



**16**  
SEP '07

**RUCKA  
BENNETT  
JADSON**

# CHECKMATE

**IRONCLAD**







**WHITE KING:**  
MICHAEL HOLT--"MR. TERRIFIC"



**WHITE QUEEN:**  
AMANDA WALLER



**WHITE KING'S BISHOP:**  
THINKER



**WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP:**  
KING FARADAY



**WHITE KING'S KNIGHT:**  
TOMMY JAGGER



**WHITE QUEEN'S KNIGHT:**  
WERNER VERTIGO--"COUNT VERTIGO"

**TWENTY-TWO MONTHS AGO.**

YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ME?



**BLACK KING:**  
TALEB BENI KHALID



**BLACK QUEEN:**  
SASHA BORDEAUX



**BLACK KING'S BISHOP:**  
SHEN LI PO



**BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP:**  
JESSICA MIDNIGHT



**BLACK KING'S KNIGHT:**  
BEATRIZ DACOSTA--"FIRE"



**BLACK QUEEN'S KNIGHT:**  
JOSEPHINE TAUTIN--"MADEMOISELLE MARIE"

# PAST PERFECT

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BLACK  
QUEEN!

REALLY, BISHOP HOLT,  
WE CAN LET IT **DROP**  
NOW. I APOLOGIZE  
IF I'VE MADE YOU  
UNCOMFORTABLE.

SO MAKE ME  
COMFORTABLE.



IF THIS **NEW**  
CHECKMATE  
IS GOING TO  
LIVE DOWN THE  
**LEGACY** OF  
MAX LORD,  
THEN THE  
PEOPLE AT  
THE TOP **CAN'T**  
BE KEEPING  
**SECRETS**  
FROM EACH  
OTHER.

I'M OWED AN  
**EXPLANATION**.  
WHY DO YOU  
KEEP **STARING--**



BECAUSE  
I THINK YOU'RE  
**BEAUTIFUL**.

I'M SORRY.  
YOU **WHAT?**



**BROTHER**  
**EYE** MADE IT  
SO I CAN'T SEE  
ANYTHING WITHOUT  
THE NANOBOTS  
**FILTERING** THE  
IMAGE THROUGH  
OMAC **THREAT-**  
**ASSESSMENT**.

**EVERYTHING** AND  
**EVERYONE** I LOOK  
AT, I SEE **TARGET**  
POINTS AND ANGLES  
OF **ATTACK**. I SEE  
**PROBABILITY** WAVES  
AND **CONTINGENCY**  
STRIKES.



