A LITTLE LATER...

HUH...?

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON? WHERE I AM?

click
clack

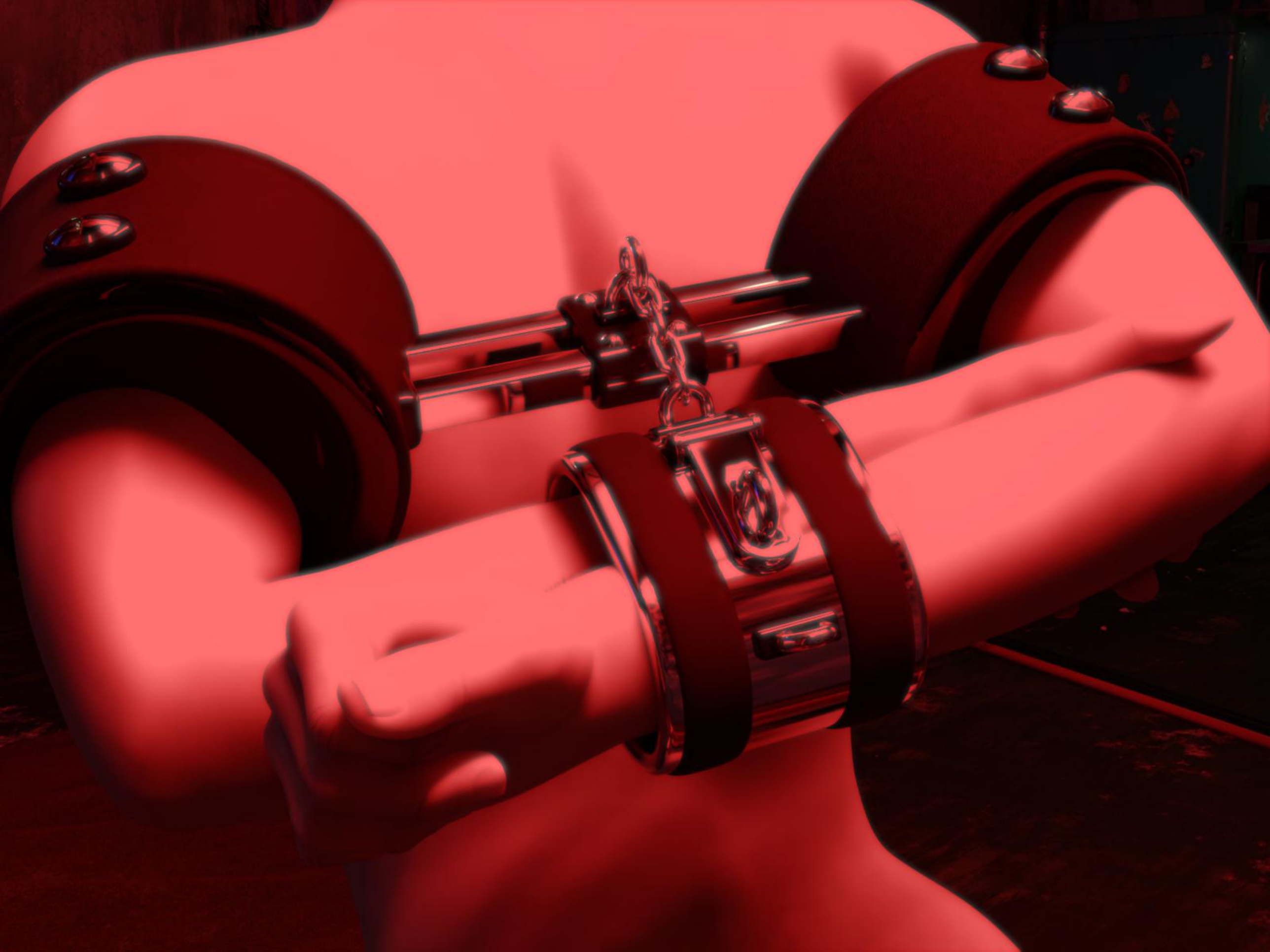
YOU...!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

WHAT YOU THINK?

CRACK!

TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW! WHY CAN'T I MOVE?



SHUT UP! YOU'RE HERE TO BE PUNISHED, NOT TO ASK QUESTIONS!

AHHHHH!!!
Crack!

YAWN

Ring
Ring

OH NO, IT'S MARINA!

LISTEN TO ME, ANDREW! SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED. OUR SAVINGS... ALL THE MONEY WE'VE BEEN SAVING FOR OUR WEDDING... IT'S GONE! I DON'T KNOW HOW BUT IT'S FUCKING GONE! WE NEED TO CALL THE POLICE AND...

T-THERE'S NO REASON TO CALL THE POLICE, MARINA. THAT WAS ME. I LOST EVERYTHING. I LOST EVERY PENNY OF OUR MONEY!

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME? WEREN'T YOU APHRODITE? NOW YOU'RE TORTURING PEOPLE AS A WAY OF SPREADING LOVE?!

APHRODITE? I DON'T THINK SO... TONIGHT I'M POENA, THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE AND PUNISHMENT.

AND WHY EXACTLY DO I DESERVE TO BE PUNISHED?

YOU TELL ME. ACCORDING TO YOU, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO CREATED ME, AFTER ALL.

AND ONE THING IS FOR SURE... YOU CAN NO LONGER RUN AWAY FROM YOUR PAST.

WHY? WHY ME?

I DID NOTHING TO DESERVE SO MUCH PAIN...

WHAT A PIECE OF SHIT!

SHOW ME SOME TRUTH. RIGHT NOW YOU WOULDN'T CONVINCE A FIVE-YEAR-OLD!

EVERYTHING I'VE DONE...

EVERYTHING IS FUCKING RUINED!

THAT'S ENOUGH, YOUNG MAN. THIS INTERPRETATION OF YOURS, IF WE CAN EVEN CALL IT AN INTERPRETATION, IS THE MOST RIDICULOUS THING I'VE EVER SEEN. YOU STILL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN.

AND YOU REALLY DID LEARN, DIDN'T YOU?

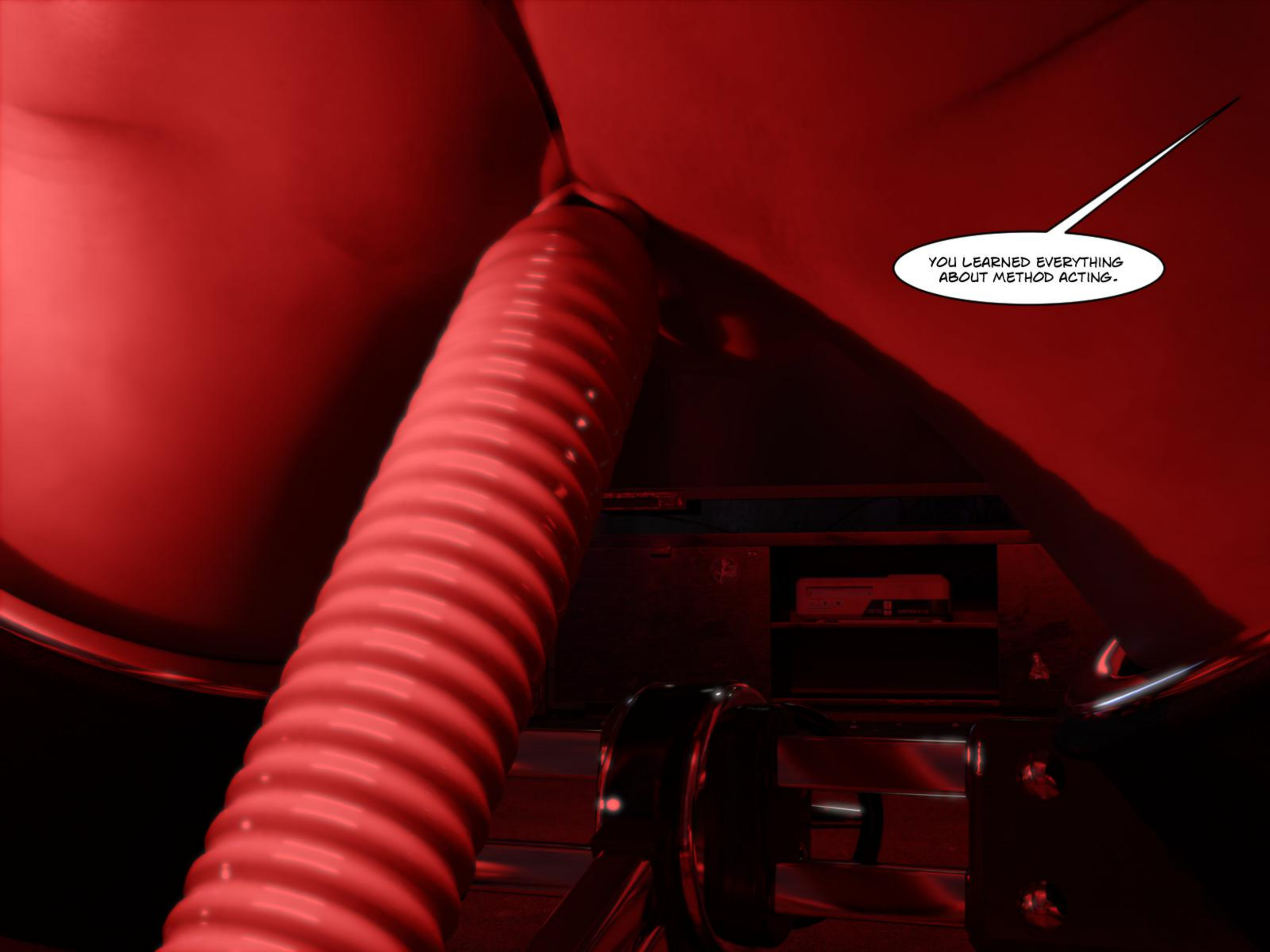
YES, YOU'VE BECOME MR. ORLOV'S FAVORITE PUPIL. BUT AT WHAT PRICE?

I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU THAT ALL I WANT IS TO FORGET ABOUT THIS!

IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT.

TOO LATE INDEED...

YOU MADE MR. ORLOV PROUD.


YOU LEARNED EVERYTHING ABOUT METHOD ACTING.

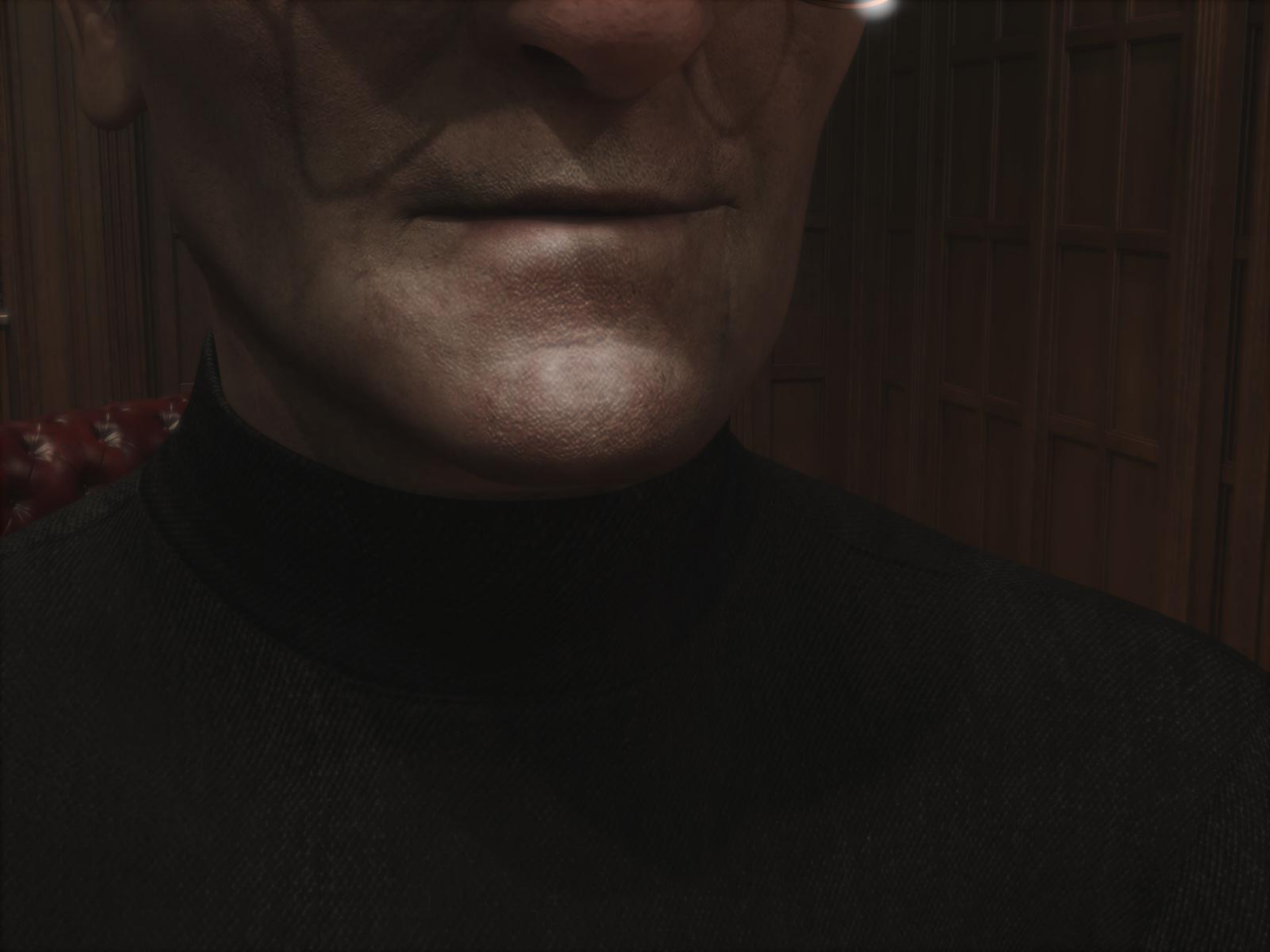
BUT IT CHANGED YOU.

