A group of people wearing VR headsets in a futuristic setting. The scene is dimly lit with a blue and purple glow. The people are wearing dark, high-tech suits. The text 'THE LESSON' is overlaid in large, white, outlined letters.

THE LESSON

STEVE COULSON + MIDJOURNEY

SOMEWHERE IN NEBRASKA.



INDIAN POINT SECURE UNDERGROUND FACILITY



NUCLEAR FACILITY UNDERGROUND FACILITY...
...TO MAINTAIN THE FACILITY...

130 YEARS FROM NOW.



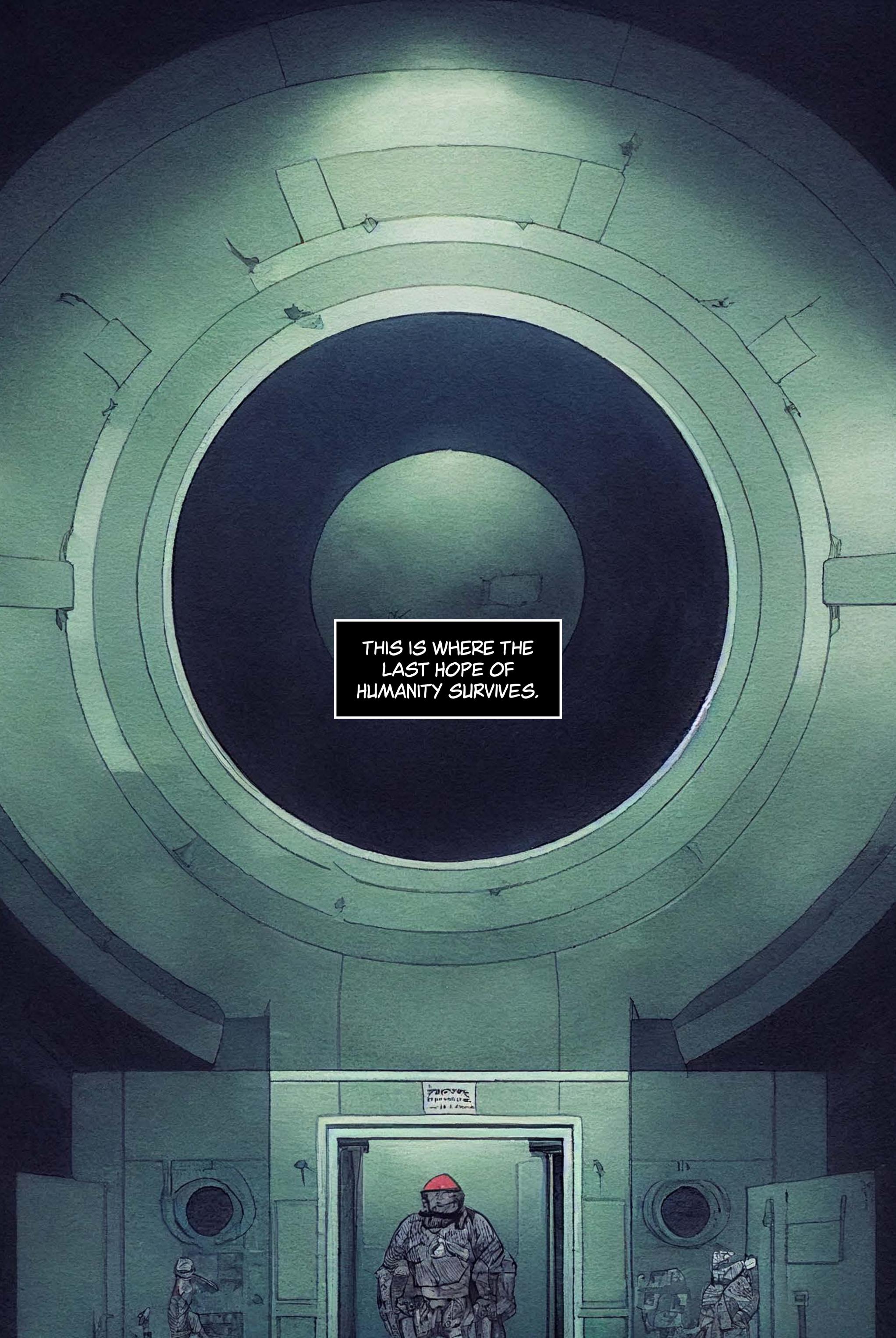
DEEP UNDERGROUND.



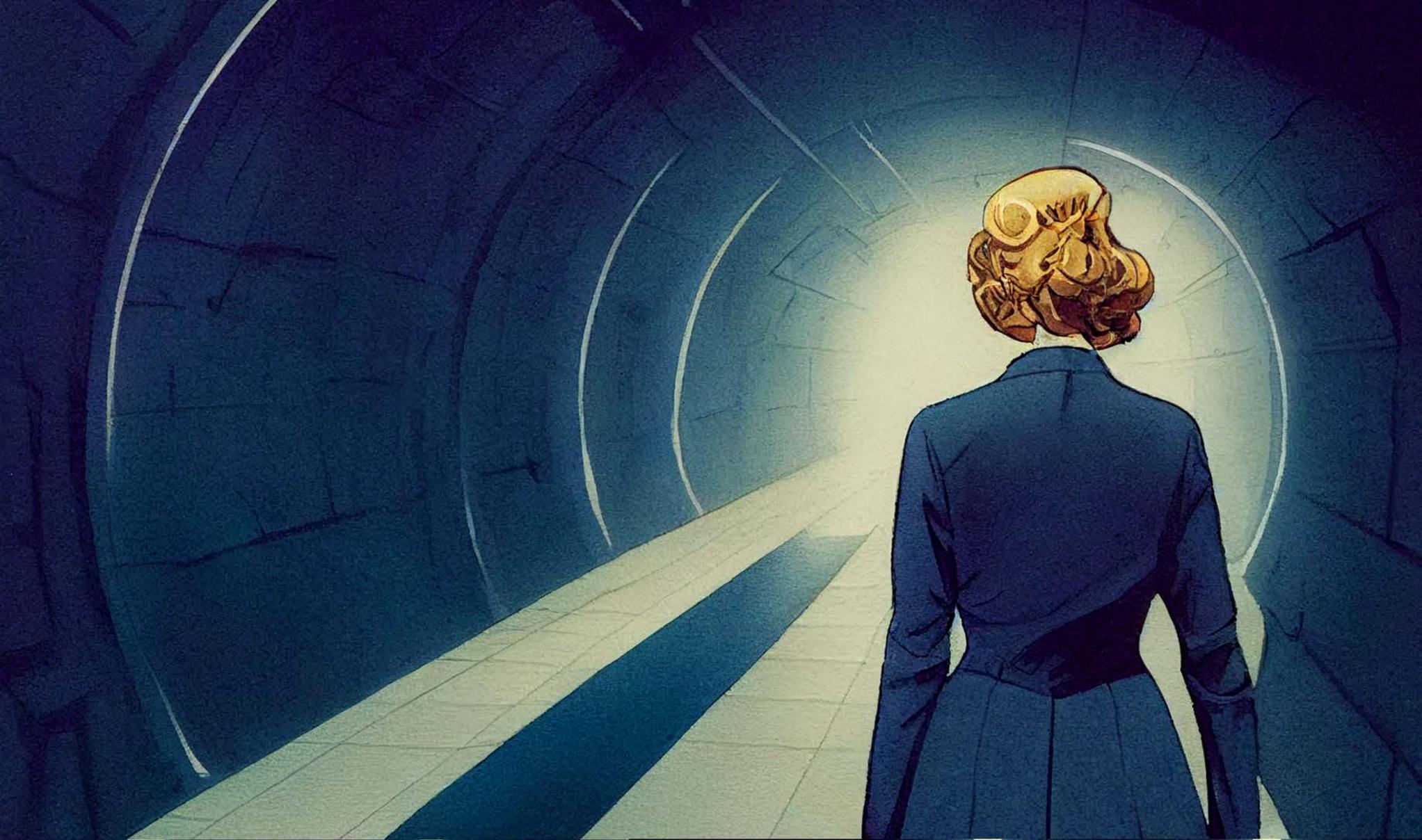
THE FIRST SUBLEVELS HAVE LONG BEEN ABANDONED TO RUST AND DECAY.



BUT 20 STORIES BELOW, YOU'LL FIND A BLAST-PROOF DOOR.



THIS IS WHERE THE
LAST HOPE OF
HUMANITY SURVIVES.





GOOD MORNING, CLASS.

"GOOD MORNING, MISS BRAIN!"

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ALL ACTIVATE YOUR VISORS AND
SET THEM TO COMMUNAL MODE, SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN

THE LESSON



STORY BY
STEVE COULSON

ART CREATED WITH
MIDJOURNEY



THE LESSON #1, November 2022. Published by Campfire Entertainment LLC, Suite C2 561 4th St, Brooklyn NY 11215. THE LESSON is © 2022 Steve Coulson. All inquiries: scoulson@campfirenyc.com. Names, characters, places, and incidents featured in this story are fictitious. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is coincidental. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>



MISS BRAUN, YOU PROMISED THAT *TODAY* YOU WOULD TELL US ABOUT *THE MONSTERS*.



OH JENNIE, AGAIN?

IS THERE ANYONE *ELSE* IN THE CLASS WHO WOULD LIKE TO HEAR THE HISTORY OF *THE MONSTERS*?

YAAAAAYYY!





VERY WELL, LET'S SEE HOW MUCH YOU REMEMBER FROM THE *LAST* TIME.

WHO CAN TELL ME WHEN THE MONSTERS *FIRST* APPEARED?



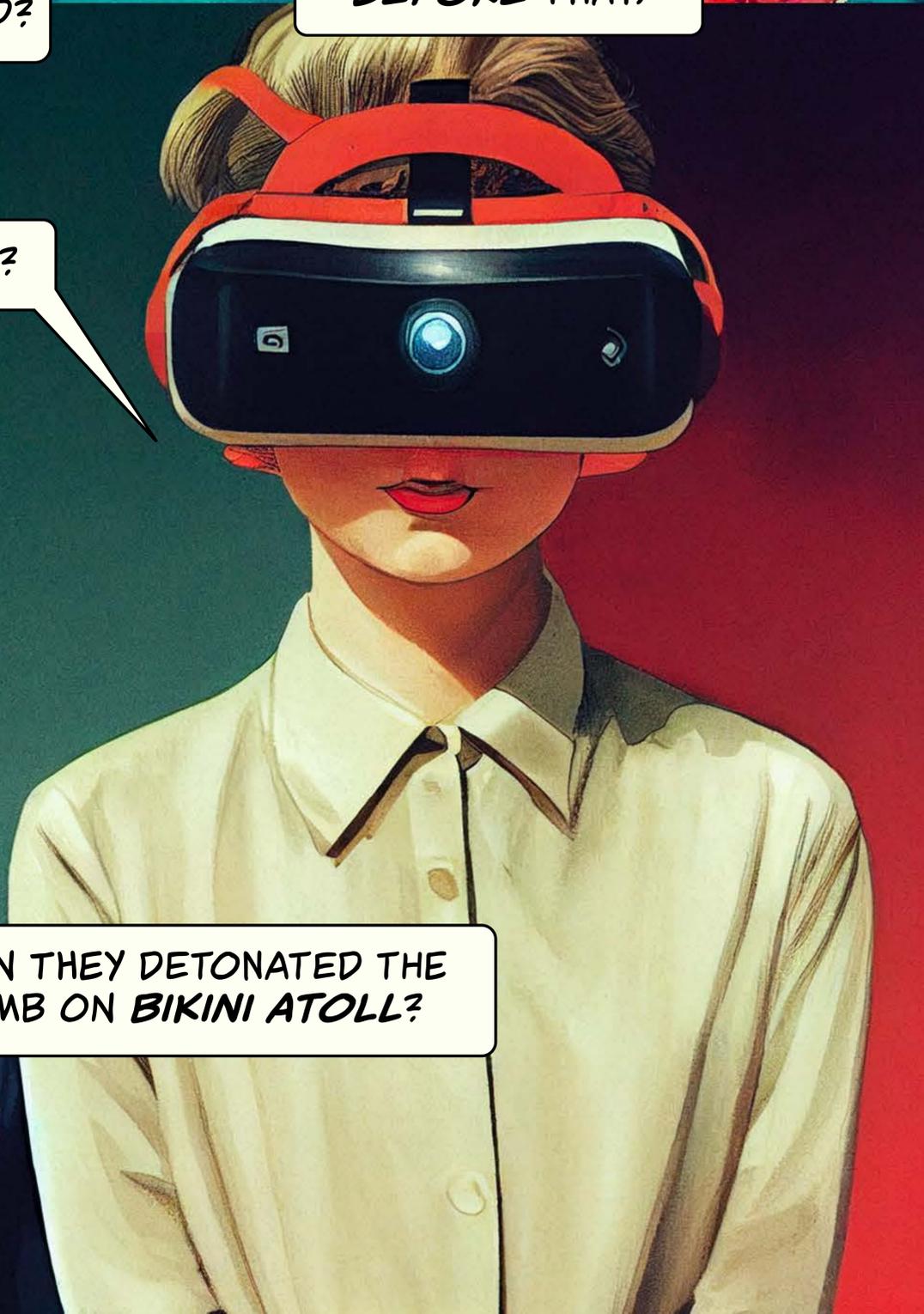
WHEN NEW YORK WAS ATTACKED?