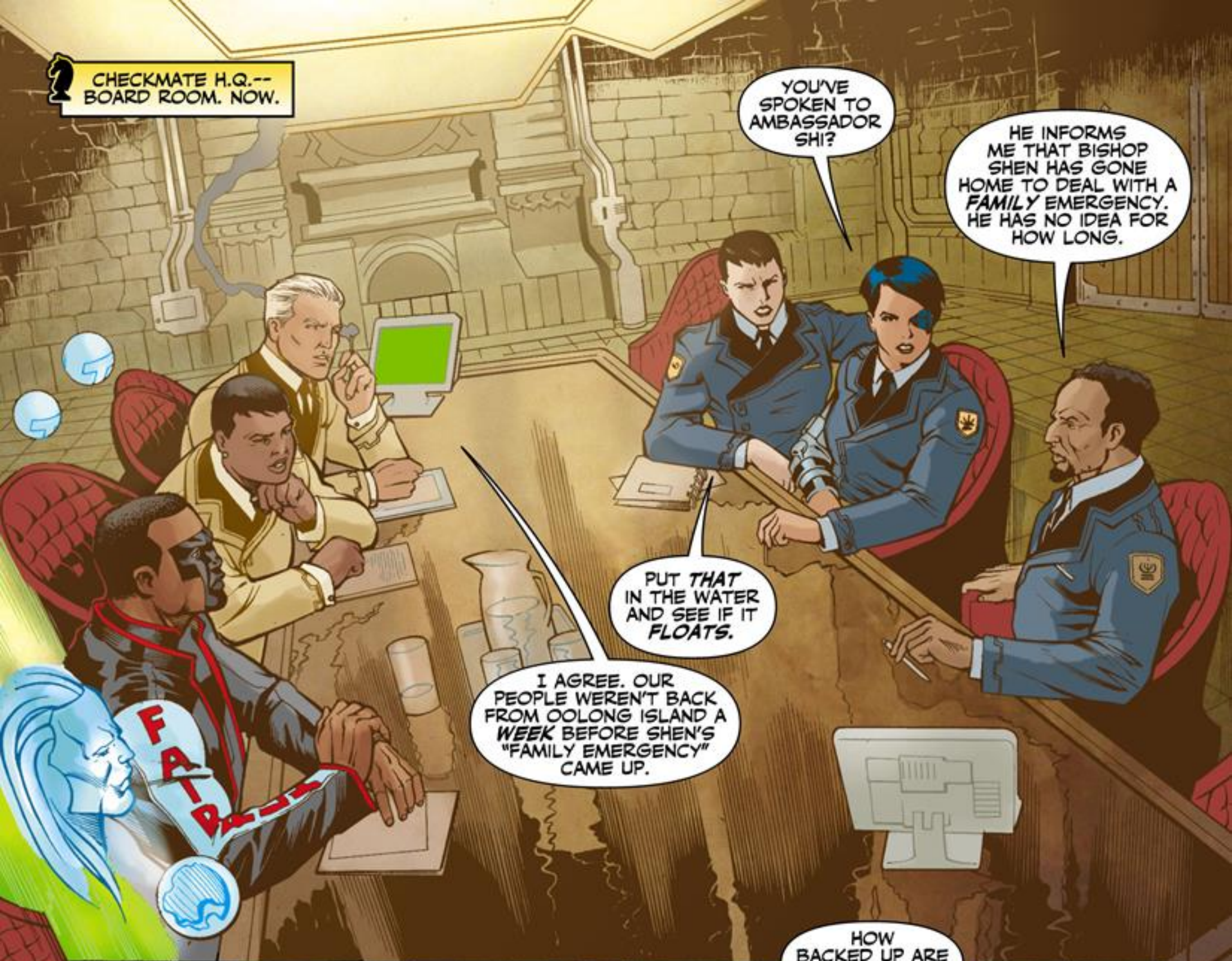
EXCEPT  
FOR YOU.  
THE EYE  
**CAN'T** SEE  
YOU.

AND  
THAT'S WHY  
I **STARE**.

BECAUSE  
YOU'RE  
**BEAUTIFUL**.



1 CHECKMATE H.Q.--  
BOARD ROOM. NOW.



YOU'VE  
SPOKEN TO  
AMBASSADOR  
SHI?

HE INFORMS  
ME THAT BISHOP  
SHEN HAS GONE  
HOME TO DEAL WITH A  
FAMILY EMERGENCY.  
HE HAS NO IDEA FOR  
HOW LONG.

PUT *THAT*  
IN THE WATER  
AND SEE IF IT  
FLOATS.

I AGREE. OUR  
PEOPLE WEREN'T BACK  
FROM OOLONG ISLAND A  
WEEK BEFORE SHEN'S  
"FAMILY EMERGENCY"  
CAME UP.

HOW  
BACKED UP ARE  
YOU WITHOUT  
SHEN?



BISHOP MIDNIGHT  
HAS OFFERED TO HELP FOR  
THE TIME BEING. AT THE MOMENT,  
EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL.

I WOULD BE  
HONORED TO OFFER  
YOU MY ASSISTANCE, AS  
WELL, BLACK KING.



THAT'S VERY GENEROUS  
OF YOU, THINKER. IF THE  
WHITE KING DOESN'T  
MIND, OF COURSE.

PERMISSION  
GRANTED, SIR?  
...SIR...?



FINE.







73 KM EAST OF  
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA.



SECURITY  
STAND DOWN,  
WALKER IS  
IDENTIFIED AS  
BLACK KING'S  
KNIGHT.



STANDING  
DOWN,  
CONFIRMED.



CONFIRMED.



HELLO,  
DEAR.  
YOU'RE  
RUNNING  
LATE.

