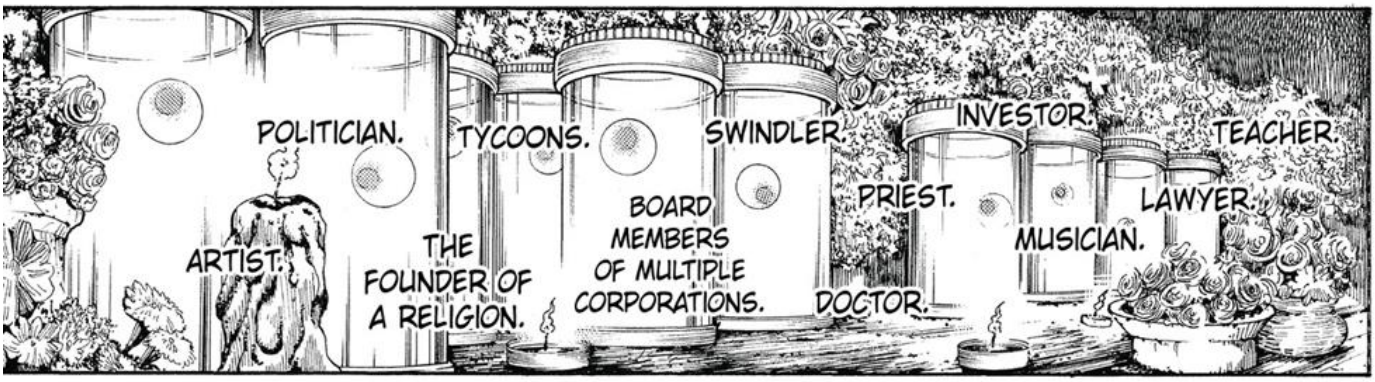
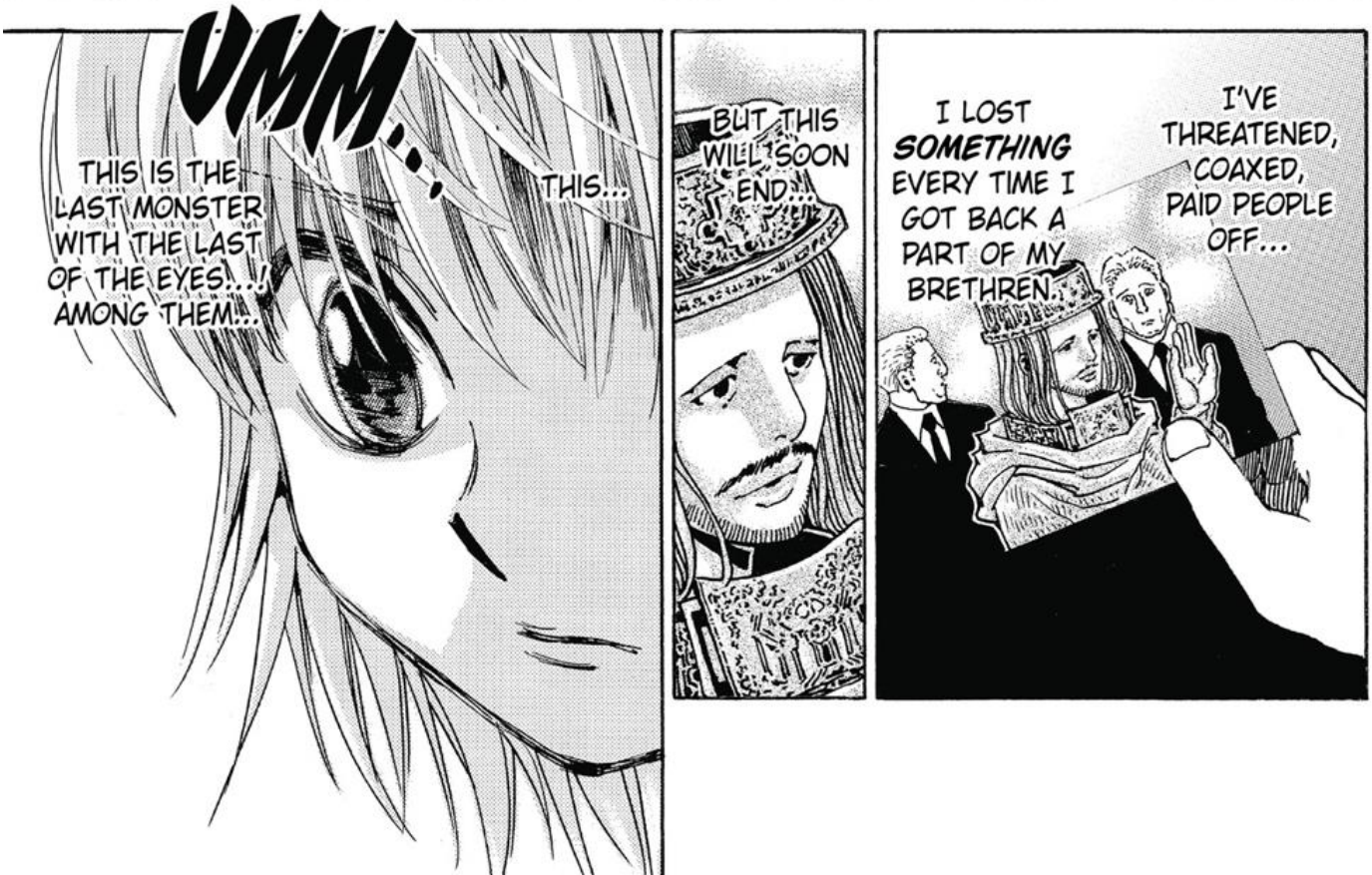
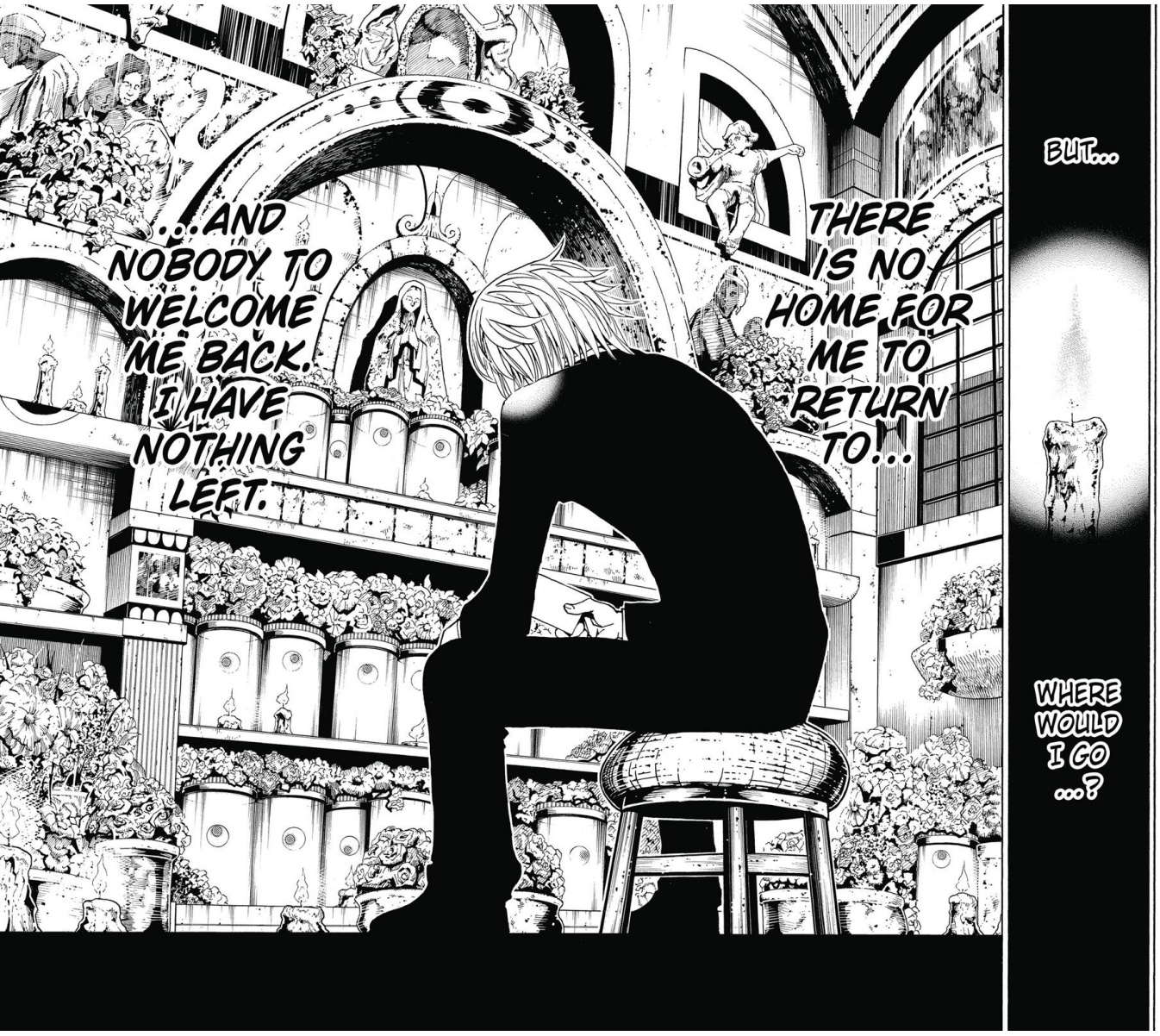


