

# ATHENAIX™ #1

RYAN CADY • PHILLIP SEVY • JEREMY COLWELL



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# ATHENA IX™

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The Aphrodite Protocol was initiated in the late 20th Century in an attempt to save humanity from a predicted extinction level event that became reality in the year 2102 AD.

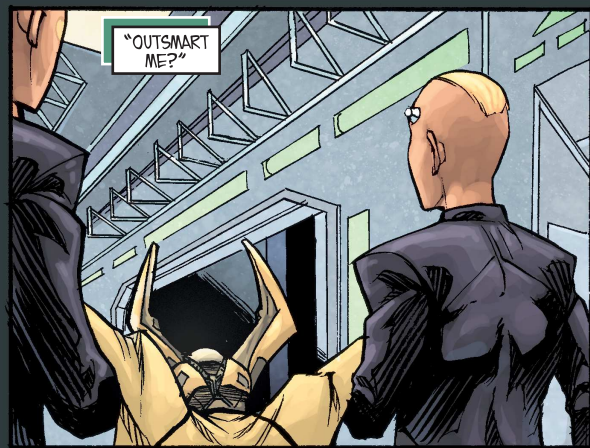
The Protocol successfully engineered and evolved humans into new species that survived in this new world via technological singularity and genetic enhancement.

The architect of the Protocol created nine heirs to rule over this new world. They were placed in hibernation for seven hundred years to be activated in what became known as the ASCENSION; the year 2802, when the self-proclaimed Gods of the IXth Generation took control.

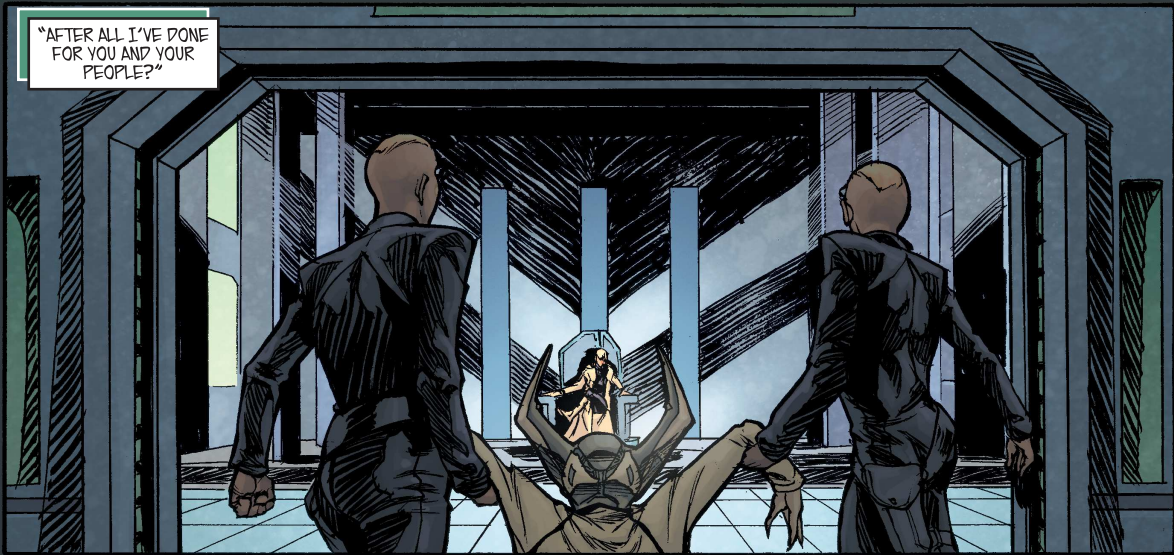


"COUNCIL-WOMAN  
ARIANA."

"YOU THOUGHT  
YOU COULD TEACH  
ME A LESSON?"



"OUTSMART  
ME?"



"AFTER ALL I'VE DONE  
FOR YOU AND YOUR  
PEOPLE?"



WELL?  
SPEAK UP.

I'M ALL  
EARS.

A LONG TIME AGO, A *GENIUS* NAMED FRANCESCA TAYLOR CREATED A PLAN TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE -- WITH BETTER GODS.

THE APHRODITE PROTOCOL.

WHEN THIS NEW PANTHEON DIVIDED UP THE WORLD, ALL OF MY SIBLINGS RUSHED FOR THE TROPICS, THE HIGHLANDS, THE PLAINS.

ONLY APHRODITE AND I CHOSE LESS HOSPITABLE REGIONS.

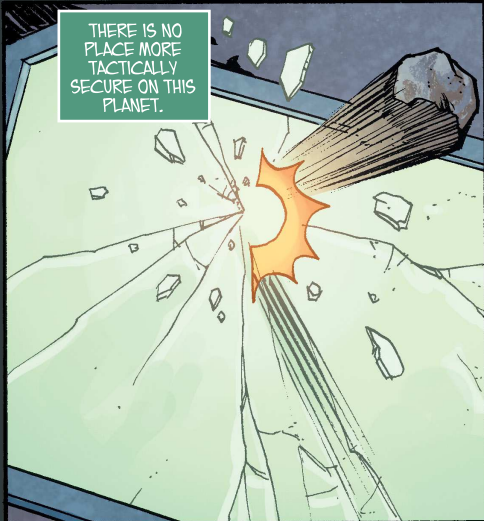
I HAD TO CARVE MY NEW ATHENS FROM ROCK AND ICE AND FROZEN EARTH.

WHEN WE FIRST LIBERATED SPEROS CITY AND ANNIHILATED THE GEN, MY SIBLINGS WANTED TO HAVE YOU COUNCILMEMBERS EXECUTED ON THE SPOT. PUBLICLY.

MY LADY ATHENA-- I...

ONLY I WAS GENEROUS ENOUGH TO SPARE YOU. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT PROVE OF SOME USE. I SUPPOSE THAT WAS A MISCALCULATION.

EDITOR'S NOTE:  
SEE APHRODITE IX: REBIRTH VOL. 2!



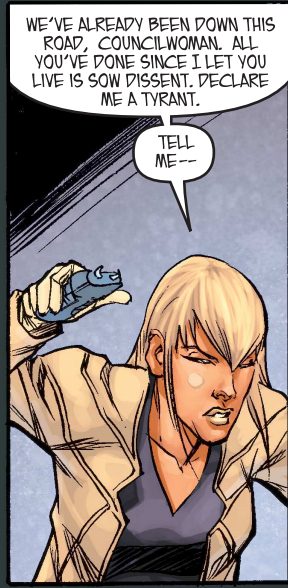
THERE IS NO PLACE MORE TACTICALLY SECURE ON THIS PLANET.



THERE IS NO PLACE MORE SAFE.



WAIT! I KNOW THINGS! I KNOW ABOUT THE GEN! I KNOW WHERE WE HID EXECUTOR CHRONOS!




WE'VE ALREADY BEEN DOWN THIS ROAD, COUNCIL-WOMAN. ALL YOU'VE DONE SINCE I LET YOU LIVE IS SOW DISSENT. DECLARE ME A TYRANT.

TELL ME--




DOES MY RULE SEEM SO HARSH?



"YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR IF YOU OBEY."




"MINE IS A RULE OF LAW -- SUPERIOR TO YOUR OLD SPEROS IN EVERY WAY."



"FROM BIRTH YOU ARE TESTED, GIVEN A ROLE AND A PURPOSE."



"ATHENS IS A PLACE OF SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS -- YOUR ONLY TASK IS TO FOLLOW THEM. THIS IS A WELL-OILED MACHINE."



"THIS IS JUST."

"I EVEN HAD MY XVS OUTFITTED WITH EMOTIONAL DAMPENERS, SO THEY WOULD TREAT YOU ALL FAIRLY, UNBIASED."



TELL ME--HOW COULD YOU IMPROVE UPON MY DESIGN? I HAVE STUDIED EVERY CIVILIZATION IN RECORDED HISTORY. I DO NOT BRAG WHEN I CLAIM THAT MINE IS THE MOST EFFICIENT.

