

INFINITE DARK

ISSUE 5

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INFINITE DARK

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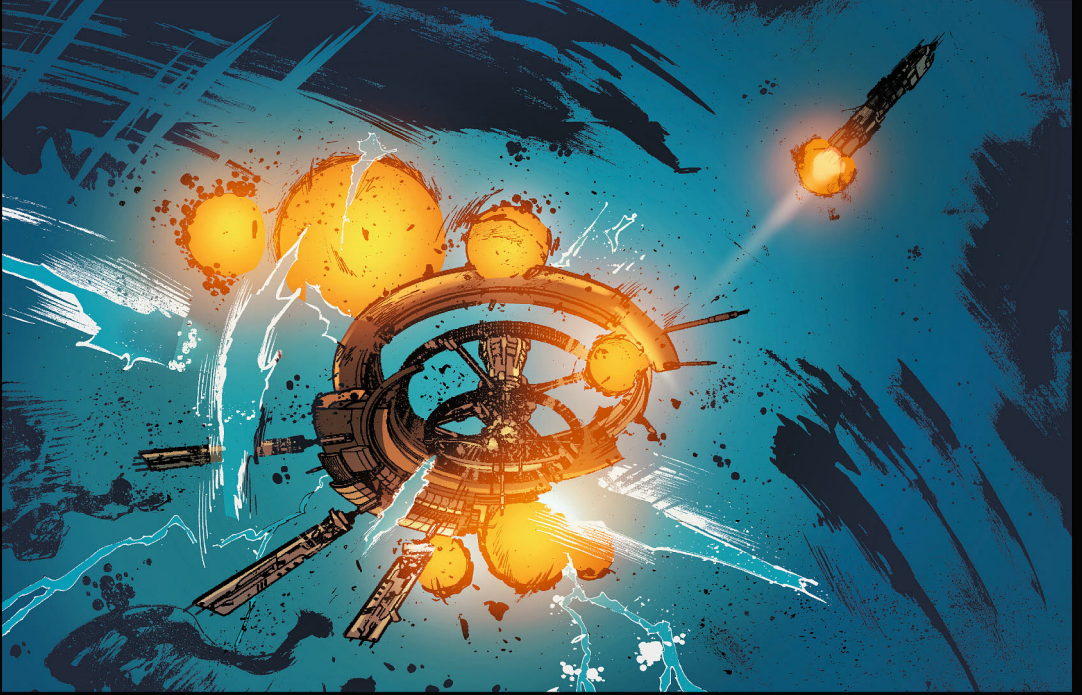
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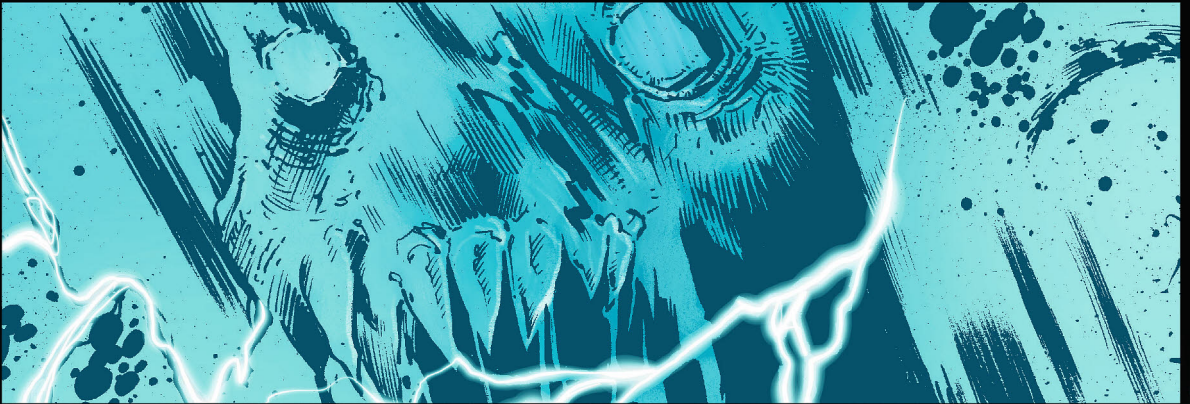
IN THE LAST VOLUME OF INFINITE DARK...

When a rapid entropic decay consumed the entire universe, a few thousand human beings managed to survive on board the Orpheus, a space station protected from the nothingness outside. After two quiet years in the Void, the Orpheus was almost destroyed by a group of insane saboteurs and murderers who claimed to be infected by an otherworldly Entity.



A daring plan was executed to salvage the station and the Entity itself was supposedly destroyed.

But in the weeks since the Orpheus' narrow escape, life has been far from peaceful...



THE CREW OF THE ORPHEUS

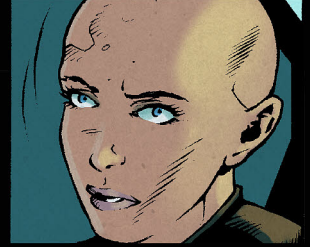
DEVA KARRELL

Security Director of the Orpheus. Deva was exposed to raw entropy while investigating the station's first murder, and she encountered the Entity. She investigated a conspiracy and spurred the Board of Directors to protect the station, confronting the Entity directly as the Orpheus collapsed around her.



KIRIN TAL-SHI

A “technolinguist,” and one of the two original servants of the Entity. Kirin believed that the Entity survived the natural order, and they attempted to remove the Orpheus’ protective pseudoreality field, but were apprehended by Sebastian.



LYNN TENANT

Project Manager for the Orpheus, and Chairperson of its Board of Directors. Lynn often clashed with Deva, and like many, never believed in the Entity’s existence. But ultimately, her willingness to trust her Security Director allowed her to help save the entire station.



SEBASTIAN

Security technician and Deva’s right-hand man. Sebastian does not believe in the Entity, but always stood by Deva no matter what. His steadfast determination can occasionally lead to anger and stubbornness.



SM1TH

An artificial intelligence created to manage the Orpheus’ many varied and complicated computer systems. Hyper-advanced, ubiquitous, and a little snooty, the posh AI seems programmed with a fierce and innate dedication to the human spirit and its potential.

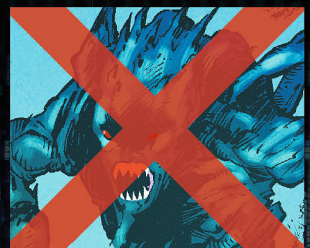
DR. IKE CHALOS

A psychiatrist and former Medical Director for the Orpheus, Ike was murdered as the Orpheus began to collapse. His murderers—the so-called Void Exposure Patients—were supposedly manipulated by the Entity as a part of Kirin Tal-Shi’s conspiracy.



THE ENTITY

While most of the Orpheus’ populace still do not know of or believe in this monster from beyond, its influence nearly caused their demise. Calling itself “Entropy’s Hand,” the Entity was a cosmic scavenger determined to feed on the universal scraps left over from heat death. The Entity was destroyed as a byproduct of Deva’s plan to save the Orpheus.





GASP...
WH-WHA...

I CAN FEEL THE
PULL OF ARTIFICIAL
GRAVITY.

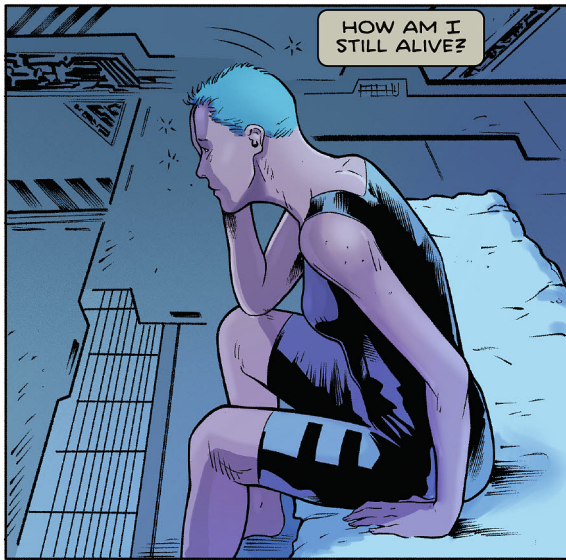
TASTE MEDICINE
ON MY TONGUE.

SMELL THE
PURIFIED AIR.

HEAR SOFT BEEPS
AND ELECTRIC
WHIRS.

SEE THE RED
SOFTENING AS MY VISION
CLEARS.

I'M STILL
ALIVE.

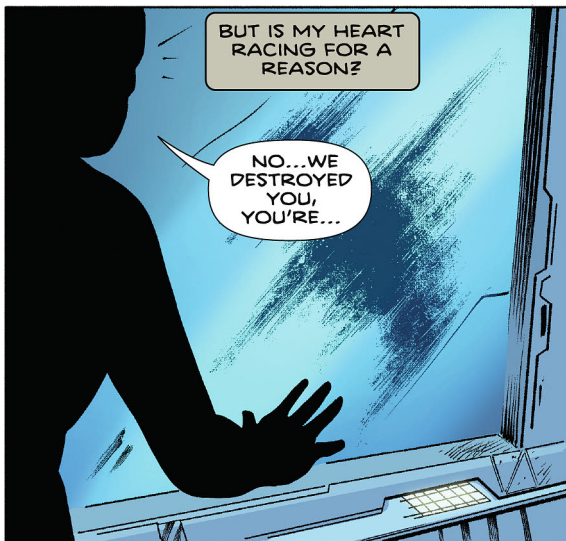


HOW AM I
STILL ALIVE?



AS MY SENSES
RETURN, SO
DOES THE FEAR.

WHO'S
THERE?



BUT IS MY HEART
RACING FOR A
REASON?

NO... WE
DESTROYED
YOU,
YOU'RE...



CAN I
AFFORD TO
DOUBT IT?

...YOU'RE
JUST A
SHADOW.

DIRECTOR
KARRELL?



NO, WAIT, I KNOW YOU-- DR. PIAGET, RIGHT?

DR. ADEWALE PIAGET.

APOLOGIES, I CAME AS SOON AS SMITH PINGED YOUR VITALS TO ME.

I'VE BEEN TAKING CARE OF YOU SINCE THE ORBITAL RING SEPARATION.

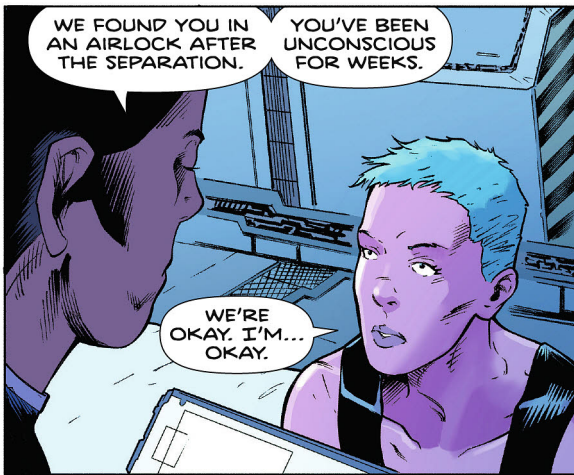


"THE HONEYBEE PROTOCOL..."



