
IRON MERIDIAN STUDIOS
PRESENTS
RED HORIZON
A TEMPERED SOL SERIES
IRON MERIDIAN STUDIOS
ISSUE 1
$4.99 US
ERA I
2061
SOME WORLDS ARE WON BY ARMIES.
THIS ONE SURVIVED BECAUSE HE STAYED.
MARS
LOWELL HABITAT
2061
LOWELL HABITAT
R-7
REACTOR CORE POWER CELL
KEEP UPRIGHT
HUMANITY ENDURES
STORY BY
STEPHEN KOMOREK
AND WILL SWAYNE
ART BY
CLAY DOWNS


CERES STATION.
2487.
EVERYTHING WE ARE…
STARTED HERE.
BEFORE THE COLONIES.
BEFORE THE WAR.
BEFORE WE WERE A SPECIES THAT LOOKED BEYOND EARTH.
IT STARTED WITH A HABITAT ON A BROKEN PLANET… AND A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO REFUSED TO LET IT DIE.

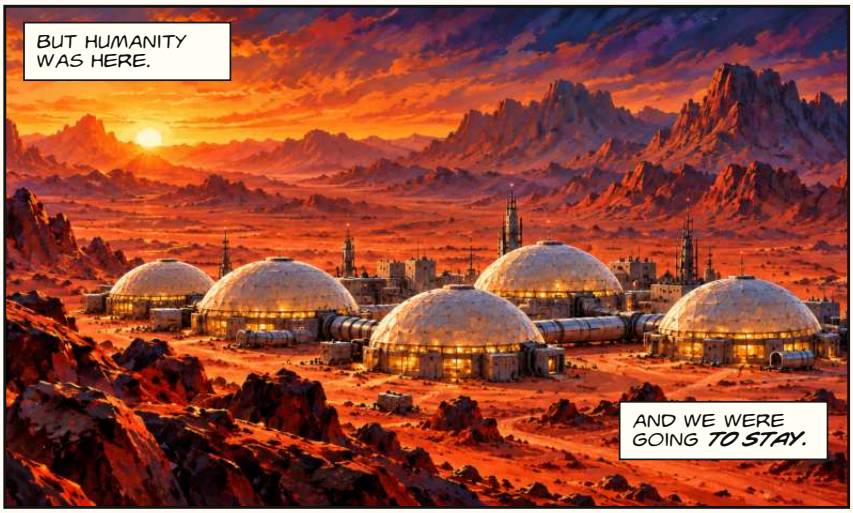

I'M MAGNUS LUSK.
THIS IS THE RECORD. THE STORIES THAT SHOULD NOT BE LOST.
THIS IS WHERE IT BEGINS.


2061. MARS. LOWELL HABITAT.
A REACTOR YARD. A DUST FRONT. NINE HOURS OF AIR.
AND A DECISION THAT CHANGED HUMAN HISTORY.

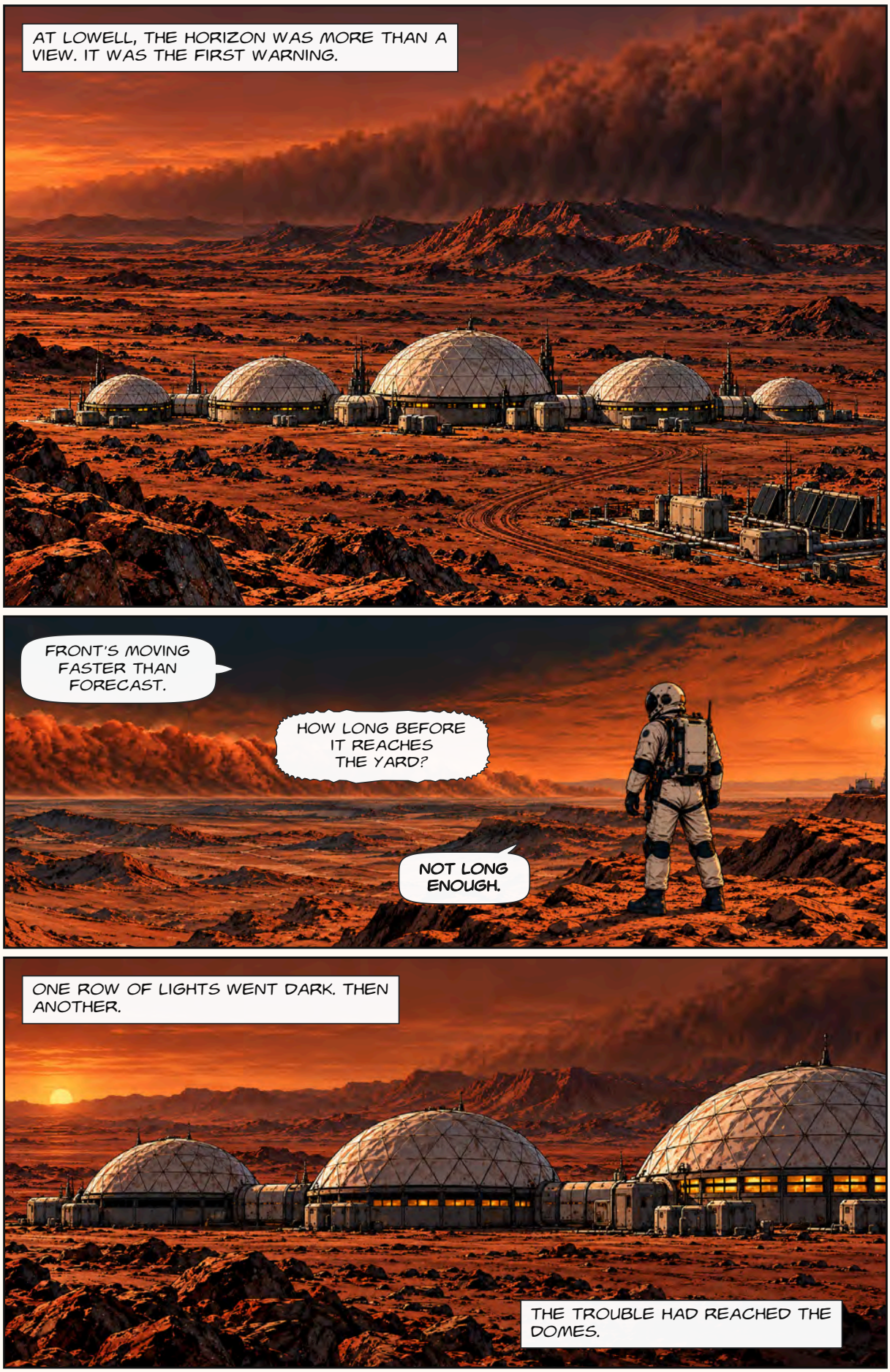

PLAY THE RECORD.

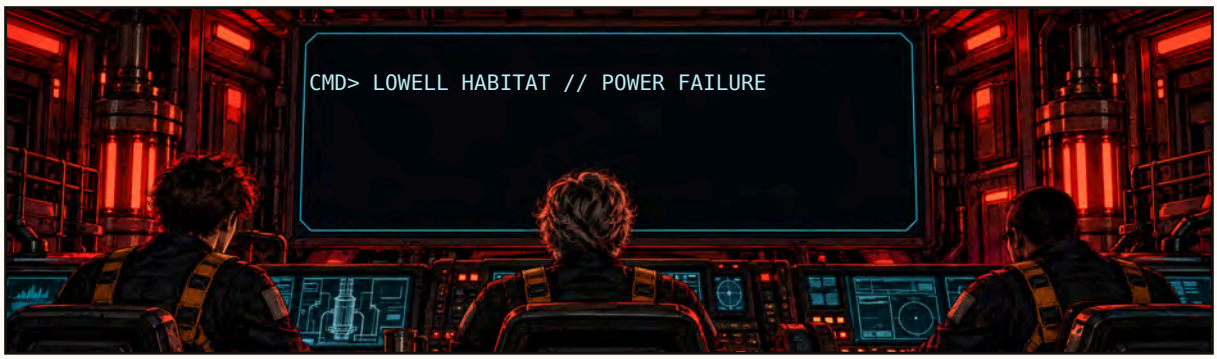

ARCHIVE I-1
LOWELL HABITAT
MARS
APR 14, 2061
00:00:00
BEGIN.


