
PART 1
AM I HUMAN?
03
GRIDLOCK STUDIOS



AM I HUMAN?

ORIGINAL STORY & ART BY
CORY HOLMAN

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GRIDLOCK STUDIOS

THANK YOU TO ALL THE BACKERS FROM PRINTOPIA 2025 WHO BELIEVED IN THIS PROJECT ENOUGH TO HELP MAKE IT COME TO LIFE. THANK YOU TO MY FRIENDS FOR THE FEEDBACK & STORY HELP. THANK YOU TO MY BEAUTIFUL WIFE FOR BELIEVING IN ME AND SUPPORTING THE STUPID THINGS I LIKE TO DO, IT MEANS MORE TO ME THAN I'LL EVER BE ABLE TO CONVEY. AND THANK YOU TO GOD, FOR PROVIDING ME THE OPPORTUNITY & THE ABILITY & THE GUIDANCE FOR MAKING THIS PROJECT COME TO LIFE. WITHOUT EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU, MY DREAM OF BEING A CARTOONIST WOULD'VE STAYED IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. THERE'S A 12 YEAR OLD CORY LOOKING AT ME FROM THE PAST & HE'S HAPPY. AND THAT MAKES ME HAPPY!

THANK YOU ALL.



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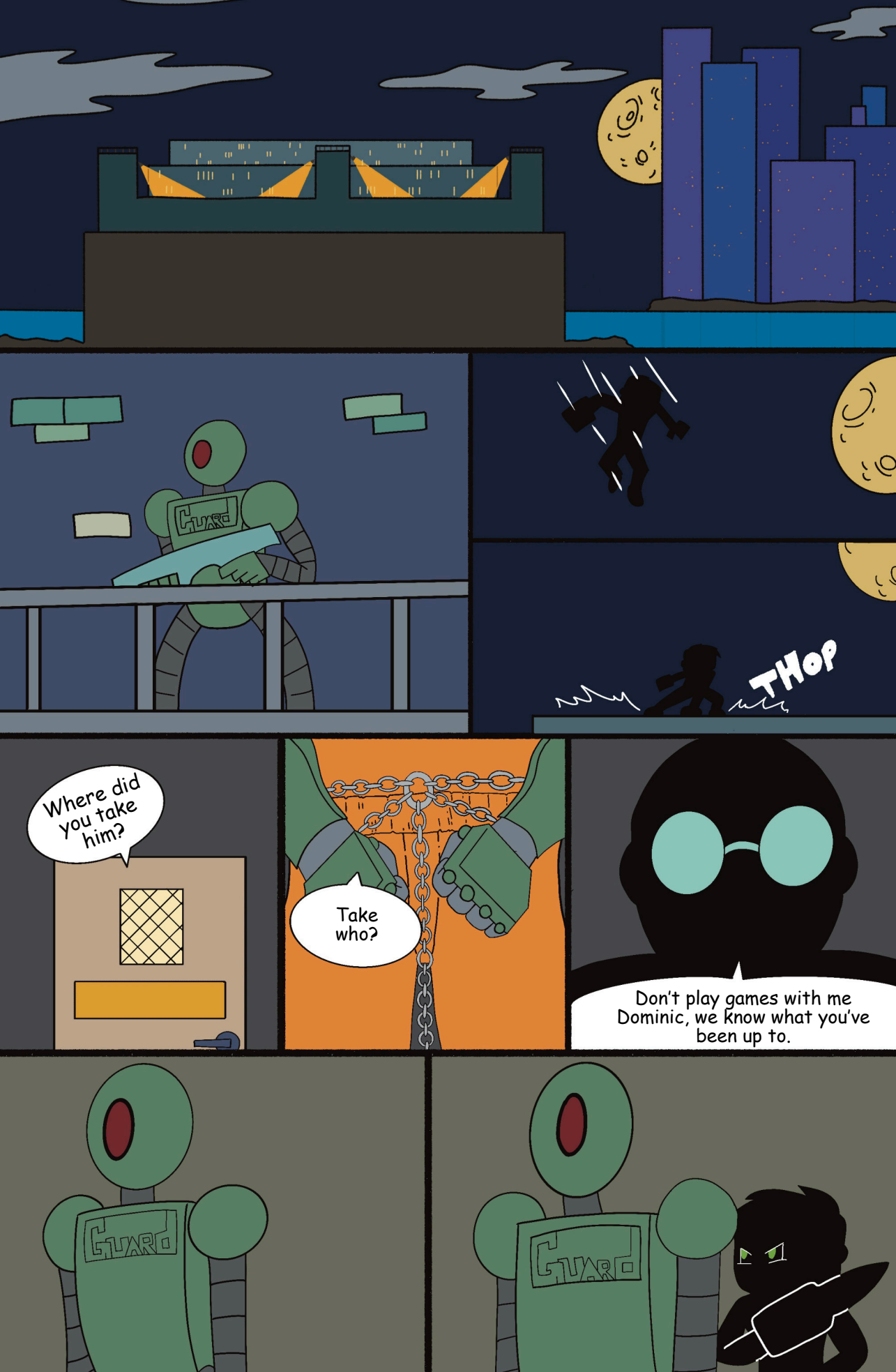
ITCH.IO - GRIDLOCK STUDIOS

CHAPTER 1

THE YEAR IS 2125. COUNTRIES NO LONGER HAVE STANDING ARMIES, BUT INSTEAD HIRE PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES FOR WARFARE.

"TERRACE" IS ONE OF THESE COMPANIES.

A GROUP OF FORMER TERRACE MERCENARIES HAVE GONE ROGUE AND ARE ATTEMPTING TO BRING DOWN TERRACE FOR THE HEINOUS ACTS AND BLASPHEMOUS WEAPONS PROGRAM THEY TRIED TO KEEP SECRET.


GUARD
THOP
Where did you take him?
Take who?
Don't play games with me Dominic, we know what you've been up to.
GUARD
GUARD


Shink!!!
Flip
Flip
Flip
SICK!!!
SNATCH!!!


I'm afraid...
I don't know what you're talking about. That's why you pay us right?
To look the other way
and forget what we see?
Ahh...
...there it is.
There "what" is?
That aggression.
That's why we approached you in the first place.

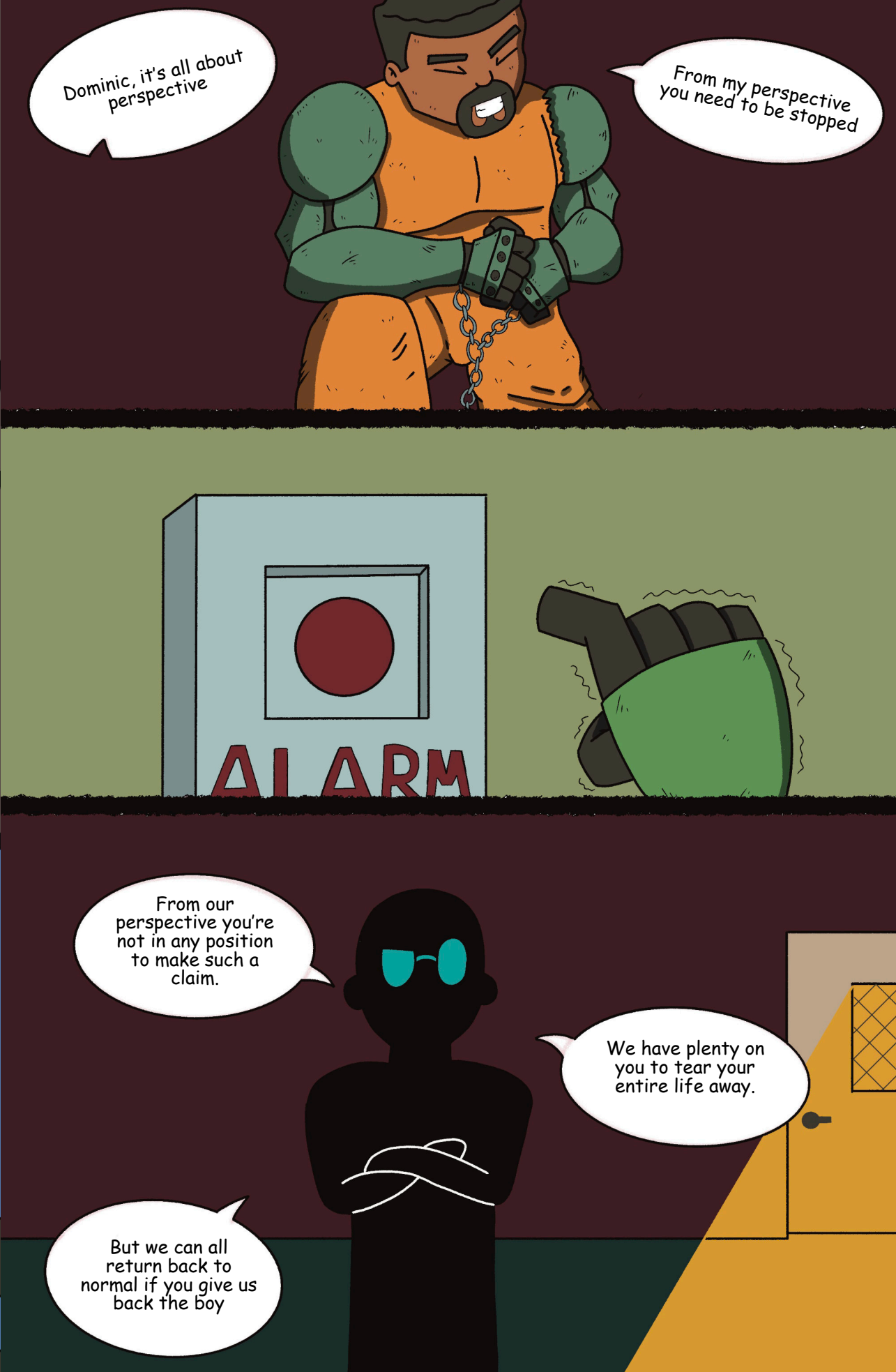

03
You mean where you mutilated me?
zzziirrr
bizzzz


Dom, we enhanced you.
Like many of your friends too.
Don't act high and mighty when we know exactly what you've used your enhancements for.
Now stop playing games and tell me....
WHERE IS THE BOY?!?




must...
...reach...
...alarm...


Children?
Why did it have to be children?
Why did you have to deviate from your directive, Dominic?
You showed such promise.
Promotions.
A decorated mercenary. An illustrious but abrupt end to a military career.
Not everyone gets a second chance like that!
Save it.
I'd rather go back to being quadriplegic than to serve a bunch of child thieves


Dominic, it's all about perspective
From my perspective you need to be stopped
ALARM
From our perspective you're not in any position to make such a claim.
We have plenty on you to tear your entire life away.
But we can all return back to normal if you give us back the boy

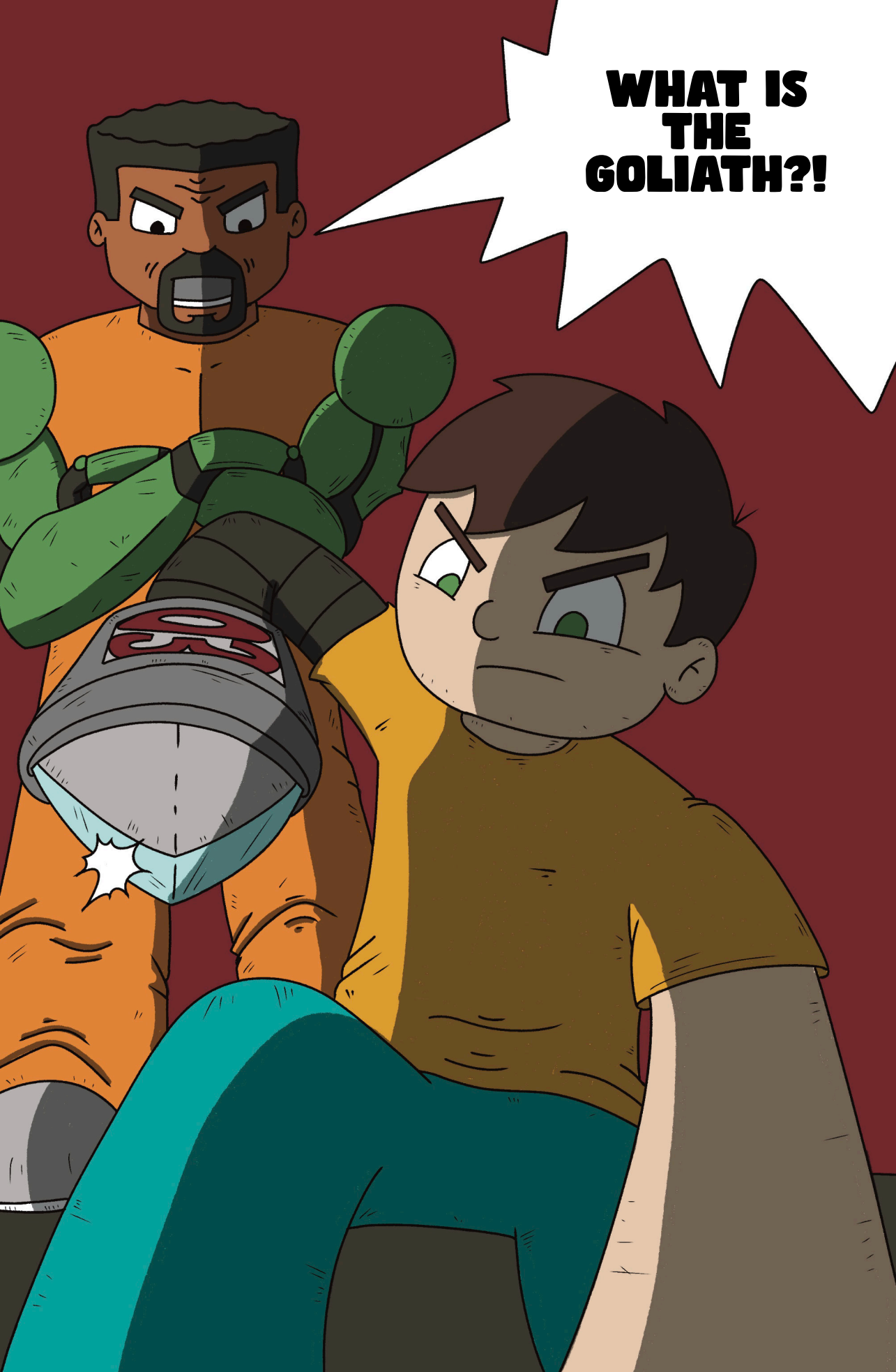

He has a name
Juvenile-03-Necro-Experiment
We call him Joe.
and if you want him...
he's already here.
KLAT
KLAT
KLAT
KLAT
KLAT
KLAT


03
Shlip!
03
03
Shing!!
03
Ratatat
Rata
Ratatatat
Ratat
tatatatata
Ratat
tatat
tatat
Ratatat
Ratatat


You brought him HERE?!
You really don't want to keep him do you?
Are you crazy?
Crazy? No, calculated.
You obviously didn't think I'd use him to break out.
Fault one to you.
Fault two...you don't have enough guards to ward off a necro-experiment. Especially him.
He has one directive. You can't just reprogram him, we made sure
EMP. Turns out, he's easy to reprogram when there's nothing operating him anymore
Dominic... what have you done?
Gave him his life back.
He has free will now.
and he...
is right outside.


03
BAM!!!!


Shink!!


WHAT IS THE GOLIATH?!


the wha-
ahh yes, the Goliath.
-ack-
Terrace trained you well Dominic.
the Goliath is a new weapon to be offered to those who are willing to pay.
Destruction on a much larger scale.
Don't like a country? Send in the Goliath to wipe out its capital cities.


