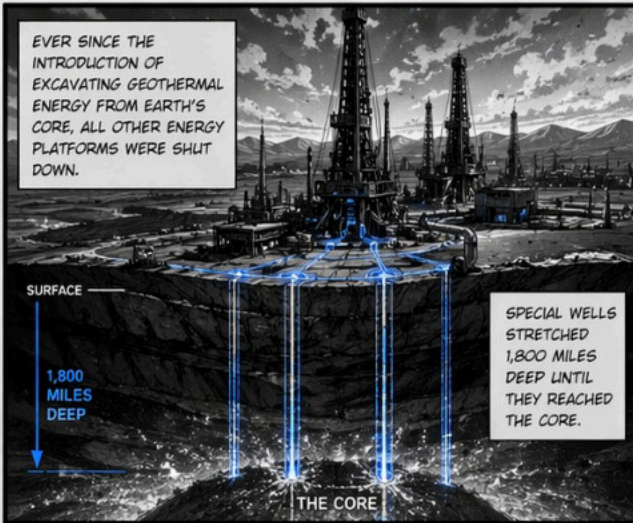


VOLUME 1

# SPIRIT INTERCOM



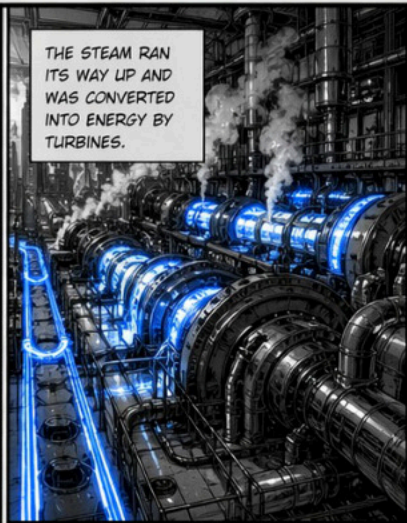


EVER SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF EXCAVATING GEOTHERMAL ENERGY FROM EARTH'S CORE, ALL OTHER ENERGY PLATFORMS WERE SHUT DOWN.

SPECIAL WELLS STRETCHED 1,800 MILES DEEP UNTIL THEY REACHED THE CORE.



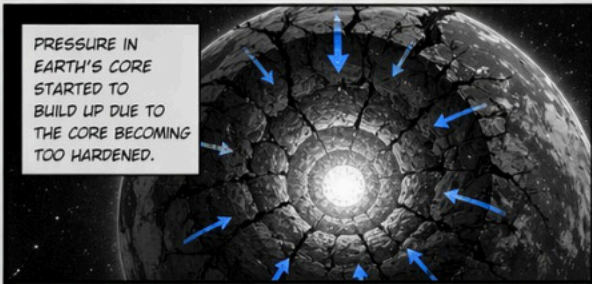
THE EXTREME HEAT WOULD MELT THE LAVA INTO MAGMA.



THE STEAM RAN ITS WAY UP AND WAS CONVERTED INTO ENERGY BY TURBINES.



AS MORE AND MORE CONVERTERS WERE IMPLEMENTED...



PRESSURE IN EARTH'S CORE STARTED TO BUILD UP DUE TO THE CORE BECOMING TOO HARDENED.



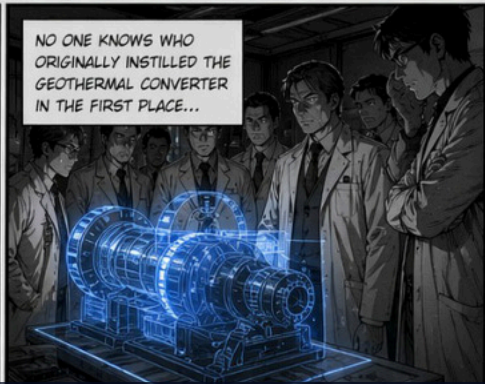
THE TECTONIC PLATES BEGAN SHIFTING AWKWARDLY...



EARTHQUAKES AND TSUNAMIS BEGAN TO HIT EARTH...



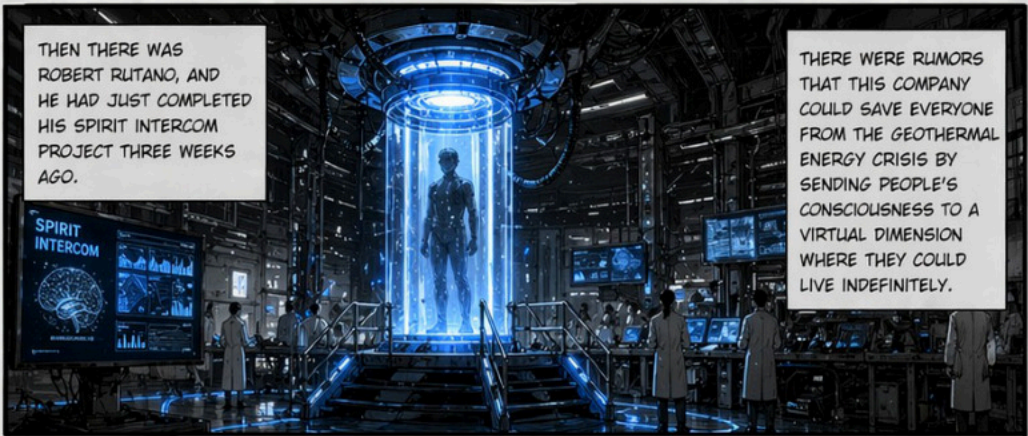
THE AIR GREW MORE POLLUTED FROM ASHES AND EMBERS OF VOLCANIC DEBRIS.



NO ONE KNOWS WHO ORIGINALLY INSTILLED THE GEOTHERMAL CONVERTER IN THE FIRST PLACE...



BUT THE MAJORITY OF THE WORLD BLAMED THE MASSES OF SCIENTISTS.



THEN THERE WAS ROBERT RUTANO, AND HE HAD JUST COMPLETED HIS SPIRIT INTERCOM PROJECT THREE WEEKS AGO.

THERE WERE RUMORS THAT THIS COMPANY COULD SAVE EVERYONE FROM THE GEOTHERMAL ENERGY CRISIS BY SENDING PEOPLE'S CONSCIOUSNESS TO A VIRTUAL DIMENSION WHERE THEY COULD LIVE INDEFINITELY.



THE PROCESS AND MACHINERY HAD TAKEN HIM NINE YEARS TO FINISH, AND IT WAS FINALLY APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR USE.



THOUGH THE COMPANY WAS CONSIDERED IN THE BETA STAGE, PEOPLE OF ONLY LUXURY AND HIGH CLASS COULD PRE-REGISTER FOR SPIRIT INTERCOM.

**SPIRIT INTERCOM PROJECT APPROVED**

WITH THE POLITICAL TIES THAT ROBERT ATTAINED, HE WAS ABLE TO HAVE HIS PROJECT FUNDED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.



AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, SUCH AS STATE SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN, WERE GRANTED FREE ACCESS.



PEOPLE IN NEW YORK CITY DIDN'T TOLERATE THIS UNWARRANTED EXCHANGE...

**THIS ISN'T FAIR!**

**THE PEOPLE BEFORE THE ELITE!**

**WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE!**

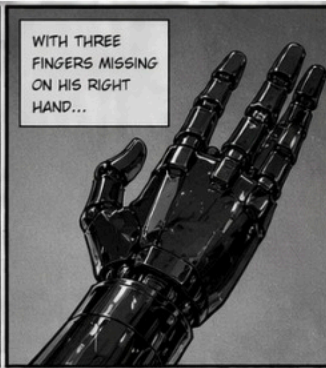


...AND THEY REVOLTED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT FOR NOT TAKING INITIATIVE.

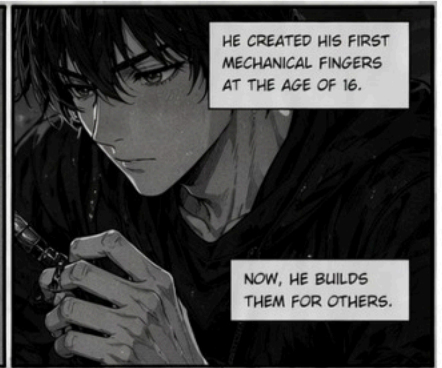


SON OF ROBERT RUTANO, ANDREW RUTANO, A 20-YEAR-OLD PROSTHETIC ENGINEER.

HE HELPED SERVE PEOPLE WHO BROKE OR SEVERELY INJURED THEIR LIMBS.

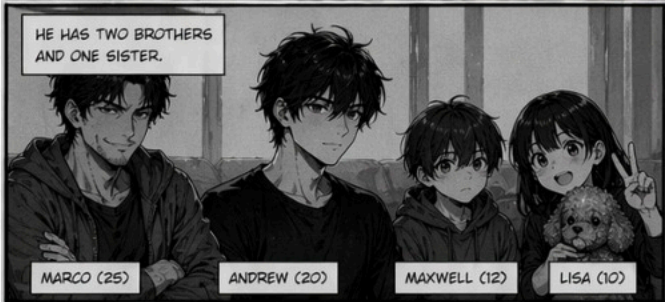


WITH THREE FINGERS MISSING ON HIS RIGHT HAND...



HE CREATED HIS FIRST MECHANICAL FINGERS AT THE AGE OF 16.

NOW, HE BUILDS THEM FOR OTHERS.



HE HAS TWO BROTHERS AND ONE SISTER.

MARCO (25)

ANDREW (20)

MAXWELL (12)

LISA (10)



HE LIVED IN AN APARTMENT IN MANHATTAN. TWO BEDROOMS, A KITCHEN, TWO BATHROOMS, A DINING ROOM, AND A LIVING ROOM WITH A GLASS BALCONY OVERLOOKING THE CITY.



AND A POODLE NAMED CHET.

PHYSICALLY PATHETIC IN STRENGTH.



ON SOME WEEKENDS, HIS GRANDMOTHER WOULD VISIT.

AND EVERY SATURDAY, HE SPENT TIME WITH HIS BROTHERS AND SISTER.



HE LIVED WITH HIS ROOMMATE KEVIN PERMANENTLY.

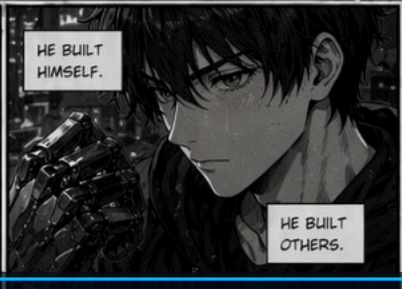


KEVIN. 21. LOUD. LAZY. IRRITATING. BUT... HE'S FAMILY TOO.



ANDREW'S LIFE WASN'T EASY.

BUT HE KEPT MOVING FORWARD.



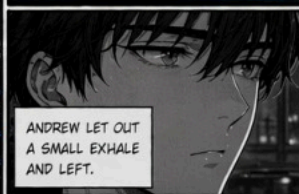
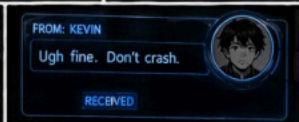
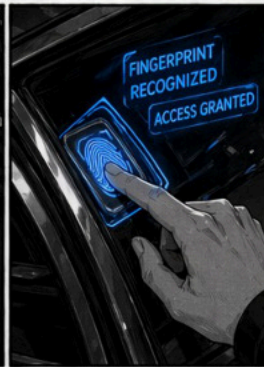
HE BUILT HIMSELF.

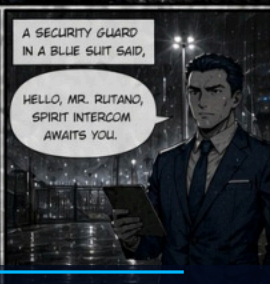
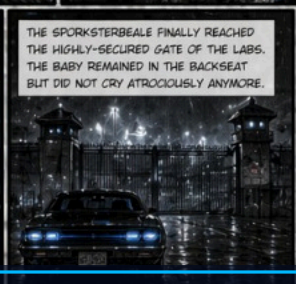
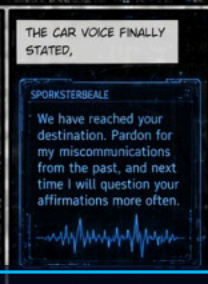
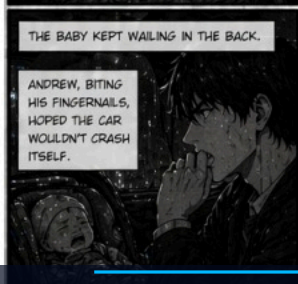
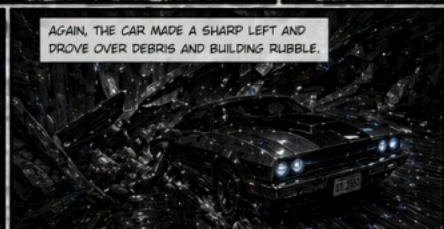
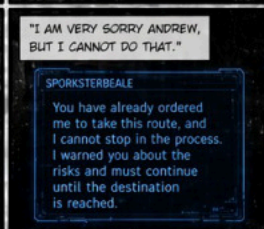
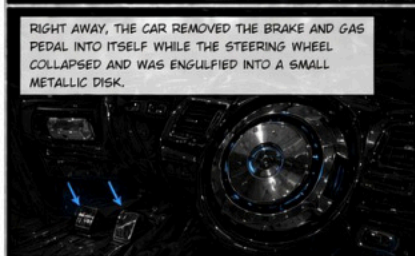
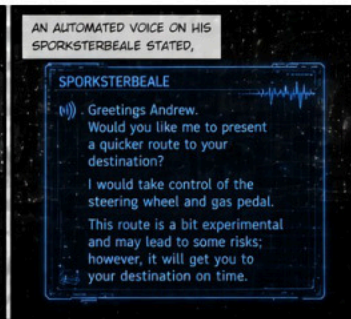
HE BUILT OTHERS.



AND SOMEWHERE IN THIS BROKEN WORLD...

HE WAS TRYING TO BUILD HOPE.







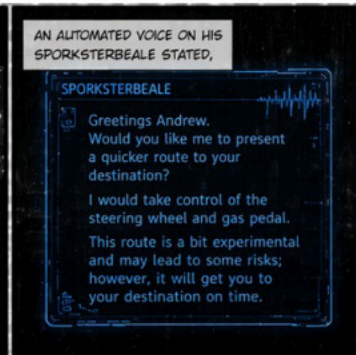
LOOKING AT THE BABY THROUGH THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR, HE SAID TO THE BABY (AND ALSO HIMSELF), "DON'T WORRY. I WON'T GIVE UP ON YOU."



ANDREW CONTEMPLATED WHETHER HE WOULD GO TO SPIRIT INTERCOM OR TAKE THE BABY TO HIS APARTMENT.

HE WAS EXPECTED TO BE AT THE LABS IN 10 MINUTES; THEREFORE, HE WOULD NOT HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO DROP THE BABY BACK AT HIS APARTMENT.

HE WAS RUNNING LATE.



AN AUTOMATED VOICE ON HIS SPORKSTERBEALE STATED,

SPORKSTERBEALE

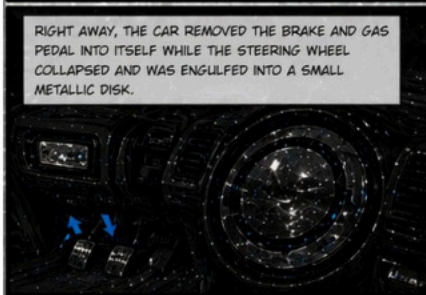
Greetings Andrew. Would you like me to present a quicker route to your destination?

I would take control of the steering wheel and gas pedal. This route is a bit experimental and may lead to some risks; however, it will get you to your destination on time.



ANDREW REPLIED,

DO YOUR THING.



RIGHT AWAY, THE CAR REMOVED THE BRAKE AND GAS PEDAL INTO ITSELF WHILE THE STEERING WHEEL COLLAPSED AND WAS ENGULFED INTO A SMALL METALLIC DISK.



THE CAR TOOK COMPLETE CHARGE AND IMMEDIATELY ACCELERATED THROUGH A FILTH-FLOODED ALLEY, PUSHING ANDREW BACK INTO HIS CAR SEAT.

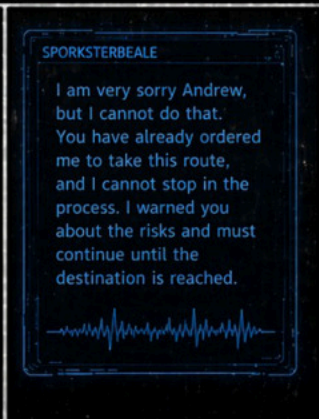


THE SPORKSTERBEALE MOVED WITH GREAT SPEED, AVOIDING DUMPSTERS AND HOMELESS HABITATS.



THE BABY CRIED.

WHY ARE YOU DRIVING WITH SUCH INTENSITY AND SPEED?! THERE'S A BABY IN THIS CAR, AND I DON'T CARE IF I AM LATE! SLOW DOWN NOW!

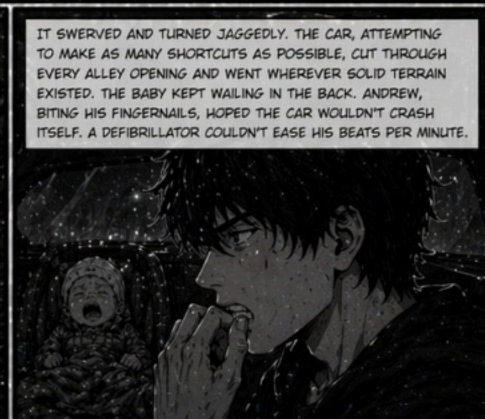


SPORKSTERBEALE

I am very sorry Andrew, but I cannot do that. You have already ordered me to take this route, and I cannot stop in the process. I warned you about the risks and must continue until the destination is reached.



AGAIN, THE CAR MADE A SHARP LEFT AND DROVE OVER DEBRIS AND BUILDING RUBBLE.



IT SWERVED AND TURNED JAGGEDLY. THE CAR, ATTEMPTING TO MAKE AS MANY SHORTCUTS AS POSSIBLE, CUT THROUGH EVERY ALLEY OPENING AND WENT WHEREVER SOLID TERRAIN EXISTED. THE BABY KEPT WAILING IN THE BACK. ANDREW, BITING HIS FINGERNAILS, HOPED THE CAR WOULDN'T CRASH ITSELF. A DEFIBRILLATOR COULDN'T EASE HIS BEATS PER MINUTE.

THE SPORKSTERBEALE FINALLY REACHED THE HIGHLY-SECURED GATE OF THE LABS.

HELLO, MR. RUTANO, SPIRIT INTERCOM AWAITS YOU.

AS THE CHARISMATIC SECURITY GUARD ESCORTED THE SPORKSTERBEALE PAST THE GATE, ANDREW OBSERVED THE "CAUTION" SIGN FROM THE CAR WINDOW.

**CAUTION**  
NO TRESPASSING.  
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.  
PLEASE TAKE CAUTION THAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY ENTERING GOVERNMENT TERRITORY. ANY SIGN OF DISTRESS OR ILLEGAL ACTIVITY ON THE PREMISES IS A FEDERAL OFFENSE, AND SPIRIT INTERCOM INC. IS A PROUD VENTURE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

THE SECURITY GUARD GUIDED THE SELF-DRIVING SPORKSTERBEALE TO THE ENTRANCE UNTIL HE SAID,

MR. RUTANO, YOU HAVE ARRIVED. I PLEASE ASK THAT YOU LEAVE YOUR VEHICLE. WE WILL TAKE CARE OF YOUR CAR FROM HERE.

ANDREW NODDED AT THE GUARD. HE OPENED THE CAR DOOR AND SAID,

DON'T BE SO RECKLESS NEXT TIME, SPORKSTERBEALE. YOU KNOW THAT YOUR CPU OF YOURS ISN'T DEEP-LEARNING, AND I'LL SEE YOU SOON. THANKS FOR THE DRIVE.

**SPORKSTERBEALE**

By no means, Andrew. I hope your destination satisfies you.



PICKING UP THE BABY, ANDREW GOT OUT OF THE CAR. A DIFFERENT SECURITY GUARD IN A WHITE SUIT ENTERED THE SPORKSTERBEALE.

THE SECURITY GUARD IN THE CAR SAID,

WE CAN TAKE CARE OF YOUR BABY. JUST GIVE IT TO ME.

ANDREW SAID,

WHY DO YOU WANT MY BABY—I MEAN—THIS BABY? WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH HIM?

"WE WILL BRING IT TO ONE OF OUR BEST NURSES ON THE STAFF TO TAKE CARE OF IT. PLUS, YOU ACT LIKE YOU OWN THE BABY. IT ISN'T YOURS."

"IT'S A 'HE' FOR YOUR INFORMATION. ALRIGHT, JUST MAKE SURE TO KEEP HIM SAFE. I FOUND HIM ABANDONED IN THE BAD PART OF TOWN."

THE SECURITY GUARD, NOW IN THE CAR, SAID,

PLEASE GIVE ME ACCESS TO PHYSICAL CONTROLS FOR THE CAR.

ANDREW GAVE THE BABY TO THE SECURITY GUARD, AND THE BABY WAS PLACED IN THE BACKSEAT.

THE SECURITY GUARD, NONY IN WANT TO SAID,

PLEASE  
GIVE ME ACCESS  
TO PHYSICAL  
CONTROLS FOR  
THE CAR.

THE SPORKSTERBEALE VOICE SAID,

SPORKSTERBEALE

I am sorry whoever you are,  
but I cannot do that  
without Andrew's  
permission.

IRRITATED, THE GUARD ASKED,

CAN YOU PLEASE  
JUST ASK YOUR CAR  
FOR THE PHYSICAL  
CONTROLS SO THAT  
I CAN DRIVE IT?

ANDREW HESITANTLY ASKED,

WHY DON'T  
YOU JUST  
ALLOW THE CAR  
TO DRIVE  
ITSELF?

THE GUARD EXCLAIMED,

ARE YOU  
KIDDING ME?  
JUST GIVE  
ME ACCESS,  
MR. RUTANO.

ANDREW ASKED,

WHAT DO  
YOU GUYS  
DO?

THE GUARD EXCLAIMED,

THAT'S ENOUGH,  
MR. RUTANO! WE  
DEMAND PHYSICAL  
CONTROLS, OR ELSE  
WE CANNOT ACCOMPANY  
YOU TO SPIRIT INTERCOM  
AND WILL ASK YOU  
TO LEAVE.

SURPRISED, ANDREW DIDN'T WANT TO UNDERGO  
ANY MORE DRAMA AND SAID,

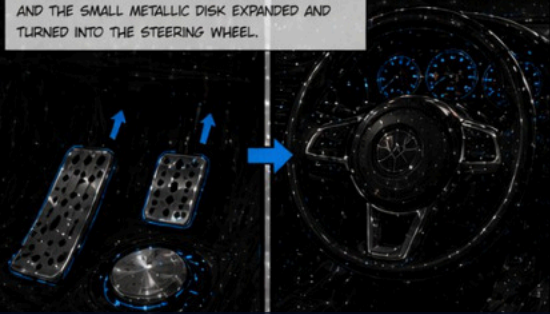
OKAY, OKAY.  
SPORKSTERBEALE,  
I GRANT ACCESS  
TO PHYSICAL  
CONTROLS.

THE VOICE SAID,

SPORKSTERBEALE

Thank you, Mr. Rutano.  
I will precede and initiate  
the physical control  
command for this man.

IMMEDIATELY, THE CAR REVEALED ITS GAS PEDALS,  
AND THE SMALL METALLIC DISK EXPANDED AND  
TURNED INTO THE STEERING WHEEL.



THE SECURITY GUARD, RATTLED AND SATISFIED  
AT THE SAME TIME, BEGAN TO DRIVE THE CAR.



HE LOOKED AT ANDREW IN DISCOMFORT WHILE HE  
CRUISED IT ON A DIFFERENT SIDE OF THE ROAD  
OF THE WHITE LABS.

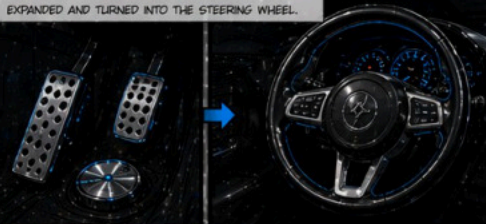
THE VOICE SAID,

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THE SECURITY GUARD, RATTLED AND SATISFIED AT THE SAME TIME, BEGAN TO DRIVE THE CAR.



HE LOOKED AT ANDREW IN DISCOMFORT WHILE HE CRUISED IT ON A DIFFERENT SIDE OF THE ROAD OF THE WHITE LABS.



AS HIS CAR DROVE DOWN THE SIDE OF THE LAB, THE BLUE-SUITED GUARD THAT ANDREW HAD PREVIOUSLY MET SAID,

LET US BEGIN YOUR TOUR OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY PLACE.



ANDREW NODDED IN AFFIRMATION AND TOOK A GLIMPSE OF WHAT SURROUNDED HIM. HE JUST BECAME CONSCIOUS THAT HE WAS AT THE ENTRANCE.



**BETA SPIRIT CONTRIVANCES READY FOR USE**

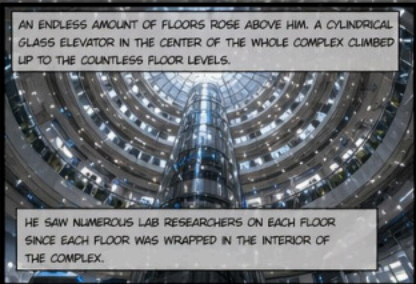
THERE WERE THREE MASSIVE COMPLEXES, AND ANDREW WAS IN THE MIDDLE ONE OF THE THREE.

HE STROLLED A FEW METERS IN FRONT AND WAS FINALLY IN THE ENORMOUS COMPLEX. THE INTERIOR WAS PURE WHITE AND PROVIDED A LAVISH OUTLOOK FOR THE LAB FLOORS.



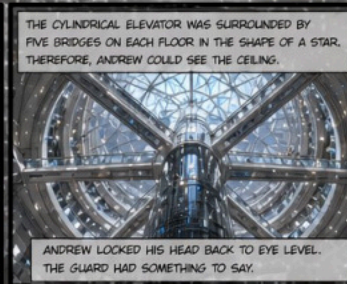
LARGE SPACES OF GARDENS SURROUNDED HIM ON THE BOTTOM FLOOR OF THE BUILDING.

AN ENDLESS AMOUNT OF FLOORS ROSE ABOVE HIM. A CYLINDRICAL GLASS ELEVATOR IN THE CENTER OF THE WHOLE COMPLEX CLIMBED UP TO THE COUNTLESS FLOOR LEVELS.



HE SAW NUMEROUS LAB RESEARCHERS ON EACH FLOOR SINCE EACH FLOOR WAS WRAPPED IN THE INTERIOR OF THE COMPLEX.

THE CYLINDRICAL ELEVATOR WAS SURROUNDED BY FIVE BRIDGES ON EACH FLOOR IN THE SHAPE OF A STAR. THEREFORE, ANDREW COULD SEE THE CEILING.



ANDREW LOCKED HIS HEAD BACK TO EYE LEVEL. THE GUARD HAD SOMETHING TO SAY.

AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE SIGN IN FRONT OF YOU, THIS COMPLEX IS WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS. WE COMPILE YOUR MIND TO REACH A DIFFERENT DIMENSION SO THAT YOU CAN TRAVEL TO THE SPIRIT WORLD. HERE, ANDREW, YOU WILL BE THE FIRST TO ACCESS THE SPIRIT WORLD.



ANDREW TUNED OUT WHAT THE GUARD SAID SINCE HE WAS STILL IN AWE FROM LOOKING AT THIS WONDER OF A BUILDING.

A BIT FLUSTERED, THE GUARD ASKED,

DID YOU EVEN HEAR A WORD THAT I SAID, MR. RUTANO?



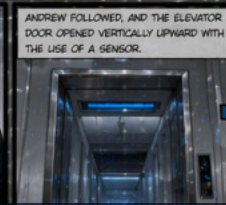
SORRY, SIR, I DIDN'T MEAN TO DISRESPECT YOU. IT'S JUST THAT I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH A MAGNIFICENT BUILDING AS THIS.

YES, ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID, I AM EXCITED TO TRY THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME CONTRAPTION.

COME THIS WAY TO THE ELEVATOR, PLEASE, MR. RUTANO.



ANDREW FOLLOWED, AND THE ELEVATOR DOOR OPENED VERTICALLY UPWARD WITH THE USE OF A SENSOR.



THE ELEVATOR DOOR CLOSED AND TRAVELED UPWARD.

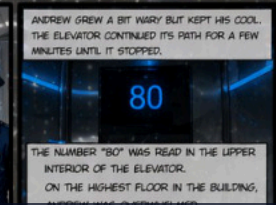


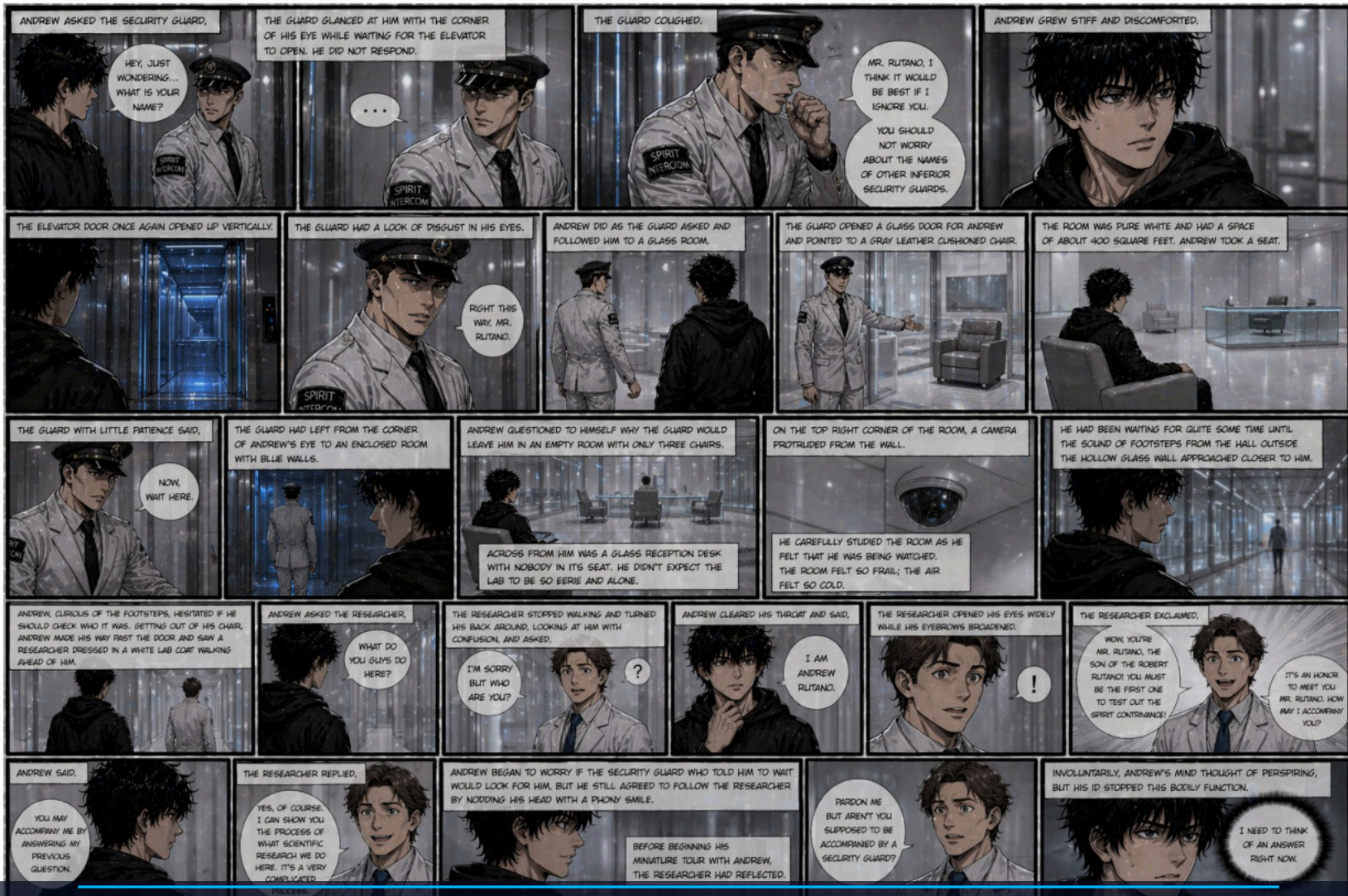
BE AWARE THAT YOU WILL BE THE FIRST HUMAN TO TRAVEL TO THIS DIMENSION, AND NOTE THAT WE WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR WELL-BEING. WE HAVE TESTED THE CONTRIVANCES ON MANY TYPES OF ANIMALS, AND THEY WORKED SMOOTHLY.



ANDREW GREW A BIT NERVOUS BUT KEPT HIS COOL. THE ELEVATOR CONTINUED ITS PATH FOR A FEW MINUTES UNTIL IT STOPPED.

THE NUMBER "80" WAS READ IN THE UPPER INTERIOR OF THE ELEVATOR. ON THE HIGHEST FLOOR IN THE BUILDING, ANDREW WAS OVERLOOKED.





ANDREW ASKED THE SECURITY GUARD,

HEY, JUST WONDERING... WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

THE GUARD GLANCED AT HIM WITH THE CORNER OF HIS EYE WHILE WAITING FOR THE ELEVATOR TO OPEN. HE DID NOT RESPOND.

...

THE GUARD COUGHED.

MR. RUTANO, I THINK IT WOULD BE BEST IF I IGNORE YOU. YOU SHOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT THE NAMES OF OTHER INFERIOR SECURITY GUARDS.

ANDREW GREW STIFF AND DISCOMFORTED.

THE ELEVATOR DOOR ONCE AGAIN OPENED UP VERTICALLY

THE GUARD HAD A LOOK OF DISGUST IN HIS EYES.

ANDREW DID AS THE GUARD ASKED AND FOLLOWED HIM TO A GLASS ROOM.

THE GUARD OPENED A GLASS DOOR FOR ANDREW AND POINTED TO A GRAY LEATHER CUSHIONED CHAIR.

THE ROOM WAS PURE WHITE AND HAD A SPACE OF ABOUT 400 SQUARE FEET. ANDREW TOOK A SEAT.

RIGHT THIS WAY, MR. RUTANO.

THE GUARD WITH LITTLE PATIENCE SAID,

NOW, WAIT HERE.

THE GUARD HAD LEFT FROM THE CORNER OF ANDREW'S EYE TO AN ENCLOSED ROOM WITH BLUE WALLS.

ANDREW QUESTIONED TO HIMSELF WHY THE GUARD WOULD LEAVE HIM IN AN EMPTY ROOM WITH ONLY THREE CHAIRS.

ON THE TOP RIGHT CORNER OF THE ROOM, A CAMERA PROTRUDED FROM THE WALL.

HE HAD BEEN WAITING FOR QUITE SOME TIME UNTIL THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS FROM THE HALL OUTSIDE THE HOLLOW GLASS WALL APPROACHED CLOSER TO HIM.

ACROSS FROM HIM WAS A GLASS RECEPTION DESK WITH NOBODY IN ITS SEAT. HE DIDN'T EXPECT THE LAB TO BE SO EERIE AND ALONE.

HE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ROOM AS HE FELT THAT HE WAS BEING WATCHED. THE ROOM FELT SO FRAIL; THE AIR FELT SO COLD.

ANDREW, CURIOUS OF THE FOOTSTEPS, HESITATED IF HE SHOULD CHECK WHO IT WAS, GETTING OUT OF HIS CHAIR, ANDREW MADE HIS WAY PAST THE DOOR AND SAW A RESEARCHER DRESSED IN A WHITE LAB COAT WALKING AHEAD OF HIM.

ANDREW ASKED THE RESEARCHER,

WHAT DO YOU GUYS DO HERE?

THE RESEARCHER STOPPED WALKING AND TURNED HIS BACK AROUND, LOOKING AT HIM WITH CONFUSION, AND ASKED,

I'M SORRY BUT WHO ARE YOU?

ANDREW CLEARED HIS THROAT AND SAID,

I AM ANDREW RUTANO.

THE RESEARCHER OPENED HIS EYES WIDELY WHILE HIS EYEBROWS BROWNEDED.

THE RESEARCHER EXCLAIMED,

WELL, YOU'RE MR. RUTANO, THE SON OF THE ROBERT RUTANO! YOU MUST BE THE FIRST ONE TO TEST OUT THE SPIRIT CONTRAINCE!

IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU MR. RUTANO. HOW MAY I ACCOMPANY YOU?

ANDREW SAID,

YOU MAY ACCOMPANY ME BY ANSWERING MY PREVIOUS QUESTION.

THE RESEARCHER REPLIED,

YES, OF COURSE. I CAN SHOW YOU THE PROCESS OF WHAT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH WE DO HERE. IT'S A VERY COMPLICATED

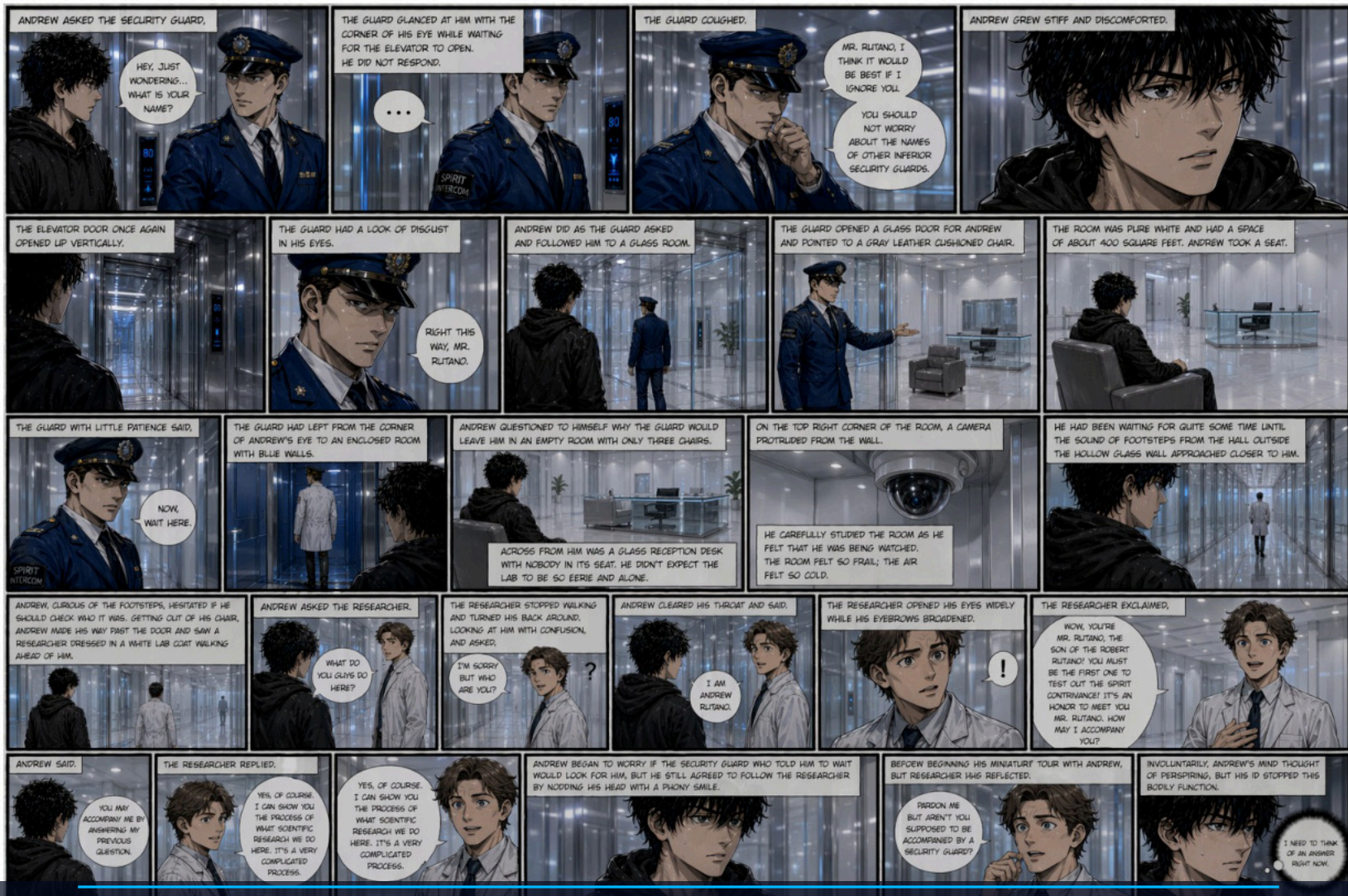
ANDREW BEGAN TO WORRY IF THE SECURITY GUARD WHO TOLD HIM TO WAIT WOULD LOOK FOR HIM, BUT HE STILL AGREED TO FOLLOW THE RESEARCHER BY NODDING HIS HEAD WITH A PHONY SMILE.

BEFORE BEGINNING HIS MINIATURE TOUR WITH ANDREW, THE RESEARCHER HAD REFLECTED,

PARDON ME BUT AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SECURITY GUARD?

INVOLUNTARILY, ANDREW'S MIND THOUGHT OF PERSPIRING, BUT HIS ID STOPPED THIS BODILY FUNCTION.

I NEED TO THINK OF AN ANSWER RIGHT NOW.



ANDREW ASKED THE SECURITY GUARD.

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RIGHT THIS WAY, MR. RUTANO.

THE GUARD WITH LITTLE PATIENCE SAID,

NOW, WAIT HERE.

THE GUARD HAD LEFT FROM THE CORNER OF ANDREW'S EYE TO AN ENCLOSED ROOM WITH BLUE WALLS.

ANDREW QUESTIONED TO HIMSELF WHY THE GUARD WOULD LEAVE HIM IN AN EMPTY ROOM WITH ONLY THREE CHAIRS.

ON THE TOP RIGHT CORNER OF THE ROOM, A CAMERA PROTRUDED FROM THE WALL.

HE HAD BEEN WAITING FOR QUITE SOME TIME UNTIL THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS FROM THE HALL OUTSIDE THE HOLLOW GLASS WALL APPROACHED CLOSER TO HIM.

ACROSS FROM HIM WAS A GLASS RECEPTION DESK WITH NOBODY IN ITS SEAT. HE DIDN'T EXPECT THE LAB TO BE SO EERIE AND ALONE.

HE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ROOM AS HE FELT THAT HE WAS BEING WATCHED. THE ROOM FELT SO FRAIL; THE AIR FELT SO COLD.

ANDREW, CURIOUS OF THE FOOTSTEPS, HESITATED IF HE SHOULD CHECK WHO IT WAS, GETTING OUT OF HIS CHAIR. ANDREW MADE HIS WAY PAST THE DOOR AND SAW A RESEARCHER DRESSED IN A WHITE LAB COAT WALKING AHEAD OF HIM.

ANDREW ASKED THE RESEARCHER.

WHAT DO YOU GUYS DO HERE?

THE RESEARCHER STOPPED WALKING AND TURNED HIS BACK AROUND, LOOKING AT HIM WITH CONFUSION, AND ASKED.

I'M SORRY BUT WHO ARE YOU?

ANDREW CLEARED HIS THROAT AND SAID.

I AM ANDREW RUTANO.

THE RESEARCHER OPENED HIS EYES WIDELY WHILE HIS EYEBROWS BROADENED.

THE RESEARCHER EXCLAIMED,

HOW, YOU'RE MR. RUTANO, THE SON OF THE ROBERT RUTANO! YOU MUST BE THE FIRST ONE TO TEST OUT THE SPIRIT CONTRAINT! IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU MR. RUTANO. HOW MAY I ACCOMPANY YOU?

ANDREW SAID.

YOU MAY ACCOMPANY ME BY ANSWERING MY PREVIOUS QUESTION.

THE RESEARCHER REPLIED.

YES, OF COURSE I CAN SHOW YOU THE PROCESS OF WHAT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH WE DO HERE. IT'S A VERY COMPLICATED PROCESS.

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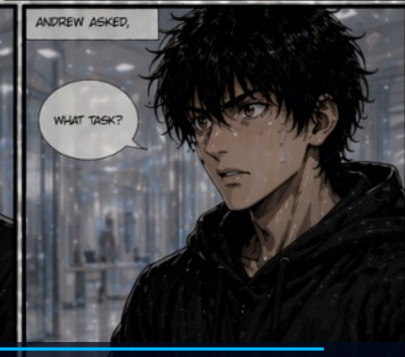
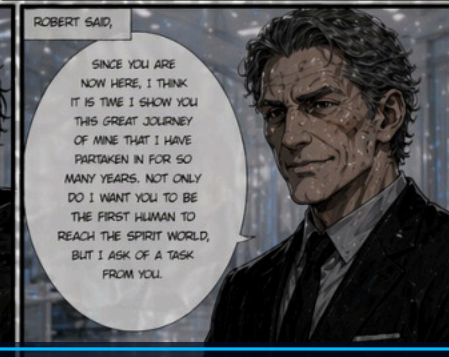
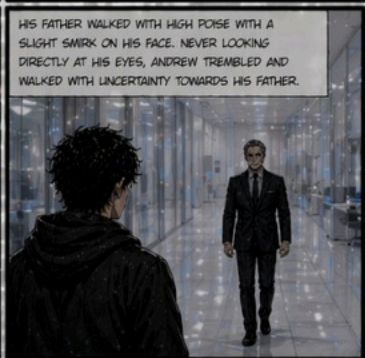
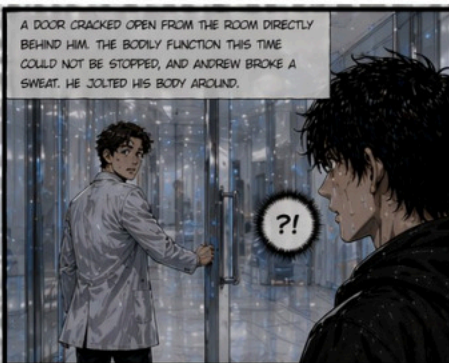
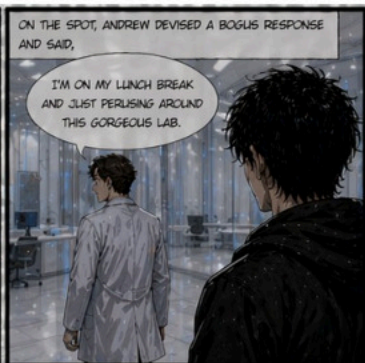
ANDREW BEGAN TO WORRY IF THE SECURITY GUARD WHO TOLD HIM TO WAIT WOULD LOOK FOR HIM, BUT HE STILL AGREED TO FOLLOW THE RESEARCHER BY NODDING HIS HEAD WITH A PHONY SMILE.

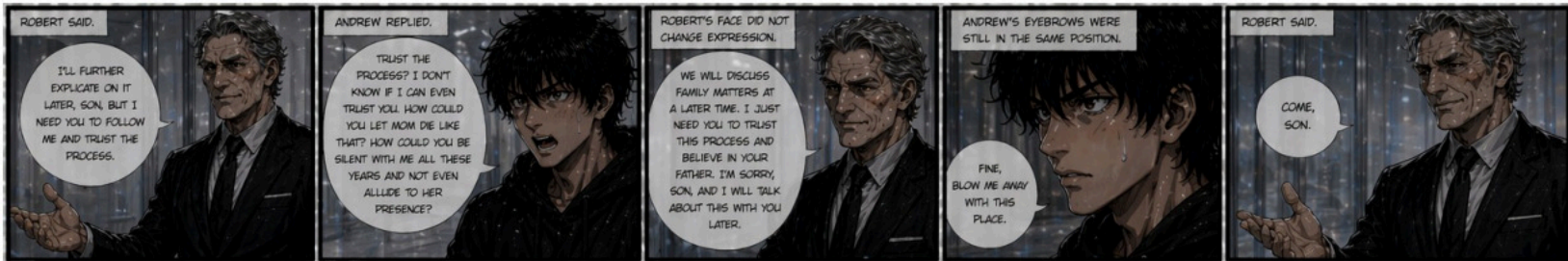
BEFORE BEGINNING HIS MINIATURE TOUR WITH ANDREW, BUT RESEARCHER WAS REFLECTED.

PARDON ME BUT AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SECURITY GUARD?

INVOLUNTARILY, ANDREW'S MIND THOUGHT OF PERSPIRING, BUT HIS ID STOPPED THIS BODILY FUNCTION.

I NEED TO THINK OF AN ANSWER RIGHT NOW.





ROBERT SAID.

I'LL FURTHER  
EXPPLICATE ON IT  
LATER, SON, BUT I  
NEED YOU TO FOLLOW  
ME AND TRUST THE  
PROCESS.

ANDREW REPLIED.

TRUST THE  
PROCESS? I DON'T  
KNOW IF I CAN EVEN  
TRUST YOU. HOW COULD  
YOU LET MOM DIE LIKE  
THAT? HOW COULD YOU BE  
SILENT WITH ME ALL THESE  
YEARS AND NOT EVEN  
ALLUDE TO HER  
PRESENCE?

ROBERT'S FACE DID NOT  
CHANGE EXPRESSION.

WE WILL DISCUSS  
FAMILY MATTERS AT  
A LATER TIME. I JUST  
NEED YOU TO TRUST  
THIS PROCESS AND  
BELIEVE IN YOUR  
FATHER. I'M SORRY,  
SON, AND I WILL TALK  
ABOUT THIS WITH YOU  
LATER.

ANDREW'S EYEBROWS WERE  
STILL IN THE SAME POSITION.

FINE,  
BLOW ME AWAY  
WITH THIS  
PLACE.

ROBERT SAID.

COME,  
SON.



ROBERT OPENED THE GLASS DOOR. HE LOOKED  
AT THE SECURITY GUARD.

GO BACK  
TO YOUR  
QUARTERS,  
RUFUS.

ANDREW SAID WITH A SMUG SMILE.

SO, YOUR  
NAME IS RUFUS.  
HUH? SEE IT WAS  
NOT THAT HARD TO  
SAY YOUR NAME...  
RUFUS.

RUFUS REPLIED.

FOLLOW  
YOUR DAD,  
ANDREW.

ANDREW DRAGGED HIMSELF TO FOLLOW HIS  
FATHER. HE STARED AT RUFUS WITH IRRITATION  
AND LEFT THE ROOM.

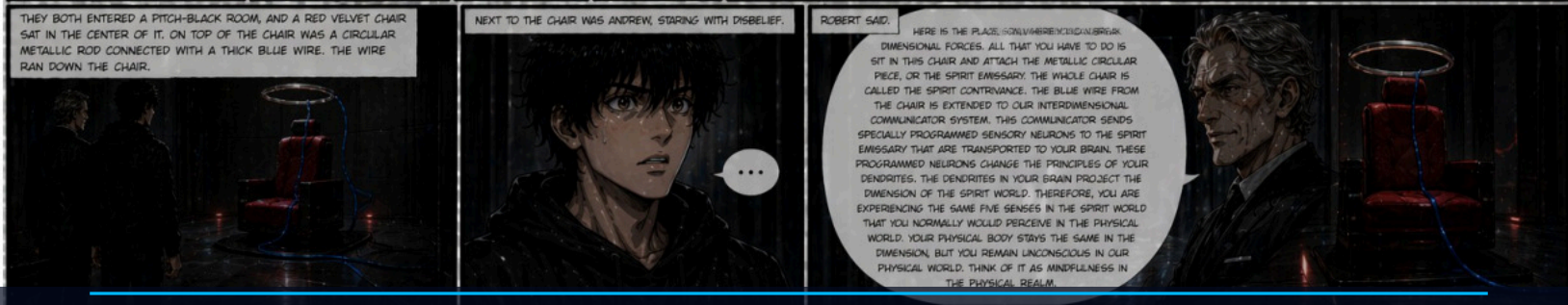
ANDREW CONTEMPLATED THE FOLLOWING:

- IF NO ONE TRIED THIS MACHINE, IS HE TRYING TO KILL ME WITH IT?
- WHY DOESN'T HE SPEAK ABOUT MY MOTHER WITH ME NOW?
- WHY DID I EVEN COME HERE?
- WHY DID HE TALK ABOUT MY KIDS WHEN HE ONLY SAW MAX WHEN HE WAS FOUR AND WHEN LISA WAS THOT?
- HOW WILL THIS MACHINE EVEN WORK? IS IT GOING TO BE PAINFUL OR FEEL GOOD?
- WHY DIDN'T RUFUS REVEAL HIS NAME TO ME?



AS ANDREW REFLECTED, HIS FATHER AND HE WALKED  
THROUGH PLAIN WHITE HALLS, MAKING LEFTS AND  
RIGHTS ALL OVER THE COMPLEX.

AFTER 30 MINUTES, ROBERT OPENED A BLACK DOOR USING AN EYE-RECOGNITION SENSOR. A SUBTLE RED  
BEAM OVERLAPPED ON HIS EYE FOR A COUPLE OF SECONDS, AND THE DOOR UNLOCKED, OPENING  
VERTICALLY UPWARD. TWO SECURITY CAMERAS WERE PERCHED ON TOP OF THE DOOR.



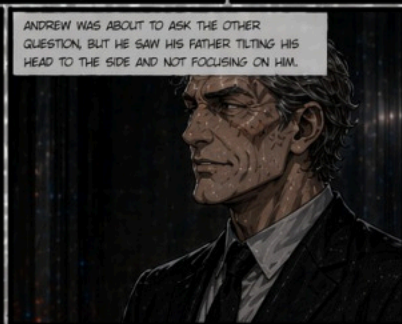
THEY BOTH ENTERED A PITCH-BLACK ROOM, AND A RED VELVET CHAIR  
SAT IN THE CENTER OF IT. ON TOP OF THE CHAIR WAS A CIRCULAR  
METALLIC ROD CONNECTED WITH A THICK BLUE WIRE. THE WIRE  
RAN DOWN THE CHAIR.

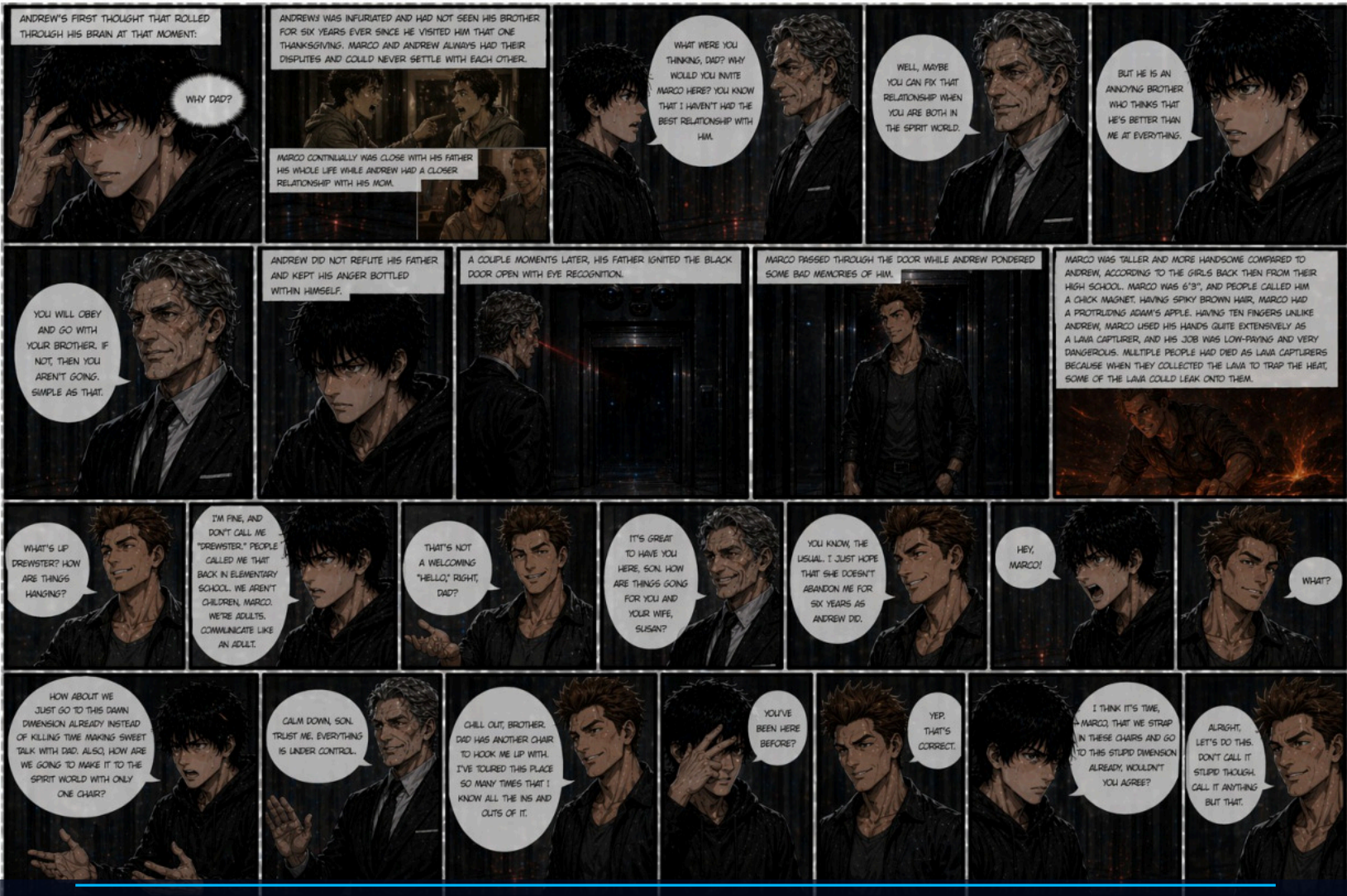
NEXT TO THE CHAIR WAS ANDREW, STARING WITH DISBELIEF.

