ALEZIA

The 26 Tyrants

2

Zeja Pyle

ALEZIA: The 26 Tyrants

Zeja Pyle

VirZ
PRODUCTIONS

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PRODUCTIONS

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(...What happened to this project? They changed everything! Again!)

--- Roland, Can you tell me if the presentation for the Kelcron project will be ready for tomorrow afternoon?

(Damn! I had completely forgotten that! How is this possible? ...Shit!)
- Uh... Yes... Yes, it will be ready tomorrow, before the lunch.

--- Good! Have a good evening!
- (Almost 5h pm! Time to leave...)

(Strange! I was pretty sure that there were only three floors to that building...)

(Home sweet home!)

(I really need a long weekend...)

(...But what day is it today?)

(It's crazy, I can't remember ... where the hell did I put my phone?)

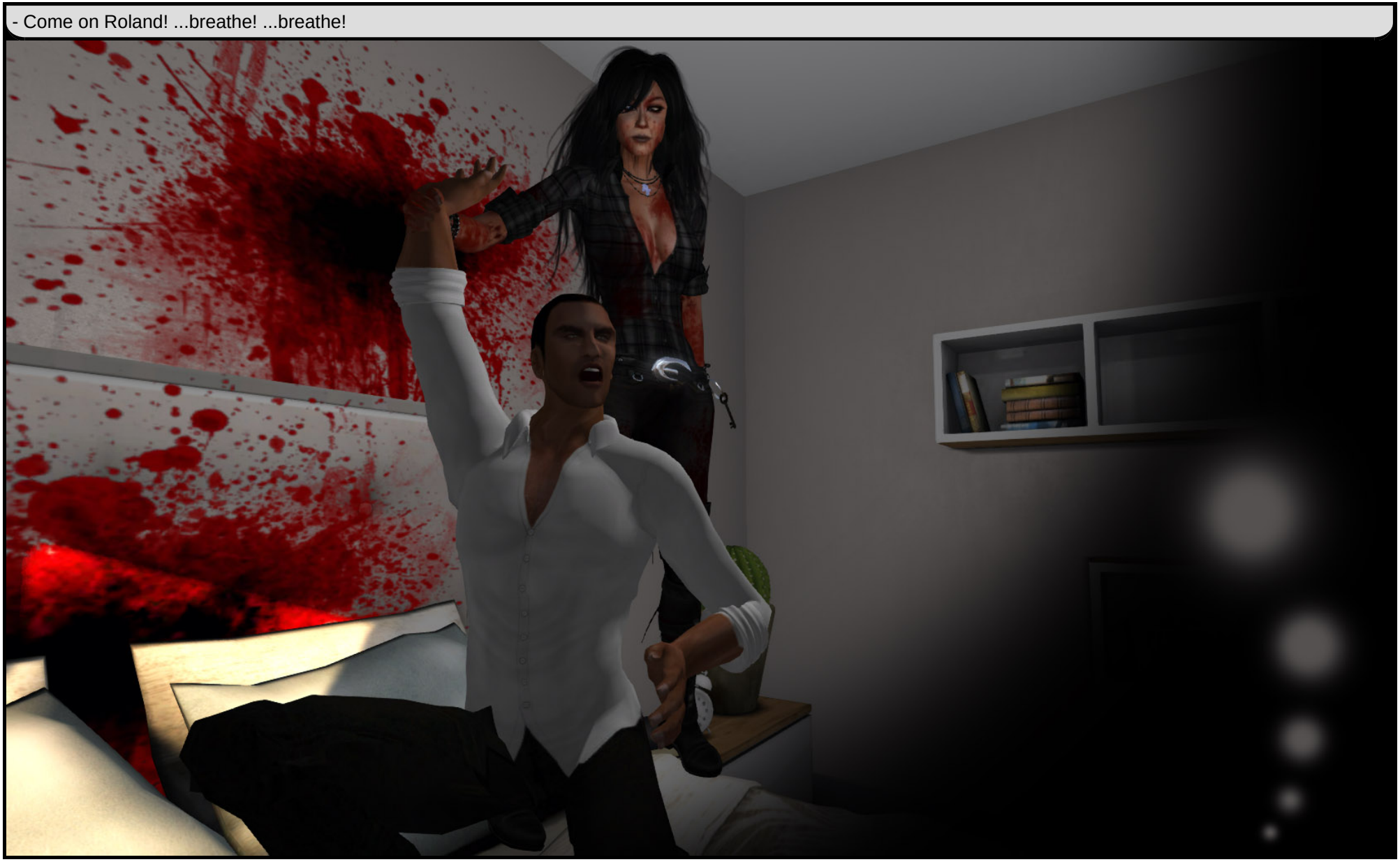
(?!?!?)

(Damn! A woman in my bed!)

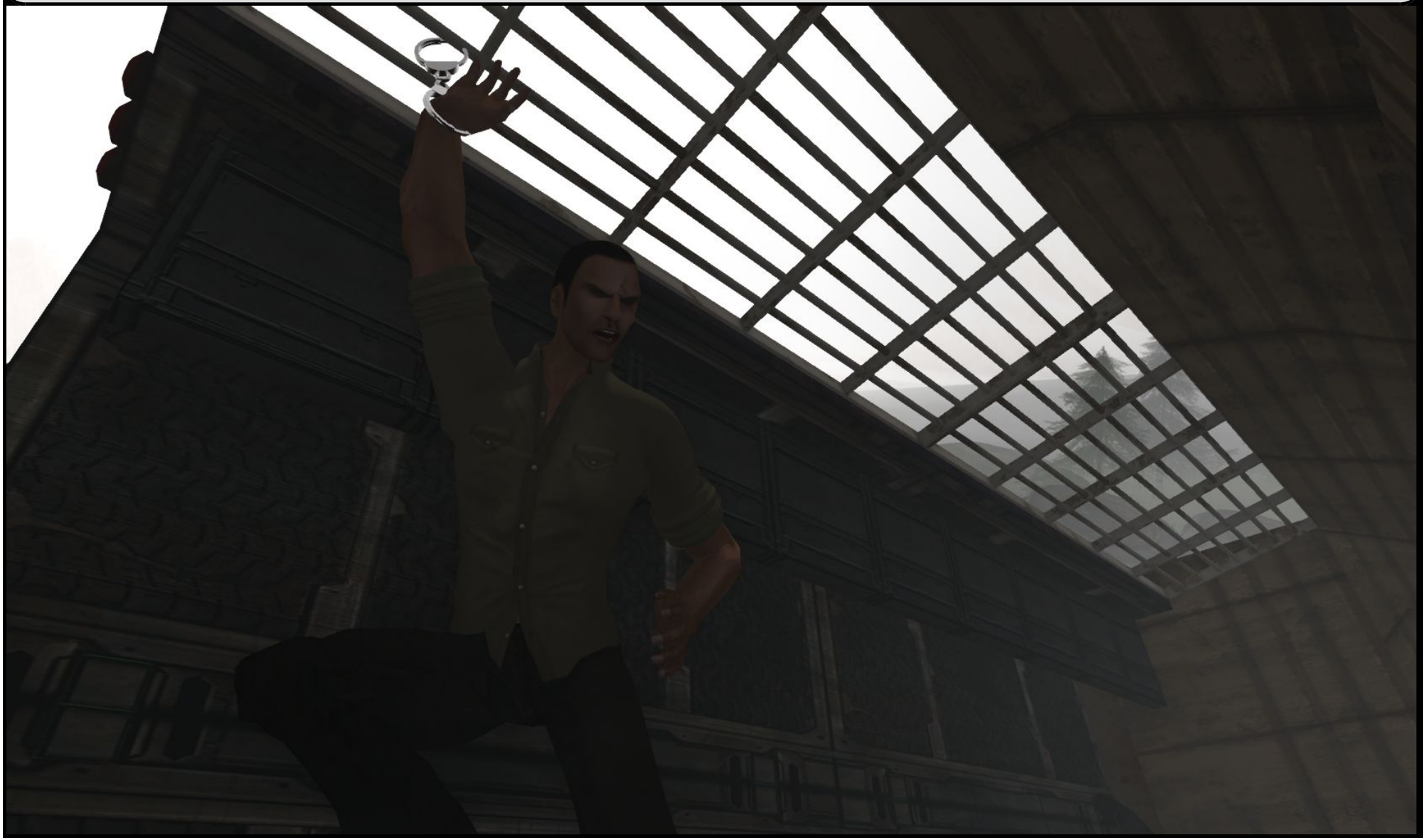
(But... who is this...)

(No... It can't be her...)

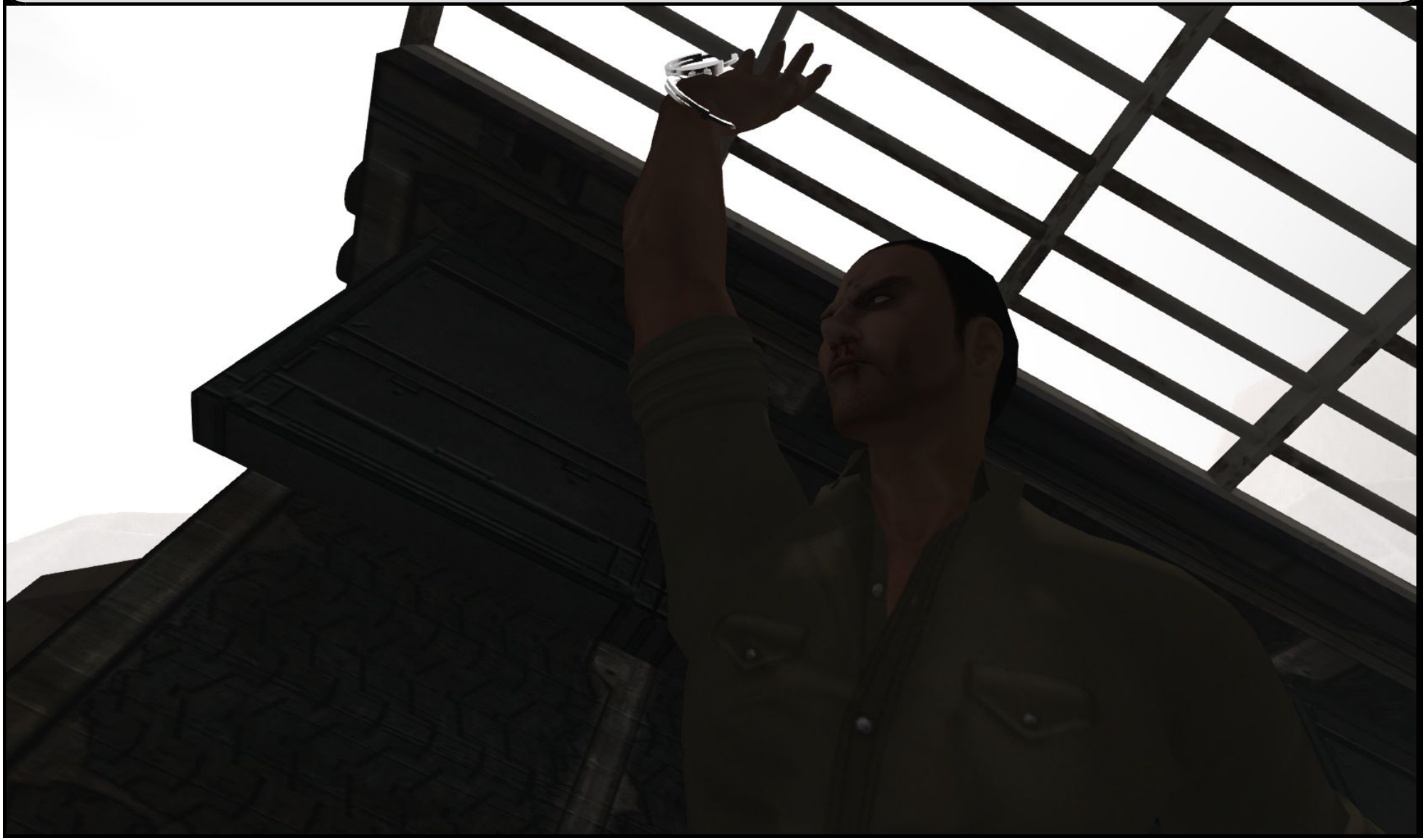
- Come on Roland! ...breathe! ...breathe!



(...Holy crap! What happened?...)



(...Chained?! ...Ah, yes! ...The truck... Did we overturn? Geez! The temperature has dropped. But where is the desert?)



-- Ouch! Shit! Arrggh!

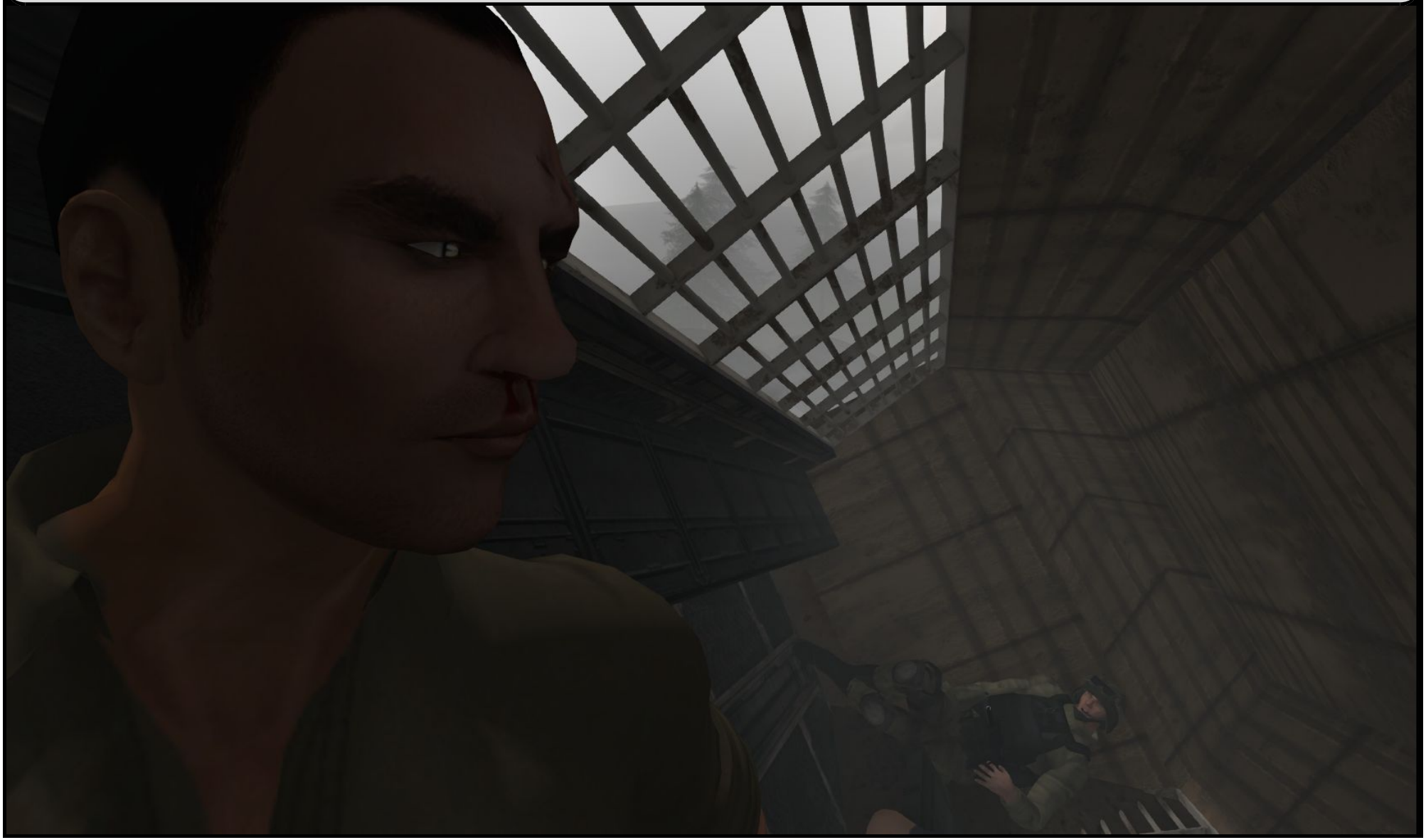
- Are you hurt?

- I think so... My leg, it hurts... I can't feel my foot.

- Can you move it?
-- I think it's broken.

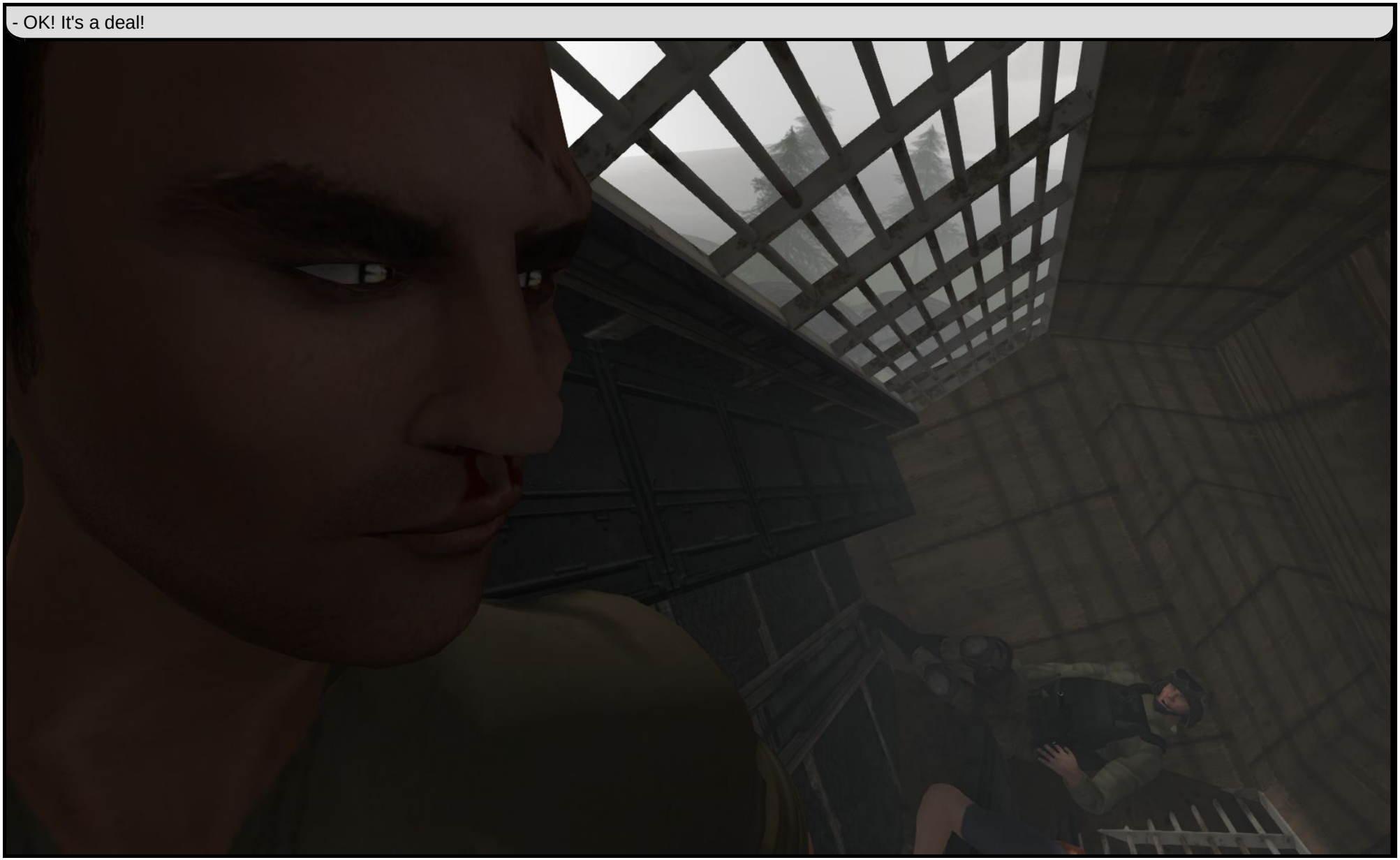
--- Can you see if he's still alive?
- For sure, he still breathes.

- Look... Give me the key, and I will get us out of here.



- Yeah right...
--- But nobody here wants to die in that truck!

- Alright!... But one bad move and you're a dead man!

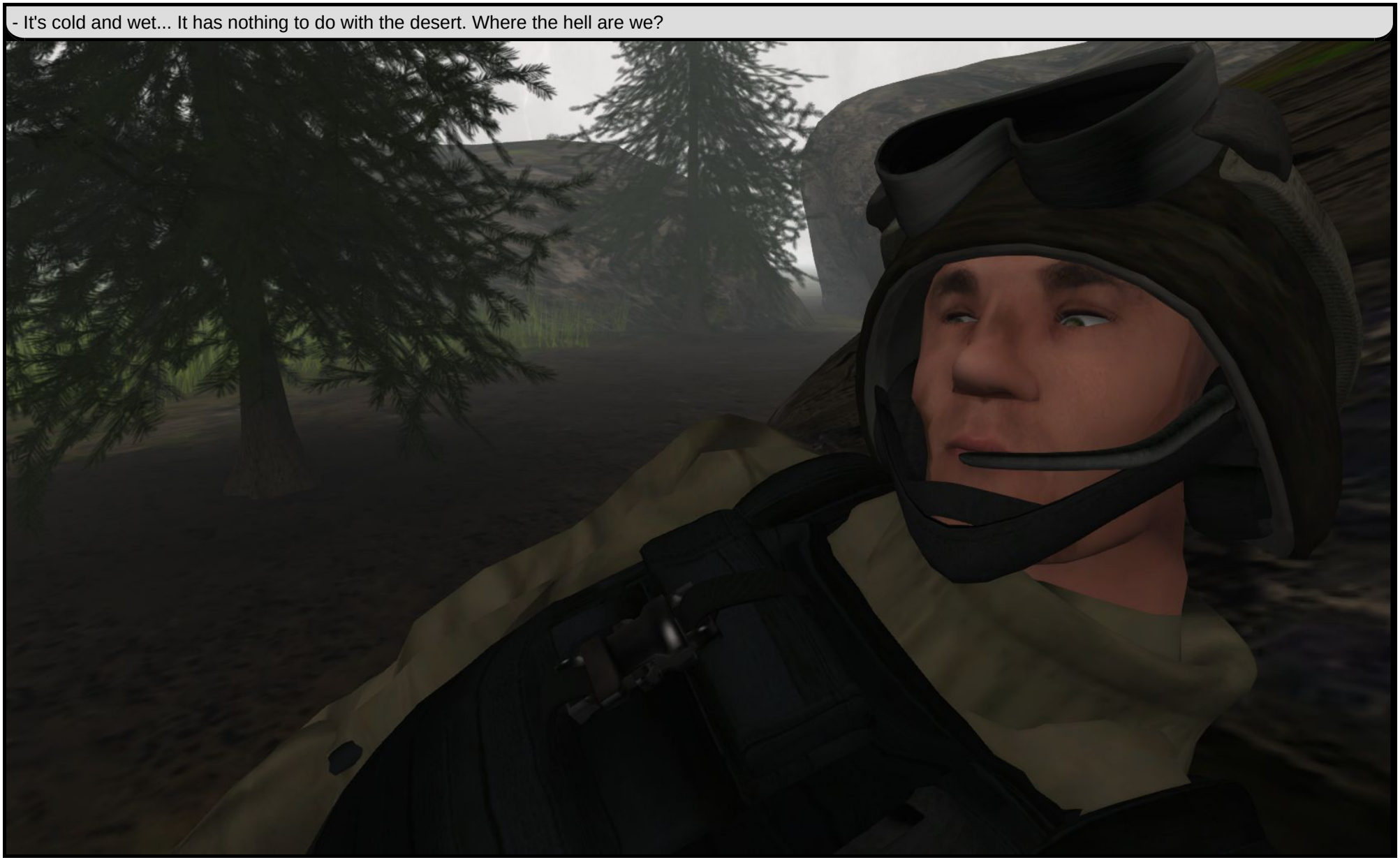

- OK! It's a deal!

A few minutes later...

--- He's still alive. I hope he will survive.
- What happened to us?

- There is not a fucking tree before at least 300 miles from Bashora... I remember a big flash... Did I miss something?

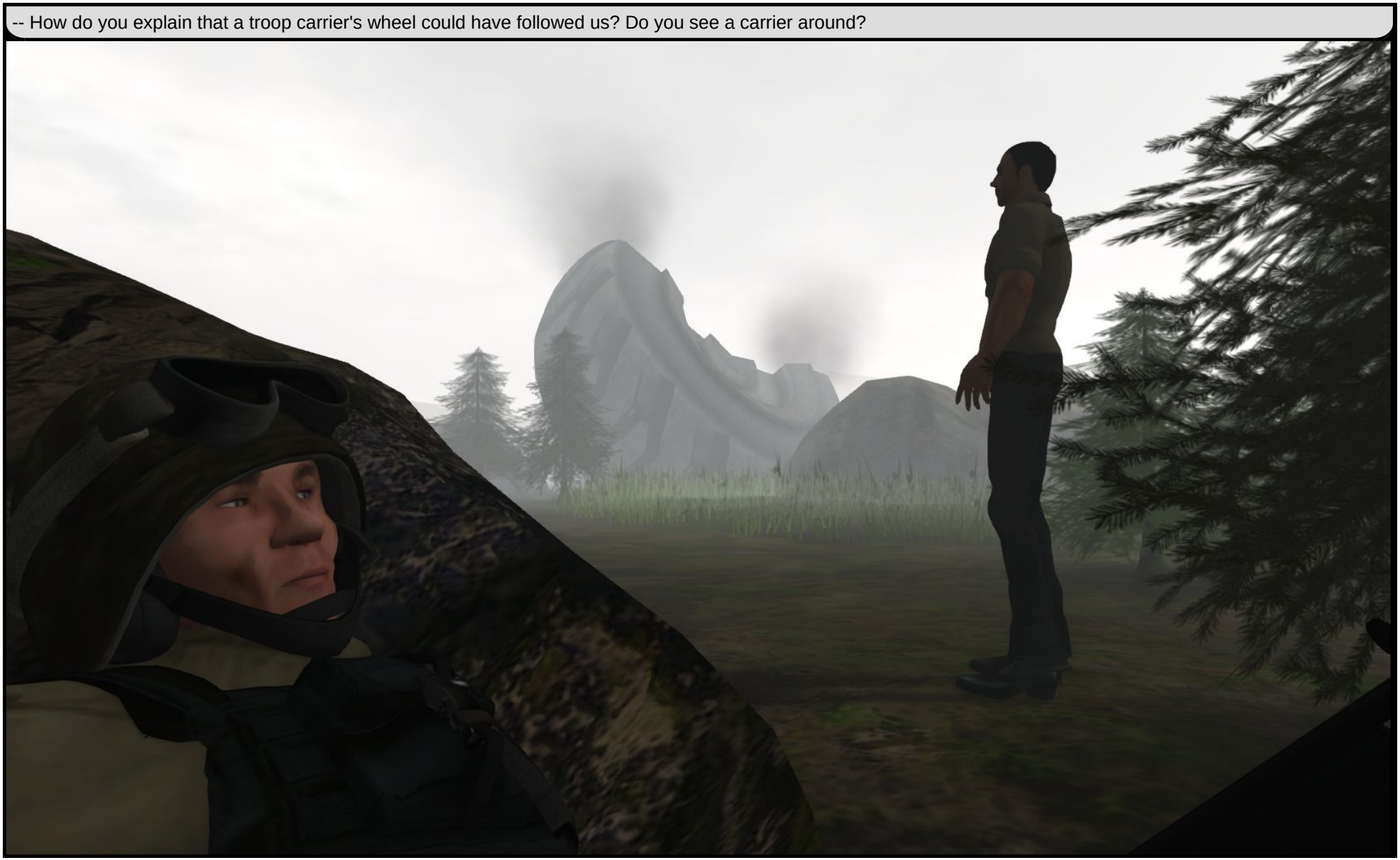
- You didn't miss anything... I have the same memories... A big flash and then I woke up here, still chained to the truck.


- It's cold and wet... It has nothing to do with the desert. Where the hell are we?

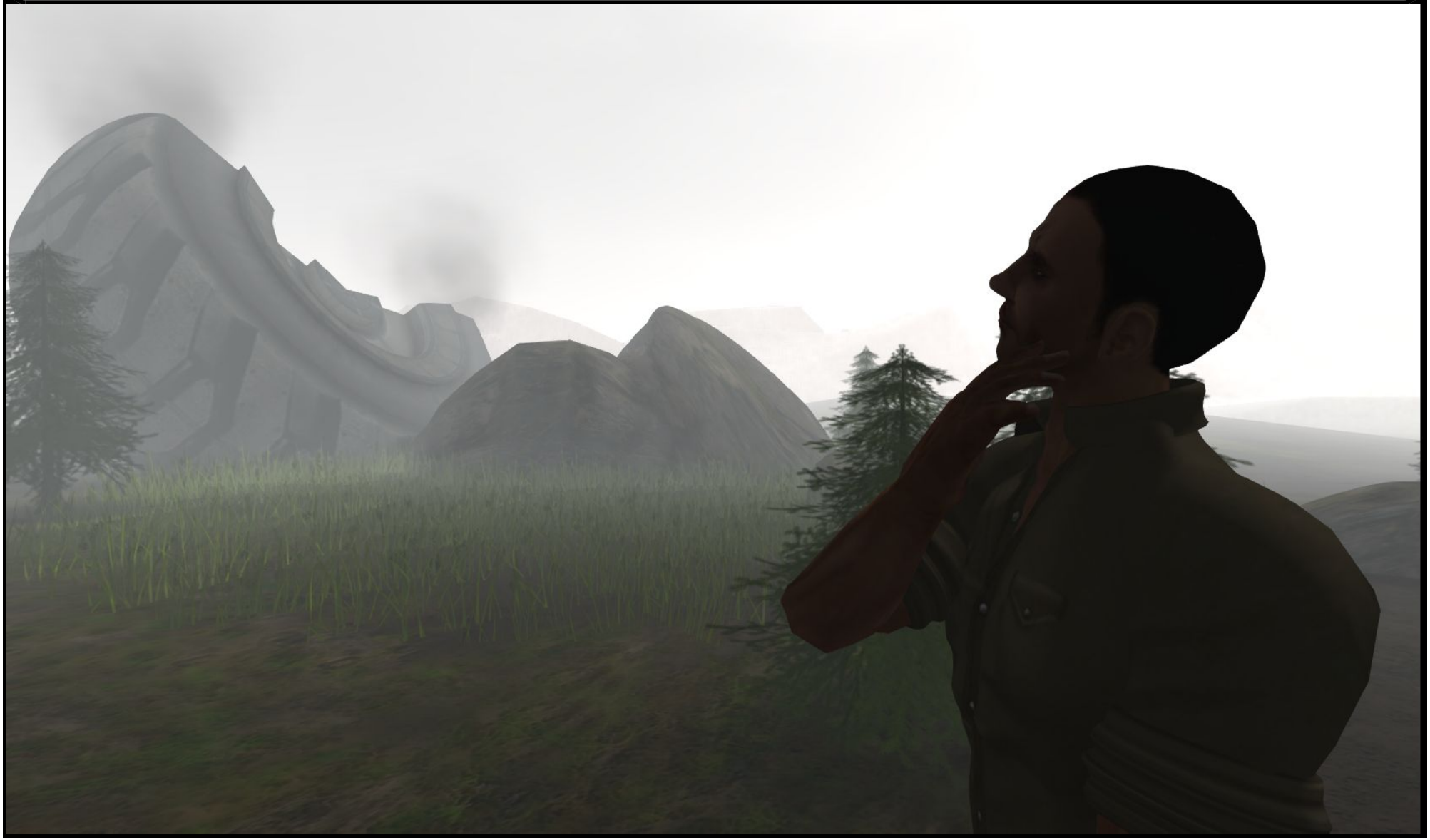
-- I'm afraid that we are still in the desert, but that it changed faster than us.

--- What are you saying? It doesn't make sense!

- I know, it's hard to believe. But this happened to me once.
--- Pfff!

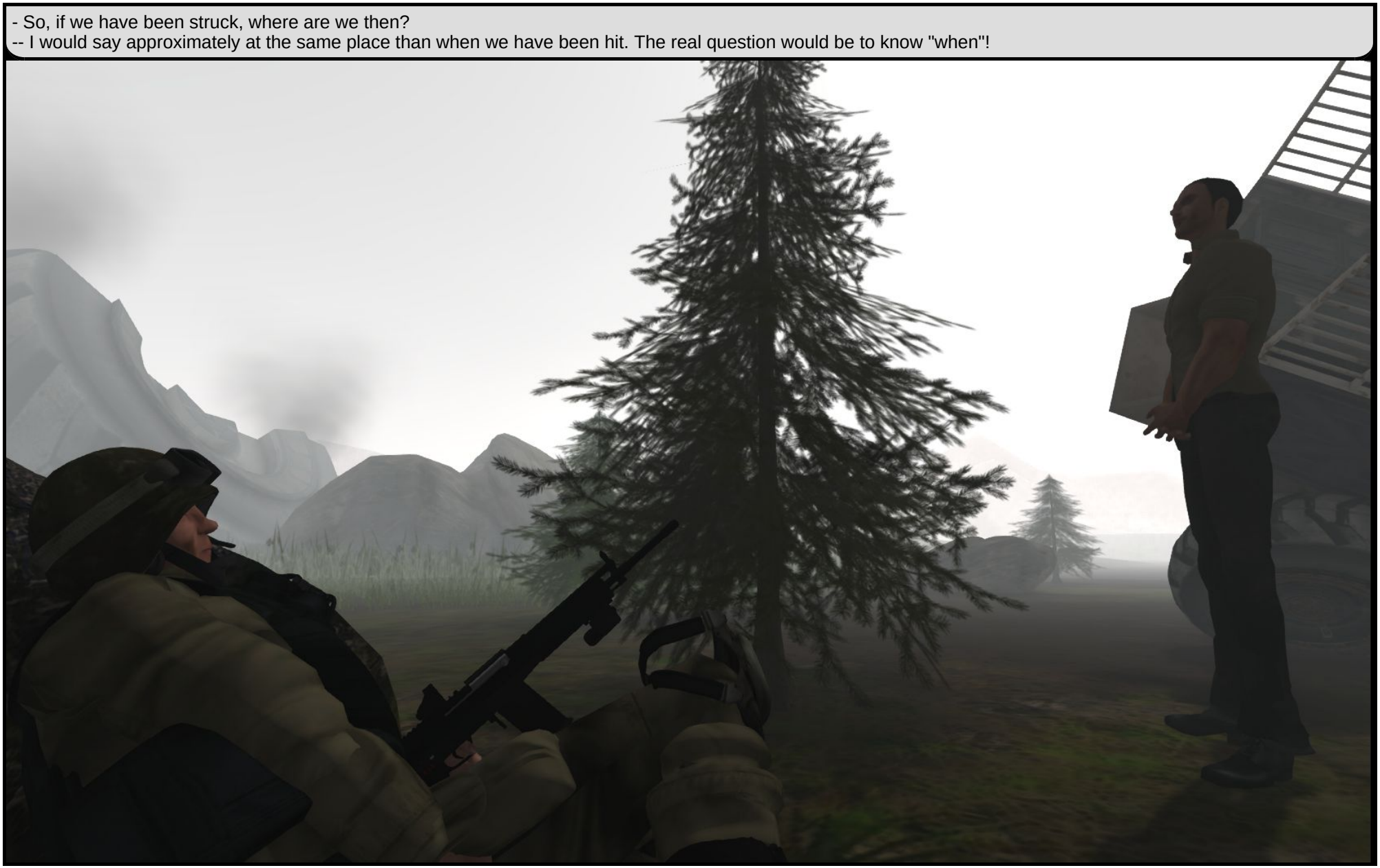

-- How do you explain that a troop carrier's wheel could have followed us? Do you see a carrier around?

- We have been struck by an eruption of the Taalus. That's what happened!



- But we wasn't into the Shade zone!

- I know! Maybe something turned bad! (...Or maybe someone did something...)


- So, if we have been struck, where are we then?
-- I would say approximately at the same place than when we have been hit. The real question would be to know "when"!

-- Pfff! It's anything!
- These are the same mountains, the same landscape!

-- I give you that! I have that impression too.
- Come on! Let's see this leg...

- Do you know that I received order to kill you if you cause me problems during the transfer to Garkitak?
-- Yes... And I also saw how you eliminate us without any form of trial.

-- These are the orders!
- Well, it's quite possible that they worth nothing here anymore. So let me check this foot. We better to be ready to walk.

-- With a broken ankle and this one in the coma? I can't wait!
- However, we will have to find a way!

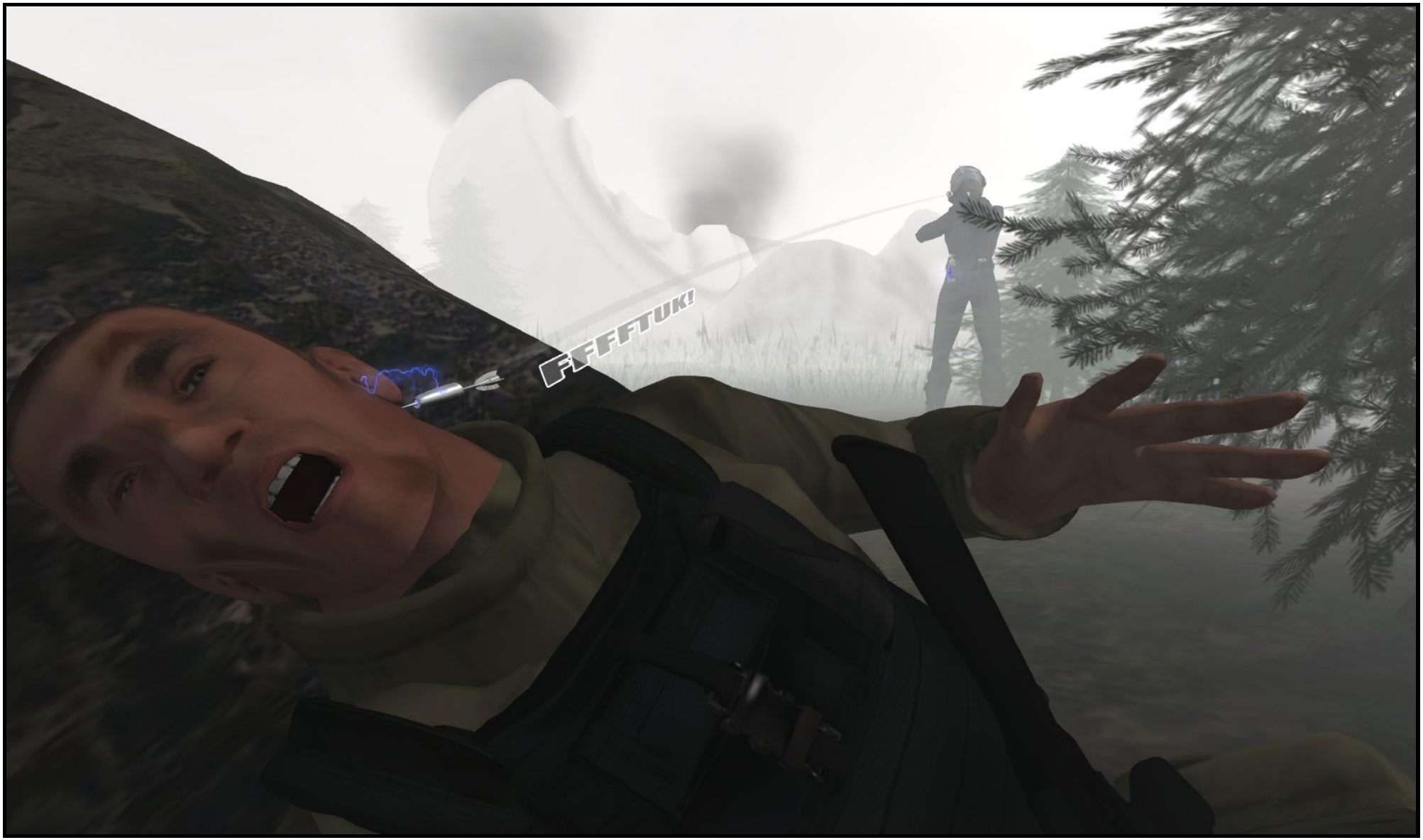
- Shhh!
-- ?!?!

- "Looks like someone coming..."

- "Move aside!"

- Stop moving! Or you're dead!

- "Maybe you shouldn't..."


FFFFTUK!

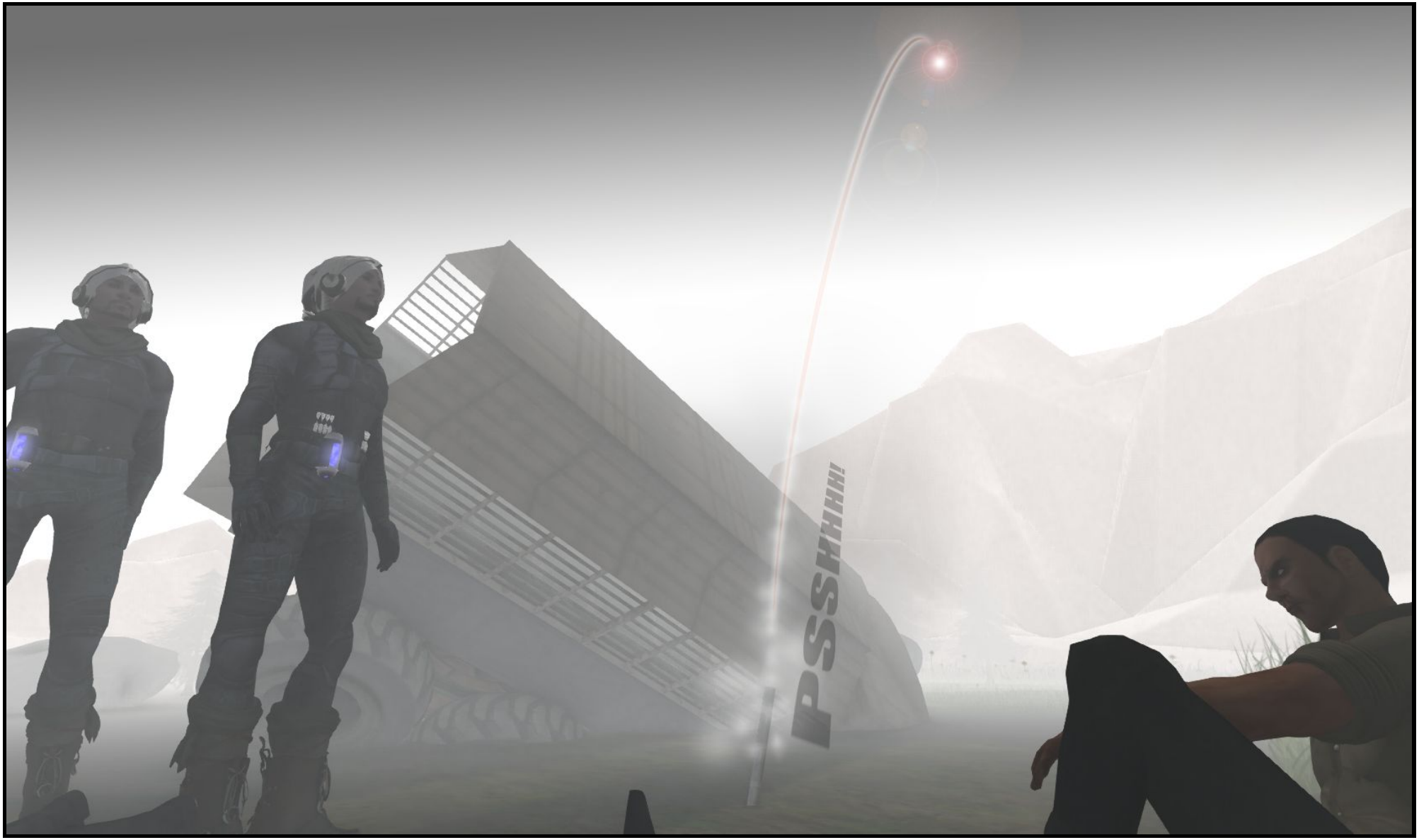
--- Don't shoot!

- Easy! Easy! I'm not armed!

- Who are you?

--- Not armed, huh?
-- Well...

- Shut up!


PSSHHH!

15 minutes later...

------ Come on! Kneel! In line with the others!

----- Obey and you won't be harmed!

- "Have you seen any of us?"
--- "No... You are the first that we've seen."

- "What happened to your arm?"
-- "I'd like to know, I regained consciousness like that. Do you know where we are? And who are those guys?"

-- Shut up!
SWIZZZ!

Shortly after...

- Here are the ones that we found in the perimeter.

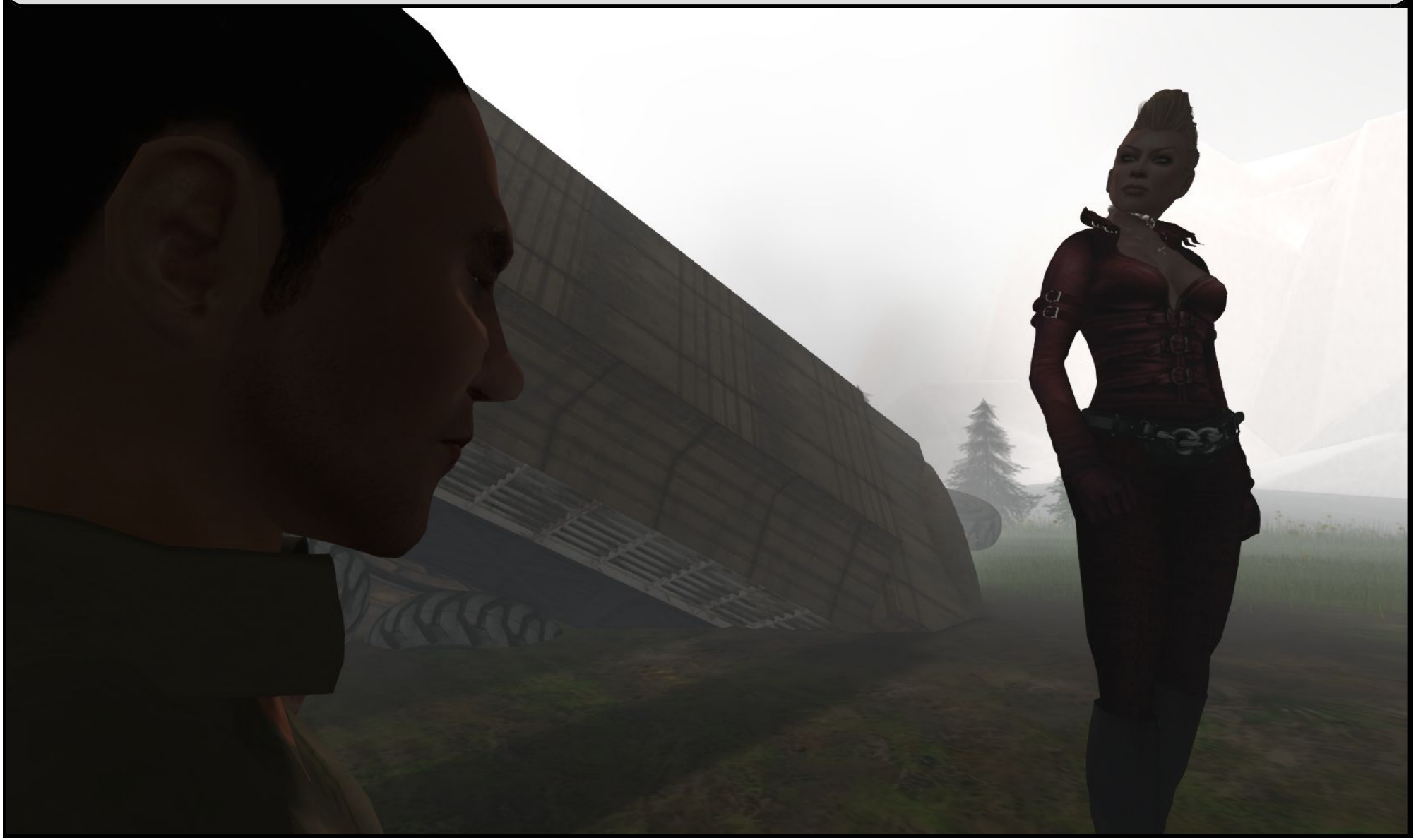
-- Good! So let's proceed.

---- You! Rank and number?
- EVG33455 Ma'am!
---- Hmm... I see.

- Where are you from Soldier?
--- I'm from Terrelern.
- Nice.

- Rank and number?

- I don't have any number, I'm not a soldier!
-- Oh!... This is a very interesting accent!



- Is he dead?
--- For sure, he's unconscious. I can't tell if he'll wake up.

- Then you will take care of him until he wakes up or dies.

- Garj! Take those two with you... Ruma! Take care of the three soldiers!

- You! Stand up! Take and carry him!

((... If you are considering to wake you up, now could be a very good timing!...))

---- Could you at least tell us who you are?

(Shit!)

BWIZZZT !

(Damn! Another world filled of raving mad!...)

25 minutes later...

--- Hey! Are we still very far?

- Why? Would you have preferred to stay with the others?

(((Yeah, right! Too welcoming, once again...)))

(But what is that noise again?)
--- Stay visible. It would be better!

DVVVVVZZZZZ !!!
DVVVVVZZZZZ !!!

- This is too much for me!

- Get up!
--- Yeah! Yeah! Can I at least catch my breath?

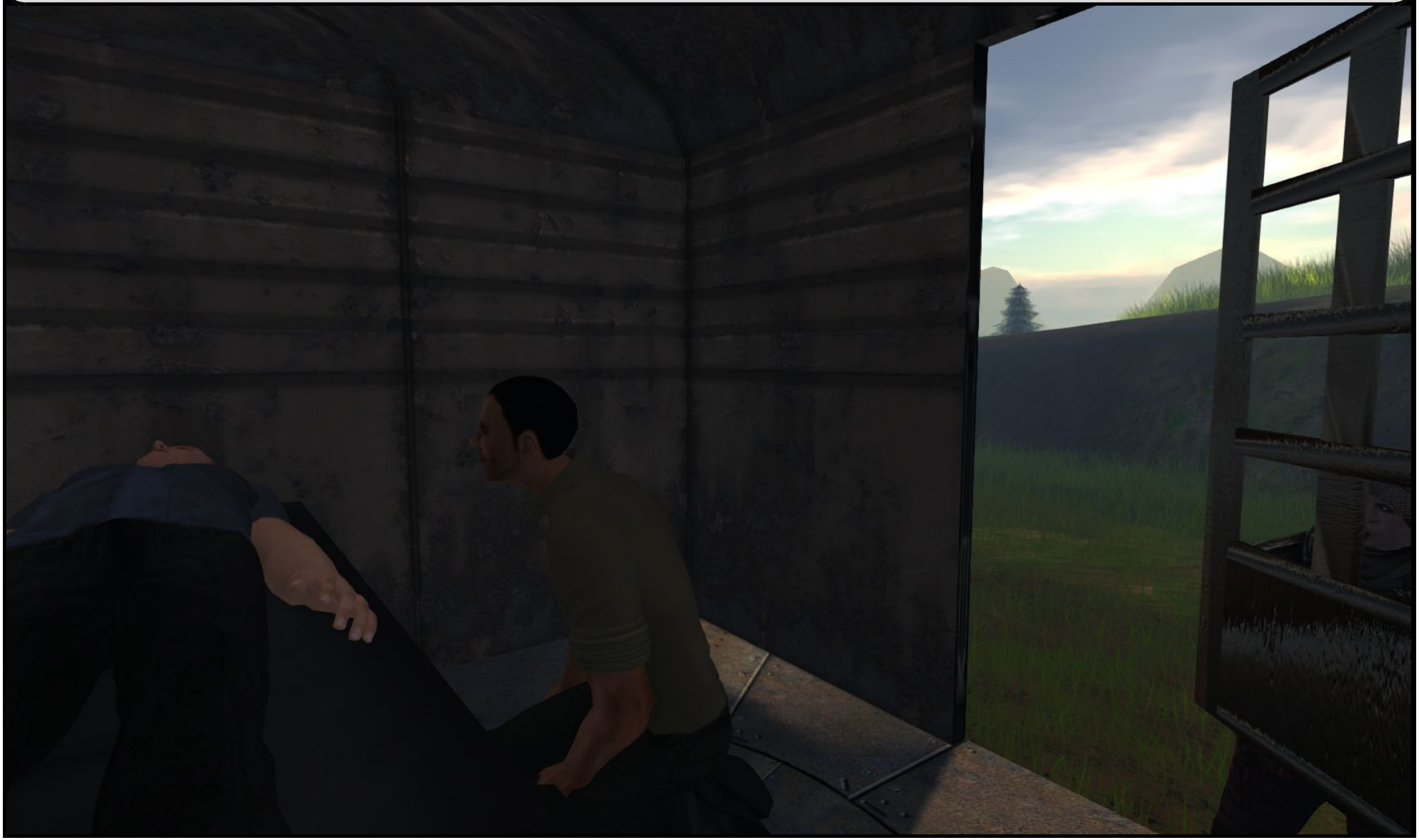
- Come on! Just a little effort, we're almost there!

DVVVZZZ !!!

--- Come here!

--- Get in!

((At least, I won't need to carry him!))



-- Where are you taking us?
----- Take care of your companion instead of asking questions!

Soon after...

(What are those strange people? And this age? At least, there is a bit of vegetation. It's already better than the desert!)

(I would never think that everything could change so quickly, in just four days! At least, I'm still alive...)

(And him? He seemed even more lost than me. The eruption has maybe destroyed his brain...)

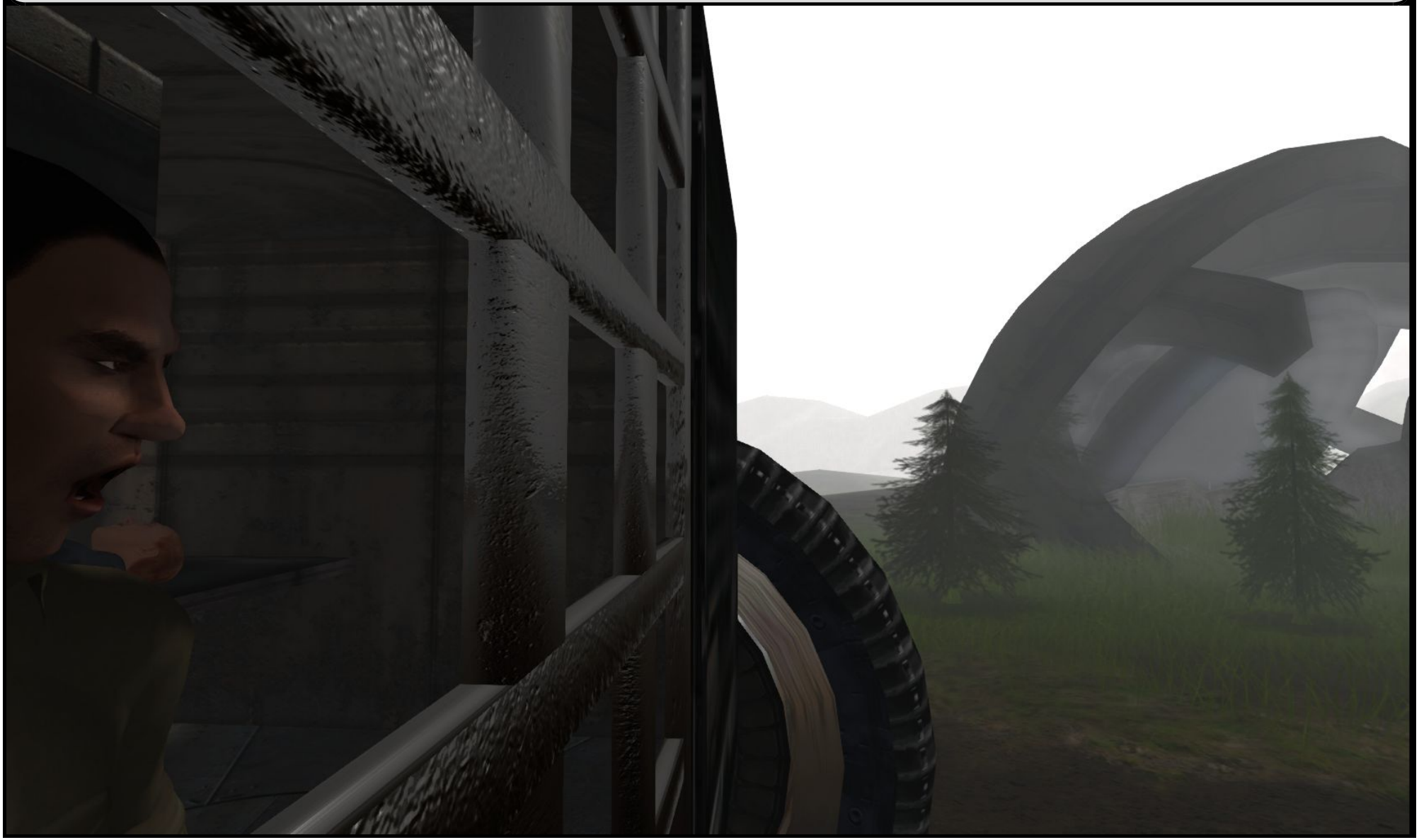
(...This sudden fog, it's very weird!)

- Mmm hmm...
((?!))

- Hey! Do you hear me? Come on! Wake up!

(It's no use... False alarm!)

- Damn! But it is...



(... The Taalus! So it has been destroyed, and the planet has survived. Hern would have dared to do it!?)

Later...

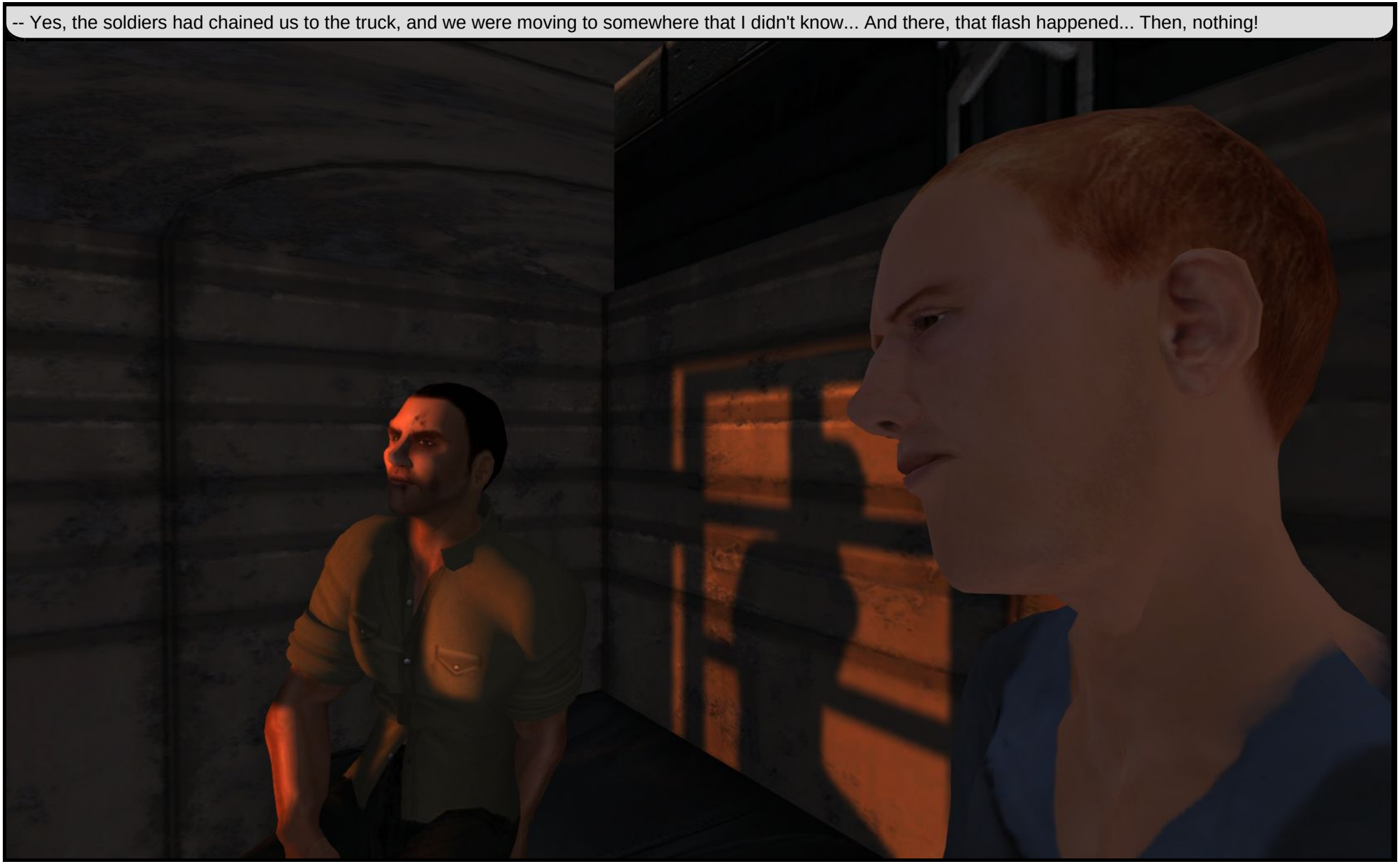
- Uh?!

-- But... Where are we?

- Ah! You're finally awake! I had lost hope to see that happens! Are you fine?
-- A little dizzy, but I'm fine.

- Do you remember me?
-- Yes... In that strange truck with the soldiers. And this desert... What happened?

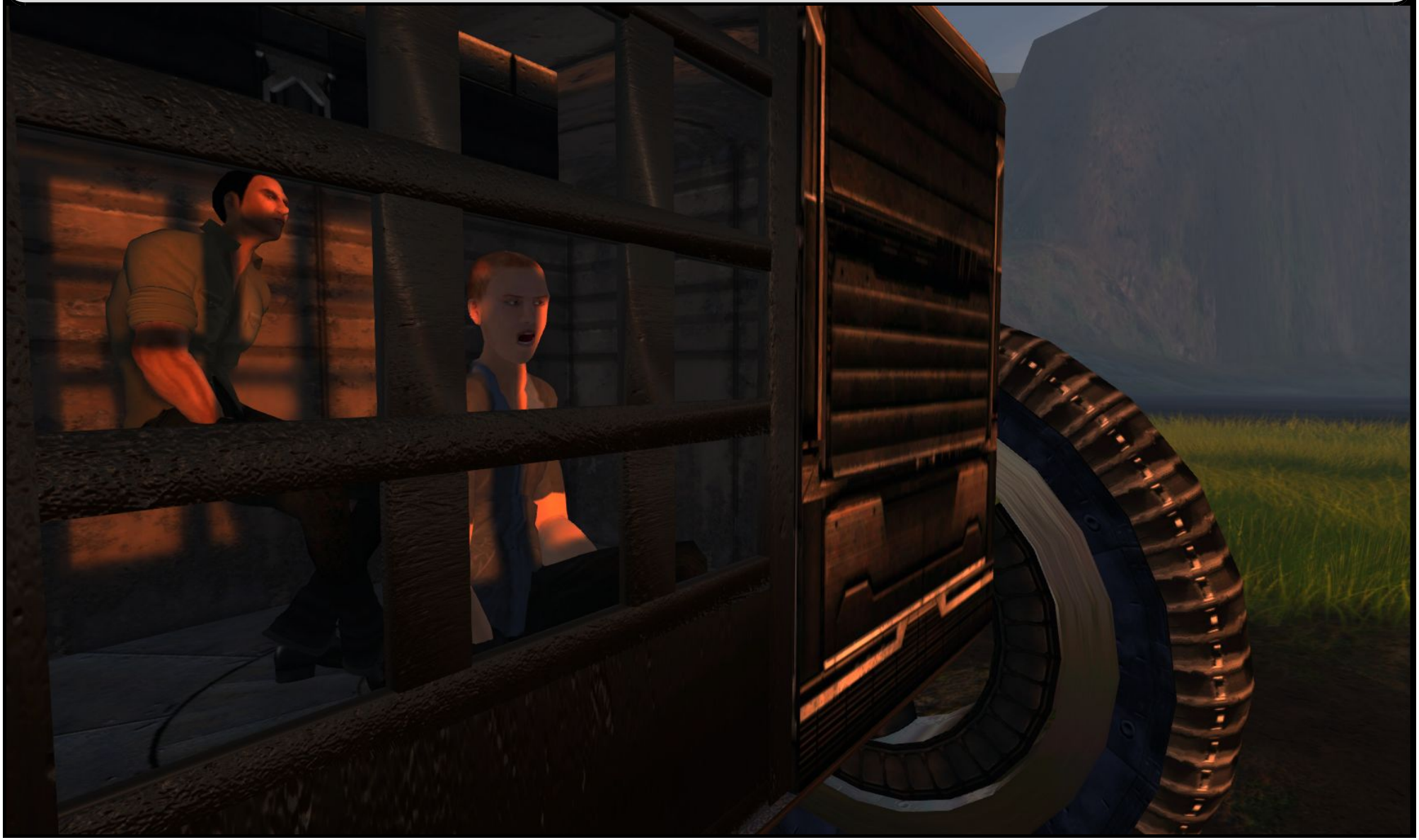
- We have been hit by the flash, do you remember?


-- Yes, the soldiers had chained us to the truck, and we were moving to somewhere that I didn't know... And there, that flash happened... Then, nothing!

-- Well, it seems that we've slid a bit more further in time.
- In time? What do you mean?

- That everybody we've known are dead since very long time!

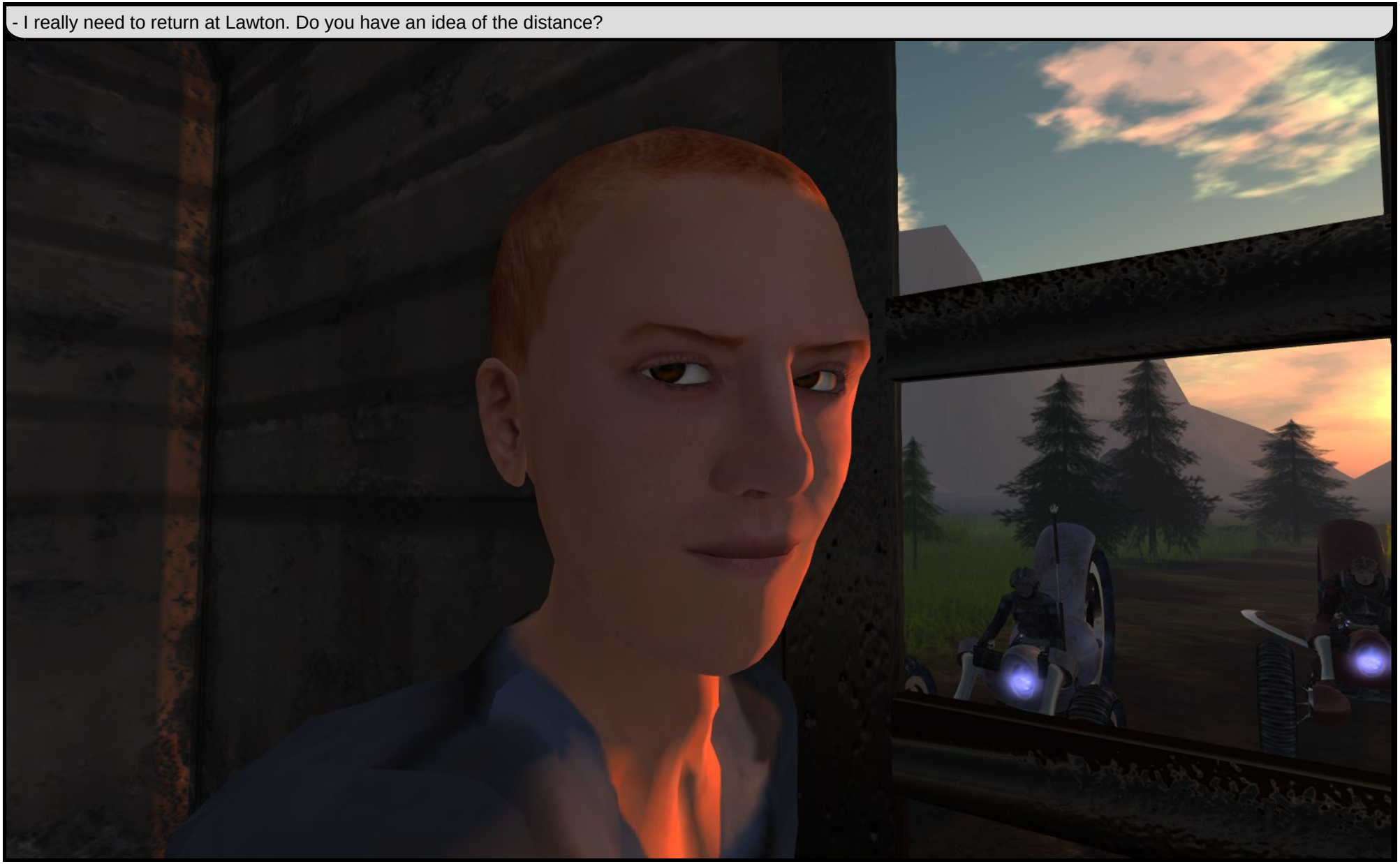
-- Goodness! The desert is gone! Who are these people on these weird bikes?



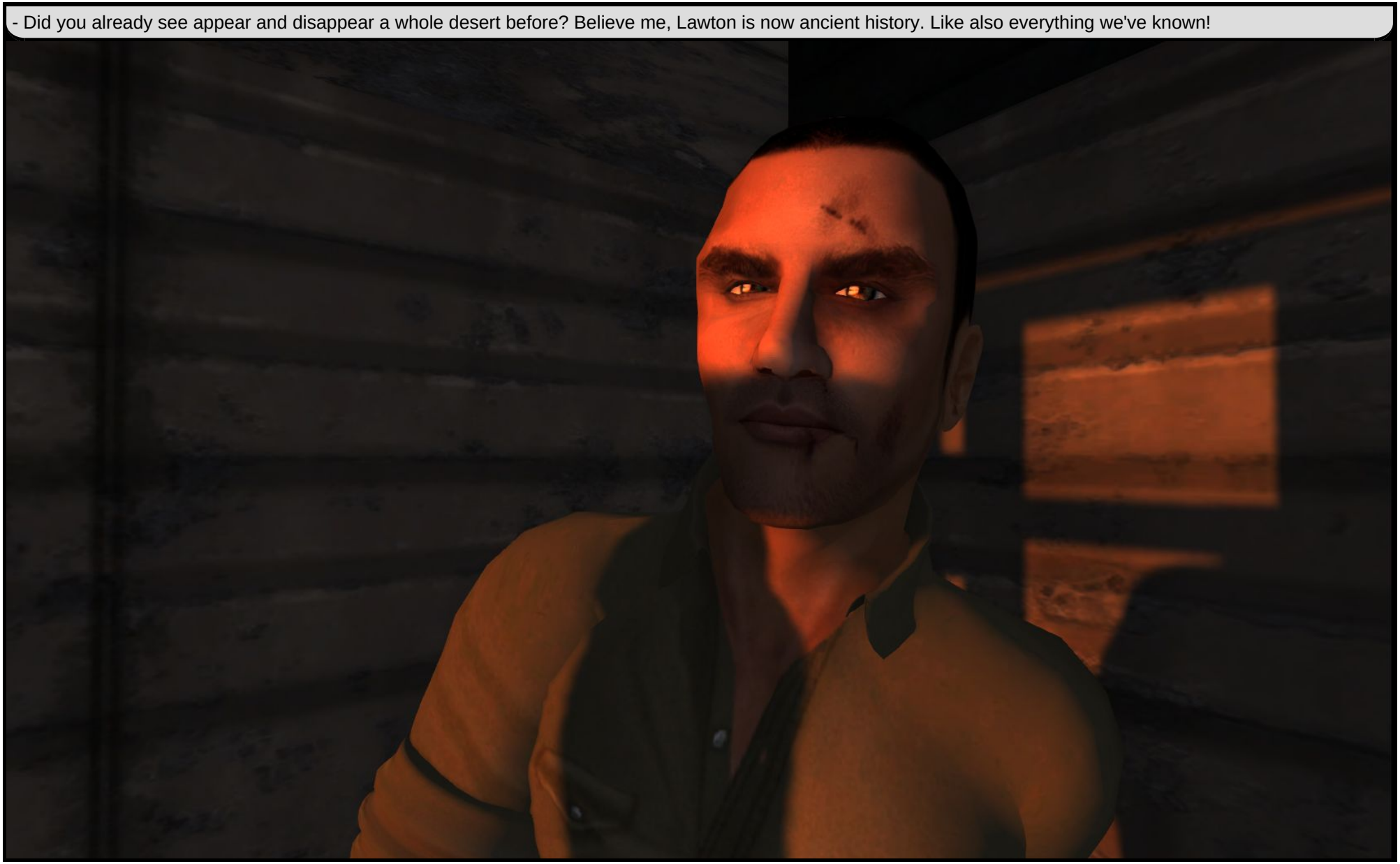
- I can't tell. For sure, they've executed the Dallusian soldiers who arrived with us.

-- Executed ?! Dallusian?
- Yes, those from the desert... Oh! By the way, I'm Roland. And you?

- Daniel Truman, representative for Eartex geotextiles, at your service!


- I really need to return at Lawton. Do you have an idea of the distance?

- Lawton! Better to make you at the idea that Lawton no longer exists!
-- No longer exists?!


- Did you already see appear and disappear a whole desert before? Believe me, Lawton is now ancient history. Like also everything we've known!

- What you say is completely absurd!
-- Absurd!? And this is a guy who walks around without any shoes who is telling me that!

- Ah! that!... It's really a stupid chain of events...

...I was on the road to Lawton. I drove at least three hours non-stop to be there at the morning...

...So I did a stop to a rest area, to stretch myself a bit and eat something...

- Shit! Damn!

(What a crap! This will be nice for the customer with all this gum! People really throw anything anywhere!)

...It's at this moment that I've been hit from behind...

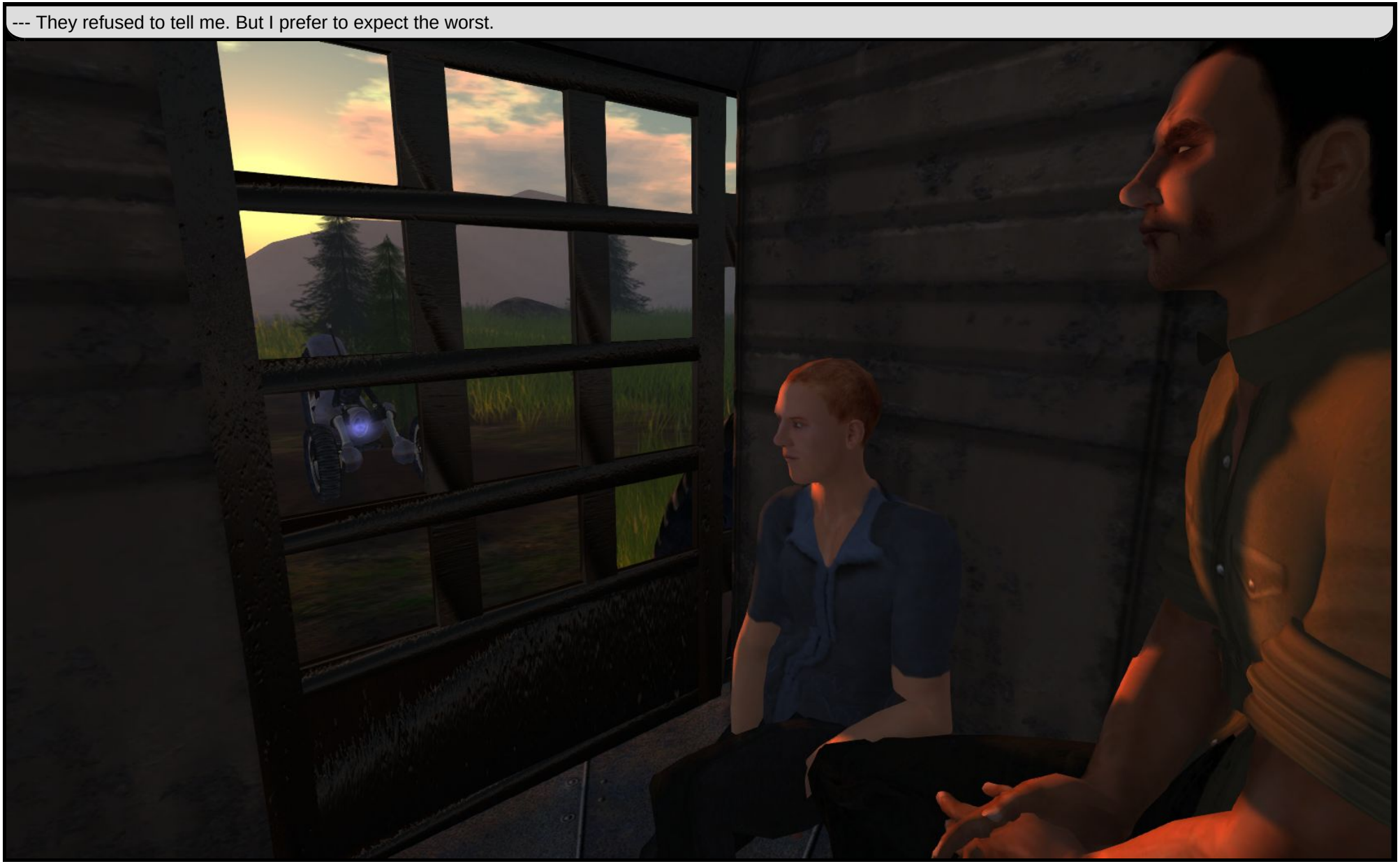
...Then, I wake up, abandoned in the middle of the desert. No more car, no more anything...

... I did ask to myself where I could be. I concluded for somewhere in Nevada or around. But the strangest thing, is that I've been abandoned with the trash can of the rest area! I have even found my soda can next to it!

- Then the soldiers found and arrested me. What crazy story!

- In any case, these ones don't seem more reassuring than the Dallusian soldiers.
-- Where do they drive us?

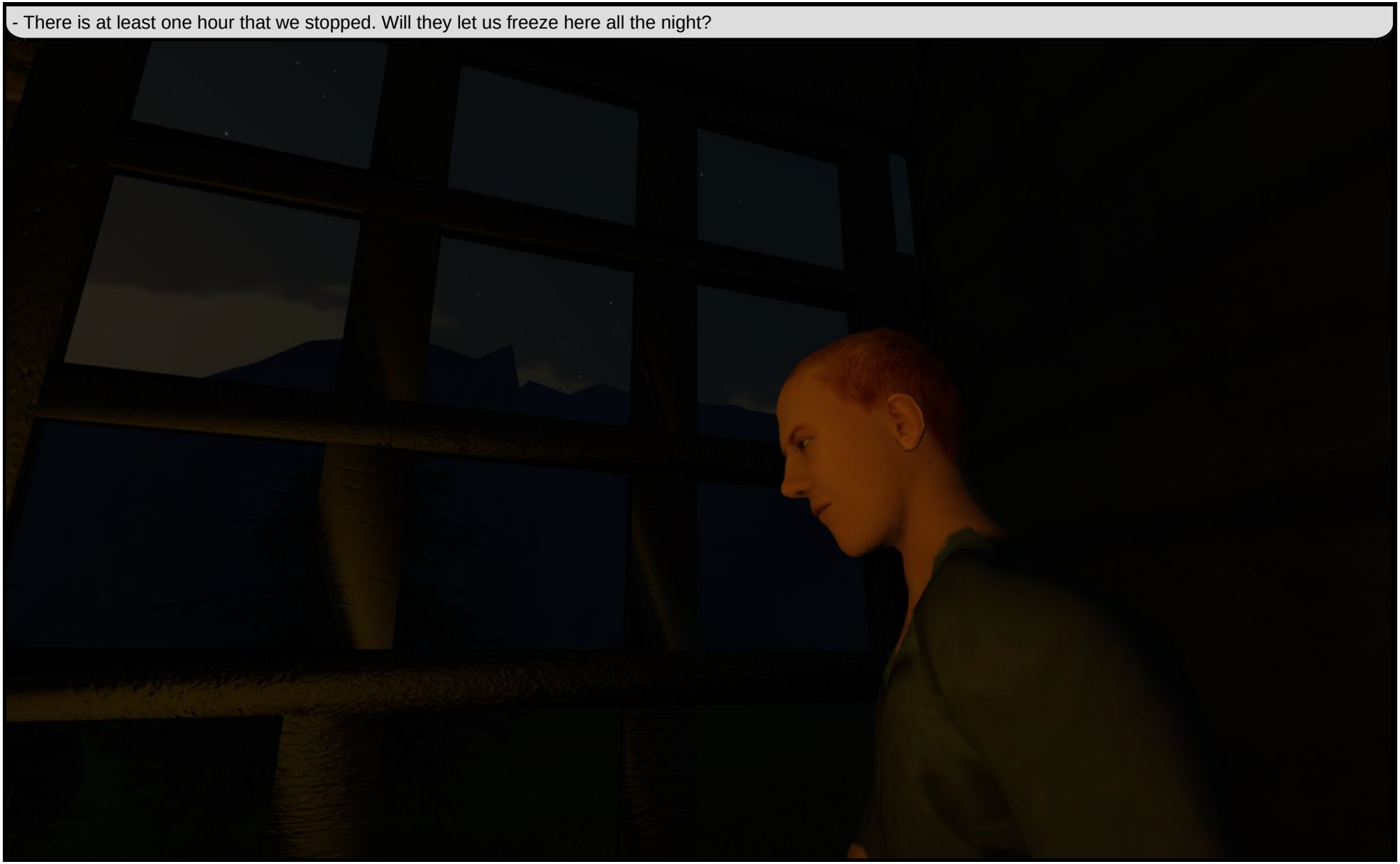
--- They refused to tell me. But I prefer to expect the worst.



- You don't expect to still make me believe that Lawton has really gone?

-- Well, it's a long story that begin long time after our time. I will try to explain you...

At nightfall...


- There is at least one hour that we stopped. Will they let us freeze here all the night?

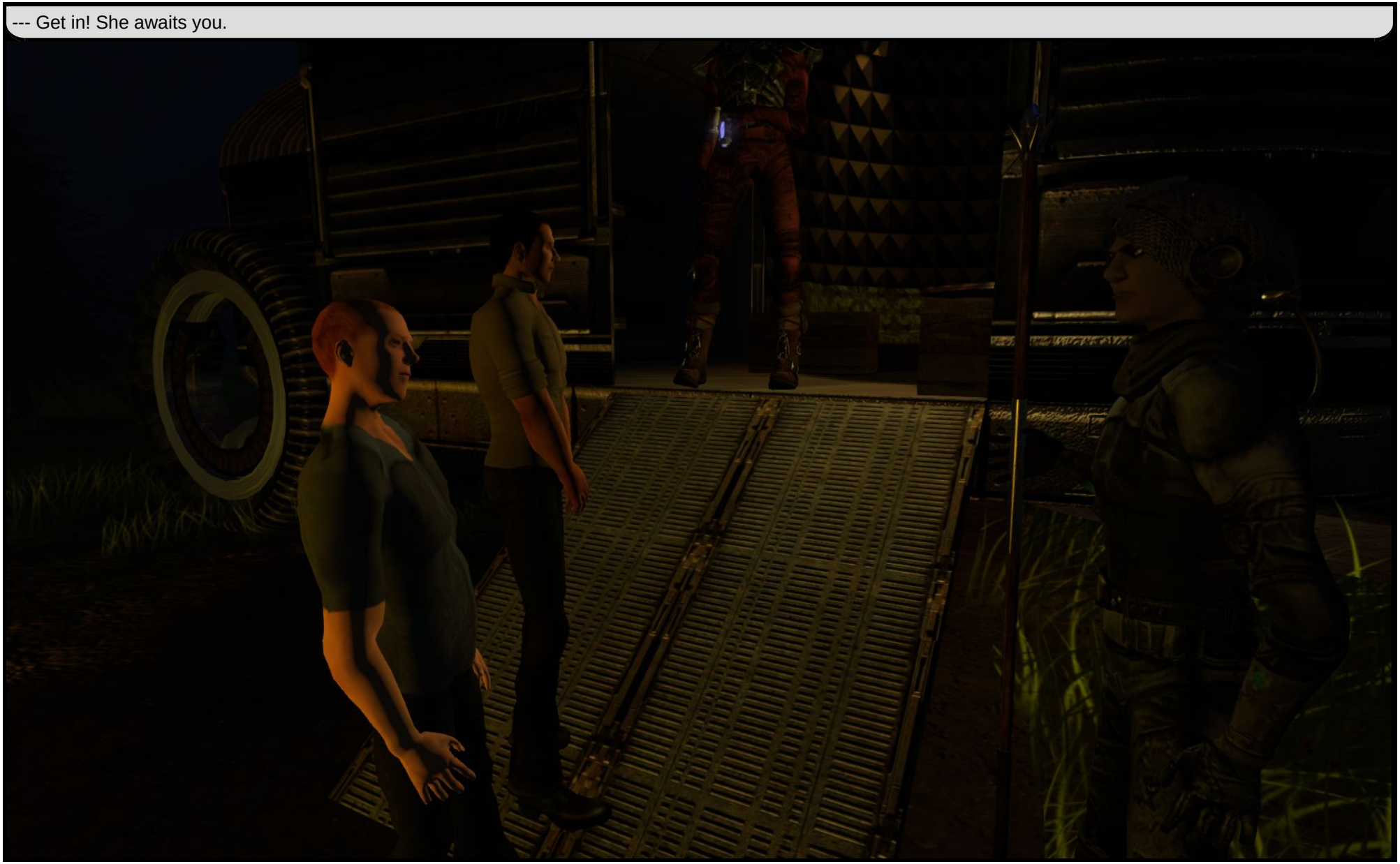
- Do you see what they do? It looks like they lit a fire. It smells smoke.

- Stand back!

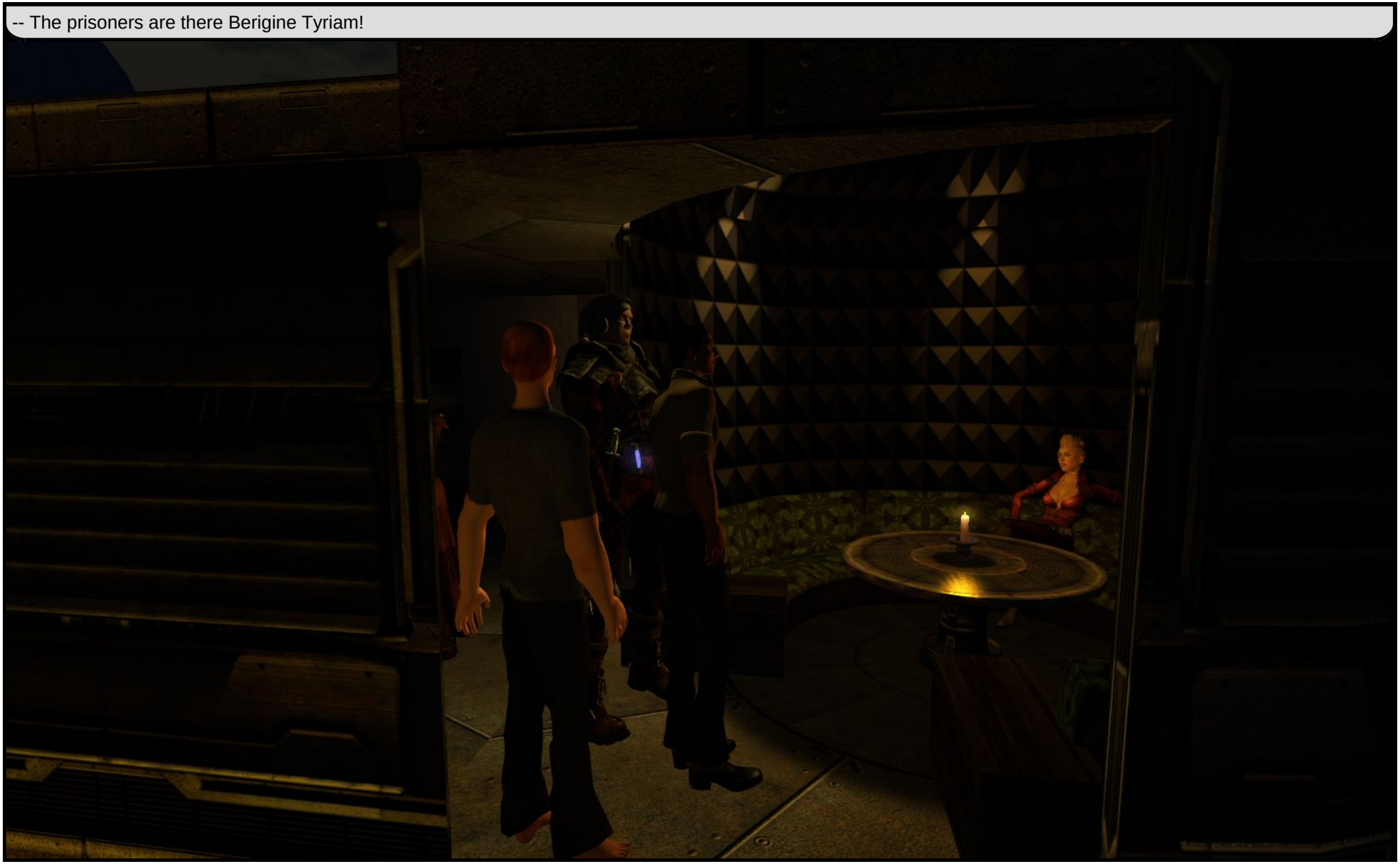
---- Get out and follow us. Not any bad move or you will be electrified.

--- I suggest you make what they say. They are serious with these electrical weapons.

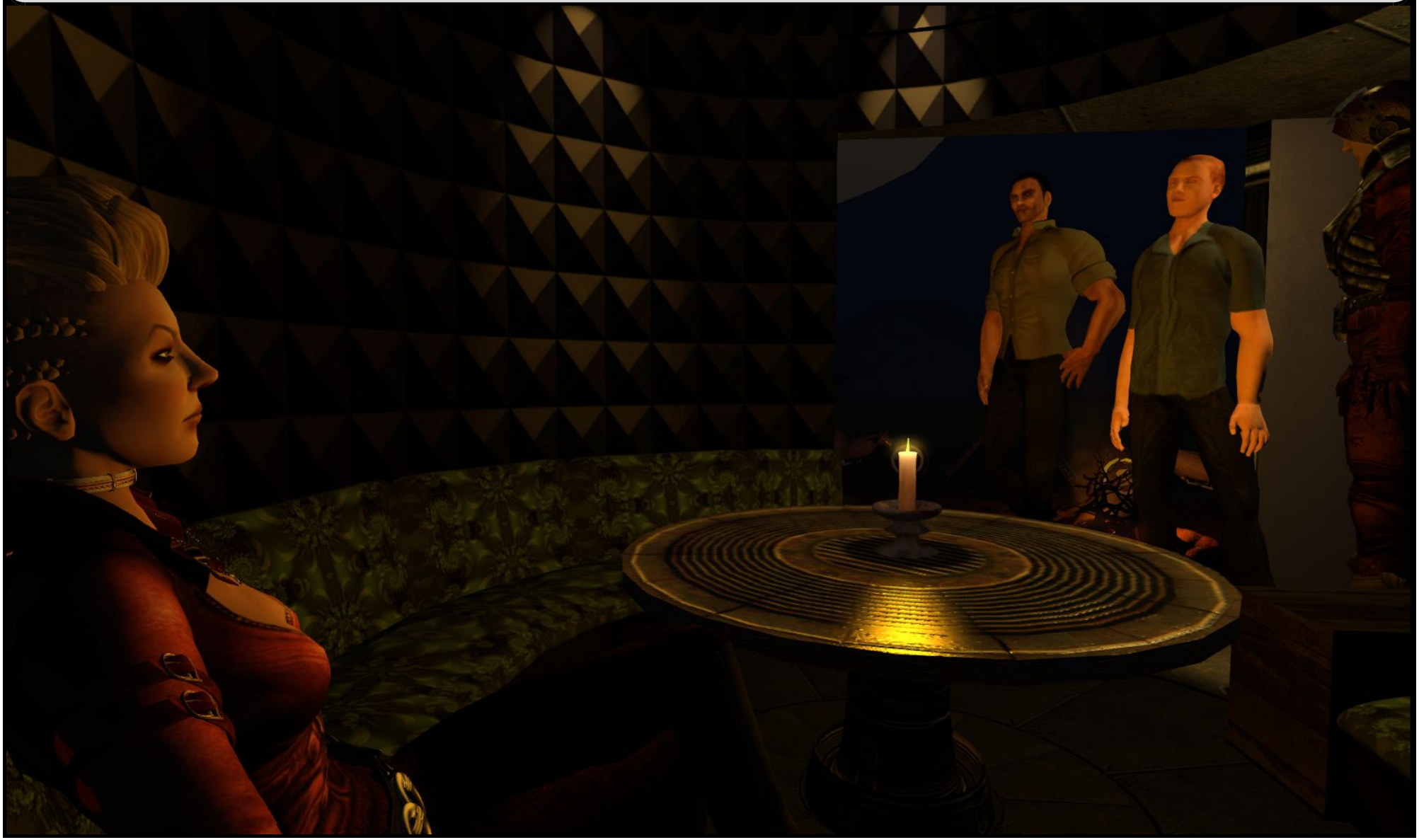
--- Get in! She awaits you.



-- The prisoners are there Berigine Tyriam!



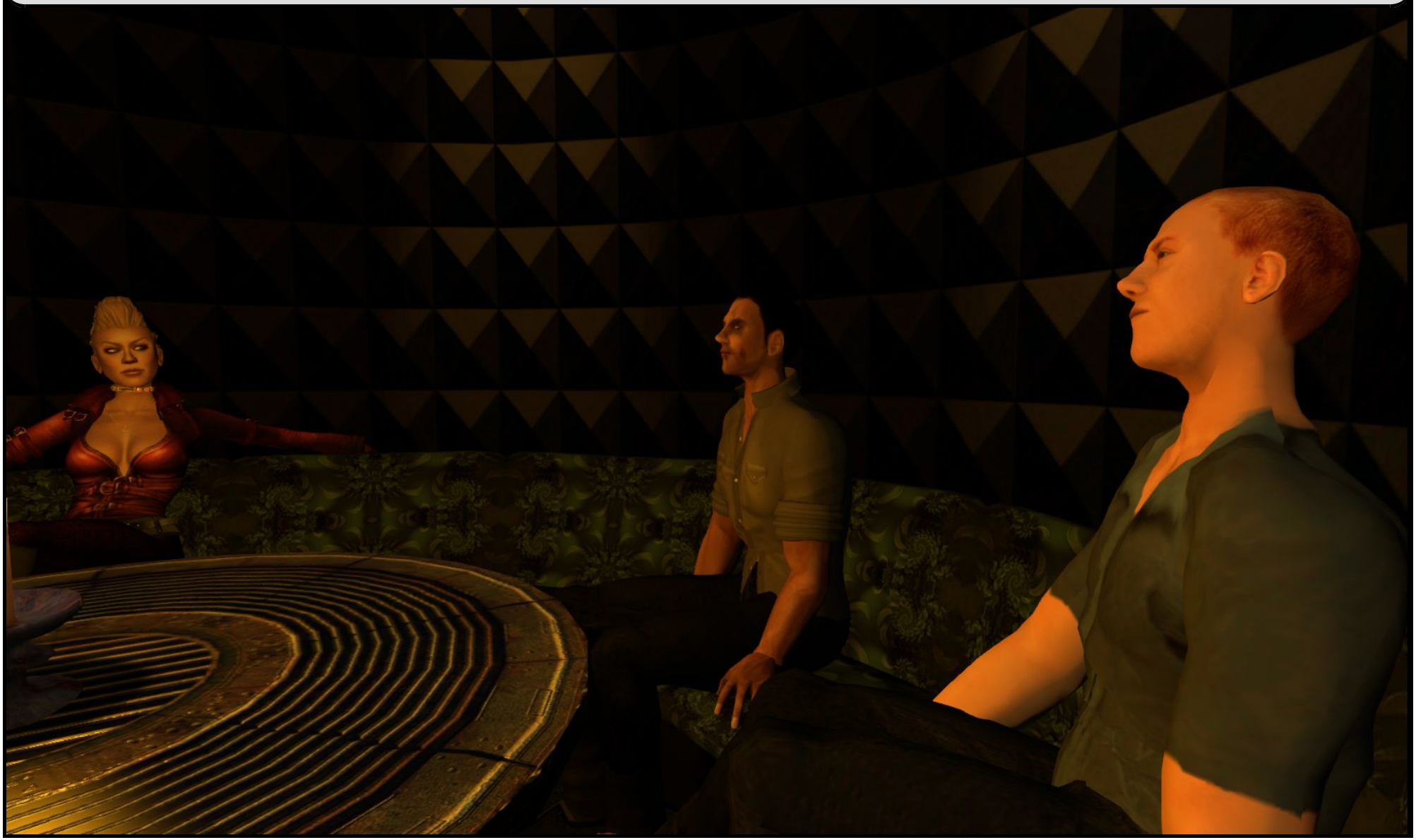
- Sit down gentlemen!



-- Bring them some food.
- Yes Berigine.

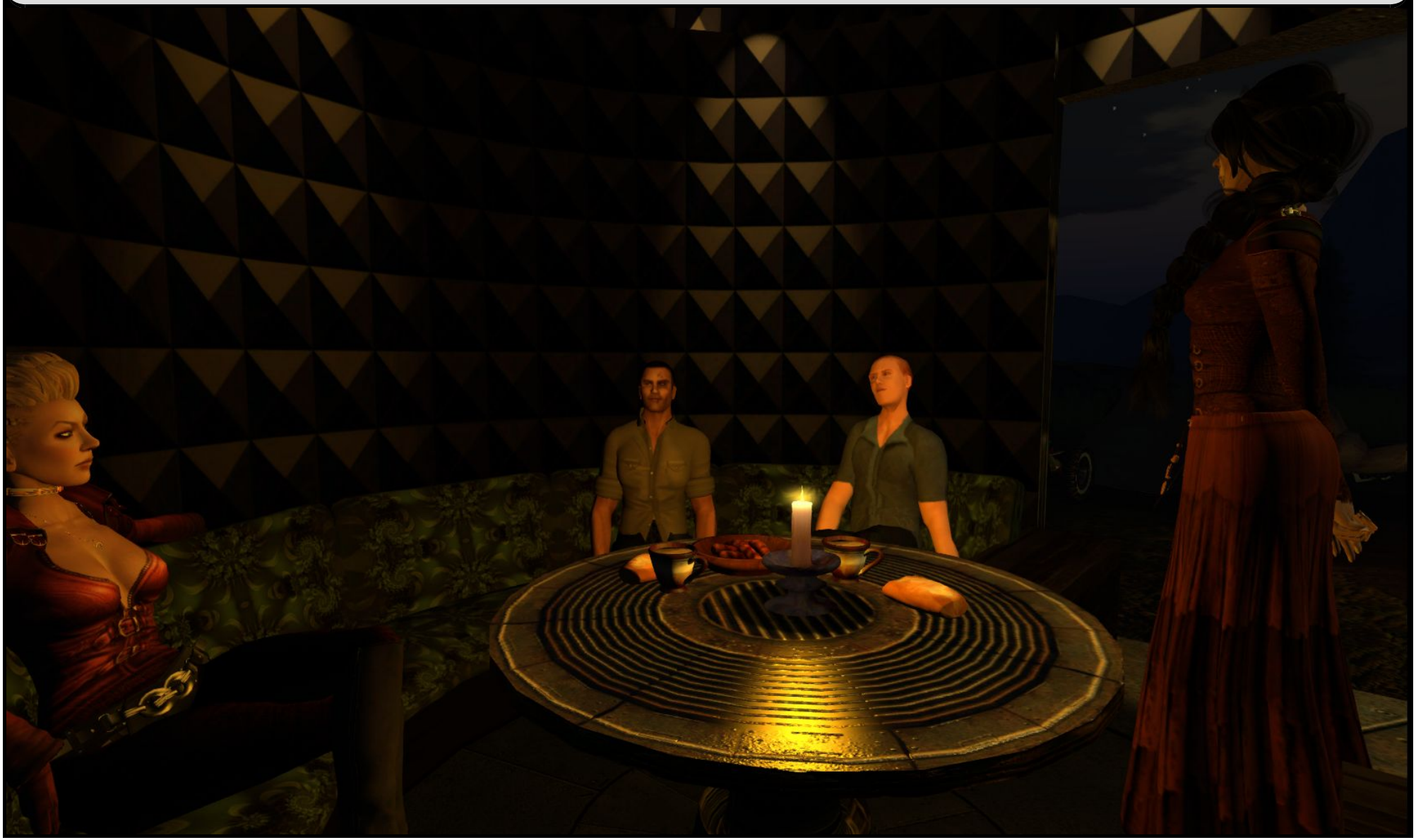
- I'm Tyriam, superintendent of Erydak. May I know your names?

-- Roland Gregoire, officially lost.
--- Daniel... Daniel Truman, ma'am, and I'm also officially lost.



- I deduce that you are not Dallusian, neither Rantarian... Even not Northalian, isn't it?
-- You are right. We are former to them.

- So you are "E.U."! I hardly dared to imagine!
--- "E.U."?



-- Is the expression "E.U." is still in use? After how many years? I deduce that it would take at least twenty years to have these trees in the desert.
- Twenty years! :) I would say more than one thousand years.

-- But you seem to know well this designation.
- I was born Dallusian Mr. Gregoire!

--- So you went through Bashora?
-- Quite right too! I was working there.

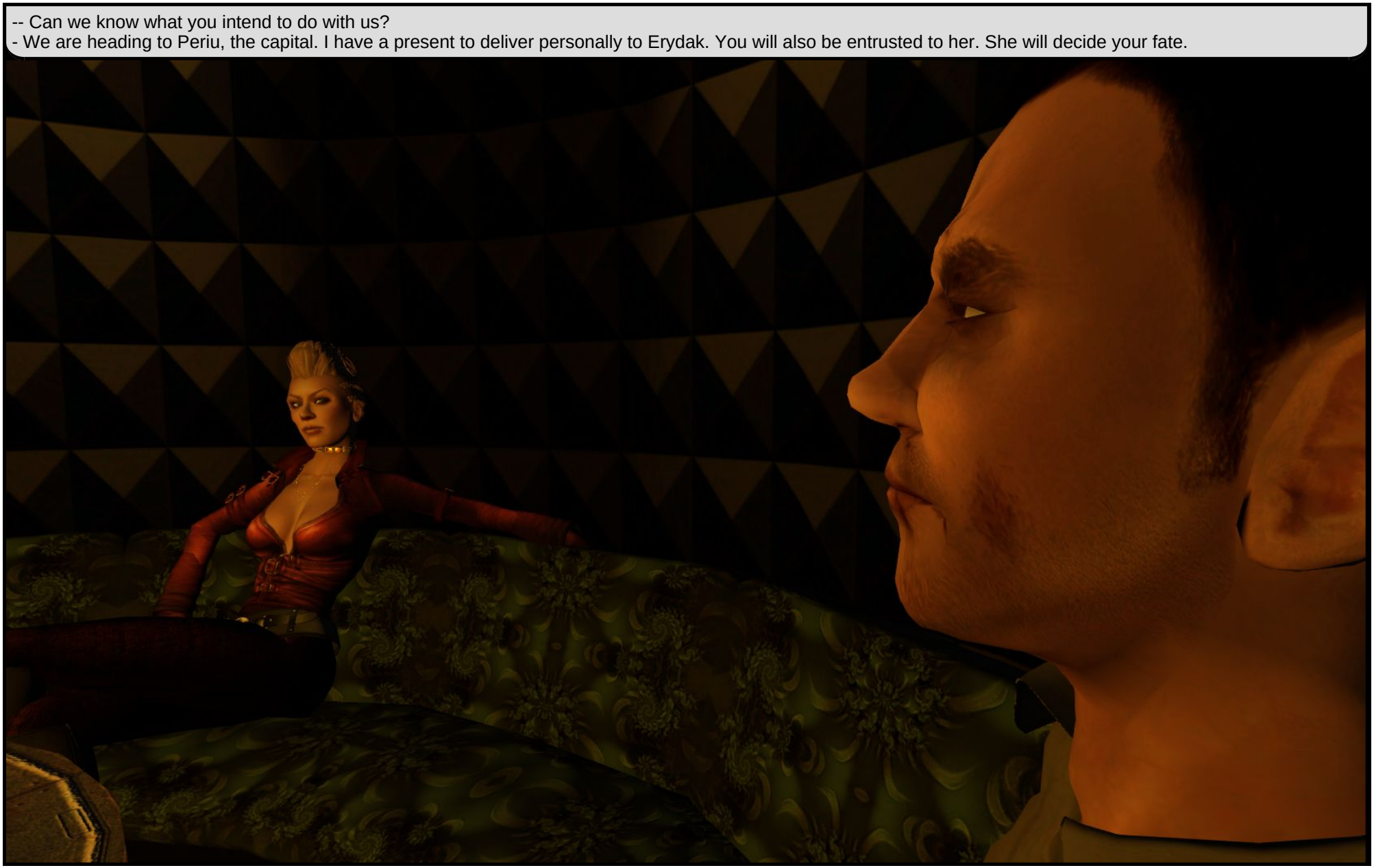
- We had never met any "E.U." here before, I mean none alive. We have seen happen some rare scientists from Bashora. Unfortunately, they were irrecoverable.
-- And the soldiers? I was told that several had slid in the flow. Ah! But you should know, since you make them execute.

- Don't be condescending! These are the orders from Erydak.
(((Gulp!)))

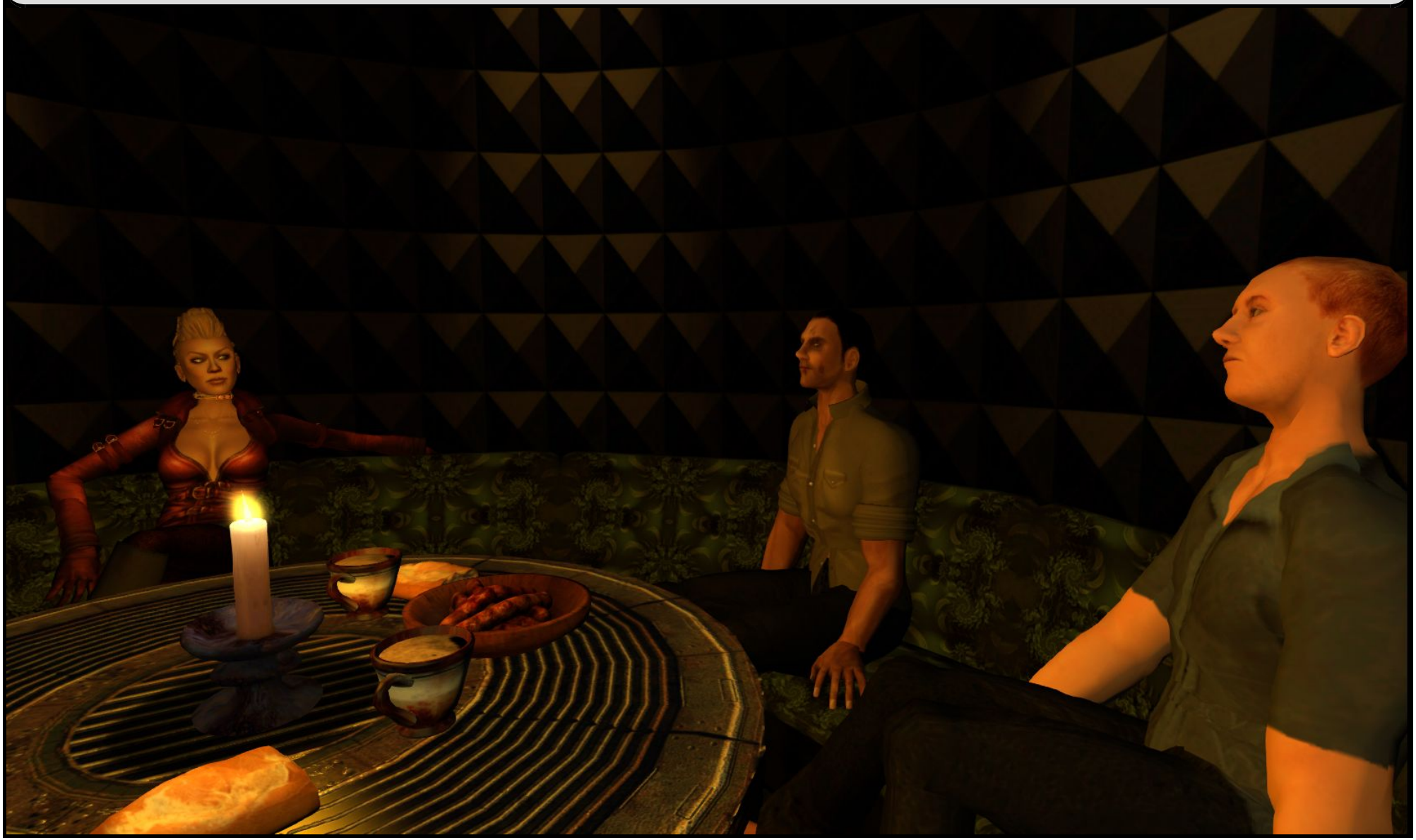
- Do you know how the Terkasides name those soldiers Mr. Gregoire?
-- I even don't know what is a Terkaside!

- The people of this country, the Terkazy, call them the Tyrants. They have suffered because of them during almost four years. It was a dark period for all of us.
-- In this case, I'm well placed to understand. But you can be relieved, because the Taalus seems to have been destroyed. I saw a section of it on the road.

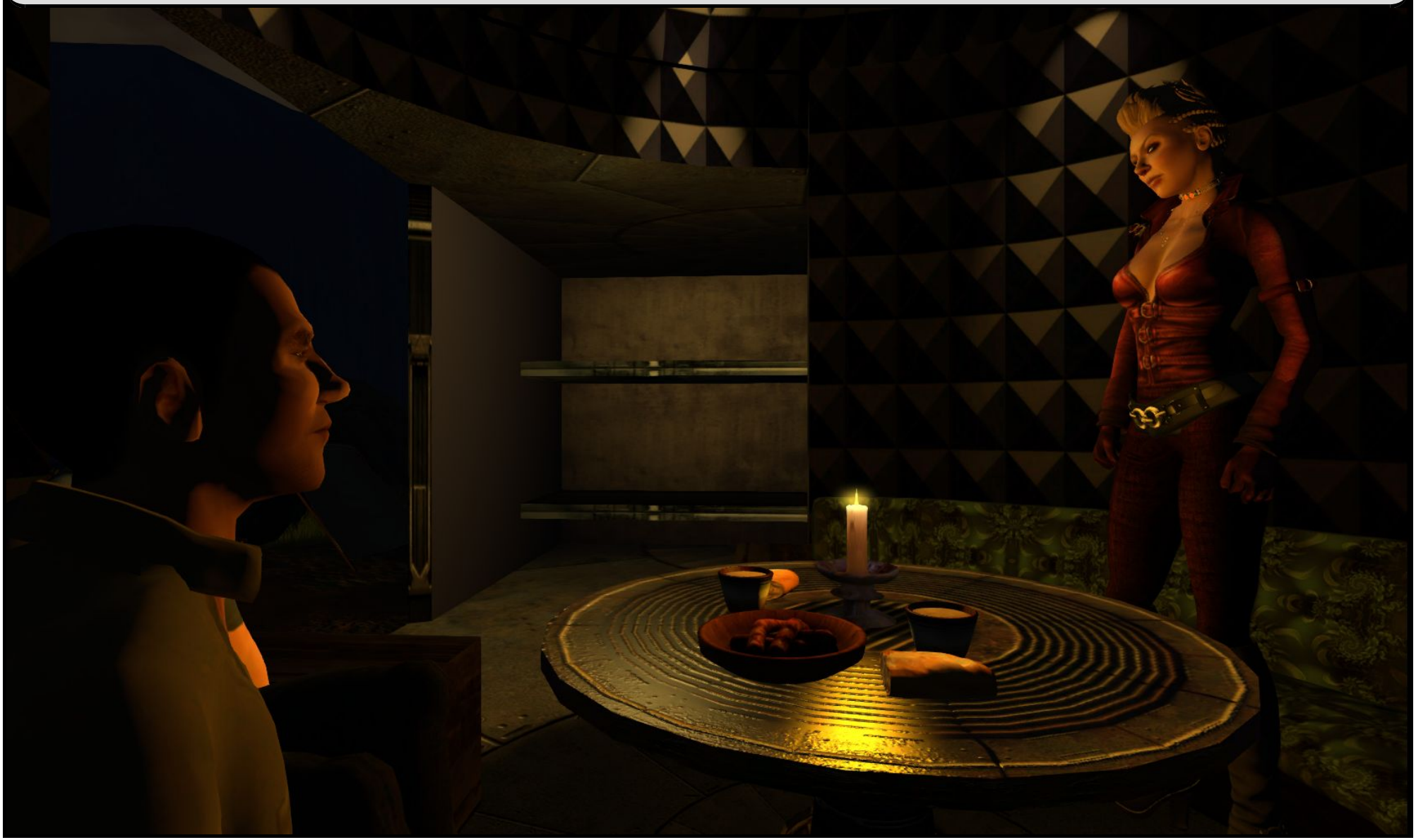
- The Taalus's head! It is already there for eight months. However, some wreckage still happens every day... And some Tyrants from time to time.


-- Can we know what you intend to do with us?
- We are heading to Periu, the capital. I have a present to deliver personally to Erydak. You will also be entrusted to her. She will decide your fate.

--- She? Could we know what is this "Erydak"?
- The Erydak is the one who have exceptionally the absolute power in that country.



- Is the game is already lost for us?
-- The Erydak is not a Terkaside. But the Council is terkaside, and it will be for sure in your disfavor. I don't know the view of Erydak regarding the "E.U.".

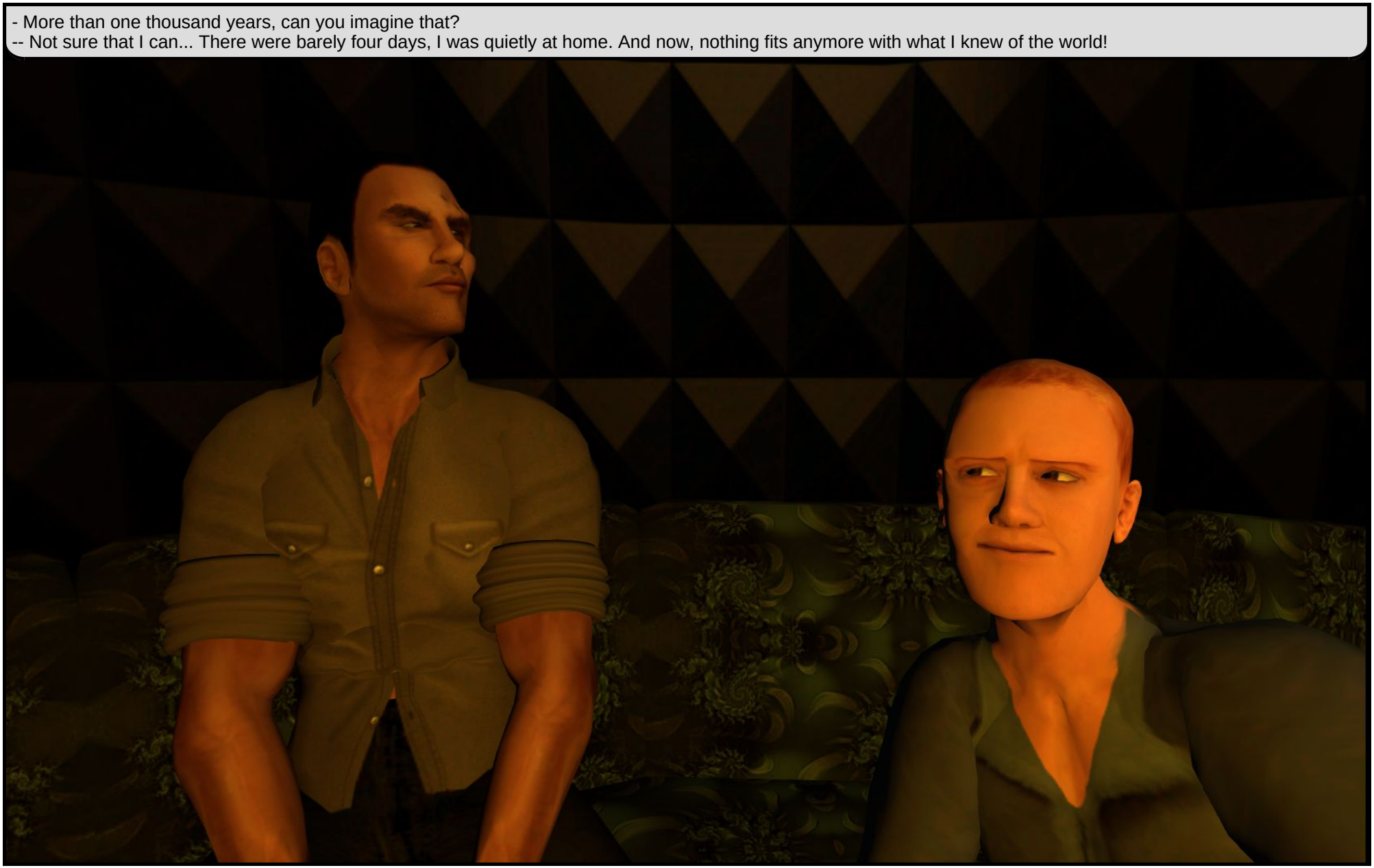


--- Eat your fill! I suggest you to sleep well because tomorrow will be a long day!