What gives you the right to do something like that?
It's not about rights, it's about power.
It's all about perspective, Dominic.
AND WARFARE. HOW CAN THE WORLD ADVANCE IF TERRACE KEEPS KILLING PEOPLE BASED ON THE HIGHEST BIDDER?!

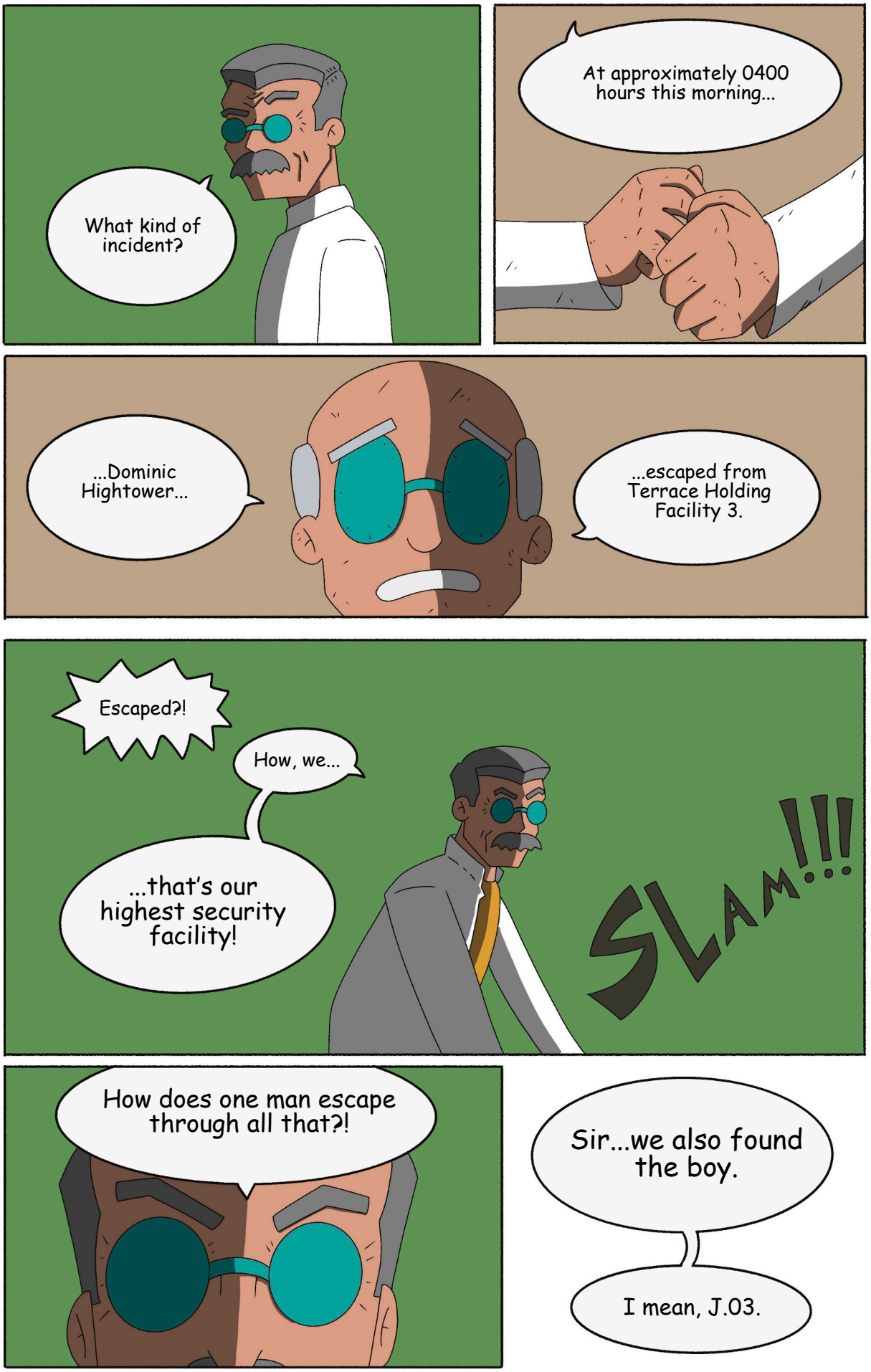

Perspectives, huh?
From my perspective, you're not going to get very far with this. Get a message to Dr. Glass,
Tell him we're coming.
Tell him what we did here.
And tell him,
The boy knows what he did to him


What's on your mind kid?
Still hu—...I don't know kid. 'Human' is kind of vague
Dom, do you believe I'm still human?
Do you believe I'm just a machine then?
No. I don't believe you're just a machine. Machines don't feel emotions like fear, anger, and love. Do you feel any of those?
I don't know, Dom.
Well kid, not knowing is the first step I guess.
Come on, you need to recharge.

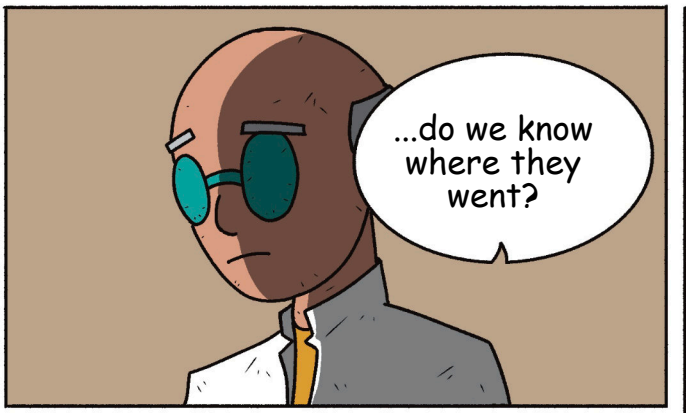
CHAPTER 2

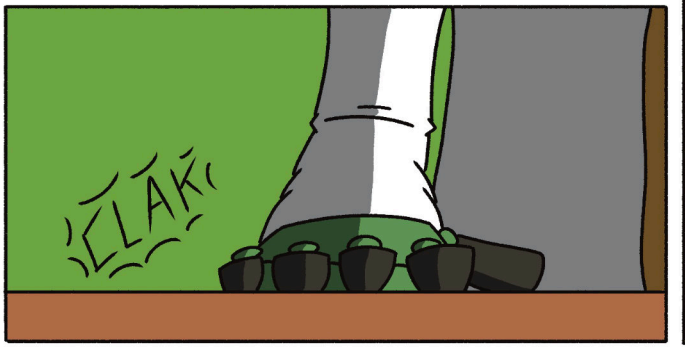
AFTER SUCCESSFULLY BREAKING DOM OUT OF THE TERRACE HOLDING FACILITY, THEY MUST RECONVENE TO SEE WHAT DOM LEARNED WHILE IMPRISONED. BUT FIRST, JOE MUST RECHARGE...

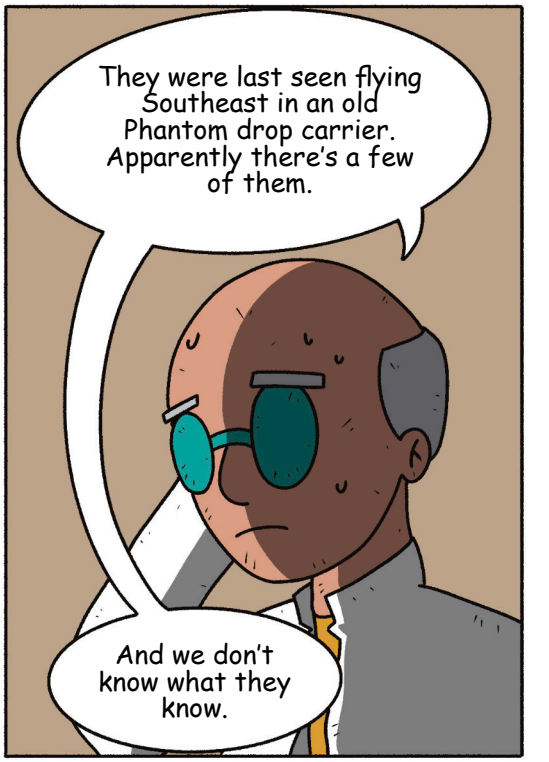

Skree
Skree
V=16
B=0
x=0
E/V.
Dr. Glass?
...there's been an incident...
An incident?

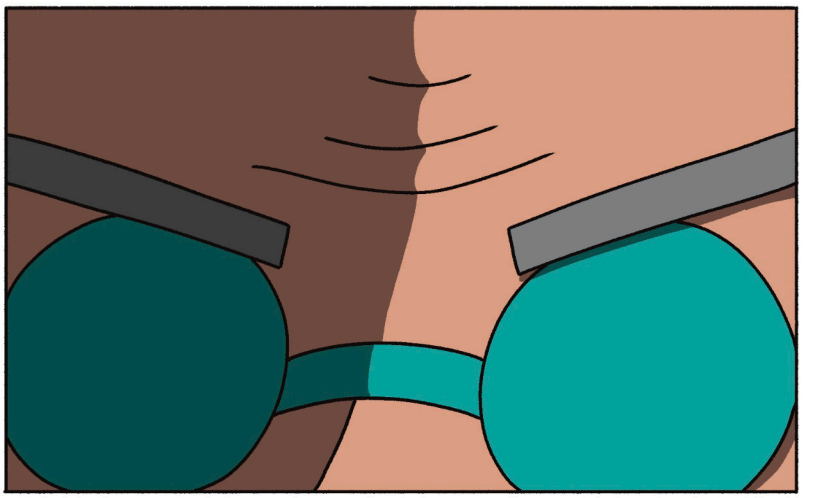

What kind of incident?
At approximately 0400 hours this morning...
...Dominic Hightower...
...escaped from Terrace Holding Facility 3.
Escaped?!
How, we...
...that's our highest security facility!
SLAM!!!
How does one man escape through all that?!
Sir...we also found the boy.
I mean, J.03.


J.03...hold on, you don't mean?
Yes, J.03 was Hightower's means of escape.
We did not anticipate this kind of action.
No wonder...
But how did he reprogram him?
I didn't build them that way. That's impossible...
It's a fact, sir.
No wonder he escaped then. No one gets passed the Necro Experiments. But how did they...





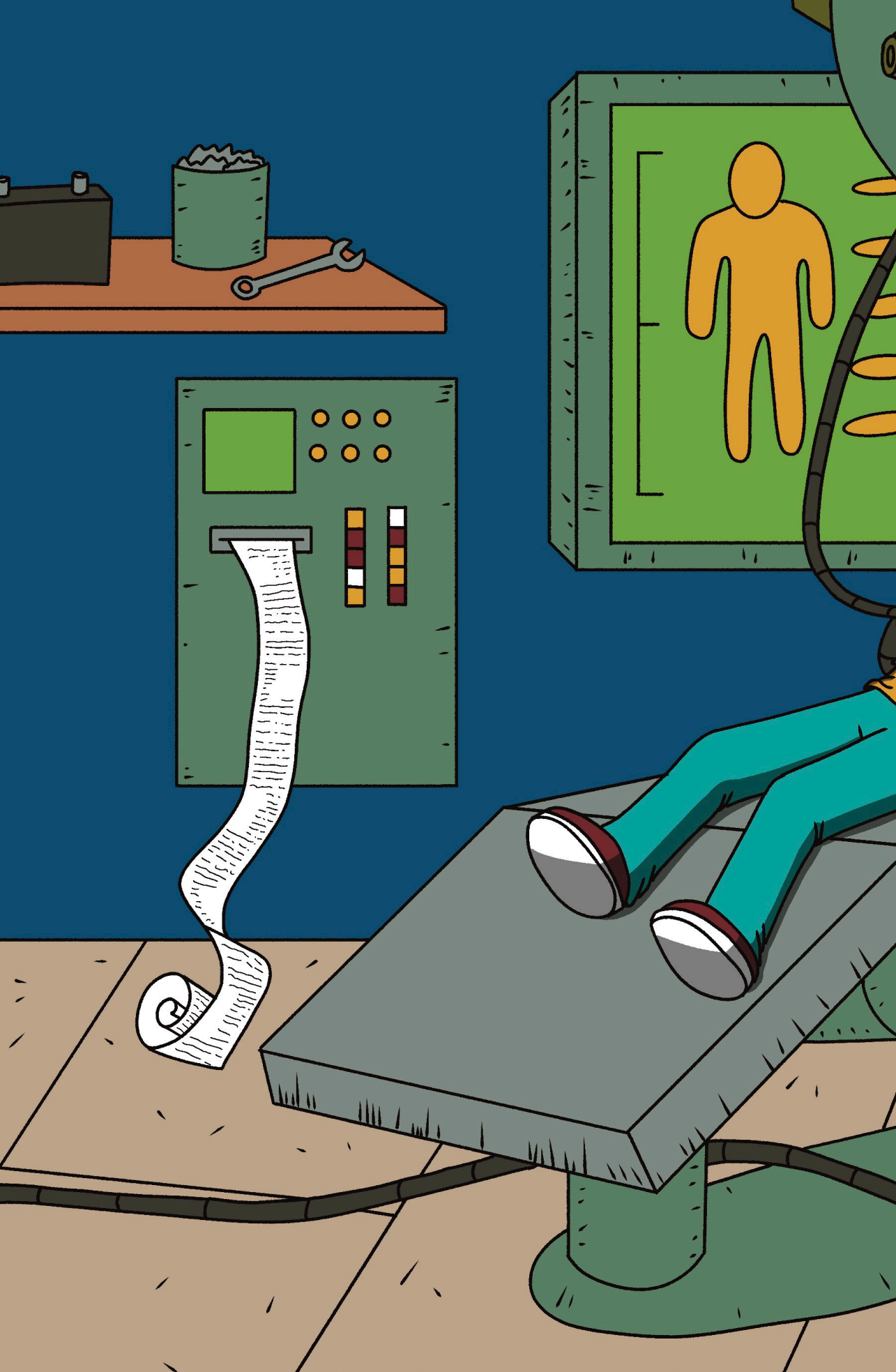


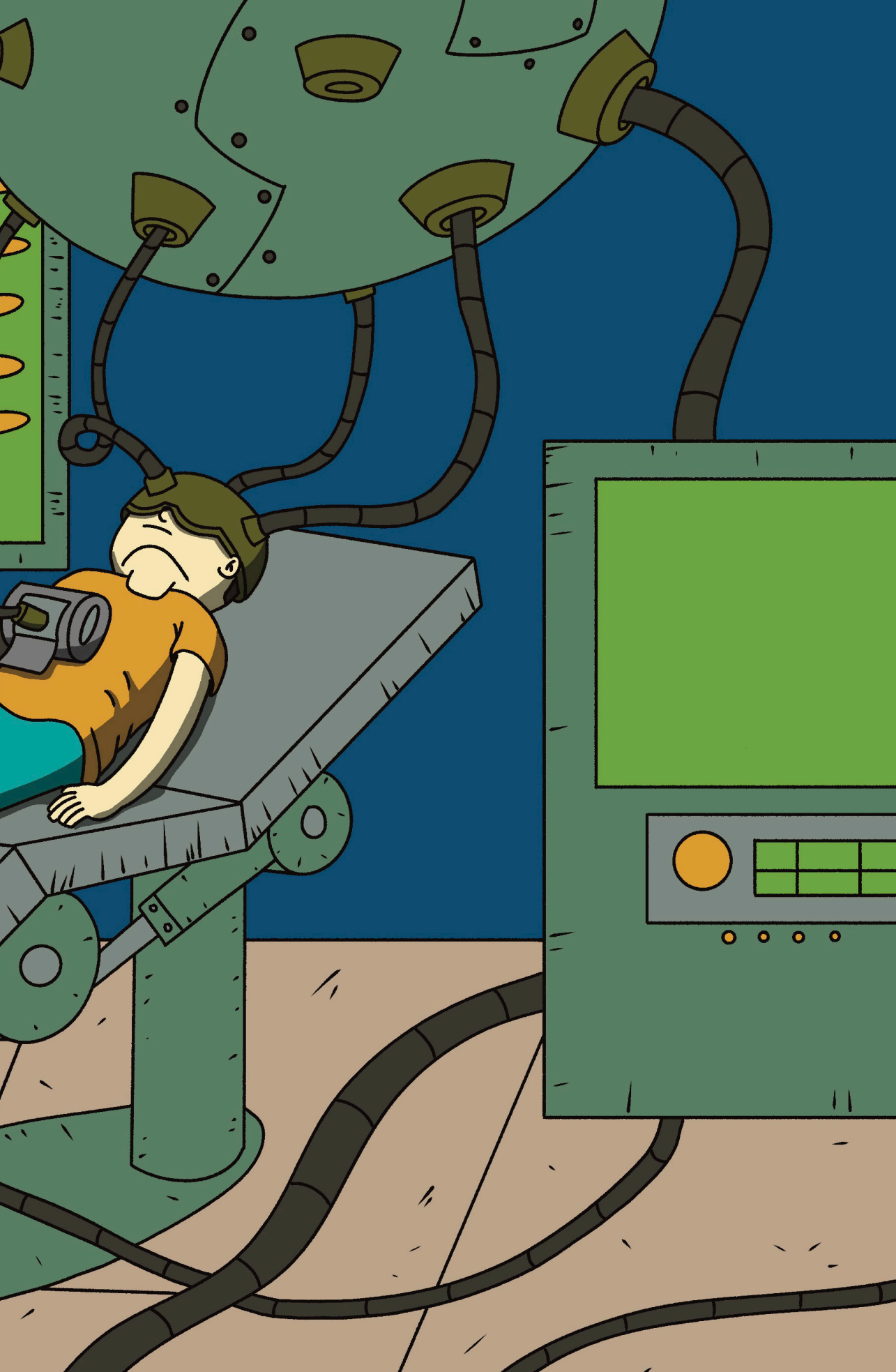


That's right, we don't.