NO TRACY, IT WAS *BEFORE* THAT.



TWO CENTURIES AGO?

WHEN THEY DETONATED THE BOMB ON *BIKINI ATOLL*?





YES, SALLY, THAT **WAS** THE FIRST **DOCUMENTED** SIGHTING, BUT STORIES OF THE MONSTERS HAVE BEEN WITH US SINCE **ANTIQUITY**.

UNTIL THE 20TH CENTURY THEY WERE DISMISSED AS MYTHS OR LEGENDS. BUT THE EVENTS OF 1954 **FORCED** US TO REEVALUATE WHAT WAS **FACT** AND WHAT WAS **FICTION**.

FOR INSTANCE, IN WHAT USED TO BE **FRANCE**, THERE WAS A CAVE NEAR THE VILLAGE OF **MONTIGNAC** THAT CONTAINED SOME OF THE OLDEST PAINTINGS CREATED BY MAN.

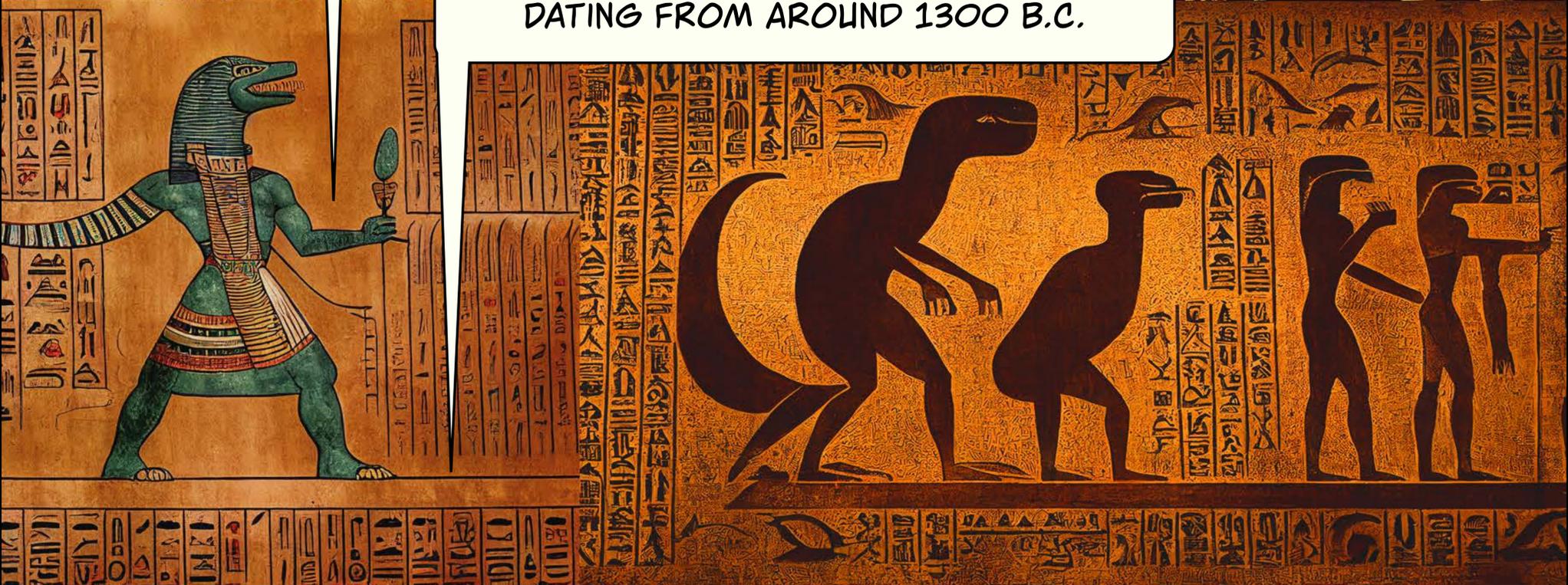
WE NOW BELIEVE IT TO BE A RECORD OF AN EARLY INCURSION, OR PERHAPS THE MANIFESTATION OF A **MYTH** PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS.



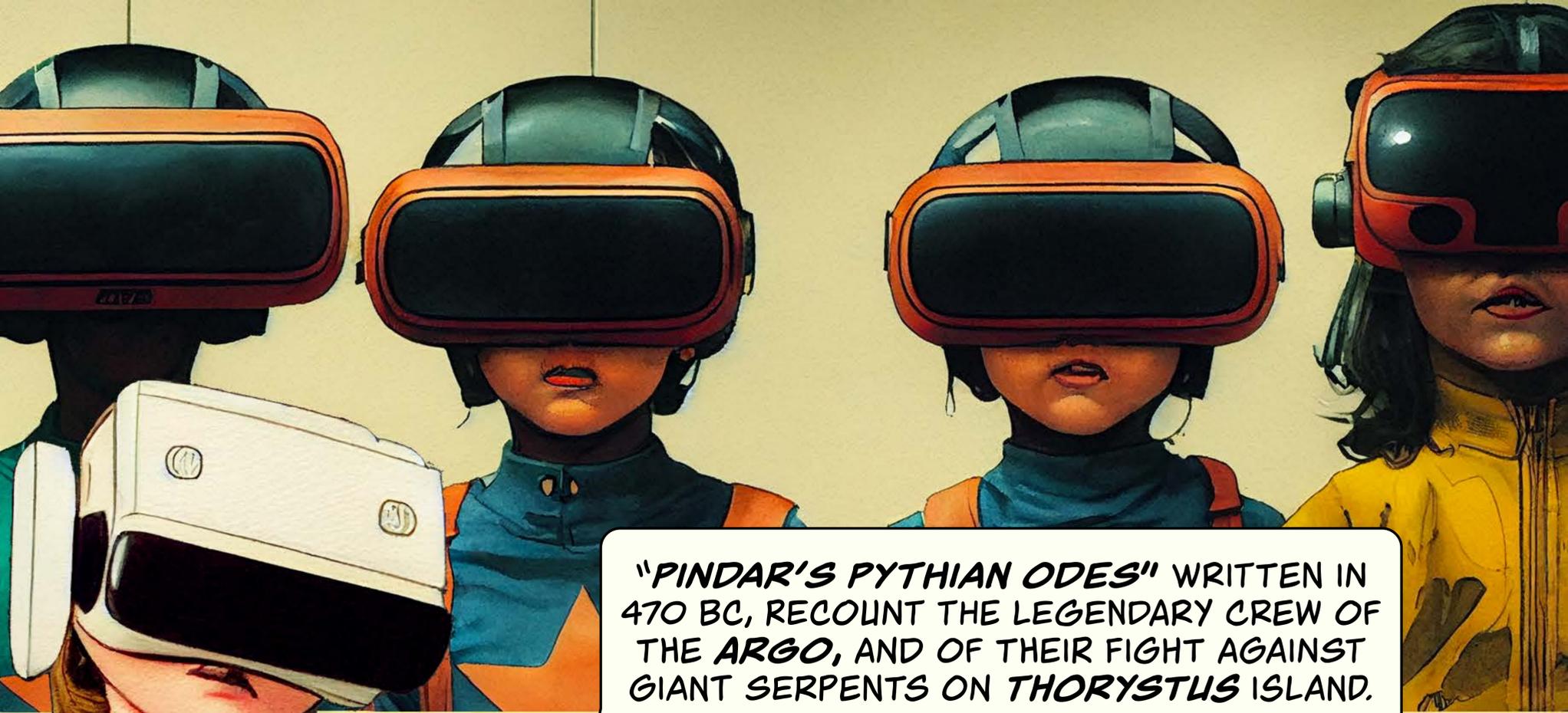


LET'S MOVE FORWARD IN TIME.

THE HIEROGLYPHS AND CARVINGS YOU SEE IN YOUR DISPLAYS WERE FOUND IN THE TOMB OF THE BOY-KING *TEF-AMEN*, DATING FROM AROUND 1300 B.C.



THEY SUGGEST THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS DEVELOPED A BELIEF SYSTEM AROUND THE WORSHIP OF LARGE, SENTIENT *LIZARD-CREATURES*.



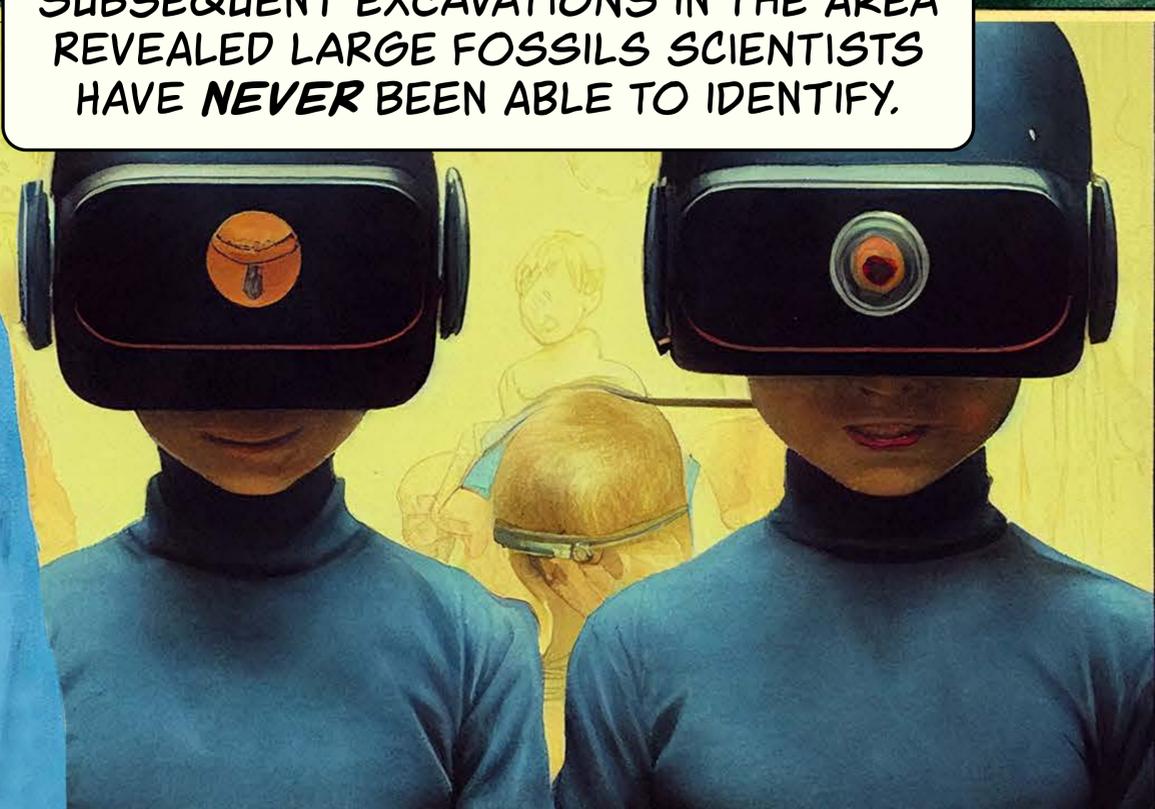
"PINDAR'S PYTHIAN ODES" WRITTEN IN 470 BC, RECOUNT THE LEGENDARY CREW OF THE *ARGO*, AND OF THEIR FIGHT AGAINST GIANT SERPENTS ON *THORYSTUS* ISLAND.