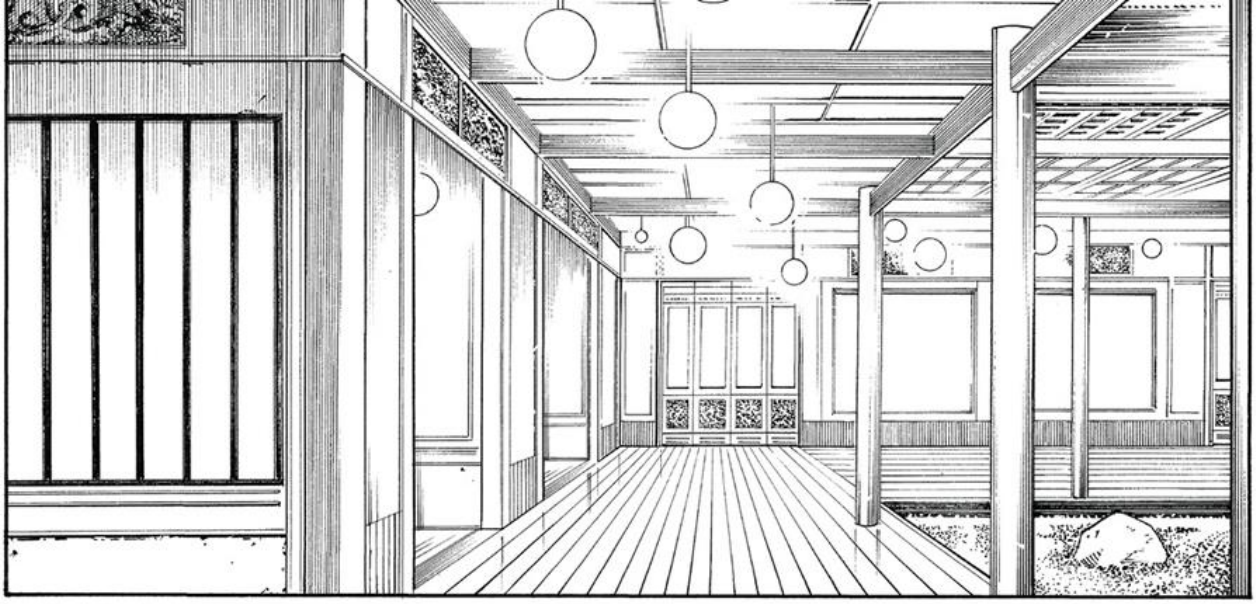
Chapter 344: Author





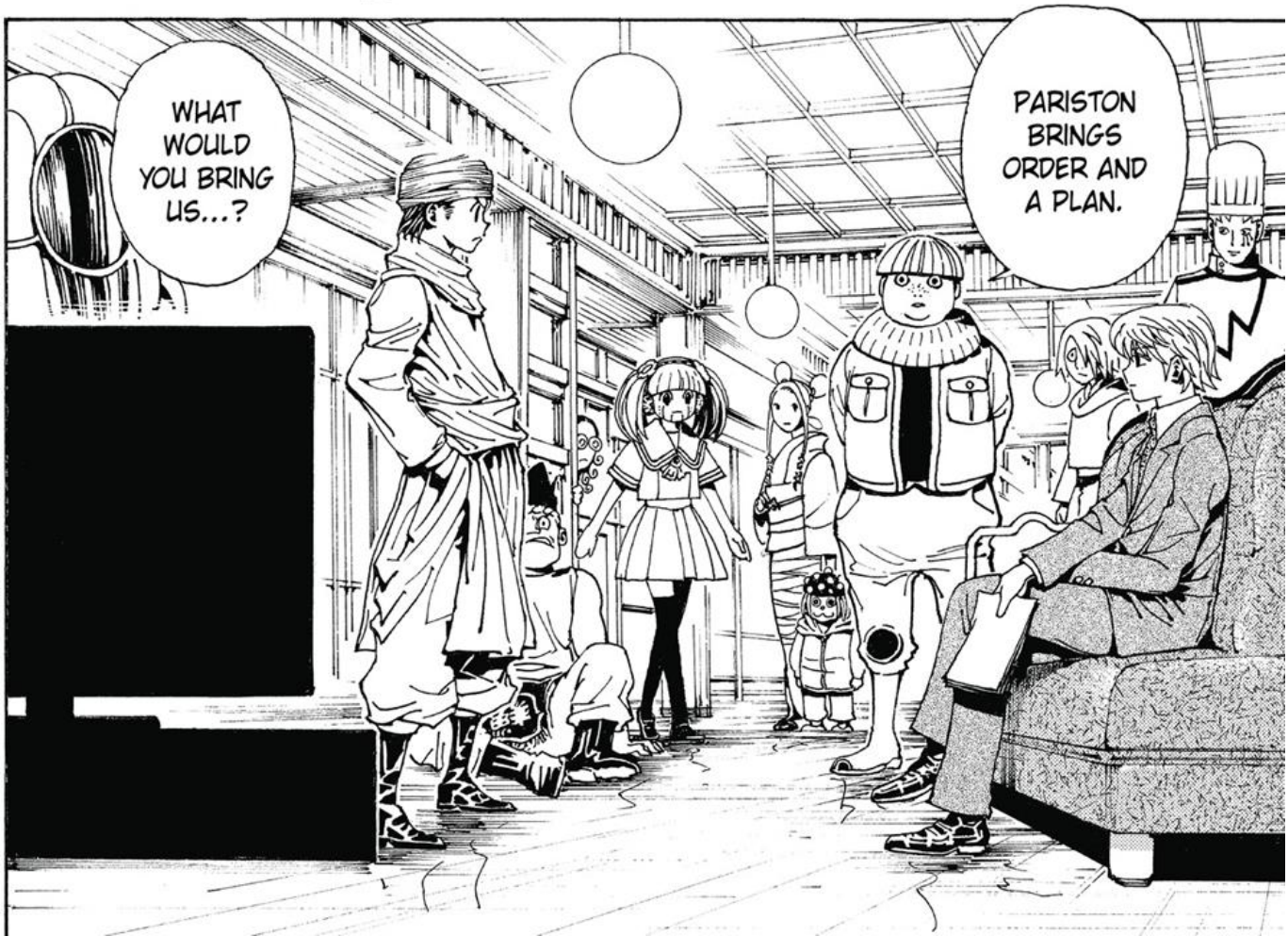



...AND NOBODY TO WELCOME ME BACK. I HAVE NOTHING LEFT.
THERE IS NO HOME FOR ME TO RETURN TO!..
BUT...
WHERE WOULD I GO ...?
PAIRO...
MY JOURNEY MAY FINALLY BEGIN.




SHF
SHF
NO. 2, EH...
KRII


THAT DEPENDS.


WHAT WOULD YOU BRING US...?
PARISTON BRINGS ORDER AND A PLAN.

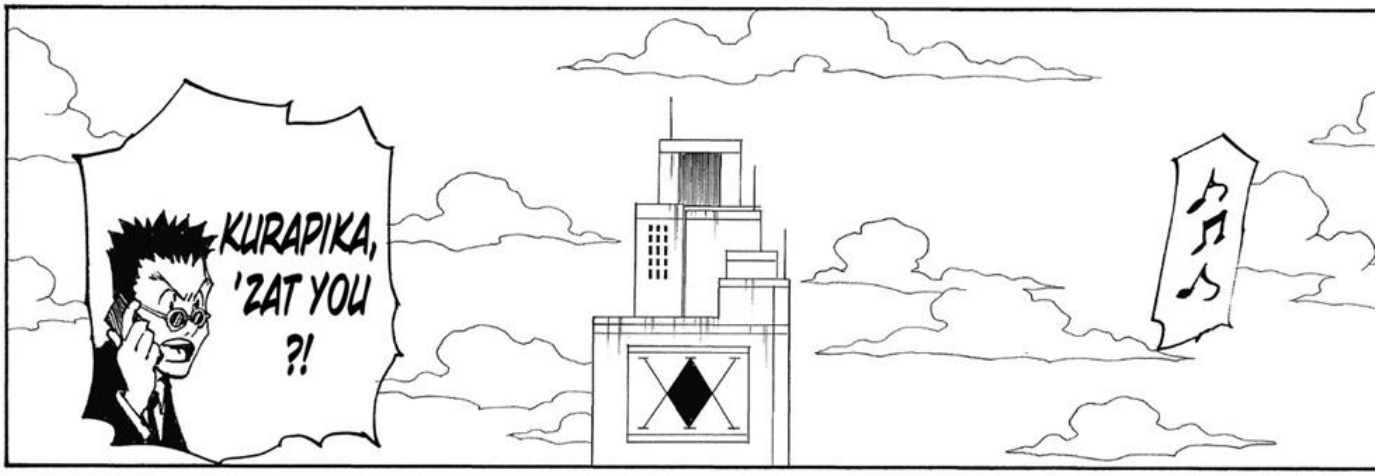

READY FOR COMBAT.
RRRM
...I MUST REMOVE YOU...!
IF YOU ONLY BRING POINTLESS CHAOS...
VMM
EVERYTHING ELSE CAN STAY THE SAME.
I'LL PAY TWICE WHAT BEYOND OFFERED, UP FRONT.
HM? WEREN'T YOU HIRED BY THIS GUY OR BEYOND?
I'M SAYING I'LL PAY TWICE THAT FOR EACH OF YOU.
I DON'T QUITE GET WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.
...


I MEAN, I'LL ANSWER QUESTIONS WHEN ASKED, OR GIVE ADVICE.
I WON'T DO ANYTHING ELSE, AND I DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER CONDITIONS FOR THE TRANSFER.
BUT IF YOU WANT TO KEEP DOING WHAT PARISTON TELLS YOU, THAT'S FINE.
?!
...
I DON'T CARE.
WAIT.
