

GRITT GRIMSTONE

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY

HERNAN MOLINA

ROWEL ROQUE



GRITT GRIMSTONE

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LETTERED & CREATED BY

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MY WAY OR THE SPACE WAY
HOW HARD WE FALL
THE SUIT MADE IT TO EUROPA
MY WAY OUT

ROWEL ROQUE

NARRATION
COVER

COVER COLORS BY DAVID ARAVENA
COVER DESIGN: DREW D. LENHART

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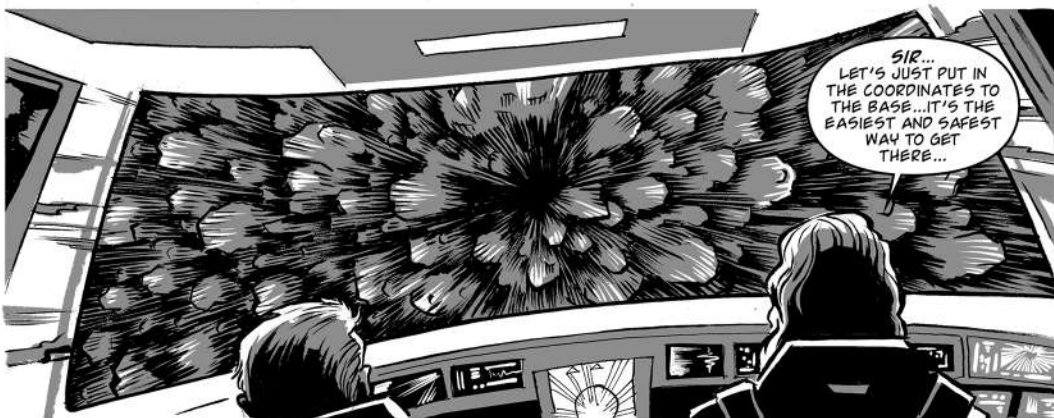
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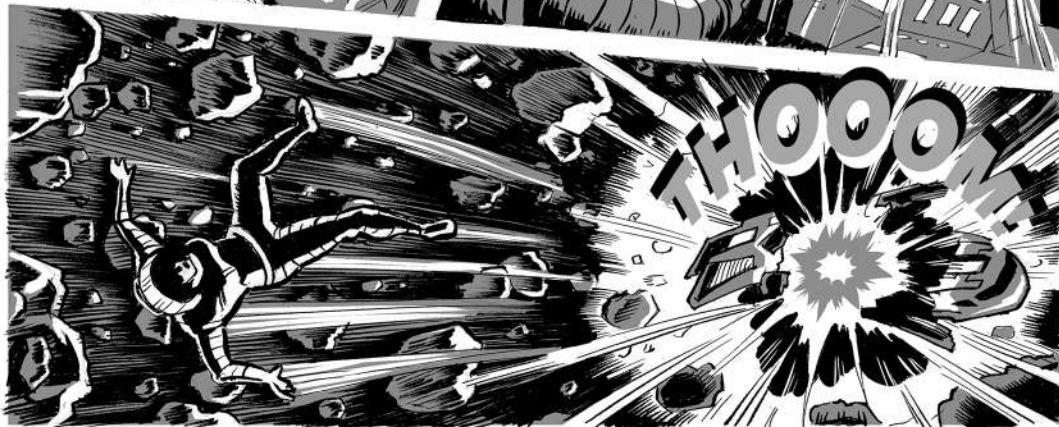


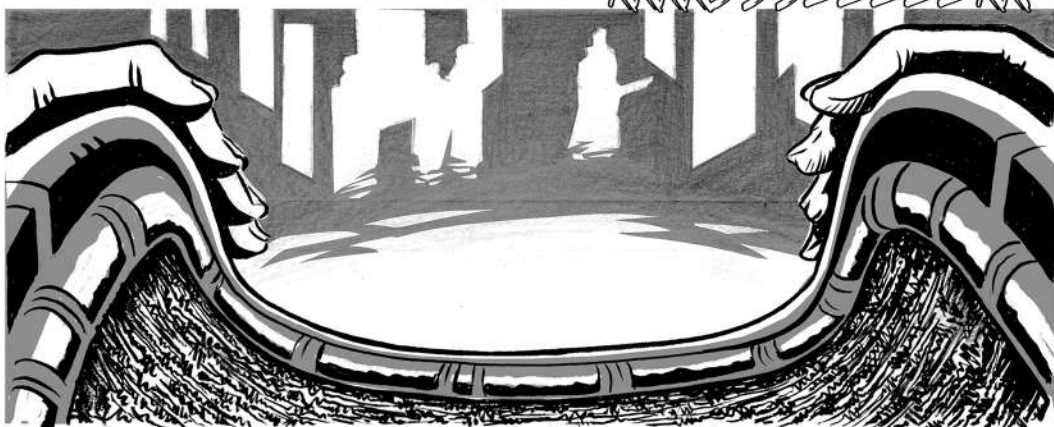
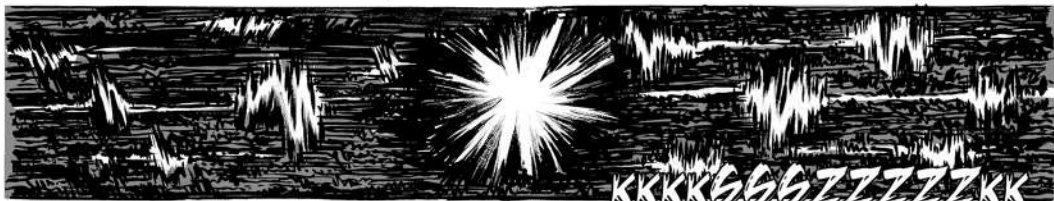
MY WAY OR THE SPACE WAY















THAT'S IT?!
THAT'S ALL??



WELL OF
COURSE NOT!



I DIDN'T STAY
STUCK IN THAT DAMN
COMPUTER FOREVER,
OBVIOUSLY.



WELL...HOW
DID YOU DO
IT?

DO
WHAT?

HOW DID YOU
GET OUT?

MIGHT NEED
TO TAKE A PAUSE
AND GRAB A
DRINK.

HUH?

OH, I'LL
GET BACK TO
THAT IN A BIT, I
JUST THOUGHT
OF ANOTHER
STORY.