MARS. 2061.
COLD. DRY. UNFORGIVING.

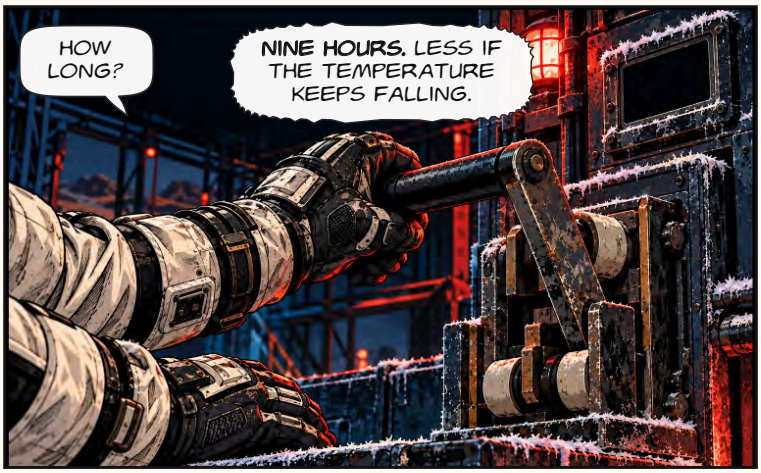

BUT HUMANITY WAS HERE.
AND WE WERE GOING TO STAY.


LOWELL HABITAT, MARS. APRIL 14, 2061.
FIVE DOMES. FORTY PEOPLE. ONE REACTOR YARD.
YOU SURE YOU'RE RELATED TO SYLVESTER STALLONE?
DISTANTLY. HE DOESN'T CALL MUCH.
IF ONLY SYLVESTER STALLONE HAD MY GODLIKE BODY.
PUT THOSE AWAY, TIM. YOU'LL BREAK SOMETHING.
PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSY.
I CAME TO STEAL YOU FOR LUNCH.
BEST OFFER I'VE HAD ALL DAY.
RADIATOR THREE IS RUNNING HOT AGAIN.
CHECK THE RETURN LINE. DON'T RESET ANYTHING YET.


AT LOWELL, THE HORIZON WAS MORE THAN A VIEW. IT WAS THE FIRST WARNING.
FRONT'S MOVING FASTER THAN FORECAST.
HOW LONG BEFORE IT REACHES THE YARD?
NOT LONG ENOUGH.
ONE ROW OF LIGHTS WENT DARK. THEN ANOTHER.
THE TROUBLE HAD REACHED THE DOMES.


CMD> LOWELL HABITAT // POWER FAILURE

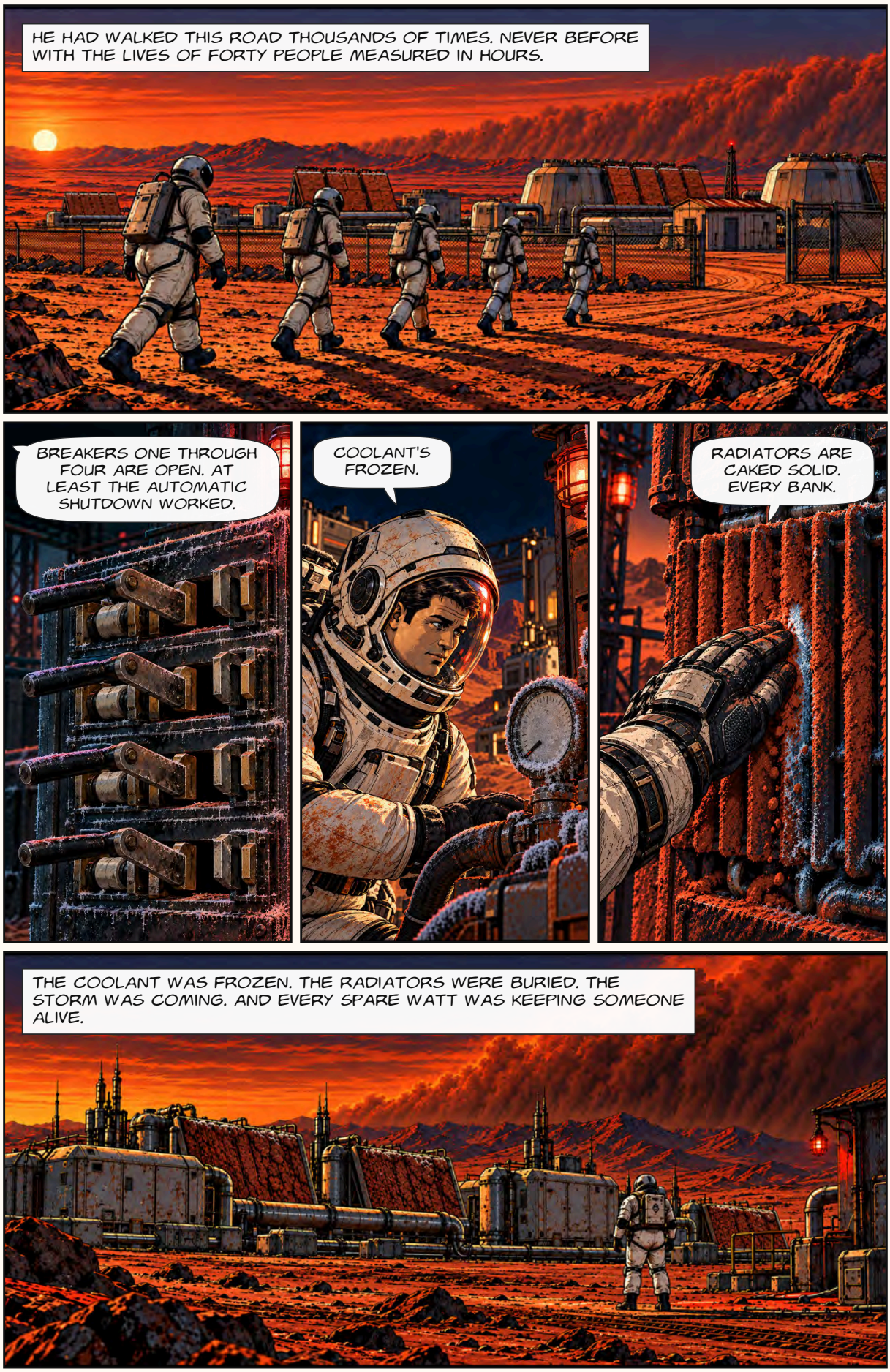

MAIN REACTOR YARD IS DOWN. WE'RE RUNNING ON CELLS.


HOW LONG?
NINE HOURS. LESS IF THE TEMPERATURE KEEPS FALLING.


DUST FRONT COMING OVER THE RIDGE. IT'S MOVING FASTER THAN PREDICTED.