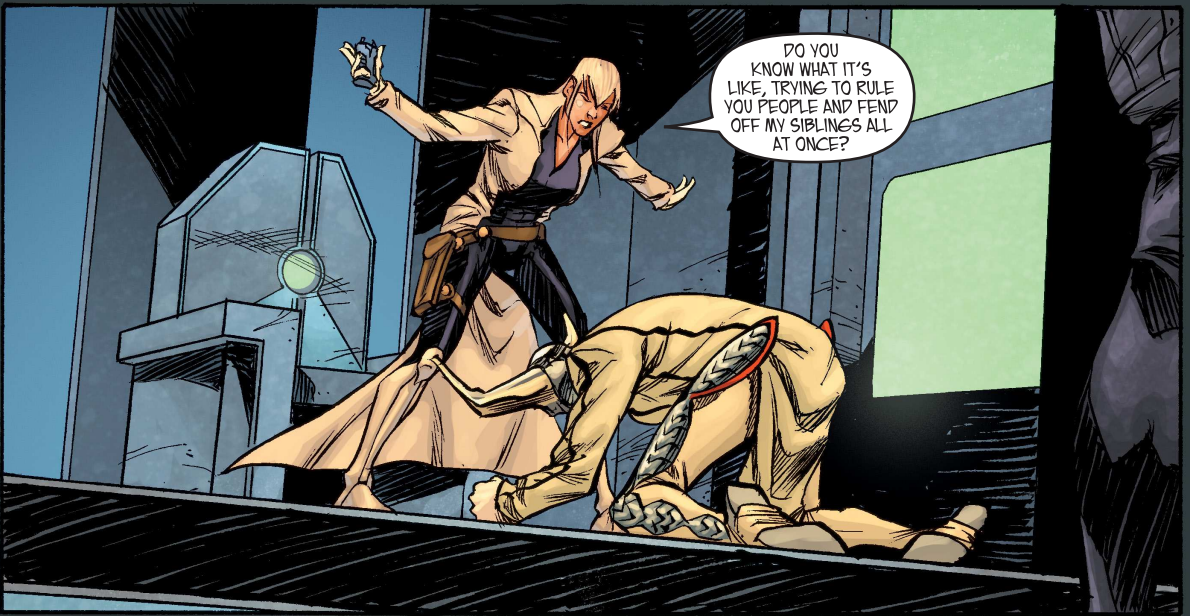
KZZT

WHAT ABOUT FREEDOM?



FREEDOM?

PEFFT



DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE, TRYING TO RULE YOU PEOPLE AND FEND OFF MY SIBLINGS ALL AT ONCE?



IT'S LIKE PLAYING CHESS, BUT INSTEAD OF GAMEPIECES I'M FORCED TO USE COCKROACHES.



WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?



THAT'S A MUCH BETTER ATTITUDE. BEG FOR A LESSON.



ACCORDING TO ANCIENT MYTHOLOGY, ATHENA IS THE GODDESS OF WISDOM, AND INSTRUCTION.

TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU THINK A JUST AND WISE RULER WOULD DO IF SHE FOUND ONE OF HER SUBJECTS--

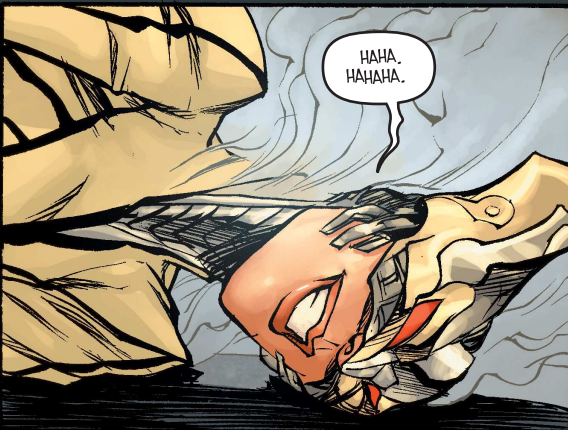
-- SLINKING AROUND IN THE DARK --

-- UNDERMINING HER AUTHORITY --

-- SPREADING DISSENT --

-- UPSETTING THE SAFETY OF THE REALM --

**AIIIIIEEEEE!**

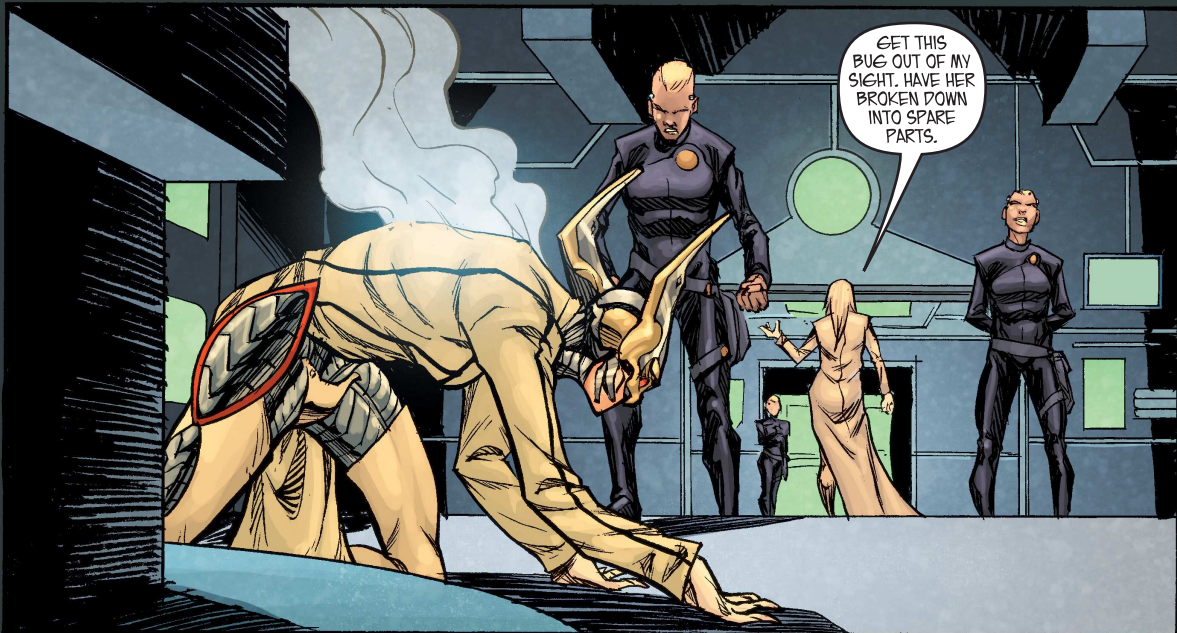


HAHA. HAHAHA.