WHAT'S THE POINT THEN?
THAT'S NON-NEGOTIABLE.
BUT I'M NO. 2.
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
SO YOU'LL PAY DOUBLE UP FRONT...
I SAID I DON'T. TRUST ME, WILL YA?
AND YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER CONDITIONS ...
TELL ME YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND I'LL MAKE A DEPOSIT RIGHT NOW.
OF COURSE.


IS HE TRYING TO REMOVE THOSE WHO ARE LESS MOTIVATED...?
WHAT IF WE DON'T ALL AGREE?
THAT'S THE VERY CHAOS WE WANT TO AVOID...
WELL, CAN'T BE HELPED... SORRY. IT'S A LONG TRIP.
I'LL WAIT.
WAIT...?
YEAH.
MAKING YOU DECIDE RIGHT NOW WOULD BE A CONDITION, TOO.
YOU CAN ACCEPT THE MONEY WHEN YOU'RE SATISFIED WITH ME BEING NO. 2.
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ...?
HEY?
I'M FINE WITH YOU BEING NO. 2.
THIS IS MY ACCOUNT AND THE AMOUNT BEYOND OFFERED.


OKAY.
SENT.
CAN YOU VERIFY IT?
....!!
WELL?
...
EXCUSE ME A MINUTE.
HUH?
BE RIGHT BACK.
HE AIN'T COMING BACK...
...
ANYONE ELSE GOOD WITH THE DEAL?
YEAH.
I DON'T MIND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

