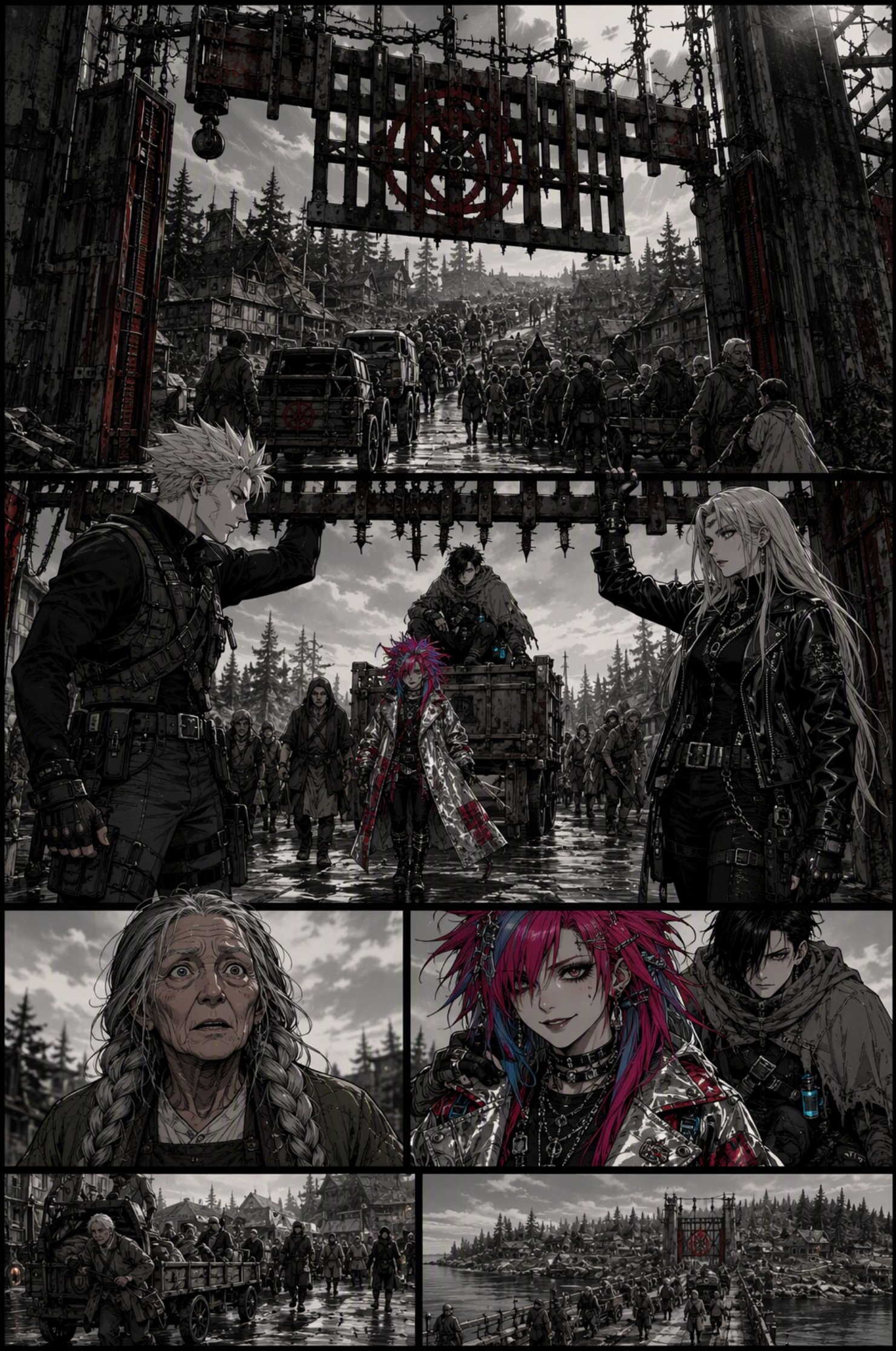
RED LATITUDE

SEASON FINALE — EPISODE NINE: THE NETWORK




RED LATITUDE
ISLAND SETTLEMENT
THE BADGER
BADG3R




THE BADGER
BADG3R
TENTS UP.
SUPPLIES DOWN.
WATER HERE.
FOOD THERE.
STORIES EVERYWHERE.


