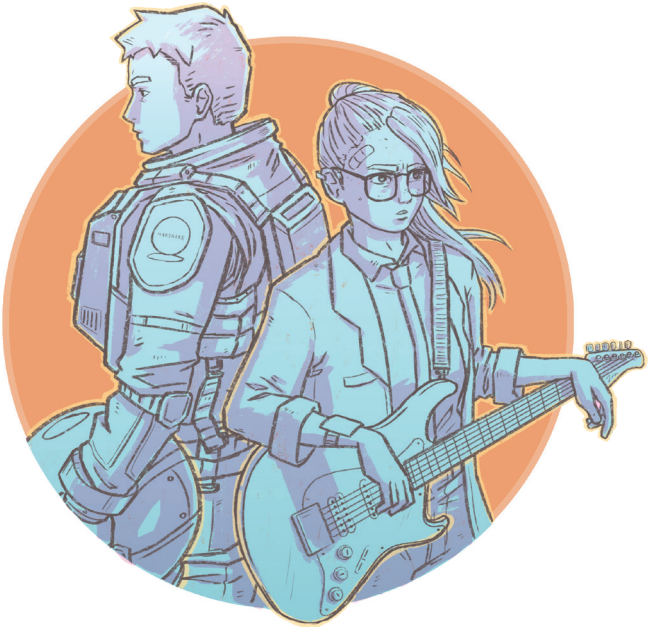
The Mars Colony Chronicles

KIPTON

AND THE MYSTERY OF THE STROMATOLITE



Written and Illustrated by Christopher Tice

Developed by Christopher Tice and Jennifer Ault

Royal Fireworks Press
Unionville, New York

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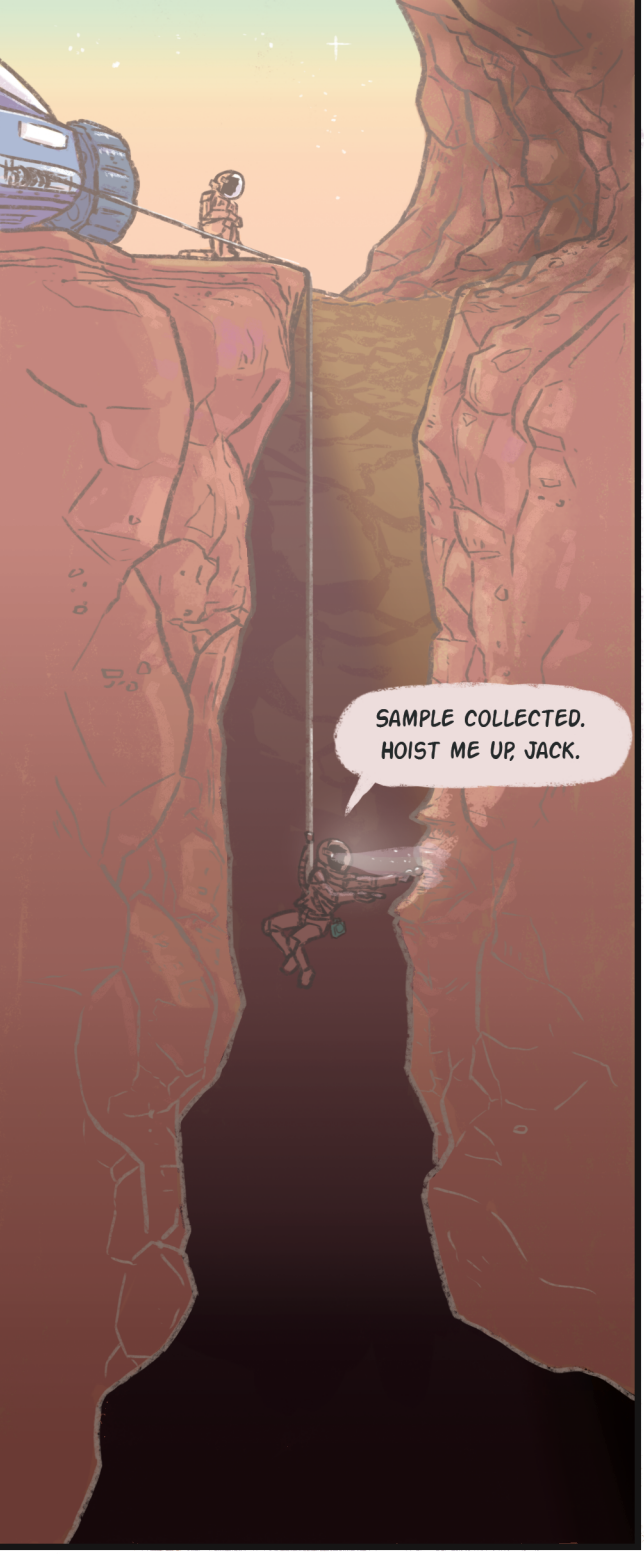
MR19, THIS IS NEW ATHENS. REPORT.

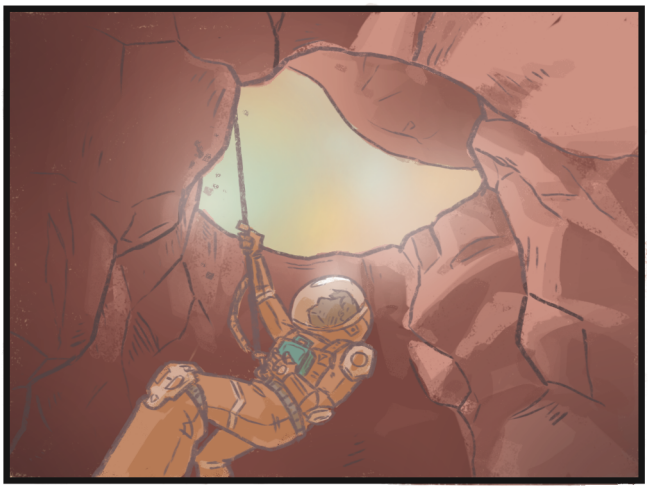
MR19 HERE. WE'VE ARRIVED AT THE THERMAL RESEARCH SITE AND ARE EXTRACTING A SAMPLE NOW. FUEL: 58%. ESTIMATED RETURN: 42 HOURS. OVER.