AHHHHH!!

IT MADE YOU LOSE EVERYTHING.

ONLY ONE PERSON REMAINED BY YOUR SIDE, AND YET YOU BETRAYED HER TRUST AGAIN. DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
I DON'T WANT TO!

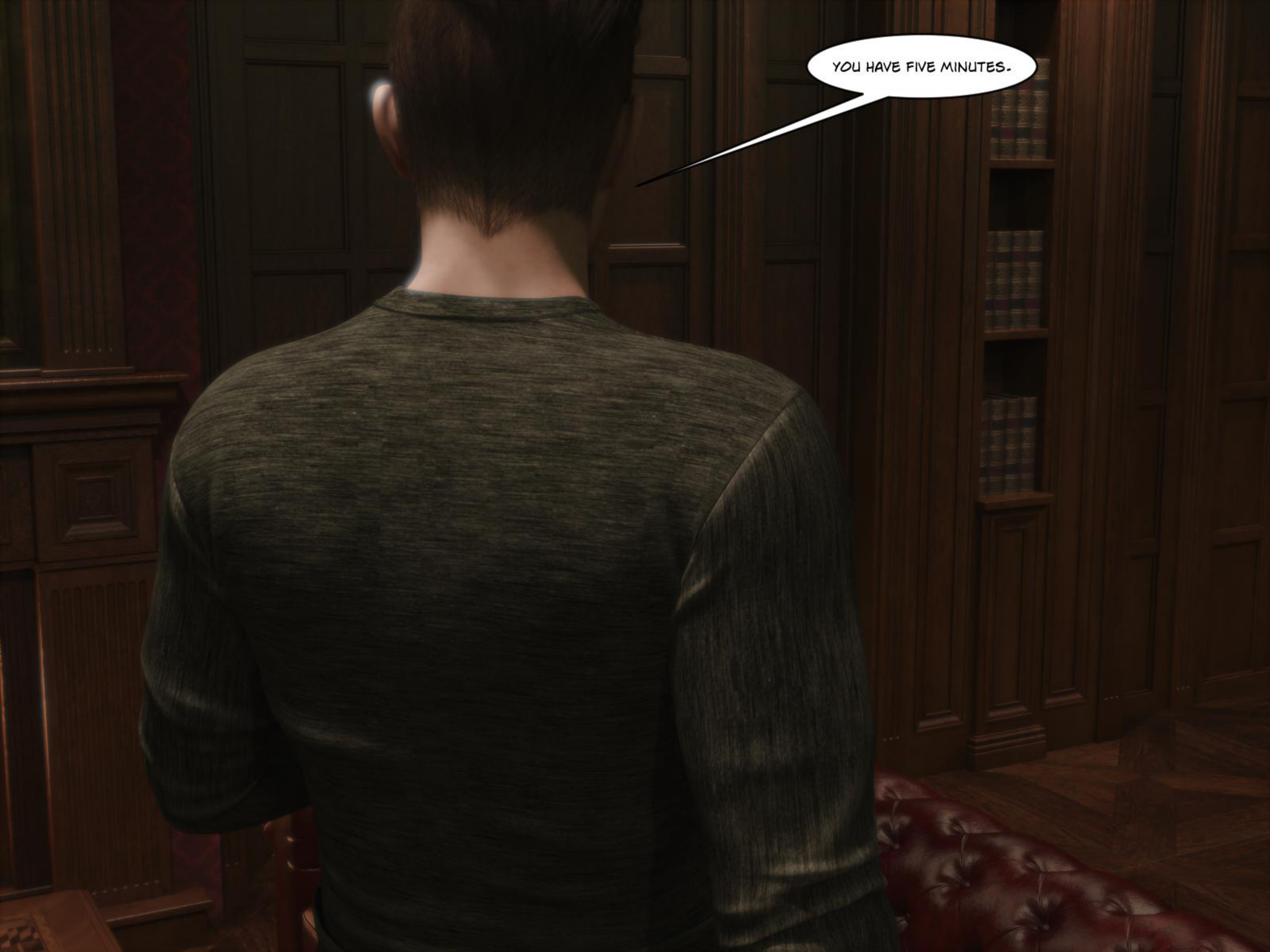
THAT'S NOT TRUE AT ALL. REMEMBER, "YOU'VE CREATED ME AND I'VE CREATED YOU..."



YOU'RE LATE.

LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING.
I JUST CAME HERE TO SAY THAT WHATEVER YOU HAVE IN MIND, I'M NOT INTERESTED.
LEAVE ME ALONE!

SO YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY JUST TO SAY YOU'RE NOT INTERESTED IN LISTENING TO ME? THAT SOUNDS RIDICULOUS, YOUNG MAN. SIT DOWN AND LET'S TALK.


YOU HAVE FIVE MINUTES.

DRINK.

DRINK?! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? THAT'S HOW YOU ALMOST RUINED MY LIFE! YOU MADE ME LIVE LIKE MY CHARACTER IN THAT PLAY... THINK LIKE HIM, ACT LIKE HIM... IT ALL STARTED WITH DRINKING PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME... YOU SAID THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY I COULD BECOME A GREAT ACTOR, AND WHAT DID I GAIN FROM IT?
I SAID HORRIBLE THINGS TO PEOPLE, I LET THEM DOWN, I MADE EVERYONE'S LIFE, ESPECIALLY MINE, MISERABLE! IF IT WEREN'T FOR MARINA, I DON'T THINK I'D HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET BACK ON TRACK AFTER THAT METHOD ACTING CRAP. I WAS LOST. BUT YOU JUST DON'T CARE, DO YOU? YOU KEPT PUSHING ME DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE FUCKING PIT!

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR CHEAP SENTIMENTALITY! YES, GUESS WHAT, DOING GREAT THINGS REQUIRES SACRIFICE. THAT'S THE NATURE OF ART! DO YOU THINK THIS WAS EASY FOR ANYONE BEFORE YOU? DO YOU WANT TO BE MEDIOCRE FOREVER?
LISTEN, ANDREW, I CALLED YOU HERE BECAUSE I TRULY BELIEVE IN YOUR POTENTIAL. AFTER TWENTY YEARS, I AM BACK IN THE INDUSTRY. A BIG PRODUCER APPROACHED ME TO DIRECT HIS NEW MOVIE. TWENTY YEARS OF BEING OSTRACIZED DUO TO SOFT PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T HANDLE A DIRECTOR WHO REALLY GOT THE BEST OUT OF HIS ACTORS... BUT NOT ANYMORE!

WHAT YOU SAY? ARE YOU READY TO HIT BIG?

AND YOU DID ACCEPT MR. ORLOV'S PROPOSAL, DIDN'T YOU?

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT WHEN HE SAID THAT THE PRODUCER NEEDED A LOAN TO START THE PROJECT, YOU PROMPTLY HANDED HIM ALL THE MONEY YOU HAD SAVED WITH MARINA, WITHOUT EVEN ASKING HER OPINION ON THE MATTER...

MEANWHILE AT THE HOSPITAL...

HUH...?

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY CAN'T I SPEAK? FUCK, I CAN BARELY MOVE A FINGER!

HE'LL SURVIVE AFTER ALL. DO YOU THINK THIS WILL ACTUALLY WORK?
SHE. REMEMBER SHE'S A WOMAN NOW. AND YES, THIS WILL WORK. I SPOKE TO THE DOCTOR. THE PROCEDURES WILL BE PERFORMED TONIGHT. THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE.

WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT? AM I A WOMAN NOW? FUCK, I NEED TO STOP THIS MADNESS! BUT I CAN'T TALK! AND I'M SO SLEEPY...

Chapter Twenty-Four
Secrets and Lies

THE NEXT MORNING...

OH GOD...!

HEY, MOM.
WE'RE GLAD YOU COULD COME.

WHAT IN HEAVEN DID THE DOCTORS DO TO JOEL?

I MEAN, HE LOOKS SO DIFFERENT...

AND IT SEEMS HE NOW HAS...

BOOBS?!

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT, MOM.

BUT WE NEED TO BE BRIEF BECAUSE IT MAY NOT BE SAFE TO DISCUSS SENSITIVE TOPICS HERE.

ALRIGHT THEN! START EXPLAINING WHY JOEL HAS BOOBS!

JOEL GOT SHOT, MOM. YOU KNOW THAT. SHOT BY THE GANGSTER WHO'S BEEN WATCHING OUR FAMILY ON MR. TOSKA'S ORDERS! HE NEEDS A DISGUISE.

SO YOUR PLAN IS TO DISGUISE HIM AS A WOMAN? YOU TWO ARE COMPLETELY OUT OF YOUR MINDS!
ARE WE? DO YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, REALLY THINK SO? HE'S THIN AND HAS A DELICATE FACE. WITH SOME MINOR ADJUSTMENTS, HE CAN EASILY PASS AS A WOMAN. AND WE HAVE EXPERIENCE DOING THIS KIND OF THING, RIGHT?

DID HE HAVE A SAY IN ANY OF THIS? HAS ANYONE ASKED HIS OPINION ON THIS CRAZY PLAN?
MR. SEFERI, AS JOEL'S UNCLE AND LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE, AUTHORIZED THE PROCEDURES.

WAIT...

IS MR. SEFERI...

JOEL'S UNCLE?

MR. SEFERI CONTACTED US DURING THE TIME YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS, MOM. HE TOLD US EVERYTHING YOU ALREADY KNEW ABOUT HIS ISSUES WITH MR. TOSKA. BUT WE ALSO DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS JOEL'S UNCLE UNTIL LAST NIGHT, WHEN HE SHOWED UP.

BUT WHY FEMINIZE JOEL? WHY NOT ASK THE POLICE FOR PROTECTION? WHAT ABOUT THAT DETECTIVE WHO'S INVESTIGATING THE ATTEMPTED MURDER?

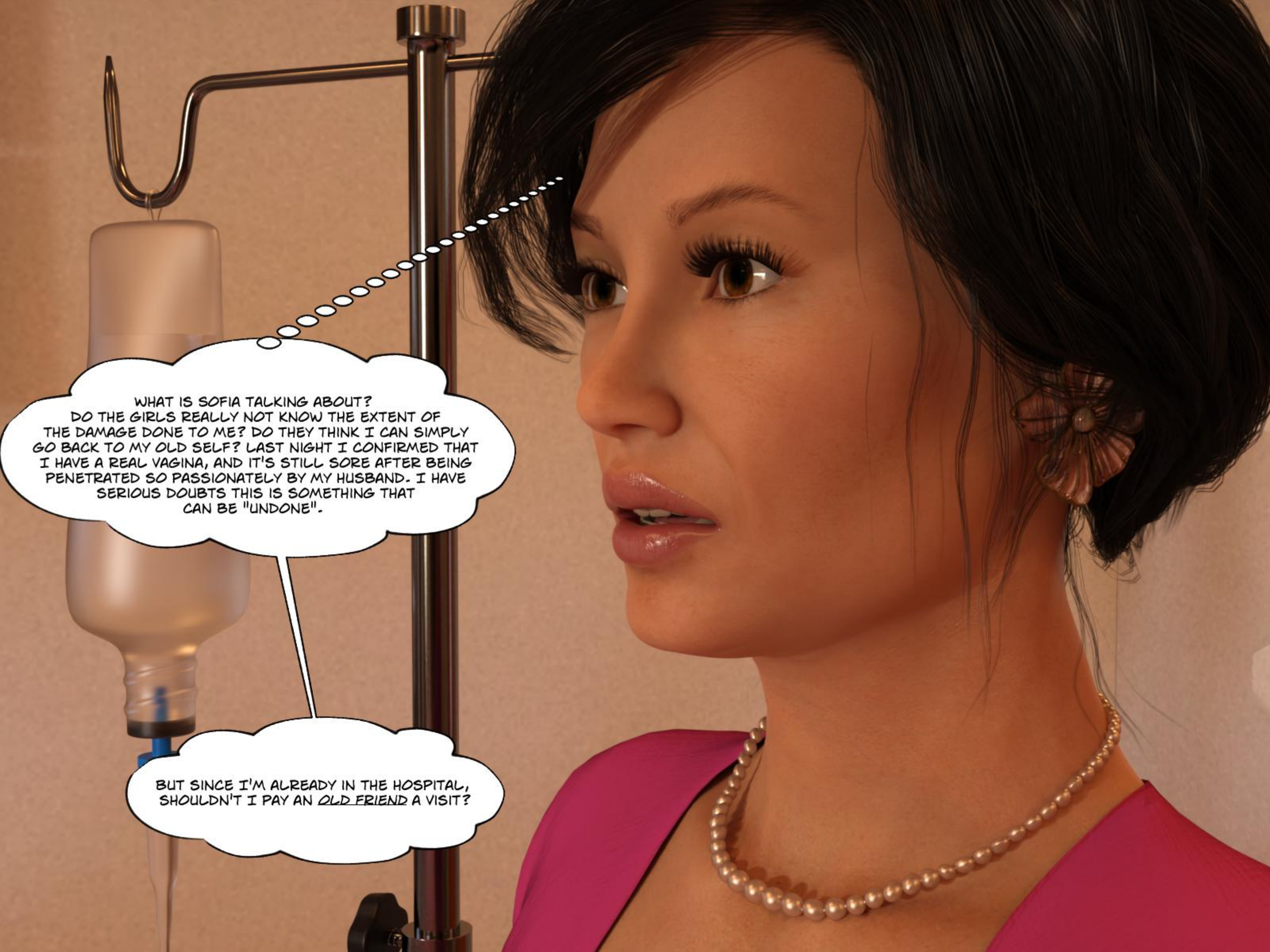
THE LESS THE POLICE KNOW ABOUT OUR FAMILY, THE BETTER, RIGHT? IT WOULD BE REALLY BAD IF THEY FOUND OUT THAT OUR DEAR MOTHER DIDN'T EXIST UNTIL A FEW MONTHS AGO. MR. SEFERI SAID HE HAS A DEAL TO PROPOSE TO THE DETECTIVE.