THE BLACK KING SAID WE  
COULD EXPECT YOU ALMOST  
AN HOUR AGO.



I'M SORRY,  
I WAS...HERE,  
I HAVE MY  
IDENT--

OH SHUSH, YOU, THAT'S  
NOT NECESSARY. YOU WERE  
SCANNED FIFTEEN WAYS TO  
SUNDAY BEFORE YOU GOT  
WITHIN A HALF MILE OF  
THE HOUSE.













YOU'RE  
QUITE FOND  
OF HER.

I CARE  
ABOUT WHAT  
HAPPENS TO  
HER.

AND, YES, I  
SUPPOSE THERE IS  
AN ATTRACTION.

I MAY BE  
BLIND, BUT IT  
IS OBVIOUS ALL  
THE SAME. IT'S IN  
HER VOICE WHEN  
SHE SPEAKS OF  
YOU, AND WHEN  
YOU SPEAK  
OF HER.

THIS  
IS MORE  
THAN SIMPLE  
ATTRACTION,  
MICHAEL.



WE DO NOT LIVE  
LIVES WITH MANY  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
LOVE. OUR SENSE OF  
DUTY, OF HONOR...OFTEN  
TIMES WE SACRIFICE  
OUR HEARTS IN THEIR  
SERVICE.

IF YOU FEEL  
FOR HER AS SHE  
SO CLEARLY FEELS  
FOR YOU, THEN  
YOU HAVE BEEN  
BLESSED.



I LOVE A WOMAN,  
PIETER. YOU KNOW  
THAT.

SHE'S  
MY WIFE,  
AND SHE'S  
DEAD.

THAT  
IS NOT IN  
DISPUTE, MY  
FRIEND.

BUT IF YOU FEAR  
THAT LOVING ANOTHER  
IS A BETRAYAL, ASK  
YOURSELF THIS...



...WHAT  
WOULD  
PAULA  
WANT FOR  
YOU?





PORTSMOUTH, OREGON. NOW.

HE AMPUTATED ABOVE THE TRICEP?

YEAH, HE SAID HE WANTED TO SEE HOW I WORKED.

CHANG TZU ALSO SET ME ON FIRE, BROKE SEVERAL BONES, AND INJECTED ME WITH VARIOUS DRUGS.

THERE'S NEW PLATING GROWTH AROUND THE ORBIT. MINOR, BUT DETECTABLE.

HE WENT AFTER MY EVIL EYE, TOO.



BREATH SOUNDS ARE GOOD.

THANK YOU, NITE-LITE.

I HAVE A FEW MORE QUESTIONS. IT MIGHT BE BEST IF YOU TWO LEFT US ALONE.



DON'T BOTHER, I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO ASK, AND THE ANSWER IS NO...



...I WASN'T SEXUALLY ASSAULTED.

YOU UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR THE QUESTION...





...YOUR BODY **REPAIRS** THE DAMAGE DONE TO IT SO **THOROUGHLY**, EVIDENCE OF PHYSICAL TRAUMA CAN BE EASILY MISSED.

YEAH, I'M FRESH FROM THE **SHOWROOM FLOOR**. EVEN MY **ARM** HAS THAT **NEW CAR SMELL**.



ARE WE **DONE?** CAN I GO?

HAVE YOU BEEN HAVING DIFFICULTY SLEEPING? ANY LOSS OF APPETITE? CHANGE IN DIET?

MY ARM GREW BACK **METAL**, YOU ASK IF I WAS **RAPED**, AND NOW YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT MY **DIET**?



I'M **FINE** AND WE'RE **FINISHED** HERE.



THE REGENERATION OF HER **ARM** HAS CONFIRMED HER WORST FEARS.

SHE THINKS SHE'S BECOMING A **MACHINE**.

NO, SHE **ALREADY** THINKS THAT, AND I SUSPECT HAS FOR SOME TIME. WHAT SHE FEARS IS THAT EVERYONE **ELSE** THINKS IT, TOO...

