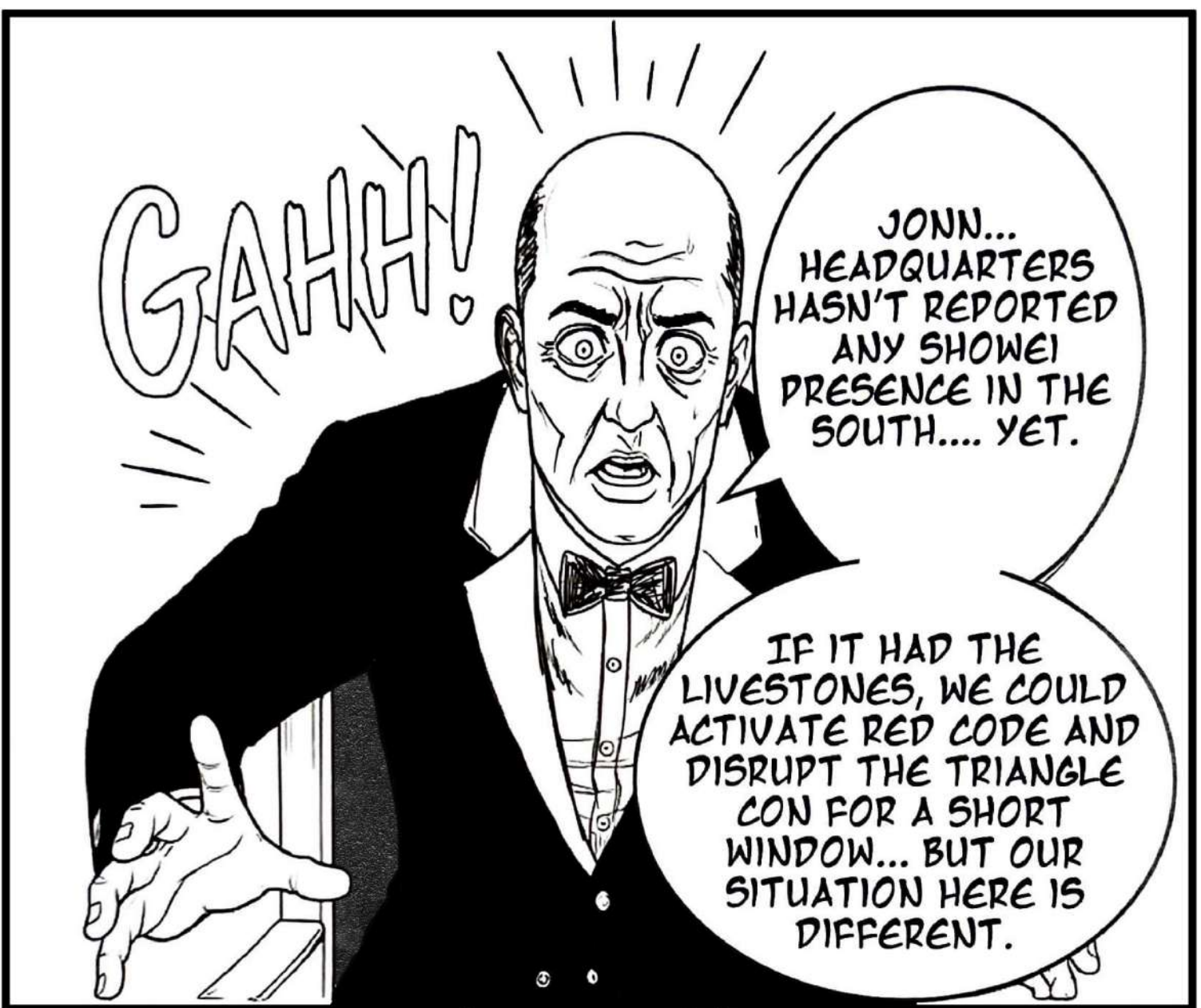


#004





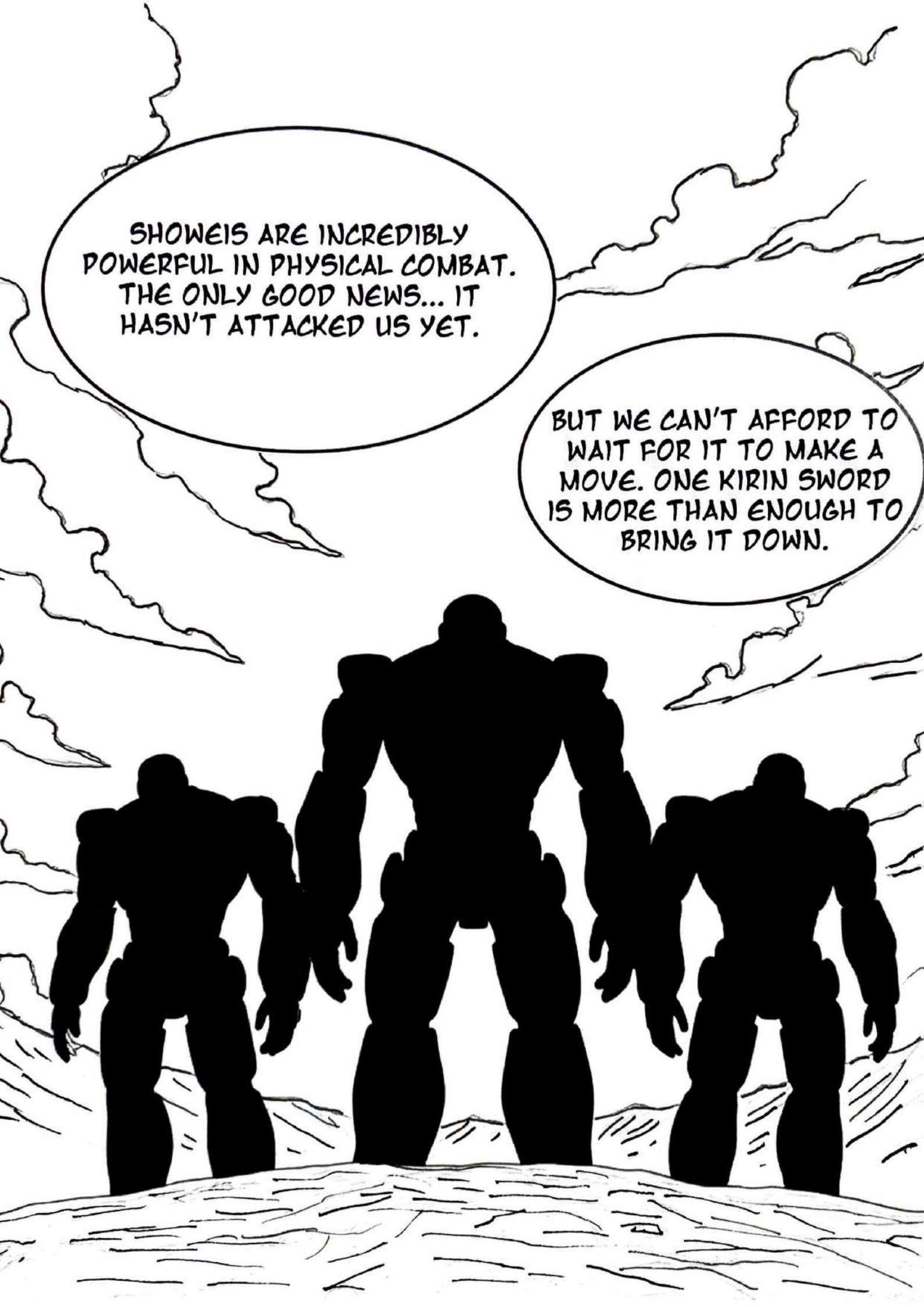
GAHH!

JOHN...
HEADQUARTERS
HASN'T REPORTED
ANY SHOWEI
PRESENCE IN THE
SOUTH.... YET.

IF IT HAD THE
LIVESTONES, WE COULD
ACTIVATE RED CODE AND
DISRUPT THE TRIANGLE
CON FOR A SHORT
WINDOW... BUT OUR
SITUATION HERE IS
DIFFERENT.