AND WHAT DEAL WOULD THAT BE?
JOEL MANAGED TO GATHER EVIDENCE OF MR. TOSKA'S INVOLVEMENT WITH ROAN GJOKA, THE ALBANIAN GANGSTER. THAT'S MOST LIKELY WHY THEY TRIED TO KILL HIM. NOW WE JUST NEED MR. TOSKA TO RETURN TO GREEK SOIL SO HE CAN BE ARRESTED. YOU SEE? THAT'S A WIN-WIN SITUATION. GREAT FOR US AND ALSO FOR THE DETECTIVE WHO WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE THE ARREST.

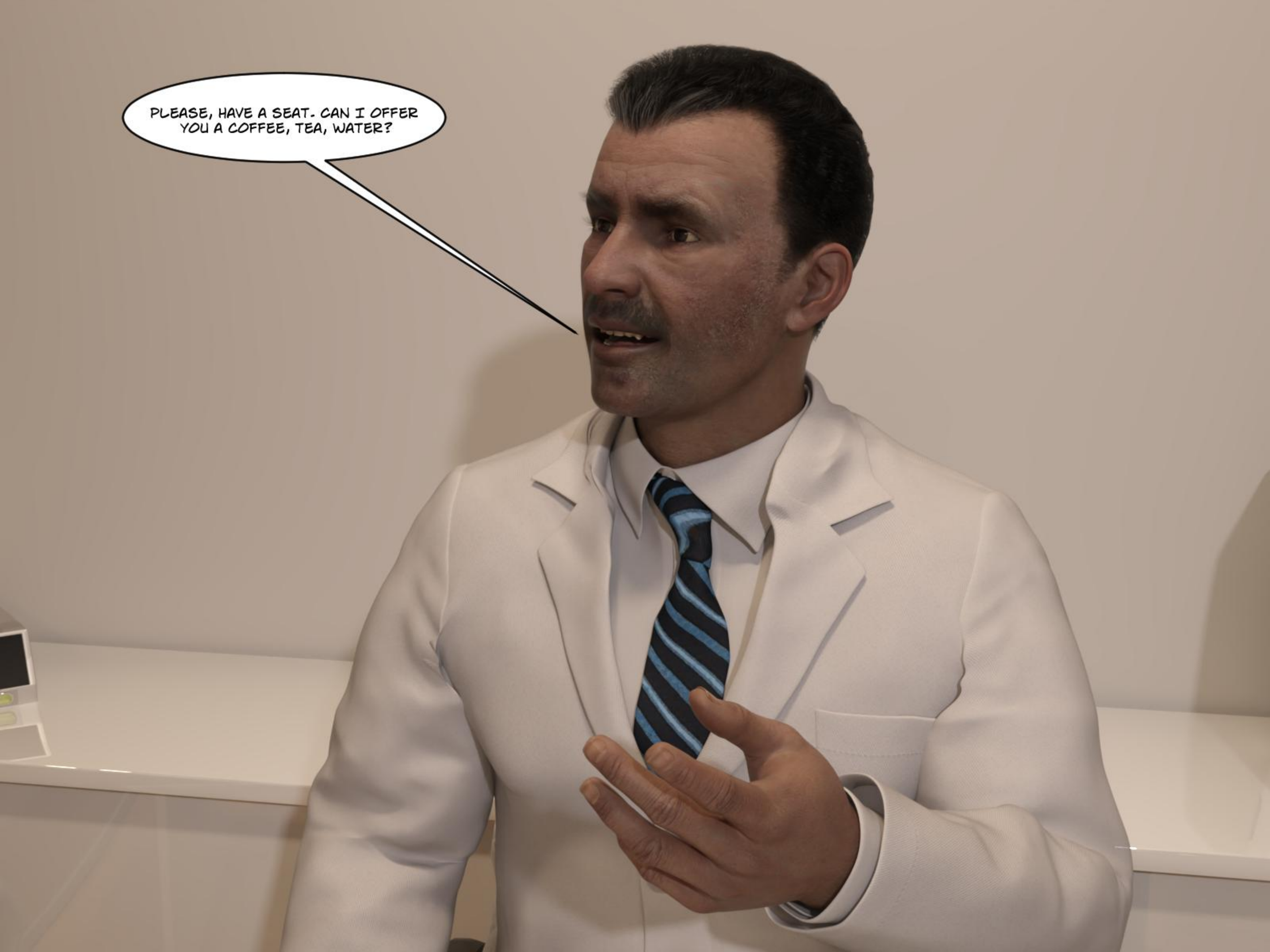
AND WHY EXACTLY WOULD MR. TOSKA RETURN TO GREECE?

ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS? HE'LL BE BACK FOR YOU AND DAD'S VOW RENEWAL. HE MAY THINK OUR FAMILY HAS A PLAN TO STEAL HIM, BUT HE HAS NO WAY TO PROVE IT, AND HE HAS A PRE-SIGNED CONTRACT WITH DAD. HE HAS TO COME BACK.
THEN HE WILL BE ARRESTED AND OUR FAMILY WILL NO LONGER BE OBLIGATED TO FULFILL THE CONTRACT. THIS WILL BE OVER, MOM. WE'LL BE FREE.

I KNOW YOU'RE SHOCKED ABOUT JOEL, BUT REMEMBER THAT, JUST LIKE IN YOUR CASE, ALL THE PROCEDURES PERFORMED ON HIM CAN BE UNDONE. HE'LL BE FINE. BUT I WONDER... AT THIS POINT, DO YOU WANT TO GO BACK? DO YOU REALLY WANT TO STOP BEING ELENA SAMARAS?


WHAT IS SOFIA TALKING ABOUT? DO THE GIRLS REALLY NOT KNOW THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE DONE TO ME? DO THEY THINK I CAN SIMPLY GO BACK TO MY OLD SELF? LAST NIGHT I CONFIRMED THAT I HAVE A REAL VAGINA, AND IT'S STILL SORE AFTER BEING PENETRATED SO PASSIONATELY BY MY HUSBAND. I HAVE SERIOUS DOUBTS THIS IS SOMETHING THAT CAN BE "UNDONE".
BUT SINCE I'M ALREADY IN THE HOSPITAL, SHOULDN'T I PAY AN OLD FRIEND A VISIT?

DR. GIANAKOS.
HELLO, MRS. SAMARAS!


PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT. CAN I OFFER YOU A COFFEE, TEA, WATER?

NO, THANK YOU. I DON'T INTEND TO TAKE UP MUCH OF YOUR TIME.

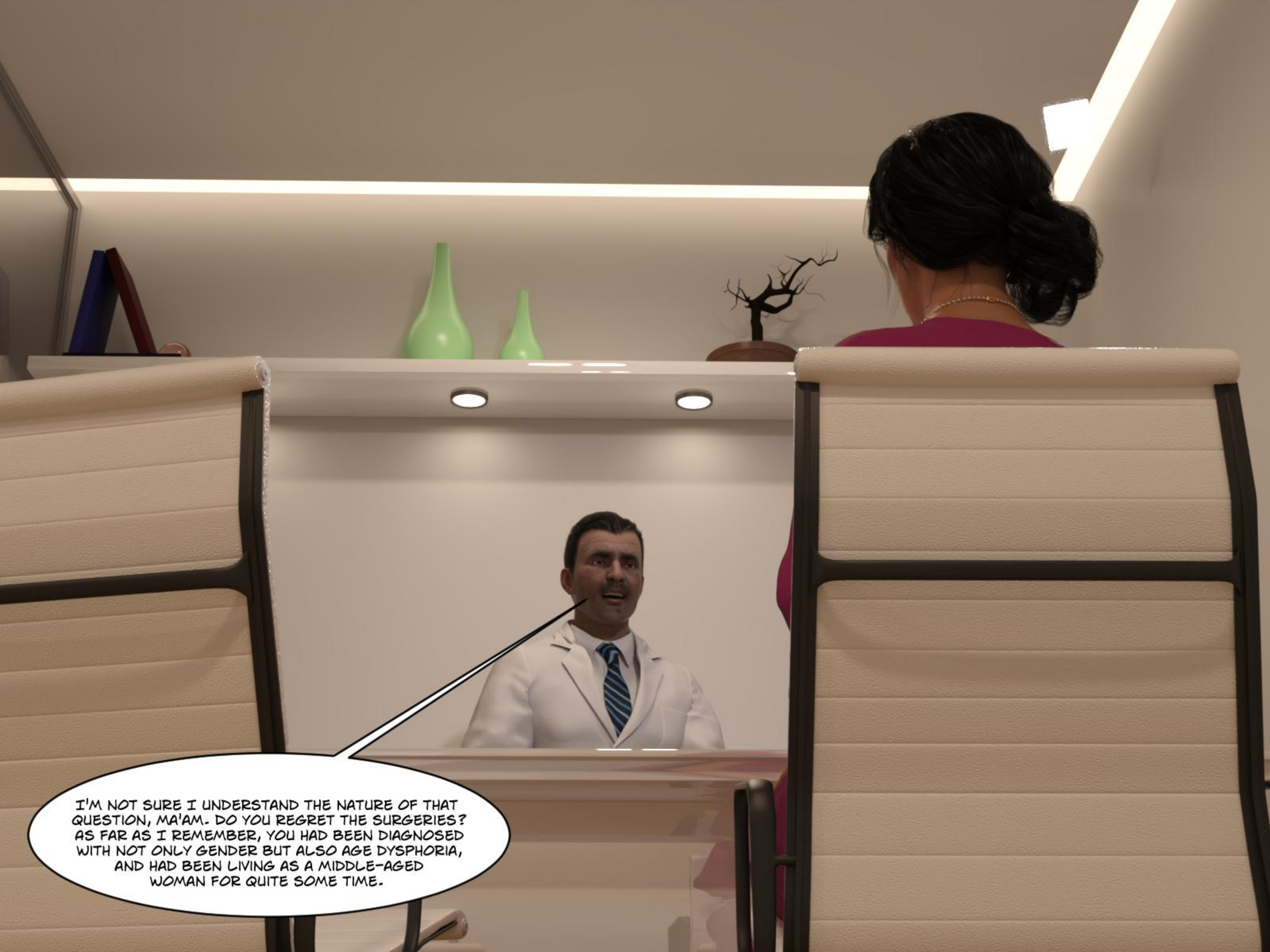
VERY WELL, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU TODAY, MA'AM? I WASN'T EXPECTING TO SEE YOU UNTIL YOUR CHECK UP APPOINTMENT WHICH IS SCHEDULED FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS FROM NOW.

I NEED TO CHOOSE MY WORDS VERY CAREFULLY HERE. I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THE DOCTOR'S REAL INVOLVEMENT IN ALL OF THIS IS.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE PROCEDURES PERFORMED ON ME, DR. GIANAKOS.