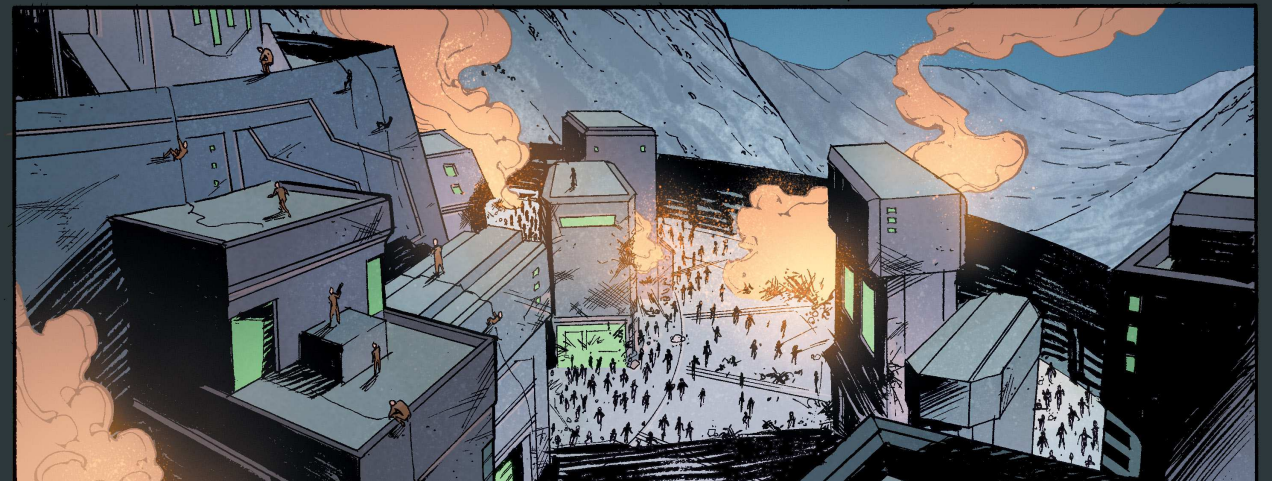
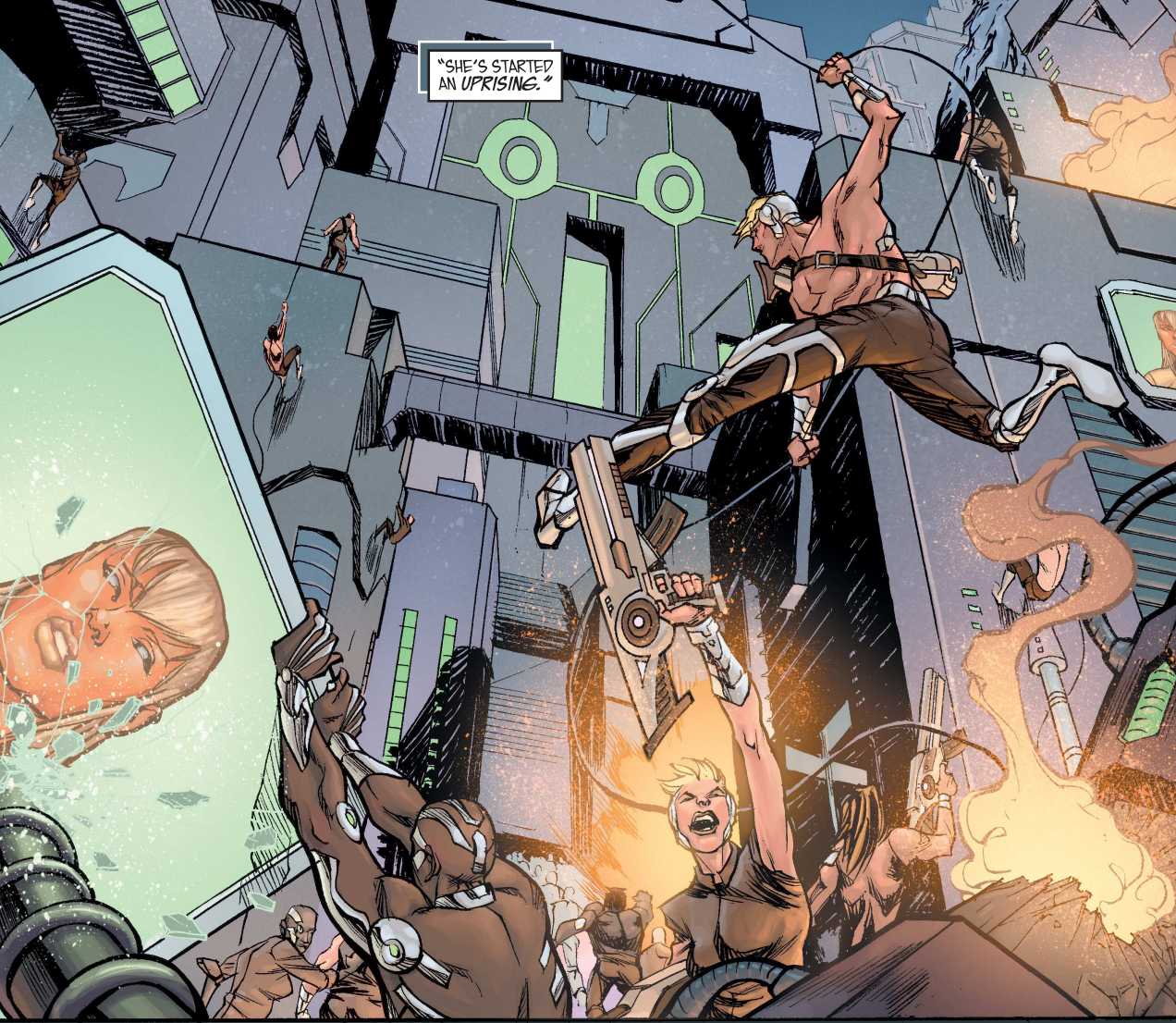


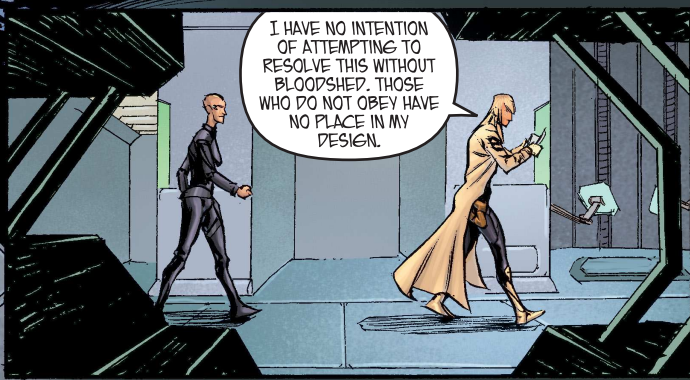
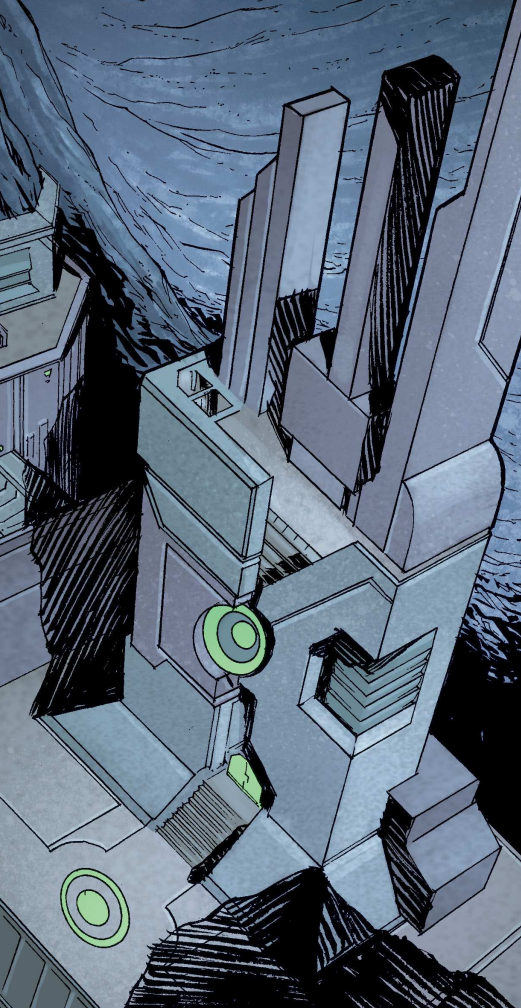
OH.

**BREEETBREEETBREEEEETBREEEET**



"SHE'S STARTED  
AN UPRISING."





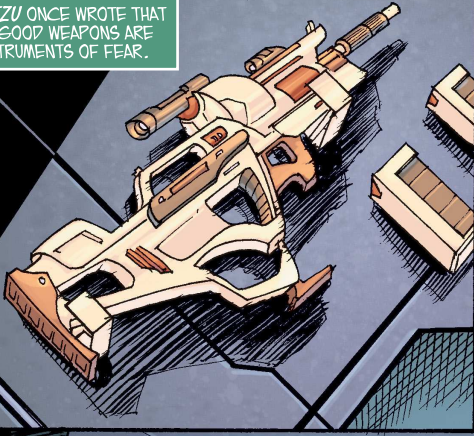


"WE HAVE THE SUPERIOR FIREPOWER."

"WE HAVE THE TACTICAL ADVANTAGE."



LAO TZU ONCE WROTE THAT  
ALL GOOD WEAPONS ARE  
INSTRUMENTS OF FEAR.



THAT ALL CREATURES ABHOR  
THEM, AND WISE MEN WOULD  
NEVER USE THEM.



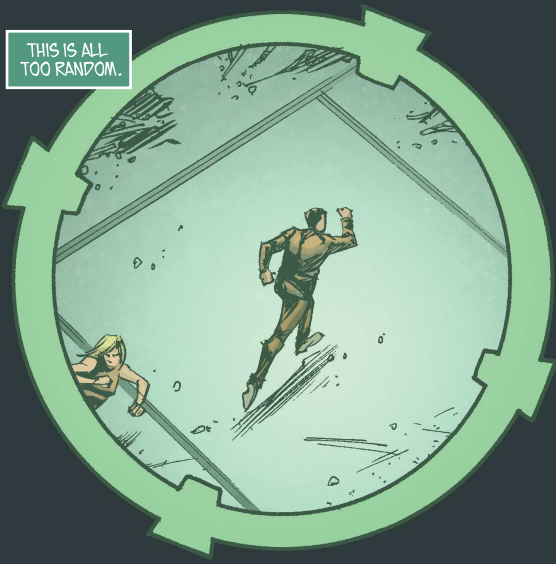
LAO TZU WAS  
WEAK.