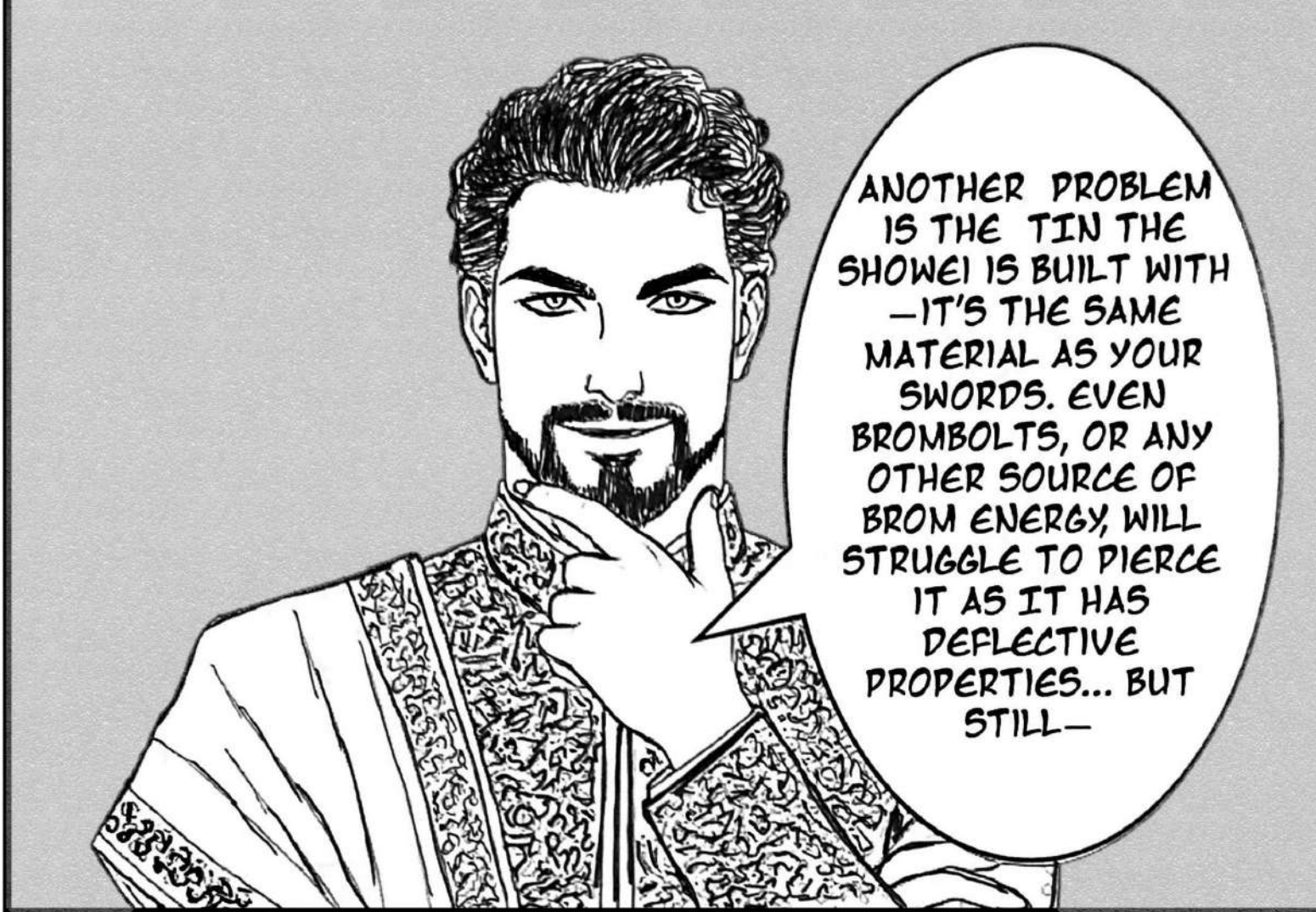


IF SOMEONE ELSE
IS CONTROLLING
IT... AND WE DON'T
KNOW WHO... THEN
THE ONLY OPTION
LEFT IS TO BRING
IT DOWN WITH OUR
KIRIN.

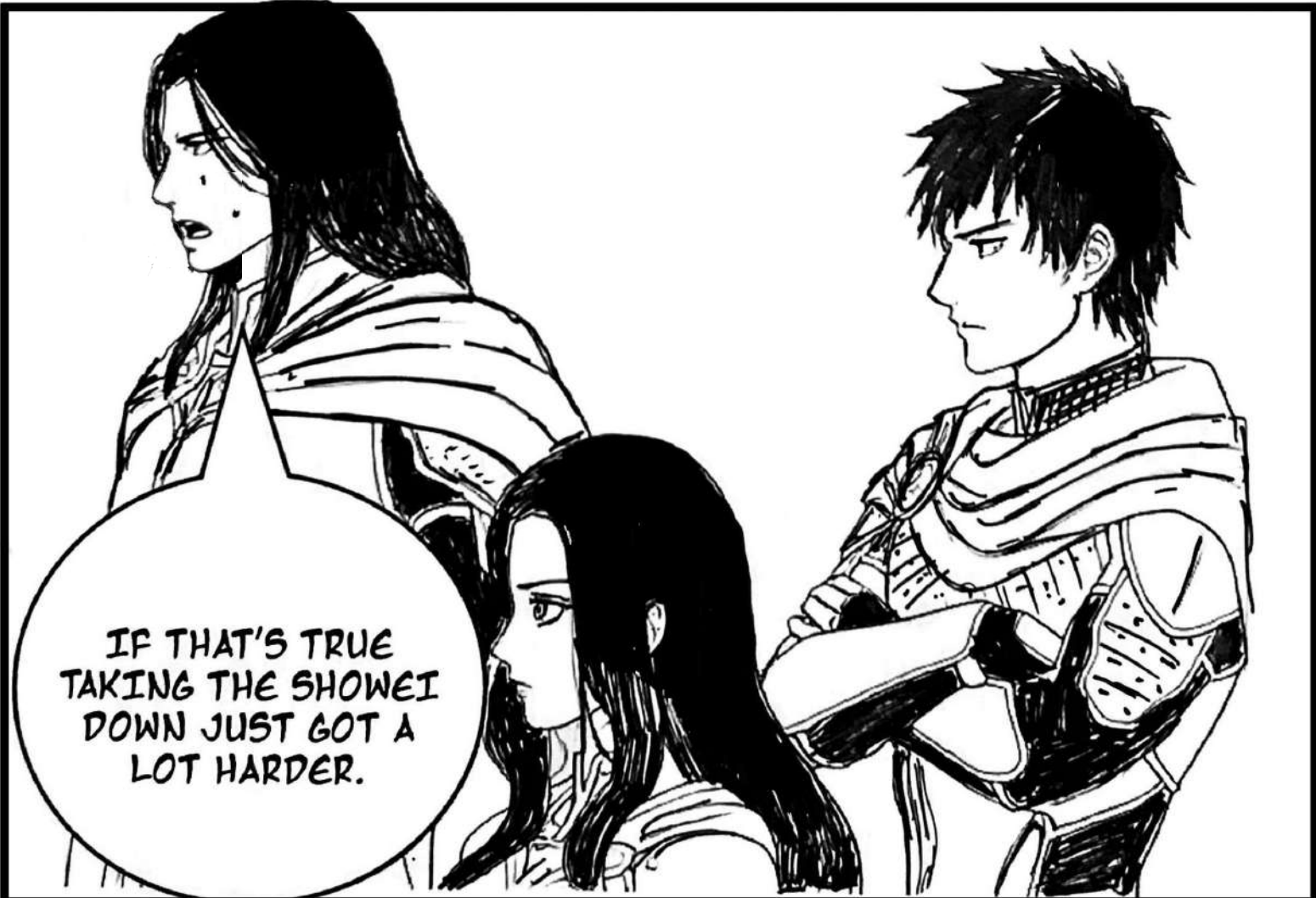
A black and white comic book panel. At the bottom, three muscular, bald figures are shown in silhouette, standing on a rocky ledge. They are looking towards the sky. The background consists of stylized, jagged clouds. Two speech bubbles are present: one on the left and one on the right. The text in the speech bubbles is in all caps and a simple, bold font.

SHOWEIS ARE INCREDIBLY
POWERFUL IN PHYSICAL COMBAT.
THE ONLY GOOD NEWS... IT
HASN'T ATTACKED US YET.

BUT WE CAN'T AFFORD TO
WAIT FOR IT TO MAKE A
MOVE. ONE KIRIN SWORD
IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO
BRING IT DOWN.



ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THE TIN THE SHOWEI IS BUILT WITH —IT'S THE SAME MATERIAL AS YOUR SWORDS. EVEN BROMBOLTS, OR ANY OTHER SOURCE OF BROM ENERGY, WILL STRUGGLE TO PIERCE IT AS IT HAS DEFLECTIVE PROPERTIES... BUT STILL—



IF THAT'S TRUE TAKING THE SHOWEI DOWN JUST GOT A LOT HARDER.