...

ROBERT SAID.

HERE IS THE PLACE. ONLY WARRIORS CAN BREAK  
DIMENSIONAL FORCES. ALL THAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS  
SIT IN THIS CHAIR AND ATTACH THE METALLIC CIRCULAR  
PIECE, OR THE SPIRIT EMISSARY. THE WHOLE CHAIR IS  
CALLED THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE. THE BLUE WIRE FROM  
THE CHAIR IS EXTENDED TO OUR INTERDIMENSIONAL  
COMMUNICATOR SYSTEM. THIS COMMUNICATOR SENDS  
SPECIALLY PROGRAMMED SENSORY NEURONS TO THE SPIRIT  
EMISSARY THAT ARE TRANSPORTED TO YOUR BRAIN. THESE  
PROGRAMMED NEURONS CHANGE THE PRINCIPLES OF YOUR  
DENDRITES. THE DENDRITES IN YOUR BRAIN PROJECT THE  
DIMENSION OF THE SPIRIT WORLD. THEREFORE, YOU ARE  
EXPERIENCING THE SAME FIVE SENSES IN THE SPIRIT WORLD  
THAT YOU NORMALLY WOULD PERCEIVE IN THE PHYSICAL  
WORLD. YOUR PHYSICAL BODY STAYS THE SAME IN THE  
DIMENSION, BUT YOU REMAIN UNCONSCIOUS IN OUR  
PHYSICAL WORLD. THINK OF IT AS MINDFULNESS IN  
THE PHYSICAL WORLD.





IMMEDIATELY, ROBERT TALKED TO HIS EARPIECE AND SAID, "SEND IN THE LAB RESEARCHERS."

A FEW SECONDS LATER, SEVERAL LAB RESEARCHERS, WEARING WHITE SUITS, ENTERED THE BLACK ROOM.

THEY HELD BROWN CLIPBOARDS, AND OTHERS WORE THICK GRAY GLASSES. THEY WALKED STUDIOUSLY, AND THEY REACHED ROBERT'S SPIRITAL PERIPHERY.

I WOULD LIKE YOU, FINE RESEARCHERS, TO TAKE NOTE OF EVERY DETAIL AND OBSERVATION YOU SEE ON MY SONS. I NEED SOME OF YOU TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE DIMENSIONAL-TRACKING STATUS AND SOME OF YOU TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR DOPAMINE LEVELS. IF ANY PROBLEMS OCCUR, IMMEDIATELY EXTERMINATE THE PROCESS AND SEND THEM BACK TO THE PHYSICAL WORLD, ALSO--

"WHAT PROBLEMS COULD POSSIBLY OCCUR?" ANDREW INTERRUPTED.

LOSING HIS TRAIN OF THOUGHT, ROBERT SAID,

BRINGING BACK HIS ATTENTION TO HIS LAB RESEARCHERS, HE SAID,

NOW BRINGING HIS ATTENTION TO HIS CHILDREN, HE SAID,

WHAT PROBLEMS COULD POSSIBLY OCCUR?

NOTHING, ANDREW. I JUST WANT TO TAKE EXTRA PRECAUTIONS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF MY CHILDREN. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

LIKE I WAS SAYING, TRACK THEM WHEN THEY ARE IN THE SPIRIT WORLD WITH THE USE OF OUR NEURON-SEEKING SENSORS THAT ARE ON THE SPIRIT EMISSARIES. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION, AND GOOD LUCK ON YOUR DIMENSIONAL MANAGEMENT.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, GOOD LUCK TO YOU MARCO AND ANDREW. WHEN YOU VOYAGE THROUGH THIS DIMENSION, TAKE THE TIME TO OBSERVE HOW THIS WORLD APPEARS TO YOUR PERSPECTIVES. THIS DIMENSION IS KNOWN AS A "PARADISE" AND-- I'M TALKING TOO MUCH, AREN'T I? I HOPE THE BEST FOR MY SONS.

ANDREW WIPED THE SWEAT OFF HIS FACE.

TREADING BACK TO HIS LAB RESEARCHERS, ROBERT SAID TO THEM,

A LAB RESEARCHER WITH A NAME TAG READING "EARL" INSERTED A FIVE-INCH KEY WITH INTRICATE GROOVES INTO THE IGNITION OF THE COMMUNICATOR SYSTEM.

IS THIS GOING TO HURT, FATHER?

CLOSE YOUR EYELIDS AND JUST TRY TO RELAX.

JUST LIKE HOW WE PUT A MAN ON THE MOON, LET'S PUT A MAN ON THE SPIRIT WORLD. IGNITE THE COMMUNICATOR AT ONCE.

COMMUNICATOR SYSTEM

THE SYSTEM MADE WHIRRING NOISES AND ELECTRIFIED, SENDING A NEUROELECTRIC CURRENT TO THE SPIRIT EMISSARIES OF MARCO AND ANDREW.

INSTANTLY, MARCO AND ANDREW GREW UNRESPONSIVE WITH THEIR MOUTHS OPEN AND EYES CLOSED.

UNCONSCIOUS, ANDREW'S VISION HAD FADED.

SURPRISED BY THEIR QUICK READINESS, ROBERT SAID INTO HIS EARPIECE, "BRING OUT THE OTHER SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE, RUFUS."

MEANWHILE, ANDREW STUDIED THE INTERDIMENSIONAL COMMUNICATOR SYSTEM. HE GRAZED THE WIRES WITH HIS INDEX FINGER.

THE SYSTEM CONTAINED A MEDIUM-SIZED GLASS BOX ENCLOSED BY THE BOX WAS A HOLOGRAPHIC VISUAL. THE VISUAL WAS OF A BLUE BRAIN WITH DIFFERENT POINTS LOCATED ON IT. ON TOP OF THE BRAIN WAS A PLACEHOLDER THAT READ "NAME OF SUBJECT."

ANDREW INFERRED THAT THIS HOLOGRAPH WOULD DISPLAY THE PERSON'S BRAIN USING THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE. THERE WERE OTHER GRAPHICS ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE GLASS BOX THAT READ "SPIRIT EMISSARY STATUS," "NEURON CODING," AND "DOPAMINE LEVELS."

ANDREW PINPOINTED A TAB THAT SAID "HISTORY OF TRIED SUBJECTS." WITH CURIOSITY, ANDREW TAPPED ON THE TAB, AND A LIST OF WORDS APPEARED.

THE LIST READ THE FOLLOWING:

**TESTED SUBJECTS:**

- 37 MONKEYS: SUCCESS
- 21 ARMADILLOS: SUCCESS
- 24 RATS: SUCCESS
- 5 CHIMPANZEES: SUCCESS
- 1 BABY: IN PROGRESS**

ANDREW READ THE LIST AND WAS HALUNTED BY THE WORD "BABY." ANDREW IMMEDIATELY ASKED, "DAD... WHY IS THERE A BABY ON THIS LIST?"

ROBERT SAID, "SON, THERE IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT," EMPHASIZING THE WORD "NOTHING."

SON, THERE IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

ARE YOU GUYS TESTING A BABY IN THE SPIRIT WORLD AT THIS INSTANT?

NO.

MARCO BARGED IN AND SAID,

COME ON ANDREW. YOU CAN TRUST HIM. I'M SURE IT IS JUST ONE OF HIS COMPLICATED SCIENTIFIC GIMMICKS.

ANDREW, STILL CERTAIN AND SKEPTICAL THAT HIS FATHER WAS DOING SOMETHING STRANGE, DIDN'T WANT TO RILE THINGS UP.

OKAY THEN. LET'S JUST USE THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCES NOW.

THE SECOND CHAIR THAT RUFUS WAS COMMANDED TO WITHDRAW OPENED UP FROM THE FLOOR AND PROPPED ITSELF RIGHT NEXT TO THE OTHER CHAIR.

ROBERT SNARLED AT RUFUS.

RUFUS, YOU FORGOT TO ATTACH THE CONTRIVANCE TO THE INTERDIMENSIONAL COMMUNICATOR SYSTEM!

AT THIS INSTANT, ANDREW WAS STARTING TO GROW UNCOMFORTABLE.

RUFUS ATTACHED THE REST OF THE BLUE WIRE TO THE INTERDIMENSIONAL COMMUNICATOR SYSTEM BY OPENING UP THE HATCH FOR IT. THE SYSTEM LIT UP WITH RGB COLORS ON THE OUTSIDE. THE INTERDIMENSIONAL COMMUNICATOR SAID, "COMMUNICATOR READY," IN A VERY MONOTONOUS AI VOICE.

COMMUNICATOR READY

MARCO WAS ALSO READY TO ENTER THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE.

WITH HIGH POISE, MARCO WALKED TOWARDS THE MACHINE AND SAT IN THE VELVET CHAIR. GRASPING THE SPIRIT EMISSARY, MARCO PUT IT ON THE CROWN OF HIS HEAD. THE METALLIC RING FIT PERFECTLY FOR HIS HEAD.

ANDREW STILL STOOD IN ANGLESH. ROBERT GLANCED AT HIS SON. MARCO GLANCED AT HIS BROTHER.

MARCO IMPATIENTLY SAID,

I DON'T HAVE ALL DAY, BROTHER.

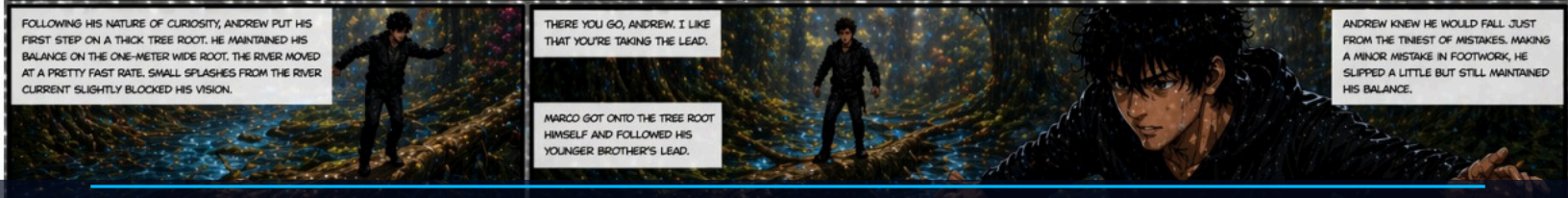
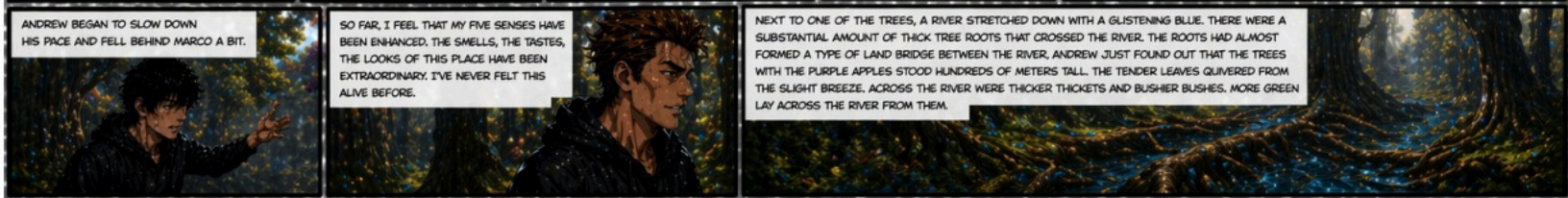
"ALRIGHT MAN, JUST GIVE ME A SECOND," WALKING WITH HIGH DOUBT, ANDREW SLOWLY MADE HIS WAY TO THIS FOREIGN MACHINE. HE LIGHTLY TAPPED HIS FEET AGAINST THE GROUND.

HE WAS NOT READY. HIS HEART POUNDED AS FAST AS A 10,000-VOLT GENERATOR, AND HE FINALLY REACHED THE CHAIR AND TOOK A SEAT UNCOMFORTABLY.

TAKING HIS TIME, HE ATTACHED THE SPIRIT EMISSARY AROUND THE CROWN OF HIS HEAD. THE METALLIC RING WAS DISPROPORTIONATE AND TIGHT FOR HIS HEAD.

HE LOOKED AT HIS FATHER'S EYES AND REGRETFULLY SAID,

READY.



CONSCIOUSNESS SHIFTS BACK TO ANDREW.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

IT APPEARS THAT A BEE WITH HUGE SIZE PROPORTIONS INJECTED YOU WITH DOPAMINE INTO YOUR BRAIN. YOU REACHED SUCH A HIGH SENSATION OF DOPAMINE THAT THE CODED SENSORY NEURONS WERE DISPATCHED, HENCE WAKING YOU UP. THIS BEE SEEMS TO HAVE SOME SORT OF DOPAMINE COMPOSITOR IN ITS BODY. ACCORDING TO OUR NEURAL SENSORS, THIS HELLVIA CREATURE COULD TURN THE MOST DEPRESSED MAN ON EARTH TO THE HAPPIEST THROUGH ITS DOPAMINE BYPRODUCT.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE DOPAMINE NEURONS THAT PENETRATED THE FRONTAL CORTEX OF YOUR BRAIN REACTED WITH OUR CODED NEURONS, CREATING A CHEMICAL REACTION. THIS REACTION CREATED A MALFUNCTION IN THE INTERDIMENSIONAL COMMUNICATOR SYSTEM, AND THE CODED NEURONS WERE ABORTED.

BUT I THOUGHT I CAN'T FEEL THE DOPAMINE NEURONS IN MY PHYSICAL BRAIN SINCE THE BEE DIDN'T STING ME IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD?

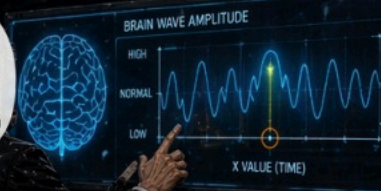
YES, THAT IS TRUE, BUT YOU ARE MISSING ONE LINK IN THAT STATEMENT. SINCE THE CODED SENSORY NEURONS IN YOUR BRAIN OPEN UP TO ALL THE PERCEIVINGS OF THE SPIRIT WORLD, THEY INTERACTED WITH THE DOPAMINE THROUGH THAT NEUROLOGICAL FEELING THE CODED SENSORY NEURONS ARE INTRINSICALLY OPENED UP TO.

WHEN FOREIGN NEURONS, A.K.A. THE DOPAMINE NEURONS, TRAVEL TO YOUR BRAIN IN THE SPIRIT WORLD, THESE NEURONS MESS UP WITH THE NEURONS THAT WE CODED IN THE COMMUNICATOR SYSTEM THROUGH THE CHEMICAL REACTION.

NOW IS IT POSSIBLE THEN THAT YOU CAN SEND CODED NEURONS TO OUR HEAD? I WANTED TO ASK THIS EARLIER BEFORE WE CHANGED DIMENSIONS.

I'M GLAD YOU BROUGHT THAT UP.

THESE ARE YOUR BRAIN WAVES OR YOUR NEURAL OSCILLATIONS. WE CHANGE THE PROPERTIES OF YOUR NEURONS BY EXTENDING OR SHRINKING THE AMPLITUDE OF THE BRAIN WAVES. CHANGING THE WAVES CHANGES THE OUTLOOK ON HOW YOUR DENDRITES PERCEIVE THE SENSES. YOUR DENDRITES ARE THE PART OF THE NERVE WHERE THE IMPULSES ARE RECEIVED. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN YOU WERE IN THE SPIRIT WORLD, THE AMPLITUDE OF YOUR SENSORY BRAIN WAVES WAS TINKERED AN INCH TALLER IN RETROSPECT TO THE GRAPH AT THIS X VALUE.



EVERY CHANGE IN THE X-AXIS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE Y AXIS CONSTANTLY CHANGES YOUR NEURAL WAVES, HENCE THE REASON WHY THEY ARE CALLED CODED NEURONS. THE COMPLEXITY OF THE ACTUAL CODE THOUGH IS INSURMOUNTABLE.

I SEE.

ROBERT CLOSED THE HOLOGRAM. TALKING REMAINED EXTINCT FOR A FEW SECONDS.

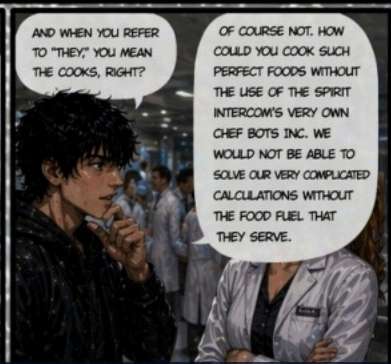
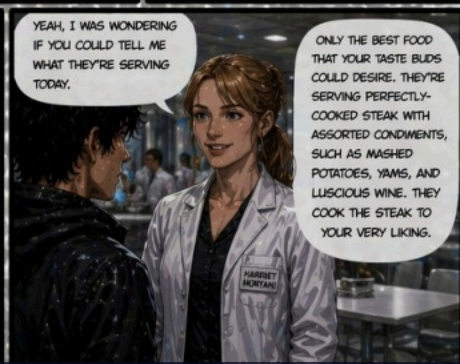
SO, WHAT NOW?

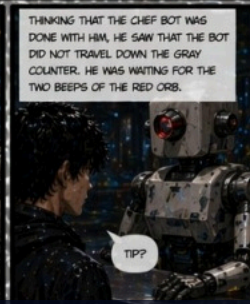
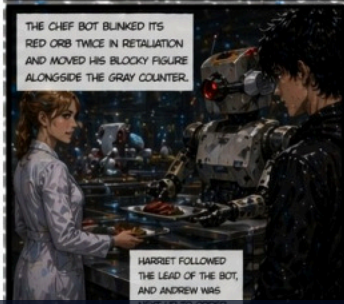
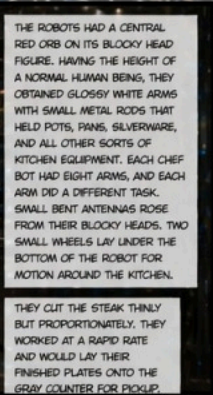
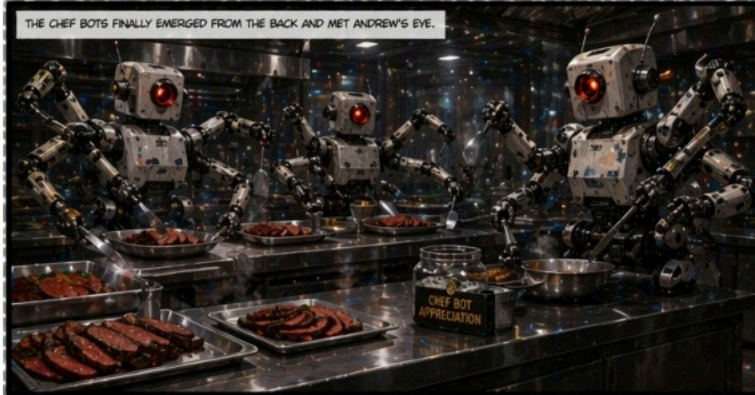
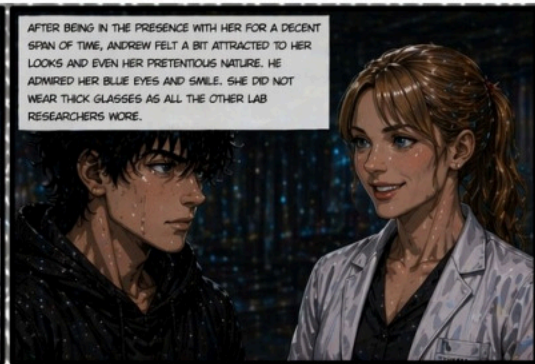
NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOU AND MARCO TO TAKE A BREAK FROM THE HIGH-TIER SENSATION OF THE SPIRIT WORLD. GO ON A LUNCH BREAK IN THE CAFETERIA. I HEAR THEY HAVE MEDIUM-RARE STEAK THERE. AS FOR YOU, MY LAB RESEARCHERS, CONVERGE IN MY HEADQUARTERS TO DISCUSS FURTHER RESEARCH.

ROBERT AND THE LAB RESEARCHERS, INCLUDING EARL, LEFT THE BLACK ROOM THROUGH THE VERTICALLY SHIFTING-UP DOOR.

ONCE THE ROOM WAS EMPTY WITH ONLY ANDREW AND MARCO, ANDREW DEPARTED FROM THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE AND TAPPED THE SHOULDER OF MARCO.

WANNA EAT SOMETHING?

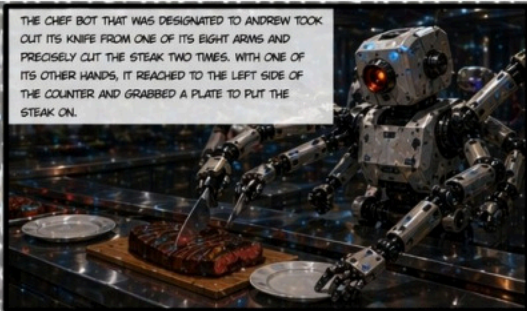




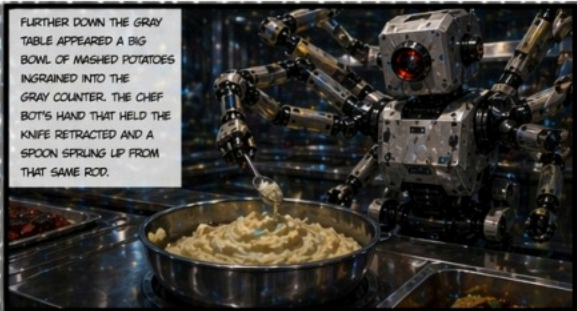
DROPPING THE BILL INTO THE JAR, THE CHEF BOT BLINKED ITS RED ORB TWICE AND CONTINUED DOWN THE GRAY COUNTER.



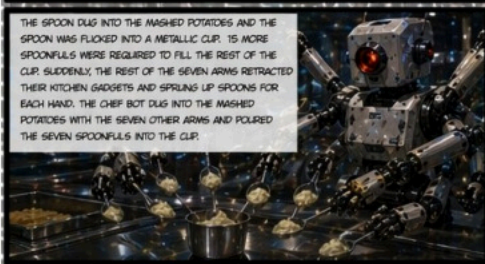
THE CHEF BOT THAT WAS DESIGNATED TO ANDREW TOOK OUT ITS KNIFE FROM ONE OF ITS EIGHT ARMS AND PRECISELY CUT THE STEAK TWO TIMES, WITH ONE OF ITS OTHER HANDS, IT REACHED TO THE LEFT SIDE OF THE COUNTER AND GRABBED A PLATE TO PUT THE STEAK ON.



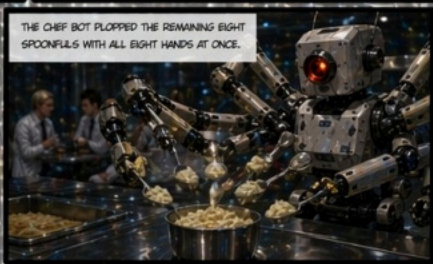
FURTHER DOWN THE GRAY TABLE APPEARED A BIG BOWL OF MASHED POTATOES INGRAINED INTO THE GRAY COUNTER. THE CHEF BOT'S HAND THAT HELD THE KNIFE RETRACTED AND A SPOON SPRUNG UP FROM THAT SAME ROD.



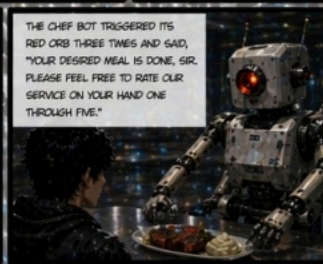
THE SPOON DUG INTO THE MASHED POTATOES AND THE SPOON WAS FLOPPED INTO A METALLIC CLIP. 15 MORE SPOONFULS WERE REQUIRED TO FILL THE REST OF THE CLIP. SUDDENLY, THE REST OF THE SEVEN ARMS RETRACTED THEIR KITCHEN GADGETS AND SPRUNG UP SPOONS FOR EACH HAND. THE CHEF BOT DUG INTO THE MASHED POTATOES WITH THE SEVEN OTHER ARMS AND POURED THE SEVEN SPOONFULS INTO THE CLIP.



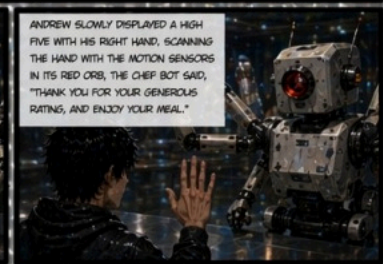
THE CHEF BOT FLOPPED THE REMAINING EIGHT SPOONFULS WITH ALL EIGHT HANDS AT ONCE.



THE CHEF BOT TRIGGERED ITS RED ORB THREE TIMES AND SAID, "YOUR DESIRED MEAL IS DONE, SIR. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO RATE OUR SERVICE ON YOUR HAND ONE THROUGH FIVE."



ANDREW SLOWLY DISPLAYED A HIGH FIVE WITH HIS RIGHT HAND, SCANNING THE HAND WITH THE MOTION SENSORS IN ITS RED ORB, THE CHEF BOT SAID, "THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS RATINGS, AND ENJOY YOUR MEAL."



MARKED BY THE HIGHLY ADVANCED ENGINEERS, ANDREW BECAME MORE IMPRESSED WITH THE TECHNOLOGY OF SPIRIT INTERCOM.



MIND IF I SIT HERE?

AFFIRMATIVE. I WILL WELCOME ANY FORMER SPIRIT INTERCOM PARTICIPANTS TO ACCOMPANY ME.



AS A PROSTHETIC ENGINEER MYSELF, THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHEF BOT HANDS ARE A WORK OF ART.

INDEED IT IS QUITE SUPERB HOW THE CHEF BOTS CAN PARTAKE IN EIGHT TASKS ALL AT ONCE.



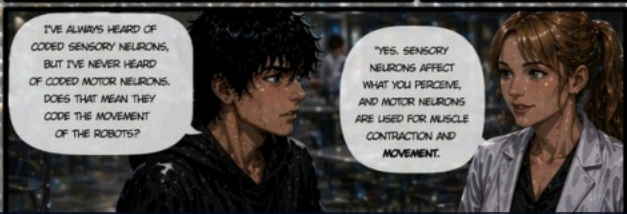
IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING, HOW DO THEY FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON MULTIPLE THINGS AT ONCE?

THROUGH THE USE OF EIGHT CONTROL UNITS THAT ARE COMMUNICATED THROUGH CODED MOTOR NEURONS, JUST LIKE THE ONES THAT TRAVELED TO YOUR BRAIN WHEN YOU WERE SENT TO THE SPIRIT WORLD.



I'VE ALWAYS HEARD OF CODED SENSORY NEURONS, BUT I'VE NEVER HEARD OF CODED MOTOR NEURONS. DOES THAT MEAN THEY CODE THE MOVEMENT OF THE ROBOTS?

YES. SENSORY NEURONS AFFECT WHAT YOU PERCEIVE, AND MOTOR NEURONS ARE USED FOR MUSCLE CONTRACTION AND MOVEMENT.



WOW, THAT'S AMAZING! ARE ALL THE ROBOTS IN THE LABS CONTROLLED BY CODED MOTOR NEURONS?





IN FACT, YES. WITH THE USE OF ROBERT'S FINDINGS IN NEURON CODING, WE CAN REPLICATE IT ONTO EVERY ROBOT IN OUR LABS.



ARE YOU A ROBOT FLOWING WITH CODED MOTOR NEURONS, HARRIET?  
I SURE HOPE NOT.



SO TECHNICALLY, COULDN'T SPIRIT INTERCOM PROGRAM HUMAN MOVEMENT WITH CODED MOTOR NEURONS?

ANDREW GREW A BIT HAUNTED BY THIS QUESTION.



TECHNICALLY THEY COULD, BUT THAT WOULD BE SCARY. SPIRIT INTERCOM WOULD NEVER DO SOMETHING THAT IN-HUMANE.



WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON PRE-REGISTRATION? I MEAN—IT IS KIND OF UNFAIR IN MY OPINION.

ESPECIALLY FOR THE POOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DYING FROM THE EARTHQUAKES.



FROM MY STANDPOINT, I FEEL THAT IT IS A BIT UNFAIR THAT ONLY THE RICH HAVE THEIR HANDS ON THIS STATE-OF-ART TECHNOLOGY. WITH ALL THESE "NATURAL" DISASTERS HAPPENING, THE WORLD IS IN COMPLETE TURMOIL. RIGHT NOW.



COULD SPIRIT INTERCOM PRODUCE ENOUGH CONTRINANCES FOR EVERYONE IN THE WORLD TO USE?



HIGHLY DOUBTFUL. IT WOULD REQUIRE AN ASTRONOMICAL AMOUNT OF MONEY TO CREATE MILLIONS OF CHAIRS. BUT MAYBE IF YOU CAN BRING A PITCH TO YOUR FATHER, WE COULD IMPLEMENT A REALISTIC INCREASE OF CHAIRS FOR HIGHER VOLLUMES OF PEOPLE TO ENTER THE SPIRIT WORLD.



THAT ACTUALLY COULD WORK. MAYBE I COULD SOMEHOW CONVINCE HIM TO MAKE MORE CHAIRS SO THAT "MORE RICH PEOPLE" COULD ENTER THE SPIRIT WORLD.

YES. GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT.



IT WAS A PERSUADE TALKING WITH YOU HARRIET. I'LL SEE YOU AROUND.

TAKE CARE. MAYBE NEXT TIME I CAN SHOW YOU THE INS AND OUTS OF MY JOB.

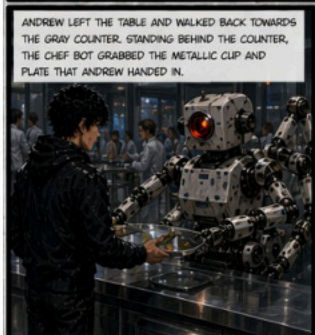


SOUNDS GREAT. LASTLY, DO YOU KNOW WHERE WE PLACE OUR DISHES?

JUST HAND IT IN TO ONE OF THE CHEF BOTS, AND THEY WILL TAKE CARE OF IT FOR YOU.



ALRIGHT, HOPE I CAN CHAT WITH YOU ANOTHER TIME.



ANDREW LEFT THE TABLE AND WALKED BACK TOWARDS THE GRAY COUNTER, STANDING BEHIND THE COUNTER, THE CHEF BOT GRABBED THE METALLIC CLIP AND PLATE THAT ANDREW HANDED IN.



THANK YOU FOR EATING WITH US. HAVE A GREAT DAY.

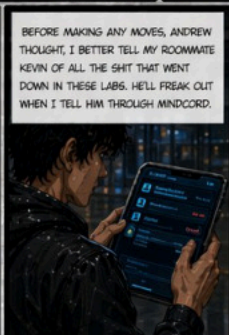


BEFORE ANDREW PLACED HIS LAST STEP OUT OF THE CAFETERIA, MULTIPLE LAB RESEARCHERS GAVE HIM CHEERS AND ONE OF THEM SAID,

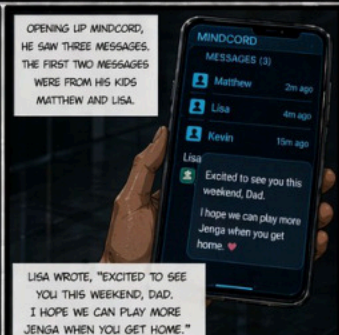
GO MAKE HISTORY ANDREW!



UNSURE OF WHERE TO SET HIS NEXT DESTINATION, ANDREW DIDN'T EXACTLY KNOW WHERE HIS BROTHER AND FATHER WERE. HE FIGURED THAT HE OUGHT TO VISIT THE BLACK ROOM WITH THE SPIRIT CONTRINANCE.



BEFORE MAKING ANY MOVES, ANDREW THOUGHT, I BETTER TELL MY ROOMMATE KEVIN OF ALL THE SHIT THAT WENT DOWN IN THESE LABS. HE'LL FREAK OUT WHEN I TELL HIM THROUGH MINDCORD.

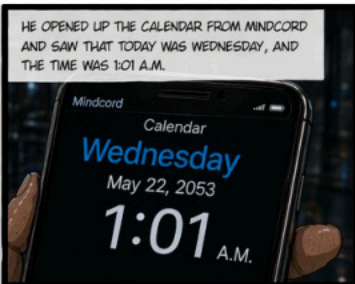


OPENING UP MINDCORD, HE SAW THREE MESSAGES. THE FIRST TWO MESSAGES WERE FROM HIS KIDS MATTHEW AND LISA.

LISA WROTE, "EXCITED TO SEE YOU THIS WEEKEND, DAD. I HOPE WE CAN PLAY MORE JENGA WHEN YOU GET HOME."



BEFORE READING THE NEXT MESSAGE, ANDREW REALIZED THAT HE HAD LOST COMPLETE AWARENESS OF WHAT TIME AND DAY IT WAS.

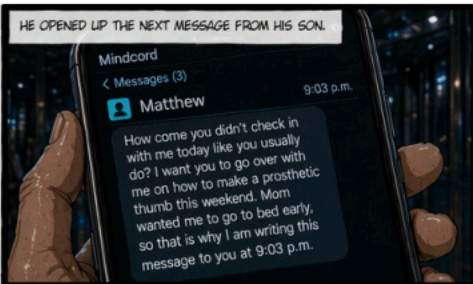


HE OPENED UP THE CALENDAR FROM MINDCORD AND SAW THAT TODAY WAS WEDNESDAY, AND THE TIME WAS 1:01 A.M.



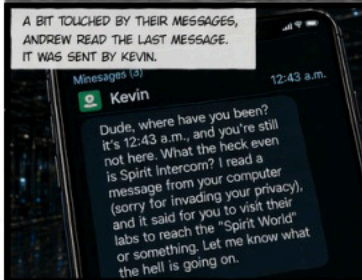
HAVING LEFT HIS APARTMENT TUESDAY AFTERNOON, HE HAD BEEN AT THE LABS FOR A SOLID 12 HOURS.

SIGHING WITH RELIEF, HE WAS THANKFUL THAT HE WAS NOT OUT UNTIL THE WEEKEND.



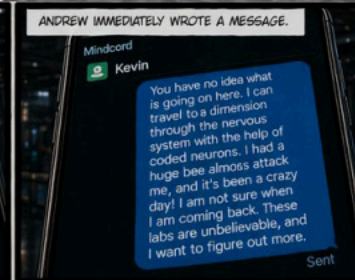
HE OPENED UP THE NEXT MESSAGE FROM HIS SON.

Matthew  
How come you didn't check in with me today like you usually do? I want you to go over with me on how to make a prosthetic thumb this weekend. Mom wanted me to go to bed early, so that is why I am writing this message to you at 9:03 p.m.



A BIT TOUCHED BY THEIR MESSAGES, ANDREW READ THE LAST MESSAGE. IT WAS SENT BY KEVIN.

Kevin  
Dude, where have you been? It's 12:43 a.m., and you're still not here. What the heck even is Spirit Intercom? I read a message from your computer (sorry for invading your privacy), and it said for you to visit their labs to reach the "Spirit World" or something. Let me know what the hell is going on.



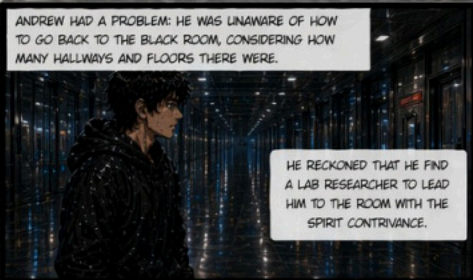
ANDREW IMMEDIATELY WROTE A MESSAGE.

Kevin  
You have no idea what is going on here. I can travel to a dimension through the nervous system with the help of coded neurons. I had a huge bee almost attack me, and it's been a crazy day! I am not sure when I am coming back. These labs are unbelievable, and I want to figure out more.



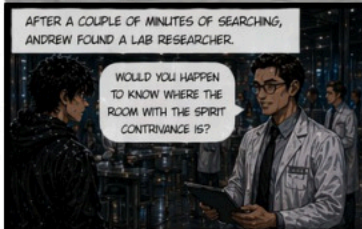
CLOSING THE MINDCORD INTERFACE, HE WANTED TO NOW VISIT THE BLACK ROOM.

ANDREW WAS STILL AMAZED BY HOW CUTTING-EDGE THE TECHNOLOGY WAS.



ANDREW HAD A PROBLEM: HE WAS UNAWARE OF HOW TO GO BACK TO THE BLACK ROOM, CONSIDERING HOW MANY HALLWAYS AND FLOORS THERE WERE.

HE RECKONED THAT HE FIND A LAB RESEARCHER TO LEAD HIM TO THE ROOM WITH THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE.



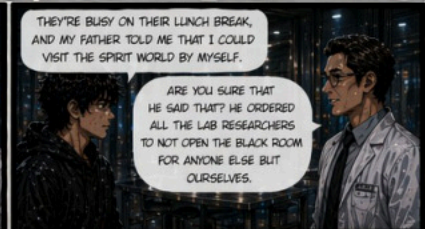
AFTER A COUPLE OF MINUTES OF SEARCHING, ANDREW FOUND A LAB RESEARCHER.

WOULD YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE THE ROOM WITH THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE IS?



TURNING HIS BODY AROUND, THE LAB RESEARCHER JUST REALIZED WHO HE WAS TALKING TO.

HEY, IT'S ANDREW! IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU. WHERE IS YOUR FATHER AND LAB CREW?



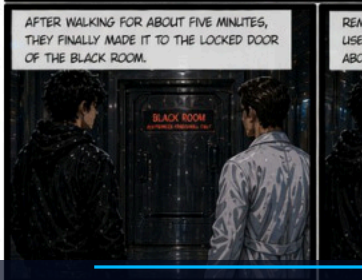
THEY'RE BUSY ON THEIR LUNCH BREAK, AND MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT I COULD VISIT THE SPIRIT WORLD BY MYSELF.

ARE YOU SURE THAT HE SAID THAT? HE ORDERED ALL THE LAB RESEARCHERS TO NOT OPEN THE BLACK ROOM FOR ANYONE ELSE BUT OURSELVES.

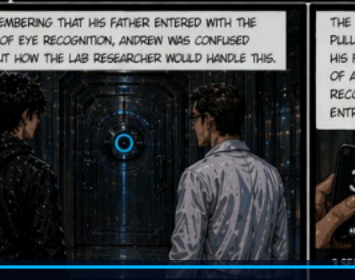


DO YOU WANT ME TO TELL MY FATHER THAT YOU ARE NOT OBEYING MY ORDERS?

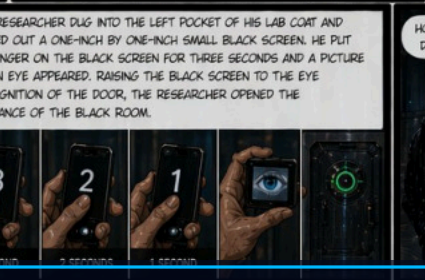
NO, PLEASE! SORRY, I WAS LOST ON WHICH COMMAND I SHOULD FOLLOW. I'LL GRANT YOU ACCESS TO THE ROOM. COME FOLLOW ME.



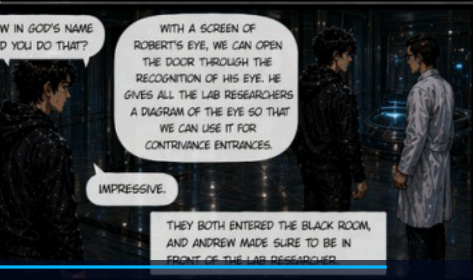
AFTER WALKING FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES, THEY FINALLY MADE IT TO THE LOCKED DOOR OF THE BLACK ROOM.



REMEMBERING THAT HIS FATHER ENTERED WITH THE USE OF EYE RECOGNITION, ANDREW WAS CONFUSED ABOUT HOW THE LAB RESEARCHER WOULD HANDLE THIS.



THE RESEARCHER DUG INTO THE LEFT POCKET OF HIS LAB COAT AND PULLED OUT A ONE-INCH BY ONE-INCH SMALL BLACK SCREEN. HE PUT HIS FINGER ON THE BLACK SCREEN FOR THREE SECONDS AND A PICTURE OF AN EYE APPEARED, RAISING THE BLACK SCREEN TO THE EYE RECOGNITION OF THE DOOR, THE RESEARCHER OPENED THE ENTRANCE OF THE BLACK ROOM.

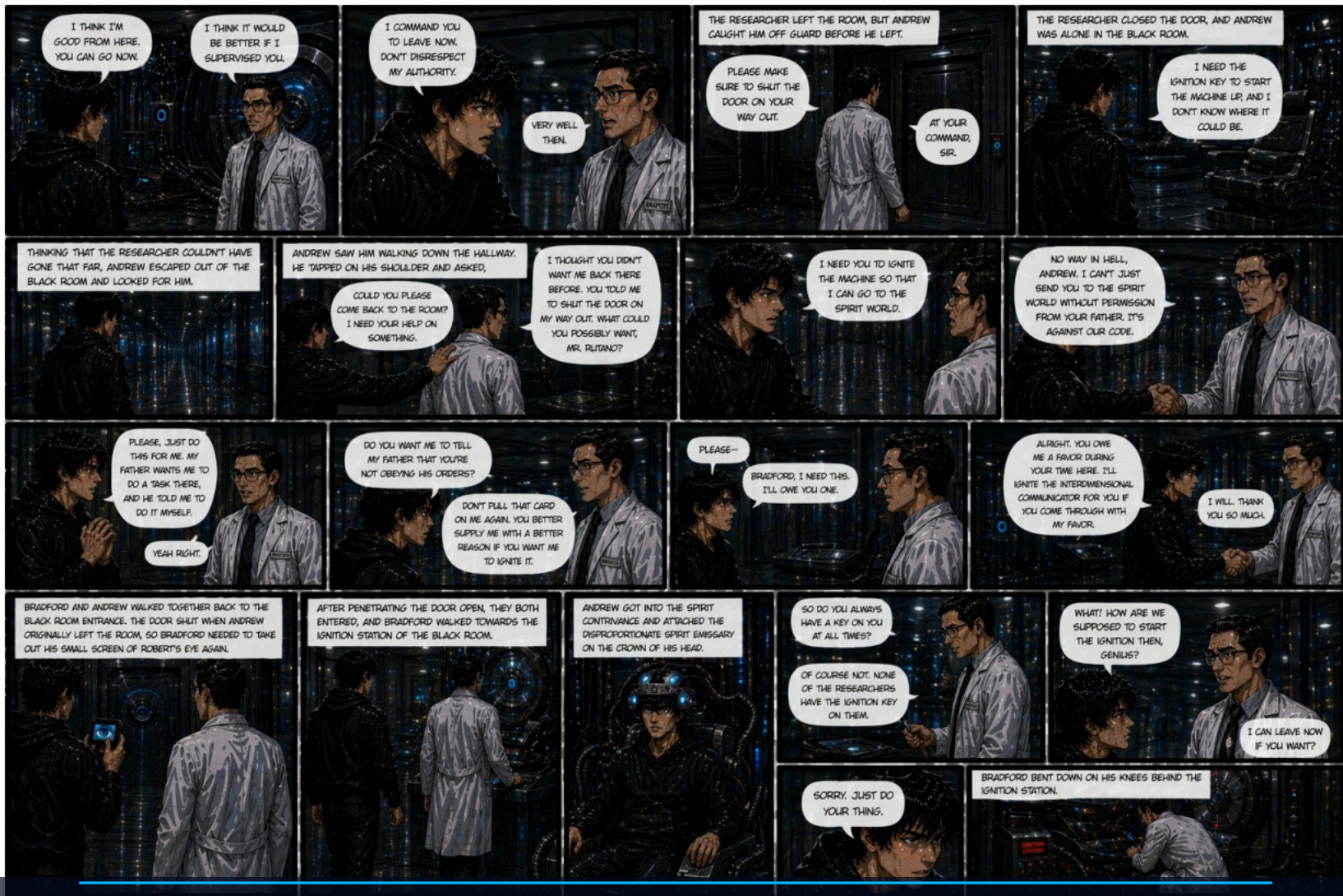


HOW IN GOD'S NAME DID YOU DO THAT?

WITH A SCREEN OF ROBERT'S EYE, WE CAN OPEN THE DOOR THROUGH THE RECOGNITION OF HIS EYE. HE GIVES ALL THE LAB RESEARCHERS A DIAGRAM OF THE EYE SO THAT WE CAN USE IT FOR CONTRIVANCE ENTRANCES.

IMPRESSIVE

THEY BOTH ENTERED THE BLACK ROOM, AND ANDREW MADE SURE TO BE IN FRONT OF THE LAB RESEARCHER



I THINK I'M GOOD FROM HERE. YOU CAN GO NOW.

I THINK IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I SUPERVISED YOU.

I COMMAND YOU TO LEAVE NOW. DON'T DISRESPECT MY AUTHORITY.

VERY WELL THEN.

THE RESEARCHER LEFT THE ROOM, BUT ANDREW CAUGHT HIM OFF GUARD BEFORE HE LEFT.

PLEASE MAKE SURE TO SHUT THE DOOR ON YOUR WAY OUT.

AT YOUR COMMAND, SIR.

THE RESEARCHER CLOSED THE DOOR, AND ANDREW WAS ALONE IN THE BLACK ROOM.

I NEED THE IGNITION KEY TO START THE MACHINE LR, AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT COULD BE.

THINKING THAT THE RESEARCHER COULDN'T HAVE GONE THAT FAR, ANDREW ESCAPED OUT OF THE BLACK ROOM AND LOOKED FOR HIM.

ANDREW SAW HIM WALKING DOWN THE HALLWAY. HE TAPPED ON HIS SHOULDER AND ASKED,

COULD YOU PLEASE COME BACK TO THE ROOM? I NEED YOUR HELP ON SOMETHING.

I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T WANT ME BACK THERE BEFORE. YOU TOLD ME TO SHUT THE DOOR ON MY WAY OUT. WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY WANT, MR. RUTAND?

I NEED YOU TO IGNITE THE MACHINE SO THAT I CAN GO TO THE SPIRIT WORLD.

NO WAY IN HELL, ANDREW. I CAN'T JUST SEND YOU TO THE SPIRIT WORLD WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM YOUR FATHER. IT'S AGAINST OUR CODE.

PLEASE, JUST DO THIS FOR ME. MY FATHER WANTS ME TO DO A TASK THERE, AND HE TOLD ME TO DO IT MYSELF.

YEAH RIGHT.

DO YOU WANT ME TO TELL MY FATHER THAT YOU'RE NOT OBEYING HIS ORDERS?

DON'T PULL THAT CARD ON ME AGAIN. YOU BETTER SUPPLY ME WITH A BETTER REASON IF YOU WANT ME TO IGNITE IT.

PLEASE--

BRADFORD, I NEED THIS. I'LL OWE YOU ONE.

ALRIGHT. YOU OWE ME A FAVOR DURING YOUR TIME HERE. I'LL IGNITE THE INTERDIMENSIONAL COMMUNICATOR FOR YOU IF YOU COME THROUGH WITH MY FAVOR.

I WILL. THANK YOU SO MUCH.

BRADFORD AND ANDREW WALKED TOGETHER BACK TO THE BLACK ROOM ENTRANCE. THE DOOR SHUT WHEN ANDREW ORIGINALLY LEFT THE ROOM, SO BRADFORD NEEDED TO TAKE OUT HIS SMALL SCREEN OF ROBERT'S EYE AGAIN.

AFTER PENETRATING THE DOOR OPEN, THEY BOTH ENTERED, AND BRADFORD WALKED TOWARDS THE IGNITION STATION OF THE BLACK ROOM.

ANDREW GOT INTO THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE AND ATTACHED THE DISPROPORTIONATE SPIRIT EMISSARY ON THE CROWN OF HIS HEAD.

SO DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE A KEY ON YOU AT ALL TIMES?

OF COURSE NOT, NONE OF THE RESEARCHERS HAVE THE IGNITION KEY ON THEM.

WHAT! HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO START THE IGNITION THEN, GENIUS?

I CAN LEAVE NOW IF YOU WANT?

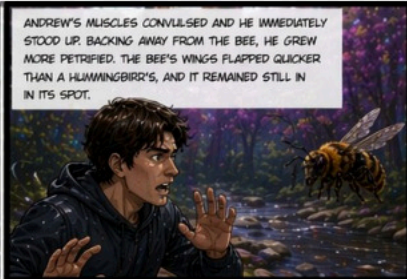
SORRY. JUST DO YOUR THING.

BRADFORD BENT DOWN ON HIS KNEES BEHIND THE IGNITION STATION.

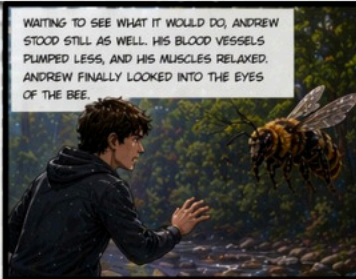
BY THE RIVER, ANDREW AWOKE NEXT TO MARCO'S LAYING BODY. ANDREW GAINED HIS VISION BACK AND SAW THE BEE BUZZING NEXT TO HIM WITH ITS GRAY STINGER.



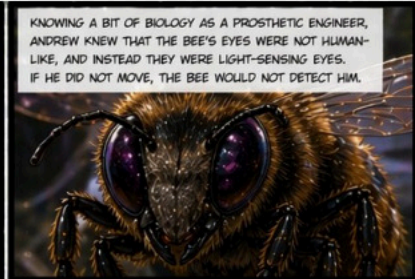
ANDREW'S MUSCLES CONVULSED AND HE IMMEDIATELY STOOD UP, BACKING AWAY FROM THE BEE. HE GREW MORE PETRIFIED. THE BEE'S WINGS FLAPPED QUICKER THAN A HUMMINGBIRRS', AND IT REMAINED STILL IN ITS SPOT.



WAITING TO SEE WHAT IT WOULD DO, ANDREW STOOD STILL AS WELL. HIS BLOOD VESSELS PUMPED LESS, AND HIS MUSCLES RELAXED. ANDREW FINALLY LOOKED INTO THE EYES OF THE BEE.



KNOWING A BIT OF BIOLOGY AS A PROSTHETIC ENGINEER, ANDREW KNEW THAT THE BEE'S EYES WERE NOT HUMAN-LIKE, AND INSTEAD THEY WERE LIGHT-SENSING EYES. IF HE DID NOT MOVE, THE BEE WOULD NOT DETECT HIM.



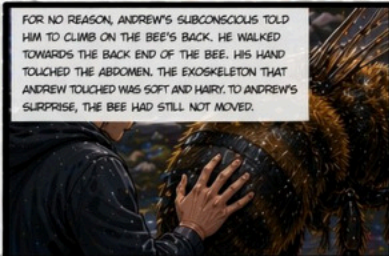
ANDREW WAVED HIS HAND GENTLY, AND THE BEE LET OFF A LITTLE FLINCH. CURIOUS ABOUT THE BEE'S REACTION, ANDREW APPROACHED THE BEE WITH ONE STEP.



THE BEE FLINCHED A LITTLE AGAIN BUT DID NOT CHARGE ANDREW. HE TOOK ANOTHER STEP, BUT THIS TIME THE BEE DID NOT MOVE A MUSCLE. HE TOOK SEVERAL MORE STEPS, AND THE BEE CONTINUED TO FLUTTER IN ITS STATIONARY SPOT.



FOR NO REASON, ANDREW'S SUBCONSCIOUS TOLD HIM TO CLIMB ON THE BEE'S BACK. HE WALKED TOWARDS THE BACK END OF THE BEE. HIS HAND TOUCHED THE ABDOMEN. THE EXOSKELETON THAT ANDREW TOUCHED WAS SOFT AND HARRY. TO ANDREW'S SURPRISE, THE BEE HAD STILL NOT MOVED.



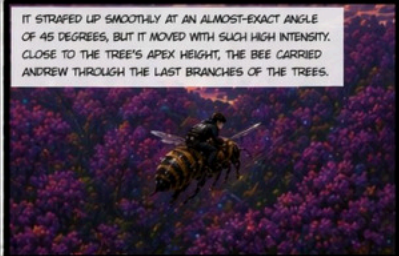
ANDREW ATTACHED HIS OTHER HAND TO THE ABDOMEN AND PULLED HIMSELF UP TO THE THORAX OF THE BEE, WONDERING HOW HE MADE IT THIS FAR ONTO THE BEE, ANDREW MOVED HIMSELF TO A MILDLY COMFORTABLE POSITION. HE PATTED THE THORAX WITH HIS RIGHT HAND TWO TIMES.



INSTANTLY, THE BEE DEPARTED AND LUNGED ITSELF FORWARD WITH VIGOROUS SPEED. ANDREW ALMOST LOST HIS GRASP AND TENACIOUSLY GRABBED THE BEE'S THORAX WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH.



IT STRAFED UP SMOOTHLY AT AN ALMOST-EXACT ANGLE OF 45 DEGREES, BUT IT MOVED WITH SUCH HIGH INTENSITY. CLOSE TO THE TREE'S APEX HEIGHT, THE BEE CARRIED ANDREW THROUGH THE LAST BRANCHES OF THE TREES.



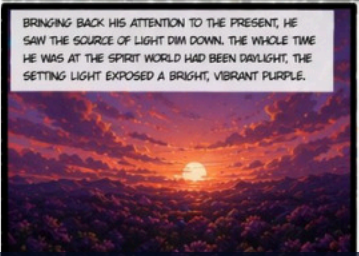
RISING ABOVE THE TREES FROM THE THICK FOREST, THE BEE CHANGED THE ANGLE FROM FLYING UPWARD TO FLYING HORIZONTALLY STRAIGHT, ALMOST PROPELLING ANDREW OFF THE BEE'S BACK.



ANDREW SITUATED HIMSELF ON THE BACK AND LET OUT A BIG SIGH OF RELIEF. THE BEE'S FLIGHT FELT EXHILARATING TO ANDREW, AND HE LAUGHED OUT ALL HIS ANXIETY.



BRINGING BACK HIS ATTENTION TO THE PRESENT, HE SAW THE SOURCE OF LIGHT DIM DOWN. THE WHOLE TIME HE WAS AT THE SPIRIT WORLD HAD BEEN DAYLIGHT, THE SETTING LIGHT EXPOSED A BRIGHT, VIBRANT PURPLE.



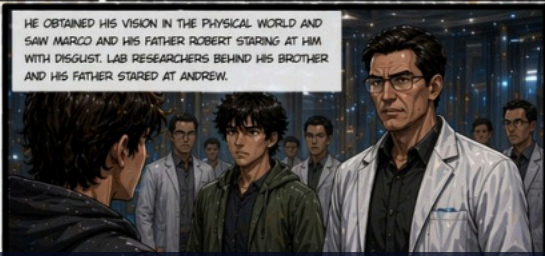
APPRAISING THE BEAUTY OF THE SKY WHILE GLIDING ON THE BEE, ANDREW LOST CONTACT WITH HIMSELF, AND HIS VISION FADED.



HE WOKE UP ON THE SPIRIT CONTRIVANCE AND FELT MENTALLY DISORIENTED. HE MUMBLED HALF-ASLEEP.



HE OBTAINED HIS VISION IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND SAW MARCO AND HIS FATHER ROBERT STARING AT HIM WITH DISGUST. LAB RESEARCHERS BEHIND HIS BROTHER AND HIS FATHER STARED AT ANDREW.





WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, ANDREW!

WAKE UP, DREWSTER!

HEY, WHAT GIVES GLYS! WHY WOULD YOU SEND ME OUT OF THE SPIRIT WORLD?

WELL, SORRY ABOUT HURTING YOUR FEELINGS. WHY WOULD YOU GO THERE WITHOUT ME?

AND WHY WOULD YOU GO TO THE SPIRIT WORLD WITHOUT MY PERMISSION?

YOU GLYS NEVER CAME BACK, AND I WAS TRYING TO FULFILL THE TASK THAT YOU GAVE US. WHERE WERE YOU GLYS? I DIDN'T SEE MARCO AT THE CAFETERIA.

I DID EAT AT THE CAFETERIA, BUT I WENT WITHOUT YOU. I DIDN'T SEE YOU AT THE CAFETERIA.

I DID.

I WAS IN MY HEADQUARTERS PLANNING FOR THE DIMENSIONAL MANAGEMENT OF MY LAB WORKERS. ANDREW, YOU MUST ACQUIRE MORE RESPONSIBILITY IF YOU WANT TO CONTINUE TO TEST OUT MY MACHINE.

OKAY, I WON'T.

I THINK IT IS TIME THAT YOU, ANDREW, TAKE A BREAK FROM SPIRIT INTERCOM. IT WOULD BE BEST FOR YOU TO COME BACK WHEN WE HAVE ANALYZED ALL THE DATA WE COLLECTED OVER THE PAST DAY.

BUT WHY, DAD?

WHAT HE IS TRYING TO SAY IS THAT YOU'VE BEEN A NUISANCE AND THAT YOU SHOULD COME BACK WHEN YOU GET YOURSELF BACK TOGETHER.

SHUT UP, MARCO.

THAT IS NOT WHAT I MEANT, ANDREW. I JUST THINK THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE IN ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED, AND RETHINK YOUR APPROACH WHEN YOU COME BACK.