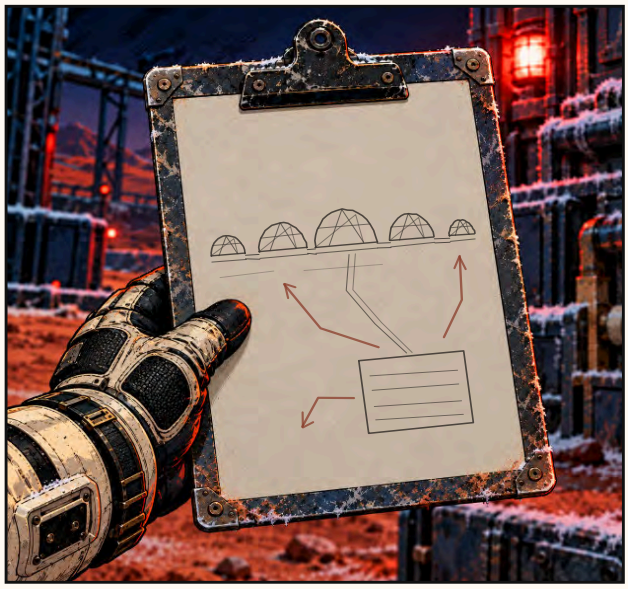

FORTY PEOPLE. NINE HOURS.


DOME THREE HAS HEAT. SAY AGAIN—DOME THREE HAS HEAT.
EVERY DECISION THAT MIGHT SAVE THE REACTOR WOULD TAKE SOMETHING AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE IT WAS SUPPOSED TO PROTECT.


HE HAD WALKED THIS ROAD THOUSANDS OF TIMES. NEVER BEFORE WITH THE LIVES OF FORTY PEOPLE MEASURED IN HOURS.
BREAKERS ONE THROUGH FOUR ARE OPEN. AT LEAST THE AUTOMATIC SHUTDOWN WORKED.
COOLANT'S FROZEN.
RADIATORS ARE CAKED SOLID. EVERY BANK.
THE COOLANT WAS FROZEN. THE RADIATORS WERE BURIED. THE STORM WAS COMING. AND EVERY SPARE WATT WAS KEEPING SOMEONE ALIVE.