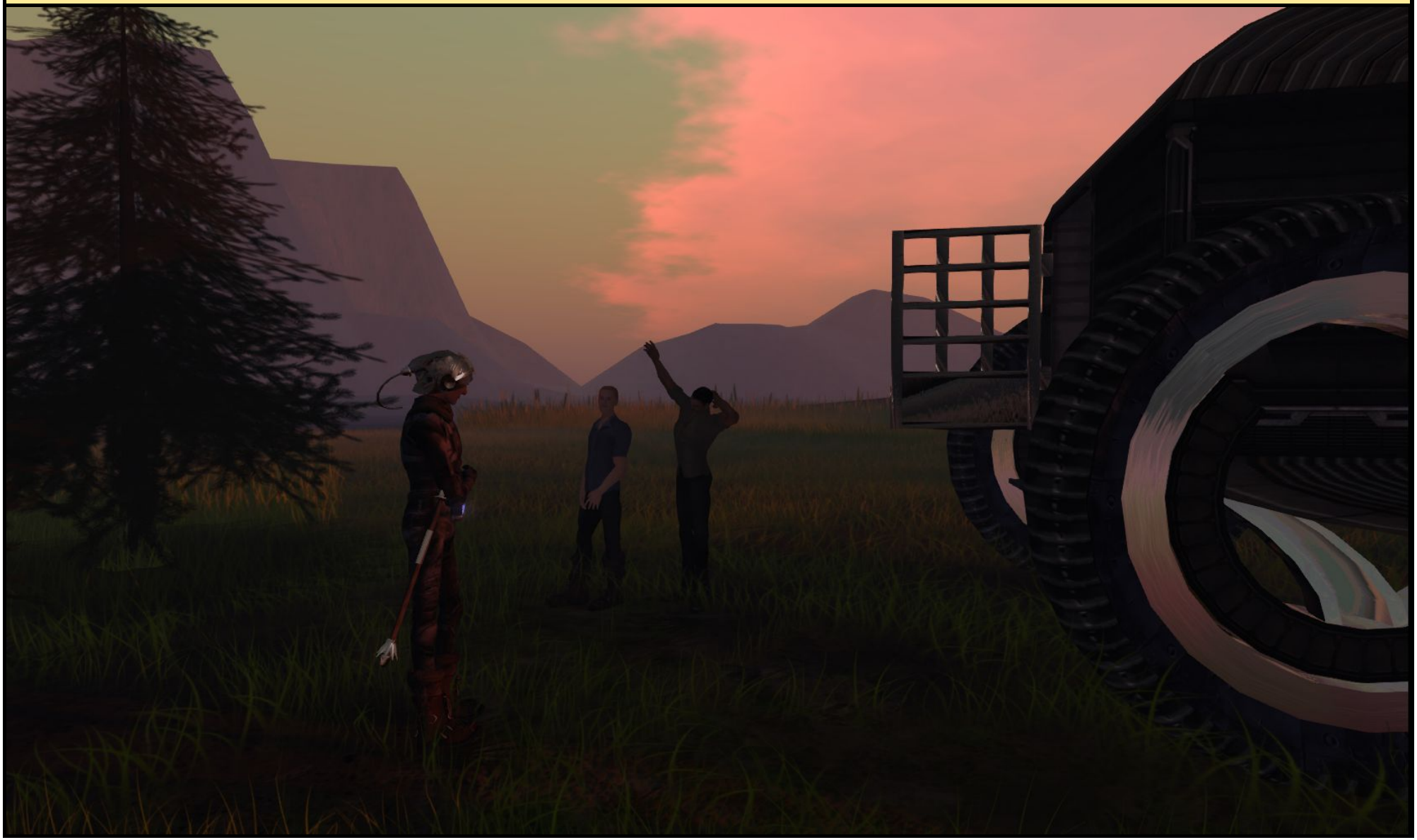
--- Garj! Find them some blankets for the night. Ah!... And a pair of footwear for Mr. Truman.

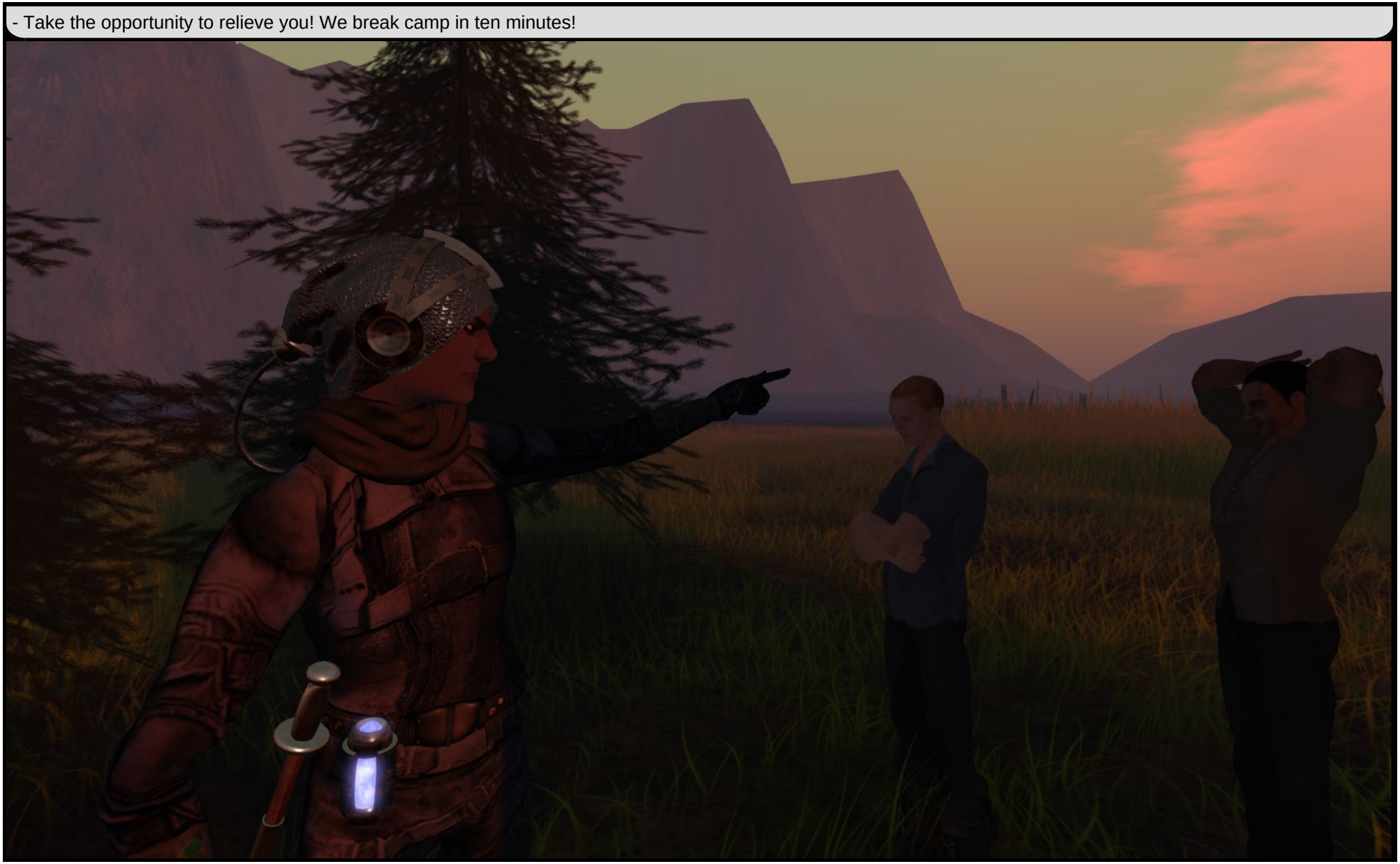
-- It doesn't bode well! A dictatorship! What kind of a sticky wicket is that?

- This is weird! The superintendent is a former employee of Bashora! And the Erydak also is not one of them...
-- Maybe they like to be lead by strangers? At least the food is good.


- More than one thousand years, can you imagine that?
-- Not sure that I can... There were barely four days, I was quietly at home. And now, nothing fits anymore with what I knew of the world!

At sunrise...




- Take the opportunity to relieve you! We break camp in ten minutes!

-- These boots, it's really too chic!

-- Maybe I look like a clown, but at least, it's warm and comfortable.

- Have you been able to sleep?
-- A few, but I have this anxiety that persists.

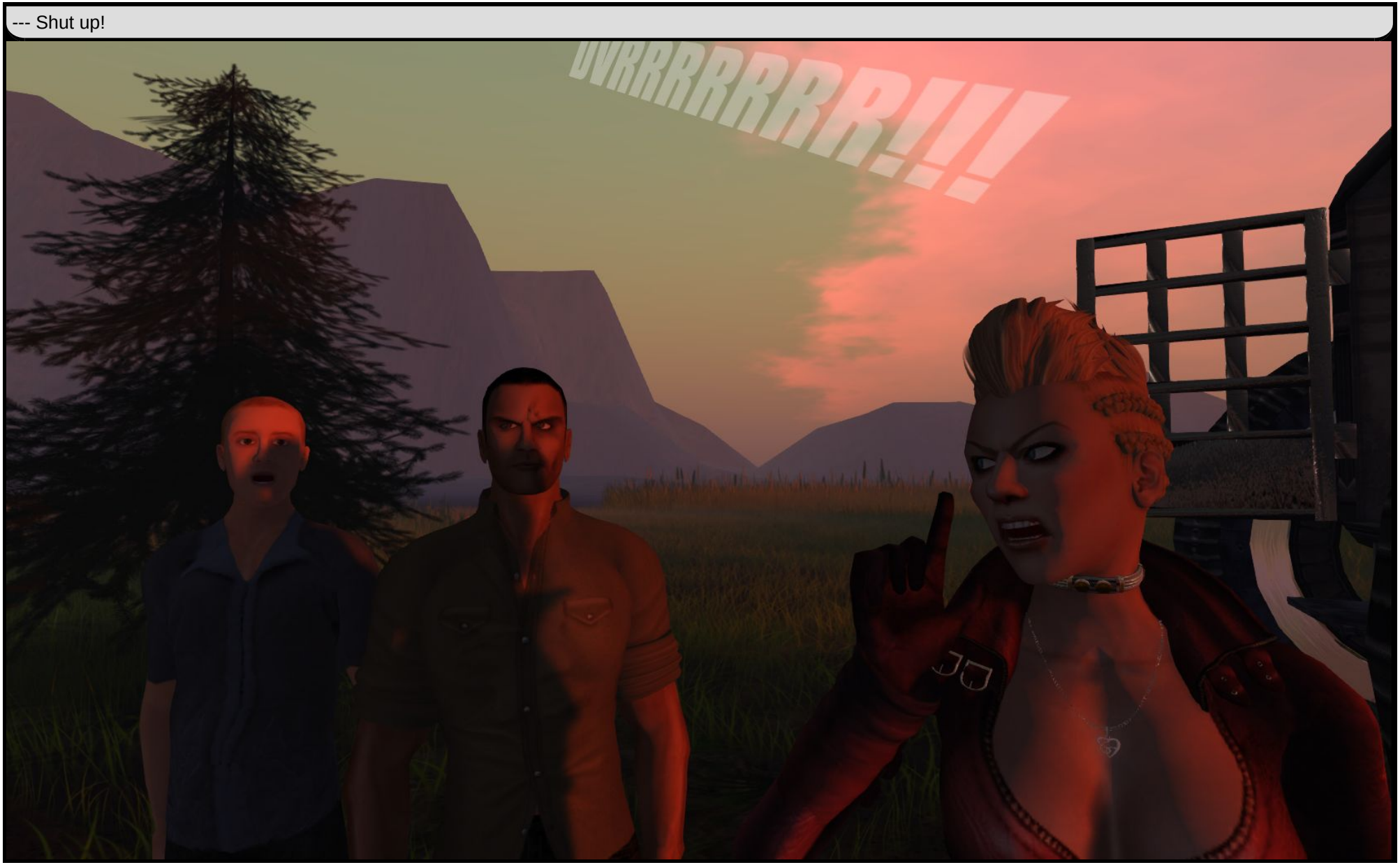
-- What's that?

-- I don't know, but this is coming right at us and this is very fast!

DVRRRRRR!!!
DVRRRRRR!!!

- Whatever happens, do nothing! Not a move!

--- Shut up!



(((Damn! But what the hell this thing wants of me?!)))

---- Stay quiet! They should be gone very soon!

((((Sigh!))))
-- Damn! But what was that?

-- Jijuterk's probes. They are not dangerous unless they are attacked.

- Drones? What did they want?
-- The Jijuterk use them to watch what the Terkasides do. But it seems they were mainly looking for the presence of non-Terkasides.

--- They seem interested by the emergence of individuals of their species among the Terkasides. I mean, you and me, and also all those who've come through the Taalus.

- "Individuals of their species" ?!

-- Yes! Of their species! I never met any Jijuterk personally, but I was told they are human like you and me. The Terkasides thought we were Jijuterk.

- What you're saying, is that all these people around us are of another species!

- Absolutely. You could try to mate with this woman there, with all the ardor that you might, you won't risk of getting her pregnant! If you aren't lucky, you may cause the mutation of a virus that could be fatal for one of the two species.

--- Incredible!
- How another human species could have emerged in one thousand years only?

-- With the addition of extra-planetary genomes. Have you never heard about the eastern embassy of Kwanjo?
- Not really, what is it?

--- At the time of Dallusia, the first contact with the extra-planetary nation of Santrosis had taken place in Far East, at the exact place where the consular city of Kwanjo has been founded. At my time, there was already a hybrid generation that was no longer compatible with humans. The Terkasides are their descendants.

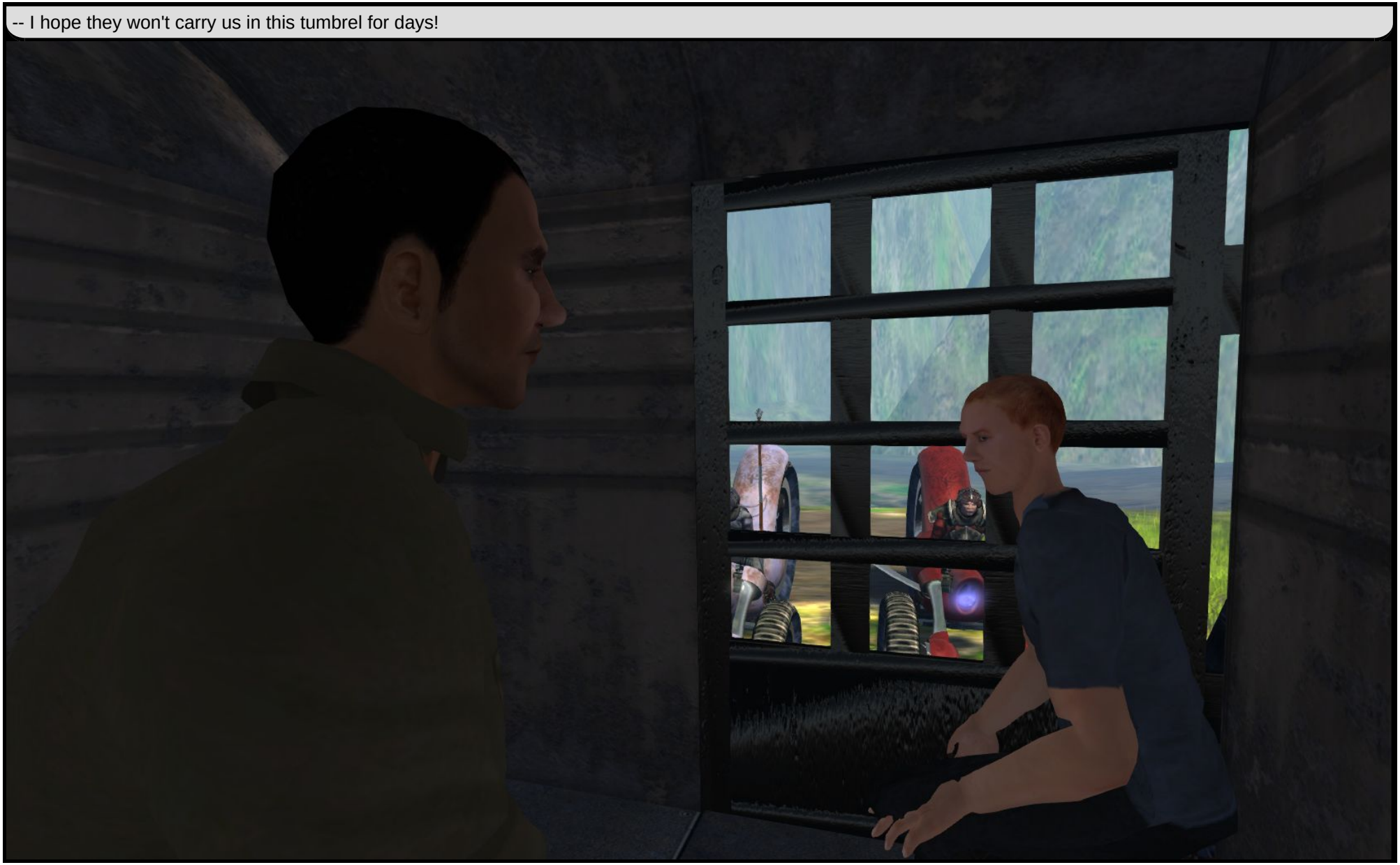
- And the Terkasides let themselves be governed by humans?
-- They were living peacefully and modestly when that the tyrants have appeared and ravaged the clans. The Erydak is a crisis government.

- Do not make the mistake to believe that the humans are leading them. Myself, despite my status of berigine, I'm still a sub-citizen.

- Berigine? What is that exactly?
--- This is the Terkaside word for superintendent woman.

--- Berigine, we must leave.
---- Alright, so gentlemen, have a safe journey!

4 hours later...


-- I hope they won't carry us in this tumbrel for days!

-- The berigine seemed to say that we were to be there today.
- Do you really trust her?

- She seems positive toward us. I guess that she must not have many humans among her relationship. No... The one I wouldn't trust for now, is their Erydak who will decide our fate.

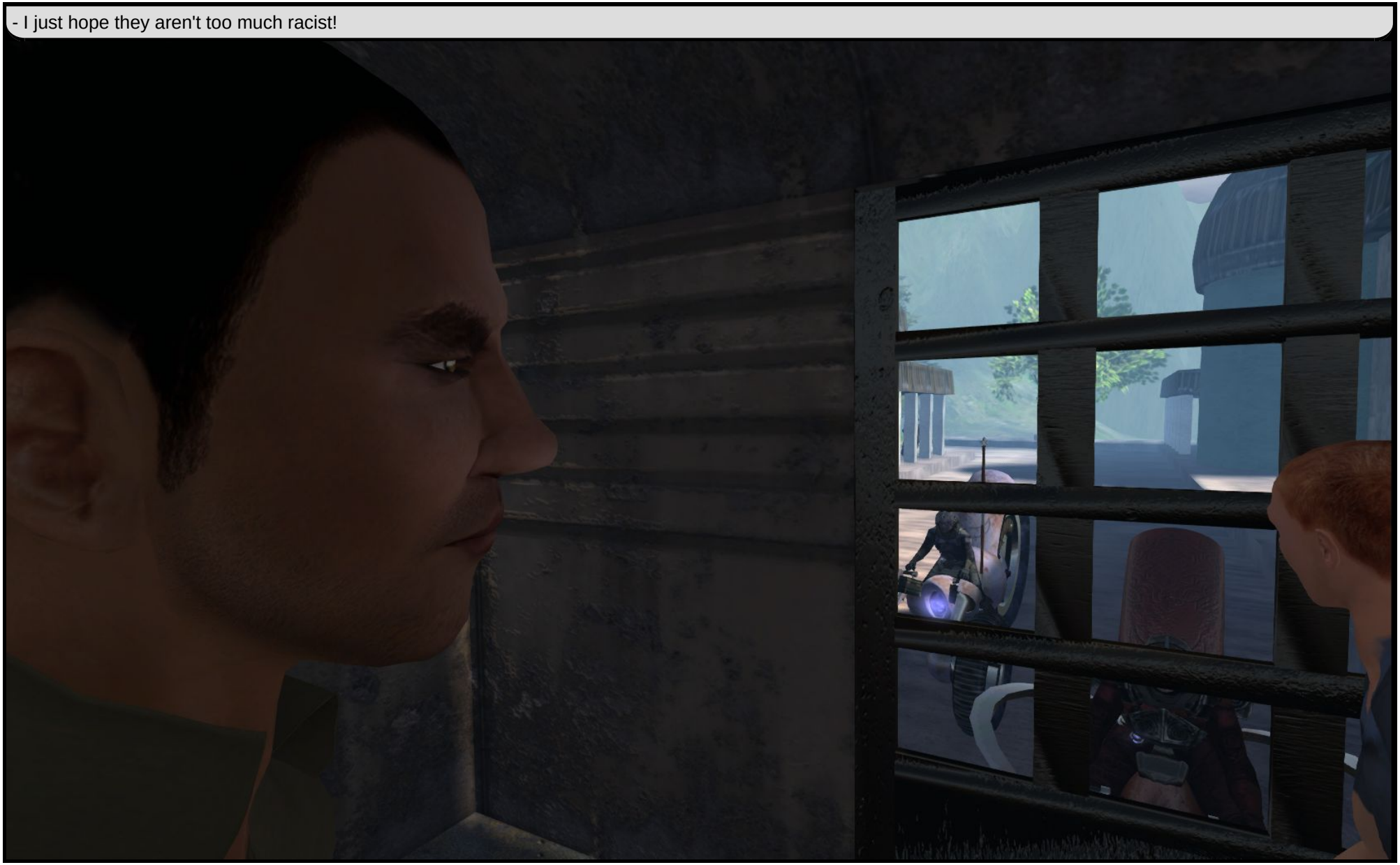
- Oh! A building!

- The civilization! Finally!
-- Yes, the civilization... non-human.

- I expected something more modern.

- It doesn't seem very huge for a capital.

- I wonder what awaits us. I don't have a good feeling about it...


- I just hope they aren't too much racist!

- OK! It seems that we will know very soon!

- Get down!

--- Is this our final destination?

---- Yes gentlemen, we have arrived... Garj! Go fetch the case.

-- We have an audience with Erydak in a few moments, so listen to me carefully!

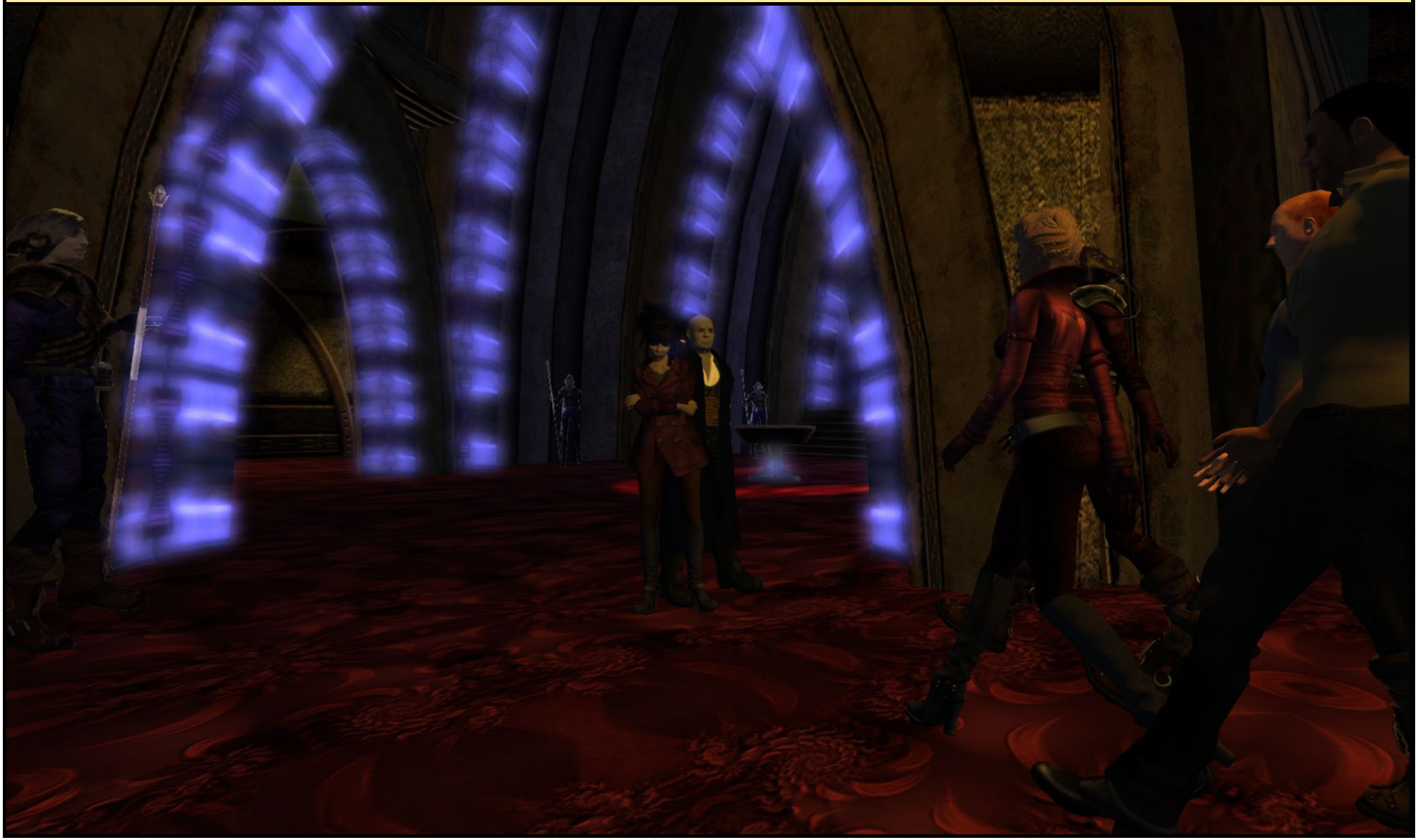
---- Many members of the court will be present. They are all terkasides. So, don't say anything unless you are requested to do it.

- Stick to the facts. This is really not the place to give your thoughts. Do not stare at anyone, this could harm you.

--- In short, stay at your place and try to go unnoticed. I'll take care of the rest. Is this clear enough?

--- Yes, it's very clear.
-- Absolutely.

A few minutes later...



- Berigine Tyriam! You are eagerly awaited!
--- Berigine Hystazi... Krul Erifrin...

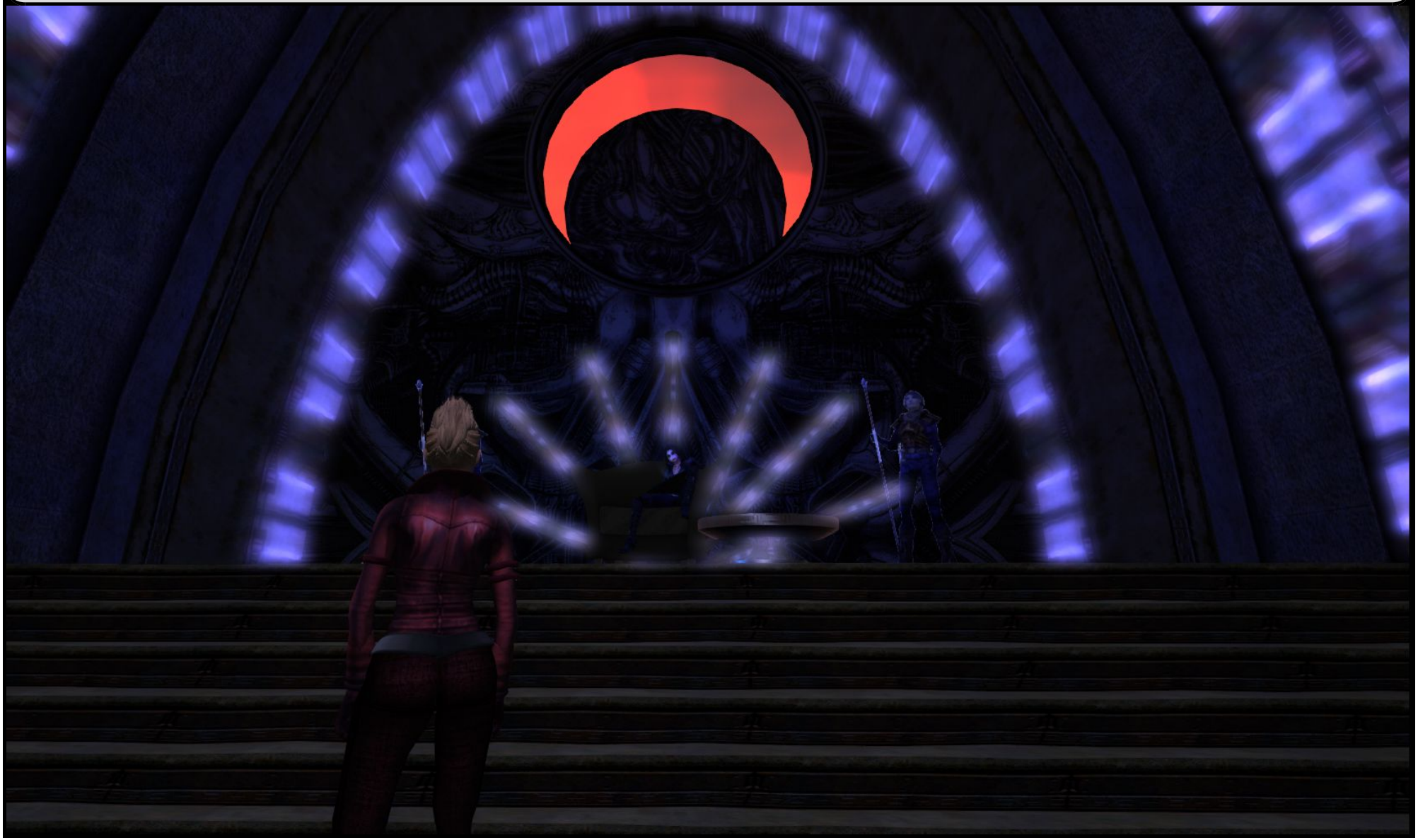
- The berigane Larmis has learned that you have taken the killer four days ago, is that true?
-- The berigane Larmis is well informed.

- Erydak will enjoy. I hope you have a good reason to have let her wait two more days!

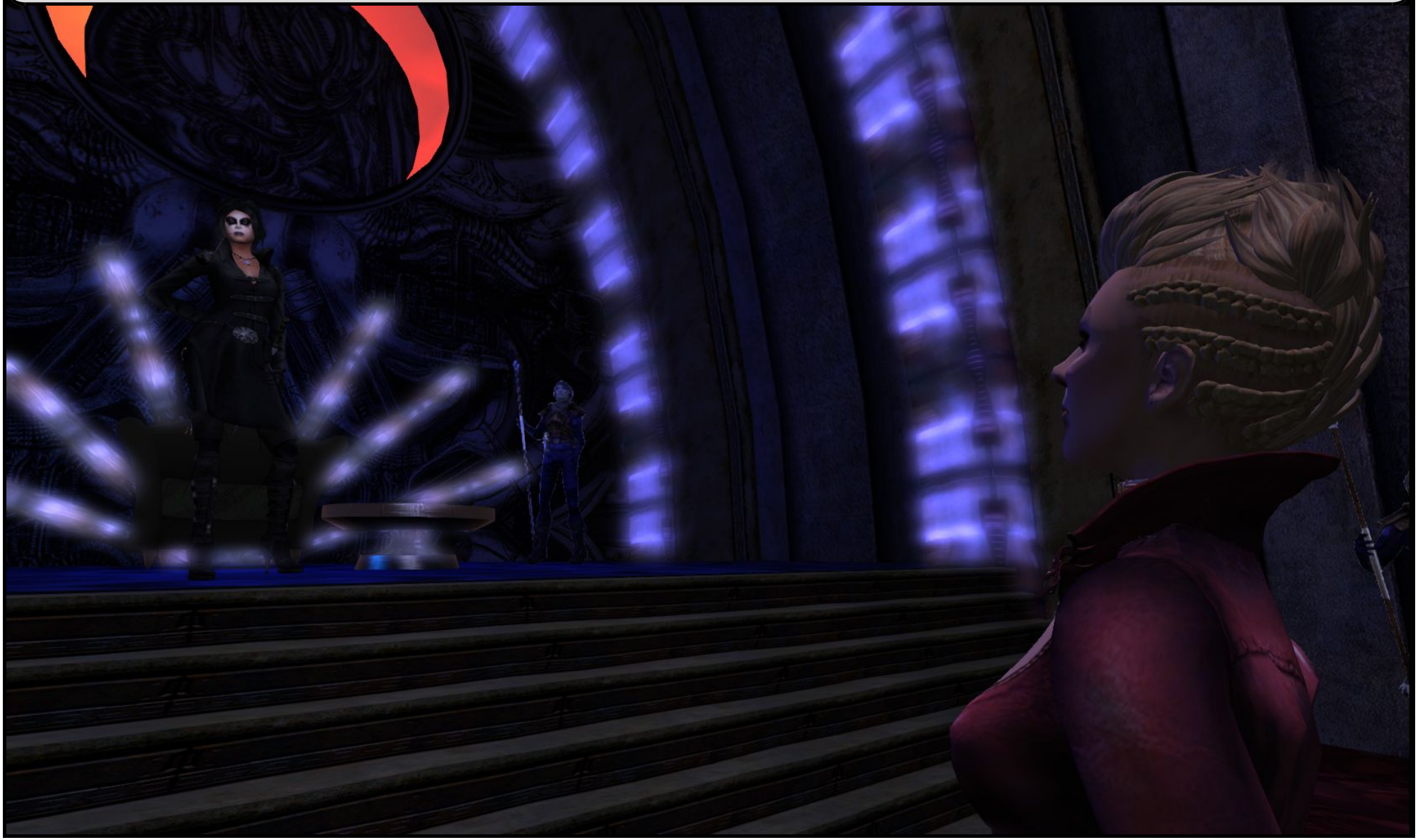
-- More than valuable reasons I must say. That have nothing to do with something that could be under your authority. Don't worry.

--- Erydak! Here is for you: Tyriam, the berigine of Dalsa!

-- Mary! We were waiting for you...



-- Erydak, here is the present that you were waiting for a long time!



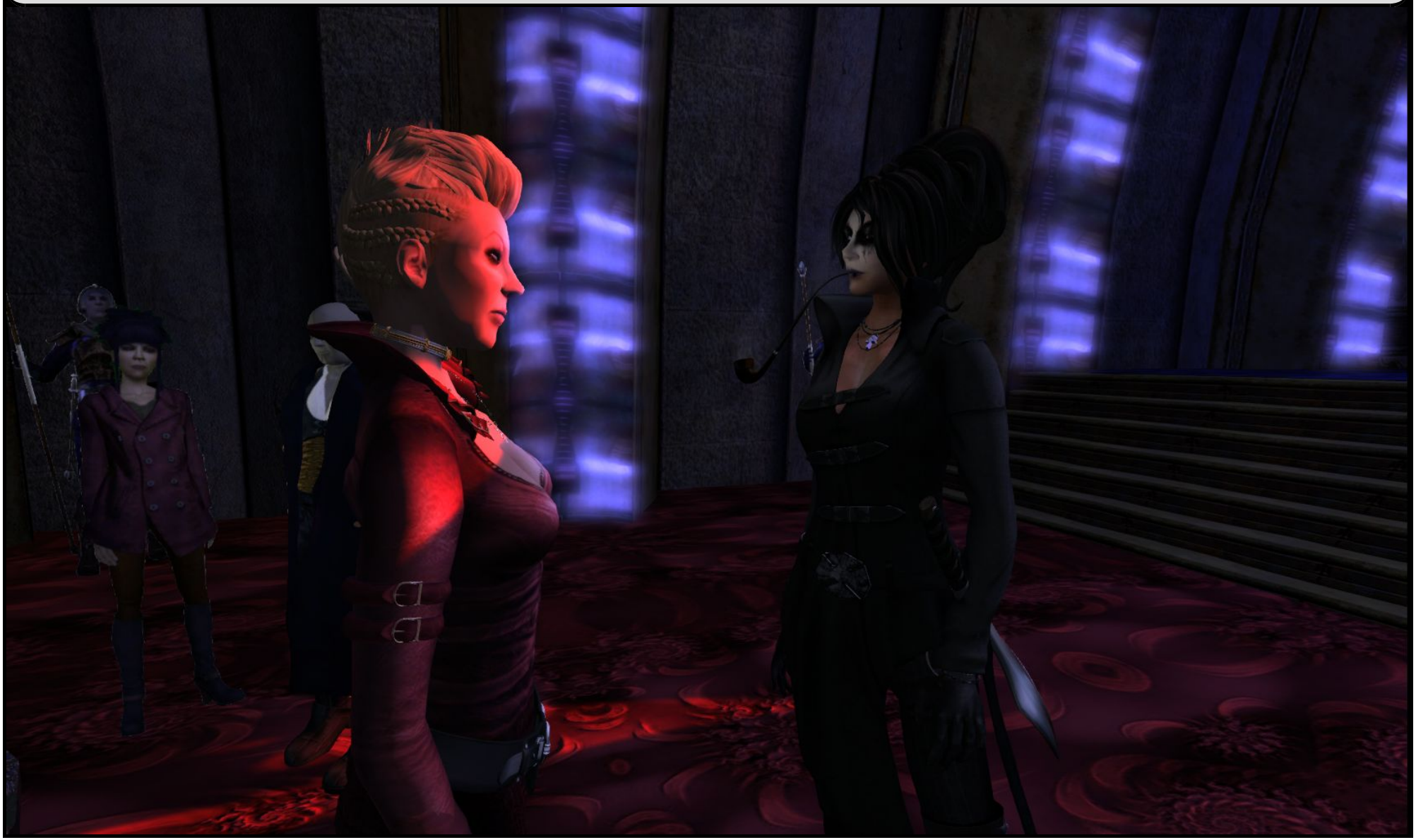
---- Here is for you...

-- ...The head of the tyrant named Luxor Slonk!

(Damn! But this is Alezia! ...And the head of Slonk!)
((What a nightmare! I think that I'm gonna be sick...))

- Thus, the most dangerous tyrant is dead!

--- I don't have enough words to thank you Mary.
-- I have only done my duty Erydak.



- You did much more than that today, believe me.

- Before someone urges mentioning it, Erydak, we've been delayed by a new eruption. This has allowed us to eliminate three new tyrants before they enter on the territory.

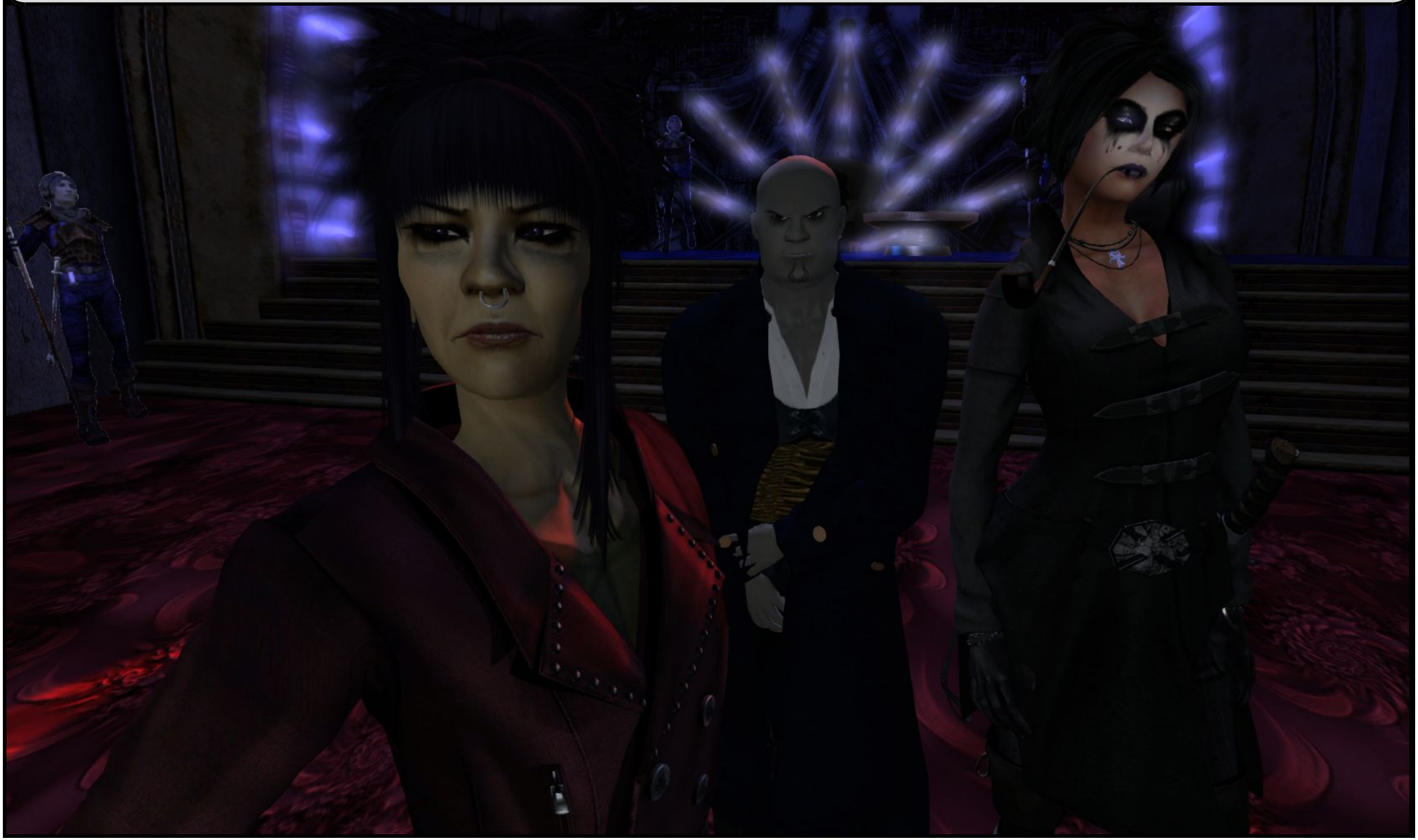
- Some officers among them?
-- No Erydak, only soldiers.

---- But we've taken, among them, these two men.

- You've brought some tyrants to the court?! This is madness!

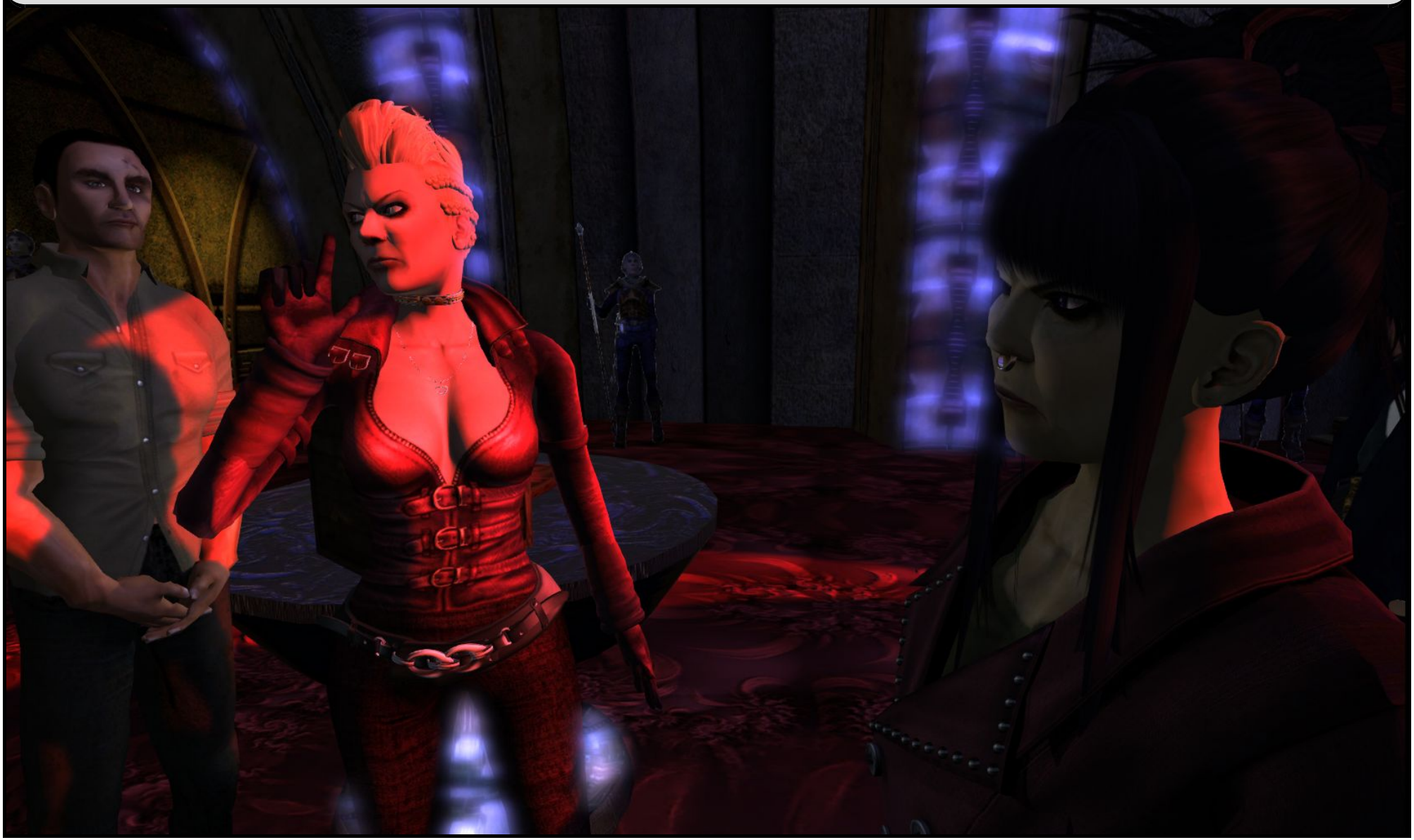
--- They are not tyrants, but Pre-Dallusians!

- Pre-Dallusians? What you are trying to make us swallow?



- Some "U.E."?
--- Exactly.

- Can I...
--- But what make you presume such a thing?



-- That's what they told you maybe? Their presence here is irresponsible!
- You ought to keep them locked!

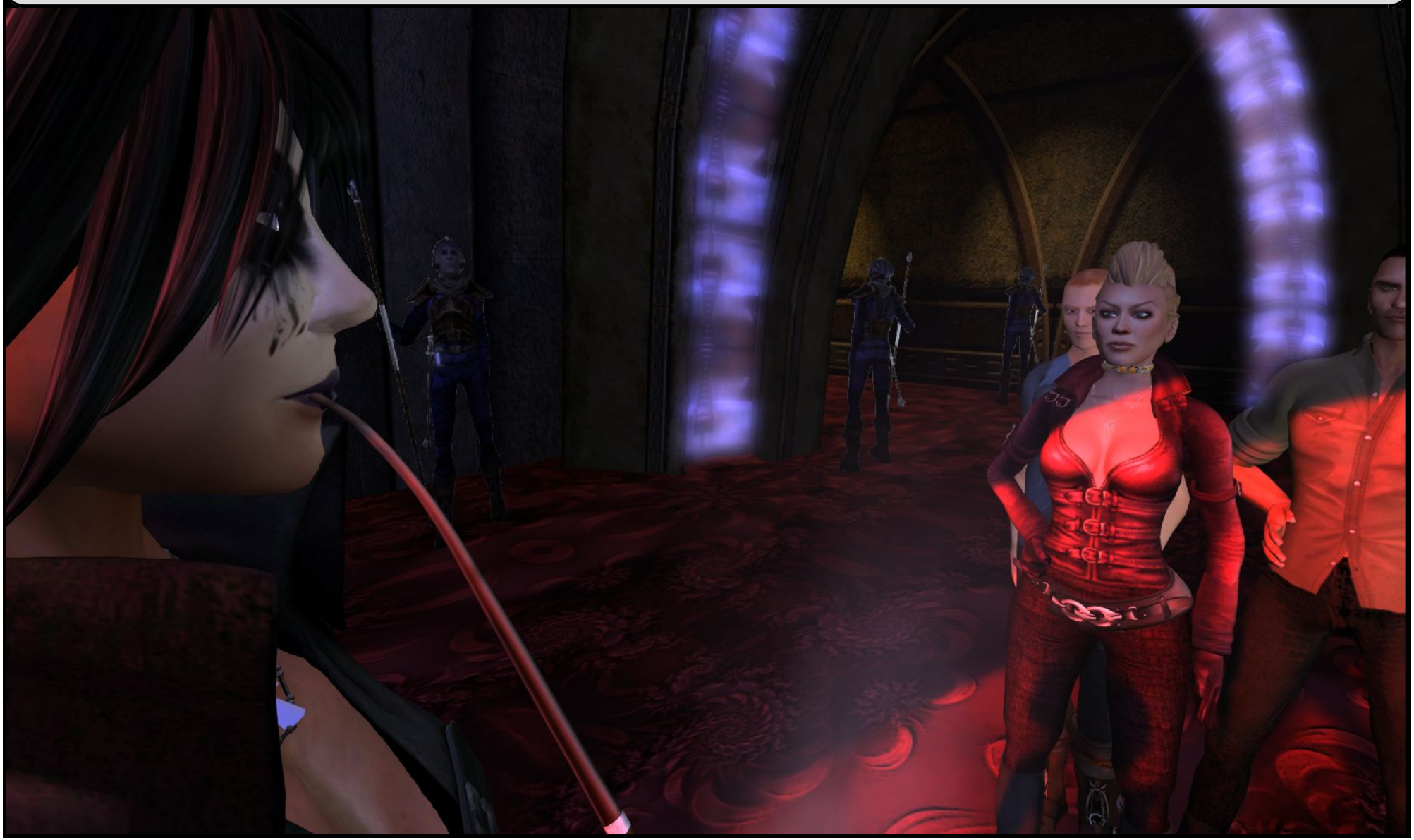
--- Enough!

--- Berigine Tyriam, you affirm they are not dangerous. Is it the case?
-- I confirm Erydak. They have been very cooperative and have acted with civility.

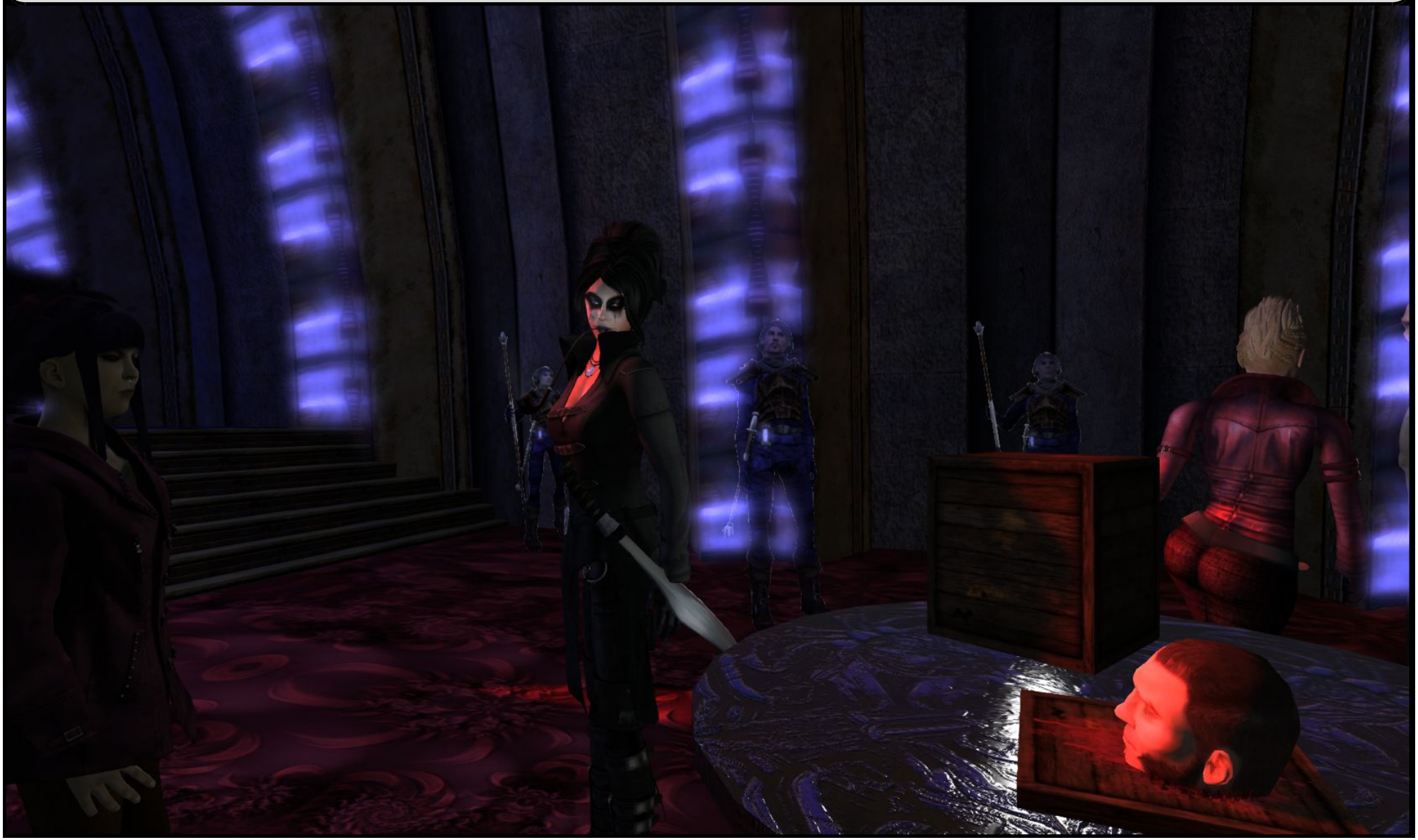
--- "Tell me Mary... This one... Have you ever presented him before?"

--- It's...
---- They arrived yesterday. I don't see how that could have been possible.
- They are indeed not shaped like soldiers...

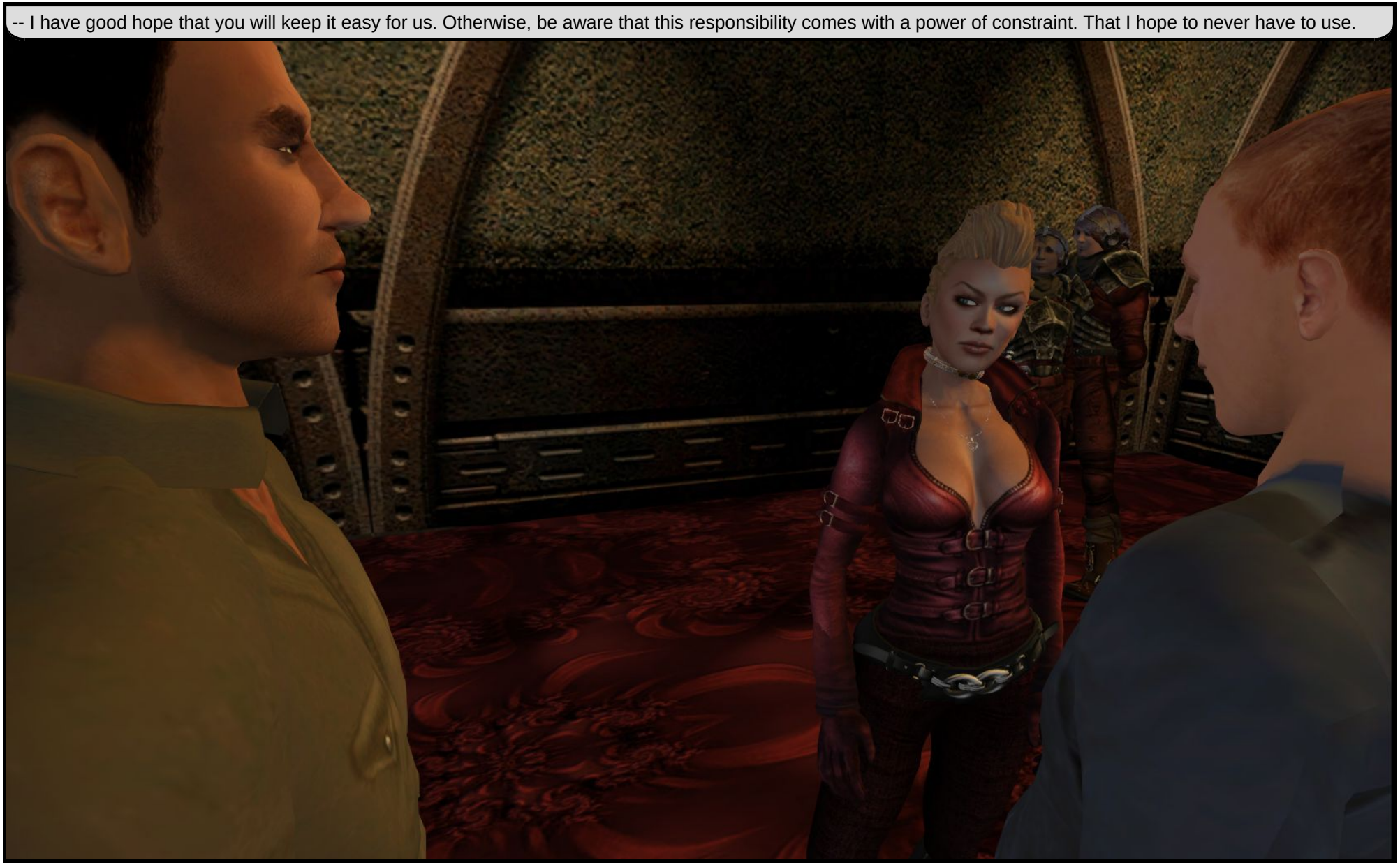
- Berigine Tyriam! Take these two men and lodge them in the sub-citizens' district. Make them identify. You will be directly responsible for their behavior.
-- At your orders.



-- Hystazi! ...Make incinerate this head! I never want to see it again!
- Yes Erydak.



- Gentlemen, you've heard Erydak, you are under my responsibility. In other words, all your wrongdoings will be imputed to me.

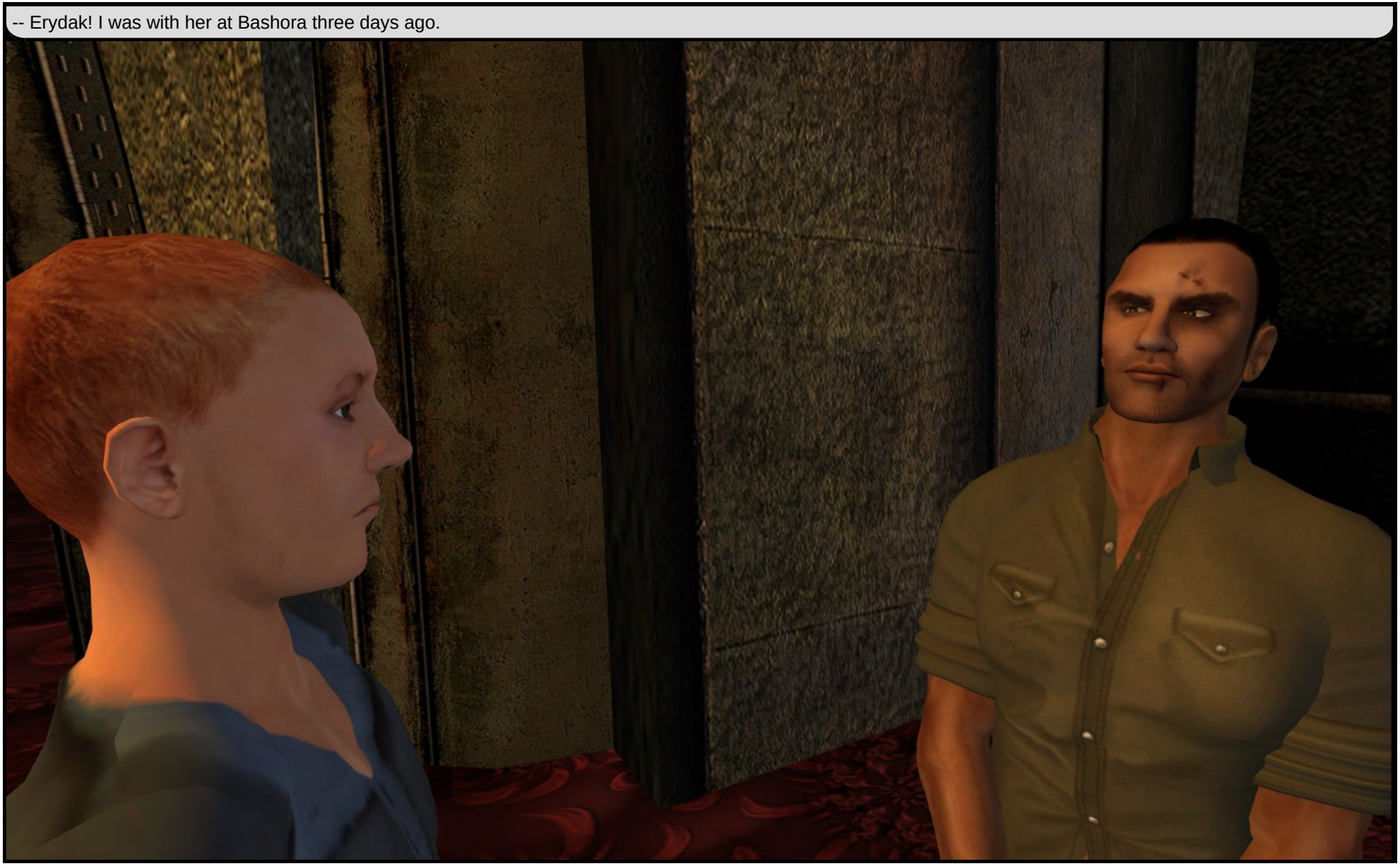

-- I have good hope that you will keep it easy for us. Otherwise, be aware that this responsibility comes with a power of constraint. That I hope to never have to use.

-- Believe me, all I want for now is peace.
- I agree, the less trouble as possible would be appreciated.

- What is the sub-citizens' district?

-- A building where live the sub-citizen castes and the foreigners. Except the criminals of course... Please, give me one minute. Would you?

- I know her!
-- Who?

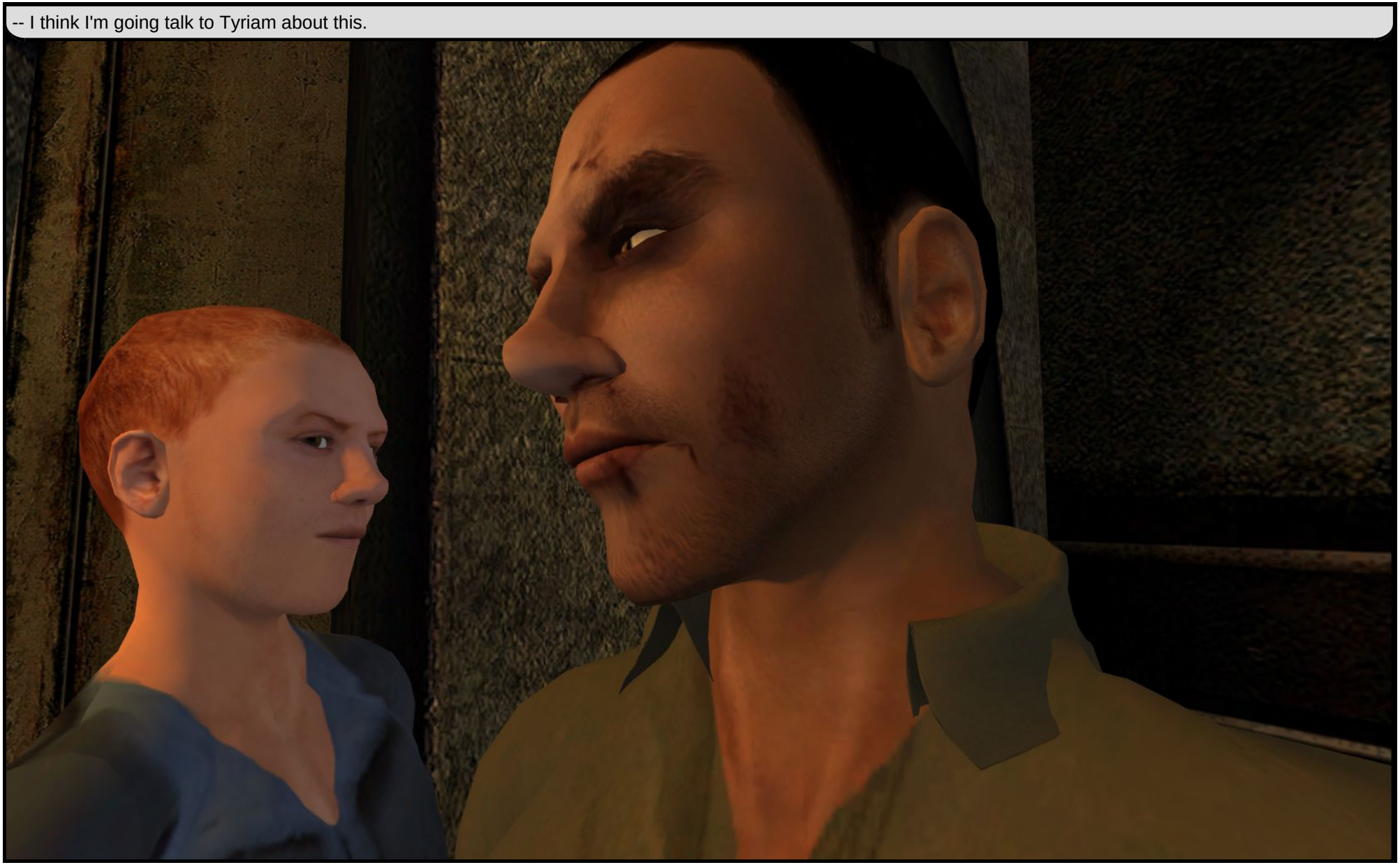

-- Erydak! I was with her at Bashora three days ago.

-- What? And she wouldn't have recognized you?

-- It surprises me too. I've got to admit that I don't understand why.

- She may be confused! Did you smell what she smokes?

-- I think I'm going talk to Tyriam about this.



-- I'm not sure if it's a good idea. Trust my salesman's instinct, speaking too much without knowing more about it could harm us. Test the waters first.

--- Come on gentlemen, follow me!

--- What will happen next?

--- You will be certainly assigned to some tasks, but don't have too many expectations. For the Terkasides, the sub-citizens are the dregs of society, and you'll be treated by them as such.

- This is somewhat demoralizing!

--- This is here all the complexity of the Terkasides. Even if I have the rank of berigine, I'm still also a sub-citizen. And trust me, they remind me every day.

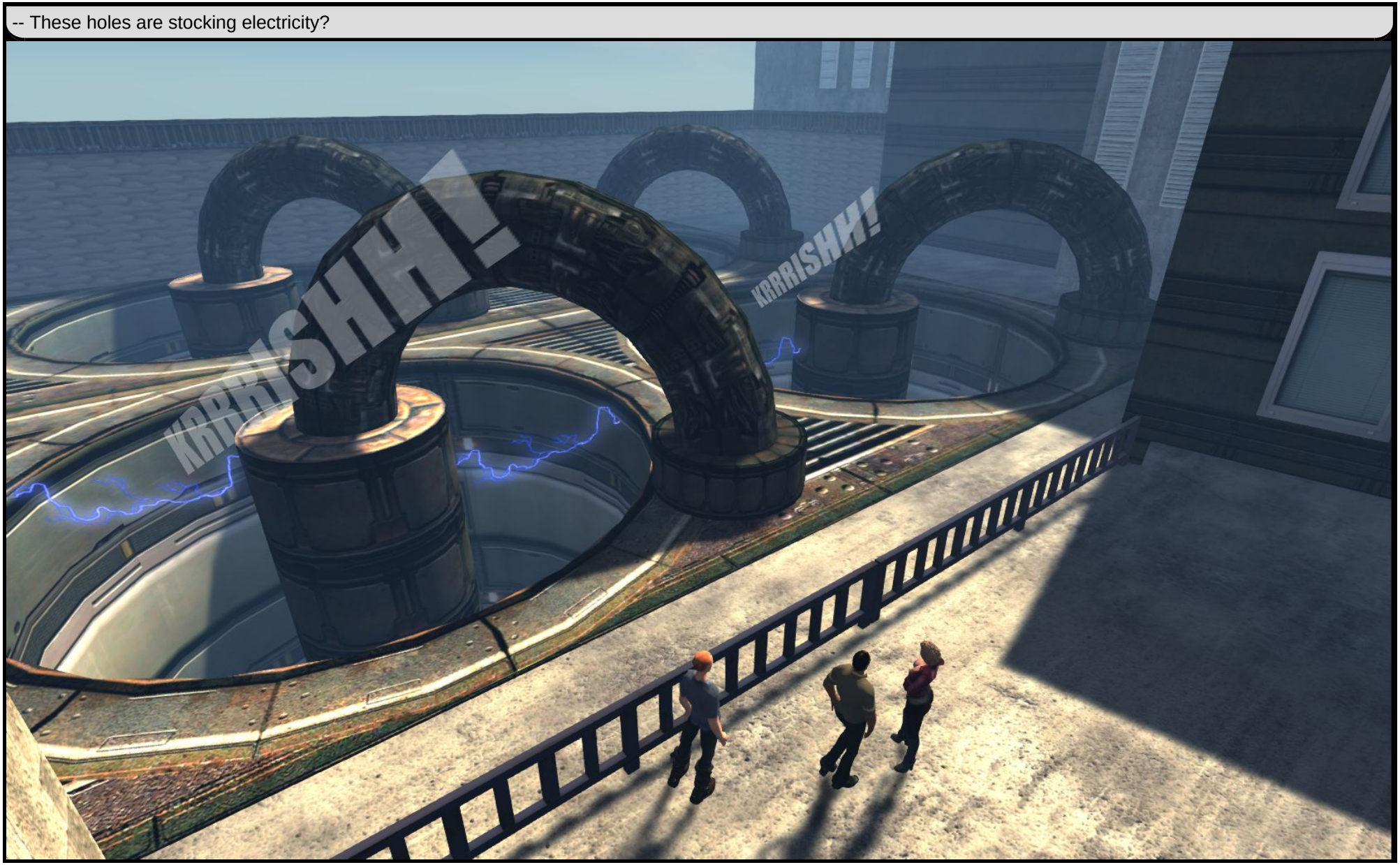
-- Remake our lives as slaves! I do hope that I'm going to wake up soon from this nightmare!

--- I know. But remember that it could have been worst. I'll try to get you some decent tasks... This way gentlemen...

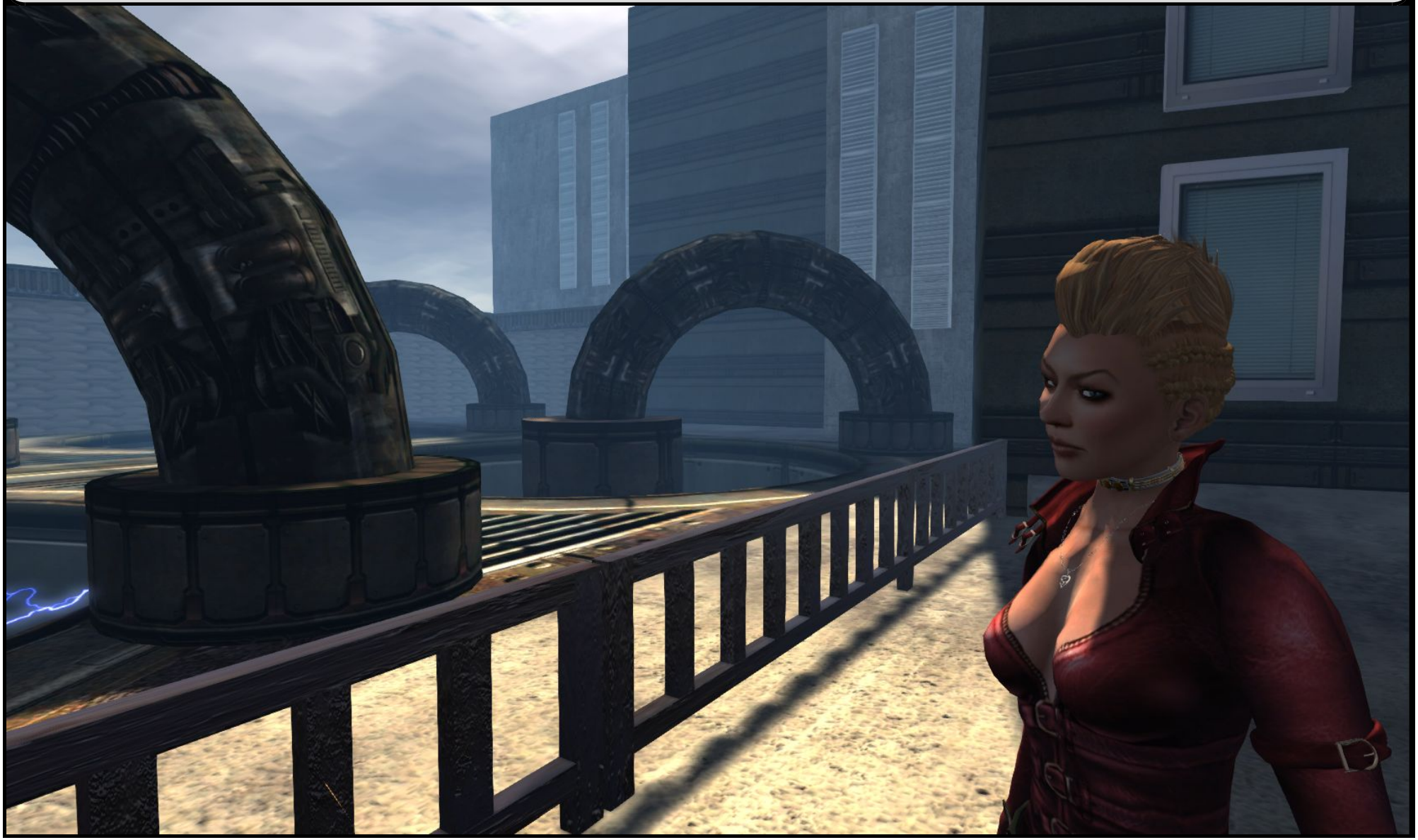
-- What are those installations?

--- These are electrostatic collectors. Everything runs on electricity here. Including the vehicles and the weapons. You must have already noticed.

-- These holes are stocking electricity?



- It's a system that works by induction. The energy is captured in accumulators.



- There is also a separated installation to recharge the vehicles and the personal energy packs. You must have seen those that the guards are wearing on their belt.

-- This is rather interesting as system.
- I would say, they are rather brilliant those Terkasides!

- Um... The accumulators are all imported from the Jijuterk. Nobody here really knows how to make them. Only the collectors are locally made.

-- That being said, stay away from these wells, they discharge easily on everything that enters inside. If you fall inside, you would be dead before having reached the bottom.

-- Everything seems recent here.
- You are right. This was only a village three years ago.

-- Wouldn't be better to move aside?

- Goodness! But... Will it stop?

BANG!!!

- Look out!

GRIIINNNNCH !!!
CLUNK !
CLUNK !

-- Are you hurt?
- I think I'm OK!

-- Shit! Daniel!

-- Daniel!

-- He's dead!

Later...

- It's getting too much bad luck in such a short lapse of time!
-- I'm really sorry for your friend.

- They will take him to the mortuary.

-- This vehicle was going without any driver ... Who's the fucking moron who let this happen?!

-- I don't think it was an accident.
- What do you mean?

-- There is very few chances to see a heavy vehicle accidentally crush the only three humans who were walking in a city of thirty thousand people.

-- We would have been targeted?
- This is more than possible. Our demise would suit some people.

-- My hands are shaking.
- It's adrenaline. The incident was rather traumatic!

- I will have known him only two days. I was getting used to him. He didn't deserve to end like this.

-- There is a smell of conspiracy. I don't like what is happening...

- Come on, I know a place where we can rest a little.

- Here we are. Probably the oldest spot in town!

-- At the back, please!
--- Of course Berigine.

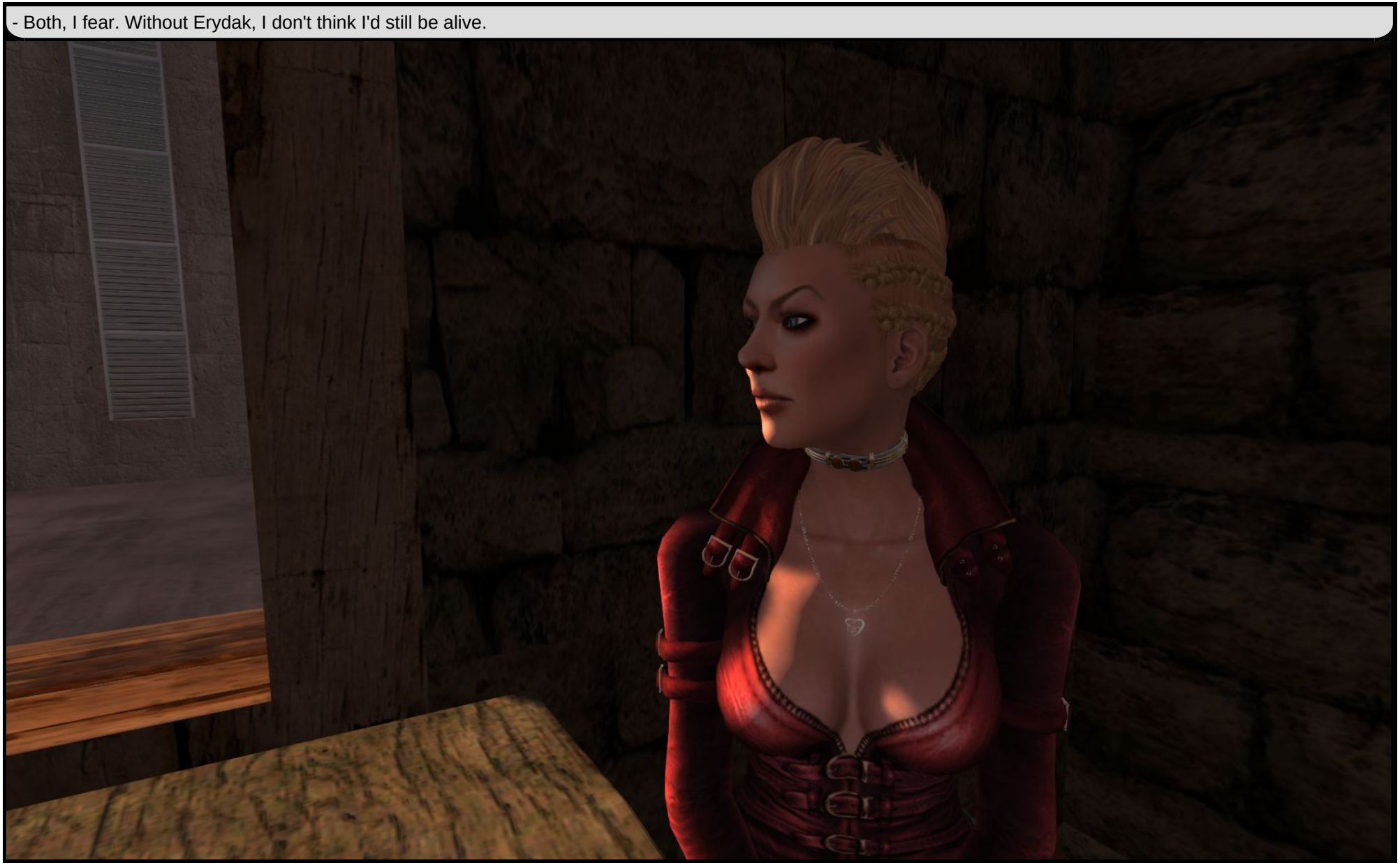
- Can I offer you something?
--- Bring us two kwiza. The strongest, please.

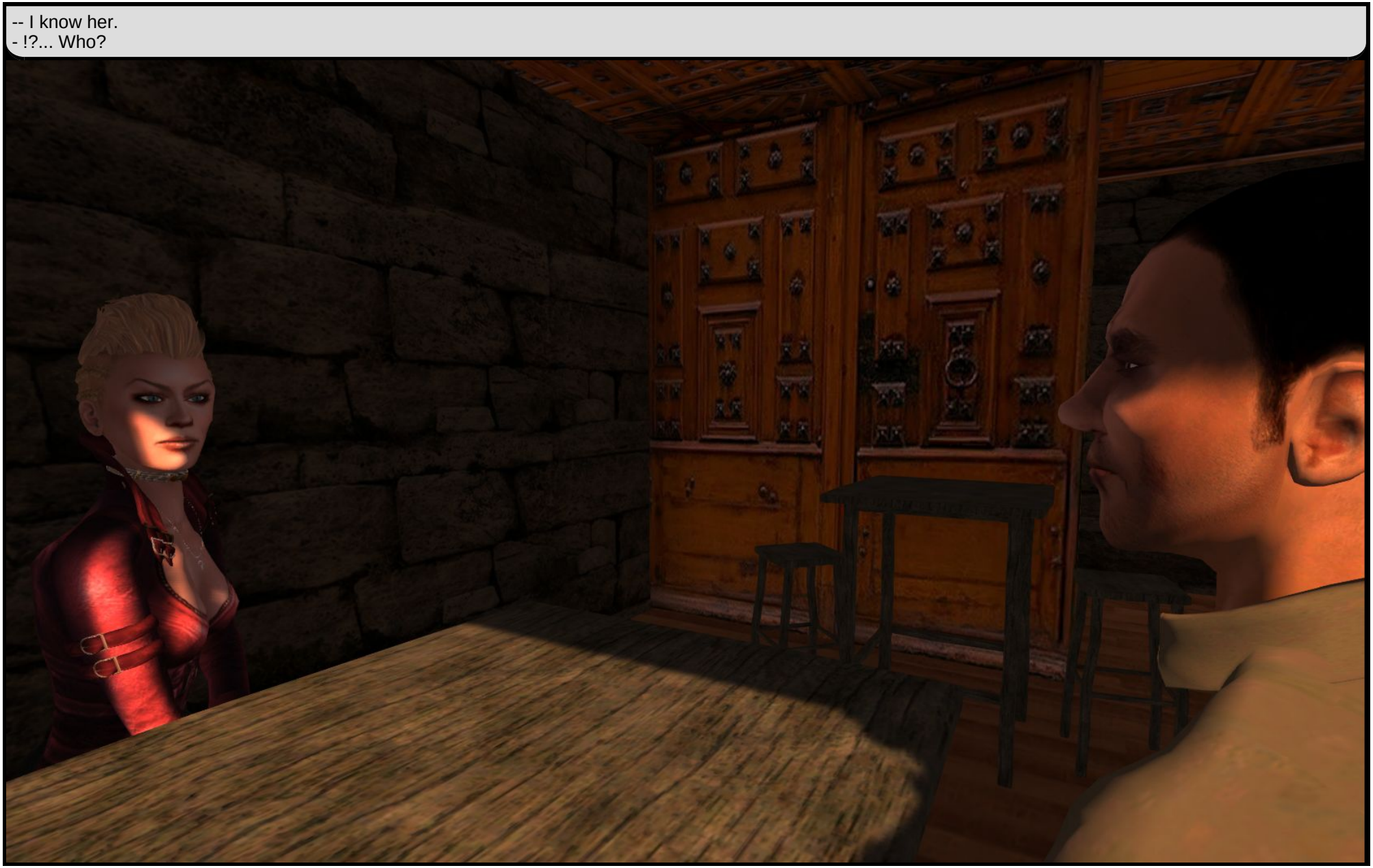
- Kwiza?
-- A strong alcohol... If you don't like, I'll drink it.

- I owe you my life.
-- I wish I could also save the Daniel's one.

- So you have enemies among the Terkasides? Or is it our presence that disturbs that much?

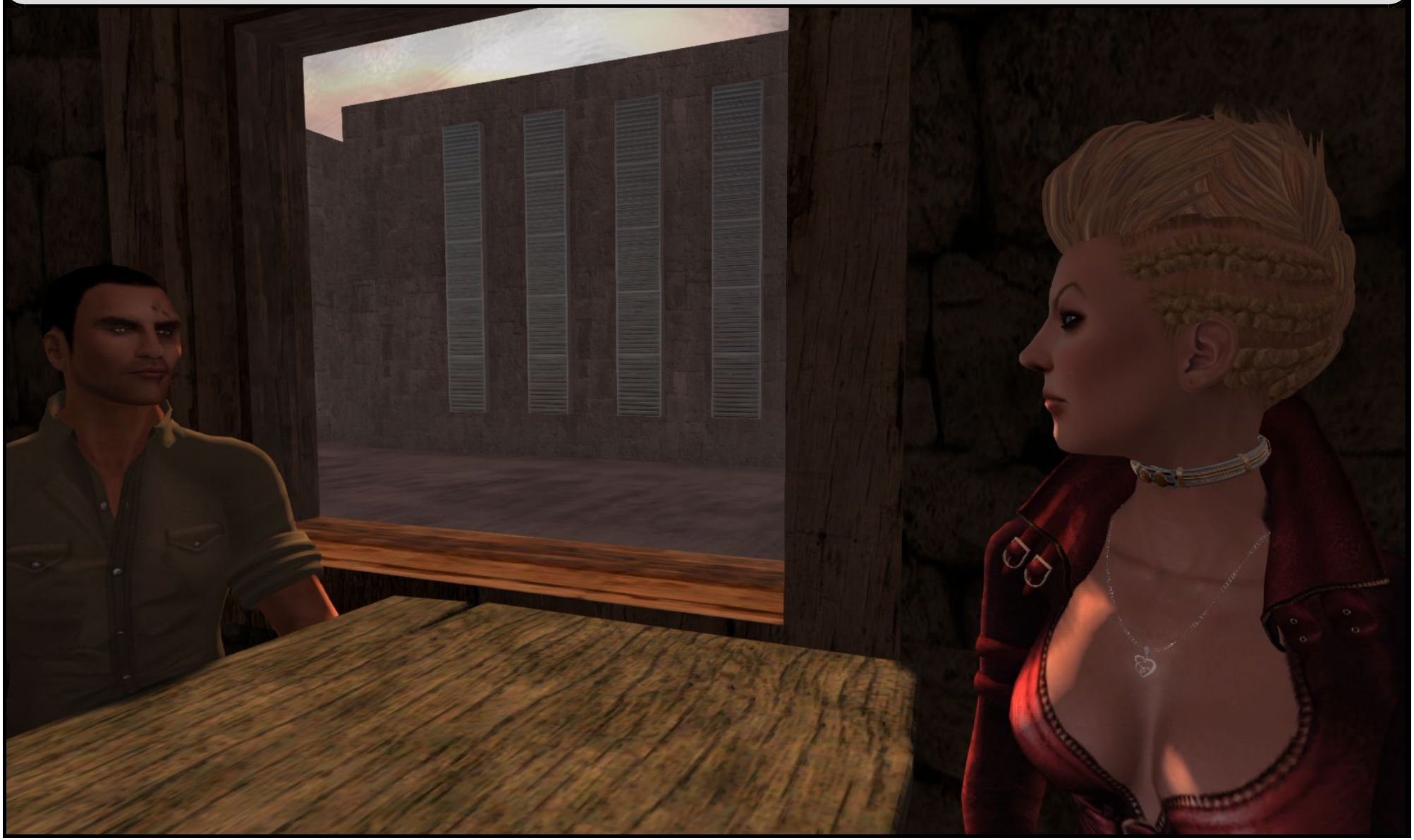
- Both, I fear. Without Erydak, I don't think I'd still be alive.




-- I know her.
- !?... Who?

- Erydak, I know her! I was still with her there is 3 days!

-- I'm not sure to understand. What do you mean?
- We were both at Bashora. Her real name is Alezia.

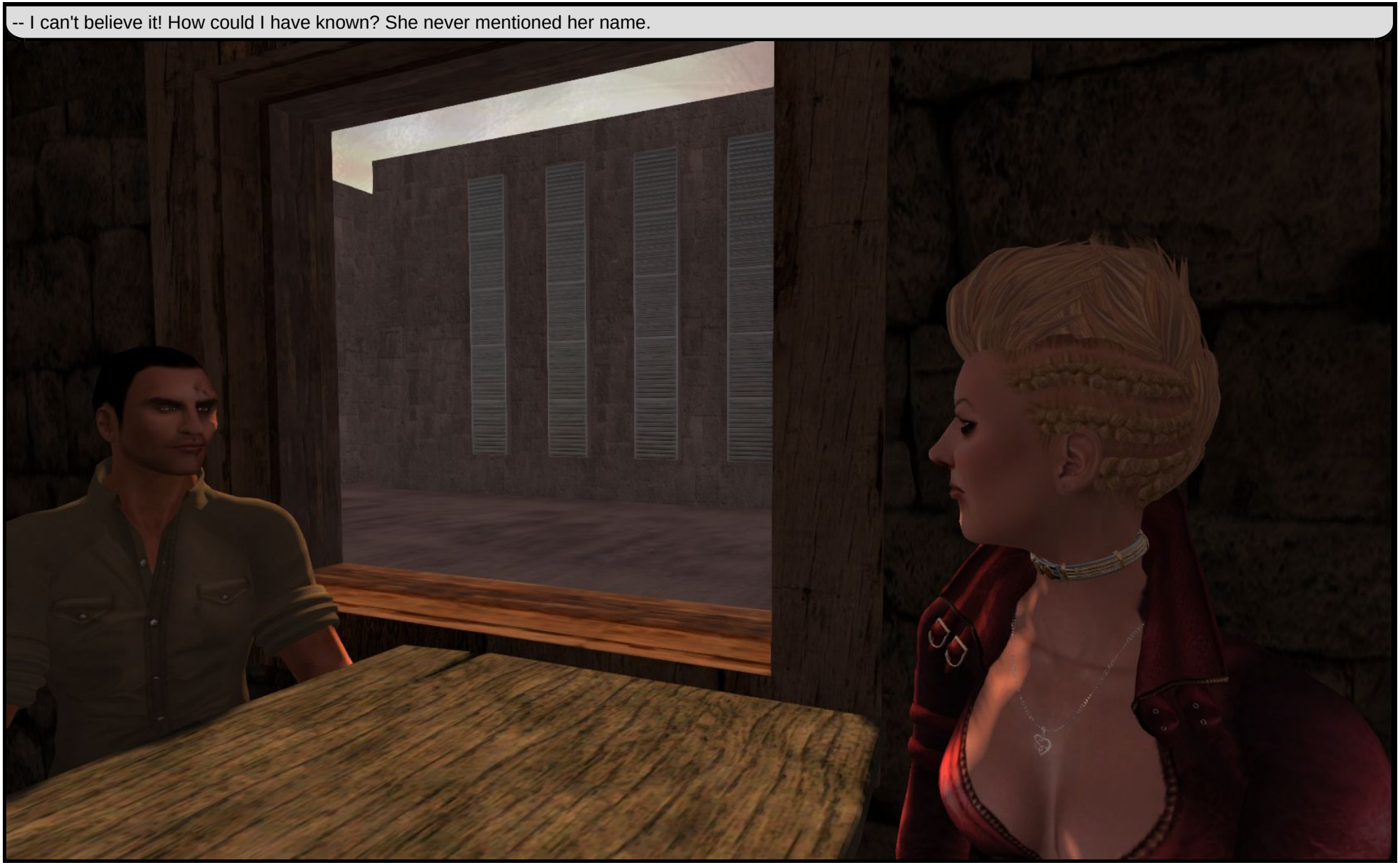


-- Alezia?
- Alezia Kurdis.

- What!? ...the Ollen's murderess!?

- The same Alezia. But she never killed Ollen, she has been used as a scapegoat.

- She... She never told me that...


-- I can't believe it! How could I have known? She never mentioned her name.

--- This would explain the impression of "deja vu" that she had when she saw you at the audience.

- She didn't seem to really recognize me.

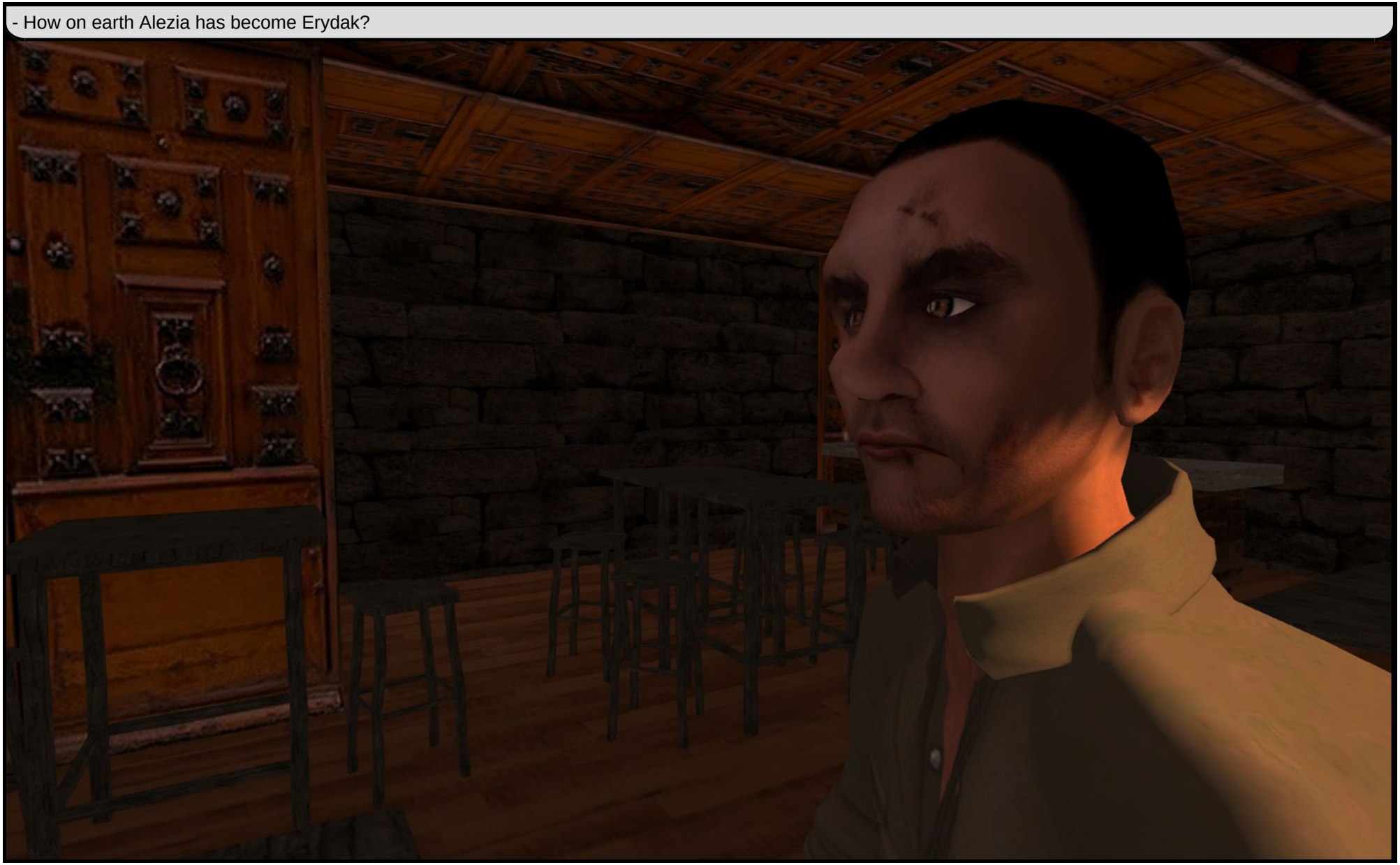
-- But she's arrived here almost three years ago!
- Do you think she could have forgotten after three years?

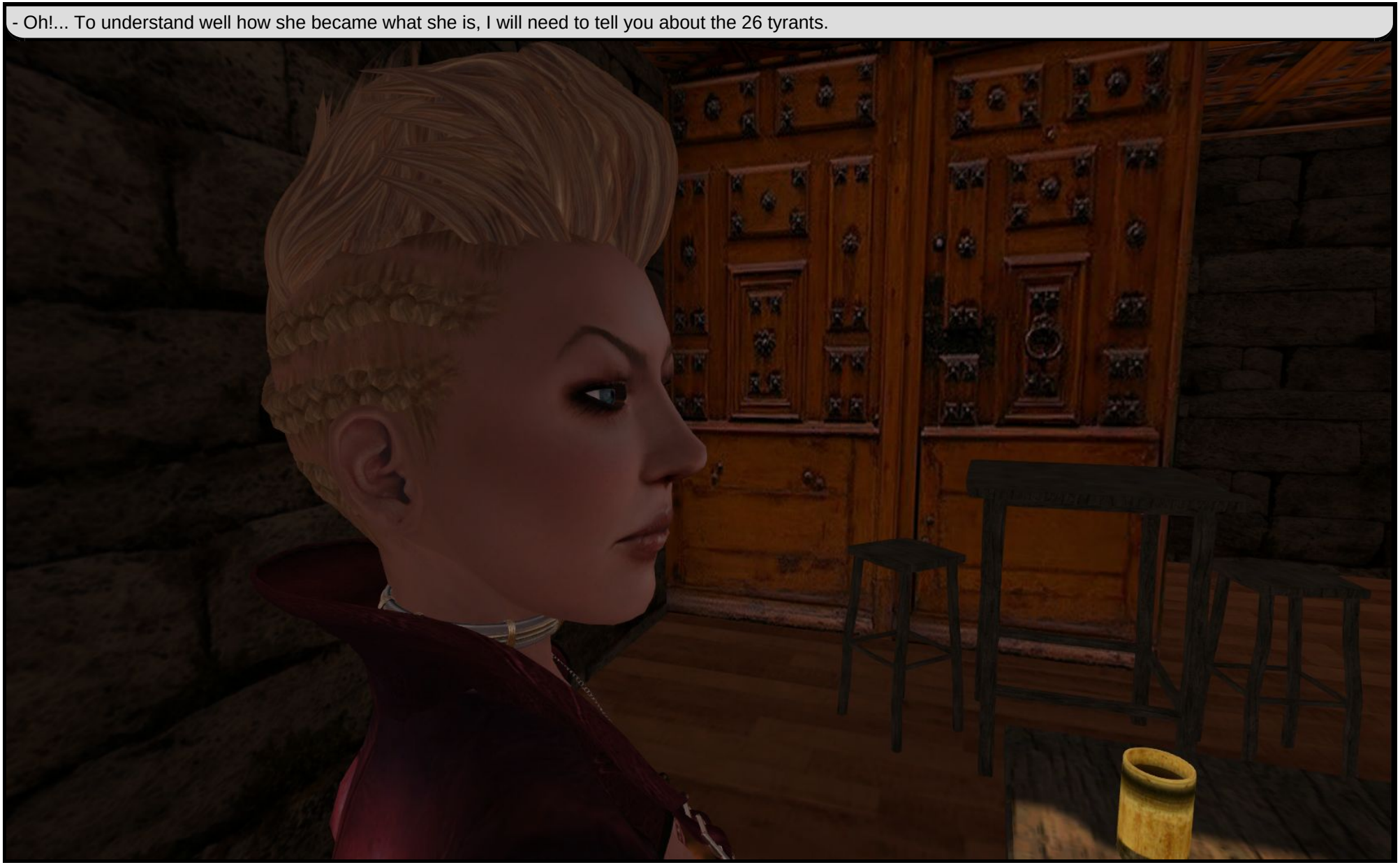
- I don't think, but she has already told me to not have any clear memories of the events of her passage.

- She remembers the expression "U.E.", but not of me!
-- We've often seen cases of damaged brain after a passage through the Taalus. This is an experience that can leave sequelae.

-- She called you Mary. Is it your real name?
- Yes, Marya Jaffah or simply Mary. This is the name that I had before arriving here.

- How on earth Alezia has become Erydak?

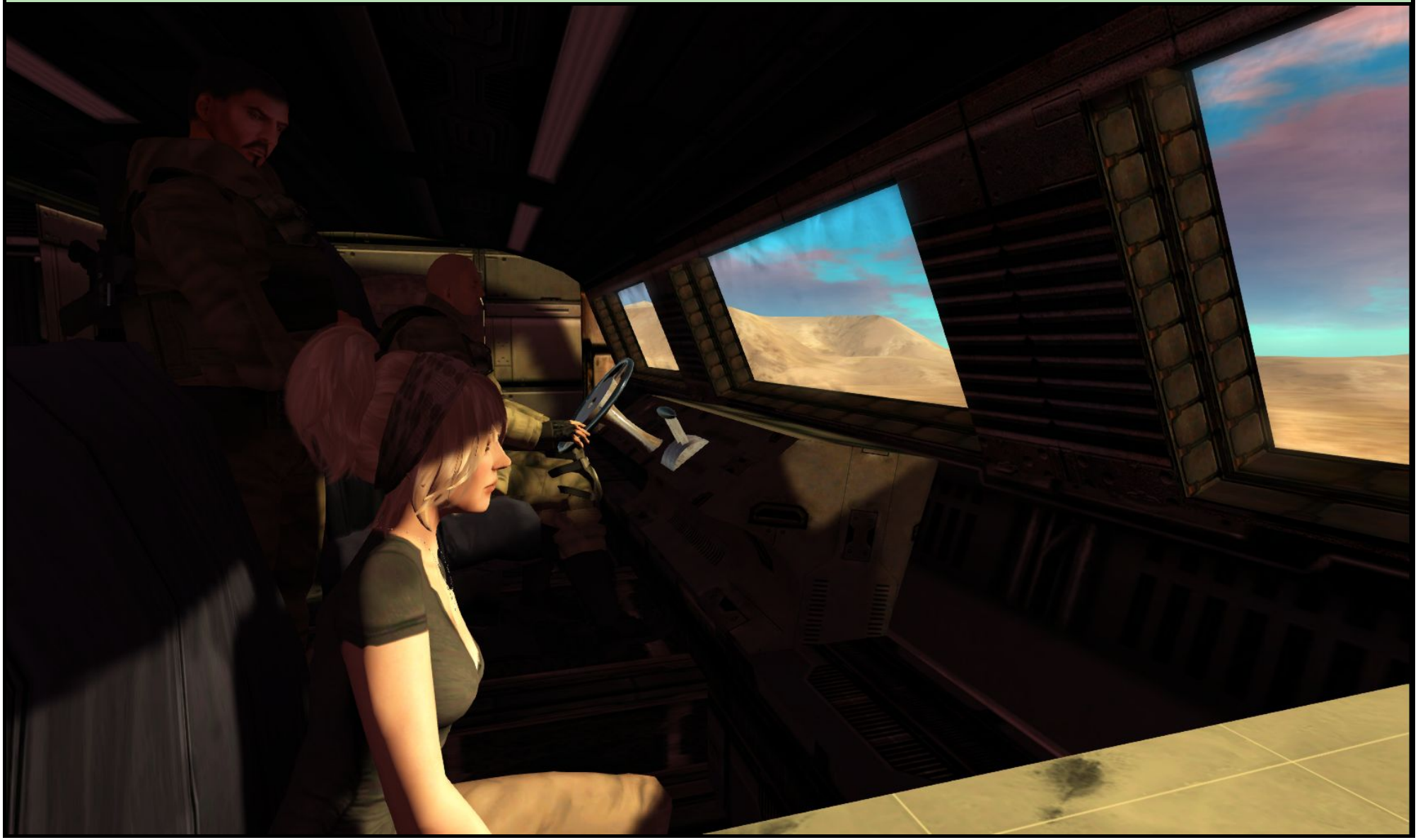



- Oh!... To understand well how she became what she is, I will need to tell you about the 26 tyrants.

- The 26 tyrants? What is it?
-- This is what has made of Erydak the leader of the Terkaside armies.

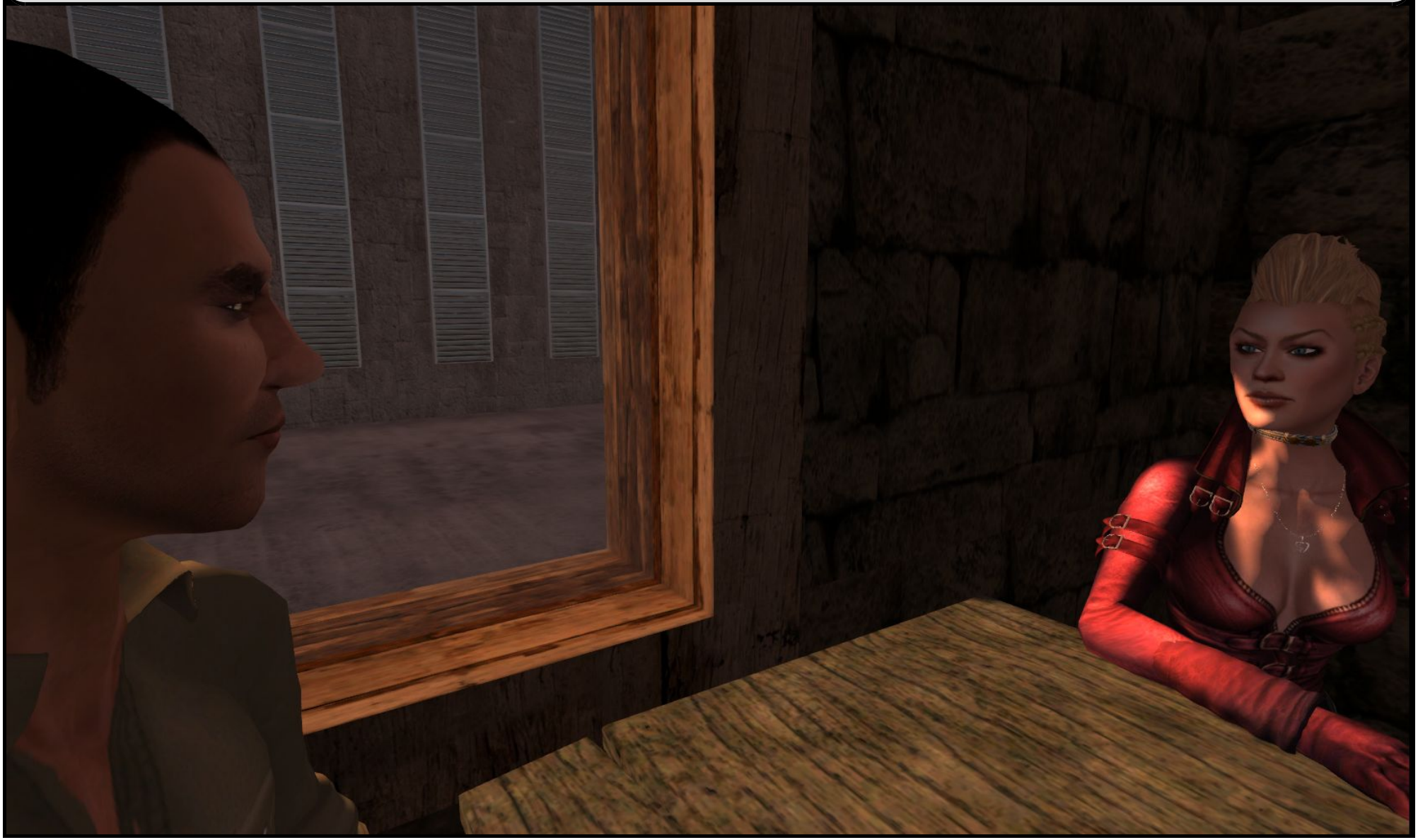
- All this has begun when I worked at Bashora...

I had been sent on the ground as a technician with two other scientists and a detachment of the Dallusian special force.



We were assigned to a strip of land severely affected by the eruptions of the Taalus.

- The Shade?
-- I see you know what I'm talking about...



So, we were into the Shade when the Taalus has struck.

Me, a colleague and 22 soldiers, we suddenly found ourselves here. That was a bit more than five years ago.

At that time, the Terkasides were structured in scattered clans and lived relatively in peace. It was a people who had practically never experienced war or other forms of conflict.

The soldiers, rapidly out of resources, began to tax the people in order to ensure their livelihood.

It took only one week before one of them kills my colleague after he tried to stop them to force me to have sex.

-- The soldiers have always despised the scientific staff. I won't tell you what they made me endure during the months that followed. This is when I started to drink kwiza.

- The soldiers of the Dallusian special forces has been trained for war since the age of 12 years old. They are specifically selected according their lack of empathy, in order to obtain shock troops who won't stop at nothing.

Six months later, four new soldiers has been rejected by the Taalus and have joined the group, including an officer, the captain Hornak.

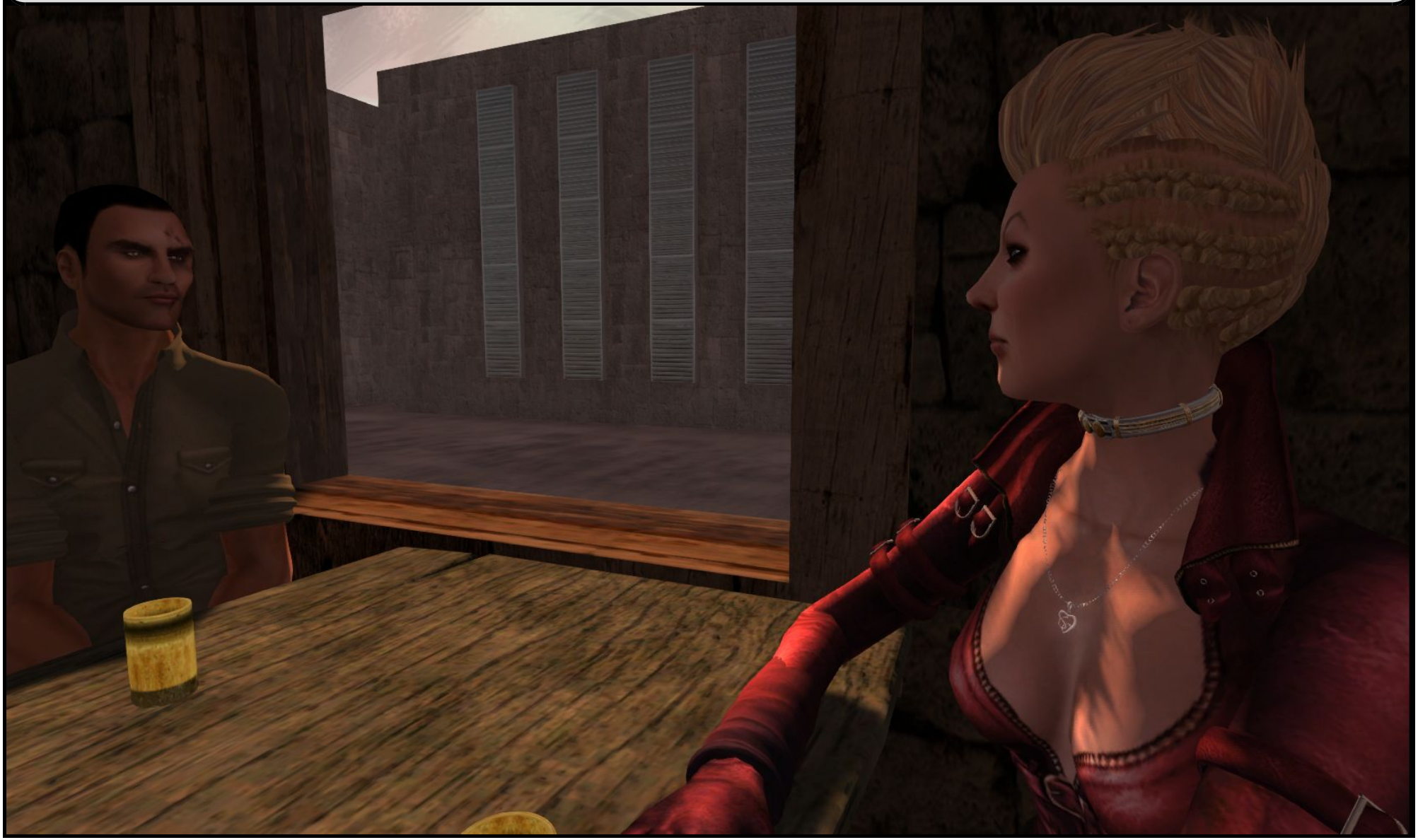
It's from this moment that the 26 got organized to sow terror and establish their power over the clans.

It's also from that moment that the horrors have really begun during the punitive plunders. Devastation, murders, torture, gang rapes...

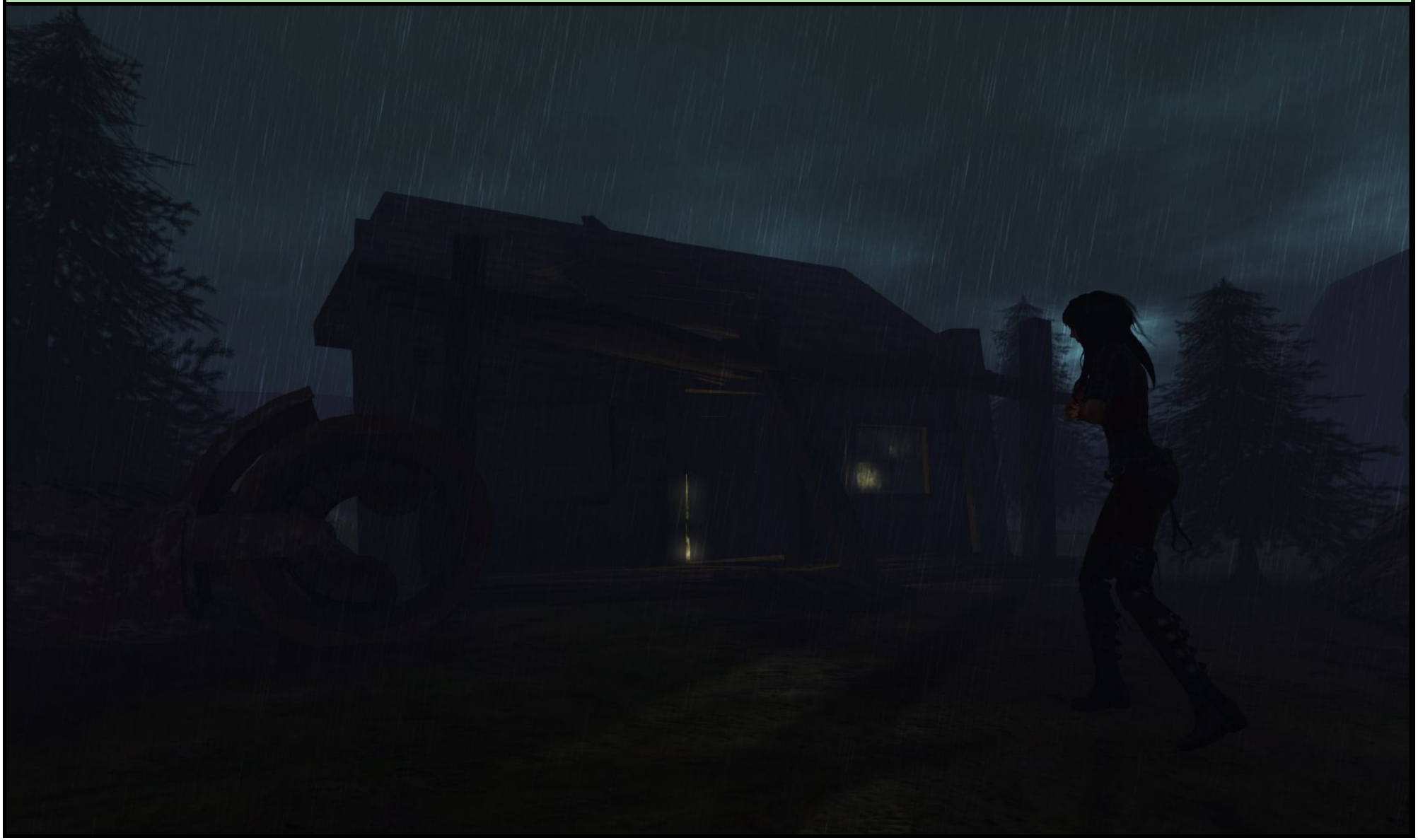
The Dallusian soldiers were already very brutal. Once deprived of their social constraints, they became monsters...

Captain Hornak has quickly established a reign of terror, forcing the clans to obey and to organize the authority around him.

-- It's in this context where Erydak arrived, as I said, approximately three years ago.



It's by a winter evening that Erydak arrived at the Hystazi's shelter, completely exhausted...

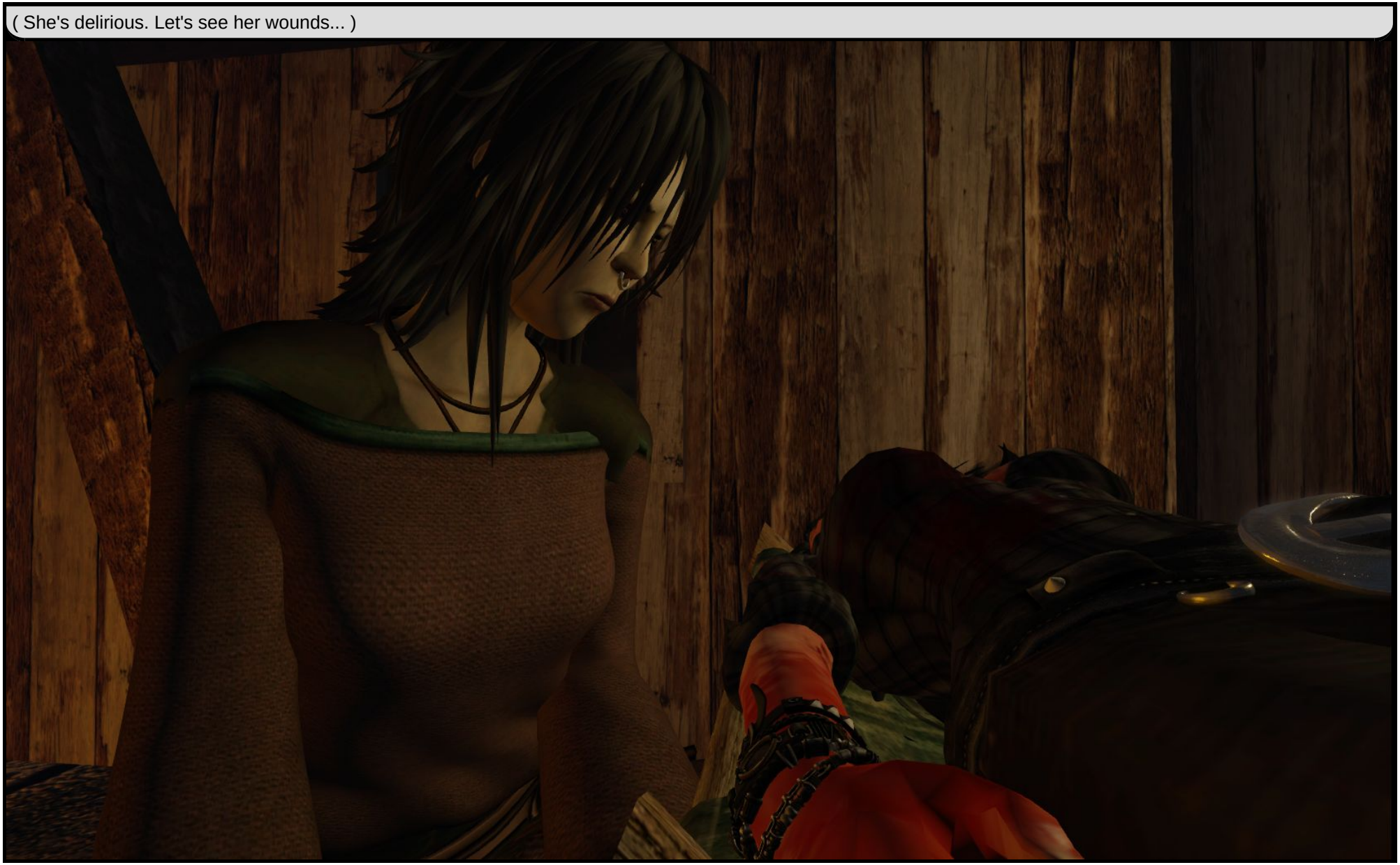


At that time, Hystazi, who you have seen at the court, was in exile in the Dalsa, to escape from the Nylo clan, fell under the control of the 26 tyrants...

Hystazi has found Erydak at her door, covered of blood and confused.

(Would she be one of them? Maybe I better to put her out of her misery. She's unconscious, perhaps she has lost too much blood?)
-- ...No!... Step back... No...

(She's delirious. Let's see her wounds...)



(She has only a few scratches... That wouldn't be her blood!?...)

- From who comes that blood "ery-dak"?

- ... The Slonk's soldiers!... you know... You have told them!...

- (The soldiers' blood...) Sleep "ery-dak"! You must recover... (We have to leave at the morning.)

- Hystazi moved and went to hide her in the village of Kentor, in Dalsa.

-- You must understand that Hystazi was and still is a feared and respected person among the Terkasides. She's from a family of Turza, a group of moral guides who have their access to the clan leaders.

So this is at Kentor that Erydak became aware of what the tyrants were doing and of what they were capable of. According Hystazi, she swore at this moment to solve the problem.

-- It was shortly after that the events have rushed. I will remember that all my life...

The 26 were moving in three hordes, and they were meeting regularly to celebrate...

During the two years where they have raged, I was for these bastards their bitch in service. The one who they were playing dice between them every night, without any possible objection.