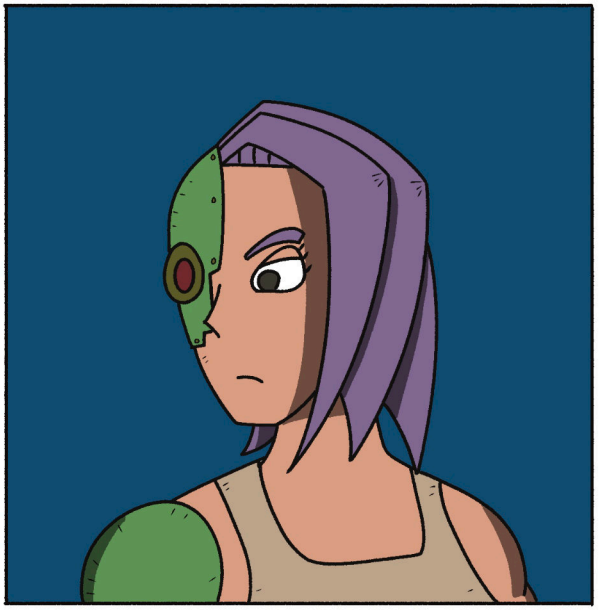



...still at High Point?
Yes, she's with the Goliath.
Good.
Keep her there.
Just in case.

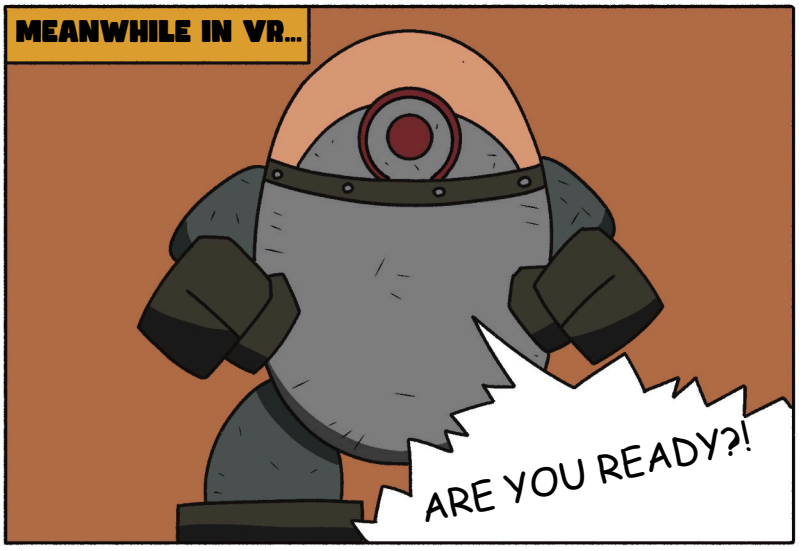





He asked me if I thought he was still human.
What did you tell him?
The truth.
That I didn't know & it was for him to decide.




You're better than me, I would've lied and told him yes.


MEANWHILE IN VR...
ARE YOU READY?!


Do you ever feel bad knowing that we're using him?


03
Bring it on!!


We're not.


He knows exactly why he's here
he's free to go and live out his life however he sees fit


He knows?
03
He knows.
And he still chooses to stay. And I'm glad he does. We need him, but most importantly...
I think he needs us too.

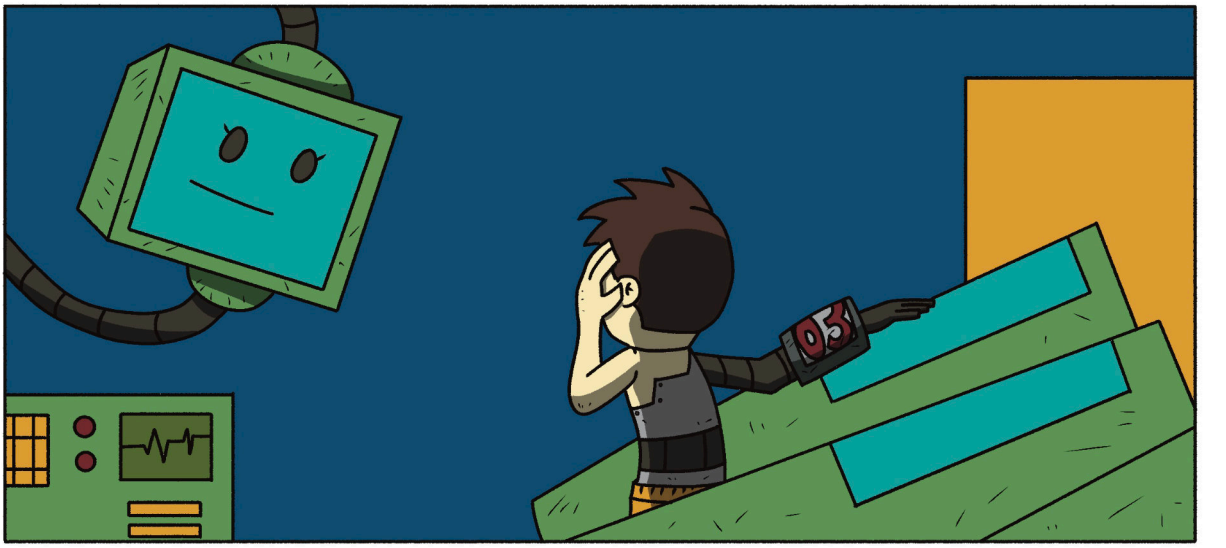

:rustle:
:rustle:


AAAAAAAHHHH!!!


AAAAHHH!!!!
CLICK
HIIIssssssss



Joe, good morning. The rest of the crew are already eating.

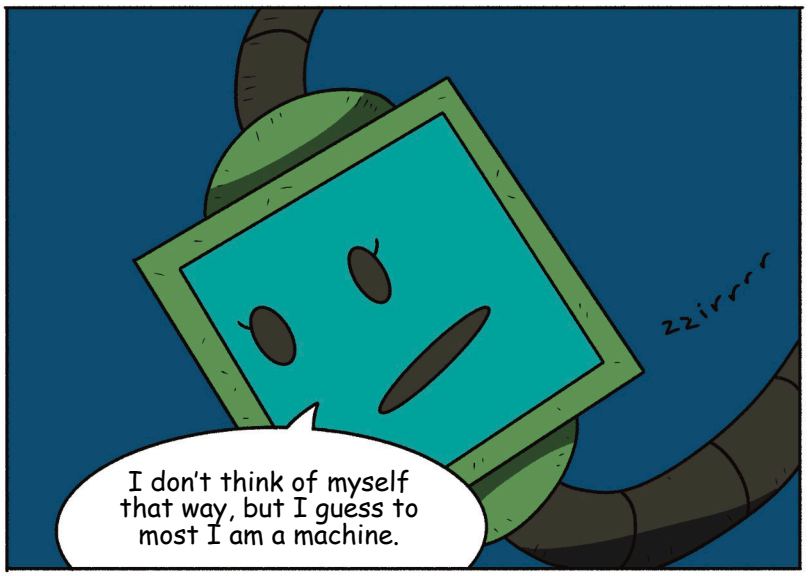


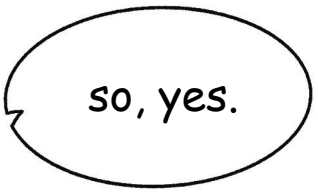
Thanks Sim.

Hey Sim...

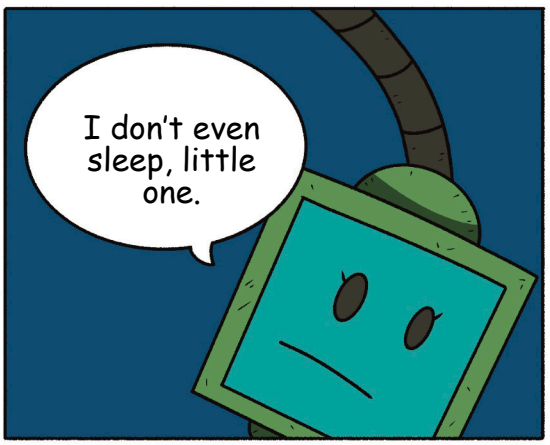
...you're a machine,

right?


zzirrrr
I don't think of myself that way, but I guess to most I am a machine.

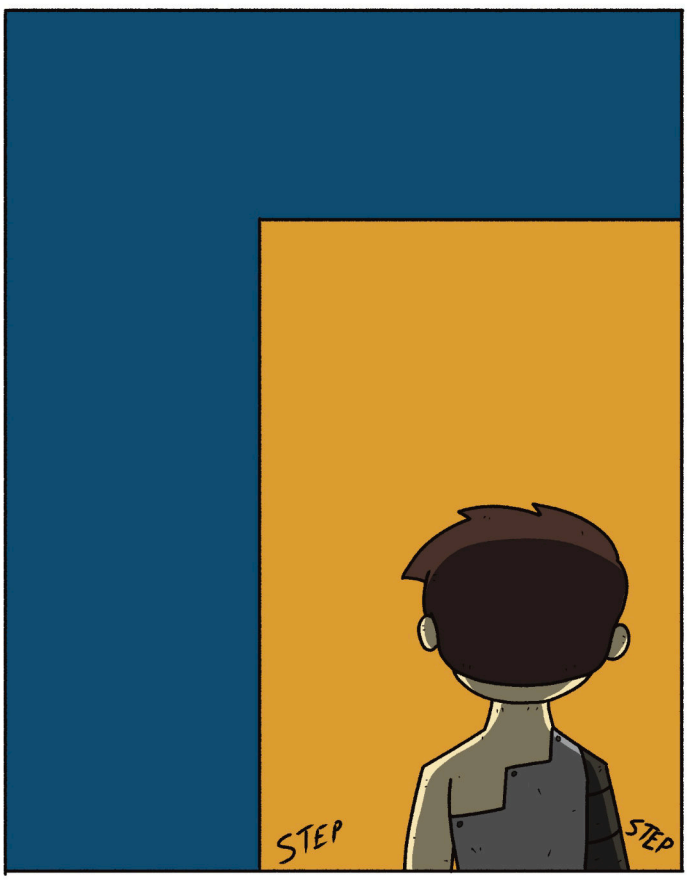

so, yes.


Do you dream?

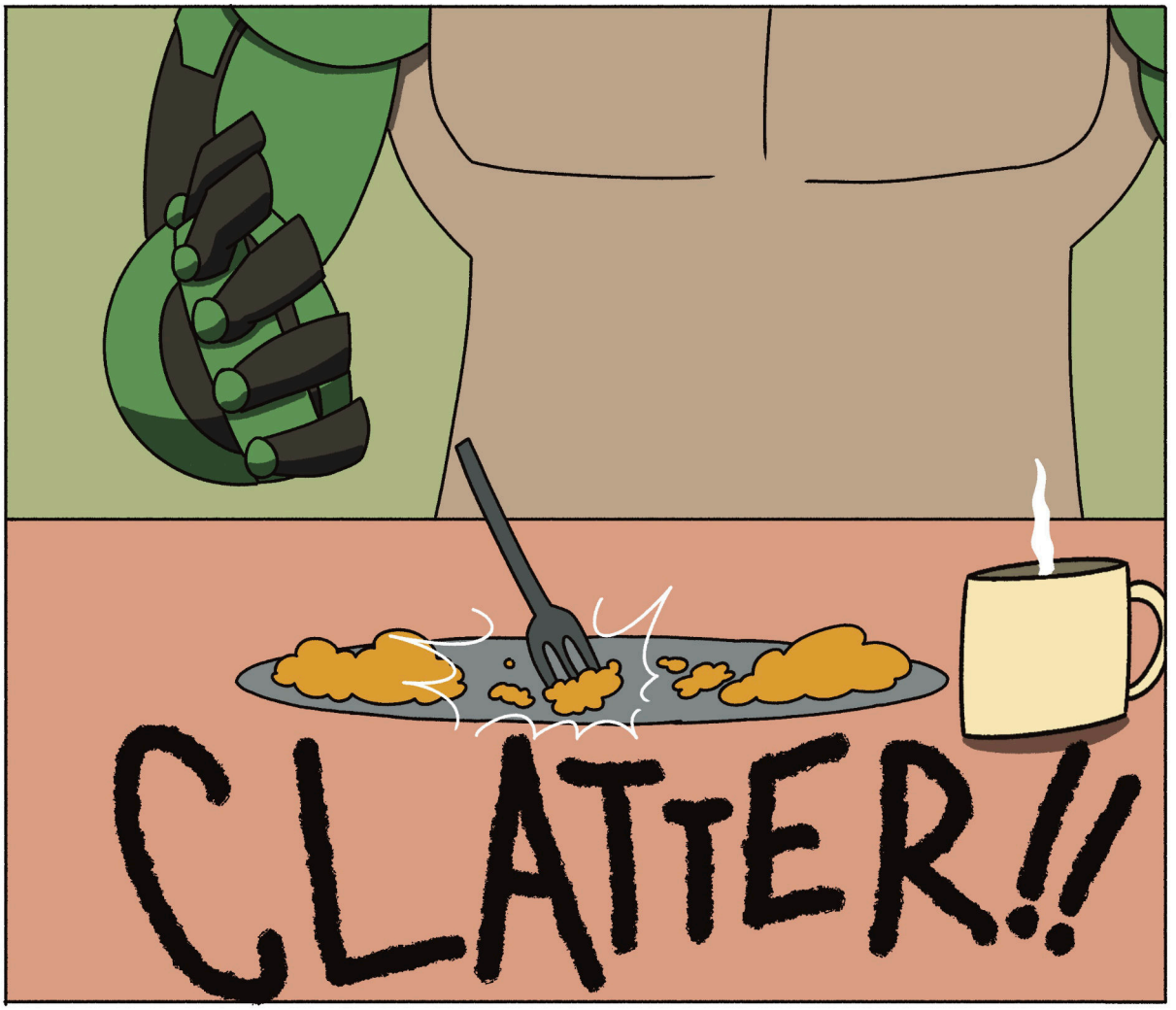

I don't even sleep, little one.






