

CLIMBING THE LADDER INSIDE THE SHIP'S UMBILICAL, C.J. FOUND HIMSELF MOVING MORE SLOWLY THAN THE OTHER TWO. AWE MINGLED WITH A STRONG SENSE OF APPREHENSION.

IF WE WANTED TO DO THAT, WE WOULD HAVE JUST DONE IT.

C'MON! IF THAT'S AS FAST AS YOU CAN CLIMB A LADDER, WE'RE GONNA HAVE A PROBLEM.

SORRY... I'M STILL HALF EXPECTING TO WAKE UP ANY SECOND... OR GET A BULLET IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD...

WOW! THIS... THIS IS REAL... OH MY GOD! ARE WE GOING TO BE FIGHTING ALIENS!?

THEN WHY DO WE HAVE A FREAKIN' SPACESHIP!?

FIGHTING THEM? NOT EXACTLY, NO.

IN SHORT, WE STOLE IT FROM THE BAD GUYS.

YOU'LL BE FULLY BRIEFED HERE IN A BIT. THERE'S ALSO SOME TRAINING YOU'LL NEED...



MOST OF THAT WILL HAVE
TO WAIT, CHIEF. WE'RE HEADIN'
OUT!

SITUATION ON MARS,
STILL DEVELOPING. A COUPLE
OF RESEARCHERS AND THEIR
ESTSO OF ESCORT WENT MISSING
UNDER SUSPICIOUS
CIRCUMSTANCES. MIGHT BE
THE C.C.P.

COLONEL, WHAT'S THE
SITUATION?

MA-MARS!?

HOW LONG AGO DID
THEY GO MISSING?

ABOUT 4 HOURS AGO.
SATELLITE IMAGERY SHOWS
THEIR ROVER PARKED EXACTLY
WHERE IT WAS EXPECTED TO
BE.



YOU MUST BE MY NEW
MARINE! I'M COLONEL VAN
HELLEN, COMMANDER OF THE
CURTIS LEMAY.

SO EITHER ROVER
TROUBLE OR AN AMBUSH.
COOL.

SIR! LANCE
CORPORAL KINCAID
REPORTING FOR
DUTY, SIR!

RELAX, SON.



YES, SIR.

THE SERGEANT
MAJOR TELLS ME
YOU'RE AN ANDROID.
IS THAT
CORRECT?

FASCINATING! YOU'RE OUR
FIRST... WELL, IF YOU DON'T MIND
MY SAYING, "NON-HUMAN" CREW
MEMBER.

BELIEVE IT OR
NOT, SIR. I HEAR
THAT A LOT.

INDEED! WELL, YOU'VE MET
SERGEANT MAJOR SHAW AND
CHIEF DI PAULO. STAFF SERGEANT
WINTERS HERE WILL BE YOUR
RADIO OPERATOR.



AHH, WELL, IT'S A
PLEASURE, STAFF
SERGEANT.

JUST SO YOU KNOW, I
HAVE THREE BUILT-IN RADIO
RECEIVERS. BUT IF YOU'D PREFER
TO WHISPER TO ME DIRECTLY,
THAT'S FINE, TOO.

NICE TO MEET
YOU, LANCE CORPORAL.
NO MATTER WHERE YOU
GUYS GO, I'LL BE THAT
LITTLE VOICE IN YOUR
EAR!

HA! WELL, SORRY TO
DISAPPOINT YOU, MARINE.
I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO
"WHISPER."



OH, WOW!

ALL RIGHT!
THAT'S ENOUGH.
ARE YOU
SERIOUS?

I DON'T MIND
THE RIGHT KIND
OF SCREAMS,
EITHER...

LISTEN, SON. I'M A PRETTY
LAID-BACK GUY. YOU HAVE TO BE IN
THIS JOB. BUT THIS IS STILL A UNITED
STATES AIR FORCE VESSEL, AND I
TAKE THAT VERY SERIOUSLY.

WE'RE ALL ADULTS, AND
WE'RE STUCK ABOARD FOR LONG
STRETCHES. AS LONG AS I DON'T SEE IT AND IT
DOESN'T INTERFERE WITH THE MISSION, I WON'T
PUSH IT. BUT IF I DO SEE IT, YOU'RE DONE.
UNDERSTOOD?

SEE THAT IT DOESN'T.

SERGEANT MAJOR, WE'LL
HAVE A FULL MISSION BRIEF AT
1130. GET THE LANCE CORPORAL
UP TO SPEED AS BEST YOU CAN
UNTIL THEN.

YES, SIR.
SORRY, SIR. IT
WON'T HAPPEN
AGAIN.

AYE, SIR.



DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO...

LES...

WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE!?

WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT IN FRONT OF THE COLONEL?

THEN WHY DID YOU KEEP FUCKING TALKING!?

I'M SORRY! I KNEW IT WAS STUPID AS SOON AS I SAID IT...

LISTEN TO ME, YOU SPOILED PUNK!

I DIDN'T ASK TO HAVE YOU HERE, AND I DON'T CARE WHO YOUR DADDY IS!

IN FACT, I DIDN'T WANT YOU HERE AT ALL. NONE OF US DID!

I UNDERSTAND. I'M SORRY!

SHAW STUCK HIS NECK OUT FOR YOU! DON'T APOLOGIZE TO ME. APOLOGIZE TO HIM!



YEAH, NO SHIT.
SO DO THE REST OF US,
SON. IT'S CALLED BEING A GUY.
LEARN TO CONTROL IT, AT LEAST
WHEN THERE'S AN OFFICER
AROUND. FOR THE LOVE OF
GOD.

I AM SORRY... I
HAVE A THING FOR
ATTRACTIVE WOMEN, AND ALL
THIS IS KINDA
OVERWHELMING.

PFET. I'D
JUST CALL YOU AN
ASSHOLE.

GETTING CHEWED
OUT BY THE C.O. FIFTEEN
SECONDS AFTER MEETING HIM...
PROBABLY NOT A GOOD FIRST
IMPRESSION...

NO, DEFINITELY NOT.
FOR ANY OF US.

YOU EITHER GET YOUR
ACT TOGETHER REAL FAST, OR
YOU SPEND THE REST OF YOUR
SYNTHETIC LIFE IN A STEEL CAGE
UNDER CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN.
UNDERSTOOD?

UNDERSTOOD.

YEAH, SURE THING...
YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANNA
DO THAT WHILE I HANDLE THE
PAPERWORK?

PAUL, GET HIM
SETTLED IN AND
INTRODUCED TO THE REST OF
THE TEAM. I'VE GOT TO GET
THE BUG-LIGHT BACK TO THE
ARMORY AND HANDLE
SOME PAPERWORK.

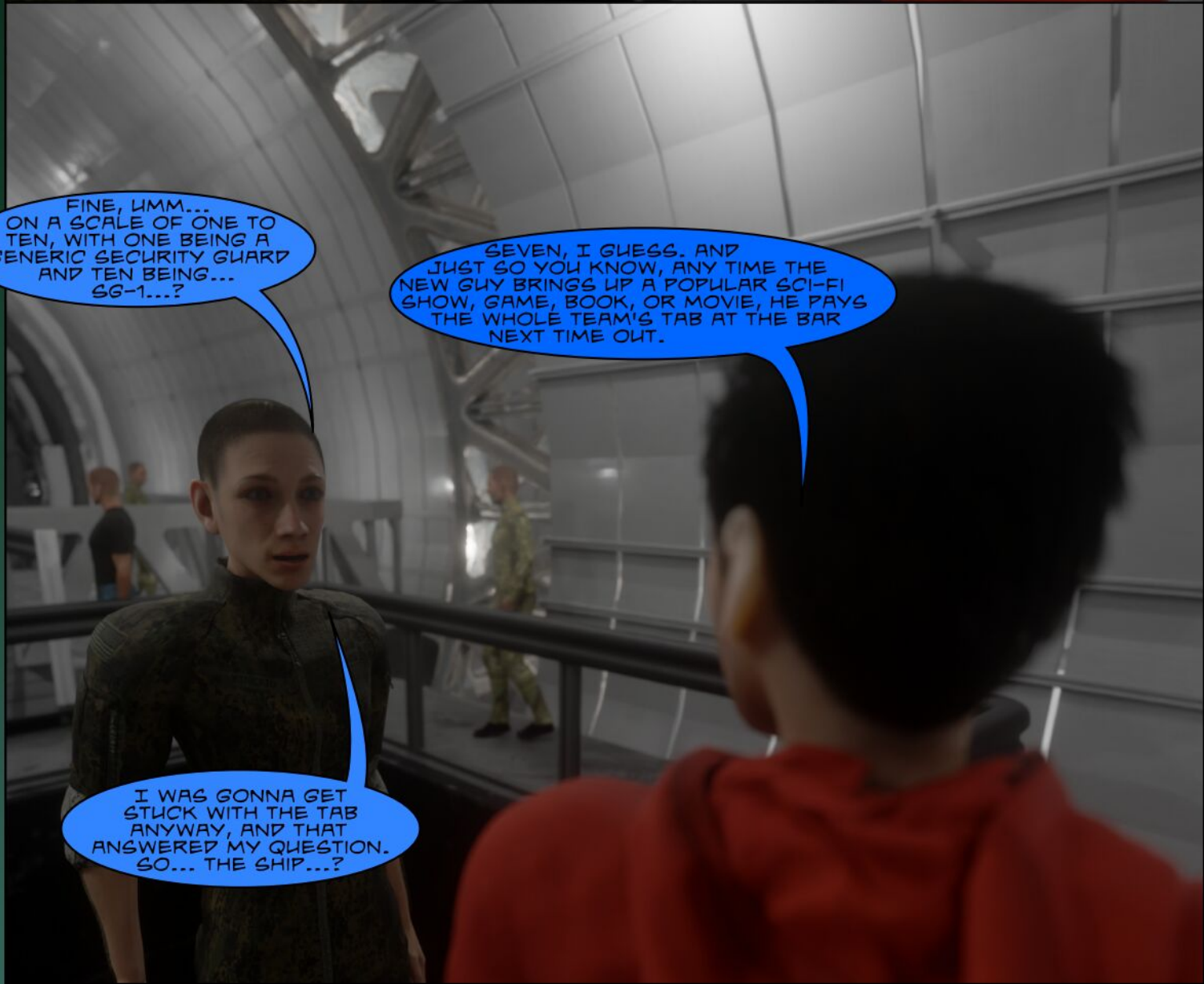
PRETTY DAMN SURE.
UNLESS THINGS CHANGE,
BRIEFING'S AT 1130, LIKE THE
COLONEL SAID. SEE YOU
GUYS THERE.



LASER FOCUSED,
BOSS.

WELL... LOOKS
LIKE I'M STUCK WITH
YOU. DO AS I SAY AND
PAY ATTENTION.

C'MON. I'LL GIVE YOU
THE BASIC TOUR, I GUESS.



FINE, UMM...
ON A SCALE OF ONE TO
TEN, WITH ONE BEING A
GENERIC SECURITY GUARD
AND TEN BEING...
SG-1...?

SEVEN, I GUESS. AND
JUST SO YOU KNOW, ANY TIME THE
NEW GUY BRINGS UP A POPULAR SCI-FI
SHOW, GAME, BOOK, OR MOVIE, HE PAYS
THE WHOLE TEAM'S TAB AT THE BAR
NEXT TIME OUT.

I WAS GONNA GET
STUCK WITH THE TAB
ANYWAY, AND THAT
ANSWERED MY QUESTION.
SO... THE SHIP...?

THIS SHIP IS PRETTY OLD, BELIEVE IT OR NOT. NINETY-TWO YEARS OLD, TO BE EXACT. SHE WAS DESIGNED FOR SPIN GRAVITY, BUT SHE'S BEEN MODIFIED AND REFITTED A FEW DOZEN TIMES SINCE THEN. SO THINGS ARE A LITTLE... UNINTUITIVE...

THIS CENTRAL PART OF THE SHIP IS WHAT WE CALL THE HUB. RIGHT NOW, WE'RE FEELING EARTH'S NATURAL GRAVITY. WE WON'T FEEL IT HERE ONCE WE HEAD OUT INTO SPACE.

ONCE WE'RE IN SPACE, THE CENTRAL AXIS HERE IS A MICROGRAVITY ENVIRONMENT, BUT THE OUTER EDGES OF THE DECKS HAVE ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY.

ONLY THE CENTRAL HUB HERE IS SUBJECT TO NATURAL GRAVITY.

NO. THE ENGINES GENERATE GRAVITY... SOMEHOW. THAT'S ALL WAY BEYOND ME.

EITHER WAY, IT TAKES SOME GETTING USED TO. SO ONCE WE'RE IN THERE, DON'T BE AFRAID TO GRAB ONTO SOMETHING IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO FALL. YOU WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST.

SWITCH OFF YOUR PHONE AND ANY OTHER ELECTRONICS... BESIDES YOURSELF. LEAVE THEM IN ONE OF THOSE SLOTS, AND FOLLOW ME.

DOES IT STILL SPIN... OR...?

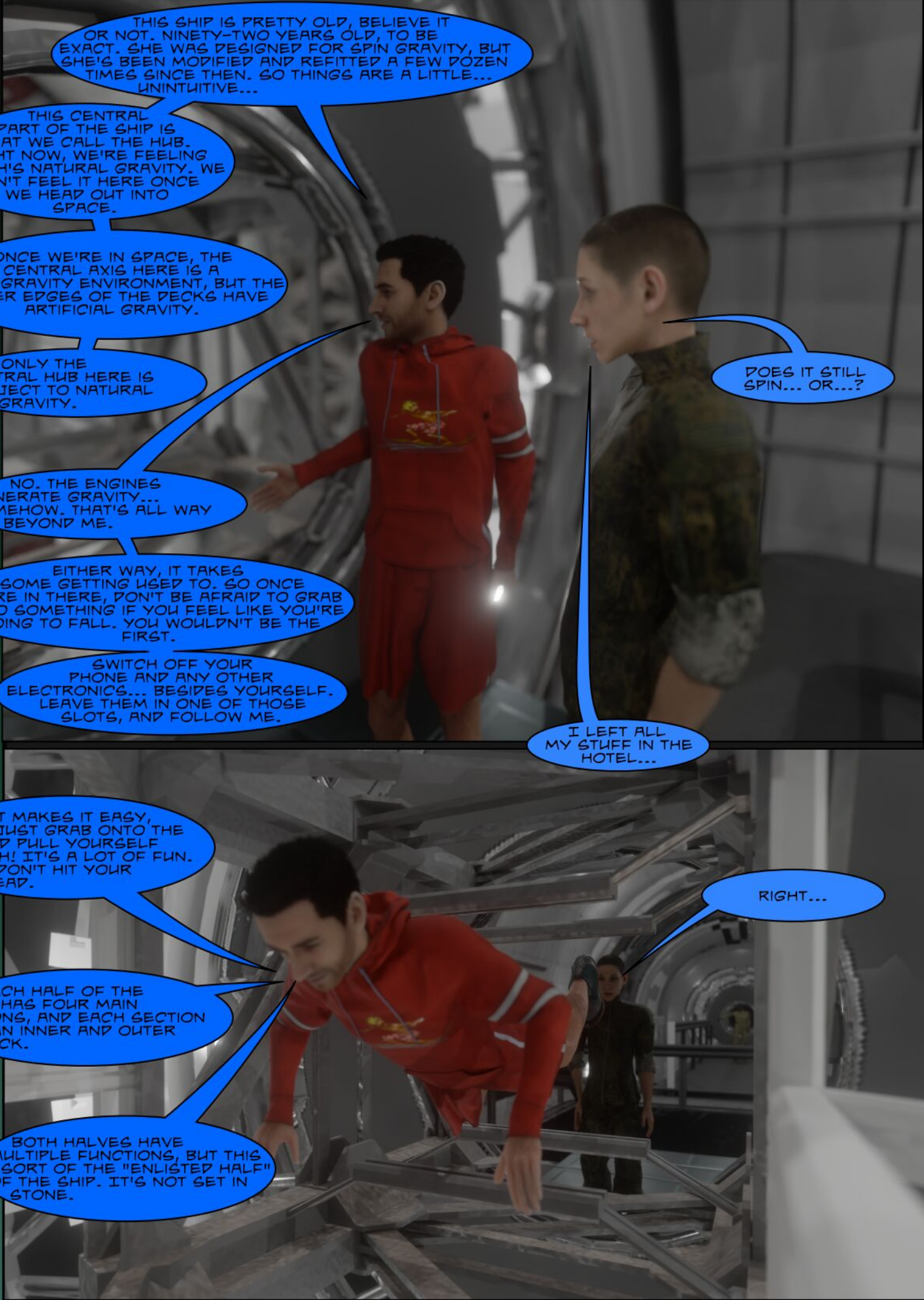
I LEFT ALL MY STUFF IN THE HOTEL...

THAT MAKES IT EASY, THEN! JUST GRAB ONTO THE BARS AND PULL YOURSELF THROUGH! IT'S A LOT OF FUN. JUST DON'T HIT YOUR HEAD.

EACH HALF OF THE HULL HAS FOUR MAIN SECTIONS, AND EACH SECTION HAS AN INNER AND OUTER DECK.

BOTH HALVES HAVE MULTIPLE FUNCTIONS, BUT THIS IS SORT OF THE "ENLISTED HALF" OF THE SHIP. IT'S NOT SET IN STONE.

RIGHT...





THIS FIRST SECTION IS SPLIT IN TWO. THIS HALF HOUSES THE LAB AND ARMORY. DR. LAPOINTE KINDA THINKS OF IT AS HIS OWN SECTION. IT'S NOT, EVEN THOUGH HE'S GOT HALF THE OUTER DECK FILLED WITH HIS JUNK...

WE ALSO KEEP A BUNCH OF OUR E.V.A. SUITS IN HERE, AND THE QUARTERMASTER HAS THE DORSAL QUADRANT, BOTH DECKS.

LOOK TO YOUR RIGHT. WE FOUND THAT RECENTLY. THE DOC THINKS IT'S IMPORTANT SOMEHOW... IT BETTER BE.



WHOA! COOL! IS THAT REAL!?

THOSE ARE ALIENS! IS THAT REALLY WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE!?

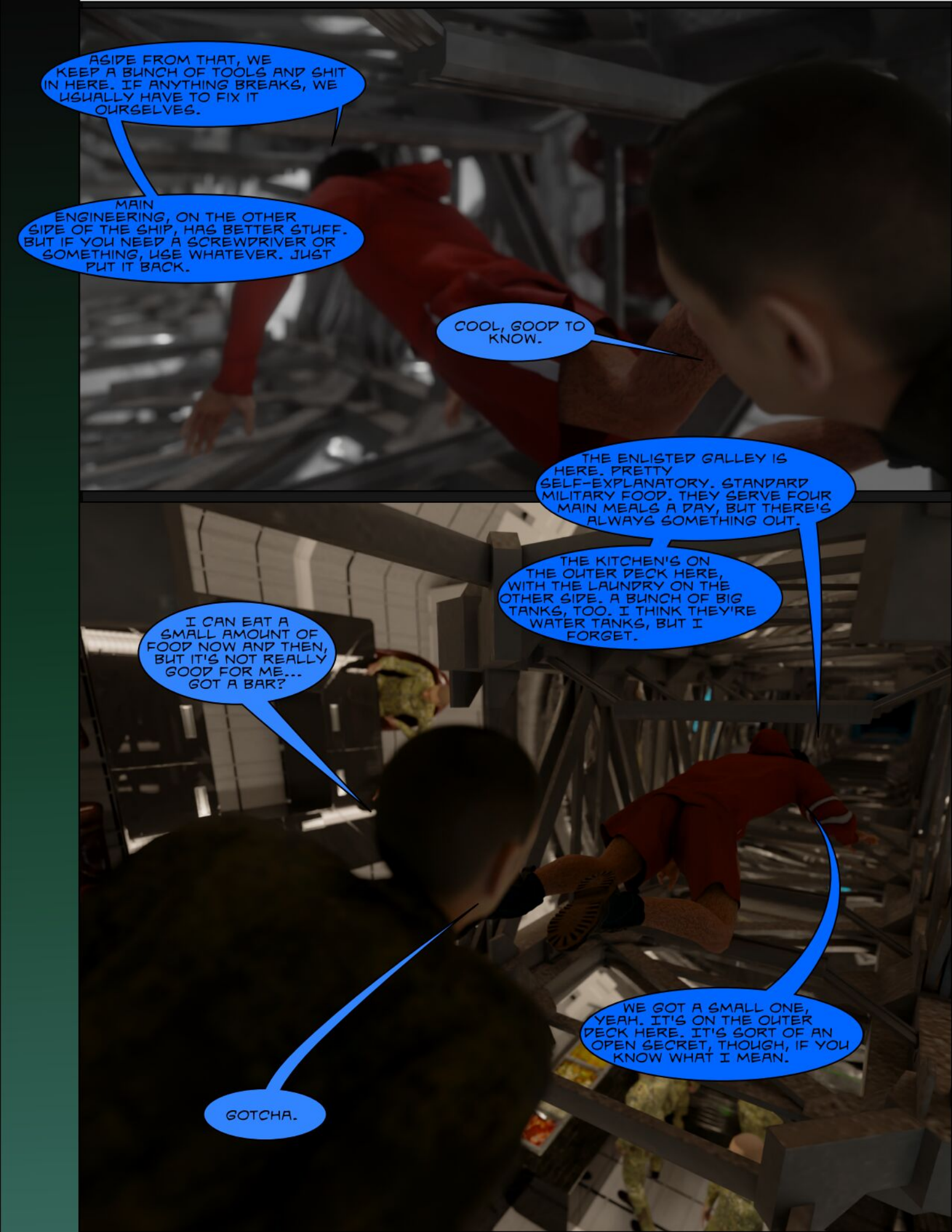
DOCTOR LAPOINTE THINKS IT'S FROM PERU, BUT IT'S GOT EGYPTIAN-LIKE WRITING ON IT. IT'S, LIKE, 20,000 YEARS OLD. HE'S BEEN STARING AT IT FOR THE PAST THREE MONTHS.



I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN ONE MYSELF. SEEN THEIR SHIPS, BUT NOT THEM. QUITE A FEW PEOPLE ON BOARD HAVE, THOUGH. THEY SAY YES.

TRY TO KEEP UP. YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO LEARN THE DETAILS. RIGHT NOW, WE'RE COVERING THE BASICS. PAY ATTENTION. IT'S A BIG SHIP.

RIGHT... SORRY.



ASIDE FROM THAT, WE
KEEP A BUNCH OF TOOLS AND SHIT
IN HERE. IF ANYTHING BREAKS, WE
USUALLY HAVE TO FIX IT
OURSELVES.

MAIN
ENGINEERING, ON THE OTHER
SIDE OF THE SHIP, HAS BETTER STUFF.
BUT IF YOU NEED A SCREWDRIVER OR
SOMETHING, USE WHATEVER. JUST
PUT IT BACK.

COOL, GOOD TO
KNOW.

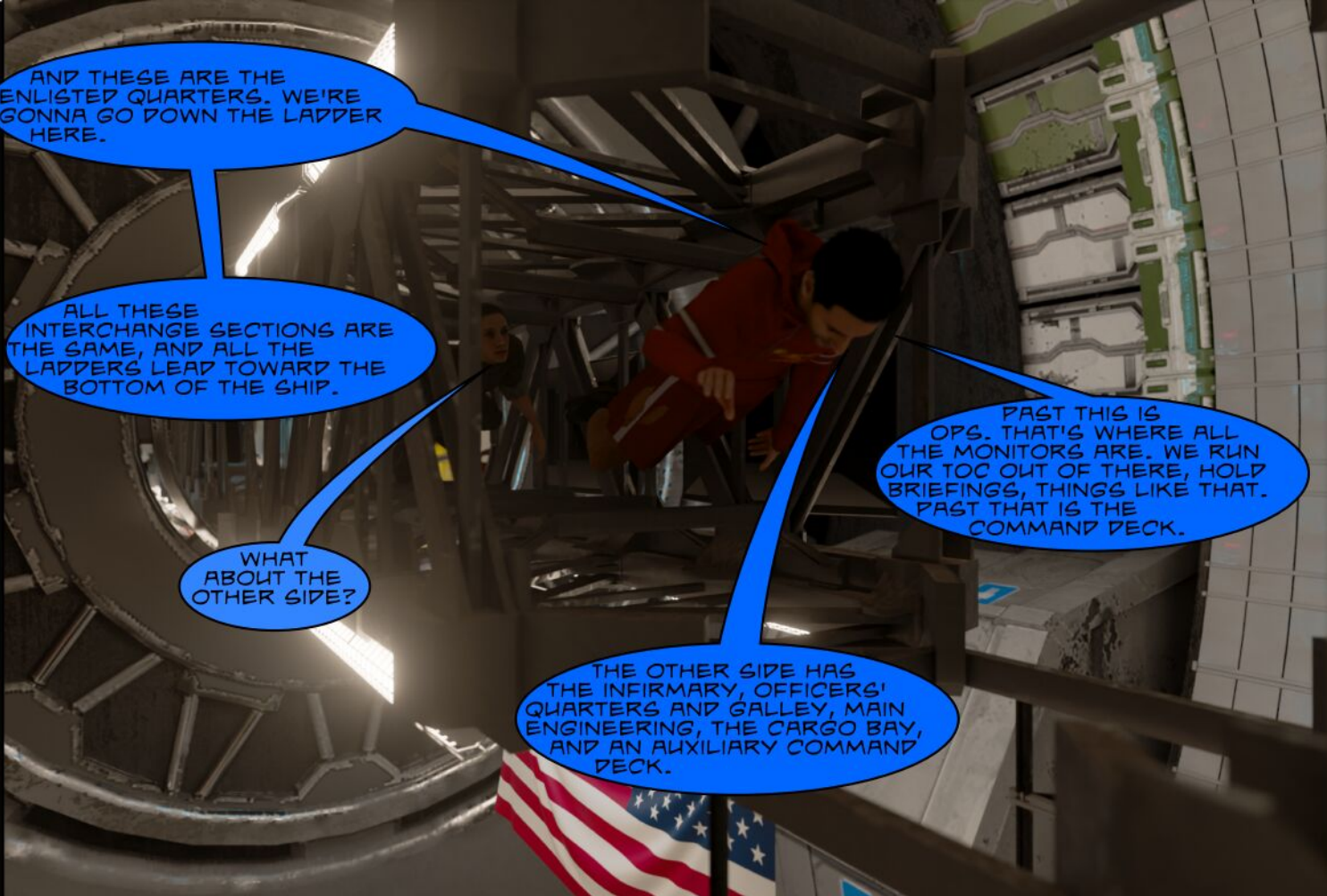
THE ENLISTED GALLEY IS
HERE. PRETTY
SELF-EXPLANATORY. STANDARD
MILITARY FOOD. THEY SERVE FOUR
MAIN MEALS A DAY, BUT THERE'S
ALWAYS SOMETHING OUT.

THE KITCHEN'S ON
THE OUTER DECK HERE,
WITH THE LAUNDRY ON THE
OTHER SIDE. A BUNCH OF BIG
TANKS, TOO. I THINK THEY'RE
WATER TANKS, BUT I
FORGET.

I CAN EAT A
SMALL AMOUNT OF
FOOD NOW AND THEN,
BUT IT'S NOT REALLY
GOOD FOR ME...
GOT A BAR?

GOTCHA.

WE GOT A SMALL ONE,
YEAH. IT'S ON THE OUTER
DECK HERE. IT'S SORT OF AN
OPEN SECRET, THOUGH, IF YOU
KNOW WHAT I MEAN.