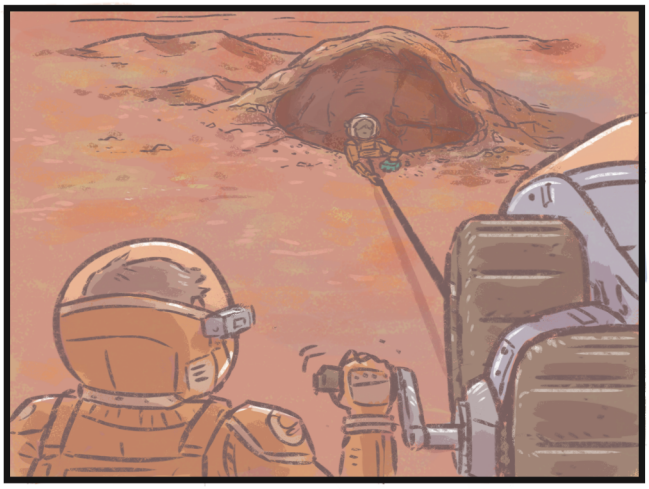
Part One

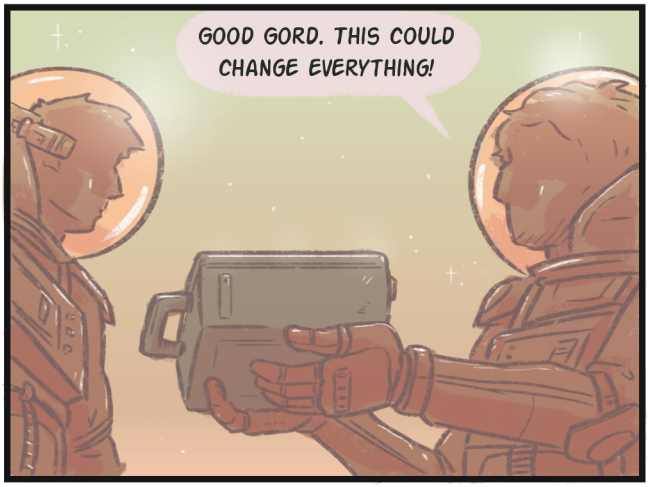


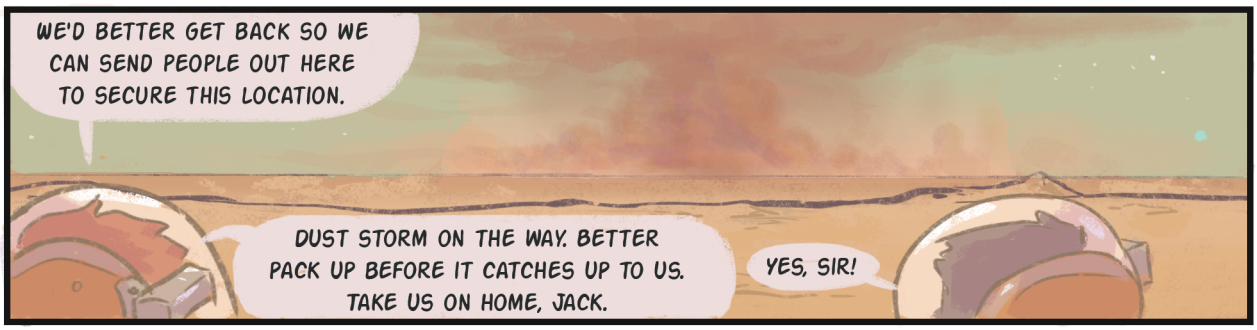
COPY, MR19. EXCELLENT. WE EAGERLY AWAIT YOUR RETURN. NEW ATHENS OUT.

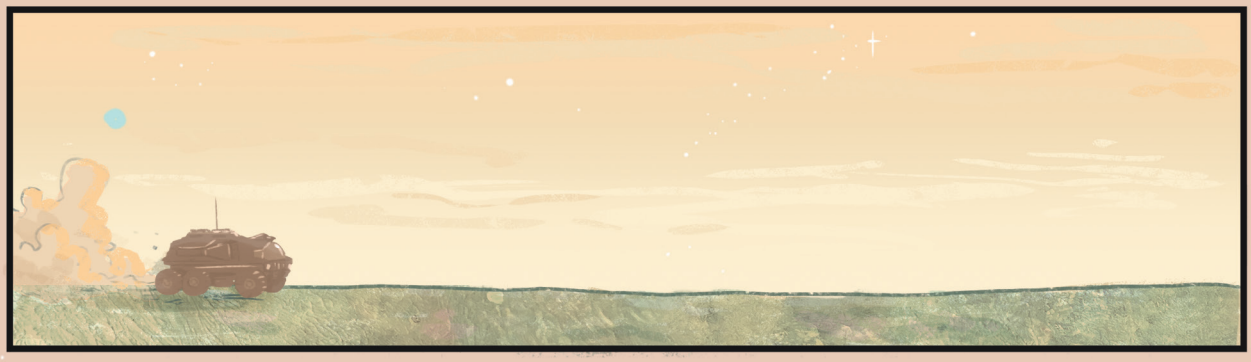

SAMPLE COLLECTED. HOIST ME UP, JACK.

