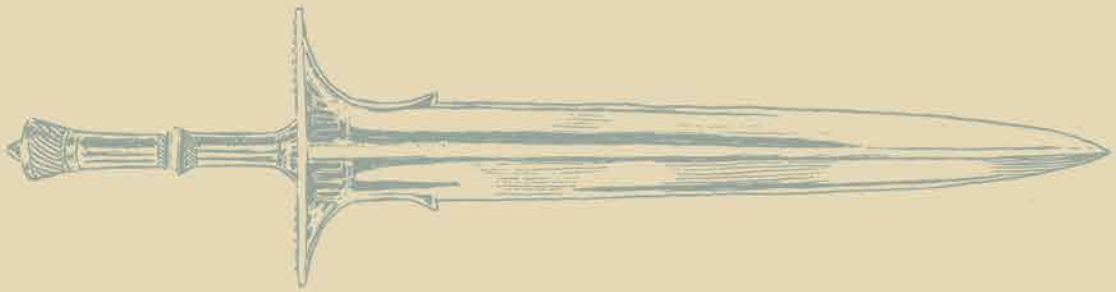
THE LOST CITY OF HERACLEON™

BRUCE LIVINGSTONE

MIKE WILLCOX

THE LOST CITY OF HERACLEON™



BY BRUCE LIVINGSTONE

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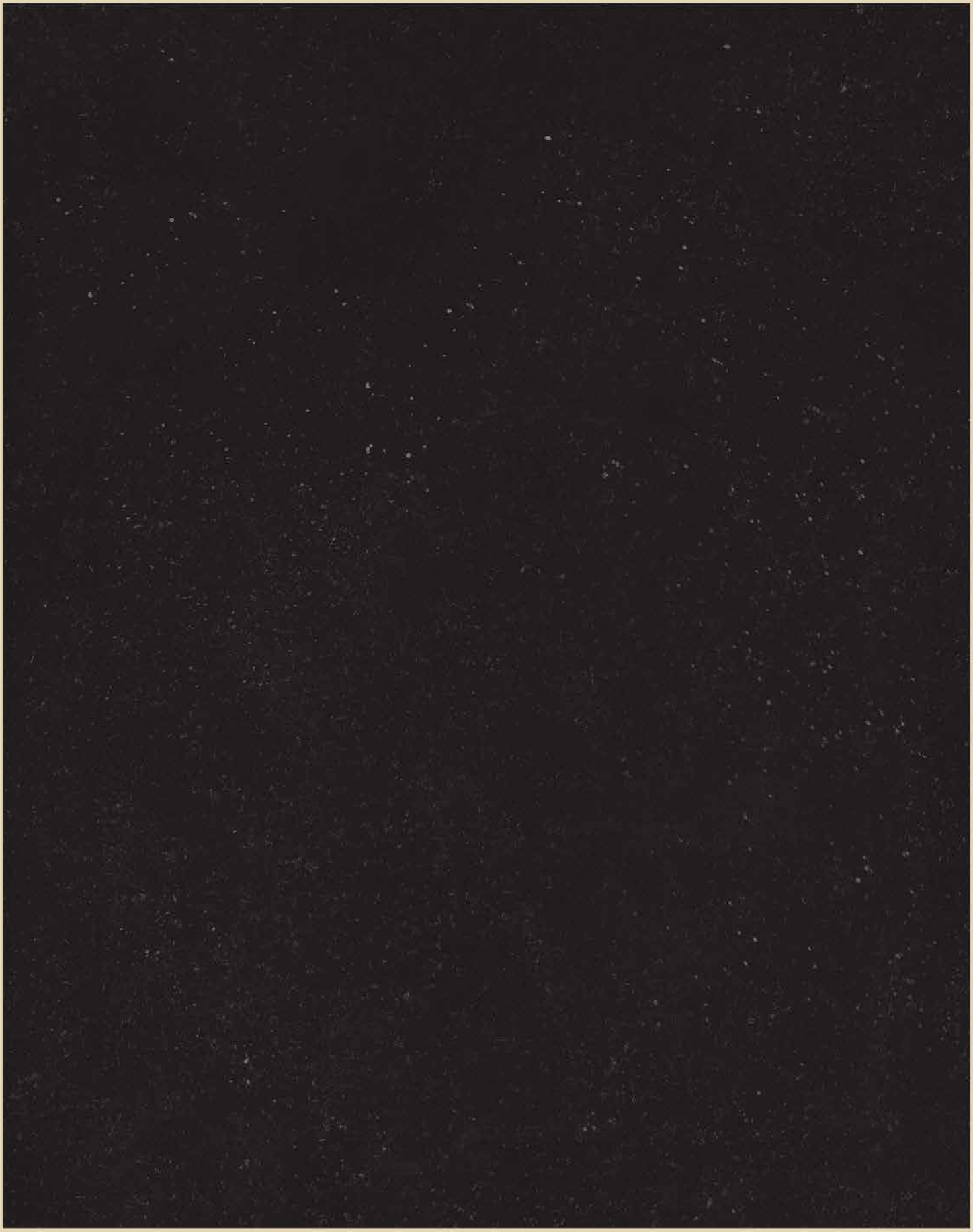
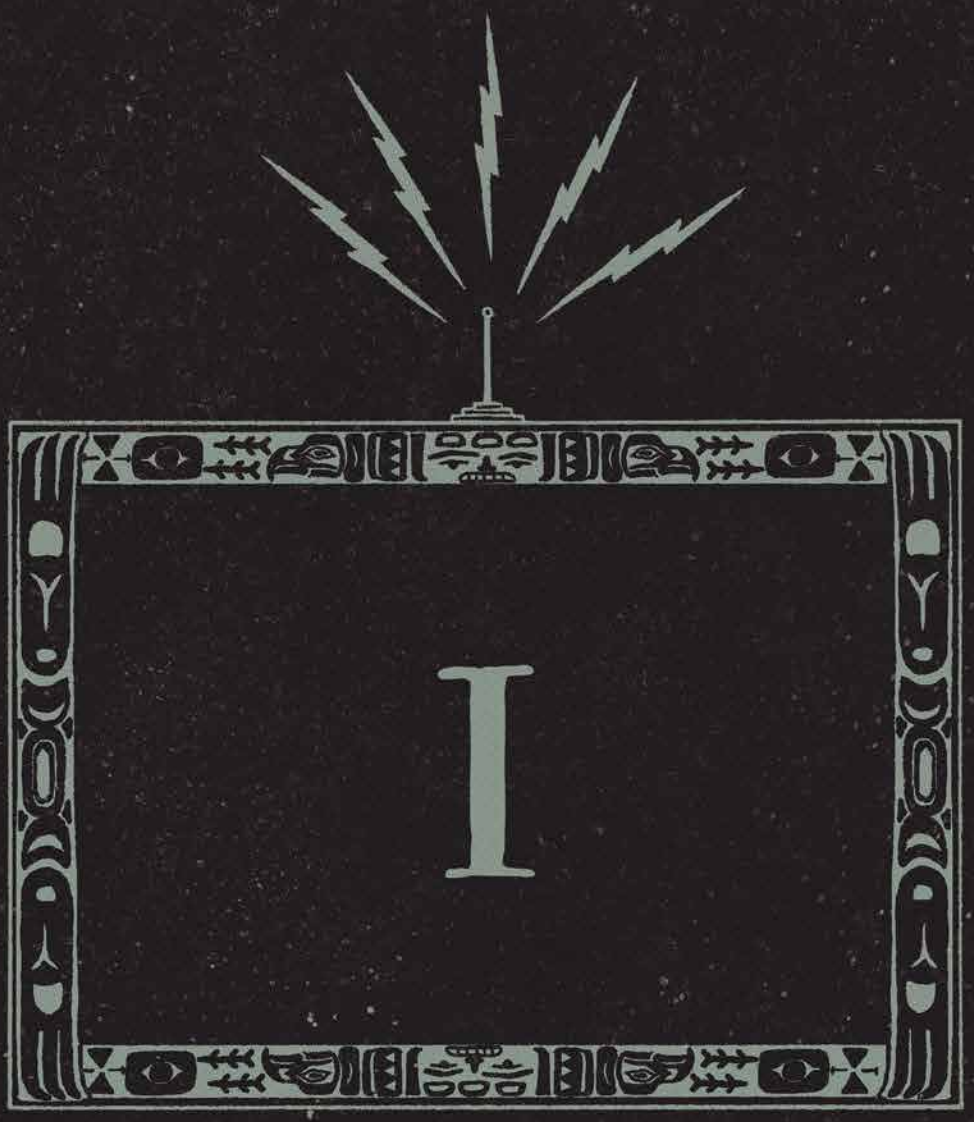
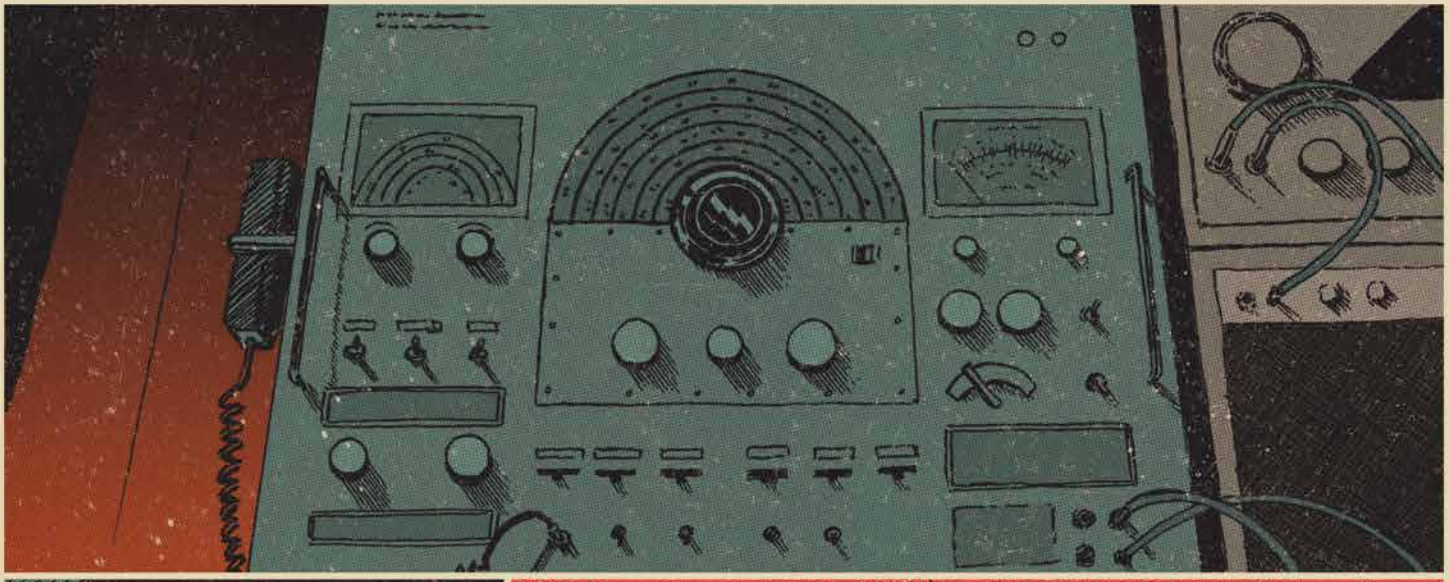




I

TUCKED AWAY IN THE ATTIC OF A RUN DOWN BEACH HOUSE IS AN OLD *UHF HAM RADIO* THAT BELONGS TO LOU'S GRANDFATHER. HE WAS A CAPTAIN IN THE NAVY NOW RETIRED FOR MANY YEARS...
BOYS I'M HEADING TO THE TACKLE SHOP, DON'T MESS WITH MY *HAM!* YOU CAN LISTEN TO IT BUT DON'T TOUCH NOTHIN!
WE WON'T!
DON'T WORRY!



FLICK

MICROVOLTS
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.1K
.2K
.5K
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100K
1000K
1 3 5 7 9 10 20 40 60 80
S-UNITS
DB OVER S9
CARRIER LEVEL

BBZZZZZZZRRRUUUUPP
TSSSSSSSHH
DZZZZZZZ
EEEEEEEP
BZZZSSS
WEEEUUU
BZZT
WEEEEEPWEP

COME IN ALL JUNIOR ADVENTURERS AND TOUGH GUYS... LIFE'S GREATEST ADVENTURES AWAIT! BUT BEWARE CALM SEAS DO NOT GOOD SAILORS MAKE. THOSE THAT DO COME BACK WILL BE FOREVER CHANGED. GET TO THESE COORDINATES!

N 48° 13' 44.0544" W 123° 27' 12.1284"

DIVE 65FT BELOW AND ENTER THE SUB FROM THE AFT. LOOK FOR THE SIGN READING 'HIGH COMPRESSION CHAMBER' TO BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY. I WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU. OVER.

WH.. WH..
W-H-O IS THIS??
MY NAME IS
STEWART STUART
BUT MY CREW CALLS ME
CAPTAIN SHORTY. OVER.
WHAT KIND OF NAME IS THAT? YOU CAN'T TRUST A PERSON WITH TWO FIRST NAMES.
I HAVE TWO FIRST NAMES.
OH YEAH...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
TALKING ABOUT MY NAME?
SEARCH IT. OVER.
WHOOSH
THIS THING IS A DINOSAUR.
PA-WANG
BEEP

CAPTAIN STEWART STUART LOCATES LOST CITY OF HERACLEON

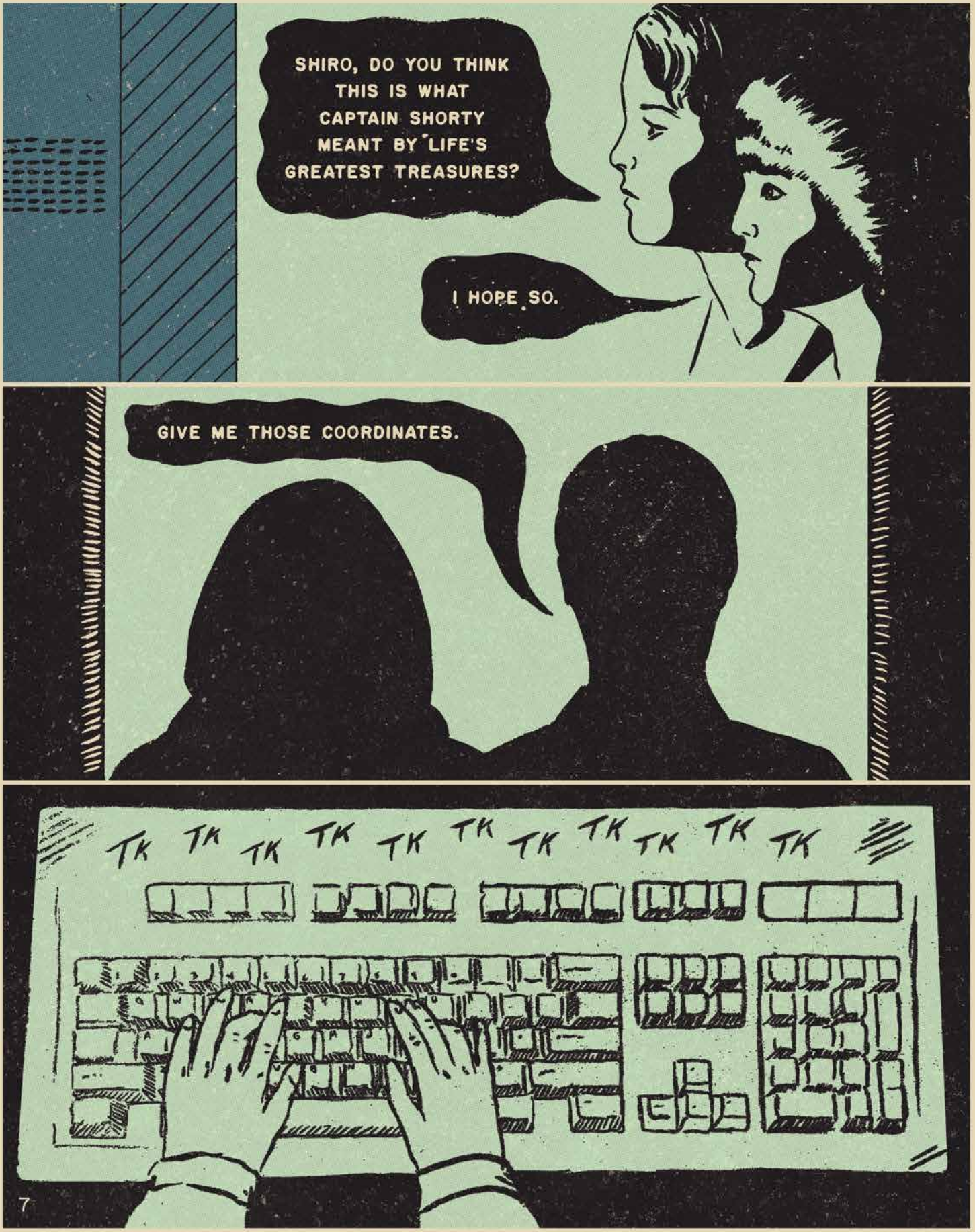
NEWS.DISCOVERY.COM/LOST-CITY-HERACLEON
CAPTAIN STEWART STUART LOCATES LOST CITY OF HERACLEON IN A DRAMATIC NEWS CONFERENCE TODAY, CAPTAIN STEWART STUART ANNOUNCED THAT THE LOST CITY OF HERACLEON HAD BEEN LOCATED IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. THE ANCIENT CITY DATES BACK TO THE 8TH CENTURY BC.

PICTURES FROM LOST CITY SHOW ADVANCED ANCIENT CIVILIZATION

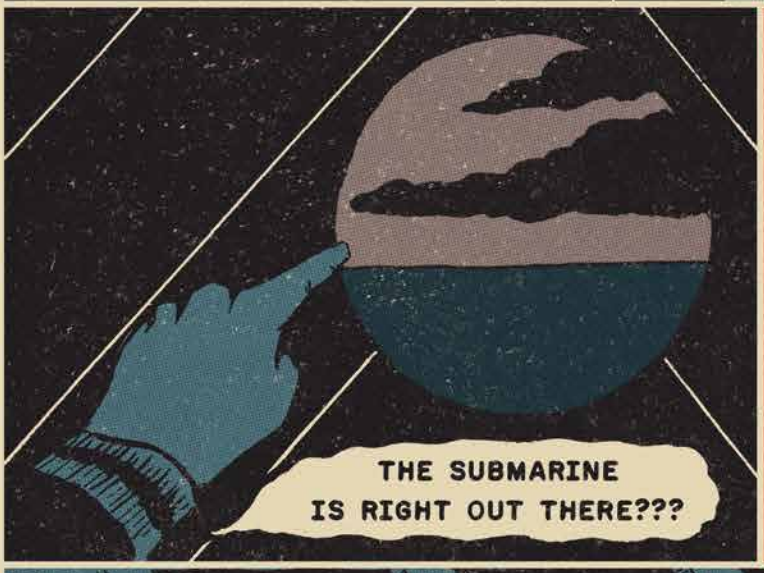
SMITHSONIAN.ORG/THE-LATEST/ANCIENT-CIVILIZATION
PICTURES FROM LOST CITY SHOW ADVANCED ANCIENT CIVILIZATION PHOTOGRAPHS DISPLAYED IN THE MUSEUM SHOW PART OF THE LARGEST TEMPLE EVER CONSTRUCTED, THE TEMPLE OF AMUN. AMONG THE RUINS OF THE TEMPLE ARE SEVERAL CURIOUS DEVICES. ONE DEVICE IN PARTICULAR IS KNOWN AS THE CODEX, WHICH CPTN STUART CLAIMS IS SOME KIND OF BASIC, WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY.

LOST CITY OF HERACLEON, LOST AGAIN. CAPTAIN STUART HUMILIATED

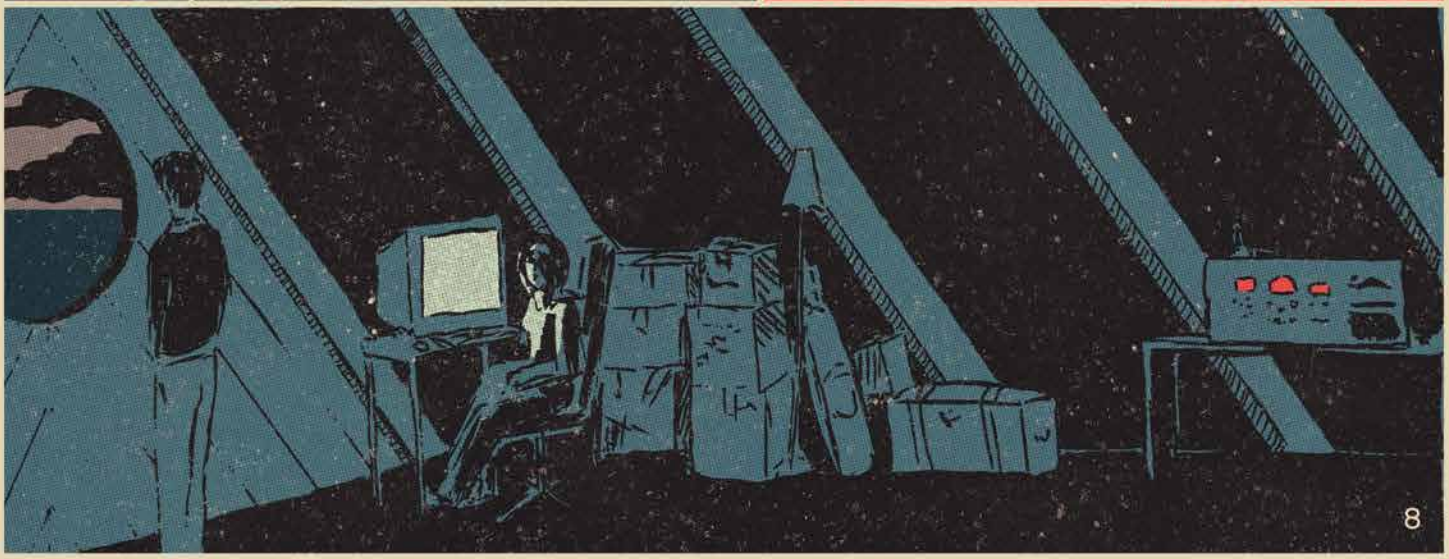
NEWS.NATIONALHISTORYMUSEUM.ORG/LOST-CITY-HOAX?/CAPTAINSTUART
LOST CITY OF HERACLEON LOST AGAIN! CAPTAIN STUART HUMILIATED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY, CPTN STUART ANNOUNCED THAT THE ANCIENT CITY OF HERACLEON WAS MISSING, AGAIN! SCIENTISTS AND SKEPTICS ACCUSED CPTN STUART OF FABRICATING THE STORY, EVIDENCE AND PHOTOGRAPHS. CPTN STUART, HUMILIATED, VOWED TO RELOCATE THE CITY, BUT NOBODY CARED.


SHIRO, DO YOU THINK THIS IS WHAT CAPTAIN SHORTY MEANT BY LIFE'S GREATEST TREASURES?
I HOPE SO.
GIVE ME THOSE COORDINATES.
TK TK TK TK TK TK TK TK TK TK TK

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

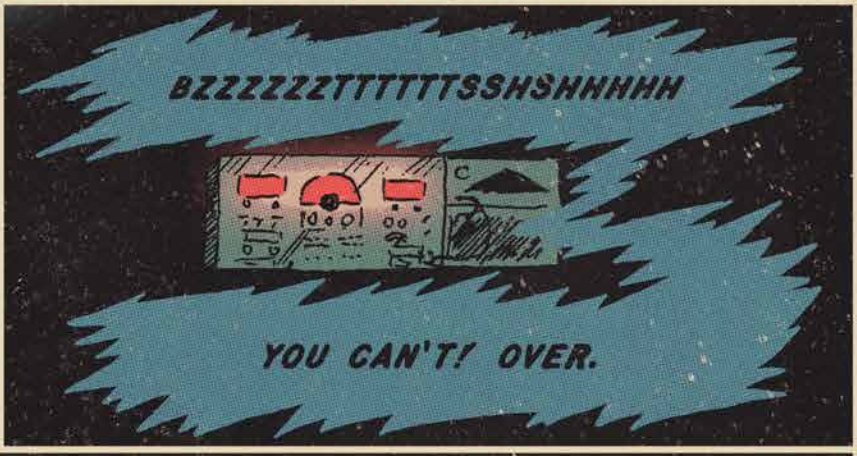

THE SUBMARINE
IS RIGHT OUT THERE???

I'M CREEPED OUT!
CAPTAIN SHORTY
IS CREEPIN ON US!



WHAT IF HE'S SOME KIND OF GHOST PIRATE???

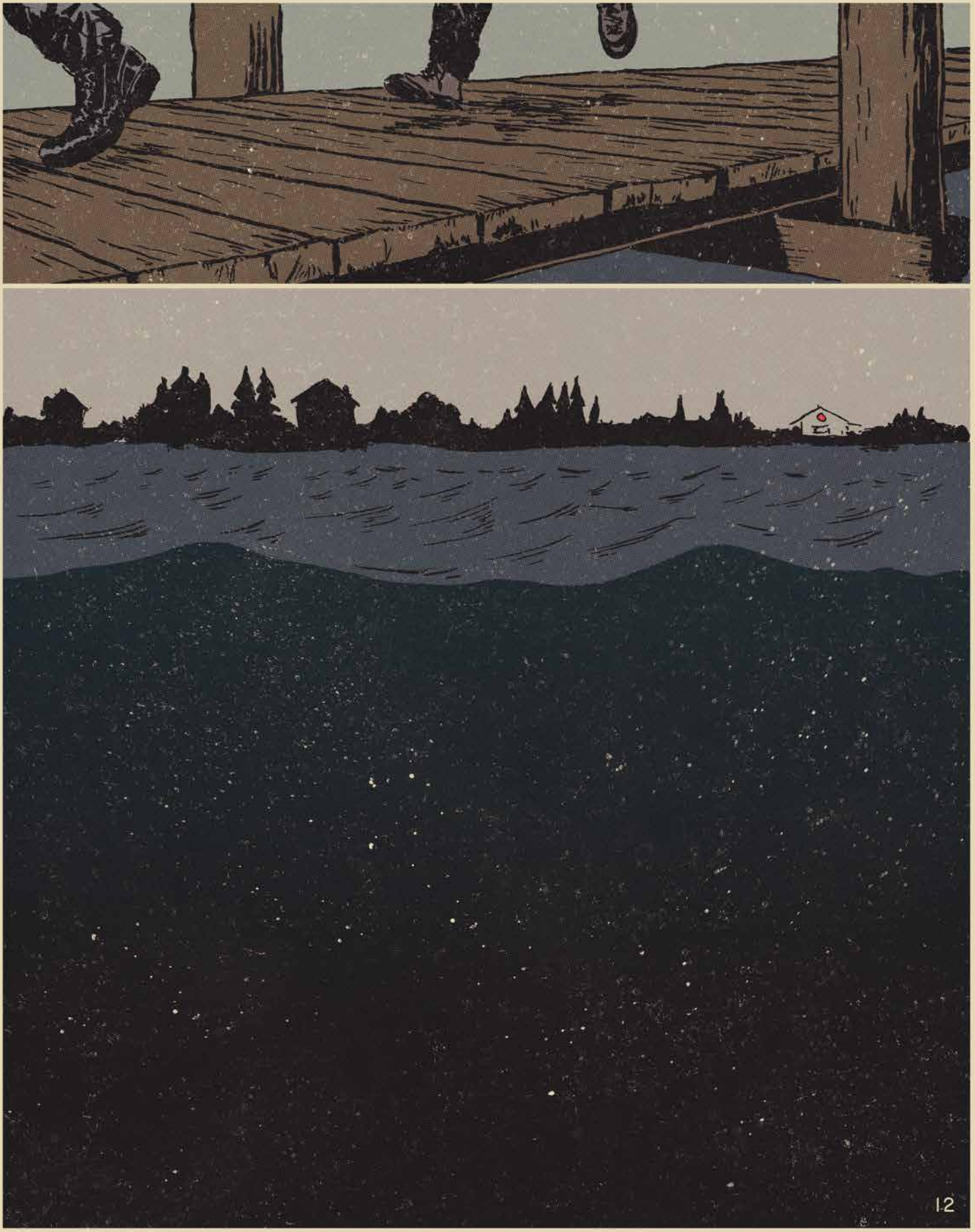
MAYBE WE CAN GO LATER, IN A FEW YEARS...
WHEN WE'RE OLDER...

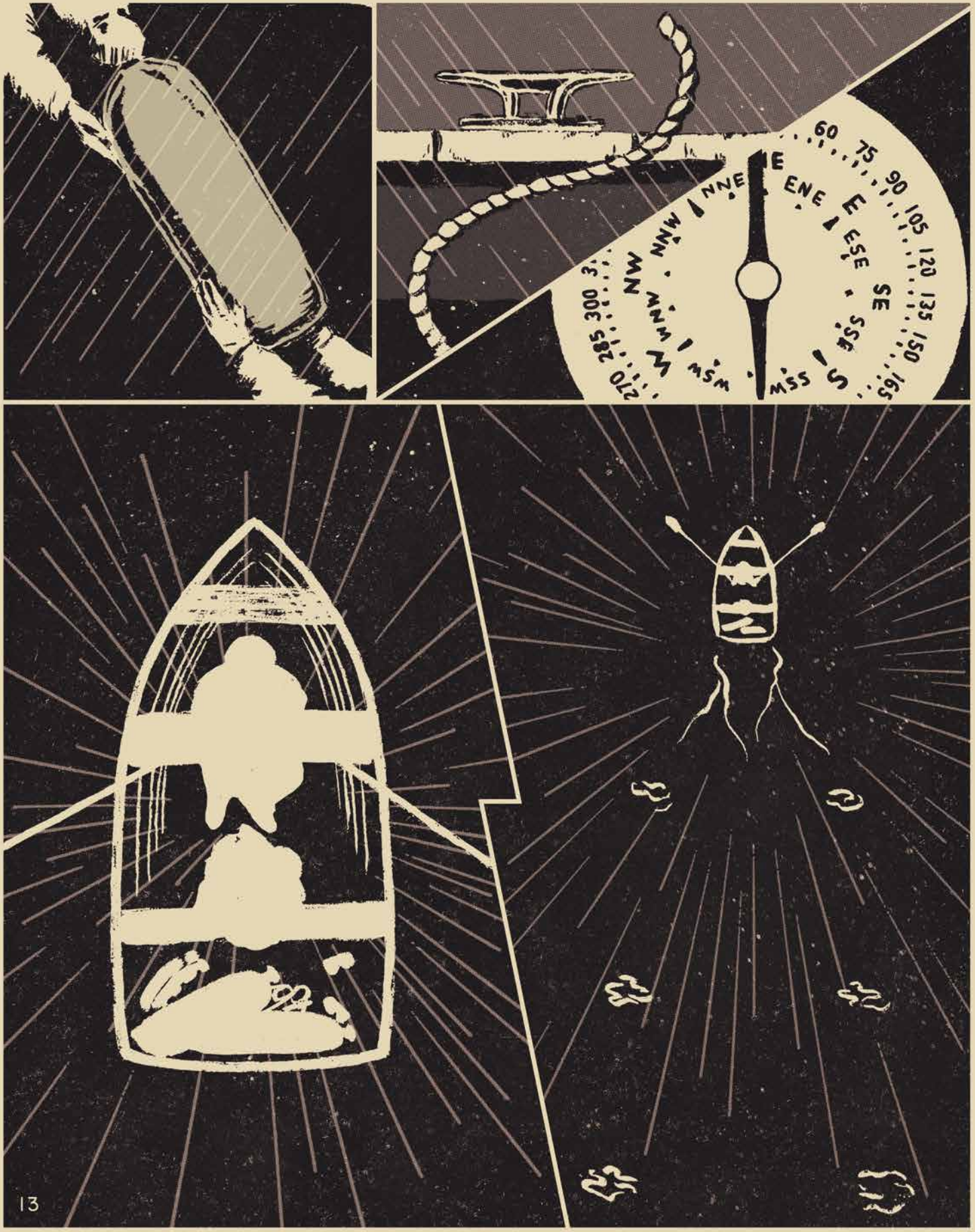

BZZZZZZTTTTTTSSHSHHHHH
YOU CAN'T! OVER.

IF YOU'RE COMING, WE HAVE TO GO NOW. I'M NOT COMING BACK, OVER.

I WANT TO GO! DON'T YOU?!
DO YOU THINK HE CAN HEAR US? HOW DID HE DO THAT?
WHO CARES, I CAN'T *NOT* GO, I'LL REGRET IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE IF WE DON'T DO THIS!
BRRRRRRRTZZZSSSSSSHHHHHHHHHHHHHSHSHSSSSHSSSSSSSSSSS
THERE IS DIVE GEAR FOR TWO BRAVE BOYS ON THE DOCK. TAKE THE ROWBOAT. TAKE A COMPASS. SPEAK TO NO ONE. HEAD 35 DEGREES NE FOR 800 METERS AND LOOK FOR THE BUBBLES. GEAR UP AND DESCEND TO 60 FT. YOU'LL FIND THE SUB. SHE IS CALLED ISIS. NOT AS IN THE ISLAMIC STATE, BUT THE EGYPTIAN TAXI DRIVER BETWEEN MEN AND GODS. ENTER THE HIGH COMPRESSION CHAMBER FROM UNDERNEATH AT THE AFT. I WILL MEET YOU THERE. BE BRAVE. OVER.

WERE GOING??!
CHECKING THE TRAPS GRANDPA... BACK SOON!
WHAT IN THE CURSE HAS GOTTEN INTO YOU BOYS??

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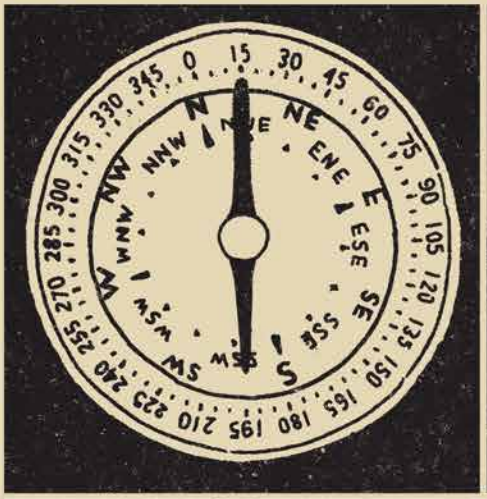


EAGER SHIRO TIRES QUICKLY IN THE STRONG WIND. LOU TAKES OVER ROWING AND SETS THE COMPASS TO 15 DEGREES TO MAKE UP FOR THE DRIFT.

AFTER THIRTY MINUTES OF HARD ROWING, THE BOYS START SEEING BUBBLES.

B

BECAUSE

THEY QUICKLY GEAR UP AND DO THE BWARF BUDDY CHECK

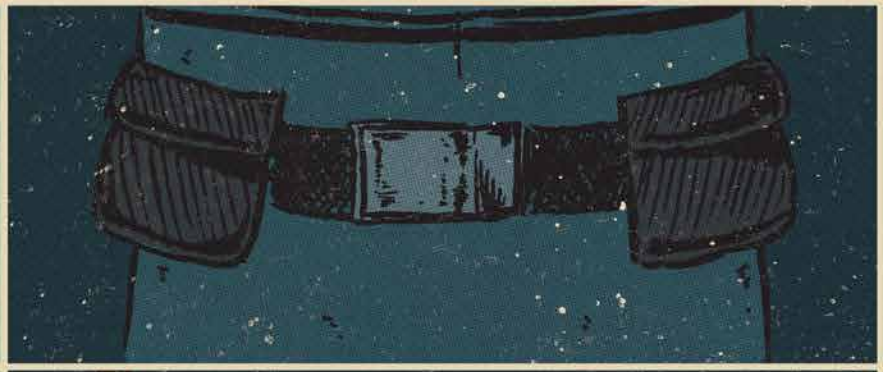
BUOYANCY CONTROL DEVICE

OPERATING NORMALLY

CHECK!

W

WE



WEIGHTS

ON AND BUCKLED

CHECK!

A

AREN'T

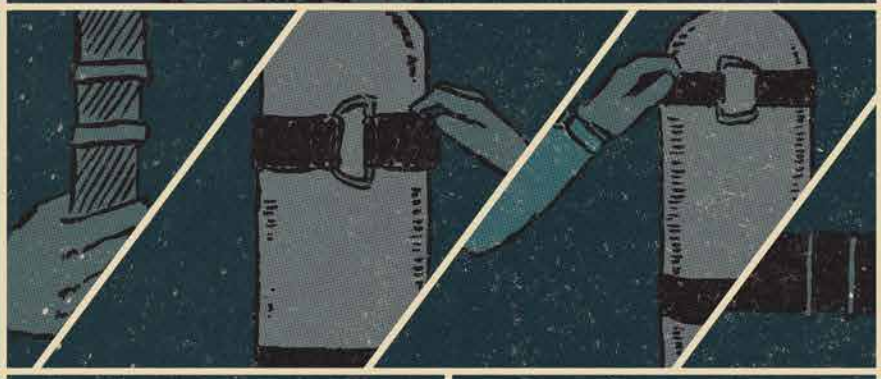
AIR

FUNCTIONING NORMALLY

CHECK!

R

REALLY



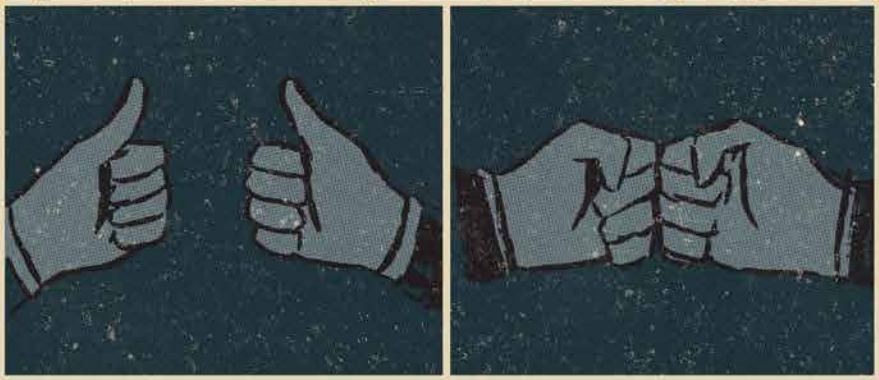
RELEASES

BUCKLED AND TIGHT

CHECK!

F

FISH



FINAL OK

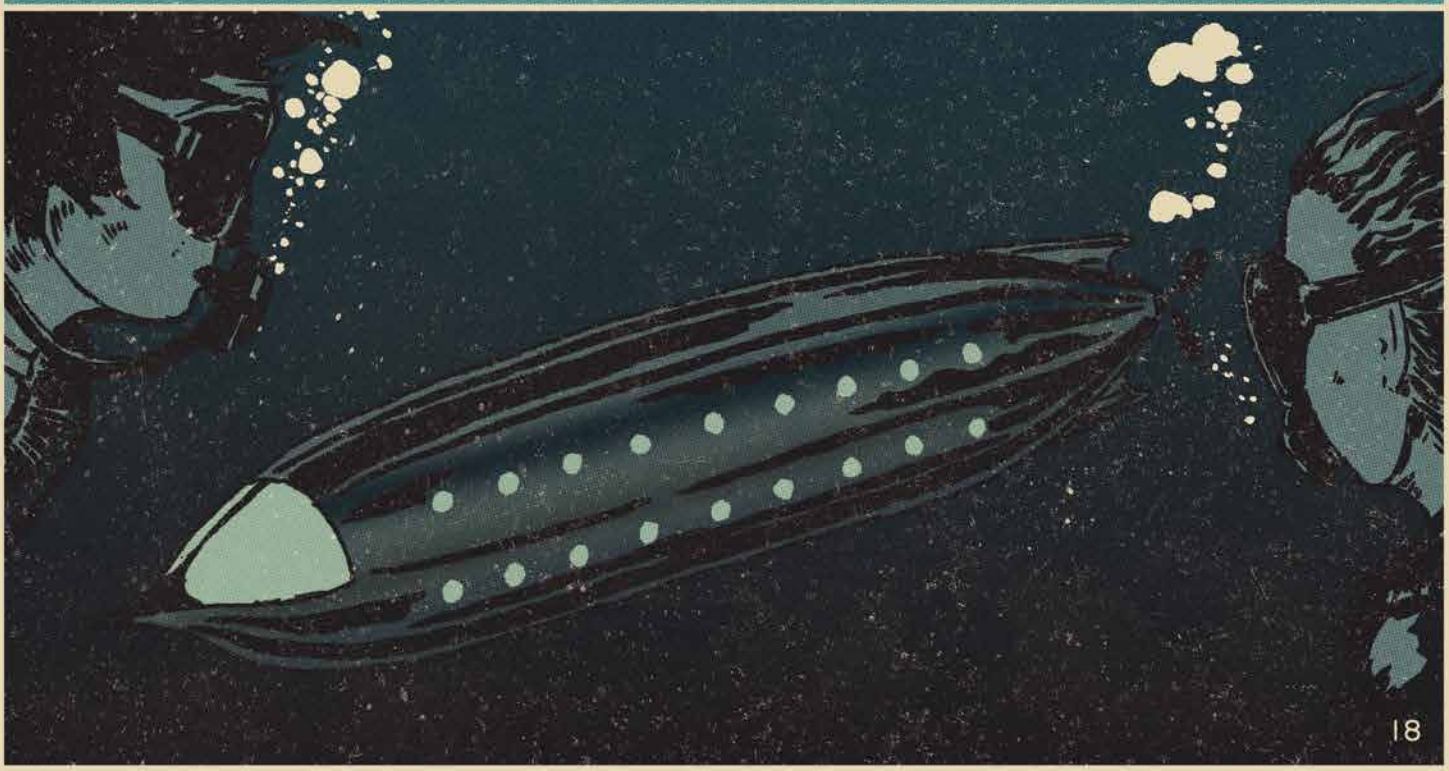
AND INTO THE WATER

FINS UP!

THE BOYS LEARNED HOW TO DIVE FROM LOU'S DAD. THEY DOVE SO MUCH ONE SUMMER, THEY PREFERRED IT TO WALKING. SHIRO THOUGHT OF HIM LIKE A FATHER. LOU'S FATHER WAS A MASTER DIVER UNTIL HE WENT MISSING A FEW YEARS BACK. IT IS ASSUMED HE WAS SWEPT AWAY IN A STRONG CURRENT. HE DESCENDED ONE DAY AND NEVER RETURNED. BUT THE BOYS DON'T TALK ABOUT IT VERY OFTEN.

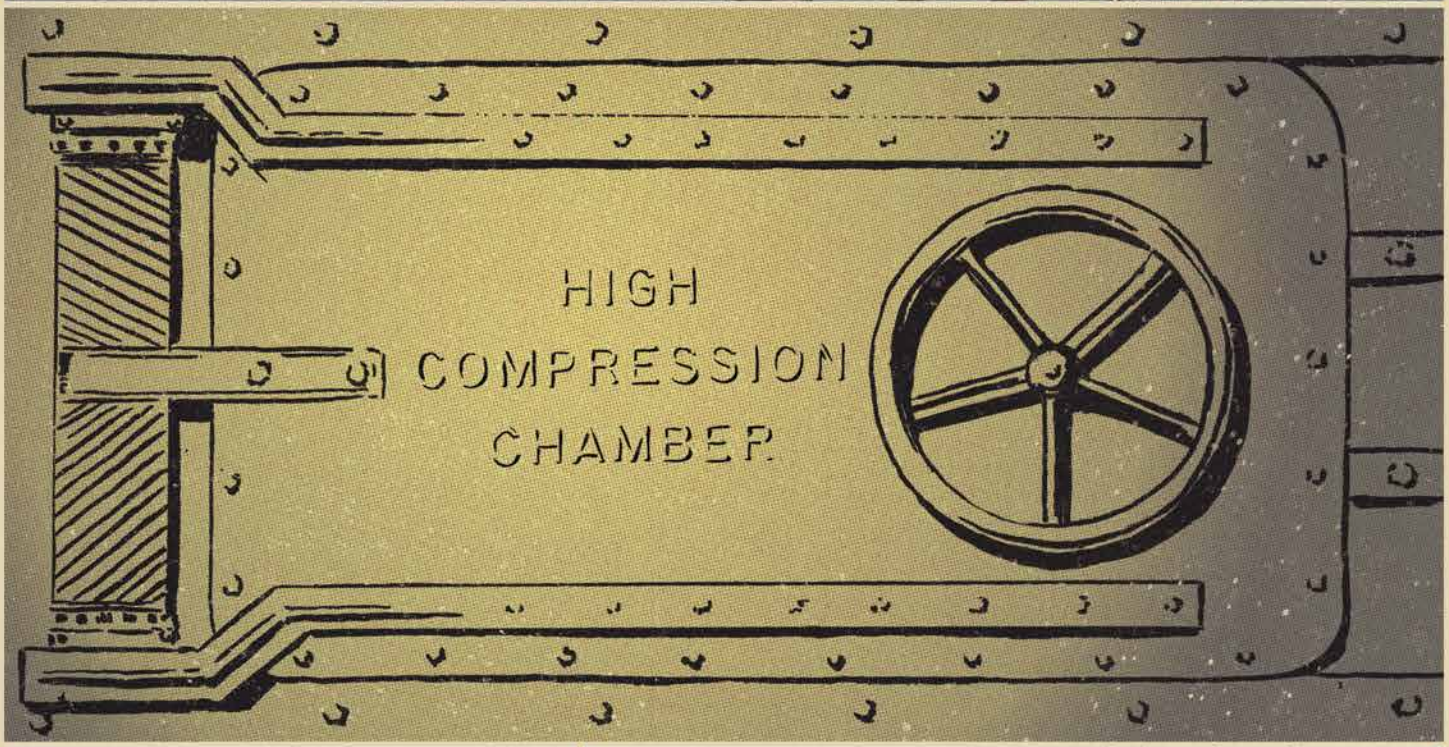
EVERYTHING IS SILENT AS THEY SLOWLY DESCEND AND EQUALIZE BY PINCHING THEIR NOSES THROUGH THE MASK AND GENTLY BLOWING. SHIRO IS THE FIRST TO TURN ON A SMALL DIVE FLASHLIGHT AND CHECKS HIS DIVE WATCH, THEY ARE AT A DEPTH OF 20 FT.

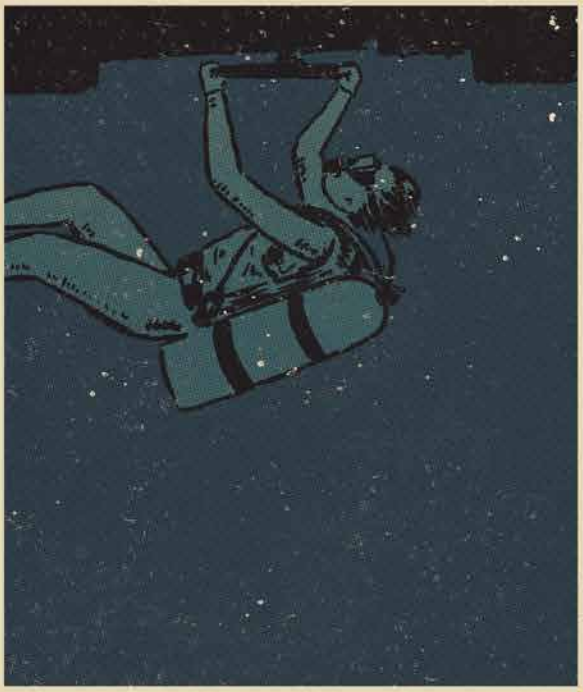
EXCITED AND APPREHENSIVE TO MEET CAPTAIN SHORTY, THEY CONTINUE THEIR DESCENT BY PUSHING THE AIR FROM THEIR LUNGS. LOU TURNS ON HIS DIVE LIGHT AND SHINES IT DOWN BENEATH HIS FINS. SUDDENLY THEY SEE THE LIGHTS FROM THE SUB TURN ON. THEY'RE REALLY CLOSE NOW, ONLY 20 FEET TO GO.

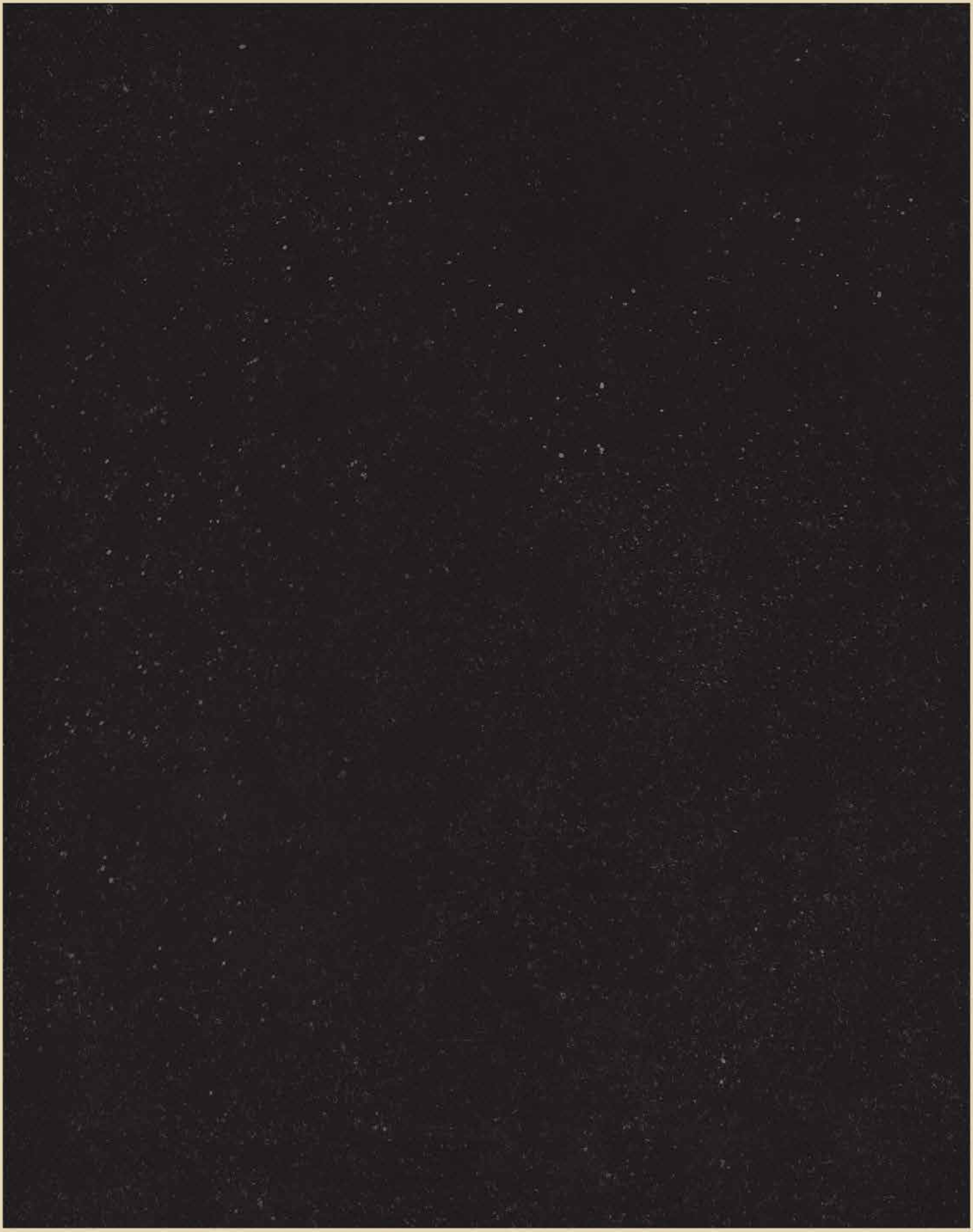


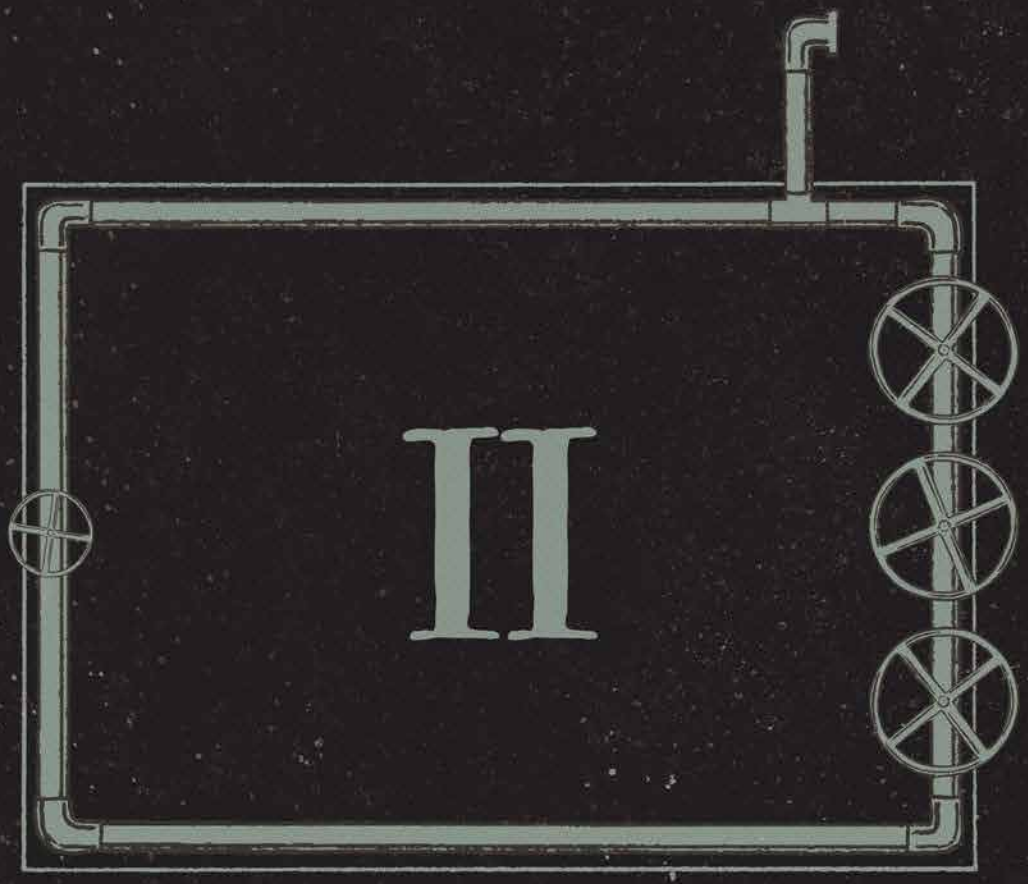
THE BOYS START SWIMMING TO THE LIGHTS. AS THEY GET CLOSER THINGS GET WEIRD. ALL THEY SEE IS LIGHT, THE SUB ISN'T THERE. LOU AND SHIRO LOOK AT EACH OTHER, UNABLE TO SPEAK, THEY MOVE IN FOR A CLOSER LOOK.