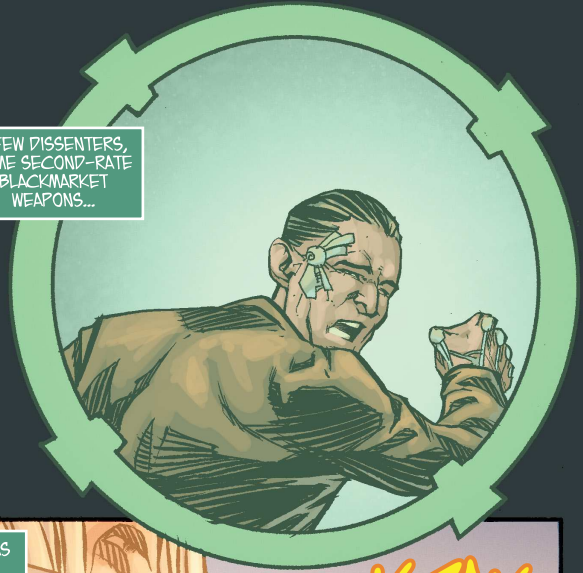
WAIT A MINUTE.  
SOMETHING IS  
WRONG HERE.



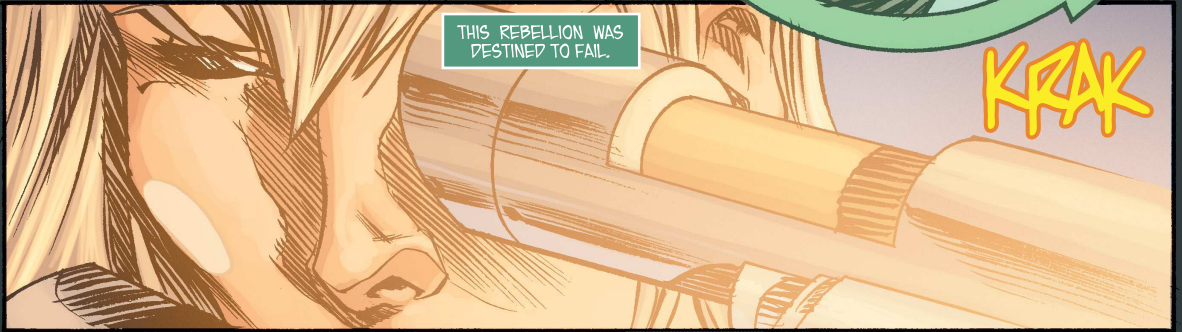
THIS IS ALL  
TOO RANDOM.



A FEW DISSIDENTERS,  
SOME SECOND-RATE  
BLACKMARKET  
WEAPONS...



THIS REBELLION WAS  
DESTINED TO FAIL.

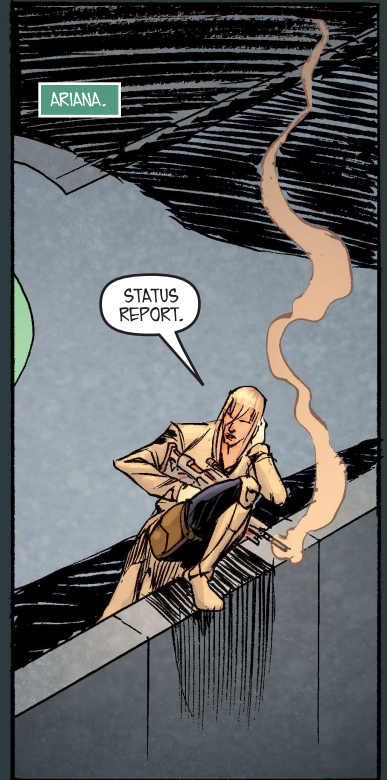


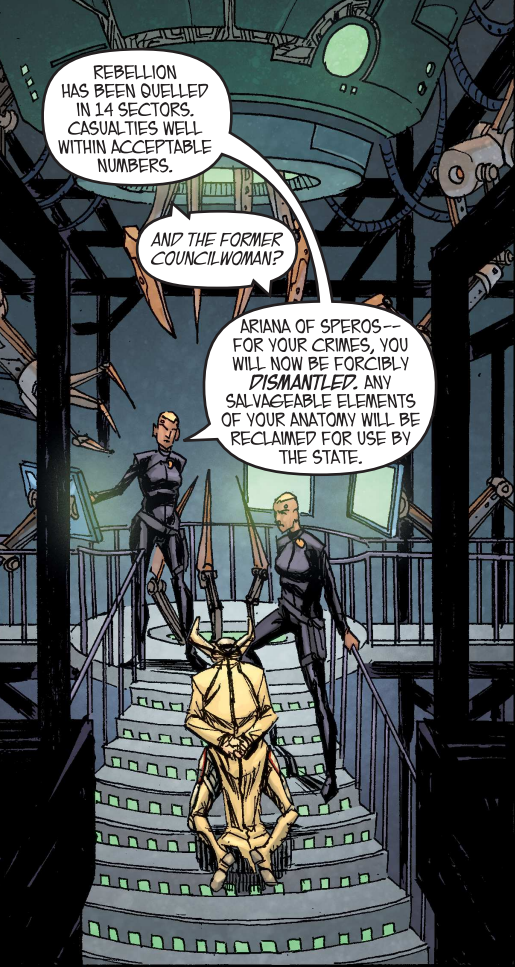
WHICH MEANS THAT  
SOMEONE MEANT IT  
TO FAIL.



ARIANA.

STATUS  
REPORT.





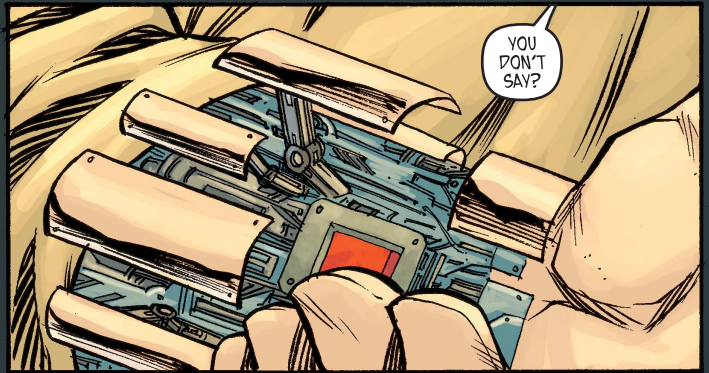
REBELLION HAS BEEN QUELLED IN 14 SECTORS. CASUALTIES WELL WITHIN ACCEPTABLE NUMBERS.

AND THE FORMER COUNCILWOMAN?

ARIANA OF SPEROS-- FOR YOUR CRIMES, YOU WILL NOW BE FORCIBLY DISMANTLED. ANY SALVAGEABLE ELEMENTS OF YOUR ANATOMY WILL BE RECLAIMED FOR USE BY THE STATE.



DATA INFERENCE SUGGESTS THAT THIS EXPERIENCE IS EXTRAORDINARILY PAINFUL.



YOU DON'T SAY?

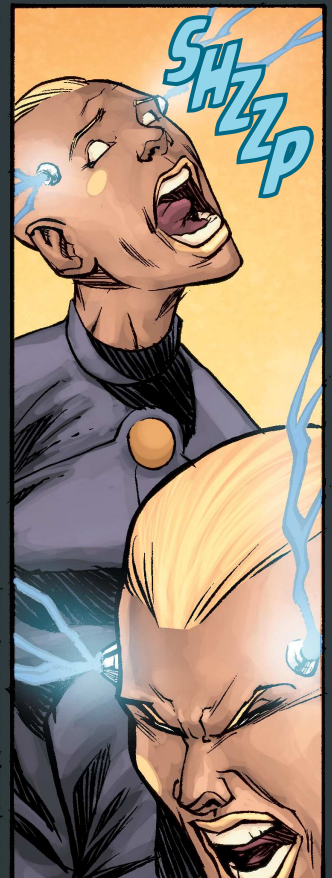


ENOUGH. CEASE ANY RESISTANCE IMMEDIATELY.

BLIP



SHZZP



SHZZP



THAT'S NOT RIGHT.

**AAAAAAAAA!**

THEY SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SCREAM LIKE THAT.

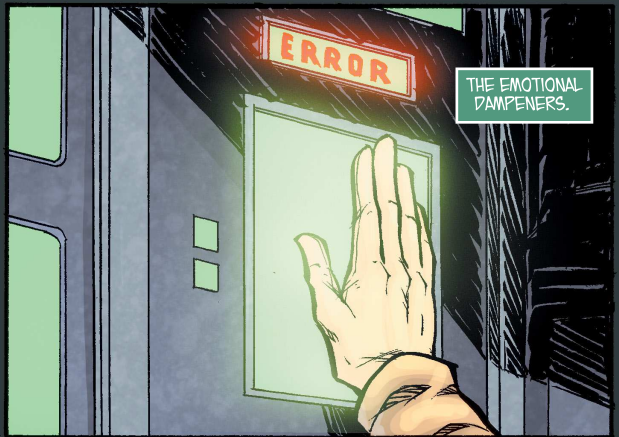
STATUS REPORT!  
STATUS REPORT!  
STATUS REPORT!