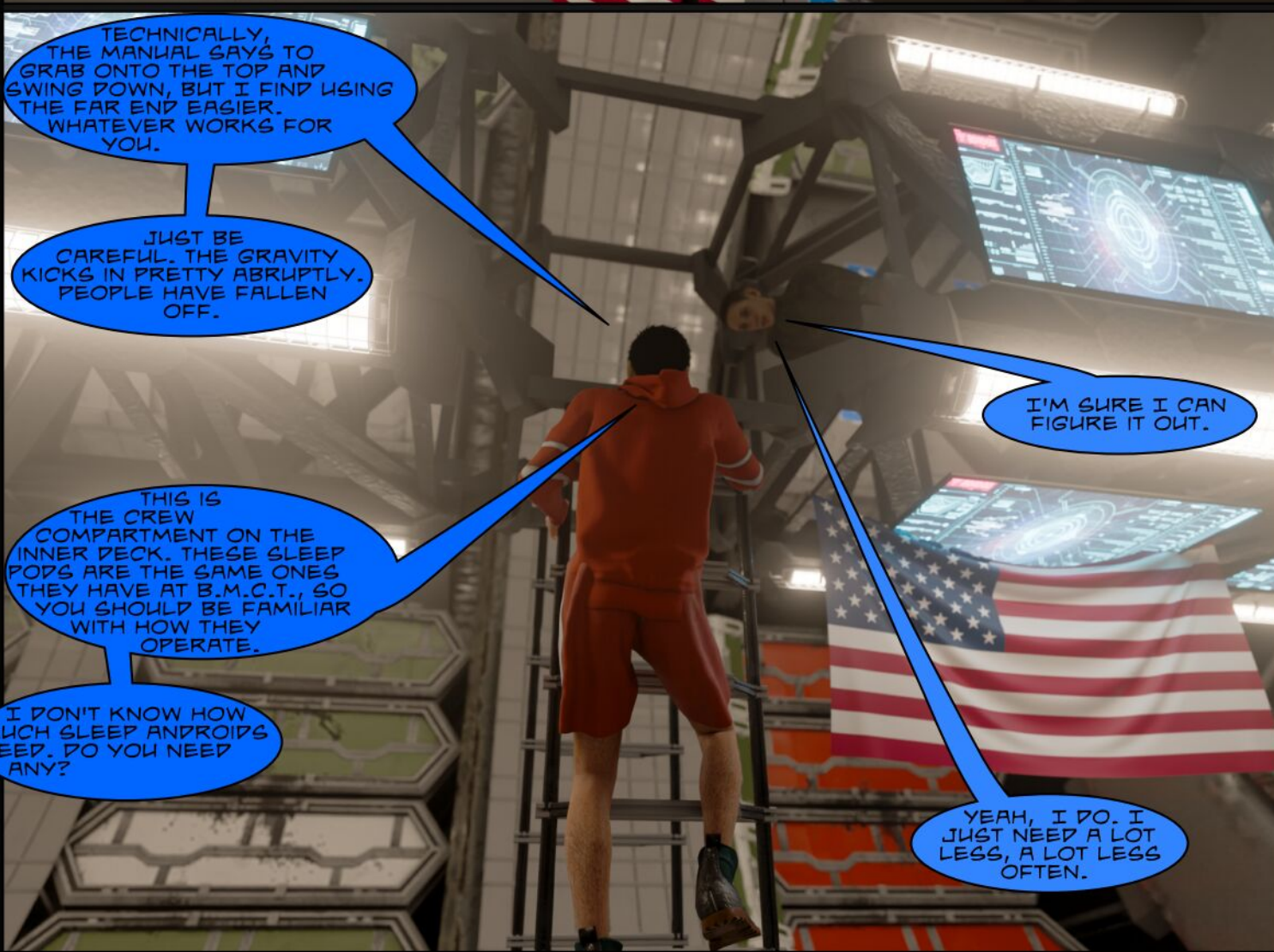
AND THESE ARE THE ENLISTED QUARTERS. WE'RE GONNA GO DOWN THE LADDER HERE.

ALL THESE INTERCHANGE SECTIONS ARE THE SAME, AND ALL THE LADDERS LEAD TOWARD THE BOTTOM OF THE SHIP.

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER SIDE?

THE OTHER SIDE HAS THE INFIRMARY, OFFICERS' QUARTERS AND GALLEY, MAIN ENGINEERING, THE CARGO BAY, AND AN AUXILIARY COMMAND DECK.

PAST THIS IS OPS. THAT'S WHERE ALL THE MONITORS ARE. WE RUN OUR TOC OUT OF THERE, HOLD BRIEFINGS, THINGS LIKE THAT. PAST THAT IS THE COMMAND DECK.



TECHNICALLY, THE MANUAL SAYS TO GRAB ONTO THE TOP AND SWING DOWN, BUT I FIND USING THE FAR END EASIER. WHATEVER WORKS FOR YOU.

JUST BE CAREFUL. THE GRAVITY KICKS IN PRETTY ABRUPTLY. PEOPLE HAVE FALLEN OFF.

THIS IS THE CREW COMPARTMENT ON THE INNER DECK. THESE SLEEP PODS ARE THE SAME ONES THEY HAVE AT B.M.C.T., SO YOU SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH HOW THEY OPERATE.

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH SLEEP ANDROIDS NEED. DO YOU NEED ANY?

I'M SURE I CAN FIGURE IT OUT.

YEAH, I DO. I JUST NEED A LOT LESS, A LOT LESS OFTEN.

AS C.J. STEPPED ONTO THE DECK, HE SUDDENLY FELT DIZZY AND OFF BALANCE FROM THE ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY.

HANG ONTO THE LADDER FOR A SECOND IF YOU HAVE TO. IT DOES HELP.

IT DOES THE SAME THING TO THE HUMAN INNER EAR, BUT YOU GET USED TO IT PRETTY QUICK. IF YOU'RE GONNA PUKE, THE HEADS ARE RIGHT THERE BEHIND YOU.

WHOA! OK, THAT IS KINDA STRANGE.

I'M GOOD. I DON'T THINK MY GYROS LIKED THAT AT ALL... I THINK THEY'VE ADJUSTED NOW, THOUGH.

HA! NO, I'M FINE.

ALL RIGHT. WELL, IF YOU DO PUKE, YOU HAVE TO CLEAN IT UP... YOU WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST.

EITHER WAY, WE'RE IN THE RED ONES. YOU'RE IN THE FOURTH FROM THE TOP.

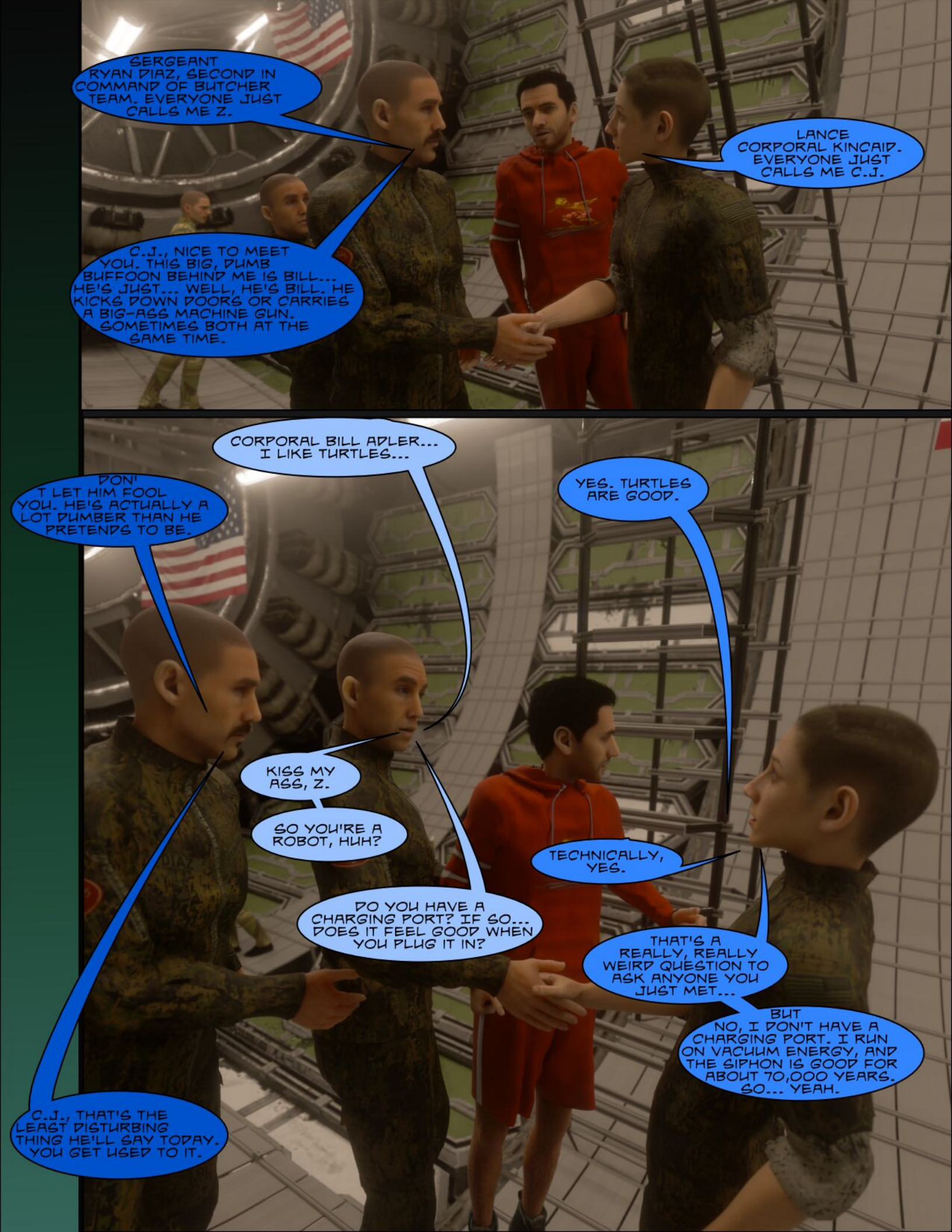
FOURTH FROM THE TOP. GOT IT.

THESE GRAY PODS ARE THE SHOWERS. THERE ARE TWELVE IN EACH CREW SECTION. THEY'RE CRAMPED, BUT THEY'RE PRIVATE, AND THE WATER GETS REALLY HOT. THE HEADS ARE UP THERE, LIKE I SAID.

ACTUALLY, PART OF THAT TRAINING I MENTIONED IS A LONG VIDEO ABOUT HOW THE SHIP WAS BUILT, HOW IT WORKS, AND A BUNCH OF SAFETY STUFF. YOU DON'T HAVE TO PASS A TEST OR ANYTHING. I FOUND A LOT OF THE TECHNICAL STUFF HARD TO FOLLOW MYSELF.

I DON'T SUPPOSE THEY'D LET ME SEE THE... I DON'T KNOW... THE SCHEMATICS FOR THIS THING?

PRETTY INCREDIBLE, HUH? FIRST TIME I SAW HER, I JUST ABOUT SHIT MYSELF!



SERGEANT
RYAN DIAZ, SECOND IN
COMMAND OF BUTCHER
TEAM. EVERYONE JUST
CALLS ME Z.

LANCE
CORPORAL KINCAID.
EVERYONE JUST
CALLS ME C.J.

C.J., NICE TO MEET
YOU. THIS BIG, DUMB
BUFFOON BEHIND ME IS BILL...
HE'S JUST... WELL, HE'S BILL. HE
KICKS DOWN DOORS OR CARRIES
A BIG-ASS MACHINE GUN.
SOMETIMES BOTH AT THE
SAME TIME.

CORPORAL BILL ADLER...
I LIKE TURTLES...

DON'T
LET HIM FOOL
YOU. HE'S ACTUALLY A
LOT DUMBER THAN HE
PRETENDS TO BE.

YES. TURTLES
ARE GOOD.

KISS MY
ASS, Z.

SO YOU'RE A
ROBOT, HUH?

DO YOU HAVE A
CHARGING PORT? IF SO...
DOES IT FEEL GOOD WHEN
YOU PLUG IT IN?

TECHNICALLY,
YES.

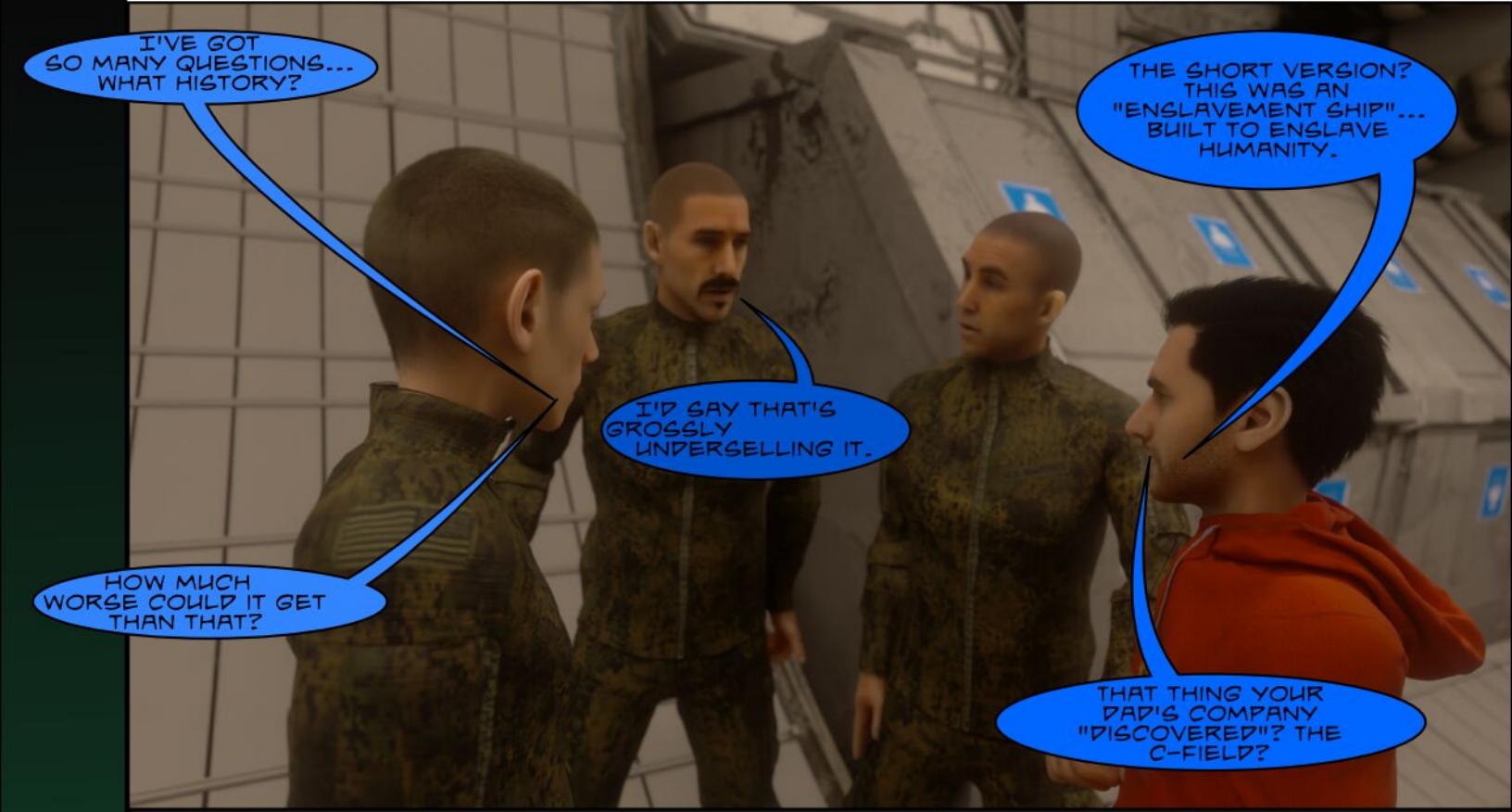
THAT'S A
REALLY, REALLY
WEIRD QUESTION TO
ASK ANYONE YOU
JUST MET...

BUT
NO, I DON'T HAVE A
CHARGING PORT. I RUN
ON VACUUM ENERGY, AND
THE SIPHON IS GOOD FOR
ABOUT 70,000 YEARS.
SO... YEAH.

C.J., THAT'S THE
LEAST DISTURBING
THING HE'LL SAY TODAY.
YOU GET USED TO IT.







I'VE GOT
SO MANY QUESTIONS...
WHAT HISTORY?

THE SHORT VERSION?
THIS WAS AN
"ENSLAVEMENT SHIP"...
BUILT TO ENSLAVE
HUMANITY.

I'D SAY THAT'S
GROSSLY
UNDERSELLING IT.

HOW MUCH
WORSE COULD IT GET
THAN THAT?

THAT THING YOUR
DAD'S COMPANY
"DISCOVERED"? THE
C-FIELD?



YEAH, OF COURSE...
SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE HEARING
ABOUT IT... OVER AND OVER... AND
OVER. "THE SOURCE OF THE
SOUL."

WELL, A FEW PEOPLE HAVE
KNOWN ABOUT IT FOR A VERY
LONG TIME...

YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND
EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE UP
AGAINST.

YOU ASKED IF
WE WERE FIGHTING
ALIENS. THE ANSWER IS NO,
BECAUSE WE CAN'T. NOT
DIRECTLY. NOT YET,
ANYWAY.

THEY CAN
CONTROL AND MANIPULATE THAT
FIELD. IF WE TRY TO FIGHT THEM,
THEY CAN JUST... TAKE OVER OUR
MINDS. SHUT US OFF.

THIS SHIP WAS BUILT SO
THEIR FOLLOWERS COULD HELP
THEM... HOW DO I EXPLAIN THIS
WITHOUT SOUNDING CRAZY?
HARVEST OUR SOULS.

HOW AND WHY DON'T
REALLY MATTER. FRANKLY, I DON'T
EVEN GET IT.



SO... WHAT DO WE ACTUALLY DO? AND WHY DON'T THEY STOP US?

BECAUSE THEY CAN'T EITHER.

THE ALIENS WE'RE DEALING WITH... THEY'RE ESSENTIALLY A SMALL FACTION OF NUT JOBS.

THEY'RE NOT ALL BAD, BUT THE GOOD ONES ARE OUTNUMBERED. AT LEAST FOR NOW.

THE GOOD ONES SEEM TO HAVE BETTER EQUIPMENT, THOUGH. FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, AN AGREEMENT HAS PROTECTED EARTH FROM DIRECT ATTACK. BREAK IT, AND FACE THEIR WRATH.

BASICALLY, MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION. THE AGREEMENT WORKS A LOT LIKE MARITIME LAW. ONLY U.S. SHIPS ARE RECOGNIZED, AND PROTECTED VESSELS ARE LISTED BY NAME. THIS SHIP WAS STOLEN.

AHH, THAT MAKES SENSE. I WAS GONNA SUGGEST WE RENAME IT THE ENT...

FINISH THAT SENTENCE, AND YOU'RE PICKING UP THE WHOLE SHIP'S TAB. RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE ONLY BUYING FOR US. TWICE.

THE BAD ALIENS BELIEVE THE OTHERS ARE ON THEIR WAY, AND THEY'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME TO COMPLETE THEIR OBJECTIVE.

OUR JOB IS TO BE A THORN IN THEIR SIDE. DELAY THEM. DO ANYTHING WE CAN.

THEY THINK THEY CAN USE OUR SOULS TO SUMMON THE ANTICHRIST.

PROBLEM IS, THEY'RE TOO LATE. IT'S STANDING RIGHT HERE!

OK, WHAT OBJECTIVE?

C.J. SAID NOTHING. HE SIMPLY TURNED, GAVE JIMMY THE MIDDLE FINGER, AND TURNED BACK.

LOOK, I'M THE NEW GUY. I GET IT. AND I UNDERSTAND I WASN'T YOUR FIRST CHOICE... BUT CAN I HAVE A DIFFERENT PARTNER?

JIMMY AIN'T THAT BAD. THE WHOLE ANDROID THING FREAKS HIM OUT, AND HE'S CONVINCED YOUR INITIALS, "CJ," MAKE YOU THE ANTICHRIST.

THEN HE'S NOT JUST A DICK. HE'S A RETARD. MY INITIALS ARE "CK."

REMEMBER THAT GUY I TOLD YOU ABOUT? THE ONE WHO SHOT AT ME WHEN I WAS SIX? HE BELIEVED THE EXACT SAME THING.

THAT'S PART OF IT, BUT HE ALSO GREW UP DIRT-POOR IN THE RURAL ALABAMA GHETTOS. YOU'VE HEARD STORIES, I'M SURE.

HOMIE DIDN'T EVEN RIDE IN A CAR UNTIL HE WAS LIKE 15, AND WE ALL KNOW WHO YOUR DAD IS.

MY FIRST CAR WAS A 2074 911 GT2 RS WITH THE RETRO BODY KIT AND FULL TRACK PACKAGE.

EXACTLY MY POINT. WHAT'S THAT, A \$150,000 CAR?

YOU MIGHT FIND ONE FOR 150K IF IT HIT A BRICK WALL AT 90 AND ROLLED 14 TIMES... MINE? 850K FOR THE BASE MODEL, BEFORE THE UPGRADES.

YOU'RE TELLING ME HE'S REALLY JUST BEING A JEALOUS BITCH?



I DIDN'T MEAN TO BRAG. I JUST REALLY LOVE THAT CAR. BUT FAIR ENOUGH.

NOW, IF I WANTED TO BRAG, I'D TALK ABOUT SOMETHING MUCH RARER AND MORE EXPENSIVE. LIKE THE 959.

TO AN EXTENT, YEAH. BUT CAN I GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE? KEEP THAT KIND OF THING TO YOURSELF. BRAGGING ABOUT YOUR RICH DADDY BUYING YOU A RACE CAR... NO ONE'S IMPRESSED.

IN FACT, IT MAKES YOU REALLY UNLIKABLE.

WAIT, REALLY? THE 959S WERE BEAUTIFUL! THAT'S ONE OF THE RAREST CARS IN THE WORLD! YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE ONE, DO YOU?

THANKS, BILL. BIG HELP.

NO, I HAVE TWO.

I COULD, BUT I DON'T HAVE MY PHONE. IT'S...

PROVE IT!

RIGHT! IN THE CENTRAL HUB! LATER, THEN!

ACTUALLY, I LEFT MY PHONE AT THE HOTEL YOU GUYS PICKED ME UP FROM. THEY TOLD ME TO. TELL YOU WHAT, WHEN WE GET THE CHANCE, I'LL TAKE YOU FOR A RIDE IN ONE.

YOU FUCKING BETTER! I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, Z. I LOVE THIS KID ALREADY!



BILL, SHOW C.J. THE REST OF THE SHIP AND GET HIM SQUARED AWAY AT THE ARMORY. YOU TWO CAN GEEK OUT OVER CARS YOU'LL NEVER AFFORD. HE WILL. YOU WON'T.

YEAH, SURE THING, CHIEF!

ALSO, GET HIM TO THE QUARTERMASTER. SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO MARS, SO HE'LL NEED TO BE FITTED FOR AN EVA SUIT.



COOL. IT ONLY TAKES A FEW MINUTES TO SEE THE WHOLE SHIP. WANNA DO THAT FIRST?

SURE, UNLESS THE ARMORY'S FULL OF COOL ALIEN LASER GUNS. IN THAT CASE, LASER GUNS FIRST.

NAH, MAN. HK416S, M27S. BASIC SHIT.

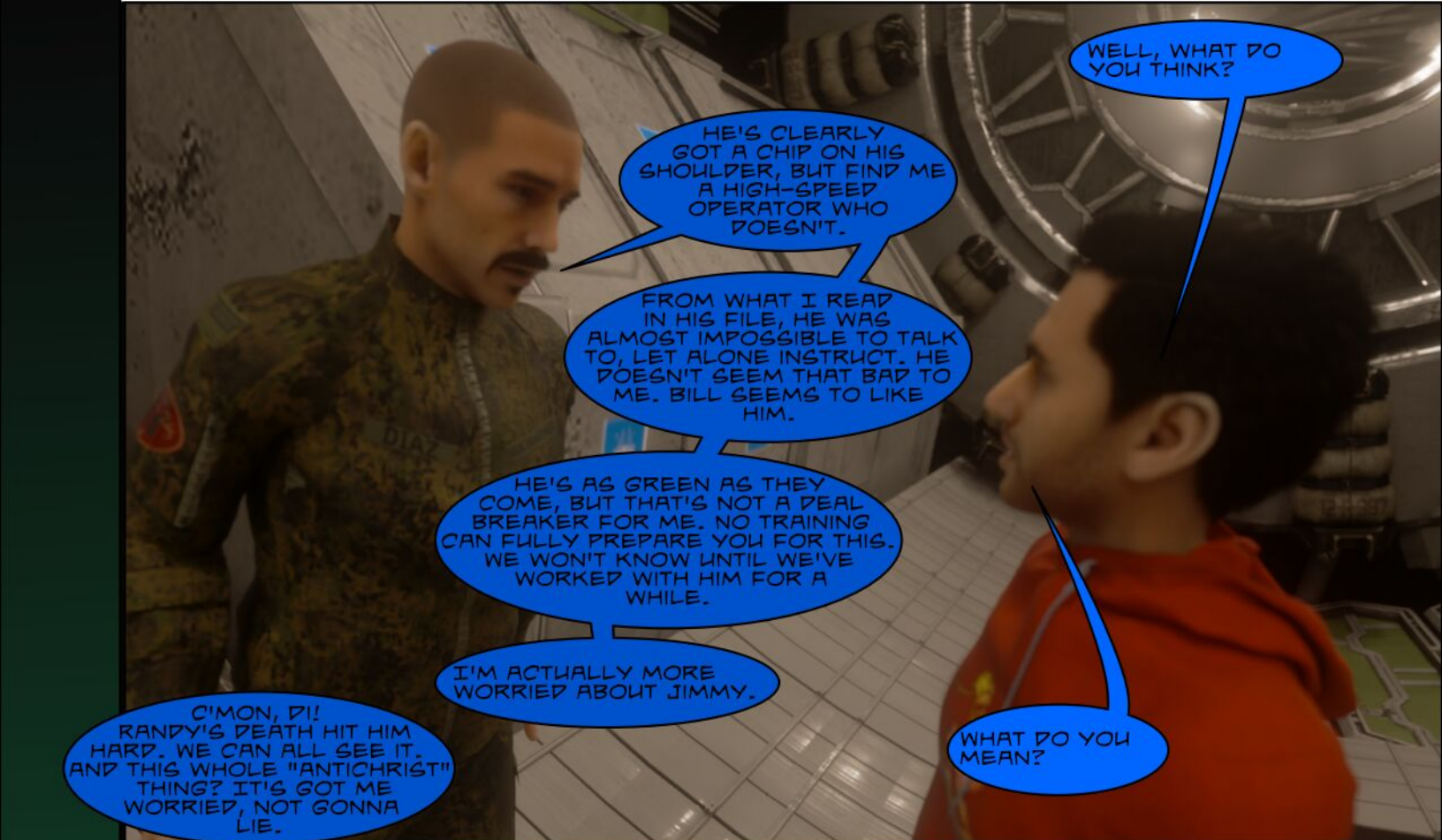
...P90S?

THAT COUNTS! HOW MANY TABS DOES HE OWE NOW?

HEY, BILL! HOW ABOUT YOU SHOW ME AROUND BEFORE I HAVE TO BUY A WHOLE BREWERY TO KEEP UP? I DON'T THINK I CAN STOP.

WE'RE UP TO THREE WITH THAT!

THAT'S PROBABLY SMART. THEN AGAIN... HAVING YOU PAY FOR US FOREVER WOULD BE CONVENIENT...



WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

HE'S CLEARLY GOT A CHIP ON HIS SHOULDER, BUT FIND ME A HIGH-SPEED OPERATOR WHO DOESN'T.

FROM WHAT I READ IN HIS FILE, HE WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO TALK TO, LET ALONE INSTRUCT. HE DOESN'T SEEM THAT BAD TO ME. BILL SEEMS TO LIKE HIM.

HE'S AS GREEN AS THEY COME, BUT THAT'S NOT A DEAL BREAKER FOR ME. NO TRAINING CAN FULLY PREPARE YOU FOR THIS. WE WON'T KNOW UNTIL WE'VE WORKED WITH HIM FOR A WHILE.

I'M ACTUALLY MORE WORRIED ABOUT JIMMY.

C'MON, DI! RANDY'S DEATH HIT HIM HARD. WE CAN ALL SEE IT. AND THIS WHOLE "ANTICHRIST" THING? IT'S GOT ME WORRIED, NOT GONNA LIE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



MM... YEAH, I BET YOU HAVE...

I'VE SEEN PLENTY OF GUYS TAKE IT HARD AND BOUNCE BACK.

WELL... HOW ELSE DO YOU SPEND A SATURDAY NIGHT?

NO, BUT SERIOUSLY. IF HE CAN'T KEEP IT TOGETHER, HE'S OUT.

HEY, YOU KNOW WHAT? NO, FUCK THAT. HE'LL EITHER WORK WITH THE TEAM OR HE'S OUT. SIMPLE AS. HE DOESN'T GET TO DICTATE ANYTHING.

WE DIDN'T ASK FOR HIM, BUT C.J. IS PART OF THE TEAM, AT LEAST FOR NOW. JIMMY'S GONNA HAVE TO GET USED TO IT.

YOU'RE THE BOSS. WANT ME TO TALK TO HIM?

NO, I WILL.

JIMMY'S ONE OF THE BEST DAMN SHOOTERS I'VE EVER KNOWN. IF IT'S HIM OR THE ROBOT... I'D BE INCLINED TO KEEP JIMMY. JUST MY OPINION.



BLUE EAGLE-1,
YOU ARE GO FOR
DEPARTURE.
GODSPEED.

VANDENBERG
CONTROL, BLUE
EAGLE-1. ALL SYSTEMS
GO FOR MARS
DEPARTURE.

YO, DOC! THIS IS THE
NEW GUY, C.J. HE'S A
ROBOT! AND HE'S GOT A
BUNCH OF REALLY COOL
OLD CARS!

HUH? OHH... OHH!
YEAH, HI. DOCTOR WAYNE
LAPOINTE. YOU CAN CALL
ME DALE.