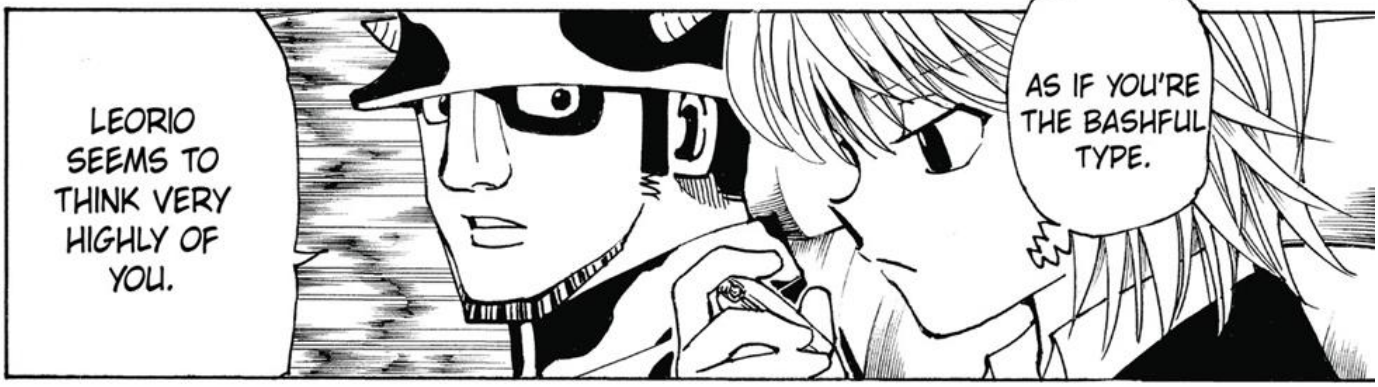

TELL ME YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND AMOUNT.
THAT'S FINE.
YOU'RE NOTHING, LIKE THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES.
BUT AS YOU WISH, I WON'T LISTEN TO ANYTHING YOU SAY!!
THEN YOU HAVEN'T ACCEPTED ME.
I SAID I DON'T WANT IT!!
NO, YOU HAVE TO TAKE IT.
I DON'T WANT YOUR MONEY.
IN FACT, IT WOULD BE GREAT IF YOU WERE NO. 2.
NOT AT ALL.
PARISTON, YOU DON'T OBJECT?
...
WELL, LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU FEEL UP TO IT.
YOU CAN DONATE IT OR GIVE IT AWAY, FOR ALL I CARE.
...TWO TIMES ZERO IS STILL ZERO.
BUT IF MY MATH IS CORRECT...
I'LL ASK FOR YOUR ACCOUNT ANYWAY.
YOU'RE RIGHT! ♪


KURAPIKA, 'ZAT YOU ?!
♪♫♪


HE'S FINE NOW. JUST GET OVER HERE AND HELP ME.
MIZAISTOM TOLD ME ABOUT GON. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

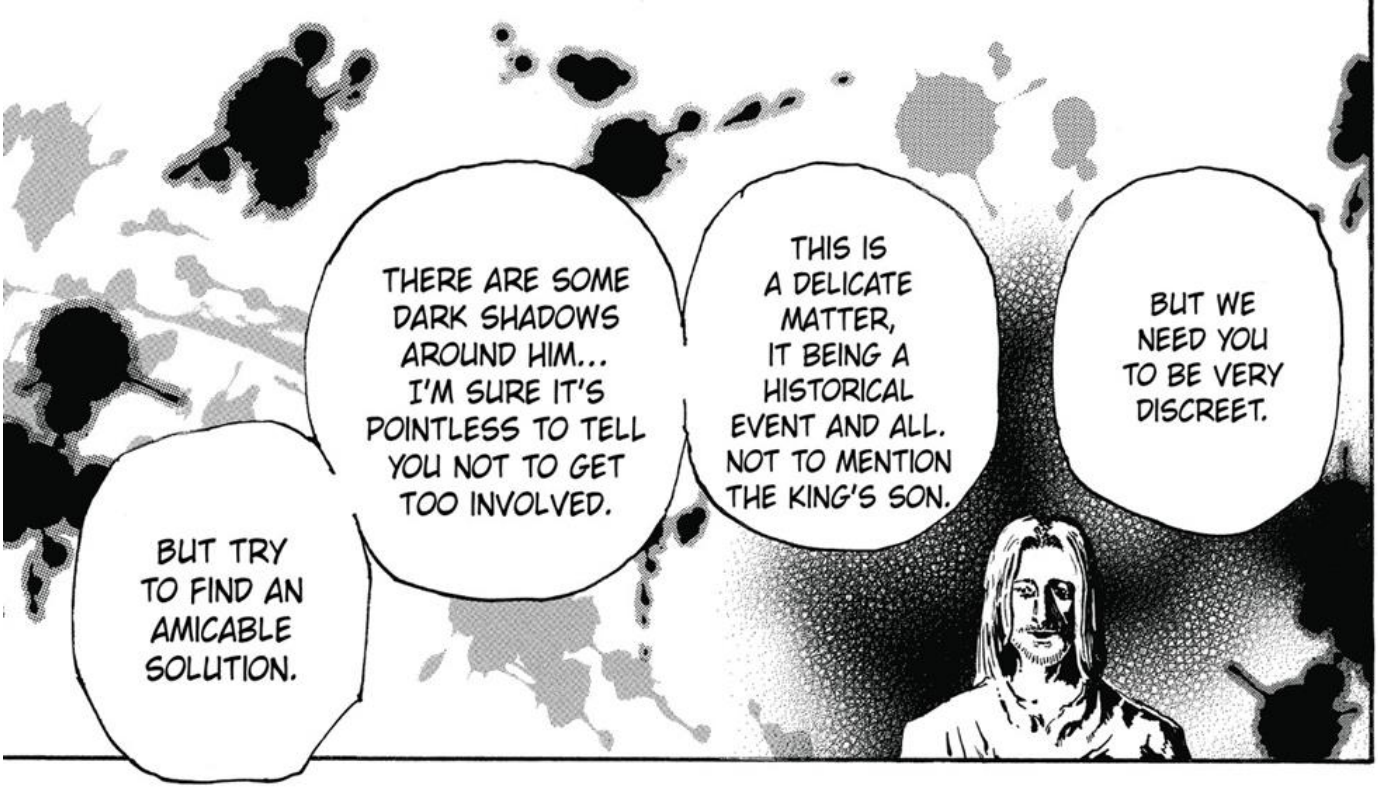

ALL RIGHT.
I DON'T KNOW ANYONE. IT'S AWKWARD.


NO. I'M HEADING OVER NOW.
HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU THINK I'VE CALLED?! TELL ME YOUR EMAIL!!
YES.
SO YOU'RE JOINING THE ZODIACS?
NO.
EMAIL!

