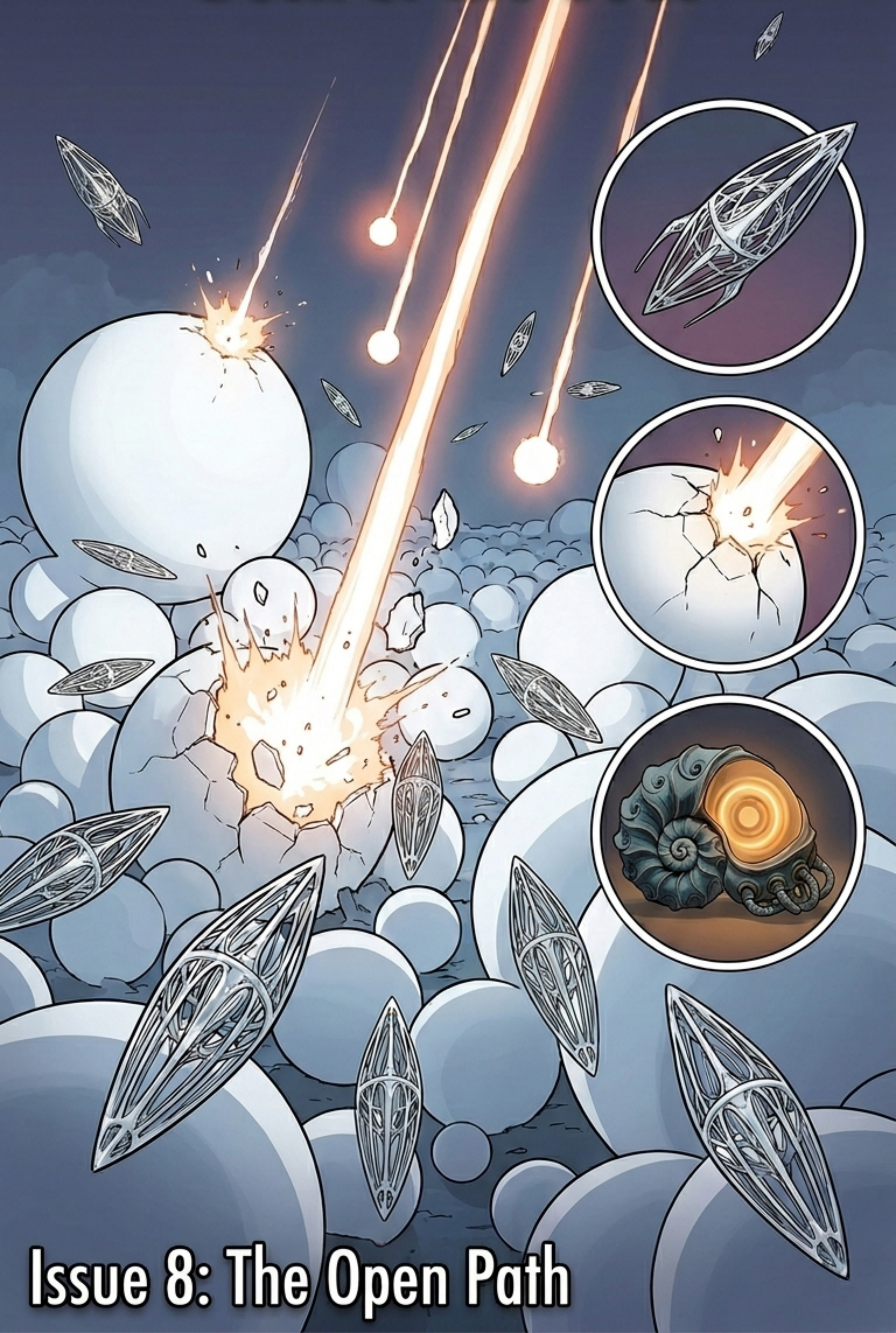


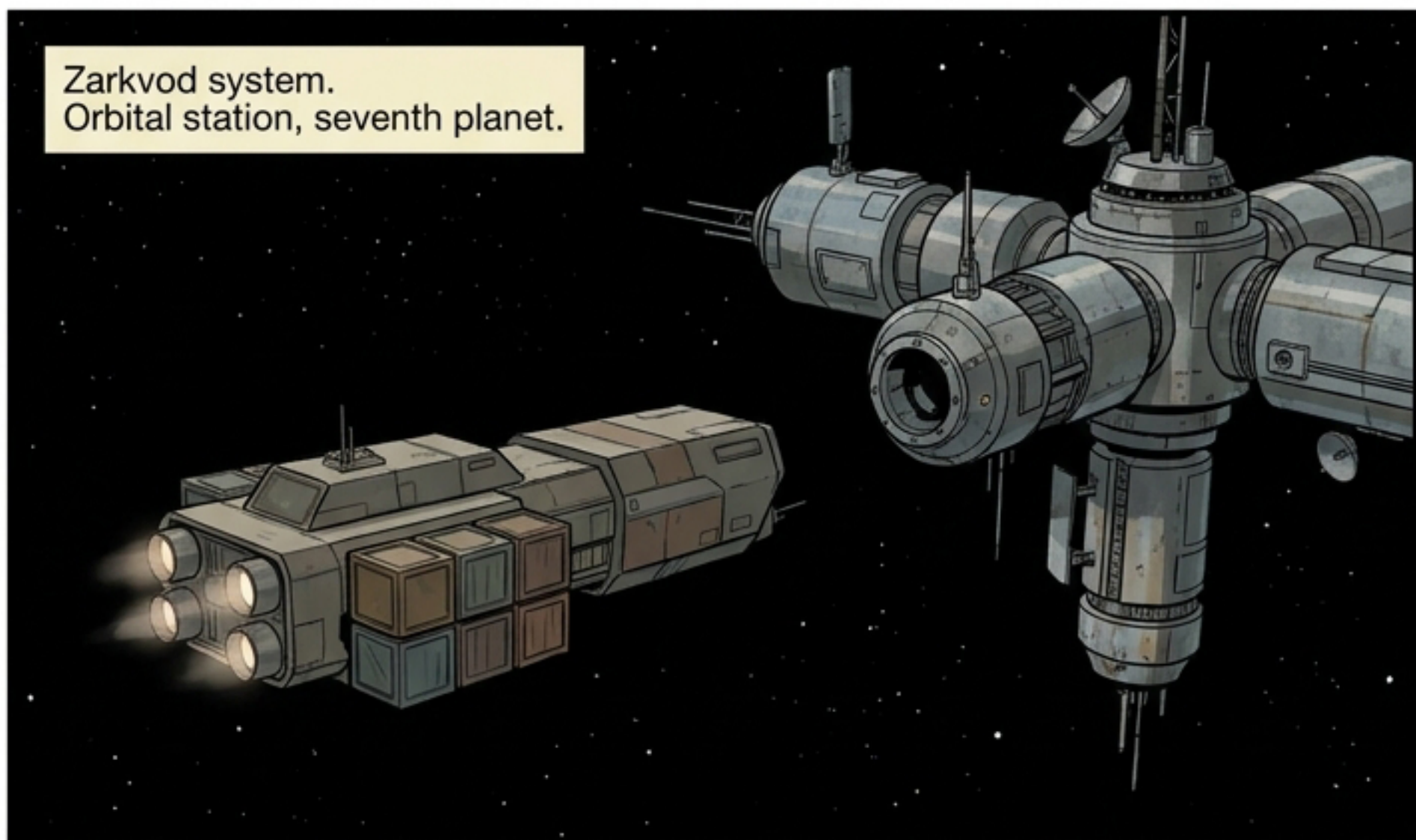
SOVA'S LEGEND

Dusk of the Gods

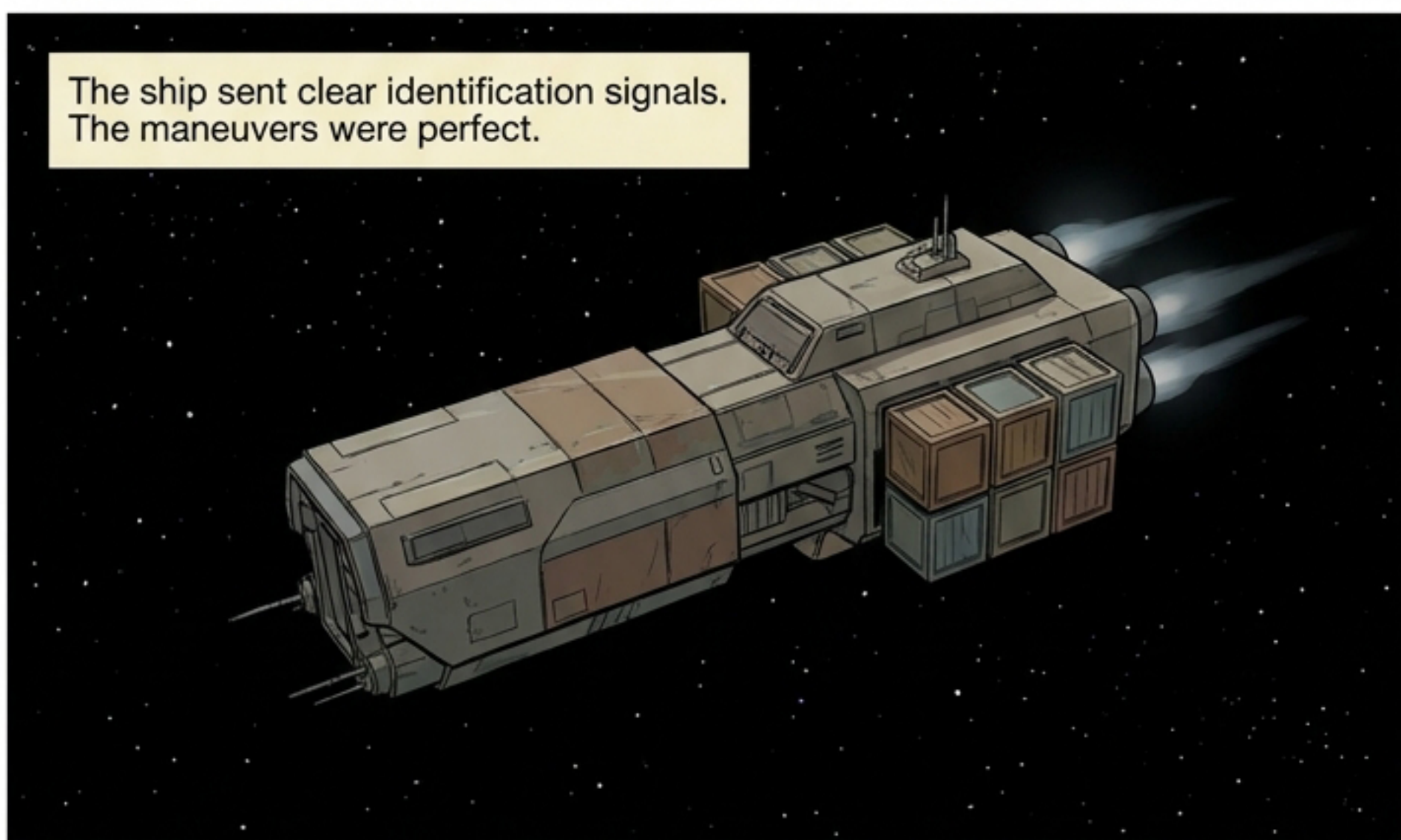


Issue 8: The Open Path

Zarkvod system.
Orbital station, seventh planet.



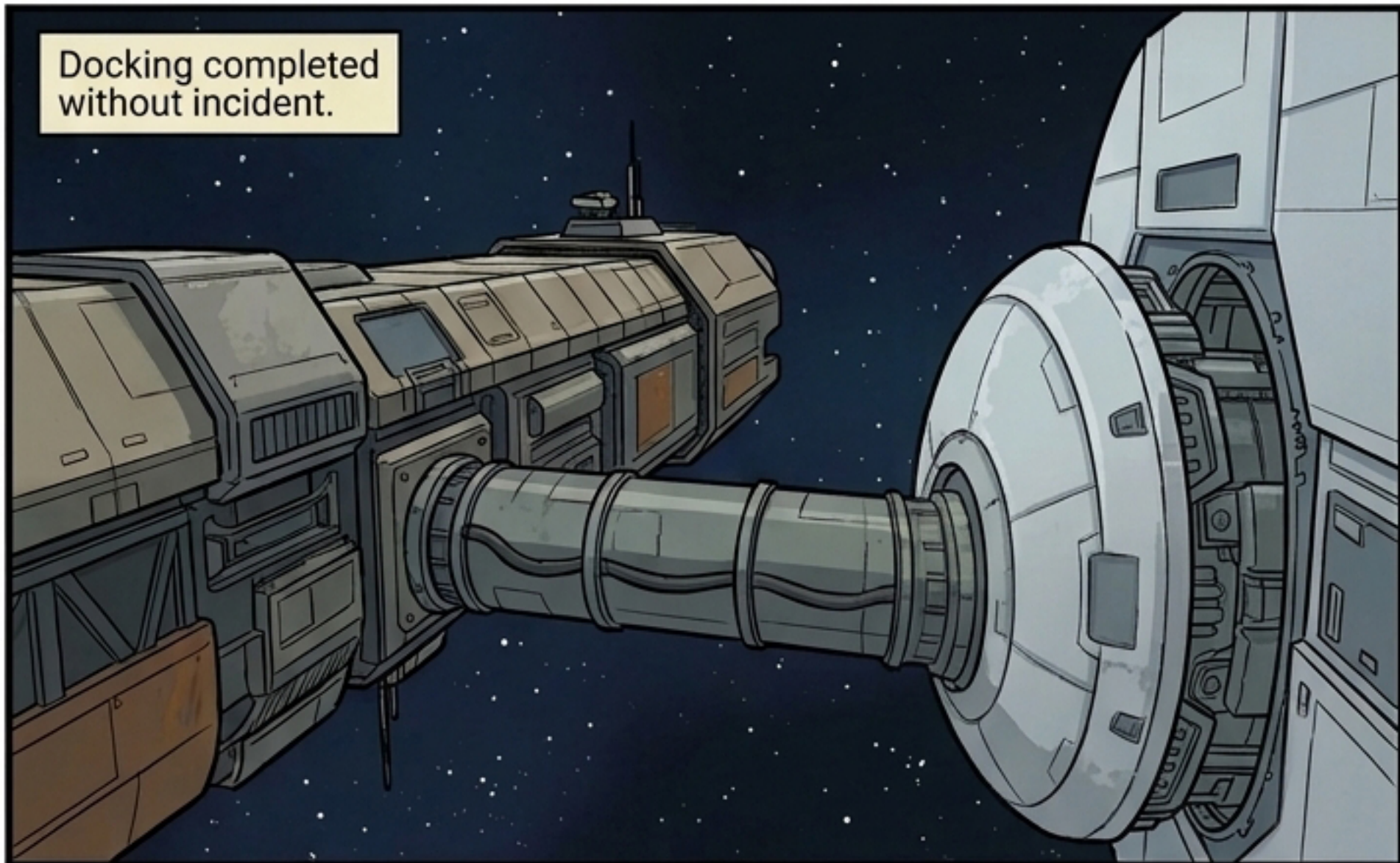
The ship sent clear identification signals.
The maneuvers were perfect.