SHIRO COLLIDES WITH THE SUB, BANGING HIS HEAD RIGHT INTO HER BELLY. LOU SEES HIS REFELECTION IN HER. SHE'S MADE OF SOME KIND OF CHROME LIKE METAL, REFLECTING EVERYTHING AROUND IT LIKE A SAUSAGE SHAPED MIRROR. SHINING HIS LIGHT ON HER, SHIRO GETS A SENSE OF HER SIZE AND SHAPE AS THE LIGHT REFLECTS BACK BUT THE DARKNESS DOESN'T.


HIGH
COMPRESSION
CHAMBER



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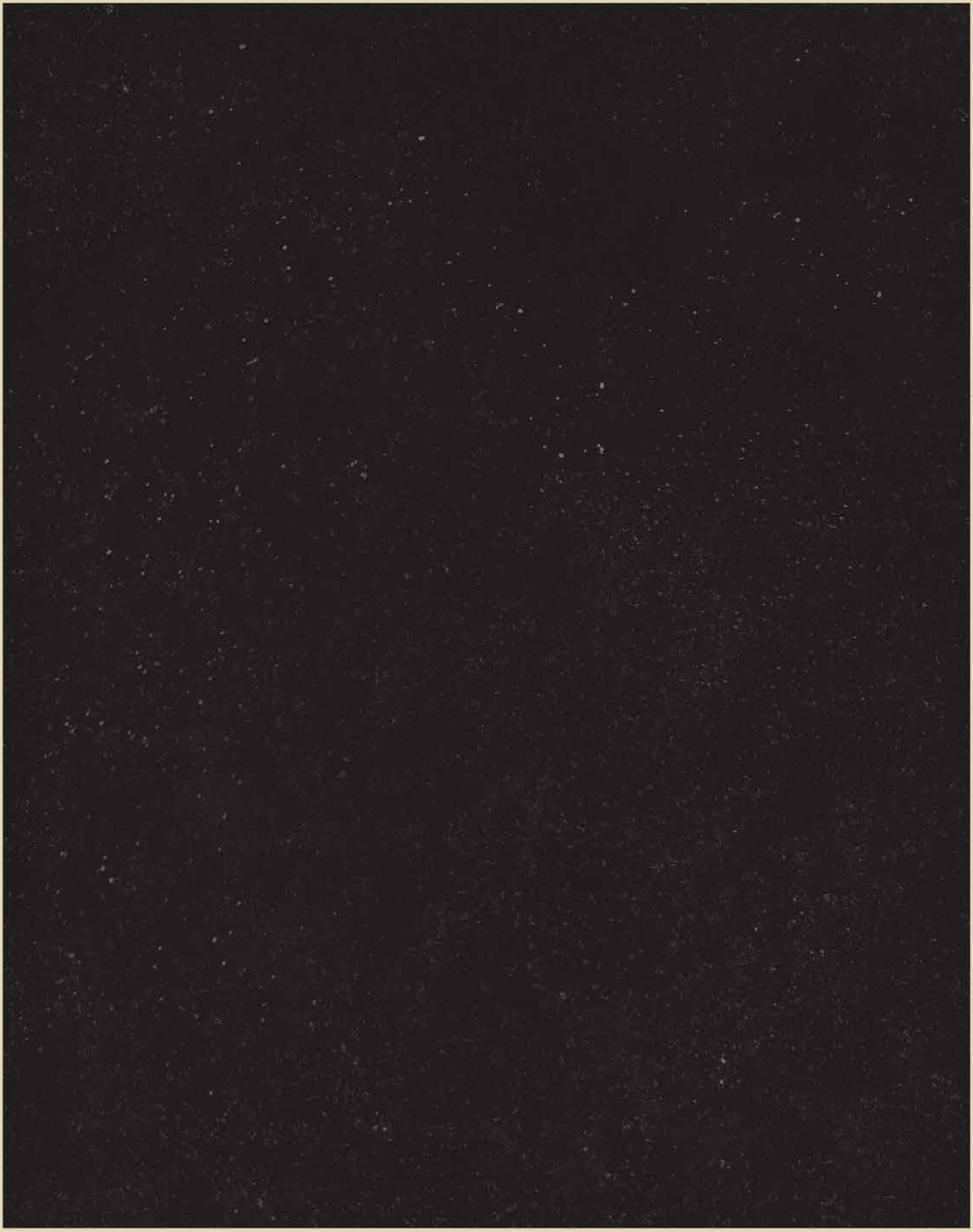
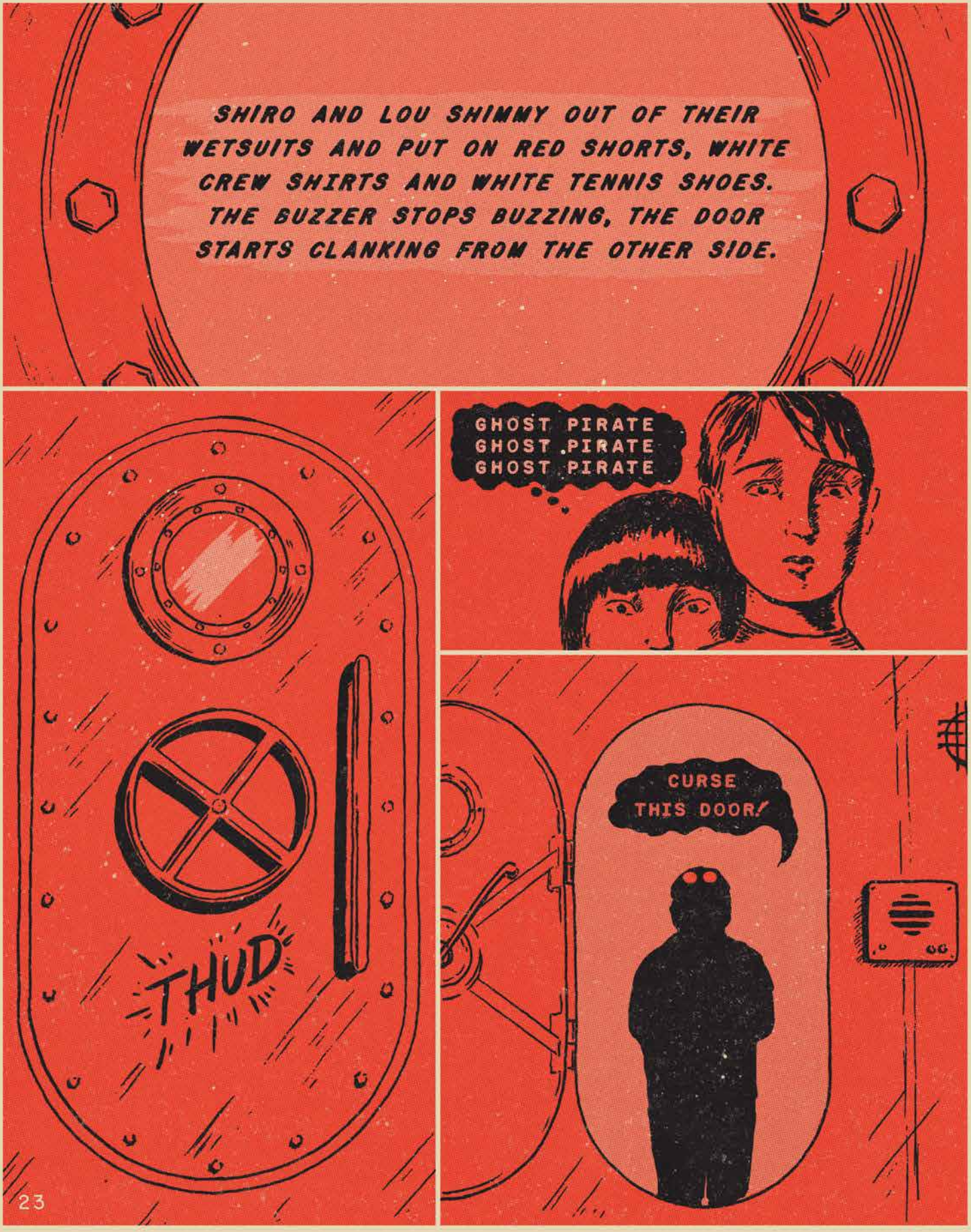
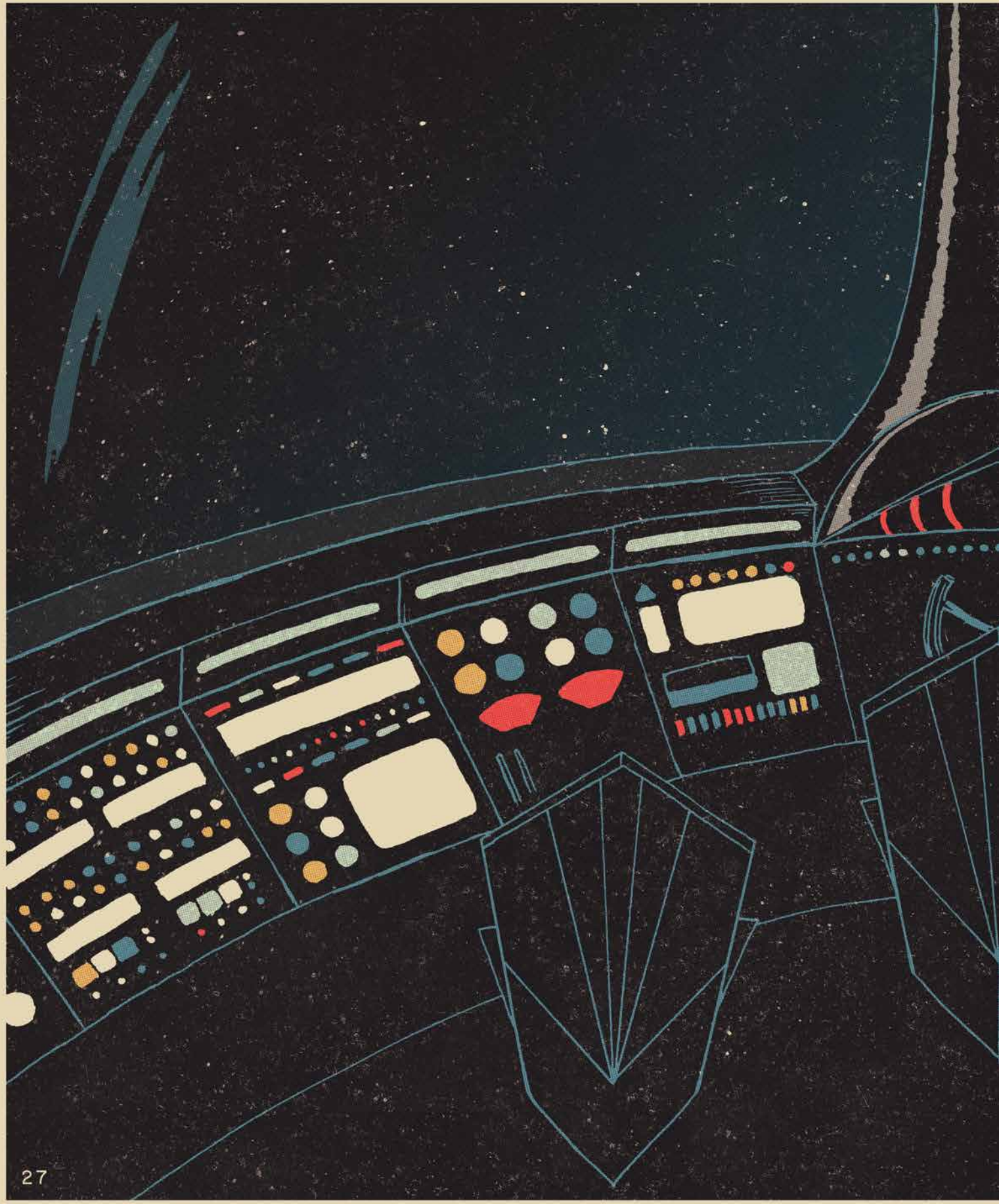


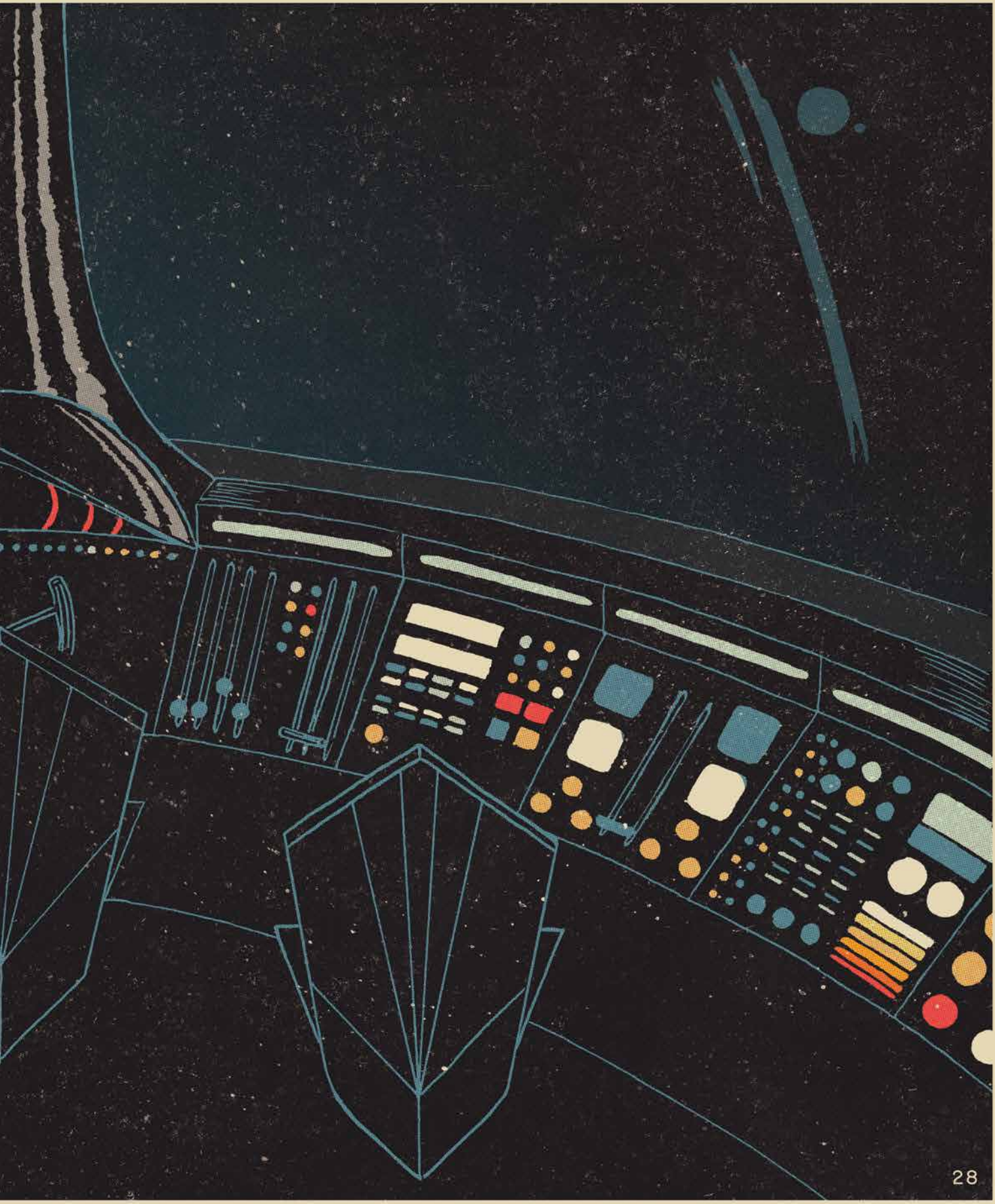
DECOMPRESSION COMMENCING IN 5...4...3...2...1
PSSSSSHHHH
BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ
WE JUST NEED TO RE-PRESSURIZE YOU BOYS FOR A FEW MINUTES, THEN I'LL OPEN THE DOOR. DON'T BE AFRAID. THERE'S SOME DRY CLOTHES THERE ON THE BENCH FOR YOU.

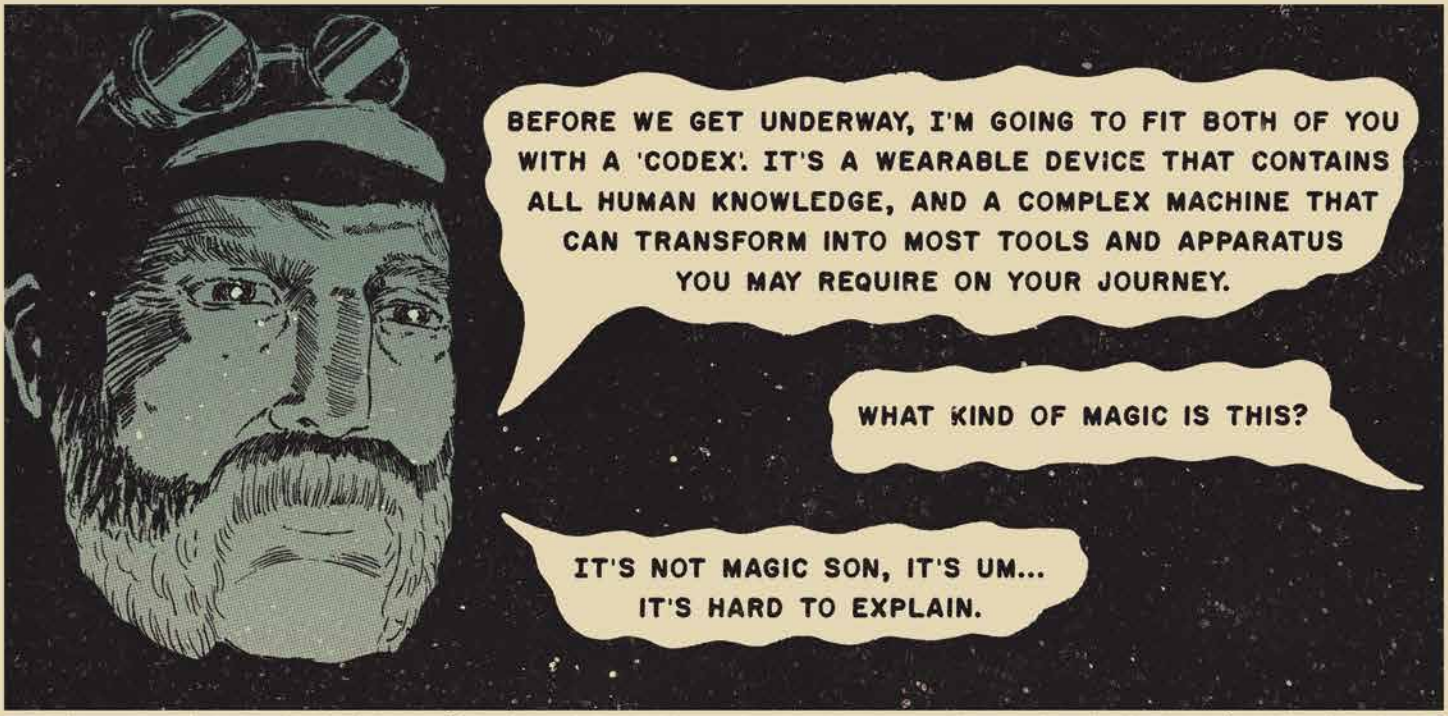

SHIRO AND LOU SHIMMY OUT OF THEIR WETSUITS AND PUT ON RED SHORTS, WHITE CREW SHIRTS AND WHITE TENNIS SHOES. THE BUZZER STOPS BUZZING, THE DOOR STARTS CLANKING FROM THE OTHER SIDE.
THUD
GHOST PIRATE
GHOST PIRATE
GHOST PIRATE
CURSE THIS DOOR!

DON'T BE SCARED, SON. THESE ARE THE DAYS WE TEST THE TIMBER OF YOUR HEART. NOW THAT YOU'RE IN MY CREW, YOU ARE IN MY COMMAND. WHAT YOU BOYS DO IN THE COMING DAYS WILL MARK YOUR SOULS. YOU WILL SEE THINGS NO MAN HAS EVER SEEN. YOU WILL DO THINGS YOU WON'T BELIEVE... AND NOBODY ELSE WILL EITHER, WHICH IS WHY YOU ARE ADVISED TO USE THE UTMOST DISCRETION.
WHAT DOES DISCRETION MEAN?
IF THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS, FOLLOW ME TO THE BRIDGE. DOUBLE TIME!
OKAY.
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY SAILOR?

OKAY!!!
I THOUGHT I HEARD A MOUSE... DID YOU HEAR A MOUSE, SAILOR?
NO SIR!
NOW THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!
HOW 'BOUT YOU SAILOR??
YES SIR!!!
THAT'S AYE AYE SIR... CAPTAIN OR SHORTY, TO YOU, SAILOR!
AYE AYE CAPTAIN SHORTY!






BEFORE WE GET UNDERWAY, I'M GOING TO FIT BOTH OF YOU WITH A 'CODEX'. IT'S A WEARABLE DEVICE THAT CONTAINS ALL HUMAN KNOWLEDGE, AND A COMPLEX MACHINE THAT CAN TRANSFORM INTO MOST TOOLS AND APPARATUS YOU MAY REQUIRE ON YOUR JOURNEY.
WHAT KIND OF MAGIC IS THIS?
IT'S NOT MAGIC SON, IT'S UM... IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN.

CURSE! WE'RE NOT DOPES, IF IT'S SOME KIND OF ALIEN TECHNOLOGY, JUST TELL US!
crew
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LET THIS GO ARE YOU?
CURSE NO! WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT THIS THING IS!
SHORTY TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND EXPLAINS
WELL... IT'S... IT'S A...

IT'S A COMPUTER

A LIBRARY

A THEATER

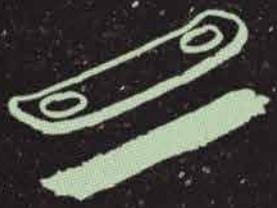
A JACKHAMMER

A BODYGUARD

A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

A REBREATHER

A MICROSCOPE



A HOVERBOARD

A DIVE WATCH

A CAMP STOVE

A RAY GUN

A BASKETBALL

GRAVITY BOOTS

SNOW SHOES

ROPE

A GUITAR

A SADDLE FOR YOUR HORSE

A HELMET IF YOU CRASH

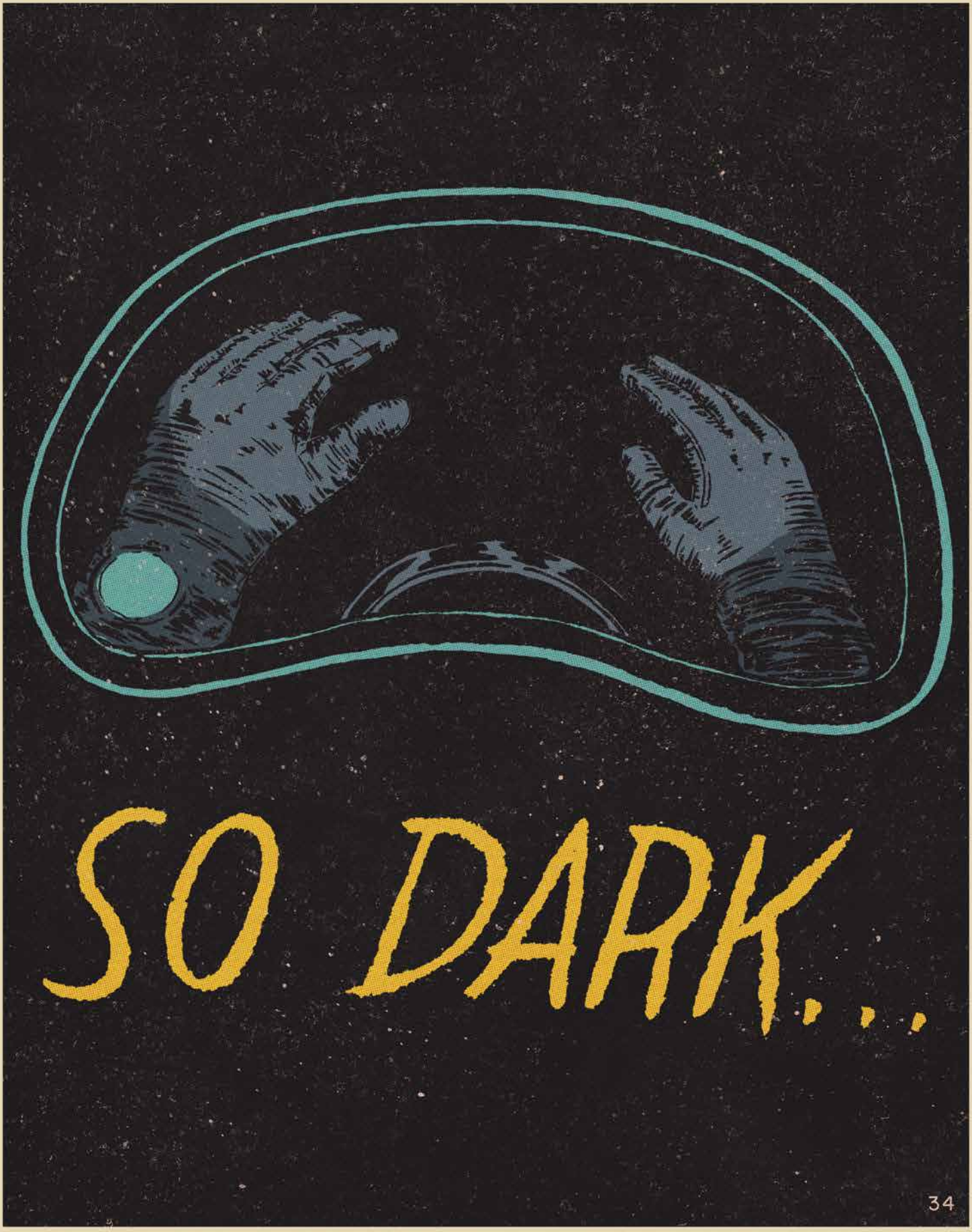
AND A PILLOW WHEN YOU SLEEP

IT'S ANYTHING YOU NEED IT TO BE AND YOU WEAR IT RIGHT HERE. ITS NOT ALIEN TECHNOLOGY IT'S MY TECHNOLOGY.
B-B-B-B-B BUT HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NOT FROM HERE?
IT'S NOT FROM HERE.
IT'S FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION! CURSE! DO I REALLY HAVE TO GIVE YOU THE BACKSTORY RIGHT NOW? WE HAVE THINGS TO DO!
YESSSSSSSSSS
ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT. LISTEN HERE...

THREE YEARS AGO I SAID GOODBYE TO MY FATHER AND WENT TO WORK LIKE I HAD DONE TEN THOUSAND TIMES BEFORE. I DIDN'T KNOW IT WOULD BE THE LAST TIME I'D SEE HIM OR MY FAMILY...

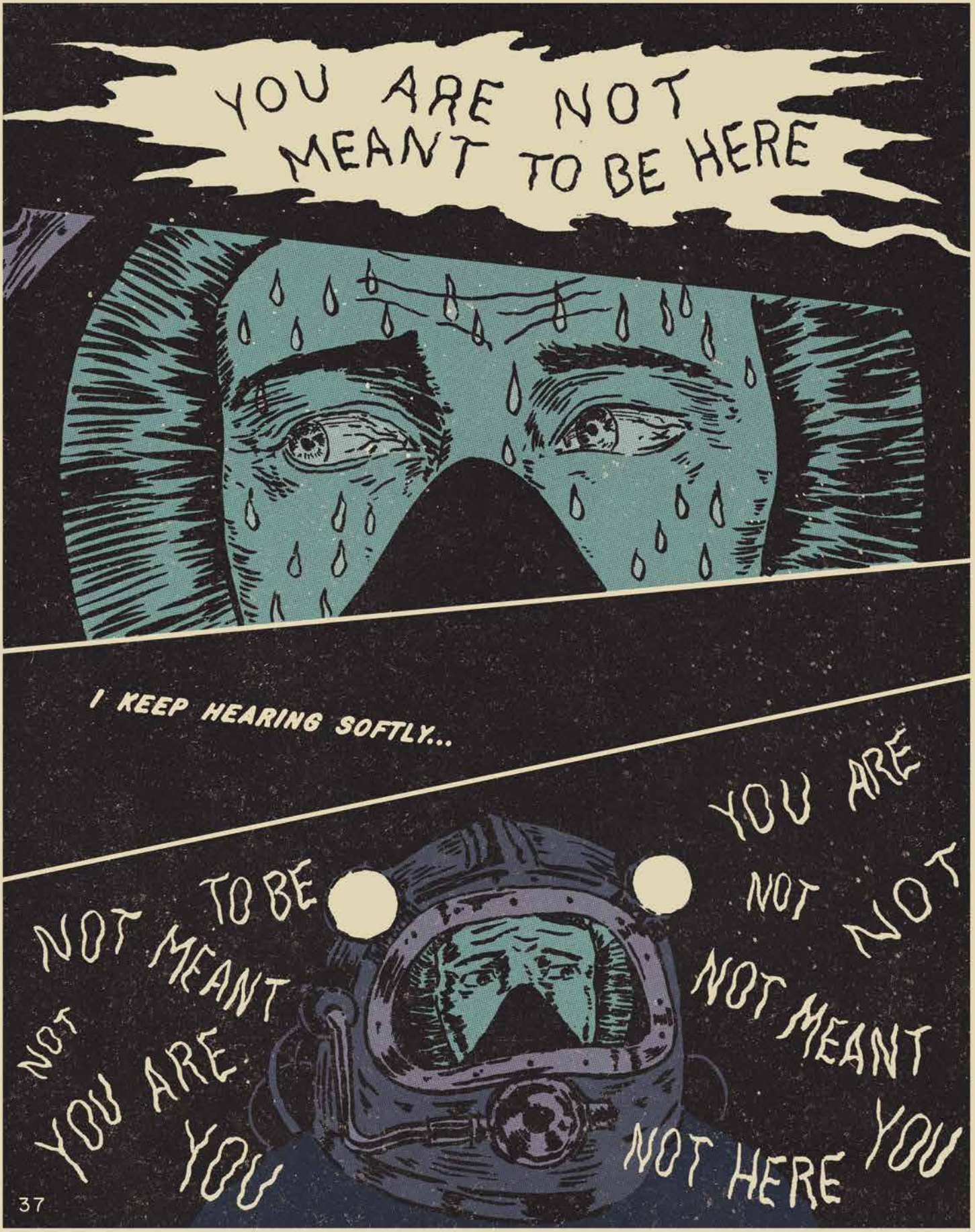
MY ORDERS THAT DAY WERE TO ASSESS THE FUEL TANKS OF A SUNKEN VESSEL 60 KM FROM THE PORT OF VICTORIA. THE MERCHANT SHIP HAD BEEN DRIFTING FOR CURSE-NEAR 70 YEARS, BUT HAD COME TO REST ON A BANK 200 FT BELOW. IT WAS HIT BY A TORPEDO FROM A JAPANESE SUB DURING WWII. A DIVE THAT DEEP MEANT I HAD TO BREATHE NITROX, A MIXTURE OF NITROGEN AND OXYGEN. IT REALLY MAKES YOU TRIP OUT AND MESSES WITH YOUR MIND... MAKES YOU VERY VERY DISORIENTED AND HALLUCINATE...

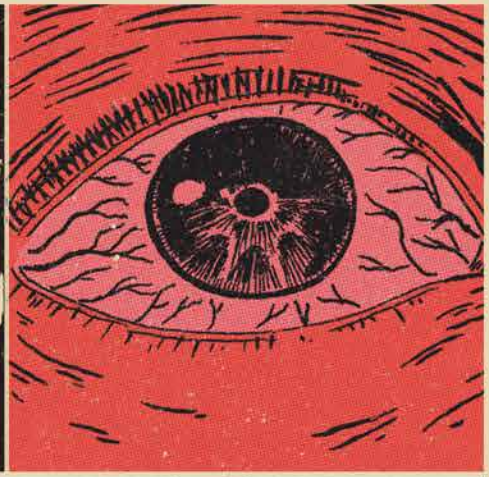
SO I BEGAN MY DESCENT...


SO DARK...

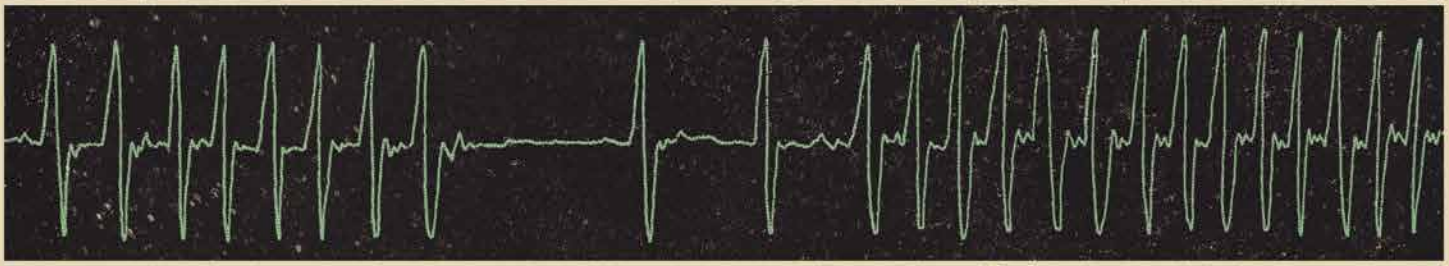
THE SILENCE

TERRIFYING


YOU ARE NOT MEANT TO BE HERE
I KEEP HEARING SOFTLY...
YOU ARE NOT NOT NOT MEANT YOU NOT HERE YOU
TO BE NOT MEANT NOT YOU ARE YOU

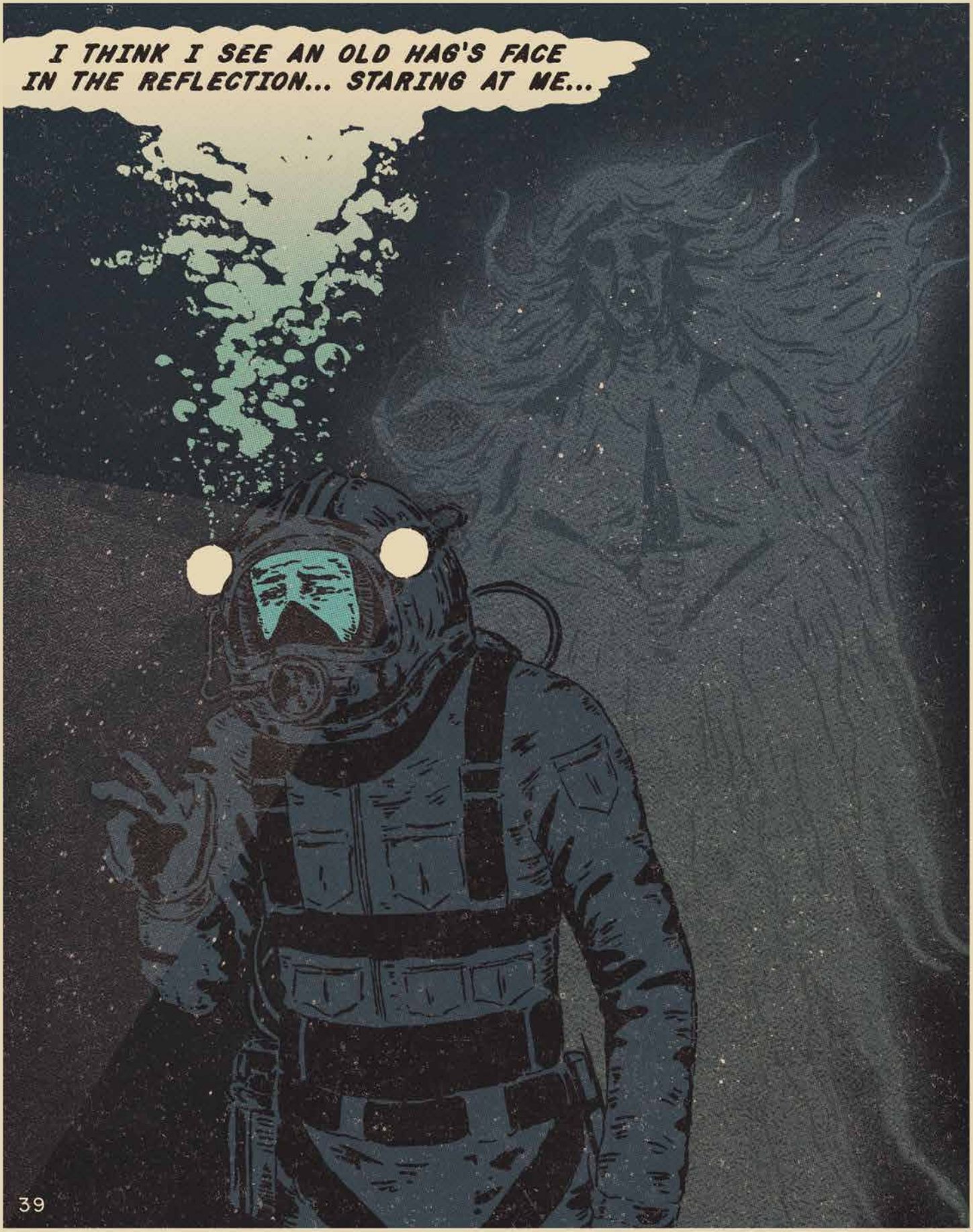


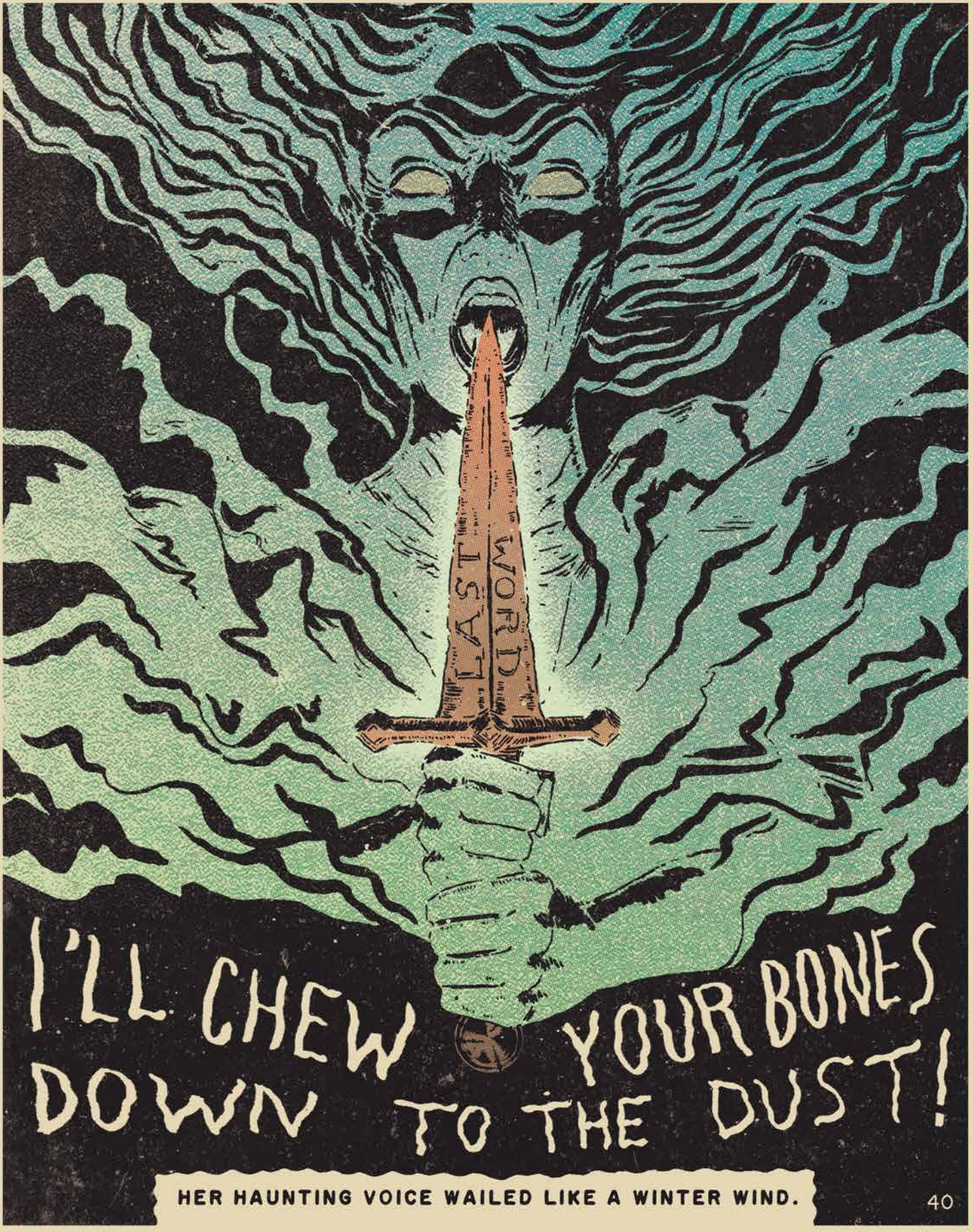
I BEGIN TO PANIC. AT 220 FEET. OXYGEN TOXICITY. BLOOD FILLING WITH NITROGEN.



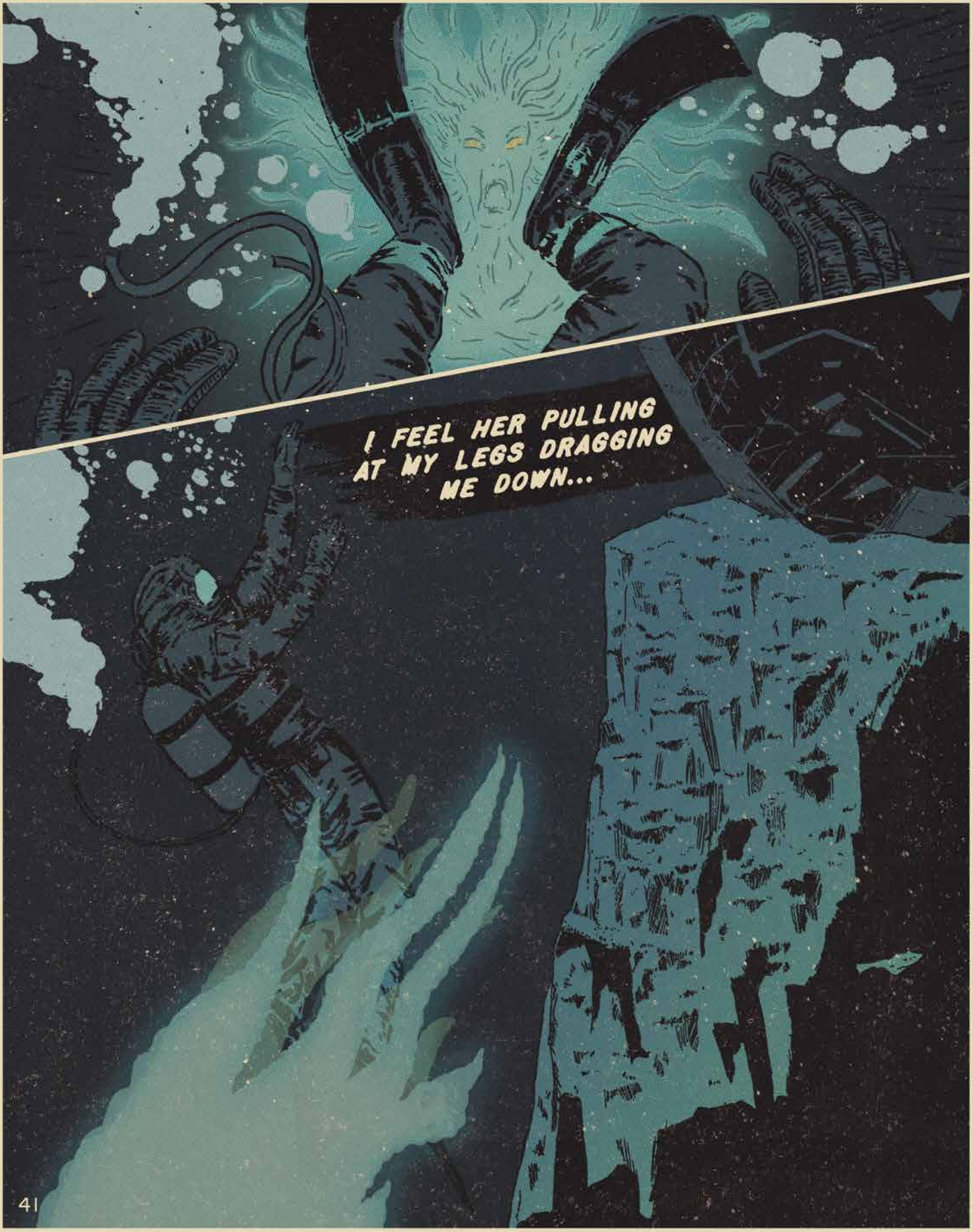
I'M GOING TO BLACK OUT SOON...

JUST THEN I FIND THE WOUNDED VESSEL


I THINK I SEE AN OLD HAG'S FACE IN THE REFLECTION... STARING AT ME...



HER HAUNTING VOICE WAILED LIKE A WINTER WIND.


I FEEL HER PULLING AT MY LEGS DRAGGING ME DOWN...

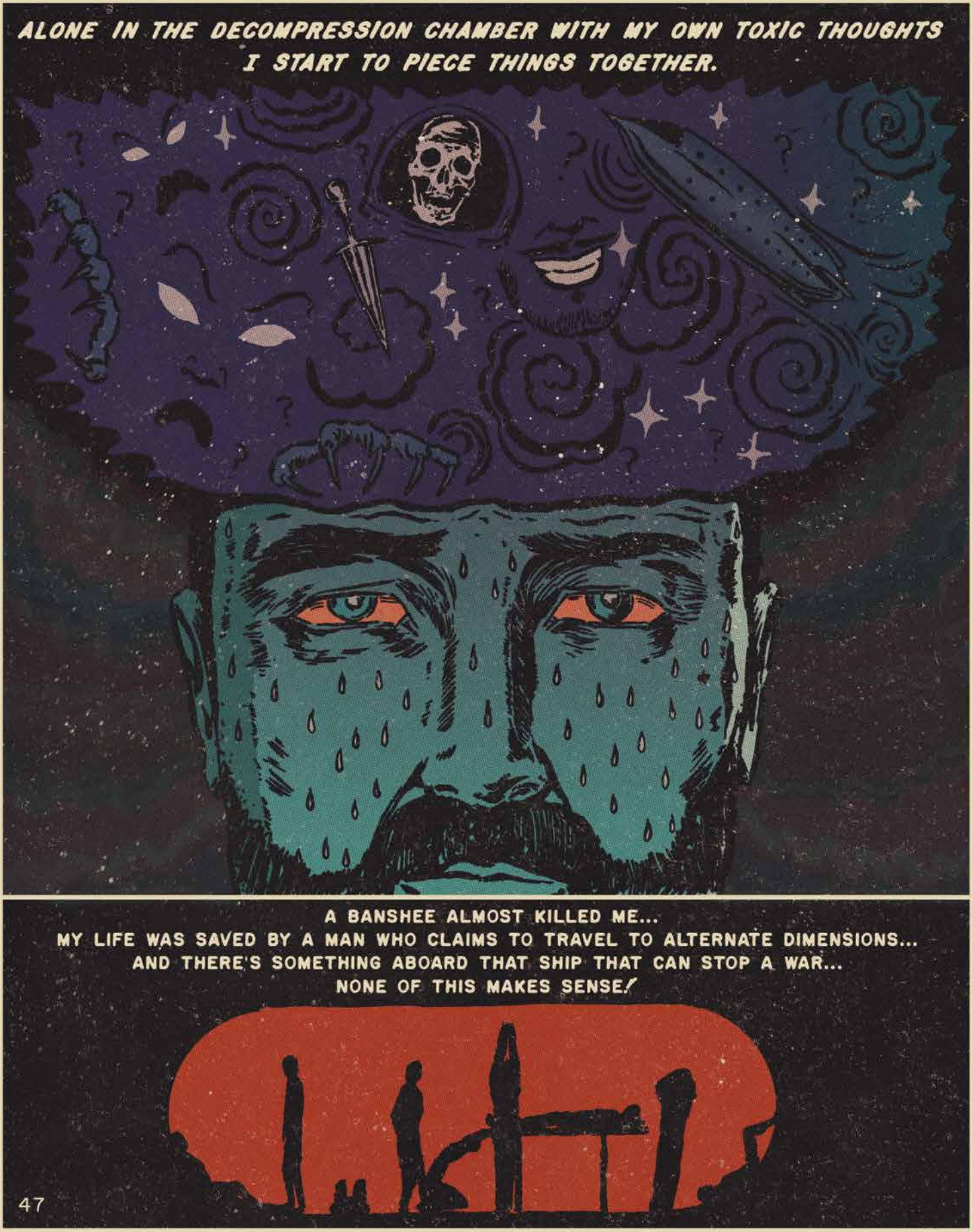
MY BLOOD FEELS HOT.
I RELINQUISH MY GRIP.
SHE TAKES ME...
I CLOSE MY EYES FOR THE VERY LAST TIME.

THE NEXT THING I KNOW SOMEONE IS TAKING MY MASK OFF...
I HAD BEEN RESCUED.

YOU'RE GOING TO BE JUST FINE.
MY NAME IS HECTOR, I AM TREATING YOU FOR OXYGEN TOXICITY NOW.
I WAS HALLUCINATING.
YOU'RE GOING TO FEEL FUZZY FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS, BUT IT WILL PASS. YOU'RE VERY LUCKY I FOUND YOU WHEN I DID
HAH... I THOUGHT A BANSHEE HAD ME.
SHE DID.
AIBELL HAS BEEN HUNTING IN THESE WATERS FOR A THOUSAND YEARS. AND SHE WOULD HAVE YOU TOO IF I HADN'T STOPPED HER!

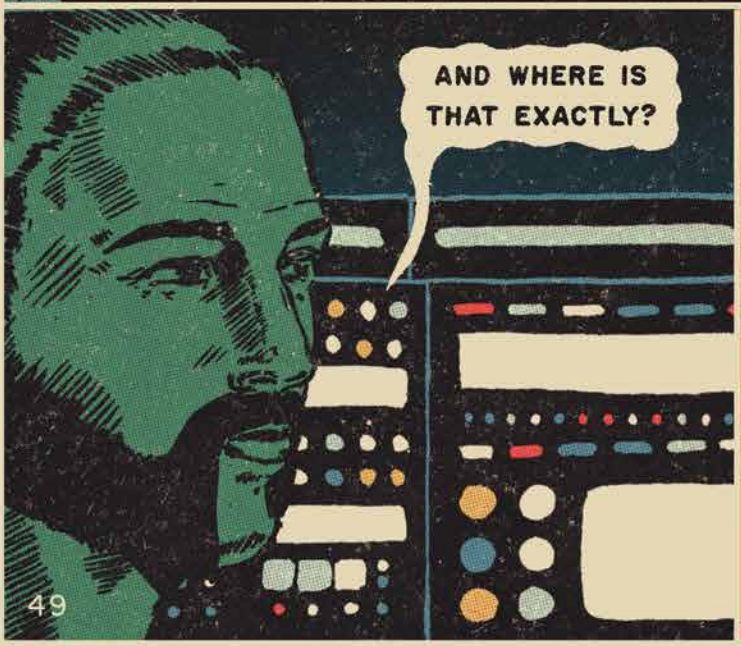
HARDLY ABLE TO SPEAK, SHOCKED.
WHERE AM I?
YOU ARE ON BOARD MY SUBMARINE, ISIS.
I HAD COME TO INVESTIGATE THE SAME MERCHANT VESSEL AS YOU, WHEN I HEARD THE FAMILIAR WAILING OF AIBELL. THAT'S WHEN I SAW YOU SINKING PAST MY PORTHOLE.
WHAT WOULD YOU WANT WITH A MERCHANT VESSEL?
WELL, THAT'S A COMPLICATED QUESTION, WITH A COMPLICATED ANSWER. MY ANCESTORS BUILT ISIS AS A WAY TO TRAVEL BETWEEN WORLDS. NOT SO MUCH THE REALMS OF MEN AND, UH, NOT-MEN... ALTHOUGH THAT IS POSSIBLE. IT'S A SHIP THAT TAKES YOU BETWEEN TIME TO DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS. I CAME HERE TO SEE IF I COULD FIND AN OBJECT THAT IS SAID TO BE ON THAT VESSEL. IF I COULD FIND IT AND BRING IT BACK WITH ME, IT MAY PREVENT A DEVASTATING CONFLICT.
WHY ARE YOU HERE, STEWART?