CMD> RESTORE POWER
// SUPPLY DOMES
// DEFEND YARD



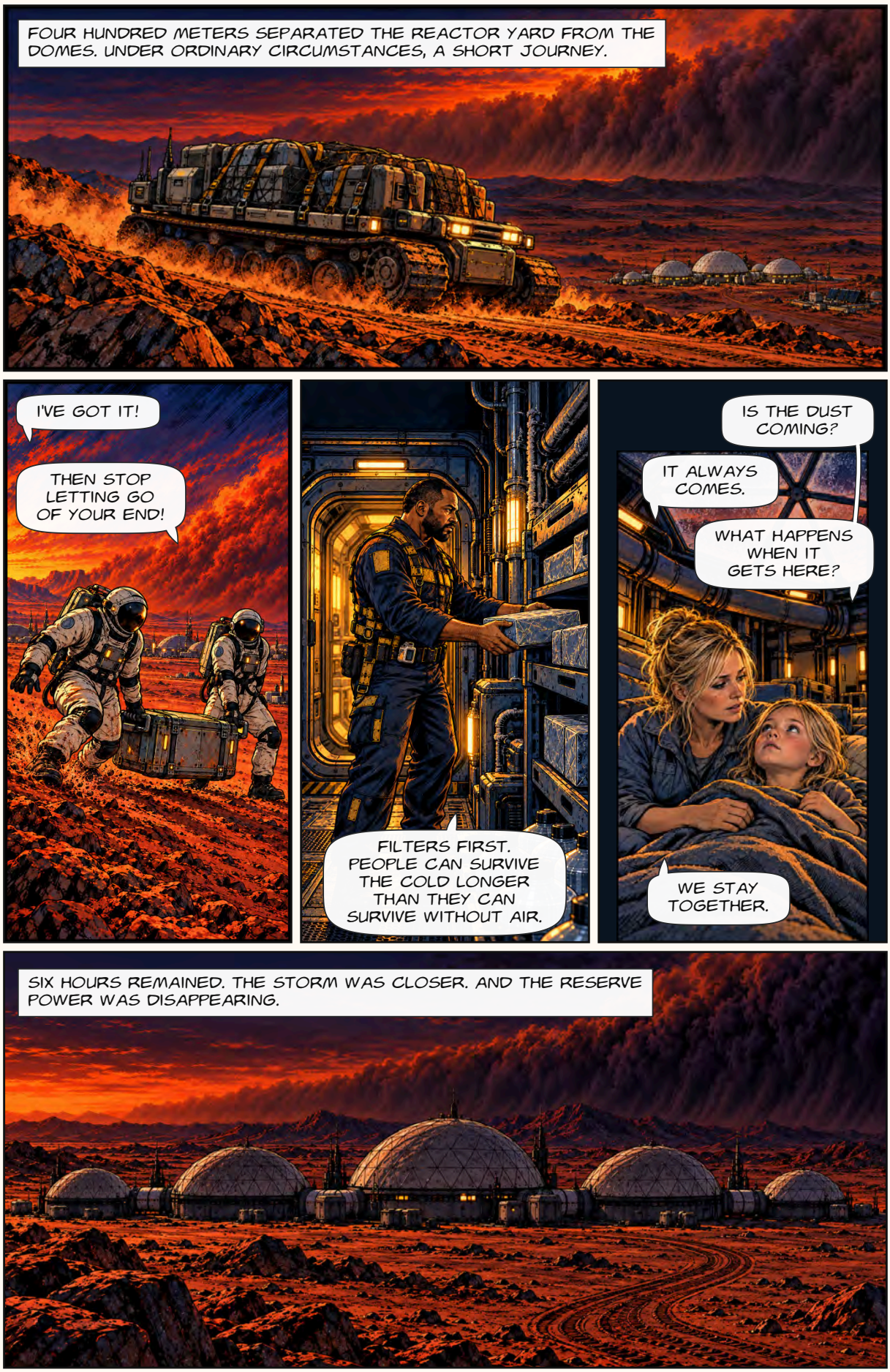


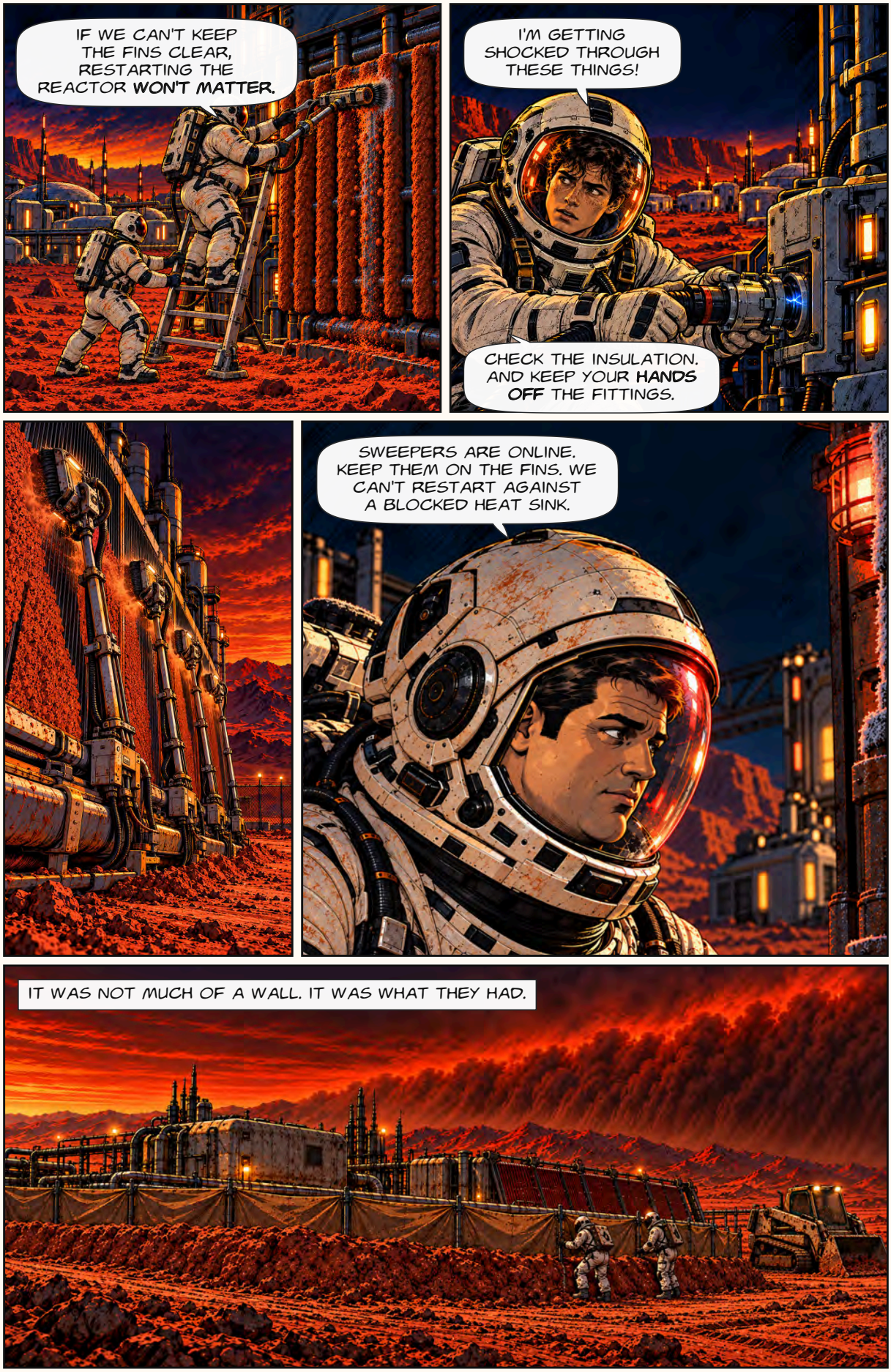


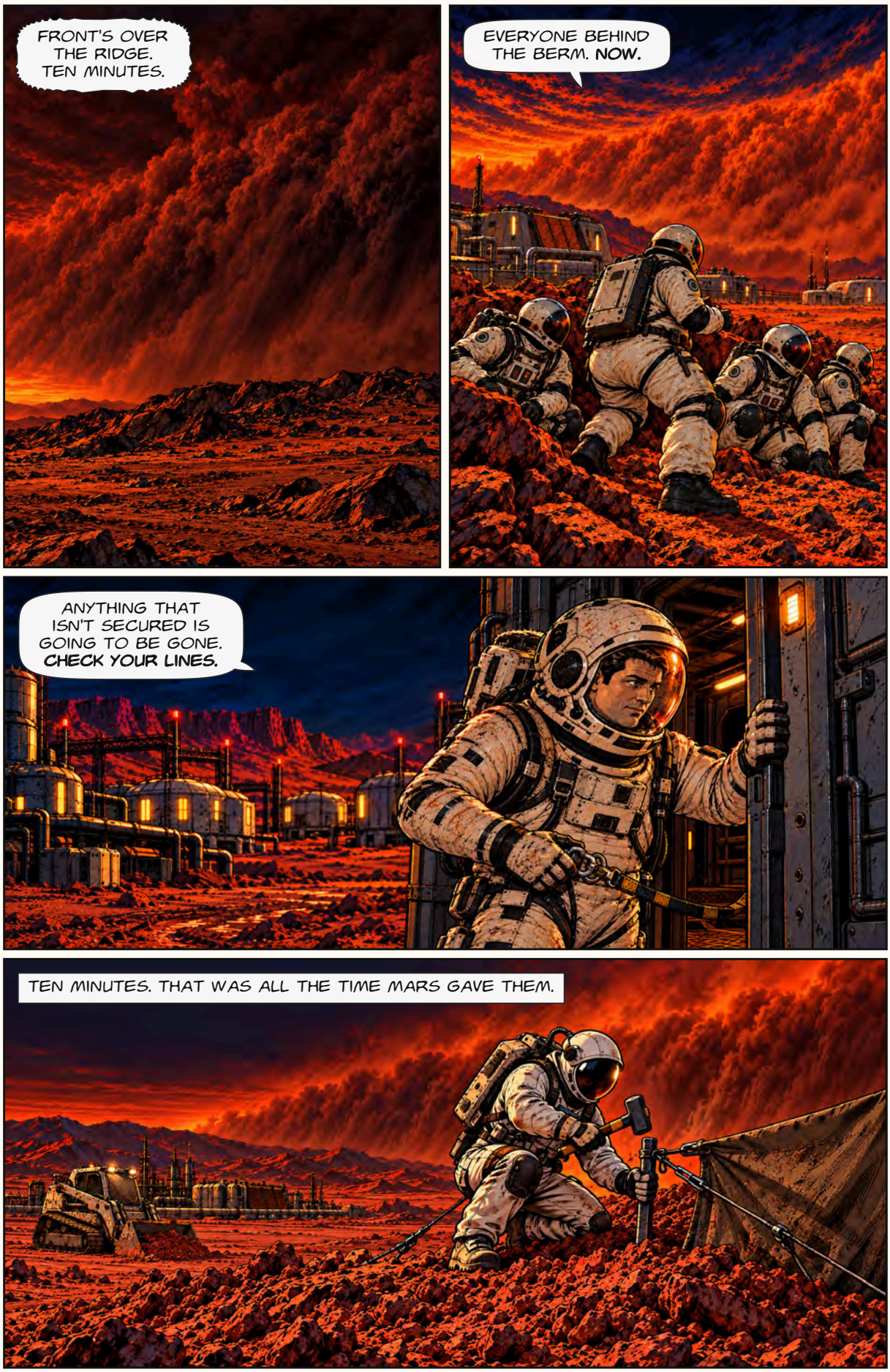


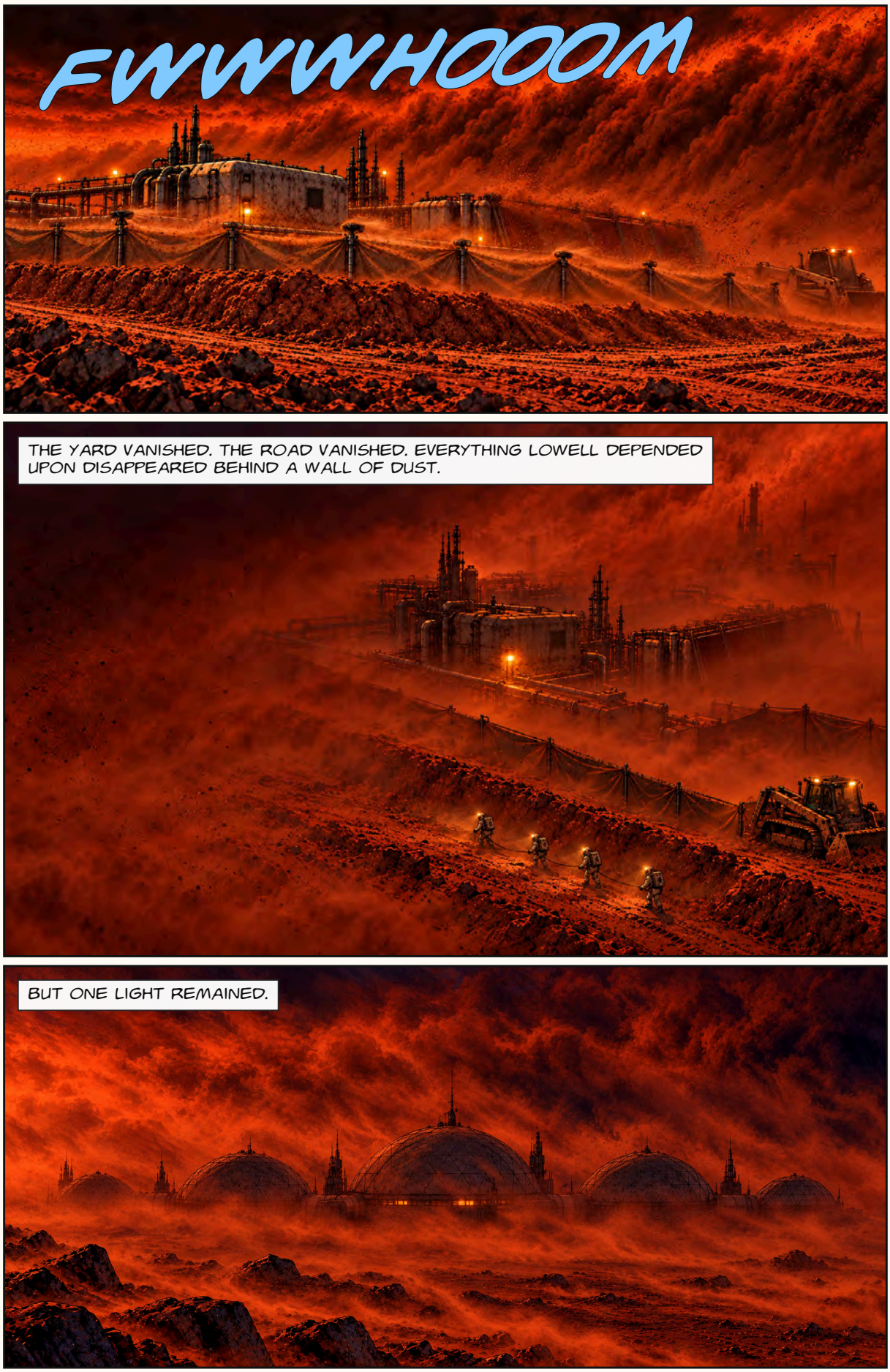



FIRST, THEY HAD TO MAKE THE REACTORS CAPABLE OF RUNNING AGAIN.
SECOND, THEY HAD TO KEEP FORTY PEOPLE ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE IT HAPPEN.
THIRD, THEY HAD TO PROTECT THE YARD FROM THE STORM THAT WAS ALREADY APPROACHING.
WARDEN. DOME THREE, STATUS.
TEMPORARY HEAT'S HOLDING. BUT WE'RE DRAINING THE CELLS FASTER THAN WE CAN REPLACE THEM.


FOUR HUNDRED METERS SEPARATED THE REACTOR YARD FROM THE DOMES. UNDER ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES, A SHORT JOURNEY.
I'VE GOT IT!
THEN STOP LETTING GO OF YOUR END!
FILTERS FIRST. PEOPLE CAN SURVIVE THE COLD LONGER THAN THEY CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT AIR.
IS THE DUST COMING?
IT ALWAYS COMES.
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT GETS HERE?
WE STAY TOGETHER.
SIX HOURS REMAINED. THE STORM WAS CLOSER. AND THE RESERVE POWER WAS DISAPPEARING.


IF WE CAN'T KEEP THE FINS CLEAR, RESTARTING THE REACTOR **WON'T MATTER.**
I'M GETTING SHOCKED THROUGH THESE THINGS!