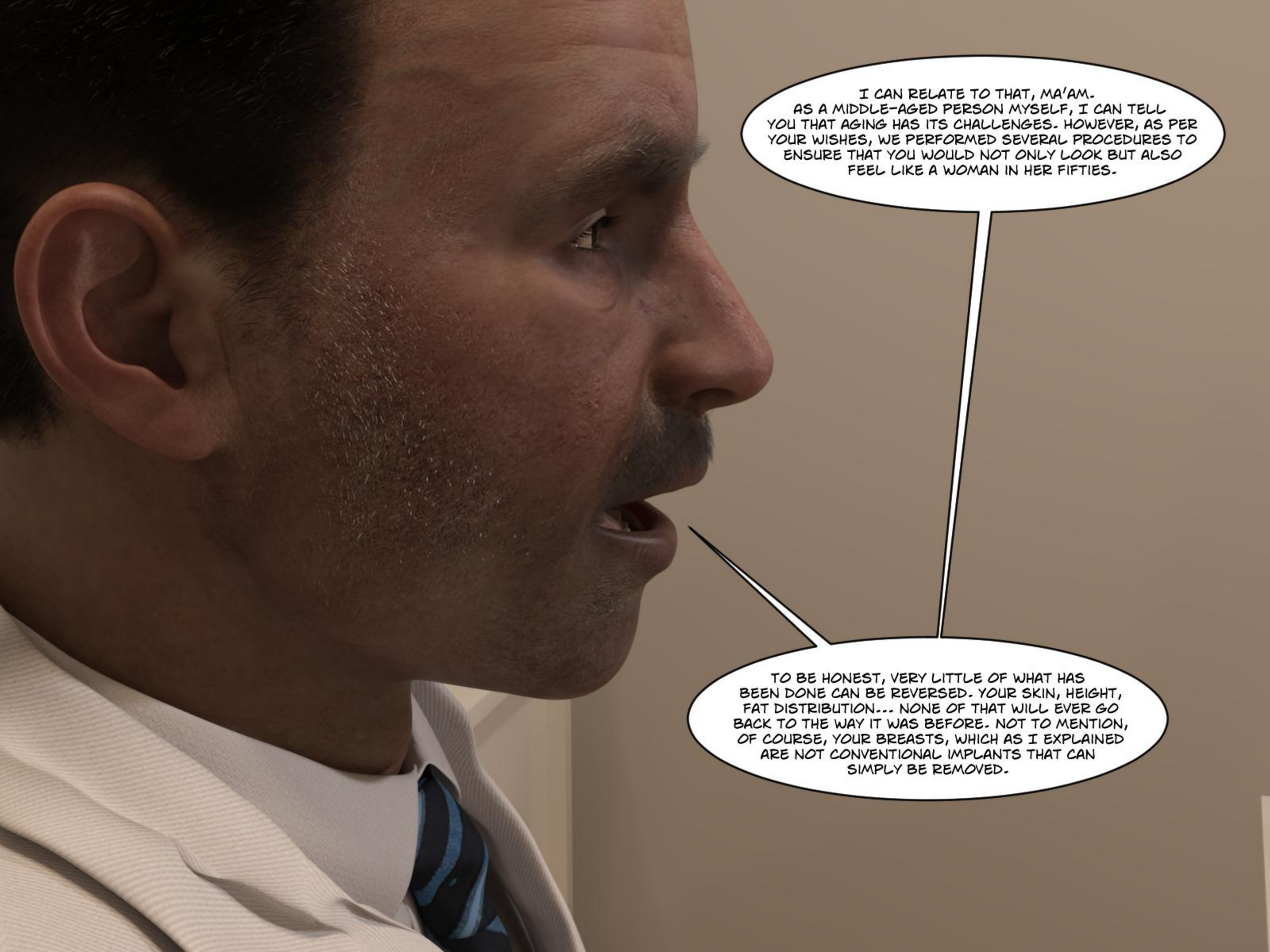
GO AHEAD, MRS. SAMARAS. I'M HERE TO ANSWER ALL YOUR DOUBTS.

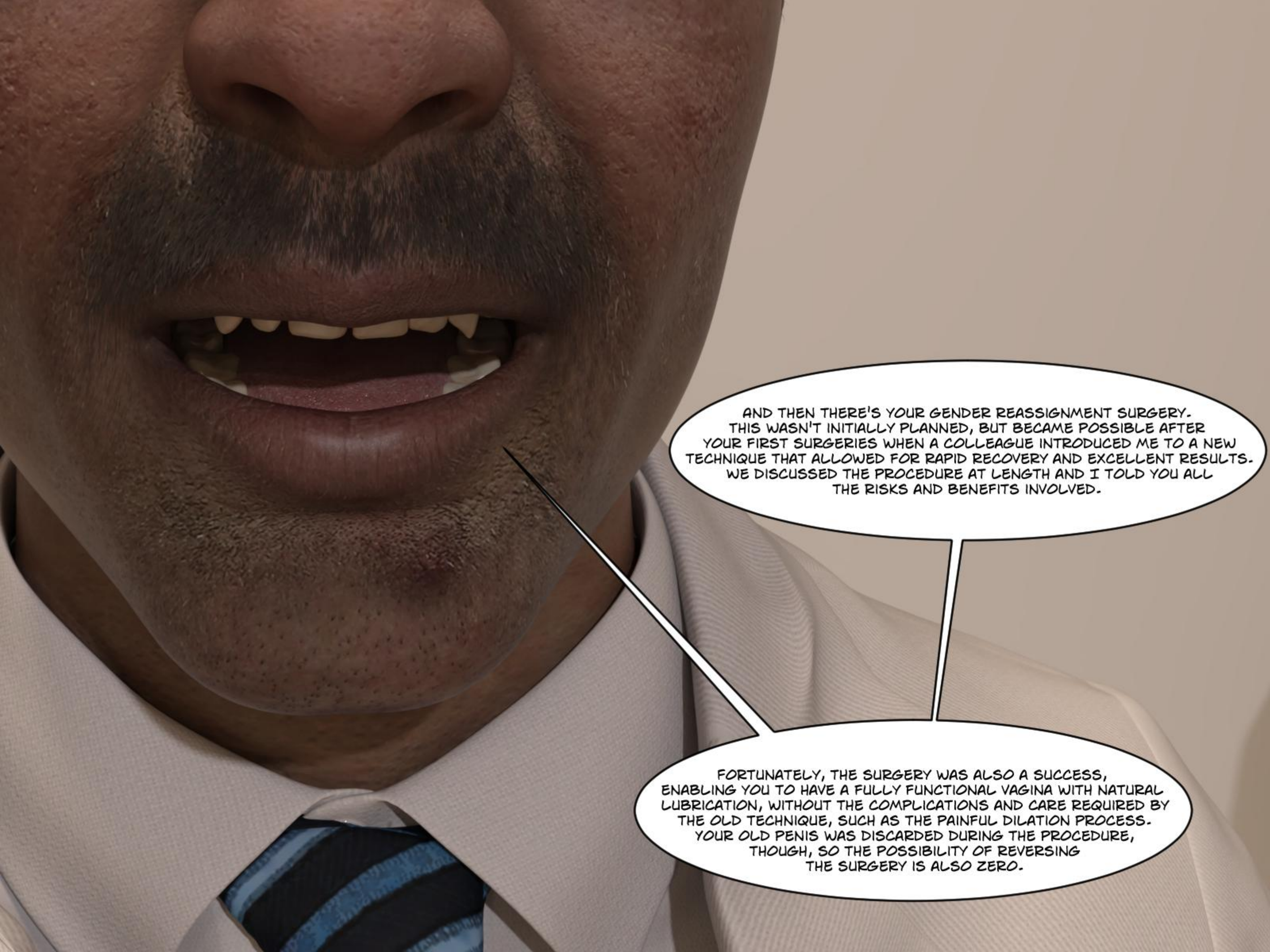
JUST OUT OF CURIOSITY... HOW REVERSIBLE ARE THEY?

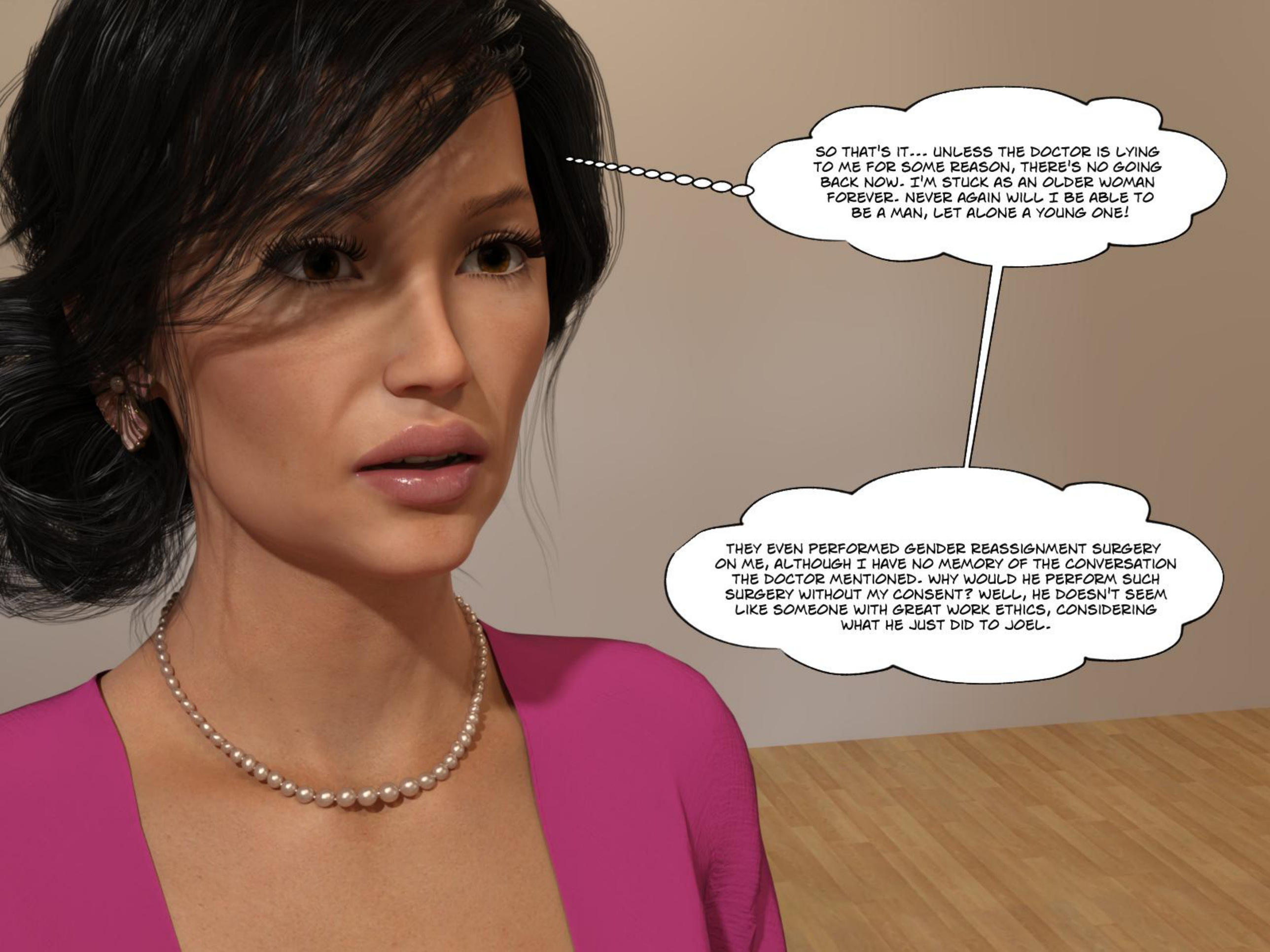

I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THAT QUESTION, MA'AM. DO YOU REGRET THE SURGERIES? AS FAR AS I REMEMBER, YOU HAD BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH NOT ONLY GENDER BUT ALSO AGE DYSPHORIA, AND HAD BEEN LIVING AS A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN FOR QUITE SOME TIME.

YES, THAT WAS THE LIE WE MADE UP TO CONVINCE THE DOCTOR THAT I WAS TRANS. I HAD NEVER BEEN TO A PSYCHOLOGIST, NOR HAD I BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH DYSPHORIA, OF COURSE. HOWEVER, I HAD NO IDEA THAT HE WOULD PERFORM SUCH RADICAL SURGERIES. AND EVEN THOUGH HE SUPPOSEDLY EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO ME, I BARELY UNDERSTOOD AT THE TIME WHAT HE WAS SAYING.

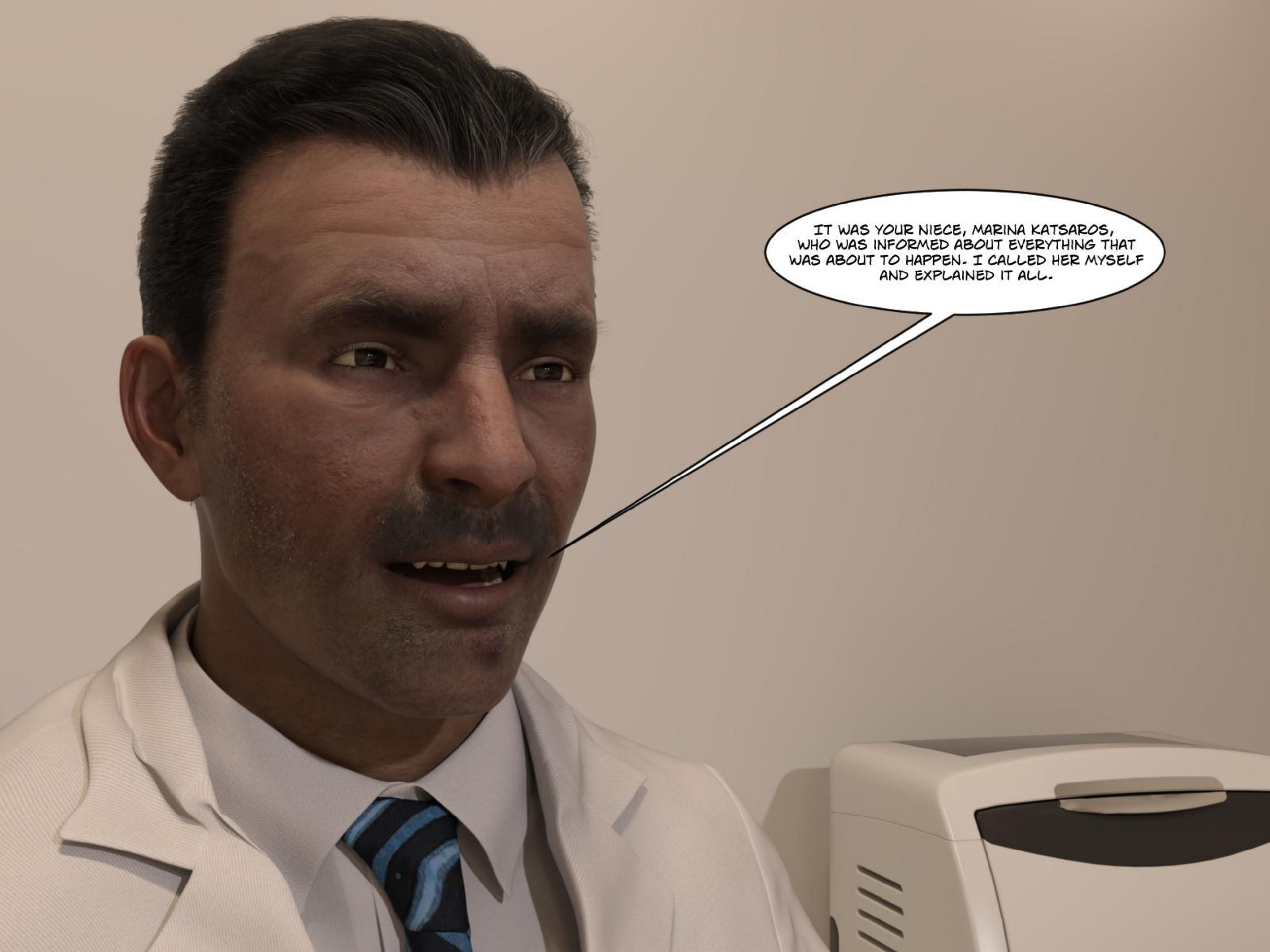
OF COURSE I HAVE NO REGRETS, DOCTOR. I'M LIVING THE LIFE I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF, AFTER ALL, WITH MY LOVING FAMILY. BUT I CAN'T DENY THAT SOME OF THE PROCEDURES DID COME WITH CERTAIN... UNPLEASANT SIDE EFFECTS.