FINE.

RUFUS WILL ESCORT YOU AND RETURN YOUR SPORKSTERBEALE. I KNOW, SON, THAT THIS IS DIFFICULT, BUT TRUST ME BECAUSE THIS WILL ALL BE FOR THE BEST.

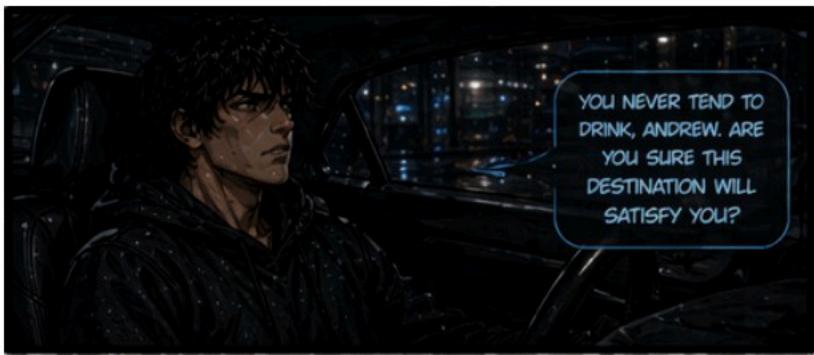
ANDREW, IT'S TIME FOR US TO HEAD OUT NOW.

SPIRIT INTERCOM RESEARCH COMPLEX

HERE ARE YOUR KEYS.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, ANDREW.

SET DESTINATION TO BENJY'S BAR.



YOU NEVER TEND TO DRINK, ANDREW. ARE YOU SURE THIS DESTINATION WILL SATISFY YOU?



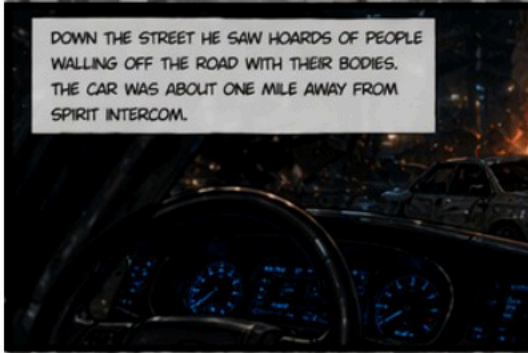
JUST KEEP DRIVING.



SPIRIT INTERCOM RESEARCH COMPLEX



THE GATES OF THE LABS OPENED UP, AND ANDREW LEFT HIS FATHER'S LABS.



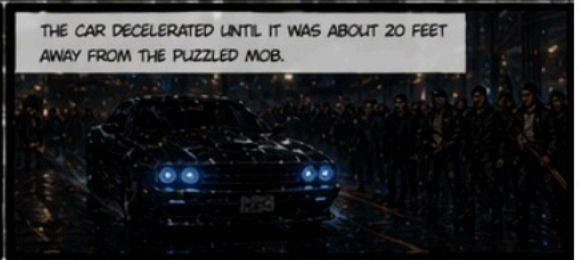
DOWN THE STREET HE SAW HOARDS OF PEOPLE WALLING OFF THE ROAD WITH THEIR BODIES. THE CAR WAS ABOUT ONE MILE AWAY FROM SPIRIT INTERCOM.



ANDREW RUTANO, PLEASE STEP OUT OF YOUR CAR NOW, OR WE WILL BURN YOU TO THE GRAVES!



WHAT THE HELL DID I JUST GET MYSELF INTO.



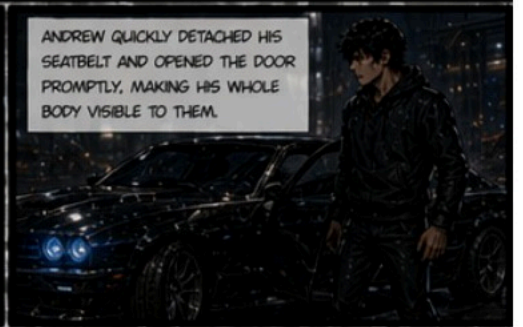
THE CAR DECELERATED UNTIL IT WAS ABOUT 20 FEET AWAY FROM THE PUZZLED MOB.



ANDREW ESTIMATED ABOUT 30 PEOPLE WERE BLOCKING HIS PASSAGE. FIVE RUN-DOWN CARS WERE ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, AND THE CARS CONVEYED SPRAY-PAINTED MESSAGES OF HATE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.



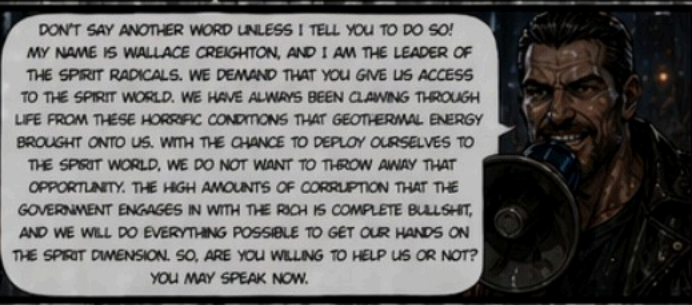
GET OUT OF YOUR CAR, NOW!



ANDREW QUICKLY DETACHED HIS SEATBELT AND OPENED THE DOOR PROMPTLY, MAKING HIS WHOLE BODY VISIBLE TO THEM.



WHAT IS IT THAT I CAN DO FOR YOU GUYS?



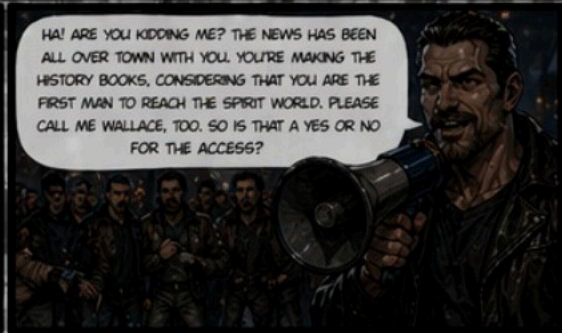
DON'T SAY ANOTHER WORD UNLESS I TELL YOU TO DO SO! MY NAME IS WALLACE CREIGHTON, AND I AM THE LEADER OF THE SPIRIT RADICALS. WE DEMAND THAT YOU GIVE US ACCESS TO THE SPIRIT WORLD. WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CLAIMING THROUGH LIFE FROM THESE HORRIFIC CONDITIONS THAT GEOTHERMAL ENERGY BROUGHT ONTO US. WITH THE CHANCE TO DEPLOY OURSELVES TO THE SPIRIT WORLD, WE DO NOT WANT TO THROW AWAY THAT OPPORTUNITY. THE HIGH AMOUNTS OF CORRUPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT ENGAGES IN WITH THE RICH IS COMPLETE BULLSHIT, AND WE WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO GET OUR HANDS ON THE SPIRIT DIMENSION. SO, ARE YOU WILLING TO HELP US OR NOT? YOU MAY SPEAK NOW.



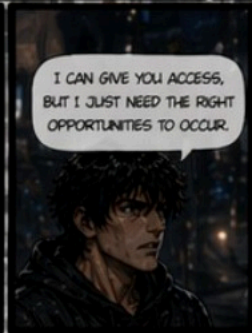
YEAHHH!



FIRST OF ALL, MR. CREIGHTON, HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE I WAS? AND SECOND, HOW DO YOU POSSIBLY KNOW WHO I AM?



HA! ARE YOU KIDDING ME? THE NEWS HAS BEEN ALL OVER TOWN WITH YOU. YOU'RE MAKING THE HISTORY BOOKS, CONSIDERING THAT YOU ARE THE FIRST MAN TO REACH THE SPIRIT WORLD. PLEASE CALL ME WALLACE, TOO. SO IS THAT A YES OR NO FOR THE ACCESS?



I CAN GIVE YOU ACCESS, BUT I JUST NEED THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITIES TO OCCUR.

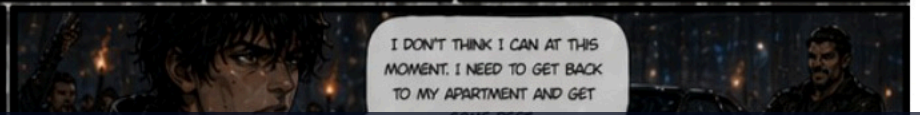


GREAT!

I TOLD YOU WE COULD TRUST THIS GUY!



COME WITH US.



I DON'T THINK I CAN AT THIS MOMENT. I NEED TO GET BACK TO MY APARTMENT AND GET

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF WALLACE, ANDREW HAD BEEN IN THE CAR, TRYING TO SPEAK AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE. ALL ANDREW COULD SEE WAS PITCH BLACK.

THEY HAD BEEN DRIVING FOR TWENTY MINUTES WITHOUT SAYING A WORD UNTIL WALLACE ASKED A QUESTION.

YES, SIR.

AND...

AND I HAVE A 10-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER AND A 12-YEAR-OLD SON.

MARRIED?

NO. DIVORCED.

AW... THAT'S TOUGH.

NO, IT WAS FOR THE BETTER.

THE CAR REMAINED SILENT FOR ANOTHER MINUTE OF DRIVING.

IF THE WORLD WAS GOING TO END, WOULD YOU WANT YOUR FAMILY SAFE AND SECURE?

YES, OF COURSE.

IF YOU WERE I, DO YOU THINK I WOULD WANT MY FAMILY TO BE SECURE?

HAVING TROUBLE BREATHING WITH THE MASK, ANDREW COUGHED DEEPLY AND SAID, YES.

THIS IS WHY WE GO THROUGH ALL THE TROUBLE: FOR THE SAKE OF OUR FAMILIES. WE ALL WANT WHAT IS BEST FOR OUR FAMILIES, AND WE MAKE SACRIFICES TO FULFILL THIS NEED. UNDERSTAND?

YES.

THAT IS WHY I AM GOING TO NEED YOU TO COOPERATE WITH US AS BEST AS POSSIBLE.

YES.

ANDREW'S MIND JUMPSTARTED, AND HE REALIZED THAT HE COULD ASK FOR HELP BY USING MINDCORD. HE IMMEDIATELY ACCESSED THE INTERFACE.

HE OPENED UP THE TAB FOR "MESSAGES" AND CHOSE "KEVIN."

ANDREW, WANTING TO WRITE A DRAMATIZED MESSAGE FOR HELP, REALIZED HE COULDN'T BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SERVICE AVAILABLE.

ANDREW ENDURED HIGH FRUSTRATION AND THOUGHT, DAMN, THIS SUCKS.

BEFORE CLOSING THE INTEFACE, HE SAW THE TIME WAS 5:46 A.M.

WALLACE CONTINUED DRIVING FOR ONE HOUR, AND ANDREW FELL ASLEEP ON THE WAY DUE TO NOT GETTING SLEEP FOR 21 HOURS STRAIGHT.

THE SPORKSTERBEALE FINALLY CAME TO A STOP.

WALLACE REMOVED THE MASK OFF ANDREW AND SLAPPED HIM IN THE FACE.

HEY! WAKE UP! WE GOT BUSINESS TO DO, MR. RUTANO!

PETRIFIED BY THE SLAP, ANDREW AWOKE WITH PHEGMA PARTLY STUCK ONTO HIS NOSE AND MOUTH AREA.

INSTEAD OF BEING ENCLOSED IN THE DARKNESS, ANDREW WAS NOW ABLE TO SEE. HAVING A STRUCTURE OF A CIRCUS TENT, THE HIDEOUT WAS ENCIRCLED WITH TRASH AND BUILDING DEBRIS.

THEY WERE IN A PLAIN DESERT WITH NO OTHER BUILDINGS OR PEOPLE IN SIGHT. THE HIDEOUT WAS A TORN-DOWN BUILDING WITH A FADED RED AND WHITE COLOR ON THE ROOF. RATS NIBBLED ON THE ALMOST-DECOMPOSED SCRAPS AROUND THE OUTSIDE OF THE TRASHED BUILDING.

THE ONLY SENSE OF COMMUNICATION THEY HAD WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD WAS A BENT TV ANTENNA STICKING OUT THE ROOF OF THE BUILDING.

THE SPIRIT RADICALS EXITED THE FIVE RUN-DOWN CARS AND TALKED AMONGST THEMSELVES.



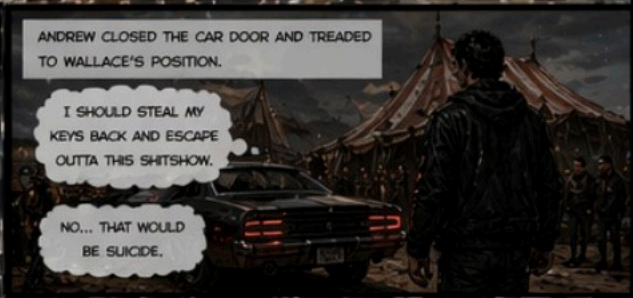
GET YOUR ASS OVER HERE, ANDREW!

ON MY WAY.

ANDREW CLOSED THE CAR DOOR AND TREADED TO WALLACE'S POSITION.

I SHOULD STEAL MY KEYS BACK AND ESCAPE OUTTA THIS SHITSHOW.

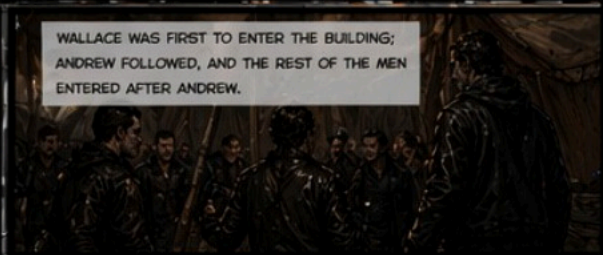
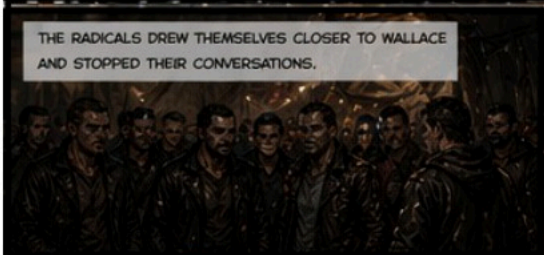
NO... THAT WOULD BE SUICIDE.



THE RADICALS DREW THEMSELVES CLOSER TO WALLACE AND STOPPED THEIR CONVERSATIONS.

MY BROTHERS, I PROPOSE THAT WE BEGIN PLANNING IN OUR REFUGE.

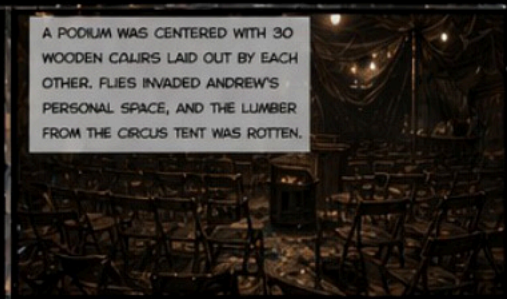
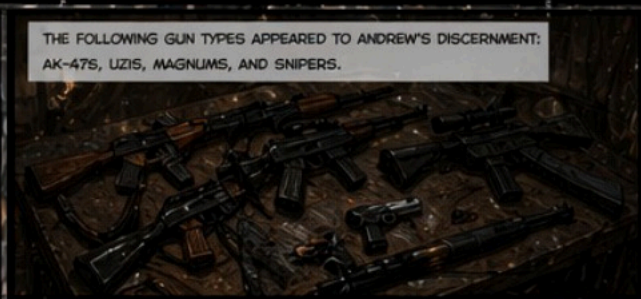
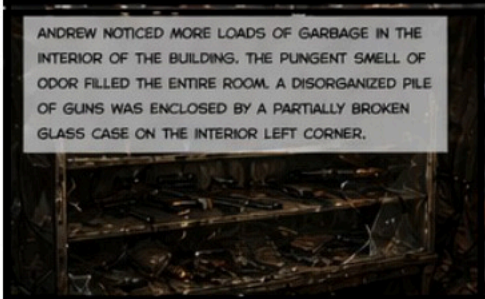
WALLACE WAS FIRST TO ENTER THE BUILDING; ANDREW FOLLOWED, AND THE REST OF THE MEN ENTERED AFTER ANDREW.



ANDREW NOTICED MORE LOADS OF GARBAGE IN THE INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING. THE PUNGENT SMELL OF ODOR FILLED THE ENTIRE ROOM. A DISORGANIZED PILE OF GUNS WAS ENCLOSED BY A PARTIALLY BROKEN GLASS CASE ON THE INTERIOR LEFT CORNER.

THE FOLLOWING GUN TYPES APPEARED TO ANDREW'S DISCERNMENT: AK-47S, UZIS, MAGNUMS, AND SNIPERS.

A PODIUM WAS CENTERED WITH 30 WOODEN CHAIRS LAID OUT BY EACH OTHER. FLIES INVADED ANDREW'S PERSONAL SPACE, AND THE LUMBER FROM THE CIRCUS TENT WAS ROTTEN.



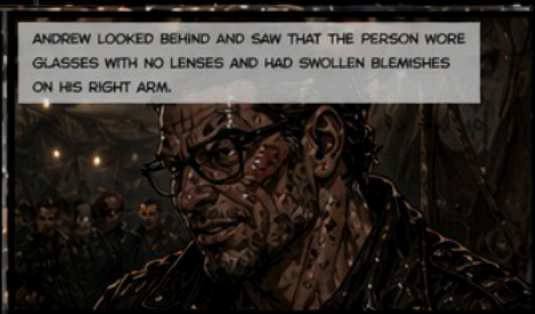
FINE MEN, PLEASE TAKE YOUR SEATS.

A MAN GAVE ANDREW'S BACK A TOUGH SHOVE AS HE MOVED.

HEY! WHO DID THAT?

IT WAS ME! YOU BETTER SUPPLY US WITH ACCESS, MAN, OR ELSE WE AIN'T GIVING YOU ANY MERCY.

ANDREW LOOKED BEHIND AND SAW THAT THE PERSON WORE GLASSES WITH NO LENSES AND HAD SWOLLEN BLEMISHES ON HIS RIGHT ARM.

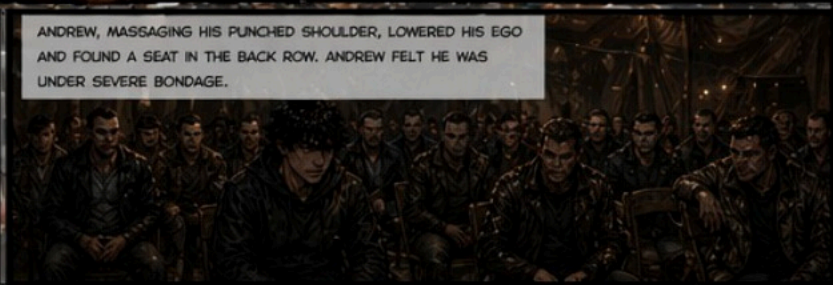


AND WHO ARE YOU EXACTLY?

JIMMY CREIGHTON, SON OF WALLACE.

TAKE A DAMN SEAT ALREADY.

ANDREW, MASSAGING HIS PUNCHED SHOULDER, LOWERED HIS EGO AND FOUND A SEAT IN THE BACK ROW. ANDREW FELT HE WAS UNDER SEVERE BONDAGE.

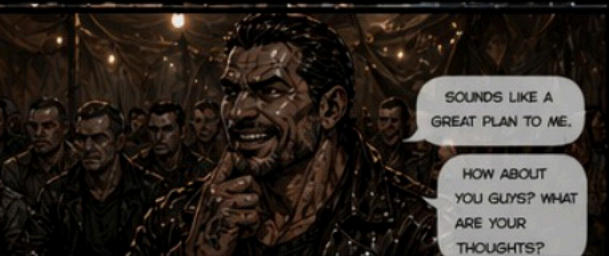
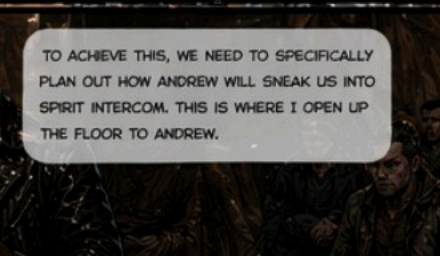
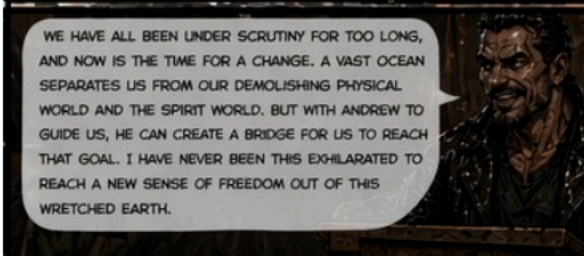


WE HAVE ALL BEEN UNDER SCRUTINY FOR TOO LONG, AND NOW IS THE TIME FOR A CHANGE. A VAST OCEAN SEPARATES US FROM OUR DEMOLISHING PHYSICAL WORLD AND THE SPIRIT WORLD. BUT WITH ANDREW TO GUIDE US, HE CAN CREATE A BRIDGE FOR US TO REACH THAT GOAL. I HAVE NEVER BEEN THIS EXHILARATED TO REACH A NEW SENSE OF FREEDOM OUT OF THIS WRETCHED EARTH.

TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE NEED TO SPECIFICALLY PLAN OUT HOW ANDREW WILL SNEAK US INTO SPIRIT INTERCOM. THIS IS WHERE I OPEN UP THE FLOOR TO ANDREW.

SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT PLAN TO ME.

HOW ABOUT YOU GUYS? WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

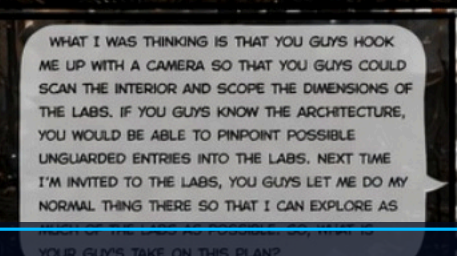
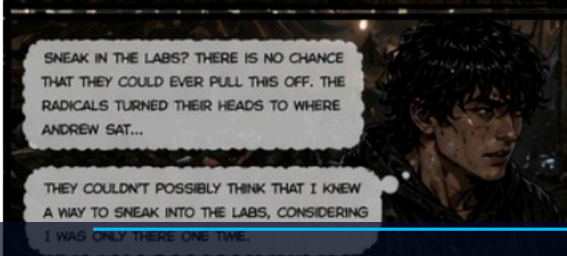


SNEAK IN THE LABS? THERE IS NO CHANCE THAT THEY COULD EVER PULL THIS OFF. THE RADICALS TURNED THEIR HEADS TO WHERE ANDREW SAT...

WHAT I WAS THINKING IS THAT YOU GUYS HOOK ME UP WITH A CAMERA SO THAT YOU GUYS COULD SCAN THE INTERIOR AND SCOPE THE DIMENSIONS OF THE LABS. IF YOU GUYS KNOW THE ARCHITECTURE, YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO PINPOINT POSSIBLE UNGUARDED ENTRIES INTO THE LABS. NEXT TIME I'M INVITED TO THE LABS, YOU GUYS LET ME DO MY NORMAL THING THERE SO THAT I CAN EXPLORE AS

THEY COULDN'T POSSIBLY THINK THAT I KNEW A WAY TO SNEAK INTO THE LABS, CONSIDERING I WAS ONLY THERE ONE TIME.

YOUR GUYS TAKE ON THIS PLAN?



YEAH! YEAH! YEAH!

ANDREW WAS GLAD THEY CONFIRMED THIS ON-THE-SPOT PLAN.

THE MEN DISAPPEARED OUT OF THEIR CHAIRS AND TRAVELLED OUTSIDE THE BUILDING.

WALLACE GOT OFF THE PODIUM AND WALKED OVER TO ANDREW.

DON'T THINK THAT YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK JUST YET. YOU AND I STILL GOTTA GO OVER SOME OF THE DETAILS.

ANDREW MUTTERED QUIET CURSES, WANTING TO LEAVE THIS HELLHOLE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. ALL HE WANTED WAS THE SWEET COMFORT OF SLEEPING IN HIS WARM BED.

I THINK IT WOULD BE BETTER IF WE GO OVER THE TERMS THE NEXT DAY. I NEED TO GET BACK TO MY APARTMENT AND GET SOME REST. YOU'D UNDERSTAND, RIGHT?

YOU THINK WE CARE ABOUT YOUR "REST." YOU AIN'T GOING NOWHERE UNTIL WE FIGURE THIS SHIT OUT. NO VISITING FAMILY, TAKING BATHROOM BREAKS, SLEEPING, EATING, DRINKING, OR EVEN SITTING FOR YOU UNTIL WE FINISH THIS!

UNDERSTAND!

VERY WELL, THEN.

ANDREW WANTED TO PUNCH WALLACE IN THE NOSE, BUT HE HAD TO REMAIN BEED BB 89. THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY.

PLEASE FOLLOW ME TO MY OFFICE.

LEAD RADICAL

TOWARDS THE LEFT CORNER OF THE BUILDING WAS A SMALL ROOM WITH A DOOR THAT READ "LEAD RADICAL." WALLACE OPENED THE DOOR, AND ANDREW FOLLOWED HIM AFTER.

THE ROOM ONLY HAD ONE LIGHT SOURCE: A FLICKERING SMALL LIGHT BULB HANGING FROM THE CEILING. A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE FRONT VIEW SPIRIT INTERCOM BUILDING WAS DISPLAYED ON TOP OF A WALL BEHIND HIS DESK. WALLACE SAT ON HIS IMMENSELY-TORN LEATHER CHAIR AS ANDREW SAT ON AN UNCOMFORTABLE METALLIC CHAIR.

SO WHAT IN GOD'S NAME DO YOU WANT TO PLAN?

JUST SHUT UP AND BE QUIET.

WHAT THE HECK, MAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

THERE. I INSERTED A TINY MICROSCOPIC CAMERA ON YOUR FOREHEAD.

WITH A PEN? ARE YOU INSANE OR SOMETHING?

NO. YOU'RE THE INSANE ONE. THIS DEVICE IS NOT A PEN. THE DEVICE I CALLED A CAMERA FURNISHER, AND IT CARRIES TEN MICROSCOPIC CAMERAS IN ITSELF AND CAN BE PLACED WITH EXERTED FORCE.

NOW THAT WE HAVE THE CAMERA IN ME, I FEEL IT'S TIME TO CALL IT A DAY. HOW ABOUT YOU?

WILL THIS THING BE ABLE TO COME OFF? I CAN'T EVEN FEEL THE CAMERA WITH MY FINGER, BUT I STILL FEEL LIKE IT'S A SPLINTER POKING DEEP INTO MY BODY.

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT TAKING THAT OFF. IT'S CONNECTED TIGHTLY TO YOUR SKIN, AND IT'S MEANT TO BE SMALL TO THAT THE LAB RESEARCHERS WON'T BE ABLE TO SPOT IT.

NOW THAT WE HAVE THE CAMERA IN ME, I FEEL IT'S TIME TO CALL IT A DAY. HOW ABOUT YOU?

SHUT UP. NOW THAT THE HARD PART OF THE PLANNING IS DONE, IT'S TIME WE GO OVER HOW YOU ARE GOING TO PHYSICALLY PERFORM THIS PLAN.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? ALL I GOTTA DO IS JUST WORK THERE NORMALLY AND EXPLORE MORE OF THE BUILDING. THERE'S NOTHING MORE THAT NEEDS TO BE SAID.

IT'S NOT ALL THAT SIMPLE. WHAT YOU NEED ARE THEIR TRUST AND RESPECT.

THINKING ABOUT THE POINT WHY AND THEY MAKE FULL BRAD A BREAK FROM THEIR LABS?



JUST BECAUSE I USED THE CONTRIVANCE WITHOUT SUPERVISION... BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT I HAVE THEIR TRUST. I'M STILL THE SON OF THE CREATOR, THE ROBERT RUTANO.

THAT DOESN'T PERMIT YOU TO BE ON AUTOPILOT AND DO WHATEVER YOU DESIRE. YOU GOTTA BE DISCIPLINED. YOU HAVE TO ACT PASSIONATE AND PRETEND THAT YOU DEEPLY CARE FOR THE LABS. THEN YOU WILL EARN THEIR TRUST.



WHY DO I NEED THEIR TRUST IN THE FIRST PLACE?

SO THAT YOU CAN OBTAIN SECURITY PASSES AND RIGHTS FOR INACCESSIBLE ROOMS. WE WANT AS MANY RESOURCES POSSIBLE THAT WE CAN USE TO OUR ADVANTAGE.



I DOUBT THAT THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO GIVE ME ANY SECURITY ACCESS. AFTER ALL, IT'S NOT LIKE A SECURITY GUARD OR A LAB RESEARCHER.

THIS IS A LIST OF EVERY SECURITY GUARD AND LAB RESEARCHER WHO WORKS AT SPIRIT INTERCOM. NEXT TO EACH NAME IS THEIR SECURITY ID NUMBER.

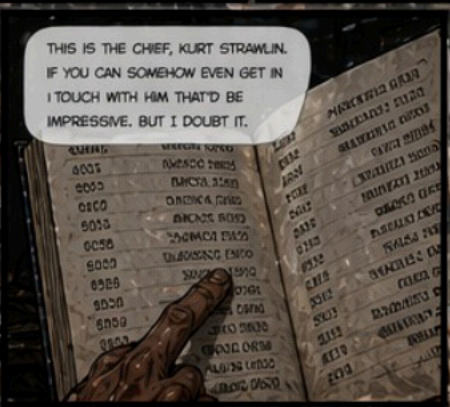


I GOT A GUY WHO HAS BEEN ON THE STAFF FOR A LONG TIME. HIS NAME IS RICK, AND HE IS A SECURITY GUARD THERE. YOU MAY HAVE MET HIM.

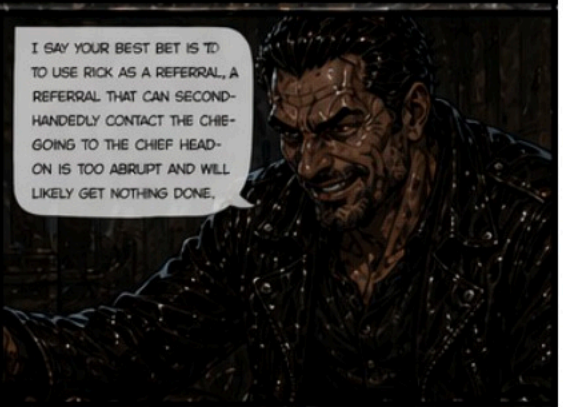


NOPE. AND IF YOU HAVE A GUY WORKING ON THE INSIDE, WHY DOESN'T HE JUST GIVE ME THE LOCK COMBINATIONS?

BECAUSE HE'S NOT THE HEAD SECURITY CHIEF.



THIS IS THE CHIEF, KURT STRAWLIN. IF YOU CAN SOMEHOW EVEN GET IN I TOUCH WITH HIM THAT'D BE IMPRESSIVE. BUT I DOUBT IT.



I SAY YOUR BEST BET IS TO USE RICK AS A REFERRAL, A REFERRAL THAT CAN SECOND-HANDEDLY CONTACT THE CHIEF-GOING TO THE CHIEF HEAD-ON IS TOO ABRUPT AND WILL LIKELY GET NOTHING DONE.



WITH THIS LIST YOU WILL BE ABLE TO LEARN THE NAMES OF EVERY GUARD SINCE EACH OF THEM HAS A -- SECURITY ID BADGE ON THEM AT ALL TIMES. TAKE THIS BOOK WITH YOU WHEN YOU'RE THERE.



SAVING HELLO TO EACH OF THE GUARDS WILL ESTABLISH A CLOSER BOND WITH YOU AND SPIRIT INTERCOM. MY MATE, RICK, MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU OUT WITH ANY SECURITY QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS THAT YOU HAVE.



YOU UNDERSTANDING MORE OF THE PLAN?

YEAH. I AM.



WOULD YOU SAY THAT WE'RE ABOUT DONE NOW?

THERE'S ONLY ONE MORE THING WE NEED TO GO OVER.



WHEN YOU'RE AT THE LABS, MAKE SURE TO DELIVER THIS PACKAGE TO RICK.

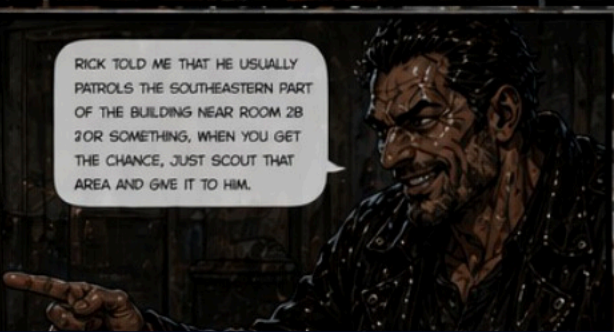


WHAT IS IT?

JUST GIVE IT TO HIM. HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT. JUST SAY IT'S FROM WALLACE.



I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT RICK LOOKS LIKE.



RICK TOLD ME THAT HE USUALLY PATROLS THE SOUTHEASTERN PART OF THE BUILDING NEAR ROOM 2B 20R SOMETHING, WHEN YOU GET THE CHANCE, JUST SCOUT THAT AREA AND GIVE IT TO HIM.



WHAT'S IN THE BOX?



SHUT UP FOR THE HUNDRETH TIME. GIVE IT TO HIM. IT'S AN ORDER. FOLLOW IT.

NOW GET OUTTA MY SIGHT! CLOSE THE DOOR ON YOUR WAY OUT.



BY ALL MEANS.



?!

YOU BETTER DO WHAT MY FATHER ORDERED YOU TO DO, OR ELSE THIS KNIFE IS EATING YOUR PHARYNX.



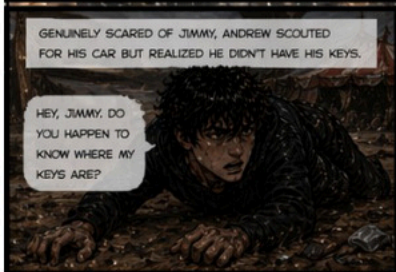
DON'T WORRY, MAN. I'M DEDICATED AND WON'T LET YOU DOWN AND--



CUT YOUR BULLSHIT. GET THE HELL OUTTA HERE!



HE RELEASED THE KNIFE AWAY FROM ANDREW AND PUSHED HIM OUT OF THE BUILDING UNTIL ANDREW FELL ON THE OUTSIDE DESERT FLOOR.



GENUINELY SCARED OF JIMMY, ANDREW SCOUTED FOR HIS CAR BUT REALIZED HE DIDN'T HAVE HIS KEYS.

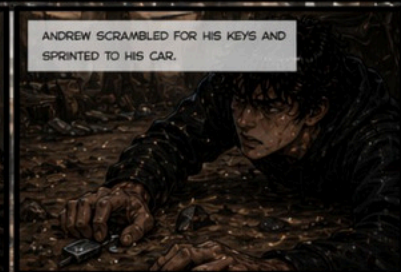
HEY, JIMMY. DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE MY KEYS ARE?



HERE'S YOUR KEYS. BETTER FOLLOW THROUGH WITH YOUR SHIT OR ELSE--



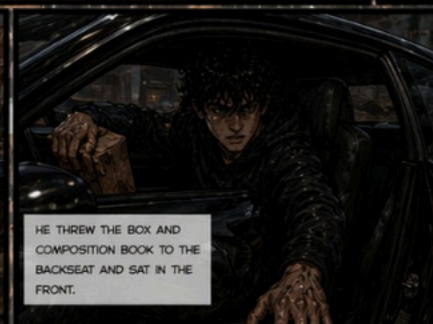
HE PULLED OUT HIS KNIFE AND PRETENDED TO SLICE HIS NECK.



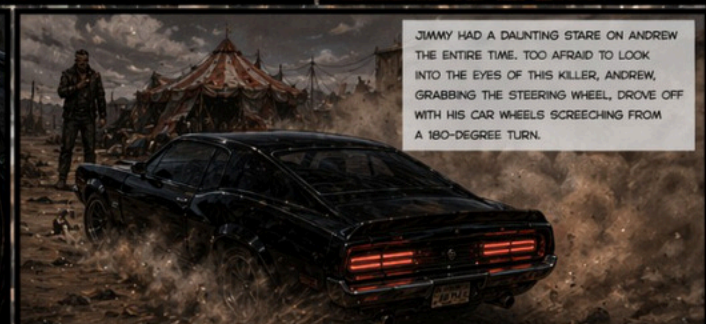
ANDREW SCRAMBLED FOR HIS KEYS AND SPURTED TO HIS CAR.



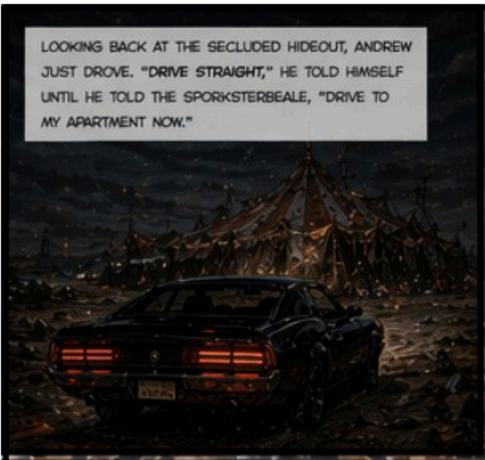
SMASHING THE TOUCH RECOGNITION WITH HIS FINGER, HE PROMPTED THE CAR DOOR OPEN.



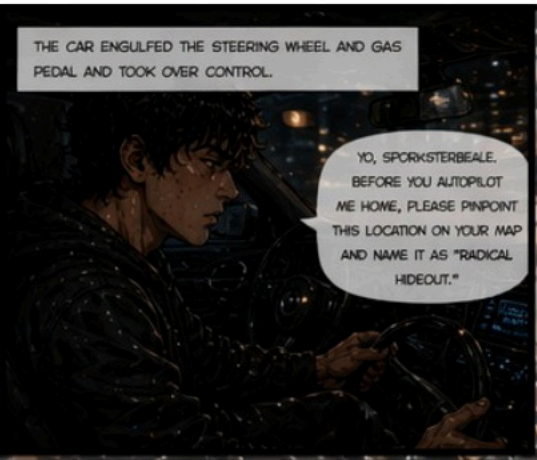
HE THREW THE BOX AND COMPOSITION BOOK TO THE BACKSEAT AND SAT IN THE FRONT.



JIMMY HAD A DAUNTING STARE ON ANDREW THE ENTIRE TIME. TOO AFRAID TO LOOK INTO THE EYES OF THIS KILLER, ANDREW, GRABBING THE STEERING WHEEL, DROVE OFF WITH HIS CAR WHEELS SCREECHING FROM A 180-DEGREE TURN.

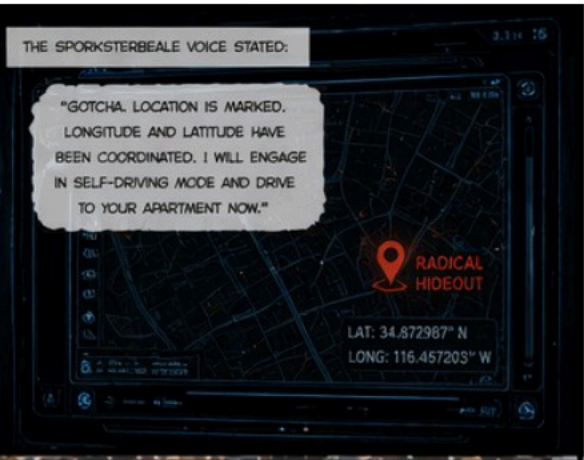


LOOKING BACK AT THE SECLUDED HIDEOUT, ANDREW JUST DROVE. "DRIVE STRAIGHT," HE TOLD HIMSELF UNTIL HE TOLD THE SPORKSTERBEALE, "DRIVE TO MY APARTMENT NOW."



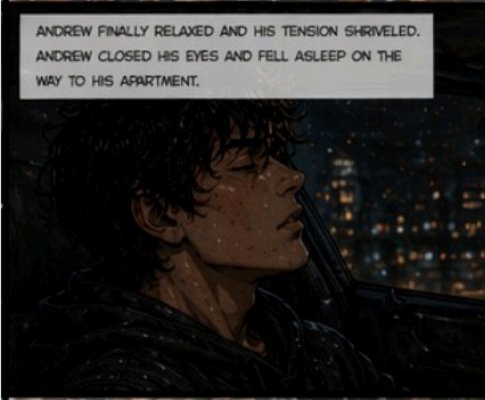
THE CAR ENGULFED THE STEERING WHEEL AND GAS PEDAL AND TOOK OVER CONTROL.

YO, SPORKSTERBEALE. BEFORE YOU AUTOPILOT ME HOME, PLEASE PINPOINT THIS LOCATION ON YOUR MAP AND NAME IT AS "RADICAL HIDEOUT."



THE SPORKSTERBEALE VOICE STATED:

"GOTCHA. LOCATION IS MARKED. LONGITUDE AND LATITUDE HAVE BEEN COORDINATED. I WILL ENGAGE IN SELF-DRIVING MODE AND DRIVE TO YOUR APARTMENT NOW."



ANDREW FINALLY RELAXED AND HIS TENSION SHRIELED. ANDREW CLOSED HIS EYES AND FELL ASLEEP ON THE WAY TO HIS APARTMENT.

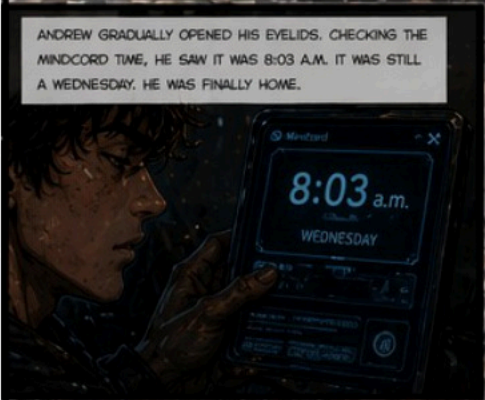


AFTER DRIVING FOR ABOUT THREE HOURS, THE CAR STOPPED ON THE STREET OF ANDREW'S APARTMENT.

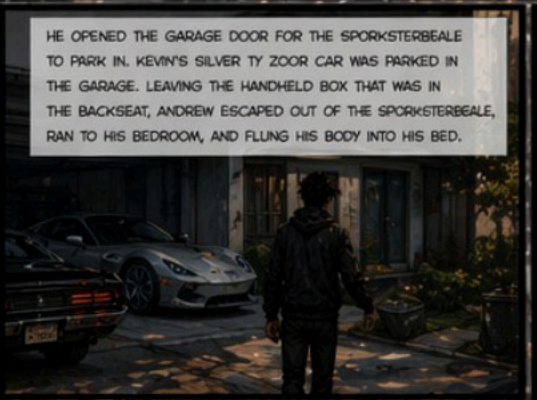


THE SPORKSTERBEALE HONKED ITSELF AND SAID:

ANDREW! ANDREW? YOU HAVE ARRIVED AT YOUR DESTINATION. WAKEY WAKEY!



ANDREW GRADUALLY OPENED HIS EYELIDS. CHECKING THE MINDCORD TIME, HE SAW IT WAS 8:03 A.M. IT WAS STILL A WEDNESDAY. HE WAS FINALLY HOME.



HE OPENED THE GARAGE DOOR FOR THE SPORKSTERBEALE TO PARK IN. KEVIN'S SILVER TY ZOOOR CAR WAS PARKED IN THE GARAGE. LEAVING THE HANDHELD BOX THAT WAS IN THE BACKSEAT, ANDREW ESCAPED OUT OF THE SPORKSTERBEALE, RAN TO HIS BEDROOM, AND FLUNG HIS BODY INTO HIS BED.



BEFORE CLOSING HIS EYES, HE SAW KEVIN ENTER HIS ROOM WITH A TROUBLED LOOK ON HIS FACE.

BRO, WHERE THE HELL WERE YOU? ARE YOU OKAY?



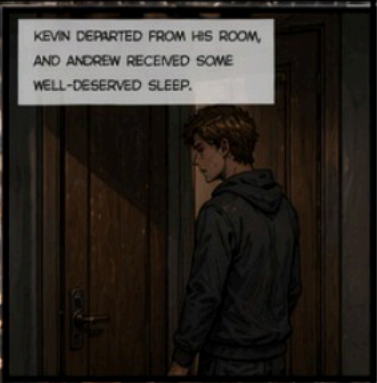
I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED TO YOU LATER. I'M DEAD. PLEASE LET ME SLEEP.



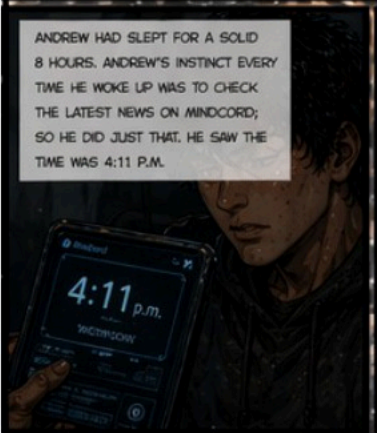
ALRIGHT, AS SOON AS YOU WAKE UP RESTED, LET ME KNOW.



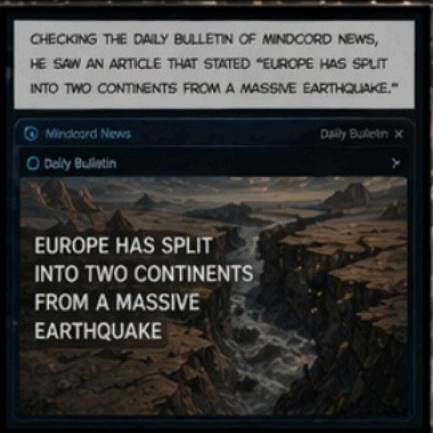
KEVIN, CLOSE THE DOOR ON YOUR WAY OUT.



KEVIN DEPARTED FROM HIS ROOM, AND ANDREW RECEIVED SOME WELL-DESERVED SLEEP.

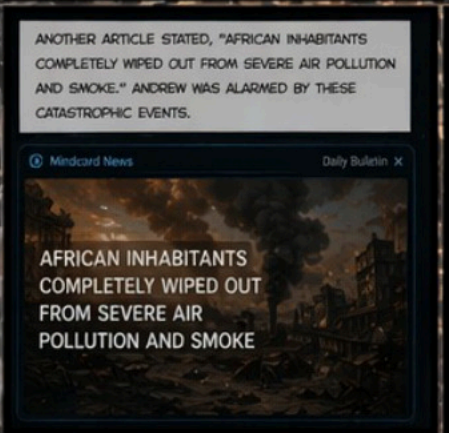


ANDREW HAD SLEPT FOR A SOLID 8 HOURS. ANDREW'S INSTINCT EVERY TIME HE WOKE UP WAS TO CHECK THE LATEST NEWS ON MINDCORD; SO HE DID JUST THAT. HE SAW THE TIME WAS 4:11 P.M.



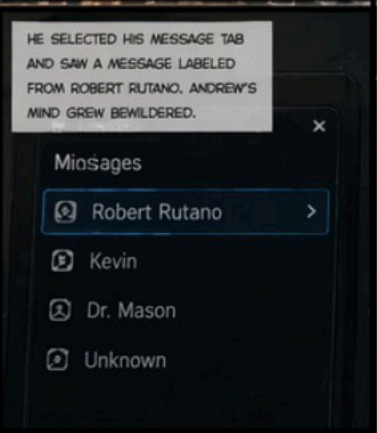
CHECKING THE DAILY BULLETIN OF MINDCORD NEWS, HE SAW AN ARTICLE THAT STATED "EUROPE HAS SPLIT INTO TWO CONTINENTS FROM A MASSIVE EARTHQUAKE."

EUROPE HAS SPLIT INTO TWO CONTINENTS FROM A MASSIVE EARTHQUAKE



ANOTHER ARTICLE STATED, "AFRICAN INHABITANTS COMPLETELY WIPED OUT FROM SEVERE AIR POLLUTION AND SMOKE." ANDREW WAS ALARMED BY THESE CATASTROPHIC EVENTS.

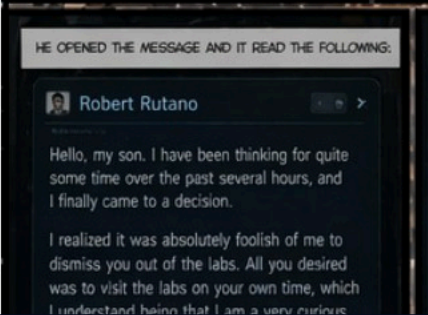
AFRICAN INHABITANTS COMPLETELY WIPED OUT FROM SEVERE AIR POLLUTION AND SMOKE



HE SELECTED HIS MESSAGE TAB AND SAW A MESSAGE LABELED FROM ROBERT RUTANO. ANDREW'S MIND GREW BEWILDERED.

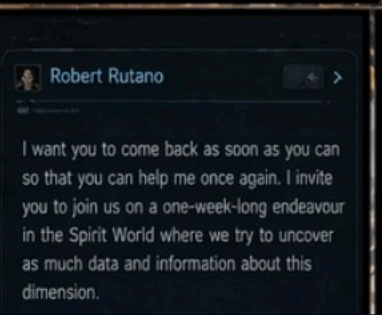
Messages

- Robert Rutano
- Kevin
- Dr. Mason
- Unknown

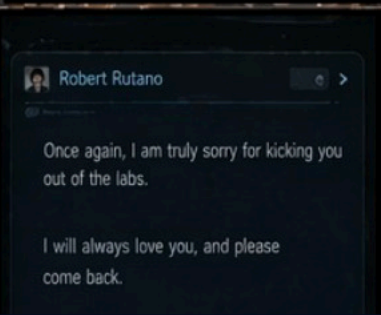


HE OPENED THE MESSAGE AND IT READ THE FOLLOWING:

Robert Rutano  
Hello, my son. I have been thinking for quite some time over the past several hours, and I finally came to a decision. I realized it was absolutely foolish of me to dismiss you out of the labs. All you desired was to visit the labs on your own time, which I understand being that I am a very curious person myself.



Robert Rutano  
I want you to come back as soon as you can so that you can help me once again. I invite you to join us on a one-week-long endeavour in the Spirit World where we try to uncover as much data and information about this dimension.



Robert Rutano  
Once again, I am truly sorry for kicking you out of the labs. I will always love you, and please come back.



LOOKING BACK AT THE SECLUDED HIDEOUT, ANDREW JUST DROVE. "DRIVE STRAIGHT," HE TOLD HIMSELF UNTIL HE TOLD THE SPORKSTERBEALE, "DRIVE TO MY APARTMENT NOW."

THE CAR ENGULFED THE STEERING WHEEL AND GAS PEDAL AND TOOK OVER CONTROL.

THE SPORKSTERBEALE VOICE STATED:

"GOTCHA. LOCATION IS MARKED. LONGITUDE AND LATITUDE HAVE BEEN COORDINATED. I WILL ENGAGE IN SELF-DRIVING MODE AND DRIVE TO YOUR APARTMENT NOW."

**RADICAL HIDEOUT**  
LAT: 34.872987° N  
LONG: 116.457203° W

ANDREW FINALLY RELAXED AND HIS TENSION SHRIELED. ANDREW CLOSED HIS EYES AND FELL ASLEEP ON THE WAY TO HIS APARTMENT.

AFTER DRIVING FOR ABOUT THREE HOURS, THE CAR STOPPED ON THE STREET OF ANDREW'S APARTMENT.

THE SPORKSTERBEALE HONKED ITSELF AND SAID:

ANDREW! ANDREW? YOU HAVE ARRIVED AT YOUR DESTINATION. WAKEY WAKEY!

ANDREW GRADUALLY OPENED HIS EYELIDS. CHECKING THE MINDCORD TIME, HE SAW IT WAS 8:03 A.M. IT WAS STILL A WEDNESDAY. HE WAS FINALLY HOME.

HE OPENED THE GARAGE DOOR FOR THE SPORKSTERBEALE TO PARK IN. KEVIN'S SILVER TY ZOOOR CAR WAS PARKED IN THE GARAGE. LEAVING THE HANDHELD BOX THAT WAS IN THE BACKSEAT, ANDREW ESCAPED OUT OF THE SPORKSTERBEALE, RAN TO HIS BEDROOM, AND FLUNG HIS BODY INTO HIS BED.

BEFORE CLOSING HIS EYES, HE SAW KEVIN ENTER HIS ROOM WITH A TROUBLED LOOK ON HIS FACE.

BRO, WHERE THE HELL WERE YOU? ARE YOU OKAY?

I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED TO YOU LATER. I'M DEAD. PLEASE LET ME SLEEP.

ALRIGHT, AS SOON AS YOU WAKE UP RESTED, LET ME KNOW.

KEVIN, CLOSE THE DOOR ON YOUR WAY OUT.

KEVIN DEPARTED FROM HIS ROOM, AND ANDREW RECEIVED SOME WELL-DESERVED SLEEP.

ANDREW HAD SLEPT FOR A SOLID 8 HOURS. ANDREW'S INSTINCT EVERY TIME HE WOKE UP WAS TO CHECK THE LATEST NEWS ON MINDCORD; SO HE DID JUST THAT. HE SAW THE TIME WAS 4:11 P.M.

CHECKING THE DAILY BULLETIN OF MINDCORD NEWS, HE SAW AN ARTICLE THAT STATED "EUROPE HAS SPLIT INTO TWO CONTINENTS FROM A MASSIVE EARTHQUAKE."

ANOTHER ARTICLE STATED, "AFRICAN INHABITANTS COMPLETELY WIPED OUT FROM SEVERE AIR POLLUTION AND SMOKE." ANDREW WAS ALARMED BY THESE CATASTROPHIC EVENTS.

HE SELECTED HIS MESSAGE TAB AND SAW A MESSAGE LABELED FROM ROBERT RUTANO. ANDREW'S MIND GREW BEWILDERED.

Mindcord News Daily Bulletin

**EUROPE HAS SPLIT INTO TWO CONTINENTS FROM A MASSIVE EARTHQUAKE**

Mindcord News Daily Bulletin

**AFRICAN INHABITANTS COMPLETELY WIPED OUT FROM SEVERE AIR POLLUTION AND SMOKE**

Minsages

- Robert Rutano
- Kevin
- Dr. Mason
- Unknown

HE OPENED THE MESSAGE AND IT READ THE FOLLOWING:

**Robert Rutano**

Hello, my son. I have been thinking for quite some time over the past several hours, and I finally came to a decision.

I realized it was absolutely foolish of me to dismiss you out of the labs. All you desired was to visit the labs on your own time, which I understand being that I am a very curious person myself.

**Robert Rutano**

I want you to come back as soon as you can so that you can help me once again. I invite you to join us on a one-week-long endeavour in the Spirit World where we try to uncover as much data and information about this dimension.

**Robert Rutano**

Once again, I am truly sorry for kicking you out of the labs.

I will always love you, and please come back.



ANDREW WAS PERPLEXED BY THIS MESSAGE. HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO FEEL ABOUT THIS.

Mindcord 0.1H X

Robert Rutano X

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I realized it was absolutely foolish of me to damian you out of the labs. All you desired was to visit the labs on your own time, which I understand being that I am a very curious person myself.

I want you to come back as soon as you can so that you can help me once again. I invite you to join us on a one-week-long endeavour in the Spirit World where we try to uncover as much data and information about this dimension.

Once again, I am truly sorry for kicking you out of the labs.

I will always love you, and please come back.

ANDREW FELT ADMIRER. HE FELT NEEDED. HE FELT LOVED. HE FELT A DESIRE TO COME BACK. HE HAD TO. IF NOT, THEN SPIRIT RADICALS WOULD ANNIHILATE HIM.

KEVIN BARGED INTO HIS ROOM. HE INTERRUPTED ANDREW'S TRAIN OF THOUGHT.

SO ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED?

KEVIN GOT THE MESSAGE AND SHUT THE DOOR ON HIS WAY.

ANDREW'S TRAIN OF THOUGHT RESUMED. HE WOULD GO TO SPIRIT INTERCOM RIGHT AWAY—RIGHT AFTER HE EXPLAINS EVERYTHING TO HIS AGGRAVATING ROOMMATE.

IT WOULD BE TIME TO RETURN TO HIS FATHER.

HE TURNED OFF MINDCORD AND GOT OFF HIS COMFORTING BED.

IN THE LIVING ROOM, ANDREW LOOKED FOR KEVIN. KEVIN SAT ON THE COUCH WATCHING A NEWS CHANNEL NAMED MCN (MANHATTAN CITY NEWS) ON HIS 64K TV.

MCN  
MANHATTAN CITY NEWS  
EST. 1988

**BREAKING NEWS**

EUROPE SPLITS INTO TWO CONTINENTS AFTER MASSIVE QUAKE

NEWS? AREN'T YOU SICK OF THAT ALREADY, CONSIDERING EVERYTHING IS JUST BAD NOWADAYS.

WHAT'S ALSO BAD IS YOU NOT GIVING ME ANY NEWS ABOUT YOU.

JEEZ, I'LL TELL YOU NOW.

FINALLY. IT'S ABOUT TIME.

FIRST, TURN OFF THAT SAD-SACK NEWS.

SNAP

I'LL BE BRIEF. ALL THAT HAPPENED WAS THAT I WAS THE FIRST ONE TO ENTER THE SPIRIT WORLD DIMENSION, I GOT CODED NEURONS INJECTED INTO MY BRAIN, I FOUGHT A BEE THAT HAD A DOPAMINE COMPOSITOR IN ITS STINGER, I GOT FED BY ROBOTS, AND NOW I AM HOME.