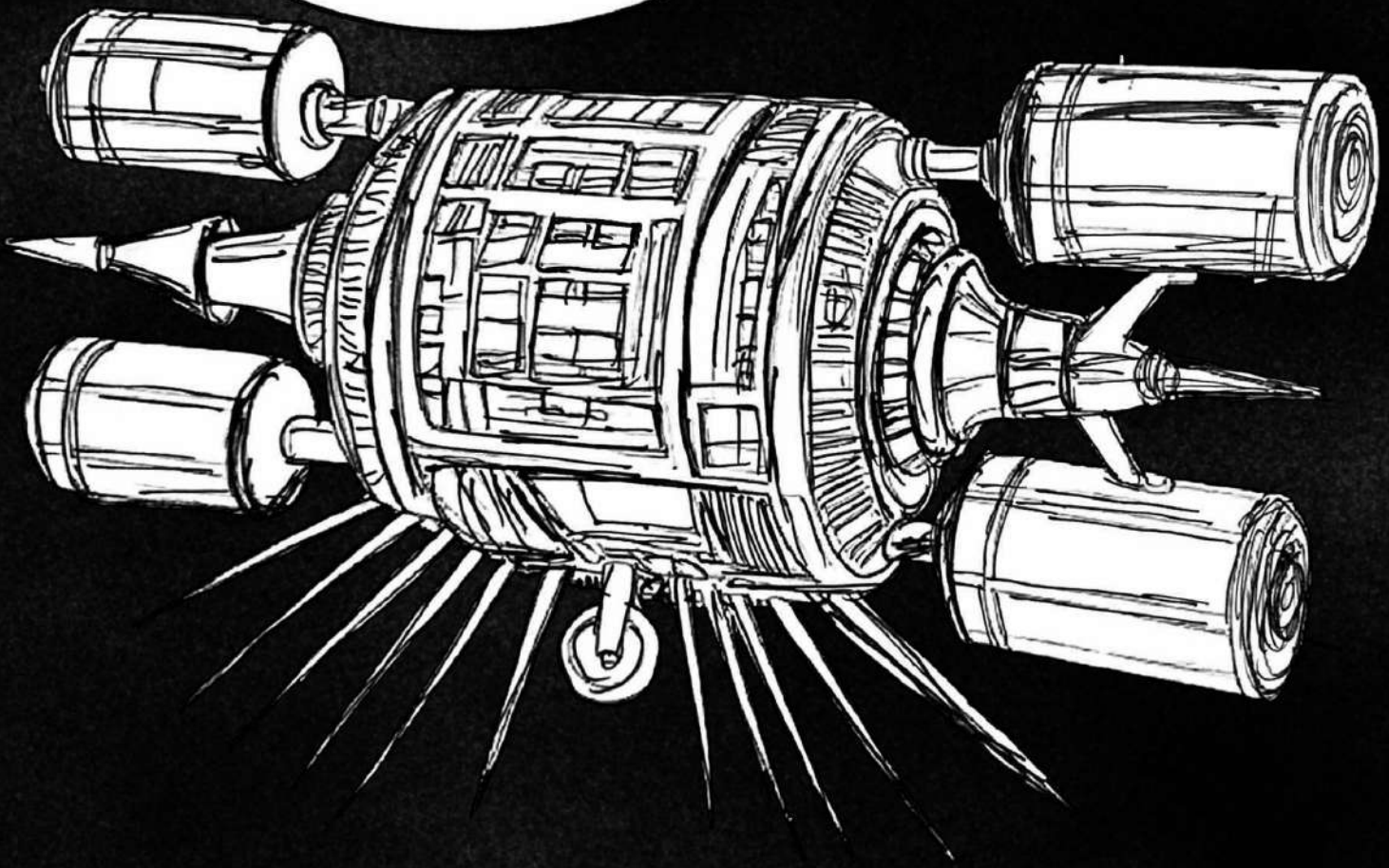


AIESHOK...WE SAW
A CELBREROM ON THE
RIVER BEFORE SHOWEI
APPEARED.
WHAT ABOUT THAT?

COMMANDER MALICE,
WE'VE CONFIRMED UNIT
LOSSES IN THE SOUTH—
BUT WE STILL HAVE NO
EXPLANATION FOR HOW IT
HAPPENED.

I'VE ATTEMPTED TO REBALANCE
THE NETTING MULTIPLE TIMES
AND HAVE BEEN MONITORING IT
CONTINUOUSLY, BUT STABILIZATION
HASN'T HELD. YOU SHOULD EXPECT
FLUCTUATIONS IN BROMBOLT
DELIVERY DURING KIRIN
DEPLOYMENT. BE CAREFUL WHILE
USING THE KIRIN.

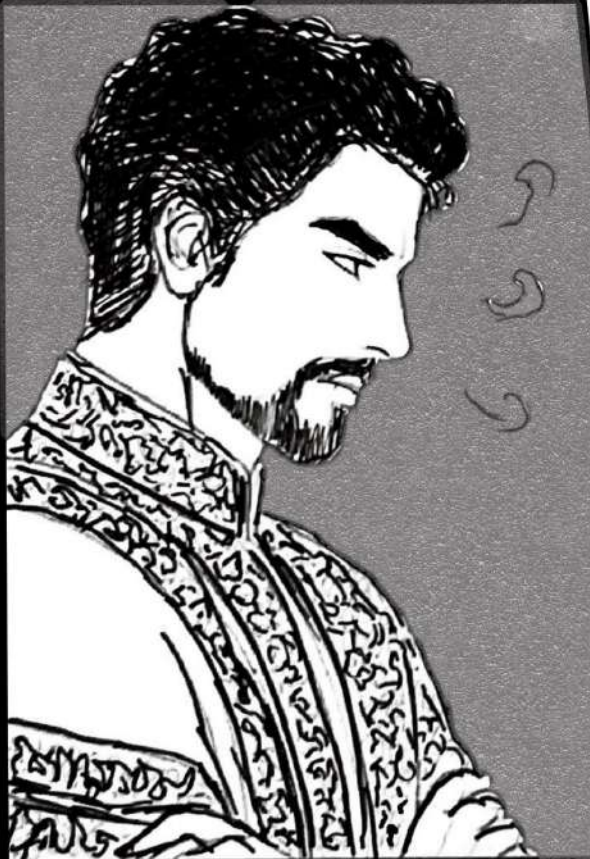
WE NEED TO RECOVER THE
LOST CEL-UNITS AND BRING
THEM TO MY LAB. ONLY
THEN CAN I SHED LIGHT ON
WHAT HAPPENED.



FOR NOW, IT'S BEST WE
FOCUS ON HOW TO BRING
THAT SHOEI DOWN..



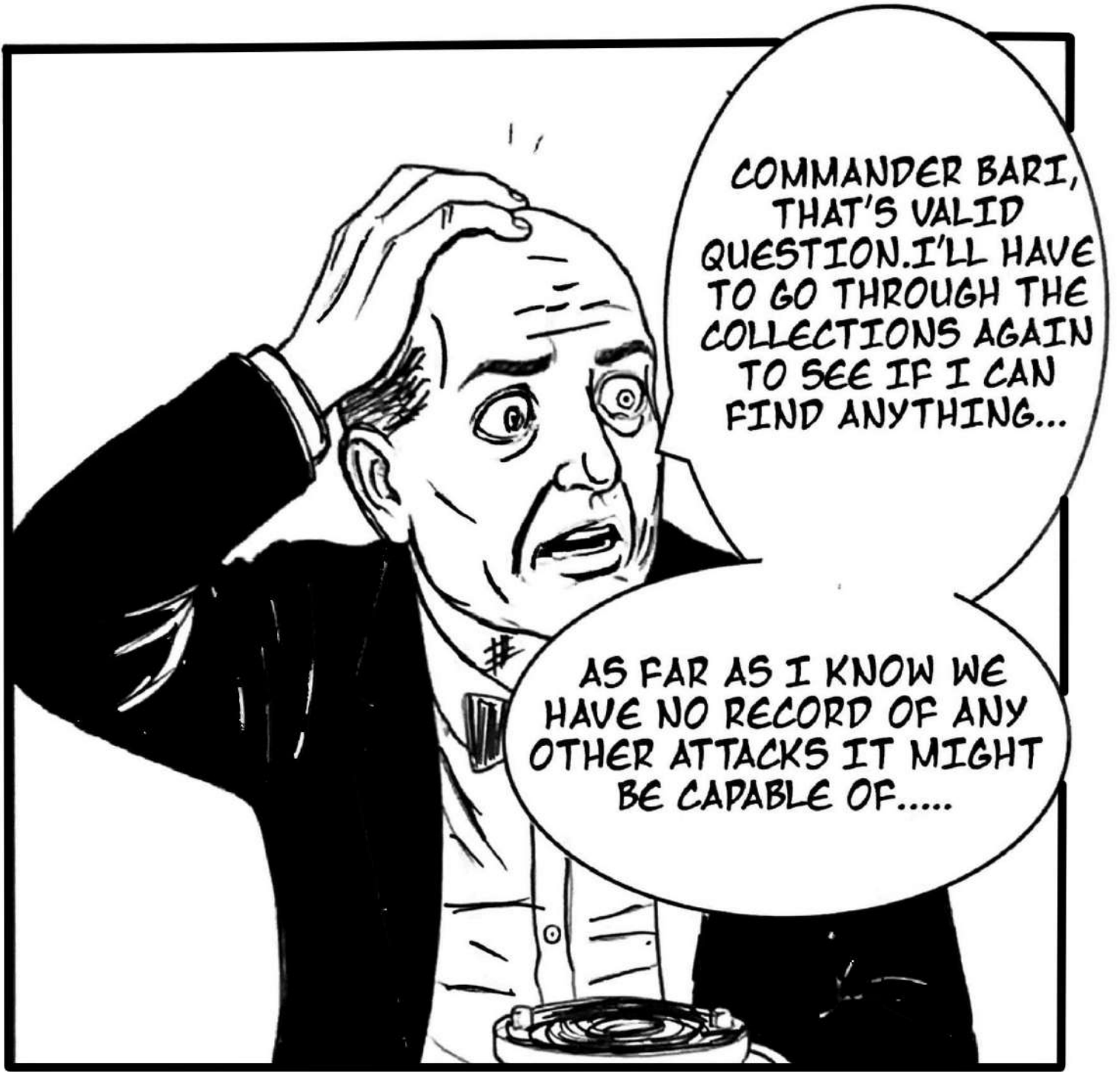
ABOUT THE
SHOWEI....IF IT
CAN'T USE THE
CEL UNITS,DO WE
KNOW OF ANY
OTHER BACKUP
ATTACKS IT
MIGHT HAVE.



WELL...I HADN'T CONSIDERED
THAT... IF IT DOESN'T HAVE
THE LIVESTONES, THEN IT
MUST BE HIDING SOMETHING
ELSE. BARI MAY BE RIGHT



HE'S RIGHT...
THERE MIGHT BE
SOMETHING
DANGEROUS IT'S
HIDING.