WAS A SUCCESS.

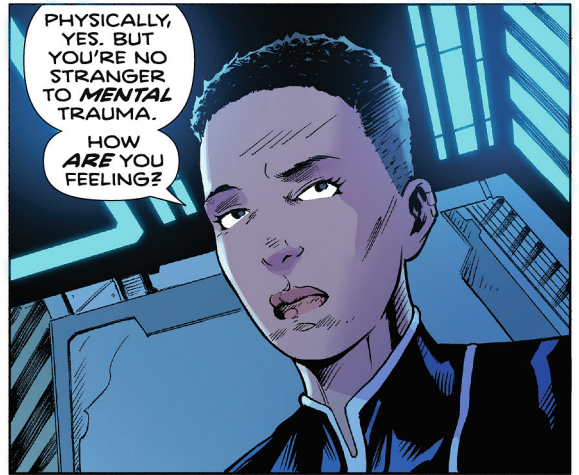
YOUR PLAN SAVED THE ORPHEUS AND EVERYONE ON BOARD.



WE FOUND YOU IN AN AIRLOCK AFTER THE SEPARATION.

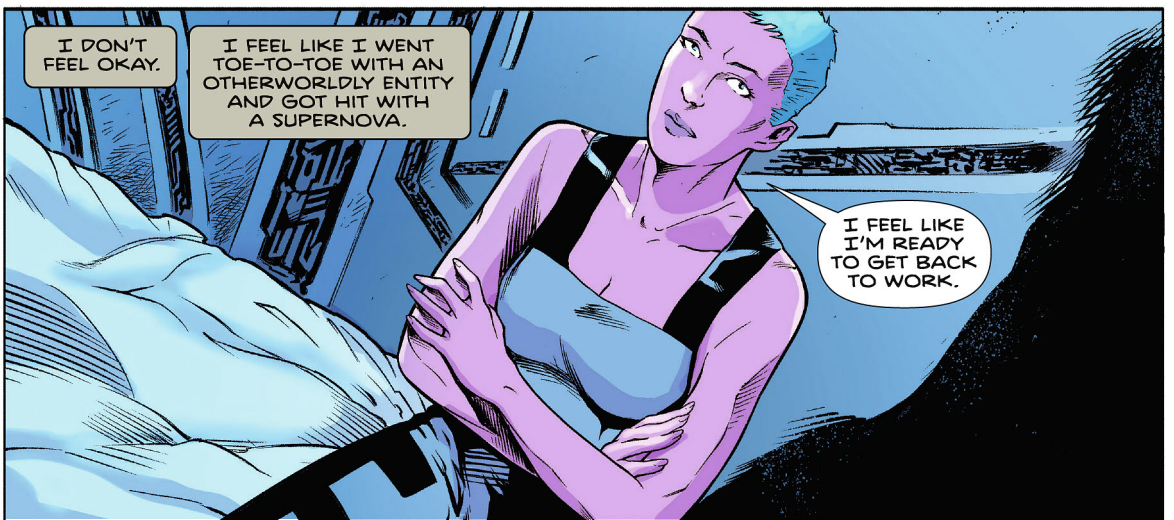
YOU'VE BEEN UNCONSCIOUS FOR WEEKS.

WE'RE OKAY. I'M... OKAY.



PHYSICALLY, YES. BUT YOU'RE NO STRANGER TO MENTAL TRAUMA.

HOW **ARE** YOU FEELING?



I DON'T FEEL OKAY.

I FEEL LIKE I WENT TOE-TO-TOE WITH AN OTHERWORLDLY ENTITY AND GOT HIT WITH A SUPERNOVA.

I FEEL LIKE I'M READY TO GET BACK TO WORK.

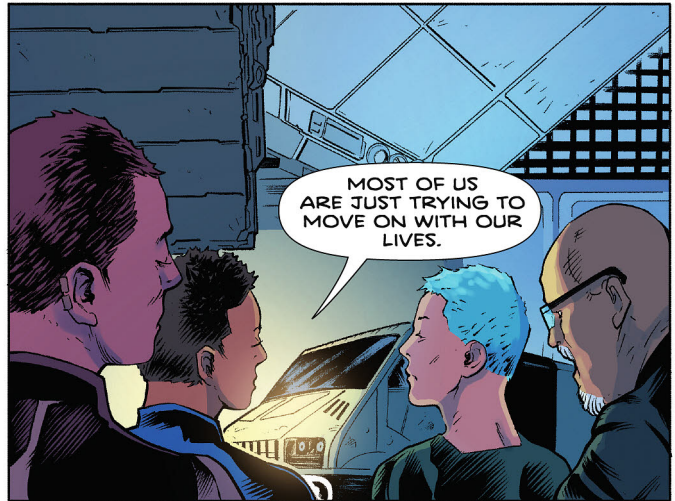


...AND SO I'VE TAKEN **IKE CHALOS'** POSITION ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

IKE'S DEATH WAS...WAIT, WEREN'T YOU TWO--

I'D...RATHER NOT TALK ABOUT IT, IF THAT'S ALL THE SAME TO YOU.

A LOT CHANGED WHILE YOU WERE OUT, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE CASUALTIES OF **SEPARATION DAY**...

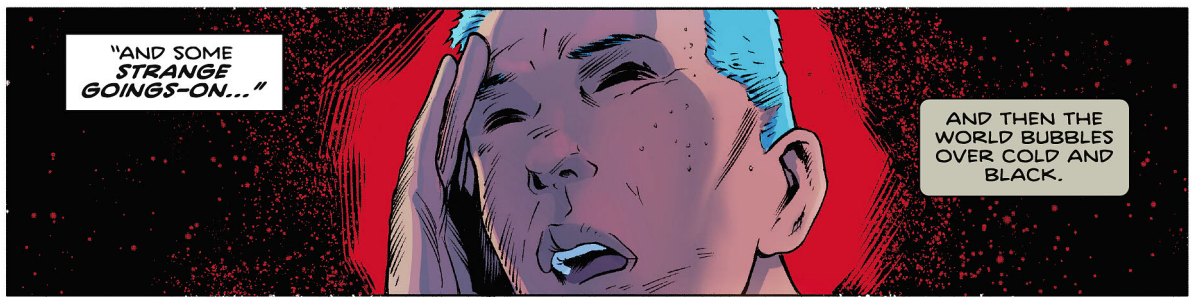


MOST OF US ARE JUST TRYING TO MOVE ON WITH OUR LIVES.



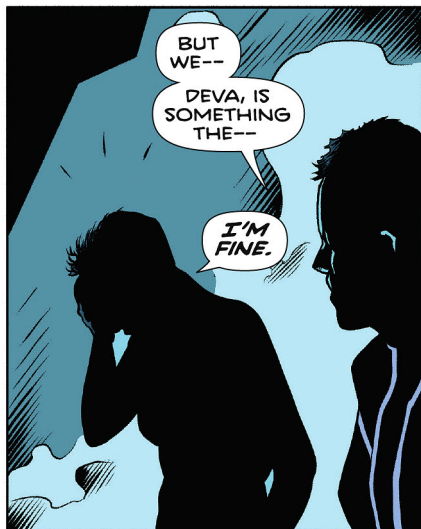
"THERE'S BEEN SOME MISTRUST--"

SUDDENLY, THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED



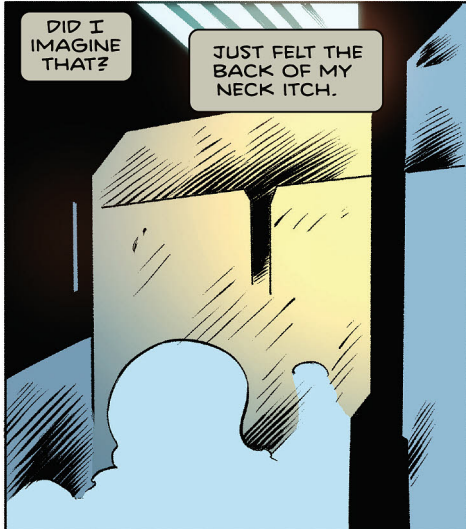
"AND SOME **STRANGE GOINGS-ON...**"

AND THEN THE WORLD BUBBLES OVER COLD AND BLACK.



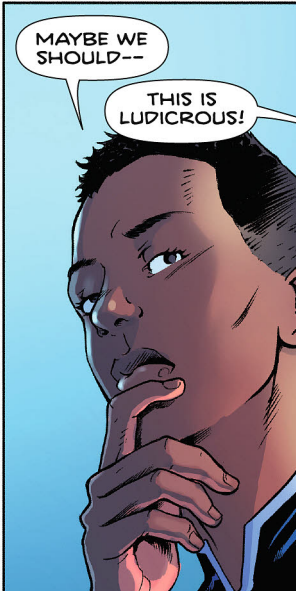
BUT WE--
DEVA, IS SOMETHING THE--

I'M FINE.