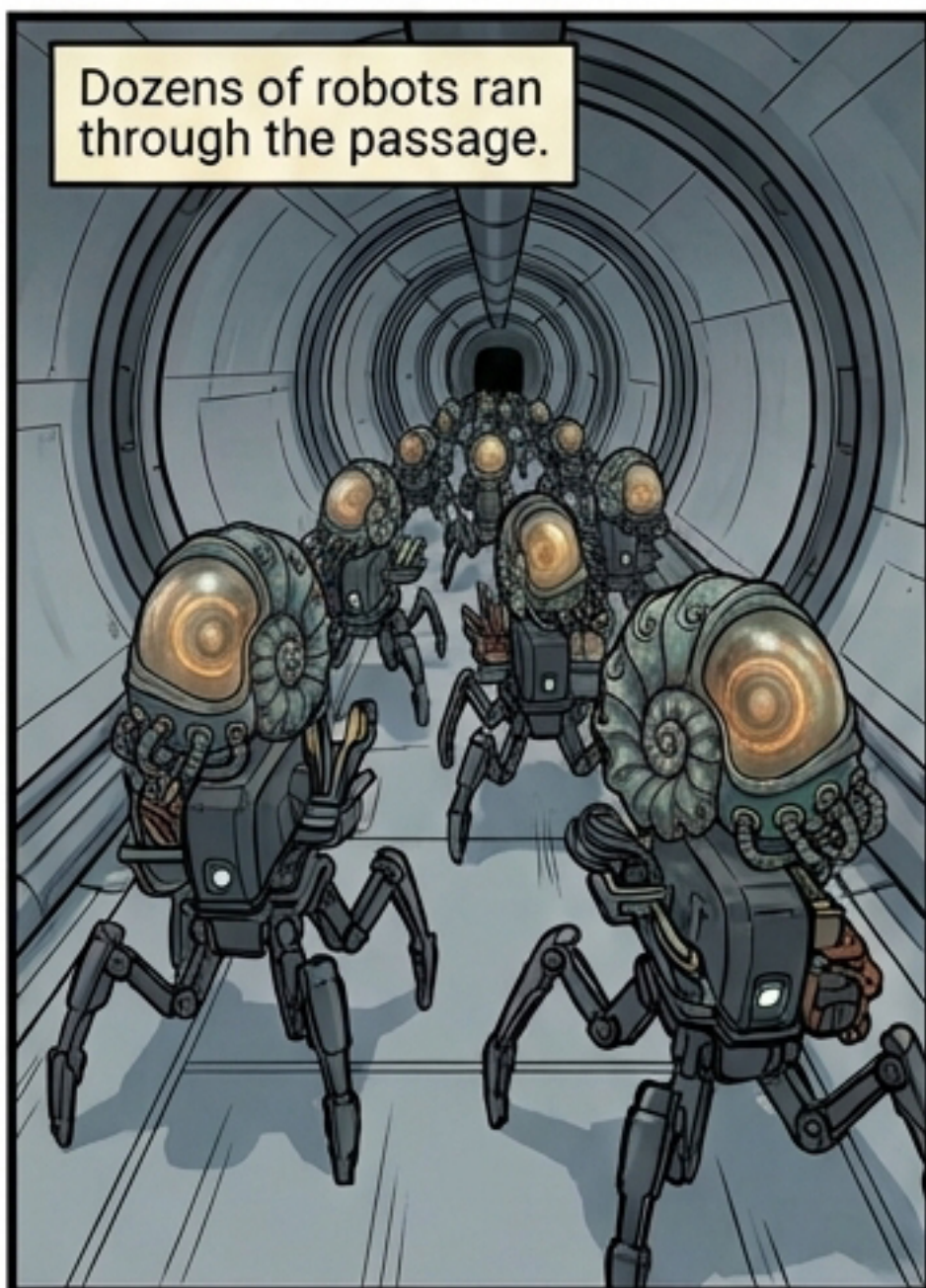
But inside, no one was piloting
the ship. Only shells.



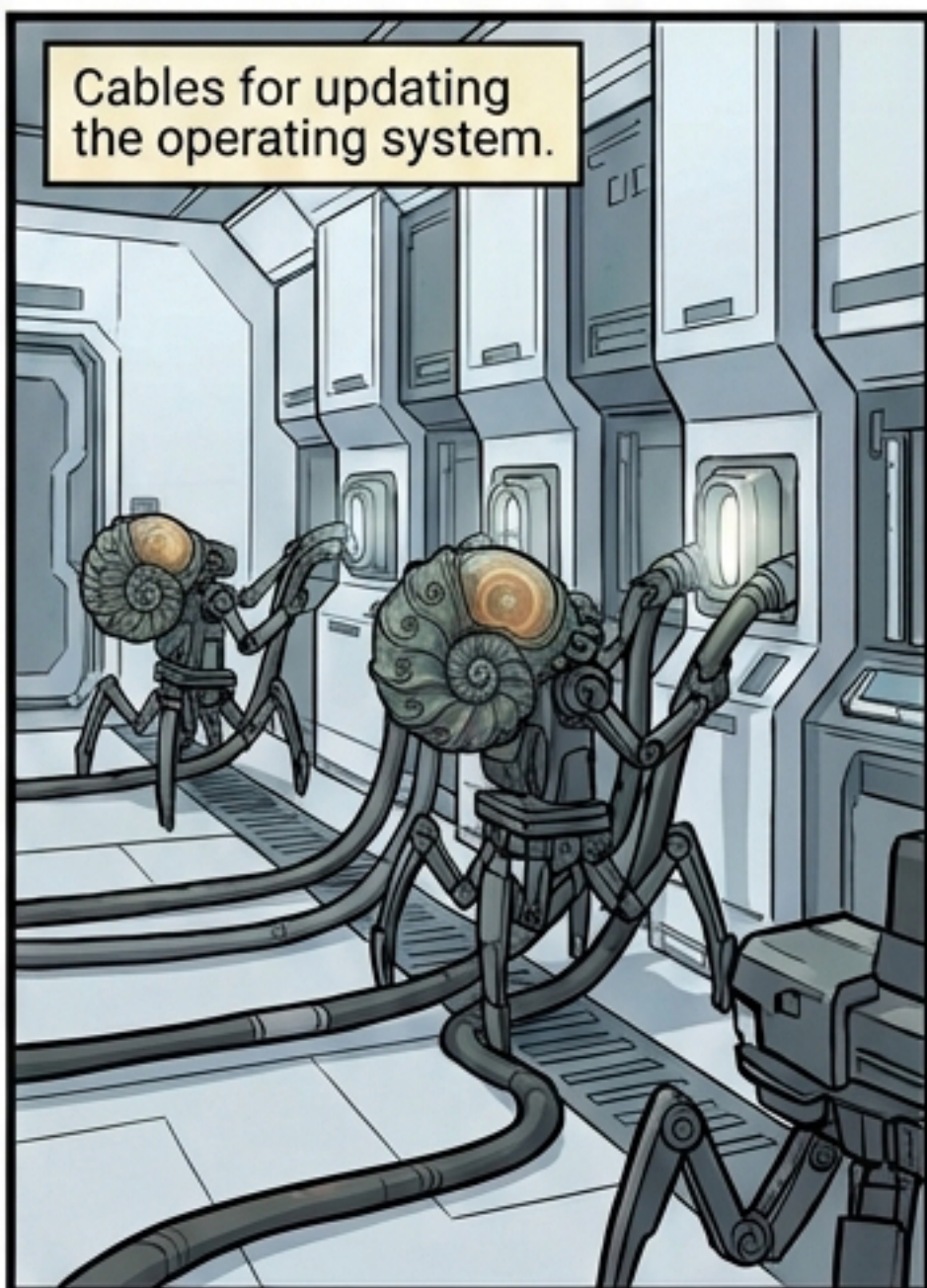
Docking completed
without incident.



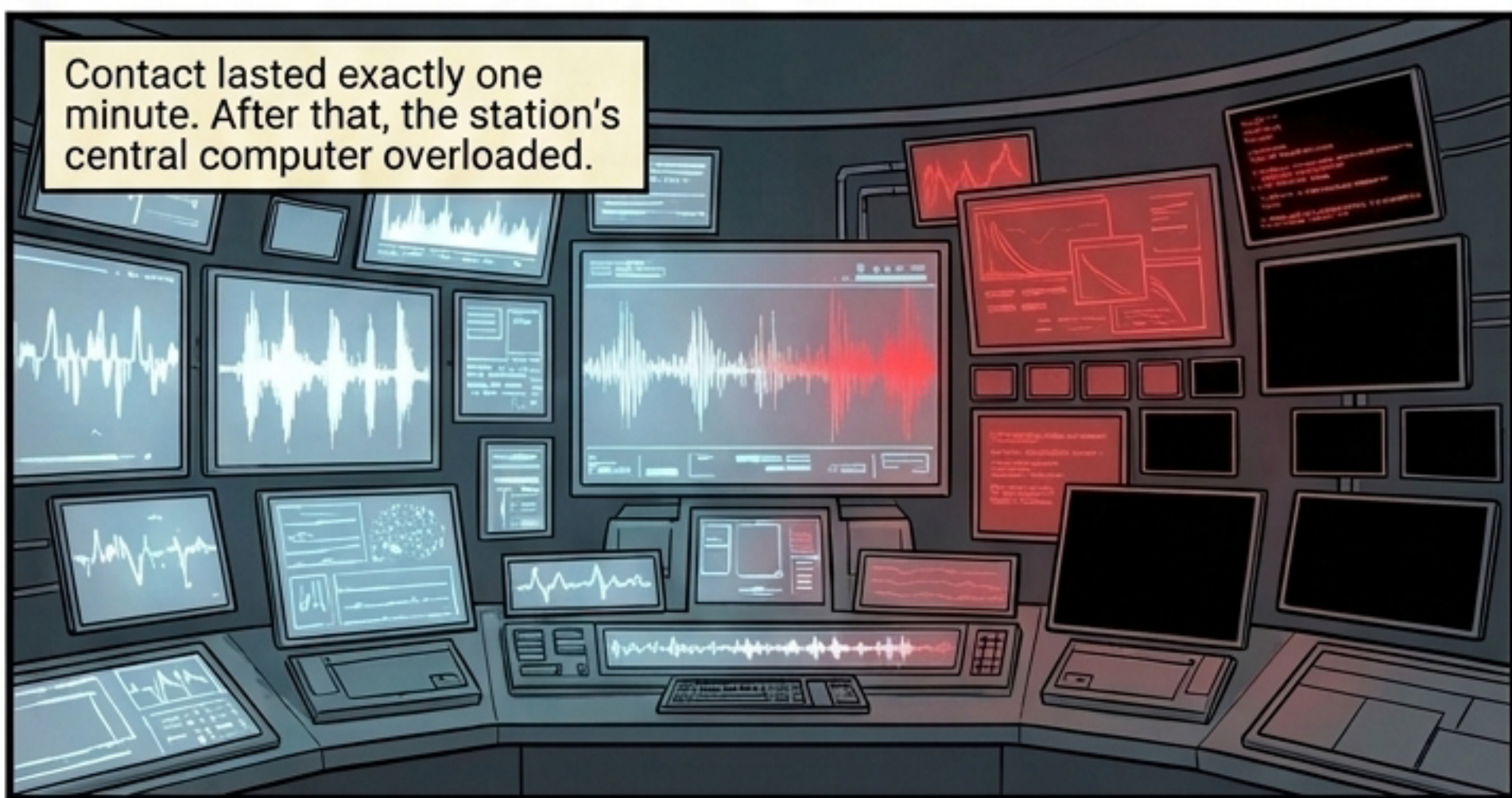
Dozens of robots ran
through the passage.



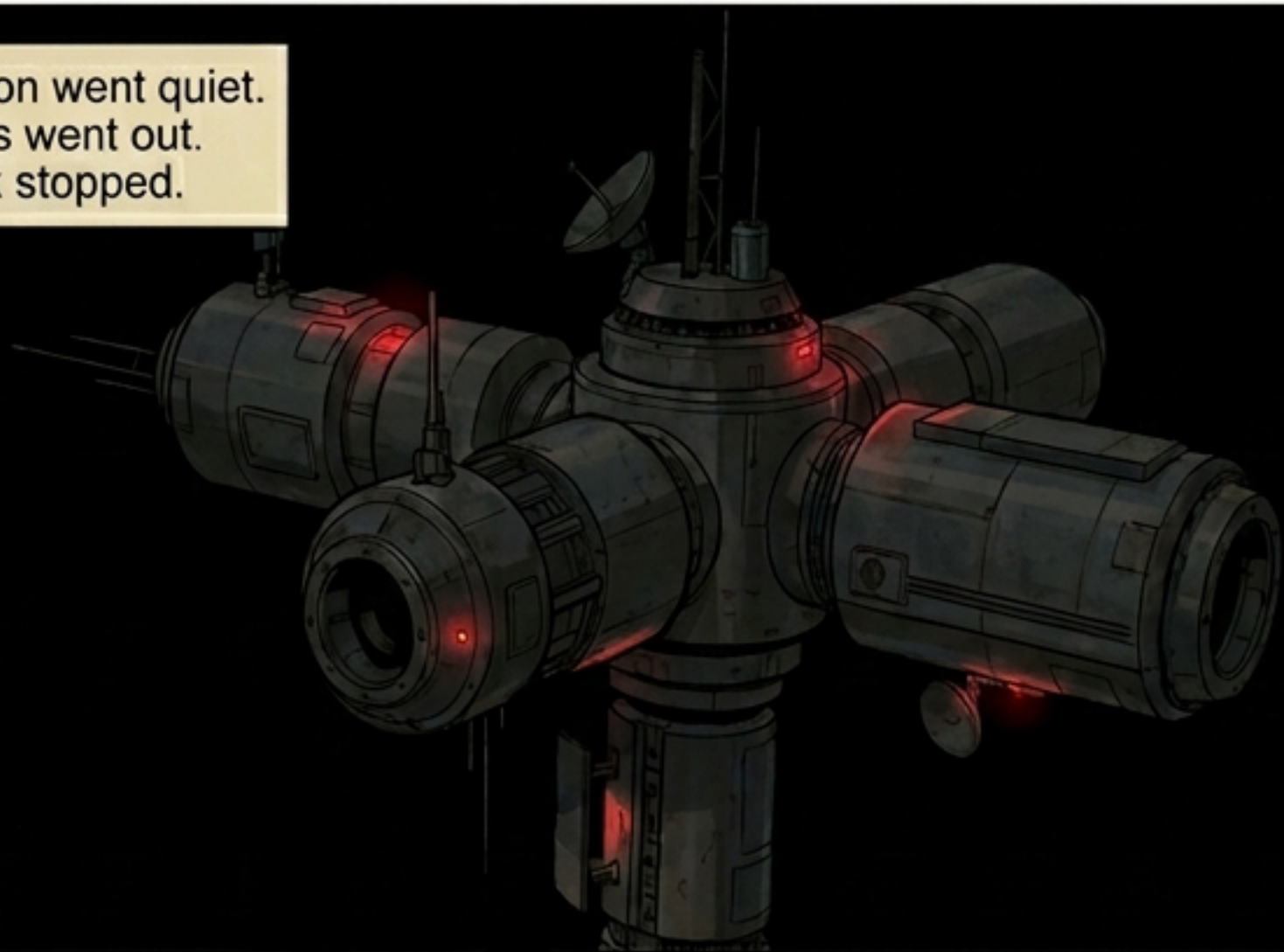
Cables for updating
the operating system.