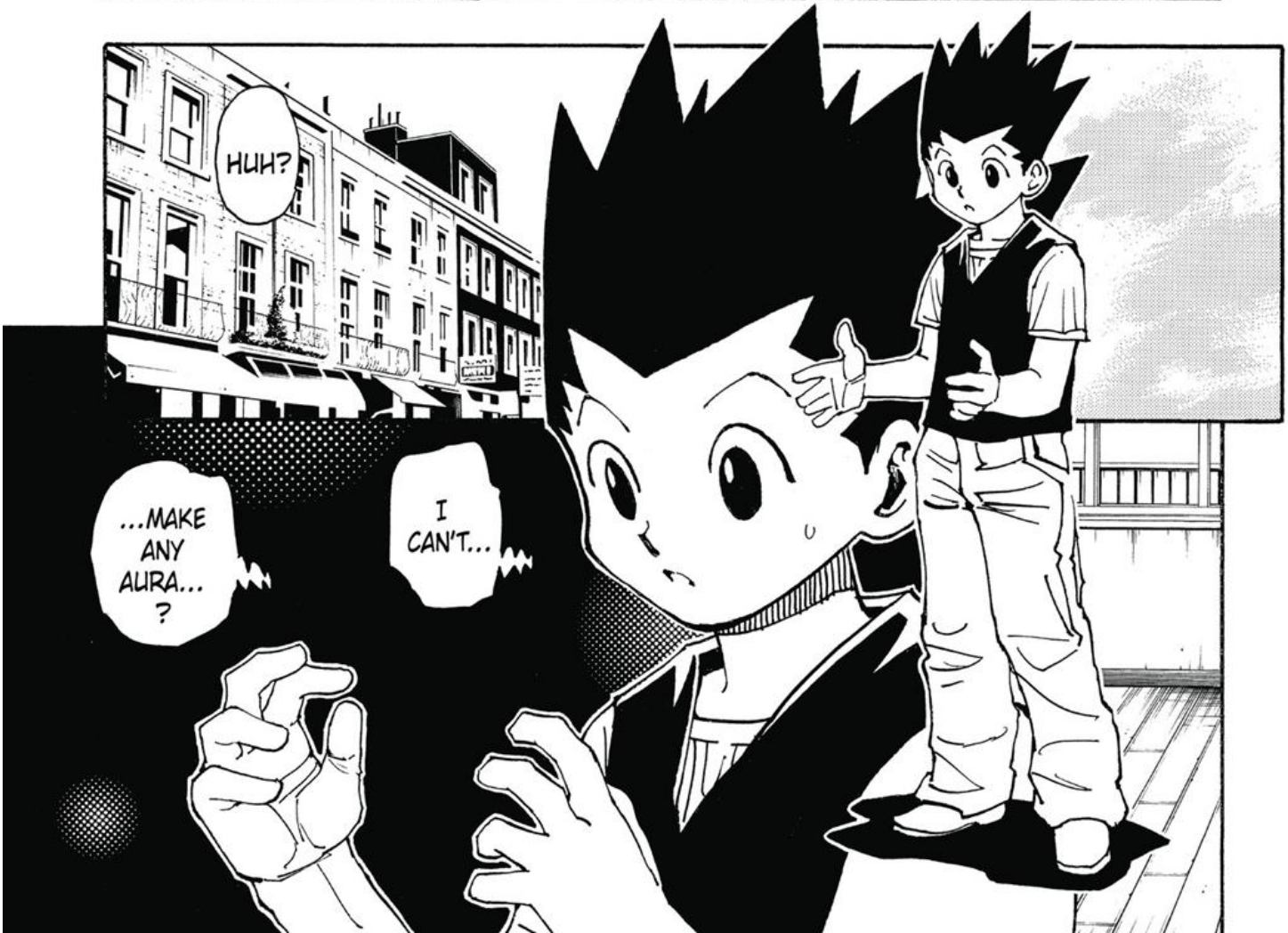

LEORIO SEEMS TO THINK VERY HIGHLY OF YOU.
AS IF YOU'RE THE BASHFUL TYPE.

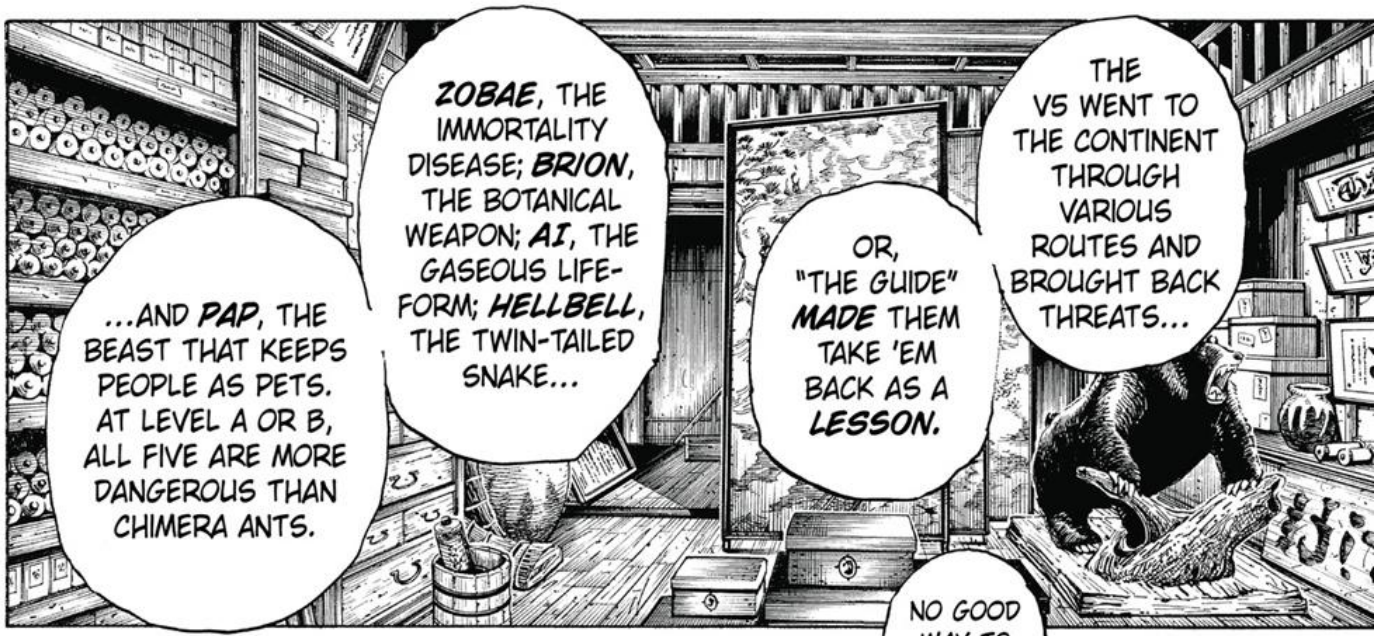

YOU CAN PRIORITIZE YOUR "BUSINESS" ON BOARD.
I KNOW.
I'LL HELP AS MUCH AS I CAN, BUT...


BUT THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME KNOW ABOUT THE PRINCE.
I DON'T KNOW... I'M NOT SURE HOW MY ABILITY WOULD BE USEFUL IN THIS ENDEAVOR...


BUT WE NEED YOU TO BE VERY DISCREET.
THIS IS A DELICATE MATTER, IT BEING A HISTORICAL EVENT AND ALL. NOT TO MENTION THE KING'S SON.
THERE ARE SOME DARK SHADOWS AROUND HIM... I'M SURE IT'S POINTLESS TO TELL YOU NOT TO GET TOO INVOLVED.
BUT TRY TO FIND AN AMICABLE SOLUTION.


NO NEED TO WORRY.
I'M BETTER AT HANDLING MONSTERS IN HUMAN SKIN THAN AT BATTLING THE UNKNOWN.
...