CHECK THE INSULATION. AND KEEP YOUR **HANDS OFF** THE FITTINGS.
SWEEPERS ARE ONLINE. KEEP THEM ON THE FINS. WE CAN'T RESTART AGAINST A BLOCKED HEAT SINK.
IT WAS NOT MUCH OF A WALL. IT WAS WHAT THEY HAD.

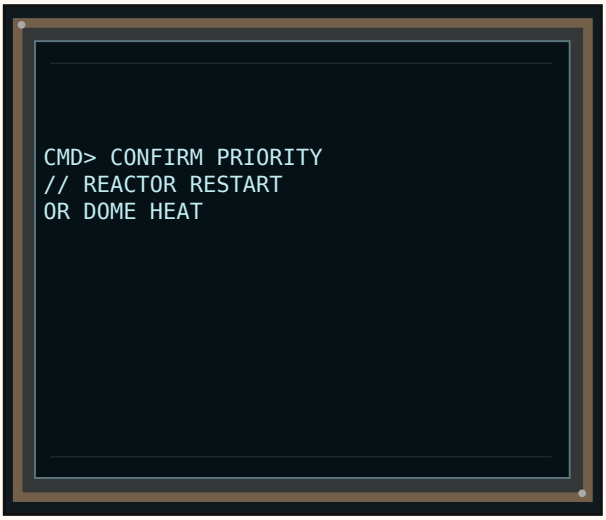

FRONT'S OVER THE RIDGE. TEN MINUTES.
EVERYONE BEHIND THE BERM. NOW.
ANYTHING THAT ISN'T SECURED IS GOING TO BE GONE. CHECK YOUR LINES.
TEN MINUTES. THAT WAS ALL THE TIME MARS GAVE THEM.


FWWWHOOOM
THE YARD VANISHED. THE ROAD VANISHED. EVERYTHING LOWELL DEPENDED UPON DISAPPEARED BEHIND A WALL OF DUST.
BUT ONE LIGHT REMAINED.

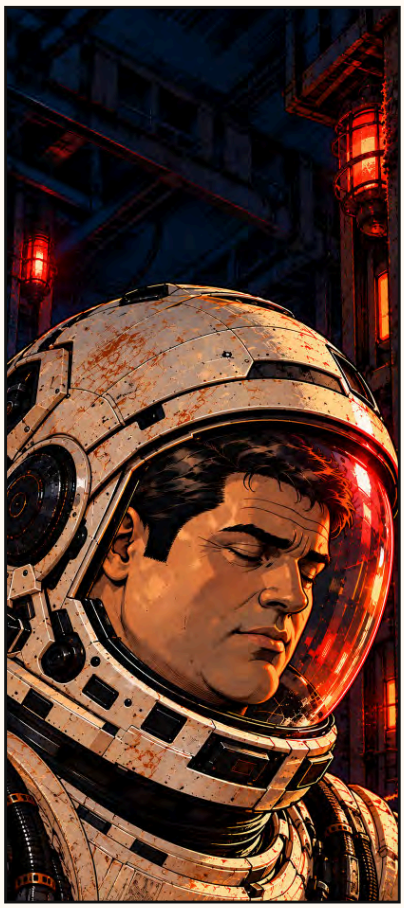

CLIP ON. COUNT OFF. IF YOU LOSE SIGHT OF THE ROPE, STOP MOVING.
TSSST
CHIEF! I'VE LOST THE—
HOLD THE LINE!
I THOUGHT I WAS GONE.
I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING.
YOU'RE TWELVE METERS FROM THE BREAKER HOUSE. GET UP.
THEN FOLLOW ME.
FOUR HOURS OF AIR REMAINED. OUTSIDE, THE STORM WAS ONLY BEGINNING.


THE EMERGENCY CELLS HAD BOUGHT DOME THREE TIME. NOT ENOUGH.
CHIEF, THE HEATERS ARE DROPPING. I CAN STRETCH THE AIR ANOTHER TWO HOURS. I CAN'T KEEP THE WARMTH.
MAMA, MY HAND'S STUCK.
HERE. LET ME HELP YOU.
FOUR DOMES HAD ALREADY GONE DARK. THE FIFTH WAS RUNNING OUT OF TIME.