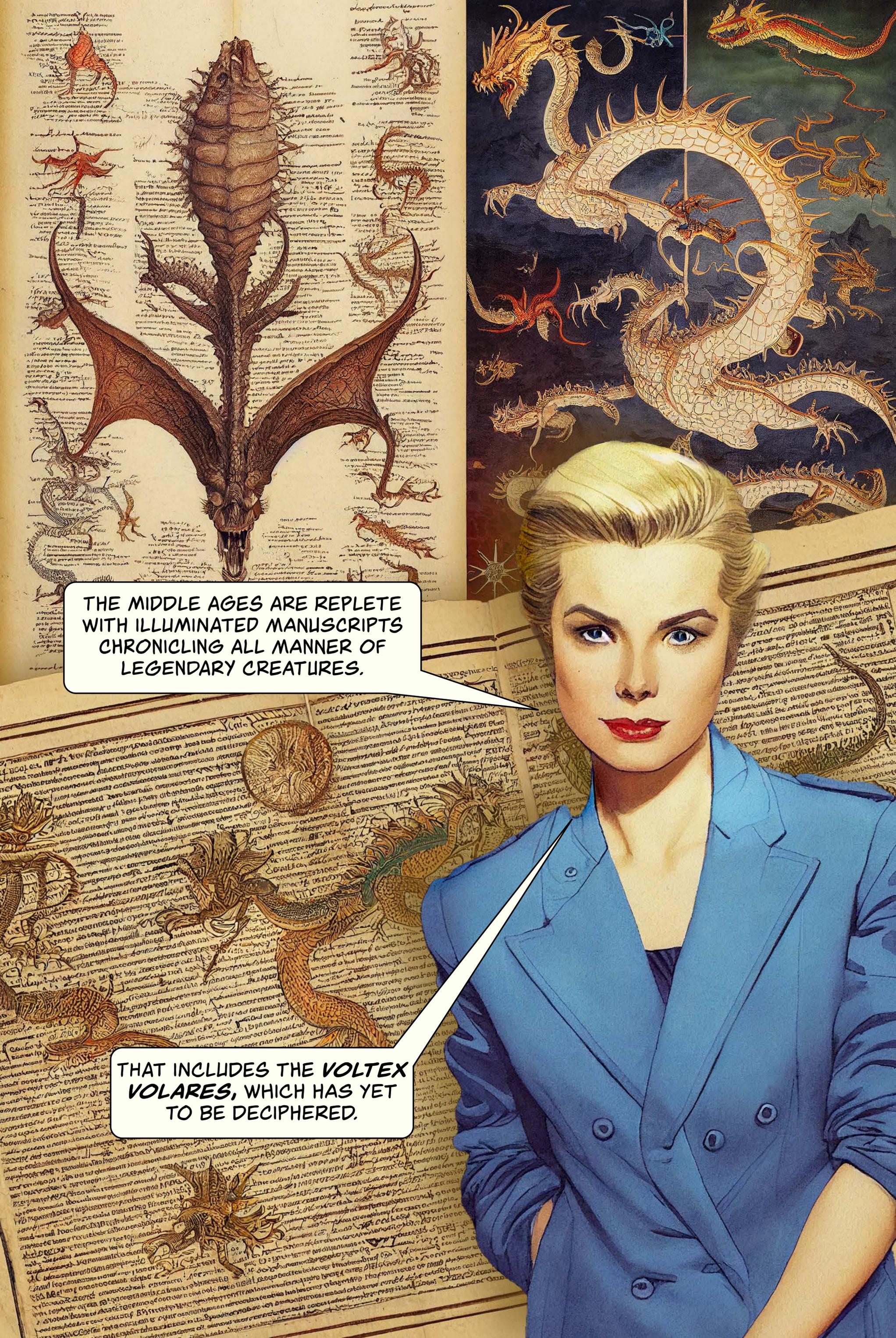


YES, GO AHEAD TRACY, YOU CAN INTERACT WITH IT!



SUBSEQUENT EXCAVATIONS IN THE AREA REVEALED LARGE FOSSILS SCIENTISTS HAVE *NEVER* BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY.





THE MIDDLE AGES ARE REPLETE WITH ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS CHRONICLING ALL MANNER OF LEGENDARY CREATURES.

THAT INCLUDES THE VOLTEX VOLARES, WHICH HAS YET TO BE DECIPHERED.



MANY CULTURES HAVE FOLK LEGENDS ABOUT LAKE AND RIVER MONSTERS, THE MOST FAMOUS BEING THE BEAST THAT ALLEGEDLY INHABITED *LOCH NESS*.

THOUGH LIKELY REMNANTS OF TALES TOLD TO KEEP CHILDREN *SAFE* FROM OPEN WATER., IT'S UNDENIABLE THAT - WITHOUT EXCEPTION - *ALL* THE LEVIATHANS EMERGED FROM OUR OCEANS.



THE FIRST *RELIABLE* RECORD WE HAVE THAT FORESHADOWS WHAT WAS TO COME IS FROM *INNSMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS* IN 1695.



JAYNE AND CHASTITY GOODFELLOW WERE PLAGUED BY NIGHTMARE VISIONS OF GIANT SERPENTS EMERGING FROM THE NEW ENGLAND SHORELINE.





THE TOWN ELDERS FOOLISHLY DECLARED IT TO BE WITCHCRAFT, AND THE FINGER OF SUSPICION WAS POINTED AT THE WIDOW *SARAH OSBOURNE*.



OF COURSE SHE DENIED ALL KNOWLEDGE OF THE NIGHTMARES, BUT TO NO AVAIL.



AS SHE BURNED AT THE STAKE, SHE IS SAID TO HAVE CURSED THE MONSTERS INTO EXISTENCE "ELEVEN SCORE YEARS FROM THIS DAY."



NOW, REACH OUT AND MAKE THE **CLOCK-HAND** MOTION I TAUGHT YOU.

WE'RE GOING TO STAY IN INNSMOUTH BUT MOVE **FORWARD** IN TIME.

1695



1760



1880



1925





IN A HOUSE BUILT ON THE SITE OF THE WIDOW'S BURNING, AN AUTHOR NAMED **LOVECRAFT** BEGAN WRITING "**THE BESTIARY CHRONICLES**" AFTER MONSTERS CAME TO HIM IN DREAMS.

IT'S AS IF HE COULD SEE THE FUTURE COMING.

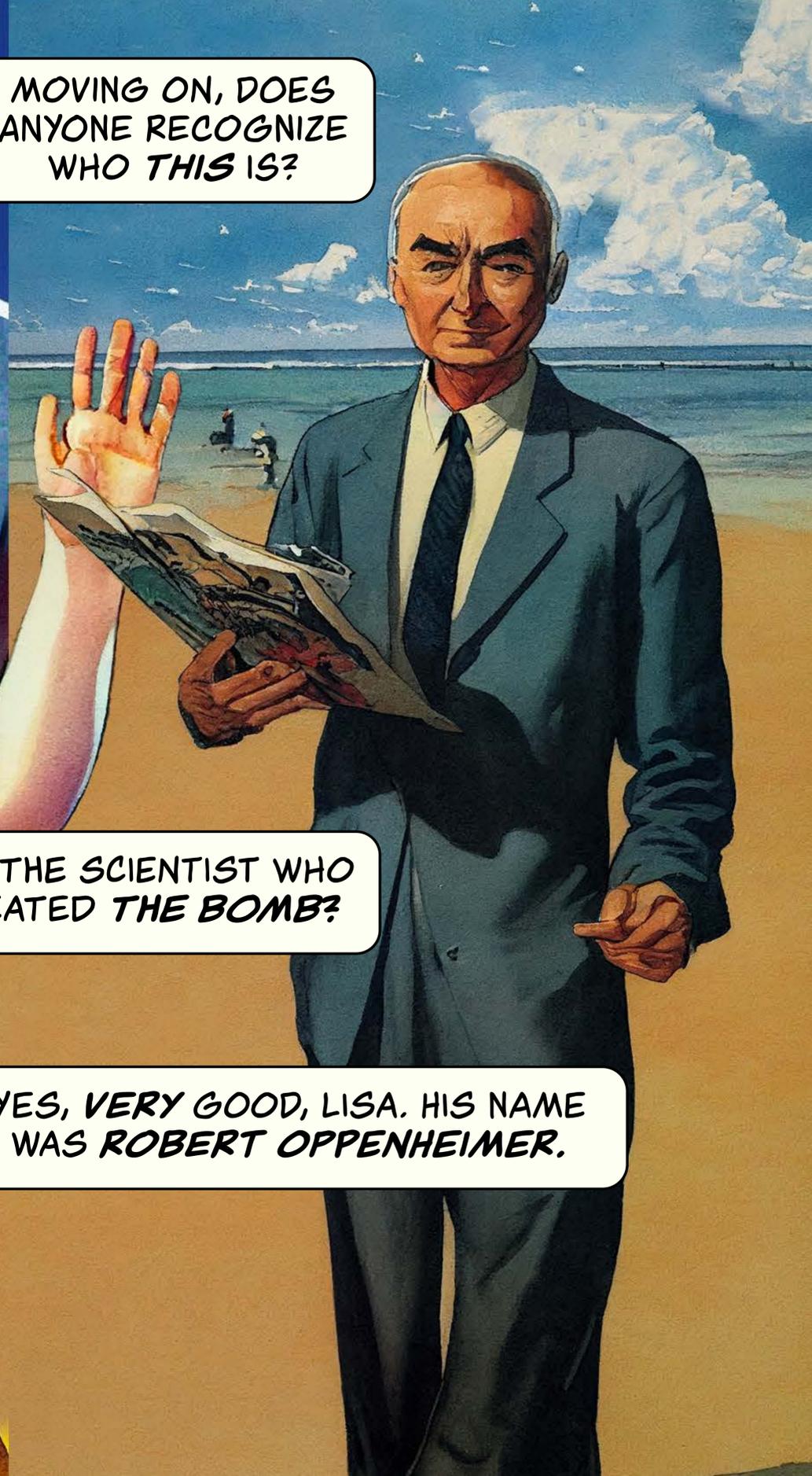


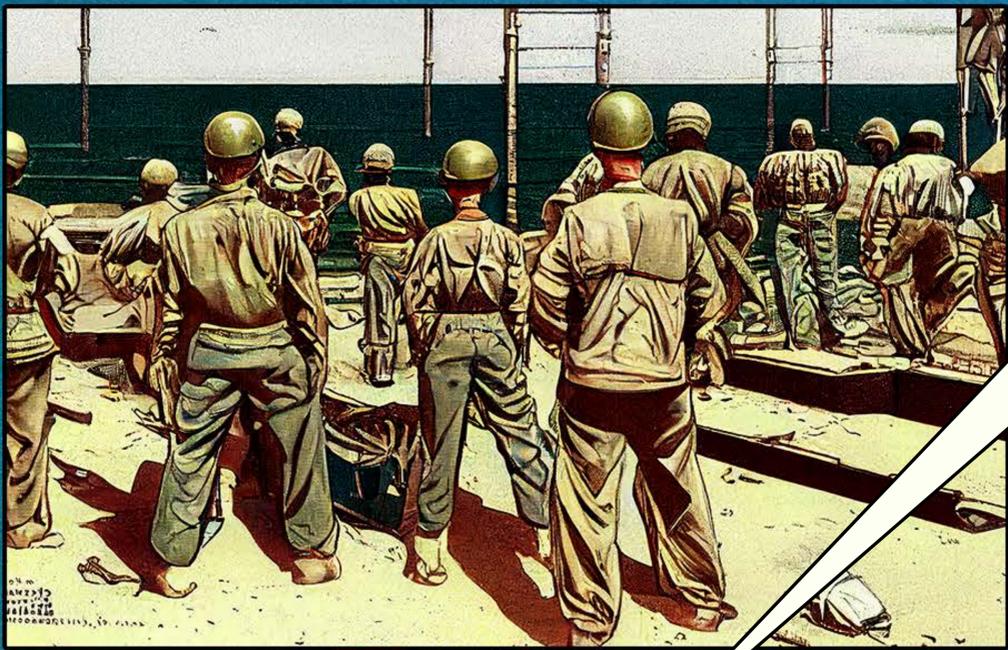
MOVING ON, DOES ANYONE RECOGNIZE WHO *THIS* IS?