VALE.
FORMER CIRCUIT OUTPOST.
NOW SANCTUARY.
SEE.
WATER.
FOOD.
MEDICINE.
HOME.
CLEAN.
RUNNING.
ALIVE.
(EXHALE)
MEDICINAL.
NOURISHING.
ABUNDANT.
YOU
REALLY
CUT IT.
I FOUND
SOMEWHERE
WORTH
CHANGING
FOR.
FIRST SAFE
PLACE WE'VE
SEEN.
FIRST REAL
BREATH WE'VE
TAKEN.
WE'LL HELP
THEM DEFEND IT.
WE'LL HELP
THEM GROW.
TOGETHER.


I CAN'T CALCULATE IT.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FIVE YEARS...
...WE AREN'T COUNTING HOW LONG UNTIL WE DIE. WE'RE COUNTING SURPLUS.







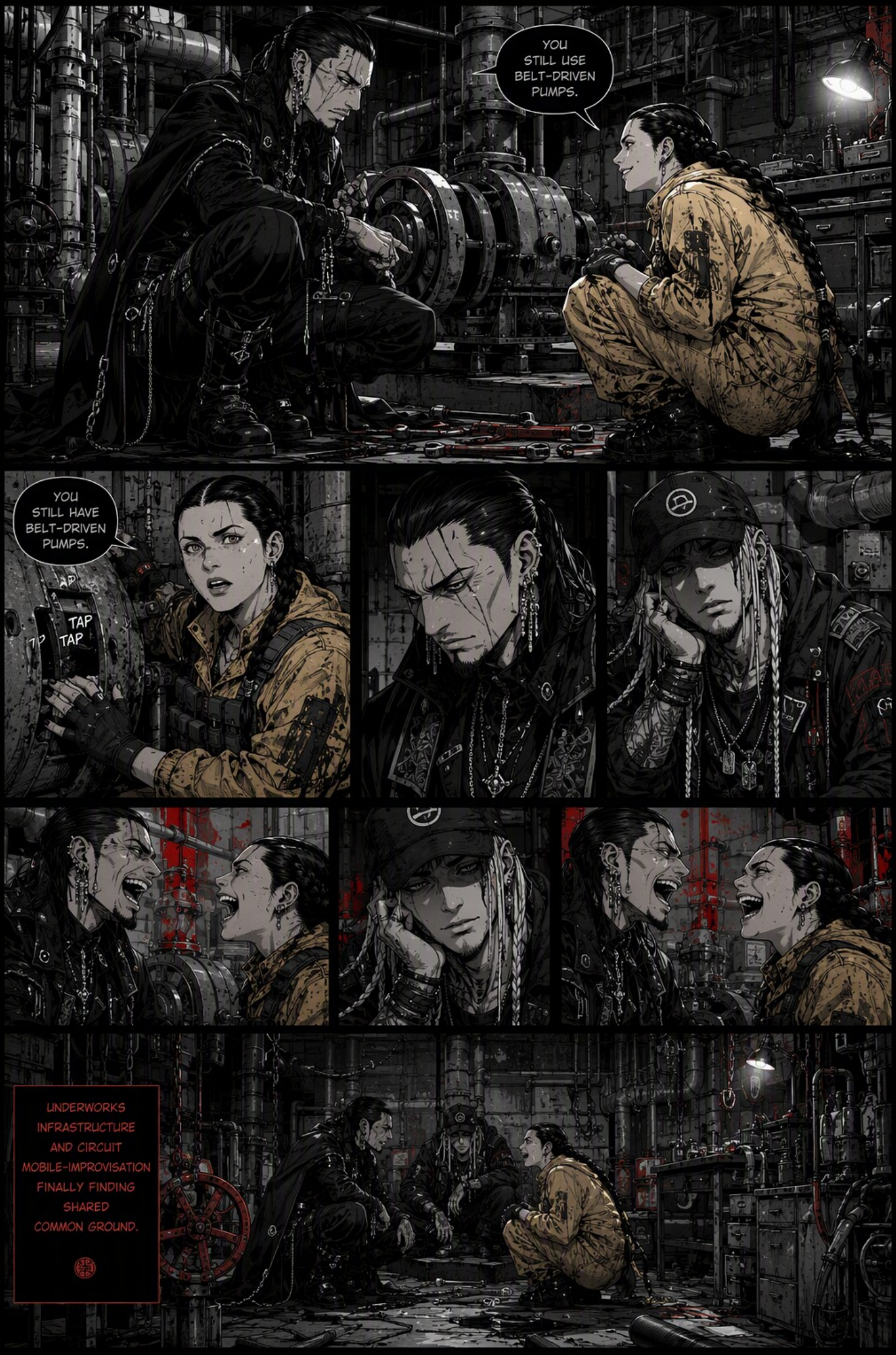





YOU WERE REALLY ON THE TOP OF THAT BUILDING.
I FOUND SOMETHING TOO.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY DID.
NO.
BUT I KNOW WHAT THEY WERE TRYING TO DO.
ASCEND
TOGETHER
OR NOT AT ALL
WE SCALE THE TOWER TO BE REBORN

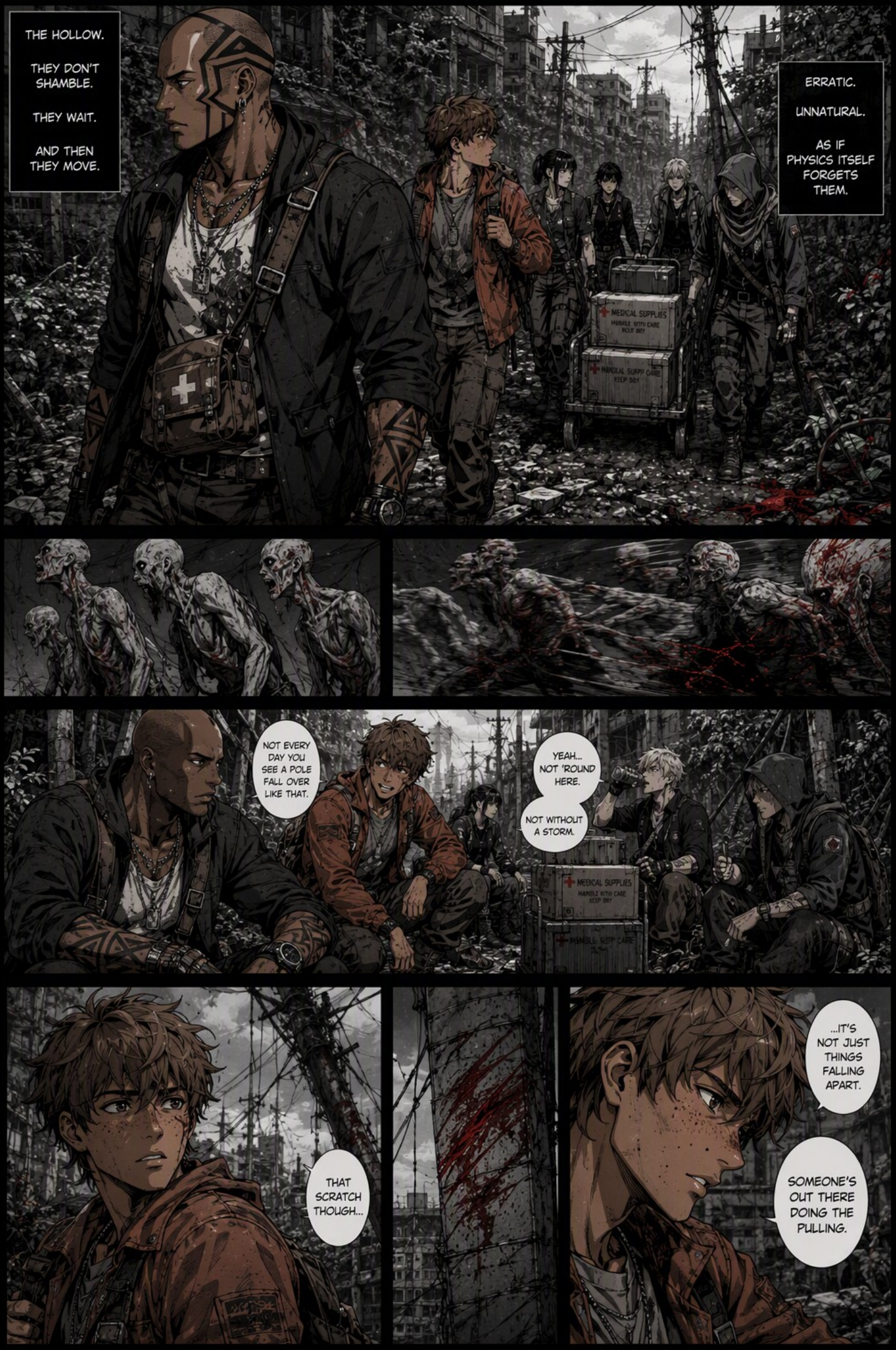

THE BADGER
BADG3R
THE BADGER
THE BADGER


People deserve to know.
Unverified information destroys trust as fast as a lie.
These are military records, Dessa.