One moonless night, while I shared the bed of one of the soldiers...

Erydak did an approach, silently by the fields...

Then, just before dawn, she cut off the electric power of the building, by removing the power cells...

And she executed her plan, only armed with an electric baton and a hunting knife.

She sneaked into the den...

Her artificial vision gave her a serious advantage in the dark.

Too drunk or asleep, given the late hour, they haven't seen her coming.

I woke up at dawn, horrified, bathing in the blood of the soldier who slept beside me...

I was terrified...

She had cut them the throat, one by one, in total darkness, without even waking me.

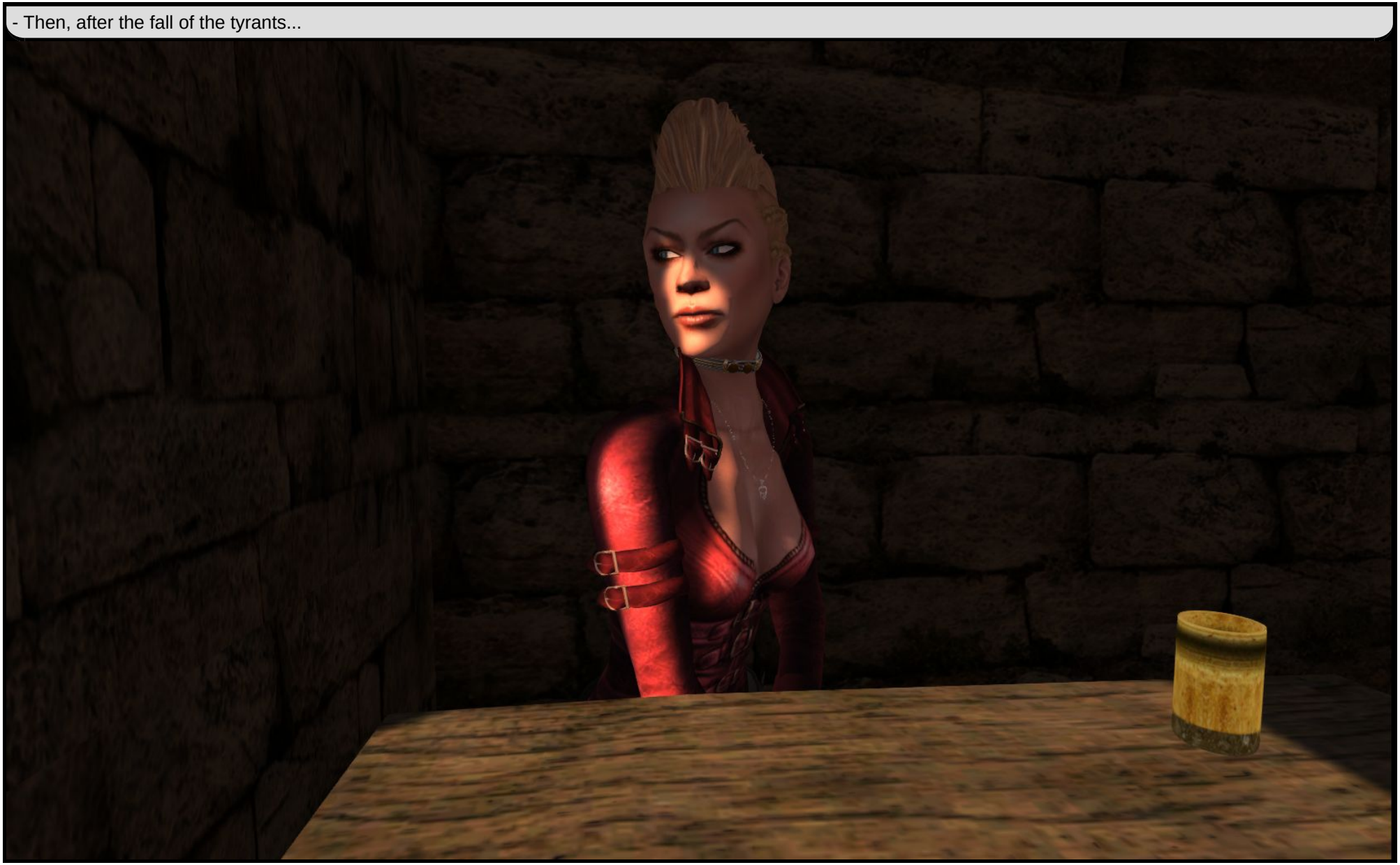
The 26 tyrants had ceased their reign in only one night.

- I've been the only one that she's spared that day. And without her intervention, I'm pretty sure that I would have been executed the same day.

- And it's how she has been named Erydak?

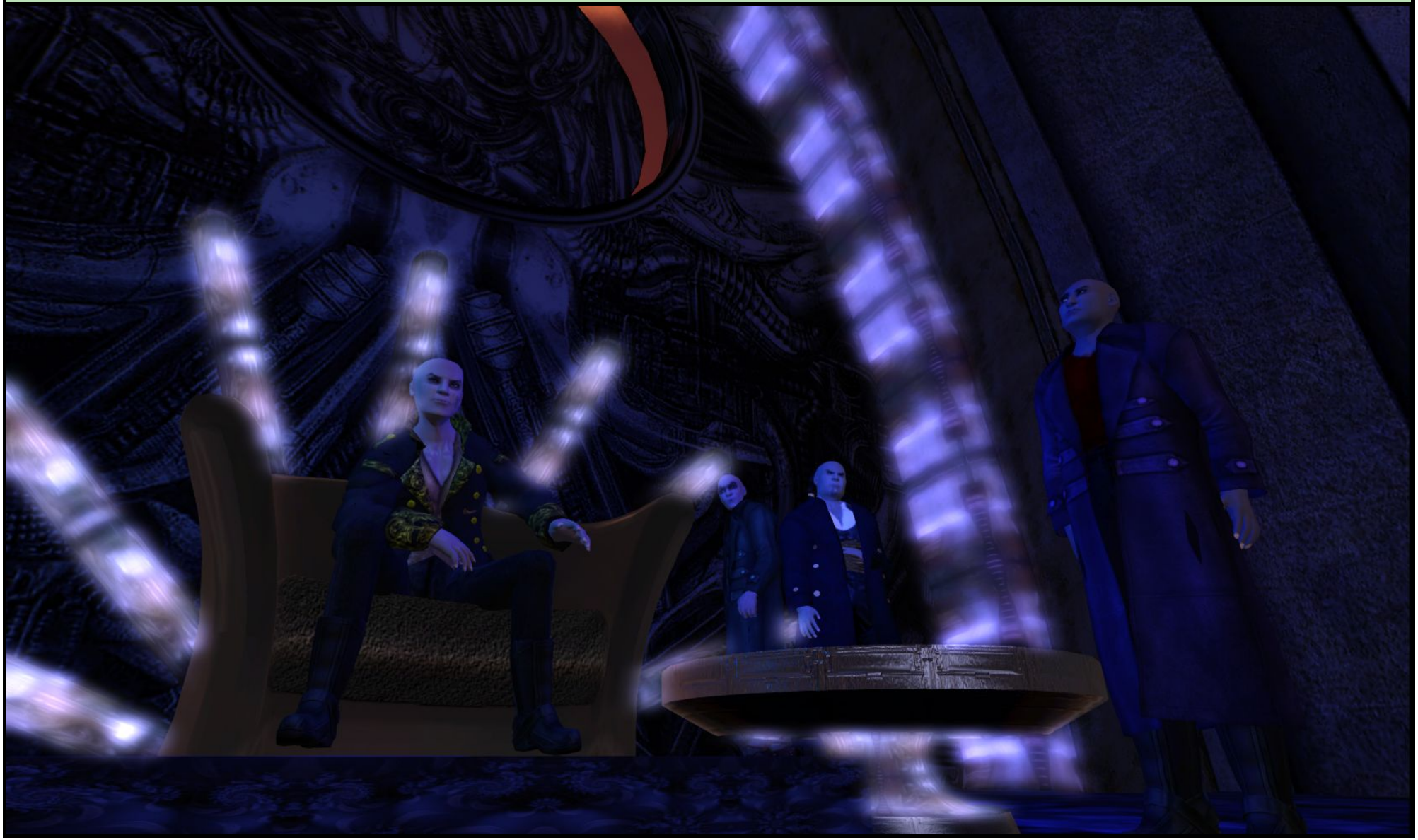
- Hmm! Not exactly. "Erydak" simply means "dark eye". This is how the Terkasides called her.

- Then, after the fall of the tyrants...



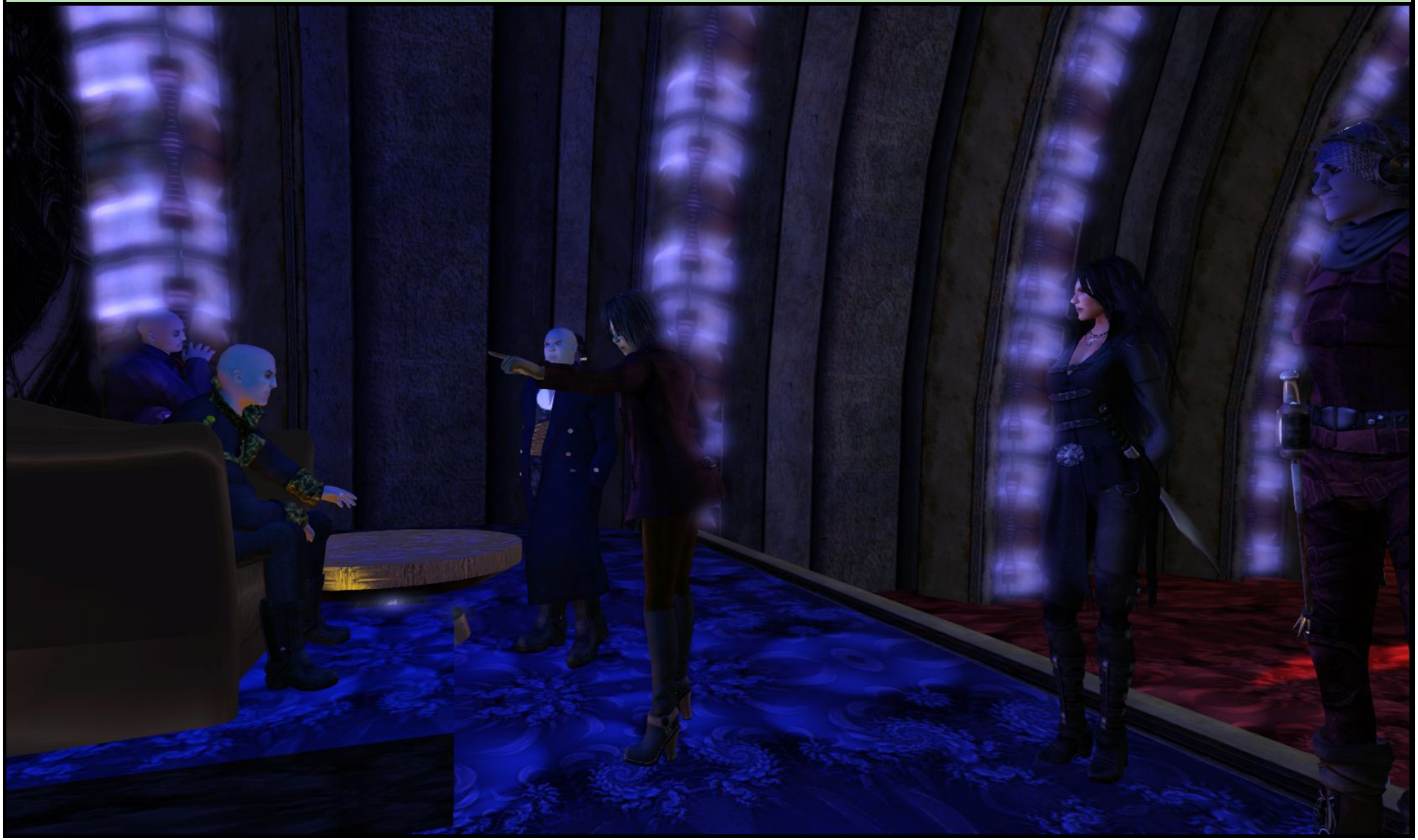
The clan leaders, the "Kruls", have met to take over what the tyrants had established.

They elected a king, a Krul of the Kruls, Kwerny from the Terk clan.



But after a few months, new Dallusian soldiers appeared and soon came to violence. The Terkasides, still haunted by the tyrants, have only made rushing the things faster.

Hystazi and the Krul Erifrin have then requested that Erydak was to be sent to solve the problem.



What Erydak did, after have organized a troop of elite fighters to assist her.

-- The Terkasides idolized her so much you know. They are impressionable nature and have an unusual sense of the loyalty.

She inspired them both strength and terror. She quickly had many Terkasides ready to follow her.

Kwerny, the King, began have fear of her and devised a plan to make her disappear...

...But the assassin that he sent, missed its target, and it's her Captain who was shot.

Then Erydak has turned against Kwerny and seized power with the help of her elite guard.

Hystazi has been named berigine. She has been mandated to deal with the Kruls.

Hystazi, skillful negotiator, has obtained from the Kruls the full military power for Erydak... And as well as the execution of Kwerny.

-- Erydak is really a strange woman I must say. Irascible, visibly bruised, maybe traumatized, sometimes she shows no mercy. But she can also be a great friend. It's like if a darkness masks her true person. She's the only friend I have here anyway.

- And Hystazi, this witch has always encouraged her dark and ruthless side for her own personal revenges and her thirst for power.

-- It's next to this that Erydak has named me berigine. Who's better than a Dallusian to be able to recognize another? My nomination was made to the dismay of Terkasides who wanted to finish with the "whore of the tyrants". By the way, it's what means the charming name of "Tyriam" they gave me.

- But Erydak seems to be only the shadow of herself lately... She smokes too much of this substance that Hystazi gives her.

- She was already smoking when I was with her. She said that it was to be able to sleep...

- She already told me she's doing recurring dreams. In my opinion, this is hiding a trauma, or at least something repressed.

- You've never planned to leave? And see those famous Jijuterk?

- Leave? Oh! I would have liked. But 1200 miles of wild lands and forests, by foot, and to risk being returned once there... It's discouraging just to think about it.

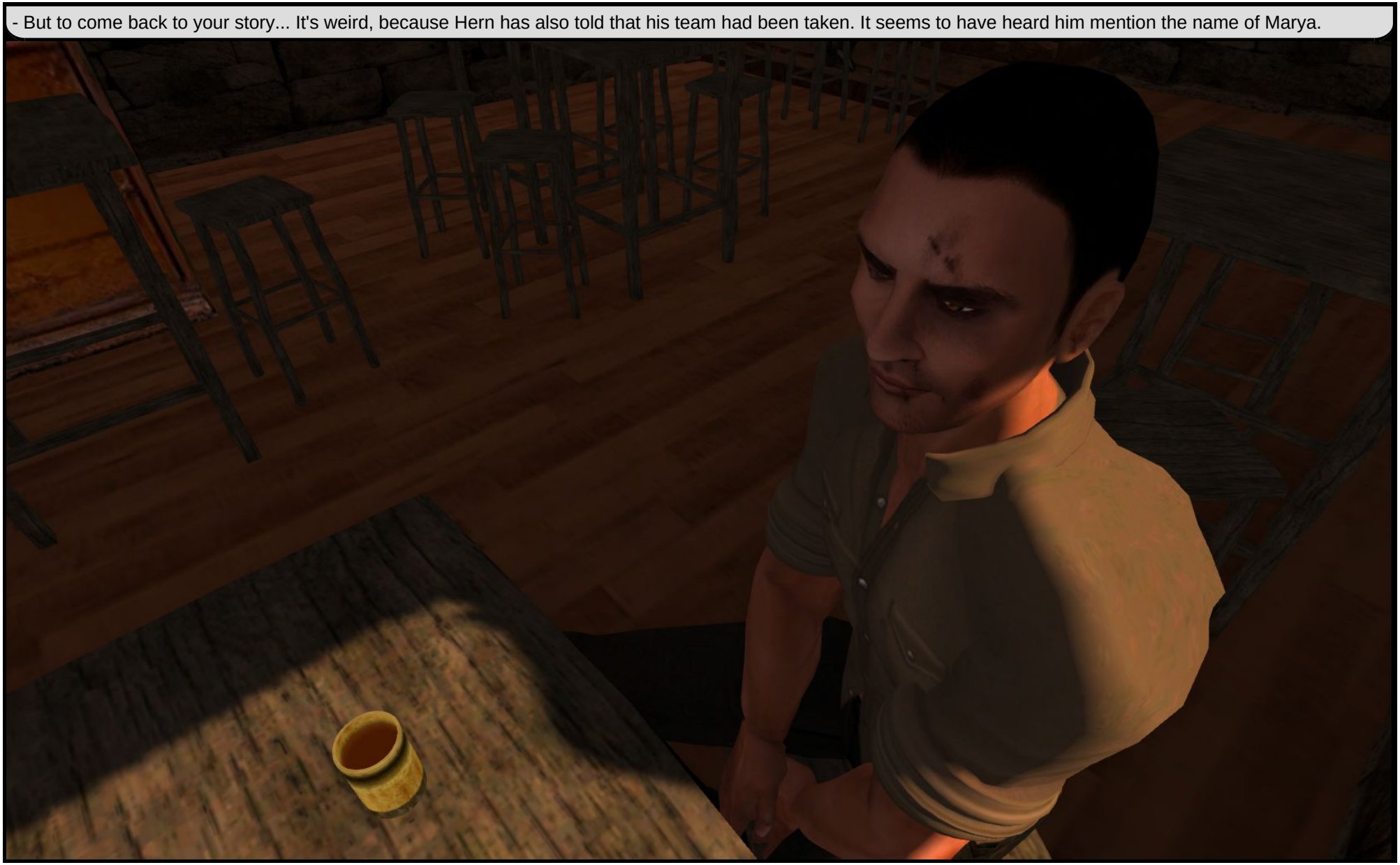
- The Terkasides don't have any flying vehicles?

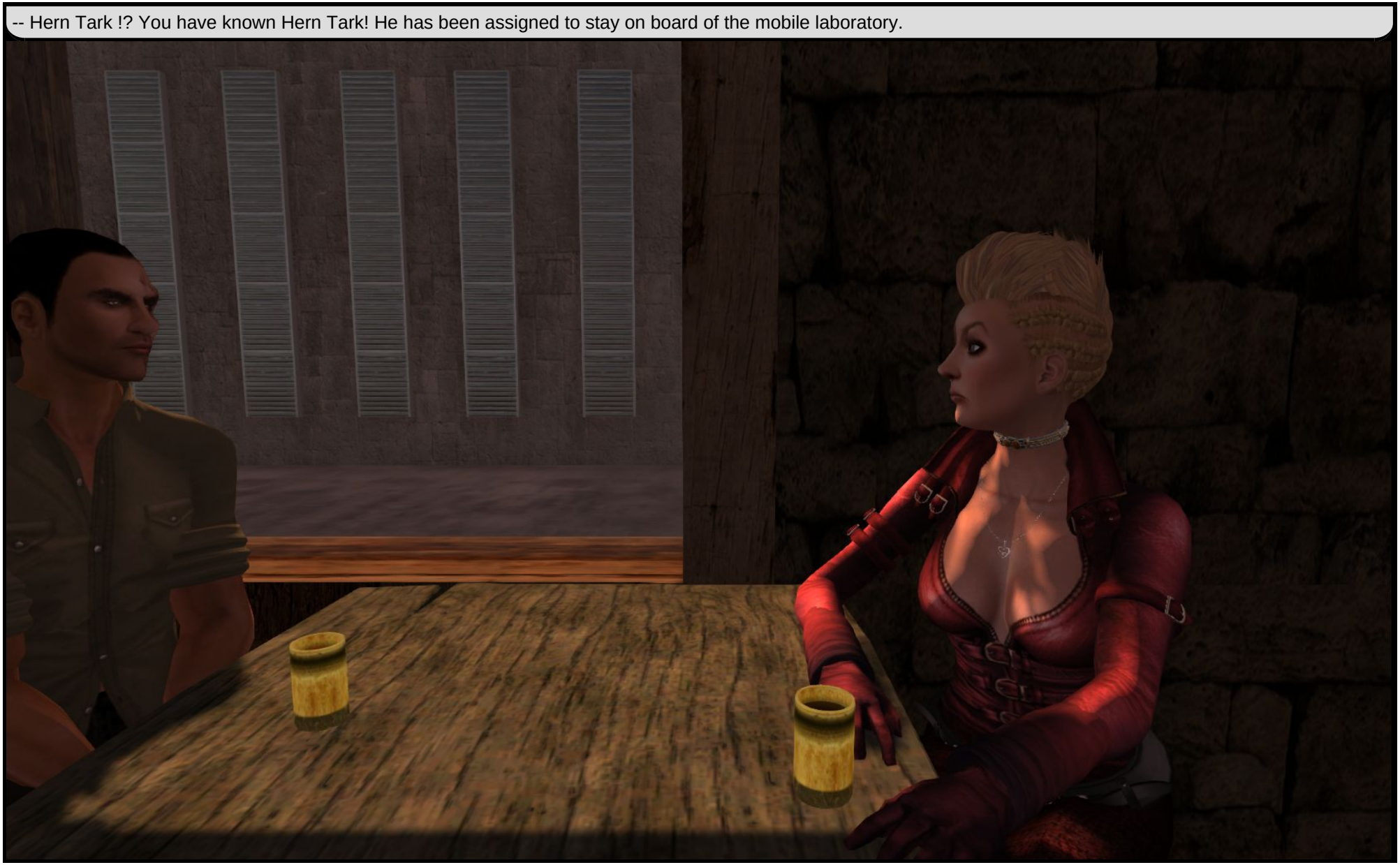
- No. The agreement with the Jijuterk forbids them to have any. The deal is "power cells for territorial restrictions".

- That's intriguing.

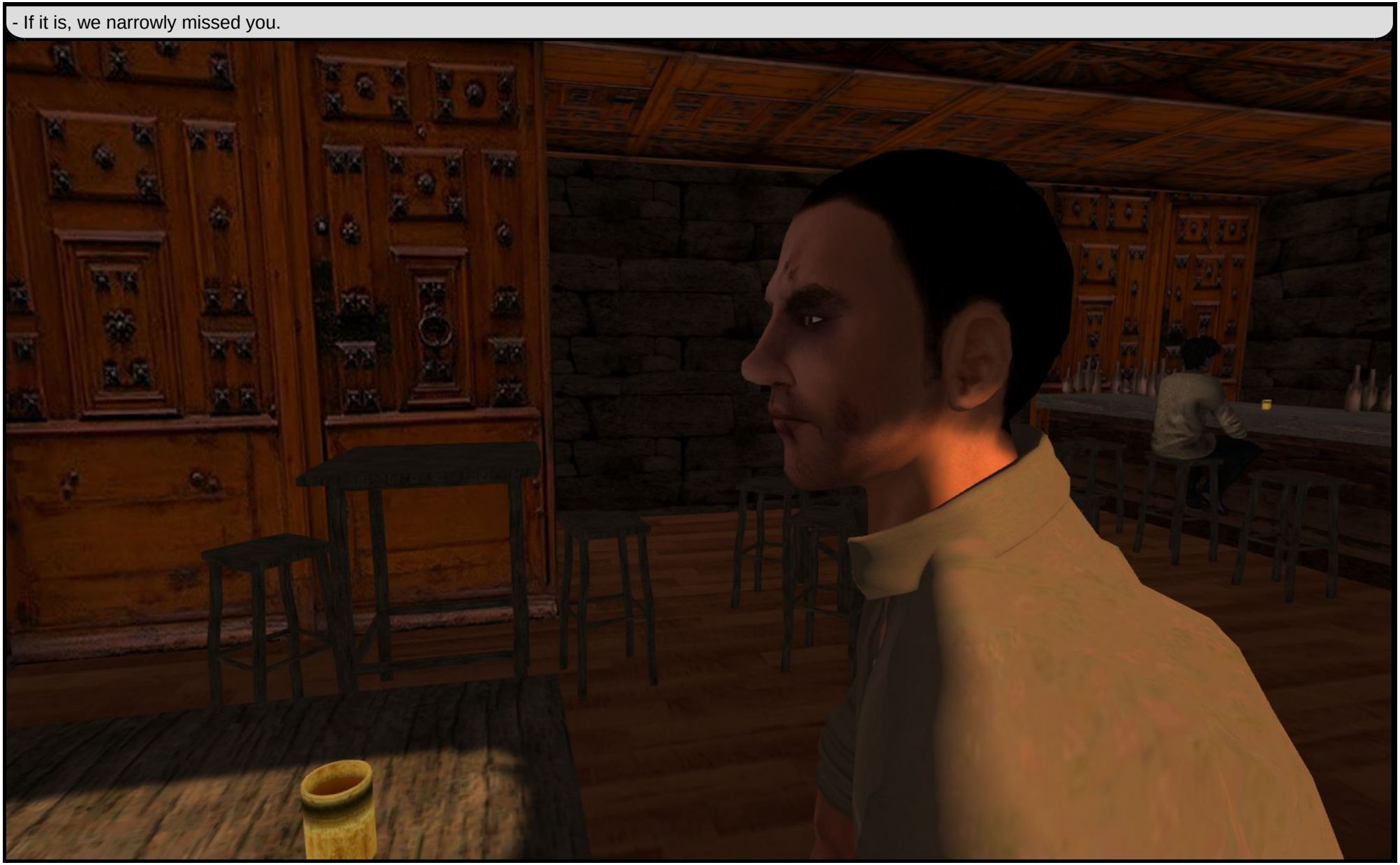
-- You understand now why they send all these drones.

- But to come back to your story... It's weird, because Hern has also told that his team had been taken. It seems to have heard him mention the name of Marya.




-- Hern Tark !? You have known Hern Tark! He has been assigned to stay on board of the mobile laboratory.

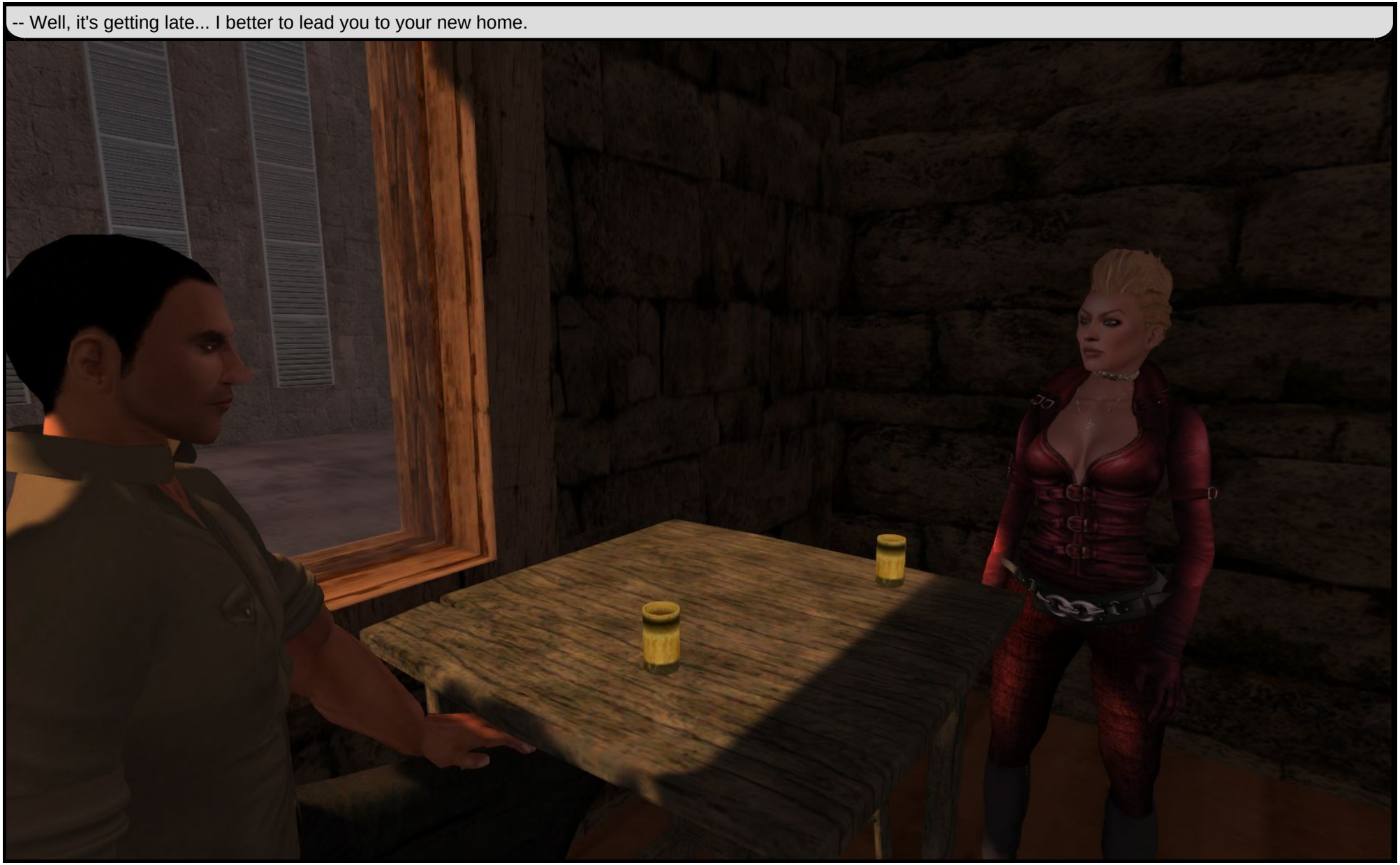
- If it is, we narrowly missed you.



-- So he was fine?
- Yes, at least before the event that brought me here.

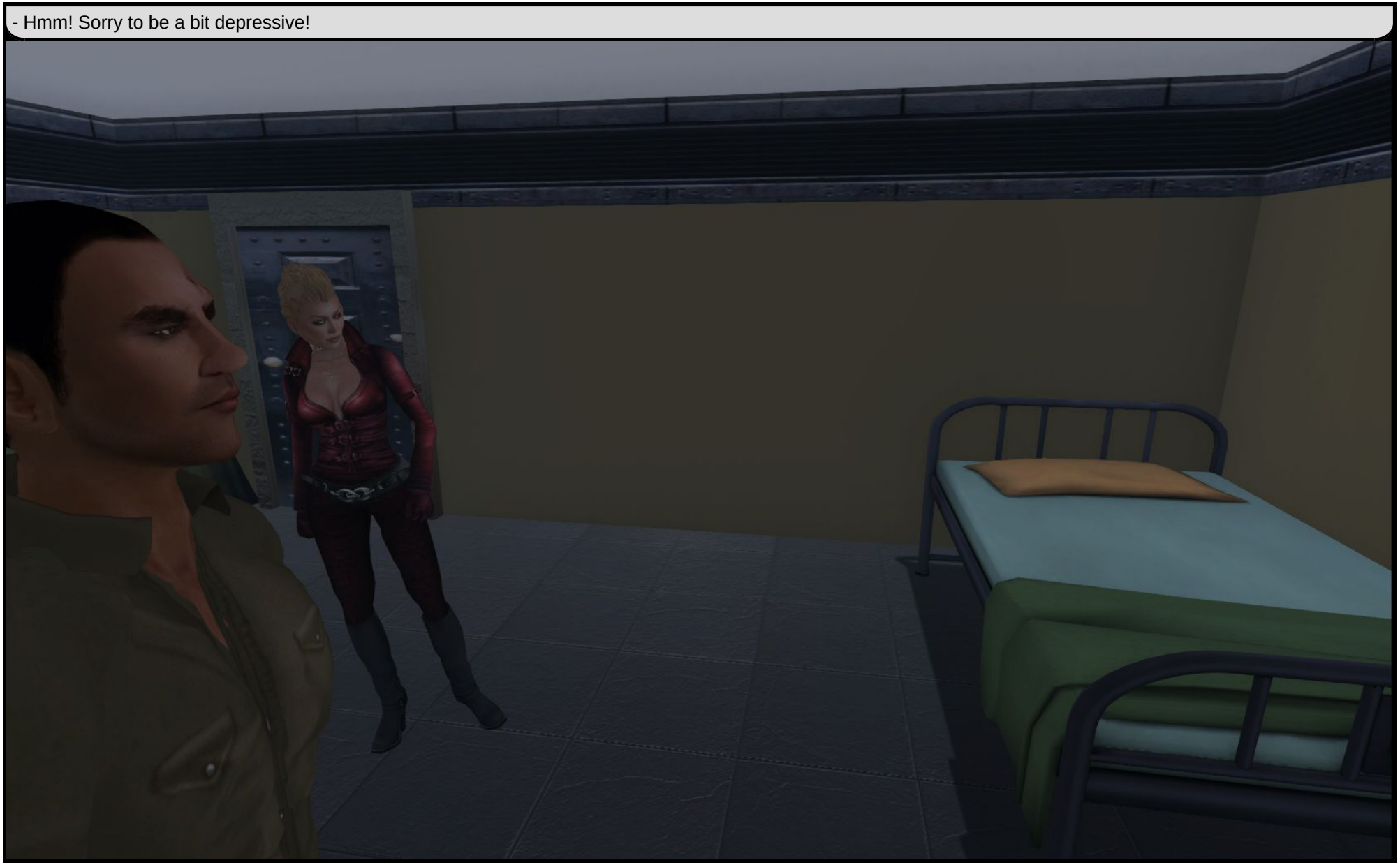
- I liked Hern. You made me go back a lot of memories suddenly.

-- Well, it's getting late... I better to lead you to your new home.



Later...

- So this will be your new home. This is small, I know, but that's all there is for now.


- Hmm! Sorry to be a bit depressive!

-- I know, the change is rough.
- It's mainly that impression to be in jail that bothers me.

-- Give you a few days, all this is temporary.
- If you say so.

-- Ah! I was forgetting... He needs clothes... And please, nothing folk!
--- Yes Berigine, I will find him some.

- Good! Then I'll go. I see you tomorrow morning.
- I will be there... Thanks, see you later Marya.

-- And don't forget to feed him!
--- I will, don't worry.

(Damn! ...I would like simply go home... at my true home! ...What a crazy day! At least, this Marya is ultimately a charming woman...)

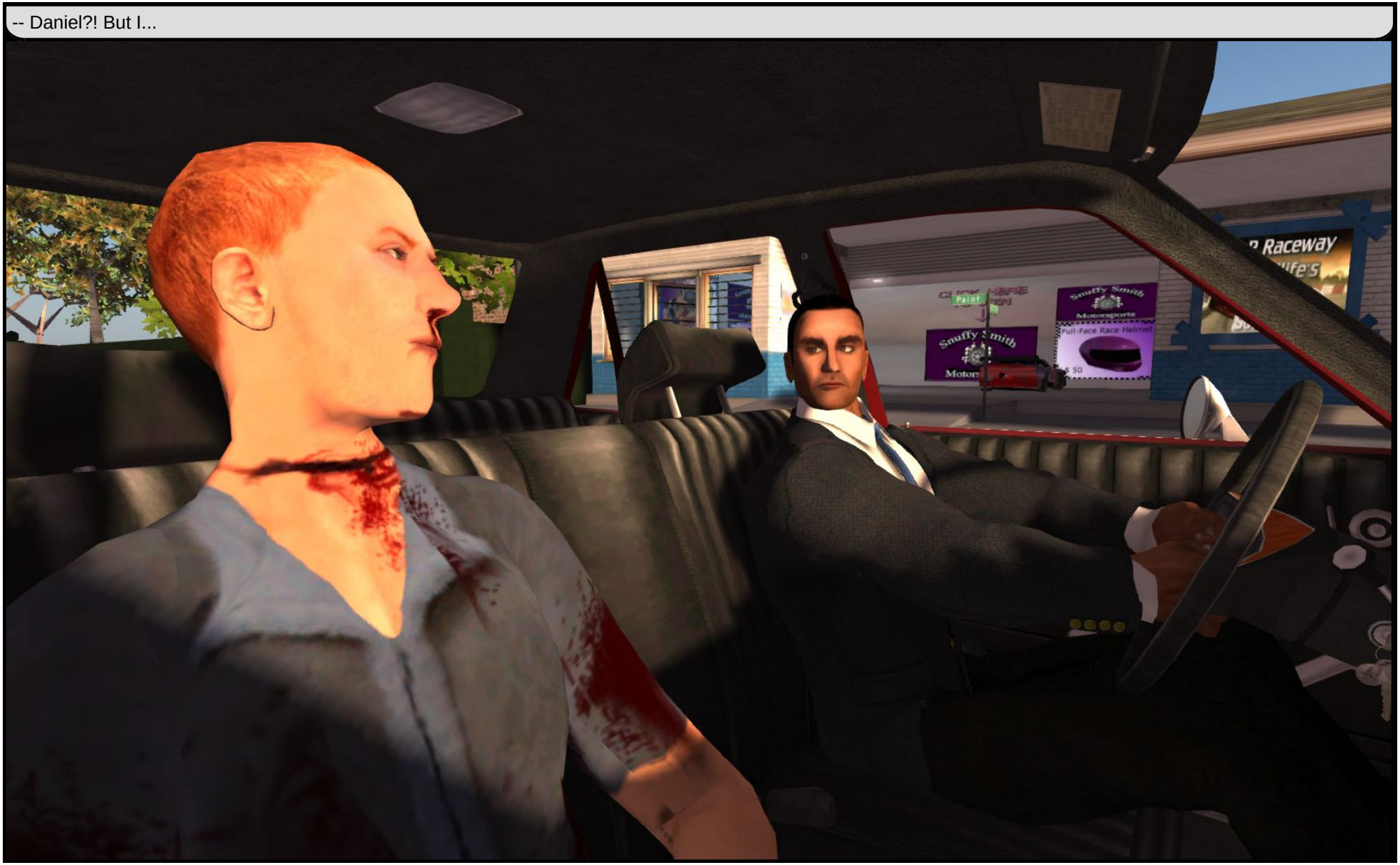
(She's right. I'm going to give me a few days. I can take my time... Tomorrow, I don't work! ...)

(... What is this! I thought there was a shopping center around here...)

{radio} ... According to the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, the Syrian troops would have been decimated completely overnight by a commando squad of black widows...
Smuffy Smith
Motorsports
Full-Face Race Helmet
$0
Smuffy Smith

- Would you mind dropping me off at the corner of the street?

-- Daniel?! But I...


Raceway
Paint
Smuffy Smith
Motorsports
Full-Face Race Helmet
$ 50

- Pays attention! ... This is not over!

- What? ... Crap!

BANG!
CRUNTCH!

- Phew!

(Damn! Phew! ... The sun is already raised! ... I've slept like a log...)

(Let's see these clothes she left me.)

(At least it's not like these horrible boots they had given to Daniel.)

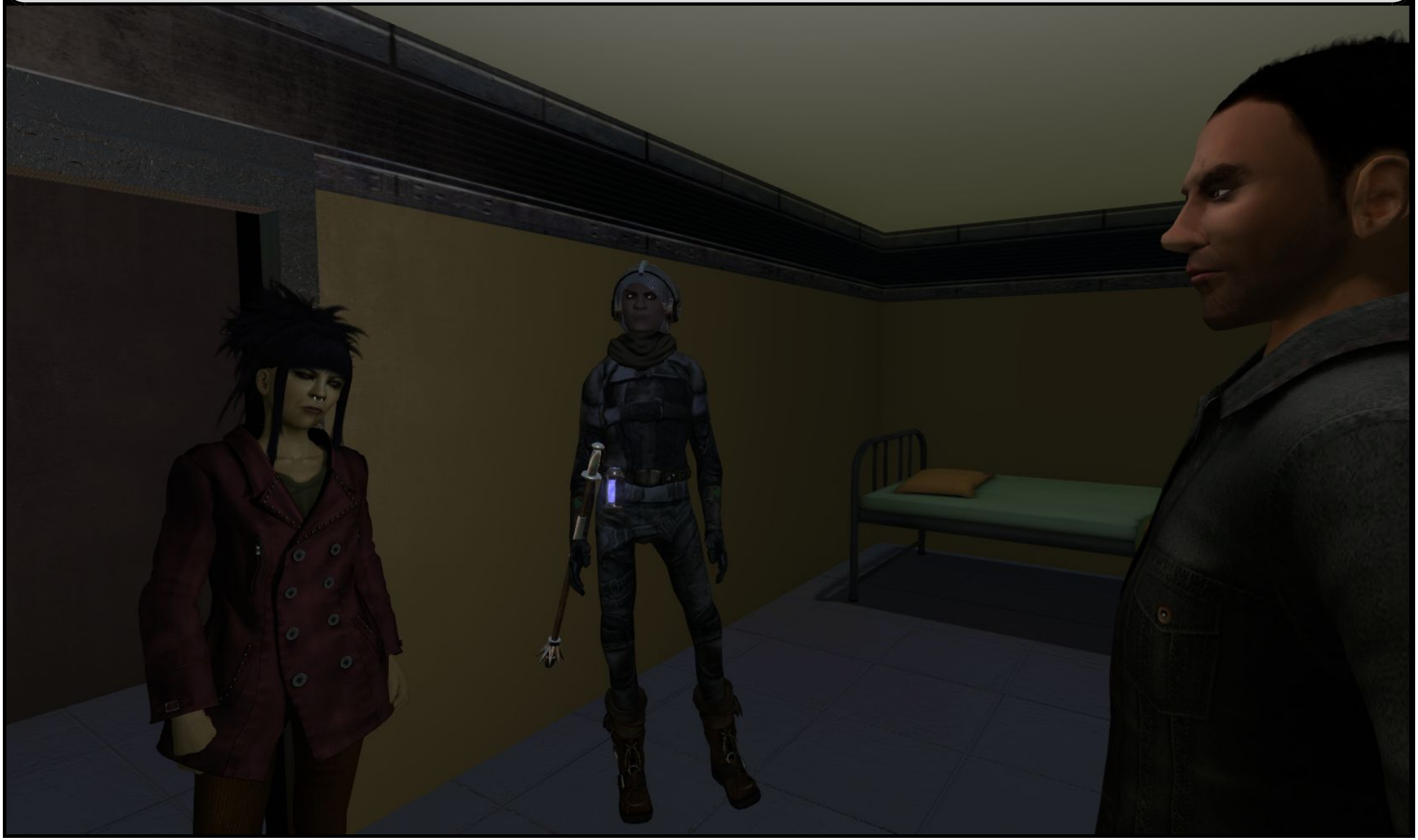
(I wonder if they have coffee somewhere in this city... This room is really giving me the blues.)

- (That must be Marya ...) I'm coming!
BZZZZZ !
BZZZZZ !

-- I hope you slept well!

- Uh...
--- Please, follow us!

--- Can I ask why? And why Tyriam is not there? I believed it was her who should...



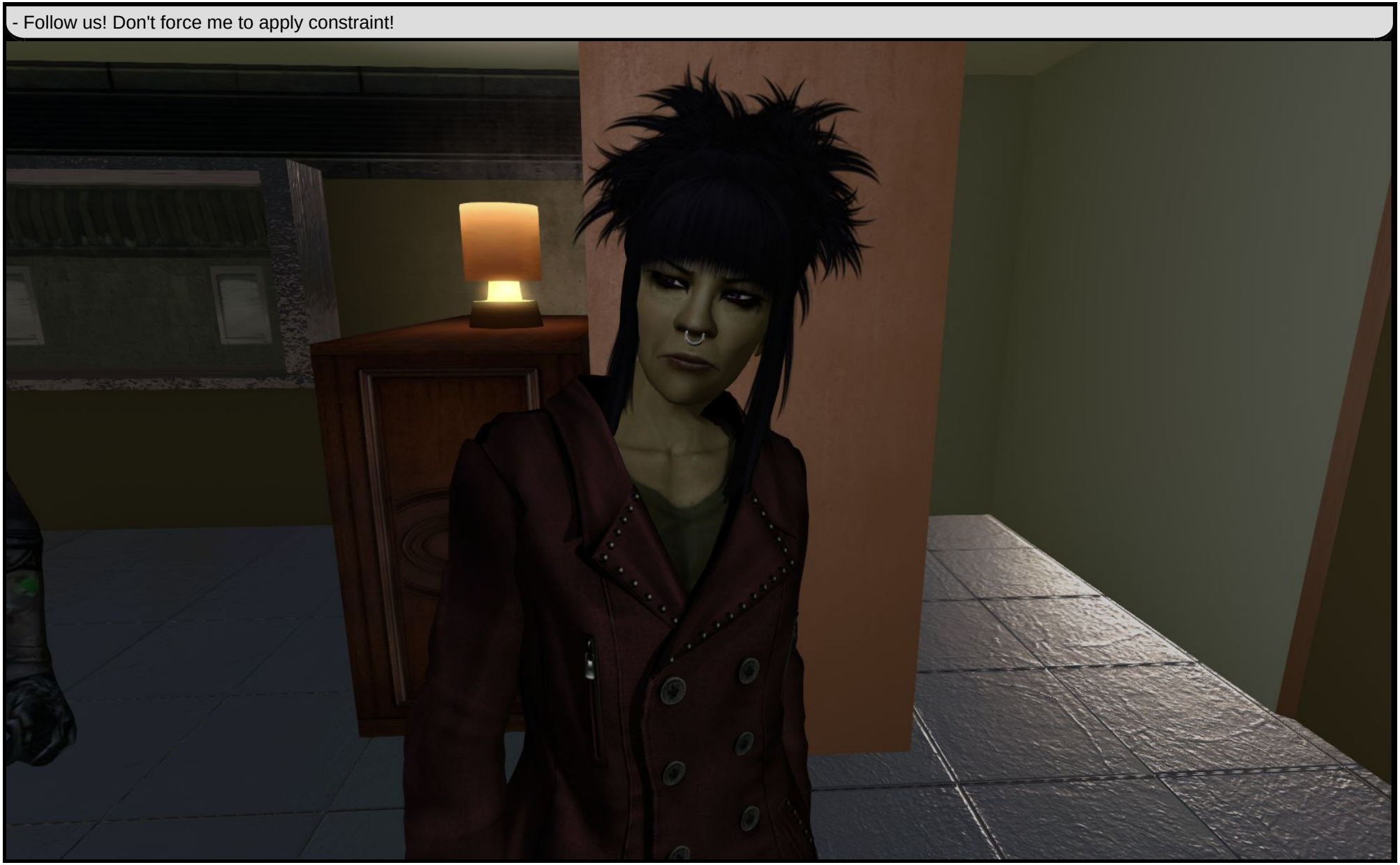
- We have questions to ask you! And the demand comes from the council.

--- ... And know that the berigine Tyriam has no authority there!

-- Kleg! Bring this shirt.

- You never take breakfast in this country?

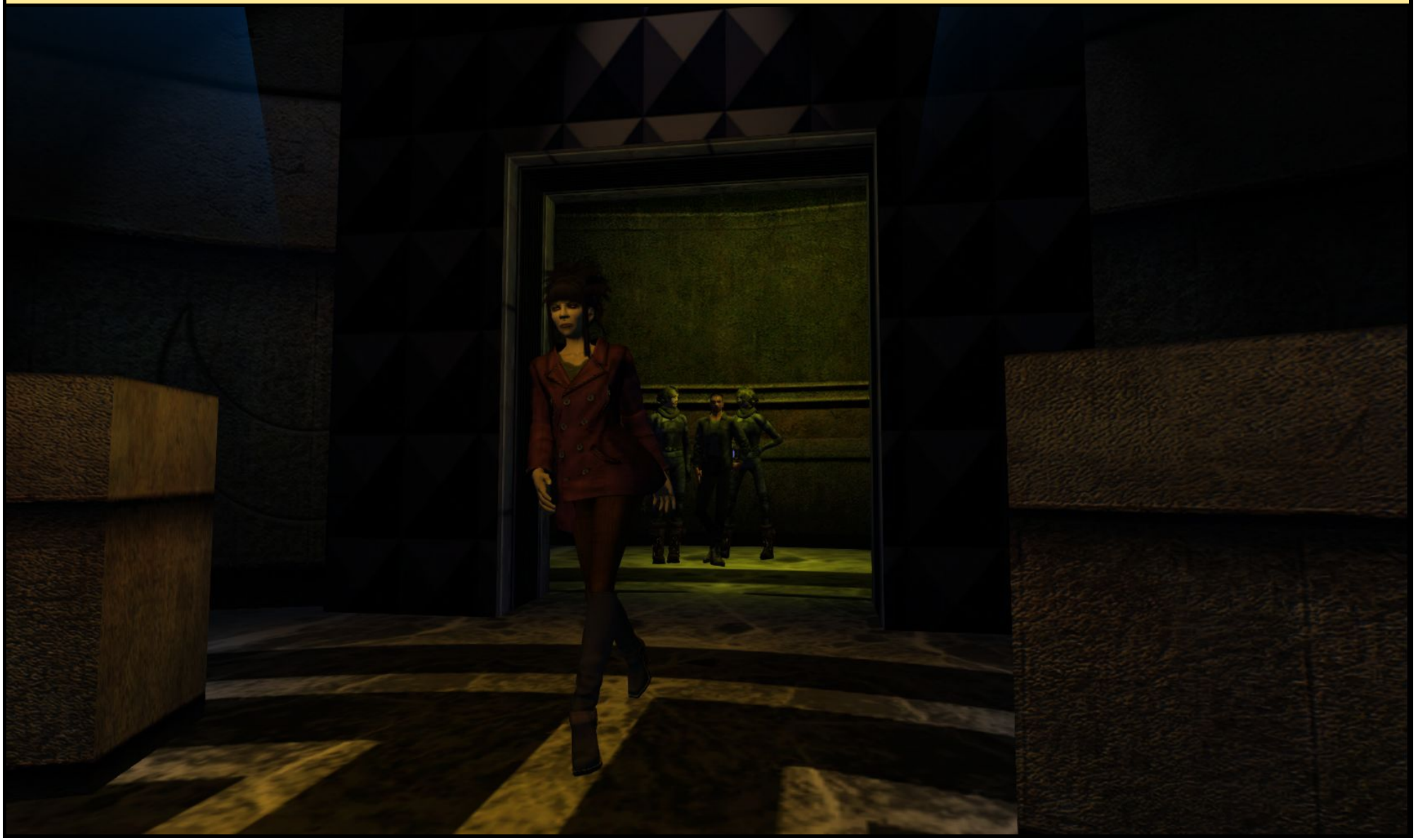
- Follow us! Don't force me to apply constraint!



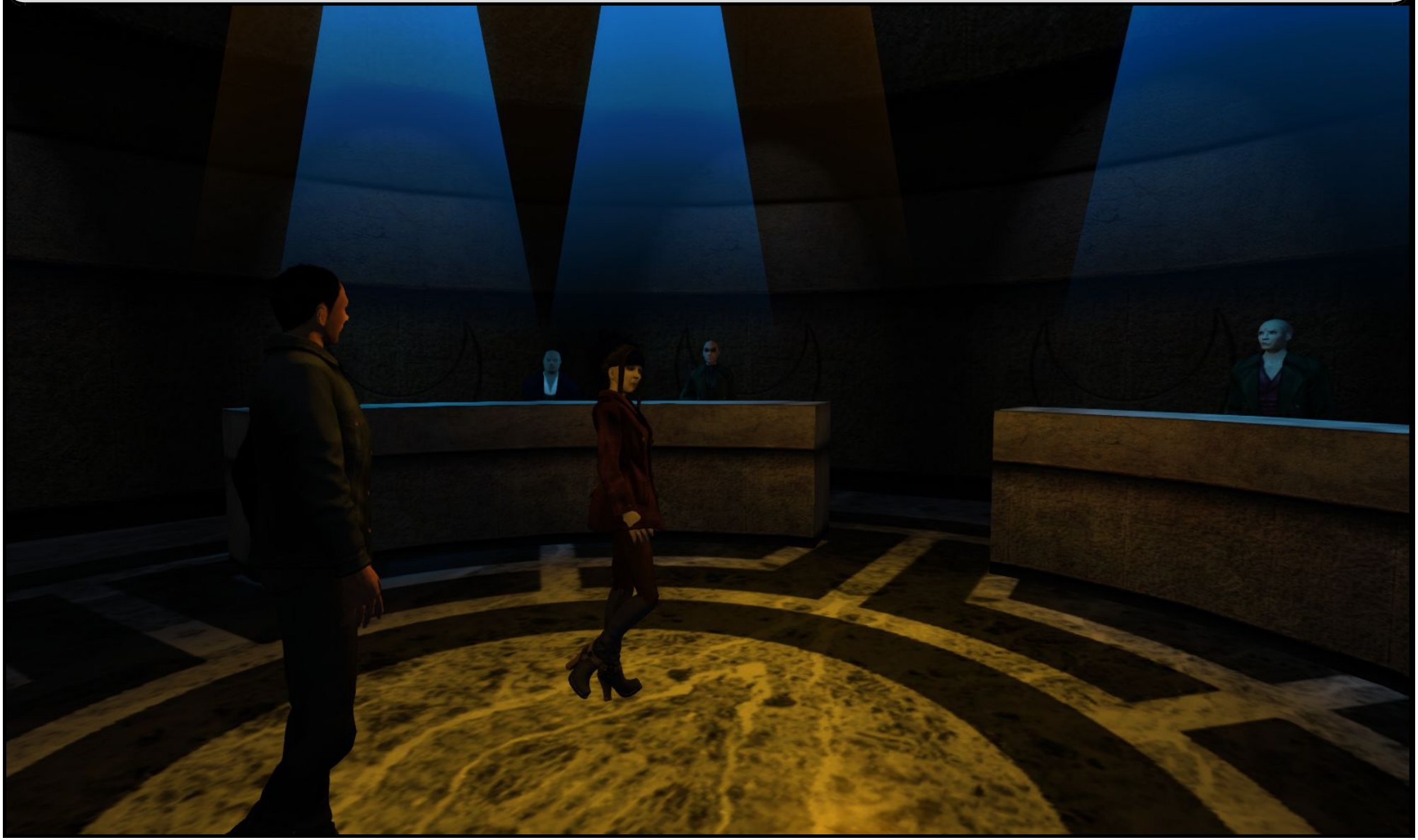
-- OK! OK! Let's go! ((What a promising day!))

(((I don't like this. She seems to hate me without even knowing me...)))

Shortly after...

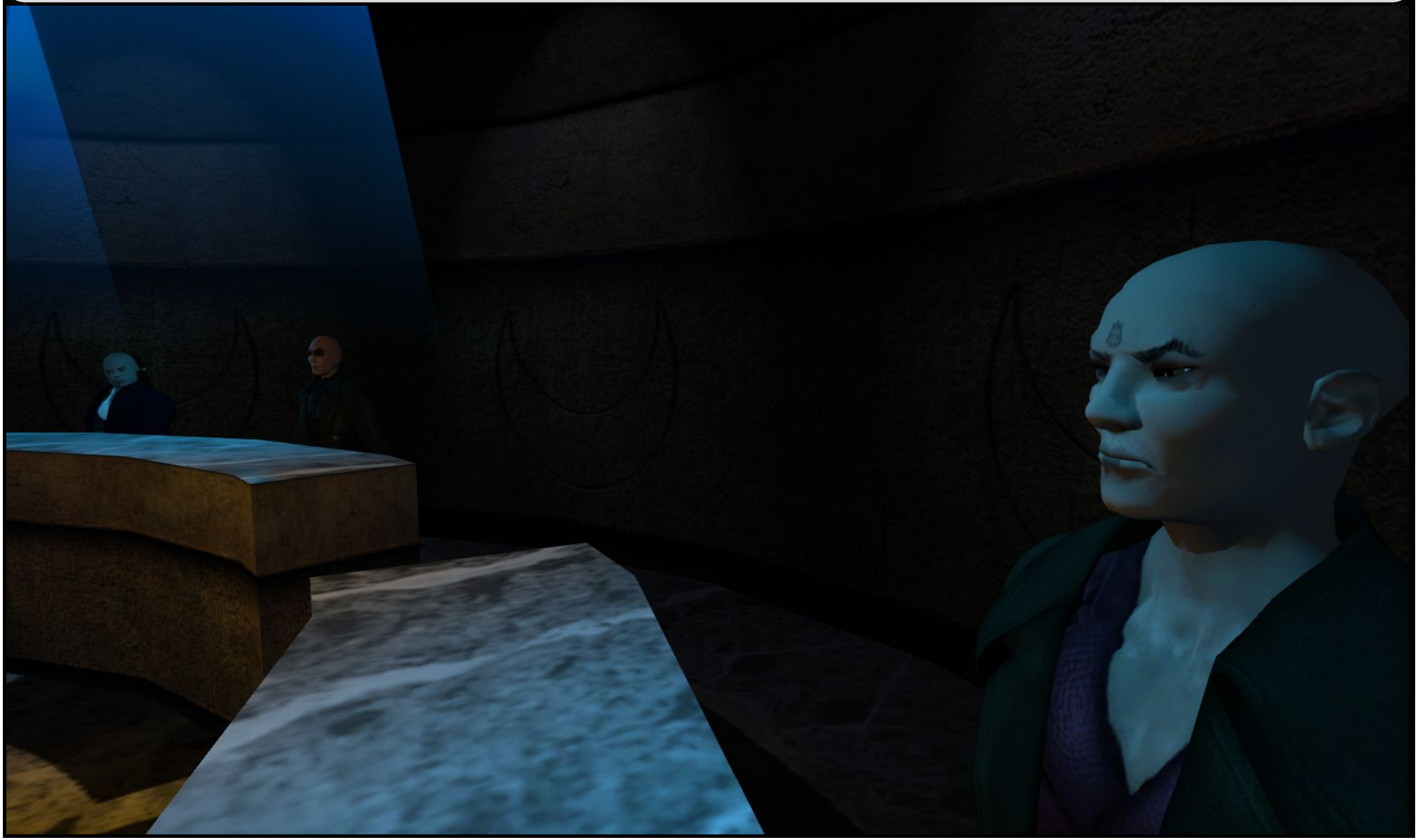


--- Here is the sub-citizen brought by the Berigine Tyriam!

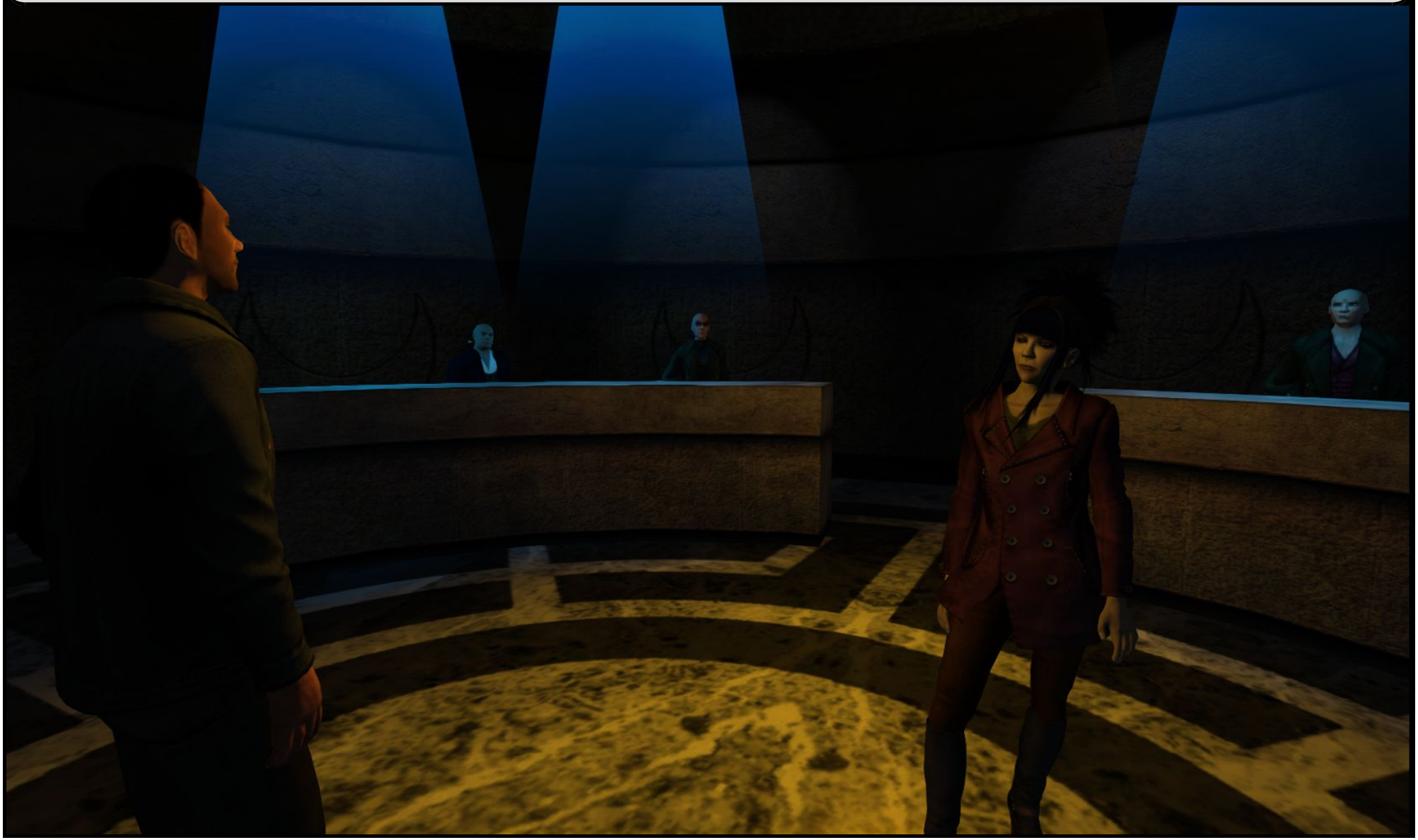


- I would like to specify that it is the same sub-citizen that Erydak seemed to have already seen.

--- Let's begin, would you? Berigine?

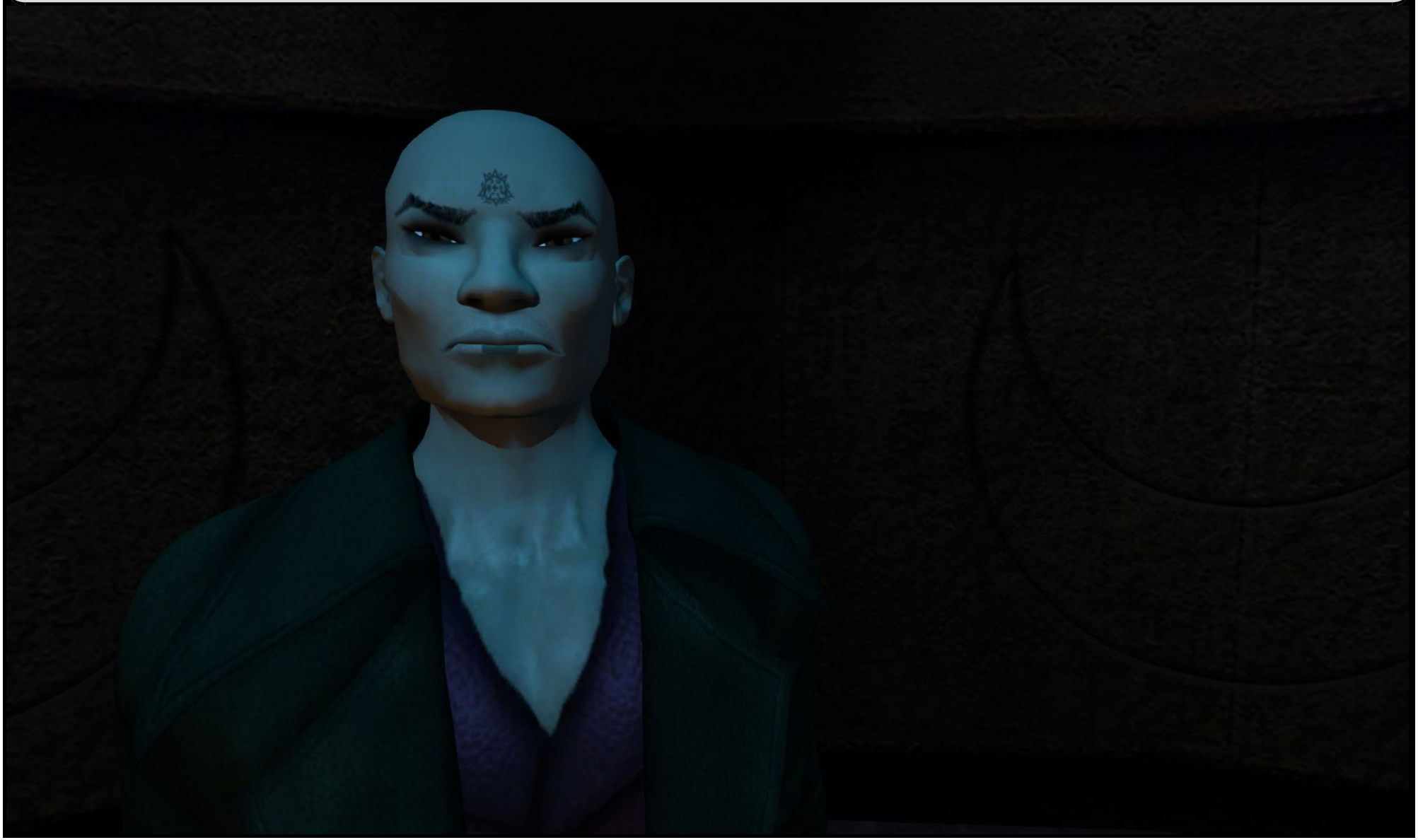


---- Sub-citizen, you've claimed to not be a Dallusian. Tell to this council, what else, do you pretend to be?

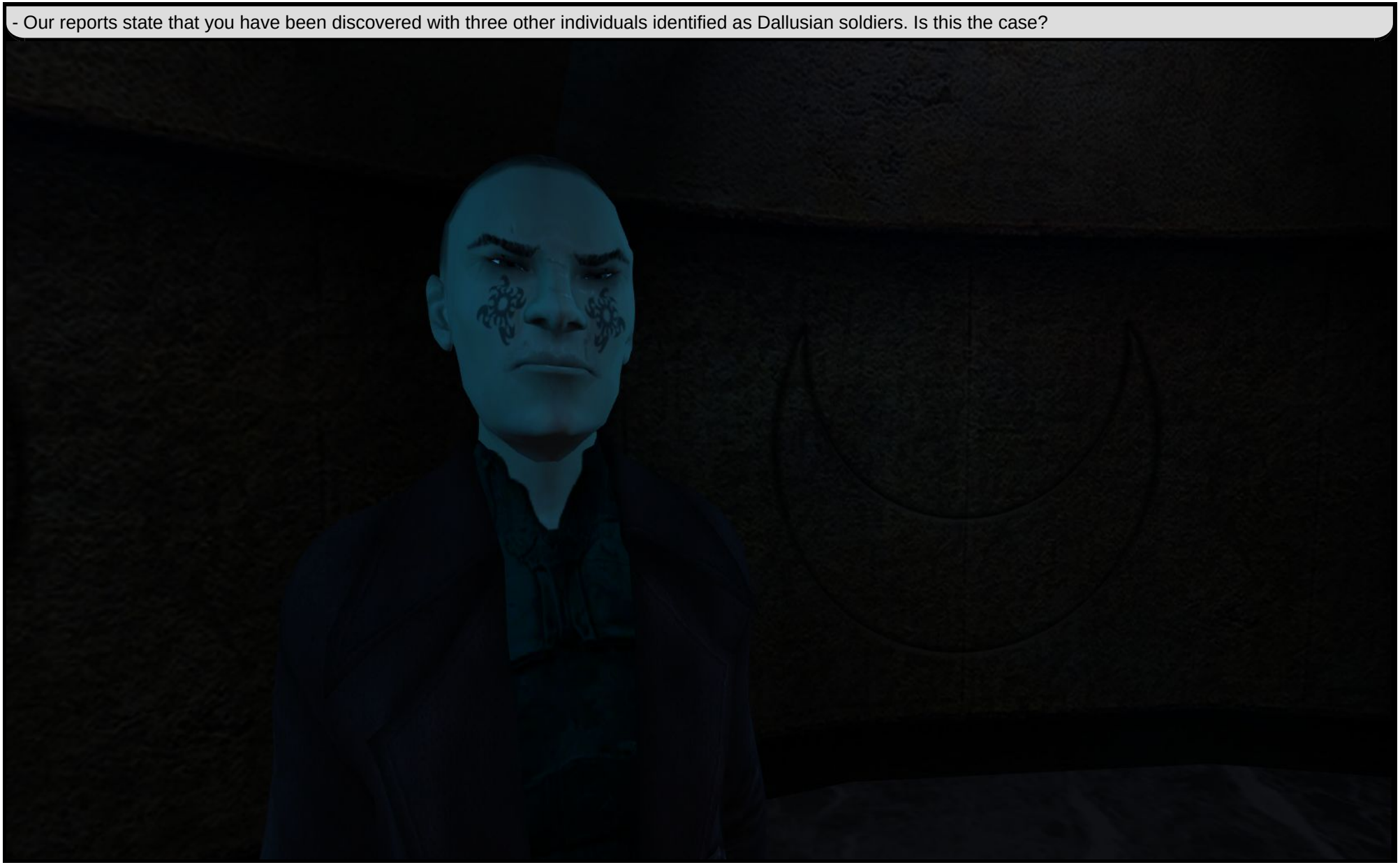


- Well! I'm just not from the same time than the Dallusians. I arrived there, the same way that led here later.

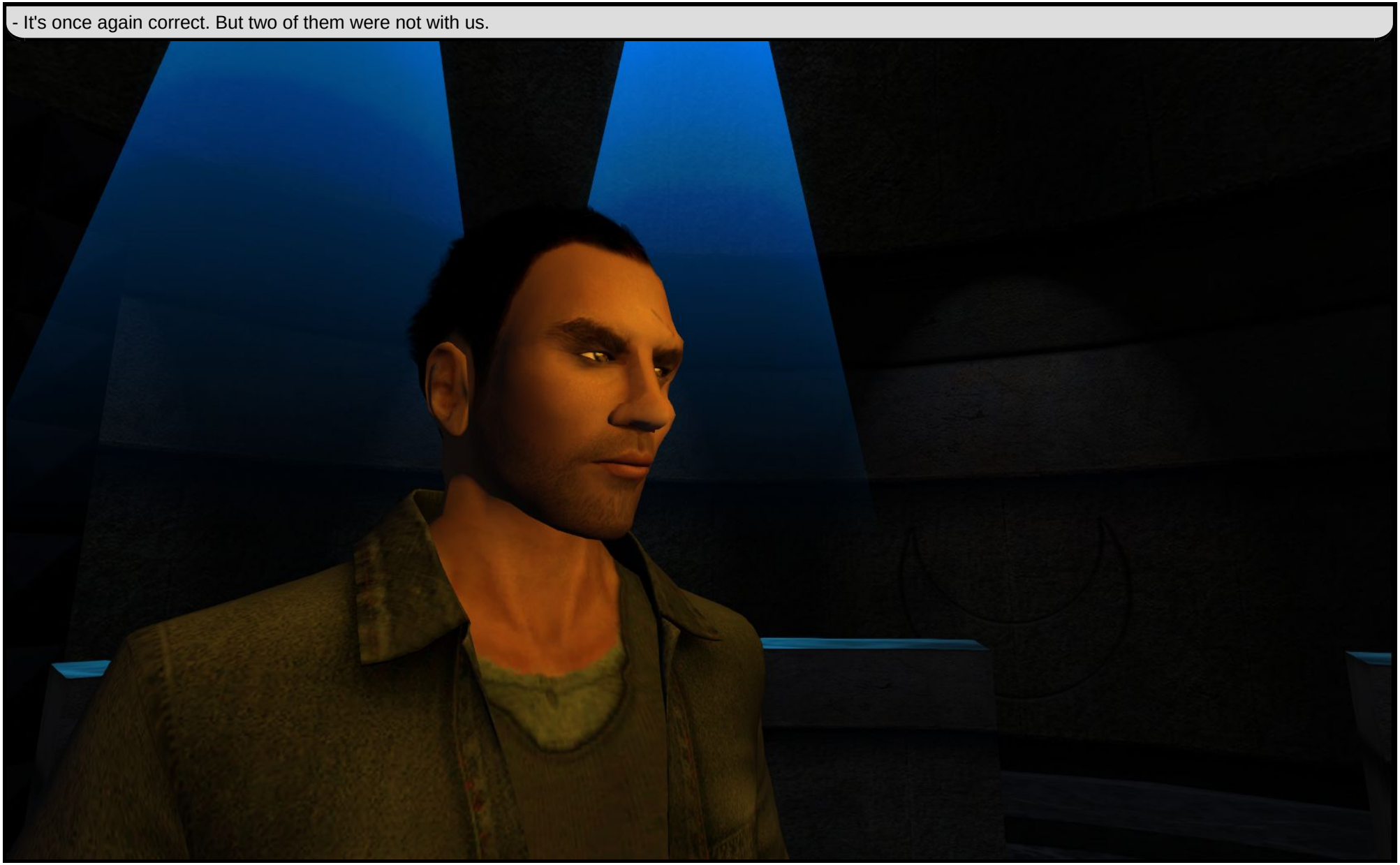
- Are you expecting us believe that you have survived two transfers?



---- Exactly!

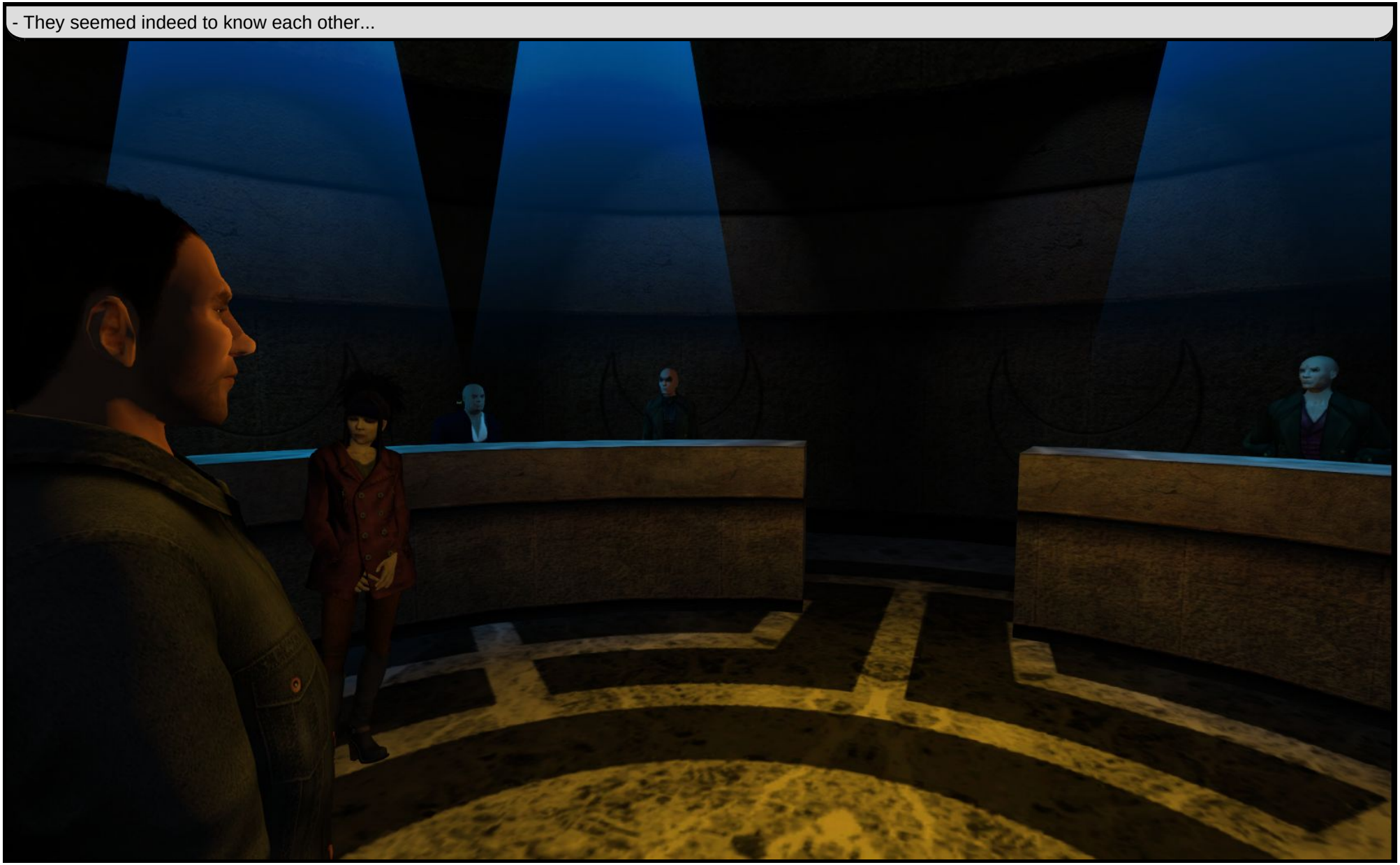

- Our reports state that you have been discovered with three other individuals identified as Dallusian soldiers. Is this the case?

- It's once again correct. But two of them were not with us.

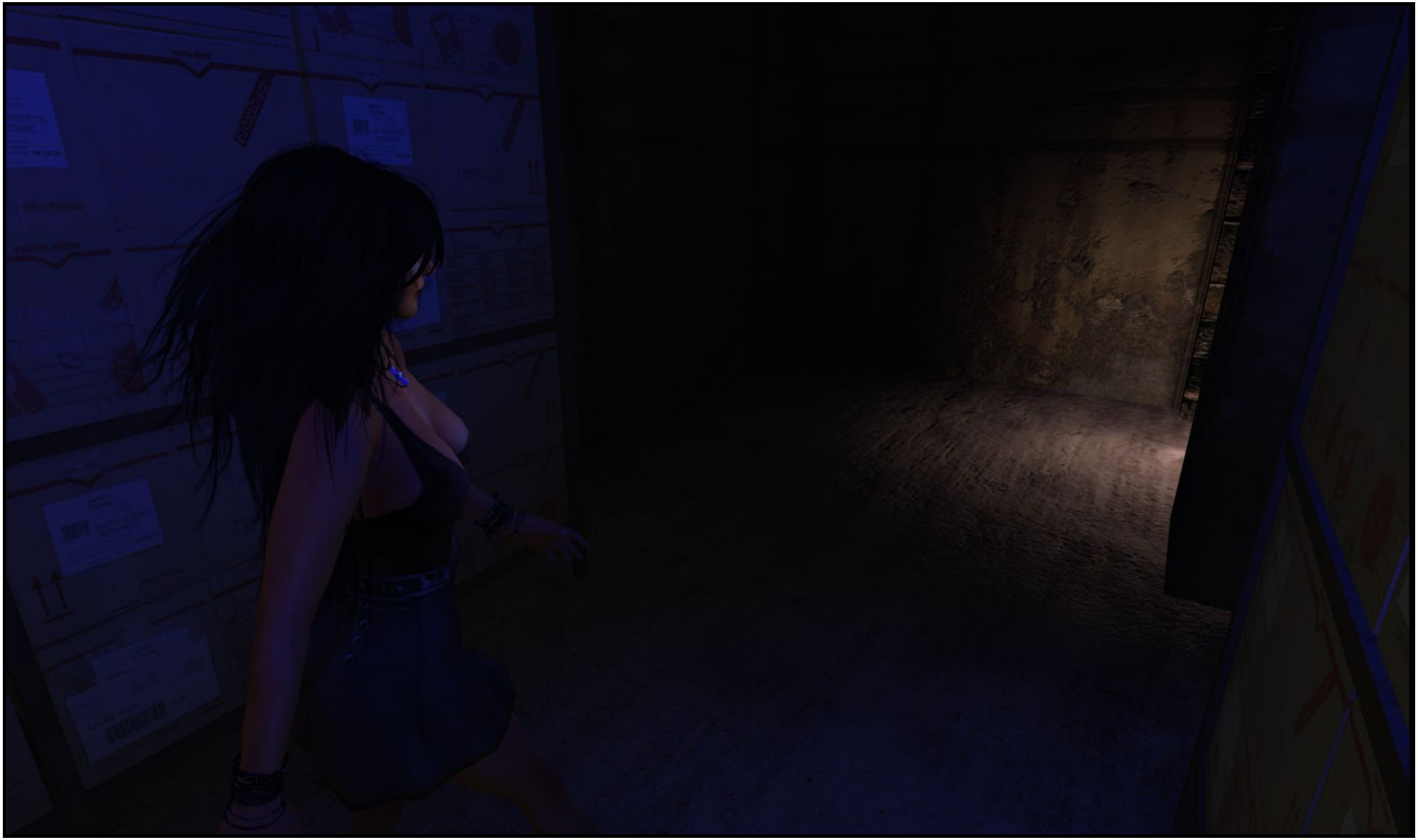


--- The Council must take note that the report talks about familiarities between the two groups after they have been gathered together...

- They seemed indeed to know each other...



IMPACT
IMPACT



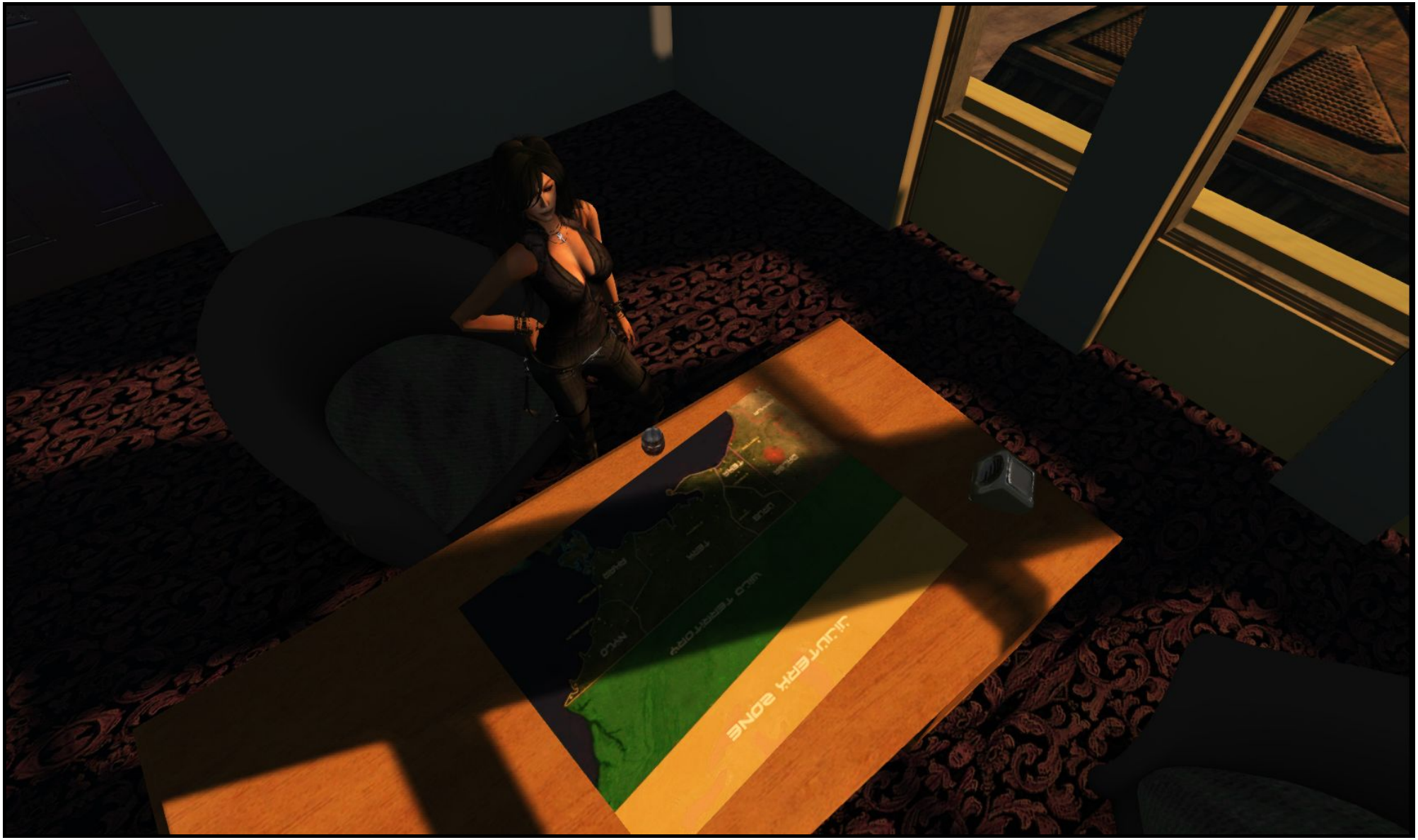
(!?!)

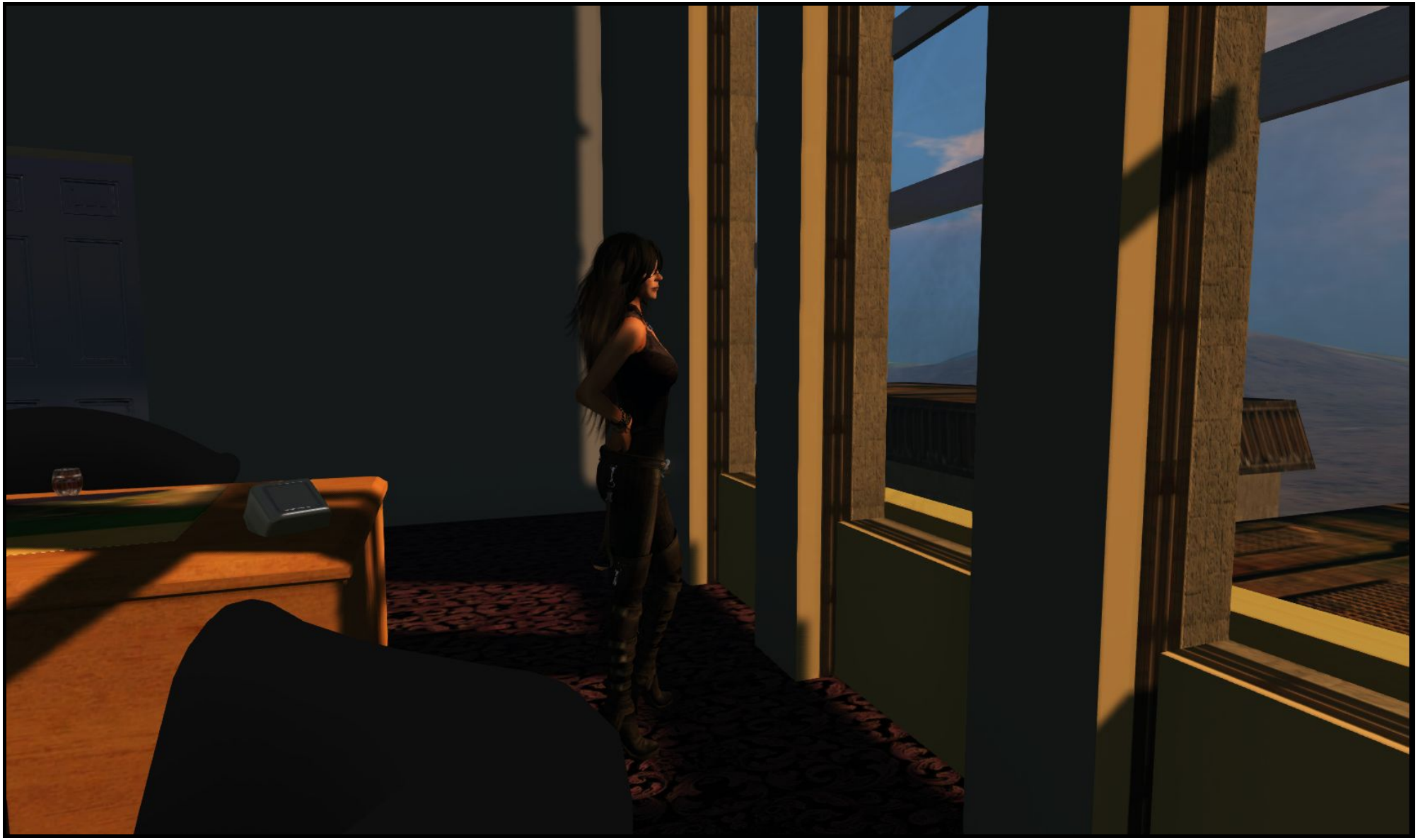
(Yuck!... Still dressed... I hate that! Congratulation Erydak!)

(I must have fallen asleep one more time by touching the bed... Ouch! My head!)

(Oh! Shit! What a mess!)

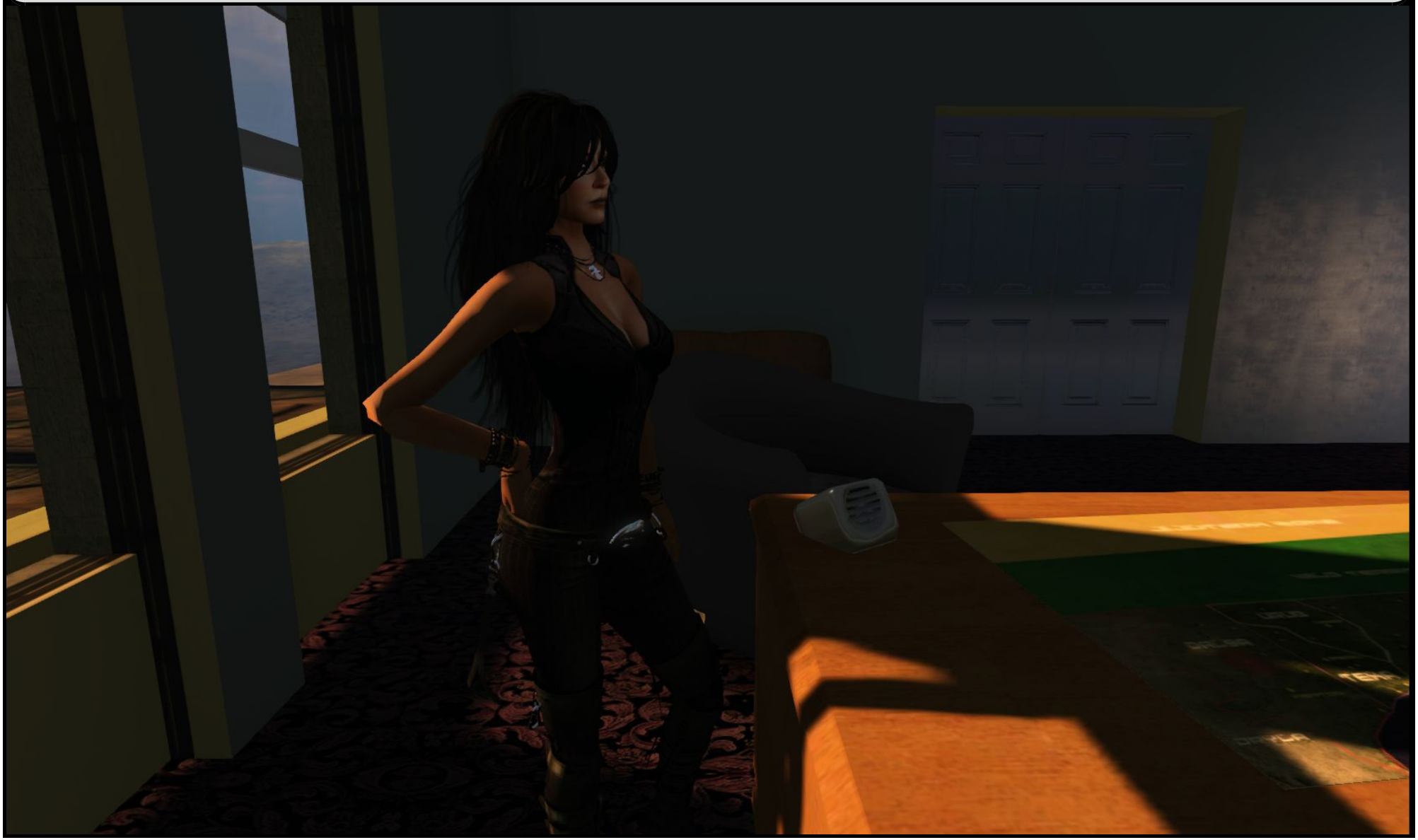
(Damn ceremonial makeup!)



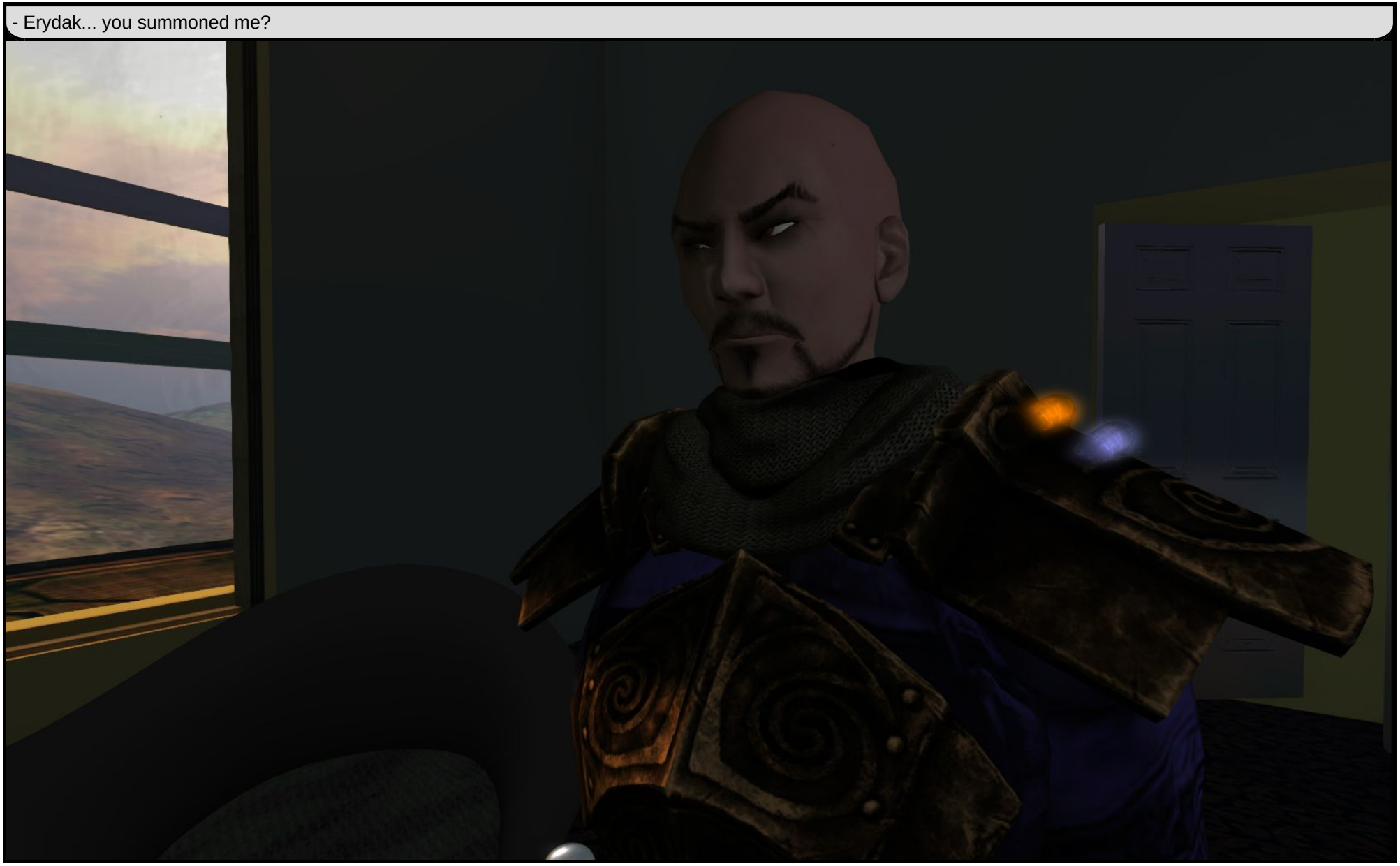


- Qwelz! Send me Esane Gulan, please.

{Qwelz's voice} I call him immediately Erydak.

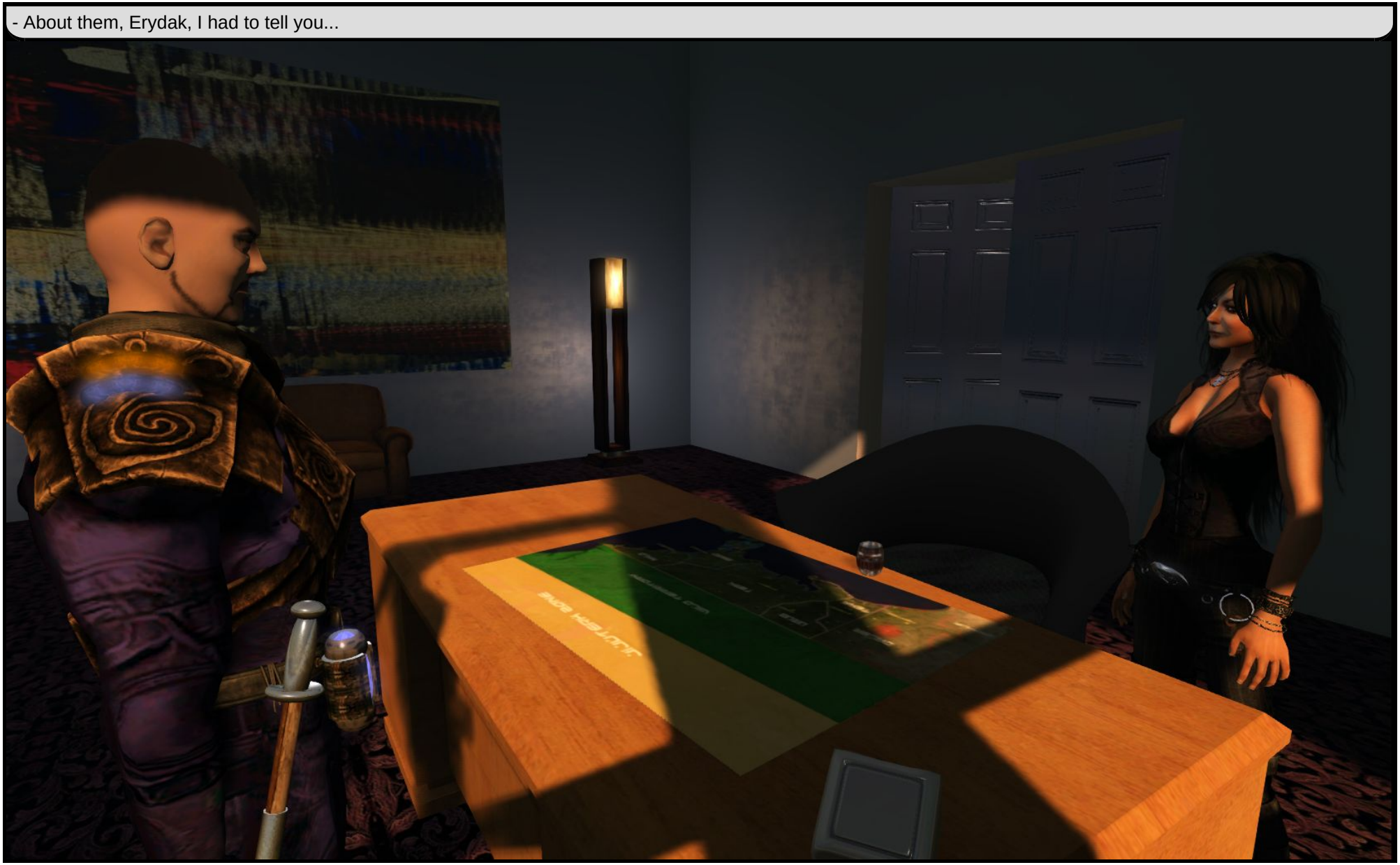


Soon after...

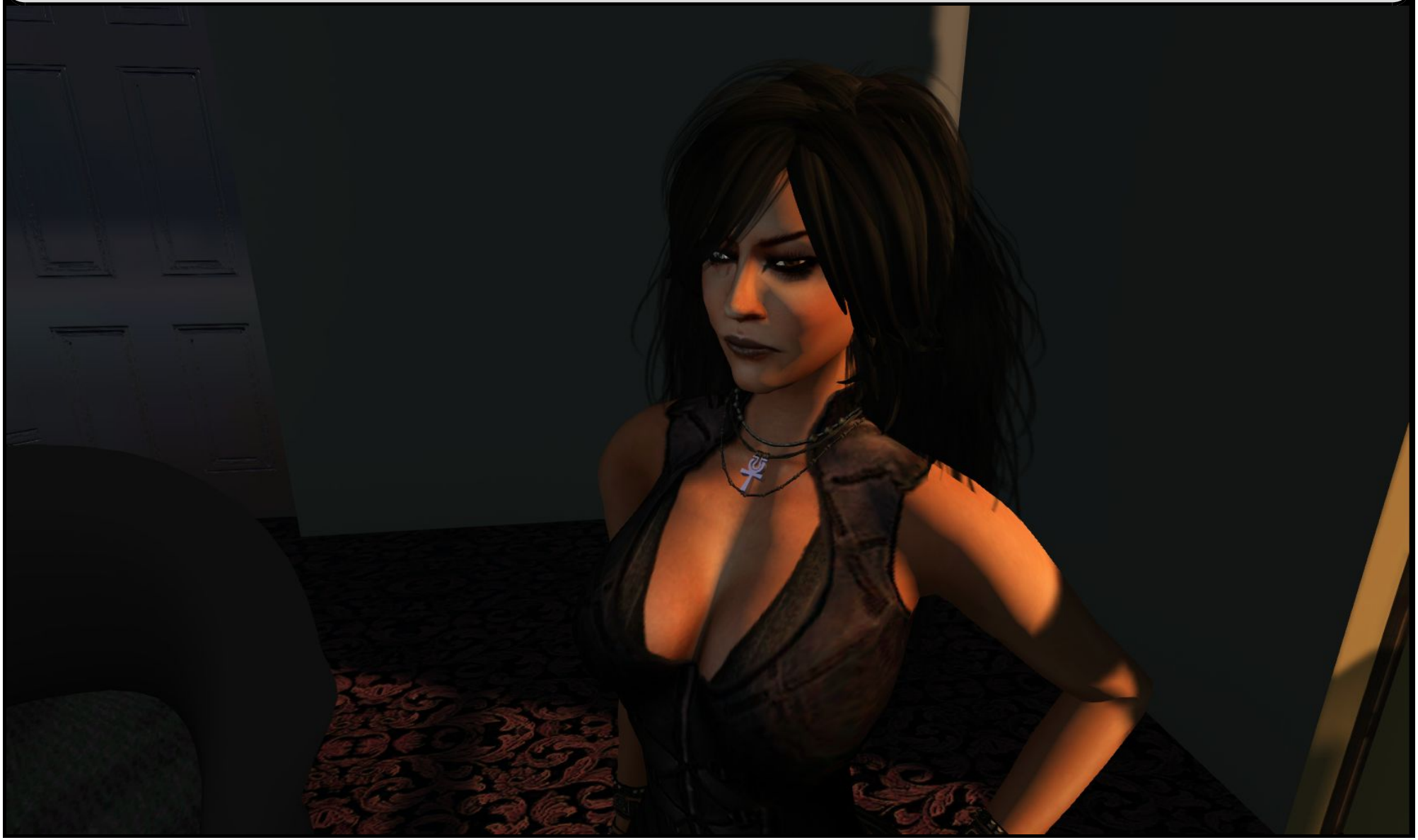

- Erydak... you summoned me?

- Yes, these two men that the Berigine Tyriam has brought to the court, bring them to me. I would like to talk to them.

- About them, Erydak, I had to tell you...



- What is it?



- An accident happened yesterday in the late afternoon. One of them has been crushed to death by a mobile platform. The berigine and the other have been lucky to not be injured.

- What! Dead!? Where did this happen?

- In the slope near the east electron's wells. An investigation was open. The owner of the mobile platform was even not in town when it happened.

- Which one of them is dead?

-- Uhh... The strangest, the one with the red hair.

- ... I see...

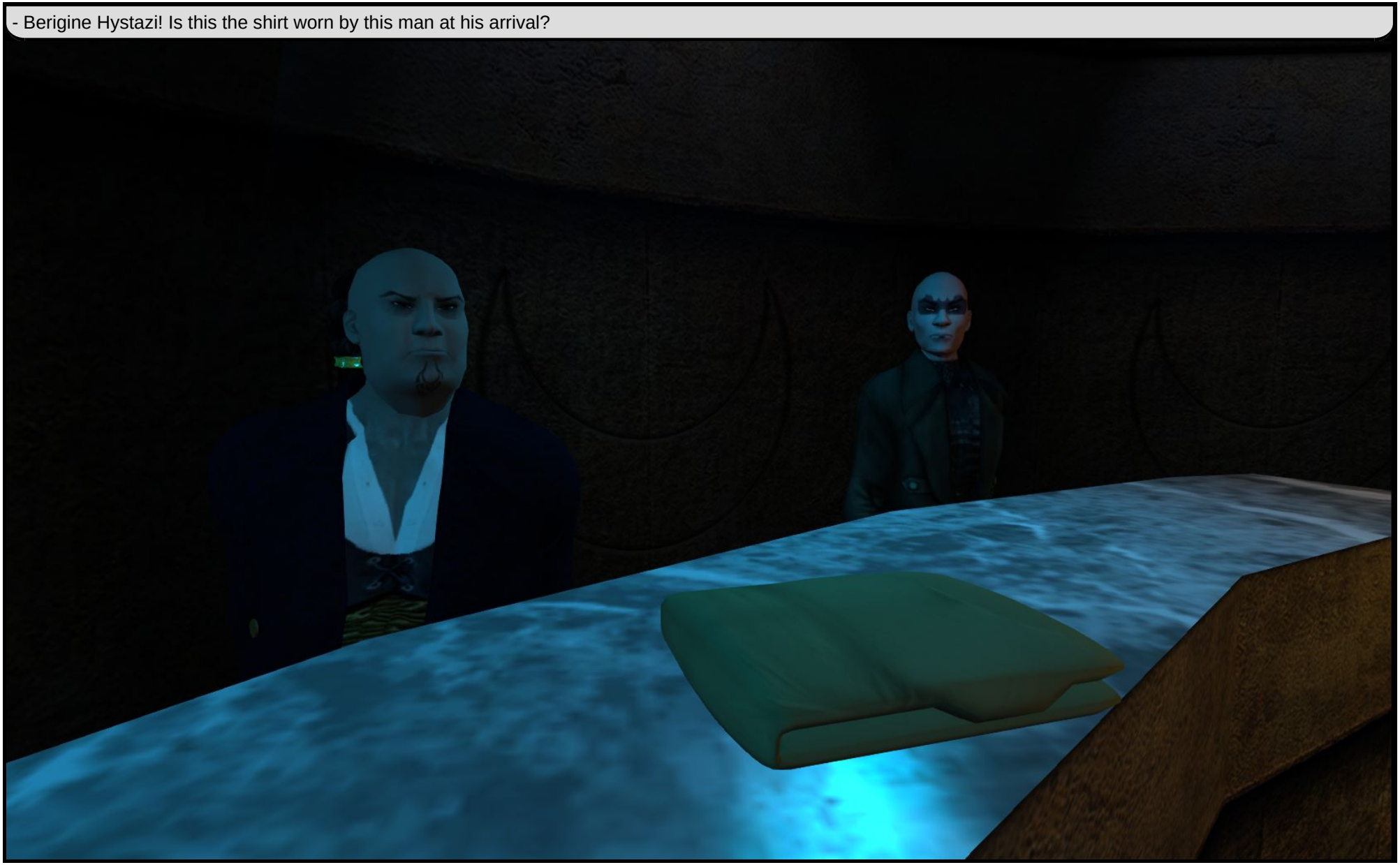
-- Gulan! Find the other man immediately, and bring him to me!

- At your orders Erydak.

-- Hmm... Gulan! Take care of this personally, and keep the eye open. I don't like what has just happened. You are my esane and I know that I can trust you.

- It's okay, I understand. I 'm going to take care of this right now.
-- Thank you.

- Berigine Hystazi! Is this the shirt worn by this man at his arrival?

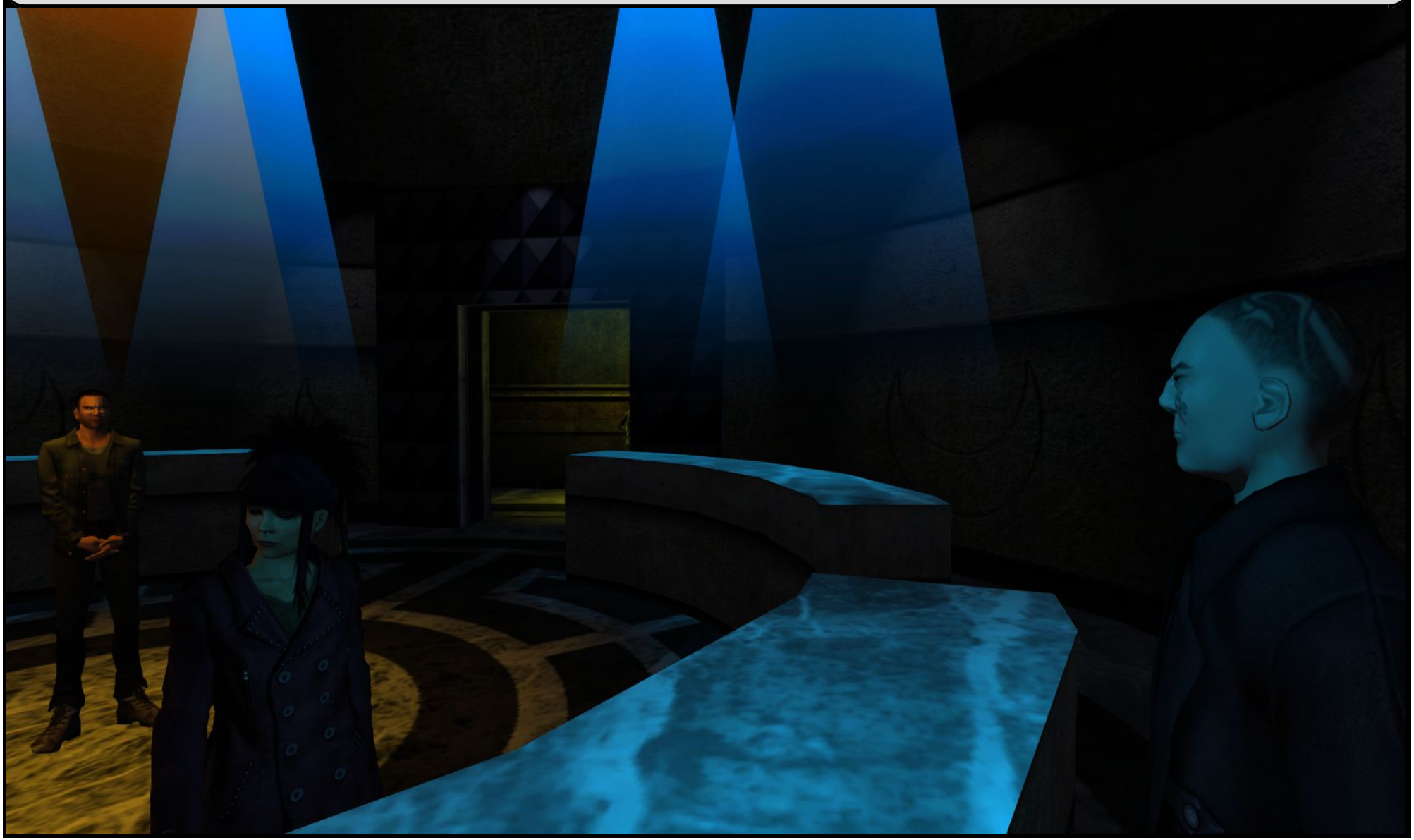


-- This is indeed the shirt that I saw on the sub-citizen at his arrival. And the same shirt that I found in his quarters this morning.

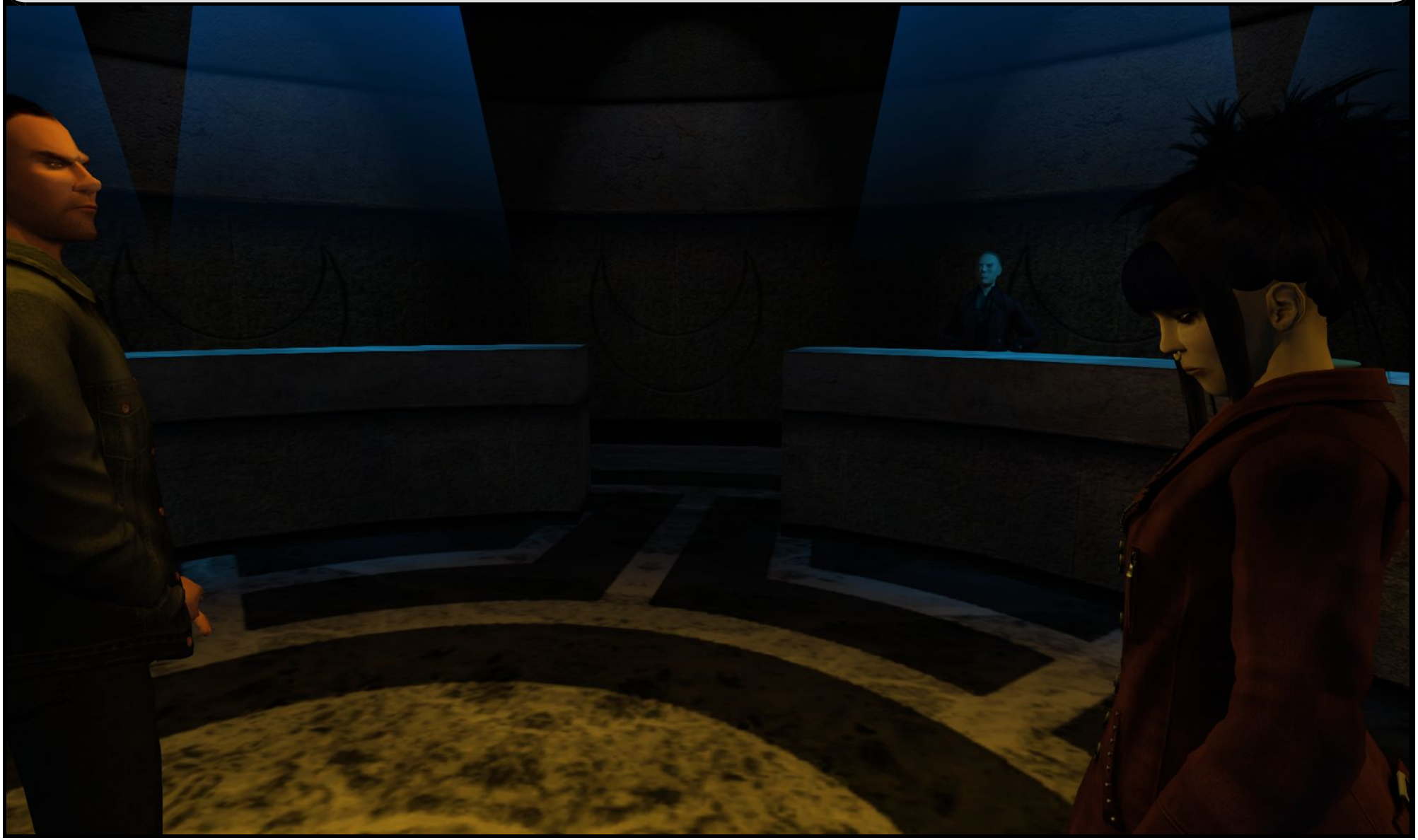
- Sub-citizen! Is that your shirt?

- Uhh... Yes, this is the one that I was wearing at my arrival.

--- Do you admit that it is a military shirt like those worn by the Dallusian soldiers?
- Yes, it is.



--- Sub-citizen, is that civilians normally wear military uniforms?



-- No, but this shirt doesn't necessarily make me a soldier!

- But if it was the case, in the current context, you would be certainly willing to deny it!

--- Tyriam knows very well that I'm not Dallusian!

- The opinions of the Berigine Tyriam have no value, herself being a sub-citizen!

Meanwhile...

(...You walk so quickly Marya! ...We could believe that you are hurried to see this man...)

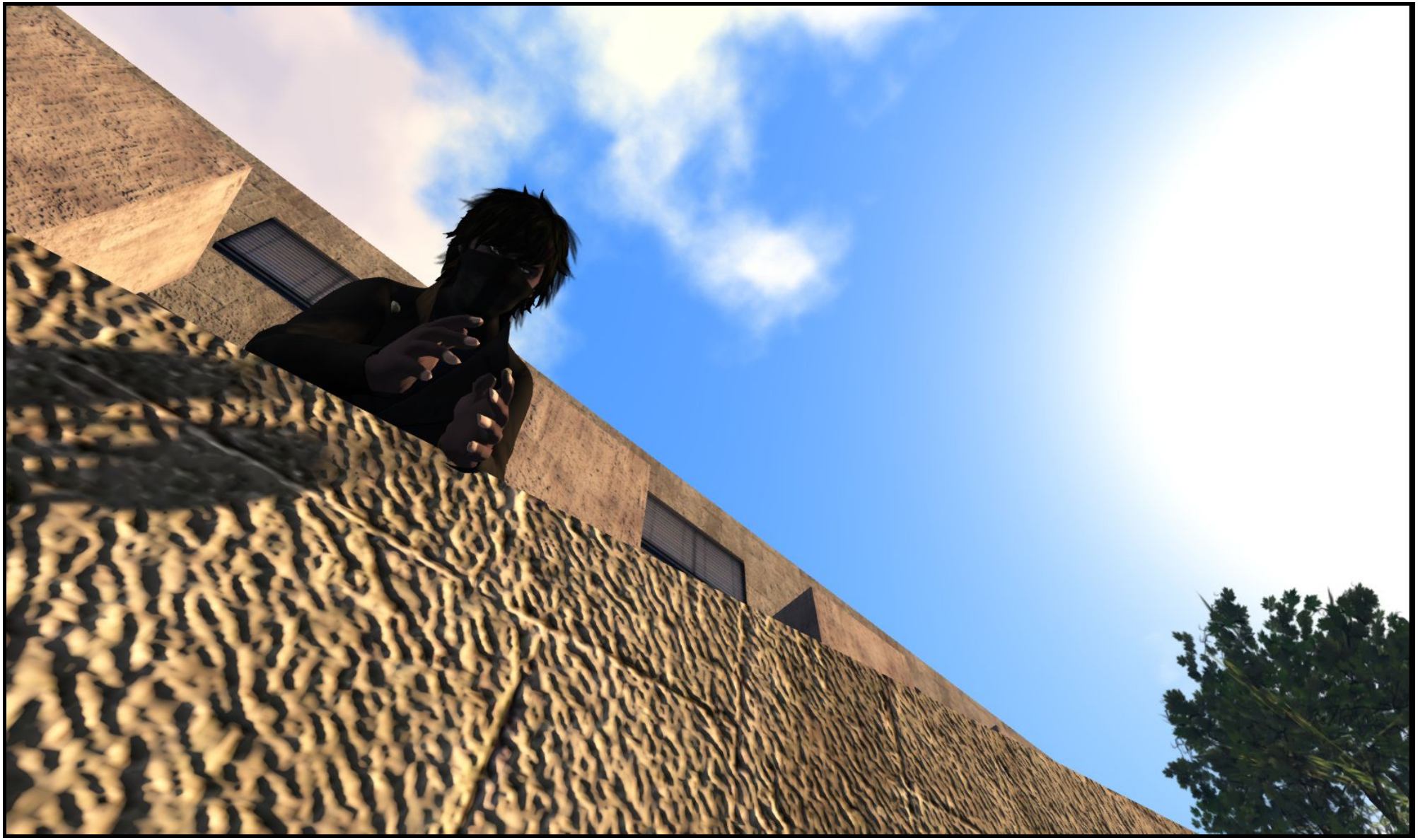
(...I've got to admit, he's still not bad. It's a chance. Especially since he is the only one in this country...)