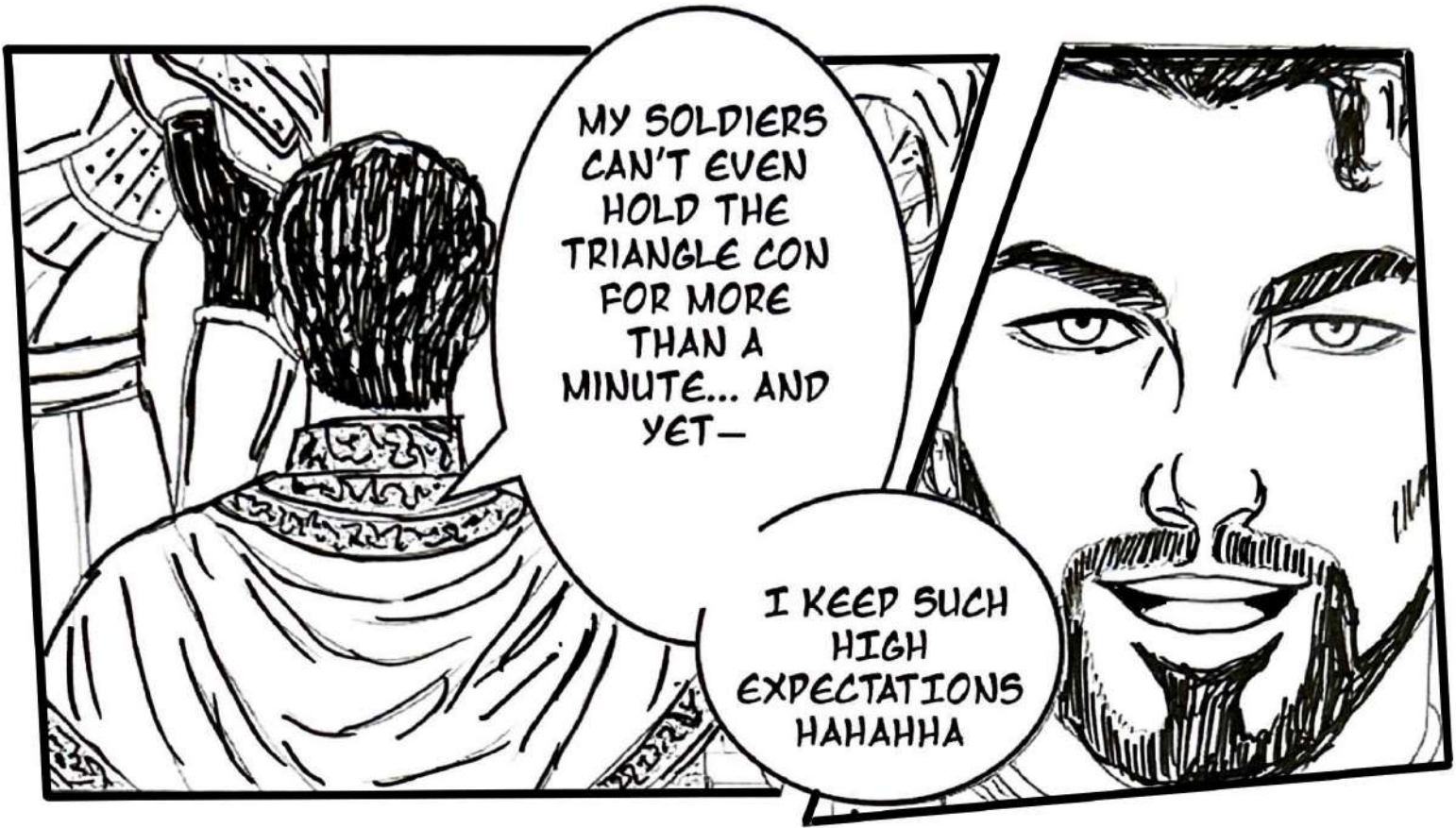


COMMANDER BARI,
THAT'S VALID
QUESTION. I'LL HAVE
TO GO THROUGH THE
COLLECTIONS AGAIN
TO SEE IF I CAN
FIND ANYTHING...

AS FAR AS I KNOW WE
HAVE NO RECORD OF ANY
OTHER ATTACKS IT MIGHT
BE CAPABLE OF.....

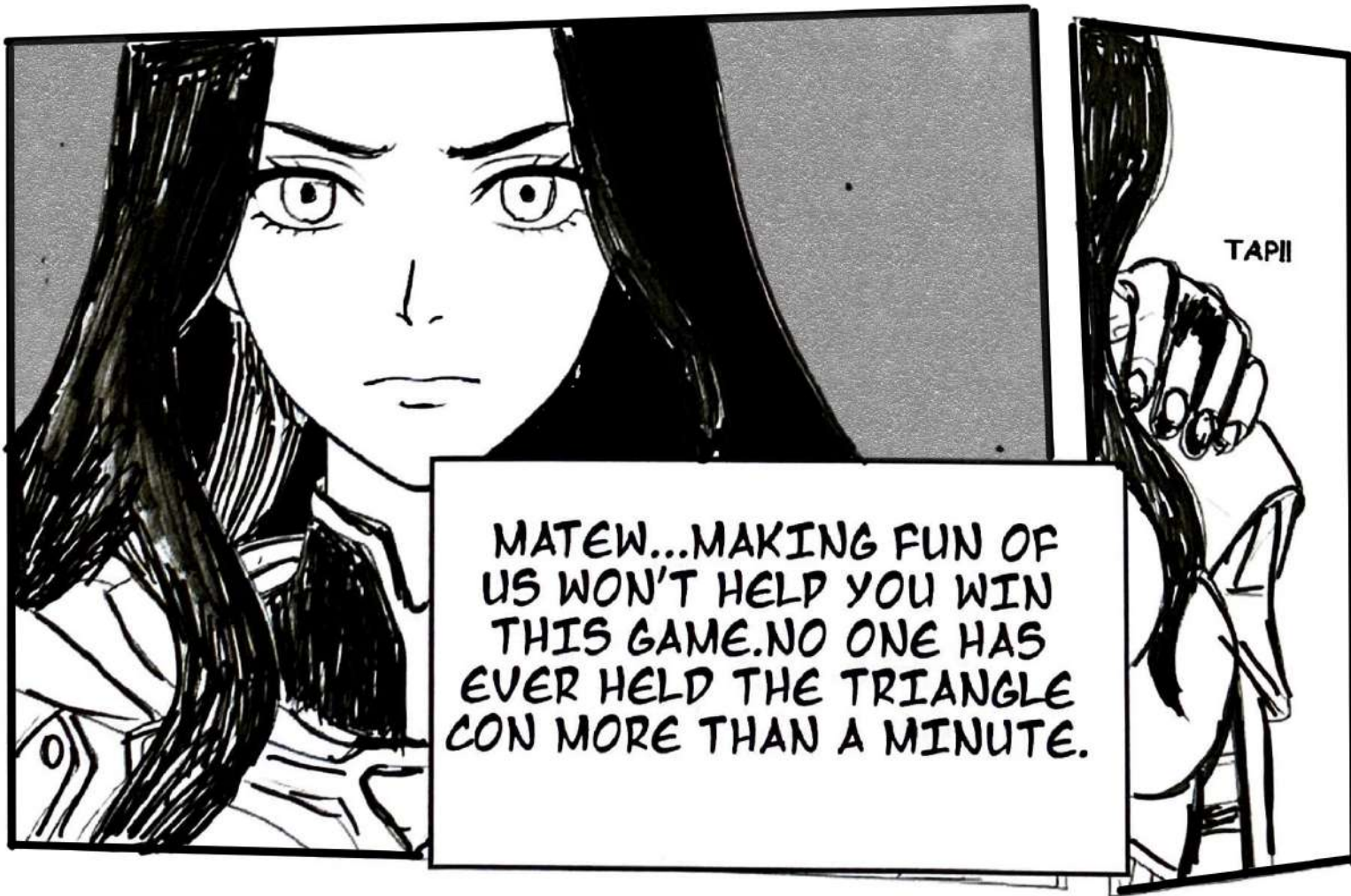


HOPE IT
DOESN'T
TURN OUT
BAD




MY SOLDIERS
CAN'T EVEN
HOLD THE
TRIANGLE CON
FOR MORE
THAN A
MINUTE... AND
YET—

I KEEP SUCH
HIGH
EXPECTATIONS
HAHAHHA



TAPII

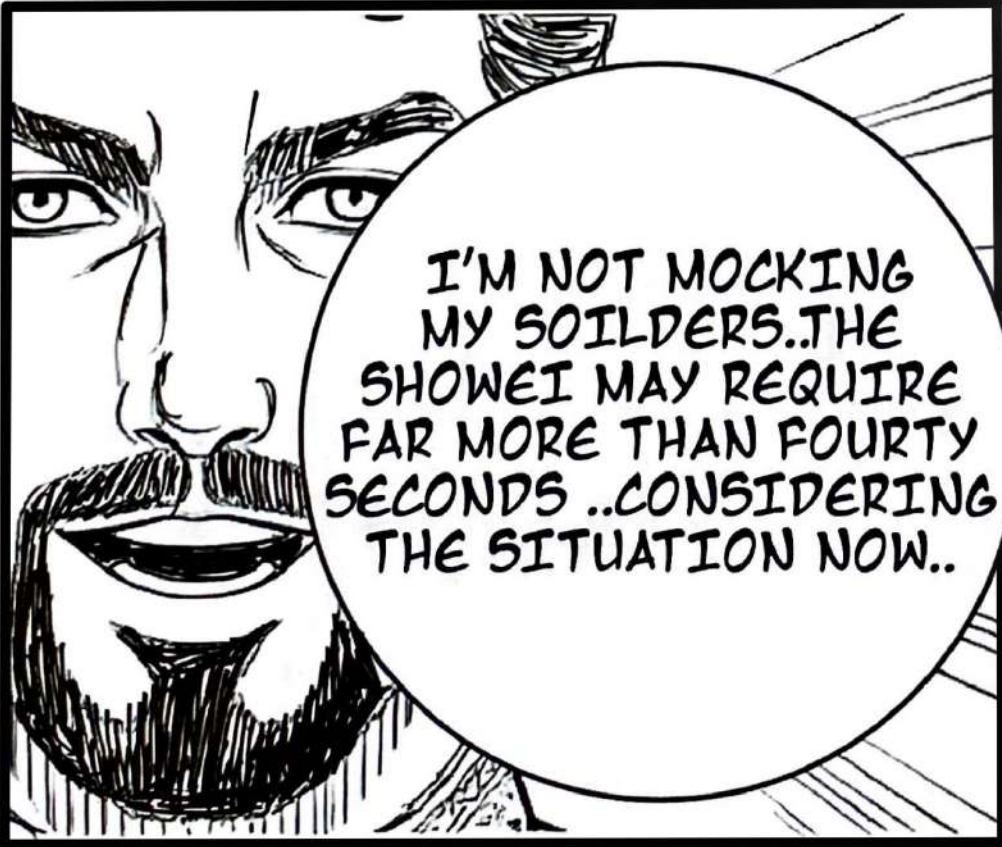
MATEW...MAKING FUN OF
US WON'T HELP YOU WIN
THIS GAME.NO ONE HAS
EVER HELD THE TRIANGLE
CON MORE THAN A MINUTE.