GEE, THIS OLD
GUY HAS LOST HIS
MARBLES...

AH, ANYWAYS,
THIS NEXT STORY IS
ABOUT NOT BELIEVING
EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN
TOLD, ESPECIALLY IN A
TIME OF WAR...



HOW HARD WE FALL

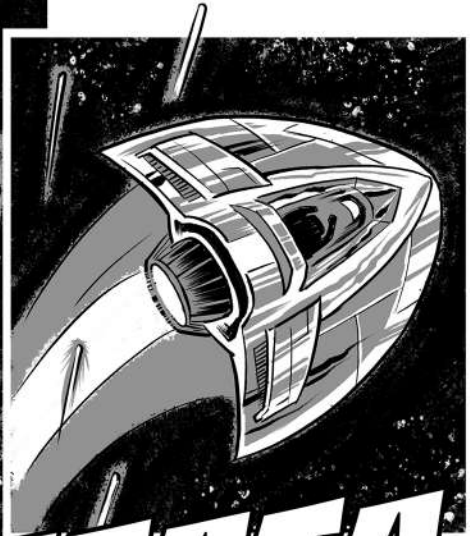
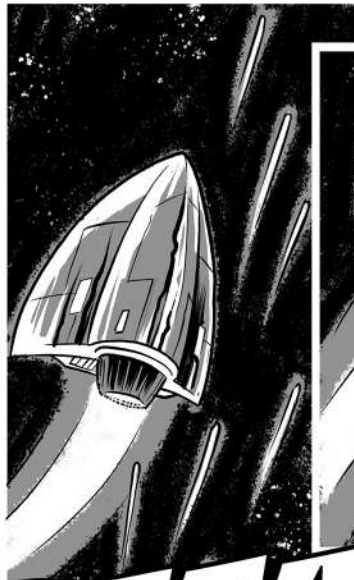


GAMMA STATION,
THIS IS COMMANDER
GRIMSTONE. I HAVE
THE ENEMY DEAD IN MY
SIGHTS, REQUESTING
ORDERS.

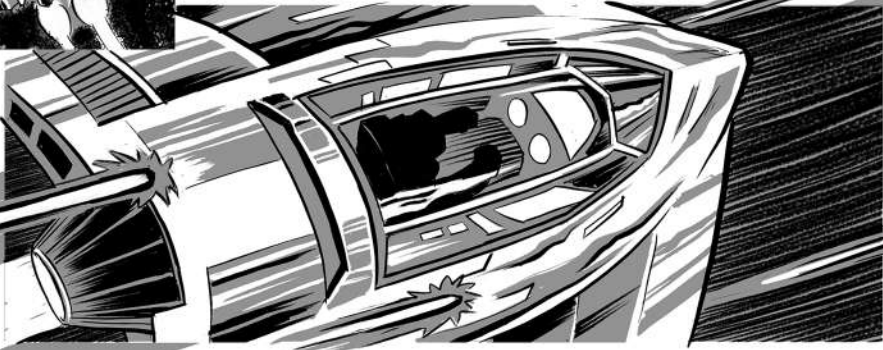


GRIMSTONE TO
GAMMA STATION,
COME IN.

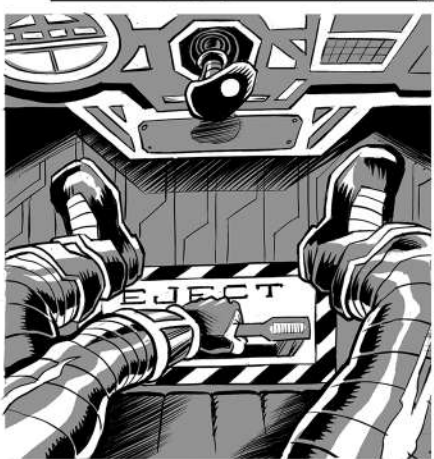
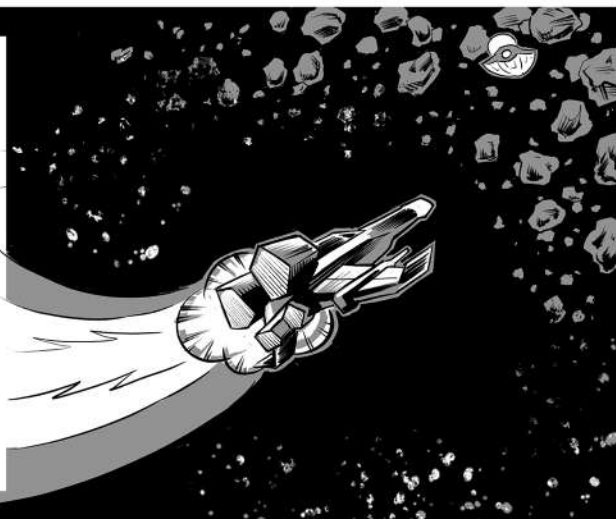




