

Elevation

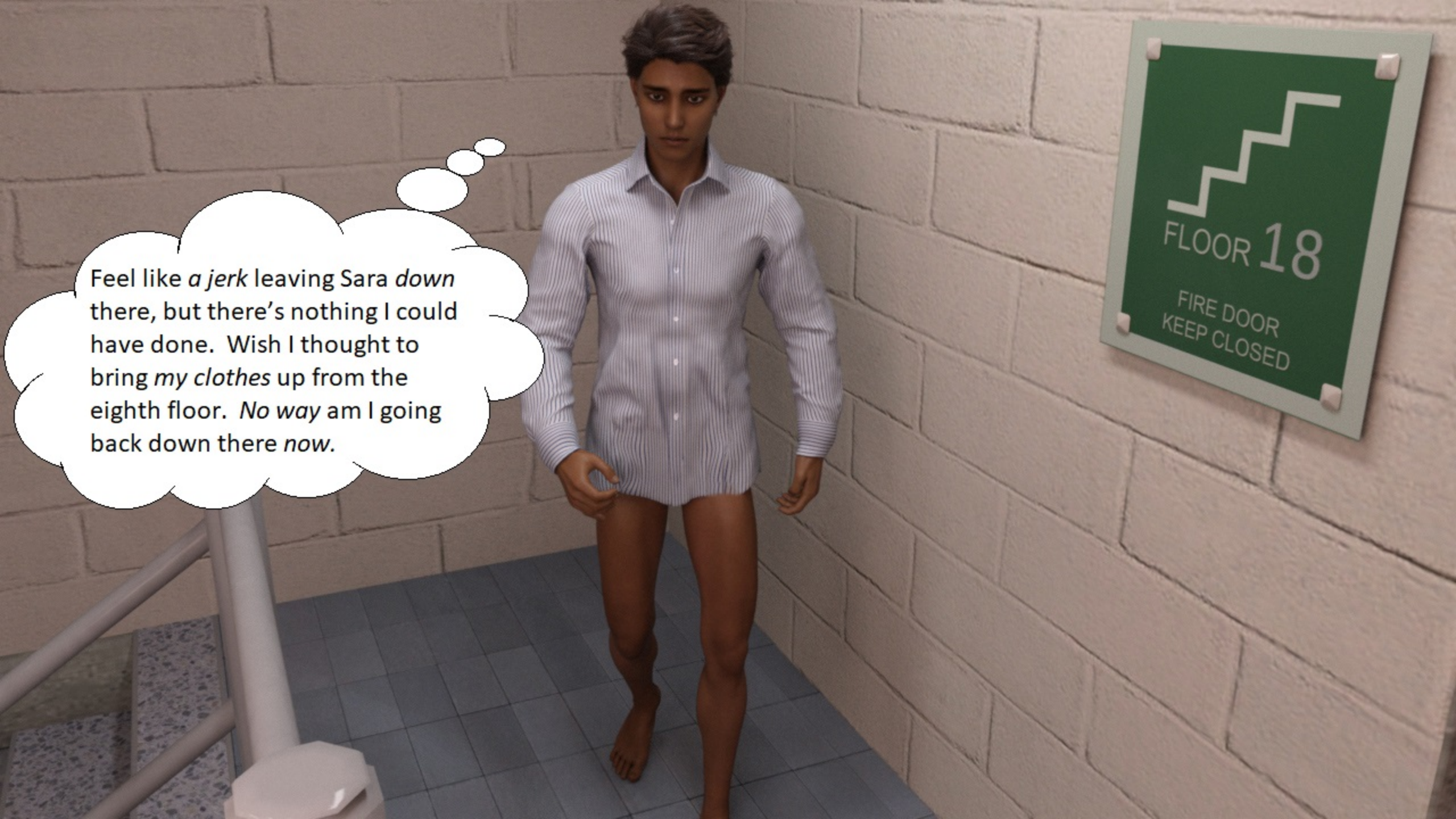
Part 5

Preview

By Sumner

Illustrated and edited by Areg5

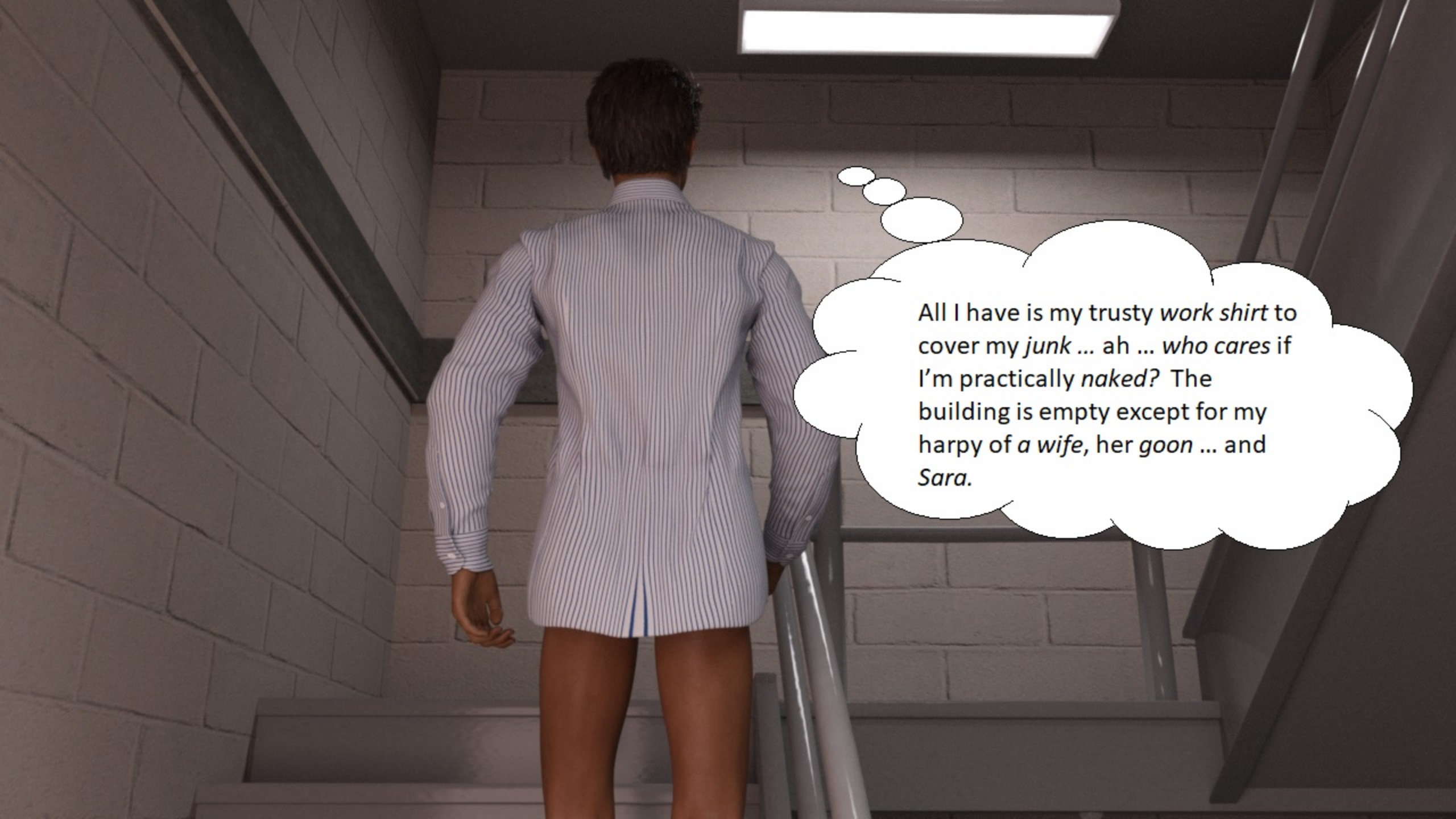


A man with dark hair, wearing a light blue and white vertically striped long-sleeved shirt and matching shorts, stands barefoot in a hallway. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The hallway has a light-colored brick wall on the right and a grey tiled floor. A white handrail is visible on the left. On the right wall, there is a green fire door sign with a white staircase icon, the text 'FLOOR 18', and 'FIRE DOOR KEEP CLOSED'. A thought bubble originates from the man's head, containing text about his feelings and actions.