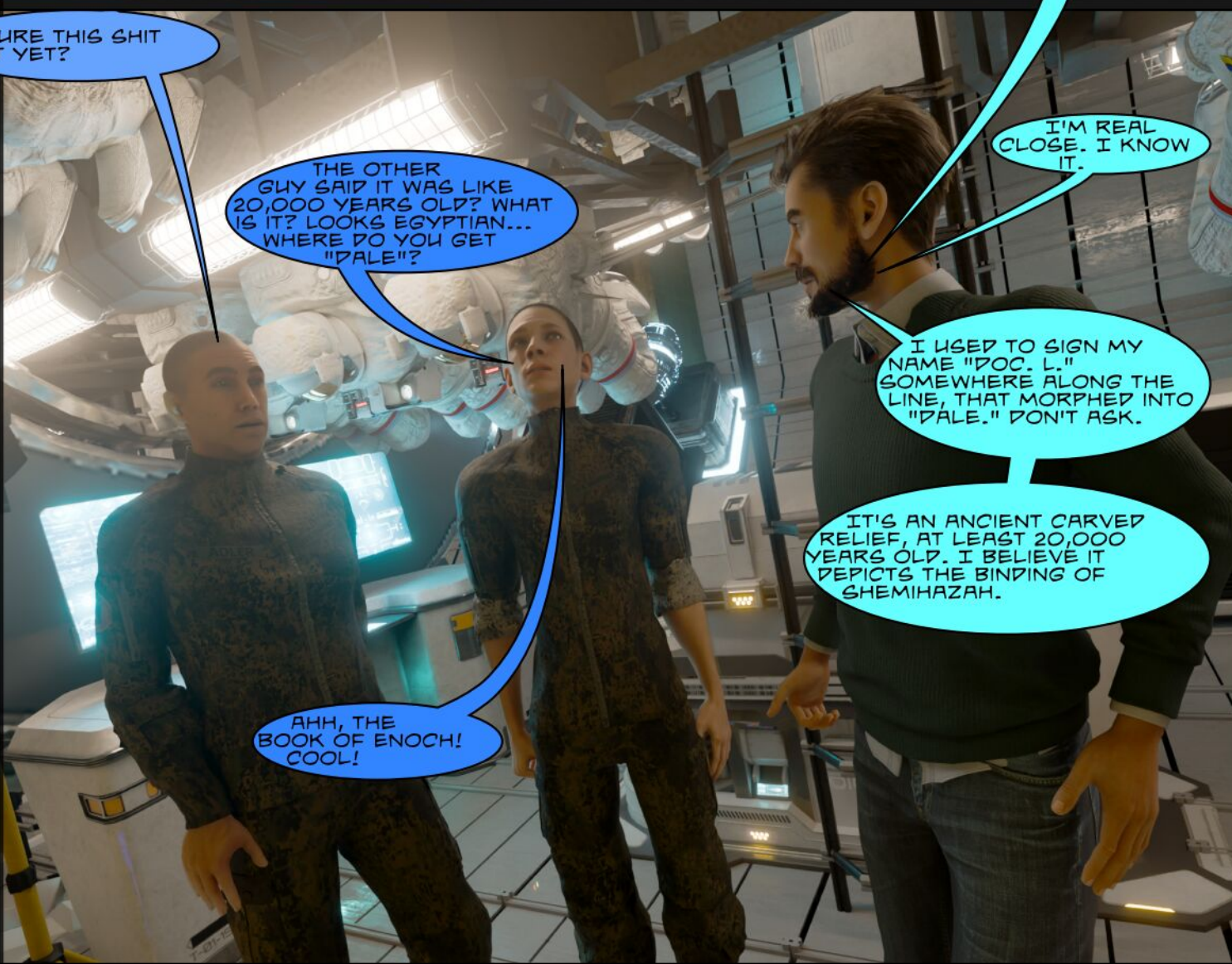


FIGURE THIS SHIT
OUT YET?

THE OTHER
GUY SAID IT WAS LIKE
20,000 YEARS OLD? WHAT
IS IT? LOOKS EGYPTIAN...
WHERE DO YOU GET
"DALE"?

I'M REAL
CLOSE. I KNOW
IT.

I USED TO SIGN MY
NAME "DOC. L."
SOMEWHERE ALONG THE
LINE, THAT MORPHED INTO
"DALE." DON'T ASK.

IT'S AN ANCIENT CARVED
RELIEF, AT LEAST 20,000
YEARS OLD. I BELIEVE IT
DEPICTS THE BINDING OF
SHEMHAZAH.

AHH, THE
BOOK OF ENOCH!
COOL!

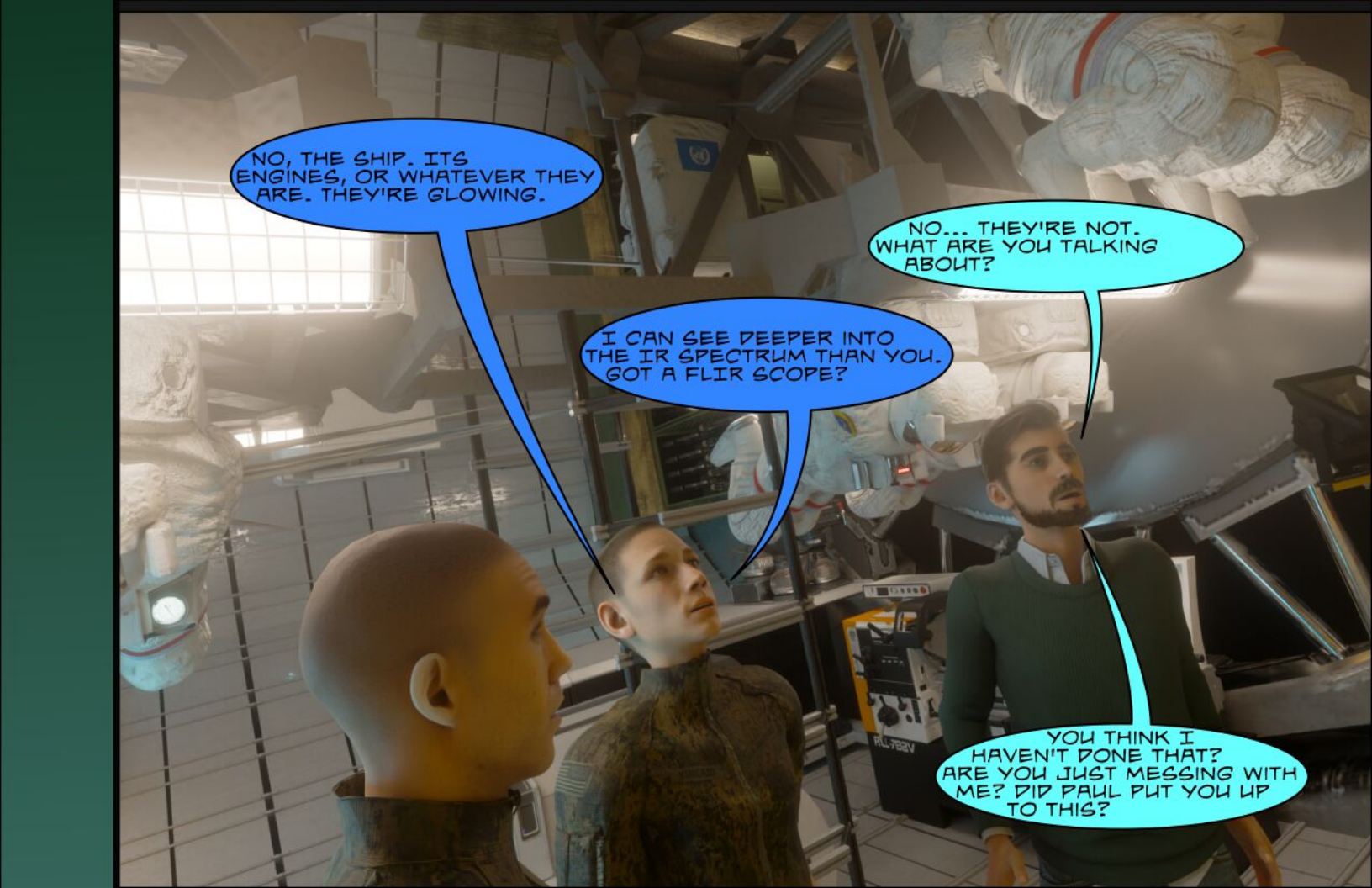


THAT'S RIGHT! I'M SURPRISED YOU KNOW THAT. YOU MARINES AREN'T EXACTLY KNOWN FOR YOUR ACADEMIC PROWESS.

ANYWAY, THIS SEEMS TO DEPICT THE ARRIVAL OF MICHAEL.

MY DAD'S OBSESSED WITH THAT KIND OF STUFF. I NEVER WATCHED CARTOONS AS A KID. I HAD TO WATCH ANCIENT ALIENS AND THAT KIND OF STUFF... ANYWAY, WHAT POWERS THE LIGHTS?

WHAT LIGHTS? THE ALIENS' EYES ARE MADE OF A KIND OF BLUE QUARTZ. IT CATCHES THE LIGHT, SO THEY LOOK LIKE THEY GLOW A BIT...

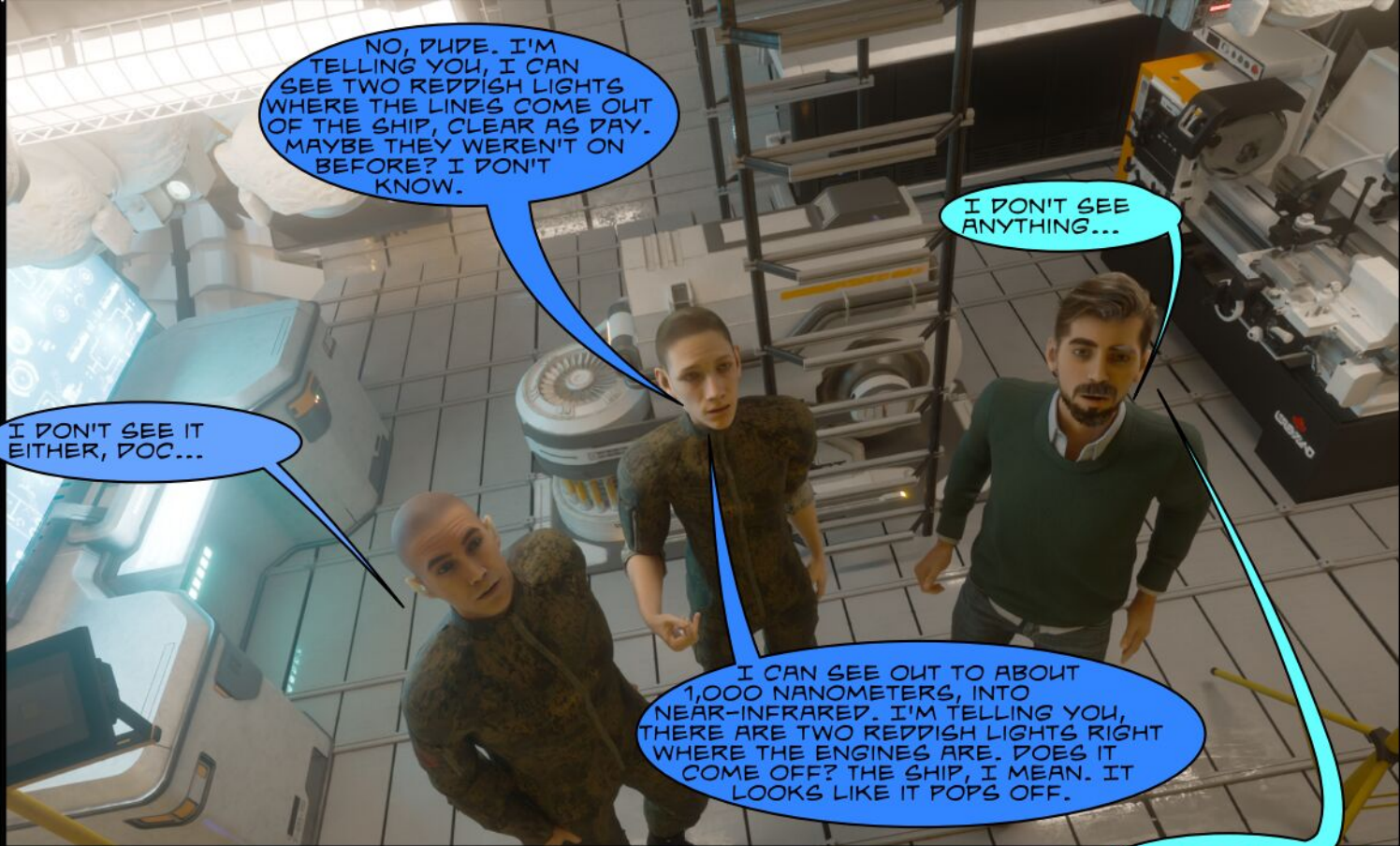


NO, THE SHIP. ITS ENGINES, OR WHATEVER THEY ARE. THEY'RE GLOWING.

NO... THEY'RE NOT. WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I CAN SEE DEEPER INTO THE IR SPECTRUM THAN YOU. GOT A FLIR SCOPE?

YOU THINK I HAVEN'T DONE THAT? ARE YOU JUST MESSING WITH ME? DID PAUL PUT YOU UP TO THIS?



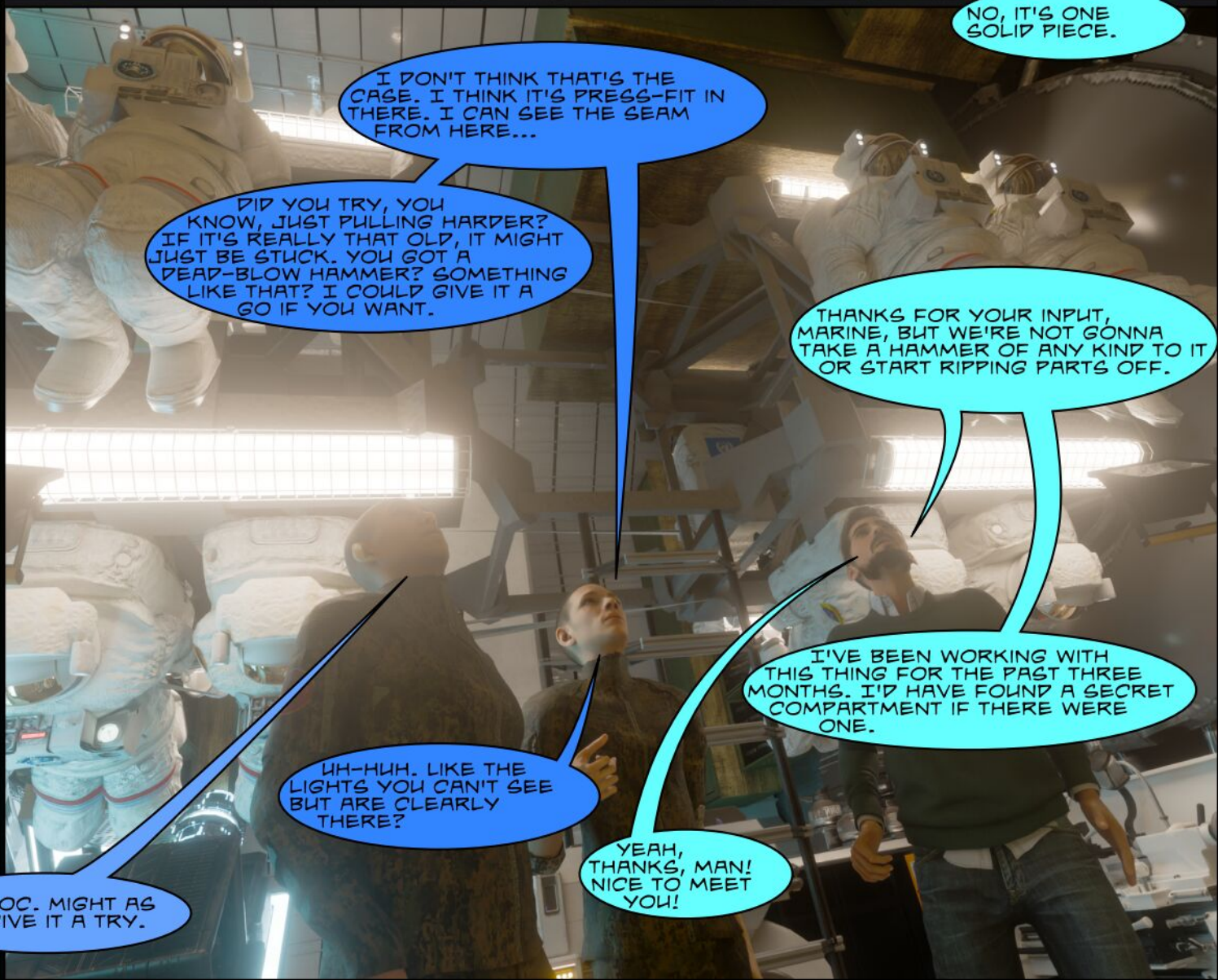
NO, DUDE. I'M TELLING YOU, I CAN SEE TWO REDDISH LIGHTS WHERE THE LINES COME OUT OF THE SHIP, CLEAR AS DAY. MAYBE THEY WEREN'T ON BEFORE? I DON'T KNOW.

I DON'T SEE ANYTHING...

I DON'T SEE IT EITHER, DOC...

I CAN SEE OUT TO ABOUT 1,000 NANOMETERS, INTO NEAR-INFRARED. I'M TELLING YOU, THERE ARE TWO REDDISH LIGHTS RIGHT WHERE THE ENGINES ARE. DOES IT COME OFF? THE SHIP, I MEAN. IT LOOKS LIKE IT POPS OFF.

NO, IT'S ONE SOLID PIECE.



I DON'T THINK THAT'S THE CASE. I THINK IT'S PRESS-FIT IN THERE. I CAN SEE THE SEAM FROM HERE...

DID YOU TRY, YOU KNOW, JUST PULLING HARDER? IF IT'S REALLY THAT OLD, IT MIGHT JUST BE STUCK. YOU GOT A DEAD-BLOW HAMMER? SOMETHING LIKE THAT? I COULD GIVE IT A GO IF YOU WANT.

THANKS FOR YOUR INPUT, MARINE, BUT WE'RE NOT GONNA TAKE A HAMMER OF ANY KIND TO IT OR START RIPPING PARTS OFF.

I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH THIS THING FOR THE PAST THREE MONTHS. I'D HAVE FOUND A SECRET COMPARTMENT IF THERE WERE ONE.

UH-HUH. LIKE THE LIGHTS YOU CAN'T SEE BUT ARE CLEARLY THERE?

YEAH, THANKS, MAN! NICE TO MEET YOU!

SHIT, DOC. MIGHT AS WELL GIVE IT A TRY.

A comic book panel showing two men in military uniforms standing in a futuristic, high-tech environment. The man on the left is looking at the man on the right, who is looking towards the right side of the frame. The background features large, white, mechanical structures and a glowing blue screen displaying various icons and data. The lighting is bright and industrial.

LET'S LEAVE
THE DOCTOR ALONE
BEFORE HE BREAKS
SOMETHING AND STARTS
FREAKING OUT. WE'LL GET
YOU SET UP WITH A
RIFLE.

GUNS! NOW
YOU'RE TALKING!

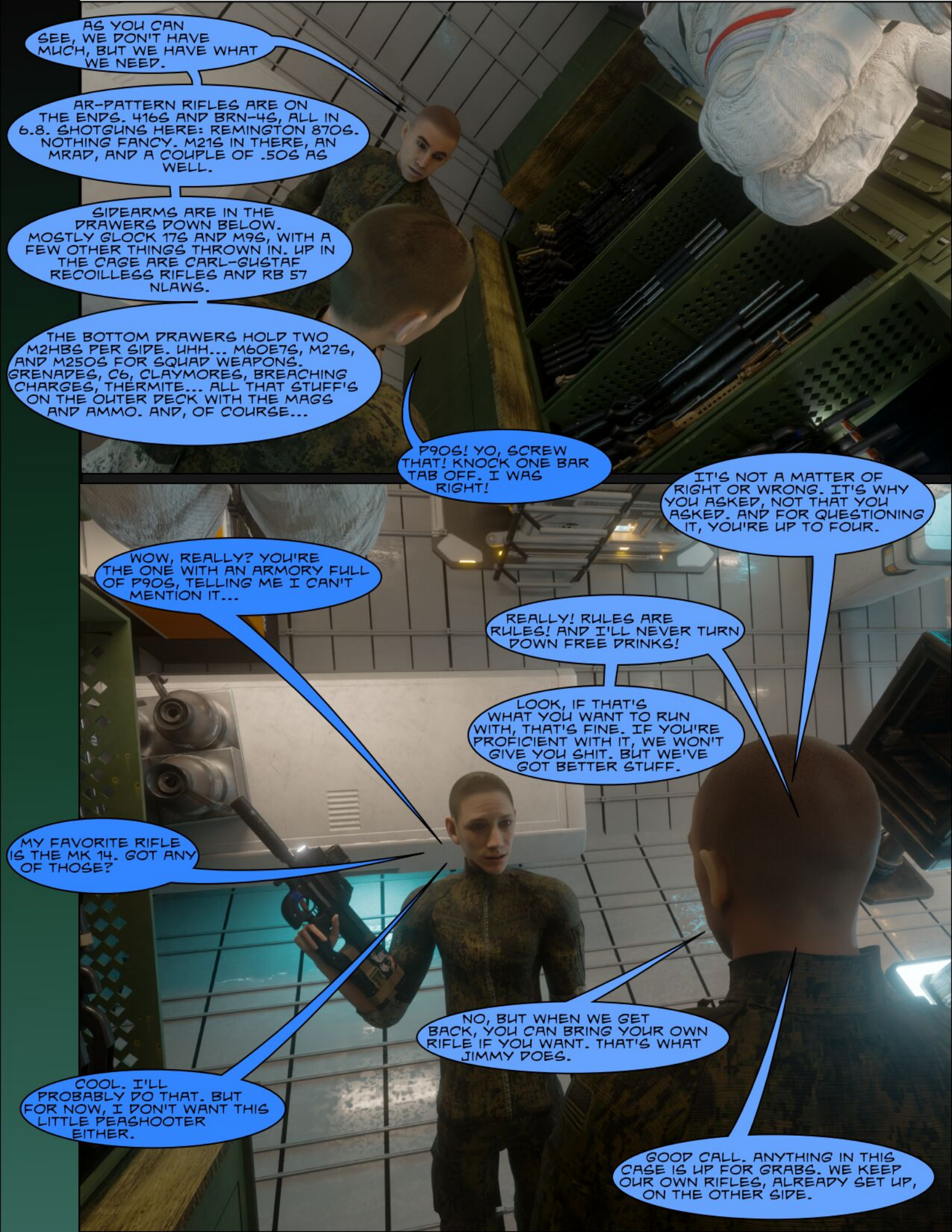
JUST
BE CAREFUL NOT TO
KNOCK ONE OF THESE
SUITS DOWN. THEY'RE ONLY
HELD UP WITH VELCRO AND
BUNGEE CORDS. I DID THAT
ONCE AND CRACKED A
VISOR. THEY WERE
PISSED.

NORMALLY, WE
TAKE THE OTHER
LADDER DOWN TO THE
ARMORY. JUST SO
YOU KNOW.

GOOD TO
KNOW... A LATHE
IN A SPACESHIP?
SEEMS UNSAFE.
METAL CHIPS AND
ALL?

DON'T ASK ME. DALE HAD
TO HAVE IT, THEN USED IT
ONCE. THIS WHOLE SECTION'S
LITTERED WITH THAT KIND OF
STUFF.

OH, NO. HE'S
ONE OF THOSE GUYS?
SOUNDS LIKE MY
DAD...



AS YOU CAN SEE, WE DON'T HAVE MUCH, BUT WE HAVE WHAT WE NEED.

AR-PATTERN RIFLES ARE ON THE ENDS. 416S AND BRN-4S, ALL IN 6.8. SHOTGUNS HERE: REMINGTON 870S. NOTHING FANCY. M21S IN THERE, AN MRAP, AND A COUPLE OF .50S AS WELL.

SIDEARMS ARE IN THE DRAWERS DOWN BELOW. MOSTLY GLOCK 17S AND M9S, WITH A FEW OTHER THINGS THROWN IN. UP IN THE CAGE ARE CARL-GUSTAF RECOILLESS RIFLES AND RB 57 NLAWS.

THE BOTTOM DRAWERS HOLD TWO M2HBs PER SIDE. UHH... M60E7S, M27S, AND M250S FOR SQUAD WEAPONS. GRENADES, C6, CLAYMORES, BREACHING CHARGES, THERMITE... ALL THAT STUFF'S ON THE OUTER DECK WITH THE MAGS AND AMMO. AND, OF COURSE...

P90S! YO, SCREW THAT! KNOCK ONE BAR TAB OFF. I WAS RIGHT!

IT'S NOT A MATTER OF RIGHT OR WRONG. IT'S WHY YOU ASKED, NOT THAT YOU ASKED. AND FOR QUESTIONING IT, YOU'RE UP TO FOUR.

WOW, REALLY? YOU'RE THE ONE WITH AN ARMORY FULL OF P90S, TELLING ME I CAN'T MENTION IT...

REALLY! RULES ARE RULES! AND I'LL NEVER TURN DOWN FREE DRINKS!

LOOK, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT TO RUN WITH, THAT'S FINE. IF YOU'RE PROFICIENT WITH IT, WE WON'T GIVE YOU SHIT. BUT WE'VE GOT BETTER STUFF.

MY FAVORITE RIFLE IS THE MK 14. GOT ANY OF THOSE?

NO, BUT WHEN WE GET BACK, YOU CAN BRING YOUR OWN RIFLE IF YOU WANT. THAT'S WHAT JIMMY DOES.

COOL. I'LL PROBABLY DO THAT. BUT FOR NOW, I DON'T WANT THIS LITTLE PEASHOOTER EITHER.

GOOD CALL. ANYTHING IN THIS CASE IS UP FOR GRABS. WE KEEP OUR OWN RIFLES, ALREADY SET UP, ON THE OTHER SIDE.

C.J. LOOKED OVER THE RIFLES BRIEFLY BEFORE GRABBING ONE.

ALL RIGHT, COOL. SET IT ON THE TABLE HERE, AND WE'LL HAVE DOUG, THE ARMORER, SIGN IT OUT TO YOU.

THAT WAY, IT'S ASSIGNED TO YOU. WE'RE PRETTY MUCH THE ONLY ONES WHO USE THESE GUNS ANYWAY... NOW WE JUST GOTTA FIND HIM. IF WE CAN'T, FRANK, THE QUARTERMASTER, CAN SIGN IT OUT TOO. HE'S ALWAYS AROUND.

HA! YOU EXPECTED ANYTHING ELSE?

THIS IS ADEQUATE FOR NOW.

EVEN IN SPACE, FIGHTING DEMONS, WE STILL GOTTA DO PAPERWORK, HUH?

HONESTLY? I'M STILL KINDA WAITING TO WAKE UP FROM WHATEVER DREAM THIS IS...

AHH! THAT'LL GO AWAY IN A FEW DAYS. WHAT'S REALLY WEIRD IS WHEN THIS BECOMES NORMAL.

YEAH... SO, UHH... WE'RE GOING TO MARS? EVER BEEN THERE?

OHH, YEAH. MANY TIMES. YOU?

NO. I WANTED TO GO FOR MY 15TH BIRTHDAY, BUT MY DAD FREAKED OUT. THE COMPROMISE WAS THE GT2.

WHAT A TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE THING... POOR YOU. I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE SUCH HORROR...

PROBABLY. HEY, I WAS GONNA ASK, BUT EVERYTHING'S HAPPENING SO FAST. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE THIS SHIP TO GET TO MARS?

THREE MONTHS THERE, THREE BACK ON A ROCKET... NOT WORTH IT FOR RED SAND AND ROCKS. YOU GOT THE BETTER DEAL.

NOT LONG. DEPENDS ON HOW DESPERATE WE ARE TO GET THERE. PROBABLY THREE OR FOUR HOURS, TOPS.

ANOTHER THING THAT'S BUGGING ME: WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF U.S. ASSETS ON AND AROUND MARS. WHY ARE WE BEING SENT ALL THE WAY FROM EARTH?



BUT WE CAN'T FIGHT THE ALIENS, RIGHT?

I DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE A BRAIN, THOUGH. I HAVE THREE CPUs AND FOUR REDUNDANT MEMORY CORES. SAME BASIC "PROGRAMMING," JUST DIFFERENT HARDWARE.

WHY WOULD THAT BE HILARIOUS?

OHH, I HAVE NO IDEA. USUALLY, IT'S BECAUSE IT INVOLVES THE ALIENS, OR SOMETIMES THE CCP. THEY'RE OUT HERE TOO.

NOT DIRECTLY, NO. THEY'LL JUST SHUT OUR BRAINS OFF. YOU'VE HEARD UFO ABDUCTION STORIES, RIGHT? IT'S LIKE THAT. WE JUST WAKE UP WITH MISSING TIME. BUT WE CAN FIGHT THEIR FOLLOWERS. WE KICK THEIR ASSES!

OHH! NOW IT MAKES SENSE WHY THEY WANTED YOU SO BADLY! YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY BE IMMUNE TO THEIR MIND BEAMS! THAT'D BE HILARIOUS!

THEY HATE A.I. WE ALWAYS ASSUMED IT WAS BECAUSE THEY GOT WIPE OUT BY IT. THAT'S WHAT THEY'VE TOLD US, BUT I'M STARTING TO WONDER...

MY DAD INSISTS HE WAS VISITED BY AN ALIEN THE NIGHT HE DECIDED TO MAKE ME. SAYS I WAS MADE AT THEIR DIRECTION.

YEAH, GABRIEL.

YEAH! THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO COME SEE IT AGAIN. YOU KNOW HIM?

GOD, I HOPE THAT JIMMY GUY ISN'T RIGHT ABOUT ME...

THAT'S... A LITTLE CONCERNING, ACTUALLY. DID HE HAPPEN TO MENTION A NAME?

DID YOUR DAD SAY HE LOOKED A LOT LIKE THE ALIENS ON THAT ARTIFACT?

NO, BUT WE'RE AWARE OF HIM. HE'S ONE OF THE GOOD ONES, FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL.