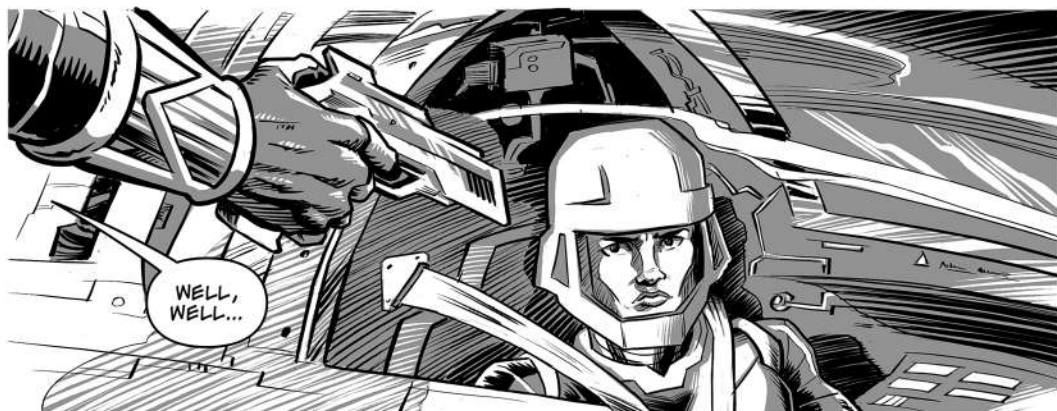
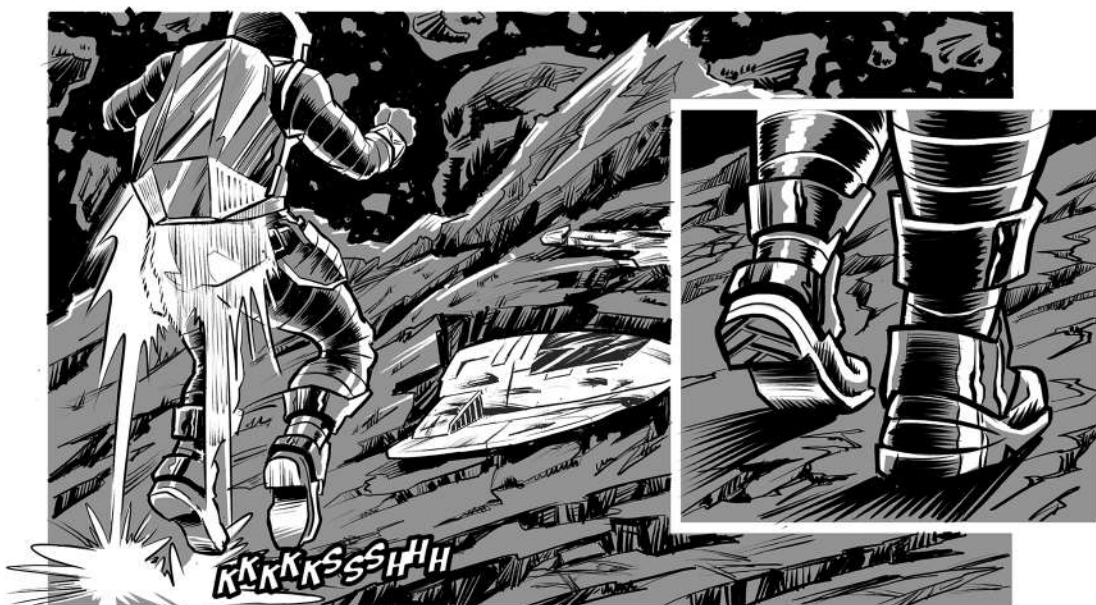
RATATATA













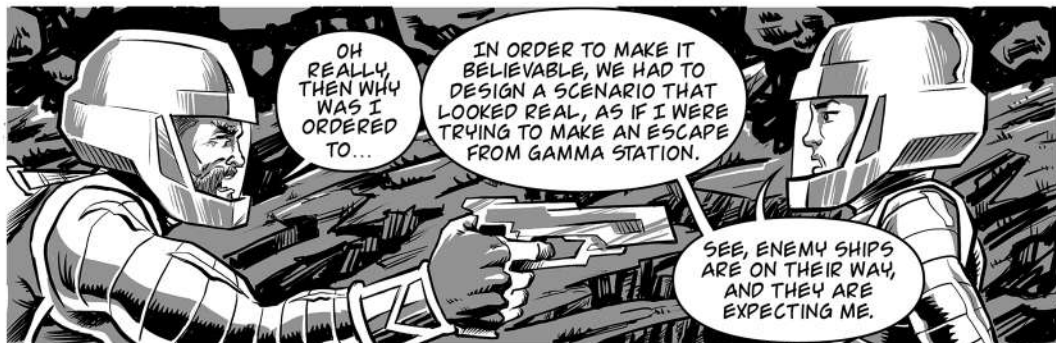
GET OUT!

DON'T SHOOT. WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE.



LISTEN, I'M A SPECIAL AGENT. MY MISSION FROM THE SPACE FORCE IS TO SMUGGLE SECRET INFORMATION...

...FALSE INFORMATION TO THE ENEMY AND TO INFILTRATE THEIR RANKS FROM WITHIN.



OH REALLY, THEN WHY WAS I ORDERED TO...

IN ORDER TO MAKE IT BELIEVABLE, WE HAD TO DESIGN A SCENARIO THAT LOOKED REAL, AS IF I WERE TRYING TO MAKE AN ESCAPE FROM GAMMA STATION.

SEE, ENEMY SHIPS ARE ON THEIR WAY, AND THEY ARE EXPECTING ME.



I'M NOT BUYING THIS, LADY. I WAS ORDERED TO KILL YOU, DIRECT ORDERS!

I KNOW, THAT'S WHY YOU WERE DISPATCHED AFTER ME. AFTER ALL, YOU ARE THE FLEET'S BEST PILOT AND THAT MAKES THE SITUATION ALL THE MORE BELIEVABLE.

WHAT BETTER OF A SITUATION THAN TO HAVE THE GREAT GRITT GRIMSTONE CHASE ME?



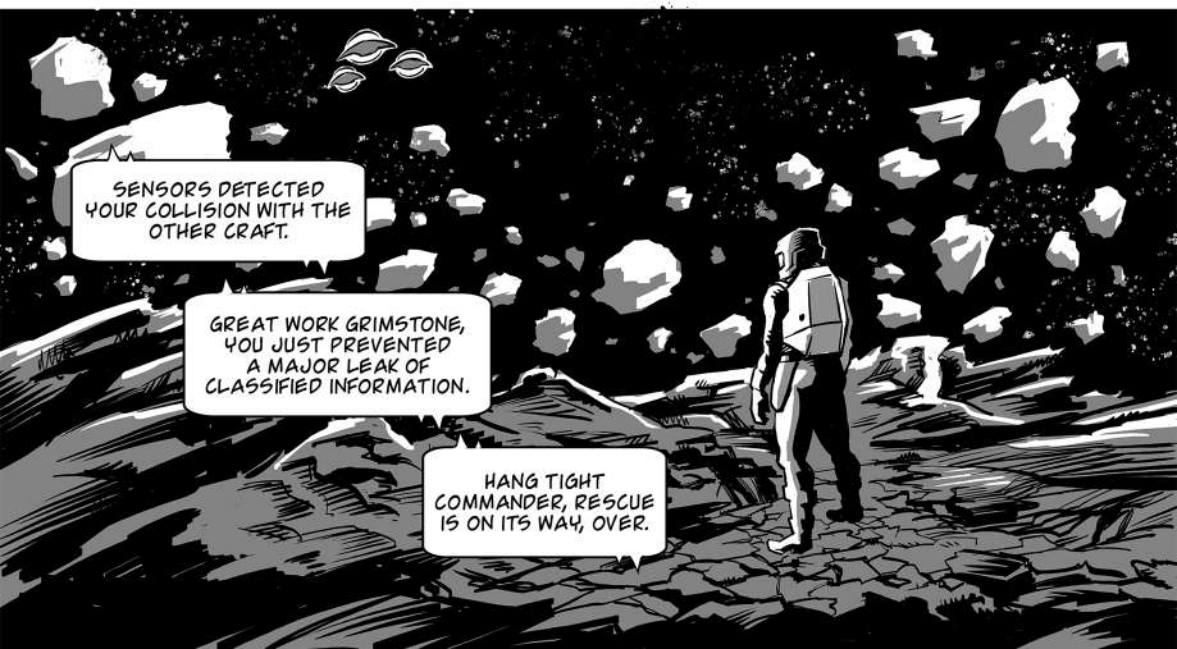
THE ENEMY WOULD HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR ME, IT IS THE PERFECT PLAN.