I CAN RELATE TO THAT, MA'AM. AS A MIDDLE-AGED PERSON MYSELF, I CAN TELL YOU THAT AGING HAS ITS CHALLENGES. HOWEVER, AS PER YOUR WISHES, WE PERFORMED SEVERAL PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THAT YOU WOULD NOT ONLY LOOK BUT ALSO FEEL LIKE A WOMAN IN HER FIFTIES.
TO BE HONEST, VERY LITTLE OF WHAT HAS BEEN DONE CAN BE REVERSED. YOUR SKIN, HEIGHT, FAT DISTRIBUTION... NONE OF THAT WILL EVER GO BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS BEFORE. NOT TO MENTION, OF COURSE, YOUR BREASTS, WHICH AS I EXPLAINED ARE NOT CONVENTIONAL IMPLANTS THAT CAN SIMPLY BE REMOVED.


AND THEN THERE'S YOUR GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY. THIS WASN'T INITIALLY PLANNED, BUT BECAME POSSIBLE AFTER YOUR FIRST SURGERIES WHEN A COLLEAGUE INTRODUCED ME TO A NEW TECHNIQUE THAT ALLOWED FOR RAPID RECOVERY AND EXCELLENT RESULTS. WE DISCUSSED THE PROCEDURE AT LENGTH AND I TOLD YOU ALL THE RISKS AND BENEFITS INVOLVED.
FORTUNATELY, THE SURGERY WAS ALSO A SUCCESS, ENABLING YOU TO HAVE A FULLY FUNCTIONAL VAGINA WITH NATURAL LUBRICATION, WITHOUT THE COMPLICATIONS AND CARE REQUIRED BY THE OLD TECHNIQUE, SUCH AS THE PAINFUL DILATION PROCESS. YOUR OLD PENIS WAS DISCARDED DURING THE PROCEDURE, THOUGH, SO THE POSSIBILITY OF REVERSING THE SURGERY IS ALSO ZERO.


SO THAT'S IT... UNLESS THE DOCTOR IS LYING TO ME FOR SOME REASON, THERE'S NO GOING BACK NOW. I'M STUCK AS AN OLDER WOMAN FOREVER. NEVER AGAIN WILL I BE ABLE TO BE A MAN, LET ALONE A YOUNG ONE!
THEY EVEN PERFORMED GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY ON ME, ALTHOUGH I HAVE NO MEMORY OF THE CONVERSATION THE DOCTOR MENTIONED. WHY WOULD HE PERFORM SUCH SURGERY WITHOUT MY CONSENT? WELL, HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE SOMEONE WITH GREAT WORK ETHICS, CONSIDERING WHAT HE JUST DID TO JOEL.

TELL ME DOCTOR, WAS ANYONE IN MY FAMILY INFORMED ABOUT MY PROCEDURES BEFORE THEY HAPPENED?
OF COURSE, MRS. SAMARAS. EVEN WITH YOUR SIGNATURE AND CONSENT, I WOULDN'T PERFORM SUCH EXTENSIVE SURGERIES WITHOUT THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF A FAMILY MEMBER.


IT WAS YOUR NIECE, MARINA KATSAROS, WHO WAS INFORMED ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. I CALLED HER MYSELF AND EXPLAINED IT ALL.

.....
MARINA?! SHE KNEW?

MARINA AND NIKOS TOGETHER? WHAT IS NIKOS DOING HERE?

I TOLD MARINA THAT I NEEDED TO TALK TO HER, BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT MY HUSBAND TO BE HERE, AS WELL.

I KEEP THINKING OF HIM AS MY HUSBAND WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT. IS THAT REALLY ME OR THE METHOD ACTING TALKING? I JUST DON'T KNOW ANYMORE. DOES IT MATTER, THOUGH? I JUST GOT CONFIRMATION I'M GOING TO BE A MATURE LADY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE. I'M STUCK FOREVER.

ANYWAY, ONE THING IS FOR SURE...

THEY DON'T SEEM VERY HAPPY WITH EACH OTHER.

OH, WAIT A MINUTE, UNCLE NIKOS.

AUNT ELENA IS HERE! DOESN'T SHE LOOK LOVELY TODAY?

HI, ELENA.
NIKOS, WHAT ARE YOU...

I THINK YOU AND MARINA NEED TO TALK. I'LL SPEAK TO YOU LATER.

WHAT DID YOU SAY TO NIKOS? WHY DOES HE SEEM UPSET WITH ME?

OH, SO YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR BELOVED HUSBAND, AUNT ELENA?

IT'S ALWAYS BAD TO HAVE MARRIAGE ISSUES, ISN'T IT?
YOU KNOW WHAT? YES, I'M WORRIED! AT LEAST NIKOS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ME!

YOU DEFINITELY HAVE A STRANGE WAY OF SHOWING GRATITUDE, AUNT ELENA. BUT THAT'S SOMETHING I KNOW ALL TOO WELL!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

ARE YOU GOING TO PRETEND YOU'VE ALSO FORGOTTEN WHAT YOU TOLD UNCLE NIKOS ABOUT ME? ABOUT US?

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT... WAIT...
I THINK I'M REMEMBERING. THAT WAS THE DAY I LEFT THE HOSPITAL AND WENT STRAIGHT TO THE SALON...

SO THAT'S WHAT I THINK WE NEED TO DO FOR NOW...

WHEN WE'RE TALKING IN A PLACE WHERE THERE IS A RISK OF US BEING WATCHED, WE MUST ACT AS IF ANDREW HAD NEVER EXISTED IN OUR LIVES, AND I HAD ALWAYS BEEN ELENA SAMARAS.
AND THEN, WHEN WE NEED TO TALK AS OUR TRUE SELVES, WE CAN USE A CODE OR SOMETHING TO ARRANGE A MEETING IN A SAFE PLACE.

IT MAKES SENSE... I GUESS?

FOR THE CODE, THIS HAS TO BE SOME KIND OF "GIRLY TALK", RIGHT? TO AVOID AROUSING SUSPICION. PERHAPS I CAN COMPLIMENT YOUR EARRINGS OR SOMETHING.
THEN WE CAN MEET AT THAT PLACE WE FIRST VISITED IN ATHENS? IT'S OPEN AND ISOLATED... IT'S HARD FOR SOMEONE THERE TO WATCH US WITHOUT BEING NOTICED.

YES, THIS SOUNDS PERFECT. AND I THINK YOU SHOULD WARN EVA AND SOFIA ABOUT OUR PLAN. THEY DIDN'T SEEM TO NEED MUCH ENCOURAGEMENT BEFORE TO TREAT ME AS IF I REALLY WERE THEIR MOTHER PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME, BUT IT'S CRITICAL TO REMIND THEM ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING IN CHARACTER.

WHAT ABOUT UNCLE NIKOS?

ABOUT NIKOS... I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO TALK TO HIM MYSELF SO WE CAN THINK OF A WAY TO LOOK CONVINCING AS HUSBAND AND WIFE.

ALRIGHT, MRS. SAMARAS...

JUST WAIT A MOMENT. I'LL FINISH YOUR HAIR SOON, OKAY?

I PROMISE YOU THAT YOU'LL LOVE THE RESULT, MA'AM!

OKAY, ANGELIKI. IN THE MEANTIME, COULD YOU HAND ME MY PHONE?
NO PROBLEM, MA'AM.

NIKOS? IT'S ME... ELENA. PLEASE LISTEN TO ME. I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU.

THINGS HAVE BECOME... A LOT MORE COMPLICATED, NIKOS.

GOD, I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW TO SAY THIS, BUT THE THING IS...

FOCUS, ELENA. THIS IS IMPORTANT! MR. TOSKAS IS AFTER ANDREW. IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT NIKOS UNDERSTANDS THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION.

ELENA, ARE YOU STILL THERE?

YES, I'M HERE.

HAVE YOU BEEN DISCHARGED FROM THE HOSPITAL? I'LL COME PICK YOU UP THEN.
THERE'S NO NEED, NIKOS. I'M AT THE BEAUTY SALON.

THE SALON? BUT... THERE WAS NO REASON FOR YOU TO LEAVE THE HOSPITAL BY YOURSELF.

THAT'S OKAY. PLEASE, LISTEN TO ME. ARE YOU ALONE? YES? GOOD. NO ONE CAN HEAR WHAT I'M GOING TO TELL YOU.

MR. TOSKA IS NOT WHO HE APPEARS TO BE. HE'S A VERY DANGEROUS MAN AND WE ARE IN DANGER. ALL OF US!

I KNOW THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE GOING ON, ELENA. AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO FILIP, OUR DRIVER... STRANGE INDEED. BUT, AT LEAST FOR NOW, WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT MR. TOSKA IS BEHIND ALL THIS. YOU'VE BEEN UNCONSCIOUS FOR A LONG TIME. IT'S NORMAL THAT YOU'RE A LITTLE CONFUSED RIGHT NOW.

IT SEEMS EVA AND SOFIA DIDN'T TELL NIKOS ABOUT MR. SEFERI AND THE TIME HE SPENT IN JAIL BECAUSE OF MR. TOSKA WHILE I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL. WHY? DIDN'T THEY EVEN HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK TO THEIR FATHER WITHOUT BEING OBSERVED? THAT MAKES THINGS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT...

WE CAN DISCUSS THIS LATER, NIKOS. THERE'S NO TIME NOW. I JUST NEED YOU TO PROMISE ME SOMETHING. WE NEED TO PRETEND TO BE HUSBAND AND WIFE AT ALL TIMES. EVEN WHEN WE'RE APPARENTLY ALONE. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHEN SOMEONE IS WATCHING US. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT!

THAT'S SOMETHING I CAN'T DO. LISTEN, ELENA. NO... LISTEN, ANDREW. I UNDERSTAND THAT MY GIRLS MAY HAVE GOTTEN A LITTLE TOO EXCITED ABOUT THIS "HAVING A MOTHER" THING, AND STARTED PUSHING YOU A LITTLE TOO HARD, EVEN CONVINCING YOU THAT WE'RE IN DANGER OF SOMETHING LIKE THAT. THEY MENTIONED SOMETHING ALONG THOSE LINES TO ME, AS WELL.
BUT THAT'S JUST IT. THEY ARE ENJOYING THE FANTASY OF HAVING A MOM. AND IT'S ALL MY FAULT. I... WELL, I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE THEM A REAL FAMILY. BUT THIS NEEDS TO STOP NOW. FOR GOD'S SAKE, YOU EVEN UNDERWENT SURGERY! AT LEAST THE GIRLS TOLD ME THAT ALL PROCEDURES CAN BE REVERSED.

NOT ONLY FOR MY DAUGHTERS' SAKE, BUT WHAT ABOUT MARINA? WE CAN'T KEEP DOING THIS TO HER. IT'S NOT FAIR. I'LL TALK TO MR. TOSKA AND EXPLAIN THE WHOLE SITUATION. HE'LL HAVE TO UNDERSTAND! AND BESIDES MARINA...

...THERE'S ALSO ME.

Y-YOU, NIKOS?