STEP
STEP


I hate powdered eggs...
Good morning Joe!
I think I dreamt last night.


CLATTER!!


You what?

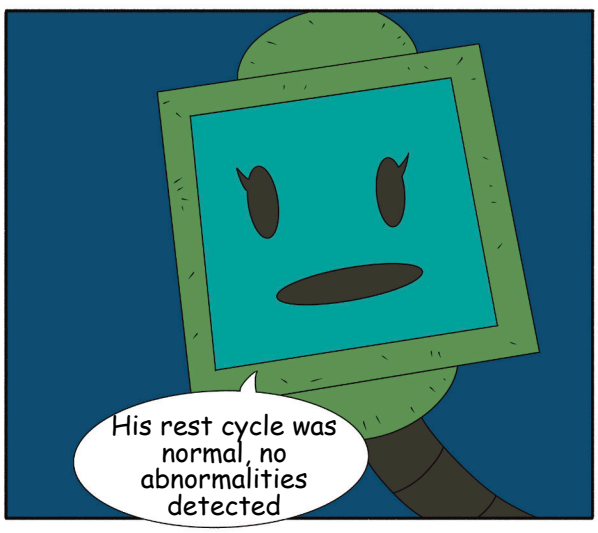
CHAPTER 3

DO MACHINES DREAM? A BOY ONCE THOUGHT DEAD AND ANIMATED PURELY BY MACHINERY HAS BEGUN TO SEE GLIMPSES OF HIS PAST LIFE. GLIMPSES THAT HE DOESN'T REMEMBER.

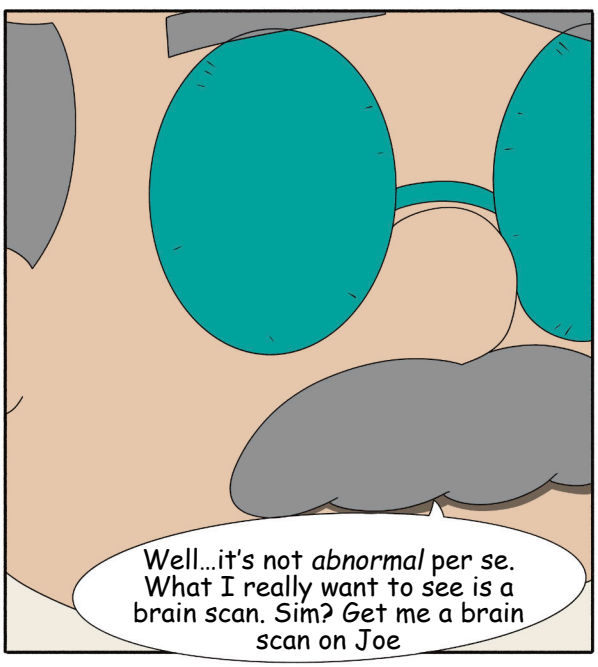
BUT WHAT IS HE TRULY?


03


Alright, let's see what we're working with here.

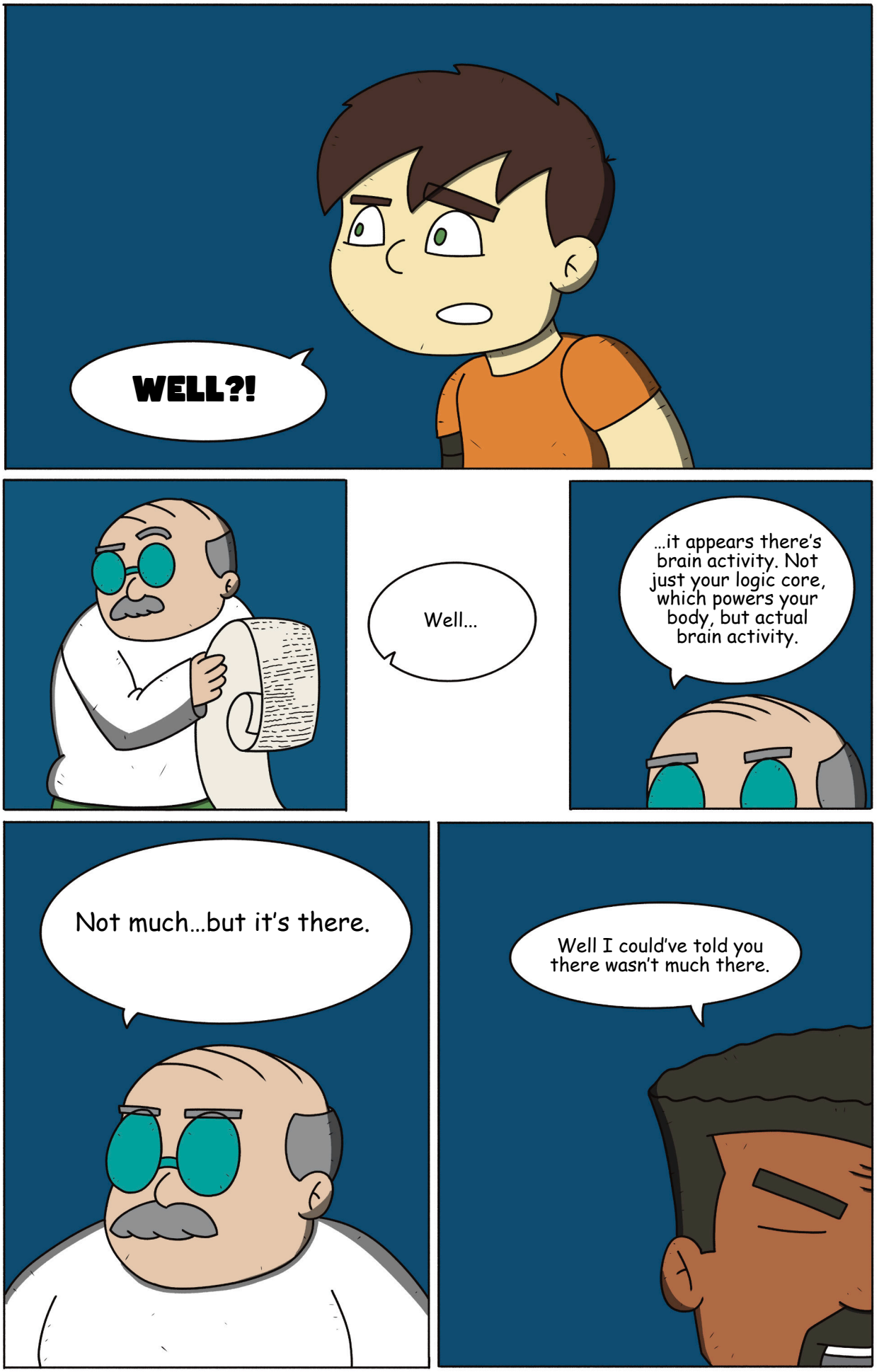

His rest cycle was normal, no abnormalities detected


But he dreamt,
that's not normal right?


Well…it's not *abnormal* per se. What I really want to see is a brain scan. Sim? Get me a brain scan on Joe


What does this mean if I dreamt?
I'm not sure kid, but we may be closer to your answer than you think
SCAN
PRINT


03

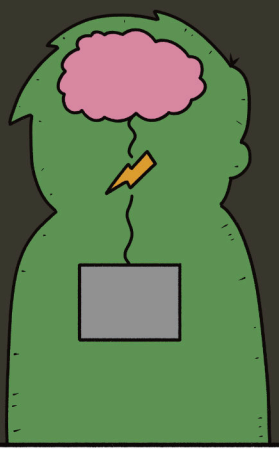

WELL?!
Well...
...it appears there's brain activity. Not just your logic core, which powers your body, but actual brain activity.
Not much...but it's there.
Well I could've told you there wasn't much there.



So is he...coming back alive? Like his past self?



My guess, and this is a weak guess, is when we reprogrammed him that some power got diverted to the brain and began to cause some activity.



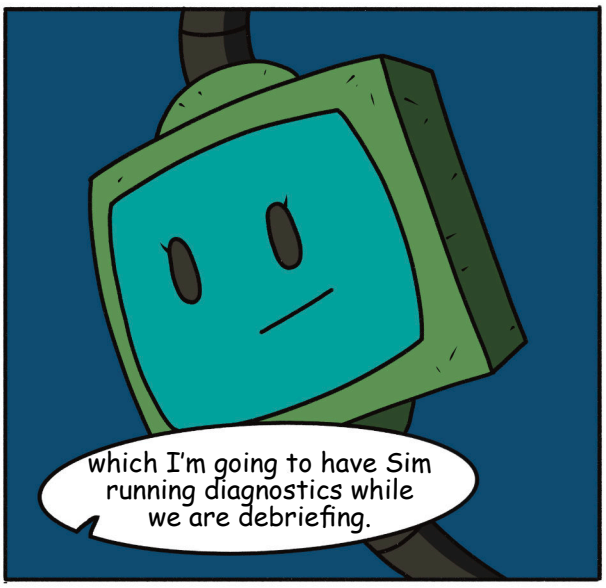

But what about the Logic core?
Do I have...
...two brains now?!
Great, that's the last thing you need.
What about his other weapons?
Have they come back online?
Still looks like the EMP has wiped them beyond use.


We were lucky we could even reprogram him.
His hand blade still does really well.
How did it feel kid?
It felt fine. It didn't have that sticking point anymore.
so I guess that's progress.
So if the weapons are still there but I can't access them...


...can they maybe be reprogrammed too?
They could help a ton.
Maybe, I'm not sure.
We would need to run some more diagnostics.
But I don't think we have time for that. Right, Dom?
Right, we need to have a debrief on the Goliath.
I want to get moving as fast as we can.
Terrace is going to be after us even harder now that they know Joe is back online.



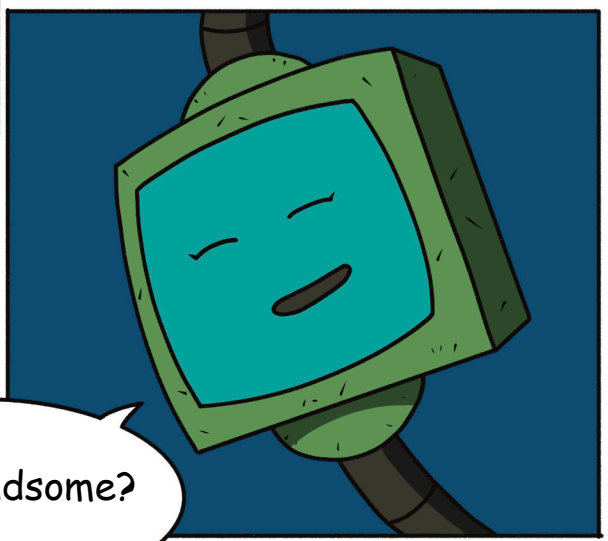
I'm not sure about that either.



We would still need to do some more testing



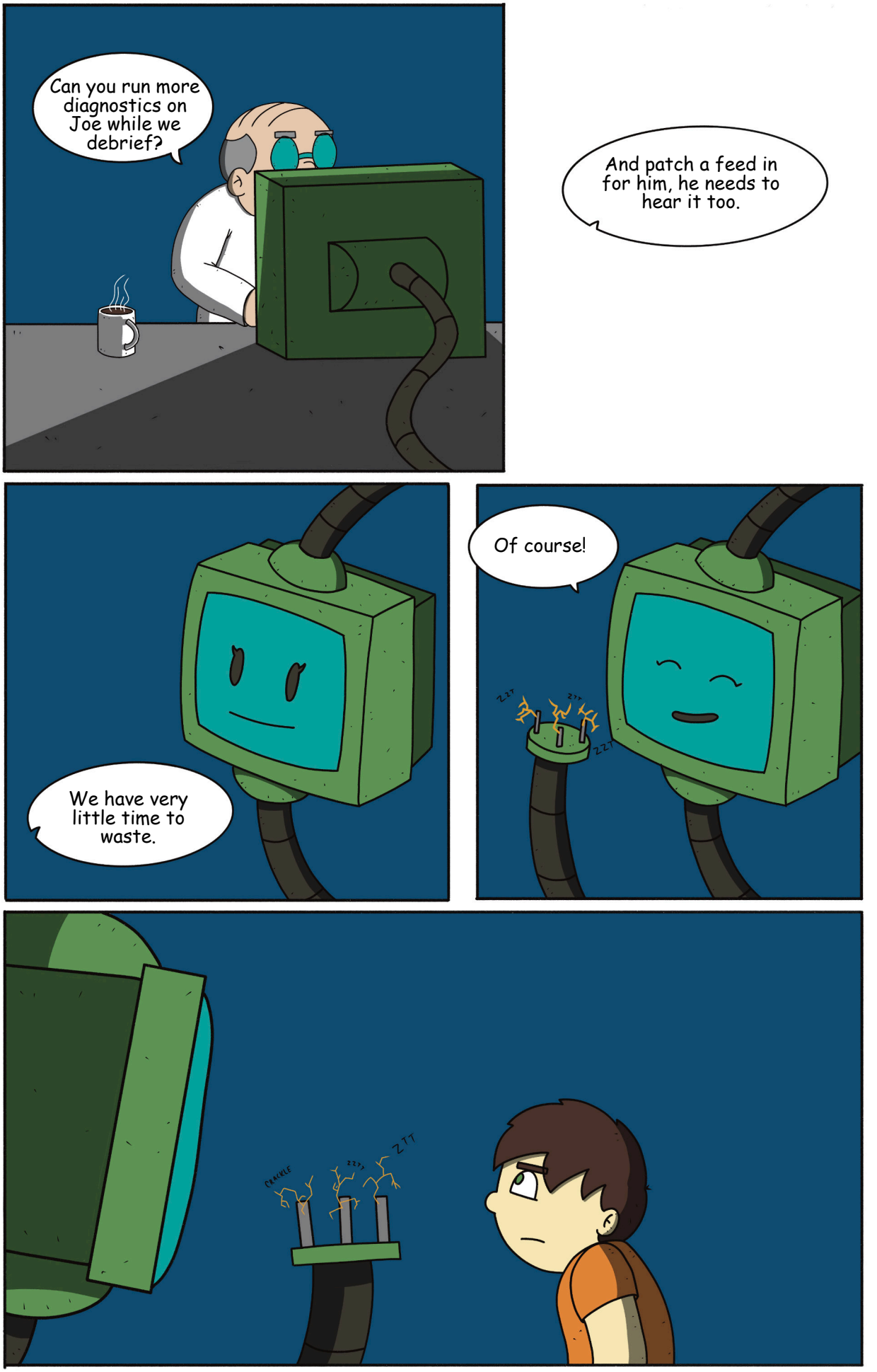
Sim?



Yes, Handsome?