(...You should forget it! You're going to rip your heart once more... This is ridiculous!)

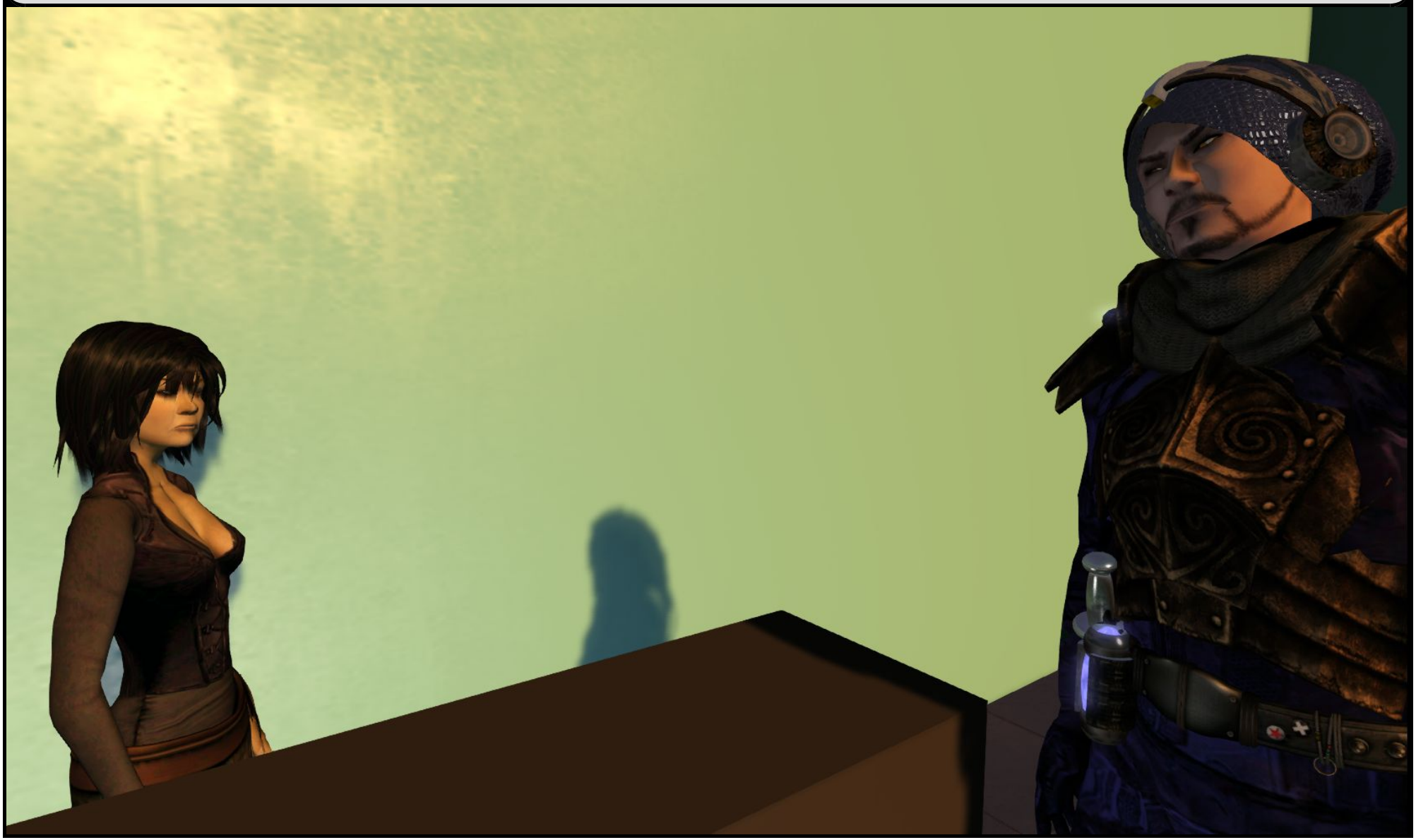
PAF!

- Whore!

SLAM!



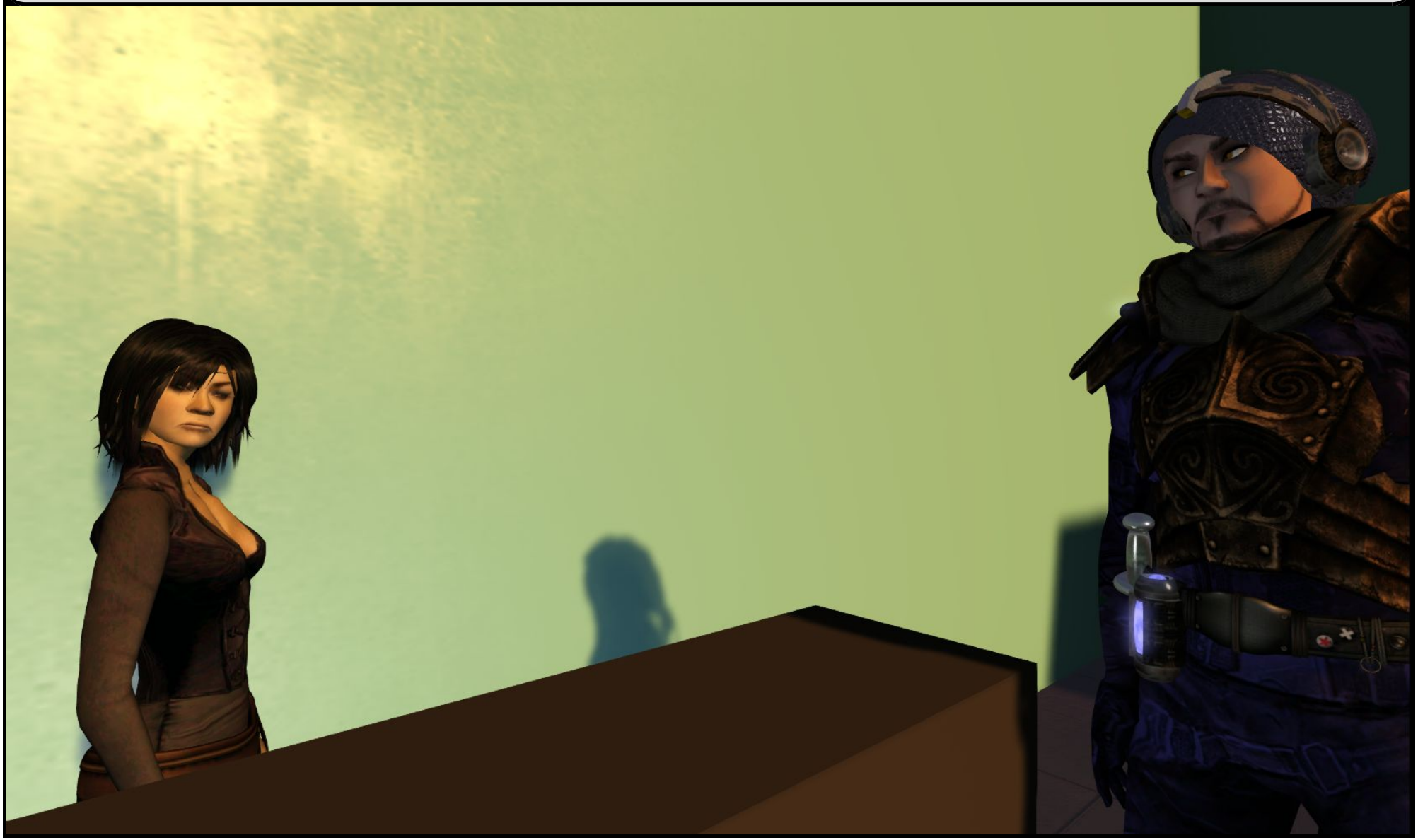
- How can I help you?
-- I must find the sub-citizen who has been hosted here yesterday. Where is he?



- Ah! The new one! The one they call Roland! The berigine came to get him this morning.

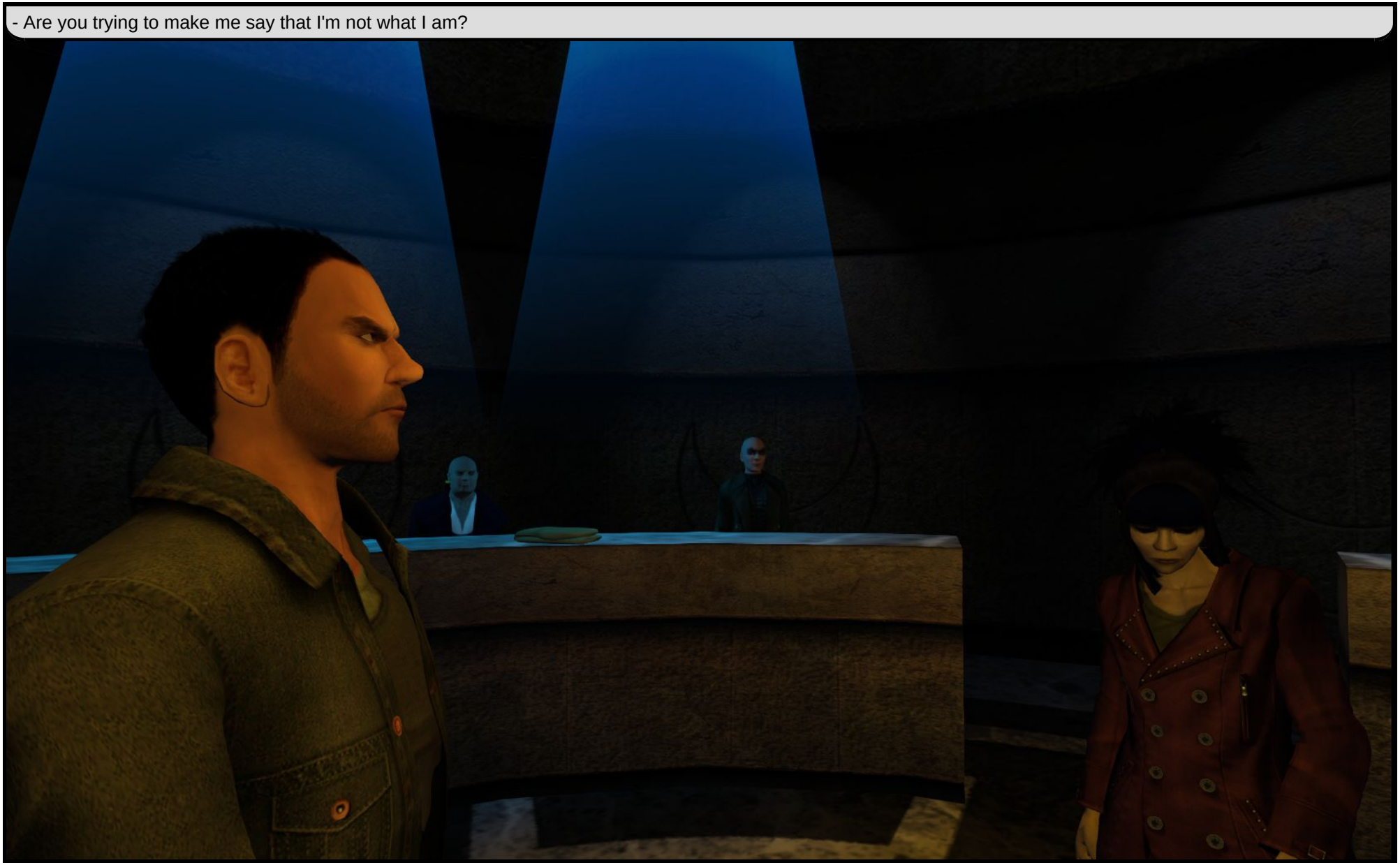
-- Already?! ...OK then, I'll try to find Tyriam.

- Oh! I was talking about the Berigine Hystazi.
-- What?! The Berigine Hystazi came to get the sub-citizen?



- That's right. She came with two of her men.
-- I see... Thank you, and I wish you a good day!

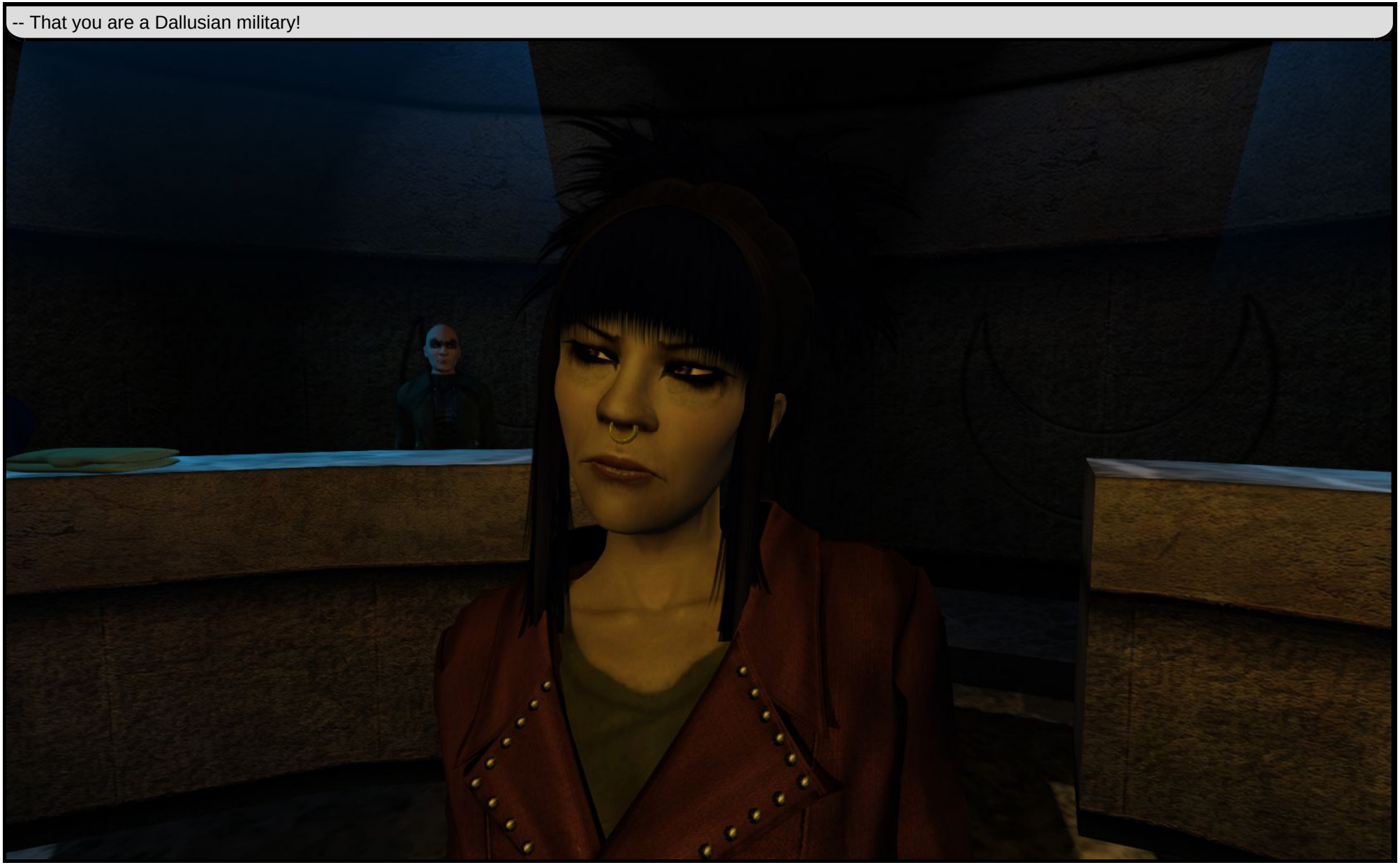
- Are you trying to make me say that I'm not what I am?



- The council is entitled to know who you are! You have been found in the company of tyrants, wearing their uniform. For my part, it would be enough to conclude!

- To conclude what exactly?

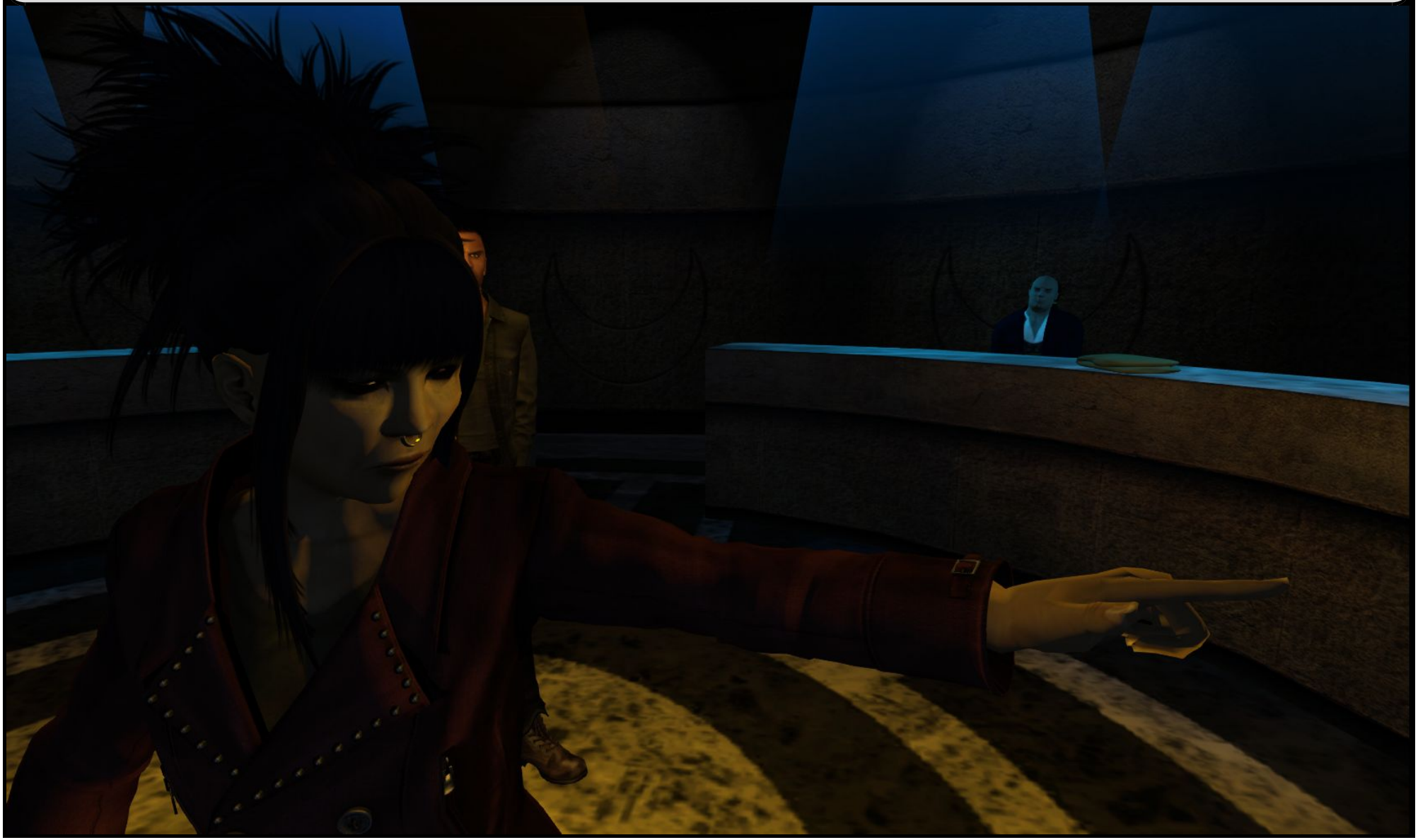
-- That you are a Dallusian military!



- Damn! Have I the build of a soldier? I've never owned a weapon of my life!

- However! The report mentions the seizure of a knife that was in your possession.

- A knife that, we must say, has been identified as similar to those found on some other tyrants!



- There is an explanation to this. I was their prisoner.

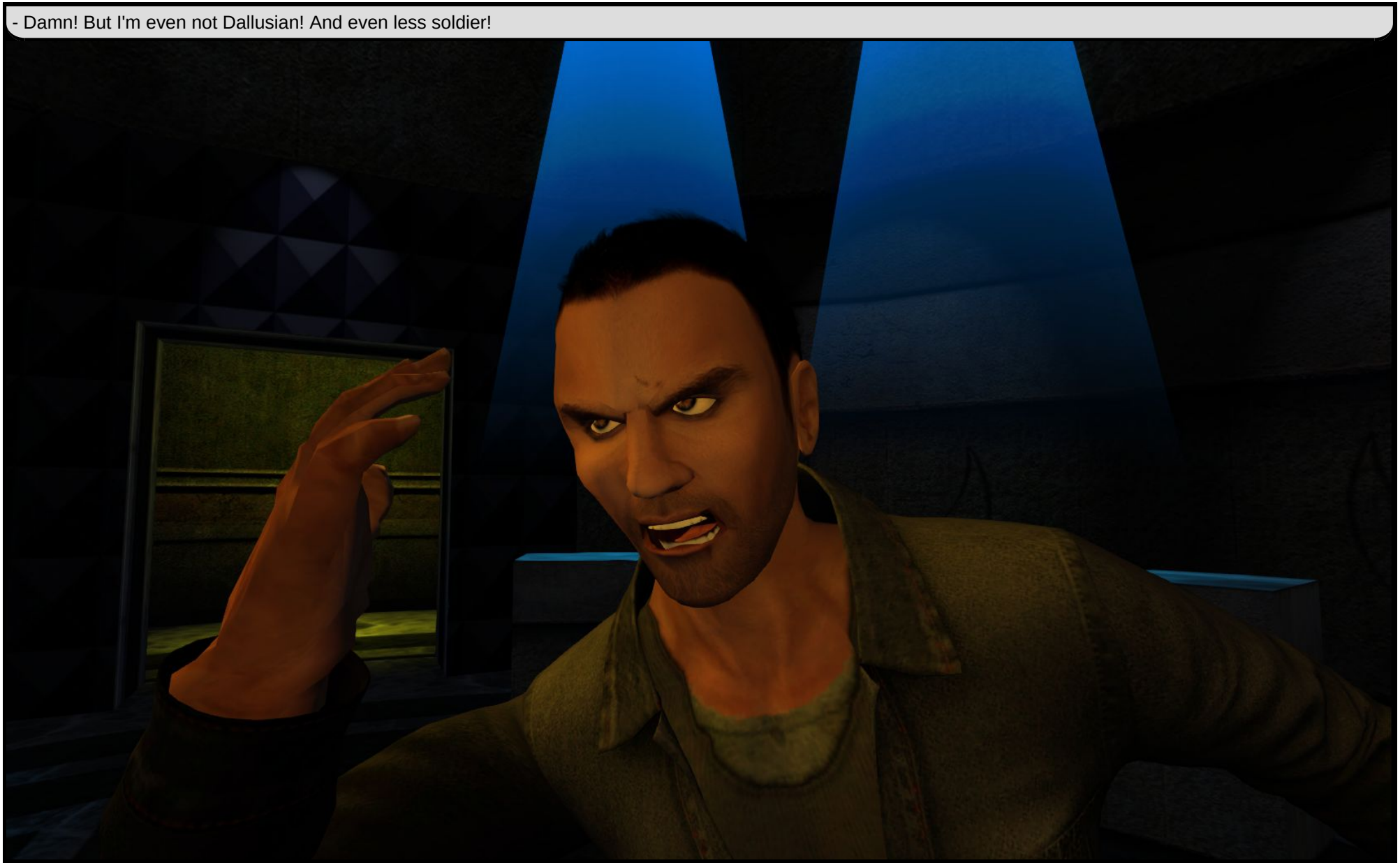
- Since when do we give weapons to prisoners?

- If you were prisoner of the Dallusians, in addition of having a knife in your possession, I think we have good reasons to worry!

- I think that the Berigine Tyriam has one more time proved her lack of judgment. It seems that she brought us a tyrant in the capital!

- You try to make me look for what I'm not. This is bad faith!

- Are you accusing the council to be bad faith? Protect the people of our country is, according you, being bad faith?


- Damn! But I'm even not Dallusian! And even less soldier!

- Sub-citizen! Erydak has seemed to recognize you at the audience, could you tell us if you already met her before? ...Including where you come from.

- Yes, indeed, we met us, near Bashora.

- That's enough for me! I've heard enough!

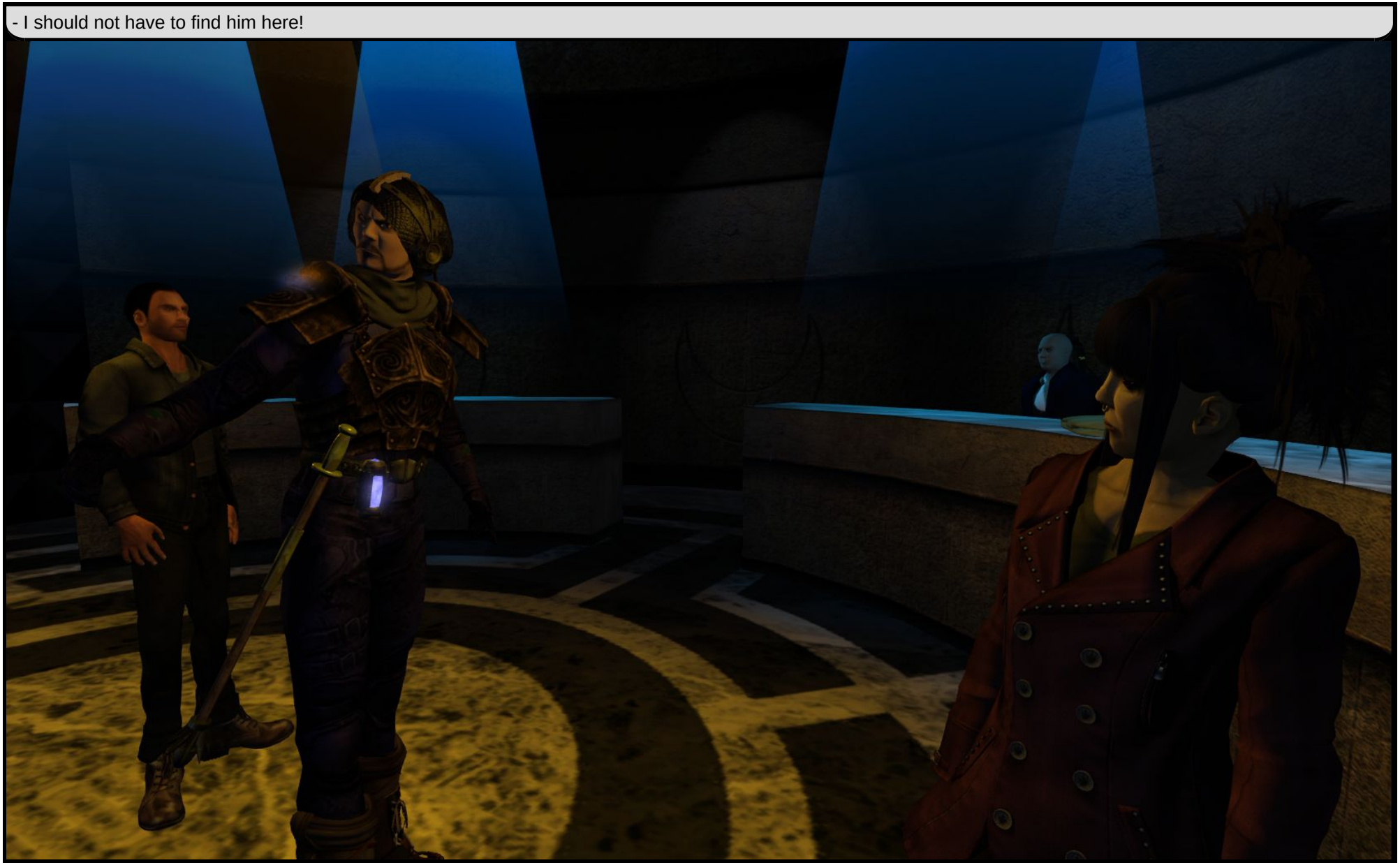
--- I suggest that we take action immediately.

- I agree with the Berigine Hystazi, we must settle this as soon as possible! I think that...

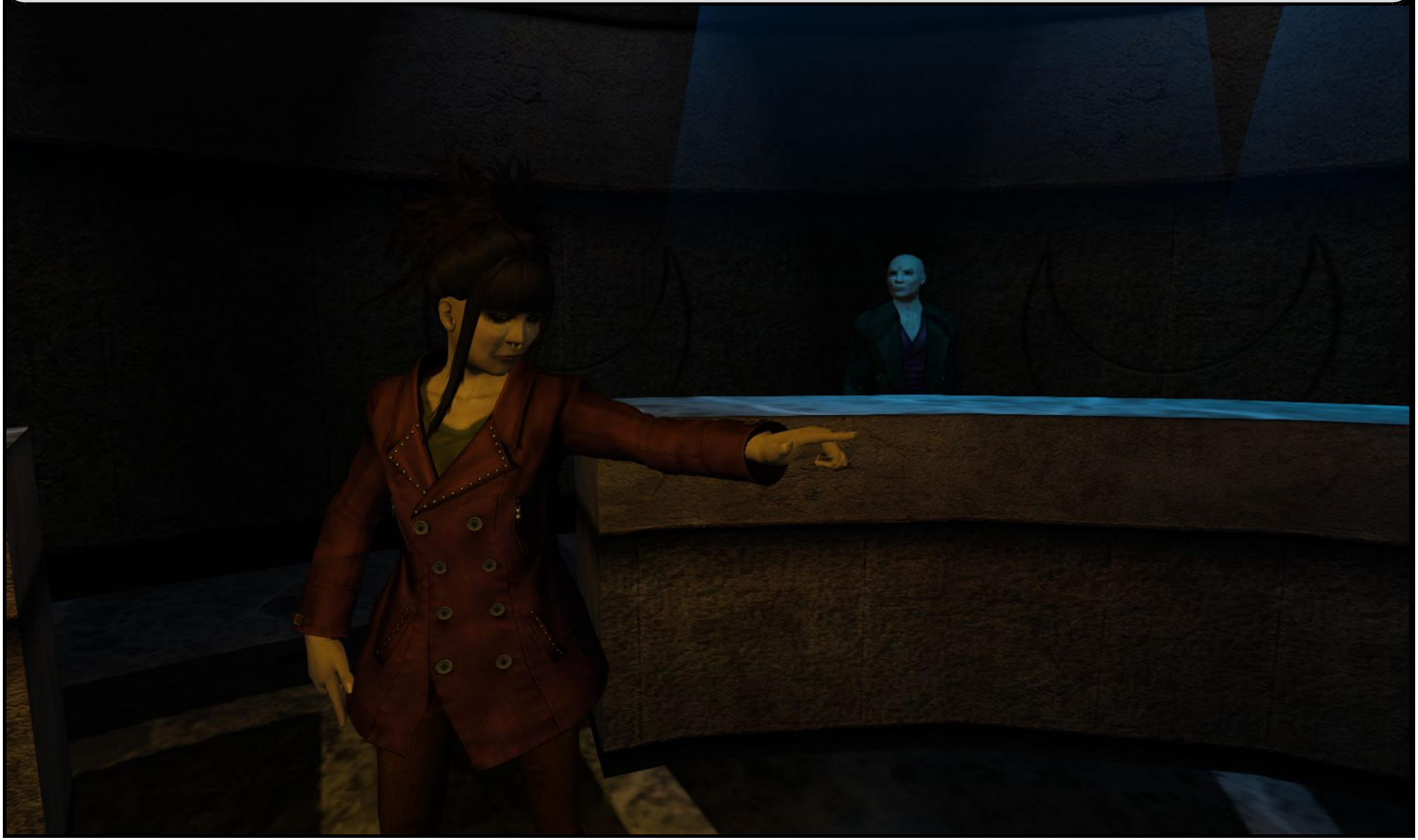
- Ahem!

- Erydak has requested to see this man, right now!

- I should not have to find him here!



- The Council had questions to ask to the sub-citizen! They are entitled to get answers!

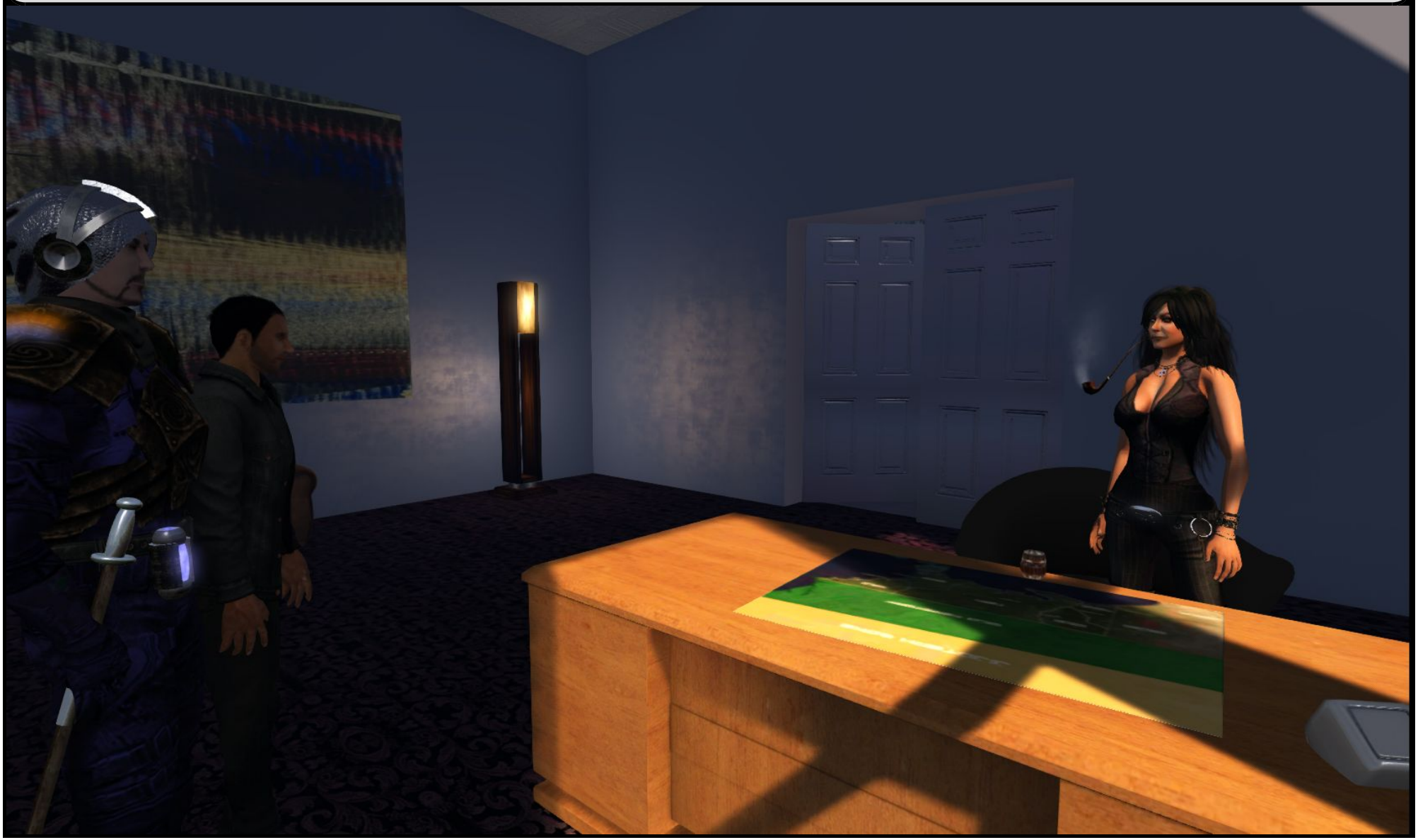


- You should have respected the order of responsibilities that had been given. Next time, sanctions may be applied!

--- You! Follow me!

Soon after...

- Here is the sub-citizen that you have requested to see.



- Thank you Gulan.

- But you will be certainly interested to know where I have found him...
--- What do you mean?

- The Berigine Hystazi had taken him to the Kruls's council for questioning.

-- An examination that had all the appearances of a trial!

--- This is rather unusual. Which reason have they invoked?

- No specific reason outside to want to learn more about him. But at my arrival, the ambiance was indeed of an accusatory tone. They seem to believe that this man would be a Dallusian soldier.

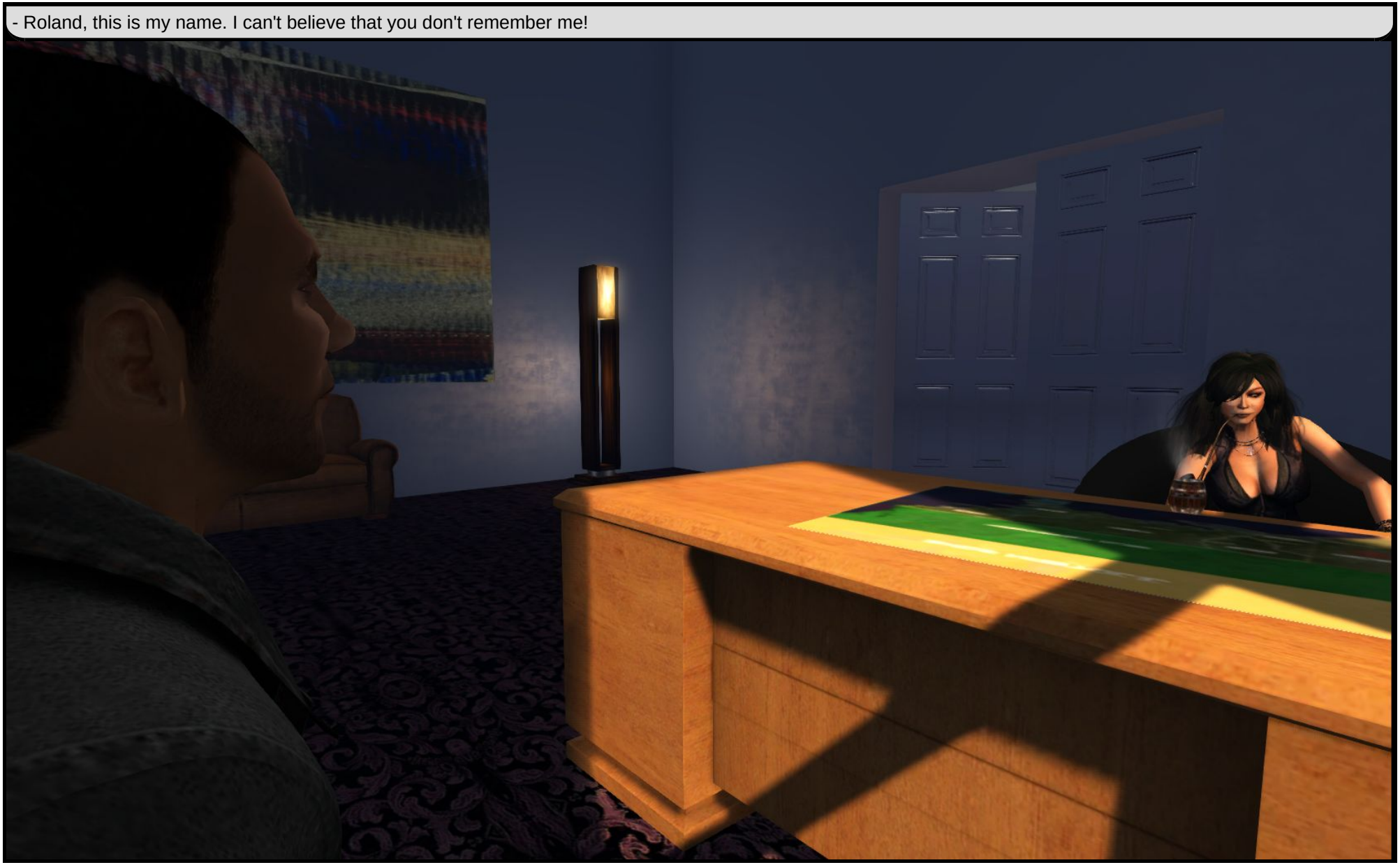
--- Hystazi does too often as her own way! I don't like this very much. I'll see that with her later. You can leave us Gulan.
- Erydak.

- Please, sit down.

-- With such an accent, you are definitely not Dallusian. Isn't it?

- This is correct, and I'm happy to see that there is no doubt.

-- Have we met somewhere before? Sir...?
- ...Roland!


- Roland, this is my name. I can't believe that you don't remember me!

- Hmm... Tell me why I should!

- Well! From my point of view, I was still with you there are only a few days.

- Few days ago?! Are you mad?

- No... Uhh! I know... For you, according what Marya told me, it was over three years ago! ...At Bashora!

-- At Bashora! I know what is Bashora, but I have no souvenir to have been there.

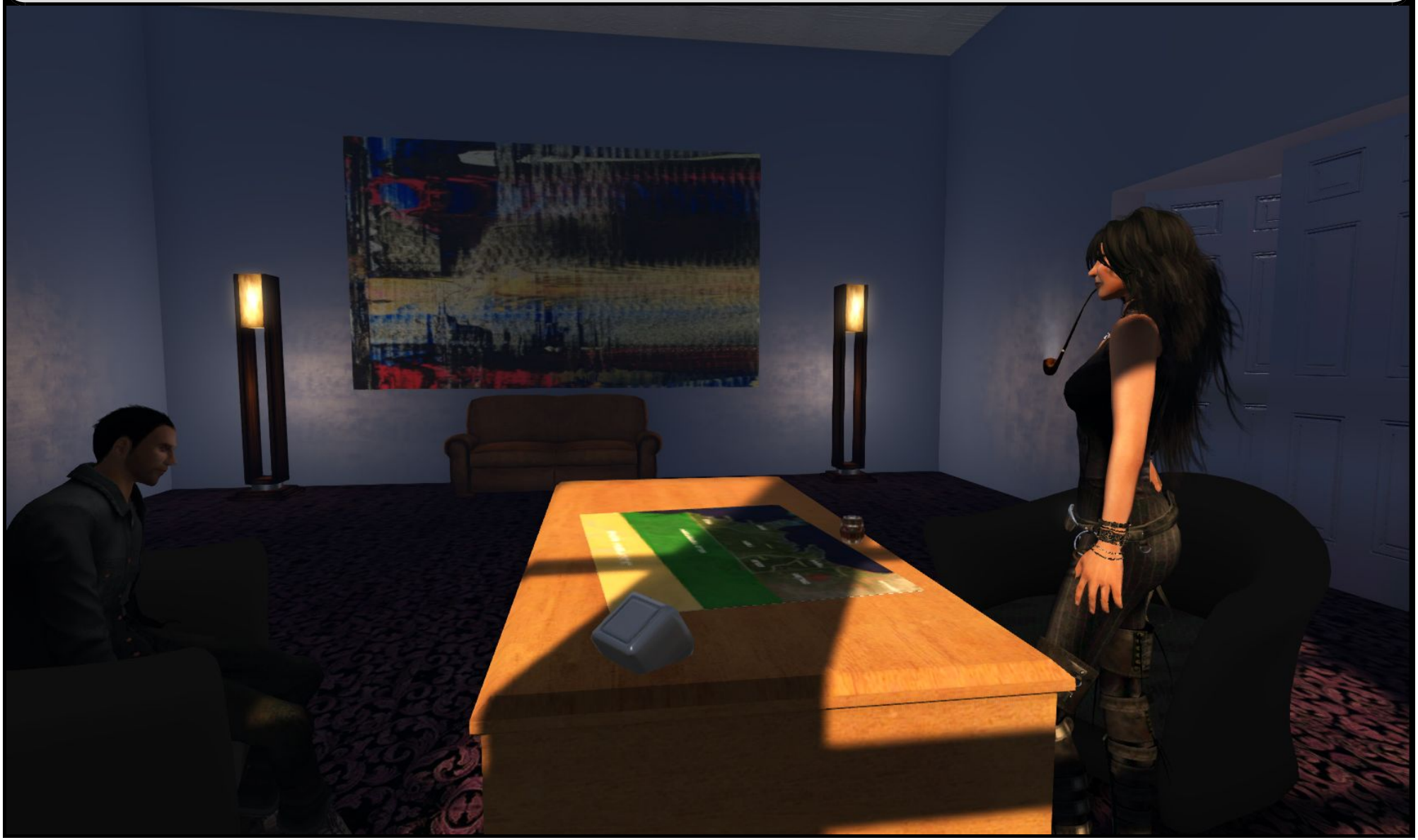
-- Really! ...I saw you be swept away by the Taalus.

((She doesn't remember anything... This is not good...))

-- Tell me. What were you doing at Bashora? Were you held prisoner there?

-- Do you really remember nothing? We went there together.

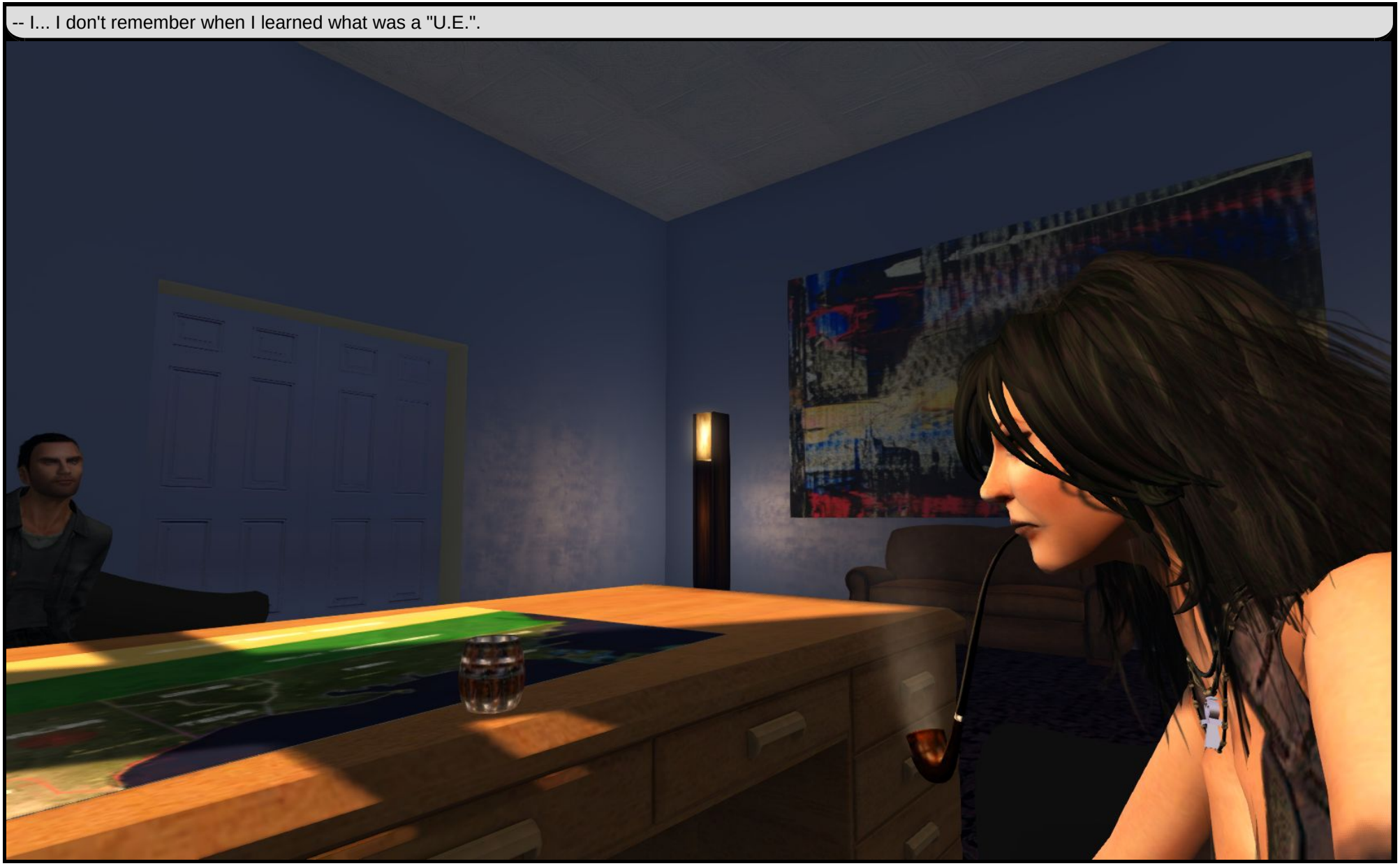
-- I remember to have crossed the desert to go there. I suppose that I've been there, otherwise I wouldn't be here.



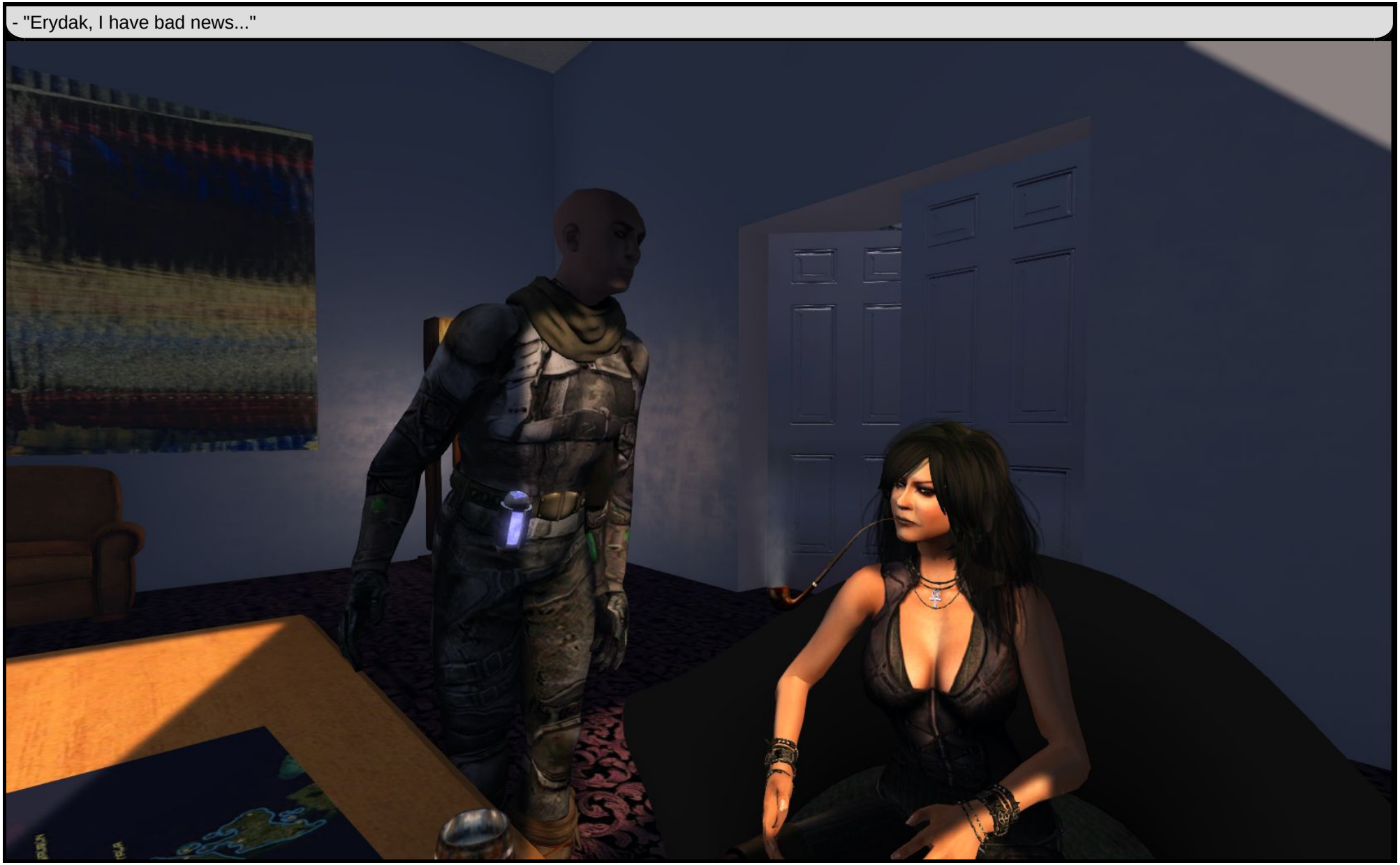
- I have also some weird memories, like a skull found in a dark cave, that I was surprisingly sure that it was my own one! What a stupid and inconsistent souvenir to have, isn't it?

- But you remember what is a "U.E."?
-- Yes, I know what it is.

- But I learned what was a "U.E." at the same time as you. We were together.


-- I... I don't remember when I learned what was a "U.E.".

- "Erydak, I have bad news..."



-- What is it?

- "It's the Berigine Tyriam, she had an accident..."
-- What?!

- "She was found down a retaining wall. She made a violent fall and she's in very bad state."

-- Goodness! Is it serious?

--- "She was taken to the medical center. She's in a critical condition."
- ?!

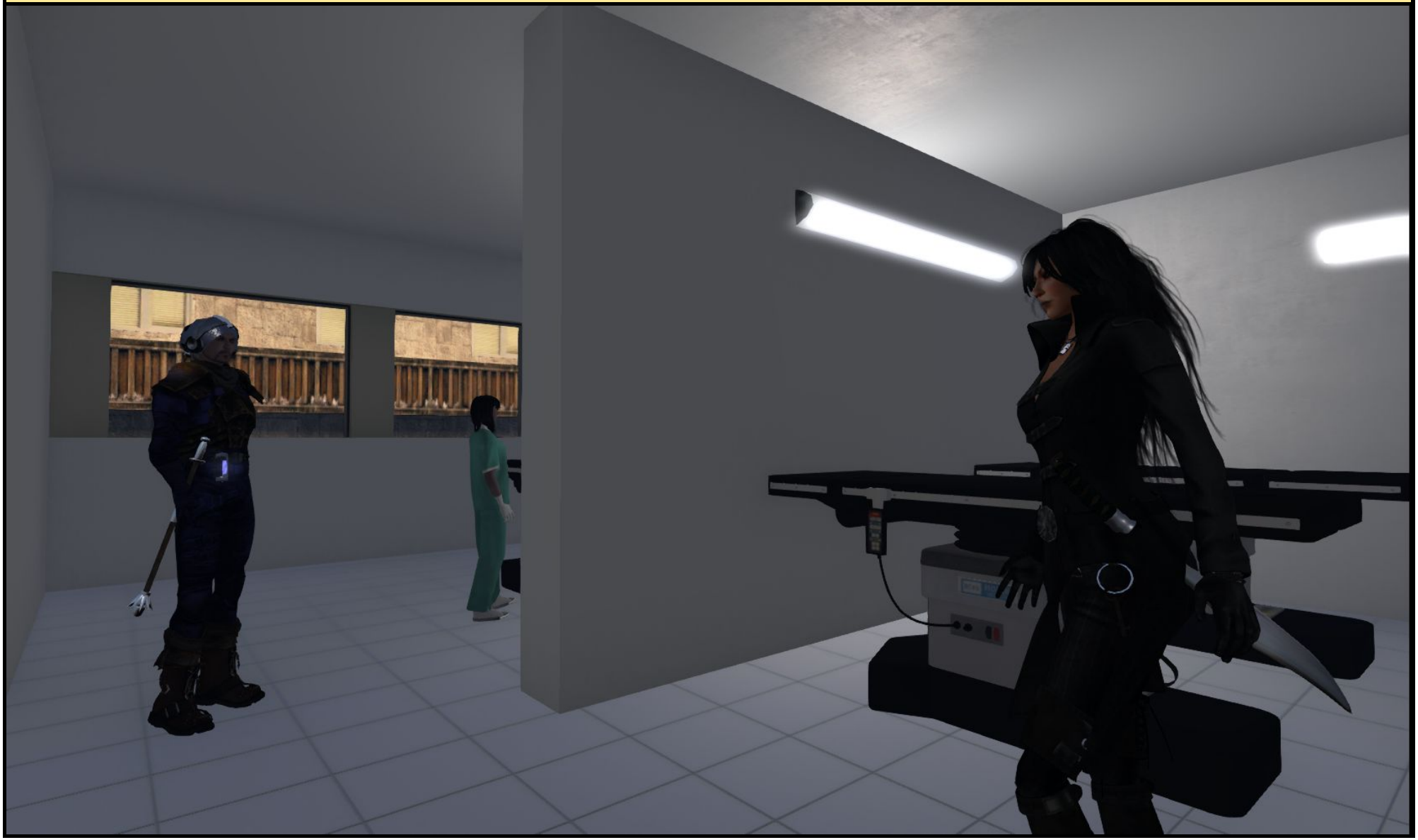
-- OK! I'm coming...

--- You! Stay here. Just relax. If you are hungry, there must be, in my room, a breakfast that I won't eat.
- Uh!... Yes!... But what is...

-- Put some guards at the door and don't let anyone enter or get out. Understood?
- Very well Erydak!

--- "Do you trust him enough to leave him alone in your apartments?"
- "He's not a bad guy. And trust me, I know what it is. Anyway, he's so scrupulous."

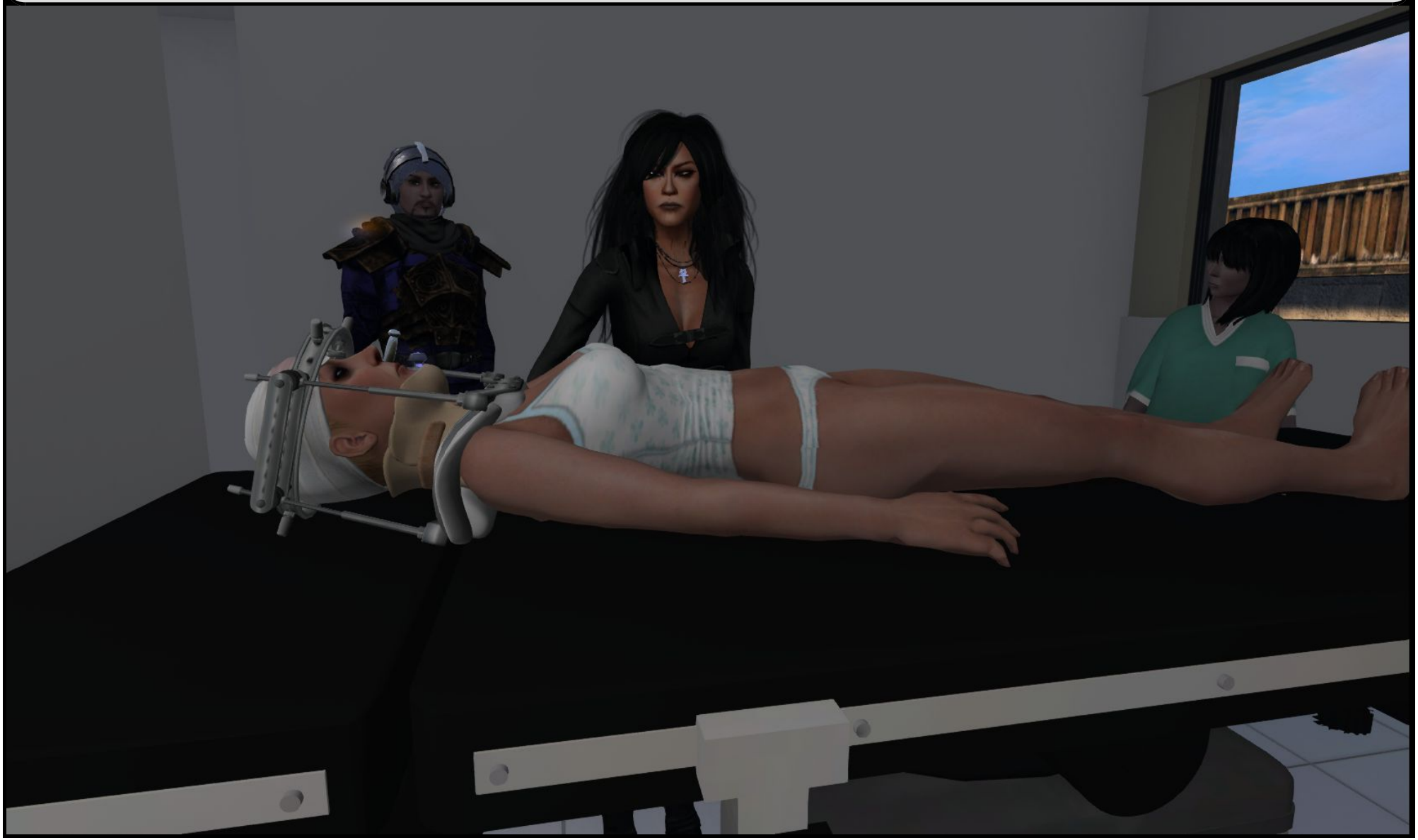
Later...



- How is she?

-- She's conscious but in a very bad shape. She has several sources of internal bleeding. Her condition is fading rapidly.

--- Mary!... Mary! You're not gonna let me down now!



- ...Erydak...

- But what he happened to you?

- ...Pushed, I've been pushed...

-- Mary, who did this? ...Who?

- I don't know... but...

-- It will be all right, you'll see!

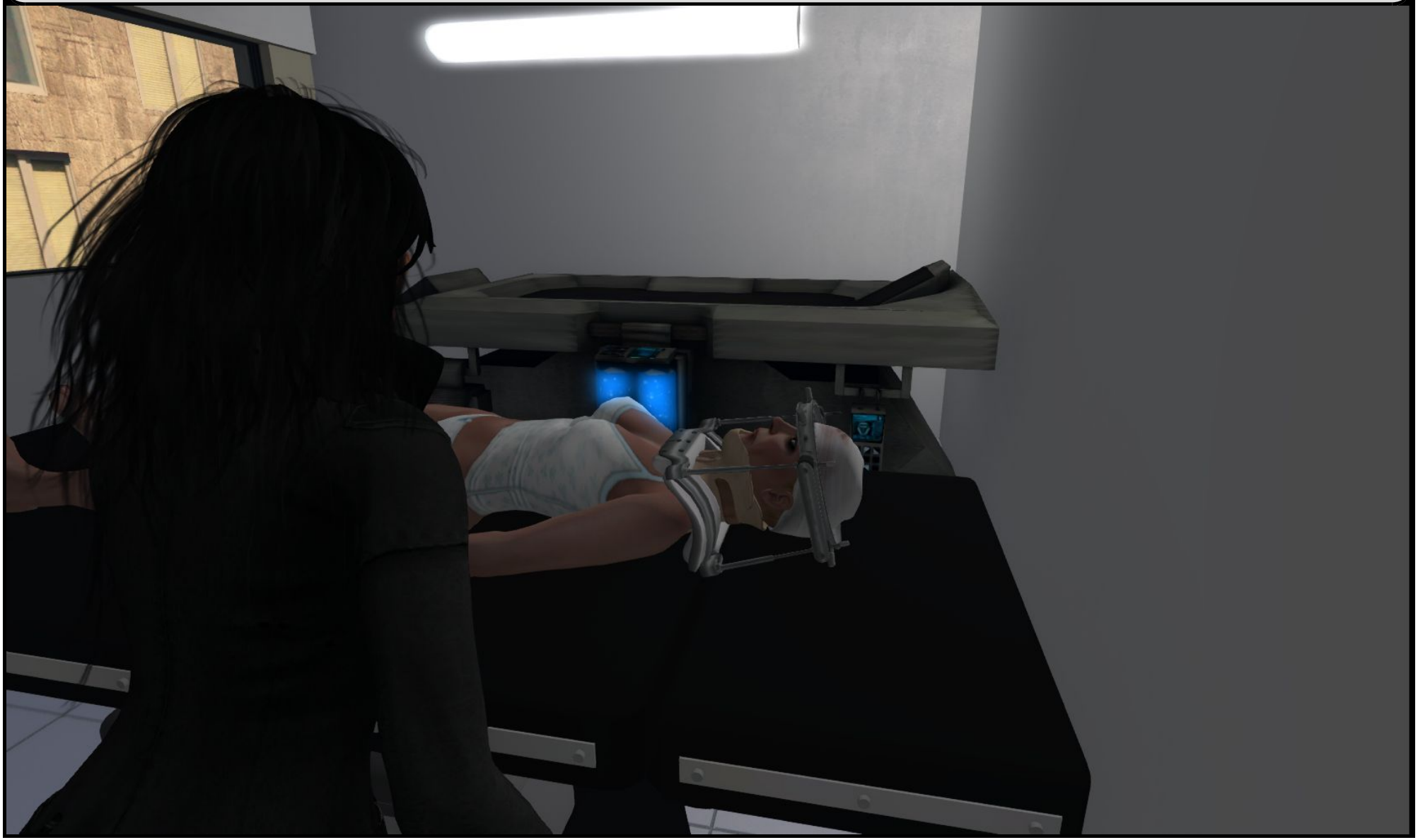
- She's behind all this... Ow!...

- Who?

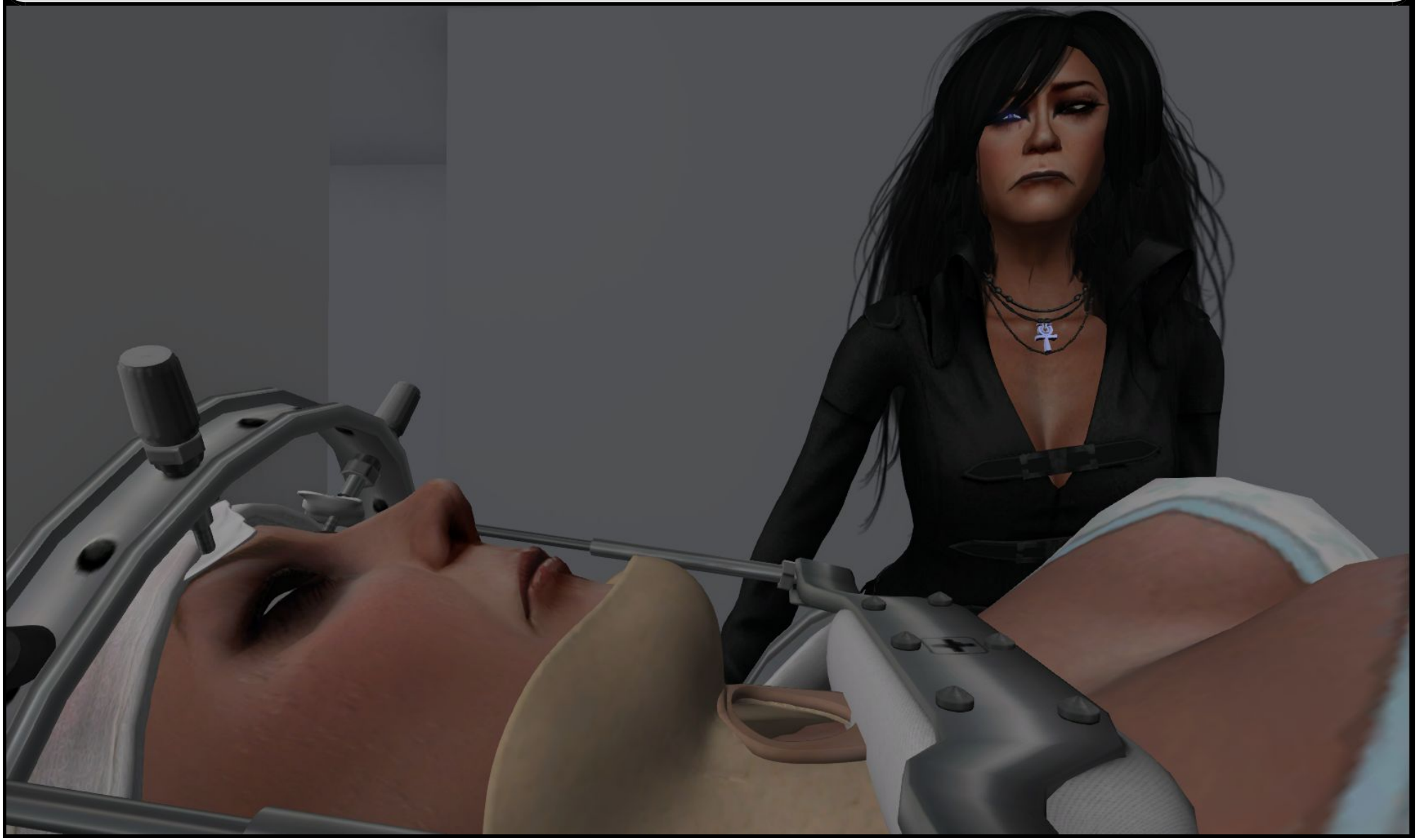
- Hystazi... Beware of her...

-- Save your strength... You need to recover, you won't leave me here!

-- ...Ow! ...Come on!... I'm not going too well, you know... Really not well...



-- Oh! Mary...
- ...Listen to me... Keep him in security... Roland... Don't let them take him... This is...



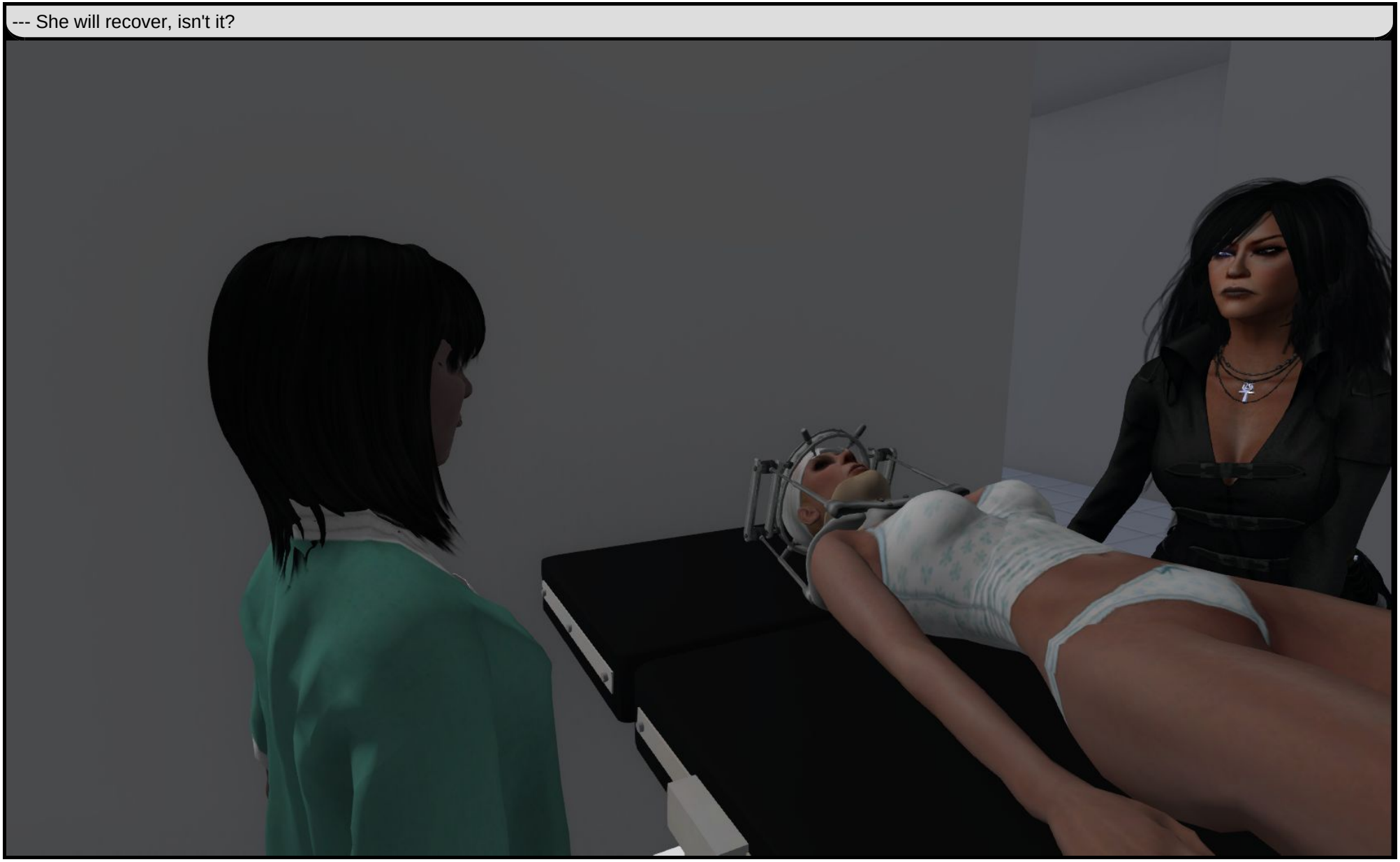
- Roland? Yes, I'll take care of him, don't worry. For now, you need to recover...

- He knows you... Keep him close to you... Ow! Ouch!... I'm sorry...

-- Mary?! ... Mary!

--- She lost consciousness.

--- She will recover, isn't it?



- Her pulse doesn't cease to decline. There is nothing more that we can do. Better to be ready for the worst. By the way, if she comes back, she would remain quadriplegic for the rest of her days.

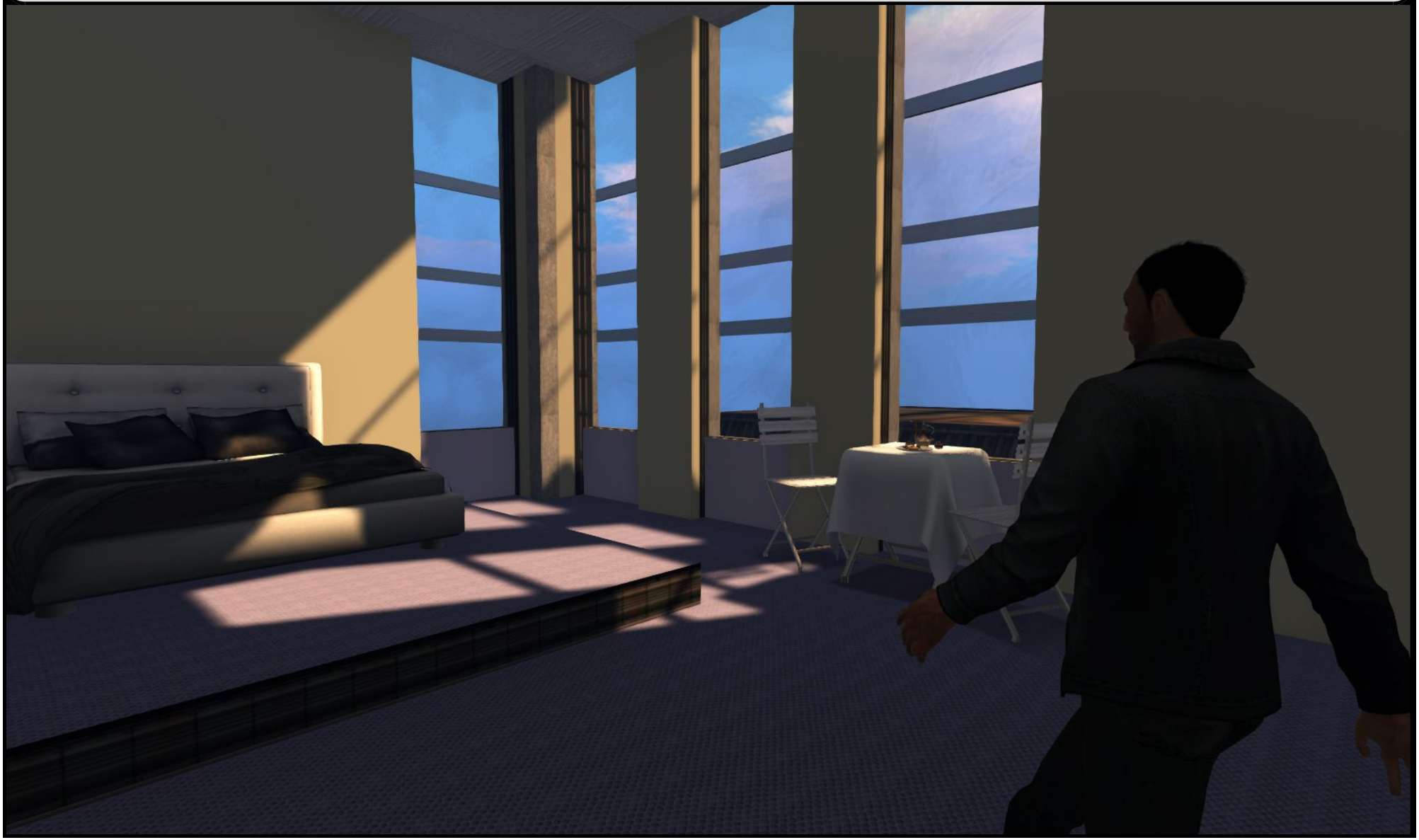
(... The outlines match ...Except for Florida, which is now nothing more than a string of islands... And my poor parents who were living there... Now gone like all the rest...)

(Let's see if they've received news...)

-- Excuse me, do you have any news about Tyriam?
- ?! ...Uh!...

-- All we have learned, is that she would be in a critical state.
- OK, Thanks.

(Wow! Her room is nice and spacious... I'm jealous!)



(Well! Let's eat. I'm starving...)

(...I hope that I won't have to deal again with that Hystazi... Maybe I should talk about that to Alezia. Uh! ... Ah yes! ...Erydak!)

(I'm only a perfect stranger for her now... I do hope that Tyriam will get better. Otherwise, This is not auguring well...)

(...Very comfortable this bed... Mmmm! This is her scent everywhere... I might let myself convinced easily...)

(OK! Get up Roland! I better to not be in her bed when she will come back.)

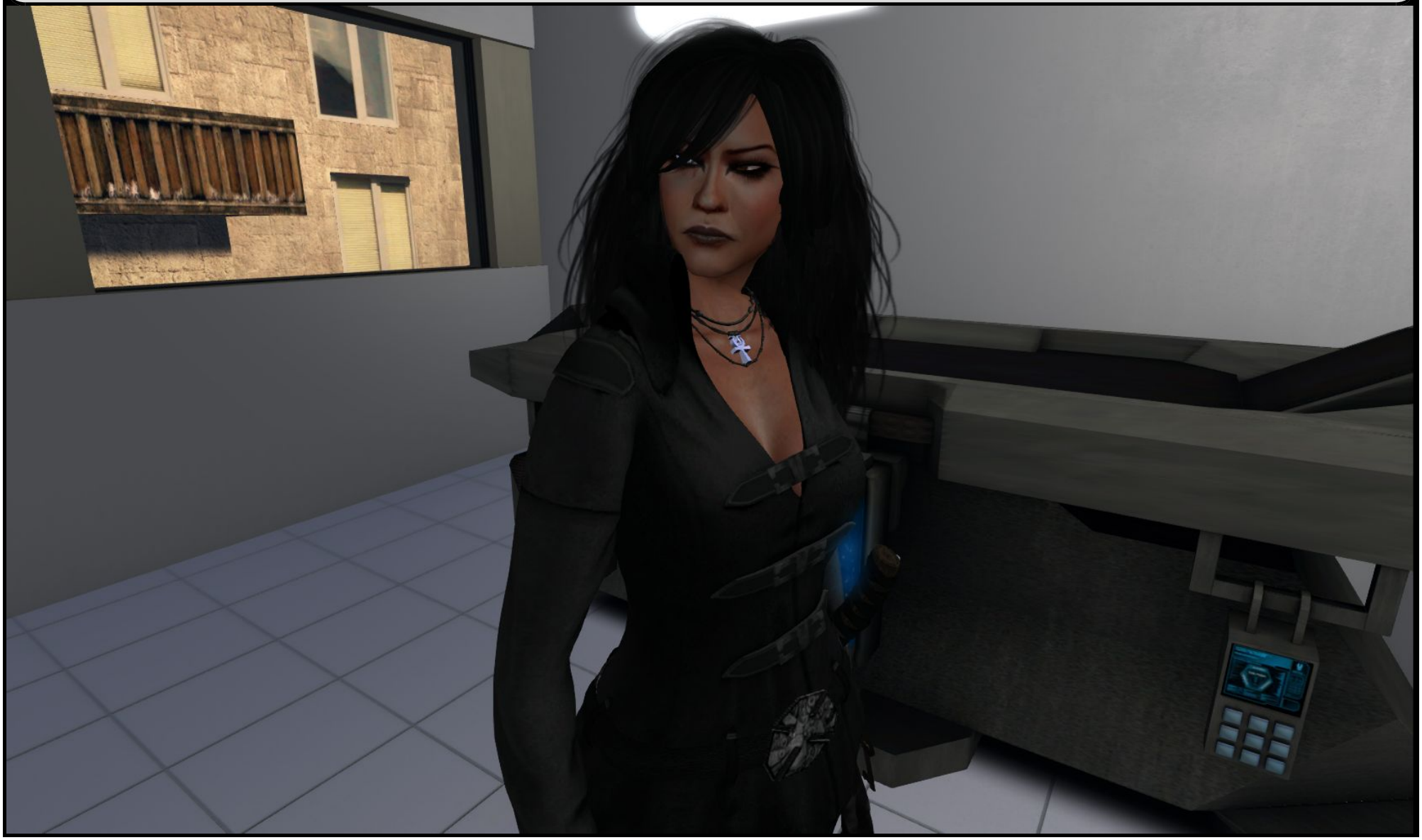
One hour later...

-- I'm sorry Erydak. She passed away.

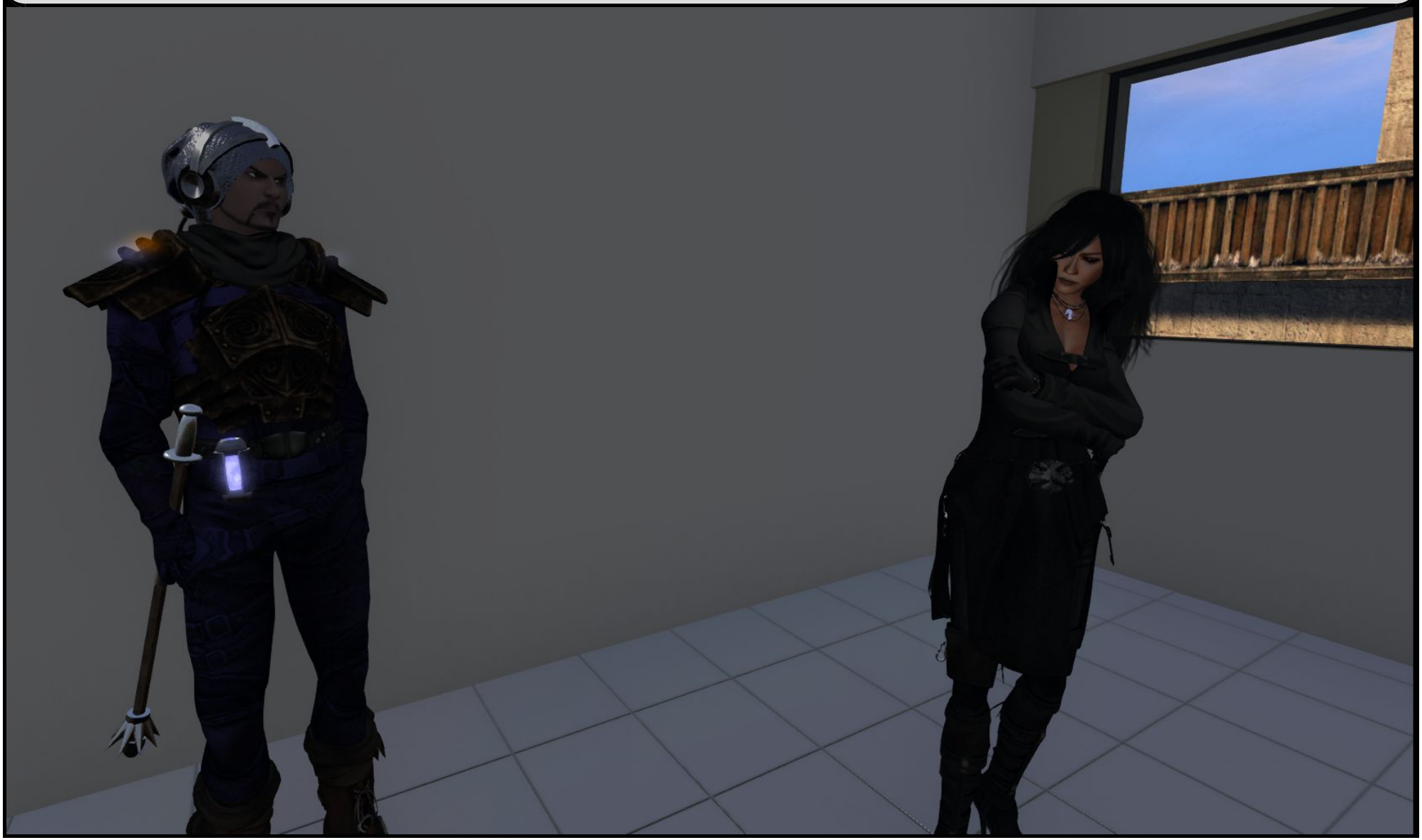
(So fast... Too fast...)

(Why you Mary? Why now?)

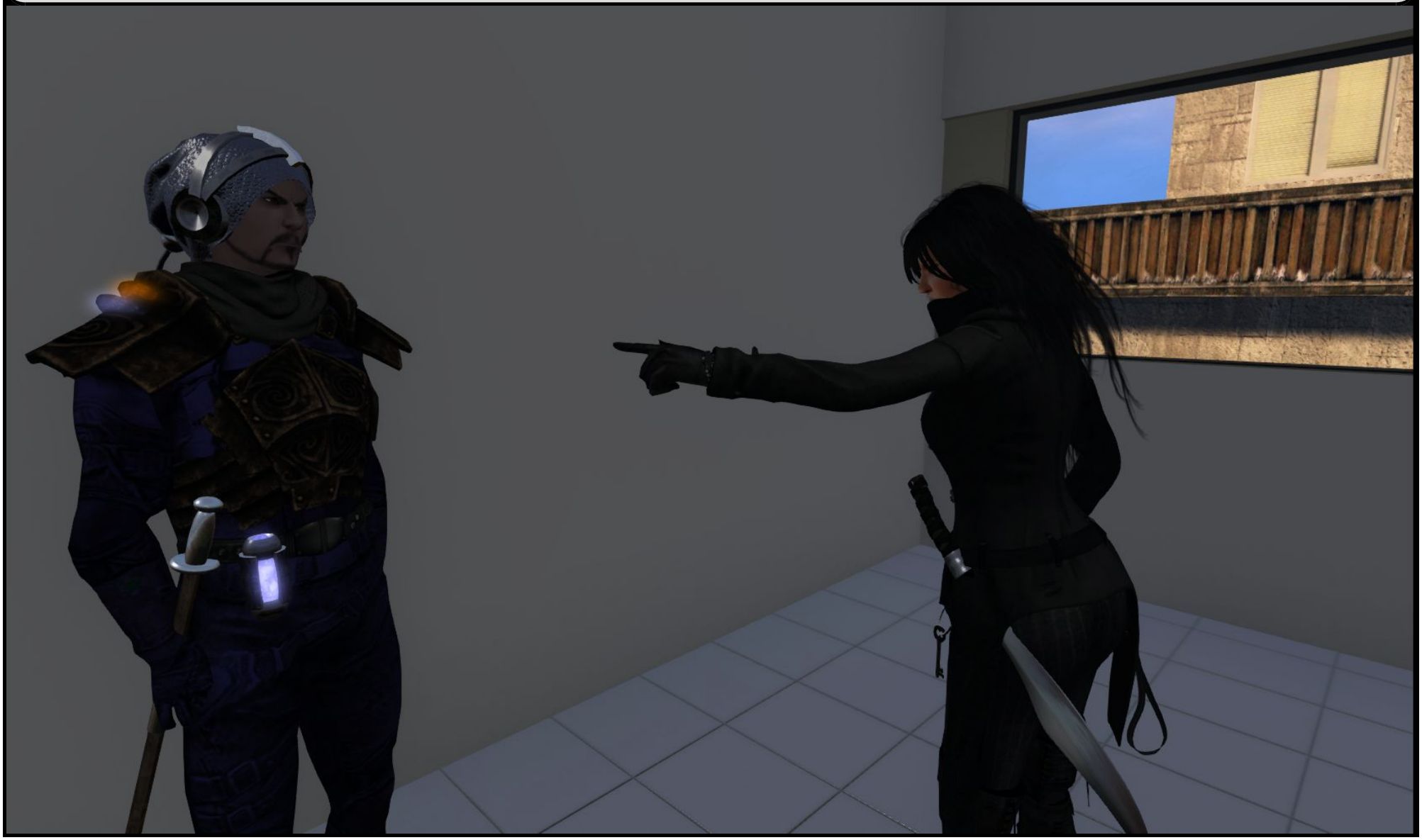
- Who dare to do this!



-- Gulan! ...Gulan!
- Yes Erydak?



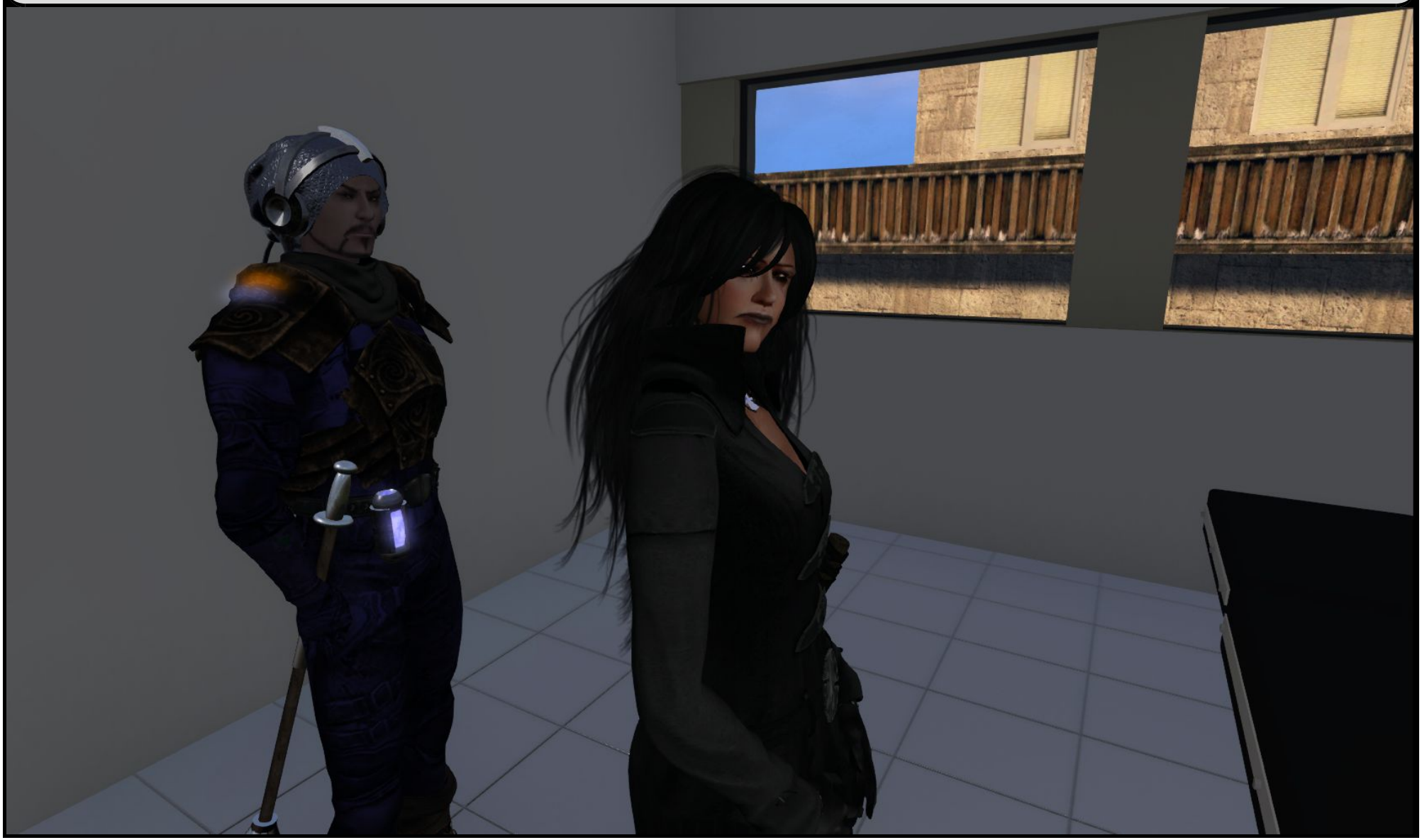
-- Find me who did this! You hear me! And this, even if you have to question all the citizens of the capital!



- They are already investigating Erydak, but I'm going to double the teams.

- Goodbye my friend... I should have been more careful...

-- (Sigh) Gulan... Bring me home, would you?
- Of course.



Soon after...

-- So?

- What about Marya?

- Tonight, you'll sleep here, on the couch.
-- ?!

--- Gulan! Ensure that someone brings him a dinner when it will be time.

--- "Sleeping on the couch? ...But we're only the afternoon..."

- The Berigine Tyriam is dead. It seems that someone would have pushed her from the top of a retaining wall.

- Oh! Damn!

- She's shaken.
-- I understand. This is really unfortunate.

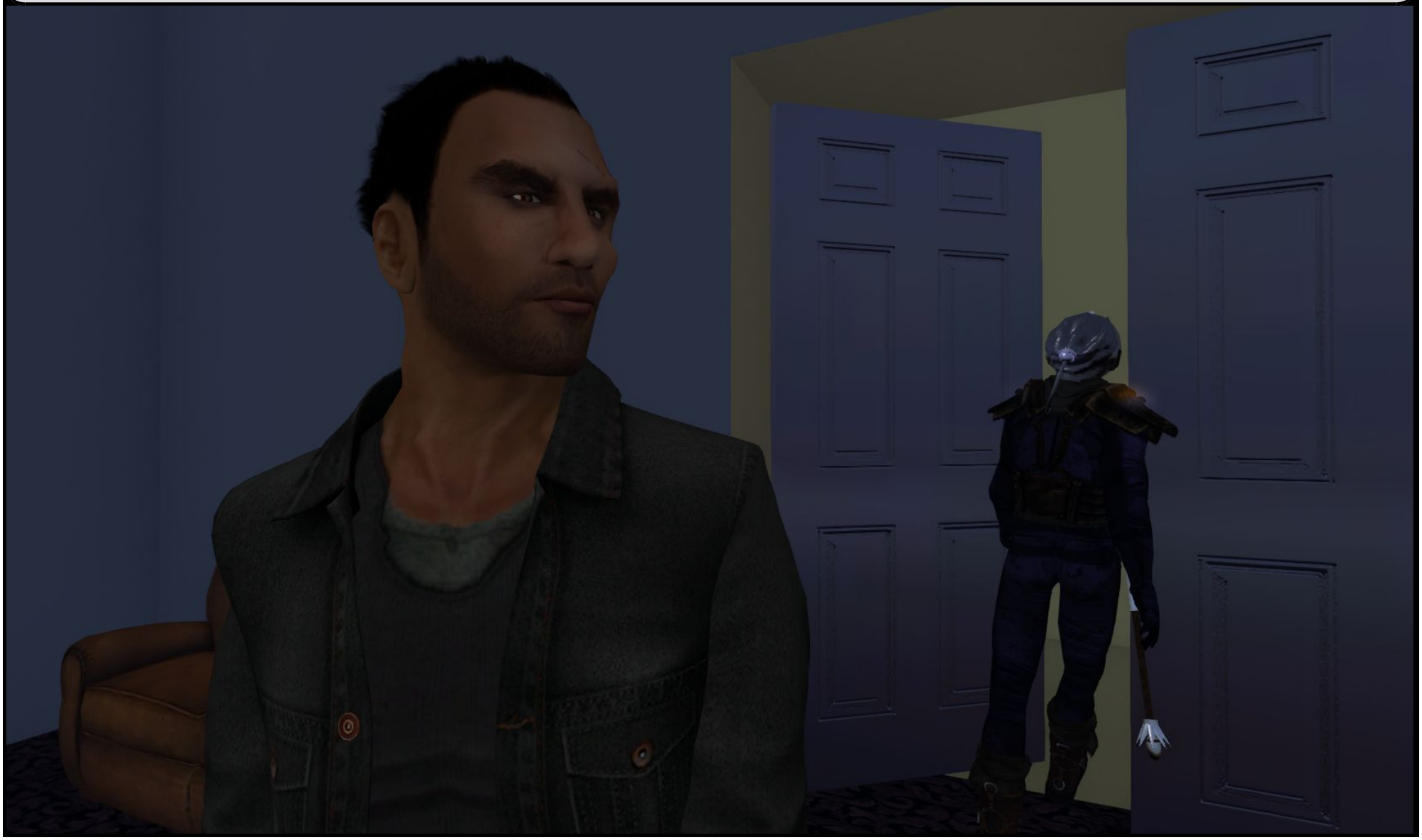
- This is for your safety she wants you to stay here. Until we will have clarified the situation, you're considered as a potential target.

- (Sigh) I don't understand why my presence could bother at this point.

-- I must go, I have an investigation to manage. I'm going to make you serve a dinner at the end of the day.

-- Oh! Better to not disturb her. Let her settle her sorrow, she needs this more than she wants to admit.
- Well, that's noted.

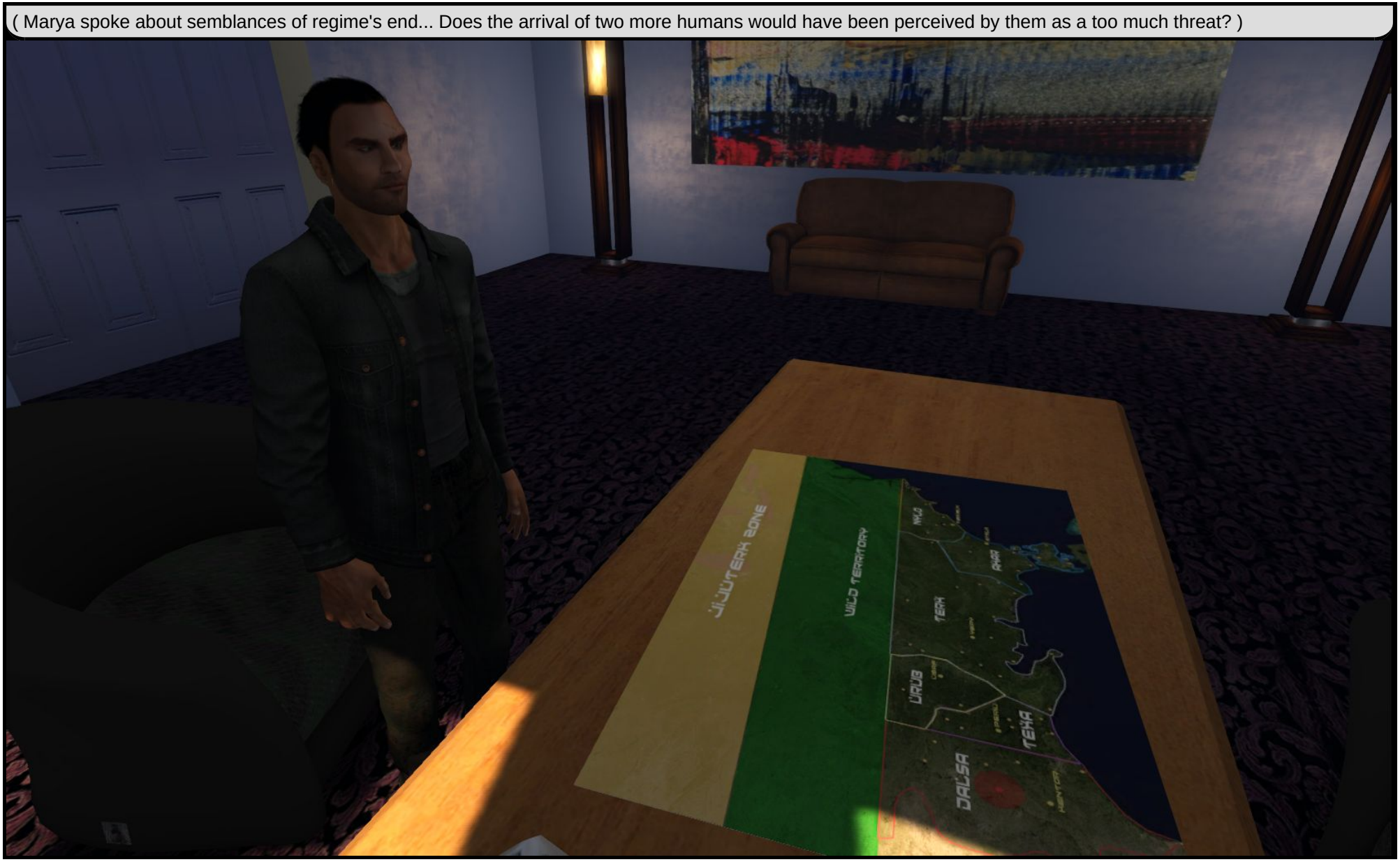
(Daniel, and now Marya... No, but... Am I losing the few remains of what I have, like all the rest in my life?)



(If I understand well, there is now only two humans in this town... Alezia and me. Someone has triggered an accident for eradicate us: Marya, Daniel and me...)

(Then, Marya would have been literally assassinated. The same day where the Council has tried to make me a trial to eventually make me accused. Could it be possible that those same people would be responsible for all this?)

(Marya spoke about semblances of regime's end... Does the arrival of two more humans would have been perceived by them as a too much threat?)



(This day is going to be long, locked here... No TV... No book... No book that I can at least read... Really!)

In the middle of the night...

(!)

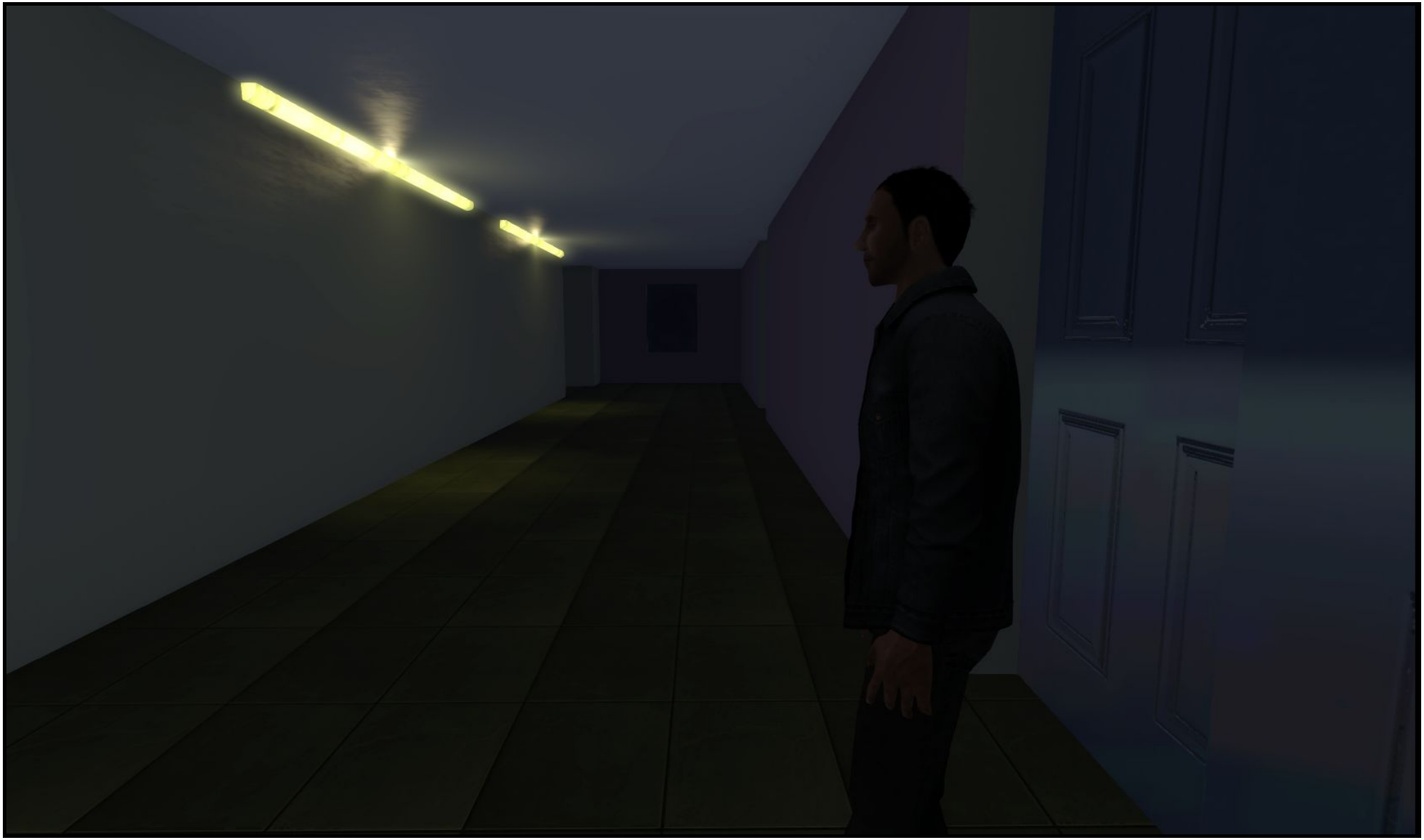
CLUNK!

((...?...))

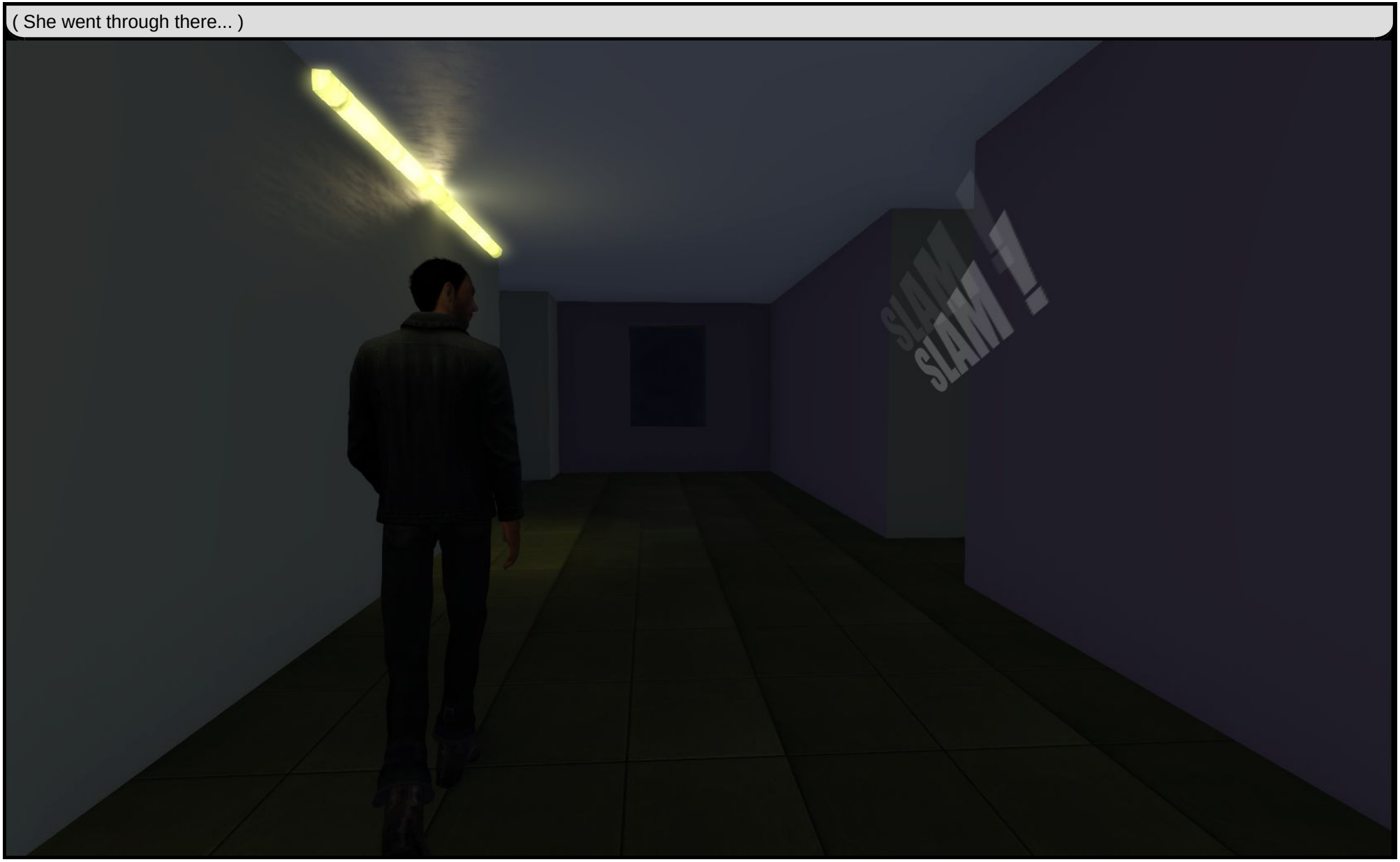
((?!))

(But what is she doing? She's going out half-naked!)

(Maybe I'd better go check...)

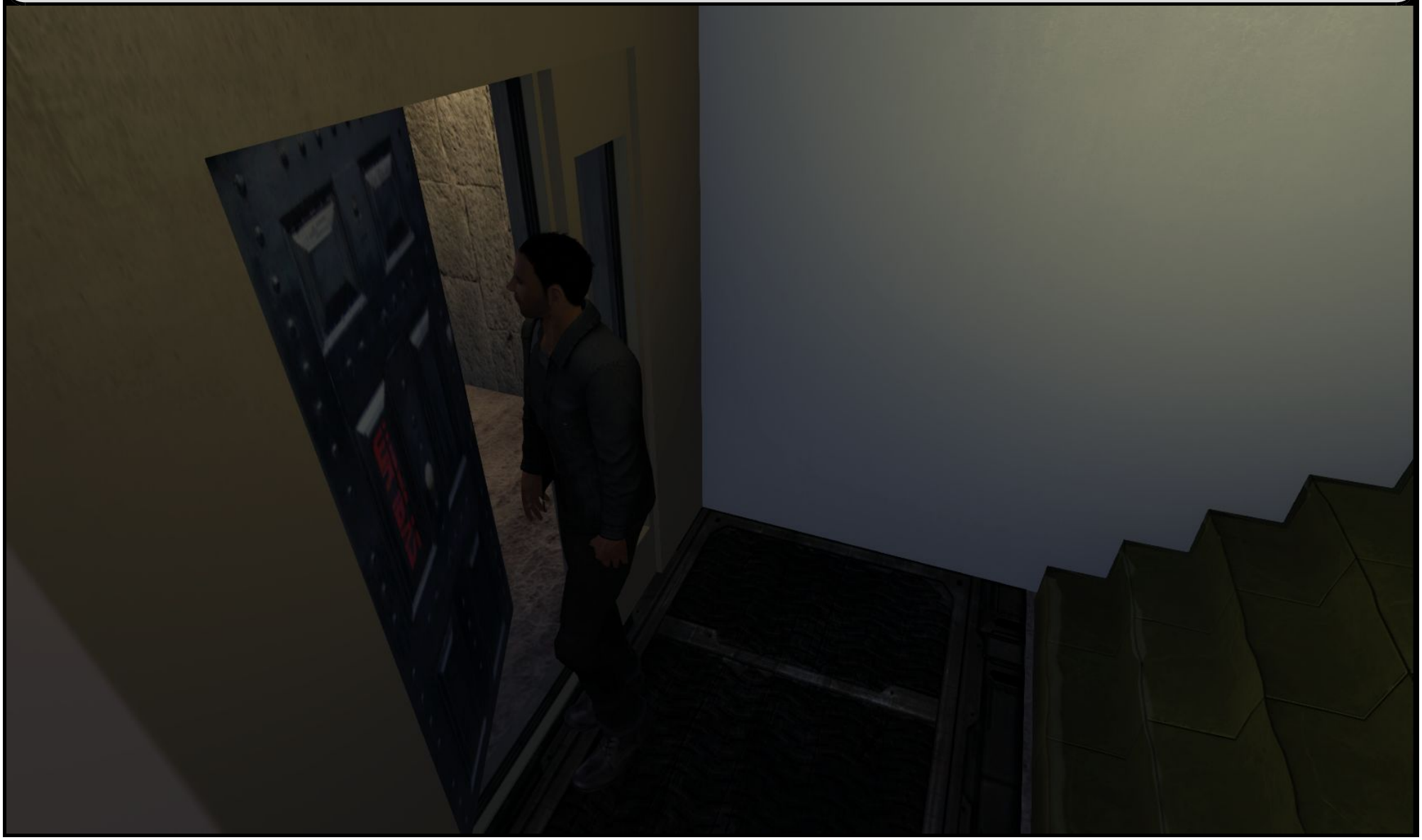


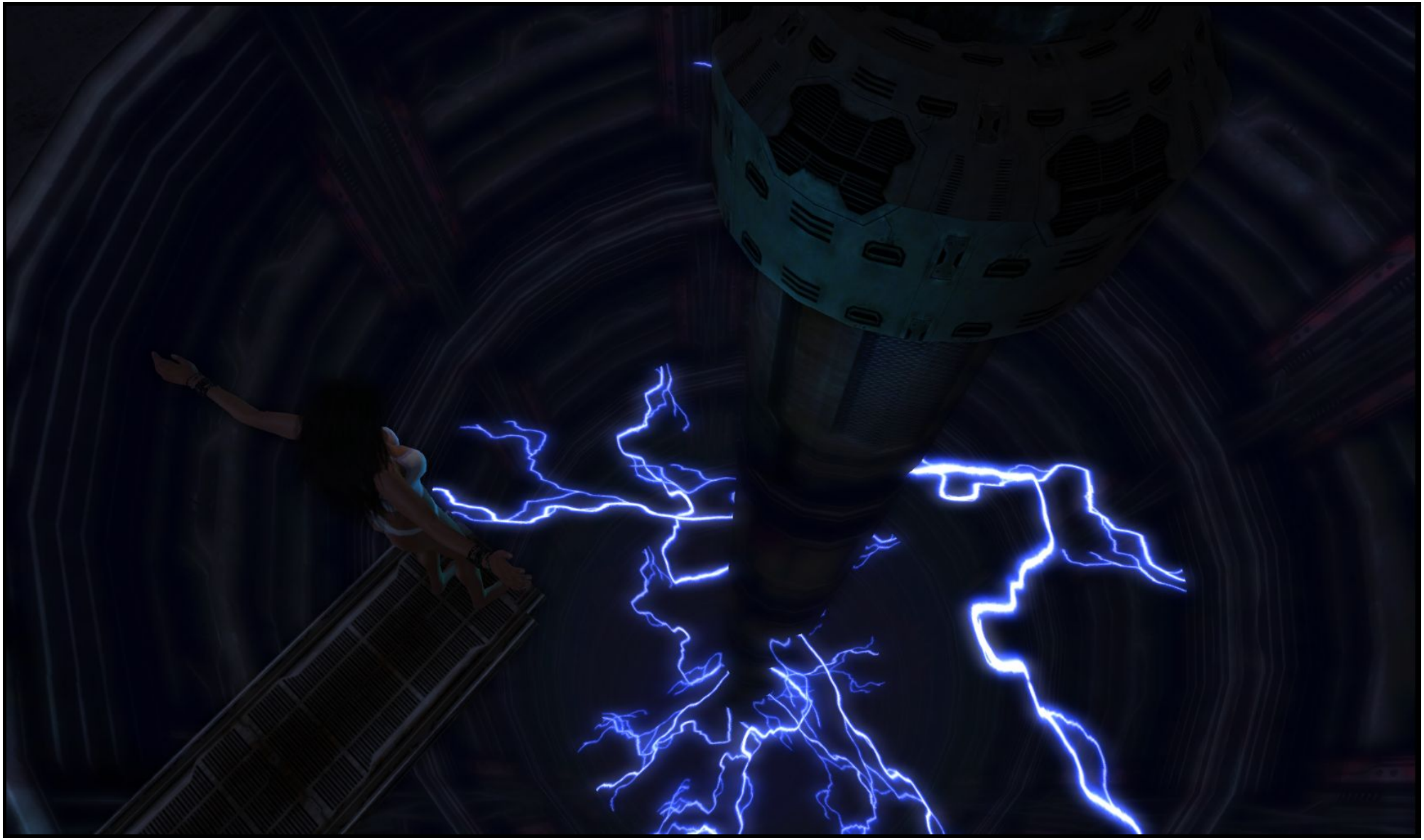
(She went through there...)



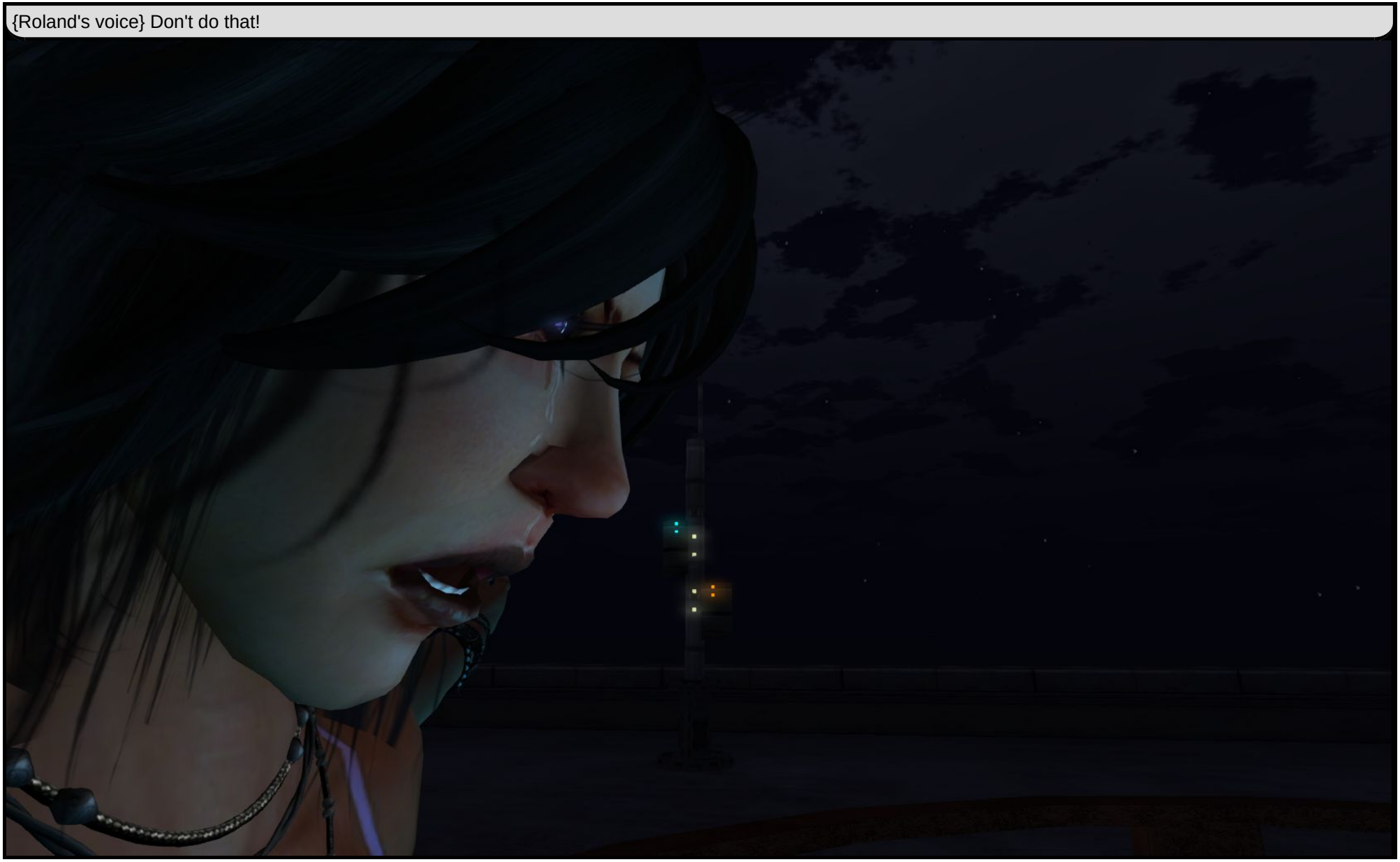
(Where the hell does it lead?)