LOOK. WE HAVE TO HURRY! ANY MINUTE NOW THE ENEMY IS EXPECTING TO RANDEVU WITH ME. EARLIER, I HAD SENT THEM A MESSAGE I HAD CRASHED!

YOU'LL NEED TO GIVE ME YOUR GUN, IF THEY SEE YOU POINTING THAT THING AT ME, THEY'LL KNOW SOMETHING IS OFF AND THEY'LL KILL US BOTH!







SENSORS DETECTED
YOUR COLLISION WITH THE
OTHER CRAFT.

GREAT WORK GRIMSTONE,
YOU JUST PREVENTED
A MAJOR LEAK OF
CLASSIFIED INFORMATION.

HANG TIGHT
COMMANDER, RESCUE
IS ON ITS WAY, OVER.



SHIT...



WHAT WAS
THE POINT OF
THAT STORY?



THE POINT
YOU SAY? I GUESS
THE POINT IS THAT
EVEN THE BEST OF
MEN FAIL.

HEY KID, WANT
TO RUN OVER TO
THE WAITER AND
GRAB ME A
DRINK?

I'M A BIT
PARCHED.

WHO?



THAT GUY WITH
THE DRINKS ON A
TRAY, RIGHT OVER
THERE!

CAN'T YOU GET
YOUR OWN? BESIDES, I
WANT TO HEAR ANOTHER
STORY.



FINE.



SO, AH,
HAVE YOU EVER
HEARD OF AN
ETHRAN?

WHO?
ETHAN? ETHAN
WHO?

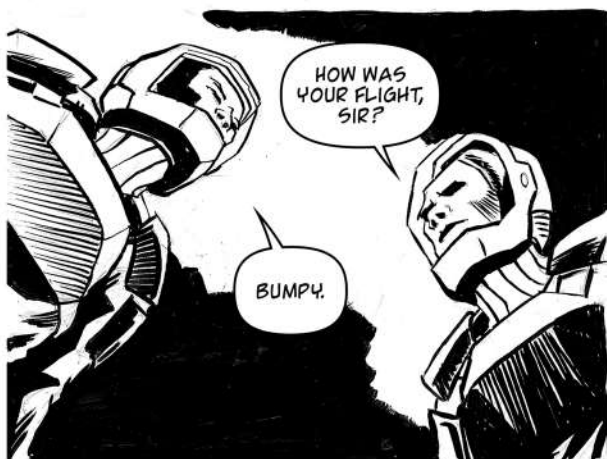
NO, NO, NO.
NOT ETHAN.

E-T-H-R-A-N.
THEY ARE TRICKY LITTLE
ALIEN DEVILS FOUND ON
THE MOON EUROPA...





THE SUIT MADE IT TO EUROPA







YES SIR.
DEFINITELY IS
SIR.



YES, THAT IS
CORRECT SIR. HOWEVER,
THERE IS A MILITARY AND
SCIENCE RESEARCH STATION AT
GANYMEDE LED BY COMMANDER
GRIMSTONE AND APPARENTLY A
COUPLE OF THOSE TRICKY
DEVILS GOT OUT.



I DON'T
RECALL THE
ETHRANS BEING ON
GANYMEDE, VERY
STRANGE.

I THOUGHT
THEY WERE
ONLY NATIVE
TO EUROPA?



INTERESTING...
I NEVER SAW THAT
REPORT.



I BELIEVE
IT WAS A...A HIGHLY
CLASSIFIED INCIDENT...
MAYBE YOU DIDN'T SEE
IT BECAUSE OF YOUR
SECURITY CLEARANCE
LEVEL?

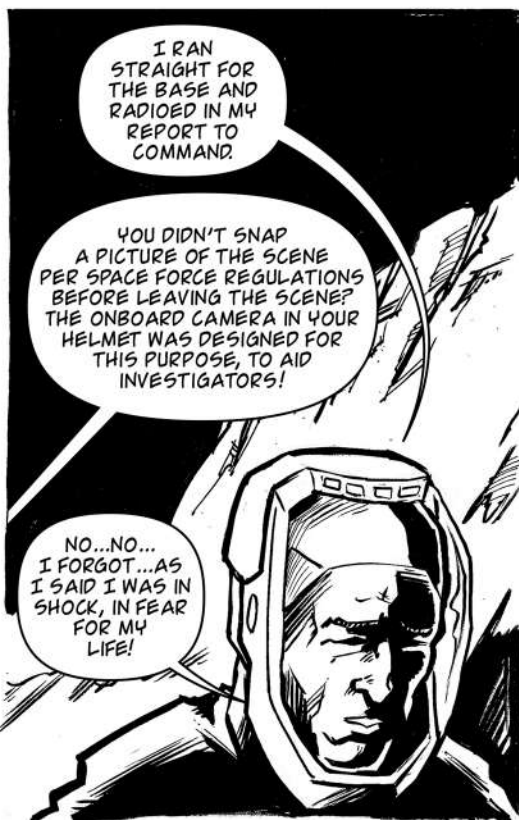
PERHAPS.



TELL ME
ABOUT THE BODIES,
THEIR POSITION, IS
DECOMPOSITION
PRESENT? WERE
THE SUITS
COMPROMISED?