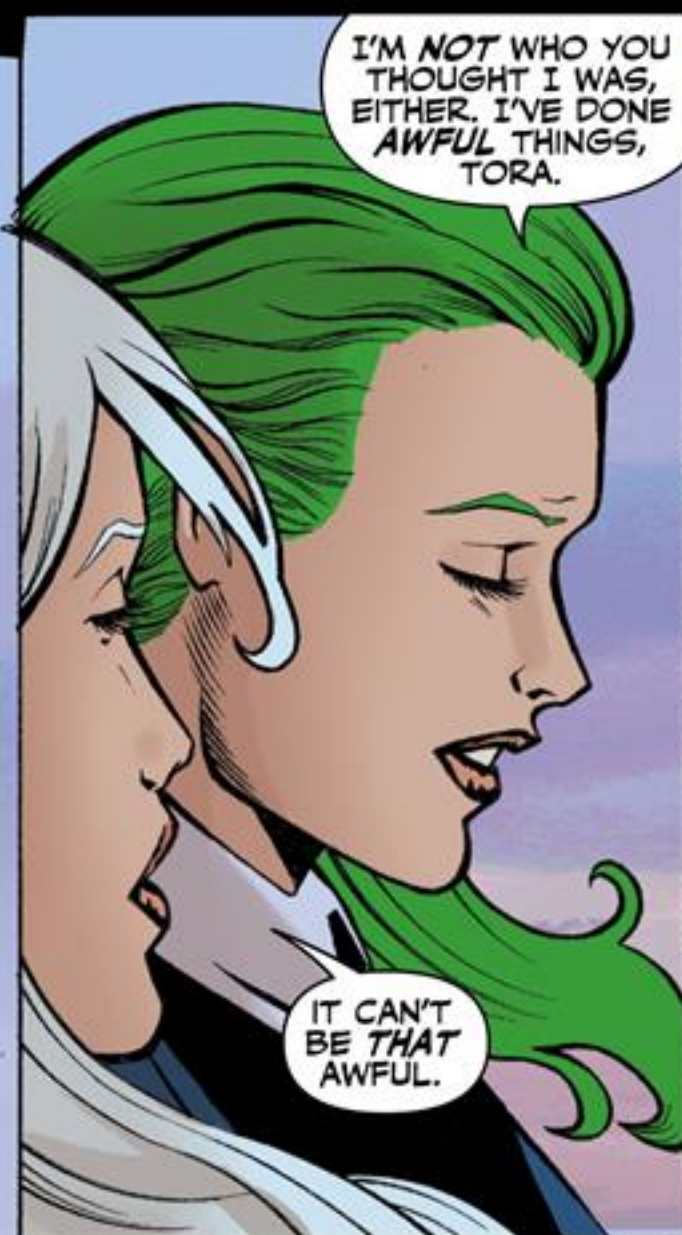
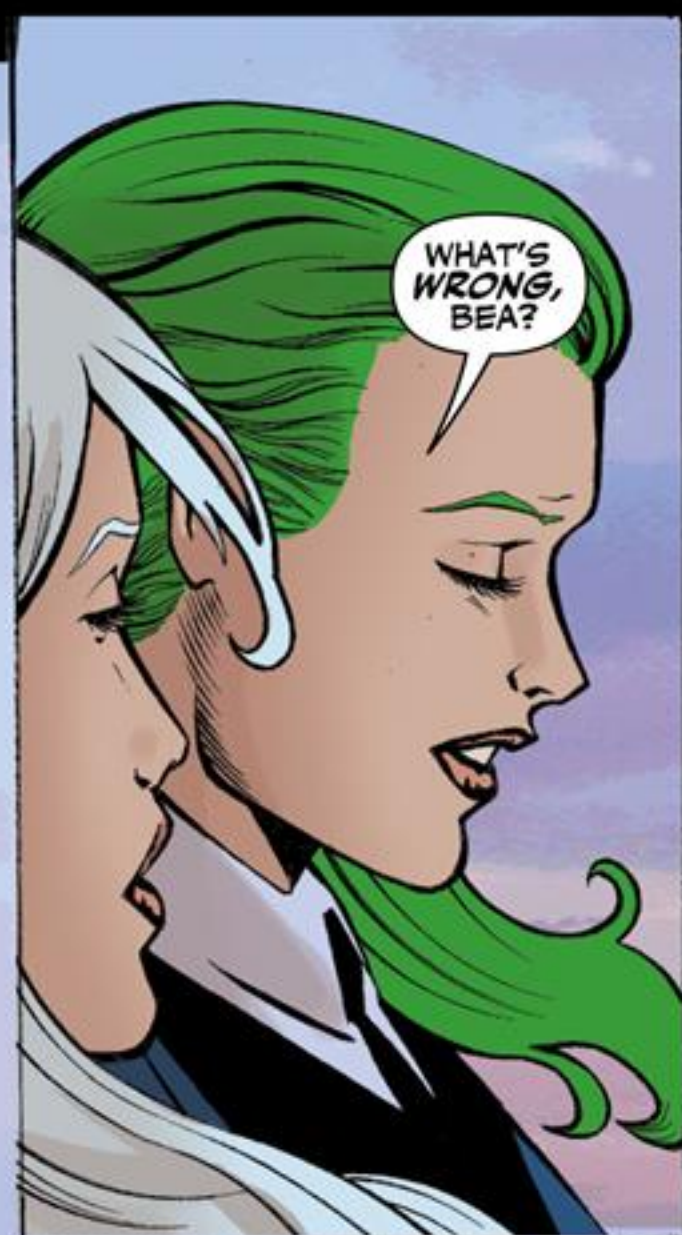