(Inevitably, she exited here... What can she do outside in that outfit? That's not very normal...)





{Roland's voice} Don't do that!



-- Please, don't jump!

- Go away! Flee before I kill you too like all the others!

- Alezia! I beg you!

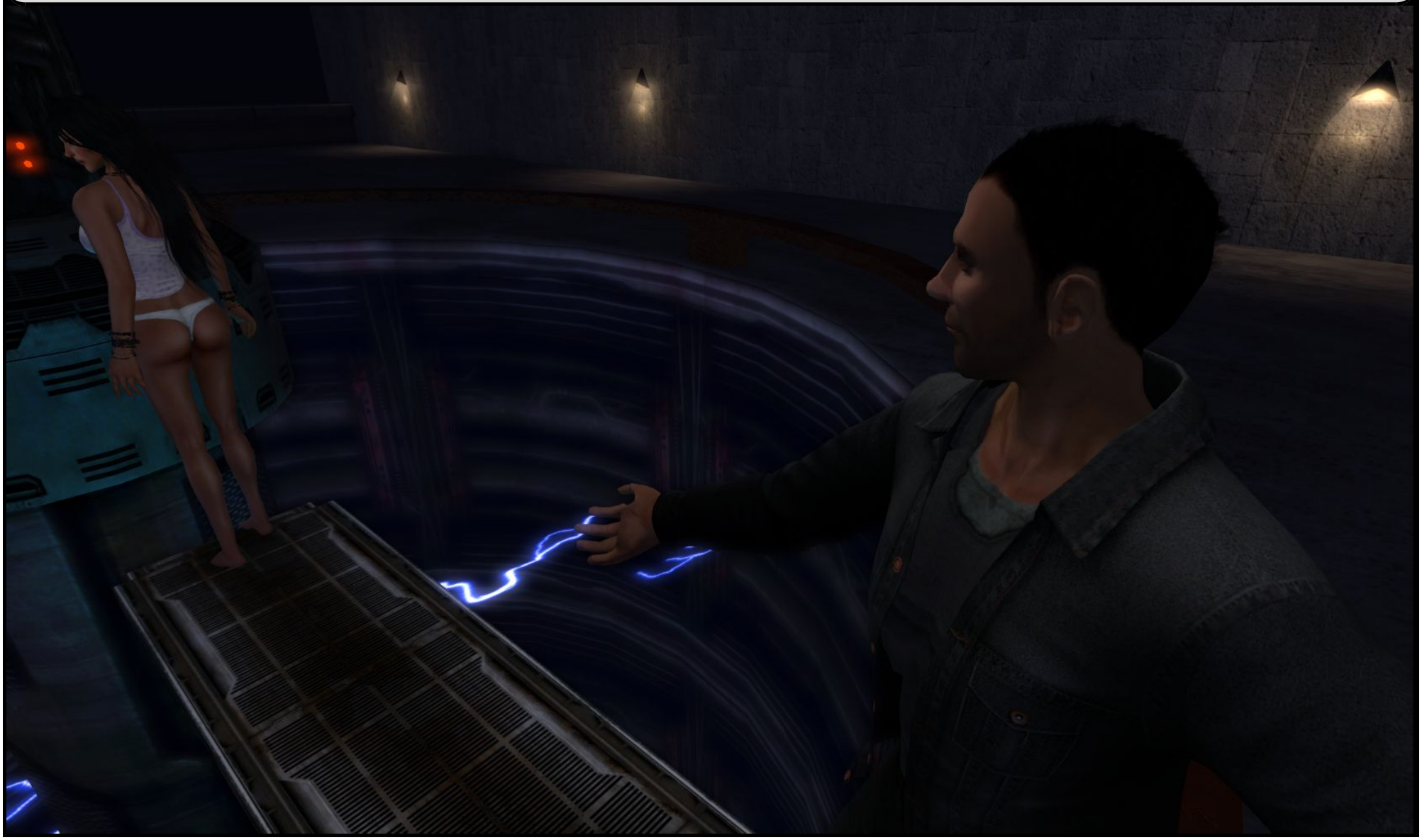
(!)

- How did you call me?!

-- Alezia! Come back or I'm going to pick you up even if I have to risk my life!

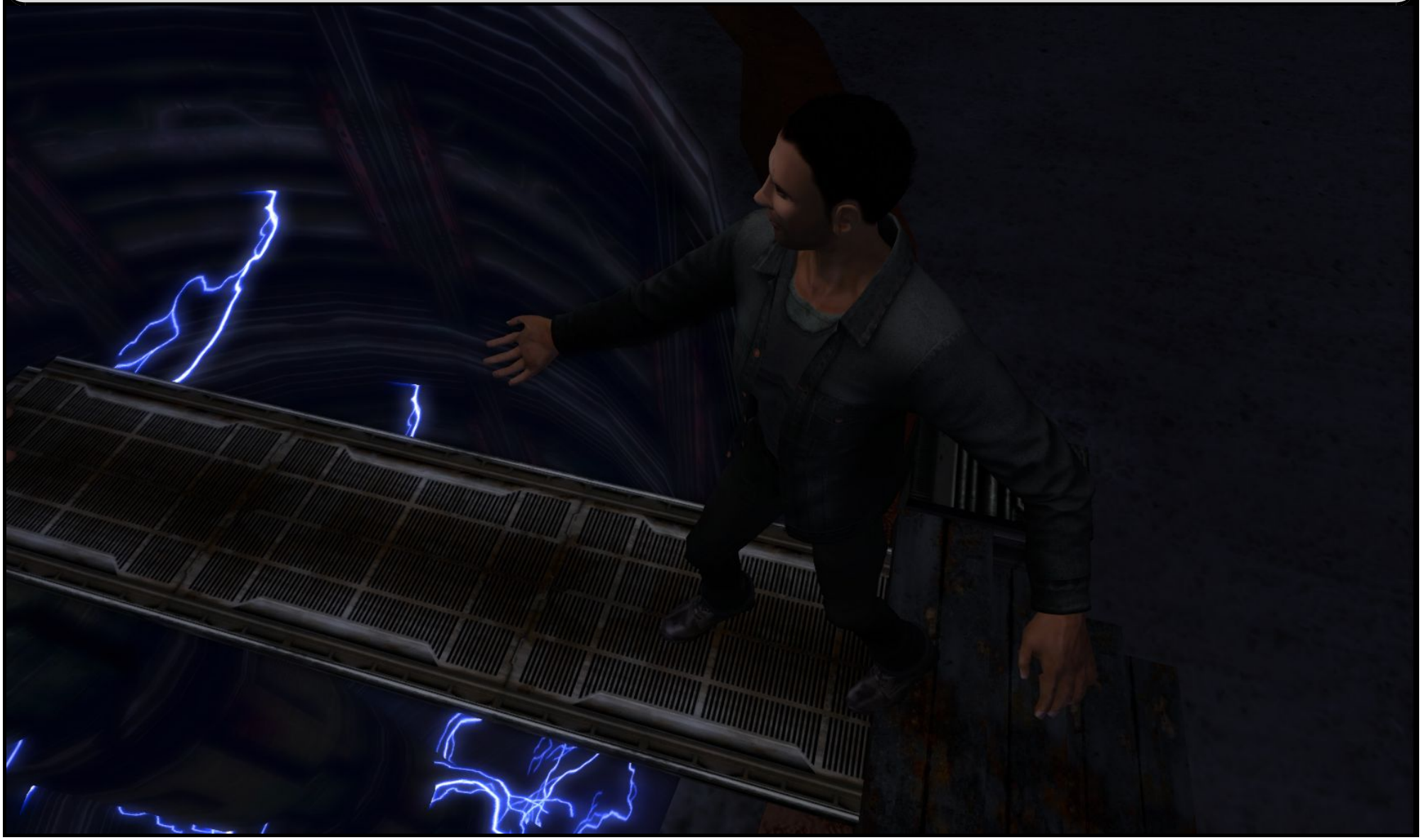
- Alezia!? ...Yes... You're right... This is my name... I know you...

-- I told you. Please, trust me. Come back, you're not going to abandon me here alone, aren't you?



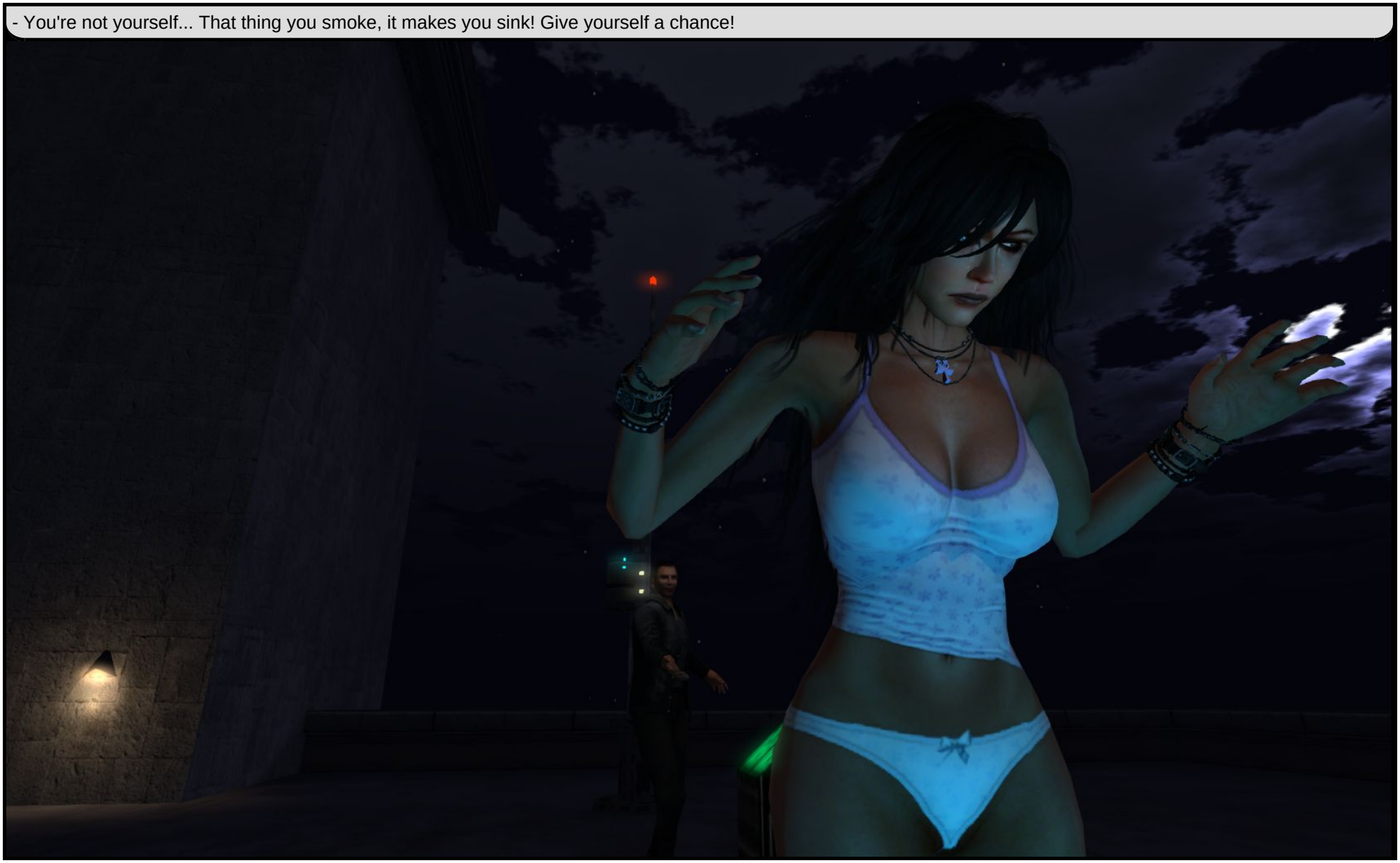
- Yes, but I knew so many people, and many wanted me dead... Why should I trust you?

- Look in yourself Alezia. Remember. You'll see.



- I can't... I can't continue...

- Then why not try to do it with me?


- You're not yourself... That thing you smoke, it makes you sink! Give yourself a chance!

- I... I can't...

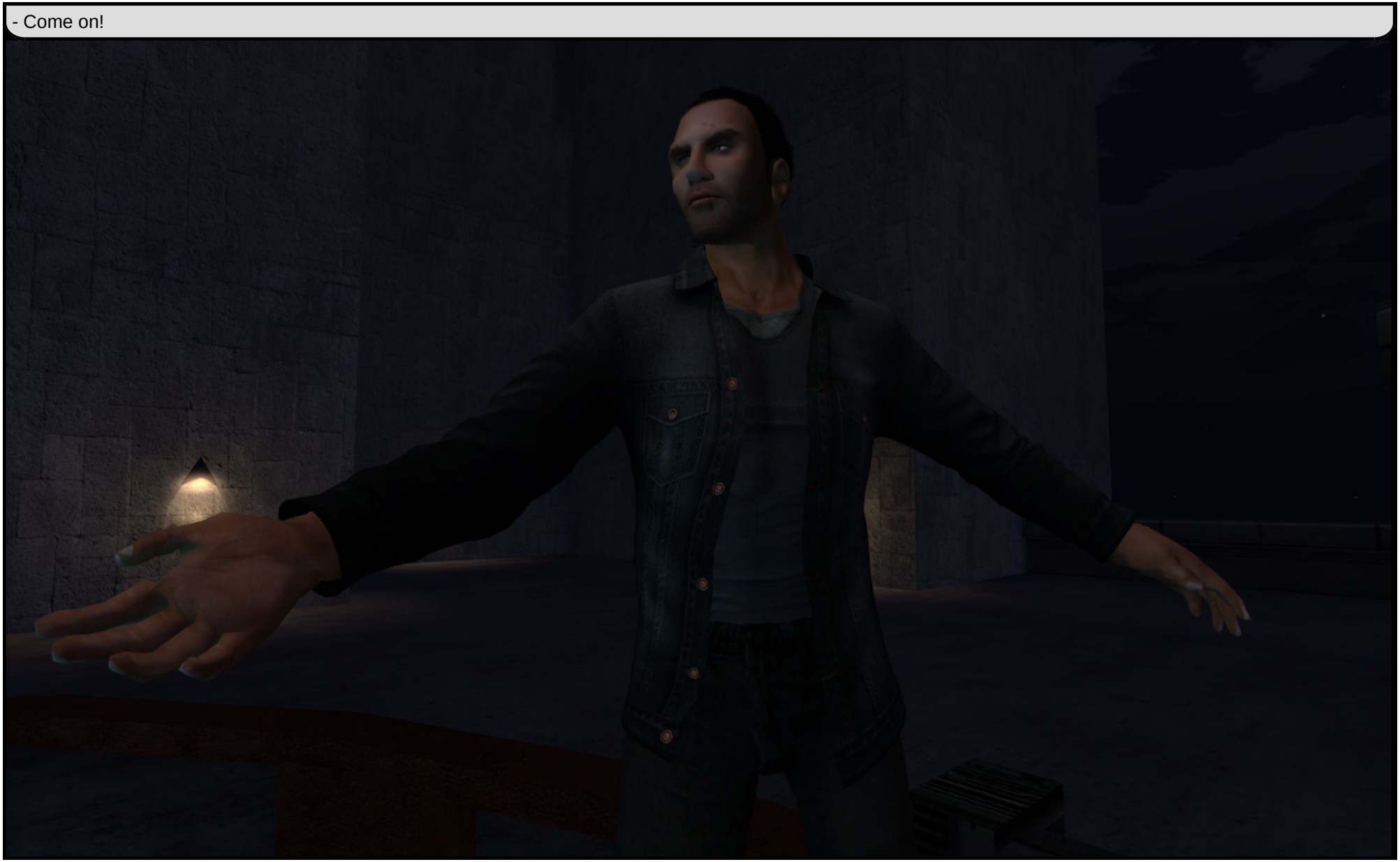
- Alright, then I'm going to reach you... Wait...

- Don't do anything stupid!

-- Don't let you die is far to be stupid Alezia! I'm going to risk my life for yours, whether you like it or not. I have nothing to lose anymore.

-- Grrr! ...Back off!

- Come on!

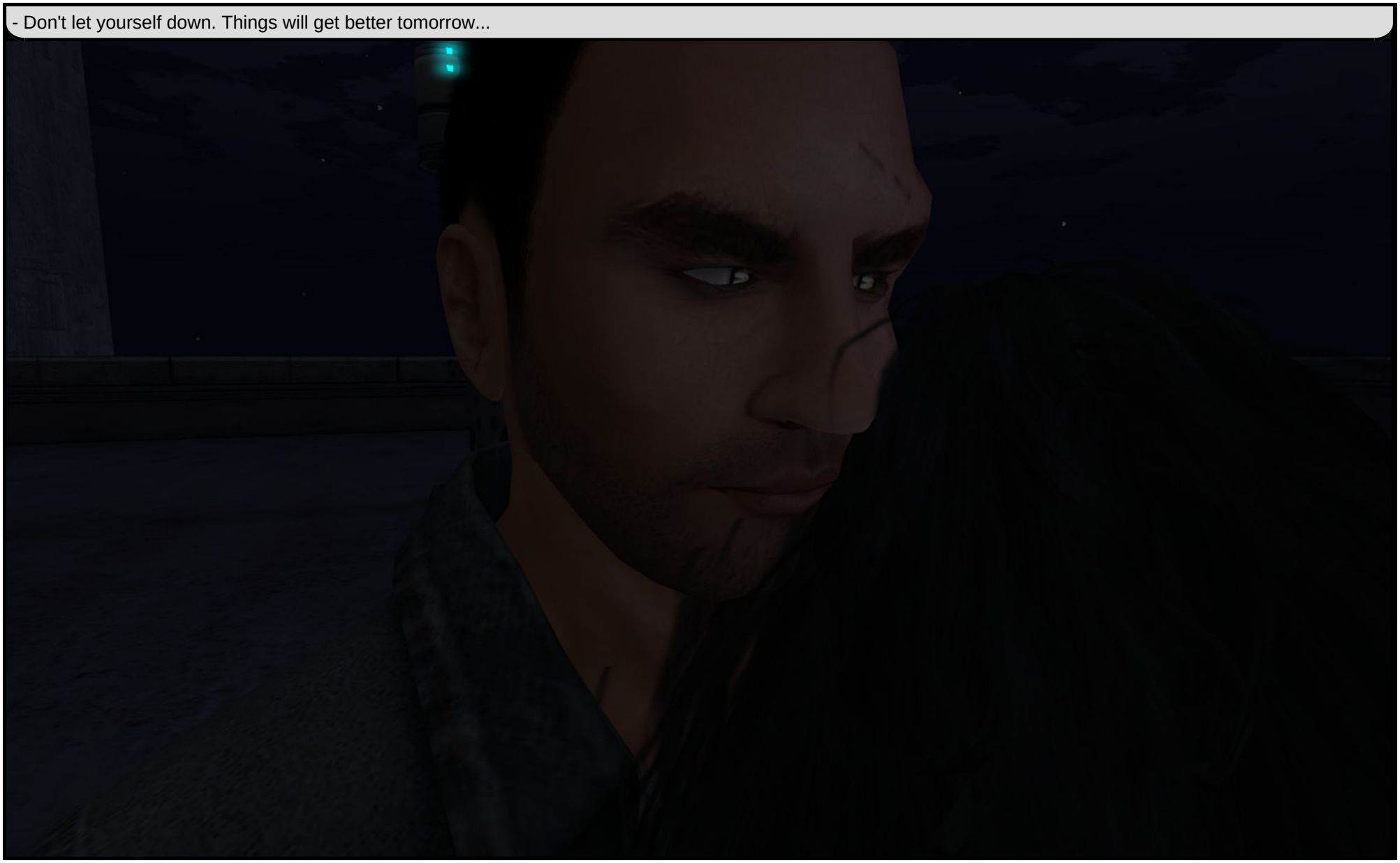


- I said: back off!

- Trust me! Can't you? ...Just one minute.

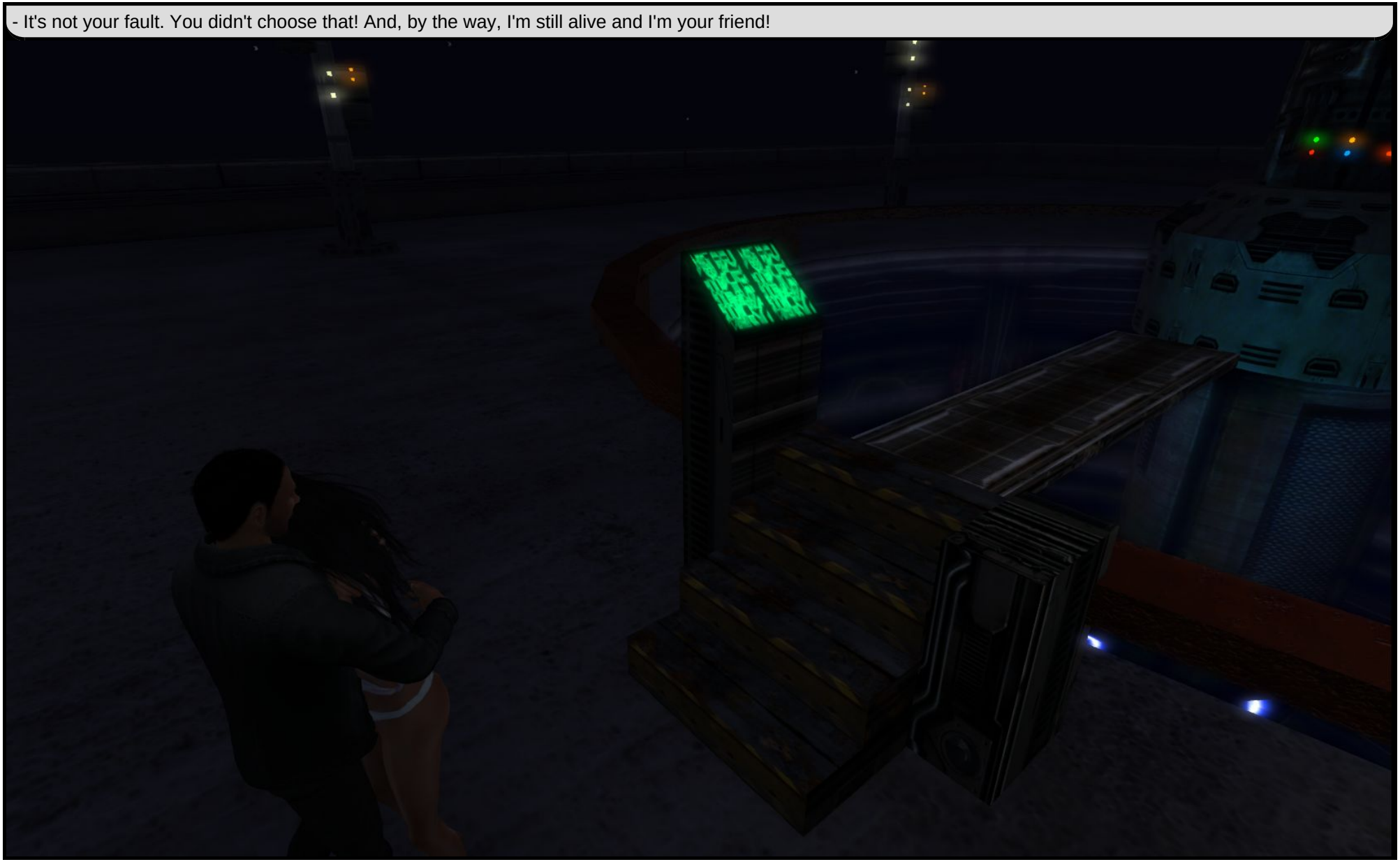
- Roland!?

- You remember?


- Don't let yourself down. Things will get better tomorrow...

- They killed Mary, my only friend. Why all my friends die because of me?

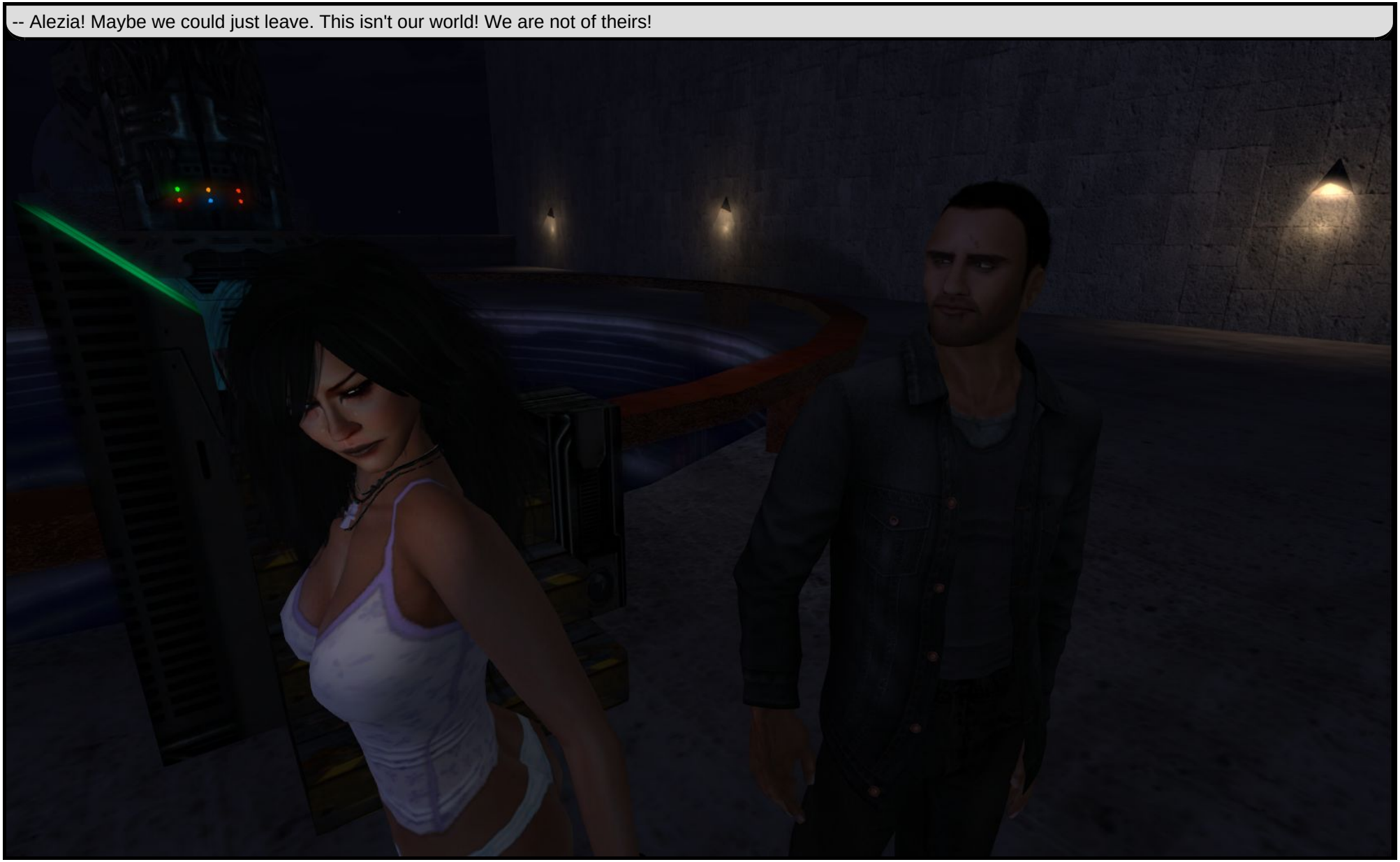
- It's not your fault. You didn't choose that! And, by the way, I'm still alive and I'm your friend!



- I hate them!

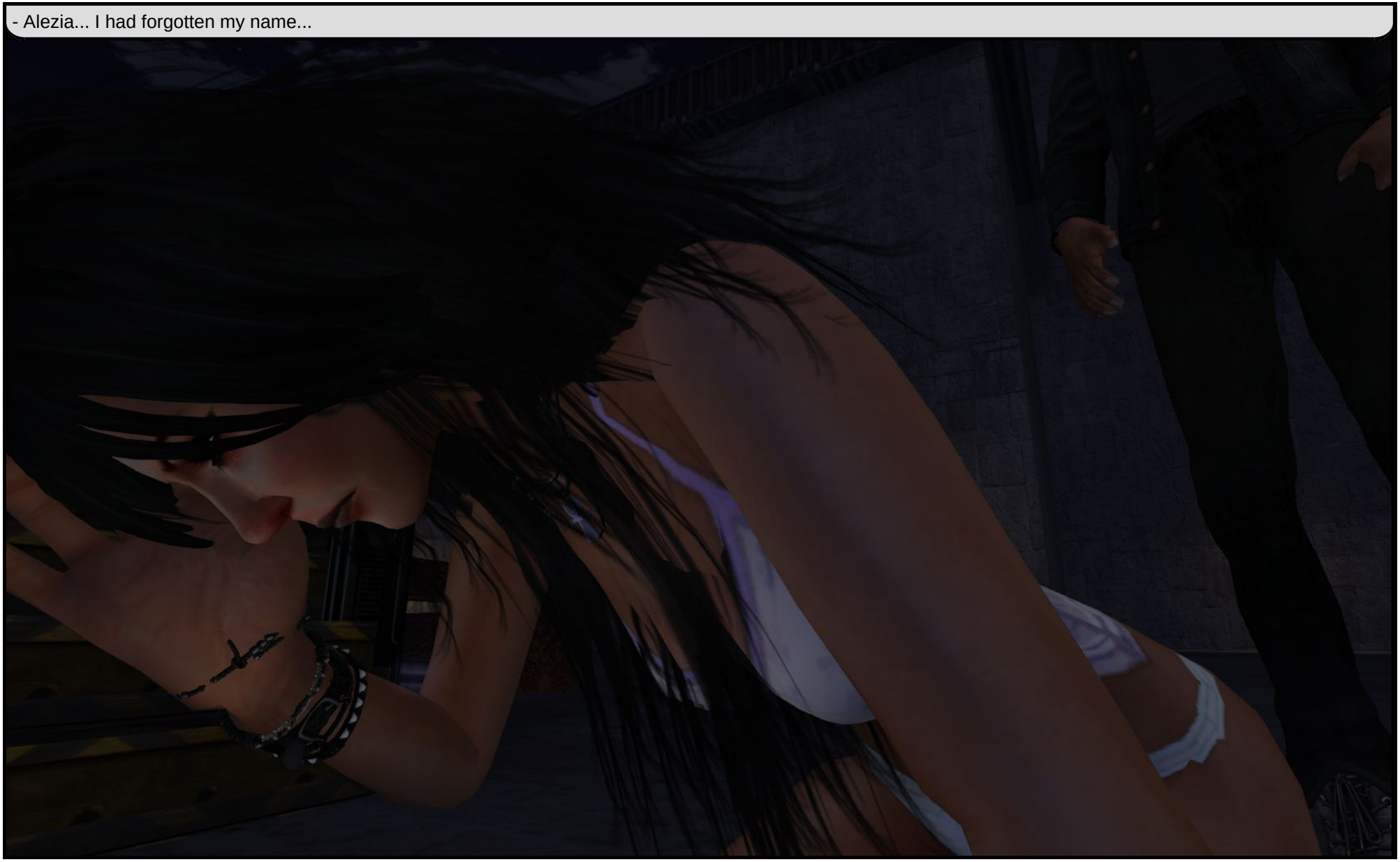
- I'm going to kill'em all!

-- Alezia! Maybe we could just leave. This isn't our world! We are not of theirs!



(Sigh)

- Alezia... I had forgotten my name...



-- You're exhausted... Let me return you to bed... A good sleep will clarify your mind...

-- You're maybe right... I better to go to sleep...

-- I guess you've shut the door behind you?
- Yes. Why?

- The problem is that it can't be open from outside. We'll have to go down through the emergency ladder and come back by the main entrance. People will gossip... One more time...

-- OK, I understand that you had not considered reusing that door. So let's go for a scandal in little panties.

- Take at least my jacket.

-- Thank you! It's this way.

-- This is strange, I remember you very well now. And I remember Bashora very clearly. A bunch of details has come back suddenly when you have pronounced my name.

- My worst fear was that you never remember.

- This is really a weird feeling. Despite these last three years, I feel like if all these events happened yesterday. Like if all these memories haven't been soiled by these three years.

-- So that puts us on the same wavelength. For me, it's really a matter of days. And I still can't get used with the idea that everything I had is gone.

- We'll have to jump the last ten feet. I will go first, ...since I'm not too much dressed.
-- Alright. ;-)

-- Regarding memories' troubles, Marya told me that the Taalus could cause this kind of incidents. By the way, I think we have been lucky to not finish transformed as vegetables.

- Mary... It's so unfortunate...

- You miss her?
-- A lot...

-- I was feeling good when she was there! When I discovered her, she had been sexually exploited by the 26. So I decided to take her under my wing. Everybody wanted her executed, because they considered her wrongly as a tyrants' collaborator.

- Unconsciously, I believe I was finding in that a compensation to my remorse regarding Ima, my friend that Slonk had killed under my eyes. Like a chance to redeem myself. This was a bit stupid... As if that could change anything... Finally, we became friends.

- Some remorse?
-- Yes, remorse. Sometimes our actions can turn against the people we love the most... I don't like to talk about this story... Story that each night takes great care to recall me!

- And the death of Slonk, did it settle anything?

-- No, except for some justice that has been done. For me, nothing has changed, I still do the same nightmares.

-- ?! ...What's wrong?

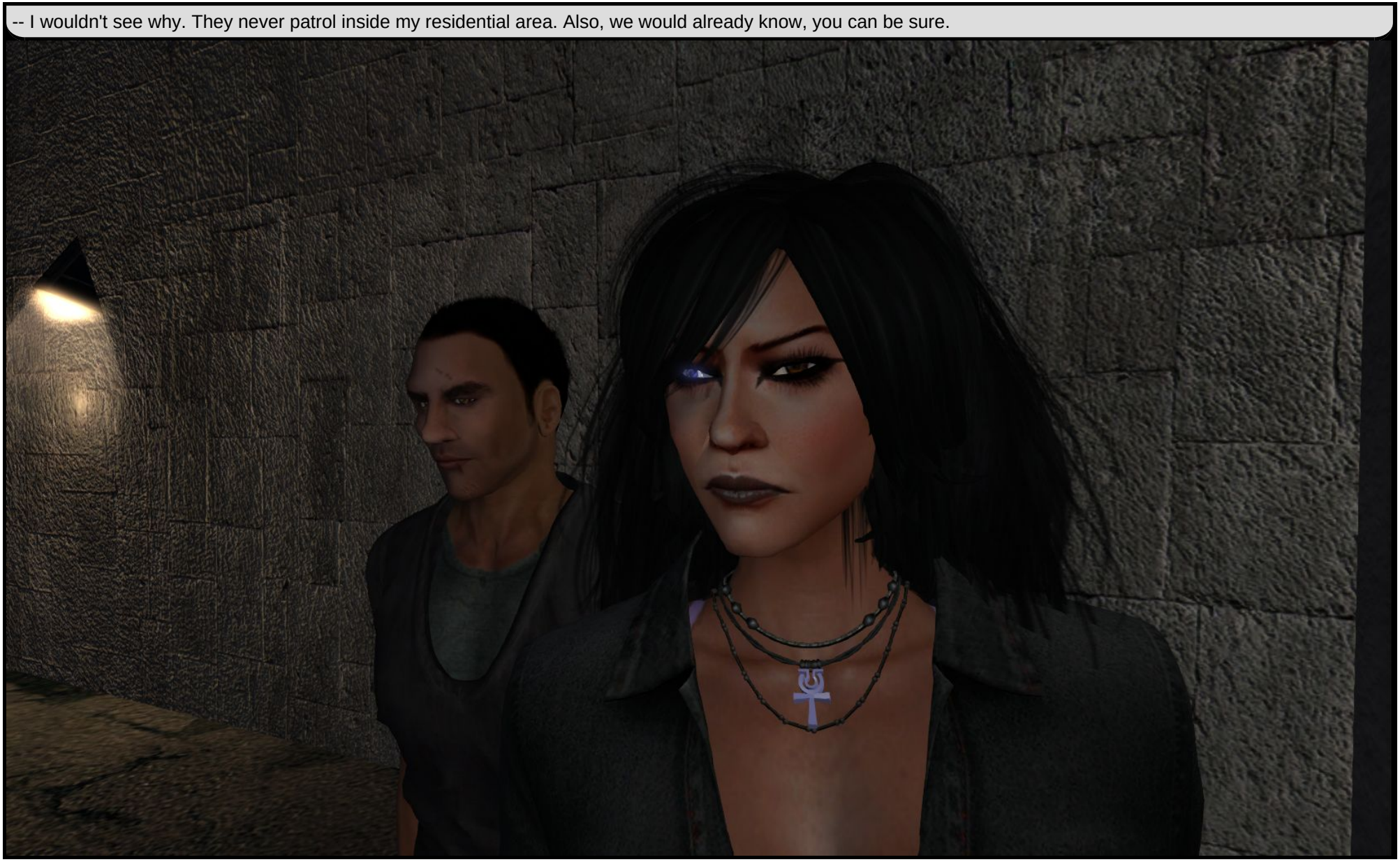
- The guards are not there, and the door is ajar. This is not normal.

-- Maybe they are doing a spell of duty?

-- No, the guards of the entrance never leave. If they do, it's because something is wrong.

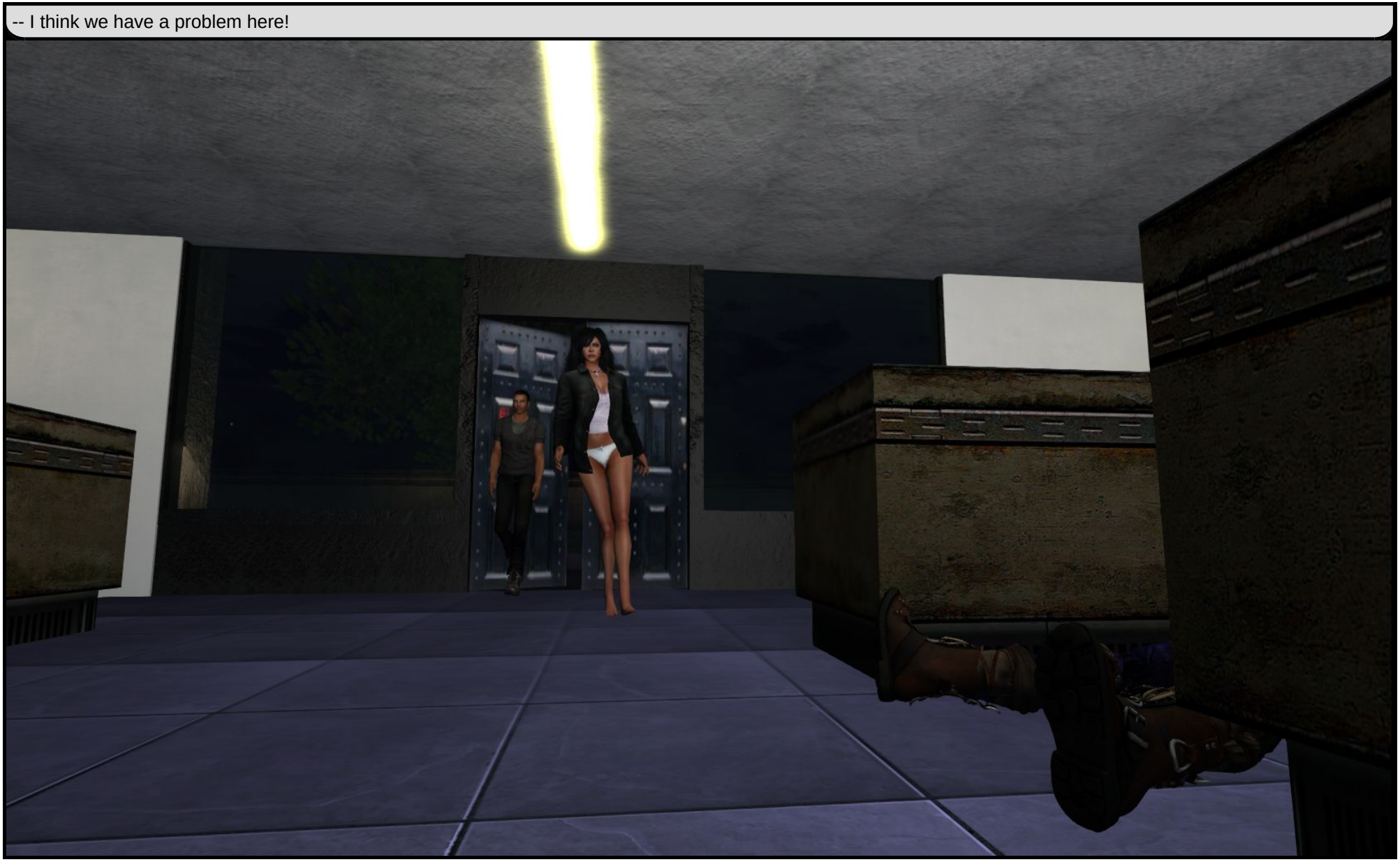
- They seek us undoubtedly.

-- I wouldn't see why. They never patrol inside my residential area. Also, we would already know, you can be sure.



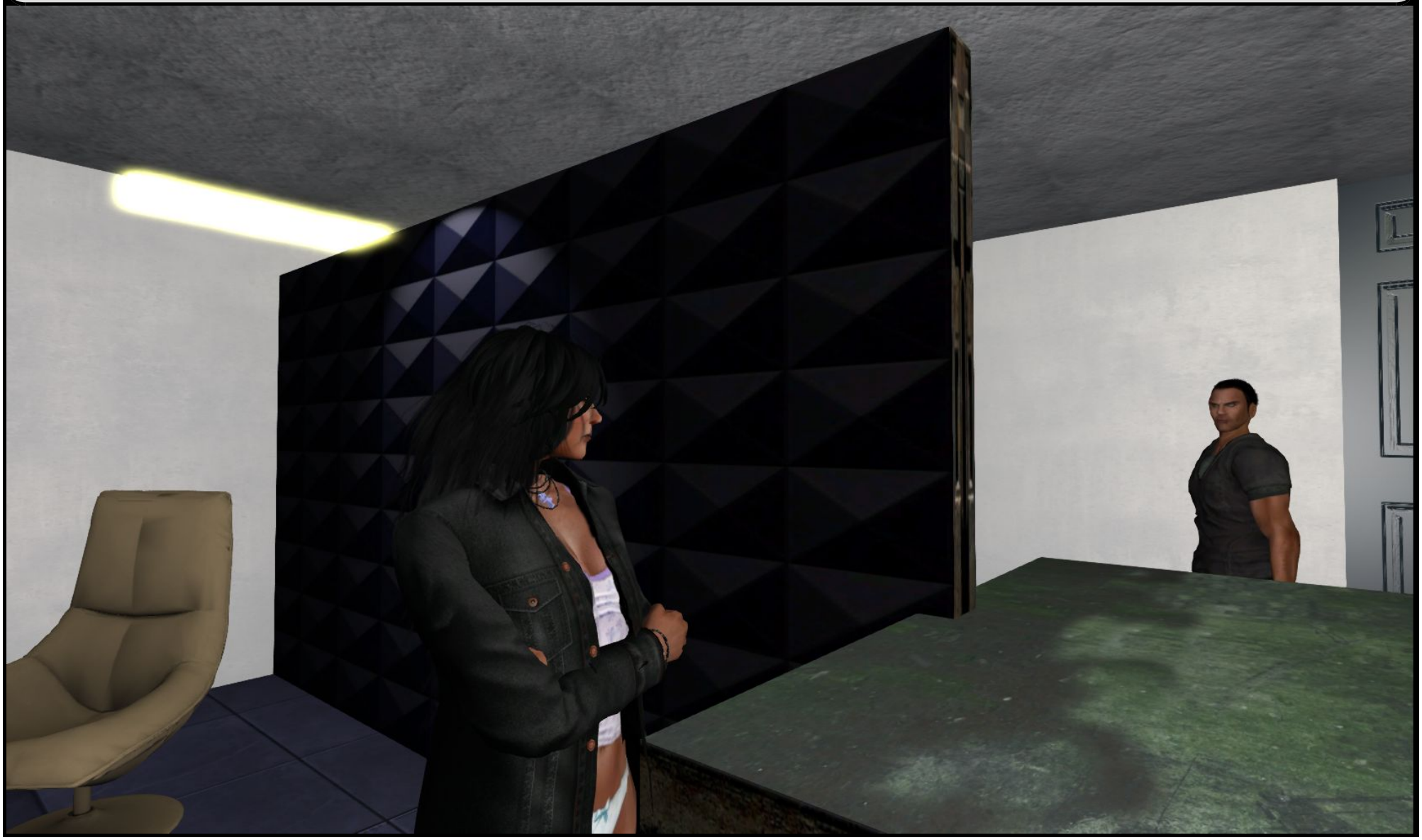
-- Stay on your guard.

-- I think we have a problem here!



--- Is he alive?
- Yes, he's breathing. He has been hit in the face, maybe with a neuroparalytic injector bat. There is also a smell of gas.

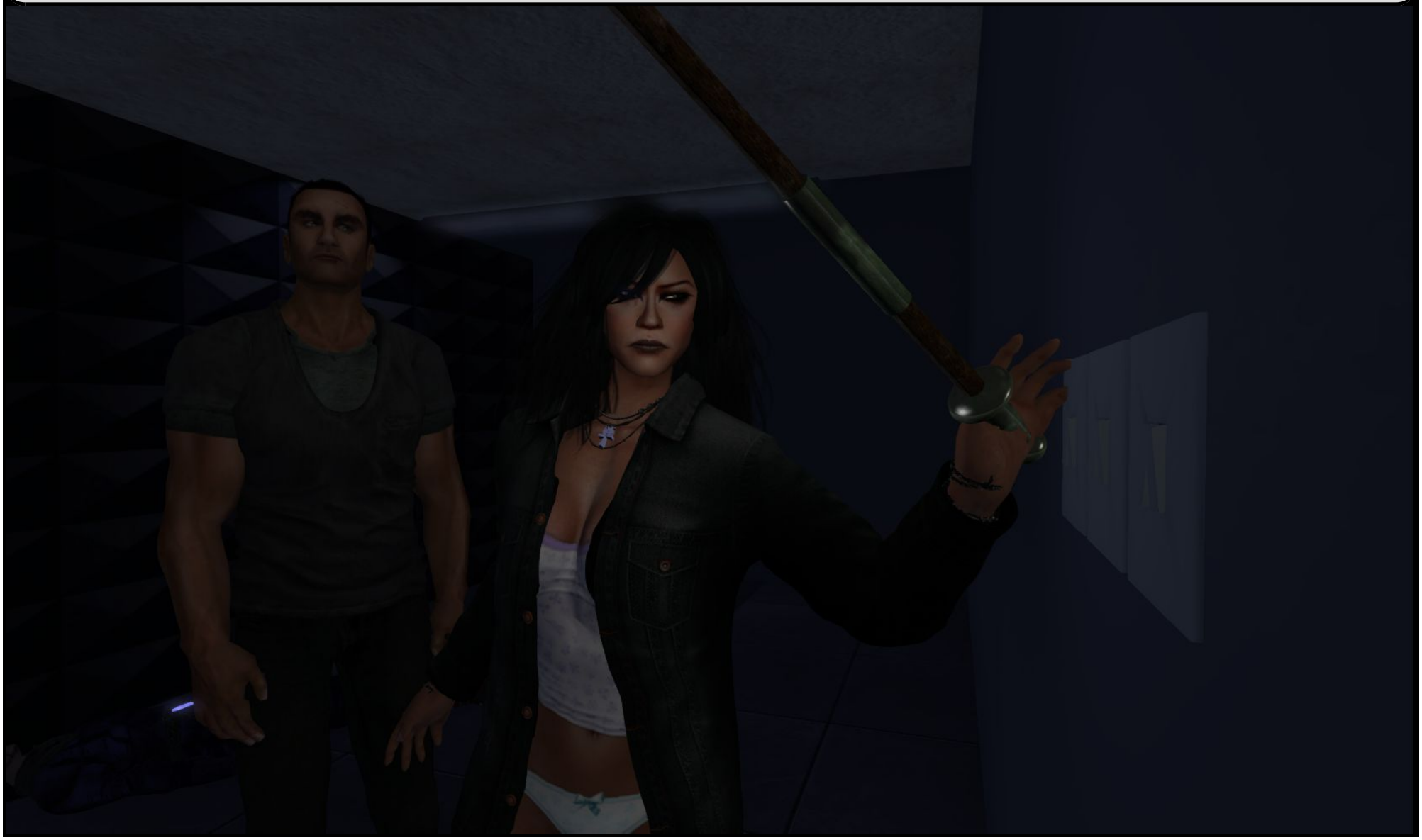
-- There is another guard here! But what...



- They have been taken by surprise. That must be recent. If it's the case, the one who did this, is probably still in the building. He must be armed and he...
-- ... has come for us!

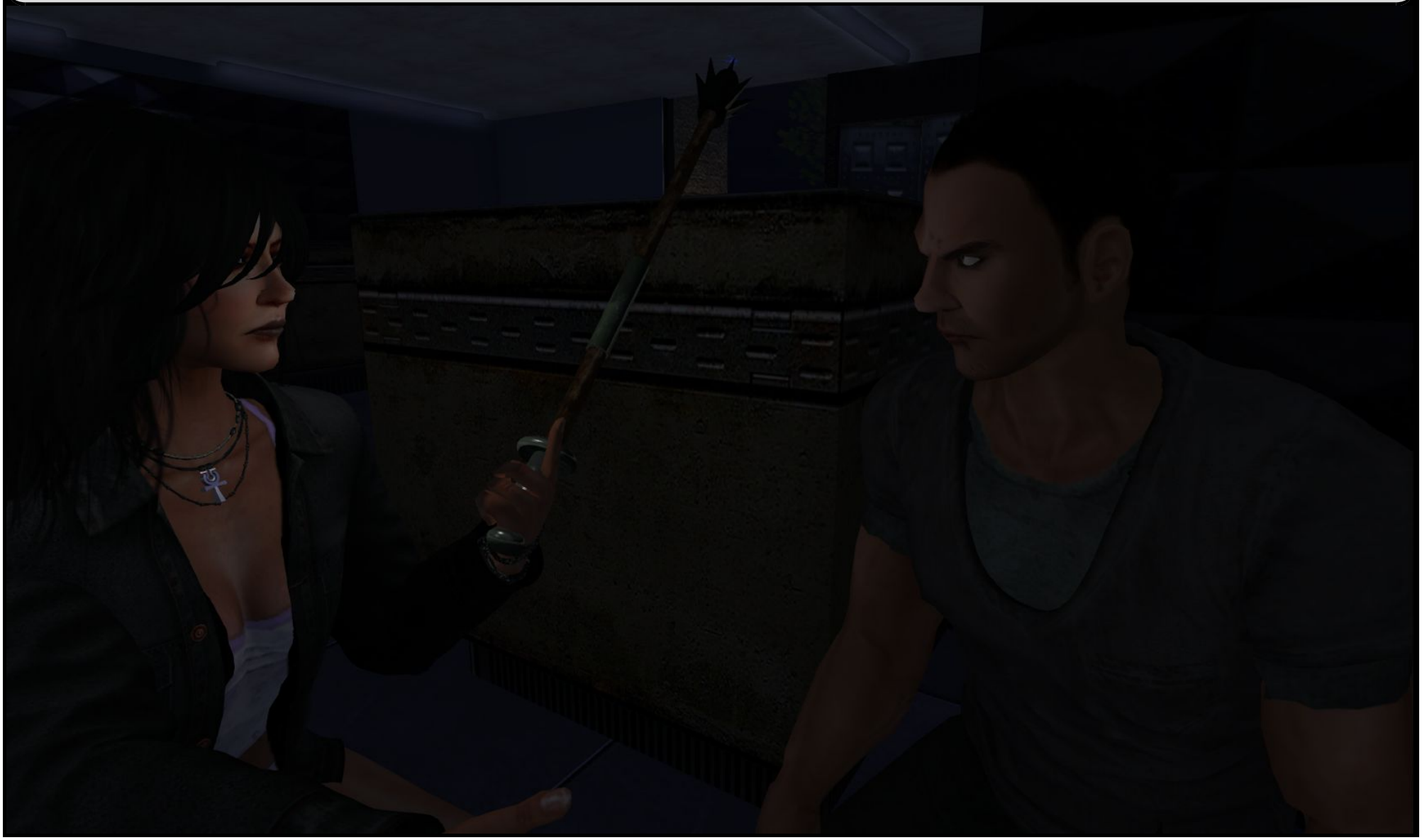
-- You've got it!

- ?

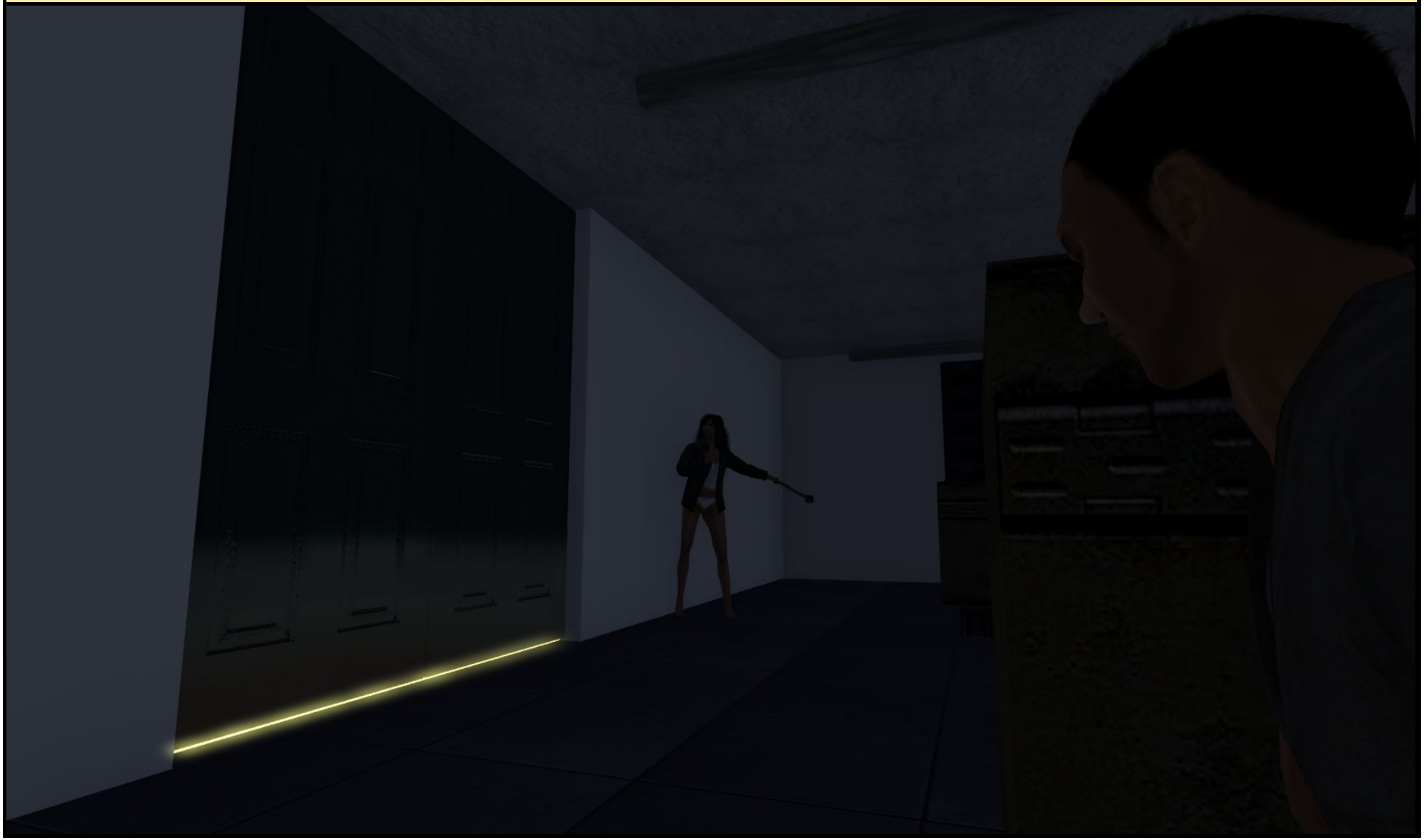


-- Damn! But what are you doing? I no longer see anything!

- If he comes, keep your distance. Just a scratch from his weapon and you would be dead instantly.

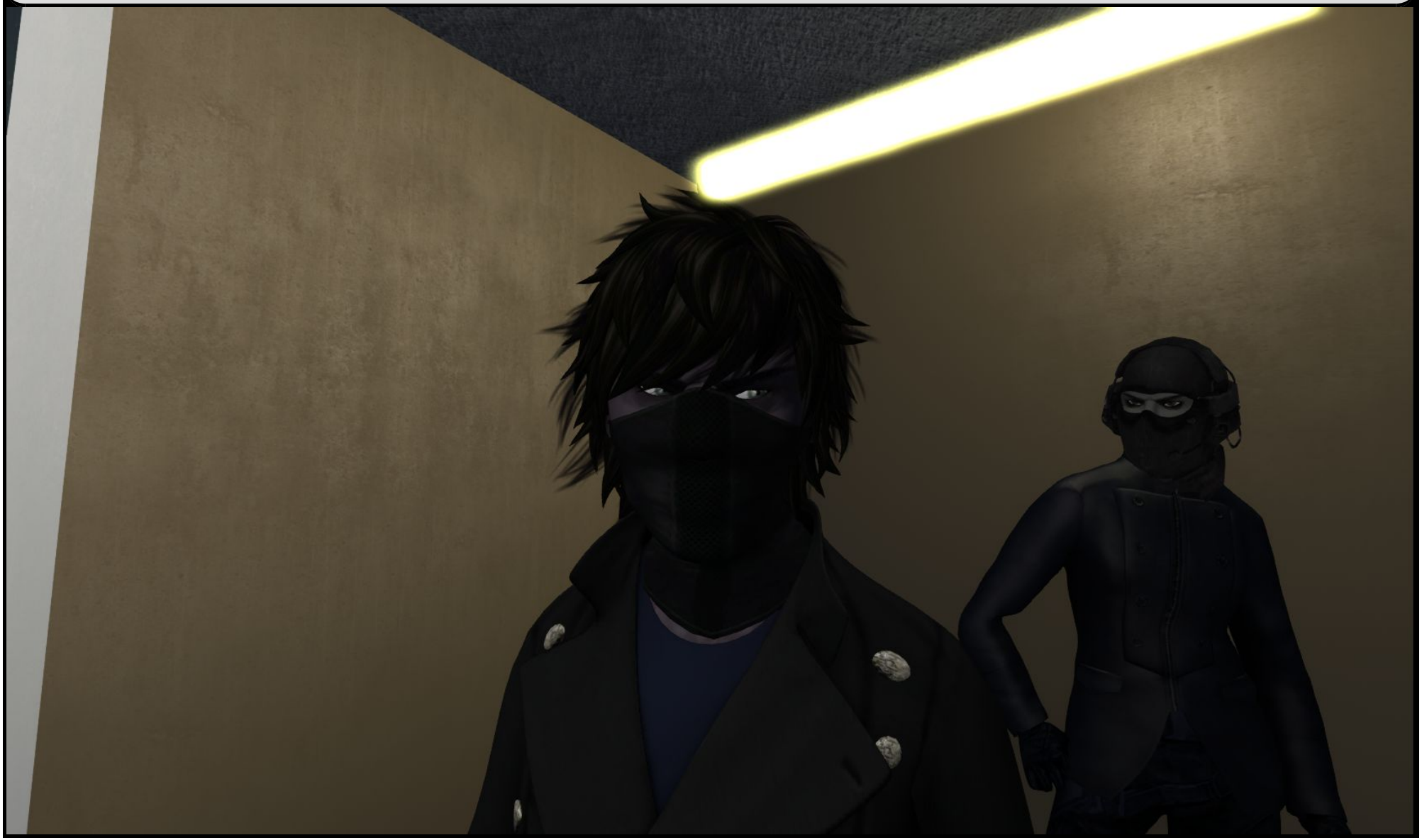


One long minute later...



(?!)
((!))

- The lights have been turned off! ...She's here! Quick, let's get out!
-- Oh! Shit...



TCHAK !

--- We got at least one!

- Do you think they came to kill us?

--- It looks like this. This seems to be the tendency these days.

- Is he dead?
-- I don't think so.

- Here is what was planned for us.
--- What is it?

- This is commonly called "red spikes"... Probably loaded with a very efficient lethal neurotoxic substance.

- Looks like we had a narrow escape!
-- This is the least we can say. I'm going to call the guard...

Twenty minutes later...

- The guards, are they going to recover?
--- Yes, they have been simply neutralized. They were visibly not their target.

--- You know that he's not going to talk, these assassins give their relatives as guarantee.
- Yes, I know.

- But I have enough elements to act. We'll see then where from the waves will come.
--- ?

-- However, this is somewhat disquieting. I'll post some men on the roofs and will double the number of patrols.

-- Let's go sleep.
- I just hope that I will be able.

Soon after...

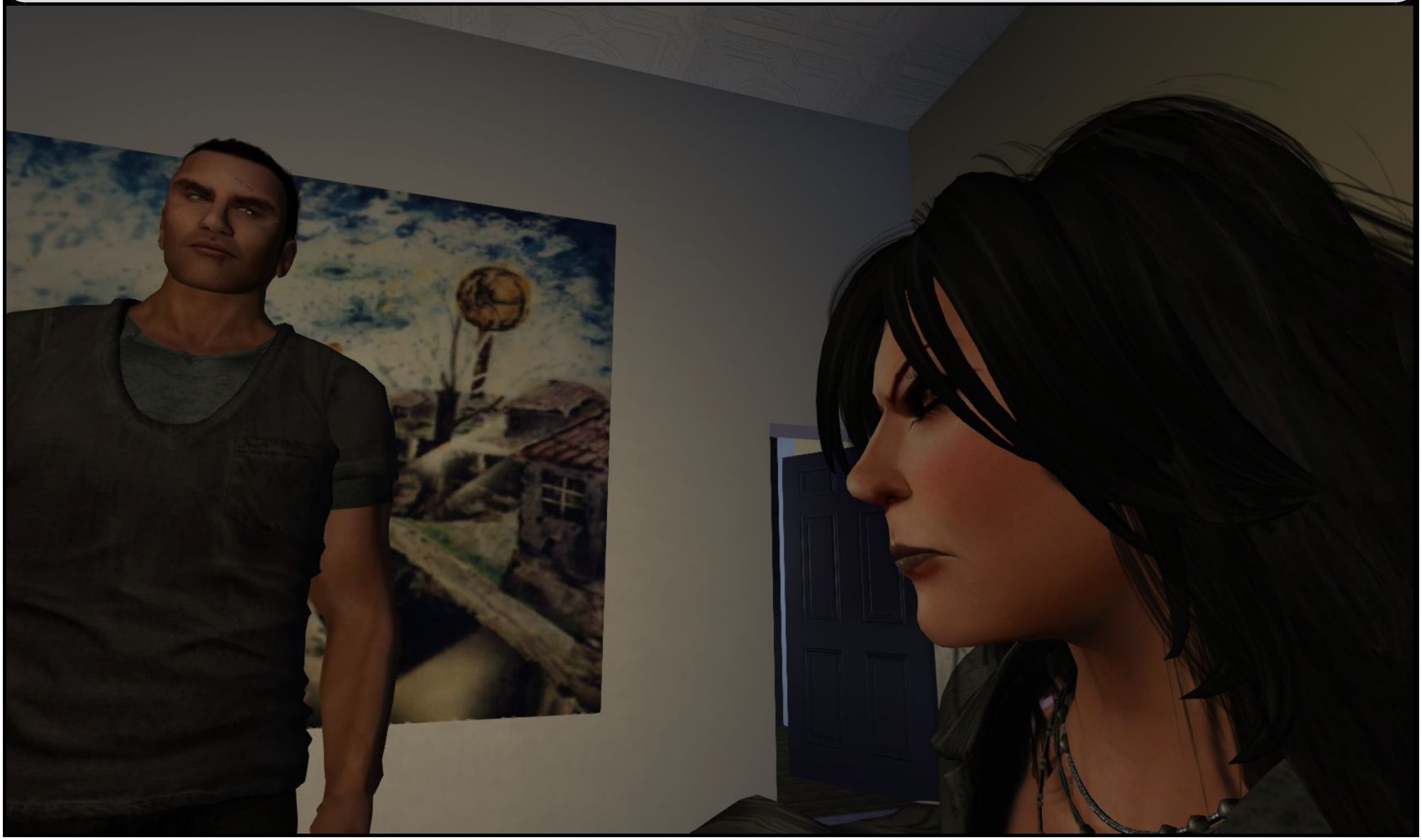
- What did you mean by "to act"?

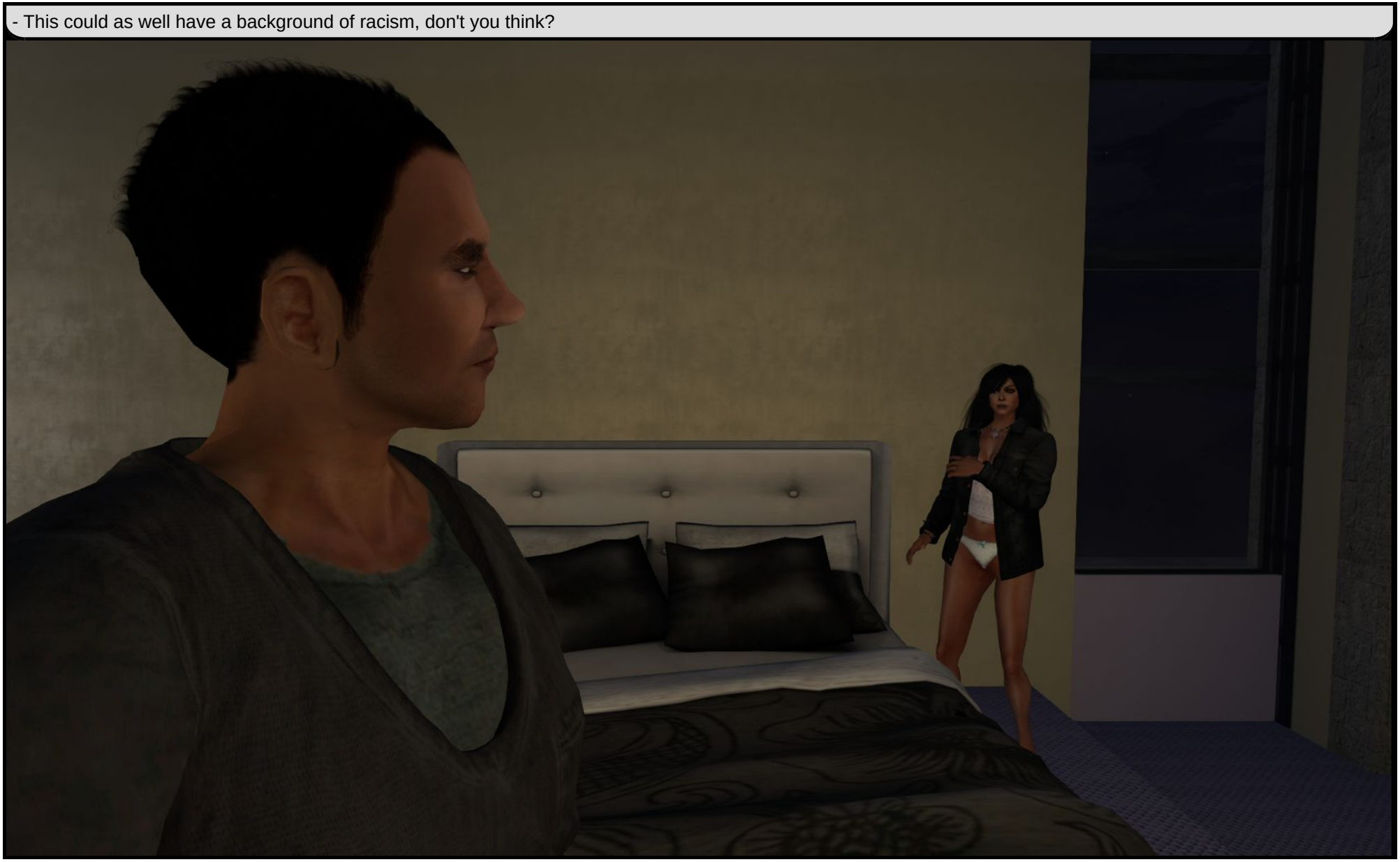
-- I'm going to confront Hystazi, invoking a loss of confidence, for having unjustly interfered within the Tyriam's responsibilities, by putting you in front of the Kruls's council.

-- The Kruls are behind all this. They are the only ones to whom these crimes pay. And I'm afraid that Hystazi works from now with them. By attacking her, the Kruls will fear of losing their only privileged link with the army. Then, we'll see soon enough where from the counterattack will come.

- Is this always intense like this?

-- Never that much. But they've gone too far this time, nothing less than a putsch attempt!




- This could as well have a background of racism, don't you think?

-- Or they simply want to get full authority. As you said, we are not of theirs, and they will never consider me completely as such.

- In every case, this looks highly bad for our health.

- I know... You can sleep here. As long as you don't move too much! It will be safer than the office, and more comfortable than the couch.

- Tell me... You've really decimated twenty-six soldiers in the prime of life in one night?

-- Yes... But let's say I have some better souvenirs than those about that bloody night.

- This must have required an incredible determination...

-- Do you really believe that I got up that night, saying to myself: "Oh! Erydak! Let's go kill twenty-six bastards!" ?... Well... I didn't go for twenty-six. One or two would have been already something. I planned more make them disappear over several months.

- This level of premeditation gives me the creeps.

- If you had seen them at work, here and in Dallusia, you would understand better.

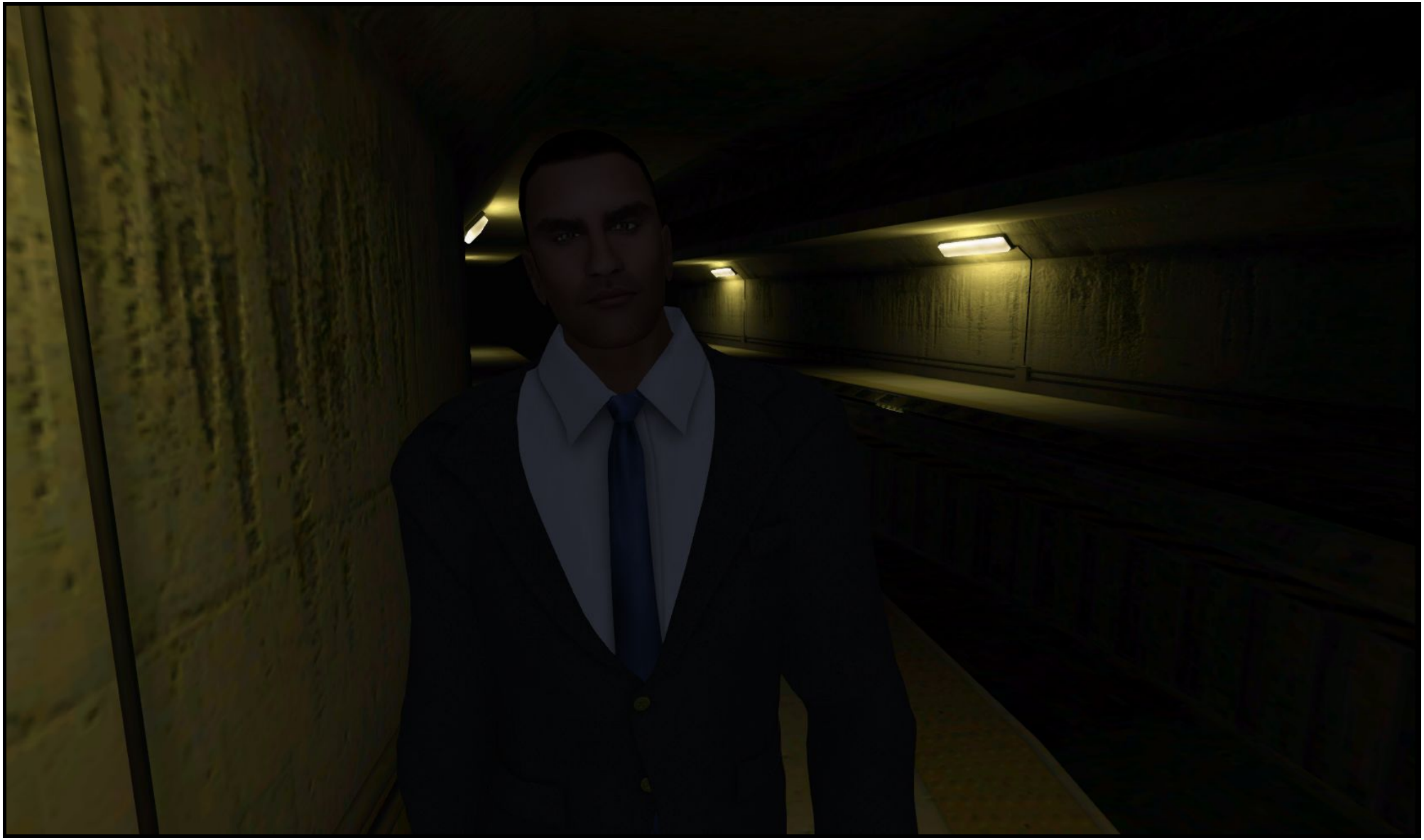
- This cohort of soldiers comes from the regiments of warlike children of Dallusia. They were orphans, reformed in military camps to make of them any hyper-efficient soldiers.

-- In the prison camps of Vernatern, they had the responsibility to execute the civilians identified as nuisances by the regime. They were shooting men, women and children. At 13 years old, the trivialization of this task have disconnected them of any empathy, and by this way, made them shielded against traumatic shocks. I'll let you imagine how they were behaving when they were sent at the front.

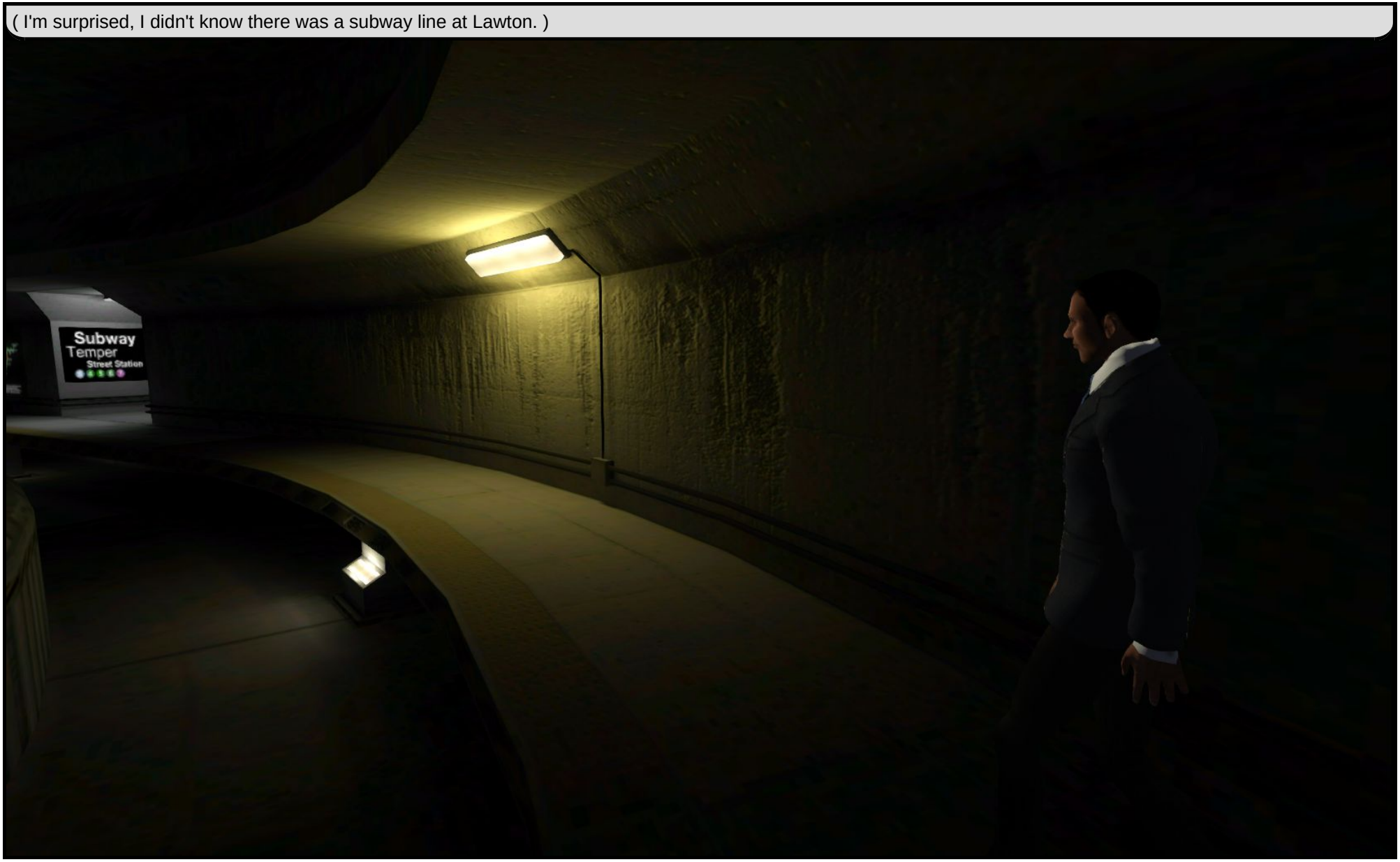
- Pretty terrible. Nevertheless, I would never be able to do what you did.

-- Roland... The Rantarian army was doing practically the same thing. I was only sixteen when they ordered us to do the firing squad, several times...

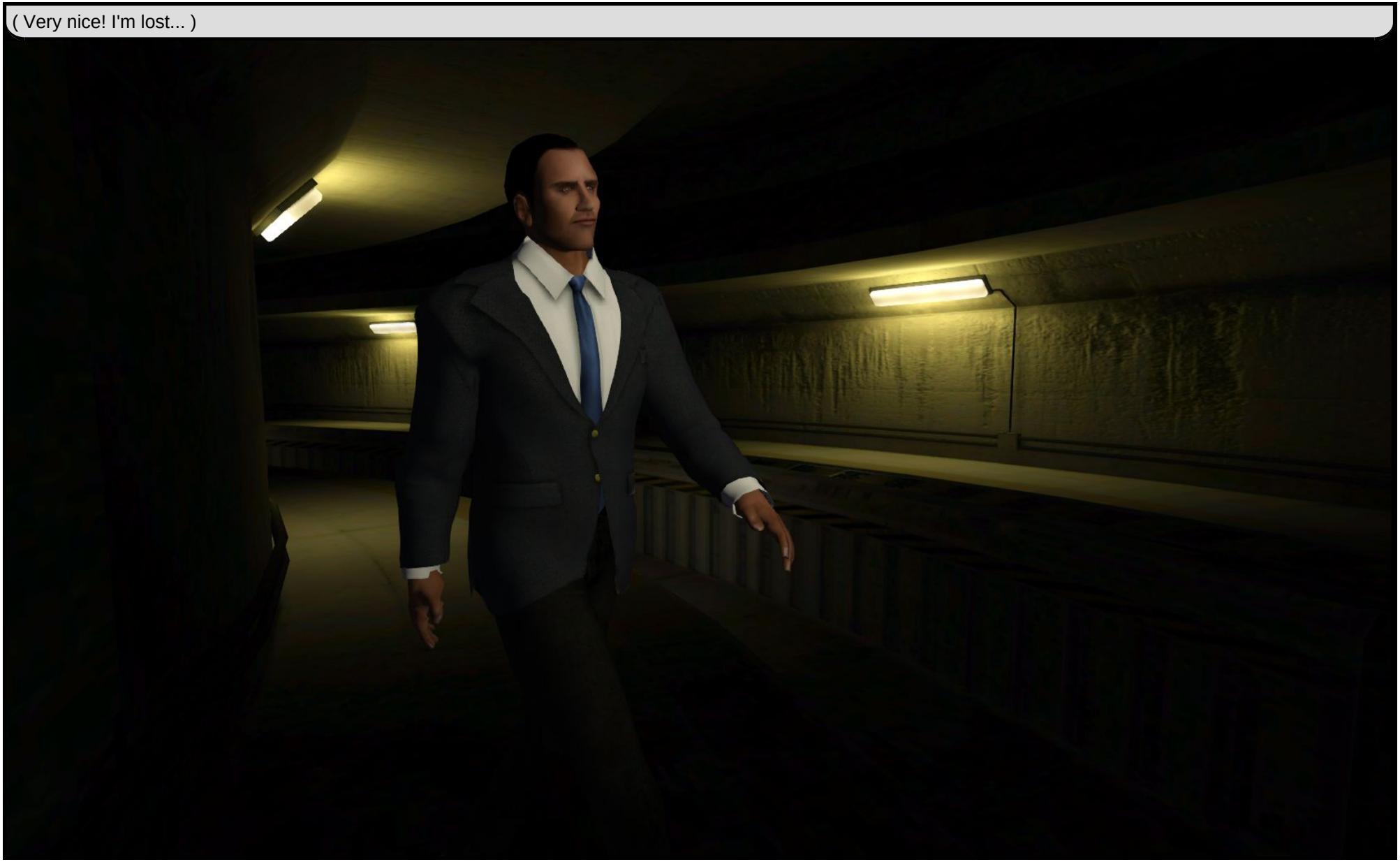
-- I really need to sleep.
- Good night Alezia.



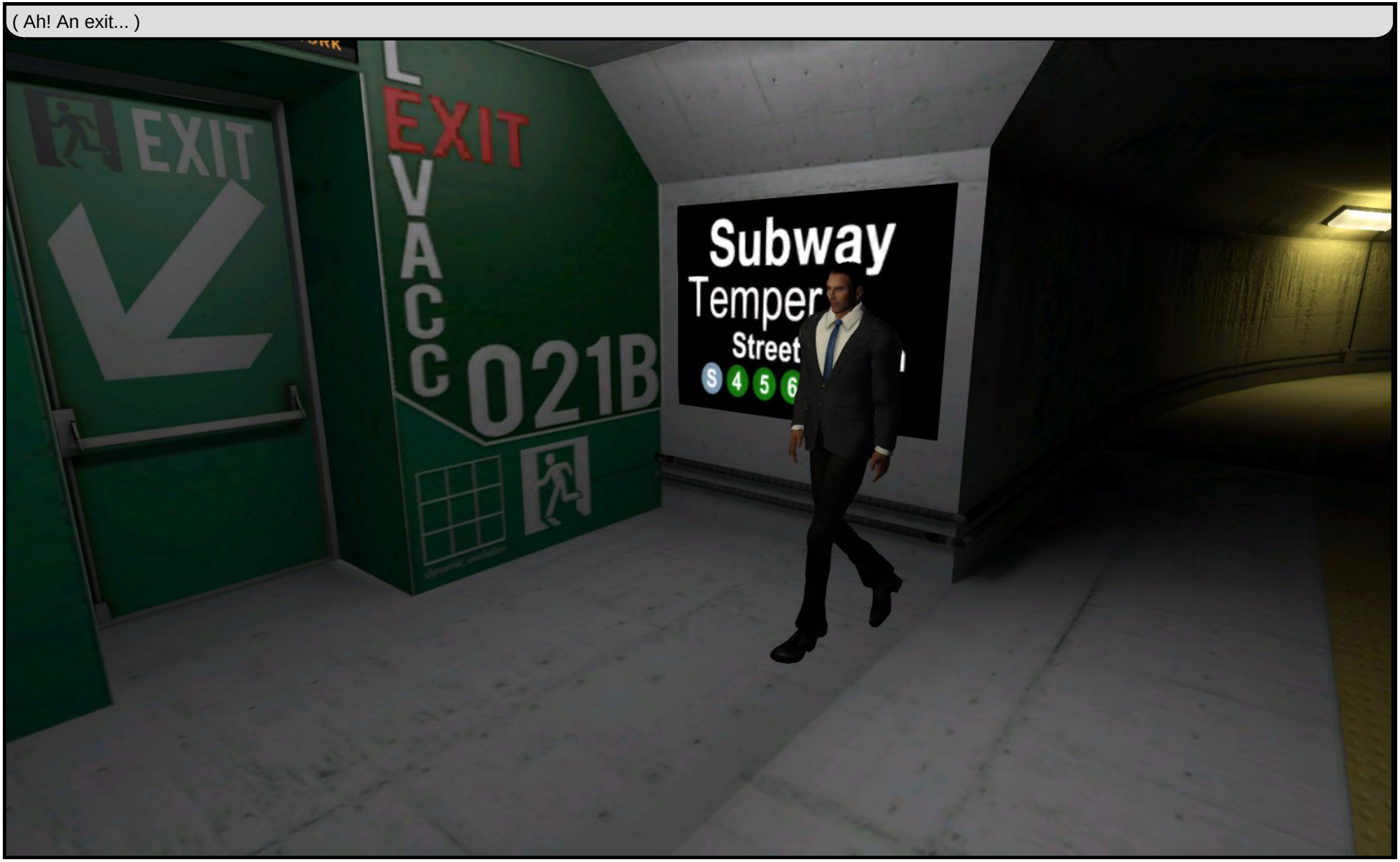
(I'm surprised, I didn't know there was a subway line at Lawton.)



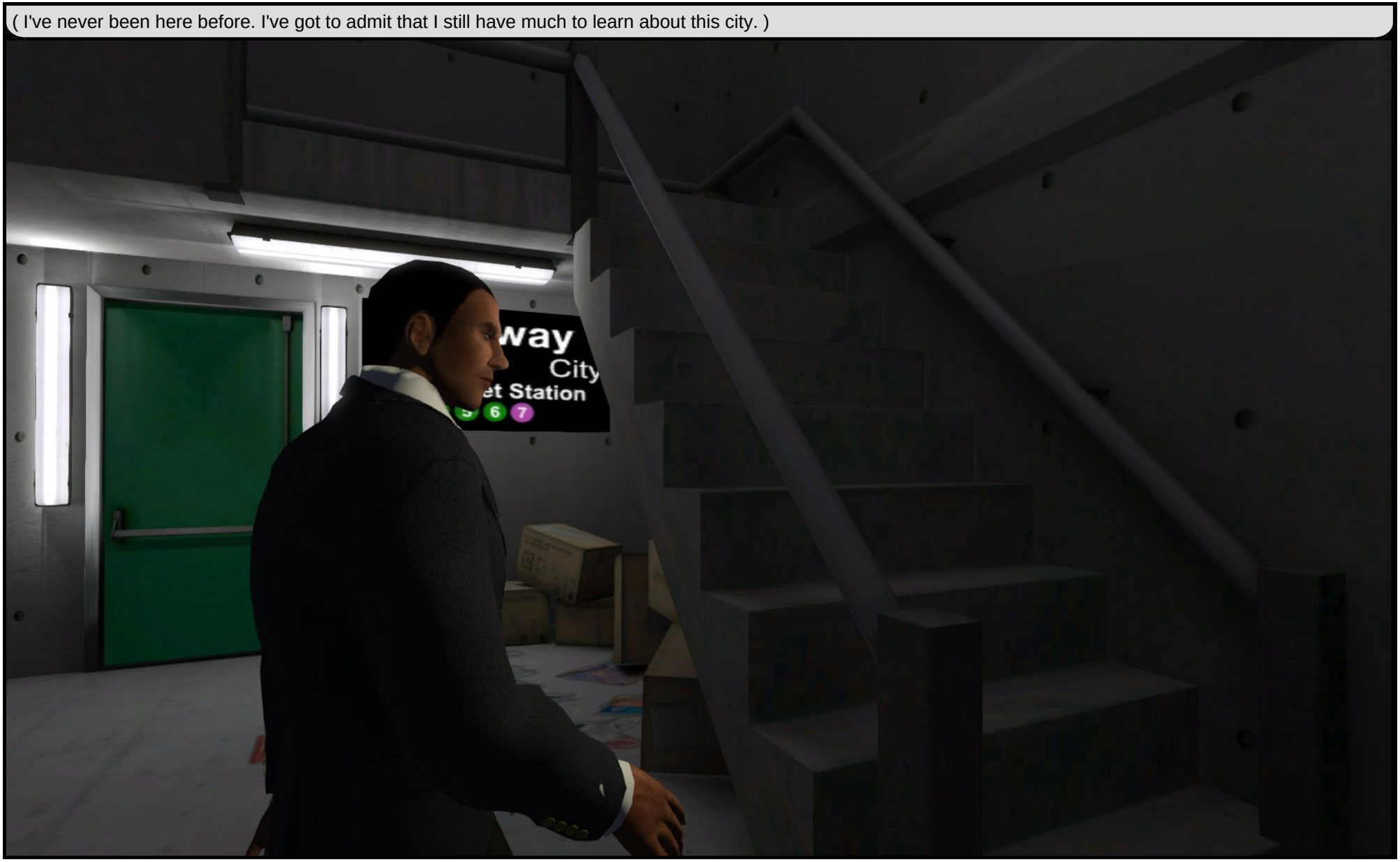
(Very nice! I'm lost...)



(Ah! An exit...)



(I've never been here before. I've got to admit that I still have much to learn about this city.)



(Could I be in New York? This can't be Lawton!)

(Nice place, there must be any trendy nightclubs around here...)

(Maybe I'd better go home... Looks like the dawn is coming.)

(I think a taxi would be a good option.)

- Hey! Roland! What took you so long?
-- ?!

-- It would be time to get going, I would like to have time to dance.
- Uh?...

-- Come on! I'll buy you a drink!
- Marya?! But...

-- Ah! There you are!
- ?!

--- Sorry... I had to fight with one of my contact lenses.

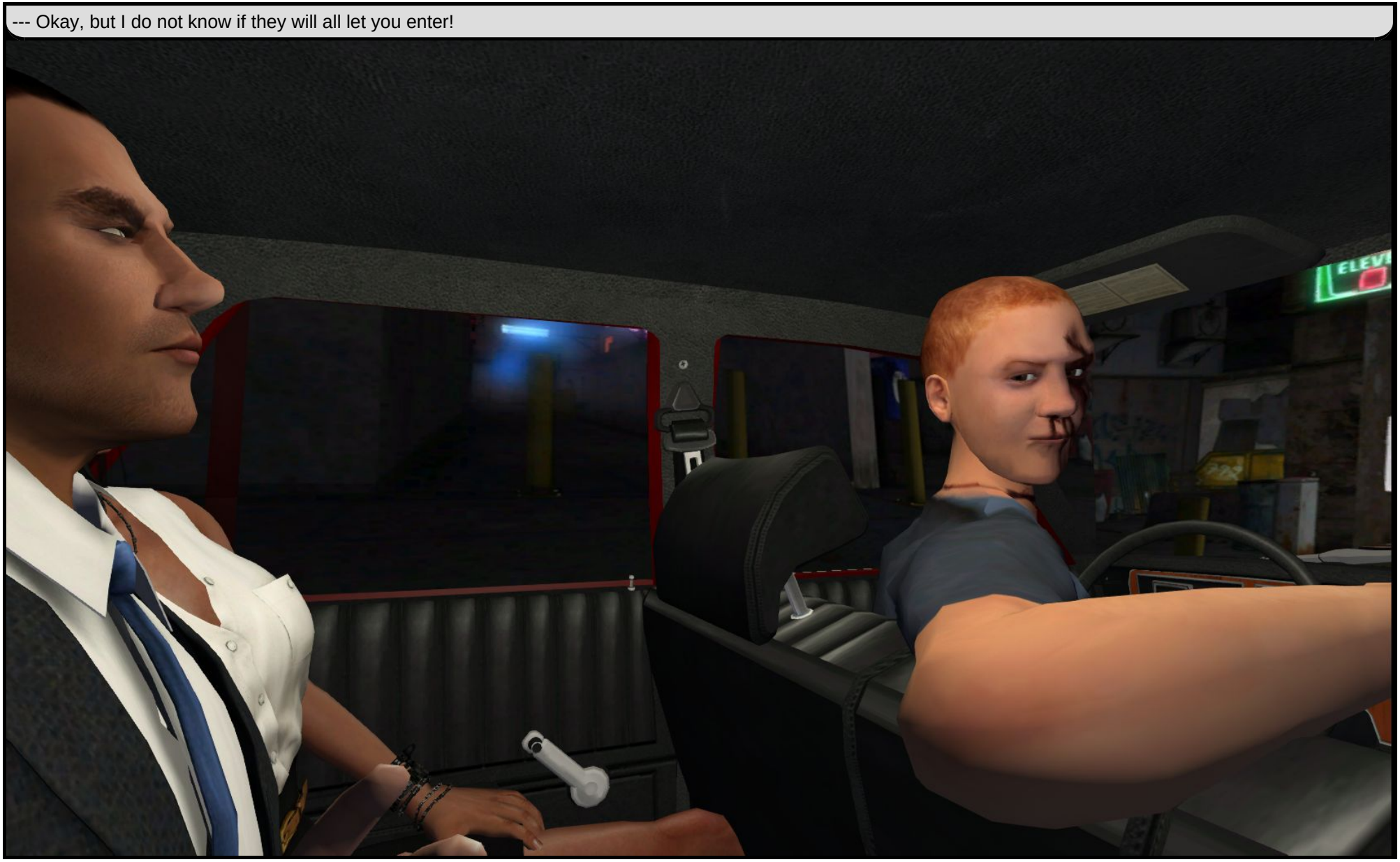
--- You can't say that you are not in good company!
-- I admit, but where are we going exactly?

- We'll see this in the taxi.

- Hey!

- Please, take us to the most trendy bar in town!
((Alezia and Marya, here... There's something wrong...))

--- Okay, but I do not know if they will all let you enter!



-- Why?
---- I think this is clearly a private club...

- Too bad that the sun already rises. You should go home before it rises completely.

(?! ...Where is she ?)

-- Would you want to come and have a drink with me?
- Uh?! ...Yes, of course!

(This is surprising coming from her... But wait a minute... Alezia in Lawton? ...But this is...)

(Where did she go? ...Where the hell did they all go?)

(But what the fuck is that?)

(But... This is blood!)

(Holy shit!... This is locked! ...And this is filling too fast!)

(Oh my God! I'll drown!)

(Whew! What a nightmare!)

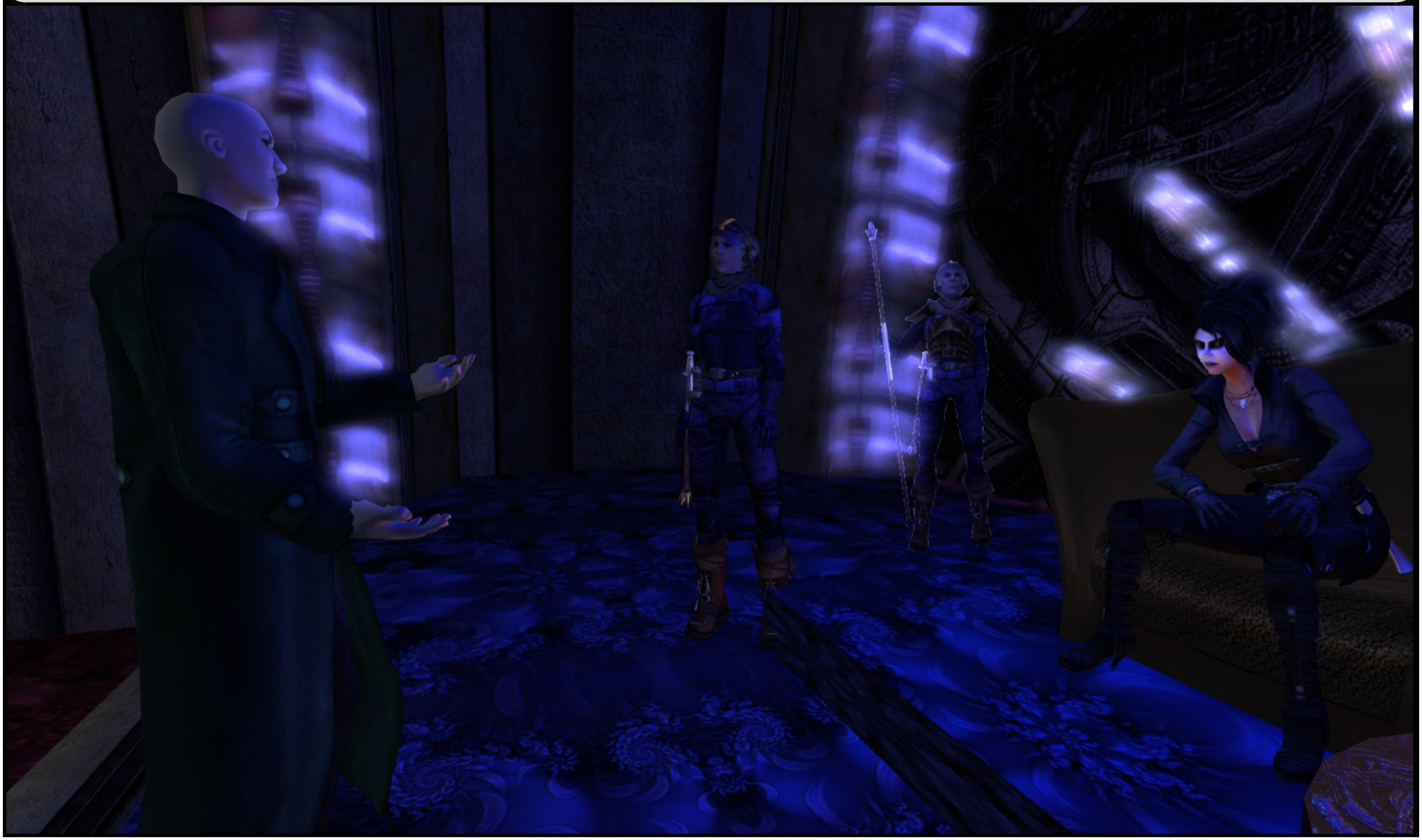
(The sun is already high...)

(But where did she go? She could at least have woken me up.)

(At least she left me something to eat.)

---- The session is open!

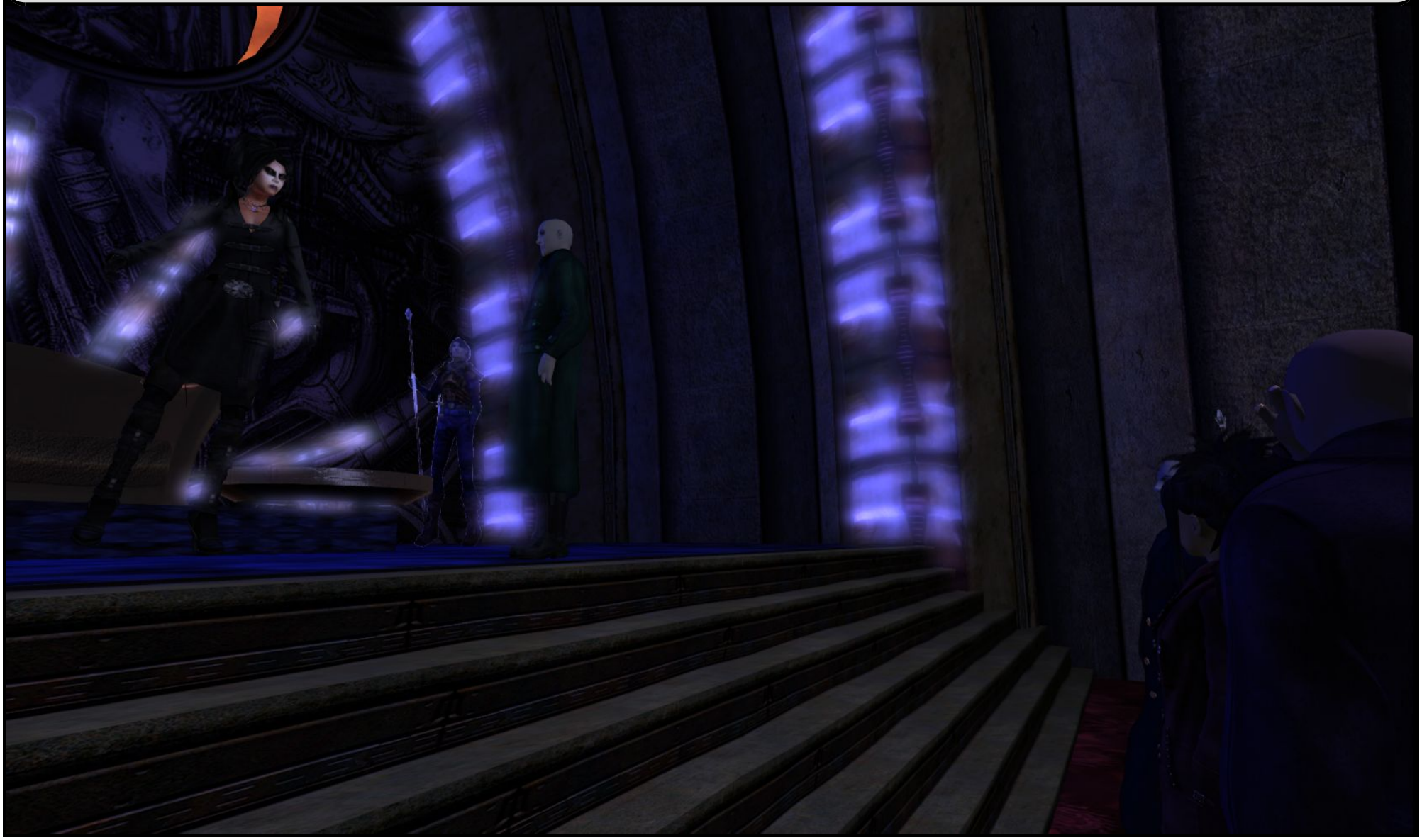
- Erydak! The clan of Terk would have a...



-- Be quiet!

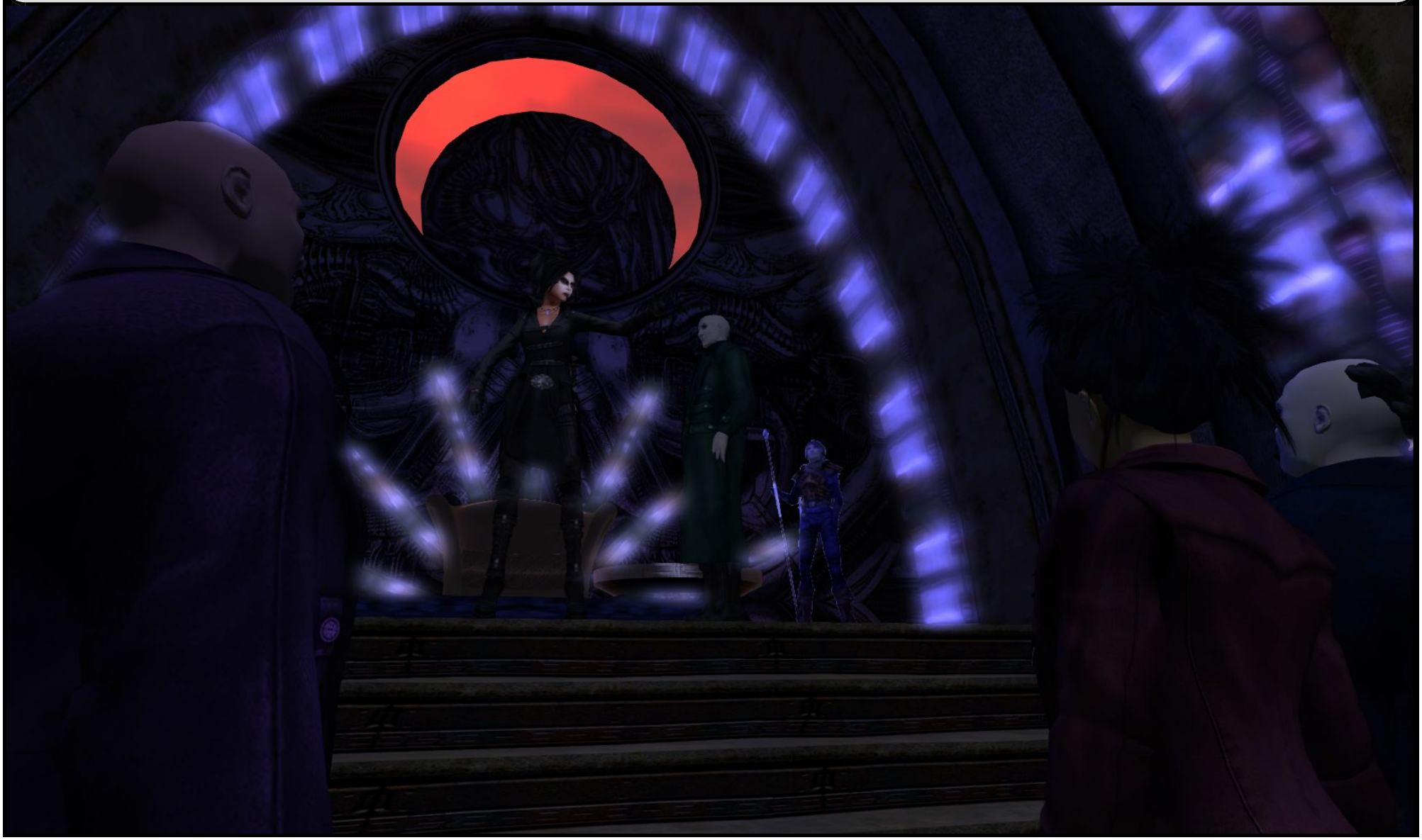
-- Some harmful events have, I must say, tarnished the last days!

- And this time, it's gone too far!



-- Also, some elements are working in the shadows, in a very bad direction!

-- Berigine Hystazi!



-- Erydak?

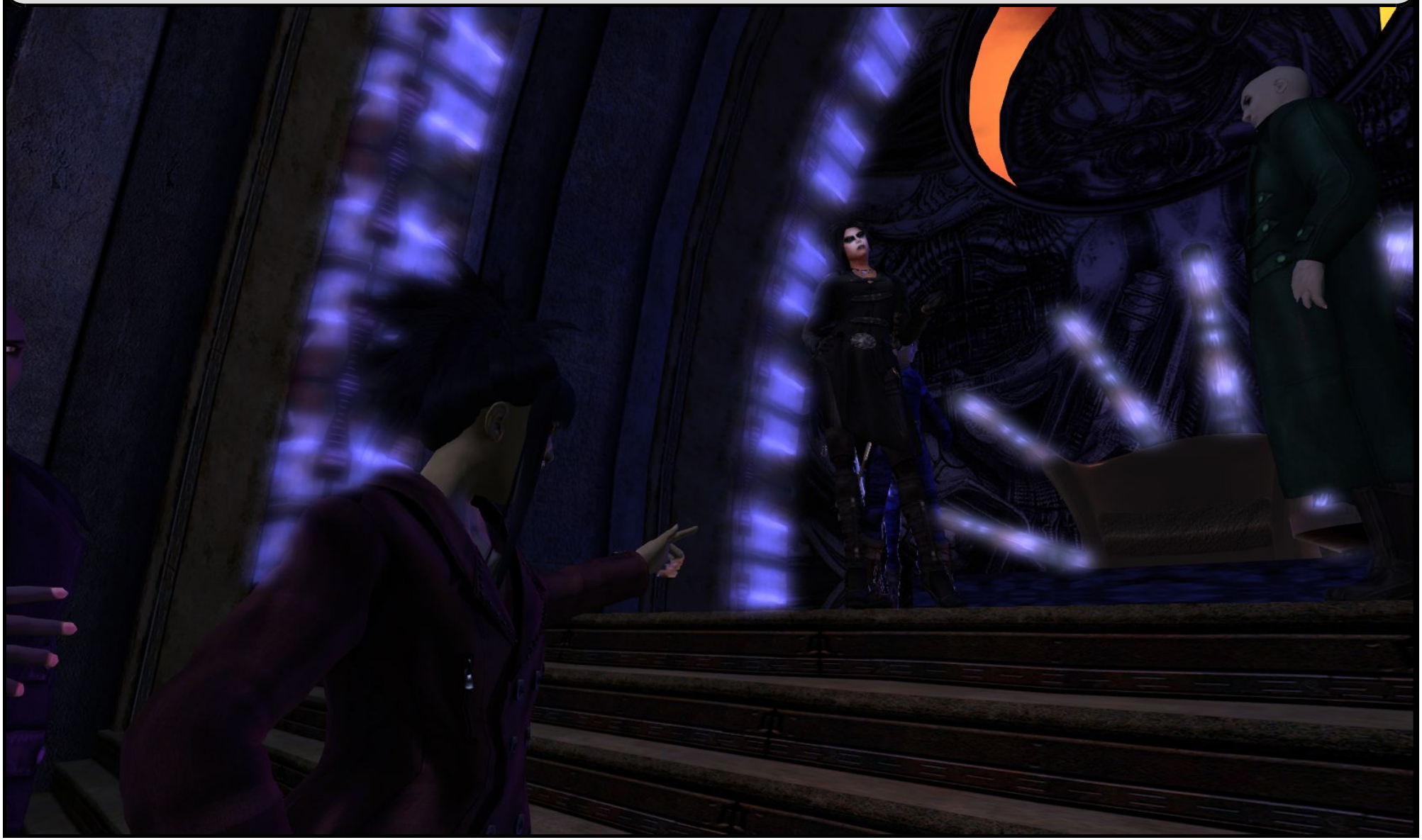
- Effective now, you are relieved from the role of berigine!

-- What?! ...You don't even think to do this!

-- Erydak!

-- Guards! Arrest her!

- You're mad! For what motive?
--- Erydak! You're not serious!

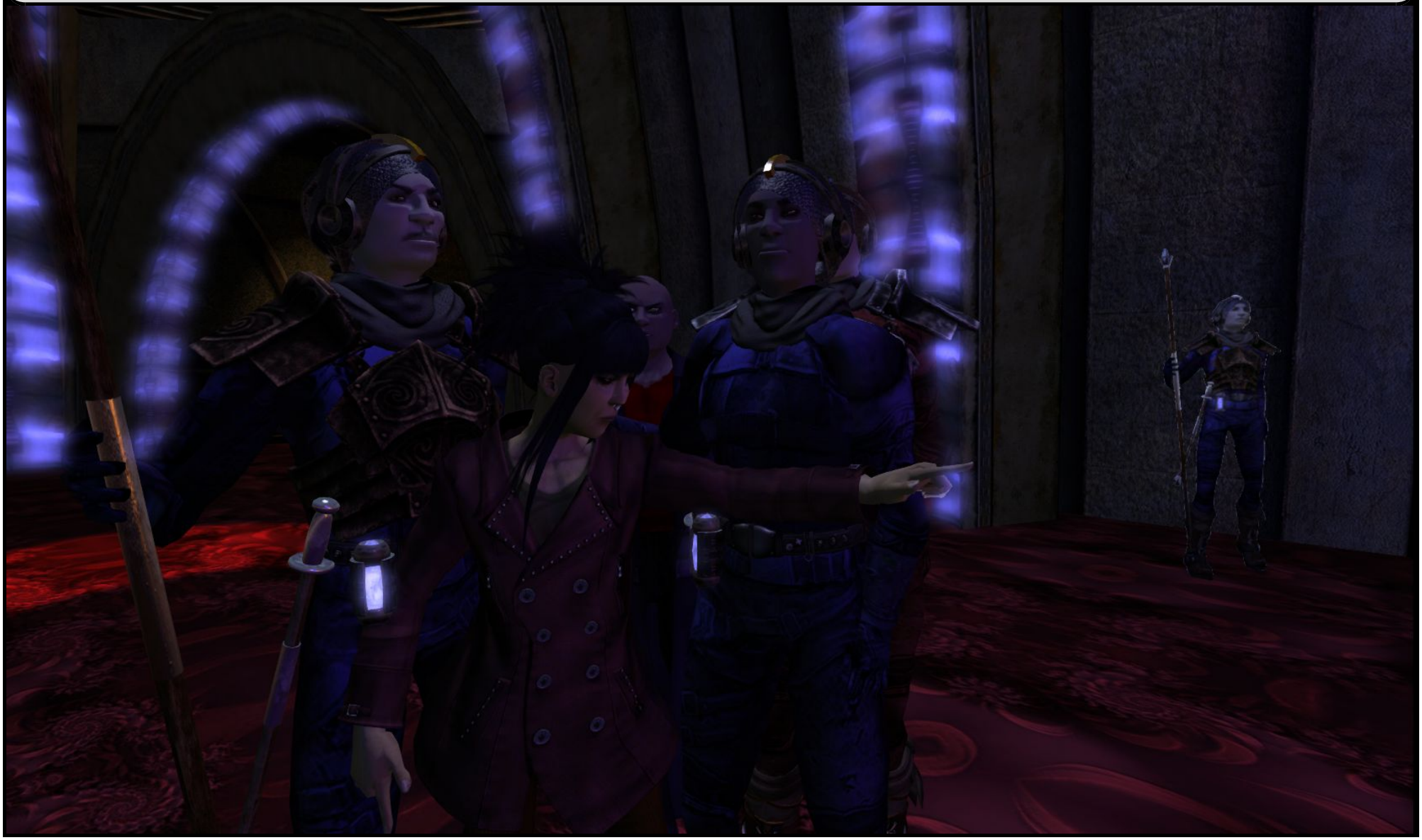


- To have ignored the orders that had been given, by leading the protégé of the Berigine Tyriam to the Kruls' Council, without having obtained previously her consent!

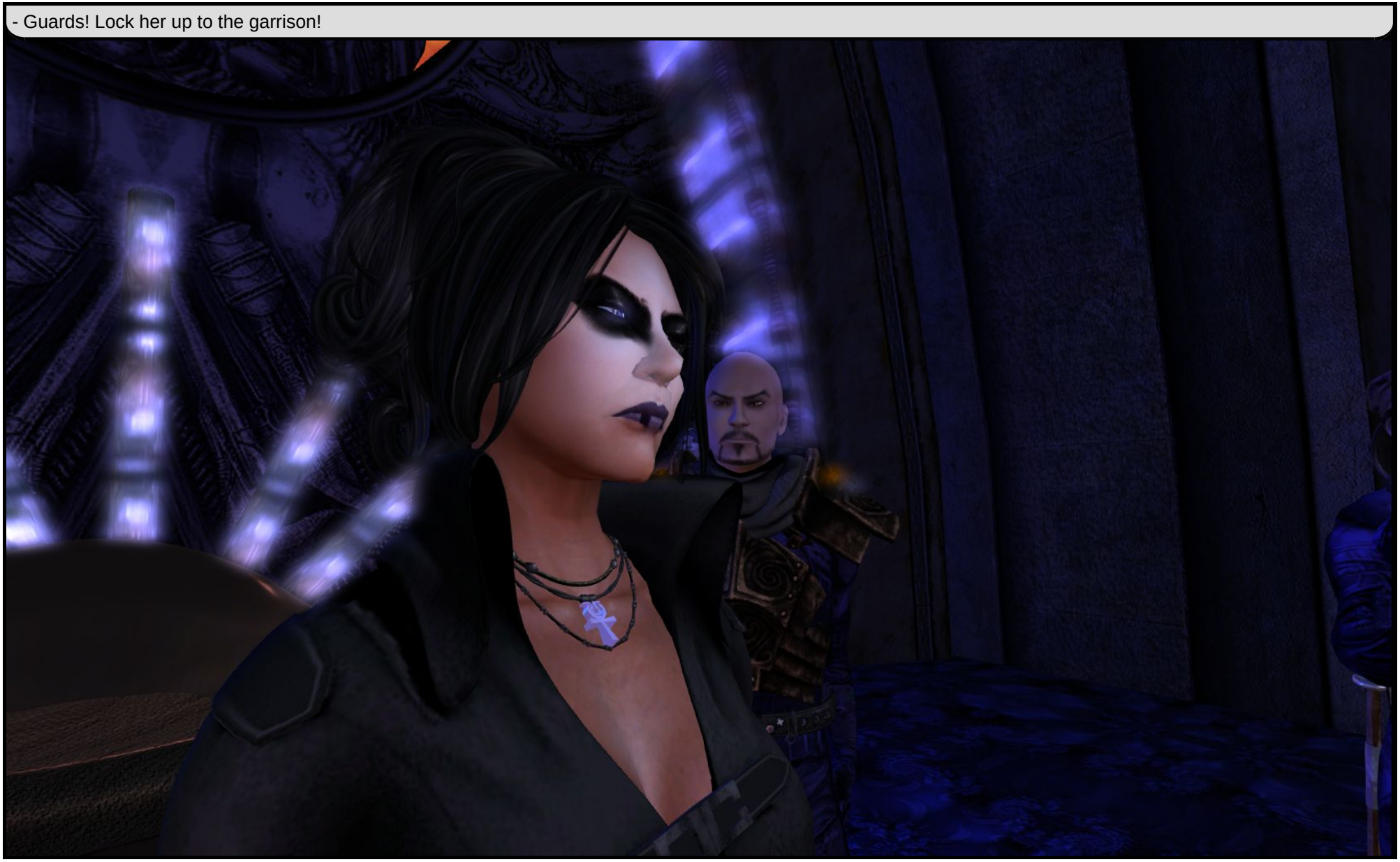
-- Move over!

-- Koren! No, let them.

-- This is ridiculous! You don't know what you're doing!