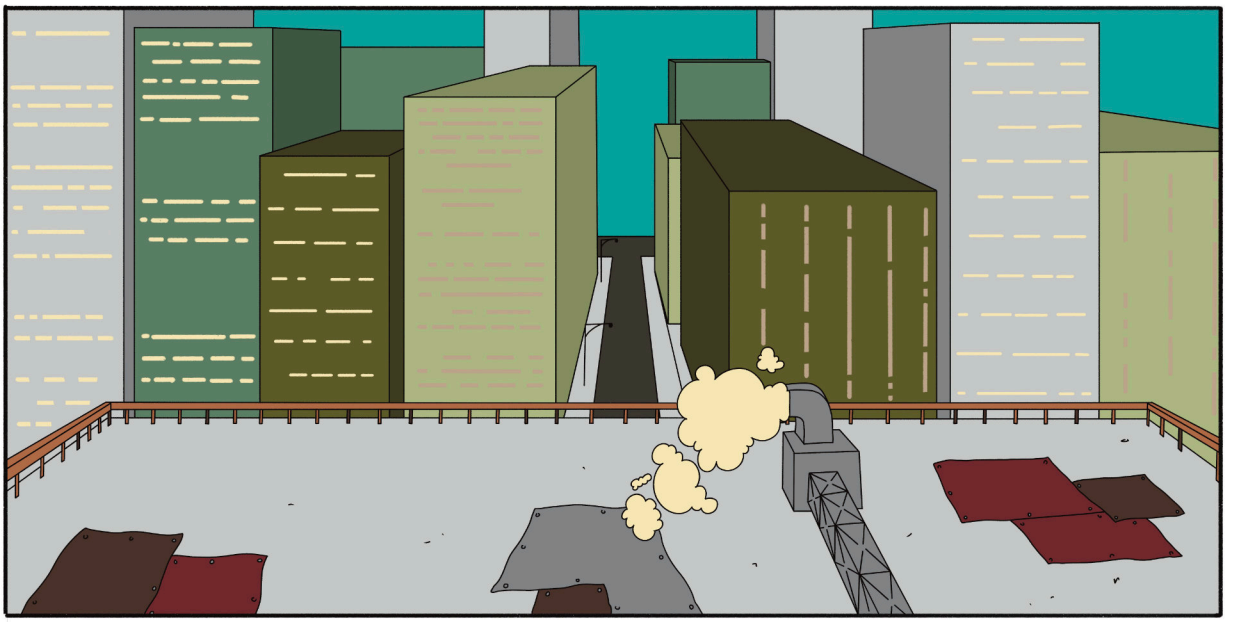

HANDSOM

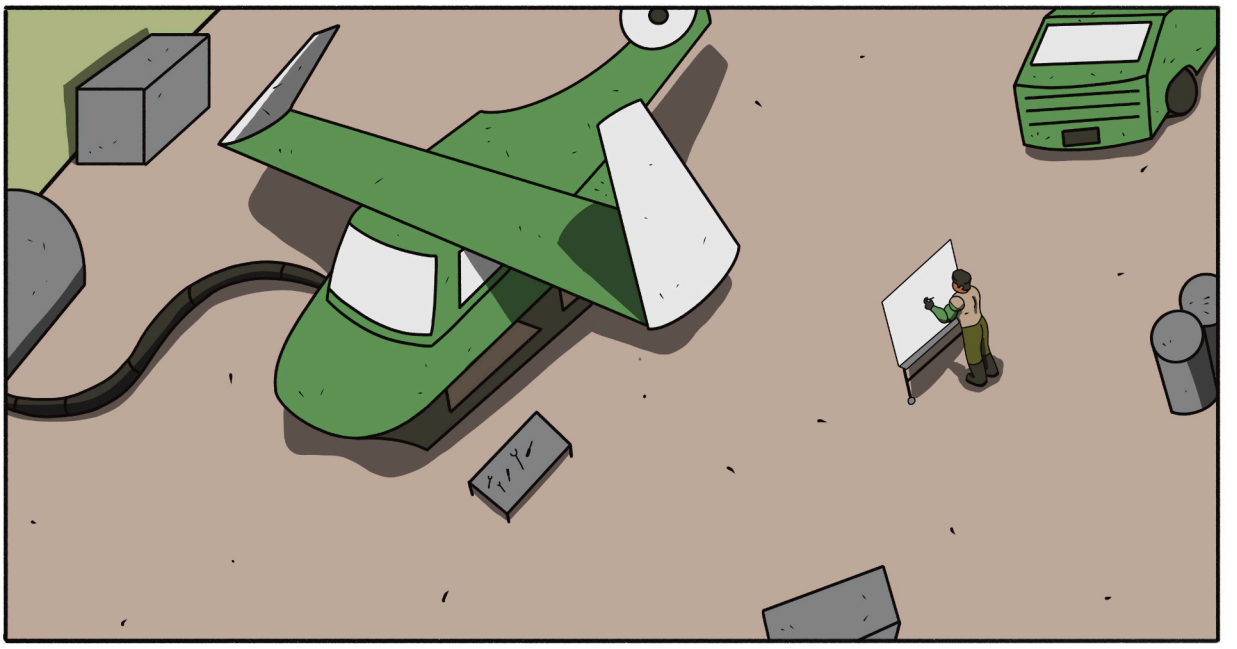

ME???

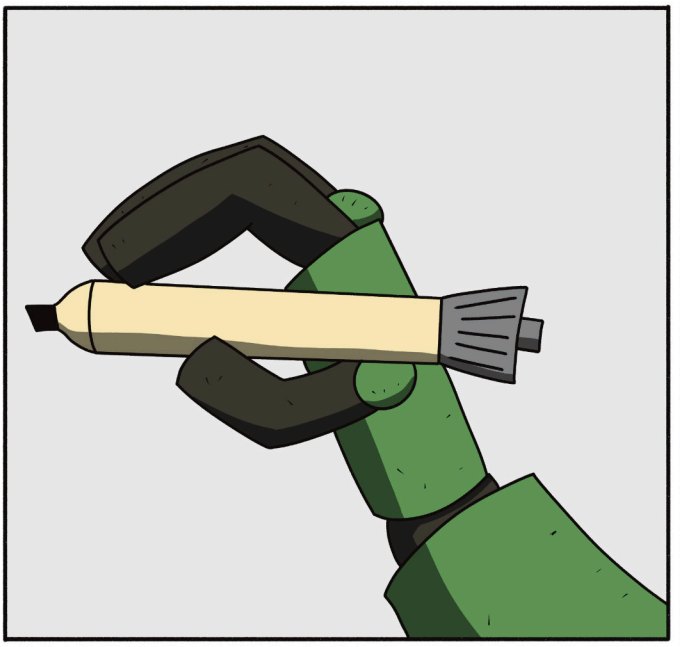

Can you run more diagnostics on Joe while we debrief?
And patch a feed in for him, he needs to hear it too.
We have very little time to waste.
Of course!
ZZT
ZZT
ZZT
CRACKLE
ZZT
ZTT

CHAPTER 4

THE TEAM PLANS OUT THEIR NEXT MISSION TO DO SOME RECON ON WHAT EXACTLY THE GOLIATH IS. BUT JOE WONDERS WHAT HIS FULL POTENTIAL IS AND IF HE'S READY TO SEE MORE OF WHO HE USED TO BE...




٢٠١٢






Ready?
As we'll ever be.
While I was being interrogated by one of Terraces top scientists,
we were able to ascertain more information about the Goliath.

It is a city-leveling weapon built for destruction on a mass scale.

Which pretty much confirms our intel.

But as far as where is unknown.