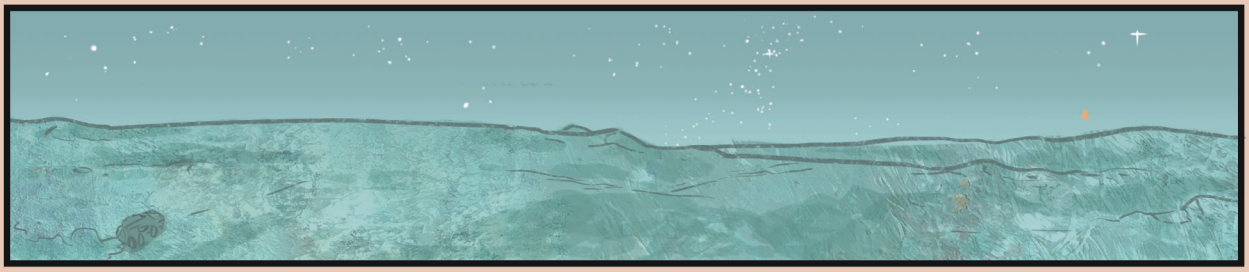




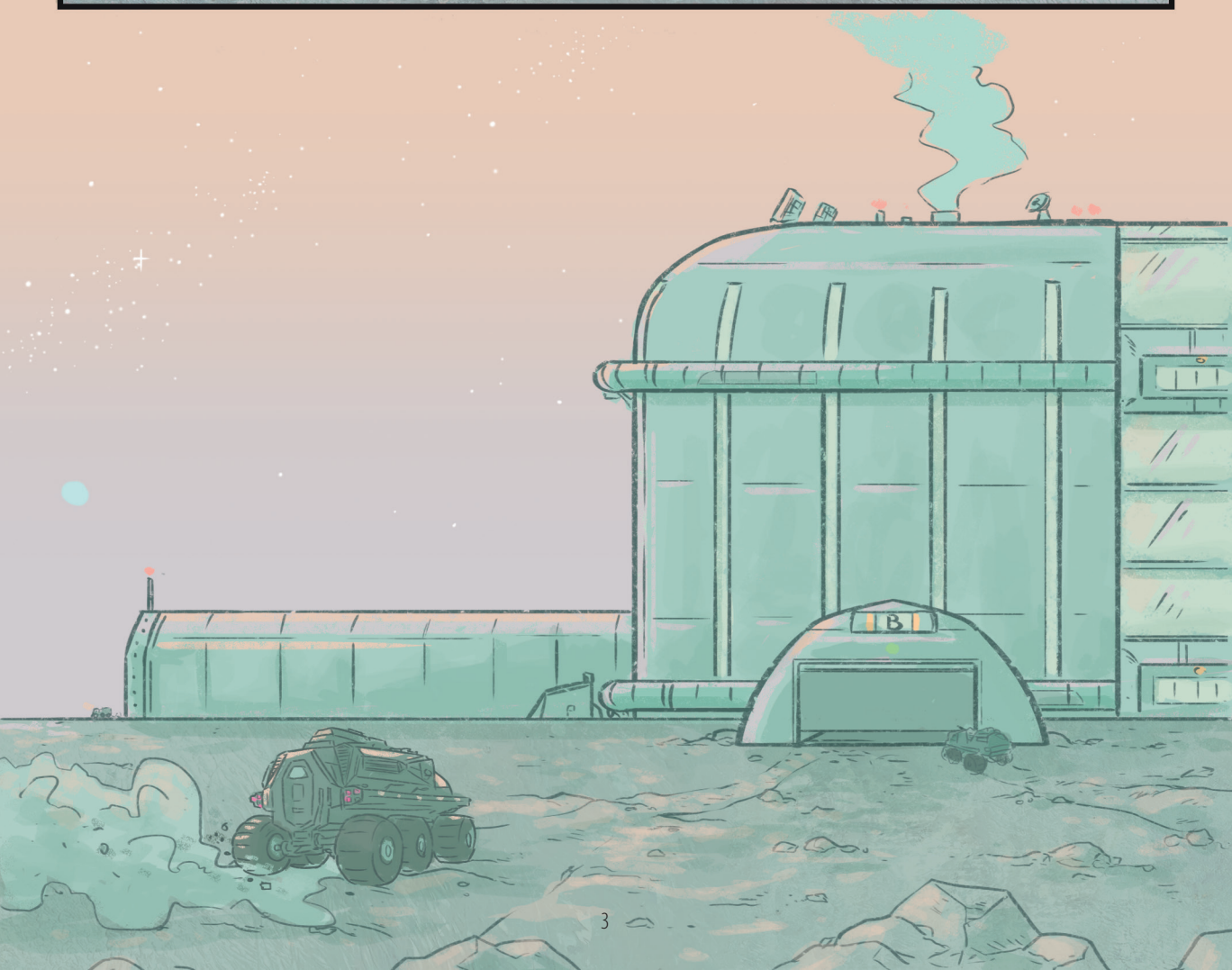

GOOD GORD. THIS COULD CHANGE EVERYTHING!