YEAH, SO DO I... I GUESS IT'S AN EASY QUESTION TO ANSWER. DO YOU THINK YOU'RE... EVIL?



NO... BUT STILL,
I GET WHERE HE'S
COMING FROM, IN A
WAY.

I'VE SEEN... THE
MOVIES. I GET WHY
PEOPLE ARE AFRAID
OF ME.

HEY, NICE SAVE
THERE. UMM, THIS MIGHT
BE A DUMB QUESTION, BUT DO
YOU EVEN NEED AN EVA
SUIT?

OHH, FUCK YES.
I'M NOT BUILT FOR VACUUM. I'D
SURVIVE A LOT LONGER THAN YOU, BUT
IT'D SUCK DONKEY BALLS. MY SKIN
WOULD CRACK AND SHIT. NOT
PLEASANT.

I ACTUALLY
DON'T KNOW AND DON'T
PARTICULARLY CARE TO
FIND OUT.

UGH... WOULD IT
HEAL OR, LIKE, SLOUGH
OFF?

IS IT WEIRD IF I
KINDA DO? YOU KNOW,
JUST TO KNOW?

OHH! NOT... LIKE,
WHILE IT'S ON YOU. I
MEAN, LIKE A SAMPLE OR
SOMETHING NAILED TO A
BOARD... JUST TO SEE? YOU
KNOW WHAT? NEVER
MIND.

YEAH,
I GOT WHAT YOU MEANT.
THAT MIGHT NOT BE A BAD IDEA,
HONESTLY, IF I'M GONNA BE OUT
HERE... CHANGING THE SUBJECT,
WEREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO BE
LOOKING FOR SOME GUY
NAMED DOUG?

RIGHT! SCREW HIM. HE'S
NEVER AROUND. FUCKIN' CHAIR
FORCE, MAN. CAN'T EVEN BE
BOOTHERED TO SIT IN HIS DAMN
CHAIR... LET'S CHECK THE OUTER
DECK.





WHAT THE FUCK WAS
THAT BULLSHIT BACK
THERE?

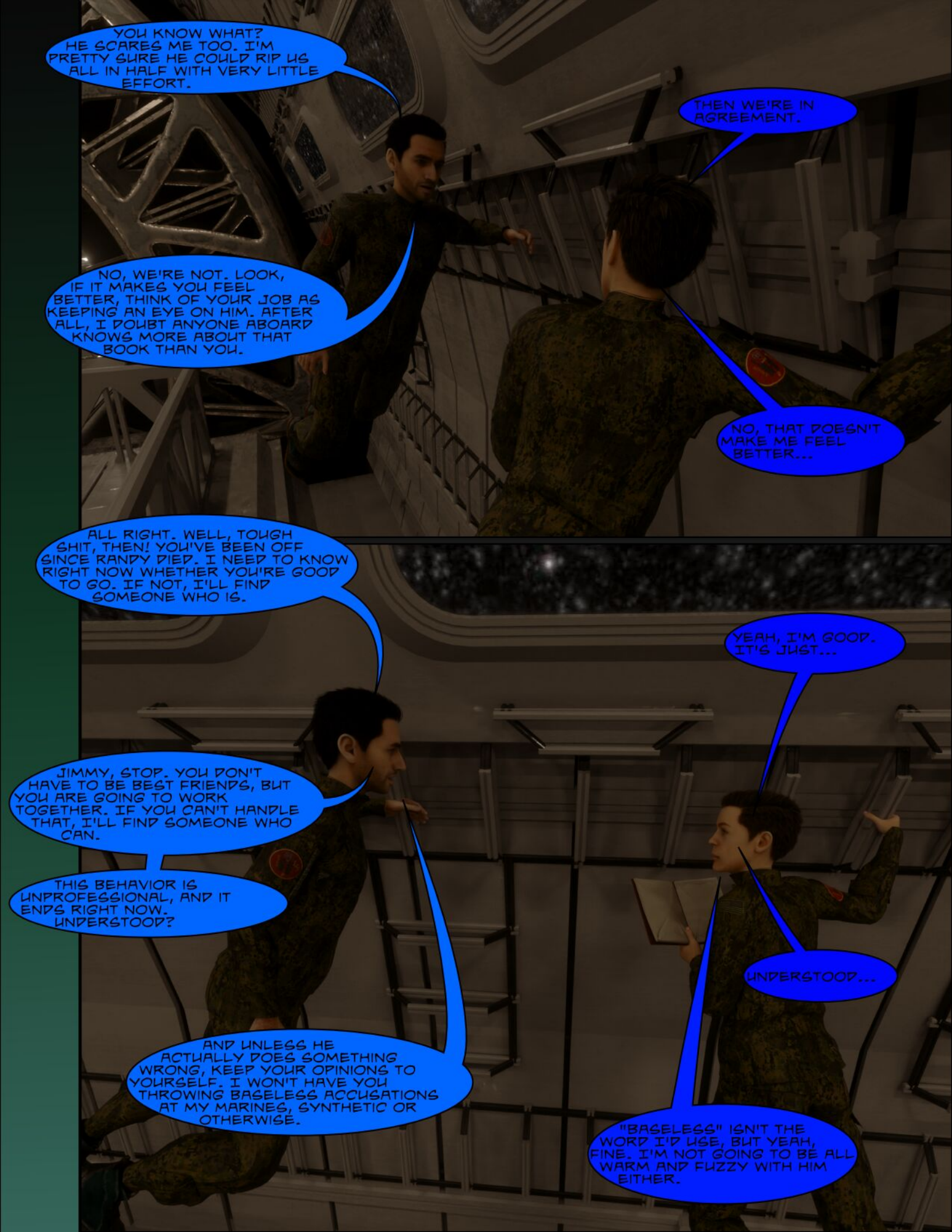
DON'T TAKE THIS THE
WRONG WAY, PI, BUT I
CAN'T WORK WITH THAT...
THING.

OH, REALLY? YOU
CAN'T? WELL, GUESS
WHAT? IT AIN'T FUCKING
UP TO YOU.

MARK MY
WORDS: WHATEVER
THAT THING IS, IT'S UNHOLY.
I DON'T WANT ANYTHING
TO DO WITH IT.

JIMMY... YOUR TRACK RECORD
WITH "GUT FEELINGS" IS LESS
THAN STELLAR.

IT'S A WALKING,
TALKING MACHINE. IT'S AN
ABOMINATION. IT SHOULDN'T
BE ALLOWED TO EXIST.

A comic book panel showing two soldiers in a futuristic, metallic corridor. The soldier on the left is wearing a dark uniform and is gesturing with his right hand towards the other soldier. The soldier on the right is wearing a camouflage uniform and is looking back at the first soldier. The corridor has a high ceiling with a grid of lights and a floor with a similar grid pattern. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the characters.

YOU KNOW WHAT?
HE SCARES ME TOO. I'M
PRETTY SURE HE COULD RIP US
ALL IN HALF WITH VERY LITTLE
EFFORT.

THEN WE'RE IN
AGREEMENT.

NO, WE'RE NOT. LOOK,
IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL
BETTER, THINK OF YOUR JOB AS
KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM. AFTER
ALL, I DOUBT ANYONE ABOARD
KNOWS MORE ABOUT THAT
BOOK THAN YOU.

NO, THAT DOESN'T
MAKE ME FEEL
BETTER...

ALL RIGHT. WELL, TOUGH
SHIT, THEN! YOU'VE BEEN OFF
SINCE RANDY DIED. I NEED TO KNOW
RIGHT NOW WHETHER YOU'RE GOOD
TO GO. IF NOT, I'LL FIND
SOMEONE WHO IS.

YEAH, I'M GOOD.
IT'S JUST...

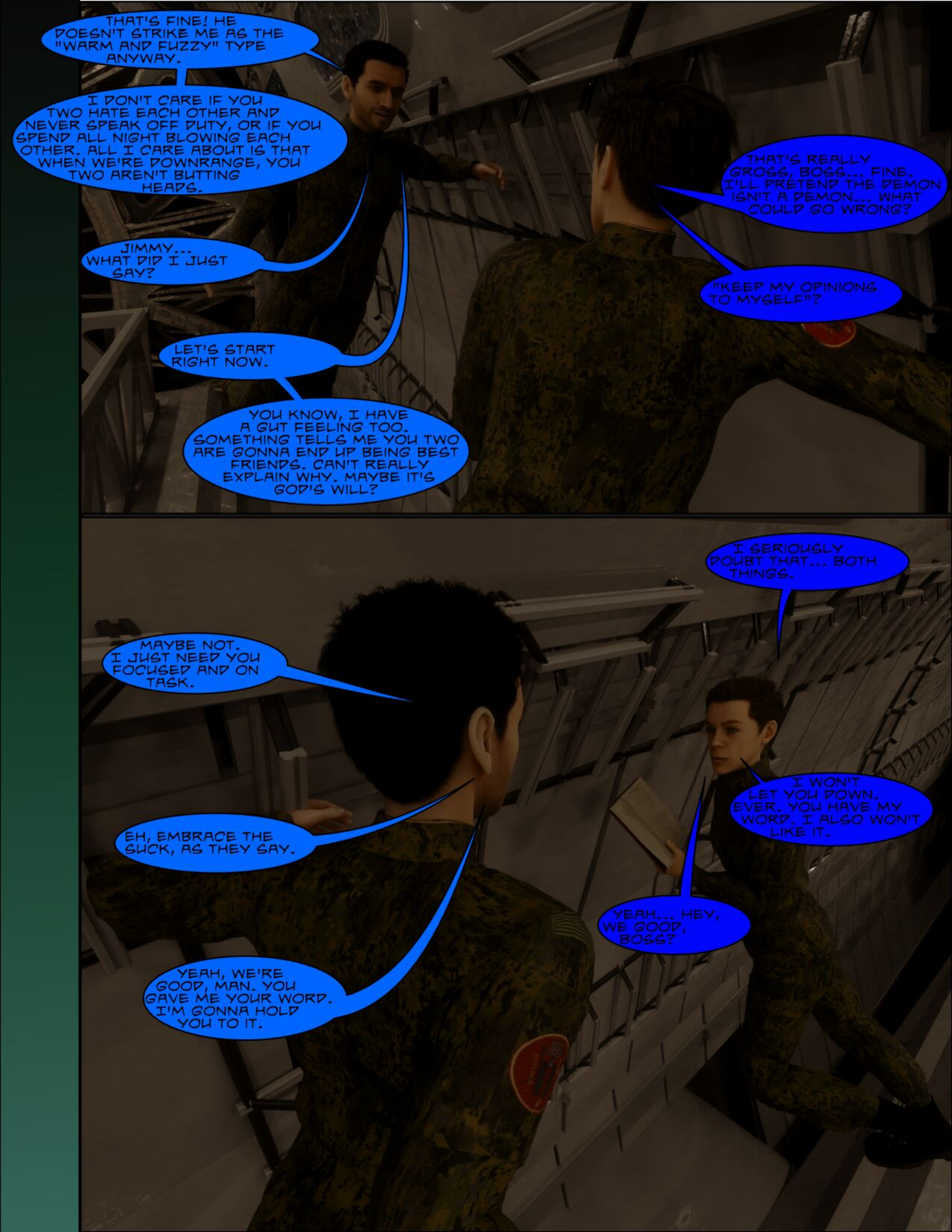
JIMMY, STOP. YOU DON'T
HAVE TO BE BEST FRIENDS, BUT
YOU ARE GOING TO WORK
TOGETHER. IF YOU CAN'T HANDLE
THAT, I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO
CAN.

THIS BEHAVIOR IS
UNPROFESSIONAL, AND IT
ENDS RIGHT NOW.
UNDERSTOOD?

AND UNLESS HE
ACTUALLY DOES SOMETHING
WRONG, KEEP YOUR OPINIONS TO
YOURSELF. I WON'T HAVE YOU
THROWING BASELESS ACCUSATIONS
AT MY MARINES, SYNTHETIC OR
OTHERWISE.

UNDERSTOOD...

"BASELESS" ISN'T THE
WORD I'D USE, BUT YEAH,
FINE. I'M NOT GOING TO BE ALL
WARM AND FUZZY WITH HIM
EITHER.



THAT'S FINE! HE DOESN'T STRIKE ME AS THE "WARM AND FUZZY" TYPE ANYWAY.

I DON'T CARE IF YOU TWO HATE EACH OTHER AND NEVER SPEAK OFF DUTY, OR IF YOU SPEND ALL NIGHT BLOWING EACH OTHER. ALL I CARE ABOUT IS THAT WHEN WE'RE DOWNRANGE, YOU TWO AREN'T BUTTING HEADS.

JIMMY... WHAT DID I JUST SAY?

LET'S START RIGHT NOW.

YOU KNOW, I HAVE A GUT FEELING TOO. SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU TWO ARE GONNA END UP BEING BEST FRIENDS. CAN'T REALLY EXPLAIN WHY. MAYBE IT'S GOD'S WILL?

THAT'S REALLY GROSS, BOSS... FINE. I'LL PRETEND THE DEMON ISN'T A DEMON... WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

"KEEP MY OPINIONS TO MYSELF"?

MAYBE NOT. I JUST NEED YOU FOCUSED AND ON TASK.

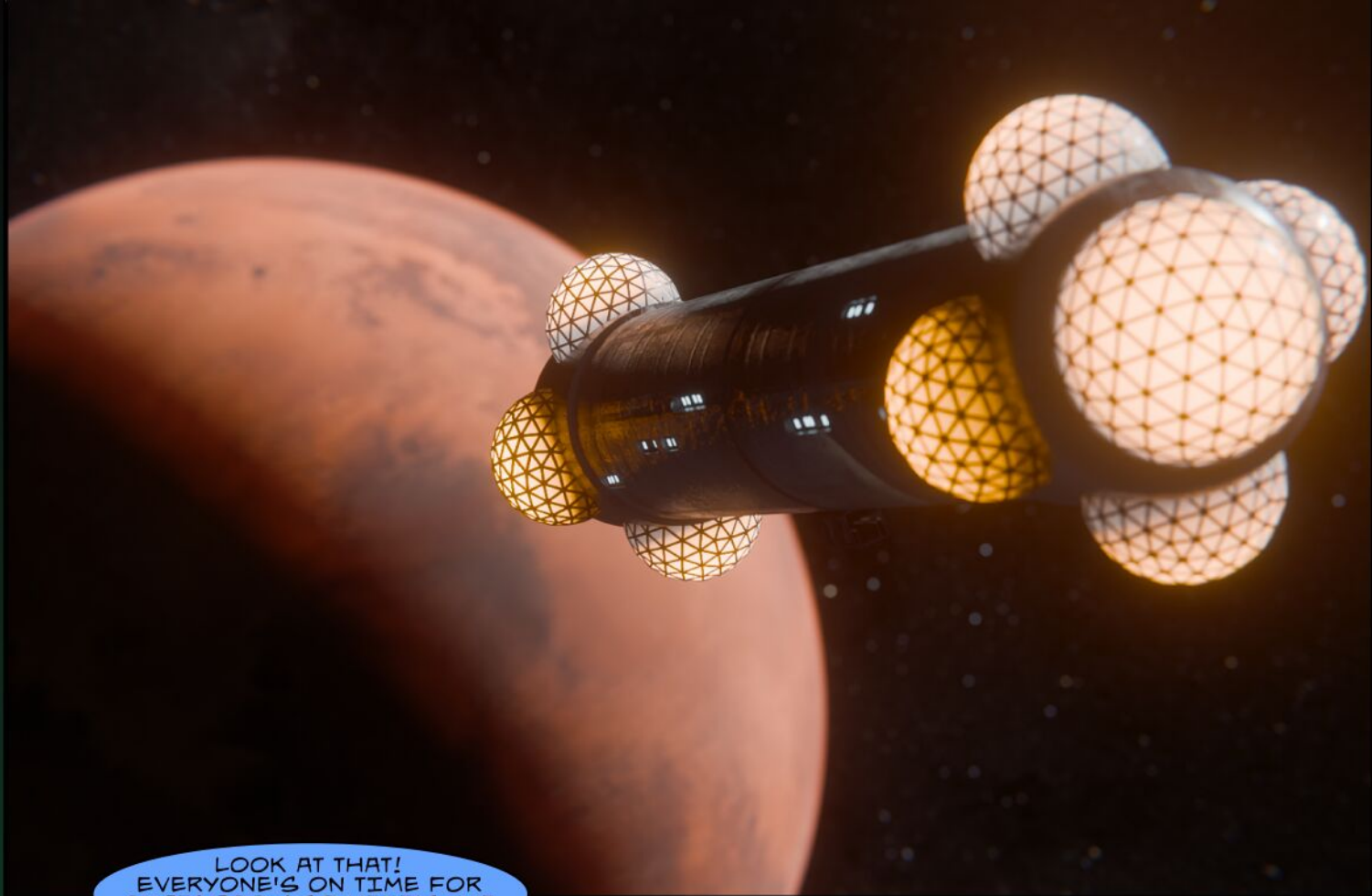
EH, EMBRACE THE SUCK, AS THEY SAY.

YEAH, WE'RE GOOD, MAN. YOU GAVE ME YOUR WORD. I'M GONNA HOLD YOU TO IT.

I SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT... BOTH THINGS.

I WON'T LET YOU DOWN. EVER. YOU HAVE MY WORD. I ALSO WON'T LIKE IT.

YEAH... HEY, WE GOOD, BOSS?



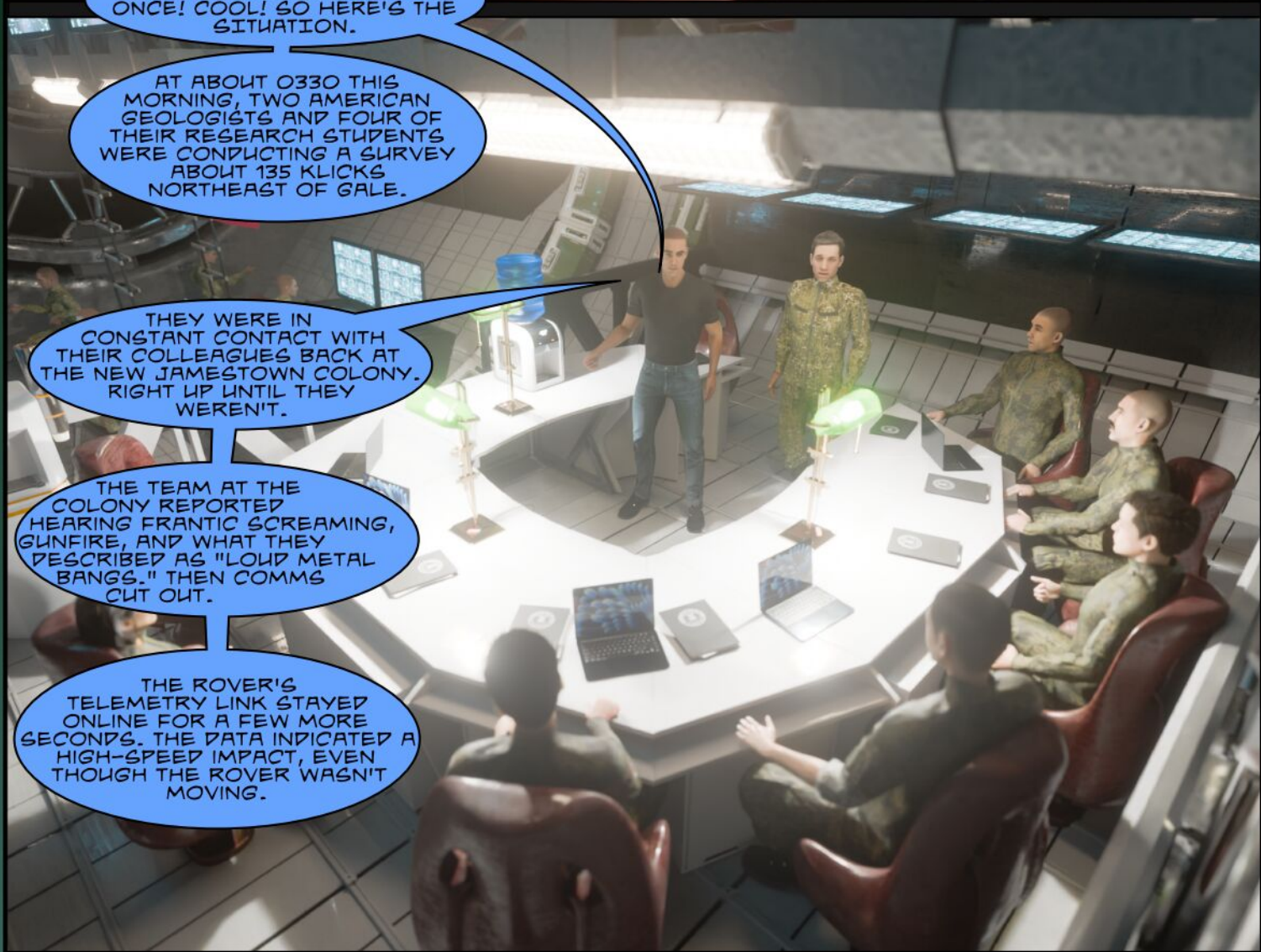
LOOK AT THAT!
EVERYONE'S ON TIME FOR
ONCE! COOL! SO HERE'S THE
SITUATION.

AT ABOUT 0330 THIS
MORNING, TWO AMERICAN
GEOLOGISTS AND FOUR OF
THEIR RESEARCH STUDENTS
WERE CONDUCTING A SURVEY
ABOUT 135 KCLICKS
NORTHEAST OF GALE.

THEY WERE IN
CONSTANT CONTACT WITH
THEIR COLLEAGUES BACK AT
THE NEW JAMESTOWN COLONY.
RIGHT UP UNTIL THEY
WEREN'T.

THE TEAM AT THE
COLONY REPORTED
HEARING FRANTIC SCREAMING,
GUNFIRE, AND WHAT THEY
DESCRIBED AS "LOUD METAL
BANGS." THEN COMMS
CUT OUT.

THE ROVER'S
TELEMETRY LINK STAYED
ONLINE FOR A FEW MORE
SECONDS. THE DATA INDICATED A
HIGH-SPEED IMPACT, EVEN
THOUGH THE ROVER WASN'T
MOVING.





UNCLEAR. TWO
ESTONIAN ESTSOFS OPERATORS
WERE ASSIGNED TO THEIR
SECURITY DETAIL.

I ASSUME THE
SCIENTISTS DIDN'T HAVE
GUNS. WHO WAS SHOOTING? AND
WHAT WERE THEY SHOOTING
AT?

UNFORTUNATELY, IT LOOKS LIKE
COMPLACENCY'S GONNA BITE US IN THE
BALLS ON THIS ONE. THEY WEREN'T
RECORDING, SO ALL WE HAVE ARE
WITNESS ACCOUNTS.

ARE WE SURE THEY DIDN'T
JUST WRECK THE ROVER? THE
GUNSHOTS, THE TELEMETRY... COULD
JUST BE STATIC AND INTERFERENCE AS
THE SYSTEM WENT DOWN. THEY
PROBABLY ROLLED IT OFF A CLIFF
OR SOMETHING.



I HATE TO ADMIT IT, SINCE
HE'S THE NEW GUY, BUT I'VE GOT
TO AGREE WITH C.J. WE ALL KNOW
THESE SCIENCE GUYS ARE PRONE TO
OVERREACTING. PLUS, GALE IS PRETTY
FAR FROM THE CHINESE
COMPOUNDS.

VERY
POSSIBLE. IT WAS ONE
OF THOSE FANCY,
HIGH-PERFORMANCE MODELS. THE
DETAILS ARE IN THE FILES THERE.
ALONG WITH THE NAMES AND
PICTURES OF EVERYONE IN
THAT ROVER.

REGARDLESS, THE
NEXT-NEAREST U.S. ASSET
IS TWO DAYS OUT BY
ROVER.

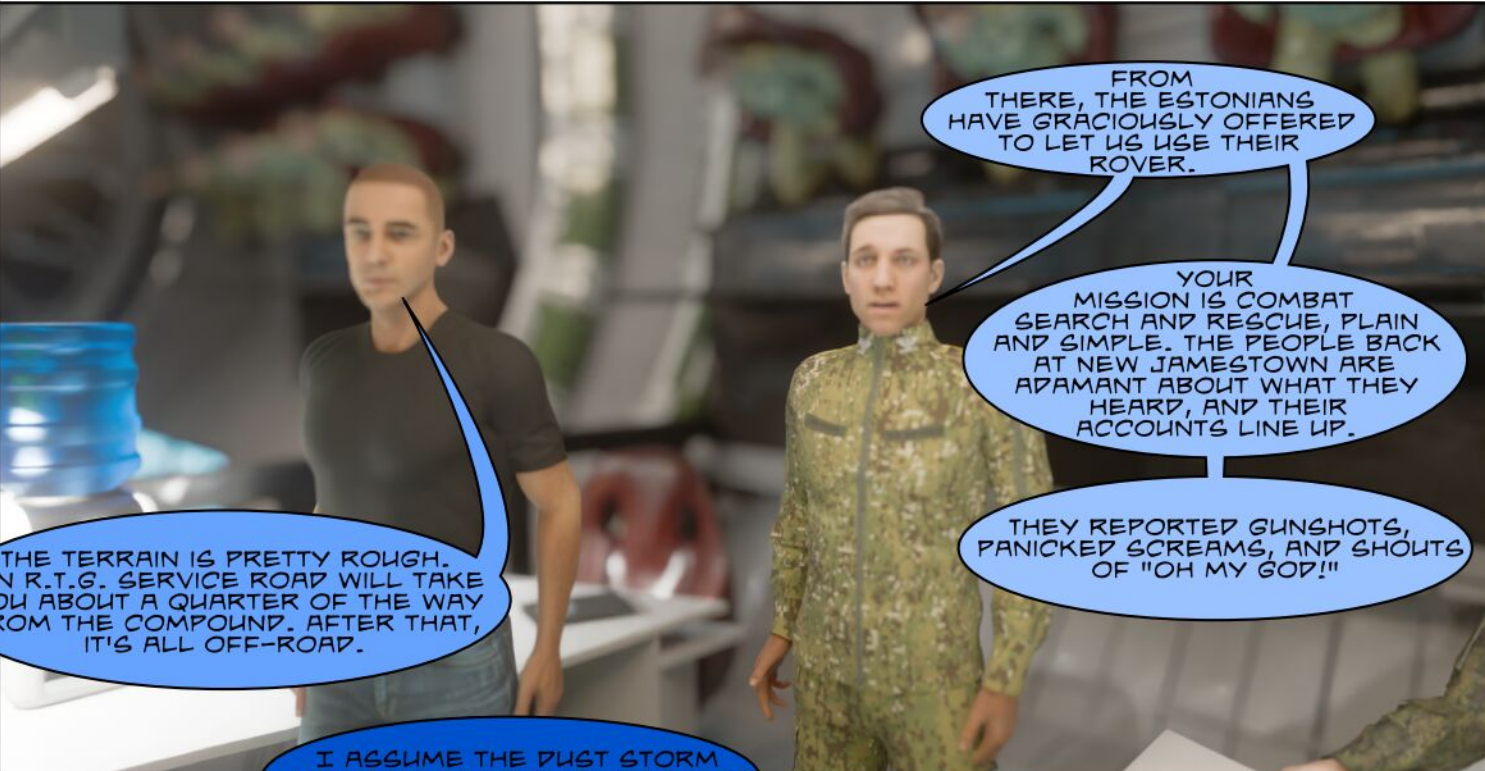
THERE ARE CLOSER
ROVERS AT THE GALE
OUTPOST, BUT THEY WON'T
DEPLOY A RESCUE TEAM
BECAUSE OF THE
REPORTED GUNFIRE.

THE ROVER HAS
ENOUGH SUPPLIES FOR
SEVERAL DAYS. BUT IF IT'S
DAMAGED AND THE CREW HAD
TO GET INTO THEIR SUITS,
THEY MAY ONLY HAVE A
FEW HOURS.



ON TOP OF THAT, A
DUST STORM IS COVERING
HALF THE PLANET. ITS STATIC
CHARGE IS WELL BEYOND OUR
DRIVES' SAFE OPERATING LIMITS,
SO WE CAN'T INSERT YOU
DIRECTLY.

WE'RE ENTERING
MARS ORBIT NOW. IN
ABOUT 15 MINUTES, WE'LL
RENDEZVOUS WITH THE DESTROYER
U.S.S. ARES. SHE'LL TAKE YOU TO
THE ESTONIAN COMPOUND ON THE
OUTSKIRTS OF THE GALE REGION,
JUST 20 KLICKS FROM THE
ROVER'S LAST KNOWN
POSITION.



FROM THERE, THE ESTONIANS HAVE GRACIOUSLY OFFERED TO LET US USE THEIR ROVER.

YOUR MISSION IS COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE, PLAIN AND SIMPLE. THE PEOPLE BACK AT NEW JAMESTOWN ARE ADAMANT ABOUT WHAT THEY HEARD, AND THEIR ACCOUNTS LINE UP.

THEY REPORTED GUNSHOTS, PANICKED SCREAMS, AND SHOUTS OF "OH MY GOD!"

THE TERRAIN IS PRETTY ROUGH. AN R.T.G. SERVICE ROAD WILL TAKE YOU ABOUT A QUARTER OF THE WAY FROM THE COMPOUND. AFTER THAT, IT'S ALL OFF-ROAD.

I ASSUME THE DUST STORM MEANS NO EYES ON THE ROVER? NO I.S.R.?

WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF IMAGES OF IT FROM BEFORE THE DUST STORM ROLLED IN. WE HAVE LIVE RADAR IMAGERY, BUT THE RESOLUTION IS POOR. BAD ANGLE. WE'RE WORKING TO CLEAR IT UP, BUT DON'T GET YOUR HOPES UP.

THE ROVER IS RIGHT WHERE ITS LAST TELEMETRY PLACED IT. IT APPEARS TO BE UPRIGHT, POSSIBLY IN A DITCH OR STUCK ON A ROCK. IT'S HARD TO TELL.

I WISH WE HAD MORE INFO FOR YOU, BUT WE DON'T. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE IT WORK.

THAT MEANS NO I.S.R. OR COMMS FOR THEM, EITHER. LET'S FIGHT IN THE SHADE! I'M COOL WITH THAT!

FUCKIN' OORAH.

IF THERE ARE NO FURTHER QUESTIONS, GEAR UP, MARINES. BRING 'EM HOME.



BLUE EAGLE ONE, THIS IS U.S.S. ARES.
RELEASING UMBILICAL SEAL.



ALL CLEAR. BEGINNING DEORBIT BURN.

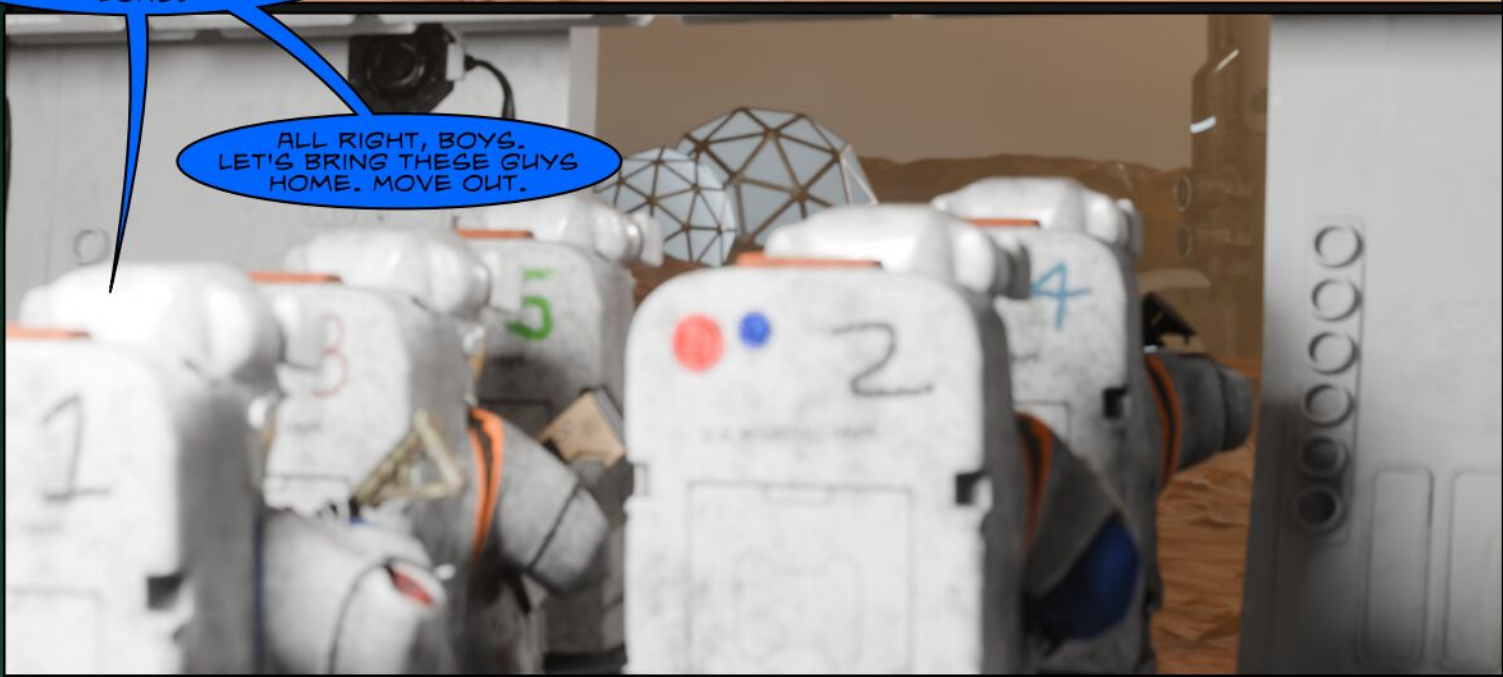




BUTCHER ONE, ARES
ACTUAL. AIRLOCK SECURE.
YOU'RE CLEAR TO DEPART. BE ADVISED:
WE HAVE ABOUT FOUR HOURS BEFORE
THE STORM EXCEEDS OUR SAFE
LAUNCH LIMITS.

LAUNCH CLOCK IS SET AT
T-MINUS 3 HOURS, 50 MINUTES.
WHEN IT HITS ZERO, WE LAUNCH WITH
OR WITHOUT YOU.

ONE COPIES ALL,
ARES. KEEP THE LIGHTS ON
FOR US. WE WON'T BE GONE
LONG.



ALL RIGHT, BOYS.
LET'S BRING THESE GUYS
HOME. MOVE OUT.



SO, WE GOT A
WAGER GOING? WRECKED
ROVER OR CHINESE AMBUSH?
I'VE GOT 50 ON WRECKED,
ANOTHER 25 IF THEY WERE
DRUNK.

NAH, BRO. IT SEEMS
PRETTY CLEAR THEY
WRECKED. SOME OF THESE NEW
ROVERS REALLY RIP, AND WHEN
THEY WRECK, THEY WRECK
HARD.

THE FILE SAID THEY WERE
IN A NOVATECH KILONOVA.
THOSE THINGS HAVE, LIKE,
3,800 HORSEPOWER...



...WOOOOW!!!
THIS IS AMAZING!

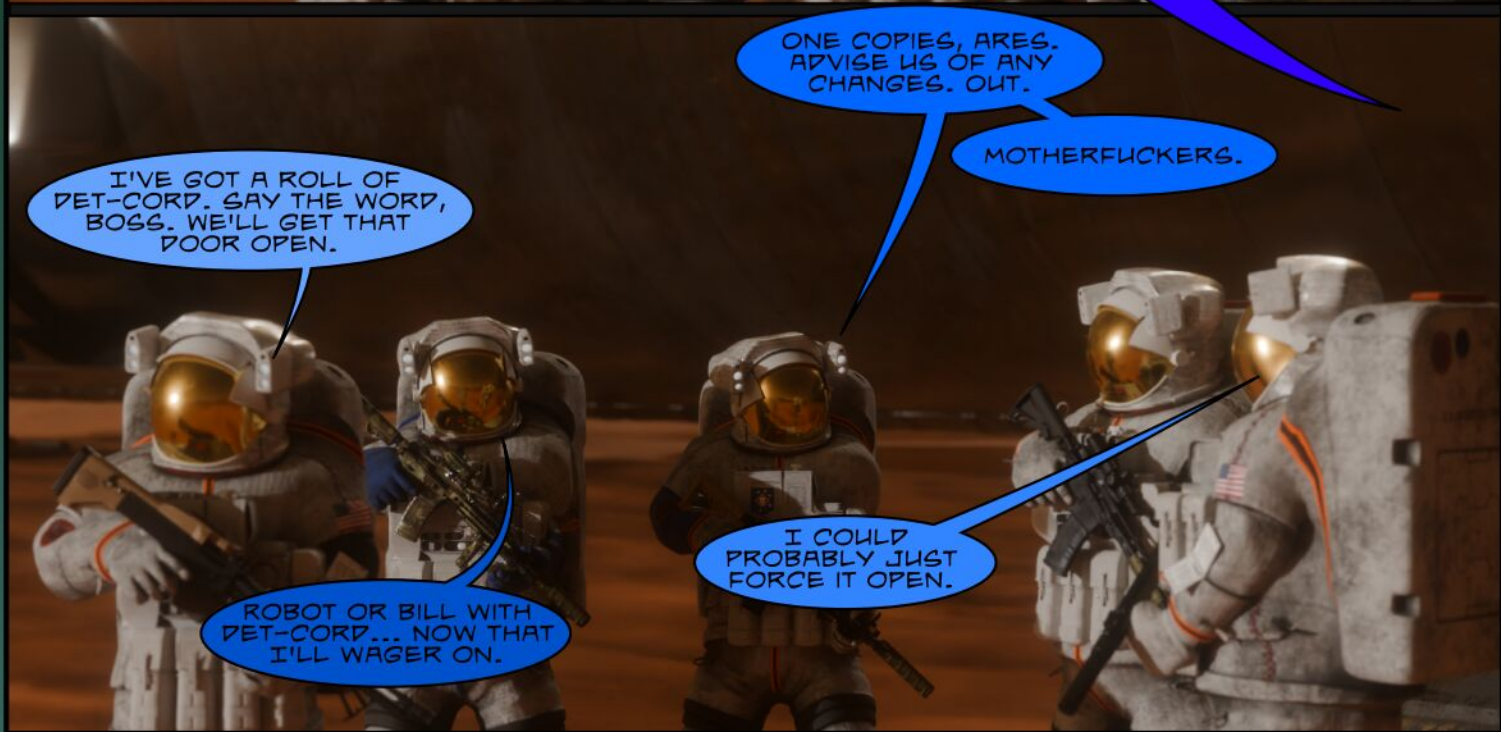


YO,
ROBOT! DON'T BLAST
OFF BEFORE THE SHIP.
STAY FOCUSED. WE'RE
NOT HERE TO
SIGHTSEE.

ARES,
BUTCHER ONE. PARTNER
FORCE IS A NO-SHOW. SEE IF
YOU CAN RAISE 'EM FOR
US.

RIGHT... WOW...
SO COOL.

ONE, PARTNER FORCE JUST
INFORMED US THEY'RE HAVING TROUBLE
WITH THEIR GARAGE DOOR. CAN'T GET THE
ROVER OUT. THEY'LL NEED 10 MIKES TO SORT
IT OUT.



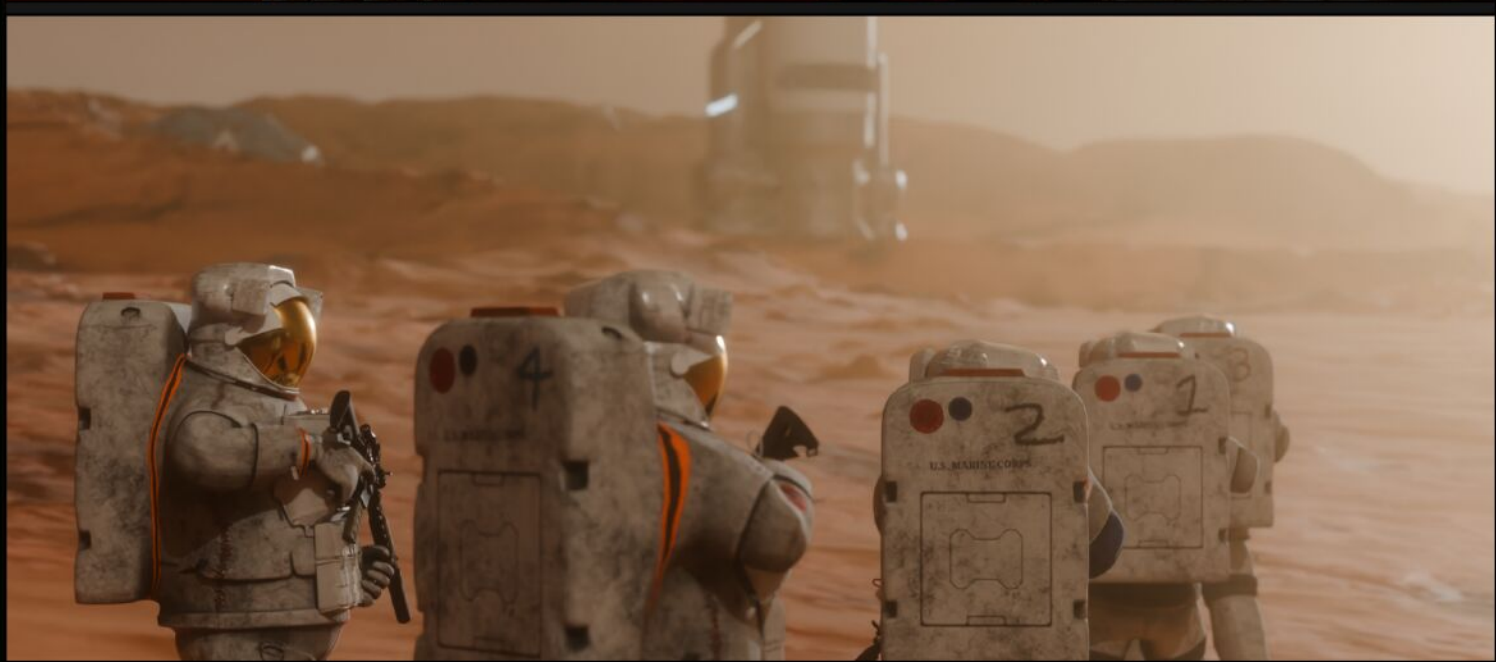
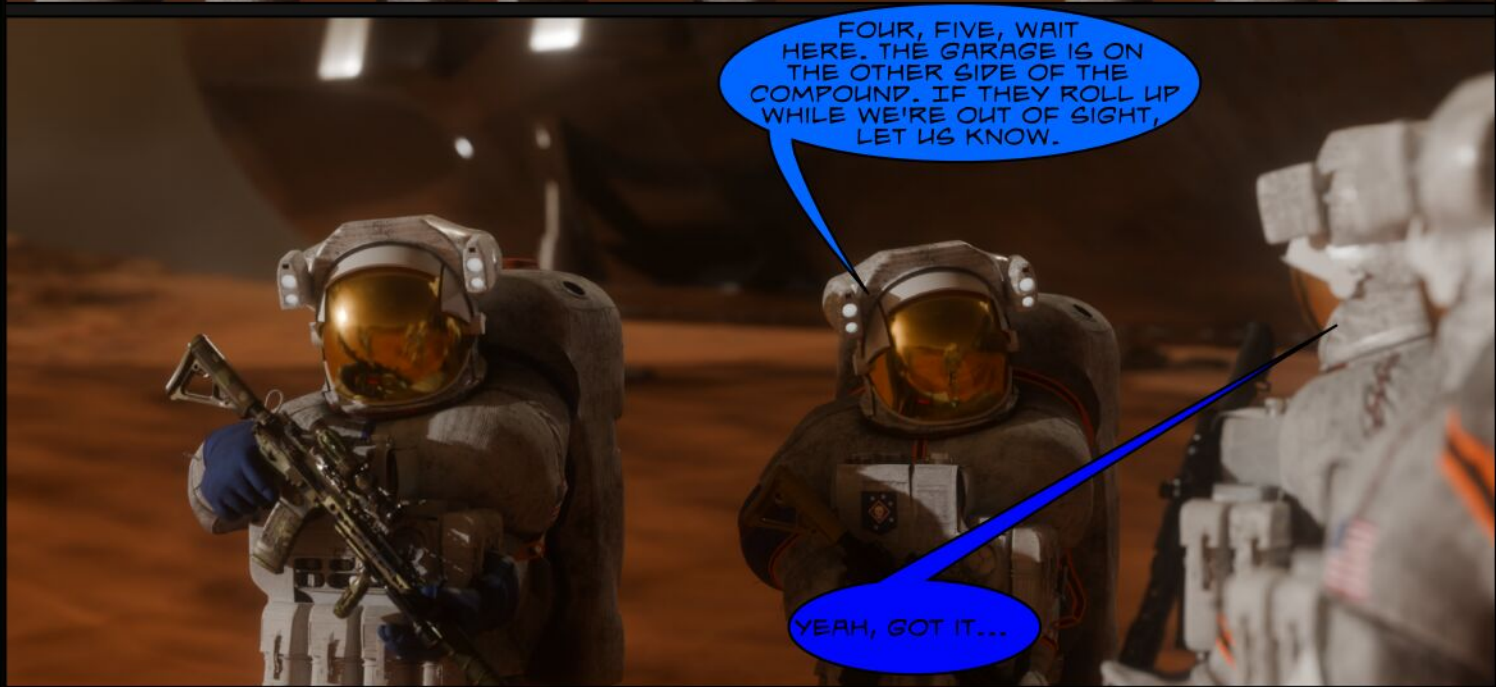
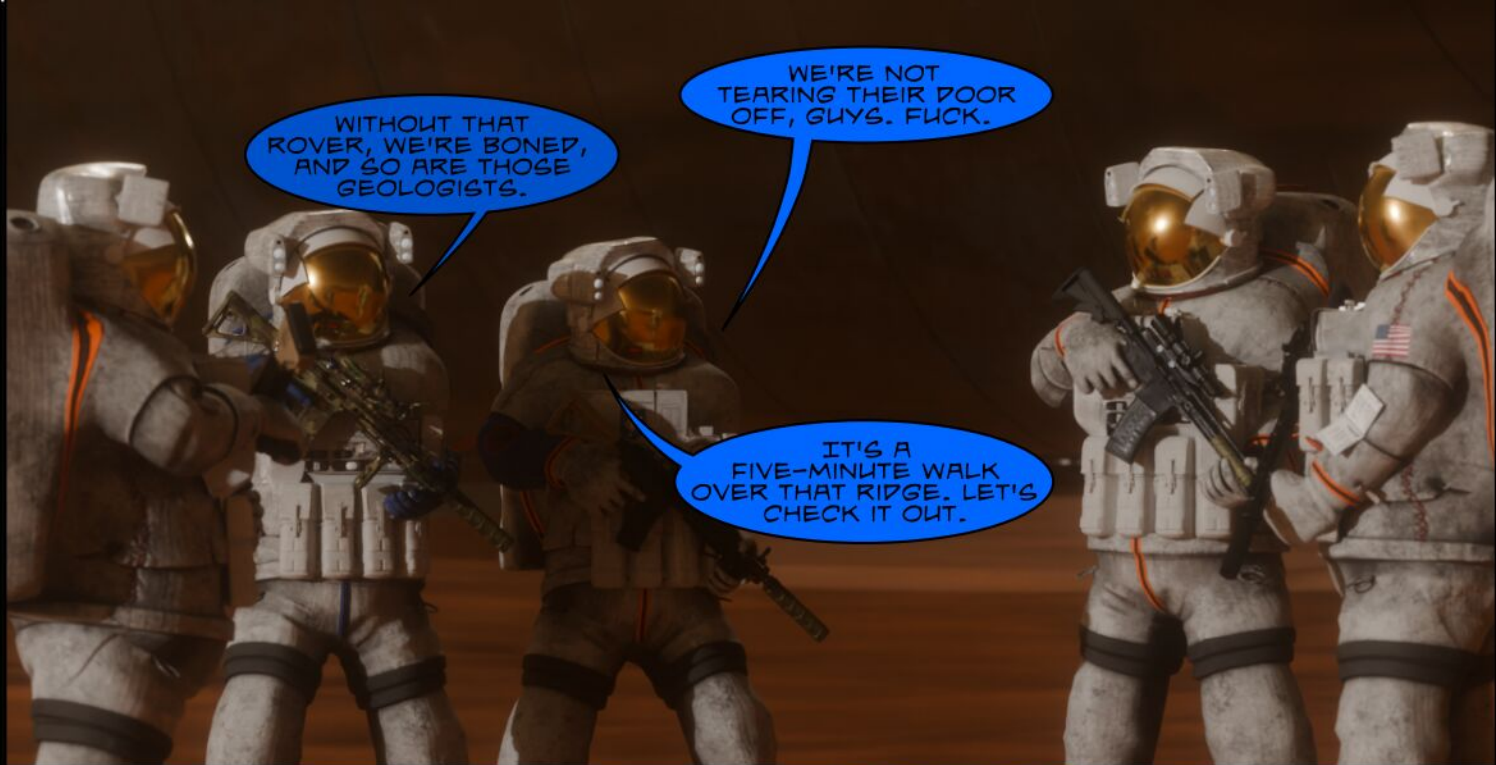
I'VE GOT A ROLL OF
PET-CORP. SAY THE WORD,
BOSS. WE'LL GET THAT
DOOR OPEN.

ONE COPIES, ARES.
ADVISE US OF ANY
CHANGES. OUT.

MOTHERFUCKERS.

ROBOT OR BILL WITH
PET-CORP... NOW THAT
I'LL WAGER ON.

I COULD
PROBABLY JUST
FORCE IT OPEN.





SO... WE'RE ALONE...

...SHALL WE PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO SATAN NOW?



HUH!? WHAT THE FUCK!?

PFFFFFFT!!
AHHHAHAHAHAHA!

TOO EASY, MAN!

FUCK YOU, CLANKER! THAT'S NOT FUNNY!

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S REALLY NOT. YOUR REACTION IS!



NO, IT'S NOT. THAT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU EVEN JOKE ABOUT.

REALLY? I JUST DID!

JUST... DON'T TALK TO ME. WE HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER? FINE. OTHER THAN THAT, I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOU.

OH, CALM DOWN, DUDE.

DO YOU NEED A HUG? SOME HOT COCOA?

SHUT THE FUCK UP. WHAT PART OF "I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOU" DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND?

...
...WOULD YOU?

HONEST QUESTION. I WANT AN HONEST ANSWER. IF I WENT TO CHURCH WITH YOU, WOULD YOU RELAX A LITTLE?

YEAH, YOU'RE HILARIOUS. TELL YOU WHAT: I'LL BELIEVE THAT WHEN I SEE IT. MY GUESS IS YOU'LL FIND AN EXCHANGE.

SURE, WHY NOT? JUST REMEMBER TO BRING A FIRE EXTINGUISHER, THOUGH! JUST IN CASE I BURST INTO FLAMES!

WAIT, DO YOU REALLY THINK...? WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD HAPPEN?

I THINK I WANT YOU TO STOP TALKING...

MMM... NAH! I'M PRETTY SURE THESE PROXIMITY COMMS CAN'T BE TURNED OFF, SO YOU'RE STUCK WITH ME!

ANYWAY, HOW'S YOUR DAY GOING?

PERSONALLY, I BASICALLY JUST GOT ABDUCTED BY A UFO AND THROWN ONTO A TEAM OF GUYS I DON'T KNOW, WHO DON'T REALLY WANT ME AROUND. NOTHING WAS REALLY EXPLAINED TO ME. NOW I'M STANDING ON MARS WITH A GUN AND A GUY WHO THINKS I'M THE ANTICHRIST... ALL TO AVOID A COURT-MARTIAL I PROBABLY DESERVED.

...SO IT'S BEEN A WEIRD ONE FOR ME. YOU COULD SAY I'M A LITTLE FREAKED OUT...

IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER, AFTER WHAT LITTLE I HEARD TODAY, I'D STAND WITH YOU OVER "THEM" ANY DAY. EVEN KNOWING YOU HATE ME.

UMM... I GUESS YOU'LL GET YOUR CHANCE TO PROVE THAT.

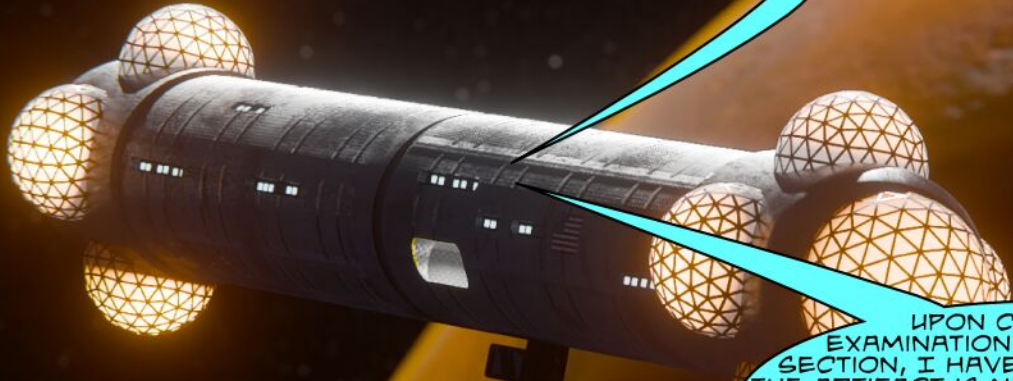
UNTIL THEN. WE ARE NOT FRIENDS, AND I DON'T WANT TO CHAT.

NO, WE'RE NOT AND I DON'T. YOU'RE A MACHINE. REPLACEABLE HARDWARE. NOTHING MORE.

YEAH... WE ARE! I CAN TELL! YOU LOVE ME ALREADY!

PEFT... UGHMM. YEAH, I'M GONNA PASS ON THAT...

OK, LOOK. WE CAN SNUGGLE A LITTLE, BUT NOTHING CREEPY.



THIS IS DOCTOR LAPOINTE. LOG 0273. THE DATE IS AUGUST 15TH, 2080. THE TIME IS 13:17. I AM PROCEEDING WITH THE EXAMINATION OF THE ARTIFACT DESIGNATED P-7-7 ALPHA-6-2.

UPON CLOSER EXAMINATION OF THE "SHIP" SECTION, I HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE ARTIFACT IS NOT A SINGLE SOLID PIECE, AS PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT. THE SECTION APPEARS TO BE PRESS-FIT INTO PLACE, WITH EXTRAORDINARILY TIGHT TOLERANCES.

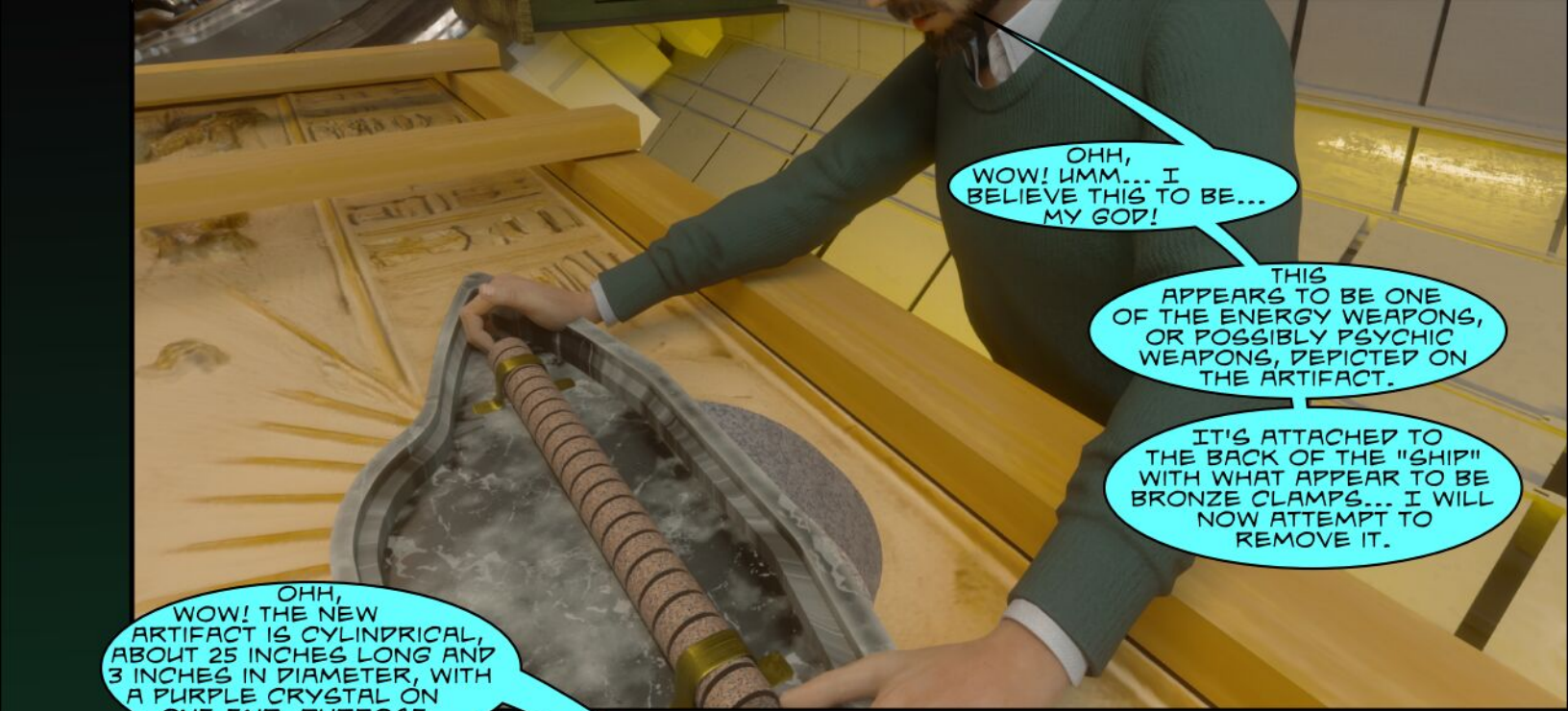
BEFORE I PROCEED WITH REMOVAL OF THE "SHIP," I WOULD LIKE TO NOTE, BEGRUDGINGLY, THAT I DID NOT MAKE THIS DISCOVERY ALONE. ONE OF THE MARINES ON BOARD REPORTED SEEING LIGHT COMING FROM THE TWO POLISHED SPHERES. I REGRET THAT I DON'T RECALL HIS NAME. "A.J." OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

I AM NOW ATTEMPTING TO LOOSEN THE FIT WITH A GENTLE ROCKING MOTION... I'M NOT FEELING ANY PLAY... I'M ALSO NOTING DUST FALLING INTO THE GAPS AS I ROCK IT BACK AND FORTH... INTERESTING.