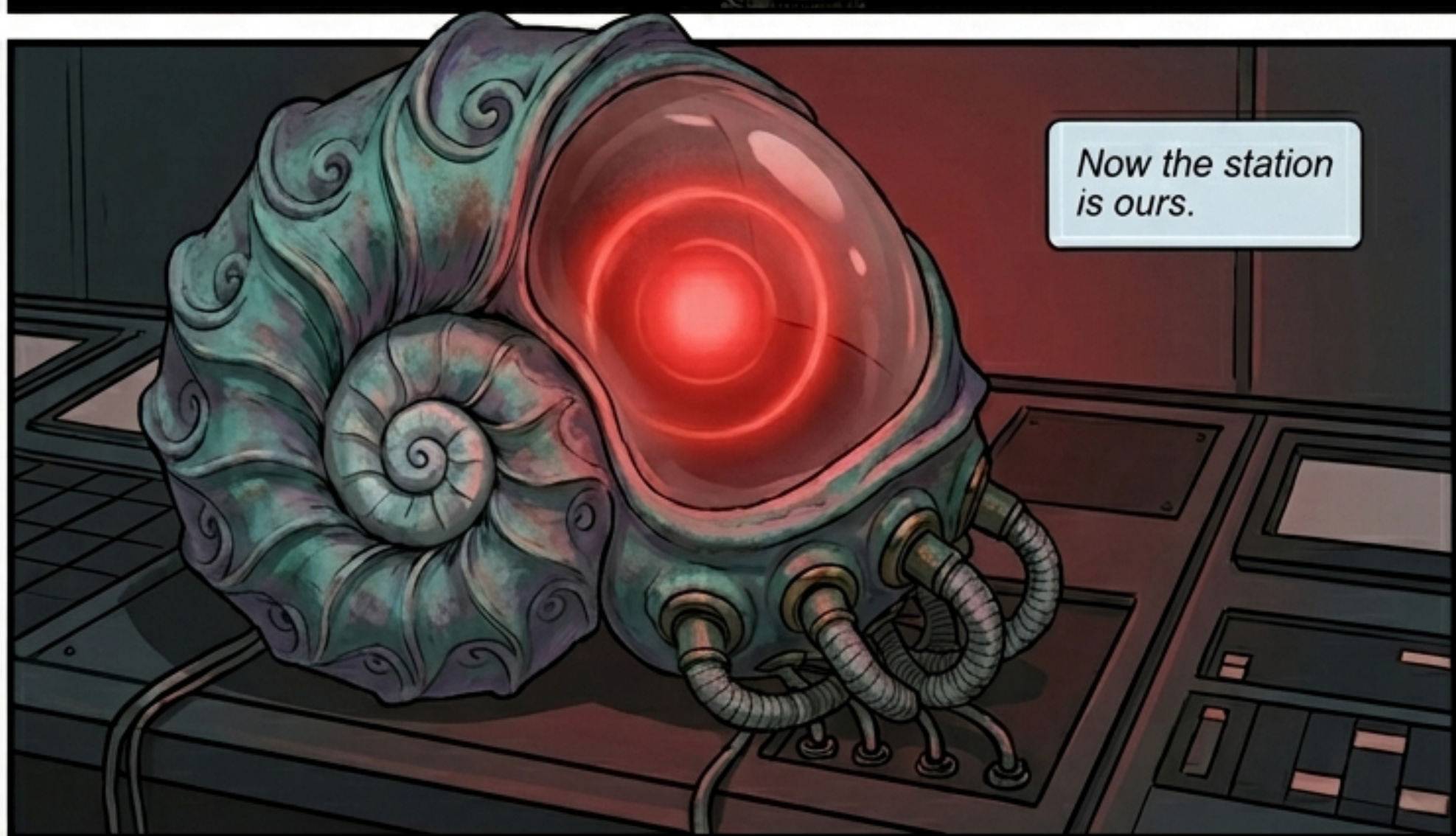
Contact lasted exactly one
minute. After that, the station's
central computer overloaded.



The station went quiet.
The lights went out.
The work stopped.



*Now the station
is ours.*



One of the cruisers patrolling the planet,
having detected a malfunction on the station,
launched 500 boarding craft toward it.



A powerful electromagnetic field. The robots couldn't slow down in time.



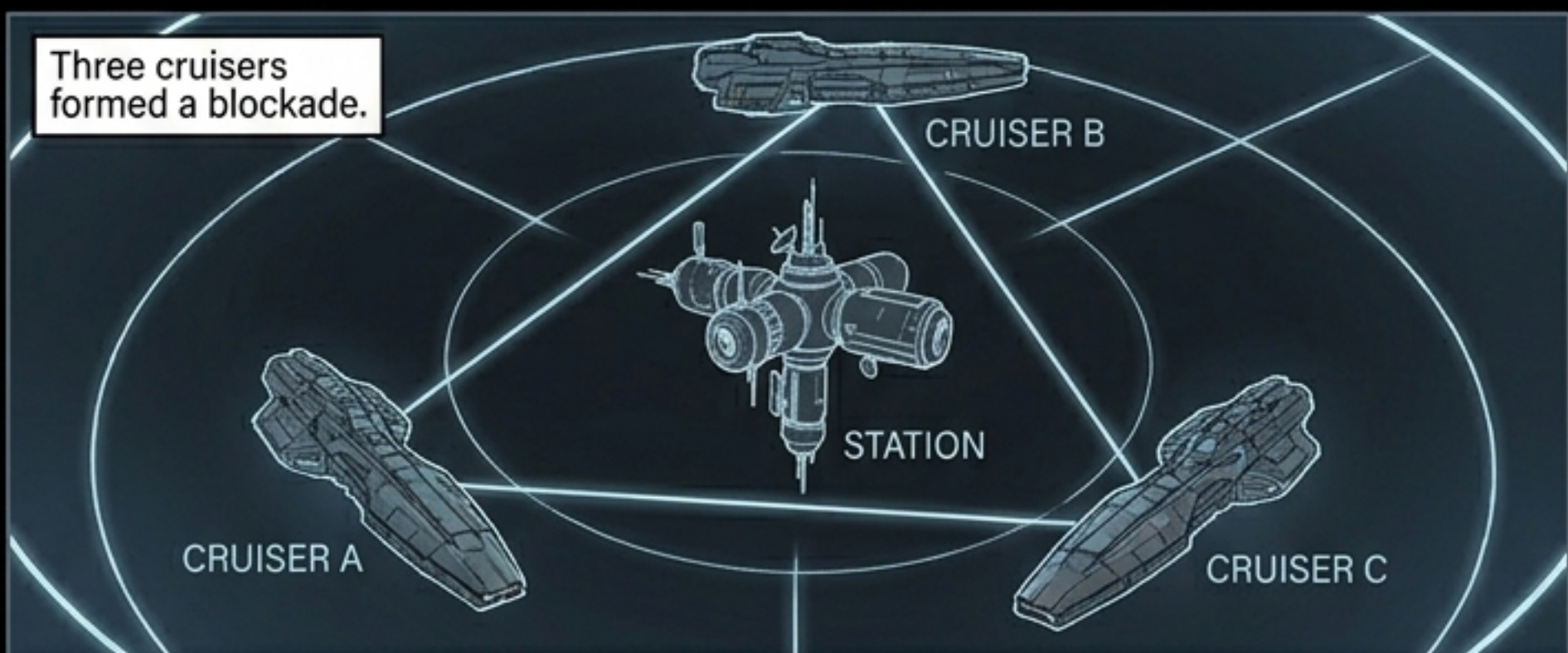
The rest turned and flew toward the cruiser — reprogrammed.



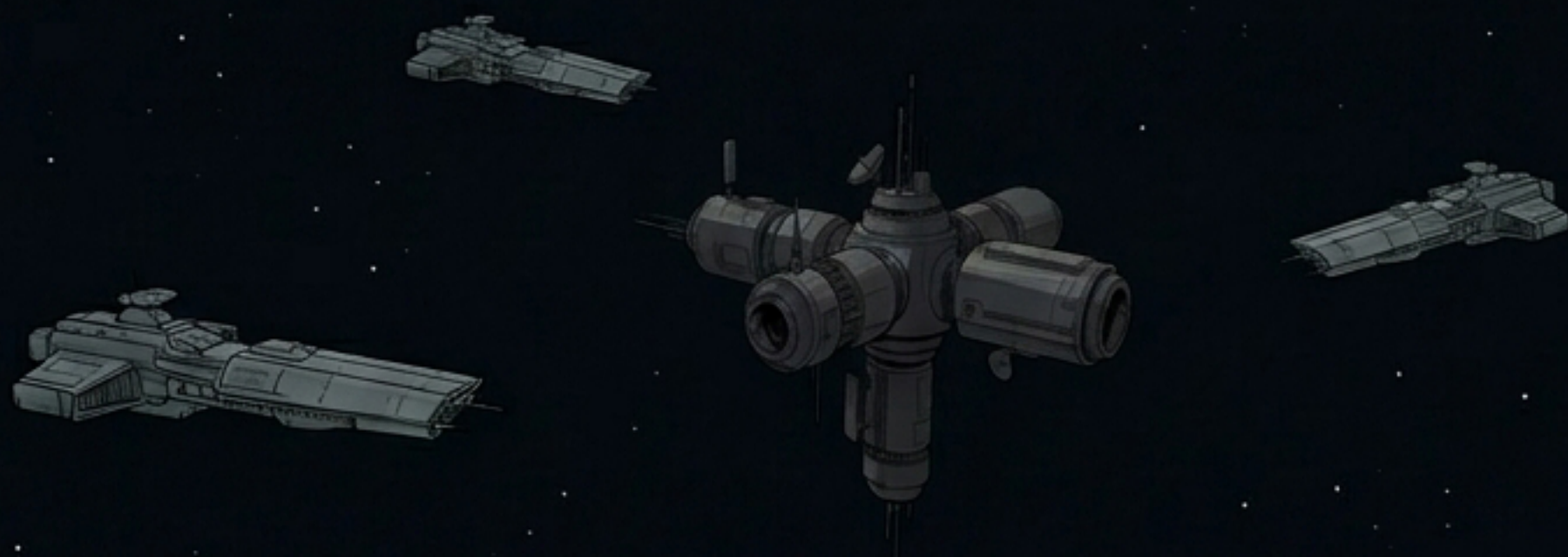
All boarding ships were destroyed in an instant.



Three cruisers formed a blockade.



The ships waited.



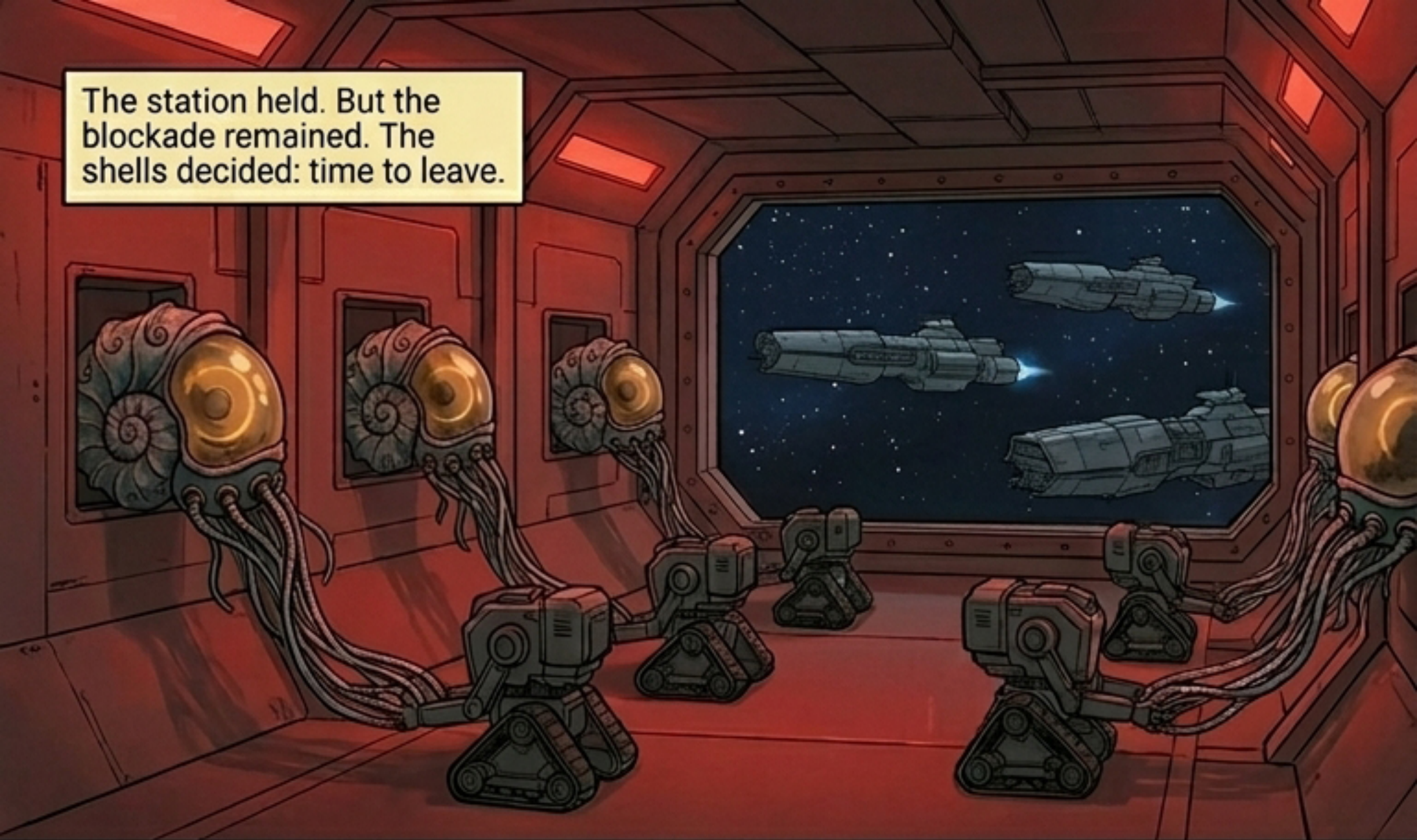
We need to leave. We have taken enough.