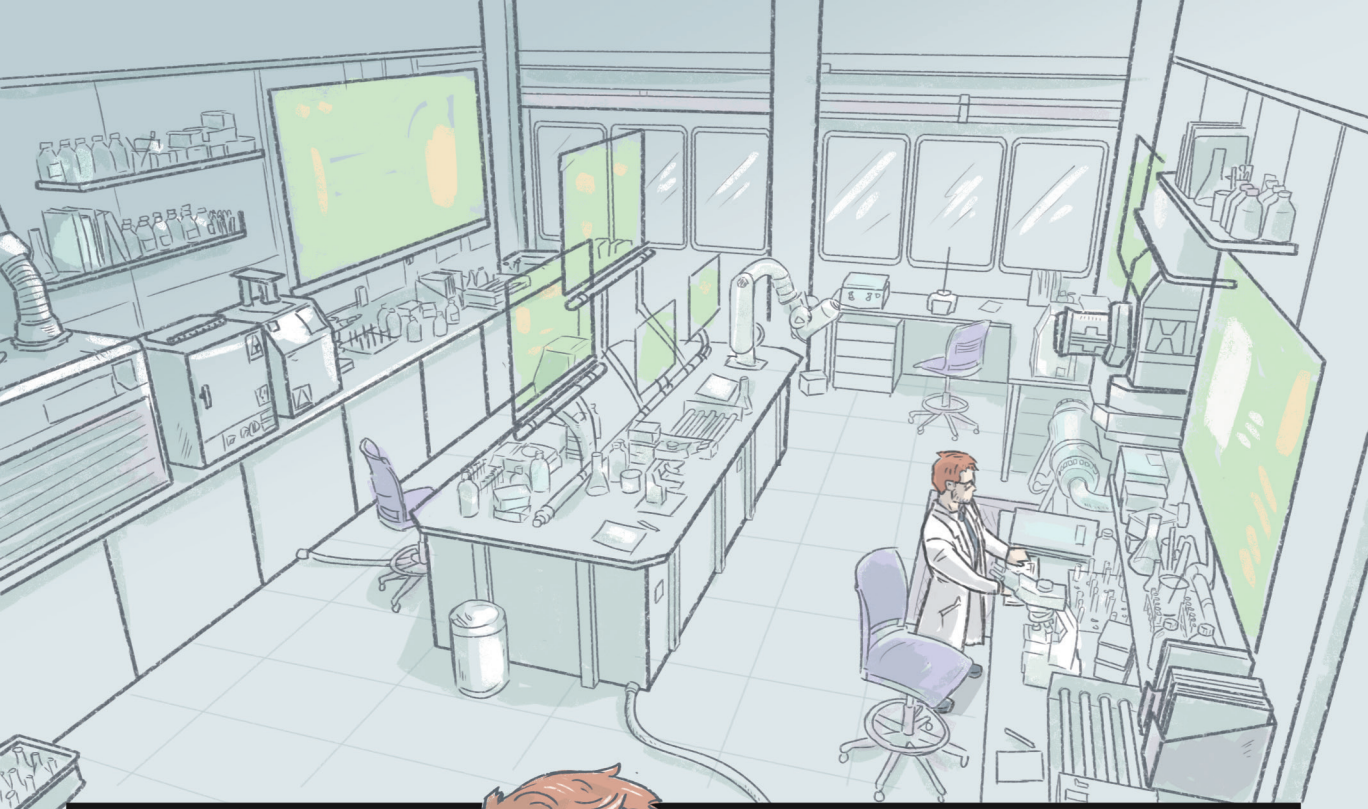

WE'D BETTER GET BACK SO WE CAN SEND PEOPLE OUT HERE TO SECURE THIS LOCATION.
DUST STORM ON THE WAY. BETTER PACK UP BEFORE IT CATCHES UP TO US. TAKE US ON HOME, JACK.
YES, SIR!