I WAS SENT TO FIND OUT IF HER FUEL TANKS WERE LEAKING.
AMAZING... BUT IF WE'RE GOING TO FIND THIS THING WE'D BETTER GET MOVIN'.
AIBELL WILL BE BACK SOON...
FOR YOUR BONES
WAIT HERE AND DON'T OPEN THE HATCH UNTIL YOU HEAR ME TAP ON IT LIKE THIS...
TAP
TAP
TAP
OKAY, GOT IT.
HECTOR SHOT OUT OF THE HATCH LIKE A BULLET.

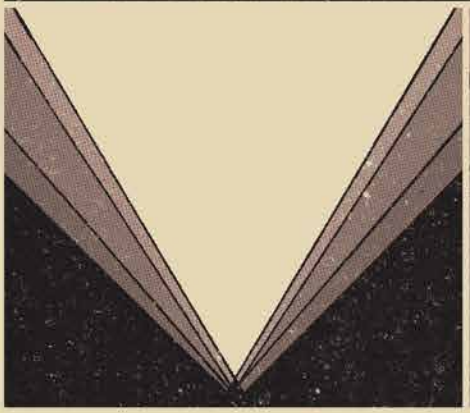

ALONE IN THE DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER WITH MY OWN TOXIC THOUGHTS
I START TO PIECE THINGS TOGETHER.
A BANSHEE ALMOST KILLED ME...
MY LIFE WAS SAVED BY A MAN WHO CLAIMS TO TRAVEL TO ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS...
AND THERE'S SOMETHING ABOARD THAT SHIP THAT CAN STOP A WAR...
NONE OF THIS MAKES SENSE!

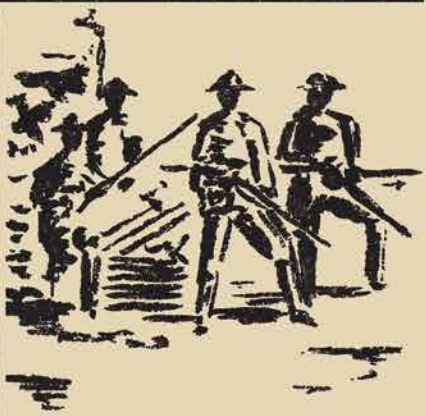
WHAT SEEMED LIKE MINUTES LATER...
TAP TAP TAP
GOT IT!
OH, AND THE FUEL TANKS AREN'T LEAKING.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE AIBELL COMES BACK.

ON THE BRIDGE HECTOR EXPLAINS HOW ISIS WORKS, BASIC INSTRUMENT OPERATION, NAVIGATION AND PILOTING BETWEEN TIME.



A CODEX OPENED UP AND PROJECTED INTEL ONTO THE GLASS.





Weather Forecast: Showers Tonight; Fair Monday

The Sun.

SUNDAY EVENING EDITION

NUMBER 8214. SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 28, 1914. PRICE ONE CENT.

THE BLACK HAND RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSASINATION OF FRANZ FERDINAND

BOMB HURLED INTO CARRIAGE FAILS TO EXPLODE, USES PISTOL

Fires Several Shots, All of Which Lodged in Vital Parts, and Francis Ferdinand of Austria and Sophie Chotek, His Morganatic Wife, Were Found to Have Been Killed Instantly.

VIENNA, June 28.—The Archduke Francis Ferdinand and the archduchess were assassinated today as they were leaving the Sarajevo station [illegible] assassin, a Servian student of eighteen, first hurled a bomb into the carriage. This took no effort. He then opened fire on the royal couple with a revolver. He fired several shots, all of which lodged in vital points and the archduke and duchess were found to have been killed instantly.

The assassin was arrested after being attacked by a mob and has been [illegible] been banished from Bosn[illegible] to Vi[illegible]

MAY LEAD TO WAR

MURDERED ARCHDUKE.
The Archduke Francis Ferdinand

SEVEN PASSENGERS [illegible] FLY THROUGH AIR [illegible] WITH LIEUT. PORTE

Trans-Atlantic Flight Plans Ad[illegible] vanced by Almost Perfect[illegible] Behavior of the Marvel.

By LIEUT. JOHN CYRIL PORTE, R. N.

[illegible]GES [illegible]LEN [illegible]ACY

NEWMAN TO FILE MOTION FOR NEW TRIAL WEDNESDAY

Three Grounds for Setting Aside Verdict in Ouster Suit Are Alleged.

Tory Island, where the California struck, and Londonderry, from which port help was sent.

[illegible]dinand, heir to the [illegible]Duchess of Hohenberg, [illegible]g their first official visit

[illegible]t of a concerted plan in which [illegible]is believed to have been the result of [illegible]spects of Austria in the Province of Bosnia, [illegible] 1908, against the policy of the Aus[illegible] Servian flags were flying in Serajevo before t[illegible] of the royal party, and when the Bosnian diet met after th[illegible]

SO YOU'RE GOING TO USE THAT THING YOU JUST GOT OFF THAT SHIP TO TRY AND STOP WWI FROM HAPPENING? WHAT IS IT??
WAR, MEXICAN SAYS
CAN'T TELL.
YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T TELL ME? OR CAN'T TELL WHAT THE THING ACTUALLY IS?
OF COURSE I KNOW WHAT IT IS, I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT IT IS BECAUSE THAT WOULD INTERFERE WITH A CONTINUUM.
OH, I SEE, SO I CAN'T BE TOLD WHAT IT IS BUT YOU CAN TRY AND STOP WWI? DON'T LECTURE ME ABOUT BROKEN CONTINUUMS! ISN'T MY CONTINUUM COMPLETELY MESSED UP NOW THAT I'M ON BOARD ISIS?

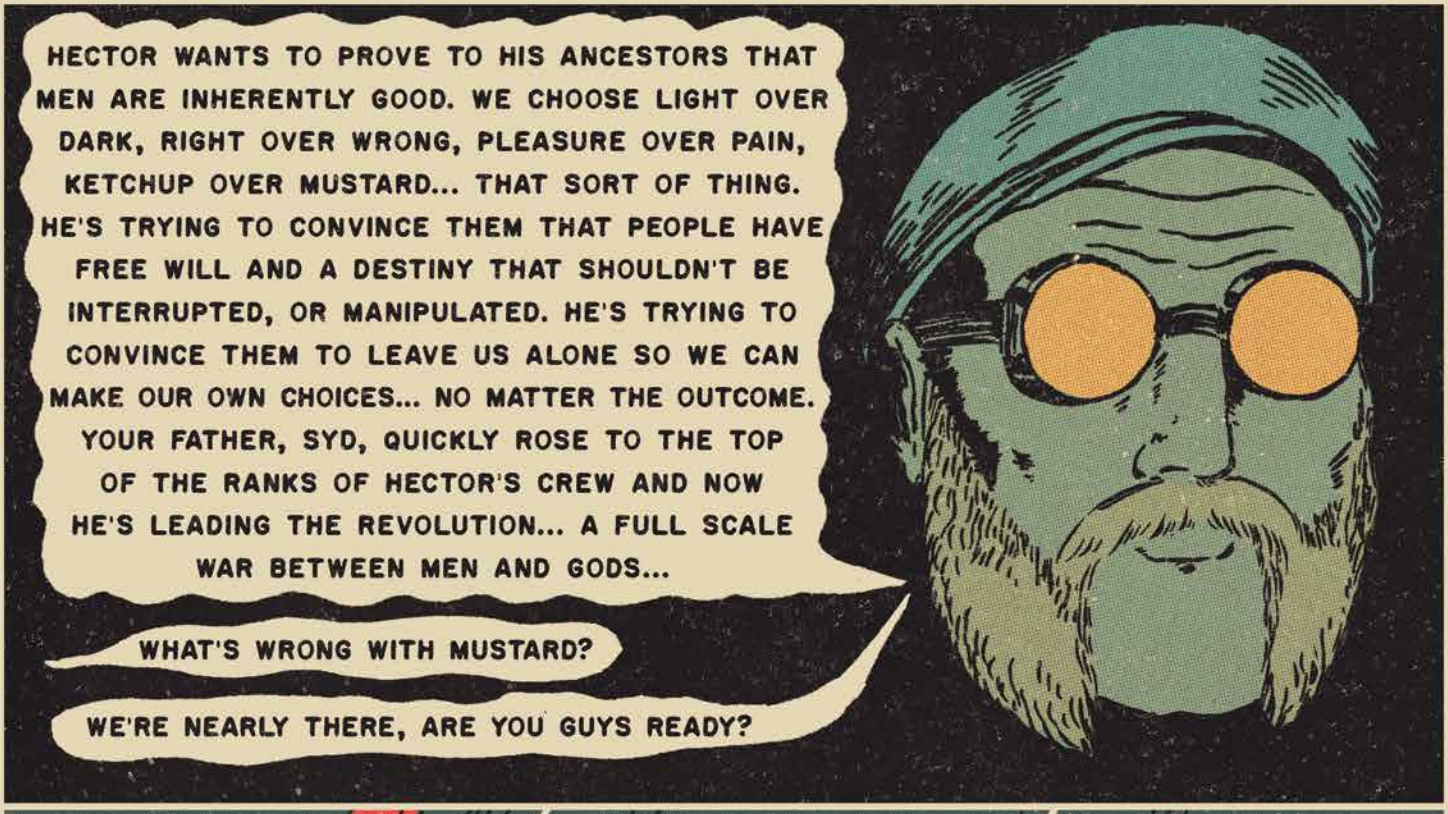
WITH THAT EXPLANATION, I REALIZE HOW GRATEFUL I FEEL TOWARD HECTOR FOR SAVING ME FROM THE BANSHEE, AND MAYBE FROM MYSELF. FEELING SLIGHTLY ASHAMED, I SHUT MY EYES AND DRIFT OFF TO SLEEP AS THE CHROME SAUSAGE BENDS ITS WAY ACROSS THE LIGHT, IN BETWEEN TIME.

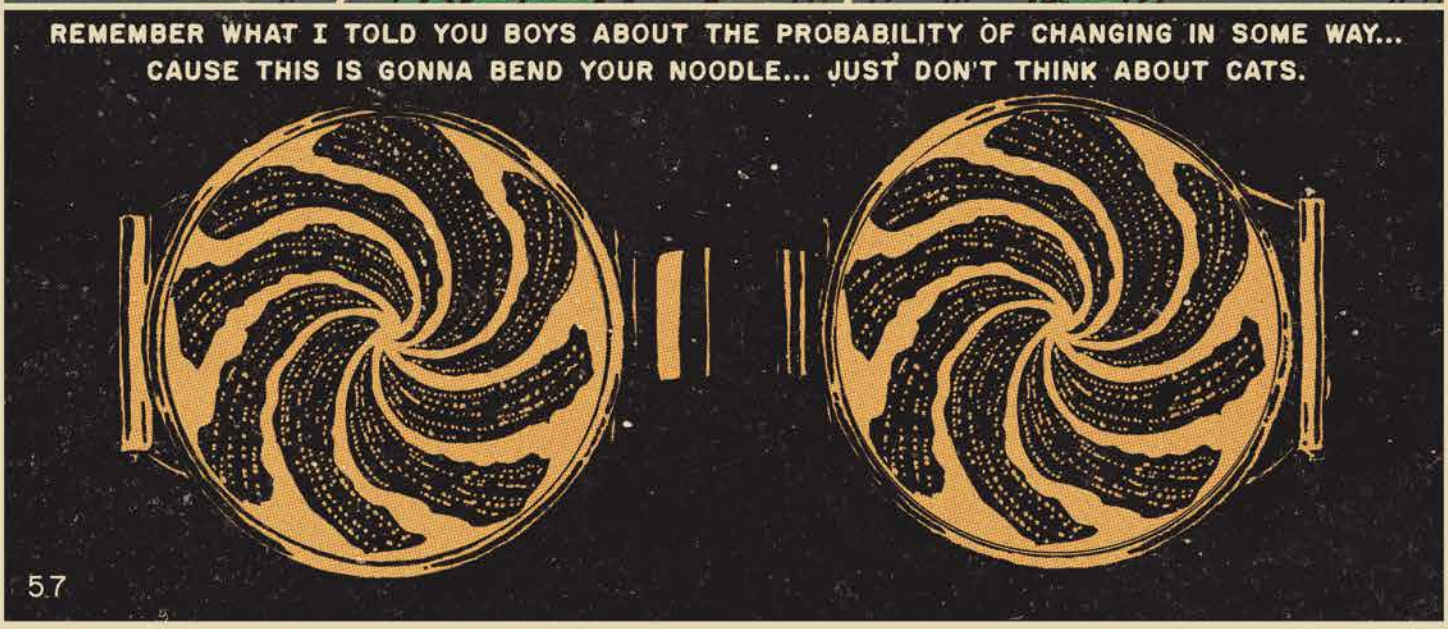
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ
HEY! WAKE UP!
OH CURSE!
YOU SEE BOYS THE THING ABOUT SLIPPING BETWEEN TIME IS THE PROBABILITY YOU CHANGE IN SOME WAY. IN ANOTHER DIMENSION I MAY BE BE MUCH TALLER, MUCH YOUNGER, OR I COULD HAVE THE FACE OF A CAT, OR A CAT BODY WITH A MAN FACE... ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.
LIKE HAVING SWORDS FOR HANDS?
EXACTLY!

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
STRAP IN!
KLANK
THE BOYS LOOK AT EACH OTHER, FRIGHTENED. THEIR HEARTS AFLAME AT THE POSSIBILITY OF WHAT HAPPENS NEXT!

WHERE ARE WE GOING?
TO HERACLEON. WE'RE GOING TO MEET THE MAKERS OF ISIS, HECTORS ANCESTORS.
ASTEROIDS BEGIN TO BREAK THE SILENCE.
UM, AREN'T THEY LIKE GODS OR SOMETHING? ARE YOU SURE THAT'S A GOOD IDEA?
YOUR FATHER THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD IDEA TWO YEARS AGO AFTER HECTOR PICKED HIM UP AND TRAPPED HIM IN THIS CURSED SUB!
WHAT!? MY FATHER'S ALIVE???

OF COURSE, HIS CONTINUUM WAS ABOUT TO END AND HECTOR TOOK HIM ON BOARD, SAME AS ME... AND NOW I'M THE ONE THAT'S TRAPPED IN HERE. YOU SEE, THERE'S A BOND WITH ISIS. ONCE SHE HAS YOU, SHE DON'T LET GO EASILY.
WHERE IS LOU'S FATHER NOW?
HE IS IN HERACLEON, LEADING THE REBELLION AGAINST TYRANNY AND CONSTANT MANIPULATION IN THE HUMAN WORLD BY HECTOR'S ANCESTORS. YOU SEE, THE WAY THIS WORKS IS HECTOR'S FAMILY SEES THE WAY THINGS ARE, THE WAY THEY COULD BE AND THE WAY THINGS OUGHT TO BE. IF THEY DECIDE TO TRY TO CHANGE THE OUTCOME OF SOMETHING THEY SEND HECTOR TO CHANGE IT AS THEY WISH IT SO.


HECTOR WANTS TO PROVE TO HIS ANCESTORS THAT MEN ARE INHERENTLY GOOD. WE CHOOSE LIGHT OVER DARK, RIGHT OVER WRONG, PLEASURE OVER PAIN, KETCHUP OVER MUSTARD... THAT SORT OF THING. HE'S TRYING TO CONVINCE THEM THAT PEOPLE HAVE FREE WILL AND A DESTINY THAT SHOULDN'T BE INTERRUPTED, OR MANIPULATED. HE'S TRYING TO CONVINCE THEM TO LEAVE US ALONE SO WE CAN MAKE OUR OWN CHOICES... NO MATTER THE OUTCOME. YOUR FATHER, SYD, QUICKLY ROSE TO THE TOP OF THE RANKS OF HECTOR'S CREW AND NOW HE'S LEADING THE REVOLUTION... A FULL SCALE WAR BETWEEN MEN AND GODS...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH MUSTARD?
WE'RE NEARLY THERE, ARE YOU GUYS READY?


REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU BOYS ABOUT THE PROBABILITY OF CHANGING IN SOME WAY... CAUSE THIS IS GONNA BEND YOUR NOODLE... JUST DON'T THINK ABOUT CATS.

LIGHT IS BENT. ISIS IS REMARKABLY SMOOTH AND QUIET AS SHE'S RIPPING THE LIGHT UNTIL SUDDENLY ANYTHING THAT COULD BE, ANY PROBABILITY BEGINS TO PRESENT ITSELF LIKE A SLOT MACHINE RUNNING THROUGH ALL THE POSSIBILITIES OF WINNING, EACH MILLISECOND EVERYTHING CHANGES, ALL THINGS COMING AT ONCE. INDESCRIBABLE AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE.

III

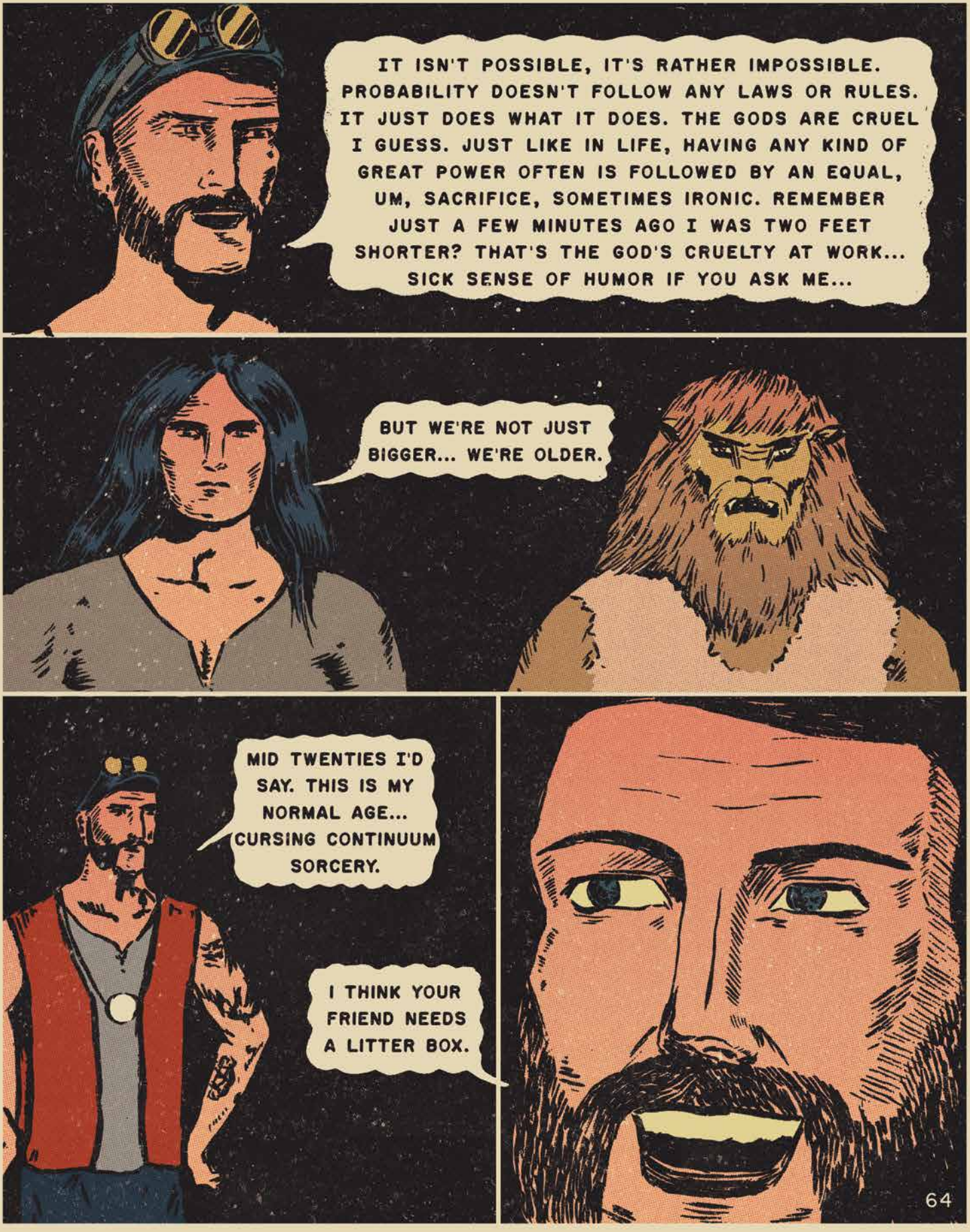
THEN SUDDENLY THE CHROME SAUSAGE STOPS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHAOS AS IF SHE'S TRYING TO GET THROUGH A CAVE THAT IS MUCH TOO SMALL FOR HER GIRTH. SHORTY, SHIRO AND LOU LURCH FORWARD, BUT ARE HELD INTO PLACE BY THEIR SAFETY HARNESSES. THEY'VE LOST CONSCIOUSNESS TEMPORARILY. TIME SLIPPING IS HARD ON THE BODY AND HARDER ON THE COGNITIVE REASONING. LOU BEGINS TO OPEN HIS EYES.

WHERE'S A MIRROR?
HERE.
WHAAAAA

HEY ALRIGHT!
HRRRRRRRRR!
WE'RE HERE KIDDO.
SHORTY! ...YOU'RE NOT SHORT! WE'RE GIANTS!
WE HAVE BECOME WARRIORS... NOW GO GET CHANGED YOU LOOK LIKE AN AMAZON WOMAN.
OH...
CLAP!
SHAKE A LEG SAILOR!

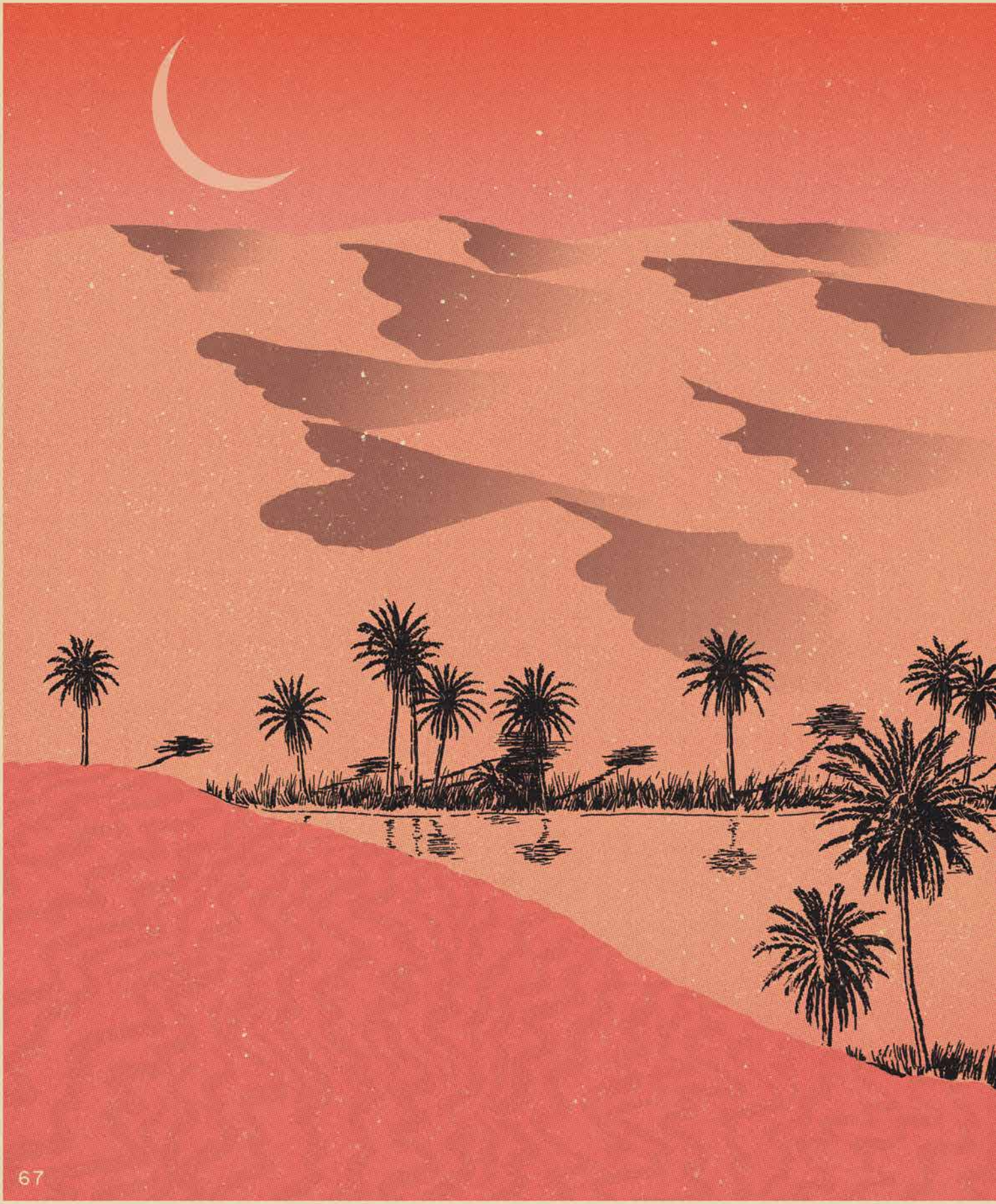
OW!
AHH!
WHAT THE CURSE!
TOLD YOU...
YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT CATS WEREN'T YOU?
...WAS NOT...

RAAAAAAAAAWR!
I HAVE A CURSING TAIL?!?
I FEEL TEN TIMES STRONGER!
HOW IS ANY OF THIS EVEN POSSIBLE??

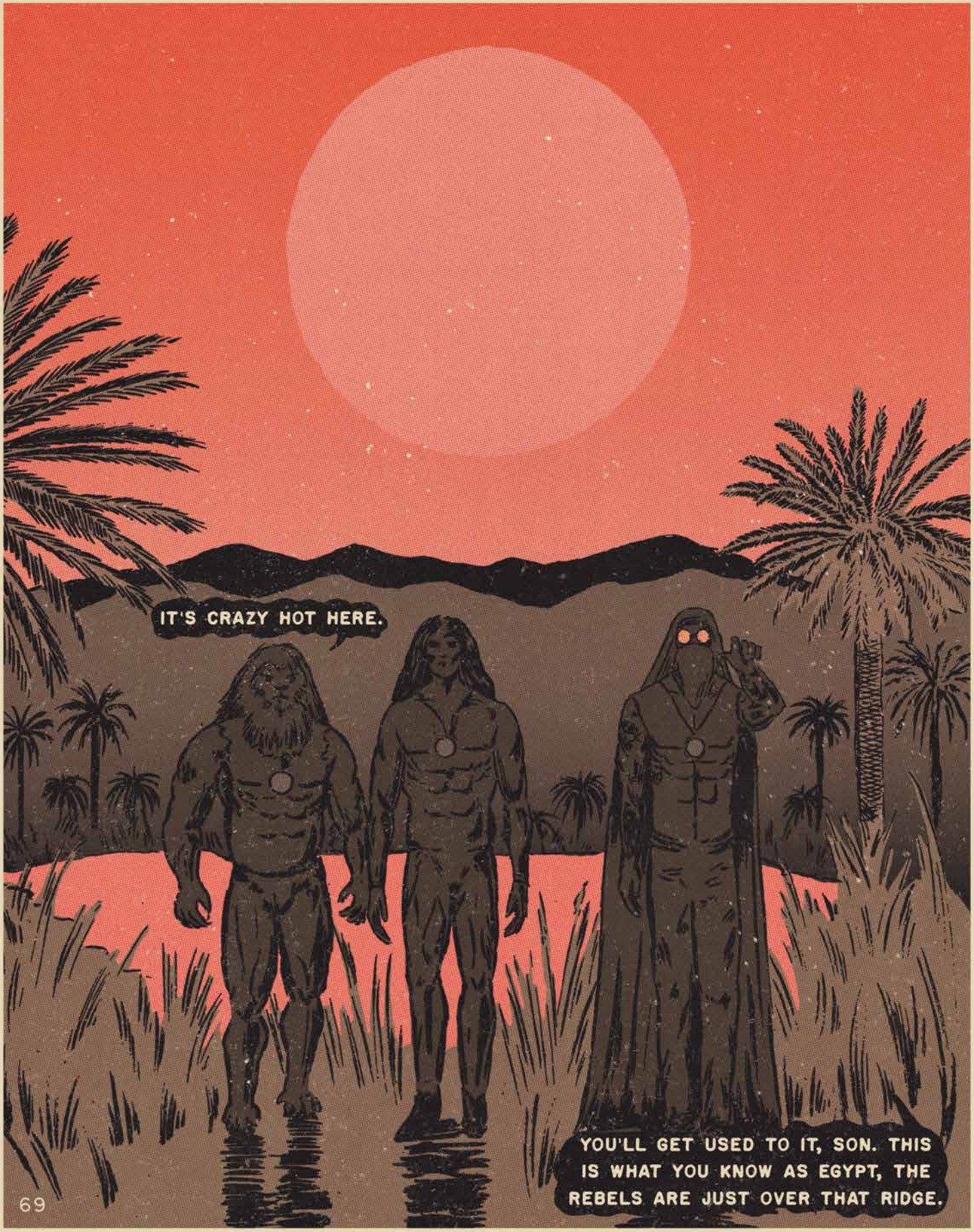

IT ISN'T POSSIBLE, IT'S RATHER IMPOSSIBLE. PROBABILITY DOESN'T FOLLOW ANY LAWS OR RULES. IT JUST DOES WHAT IT DOES. THE GODS ARE CRUEL I GUESS. JUST LIKE IN LIFE, HAVING ANY KIND OF GREAT POWER OFTEN IS FOLLOWED BY AN EQUAL, UM, SACRIFICE, SOMETIMES IRONIC. REMEMBER JUST A FEW MINUTES AGO I WAS TWO FEET SHORTER? THAT'S THE GOD'S CRUELTY AT WORK... SICK SENSE OF HUMOR IF YOU ASK ME...
BUT WE'RE NOT JUST BIGGER... WE'RE OLDER.
MID TWENTIES I'D SAY. THIS IS MY NORMAL AGE... CURSING CONTINUUM SORCERY.
I THINK YOUR FRIEND NEEDS A LITTER BOX.

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO FIGHT GODS THOUGH SHORTY?
YOU DON'T. YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT FIGHTING GODS, IT'S THEIR UH, LITTLE FRIENDS YOU NEED TO WORRY ABOUT
HERE, PUT ON YOUR CODEXES!
NOW LETS GET OUT OF HERE. IT'S STARTING TO SMELL LIKE A CAT'S SANDBOX.
GRRR!

THE THREE CREW MEMBERS EXIT ISIS THROUGH THE DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER WITHOUT ANY SCUBA GEAR, THEIR CODEXES NOW PROTECT THEM, SENDING TUBES AND MASKS UP TO THEIR FACES, EVEN CHANGING THEIR CLOTHES INTO SOME KIND OF BREATHABLE KEVLAR MATERIAL TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE ELEMENTS, BLADES, TEETH AND CLAWS.



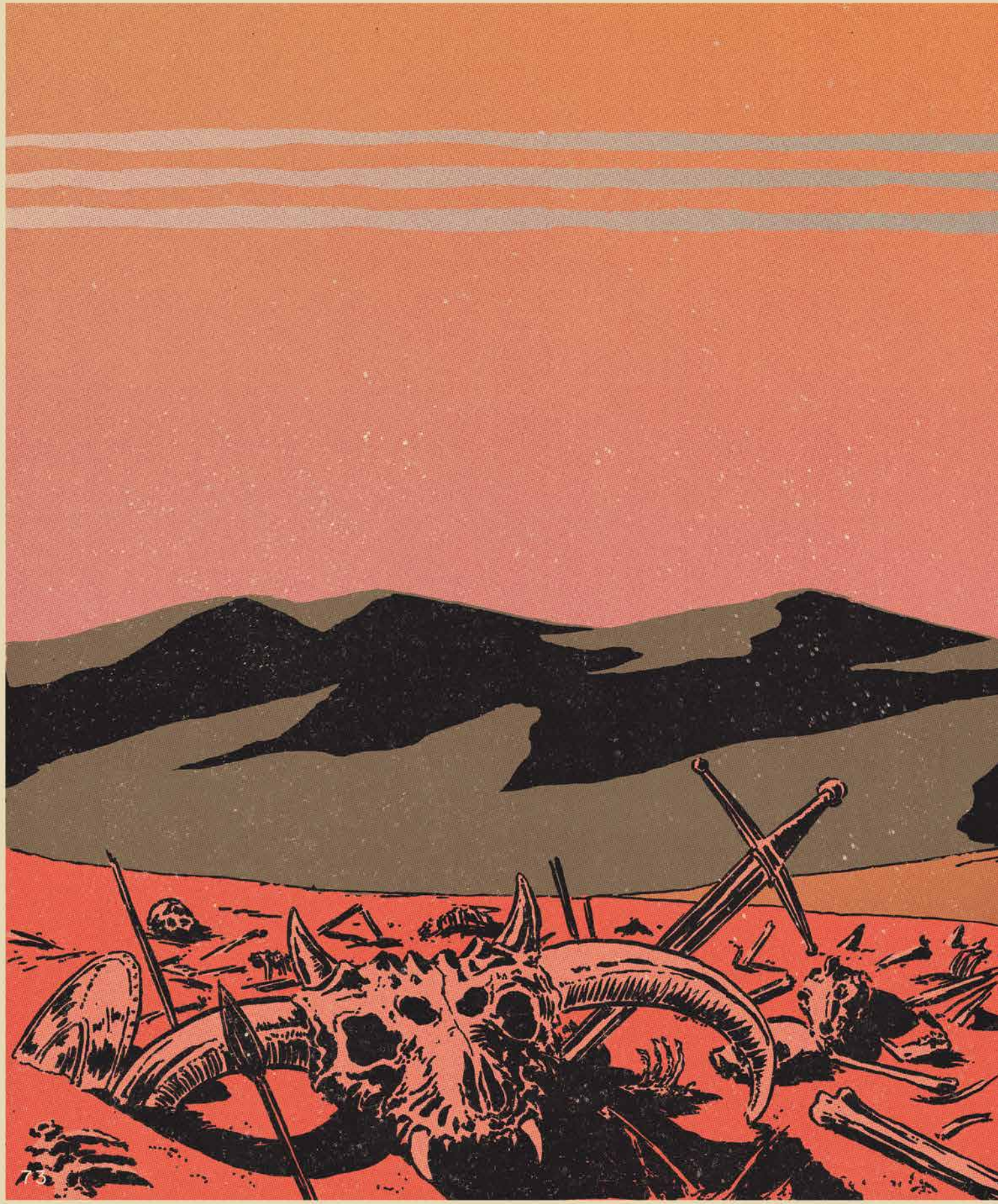
CURSE.


IT'S CRAZY HOT HERE.
YOU'LL GET USED TO IT, SON. THIS IS WHAT YOU KNOW AS EGYPT, THE REBELS ARE JUST OVER THAT RIDGE.

THEIR CODEX'S LABOR TO PRODUCE PIPES, HANDLES AND HUDS (HEAD'S UP DISPLAY) THAT SHOOT IN FRONT OF THEIR FACES LIKE AN EX-GIRLFRIEND SHOWING YOU EVIDENCE OF WHY YOU'RE BREAKING UP.

CLICK.

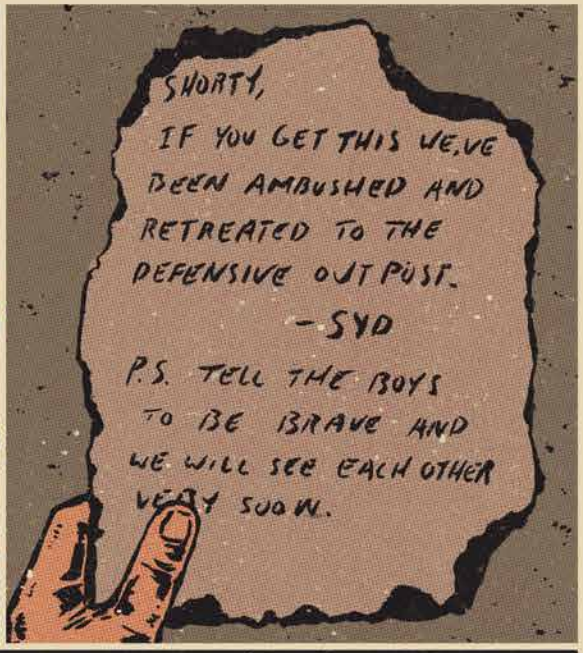
THERE'S NO COUNTDOWN OR WAITING, THEY BLAST OFF ABOUT 300 FEET INTO THE AIR AND MAKE THEIR WAY WESTWARD.



I CAN'T BELIEVE YOUR FATHER'S ALIVE LOU. AND WE GET TO SEE HIM AGAIN IN ABOUT AN HOUR!
I'VE MISSED HIM SO MUCH, I CAN'T GET THERE FAST ENOUGH! I'M ALSO KINDA MAD IT TOOK HIM TWO YEARS TO SEND SHORTY FOR ME. NOW THAT I KNOW HE'S ALIVE, THAT EMPTY FEELING I'VE BEEN HAVING MAKES SENSE. IT FEELS LIKE HE ABANDONED ME... LIKE HE DIDN'T WANT ME ANYMORE.
YOU CAN'T KNOW THAT, IN A WAY HE DIED BECAUSE HIS CONTINUUM BROKE AND HE COULD NEVER COME BACK. MAYBE THIS IS THE ONLY WAY HE COULD GET TO YOU. MAYBE HE'S BEEN WORKING OUT A PLAN TO BE TOGETHER AGAIN FOR ALL THAT TIME. I'M SURE HE FEELS AS BAD AS YOU DO, BUT I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'D FEEL HURT. I MISS HIM TOO.

JUST THEN THE CODEX ABIDES TO HIS WISH AND ENHANCES THE HUD DISPLAY, 3X MAGNIFICATION. LOU'S HEART JUMPS INTO HIS THROAT, HE FEELS LIKE HE'S GOING TO CRY, BUT INSTEAD CHOKES IT BACK AND HAS A FULL FREAKOUT.

AFTER WHAT SEEMS LIKE AN ETERNITY, THEY ARRIVE AT THE REBEL CAMP, BUT IT'S ALL ON FIRE. EVERY MAKESHIFT STRUCTURE IS BURNING, THERE ARE SCORCHED BODIES OF MAN AND BEAST, AND PIECES OF THEM BEING PICKED AT BY SCAVENGING BIRDS. THE THREE LAND AT THE CENTER OF THE CAMP, THEIR CODEXES FOLDING AWAY AND CONCEALING ALL THAT WAS OF THE JET PACKS. LOU IS DEVASTATED.
WE'RE TOO LATE! NO NO NO... THIS ISN'T HAPPENING.

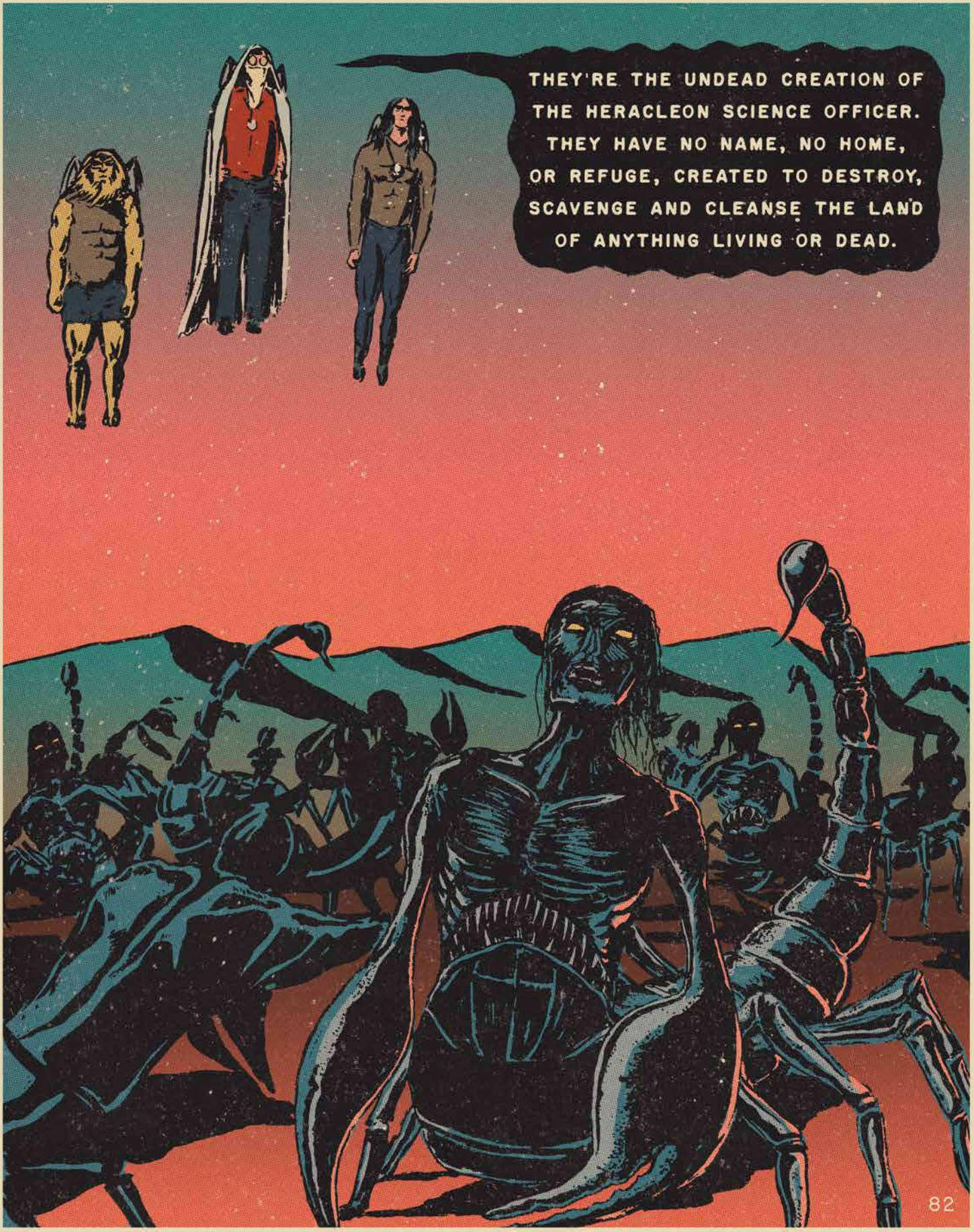


AS LOU GETS TO THE END OF THE NOTE, HE FEELS DEFEATED, FILLED WITH FRUSTRATION THAT HIS FATHER ISN'T THERE. HE LOOKS FOR SOMETHING TO THROW OR SMASH. HE PICKS UP, OF ALL THINGS, THE HEAD OF A BEAST AND GRABS IT BY THE FUR AND HURLS IT INTO THE AIR.

BOOM!
GROSS!
...WANNA DO THAT.
SPLAT!
WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO GET THAT TEMPER UNDER CONTROL SAILOR.
UH OH, SOMETHING KNOWS WE'RE HERE.
HOSTILES DETECTED
SPECIES: UNKNOWN

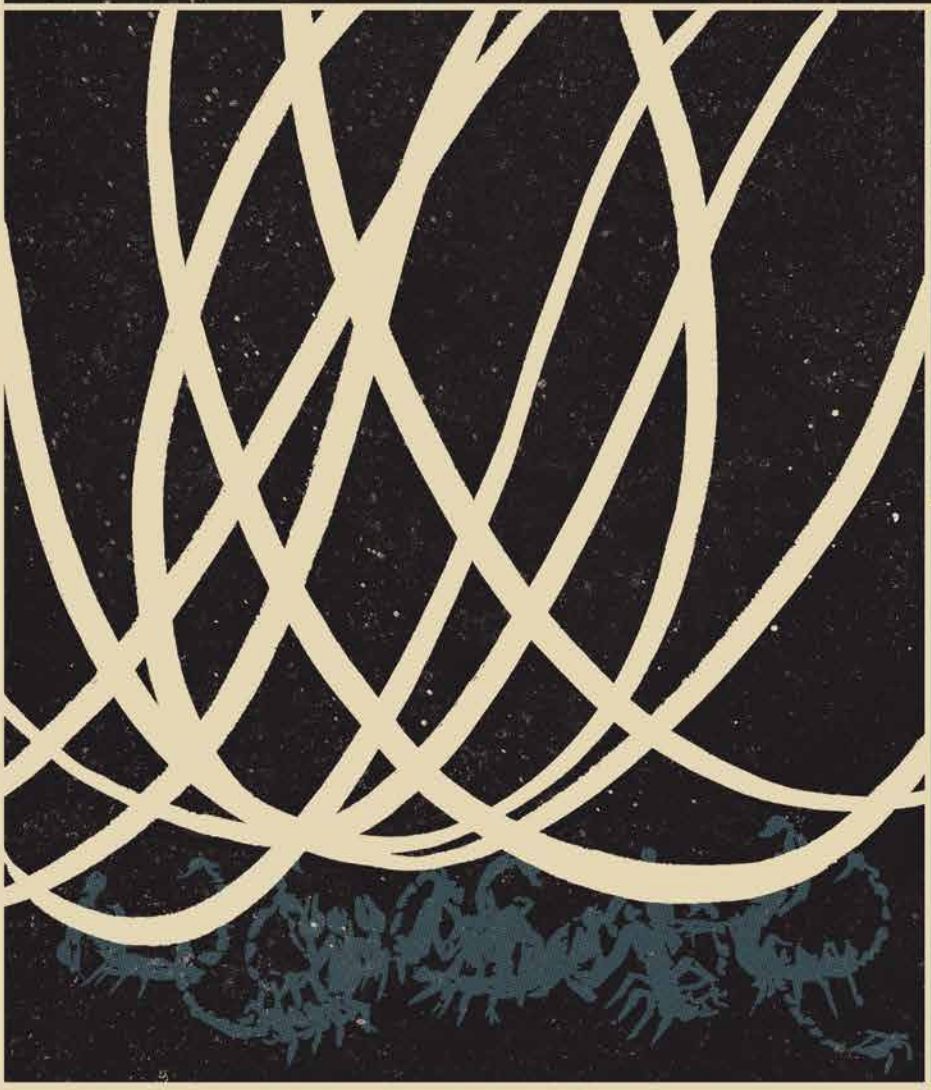
LET'S GET MOVING FOR THOSE HILLS! THE DEFENSIVE OUTPOST IS OVER THERE!
JETPACKS!

WHAT IS THAT DOWN THERE?
LET'S GO IN FOR A CLOSER LOOK.
WAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!
THAT'S CLOSE ENOUGH THERE BOYS!
HOLY CURSE! ARE THOSE SCORPION MEN?
WORSE...

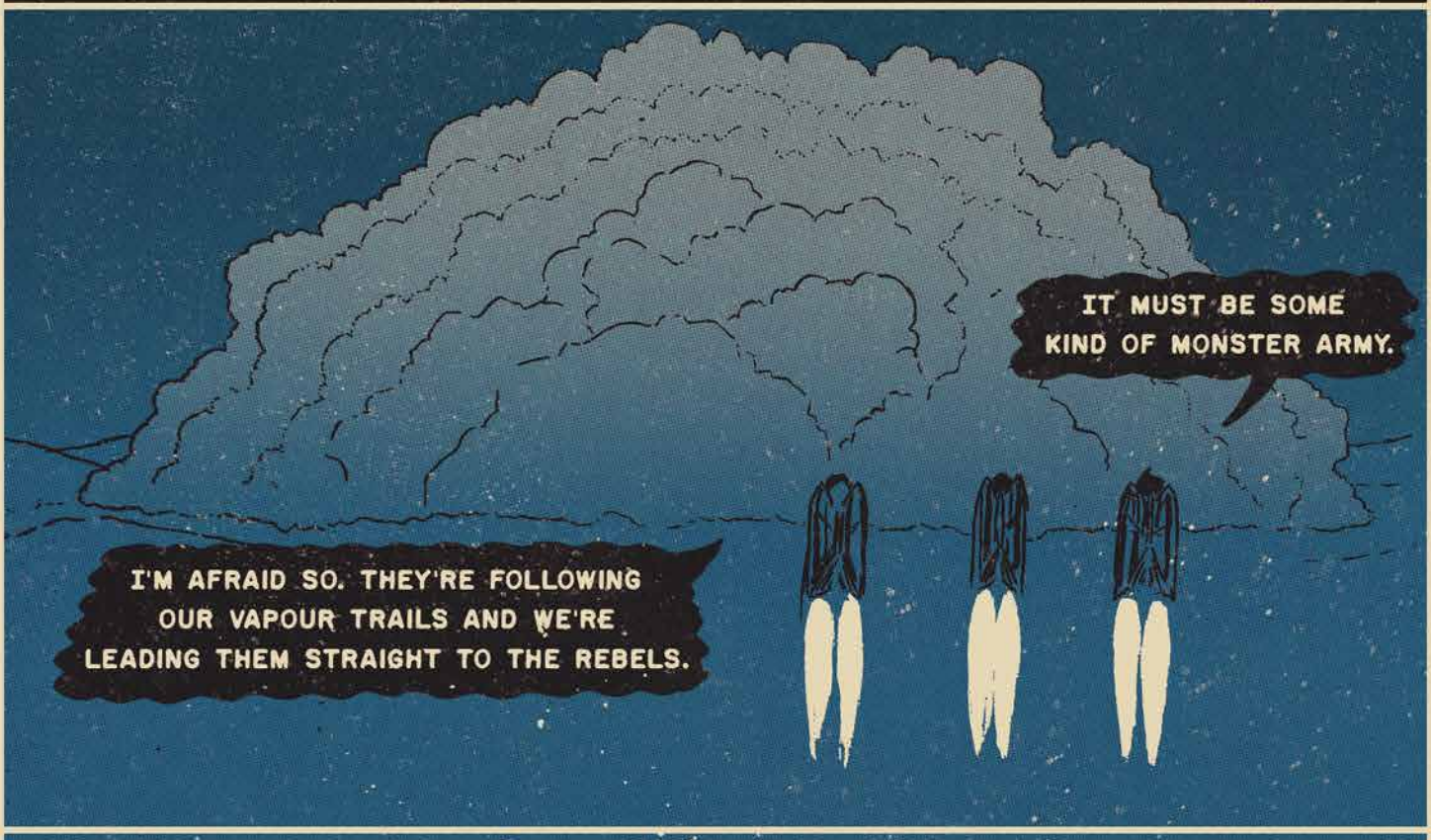

THEY'RE THE UNDEAD CREATION OF THE HERACLEON SCIENCE OFFICER. THEY HAVE NO NAME, NO HOME, OR REFUGE, CREATED TO DESTROY, SCAVENGE AND CLEANSE THE LAND OF ANYTHING LIVING OR DEAD.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THESE GUYS FROM MYTHOLOGY BOOKS, NOT IN ANY CULTURE!
PSH, THOSE BOOKS ARE HALF TRUTHS, THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD, WRITTEN BY SUPERSTITIOUS WHACK JOBS WHO THOUGHT THE WORLD WAS FLAT AND THEIR LIVES WERE ALL PLANNED OUT BY SOME DIVINE ENTITY.
THE ONLY MEANING OUR LIVES HAVE IS THE MEANING WE GIVE TO THEM. WHAT WE DO FOR OTHERS, WHAT WE DO FOR OURSELVES, OUR CHILDREN, FRIENDS AND OUR PLANET. EVERYTHING ELSE IS JUST AN ILLUSION.
YEAH, FOR ALL 7.5 BILLION OF US.