THUNK!

OK! WHOA... I JUST OBSERVED THE ENTIRE SECTION MOVE, ACCOMPANIED BY A CLEAR, AUDIBLE THUNK. ALMOST AS IF AN AIRTIGHT SEAL HAD BROKEN...

THE "SHIP" APPEARS TO BE FREE NOW, BUT THE FIT IS STILL VERY TIGHT. I WILL NOW TRY TO CAREFULLY LIFT IT OUT OF ITS SLOT AND TURN IT OVER...



OH, WOW! UMM... I BELIEVE THIS TO BE... MY GOD!

THIS APPEARS TO BE ONE OF THE ENERGY WEAPONS, OR POSSIBLY PSYCHIC WEAPONS, DEPICTED ON THE ARTIFACT.

IT'S ATTACHED TO THE BACK OF THE "SHIP" WITH WHAT APPEAR TO BE BRONZE CLAMPS... I WILL NOW ATTEMPT TO REMOVE IT.

OH, WOW! THE NEW ARTIFACT IS CYLINDRICAL, ABOUT 25 INCHES LONG AND 3 INCHES IN DIAMETER, WITH A PURPLE CRYSTAL ON ONE END. PURPOSE UNKNOWN.

THE MAIN BODY APPEARS TO BE MADE OF TWO SEPARATE MATERIALS, WITH ABOUT A DOZEN OR SO SEAMS. I CAN'T SEE ANY SEAMS, LEADING ME TO BELIEVE THE MATERIALS MAY BE FUSED AT THE ATOMIC LEVEL, AS WE'VE OBSERVED BEFORE.

THE OUTER MATERIAL APPEARS TO BE ROUGHLY FINISHED ROSE GRANITE. THE INNER MATERIAL SEEMS MUCH MORE SOPHISTICATED, POSSIBLY GRAPHITE-BASED OR SOME SIMILAR CARBON-RICH MATERIAL.

IT APPEARS VERY DARK GRAY, WITH MORE REFLECTIVE LINES RUNNING AROUND ITS CIRCUMFERENCE.

AS WITH MUCH ALIEN TECHNOLOGY, THERE ARE NO CLEAR SIGNS OF CIRCUITRY OR AN INTERFACE OF ANY KIND.

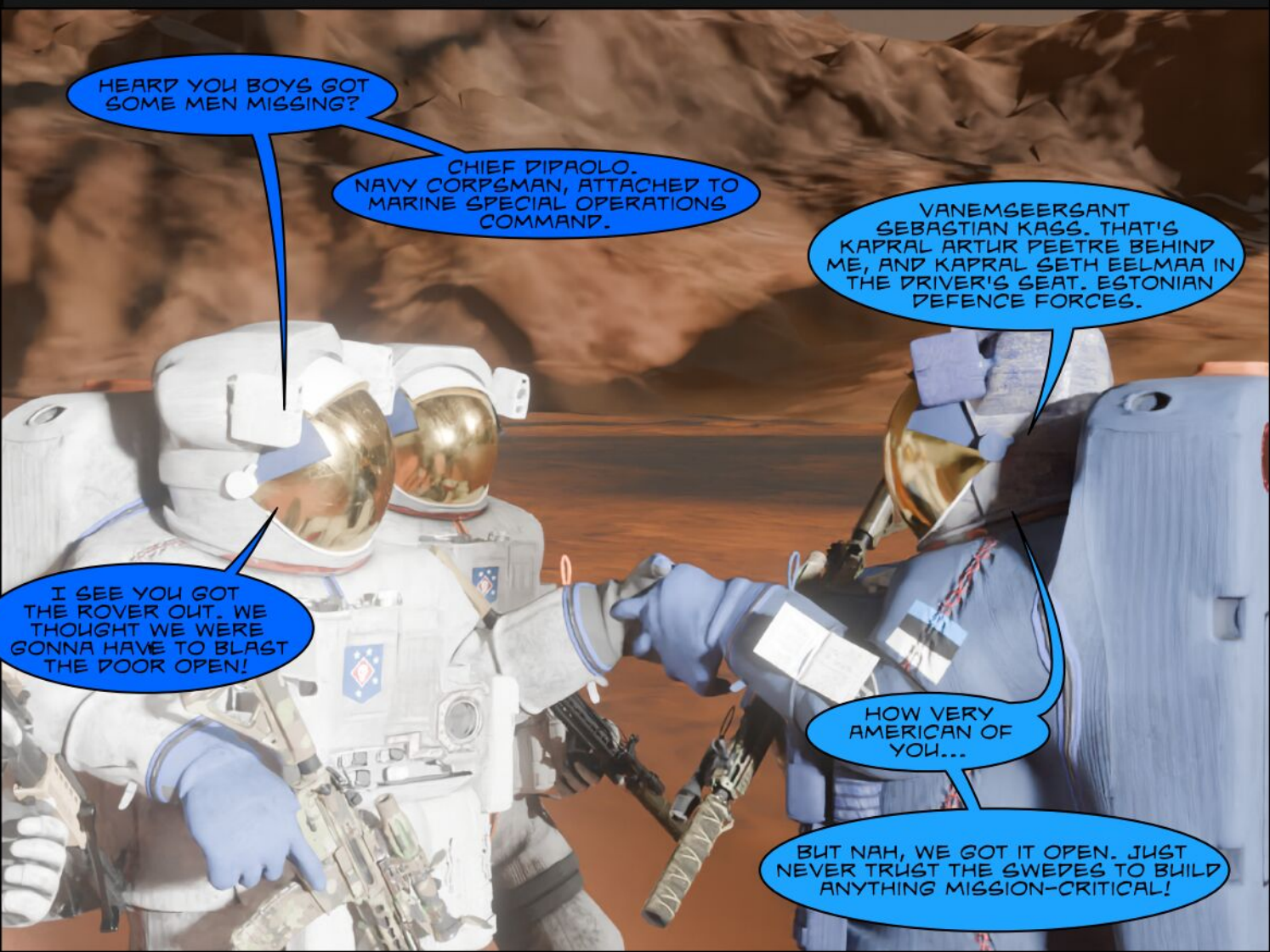
UNFORTUNATELY, EITHER ITS POWER SOURCE IS DEPLETED OR THE DEVICE IS BIOMETRICALLY LOCKED IN SOME WAY... OR I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO USE IT...

EVEN SO, FURTHER RESEARCH INTO THIS DEVICE MAY LEAD TO A DEFENSE AGAINST THE PSYCHIC CONTROL THE ALIENS EXERT OVER US. IF NOT, I AM STILL CONFIDENT IT WILL LEAD TO A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF OUR OWN MINDS, MAYBE EVEN THE UNIVERSE ITSELF! INCREDIBLE!



DRAGON, THIS IS BUTCHER ONE. U.S. MARINE ELEMENT APPROACHING FROM YOUR NORTHEAST. HOLD FIRE. OVER.

DRAGON ONE-NINER COPIES, BUTCHER. WE SEE YOU. OUT.



HEARD YOU BOYS GOT SOME MEN MISSING?

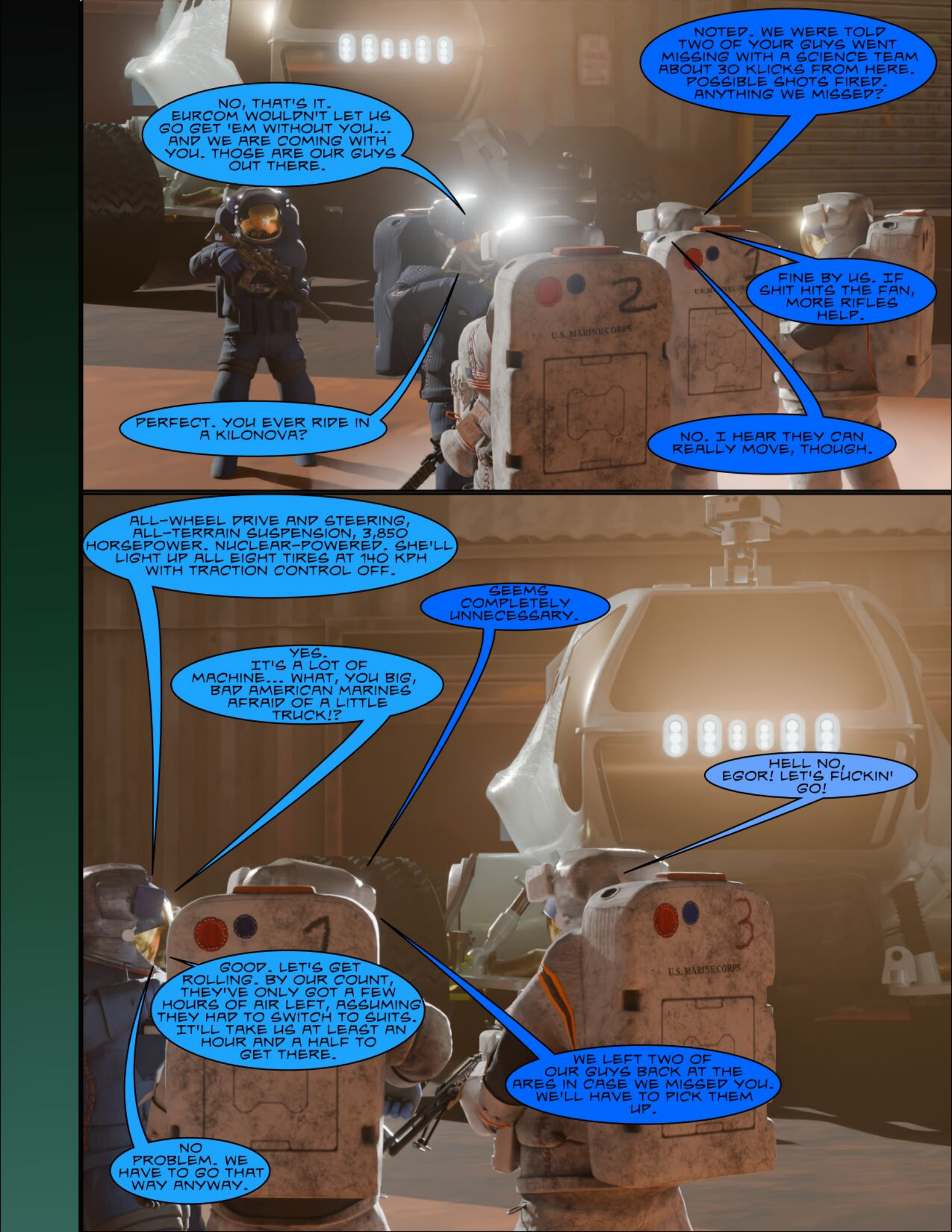
CHIEF DIPALO.
NAVY CORPSMAN, ATTACHED TO
MARINE SPECIAL OPERATIONS
COMMAND.

VANEMSEERSANT
SEBASTIAN KASS. THAT'S
KAPRAL ARTUR PEETRE BEHIND
ME, AND KAPRAL SETH EELMAA IN
THE DRIVER'S SEAT. ESTONIAN
DEFENCE FORCES.

I SEE YOU GOT
THE ROVER OUT. WE
THOUGHT WE WERE
GONNA HAVE TO BLAST
THE DOOR OPEN!

HOW VERY
AMERICAN OF
YOU...

BUT NAH, WE GOT IT OPEN. JUST
NEVER TRUST THE SWEDES TO BUILD
ANYTHING MISSION-CRITICAL!



NO, THAT'S IT.
EURCOM WOULDN'T LET US
GO GET 'EM WITHOUT YOU...
AND WE ARE COMING WITH
YOU. THOSE ARE OUR GUYS
OUT THERE.

NOTED. WE WERE TOLD
TWO OF YOUR GUYS WENT
MISSING WITH A SCIENCE TEAM
ABOUT 30 KCLICKS FROM HERE.
POSSIBLE SHOTS FIRED?
ANYTHING WE MISSED?

FINE BY US. IF
SHIT HITS THE FAN,
MORE RIFLES
HELP.

PERFECT. YOU EVER RIDE IN
A KILONOVA?

NO. I HEAR THEY CAN
REALLY MOVE, THOUGH.

ALL-WHEEL DRIVE AND STEERING,
ALL-TERRAIN SUSPENSION, 3,850
HORSEPOWER. NUCLEAR-POWERED. SHE'LL
LIGHT UP ALL EIGHT TIRES AT 140 KPH
WITH TRACTION CONTROL OFF.

SEEMS
COMPLETELY
UNNECESSARY.

YES.
IT'S A LOT OF
MACHINE... WHAT, YOU BIG,
BAD AMERICAN MARINES
AFRAID OF A LITTLE
TRUCK!?

HELL NO,
EGOR! LET'S FUCKIN'
GO!

GOOD. LET'S GET
ROLLING. BY OUR COUNT,
THEY'VE ONLY GOT A FEW
HOURS OF AIR LEFT, ASSUMING
THEY HAD TO SWITCH TO SUITS.
IT'LL TAKE US AT LEAST AN
HOUR AND A HALF TO
GET THERE.

WE LEFT TWO OF
OUR GUYS BACK AT THE
AREA IN CASE WE MISSED YOU.
WE'LL HAVE TO PICK THEM
UP.

NO
PROBLEM. WE
HAVE TO GO THAT
WAY ANYWAY.

BACK AT THE U.S.S. ARES LANDING SITE, C.J. WAS DOING HIS BEST TO ANNOY JIMMY BY SINGING... BADLY.

PLEASE STOP...

NO, I DO. YOU'RE JUST A TERRIBLE SINGER, AND I DON'T LIKE YOU... SO PLEASE, SHUT THE FUCK UP...

GOOD. I MEANT IT TO BE.

SURE.

SURE.

...TONGS?

OH, LOOK! HERE THEY COME. YOU CAN STOP NOW.

"CAN YOU TAKE ME HIGHER? TO A PLACE WHERE BLIND MEN SEE?"

"CAN YOU TAKE ME HIGHER? TO A PLACE WITH GOLDEN STREEEEEEETS!"

WHAT, YOU DON'T LIKE THAT SONG?

WELL, THAT'S JUST MEAN.

YOU'RE VERY JUDGMENTAL FOR A GUY WHO SUPPOSEDLY BELIEVES WHAT YOU BELIEVE.

ARE YOU ONE OF THOSE GUYS WHO NEED A CANDY BAR EVERY FEW HOURS TO KEEP FROM TURNING INTO A POUCHE?

MAYBE THEY'LL HAVE THOSE FROSTED MRE COOKIES OR SOMETHING IN THE ROVER... OR TONGS...

TO PULL OUT WHATEVER CRAWLED UP YOUR ASS.



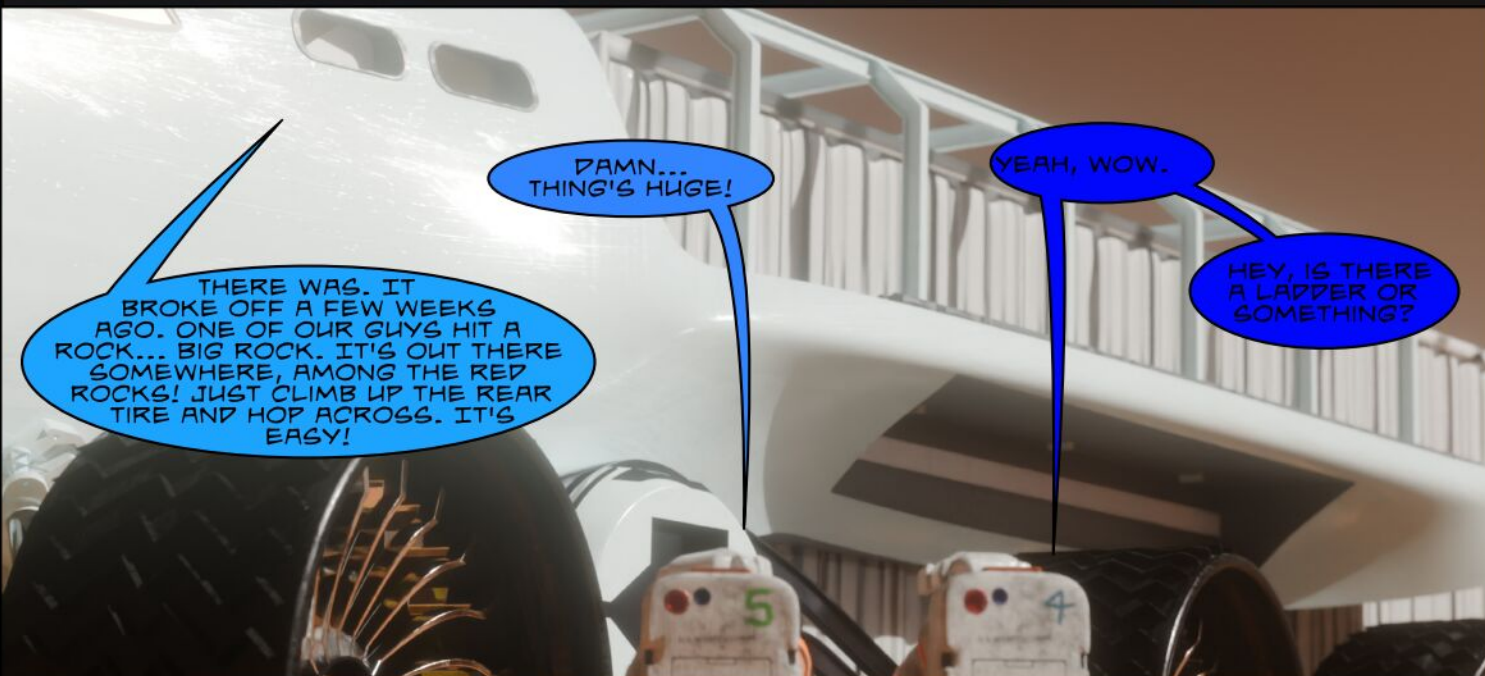
FOUR, FIVE, THIS IS ONE. NO TIME FOR THE AIRLOCK. CLIMB ON THE BACK. OVER.

IT'S PERFECTLY SAFE! WE DO IT ALL THE TIME! AS LONG AS WE DON'T ROLL IT! THAT ONLY HAPPENS... 25... NO, 15 PERCENT OF THE TIME.

BAHH! DON'T WORRY. WE DRIVE IN THESE ALL THE TIME! WE'LL BE FINE! YOU MIGHT GET DUSTY, THOUGH!

UHH, YEAH, COPY... THAT STORM LOOKS PRETTY NASTY... YOU GUYS TRACKING THAT?

WE'RE DEFINITELY GONNA DIE...



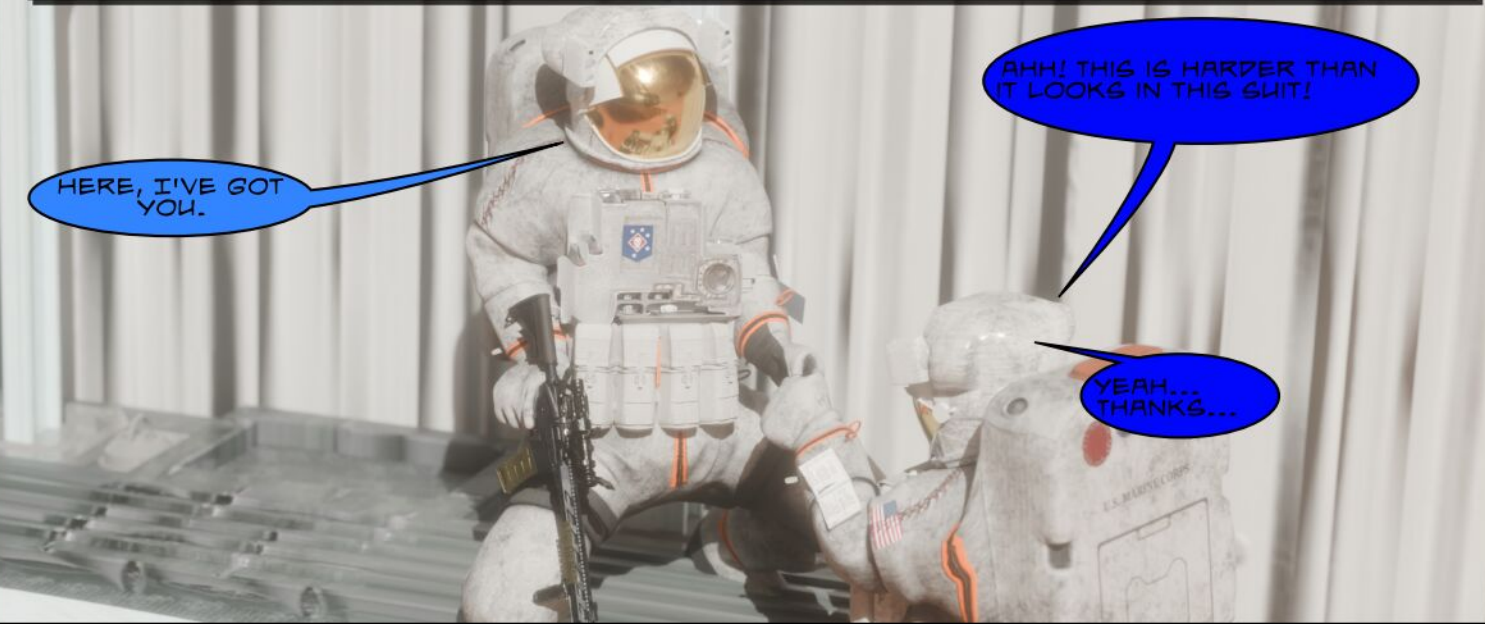
THERE WAS. IT BROKE OFF A FEW WEEKS AGO. ONE OF OUR GUYS HIT A ROCK... BIG ROCK. IT'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, AMONG THE RED ROCKS! JUST CLIMB UP THE REAR TIRE AND HOP ACROSS. IT'S EASY!

DAMN... THING'S HUGE!

YEAH, WOW.

HEY, IS THERE A LADDER OR SOMETHING?

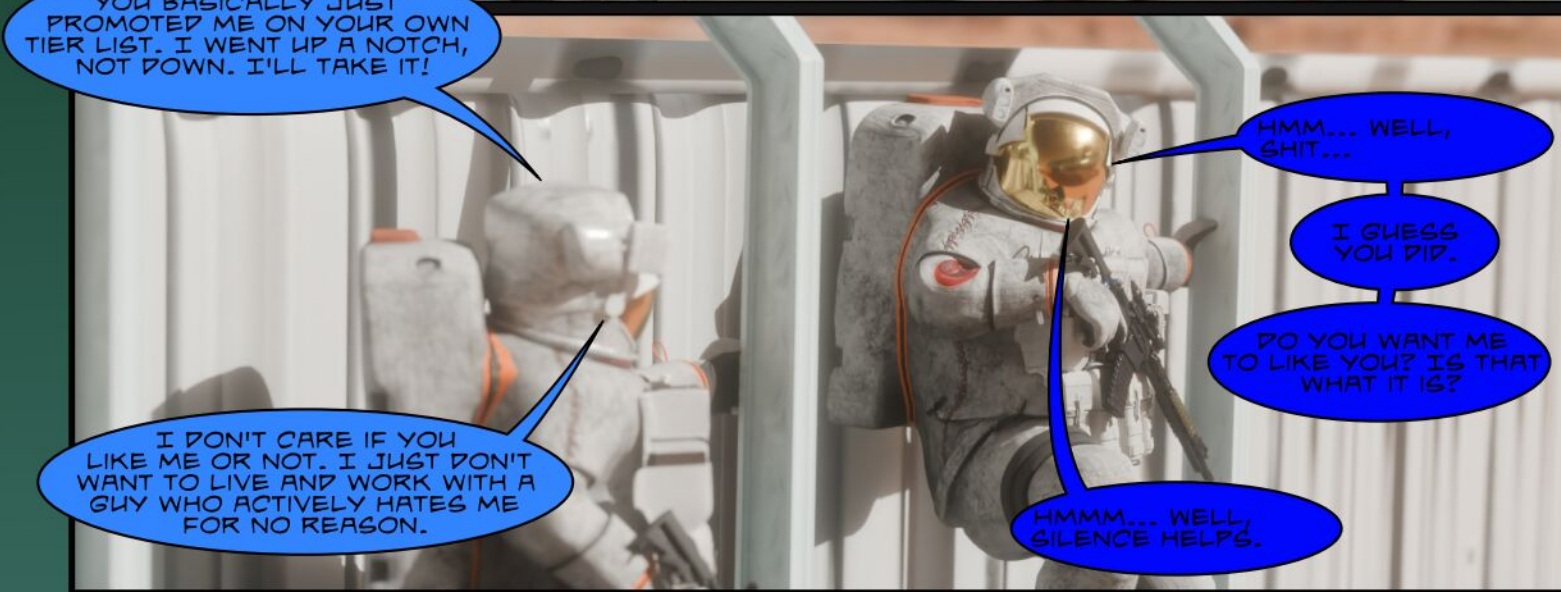
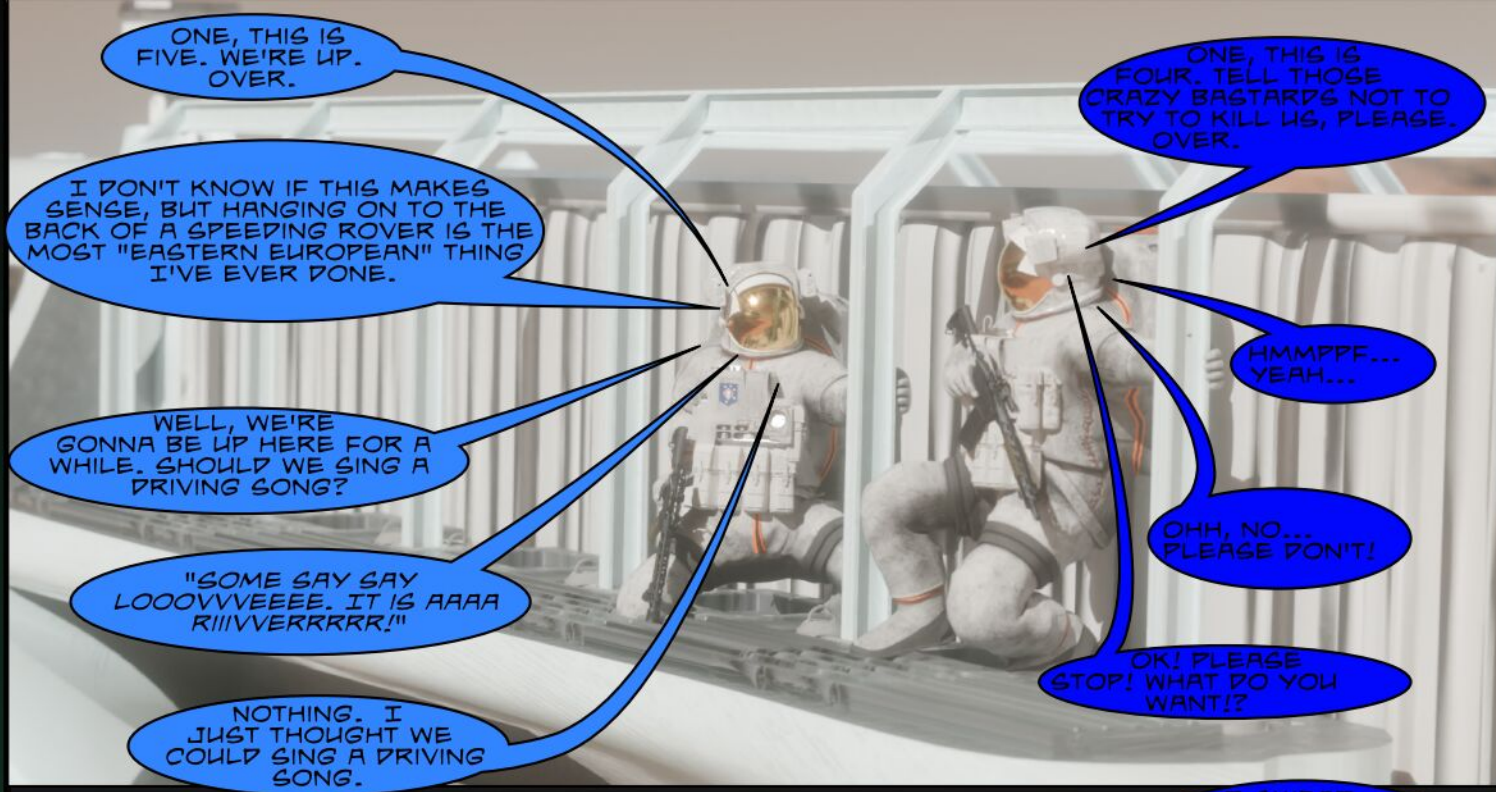
THE TWO MOVED TO THE BACK OF THE ROVER AND BEGAN CLIMBING THE REAR WHEEL. C.J. PULLED HIMSELF UP EASILY, BUT JIMMY STRUGGLED WITH THE WHEEL'S SIZE AND HIS SUIT'S LIMITED MOBILITY.



HERE, I'VE GOT YOU.

AHH! THIS IS HARDER THAN IT LOOKS IN THIS SUIT!

YEAH... THANKS...