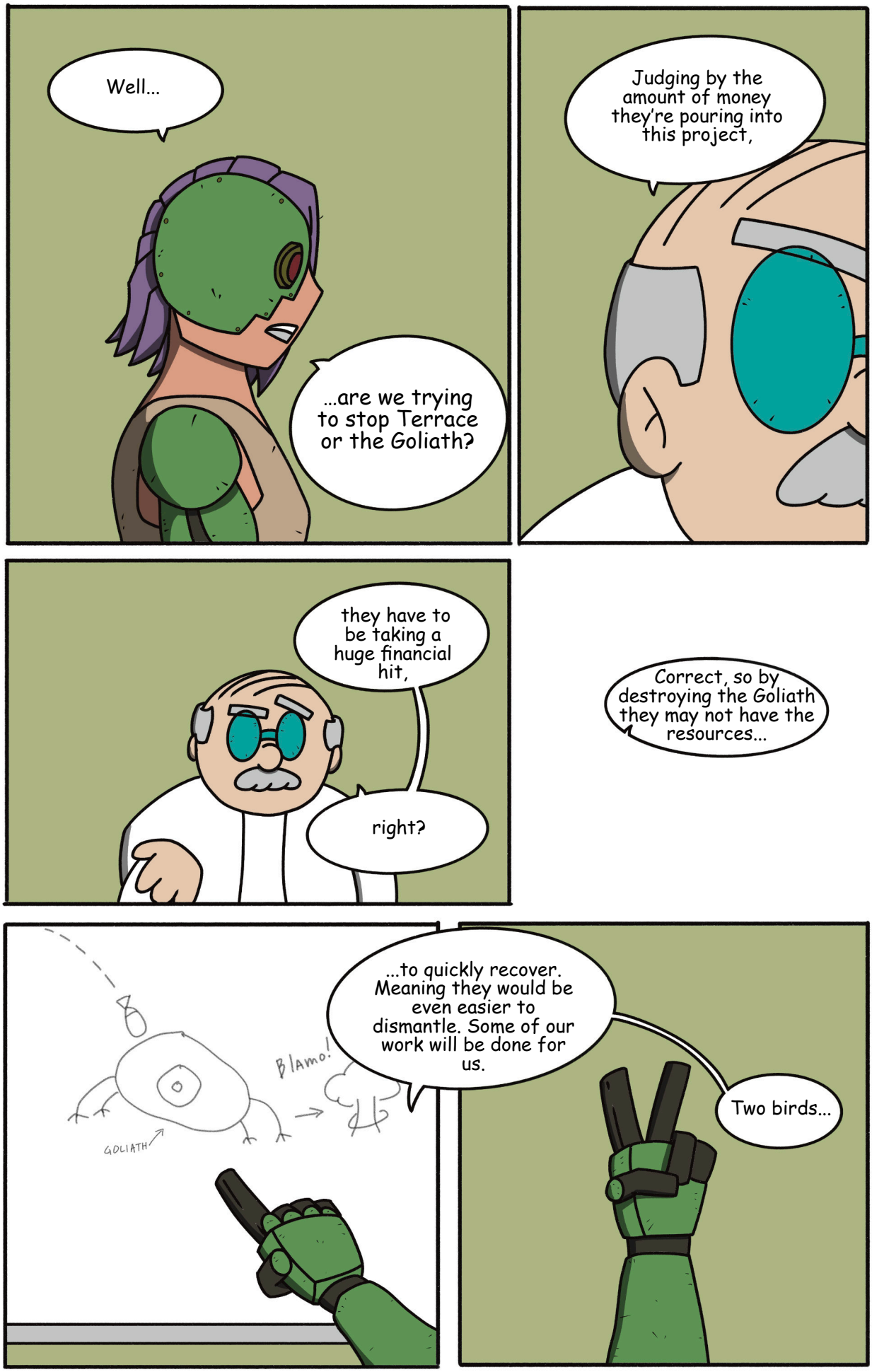


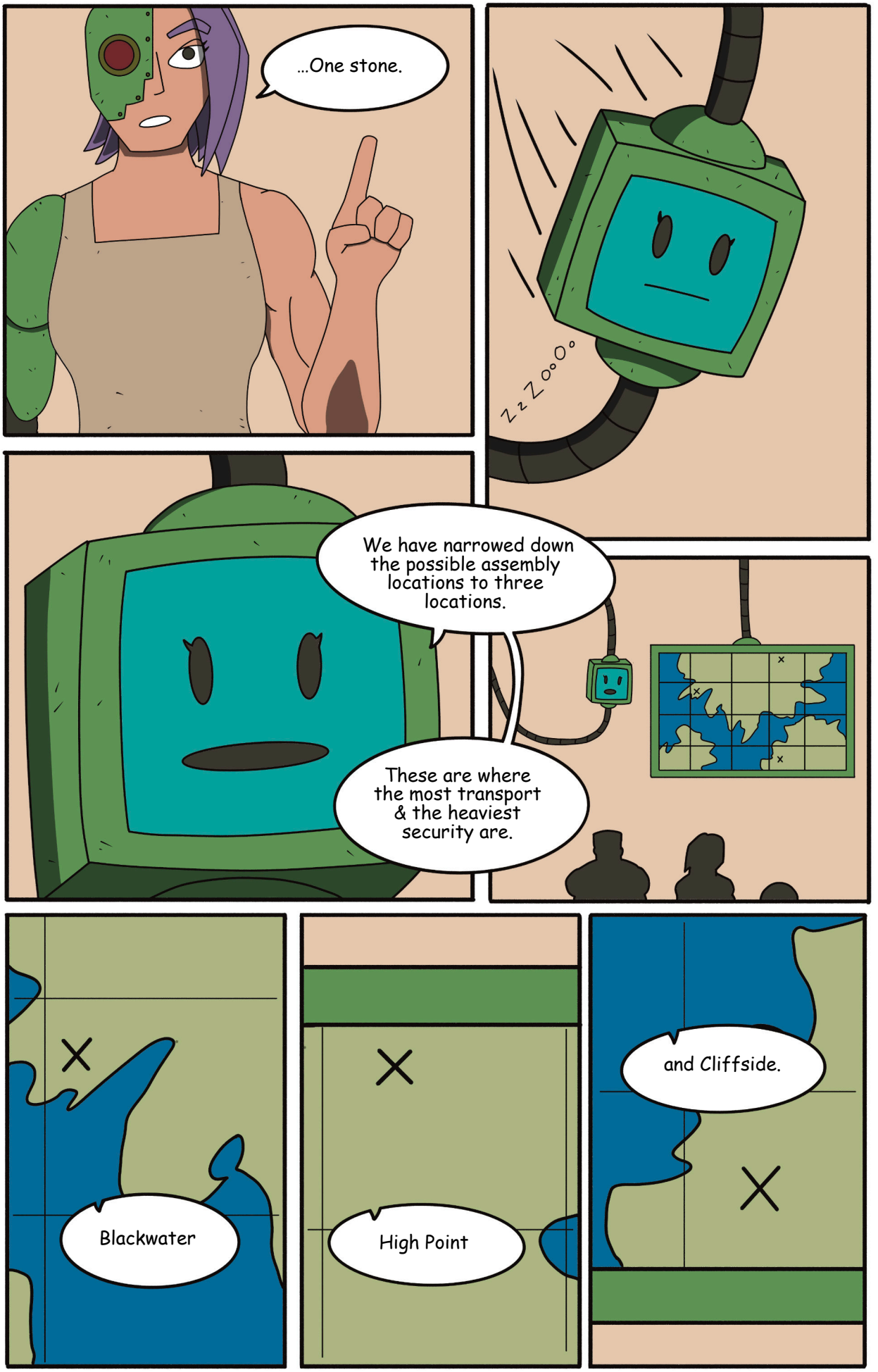


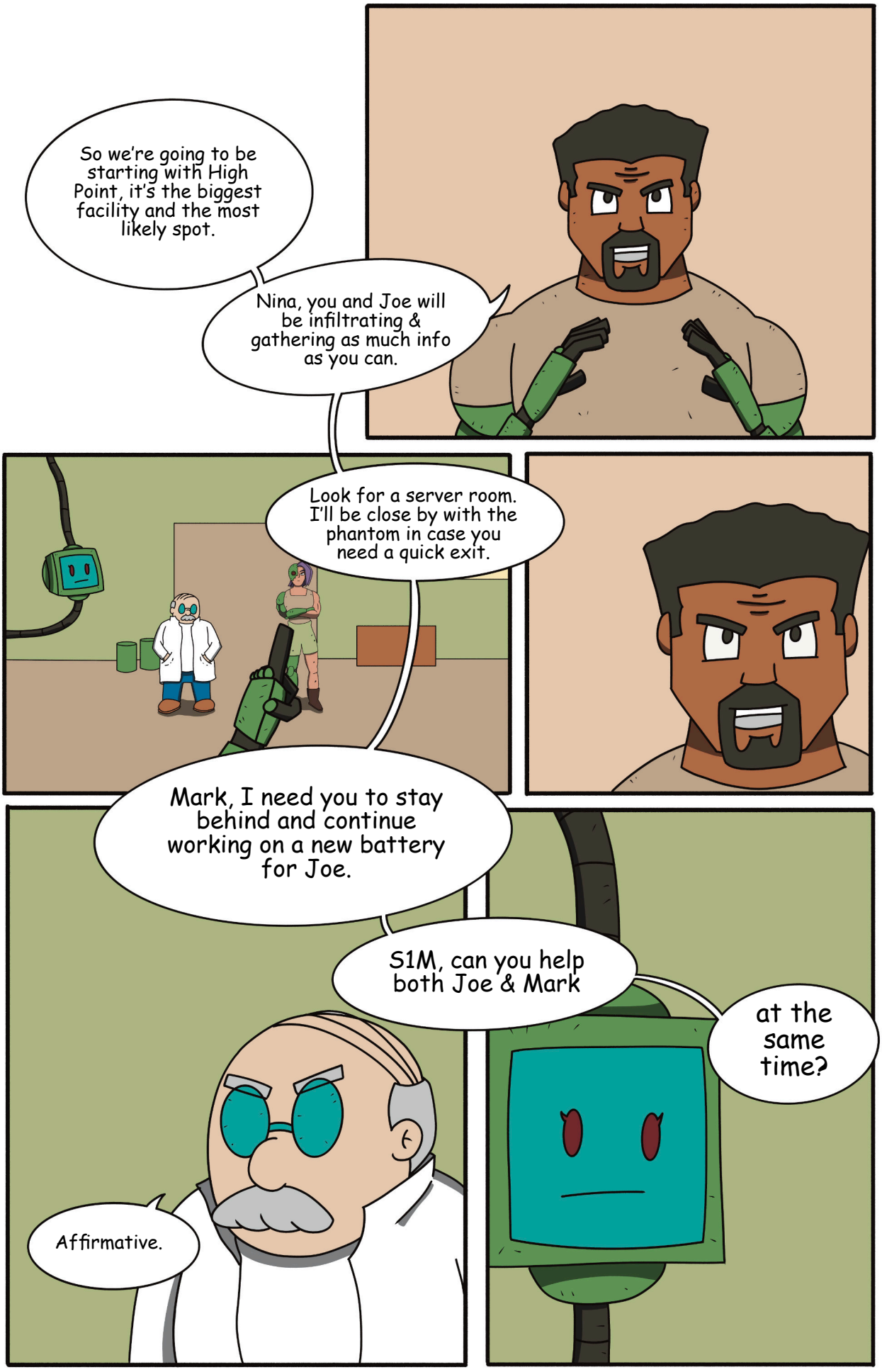


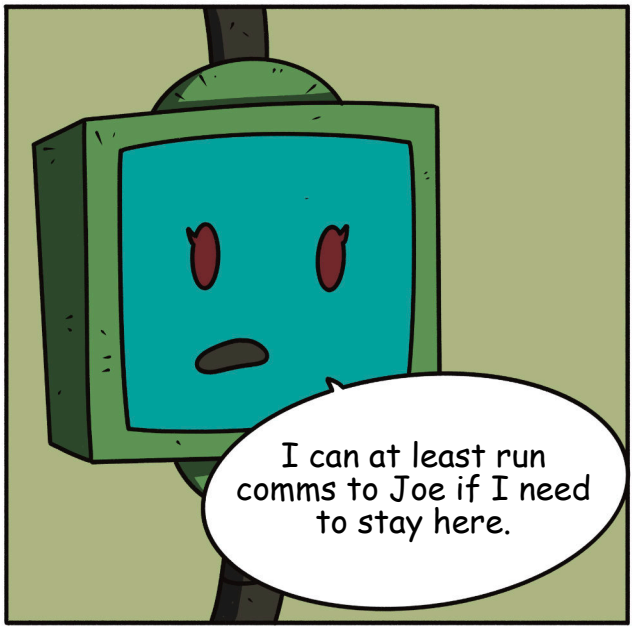
A weapon of that size won't be manufactured in one place...

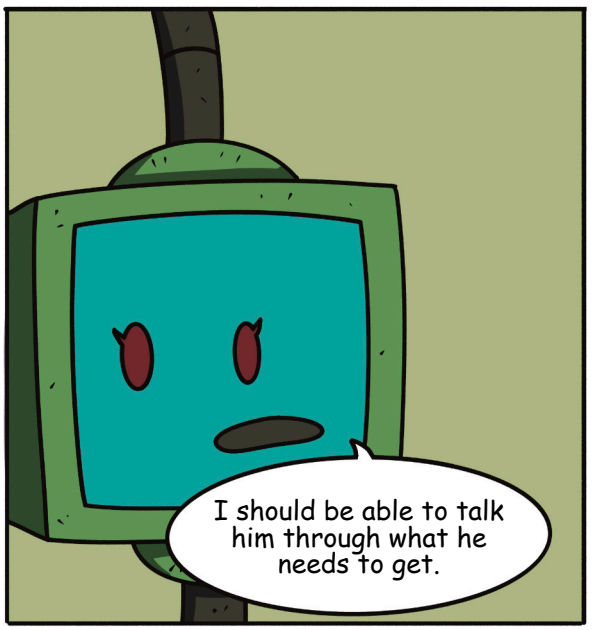
but it's possible to be assembled in one place.


Well...
...are we trying to stop Terrace or the Goliath?
Judging by the amount of money they're pouring into this project,
they have to be taking a huge financial hit,
right?
Correct, so by destroying the Goliath they may not have the resources...
BIAMO!
GOLIATH
...to quickly recover. Meaning they would be even easier to dismantle. Some of our work will be done for us.
Two birds...

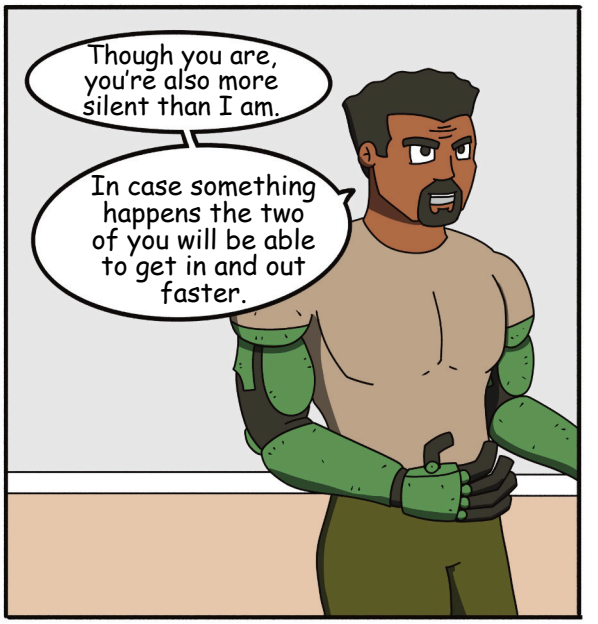

...One stone.
ZzZooOo
We have narrowed down the possible assembly locations to three locations.
These are where the most transport & the heaviest security are.
Blackwater
High Point
and Cliffside.


So we're going to be starting with High Point, it's the biggest facility and the most likely spot.
Nina, you and Joe will be infiltrating & gathering as much info as you can.
Look for a server room. I'll be close by with the phantom in case you need a quick exit.
Mark, I need you to stay behind and continue working on a new battery for Joe.
S1M, can you help both Joe & Mark
at the same time?
Affirmative.

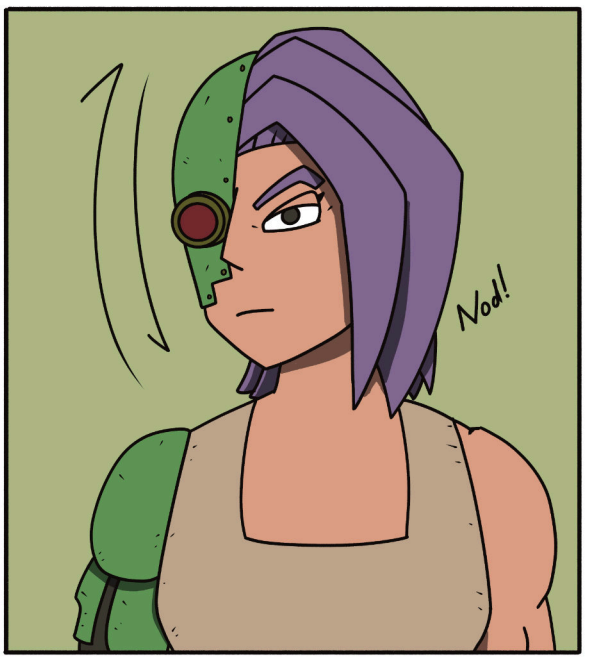

I can at least run comms to Joe if I need to stay here.

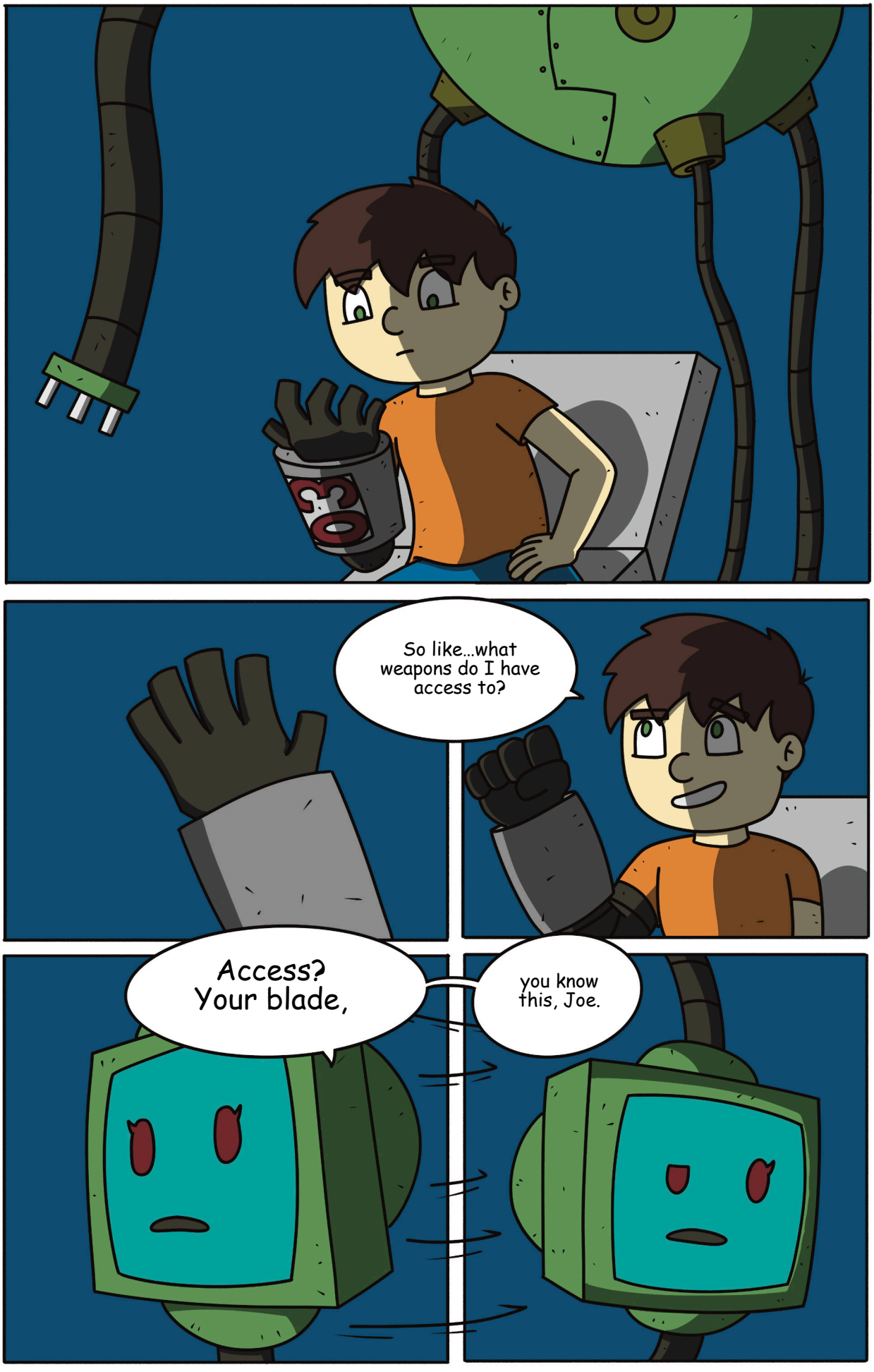

I should be able to talk him through what he needs to get.


Are you sure you don't want me to fly? I'm the better pilot.

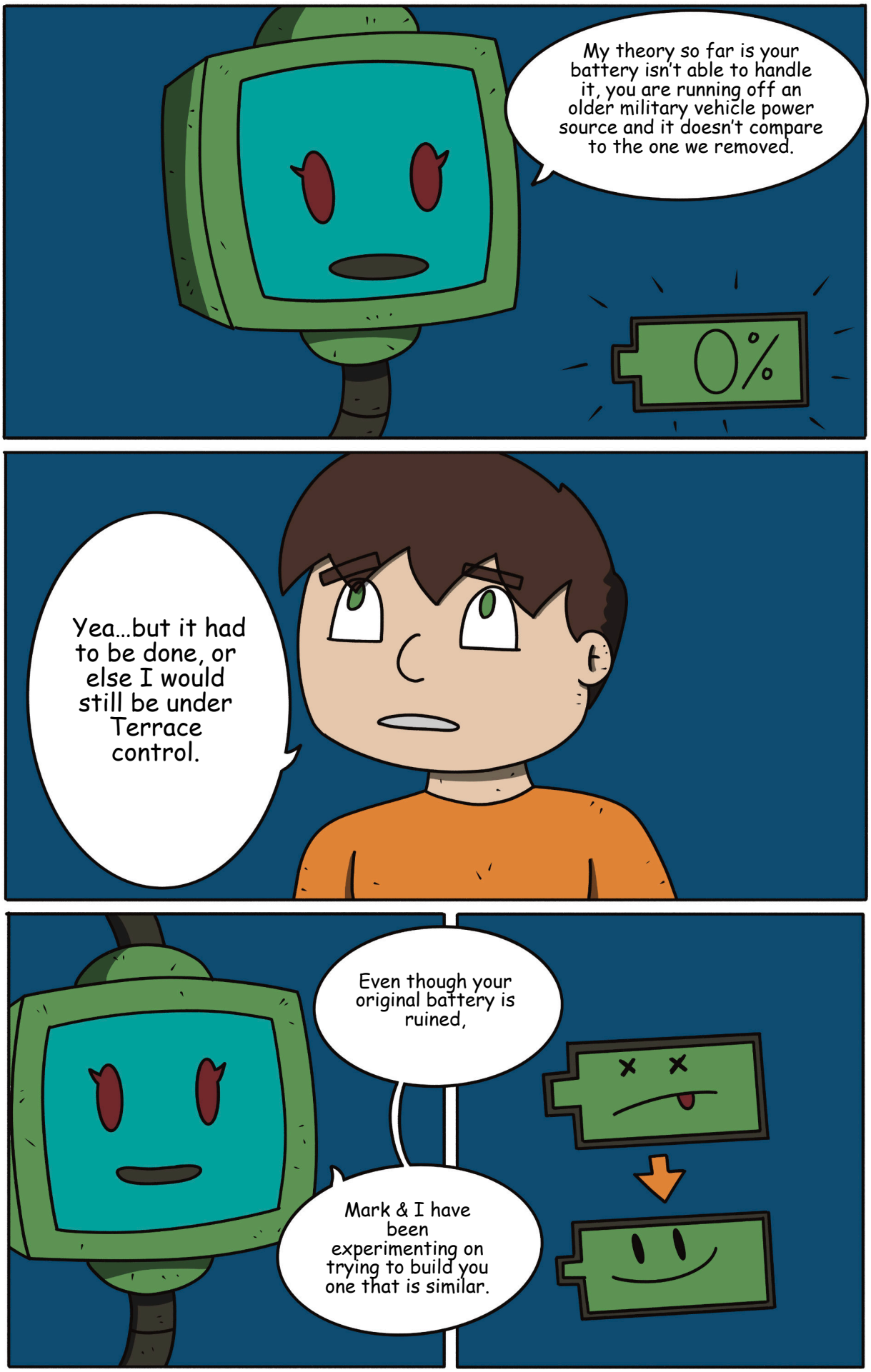

Though you are, you're also more silent than I am.
In case something happens the two of you will be able to get in and out faster.