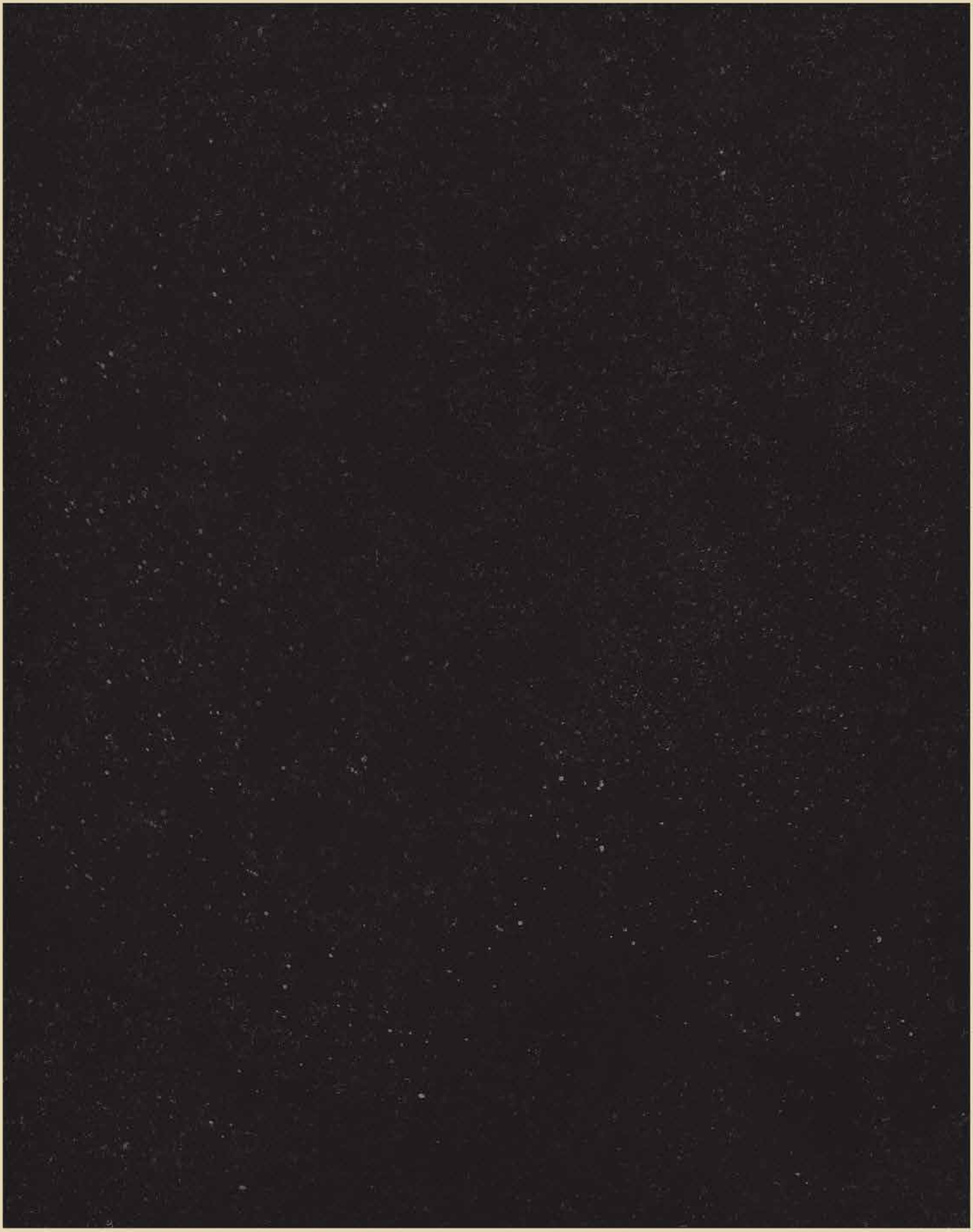
LOU, THE WARRIOR AND SHIRO THE CAT-MAN SWOOP DOWN TO THE CURSED, UNDEAD, MAN-SCORPIONS, SLAPPING THEM ON THE TOP OF THEIR ROTTING HEADS LIKE CROWS TRYING TO SNATCH A HALF EATEN HOT DOG, CARELESSLY BEING HELD BY AN UNSUSPECTING TODDLER. THIS REALLY PISSES THEM OFF, THEIR POISONOUS STINGERS AND CLAWS UNABLE TO DEFEND THEMSELVES FROM THE AERIAL ATTACK.

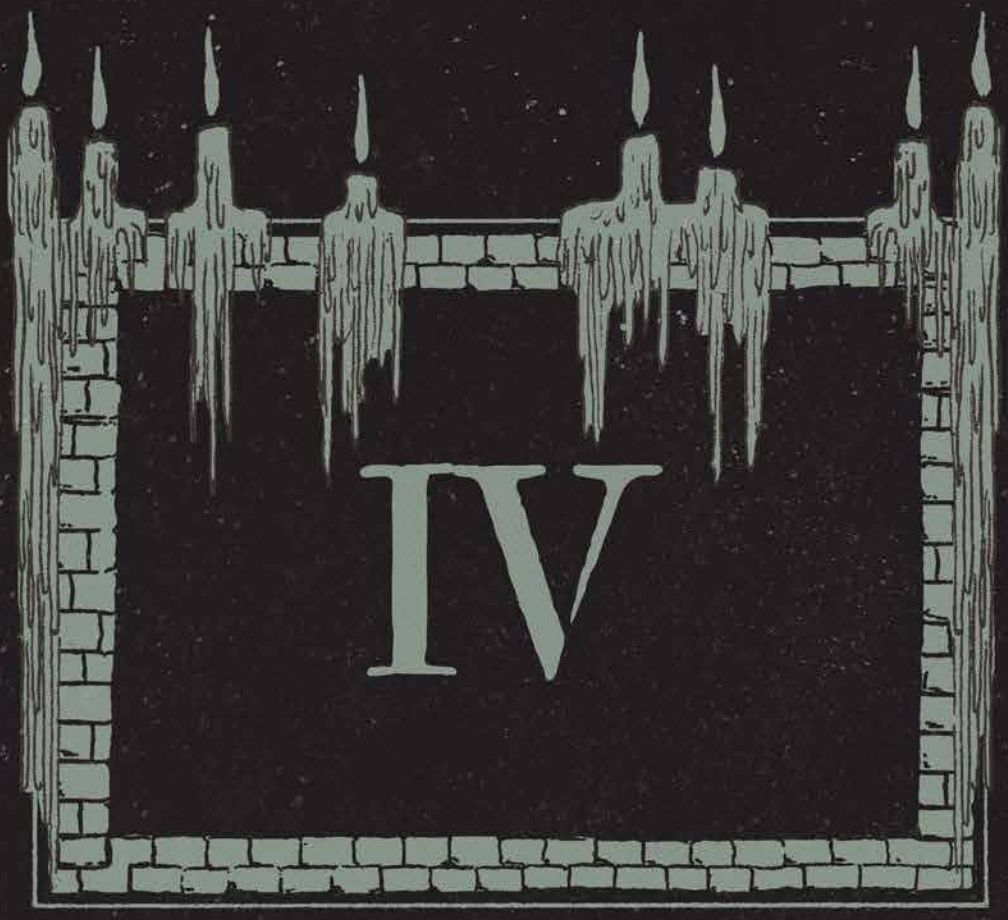


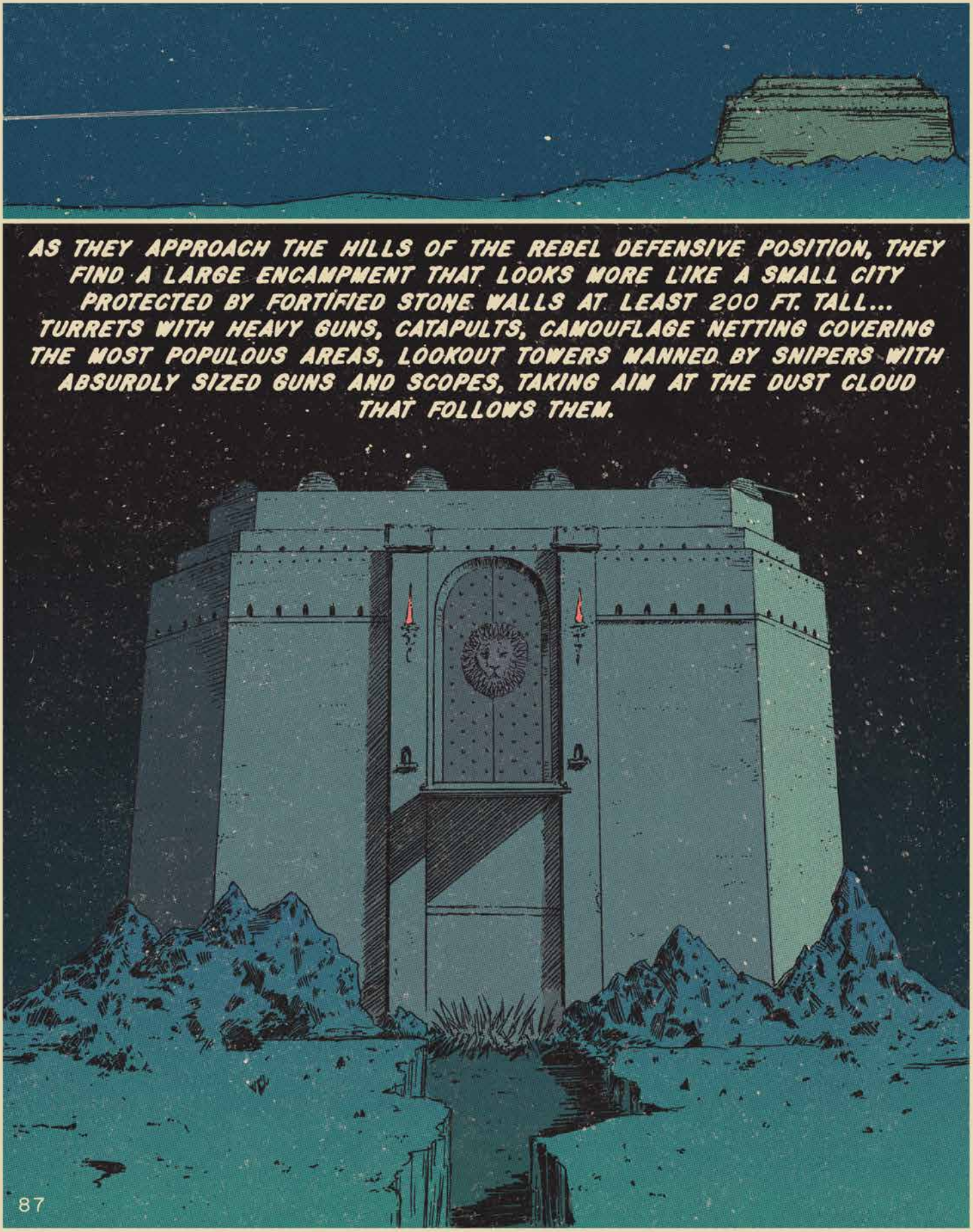
THE RAGING SAND CLOUD AND LOW RUMBLING IS GAINING ON THEM.



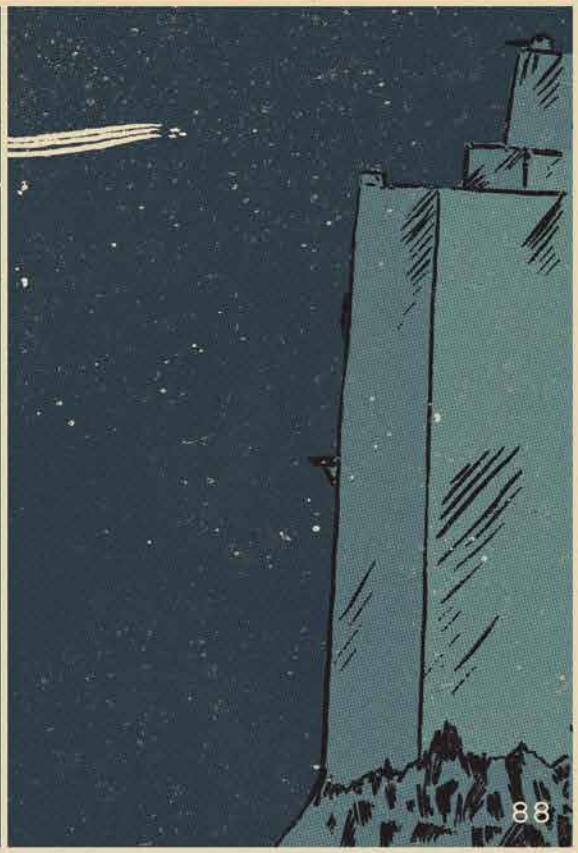
KEEP MOVING! THEY ALREADY KNOW WHAT DIRECTION WE'RE HEADING... NOTHING WE CAN DO TO CHANGE THAT... WE HAVE TO REACH THE REBEL'S DEFENSIVE POSITION BEFORE THEY DO SO WE CAN WARN THEM TO PREPARE FOR BATTLE!
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.
YEAH. KINDA. LET'S MOVE.



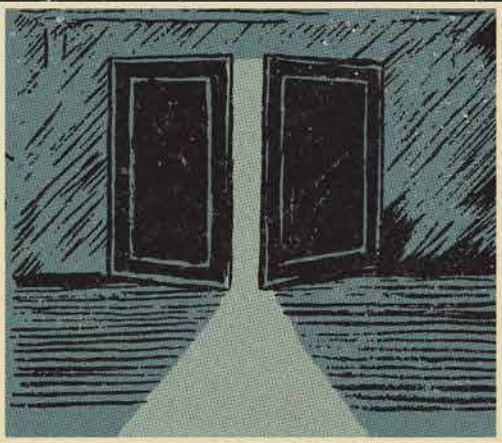

IV

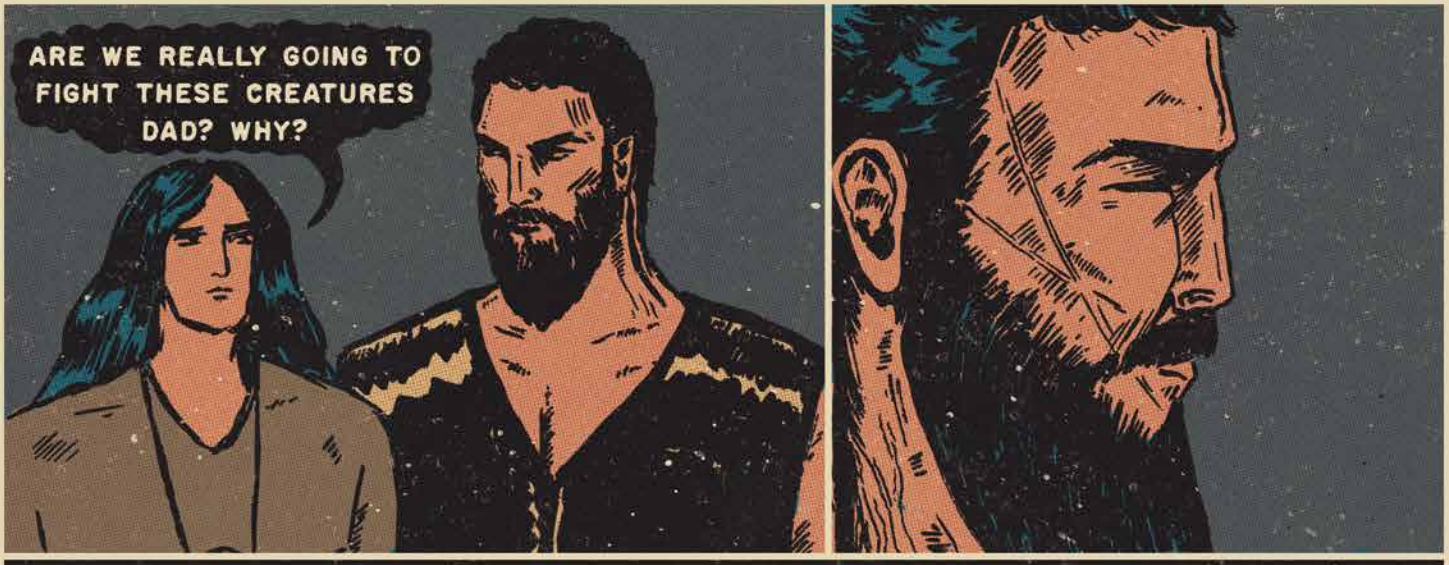

AS THEY APPROACH THE HILLS OF THE REBEL DEFENSIVE POSITION, THEY FIND A LARGE ENCAMPMENT THAT LOOKS MORE LIKE A SMALL CITY PROTECTED BY FORTIFIED STONE WALLS AT LEAST 200 FT. TALL... TURRETS WITH HEAVY GUNS, CATAPULTS, CAMOUFLAGE NETTING COVERING THE MOST POPULOUS AREAS, LOOKOUT TOWERS MANNED BY SNIPERS WITH ABSURDLY SIZED GUNS AND SCOPES, TAKING AIM AT THE DUST CLOUD THAT FOLLOWS THEM.

THE CODEX PIPES UP: THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 27 BATTALIONS, COMPRISED OF 10,472 HUMANS AND 3,006 NON-HUMANS STATIONED HERE. MOST ARE COMBAT READY.

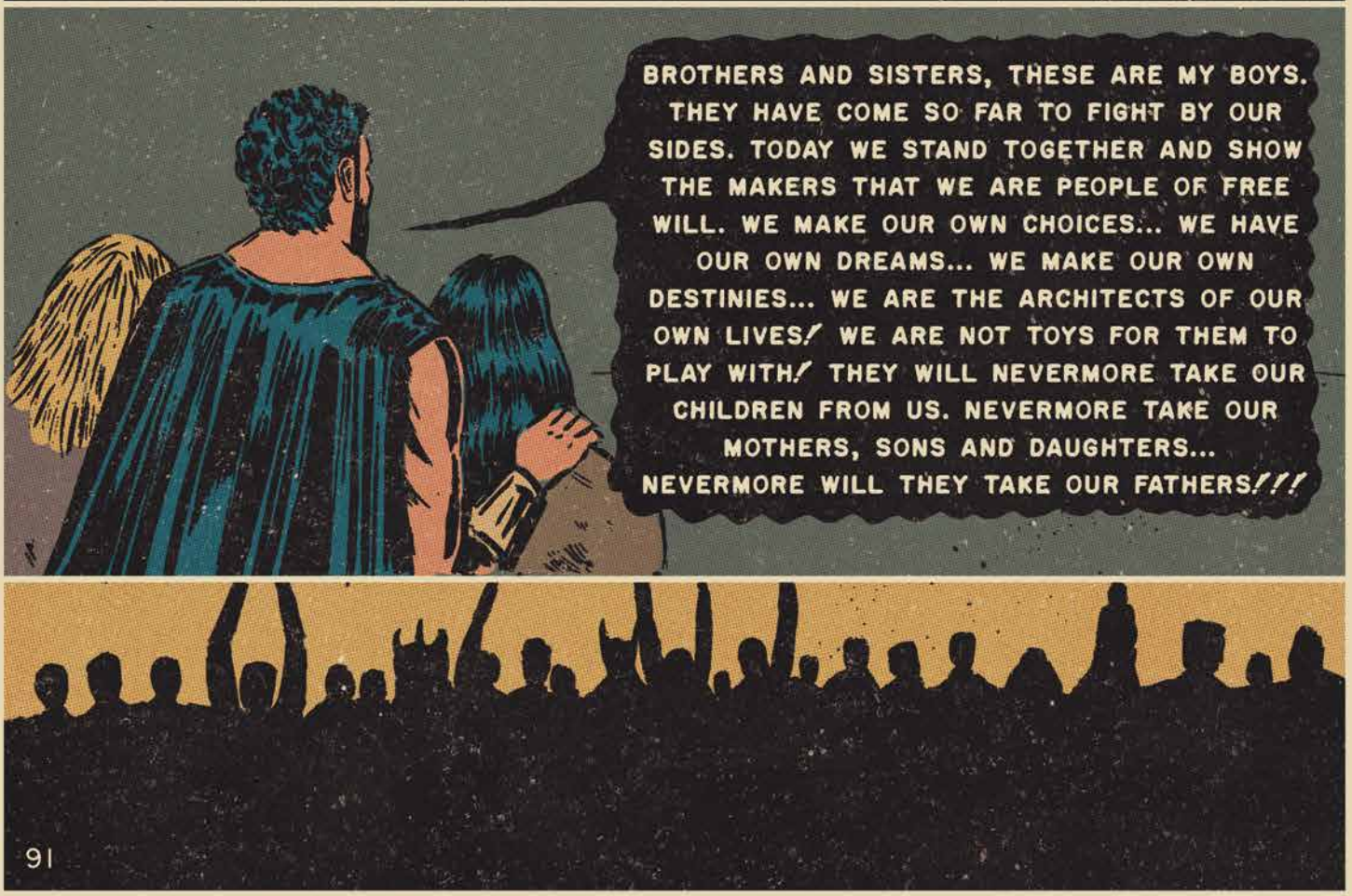


HUMAN AND HALF-BEAST ALLIES AND SYMPATHIZERS WAVE AND YELL WELCOMING WORDS AS SHORTY, LOU AND SHIRO LAND SOMEWHAT IMPERFECTLY IN THE CENTER OF AN OPEN SQUARE USED AS A SOCIAL/COMMUNITY AREA FOR THE INHABITANTS. TWO ENORMOUSLY TALL, REINFORCED DOORS FACING THE SQUARE OPEN SLOWLY ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SIZE AND WEIGHT. A SEEMINGLY COLOSSAL MAN RUNS OUT FROM BEHIND AS SOON AS THERE'S ENOUGH ROOM FOR HIS MASSIVE FRAME TO PASS THROUGH. HE SPRINTS DIRECTLY TO THE BOYS, ARMS OPEN, OCCASIONALLY SHAKING HIS HEAD IN DISBELIEF, SCOOPING THEM UP WITH THE EMBRACE OF A FATHER WHO CHEATED DEATH IN ORDER TO BE WITH HIS SON. HE SAYS NOT A WORD, IN FACT EVERYONE PILING INTO THE SQUARE TO WITNESS THE REUNION IS REMARKABLY SILENT. ONLY THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS, SHUFFLING IS BROKEN BY THE FATHER'S GENTLE SOBBING.

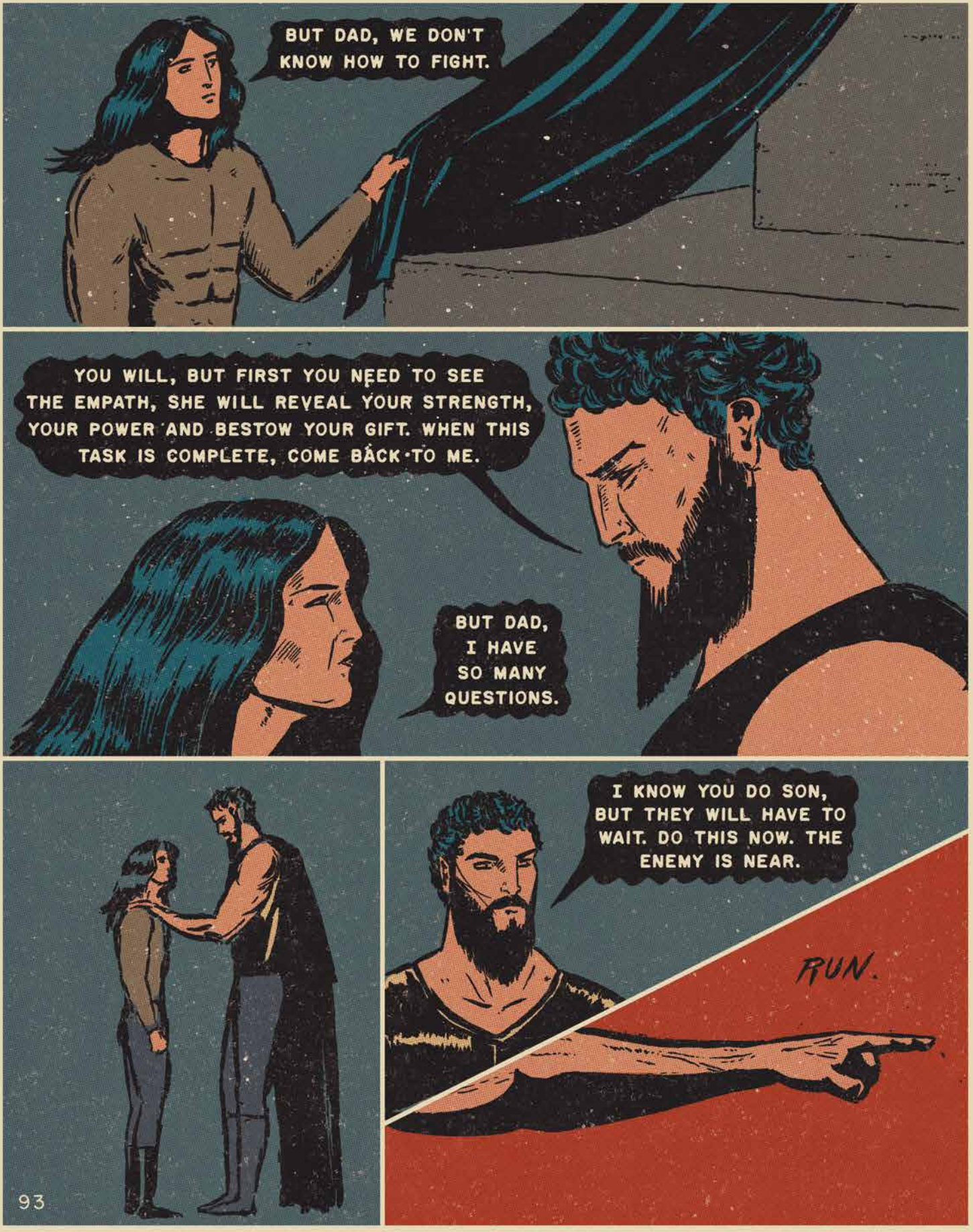




LOU'S FATHER IS THE LEADER OF THE REBELS, THE GENERAL OF STRONG WILLED PEOPLE AND CITIZENS OF HERACLEON WHO ANGERED THE GODS BY REJECTING THEM... AND WERE BANISHED FROM THE CITY. SYD RISES FROM ONE KNEE AND GENTLY PLACES HIS COLOSSAL HAND ON LOU'S BACK AND SHIRO'S SHOULDER, SPEAKING TO THE CROWD THAT'S GATHERED TO WITNESS THE MOMENT.



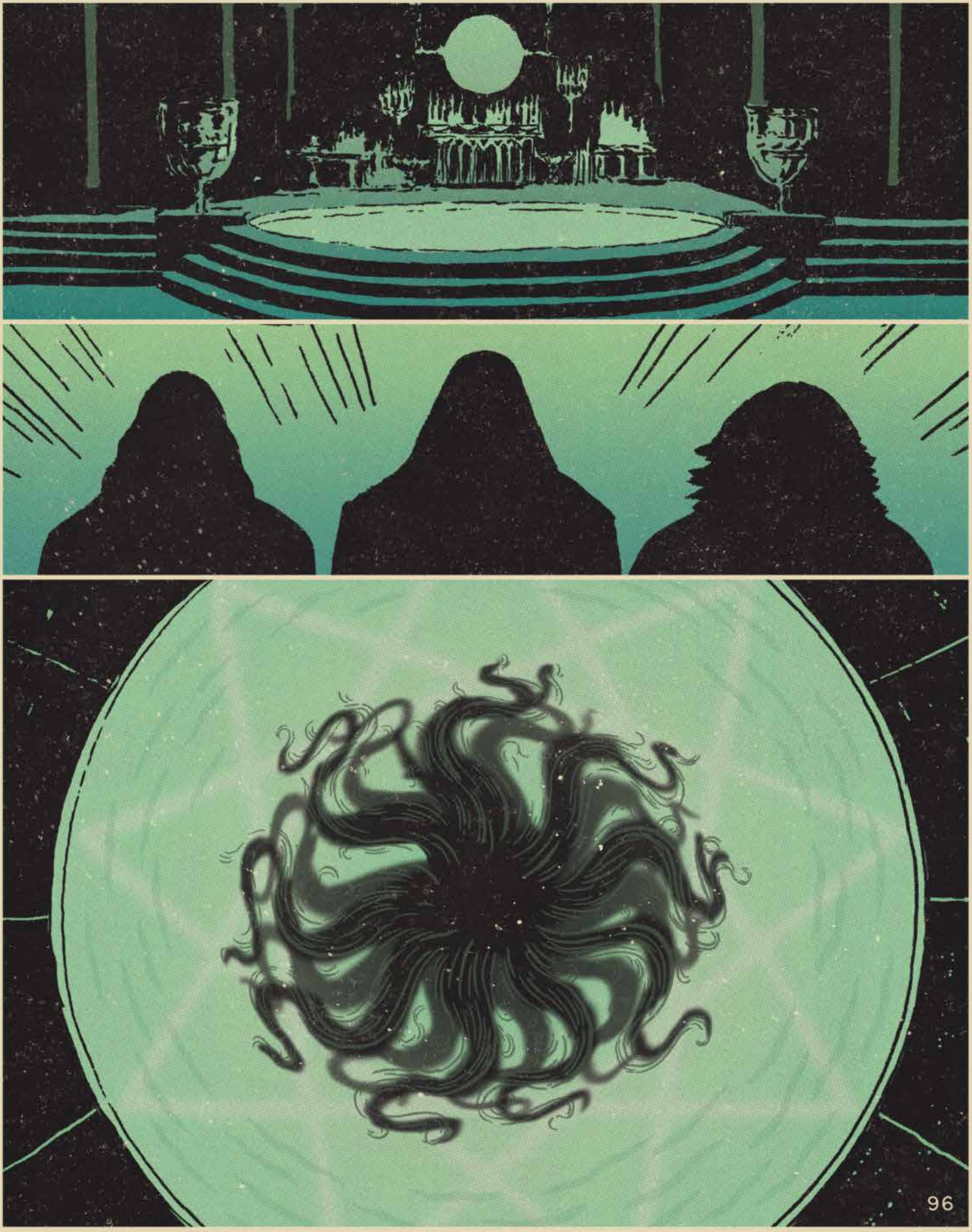
LOU GAZES AT THE ANGRY DEFIANT FACES OF MEN, WOMEN AND BEASTS WHO HAVE ALL SUFFERED UNDER THE HANDS OF THE MAKERS.
OH CURSE... I GET IT NOW.
SEE I TOLD YOU!
PREPARE FOR BATTLE! THE GOD'S ARMY APPROACHES! THOSE COWARDS SENT THEIR MONGREL HORDES... THEY WOULDN'T DARE FACE US IN THE FLESH!
TO ARMS! TO ARMS!

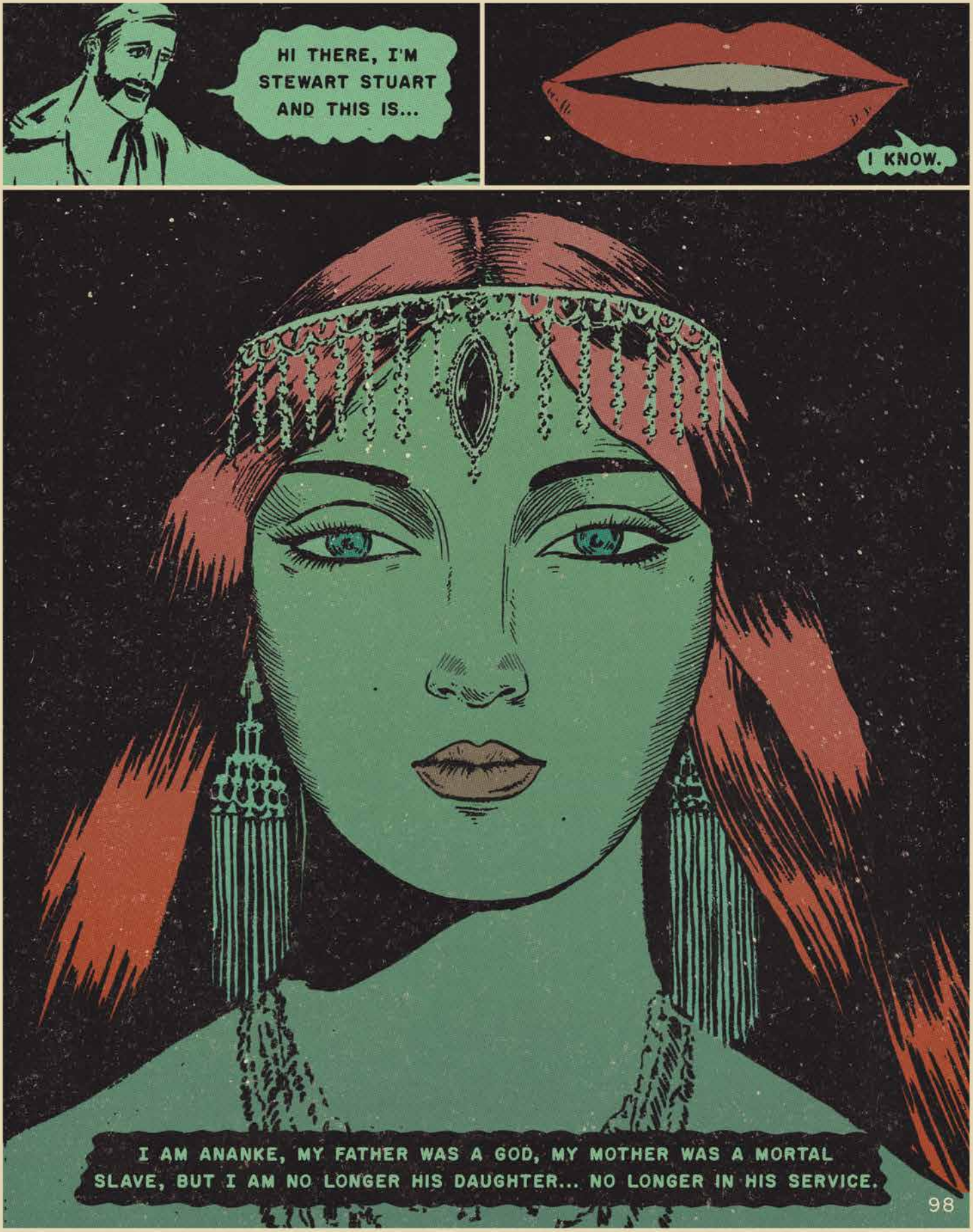

BUT DAD, WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIGHT.
YOU WILL, BUT FIRST YOU NEED TO SEE THE EMPATH, SHE WILL REVEAL YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR POWER AND BESTOW YOUR GIFT. WHEN THIS TASK IS COMPLETE, COME BACK TO ME.
BUT DAD, I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS.
I KNOW YOU DO SON, BUT THEY WILL HAVE TO WAIT. DO THIS NOW. THE ENEMY IS NEAR.
RUN.

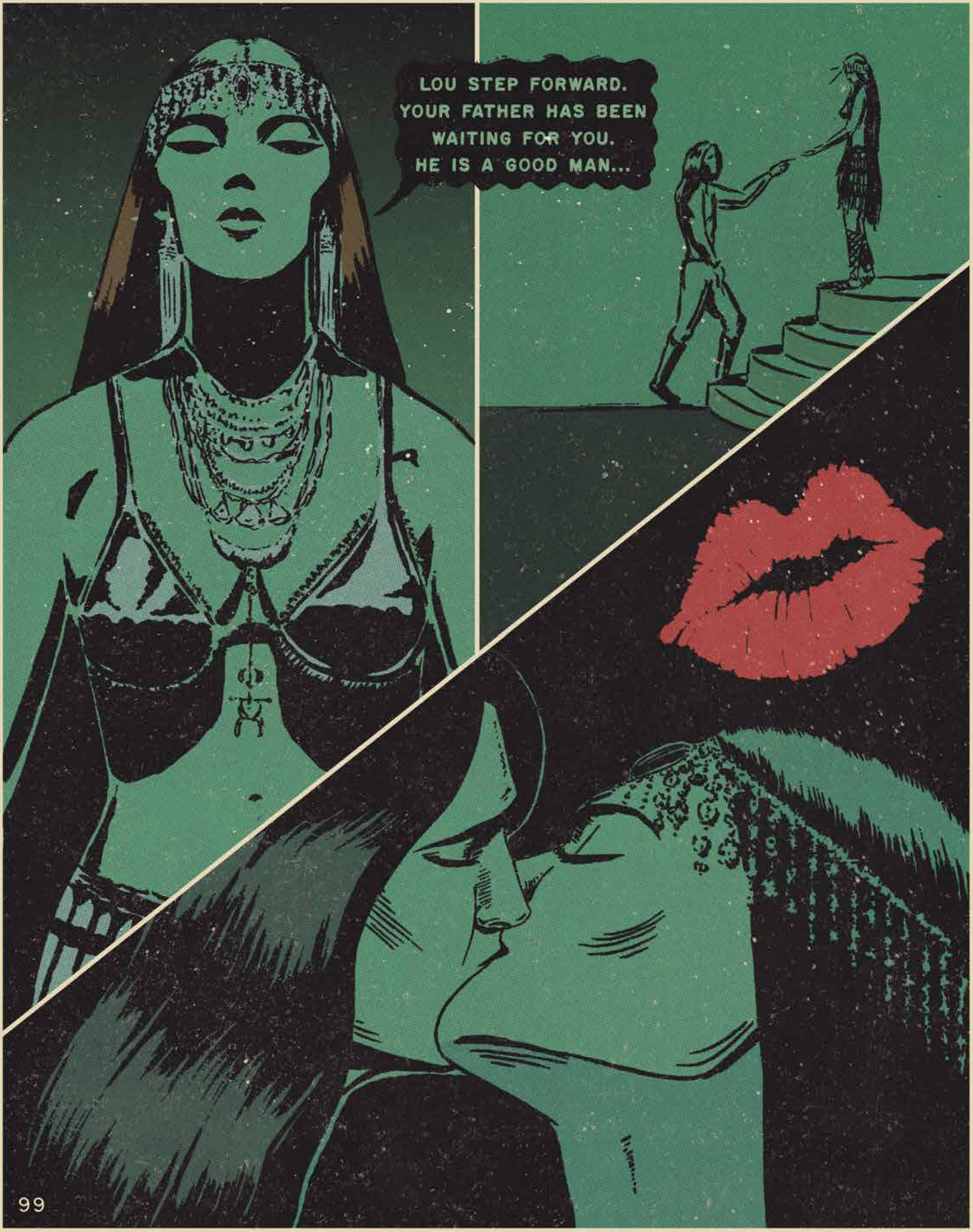
SHORTY BOLTS TOWARD A STAIRWELL YELLING "C'MON!" TO THE BOYS, WHO ARE TRYING TO KEEP UP NOT WANTING TO LEAVE THEIR FATHER. AS THEY TURN BACK TO LOOK, THEY CATCH A GLIMPSE OF SYD PICKING UP STAFF AND SHIELD AS HE FLIES STRAIGHT UP INTO THE AIR SO HIGH THAT HE NEARLY DISAPPEARS FROM SIGHT, WITHOUT THE AID OF A CODEX.

THE BOYS KEEP RUNNING, BUT LOOK AT EACH OTHER WITH HUGE SMILES ON THEIR FACES... SO PROUD OF WHAT HE HAS BECOME AND EXCITED TO SEE THE EMPATH.

SHORTY OPENS THE DOOR...




HI THERE, I'M STEWART STUART AND THIS IS...
I KNOW.
I AM ANANKE, MY FATHER WAS A GOD, MY MOTHER WAS A MORTAL SLAVE, BUT I AM NO LONGER HIS DAUGHTER... NO LONGER IN HIS SERVICE.


LOU STEP FORWARD.
YOUR FATHER HAS BEEN
WAITING FOR YOU.
HE IS A GOOD MAN...

I HAVE ENTRUSTED YOU WITH THE 'HUMAN PARTICLE.' IT WAS STOLEN FROM THE MAKERS AND THEY MUST NOT GET IT BACK. IF THEY DO, THE CONSEQUENCES WILL BE IRREVERSIBLE. IT POSSESSES THE POWER TO CREATE LIFE, CONTROL IT AND TAKE IT AWAY.
IT IS NOW EMBEDDED IN YOUR SKULL.
BUT WHY ME?

I WILL PERISH IN THIS PLACE, I HAVE SEEN IT. WE MUST NOT LET IT BE CAPTURED OR ALL LIFE WILL BE EXTINGUISHED. YOU MUST KEEP IT AWAY FROM THEM. THE PARTICLE WILL PROTECT YOU AND GIVE YOU UNNATURAL POWERS. USE IT RESPONSIBLY.
HEY, WHAT ABOUT ME?
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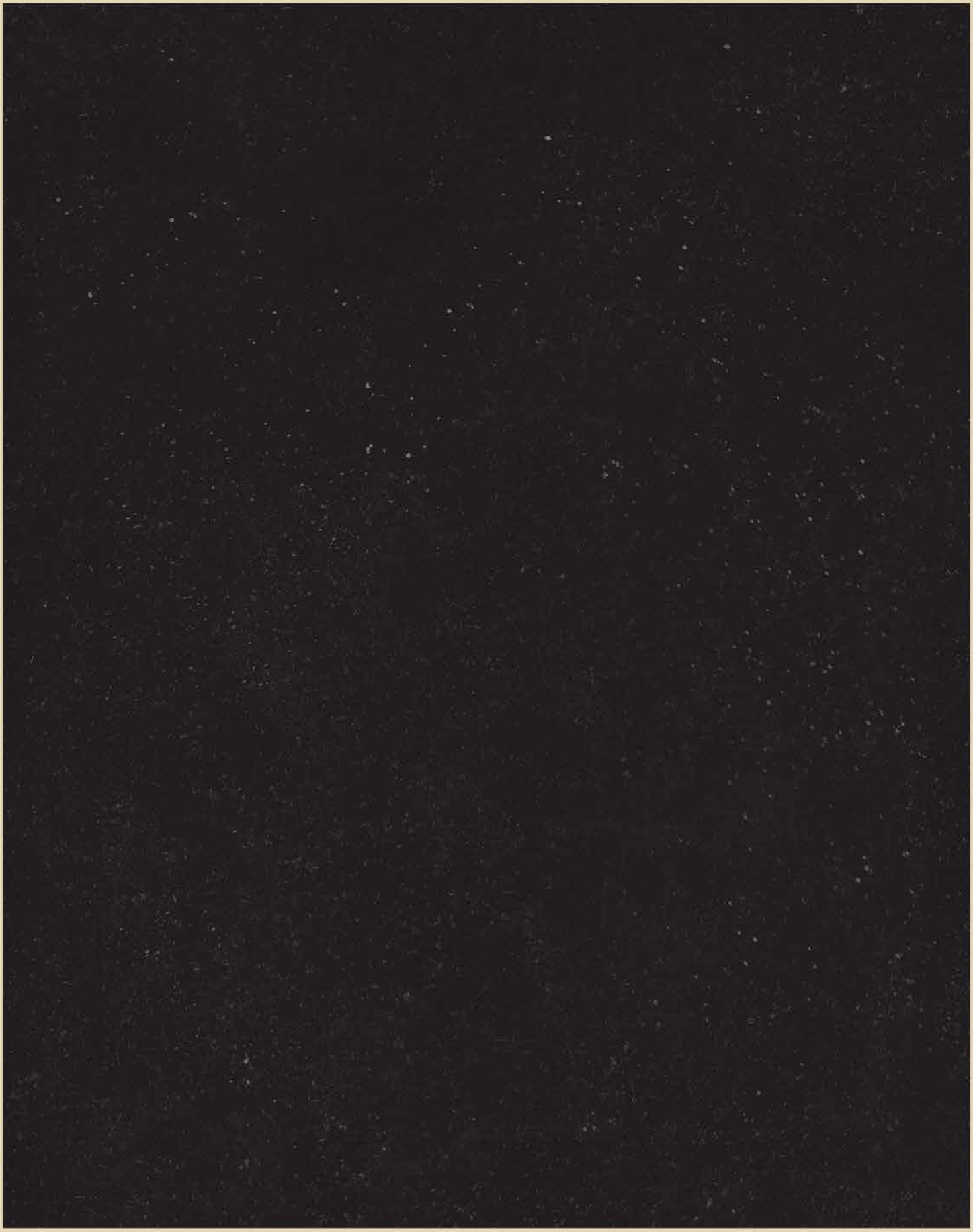
YOU ARE HALF LION. YOU HAVE FANGS AND CLAWS... AGILITY AND STRENGTH BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION.
STEWART, ON YOUR BELT IS PELEUS FORGED IN THE MAKER'S WELL OF SOULS. IT IS ONE OF SIX KNOWN RELICS THAT CAN DESTROY A GOD AND IT WILL SURELY BE VICTORIOUS ON THEIR BEASTS.
WE WILL MEET AGAIN, PERHAPS IN ANOTHER LIFE. IT HAS BEEN FORETOLD.



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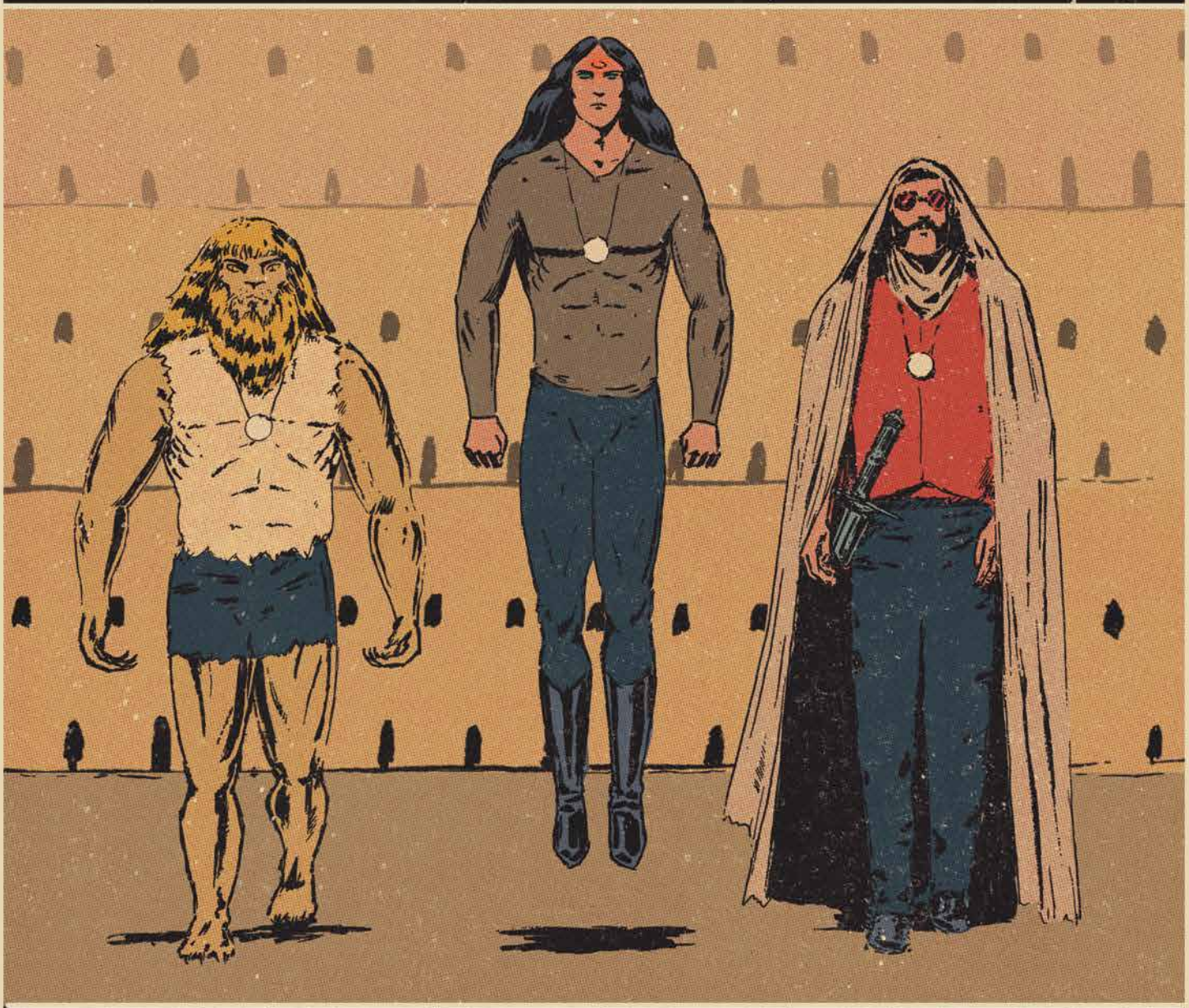
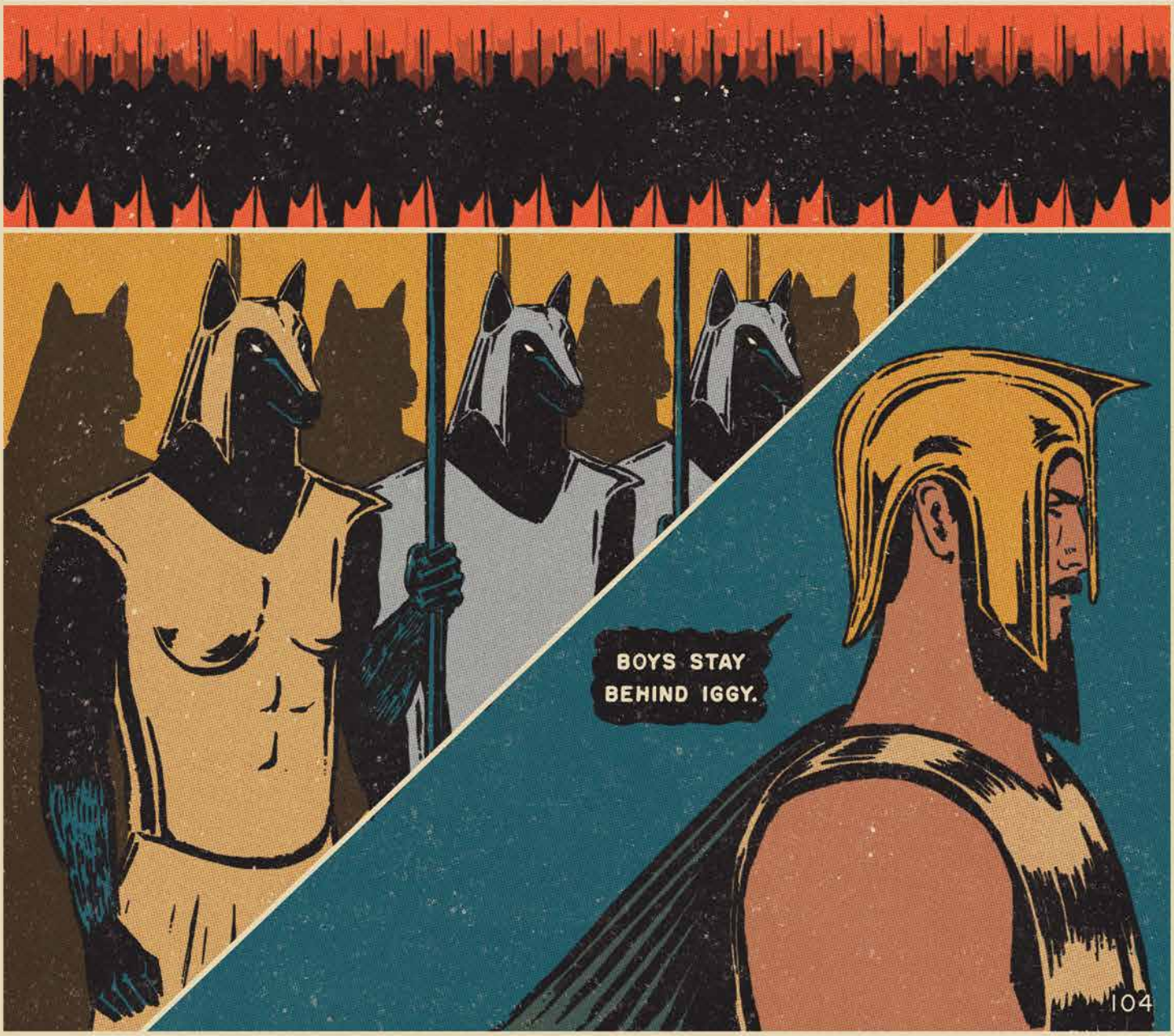
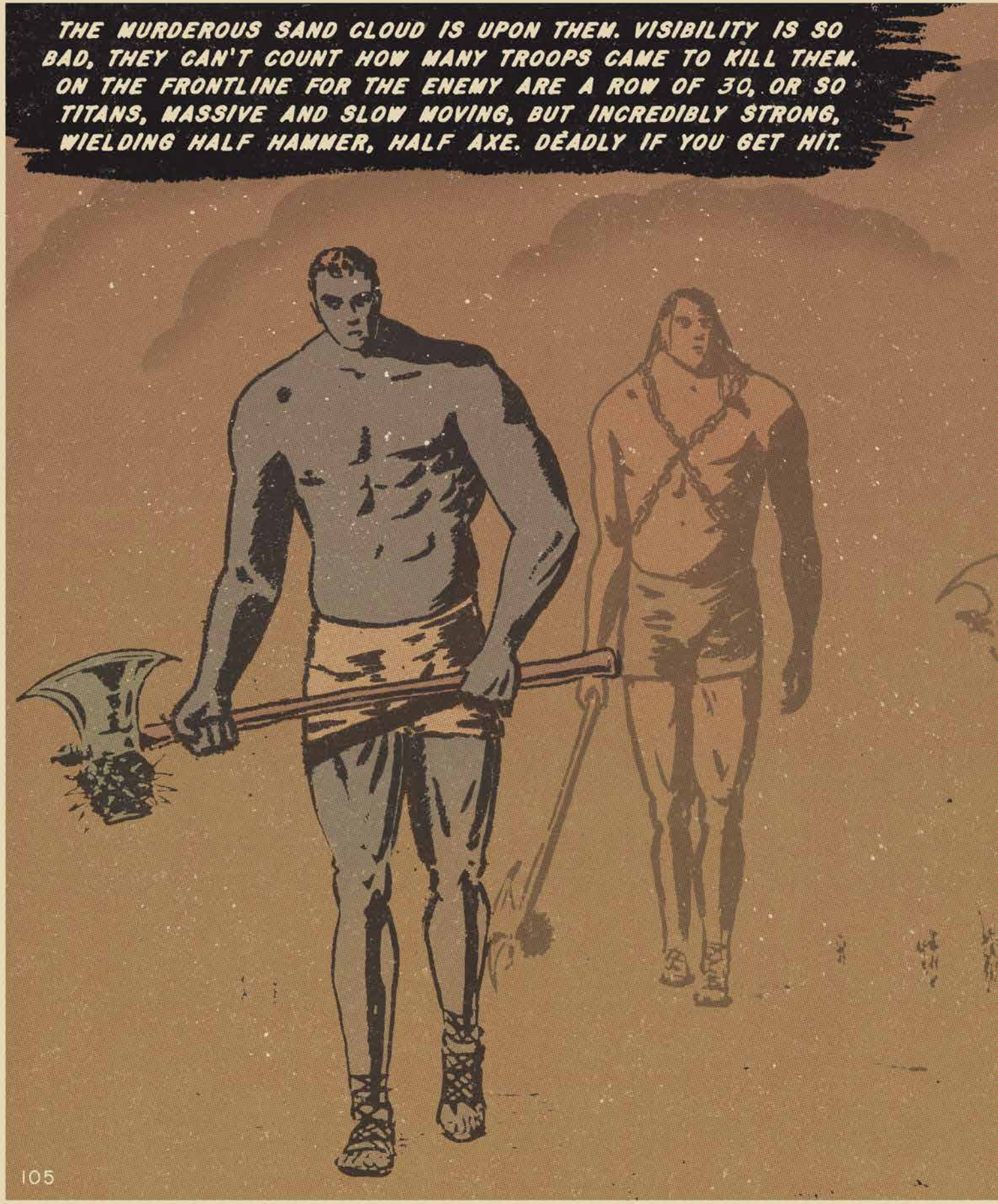
SHORTY, LOU AND SHIRO HEAD BACK TO THE SQUARE, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING REMARKABLY AND INEXPLICABLY DIFFERENT ABOUT THEM. THEY HAVE A CONFIDENCE AND SWAGGER THAT IS ONLY DELIVERED WITH ASS KICKING OR STAGE PRESENCE. LOU'S APPEARANCE IN PARTICULAR IS NOTICEABLY DIFFERENT AS HIS FOREHEAD CONTAINS AN ORANGE EMBER, THE PARTICLE OF HUMAN CREATION, WHICH LOOKS LIKE A TINY FLAMING SUN EMANATING LIGHT FROM HIS FOREHEAD. HIS EYES HAVE TURNED TO DEEP EMERALD AND HE HAS LOST THE NEED TO WALK, INSTEAD FLOATING SEVERAL INCHES ABOVE THE GROUND

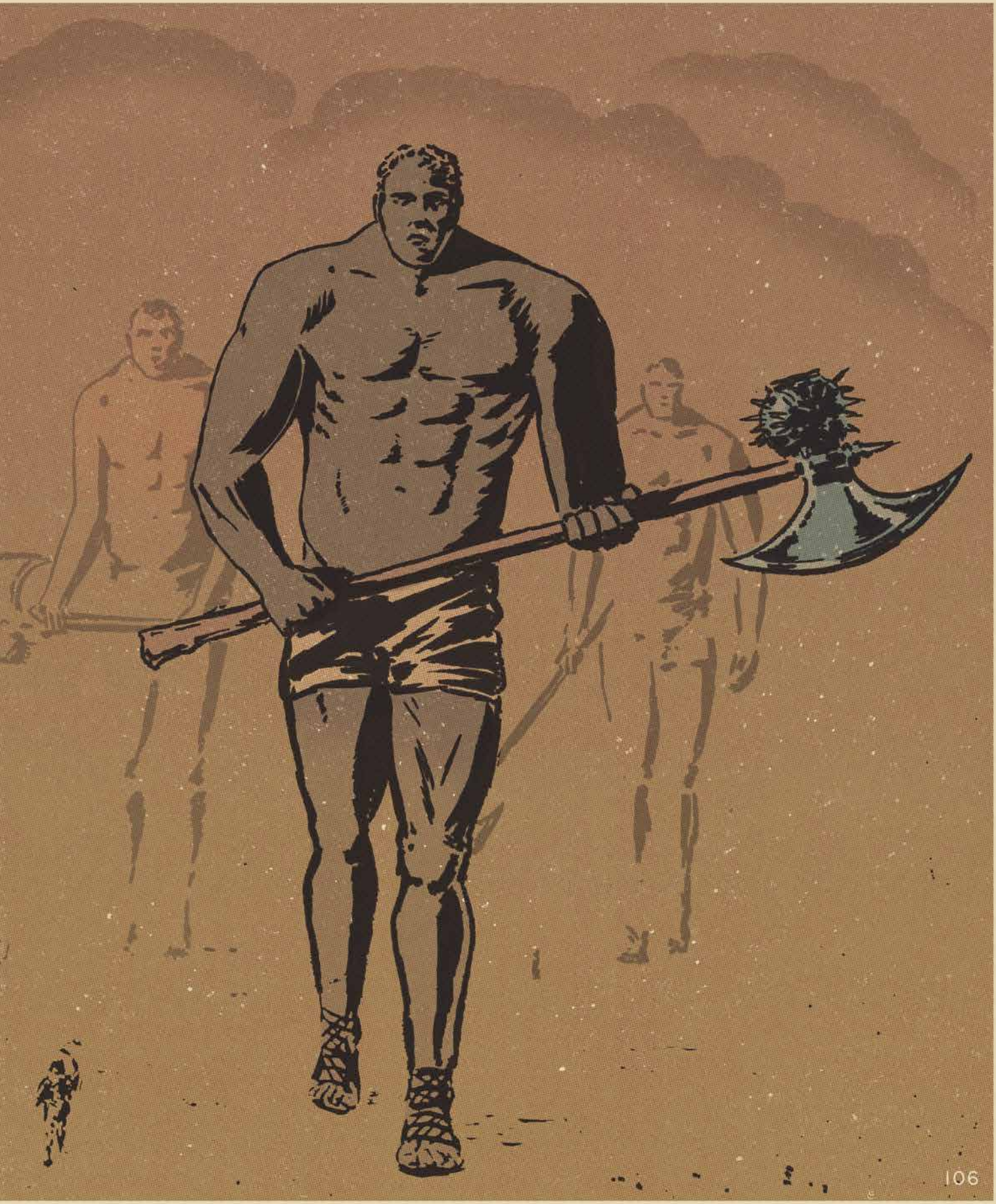


BOYS, WE ARE FORMING AN OFFENSIVE POSITION. I NEED YOU AT THE FRONT LINE, WITH ME. YOU TOO, SHORTY.