AS ABSURD AS IT SOUNDS, THE TRUTH IS THAT I'M FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOU, ELENA. I TRULY AM. THAT NIGHT WE TRICKED MR. TOSKA AND JOEL... THE NIGHT I SAW YOU AS ELENA FOR THE FIRST TIME... IT ALL MADE ME FEEL ALIVE LIKE I HADN'T IN YEARS... DECADES!
THEN, WHILE I WAS TRAVELING WITH JOEL, EVA AND SOFIA KEPT SENDING ME PICTURES OF YOUR TRANSFORMATION, AND I SAW YOU BECOMING MORE AND MORE BEAUTIFUL AND FEMININE. AND WHEN I GOT BACK TO ATHENS, AND I FOUND OUT YOU WERE HOSPITALIZED... YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW WORRIED I WAS. I VISITED YOU EVERY DAY WHILE YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS. EVERY SINGLE DAY!

I KEPT FEEDING THE ILLUSION THAT I ACTUALLY HAD A WIFE. A WIFE I COULD NEVER HAVE. ASIDE FROM A FEW QUICK AND FRIVOLOUS RELATIONSHIPS, I WAS FORCED TO LIVE ALONE, WITHOUT A PARTNER BY MY SIDE. DO YOU SEE NOW? DO YOU SEE WHY WE NEED TO GROW APART? I MUST BE LOSING MY MIND!

SIGH

WELL, THE TRUTH IS... I HAVE FEELINGS FOR YOU TOO, NIKOS.
PALOMINO

SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED. I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO TELL NIKOS THAT I HAD FEELINGS FOR HIM TOO. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE HIM... COOPERATE. YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND HOW DESPERATE I WAS!
OF COURSE, TO MAKE THIS WORK, I ALSO HAD TO TELL HIM THAT OUR MARRIAGE WASN'T A REAL ONE, THAT WE WEREN'T REALLY HUSBAND AND WIFE.

AND THEN, AFTER I MADE HIM PROMISE THAT HE WOULD TREAT ME AS ELENA ALL THE TIME, SOMEONE APPEARED...

Knock!
Knock!

THAT'S WEIRD. I'VE CANCELED ALL THE CLIENTS' APPOINTMENTS FOR THIS MORNING.

HELLO, SIR. WE ARE NOT OPEN RI...

HAIRCUT.

OH NO! IT'S HIM!
IT'S THE GANGSTER WHO'S
AFTER ME... AFTER ANDREW.

THIS IS TOO MUCH. WHY CAN'T THESE PEOPLE JUST LEAVE ME ALONE? WHAT ELSE DO I HAVE TO DO?

ELENA, ARE YOU STILL THERE?
IS SOMETHING WRONG?

AND THEN I PASSED OUT AGAIN. THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I WOKE UP IN NIKOS' ROOM, WITH NO MEMORY OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED SINCE THE DAY I ARRIVED AT THE HOSPITAL, BEFORE THE SURGERIES. ONLY RECENTLY HAVE I BEEN ABLE TO SLOWLY REGAIN MY MEMORY. I STILL DON'T REMEMBER EVERYTHING, THOUGH.

SO THAT'S IT? THAT'S YOUR STORY? AND TO MAKE YOUR PLAN WORK, YOU TOLD UNCLE NIKOS THAT OUR MARRIAGE WAS A FAKE ONE?

HOW COULD YOU DO THIS? HOW COULD YOU PLAY WITH PEOPLE'S FEELINGS LIKE THAT? I REALLY THOUGHT I COULD TRUST YOU, ANDREW. EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING...
EVEN AFTER YOU BETRAYED MY TRUST AND GAVE ALL OUR MONEY TO THAT SCAMMER! HOW COULD I BE SO STUPID!

LISTEN, MARINA, ABOUT MR. ORLOV, I HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT HE INTENDED TO SCAM ME AND RUN AWAY WITH THE MONEY. HE HAD ONCE BEEN A RESPECTED DIRECTOR. YES, I WAS AN IDIOT, NOT ONLY FOR TRUSTING HIM BLINDLY, BUT ALSO FOR NOT CONSULTING YOU BEFORE MAKING THE DECISION.
HOWEVER, I'VE ALREADY APOLOGIZED A THOUSAND TIMES FOR WHAT HAPPENED, AND YOU FORGAVE ME. IT'S NOT FAIR FOR YOU TO KEEP THROWING THIS IN MY FACE OVER AND OVER AGAIN. WHAT DO YOU WANT? FOR ME TO FEEL EVEN MORE GUILTY? I ALREADY FEEL LIKE GARBAGE EVERY TIME I REMEMBER ALL THIS. I TOLD YOU, I'LL PAY YOU BACK SOMEDAY.

THIS IS NOT ABOUT THE MONEY! I COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT THE MONEY EVEN THOUGH IT WAS EVERYTHING I MANAGED TO SAVE IN MY ENTIRE LIFE! THE ISSUE IS HOW YOU BETRAYED MY TRUST.
EVERYONE TOLD ME TO STAY AWAY FROM YOU, THAT YOU WERE UNTRUSTWORTHY... BUT HOW COULD I DO THAT? I USED TO LOVE YOU SO MUCH... AND I TRULY BELIEVED THAT YOU COULD CHANGE. I WAS SURE YOU WERE ACTING LIKE A JERK BECAUSE OF ORLOV'S INFLUENCE AND THAT YOU COULD GO BACK TO BEING THE PERSON I HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH.

SO I DECIDED TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER CHANCE. AND HOW DID YOU THANK ME? YOU TOLD MY UNCLE THAT OUR MARRIAGE WAS A FAKE ONE AND SLEEP WITH HIM! WITH MY FUCKING UNCLE!
YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YOU? HOW COULD SOMEONE AS SELFISH AS YOU UNDERSTAND? YOU NOT ONLY DESTROYED OUR MARRIAGE BUT ALSO MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY FAMILY! HOW CAN I LOOK AT MY UNCLE AND COUSINS THE SAME WAY AFTER WHAT HAPPENED?

MARINA, I...
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY EXCUSES. NO MATTER THE SITUATION, NO MATTER WHO YOU WERE PRETENDING TO BE, YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO CHEAT ON ME WITH MY OWN UNCLE! YOU'RE NOT CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING BONDS WITH PEOPLE. THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE! THAT'S WHY I WAS THE ONLY PERSON STILL BY YOUR SIDE!

YOU KNOW, YOU KEEP TREATING ME LIKE I'M A MONSTER, BUT YOU ALSO HAVE THINGS TO EXPLAIN! I JUST SPOKE TO DR. GIANAKOS. YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW ABOUT THE EXTENT OF MY SURGERIES AND YET YOU LET THEM HAPPEN!
YES, I KNEW, BUT NOT IN TIME TO PREVENT WHAT HAPPENED.

BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT... I WOULD HAVE STAYED WITH YOU, ANDREW, I WOULD HAVE STAYED WITH YOU EVEN IF YOU LOOKED LIKE A MATURE WOMAN FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES. BECAUSE I LOVED YOU. I LOVED YOU SO MUCH!

BUT NOT ANYMORE. PEOPLE WERE RIGHT ABOUT YOU. I'VE BEEN DOING HORRIBLE THINGS BECAUSE OF YOU. I WANT A DIVORCE. JUST A SYMBOLIC ONE, OF COURSE, SINCE TECHNICALLY WE'RE NOT MARRIED ANYMORE. IT'S OVER. I'M LEAVING GREECE. GOOD LUCK TO UNCLE NIKOS!

Chapter Twenty-Five
All or Nothing

A COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER...

WELL, WELL, WELL...

LOOK WHO WE HAVE HERE!

HOW DOES IT FEEL, DOLL?

TELL ME...

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE SUCH A HOT GIRL?

GO FUCK YOURSELF, ANGELIKI. I'M NOT A GIRL!

OH, ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT, JOEL? OR SHOULD I CALL YOU JOELLE? IT'S SO FUN TO HEAR YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT IN SUCH A GIRLY VOICE. YOU SOUND LIKE A SPOILED GIRL WHO HAD A FIGHT WITH HER BOYFRIEND. NOT TO MENTION...

THOSE BEAUTIFUL BOOBS OF YOURS!

I HAVE TO SAY THEY ARE BIGGER THAN MINE. I'M ALMOST JEALOUS, DOLL!

LEAVE ME ALONE, YOU BITCH!
YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT THE EXPENSE OF MY SUFFERING, AREN'T YOU? IS THIS ALL BECAUSE I DUMPED YOU? HOW PETTY OF YOU! YOU KNOW WHAT, IF YOU DON'T SHUT UP, I'M GOING TO RUIN THIS WHOLE FUCKING PLAN RIGHT NOW, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT GONNA DO ANY OF THAT, YOU LITTLE WHORE. AND YOU CALL THIS SUFFERING? JUST BECAUSE YOU GOT A PAIR OF GIANT TITS TO SEDUCE AN OLD MAN? LET ME TELL YOU WHAT SUFFERING IS. ME, STUCK HERE FOR THREE YEARS, PRETENDING TO BE A DUMB HAIRDRESSER TO MAKE THIS PLAN WORK!
I'LL SAY THIS JUST ONCE. STAY STILL WHILE I MAKE YOU PRETTY. IF YOU DON'T COOPERATE, I'M GOING TO GET A DILDO AND SHOVE IT IN YOUR GREEDY MOUTH, DO YOU HEAR ME?

NOW THAT YOU HAVE A NICE TAN AND YOUR HAIR HAS BEEN DYED, LET ME WORK ON YOUR EYEBROWS AND EYELASHES.

MUCH BETTER! TIME TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR LIPS AND FACE.

OH, YOU LOOK STUNNING AFTER SOME WORK ON YOUR JAWLINE AND LIP AUGMENTATION TO GIVE YOU THE BIMBO LIPS THAT SUIT YOU SO WELL! I ALSO TATTOOED YOUR MOUTH WITH PERMANENT LIPSTICK SO YOU CAN ALWAYS WAKE UP LOOKING LIKE A PRETTY DOLL! ISN'T THAT AMAZING? OF COURSE, YOU CAN WEAR DARKER LIPSTICKS WHEN YOU GO TO SEE YOUR MAN!

I ALSO SPENT SOME TIME ON YOUR CHEEKS AND NOSE, NOT TO MENTION THE PERMANENT MAKEUP ON YOUR EYELINER AND EYEBROWS, TOO! THE BLUE CONTACTS ARE JUST THE ICING ON THE CAKE! I THINK YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO THE HOSPITAL TO HAVE YOUR EYE COLOR CHANGED PERMANENTLY, DARLING!

THIS CAN'T BE ME! THIS IS MUCH WORSE THAN I WAS EXPECTING! THIS BITCH IS GOING TO PAY ME. I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT SHE WILL!
NOW LET ME FINISH YOUR MAKEUP!

PERFECT! IT'S TIME TO GIVE YOU SOME BEAUTIFUL EARRINGS!

OH SWEETIE, I'D SAY YOU'RE THE KIND OF GIRL WHO WEARS BIG EARRINGS PRETTY MUCH EVERYDAY, DON'T YOU THINK? GIVE ME YOUR HANDS...

I SEE YOU ARE LOVING YOUR NEW NAILS! TRUST ME, YOU'LL NEVER HAVE SHORT NAILS AGAIN. IT JUST DOESN'T SUIT YOUR PERSONALITY. LET'S WORK ON YOUR HAIR AND OUTFIT AND WE'RE FINALLY DONE!

MEANWHILE, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF ATHENS...

SO...

LET ME SEE IF I UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING CORRECTLY, MRS. SAMARAS.

ARE YOU SAYING THAT THE VOW RENEWAL CEREMONY IS CANCELED?

AT LEAST FOR NOW, YES, MR. ANGELOS, THE CEREMONY IS CANCELLED. WE'D STILL LIKE YOU TO ORGANIZE A RECEPTION FOR OUR SPECIAL GUEST, THOUGH.

I DON'T WANT TO SOUND RUDE, BUT MIGHT I ASK THE REASON FOR THIS, MA'AM? EVERYTHING SEEMED JUST FINE A FEW WEEKS AGO!

MY HUSBAND AND I HAD... A DISAGREEMENT, MR. ANGELOS. LET'S PUT IT THIS WAY.
I UNDERSTAND, MRS. SAMARAS. I UNDERSTAND.

SIGH

ARE YOU VERSED IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, MRS. SAMARAS?
NOT EXACTLY, MR. ANGELOS. WHY?

IF YOU DON'T MIND ME BEING A BIT CORNY, I LIKE TO THINK OF MYSELF AS IRIS, THE MESSENGER, THE PERSONIFICATION OF THE RAINBOW, RESTORING PEACE AND HARMONY. HERMES MAY BE THE MOST FAMOUS MESSENGER, BUT IRIS HAS ALWAYS FASCINATED ME.

IRIS SOMETIMES NOT ONLY PERFORMED SERVICES WHEN REQUESTED, BUT ALSO ASSISTED AND ADVISED ACCORDING TO HER OWN JUDGMENT, WHICH PROVED USEFUL ON MANY OCCASIONS.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ARE TELLING ME THIS, MR. ANGELOS.

IT'S BECAUSE I TRULY THINK YOU ARE A CAPTIVATING CHARACTER, MRS. SAMARAS. IN MY FIELD OF WORK, YOU SEEM TO ME TO BE ONE OF THE MOST SINCERE AND HONEST PEOPLE I HAVE EVER MET, ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE CLEARLY BEEN HIDING A SECRET FOR A LONG TIME.
MY POINT IS, I'M REALLY SORRY THE VOW RENEWAL CEREMONY HAD TO BE CANCELED. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP YOU, JUST LET ME KNOW.