THERE IS NO GREATER DANGER THAN UNDERESTIMATING YOUR OPPONENT.

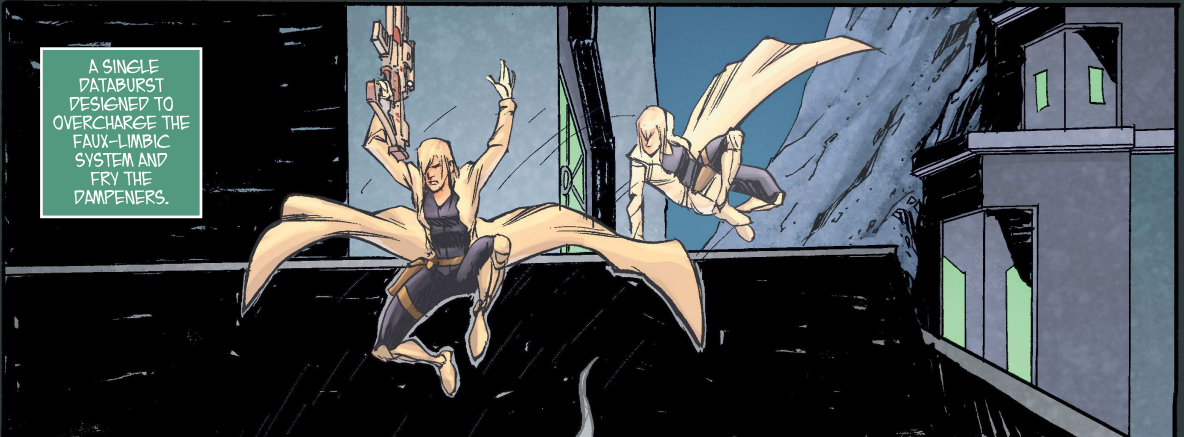
LAO TZU AGAIN. DAMMIT.



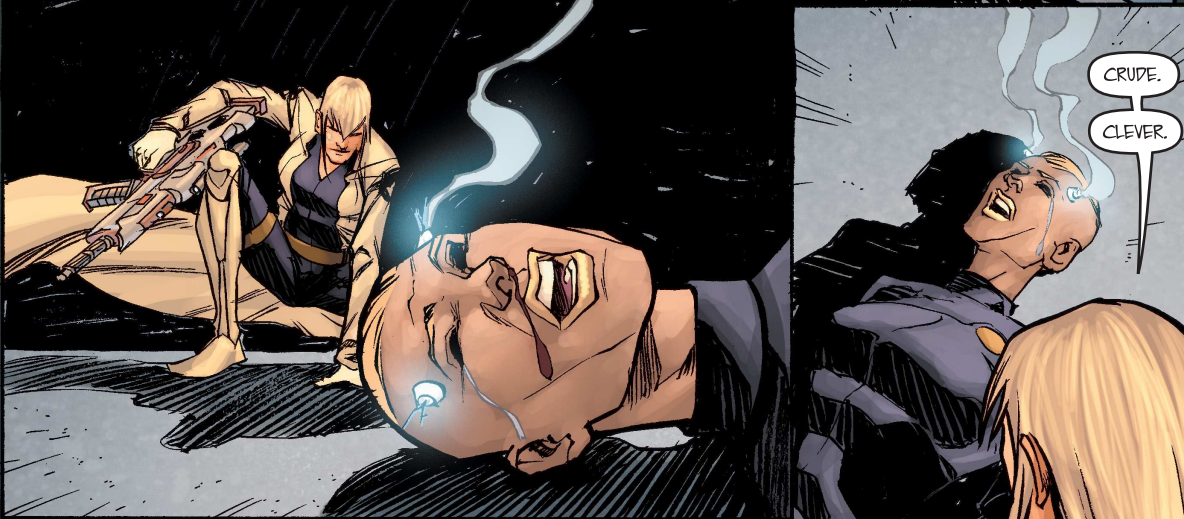
ZERO FEEDBACK. ALL OF THE XVS ARE DOWN-- HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?



THE EMOTIONAL DAMPENERS.

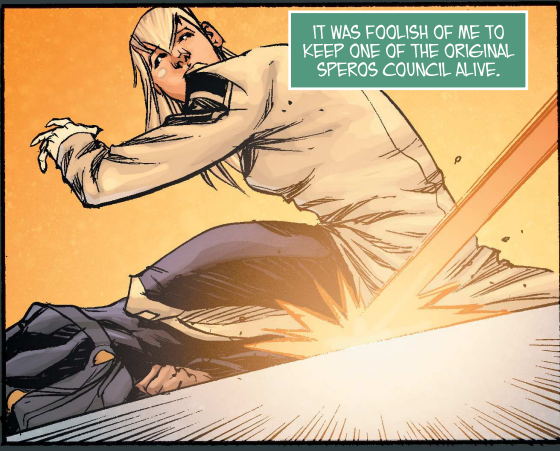


A SINGLE DATABURST DESIGNED TO OVERCHARGE THE FAUX-LIMBIC SYSTEM AND FRY THE DAMPENERS.

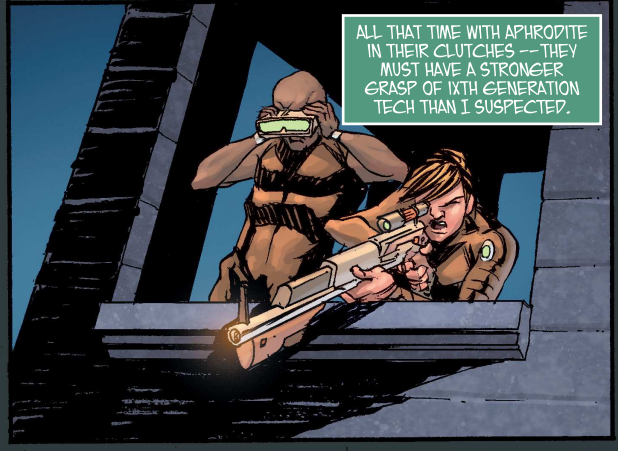


CRUDE.

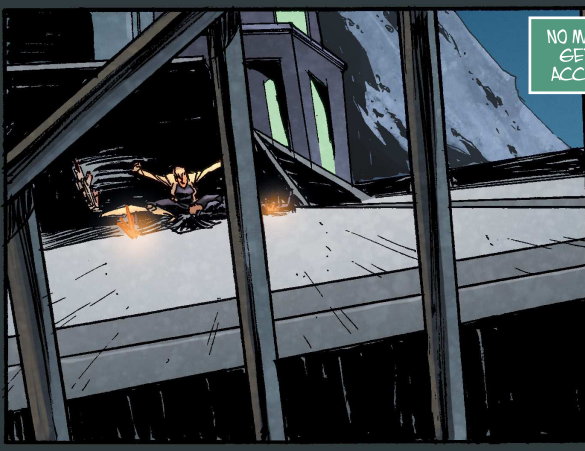
CLEVER.



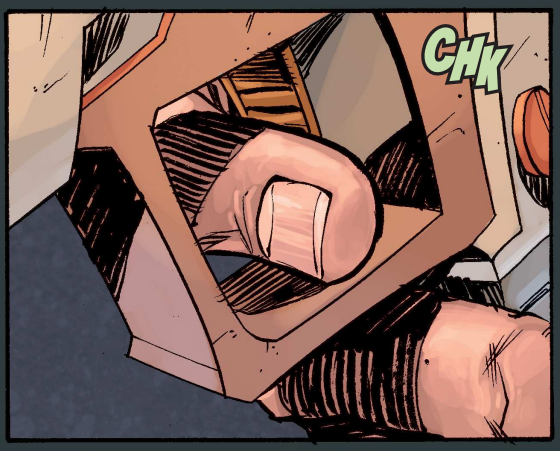
IT WAS FOOLISH OF ME TO KEEP ONE OF THE ORIGINAL SPEROS COUNCIL ALIVE.