OKAY, THERE'S NO DAMN WAY YOU DID THAT, YOU'RE SHITTIN' ME, RIGHT? ARE YA?

NOPE. THAT'S THE FULL TRUTH.

WELL THEN, THAT'S A LOT TO TAKE IN.

WHY DID IT TAKE YOU 20 HOURS?

WHAT CAN I EXPLAIN? IT WAS A LONG SHIFT, AND WE DID A LOT OF TESTING.

ALRIGHT. THAT WAS ONE HELL OF A RIDE FOR YOU. AT LEAST YOU'RE BACK NOW.

ON THAT NOTE, I ACTUALLY WON'T BE HERE FOR A WEEK BECAUSE I'M LEAVING FOR ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT WITH SPIRIT INTERCOM. AND I NEED YOU TO MAYBE WATCH OVER MY KIDS FOR ME THIS WEEKEND BECAUSE THEY'RE VISITING AT THAT TIME. SORRY ABOUT THAT.

OH DAMN. THAT SUCKS. THE SECOND I THINK YOU'RE BACK YOU LEAVE.

AND REGARDING YOUR QUESTION, I CAN TAKE CARE OF YOUR KIDS.

THANKS, BRO, SO MUCH. I APPRECIATE IT.

SURE, NO PROBLEM. I'M SURE THAT YOUR KIDS WILL BE A BIT SADDENED YOU WON'T BE HERE.

AHH. IT'LL BE FINE.

DAMN, YOU'RE RIGHT. THERE ARE A LOT OF PROSTHETIC

WELL, ANYWAY, DID YOU MESSAGE THEM THAT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE THEM?



WHY DO YOU CARE SO MUCH, DUDE? I HAVE EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.

DO YOU HAVE EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL?

BRO, WHAT'S YOUR DEAL? WHY ARE YOU ACTING LIKE THIS?

I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE IT'S THE FACT THAT YOU WERE GONE FOR 21 HOURS STRAIGHT, OR MAYBE IT'S THE FACT THAT YOU HAVEN'T EXPLAINED SHIT TO ME.

DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GETTING YOURSELF INTO IN SPIRIT INTERCOM?

THAT PLACE IS NOT NORMAL. DID YOU KNOW THEY ONLY ALLOW THE PRE-REGISTERED TO GO? DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE WANT TO HAVE ACCESS TO SPIRIT INTERCOM? IT'S ASTRONOMICAL. THE WORLD IS IN TURMOIL. YOU SAW IT ON THE NEWS. AND YOU DON'T SUSPECT THAT ANYTHING BAD COULD HAPPEN THERE? IF I WERE YOU, I WOULD REETHINK MY ENTIRE APPROACH TO ALL THIS SHIT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SO FAR.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I ALREADY TOLD YOU. SPIRIT INTERCOM IS FINE. MY FATHER OWNS THE PLACE FOR GOD'S SAKE.

DON'T DO ALL THIS JUST FOR YOUR FATHER. START LIVING FOR YOURSELF, ANDREW! WHO GIVES A SHIT ABOUT YOUR DAD! WHAT YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT IS YOUR SAFETY.

I KNOW THE WORLD IS GOING THROUGH TRAUMA. I ACCEPT THAT. HOWEVER, I HAVE TO GIVE THIS PLACE A CHANCE. IT'S WHAT MY FATHER WOULD WANT.

(I COULD GIVE A SHIT WHAT MY FATHER THINKS.)

I'M SORRY, KEVIN. I HAVE TO GO. I'LL LEAVE IT AT THAT.

SO, WHEN ARE YOU LEAVING?

TO BE FRANK, I'M PLANNING TO LEAVE NOW. THEY WANT ME THERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SORRY AGAIN ABOUT THIS, AND THANKS FOR WATCHING OVER MY KIDS.

THIS SUCKS. JUST STAY SAFE. THAT'S ALL I CAN SAY.

THANKS. I'LL SEE YOU SOON.

BYE.

ALL ANDREW BROUGHT WERE HIS CAR KEYS, WALLET, AND HIS MICROSCOPIC CAMERA THAT WAS INGRAINED IN HIS FOREHEAD.

SPORKSTERBEALE

WHERE DO YOU WISH TO GO TODAY, ANDREW?

SPIRIT INTERCOM.

HE SUSPENDED THE GARAGE DOORS OPEN AND LEFT HIS APARTMENT. NOT IN A RUSH THIS TIME, ANDREW DIDN'T WANT HIS CAR TO GO ON AN EXPERIMENTAL ROUTE. HE LET THE CAR DO ITS THING.

HIS CAR MADE IT TO THE BAD PART OF TOWN, WHICH WAS SUPPOSEDLY THE MAJORITY OF THE TOWN. HIS CAR CONTINUED DRIVING THROUGH THE TROUBLED STREETS.

AS THEY PASSED CITY HALL, ANDREW THOUGHT, LET'S SEE WHAT THE NEW DAILY COMMOTION IS GOING ON AT CITY HALL. ANDREW LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AND SAW CITY HALL WAS COMPLETELY RAVAGED. THE BUILDING HAD BEEN BURNT DOWN, AND DISLODGED GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL BODIES LAID LIFELESSLY IN THE DEBRIS. ANDREW FELT HIS EYES WERE DECEIVING HIM. HE WAS HORRIFIED BY THIS SITE.

SPORKSTERBEALE

YOU SEEM INTRIGUED BY THIS LOCATION. WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO TAKE A REST STOP FOR YOU TO EXPLORE MORE OF THIS DESIRED PLACE THAT YOU SEEM TO SEEK?

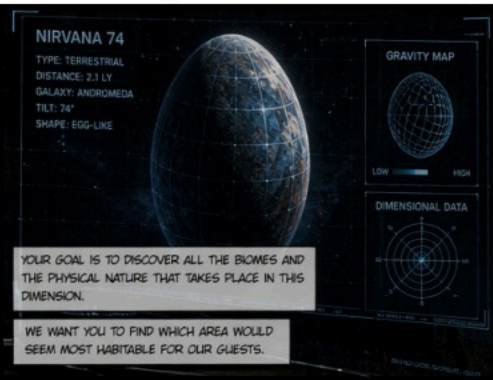
NO! WHY WOULD YOU ASK THAT? GET THE HELL AWAY FROM THIS PLACE!

KEEP DRIVING TO SPIRIT INTERCOM!



NIRVANA 74 IS THE CLOSEST PLANET SIMILAR TO OURS IN THE UNIVERSE. OUR NEURAL SENSORS CAN ONLY RECOGNIZE THE GRAVITATIONAL FORCES AND DIMENSIONS OF THE PLANET.

THE PLANET ALSO HAS THE SHAPE OF AN EGG, MEANING THAT GRAVITY IS WEAKER IN CERTAIN AREAS.



**NIRVANA 74**  
TYPE: TERRESTRIAL  
DISTANCE: 2.1 LY  
GALAXY: ANDROMEDA  
TILT: 74°  
SHAPE: EGG-LIKE

YOUR GOAL IS TO DISCOVER ALL THE BIOMES AND THE PHYSICAL NATURE THAT TAKES PLACE IN THIS DIMENSION.

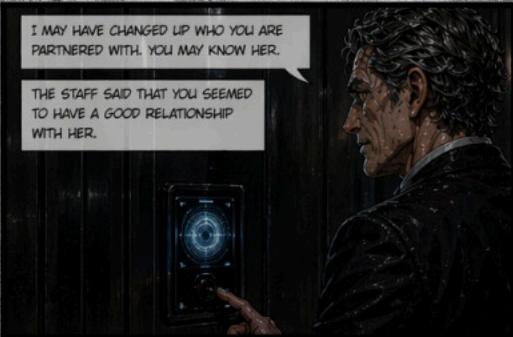
WE WANT YOU TO FIND WHICH AREA WOULD SEEM MOST HABITABLE FOR OUR GUESTS.



THEY WALKED PAST THE HALLWAYS AND WERE ALMOST IN THE BLACK ROOM.

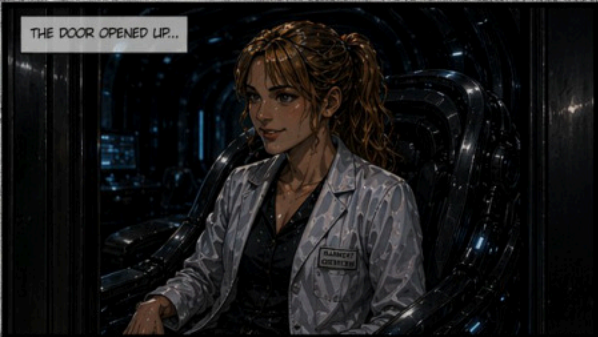


THAT SOUNDS FASCINATING. WILL I BE GOING WITH MARCO AGAIN?



I MAY HAVE CHANGED UP WHO YOU ARE PARTNERED WITH. YOU MAY KNOW HER.

THE STAFF SAID THAT YOU SEEMED TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH HER.



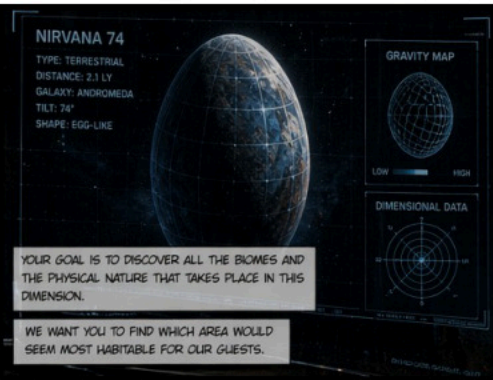
THE DOOR OPENED UP...





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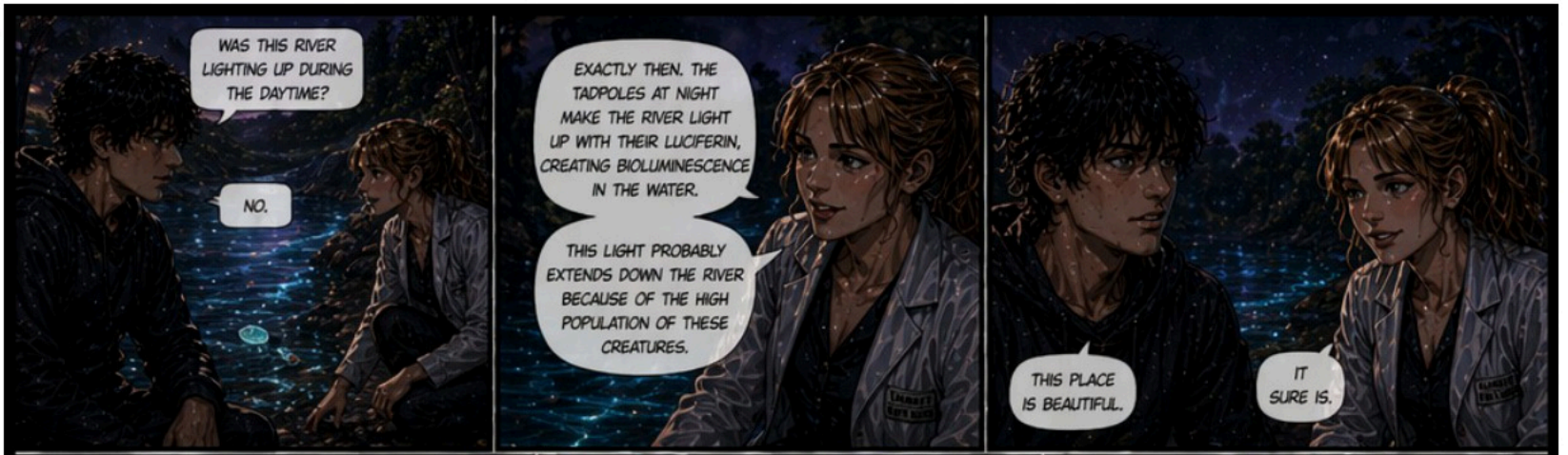
I MAY HAVE CHANGED UP WHO YOU ARE PARTNERED WITH. YOU MAY KNOW HER.

THE STAFF SAID THAT YOU SEEMED TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH HER.



THE DOOR OPENED UP...





WAS THIS RIVER LIGHTING UP DURING THE DAYTIME?

NO.

EXACTLY THEN. THE TADPOLES AT NIGHT MAKE THE RIVER LIGHT UP WITH THEIR LUCIFERIN, CREATING BIOLUMINESCENCE IN THE WATER.

THIS LIGHT PROBABLY EXTENDS DOWN THE RIVER BECAUSE OF THE HIGH POPULATION OF THESE CREATURES.

THIS PLACE IS BEAUTIFUL.

IT SURE IS.



SUDDENLY—

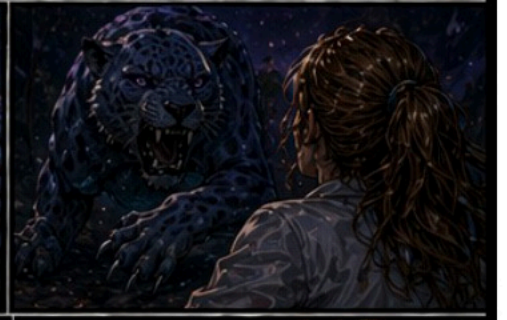
!?



AHH!



TAKE THIS!



HARRIET... RUN!



HOLY SHIT! ANDREW, ARE YOU OKAY?!



I'LL BE FINE... THIS PLACE WENT FROM BEAUTIFUL TO STRAIGHT DELUSIONAL.

"COUGH"



CAN YOU DIE IN THIS DIMENSION?

I DON'T THINK SO... BUT AT THIS POINT, I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE.



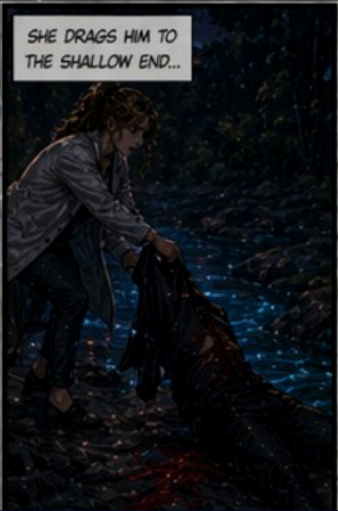
WHAT SHOULD I DO TO HELP YOU? WHAT SHOULD I DO?!

I'M SORRY... I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU...

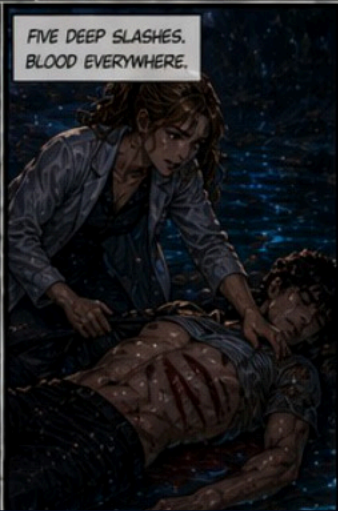


CONSCIOUSNESS SHIFTS BACK TO HARRIET.

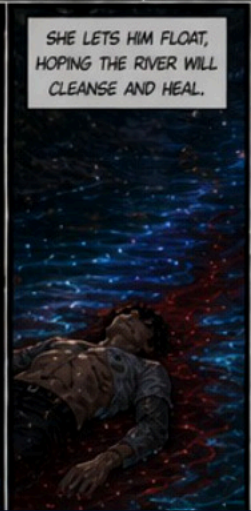
HERE, I'LL PUT YOU IN THE RIVER. LET'S START BY WASHING UP THAT YUCKY BLOOD OFF YOU.



SHE DRAGS HIM TO THE SHALLOW END...



FIVE DEEP SLASHES. BLOOD EVERYWHERE.



SHE LETS HIM FLOAT, HOPING THE RIVER WILL CLEANSE AND HEAL.



HEY! ABORT US OUT OF THIS DIMENSION! ANDREW IS IN SO MUCH PAIN RIGHT NOW! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU GUYS DOING?!

HOPING SHE WOULD GROW UNRESPONSIVE AND BE TRANSPORTED BACK TO THE PHYSICAL WORLD.

HELP US!

A FEW SOBS LATER, SHE LIFTED HER HEAD BACK UP AND SAW ANDREW STILL LYING STAGNANTLY IN THE RIVER.

A TEAR FELL IN THE RIVER. ATTRACTED TO THE TEARY SALTINESS, THE TADPOLE CREATURES EMERGED.

THEY GATHERED... AND STUCK TO HIS WOUNDS, FILLING THE ENTIRE REGION.

THEY GLEAMED TOGETHER...

THEN DISPERSED BACK INTO THE RIVER.

HIS WOUNDS WITHERED AWAY. SCARS FORMED IN SECONDS.

WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED?

IT WAS UNEXPLAINABLE! FIRST, THAT CREATURE ATTACKED YOU!

THEN THE BEE BEAST STUNG IT BEFORE IT COULD GET ME!

AND FINALLY, THOSE TADPOLE CREATURES SAVED YOUR LIFE!

WELL, ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT I'M FINE NOW.

YOU WENT UNCONSCIOUS ON ME. WERE YOU DEAD? DID YOU SOMEHOW WAKE UP IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD?

I DON'T RECALL ANYTHING AFTER I TOLD YOU TO RUN. BUT THERE WAS NO WAY I WAS DEAD.

DEAD DIMENSIONALLY OR PHYSICALLY?

PHYSICALLY. BUT I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE ABOUT BEING DEAD DIMENSIONALLY.

MY FATHER DID TELL ME THAT YOU CAN'T DIE IN THIS DIMENSION, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHY I DIDN'T WAKE UP IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD.

THAT'S A BIT GRIM.

AS I SHOWED YOU BEFORE, JUST RIDE WITH IT. DON'T SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON EVERY MEAGER DETAIL IN THIS PLACE.

ANDREW EXTENDED HIS BODY TO WHERE THE BLUE CHEETAH LAY.

MOUTH OPEN WITH A SMALL PUDDLE OF DROOL. ITS EYES WERE OPEN.

HE FELT THE FUR OF THE CHEETAH WITH HIS FINGERTIPS: FRIZZY.

SHOULD WE CUT OPEN INTO THE CREATURE'S BODY?

WHY?

IN CASE WE GROW HUNGRY.

WE CAN GET HUNGRY HERE? YOU SURE?

I'M HUNGRY AT THIS VERY INSTANT. OUR DESIRE TO EAT COMES FROM THE HYPOTHALAMUS REGION OF OUR BRAIN. THE CODED NEURONS WE ARE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING AREN'T BLOCKING THE NEURONS THAT ENTER THE HYPOTHALAMUS.

ALTHOUGH WE ARE BEING NURTURED WITH IVS, WE STILL CAN GROW HUNGRY.

THAT'S KINDA DEEP. WELL, IF YOU SAY WE SHOULD EAT IT, THEN CUT IT UP I WILL.



WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED?

IT WAS UNEXPLAINABLE. I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

FIRST OF ALL, YOU GOT CUT IN YOUR STOMACH GRUESOMELY BY THAT CREATURE BEAST THINGY!

THEN THE BEE BEAST STUNG THE CREATURE IN THE HEAD BEFORE IT ATTACKED ME!

AND, FINALLY, THOSE MAGNIFICENT TADPOLE CREATURES SAVED YOUR LIFE! LITERALLY! I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! THIS ALL HAPPENED SO FAST, AND I WORRIED SO MUCH FOR YOU!



WELL, ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT I'M FINE NOW.

YOU WENT UNCONSCIOUS ON ME. WERE YOU DEAD? DID YOU SOMEHOW WAKE UP IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD?

I DON'T RECALL ANYTHING AFTER I TOLD YOU TO RUN. BUT FOR ONE THING, THERE WAS NO WAY THAT I WAS DEAD.

DEAD DIMENSIONALLY OR PHYSICALLY?

PHYSICALLY. BUT I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE ABOUT BEING DEAD DIMENSIONALLY. MY FATHER DID TELL ME THAT YOU CAN'T DIE IN THIS DIMENSION, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHY I DIDN'T WAKE UP IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD WHEN I DROPPED UNCONSCIOUSLY.



THAT'S A BIT GRIM.

AS I SHOWED YOU BEFORE, JUST RIDE WITH IT. DON'T SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON EVERY MEAGER DETAIL IN THIS PLACE.

HOWEVER, ANDREW DID WORRY ABOUT EVERY DETAIL. ANDREW EXTENDED HIS BODY TO WHERE THE BLUE CHEETAH'S BODY LAY.

MOUTH OPEN WITH A SMALL PUDDLE EVERY DROOL, THE CHEETAH HAD ITS EYES OPEN. HE FELT THE FUR OF THE CHEETAH WITH HIS FINGERTIPS: FRIZZY.



SHOULD WE CUT OPEN INTO THE CREATURE'S BODY?

WHY?

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THAT'S KINDA DEEP. WELL, IF YOU SAY WE SHOULD EAT IT, THEN CUT IT UP I WILL.



HE GRABBED THE CHEETAH'S PAW AND WAS IN THE MOTION OF CUTTING UP THE BEAST'S STOMACH WITH ITS PAW.

WAIT! ISN'T THIS CREATURE STILL ALIVE? IT'S ONLY THE DOPAMINE THAT MAKES IT UNCONSCIOUS.

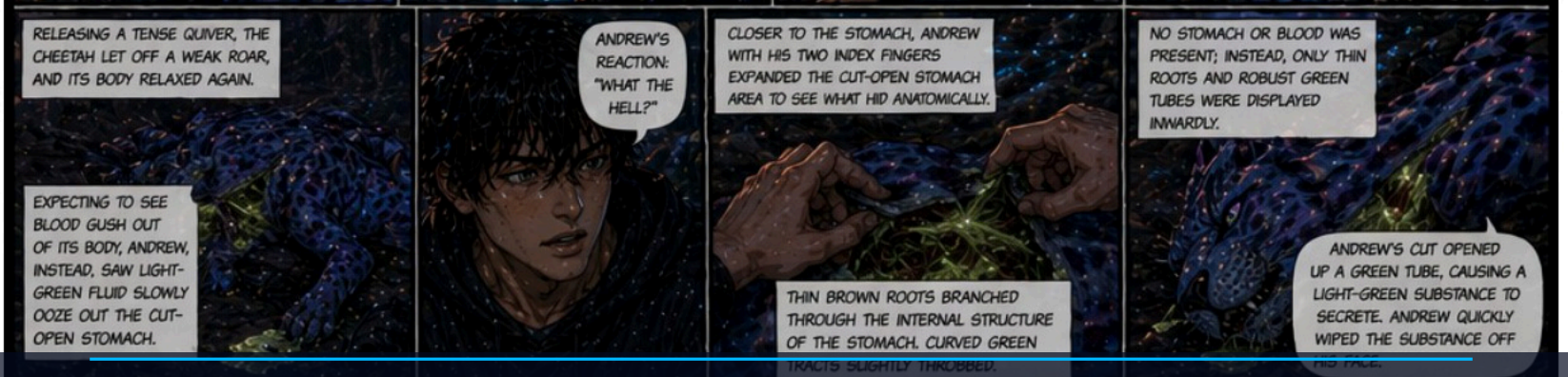
THE CREATURE IS JUST EXTREMELY RELAXED. YOU SURE YOU WANNA KILL THIS THING?

SORRY, JUST KILL IT! I'M REALLY HUNGRY, AND I CAN'T STAND IT.

I'LL LOOK AWAY. THE SIGHT OF BLOOD DISTURBS ME.

THE THOUGHT OF HUNGER ZAPPED INTO ANDREW'S MIND TOO. ANDREW KNEW HE WAS GOING TO REGRET THIS.

GRABBING THE PAW AGAIN, HE JERKED THE SHARP CLAWS INTO THE CREATURE'S STOMACH AREA WITH GREAT FORCE.



RELEASING A TENSE QUIVER, THE CHEETAH LET OFF A WEAK ROAR, AND ITS BODY RELAXED AGAIN.

ANDREW'S REACTION: "WHAT THE HELL?"

CLOSER TO THE STOMACH, ANDREW WITH HIS TWO INDEX FINGERS EXPANDED THE CUT-OPEN STOMACH AREA TO SEE WHAT HID ANATOMICALLY.

NO STOMACH OR BLOOD WAS PRESENT; INSTEAD, ONLY THIN ROOTS AND ROBUST GREEN TUBES WERE DISPLAYED INWARDLY.

EXPECTING TO SEE BLOOD GUSH OUT OF ITS BODY, ANDREW, INSTEAD, SAW LIGHT-GREEN FLUID SLOWLY OOOZE OUT THE CUT-OPEN STOMACH.

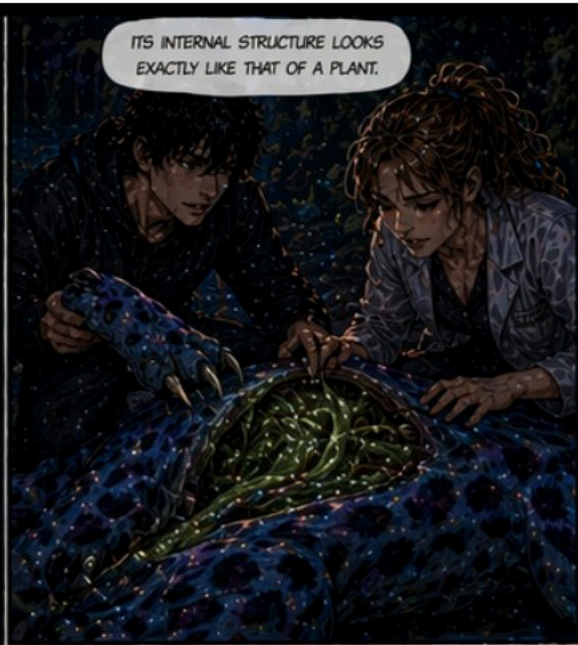
THIN BROWN ROOTS BRANCHED THROUGH THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF THE STOMACH. CURVED GREEN TRACTS SLIGHTLY THROBBED.

ANDREW'S CUT OPENED UP A GREEN TUBE, CAUSING A LIGHT-GREEN SUBSTANCE TO SECRETE. ANDREW QUICKLY WIPED THE SUBSTANCE OFF HIS FACE.

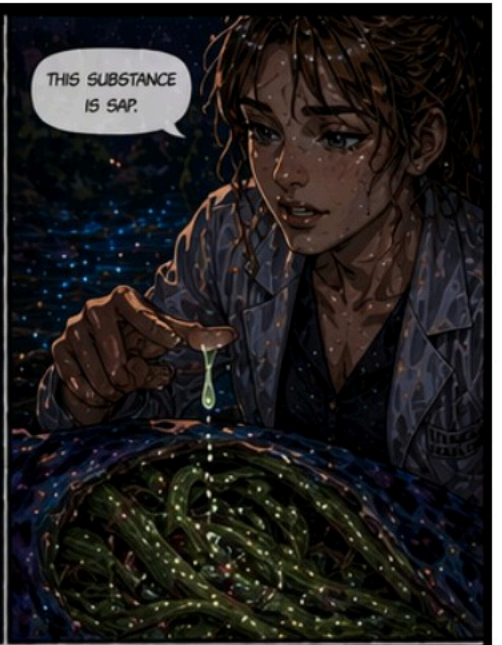


SO... THIS CREATURE IS ACTUALLY A PLANT?

CORRECT. ITS ANATOMY DOES NOT DECEIVE.



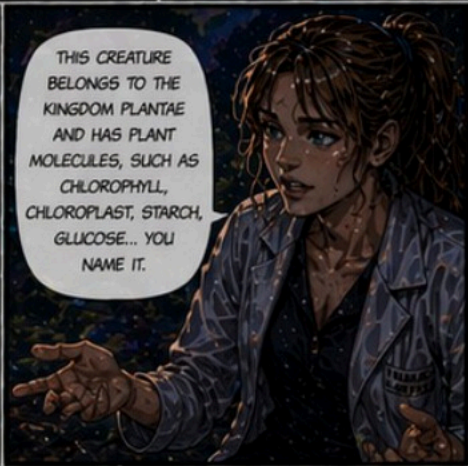
ITS INTERNAL STRUCTURE LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THAT OF A PLANT.



THIS SUBSTANCE IS SAP.



SAP?



THIS CREATURE BELONGS TO THE KINGDOM PLANTAE AND HAS PLANT MOLECULES, SUCH AS CHLOROPHYLL, CHLOROPLAST, STARCH, GLUCOSE... YOU NAME IT.



LEMME GET THIS STRAIGHT. THIS INJURIOUS CREATURE IS, AND I REPEAT, A PLANT?

YOU HAVE NO CLUE HOW AMAZING THIS IS. THIS CREATURE IS A MARVEL OF ENCHANTMENT! NOTHING THIS EXTRAORDINARY HAS EVER BEEN WITNESSED BY A HUMAN BEING.



SO WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THIS CREATURE?

CONTINUE DISSECTING.



BUT... IS IT EVEN OKAY TO EAT THIS?

IF IT'S MADE OF PLANT MATERIALS AND NUTRIENTS, THEN IT SHOULD BE EDIBLE.



WHAT IF IT'S POISONOUS?

THIS CREATURE IS ORGANIC. POISONOUS PLANTS ARE STILL ORGANIC AT THEIR CORE. BESIDES, WE DON'T EXACTLY HAVE ANOTHER OPTION.



BESIDES, I'M REALLY HUNGRY.

SAME HERE...



LOOK AT THIS TUBE. IT'S THICK AND FILLED WITH SAP AND NUTRIENTS. THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST NUTRITIOUS PART OF ITS BODY.



FINE.. CUT IT UP THEN.

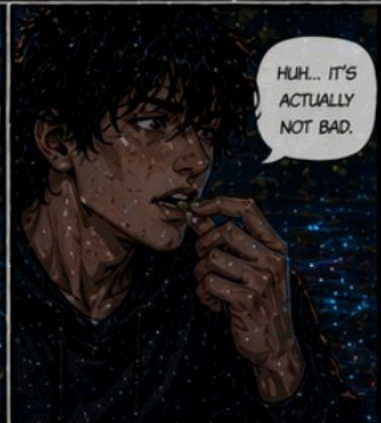
I'LL START WITH THESE TUBES.



THE SAP MIGHT BE BITTER, BUT THE TUBES SHOULD HAVE STARCHES AND SUGARS.



ALRIGHT... I'LL TRY A SMALL PIECE FIRST.

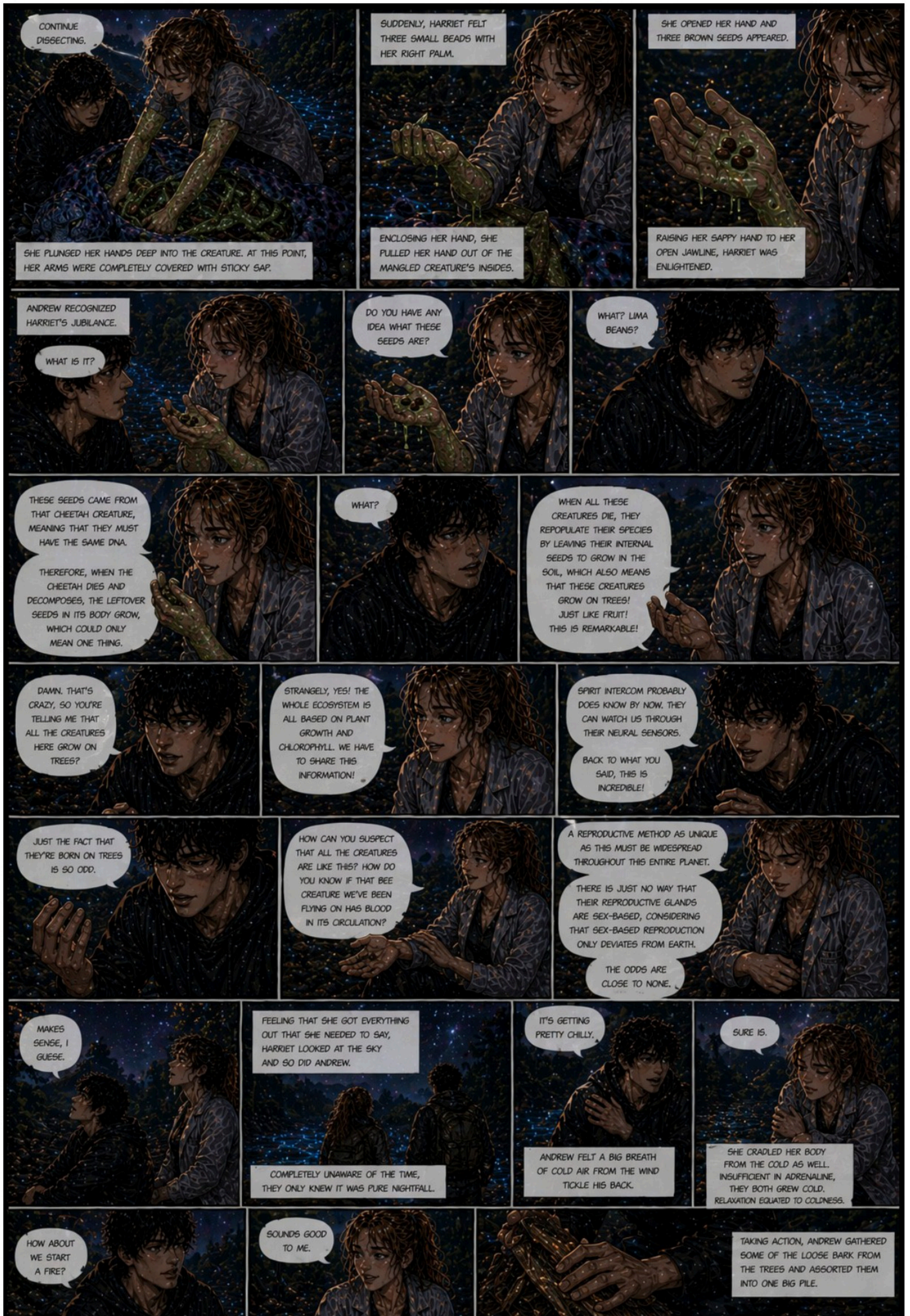


HUH... IT'S ACTUALLY NOT BAD.



WE CAN ROAST THESE. IT WILL BE EASIER TO EAT THAT WAY.

GOOD PLAN.



CONTINUE DISSECTING.

SUDDENLY, HARRIET FELT THREE SMALL BEADS WITH HER RIGHT PALM.

SHE OPENED HER HAND AND THREE BROWN SEEDS APPEARED.

SHE PLUNGED HER HANDS DEEP INTO THE CREATURE. AT THIS POINT, HER ARMS WERE COMPLETELY COVERED WITH STICKY SAP.

ENCLOSING HER HAND, SHE PULLED HER HAND OUT OF THE MANGLED CREATURE'S INSIDES.

RAISING HER SAPPY HAND TO HER OPEN JAWLINE, HARRIET WAS ENLIGHTENED.

ANDREW RECOGNIZED HARRIET'S JUBILANCE.

WHAT IS IT?

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THESE SEEDS ARE?

WHAT? LIMA BEANS?

THESE SEEDS CAME FROM THAT CHEETAH CREATURE, MEANING THAT THEY MUST HAVE THE SAME DNA.

THEREFORE, WHEN THE CHEETAH DIES AND DECOMPOSES, THE LEFTOVER SEEDS IN ITS BODY GROW, WHICH COULD ONLY MEAN ONE THING.

WHAT?

WHEN ALL THESE CREATURES DIE, THEY REPOPULATE THEIR SPECIES BY LEAVING THEIR INTERNAL SEEDS TO GROW IN THE SOIL, WHICH ALSO MEANS THAT THESE CREATURES GROW ON TREES! JUST LIKE FRUIT! THIS IS REMARKABLE!

DAMN. THAT'S CRAZY, SO YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT ALL THE CREATURES HERE GROW ON TREES?

STRANGELY, YES! THE WHOLE ECOSYSTEM IS ALL BASED ON PLANT GROWTH AND CHLOROPHYLL. WE HAVE TO SHARE THIS INFORMATION!

SPIRIT INTERCOM PROBABLY DOES KNOW BY NOW. THEY CAN WATCH US THROUGH THEIR NEURAL SENSORS.

BACK TO WHAT YOU SAID, THIS IS INCREDIBLE!

JUST THE FACT THAT THEY'RE BORN ON TREES IS SO ODD.

HOW CAN YOU SUSPECT THAT ALL THE CREATURES ARE LIKE THIS? HOW DO YOU KNOW IF THAT BEE CREATURE WE'VE BEEN FLYING ON HAS BLOOD IN ITS CIRCULATION?

A REPRODUCTIVE METHOD AS UNIQUE AS THIS MUST BE WIDESPREAD THROUGHOUT THIS ENTIRE PLANET.

THERE IS JUST NO WAY THAT THEIR REPRODUCTIVE GLANDS ARE SEX-BASED, CONSIDERING THAT SEX-BASED REPRODUCTION ONLY DEVIATES FROM EARTH.

THE ODDS ARE CLOSE TO NONE.

MAKES SENSE, I GUESE.

FEELING THAT SHE GOT EVERYTHING OUT THAT SHE NEEDED TO SAY, HARRIET LOOKED AT THE SKY AND SO DID ANDREW.

IT'S GETTING PRETTY CHILLY.

SURE IS.

COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF THE TIME, THEY ONLY KNEW IT WAS PURE NIGHTFALL.

ANDREW FELT A BIG BREATH OF COLD AIR FROM THE WIND TICKLE HIS BACK.

SHE CRADLED HER BODY FROM THE COLD AS WELL. INSUFFICIENT IN ADRENALINE, THEY BOTH GREW COLD. RELAXATION EQUATED TO COLDNESS.

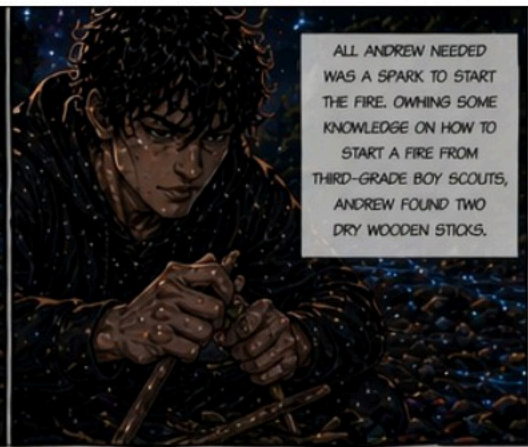
HOW ABOUT WE START A FIRE?

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.

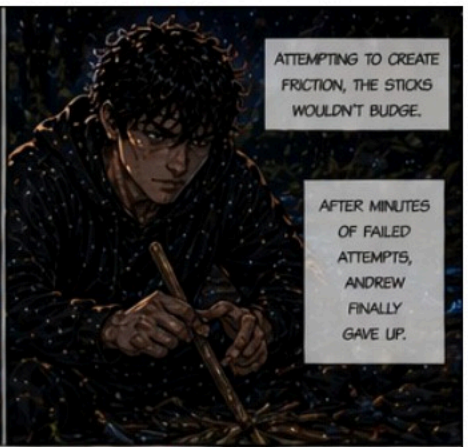
TAKING ACTION, ANDREW GATHERED SOME OF THE LOOSE BARK FROM THE TREES AND ASSORTED THEM INTO ONE BIG PILE.



THANKS, ANDREW.



ALL ANDREW NEEDED WAS A SPARK TO START THE FIRE. OWNING SOME KNOWLEDGE ON HOW TO START A FIRE FROM THIRD-GRADE BOY SCOUTS, ANDREW FOUND TWO DRY WOODEN STICKS.



ATTEMPTING TO CREATE FRICTION, THE STICKS WOULDN'T BUDGE.

AFTER MINUTES OF FAILED ATTEMPTS, ANDREW FINALLY GAVE UP.



WHY WON'T THESE GODDAMN STICKS BURN ALREADY!



WHAT THE HELL SHOULD WE DO? WE'RE TIRED, COLD, HUNGRY, AND HAVE NOWHERE TO SLEEP WITH A DEAD CHEETAH BY OUR FEET!



I DON'T KNOW. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO! WE'RE IN THE SAME BOAT, ANDREW!



YA, WELL, YOU'RE THE SMART ONE HERE. DO SOMETHING!



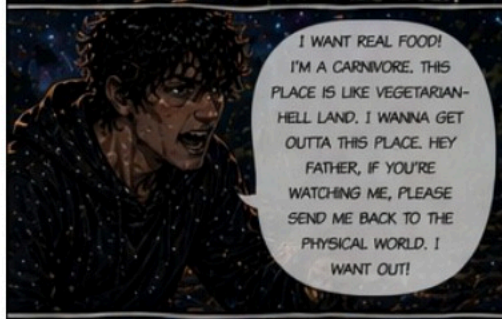
I THINK IT'D BE BETTER IF WE TRIED TO CALM DOWN.



THAT'S WHAT'S MAKING US COLD IN THE FIRST PLACE! WE NEED TO FIND A SOLUTION NOW. HOW MUCH LONGER IN THIS DIMENSION ANYWAY? I ADORE THE BEAUTY AND ALL, BUT NOT THE SURVIVING ASPECT!



HOW ABOUT WE EAT THE CHEETAH? IT STORES GLUCOSE IN ITS GREEN FIBERS.



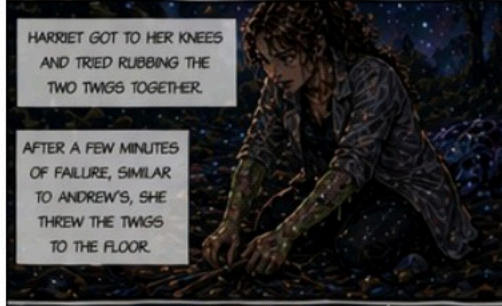
I WANT REAL FOOD! I'M A CARNIVORE. THIS PLACE IS LIKE VEGETARIAN-HELL LAND. I WANNA GET OUTTA THIS PLACE. HEY FATHER, IF YOU'RE WATCHING ME, PLEASE SEND ME BACK TO THE PHYSICAL WORLD. I WANT OUT!



ANDREW, I'VE ALREADY TRIED DOING THAT. JUST LIKE HOW PRAYERS ARE NEVER ANSWERED, SPIRIT INTERCOM WON'T ANSWER OUR WOES.



SORRY IF I'M BEING IMPATIENT. PLEASE, JUST TRY TO GET THIS FIRE GOING. I'M FREEZING!



HARRIET GOT TO HER KNEES AND TRIED RUBBING THE TWO TWIGS TOGETHER.

AFTER A FEW MINUTES OF FAILURE, SIMILAR TO ANDREW'S, SHE THREW THE TWIGS TO THE FLOOR.



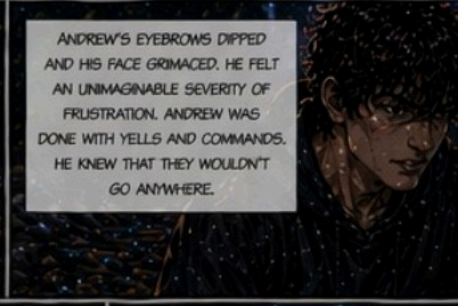
OXYGEN IS KEY TO STARTING A FIRE, AND I THINK THERE'S A LACK OF IT IN THIS WORLD.



ENOUGH WITH THE SCIENCE! WHY WOULDN'T THEY BE ABLE TO FLAME? JUST TRY HARDER AND PUT IN MORE EFFORT INTO THE TWIGS.



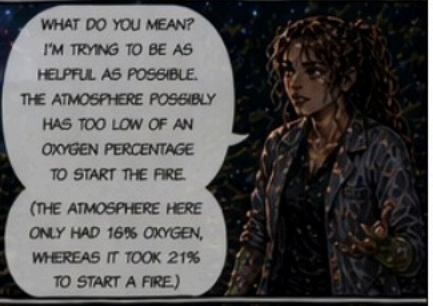
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF!



ANDREW'S EYEBROWS DIPPED AND HIS FACE GRIMACED. HE FELT AN UNIMAGINABLE SEVERITY OF FRUSTRATION. ANDREW WAS DONE WITH YELLS AND COMMANDS. HE KNEW THAT THEY WOULDN'T GO ANYWHERE.



WELL, IF YOU'RE NOT GONNA HELP ME, THEN I GUESS I BETTER HELP MYSELF.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I'M TRYING TO BE AS HELPFUL AS POSSIBLE. THE ATMOSPHERE POSSIBLY HAS TOO LOW OF AN OXYGEN PERCENTAGE TO START THE FIRE. (THE ATMOSPHERE HERE ONLY HAD 16% OXYGEN, WHEREAS IT TOOK 21% TO START A FIRE.)



BULLSHIT! I'M TIRED OF YOUR SCIENCE SHENANIGANS. I'M OUT OF HERE. GOOD LUCK ON YOUR OWN.





WHERE COULD YOU POSSIBLY GO?



AWAY.

LEAVING THE VICINITY OF HARRIET, HE APPROACHED THE BEE AND CLIMBED UP TO ITS THORAX.



HEY! WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING? DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT THAT!

SHE TRIED RUNNING TO THE BEE, BUT SHE WAS TOO LATE.



WHIRRRRRRRR

THE BEE HAD ALREADY BEGUN FLUTTERING ITS WINGS.



SORRY, BUT I HAVE TO START LIVING FOR MYSELF.

ANDREW! WAIT!

HE HEAVED THE BEE'S ANTENNAS TOWARDS HIS BODY, AND THE BEE FLEW OFF, LEAVING HARRIET STRANDED.

HIS MIND FLUTTERING LIKE THE BEE'S WINGS, ANDREW ROSE OVER THE NIGHT SKY, UNAWARE OF WHERE HIS NEXT DESTINATION COULD TAKE HIM.

MALNOURISHED AND TIRED, ANDREW ZONED OUT THE SCENERY THAT WAS PRESENTED AS THE BEE TRAVELLED.

AFTER GLIDING FOR A FEW MORE MOMENTS, ANDREW FELL ASLEEP, AND SOON ENOUGH, HIS BODY FELL ASLEEP.

STILL SHIVERING FROM THE COLD NIGHT, HE RUBBED HIS HANDS AGAINST THE BEE'S ABDOMEN, TRYING TO CREATE HEAT WITH THE FRICTION. BLISTERS CRESTED ON HIS FINGERTIPS.

MUSCLES RELAXING, ANDREW LET GO OF THE BEE'S ANTENNAS, AND HIS BODY SLO DOWN THE BEE'S BACK.

UNCONSCIOUS WHILE FALLING HUNDREDS OF FEET, ANDREW COLLIDED WITH SHARP-EDGED BRANCHES OF THE TALL TREES, SOMEWHAT SLOWING DOWN HIS FALL.

MOVING WITH ENORMOUS VELOCITY, ONE THICK BRANCH PUNCTURED HIS LOWER BACK, IMMEDIATELY WAKING HIM UP WITH PAIN.

CRACKING BONES LEFT AND RIGHT, EVERY LIMB WAS MISSHAPEN WITH EACH GRAVITATIONAL HIT WITH A BRANCH. AGONY, STRAIN, AND SPASMS, THIS WAS ALL ANDREW COULD FEEL.

RELEASING TUMULTUOUS SHRIEKS, HIS VOCAL CORDS GAVE OUT. THE FALL FELT NEVER-ENDING, COLLISION AFTER COLLISION, MOURN AFTER MOURN.

INSIDE OF A DIMENSION WHERE NEURAL FEELINGS WERE EXAGGERATED, ANDREW HAD NEVER GONE THROUGH THIS MUCH PAIN. AFTER WHAT SEEMED TO BE A NONSTOP HELL-TRIP, HE MADE A HARD POUNDING ONTO THE MUD FLOOR.

HE FELT THIS WAS WORSE THAN DEATH. THE PAIN WAS EXCRUCIATING AND UNBEARABLE. HE COULDN'T GET UP. BONES AND MUSCLES THROBBED TURBULENTLY.

TEARS OVERFILLED HIS EYELIDS, AND HE COULDN'T SEE ANYTHING BUT THE BLURRY RED ALL OVER HIS BODY WITH TEARS, MIXING WITH HIS BLOOD.

THIS PAIN WAS INDESCRIBABLE. NO OTHER HUMAN ON EARTH IN EVERY LIFE HAD FELT THE PAIN ANDREW WAS GOING THROUGH. HE WAILED AND WAILED, WANTING SOMEONE TO PUT HIM OUT OF HIS MISERY.

ONE LOOSE BRANCH BROKE OFF AND FELL, KNOCKING ANDREW'S HEAD.

ANDREW'S WISH WAS GRANTED AND HE FINALLY LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.

KNOCKED OUT FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT, ANDREW FINALLY AWOKE TO THE SOURCE OF LIGHT ARISING.

A PEBBLE-LIKE OBJECT PENETRATED ANDREW'S HEAD.

ANDREW FORCED HIS HEAD UP AND SAW QUITE THE FIGURE.

ANDREW STRUGGLED TO MOVE. HIS BODY ACHED, BUT HIS MIND STAYED ALERT.

WHAT... JUST HAPPENED?

CONSCIOUSNESS SHIFTING...

WHY ARE YOU ALL HAPPY? WHAT'S GOING ON?!

HARRIET SMILED AT ANDREW. SHE SAID SOMETHING AFFECTIONATE TOO.

ANDREW ASSIMILATED THEIR SMILES.

BEHIND THEM ALL, ROBERT LED THE ROOM WITH PRIDE.

MARCO STOOD NEXT TO HIM WITH HIS USUAL CONFIDENCE.



WE COLLECTED GREAT DATA FROM YOUR ENDEAVOUR. WE DICTATED THAT NIRVANA 74 IS, INDEED, HABITABLE FOR OUR GUESTS.

MOVING FORWARD, WE WILL ALWAYS RECOGNIZE THE HARD AND DEDICATED WORK THAT YOU HAVE HELPED US WITH. WE WILL ALWAYS RECOGNIZE HARRIET FOR HER WORK LIKEWISE.

MOST DEFINITELY. ANDREW AND HARRIET HAVE DONE A SPECTACULAR JOB HERE.

WE'LL GET YOU GUYS SITUATED BACK AGAIN. I'M SURE YOU BOTH ARE TIRED OF THE SAME IV SERUM YOU'VE BEEN SUPPLIED WITH THE PAST WEEK.

WE ARE SERVING PARMESAN PASTA WITH NURTURED MEATBALLS. PUMMELED CASSEROLES AND STEAMED CARROTS ARE SERVED ON THE SIDE.

ANDREW FELT MARCO SAID NOTHING WITH THAT STATEMENT. THERE WAS NO ORIGINALITY.



NURTURED MEATBALLS? WHAT ARE THOSE?



YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS ONCE YOU ARE GIVEN YOUR MEAL.

SO I SUGGEST THAT YOU TWO TEMPORARILY TAKE A BREAK FROM THIS ROOM AND HEAD ON OVER TO THE CAFETERIA.

HA!

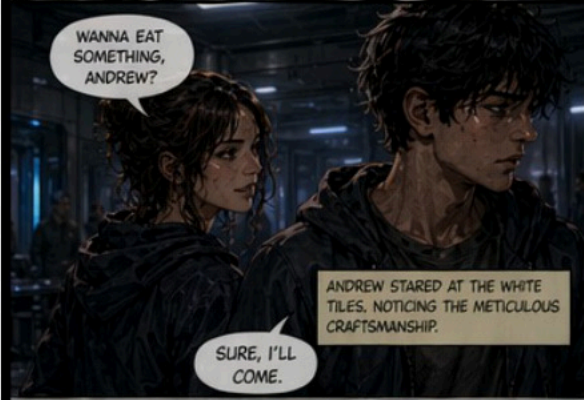


THAT SOUNDS GREAT.



RESEARCHERS, YOU ARE DISMISSED.

AND SO ARE SECURITY GUARDS.



WANNA EAT SOMETHING, ANDREW?

SURE, I'LL COME.

ANDREW STARED AT THE WHITE TILES, NOTICING THE METICULOUS CRAFTSMANSHIP.



BEFORE ANDREW RAISED HIMSELF OUT OF THE CHAIR, ROBERT HELD HIS SHOULDER.



IF I COULD HAVE A MINUTE BEFORE YOU HEADED OFF, I'D REALLY APPRECIATE IT.

ANDREW LOOKED AT HIS TAUT LOWER EYELID AND AGREED.



I APPRECIATE YOU TAKING THE TIME TO EXPLORE THIS WORLD OF MINE. I KNOW THAT IT WAS NOT EASY, AND I WANTED TO THANK YOU PERSONALLY ONE-ON-ONE.

I LOVE YOU, SON, AND I'M SORRY IF SOME OF MY DECISIONS UPSET YOU. JUST KNOW THAT IN THE LONG RUN, THEY'LL BENEFIT YOU.



I KNOW, I KNOW. THANKS FOR TRUSTING ME IN THIS PROCESS.



OF COURSE.

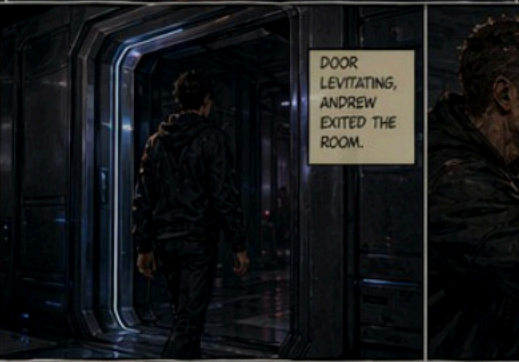
FEEL FREE TO ENJOY YOUR FEAST. I'LL BE OUT OF YOUR HAIR FOR NOW.

HE SMILED AND LEFT THE ROOM.

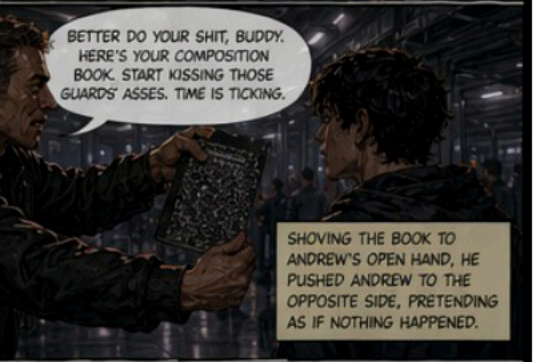


ANDREW WAS ALONE IN THE BLACK ROOM.

HE SIGHED AND WAS HONESTLY QUITE IMPRESSED WITH HIS SINCERITY. BUT HE WASN'T SURE IF THE SINCERITY WAS TRUTHFULLY GENUINE.

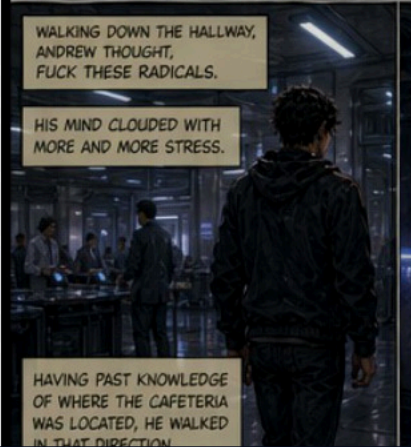


DOOR LEVITATING, ANDREW EXITED THE ROOM.



BETTER DO YOUR SHIT, BUDDY. HERE'S YOUR COMPOSITION BOOK. START KISSING THOSE GUARDS' ASSES. TIME IS TICKING.

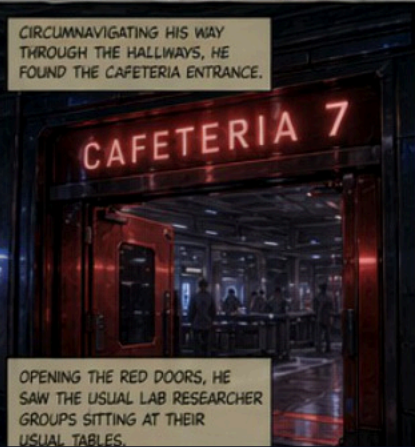
SHOWING THE BOOK TO ANDREW'S OPEN HAND, HE PUSHED ANDREW TO THE OPPOSITE SIDE, PRETENDING AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED.



WALKING DOWN THE HALLWAY, ANDREW THOUGHT, FUCK THESE RADICALS.

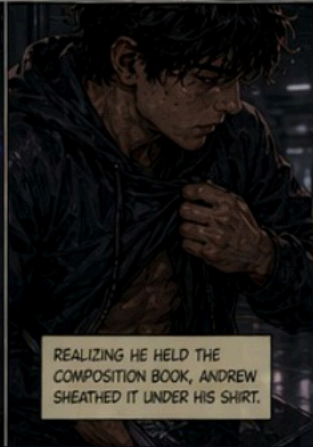
HIS MIND CLOUDED WITH MORE AND MORE STRESS.

HAVING PAST KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE THE CAFETERIA WAS LOCATED, HE WALKED IN THAT DIRECTION.

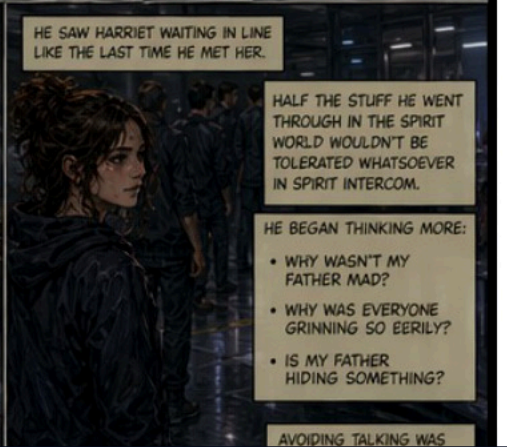


CIRCUMNAVIGATING HIS WAY THROUGH THE HALLWAYS, HE FOUND THE CAFETERIA ENTRANCE.