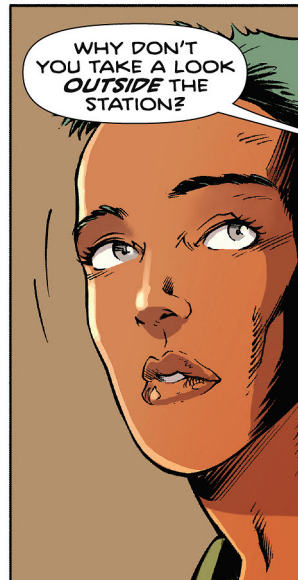
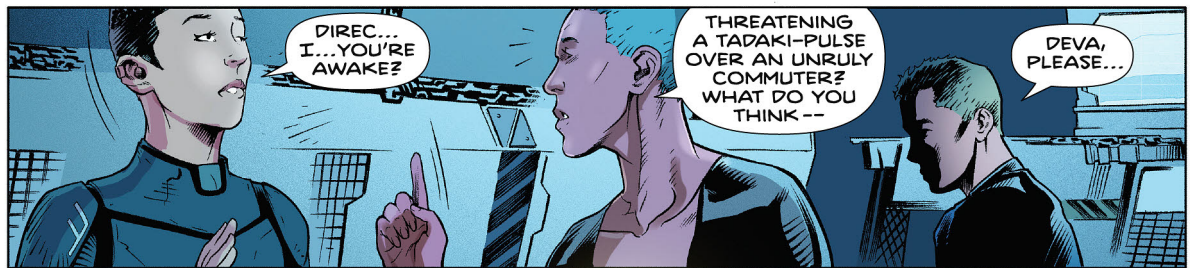
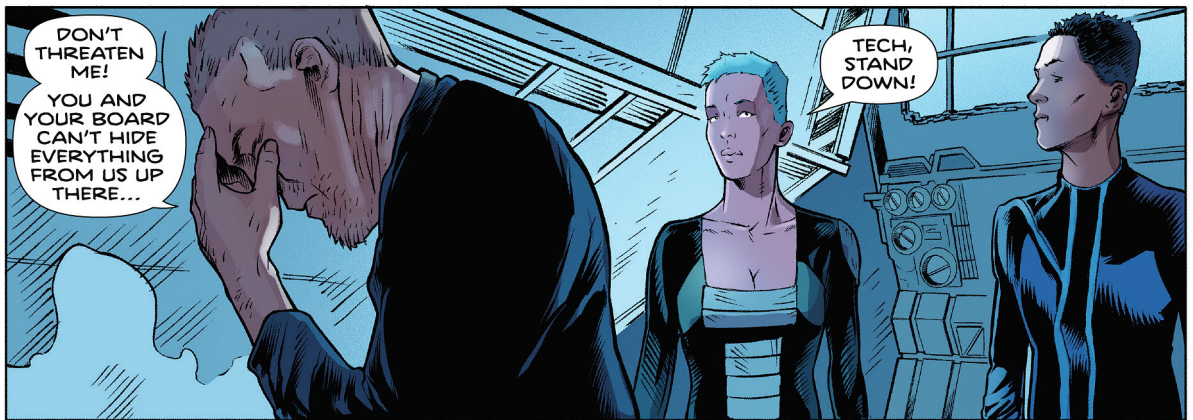
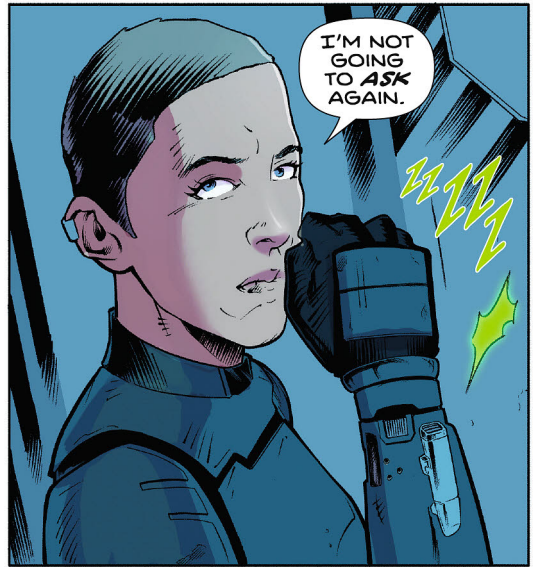
DID I IMAGINE THAT?

JUST FELT THE BACK OF MY NECK ITCH.



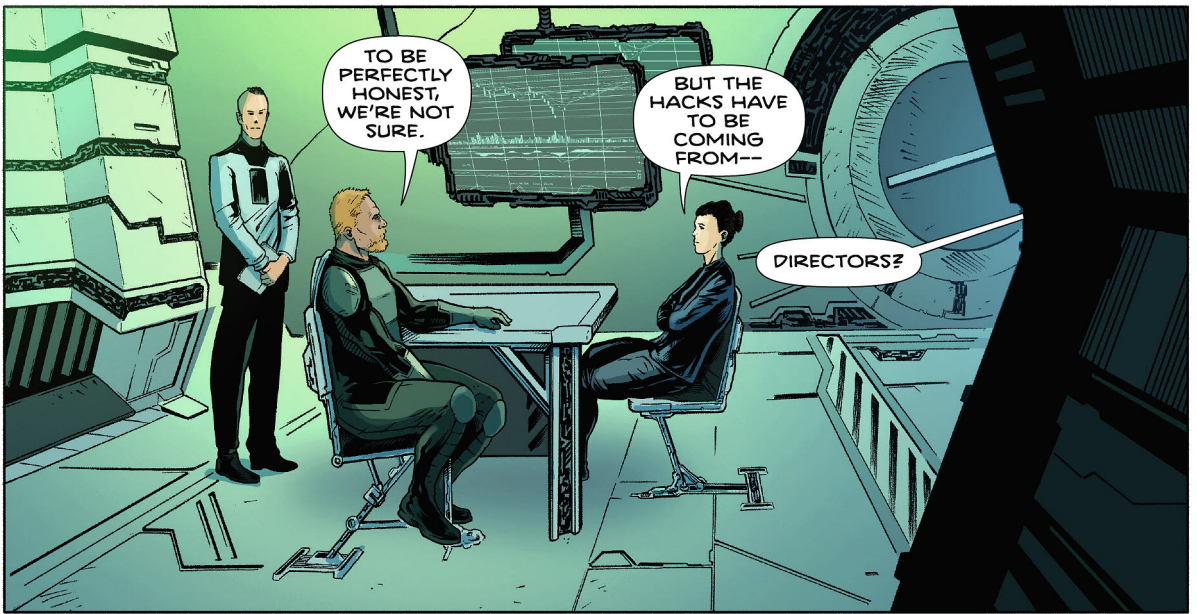
MAYBE WE SHOULD--

THIS IS LUDICROUS!



"WHAT AM I
LOOKING AT?"

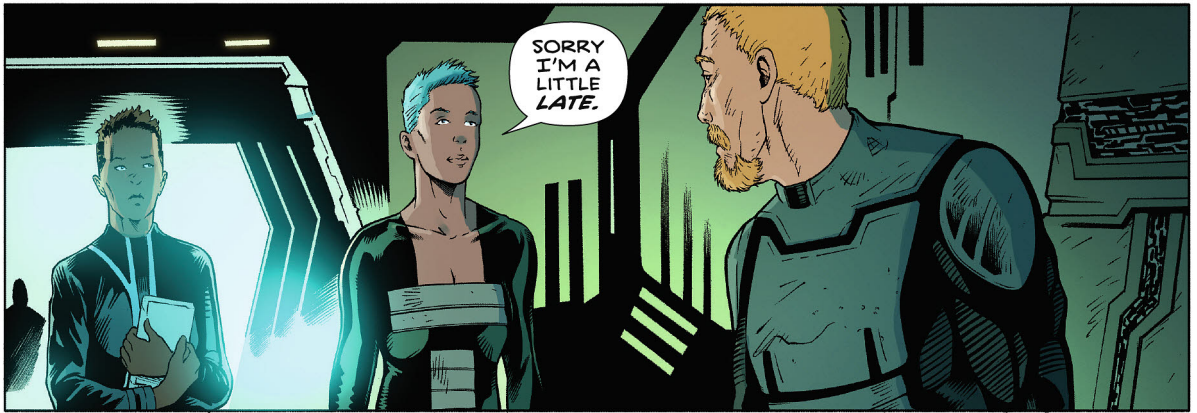




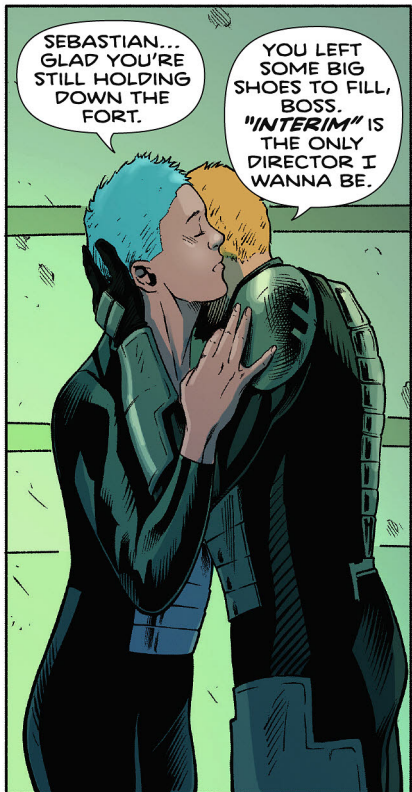
TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, WE'RE NOT SURE.

BUT THE HACKS HAVE TO BE COMING FROM--

DIRECTORS?!



SORRY I'M A LITTLE LATE.



SEBASTIAN... GLAD YOU'RE STILL HOLDING DOWN THE FORT.

YOU LEFT SOME BIG SHOES TO FILL, BOSS. "INTERIM" IS THE ONLY DIRECTOR I WANNA BE.



I... AT THE END, WE...

LYNN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY ANOTHER WORD.



IT'S AN HONOR, DIRECTOR KARRELL. I'M *SILAS*.

YOU'RE OUR NEW CHIEF TECHNO-LINGUIST?

NOT QUITE.



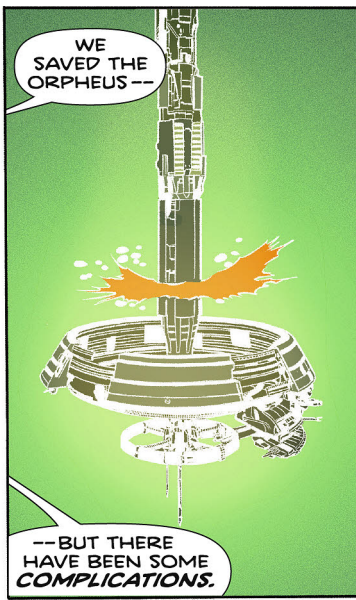
SMITH! I MISSED YOUR VOICE.

I've been handling the late Alvin Scheidt's duties, I'm afraid.

Hence, Silas, to assist as my, ah...corporeal liaison for technolinguist duties.



LET'S GET YOU UP TO SPEED.



WE SAVED THE ORPHEUS--

--BUT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME COMPLICATIONS.



SHE'S ALREADY SEEN THE OUTER MIRROR EFFECT. AND WE WITNESSED ANOTHER TRANSIT ALTERCATION.



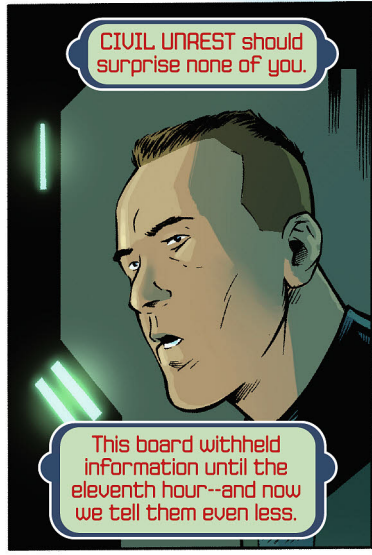
AGAIN? WE'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP CRACKING DOWN.