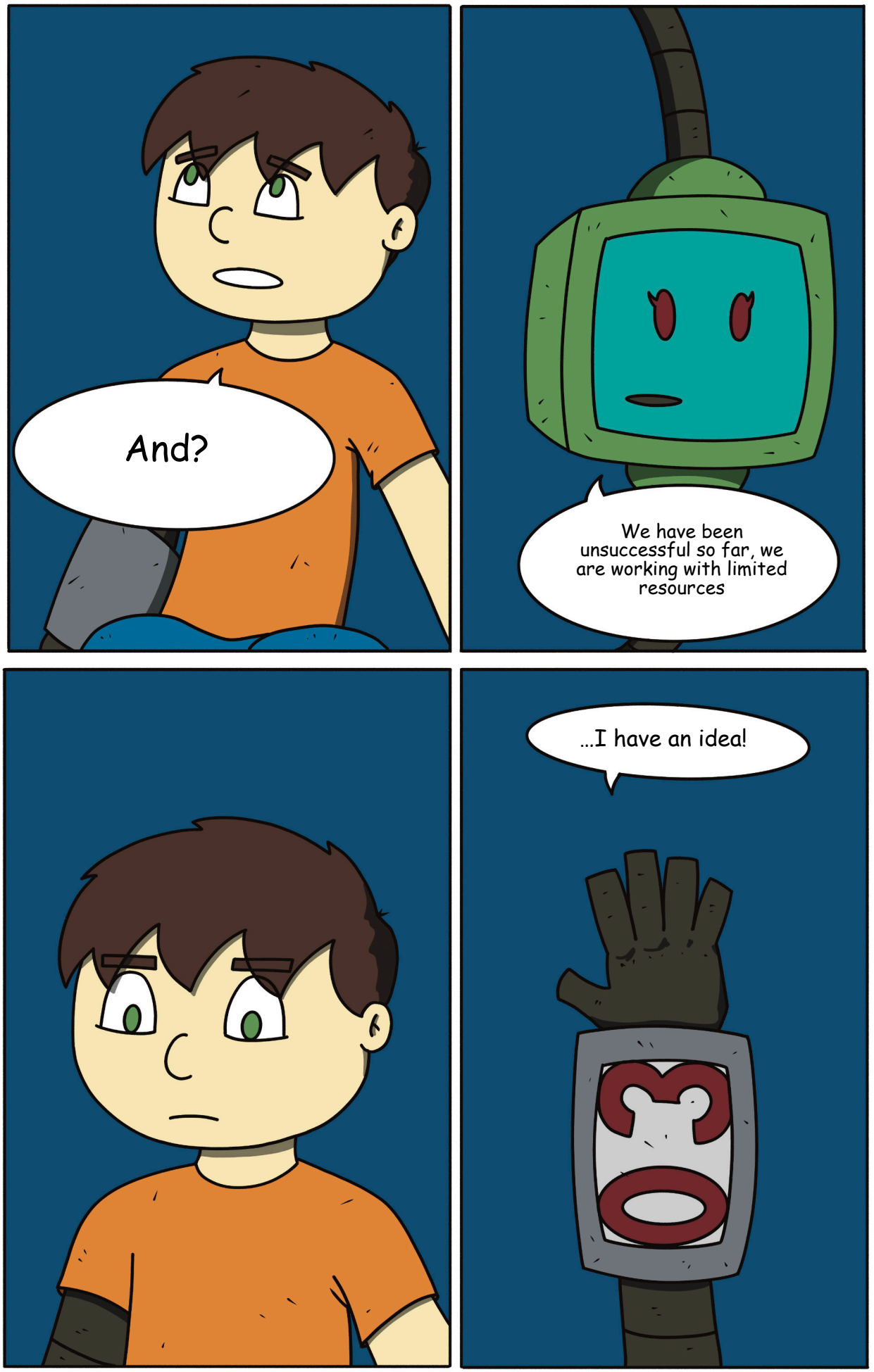

Just really try to watch his back...even though he's advanced he's still a kid.
And a massive target.


Nod!


So like...what weapons do I have access to?
Access? Your blade,
you know this, Joe.

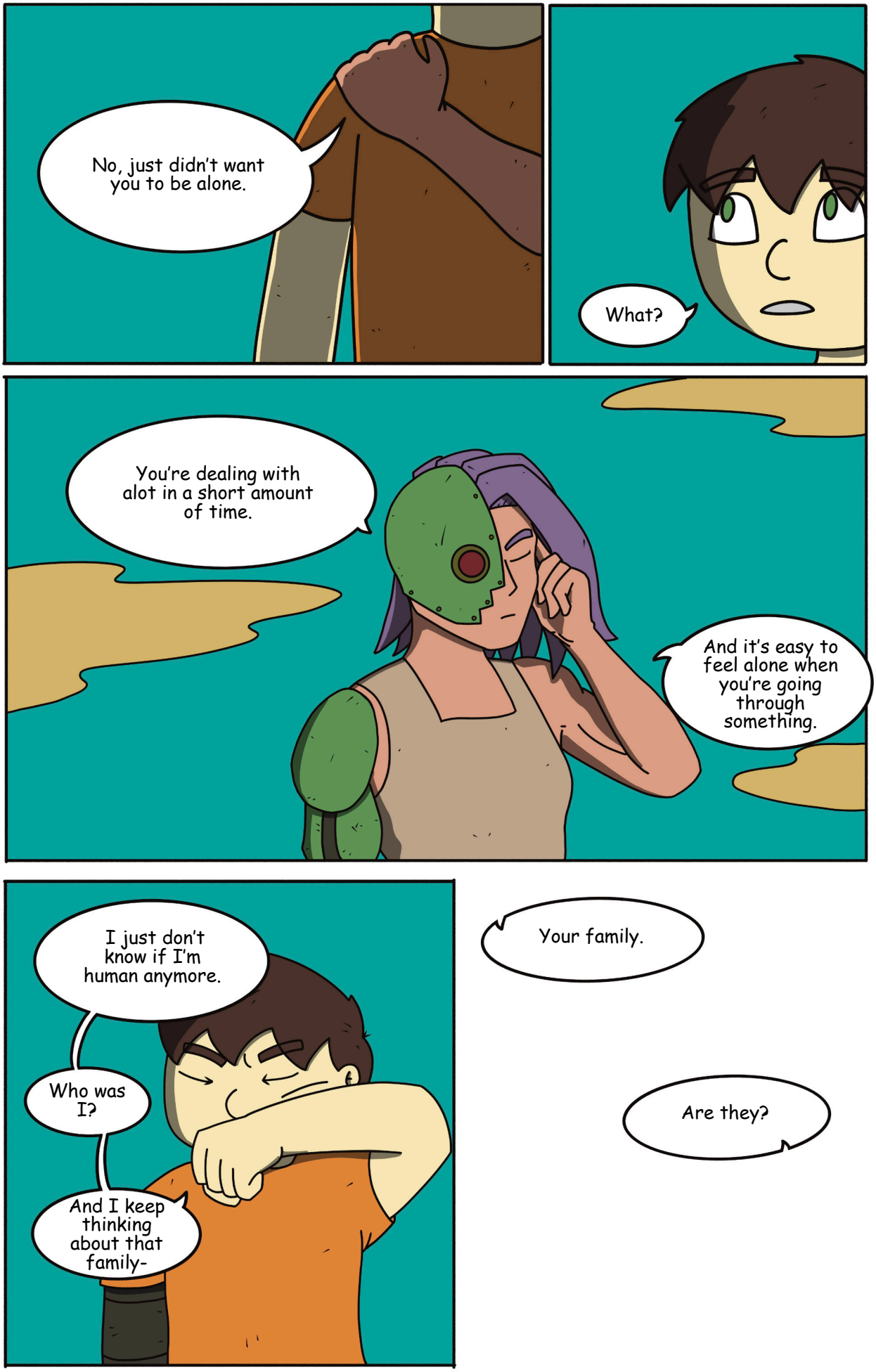

No, I meant what's all in here?
Judging by what we know about the previous Necro Experiments you should have at least...
...a grappling hook and a blaster, but I see a lot of options that are available.
A GUN?!
Whoa, that would be *sick* to have!


My theory so far is your battery isn't able to handle it, you are running off an older military vehicle power source and it doesn't compare to the one we removed.
0%
Yea...but it had to be done, or else I would still be under Terrace control.
Even though your original battery is ruined,
Mark & I have been experimenting on trying to build you one that is similar.


And?
We have been unsuccessful so far, we are working with limited resources
...I have an idea!




What did SIM find?
Nothing new.
I guess we'll have to wait and see.
Nina, did you need something?

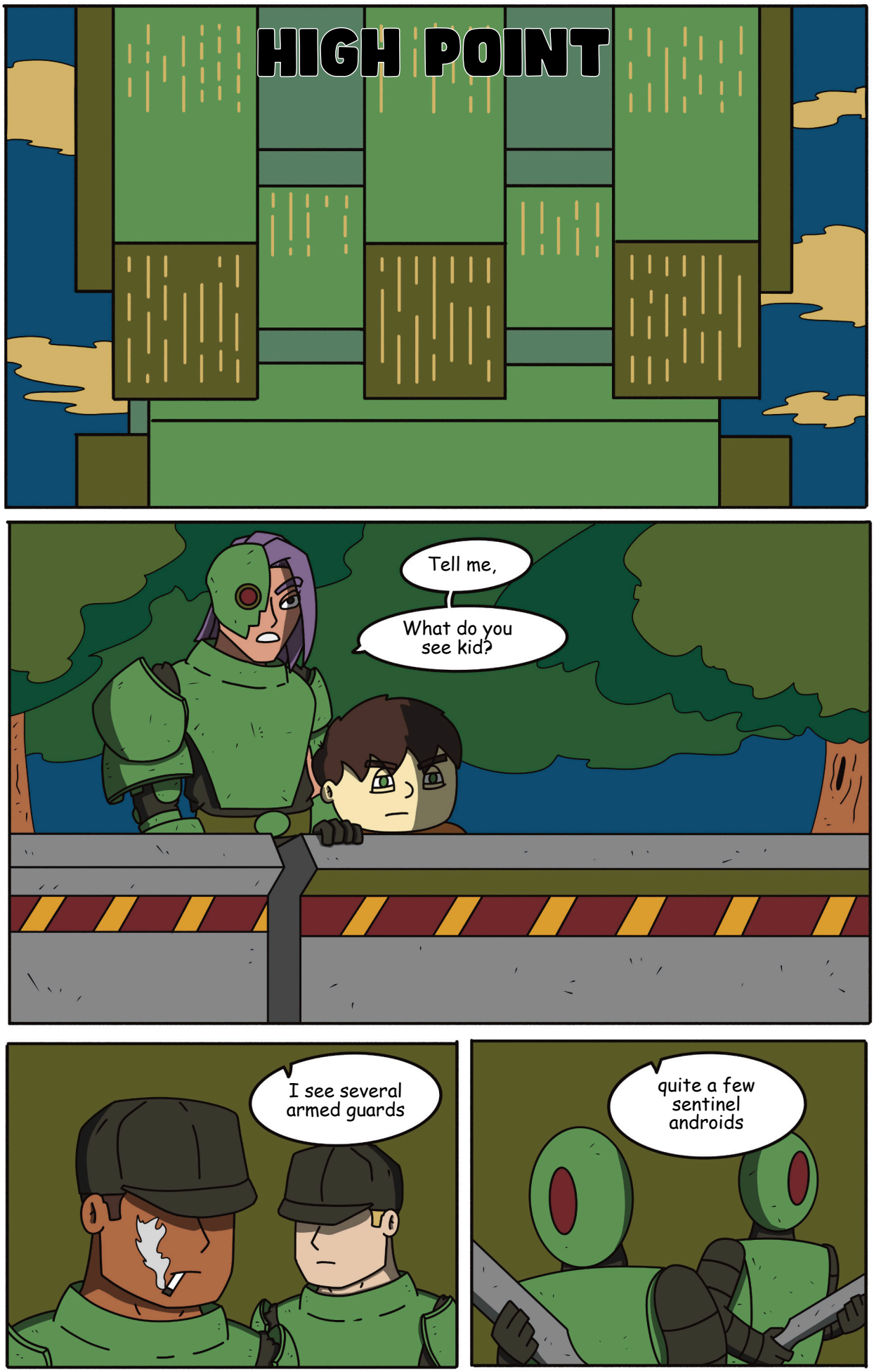

No, just didn't want you to be alone.
What?
You're dealing with alot in a short amount of time.
And it's easy to feel alone when you're going through something.
I just don't know if I'm human anymore.
Who was I?
And I keep thinking about that family-
Your family.
Are they?


Yes they are. That doesn't change just because you don't remember them.
Do you...
...want to remember them?
I don't know...
...if I saw them, would I even recognize them?
Would they recognize me?
For sure they would.
Would I even want to recognize them?
I think the kid you are inside would want to.
Do you think Dom would be mad...
...if I looked for them?
I think Dom wants you to do whatever will bring *you* peace.

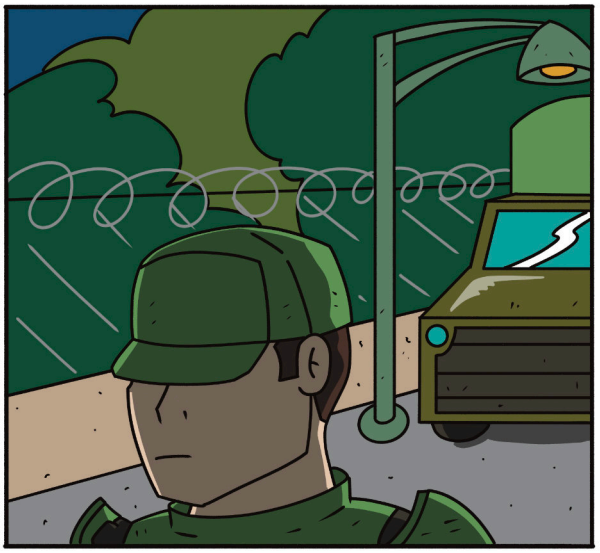

After all...
...that's what we're all trying to do.