YES SIR...
THE HELMETS WERE
SMASHED IN..ALL OF
THEM..THEIR BODIES
APPEARED TO BE TOSSED
ASIDE AS IF THEY WERE A
PIECE OF TRASH. GOD
DAMN ETHRANS!













MY WAY OUT



















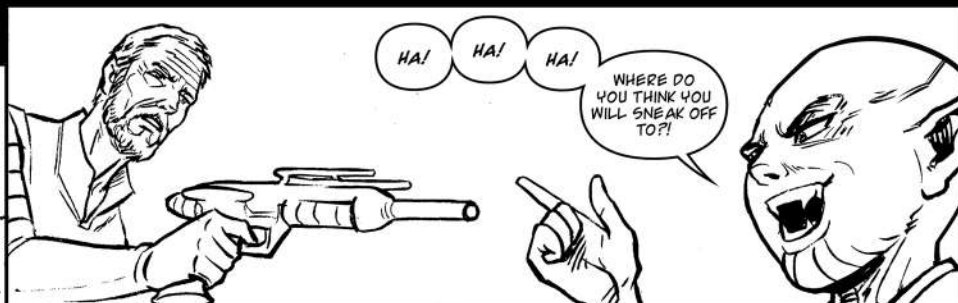


THE TABLES
HAVE TURNED...









KKKKSSSSZZZZZZKK

THE END.

He is a seasoned pilot,
a dedicated astronaut,
a daring adventurer,
a master of all trades,
he is,

GRITT GRIMSTONE

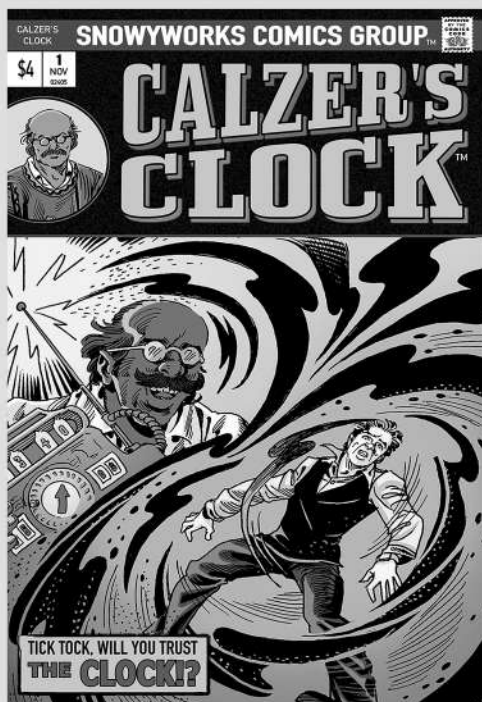
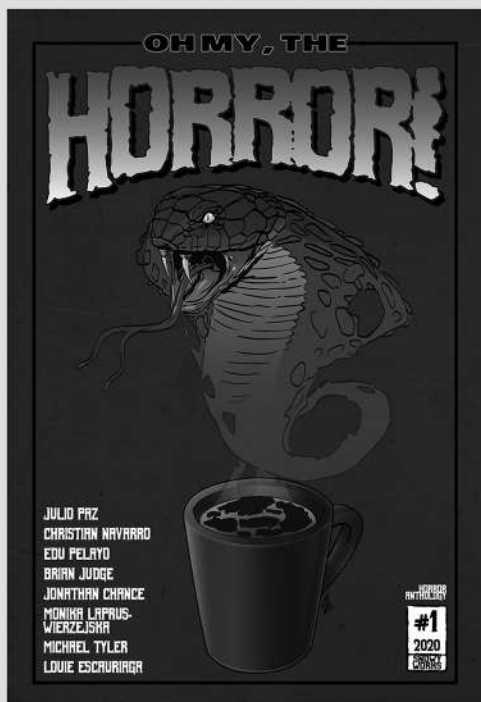
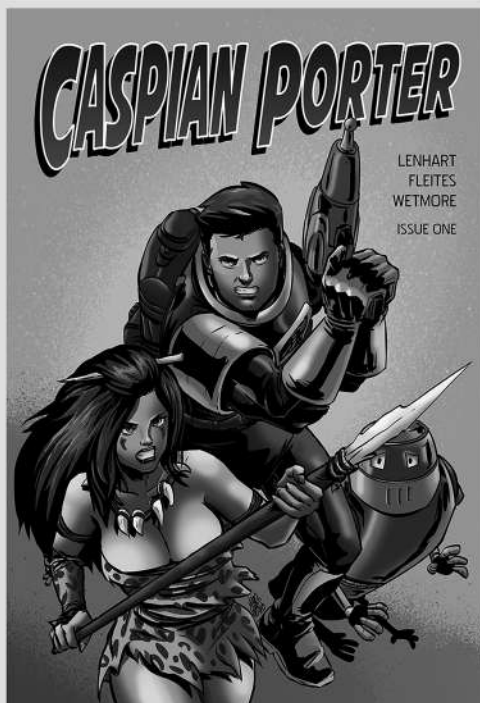


They are cunning,
highly intelligent and
perceptive. They can
shift, shape and distort.
They can blend, mold
and trick. They are
masters of deception,
they are,

ETHRANS



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GRIMSTONE

Thanks for reading "Gritt Grimstone: Tales From a Far Out Future"! I hope you've enjoyed reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. Gritt Grimstone is a character that I created back in 2018 and has gone many directions along the way. However, the one core attributes of the character is I've always intended for Gritt to be a larger than life person, famous and someone that skirts around his own ego.

The first incarnation of the character began in a short story that served as the basis of, "My Way or the Space Way", however in the story, he was first named Jonathan. Much like the story in



this book, Gritt has an out of this world ego that puts the life of his co-pilot in danger.

The next few pages feature the original story. Please note that this has been re-edited to reflect the name change of the character.

Drew D. Lenhart
Writer/Creator/Publisher
SnowyWorks LLC.

ONE WAY

By Drew D. Lenhart

I was about to sit next to the most experienced astronaut in the entire solar system. He was once the most widely loved and cherished man all across the system. He was a national gem, known for his charisma and love for all topics relating to space. He was renowned by Earth inhabitants and all the colonies, large and small spread throughout the solar system. As I was growing up, I watched this man's exploration of space, his adventures, the television shows, books, and action figures. I followed and collected everything I possibly could. This man inspired my love for space and adventure. I spent my whole life wanting to meet this man but that feeling was about to quickly fade away.