THE PUBLIC CHATS HAVE BEEN TRENDING WITH STEADY UNREST...



I THINK WE'RE LOOKING AT BAD ACTORS, SOMEONE MANIPULATING--

A few hacked terminals are not a grand conspiracy.

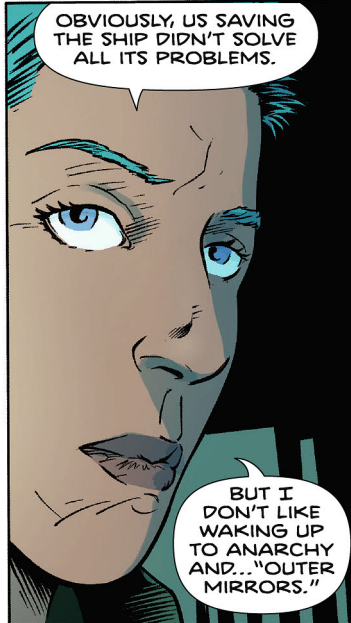


CIVIL UNREST should surprise none of you.

This board withheld information until the eleventh hour--and now we tell them even less.

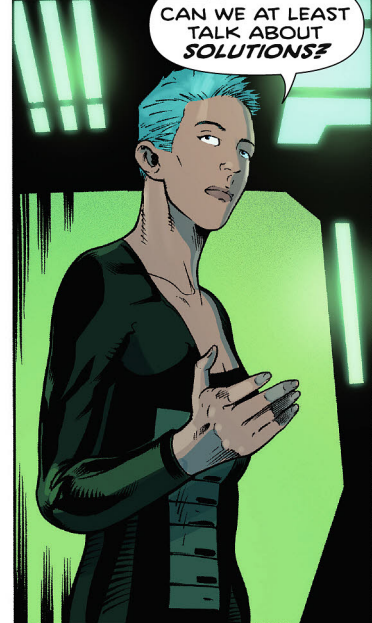


DÉJÀ VU.

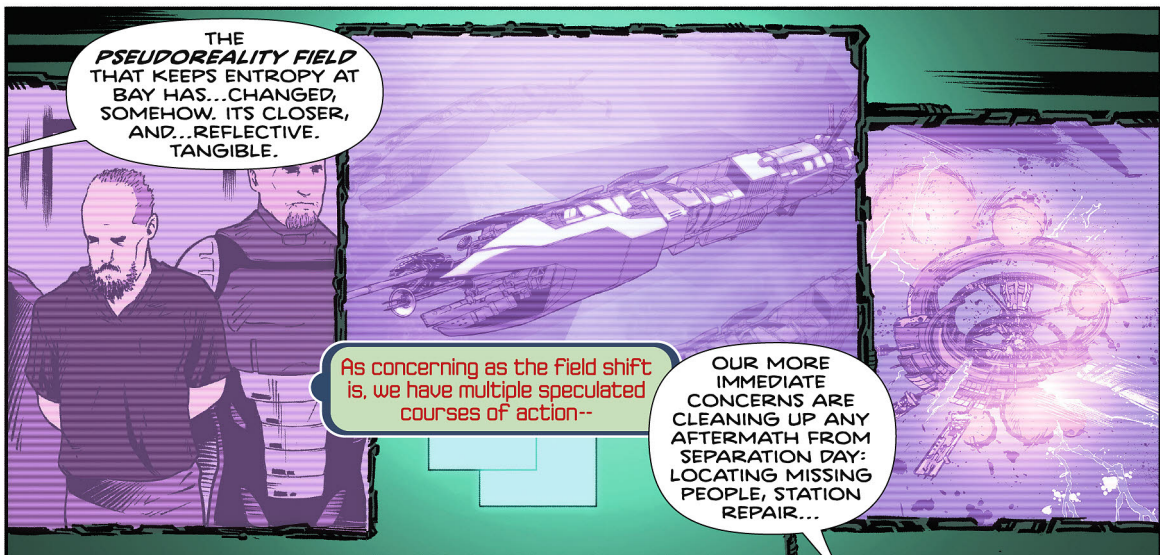


OBVIOUSLY, US SAVING THE SHIP DIDN'T SOLVE ALL ITS PROBLEMS.

BUT I DON'T LIKE WAKING UP TO ANARCHY AND... "OUTER MIRRORS."



CAN WE AT LEAST TALK ABOUT SOLUTIONS?



THE **PSEUDOREALITY FIELD** THAT KEEPS ENTROPY AT BAY HAS...CHANGED, SOMEHOW. ITS CLOSER, AND...REFLECTIVE. TANGIBLE.

As concerning as the field shift is, we have multiple speculated courses of action--

OUR MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS ARE CLEANING UP ANY AFTERMATH FROM SEPARATION DAY: LOCATING MISSING PEOPLE, STATION REPAIR...



WE **BLEW UP** HALF THE STATION, OUR FORCE FIELD TURNED INTO A **DARK CRYSTAL**, AND NOW PEOPLE ARE SCARED.

I TAKE A FEW WEEKS OFF TO NAP AND IT ALL FALLS APART.

BUT WE CAN FIX THIS. I'M READY TO HELP.

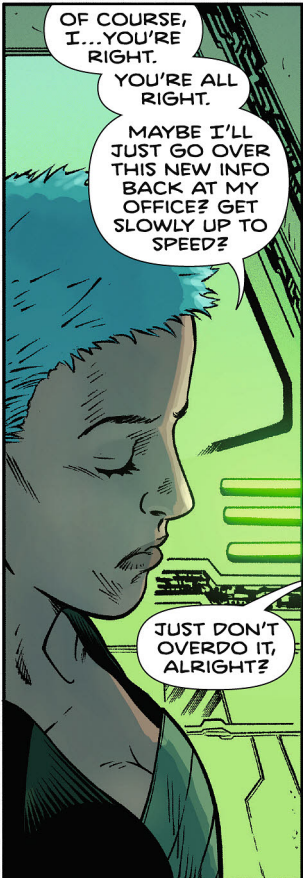
I'D HAVE TO ADVISE AGAINST RESUMING YOUR POST SO QUICKLY.



YOU'VE ONLY BEEN CONSCIOUS FOR A COUPLE HOURS, AFTER A TERRIBLY TRAUMATIC EVENT.

WE KNOW YOU'RE EAGER TO GET BACK TO IT, AND EVERYONE ON THE STATION IS GRATEFUL FOR WHAT YOU DID LAST MONTH...THE COUNTLESS LIVES YOU SAVED...

BUT YOU NEED REAL REST.



OF COURSE, I... YOU'RE RIGHT.

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.

MAYBE I'LL JUST GO OVER THIS NEW INFO BACK AT MY OFFICE? GET SLOWLY UP TO SPEED?

JUST DON'T OVERDO IT, ALRIGHT?



THE BARRIER BETWEEN US AND **THE BLACK** HAS CRYSTALLIZED.

HACKING. CIVIL UNREST. THE LIST GOES ON AND ON.

BUT WHAT WORRIES ME IS WHAT THEY DON'T MENTION.



"THE ENTITY."



"THAT MONSTER FROM BEYOND THAT WANTED TO LET ENTROPY CONSUME US."

"THE STATION'S FIRST MURDER, THE VOID EXPOSURE PATIENTS THAT RAN RAMPANT, ALL THE EVENTS OF SEPARATION DAY..."

"I SAW IT AND WARNED THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS."

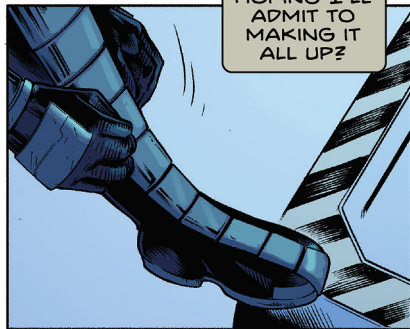
"I LET IT SCREAM INTO MY MIND AND THEN I WATCHED IT DIE."



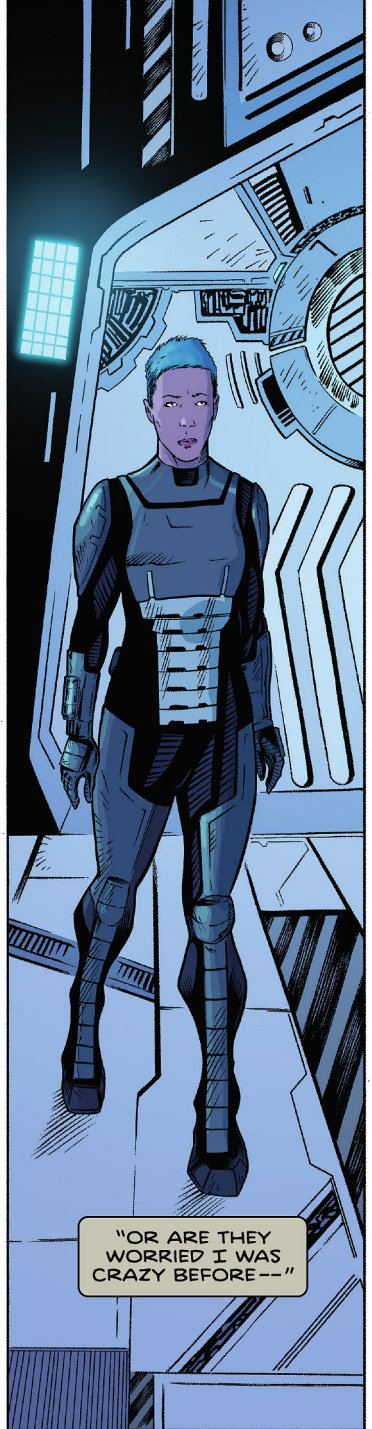
"AND NOBODY ELSE BELIEVES ME."



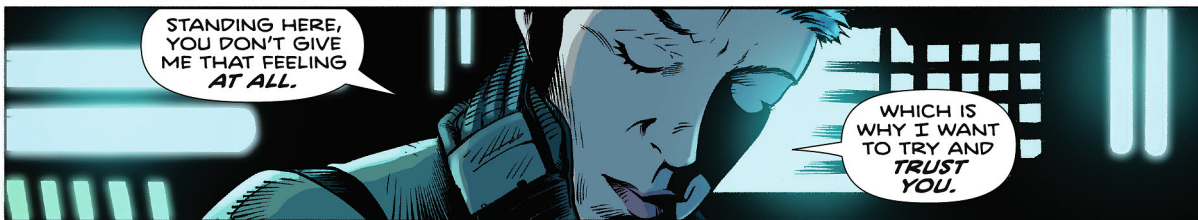
"ARE THEY HOPING I'LL ADMIT TO MAKING IT ALL UP?"