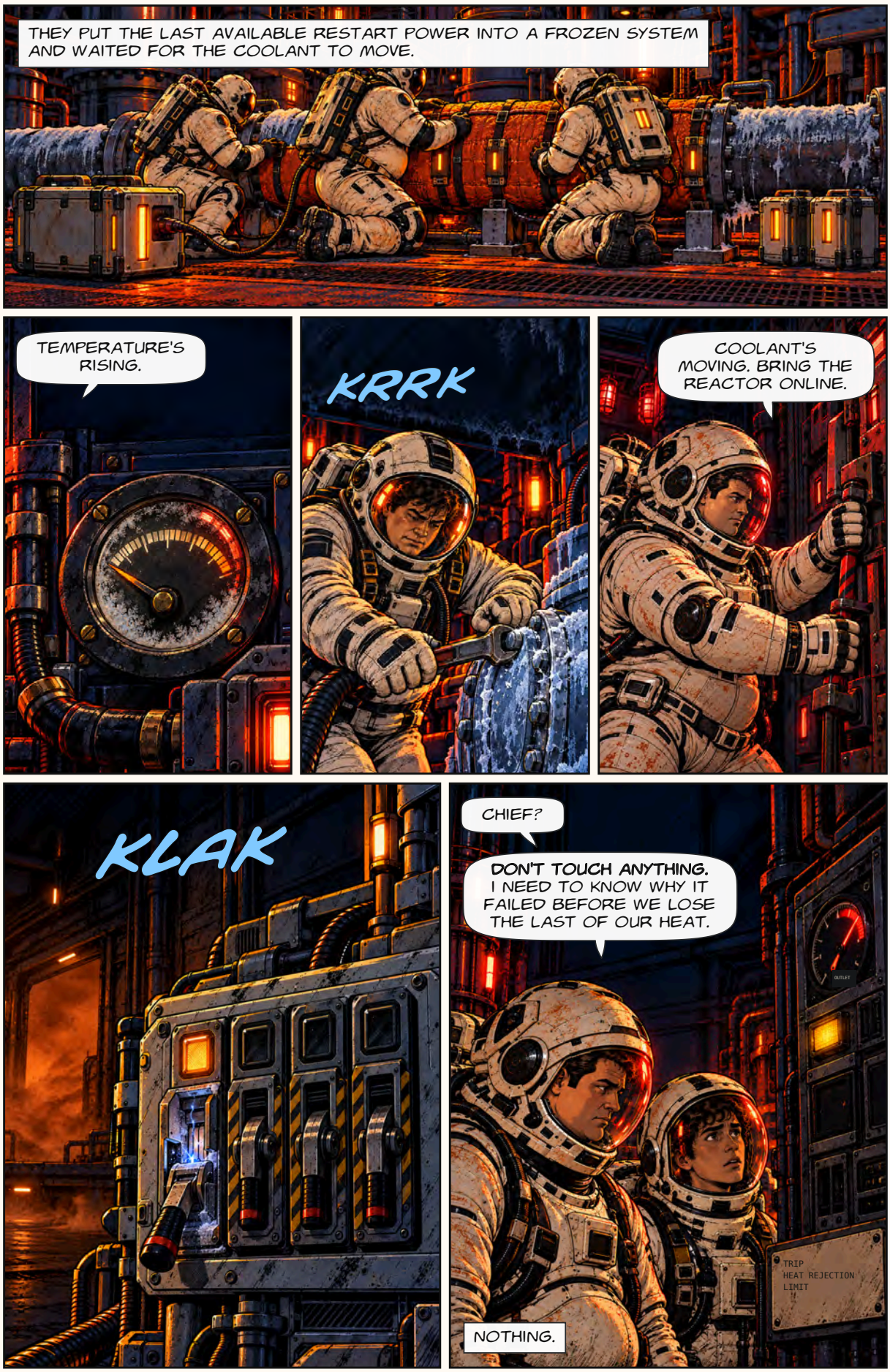

CELLS TO THE YARD, OR CELLS TO THE DOME.


CMD> CONFIRM PRIORITY
// REACTOR RESTART
OR DOME HEAT


FIVE CELLS REMAINED. THE RESTART NEEDED THREE. DOME THREE NEEDED THREE. THEY COULD NOT FULLY SUPPLY BOTH.

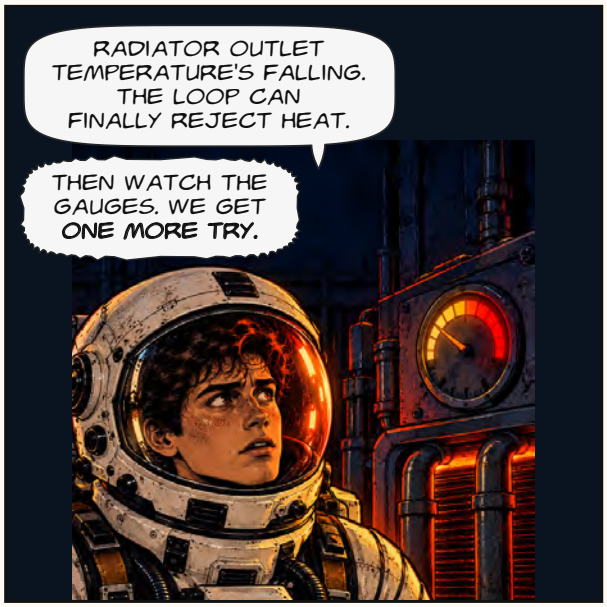



TWO CELLS TO DOME THREE. THREE STAY HERE.
THAT LEAVES NOTHING IN RESERVE.
I KNOW.
THE RECORD CALLS IT AN ALLOCATION OF EMERGENCY RESOURCES. FIVE CELLS. TWO NEEDS. NO SAFE ANSWER.


THEY PUT THE LAST AVAILABLE RESTART POWER INTO A FROZEN SYSTEM AND WAITED FOR THE COOLANT TO MOVE.
TEMPERATURE'S RISING.
KRRK
COOLANT'S MOVING. BRING THE REACTOR ONLINE.
KLAK
CHIEF?
DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING. I NEED TO KNOW WHY IT FAILED BEFORE WE LOSE THE LAST OF OUR HEAT.
OUTLET
TRIP
HEAT REJECTION
LIMIT
NOTHING.


THE REPORT SAYS THE OCCUPANTS REMAINED CALM. IT SAYS NOTHING OF WHAT THAT COST THEM.
WHAT ARE YOU SINGING?
SOMETHING MY MOTHER USED TO SING.
WILL YOU TEACH ME?
WHEN THE LIGHTS COME BACK.
THE CHIEF SAYS HE'S STILL WORKING.
AN HOUR CAN BE A VERY LONG TIME WHEN THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO DO BUT WAIT.


BERM'S HOLDING! THE SWEEPERS CLEARED THE LAST RADIATOR BANK!


RADIATOR OUTLET TEMPERATURE'S FALLING. THE LOOP CAN FINALLY REJECT HEAT.
THEN WATCH THE GAUGES. WE GET ONE MORE TRY.


THE ACTUATOR'S GONE. I'LL CONTROL THE BYPASS BY HAND.
TIM, THAT RETURN LINE IS CRACKED. IF IT LETS GO, YOUR SUIT WON'T STOP IT.
IF I LEAVE, WE LOSE THE FLOW. GET THEM THROUGH THE RESTART, ALEX.


KLAK. KLAK. KLAK. KLAK.