MATEW...YOU KNOW
THE TRIANGLE-CON
CAN BE DEADLY
AFTER FOURTY
SECONDS.AND YET
I'VE CROSSED IT
FEW TIMES



..SO WHY..
ARE YOU TRYING TO
MOCK US IN A
SITUATION LIKE THIS?



I'M NOT MOCKING
MY SOILDERS.THE
SHOWEI MAY REQUIRE
FAR MORE THAN FOURTY
SECONDS ..CONSIDERING
THE SITUATION NOW..

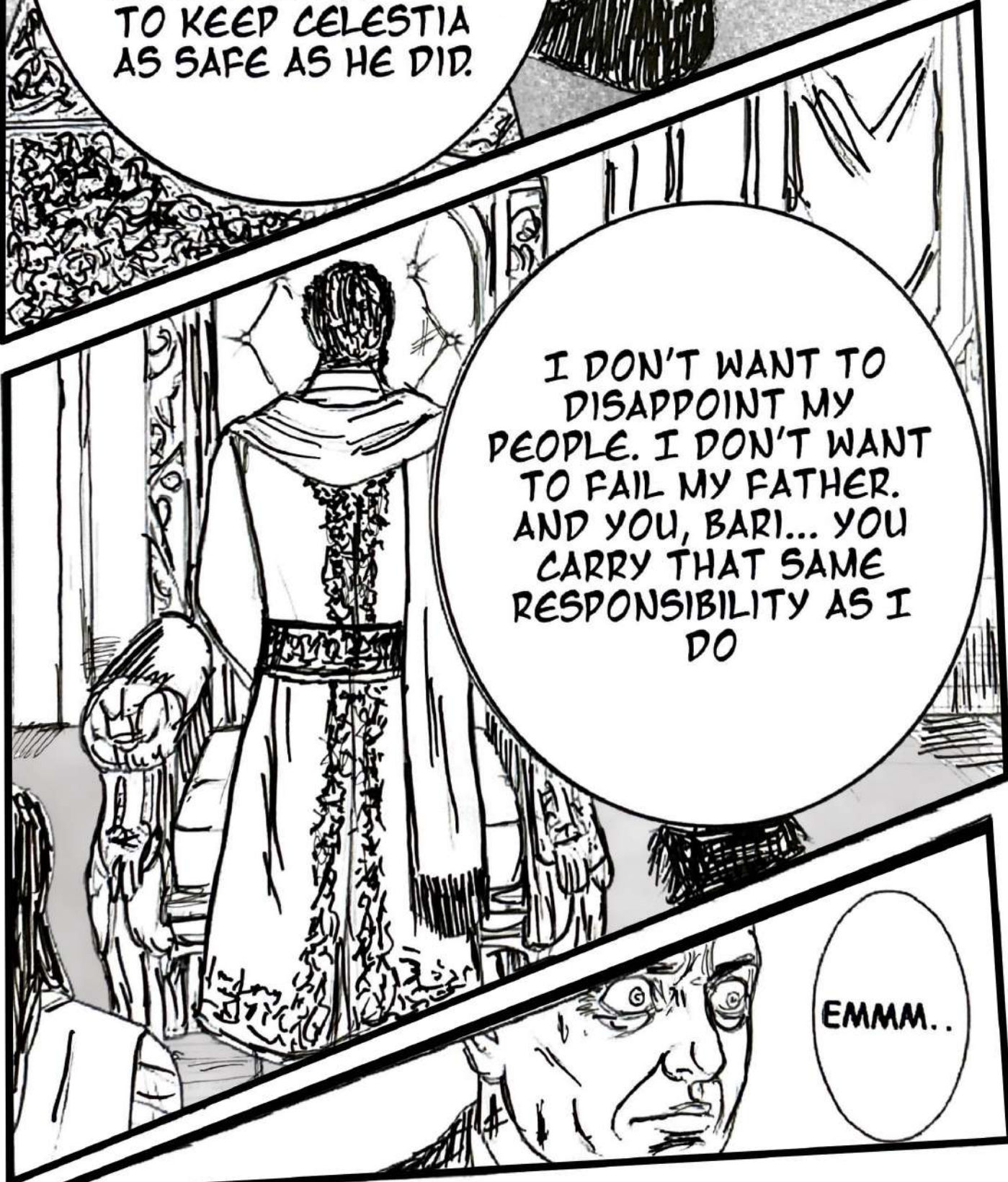


TAPII

TAPIII



BARI... WE GREW UP TOGETHER. WE TRAINED SIDE BY SIDE. AFTER MY FATHER DIED AND I TOOK THE THRONE... ALL I EVER WANTED WAS TO KEEP CELESTIA AS SAFE AS HE DID.



I DON'T WANT TO DISAPPOINT MY PEOPLE. I DON'T WANT TO FAIL MY FATHER. AND YOU, BARI... YOU CARRY THAT SAME RESPONSIBILITY AS I DO



EMMM..



MATEW...
THERE'S
SOMETHING I
FORGOT TO
TELL YOU.



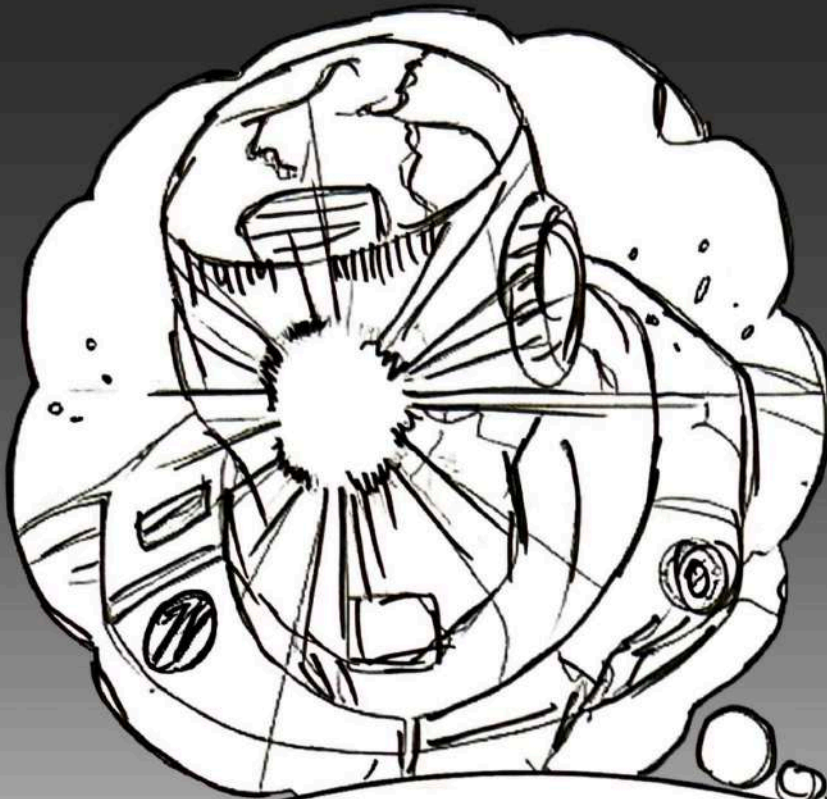
EHH..



MHM..?
WHAT IS IT?



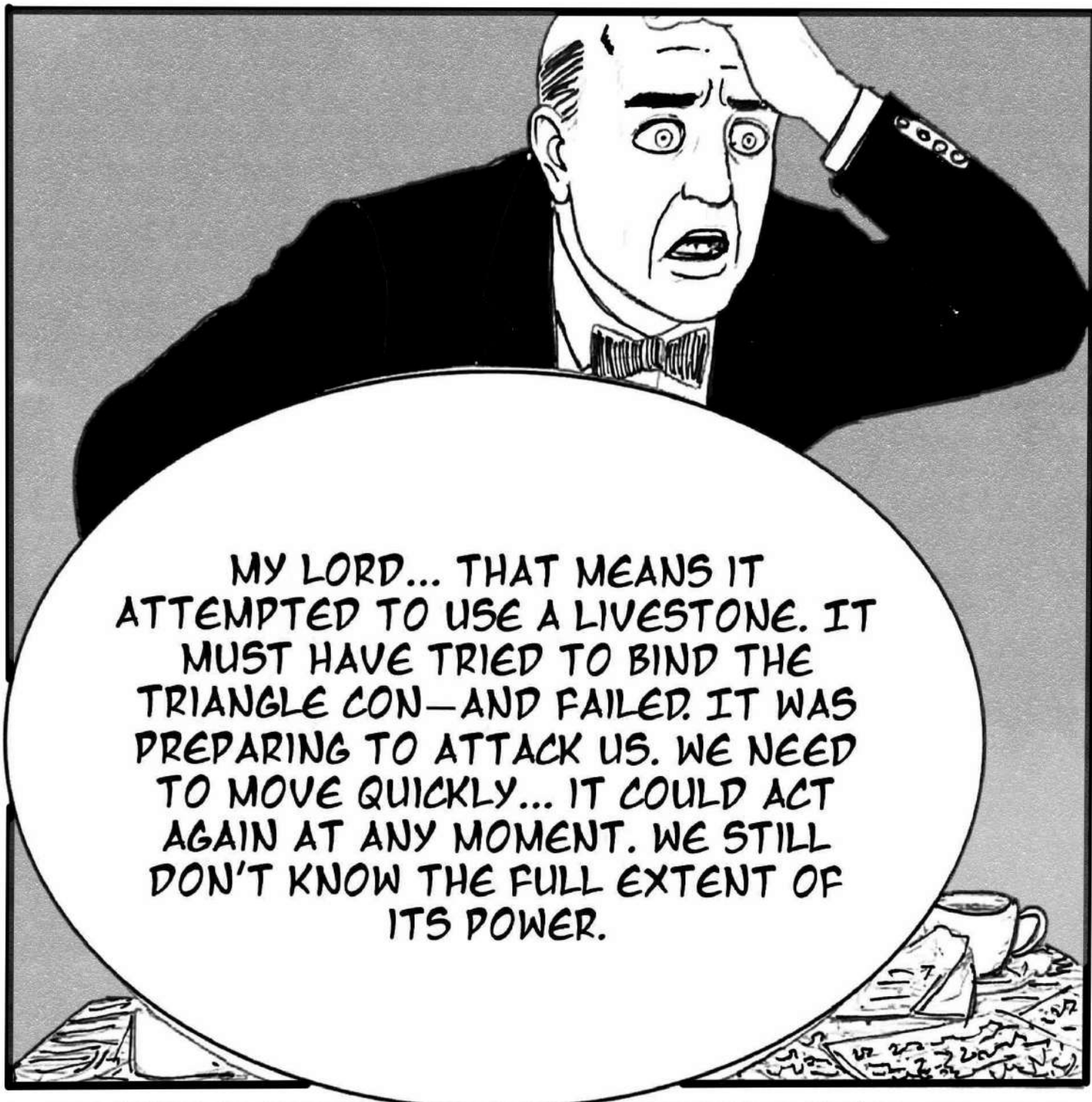
WHEN THE SHOWEI BURST
OUT OF THE RIVER, THE
FORCE THREW ME INTO THE
NEARBY BUSHES. BY THE
TIME I GOT BACK ON MY
FEET... I SAW SOMETHING.