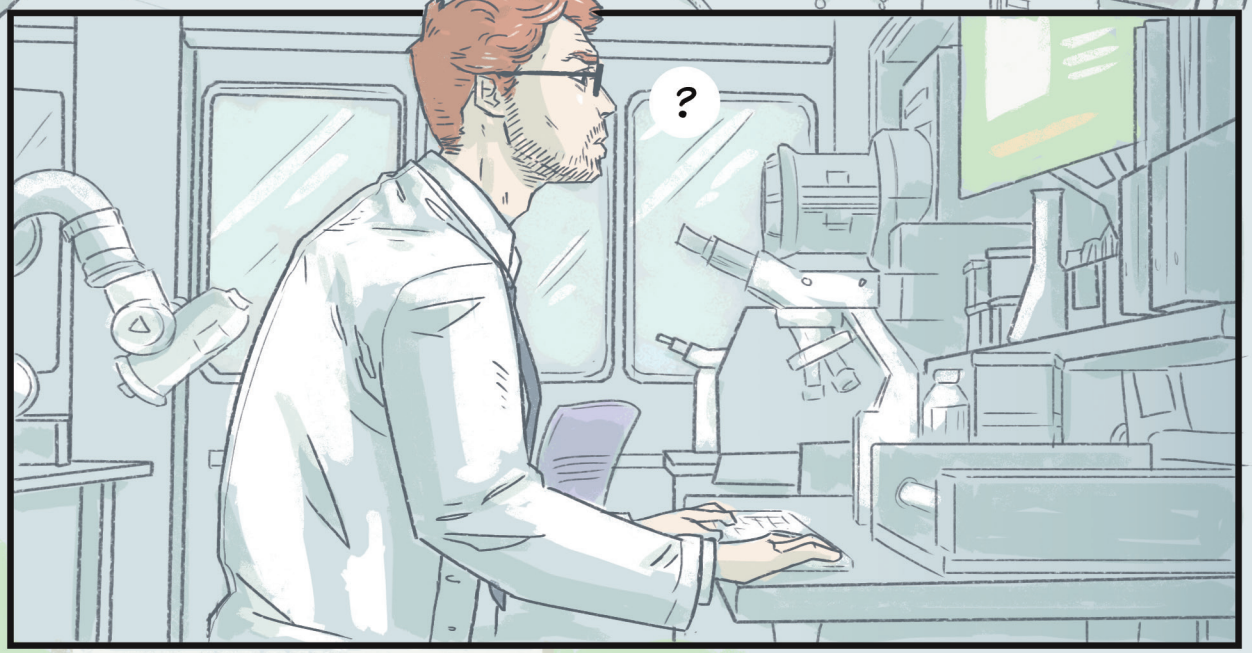





TWO SOLS LATER



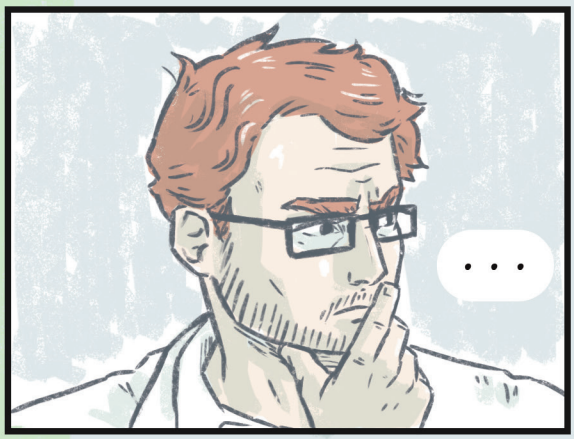


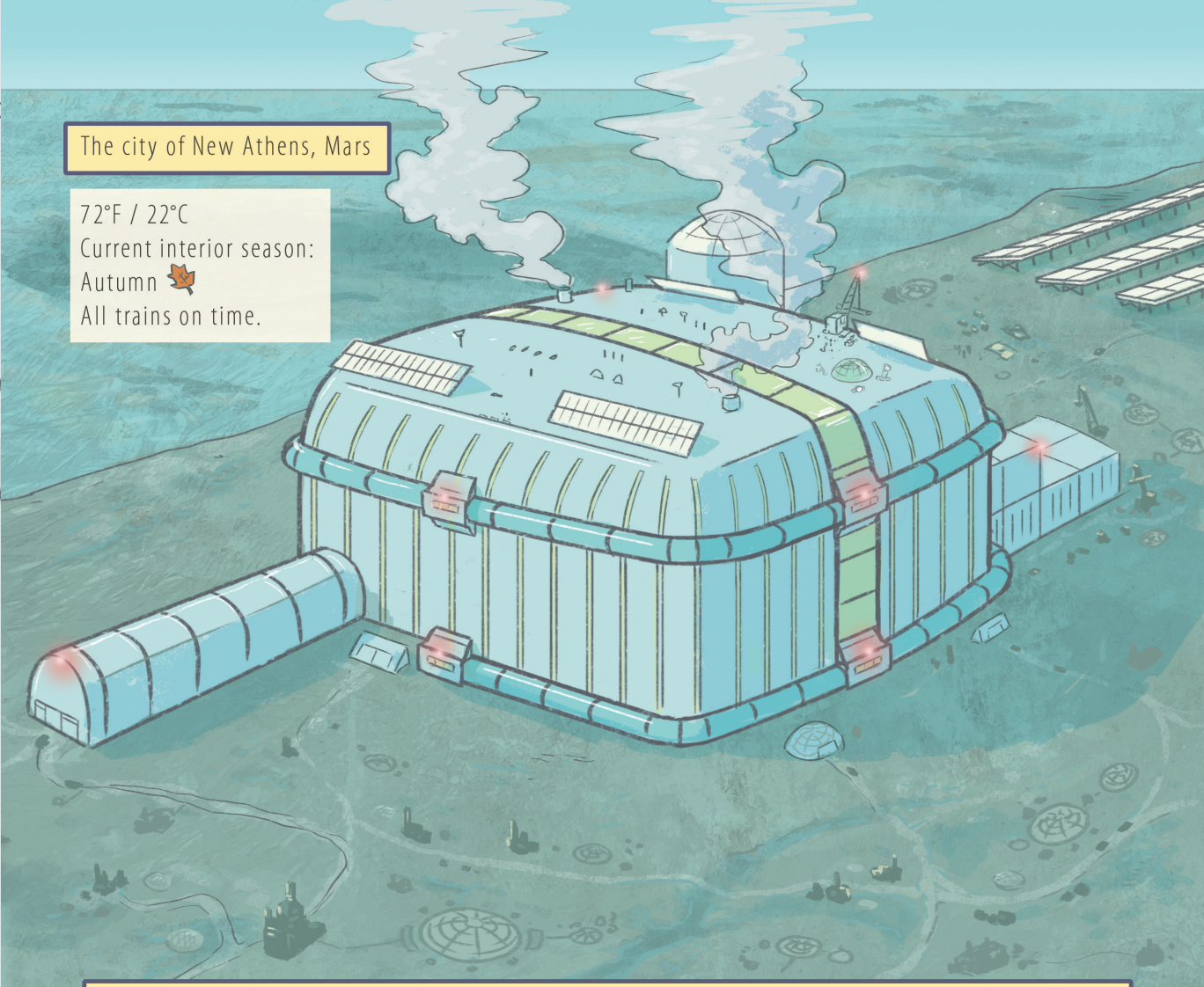


SAMPLE - STROMATOLITE

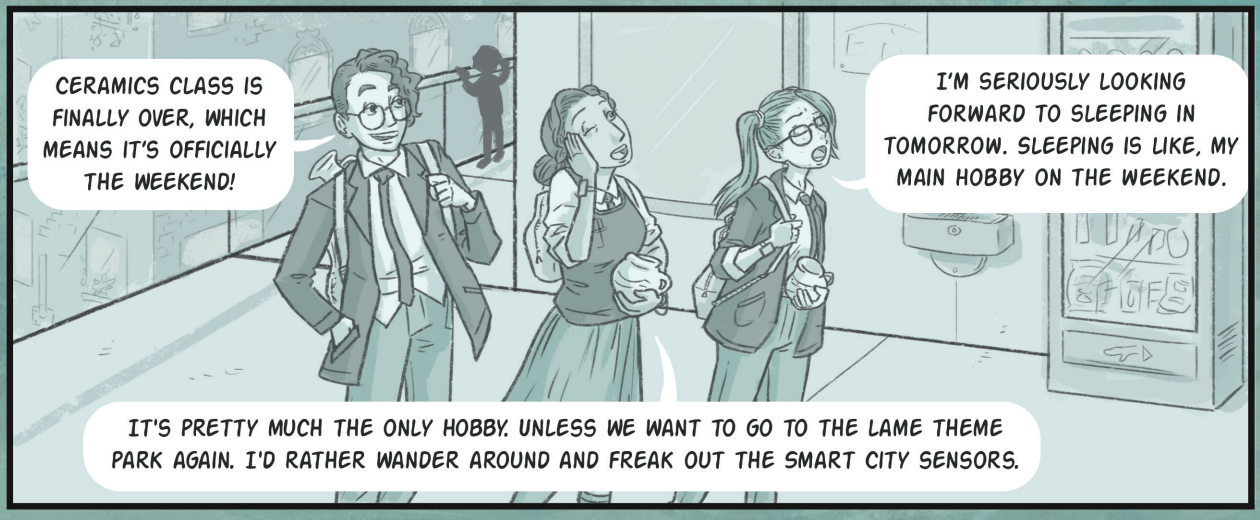
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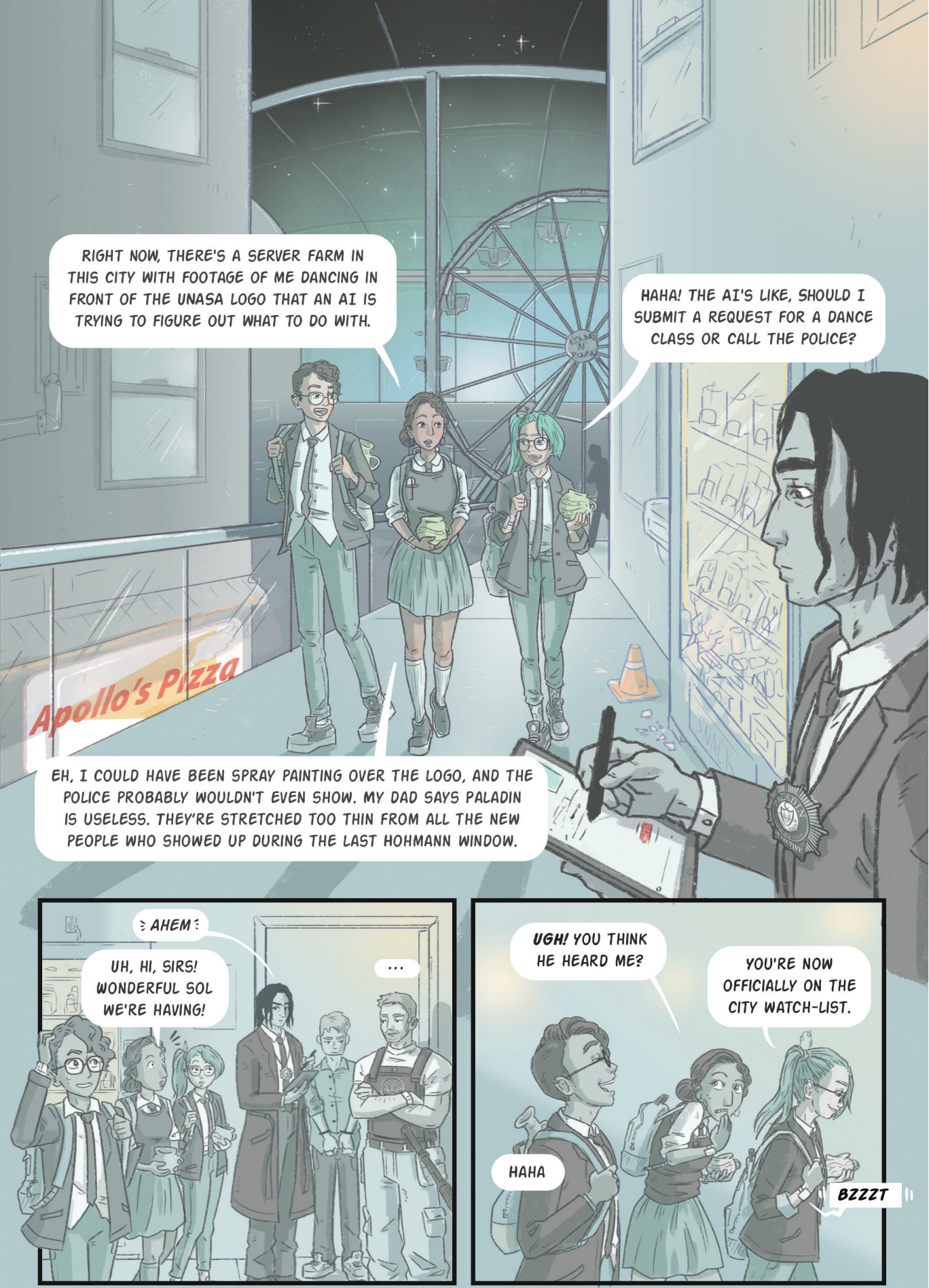
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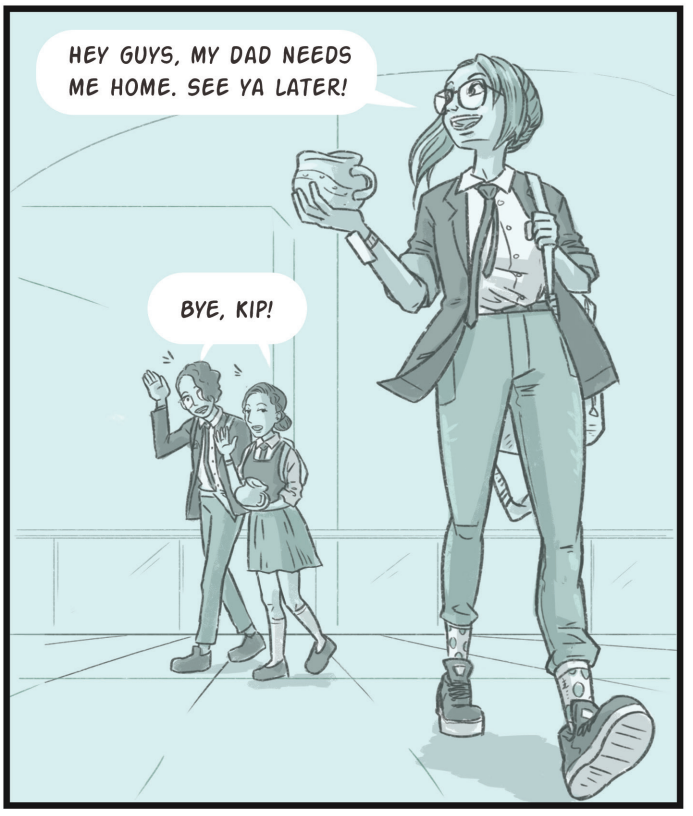


New Athens is the first city on Mars. It is a city of science and learning, complete with oxygen and water production, indoor agriculture, shops, restaurants, schools, and even public transportation. It currently has a population of approximately 10,200, a significant increase from just seven months earlier due to the huge influx of new citizens who arrived during the last Hohmann transfer window.