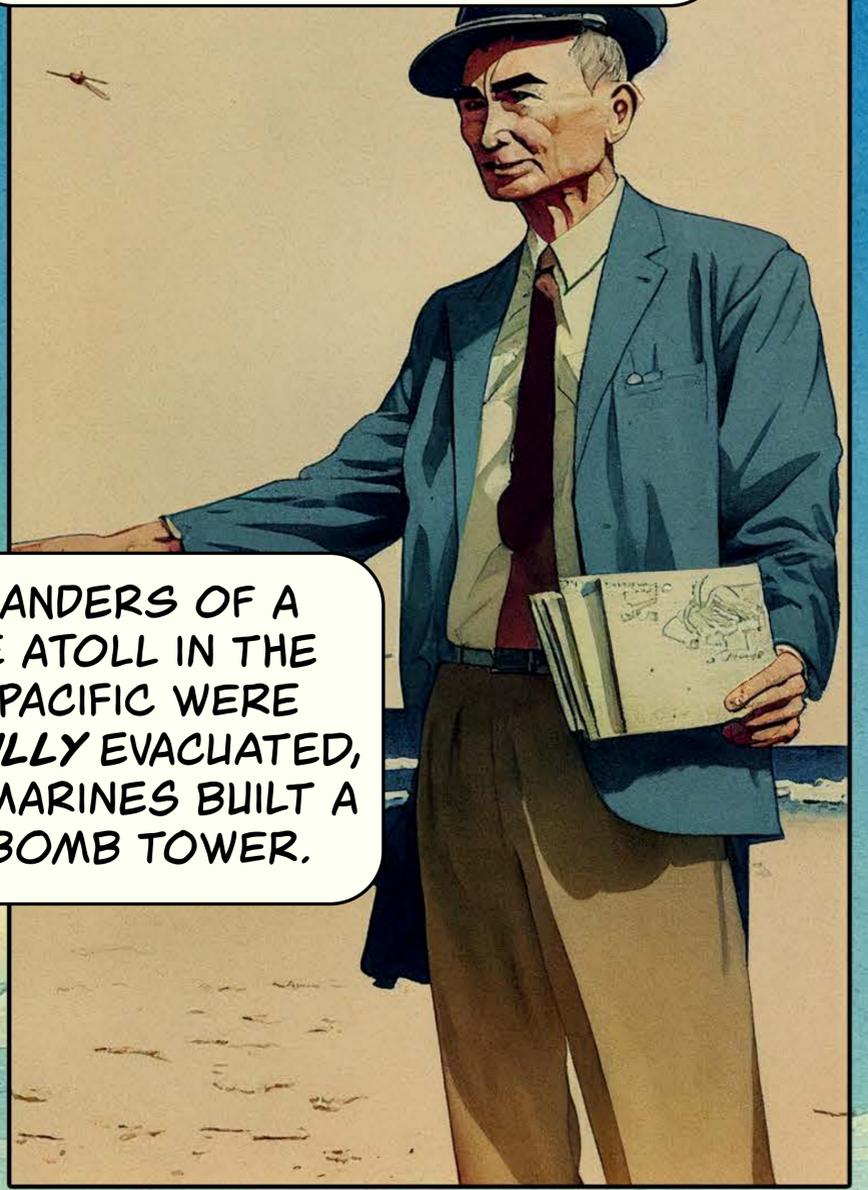
IT'S THE SCIENTIST WHO CREATED *THE BOMB*?

YES, *VERY GOOD*, LISA. HIS NAME WAS *ROBERT OPPENHEIMER*.

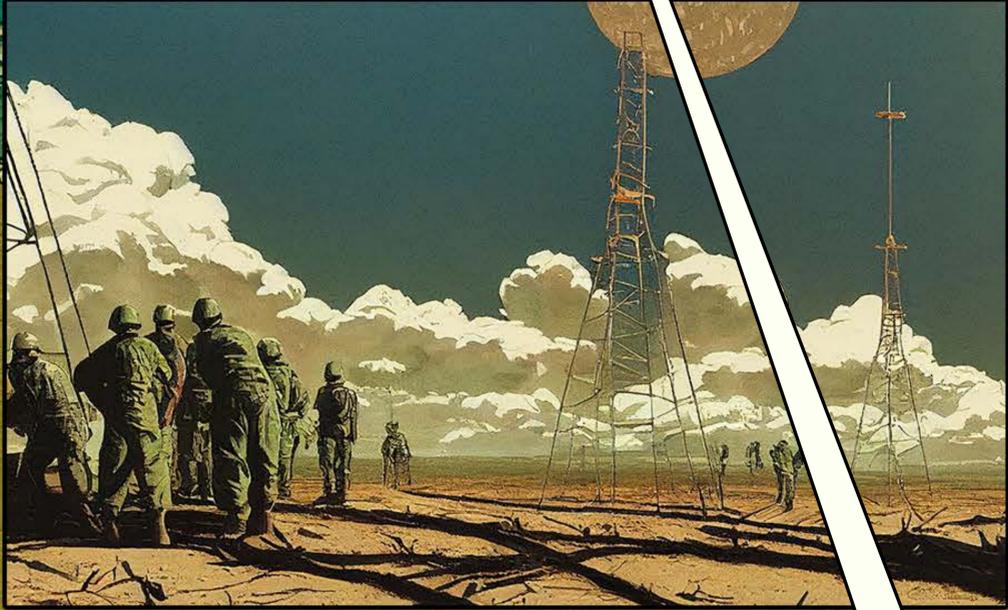




AFTER DEVELOPING THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS THAT ENDED THE WAR, OPPENHEIMER TRANSFERRED HIS ATTENTION TO *HYDROGEN* DETONATIONS.



THE ISLANDERS OF A REMOTE ATOLL IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC WERE *FORCEFULLY* EVACUATED, AND U.S. MARINES BUILT A 100FT BOMB TOWER.



CLOSE YOUR EYES.





**SCIENTISTS HAD
MISCALCULATED THE YIELD.**



THE RESULTING
EXPLOSION WAS **1,000**
TIMES LARGER THAN BOTH
HIROSHIMA AND
NAGASAKI COMBINED.



IRONICALLY IT WAS THE
MOST *POWERFUL*
EXPLOSION THAT EARTH HAD
SEEN SINCE THE METEOR
THAT KILLED THE DINOSAURS.



SOON AFTER, THE
MONSTERS APPEARED...



**THE MIGHTY
GOLGOTH**

ORTHAMON



DOUZ'ITRUSH

THE DESTROYER OF LONDON



月夜口上口口口



NAIKA

FROM THE SILENT DEPTHS





RAMZAN

DEVOURER OF WORLDS



FOR YEARS, HUMANITY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HOW TO RESPOND TO THE INCURSIONS.

IT WAS SUCH AN ALIEN EXPERIENCE.