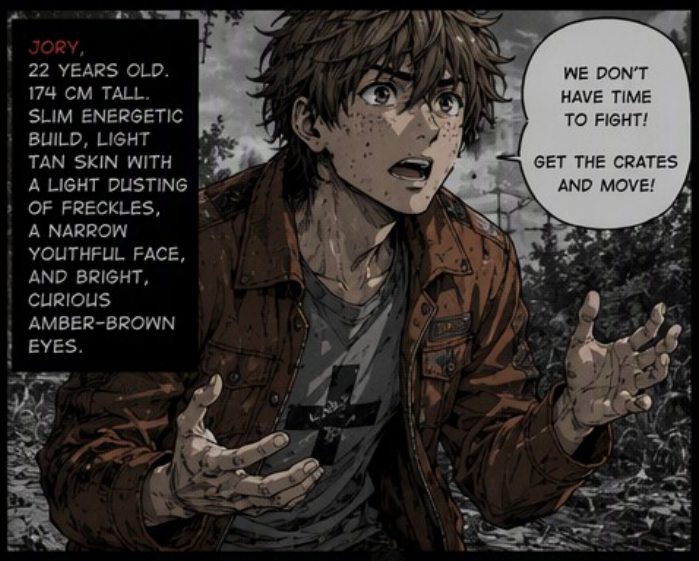

YOU STILL USE BELT-DRIVEN PUMPS.
YOU STILL HAVE BELT-DRIVEN PUMPS.
TAP TAP
UNDERWORKS INFRASTRUCTURE AND CIRCUIT MOBILE-IMPROVISATION FINALLY FINDING SHARED COMMON GROUND.

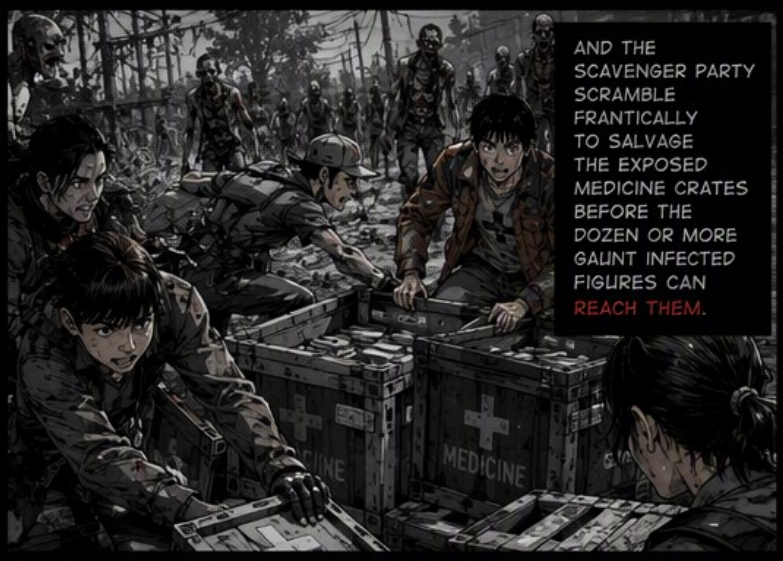

...IT'S ALL HERE.
ALL OF IT.
ONE MAP.
EVERY LAST SETTLEMENT.
THE WHOLE CIRCUIT.
FINALLY... UNITED.
DISPATCH.
SIGNAL RUNNER REPORTING IN.
YOU'RE LATE.
THE ROADS ARE WORSE. THAN THE MAPS SHOW.
AN OVERDUE TRANSPORT— MEDICAL SUPPLIES BOUND FOR THE WESTERN SKYLINE CIRCUIT CAMP.
VANISHED. NO CONTACT. NO TRACE.
...GONE?
LAST CONFIRMED POSITION HERE.
THE IRON GULLEY. NARROW PASS. HIGH AMBUSH FREQUENCY. DEAD ZONE.
A CHOKEPOINT EVERY SCAVVER KNOWS.
IF IT MOVES— IT GETS TAKEN THERE.
I'LL FIND IT. OR WHAT'S LEFT.