CLACK



"OR ARE THEY WORRIED I WAS CRAZY BEFORE--"

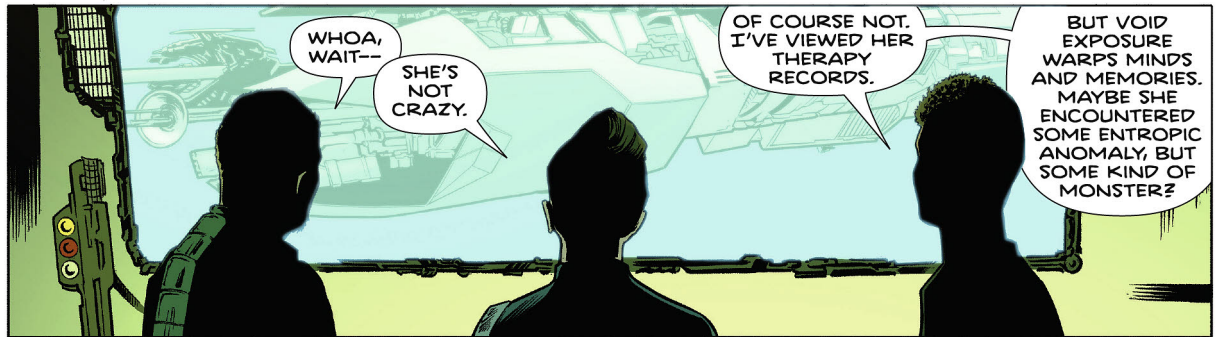




DEVA SEEMS OKAY. MAYBE WE WERE WORRIED FOR NOTHING?

I'M GRATEFUL SHE DIDN'T FIGHT US, AND SHE DIDN'T MENTION THE... YOU KNOW.

HER DELUSIONS?

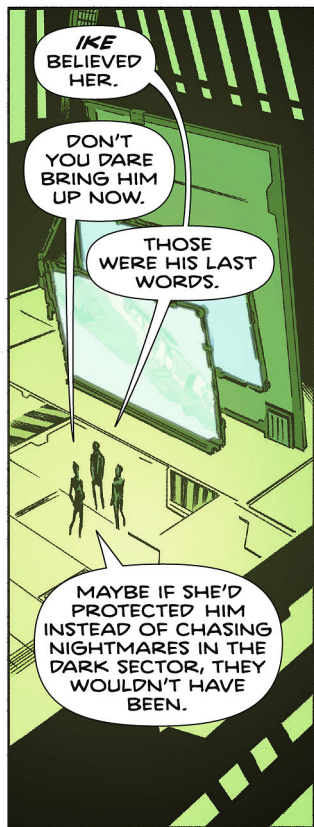


WHOA, WAIT--

SHE'S NOT CRAZY.

OF COURSE NOT. I'VE VIEWED HER THERAPY RECORDS.

BUT VOID EXPOSURE WARPS MINDS AND MEMORIES. MAYBE SHE ENCOUNTERED SOME ENTROPIC ANOMALY, BUT SOME KIND OF MONSTER?



IKE BELIEVED HER.

DON'T YOU DARE BRING HIM UP NOW.

THOSE WERE HIS LAST WORDS.

MAYBE IF SHE'D PROTECTED HIM INSTEAD OF CHASING NIGHTMARES IN THE DARK SECTOR, THEY WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN.



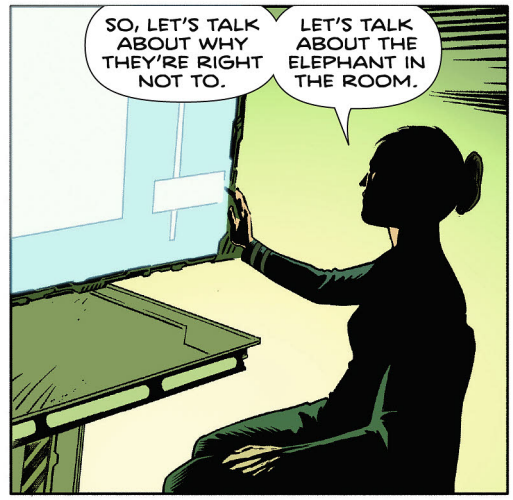
...EITHER WAY, IT'S BEST DEVA TAKE SOME LEAVE.

SHE DOESN'T HAVE THE SAME CONTEXT WE DO, AND DECISIONS NEED MAKING.

AND SOON. PUBLIC OPINION IS ONLY GETTING WORSE.



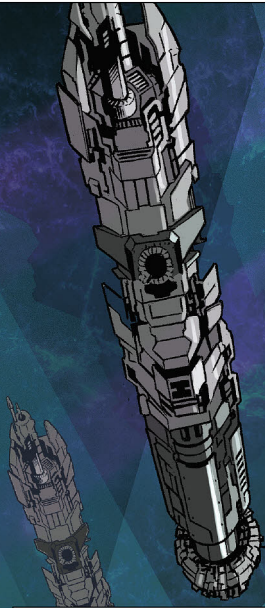
MAINTENANCE ISSUES, DATA LEAKS-- THERAPY REPORTS AND PUBLIC CHATS ARE ALL GRIM AND PARANOID. OUR PEOPLE DON'T TRUST THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.



SO, LET'S TALK ABOUT WHY THEY'RE RIGHT NOT TO.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM.

"THE TECHNOLOGY THAT GENERATES **REAL PHYSICS** AND PROTECTS US FROM THE **RAW ENTROPY** OUTSIDE--HAS CHANGED IRREVOCALLY.



"THE PSEUDOREALITY FIELD IS NOW SOLID, REFLECTIVE. THERE IS NO PRECEDENT FOR THIS.

"WE CAN ONLY GUESS WHAT ITS PROPERTIES ARE, BUT, AS ONLY THE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM KNOW..."

IT IS **CRACKING**.
THE ONLY THING KEEPING US ALIVE IS STARTING TO SHATTER, AND WE'RE RUNNING LOW ON TIME TO FIX IT.



YEAH, IT'S **SPOOKY** AS HELL, BUT WE ALREADY HAVE A FIX.
WE CAN SYNC UP THE FIELD PROJECTOR TO THIS WEIRD CRYSTAL SHAPE AND LOCK THE ORPHEUS IN.

THAT'S ONE OPTION.



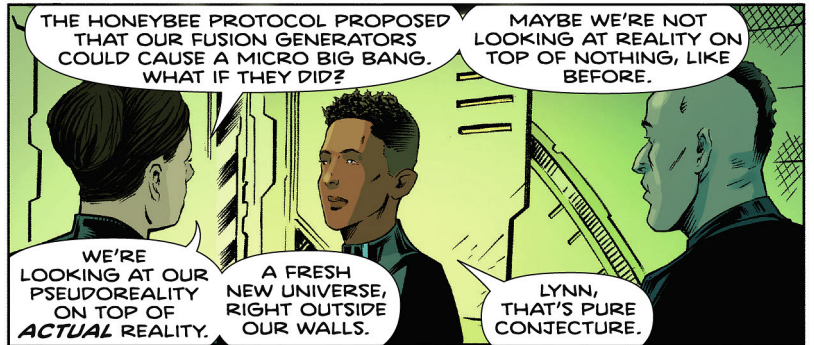
THE HONEYBEE PROTOCOL PROPOSED THAT OUR FUSION GENERATORS COULD CAUSE A MICRO BIG BANG. WHAT IF THEY DID?

MAYBE WE'RE NOT LOOKING AT REALITY ON TOP OF NOTHING, LIKE BEFORE.

WE'RE LOOKING AT OUR PSEUDOREALITY ON TOP OF **ACTUAL REALITY**.

A FRESH NEW UNIVERSE, RIGHT OUTSIDE OUR WALLS.

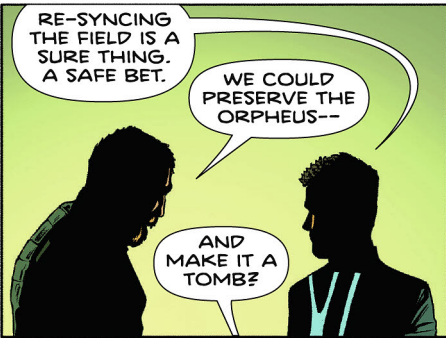
LYNN, THAT'S PURE CONJECTURE.



RE-SYNCING THE FIELD IS A SURE THING. A SAFE BET.

WE COULD PRESERVE THE ORPHEUS--

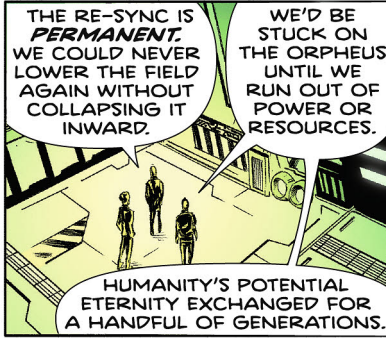
AND MAKE IT A TOMB?



THE RE-SYNC IS **PERMANENT**. WE COULD NEVER LOWER THE FIELD AGAIN WITHOUT COLLAPSING IT INWARD.

WE'D BE STUCK ON THE ORPHEUS UNTIL WE RUN OUT OF POWER OR RESOURCES.

HUMANITY'S POTENTIAL ETERNITY EXCHANGED FOR A HANDFUL OF GENERATIONS.



LOWERING THE FIELD-- EVEN FOR A SECOND TO SCAN-- COULD ERASE US INSTANTLY. THOSE ODDS AREN'T AS HOPEFUL AS SM1TH ACTS. WHERE IS HE, ANYWAY?



I'm sorry, but we have to table this debate.

I've been tracking Director Harrell since she left security a half an hour ago...

And you all need to go after her.



"Because she's not alone."

WHY ARE WE HERE?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU BROKE ME OUT.

THIS WAS YOUR IDEA, REMEMBER?

NOT THAT I'M COMPLAINING.

NO, I MEAN, HOW... WHY THE DARK SECTOR?

SEARCH ME.

WE'RE IN *YOUR* HEAD.

I'VE NEVER USED THE ORPHEUS VR PROGRAMS LIKE THIS.

INSTEAD OF USING SM1TH OR A RECREATIONAL SIM AS A PRESERVATIVE SPACE, BRIDGING OUR MINDS DIRECTLY. PROJECTING SHARED IMAGINATIONS? MUCH MORE UNSTABLE.

I'VE DONE IT BEFORE. WITH *IKE CHALOS*.