...ESPECIALLY YOU.















LAKE SILVAPLANA,  
SANKT MORITZ,  
SWITZERLAND.

EIGHTEEN  
MONTHS AGO.

HERE...

...TAKE A  
HANDFUL.

EVERYONE'S  
STARING AT ME.

THEN  
THEY CAN  
STARE WHILE  
YOU FEED THE  
DUCKS.

I DON'T  
EVEN KNOW  
HOW I LET  
YOU TALK ME  
INTO THIS.

I HAVE *WORK* TO DO  
AT THE CASTLE. I *STILL*  
HAVEN'T MADE FINAL  
SELECTION ON A  
*KNIGHT*.

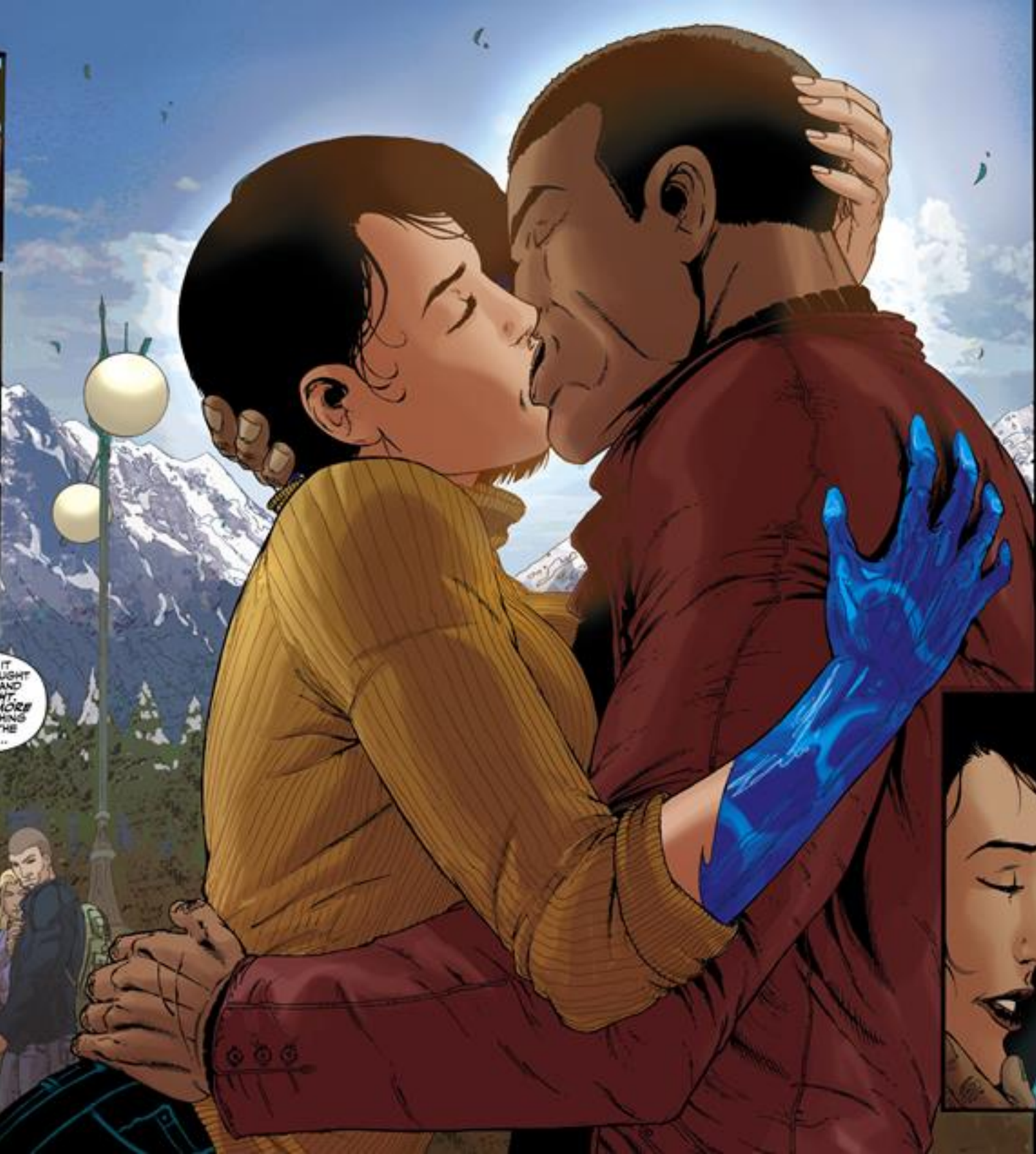
AS IF I COULD  
TALK YOU INTO  
DOING *ANYTHING* YOU  
DON'T WANT TO DO.