A WHITE LIGHT... IT WAS SHINING FROM THE PORT ON ITS HEAD. IT LASTED ONLY A FEW SECONDS— THEN IT TURNED BLACK. I'M SORRY I DIDN'T MENTION IT EARLIER.



WHAT...?
AIESHOK..?



MY LORD... THAT MEANS IT ATTEMPTED TO USE A LIVESTONE. IT MUST HAVE TRIED TO BIND THE TRIANGLE CON—AND FAILED. IT WAS PREPARING TO ATTACK US. WE NEED TO MOVE QUICKLY... IT COULD ACT AGAIN AT ANY MOMENT. WE STILL DON'T KNOW THE FULL EXTENT OF ITS POWER.



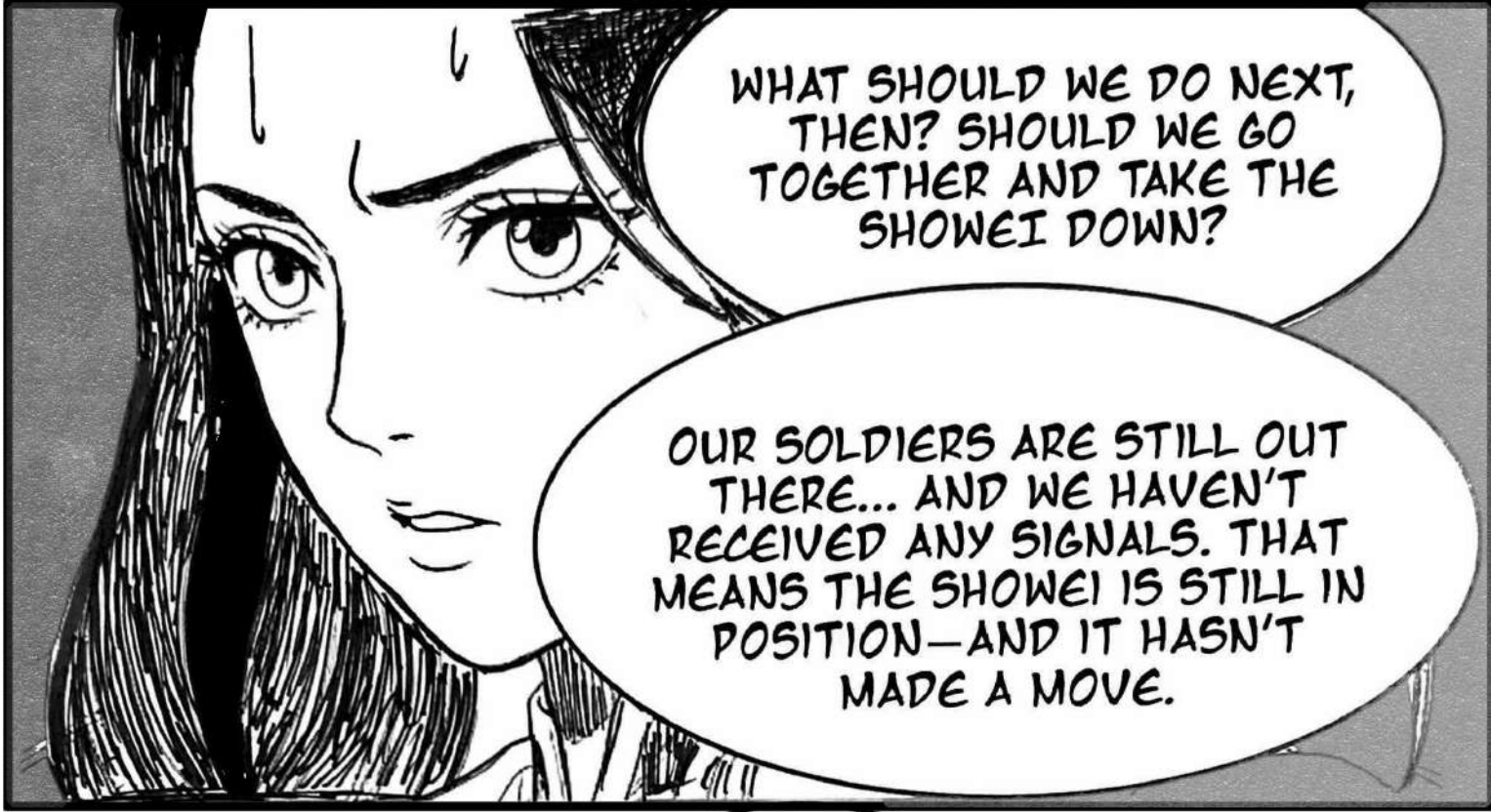
THAT'S NOT GOOD



TO BE HONEST WITH YOU,
COMMANDER BARI... YOU ALL
COULD HAVE DIED THERE IF IT
HAD MANAGED TO BIND WITH
THE LIVESTONE . FORTUNATELY
THE SHOWEI DOESN'T POSSESS
IT-NOT YET.



NOT
YET?



WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT, THEN? SHOULD WE GO TOGETHER AND TAKE THE SHOWEI DOWN?

OUR SOLDIERS ARE STILL OUT THERE... AND WE HAVEN'T RECEIVED ANY SIGNALS. THAT MEANS THE SHOWEI IS STILL IN POSITION—AND IT HASN'T MADE A MOVE.



MY LORD, I SUGGEST WE SEND ALL OUR KIRIN SOLDIERS TO RIVER HELA.

IF THAT'S THE CASE THEN WE'RE OUT OF TIME. COMMANDER, I SUGGEST YOU PREPARE TO RETURN TO HELA

AND JONN, WE CAN'T DEPLOY ALL OUR SOLDIERS ON THE GROUND—WE HAVE LIMITED NUMBERS. AIESHOK WILL ASSIGN YOU.