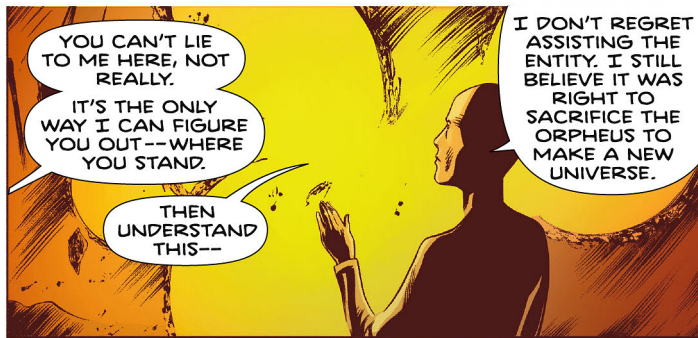
SPEAK OF THE DEVIL---



GUILTY CONSCIENCE?

MAYBE I COULD'VE SAVED IKE, BUT HIS BLOOD IS ON **YOUR** HANDS.

WE'RE SHARING MINDS, DEVA...LIKE THE ENTITY SHARED **ITS** MIND WITH OURS.

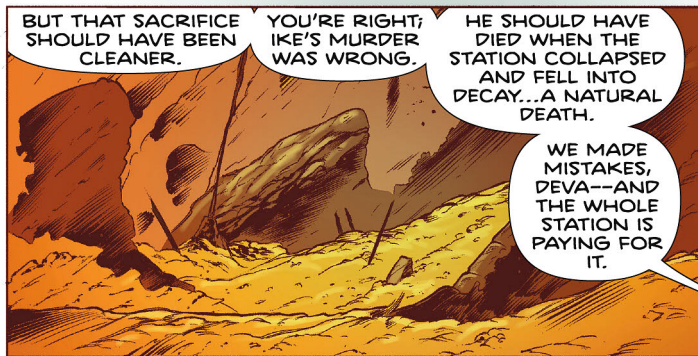


YOU CAN'T LIE TO ME HERE, NOT REALLY.

IT'S THE ONLY WAY I CAN FIGURE YOU OUT -- WHERE YOU STAND.

THEN UNDERSTAND THIS--

I DON'T REGRET ASSISTING THE ENTITY. I STILL BELIEVE IT WAS RIGHT TO SACRIFICE THE ORPHEUS TO MAKE A NEW UNIVERSE.



BUT THAT SACRIFICE SHOULD HAVE BEEN CLEANER.

YOU'RE RIGHT; IKE'S MURDER WAS WRONG.

HE SHOULD HAVE DIED WHEN THE STATION COLLAPSED AND FELL INTO DECAY...A NATURAL DEATH.

WE MADE MISTAKES, DEVA--AND THE WHOLE STATION IS PAYING FOR IT.



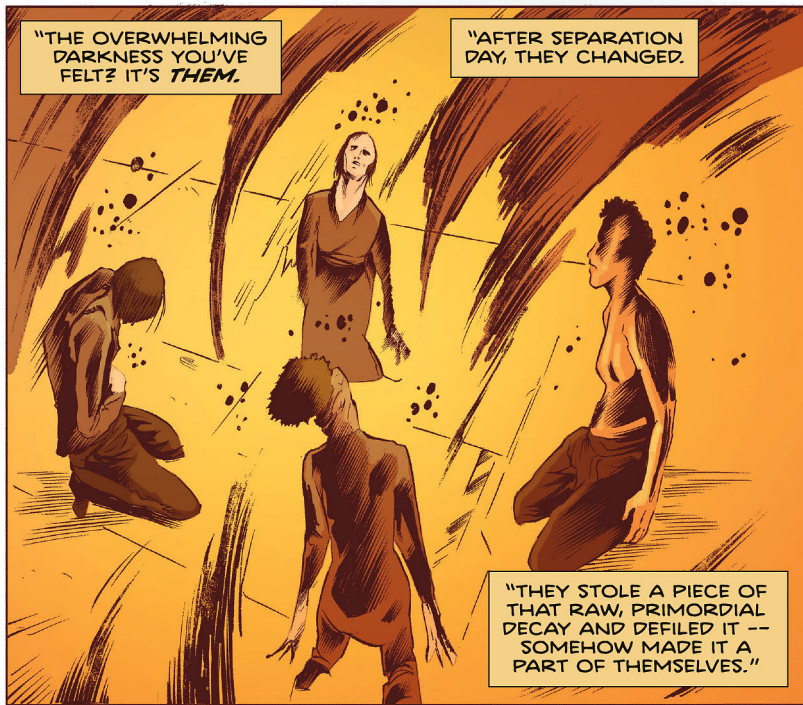
'WE' MADE MISTAKES?

ALVIN WAS RIGHT TO EXPOSE ME, TO SHOW ME THE VOID--I SAW. I UNDERSTOOD.

BUT IN HIS HUBRIS HE TRIED TO BRING OTHERS INTO THE FOLD.

PEOPLE WHO SAW ENTROPY AND MISUNDERSTOOD IT--LIKE YOU, AND--

THE VOID EXPOSURE PATIENTS.



"THE OVERWHELMING DARKNESS YOU'VE FELT? IT'S **THEM**."

"AFTER SEPARATION DAY, THEY CHANGED."

"THEY STOLE A PIECE OF THAT RAW, PRIMORDIAL DECAY AND DEFILED IT -- SOMEHOW MADE IT A PART OF THEMSELVES."



'ENTROPY'S HAND!'

AT THE END, IT... IT FELT EXISTENCE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND PANICKED, IT REACHED OUT IN PAIN...

AND I CUT OFF ITS HAND.

I FUCKED UP.



I AGREE, DEVA.
BUT WE WON'T LET IT GO ANY FURTHER.

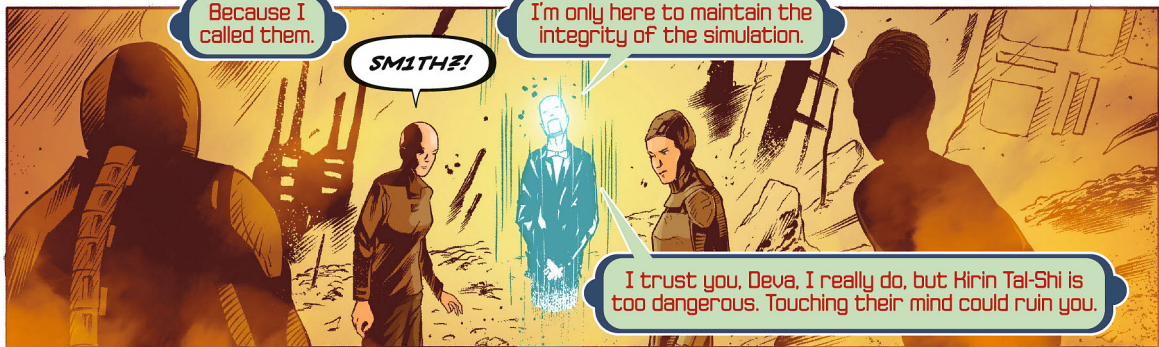


GET BACK, BOSS!
KIRIN'S A MURDERER! YOU CAN'T TRUST THEM!



CLEARLY I WAS DEAD-ON ABOUT THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE EARLIER.

NO, THESE AREN'T...
WHY ARE YOU TWO IN HERE?

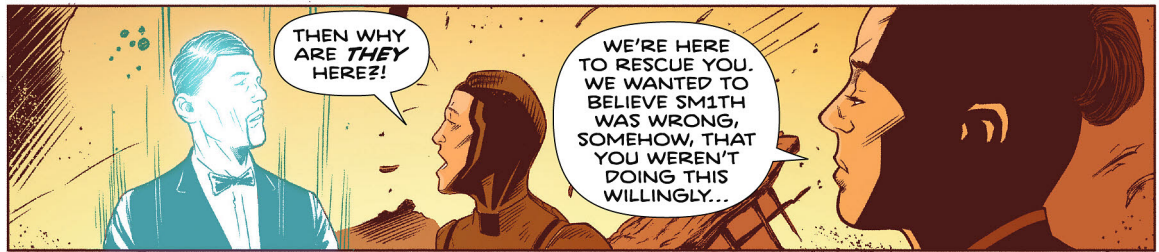


Because I called them.

SMITH?!

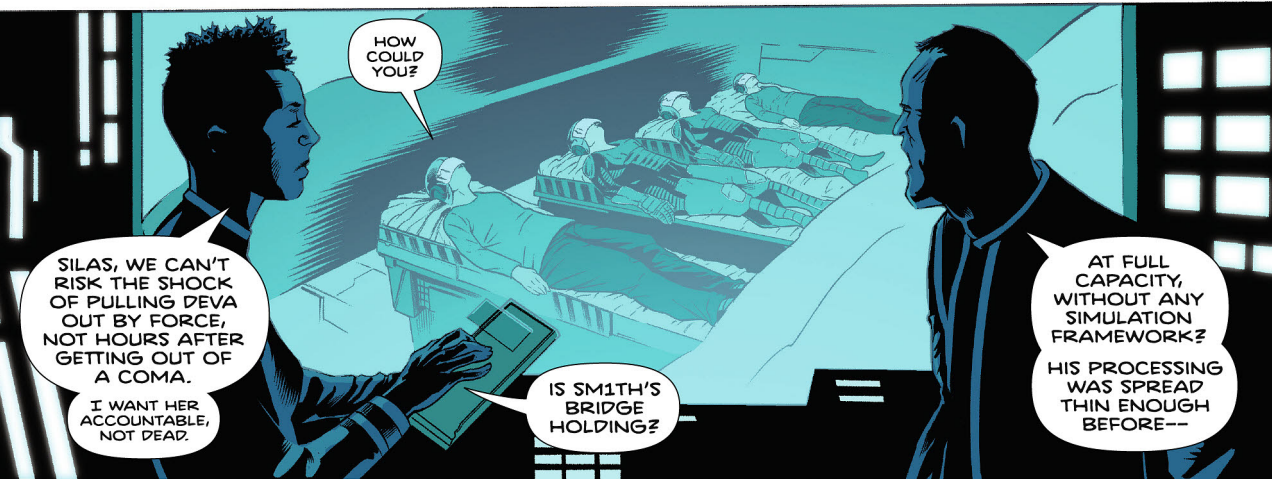
I'm only here to maintain the integrity of the simulation.

I trust you, Deva, I really do, but Kirin Tal-Shi is too dangerous. Touching their mind could ruin you.



THEN WHY ARE *THEY* HERE?!

WE'RE HERE TO RESCUE YOU. WE WANTED TO BELIEVE SMITH WAS WRONG, SOMEHOW, THAT YOU WEREN'T DOING THIS WILLINGLY...