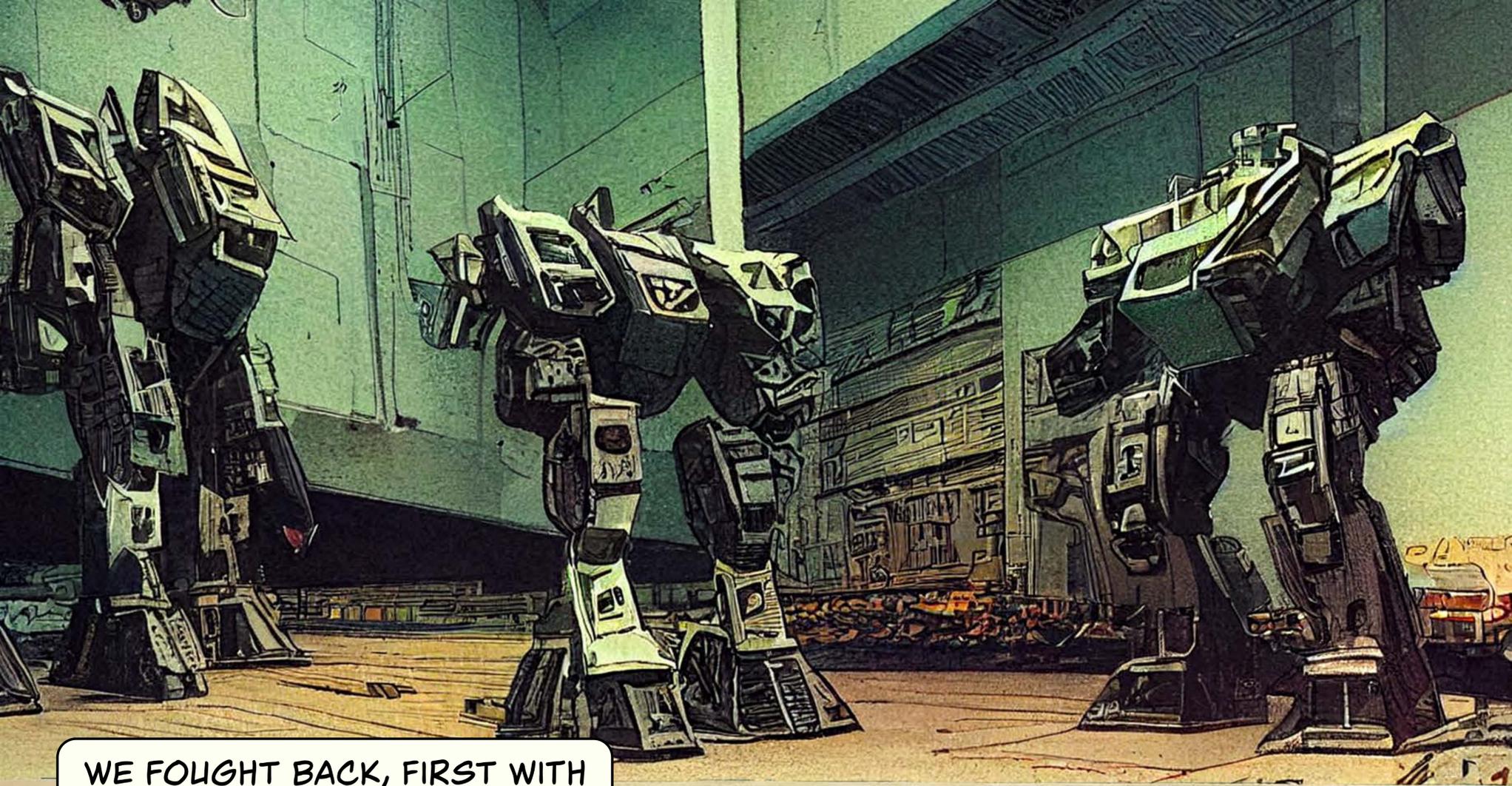
SOME FEARED THE MONSTERS, OTHERS WORSHIPPED THEM.*

* AS SEEN IN SUMMER ISLAND

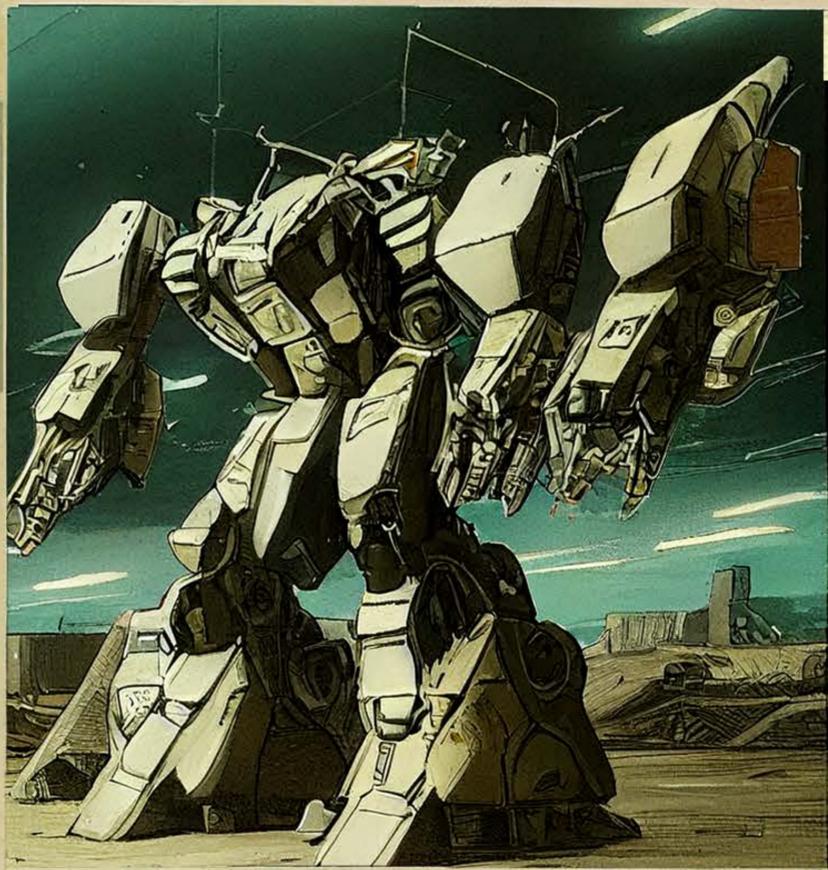
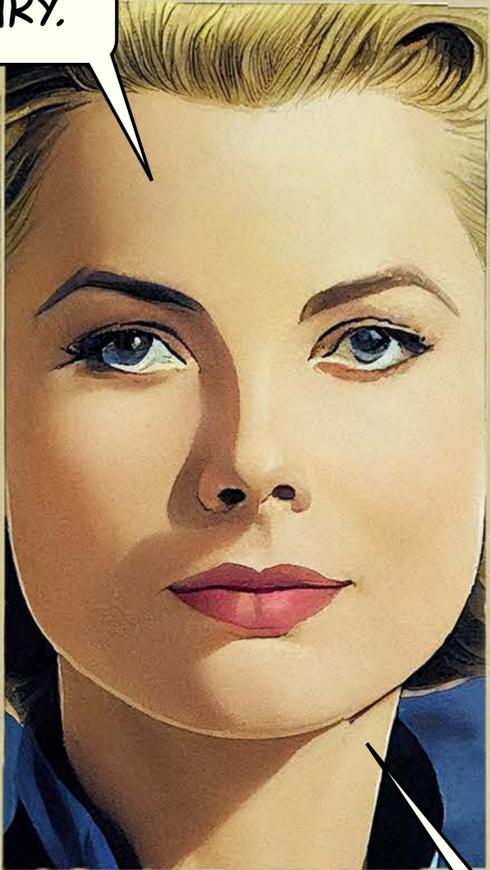
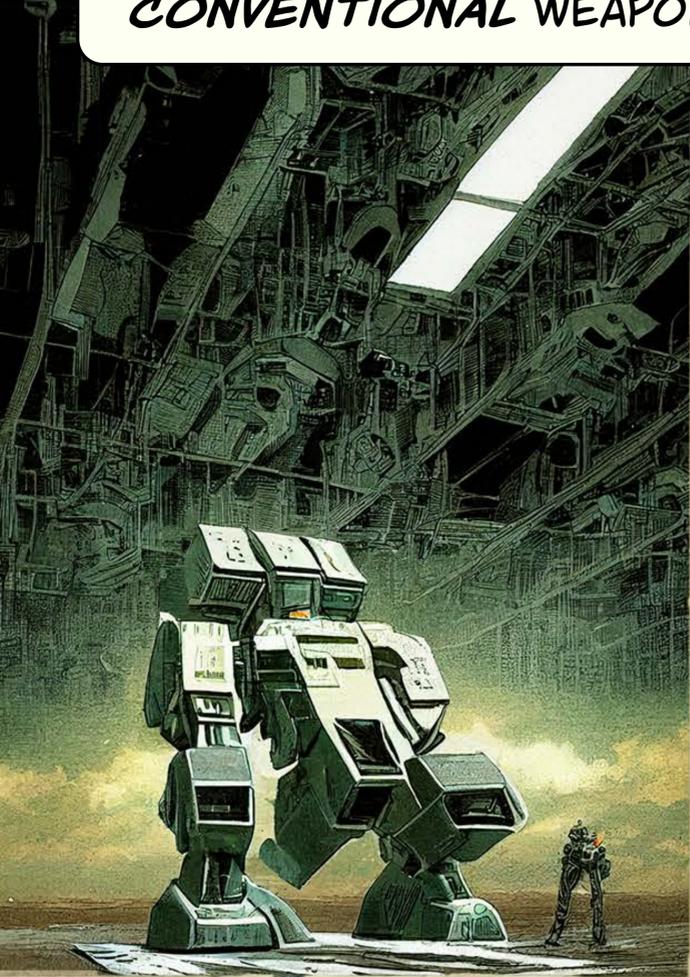
LIFE

SUMMER ISLAND
The shocking truth behind this remote community

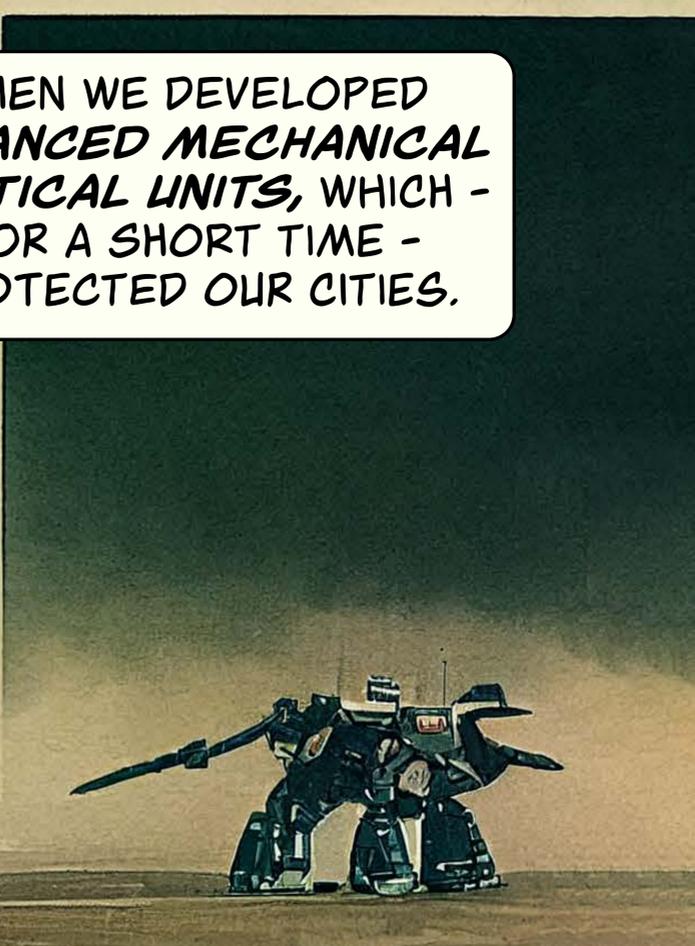
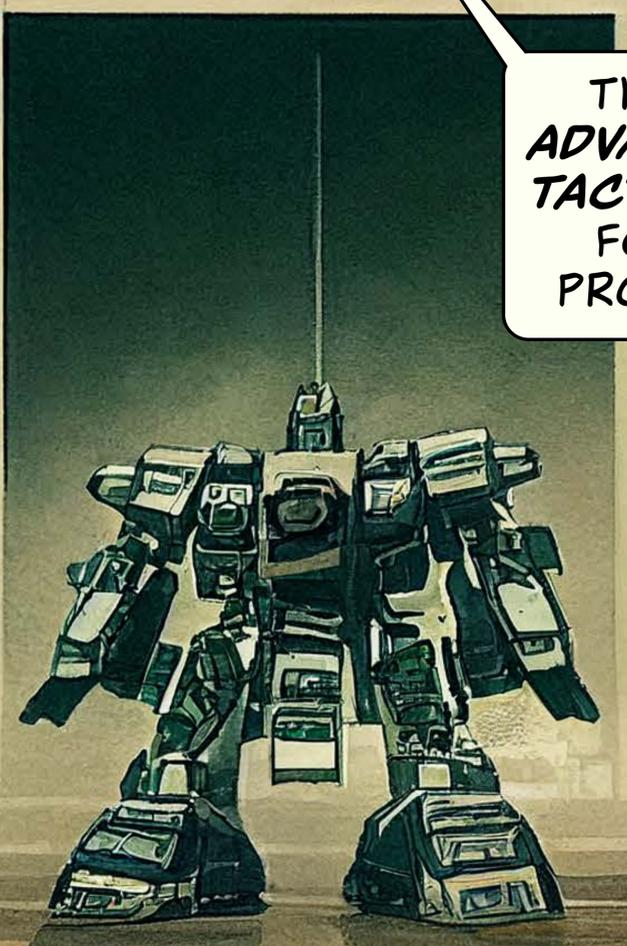
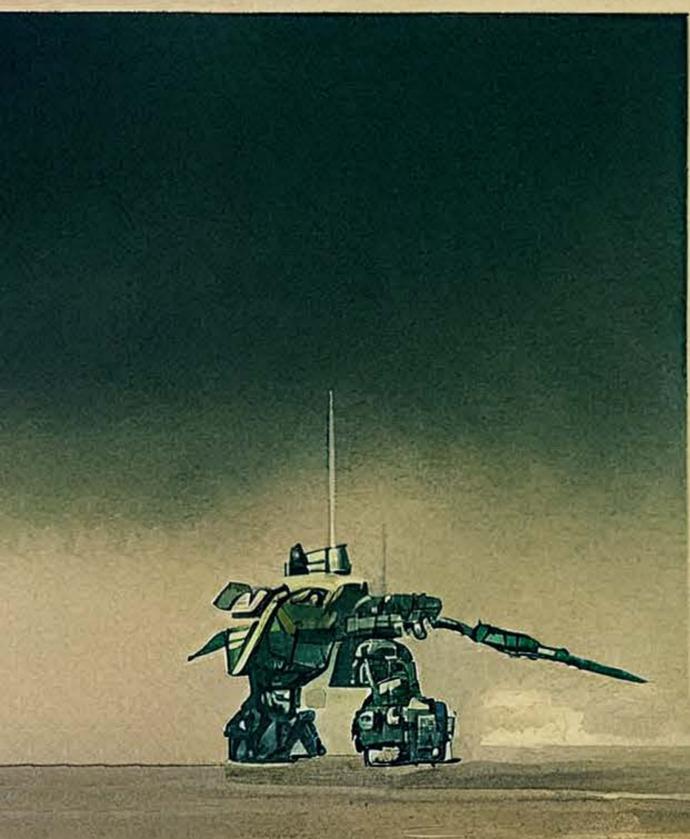




WE FOUGHT BACK, FIRST WITH CONVENTIONAL WEAPONRY.



THEN WE DEVELOPED ADVANCED MECHANICAL TACTICAL UNITS, WHICH - FOR A SHORT TIME - PROTECTED OUR CITIES.