YOU AND PAULA  
WOULD'VE GOTTEN  
*ALONG* WELL. YOU'RE  
A LOT *ALIKE* IN MANY  
WAYS.

YOU MUST  
MISS HER  
A LOT.

EVERY  
DAY OF MY  
LIFE.





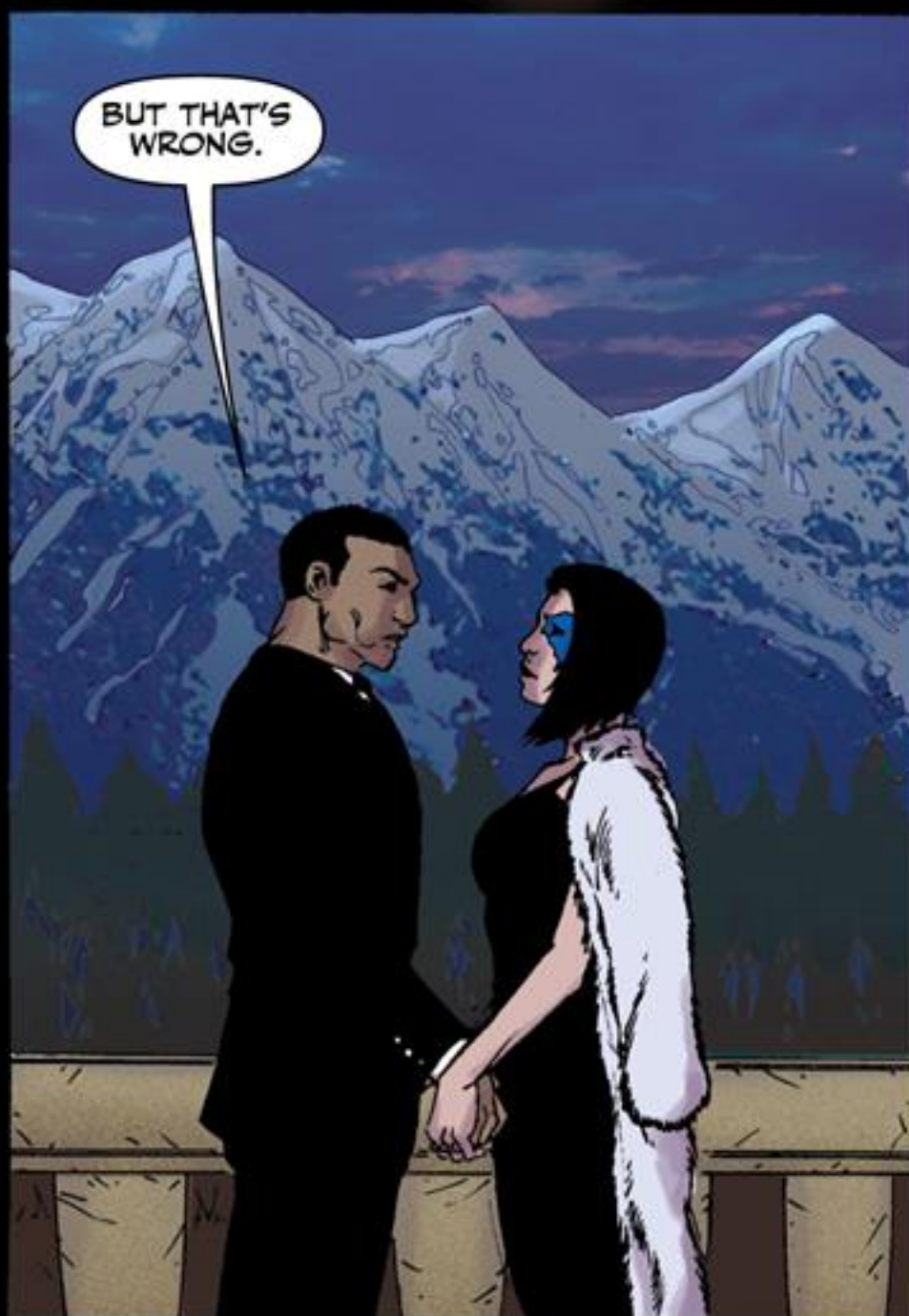






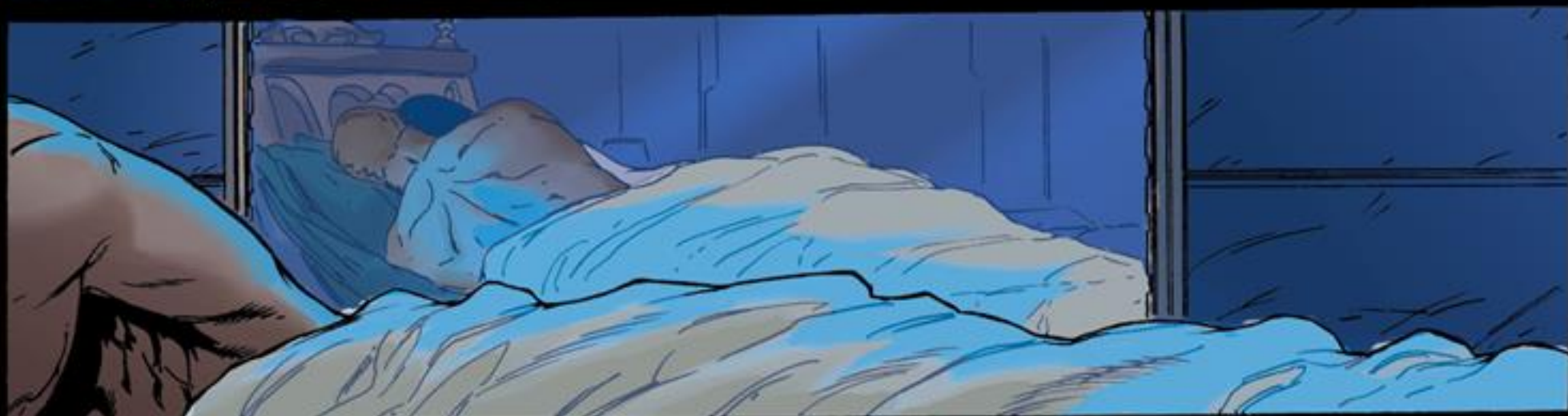








"...THAT'S REALLY  
ALL THAT MATTERS...."



**NEXT:  
FIREWALL**