Feel like *a jerk* leaving Sara *down* there, but there's nothing I could have done. Wish I thought to bring *my clothes* up from the eighth floor. *No way* am I going back down there *now*.

FLOOR 18

FIRE DOOR
KEEP CLOSED

A man with dark hair, seen from behind, is walking up a set of stairs. He is wearing a light blue and white vertically striped long-sleeved shirt that is open at the bottom, revealing his legs. The stairs are made of grey concrete, and the walls are also made of grey concrete blocks. A bright rectangular light fixture is visible on the ceiling above the stairs. To the right of the man, there is a large white thought bubble with a black outline. Inside the bubble, there is text in a mix of black and italicized black fonts. The bubble has three small circles leading to the main cloud shape.

All I have is my trusty *work shirt* to cover my *junk* ... ah ... *who cares* if I'm practically *naked*? The building is empty except for my harpy of *a wife*, her *goon* ... and *Sara*.

gasp ... can't believe ... **puff** ...
how *tall* I feel. How many people get
to know what it *feels like* to *grow up*
in a matter of *minutes*? Only one
other that I can think of ...






... **wheeze** ... Sara. I'll
save her if it *kills* me.
Man ... am I out of shape!

FLOOR 33


FIRE DOOR
KEEP CLOSED



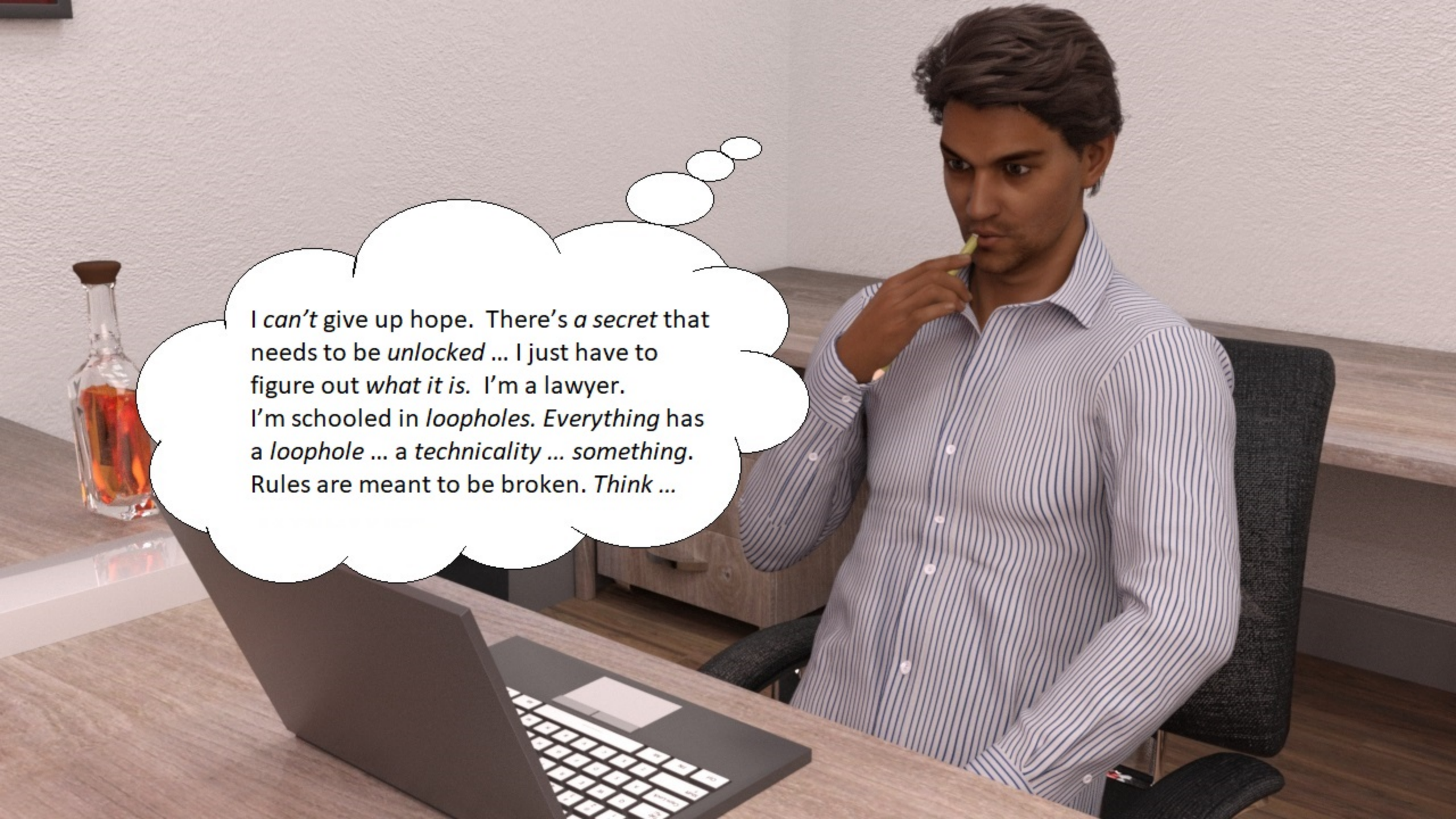
My shirt *barely covers* me ... but it is a *relief* to know that *all of me* has returned to adult proportions. Funny how I'm almost *getting used* to this ... *age play*. Wish I wasn't.