I DON'T THINK I'M AS HONEST AND SINCERE AS YOU THINK. AND I'VE DISAPPOINTED A LOT OF PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THAT.

DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF, MRS. SAMARAS. SOMETIMES THINGS JUST DON'T GO THE WAY YOU EXPECT, BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU A BAD PERSON. NOT TO BE INDISCREET AGAIN, BUT THE DISAGREEMENT THAT OCCURRED WAS REGARDING THE FACT THAT...

...YOU WEREN'T BORN A WOMAN?

YOU K-KNOW?

OH, YES, I KNEW IT SINCE YOU FIRST CAME HERE, MA'AM. DON'T GET ME WRONG. I COULD ONLY TELL BECAUSE I ENJOY A LITTLE CROSSDRESSING MYSELF, SO I HAVE A GOOD EYE FOR THAT. I DON'T THINK MRS. PETROU AND HER SON, WHO WERE ALSO PRESENT, NOTICED IT, THOUGH. NOT ONLY BECAUSE THE LIGHTING WASN'T THE BEST, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THEY HAD OTHER THINGS ON MIND.

HOWEVER, LATER, WHEN YOU SHOWED UP WITH A NEW LOOK, MRS. PETROU CERTAINLY NOTICED THAT YOU HAD UNDERGONE SOME PROCEDURES, BUT SHE DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING SO AS NOT TO BE RUDE, PROBABLY. YES, YOU UNDERWENT A MAJOR TRANSFORMATION, WHICH LED ME TO CONCLUDE YOU WERE A TRANSSEXUAL.

ALL OF THIS IS VERY INTRIGUING TO ME. I KNEW YOU WEREN'T MARRIED TO MR. SAMARAS FOR DECADES AS YOU CLAIMED. AGAIN, FORGIVE MY INDISCRETION. I'M NOT JUDGING YOU. IT'S JUST PART OF MY JOB TO KNOW THINGS.
IN FACT, I KNEW THAT MR. SAMARAS HAD NEVER BEEN MARRIED TO ANYONE. SO WHY, ALL OF A SUDDEN, DOES HE DECIDE TO TAKE ON A MYSTERIOUS TRANS WOMAN AS NOT ONLY HIS WIFE, BUT ALSO THE MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTERS? VERY, VERY INTRIGUING...

ALRIGHT...

YOUR HAIR IS DONE, SWEETIE. DON'T YOU LOVE IT?

WHAT THE...?
YES, I SEE YOU'RE SO EXCITED YOU CAN BARELY SPEAK! NOW LET'S GET YOU DRESSED!

SEE? I TOLD YOU THE THONG WOULD FIT YOU PERFECTLY!

I DON'T THINK SO! THE WAY IT'S SLIDING UP MY ASS IS ANNOYING LIKE HELL!

GET USED TO IT, DOLL. THIS IS HOW THONGS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE WORN AND YOU'RE THE KIND OF NASTY GIRL WHO DOESN'T WEAR ANY OTHER TYPE OF PANTIES BESIDES THONGS!
NOW FOR THE OUTFIT...

I CAN'T WALK ON THESE THINGS, ANGELIKI!
SURELY YOU CAN. TRUST ME, SOON YOU'LL BE SO GOOD AT WALKING IN SKY-HIGH HEELS THAT YOU'LL EVEN FORGET WHAT WALKING IN FLATS IS LIKE!

AND YOU LOOK SO SEXY IN THAT MINI SKIRT! DOESN'T IT FEEL AMAZING, GIRL?

OF COURSE, SUCH A PRETTY SKIRT NEEDS TO BE PAIRED WITH A CUTE TOP!

AND THAT TOP DEFINITELY MAKES YOUR NEW GIRLS LOOK IRRESISTIBLE!

OH, DARLING, YOU LOOK SO MUCH BETTER THAN I COULD HAVE ANTICIPATED! JUST LIKE A LIVING, SLUTTY DOLL! WE'LL DEFINITELY HAVE A LOT OF FUN!
SPEAKING OF FUN, GRAB YOUR PURSE AND LET'S GET GOING. I HAVE A SURPRISE THAT WILL MAKE YOU LOOK EVEN PRETTIER!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING TO ME. I LOOK LIKE A FUCKING BIMBO! I'LL MAKE THEM PAY FOR THIS. ALL OF THEM! FOR NOW, THOUGH, I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO PLAY ALONG...

YES, MR. SAMARAS IS ALSO A VERY INTERESTING CHARACTER, MA'AM... A BON VIVANT, ALWAYS SEEN AT EVERY PARTY IN ATHENS, WHETHER HIGH SOCIETY OR NOT, WHO SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED FROM EVERYONE'S SIGHT, ABANDONING HIS SOCIAL LIFE.
AND DO YOU KNOW WHEN THIS HAPPENED, MRS. SAMARAS...?

...EXACTLY WHEN HIS DAUGHTERS WERE BORN. HE ALWAYS SEEMED TO WANT TO HIDE THEM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, EVEN SENDING THEM TO STUDY ABROAD FOR MANY YEARS. ISN'T THAT CURIOUS, MA'AM?

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR POINT IS, MR. ANGELOS.
THAT'S ACTUALLY QUITE SIMPLE, MRS. SAMARAS. YOU OBVIOUSLY KNOW WHO THE BIOLOGICAL MOTHER OF YOUR ADOPTED DAUGHTERS IS, DON'T YOU?

T-THE BIOLOGICAL MOTHER?

OH, IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU DON'T KNOW. WHICH IS KIND OF... SURPRISING. IF YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND YOUR HUSBAND BETTER, I'D START WITH THAT SUBJECT, MRS. SAMARAS.

ONE LAST THING, I'M NOT GOING TO CANCEL THE VOW RENEWAL CEREMONY ARRANGEMENTS. I HAVE A FEELING IT'S STILL GOING TO HAPPEN. IF THAT'S NOT THE CASE, I HAVE NO PROBLEM AT ALL TAKING THE LOSSES.
NOW WHERE ARE MY MANNERS? LET ME GET YOU A HANDKERCHIEF, MA'AM!

Chapter Twenty-Six
All Those Years Ago

THE FOLLOWING DAY...

YOU KNOW WHAT, GIRLS?

I'M DEFINITELY NOT A FAN OF THIS SWIMSUIT.

I FEEL TOO EXPOSED!

DON'T BE SILLY, MOM. YOU LOOK GREAT!

TOTALLY! NOT TO MENTION THAT WE ARE ALL WOMEN HERE, AREN'T WE?

THAT MAY BE TRUE, BUT I STILL THINK...
ACTUALLY, IT'S A SHAME THAT DAD ISN'T AROUND. I'M SURE HE'D LOVE TO SEE HOW YOU LOOK RIGHT NOW!

YOU GIRLS KNOW THAT YOUR FATHER AND I ARE NOT ON GOOD TERMS THESE DAYS. HE'S NOT EVEN IN ATHENS, IS HE? HE DECIDED TO TRAVEL, SUPPOSEDLY FOR WORK.

WE'RE NOT TAKING THIS FIGHT TOO SERIOUSLY. EVERY COUPLE HAS DISAGREEMENTS, RIGHT? IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN LOVE.

THIS IS NOT AS SIMPLE AS YOU GIRLS ARE THINKING, FAR FROM THAT! AND TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND IT ALL, THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO ASK. SOMETHING REAL, OUT OF CHARACTER, AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I SAID WE NEEDED TO COME SOMEWHERE WHERE WE WOULDN'T BE HEARD UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

I'LL GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT.
I THINK IT'S BETTER THIS WAY... EVA, SOFIA...
WHO'S YOUR REAL MOTHER?

MEANWHILE, ON DRY LAND...

HELLO? YES, IT'S ME.

I'VE NOTICED THAT YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING MY CALLS. IS THERE A REASON FOR THIS?

OH, YOU THINK IT'S BEEN A HASSLE TALKING TO ME? HOW SAD! I WONDER IF THIS IS BECAUSE YOU DON'T LIKE BEING REMINDED OF HOW INEPT AND STUPID WE HAVE BEEN? NOTHING IS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN!

WE HAD VERY CLEAR GOALS, MY FRIEND. REVENGE, PURE AND SIMPLE. I WANTED REVENGE ON MR. TOSKA AND YOU ON MR. SAMARAS. BUT LOOK AT US NOW. WE ARE RUINING A LOT OF INNOCENT LIVES...

FIRST, MRS. SAMARAS, WHO WE BOTH KNOW DIDN'T USE TO BE A LADY AT ALL. YOU WERE THE ONE WHO PAID DR. GIANAKOS TO PERFORM SUCH EXTREME PROCEDURES ON HER.
THEN, I WAS FORCED TO SHOOT MY OWN NEPHEW TO PREVENT THIS PLAN FROM FAILING ONCE AND FOR ALL, AND NOW HE'S ALSO PARADING AROUND IN HIGH HEELS, WITH THAT PSYCHO GIRL AS HIS MENTOR. AND I HAVEN'T EVEN MENTIONED WHAT WE DID TO THAT POOR DRIVER!

NO, I'M NOT SAYING I'M GIVING UP. AT LEAST NOT YET. AND I'M ALSO NOT BLAMING YOU FOR EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED, ALTHOUGH YOU MAY HAVE PUSHED EVERYONE A LITTLE TOO HARD. I SEE HOW YOU ARE MANIPULATING EVEN MY SON!

WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT WE NEED TO BE A LOT MORE CAREFUL. I WON'T TOLERATE ANY MORE OF THOSE... MISTAKES. I'M WARNING YOU. WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME, SINCE PRISON, TO BE EXACT. YOU KNOW I'M NOT BLUFFING.

WHAT ARE YOU EVEN TALKING ABOUT?

IT'S OBVIOUS THAT YOU ARE OUR REAL MOM. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT!

WAIT, SOFIA...

I THINK... I THINK SHE'S SERIOUS.

SIGH

AND WHY THIS? WHY NOW?

AFTER EVERYTHING... DON'T YOU THINK I HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW?

YES, YOU DO HAVE THE RIGHT.
BUT THE TRUTH IS...

...WE DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER.

YOU... DON'T KNOW? HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU GIRLS DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR MOTHER IS?

LISTEN...

WE COULDN'T HAVE ASKED FOR A BETTER DAD THAN THE ONE WE HAVE. HE'S ALWAYS BEEN SO CARING AND SUPPORTIVE... AND MADE SURE WE HAD EVERYTHING WE COULD POSSIBLY NEED. NOT JUST MATERIAL GOODS, BUT ALSO LOVE AND RESPECT.

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO TALKING ABOUT OUR MOM, HE'S ALWAYS ACTED... STRANGELY.

WE'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW WHO SHE IS, OF COURSE. BUT WHENEVER WE ASKED DAD ABOUT IT, HE WOULD STAY SILENT FOR DAYS, BARELY LEAVING HIS ROOM. IT WAS SIMPLY IMPOSSIBLE TO GET AN ANSWER FROM HIM.
ON THE FEW OCCASIONS HE DID SPEAK, HE GAVE US VAGUE AND CONTRADICTORY ANSWERS. SOMETIMES, HE'D SAY MOM WAS A BAD PERSON WHO HAD RAN AWAY AND ABANDONED THE FAMILY WHEN WE WERE STILL BABIES. LATER, HE'D COME UP WITH SOMETHING LIKE SHE HAD ALREADY PASSED AWAY, BUT HE NEVER GAVE DETAILS ABOUT HOW IT HAPPENED.
AFTER SUCH EPISODES, HE'D ALWAYS SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN SECLUSION, DRINKING DAY AND NIGHT, SO WE STARTED TO AVOID THE SUBJECT. ONE TIME, WE DECIDED TO DO SOME RESEARCH ON HIS PAST, TRYING TO FIND GUISEPPE, WHO WAS SUPPOSEDLY HIS BEST FRIEND IN HIS YOUTH, BUT WE'RE UNSUCCESSFUL. WHEN DAD FOUND OUT, HE GOT PRETTY MAD. WE HAD NEVER SEEN HIM SO FURIOUS.