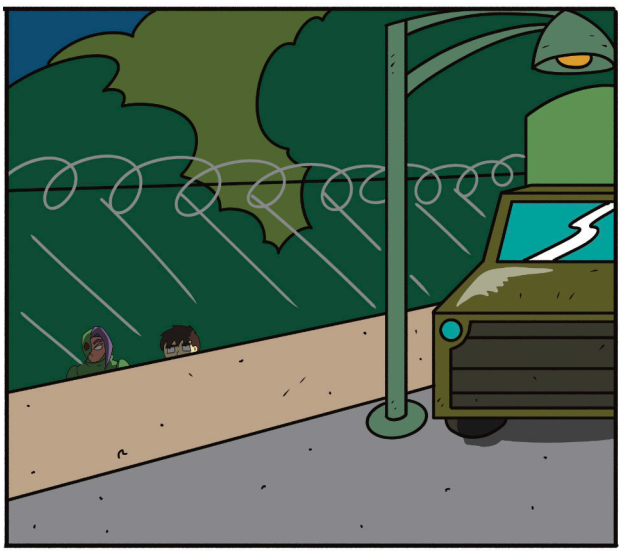
CHAPTER 5

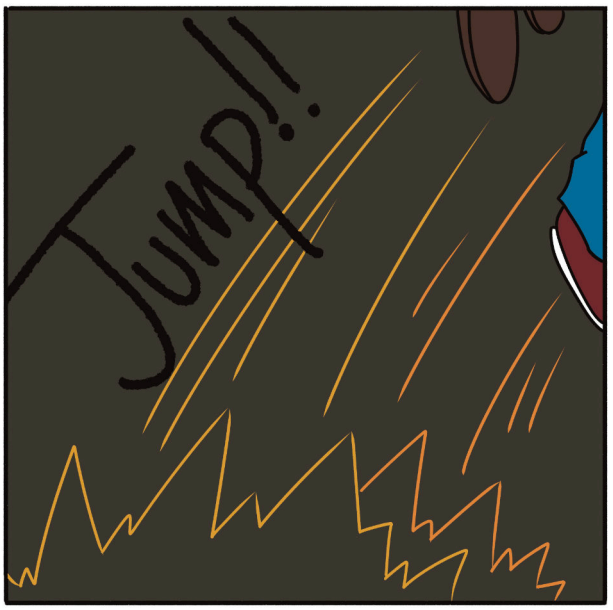
JOE & NINA INFILTRATE HIGH POINT - A HEAVILY GUARDED FACILITY WHERE TERRACE IS POSSIBLY BUILDING THEIR SUPER WEAPON.
INFORMATION IS KEY, BUT WHAT PRICE WILL THEY HAVE TO PAY FOR IT?

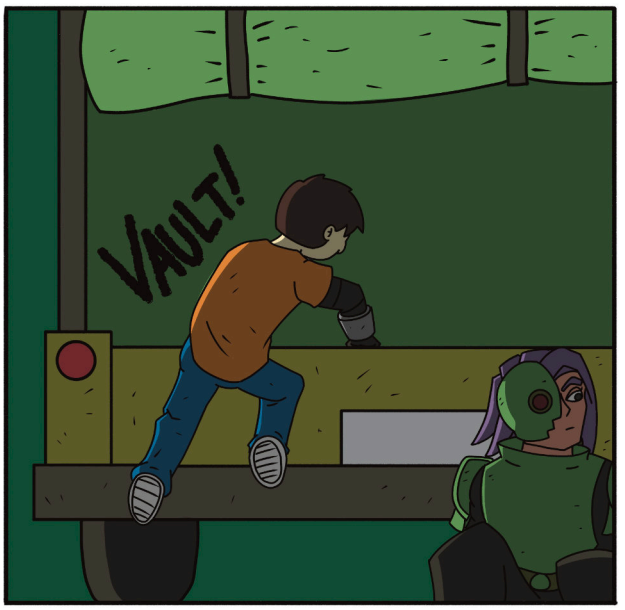

HIGH POINT
Tell me,
What do you see kid?
I see several armed guards
quite a few sentinel androids


So nothing beyond what's expected?
Tighten!
It doesn't look like it, no.
Knot!!
DASH!!!





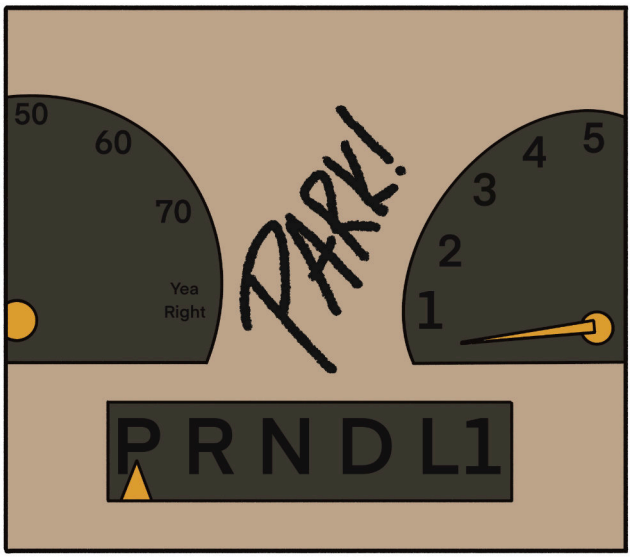

JUMP!!

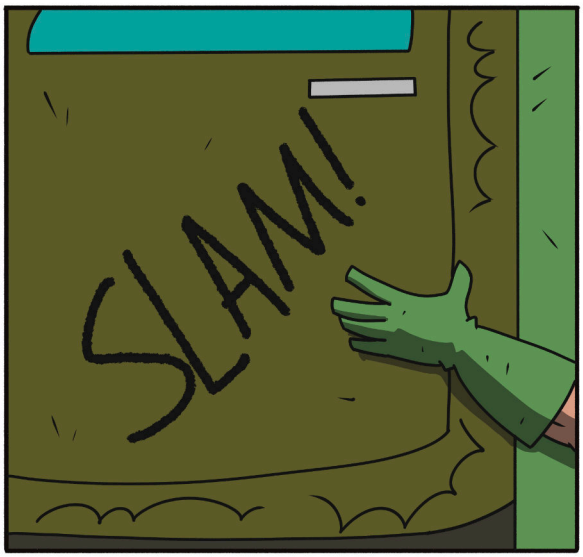

VAULT!


Hot wire!!



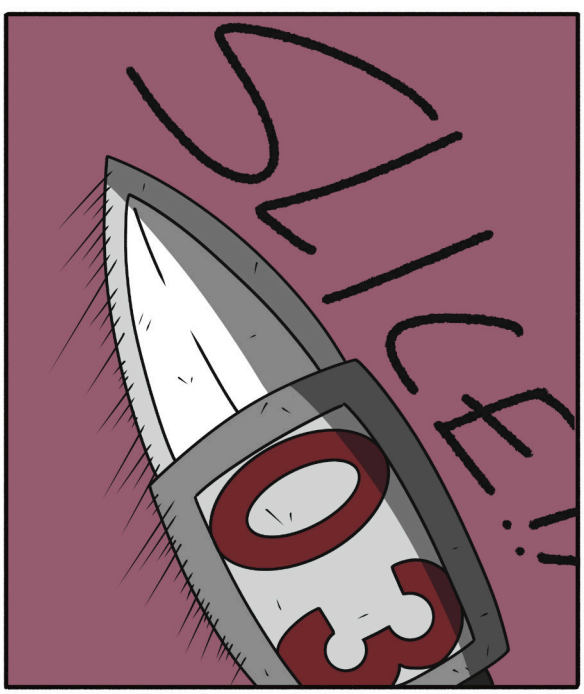

State your business.
Picking up a shipment to bring to Blackwater.
Buzz
Buzz
She's clear.


50
60
70
Yea
Right
PARK!
5
4
3
2
1
P R N D L1


SLAM!




There!

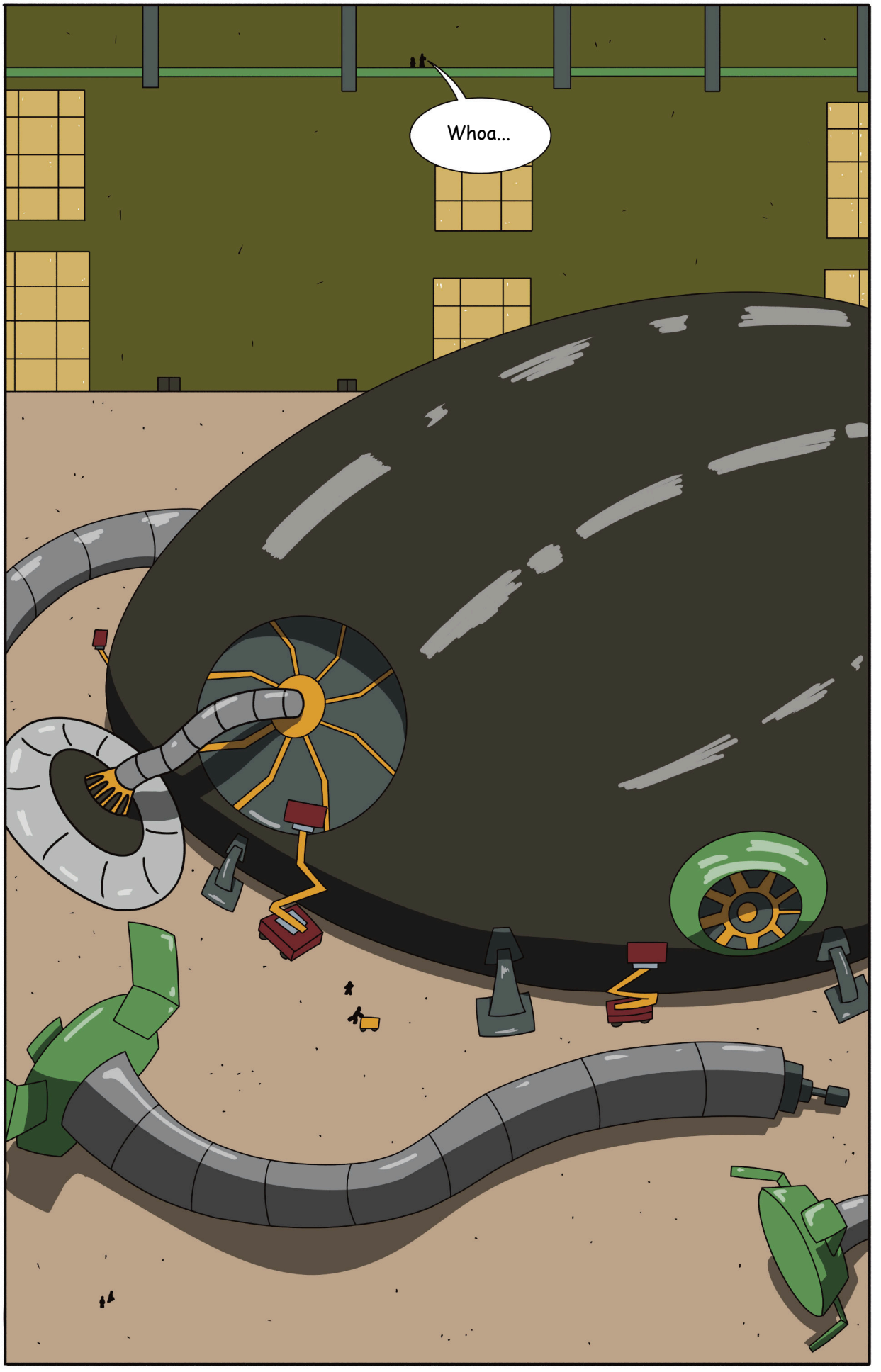

SLICE!!!


Subtle.
This looks right!
Be quiet this time!
ok...


SILENT VENT PULL!!
Alright Sim, we're here.
What do we look for?
Any one of them will do!
OPEN
Let's try to make this quick, we're lucky no one is in here right now. Take all that you can, we'll go through it later. We do not need to stay any longer than we have to.
Whaddaya got, Sim?
I believe I've found it.


Guys...
...it's being built here, at High Point.
Should we go take a look, at least?
No, we need to get out of here. We're pushing our luck as it is!
C'mooooooon...
...we can get an idea of just how big this thing is!
He has a point...
Fine, but just a quick peak.

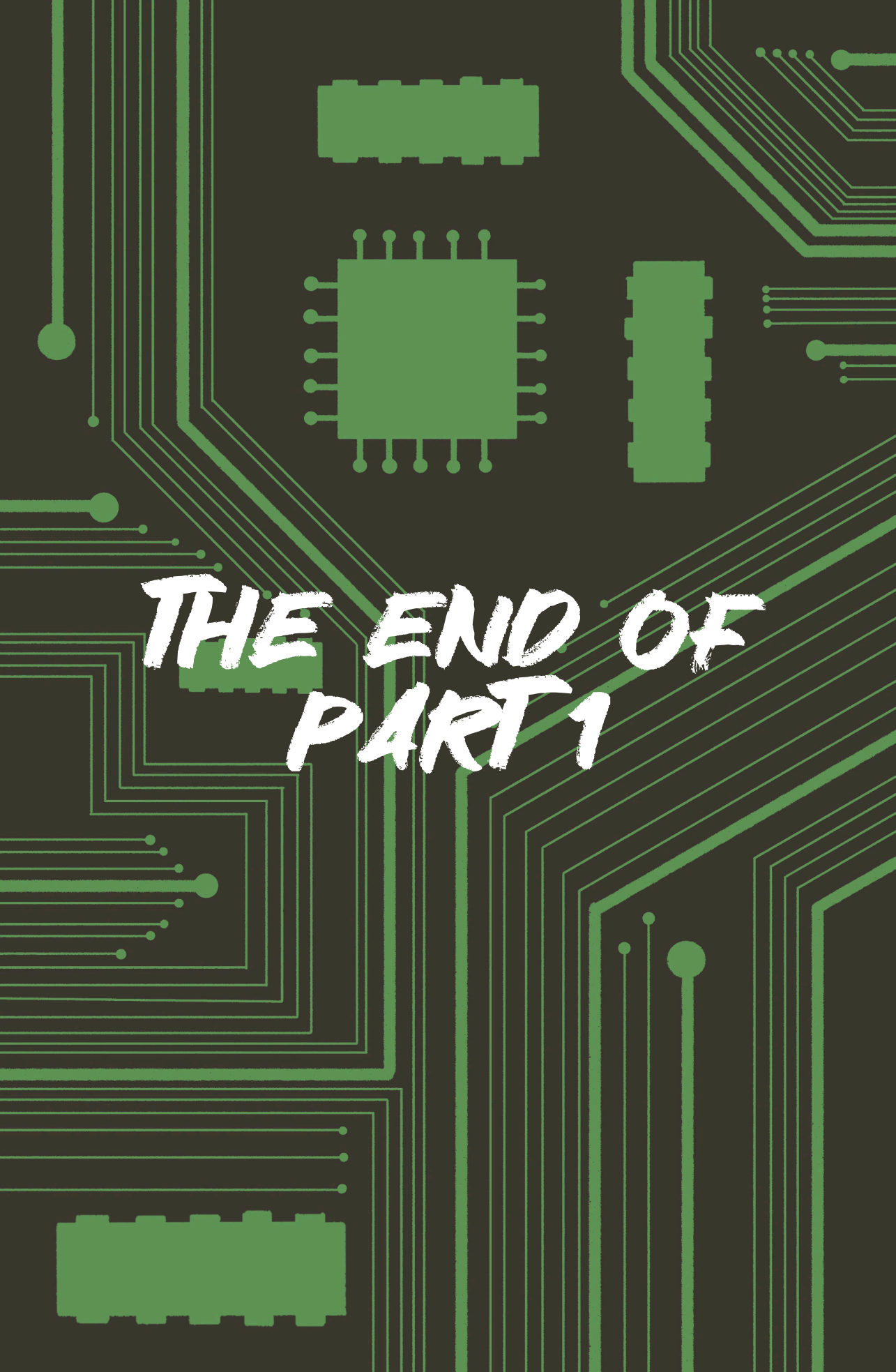

I found it, you were right.
oh?
Half right, J.04's battery schematics were in there!
FANTASTIC!
03


Whoa...


...they weren't joking.
I think I could take it.
Maybe at full power...
...but that would take a lot of cutting with your little butter knife


DROP!!
LAND!!
! CHAAAAARGE !
03
BLAM!!


Welcome home...
...brother.
INTRUDER ALERT!!!


THE END OF
PART 1

AM I HUMAN?

PART 1

A GROUP OF MERCENARIES PROCURE AN EXPERIMENTAL WEAPON, A YOUNG BOY THAT THEY NICKNAMED "JOE", TO TAKE DOWN A PRIVATIZED MILITARY COMPANY WHO ARE TURNING DEAD CHILDREN INTO WEAPONS. CAN THEY STOP THEM BEFORE THEY CREATE SOMETHING FAR MORE SINISTER?