A man with dark hair, seen from behind, is walking away from the camera on a light-colored wooden floor. He is wearing a light blue and white vertically striped long-sleeved shirt and is barefoot. The setting is a modern office or art gallery with white walls, black-framed glass partitions, and abstract art. A large thought bubble is superimposed on the left side of the image, containing text.

Ok ... my task is *clear*: see what else there is to know about *Ms. Madhat*. But my partner in crime was reduced to a crying baby ... is there really *any hope*? Kind of hard to find the energy to pour through *files* or run more *internet searches*.



But I *have to*. Sara's *depending* on me
... or she *would be* if she was old
enough to know what *depend* means.
Those words ... *modus operandi* ... still
haunt me. What does it *mean*?

A man with dark, wavy hair is sitting in a black office chair at a wooden desk. He is wearing a light blue and white vertically striped button-down shirt. He is holding a green, stick-like object (possibly a vegetable or candy) in his mouth with his right hand. In front of him is a laptop. To his left, on the desk, is a glass bottle containing an orange liquid. A large, white, cloud-shaped thought bubble originates from his head, containing text. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

I *can't* give up hope. There's *a secret* that needs to be *unlocked* ... I just have to figure out *what it is*. I'm a lawyer. I'm schooled in *loopholes*. *Everything* has a *loophole* ... a *technicality* ... *something*. Rules are meant to be broken. *Think* ...

*Somewhere on
the 6th floor...*

You what?

I found them... *both*. Daniel,
er... *your husband* ... got
away. They were *both kids*.
He was ...I don't know,
maybe nine or ten.

Well, where are
you now?

I'm on the first floor. I
have Sara with me ...

A man with blonde hair, wearing a black wetsuit, is holding a baby in his arms. He is also holding a black mobile phone to his ear with his right hand. The baby is looking up at him. The background shows a doorway and a wall with a red sign that has the letter 'Y' on it.

And?

*And she's quite
adorable.*

*So it worked! It actually
worked! She's a baby!*


*I know. I can't believe
it *either!* I think she's
a little *cold* ...*



Of course she is. Why don't you get her dressed.

In what? Her clothes don't fit her anymore.


I left a suitcase full of clothes for *the two* of them in the lobby.

A man with blonde hair, wearing a black turtleneck, is talking on a black mobile phone. He has a concerned expression. A woman with dark hair is looking up at him from the bottom left corner. The background is a simple wall with a dark door or panel.

*You did? I don't
remember you doing
that.*


*Why am I not surprised?
It's a brown suitcase.*

I don't see it.

A person with blonde hair is shown from the back, holding a black mobile phone to their ear. They are in a modern office lobby with a wooden floor, a large wooden pillar, and a reception desk in the background. A brown suitcase is on a table near the reception desk.

It's on that table near
the reception desk.

Oh ...*THAT* brown
suitcase. I found it. I'll
dress the little scamp.