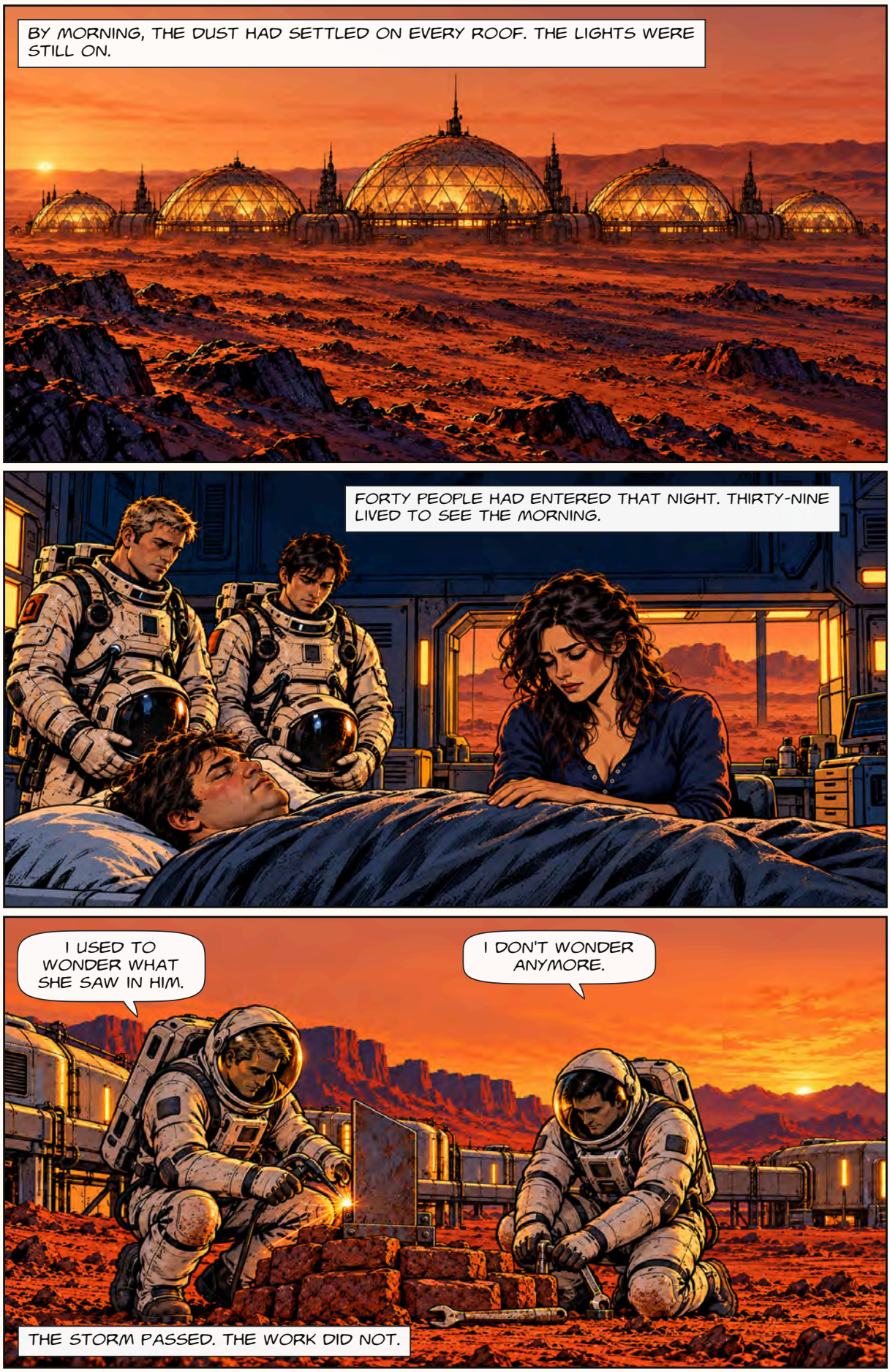


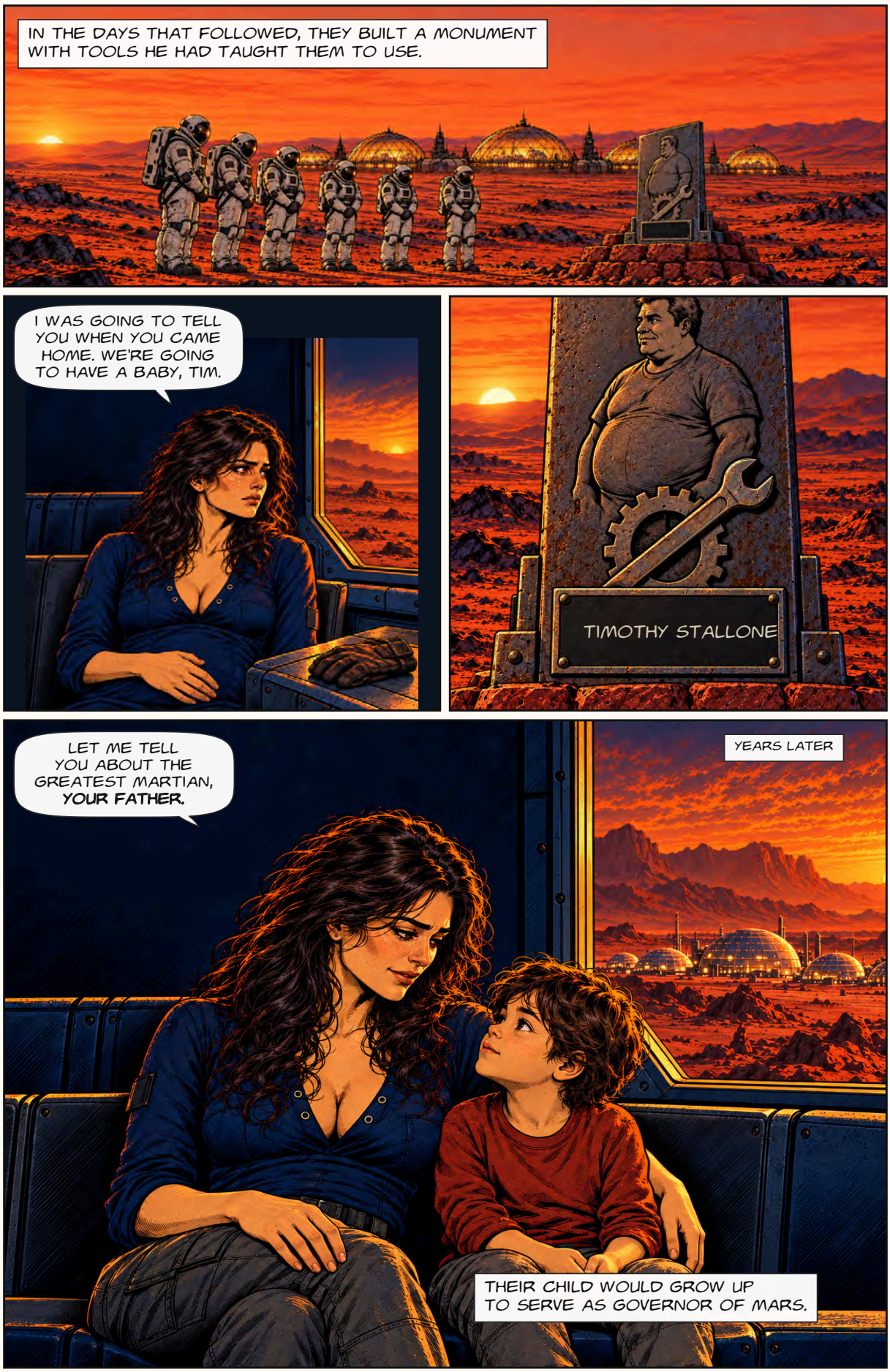

COME ON. THERE YOU ARE.


FIRST ONE. THEN ANOTHER. THEN ANOTHER.
LIGHTS.
MAMA. IT'S WARM.
DOME THREE HAS HEAT. SAY AGAIN—DOME THREE HAS HEAT.
WE DID IT?
WE STARTED IT. NOW WE KEEP IT.
TIM, GET OUT. THE LINE'S GOING!
NOT YET.
ALL FIVE.