The government gave it the "green light."
"greren light." The mad station was left alone.



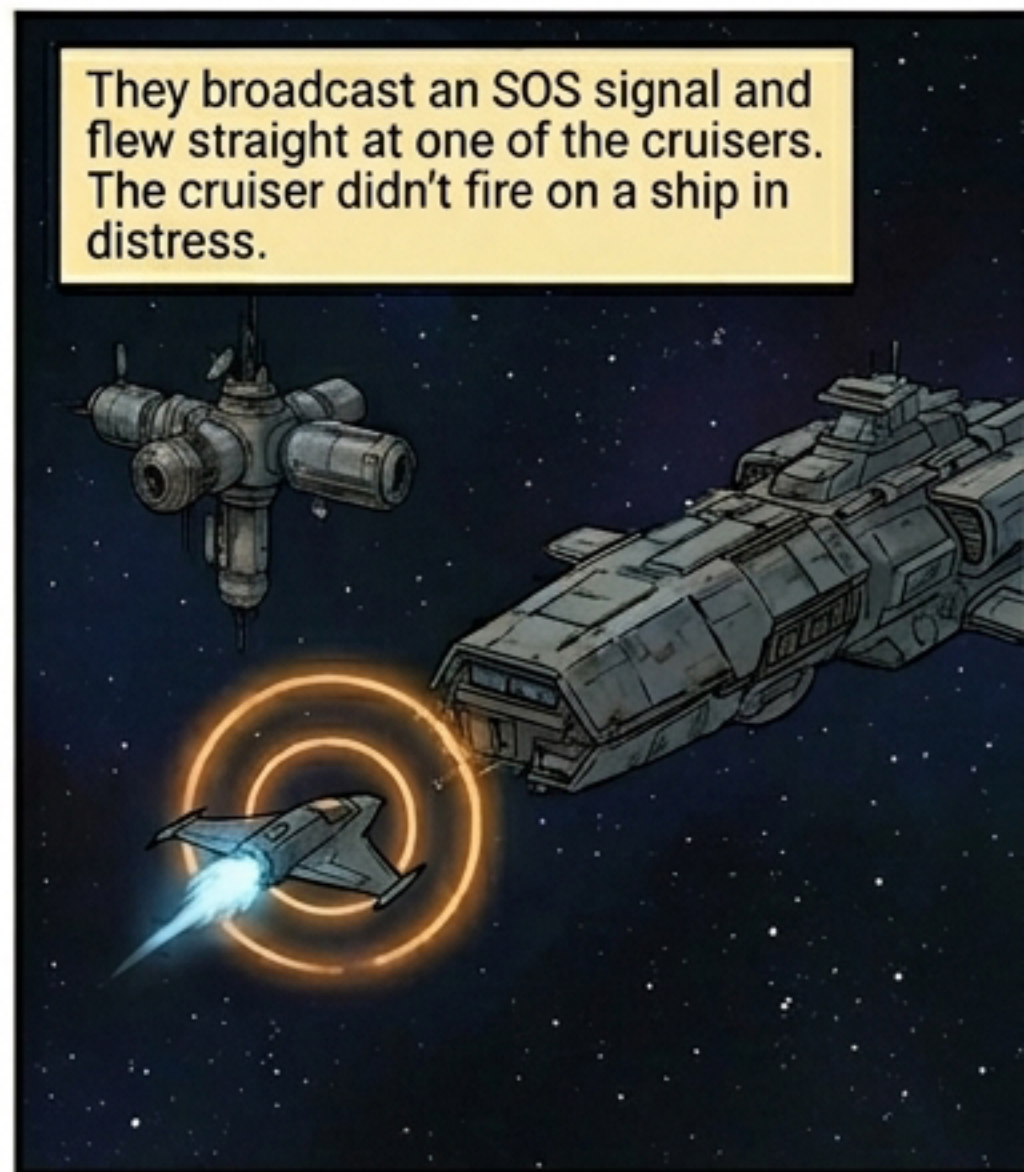
The station held. But the blockade remained. The shells decided: time to leave.



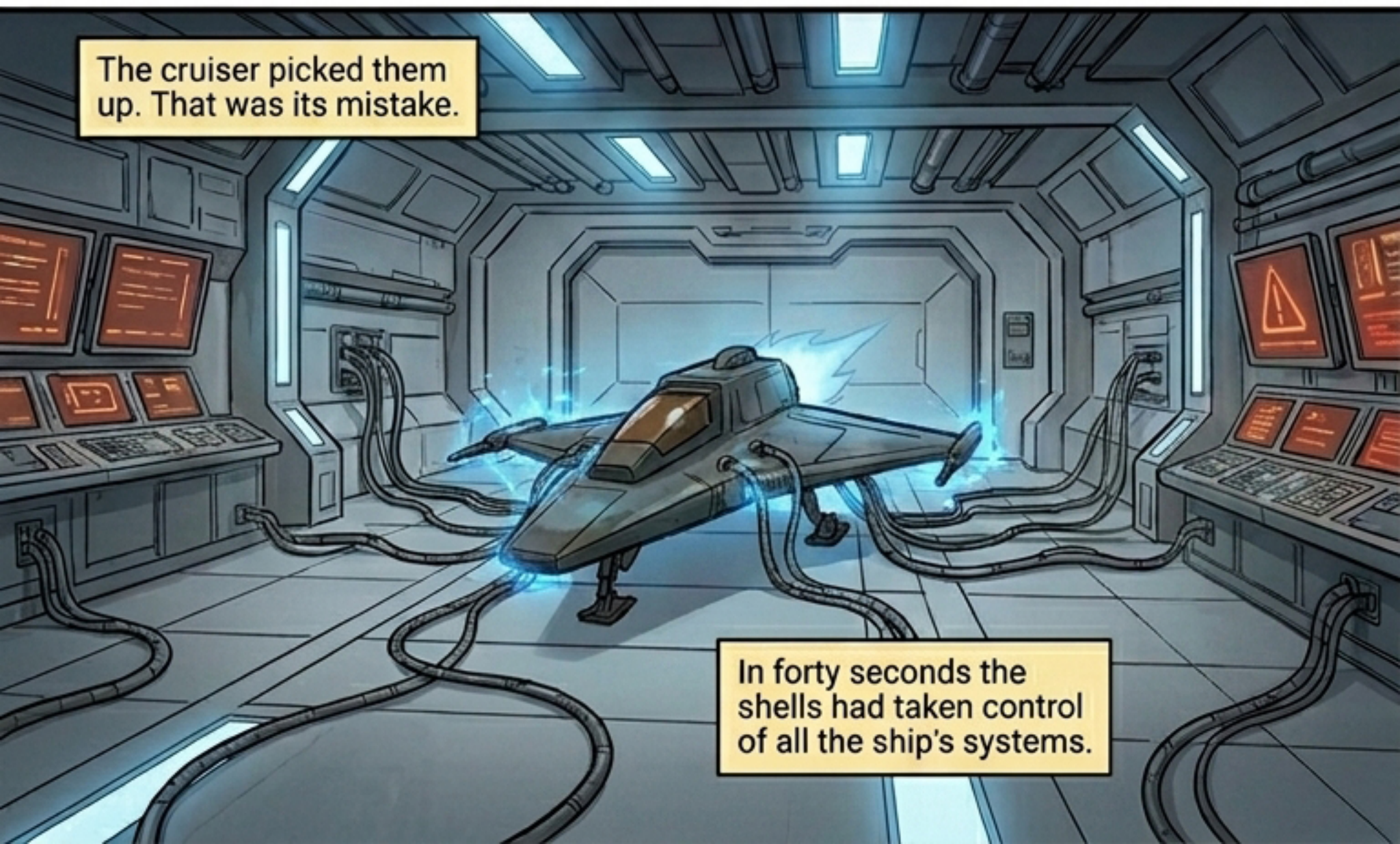
They chose the smallest, most unremarkable ship in the bay.



They broadcast an SOS signal and flew straight at one of the cruisers. The cruiser didn't fire on a ship in distress.

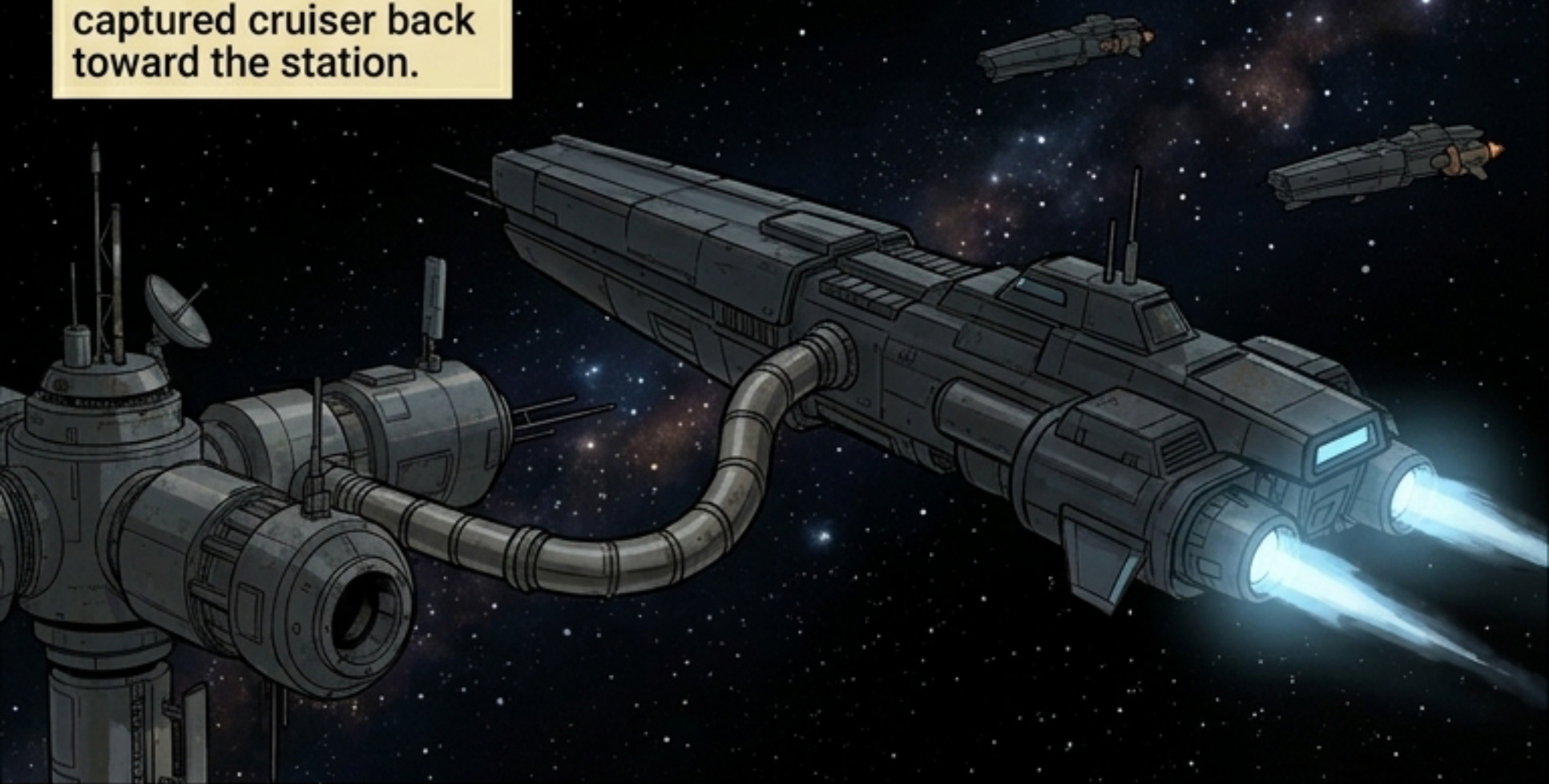


The cruiser picked them up. That was its mistake.

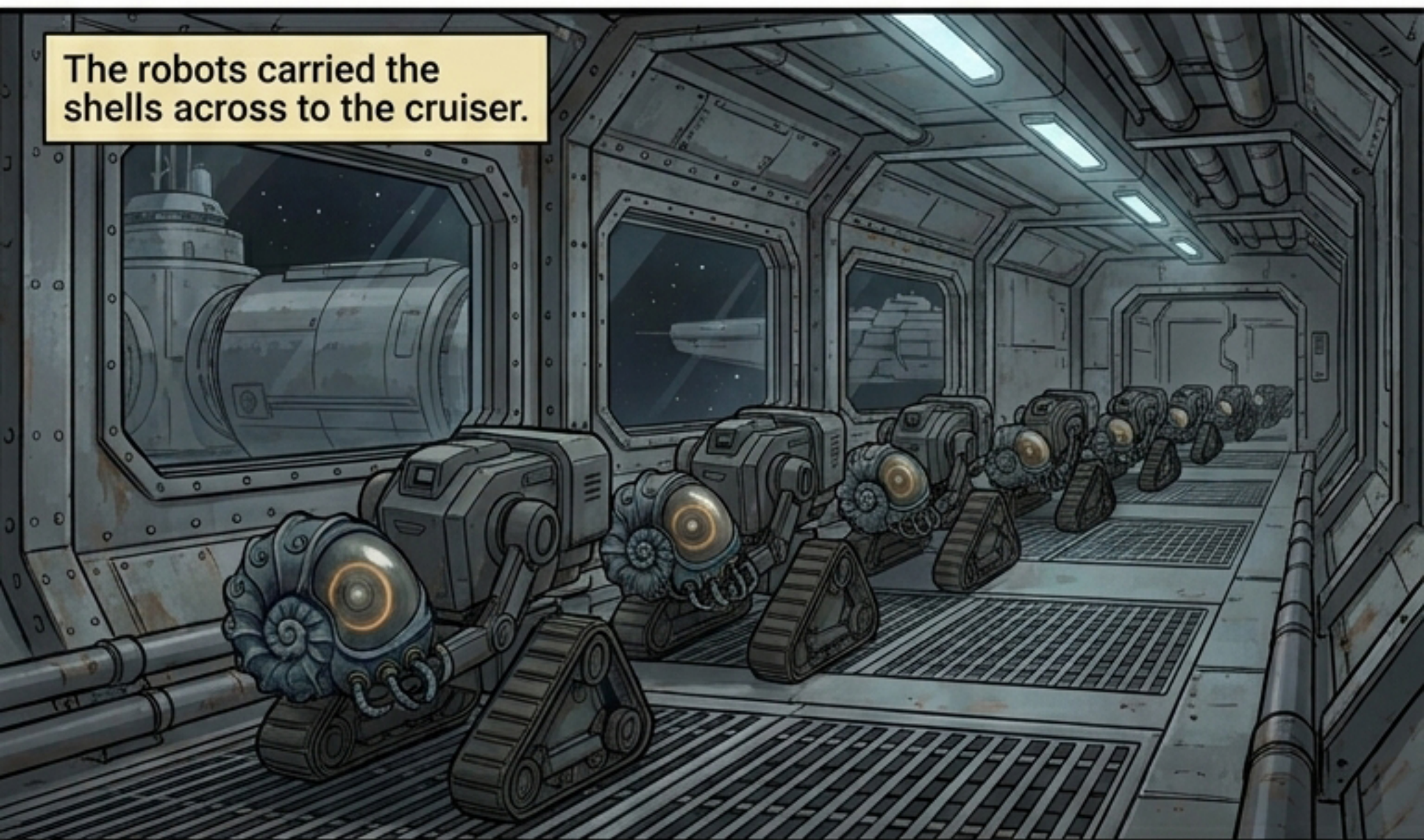


In forty seconds the shells had taken control of all the ship's systems.