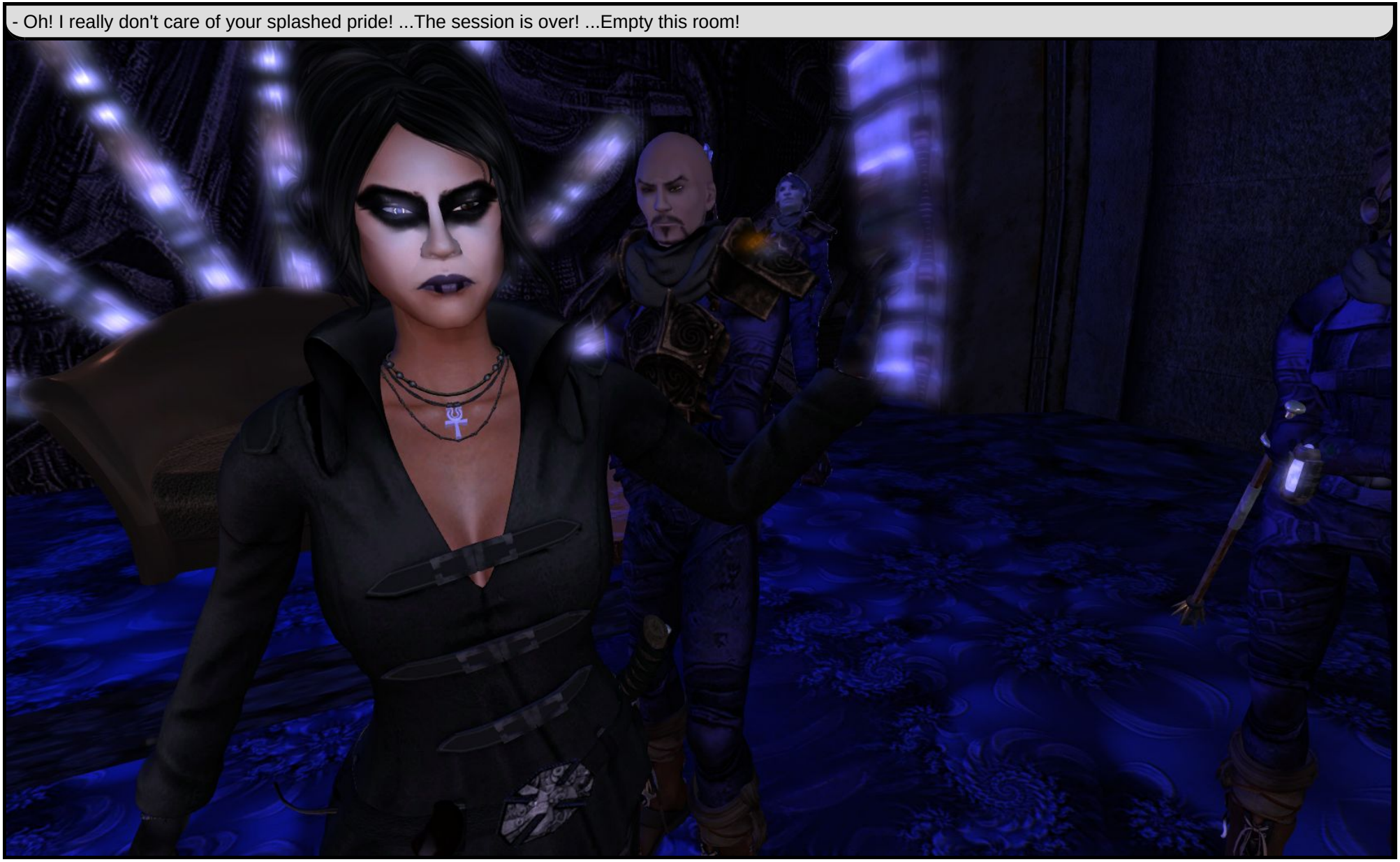


- Guards! Lock her up to the garrison!



--- She will remain there until that the end of the investigations about the death of the Berigine Tyriam, the sub-citizen Daniel Truman, and the missed attack done yesterday at my residence.

-- This is all the Kruls' Council that you defile by this arrest!

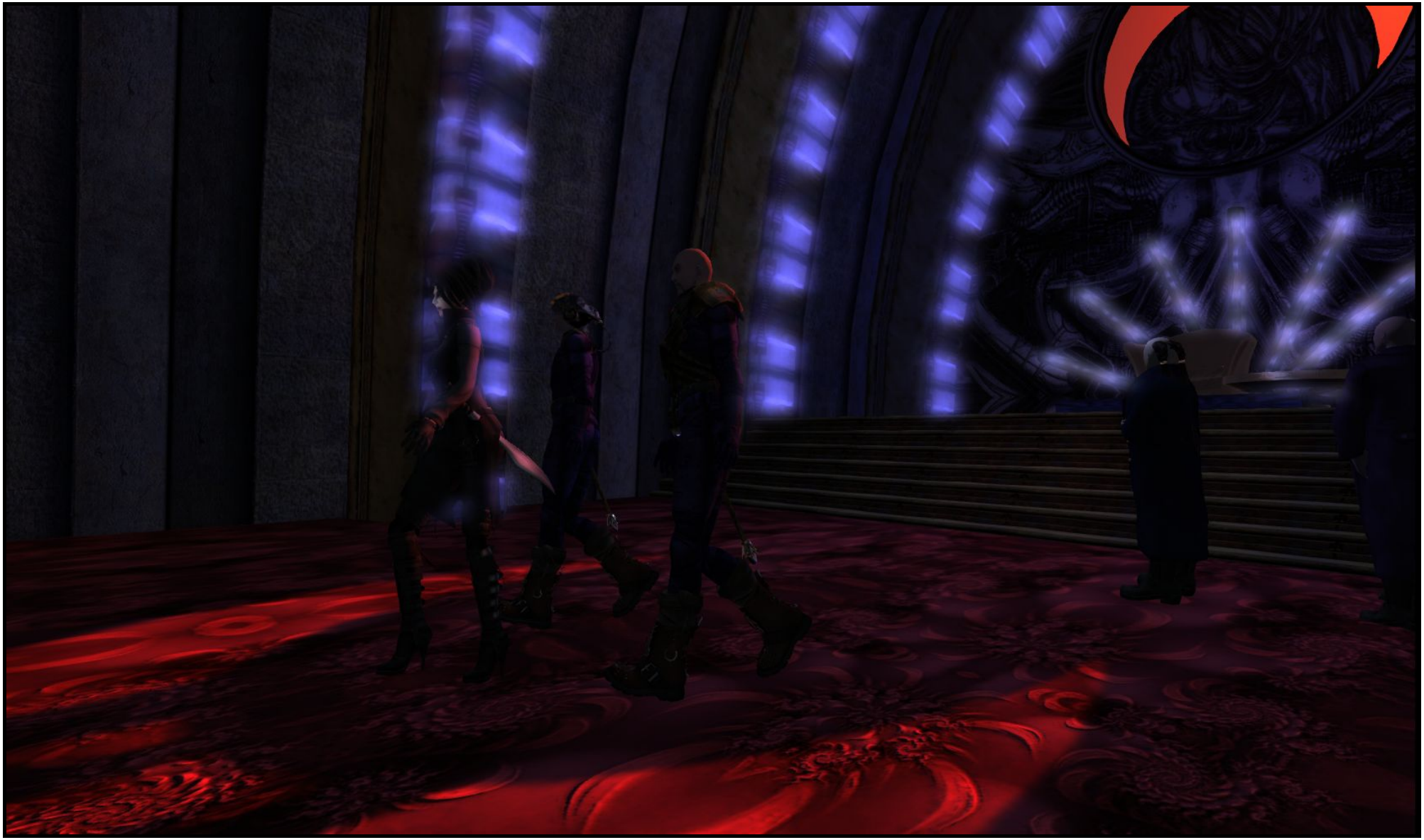

- Oh! I really don't care of your splashed pride! ...The session is over! ...Empty this room!

---- You're going too far this time!

-- Krul Erifrin! Would you have any good reason to be worried?

- Who will you appoint us as berigane this time? This tyrant that you hide in your apartments?

- Your game is a bit too much uncovered. You should be very careful.



- With all the respect I owe you Erydak, don't you think you've gone a bit strong?

-- It's possible. But what should I do Gulan? Let them kill me like a dog?

- But going up to the arrest, this risks toppling some allegiances.

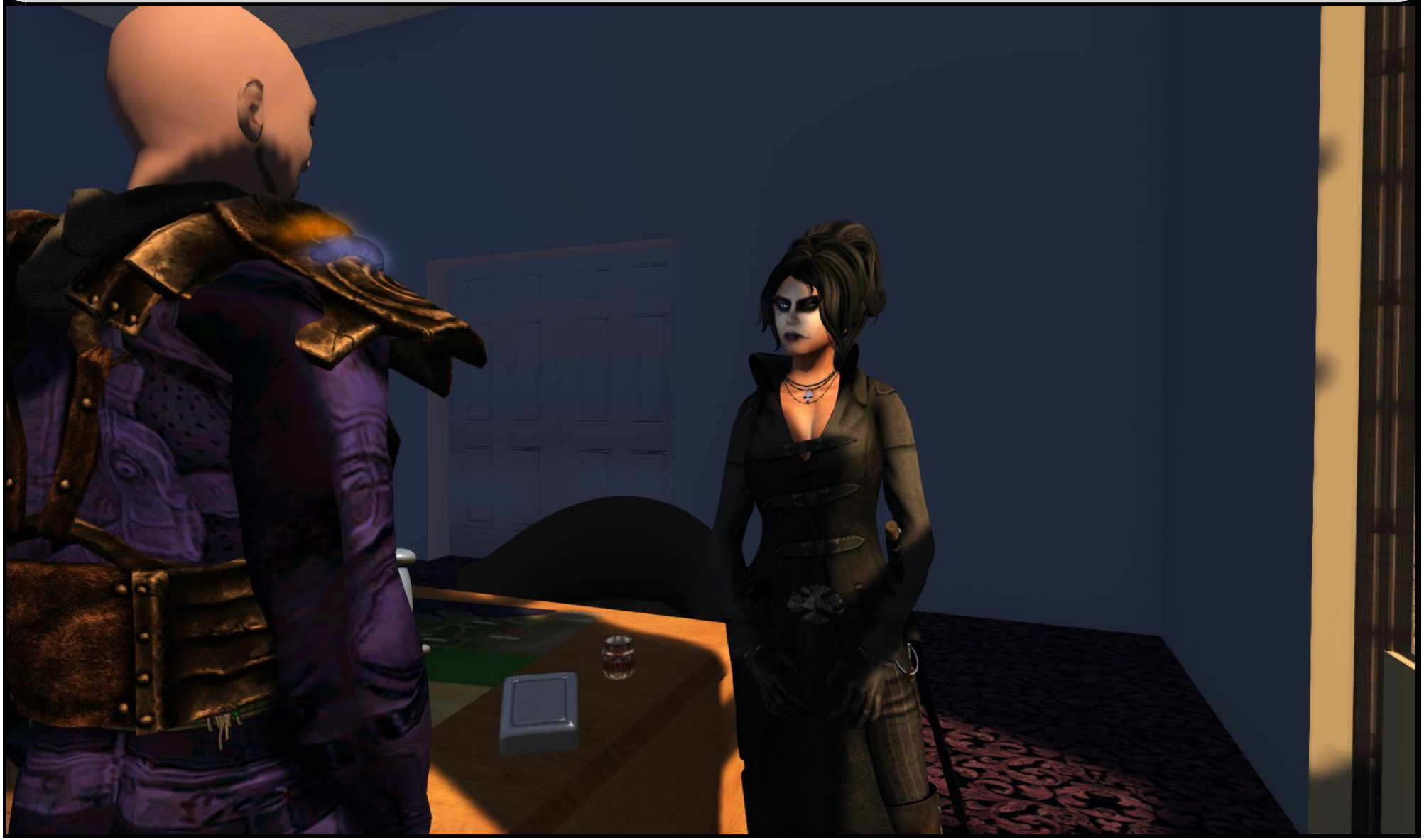
- I'm very aware. This measure is only temporary.

- I've really hard time to follow your logic. Hystazi has a faction that is very loyal to her. They won't stay pending indefinitely, even if she's incarcerated.

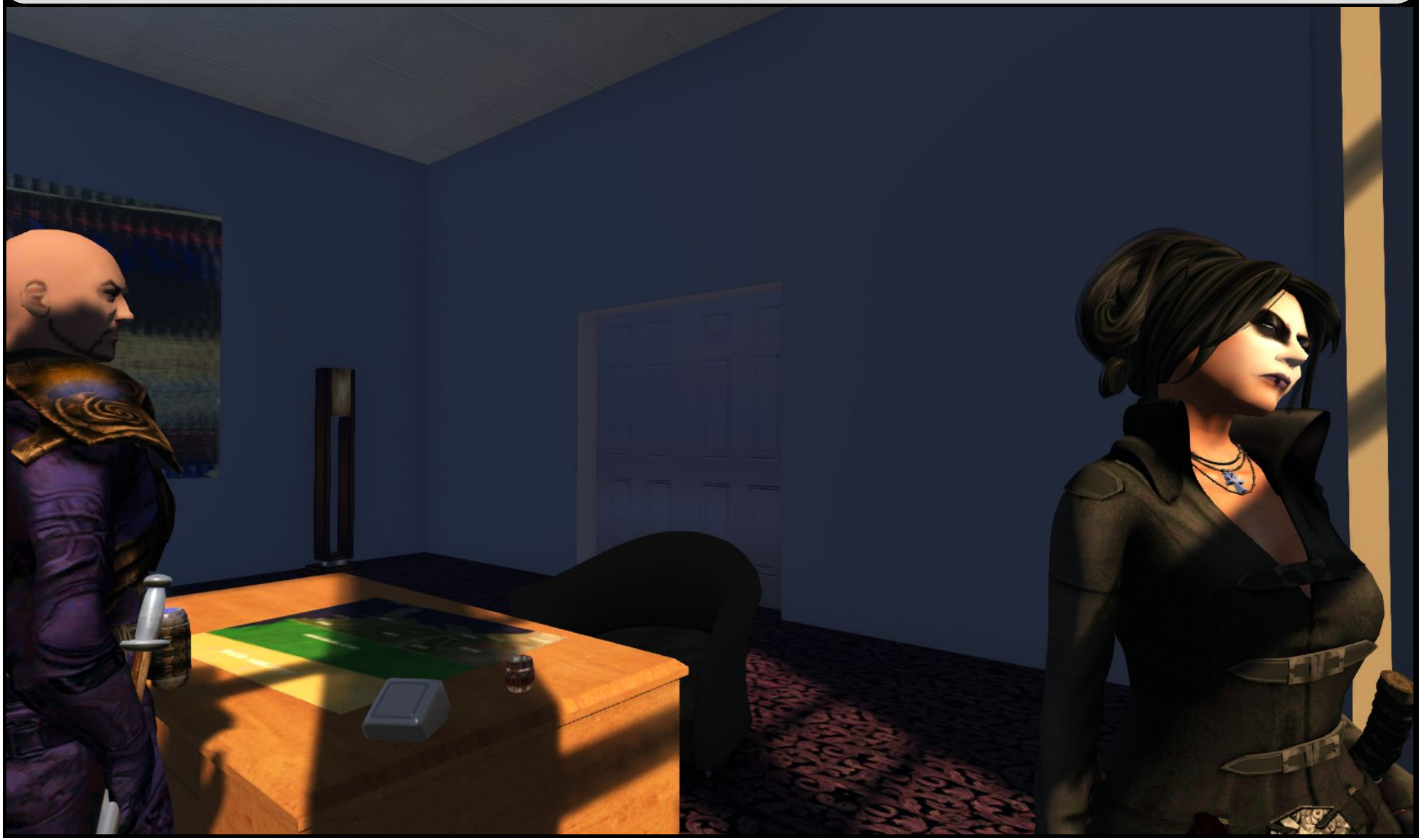
-- I know. I think we may have to change some things.

- For now, I feel some tension in our ranks.

-- Gulan, for now, keep them busy, the investigations to be done are not missing.
- Yes, indeed.



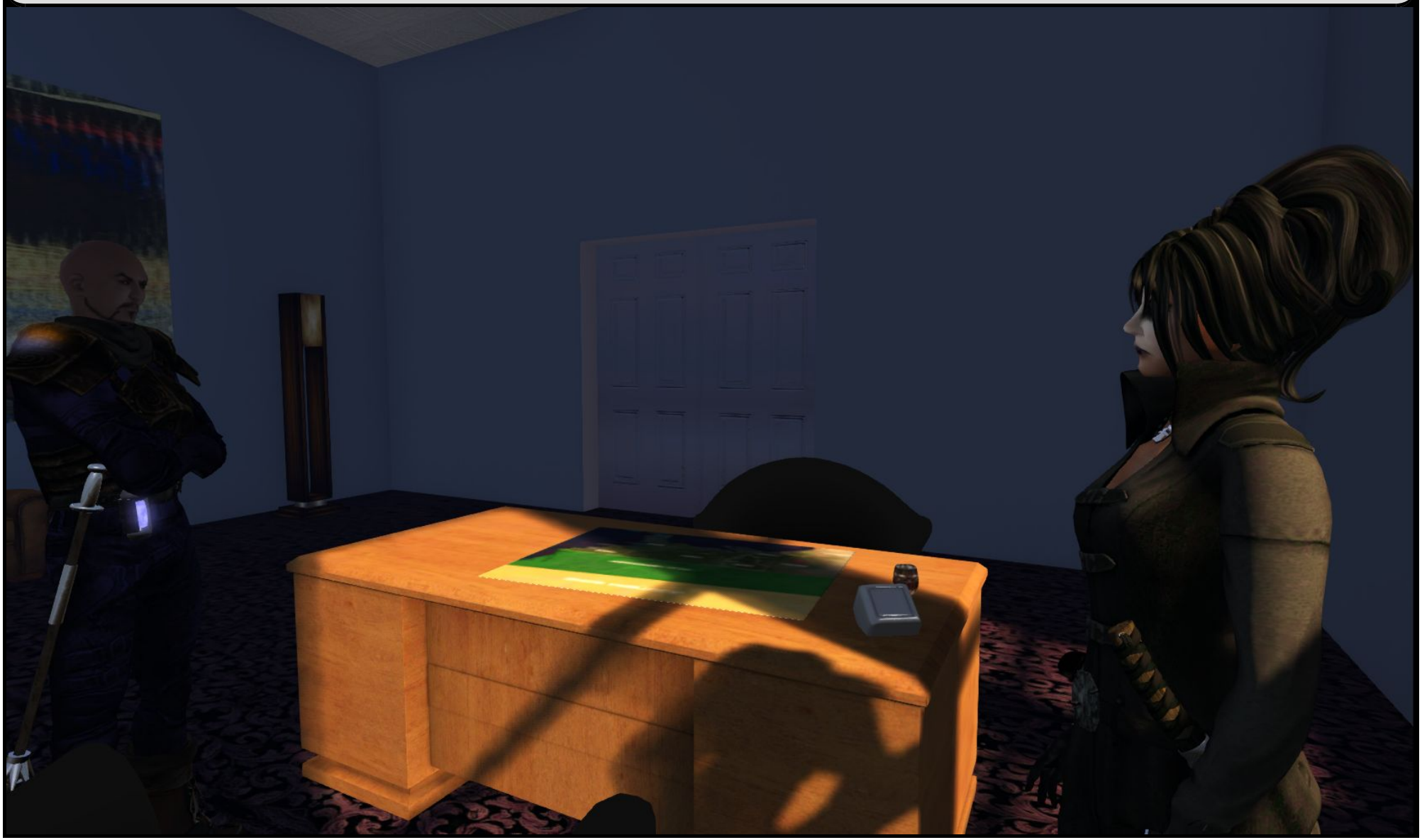
- Shall I inform the Berigane Larmis about the Hystazi's impeachment?
-- No, it's useless. Something tells me that some people have already informed him.

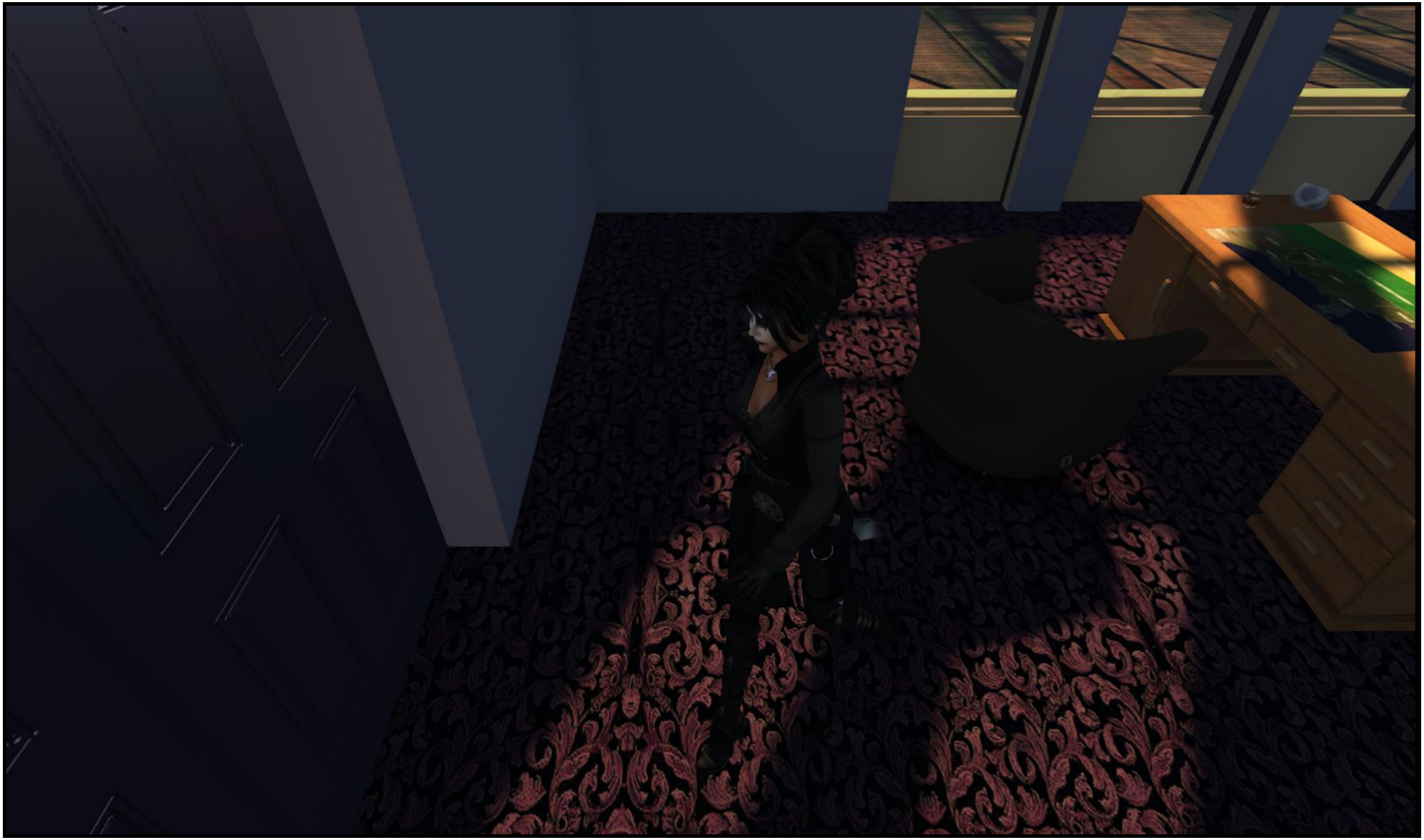


- However, could you try to know his current location?
-- Okay, I'll let you know.

- Gulan! Make strengthen the guard at the garrison.
-- I will.

-- Promise me one thing Gulan. If ever the events decide to progress in a different direction, remember that it could be necessary to move on.
- Hmm, understood.





BANG!

-- You were listening at the door!? It's not very polite!

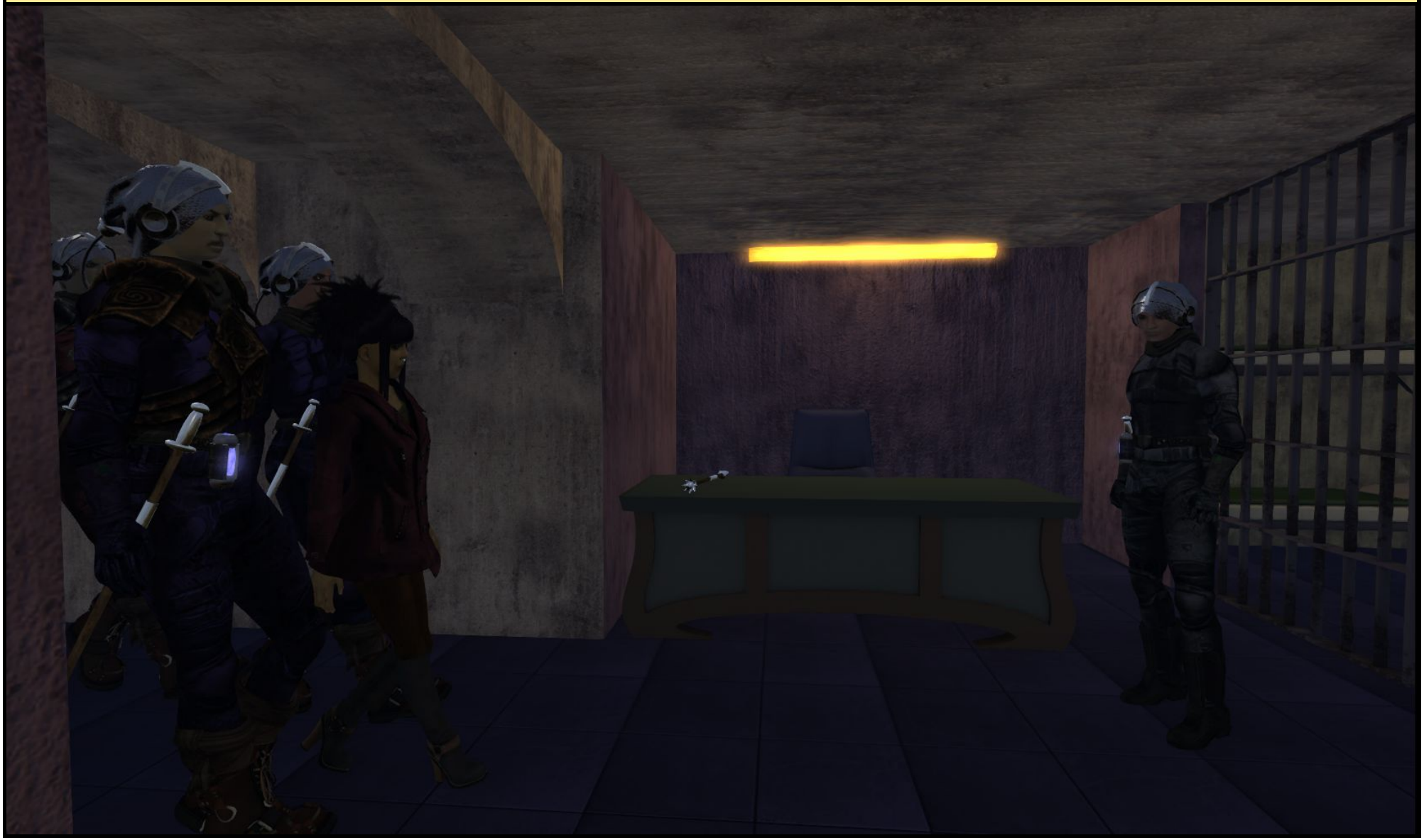
- Oh! Very nice this... makeup?!
-- Awwh! Shut up!

- If you knew how I hate that stupid ceremonial makeup! My persistent makeup is quite enough for me.

- Persistent? This is tattooed?
-- We could say that.

-- I'm going to remove it...

In the meantime...



- Please, enter.

- You should think about to what you are doing.

---- You can't consider rebelling against the clans that have seen you born.

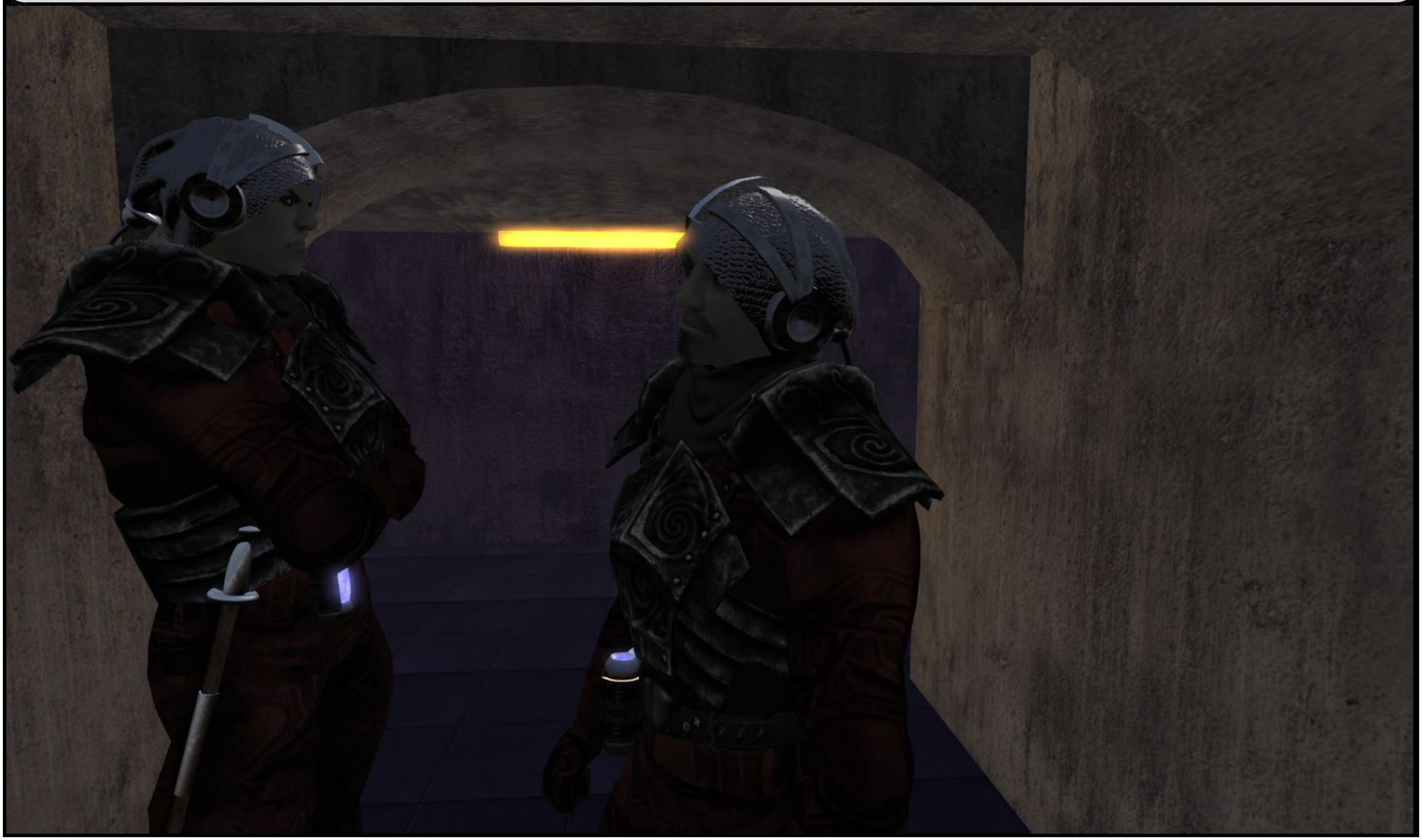
- Koren... "Oruko."

- Lock the door!

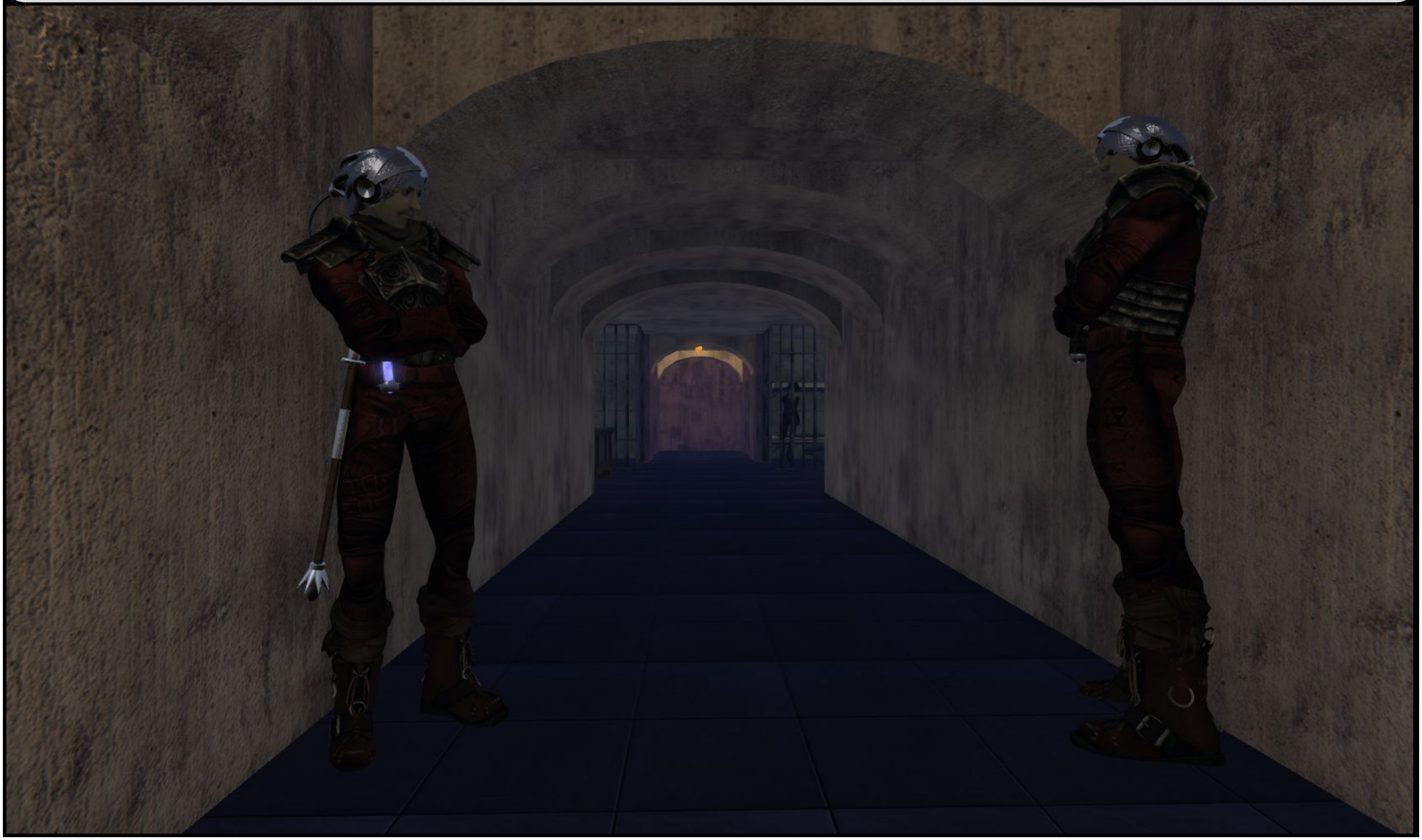
---- Your man must leave!

- Is she there?

- Oruko.



- I see... Oruko.



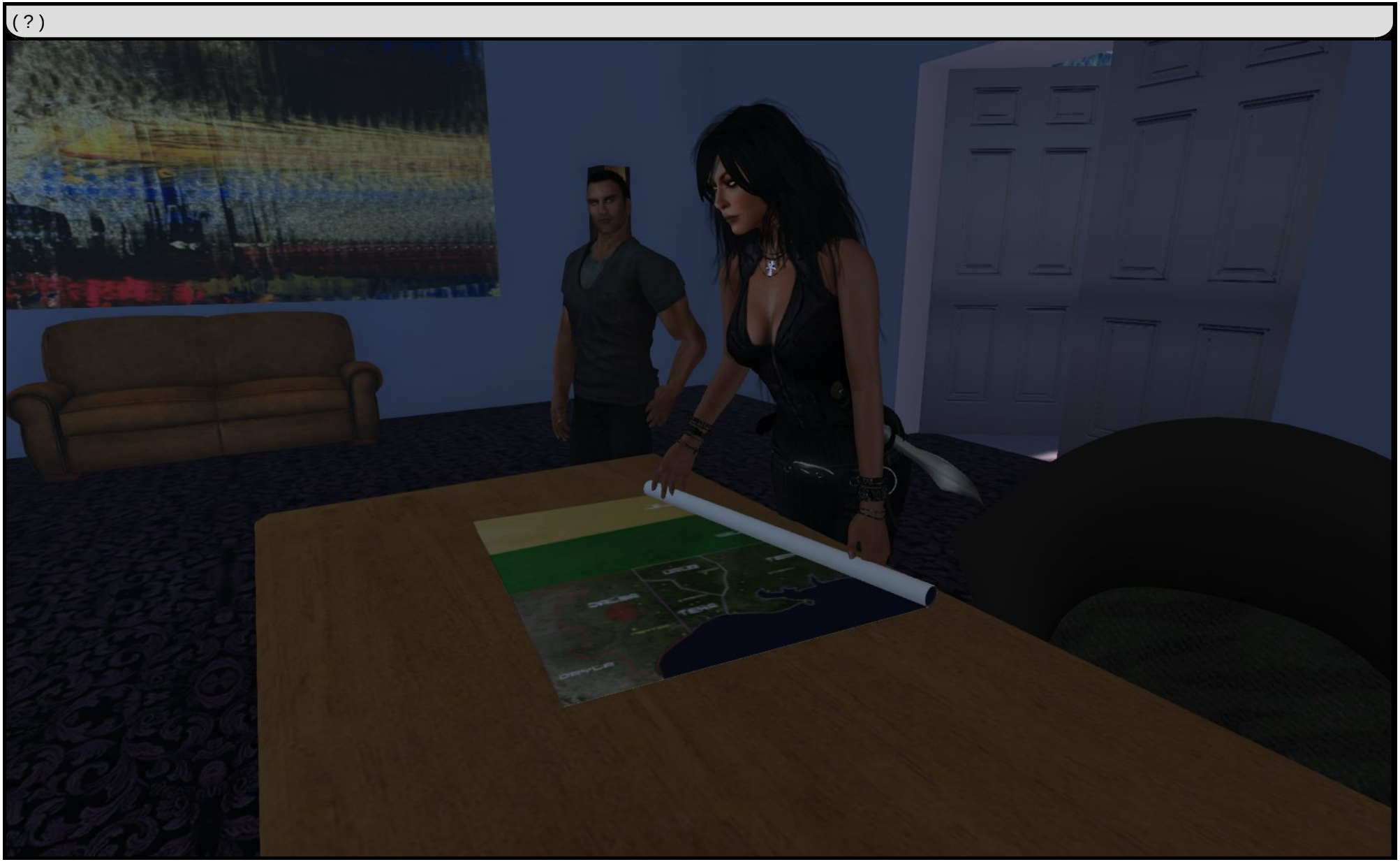
At the same time...

- If I have well heard, you've made arrested Hystazi?

- Shh!
((!?))

- Not a word. Follow me.

(?)



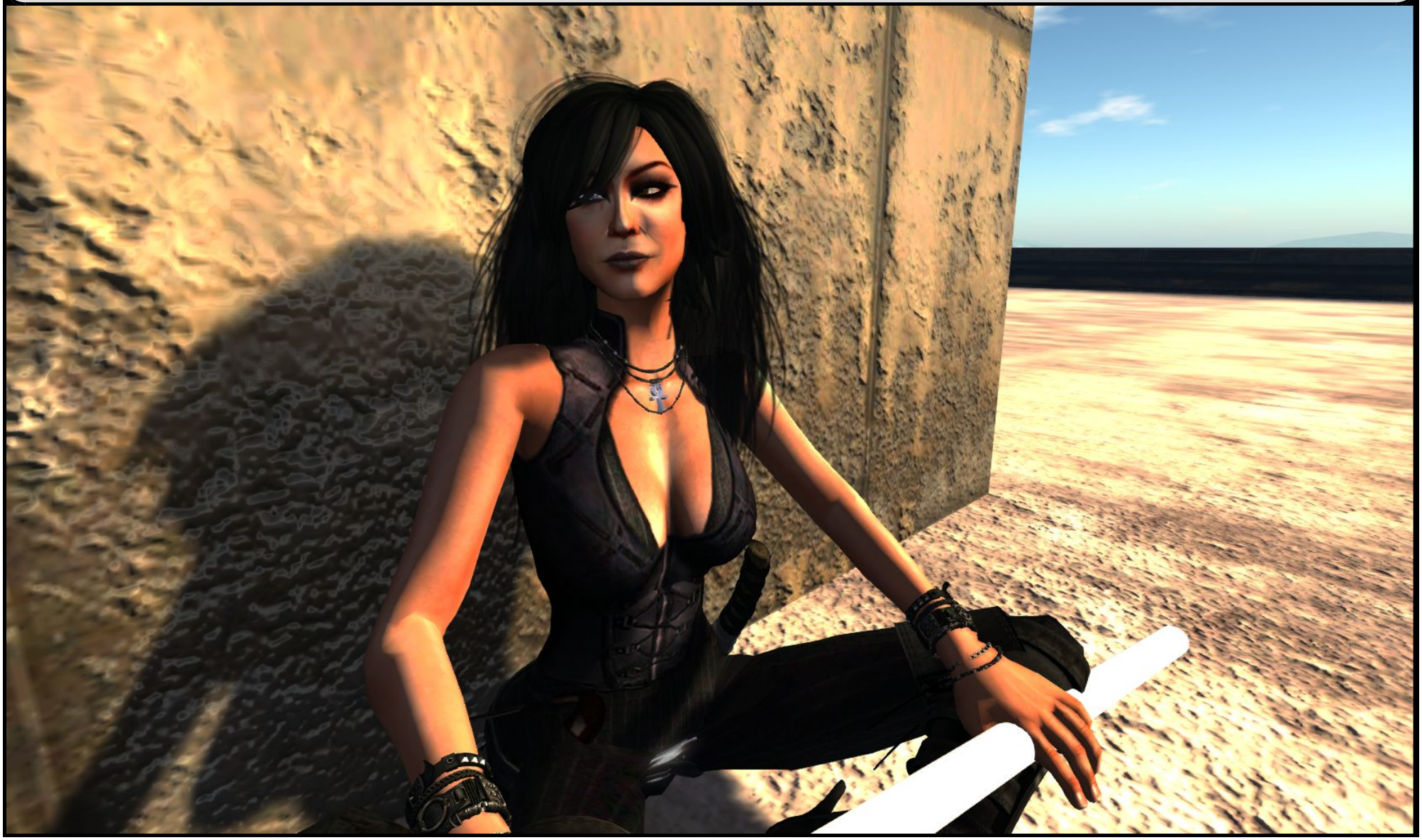
(Where are we going like this?)

- This way!

-- Sit down!

- Why are we here?

- Because it's a quiet place, and mainly far from any Terkaside's ears...



-- I come here often, mainly to think in peace. Nobody ever comes here.

- You seem suddenly very serious.

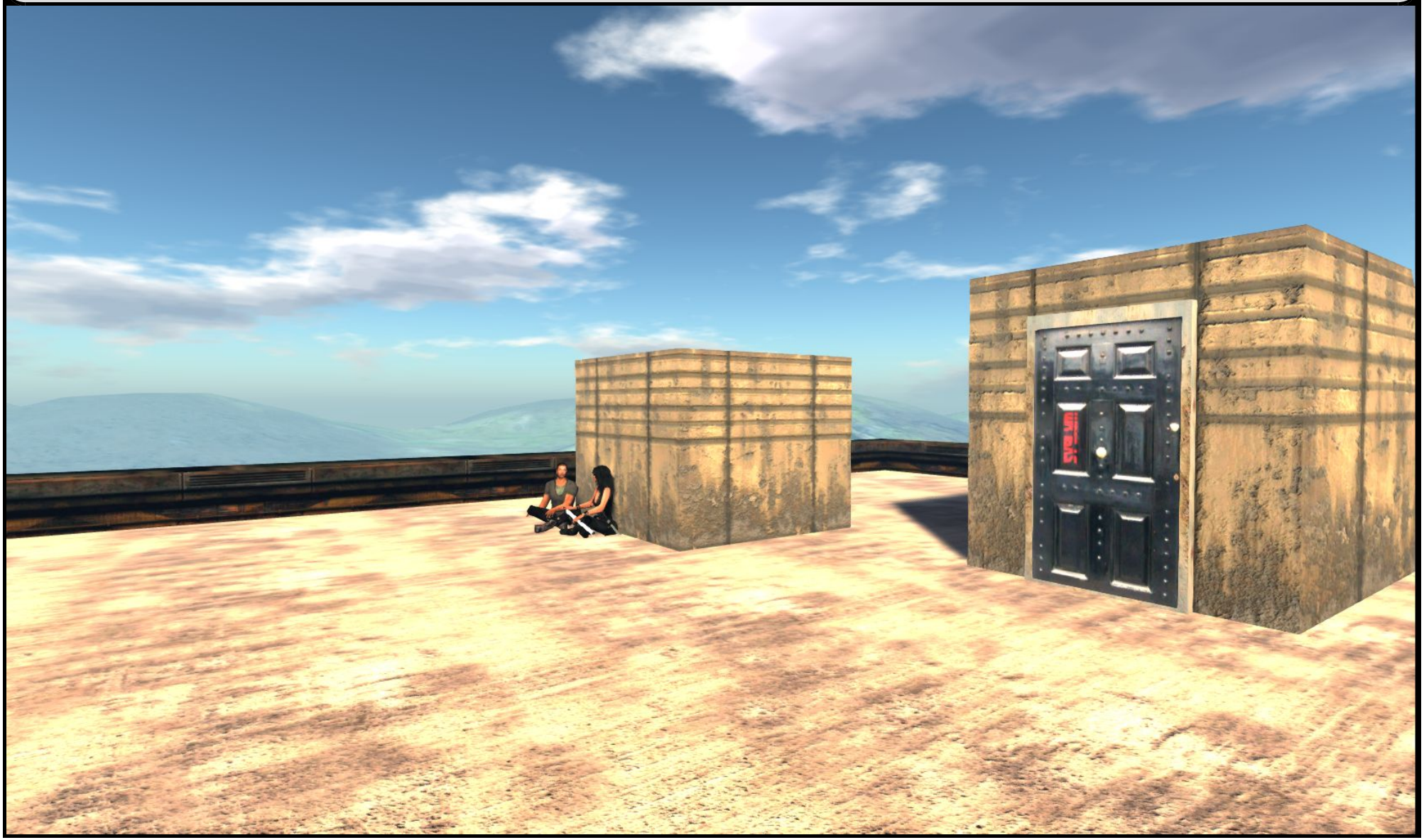
-- Listen to me carefully, because we haven't much time. I've thought long and hard this morning...

-- You suggested that we should maybe leave... Well, I believe that it's not only the good thing to do, but that it's now the only thing we can do.

- What? The only thing we can do?!

-- I've known Hystazi for more than three years, and if there's one thing that I know about her, it's that she never makes a move without have the certainty to be able to achieve it.

-- Everything has become very clear. She has the Kruls behind her. She has one of the largest faction. Then these two assassinations, especially the death of Tyriam, whose the faction is already more rallied to Hystazi than to me. And to conclude, we had this attack last night.



- You mean that she would have begun to overthrow your authority?

-- It's imminent, and this risks toggling very quickly. There's hardly any need to spell it out for making you understand what they reserve us.

- They will eliminate us, as Daniel and Marya...

-- You got it! And they will get it one way or another if we stay here.

- How much time do we have?

-- I've just made impeached and locked up Hystazi. The Kruls are furious, and I'm pretty sure to have lost the loyalty of some of my men. For now, nobody sees the logic of this provocation...

- I also would like to understand, because it seems to me that it's like having added more fuel on the fire!

-- The only goal was to gain time. They will certainly not be ready to get her out of jail without to be sure that she will be able to take the power.

- However, they could be reorganized quickly...
-- Yes, but this gives us easily up to the night, and that's what I wanted to obtain.

- Oh shit! ...You're playing a dangerous game! ...I hope you know how we will get out of here!

-- We will get ready by tonight. Then we will leave the residence by the same way we took yesterday.
- By the ladder?

-- Exactly. From there, we will be able to reach the garages and leave the town by trepyror.
- By ..."trepyror"?

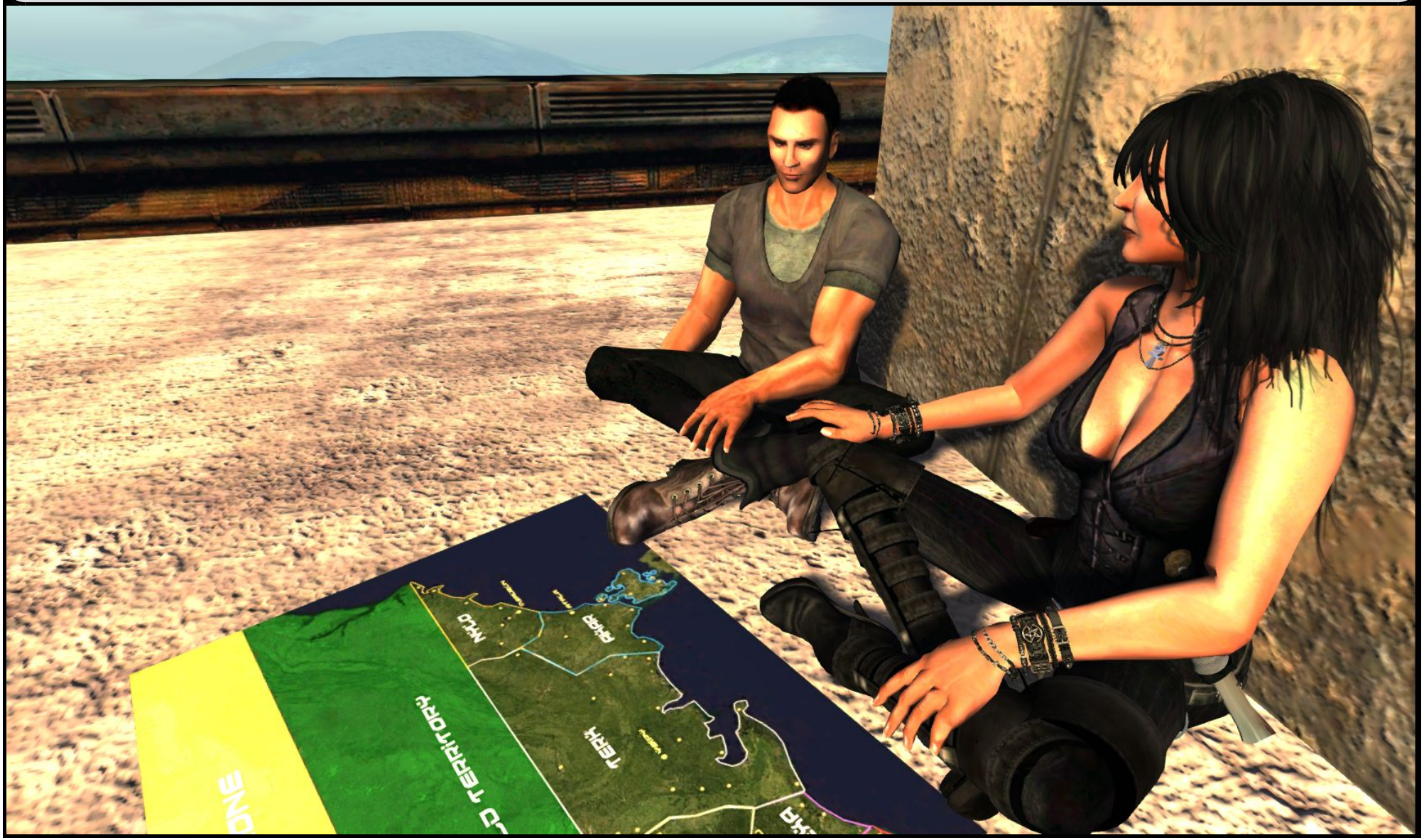
-- The vehicles... with three wheels... Do you know what I mean?
- Oh! Yes!

- And after that, where will we go?

-- We will leave the Terkazy. Even if I can drive at night, as fast as during the day, they will certainly attempt to arrest us. Out of the question to stay on their territory.

- And once out of the Terkazy?
-- You've talked about the Jijuterks... This could be an option. There must be something beyond this buffer zone!

- This means to cross this wild area, without any road! This is thousands of miles walk... How will we survive?
-- Hunting, fishing ... We'll have to do our best...



- Nice plan! I would appreciate if you could tell me before, the next time you'll plan to sink the ship... But well... It's this or die here if I have understood?
-- This looks like that.

- Damn! Me, who thought that the things were to go better...
-- Welcome to Terkazy! Come, we must prepare...

Elsewhere, at the same time...

- The situation has changed. She's made arrested Hystazi and has placed her in detention. This shouldn't affect our plans, but it will require to use a bit more strength.

-- So for this reason, we need more than ever that you honor the deal we've made. But this time you will have to be more expeditious in your approach. They must be eradicated.

- Are you really ready to face some collateral damages?

-- We are ready to take that risk.

- Nobody will survive in the building. Are you aware of that?

- Since it's the price to pay...

-- Those people are loyal to her. They would have been eventually a problem.

- Then I demand the double for such an action.

-- Hmm! ...Granted!

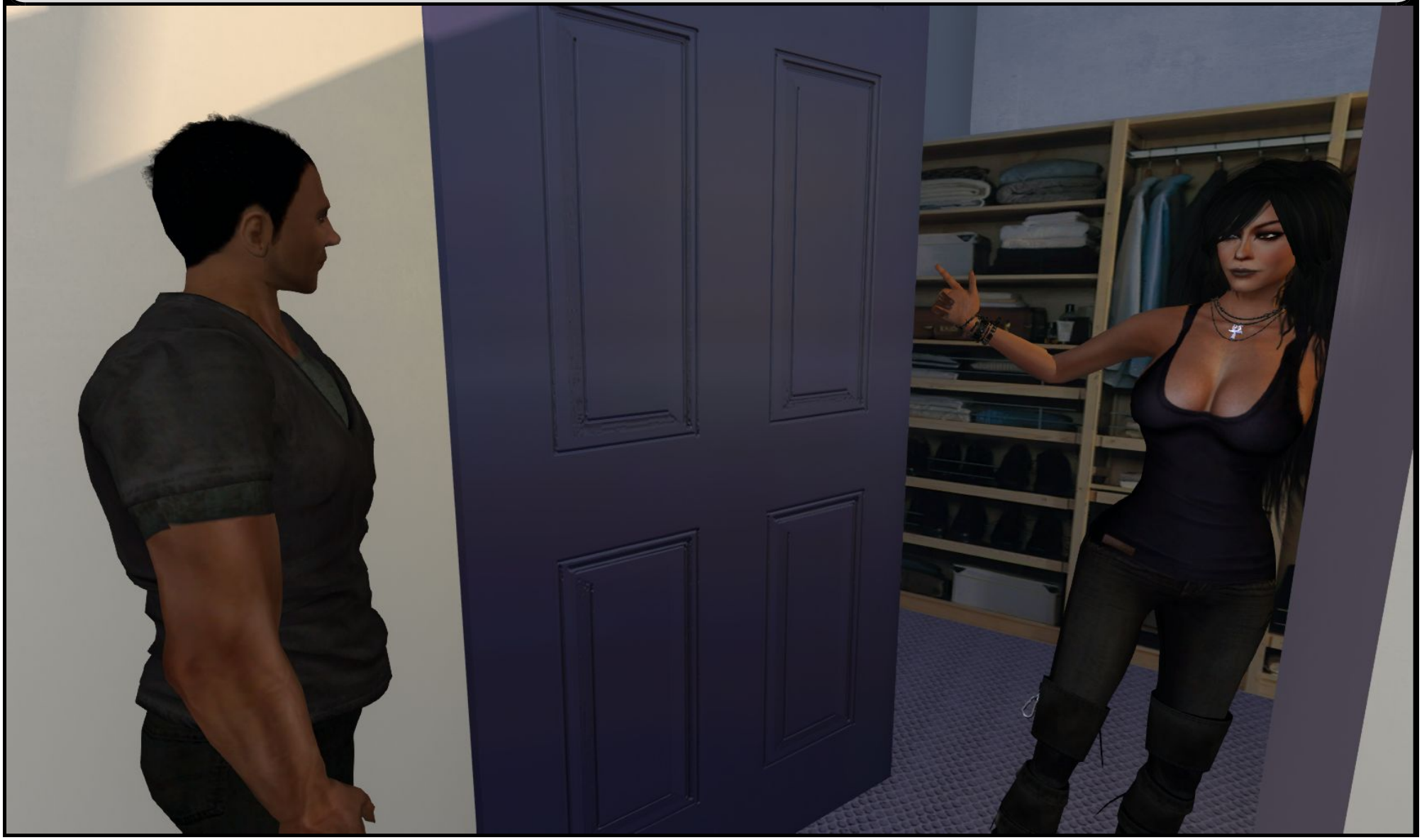
- Each of us will have a backpack...

-- Here, take this.
- What is this?

- Military pants?
-- Yes! I took them on a Dallusian soldier. These pants are exceptionally hard-wearing, yours wouldn't last more than three weeks in the field.

- But if I wear those pants and I get caught, they are going to take me for a tyrant!
-- Listen to me Roland... When we will have crossed the door, they will kill us if they catch us, with or without Dallusian pants. You know, they differentiate us very easily from their fellows!

-- When we will arrive at the end of the passable road, we will have to take the tent that is in the trepyror.



-- You are going to wear this...
- What is this? ...Headphones?

-- No, an electro-protector. This can avoid you to be knocked out in case of electric shock. But, this wouldn't prevent you to feel the pain. So try to not be hit by any weapon.

-- We have a blowgun and this electric baton... Four energy packs. This should be enough.

-- Take this! A good knife... And a watch, this could be useful.

-- It's Dallusian? This knife and this watch?
- Yes, the perfect kit of the tyrant!

-- Take also this.

- Are you serious? ...Another Dallusian inheritance?

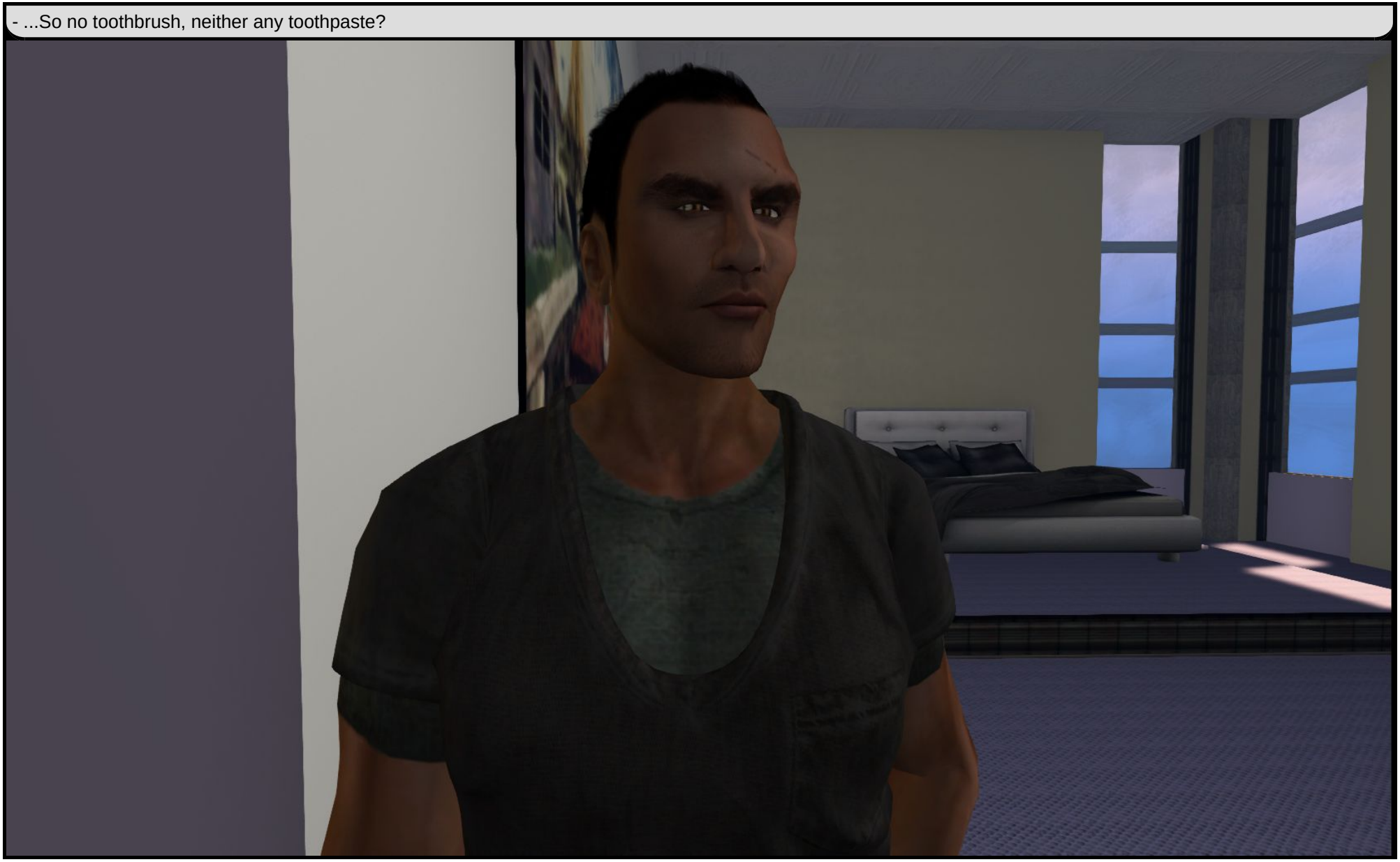
-- Almost! A Tyrant was the owner, but it's a pure Rantarian product. It was, by the way, the reason why I kept it. This is all that remains of my country!

- Nice souvenir! You at least, you still have something! ...Well, In the worst case, we could use it to hunt.

-- No way! It remains only three bullets in it. So this will be only in case of major problems. After these three bullets, it will be completely useless.
- You're right.

- For other things... Well, we'll have to find them on our road.
-- Not much time to do shopping before leaving...

- ...So no toothbrush, neither any toothpaste?



-- No, but I have 1300 krulis. We'll have to do business with the right people. The amount should be enough for our needs.

-- And how much worth a "kruli"?
- Hmm! ... An average monthly salary is about eleven krulis.

- Oh! ... This is at least ten years of salary! You're going to be considered like the dictator who runs away with the cash!

- Some people will see it like this. But like I don't plan to take these krulis outside of Terkazy, then I won't have too many scruples. They would have no value elsewhere anyway. Everything will be returned to the people on our path, at double price. We're not going to take the risk to limit our chances!

- That's it! We eat, we get dressed, and we go out!

- Do you really think it is a good time to smoke some... drug? Supplied, I've been told, by Hystazi!

-- This isn't the Hystazi's stuff. I'm not that stupid!

- OK, but you smoke every day, and you are surprised to fall in a depressive attitude? ... How long have you been doing this?

- Too long time I agree... It isn't help for the depressive attitude like you said... But it's not what led me over the electron well!
-- If you say so.

- When Mary died, I wasn't seeing any way to get through all this.

{Intercom: woman's voice} Erydak?...
- Yes? What is it Qwelz?

{Qwelz's voice} The Esane Gulan has confirmed the position of the Berigane Larmis. He's currently at Merugun.

- Noted. Thank you, Qwelz.

- Who's Larmis? A friend?

- I wouldn't say this. He's a loyal Berigane, but once we will be gone, he will be definitely aligned with the Kruls. So, it will be better for us to avoid him.

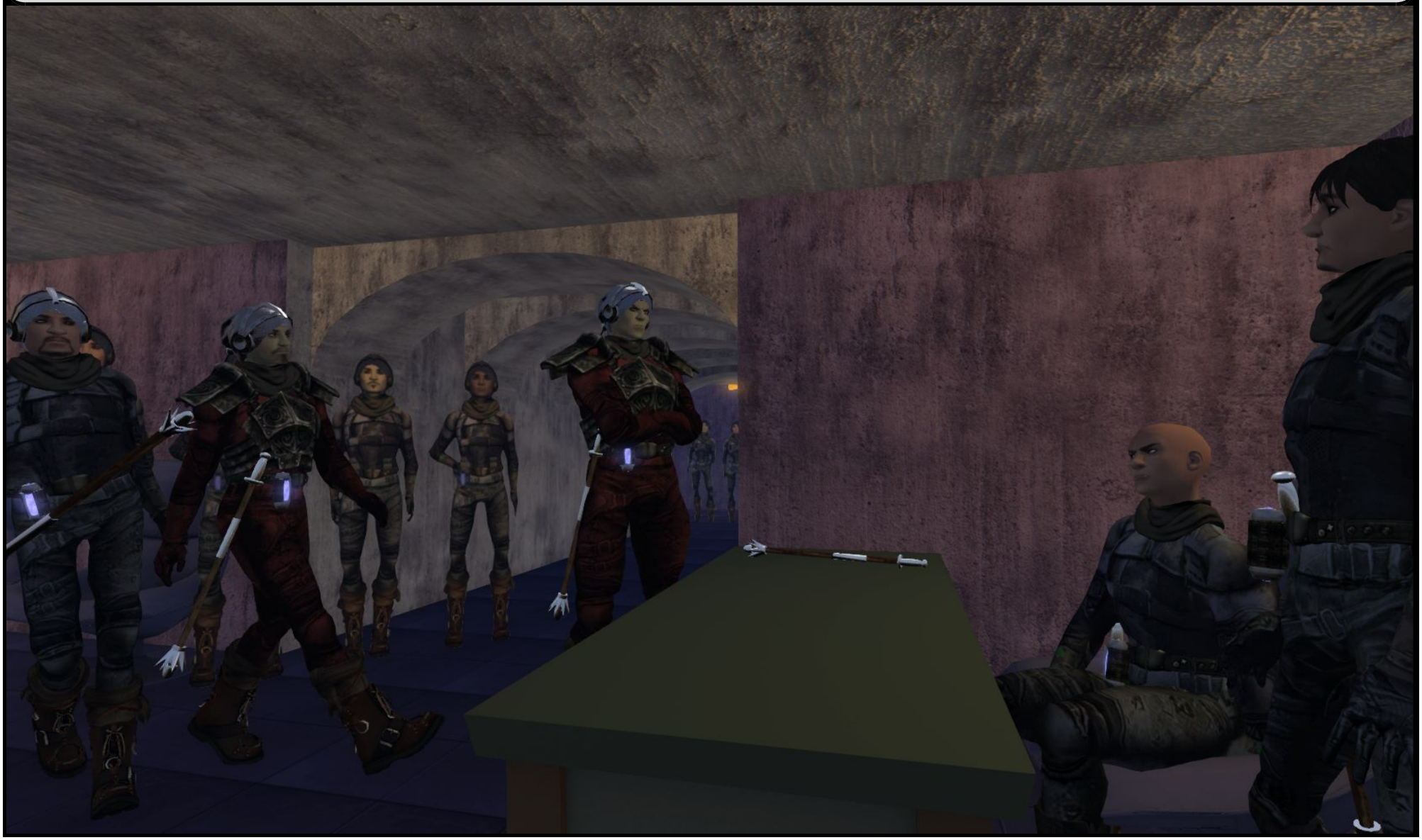
-- Knowing where he is can be very helpful. And now that it is known that I have asked Gulan where Larmis is located, they won't expect us in his direction.

- Did you have this in mind when you asked him?
-- Absolutely.

((Damn! She has thought of everything! ...))
- We will decide which road to take once we will be far from here... Let's go eat!

A few hours later...

------ But! ...What are you doing?



--- Put down your weapons! That's my advice!

- You have nothing to do here!

-- I think we'd better do what they want.

--- But this is rebellion!

- Aaargh!

--- It's alright! No need to do that!

------ Open the door!

- Oruko!
-- Thank you Koren.

-- Lock them in the last cell!

- Come on! Move your ass!

-- Alister, any new developments?
--- No, not any other intervention on her part. Her men are now deployed a bit everywhere in the city, on different investigations.

-- Alister! Take some men, and go to arrest Esane Gulan. Once done, lock him here.
--- Fine!

- Koren, you come with me. We are going to take care of Erydak. You guys, don't let anyone else get in until further orders.

Meanwhile...

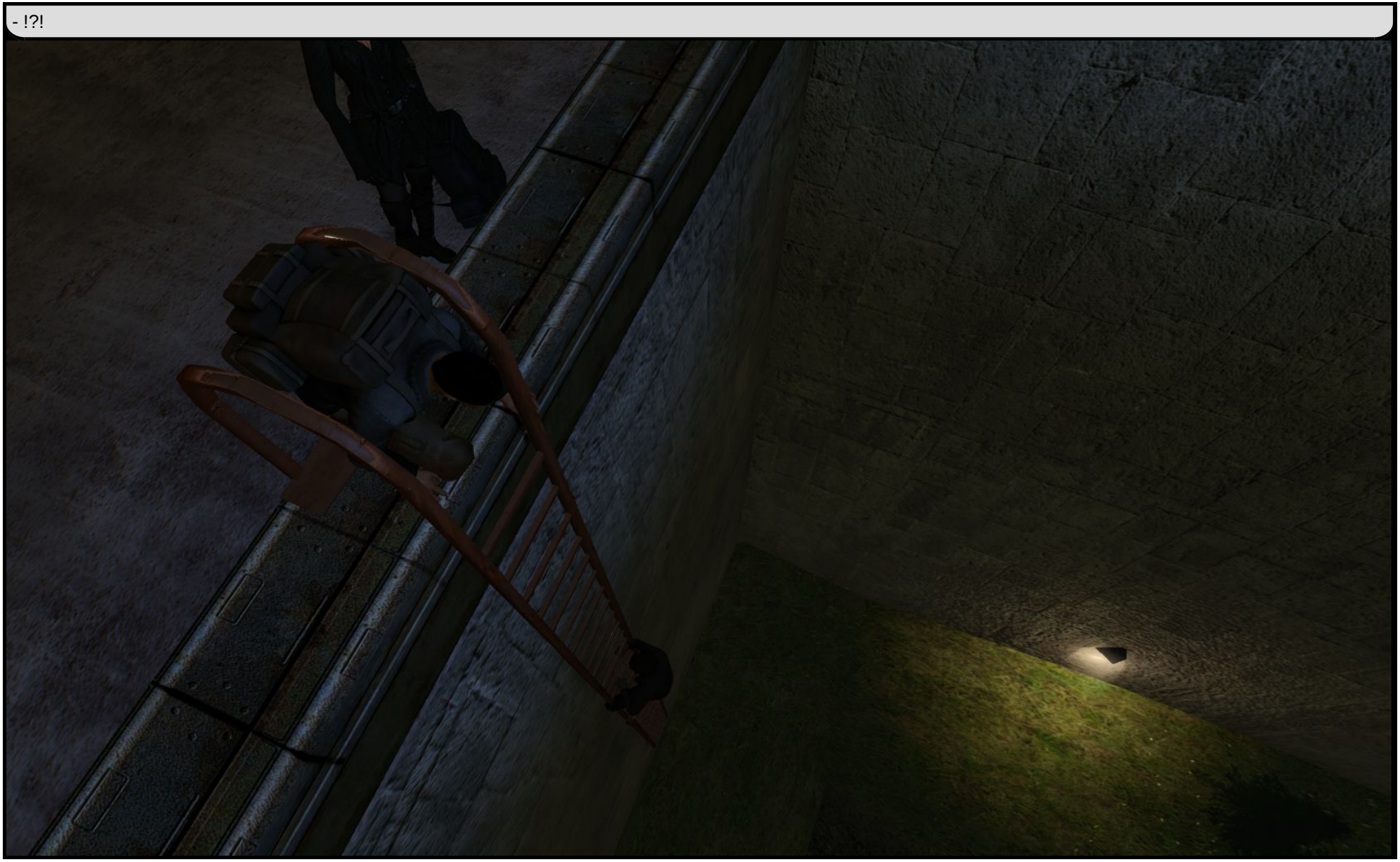
- Well! Here is the point of no return.
-- Anxious?

- No, it's... just another home I leave behind...

- And you? Anxious?
-- Yes, a bit. I guess it's normal.

- But you've already taught me to not forget to breathe! So... Let's go!

- !?!



- "Someone is climbing the ladder!"
-- "What?!"

-- "Shh!"

-- "This is the same intruder as yesterday. One that has eluded us."

- "Shit!"
-- "Don't move."

(My goodness!)

TCHAK !

CROUTCH!

- Oh my God! You killed him! But... Are you mad?

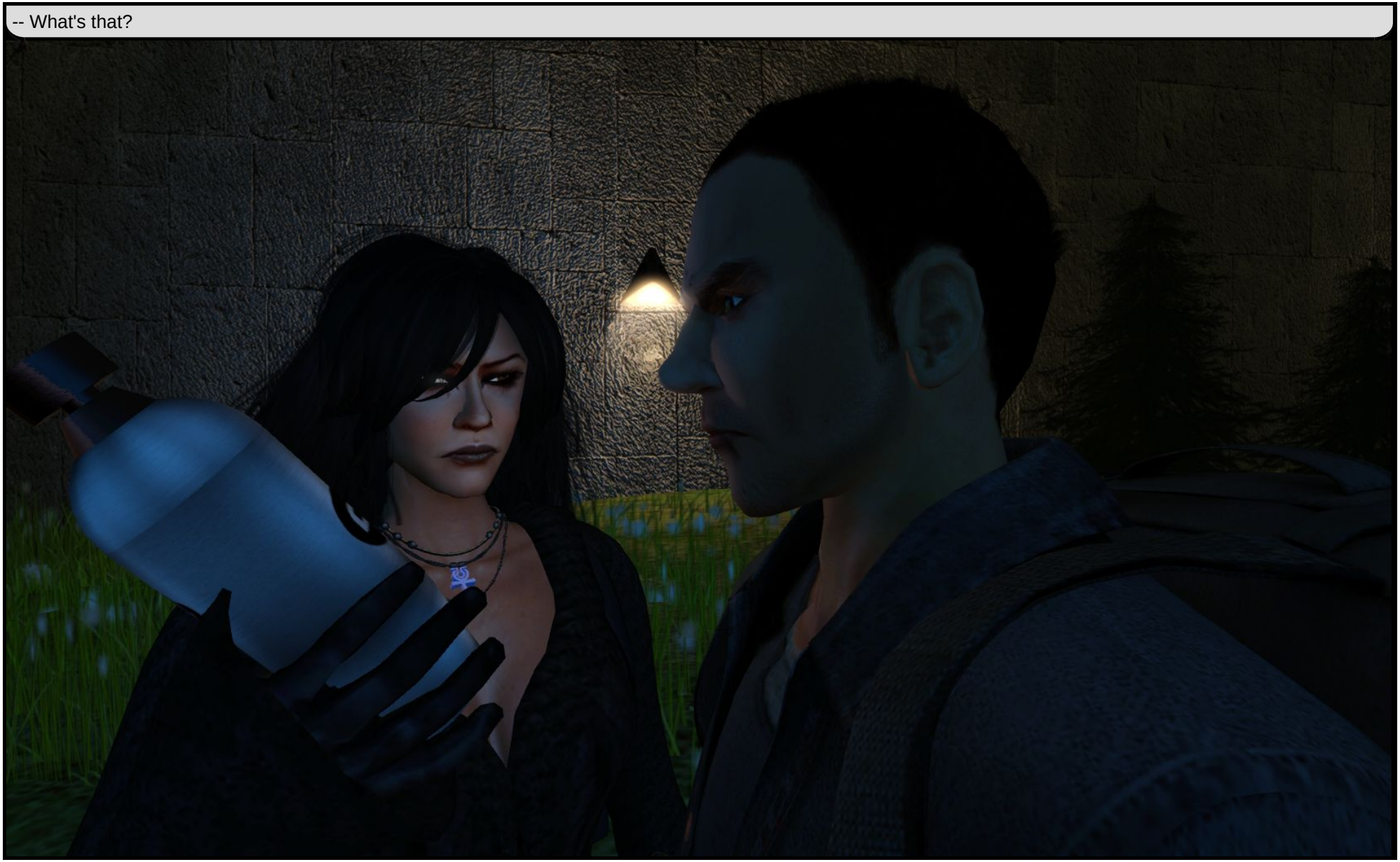
- Aw! Come on! I don't have time for an argument right now... Let's go down!

FRUTCH !

- Is he dead?

-- Yes. But look what he had on him.

-- What's that?

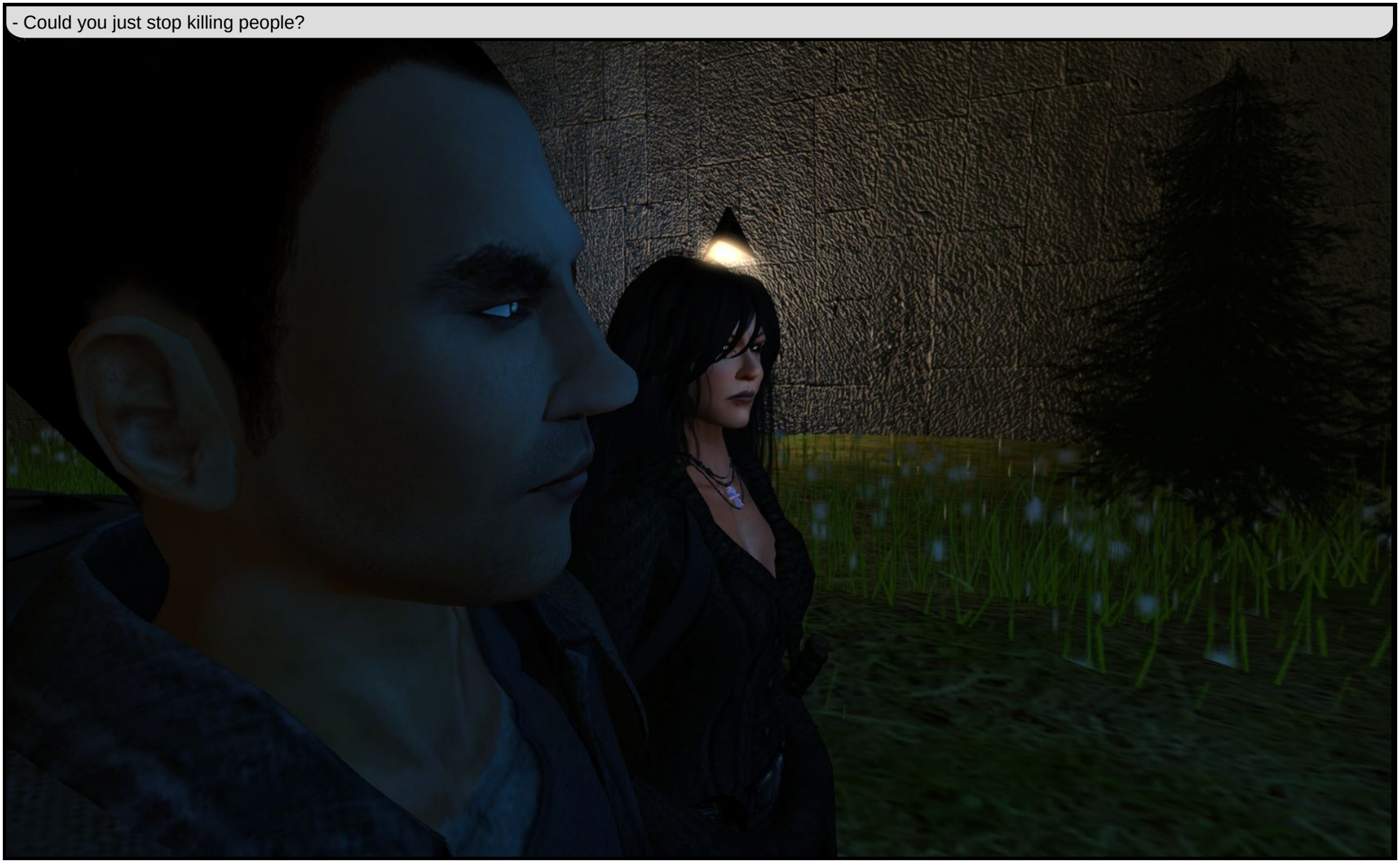


-- Gas. According the symbol, this would be liquid carbon monoxide. Enough to kill underhandedly without a trace.

-- He was trying again.
- Yes. It confirms what I thought.

-- What shall we do with him now?
- Nothing. Someone will find him soon enough.

- Can you do something for me?
-- What can I do?


- Could you just stop killing people?

-- Oh! It seems that you've clearly not understood the situation... They want us dead!

- Well, I know. We may have no choice... But ...

-- But What?!
- But can you just promise me to try to avoid to do that?

-- Alright Roland! I promise you to try to not kill. Is that fine for you?
- Yes, it is.

-- But I won't let anyone block my path. And I'm not going to notify anyone before acting!

-- Can we go now?!
- Uh! Yes, absolutely.
-- So, let's go. It's that way...

- I'm surprised not to see more guards.

-- This is because we are still inside the walls. My residence and all the decision center is guarded, but we've bypassed it. Otherwise, only the main gate of the surrounding wall is guarded.

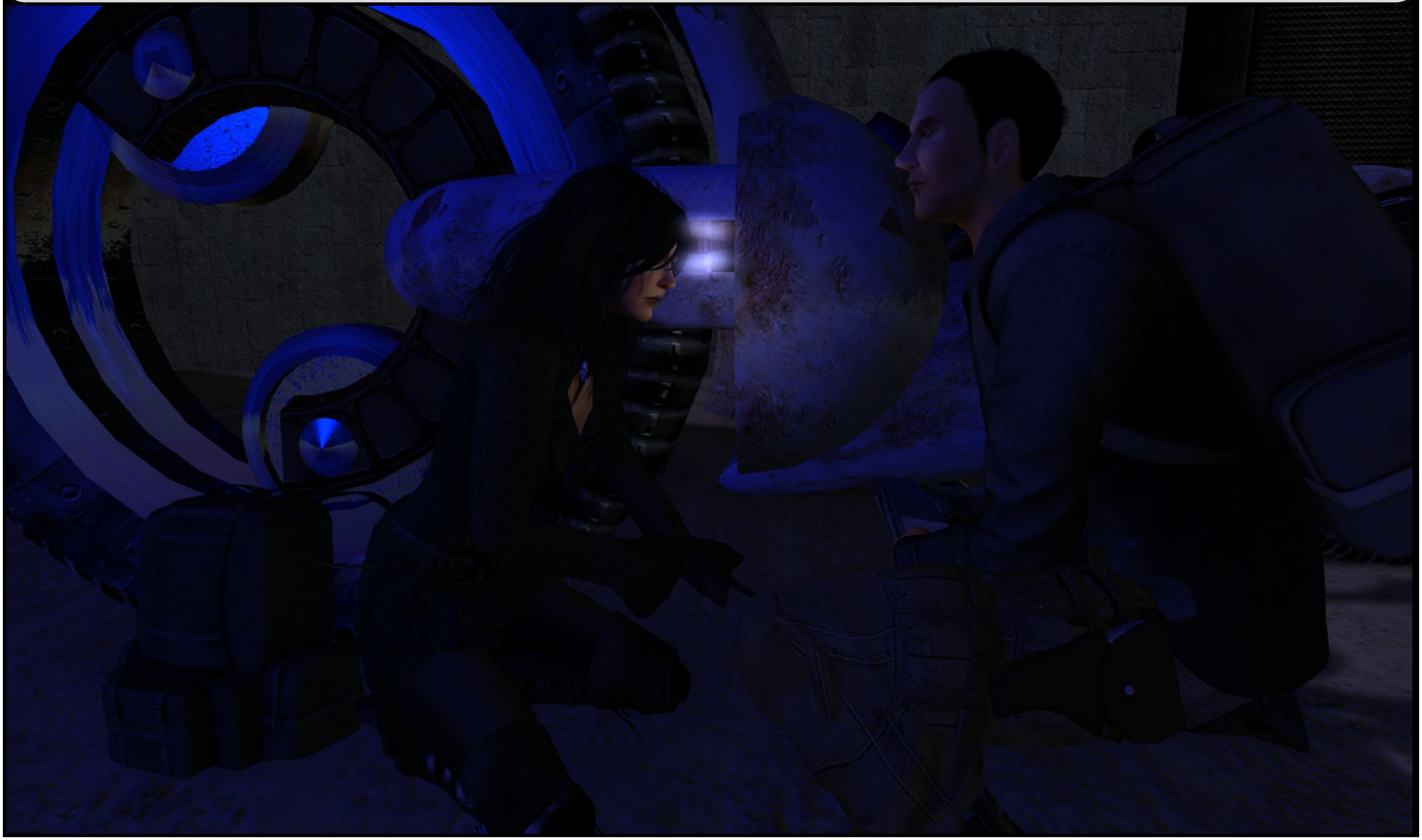
- However, there is the guard tours at each hour. This let us at least 40 minutes.

- This isn't Bashora.

-- Why would you want this more guarded? There is no state of siege. There isn't even any enemies, except some rare Dallusian soldiers, wisely eradicated at their arrival, far from here.

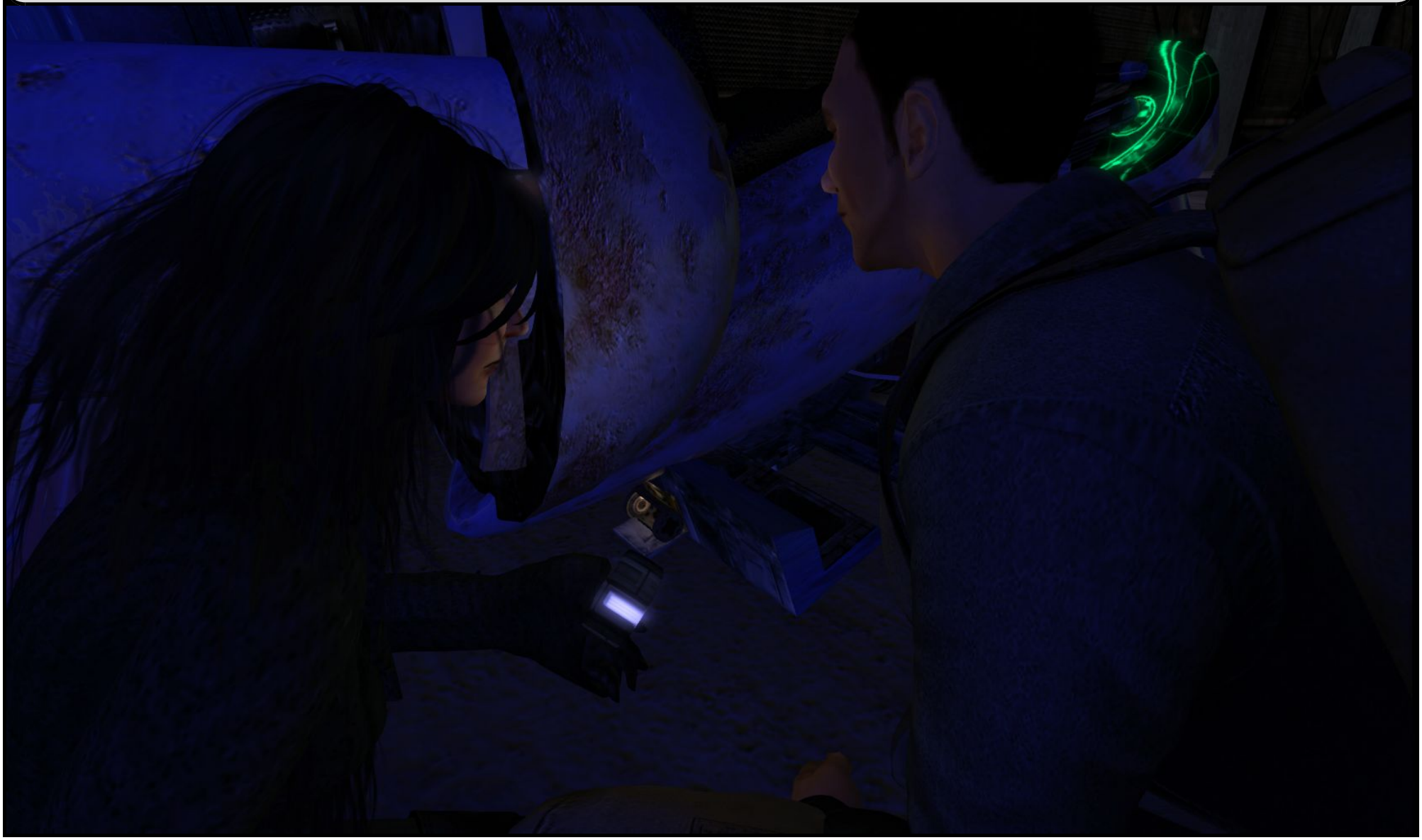
-- Follow me!

- Look...



-- Each trepyror has an energy cell like this one...

- You unscrew and pull to remove it.

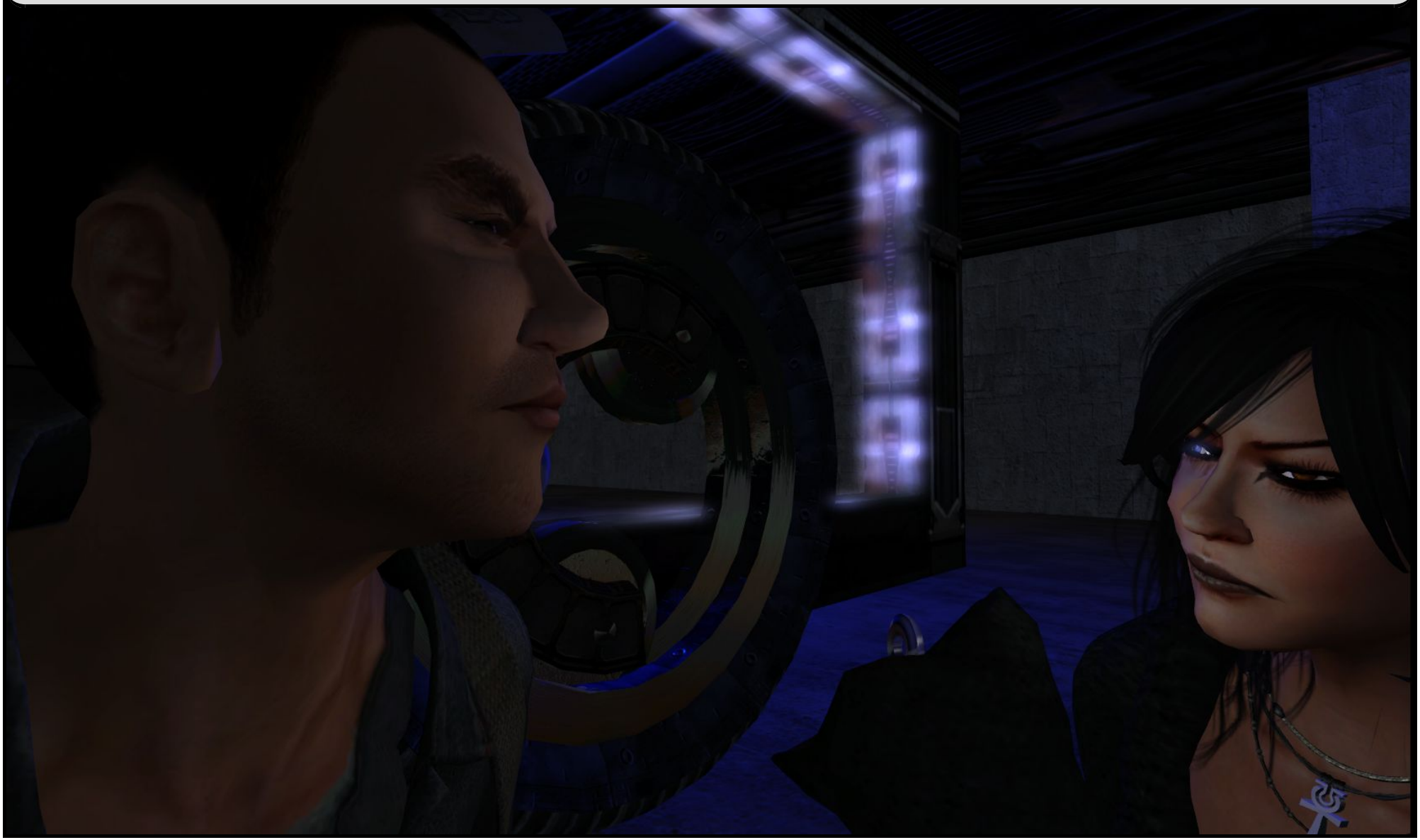


- Just below, there is this ring on the right connector. This is the diodic connector, that can be removed like this.

- Is this really the good time for a mechanics course?

- This... connector! ...is a very rare piece. No connector, no trepyror. Do you understand?
-- Oh!

-- Then you put the energy cell back in its socket, but you keep the diodic connector in your jacket pocket.
- Uh...



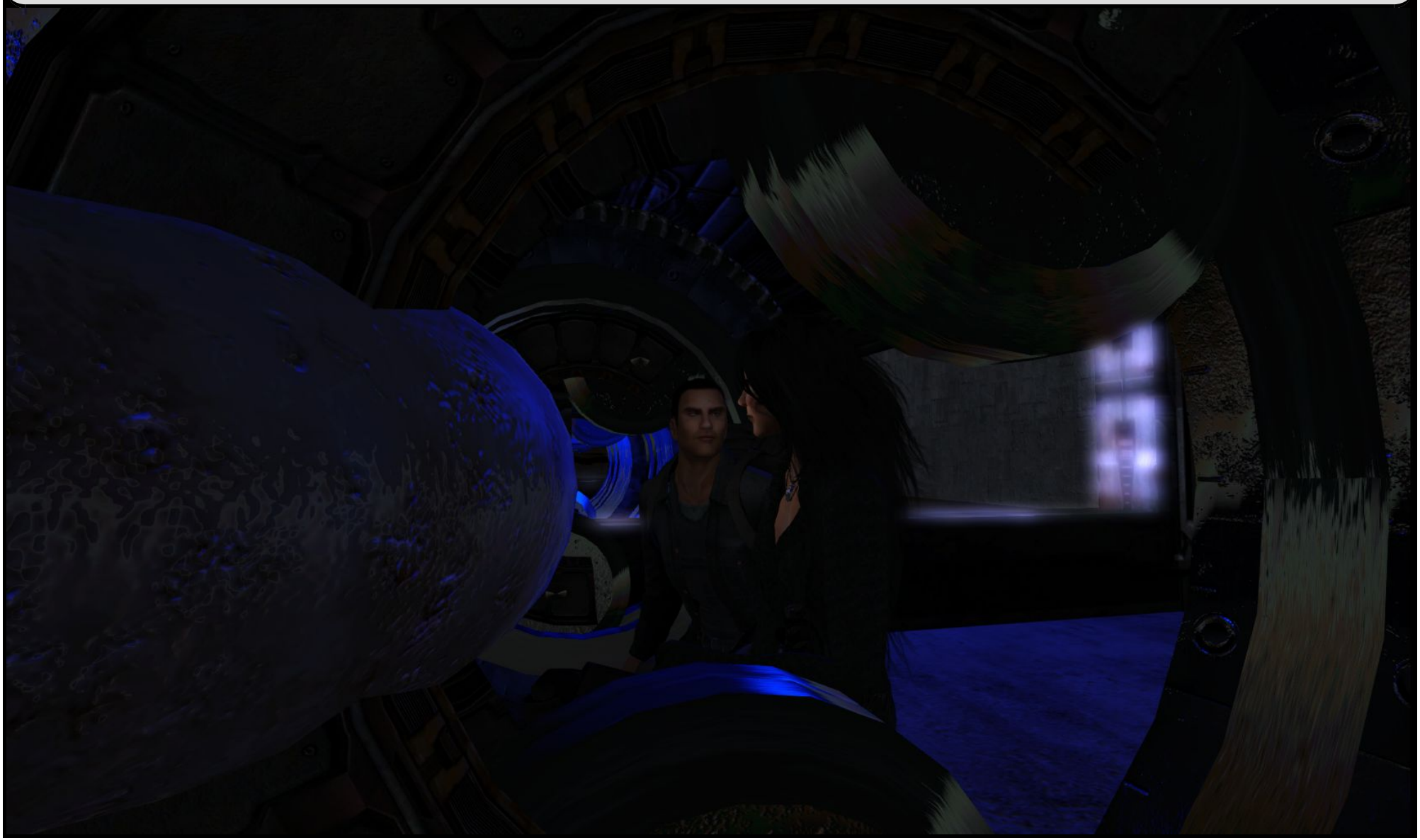
-- You have about thirty to render inoperative, crawling silently from underneath. Have you understood?

- Uh what?! You want me to disable all these vehicles?

-- This is it. Except the last one of the row, the black one, it's mine and it's the one we'll use to get out of here.

- I see... So, no pursuers.
-- Yes, and the connectors will be a good bargaining chip.

-- When you will reach the end of the row, stay hidden under our trepyror. I will have strapped our bags on it.
- OK, but...

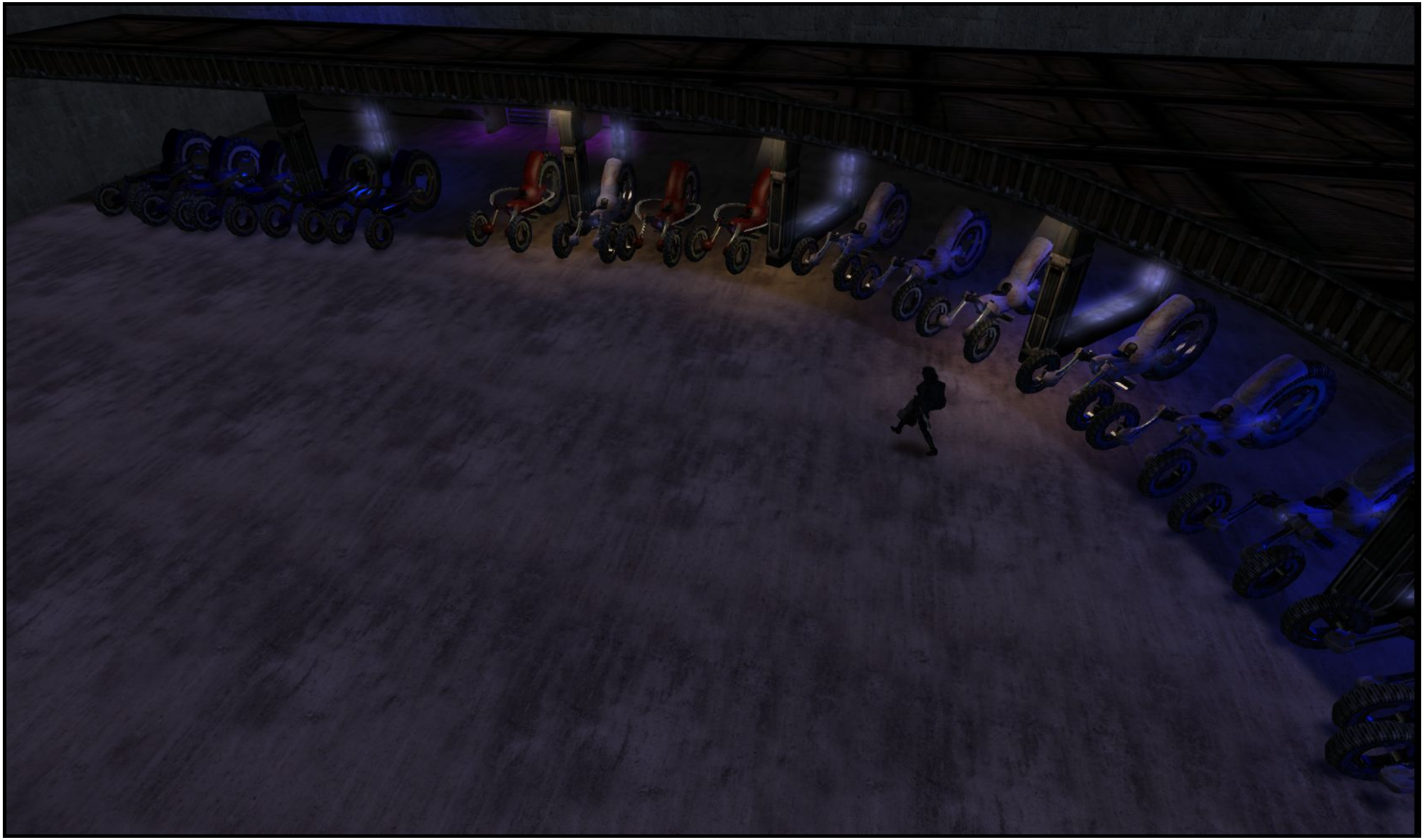


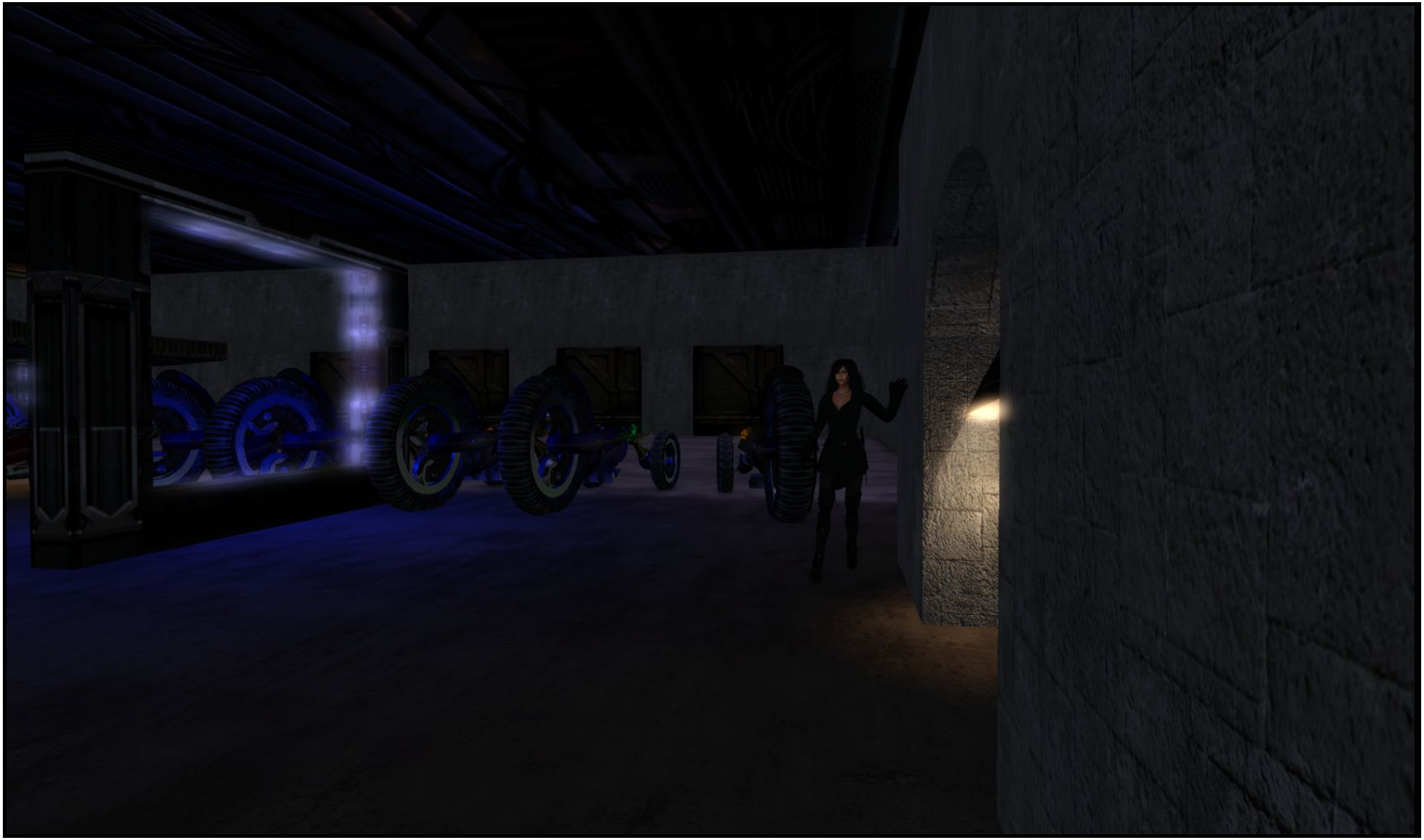
-- I have a little visit to make. It should not be long. In two hours, if I'm still not back, get out of here and escape to the north.
- ??!

- Don't get caught!

- What?! But where are you going?... It's not...

(But where is she going? ... Shit! ...She's completely crazy!)

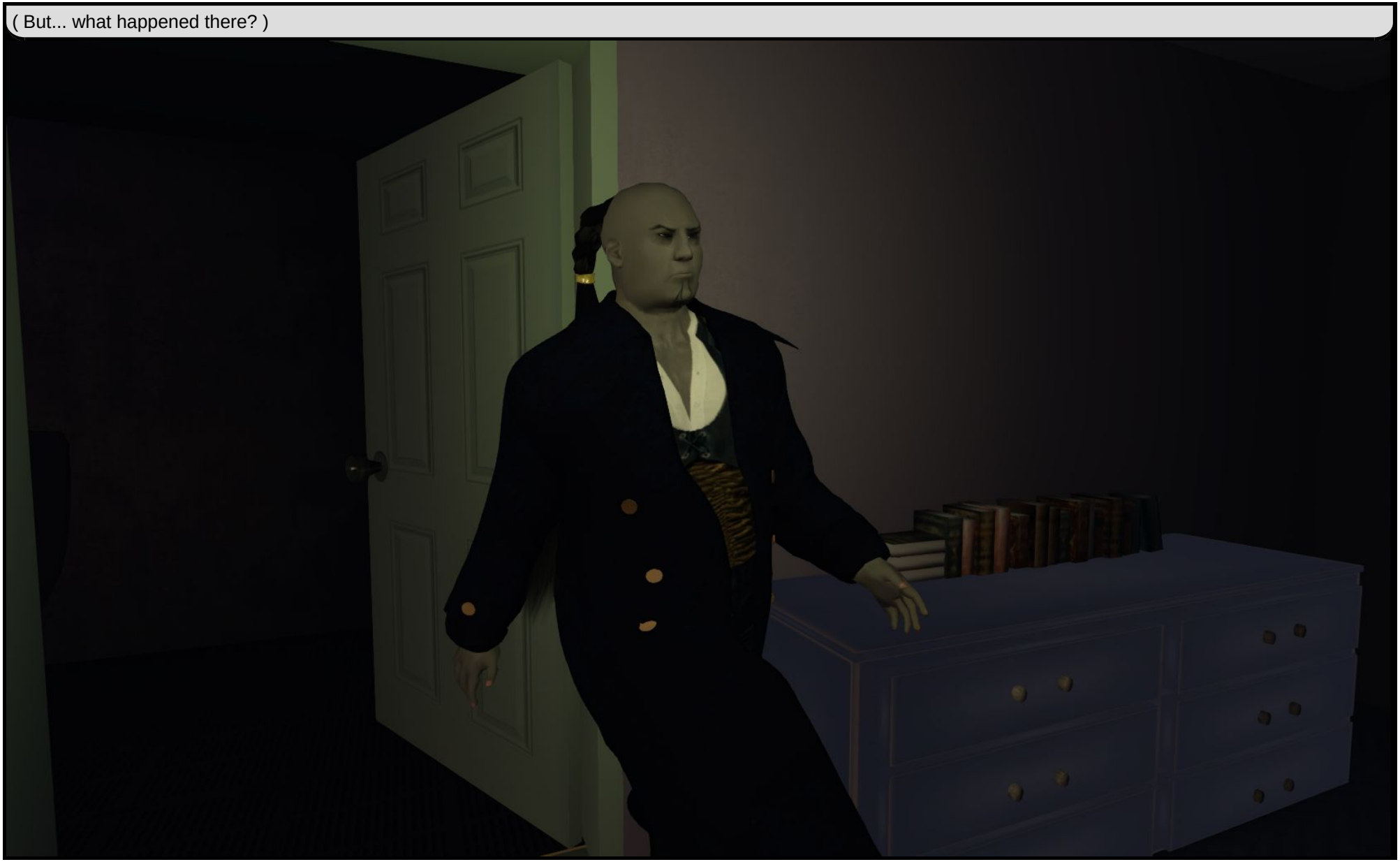


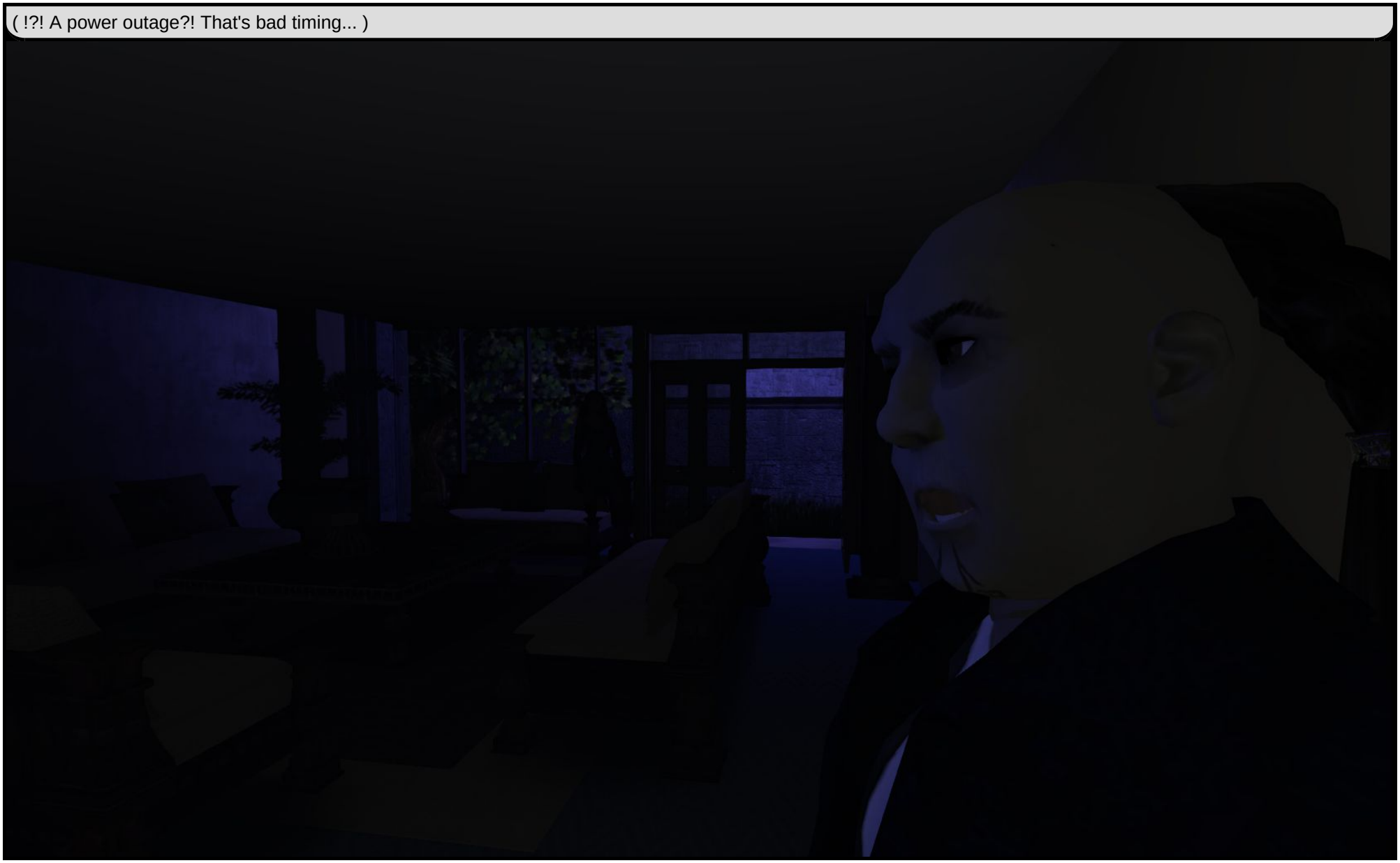


At the same time...

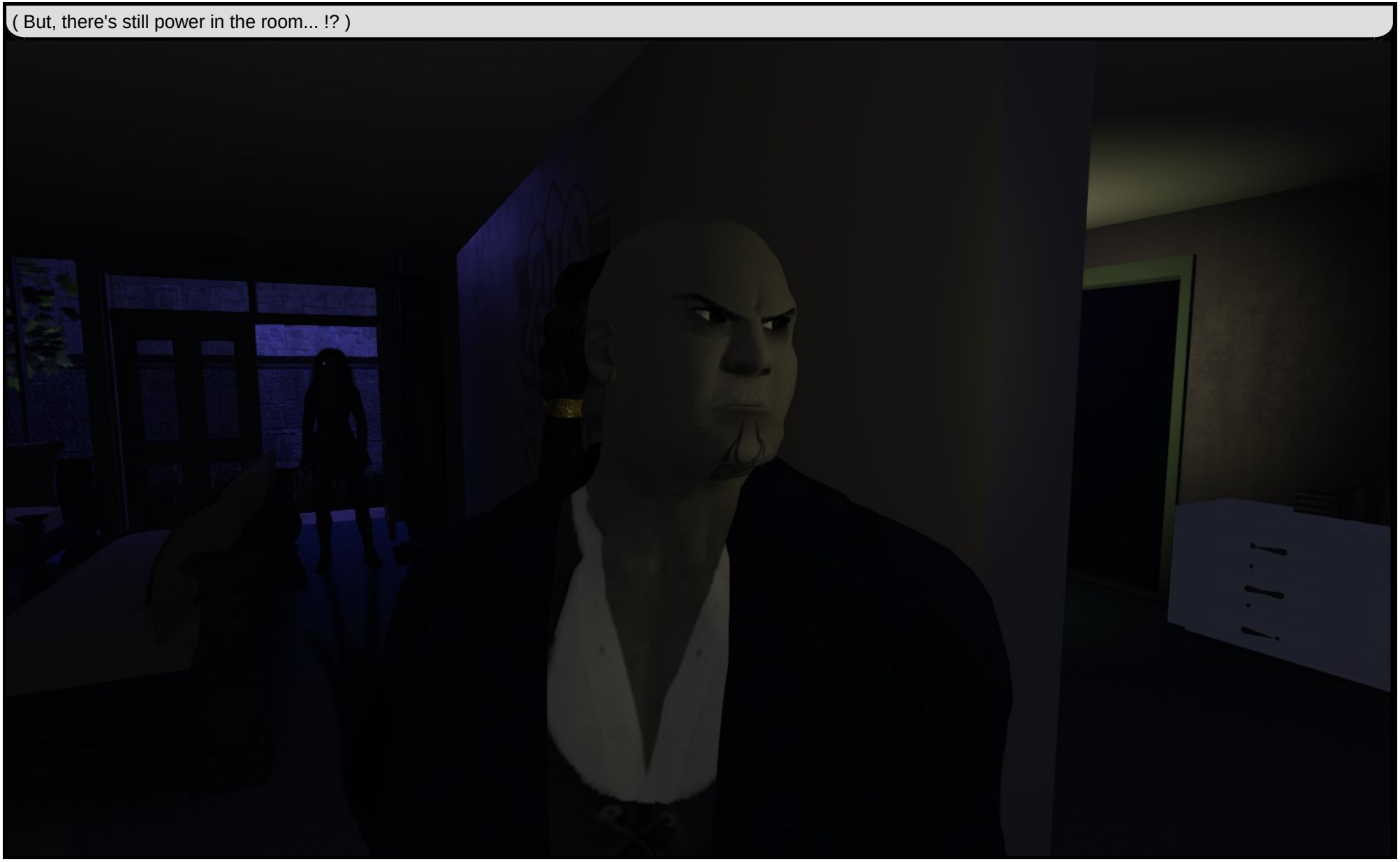
(?!)
CLUNK!
KLINK!

(But... what happened there?)

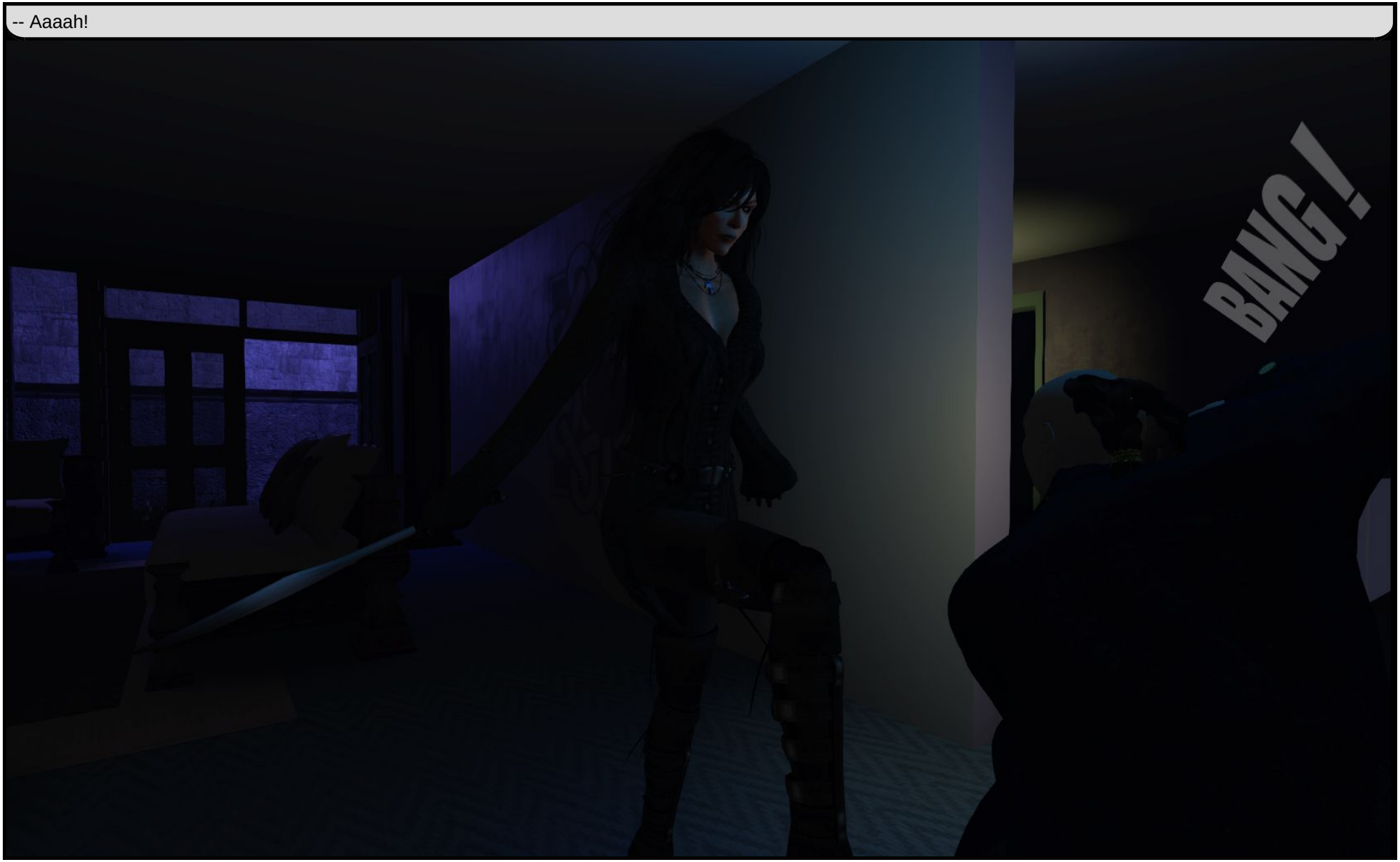



(!?! A power outage?! That's bad timing...)

(But, there's still power in the room... !?)



-- Aaaah!



- You came to kill me? As you know how to do so well!

-- Oh! I want to know who sent assassins to kill me.

-- I want to know who ordered to murder Mary!

- I want to know who wanted to get rid of the two last sub-citizens! It seems that someone wants to see disappear from Terkazy everyone who looks like a Jijuterk.

- You're out of your mind!