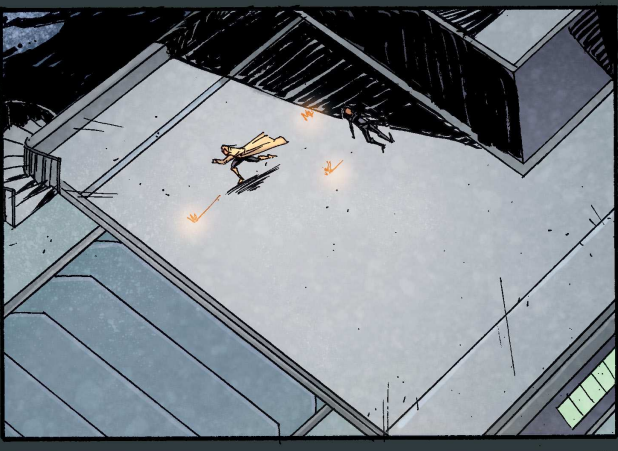
ALL THAT TIME WITH APHRODITE IN THEIR CLUTCHES -- THEY MUST HAVE A STRONGER GRASP OF 10TH GENERATION TECH THAN I SUSPECTED.



NO MATTER -- IF I CAN GET TO A CENTRAL ACCESS TERMINAL --



CHK



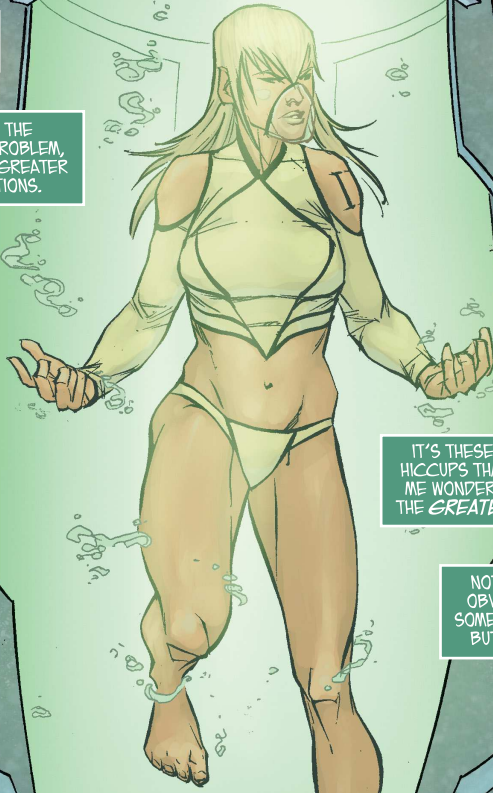
MY CONSCIOUSNESS IS DOWNLOADED INTO A NEW BODY BEFORE I EVEN REGISTER THE FACT THAT I'VE BEEN KILLED.



THE STASIS CHAMBER BEGINS TO VENT FLUID AND PREPARES FOR MY RELEASE.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO PAUSE AND REFLECT.

NOT ON THE CURRENT PROBLEM, BUT ON ITS GREATER IMPLICATIONS.



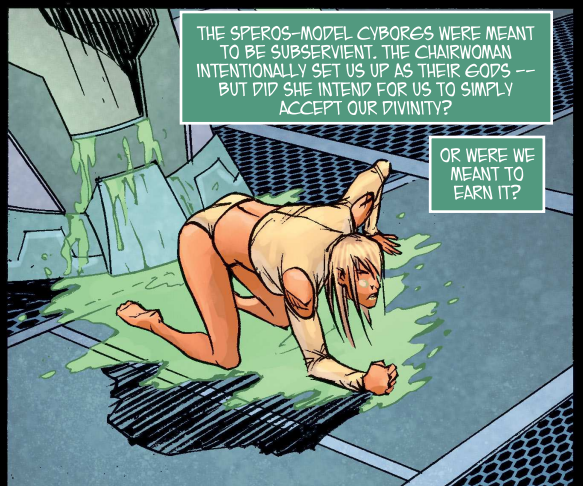
IT'S THESE LITTLE HICCUPS THAT MAKE ME WONDER ABOUT THE GREATER PLAN.

NOT MY PLAN, MIND YOU-- OBVIOUSLY THAT STILL HAS SOME KINKS TO WORK OUT -- BUT MY MOTHER'S PLAN.

THE CHAIRWOMAN, FRANCESCA TAYLOR.



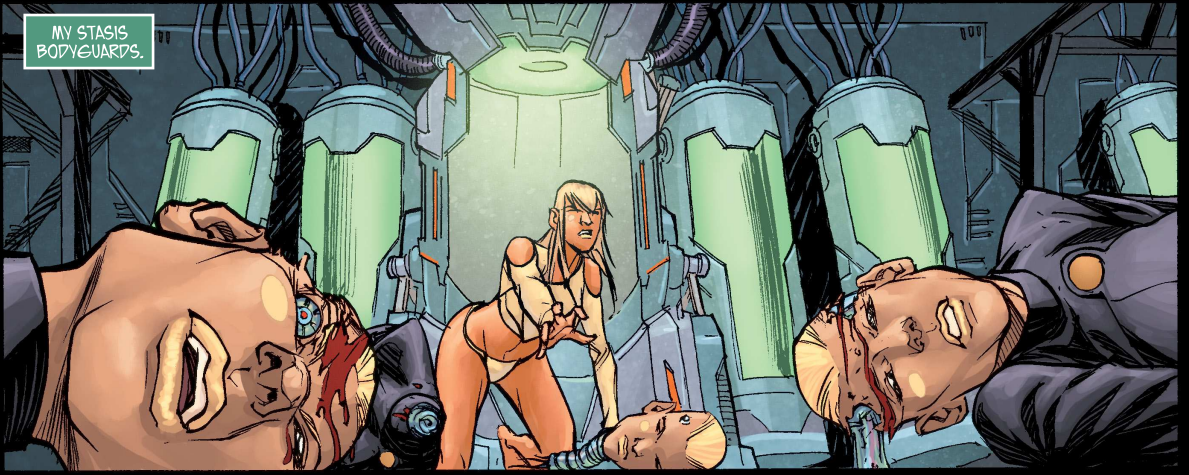
THIS ENTIRE WORLD IS HER DESIGN. SHE IMAGINED EVERY CONTINGENCY -- SURELY, SHE CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY OF A REBELLION.



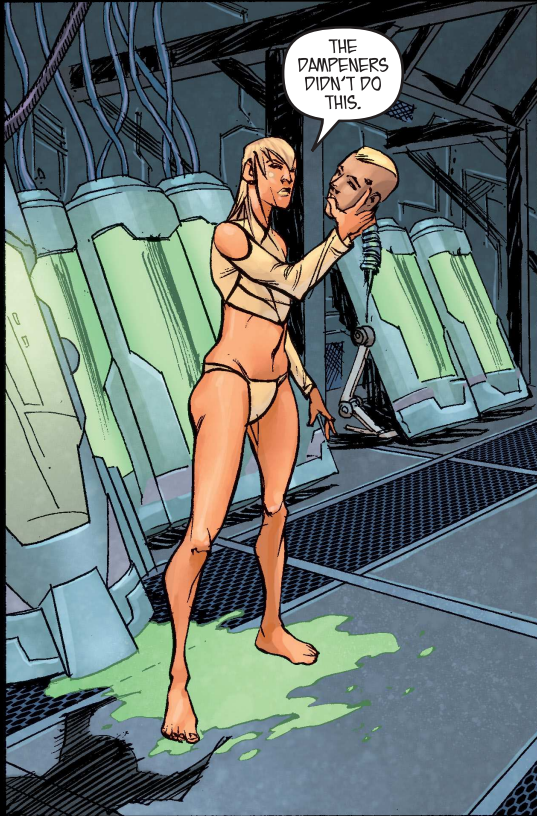
THE SPEROS-MODEL CYBORGES WERE MEANT TO BE SUBSERVIENT. THE CHAIRWOMAN INTENTIONALLY SET US UP AS THEIR GODS -- BUT DID SHE INTEND FOR US TO SIMPLY ACCEPT OUR DIVINITY?

OR WERE WE MEANT TO EARN IT?

MY STASIS  
BODYGUARDS.



THE  
DAMPENERS  
DIDN'T DO  
THIS.



NO, I DID.  
COULDN'T AFFORD  
TO TAKE ANY  
CHANCES.