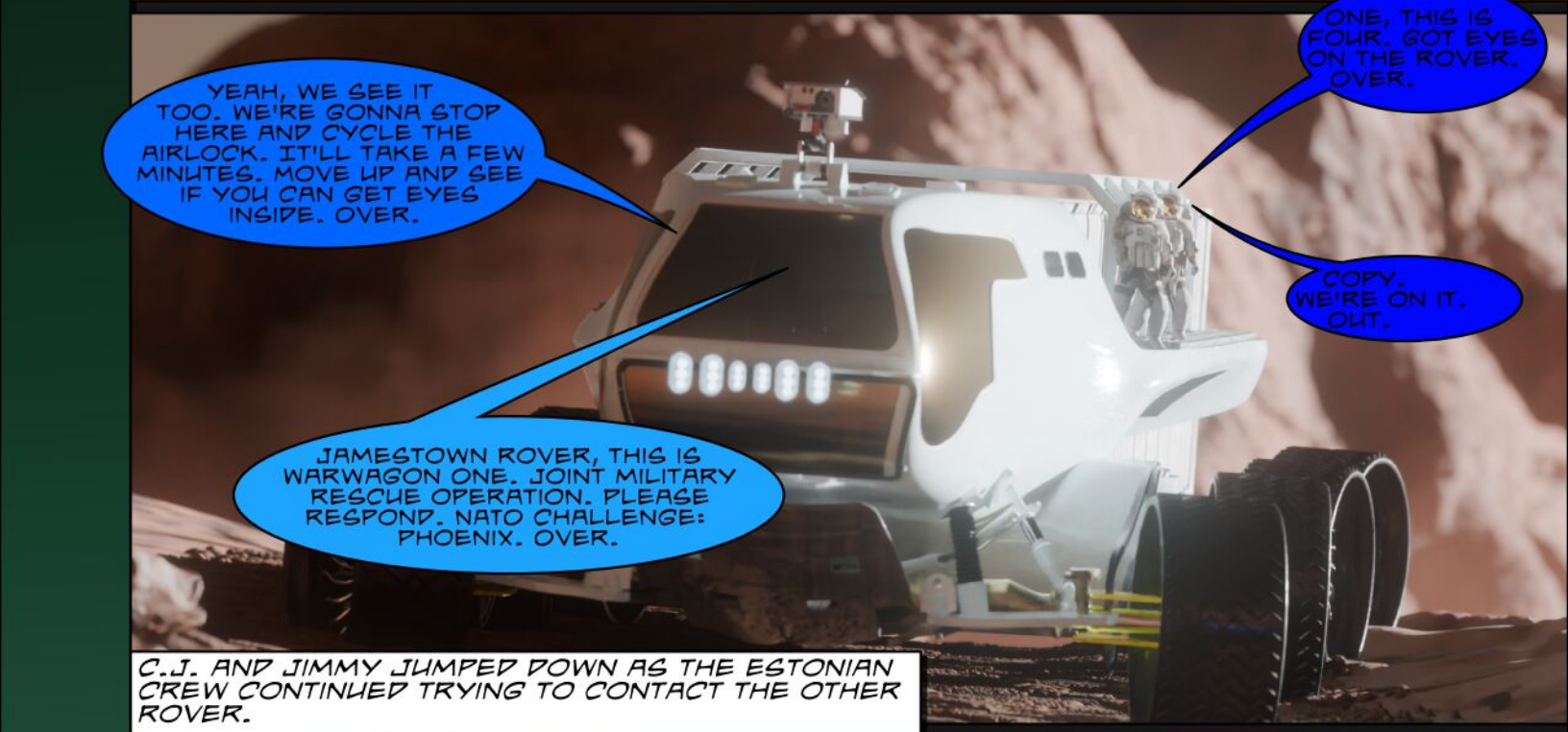


BUTCH...EAD
YO...MIN?

TOC, THIS IS
BUTCHER ONE. THIRTY
SECONDS FROM TARGET.
PASSING "GROVER." HOW
COPY? OVER.

YEAH,
FIGURED.

COMMS ARE
FUCKED, BOYS.
THIRTY SECONDS
OUT.



YEAH, WE SEE IT
TOO. WE'RE GONNA STOP
HERE AND CYCLE THE
AIRLOCK. IT'LL TAKE A FEW
MINUTES. MOVE UP AND SEE
IF YOU CAN GET EYES
INSIDE. OVER.

ONE, THIS IS
FOUR. GOT EYES
ON THE ROVER.
OVER.

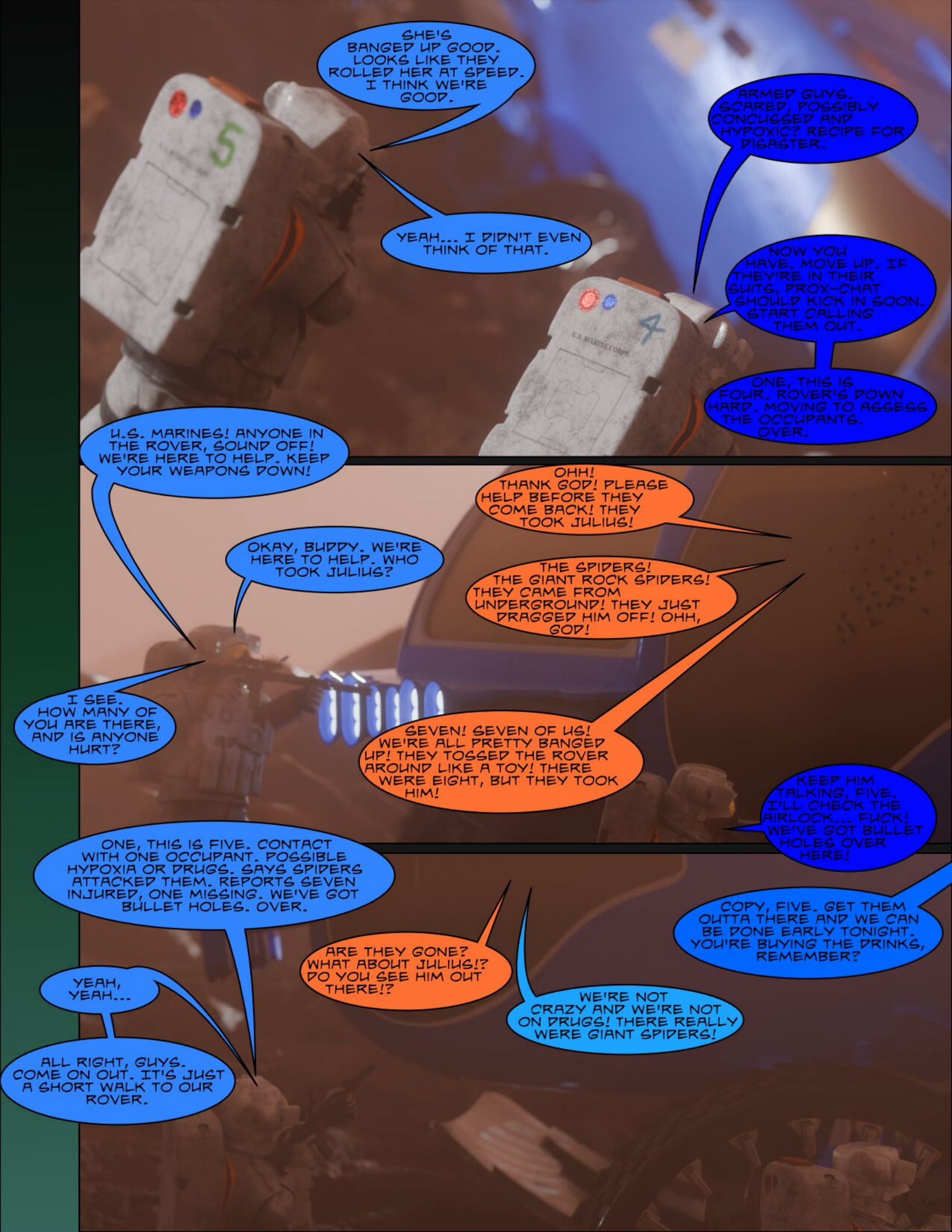
COPY.
WE'RE ON IT.
OUT.

JAMESTOWN ROVER, THIS IS
WARWAGON ONE. JOINT MILITARY
RESCUE OPERATION. PLEASE
RESPOND. NATO CHALLENGE:
PHOENIX. OVER.

C.J. AND JIMMY JUMPED DOWN AS THE ESTONIAN
CREW CONTINUED TRYING TO CONTACT THE OTHER
ROVER.



I SAY AGAIN: JAMESTOWN
ROVER, THIS IS WARWAGON ONE.
JOINT MILITARY RESCUE OPERATION.
NATO CHALLENGE: PHOENIX. PLEASE
RESPOND. OVER.



SHE'S
BANGED UP GOOD.
LOOKS LIKE THEY
ROLLED HER AT SPEED.
I THINK WE'RE
GOOD.

YEAH... I DIDN'T EVEN
THINK OF THAT.

ARMED GUYS.
SCARED, POSSIBLY
CONCUSSED AND
HYPOXIC? RECIPE FOR
DISASTER.

NOW YOU
HAVE. MOVE UP. IF
THEY'RE IN THEIR
SUITS, PROX-CHAT
SHOULD KICK IN SOON.
START CALLING
THEM OUT.

ONE, THIS IS
FOUR. ROVER'S DOWN
HARD. MOVING TO ASSESS
THE OCCUPANTS.
OVER.

U.S. MARINES! ANYONE IN
THE ROVER, SOUND OFF!
WE'RE HERE TO HELP. KEEP
YOUR WEAPONS DOWN!

OKAY, BUDDY. WE'RE
HERE TO HELP. WHO
TOOK JULIUS?

OHH!
THANK GOD! PLEASE
HELP BEFORE THEY
COME BACK! THEY
TOOK JULIUS!

THE SPIDERS!
THE GIANT ROCK SPIDERS!
THEY CAME FROM
UNDERGROUND! THEY JUST
DRAGGED HIM OFF! OHH,
GOD!

I SEE.
HOW MANY OF
YOU ARE THERE,
AND IS ANYONE
HURT?

SEVEN! SEVEN OF US!
WE'RE ALL PRETTY BANGED
UP! THEY TOSSED THE ROVER
AROUND LIKE A TOY! THERE
WERE EIGHT, BUT THEY TOOK
HIM!

ONE, THIS IS FIVE. CONTACT
WITH ONE OCCUPANT. POSSIBLE
HYPOXIA OR DRUGS. SAYS SPIDERS
ATTACKED THEM. REPORTS SEVEN
INJURED, ONE MISSING. WE'VE GOT
BULLET HOLES. OVER.

YEAH,
YEAH...

KEEP HIM
TALKING, FIVE.
I'LL CHECK THE
AIRLOCK... FUCK!
WE'VE GOT BULLET
HOLES OVER
HERE!

ARE THEY GONE?
WHAT ABOUT JULIUS!?
DO YOU SEE HIM OUT
THERE!?

COPY, FIVE. GET THEM
OUTTA THERE AND WE CAN
BE DONE EARLY TONIGHT.
YOU'RE BUYING THE DRINKS,
REMEMBER?

WE'RE NOT
CRAZY AND WE'RE NOT
ON DRUGS! THERE REALLY
WERE GIANT SPIDERS!

ALL RIGHT, GUYS.
COME ON OUT. IT'S JUST
A SHORT WALK TO OUR
ROVER.



IT'S STILL RIGHT THERE! OHH, GOD!

YEAH, MAN! I BELIEVE YOU. I THINK THEY'RE GONE. WE'LL LOOK FOR JULIUS, OKAY? RIGHT NOW, WE GOTTA GET YOU GUYS OUT. UNDERSTAND?

HOLY MOTHER OF FUCK! FOUR, FIVE, FALL BACK! WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT!?

HUH?

C.J. TURNED TO FACE A MASSIVE CREATURE: PART CRAB, PART SPIDER, PART TURTLE. ITS PIERCING EYES FIXED ON HIM AS IT STALKED CLOSER, SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY.



OH... HI THERE... GOOD DOGGIE. I PROMISE I WON'T TASTE VERY GOOD.

JIMMY... PLEASE TELL ME YOU'VE SEEN PLENTY OF THESE THINGS AND THEY'RE FRIENDLY?



SORRY... CAN'T TELL YOU THAT. GOD HELP US...

ONE, THIS IS FIVE. WE MIGHT NEED MORE RIFLES OUT HERE, LIKE NOW... I'M PRETTY SURE THIS THING'S ABOUT TO FUCK OUR DAY UP. OVER.

THE CREATURE REARED UP ON ITS HIND LEGS IN A THREAT DISPLAY, REVEALING A MASSIVE, MOUTHLIKE OPENING ON ITS UNDERSIDE, LINED WITH LARGE, JAGGED TEETH.



FRAG OUT!

JIMMY DROVE UNDER THE DISABLED ROVER AS C.J. TOSSED A FRAGMENTATION GRENADE INTO THE CREATURE'S MOUTH.

THE GRENADE STRUCK THE BACK OF THE CREATURE'S THROAT AND BOUNCED OUT. IT ROLLED BENEATH A LARGE PILE OF ROCKS BEFORE DETONATING, DOING NO APPARENT DAMAGE.



AGHHH!

THE BLAST STARTLED THE CREATURE. IT SLAMMED DOWN ONTO ALL EIGHT LEGS, THEN SWEEPED A FORELEG ACROSS C.J. WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED. THE BLOW SENT HIM FLYING DOZENS OF FEET THROUGH THE AIR BEFORE HE CRASHED INTO THE NEARBY ROCKY EMBANKMENT.



UHUUUU...

FROM BENEATH THE STRICKEN ROVER, JIMMY TOOK AIM AND POURED 7.62 MM ROUNDS INTO THE CREATURE'S HEAD.

FUCK! MAN DOWN!

BANG!
BANG! BANG!
BANG! BANG!
BANG!

MOST ROUNDS GLANCED OFF ITS THICK, ROCKLIKE HIDE. A FEW SEEMED TO PENETRATE, BUT DID LITTLE BEYOND ANGERING THE CREATURE.

ONE, WHAT THE FUCK! WHERE ARE YOU GUYS!?

BANG!
BANG! BANG!
BANG!

WE'RE ON IT!

TAKE IT DOWN!

GET SOME!!!

BANG!
BANG!

BANG!
BANG!

BANG! BANG!
THOMP THOMP THOMP THOMP
BANG! BANG!

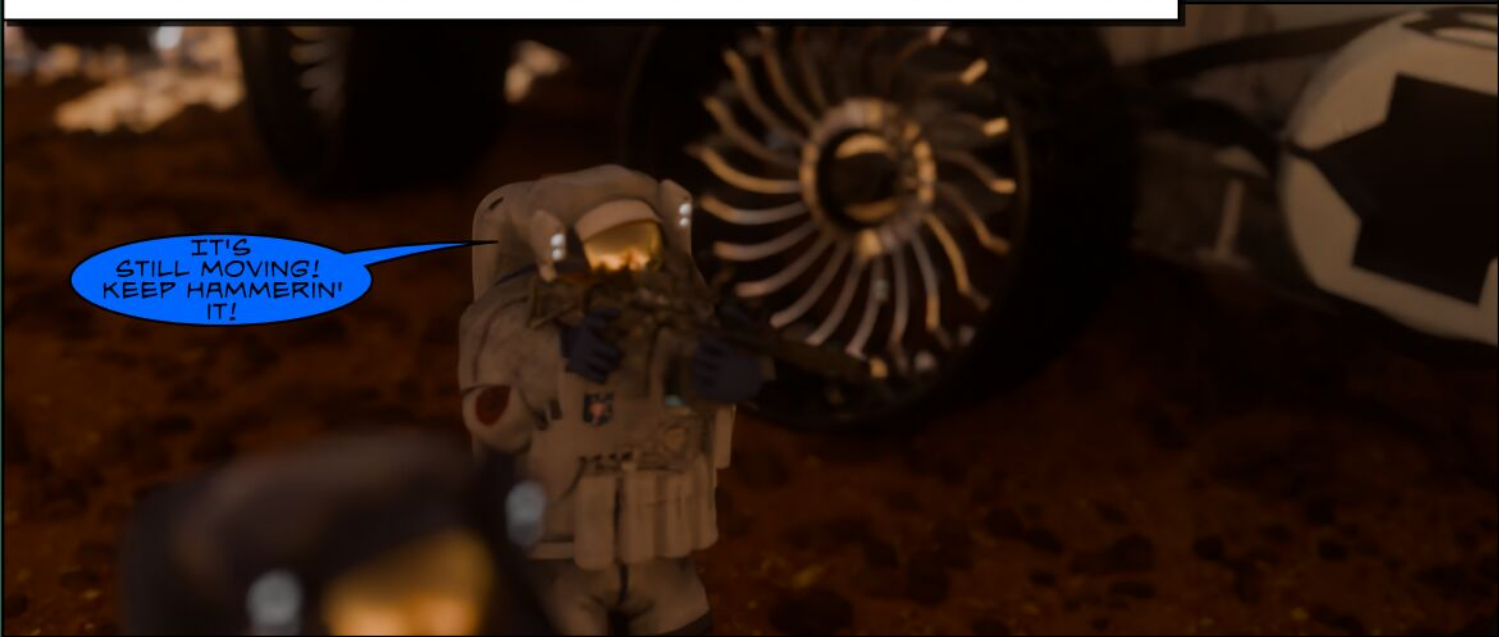
THE ENTIRE TEAM POURED FIRE INTO THE CREATURE. A FEW MORE SHOTS CAME FROM INSIDE THE ROVER.

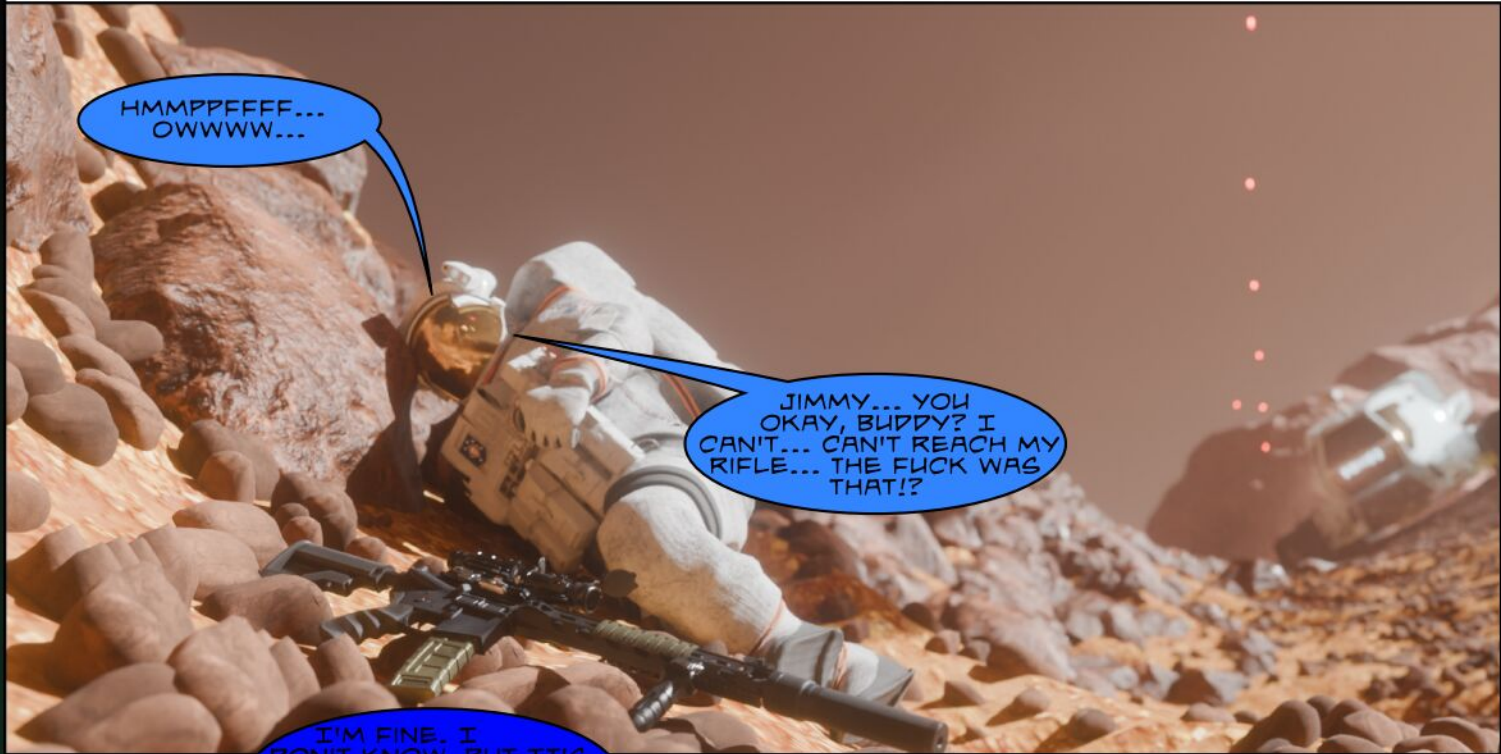
THE CREATURE REARED UP AGAIN, PERHAPS TO INTIMIDATE THEM OR MAKE A FINAL ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE. IT SUCCUMBED TO ITS WOUNDS AND COLLAPSED ONTO ITS BELLY JUST FEET FROM C.J.



DESPITE COLLAPSING, THE CREATURE CONTINUED TO TWITCH AND MOVE.

IT'S
STILL MOVING!
KEEP HAMMERIN'
IT!





HMMPPFFFF...
OWWWW...

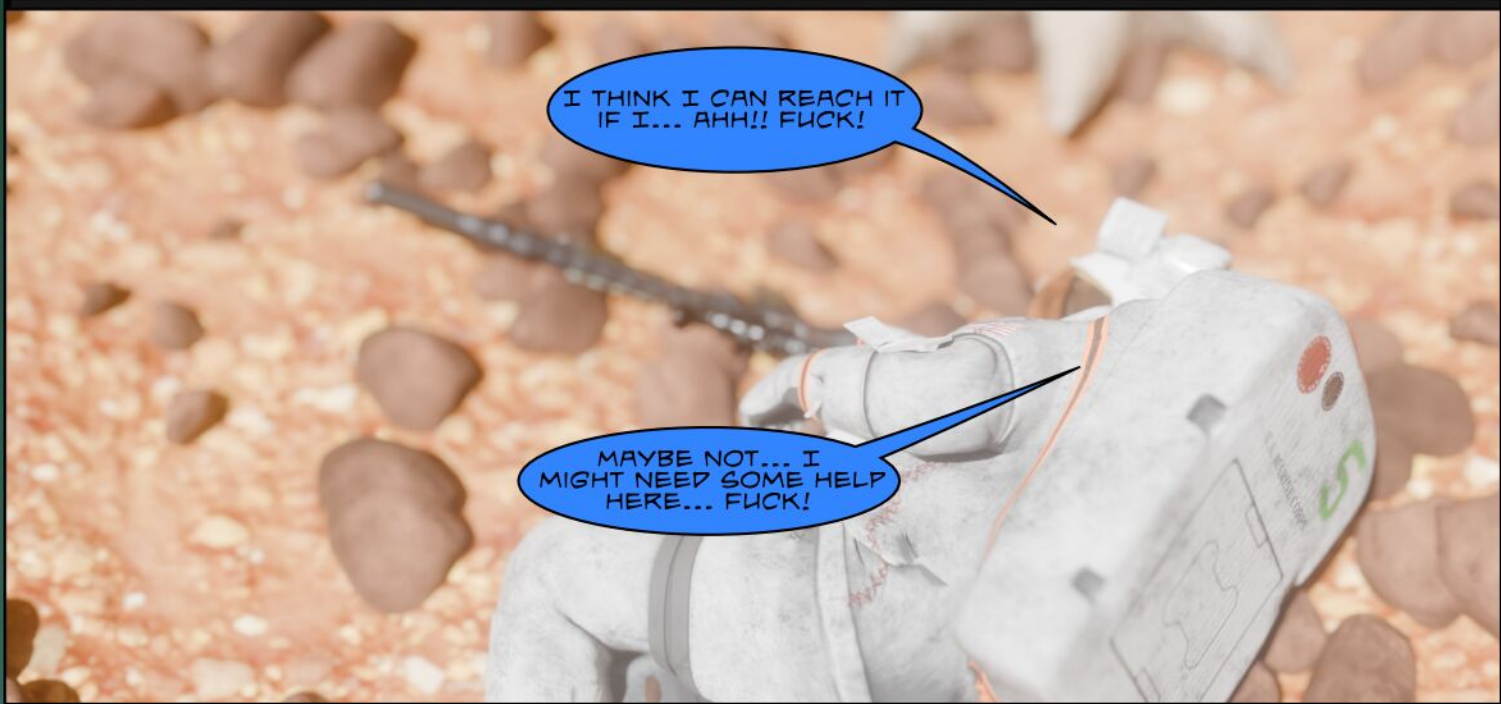
JIMMY... YOU
OKAY, BUDDY? I
CAN'T... CAN'T REACH MY
RIFLE... THE FUCK WAS
THAT!?

I'M FINE. I
DON'T KNOW, BUT IT'S
DOWN. I THINK WE'RE
GOOD, JUST DON'T
MOVE!



I THINK I CAN REACH IT
IF I... AHH!! FUCK!

MAYBE NOT... I
MIGHT NEED SOME HELP
HERE... FUCK!





WE'RE COMING TO
GET YOU! STAY STILL.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT
YOUR RIFLE!

ONE, THIS IS
FOUR! CEASE FIRE!
IT'S DOWN! FIVE IS HURT.
I'M MOVING TO HIM
NOW.

GO
GET HIM, FOUR!
WE'RE ON OUR
WAY!

TWO, GO
WITH THESE GUYS
AND SECURE THE ROVER.
THREE, WITH ME! WE'RE
GOING FOR FIVE!

LET'S GO!

LET'S GET HIM,
BOSS!

LET'S DO IT!
SETH, TURN THE
ROVER AROUND!
BACK IT IN!

HEY, MAN! DON'T MOVE,
ALL RIGHT? I'VE GOT YOU.

AHHH! FUCK.. THAT
REALLY HURT..

AGHH! EVERYTHING!
WHAT HAPPENED?

UMM... IS
THIS MARS?
WHERE'S MY
RIFLE?

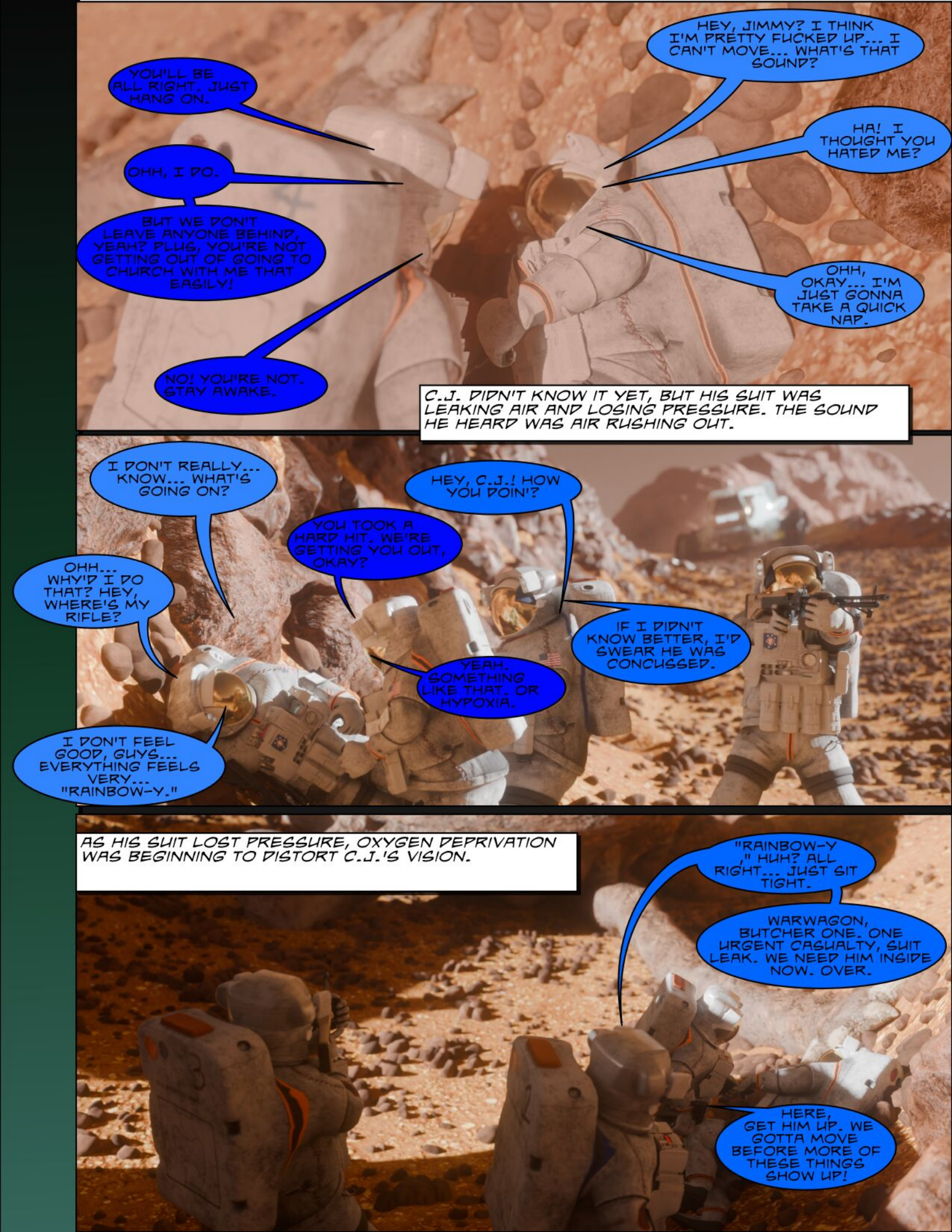
DID WE WIN?