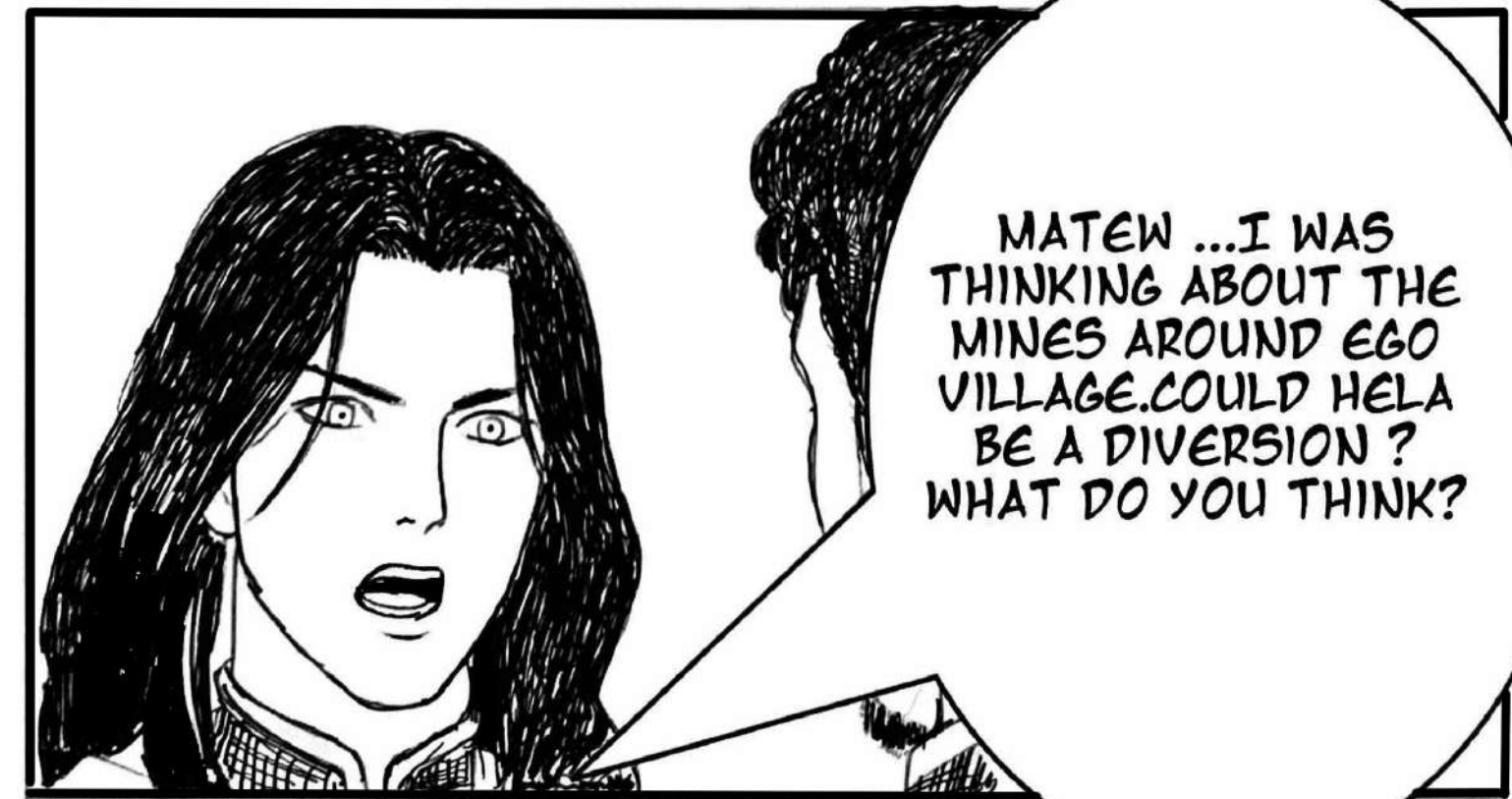




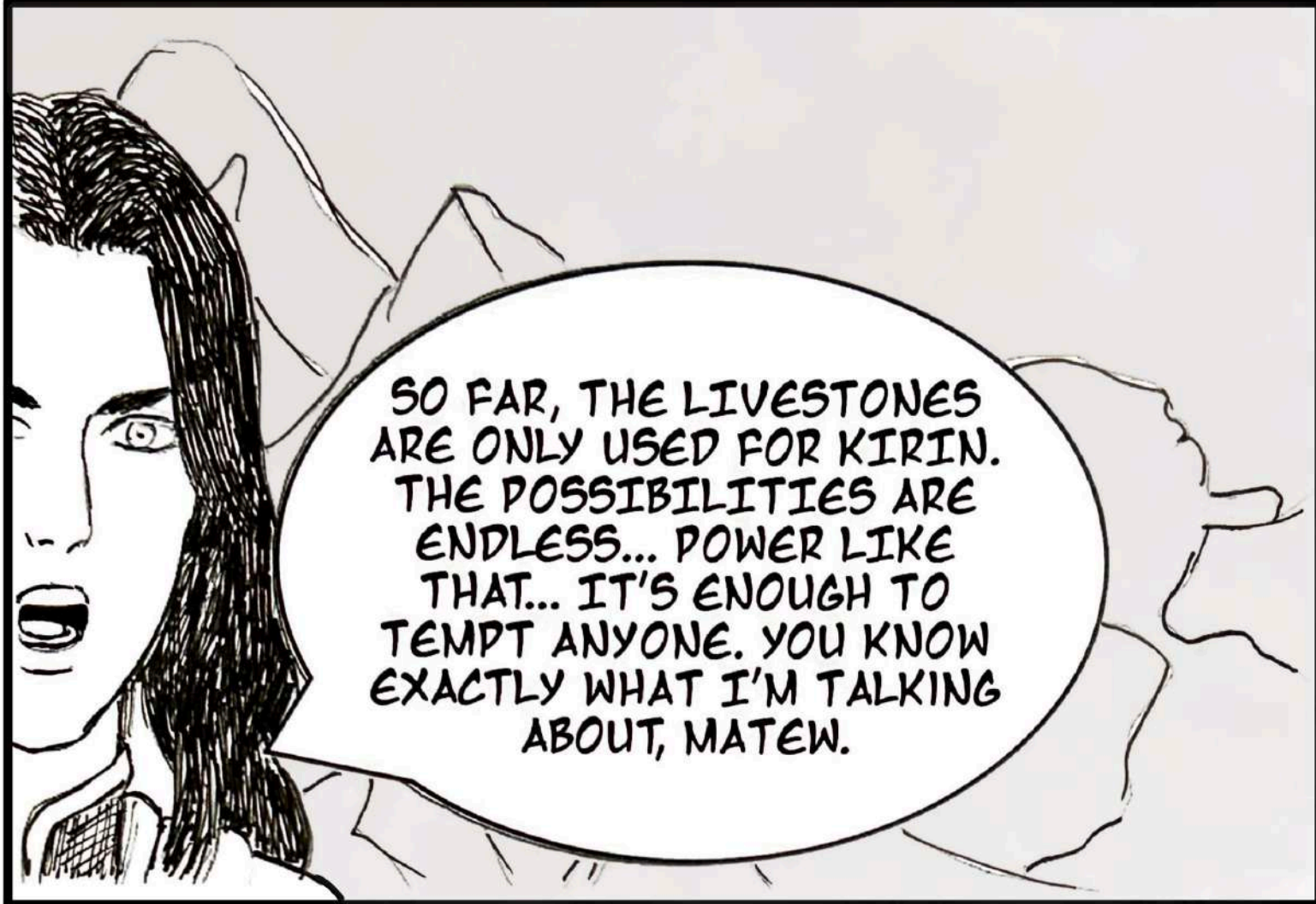
NO... WHY WON'T THIS
LEAVE MY HEAD? WHAT IF
IT'S ACTUALLY PLANNING
TO-NO... MAYBE I'M
OVERTHINKING.WE
SHOULD GO TO HELA...




BARI..WHAT IS IT?
DO YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEM
WITH MY DECISION?



MATEW ...I WAS
THINKING ABOUT THE
MINES AROUND EGO
VILLAGE.COULD HELA
BE A DIVERSION?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?



SO FAR, THE LIVESTONES
ARE ONLY USED FOR KIRIN.
THE POSSIBILITIES ARE
ENDLESS... POWER LIKE
THAT... IT'S ENOUGH TO
TEMPT ANYONE. YOU KNOW
EXACTLY WHAT I'M TALKING
ABOUT, MATEW.



BARI..IT CANNOT BE STOLEN
FROM THE TUNNELS..

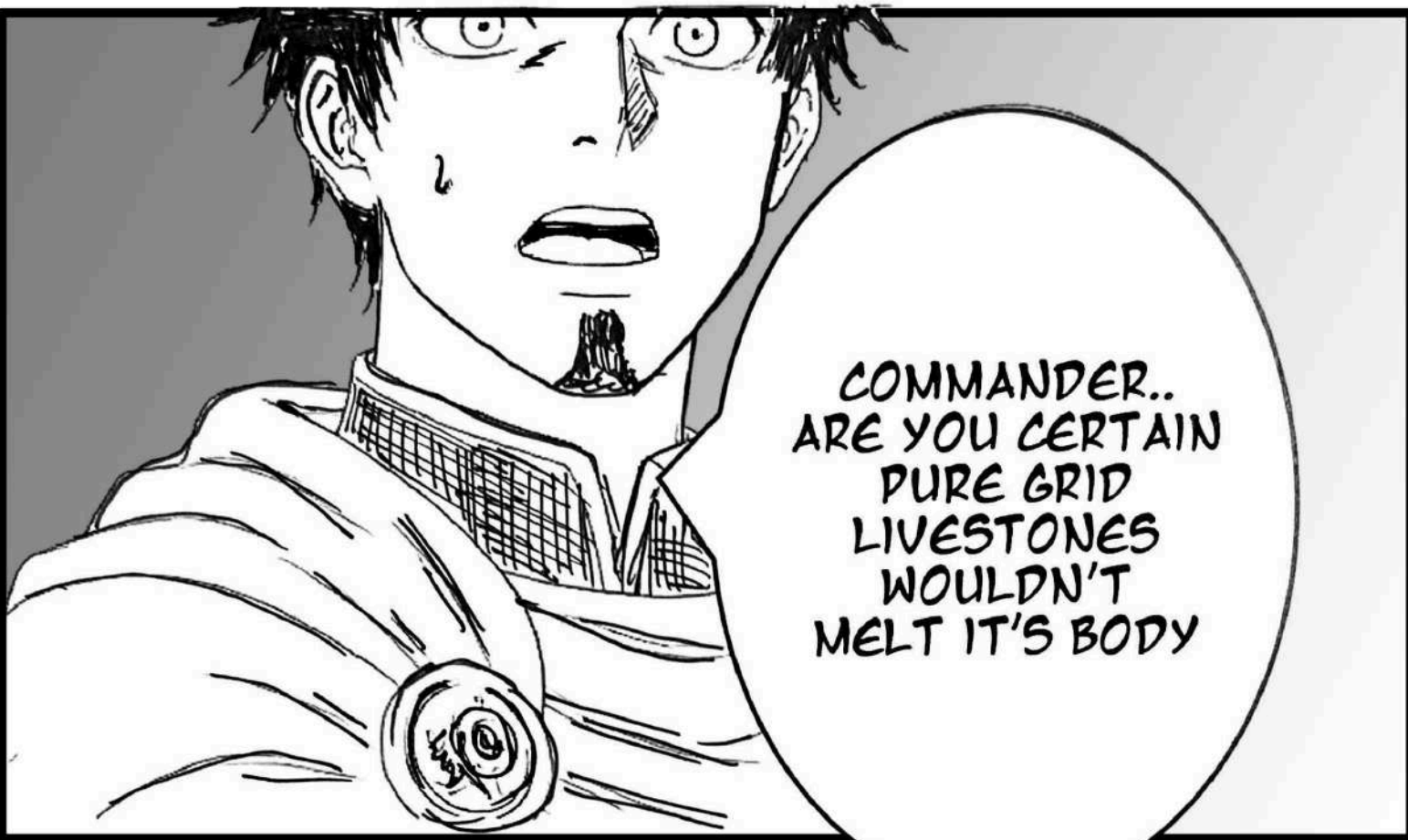


MATEW... WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY HAVE A SHOWEI UNDER THEIR CONTROL. IT MIGHT BE ABLE TO SHATTER THOSE ENTIRE TUNNELS IN SECONDS. AND I HAVE A FEELING... IF IT'S MADE OF TIN, LIKE YOU SAID, IT MAY BE ABLE TO HANDLE PURE GRID LIVESTONES- WITHOUT ANY OF THE SAFETY MEASURES WE REQUIRE.