OPENING THE RED DOORS, HE SAW THE USUAL LAB RESEARCHER GROUPS SITTING AT THEIR USUAL TABLES.



REALIZING HE HELD THE COMPOSITION BOOK, ANDREW SHEATHED IT UNDER HIS SHIRT.



HE SAW HARRIET WAITING IN LINE LIKE THE LAST TIME HE MET HER.

HALF THE STUFF HE WENT THROUGH IN THE SPIRIT WORLD WOULDN'T BE TOLERATED WHATSOEVER IN SPIRIT INTERCOM.

HE BEGAN THINKING MORE:

- WHY WASN'T MY FATHER MAD?
- WHY WAS EVERYONE GRINNING SO EERILY?
- IS MY FATHER HIDING SOMETHING?

AVOIDING TALKING WAS HIS BEST BET.

SECOND TIME WITNESSING THE CHEF BOTS INC, THE CHEF BOT ASKED, "WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TODAY, ANDREW?"

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TODAY, ANDREW?

SO THEY IMPLEMENTED MY NAME IN THE SYSTEM?

THAT'S COOL. I'LL HAVE THE PASTA.

THE ROBOT SAID, "PLEASE SPECIFY THE NUMERIC VALUE OF YOUR DESIGNATED ENTREE AND ASSORTED—"

PLEASE SPECIFY THE NUMERIC VALUE OF YOUR DESIGNATED ENTREE AND ASSORTED—

ONE PASTA BOWL AND ONE CASSEROLE.

ANDREW COULD ANTICIPATE THEIR ALGORITHMIC DIALOGUE.

"HOW MANY CARROTS?" THE BOT ASKED.

HOW MANY CARROTS?

THREE.

TIP?

THE CHEF BOT STOOD STILL.

ANDREW DIDN'T SAY A WORD AND WALKED ALONGSIDE THE COUNTER.

THE OTHER CHEF BOTS BEGAN PREPARING HIS MEAL.

FASCINATED LAST TIME BY THEIR WORK, ANDREW WASN'T THIS TIME. HE ONLY NOTICED THE FLUKES IN THEIR ROBOTICAL MECHANISMS.

HIS FOOD WAS READY AND SERVED ON A TRAY.

ANDREW GAVE NO THANKS OR REMARKS OF APPRECIATION.

FINDING HARRIET, HE SAT AT HER TABLE.

THAT WAS AN ADVENTURE LAST WEEK, RIGHT ANDREW?

YEAH, IT WAS. IT WAS A BIT CHAOTIC THOUGH.

THIS IS A NURTURED MEATBALL. DO YOU KNOW WHAT A NURTURED MEATBALL IS?

SORRY, WHAT DID YOU SAY?

WARY IF ANYONE WAS SPYING ON HIM, ANDREW LOOKED AROUND.

ANDREW?

I'M ASKING IF YOU KNOW WHAT A NURTURED MEATBALL IS?

WHAT? NO, I DON'T. LOOK, HARRIET, I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT. I HAVE OTHER THINGS ON MY MIND.

LIKE WHAT?

DOESN'T MATTER. LET ME JUST EAT MY FOOD.

HE WAS THINKING WHERE ALL THE SECURITY GUARDS WERE. HE WOULD HAVE TO START MEMORIZING THEIR ID BADGE NUMBERS IF HE WANTED TO CALL THEM BY THEIR NAMES.

YOU KNOW WHAT, ANDREW? I DON'T LIKE YOUR ATTITUDE. JUST RELAX FOR A BIT. WE JUST COMPLETED A HUGE PROJECT. ISN'T THAT SOMETHING WORTH CELEBRATING?

NO, AND I DON'T WHY YOU'RE CELEBRATING EITHER. DO YOU ACTUALLY THINK WE'RE ABSOLVED WITH ALL THE STUFF WE DID IN THE SPIRIT WORLD? I FEEL LIKE THEY'RE HIDING SOMETHING FROM US.

SHE DROPPED HER SILVERWARE.

HOW SO?

THEIR FAKE SMILES, THEIR FAKE POSITIVE ENERGY, AND THEIR FAKE HOSPITALITY. IT'S ALL FAKE.

THEY WERE JUST BEING WELCOMING.

NOT LIKELY. THEY WERE SO GENERAL IN THEIR STATEMENTS. NOT ONE OF THEM RESORTED TO TELLING A DETAIL OF OUR ENDEAVOUR.

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. THEY SORT OF SPOKE WITH A MASK OF IGNORANCE.

BUT THAT SHOULDN'T EQUATE TO YOU ALWAYS BEING SO STRESSED. SO WHAT WERE THEY GENERAL? THEY'RE NOT THREATENING US—OR SOMETHING SIMILAR TO THAT NATURE.

OF COURSE, THEY'RE NOT THREATENING US. I'M JUST A LITTLE SUSPICIOUS.

SPIRIT INTERCOM TOGETHER. FOREVER.



ANDREW, I GOT THE HONOR OF GETTING TO YOU ON THE ENDEAVOUR, AND WHAT I'VE SEEN IS THAT YOU'RE A PRETTY TENSE GUY. SO IF I WERE YOU, I WOULD BE LESS PARANOID ABOUT THIS WHOLE SITUATION THAT YOU THINK YOU'RE IN.

SO YOU DON'T TRUST MY JUDGEMENT? HOW COULD YOU SAY THAT?

FED UP WITH HIS HYPER REJECTIONS, SHE SAID,

ANDREW, YOU'RE SO FULL OF YOURSELF. YOU NEED TO RETHINK THE GRAND SCHEME OF EVERYTHING.

CARRYING HER TRAY, SHE DEPARTED FROM THE TABLE AND SAT AT A DIFFERENT TABLE IN THE OPPOSITE CORNER OF THE CAFETERIA.



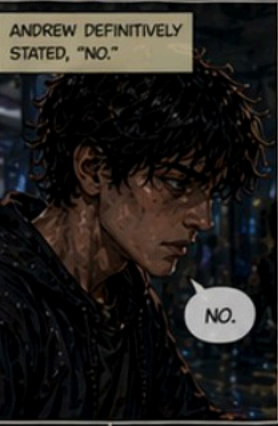
ANDREW MUFFLED HIS SWEARS. HE WAS ANGERED BY HARRIET YET AGAIN. PUTTING HIS ENERGY ON FINISHING HIS FOOD, HE CLEANSED ALL THE CRUMBS FROM HIS TRAY.



HE CARRIED HIS TRAY AND DISPOSED OF IT AT THE COUNTER.

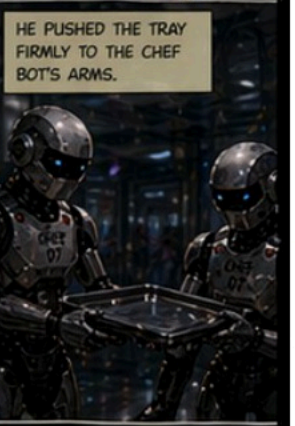


WOULD YOU RECONSIDER FOR A TIP?



ANDREW DEFINITELY STATED, "NO."

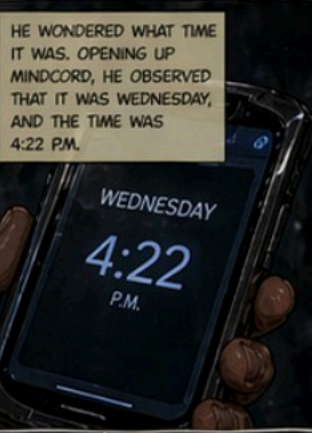
NO.



HE PUSHED THE TRAY FIRMLY TO THE CHEF BOT'S ARMS.



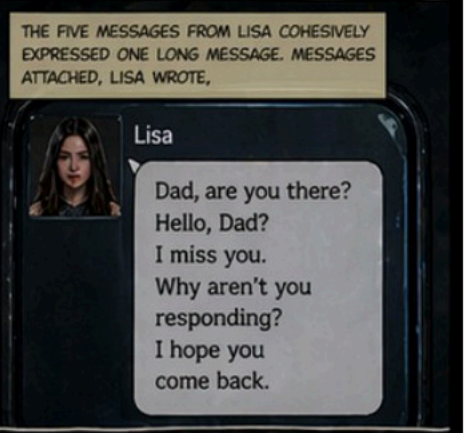
TENSION WAS BUILDING INSIDE OF HIM. EYEING HARRIET ON HIS WAY OUT, HE SHOVED THE CAFETERIA DOOR OPEN.



HE WONDERED WHAT TIME IT WAS. OPENING UP MINDCORD, HE OBSERVED THAT IT WAS WEDNESDAY, AND THE TIME WAS 4:22 P.M.

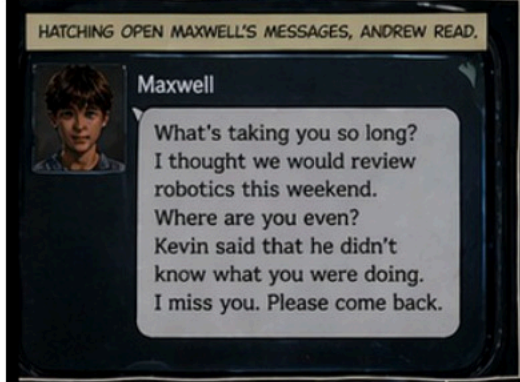


CHECKING HIS NOTIFICATIONS, HE SAW FIVE MESSAGES FROM LISA, TWO MESSAGES FROM MAXWELL, AND ONE MESSAGE FROM KEVIN.



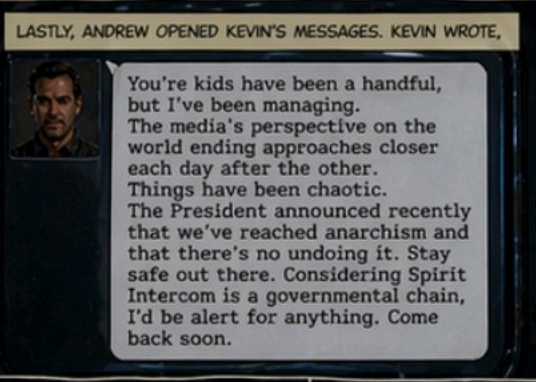
THE FIVE MESSAGES FROM LISA COHESIVELY EXPRESSED ONE LONG MESSAGE. MESSAGES ATTACHED, LISA WROTE,

Lisa  
Dad, are you there?  
Hello, Dad?  
I miss you.  
Why aren't you responding?  
I hope you come back.



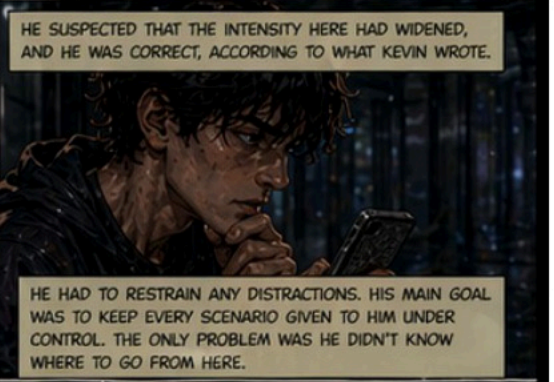
HATCHING OPEN MAXWELL'S MESSAGES, ANDREW READ.

Maxwell  
What's taking you so long? I thought we would review robotics this weekend. Where are you even? Kevin said that he didn't know what you were doing. I miss you. Please come back.



LASTLY, ANDREW OPENED KEVIN'S MESSAGES. KEVIN WROTE,

You're kids have been a handful, but I've been managing. The media's perspective on the world ending approaches closer each day after the other. Things have been chaotic. The President announced recently that we've reached anarchism and that there's no undoing it. Stay safe out there. Considering Spirit Intercom is a governmental chain, I'd be alert for anything. Come back soon.



HE SUSPECTED THAT THE INTENSITY HERE HAD WIDENED, AND HE WAS CORRECT, ACCORDING TO WHAT KEVIN WROTE.

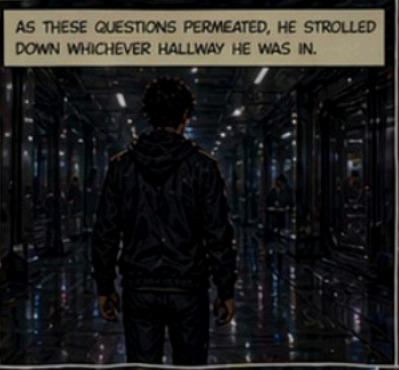
HE HAD TO RESTRAIN ANY DISTRACTIONS. HIS MAIN GOAL WAS TO KEEP EVERY SCENARIO GIVEN TO HIM UNDER CONTROL. THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS HE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO GO FROM HERE.



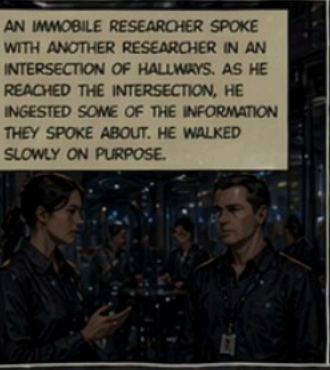
HE TEMPORARILY TICKED OFF HARRIET, AND HE HAD NO CLUE WHERE HIS FAMILY RELATIVES WERE. HE THOUGHT,

CAN I RETURN TO MY HOUSE?

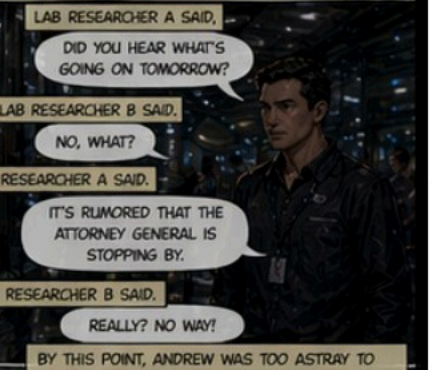
WOULD IT BE SAFE TO LEAVE THE LABS?



AS THESE QUESTIONS PERMEATED, HE STROLLED DOWN WHICHEVER HALLWAY HE WAS IN.



AN IMMOBILE RESEARCHER SPOKE WITH ANOTHER RESEARCHER IN AN INTERSECTION OF HALLWAYS. AS HE REACHED THE INTERSECTION, HE INGESTED SOME OF THE INFORMATION THEY SPOKE ABOUT. HE WALKED SLOWLY ON PURPOSE.



LAB RESEARCHER A SAID,

DID YOU HEAR WHAT'S GOING ON TOMORROW?

LAB RESEARCHER B SAID,

NO, WHAT?

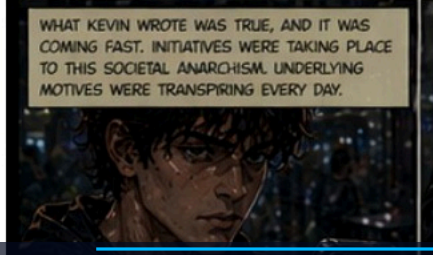
RESEARCHER A SAID,

IT'S RUMORED THAT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IS STOPPING BY.

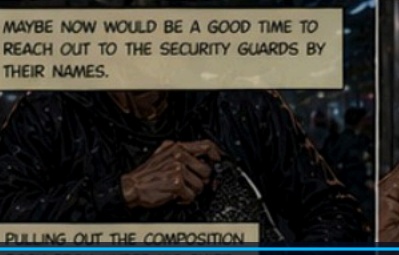
RESEARCHER B SAID,

REALLY? NO WAY!

BY THIS POINT, ANDREW WAS TOO ASTRAY TO UNDERSTAND ANY MORE OF THEIR CONVERSATION.

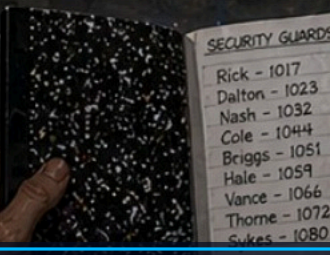


WHAT KEVIN WROTE WAS TRUE, AND IT WAS COMING FAST. INITIATIVES WERE TAKING PLACE TO THIS SOCIETAL ANARCHISM. UNDERLYING MOTIVES WERE TRANSPERING EVERY DAY.

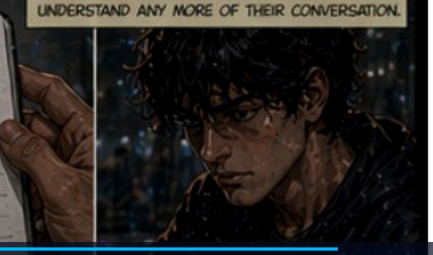


MAYBE NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO REACH OUT TO THE SECURITY GUARDS BY THEIR NAMES.

PULLING OUT THE COMPOSITION BOOK FROM UNDER HIS SHIRT, HE OPENED IT.



SECURITY GUARDS  
Rick - 1017  
Dalton - 1023  
Nash - 1032  
Cole - 1044  
Briggs - 1051  
Hale - 1059  
Vance - 1066  
Thorne - 1072  
Sykes - 1080





ANDREW, I GOT THE HONOR OF GETTING TO YOU ON THE ENDEAVOUR, AND WHAT I'VE SEEN IS THAT YOU'RE A PRETTY TENSE GUY. SO IF I WERE YOU, I WOULD BE LESS PARANOID ABOUT THIS WHOLE SITUATION THAT YOU THINK YOU'RE IN.

SO YOU DON'T TRUST MY JUDGEMENT? HOW COULD YOU SAY THAT?

FED UP WITH HIS HYPER REJECTIONS, SHE SAID,

ANDREW, YOU'RE SO FULL OF YOURSELF. YOU NEED TO RETHINK THE GRAND SCHEME OF EVERYTHING.

CARRYING HER TRAY, SHE DEPARTED FROM THE TABLE AND SAT AT A DIFFERENT TABLE IN THE OPPOSITE CORNER OF THE CAFETERIA.



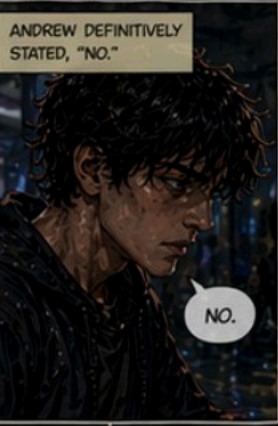
ANDREW MUFFLED HIS SWEARS. HE WAS ANGERED BY HARRIET YET AGAIN. PUTTING HIS ENERGY ON FINISHING HIS FOOD, HE CLEANSSED ALL THE CRUMBS FROM HIS TRAY.



HE CARRIED HIS TRAY AND DISPOSED OF IT AT THE COUNTER.



WOULD YOU RECONSIDER FOR A TIP?



ANDREW DEFINITELY STATED, "NO."

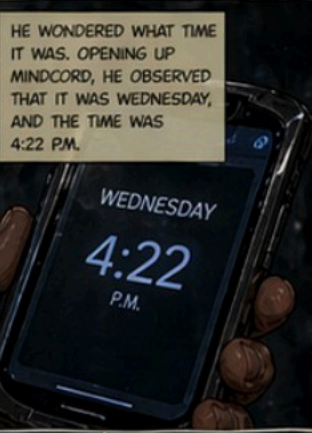
NO.



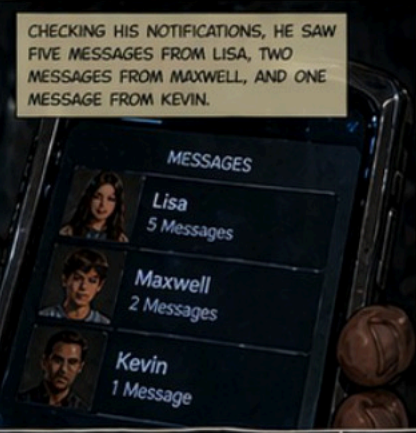
HE PUSHED THE TRAY FIRMLY TO THE CHEF BOT'S ARMS.



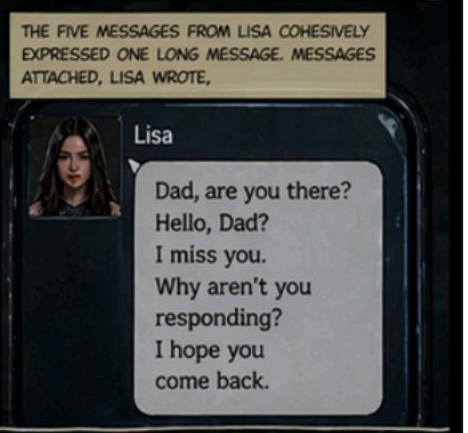
TENSION WAS BUILDING INSIDE OF HIM. EYEING HARRIET ON HIS WAY OUT, HE SHOVED THE CAFETERIA DOOR OPEN.



HE WONDERED WHAT TIME IT WAS. OPENING UP MINDCORD, HE OBSERVED THAT IT WAS WEDNESDAY, AND THE TIME WAS 4:22 P.M.

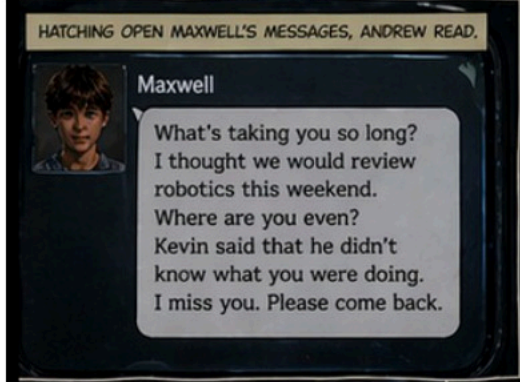


CHECKING HIS NOTIFICATIONS, HE SAW FIVE MESSAGES FROM LISA, TWO MESSAGES FROM MAXWELL, AND ONE MESSAGE FROM KEVIN.



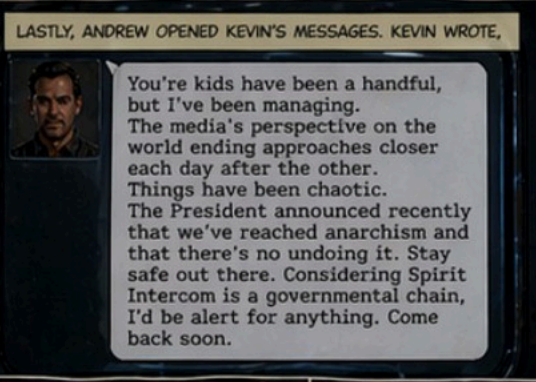
THE FIVE MESSAGES FROM LISA COHESIVELY EXPRESSED ONE LONG MESSAGE. MESSAGES ATTACHED, LISA WROTE,

Lisa  
Dad, are you there?  
Hello, Dad?  
I miss you.  
Why aren't you responding?  
I hope you come back.



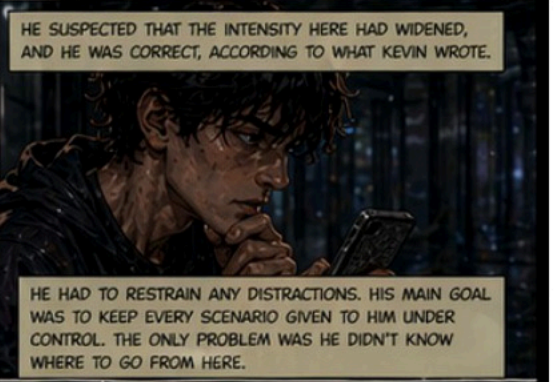
HATCHING OPEN MAXWELL'S MESSAGES, ANDREW READ.

Maxwell  
What's taking you so long? I thought we would review robotics this weekend. Where are you even? Kevin said that he didn't know what you were doing. I miss you. Please come back.



LASTLY, ANDREW OPENED KEVIN'S MESSAGES. KEVIN WROTE,

You're kids have been a handful, but I've been managing. The media's perspective on the world ending approaches closer each day after the other. Things have been chaotic. The President announced recently that we've reached anarchism and that there's no undoing it. Stay safe out there. Considering Spirit Intercom is a governmental chain, I'd be alert for anything. Come back soon.



HE SUSPECTED THAT THE INTENSITY HERE HAD WIDENED, AND HE WAS CORRECT, ACCORDING TO WHAT KEVIN WROTE.

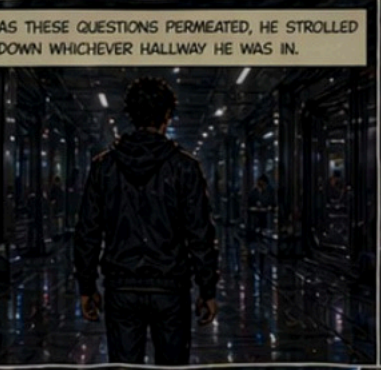
HE HAD TO RESTRAIN ANY DISTRACTIONS. HIS MAIN GOAL WAS TO KEEP EVERY SCENARIO GIVEN TO HIM UNDER CONTROL. THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS HE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO GO FROM HERE.



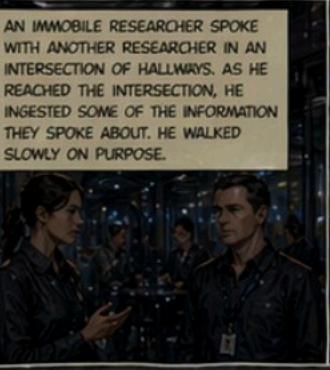
HE TEMPORARILY TICKED OFF HARRIET, AND HE HAD NO CLUE WHERE HIS FAMILY RELATIVES WERE. HE THOUGHT,

CAN I RETURN TO MY HOUSE?

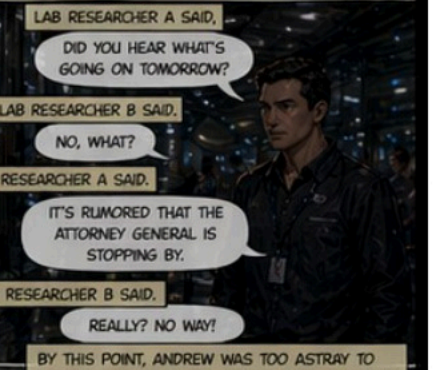
WOULD IT BE SAFE TO LEAVE THE LABS?



AS THESE QUESTIONS PERMEATED, HE STROLLED DOWN WHICHEVER HALLWAY HE WAS IN.



AN IMMOBILE RESEARCHER SPOKE WITH ANOTHER RESEARCHER IN AN INTERSECTION OF HALLWAYS. AS HE REACHED THE INTERSECTION, HE INGESTED SOME OF THE INFORMATION THEY SPOKE ABOUT. HE WALKED SLOWLY ON PURPOSE.



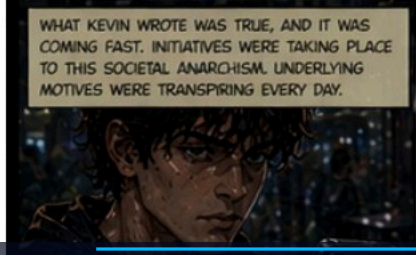
LAB RESEARCHER A SAID,  
DID YOU HEAR WHAT'S GOING ON TOMORROW?

LAB RESEARCHER B SAID,  
NO, WHAT?

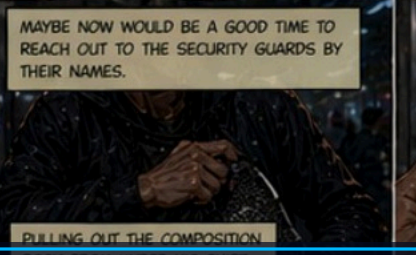
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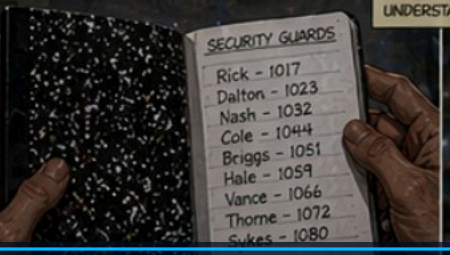


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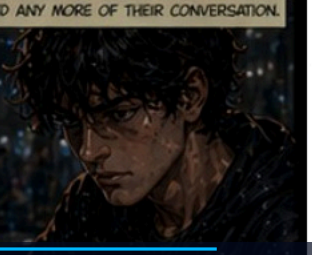


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HE STUDIED EACH NAME THAT WAS ASSOCIATED WITH EACH SECURITY NUMBER. AFTER A FEW MINUTES, HE COMPLETELY MEMORIZED EACH NUMBER.

ID NUMBER	NAME
19293704	Morgan
20304815	Samuel
42526037	Rufus
30817296	DeShawn
56180422	Trent
77102918	Blake
18460933	Noian
66273155	Jace
90214577	Victor
33176029	Elliot

HE HAD A BIT OF A PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY, SO IT DIDNT TAKE TOO LONG.

ANALYZING WHERE MOST GUARDS WOULD BE, HE DETERMINED THEY WOULD BE NEAR THE ENTRANCE OR EVEN THE COMPLEX WHERE THEY PARKED HIS CAR.

ESCAPING OUT OF THE HALLWAYS, HE FOUND HIS WAY TO THE MAIN COMPLEX.

HE STOOD RIGHT BY THE ELEVATOR THAT WAS ENCIRCLED BY THE GARDEN. NEAR THE ENTRANCE, A LOUNGE HAD SMALL GRAY COUCHES AND CHAIRS FOR RESEARCHERS TO RELAX ON.

HE SPOTTED A SECURITY GUARD BY THE LOUNGE. APPROACHING HIM, HE SAW THE NUMBER 19293704 LISTED ON HIS SECURITY BADGE.

NOW IN SPEAKING RANGE, ANDREW SAID.

GOOD AFTERNOON, MORGAN. GREAT DAY, HUH?

SURE IS.

AS HE MOVED PAST MORGAN, ANDREW GLANCED BEHIND. THE GUARD APPEARED EXCITED.

CALCULATING THIS, HE CONCLUDED THAT THE GUARD'S NAME WAS MORGAN.

NOTING HIS PRESENCE, MORGAN REALIZED IT WAS THE RENOWNED SON OF SPIRIT INTERCOM. HE APPRECIATED THE COMMENT.

IF HE KEPT THIS UP, HE WOULD BE ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE RADICALS NOT KILLING HIM.

THERE WAS ANOTHER GUARD NEAR MORGAN, BUT REAPPROACHING BACK TO THE SAME GUARD'S VICINITY WOULD ERODE AWKWARDNESS.

STEPPING FOOT ON WHERE THE ENTRANCE WAS, ANDREW WITNESSED A BLUE-SUITED GUARD. 20304815 WAS HIS NUMBER AND HIS NAME WAS SAMUEL.

CALLING THE GUARD BY HIS NAME, ANDREW SAID.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PROTECTION. KEEP IT UP!

THANKS, JR. RUTANO!

LEAVING THE LOUNGE AREA, HE TOLD HIMSELF TO TRY IT OUT ON THE GUARDS BY THE ENTRANCE.

SPIRIT INTERCOM  
TOGETHER. FOREVER.

20304815  
SAMUEL  
SECURITY

SAMUEL EXEMPLIFIED. ANDREW FELT ACCOMPLISHED.

THE QUESTION WAS HOW MANY GUARDS DID IT TAKE TO PLEASE TO EARN THE SECURITY'S TRUST AS A WHOLE?

HE CIRCLED AROUND THE FLOOR IN SEARCH OF A GUARD. WHISTLING CASUALLY, HE SAW A BLUE-SUITED GUARD NEARING HIS PRESENCE. THE NUMBER READ 42526037.

WITH A QUEER EYE, RUFUS SAID.

HELLO, ANDREW. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

DESIRING TO TRY OUT MORE NAMES, HE WENT TO THE ELEVATOR. PRESSING FLOOR 2, HE SCOUTED IF ANY OTHER GUARDS WOULD BE THERE.

PERCOLATING HIS MINDFUL ARCHIVES, HE REALIZED THE NUMBER SIGNIFIED RUFUS. LOOKING AT HIS DISTINCT FACIAL FEATURES, HE SAW THAT IT WAS RUFUS. JUDGING FROM HIS EYEBROWS, ANDREW NOTICED HIS SUSPICION.

42326035  
RUFUS  
SECURITY

"JUST EXPLORING," ANDREW REPLIED.

HAVE YOUR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS BEEN PLANNED?

FOLLOW ME.

RUFUS WENT INSIDE THE ELEVATOR AND CLOSED THE DOOR AFTER ANDREW CAME IN.

SO WHERE DO I SLEEP? AND HOW LONG AM I EXPECTED TO BE HERE?

ON THE ELEVATOR KEYPAD, RUFUS CLICKED FLOOR -1.

3 2 1 -1

RUFUS GRABBED ANDREW'S HAND WITH GREAT TENACITY. ANDREW SLOWLY MISGUIDED HIS HAND AWAY BUT KEPT FOLLOWING HIM.

ANDREW WANTED TO ASK WHETHER OR NOT HE COULD STAY AT HIS HOME, BUT HE KNEW THIS COULD CAUSE A RUPTURE.

ANDREW DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE UNDERGROUND FLOOR WASN'T ENTITLED AS FLOOR 0, CONSIDERING THAT FLOOR 1 WAS ONE FLOOR ABOVE. MATHEMATICALLY, THE FLOOR NUMBERS DIDN'T APPEAL TO HIM.

RUFUS SAID.

YOU'LL BE SLEEPING WHERE OUR SCIENTISTS SLEEP.

THEY LIVE HERE? I DIDN'T KNOW THAT.

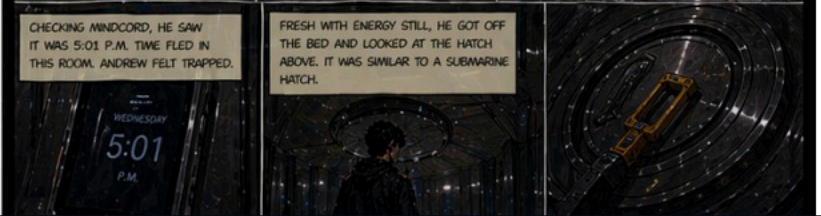
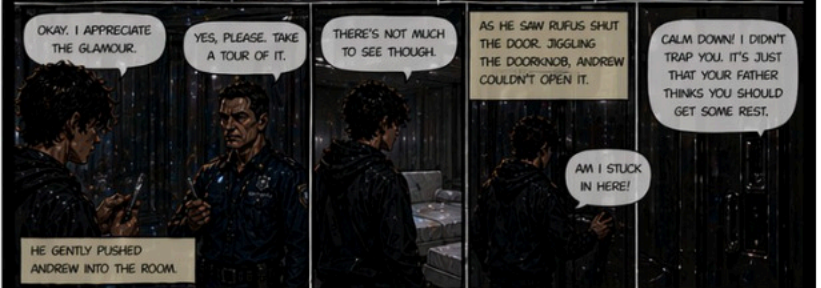
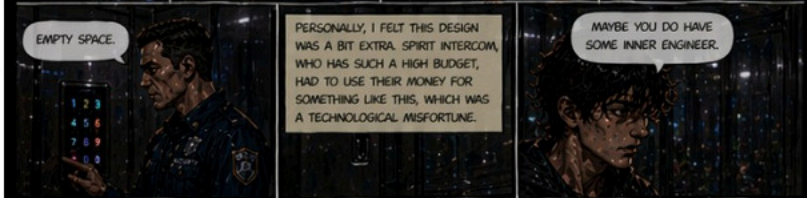
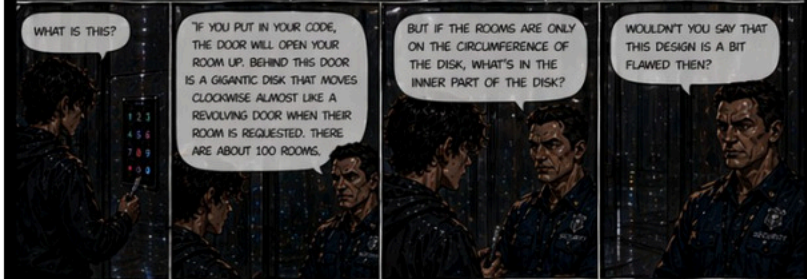
AS THE ELEVATOR PLUMMETED TWO FLOORS DOWN, RUFUS SAID.

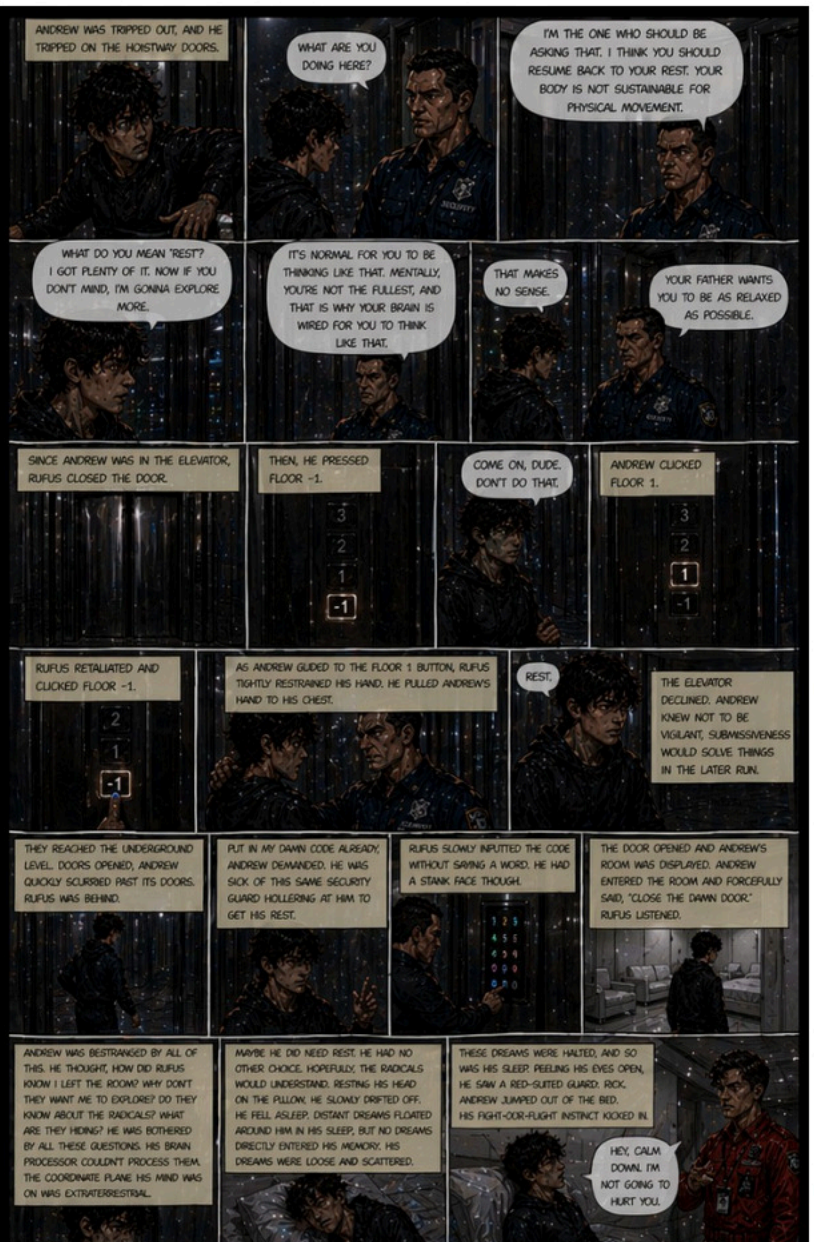
YOU ARE EXPECTED TO SLEEP HERE UNTIL YOUR FATHER IS SATISFIED WITH EVERYTHING. WHEN ALL WELL IS WELL.

SINCE THEY SLEEP UNDERGROUND, DOESN'T THAT COOL DOWN THE STRATA TEMPERATURE, THUS ALLOWING POSSIBLE HEALTH PROBLEMS?

ANDREW STUDIED RUFUS' FRONTAL EXPRESSION. THE FACE WASN'T STANK OR ASSURING. IT WAS DEADPAN.

THE ELEVATOR DINGED ELECTRONICALLY AND ARTIFICIALLY.





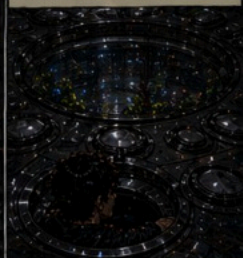
FRESH WITH ENERGY STILL, HE GOT OFF THE BED AND LOOKED AT THE HATCH ABOVE. IT WAS SIMILAR TO A SUBMARINE HATCH.



WRAPPING HIS FINGERS AROUND THE YELLOW HANDLE, HE PULLED. IT DIDN'T BUDGE. THEREFORE, HE PUSHED. THE HATCH DID BUDGE, BUT IT BEGAN TO BUDGE VERY SLOWLY. RAISING TWO HANDS ABOVE, HE INCREASED THE HATCH'S MOMENTUM.



BEFORE LONG, THE HATCH FINALLY OPENED. AS A SUBMARINE HATCH USUALLY AMPLIFIES A WHALE'S BREATH OF AIR, THIS HATCH DID NOT.



PEEKING HIS HEAD OUT OF THE HATCH, HE SAW THE OTHER HUNDRED HATCHES ARRANGED IN THE SHAPE OF A LARGE CIRCLE. STRANGELY, THE FLOOR, WASN'T WHITE HERE. IT WAS GRAY. HE COULD SEE THE OPEN QUAD AREA IN THE OPPOSITE CORNER OF THE MAIN COMPLEX.



UNSURE ABOUT LEAVING THE HATCH OPEN OR NOT, HE LET IT BE. ATTRACTING HIMSELF BACK TO THE MAIN AREA, HE NEEDED THE APPROVAL OF MORE SECURITY GUARDS. HE SAW A WHITE-SUITED GUARD NEAR THE LOUNGE. MOLDING HIS HAIR BACK INTO ORDER, HE WALKED LIGHTLY.



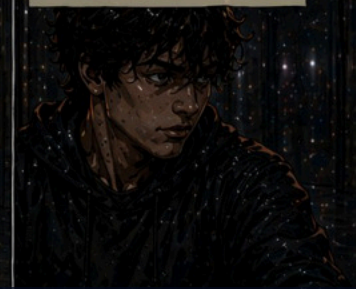
A YOUNG MAN WAS IN A WHITE SUIT. HE SEEMED APPROACHABLE. ROBERT'S EYE WAS IN HIS POCKET. SEEING THE MAN'S NUMBER, ANDREW READ 73062524.



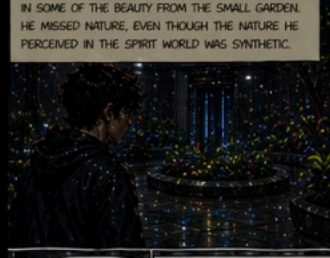
Hi, Zachary! Great job so far!

Thanks, J.R. Rutandy

ANDREW THOUGHT, I DON'T NEED NO REST. THE RADICALS, LOOKING THROUGH HIS INGRAINED CAMERA, WERE PROBABLY APPLAUDING EVERY TIME HE TALKED TO A GUARD.



LEAVING THE LOUNGE, HE WENT TOWARDS THE ELEVATOR. THERE HAD TO BE MORE SECURITY GUARDS ON THE UPPER LEVELS TO GREET. WAITING FOR THE ELEVATOR DOOR TO OPEN UP, ANDREW TOOK IN SOME OF THE BEAUTY FROM THE SMALL GARDEN. HE MISSED NATURE, EVEN THOUGH THE NATURE HE PERCEIVED IN THE SPIRIT WORLD WAS SYNTHETIC.



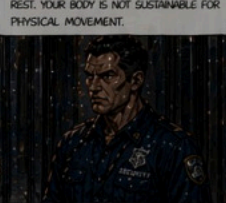
AS THE DOOR OPENED UP, RUFUS' BODY EXPANDED SYMMETRICALLY.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



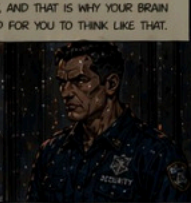
I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE ASKING THAT. I THINK YOU SHOULD RESUME BACK TO YOUR REST. YOUR BODY IS NOT SUSTAINABLE FOR PHYSICAL MOVEMENT.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN "REST"? I GOT PLENTY OF IT. NOW IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'M GONNA EXPLORE MORE.



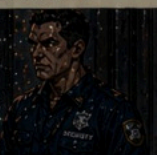
IT'S NORMAL OPENED UP, RUFUS' BODY LIKE THAT. MENTALLY, YOU'RE NOT THE FULLEST, AND THAT IS WHY YOUR BRAIN IS WIRED FOR YOU TO THINK LIKE THAT.



WHAT MAKES NO SENSE.



YOUR FATHER WANTS YOU TO BE AS RELAXED AS POSSIBLE.



SINCE ANDREW WAS IN THE ELEVATOR, RUFUS CLOSED THE DOOR. THEN, HE PRESSED FLOOR -1.



COME ON, DUDE. DON'T DO THAT.

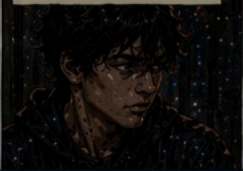


RUFUS RETALIATED AND CLICKED FLOOR -1. AS ANDREW GLIDED TO THE FLOOR 1 BUTTON, RUFUS TIGHTLY RESTRAINED HIS HAND. HE PULLED ANDREW'S HAND TO HIS CHEST.



REST.

THE ELEVATOR DECLINED. ANDREW KNEW NOT TO BE VIGILANT. SUBMISSIVENESS WOULD SOLVE THINGS IN THE LATER RUN.



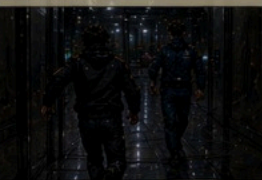
THEY REACHED THE UNDERGROUND LEVEL. DOORS OPENED. THE ELEVATOR SAW ANDREW QUICKLY SCURRY PAST ITS DOORS. RUFUS WAS BEHIND.



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THEY REACHED THE UNDERGROUND LEVEL. DOORS OPENED, THE ELEVATOR SAW ANDREW QUICKLY SCURRY PAST ITS DOORS. RUFUS WAS BEHIND.



PUT IN MY DAMN CODE ALREADY.



ANDREW DEMANDED, HE WAS SICK OF THIS SAME SECURITY GUARD HOLLERING AT HIM TO GET HIS REST.

RUFUS SLOWLY INPUTTED THE CODE WITHOUT SAYING A WORD. HE HAD A STANK FACE THOUGH.



THE DOOR OPENED AND ANDREW'S ROOM WAS DISPLAYED.



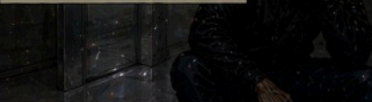
ANDREW ENTERED THE ROOM AND FORCEFULLY SAID, "CLOSE THE DAMN DOOR." RUFUS LISTENED.



ANDREW WAS BISTRANGED BY ALL OF THIS. HE THOUGHT, HOW DID RUFUS KNOW I LEFT THE ROOM? WHY DON'T THEY WANT ME TO EXPLORE? DO THEY KNOW ABOUT THE RADICALS? WHAT ARE THEY HIDING?



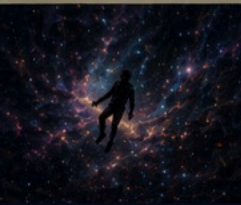
HE WAS BOTHERED BY ALL THESE QUESTIONS. HIS BRAIN PROCESSOR COULDN'T PROCESS THEM. THE COORDINATE PLANE HIS MIND WAS ON WAS EXTRATERRESTRIAL. MAYBE HE DID NEED REST. HE HAD NO OTHER CHOICE. HOPEFULLY, THE RADICALS WOULD UNDERSTAND.



RESTING HIS HEAD ON THE PILLOW, HE SLOWLY DRIFTED OFF. HE FELL ASLEEP.



DISTANT DREAMS FLOATED AROUND HIM IN HIS SLEEP, BUT NO DREAMS DIRECTLY ENTERED HIS MEMORY. HIS DREAMS WERE LOOSE AND SCATTERED.



THESE DREAMS WERE HALTED, AND SO WAS HIS SLEEP. FEELING HIS EYES OPEN, HE SAW A RED-SUITED GUARD. RICK.



HEY, CALM DOWN. I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU.



WHAT IS IT? AM I IN TROUBLE AGAIN?



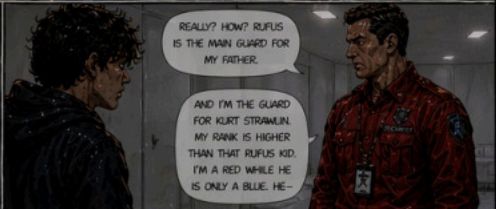
NO. WALLACE TOLD ME WHAT YOU RECENTLY HAD TO GO THROUGH, WHAT WITH THE GUARD FORCING YOU DOWN HERE AND YOUR INABILITY TO APPROACH THE OTHER GUARDS. THAT IS WHY I'M HERE TO FIX THAT.



HOW THOUGH? WHENEVER I LEAVE THIS ROOM, A GUARD NAMED RUFUS IS NOTIFIED. I DON'T KNOW HOW HE GETS NOTIFIED, BUT HE JUST DOES.



I DON'T THINK RUFUS WILL ARGUE WITH MY COMMANDS. I HAVE HIGHER SECURITY PERSONNEL THAN WHAT HE HAS.



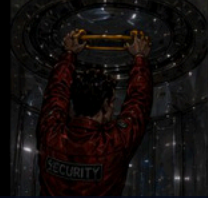
REALLY? HOW? RUFUS IS THE MAIN GUARD FOR MY FATHER.

AND I'M THE GUARD FOR KURT STRAWLIN. MY RANK IS HIGHER THAN THAT RUFUS KID. I'M A RED WHILE HE IS ONLY A BLUE. HE--

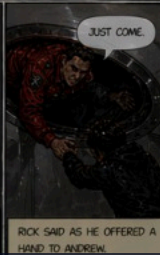
COLORS SIGNIFY SECURITY HIERARCHY? YEAH. FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST, IT GOES BLACK, WHICH IS ONLY KURT; RED, WHICH IS ME; BLUE, WHICH IS RUFUS; YELLOW, AND WHITE GUARDS WHILE KURT HAS CONTROL OVER ALL GUARD COLORS. WHEN I TELL YOU I HAVE THINGS UNDER CONTROL, I LITERALLY DO. LET'S GET THE FLUX OUT OF HERE NOW.



RICK WITH HIS PROFOUND STRENGTH EASILY HATCHED THE HATCH OPEN.



WHERE ARE WE GOING?

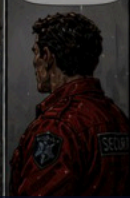


JUST COME.

BY THE WAY, WALLACE WAS IMPRESSED WITH YOUR SECURITY INTERCHANGES. HE IS FEELING MORE AND MORE CONFIDENT THAT YOU'LL OBTAIN THE LOOK COMBOS.



YOU'RE GONNA MEET THE HEAD SECURITY.



RICK SAID AS HE OFFERED A HAND TO ANDREW.

ANDREW ACCEPTED HIS HAND AND ABORTED OUT OF THE HATCH.



"HOLD UP," ANDREW SAID. HE STOPPED WALKING.

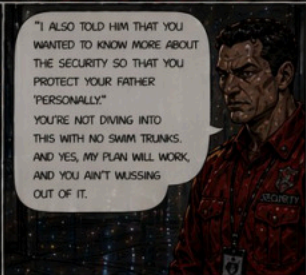
"THAT'S RIGHT," RICK SAID. I'VE ALREADY TALKED WITH KURT THAT YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE FIELD OF SECURITY.

"HE'S GONNA GIVE YOU A TOUR OF OUR MAIN STATION. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS POSITIVELY AFFIRM ANYTHING HE SAYS. AGREE WITH EVERYTHING HE SAYS, BUT DON'T BE A TOTAL KISS-ASS. CAN'T MAKE IT TOO OBVIOUS.

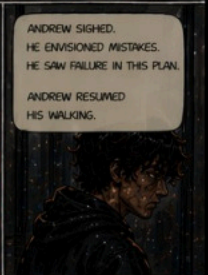


"MINDCORD REVEALED  
7:22 PM.

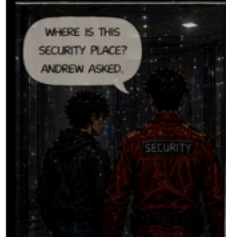
"YOU'RE CRAZY, MAN! YOU THINK THAT HELL JUST GIVE ME THE COMBOS IF I AGREE WITH HIS CRAFT. THIS IS SO FAR-FETCHED!



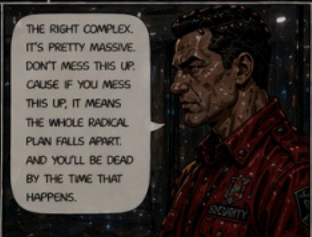
"I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT YOU WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE SECURITY SO THAT YOU PROTECT YOUR FATHER 'PERSONALLY.' YOU'RE NOT DIVING INTO THIS WITH NO SWIM TRUNKS. AND YES, MY PLAN WILL WORK, AND YOU AIN'T WUSSING OUT OF IT.



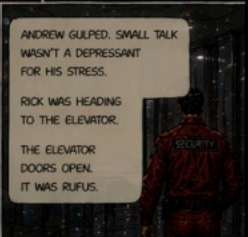
ANDREW SIGHED. HE ENVISIONED MISTAKES. HE SAW FAILURE IN THIS PLAN. ANDREW RESUMED HIS WALKING.



WHERE IS THIS SECURITY PLACE? ANDREW ASKED.



THE RIGHT COMPLEX. IT'S PRETTY MASSIVE. DON'T MESS THIS UP. CAUSE IF YOU MESS THIS UP, IT MEANS THE WHOLE RADICAL PLAN FALLS APART. AND YOU'LL BE DEAD BY THE TIME THAT HAPPENS.



ANDREW GULPED. SMALL TALK WASN'T A DEPRESSANT FOR HIS STRESS. RICK WAS HEADING TO THE ELEVATOR. THE ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN. IT WAS RUFUS.



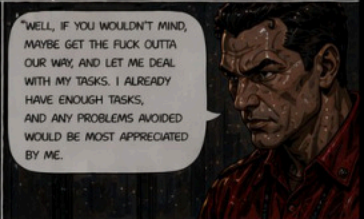
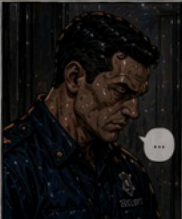
HELLO, SIR. I THINK ANDREW MUST RETURN TO HIS REST.

I THINK NOT. I'LL BE TAKING CARE OF HIM FOR NOW.

BUT ROBERT RUTANIO COMMANDS THAT--



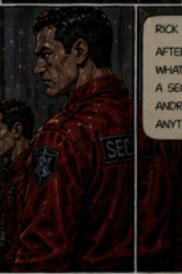
HEY, RUFUS, ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO DISOBEY MY AUTHORITY?



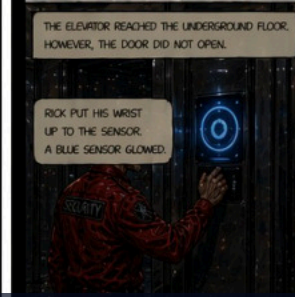
"WELL, IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND, MAYBE GET THE FUCK OUTTA OUR WAY, AND LET ME DEAL WITH MY TASKS. I ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH TASKS, AND ANY PROBLEMS AVOIDED WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATED BY ME.



RUFUS, APPEARING WEAKER PHYSICALLY, LOOKED DOWN AND WALKED PAST THEM. ANDREW HAD WITNESSED THE PURE DEFINITION OF DOMINANCE.

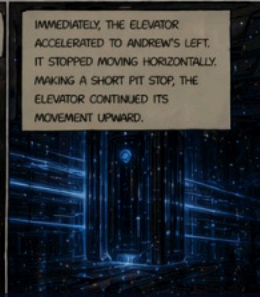


RICK CLICKED FLOOR -1. AFTER WITNESSING WHAT HE JUST DID TO A SECURITY GUARD, ANDREW DIDN'T QUESTION ANYTHING RICK DID.



THE ELEVATOR REACHED THE UNDERGROUND FLOOR. HOWEVER, THE DOOR DID NOT OPEN.

RICK PUT HIS WRIST UP TO THE SENSOR. A BLUE SENSOR GLOWED.



IMMEDIATELY, THE ELEVATOR ACCELERATED TO ANDREW'S LEFT. IT STOPPED MOVING HORIZONTALLY, MAKING A SHORT PIT STOP, THE ELEVATOR CONTINUED ITS MOVEMENT UPWARD.



IT MOVED UP ONE FLOOR. THE ELEVATOR DOOR OPENED. A WHOLE NEW DIMENSION OF SPIRIT INTERCOM WAS INTRODUCED.

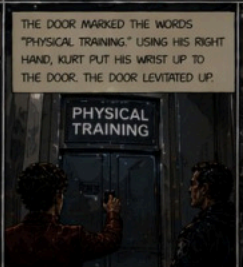


"I SHEE, I SHEE," KURT SAID. EVERY TIME HE SPOKE A CONSONANT, HIS TONGUE FLOUNDERED IN HIS MOUTH.

"WET USH GO ON A TOUR DEN. FOMNOW ME.