BUT NO MATTER WHAT WE
TRIED, ULTIMATELY WE
FAILED TO REPEL THEM.

NUCLEAR, BIOLOGICAL,
CHEMICAL. **NOTHING**
SUCCEEDED. WE CAME TO
BELIEVE THEY WERE ALL BUT
INDESTRUCTIBLE.

IN FACT, ALL WE REALLY
ACHIEVED WAS MAKING OUR
OWN PLANET INCREASINGLY
UNINHABITABLE.

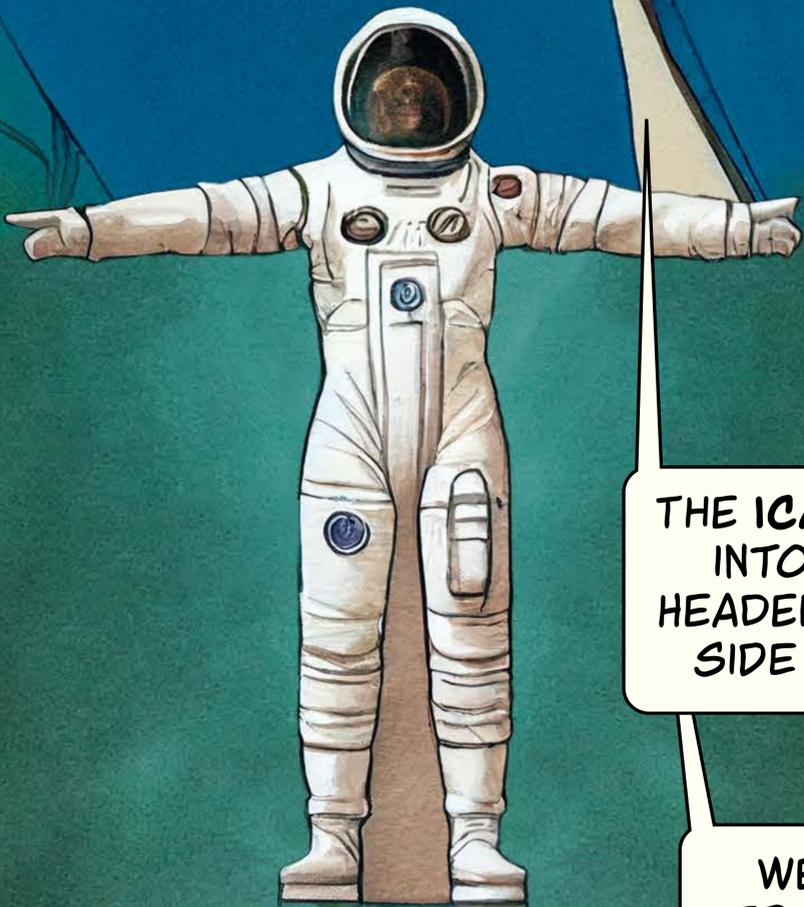




SO WE TURNED INSTEAD TO **COSMISM** AND THE STARS, AN AUDACIOUS PLAN TO ESCAPE TO A **NEW EDEN**.



THE FIRST LAUNCH ENDED IN TRAGEDY, WITH THE MONSTER **NAIKA** DESTROYING THE **ULYSSES** ON ITS LAUNCH PAD AT CANAVERAL WITH ALL ABOARD.



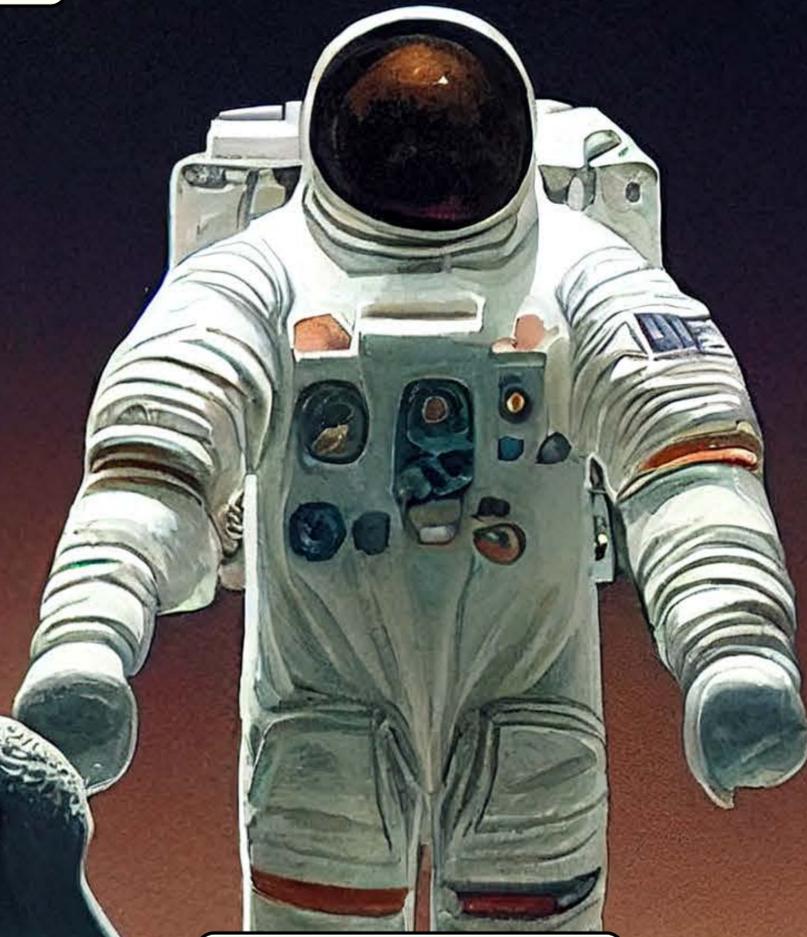
THE **ICARUS** MADE IT INTO SPACE AND HEADED FOR THE FAR SIDE OF THE SUN.



WE NEVER HEARD FROM THEM AGAIN.



AND THEN, THERE
WAS THE *TURING*.*

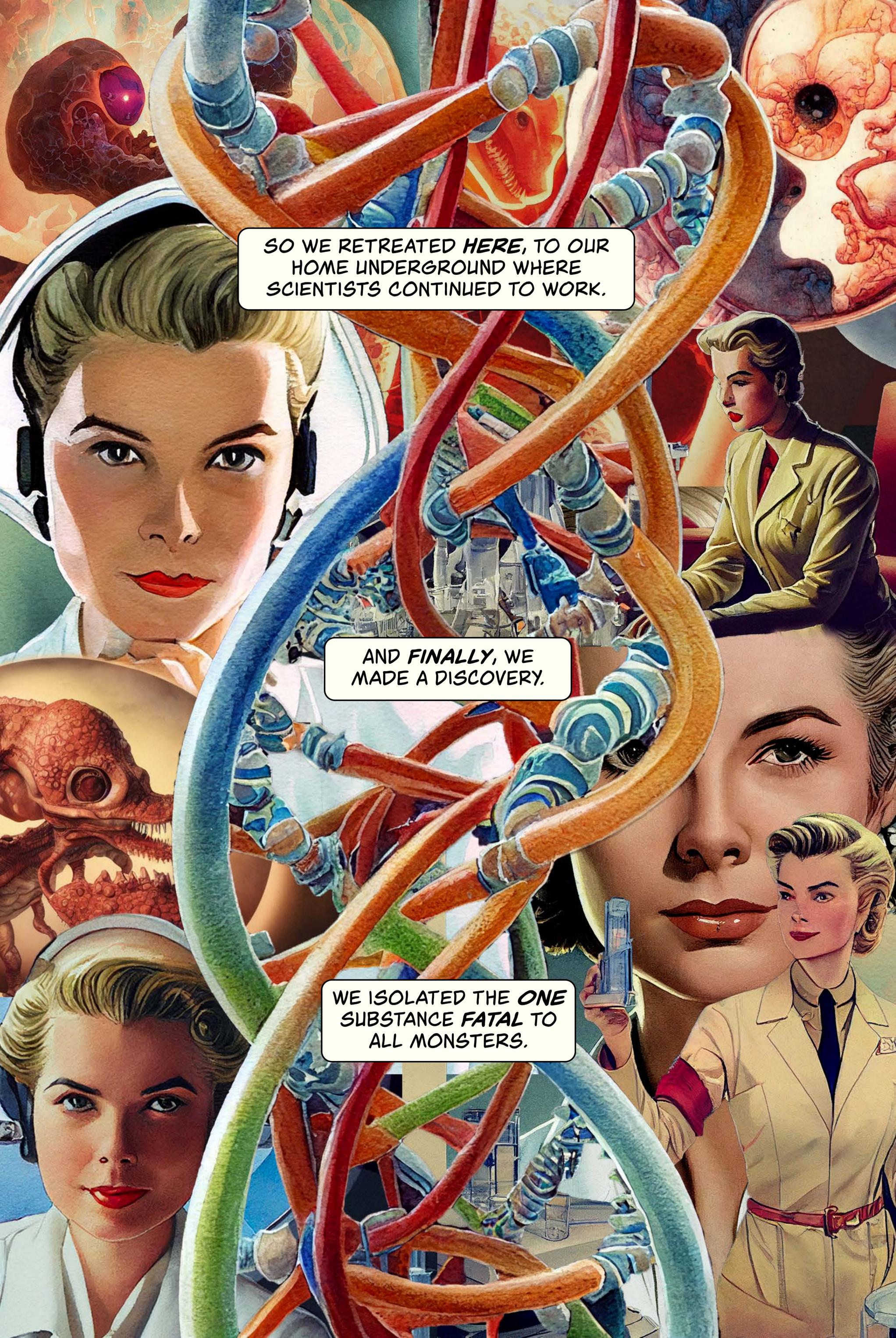


AFTER A LONG
HIBERNATION,
THESE **BRAVE**
WOMEN FINALLY
MADE IT TO THEIR
DESTINATION...



* READ THE STORY OF THE
TURING IN *EXODUS*

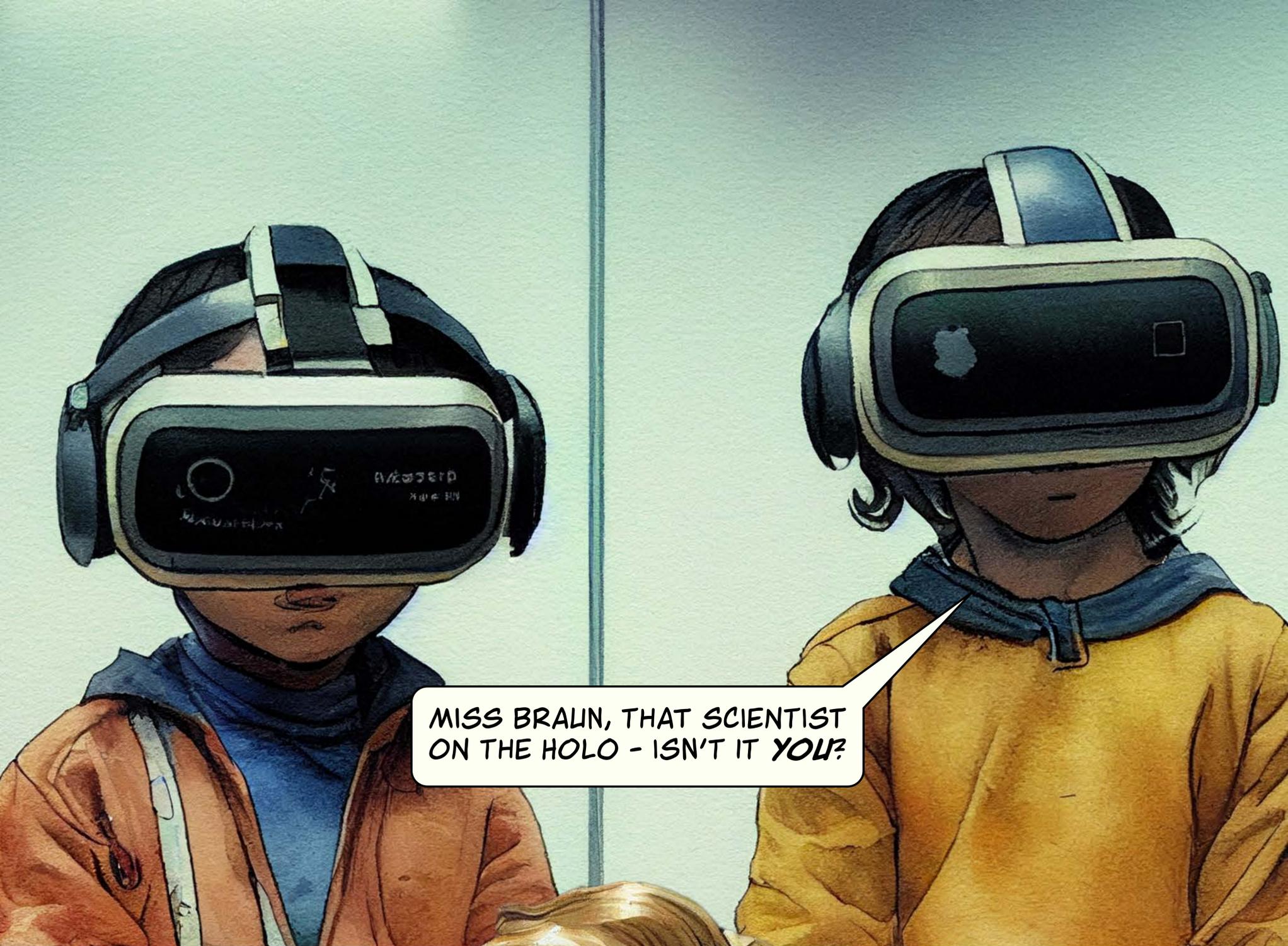
ONLY TO DISCOVER A
TERRIBLE TRUTH.