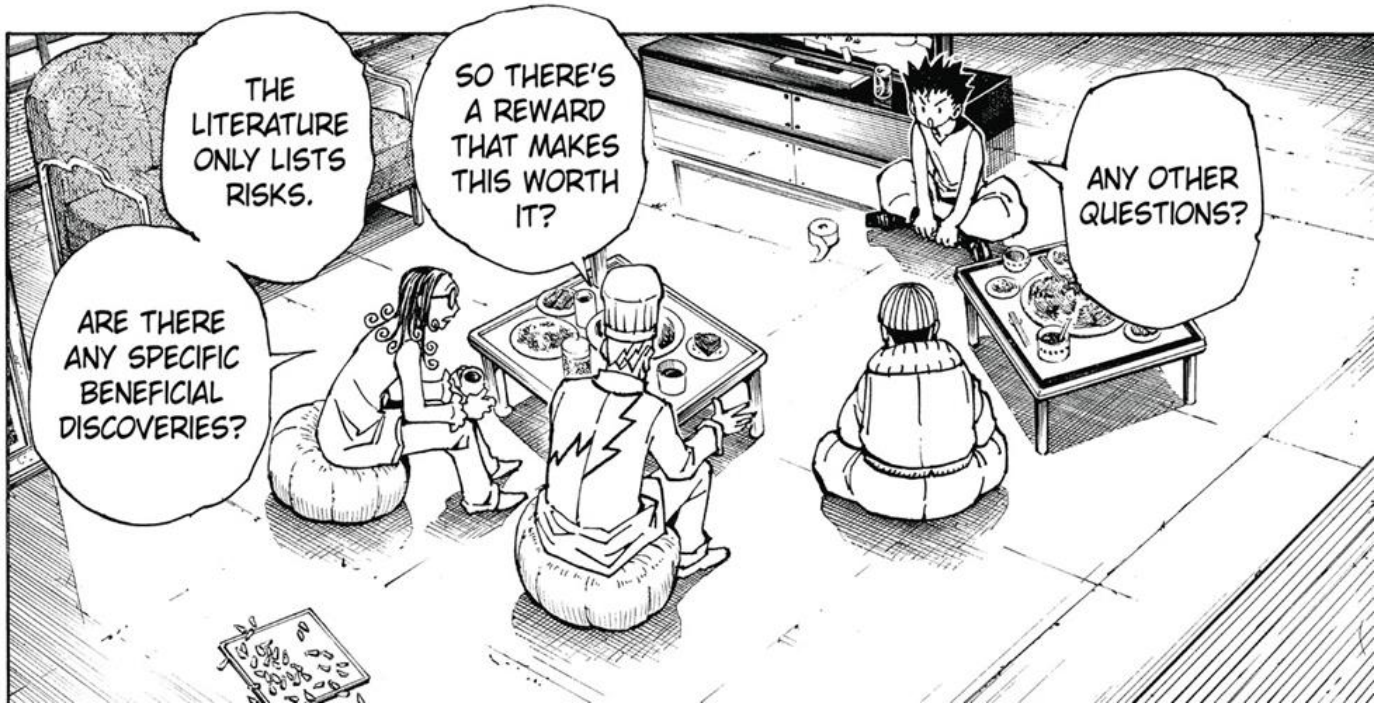

HUH?
I CAN'T...
...MAKE ANY AURA...?

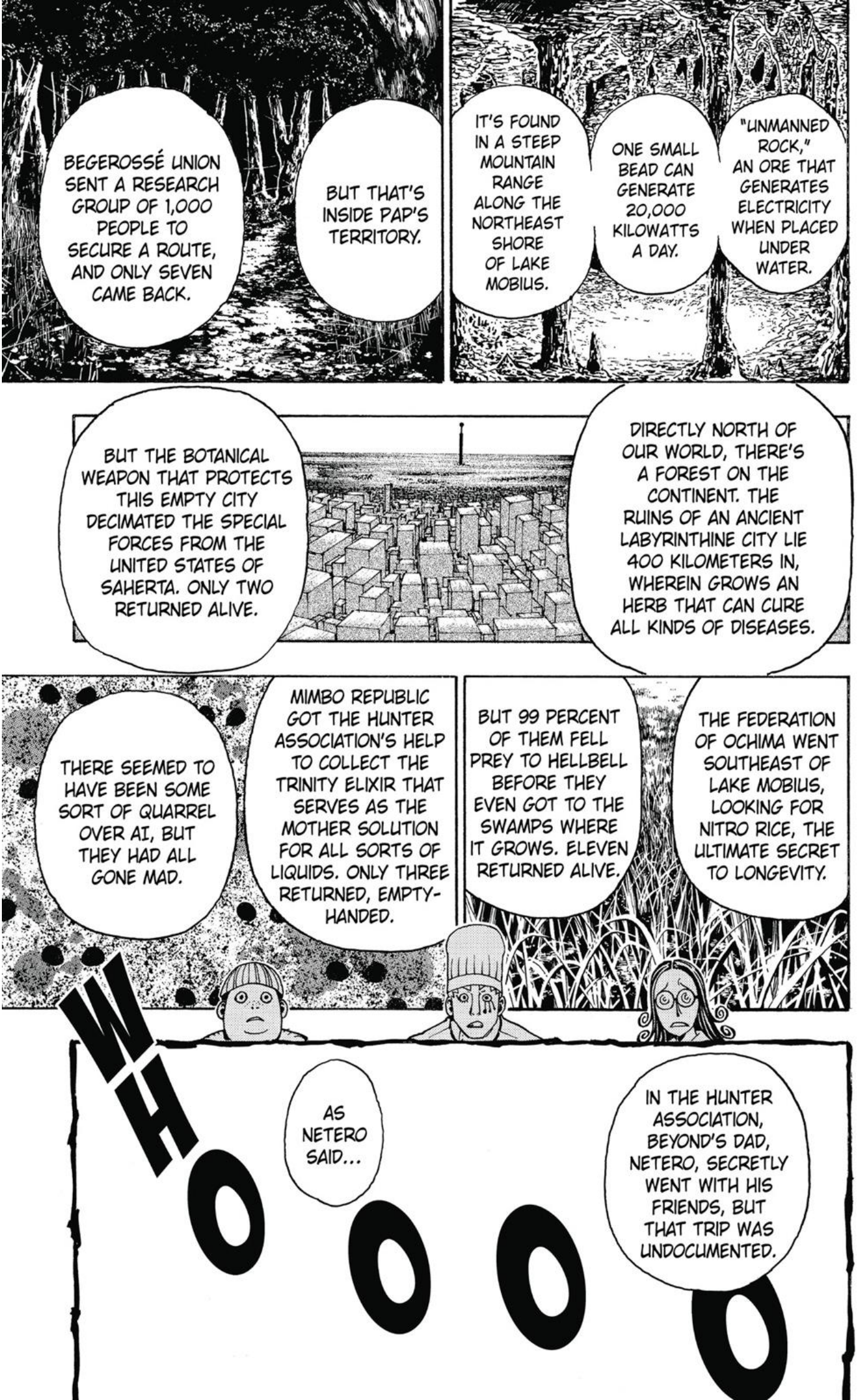

THE V5 WENT TO THE CONTINENT THROUGH VARIOUS ROUTES AND BROUGHT BACK THREATS...
OR, "THE GUIDE" *MADE* THEM TAKE 'EM BACK AS A *LESSON.*
ZOBAE, THE IMMORTALITY DISEASE; *BRION*, THE BOTANICAL WEAPON; *AI*, THE GASEOUS LIFE-FORM; *HELLBELL*, THE TWIN-TAILED SNAKE...
...AND *PAP*, THE BEAST THAT KEEPS PEOPLE AS PETS. AT LEVEL A OR B, ALL FIVE ARE MORE DANGEROUS THAN CHIMERA ANTS.


...