KURT WALKED DOWN THE HALLWAY, PAST THE RECEPTION DESK, AND TO A HIGH-REACHING DOOR.



THE DOOR MARKED THE WORDS "PHYSICAL TRAINING." USING HIS RIGHT HAND, KURT PUT HIS WRIST UP TO THE DOOR. THE DOOR LEVITATED UP.

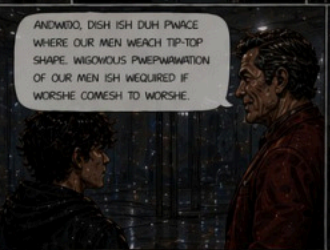


THE ROOM WAS DARK WITH MINIMAL LIGHTS ON THE 15-FOOT CEILING. SECURITY GUARDS STOOD ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DOOR. THEY BOTH ACKNOWLEDGED KURT.



"HEWMO, MEN. HOWSH DUH TWAINING GOING?"

"GOOD EVENING, COMMANDER!"



"ANDWDO, DISH ISH DUH PWACE WHERE OUR MEN WEACH TIP-TOP SHAPE. WIGONOUS PNEPINATION OF OUR MEN ISH REQUIRED IF WORSHE COMESH TO WORSHE.



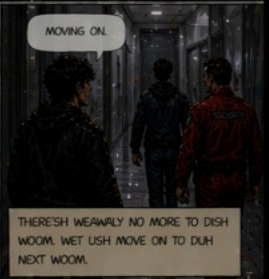
IT TOOK ANDREW SOME TIME TO PIECE TOGETHER HIS WORDS. RICK WAS STILL SURVEILLING BEHIND ANDREW. HE TAPPED HIS BACK.



"YES, COMMANDER. I UNDERSTAND. HOW MUCH DO THEY TRAIN?"

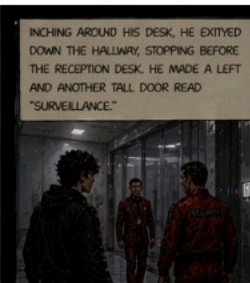


"A WOT. IT ISH UNFANDOMABLE. NO ONE WORKSH ASH HARD ASH OUR MEN. I'M GWAD YOU ASKED DAT.

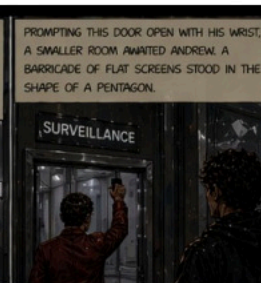


"MOVING ON."

"THERE'SH WEAWAY NO MORE TO DISH WOOM. WET USH MOVE ON TO DUH NEXT WOOM.



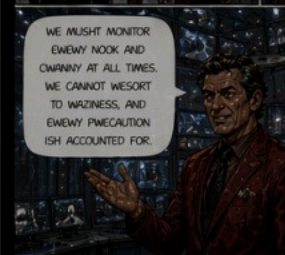
INCHING AROUND HIS DESK, HE EXITED DOWN THE HALLWAY, STOPPING BEFORE THE RECEPTION DESK. HE MADE A LEFT AND ANOTHER TALL DOOR READ "SURVEILLANCE."



PROMPTING THIS DOOR OPEN WITH HIS WRIST, A SMALLER ROOM AWAITED ANDREW. A BARRICADE OF FLAT SCREENS STOOD IN THE SHAPE OF A PENTAGON.



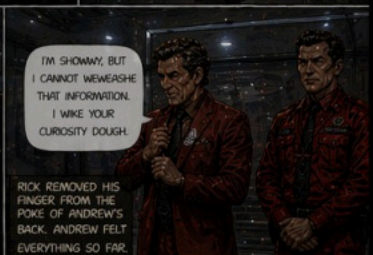
THERE WERE PROBABLY ABOUT A HUNDRED SCREENS, DISPLAYING DIFFERENT ANGLES OF THE LABS.



"WE MUST MONITOR EWEMY NOOK AND CANNYNY AT ALL TIMES. WE CANNOT WESORT TO WAZINESS, AND EWEMY PNECAUTION ISH ACCOUNTED FOR.



"WOW, THAT'S AMAZING. HOW MANY CAMERAS ARE THERE?"



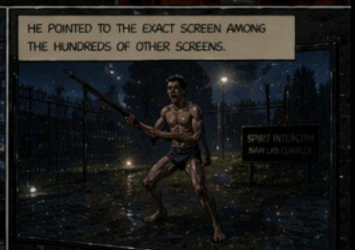
"I'M SHOWWY, BUT I CANNOT WEWEASHE THAT INFORMATION. I WIKE YOUR CURIOSITY DOUGH.

RICK REMOVED HIS FINGER FROM THE POKE OF ANDREW'S BACK. ANDREW FELT EVERYTHING SO FAR.

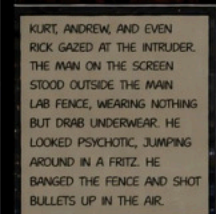


"SHO, HOW ARE THINGSH GOING, FARWAND?"

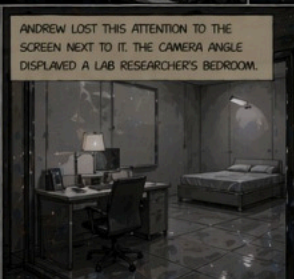
"I'M SORRY, COMMANDER, BUT THERE APPEARS TO BE AN INTRUDER ON PROMICAM 65-2A. THE INTRUDER IS HOLDING A MUSKET.



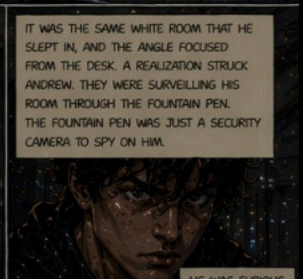
HE POINTED TO THE EXACT SCREEN AMONG THE HUNDREDS OF OTHER SCREENS.



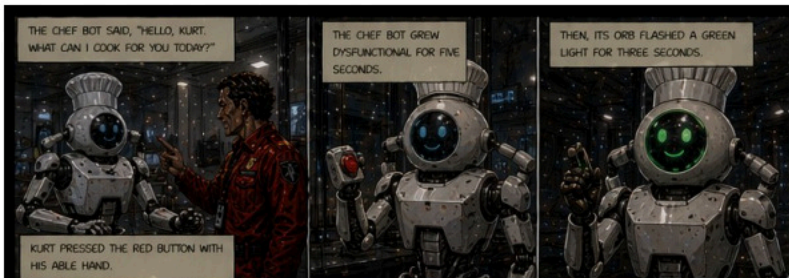
KURT, ANDREW, AND EVEN RICK GAZED AT THE INTRUDER. THE MAN ON THE SCREEN STOOD OUTSIDE THE MAIN LAB FENCE, WEARING NOTHING BUT DRAB UNDERWEAR. HE LOOKED PSYCHOTIC, JUMPING AROUND IN A FRITZ. HE BANGED THE FENCE AND SHOT BULLETS UP IN THE AIR.



ANDREW LOST THIS ATTENTION TO THE SCREEN NEXT TO IT. THE CAMERA ANGLE DISPLAYED A LAB RESEARCHER'S BEDROOM.



IT WAS THE SAME WHITE ROOM THAT HE SLEPT IN, AND THE ANGLE FOCUSED FROM THE DESK. A REALIZATION STRUCK ANDREW. THEY WERE SURVEILLING HIS ROOM THROUGH THE FOUNTAIN PEN. THE FOUNTAIN PEN WAS JUST A SECURITY CAMERA TO SPY ON HIM.



THE CHEF BOT SAID, "HELLO, KURT. WHAT CAN I COOK FOR YOU TODAY?"

THE CHEF BOT GREW DYSFUNCTIONAL FOR FIVE SECONDS.

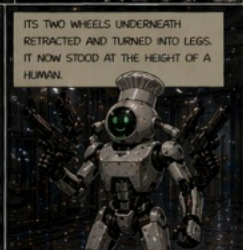
THEN, ITS ORB FLASHED A GREEN LIGHT FOR THREE SECONDS.

KURT PRESSED THE RED BUTTON WITH HIS ABLE HAND.

IMMEDIATELY, ALL EIGHT OF ITS ARMS RETRACTED ITS KITCHEN APPLIANCES TO DEADLY BLASTERS AND GUNS.

ITS TWO WHEELS UNDERNEATH RETRACTED AND TURNED INTO LEGS. IT NOW STOOD AT THE HEIGHT OF A HUMAN.

IN A DEEPER AUTOMATED VOICE, THE BOT SAID, "WHO SHOULD I EXTERMINATE?"



ANDREW WUTANO?



ANDREW FEARED FOR HIS LIFE. HE BEGAN SPRINTING FOR THE DOOR UNTIL HE HEARD KURT SAY--



WEWAK, I'M JUST KIDDING.

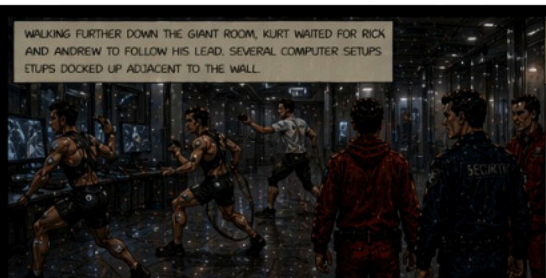
HE LET OUT SOME INAUDIBLE LAUGHS. ANDREW'S PANTING COOLED DOWN. HE WAS PISSED, BUT HE COULDN'T UPSET THE LOCK COMBO DEALER.



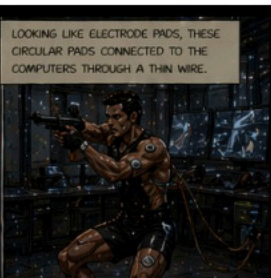
CONTINUING, KURT SAID, "WE HAVE DEESH ROBOTS TO PROTECT USH PWOM THE WEBELSH AND WAIDERSH. WE EVEN HAVE INSIGHT OF AN ORGANIZATION NAMED THE SHPRIT WADICALSH, BUT DERE IS NOT MUCH KNOWN ABOUT DEM."



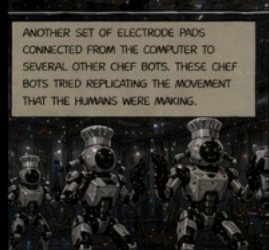
IN ADDITION, DESE ROBOTS TRANSHGH DUH ATTACKING MOVEMENT THROUGH BETA TRANSH-FIGURATION. FOMWOW ME."



WALKING FURTHER DOWN THE GIANT ROOM, KURT WAITED FOR RICK AND ANDREW TO FOLLOW HIS LEAD. SEVERAL COMPUTER SETUPS ETUPS DOCKED UP ADJACENT TO THE WALL.



LOOKING LIKE ELECTRODE PADS, THESE CIRCULAR PADS CONNECTED TO THE COMPUTERS THROUGH A THIN WIRE.



ANOTHER SET OF ELECTRODE PADS CONNECTED FROM THE COMPUTER TO SEVERAL OTHER CHEF BOTS. THESE CHEF BOTS TRIED REPLICATING THE MOVEMENT THAT THE HUMANS WERE MAKING.



"WE PHEFFECT DUH CODED MOTOR NEURAL MOVEMENTSH THROUGH CONFIGURATION. DUH MOTIONSH OUR TESHTERS DO ARE SHOTED IN OUR COMMUNICATOR SHYSYSTEMS. THE COMMUNICATOR WEDIPICATESH THE MOTOR NEUWONS TO DUH CHEF BOTSH. FASHINATING, ISHNT IT?"



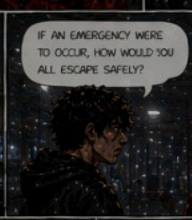
ANDREW SPIKED DIS HEAD UP AND DOWN. HE LOST TRACK OF HOW MANY TIMES HE WAS FRIGHTENED ON THIS TOUR.



WHILE I'M AT IT, I MIGHT ASH WELL SHOW THE ARMORY. IT'SH FURTHER DOWN THE WOOOM.



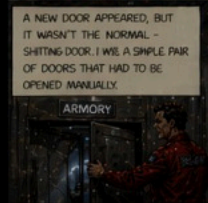
RICK WHISPERED, "ANDREW, STOP CANOODLING WITH KURT, AND ASK FOR THOSE DAMN LOCK COMBOS ALREADY!"



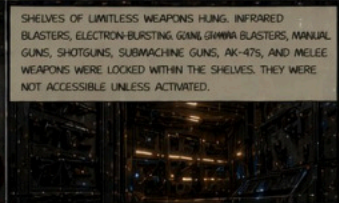
"IF AN EMERGENCY WERE TO OCCUR, HOW WOULD YOU ALL ESCAPE SAFELY?"



"I'M GWAD YOU ASHKED DAT. I WILL SHOW YOU AFTER THE ARMORY."



A NEW DOOR APPEARED, BUT IT WASN'T THE NORMAL - SHITTING DOOR. I WAS A SIMPLE PAIR OF DOORS THAT HAD TO BE OPENED MANUALLY.



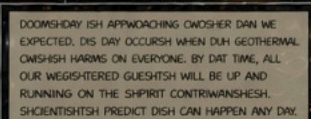
SHelves of LIMITLESS WEAPONS HUNG. INFRARED BLASTERS, ELECTRON-BURSTING GAN, GWAWA BLASTERS, MANUJAL GUNS, SHOTGUNS, SUBMACHINE GUNS, AK-47S, AND MELLEIE WEAPONS WERE LOCKED WITHIN THE SHelves. THEY WERE NOT ACCESSIBLE UNLESS ACTIVATED.



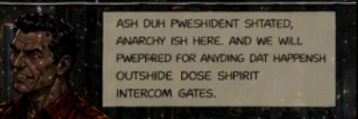
"WE HAVE EWEVY PWECATION ACCOUNTED FOR WHEN DOOMSDAY HTH. WE ARE WEADY."



WHAT'S DOOMSDAY?



DOOMSHDAY ISH APPROACHING CWOSHER DAN WE EXPECTED. DIS DAY OCCURSH WHEN DUH GEOTHERMAL CWISHSH HARMS ON EVERYONE. BY DAT TIME, ALL OUR WEGISHTERED GUESHTSH WILL BE UP AND RUNNING ON THE SHPRIT CONTRIWANSHESH. SHCIENTISHSH PREDICT DISH CAN HAPPEN ANY DAY.



ASH DUH PWESHIDENT SHTATED, ANARCHY ISH HERE, AND WE WILL PWEPREED FOR ANYOND DAT HAPPENSH OUTSHIDE DOSE SHPRIT INTERCOM GATES.



HOW WILL YOU SPECIFICALLY ENABLE THE SHUTDOWN?

I HAVE AN EMERGENCY MASH SHUTDOWN SENSOR THAT CAN BE ACTIVATED WITH MY WISHT IN MY OFFISHE.

I'M SORRY, BUT DID YOU SAY "WRIST" OR "LIST"?

I THINK HE SAID WRIST.

YESH.

I'M SHOWWY, BUT I NEED TO USHE DUH DECK. DOSE NURTURED MEATBALLSH DAT CHERYL DWOPPED OFF AT MY OFFICE HIT DIFFEWENTWY, YET DEY TASHTEED VERY SPWENDIO. EXCUSHE ME, PWEASHE.

COME ON, MAN! YOU'RE LOSING HIM. ASK FOR THOSE CODES FOR THE HUNDRETH TIME.

I'M DOING SOMETHING BETTER THAN THAT. HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED OUT ALREADY THAT ASKING FOR THE CODES STRAIGHT UP IS TOO SUSPICIOUS? THAT IS WHY I WANT TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIRE EXIT INSTEAD. THE SPIRIT RADICALS WILL HAVE AN EASY ENTRANCE TO THE LABS THROUGH THIS. STOP DESTROYING MY PLANS SO MUCH!

WELL, EITHER WAY, WE WILL NEED THE LOCK COMBOS TO EVEN ENTER THE FIRE EXIT FROM THE OUTSIDE.

I KNOW. I KNOW. AFTER HE PRESENTS ME WITH THE FIRE EXIT, I WILL SMOOTHLY TRANSITION TO THE LOCK COMBINATIONS. THIS PLAN IS ALL ABOUT TIMING AND PERSISTENCE.

I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.

KURT COULD BE SEEN AT THE END OF THE COMPLEX THEY WERE IN. HE MADE IT BACK TO THE ARMORY.



ANYWAY, DISH ARMORY ISH A MAJOR ASHPECT OF OUR SECURITY, AND--

SORRY, BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT A NURTURED MEATBALL IS?

IN FACT, YESH. I DO. NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW WHAT IT ISH, SO I APPRECIATE YOUR CURIOSHY.

DUH MEATBALLSH ARE MADE IN A COOKING WRB. DUH SHENTISHTSH FEED RATSH WITH BUTTER, CHEESH, AND YOGURT. DISH ISH SO DAT DEY CAN INWEASHE DUH BWEASHT GWANDIS OF THE RATSH. DUH MEAT BECOMESH MORE TENDER. DEY DEN KILL DUH RATSH AND EXHUME DUH MEAT OUT OF IT. DEY INHUME PWESEHRAWIVESH TO MAINTAIN ISH PWEASHNESS. DEY SPRAY ARTIFICIAL MEAT PWESEHRAWIVESH TO ENHANSHE DUH TASHTE. AND DAT'S IT! I AM GWAD YOU ASHKED DAT. WE NEED MORE CURIOSHY PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

THANKS FOR ANSWERING. CAN YOU SHOW ME THE FIRE EXIT NOW?

OKAY, ASH A SHIDE NOTE DOUGH, I AM DOING YOU A FAVOR BY SHOWING YOU THE EXIT. NO ONE BUT MYSELF AND YOUR FATHER HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF IT. I AM ALSO DOING A TWEAT TO WICK FROM DISH.

HE DEPARTED FROM THE ARMORY AND MADE IT BACK TO THE RECEPTION DESK WITH ANDREW AND RICK BEHIND.

I ALSO HEARD MANY GWEAT THINGSH FROM MY FEWWOW SECURITY GUARDSH. THEY'VE TOLD ME HOW APPROACHABLE AND OUTGOING YOU ARE.

HE ENTERED THE ELEVATOR, AND PULLING DOWN HIS ARMOR SLEEVE, HE PUT HIS WRIST UP TO THE ELEVATOR KEYPAD, CAUSING THE BLUE GLOW TO SHINE.

MAKING ANKWARD TURNS, THE ELEVATOR OPENED UP TO THE HALLWAY WHERE THE UNDERGROUND ROOMS WITH THE DISK WERE.

WALKING UP TO THE DOOR, HE LAID HIS INDEX FINGER ON THE KEYPAD.

DUH CODE DAT OPENSH UP DUH FIRE EXIT IS 62951413.

1 2 3  
4 5 6  
7 8  
9





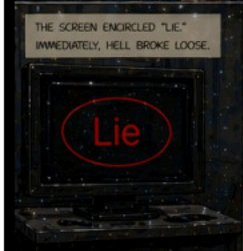


"GOOD, GOOD," KURT SAID. HE TOOK A MAJOR PAUSE THIS TIME. "SH WICK-A SHIRT WICKAL?" HE HAD A SLY LOOK ON HIS FACE.

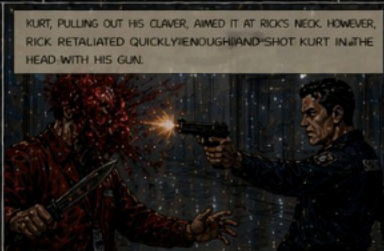
ANDREW HESITATED INSTANTLY. HE GREW NERVOUS, RICK, LOOKING ANXIOUSLY CONFUSED AND TROUBLED, STARED AT ANDREW DELIBERATELY.

IN RESPECT OF RICK THOUGH, HE SAID, "NO." HE EXHALED HEAVILY.

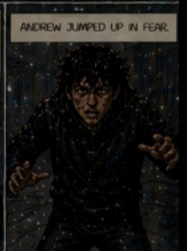
NO.



THE SCREEN ENCIRCLED "LIE" IMMEDIATELY, HELL BROKE LOOSE.



KURT, PULLING OUT HIS CLAW, AIMED IT AT RICK'S NECK. HOWEVER, RICK RETALIATED QUICKLY ENOUGH AND SHOT KURT IN THE HEAD WITH HIS GUN.



ANDREW JUMPED UP IN FEAR.



HEAD BLOWN TO SHREDS, KURT'S BODY LAID LIFELESSLY ON THE FLOOR.



PUTTING HIS GUN AWAY, RICK LOOKED THE DOOR.



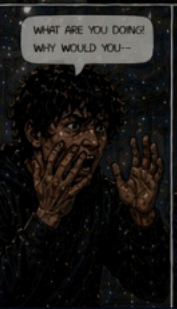
ANDREW CLOSED HIS EYES IN TERROR.



WHAT THE FUCK!



QUICK! GET OUTTA THAT CONTRAPANCE!



WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHY WOULD YOU--



PROTECTING THE BOTH OF US. NOW, I NEED YOU TO SHUT THE FUCK UP, AND LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY. YOU'RE IN THIS WITH ME.



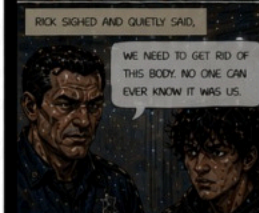
THE RECEPTIONIST, WHO WAS SEVERAL FEET FROM THE INCIDENT, ASKED,

IT WAS NOTHING CHERYL. KURT IS JUST SHOWING THE RECOL SPEED OF HIS NEW GUN AGAIN.

OKAY.

SHE AWKWARDLY SAID. THE FOOTSTEPS OF HER RETURNING TO THE RECEPTION DESK. ENDED.

WHAT WAS THAT NOISE?



RICK SIGHED AND QUIETLY SAID,

WE NEED TO GET RID OF THIS BODY. NO ONE CAN EVER KNOW IT WAS US.



HOW WOULD THEY KNOW? THE CHIEF OF THIS ENTIRE GOVERNMENTAL CHAIN IS DEAD!



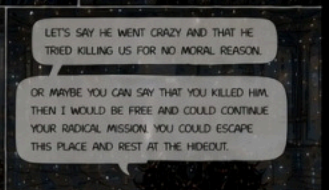
LOWER YOUR FUCKING VOICE DOWN. WE'LL JUST SAY HE DIED OF A HEART ATTACK.



YEAH, I THINK A DECAPITATED BODY GOES GREAT FOR OUR CASE.

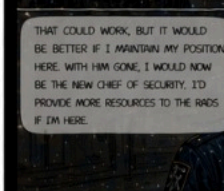


ALRIGHT, MAYBE NOT THEN. CAN YOU THINK OF SOMETHING?



LET'S SAY HE WENT CRAZY AND THAT HE TRIED KILLING US FOR NO MORAL REASON.

OR MAYBE YOU CAN SAY THAT YOU KILLED HIM. THEN I WOULD BE FREE AND COULD CONTINUE YOUR RADICAL MISSION. YOU COULD ESCAPE THIS PLACE AND REST AT THE HIDEOUT.



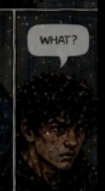
THAT COULD WORK, BUT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I MAINTAIN MY POSITION HERE. WITH HIM GONE, I WOULD NOW BE THE NEW CHIEF OF SECURITY. I'D PROVIDE MORE RESOURCES TO THE RADS IF I'M HERE.



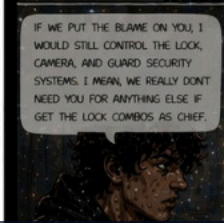
NOW WHEN I THINK IT OVER, BLAMING IT ON ME WOULDN'T WORK.



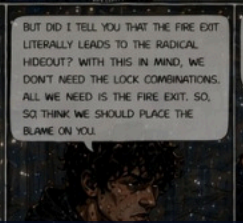
WHAT IF WE PUT THE BLAME ON YOU?



WHAT?



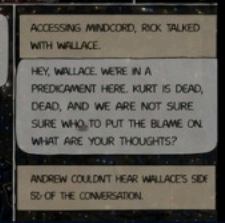
IF WE PUT THE BLAME ON YOU, I WOULD STILL CONTROL THE LOCK, CAMERA, AND GUARD SECURITY SYSTEMS. I MEAN, WE REALLY DONT NEED YOU FOR ANYTHING ELSE IF GET THE LOCK COMBOS AS CHIEF.



BUT DID I TELL YOU THAT THE FIRE EXIT LITERALLY LEADS TO THE RADICAL HIDEOUT? WITH THIS IN MIND, WE DONT NEED THE LOCK COMBINATIONS. ALL WE NEED IS THE FIRE EXIT. SO, SO THINK WE SHOULD PLACE THE BLAME ON YOU.



SHIT, I'M JUST GONNA CALL WALLACE AND SEE WHAT HE THINKS.

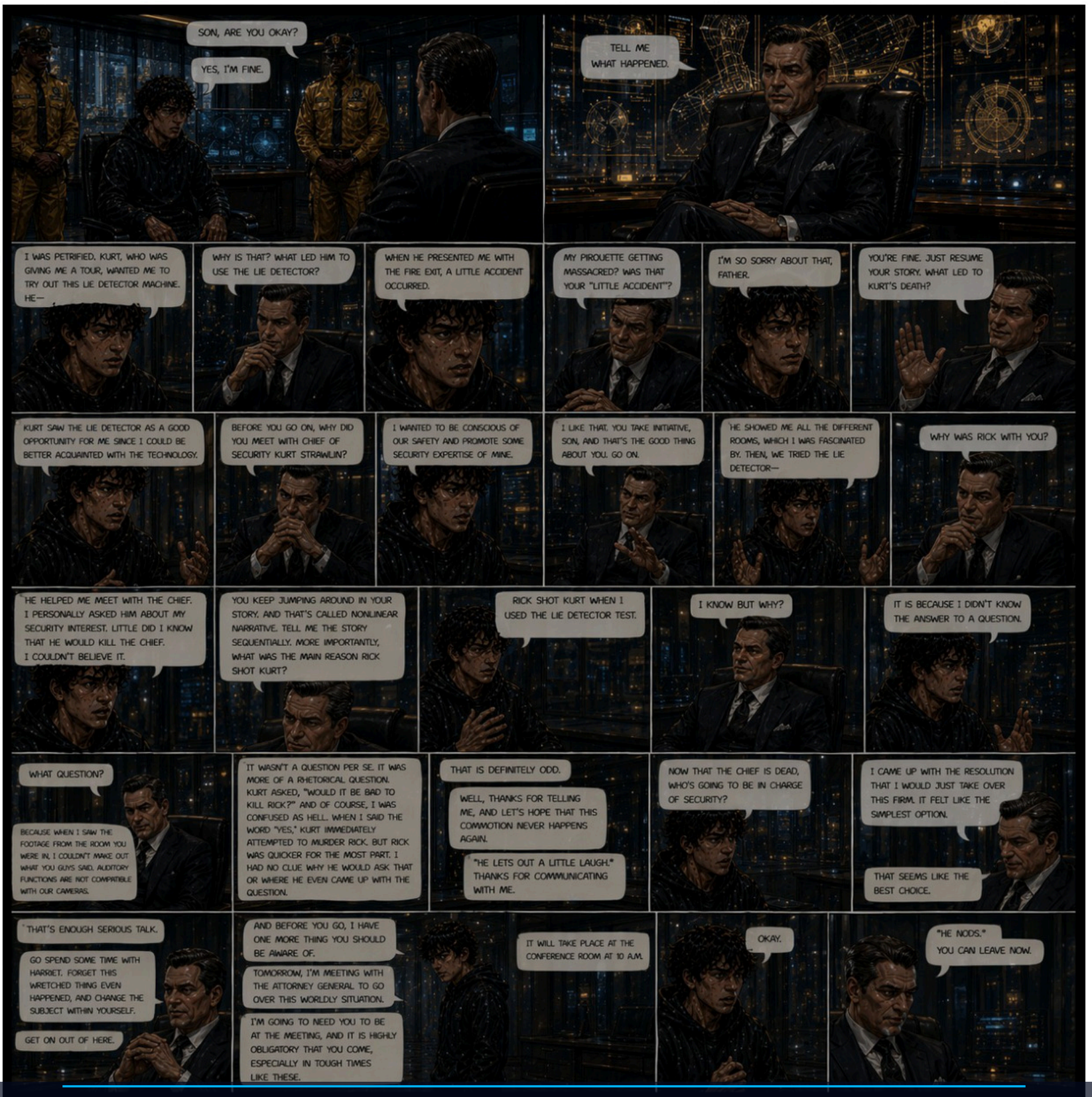


ACCESSING MINDCORD, RICK TALKED WITH WALLACE.

HEY, WALLACE. WE'RE IN A PREDICAMENT HERE. KURT IS DEAD, DEAD, AND WE ARE NOT SURE. SURE WHO TO PUT THE BLAME ON. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

ANDREW COULDN'T HEAR WALLACE'S SIDE OF THE CONVERSATION.





SON, ARE YOU OKAY?

YES, I'M FINE.

TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED.

I WAS PETRIFIED, KURT, WHO WAS GIVING ME A TOUR, WANTED ME TO TRY OUT THIS LIE DETECTOR MACHINE. HE—

WHY IS THAT? WHAT LED HIM TO USE THE LIE DETECTOR?

WHEN HE PRESENTED ME WITH THE FIRE EXIT, A LITTLE ACCIDENT OCCURRED.

MY PIROUETTE GETTING MASSACRED? WAS THAT YOUR "LITTLE ACCIDENT"?

I'M SO SORRY ABOUT THAT, FATHER.

YOU'RE FINE. JUST RESUME YOUR STORY. WHAT LED TO KURT'S DEATH?

KURT SAW THE LIE DETECTOR AS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR ME SINCE I COULD BE BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH THE TECHNOLOGY.

BEFORE YOU GO ON, WHY DID YOU MEET WITH CHIEF OF SECURITY KURT STRAWLIN?

I WANTED TO BE CONSCIOUS OF OUR SAFETY AND PROMOTE SOME SECURITY EXPERTISE OF MINE.

I LIKE THAT, YOU TAKE INITIATIVE, SON, AND THAT'S THE GOOD THING ABOUT YOU. GO ON.

HE SHOWED ME ALL THE DIFFERENT ROOMS, WHICH I WAS FASCINATED BY. THEN, WE TRIED THE LIE DETECTOR—

WHY WAS RICK WITH YOU?

HE HELPED ME MEET WITH THE CHIEF. I PERSONALLY ASKED HIM ABOUT MY SECURITY INTEREST. LITTLE DID I KNOW THAT HE WOULD KILL THE CHIEF. I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT.

YOU KEEP JUMPING AROUND IN YOUR STORY, AND THAT'S CALLED NONLINEAR NARRATIVE. TELL ME THE STORY SEQUENTIALLY. MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON RICK SHOT KURT?

RICK SHOT KURT WHEN I USED THE LIE DETECTOR TEST.

I KNOW BUT WHY?

IT IS BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION.

WHAT QUESTION?

BECAUSE WHEN I SAW THE FOOTAGE FROM THE ROOM YOU WERE IN, I COULDN'T MAKE OUT WHAT YOU GUYS SAID. AUDITORY FUNCTIONS ARE NOT COMPATIBLE WITH OUR CAMERAS.

IT WASN'T A QUESTION PER SE. IT WAS MORE OF A RHETORICAL QUESTION. KURT ASKED, "WOULD IT BE BAD TO KILL RICK?" AND OF COURSE, I WAS CONFUSED AS HELL. WHEN I SAID THE WORD "YES," KURT IMMEDIATELY ATTEMPTED TO MURDER RICK. BUT RICK WAS QUICKER FOR THE MOST PART. I HAD NO CLUE WHY HE WOULD ASK THAT OR WHERE HE EVEN CAME UP WITH THE QUESTION.

THAT IS DEFINITELY ODD.

WELL, THANKS FOR TELLING ME, AND LET'S HOPE THAT THIS COMMOTION NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN.

"HE LETS OUT A LITTLE LAUGH." THANKS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH ME.

NOW THAT THE CHIEF IS DEAD, WHO'S GOING TO BE IN CHARGE OF SECURITY?

I CAME UP WITH THE RESOLUTION THAT I WOULD JUST TAKE OVER THIS FIRM. IT FELT LIKE THE SIMPLEST OPTION.

THAT SEEMS LIKE THE BEST CHOICE.

THAT'S ENOUGH SERIOUS TALK.

GO SPEND SOME TIME WITH HARRIET. FORGET THIS WRETCHED THING EVEN HAPPENED, AND CHANGE THE SUBJECT WITHIN YOURSELF.

GET ON OUT OF HERE.

AND BEFORE YOU GO, I HAVE ONE MORE THING YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF.

TOMORROW, I'M MEETING WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO GO OVER THIS WORLDLY SITUATION.

I'M GOING TO NEED YOU TO BE AT THE MEETING, AND IT IS HIGHLY OBLIGATORY THAT YOU COME, ESPECIALLY IN TOUGH TIMES LIKE THESE.

IT WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE CONFERENCE ROOM AT 10 A.M.

OKAY.

"HE NODS." YOU CAN LEAVE NOW.





Why is your mouth like that?

I can tell you later.

Wanna talk in a different space?

Different space? Why? There is no one here but me, you, and the Chef Bots.

The cameras can't hear our conversations either.

I will discuss with you everything that happened if you follow me to a different space.

Fine.

But you have to tell me everything. And you're not gonna talk to me like you did in the last conversation. That was just plain-ass rude.

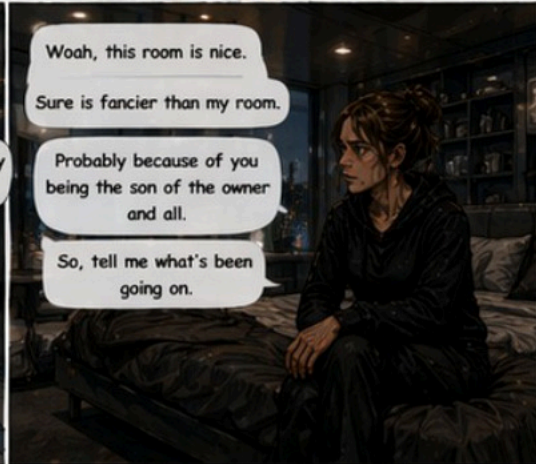


Alright.

Let's talk in my room. It's more secluded there.

They gave you a room?

Yep. It's pretty cool, too. I like the aesthetic there and stuff.



Woah, this room is nice.

Sure is fancier than my room.

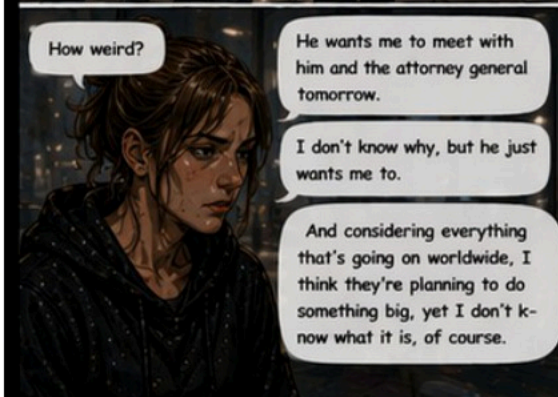
Probably because of you being the son of the owner and all.

So, tell me what's been going on.



Alright.

I met with my father today, and he brought up something weird.



How weird?

He wants me to meet with him and the attorney general tomorrow.

I don't know why, but he just wants me to.

And considering everything that's going on worldwide, I think they're planning to do something big, yet I don't know what it is, of course.



That actually seems really serious.

What do you think they're going to talk about?



I don't know.

Like I said, my father didn't give me any details.



You still haven't told me how your mouth ended up like that.



This annoying security guard kept harassing me.

I tried fighting him, but—



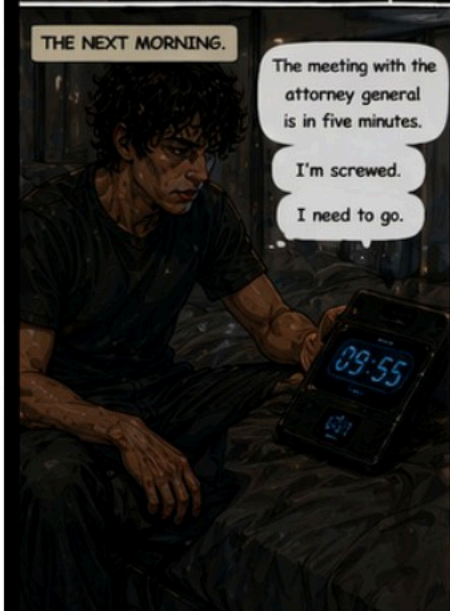
But you lost.

Aww, poor Andrew.



Let me see.

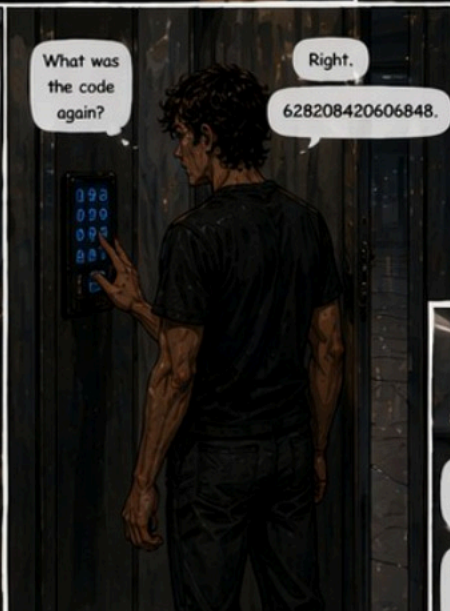
You should take better care of yourself.



THE NEXT MORNING.

The meeting with the attorney general is in five minutes.

I'm screwed. I need to go.



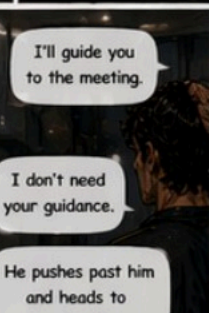
What was the code again?

Right. 628208420606848.



Why the hell are you here?

You're almost late.



I'll guide you to the meeting.

I don't need your guidance.

He pushes past him and heads to the elevator.







FINE. LET ME HEAR THIS PLAN OF YOURS.

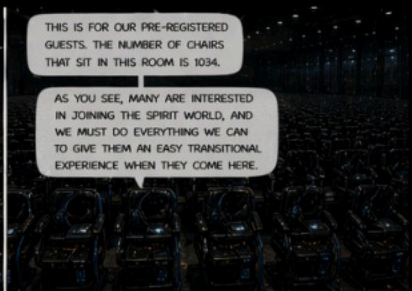
EVERYBODY GET UP THEN.



LET'S SHOW YOU GUYS SOME THINGS.

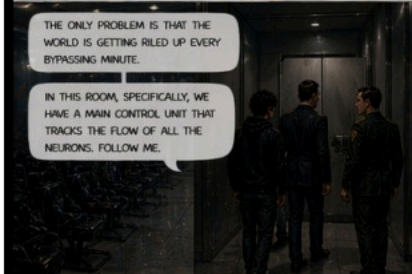


THE ENDEAVOUR PROVIDED US WITH A LOT OF ASSISTANCE TO THE PLAN.



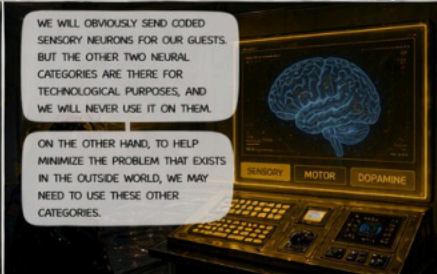
THIS IS FOR OUR PRE-REGISTERED GUESTS. THE NUMBER OF CHAIRS THAT SIT IN THIS ROOM IS 1034.

AS YOU SEE, MANY ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE SPIRIT WORLD, AND WE MUST DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO GIVE THEM AN EASY TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY COME HERE.



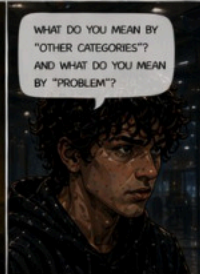
THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT THE WORLD IS GETTING RILED UP EVERY BYPASSING MINUTE.

IN THIS ROOM, SPECIFICALLY, WE HAVE A MAIN CONTROL UNIT THAT TRACKS THE FLOW OF ALL THE NEURONS. FOLLOW ME.

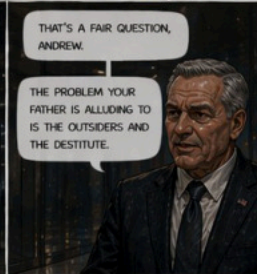


WE WILL OBVIOUSLY SEND CODED SENSORY NEURONS FOR OUR GUESTS. BUT THE OTHER TWO NEURAL CATEGORIES ARE THERE FOR TECHNOLOGICAL PURPOSES, AND WE WILL NEVER USE IT ON THEM.

ON THE OTHER HAND, TO HELP MINIMIZE THE PROBLEM THAT EXISTS IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD, WE MAY NEED TO USE THESE OTHER CATEGORIES.

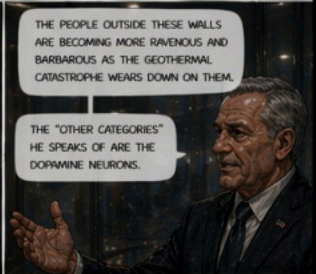


WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "OTHER CATEGORIES"? AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "PROBLEM"?



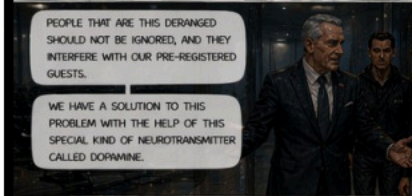
THAT'S A FAIR QUESTION, ANDREW.

THE PROBLEM YOUR FATHER IS ALLUDING TO IS THE OUTSIDERS AND THE DESTITUTE.



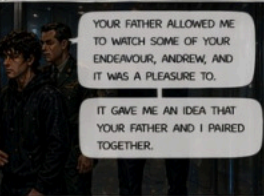
THE PEOPLE OUTSIDE THESE WALLS ARE BECOMING MORE RAVENOUS AND BARBAROUS AS THE GEOTHERMAL CATASTROPHE WEARS DOWN ON THEM.

THE "OTHER CATEGORIES" HE SPEAKS OF ARE THE DOPAMINE NEURONS.



PEOPLE THAT ARE THIS DERANGED SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED, AND THEY INTERFERE WITH OUR PRE-REGISTERED GUESTS.

WE HAVE A SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM WITH THE HELP OF THIS SPECIAL KIND OF NEUROTRANSMITTER CALLED DOPAMINE.

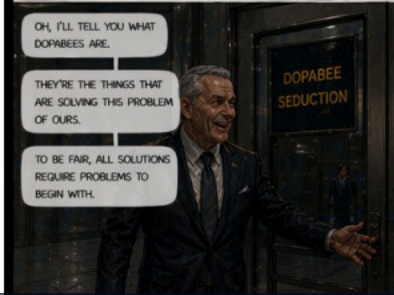


YOUR FATHER ALLOWED ME TO WATCH SOME OF YOUR ENDEAVOUR, ANDREW, AND IT WAS A PLEASURE TO.

IT GAVE ME AN IDEA THAT YOUR FATHER AND I PAIRED TOGETHER.



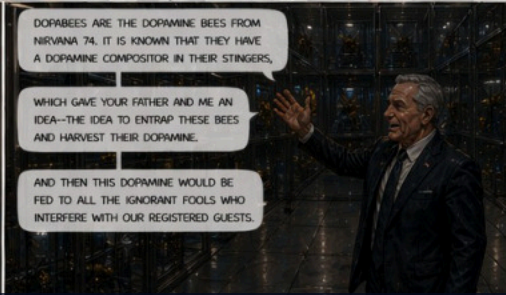
SORRY, BUT WHAT'S A DOPABEE?



OH, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT DOPABEES ARE.

THEY'RE THE THINGS THAT ARE SOLVING THIS PROBLEM OF OURS.

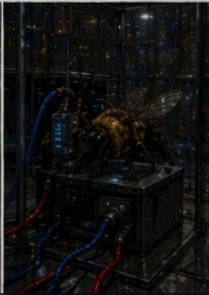
TO BE FAIR, ALL SOLUTIONS REQUIRE PROBLEMS TO BEGIN WITH.



DOPABEES ARE THE DOPAMINE BEES FROM NIRVANA 74. IT IS KNOWN THAT THEY HAVE A DOPAMINE COMPOSITOR IN THEIR STINGERS,

WHICH GAVE YOUR FATHER AND ME AN IDEA--THE IDEA TO ENTRAP THESE BEES AND HARVEST THEIR DOPAMINE.

AND THEN THIS DOPAMINE WOULD BE FED TO ALL THE IGNORANT FOOLS WHO INTERFERE WITH OUR REGISTERED GUESTS.



YOU SEE, WE MUST KEEP THESE KINDS OF PEOPLE UNDER CONTROL.

THEIR SUPPRESSION AND OBEDIENCE IS A MUST.

Andrew's heart pounded off-beat. He was deeply horrified. And enraged.

He wanted to yell at them and even fight them. This angered him so much.

But he needed more information. He needed to obtain more intellect before his natural instincts kicked in.

In a calm voice, he asked, "And how will this dopamine be given to the poor people?"

Robert said, "It will be easy. We have compiled thousands of Spirit Emissaries, not just normal ones though. These are portable Spirit Emissaries.

The Dopabess would get their dopamine extracted from their stingers, and the interdimensional communicators would successfully store the dopamine to the emissaries.

We suspect when our guests arrive, hoards of people will be at the gates, protesting for admittance. Therefore, these portable emissaries will be dispatched to this public from outside our gates.

Once they get their hands on them, their minds will be all over the Spirit World, whereas, in reality, they're only falling into a deep state of dopamine influx and coma.

The bees are needed for the dopamine, and they are our prime target.

Unbearably resisting his anger, Andrew lastly asked, "And how do you plan to capture the Dopabees?"

Wayne said, "We plan to capture them by ship. As in, we will travel to Nirvana 74. We have the ship and everything."

He reasserted the badge on his tunic. "Are you guys willing to board the ship with us and lead us to where the Dopabees are? We know you guys will do a great job."

Before Andrew could think, Marco said, "I'm all in. I pledge full attention and compliance."

Andrew's intolerance towards this plan was insurmountable. Andrew couldn't hold back his grudge. He exploded. Raising his fist, Andrew punched his father in the face. "Dad, how could you do this! You sick man! You're nothing but a liar and a complete bastard to this world!"

Wayne, using his muscular-attorney-general strength, clenched Andrew backwards. Marco grabbed his father back as well.

Tears came down Andrew's eyes. "You lie about my mother! You lie about the baby! You lie about this whole plan! You lie about your love! You've been lying to me my entire life! How could you do this!"

Andrew had fluctuated to maximum turmoil while Wayne dragged him from the room. While being dragged, Andrew said, "Marco, I'm begging you don't do this! How could you be this ignorant! They're using you! This isn't the right thing!"

Robert massaged his left eye. Using his earpiece, he said, "Send in guards, please. We have a little problem."

In about ten seconds, five guards appeared at the "Dopabee Seduction" door.

### DOPABEE SEDUCTION

Wayne let go and the guards grabbed Andrew. Andrew's resistance didn't go anywhere.

They stopped dragging him, and Robert stood in front of Andrew's sight. His father's face seemed even more punchable the closer he got.

Robert said, "That wasn't kind, son." He got out a handkerchief and wiped the remaining blood on his eye.

You should know better than to hit your own father. And seeing that you are mad about your mother leaves me to think that we should change that. Wouldn't you agree, General Wayne?



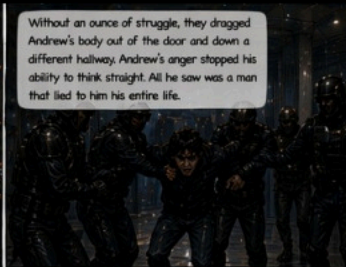
I agree without a doubt. I think it's a good time to use it on him.



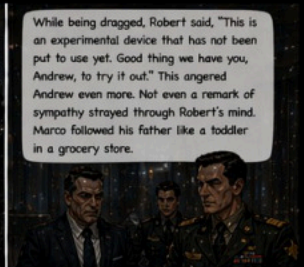
Guards, follow me.



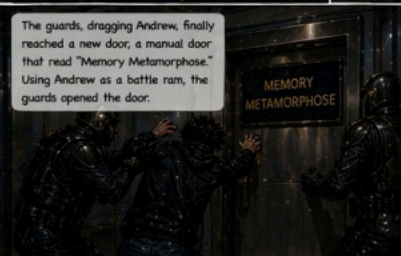
Without an ounce of struggle, they dragged Andrew's body out of the door and down a different hallway. Andrew's anger stopped his ability to think straight. All he saw was a man that lied to him his entire life.



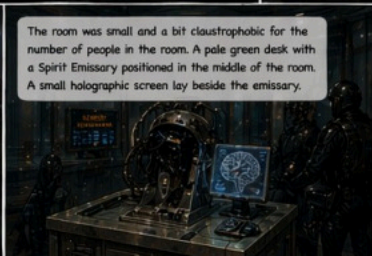
While being dragged, Robert said, "This is an experimental device that has not been put to use yet. Good thing we have you, Andrew, to try it out." This angered Andrew even more. Not even a remark of sympathy strayed through Robert's mind. Marco followed his father like a toddler in a grocery store.



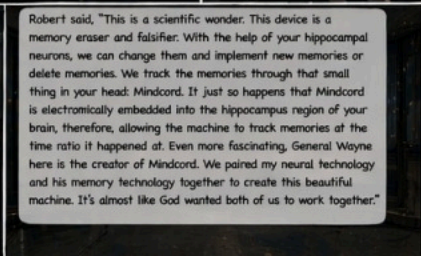
The guards, dragging Andrew, finally reached a new door, a manual door that read "Memory Metamorphose." Using Andrew as a battle ram, the guards opened the door.



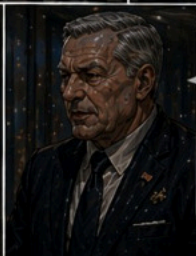
The room was small and a bit claustrophobic for the number of people in the room. A pale green desk with a Spirit Emissary positioned in the middle of the room. A small holographic screen lay beside the emissary.



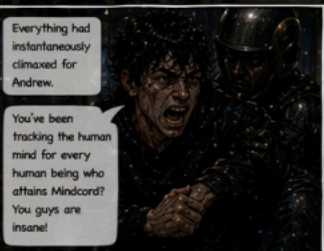
Robert said, "This is a scientific wonder. This device is a memory eraser and falsifier. With the help of your hippocampal neurons, we can change them and implement new memories or delete memories. We track the memories through that small thing in your head: Mindcord. It just so happens that Mindcord is electronically embedded into the hippocampus region of your brain, therefore, allowing the machine to track memories at the time ratio it happened at. Even more fascinating, General Wayne here is the creator of Mindcord. We paired my neural technology and his memory technology together to create this beautiful machine. It's almost like God wanted both of us to work together."



Wayne said, "Everything your father said is completely true. Tracking the time of your memories, this device can allow us to code artificially new memories. Thank god for hippocampal neurons. Not only does Mindcord record your hippocampal status, but it also records your emotional status. And finally, it tracks your five senses. Ah, I love technology all too much."



Everything had instantaneously climaxed for Andrew.



You've been tracking the human mind for every human being who attains Mindcord? You guys are insane!

You're just gonna erase my mother? This is so fucked up!

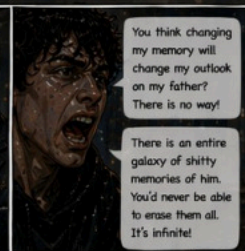


I'm not hooking up to this devilish piece of shit!

We've got that covered. Maybe after this, you'll agree with your father.

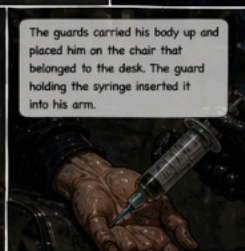


You think changing my memory will change my outlook on my father? There is no way!

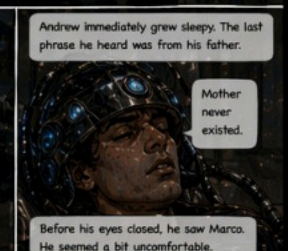


There is an entire galaxy of shitty memories of him. You'd never be able to erase them all. It's infinite!

The guards carried his body up and placed him on the chair that belonged to the desk. The guard holding the syringe inserted it into his arm.



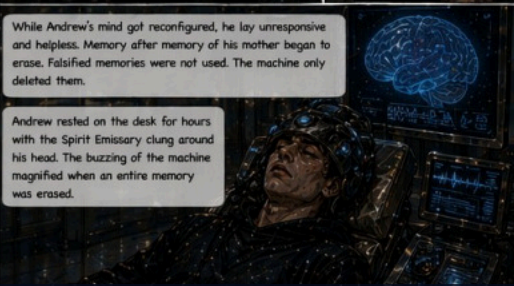
Andrew immediately grew sleepy. The last phrase he heard was from his father.



Mother never existed.

Before his eyes closed, he saw Marco. He seemed a bit uncomfortable.

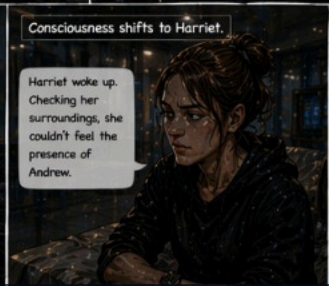
While Andrew's mind got reconfigured, he lay unresponsive and helpless. Memory after memory of his mother began to erase. Falsified memories were not used. The machine only deleted them.



Andrew rested on the desk for hours with the Spirit Emissary clung around his head. The buzzing of the machine magnified when an entire memory was erased.

Consciousness shifts to Harriet.

Harriet woke up. Checking her surroundings, she couldn't feel the presence of Andrew.



He was missing.



She thought, what time is it?

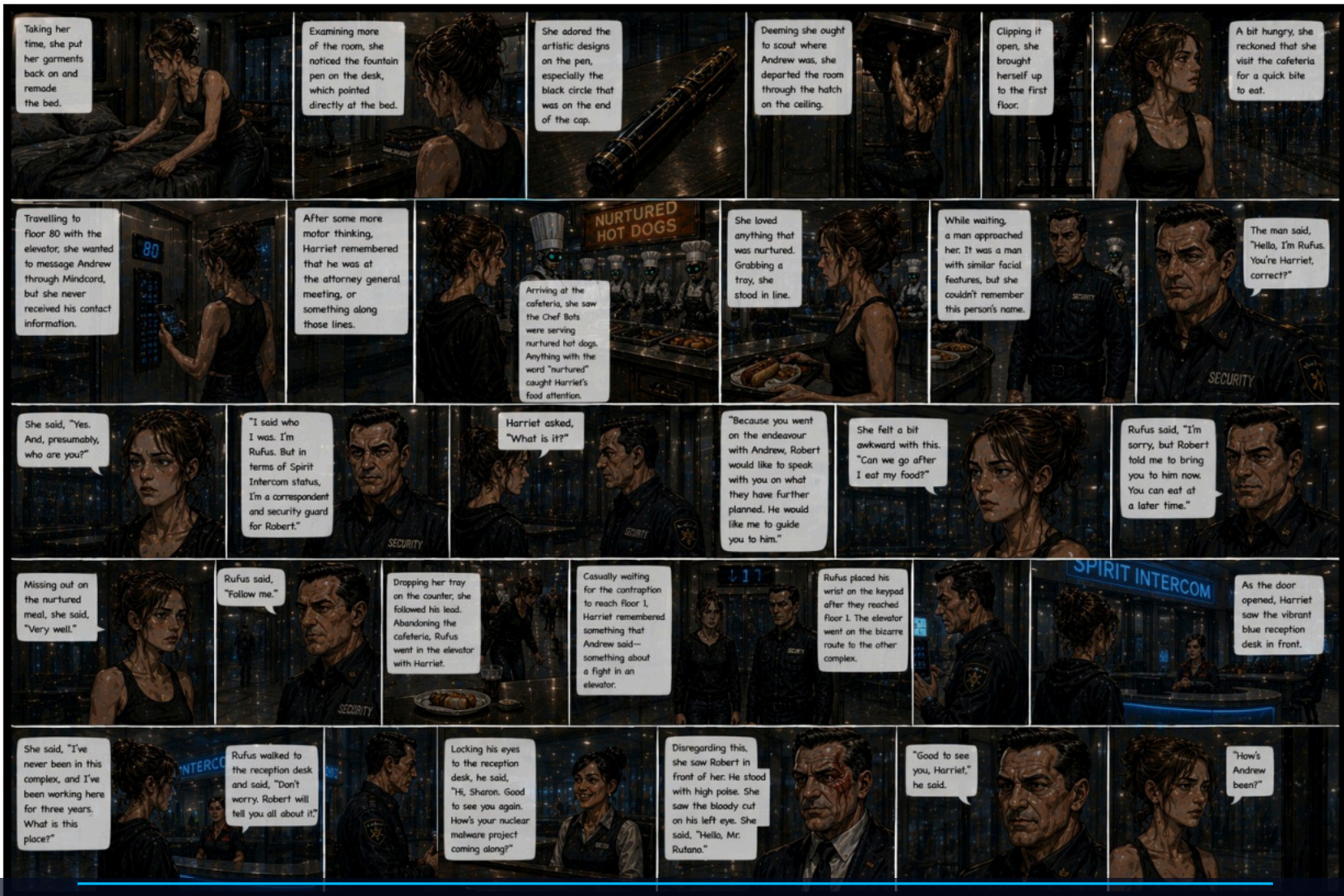
Accessing Mindcord, she noticed the time was 12:11 p.m.