BARI..WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY..?






COMMANDER..
ARE YOU CERTAIN
PURE GRID
LIVESTONES
WOULDN'T
MELT IT'S BODY



I'M NOT
CERTAIN...
BUT I BELIVE
SO...AND I'D LIKE
TO SUGGEST
SOMETHING.



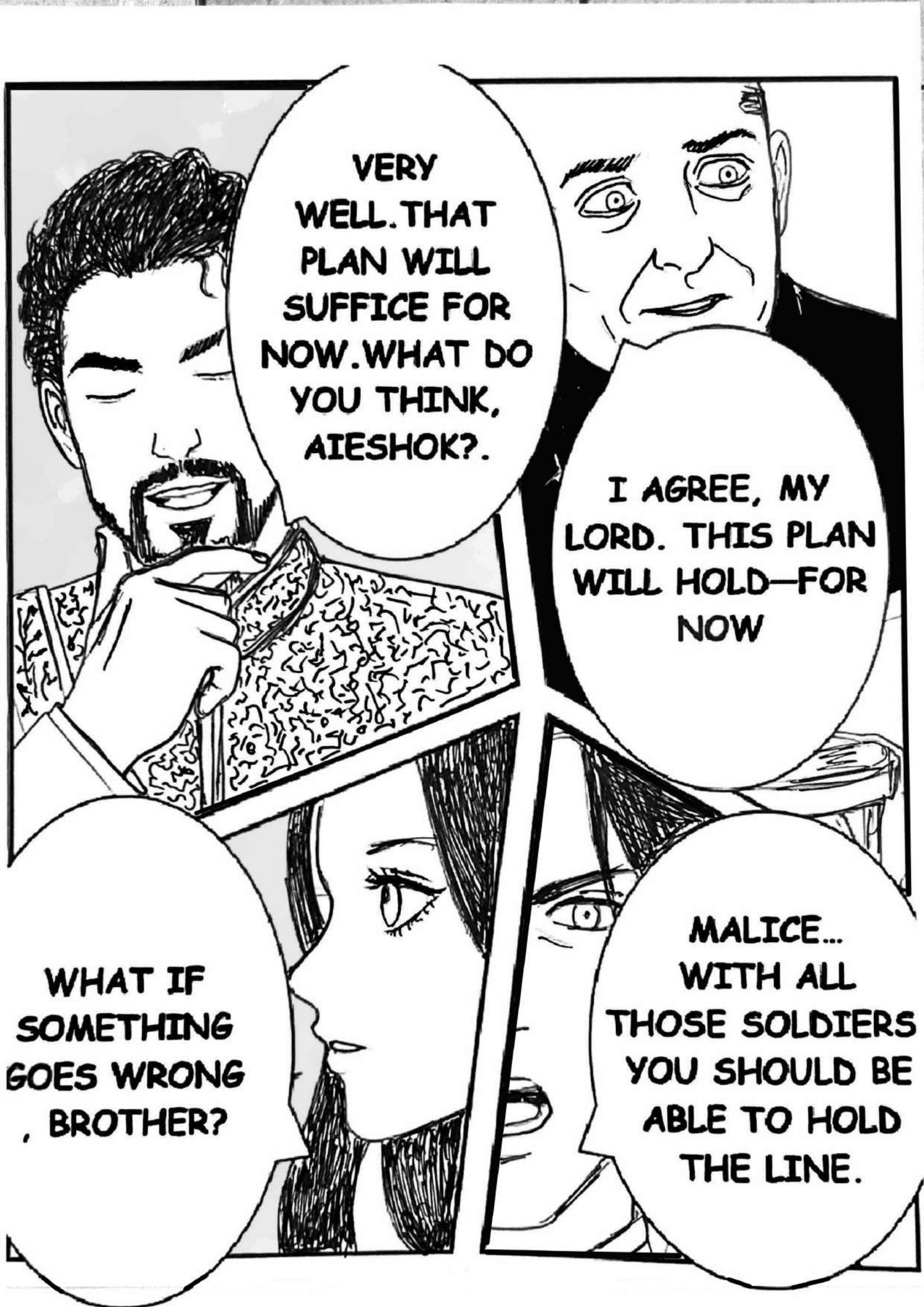
OF COURSE,
BARI. GO ON..



JONN AND I MOVE TO EGO VILLAGE AND SECURE THE MINES, WHILE MALICE TAKES THE SOLDIERS TO RIVER HELA TO DEAL WITH THE SHOWEI.



EHHH..
JUST ME??



**VERY
WELL. THAT
PLAN WILL
SUFFICE FOR
NOW. WHAT DO
YOU THINK,
AIESHOK?.**

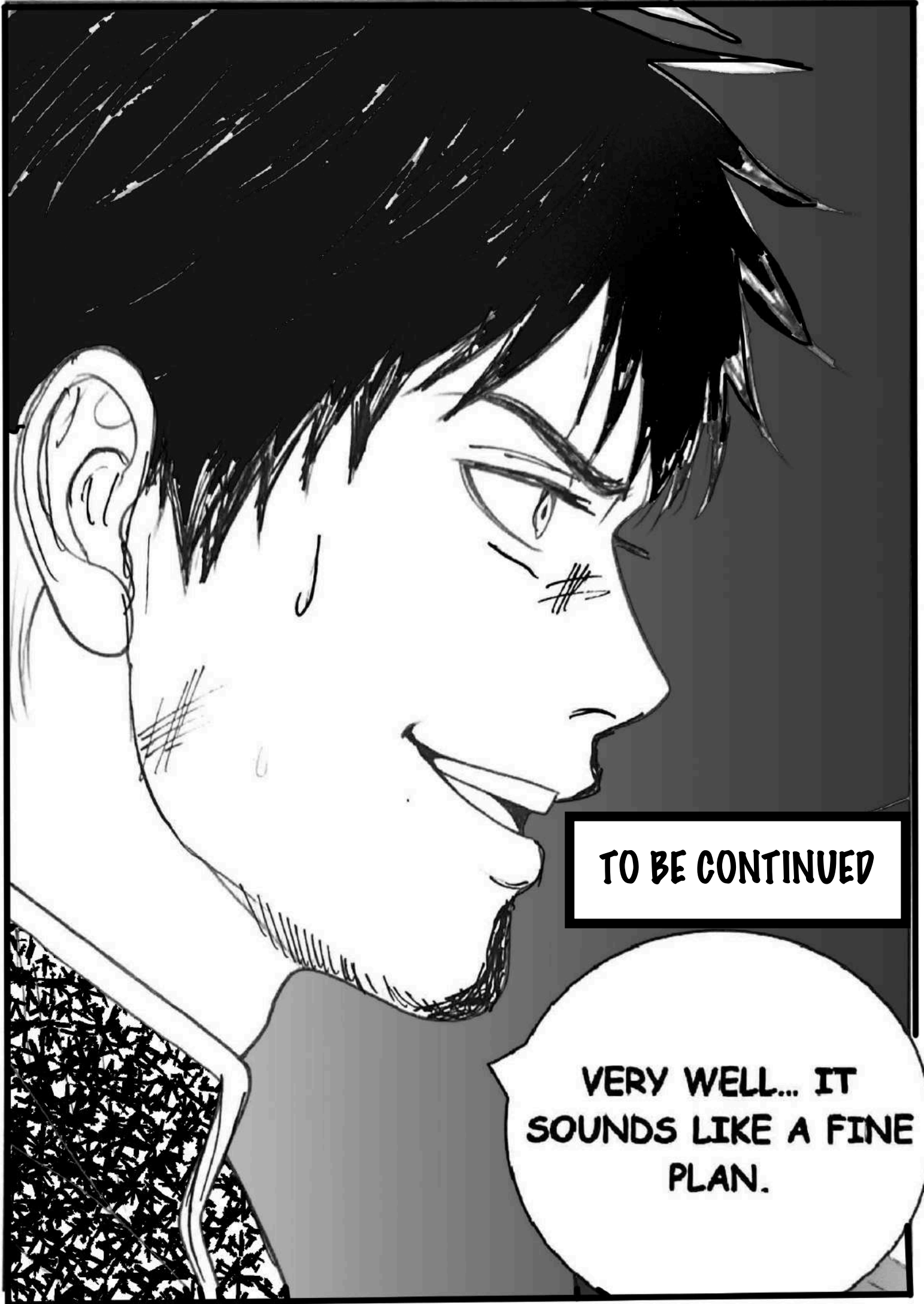
**I AGREE, MY
LORD. THIS PLAN
WILL HOLD—FOR
NOW**

**WHAT IF
SOMETHING
GOES WRONG
, BROTHER?**

**MALICE...
WITH ALL
THOSE SOLDIERS
YOU SHOULD BE
ABLE TO HOLD
THE LINE.**



**NO DECISION FROM MATEW
WITHOUT AIESHOK'S NOD....
GOOD THING BARI SAID
EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTED
TO HEAR.**



TO BE CONTINUED

**VERY WELL... IT
SOUNDS LIKE A FINE
PLAN.**