HOW COULD YOU?

SILAS, WE CAN'T RISK THE SHOCK OF PULLING DEVA OUT BY FORCE, NOT HOURS AFTER GETTING OUT OF A COMA.
I WANT HER ACCOUNTABLE, NOT DEAD.

IS SMITH'S BRIDGE HOLDING?

AT FULL CAPACITY, WITHOUT ANY SIMULATION FRAMEWORK?
HIS PROCESSING WAS SPREAD THIN ENOUGH BEFORE--

"NOW IT'S GOING TO COLLAPSE."

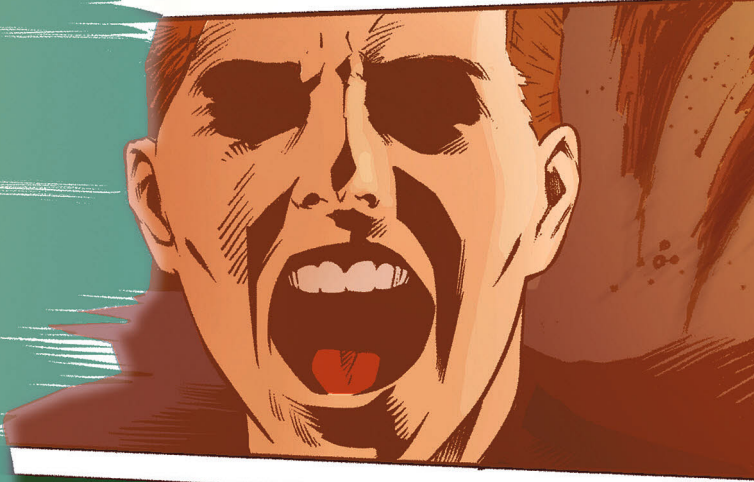
Too much, I'm afraid--

Have to ask you all to--

Rapid memory exchange--

Might experience minor Egoblood--

Ending simulation.





I DON'T UNDERSTAND

SO BIG AND SO EMPTY AND I

WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE IN



I WAS SO SURE

IT WAS ALWAYS SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE THIS

WHY DID I FAIL THEN



I CAN'T SAVE EVERYONE

THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THINGS

WHY WOULD I GIVE UP NOW



I KNOW THAT IT'S INEVITABLE

WITH SO FEW SOULS AND SO LITTLE TIME

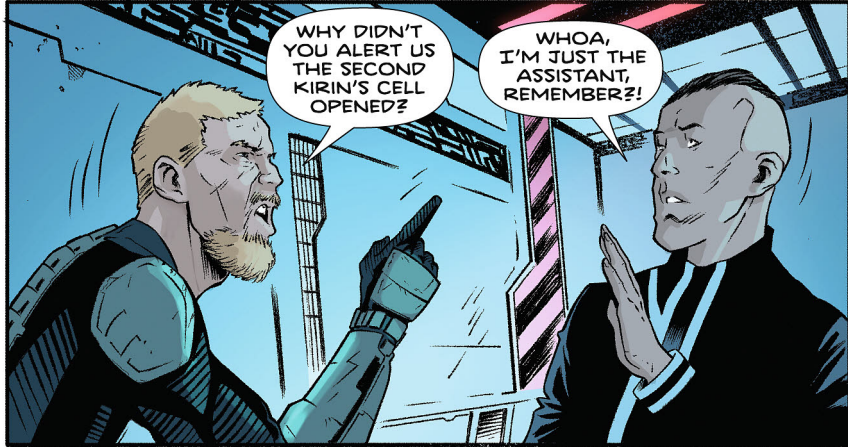
WHY CAN'T I JUST HOPE



"I hope we can all just...remain calm."

CALM?
CALM?

WE'RE LUCKY THE STATION WASN'T BLOWN UP AGAIN.



WHY DIDN'T YOU ALERT US THE SECOND KIRIN'S CELL OPENED?

WHOA, I'M JUST THE ASSISTANT, REMEMBER?!



AT LEAST THERE DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE ANY LONG-TERM DAMAGE.

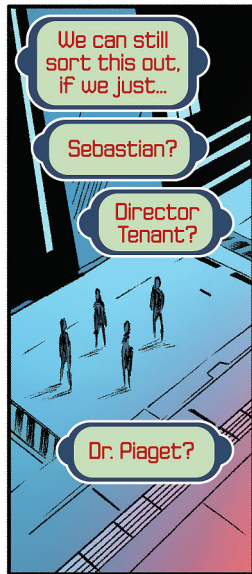
MEDICALLY SPEAKING, AT LEAST...



SEBASTIAN, WAIT, WE HAVE TO--

FORGET IT.

I...I only meant to...

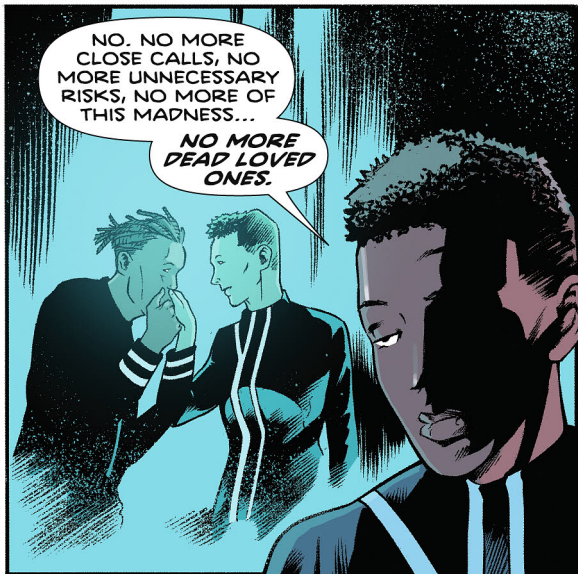


We can still sort this out, if we just...

Sebastian?

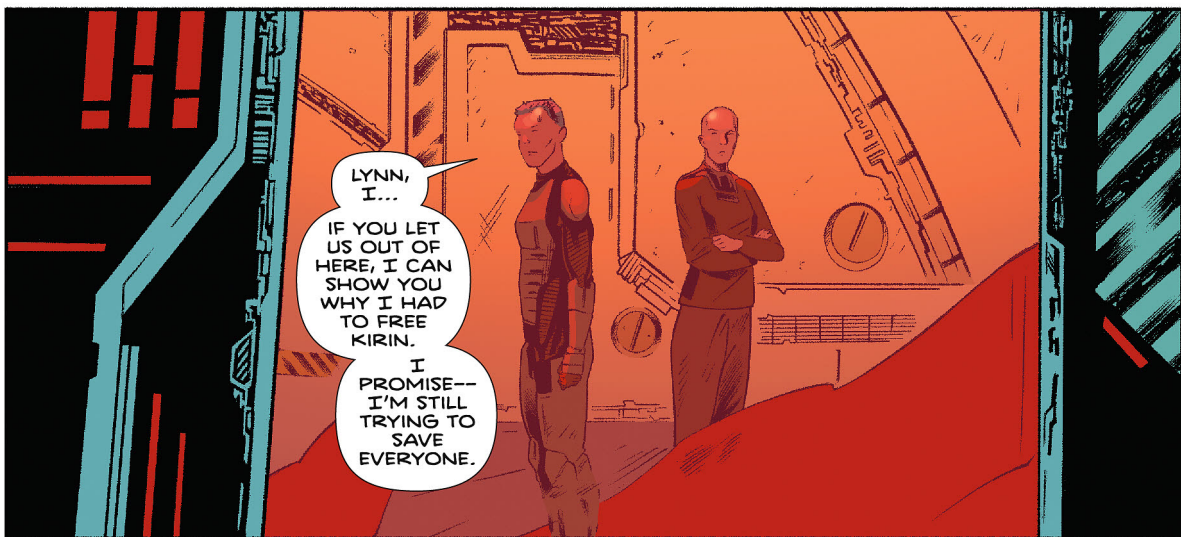
Director Tenant?

Dr. Piaget?



NO. NO MORE CLOSE CALLS, NO MORE UNNECESSARY RISKS, NO MORE OF THIS MADNESS...

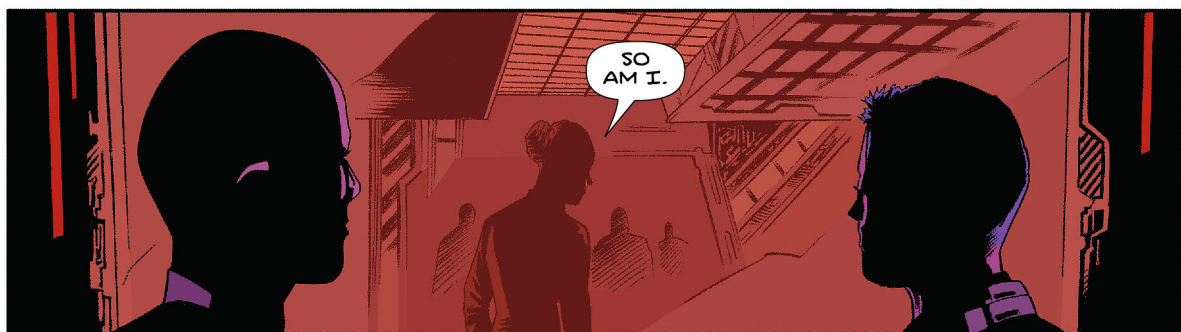
NO MORE DEAD LOVED ONES.



LYNN,
I...

IF YOU LET US OUT OF HERE, I CAN SHOW YOU WHY I HAD TO FREE KIRIN.

I PROMISE-- I'M STILL TRYING TO SAVE EVERYONE.



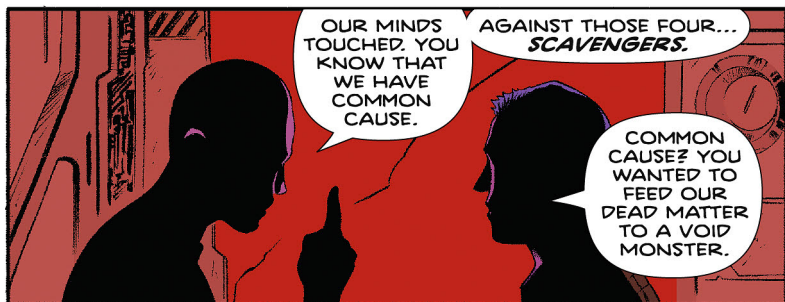
SO AM I.



WELL, NOW WE KNOW.

NOW WE CAN STOP THEM.