It was still a Thursday.



She was surprised at how long she fell asleep.



Taking her time, she put her garments back on and remade the bed.

Examining more of the room, she noticed the fountain pen on the desk, which pointed directly at the bed.

She adored the artistic designs on the pen, especially the black circle that was on the end of the cap.

Deeming she ought to scout where Andrew was, she departed the room through the hatch on the ceiling.

Clipping it open, she brought herself up to the first floor.

A bit hungry, she reckoned that she visit the cafeteria for a quick bite to eat.

Travelling to floor 80 with the elevator, she wanted to message Andrew through Mindcord, but she never received his contact information.

After some more motor thinking, Harriet remembered that he was at the attorney general meeting, or something along those lines.

Arriving at the cafeteria, she saw the Chef Bots were serving nurtured hot dogs. Anything with the word "nurtured" caught Harriet's food attention.

She loved anything that was nurtured. Grabbing a tray, she stood in line.

While waiting, a man approached her. It was a man with similar facial features, but she couldn't remember this person's name.

The man said, "Hello, I'm Rufus. You're Harriet, correct?"

She said, "Yes. And, presumably, who are you?"

"I said who I was. I'm Rufus. But in terms of Spirit Intercom status, I'm a correspondent and security guard for Robert."

Harriet asked, "What is it?"

"Because you went on the endeavour with Andrew, Robert would like to speak with you on what they have further planned. He would like me to guide you to him."

She felt a bit awkward with this. "Can we go after I eat my food?"

Rufus said, "I'm sorry, but Robert told me to bring you to him now. You can eat at a later time."

Missing out on the nurtured meal, she said, "Very well."

Rufus said, "Follow me."

Dropping her tray on the counter, she followed his lead. Abandoning the cafeteria, Rufus went in the elevator with Harriet.

Casually waiting for the contraption to reach floor 1, Harriet remembered something that Andrew said—something about a fight in an elevator.

Rufus placed his wrist on the keypad after he reached floor 1. The elevator went on the bizarre route to the other complex.

SPIRIT INTERCOM

As the door opened, Harriet saw the vibrant blue reception desk in front.

She said, "I've never been in this complex, and I've been working here for three years. What is this place?"

Rufus walked to the reception desk and said, "Don't worry. Robert will tell you all about it."

Locking his eyes to the reception desk, he said, "Hi, Sharon. Good to see you again. How's your nuclear malware project coming along?"

Disregarding this, she saw Robert in front of her. He stood with high poise. She saw the bloody cut on his left eye. She said, "Hello, Mr. Rutano."

"Good to see you, Harriet," he said.

"How's Andrew been?"

He walked down the hallway with Harriet by his side. He said, "I have deemed it infallible that we will safely provide a smooth process for our pre-registered guests. But before this can happen, we need to go over some underlying provisions."

He opened the door for the "VIP Access" room.

"As it might be seen, this is the place for our guests. Our entire company leads up to this moment. I took note of your experience in the Spirit World, and I was amazed by your performance. Not only did you successfully suffice to your surroundings but you also connected with this world on a personal level."

"You being such a highly-valued member of our company brings awareness to what else you could achieve. Therefore, I will share the plan that was given to Andrew. You two will work side-by-side on this next mission that I have planned. It's the most important, and the fate of our company depends on this scenario. Understand?"

Harriet felt needed. She felt significant. She said, "I understand fully. Do you know where Andrew is?"

Immediately, he said, "Don't worry. He's just inspecting more of the plan." Exiting this room, they headed down the hallway.

Harriet asked, "So what's the mission?"

"The mission is to travel to the physical planet of Nirvana 74."

"Why?"

"To see if the Spirit World is exactly coded to the physical standards of the planet."

She understood now. She said, "That's smart. It's good that you're double-checking that the guests are receiving a correct world in respect to the physical world. Props to you."

"Definitely," he said as he opened the door to the Conference Room.

She saw an unknown man, a recognizable man, and Rufus in the room. The unknown man introduced himself as Attorney General Howard Wayne. The recognizable man introduced himself as Marco Rutano. Each shaking Harriet's hand, they took a seat in the Conference Room.

Wayne said, "It's good to finally meet you, Harriet. We are excited to have you help us on this mission of ours. The government greatly appreciates it. As Robert may have already told you, we are planning to leave on a spaceship to Nirvana 74. Once we're there, we will examine all the creatures and geometric dimensions of the planet to make sure that they align with our software and code of the Spirit World."

"The ship is named Nirvana Voyager. It is the biggest spaceship ever created in the history of mankind. It moves at the speed of 185000 miles per second. Just below par of the speed of light. Plan to check-in at the spaceship at 5:00 p.m. Get settled and prepare during these five hours. Good luck to all of us, and may this mission prove anything but good to us."

Harriet appreciated the tenacity of the plan. It was coherent and well-thought-out. Her only question though was where Andrew was. She hadn't seen him since they had sex.

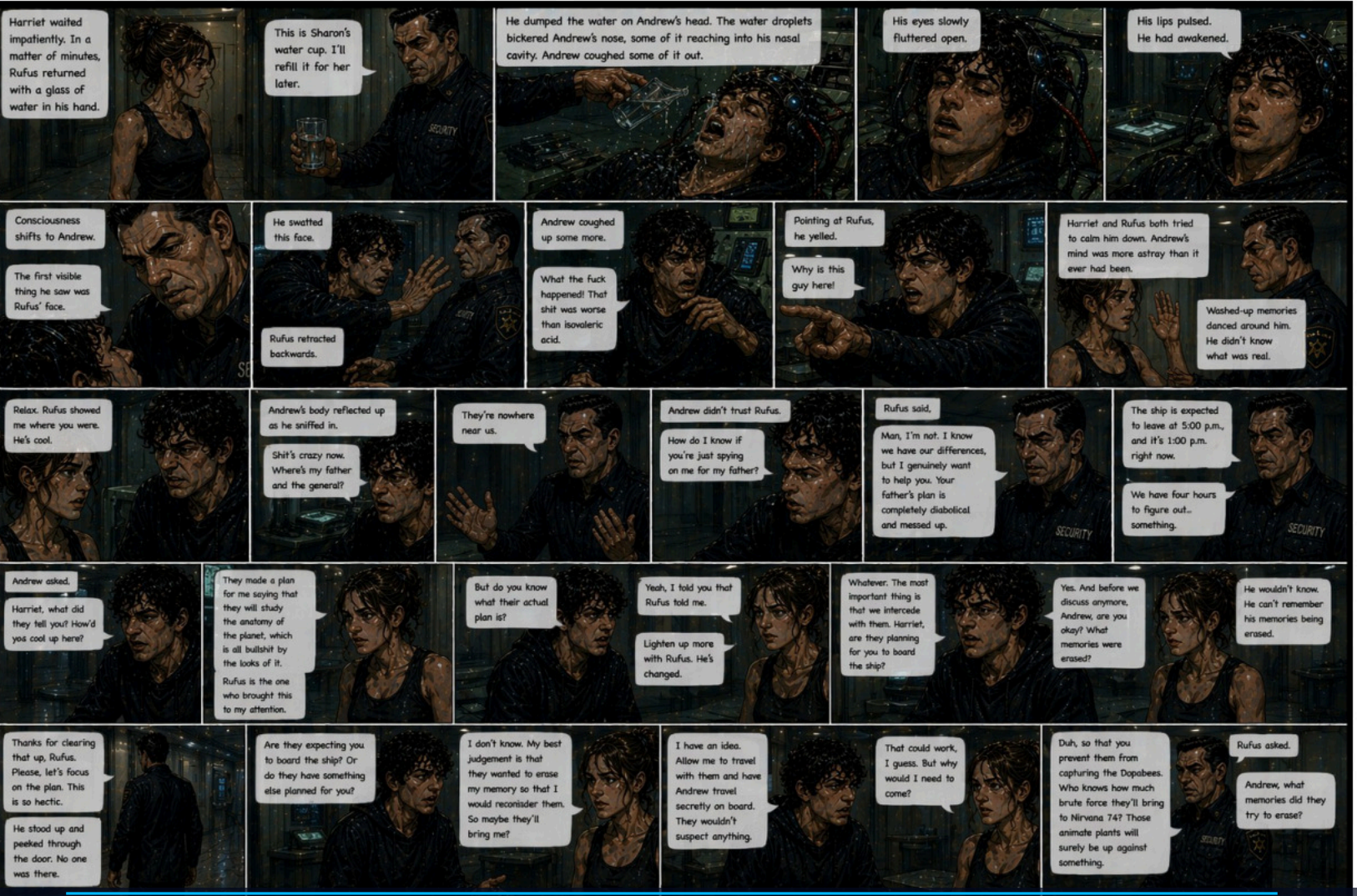
The five people in the Conference Room agreed and exited. Harriet thanked Robert.

Robert said, "Please arrive at the ship by 5:00 p.m. Rufus will escort you to the ship from our room and will notify you when it's time. Thank you so much for all your flexibility during these chaotic times. Lastly, Rufus will escort you out of this complex."

She nodded and Rufus was by her forefront.

Robert entered the elevator and said, "See you." The door closed.

Rufus by her side, she said, "Rufus, could you give me more of a tour of this place? I'm curious." In reality, she just wanted to find Andrew.



Harriet waited impatiently. In a matter of minutes, Rufus returned with a glass of water in his hand.

This is Sharon's water cup. I'll refill it for her later.

He dumped the water on Andrew's head. The water droplets bickered Andrew's nose, some of it reaching into his nasal cavity. Andrew coughed some of it out.

His eyes slowly fluttered open.

His lips pulsed. He had awakened.

Consciousness shifts to Andrew.

He swatted this face.

Andrew coughed up some more.

Pointing at Rufus, he yelled.

Harriet and Rufus both tried to calm him down. Andrew's mind was more astray than it ever had been.

The first visible thing he saw was Rufus' face.

Rufus retracted backwards.

What the fuck happened! That shit was worse than isovaleric acid.

Why is this guy here!

Washed-up memories danced around him. He didn't know what was real.

Relax. Rufus showed me where you were. He's cool.

Andrew's body reflected up as he sniffed in.

They're nowhere near us.

Andrew didn't trust Rufus.

Rufus said,

The ship is expected to leave at 5:00 p.m., and it's 1:00 p.m. right now.

Shit's crazy now. Where's my father and the general?

How do I know if you're just spying on me for my father?

Man, I'm not. I know we have our differences, but I genuinely want to help you. Your father's plan is completely diabolical and messed up.

We have four hours to figure out... something.

Andrew asked.

They made a plan for me saying that they will study the anatomy of the planet, which is all bullshit by the looks of it. Rufus is the one who brought this to my attention.

But do you know what their actual plan is?

Yeah, I told you that Rufus told me.

Whatever. The most important thing is that we intercede with them. Harriet, are you planning for you to board the ship?

Yes. And before we discuss anymore, Andrew, are you okay? What memories were erased?

He wouldn't know. He can't remember his memories being erased.

Thanks for clearing that up, Rufus. Please, let's focus on the plan. This is so hectic.

Are they expecting you to board the ship? Or do they have something else planned for you?

I don't know. My best judgement is that they wanted to erase my memory so that I would reconsider them. So maybe they'll bring me?

I have an idea. Allow me to travel with them and have Andrew travel secretly on board. They wouldn't suspect anything.

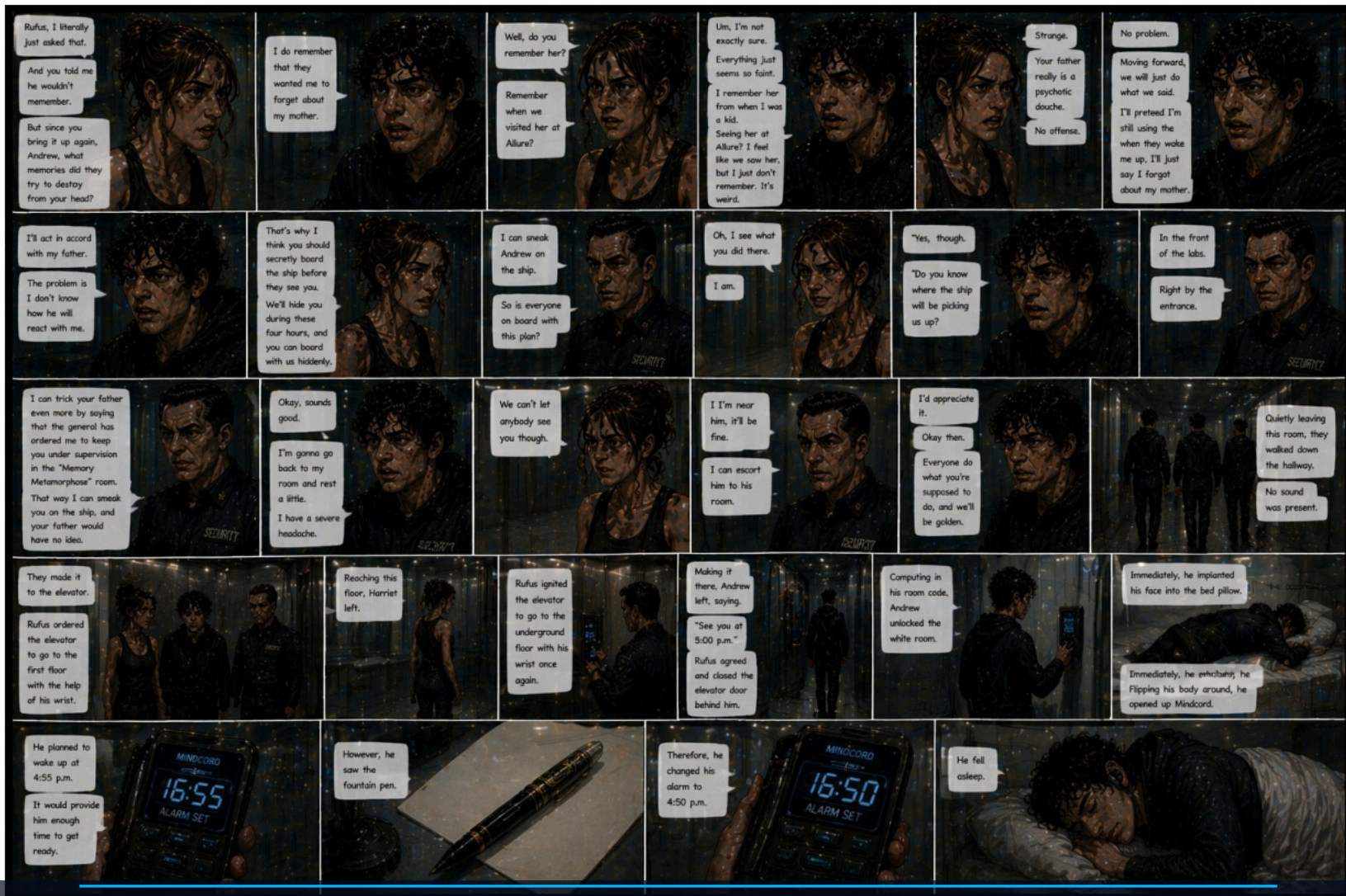
That could work. I guess. But why would I need to come?

Duh, so that you prevent them from capturing the Dopobees. Who knows how much brute force they'll bring to Nirvana 74? Those animate plants will surely be up against something.

Rufus asked.

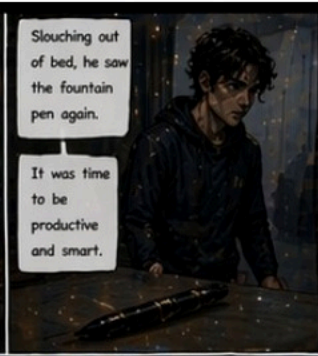
Andrew, what memories did they try to erase?

He stood up and peeked through the door. No one was there.



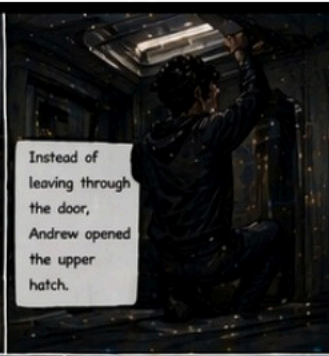


Nap done, Andrew was awakened by his 4:50 p.m. alarm.



Slouching out of bed, he saw the fountain pen again.

It was time to be productive and smart.



Instead of leaving through the door, Andrew opened the upper hatch.



As soon as he reached the first floor, he heard a whirring noise.

It was the Nirvana Voyager with its loud engine directly by the front entrance.

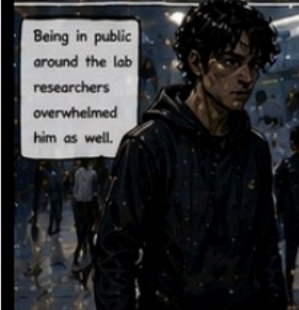


The size of the ship was so massive that only the entrance of the ship could be seen from the entrance of the labs.

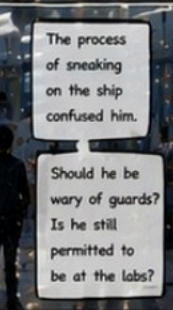


What surprised Andrew even more was that this wasn't the only ship; there were hundreds of small space cruisers and U-shaped assault vessels.

There were so many of them that they were parked outside of the lab gates.

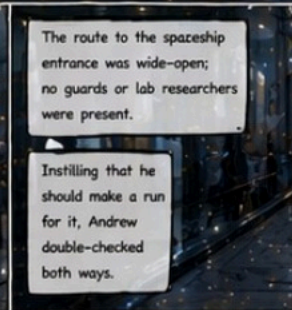


Being in public around the lab researchers overwhelmed him as well.



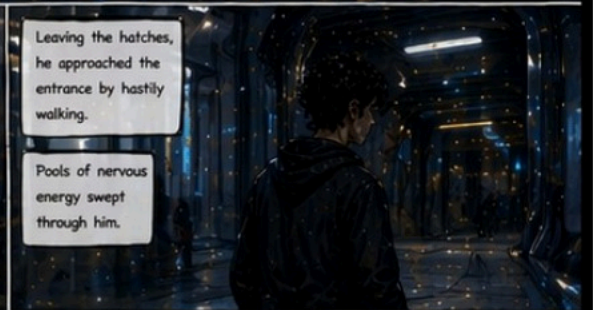
The process of sneaking on the ship confused him.

Should he be wary of guards? Is he still permitted to be at the labs?



The route to the spaceship entrance was wide-open; no guards or lab researchers were present.

Instilling that he should make a run for it, Andrew double-checked both ways.



Leaving the hatches, he approached the entrance by hastily walking.

Pools of nervous energy swept through him.



He passed the entrance door and saw two guards that stood on the sides of it.

Hey, what are you doing?



Andrew revealed his face to them.

Oh, it's Robert's son.

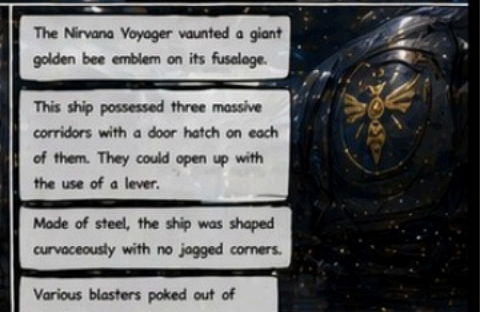
Please, go right ahead.

He pointed to the spaceship door.



Thanks.

While giving them a thumbs up, he gazed at the ship.

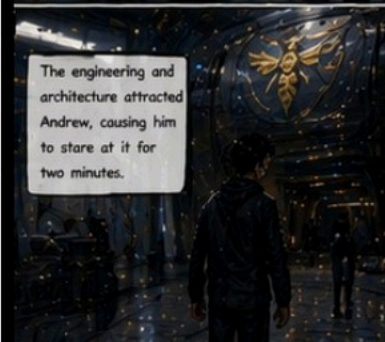


The Nirvana Voyager vaunted a giant golden bee emblem on its fuselage.

This ship possessed three massive corridors with a door hatch on each of them. They could open up with the use of a lever.

Made of steel, the ship was shaped curvaceously with no jagged corners.

Various blasters poked out of the front.

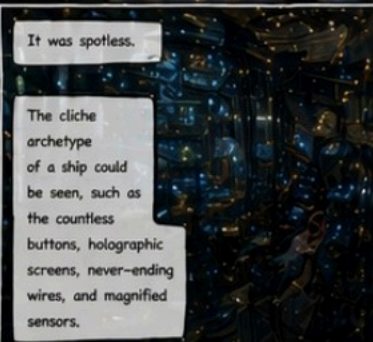


The engineering and architecture attracted Andrew, causing him to stare at it for two minutes.



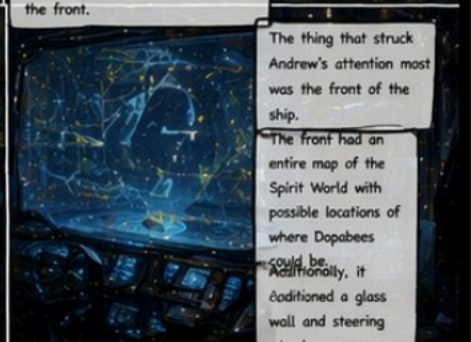
Inside was brightly lit.

Blue LEDs shined the white tiles on the floor.



It was spotless.

The cliché archetype of a ship could be seen, such as the countless buttons, holographic screens, never-ending wires, and magnified sensors.



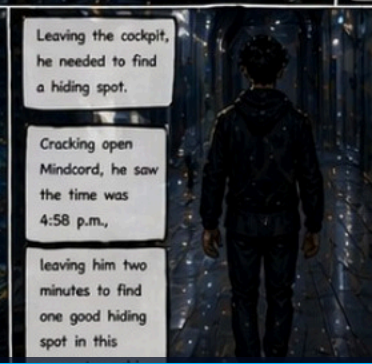
The thing that struck Andrew's attention most was the front of the ship.

The front had an entire map of the Spirit World with possible locations of where Dopabees could be. Additionally, it conditioned a glass wall and steering wheel.



The pinpoints of the Dopabee locations were placed up north of the planet.

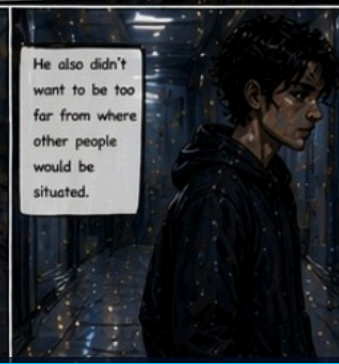
This angered him.



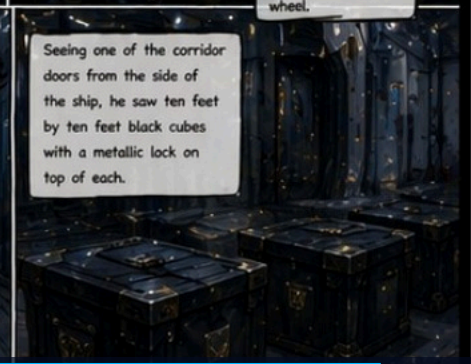
Leaving the cockpit, he needed to find a hiding spot.

Cracking open Mindcord, he saw the time was 4:58 p.m.,

leaving him two minutes to find one good hiding spot in this



He also didn't want to be too far from where other people would be situated.



Seeing one of the corridor doors from the side of the ship, he saw ten feet by ten feet black cubes with a metallic lock on top of each.



The gap between the frontal cockpit and the cubes was only about 50 feet, providing him with enough space to hear possible conversations.

He crouched behind one of the cubes and waited. This spot seemed fine to him. Now it was a matter of patience.

Mindcord displayed the time of 5:00 p.m.

Immediately, he heard crisp metallic footsteps.

That's so weird.

We'll figure it out. And I guess we're early, too.

A few seconds later, more footsteps approached, that of his father's and later the General's.

Peeking over his shoulder, Andrew saw Rufus take notice of Robert.

Wayne and Robert shook Harriet's hand.

Harriet, are you ready to help us?

Yes.

Sorry I'm late.

No problem. Let's get this ship up and running.

After this, twenty blue-suited guards came from behind them.

Lastly, one single man with a green vest entered.

Who's ready for some flyin'? Let's get this ship a'steerin'.

Harriet, this is our pilot, Fred Batenhoff.

He has flown for the U.S. Air Force in many simulations, such as Frost Island, Candy Fortress, and Blaze Land. His skills are outrageous. He even got a score of 13200 on the bonus feature, marking him as the world record holder.

Okay.

Let's engage in some Sub-Lightspeed.

In 3... 2... 1.

Andrew felt a rampant shock for less than a second. This shock was absorbed by the vertical stabilizer. The amorphous steel of the ship morphed its shape and re-established its original state.

Having no windows other than the frontal glass, he couldn't see their spatial location.

Andrew wanted a quick peek of where his father was, but he concluded it was too risky for this.

Antebellum America was a prosperous time before the geothermal crisis. Who knew that one small crisis would lead us to something like this.

It truly is. Now, if we could bring our attention to this screen, I would greatly appreciate it.

This right here is a map of Nirvana 74. It specifies which creature associates with each biome. It also calculates the dimensions of each biome, whether it be their height, width, weight, and density. Quintessentially, it is most important that these creatures match up with the standards of the Spirit World. If just a minor mistake is made in height, for example, we will do our best to match our code to Nirvana 74's physical standards.

I am in agreeance.

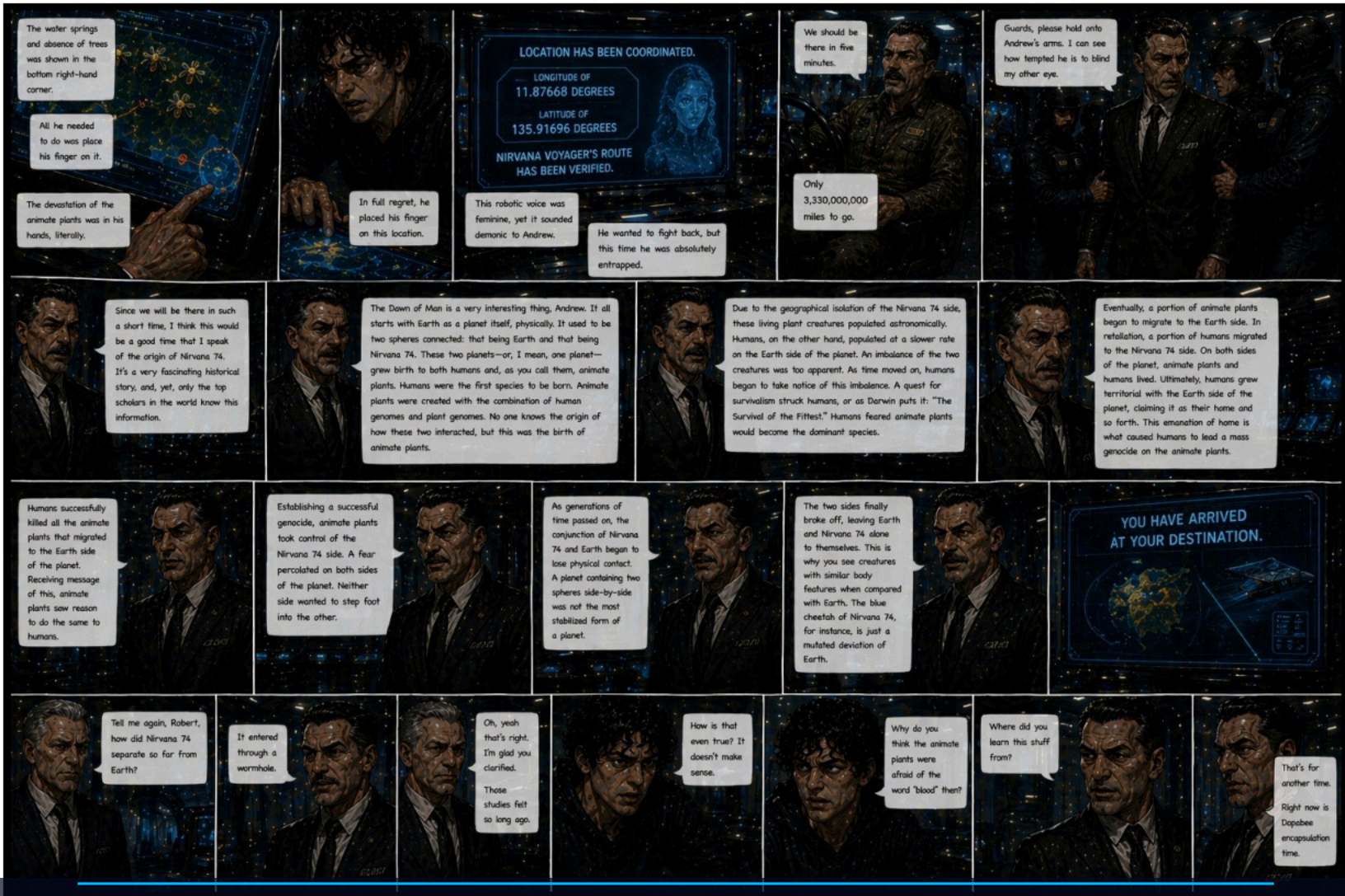
There was plain silence for ten seconds.

Which thing on the map represents the Dopabees we need to capture?

Five more seconds of plain silence.

An awkward cough emerged.

Harriet, you're under arrest.



The water springs and absence of trees was shown in the bottom right-hand corner.

All he needed to do was place his finger on it.

The devastation of the animate plants was in his hands, literally.

In full regret, he placed his finger on this location.

LOCATION HAS BEEN COORDINATED.  
LONGITUDE OF 11.87668 DEGREES  
LATITUDE OF 135.91696 DEGREES  
NIRVANA VOYAGER'S ROUTE HAS BEEN VERIFIED.

This robotic voice was feminine, yet it sounded demonic to Andrew.

He wanted to fight back, but this time he was absolutely entrapped.

We should be there in five minutes.

Only 3,330,000,000 miles to go.

Guards, please hold onto Andrew's arms. I can see how tempted he is to blind my other eye.

Since we will be there in such a short time, I think this would be a good time that I speak of the origin of Nirvana 74. It's a very fascinating historical story, and, yet, only the top scholars in the world know this information.

The Dawn of Man is a very interesting thing, Andrew. It all starts with Earth as a planet itself, physically. It used to be two spheres connected: that being Earth and that being Nirvana 74. These two planets—or, I mean, one planet—grew birth to both humans and, as you call them, animate plants. Humans were the first species to be born. Animate plants were created with the combination of human genomes and plant genomes. No one knows the origin of how these two interacted, but this was the birth of animate plants.

Due to the geographical isolation of the Nirvana 74 side, these living plant creatures populated astronomically. Humans, on the other hand, populated at a slower rate on the Earth side of the planet. An imbalance of the two creatures was too apparent. As time moved on, humans began to take notice of this imbalance. A quest for survivalism struck humans, or as Darwin puts it: "The Survival of the Fittest." Humans feared animate plants would become the dominant species.

Eventually, a portion of animate plants began to migrate to the Earth side. In retaliation, a portion of humans migrated to the Nirvana 74 side. On both sides of the planet, animate plants and humans lived. Ultimately, humans grew territorial with the Earth side of the planet, claiming it as their home and so forth. This emanation of home is what caused humans to lead a mass genocide on the animate plants.

Humans successfully killed all the animate plants that migrated to the Earth side of the planet. Receiving message of this, animate plants saw reason to do the same to humans.

Establishing a successful genocide, animate plants took control of the Nirvana 74 side. A fear percolated on both sides of the planet. Neither side wanted to step foot into the other.

As generations of time passed on, the conjunction of Nirvana 74 and Earth began to lose physical contact. A planet containing two spheres side-by-side was not the most stabilized form of a planet.

The two sides finally broke off, leaving Earth and Nirvana 74 alone to themselves. This is why you see creatures with similar body features when compared with Earth. The blue cheetah of Nirvana 74, for instance, is just a mutated deviation of Earth.

YOU HAVE ARRIVED AT YOUR DESTINATION.

Tell me again, Robert, how did Nirvana 74 separate so far from Earth?

It entered through a wormhole.

Oh, yeah that's right. I'm glad you clarified. Those studies felt so long ago.

How is that even true? It doesn't make sense.

Why do you think the animate plants were afraid of the word "blood" then?

Where did you learn this stuff from?

That's for another time. Right now is Dopebee encapsulation time.



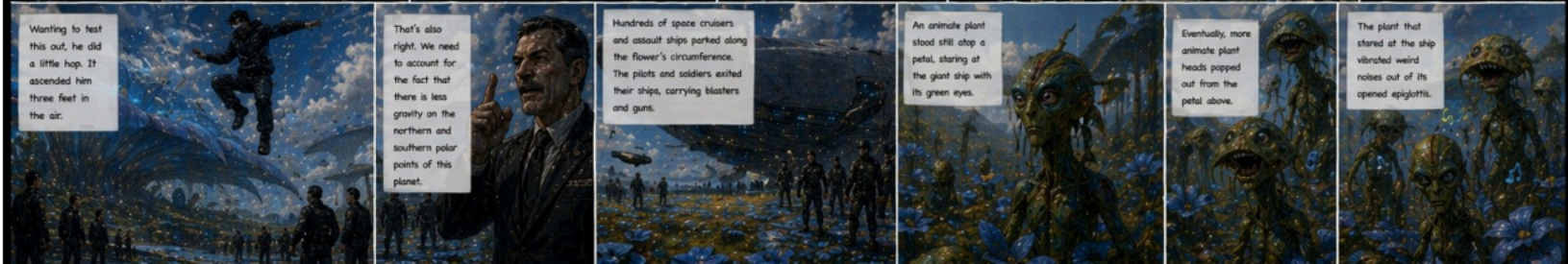
Everybody put on a mask. Those oxygen levels ain't gonna supply you enough.

Strapping the mask behind his head, he took a deep breath.

Fred, open this door.

The first thing Andrew laid eyes on was a blue flower petal, a big one.

Well, that's not a good sign for our guests. We gotta get our coders on this problem right away.



Wanting to test this out, he did a little hop. It ascended him three feet in the air.

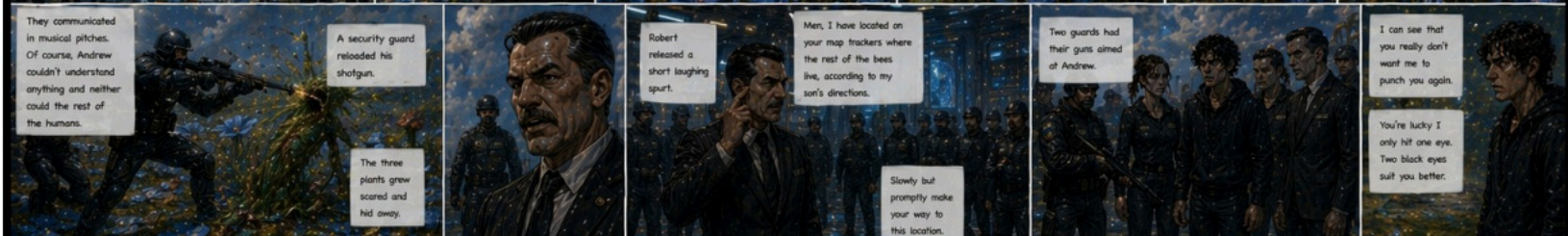
That's also right. We need to account for the fact that there is less gravity on the northern and southern polar points of this planet.

Hundreds of space cruisers and assault ships parked along the flower's circumference. The pilots and soldiers exited their ships, carrying blasters and guns.

An animate plant stood still atop a petal, starting at the giant ship with its green eyes.

Eventually, more animate plant heads popped out from the petal above.

The plant that stared at the ship vibrated weird noises out of its opened epiglottis.



They communicated in musical pitches. Of course, Andrew couldn't understand anything and neither could the rest of the humans.

A security guard reloaded his shotgun.

The three plants grew scared and hid away.

Robert released a short laughing spurt.

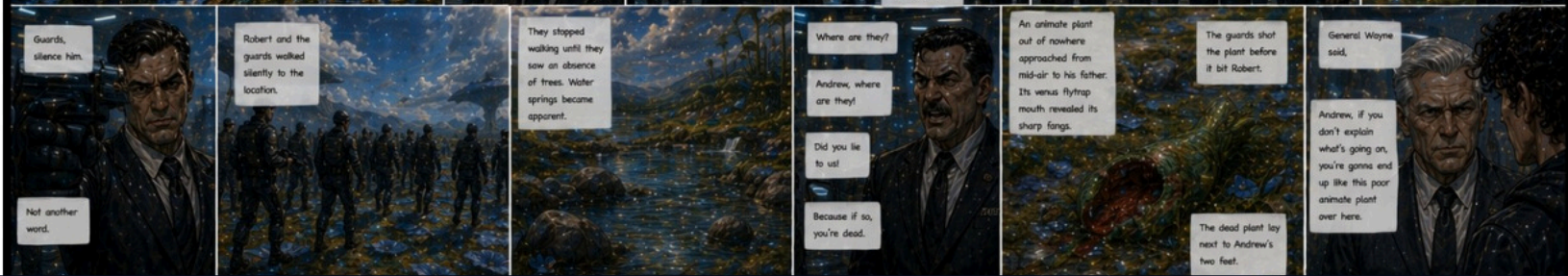
Men, I have located on your map trackers where the rest of the bees live, according to my son's directions.

Slowly but promptly make your way to this location.

Two guards had their guns aimed at Andrew.

I can see that you really don't want me to punch you again.

You're lucky I only hit one eye. Two black eyes suit you better.



Guards, silence him.

Robert and the guards walked silently to the location.

They stopped walking until they saw an absence of trees. Water springs became apparent.

Where are they?

Andrew, where are they!

Did you lie to us!

Because if so, you're dead.

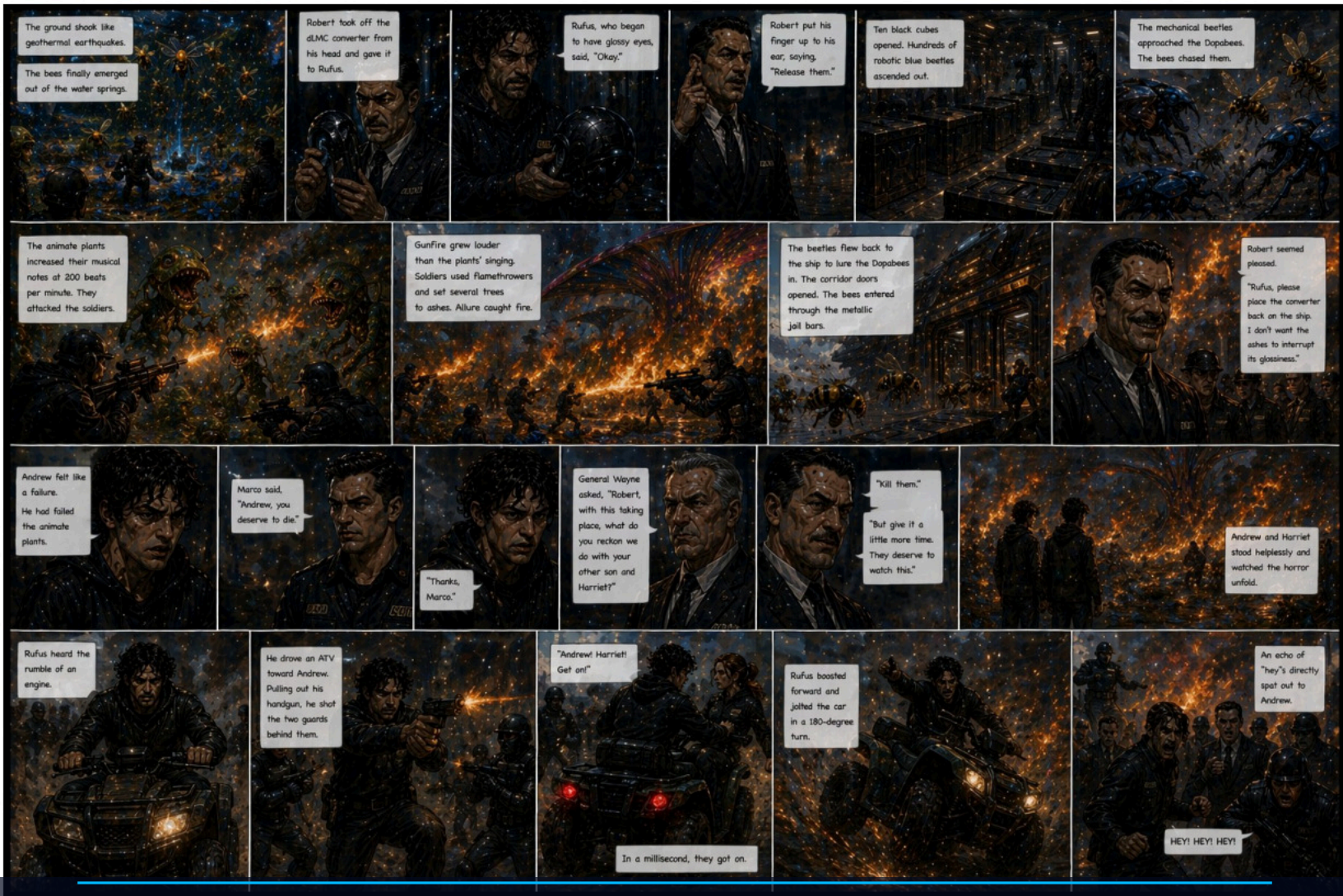
An animate plant out of nowhere approached from mid-air to his father. Its venus flytrap mouth revealed its sharp fangs.

The guards shot the plant before it bit Robert.

General Wayne said.

Andrew, if you don't explain what's going on, you're gonna end up like this poor animate plant over here.

The dead plant lay next to Andrew's two feet.



The ground shook like geothermal earthquakes.  
The bees finally emerged out of the water springs.

Robert took off the dLMC converter from his head and gave it to Rufus.

Rufus, who began to have glossy eyes, said, "Okay."

Robert put his finger up to his ear, saying, "Release them."

Ten black cubes opened. Hundreds of robotic blue beetles ascended out.

The mechanical beetles approached the Dapabees. The bees chased them.

The animate plants increased their musical notes at 200 beats per minute. They attacked the soldiers.

Gunfire grew louder than the plants' singing. Soldiers used flamethrowers and set several trees to ashes. Allure caught fire.

The beetles flew back to the ship to lure the Dapabees in. The corridor doors opened. The bees entered through the metallic jail bars.

Robert seemed pleased.  
"Rufus, please place the converter back on the ship. I don't want the ashes to interrupt its glossiness."

Andrew felt like a failure. He had failed the animate plants.

Marco said, "Andrew, you deserve to die."

"Thanks, Marco."

General Wayne asked, "Robert, with this taking place, what do you reckon we do with your other son and Harriet?"

"Kill them."  
"But give it a little more time. They deserve to watch this."

Andrew and Harriet stood helplessly and watched the horror unfold.

Rufus heard the rumble of an engine.

He drove an ATV toward Andrew. Pulling out his handgun, he shot the two guards behind them.

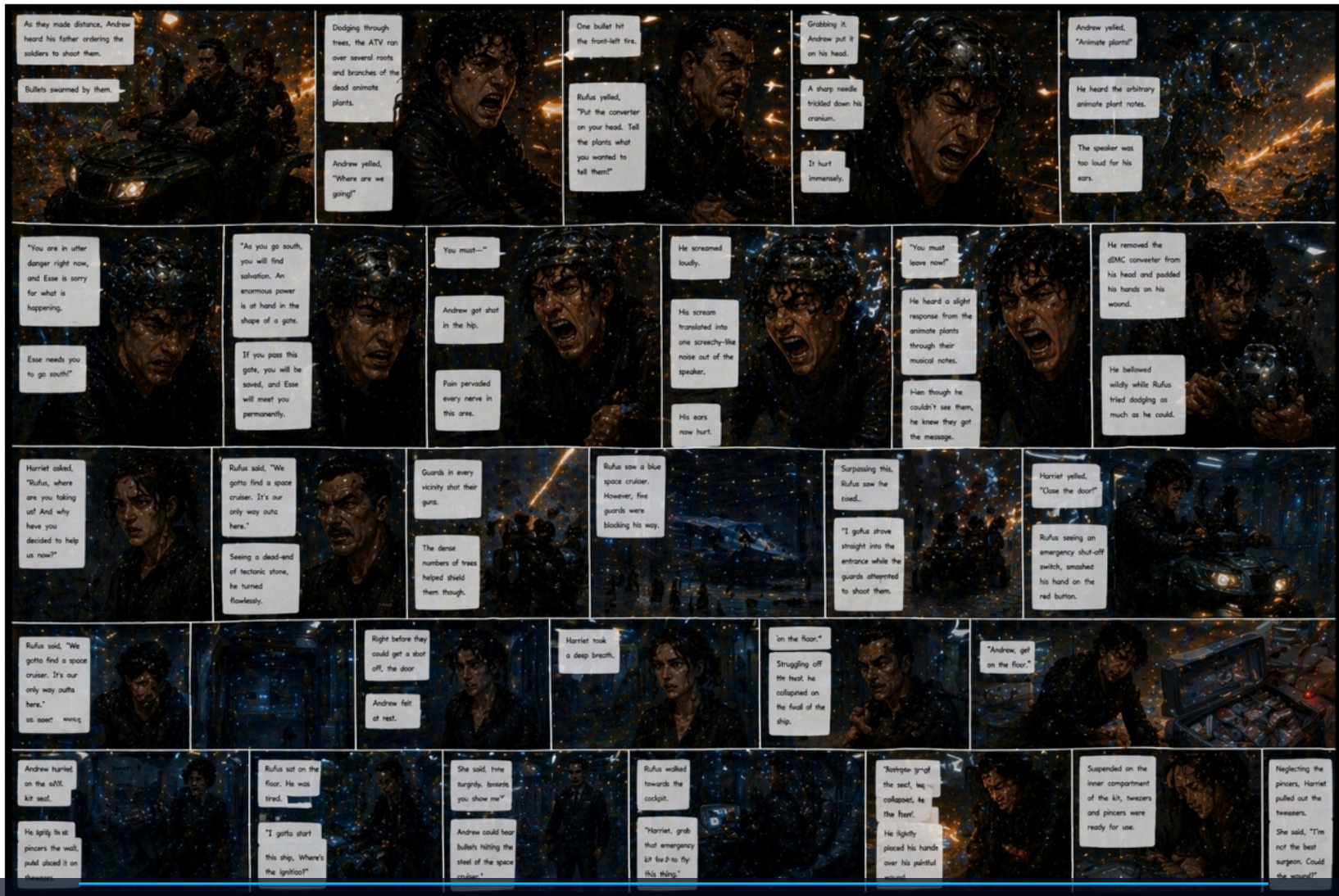
"Andrew! Harriet! Get on!"

Rufus boosted forward and jolted the car in a 180-degree turn.

In a millisecond, they got on.

An echo of "hey's" directly spot out to Andrew.

HEY! HEY! HEY!



As they made distance, Andrew heard his father ordering the soldiers to shoot them.

Bullets swarmed by them.

Dodging through trees, the ATV ran over several roots and branches of the dead animate plants.

Andrew yelled, "Where are we going!"

One bullet hit the front-left tire.

Rufus yelled, "Put the converter on your head. Tell the plants what you wanted to tell them!"

Grabbing it, Andrew put it on his head.

A sharp needle trickled down his cranium.

It hurt immensely.

Andrew yelled, "Animate plants!"

He heard the arbitrary animate plant notes.

The speaker was too loud for his ears.

"You are in utter danger right now, and Esse is sorry for what is happening.

Esse needs you to go south!"

"As you go south, you will find salvation. An enormous power is at hand in the shape of a gate.

If you pass this gate, you will be saved, and Esse will meet you permanently.

You must—"

Andrew got shot in the hip.

Pain pervaded every nerve in this area.

He screamed loudly.

His scream translated into one screechy-like noise out of the speaker.

His ears now hurt.

"You must leave now!"

He heard a slight response from the animate plants through their musical notes.

Even though he couldn't see them, he knew they got the message.

He removed the iMC converter from his head and patted his hands on his wound.

He belloved wildly while Rufus tried dodging as much as he could.

Harriet asked, "Rufus, where are you taking us? And why have you decided to help us now?"

Rufus said, "We gotta find a space cruiser. It's our only way outta here."

Seeing a dead-end of tectonic stone, he turned flowlessly.

Guards in every vicinity shot their guns.

The dense numbers of trees helped shield them though.

Rufus saw a blue space cruiser. However, five guards were blocking his way.

Surprising this, Rufus saw the coast.

"I gotta shove straight into the entrance while the guards attempted to shoot them.

Harriet yelled, "Close the door!"

Rufus seeing an emergency shut-off switch, smashed his hand on the red button.

Rufus said, "We gotta find a space cruiser. It's our only way outta here."

Right before they could get a shot off, the door

Andrew felt at rest.

Harriet took a deep breath.

On the floor," Struggling off the heat, he collapsed on the fuel of the ship.

"Andrew, get on the floor."

Andrew hurried on the ATV. He was tired.

Rufus sat on the floor. He was tired.

"I gotta start this ship. Where's the ignition?"

She said, fine burgundy. lenses you show me"

Andrew could hear bullets hitting the steel of the space cruiser.

Rufus walked towards the cockpit.

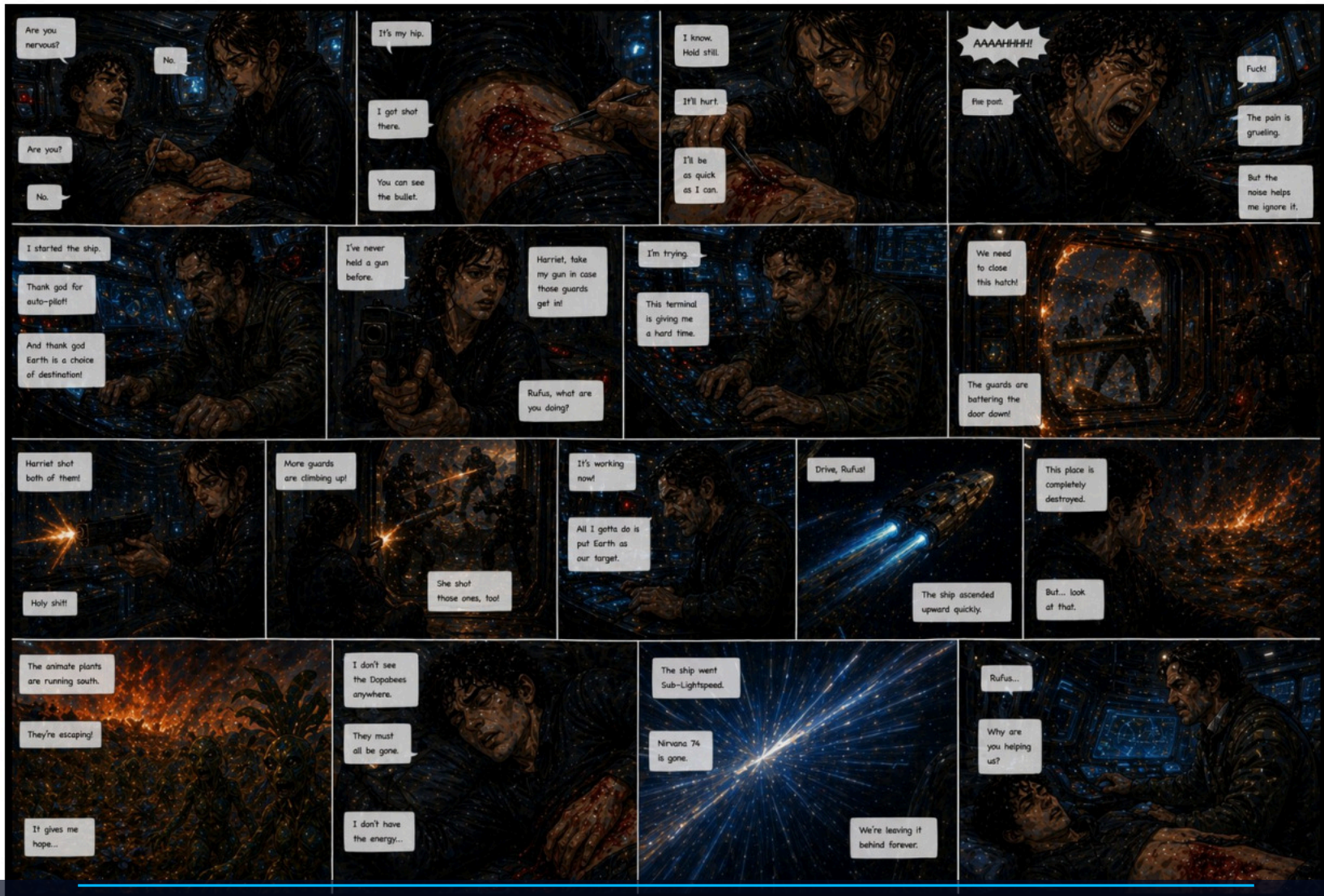
"Harriet, grab that emergency kit fast to fix this thing."

"Analyze" of the seat, he collapsed, he the floor."

He lightly placed his hands over his painful wound.

Suspended on the inner compartment of the kit, tweezers and pincers were ready for use.

Neglecting the pincers, Harriet pulled out the tweezers. She said, "I'm not the best surgeon. Could the you?"



Are you nervous?  
No.  
Are you?  
No.

It's my hip.  
I got shot there.  
You can see the bullet.

I know. Hold still.  
It'll hurt.  
It'll be as quick as I can.

AAAAHHH!  
Fuck!  
The pain is grueling.  
But the noise helps me ignore it.

I started the ship.  
Thank god for auto-pilot.  
And thank god Earth is a choice of destination!

I've never held a gun before.  
Harriet, take my gun in case those guards get in!  
Rufus, what are you doing?

I'm trying.  
This terminal is giving me a hard time.

We need to close this hatch!  
The guards are battering the door down!

Harriet shot both of them.  
Holy shit!

More guards are climbing up!  
She shot those ones, too!

It's working now!  
All I gotta do is put Earth as our target.

Drive, Rufus!  
The ship ascended upward quickly.

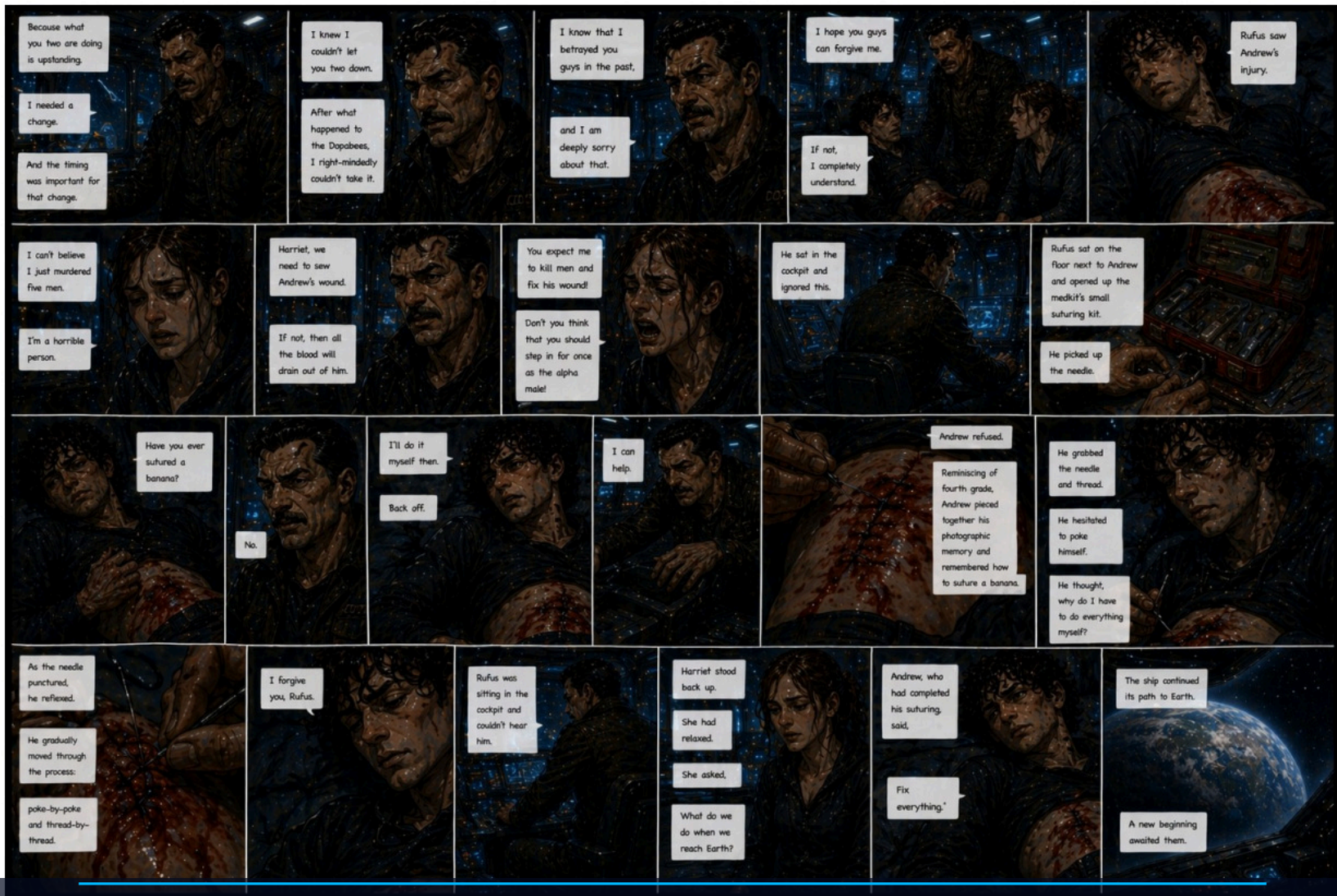
This place is completely destroyed.  
But... look at that.