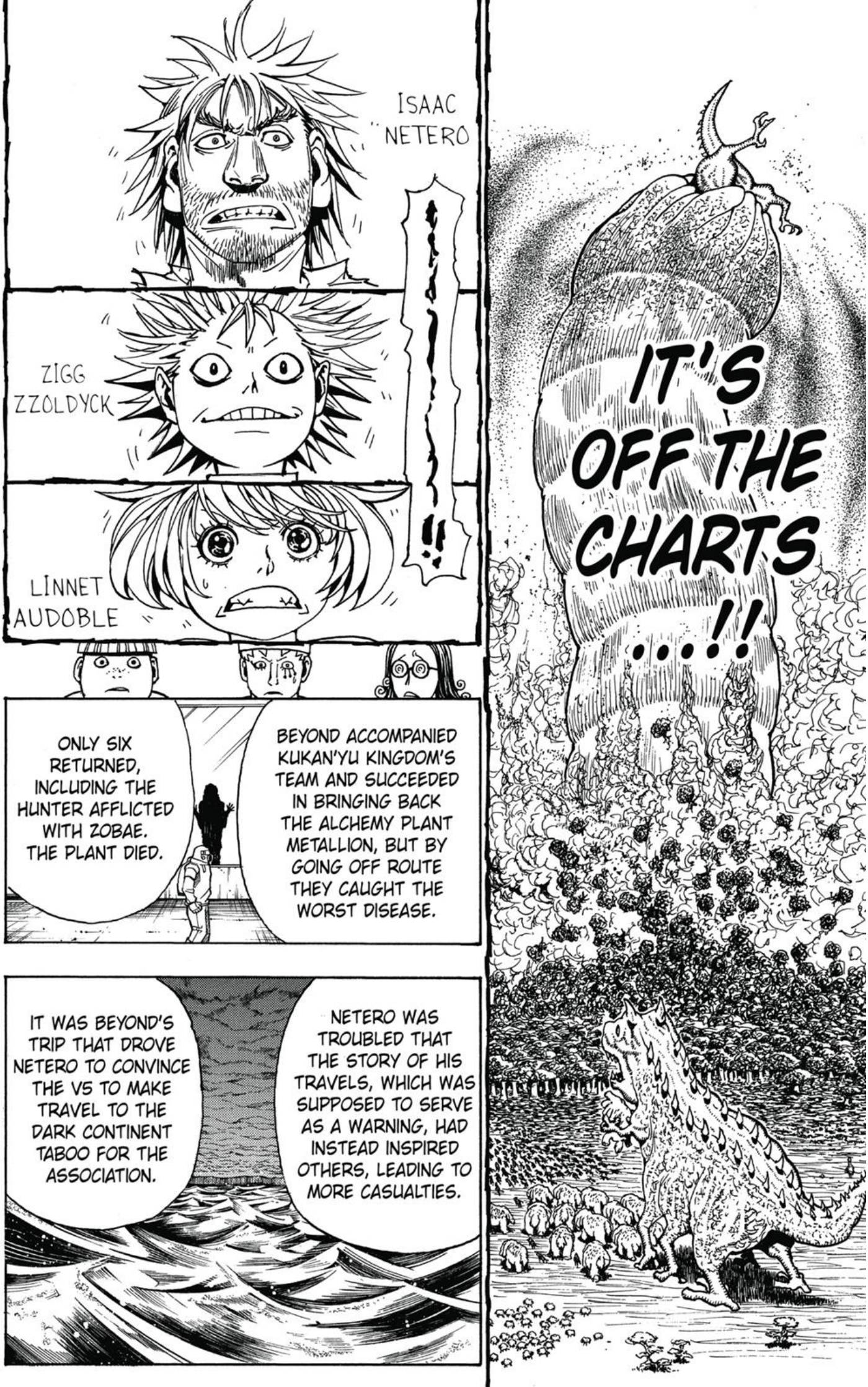

NO GOOD WAY TO DEAL WITH 'EM.
BEST WE CAN DO IS LOCK 'EM UP AND STAY AWAY.
OF THE FIVE THREATS, THERE HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF AI AND PAP ON THIS SIDE ALREADY. WE'RE LUCKY HUMANITY HASN'T BEEN WIPED OUT YET.


BEYOND WANTS TO TAKE AN UNEXPLORED ROUTE, SO IT'S POSSIBLE WE'LL END UP WITH A *SIXTH.*
THEY'RE ALL STORED IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY'S BASEMENT, OFF RECORD.

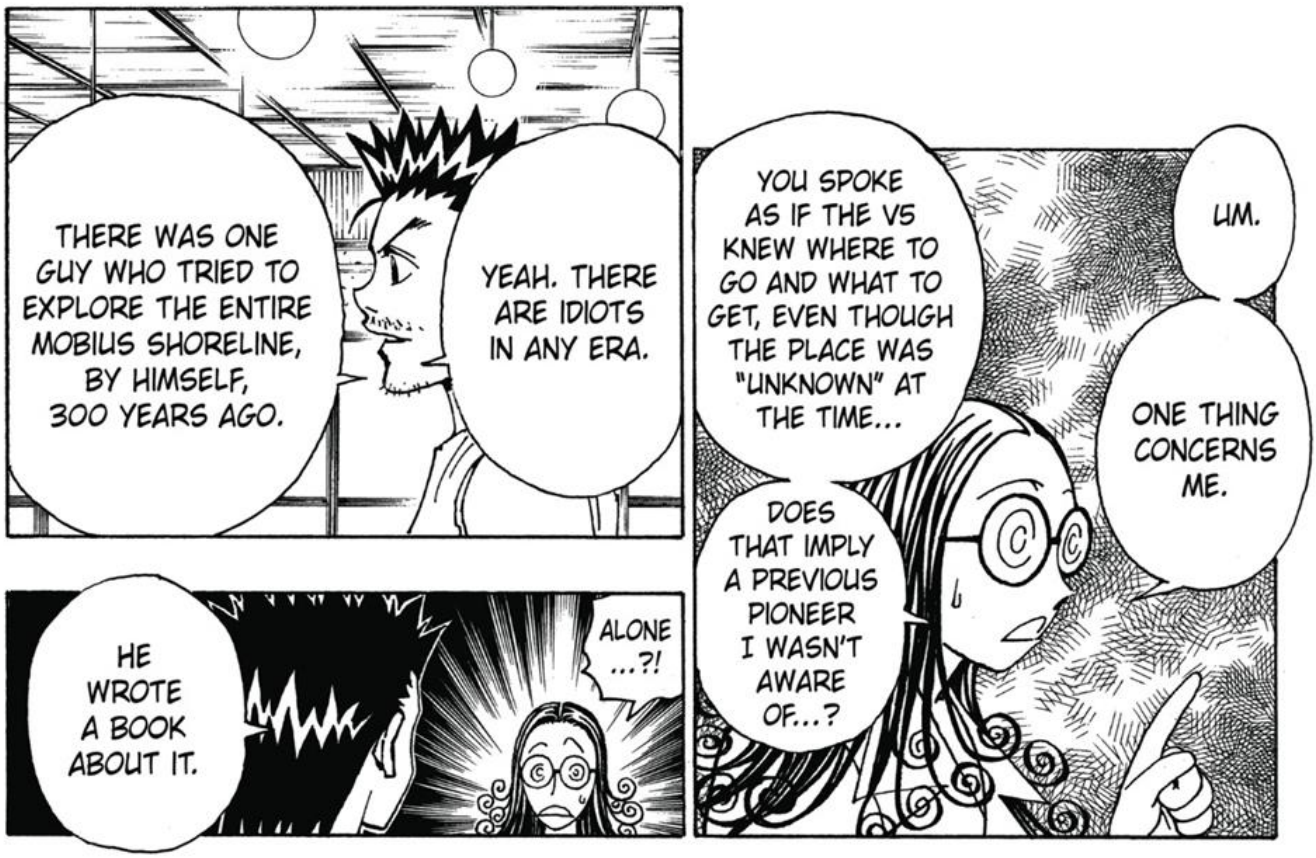

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?
SO THERE'S A REWARD THAT MAKES THIS WORTH IT?
THE LITERATURE ONLY LISTS RISKS.
ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC BENEFICIAL DISCOVERIES?