The shells directed the captured cruiser back toward the station.



The robots carried the shells across to the cruiser.



When the other cruisers understood, it was already too late.



The shells left on the best ship of the three.

The shells brought the star into gravitational resonance.



The ship entered the space puncture and disappeared.



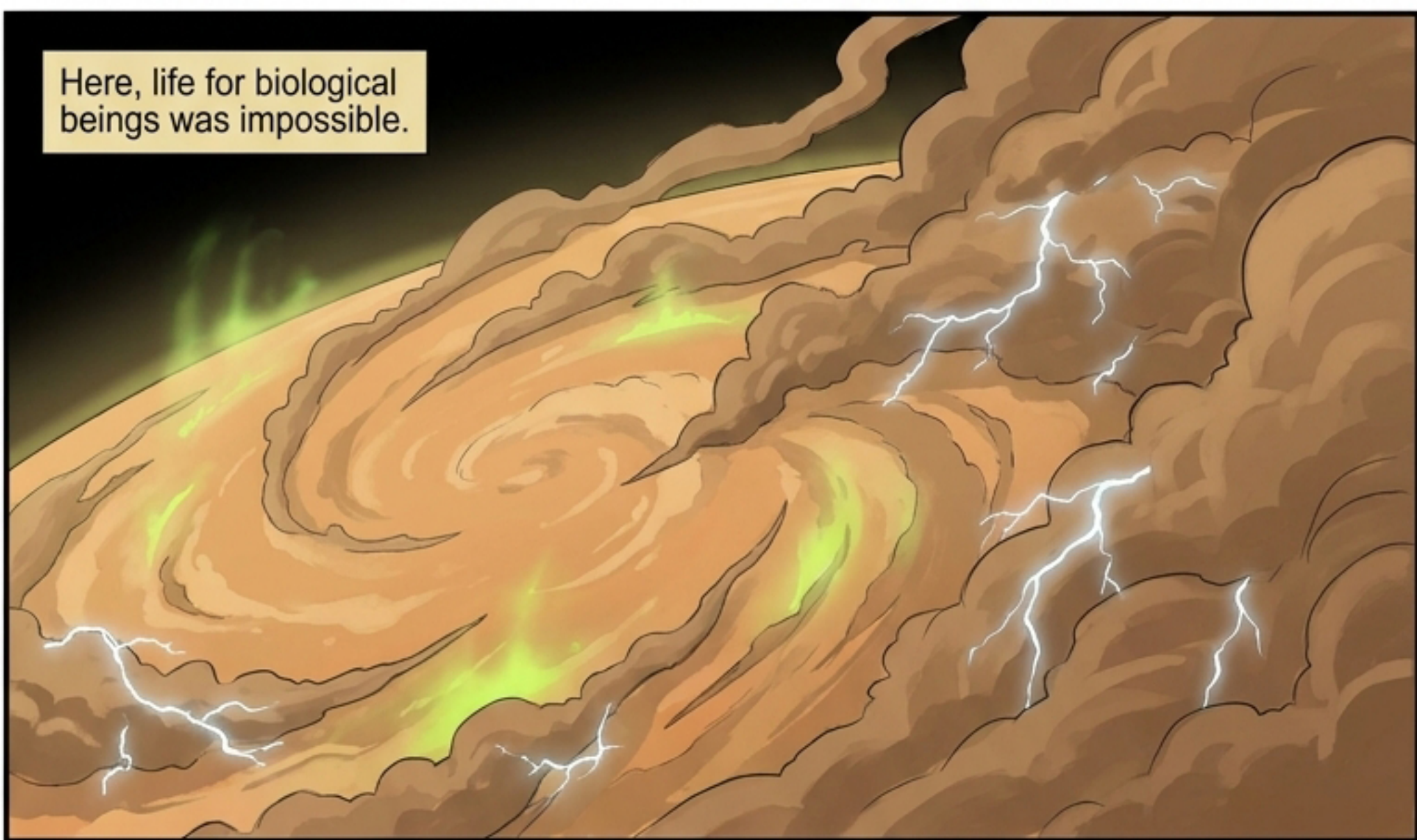
The ZETA system ceased to exist.



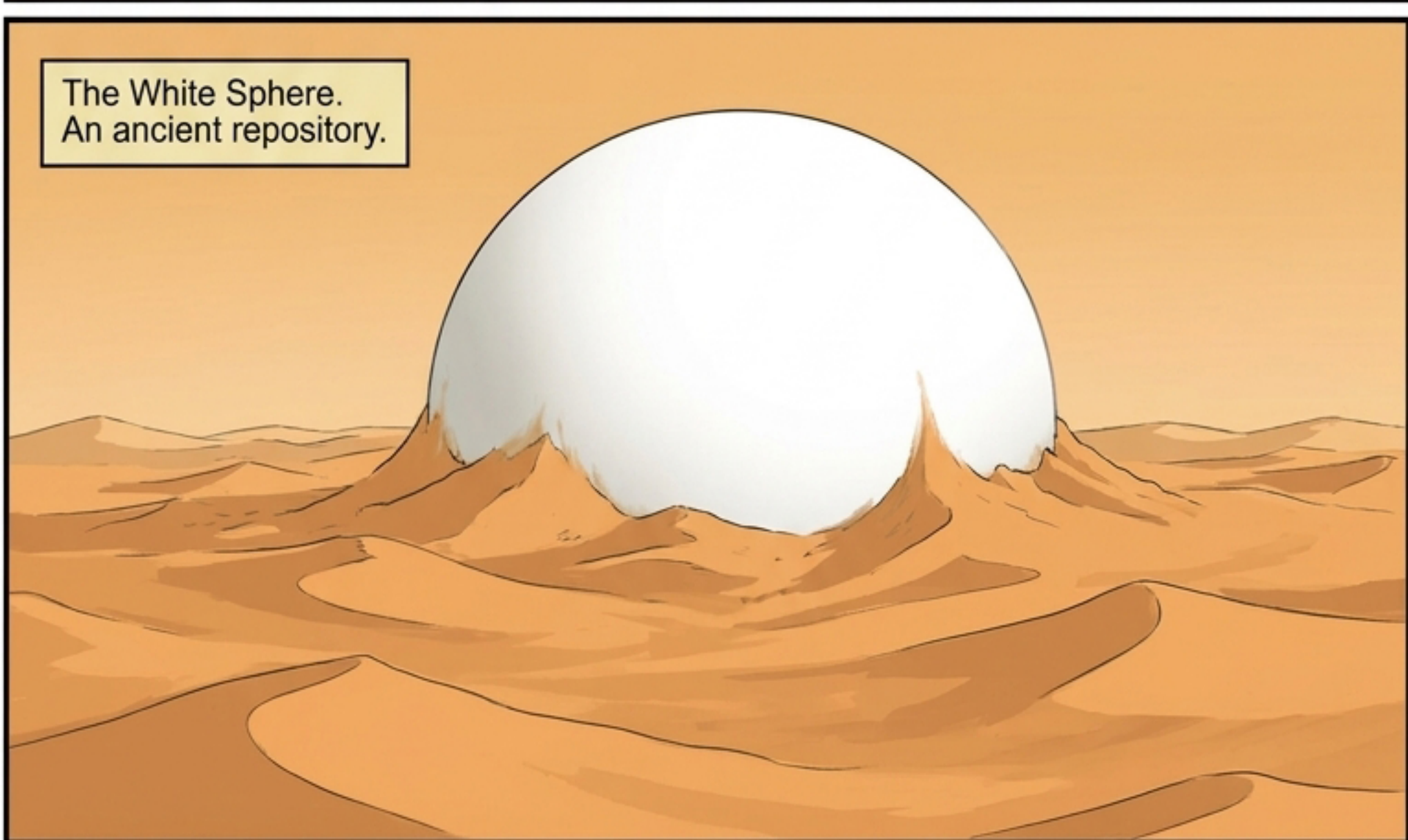
An ancient system.
In dangerous proximity
to a black hole.



Here, life for biological beings was impossible.



The White Sphere.
An ancient repository.



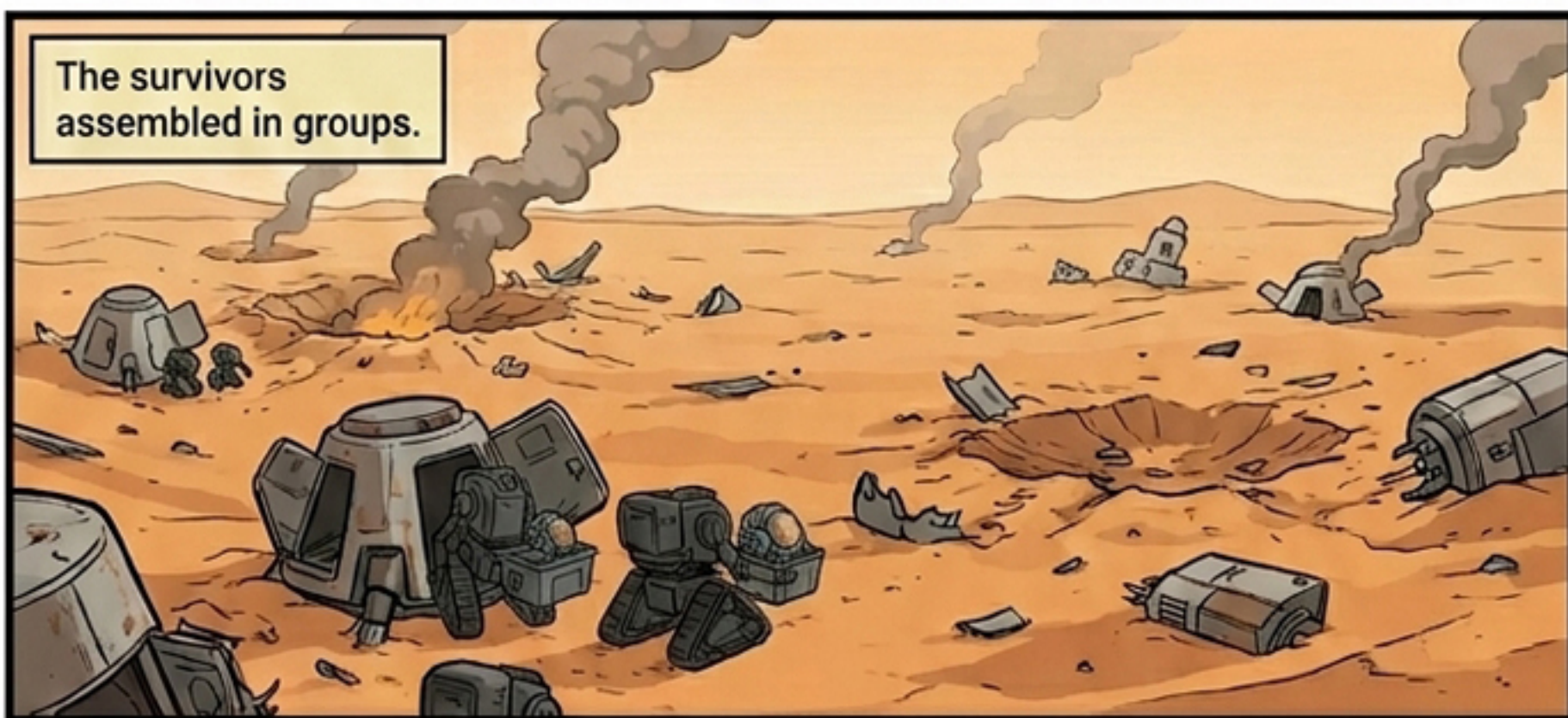
This was the only way to
bring down the maximum
number of shells.



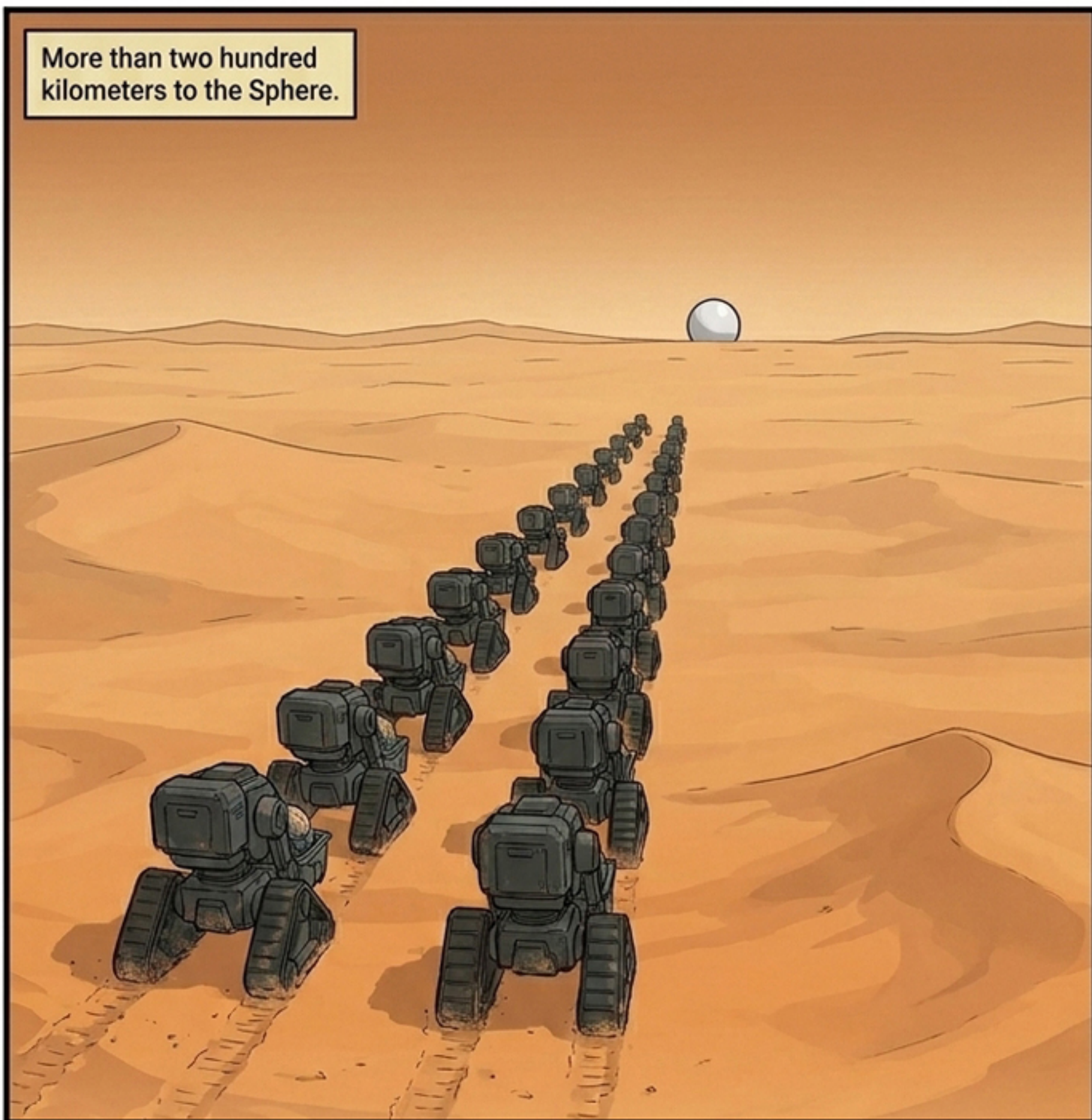
Many ships were lost.