HIGHWAY 7
KILOMETER 142
0630 HOURS
THREE DAYS OUT.
NO CONTACT.
NO EXPLANATION.
CIRCUIT
NORTH
7
NO BODIES. NO BLOOD. WHAT THE HELL?
WORSE. — NOTHING GOOD HAPPENS QUIET.
CRATES WERE OPENED. GEAR TAKEN. — NO ORDER. JUST... GONE.
CIRCUIT
THE HOLLOW WERE HERE.
YOU CAN TELL.
DRAG MARKS. DEEP. AVERAGE HOLLOW.
OVERLAID WITH HUMAN TRACKS. CHAOTIC. PANICKED. DESPERATE.
ROUTE MARKER. — FRESH CLOTH.
AND THIS.
THAT'S NOT THE POLE FAILING. — SOMETHING CUT THIS AFTER IT FELL.
NOT ANIMALS.
NOT TIME.
INTENT.


THE HOLLOW.
THEY DON'T SHAMBLE.
THEY WAIT.
AND THEN THEY MOVE.
ERRATIC.
UNNATURAL.
AS IF PHYSICS ITSELF FORGETS THEM.
MEDICAL SUPPLIES
HANDLE WITH CARE
KEEP DRY
NOT EVERY DAY YOU SEE A POLE FALL OVER LIKE THAT.
YEAH... NOT 'ROUND HERE.
NOT WITHOUT A STORM.
THAT SCRATCH THOUGH...
...IT'S NOT JUST THINGS FALLING APART.
SOMEONE'S OUT THERE DOING THE PULLING.


AT THE OVERGROWN HIGHWAY JUNCTION,
A DRAGGING CHORUS OF FOOTSTEPS HERALDS A MOVING THE HOLLOW.
5
NORTH
NORTH
EXIT 13 A-B
Riverside
Downtown
½ MILE
INFECTED HUMAN FIGURES WITH GAUNT, UNNATURALLY ELONGATED SILHOUETTES, PALLID ASHEN-GRAY SKIN STRETCHED TIGHTLY OVER VISIBLE SKELETAL FRAMES, SLACK OPEN JAWLINES, HOLLOW SHADOWED EYE SOCKETS, AND RAGGED SHREDDED CONTEMPORARY CLOTHING. THEY EXHIBIT AN EERIE, UNNATURAL STILLNESS THAT SNAPS INTO SUDDEN ERRATIC KINETIC SPEED, WITH FAINT CRIMSON VASCULAR TRACES VISIBLE BENEATH PALLID SKIN.


JORY, 22 YEARS OLD. 174 CM TALL. SLIM ENERGETIC BUILD, LIGHT TAN SKIN WITH A LIGHT DUSTING OF FRECKLES, A NARROW YOUTHFUL FACE, AND BRIGHT, CURIOUS AMBER-BROWN EYES.
WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO FIGHT!
GET THE CRATES AND MOVE!


AND THE SCAVENGER PARTY SCRAMBLE FRANTICALLY TO SALVAGE THE EXPOSED MEDICINE CRATES BEFORE THE DOZEN OR MORE GAUNT INFECTED FIGURES CAN REACH THEM.
MEDICINE


FLOW EMERGING FROM THE DENSE ROADSIDE SCRUB.