The animate plants are running south.  
They're escaping!  
It gives me hope...

I don't see the Dopbees anywhere.  
They must all be gone.  
I don't have the energy...

The ship went Sub-Lightspeed.  
Nirvana 74 is gone.  
We're leaving it behind forever.

Rufus...  
Why are you helping us?



Because what you two are doing is upstanding.

I needed a change.

And the timing was important for that change.

I knew I couldn't let you two down.

After what happened to the Dopabees, I right-mindedly couldn't take it.

I know that I betrayed you guys in the past.

and I am deeply sorry about that.

I hope you guys can forgive me.

If not, I completely understand.

Rufus saw Andrew's injury.

I can't believe I just murdered five men.

I'm a horrible person.

Harriet, we need to sew Andrew's wound.

If not, then all the blood will drain out of him.

You expect me to kill men and fix his wound!

Don't you think that you should step in for once as the alpha male!

He sat in the cockpit and ignored this.

Rufus sat on the floor next to Andrew and opened up the medkit's small suturing kit.

He picked up the needle.

Have you ever sutured a banana?

No.

I'll do it myself then.

Back off.

I can help.

Andrew refused.

Reminiscing of fourth grade, Andrew pieced together his photographic memory and remembered how to suture a banana.

He grabbed the needle and thread.

He hesitated to poke himself.

He thought, why do I have to do everything myself?

As the needle punctured, he reflexed.

He gradually moved through the process:

poke-by-poke and thread-by-thread.

I forgive you, Rufus.

Rufus was sitting in the cockpit and couldn't hear him.

Harriet stood back up.

She had relaxed.

She asked,

What do we do when we reach Earth?

Andrew, who had completed his suturing, said,

Fix everything."

The ship continued its path to Earth.

A new beginning awaited them.

Underneath the ATV engine, Andrew waited for Earth's arrival.

Traction stained Andrew's thoughts. It was time for Andrew to be the venerable one.

Andrew contemplated the following: My father is probably after me right now. The radicals are probably watching me right now. Does Wallace want me at the radical hideout? Can I talk about the radicals to Harriet and Rufus? Probably not. Did the animate plants make it to the rift? Is Rufus still trustworthy? Will Father's Dopabee plan work? What should I tell Harriet and Rufus to do when we land? How much time do I have?

Andrew was disrupted by a mental chime from Mindcord.

SHIP ANNOUNCEMENT:  
FIVE MINUTES REMAINING  
UNTIL ARRIVAL: EARTH

Harriet said, "I just got an alert from Mindcord News."

"So did I," Rufus added.

Andrew received the notification. It was a video with the title "Scientists Predict Doomsday Will Hit Tomorrow." This scared the bejesus out of him. He started the video.



The news correspondent said, "Seismic waves reveal that the biggest earthquake in human history will hit tomorrow. Scientists believe this will break Earth's core. This frightening news has doomed us all as a human species. Thankfully, Spirit Intercom has taken initiative, and pre-registered guests are expected to enter starting tomorrow."



The correspondent put his hand over his heart. "Thank god I got access! For all the sad saps who don't, unfortunately, you're gonna die with the rest of the world." The video ended.

Before Andrew closed out of Mindcord, three big X's filled up his mental screen.



An audio message began to play.

Hey, Andrew! It's Wallace! We just got news of our worldly downfall, and we need you to be at the hideout in no less than 30 minutes. Get your ass over here, or we're going to get your ass!



The hacked screen with the 3 X's went away. Andrew closed the interface in shock.

Harriet said, "I can't believe this is happening. What are we going to do?"

Andrew needed to set his mind in accord with this situation.

Andrew said, "Rufus, right when we land, I need you to bring my Sporksterbeale in. I need to evacuate the labs as soon as we get there."

"Because you've dealt with my car more than once."

"Harriet, when we land, I need you to hide at the labs for the night."

"What? Why?" she asked.

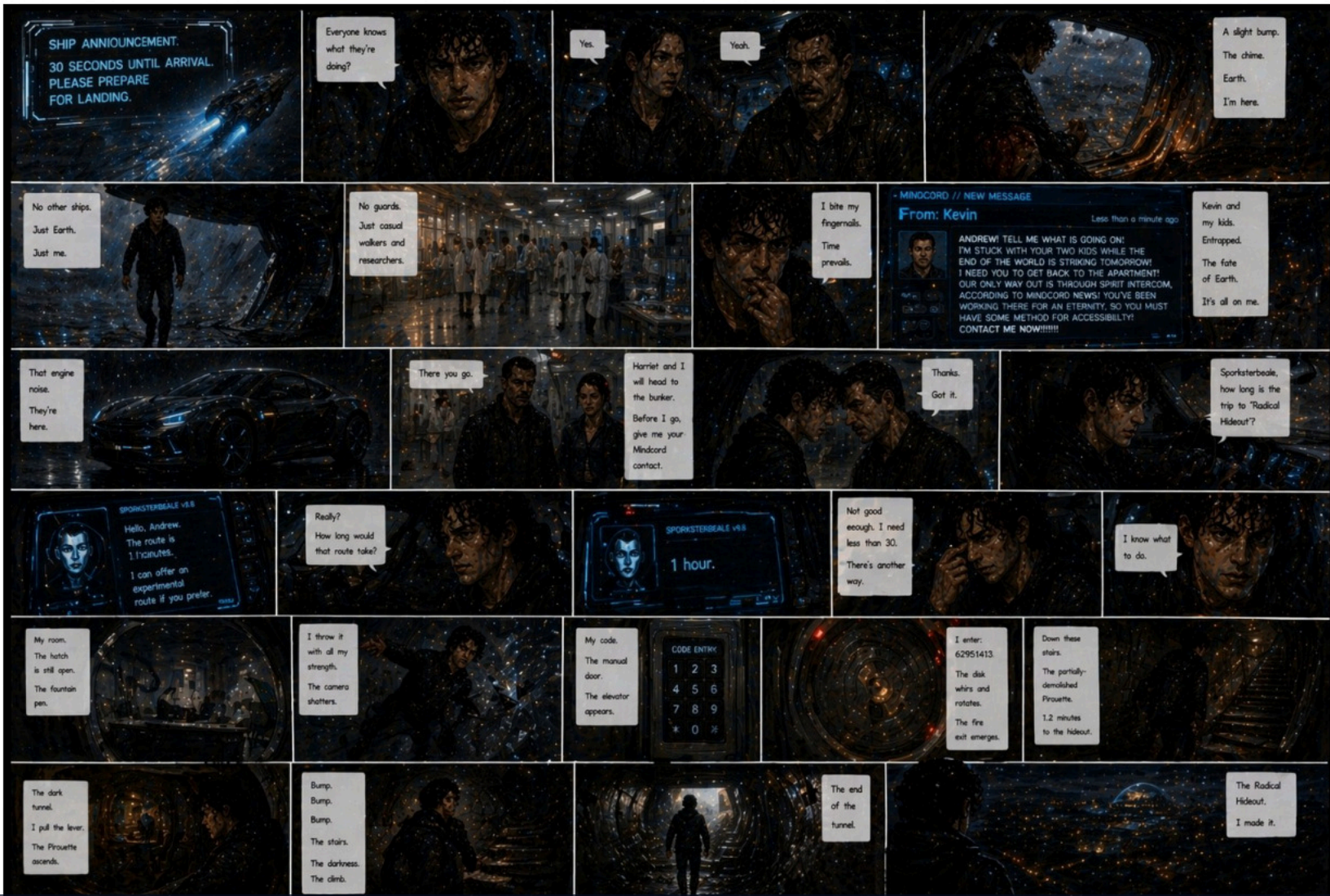
Andrew said, "I need both of you to sleep here overnight. I'll need your assistance tomorrow. And don't forget that all we got is tomorrow. Tonight, I have to check that my kids are safe."

"We can't sleep there. The entire place is covered in camera surveillance."

Rufus said, "I know a low-profile bunker we can hide in. It's a secret bunker for protection against any natural disaster. No cameras are there either."

"See, this can work. First things first, I need Rufus to bring my car in."

Rufus stood up and said, "I'll go get the keys."



SHIP ANNOUNCEMENT.  
30 SECONDS UNTIL ARRIVAL.  
PLEASE PREPARE  
FOR LANDING.

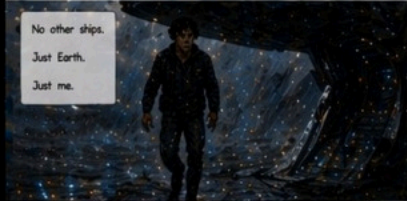
Everyone knows  
what they're  
doing?

Yes.

Yeah.



A slight bump.  
The chime.  
Earth.  
I'm here.



No other ships.  
Just Earth.  
Just me.



No guards.  
Just casual  
walkers and  
researchers.




I bite my  
fingernails.  
Time  
prevails.

- MINDCORD // NEW MESSAGE

From: Kevin

Less than a minute ago



ANDREW! TELL ME WHAT IS GOING ON! I'M STUCK WITH YOUR TWO KIDS WHILE THE END OF THE WORLD IS STRIKING TOMORROW! I NEED YOU TO GET BACK TO THE APARTMENT! OUR ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH SPIRIT INTERCOM. ACCORDING TO MINDCORD NEWS! YOU'VE BEEN WORKING THERE FOR AN ETERNITY, SO YOU MUST HAVE SOME METHOD FOR ACCESSIBILITY! CONTACT ME NOW!!!!!!

Kevin and  
my kids.  
Entrapped.  
The fate of  
Earth.  
It's all on me.



That engine  
noise.  
They're  
here.

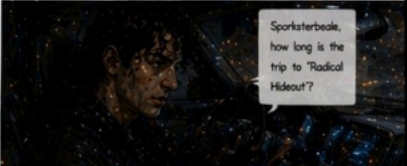


There you go.


Harriet and I  
will head to  
the bunker.  
Before I go,  
give me your  
Mindcord  
contact.



Thanks.  
Got it.



Sportssterbeale,  
how long is  
the trip to  
"Radical  
Hideout"?




SPORKSTERBEALE v8.8

Hello, Andrew.  
The route is  
1.1 minutes.  
I can offer an  
experimental  
route if you prefer.



Really?  
How long would  
that route take?

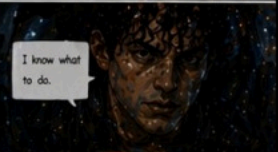


SPORKSTERBEALE v8.8

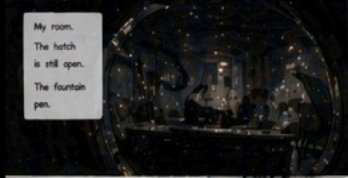
1 hour.



Not good  
enough. I need  
less than 30.  
There's another  
way.



I know what  
to do.



My room.  
The hatch  
is still open.  
The fountain  
pen.

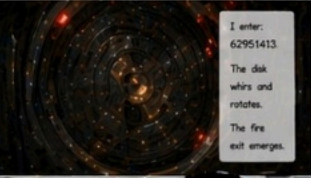


I throw it  
with all my  
strength.  
The camera  
shutters.

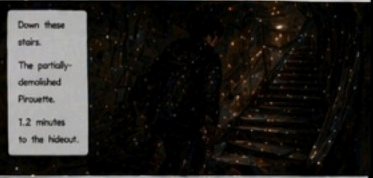
My code.  
The manual  
door.  
The elevator  
appears.

CODE ENTRY

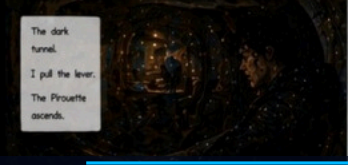
1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
*	0	*



I enter:  
62951413.  
The disk  
whirs and  
rotates.  
The fire  
exit emerges.



Down these  
stairs.  
The partially-  
demolished  
Prouette.  
1.2 minutes  
to the hideout.



The dark  
tunnel.  
I pull the lever.  
The Prouette  
ascends.



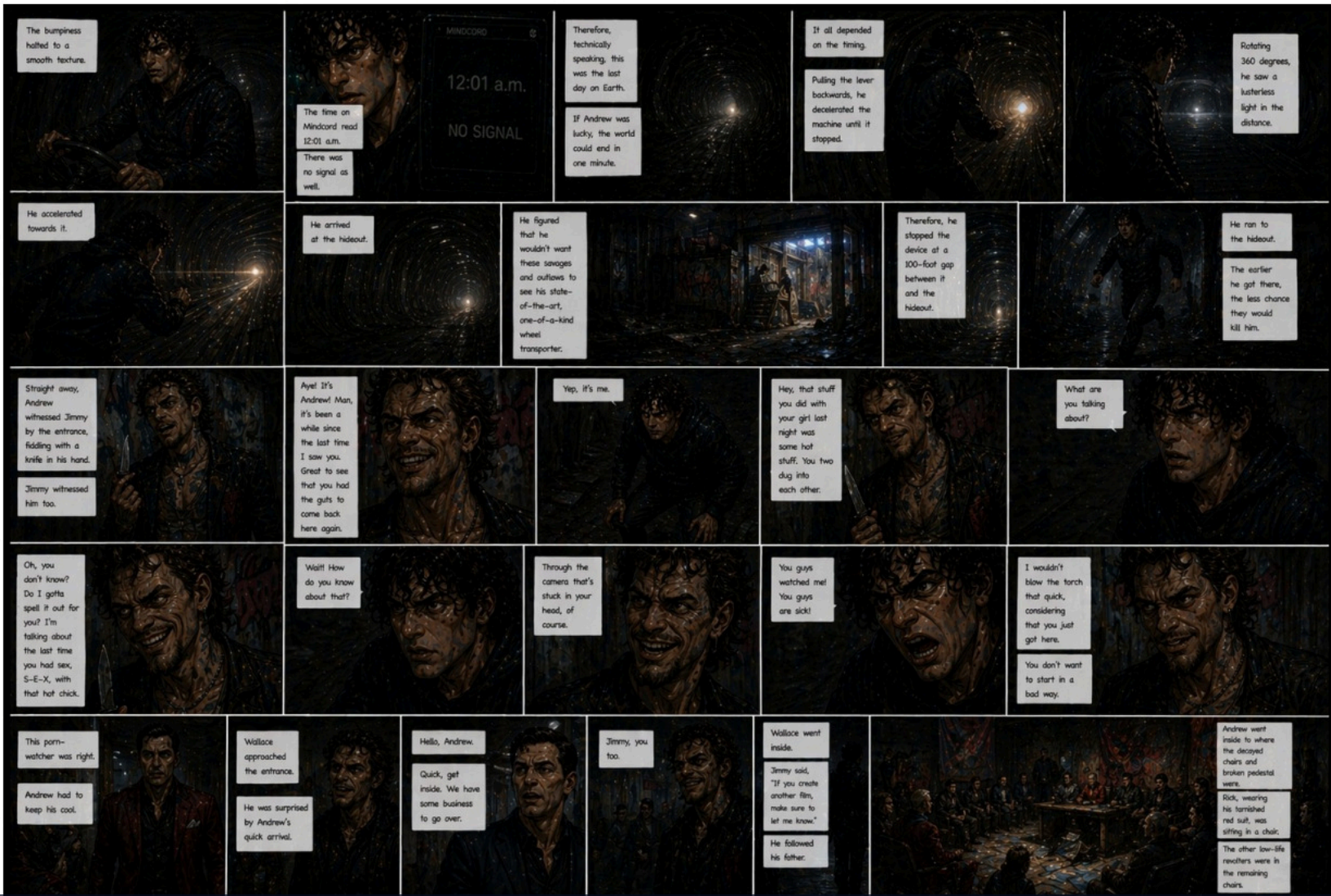
Bump.  
Bump.  
Bump.  
The stairs.  
The darkness  
The climb.



The end  
of the  
tunnel.



The Radical  
Hideout.  
I made it.



The bumpiness halted to a smooth texture.

The time on Mindcord read 12:01 a.m.  
There was no signal as well.

MINDCORD  
12:01 a.m.  
NO SIGNAL

Therefore, technically speaking, this was the last day on Earth.  
If Andrew was lucky, the world could end in one minute.

It all depended on the timing.  
Pulling the lever backwards, he decelerated the machine until it stopped.

Rotating 360 degrees, he saw a lusterless light in the distance.

He accelerated towards it.

He arrived at the hideout.

He figured that he wouldn't want these savages and outlaws to see his state-of-the-art, one-of-a-kind wheel transporter.

Therefore, he stopped the device at a 100-foot gap between it and the hideout.

He ran to the hideout.  
The earlier he got there, the less chance they would kill him.

Straight away, Andrew witnessed Jimmy by the entrance, fiddling with a knife in his hand.  
Jimmy witnessed him too.

Aye! It's Andrew! Man, it's been a while since the last time I saw you. Great to see that you had the guts to come back here again.

Yep, it's me.

Hey, that stuff you did with your girl last night was some hot stuff. You two dug into each other.

What are you talking about?

Oh, you don't know? Do I gotta spell it out for you? I'm talking about the last time you had sex, S-E-X, with that hot chick.

Wait! How do you know about that?

Through the camera that's stuck in your head, of course.

You guys watched me! You guys are sick!

I wouldn't blow the torch that quick, considering that you just got here.  
You don't want to start in a bad way.

This porn-watcher was right.  
Andrew had to keep his cool.

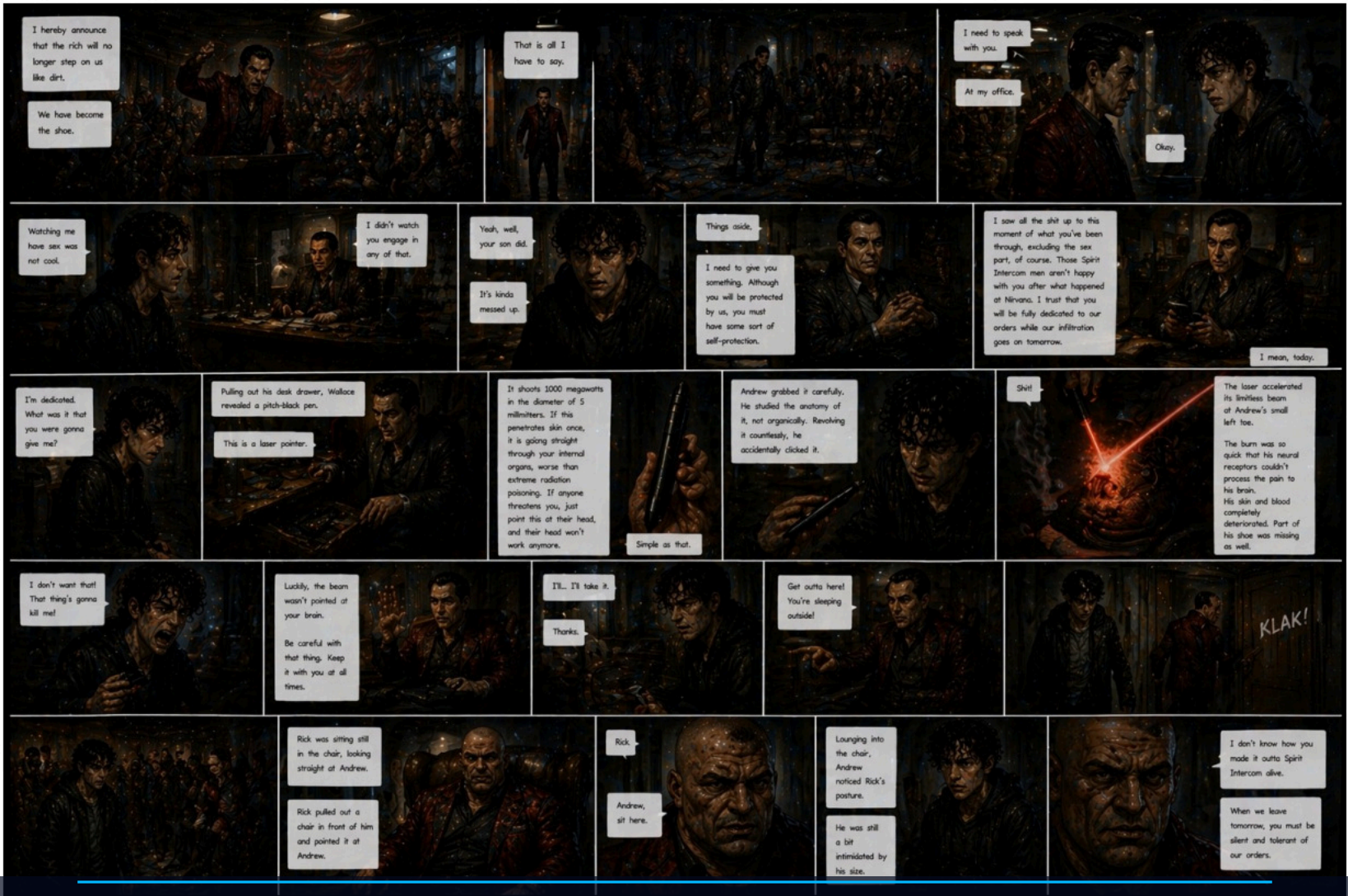
Wallace approached the entrance.  
He was surprised by Andrew's quick arrival.

Hello, Andrew.  
Quick, get inside. We have some business to go over.

Jimmy, you too.

Wallace went inside.  
Jimmy said, "If you create another film, make sure to let me know."  
He followed his father.

Andrew went inside to where the decayed chairs and broken pedestals were.  
Rick, wearing his tarnished red suit, was sitting in a chair.  
The other low-life rappers were in the remaining chairs.



I hereby announce that the rich will no longer step on us like dirt.

We have become the shoe.

That is all I have to say.

I need to speak with you.

At my office.

Okay.

Watching me have sex was not cool.

I didn't watch you engage in any of that.

Yeah, well, your son did.

It's kinda messed up.

Things aside,

I need to give you something. Although you will be protected by us, you must have some sort of self-protection.

I saw all the shit up to this moment of what you've been through, excluding the sex part, of course. Those Spirit Intercom men aren't happy with you after what happened at Nirvano. I trust that you will be fully dedicated to our orders while our infiltration goes on tomorrow.

I mean, today.

I'm dedicated. What was it that you were gonna give me?

Pulling out his desk drawer, Wallace revealed a pitch-black pen.

This is a laser pointer.

It shoots 1000 megawatts in the diameter of 5 millimeters. If this penetrates skin once, it is going straight through your internal organs, worse than extreme radiation poisoning. If anyone threatens you, just point this at their head, and their head won't work anymore.

Simple as that.

Andrew grabbed it carefully. He studied the anatomy of it, not organically. Revolving it countlessly, he accidentally clicked it.

Shit.

The laser accelerated its limitless beam at Andrew's small left toe.

The burn was so quick that his neural receptors couldn't process the pain to his brain. His skin and blood completely deteriorated. Part of his shoe was missing as well.

I don't want that! That thing's gonna kill me!

Luckily, the beam wasn't pointed at your brain.

Be careful with that thing. Keep it with you at all times.

I'll. I'll take it.

Thanks.

Get outta here! You're sleeping outside!

KLAK!

Rick was sitting still in the chair, looking straight at Andrew.

Rick pulled out a chair in front of him and pointed it at Andrew.

Rick.

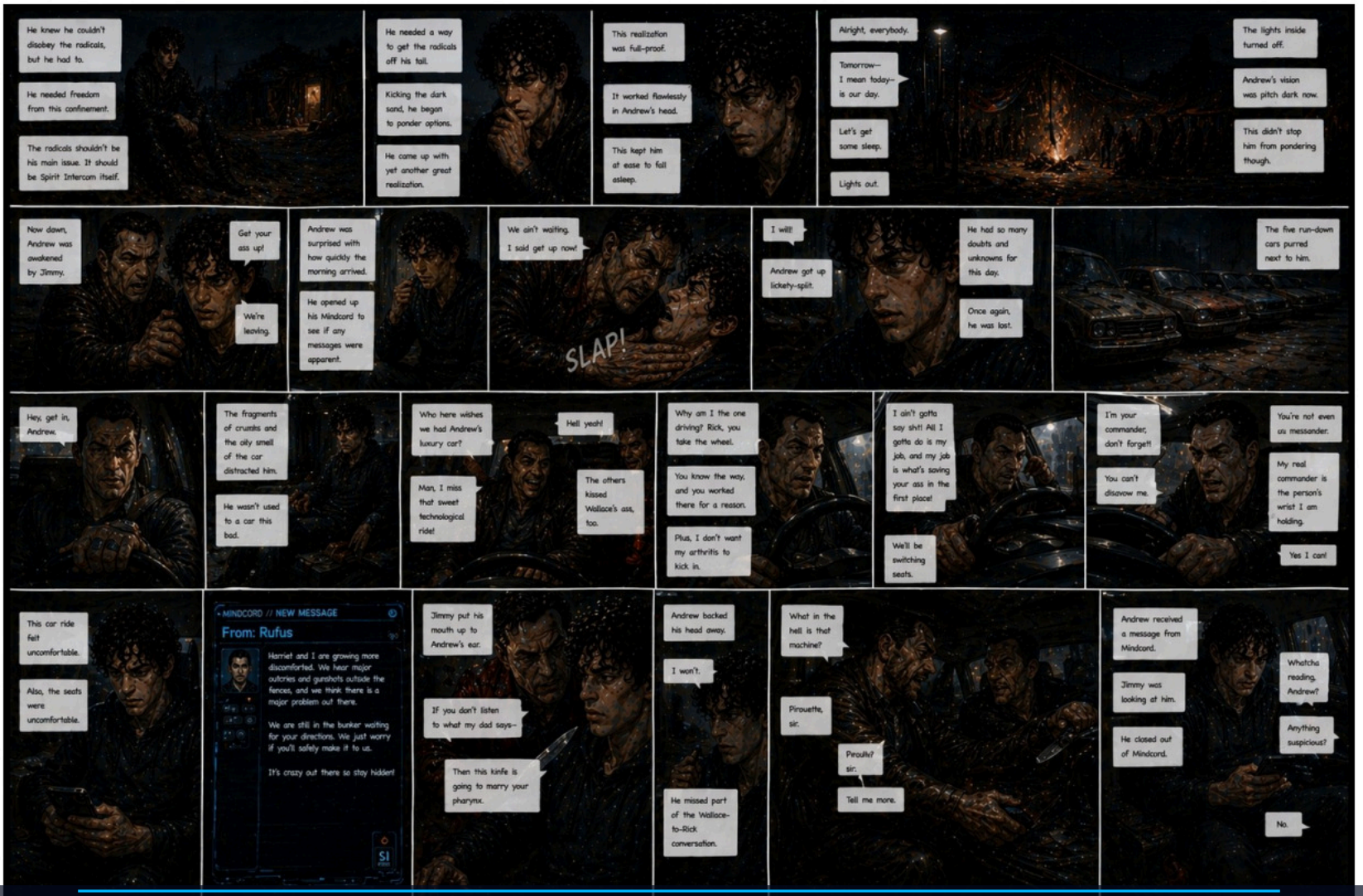
Andrew, sit here.

Lounging into the chair, Andrew noticed Rick's posture.

He was still a bit intimidated by his size.

I don't know how you made it outta Spirit Intercom alive.

When we leave tomorrow, you must be silent and tolerant of our orders.



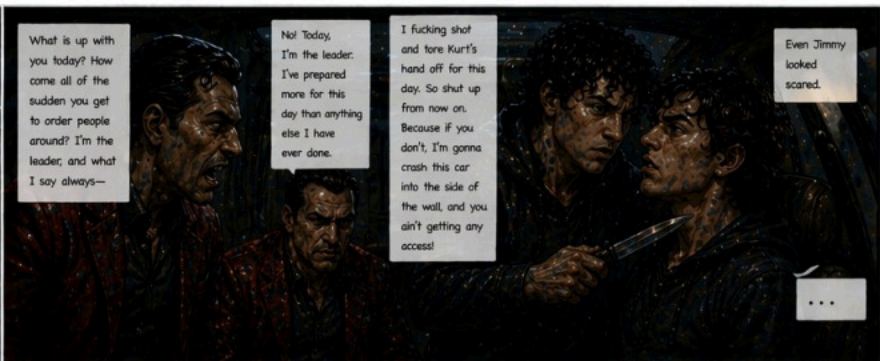


Andrew, we don't wanna give you a hard time. Tell us what you read.

He doesn't need to.

What makes you say that? He has to obey me. Andrew, tell—

He ain't gotta say shit. It's not like he can cover up anything from us. We'll just have a closer eye on him.



What is up with you today? How come all of the sudden you get to order people around? I'm the leader, and what I say always—

No! Today, I'm the leader. I've prepared more for this day than anything else I have ever done.

I fucking shot and tore Kurt's hand off for this day. So shut up from now on. Because if you don't, I'm gonna crash this car into the side of the wall, and you ain't getting any access!

Even Jimmy looked scared.

...



Andrew kept to himself.

Jimmy, relax. If you knife Andrew, I'm crashing this car right away.

I hate this dude. He's gonna screw things up for us!

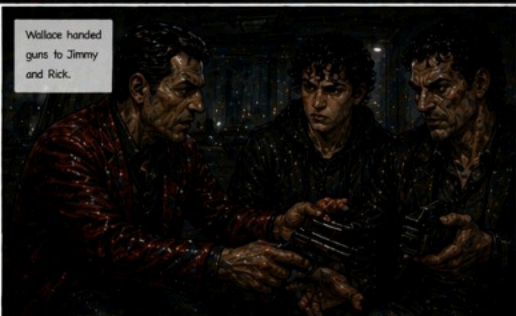


He reopened Mindcord.

MINDCORD // NEW MESSAGE  
From: Rufus  
Rufus, please have Harriet give me the screen of my father's eye. It's important and necessary for this day. I will let you know when.



The light at the end of the tunnel sharpened.

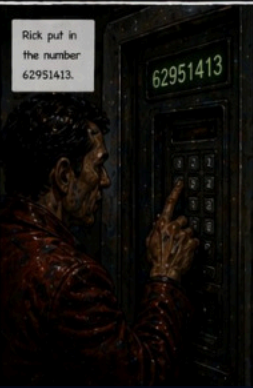


Wallace handed guns to Jimmy and Rick.



Rampant gunshots. Shrieks and yells.

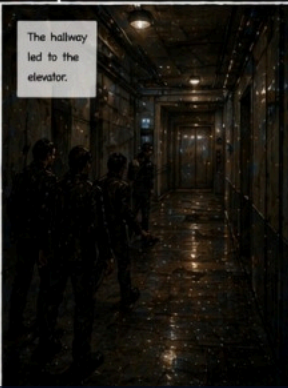
The crowd dilated their cheer.



Rick put in the number 62951413.



"Nobody says a word past this door. Follow Rick and me quietly."

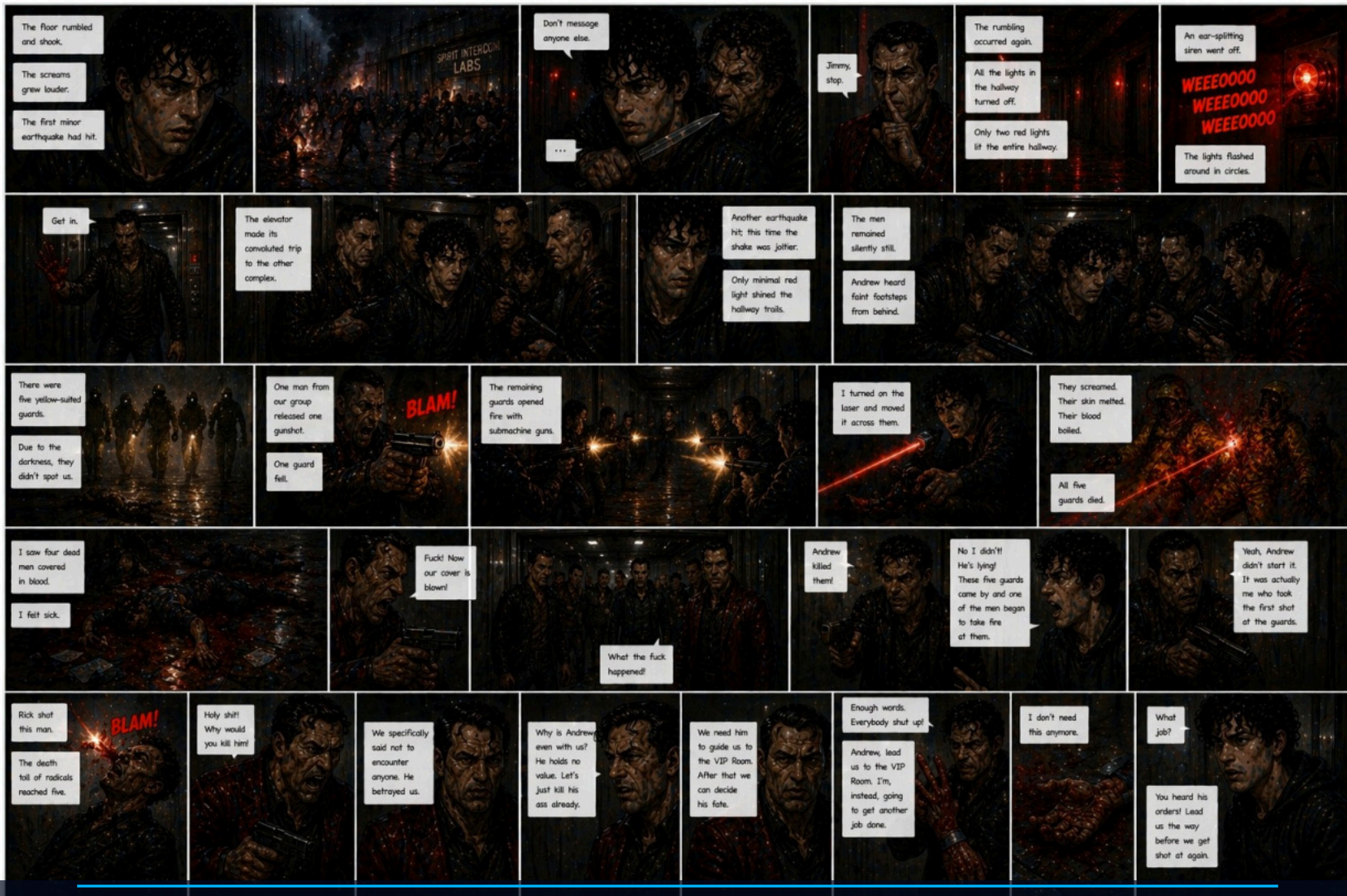


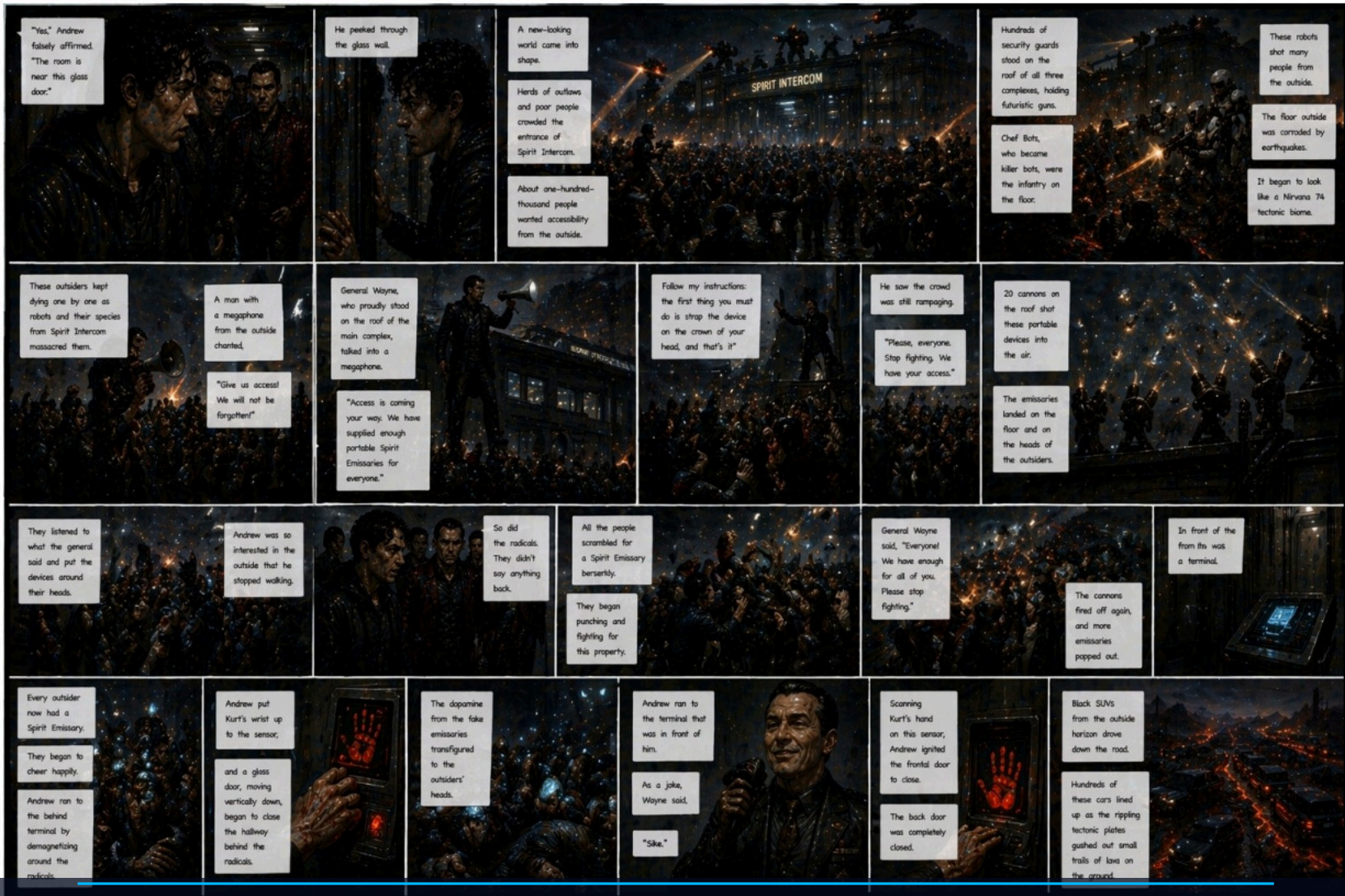
The hallway led to the elevator.



Rick went on the elevator by himself.

He held Kurt's hand in his left hand and used his wrist to trigger the elevator's convoluted trip.





"Yes," Andrew falsely affirmed. "The room is near this glass door."

He peered through the glass wall.

A new-looking world came into shape.

Hordes of outlaws and poor people crowded the entrance of Spirit Intercom.

About one-hundred-thousand people wanted accessibility from the outside.

Hundreds of security guards stood on the roof of all three complexes, holding futuristic guns.

These robots shot many people from the outside.

The floor outside was crisscrossed by earthquakes.

It began to look like a Nirvana 74 tectonic biome.

Chef Bots, who became killer bots, were the infantry on the floor.

These outsiders kept dying one by one as robots and their species from Spirit Intercom massacred them.

A man with a megaphone from the outside chanted,

"Give us access! We will not be forgotten!"

General Wayne, who proudly stood on the roof of the main complex, talked into a megaphone.

"Access is coming your way. We have supplied enough portable Spirit Emissaries for everyone."

Follow my instructions: the first thing you must do is strap the device on the crown of your head, and that's it!

He saw the crowd was still rampaging.

"Please, everyone. Stop fighting. We have your access."

20 cannons on the roof shot these portable devices into the air.

The emissaries landed on the floor and on the heads of the outsiders.

They listened to what the general said and put the devices around their heads.

Andrew was so interested in the outside that he stopped walking.

So did the radicals. They didn't say anything back.

All the people scrambled for a Spirit Emissary berserky.

They began punching and fighting for this property.

General Wayne said, "Everyone! We have enough for all of you. Please stop fighting."

In front of the from this was a terminal.

The cannons fired off again, and more emissaries popped out.

Every outsider now had a Spirit Emissary.

They began to cheer happily.

Andrew ran to the behind terminated by demagnetizing around the radicals.

Andrew put Kurt's wrist up to the sensor,

and a glass door, moving vertically down, began to close the hallway behind the radicals.

The dopamine from the fake emissaries transfigured to the outsiders' heads.

Andrew ran to the terminal that was in front of him.

As a joke, Wayne said,

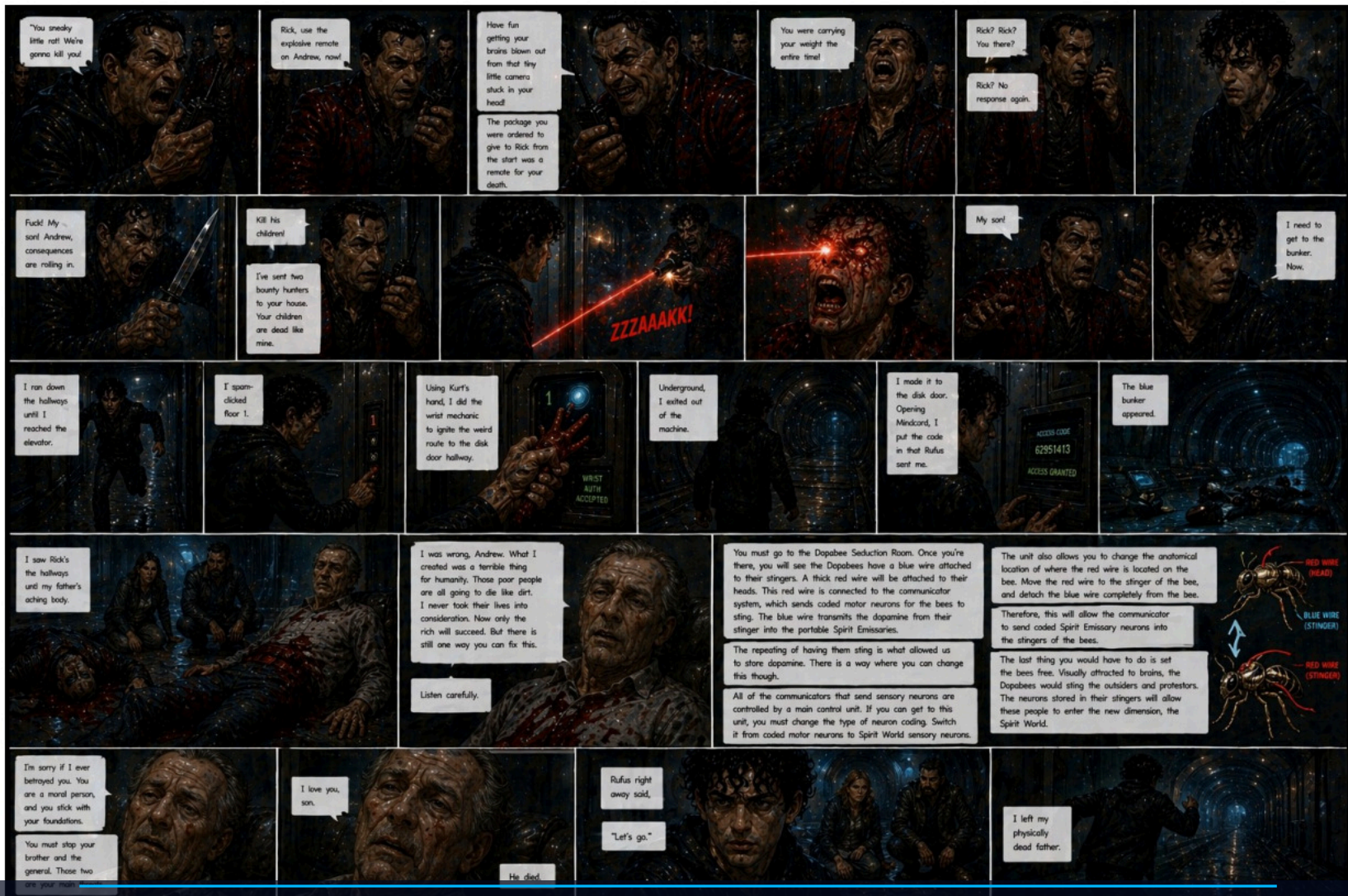
"Sike."

Scanning Kurt's hand on this sensor, Andrew ignited the frontal door to close.

The back door was completely closed.

Black SUVs from the outside horizon drove down the road.

Hundreds of these cars lined up as the rippling tectonic plates gushed out small trails of lava on the ground.



"You sneaky little rat! We're gonna kill you!"

Rick, use the explosive remote on Andrew, now!

Have fun getting your brains blown out from that fly little camera stuck in your head!  
The package you were ordered to give to Rick from the start was a remote for your death.

You were carrying your weight the entire time!

Rick? Rick? You there?  
Rick? No response again.

My son!

Fuck! My son! Andrew, consequences are rolling in.

Kill his children!  
I've sent two bounty hunters to your house. Your children are dead like mine.

**ZZZAAAKK!**

My son!

I need to get to the bunker. Now.

I ran down the hallways until I reached the elevator.

I spam-clicked floor 1.

Using Kurf's hand, I did the wrist mechanic to ignite the weird route to the disk door hallway.

Underground, I exited out of the machine.

I made it to the disk door. Opening Mindcord, I put the code in that Rufus sent me.

The blue bunker appeared.

I saw Rick's the hallways until my father's aching body.

I was wrong, Andrew. What I created was a terrible thing for humanity. Those poor people are all going to die like dirt. I never took their lives into consideration. Now only the rich will succeed. But there is still one way you can fix this.  
Listen carefully.

You must go to the Dopabee Seduction Room. Once you're there, you will see the Dopabees have a blue wire attached to their stingers. A thick red wire will be attached to their heads. This red wire is connected to the communicator system, which sends coded motor neurons for the bees to sting. The blue wire transmits the dopamine from their stinger into the portable Spirit Emissaries.  
The reopening of having them sting is what allowed us to store dopamine. There is a way where you can change this though.  
All of the communicators that send sensory neurons are controlled by a main control unit. If you can get to this unit, you must change the type of neuron coding. Switch it from coded motor neurons to Spirit World sensory neurons.

The unit also allows you to change the anatomical location of where the red wire is located on the bee. Move the red wire from the stinger of the bee, and detach the blue wire completely from the bee.  
Therefore, this will allow the communicator to send coded Spirit Emissary neurons into the stingers of the bees.  
The last thing you would have to do is set the bees free. Visually attracted to brains, the Dopabees would sting the outsiders and protectors. The neurons stored in their stingers will allow these people to enter the new dimension, the Spirit World.

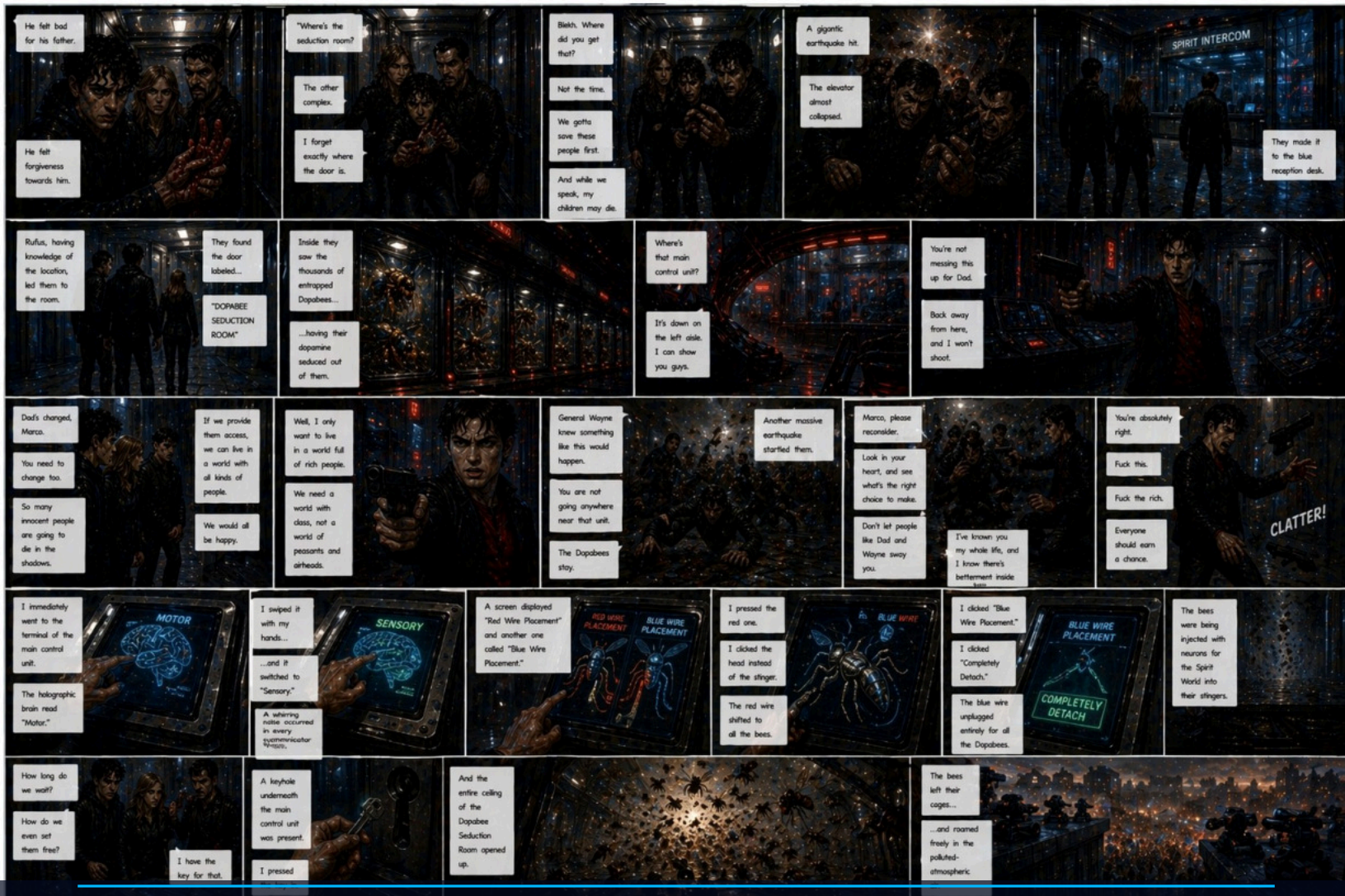


I'm sorry if I ever betrayed you. You are a moral person, and you stick with your foundations.  
You must stop your brother and the general. Those two...

I love you, son.  
He died.

Rufus right away said,  
"Let's go."

I left my physically dead father.



Andrew ran out of the lab through the main entrance. The thousands of outsiders lay unconscious, enjoying their time in the Spirit World.

The Sporksterbeede was in the dead center of the crowd, but it was still total.



The automated voice of the car was glitched. It spoke in fragments.

B-B-B-Benji's bar?

No.



Making it to Manhattan, he saw the entire city had been abandoned.

The sky was masked in red, and fire rained from every building.



The road was cracked significantly, and his car's tires received a major beating.

He finally arrived at his apartment. Several of the walls were missing.

He got to his apartment door. It was locked. He unlocked it.



Bulky people with sunglasses lay dead on the floor.

His children were cornered in the room, shivering with terror.



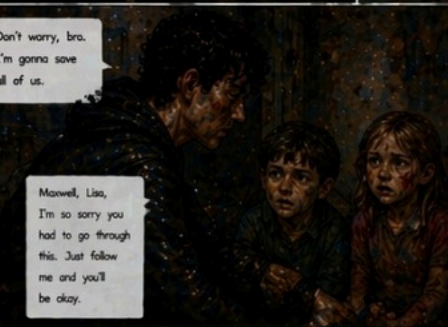
Kevin laid on the floor, suffering from a gun wound to the chest.

Andrew!  
It's you!

Thank god you're here. I was able to kill both of them, but they managed to get a shot off of me.

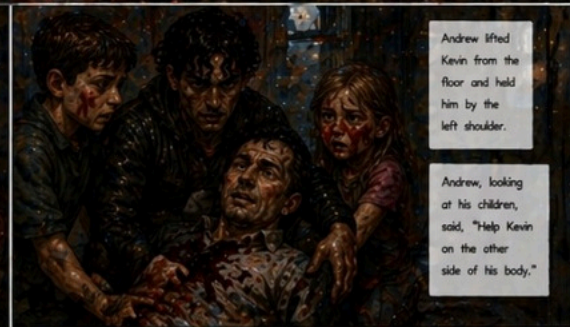
Don't worry, bro. I'm gonna save all of us.

Maxwell, Lia, I'm so sorry you had to go through this. Just follow me and you'll be okay.



Andrew lifted Kevin from the floor and held him by the left shoulder.

Andrew, looking at his children, said, "Help Kevin on the other side of his body."



Before Andrew left, he heard a bark. It was his poodle dog, Chet.

The dog followed Andrew out the door.



A startling earthquake hit the ground.

The road they stood on cracked in half.

They all got in the car, and Andrew boosted the car forward.



Ex-ex-ex-experimental route?





Andrew disagreed.  
Lisa cried.  
Maxwell coughed.

After this terrible car  
crash ended, Andrew  
made it to the lab,  
accidentally running  
over more people.

Getting out of the car,  
Andrew carefully picked  
Kevin's body up.

Carrying him over  
the debris with the  
help of his children,  
Andrew made it to  
the elevator.

The siren and alarm  
bells still signaled.

Andrew heard a set  
of footsteps behind.

There were more guards.

"Cover your eyes,"  
Andrew told his  
children.

He beamed them  
with the laser  
pointer.

Entering the elevator,  
Andrew used Kurt's  
wrist one more time  
and arrived at the  
blue reception desk.

Sharon still  
wasn't there.

They made it to  
the VIP Room.

All of Andrew's  
adversaries were  
dead.

Andrew placed  
Kevin on the floor.

A small chunk of  
the roof had cracked  
Harriet's skull.

Seeing multiple dead  
rich people, he pulled  
them out of the chairs  
and disconnected the  
emissaries from them.

He placed his children  
on the seats and  
attached the emissaries.

Picking up Kevin,  
Andrew saw that  
he was unconscious.

He rapidly strapped  
the emissary around  
Kevin's head without  
even putting him in  
the chair.

More earthquakes  
struck Earth.

Andrew said  
goodbye to his  
physical body.

He entered a  
Spirit Continuance  
and grew  
unconscious.

He woke up in  
the Spirit World.

He saw his  
children and  
Kevin beside him.

They were  
healthy-looking.

Kevin hugged Andrew  
"Dad, you just  
straight-up saved us!"  
dear roommate!"

His children  
hugged  
Andrew as well.

The weather was sunny.

They were in the forest,  
right next to the Azure flower.

The animate plants  
welcome him.  
They speak English.

Looking above, he  
saw his mother's  
home.

Climbing the wooden  
ladder, he approached  
his mother.

She and Harriet  
were talking.

The baby was  
beside his mother.

He they saw  
Andrew, they  
hugged him.

This environment  
of life had been  
so positive.

Harriet and  
Andrew kissed.

After hugging an  
affine conversation  
about what happened  
after he left his  
mother, Andrew left  
this place and  
explored more of  
this world.

He missed his father.

He saw Marco  
and Rufus.

He chatted with  
them casually.

Andrew saw Shruburb.  
Shruburb said,  
"Ah, Son of Nature,  
it is good to see you."

"Did you see the gift  
that Esse brought  
to us?"

Andrew desired  
that he show  
him the gift.

They both hopped  
on a Dopebee and  
traveled to where  
the water springs  
were.

"We have been blessed  
with more of our kind,  
but with a twist. This gift  
is us, but they speak  
differently than us."

The animate plants rode  
Dopebees.

On each Dopebee  
were two animate plants,  
except that both animate  
plants had the same color  
flower pattern and looked  
exactly alike.

All Andrew spoke English,  
and chat plant spoke  
morse code.

The plants who were made  
within the code of the  
Spirit World now rode  
with their conscious selves.

It was like seeing twins,  
or clones, side-by-side  
with each other.

That is because  
they rode with their  
true conscious being.

It was trippy  
for Andrew.

Andrew thanked  
Shruburb and  
departed off  
the bee.

Shruburb said,

"Before you go,  
I have one more  
thing to show you.  
I will carry you  
to the way."

Picking him up, similar  
to leather nest he to  
do, Shruburb brought  
him to a river in the  
middle of the forest.

In the river was Herb.

It was the real Herb.  
The one that owned a  
consciousness.

Andrew, knowing that  
the creature wouldn't  
recognize him or speak  
to him, still thanked  
Shruburb.

was that Herb lived.

Andrew fell at peace  
with everything.  
Everything had worked  
out. He lay on the mat,  
feeling satisfied with  
what he accomplished  
with his physical life.

He took a nap.

Andrew woke up  
from the sound  
of a horn.

It was loud and  
clear of silk.

Standing up, he saw  
his father next to him.

This confused the living  
daylights out of Andrew.  
He locked away  
them Robert.

Robert said,  
"Hey, Andrew.  
It's me."