BEGEROSSÉ UNION SENT A RESEARCH GROUP OF 1,000 PEOPLE TO SECURE A ROUTE, AND ONLY SEVEN CAME BACK.
BUT THAT'S INSIDE PAP'S TERRITORY.
IT'S FOUND IN A STEEP MOUNTAIN RANGE ALONG THE NORTHEAST SHORE OF LAKE MOBIUS.
ONE SMALL BEAD CAN GENERATE 20,000 KILOWATTS A DAY.
"UNMANNED ROCK," AN ORE THAT GENERATES ELECTRICITY WHEN PLACED UNDER WATER.
BUT THE BOTANICAL WEAPON THAT PROTECTS THIS EMPTY CITY DECIMATED THE SPECIAL FORCES FROM THE UNITED STATES OF SAHERTA. ONLY TWO RETURNED ALIVE.
DIRECTLY NORTH OF OUR WORLD, THERE'S A FOREST ON THE CONTINENT. THE RUINS OF AN ANCIENT LABYRINTHINE CITY LIE 400 KILOMETERS IN, WHEREIN GROWS AN HERB THAT CAN CURE ALL KINDS OF DISEASES.
THERE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN SOME SORT OF QUARREL OVER AI, BUT THEY HAD ALL GONE MAD.
MIMBO REPUBLIC GOT THE HUNTER ASSOCIATION'S HELP TO COLLECT THE TRINITY ELIXIR THAT SERVES AS THE MOTHER SOLUTION FOR ALL SORTS OF LIQUIDS. ONLY THREE RETURNED, EMPTY-HANDED.
BUT 99 PERCENT OF THEM FELL PREY TO HELLBELL BEFORE THEY EVEN GOT TO THE SWAMPS WHERE IT GROWS. ELEVEN RETURNED ALIVE.
THE FEDERATION OF OCHIMA WENT SOUTHEAST OF LAKE MOBIUS, LOOKING FOR NITRO RICE, THE ULTIMATE SECRET TO LONGEVITY.
WHOOOO
AS NETERO SAID...
IN THE HUNTER ASSOCIATION, BEYOND'S DAD, NETERO, SECRETLY WENT WITH HIS FRIENDS, BUT THAT TRIP WAS UNDOCUMENTED.


THIS PLACE IS TOO BIG...


ISAAC NETERO
ZIGG ZZOLDYCK
LINNET AUDOBLE
!!
ONLY SIX RETURNED, INCLUDING THE HUNTER AFFLICTED WITH ZOBAE. THE PLANT DIED.
BEYOND ACCOMPANIED KUKAN'YU KINGDOM'S TEAM AND SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING BACK THE ALCHEMY PLANT METALLION, BUT BY GOING OFF ROUTE THEY CAUGHT THE WORST DISEASE.
IT WAS BEYOND'S TRIP THAT DROVE NETERO TO CONVINCE THE V5 TO MAKE TRAVEL TO THE DARK CONTINENT TABOO FOR THE ASSOCIATION.
NETERO WAS TROUBLED THAT THE STORY OF HIS TRAVELS, WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO SERVE AS A WARNING, HAD INSTEAD INSPIRED OTHERS, LEADING TO MORE CASUALTIES.
IT'S OFF THE CHARTS...!!


...
DO YOU STILL WANT TO GO?
DID BEYOND TELL YOU IT'S SUPER-HIGH RISK, HIGH RETURN?
!
I DO.
I SPENT IT ALREADY.
WE THOUGHT YOU LEFT WITH THE CASH.
I SAID I WOULD.
YOU CAME BACK.
FOR THAT I'M GRATE-FUL.
THANKS TO YOU, THE INSURANCE PAY-OUT UPON MY DEATH WILL TAKE CARE OF IT FOR HER LIFETIME.
I COULD BE REBORN TWICE, SELL ALL THREE HUNTER LICENSES, AND *STILL* NOT PAY OFF ITS DEBT.
TO SAVE THE HOSPITAL MY SISTER'S AT.
YOU'LL GET TO SPEND BEYOND'S PAY.
I CAN'T LET YOU DIE KNOWING THAT...
I'LL GO WHEREVER YOU GO.
YOU'RE MY NO. 2.


THERE WAS ONE GUY WHO TRIED TO EXPLORE THE ENTIRE MOBIUS SHORELINE, BY HIMSELF, 300 YEARS AGO.
YEAH. THERE ARE IDIOTS IN ANY ERA.
UM.
ONE THING CONCERNS ME.
YOU SPOKE AS IF THE V5 KNEW WHERE TO GO AND WHAT TO GET, EVEN THOUGH THE PLACE WAS "UNKNOWN" AT THE TIME...
DOES THAT IMPLY A PREVIOUS PIONEER I WASN'T AWARE OF...?
ALONE ...?!
HE WROTE A BOOK ABOUT IT.


BUT ONLY EAST HAS BEEN FOUND, WITH NO SIGN OF WEST.
JOURNEY TO THE NEW WORLD, EAST AND WEST EDITIONS!!
WHY?


AND THE THIRD...?
...?
HIS GOAL WAS TOO AMBITIOUS AND HE NEVER WROTE IT.
IT SIMPLY HASN'T BEEN FOUND YET, OR...
THERE ARE THREE POSSIBLE REASONS...
...I CAN THINK OF!
...WRITING IT AS WE SPEAK...!!
HE'S STILL...
HA HA, OF COURSE.
LONGEVITY RICE...!! HERBS THAT CURE DISEASE...!!
...!!
BUT IT WAS 300 YEARS AGO...
?!
...IS DON FREECSS!!
THE BOOK'S AUTHOR...

DANGEROUS CREATURES EVALUATION LIST

	Aggression	Number	Fecundity	Threat of Bodily Harm	Total Score
Chimera Ants (Humanoid)	B～C (B≒A-1, A-2)	B	B-1	A	B
Ai	A-2	?	?	A～B	A
Brion	B (≒A-1)	C	B-2	A-1	B^{+}
Zobae (Patient)	C-1 (≒A-2)	E	B-2	B-2	B^{+}
Hellbell	A-1	?	?	A-2	A
Pap	A-2	?	?	B-1	A
Human (Individual)	C	E	C	B～E	C
Human (Nation)	B (≒A-1)	A	C (≒B)	A～C	A^{-}～B^{+}