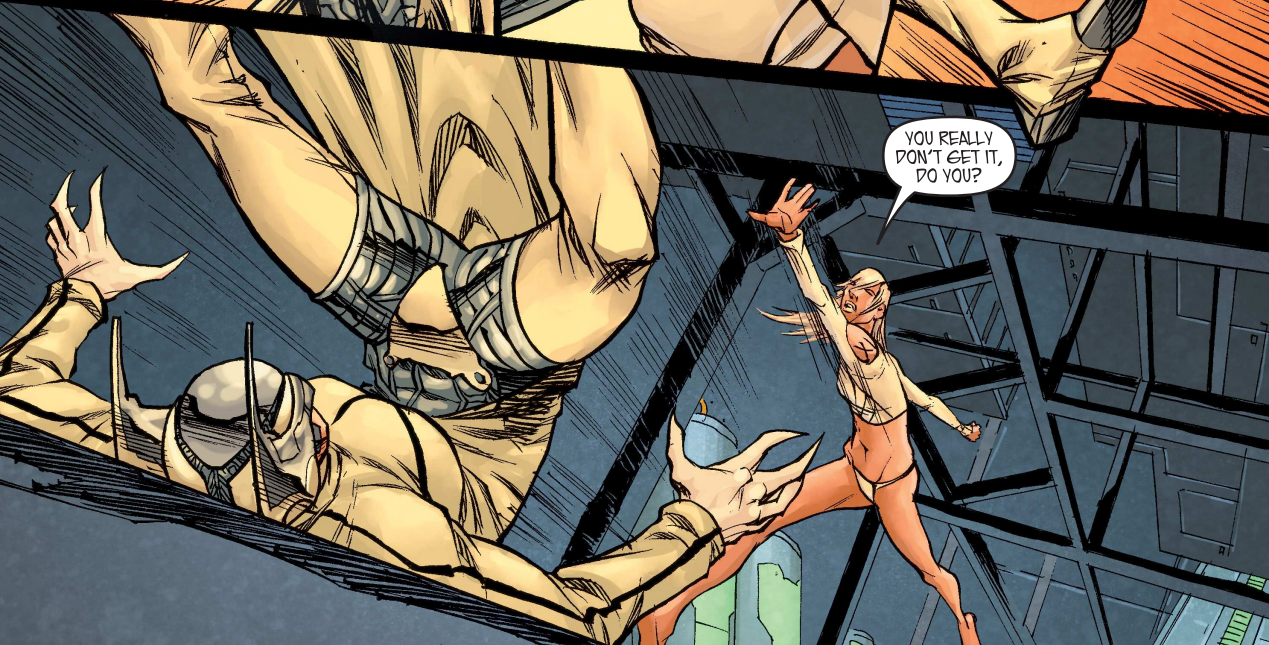
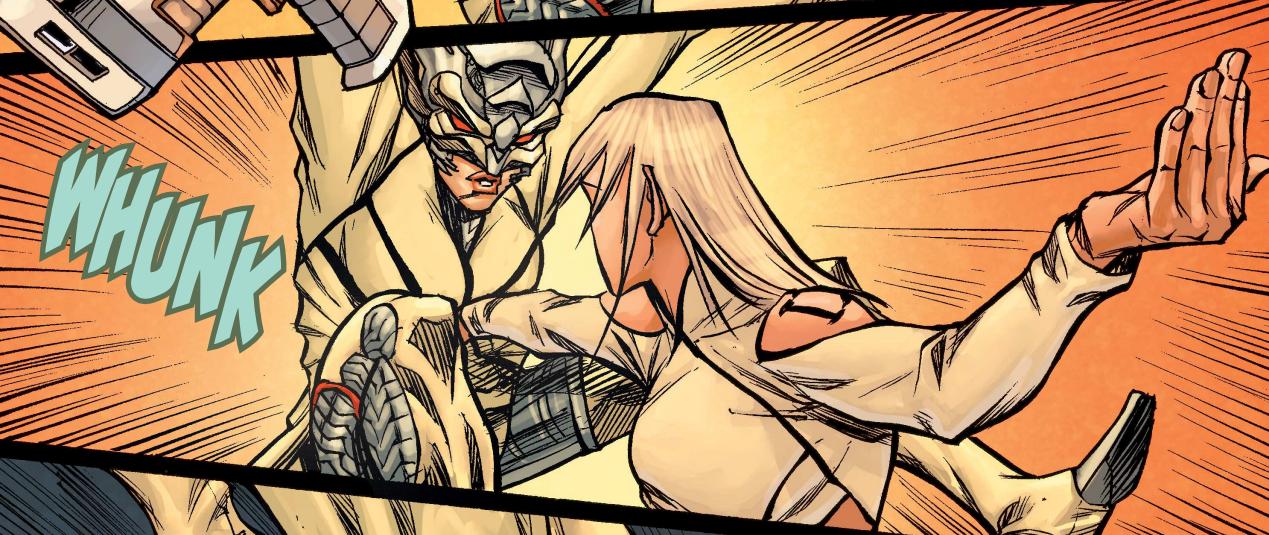
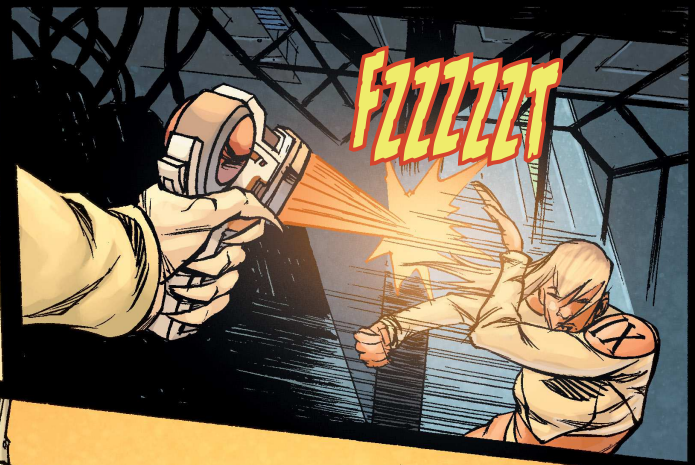
THIS TIME  
I'LL FINISH THE JOB --  
DESTROY YOU AND YOUR  
CLONING FACILITY. THIS  
WORLD WAS OURS, DAMN  
YOU -- WE WERE MEANT TO  
LIVE FOREVER. WE WERE  
MEANT TO BE ITS RULERS,  
AND WE'LL TAKE  
IT BACK!



ANY LAST  
WORDS?



ARE  
YOU QUITE  
FINISHED?





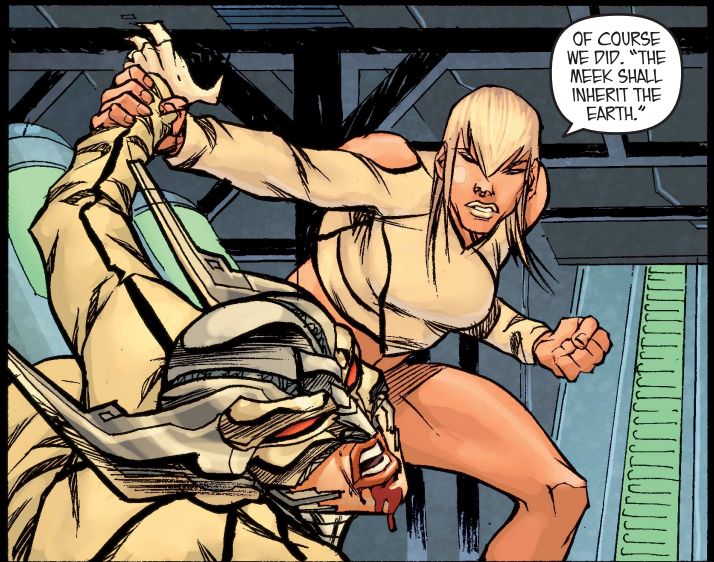
YOU WEREN'T MEANT TO INHERIT THE WORLD.



YOU WEREN'T THE SUPERIOR RACE -- YOU WERE ON A PATH TOWARD EXTINCTION.



GASP  
YOU... YOU SAVED US...



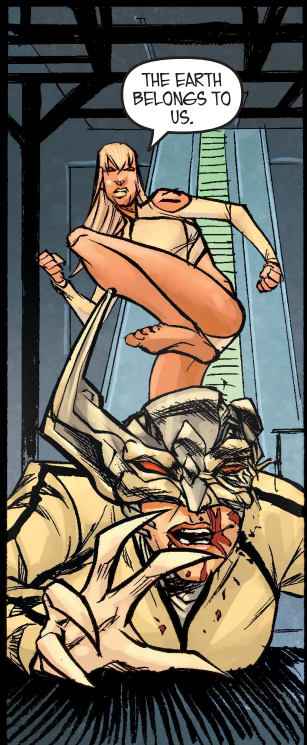
OF COURSE WE DID. "THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH."



MY MOTHER'S IDEA OF A JOKE.



YOU INHERIT NOTHING.