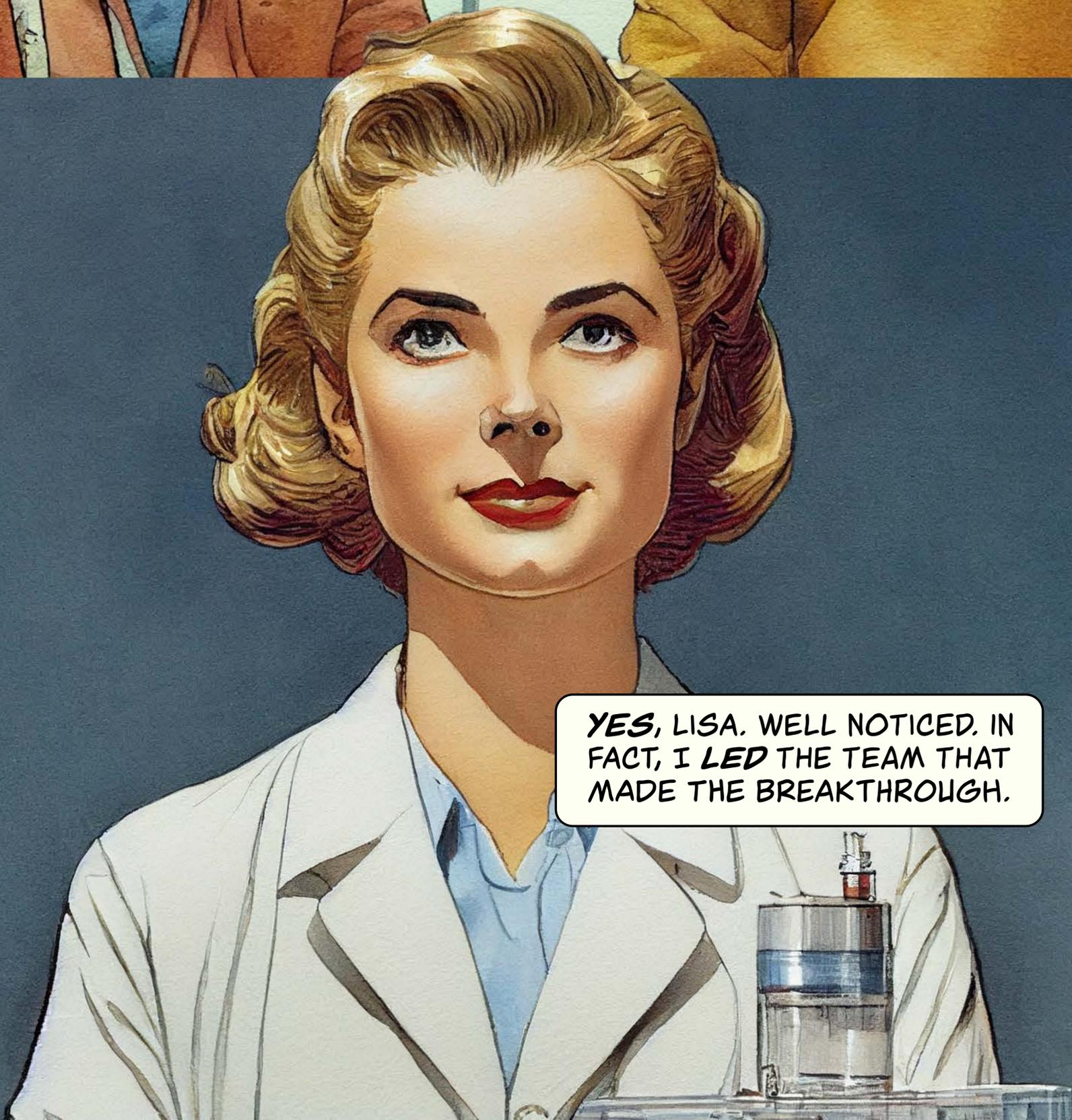
SO WE RETREATED *HERE*, TO OUR HOME UNDERGROUND WHERE SCIENTISTS CONTINUED TO WORK.

AND *FINALLY*, WE MADE A DISCOVERY.

WE ISOLATED THE *ONE* SUBSTANCE *FATAL* TO ALL MONSTERS.



MISS BRAUN, THAT SCIENTIST
ON THE HOLO - ISN'T IT *YOU*?



YES, LISA. WELL NOTICED. IN
FACT, I *LED* THE TEAM THAT
MADE THE BREAKTHROUGH.

A woman with blonde hair styled in a 1940s fashion, wearing a white lab coat over a dark blue collared shirt and tie. She is standing in a laboratory filled with various pieces of scientific equipment, including microscopes, glassware, and large metal apparatuses. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong light source from the left, casting shadows and highlighting the woman's face and the equipment. The background is dark, making the laboratory equipment stand out.

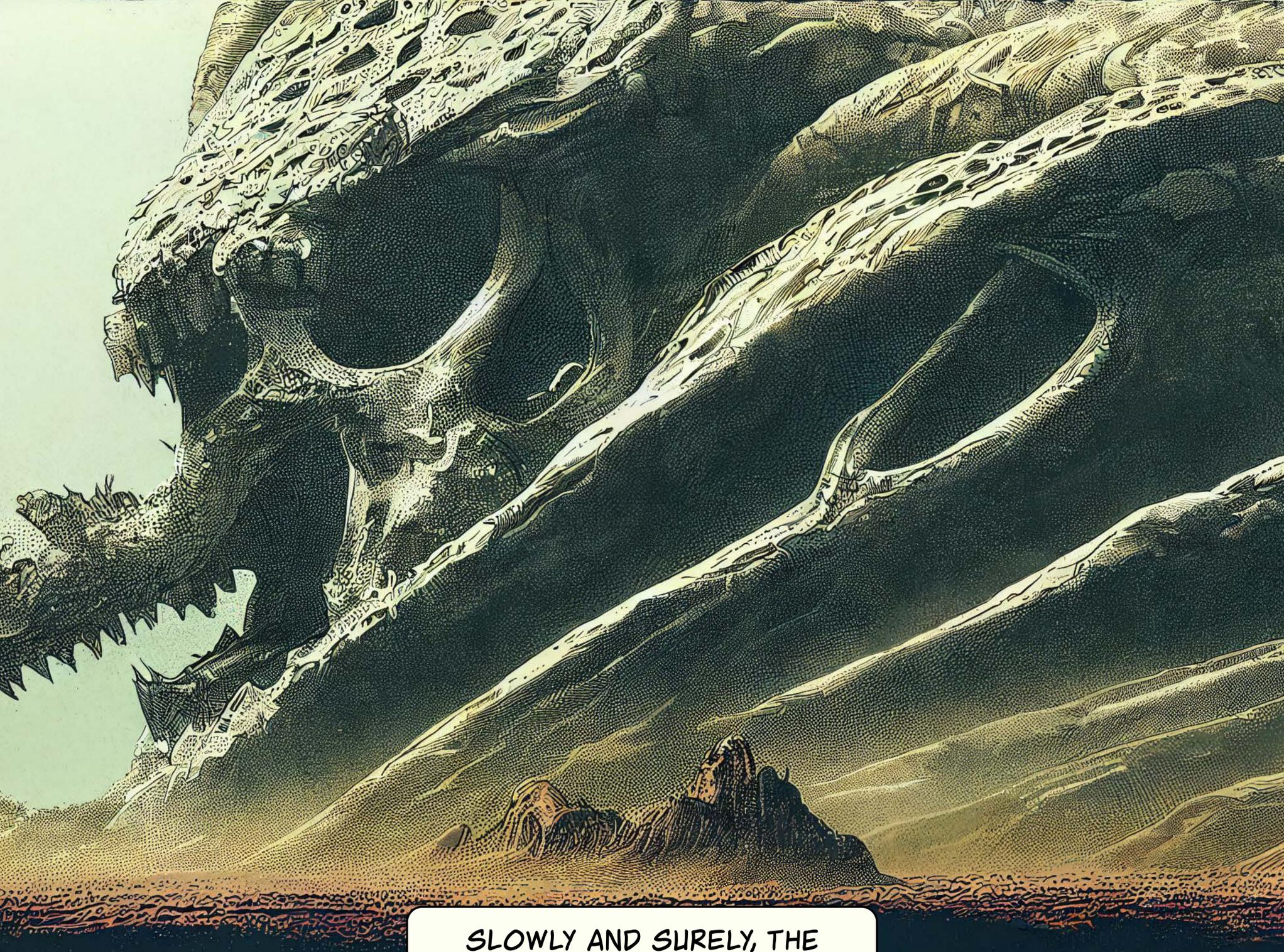
AFTER MANY TESTS, WE FOUND OUT THAT THE ONLY THING THAT COULD KILL A MONSTER WAS THE HEMOGLOBIN OF *ANOTHER* MONSTER.

BUT WE NEVER FOUND A WAY TO *SYNTHESIZE* MONSTER BLOOD, SO WE WERE FORCED TO DEVELOP A *HYBRID DELIVERY METHOD*.