SYD'S IMPRESSIVE FRONT LINE IS NEARLY 3,000 STRONG... MEN AND BEASTS. SIDE BY SIDE. THE MOST FEROCIOUS ON THE LINE IS A SQUAD OF DOG-MEN, WITH POINTED EARS LIKE EGYPTIAN ANUBIS. THIS BREED IS MOSTLY HUMAN FROM THE NECK DOWN, BUT COVERED IN BLACK FUR, WITH POWERFUL ARMS AND LEGS, HANDS AND FEET... ESPECIALLY THEIR VICIOUS MOUTHS AND TEETH. THEY STAND OVER SEVEN FEET TALL WIELDING SWORDS, STAFFS, SHIELDS AND BOWS. THIS PARTICULAR SQUAD OF TWENTY-FOUR IS LEAD BY CPTN. IGGY. THE ONLY WAY TO TELL IGGY FROM THE OTHERS IS OF COURSE SCENT, BUT SHE ALSO HAS BRINDLE FUR ON HER FOREARMS, THAT AND HER ARMOR IS GOLD, WHERE THE REST OF THE SQUAD'S IS SILVER.

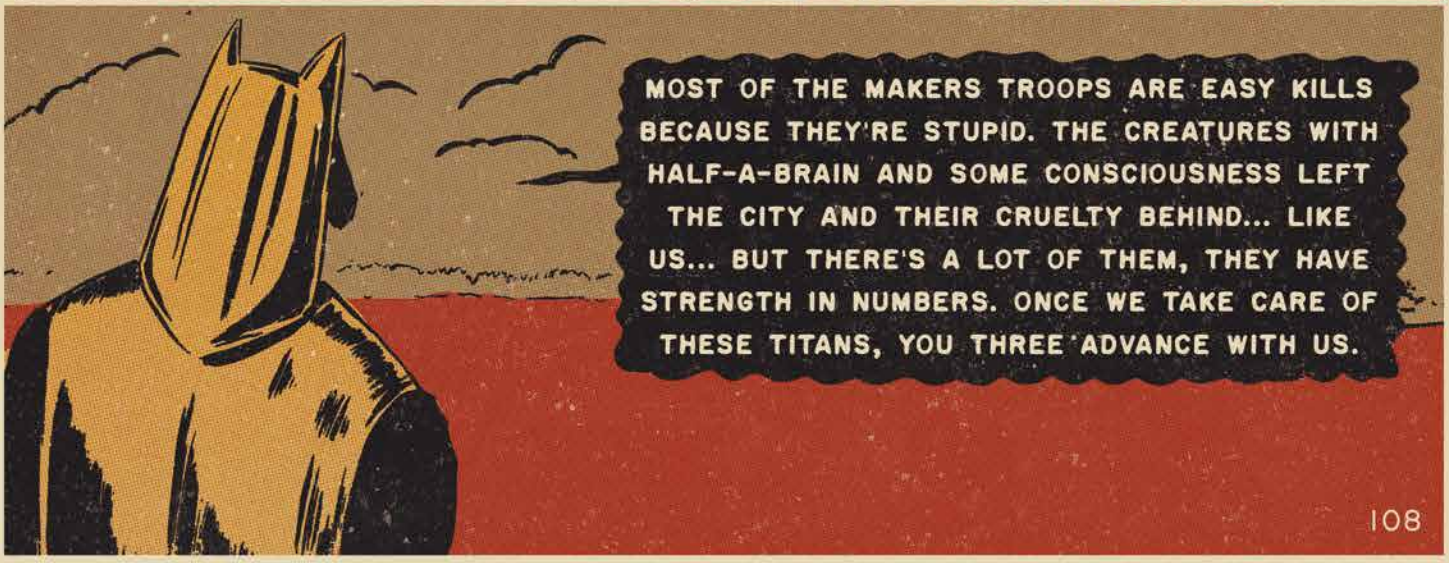



THE MURDEROUS SAND CLOUD IS UPON THEM. VISIBILITY IS SO BAD, THEY CAN'T COUNT HOW MANY TROOPS CAME TO KILL THEM. ON THE FRONTLINE FOR THE ENEMY ARE A ROW OF 30, OR SO TITANS, MASSIVE AND SLOW MOVING, BUT INCREDIBLY STRONG, WIELDING HALF HAMMER, HALF AXE. DEADLY IF YOU GET HIT.



IGGY TURNS TO THE BOYS TO MAKE SURE SHE KNOWS THEIR EXACT LOCATION, SAYS NOTHING, THEN LETS OUT A BATTLE CRY THAT SENT CHILLS UP THEIR SPINES. SHE RUNS AHEAD WITH A SPEAR, DRAWING FIRST BLOOD... LEAPING UP AND BEHIND THE TITAN, STABBING HIM REPEATEDLY ON THE THIGHS AND BEHIND THE KNEE. SHE BRINGS HIM DOWN LURCHING FORWARD, WHERE SHE DELIVERS A FINAL BLOW, LAUNCHING HER SPEAR THROUGH HIS NECK, SEVERING HEAD FROM SPINE.

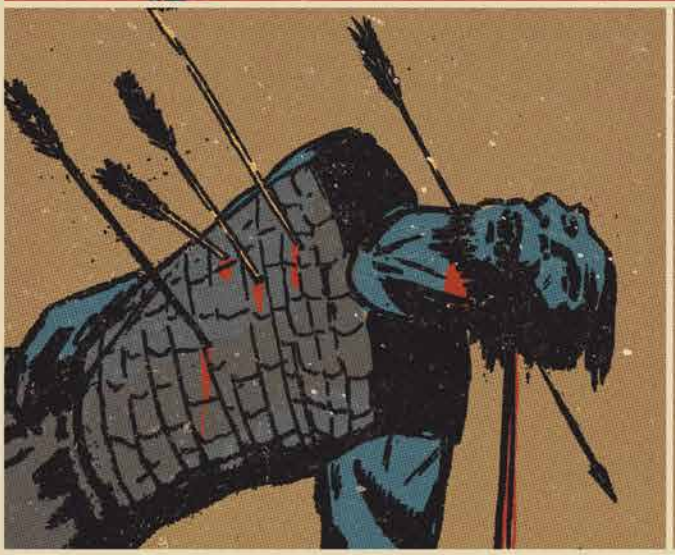
THE REST OF THE DOG-MEN ARE USING SIMILAR TECHNIQUES TO TAKE DOWN THE REST OF THE TITANS.



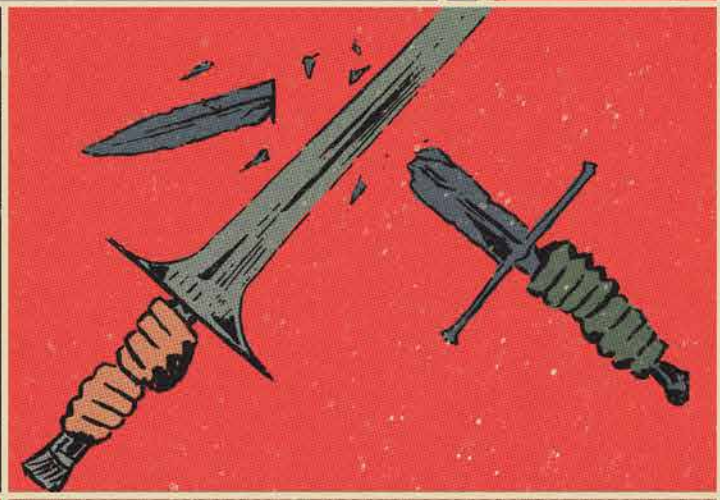
JUST AS THE LAST TITAN FALLS, A WHIPPING SOUND OF FLYING ARROWS AND SPEARS BEGINS, WELL CAMOUFLAGED BY THE CLOUD OF SAND.

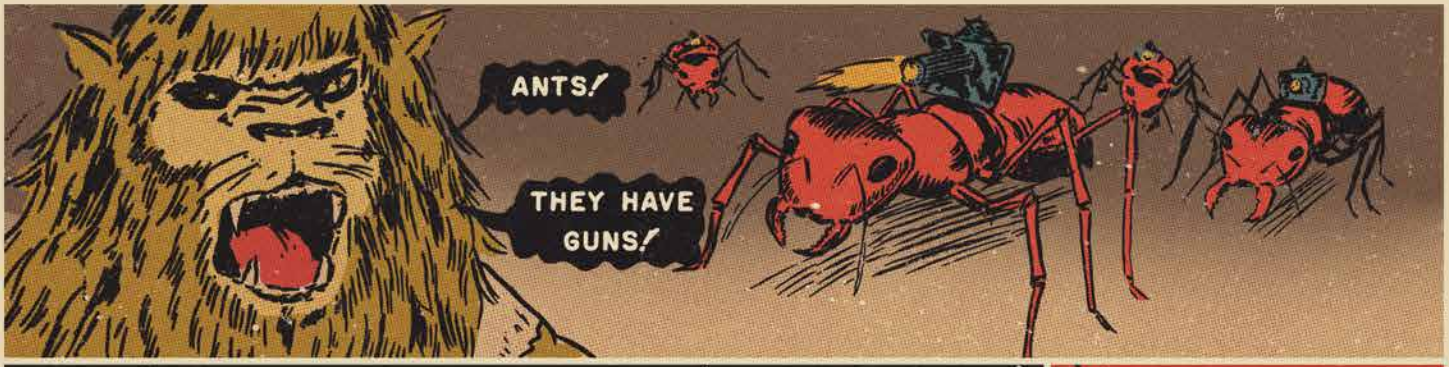
LOU GOES DOWN ON ONE KNEE AND HOLDS HIS PALMS UP OVER HIS HEAD. ORANGE LIGHT ENVELOPES EVERYONE AROUND HIM, DEFLECTING THE ONSLAUGHT OF INCOMING ARROWS. SAVAGE, FANGED, APE-LIKE BEASTS EMERGE FROM THE CLOUD, CHARGING THE LINE, WEARING ARMOR, CARRYING SWORDS AND SHIELDS.

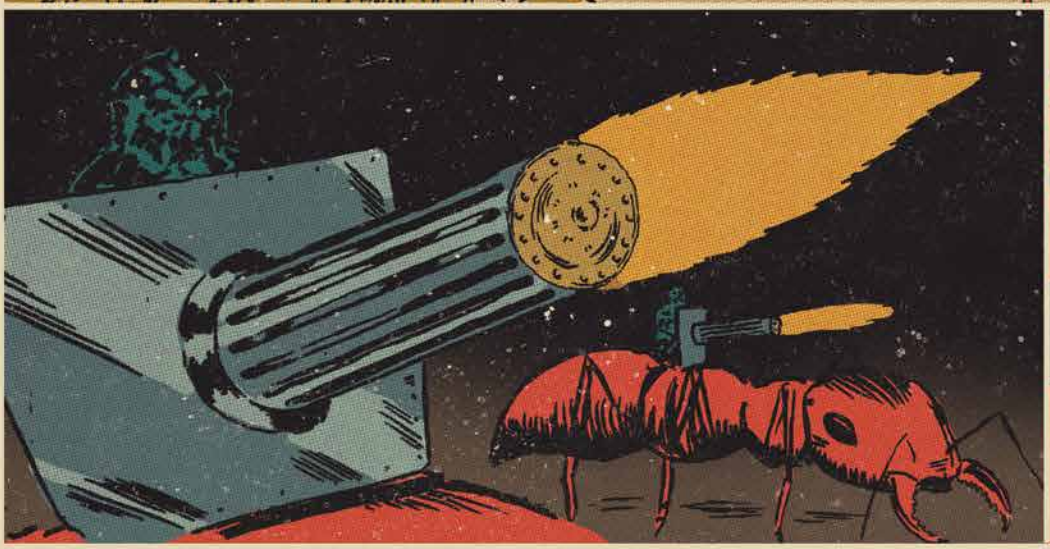
500 ARROWS ARE SENT AS A WAR TIME GIFT, ARCHING FROM THE REBEL FRONT LINE, FIFTH ROW, IN THE REAR OF THE FORMATION. SOME BOUNCE OFF ARMOR, SOME THROUGH HELMETS, TORSOS, ARMS AND LEGS. MANY FALL, AS MUCH AS HALF. STILL, SOME ARROWS ARE CAUGHT BY THE BEASTS IN THEIR HATEFUL HANDS AND EAGER MOUTHS.



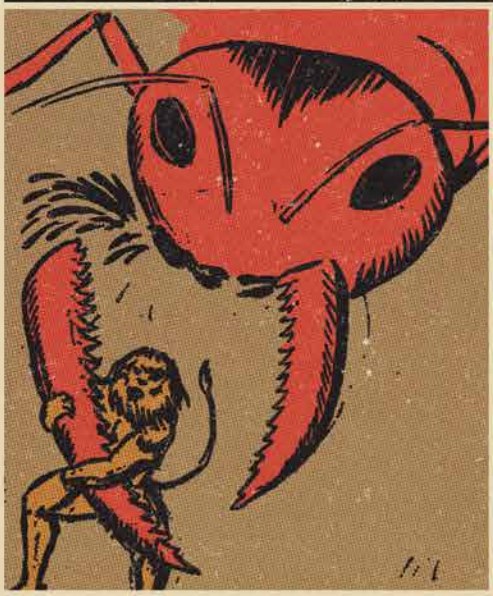
THESE ARE WILD AND NASTY, QUICK AND RUTHLESS. ONE IS BITING OUT THE THROAT OF A DOG-MAN, CONSUMING THE MEAT AS CPTN SHORTY RUNS HIS BLADE THROUGH IT'S STOMACH, WEDGING THE PELEUS UP AND INTO ITS' RIBCAGE, LIQUEFYING ALL CONTAINED ORGANS.

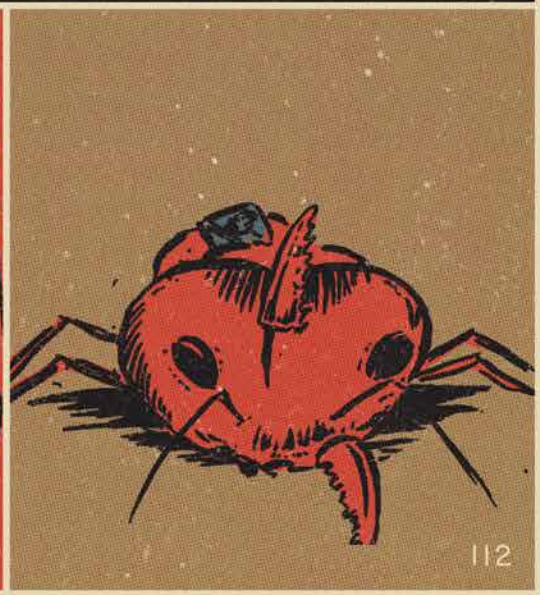




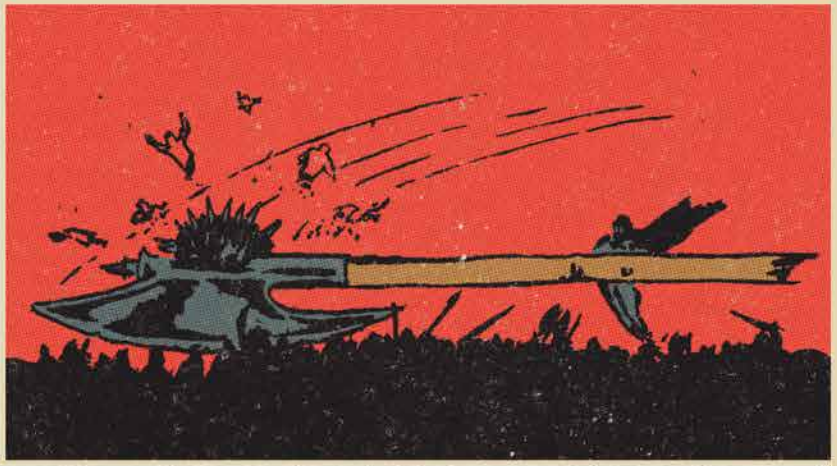


SHIRO IS NIMBLE, GRACEFUL AND LETHAL, GRABBING THE LAST ANT IN THE LINE BY THE MANDIBLE, FORCING ITS HEAD TO THE GROUND. IT BREAKS OFF AS SHIRO USES HIS OTHER PAW TO PRY OFF ITS THORAX AND REMOVE WHAT'S INSIDE. THE ANTS START SHOOTING. JUST THE SOUND OF THE GUNS WOULD KILL A MORTAL. BEYOND DEAFENING. NONE OF THE DOG-MEN ARE LEFT. ALL HAVE BEEN SHREDDED BY THE ANT'S BULLETS... EXCEPT IGGY WHO HAS BEEN ORDERED TO FALL BACK AND FLANK THEM.



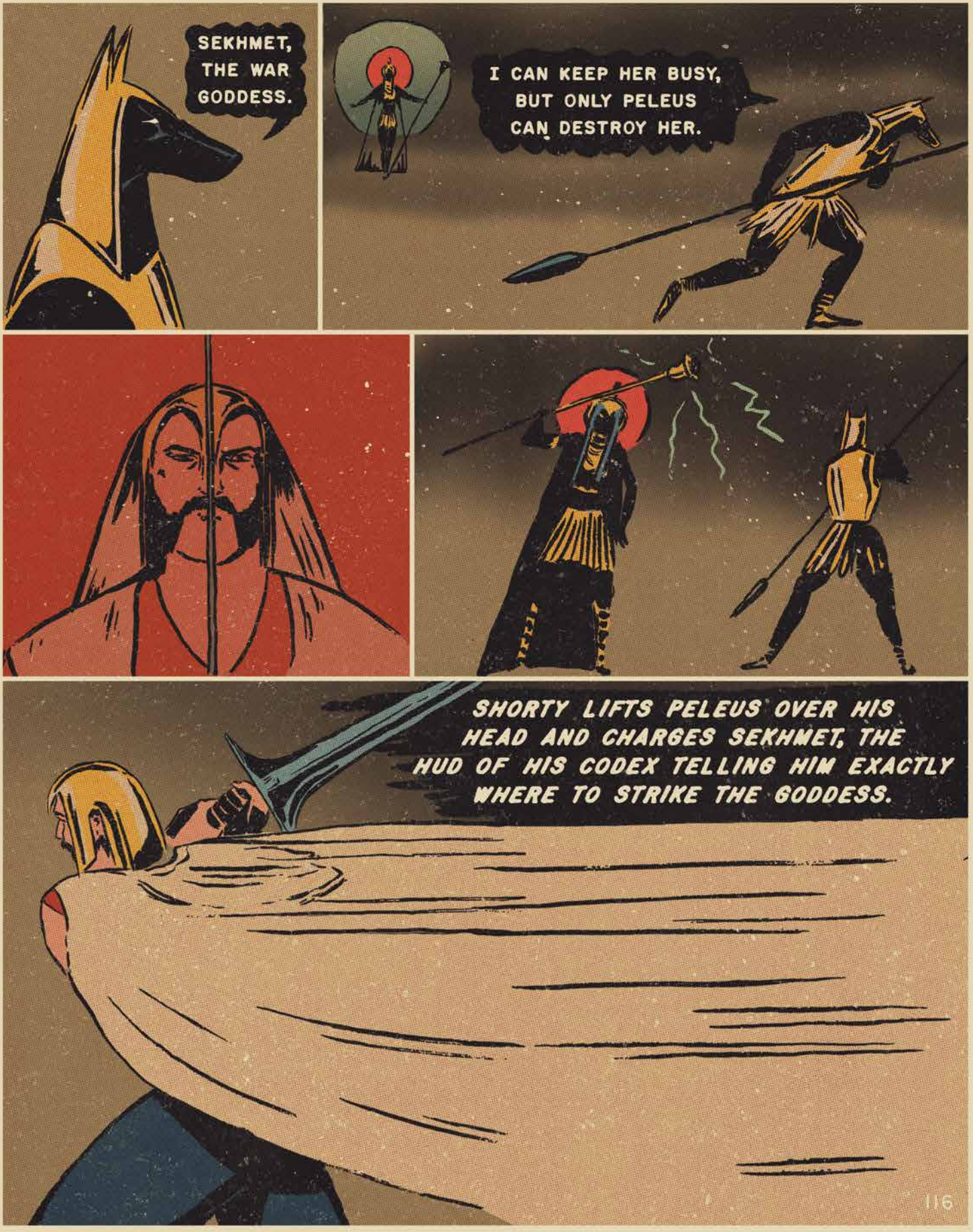


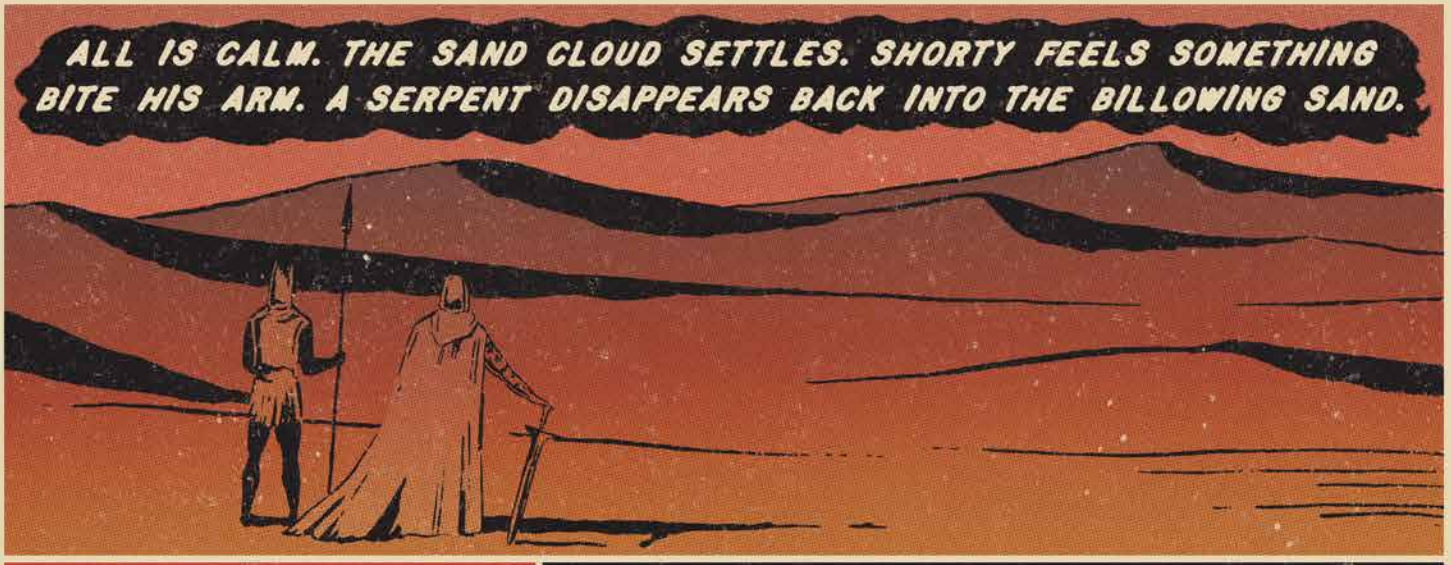
LOU AND HIS FATHER ARE FLYING ALTERNATING PATTERNS, CLEARING SWATHS OF ANTS, LIKE FARMERS CUTTING HAY. SYD IS HOLDING ONE OF THE TITAN'S AXE-HAMMERS SIDEWAYS, CLOTHES-LINING THREE ROWS AT A TIME, SEVERAL HUNDRED DEEP.



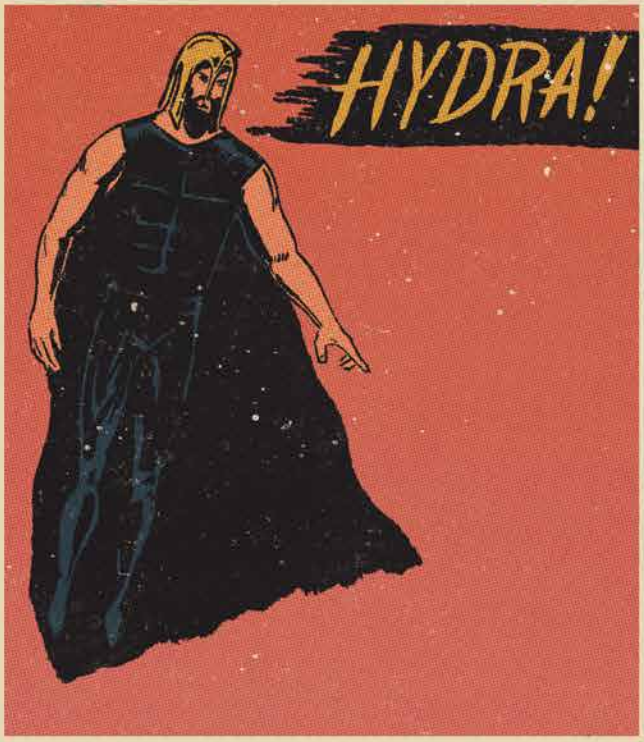
AFTER THE ANTS CAME A PACK OF CHIMERA. FIRE BREATHING LIONESSES WITH SNAKES AND A GOAT HEAD COMING OUT OF THEIR BACKS, WEIRD SPLICES OF HOOVED AND FANGED.

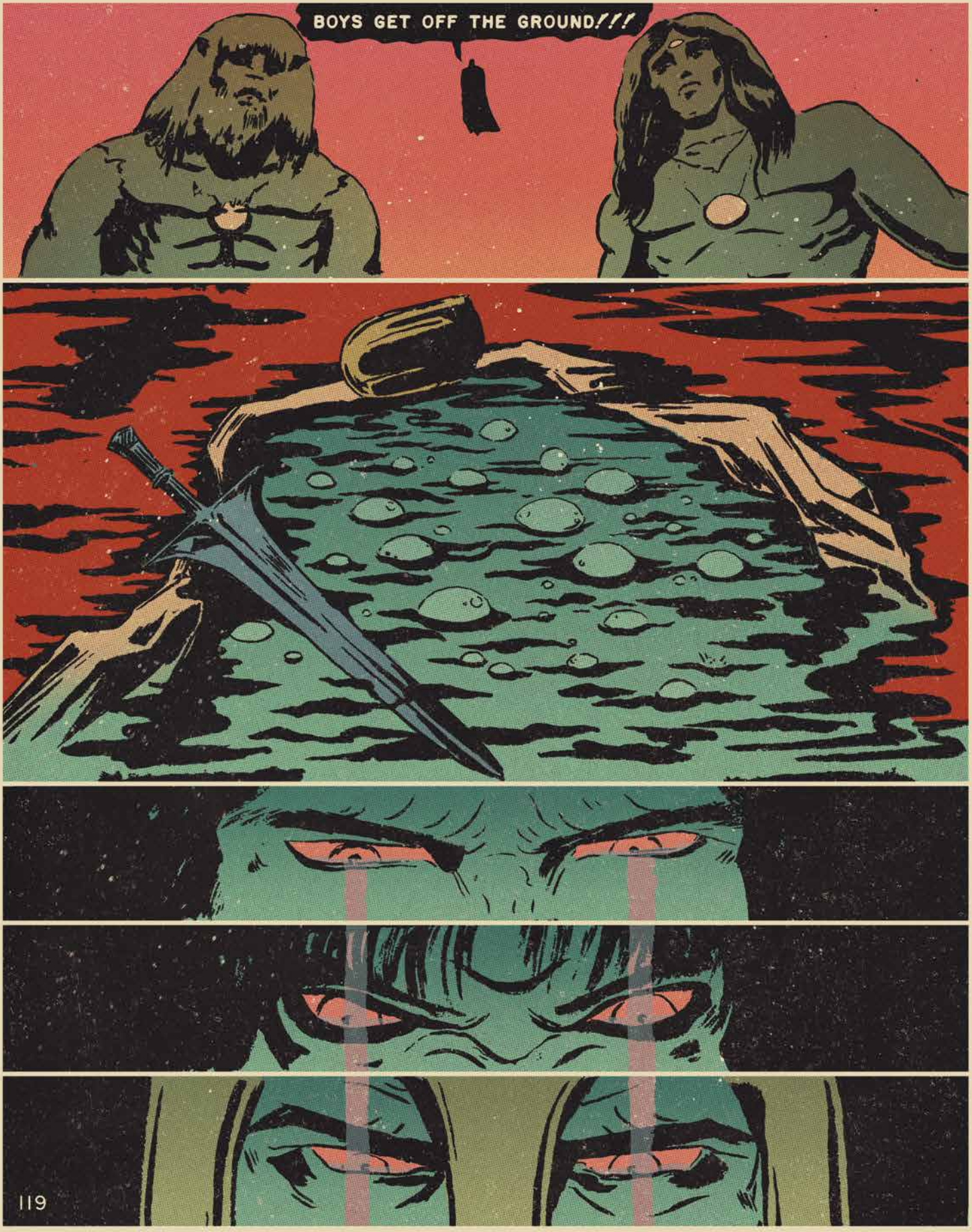
IMPOSSIBLE TO ATTACK FROM THE FRONT OR THE SIDE, EXCEPT FOR THE GOAT SIDE, AN OBVIOUS WEAKNESS THAT SHIRO EXPLOITS OPENING THEIR STOMACHS WITH A SINGLE CLAW, MOVING FREELY BETWEEN THEM LIKE INFLUENZA ON UNWASHED HANDS.

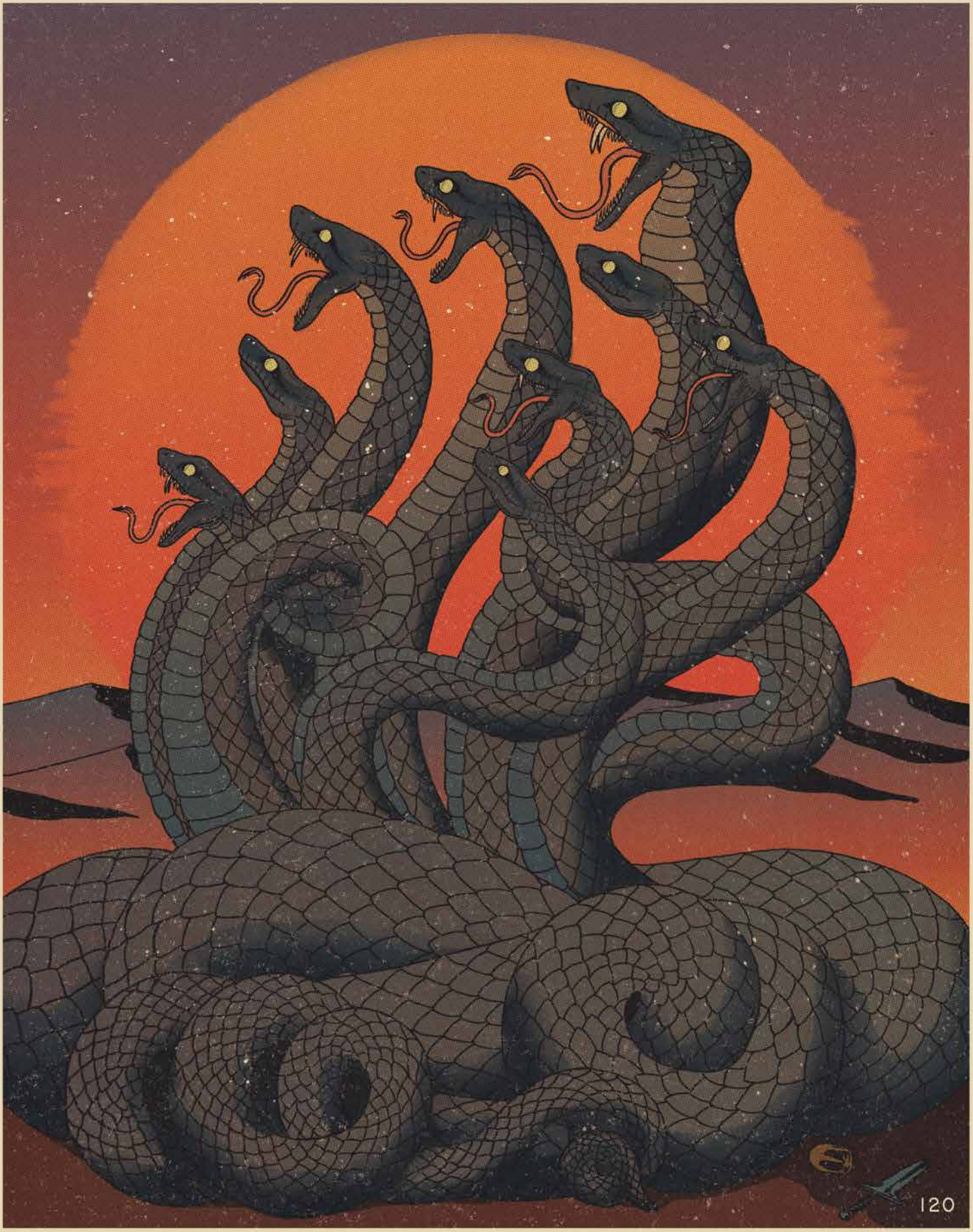

SEKHMET, THE WAR GODDESS.
I CAN KEEP HER BUSY, BUT ONLY PELEUS CAN DESTROY HER.
SHORTY LIFTS PELEUS OVER HIS HEAD AND CHARGES SEKHMET, THE HUD OF HIS CODEX TELLING HIM EXACTLY WHERE TO STRIKE THE GODDESS.



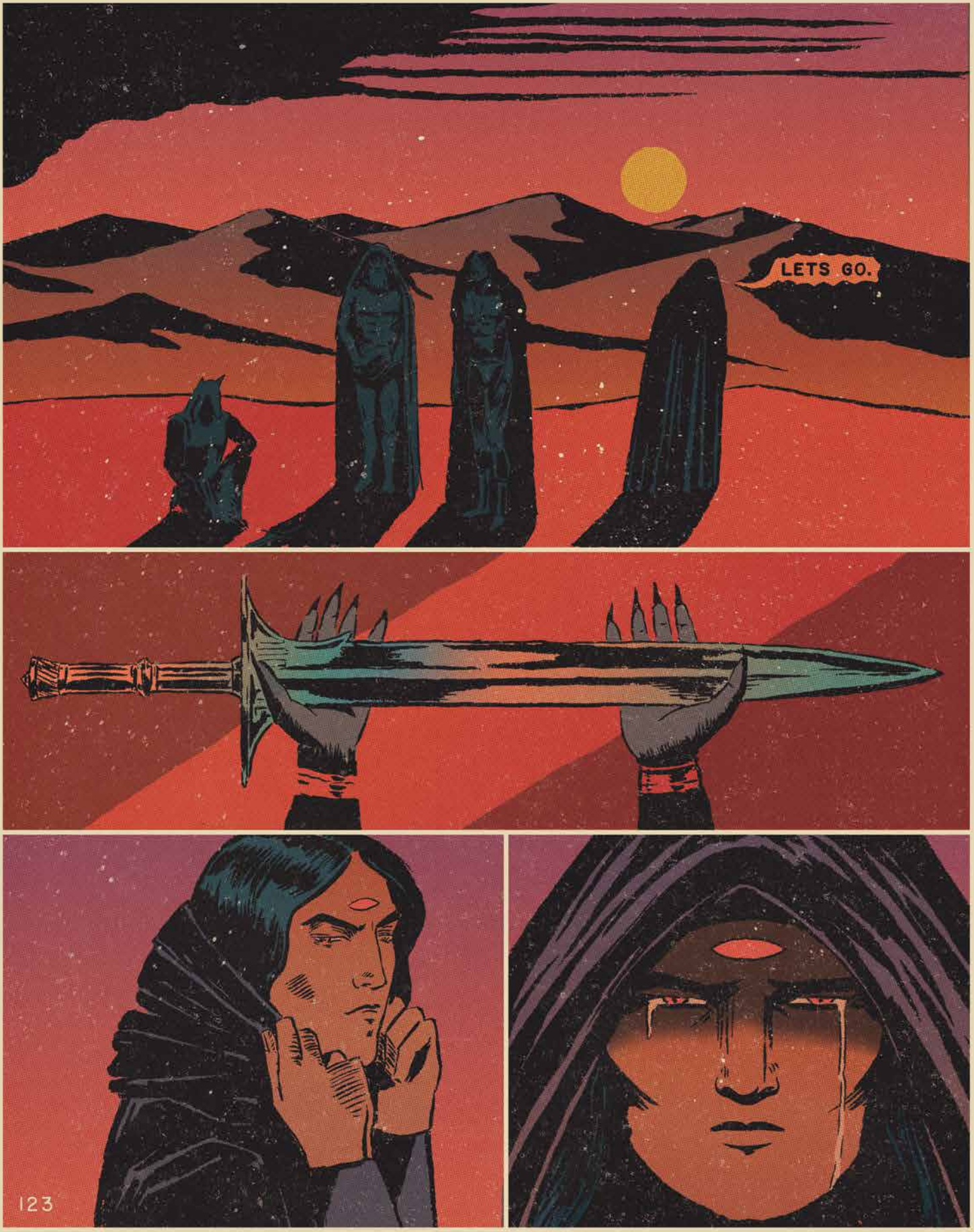
A HYDRA, FOR THOSE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE GUARDIAN OF THE UNDERWORLD, HAS MANY HEADS OF SERPENTS. FOR EACH ONE CUT OFF, TWO GROW BACK. IT'S VENOM, IF STRUCK, IS TERMINAL BURNING ACID. WATER BORNE, NOBODY QUESTIONED WHY IT WAS THERE IN THE DESERT.



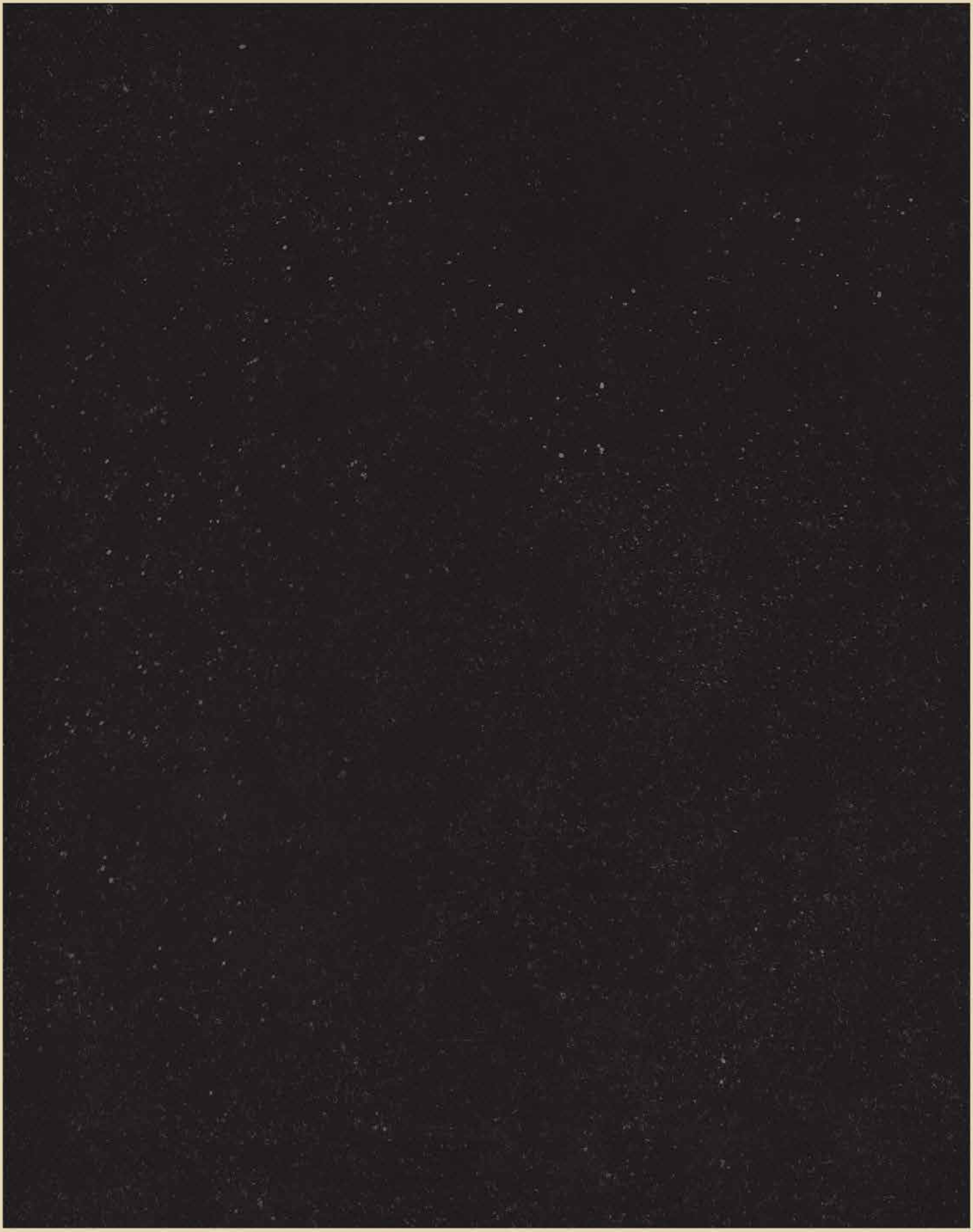

BOYS GET OFF THE GROUND!!!



WE HAVE TO BURN IT!
OH IT'S GONNA BURN!


LETS GO.

THE FOUR OF THEM WALK FOR THE REBEL ENCAMPMENT, SAYING NOTHING, THINKING ABOUT HOW COOL SHORTY WAS AND HOW MUCH THEY WILL MISS HIS FRIENDSHIP. HE WAS ONLY ONE OF THE 1,971 CASUALTIES FROM THE REBEL SIDE, BUT BY FAR THE GREATEST LOSS TO SYD AND THE BOYS.



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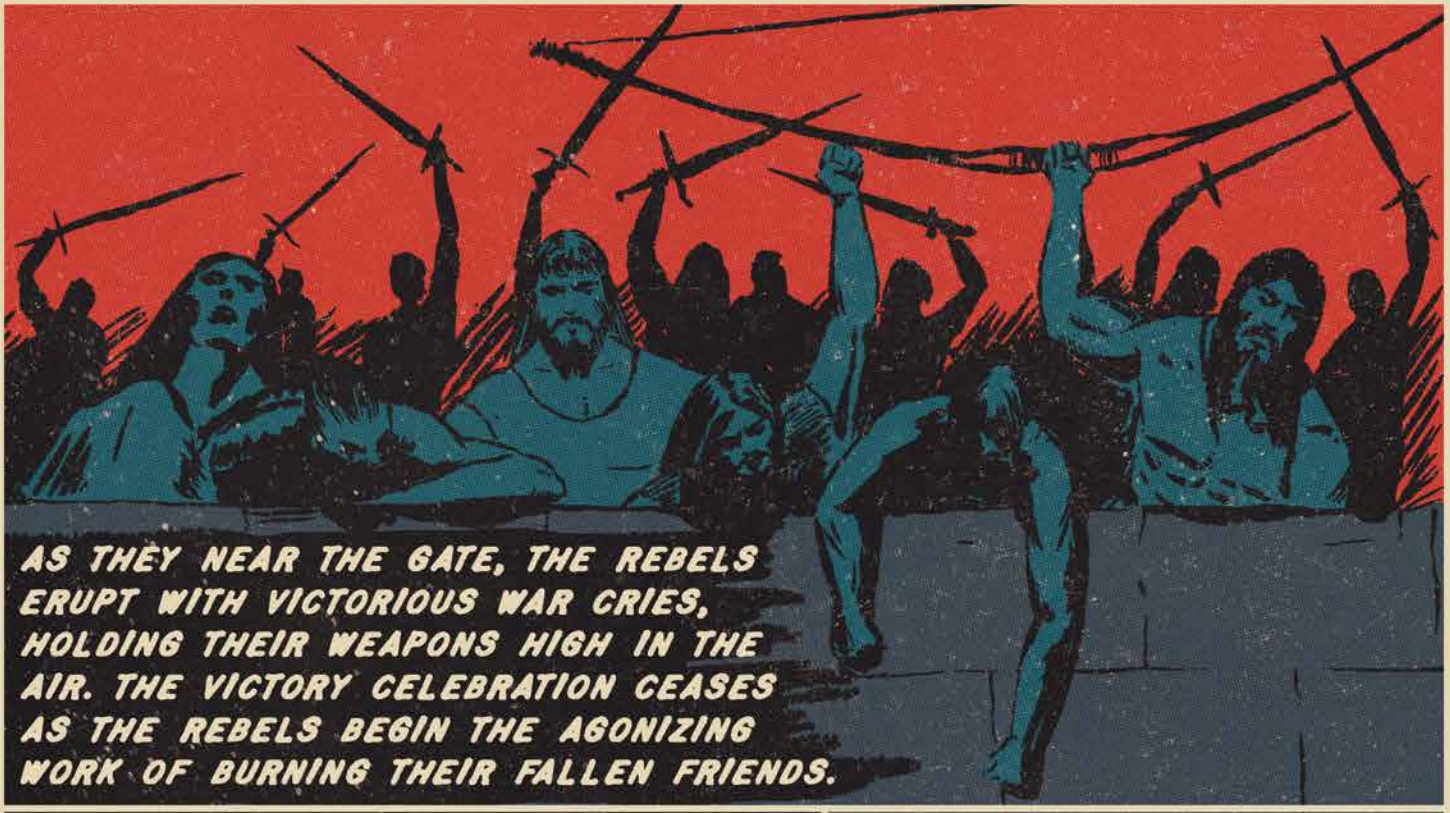
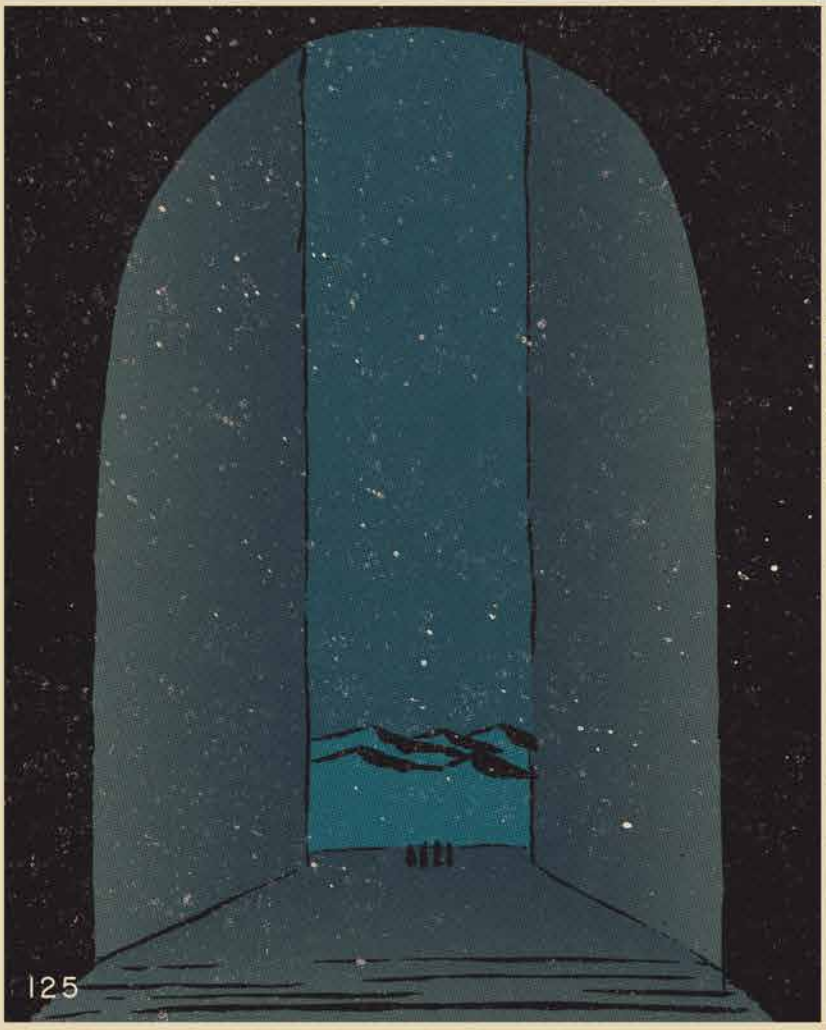
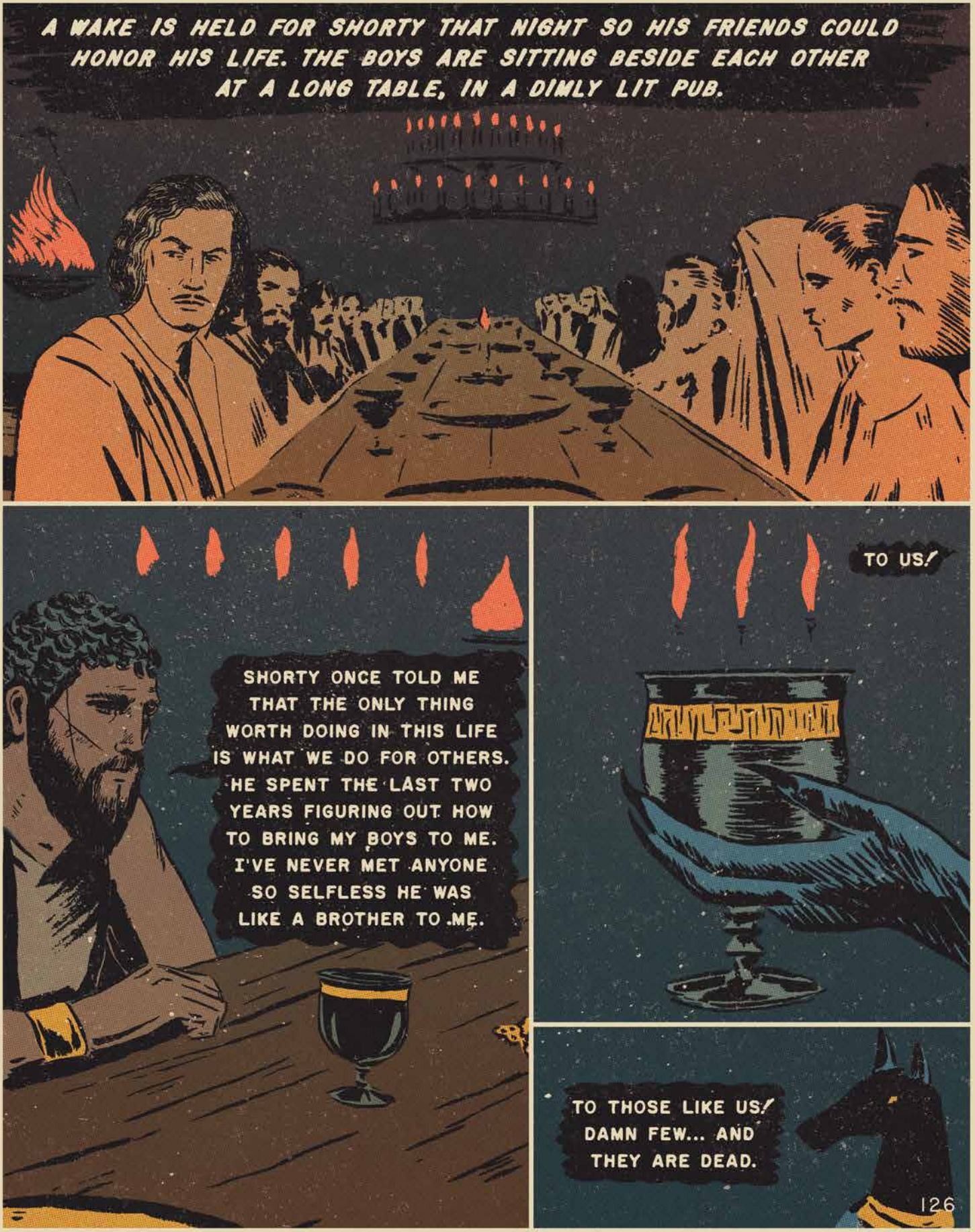


AS THEY NEAR THE GATE, THE REBELS ERUPT WITH VICTORIOUS WAR CRIES, HOLDING THEIR WEAPONS HIGH IN THE AIR. THE VICTORY CELEBRATION CEASES AS THE REBELS BEGIN THE AGONIZING WORK OF BURNING THEIR FALLEN FRIENDS.