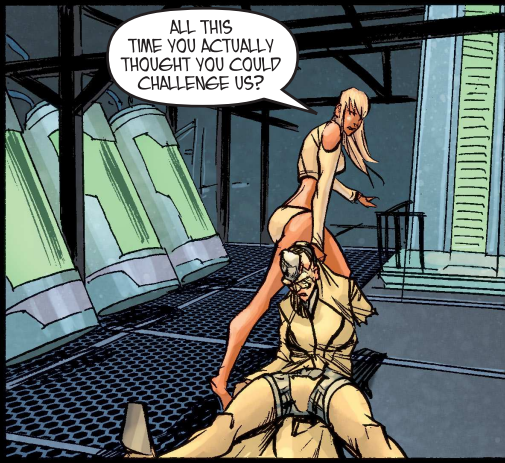


THE EARTH BELONGS TO US.



AND SO DO YOU.

THUD



ALL THIS TIME YOU ACTUALLY THOUGHT YOU COULD CHALLENGE US?



CHALLENGE ME?



I AM A GOD.



NOW WAIT RIGHT HERE.

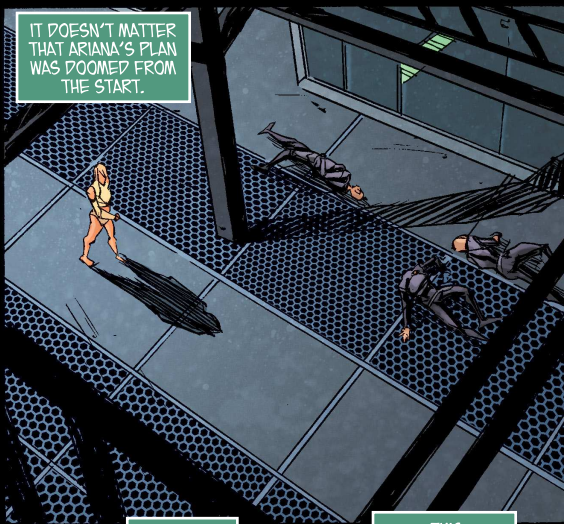


KCHHNK



I'LL BE BACK.

IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT ARIANA'S PLAN WAS DOOMED FROM THE START.



THESE WERE UNACCEPTABLE LOSSES.



THESE DAMAGES...

THIS DESTRUCTION...

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO AN ERROR IN JUDGEMENT.

MY JUDGEMENT.



LESSON LEARNED.





DID YOU MISS ME?



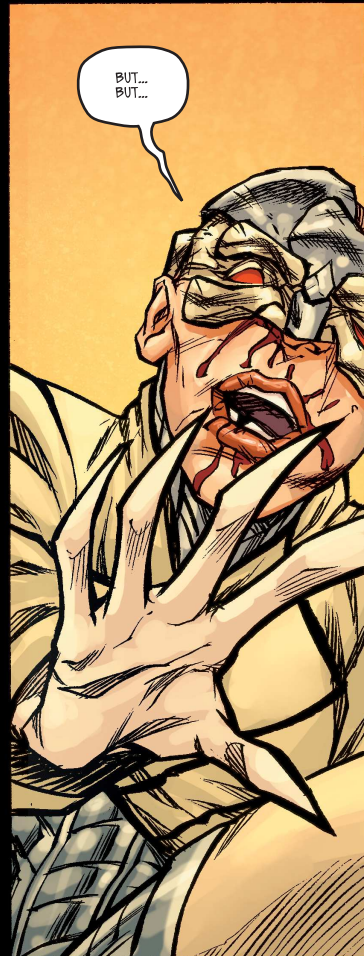
THAT WAS CLEVER, WHAT YOU DID-- USING THE EMOTIONAL DAMPENERS AGAINST ME. I UNDERESTIMATED YOU.



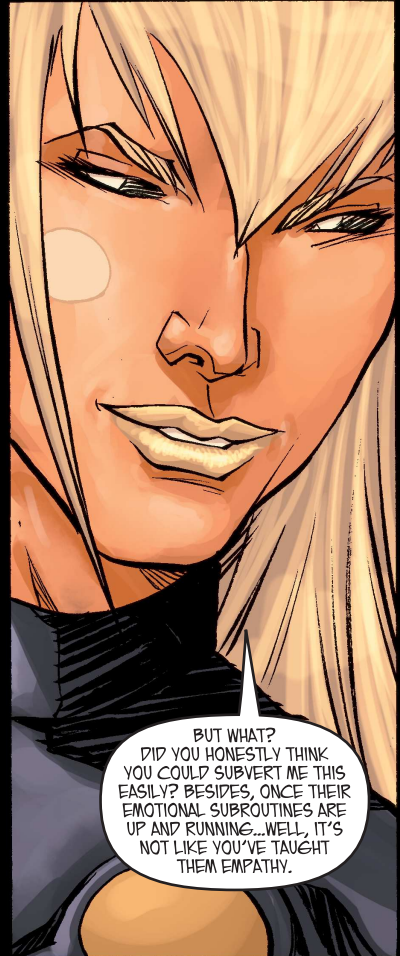
IT'S FORCED ME TO MAKE A FEW CHANGES, WHICH, I SUPPOSE, IS WHY THE CHAIRWOMAN'S DESIGN ALLOWED FOR THIS LITTLE UPRISING OF YOURS.



FOR EXAMPLE, NOW I'LL HAVE TO MASS-PROGRAM A BYPASS FUNCTION FOR MY XVS' EMOTIONAL DAMPENERS. THEY'LL BE BACK IN FIGHTING SHAPE IN SECONDS--AND WITH THEIR ORIGINAL LIMBIC PROGRAMMING.

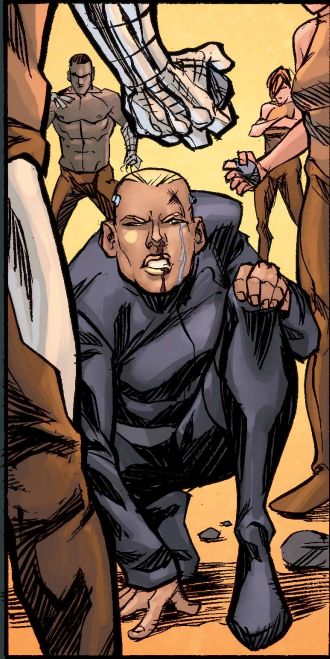


BUT... BUT...



BUT WHAT? DID YOU HONESTLY THINK YOU COULD SUBVERT ME THIS EASILY? BESIDES, ONCE THEIR EMOTIONAL SUBROUTINES ARE UP AND RUNNING...WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE TAUGHT THEM EMPATHY.

"YOU'VE ONLY  
TAUGHT THEM  
HATE."

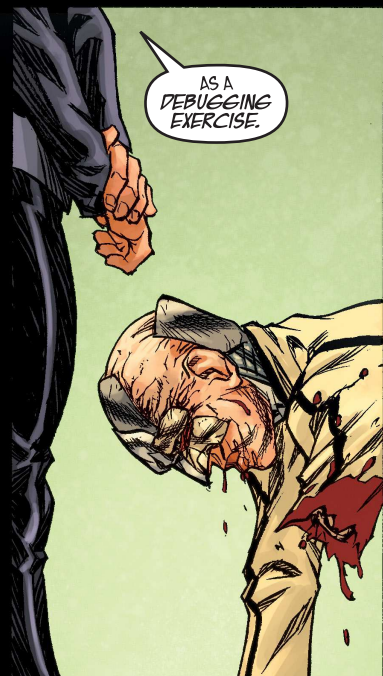




I REALLY SHOULD THANK YOU -- I PREFERRED MY ARMY TO BE UNFEELING MACHINES, BUT THEY NEVER NEEDED TO BE THAT WAY. THIS IS A TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENT. I WAS WRONG TO DISREGARD EMOTION SO COMPLETELY.



PERHAPS THAT'S THE REASON YOU SURVIVED UP UNTIL THIS POINT. PERHAPS THAT'S THE REASON YOU WERE BORN IN THE FIRST PLACE. IN THIS GRAND, ELEGANTLY DESIGNED WORLD, WHERE EVERYTHING HAS ITS PLACE, YOU'VE FULFILLED YOUR ONLY REAL PURPOSE.



AS A DEBUSSING EXERCISE.



NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, THE PEOPLE NEED TO BE REMINDED THAT GOD IS WATCHING.



BUT LET ME ONCE AGAIN OFFER YOU MY THANKS--



--FOR THE LESSON IN RAGE.

**CRUNCH**

NEXT STORY

# ARTEMIS IX #1

IN STORES AUGUST 5TH



EDEN, WYOMING.

IT'S FAR FROM  
PARADISE.



Bryan Hill • Matt Hawkins • Isaac Goodhart

# POSTAL™

ONGOING MONTHLY

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save us

# THE LAST SHIP



ALL NEW JUNE 21 SUNDAYS 9/8C

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OF THE PAST**

**WILL DETERMINE  
THE FUTURE**

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