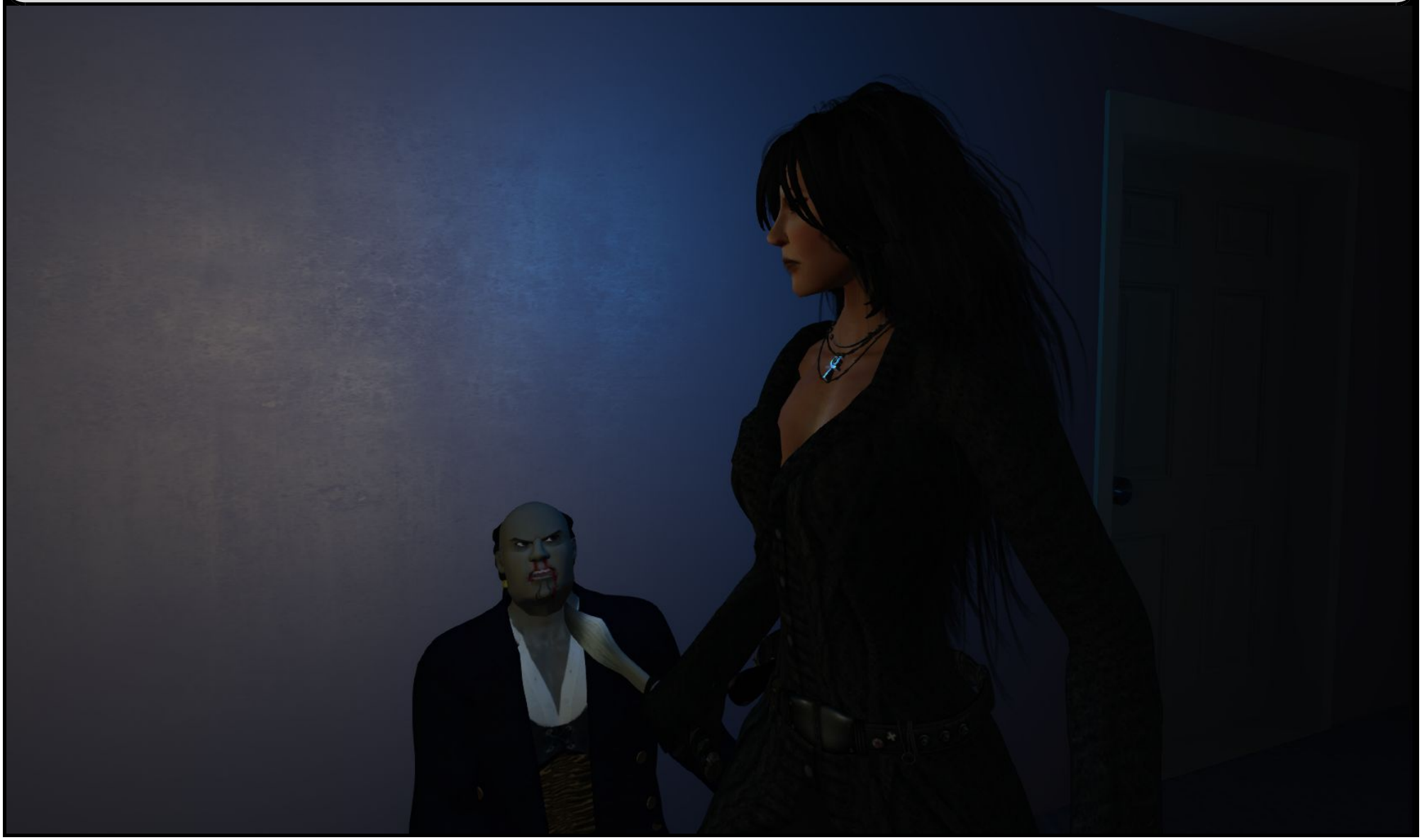
-- Really?!

-- I'm very serious! ...Answer!

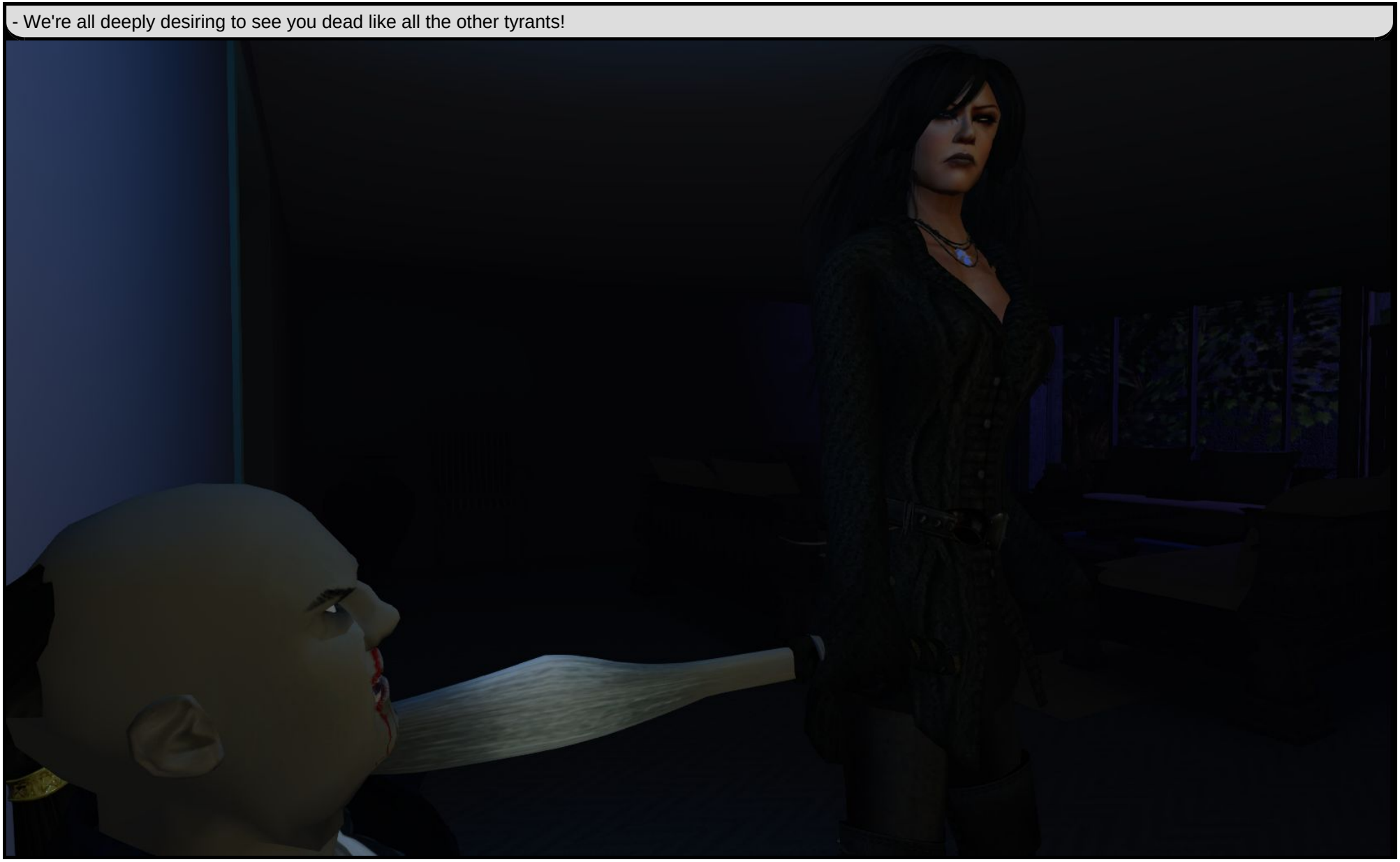
- You're a tyrant like all the others! You're a murderess like them! You're a danger for all of us!

- So there we are! You have used us to settle your problems, and now that the situation is better, you consider that we should die too!

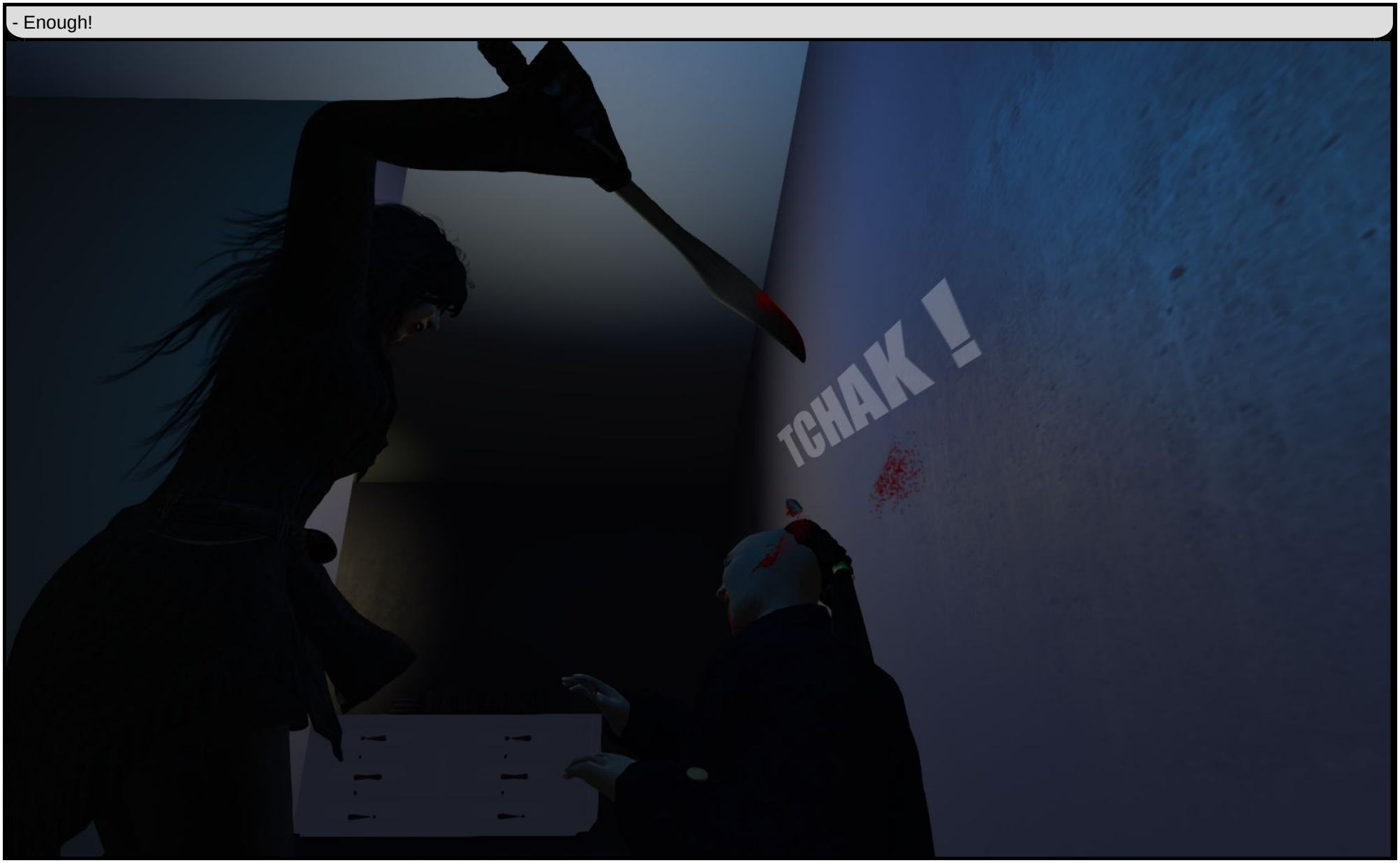
- You can still kill me, but at this hour, your reign is over!



- I'm not Kwerny! ...You don't have any allies this time!
-- I see! You are then the new king!


- We're all deeply desiring to see you dead like all the other tyrants!

- You, and this whore that you had named berigine!


- Enough!
TCHAK !

In the meantime...

(Fourteen! ...Damn, I can't wait to leave this place...)

(There must be still ten or twelve... What the hell was so important to do for letting me here alone to do all the work?)

(This is ridiculous to expose ourselves like this... We should have scrammed as fast as we could!)

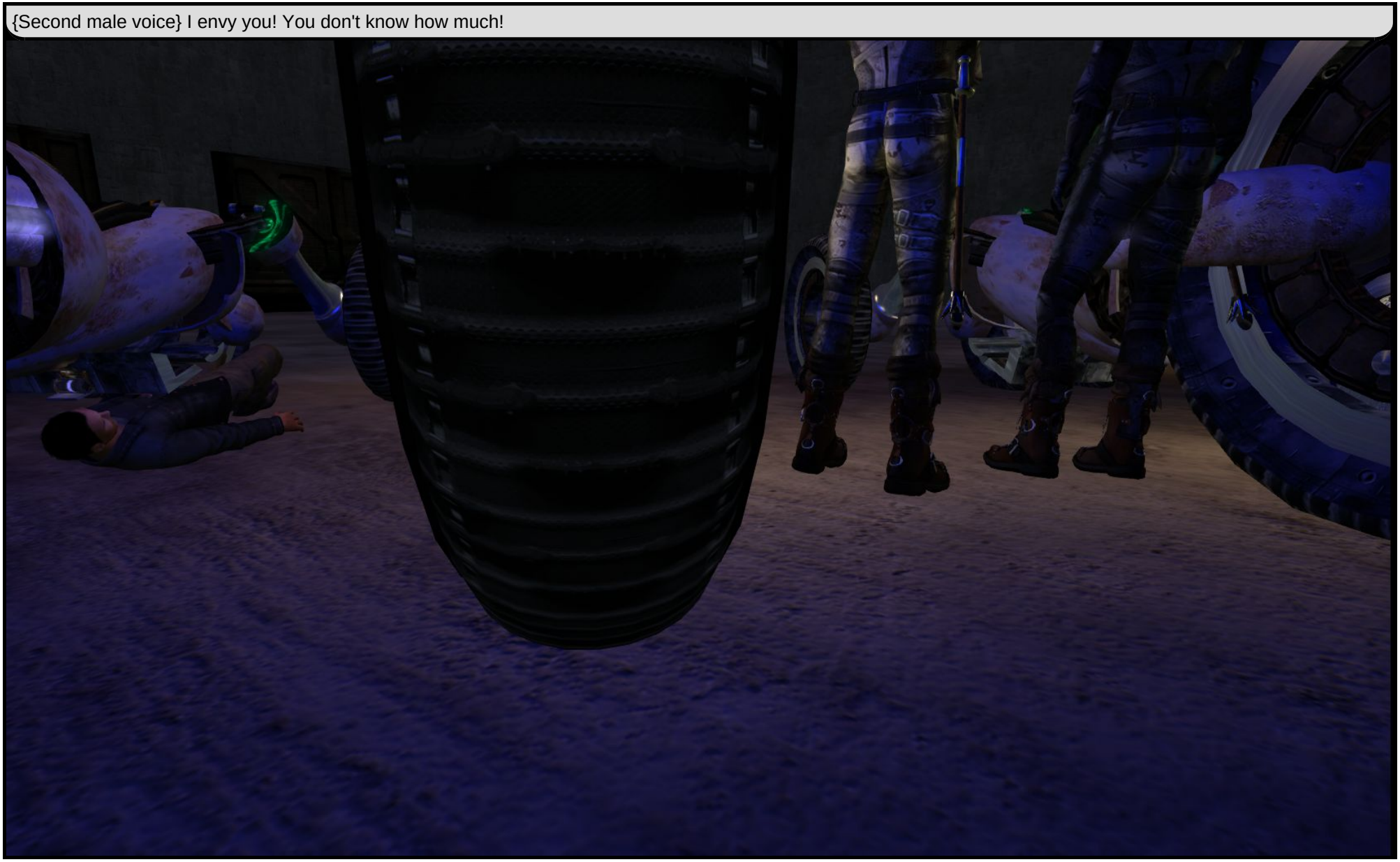
{Male voice} ...It was out of the question. I made it clear to her. She must help her mother to manage the farm.
(!?!)

{Second male voice} This is the age where they want to leave the nest. You need to understand her.

{First male voice} But this is only temporary! I will have finished my service in three months...

(Oh! Shit! ...Go talk somewhere else!)

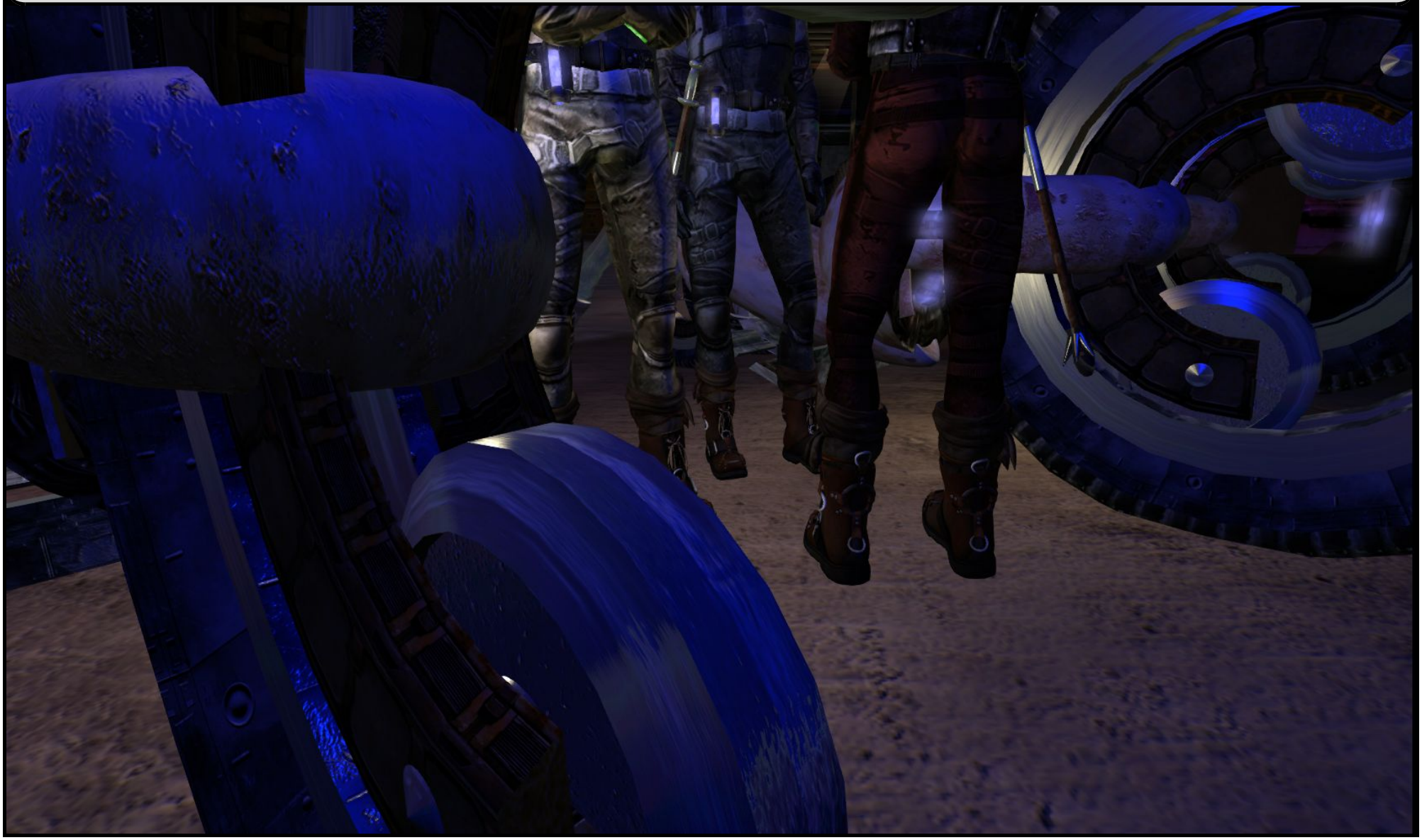
{Second male voice} I envy you! You don't know how much!



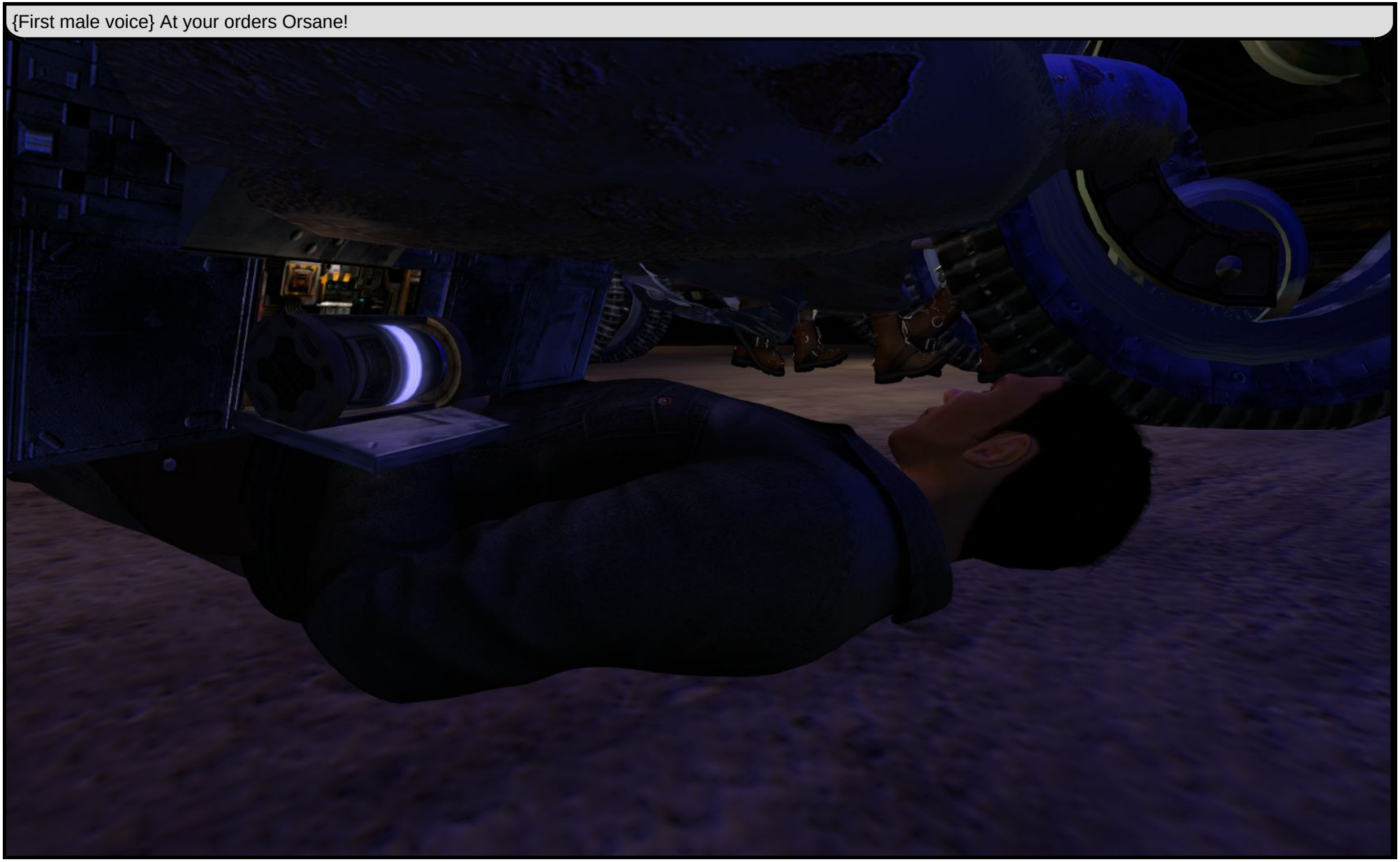
{Third male voice} Soldiers!

{Second male voice} Yes Orsane?!
{Third male voice} Go immediately join the troops in front of the decision center.

{Third male voice} A special operation is in progress. You'll receive instructions once on site.



{First male voice} At your orders Orsane!

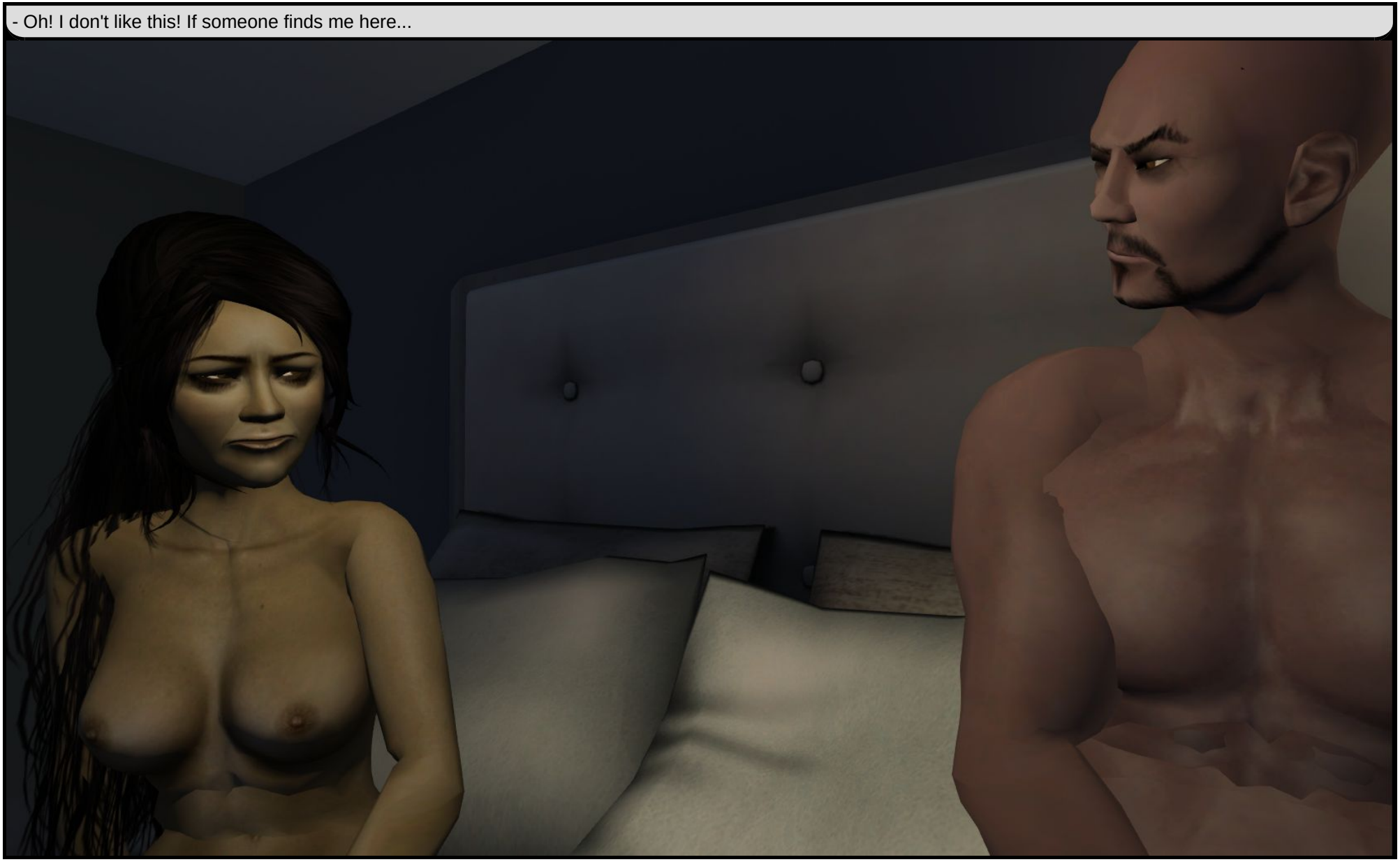


(Phew! They're finally gone...)

(I hope she hasn't done anything stupid... Damn it Alezia! In what kind of situation have you involved us?)

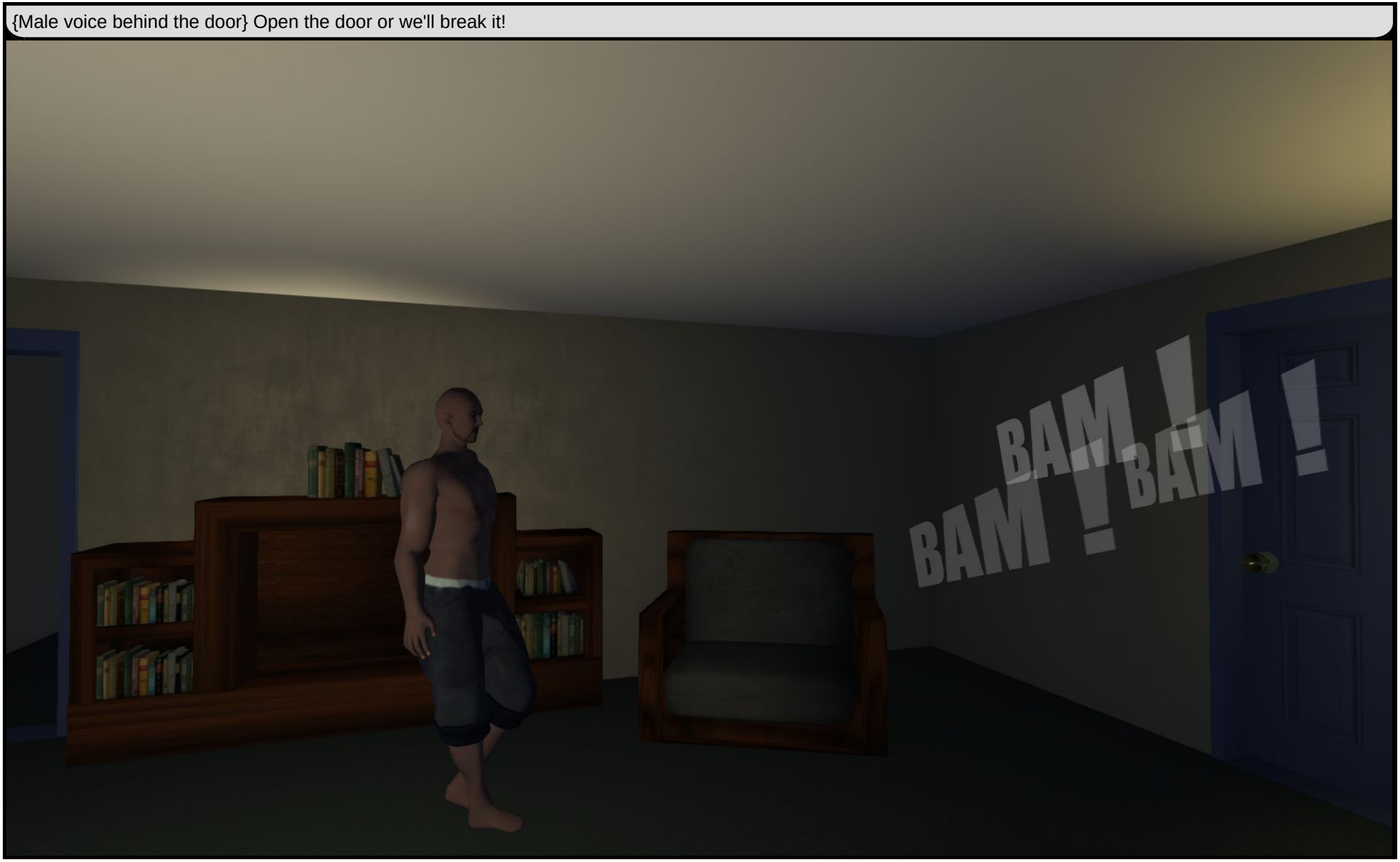
Not far away...

-- Who the hell could knock at the door at this hour?!

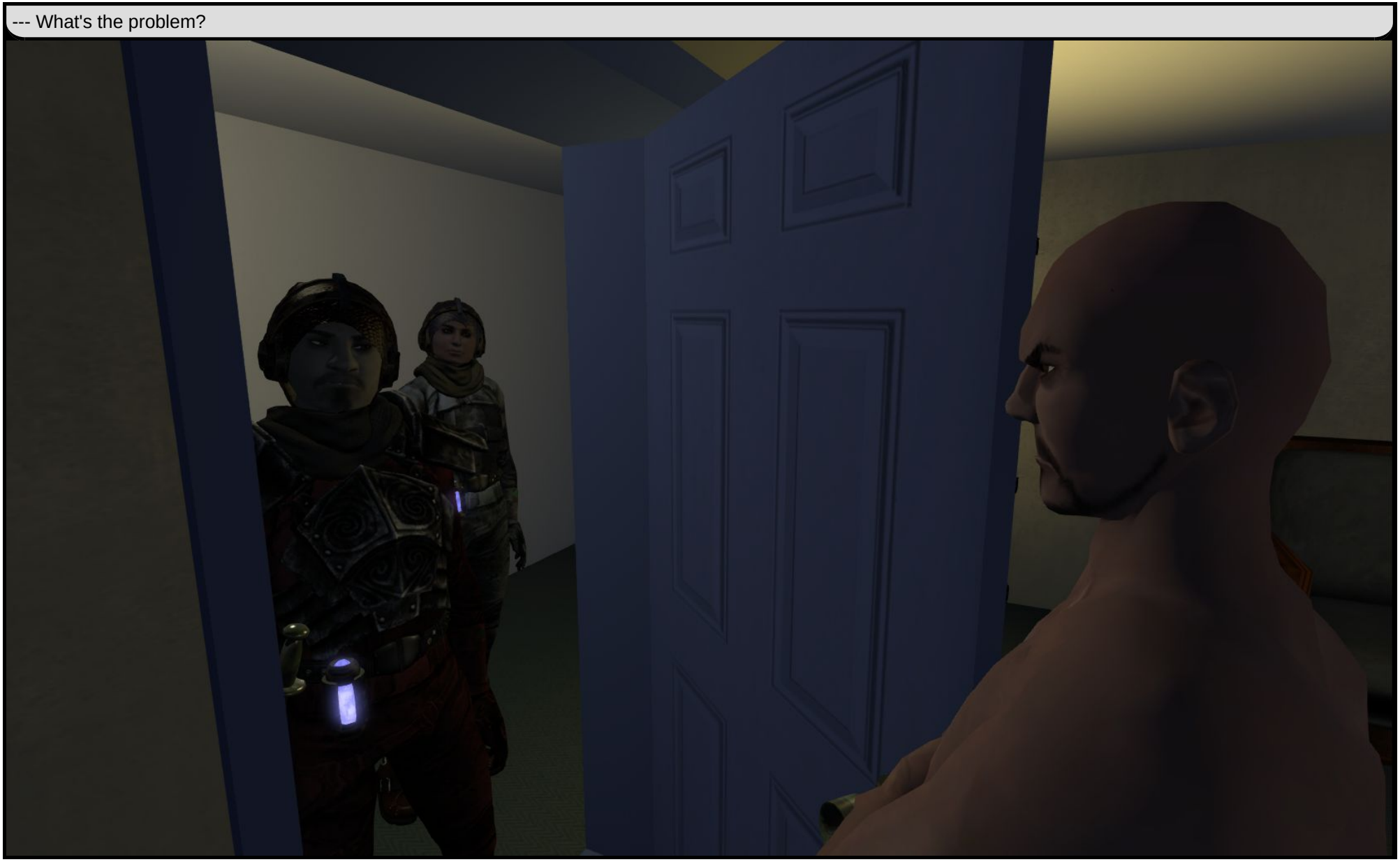

- Oh! I don't like this! If someone finds me here...

-- Relax. Stay here. ...It's probably nothing.

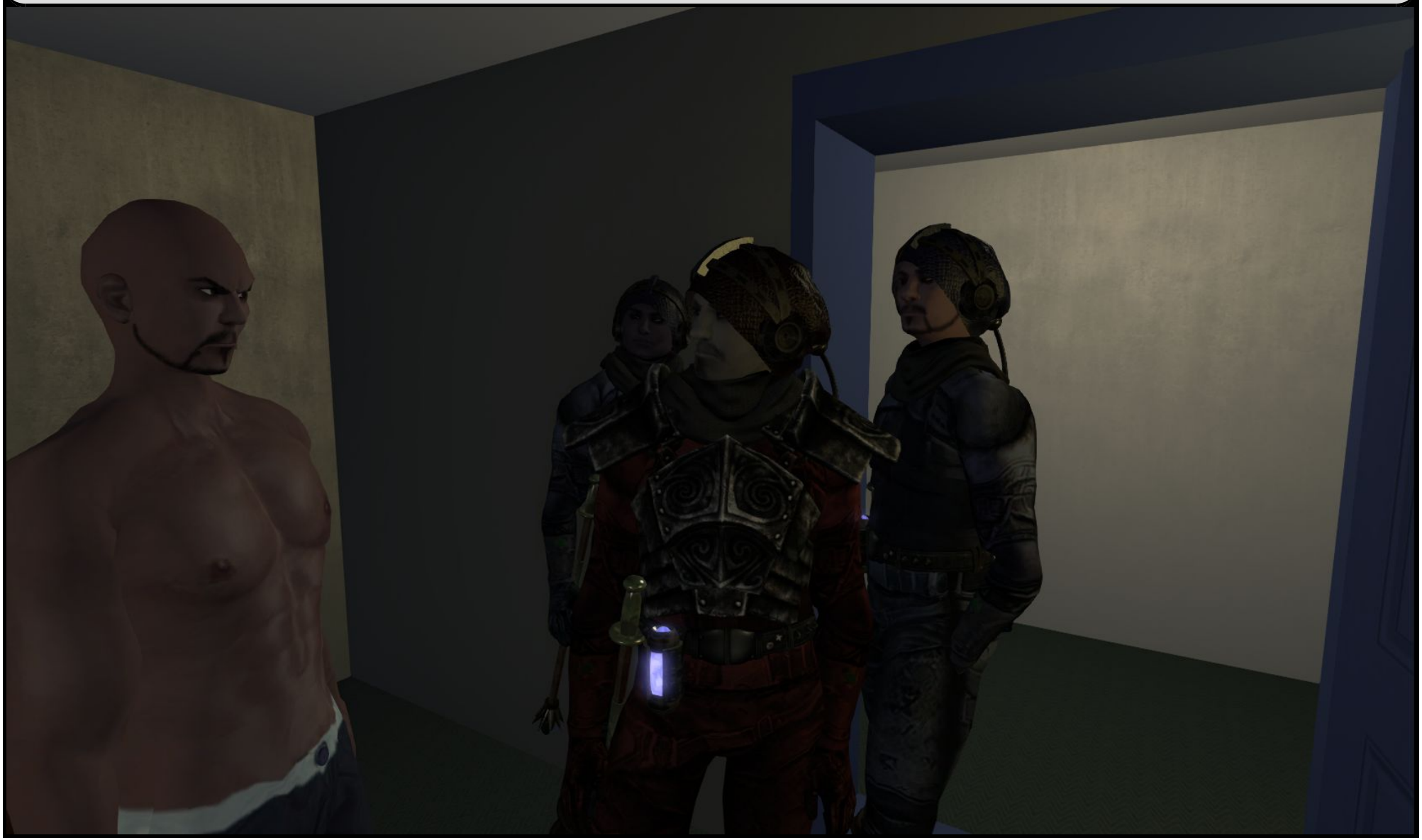
{Male voice behind the door} Open the door or we'll break it!



--- What's the problem?



--- Esane Gulan!
- What is it? Did something happened?



--- Guards! Seize him!

--- What?! Explain yourself soldier!

--- Esane Gulan, you are under arrest. I highly recommend you to offer no resistance.

---- You! Take him some clothes!
-- Arrested?! What is this insanity! Explain yourself immediately!

- You're officially arrested for treason toward the Kruls's council. But, of course, your absolute surrender could plead in your favor. Do you understand?

- Orsane! This woman was hiding in the bedroom!

- What have we here?! Qwelz! You? In the esane's bedroom?! What an interesting discovery Esane Gulan!

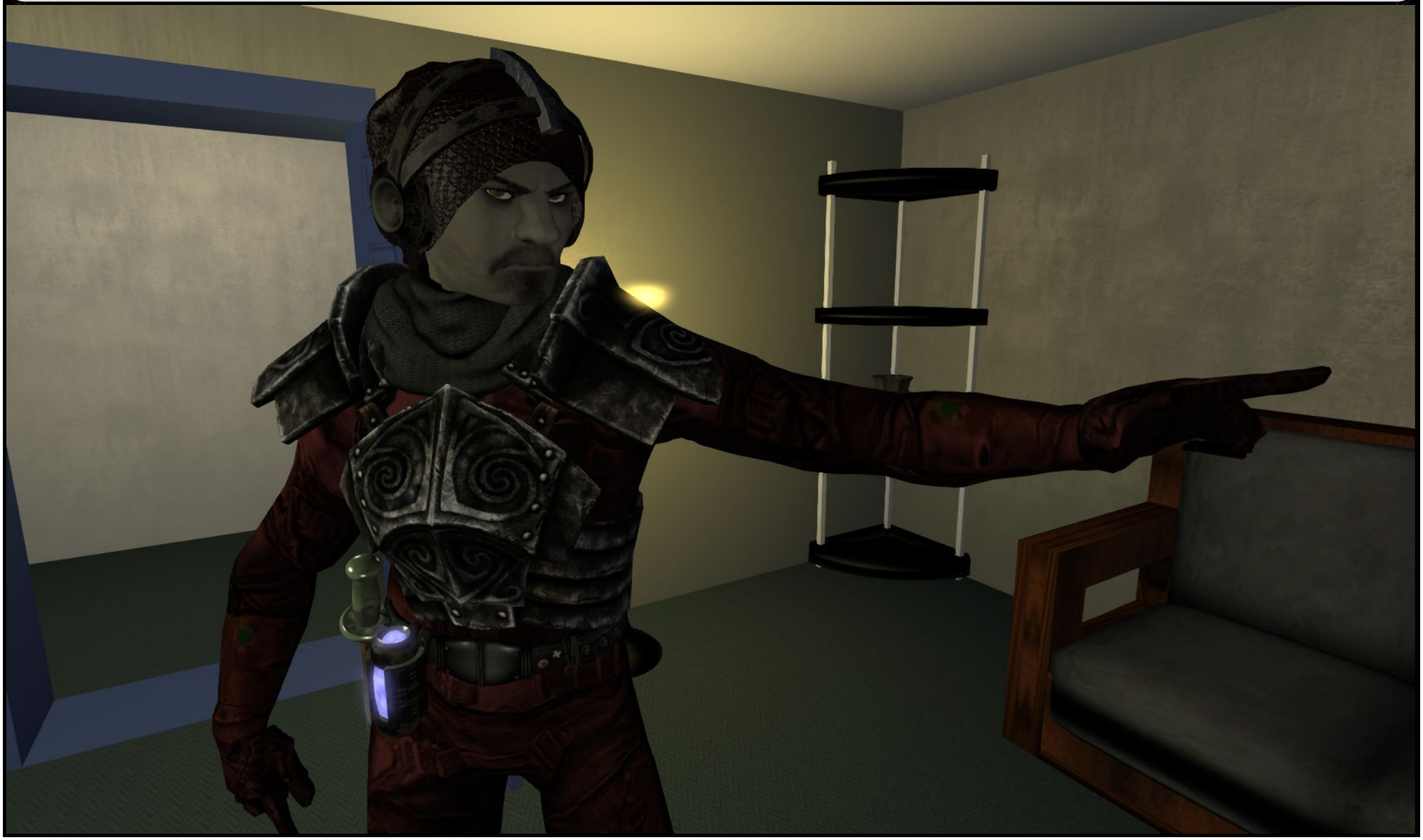
- Let her go!

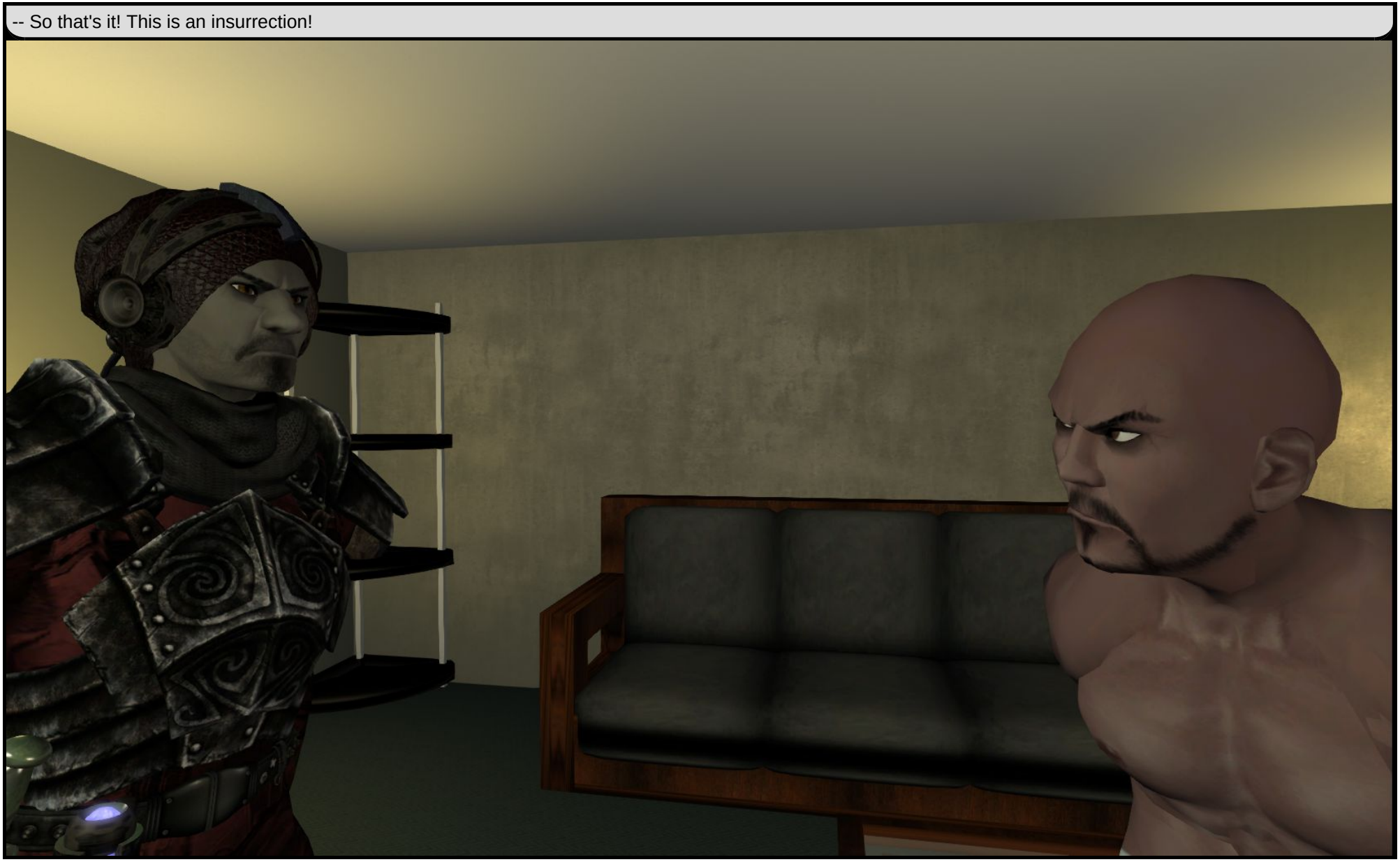
- Very interesting really! Does Erydak know that you have a relationship with her secretary?
-- This is not a crime!

- Of course not... But how embarrassing, isn't it? This is against the code.

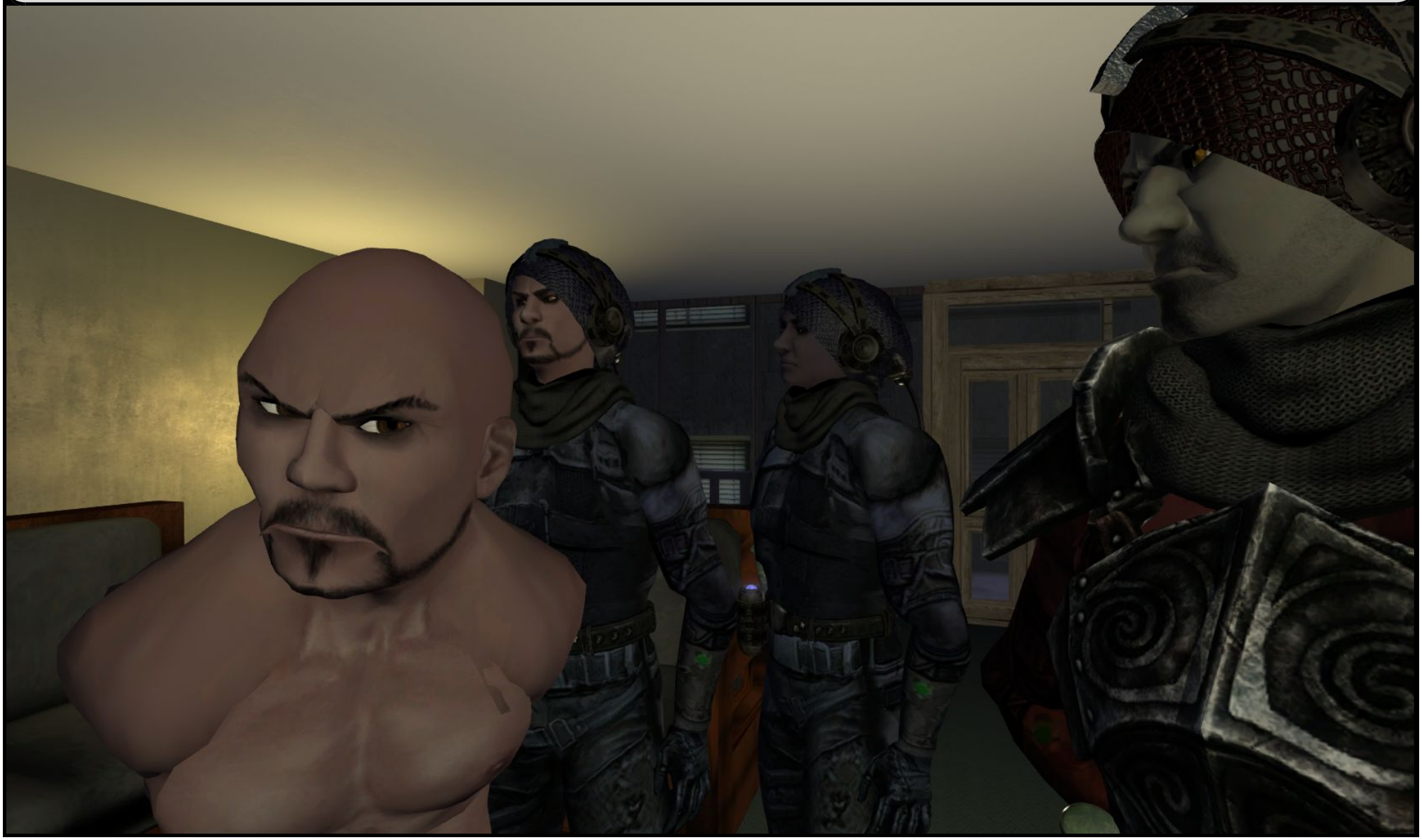
- Orsane Alister! What is the meaning of all this? This has all the appearances of a putsch! ...Where is Erydak?

- I can't say right now, but she was declared an enemy of the state.




-- So that's it! This is an insurrection!

---- Call it like you want Gulan... Guards! Lock 'em up at the garrison immediately... And don't let anyone interfere.

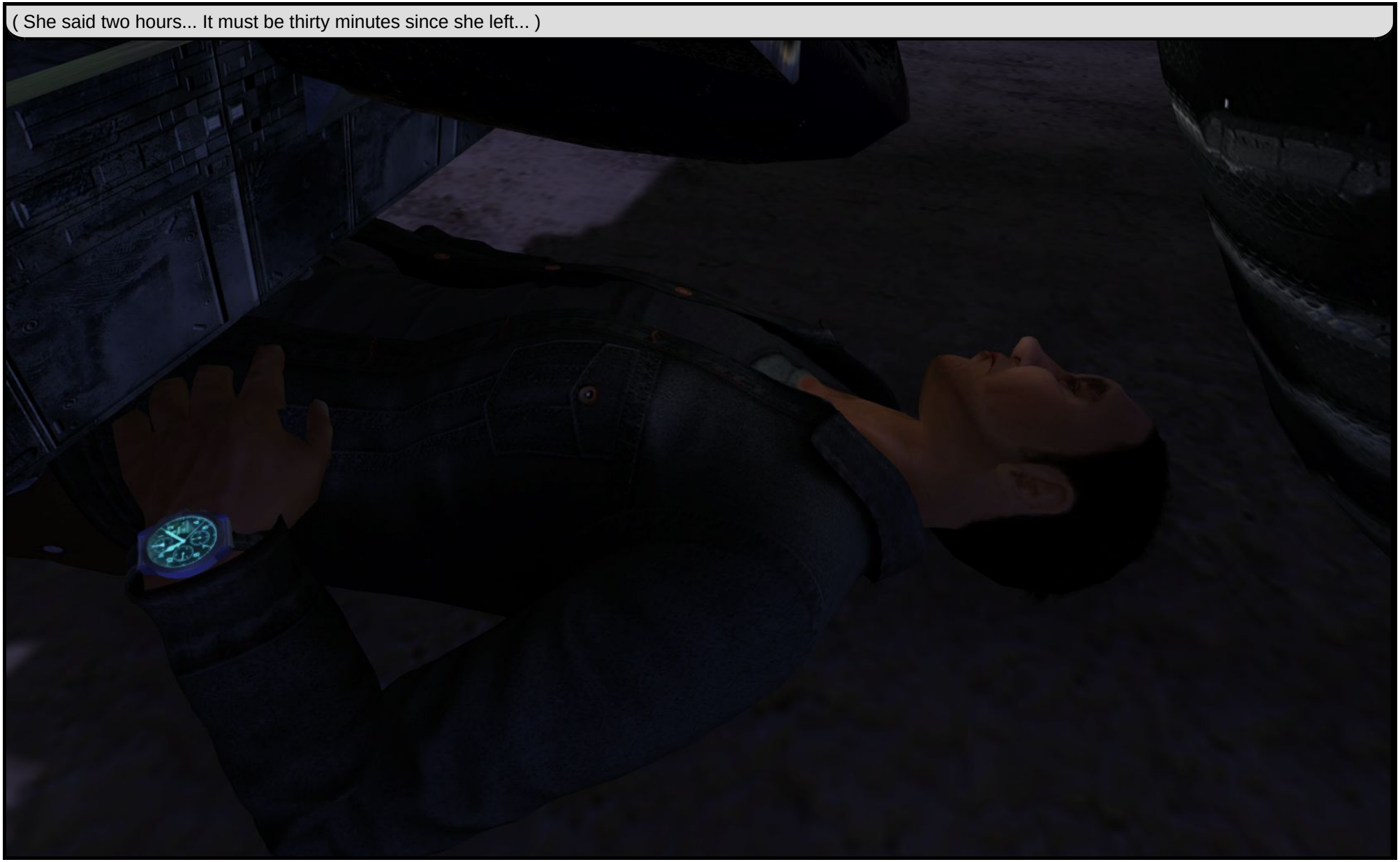


In the meantime...

(Finally! The black trepyror! Our bags are really there as expected...)

(She should already be there! Bloody hell!)

(She said two hours... It must be thirty minutes since she left...)



(Wait that we get out of here Alezia Kurdis! You will know my way of thinking! ...If she comes back! ...Damn it! ...But what the hell I did to God to deserve to be involved in such situations!)

Not far from there...

-- Well! The door is locked and you are solidly attached. You shouldn't fall.

- But what are you doing? Do you really believe that taking a hostage will help you in anything?

-- You see, Erifrin, I did a promise to a friend...

- ...I promised to not kill anybody tonight. Although, I've got to admit, I like to kill cowards like you.

-- So! ...I'm not going to do it myself...

- You bitch! You're already dead Erydak!

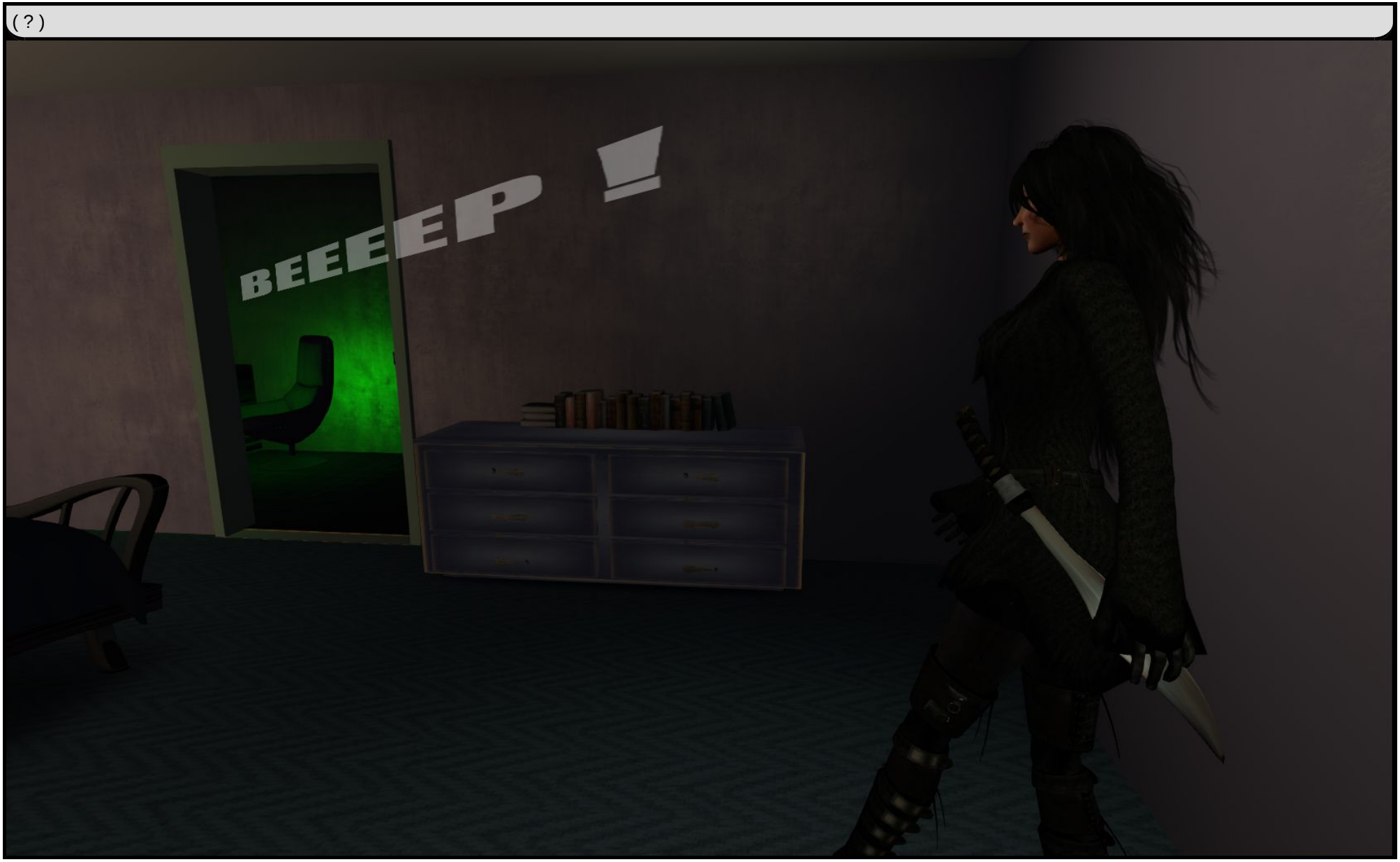
-- Instead...

-- ...I'm gonna let someone of your kind do it for me.

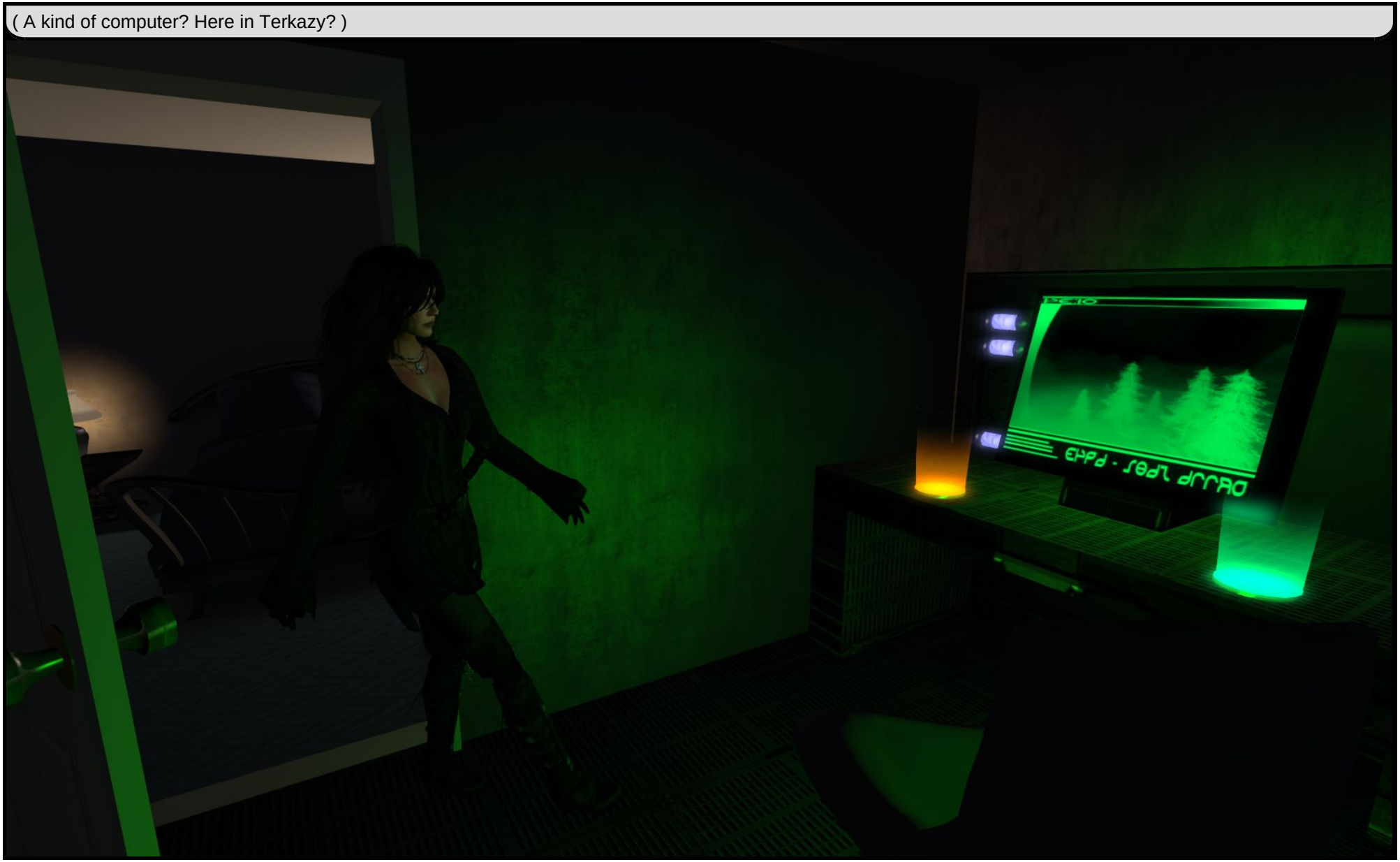
-- This is for Mary! ...So good luck!

- Oh! By the way! My name is Alezia.

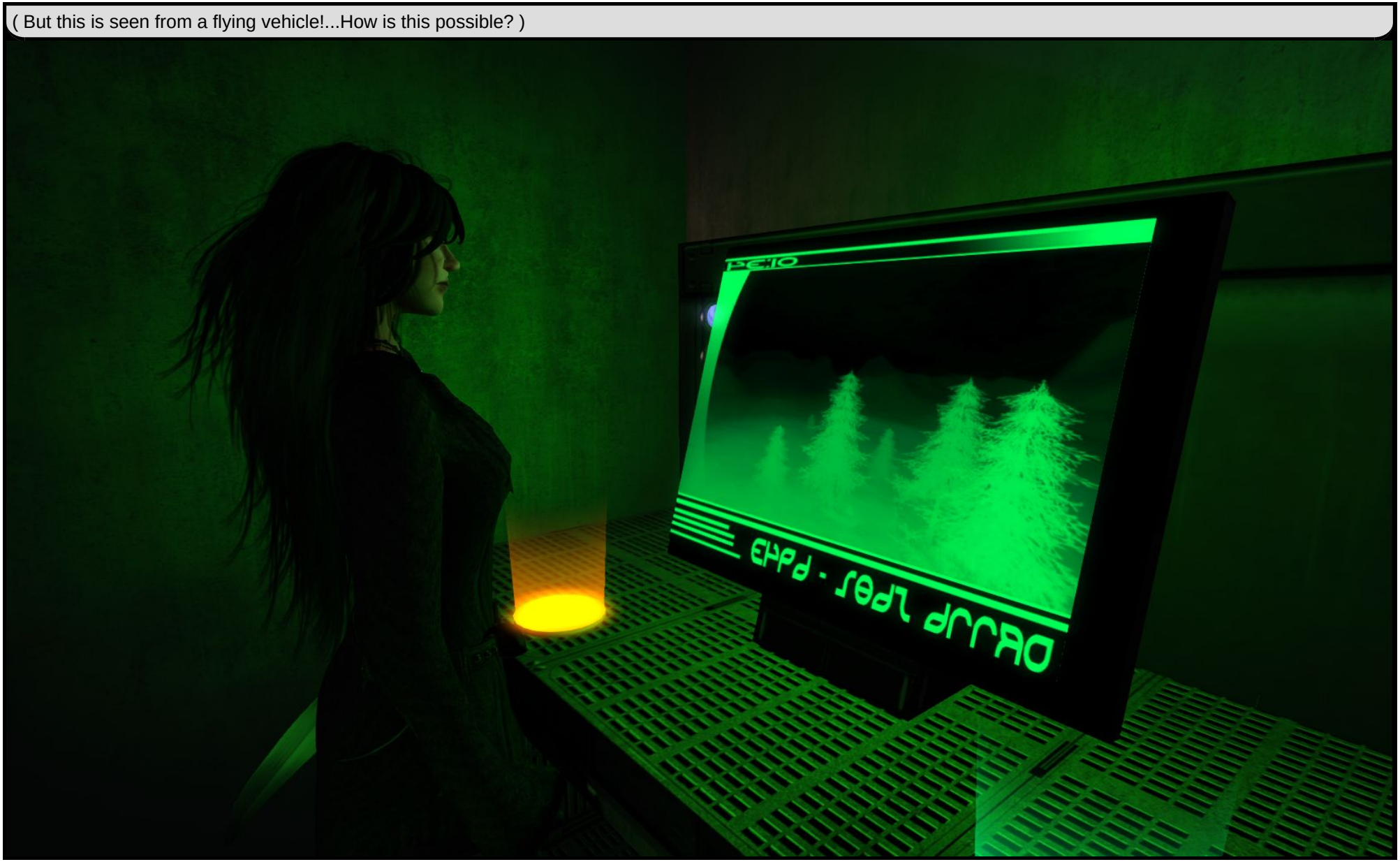
((What the hell is that?))


(?)
BEEEEP

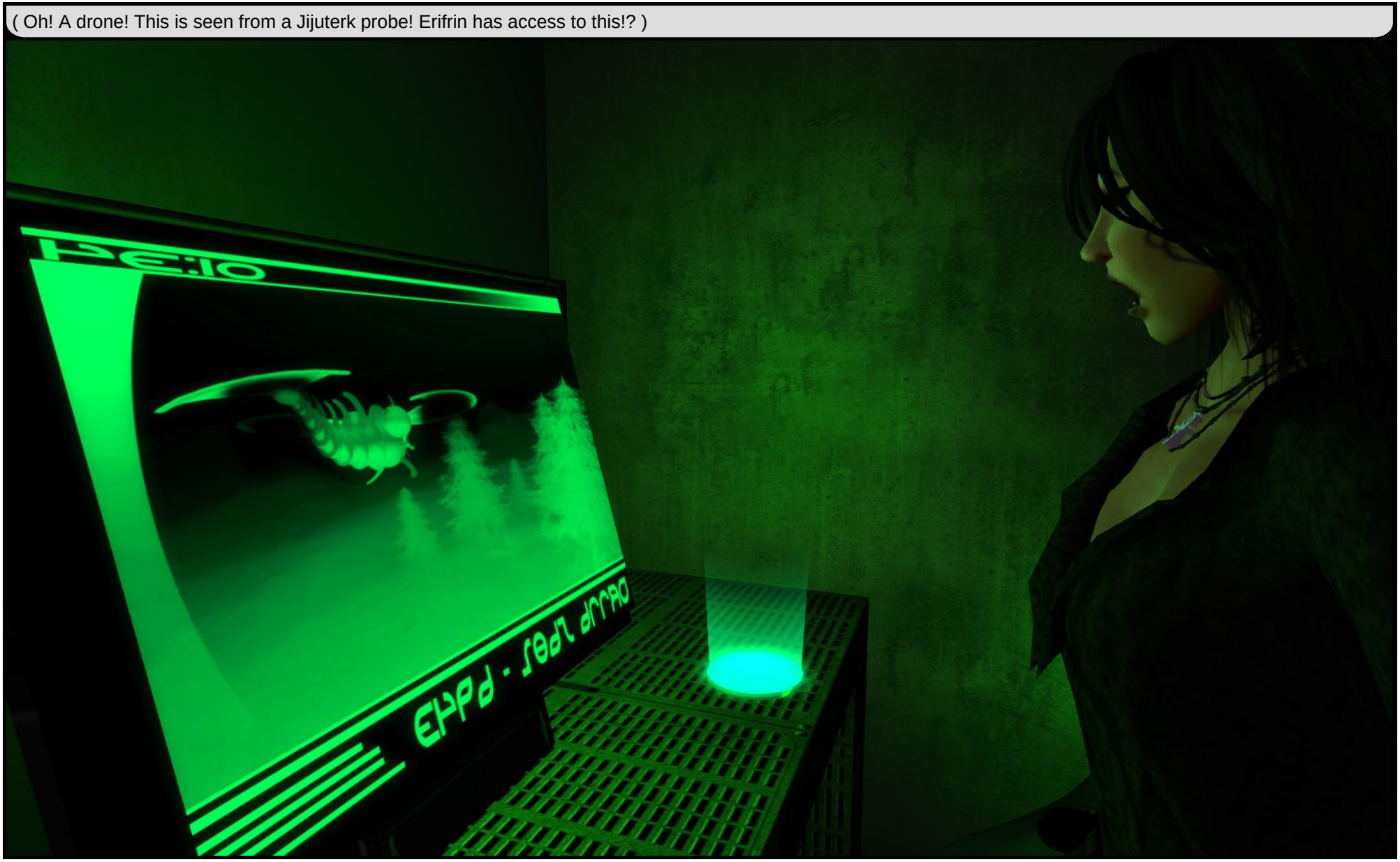
(A kind of computer? Here in Terkazy?)



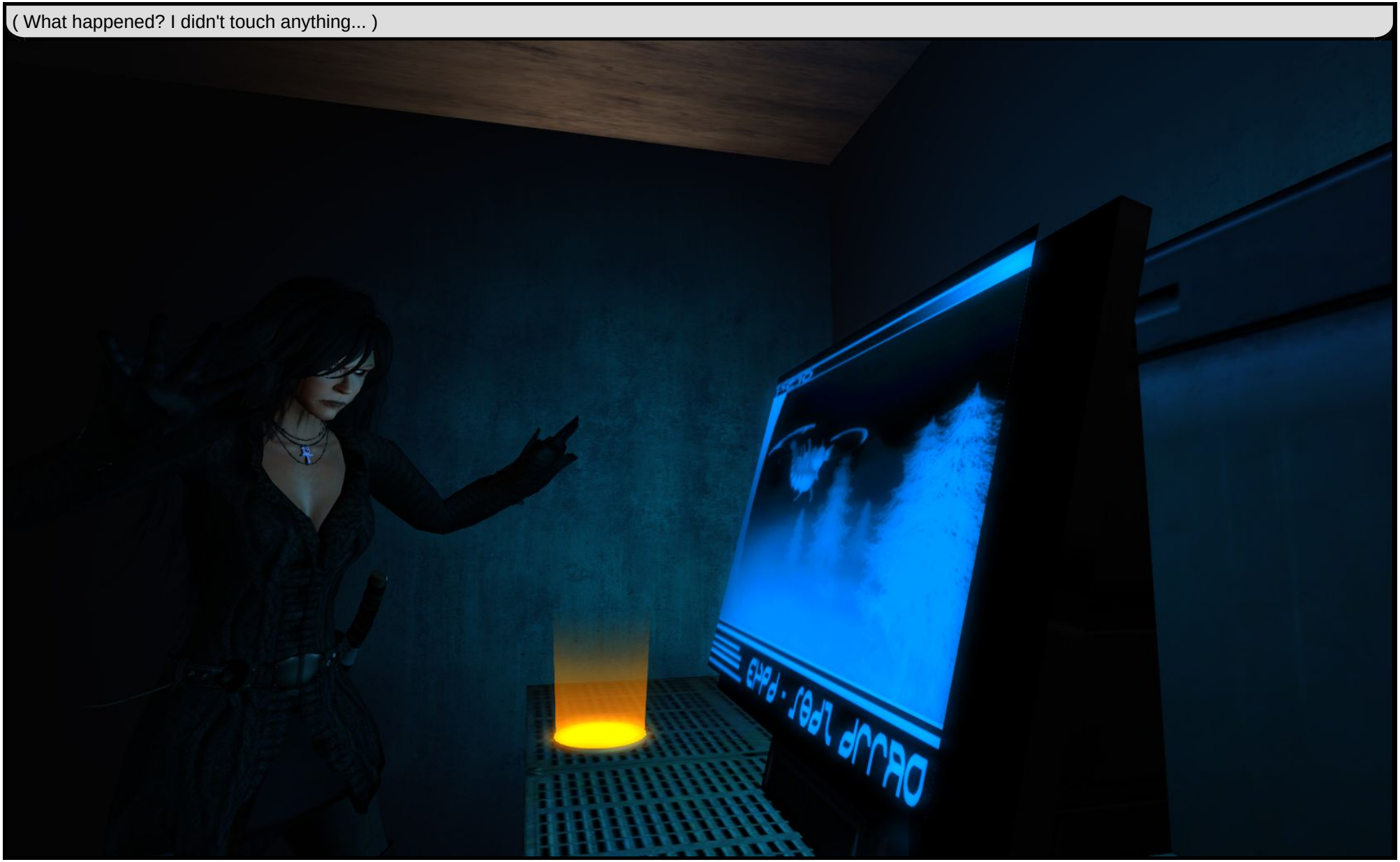
(But this is seen from a flying vehicle!...How is this possible?)



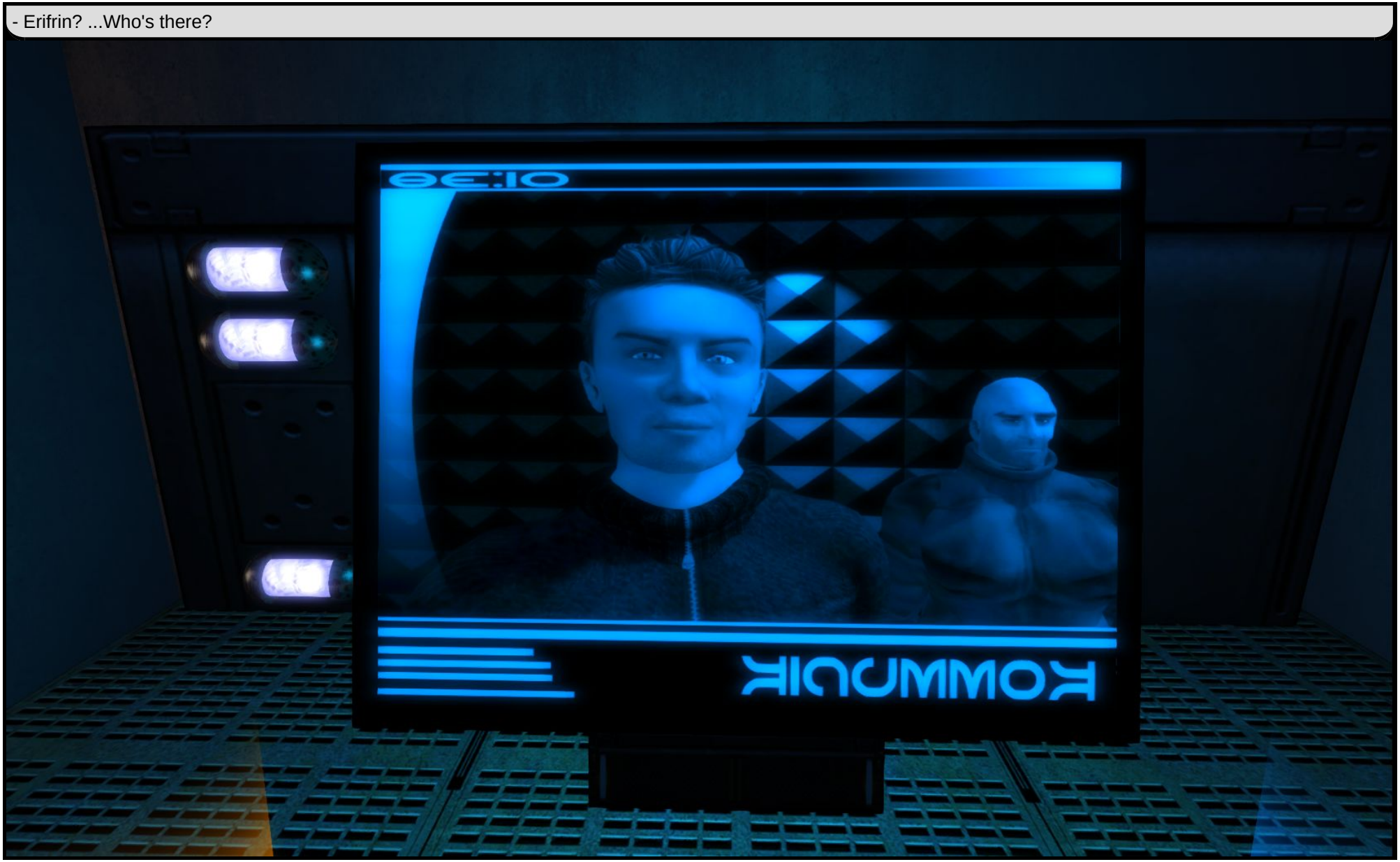
(Oh! A drone! This is seen from a Jijuterk probe! Erifrin has access to this!?)



(What happened? I didn't touch anything...)



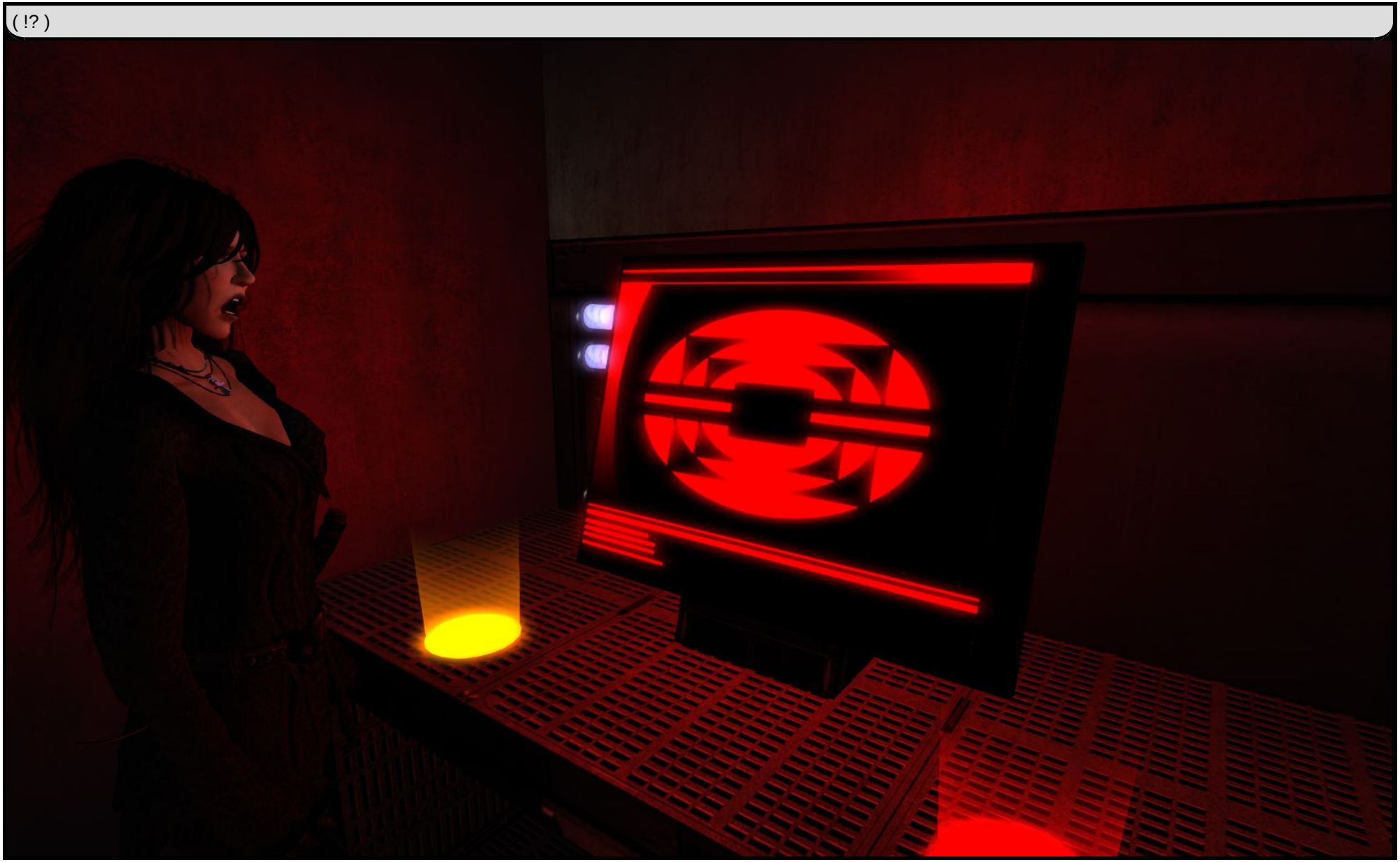
- Erifrin? ...Who's there?



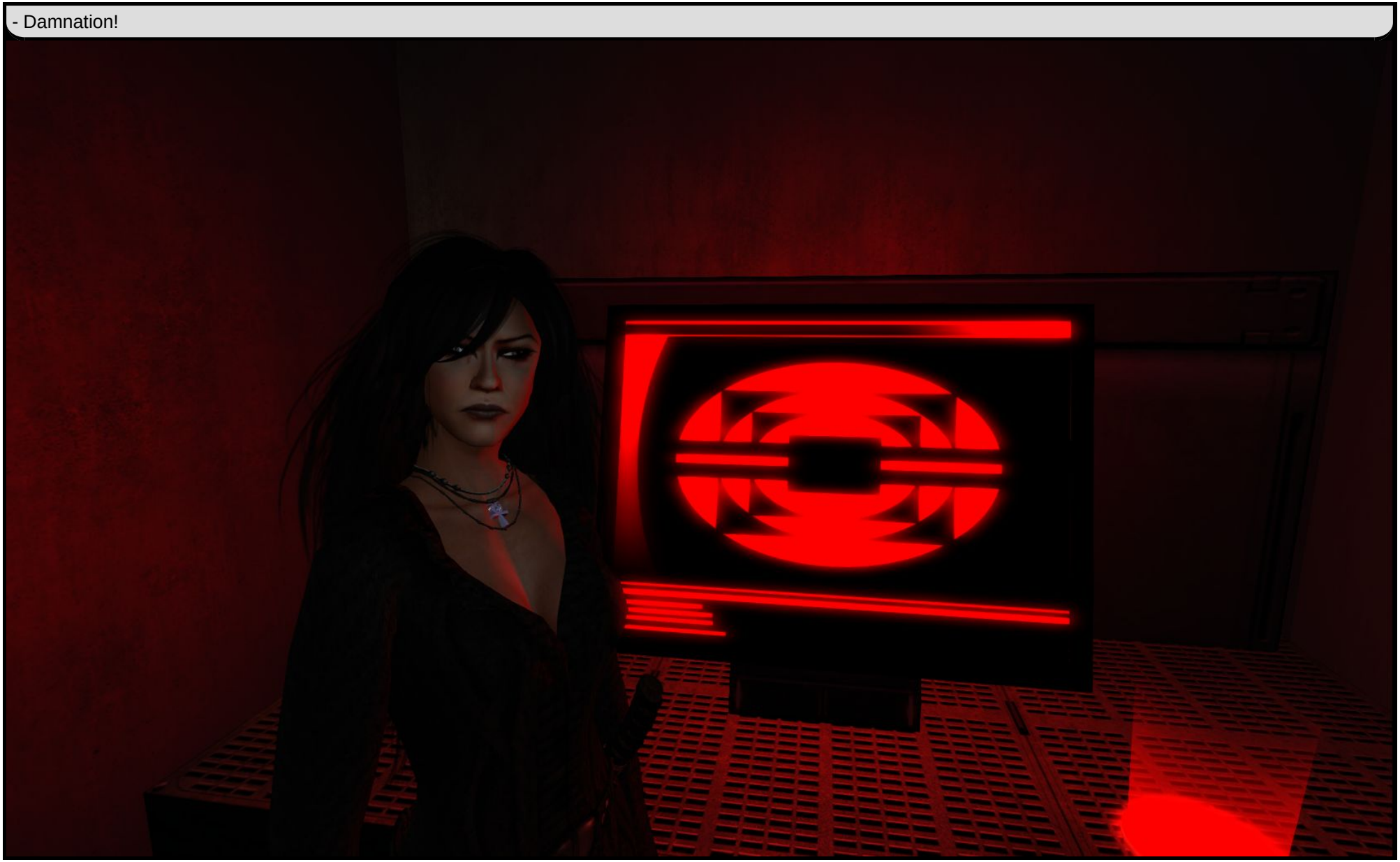
- Adjust the contrast...
((?!))

-- My goodness! ...This is Erydak!

(!?)



- Damnation!



Three minutes later...

-- What were you doing? I was worried to death!

- This is not the time to argue, we must leave as soon as possible.

- But what have you done? There is blood on your blade. Tell me that you haven't killed anyone!

-- I didn't kill anyone! As promised. I've only extirpated some confessions from Erifrin.
- Extirpate?!

-- Take this! Wear it and go open the large door. The lock is on the wall next to it.

--- Stay where you are!

-- Get back to your posts soldiers! You don't want to have problems, isn't it?

--- You're under arrest! Stay away from this trepyror!

- Soldier... Are you suicidal?!

- Surrender!

- Yeah, right...

TCHAK!

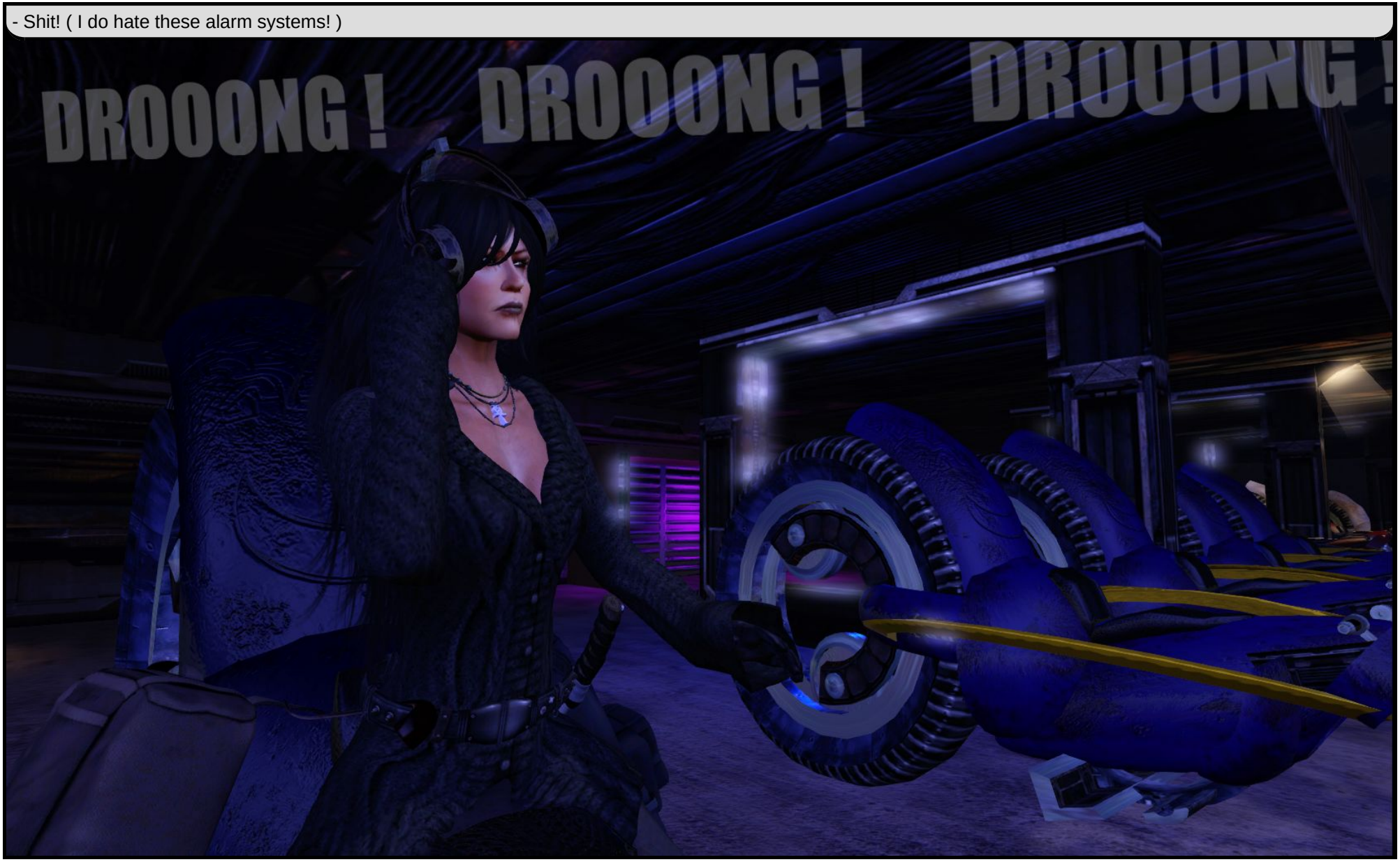
--- Ah! Ah! Aaaaaaaaah!

---- Get out!

-- Roland?

- Roland! Hurry up! Go open the door!

- Shit! (I do hate these alarm systems!)



- Roland! Open this fucking door! Right now!

- The door? Uh... Yes! The door!

ROOONG!
DROOONG!
DROOONG!
DROOONG!

DROOONG !
DROOONG !
DROOONG !
TCHAK !
DVVVVZZZZ !

DROOONG!
DROOONG!
DROOONG!
DROOONG
BVVVVZZZ !!!

-- Come on! Get in!

DROOONG !
DROOONG !
DROOONG !
BWWZZZZ !!!

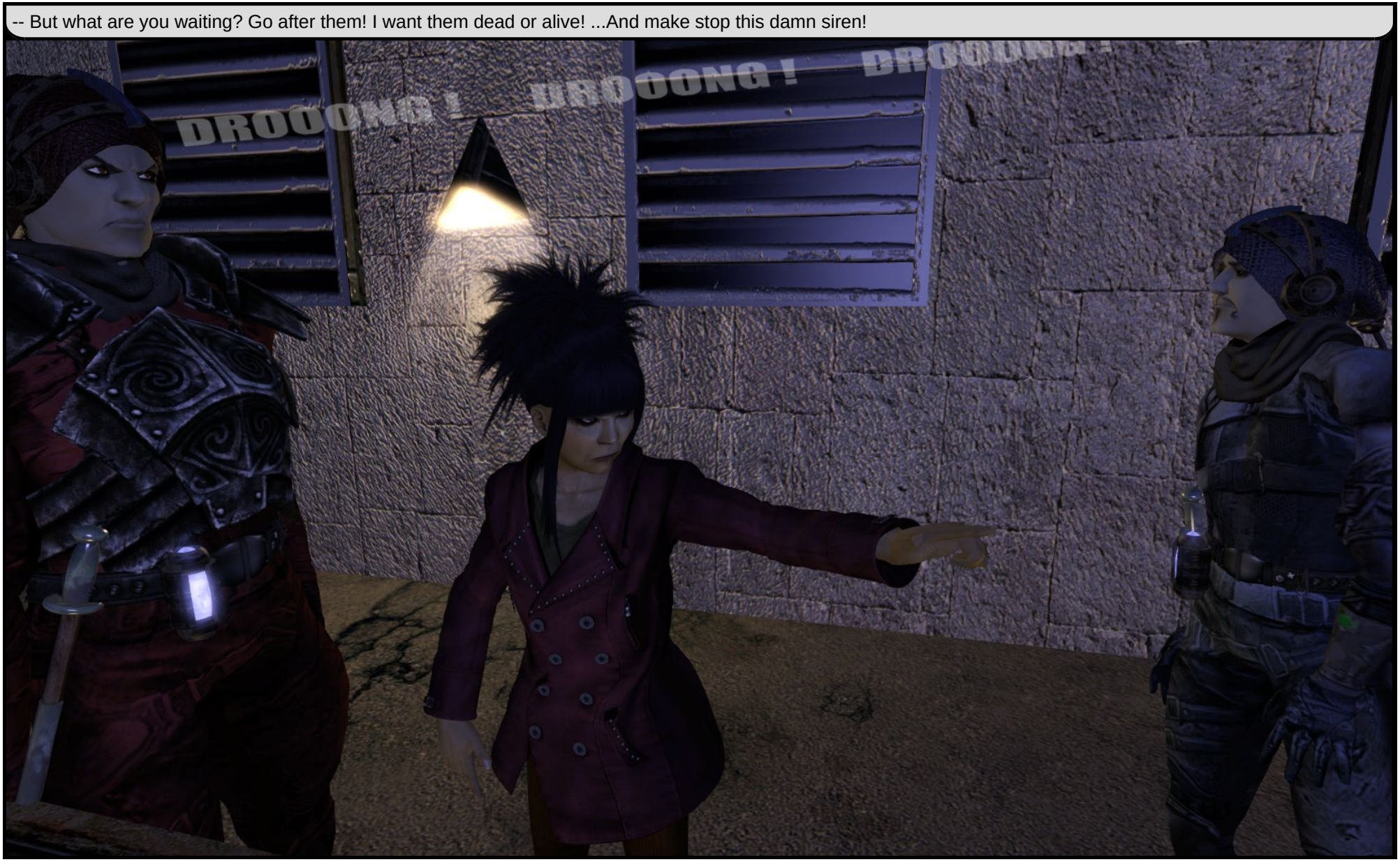
- Berigine! They located Erydak! She's right here, in the garage. She severely injured one of the guards!

-- What?! She's no longer at the decision center!?

--- There she is!

DROOONG !
DROOONG !
DROOONG !
DROOONG !
DVVVZZZZ !!!

-- You've let her escape!
- Berigine, no one dared to approach her.


-- But what are you waiting? Go after them! I want them dead or alive! ...And make stop this damn siren!
DROOONG !
DROOONG !
DROOONG !

--- It's no use! They refuse to start...

--- Berigine! The trepyrors refuse to start. This looks like sabotage.

-- She had well planned her move! How long to reactivate them?

-- She left with all diodic connectors. The best we will get is three trepyrors. But only in two hours, the time to recall those based at Texac.

--- Notify the regional checkpoints to make sure they start to seek them immediately.

- She could be very far before we could act.

- I know all this Koren! She won't have other choices than leave the Terkaside territory.

- So she can only go north.

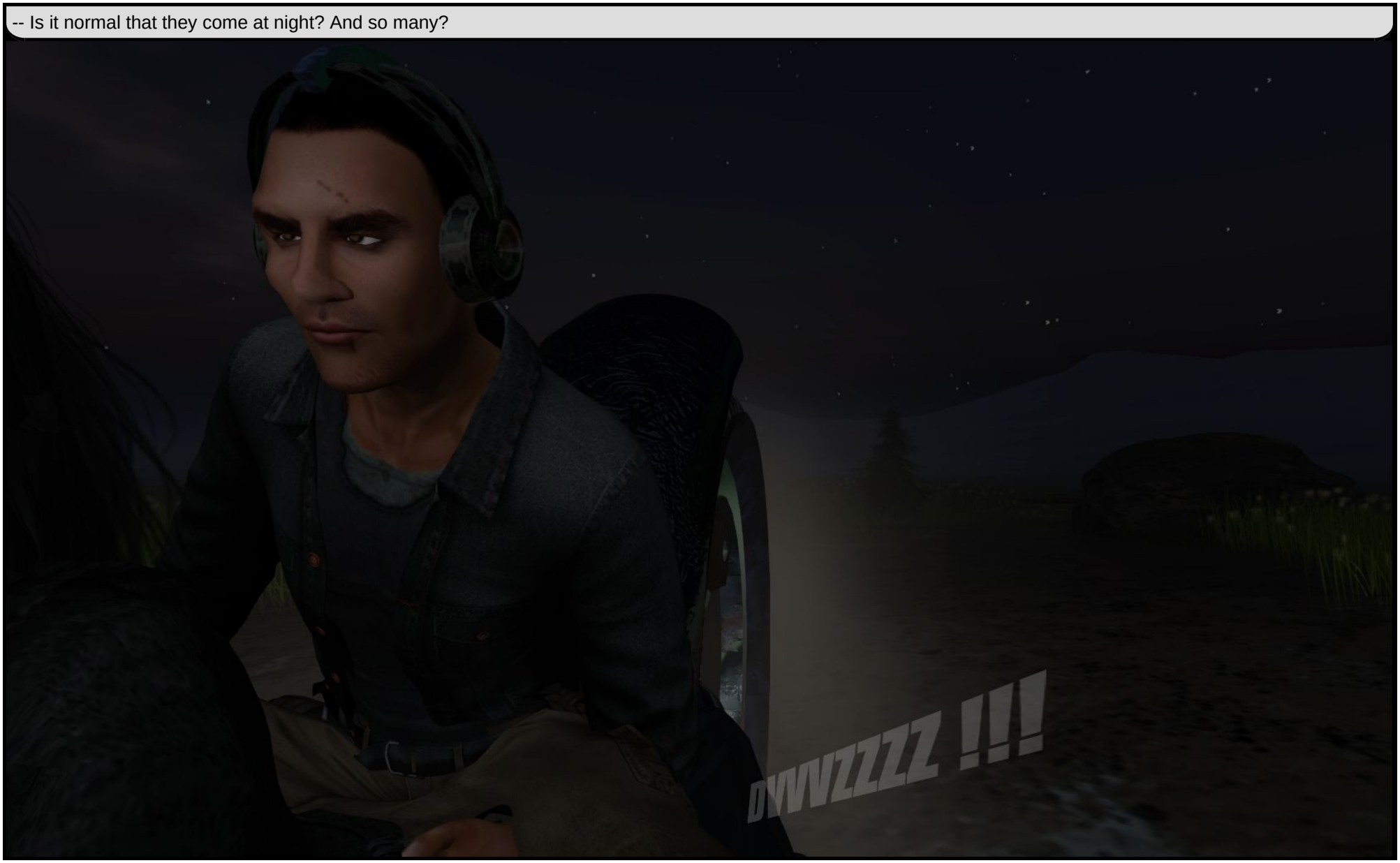
-- Take a chance to contact Larmis. He's in the east... We never know...

---- What the hell is this?

Not far away...

-- What are those lights?

- Jijuterk drones, I'm afraid.


-- Is it normal that they come at night? And so many?
DVVVZZZZ !!!

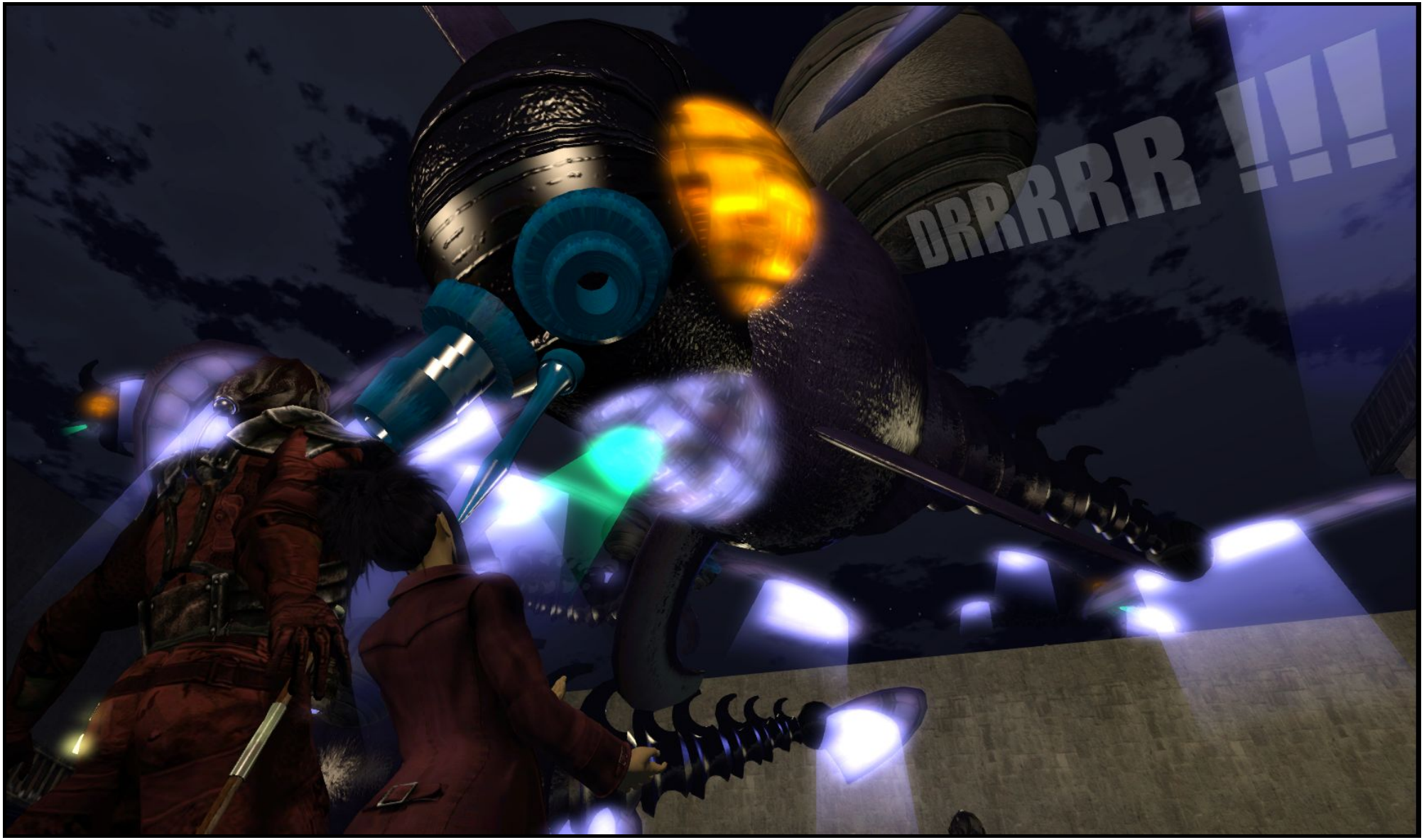
- Not really! I believe that we are what they are looking for!

-- We? I'm not sure to understand...
- I'm not sure either. But better they don't find us. I'll explain you later...

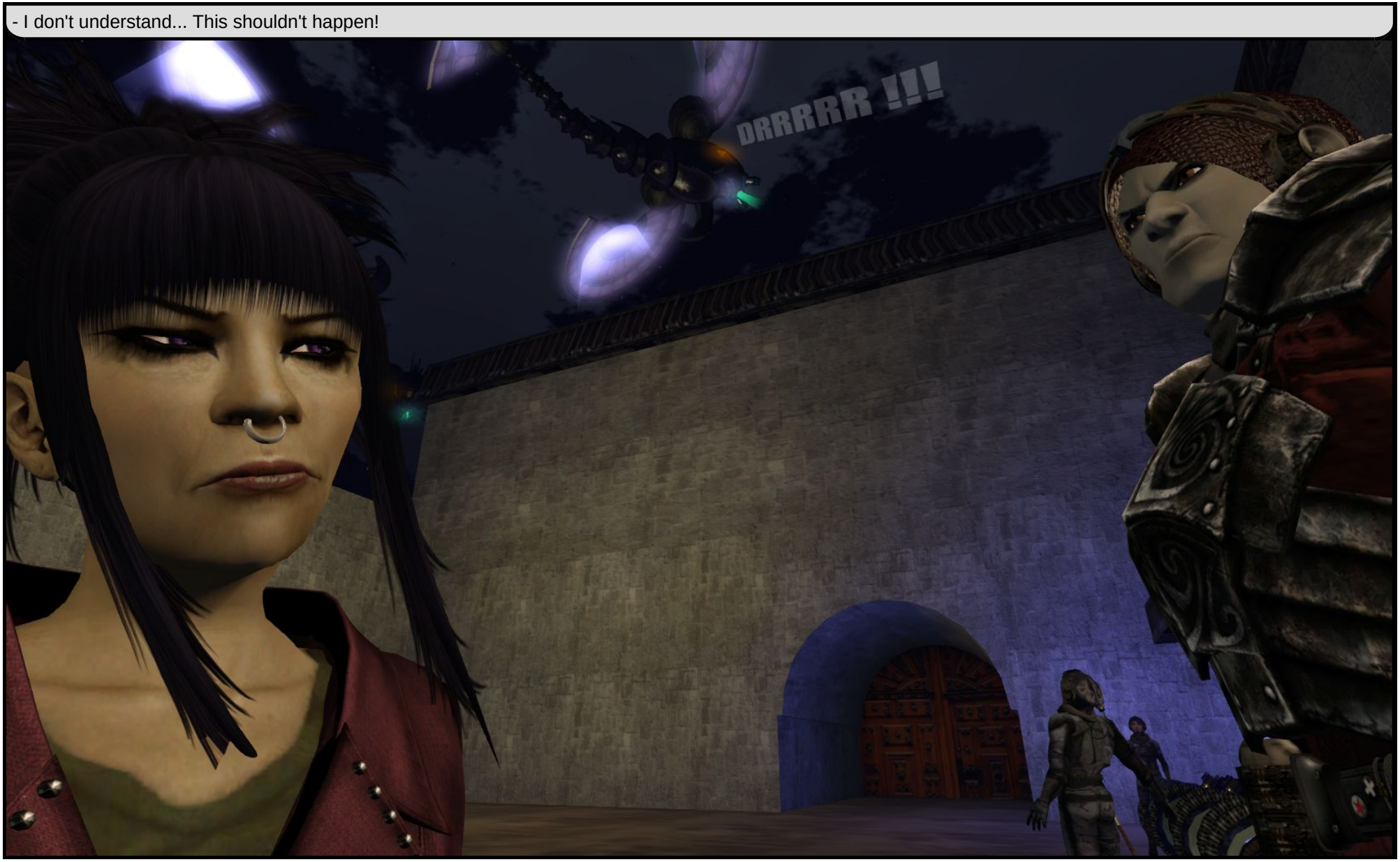
DRRRRR !!!
DRRRRR !!!
DRRRRR !!!

- Jijuterk probes?! Here at Periu?!

-- We better not stay within their reach.


DRRRRR !!!

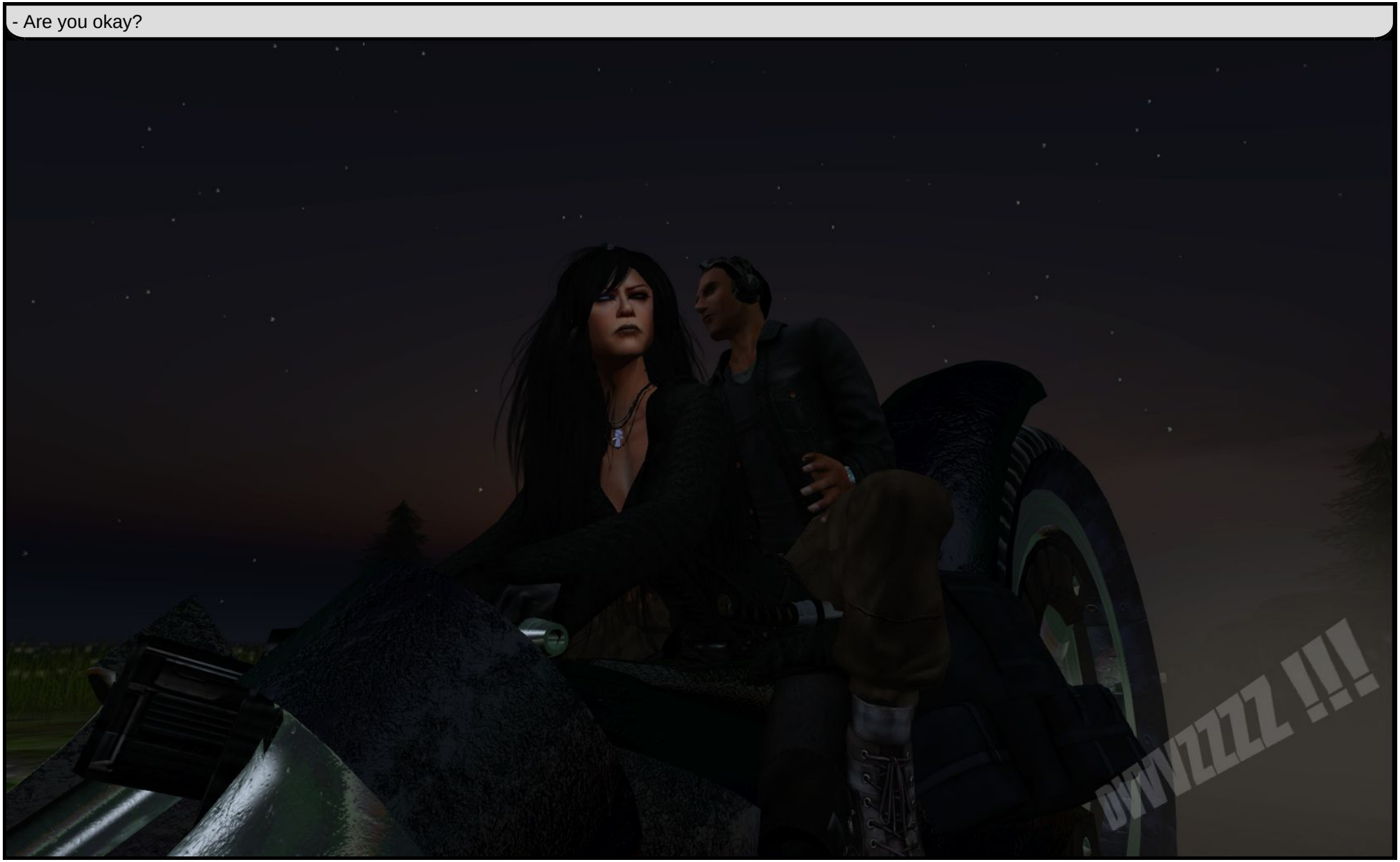
-- But what do they want from us?


- I don't understand... This shouldn't happen!
DRRRRR !!!

-- Erifrin! That can only be him! Something must have happened. Koren! Come with me! Quickly!

DWWZZZZ !!!

- Are you okay?



-- Well... I just can't stop seeing this hand on the floor. I'm not feeling well at all.
- OK, Good!

-- GOOD?!
- Yes, Good... If you can talk about it, then it's a good sign.

-- A good sign of what?!
- That the trauma is manageable. I’m very sorry for this event. He will survive you know.

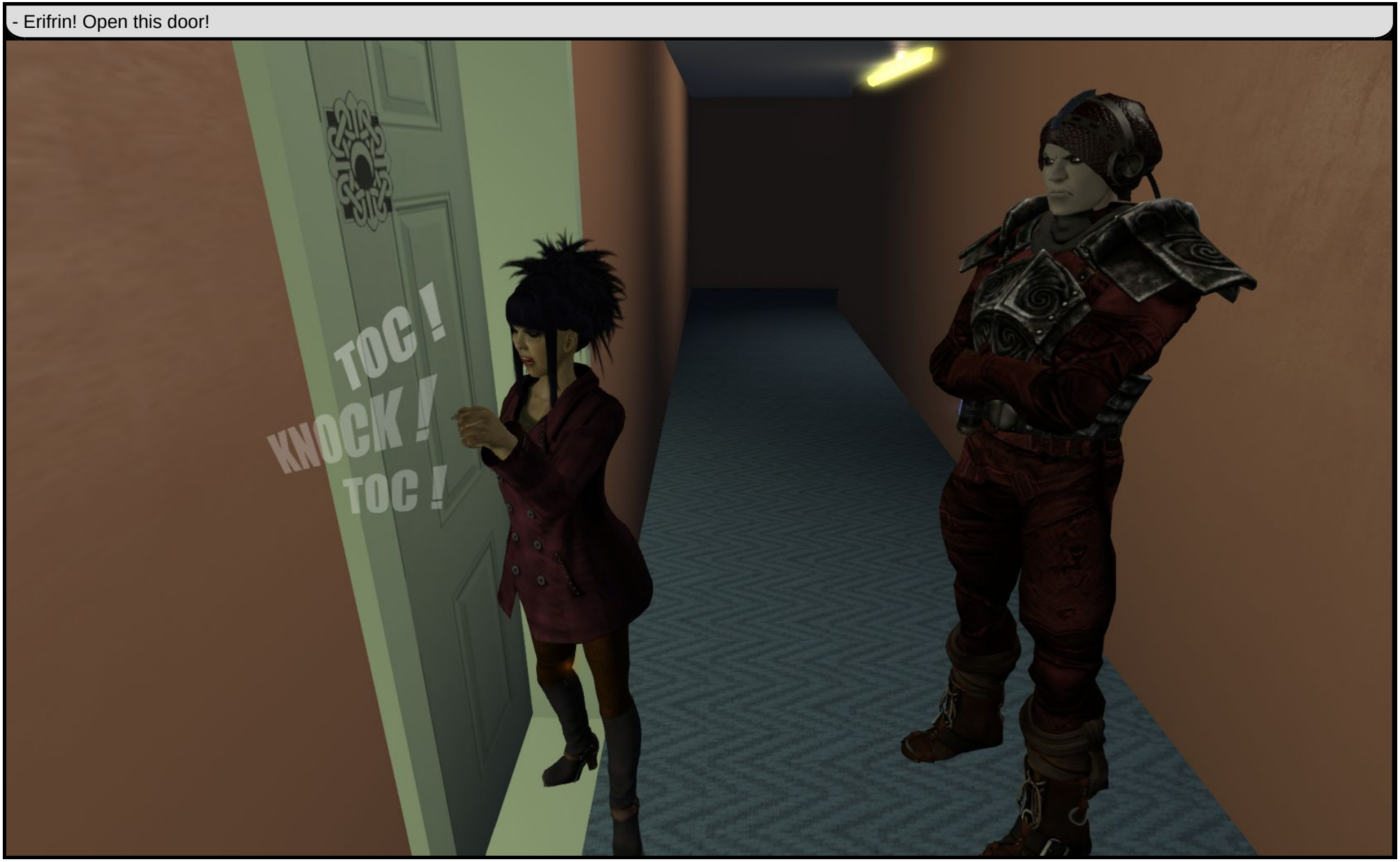
-- Is that supposed to make me feel better?! You remove him a hand!
- OK! Enough! I was only worrying about your health!

- Erifrin, open to us!

- Hummmhm!

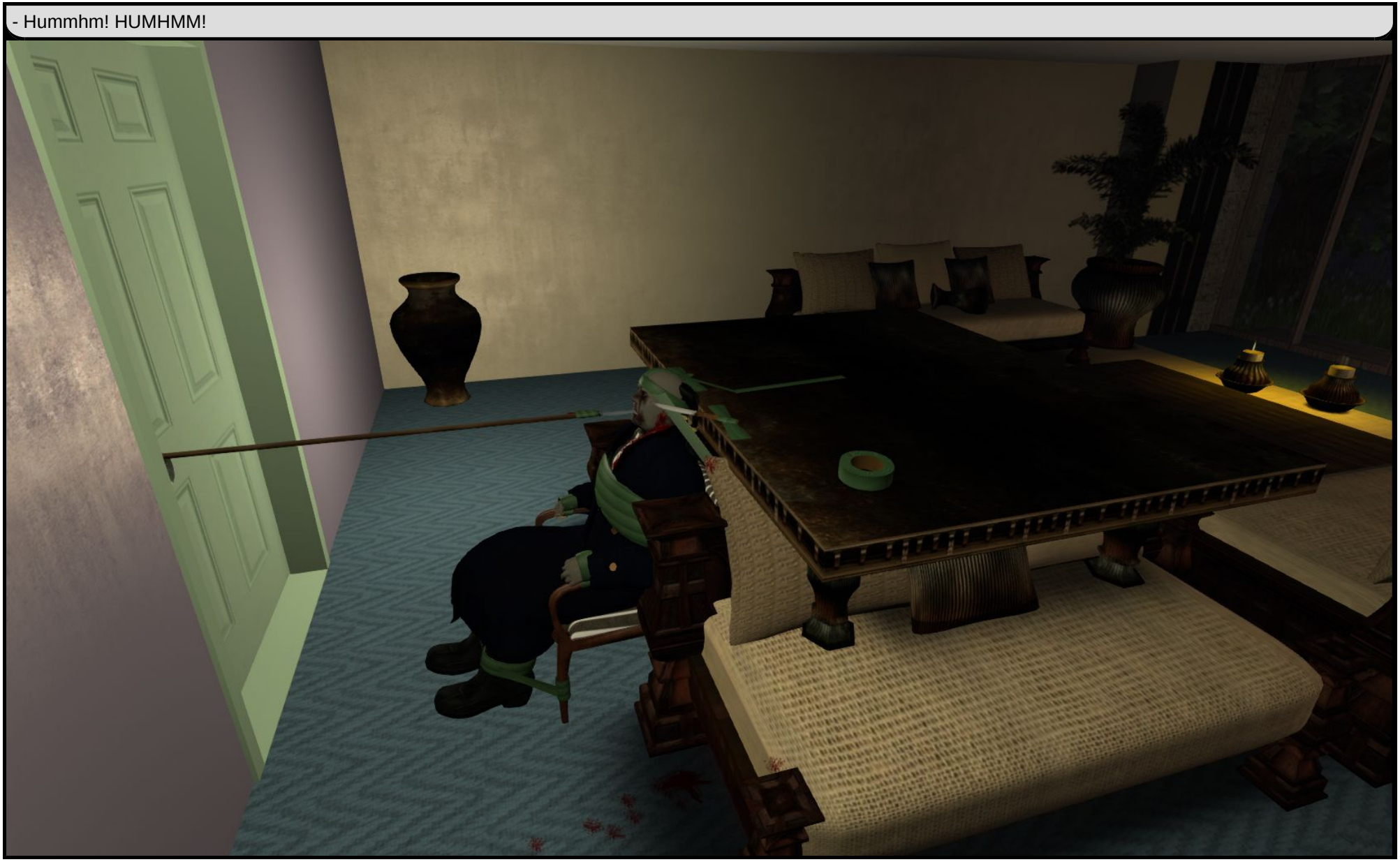
-- Maybe he went out.
- I'd be surprised!

- Erifrin! Open this door!



- The presence of the drones must have some explanation... Enough is enough! I need to see clear about it. Break the door down!

- Hummhm! HUMHMM!



- Maybe we should wait for him to come back!

-- I must have access to the communications station, it's a priority! So, break the door down immediately! That's an order, orsane!

SLAM!