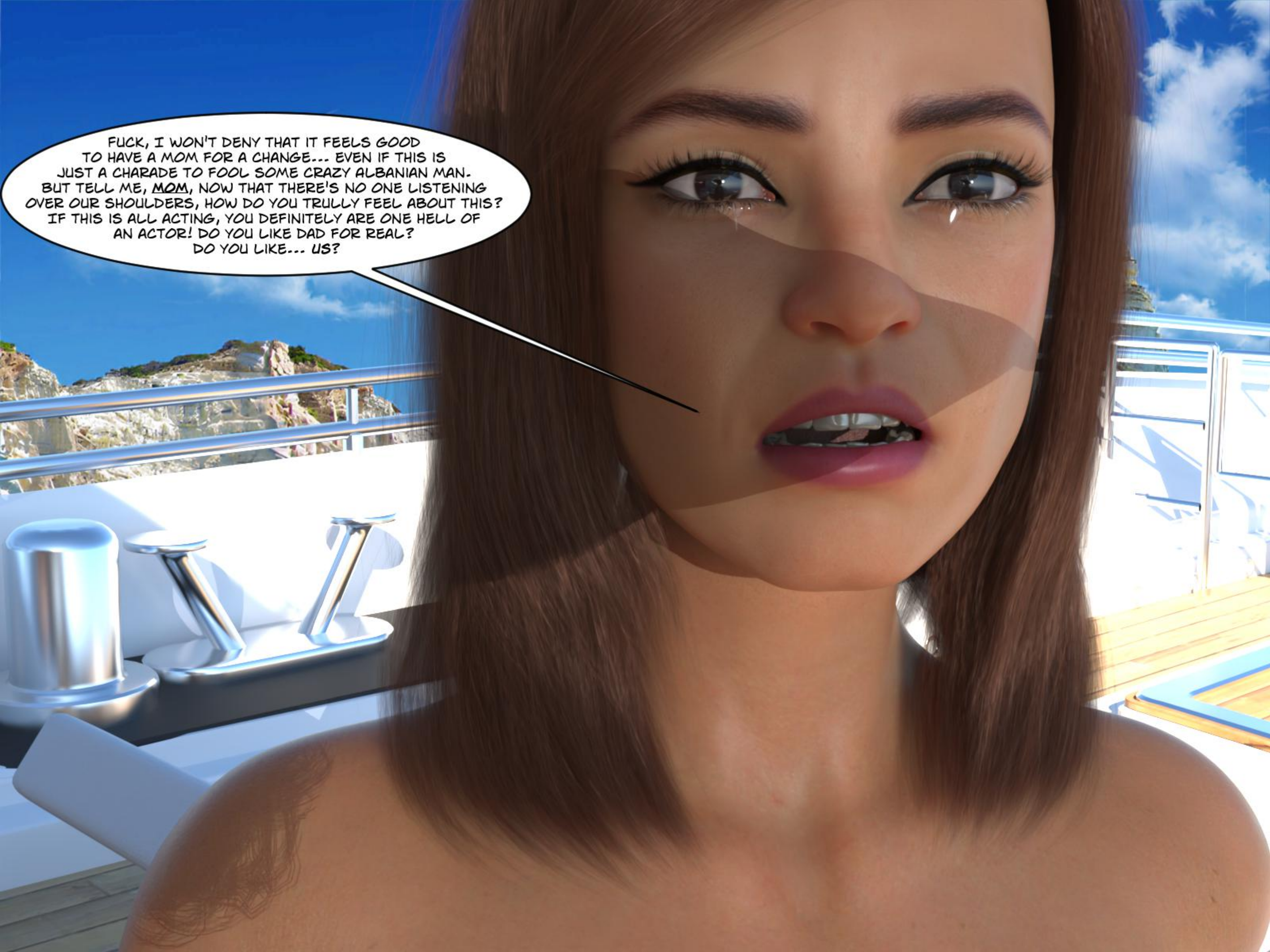
I'M SORRY, EVA. I... I HAD NO IDEA.

WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY NOW!

EVA IS CRYING FOR NOTHING! WHAT DID YOU GAIN FROM THIS?

IT'S LIKE I SAID. SHE HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW. SHE'S BEEN LIVING AS OUR MOM, INSIDE OUR HOUSE, AND THINGS HAVE GOTTEN OUT OF HAND...

OUT OF CONTROL INDEED...


FUCK, I WON'T DENY THAT IT FEELS GOOD TO HAVE A MOM FOR A CHANGE... EVEN IF THIS IS JUST A CHARADE TO FOOL SOME CRAZY ALBANIAN MAN. BUT TELL ME, MOM, NOW THAT THERE'S NO ONE LISTENING OVER OUR SHOULDERS, HOW DO YOU TRULLY FEEL ABOUT THIS? IF THIS IS ALL ACTING, YOU DEFINITELY ARE ONE HELL OF AN ACTOR! DO YOU LIKE DAD FOR REAL? DO YOU LIKE... US?

OH GOSH, IS SHE REALLY ASKING WHAT I THINK SHE IS?

THIS IS INSANE... HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT EVA AND SOFIA ACTUALLY SEE ME AS THEIR MOTHER? DOES THIS MAKE ANY SENSE?

I CAN'T DENY THAT WE'VE GROWN MUCH CLOSER IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS. WITH NIKOS OUT OF TOWN AND MARINA GONE, EVA AND SOFIA HAVE BEEN MY ONLY COMPANIONS, BESIDES DIMITRA AND THE OTHER LADIES AT THE SOCIAL EVENTS I'VE BEEN FORCED TO ATTEND.
YES, I'VE BEEN SPENDING A LOT OF TIME WITH MY SO-CALLED DAUGHTERS, AND IT'S BEEN... PLEASANT? WE'VE TALKED A LOT, AND THEY'VE EVEN ASKED MY ADVICE ABOUT DECISIONS THEY INTEND TO MAKE.

I DO LIKE THEM. I REALLY DO. AND I TRULY WANT THE BEST FOR THEM. BUT WHAT ARE THEY EXPECTING FROM ME... AM I CAPABLE OF DOING SO? MARINA DIDN'T HOLD BACK ON TELLING ME HOW BAD SHE THINKS I AM TO THE PEOPLE AROUND ME...

HOW COULD YOU DO THIS? HOW COULD YOU PLAY WITH PEOPLE'S FEELINGS LIKE THAT? I REALLY THOUGHT I COULD TRUST YOU, ANDREW. EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING...
EVEN AFTER YOU BETRAYED MY TRUST AND GAVE ALL OUR MONEY TO THAT SCAMMER! HOW COULD I BE SO STUPID!

LISTEN, MARINA, ABOUT MR. ORLOV, I HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT HE INTENDED TO SCAM ME AND RUN AWAY WITH THE MONEY. HE HAD ONCE BEEN A RESPECTED DIRECTOR. YES, I WAS AN IDIOT, NOT ONLY FOR TRUSTING HIM BLINDLY, BUT ALSO FOR NOT CONSULTING YOU BEFORE MAKING THE DECISION.
HOWEVER, I'VE ALREADY APOLOGIZED A THOUSAND TIMES FOR WHAT HAPPENED, AND YOU FORGAVE ME. IT'S NOT FAIR FOR YOU TO KEEP THROWING THIS IN MY FACE OVER AND OVER AGAIN. WHAT DO YOU WANT? FOR ME TO FEEL EVEN MORE GUILTY? I ALREADY FEEL LIKE GARBAGE EVERY TIME I REMEMBER ALL THIS. I TOLD YOU, I'LL PAY YOU BACK SOMEDAY.

THIS IS NOT ABOUT THE MONEY! I COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT THE MONEY EVEN THOUGH IT WAS EVERYTHING I MANAGED TO SAVE IN MY ENTIRE LIFE! THE ISSUE IS HOW YOU BETRAYED MY TRUST.
EVERYONE TOLD ME TO STAY AWAY FROM YOU, THAT YOU WERE UNTRUSTWORTHY... BUT HOW COULD I DO THAT? I USED TO LOVE YOU SO MUCH... AND I TRULY BELIEVED THAT YOU COULD CHANGE. I WAS SURE YOU WERE ACTING LIKE A JERK BECAUSE OF ORLOV'S INFLUENCE AND THAT YOU COULD GO BACK TO BEING THE PERSON I HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH.

SO I DECIDED TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER CHANCE. AND HOW DID YOU THANK ME? YOU TOLD MY UNCLE THAT OUR MARRIAGE WAS A FAKE ONE AND SLEEP WITH HIM! WITH MY FUCKING UNCLE!
YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YOU? HOW COULD SOMEONE AS SELFISH AS YOU UNDERSTAND? YOU NOT ONLY DESTROYED OUR MARRIAGE BUT ALSO MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY FAMILY! HOW CAN I LOOK AT MY UNCLE AND COUSINS THE SAME WAY AFTER WHAT HAPPENED?

MARINA, I...
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY EXCUSES. NO MATTER THE SITUATION, NO MATTER WHO YOU WERE PRETENDING TO BE, YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO CHEAT ON ME WITH MY OWN UNCLE! YOU'RE NOT CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING BONDS WITH PEOPLE. THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE! THAT'S WHY I WAS THE ONLY PERSON STILL BY YOUR SIDE!

MARINA MIGHT THINK I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO HAVE ANYONE CLOSE TO ME...

BUT EVA AND SOFIA... THEY'RE EVEN WILLING TO ACCEPT ME AS THEIR MOTHER!

WAIT, ARE YOU CRYING TOO?

WE'VE BECOME A BUNCH OF CRYBABIES!

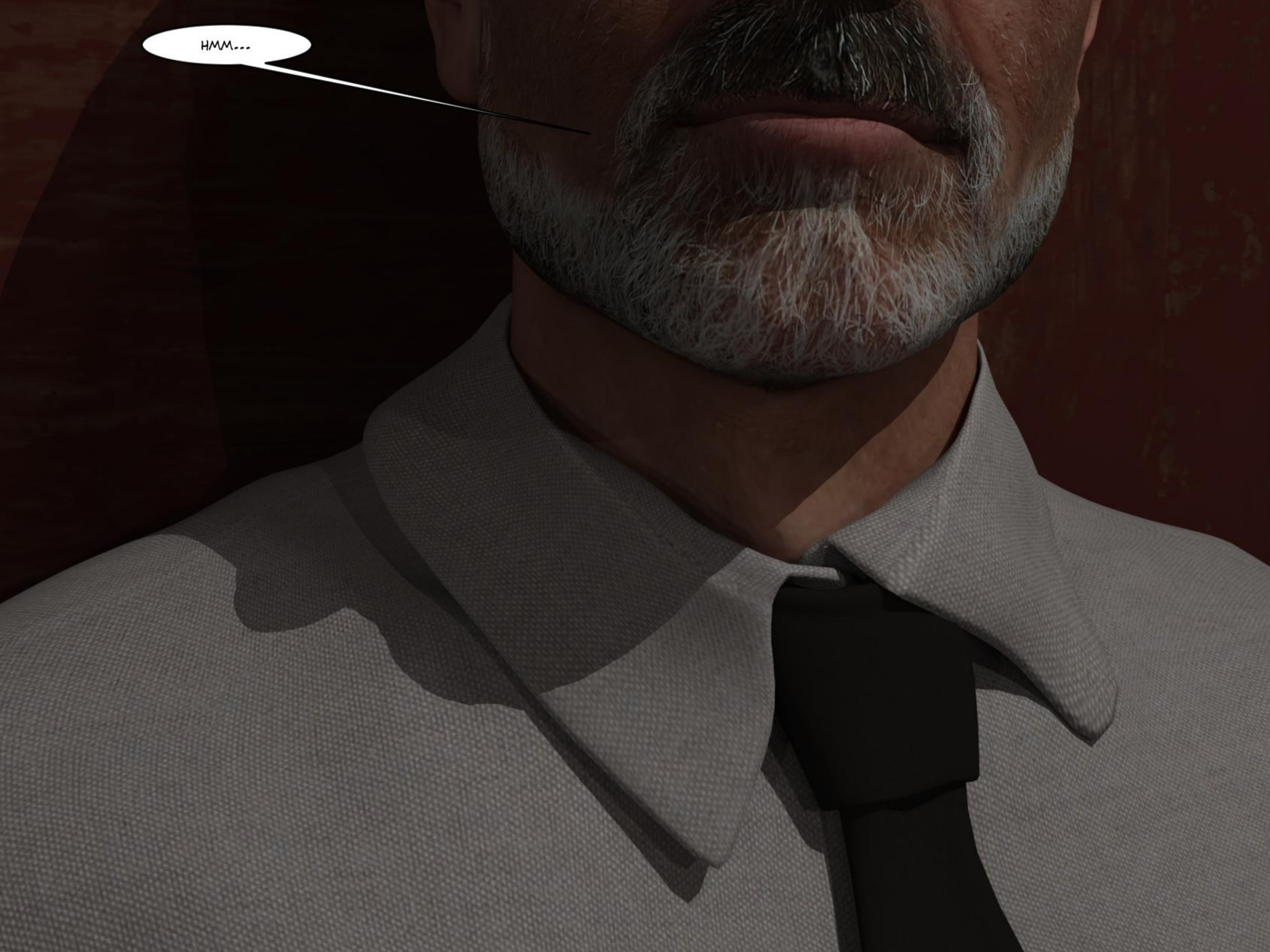
OF COURSE I LIKE YOU GIRLS...
AND YOUR FATHER, TOO... IT'S LIKE SOFIA SAID,
NO ONE CAN FAKE IT THAT WELL FOR THAT LONG.
BUT THE THING IS...

I THINK YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR MOTHER. WHAT NIKOS HAS DONE TO YOU TWO IS NOT FAIR.

NOW YOU'RE TALKING LIKE A CARING, PROTECTIVE MOM.
YEAH, AND I DON'T THINK WE NEED ANOTHER ONE.

MEANWHILE, IN A SUSPICIOUS PLACE...
FOR MAKING US
YOUR HOME AWAY
FROM HOME
ATTENTION
DUDE BARLOVERS

ONLY
NOTE TO SELF
CAN YOU GUESS


HMM...

YOU'RE EARLY, INSPECTOR KARRAS.

EXCUSE ME. DO I KNOW YOU, MISS?

WHAT? I'M GONE FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS AND YOU CAN'T RECOGNIZE ME ANYMORE?
Join the Dive Bar Charity Bike Ride and Support Local Charities.
Dusty Memories and Untold Tales Revealed as Renovations Begin
OUTLAWS!
JUKEBOX
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420
OPA
44
101
35

YOUR VOICE... I KNOW YOUR VOICE! BUT THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE... IS IT REALLY YOU?!