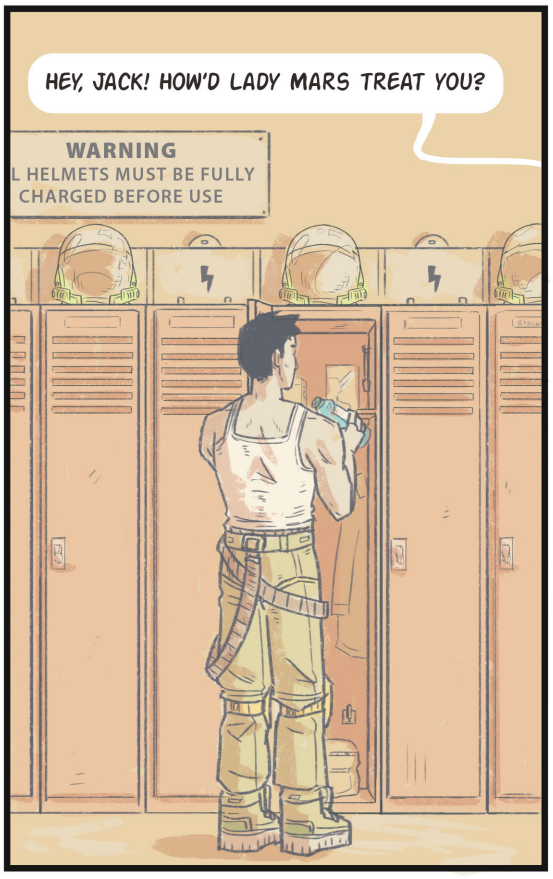



RIGHT NOW, THERE'S A SERVER FARM IN THIS CITY WITH FOOTAGE OF ME DANCING IN FRONT OF THE UNASA LOGO THAT AN AI IS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH.
HAHA! THE AI'S LIKE, SHOULD I SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR A DANCE CLASS OR CALL THE POLICE?
Apollo's Pizza
EH, I COULD HAVE BEEN SPRAY PAINTING OVER THE LOGO, AND THE POLICE PROBABLY WOULDN'T EVEN SHOW. MY DAD SAYS PALADIN IS USELESS. THEY'RE STRETCHED TOO THIN FROM ALL THE NEW PEOPLE WHO SHOWED UP DURING THE LAST HOHMANN WINDOW.
AHEM
UH, HI, SIRS! WONDERFUL SOL WE'RE HAVING!
...
UGH! YOU THINK HE HEARD ME?
YOU'RE NOW OFFICIALLY ON THE CITY WATCH-LIST.
HAHA
BZZZT

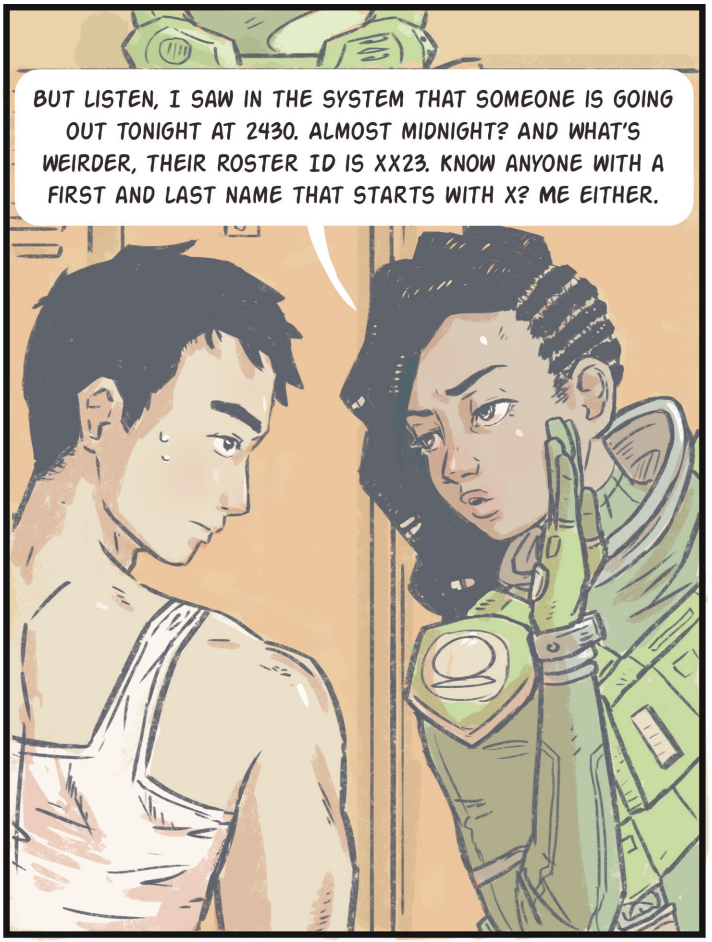

Dad
Hey, Kip. Come home directly when you're finished with class. I have a surprise for you.


HEY GUYS, MY DAD NEEDS ME HOME. SEE YA LATER!
BYE, KIP!