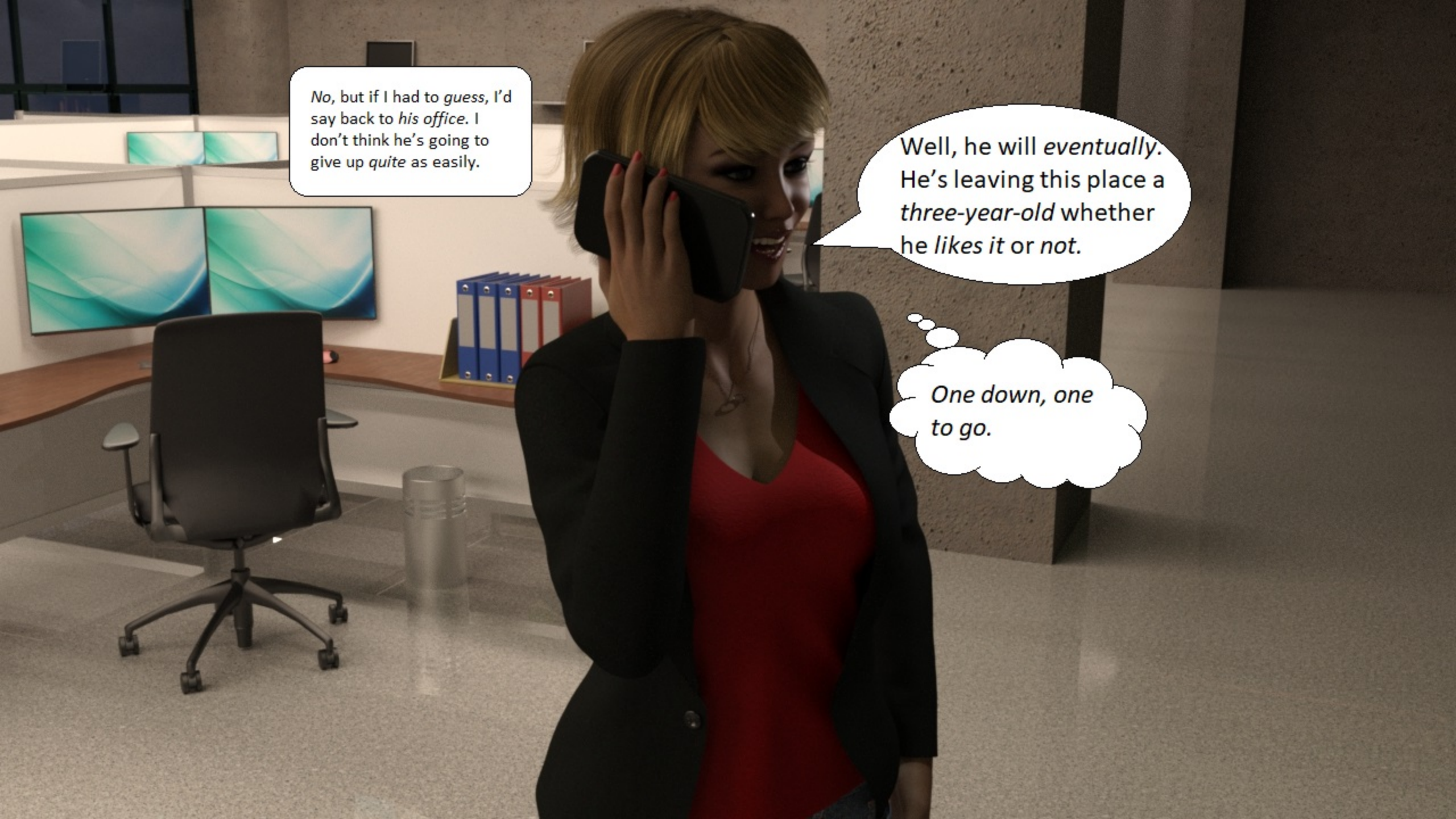
Make sure you dress
her *warmly*. Is *very*
cold out.

Will do.

But where is
Daniel?? Is he
still little?

He ran up *the*
stairs...


Do you know where
he was headed?

A woman with short blonde hair, wearing a red top and a black blazer, is standing in an office and talking on a black smartphone. She is smiling. In the background, there is a desk with two computer monitors displaying blue and green abstract patterns, a black office chair, and a set of colorful binders (blue, red, and white) on a shelf. The office has a modern, minimalist design with concrete walls and a grey floor.