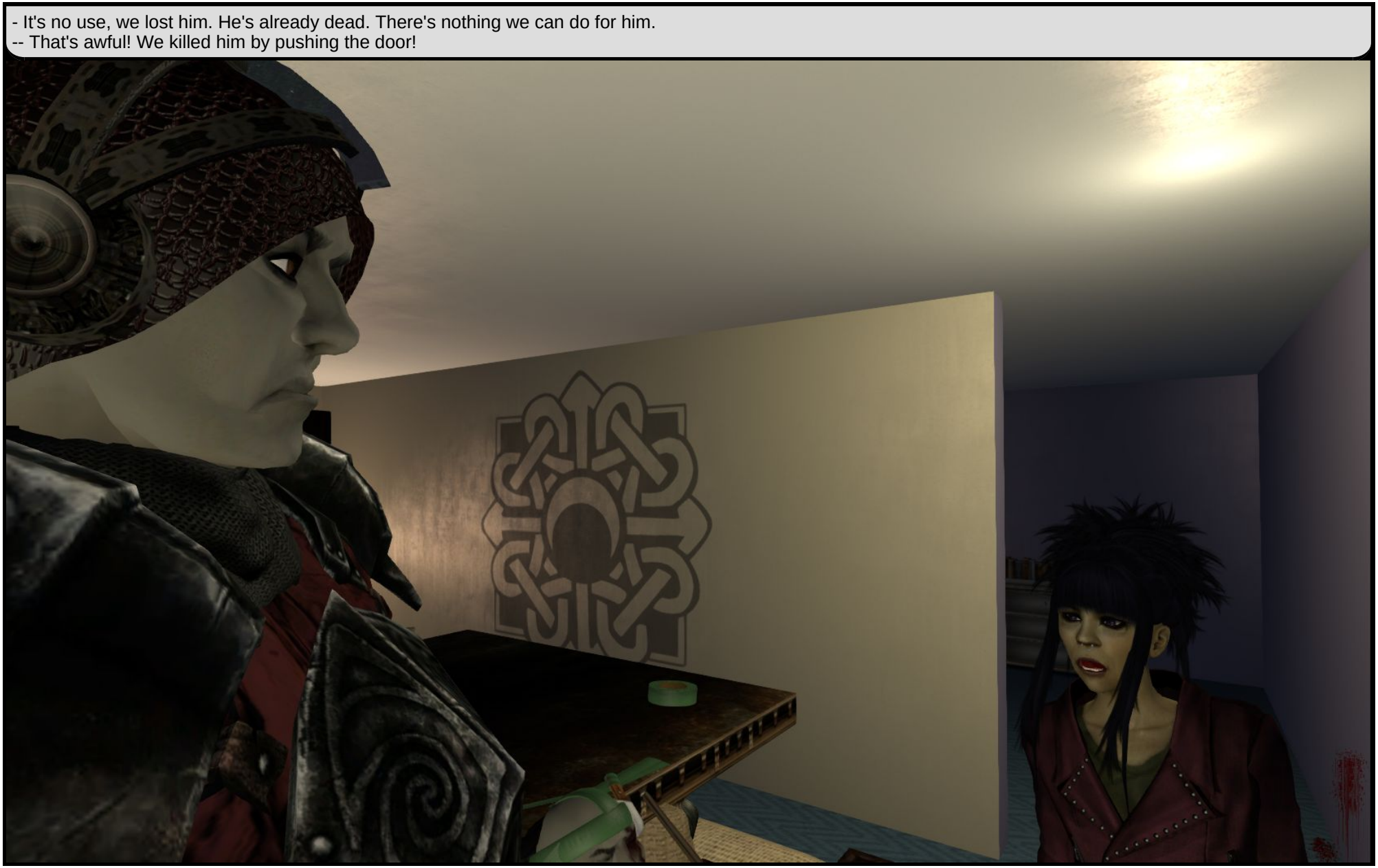
– HUMMMHM!

SLAM!
CRACK !

-- Something is blocking the door... Give me a hand! ...Push!

--- Erifrin!? ...Oh No! Erifrin!

-- Shit! ...Quick, help me...


- It's no use, we lost him. He's already dead. There's nothing we can do for him.
-- That's awful! We killed him by pushing the door!

- Ah! The dirty bitch! That can't be someone else! There is only Erydak for reaching such a level of atrocity!

-- I want her dead body! Do you hear me Koren?! I want Erydak dead! I want her to suffer as much as what she did to Erifrin!

-- There's maybe still a way to find her. The identification signal of her trepyror could be triangulated of her trepyror could be triangulated, even if her communicator is turned off. If I can approach her within 20 kems, I should be able to locate her. But for that, I would have to leave immediately.

-- Go see the baker on Jakar street, he has a trepyror for his deliveries. Commandeer it, find Erydak and eliminate her! On my side, I'll take care of the rest.
--- Will do.

In the morning...

-- Still quite powerful these engines, despite they don't seem very new anymore.
- Not very new anymore?! Hmm... I think it's not so bad for a vehicle that has more than seventy years.

-- Seventy years?!
- Yes, and potentially, it will still work fine when we will both be long dead.

-- Do you mean that this thing is guaranteed for over 100 years?
- I don't understand what you find strange in there.

- Well, it's probably because, in the world where I come from, very few things are made to last.

-- Is it still useful to wear these things?
- Oh, yeah! More than ever, mainly on the road. This is where they are most needed.

-- Would you mind to explain to me why?
- Because of the twisted wires.

- OK!... But... What is this?
-- They are cables composed of two exposed conductive wires, separated by an insulator, and connected to an electric source. They place them across the road to catch the fugitives.

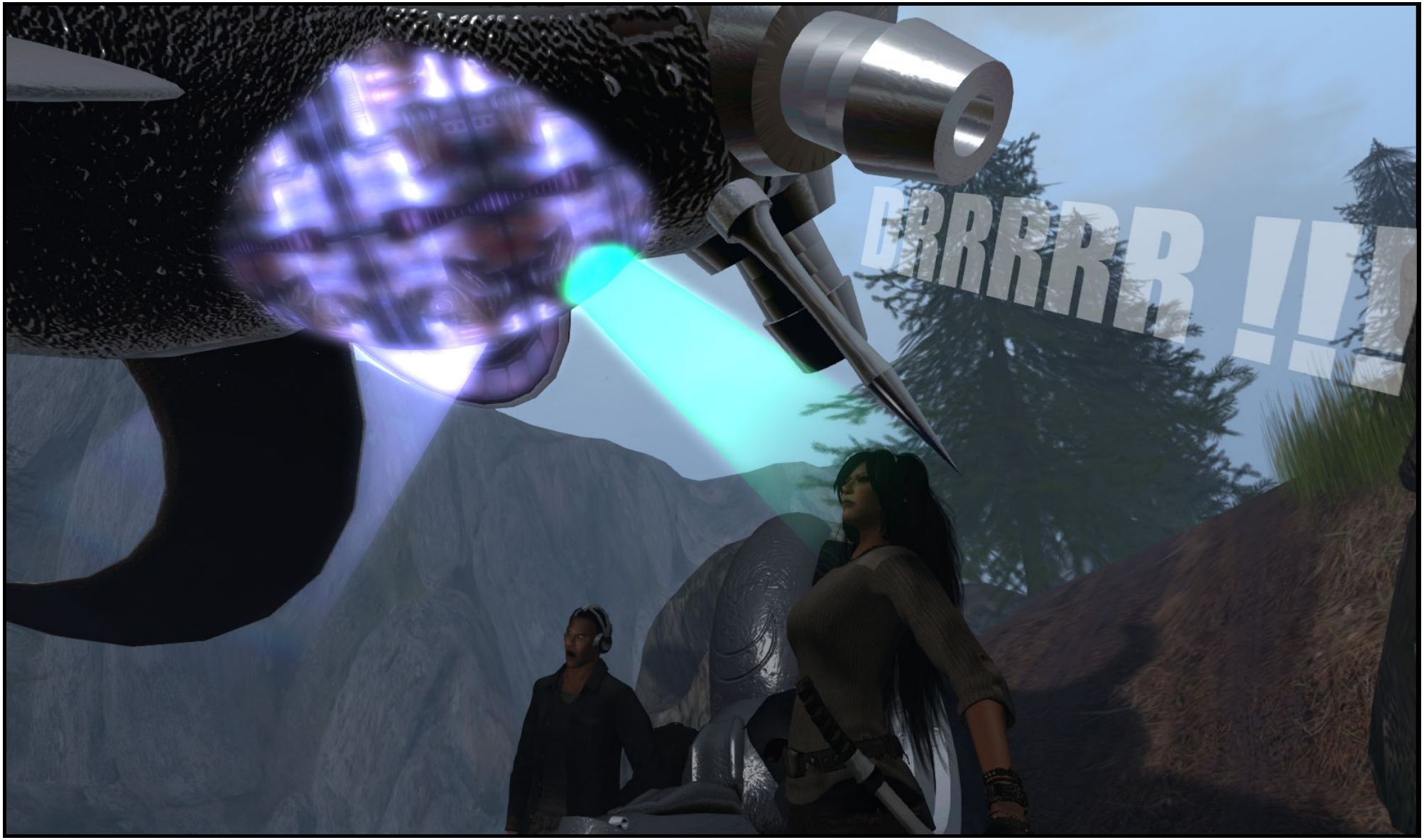
- Most of the time they are seen them too late because they are so much thin. And without protector, this is like losing consciousness while driving...

- ?!?
-- !?!

DRRRRR !!!

DRRRRR !!!

-- Whatever it does, don't move!
- I know...


DRRRRR !!!

DRRRRR !!!

DRRRRR !!!

- Damn! What did it want?
-- Find us, know our location...

- We must go now and hide us somewhere far from here. Hystazi probably already knows where we are.

- Wait, I'm not sure to understand... What do Jijuterk's drones would have to do with Hystazi?

- When I went to visit Erifrin, I discovered something rather disturbing...
-- ?!

- There was a communication station, and on the monitor, I could have seen the images emitted from the Jijuterk's drones.
-- What?! The drones are controlled by the Terkasides!?

- That's what I've thought initially. But I also fell on a video communication destined to Erifrin, sent from people who didn't really look to be terkaside.
-- Jijuterk?

- I don't see who else.
-- So the Kruls have access to the data recorded by the Jijuterk's drones...

- Yes, and the Jijuterks saw me. They know that I'm aware now.
-- This means that they know in which region we are...

-- And Erifrin? What did he have to say about that?
- Erifrin? ...Uh...

- Well, nothing. I found the communication station after have questioned him.

-- Wait a second! You couldn't ask him any questions after? Don't tell me that you have...

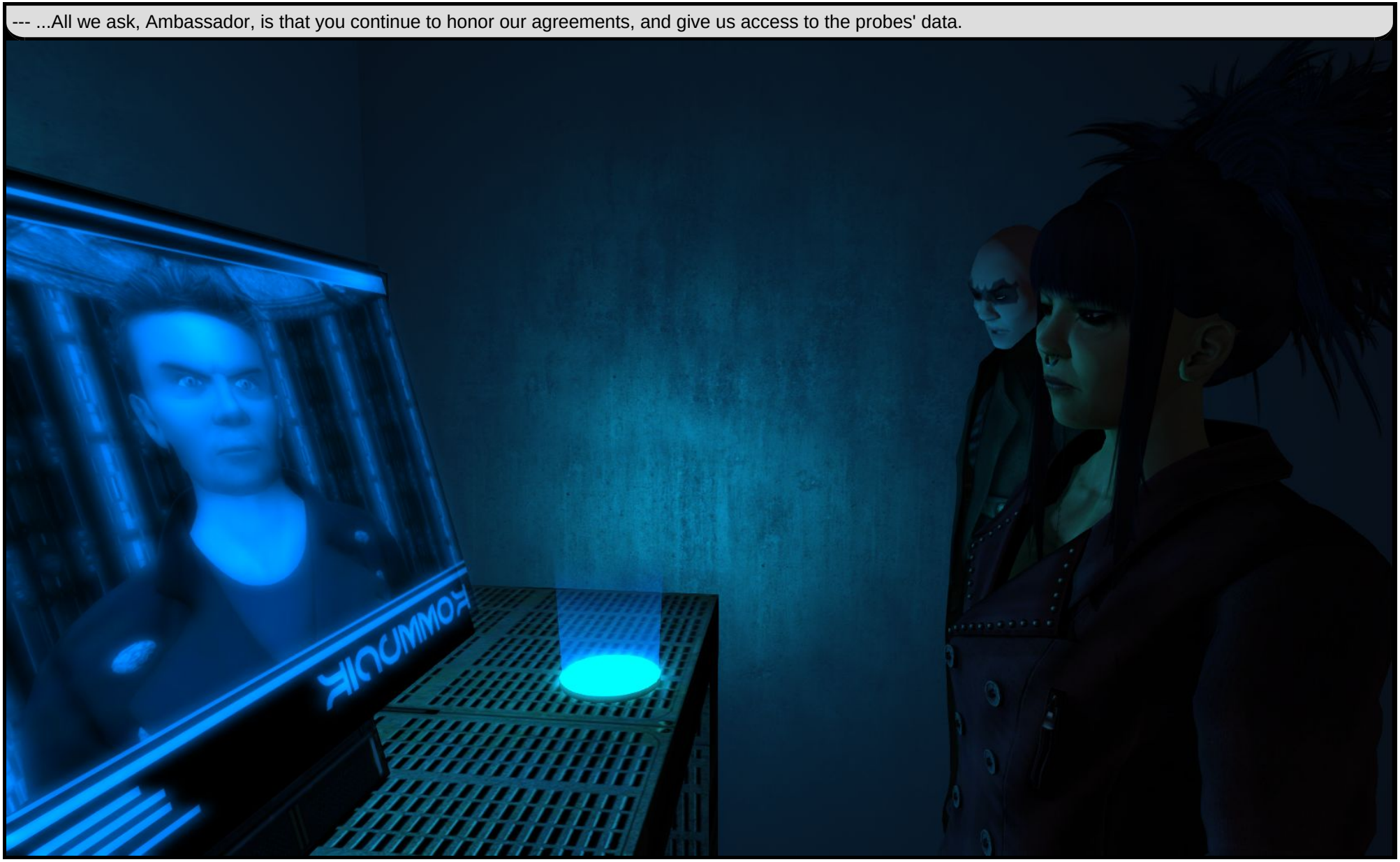
-- No! ...Uh... I left immediately after have been recognized by the Jijuterks.

-- Alezia Kurdis! What have you done to this man? You had promised me...
- Nothing! I told you. I hit him a little to make me understand... OK, I've maybe hooked a bit his ear, but no more. I've tied him up and I left.

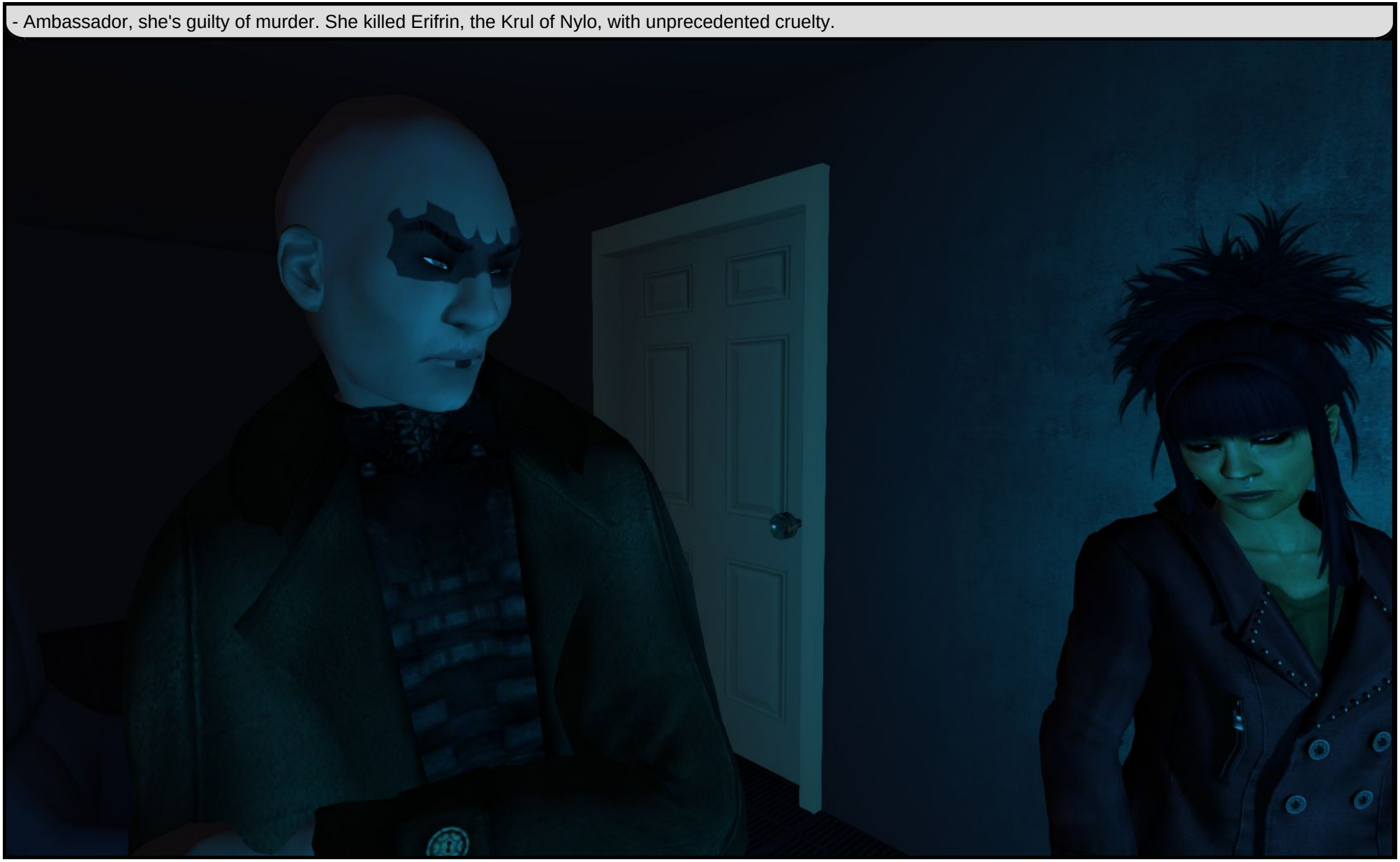
-- Hmm... Yeah... (Liar!) ...Do you have a clear idea of where we are going?

- We're going back a bit to the west. I know someone who will help us...

Meanwhile, in the capital...


--- ...All we ask, Ambassador, is that you continue to honor our agreements, and give us access to the probes' data.

-- To help you to chase Erydak? Don't count on that.


- Ambassador, she's guilty of murder. She killed Erifrin, the Krul of Nylo, with unprecedented cruelty.

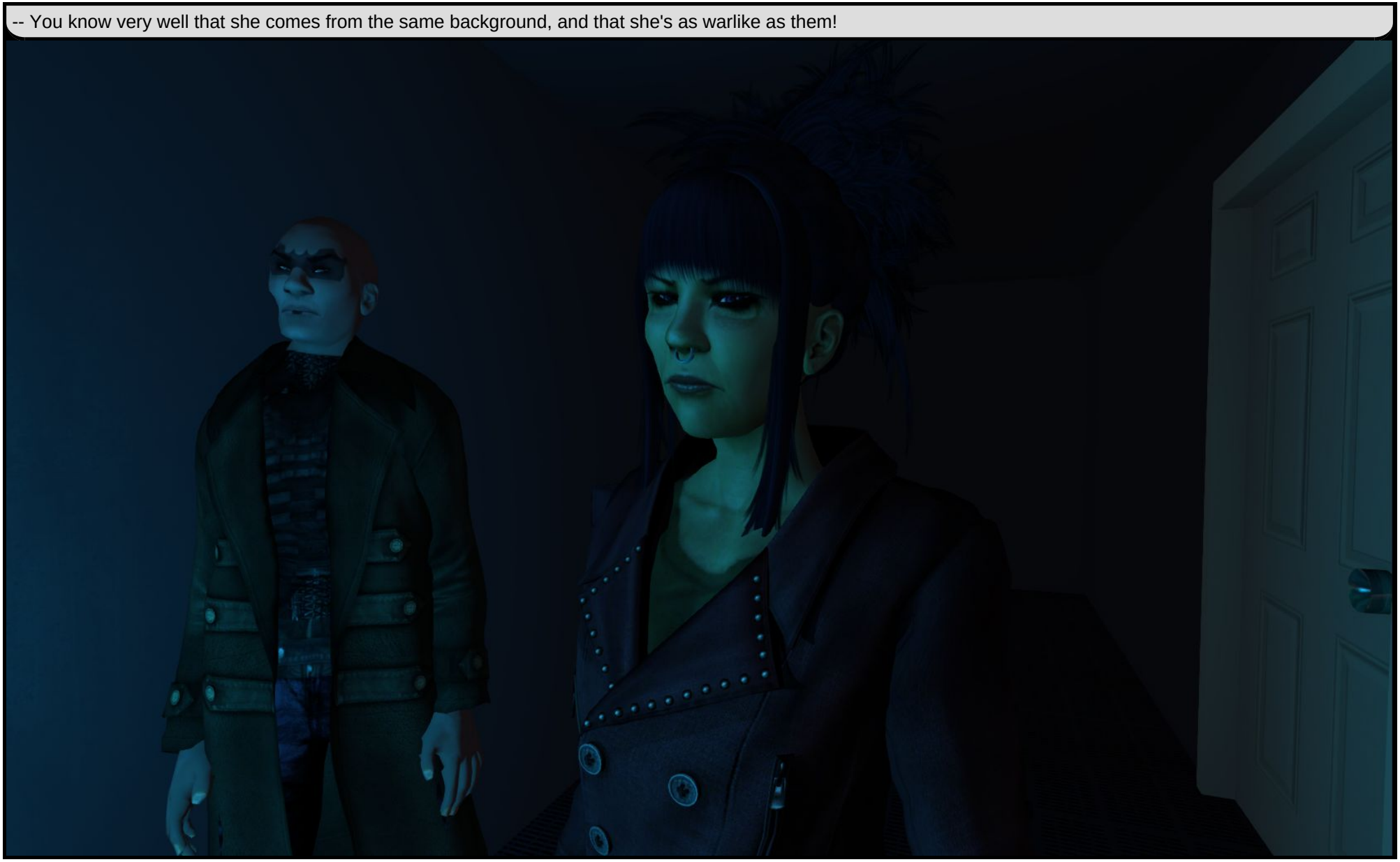
--- I'm afraid that you don't tell us everything. Our probes have scanned the lifeless body of the Dallusian woman who represented her. We also know that she ran away with a newcomer whose the genome, according to our estimates, dates from more than 2800 years. He's clearly not Dallusian!

- In addition, we've lost all trace of another human arrived with him, who was from the same period. Everything seems to indicate that you have broken the agreement.

-- The agreement didn't imply, at no time, that we should tolerate that Erydak turns against us!

-- Our agreement stated that she had to ensure the profiling of the newcomers from the disturbance, to make sure that you were not to eradicate all the newcomers without any distinction. We didn't want to see, more than you, these aggressive Dallusian military elements invade the continent. But we have a great interest for the life of those who are civilized.

-- You know very well that she comes from the same background, and that she's as warlike as them!



- However, you've chosen her as military leader, and she's always served you in a fair and equitable manner.

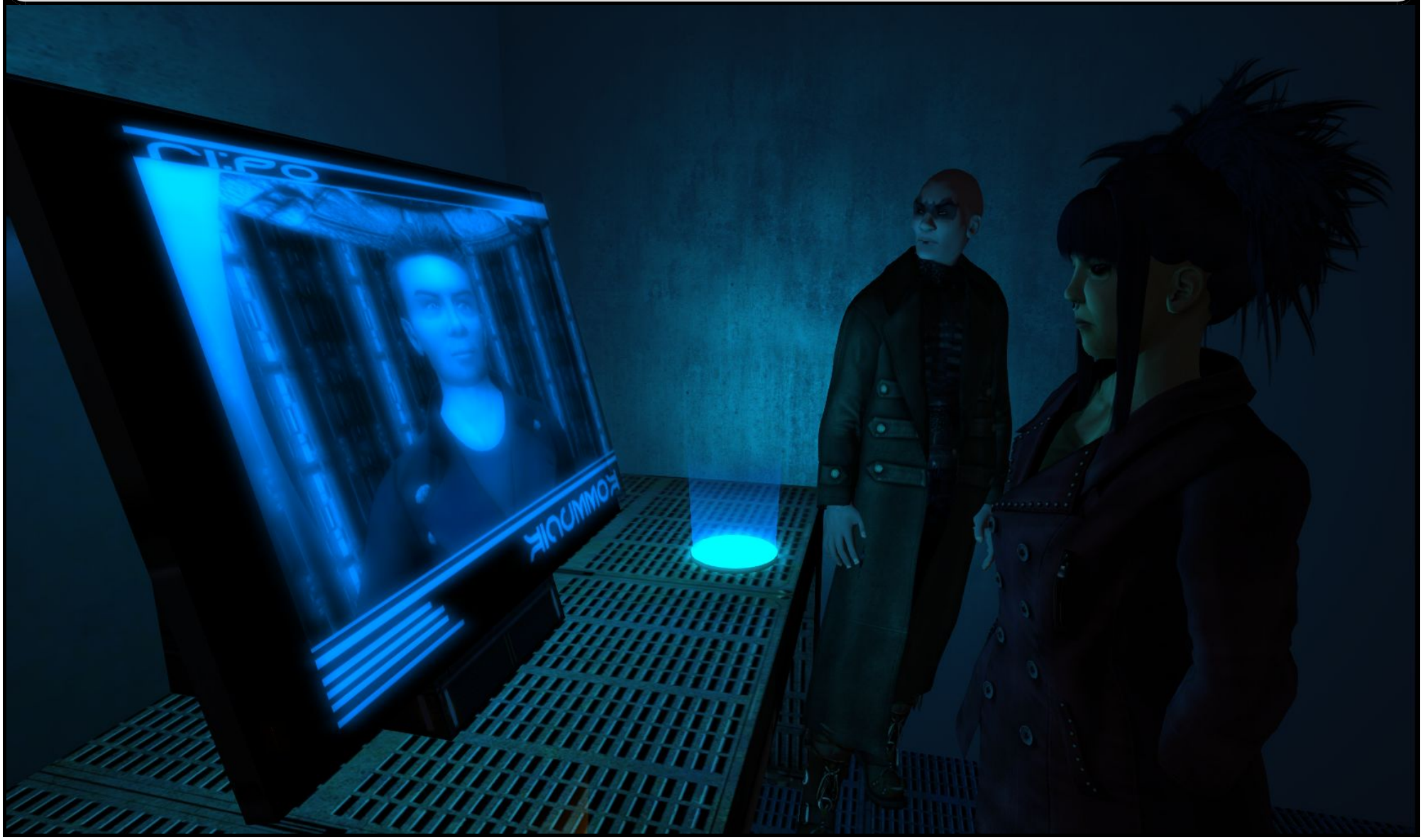
-- Nevertheless, you didn't want more than us that she becomes aware of our agreements.

- If you refuse us the access to the probes, we won't be in a position to guarantee you that the two fugitives will get out alive from Terkazy.

---- Krul Pizo, we won't intervene on your territory, but we will do all that we can to prevent that the presence of our probes reveals their location. If it is detected that you may be responsible of any affliction that could happen to them, be aware that this could have a negative effect on our agreements.

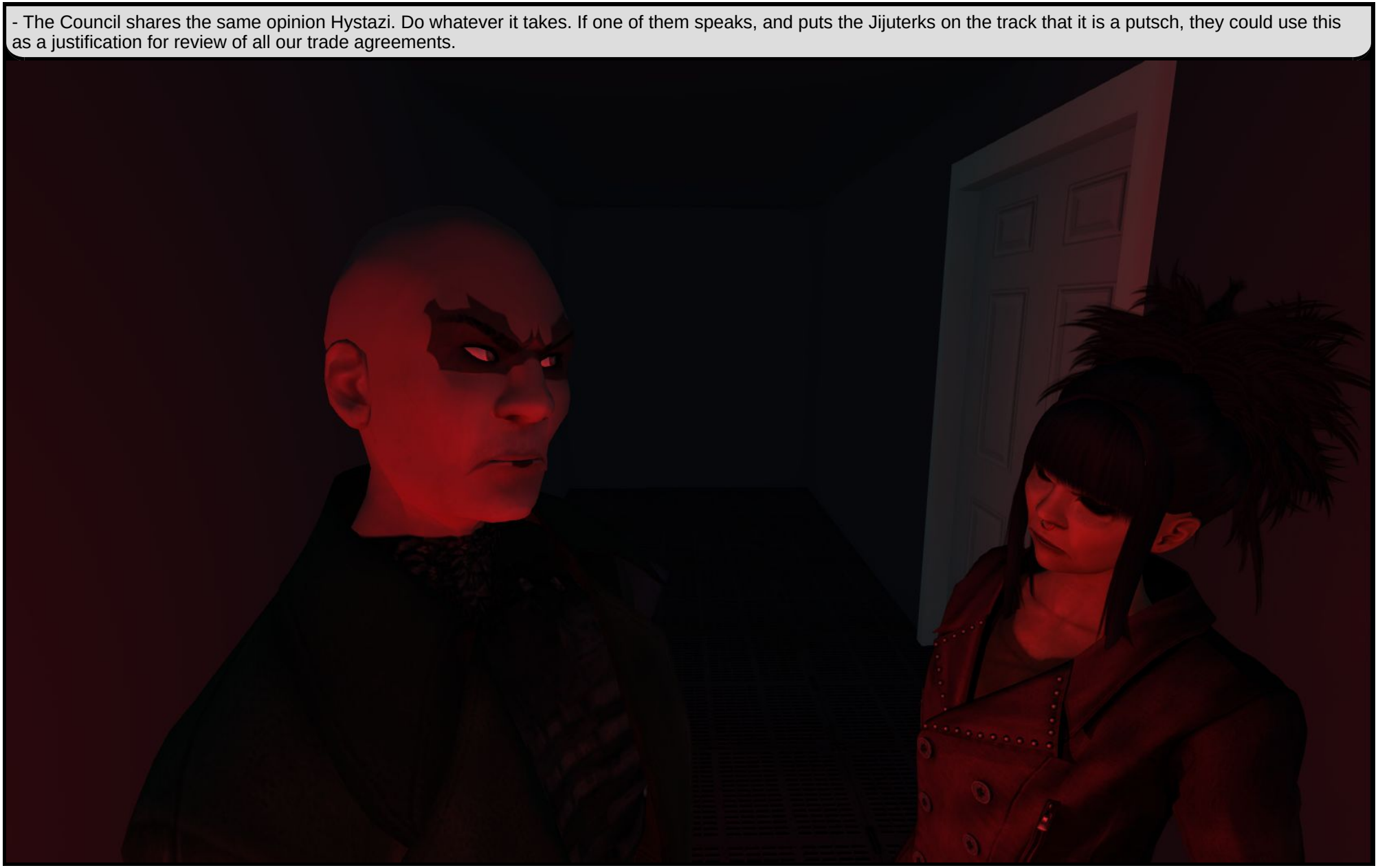
-- If they get out from Terkazy, Ambassador, they will be your problem. But you can't request to not retaliate against them if they attack us.

- I'm sure, Berigine, that you quite understood where good and bad faith begins.



-- Berigine Hystazi... Krul Pizo... Have a nice day.
- Ambassador.

- They should not leave Terkazy alive!


- The Council shares the same opinion Hystazi. Do whatever it takes. If one of them speaks, and puts the Jijuterks on the track that it is a putsch, they could use this as a justification for review of all our trade agreements.

- Do you think we can trust them?
-- No, we can't. This is now an obvious fact.

- As long they will be in Terkazy, we can't do anything for them. We can't take anymore the risk to follow them with the probes.

-- Do you think to be able to find them in the virgin zone?
- We had better, because once in the marginal zone, this could end very badly.

- If they leave the Terkaside territory, Ambassador, this won't be anymore your problem, but only mine. By then, we will maintain the probes at the border and on Terkaside squads. If they attack them, at least we will know.

- And if what they said is true, and that she killed the Krul Erifrin?

- Listen. Of the four humans who were at Periu, one is dead of multiple fractures, another is confirmed missing, and Erydak has fled with the last one. It's rather unusual. She went to Erifrin's home, maybe she killed him. But her highest subordinates have been detected in the detention block. Tell me Jali, is she running away from a coup d'etat?

- Oclan, we should have come clean with her from the beginning.
-- We didn't know whom we were dealing with. She might have been like the Dallusians.

A few hours later...

-- Is it here?
- Yep.

- You let me talk. Got it?
-- Yes, OK.

- Hi!

-- Erydak!? My goodness!... Berenice! Come quickly! Erydak is here!

---- It's a great pleasure to see you here, and an honor!

-- Erydak! I'm so happy to see you again... Ulta! Come on! Get them in!
- It's a great pleasure to see you too.

-- What do we owe the honor of your visit? ...Oh! But come in, please...

-- Uh!... I'm afraid that our presence here is sadly not for the best reasons.

--- Ah? Are they back?
- No, it's something else.

-- You certainly remember this day where we had problems with these two Tyrants?
--- How to forget!

-- You had told me to come to see you if one day you could do something for me. Well, I think that day has come.

-- It's a promise that is always valid Erydak. What can we do for you?

-- Well... We must leave Terkazy.

-- You leave?! But to go where?
- Somewhere to the north. Anywhere else in fact. The problem is that the Kruls are chasing us.

--- The Kruls have turned against you?!
- Yes, and they want us dead.

- We won't request a lot: some supplies, some food, a safe place to sleep this afternoon. We have largely what is required for a compensation.

-- I see. This is very bad news. We'll help you, don't worry. We never forgot what you did for us.

-- Thank you. If it doesn't bother you, It would be judicious to hide the trepyror immediately. The Jijuterk's probes are also looking for us.

--- The probes!? Good heavens!
-- You understand now the magnitude of our problems.

--- Follow me.

---- This way.

-- Oh! I almost forgot... This is Roland. Roland, Berenice and Ulta.
- It's a great pleasure to meet you.

--- Is he your...?
-- No! ...No, he's only a friend.
(!)

--- Would you like to come in? We have beds for you if you want to sleep.
---- If you don't mind, we'll sleep here, near the trepyror.

-- I'll bring you something to eat and drink.
- Thanks, that would be great.

- Here is a list of things we would need. We plan to leave at dusk.
---- You're going to ride at night?!

-- Yes... By the way, do you have some black paint? I would like to mask the trepyror's lights.
--- (((!?))) I surely have somewhere some paint enough dark for that. I bring all I can find...

Two hours later...

-- Here it is! That way, nobody will see us come.
- Yes, but it's now sure that I won't be able to drive at night.

-- Everything is there?
- Except for the second rope, yes, everything is there.

- Did you give him the 250 krulis?
-- And how! I thought he would never stop thanking me.

-- And this? What is this?
- Well, according his explanation, this would correspond to a pretty good whiskey.

-- That's some kwiza... You didn't plan to carry this, do you?
- I thought it might be useful, this is a very good disinfectant.

-- Yeah... But you keep it in your backpack. And we won't count it in the burden sharing. This is YOUR kwiza!
- That goes without saying.

-- Well, I'm done packing.

- Anyway, lovely place! Everything is so quiet here. This little river where we stopped, it reminds me of my parents' chalet.

- At Lawton?
-- No, in southern Quebec.

- I've no idea where it was.
-- According the map, on the Jijuterk territory.

- By the way Roland... There's one thing that has come back to my mind, and that bothers me... At Bashora, how the guards has known that I was with Branys?

-- Oh! Yes! That! Well, it's simply because they found the second gun. They understood quite fast without even have to question me.

- Ah! The gun... I should have thought about it...
-- Don't tell me you believed that I could have reported you?!

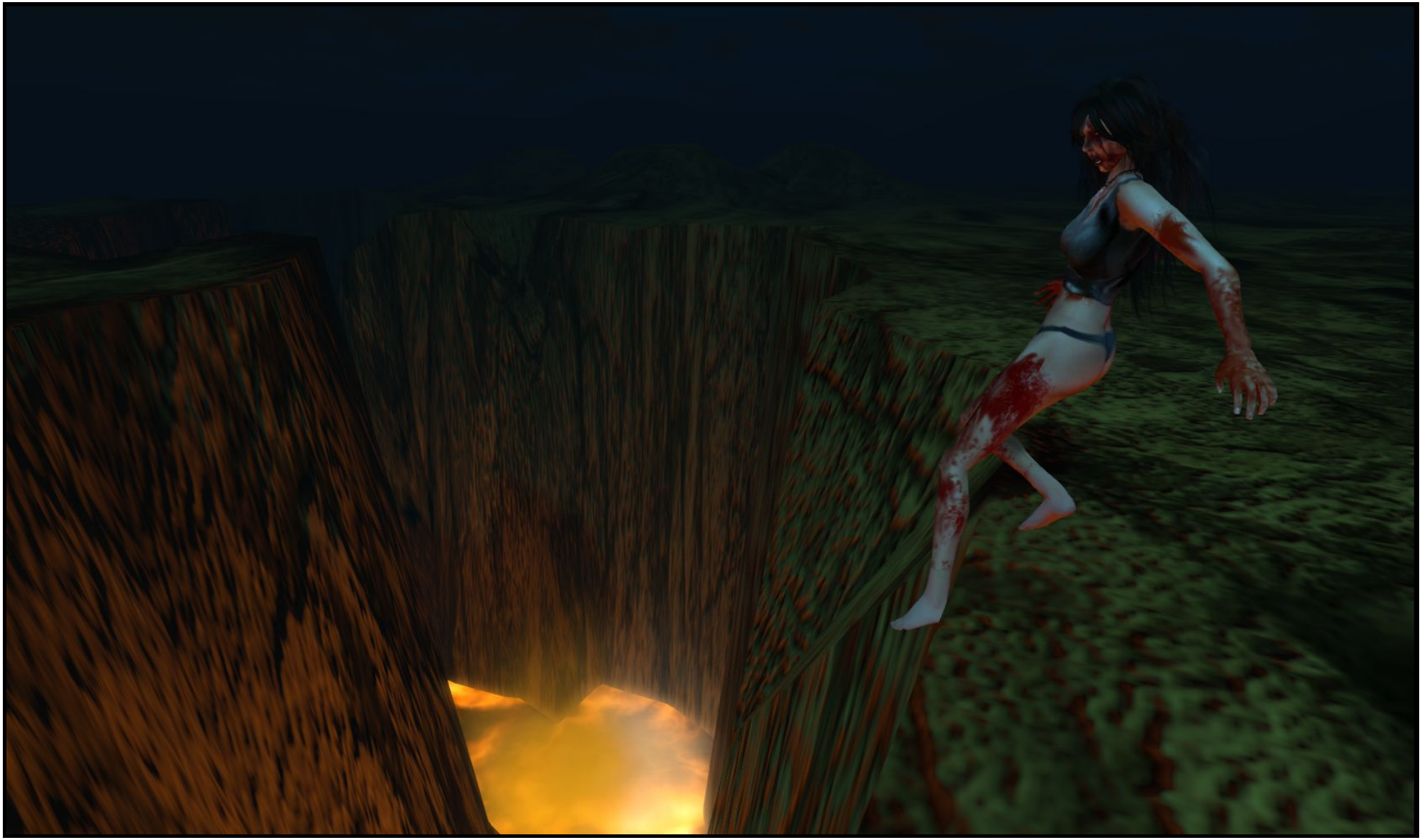
- Come on! I would never dare to think such a thing... Pfff!
-- Of course! It's not at all like you! ;-)

-- Alezia?
- Roland! ...Sleep!
-- Yeah...

- Take it easy... Don't move... good boy...

-- No, no, no! ...Come back!

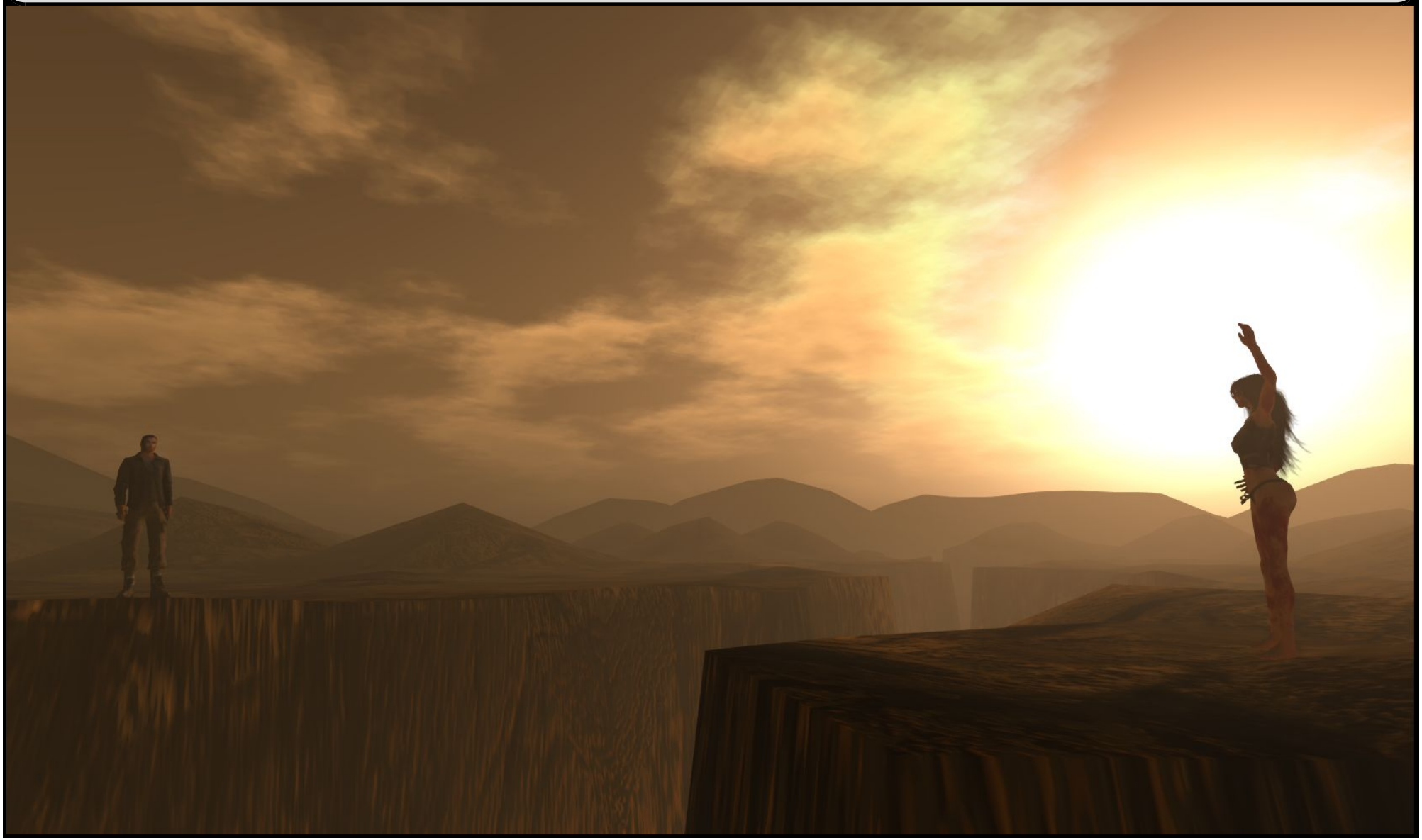
- Come back here! Fucking bastard! Grrr!



- Aaaaaaarrrrrrgh!!!

(!? ...Roland!?)

-- Hey! Roland!



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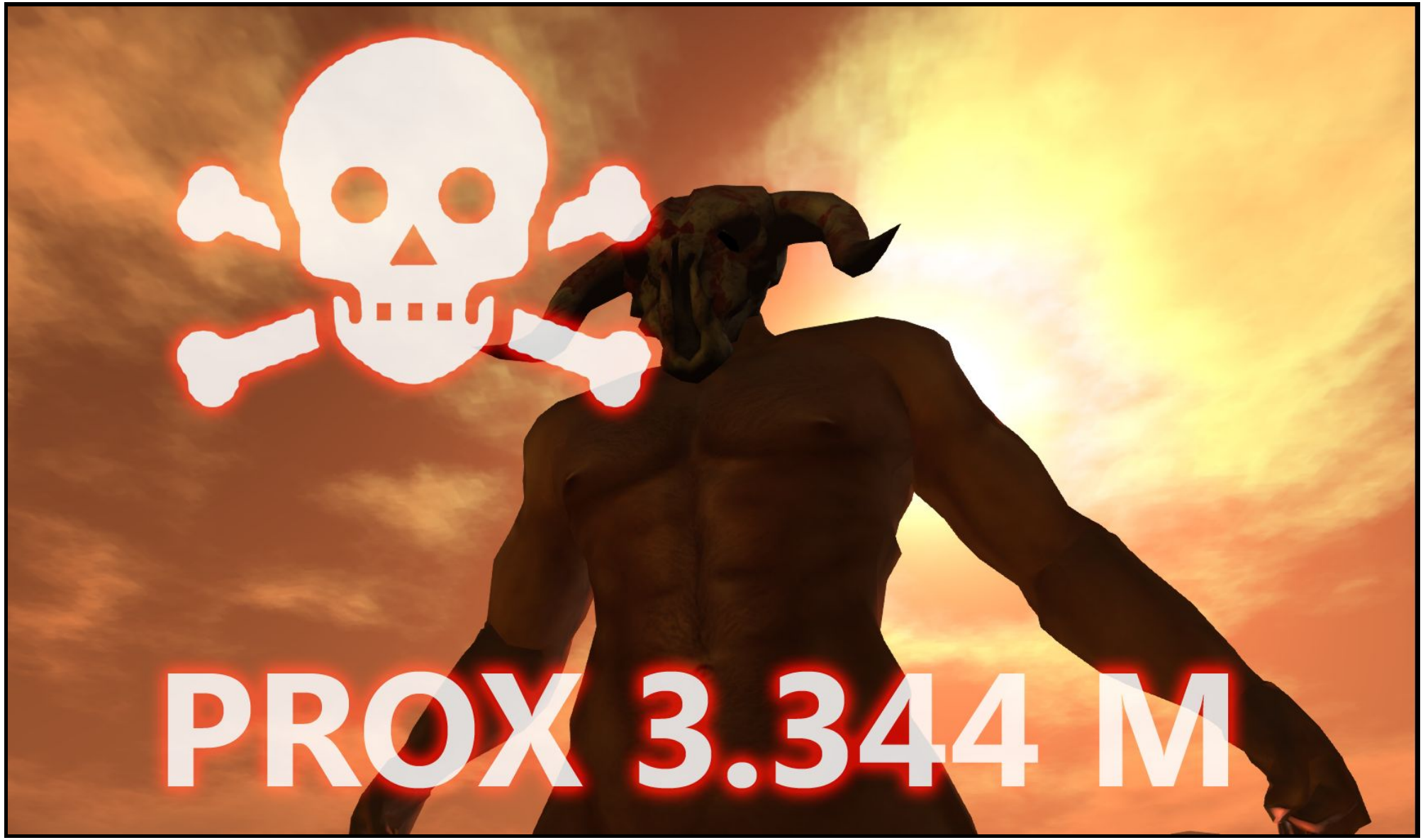
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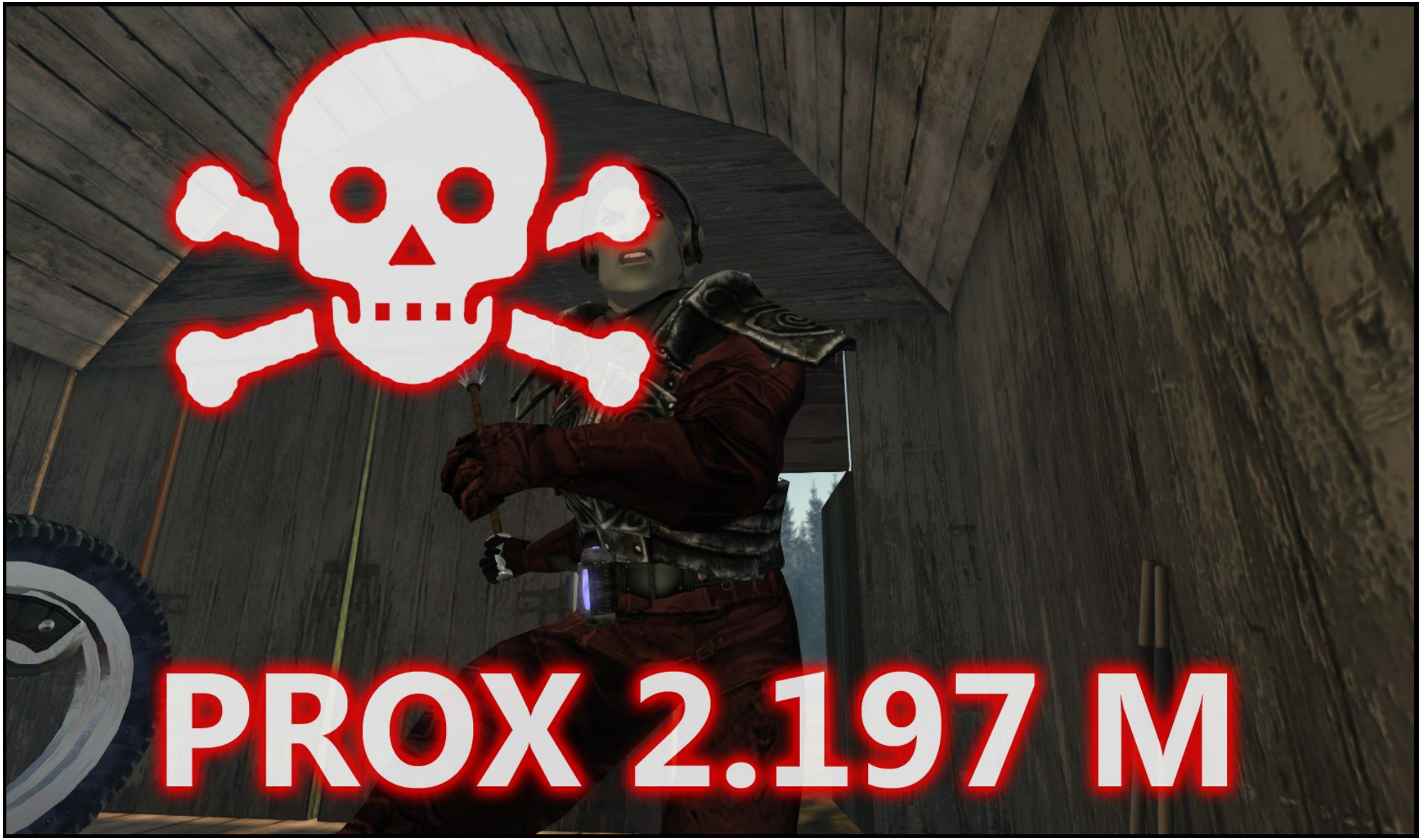
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TSHHH !

TCHAK !

TOC !

PAF !

CLUNK !

- Damn human!
-- Arrgh!

- Fucking tyrant!

TCHAK !
BANG !

- Alezia!

- Ouch! Let me check...

- It's OK! It's nothing! I can take care of myself! Give me a break!

-- In case that you haven't noticed, I've just shot a man to save your skin!

- Don't worry, he's not dead.

- Damn it! Alezia!

-- He'll be quiet for a moment.
- We could have proceeded differently!

--- Come on! We must leave immediately... Go deactivate his trepyror to be sure that nobody can follow us.

- I've nothing to do with this, I assure you. He came here by himself!
-- I can imagine, otherwise you wouldn't be here.

- This is most unfortunate. Come with me, I'll take care of you...
-- I don't have time for this, I'll be fine. Listen! Tell them that we've menaced you, otherwise they will turn against you. Don't worry about us, we will never return in Terkazy. They will defame us anyway.

- Maybe you could take care of the orsane, he's going to need it... I take this knife, he broke my blade.
-- Are you sure that it's going to be OK?
- Yes, it's a very good knife.
-- I was talking about your injuries.

-- We will be OK if we leave... Ulta, thanks for everything. We're even now. I'm afraid that it's going to be a farewell. I'm really sorry for the inconvenience.

---- Let's go! Uh! ...OK!? Are you going to be OK?

-- Sorry, it's the adrenaline.
- I had understood.

-- How the hell has he found us? There were not any drone...
- It's indeed strange. He must have left very soon after us. We will need to inspect the trepyror, the presence of a tracking device is not an impossibility.

- Still a chance that Ulta has shown me his animals, otherwise, who knows what this guy could have done.
-- That was close. Without my ocular detector, I would be dead long before that your intervention.

Many hours later...

-- Don't you think that we could make a stop?
- Why? You're wet!? :-)

- We must go as far as possible tonight. This is vital.
-- Hmm... OK. That's why I never liked motorcycles.
(?)

In the morning...

-- We have come a long way. At least it has stopped raining. The advantage of sleeping during the day is that the sun is there to keep us warm and dry.

- Yeah... You're telling me! ...Hmm! I see nothing suspicious on the trepyror...

-- This can be very small.
- Or he may have used something else to find us.

-- OK... What kind of tracks or trackable signals can we have left behind us? ...Our tracks on the ground?
- I doubt that it can be that... We rode on very used roads...

-- Electromagnetic detection? The engine? Can it be remotely detected?
- It was off. It couldn't be differentiated from all other household energy cells.

-- ...Any communication system that could emit a signal?
- Hmm... The communicator was off. This is the first thing I did when we left Periu.

-- But...
- But what?

- The hunt identifier device that is part of it. This one is maybe active!
-- The hunt identifier device?

- Yes, those trepyrors are for squads. They refer to a unique identifier to secure the connection with a specific leader. All these trepyrors have it.
-- A kind of transponder... You think he may have captured that signal?

- It may be possible. Of course, it would have required using something to triangulate the signal and find our location... And it would have required to be relatively close to us to be able to detect the signal.

- But you just said that the communication system was off.
-- Off, yes, but not disconnected. I wouldn't be surprised if it is always active to be usable as a distress beacon.

-- We have been unlucky if this is really the case.
- I'm not going to take any chances, I will remove it. We won't need a communicator anyway.

- Do you have any idea where we are?
-- We rode a lot last night. We crossed the village of Istawish, which means that we must have done approximately one-sixth of the distance between Periu and the East Coast.

- The East Coast? You plan to reach the East Coast?!
-- Yes, unless you have a problem with that.

-- Well, we were supposed to decide this together!
- I know! Don't get angry! This is what we're doing right now.

- I'm not angry! Just a bit "anxious" about your plan... In fact, I'm anxious about this whole escape.

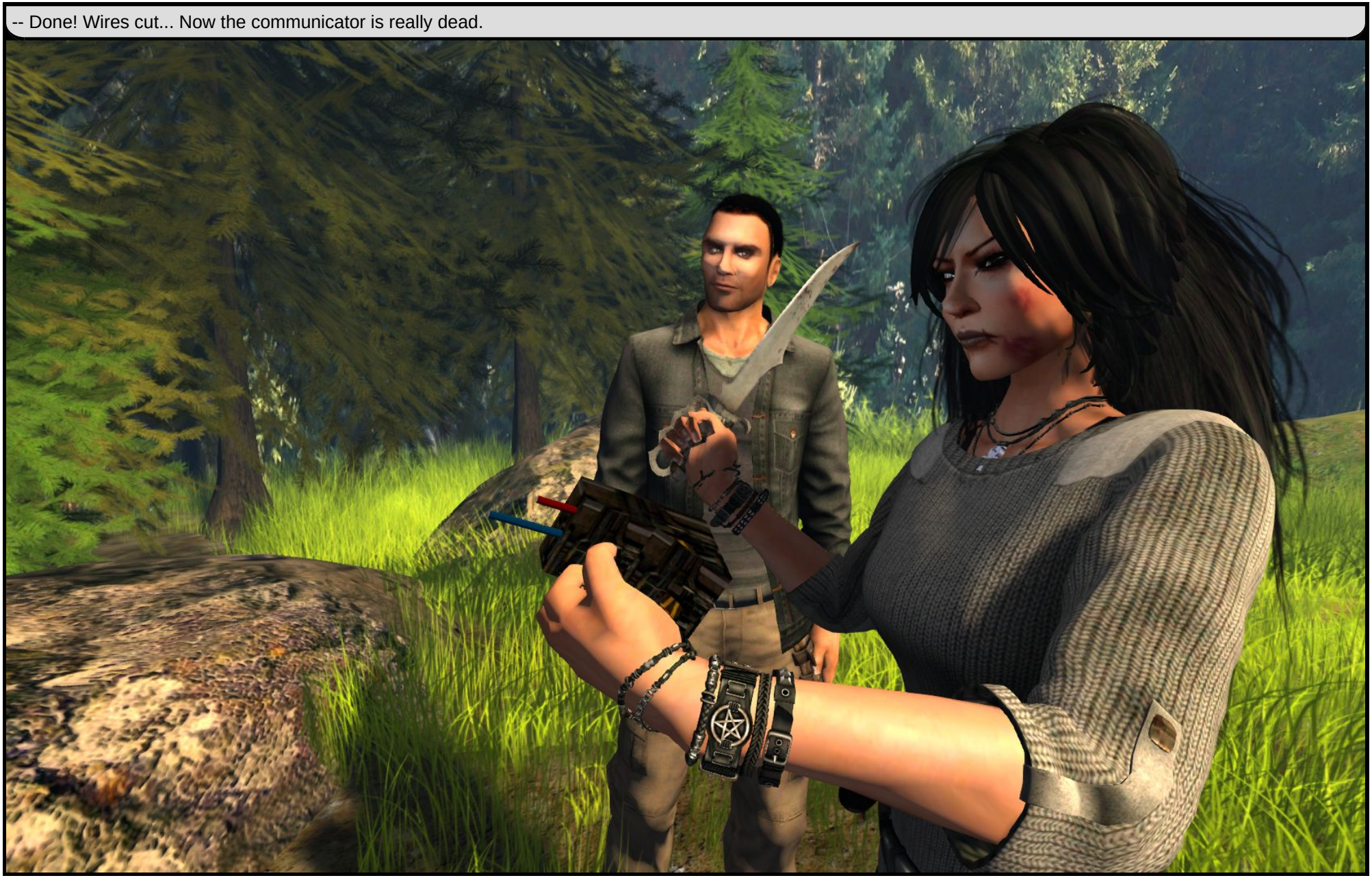
- So you want to take the longest path within the country. Isn't that a bit risky? Are you sure we can make it?

-- I'm confident. We can assume they will search us in the north sector. If so, they're going to consider us as potentially out of Terkazy, today or tomorrow. So they will stop the direct chase. The last direction they will consider, is the east, across all the country.

- Wow! Lot of assumptions.
-- ...And to be honest with you, I would prefer follow the coast to reach the North than take across in the forest, risking to go nowhere by following any river, or end up stuck between any mountains.

- I give you that, the coast by far the most reliable option. There's a good choice of resources to find food, and difficult to get lost on a shore. This is the region I know best on this continent. This is also where we are most likely to find people.

-- Done! Wires cut... Now the communicator is really dead.



- And what about Larmis and his troops?

- I don't expect to have to deal with them. They're clearly not enough to control the rural areas. Whenever possible, we will avoid the main towns.

- We'd better get some sleep if we want to leave at sunset.

- Ah! Roland... I wanted to tell you...
((?))

- Thanks for having shot the Hystazi's orsane. I owe you one.

-- You would have done the same thing for me... I'm sure.
- That's right.

- You know, when he had his hands around my neck, for a moment, I had accepted the fact that I was dying. When you shot him, I wasn't sure if I had to be happy or angry... Well... I don't expect you to understand. I just wanted to tell you.

-- Alezia... Sleep!
- Yeah. ;-)

Later...

- Are you ready to ride?
-- Hmm?! ...Uh? Yes... What time is it?

--Oh! This is already the sunset. I slept like a log.
- If you are hungry, I've put some dry meat for you in the pocket of your bag.

- This is very kind...

- Stop that!... Stop that right now!
-- Stopping what?

-- Don't even dare to do that! Do you hear me?
- Doing what?

- Trying to grab me from behind like you just did! This pisses me off! The last one, who dared to do this, has hit the floor with the nose broken!

- I... I'm very sorry... I had no intention. I didn't know...

- I'll keep my distance... Very sorry.

-- Alright! That's OK.

-- Let's go... We have a long ride to do.

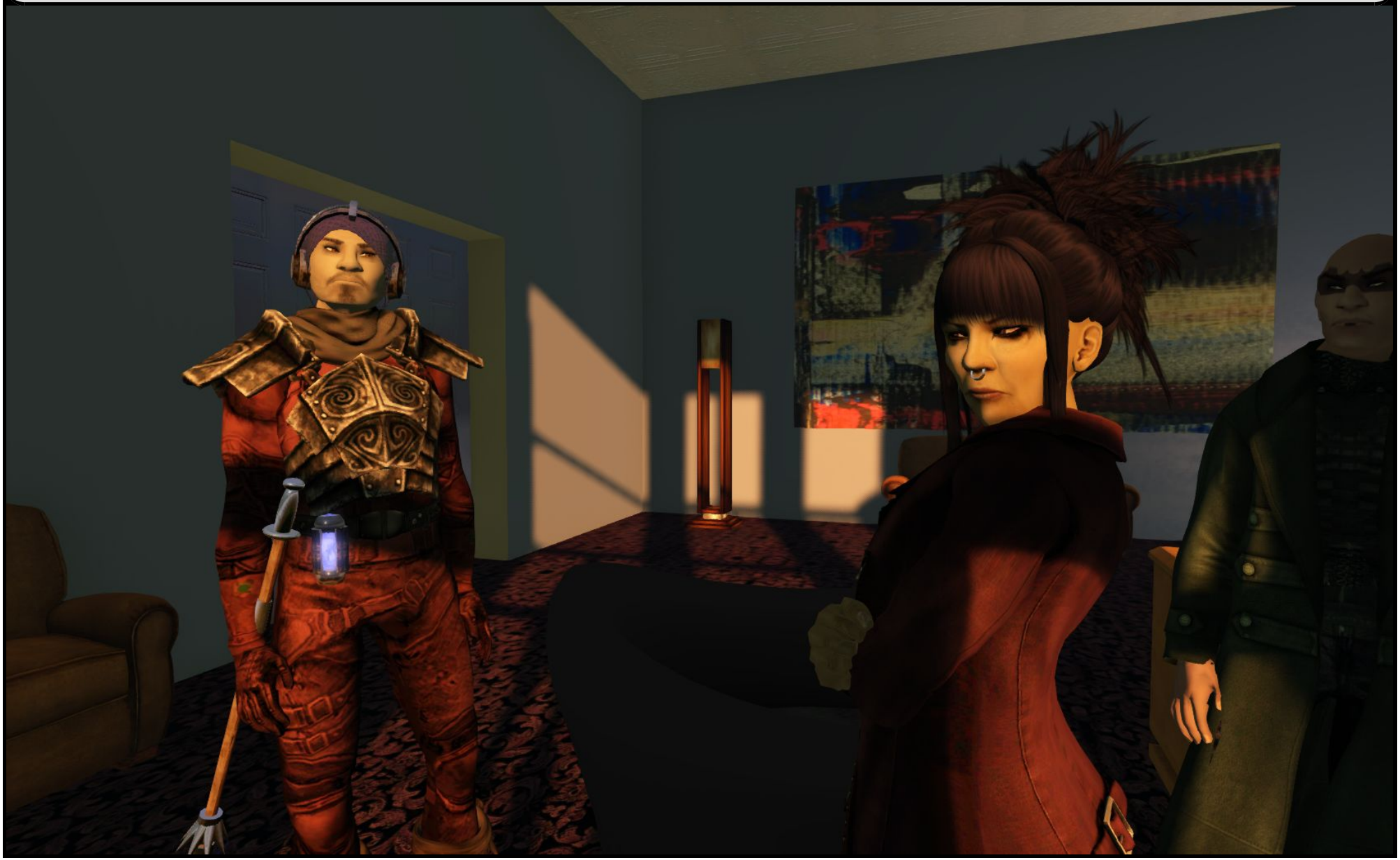
(Damn! She overreacts... She's so unstable sometimes... She was really upset... Angry I must say. She has irrational reactions, this must come from something... We will need to talk.)

Meanwhile, in Periu...

--- Alister, do you have any good news?
- I'm afraid not. It seems that we lost them this time.

- Three squadrons patrolled all roads from the farm. The second one has reached the northern border. They found nothing that could confirm whether or not they are out of the territory.

-- How is Koren?
- They removed him the bullet. He's on his way to Periu.



--- And the interrogation?
- The old man had very few things to say. He provided them some food, hoping to see them leave as soon as possible.

-- We must continue to assume that they are still on the territory.
--- I agree. Continue the patrols, and maintain the checkpoints nights and days.

Two nights later...

-- There's one... About one mile ahead.
- You see a bridge?! I can only trust you on this.

- It would be nice to be able to cross. We certainly did at least 60 miles to find a bridge since we follow this bloody river.

- The problem is that we have to cross the town of Lurdz which is just on the other side.
-- It's a problem? We have already gone through several towns at night without being worried.

- The bridges are probably all guarded. There are only two or three that cross the Isipi river... Let's go closer, and sneak a peek.

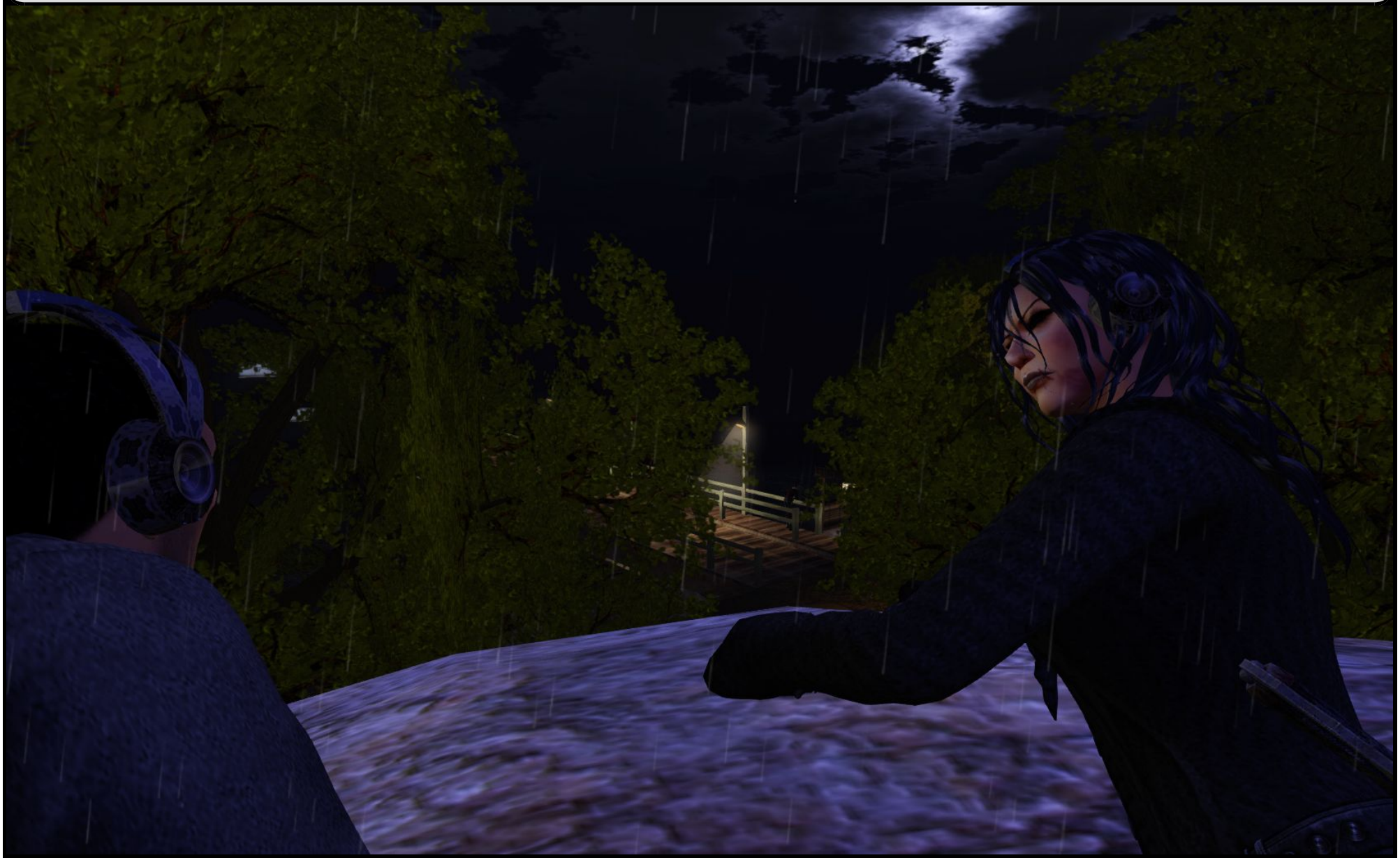
Few minutes later...

-- Nice! It rains, again! ... So? What do you see?
- Three guards. One is dozing, another is inside the cabin, I think he's reading. The last one is just sat at the door.

-- They must be armed.
- Yes. But they have no spear, fortunately for us.

- OK! And how do you plan to cross that bridge?

-- It's still early. We're going to wait until four o'clock, it's the best time to take them by surprise and to cross the town without being chased.



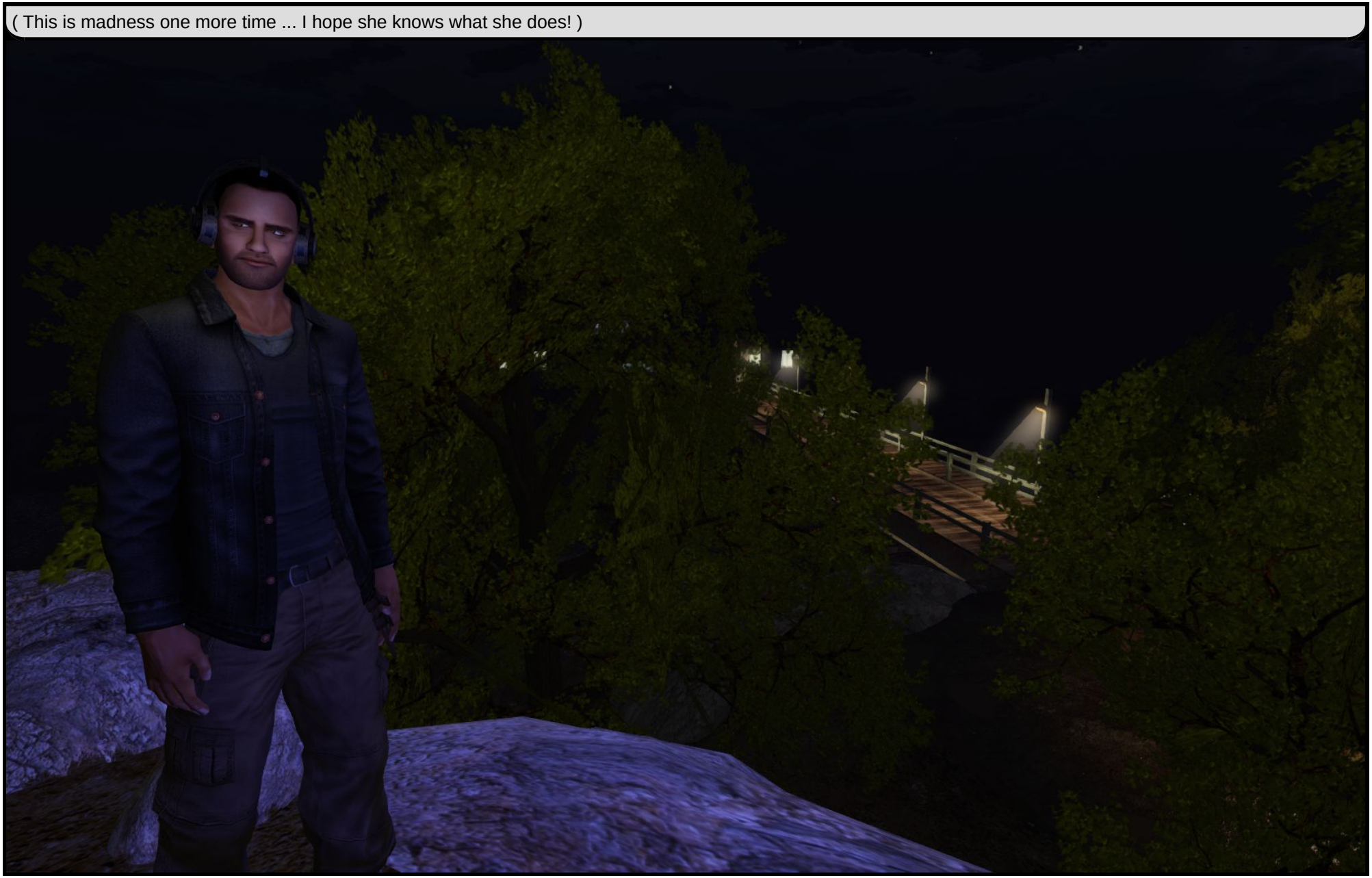
-- But you just said they are armed!
- They have electric batons, but we will do the necessary to make sure they can't approach the trepyror.

- These things that we are wearing, are they really efficient against the discharges of these weapons?
-- Yes, but not without pain. Only the long spears are really lethal.

- When we will cross the bridge, keep your teeth tightly clenched, this could prevent you from biting your tongue if ever you are hit by one of them. ;-)
-- Nice! I'm feeling reassured!

-- I know... Let's return to the trepyror, that leaves us an hour and a half to get prepared.

(This is madness one more time ... I hope she knows what she does!)



An hour and a half later...

(?!)

DVVVZZZZ !

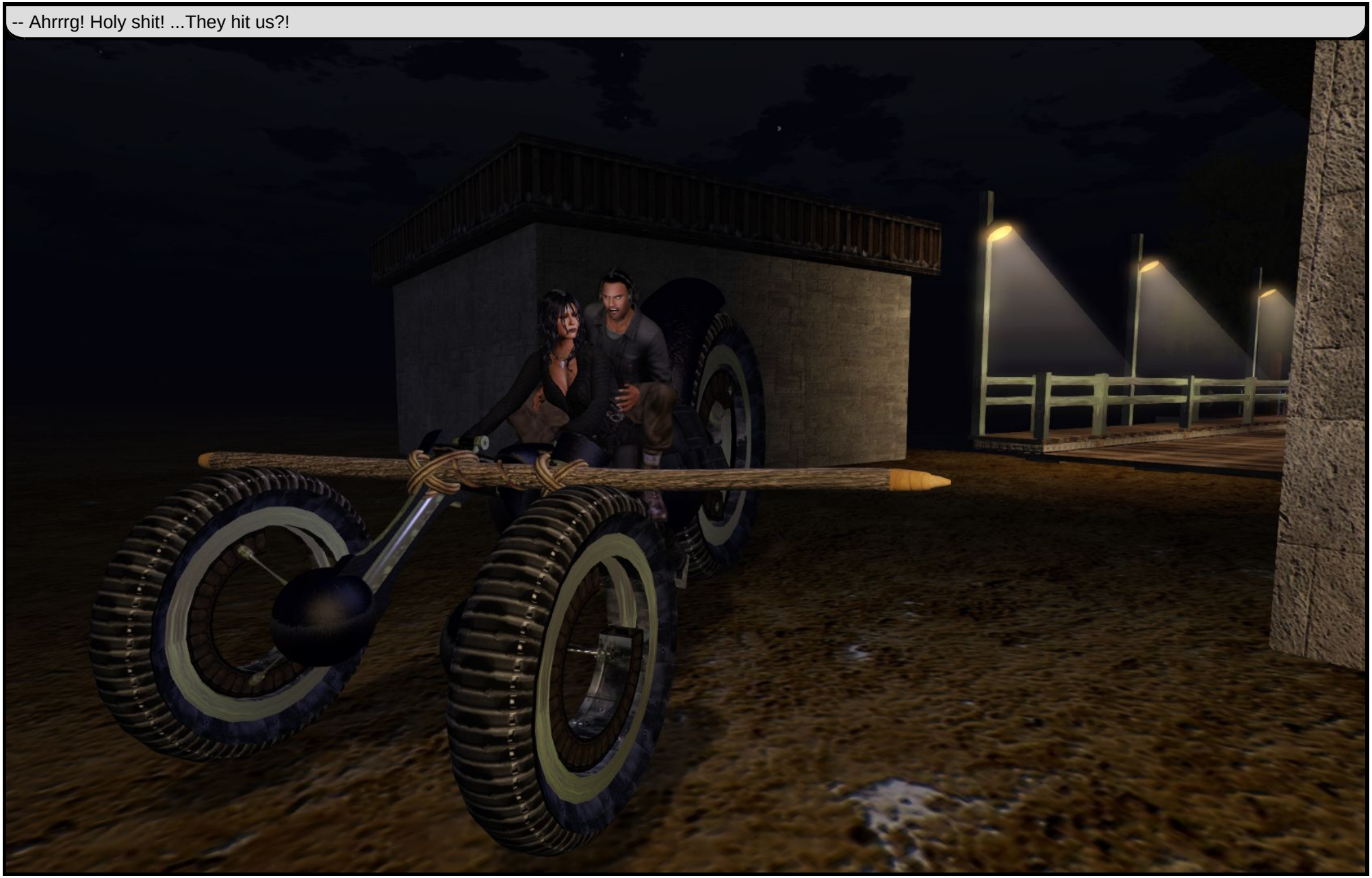
--- What the hell?!
(?!)
-- Huh?

DVVVZZZZ !

TCHUNK !
DVVVZZZZ !
GWITZ !

DYYYZZZZZ !

-- Ahrrrg! Holy shit! ...They hit us?!



- This was a twisted wire. Unpleasant, isn't it?
-- And how! I almost fell.

-- Now, let's get out of here!

DZZZZ !
DZZZZ !

-- What is it?
{Intercom: man's voice} Berigane Larmis! She just crossed the bridge of Lurdz!

{Larmis's voice} I see. When did this happen?
- There are a few minutes. We lost them quickly.

- How many men are aware?
{Intercom} three men. We are only three guards here.
- And... Did you talk about this with anyone else?
{Intercom} No berigane, you wanted to be informed directly.

{Larmis's voice} Listen to me carefully soldier! You and the two others who are with you, I forbid you to talk of this incident to someone else! Nobody must know! Is this understood?
- We have understood berigane.

- I'm serious with that! This information must not fall to the ears of the main berigine. It is the survival of our trade agreements. It concerns the survival of our trade agreements with the North.

- We saw nothing. Nothing will appear in our report.
{Larmis's voice} Goodnight soldiers!
- Goodnight Berigane Larmis.

-- What?! She's still on the territory!
- Yes, and I hope that she will leave the country rapidly!

-- This puts me in an uncomfortable position towards Periu. I don't like that.

-- Come on! Our relationships with the North are more important than the thirst of vengeance of the Kruls.
- Undoubtedly. I suppose it's what we call being caught between a rock and a hard place. Between the Hystazi's orders and the Jijuterk probes pointed on our troops.

Three days later...

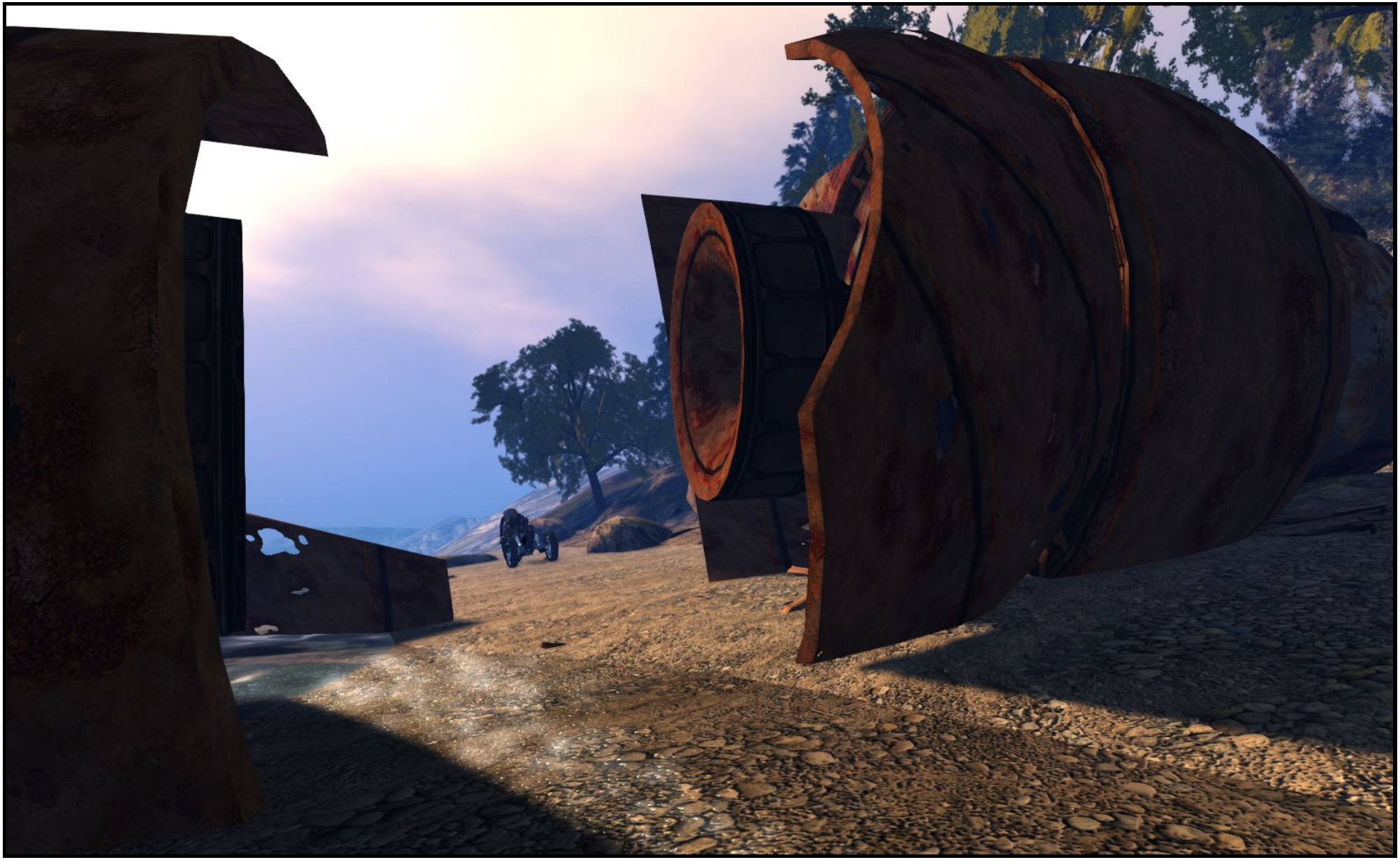
- Finally! Here it is!
-- This is the border?!

- Yeah! We're officially out of Terkazy.
-- I was expecting something more fenced or more guarded. At least we can consider beginning to de-stress.

- Yes, but not too much.

-- It's a good thing, this is still passable for this vehicle.
- I wonder how far will we go before having to abandon it.

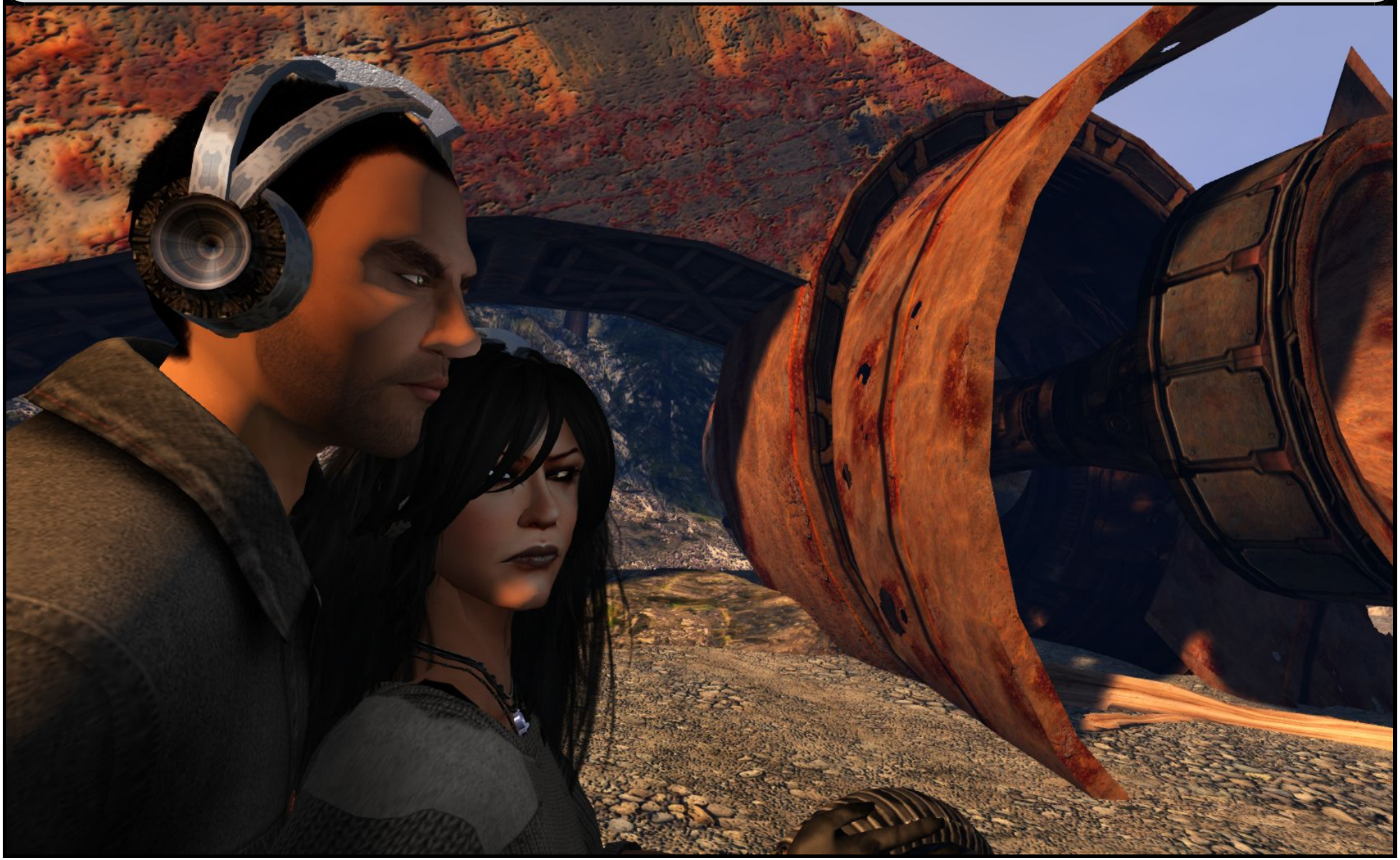
Later...



- What is that? A wreck? It doesn't look much like a boat.

- This is a wreck, but it looks more like the remains of something bigger. This could also be a part of an aircraft... Maybe even from a spacecraft.

- Have you ever seen such things since your arrival?



- Once, but from very far away. It was a Jijuterk aircraft according what they told me. But it wasn't like that.

- This seems to have been there for a long time. Several years certainly.
-- Maybe even some decades.

- I wonder if we will find some remains from our times.

-- I've seen many at different locations in Terkazy. Dallusian vestiges at least. It's far from being uncommon.

-- Do you know what happened to the Dallusian civilization?
- From what I learned, Northalia would have destroyed Dallusia after being severely attacked.

-- This would have stayed contaminated during a long time, since it seems that it would the reason why the Terkasides have finally got this territory, long time left vacant.

Two hours later...

-- Here we are, the end of the road! We won't go further with the trepyror.

-- So it's time for a small walk! ...Nobody around, can we finally remove those electro-protectors?

-- Yes, I think we can. No Terkaside comes that far.

-- I take the tent.
- Ah! I'm going to abandon the krulis on the trepyror, but we will keep the diodic connector. Who knows, this is probably the only things we have that might have a value outside the Terkazy.

-- Do you think we can consider us safe now?

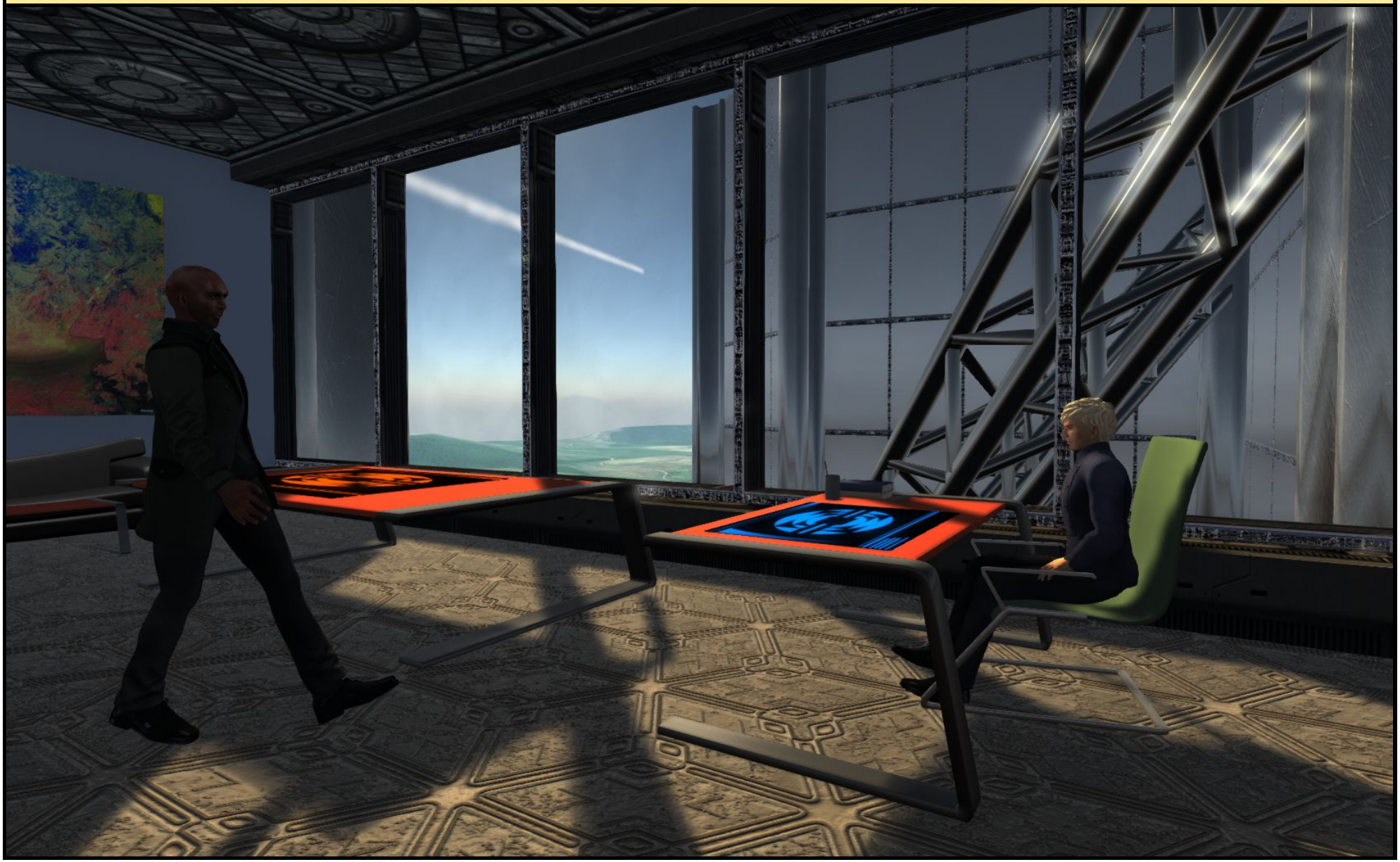
-- Well! We rode very far from any roads. It could take a certain time before someone finds the trepyror. We will be already far when it will happen. So let's say that it's a bit safer.

-- There is always the drones, but we haven't seen any since four days.
- Yes. Maybe they are still searching for us in the north of Periu.

-- I think it will take me a few days to find a decent pace of walking...
- You'll lose your little belly! ;-)

-- Hey! I have a very sedentary job! Do you know that?
- Not anymore... Not anymore. ;-)
-- Yeah, that's true! :-)

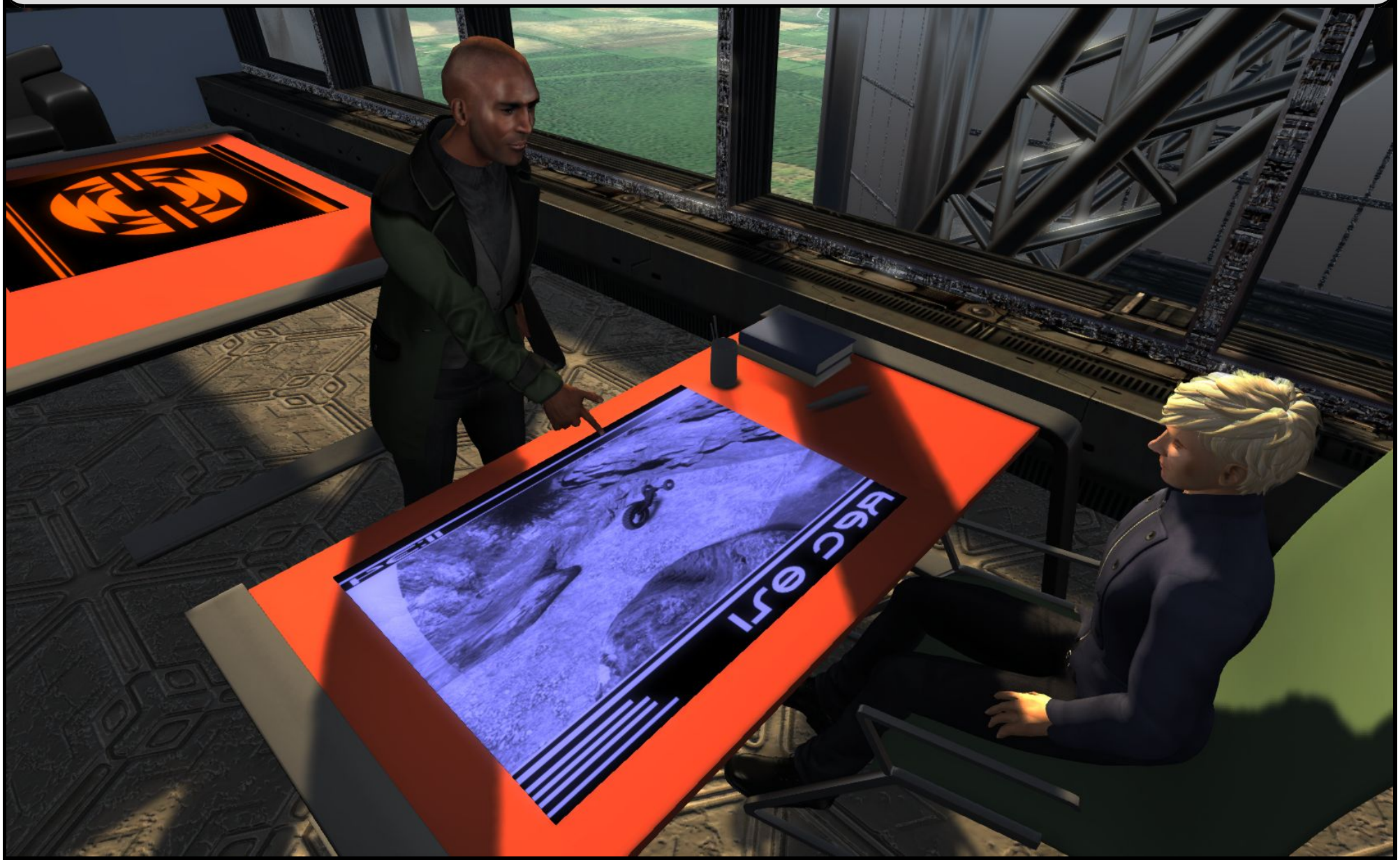
Four hours later...



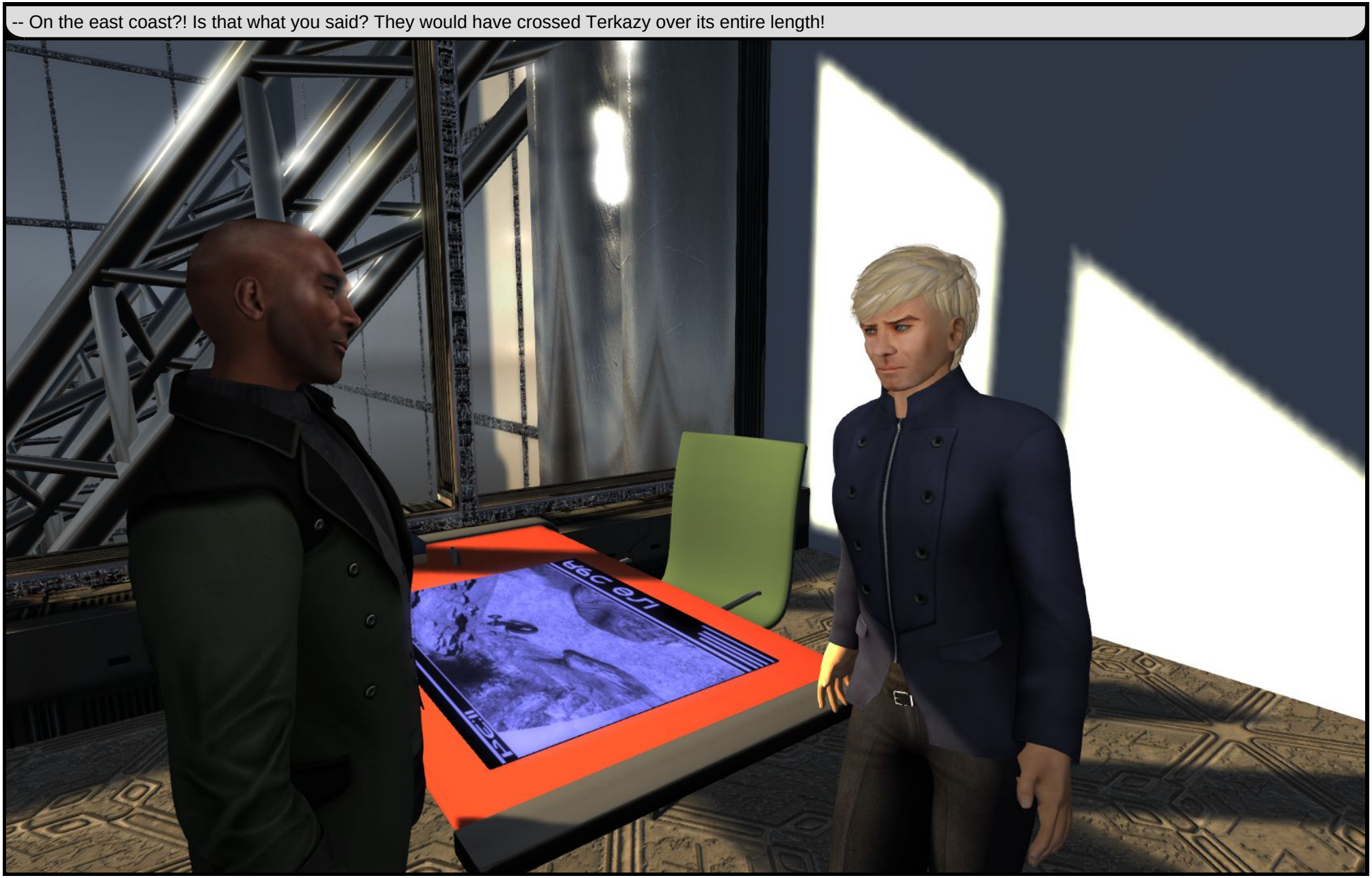
-- Commissioner, we've just received a positive report. We've maybe found physical evidences that Erydak and the Pre-Dallusian could be finally out of the Terkaside territory.

- Really?! Expose the facts, please.

- At 11:34 this morning, the probe 821 has detected a vehicle abandoned on a beach, far north of the Terkaside border on the east coast. The vehicle has been identified as the same scanned by the probe 765 during the last observation of the fugitives.



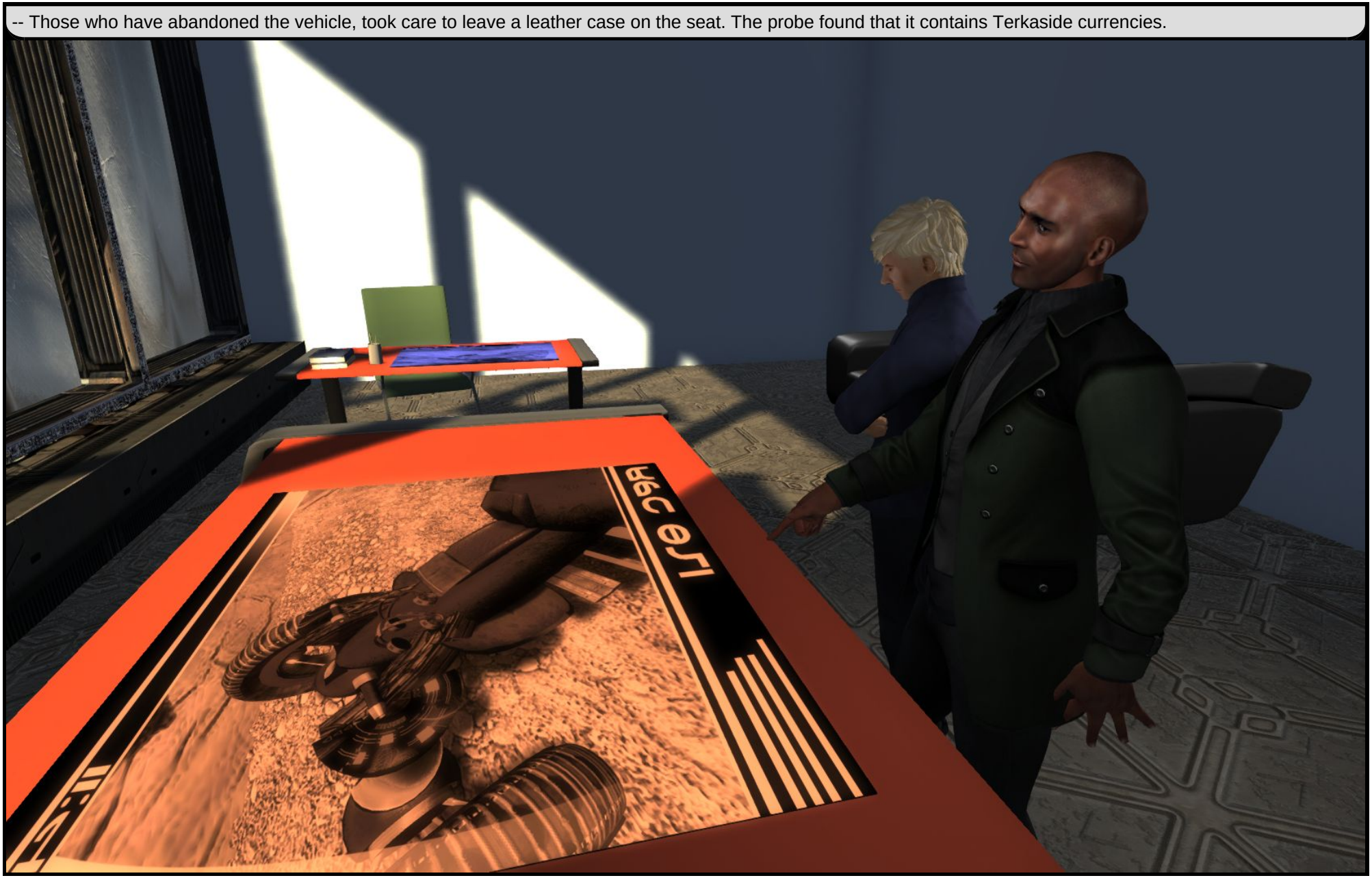
-- On the east coast?! Is that what you said? They would have crossed Terkazy over its entire length!



- I've been surprised as well. Especially because no Terkaside report about their presence has been intercepted after the observation of the 765.

- Do we have any other evidence?

-- Those who have abandoned the vehicle, took care to leave a leather case on the seat. The probe found that it contains Terkaside currencies.



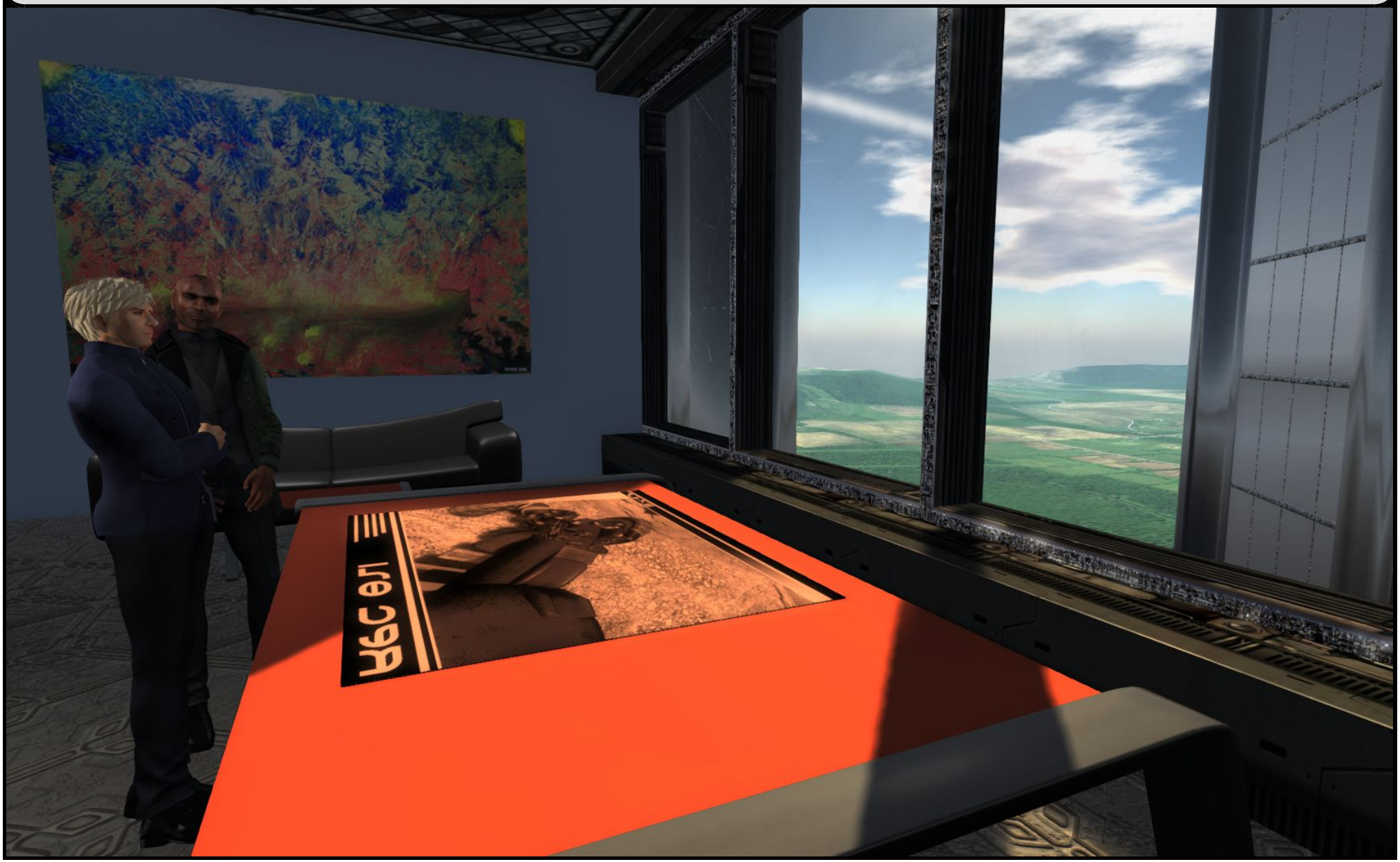
- Hmm... Currencies that are worthless outside the Terkazy. We need more evidence, this could be easily a staging from the Terkasides. They have all the interests of the world that we believe that Erydak has left their territory... Which could also let us fear that the worst happened to her.

- Exactly Commissioner, I've sent a team to the site to find additional evidence that could confirm that all of this is not staged. They left Jijuterk an hour ago.

- Good initiative. If they are still alive, and really on the east coast, it could increase our chances of finding them.

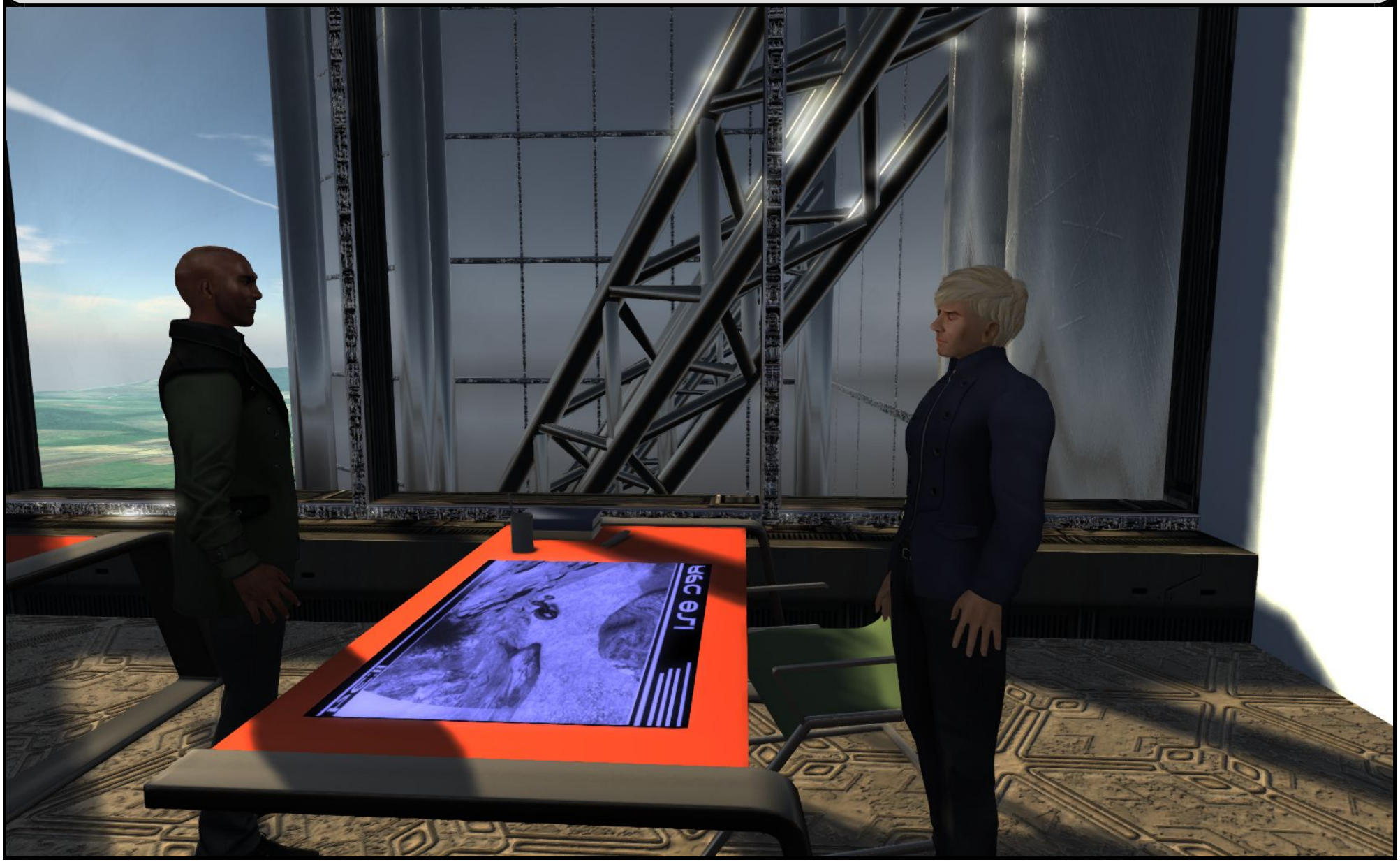
- And, unfortunately, at the same time also find a big part of wildlife.

- Don't undermine all my hopes Mr. Maguire! I know very well that our probes have their limits in the wilderness area.
-- It's only a matter of time, I'm pretty sure.

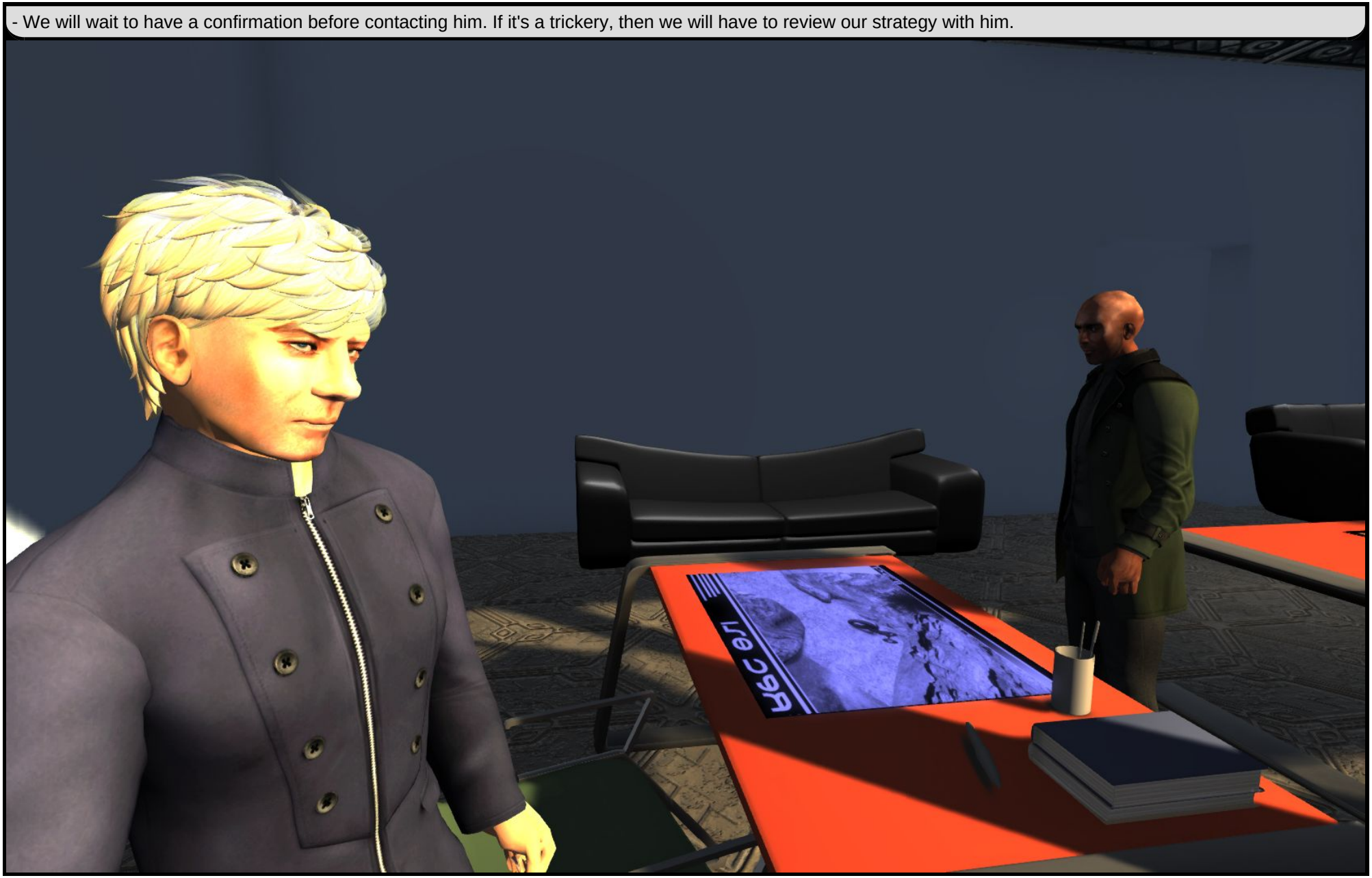


- Contact Reim. Tell him he must now open wide his ears in the marginal zone.

-- In the meantime, make sure that the probes continue to hound the Terkasides. I want to know what they say.
- And for the ambassador?



- We will wait to have a confirmation before contacting him. If it's a trickery, then we will have to review our strategy with him.



At the end of the afternoon...

-- Could we take a break?
- OK.

- I always like the ocean.
-- Yes, me as well. This remembers me the Rantar's beaches, despite the fact that it's not the same ocean.

- You know what? For the first time since many weeks, in fact, since several years, I can truly say that I feel free. And this, even though I have great uncertainty about our ability to ensure our subsistence.

- No job, no alarm clock, no silly deadlines. No more boss... Except you of course! ;-)

- You couldn't believe how long it took me to stop to be worry about this day-to-day that I've left behind.

- I can say that I feel pretty like this too. All the last years passed in this country, in this culture that was clearly not mine. And that constant high expectation that they had all toward me. I won't miss most of them... For finally remember who I was...

-- Now we just have to take care of us... Which means, that I have to get ready to go hunting while you set up the camp and go to sleep.

-- ... And that you're going to cook while I'm gonna sleep late in the morning. ;-)

- Cooking? Yeah... Uh! But I'm not very good at cooking!
-- Me neither... You cook, I hunt... I see the infrareds, but you can't. I can see animals very clearly at night... so!

- Alright! Let's try this. Anyway, I'm sure you're better than me for hunting.

- Yeah! If we want to have something to eat, I better take care of this. ;-)

- Pfff!
((?!))

-- Roland...

-- Roland... On the ground! Quick!

- What is happening?

FUUUUUUUUU !!!

-- What the hell is that? Another kind of drone?

- No... These are the Jijuterks!

A few days later...

-- Esane Gulan! I hope you are happy to be back to your position?
- I can't deny it.

- I have to go, I have a some cases to settle. However, I would like to see you tomorrow. I would like to inform you about the next steps of our reorganization.
-- I shall do so.

- Ah! I was forgetting... I found this letter addressed to you, it comes from the eastern division. It was among the papers in her desk.
-- Oh? Thank you.

- I see you tomorrow esane. Have a good day.

(Let's see what the eastern division could have of so important to send it to me in writing... Goodness! This is something else... A letter from Erydak!)

(Dear esane and friend Gulan.
By the time you read this letter, there is a lot of chances that I will be already far, by distance, if it's not in existence. If I took the time to write you this letter, this is to make you understand the reasons that made me choose to quit, instead to confront the coup d'etat that I see dawning. After Mary's death, I realized that there was no room in Terkazy for Erydak, the "twenty-seventh tyrant". A significant event happened the night after her death, triggered by the presence of Roland. His presence has unlocked a part of my memory affected by my passage through the Taalus...)

(... I finally got to remember who I was before coming here. It has seemed very clear to me, after this event, that it was better for me to move on and leave the Terkazy, despite the friendship that I feel for you. There is one thing that came back to my mind, and that I have to tell you...)

... An event that has occurred after my arrival, three years ago. The eve of the fateful night that sealed the fate of the 26 tyrants, at Hystazi's home, while I was still befuddled after have smoked, a man has come...

... A man who had neither the accent nor the expressions of a Terkaside. He seemed very informed about the moves of the 26 tyrants. He could not be one of them, I would have recognized the Dallusian accent. This man could only be a Jijuterk...

... The next morning, after have eradicated the 26 tyrants, it was the first time of my life that I was seeing a Jijuterk probe. Four probes have surrounded the building during several minutes. But for Mary, freshly captured, it was not really the first time...

(... Is that Hystazi would have some privileged contacts with the Jijuterk watchers? There is something not very clean behind this. Gulan, never trust Hystazi, she's manipulative. If my calculations are correct, the coup d'etat will come from her. You will have understood that I placed her in custody to save time...)

(... I wanted to let you know how important you were to me. Thank you for your dedication, your loyalty and above all, for your friendship. It's time to move on my friend. Take care of Qwelz, you two seem to get along pretty well.
Your friend Alezia (Erydak))

The End.

ALEZIA: The 26 Tyrants

Roland wakes up under another sky, and learns what happened to Alezia.

by Zeja Pyle

Contact

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