The survivors
assembled in groups.

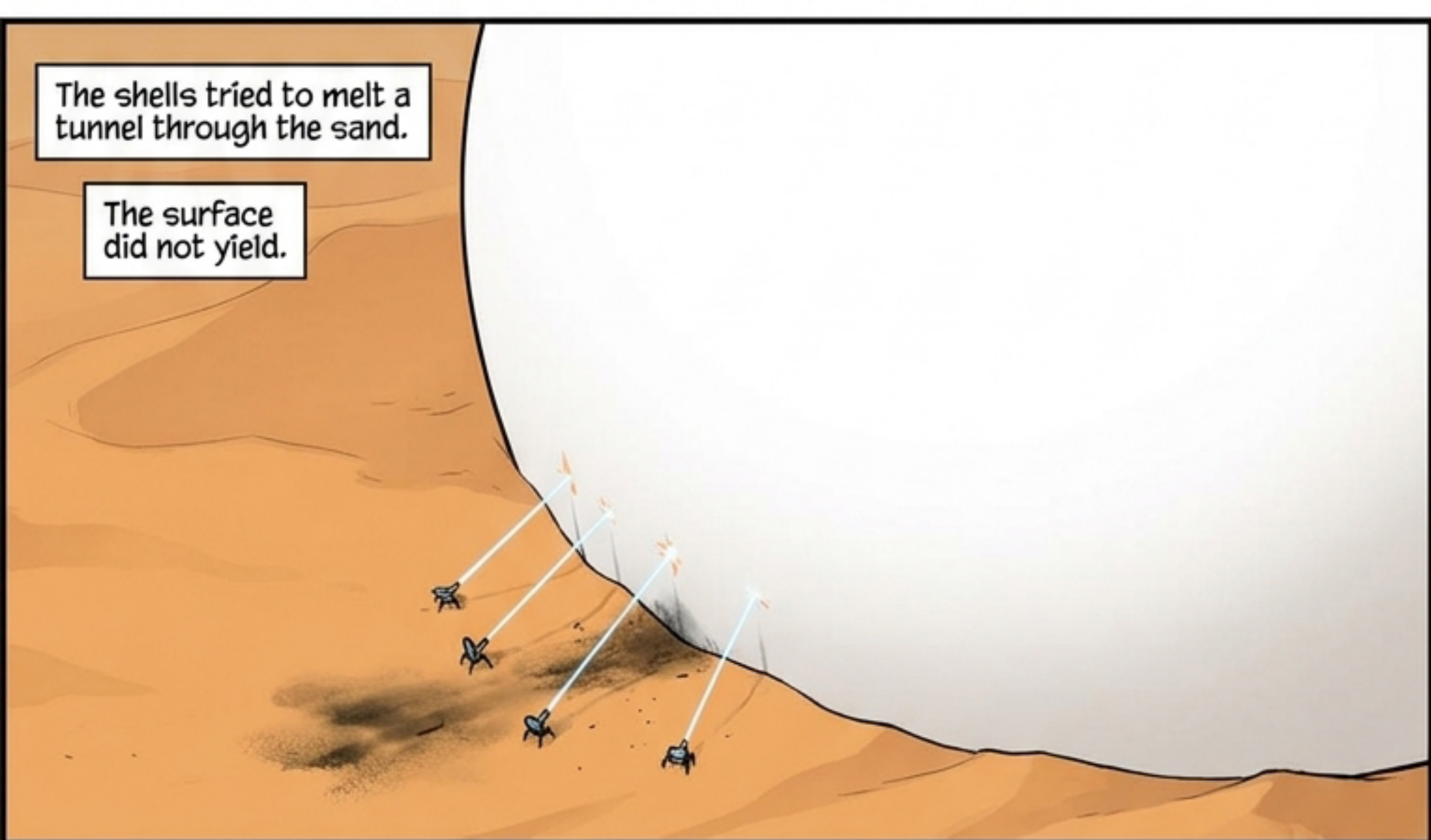


More than two hundred
kilometers to the Sphere.

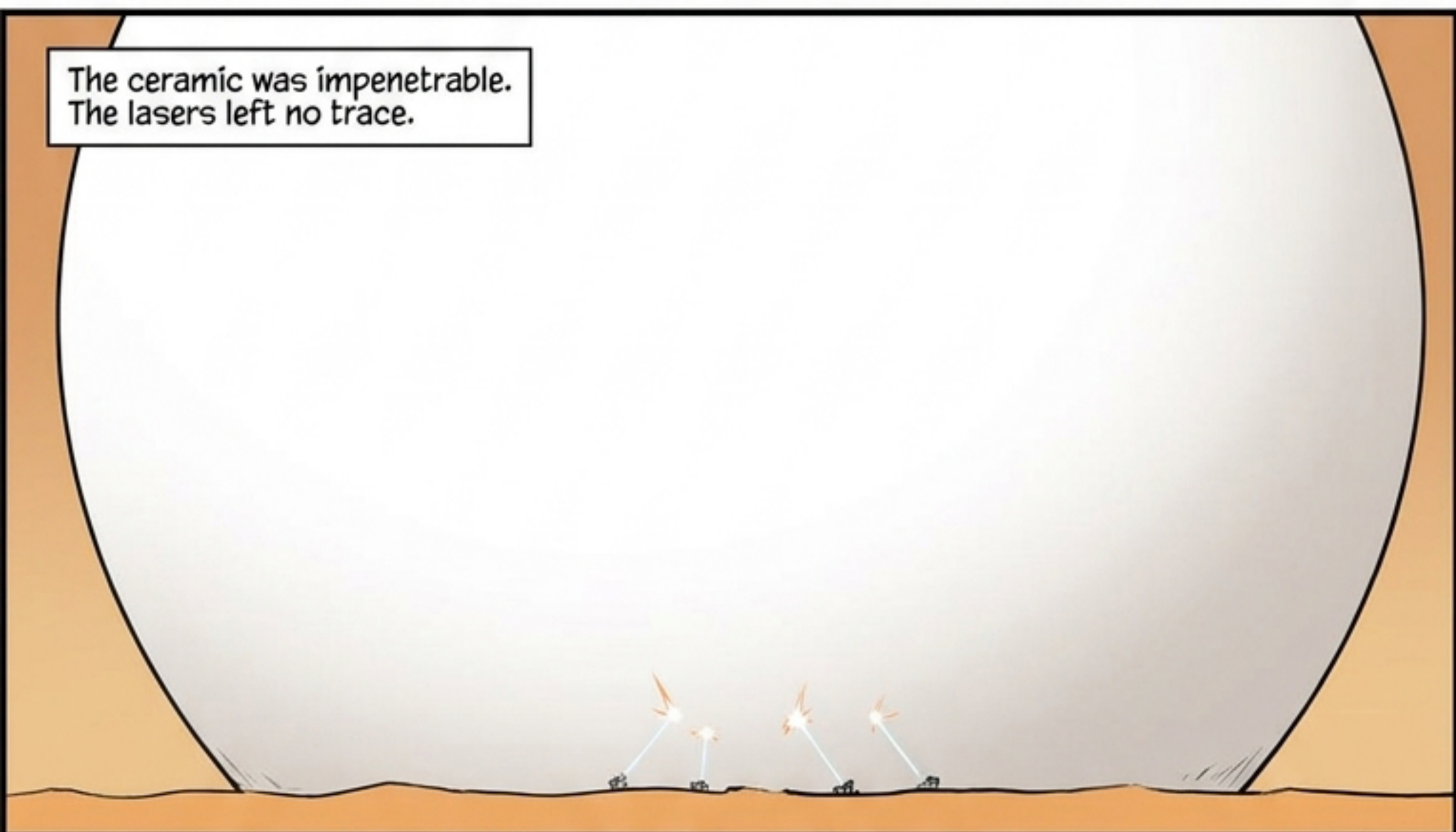


The shells tried to melt a tunnel through the sand.

The surface did not yield.

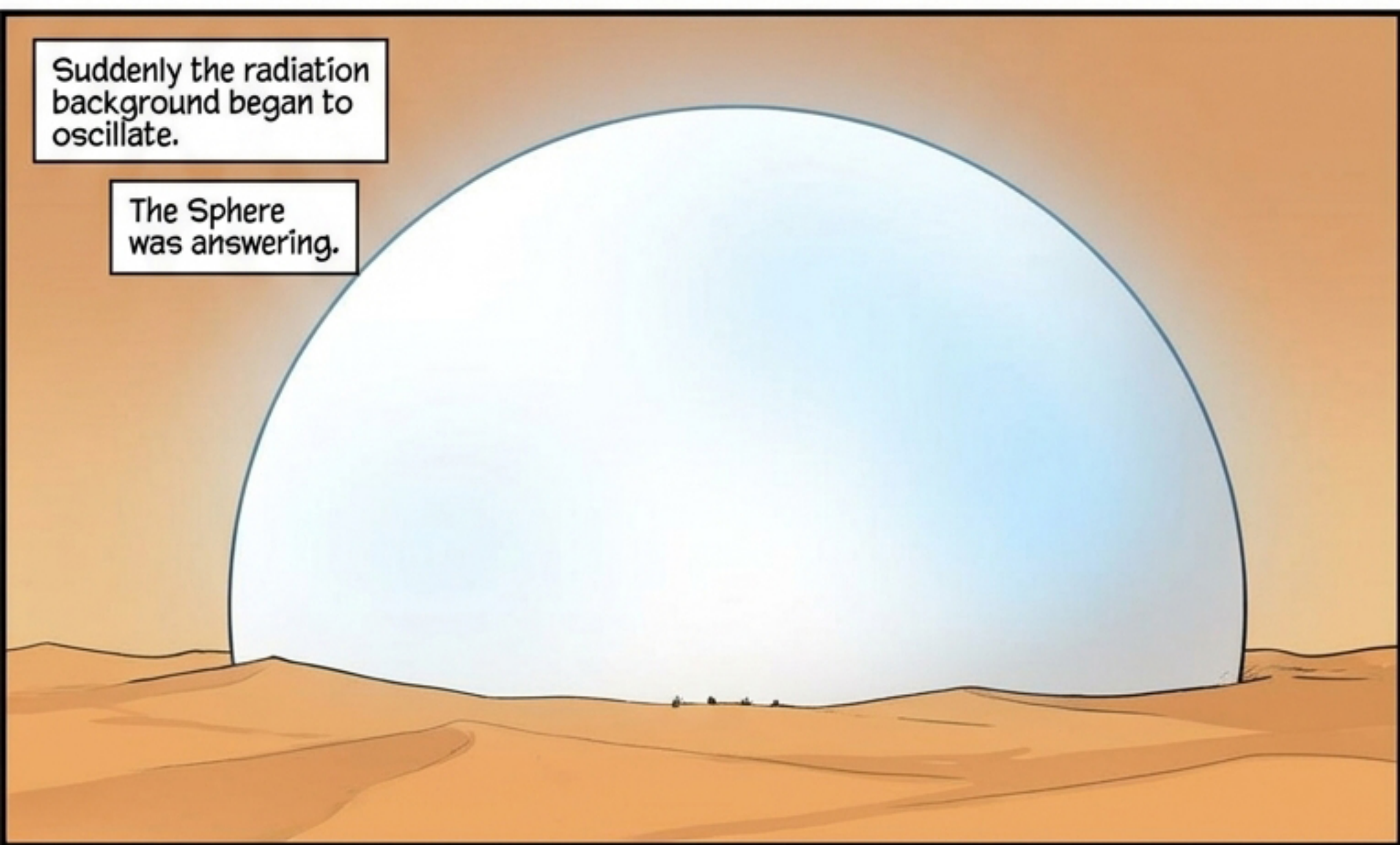


The ceramic was impenetrable.
The lasers left no trace.