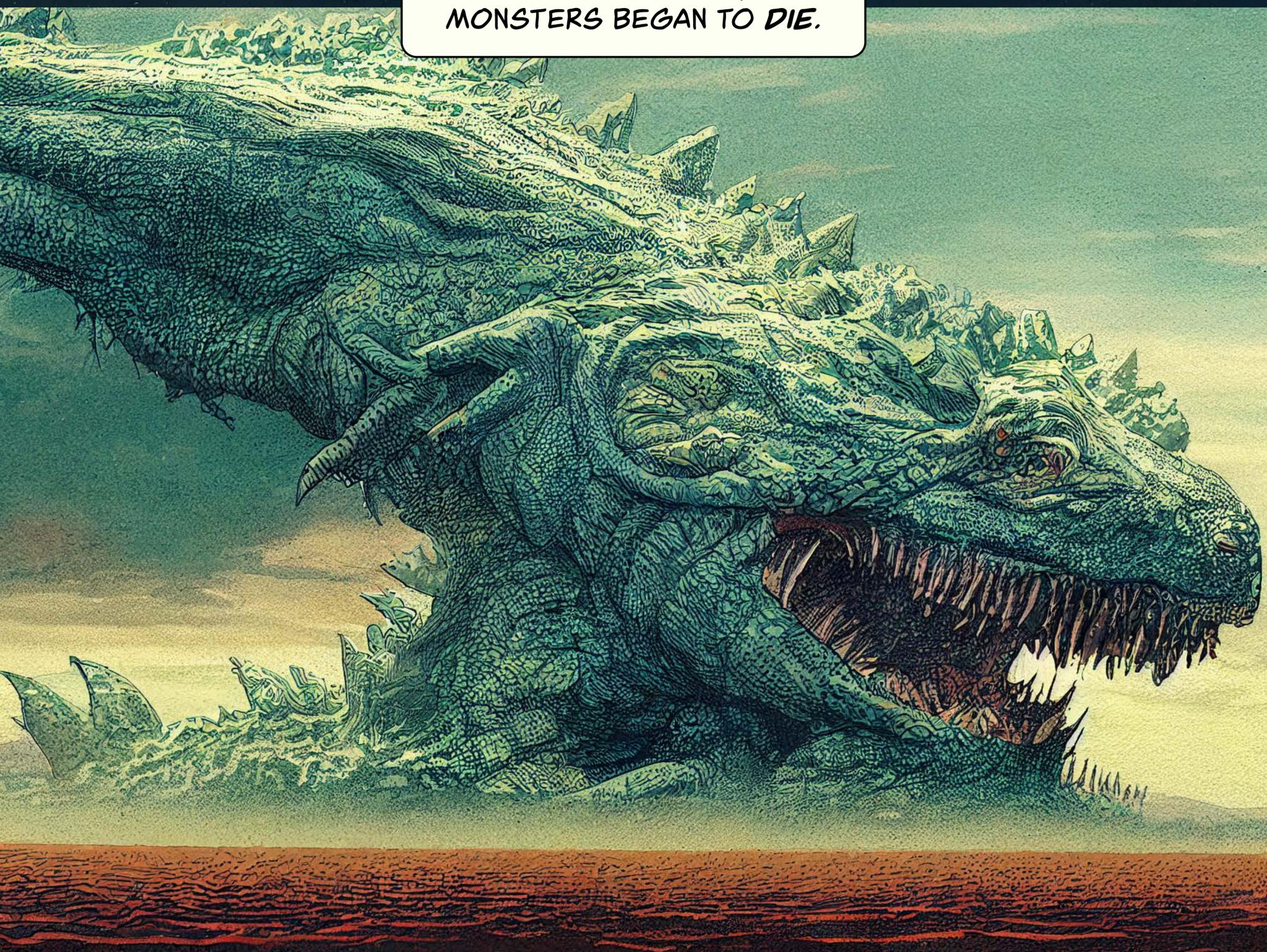
IT'S SIMILAR TO HOW THE ANTIPODEANS SOLVED THEIR VERMIN PROBLEM BACK IN THE 20TH CENTURY, BY RELEASING *MYXOMATOSIS* INTO THE HABITAT.



AND ONCE THE MONSTERS
STARTED TO *INJEST* OUR
WEAPON, IT WAS JUST A
MATTER OF TIME BEFORE
THE TIDE TURNED.



SLOWLY AND SURELY, THE
MONSTERS BEGAN TO DIE.







MISS BRAUN, ARE ALL THE MONSTERS *GONE* NOW?



MOST ARE, YES.



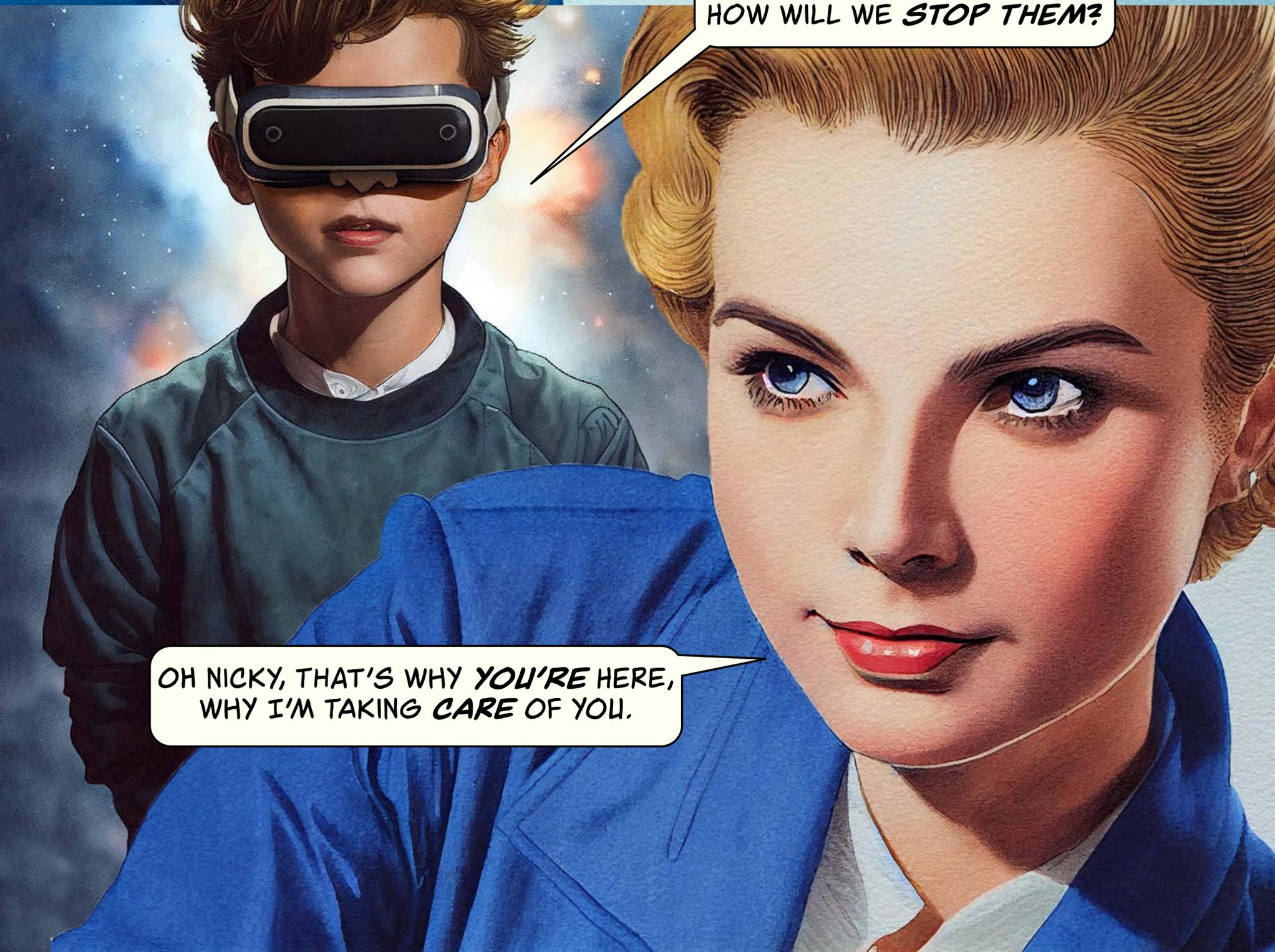
THE ONES THAT REMAIN CONTINUE TO BREED AND EVOLVE, AND THE FORMULA FOR THEIR DEFEAT IS ALWAYS IN FLUX.

SO WE STAY HERE SAFELY UNDERGROUND AND *WATCH*, AND *WAIT*.



ALRIGHT CLASS, THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY.

TAKE OFF YOUR HEADSETS AND GET READY FOR YOUR FEEDING.



BUT MISS BRAUN, IF THE MONSTERS COME BACK, HOW WILL WE *STOP THEM*?

OH NICKY, THAT'S WHY *YOU'RE* HERE, WHY I'M TAKING *CARE* OF YOU.



THAT'S WHY
YOU'RE ALL HERE.

IF THE MONSTERS COME
BACK, YOU WILL SAVE US.

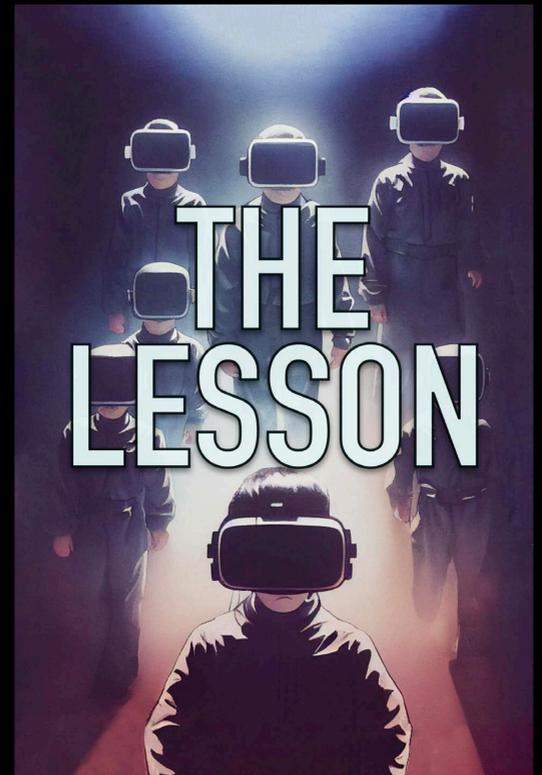
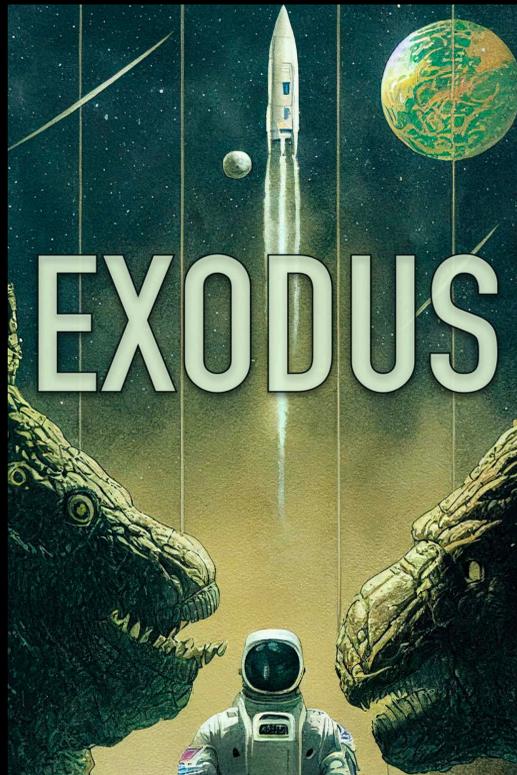
ALL OF YOU.



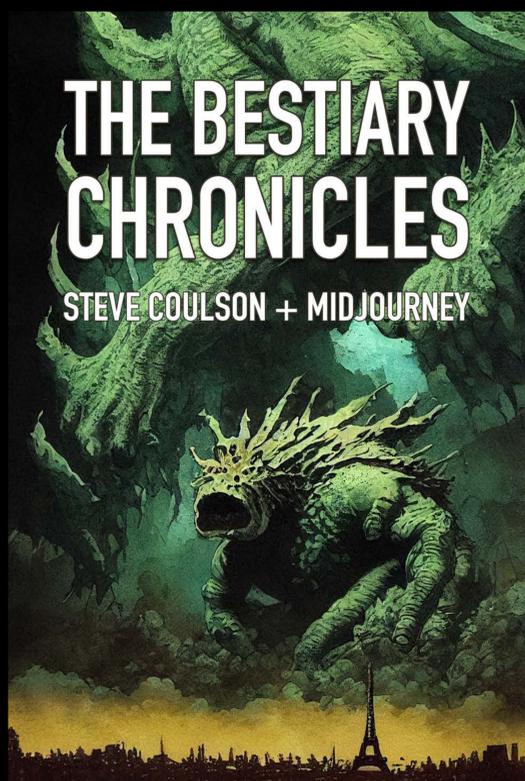
THAT'S WHY WE BRED YOU.

*HERE ENDETH
THE LESSON.*

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