People say, "Don't meet your hero". It is a phrase that should be pounded into the subconscious of every man, woman, and child. The reality is, Gritt is an aging, cocky, self-centered man. You would think a man in his late fifties, with his vast experience, would have wisdom to share in abundance. But no, he's a gray old man, a washed-up astronaut still thinking he is the best, unable to let go of his glory days.

Now, he hauls cargo and people between colonies.

I barely spoke a hello to Gritt before he cut me off, "Not now kid, I'm trying to concentrate," said Gritt.

Like a child in trouble, I quickly sat in my seat and pulled the tattered seat buckles over my shoulders, tightening hard until they dug into my brand new spacesuit. I noticed my reflection in the cockpit window and made sure my slicked black hair was looking perfect.

Gritt was busily punching in Earth's coordinates, calculating the best route and checking flight systems. He hardly took notice of me, barely acknowledging my existence. I was a substitute co-pilot, and clearly, I am nothing to him. I imagined he worked with a lot of different co-pilots for as many round trips through the system he makes. He was all business and obviously knew the

ins-and-outs of his own ship.

Gritt's ship is very old, first generation old, and it sure shows its age. It was once painted white but has mostly faded to a charred black, probably from the years of atmospheric re-entry. He received the first of its kind, long distance star cruiser long ago, taking it on its maiden voyage to Pluto and back to Earth in record time. At the time, his maiden voyage made headlines across the system. I even remember watching the initial launch when I was a very young boy.

The ship can transport three passengers and was built for speed and maneuverability. The ship was perfect for all the scientific missions Gritt was well known for in his prime. It holds a bit of nostalgia about it since it resembles a 20th century space shuttle, with the cargo bay door that loads in the front.

I hung my space helmet on the hook to the right of me. It wobbled back and forth until it found its resting place against the hull. I reached over to introduce myself, trying again to get my childhood hero to notice me. I let my hand glide towards Gritt with the assist of Europa's super low gravity. He took no notice of me. I was the rookie, the fresh meat along for the ride, the temporary co-pilot.

Gritt wore a simple, blue jumpsuit which looked stained from years of use. He has clearly spent a lot of time in space. I chose to keep my spacesuit on until the ship broke into space. We were taught in the academy the cardinal rule, which is to keep our suits on in case of emergencies. Gritt obviously didn't care for regulations.

"Hello sir, it is an honor to ride with you back to Earth," I said.

Gritt's eyes peered over at my hand, appearing disgusted at the thought of shaking it, "Save the small talk, the trip is only a few hours. If I'm lucky, I'll never get to see the likes of you again," he muttered.

Could it really be just yesterday when I checked into the busy space port of Europa, Jupiter's moon and the newest colony in the system? I remember how excited I was to see Gritt's name on the flight roster followed by my name--pilot: Gritt G. and co-pilot: Doug L., destination: Earth. I was giddy with my excitement. How lucky was I? My second official flight, straight out of the academy, and I am paired up with one of the greatest astronauts of all time! Unfortunately, I didn't expect the excitement of meeting the great Gritt

Grimstone to wear off within the first few minutes of meeting the man.

Gritt put on his communications headset and muttered a few words I couldn't quite hear. I assumed it was something along the lines of, "Why did they stick me with this guy?" or, "Why can't they give me someone with more experience?" I ignored his comments and observed him as he worked.

He glanced over the controls before him, "I just want to reiterate, do not touch anything on my ship, got it?"

I nodded in agreement. I wouldn't be able to help much anyway because the ship is so old and the control labels are mostly worn off. The control panel had finger smudges which had been built up over the years. The ship had clearly never been cleaned. The seats were torn at the edges and the floors haven't been mopped in years. I would have no problem keeping my hands to myself, it was disgusting.

"There is only one good pilot on this ship, and it's me! So sit back, relax, and watch the professional work."

Gritt gave the all go to the space port command and we launched through Europa's thin atmosphere like a bullet out of a gun. It was a smooth launch and I was surprised given the condition of the rickety old ship.

We left Jupiter and its moon quickly behind us. According to some people, traveling through the asteroid belt would be the next challenge. It is in fact my second journey through it. Most pilots let the ship's computer navigate through the asteroid belt, but not Gritt. The chances of colliding with an asteroid are like one in a million, though the occasional collision isn't unheard of, but Gritt preferred to pilot using manual controls.

"Sir, wouldn't it be smarter to let the computer navigate through the asteroid belt?" I asked cautiously.

Gritt finally looked at me. The spark and hint of hope I still held that I could pick up some kind useful bit of knowledge from the great Gritt Grimstone was quickly diminished with one line, "I know what I am doing here, been through here close to a hundred times. Just sit there, look forward, and don't touch anything!" he repeated.

"But sir..."

"Just stop! I don't want to hear about all that junk that comes out of the Academy these days! You are flying with the best astronaut in the whole system!" he said irritably.

"The academy regulations state that while traveling through the asteroid

belt, auto-pilot and the forward deflection system must be used," I relayed, trying to remember the exact verbiage.

"Kid, I understand. You are new and fresh out of the academy, with a boat load of fresh new knowledge. That is great, GREAT for you," interrupted Gritt. "This is my ship, and there is only one way, my way! Besides, when I was your age, I already had a ship of my own. I think I know a few more things than you, do you hear me?"

We had only been traveling for about ten minutes when we entered the asteroid belt. The ship's radar display began flashing a red alert that grabbed my attention. On the screen, large splotchy objects appeared. Asteroids! We were heading right towards a large cluster of them. There is a one in a billion chance we could run into asteroids and here it was about to happen! I swear the next thing I will do when we get back is buy a lottery ticket with this kind of luck. "Sir, asteroids approaching, perhaps we should activate the autopilot?" I asked while trying to remain calm.

I hovered my index finger over the autopilot button located next to the radar screen. It was the only button on the control panel that looked brand new.

"Permission NOT granted. I am fully capable of navigating through this manually. I've done this before," barked Gritt. "Just watch and learn, kid."