A WAKE IS HELD FOR SHORTY THAT NIGHT SO HIS FRIENDS COULD HONOR HIS LIFE. THE BOYS ARE SITTING BESIDE EACH OTHER AT A LONG TABLE, IN A DIMLY LIT PUB.
SHORTY ONCE TOLD ME THAT THE ONLY THING WORTH DOING IN THIS LIFE IS WHAT WE DO FOR OTHERS. HE SPENT THE LAST TWO YEARS FIGURING OUT HOW TO BRING MY BOYS TO ME. I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE SO SELFLESS HE WAS LIKE A BROTHER TO ME.
TO US!
TO THOSE LIKE US! DAMN FEW... AND THEY ARE DEAD.

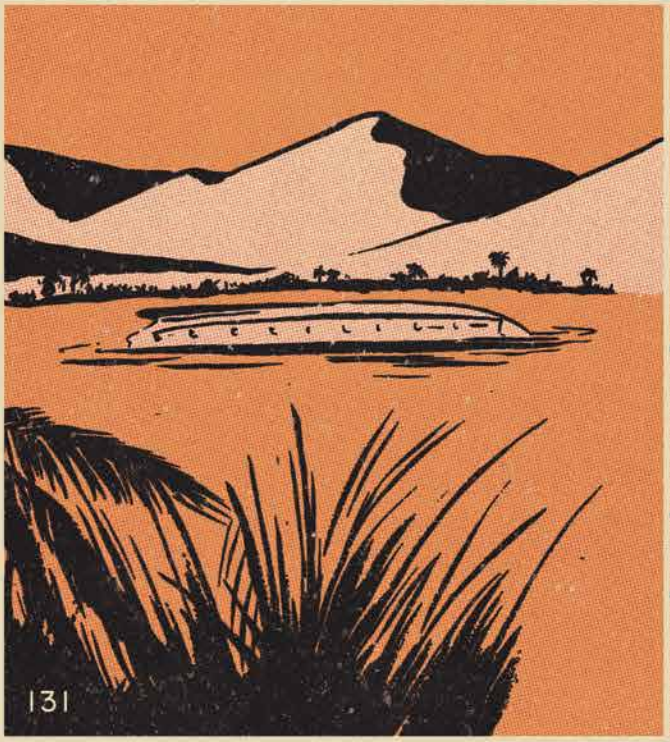
AS THE SUN RISES THE NEXT MORNING, SYD GATHERS A FEW SUPPLIES, PACKING THEM IN A MAKESHIFT PACK AROUND HIS SHOULDER. HE WAKES LOU AND SHIRO BY TUSSLING THEIR HAIR GENTLY AND WHISPERING.
GOOD MORNING BOYS WHAT IF YOUR LIFE HAD NO MEANING? WHAT IF I TOLD YOU THAT ALL YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, STRUGGLES, EVERYTHING YOU WORKED SO HARD FOR, WAS NOT YOURS? WHAT IF YOUR DISAPPOINTMENTS AND TRAGEDIES WEREN'T YOURS EITHER? IT ALL BEGINS WITH CHOICE, AND WHEN THERE IS NO CHOICE, THERE'S NO POINT IN DOING ANYTHING.
GOOD MORNING DAD... ARE YOU SAYING THAT OUR LIVES WERE JUST SOME KIND OF ENTERTAINMENT FOR THEM? I THOUGHT WE DEFEATED THEIR ARMY YESTERDAY. I HOPED THIS WAS ALL OVER!

SADLY, THAT WAS ONE BATTLE. THEIR WAR COUNCIL IS PROBABLY MEETING RIGHT NOW TO COME UP WITH A NEW STRATEGY. IN ORDER FOR US TO KEEP THEM FROM SENDING MORE TROOPS, WE NEED TO TAKE CARE OF A COUPLE OF THINGS.
YEAH, WHAT'S THAT?
FIRST WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THEY DON'T FIND THE HUMAN PARTICLE.
I'LL JUST COVER IT UP WITH THIS.
WHAT'S THE OTHER THING?

GET DRESSED BOYS. WE'RE GETTING BACK ON ISIS!
WHAT? WHAT FOR?
TO FIND HECTOR!

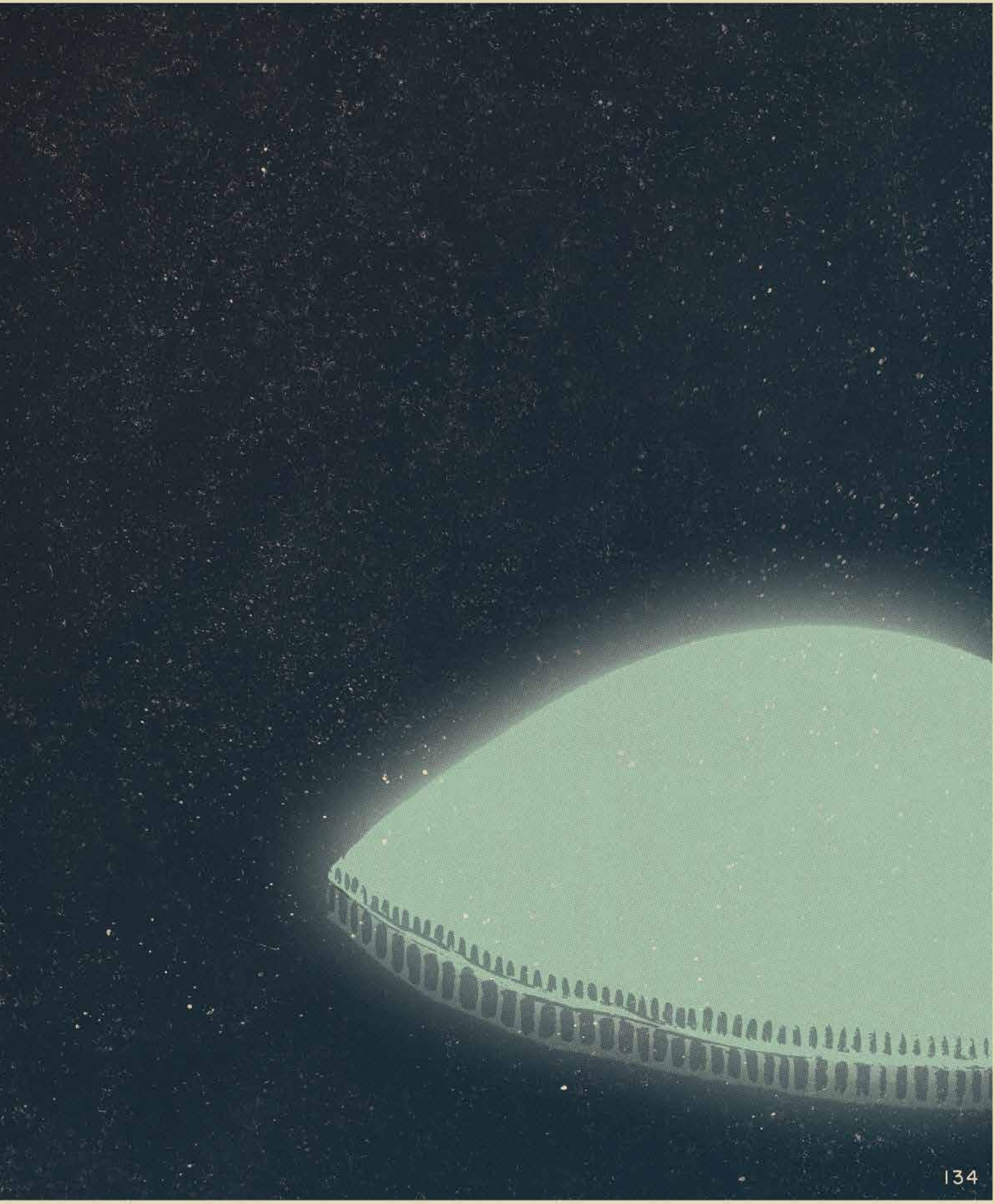
SYD AND THE BOYS FLY OFF ACROSS THE SAND TOWARD ISIS. THEIR HEARTS ARE FILLED WITH VENGEANCE AND ACUTE BLOODLUST THAT CAN ONLY BE HAD BY WATCHING THEIR FRIEND BE KILLED IN SUCH A GRUESOME WAY. SHIRO TRAILS BEHIND AS THE CODEX'S JETPACK CAN'T KEEP UP TO SYD AND LOU'S NEAR IMMORTAL FLIGHT ABILITIES.

ISIS RUMBLES FROM HER WATERY HIDING PLACE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OASIS, BECOMING BUOYANT AND SURFACING BRIEFLY BEFORE TAKING FLIGHT. THE CHROME SAUSAGE BECOMES AIRBORNE, GAINING ALTITUDE WHILE SETTING COURSE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA.



WHAT'S OUR HEADING?
WE ARE PASSING OVER THE ANCIENT CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, BUT OUR FINAL DESTINATION IS JUST OFF THE COAST A FEW KILOMETERS.
WHAT IS OUR FINAL DESTINATION??
THE LOST CITY OF HERACLEON.
THAT'S SUICIDE!
SUDDENLY ISIS STARTS TO DESCEND, BOW FIRST, HEADING DIRECTLY FOR THE SEA. ISIS PIERCES THE SEA WITHOUT MAKING AS MUCH AS A RIPPLE, HAVING NO PREFERENCE FOR AIR OR WATER, INDIFFERENT TO BOTH.
WHERE ELSE ARE WE GOING TO FIND HECTOR? HE'S EXPECTING US.

IN THE DARKEST OF DEPTHS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA THE CREW IS UNABLE TO SEE, BUT THE VESSEL KNOWS WHERE TO GO. WITHIN A FEW MOMENTS A PULSING, BLURRY HAZE REVEALS A BUBBLE LIKE DOME STRUCTURE CONTAINING A BUSTLING CITY OF COLISEUMS, OPEN MARKETS, BUSINESSES, ELABORATE PRIVATE RESIDENCES AND MYTHOLOGICAL LOOKING STATUES. EVERYWHERE, THERE ARE MONUMENTS AND PLACES OF WORSHIP. ONE BUILDING INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE NEXT, STARKLY WHITE AS IF MADE ENTIRELY OF SAND.



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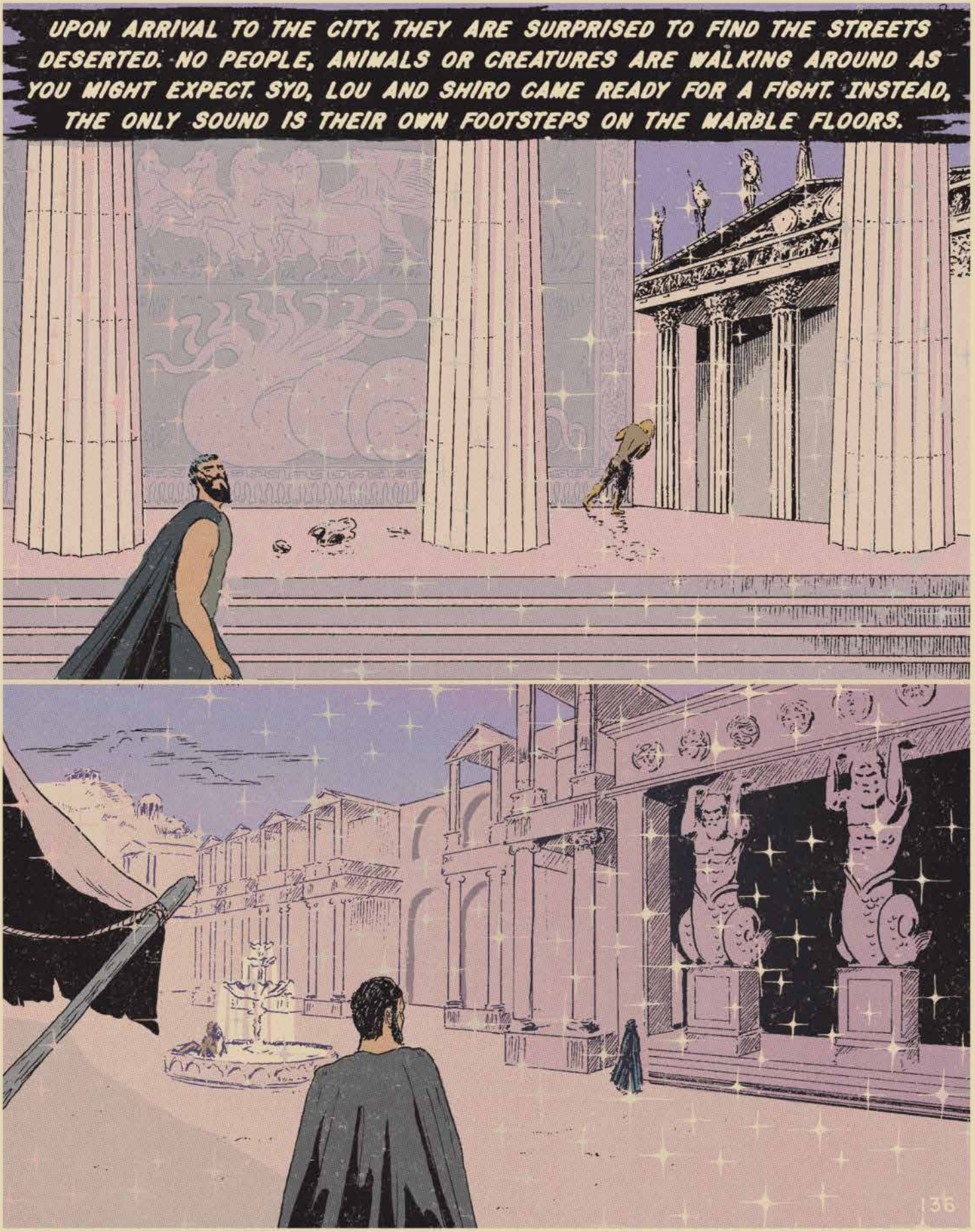
UPON ARRIVAL TO THE CITY, THEY ARE SURPRISED TO FIND THE STREETS DESERTED. NO PEOPLE, ANIMALS OR CREATURES ARE WALKING AROUND AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT. SYD, LOU AND SHIRO CAME READY FOR A FIGHT. INSTEAD, THE ONLY SOUND IS THEIR OWN FOOTSTEPS ON THE MARBLE FLOORS.
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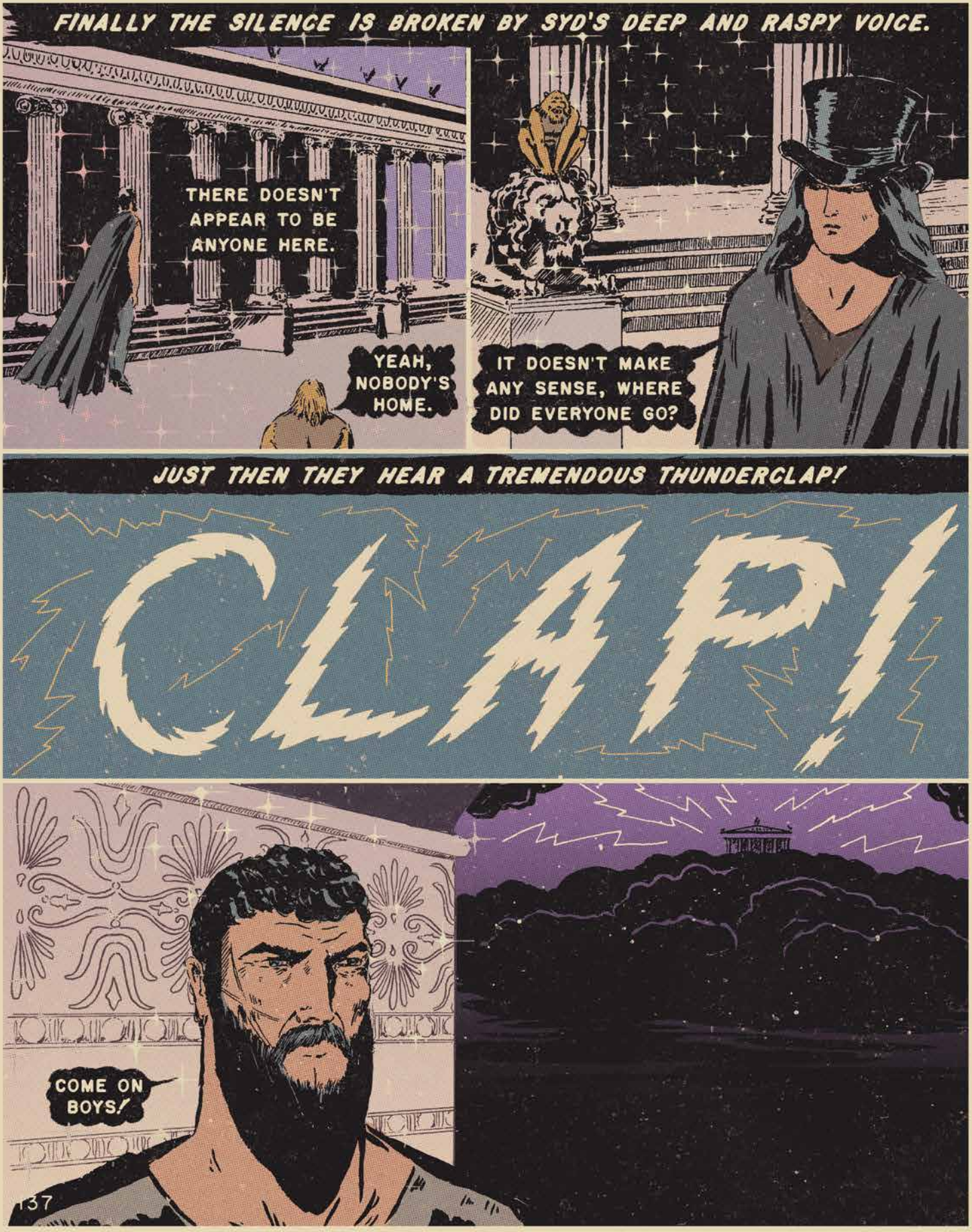
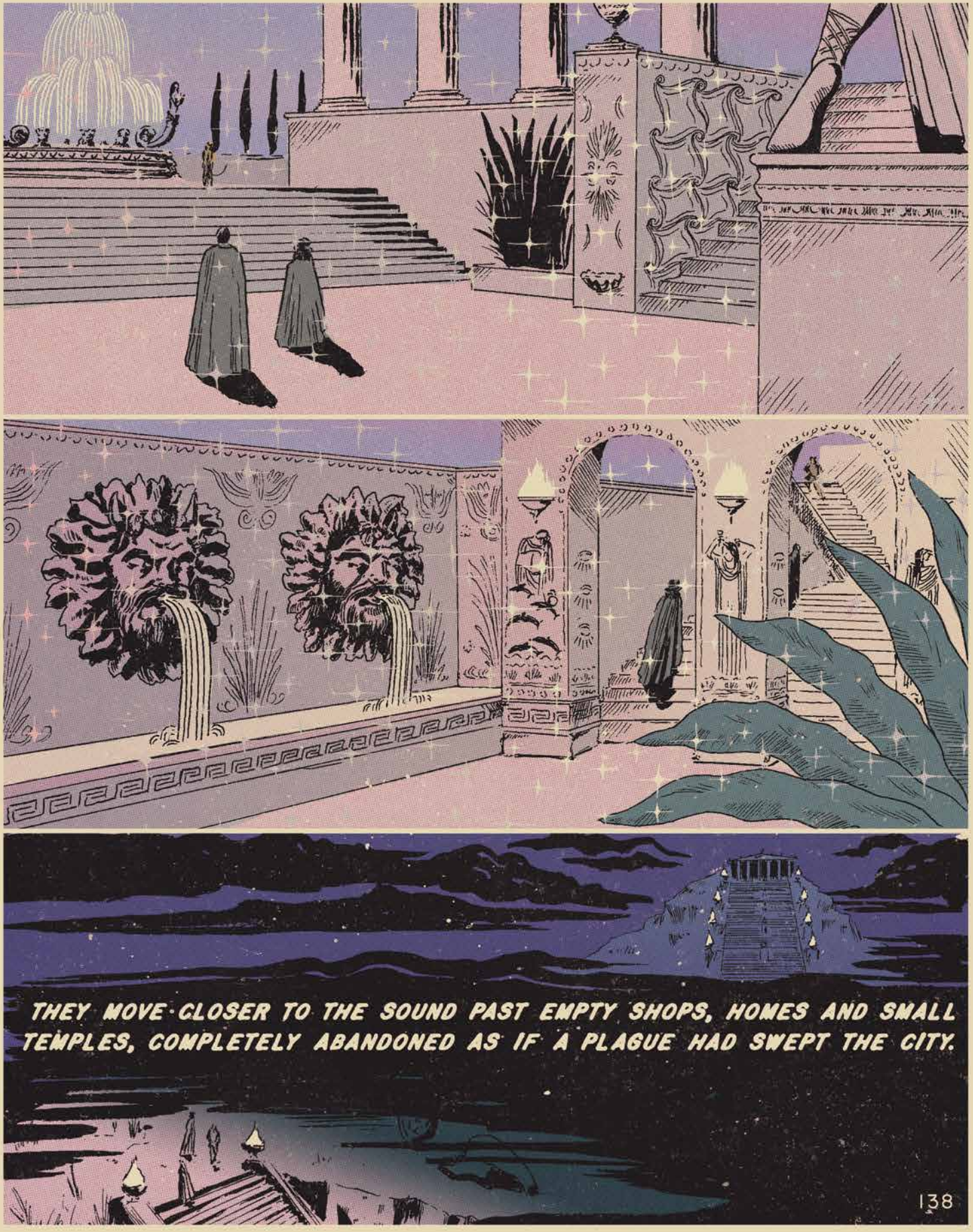
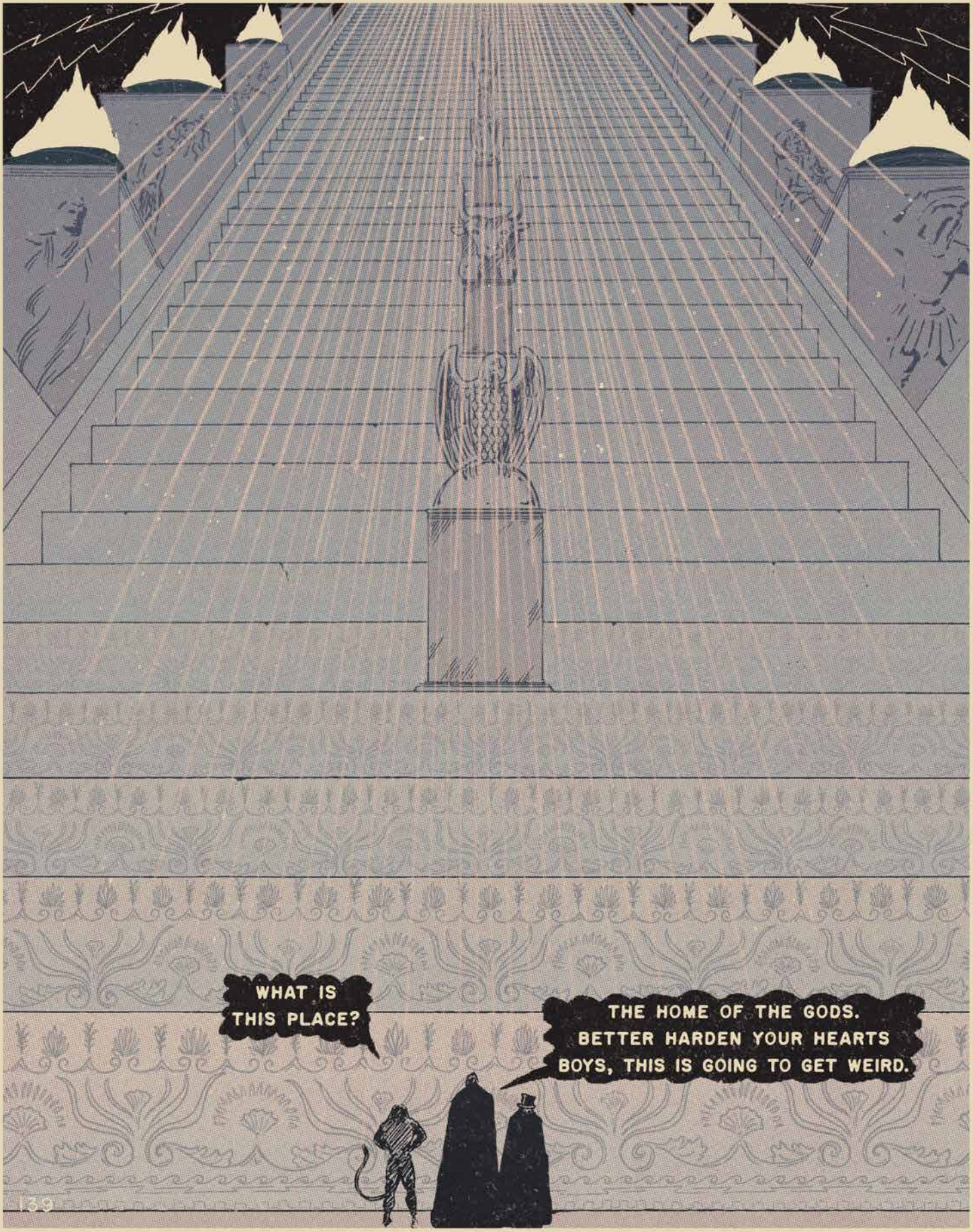
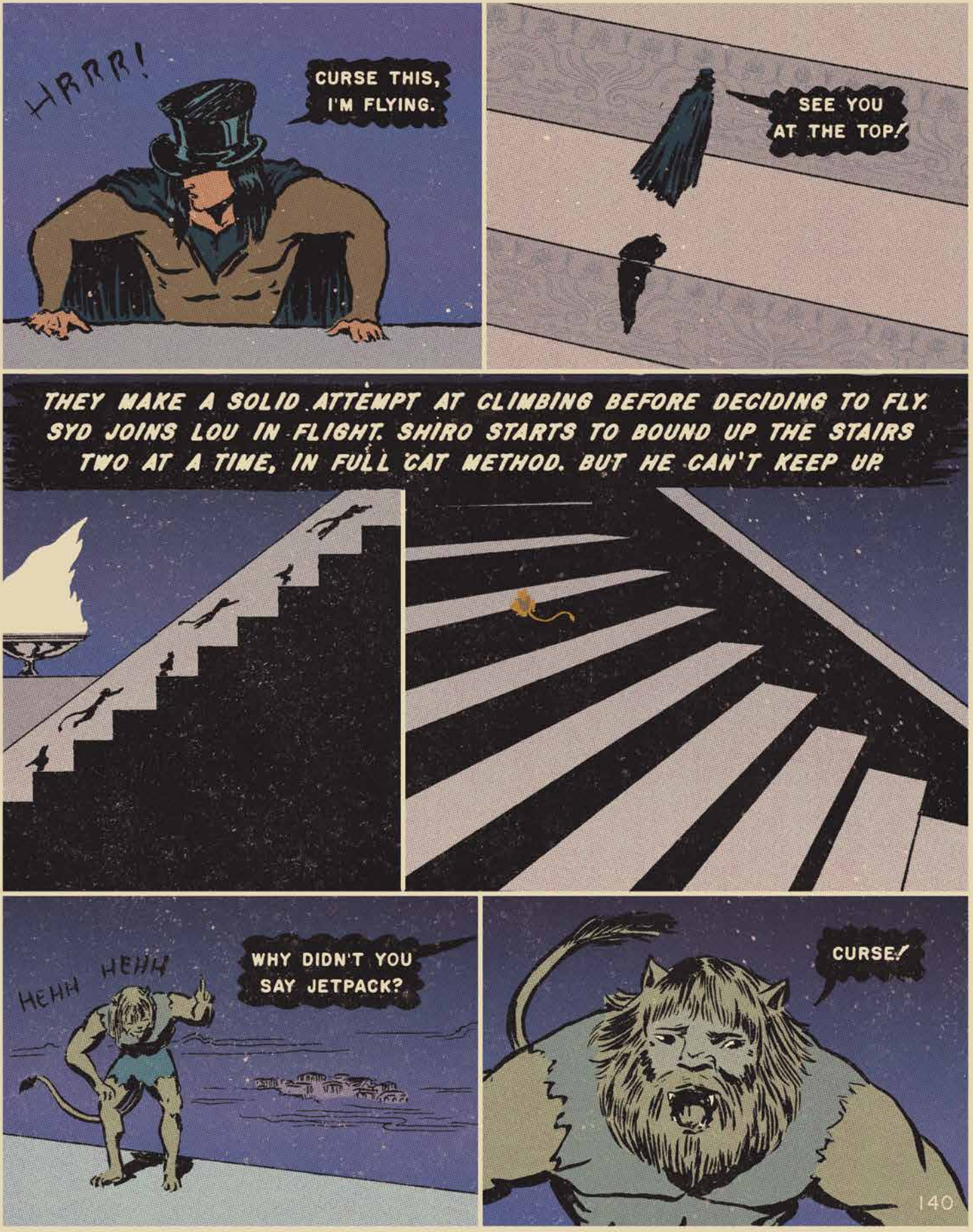
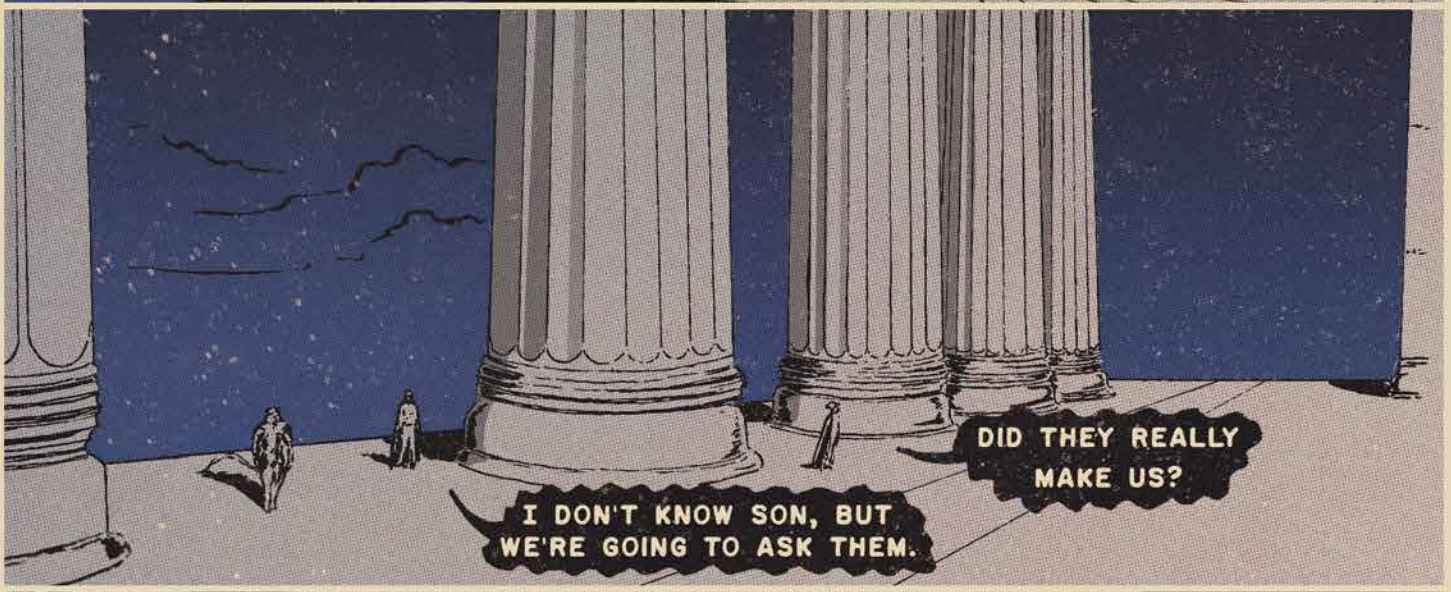

FINALLY THE SILENCE IS BROKEN BY SYD'S DEEP AND RASPY VOICE.
THERE DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE ANYONE HERE.
YEAH, NOBODY'S HOME.
IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE, WHERE DID EVERYONE GO?
JUST THEN THEY HEAR A TREMENDOUS THUNDERCLAP!
CLAP!
COME ON BOYS!


THEY MOVE CLOSER TO THE SOUND PAST EMPTY SHOPS, HOMES AND SMALL TEMPLES, COMPLETELY ABANDONED AS IF A PLAGUE HAD SWEPT THE CITY.

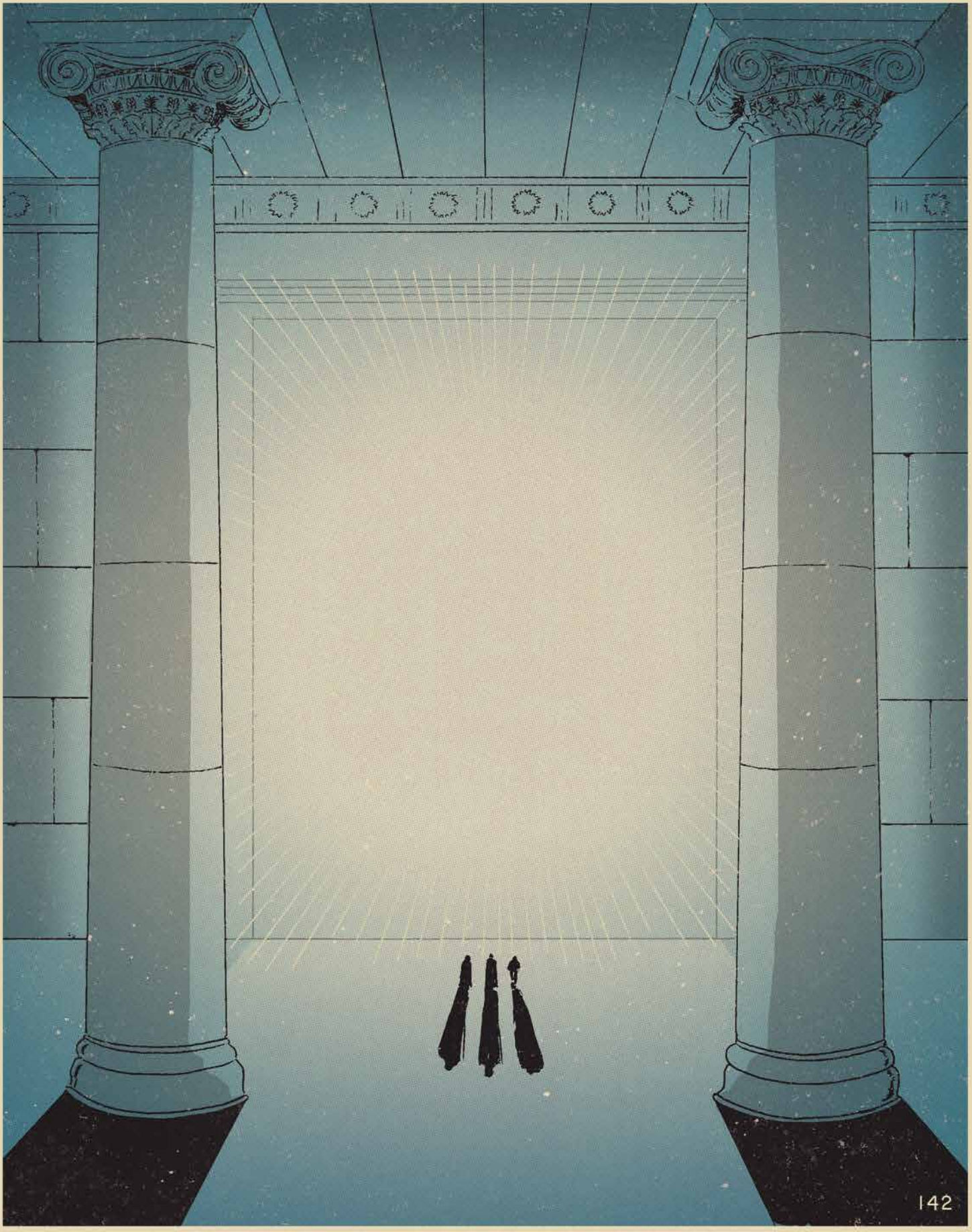

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
THE HOME OF THE GODS. BETTER HARDEN YOUR HEARTS BOYS, THIS IS GOING TO GET WEIRD.


HRRR!
CURSE THIS, I'M FLYING.
SEE YOU AT THE TOP!
THEY MAKE A SOLID ATTEMPT AT CLIMBING BEFORE DECIDING TO FLY. SYD JOINS LOU IN FLIGHT. SHIRO STARTS TO BOUND UP THE STAIRS TWO AT A TIME, IN FULL CAT METHOD. BUT HE CAN'T KEEP UP.
HEHH HEHH
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY JETPACK?
CURSE!

ARE THESE THE GODS EVERYONE KEEPS TALKING ABOUT?
I THINK SO.


DID THEY REALLY MAKE US?
I DON'T KNOW SON, BUT WE'RE GOING TO ASK THEM.

FILLED WITH DREAD THEY CAUTIOUSLY APPROACH THE ENTRANCE. TO THEIR SURPRISE IT'S WIDE OPEN, NO GUARDS ON POST OR ANY OTHER SECURITY.



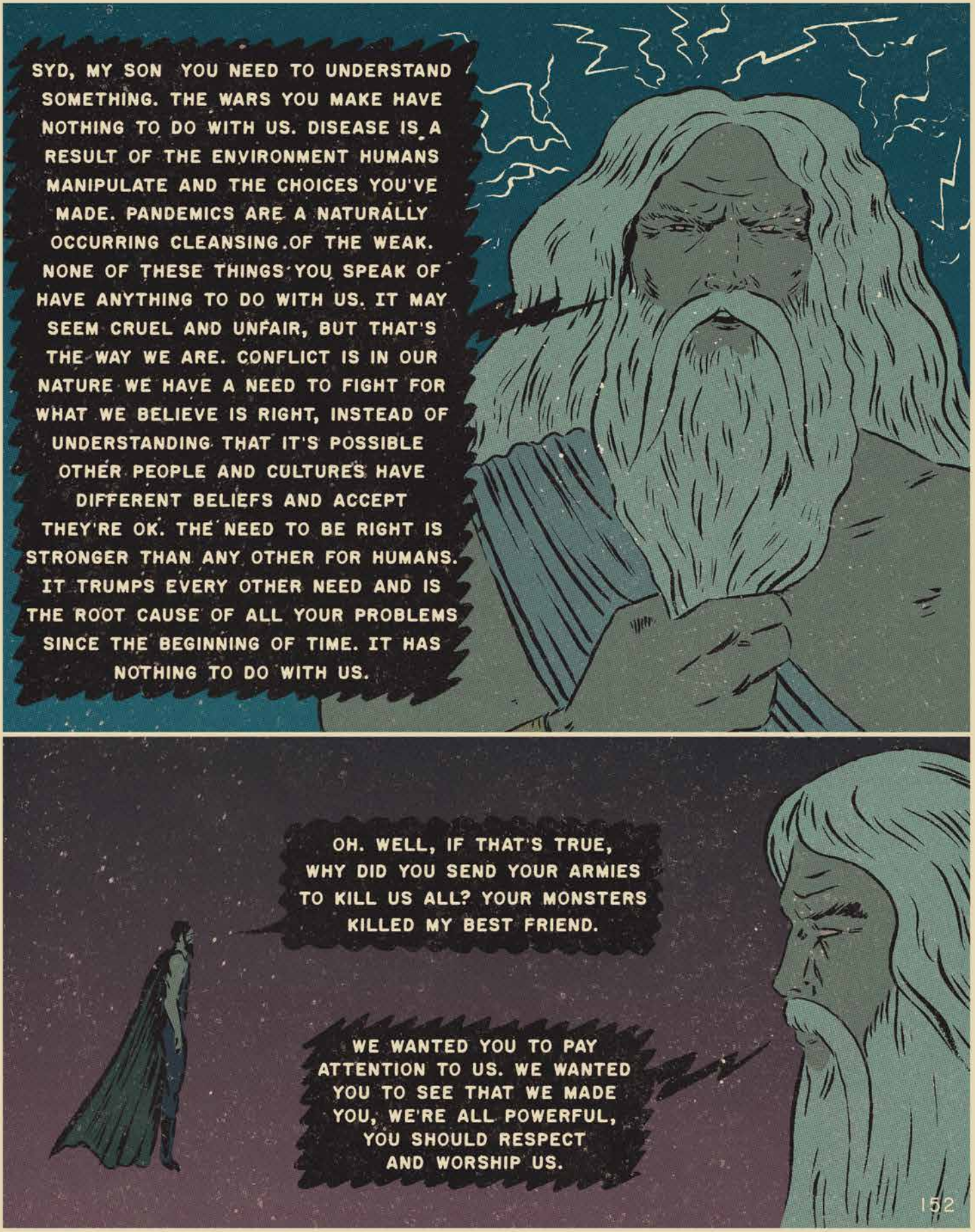
IF ONLY THEY WOULD HAVE LISTENED! WE COULD HAVE TALKED SOME SENSE INTO THEM!
I'LL SHOW THEM HOW TO LISTEN! I'LL GET THEM TO LISTEN!
WHY DON'T THEY CARE ANYMORE?
'CAUSE YOU SUCK! THAT'S WHY!

WAHHH!
WHO ARE YOU!!!

I AM SYD. THESE ARE MY BOYS LOU AND SHIRO.
BOW DOWN BEFORE HERACLES AND ZEUS!
WE WILL NOT.
SIGH
SEE?
...I KNOW.

KILL THEM!
AGH!
NO, YOU!
NO, YOU!
NO, YOU!
NO, YOU!
NO, YOU!
WHAT'S THE POINT? ALL THESE THOUSANDS OF YEARS AND NOBODY CARES ABOUT US ANYMORE.
ZEUS SLAP!
HERACLES UPPERCUT!

THEY'RE ACTING LIKE CHILDREN.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
LET ME HANDLE THIS.
WHY WOULD ANYONE CARE? WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID SOMETHING BENEVOLENT? ALL WE AS HUMANS HAVE IS WAR, FLOODS, DISEASE, DROUGHTS, PANDEMICS, MASS EXTINCTION, DEATH AND DESTRUCTION.


SYD, MY SON YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING. THE WARS YOU MAKE HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH US. DISEASE IS A RESULT OF THE ENVIRONMENT HUMANS MANIPULATE AND THE CHOICES YOU'VE MADE. PANDEMICS ARE A NATURALLY OCCURRING CLEANSING OF THE WEAK. NONE OF THESE THINGS YOU SPEAK OF HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH US. IT MAY SEEM CRUEL AND UNFAIR, BUT THAT'S THE WAY WE ARE. CONFLICT IS IN OUR NATURE WE HAVE A NEED TO FIGHT FOR WHAT WE BELIEVE IS RIGHT, INSTEAD OF UNDERSTANDING THAT IT'S POSSIBLE OTHER PEOPLE AND CULTURES HAVE DIFFERENT BELIEFS AND ACCEPT THEY'RE OK. THE NEED TO BE RIGHT IS STRONGER THAN ANY OTHER FOR HUMANS. IT TRUMPS EVERY OTHER NEED AND IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF ALL YOUR PROBLEMS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH US.
OH. WELL, IF THAT'S TRUE, WHY DID YOU SEND YOUR ARMIES TO KILL US ALL? YOUR MONSTERS KILLED MY BEST FRIEND.
WE WANTED YOU TO PAY ATTENTION TO US. WE WANTED YOU TO SEE THAT WE MADE YOU, WE'RE ALL POWERFUL, YOU SHOULD RESPECT AND WORSHIP US.

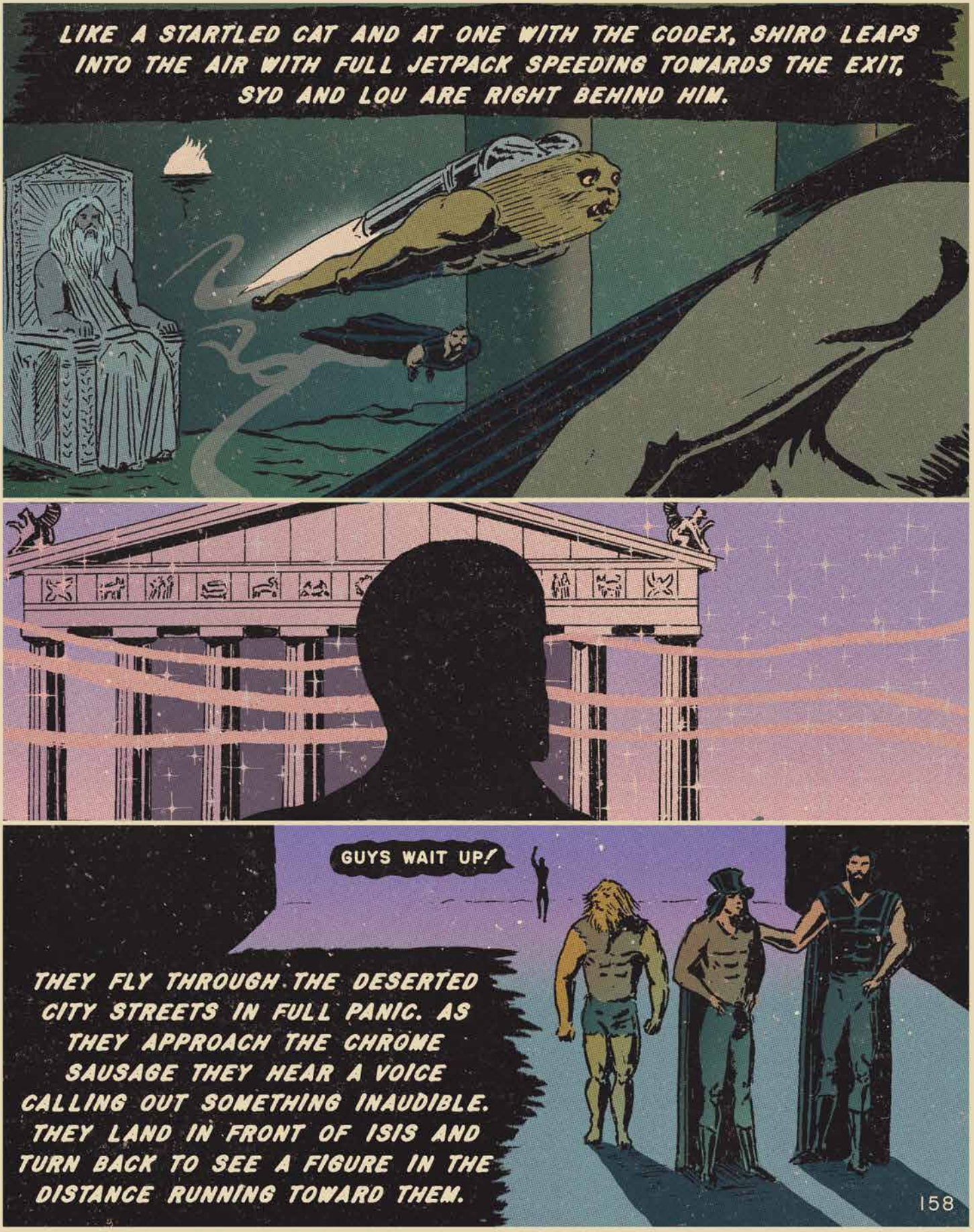
I THOUGHT GODS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE LOVING AND BENEVOLENT?
YOU KILLED SEKHMENT AND SOME OF MY FAVORITE PETS. WE'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT
I GUESS NOT...
WHAT WOULD MAKE MEN RESPECT US AGAIN?
WELL, YOU'RE LARGELY FORGOTTEN, IF NOT HATED IN OUR SOCIETY. TO BE HONEST MEN FEEL ALONE MOST OF THE TIME. GODS HAVE BECOME IRRELEVANT. WE DON'T REALLY KNOW YOU'RE THERE. IF YOU STOPPED PEOPLE'S SUFFERING FROM TIME TO TIME OR PREVENTED THE ODD DISASTER, PEOPLE MIGHT START PAYING ATTENTION AGAIN.
I TAKE YOUR POINT.
HEY, WHERE IS EVERYONE ANYWAY?
MANY LEFT THE CITY BECAUSE WE WERE RUNNING OUT OF FOOD. WE WERE ALL HUNGRY AND OUR NUMBERS BECAME LESS AND LESS.