THE RETURN LINE WON'T HOLD ITSELF.
IF I LEAVE, THE HEAT STOPS. ALL FIVE DOMES. EVERYONE.
TIM, THE HEAT WILL LOCK THE CHAMBER UNTIL IT COOLS. I CAN'T OVERRIDE IT. YOUR SUIT WON'T LAST. IF YOU STAY, YOU'LL DIE.
IF THE HEAT BURNS THROUGH MY SUIT AND I SUFFOCATE... AT LEAST THE SHIELD WILL SAVE MY BEAUTIFUL FACE.
IF I LET GO, ALL FIVE DOMES LOSE HEAT.
I'M NOT COMING HOME. I'M STAYING SO YOU CAN LIVE.
I'M SORRY, ALEXANDRA.
THERMAL LOCKDOWN ACTIVE
RELEASE DISABLED
UNTIL CHAMBER COOLS

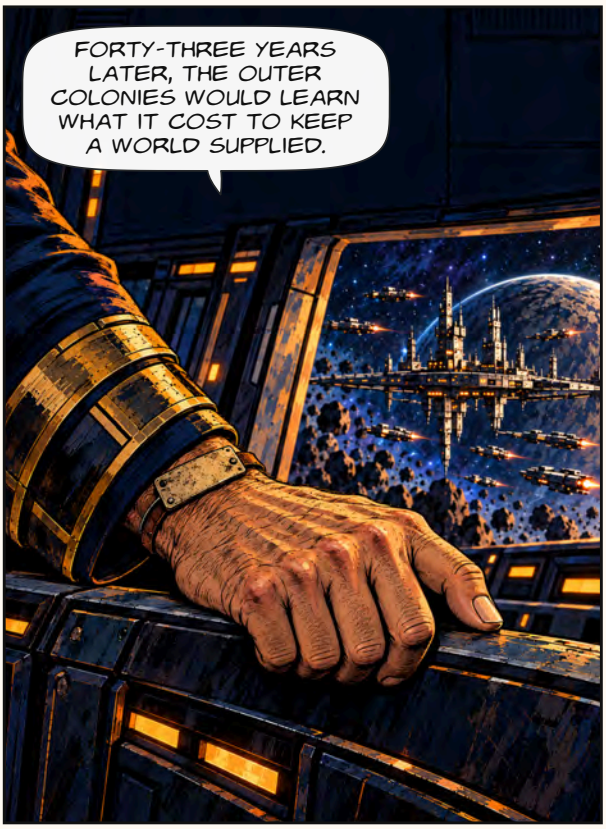

TIM...
I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU, ALEXANDRA.
I LOVE OUR COLONY. I LOVE MARS.
I'M DOING THIS FOR MARS.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY GOODBYE TO YOU.
HE COULD HAVE LEFT. HE STAYED FOR US.
FOR ALL OF US. FOR MARS.
THEN DON'T. JUST STAY WITH ME.
I'M HERE. I'M STILL HERE.
LET THERE BE A MORNING.


BY MORNING, THE DUST HAD SETTLED ON EVERY ROOF. THE LIGHTS WERE STILL ON.
FORTY PEOPLE HAD ENTERED THAT NIGHT. THIRTY-NINE LIVED TO SEE THE MORNING.
I USED TO WONDER WHAT SHE SAW IN HIM.
I DON'T WONDER ANYMORE.
THE STORM PASSED. THE WORK DID NOT.

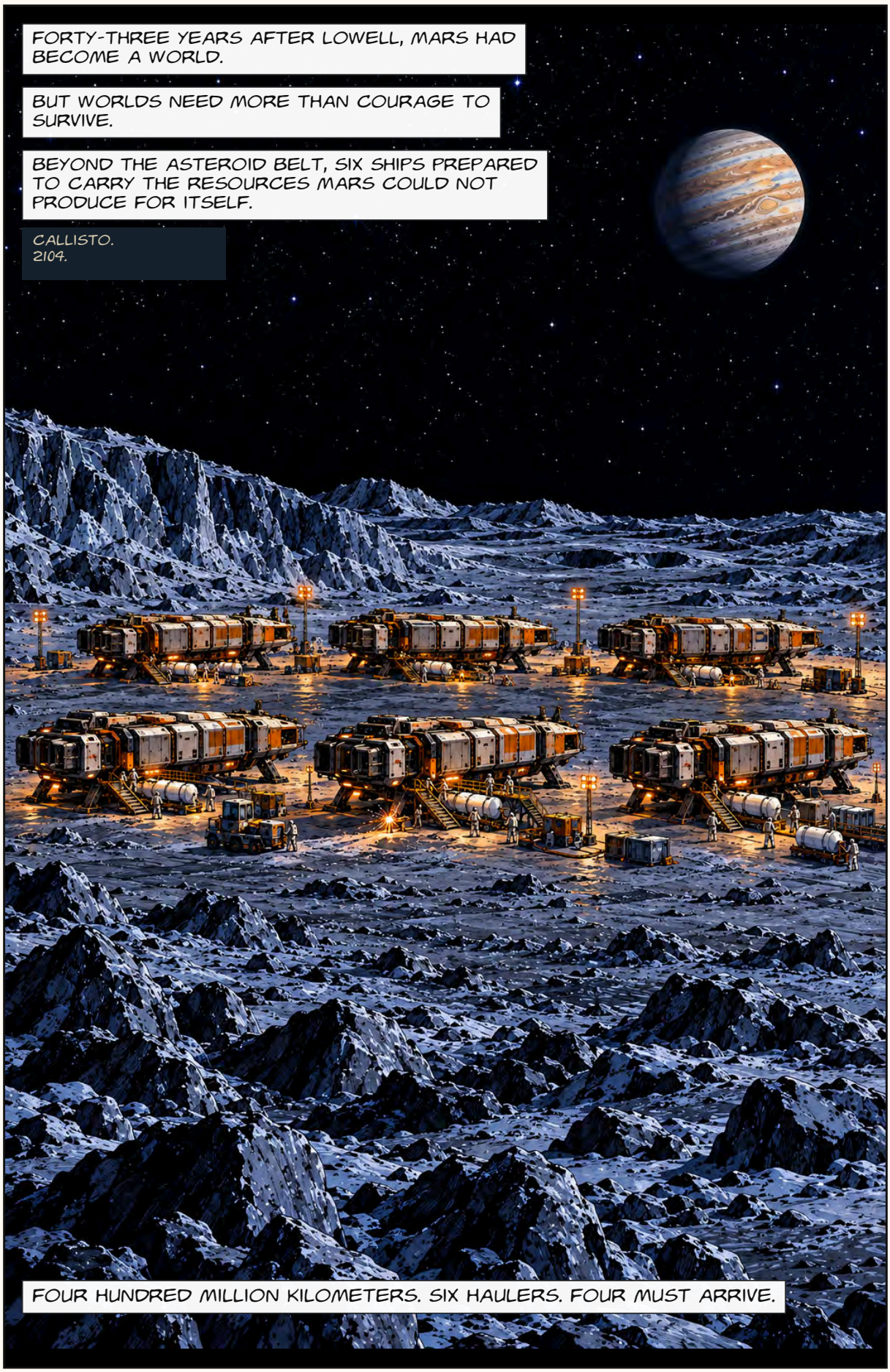

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, THEY BUILT A MONUMENT WITH TOOLS HE HAD TAUGHT THEM TO USE.
I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU WHEN YOU CAME HOME. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A BABY, TIM.
TIMOTHY STALLONE
LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE GREATEST MARTIAN, YOUR FATHER.
YEARS LATER
THEIR CHILD WOULD GROW UP TO SERVE AS GOVERNOR OF MARS.







CMD> STRATEGIC RECORD
// JUPITER TO MARS
// 2104


FORTY-THREE YEARS AFTER LOWELL, MARS HAD BECOME A WORLD.
BUT WORLDS NEED MORE THAN COURAGE TO SURVIVE.
BEYOND THE ASTEROID BELT, SIX SHIPS PREPARED TO CARRY THE RESOURCES MARS COULD NOT PRODUCE FOR ITSELF.
CALLISTO.
2104.
FOUR HUNDRED MILLION KILOMETERS. SIX HAULERS. FOUR MUST ARRIVE.