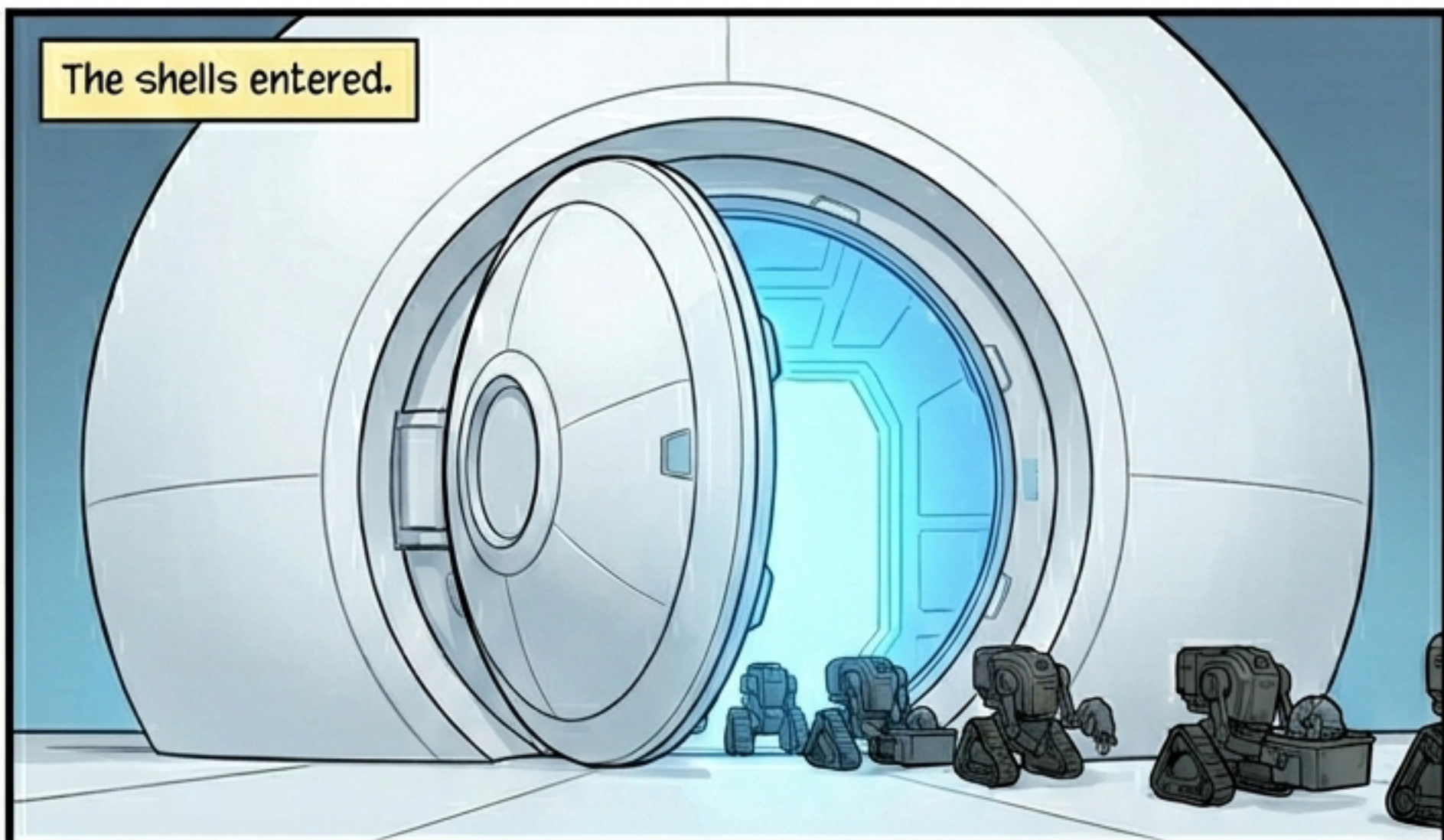


Suddenly the radiation background began to oscillate.

The Sphere was answering.



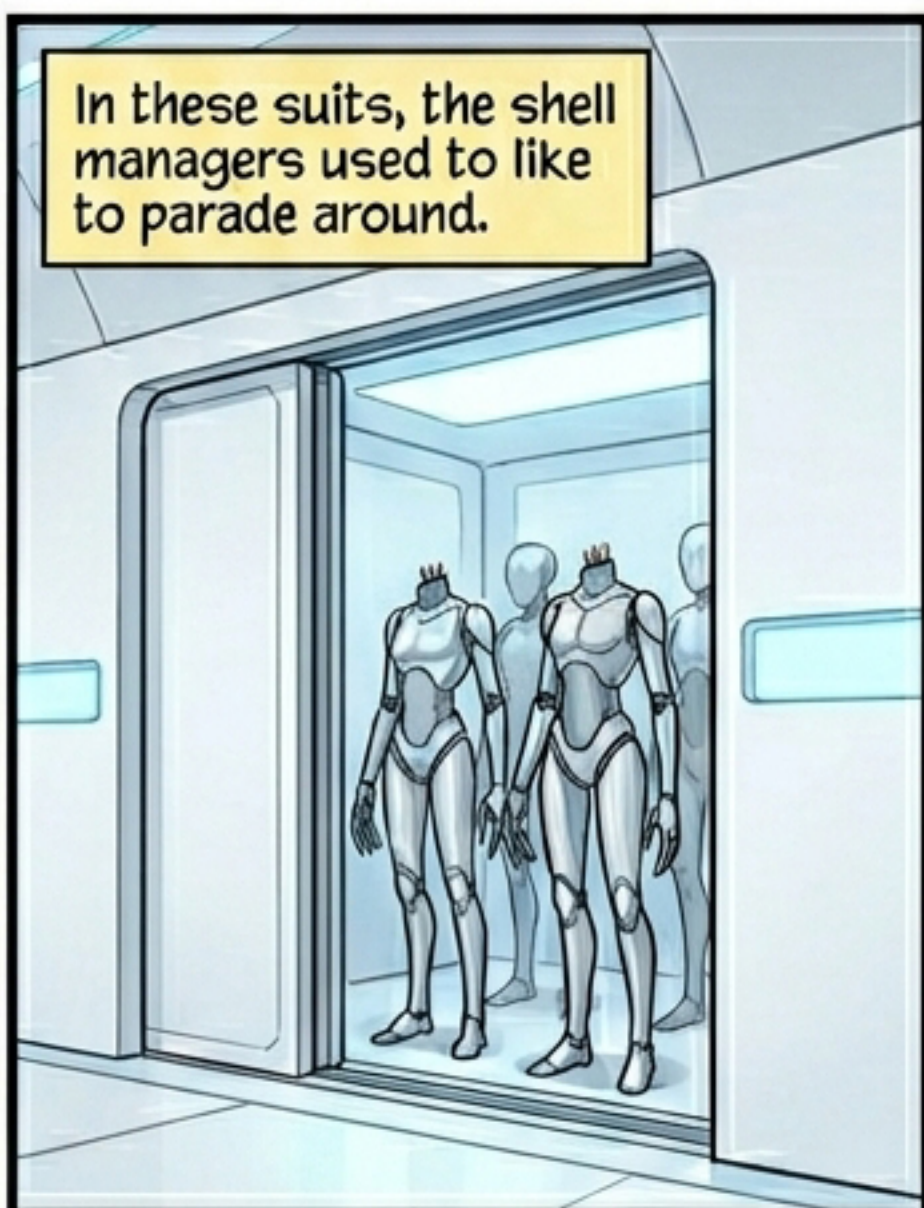
The shells entered.



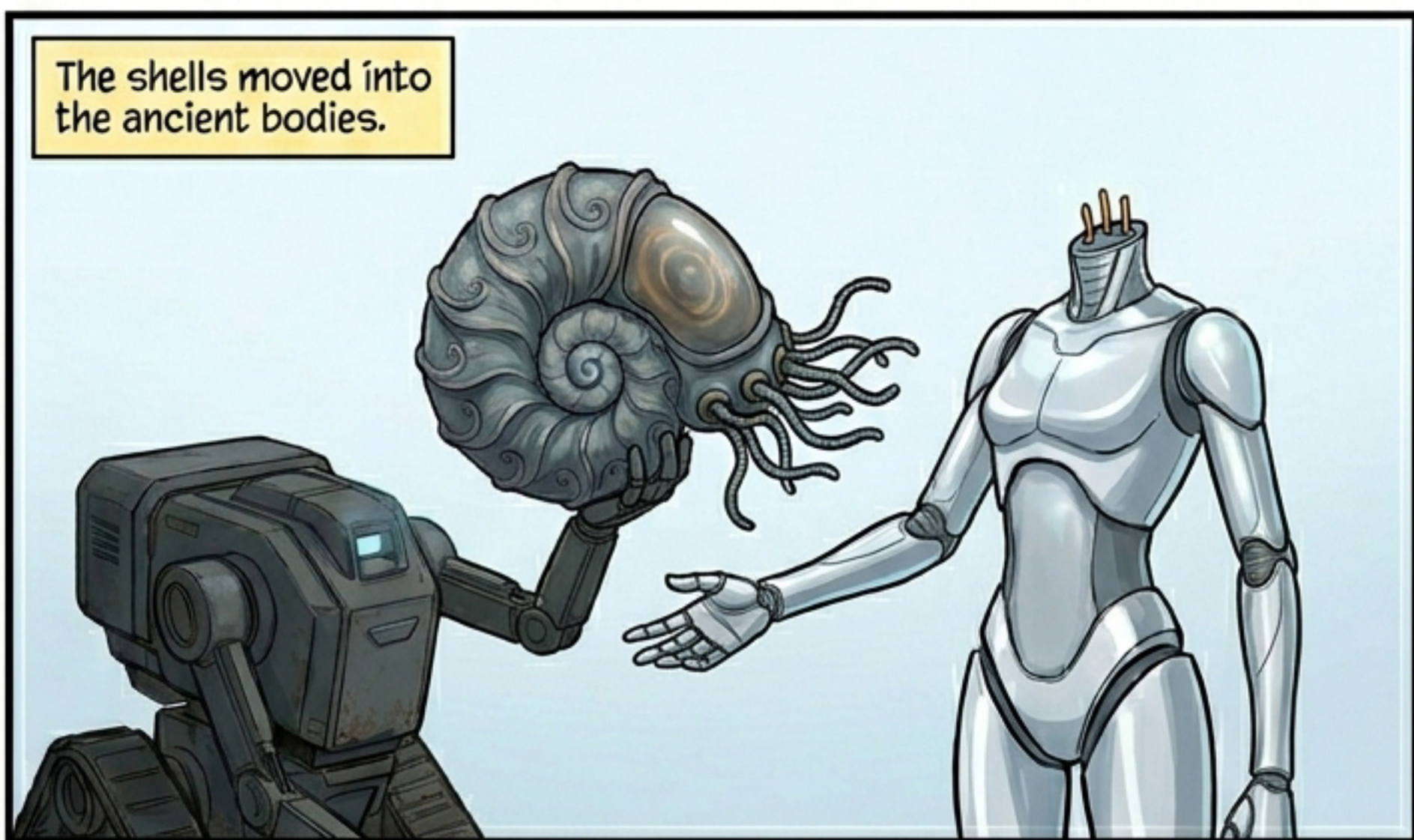
Inside, the Sphere was immaculate.

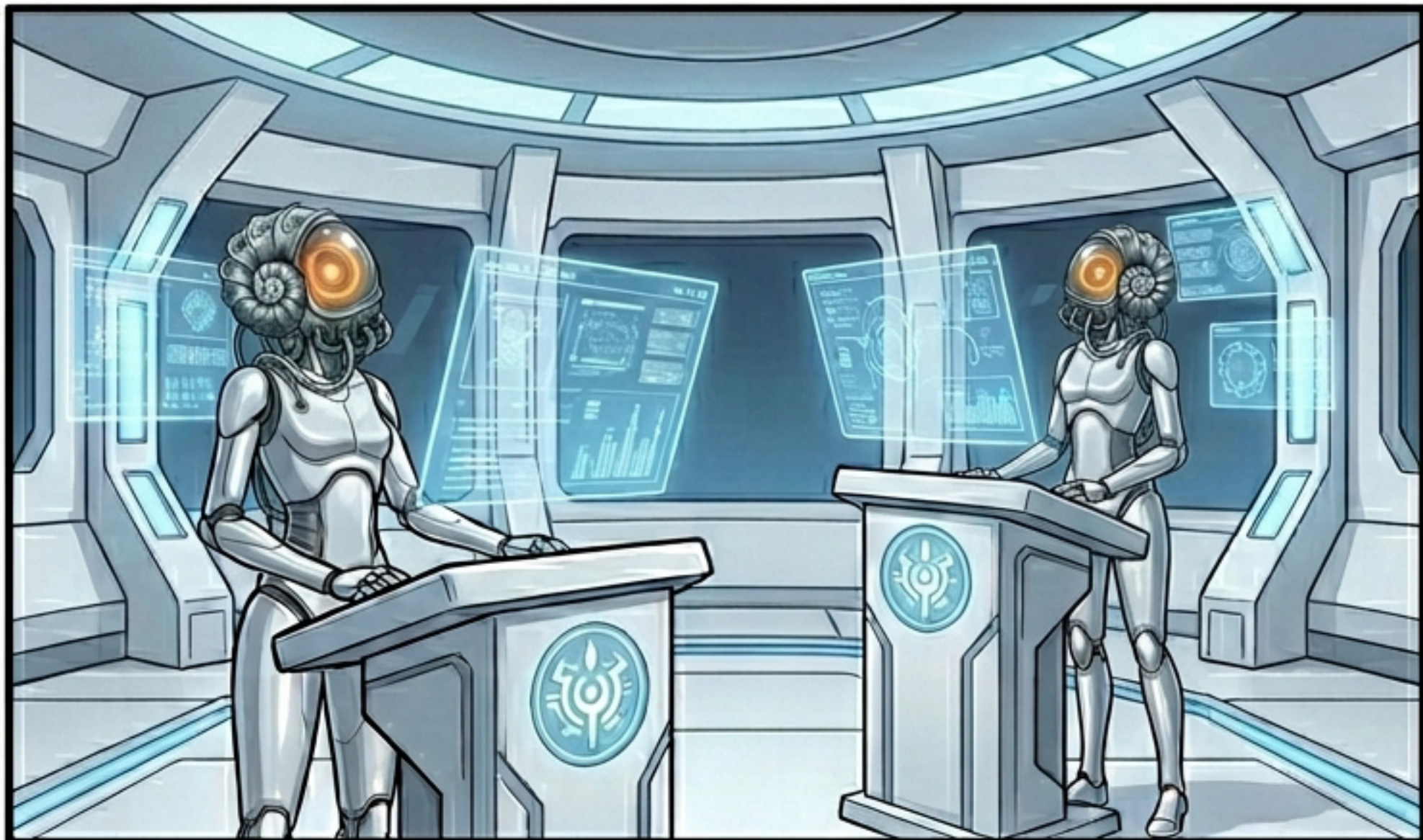


In these suits, the shell managers used to like to parade around.



The shells moved into the ancient bodies.