WHY ARE THERE ALL THESE PILES OF BONES EVERYWHERE?
WE WERE ALL FIGHTING OVER THE LAST SCRAPS OF FOOD, IT WAS A TERRIBLE THING.
SOOO NOBODY ATE ANYONE?
CERTAINLY NOT!
THIS IS THE KIND OF THING WE'RE TALKING ABOUT! YOU CAN'T JUST EAT PEOPLE IF YOU WANT TO BE RESPECTED AND REVERED! HAVE YOU COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN HOW TO BE GOD-LIKE? PEOPLE WON'T RESPECT YOU IF YOU ARE CRUEL TO THEM. ONCE YOU MISTREAT A PERSON OR AN ANIMAL, THEY WILL BE SCARED OF YOU FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES. SAME GOES FOR MORTALS AS IT DOES FOR GODS.

OKAY SYDNEY, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE US DO TO BEGIN OUR RECONCILIATION WITH MORTALS?
TO BEGIN WITH, PREVENT A WAR FROM HAPPENING.
IF WE PREVENT IT NOBODY WILL KNOW IT WAS US THAT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH ITS PREVENTION.
A TRUE GIFT IS ONE THAT SOMEONE DOESN'T KNOW THEY RECEIVED. THINK OF IT AS YOUR NEW PRACTICE OF BENEVOLENCE. YOU DON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT ZEUS.
AGREED.
IN FACT WE HAVE A MAN IN AUSTRIA-ESTE RIGHT NOW ATTEMPTING TO DO SOMETHING LIKE WHAT YOU SAID, BUT WE DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS.
HECTOR!

YOU KNOW HECTOR?!
OF COURSE THEY KNOW HECTOR...
MORE LIKE HECTOR KNOWS US. HE PICKED ME UP IN ISIS WHEN I NEEDED HELP, WHICH INCIDENTALLY IS HOW WE GOT HERE TO HERACLEON.
CURSE!
THEN YOU NEED TO GO HELP HECTOR. WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET INVOLVED UNTIL YOU PROVE TO US THIS WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE. BUT WE DO SUPPORT YOU.
WAHH!
OH YEAH? HOW'S THAT?

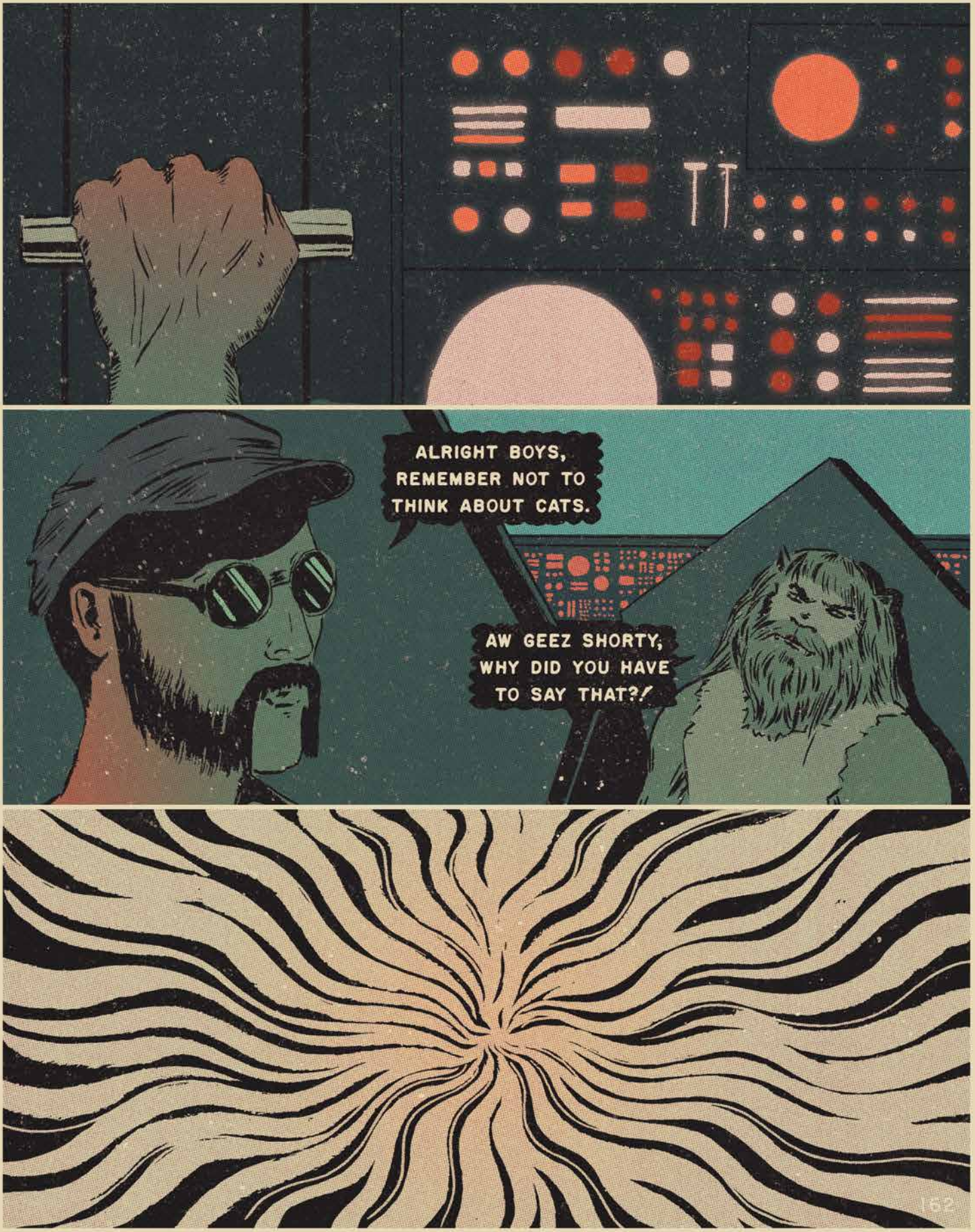
BY NOT EATING YOU!
TAKE YOUR LEAVE AT ONCE!

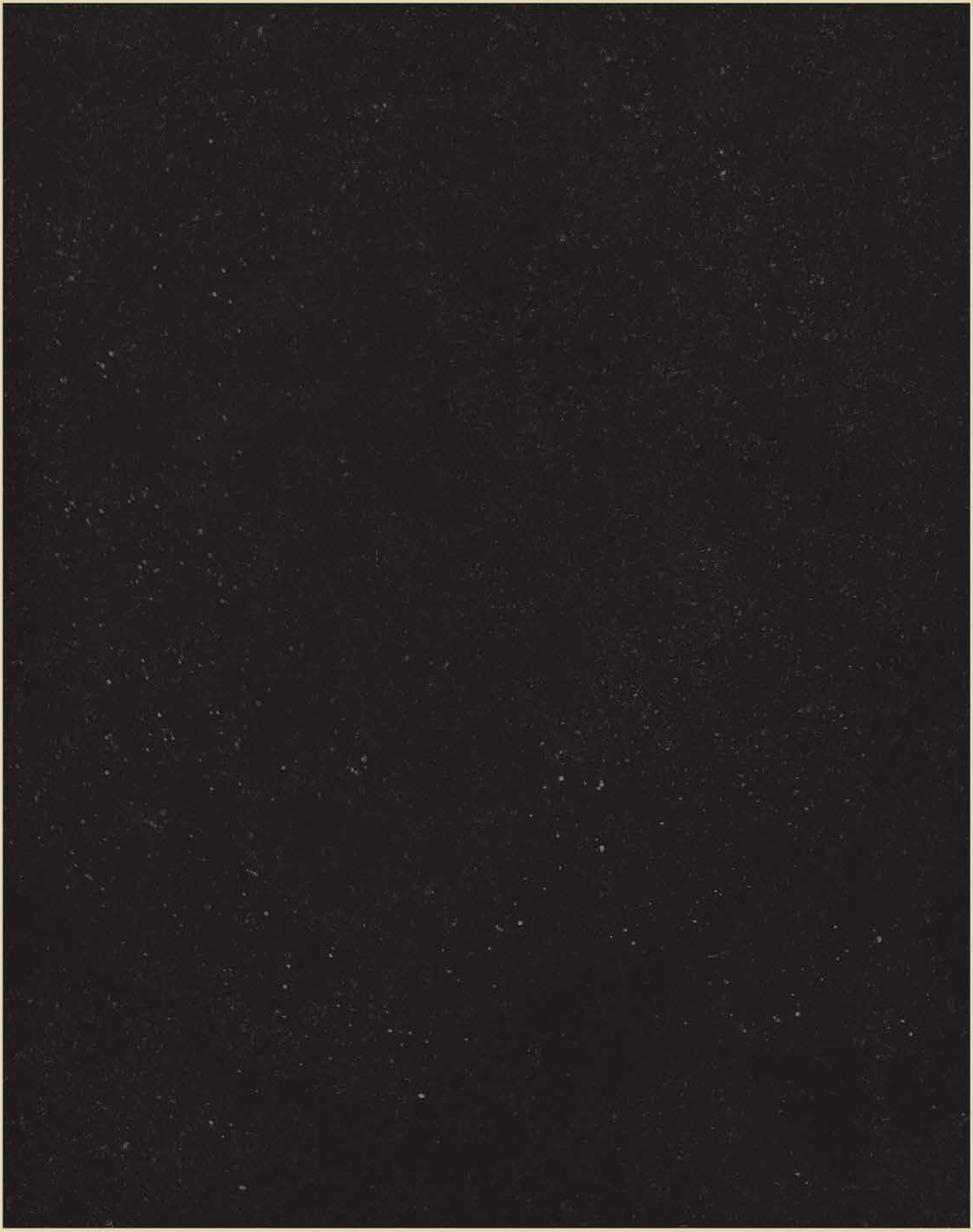

LIKE A STARTLED CAT AND AT ONE WITH THE CODEX, SHIRO LEAPS INTO THE AIR WITH FULL JETPACK SPEEDING TOWARDS THE EXIT, SYD AND LOU ARE RIGHT BEHIND HIM.
GUYS WAIT UP!
THEY FLY THROUGH THE DESERTED CITY STREETS IN FULL PANIC. AS THEY APPROACH THE CHROME SAUSAGE THEY HEAR A VOICE CALLING OUT SOMETHING INAUDIBLE. THEY LAND IN FRONT OF ISIS AND TURN BACK TO SEE A FIGURE IN THE DISTANCE RUNNING TOWARD THEM.

GUYS!
NO WAY!
IS THAT SHORTY??
TAKE THIS.
HERE, TAKE THIS TOO...
HOW THE CURSE ARE YOU ALIVE?
NO IDEA.
I BET IT WAS HERACLES. ZEUS IS A DICK!

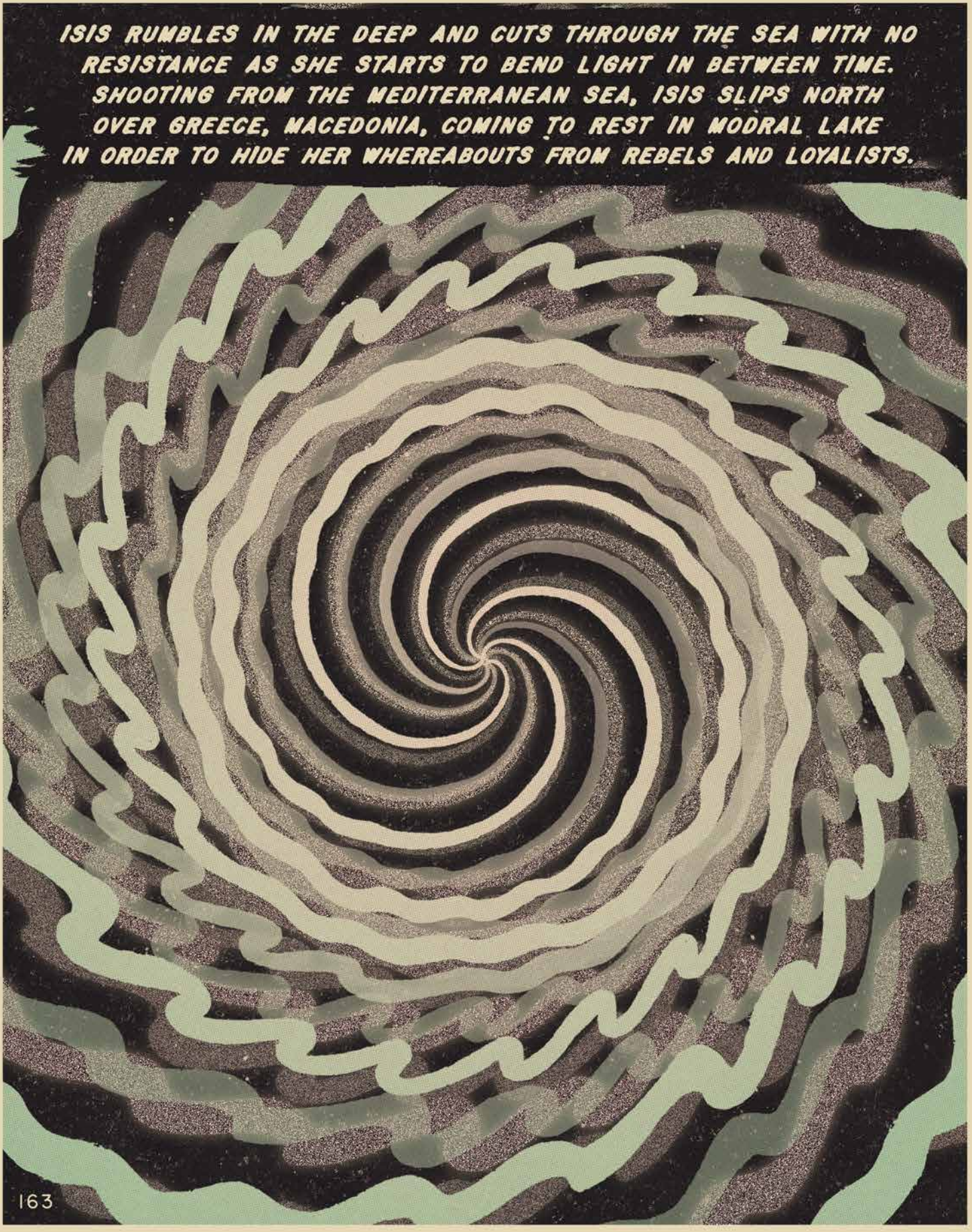
NOW I KNOW WHY THEY CALL YOU SHORTY.
SO WHAT'S THE PLAN?
WE NEED TO FIND HECTOR AND HELP HIM PREVENT WWI SO THESE GODS WILL START ACTING LIKE GODS AGAIN.
DO YOU THINK THEY ACTUALLY WOULD, EVEN IN THE OFF CHANCE WE CAN STOP THIS WAR FROM HAPPENING?
WE HAVE A CHOICE TO CHANGE THINGS. WE COULD GO HOME NOW... BACK TO GRANDPA AND TRY TO PRETEND NONE OF THIS HAPPENED...
OR WHAT?
WE WORK TOGETHER AND FACE THIS THING HEAD ON TO REVERSE THE COURSE OF CIVILIZATION. THINK OF THIS BOYS - IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE SOMETIMES THERE ISN'T A GOOD GUY AND A BAD GUY... THERE'S NO SIDES TO CHOOSE, PEOPLE RESPECT EACH OTHER, THEIR BELIEFS AND CHOICES. I HAVE TO BELIEVE A WORLD LIKE THAT CAN EXIST...

YOU HEARD ZEUS, ALL THAT CONFLICT IS IN OUR NATURE. THERE'S NO ESCAPING IT.
I NEED TO TRY.
I'M IN. WHERE ARE WE GOING?
SARAJEVO, JUNE 27 1914. THAT'S WHERE WE'LL FIND HECTOR. HE'LL BE WELL INTEGRATED INTO THE BLACK HAND NETWORK BY NOW, TRYING TO PREVENT THE ASSASSINATION OF THE ARCHDUKE, FRANZ FERDINAND.
SOUNDS DANGEROUS, LET'S GO!


ALRIGHT BOYS, REMEMBER NOT TO THINK ABOUT CATS.
AW GEEZ SHORTY, WHY DID YOU HAVE TO SAY THAT?!

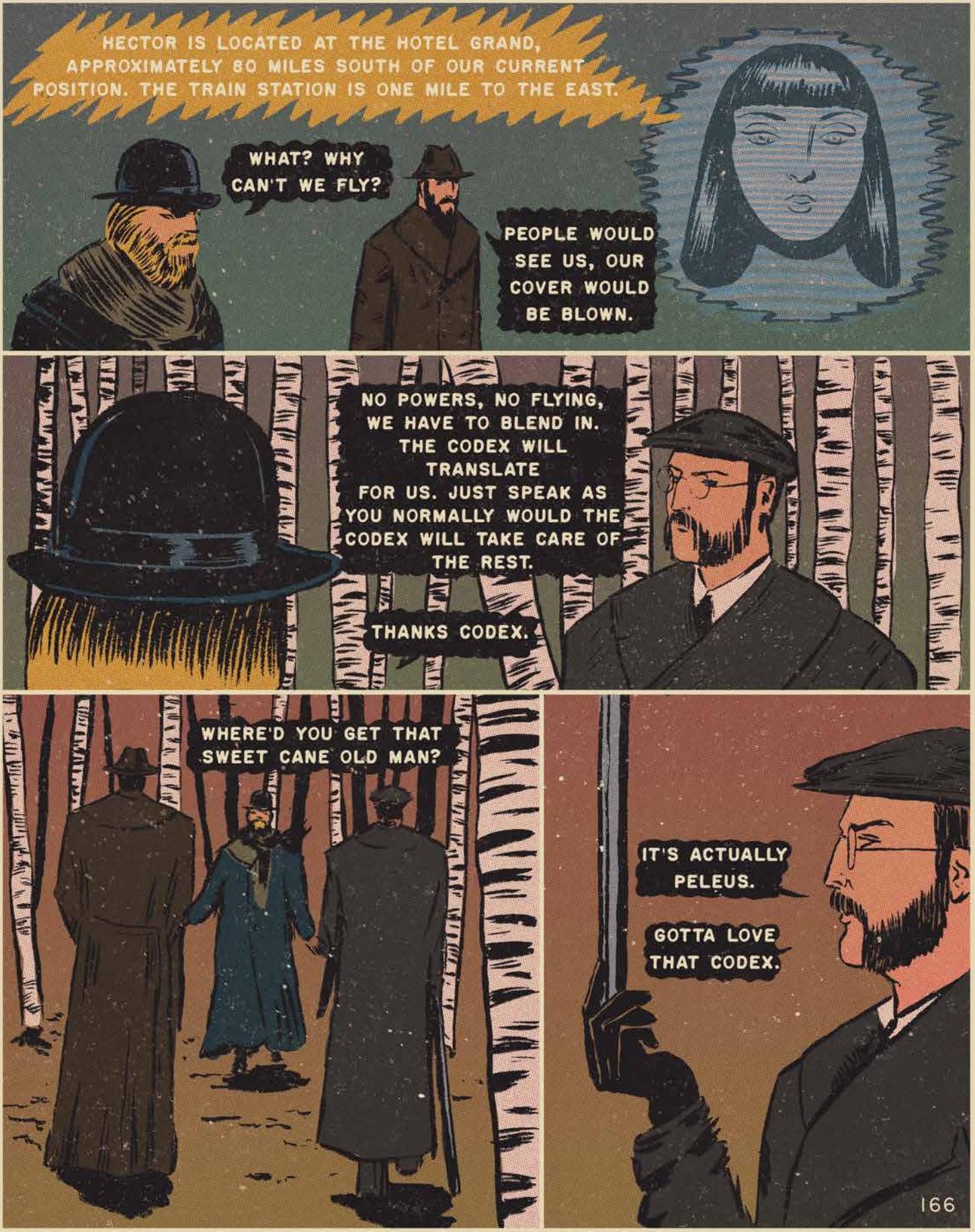


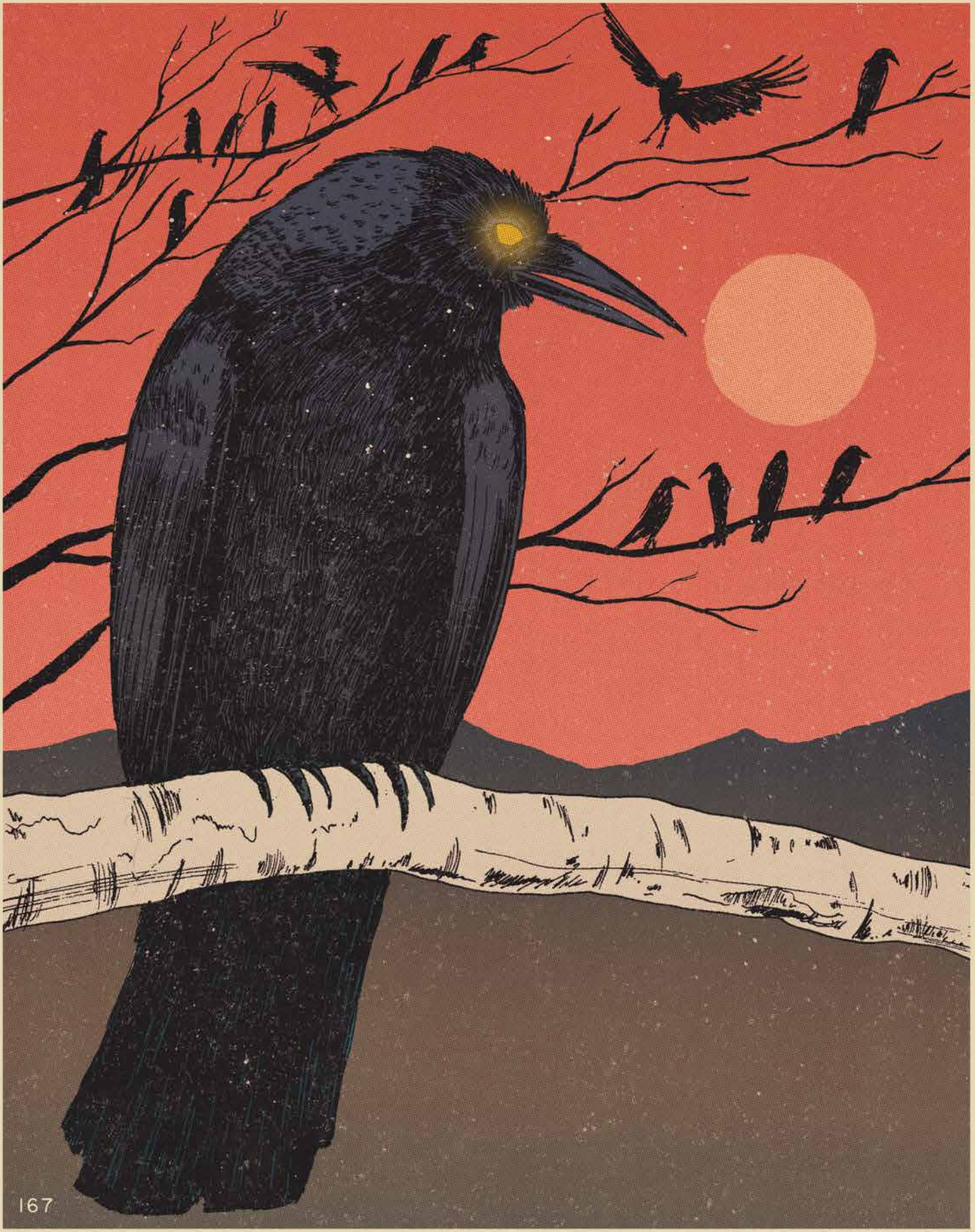
VIII


ISIS RUMBLES IN THE DEEP AND CUTS THROUGH THE SEA WITH NO RESISTANCE AS SHE STARTS TO BEND LIGHT IN BETWEEN TIME. SHOOTING FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, ISIS SLIPS NORTH OVER GREECE, MACEDONIA, COMING TO REST IN MODRAL LAKE IN ORDER TO HIDE HER WHEREABOUTS FROM REBELS AND LOYALISTS.

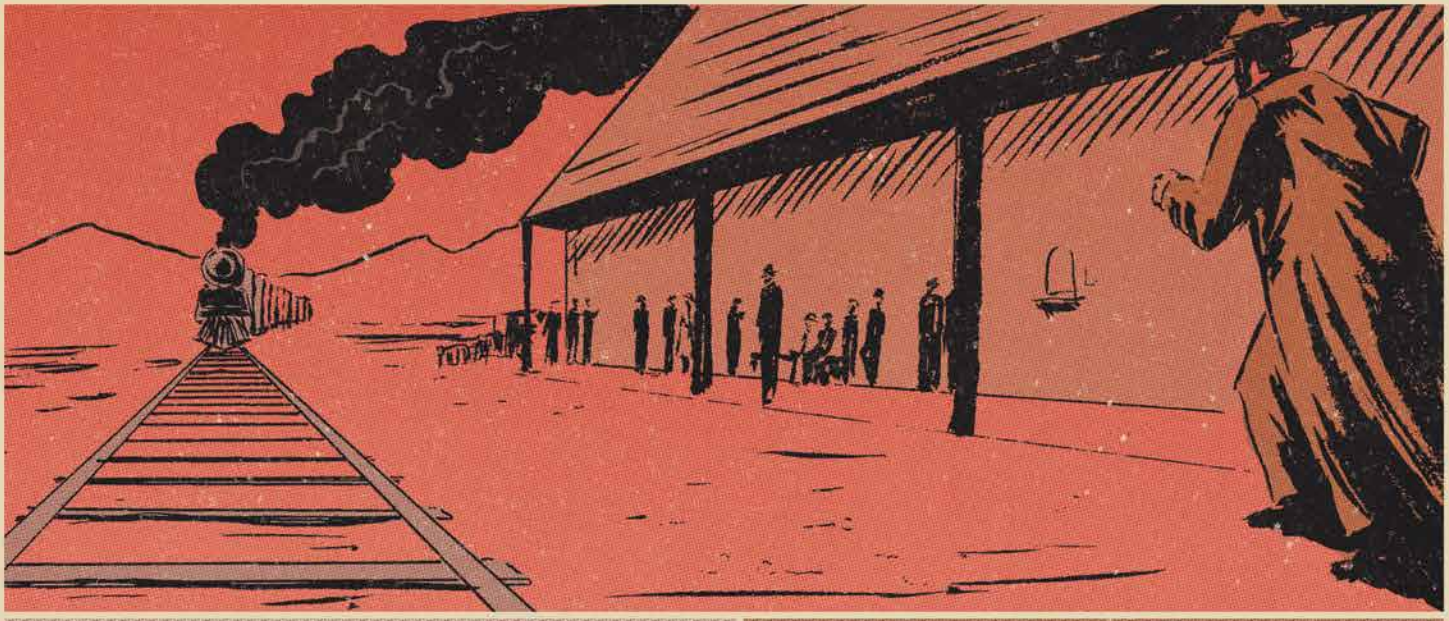
YOU DID IT AGAIN KID!
DONT TEASE HIM SHORTY, WE'LL NEED HIS STRENGTH.
YEAH, I KNOW, BUT HOW ARE WE GONNA HIDE THAT TAIL, THOSE PAWS AND INCISORS?
THE CODEX WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT. IN FACT THE CODEX WILL MAKE SURE WE ALL ARE DRESSED IN APPROPRIATE ATTIRE FOR THIS TIME AND SITUATION.

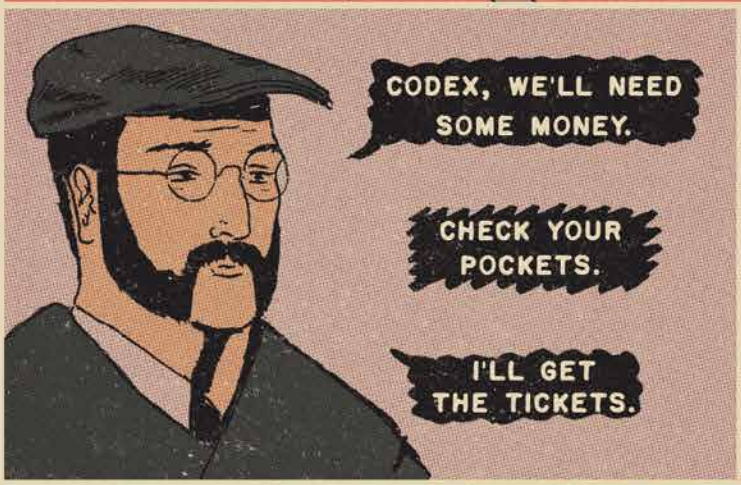
THE CODEXES SEMALESSLY MANUFACTURE WOOL SUITS, CAPS AND SCARVES FOR SYD, SHORTY, LOU AND SHIRO.
WOW, WE LOOK GREAT!
THANKS CODEX!

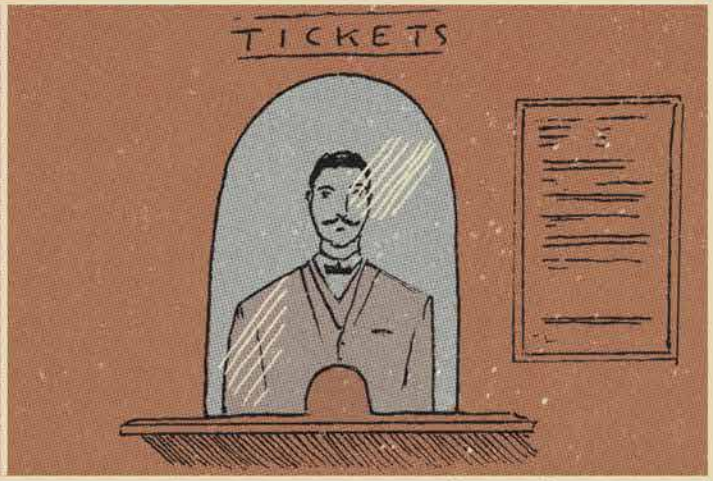

HECTOR IS LOCATED AT THE HOTEL GRAND, APPROXIMATELY 80 MILES SOUTH OF OUR CURRENT POSITION. THE TRAIN STATION IS ONE MILE TO THE EAST.
WHAT? WHY CAN'T WE FLY?
PEOPLE WOULD SEE US, OUR COVER WOULD BE BLOWN.
NO POWERS, NO FLYING, WE HAVE TO BLEND IN. THE CODEX WILL TRANSLATE FOR US. JUST SPEAK AS YOU NORMALLY WOULD THE CODEX WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.
THANKS CODEX.
WHERE'D YOU GET THAT SWEET CANE OLD MAN?
IT'S ACTUALLY PELEUS.
GOTTA LOVE THAT CODEX.

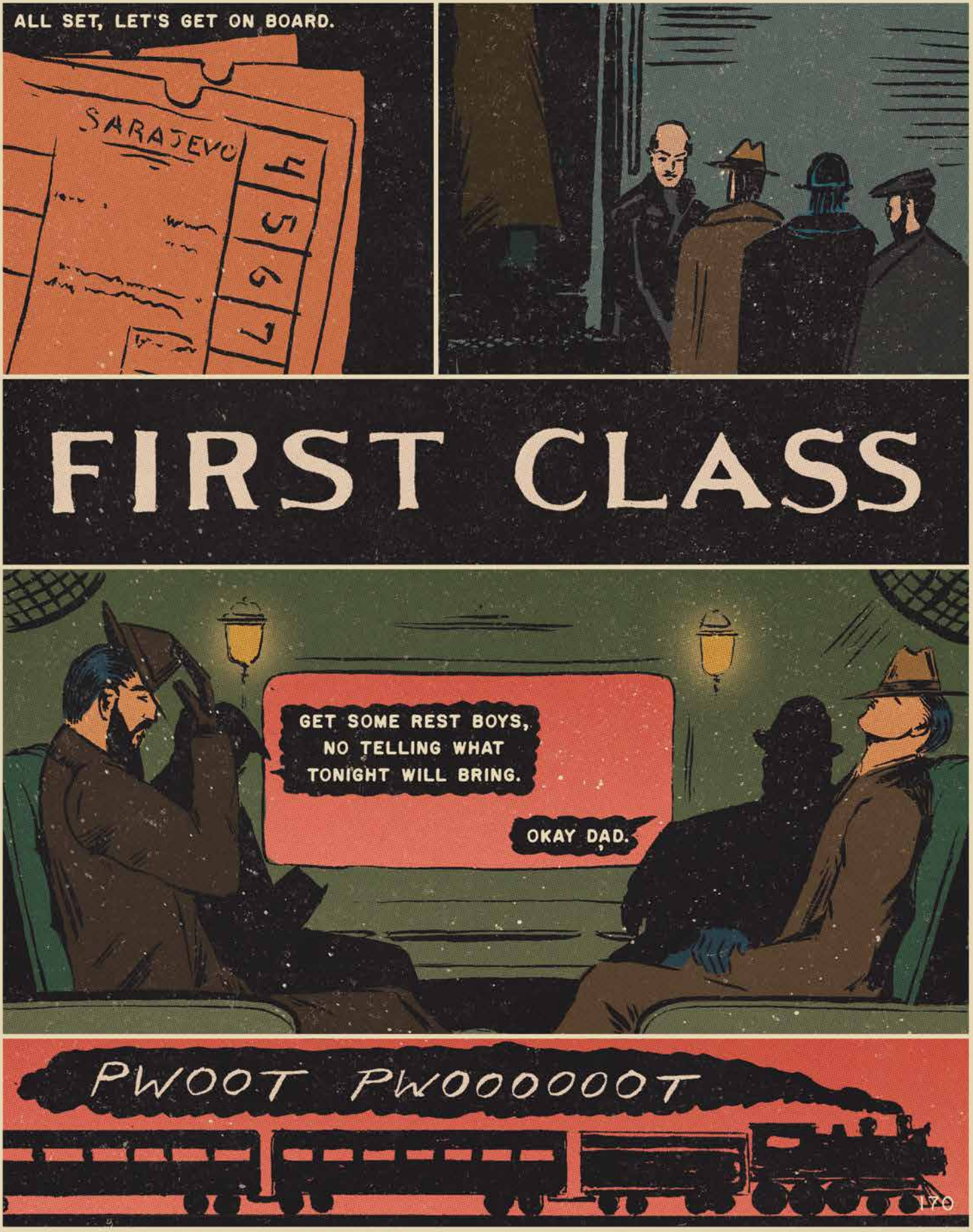


I'VE LOCATED HECTOR AND DETERMINED THAT HE IS ALONE AT THE MOMENT. SHOULD I OPEN A COMMUNICATION CHANNEL?
YES, BUT KEEP IT QUIET, MINIMUM VOLUME.
HECTOR, IT'S SYD, CAN YOU TALK?
OH WOW, SYD, I'M SO HAPPY TO HEAR YOUR VOICE! ARE YOU CLOSE?
YES, WE'RE COMING TO YOUR LOCATION FROM THE NORTH BY TRAIN. WE SHOULD BE THERE BY MORNING.
GREAT! WHO IS WE?
ME, SHORTY, LOU AND SHIRO.
CURSE NO, THIS IS NO PLACE FOR KIDS. DON'T GET ME WRONG, I'M HAPPY YOU FOUND YOUR SON, BUT IT'S GOING TO GET DANGEROUS HERE REAL FAST.
WELL THAT'S THE COOL THING HECTOR, ISIS CHANGED THEM, WE FOUGHT A BATTLE WITH THE BEASTS TOGETHER. THEY'RE FIERCE WARRIORS NOW.
OH YES? WHO WON?
WE DID, OBVIOUSLY.
RIGHT, DUH. SEE YOU SOON MY FRIEND. I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU AT THE HOTEL. ROOM 13.




CODEX, WE'LL NEED SOME MONEY.
CHECK YOUR POCKETS.
I'LL GET THE TICKETS.


TICKETS


ALL SET, LET'S GET ON BOARD.
SARAJEVO
FIRST CLASS
GET SOME REST BOYS, NO TELLING WHAT TONIGHT WILL BRING.
OKAY DAD.
PWOOT PWOOOOOOT
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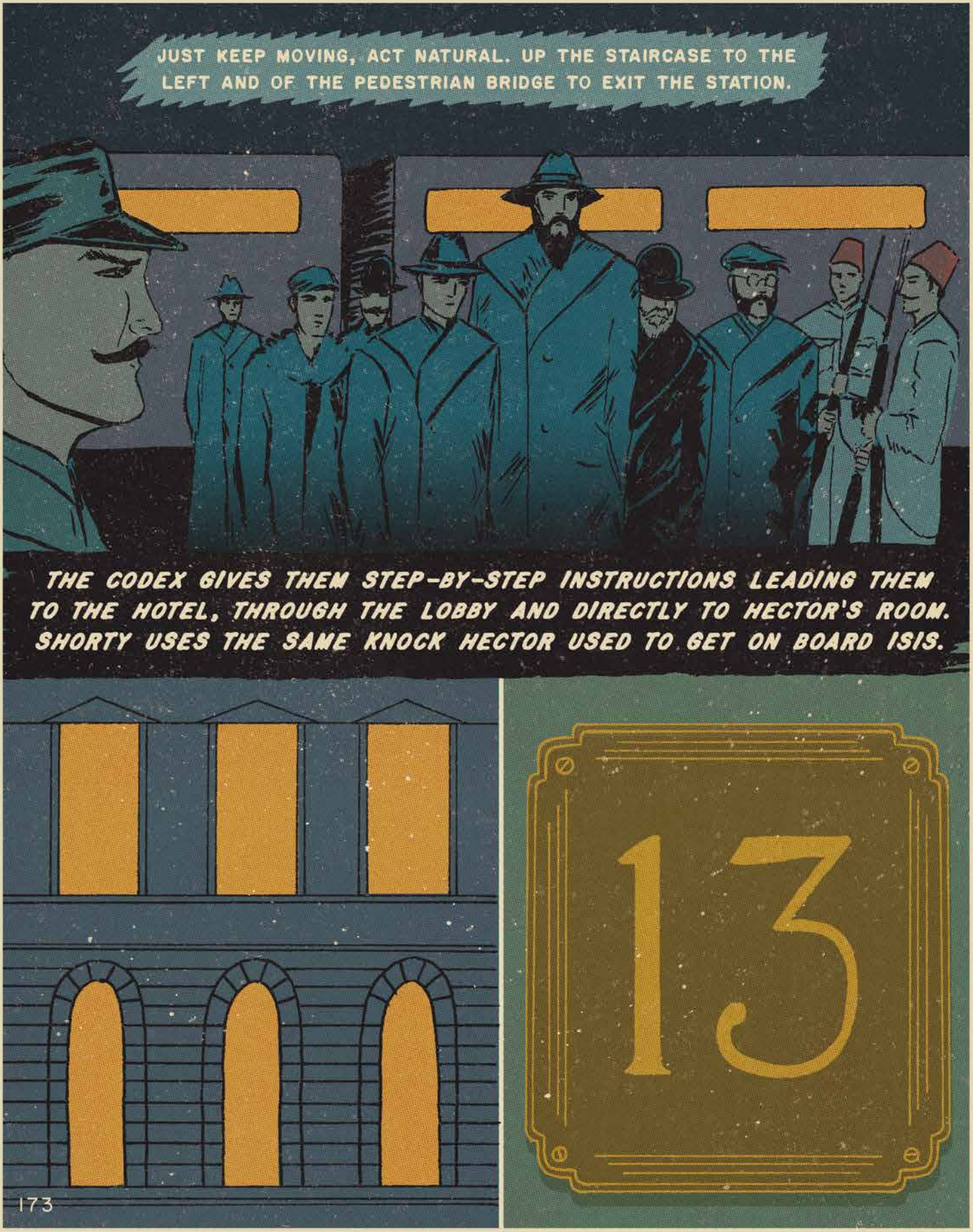
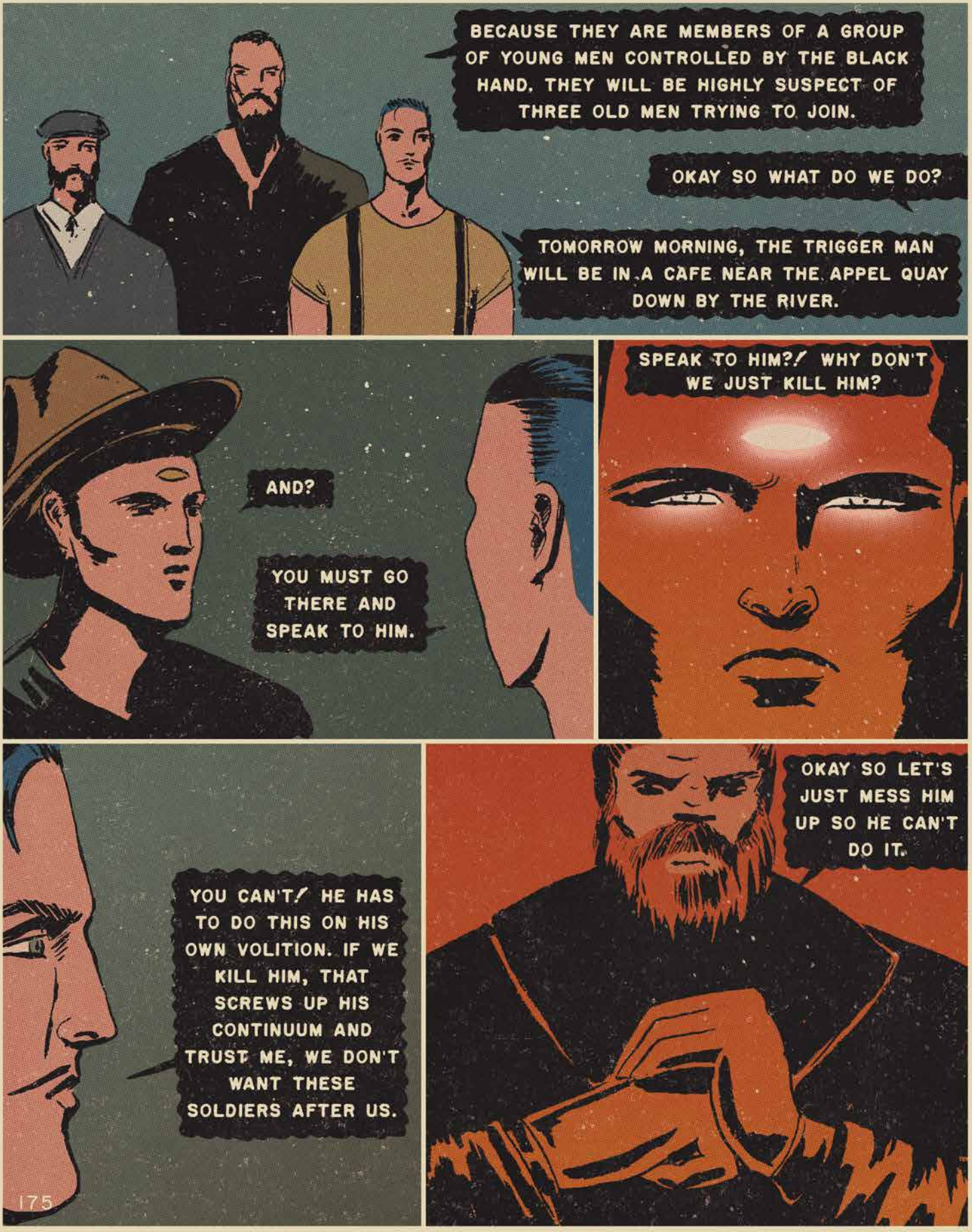
THE TRAIN ARRIVES IN SARAJEVO LATER THAT NIGHT...
OH CURSE. THAT'S A LOT OF GUNS AND I'M NOT BULLETPROOF.
ACTUALLY YOU MOSTLY ARE, BECAUSE OF ME.
ALL OF THE GARMENTS I MADE CAN WITHSTAND GUNFIRE, BLADES TOO.
WHY DID YOU SAY MOSTLY??
IT'S YOUR FACE.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY FACE?
BESIDES LOOKING LIKE THAT, NOTHING.
OH GREAT, THE CODEX GOT ALL "AI" ON US GUYS.

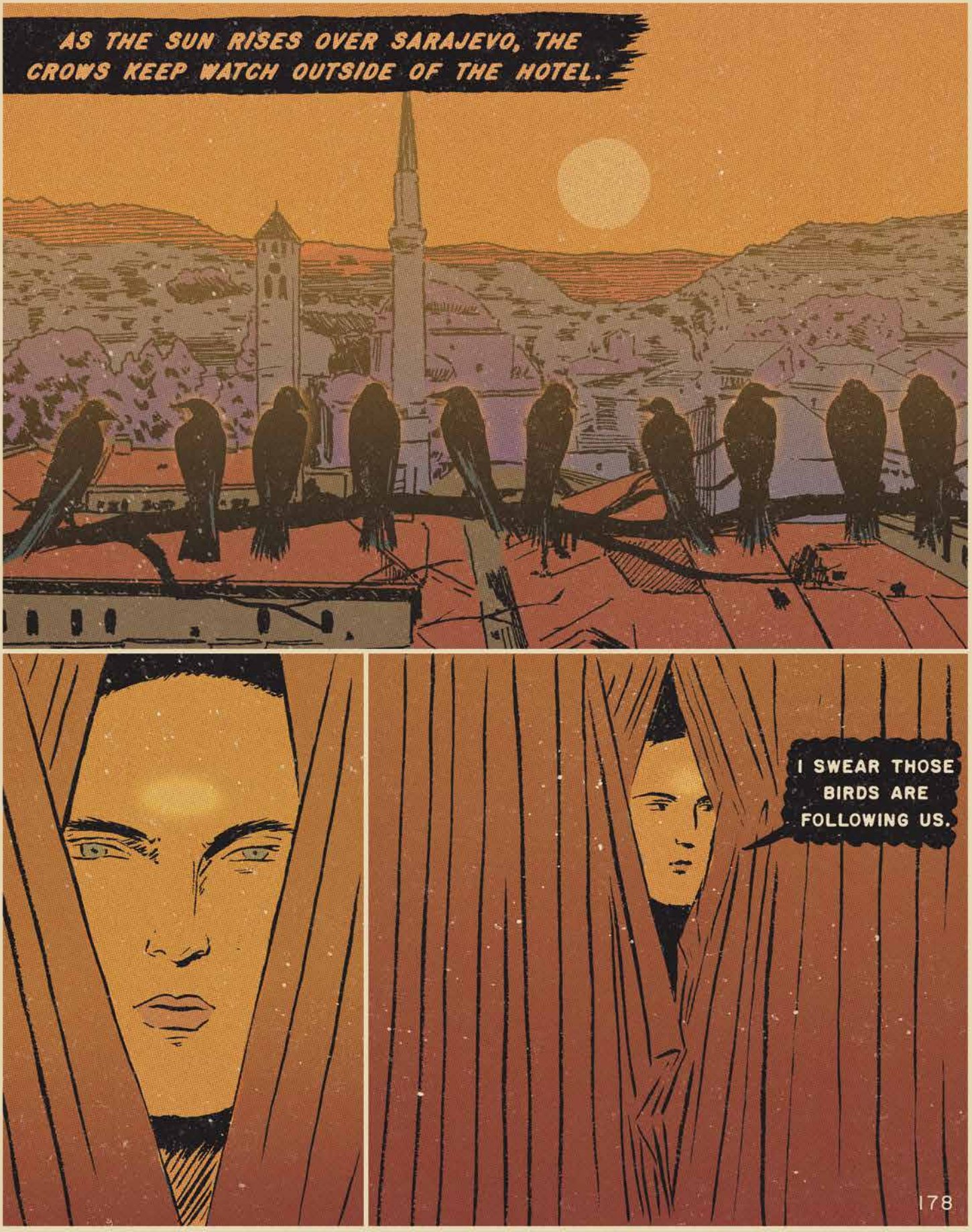

JUST KEEP MOVING, ACT NATURAL. UP THE STAIRCASE TO THE LEFT AND OF THE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO EXIT THE STATION.
THE CODEX GIVES THEM STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS LEADING THEM TO THE HOTEL, THROUGH THE LOBBY AND DIRECTLY TO HECTOR'S ROOM. SHORTY USES THE SAME KNOCK HECTOR USED TO GET ON BOARD ISIS.
13

13
MY ISIS CREW! HOW IS THE OLD GIRL? STILL IN ONE PIECE I HOPE!
WE HID HER IN A LAKE JUST NORTH OF HERE.
GOOD. LISTEN. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME. THE ASSASINATION OF ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND IS SET FOR TOMORROW BY A YOUNG BOSNIAN, WHICH WILL SET OFF A CHAIN OF EVENTS, STARTING WWI. HE'S NAMED AFTER THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL. TOUGH AS NAILS AND MEAN TOO. A REAL REVOLUTIONIST! THE PLAN REQUIRES SOME BACKSTORY... FRANZ FERDINAND IS JUST ONE OF 70 ARCHDUKES, BUT BY FAR THE MOST FOREWARD THINKING ONE. THE OTHER GUYS ARE HATE MONGERS. FRANZ IS ABOUT TO GET BEHIND THE IDEA OF A TRIPARTITE STATE, WHICH IS A STATE THAT'S SHARED BY 3 PARTIES. SO THERE WOULD BE AUSTRIA, HUNGARY AND THE UNION OF SLAVIC PEOPLE. ALL WITHIN THE CURRENT BORDERS. IF HE IS KILLED, HE'LL NEVER GET THE CHANCE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.
WHY WOULD THEY WANT TO KILL HIM IF FRANZ IS TRYING TO HELP THE SLAVS?
WAIT WHY US?
THEY DON'T KNOW HE'S TRYING TO HELP.. YET. THAT'S WHERE YOU TWO COME IN.

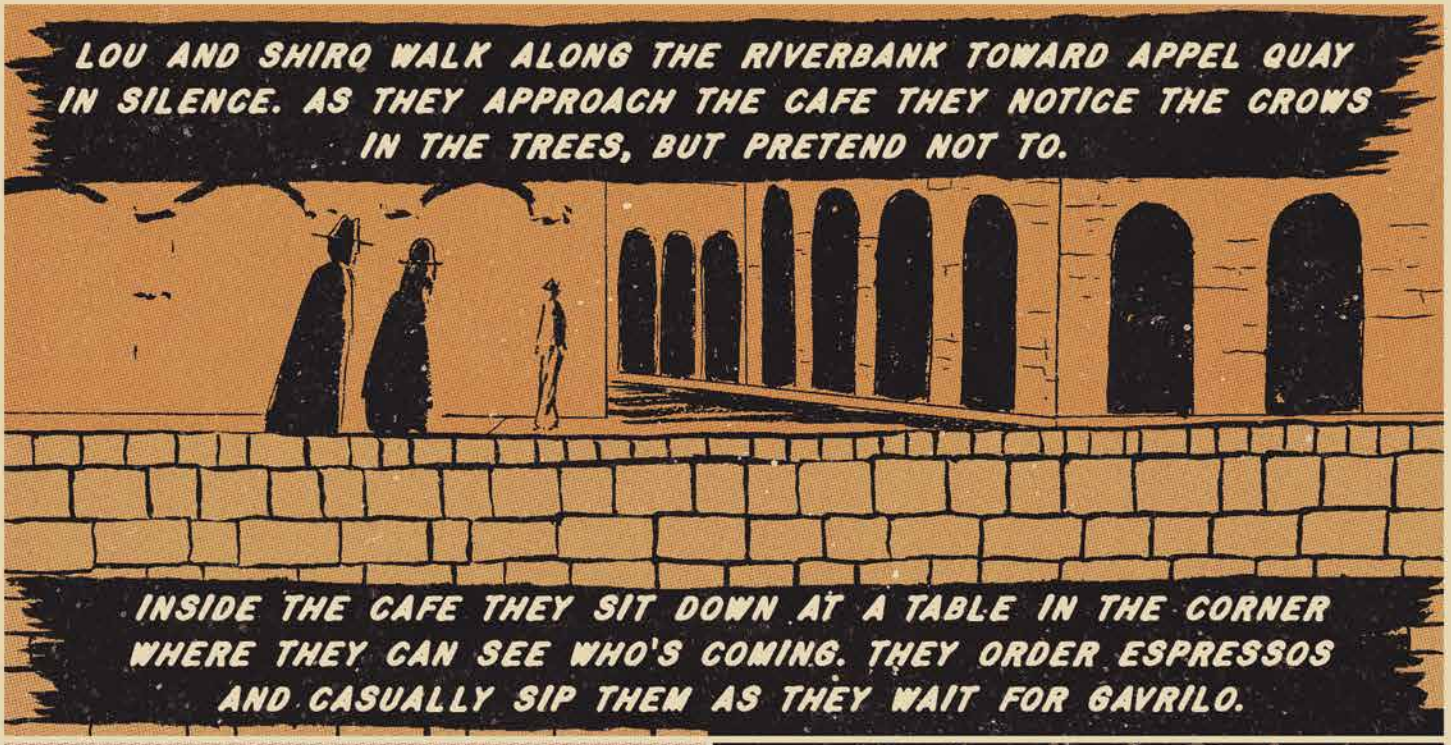

BECAUSE THEY ARE MEMBERS OF A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN CONTROLLED BY THE BLACK HAND. THEY WILL BE HIGHLY SUSPECT OF THREE OLD MEN TRYING TO JOIN.
OKAY SO WHAT DO WE DO?
TOMORROW MORNING, THE TRIGGER MAN WILL BE IN A CAFE NEAR THE APPEL QUAY DOWN BY THE RIVER.
AND?
YOU MUST GO THERE AND SPEAK TO HIM.
SPEAK TO HIM?! WHY DON'T WE JUST KILL HIM?
YOU CAN'T! HE HAS TO DO THIS ON HIS OWN VOLITION. IF WE KILL HIM, THAT SCREWS UP HIS CONTINUUM AND TRUST ME, WE DON'T WANT THESE SOLDIERS AFTER US.
OKAY SO LET'S JUST MESS HIM UP SO HE CAN'T DO IT.