No, but if I had to *guess*, I'd say back to *his office*. I don't think he's going to give up *quite* as easily.

Well, he will *eventually*. He's leaving this place a *three-year-old* whether he *likes it* or not.


One down, one to go.

A woman with short, layered blonde hair and bangs is shown from the chest up. She is wearing a black blazer over a red top and a thin gold necklace with a small pendant. She has a slight, knowing smile and is looking directly at the camera. The background is an office with cubicles, computer monitors displaying blue and green abstract patterns, and a black office chair. A thought bubble is positioned to her left, containing text.

Things had not gone *exactly* as planned, but I'm satisfied that the old lady's curse has *obviously succeeded*.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black long-sleeved top, blue jeans, and brown high-heeled boots, is walking away from the camera down a modern office hallway. The floor is polished and reflects the overhead lights. To the right, there are office cubicles with white partitions and desks. In the background, a desk with two computer monitors and a black office chair is visible. A thought bubble originates from the woman's head, containing text.


Clearly, Daniel knew enough to run from Stephen, so the jig is up. He knows I'm out to get him, not help him. Now the only task remaining is to find my little husband.



Well, *Little Lady* ...
how's about Daddy
gets you *all* dressed?

Grrr ...


EXIT
DO NOT



Bow bet depwa'd
like a va didee!

Did he just say *didee*?
How *humiliating*! What a
creep. Why did I ever
marry this asshole?! He is
really *pissing me off* ...


SSSSSSS...



Fro neeshga!

... now *why's he* all
bent out of shape? I ...
oooooh ...

EMERGENCY
EXIT

A person wearing a black long-sleeved shirt is holding a baby. The baby's legs and feet are visible, and the person's hands are wrapped around the baby's torso. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.


Bad nooboo!

*... haha ...I didn't even feel it
come out... haha ... well what
do you expect from a baby?
Serves him right! Better play
the dumb baby routine so he
doesn't take it out on me ...*



Bow forgive nooboo,
not depper fault.

suck suck ...
Goo goo ga ga ...