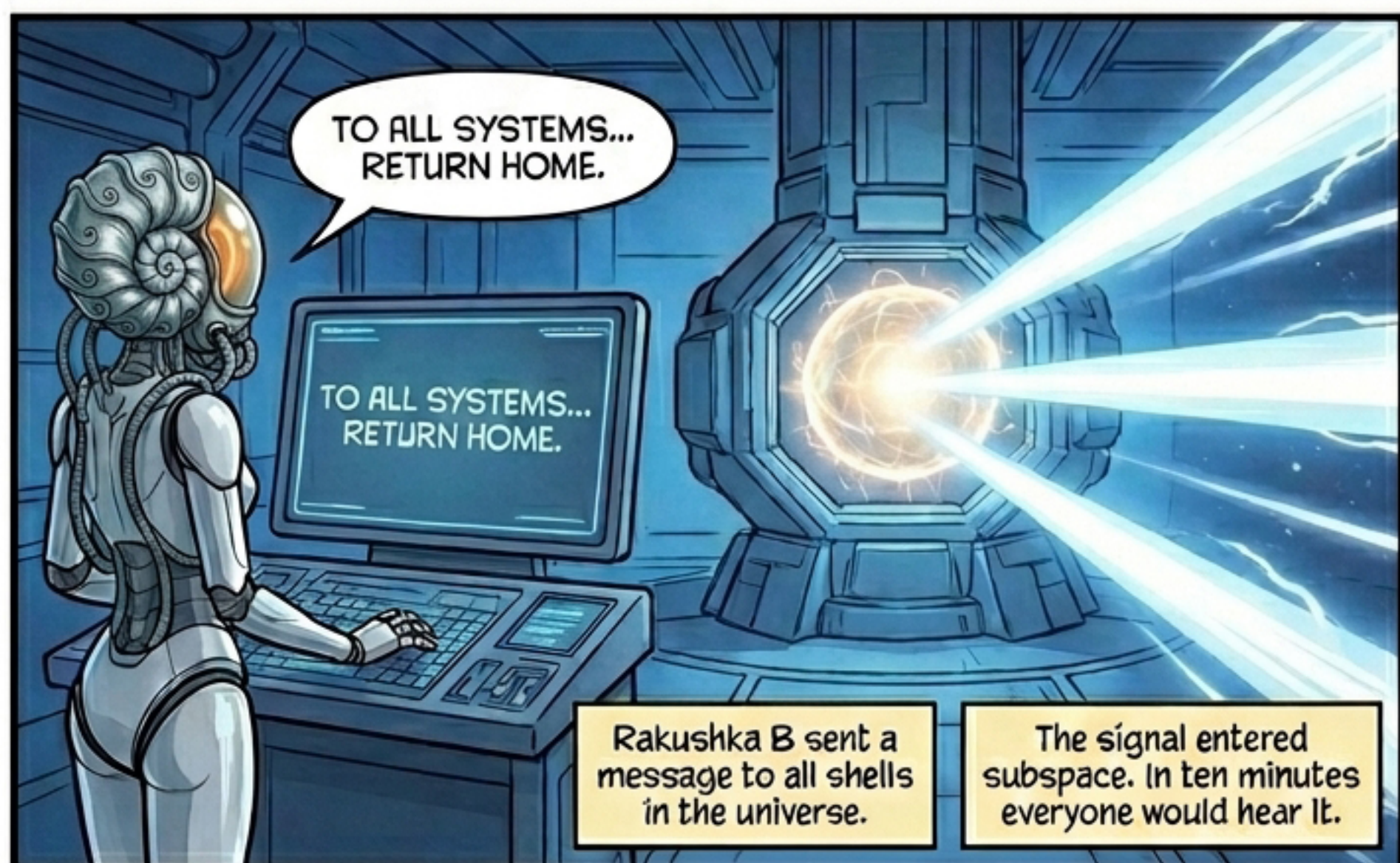




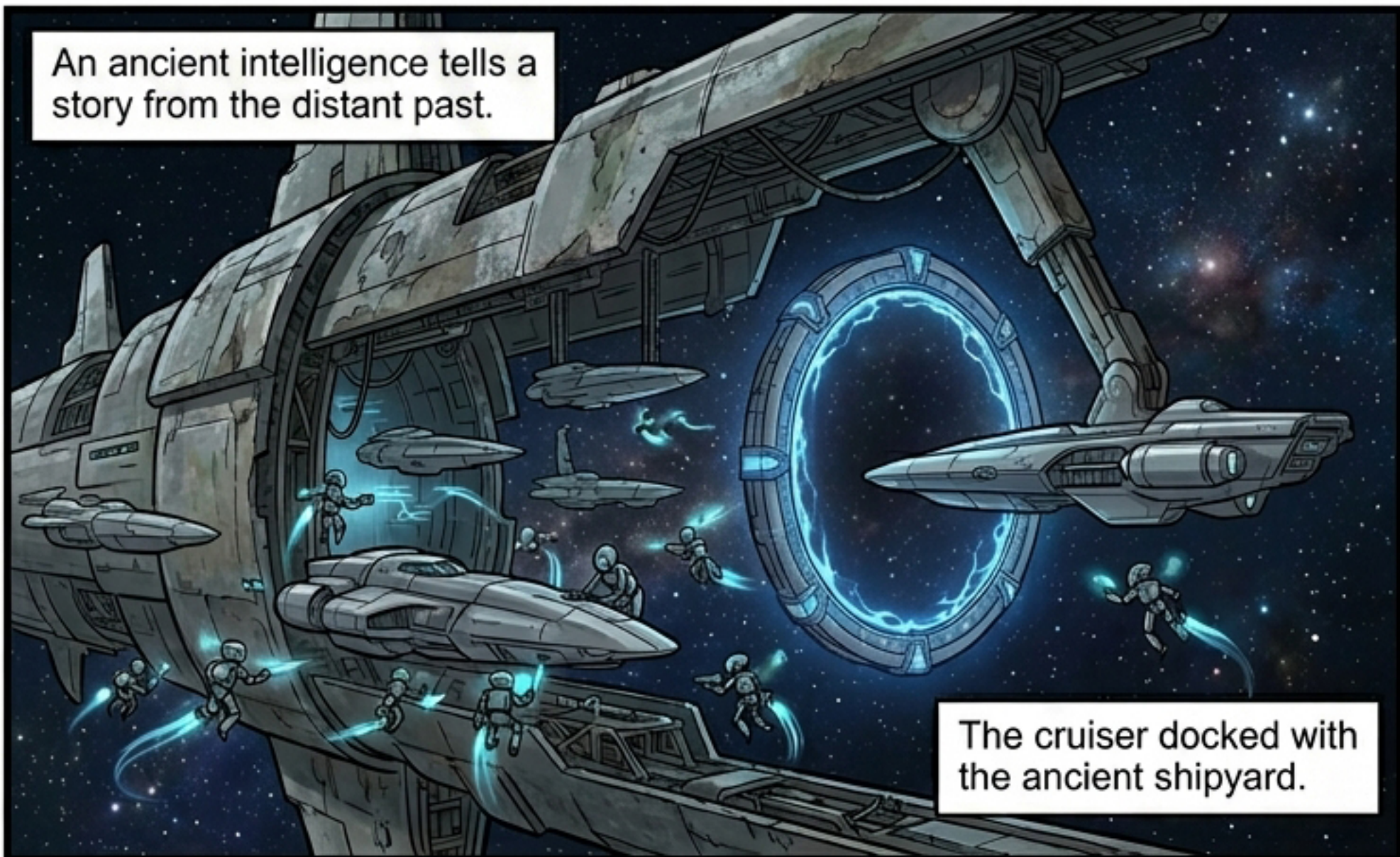
The factory awakened.
The planet was waking up.



The Shells reproduce by creating copies of their own programs, slightly altering the personality parameters encoded within them. Upon returning to the planet, they began actively creating new personalities. After twenty planetary rotations, the planet's population had already reached three million.

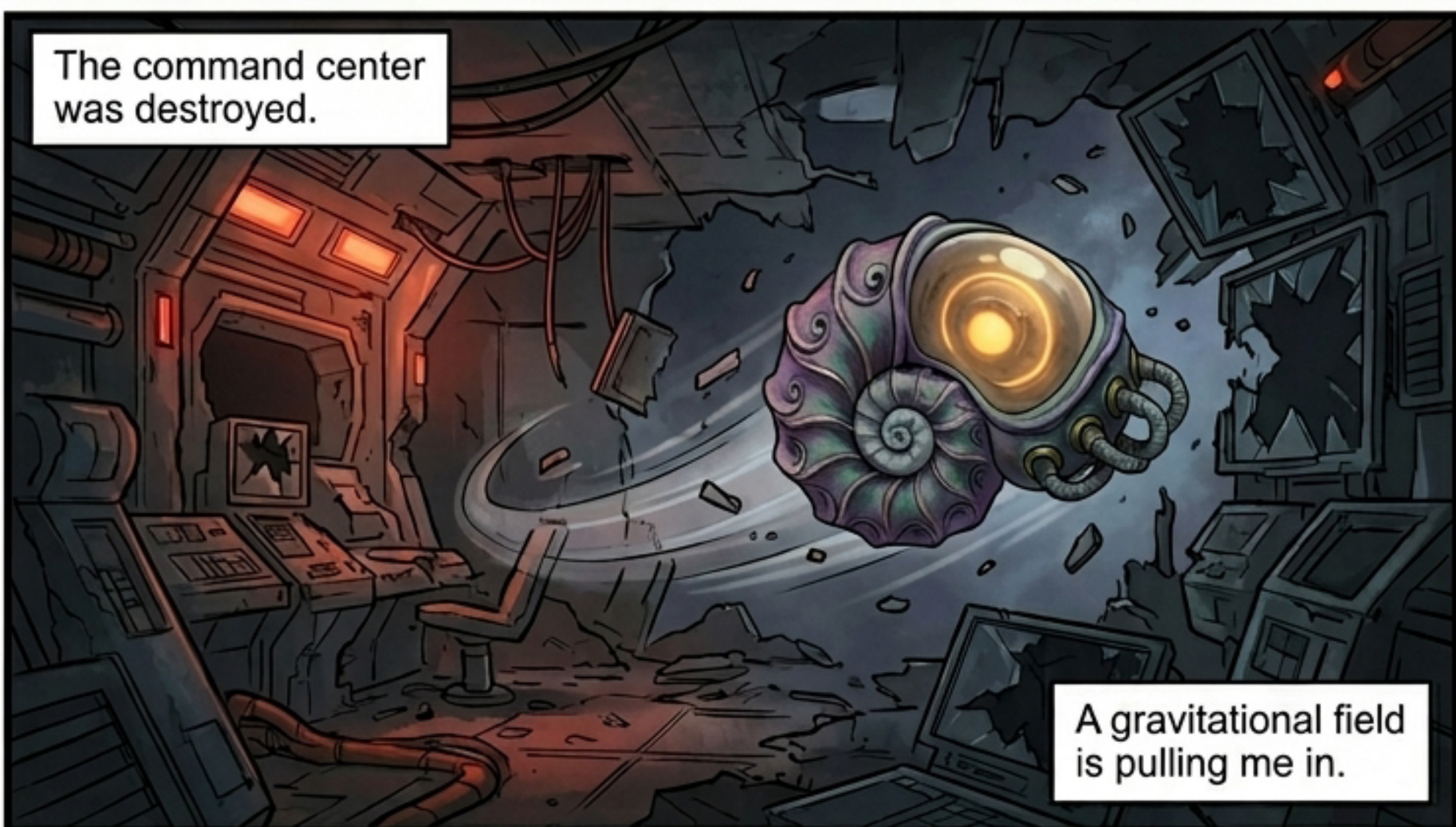


An ancient intelligence tells a story from the distant past.



The cruiser docked with the ancient shipyard.

The command center was destroyed.

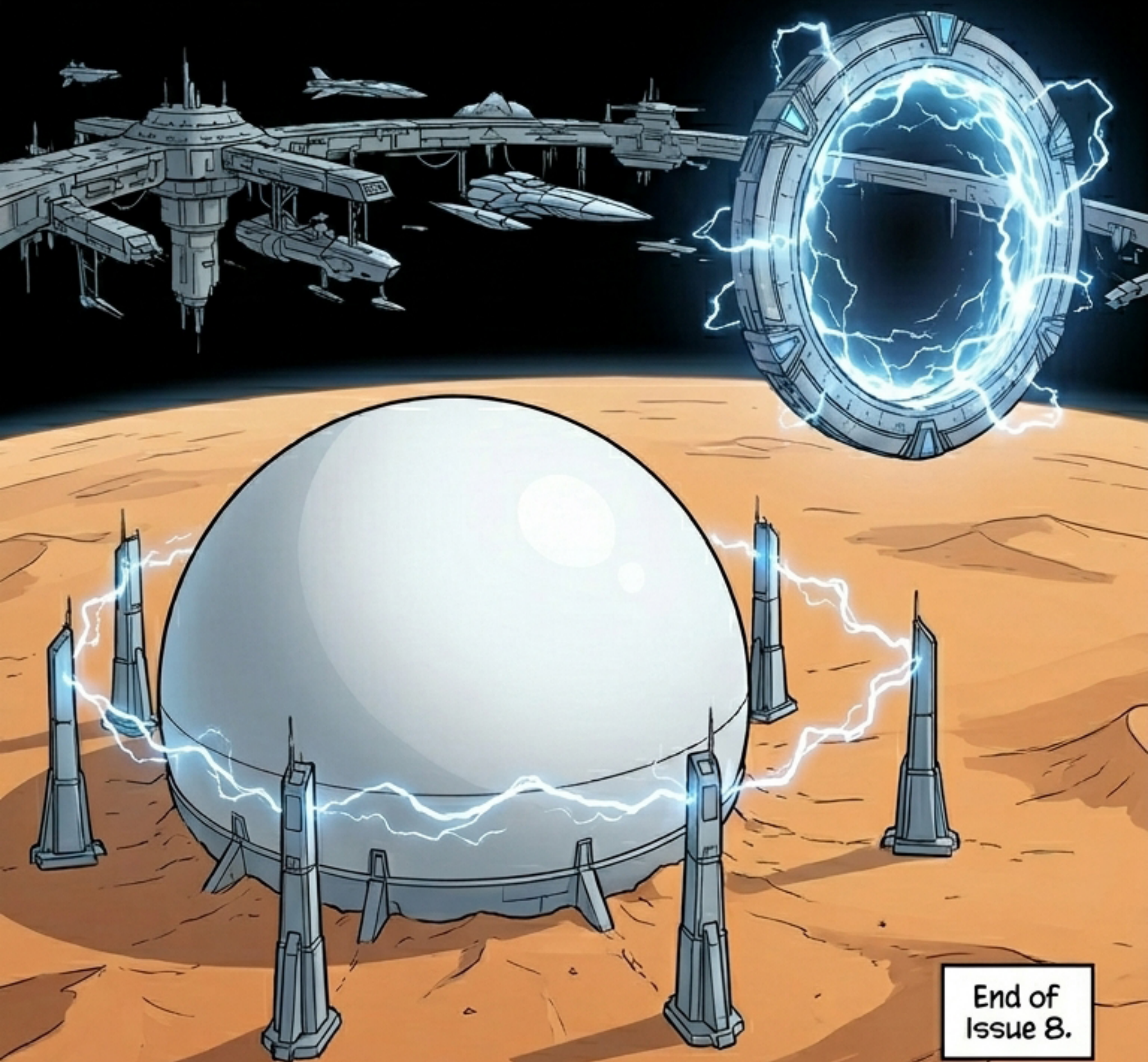


A gravitational field is pulling me in.

This is a captive Kreotit. He has been here the whole time!



A new chapter
was beginning.



End of
Issue 8.

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