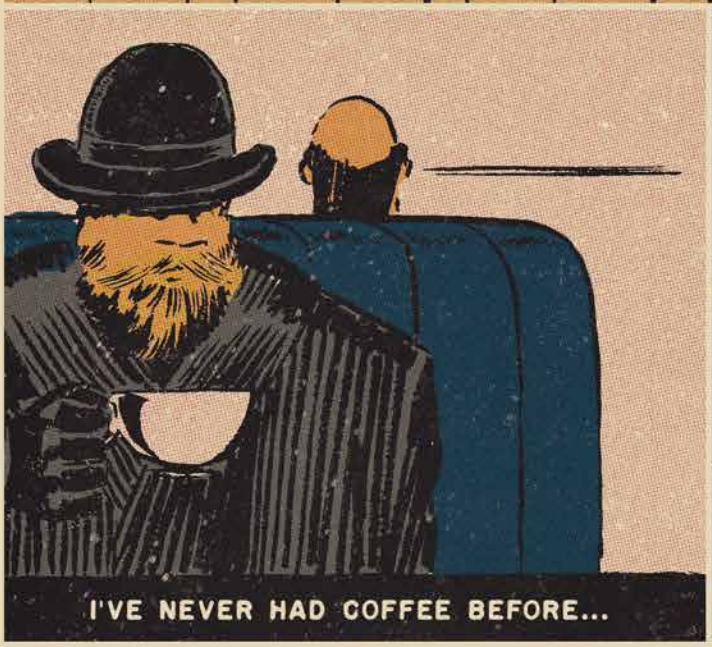
YOU CAN'T PHYSICALLY INTERFERE. THIS IS WHAT ZEUS IS LOOKING FOR. IF WE HURT HIM IT DOESN'T DO ANYTHING IT HAS TO BE HIS CHOICE.
I GET IT.
ME TOO. BUT WHAT DO WE SAY?
THE TRUTH. YOU TELL HIM FRANZ FERDINAND IS THE ONLY PERSON TO FULFILL HIS FATHER'S DREAM OF THE SLAVIC PEOPLE BEING FREE. THAT FRANZ IS GOING TO SUPPORT THE IDEA OF THE TRIPARTITE STATE.
AND WHY WOULD HE BELIEVE ME?
BECAUSE...
YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE HIM THIS.
IS THAT *THE* THING YOU GOT OFF THE MERCHANT VESSEL WHEN YOU SAVED ME?!
YES.

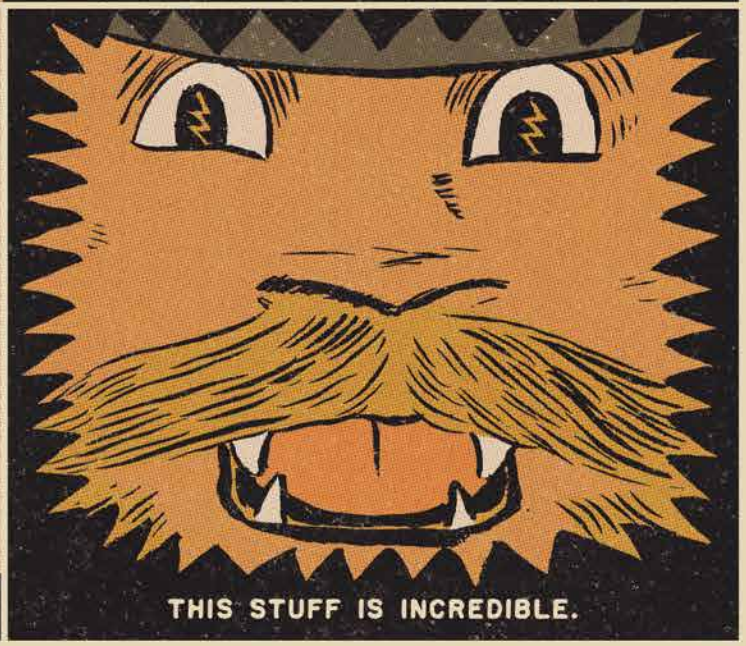
AW GREAT! IT'S BEEN KILLING ME ALL THESE YEARS OF NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS IN THERE! I THOUGHT YOU SAID I COULDN'T KNOW?
WE ARE BEYOND THAT NOW.
THAT'S IT? WHO CARES?
THIS OBJECT IS A FAMILY TREASURE. IT'S OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE. IT REPRESENTS EVERYTHING HE'S BEEN FIGHTING FOR AND IT MIGHT HELP PREVENT THE DEATH OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE!
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.
LIKEWISE MY FRIEND.
WE ALL SHOULD GET SOME SLEEP. WE HAVE A BIG DAY TOMORROW. WE HAVE TO BE UP AT DAWN.


AS THE SUN RISES OVER SARAJEVO, THE CROWS KEEP WATCH OUTSIDE OF THE HOTEL.
I SWEAR THOSE BIRDS ARE FOLLOWING US.

THEY ARE. THAT BIG ONE RIGHT THERE IS ZEUS. PRETEND YOU DON'T NOTICE THEM PLEASE.
CURSE THAT'S A LOT OF PRESSURE. WHAT IF THIS DOESN'T WORK?
IT WILL.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO CERTAIN?
IT HAS TO.
NOW YOU TWO GET A MOVE ON, GET TO THE CAFE ON APPEL QUAY. JUST FOLLOW THE RIVER THAT WAY, YOU CAN'T MISS IT.
GOOD LUCK SON.

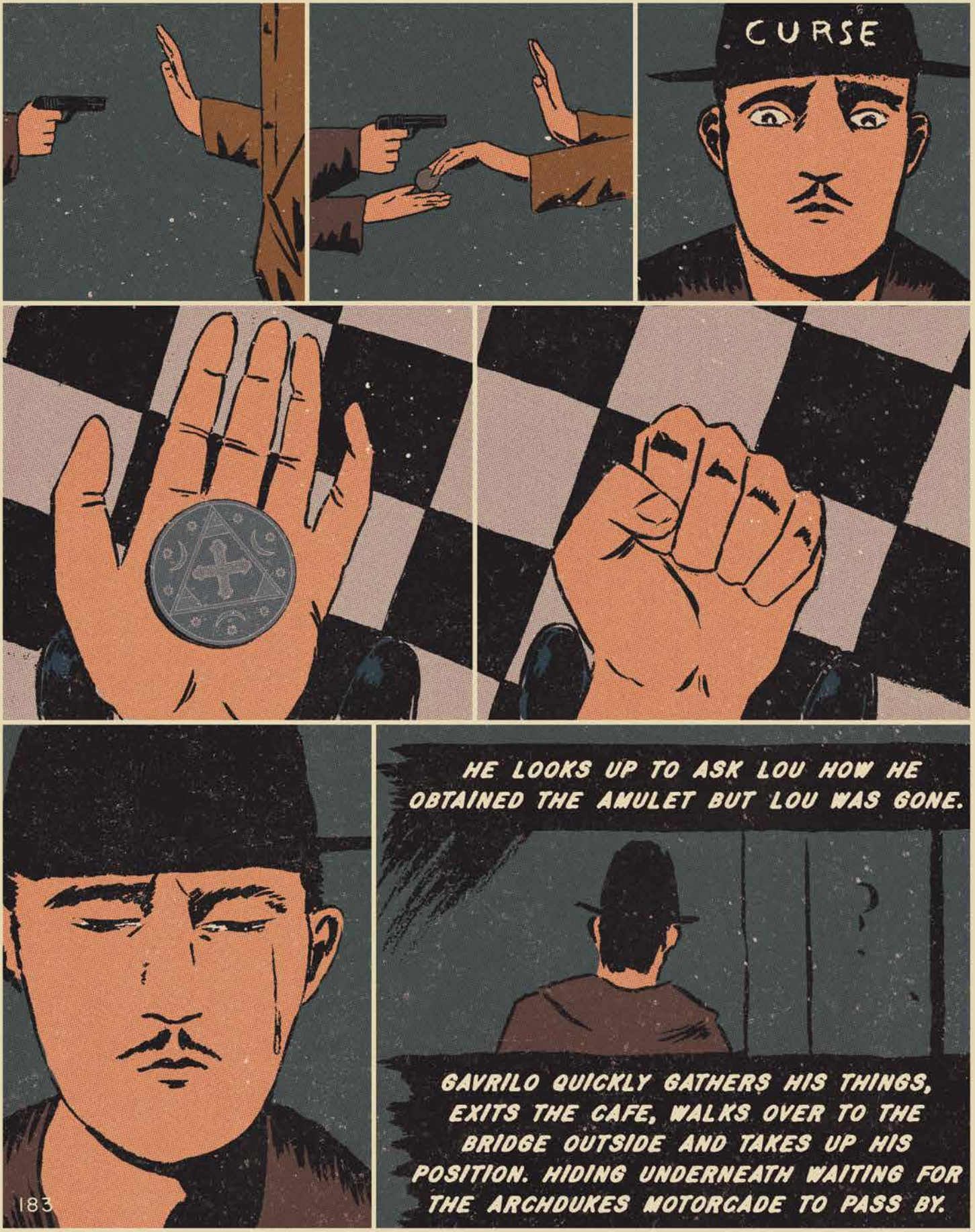

LOU AND SHIRQ WALK ALONG THE RIVERBANK TOWARD APPEL QUAY IN SILENCE. AS THEY APPROACH THE CAFE THEY NOTICE THE CROWS IN THE TREES, BUT PRETEND NOT TO.
INSIDE THE CAFE THEY SIT DOWN AT A TABLE IN THE CORNER WHERE THEY CAN SEE WHO'S COMING. THEY ORDER ESPRESSOS AND CASUALLY SIP THEM AS THEY WAIT FOR GAVRILO.


I'VE NEVER HAD COFFEE BEFORE...


THIS STUFF IS INCREDIBLE.

AFTER SEVERAL MORE COFFEE BEVERAGES THE BOYS ARE WIRED, EDGY AND NERVOUS. LOU GETS UP TO GO TO THE BATHROOM, GETS INTO THE AVAILABLE STALL, CLOSES WHAT'S LEFT OF THE CRAPPY BROKEN DOOR AND PEES. HE HEARS WEEPING IN THE NEXT STALL FOLLOWED BY THE INAUDIBLE MUTTERINGS OF A PERSON IN DISTRESS.
GAVRILO?
THE WEEPING STOPS WITH A GASP FOLLOWED BY THE C-CLICK OF A REVOLVER BEING COCKED.
CLICK
CLACK
WHO'S THERE?!
I WAS SENT HERE TO ASK YOU NOT TO DO THIS.

GAVRILO FUMBLES IN THE STALL TRYING TO GET OFF THE TOILET SEAT AND OPEN THE DOOR WHILE HOLDING A GUN.
DO WHAT EXACTLY?
THERE'S GOOD IN YOU. YOUR FATHER WOULDN'T WANT THIS FOR YOU.
HE BELIEVED THAT YOUR PEOPLE WOULD SOMEDAY UNITE AND SHARE THIS LAND WITH THE AUSTRIANS AND THE HUNGARIANS IN A REPUBLIC. THE ONLY WAY TO FREEDOM IS BY LETTING THE ARCHDUKE CREATE THE TRIPARTITE STATE. IF YOU KILL HIM, HE WON'T GET THE CHANCE TO DO IT. AND THINGS GET WORSE FROM THERE.
WHY SHOULD I BELEIVE YOU?! YOU DON'T KNOW ME AND YOU DIDN'T KNOW MY FATHER!
THAT'S TRUE, BUT BEFORE YOU DECIDE, I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.


CURSE
HE LOOKS UP TO ASK LOU HOW HE OBTAINED THE AMULET BUT LOU WAS GONE.
GAVRILO QUICKLY GATHERS HIS THINGS, EXITS THE CAFE, WALKS OVER TO THE BRIDGE OUTSIDE AND TAKES UP HIS POSITION. HIDING UNDERNEATH WAITING FOR THE ARCHDUKES MOTORCADE TO PASS BY.
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LOU AND SHIRO WATCH DISCREETLY FROM A NEWSSTAND ACROSS THE STREET. THE MURDER OF CROWS BEGINS ARRIVING ONE BY ONE. INCONSPICUOUS TO EVERYONE EXCEPT LOU.

JUST THEN, THE MOTORCADE ROUNDS THE CORNER ON APPEL QUAY, PAST THE CAFE TOWARD THE BRIDGE. THERE ARE THREE CARS. THE FIRST CAR AND THE LAST CAR CARRY SOLDIERS. THE MIDDLE CAR CONTAINS THE ARCHDUKE, FRANZ FERDINAND, THE DUCHESS AND TWO SENIOR OFFICERS. THE FIRST CAR CROSSES THE BRIDGE BUT THE SECOND CAR HAS STALLED BEFORE CROSSING.

UNDER THE BRIDGE, GAVRILO HAS HIS BACK AGAINST THE STRUCTURE TRYING TO STAY AS CLOSE TO IT AS POSSIBLE SO HE ISN'T SEEN. AFTER A DEEP BREATH AND A LONG SIGH HE POCKETS THE PISTOL, CLIMBS UP FROM HIS HIDING SPOT AND NONCHALANTLY WALKS THE OPPOSITE WAY FROM THE ARCHDUKE'S MOTORCADE.
THERE HE GOES.
SOMETHING DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT.

THE DRIVER OF THE STALLED CAR TRIES TO GET IT STARTED AS THE EVER WATCHING BIRDS ARE STARTLED AND TAKE FLIGHT. THEY CIRCLE ONCE AND BEGIN TO DIVE TOWARD THE BRIDGE, ALMOST IN ATTACK FORMATION.

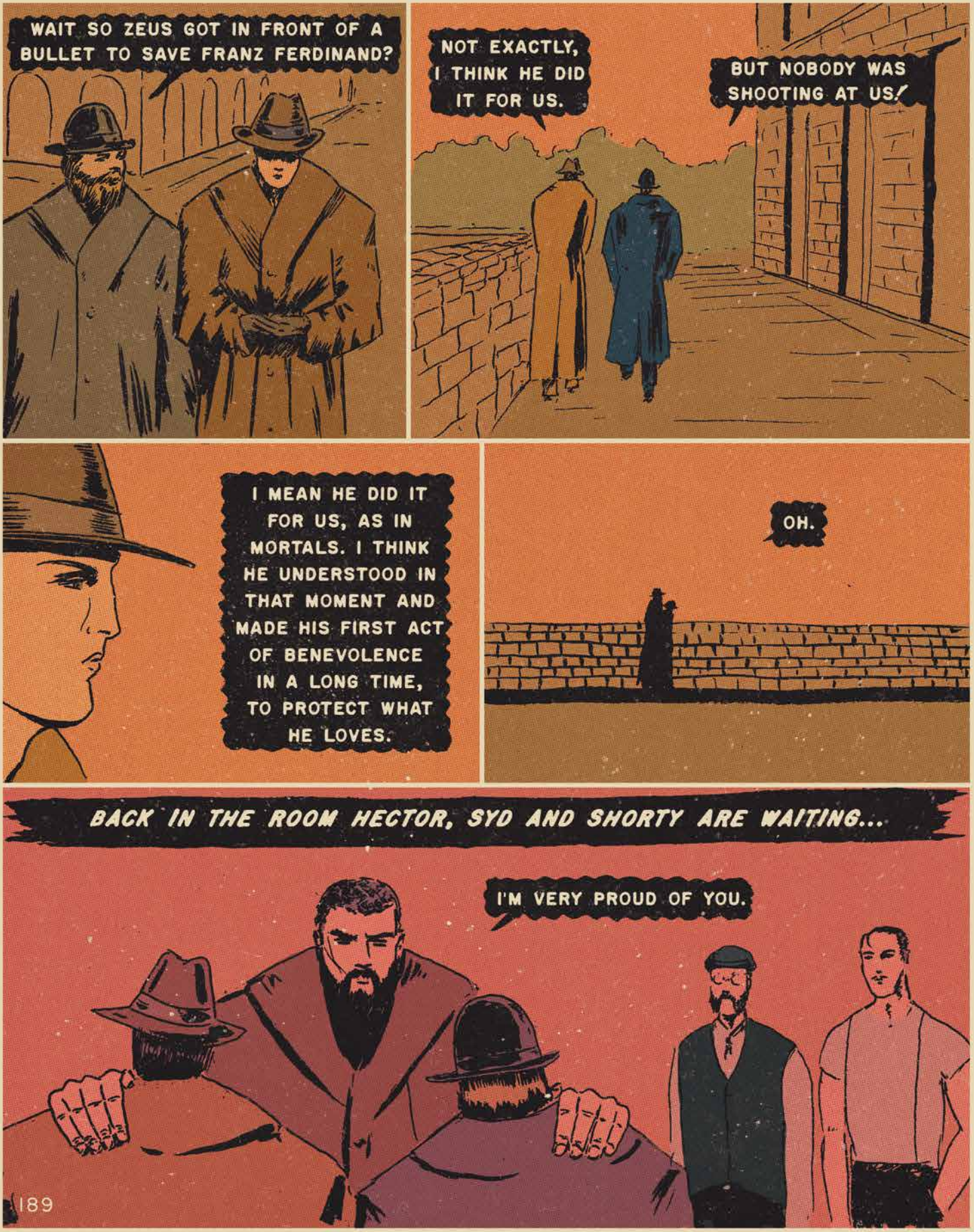
THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE SENDS EVERYONE TO THE GROUND LOOKING FOR COVER.

P-TOOOOOOOM!

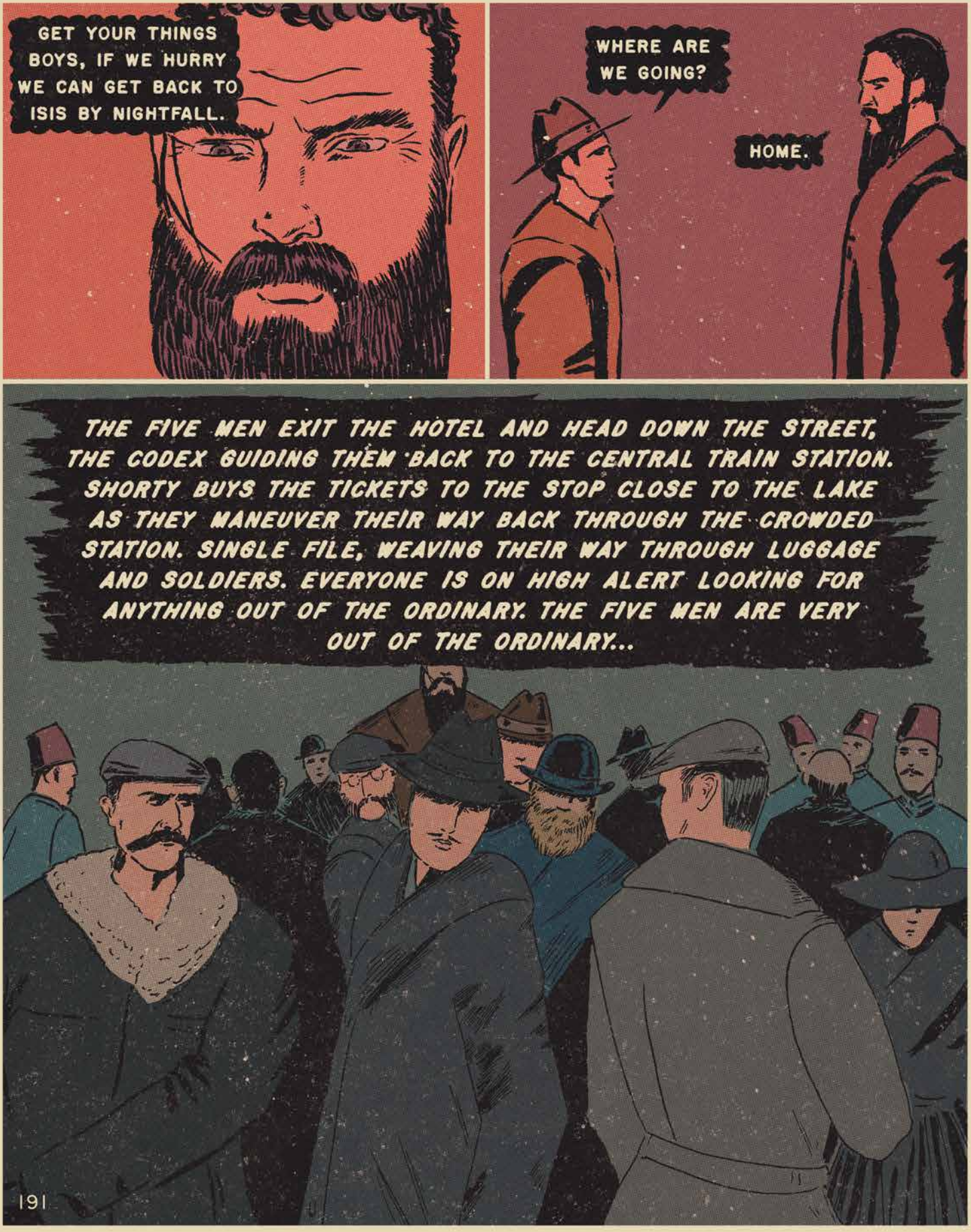
P-TOOOOOOOM!

A LIFELESS BLOODY CROW FALLS TO THE GROUND BEFORE THE ARCHDUKE.
SHHH

THE CAR CARRYING THE ARCHDUKE IS FINALLY STARTED AND THEY CONTINUE OVER THE BRIDGE ONLY MUCH FASTER THAN BEFORE.
VRRRRR!
VROOOOM!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THAT'S SO GROSS!
WHAT AM I MISSING? WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH A BIRD THAT WAS ACCIDENTALLY SHOT BY A SNIPER?
THIS IS NO ORDINARY BIRD AND THAT WASN'T AN ACCIDENT. THIS IS ZEUS.

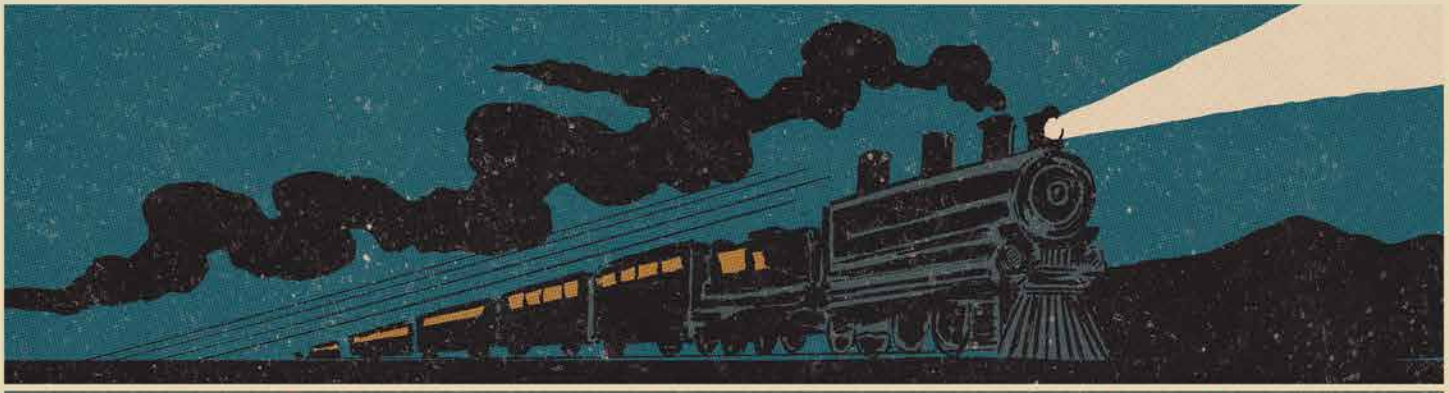

WAIT SO ZEUS GOT IN FRONT OF A BULLET TO SAVE FRANZ FERDINAND?
NOT EXACTLY, I THINK HE DID IT FOR US.
BUT NOBODY WAS SHOOTING AT US!
I MEAN HE DID IT FOR US, AS IN MORTALS. I THINK HE UNDERSTOOD IN THAT MOMENT AND MADE HIS FIRST ACT OF BENEVOLENCE IN A LONG TIME, TO PROTECT WHAT HE LOVES.
OH.
BACK IN THE ROOM HECTOR, SYD AND SHORTY ARE WAITING...
I'M VERY PROUD OF YOU.

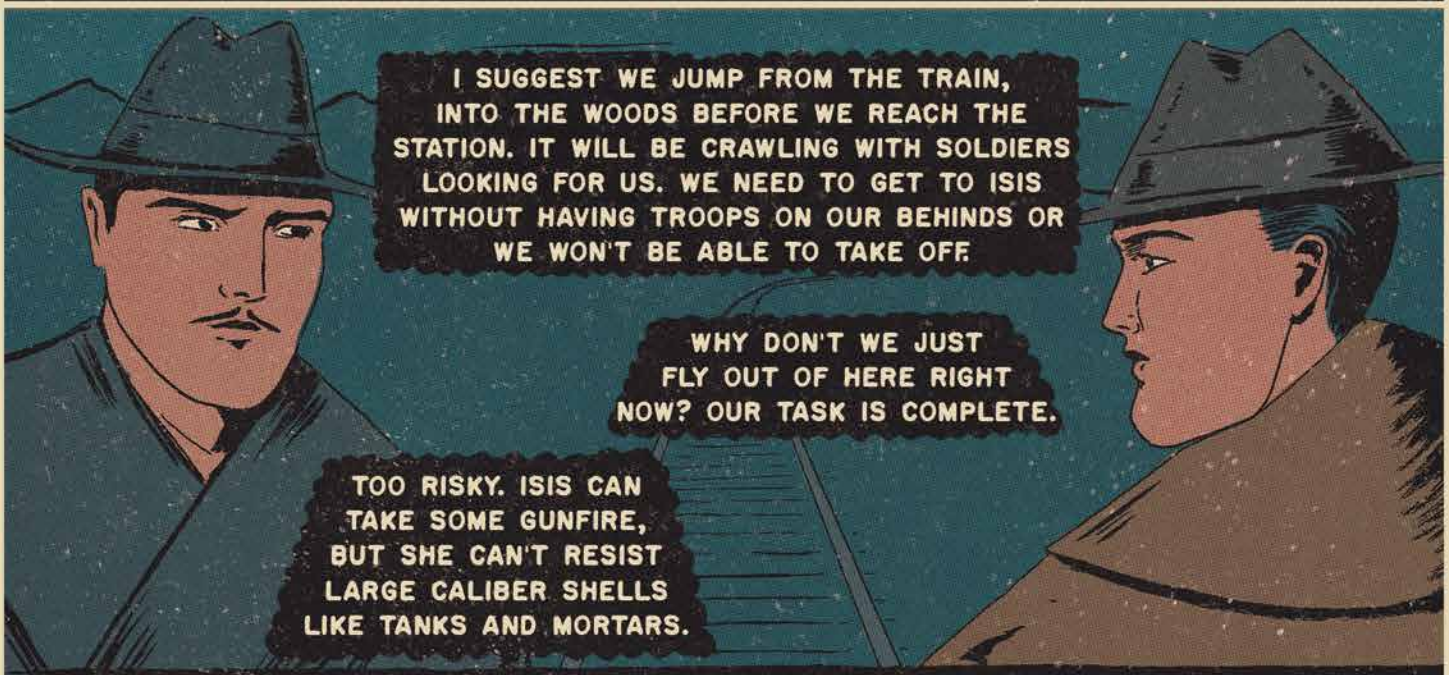
HE GOT IN FRONT OF THE SNIPERS BULLET TO SAVE THE ARCHDUKE.
I SAW... BUT I THINK HE DID IT TO SAVE US FROM OURSELVES, NOT THE ARCHDUKE.
CURSE THAT WAS COOL...


GET YOUR THINGS BOYS, IF WE HURRY WE CAN GET BACK TO ISIS BY NIGHTFALL.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
HOME.
THE FIVE MEN EXIT THE HOTEL AND HEAD DOWN THE STREET, THE CODEX GUIDING THEM BACK TO THE CENTRAL TRAIN STATION. SHORTY BUYS THE TICKETS TO THE STOP CLOSE TO THE LAKE AS THEY MANEUVER THEIR WAY BACK THROUGH THE CROWDED STATION. SINGLE FILE, WEAVING THEIR WAY THROUGH LUGGAGE AND SOLDIERS. EVERYONE IS ON HIGH ALERT LOOKING FOR ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY. THE FIVE MEN ARE VERY OUT OF THE ORDINARY...

THE MEN SPRING TOWARD THE TRAIN; LOU LOOKS BACK TO SHIRO TO SEE HIS LONG CAT TAIL HAS WORKED IT'S WAY OUT FROM HIS COAT.

GET THAT TAIL AWAY.
THAT WAS CLOSE.
THEY'LL BE PLANNING A LITTLE PARTY FOR US AT THE NEXT STATION.
OOOOOOOOOOO, I LOVE PARTIES!
NOT THAT KIND OF PARTY!
I WISH IT WAS, I'M GETTING HUNGRY.
PFFFFT.





FOR THE DURATION OF THE TRAIN RIDE THEY REMAIN OUTSIDE ON THE BACK OF THE CABOOSE, LEANING AGAINST THE RAILING IN ANTICIPATION.

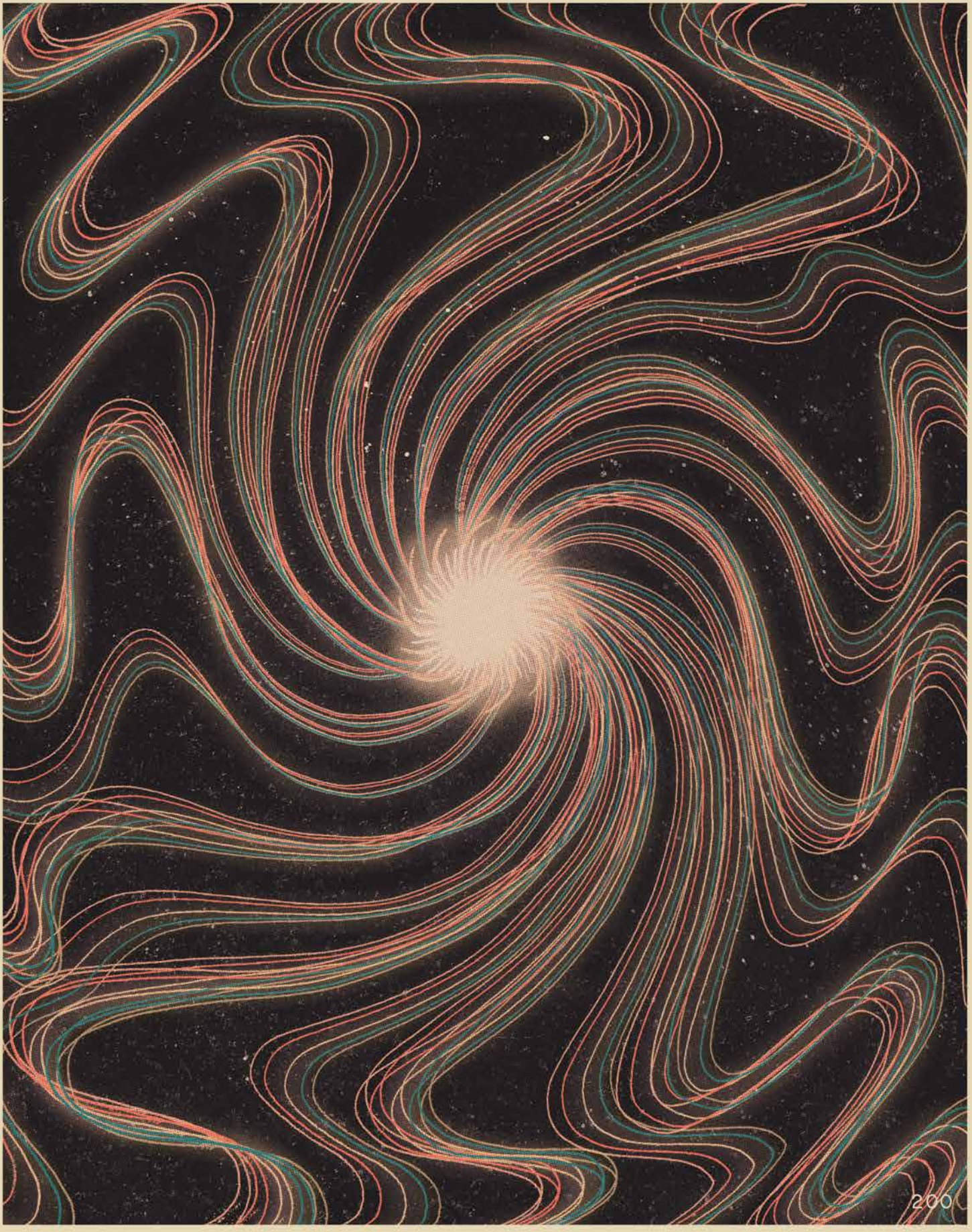
WE'RE GETTING CLOSE. GET READY.
WHY IS THE TRAIN GOING SO FAST?
SO NOBODY CAN JUMP OFF.
NOW!

RALF!
-CHICK-
-CHICK-
SHIRO CAN SEE AND HEAR BETTER THAN EVERYONE ON ACCOUNT OF BEING HALF CAT. HE SMELLS THE SOLDIERS FEAR AND POUNCES.

NICE WORK SHIRO, NOW LET'S MOVE.
RUN!

AS THEY GET CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF THE LAKE THE CODEX REPLACES THEIR FANCY DISGUISES WITH WESUITS JUST BEFORE THEY ALL DIVE IN.
THANKS CODEX!
THEY SWIM DOWN AND ENTER ISIS FROM THE AFT AND RUN TO THE BRIDGE.

HECTOR AND SHORTY POWER UP AND SET COURSE FOR HOME. THE SAME DAY THE BOYS LEFT ON THIS JOURNEY.
OH, I MISSED YOU OLD GIRL...
EVERYONE BUCKLED IN? SAFETY FIRST.
ENGAGE
ISIS RUMBLES AND LIFTS OFF, SHOOTING OUT OF THE LAKE AND INTO THE SKY LIKE A MISSILE. LIGHT BENDS AS THEY START RIPPING BETWEEN TIME ON THEIR JOURNEY HOME.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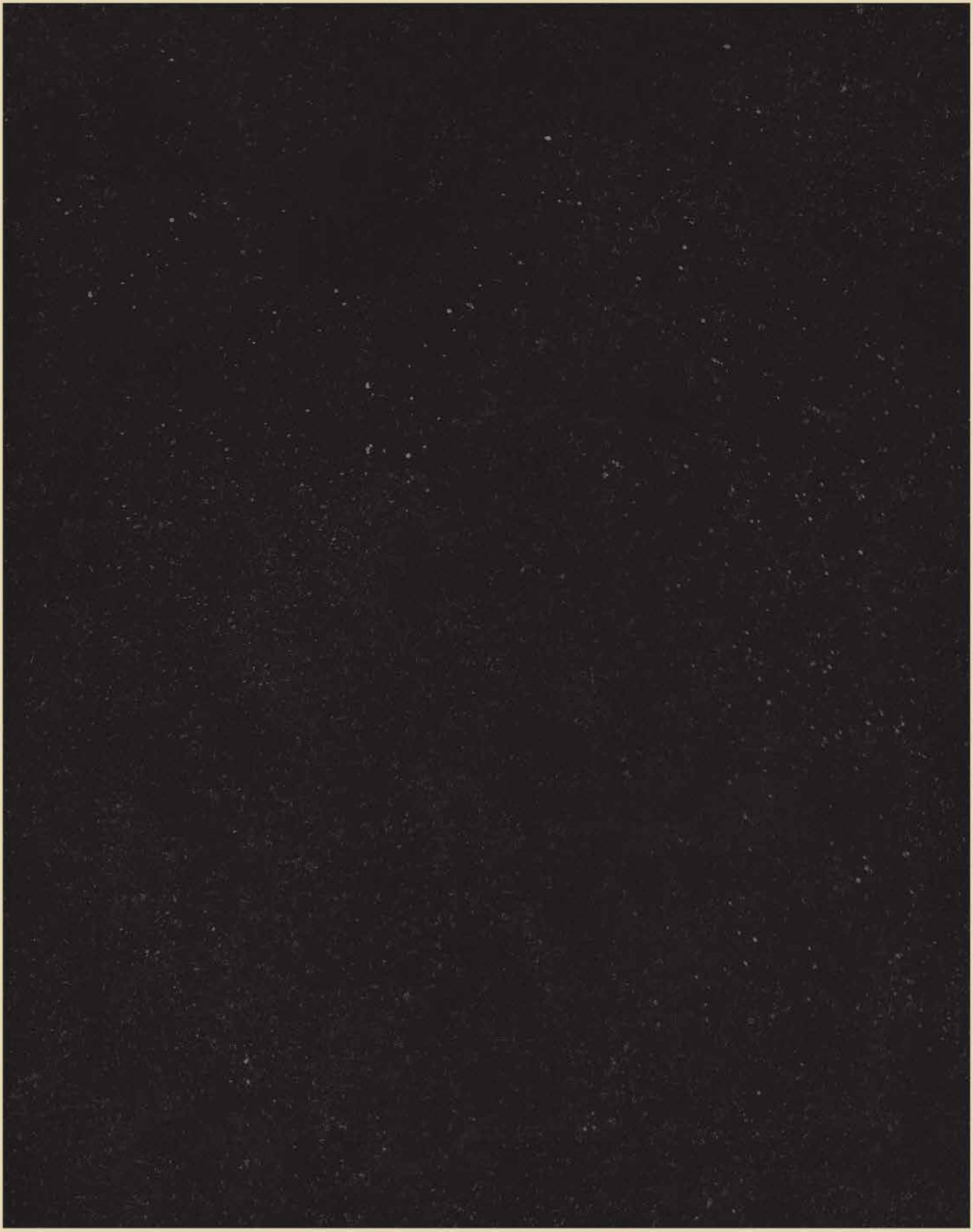

IX

WE'RE HERE.
THE BOYS WAKE FROM A DEEP SLEEP, CONFUSED BUT ELATED TO FIND THEY HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR ORIGINAL, REGULAR SIZES.
I'M NOT A CAT ANYMORE!
I WON'T MISS THAT SMELL.
SUIT UP, WE'RE DROPPING YOU OFF BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO SWIM FROM HERE.

SERIOUSLY?
YEAH 'FRAID SO.
EVERYONE PUTS ON WETSUITS THANKS TO THE CODEX EXCEPT FOR HECTOR AND SHORTY...
UH, WHERE'S YOUR SUIT BUDDY?
I'M STAYING WITH HECTOR. I'VE BEEN GONE SO LONG THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR ME HERE. BESIDES, HECTOR NEEDS A CREW.
BUT WE'RE HERE SHORTY, STAY WITH US!
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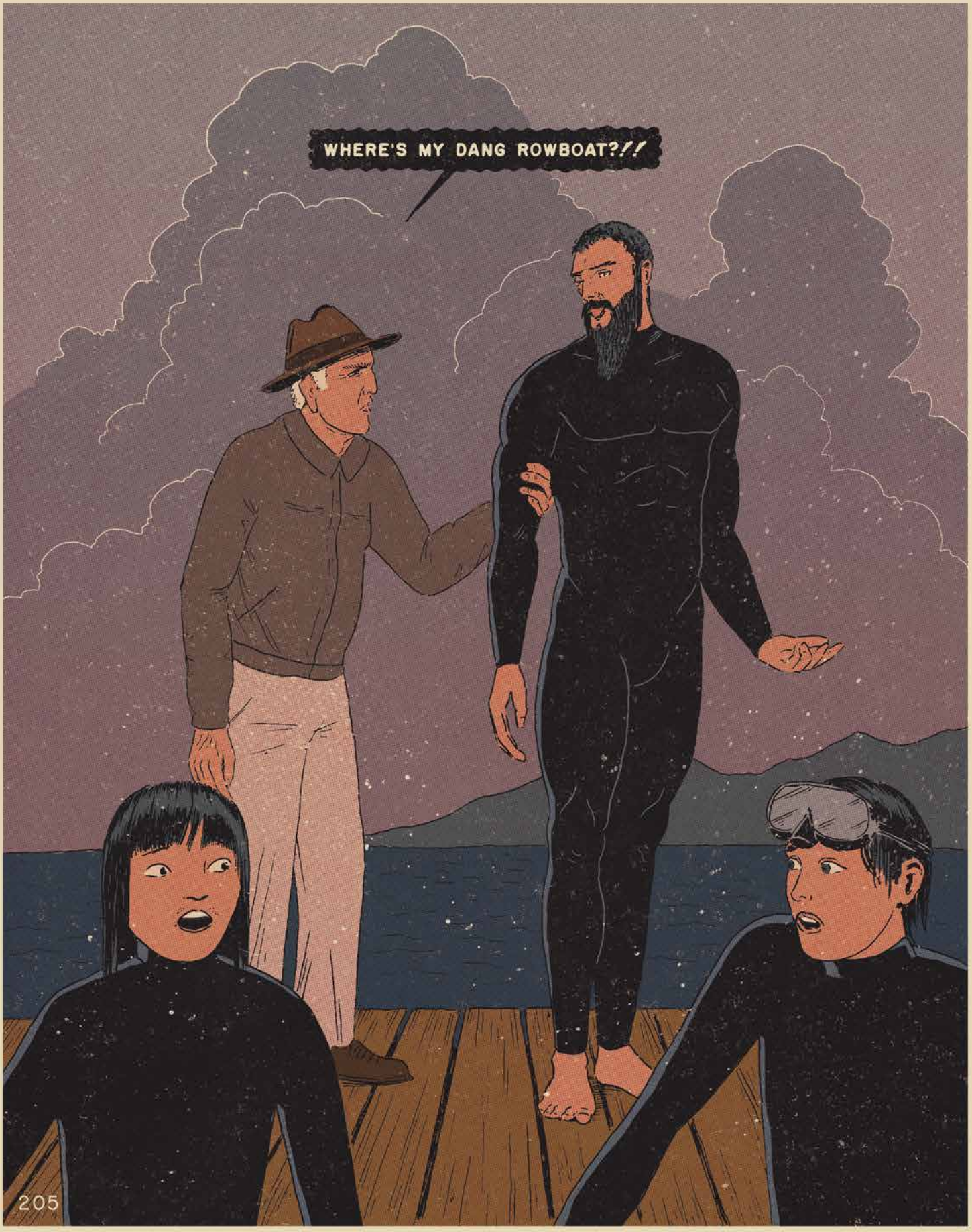
I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN SOMETIME. WHEN WE FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH THAT THING.
UNTIL THEN, YOU BETTER START A REAL NICE HAT COLLECTION.
THANK YOU FOR BRINGING ME MY SON, OLD FRIEND.
THANKS FOR SAVING HUMANITY.
ADIEU, ADIEU, ADIEU.

WHERE THE CURSE HAVE YOU BOYS BEEN. I WAS WORRIED SICK!
WE FOUND DAD!
WE ALL THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.


WHERE'S MY DANG ROWBOAT?//

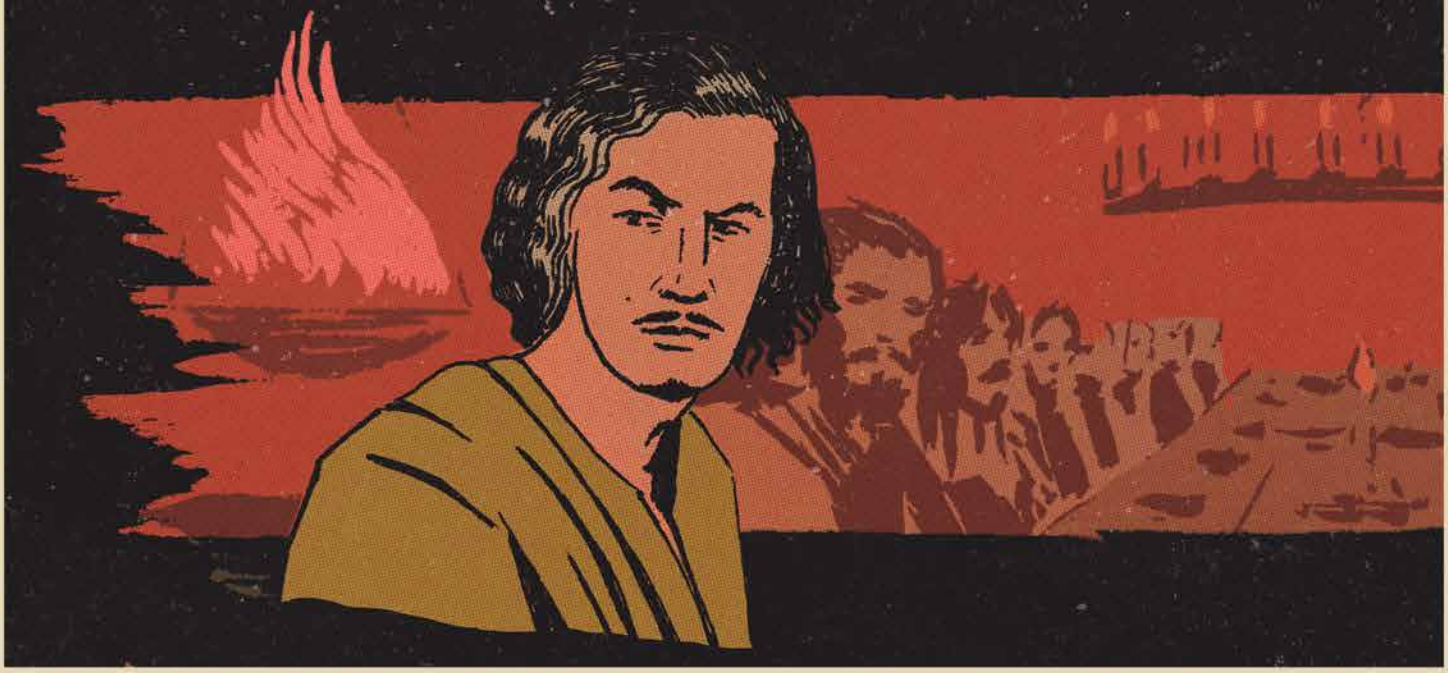
The End

WRITTEN BY

BRUCE LIVINGSTONE

ILLUSTRATED BY

MIKE WILLCOX



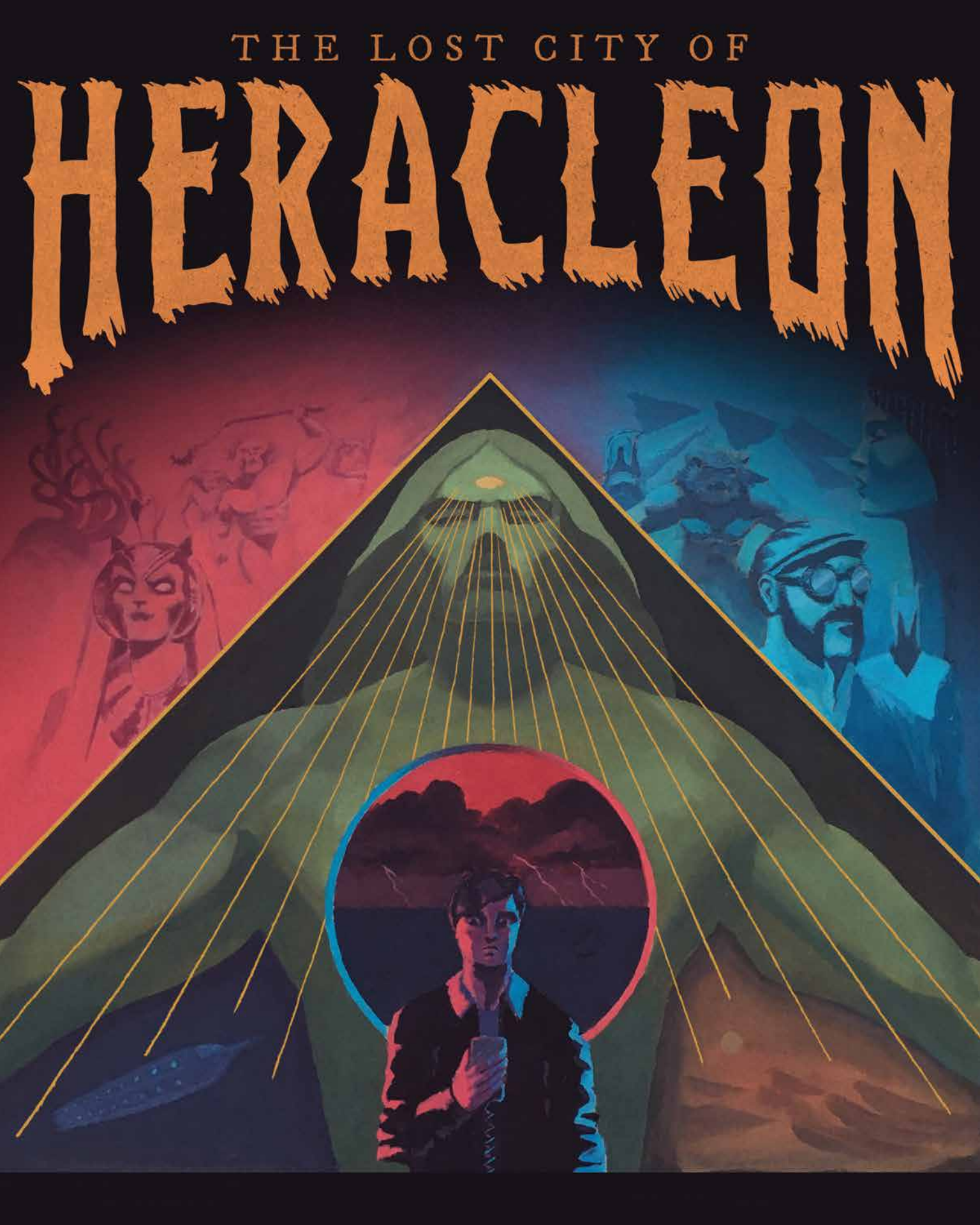
BRUCE LIVINGSTONE WAS THE CEO AND FOUNDER OF ISTOCK.
HE ALSO CO-FOUNDED SAATCHI ART, STOCKSY UNITED
AND EXLIBRE APPAREL. HE LIVES IN VICTORIA, BC CANADA
WITH HIS SON SOZE, HIS DAUGHTER MINA AND THEIR
GERMAN SHEPHERD NAMED IGGY.
HE'S ALSO QUITE FUN AT PARTIES.

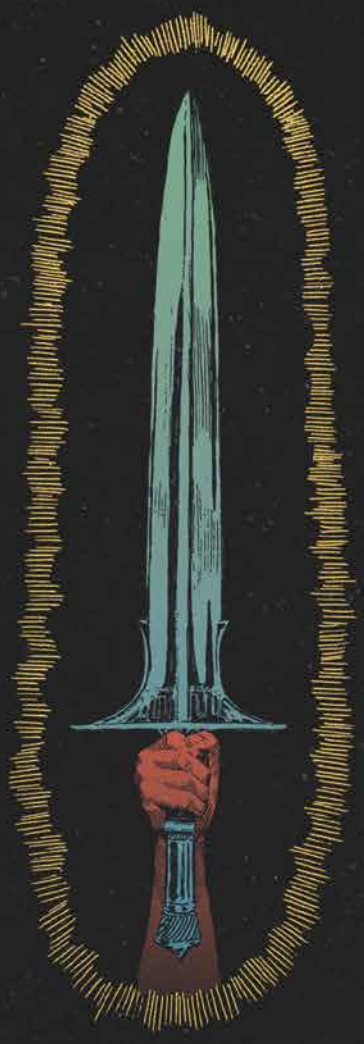
HE CAN BE REACHED AT BITTER@ME.COM

MIKE WILLCOX IS A SELF TAUGHT MULTI-DICIPLINARY ARTIST.
CURRENTLY HE LIKES MAKING ART DECO PAINTINGS WORKING
WITH SYMBOLISM TO HEAL AND BRING HARMONY TO THE
SUBCONCIOUS, UNCONSCIOUS, AND CONCIOUS MIND.
HE ALSO MAKES CHILL SURFY MUSIC UNDER THE NAME BEACH WIZARD.
HE ALSO LIKES WOODWORKING. AND METAL WORKING. AND SCULPTING,
AND FILM MAKING, AND WRITING, AND COMEDY.
MIKE LIKES MAKING THINGS.

FIND HIM ON INSTAGRAM @MIKEWILLCOX
HE CAN BE REACHED AT MWXXART@GMAIL.COM

THE LOST CITY OF HERACLEON





Called to adventure, young boys Lou and Shiro find themselves on an inter-dimensional submarine captained by an off-the-hinges old man. They soon discover Lou's missing father might still be alive as they are transformed into fully grown warriors headed straight for the battlegrounds of Ancient Egypt, the Lost City, and 1914 Sarajevo. As the gods tinkering with fate become reckless and apathetic, the boys become part of a legion hell-bent on restoring balance to humanity.

Writer **Bruce Livingstone** and artist **Mike Willcox** present an epic adventure across space and time. Bringing forth the power of family and what it means to fight for what you love most!

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