YEAH, NO SHIT! YOU
GOT THROWN 40 FEET
INTO A PILE OF ROCKS.
WHAT HURTS?

HEY, C.J. DO YOU
KNOW WHERE YOU ARE
RIGHT NOW?

DON'T WORRY
ABOUT YOUR RIFLE.
FIGHT'S OVER, ALL
RIGHT?

YEAH, WE DID.

A comic book panel showing three astronauts on a rocky, orange-brown Mars surface. One astronaut is lying on the ground, while two others stand over him. The scene is set in a rocky, hilly landscape under a hazy sky.

YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT. JUST HANG ON.

OH, I DO.

BUT WE DON'T LEAVE ANYONE BEHIND, YEAH? PLUS, YOU'RE NOT GETTING OUT OF GOING TO CHURCH WITH ME THAT EASILY!

NO! YOU'RE NOT. STAY AWAKE.

HEY, JIMMY? I THINK I'M PRETTY FUCKED UP... I CAN'T MOVE... WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

HA! I THOUGHT YOU HATED ME?

OH, OKAY... I'M JUST GONNA TAKE A QUICK NAP.

C.J. DIDN'T KNOW IT YET, BUT HIS SUIT WAS LEAKING AIR AND LOSING PRESSURE. THE SOUND HE HEARD WAS AIR RUSHING OUT.

I DON'T REALLY... KNOW... WHAT'S GOING ON?

HEY, C.J.! HOW YOU DOIN'?

YOU TOOK A HARD HIT. WE'RE GETTING YOU OUT, OKAY?

OH... WHY'D I DO THAT? HEY, WHERE'S MY RIFLE?

I DON'T FEEL GOOD, GUYS... EVERYTHING FEELS VERY... "RAINBOW-Y."

YEAH. SOMETHING LIKE THAT. OR HYPOXIA.

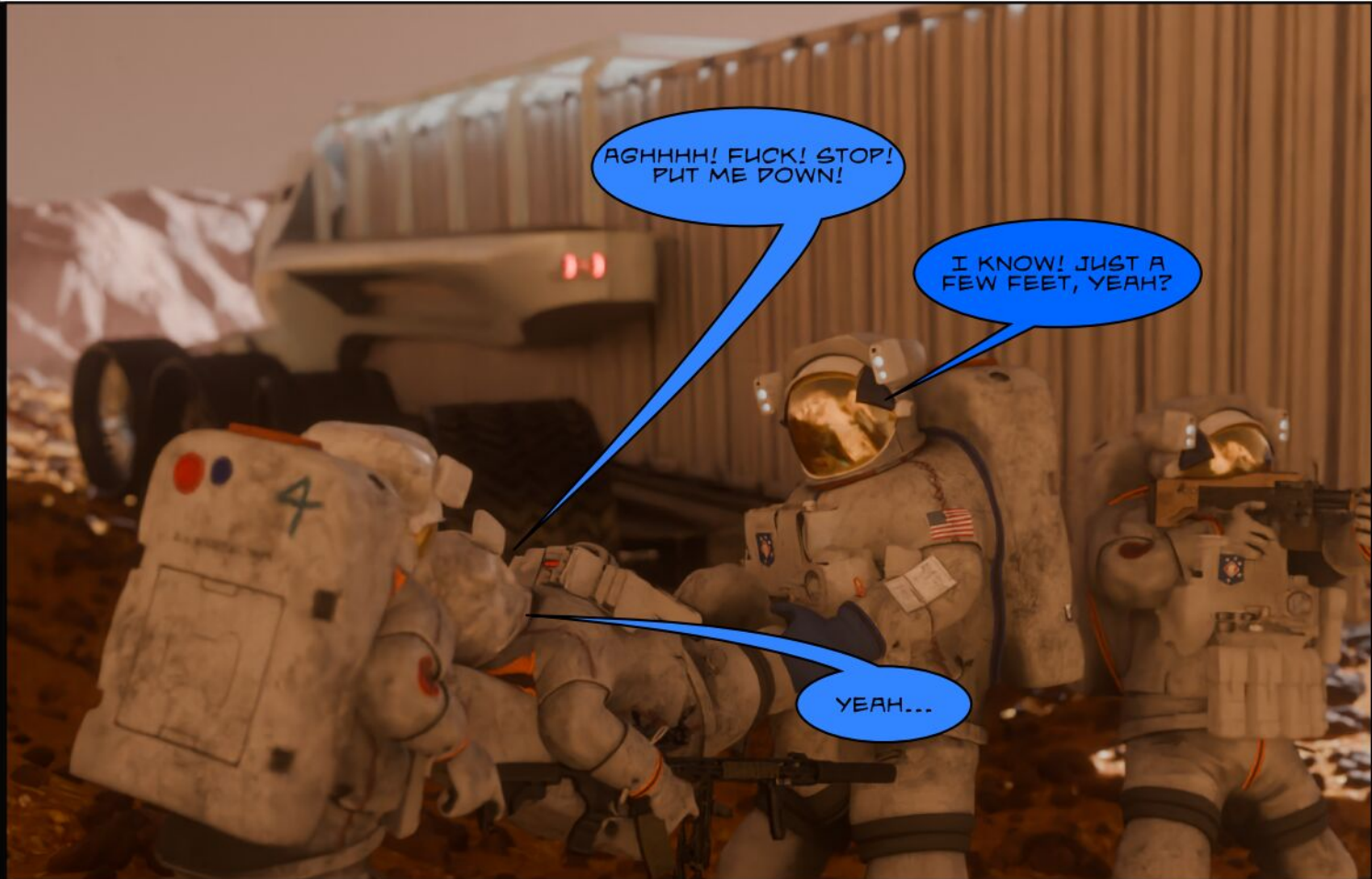
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SWEAR HE WAS CONCUSSED.

AS HIS SUIT LOST PRESSURE, OXYGEN DEPRIVATION WAS BEGINNING TO DISTORT C.J.'S VISION.

"RAINBOW-Y," HUH? ALL RIGHT... JUST SIT TIGHT.

WARWAGON, BUTCHER ONE. ONE URGENT CASUALTY, SUIT LEAK. WE NEED HIM INSIDE NOW. OVER.

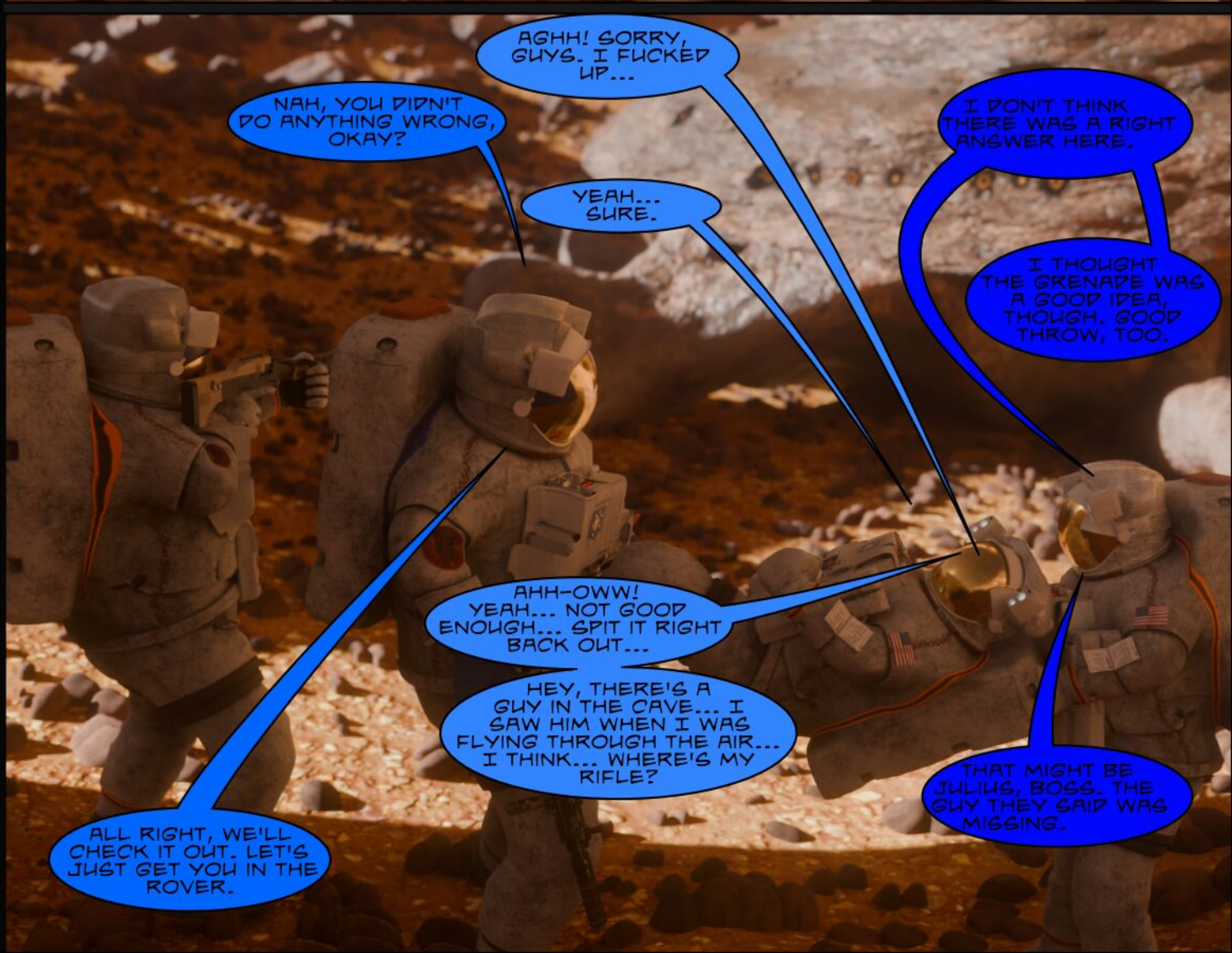
HERE, GET HIM UP. WE GOTTA MOVE BEFORE MORE OF THESE THINGS SHOW UP!



AGHHHH! FUCK! STOP!
PUT ME DOWN!

I KNOW! JUST A
FEW FEET, YEAH?

YEAH...



AGHH! SORRY,
GUYS. I FUCKED
UP...

NAH, YOU DIDN'T
DO ANYTHING WRONG,
OKAY?

YEAH...
SURE.

I DON'T THINK
THERE WAS A RIGHT
ANSWER HERE.

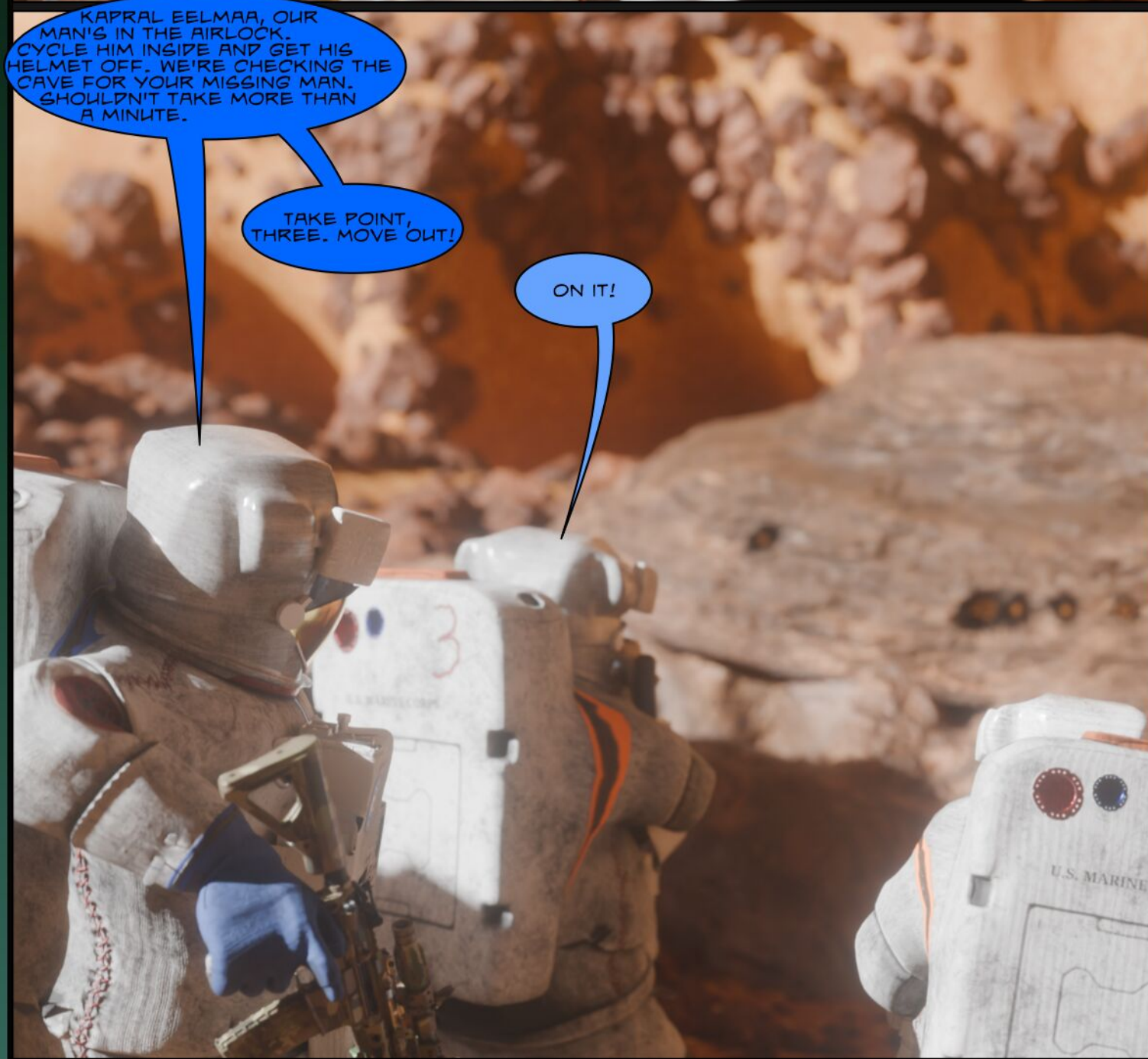
I THOUGHT
THE GRENADE WAS
A GOOD IDEA,
THOUGH. GOOD
THROW, TOO.

AHH-OWW!
YEAH... NOT GOOD
ENOUGH... SPIT IT RIGHT
BACK OUT...

HEY, THERE'S A
GUY IN THE CAVE... I
SAW HIM WHEN I WAS
FLYING THROUGH THE AIR...
I THINK... WHERE'S MY
RIFLE?

ALL RIGHT, WE'LL
CHECK IT OUT. LET'S
JUST GET YOU IN THE
ROVER.

THAT MIGHT BE
JULIUS, BOSS. THE
GUY THEY SAID WAS
MISSING.



LOOKS CLEAR.

JULIUS, WE'RE
U.S. MARINES. CAN
YOU HEAR ME? MOVE
OR SAY
SOMETHING.

YUP.

GOTCHA', GO!

THREE, YOU
AND I WILL GRAB
HIM. FOUR, COVER
US.

NAH, HE'S IN
RIGOR. NOTHING WE
CAN DO.

FUCKING SHIT WAY
TO GO, MAN.

YEAH, FUCKIN'
SUCKS.

LET'S GET HIM
UP AND GET THE
FUCK OUTTA HERE!
CAREFUL...

POOR
GUY'S STIFF AS A
BOARD. SUCKS FOR
HIM. MAKES OUR JOB
EASY, THOUGH.

HOLY FUCK!

I DIDN'T SIGN UP
FOR THIS
BULLSHIT, BRO!

NO SHIT! RUN!

BANG!
BANG!
BANG!
BANG!

GUYS!
FUCKING RUN!

GET UP! WE
GOTTA MOVE!

JIMMY,
THERMITE! GLASS
THAT FUCKING
HOLE!

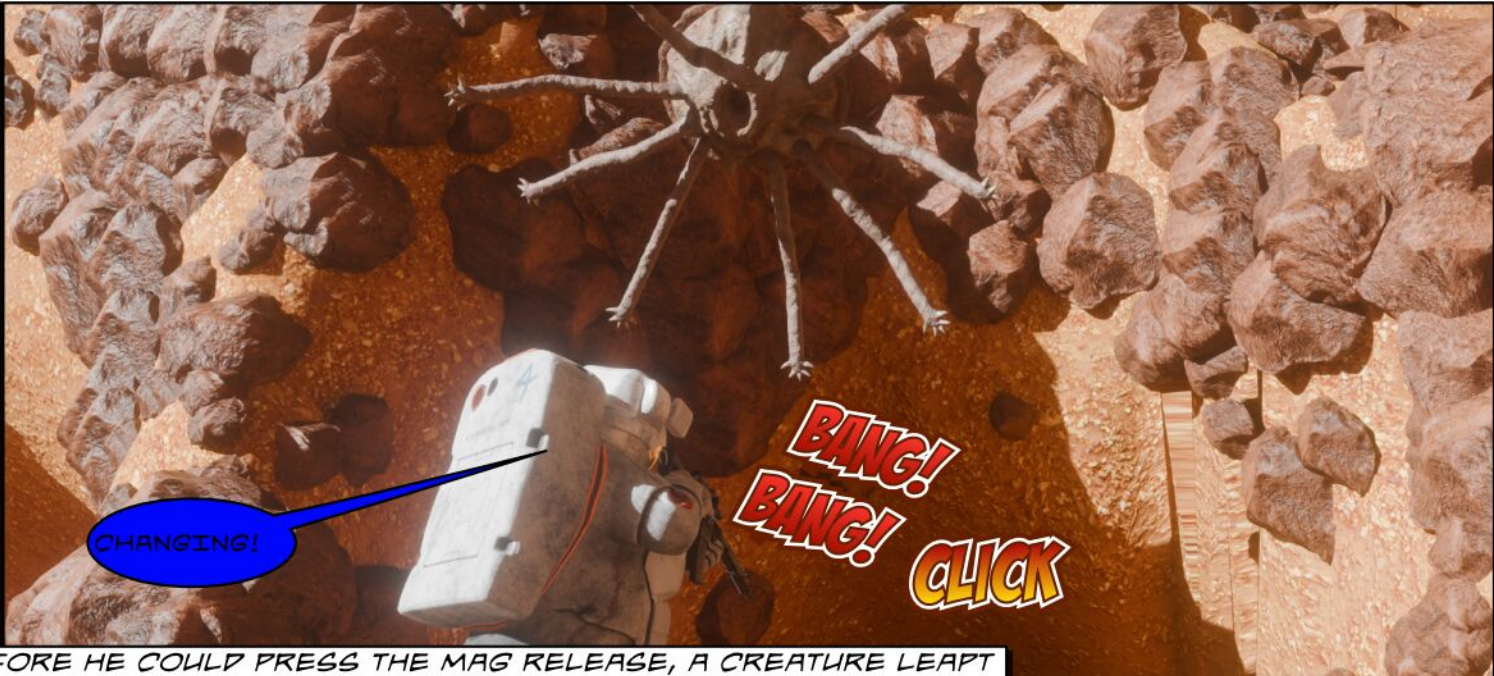
ON IT!

AH! FUCK!

BANG! BANG!
BANG! BANG!

JIMMY WRESTLED WITH A THERMITE GRENADE IN HIS SUIT POUCH. HIS BULKY GLOVES MADE IT HARD TO GET A GRIP. WITH DOZENS OF CREATURES POURING OUT OF THE CAVE, HE GAVE UP AND WENT BACK TO FIRING HIS RIFLE.

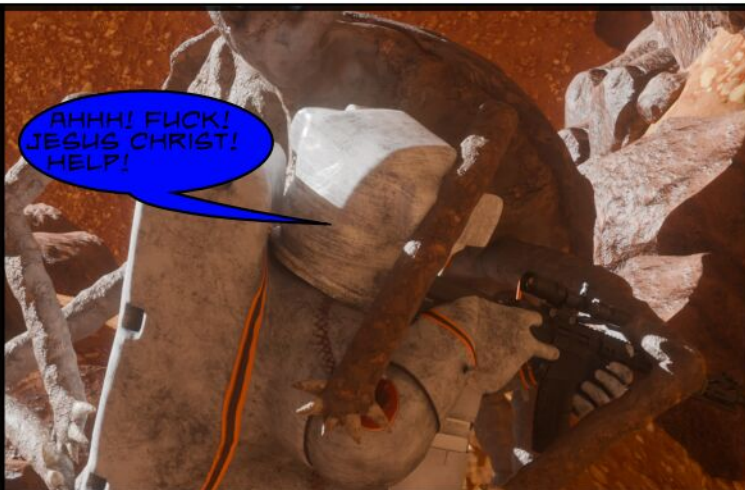
FUCK!
COME ON!



CHANGING!

BANG!
BANG! **CLICK**

BEFORE HE COULD PRESS THE MAG RELEASE, A CREATURE LEAPT DOWN FROM ABOVE THE CAVE MOUTH AND WRAPPED ITS LEGS AROUND HIM. IT TRIED TO DRAG HIM DOWN, CLAWING AT HIS SUIT.

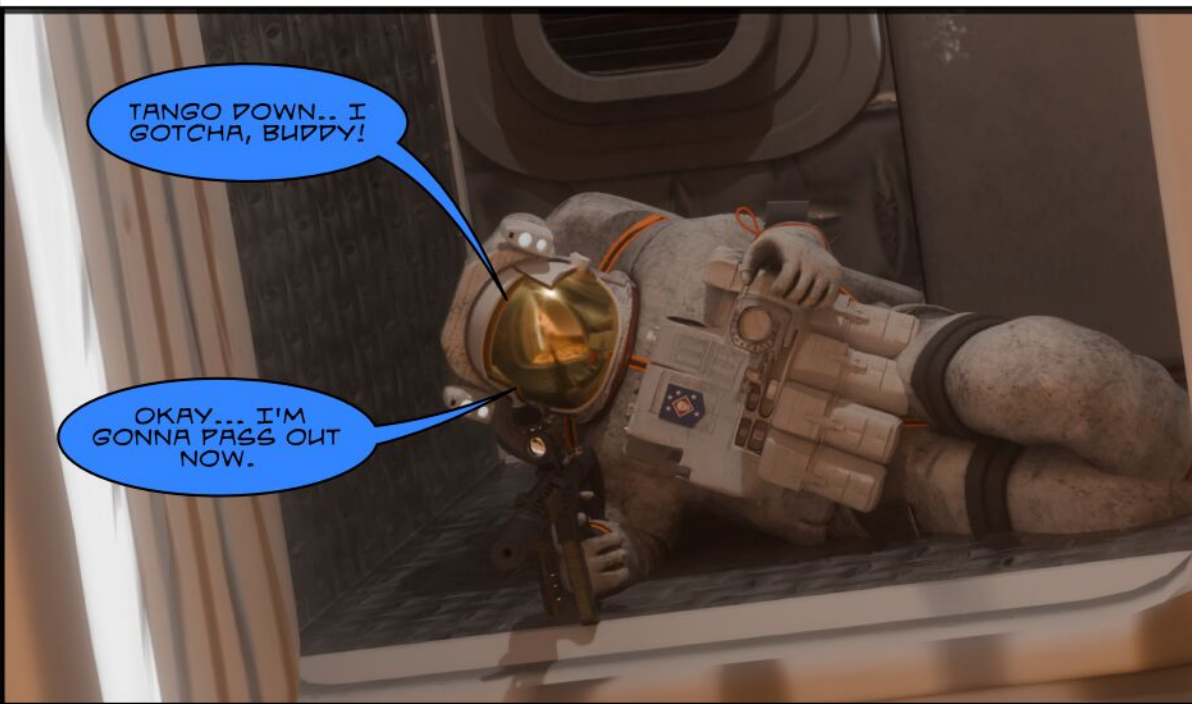


AAAAH! FUCK!
JESUS CHRIST!
HELP!



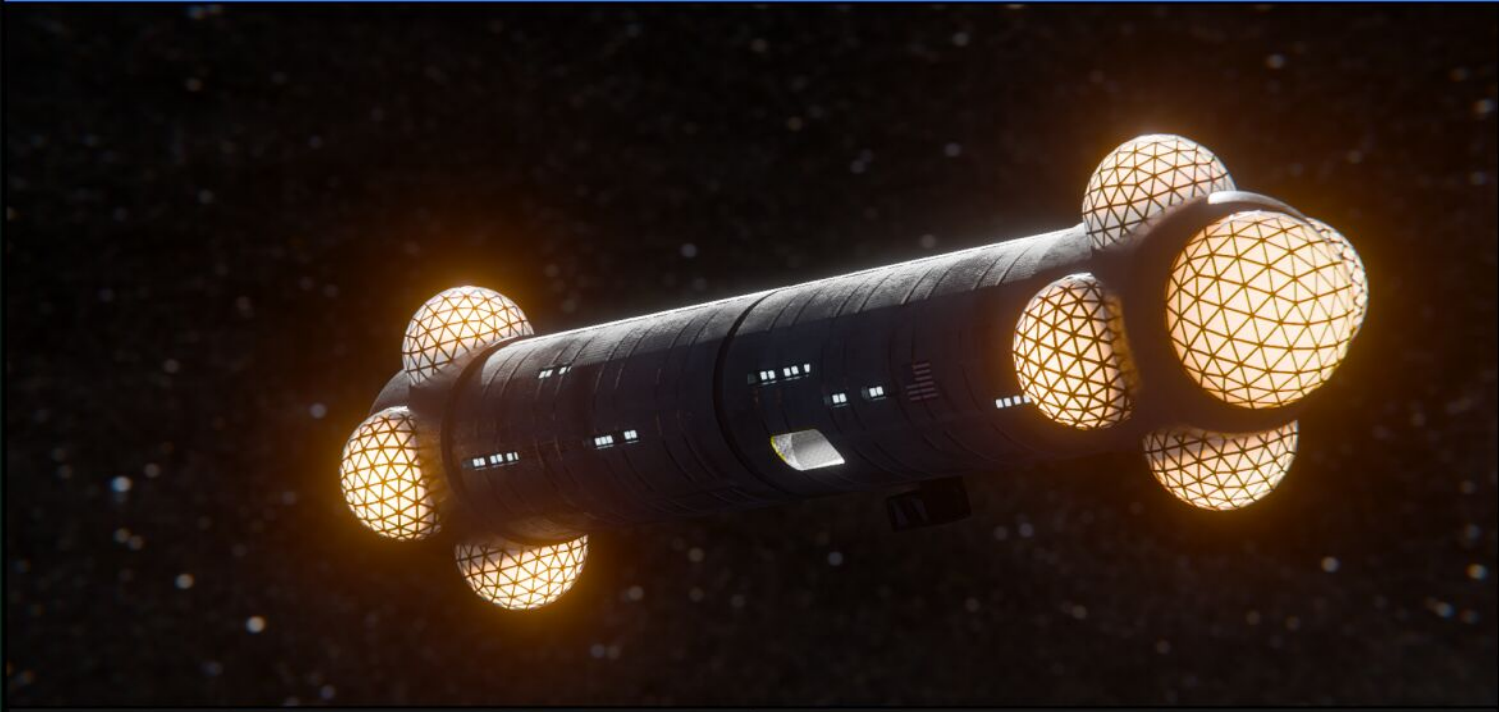
THWACK!

A BULLET STRUCK THE CREATURE IN THE HEAD, DROPPING IT AT JIMMY'S FEET. HE TURNED TOWARD PAUL AND BILL, EXPECTING ONE OF THEM TO HAVE FIRED. BUT THEY WERE CARRYING JULIUS'S BODY AND ONLY NOW TURNING TO HELP.



TANGO DOWN.. I
GOTCHA, BUDDY!

OKAY... I'M
GONNA PASS OUT
NOW.





READING THE BIBLE AND PRAYING FOR ME?

OHH... WELL, THANKS, I GUESS. DID IT HELP?

THAT'S GOOD. HOW LONG WAS I OUT?

AHH, NOT THAT BAD THEN. I'VE HAD WORSE.

IT WAS WEIRD. EVERYTHING SHIMMERED. I COULDN'T THINK STRAIGHT... I FEEL FINE NOW, THOUGH.

AHH, THAT MAKES SENSE... YO, I THINK WE GOT OFF TO A BAD START. LET'S TRY AGAIN.

HI, I'M C.J.!

FINE. WE'RE GOOD, THOUGH, RIGHT?

HEY, WELCOME BACK.

SOMETHING LIKE THAT, YEAH.

I THINK SO.

NOT THAT LONG. A FEW HOURS.

YOU'VE GOT A FEW BROKEN BONES, A DISLOCATED ELBOW AND A LOT OF BRUISING, BUT THE DOC SAYS YOU'LL BE FINE. APPARENTLY, YOU HEAL VERY FAST.

YOUR SUIT WAS LEAKING. YOU'D LOST ALMOST ALL YOUR AIR BY THE TIME WE GOT YOU INTO THE ROVER.

THAT MIGHT BE FURTHER BACK THAN WE NEED TO GO.