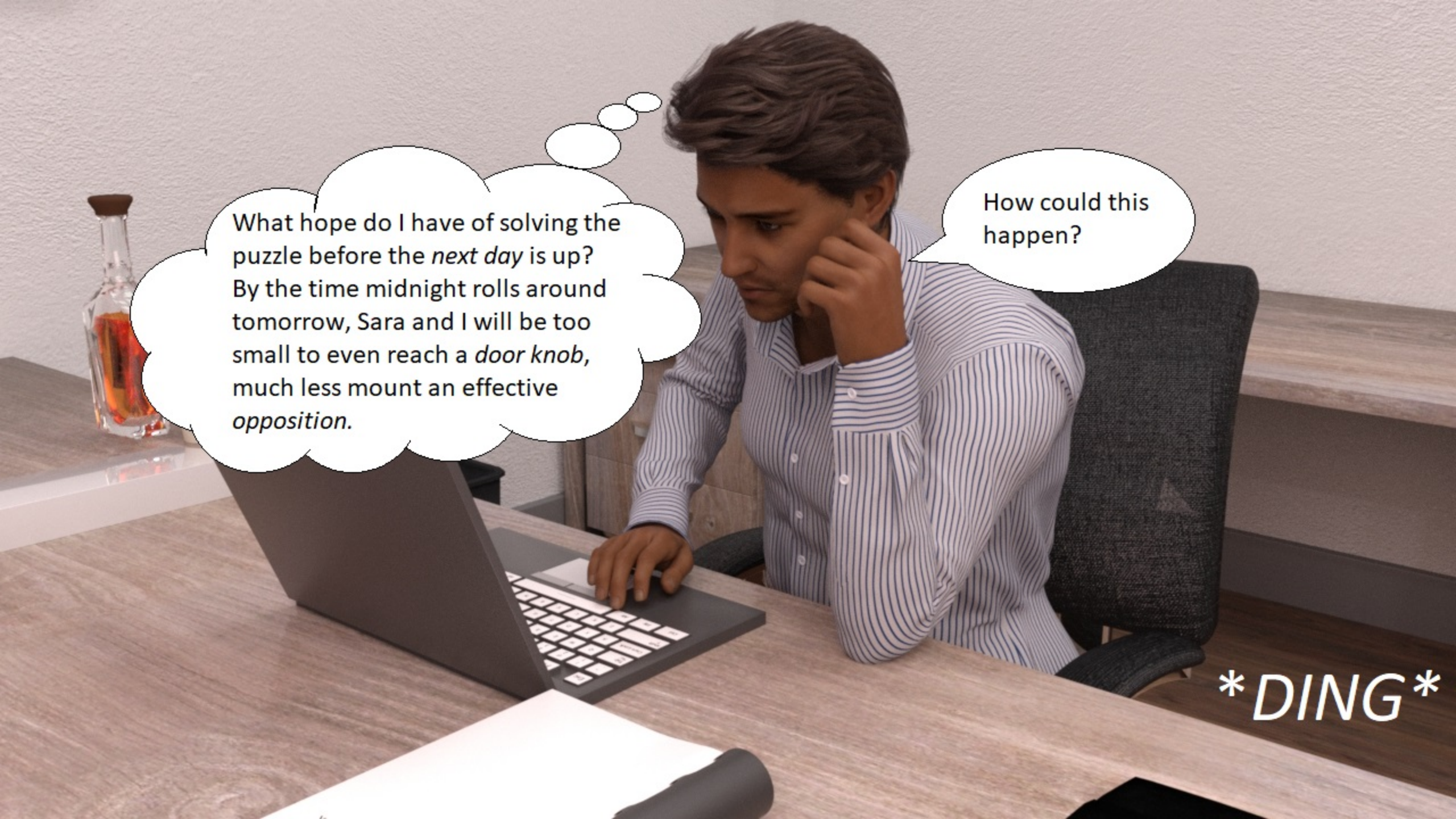
A close-up photograph of a young woman with dark hair and light skin. She has a smug, triumphant expression, looking slightly to the left. Her mouth is slightly open, showing her teeth. A hand is visible near her chin. A white thought bubble with a black outline is positioned near her ear. The background is out of focus, showing a person's face on the left and a textured surface on the right.

*Haha ... sucker!
What a clod!*

On the 33rd
floor...

Not a clue. I would have remembered *anything strange* showing up on Madhat's *file*, and it isn't likely she left any hints as to how I can break the spell. Every line in that note *came true*.


Feels like the walls are *closing in* on me. I'm drained. The *last thing* I feel like doing is solving some *ridiculous riddle*. **sigh** All there is *left to do* is surrender to Devra.



What hope do I have of solving the puzzle before the *next day* is up? By the time midnight rolls around tomorrow, Sara and I will be too small to even reach a *door knob*, much less mount an effective *opposition*.


How could this happen?

DING


A man with dark, wavy hair and a light beard is sitting at a wooden desk. He is wearing a white shirt with thin blue vertical stripes. He is looking down and to his left with a serious, contemplative expression. His right hand is resting on the desk near a laptop. In the background, there is a black trash can and a wooden cabinet. The scene is set in an office environment with a plain wall.

Looks like it's time
to face the music.


Thirty-third floor

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a red V-neck top, a black blazer, blue jeans, and brown boots, stands in a doorway. She is looking towards the camera. A thought bubble is positioned to her left, containing the text 'Looks like a light's on in his office ...'. The doorway leads to a room with wood-paneled walls and a wooden floor. The surrounding area has light-colored walls and a wooden floor.

Looks like a light's
on in his office ...

A woman with short blonde hair, wearing a black blazer, blue jeans, and brown boots, is walking away from the camera down a modern office hallway. The floor is made of light-colored wood. To the left, there are several modern wooden chairs. To the right, there is a glass wall with black frames and abstract art pieces. A thought bubble is positioned to the left of the woman.

... time to pay my
husband a *surprise* visit.



Daniel?

A man with dark, wavy hair and a light beard is sitting at a wooden desk. He is wearing a blue and white vertically striped button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. A speech bubble is positioned to his left, containing the word "Devra.". The desk is made of light-colored wood and has three drawers on the left side with silver handles. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Devra.