A large asteroid was quickly approaching. It was moving fast towards us, or perhaps Gritt was intentionally moving towards it. So much detail could be seen through the cockpit window. The asteroid was about ten times larger than the ship, with large indentations and crevices with boulders and loose rocks orbiting around it as we flew. Obviously this celestial object has had many collisions over it's billion year life span. We could observe every detail of the giant rock. It looked as if the asteroid had its own rocky moons orbiting it.

"Sir, I don't think this is such a good ..."

"Stop, just stop," demanded Gritt, preventing me from finishing my sentence.

I looked over at Gritt, he displayed a large grin on his face. I couldn't tell if he was showing off or having fun. Perhaps both.

I hovered my finger over the autopilot button again, trying to determine if I should break rank and save both our lives.

"Watch this!!" exclaimed Gritt with confidence.

Gritt threw the throttle lever into full speed, which caused the ship's engines to explode with thrust. My head slammed against the head rest of my seat while the g-force took its toll on my body. I managed to look over at Gritt, looking intently through the window. I grabbed both armrests and squeezed until the tops of my knuckles turned white.

I closed my eyes, fearing collision, that dreadful feeling of impending death overwhelming my thoughts with fear. Gritt suddenly jerked the ship to the left at the last possible moment. He was showing off. The ship gracefully maneuvered around the asteroid, missing all the loose debris. He managed to pilot the ship around the object, showing mastery and finesse borne of his years of experience. He moved the ship left and right several times, easily managing to miss any object within sight.

"Wake up, you!" yelled Gritt.

I peeked open one eye, no asteroid. Wheew.

"First time through the asteroid belt?" asked Gritt, sporting a large smile.

I managed to sputter out a response, "Nnnnoo."

"You sure act like it," chuckled Gritt. "There's nothing more thrilling than flying through all that, it really gets the blood flowing!"

"I've gone through there hundreds of times. Takes REAL skill to pilot through that mess." gloated Gritt. "Real skill!"

I released the death grip off my seat, "Sir, it would make me more comfortable if we could put the ship on auto pilot for the remainder of the trip."

"What? Are you serious? Didn't you just witness the precision of that maneuver?" bellowed Gritt, "You really want to trust a computer after seeing what I just did?"

Gritt's cocky nature was beginning to annoy me. Was it too much to ask for a smooth and stress free ride back home?

"Didn't you watch any of it?" asked Gritt, looking hurt by my question.

Gritt rambled on for several minutes, mostly describing his greatness as a pilot. He failed to notice the next batch of debris. The radar must not detect small patches or maybe Gritt's equipment is so old it doesn't detect small debris like the newer models. It seems as if we slammed through a field of floating pebbles. I could hear and feel the thousands of tiny meteoroids ricocheting off the glass of the cockpit window, battering the ship. It sounds like hundreds of pop cans with their tabs rattling inside the empty can.

Gritt's face went from smiling to serious in a split second. Even though there is a six inch piece of glass window in front of me, I closed my eyes fearing the worst. The hair on the back of my neck stood straight up as if it received a bad premonition. My hands performed what must have been the tenth armchair death grip sequence of this trip and dug into the already torn and tattered armrest.

I peered over at Gritt. I was hoping his years of skill would react and pilot us quickly from the debris field. He couldn't do it. With the force, intensity, and constant attack on the cockpit window, one of the small asteroids eventually broke through. A single rock, the size of a dime, pierced through the window hitting Gritt square in the forehead. I watched, horrified, as the rock exited from Gritt's head.

Amazingly a single, small asteroid just killed the greatest pilot in the entire solar system.

The ship's oxygen began to suck out of the tiny hole made by the asteroid. The high-pitched sound, as if someone had let out the air of one thousand balloons, grew louder. Within a split second, the cockpit window began to crack up, spider-webs appearing all over it until they consumed the entire window. I quickly grabbed my helmet off the hull and put it on. I slammed the compression lever under my chin into the locking position and the oxygen burst through the inside of the helmet and I gasped, gulping the fresh oxygen into my lungs.

The tiny hole in the cockpit window quickly eroded the remaining glass and sucked the remaining bits and fragments of glass into space. In a blink of an eye, my pilot's chair was ripped away from the secured attachment of the ship's floor. All items not secured to the ship were being exported into the cold vacuum of space, including Gritt's lifeless body. I was being sucked into space!

I am hopelessly drifting further away from the ship. As chance would have it, I was slowly circling around so my view took in the ship. There was nothing I could do. No way to stop the inevitable: I would die out here when the oxygen runs out. Dying of asphyxiation is an astronaut's worst nightmare, my worst nightmare. I watched as the ship continued to move further and further away from me.

"Dangit Gritt!!!" I screamed before the brightness of the billions of stars stopped shining all around me. My vision went completely black and a buzzing noise rang through my ears.

The program had ended. Oh how easy it is to forget about reality when using these things.

♦ ♦ ♦

I took off my virtual reality headset. Gritt sat to my left. He had already taken off his headset. In fact, it was thrown across the room in front of us. His arms were slumped down, dangling beside the chair. He was looking around the training room, hoping no one had witnessed his poor performance.

We sat in a large open room with no windows and tall ceilings surrounded by other pilots, training just like us. Everyone wore the same blue training jumpsuit. Pilots and co-pilots were paired and spaced throughout the room, sitting on nothing but a simple metal chair. Each pilot had on their virtual reality headset and held their hands up flying an imaginary spaceship. It looked silly on the outside, but to the pilot, it was very real.

Hung on the walls all around the room were large televisions, one after another. Each television represented the view of a certain pilot. It was a direct feed into the pilots virtual reality program.

At the end of the room on an elevated platform, stood the trainers. They wore special glasses that projected a tiny screen on the inside. It was a view into the virtual world of their assigned pilot, watching and grading all the performances.

"Gritt, seriously! You can't even pass your own VR program?" I exclaimed exasperatedly.

What irony. Gritt had received special permission to alter the certification virtual reality training program. He had hounded the certification board for weeks to replace the standard ship program with a special program he wrote which allows him to fly a virtual replica of his own personal spaceship. He had complained it was the only ship he would ever fly and could not train on anything else, period.