BEEP

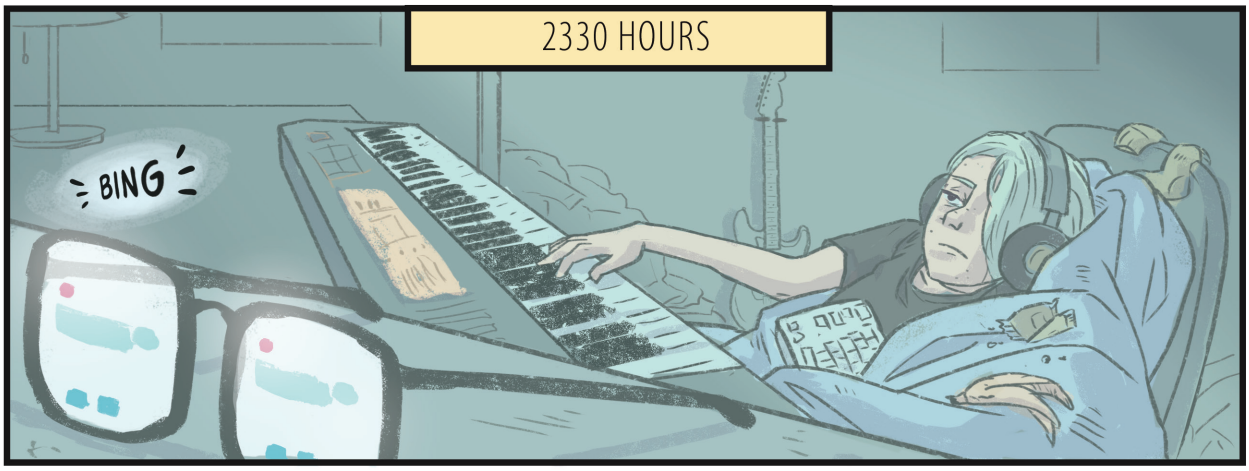

HEY, JACK! HOW'D LADY MARS TREAT YOU?
WARNING
L HELMETS MUST BE FULLY
CHARGED BEFORE USE

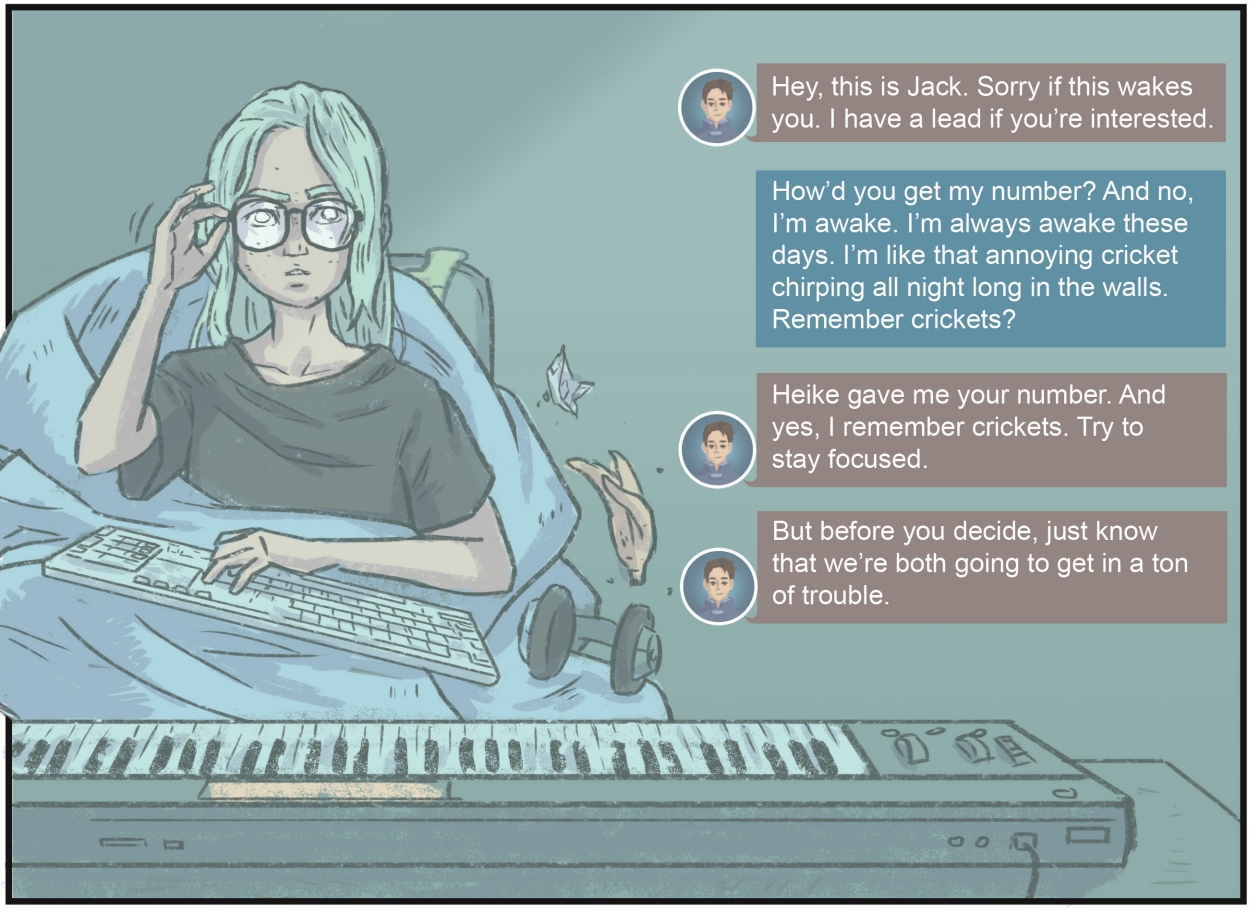

HEY, BRIENNE. SAME AS USUAL. NO DUST STORMS, AT LEAST. OH, AND SORRY ABOUT ALL THAT QUESTIONING YESTERDAY. KIPTON GLENDAUER IS, UH, GOING THROUGH SOME...
SOME MENTAL ANGUISH? YEAH, I DON'T BLAME HER. DR. O'FEIGHAN'S DEATH HIT US ALL HARD. HE WAS A GREAT GUY.

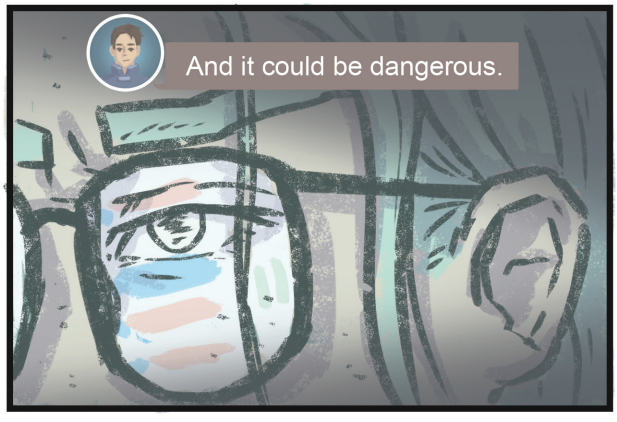

BUT LISTEN, I SAW IN THE SYSTEM THAT SOMEONE IS GOING OUT TONIGHT AT 2430. ALMOST MIDNIGHT? AND WHAT'S WEIRDER, THEIR ROSTER ID IS XX23. KNOW ANYONE WITH A FIRST AND LAST NAME THAT STARTS WITH X? ME EITHER.


SUSPICIOUS. JUST SAYIN'. WATCH YOUR BACK, JACK.


HMM. YEAH, THANKS.


2330 HOURS
BING


Hey, this is Jack. Sorry if this wakes you. I have a lead if you're interested.
How'd you get my number? And no, I'm awake. I'm always awake these days. I'm like that annoying cricket chirping all night long in the walls. Remember crickets?
Heike gave me your number. And yes, I remember crickets. Try to stay focused.
But before you decide, just know that we're both going to get in a ton of trouble.


And it could be dangerous.


I'm in.