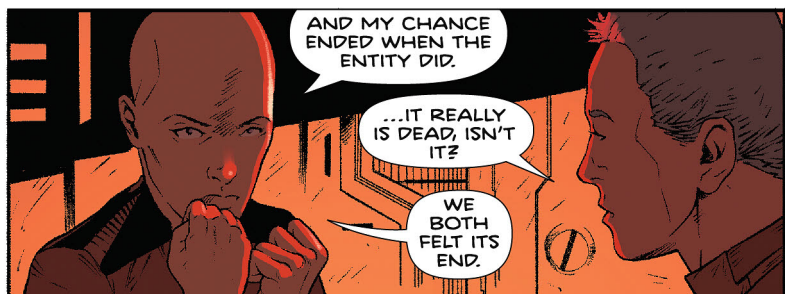
...WHAT?



OUR MINDS TOUCHED. YOU KNOW THAT WE HAVE COMMON CAUSE.

AGAINST THOSE FOUR... **SCAVENGERS.**

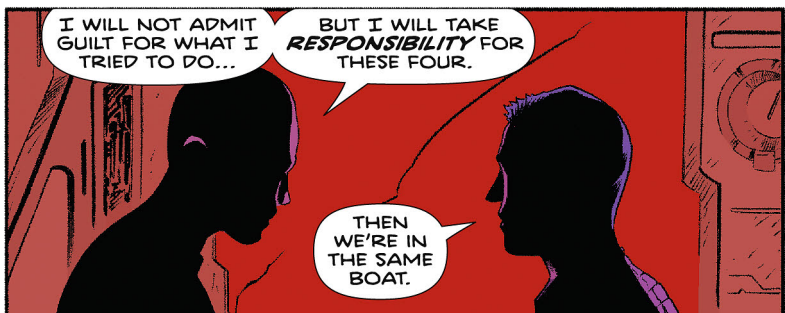
COMMON CAUSE? YOU WANTED TO FEED OUR DEAD MATTER TO A VOID MONSTER.



AND MY CHANCE ENDED WHEN THE ENTITY DID.

...IT REALLY IS DEAD, ISN'T IT?

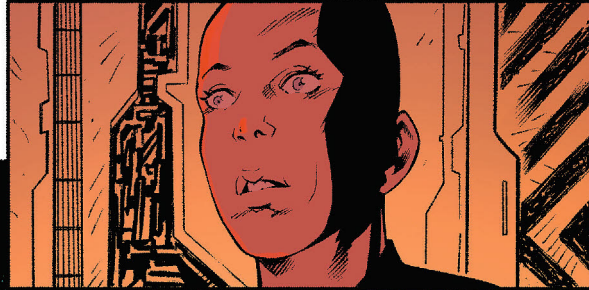
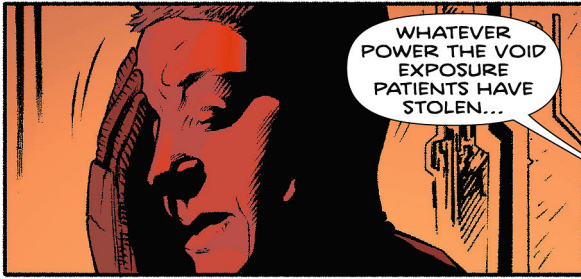
WE BOTH FELT ITS END.



I WILL NOT ADMIT GUILT FOR WHAT I TRIED TO DO...

BUT I WILL TAKE **RESPONSIBILITY** FOR THESE FOUR.

THEN WE'RE IN THE SAME BOAT.



NEXT ISSUE

INFINITE DARK

ISSUE 6



Reed



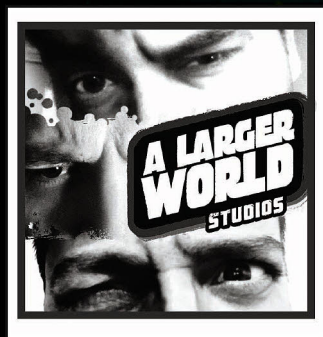
RYAN CADBY is a writer of comics and horror fiction based in Southern California. A graduate of the DC Comics Talent Development Workshop, he has written for such properties as WARFRAME, THE MAGDALENA and *The Punisher*, as well as a number of original short stories and creator-owned features. To this day, his early reviews of terrible fast food products for the OC Weekly remain his greatest creative triumph.



ANDREA MUTTI is an Italian artist who has worked in the comic book world for 25 years. He studied at the Comics School in Brescia and has worked with such US publishers as Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, Vertigo, IDW, BOOM! Studios, Dynamite, Stela, Adaptive and many more European publishers like Glenat, Casterman, Soleil, Dargaud and Titan. He lives in Italy and you can learn more about his career at his website www.andrearedmutti.com.



K. MICHAEL RUSSELL has been working as a comic book color artist since 2011. His credits include Image series GLITTERBOMB with WAYWARD & *Thunderbolts* writer Jim Zub, HACK/SLASH, *Judge Dredd* and the Eisner and Harvey-nominated *In the Dark: A Horror Anthology*. He launched an online comic book coloring course in 2014 at ColoringComics.com and maintains a YouTube channel dedicated to coloring tutorials. He lives on the coast in Long Beach, Mississippi, with his wife of sixteen years, Tina. They have two cats. One is a jerk. [@kmichaelrussell](https://twitter.com/kmichaelrussell)



TROY PETERI, Dave Lanphear and Joshua Cozine are collectively known as A Larger World Studios. They've lettered everything from *The Avengers*, *Iron Man*, *Wolverine*, *Amazing Spider-Man* and *X-Men* to more recent titles such as WITCHBLADE, CYBERFORCE, and *Batman/Wonder Woman: The Brave & The Bold*. They can be reached at studio@alargerworld.com for your lettering and design needs. (Hooray, commerce!)

DISPATCHES FROM THE VOID

Wow. Issue five. This is a little surreal, I'll be honest.

When I first pitched INFINITE DARK around (under the title No Stars), I envisioned a four-or five-issue miniseries with the same sort of cool-but-niche appeal of GOD HATES ASTRONAUTS or *Empty Zone*. That pitch talked a lot about heat death, and the end of the universe, and the perils of survivor's guilt—all of which are pretty clearly represented in the first four issues of this series. But more importantly, that pitch demanded a character-driven story, a bleak and scary saga following a bunch of individuals trapped at the end of time, and while that's obviously a core element to every part of INFINITE DARK, there was only so much space and time that first story arc could dedicate to each character.

...that first pitch also suggested that the series should have a hard ending with no room for multiple story arcs, and I was very clear on what that ending would be:

It turns out that the mysterious shadow that's been influencing [Kirin], [Alvin], and the others to destroy the station has a pretty firm agenda and a far from simple perspective. The Shadow ([Entity]) is the universe's creator...like God, basically, and now it's trying to clean up reality and start over, but the station's reality field doesn't allow that.

But after all the horror and sabotage is overcome in a triumph of the human spirit, we have the universe's final showdown—God vs. Man. As Deva uses the station's fusion cannon to obliterate the Shadow, the station soars forward into the storm of its death throes...and into a new Big Bang.

Obviously a bit different—the Entity destroyed in last issue pretty clearly isn't a creator being, God or otherwise—and what we delivered was far from a hard ending...because we were hoping to continue the story.



There was more, see? Because from the beginning, every version of INFINITE DARK was full of emotion, examining the psychological consequences of outliving the entire universe, the fear of facing down the end of all things, etc. But there was little room last volume to do what—hopefully—this new story arc sets out to accomplish. To explore the friction and pain and conflict at play in the hearts of these survivors, and more importantly, to give them a chance at forging a new life for themselves. Can they cooperate? Can they trust each other? Can they work together to save themselves?

God...can any of us?

I'd like to think so, and that's what we'll be exploring throughout this arc. Not just how Deva, Kirin, and the crew can fight the horrors from outside, but the horrors within themselves. So please, stick around—just because we killed the big bad monster last issue doesn't mean we're even close to finished with traumatizing you, dear reader.

But if you'll step on board with us, I can promise that there'll be a reason for all that bleakness, that horror, and if we're lucky, we might charge through, past the ending and the shadow, to find a bit of light.

Ryan Cady
March 2019

P.S. We currently have several academic/memoir style pieces in the works for our Dispatches from the Void segments—and I'm really excited for them! But I'd like to use this space for fanmail and fanart as well. So if you'd like to have a letter or doodle acknowledged here, shoot it over to fanmail@topcow.com, and mark "okay to print."

Thanks for reading!



I was over the moon when we got the amazing Nick Robles to handle our covers for these next four issues. Back in December 2018, after an incredibly pleasant and agreeable couple of professional negotiations, Nick was in! Not long after he agreed to the cover gig, I sent Nick a veeeeerrry rough—and probably quite ramby—breakdown of how the plot for this volume went. Then maybe a day later he passed on these incredible layouts for suggested covers.



Issue 8 cover thumbnails

We had a surprisingly long back and forth—me, Nick, Andrea, Alex Lu, and everybody at Top Cow—but ultimately settled on the cover of this issue. It was clear that we wanted to emphasize how we were bringing the virtual reality elements from issues #1 and 2 back into the forefront, and I personally really wanted the readers to know that the Entity was gone but NOT forgotten.

And then this beautiful, final, finished product arrived. My god! It was surreal, beautiful, ominous, and a little Renaissance classical? I knew Nick was brilliant, but when I saw this finished beauty, I knew we were onto something special, incorporating him onto our team.



Issue 7 cover preview

CAYTI BOURQUIN ■ YISHAN LI



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VOLUME ONE



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“I am excited to see where this series goes. I guess I’m a WITCHBLADE fan now.”

—NERDIST

A new chapter from writer CAITLIN KITTREDGE (*Coffin Hill*) and artist ROBERTA INGRANATA

WITCHBLADE

VOLUME 2, AVAILABLE APRIL 2019

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“There’s enough of the original myths present that longtime readers can find their way around, but this new beginning is also accessible... this is exactly what the series needed to move forward.”

—COMICON.COM

“Sharp, powerful and cutting urban fantasy.”

—MONKEYS FIGHTING ROBOTS

“Every panel has a sense of urgency to its composition and the splash of bright colors is restrained until a bloody explosion is shown with a vibrancy for emphasis. It’s a very post-*Jessica Jones* comic, but the juxtaposition of the trauma-centric themes with the urban fantasy setting make this a comic with a lot of potential.”

—NEWSARAMA

“They have captured and injected a world of emotion into these pages, bringing this property out of the ‘90s and into the modern times.”

—COMICOSITY

“Ingranata and Valenza’s art is stellar. They’ve set this story in a very realistic New York City, that’s also the setting of a horror movie. The deep shadows, the strange angles, all contribute to a story that’s more ghost story than the supernatural superhero of the previous volume of WITCHBLADE.”

—COMICBUZZ



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