The flight instructor, a former drill sergeant, stormed up to Gritt. Gritt cowered slightly expecting to be attacked. The instructor is an elderly woman with short curly hair wearing a white blouse, skirt, and heels. She still looked incredibly fit and intimidating for her age and her physique still showed it. I'm sure, even at her age, she could outperform any person in this room with very little problem.

"Gritt," she angrily said, pointing

her index finger at Gritt's face as she bent over to look at him straight in the eyes, "At this rate you will never get recertified. You will never fly again and that piece of junk you call a ship will never see the darkness of space again!"

Gritt slumped over feeling agitated and dejected. Every astronaut must be recertified, even the biggest idiots in the solar system.

The End.

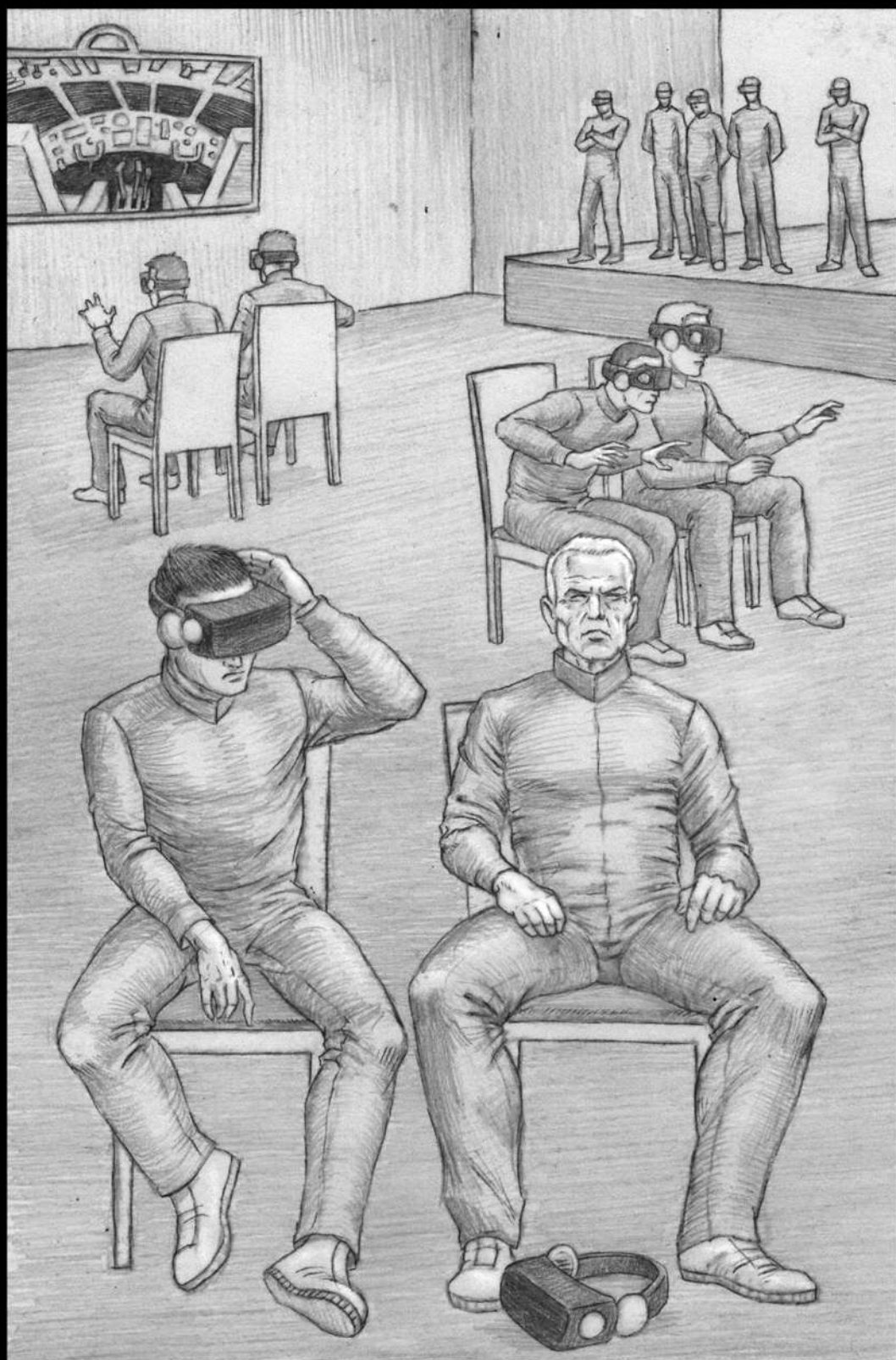


Illustration by Mike Cody

A RIP ROARING SCI-FI ADVENTURE!

CASPIAN PORTER

LENHART
FLEITES
WETMORE
ISSUE ONE



"It should be said from the outset that I'm a big fan of sci-fi. My personal journey to nerdism started with comics, Star Trek, and Mystery Science Theater 3000 (with an early foundation of The Empire Strikes Back).

With that mix of dorkery, Caspian Porter hit just about every note of my personal geek-song."

Brett Hillesheim - Indie Comix Dispatch

"Exciting, engaging and just plain fun: Caspian Porter is a rip-roaring space caper in the style of a classic sci-fi adventure!"

Morgan Quaid - Super Serious Comics

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ABOUT THE CREATORS



DREW D. LENHART - AUTHOR

Drew has been writing, creating, and publishing since 2017 first starting with Future Sci-Fi Tales, which consisted of his own set of anthology stories. Since then he's released a number of anthology issues (science fiction and horror), as well as a number of one-shot books. He currently writes and letters the ongoing sci-fi series, Caspian Porter. He currently lives in Indiana with his wife and daughters.

HERNAN MOLINA - ARTIST

Hernan Molina is a self-taught comic creator from Argentina. He started comics in 1997, both as an artist and script writer. In 2017 he created MULTIVERS9, a comic creator's initiative, along with some friends and colleagues. He is hooked on sci-fi, horror, crime and fantasy genres, and always looking for a great story to tell.



ROWEL ROQUE - ARTIST

Rowel is a talented comic illustrator based in the Philippines. His credits include illustrating children's textbooks and has done freelance comic work for a local magazine. Rowel also worked for an animation company as a lay-out artist. His favorite accomplishment is being a family man to a wife and three beautiful daughters. His passion for the art of drawing is constantly changing as he enjoys finding new ways to improve his style.



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