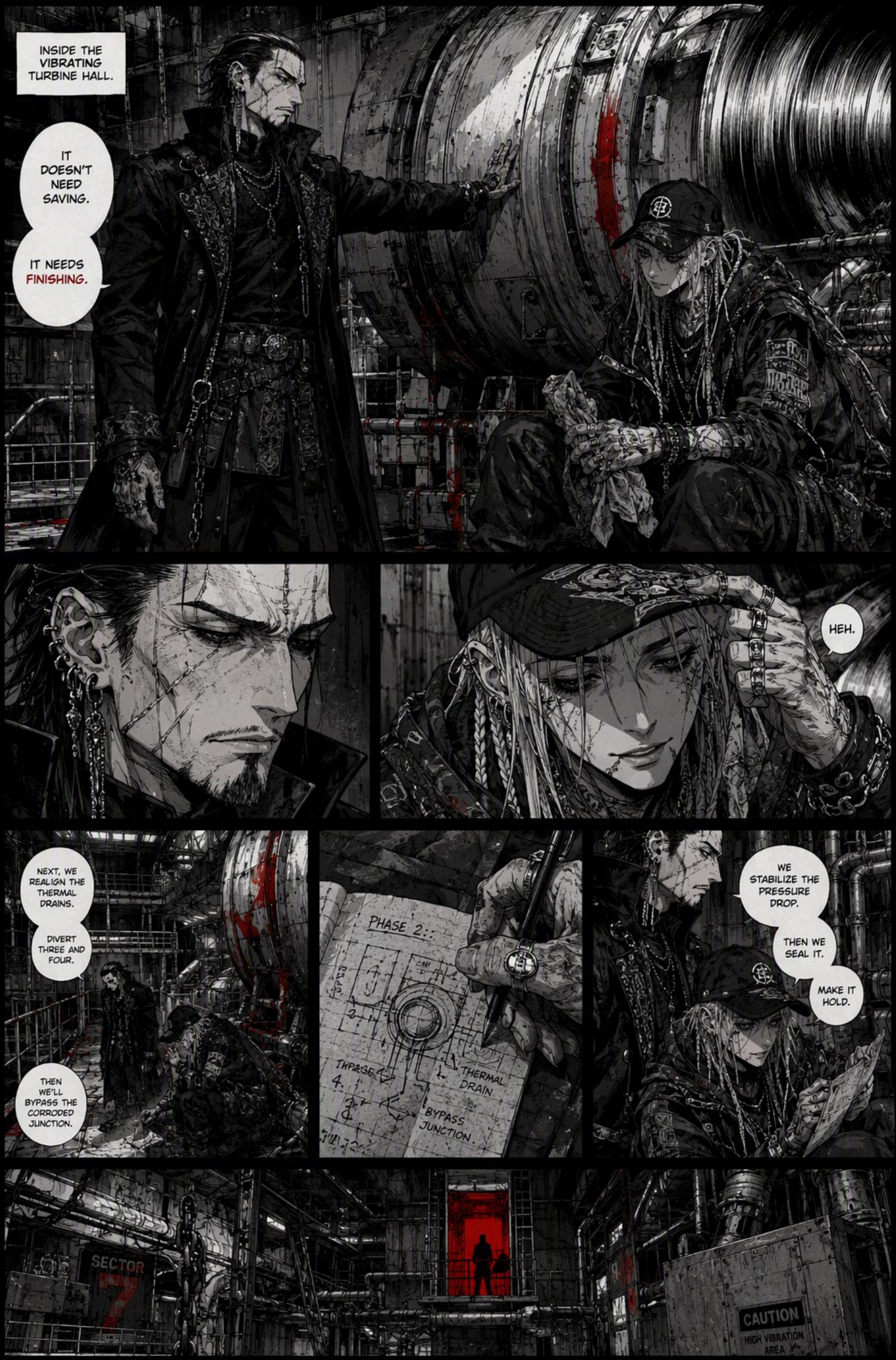


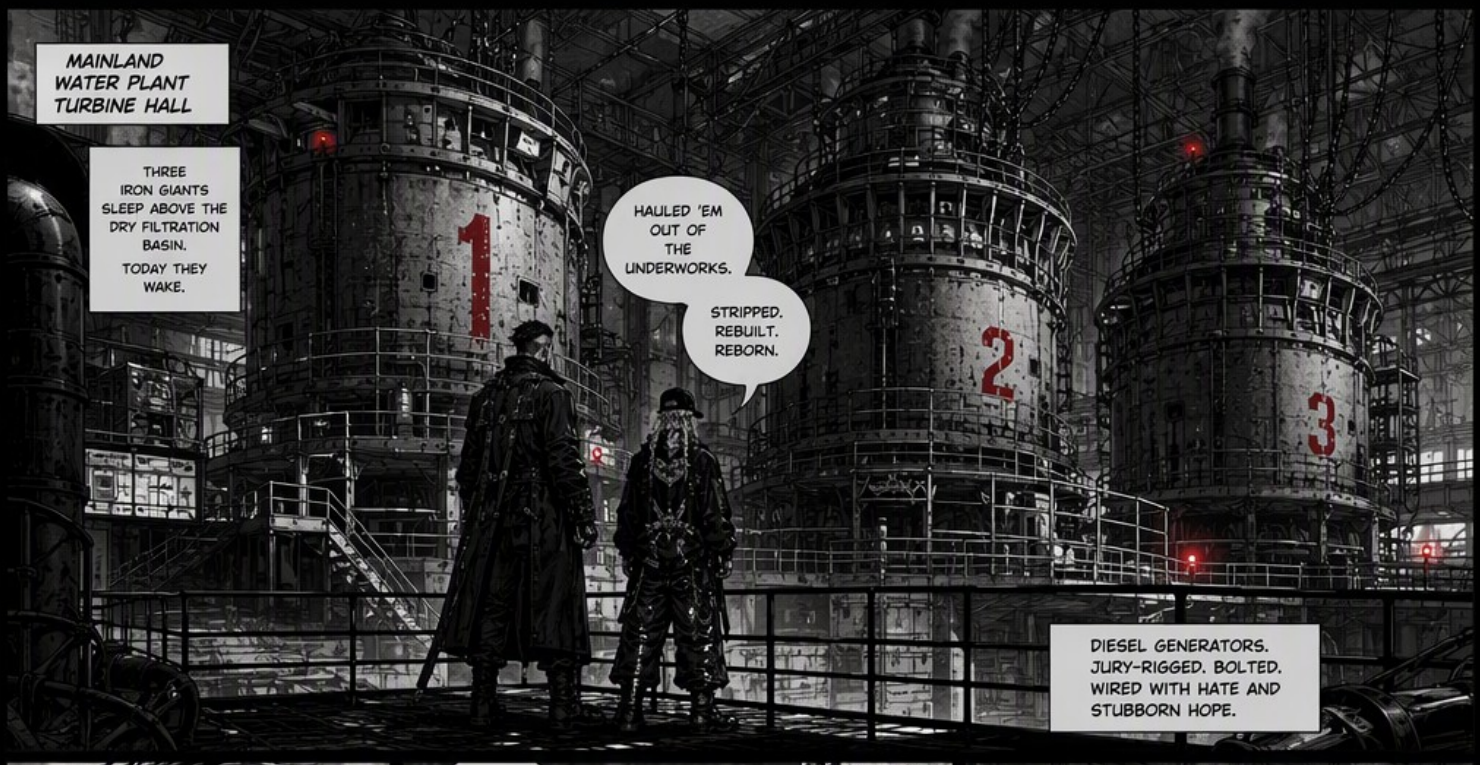

CASEY! GRAB THE ANTIBIOTICS!
MILO! COVER THE REAR!


AHH!


DON'T STOP!
KEEP MOVING!


THE CIRCUIT
YEAR 3. MONTH 17. DAY 04.
BEHIND THE WRECKED TRANSPORT'S CAB, JORY LAYS DOWN CONTROLLED COVERING FIRE, BRILLIANT MUZZLE FLASHES STROBING ACROSS THE CRACKED ASPHALT.
CIRCUIT
HE'S NOT A SOLDIER. BUT HE KNOWS HOW TO MAKE EACH SHOT COUNT.
TWO CIRCUIT SCAVENGERS HAUL THE LAST HEAVY CRATE OF MEDICINE ONTO A HANDCART.
MEDSUPPLY
THE HOLLOW— ERRATIC. UNNATURAL. DEAD, BUT NEVER STILL.
ONE COURIER SWINGS A LENGTH OF IRON PIPE HARD INTO A LUNGING THE HOLLOW,
CIRCUIT
DROPPING IT IN A SINGLE, DECISIVE BLOW.
TEAMWORK. THAT'S HOW YOU MAKE IT HOME.
CIRCUIT
WE KEEP EACH OTHER RUNNING.


INSIDE THE VIBRATING TURBINE HALL.
IT DOESN'T NEED SAVING.
IT NEEDS FINISHING.
HEH.
NEXT, WE REALIGN THE THERMAL DRAINS.
DIVERT THREE AND FOUR.
THEN WE'LL BYPASS THE CORRODED JUNCTION.
PHASE 2::
THERMAL DRAIN
BYPASS JUNCTION
WE STABILIZE THE PRESSURE DROP.
THEN WE SEAL IT.
MAKE IT HOLD.
SECTOR
CAUTION
HIGH VIBRATION AREA















ORIN

DISCIPLINE.
CONTROL.
A MAN WHO BUILDS TEMPLES OUT OF RUIN.



SERA

GENIUS.
REBELLION.
A GHOST WHO MAKES DEAD THINGS LIVE.

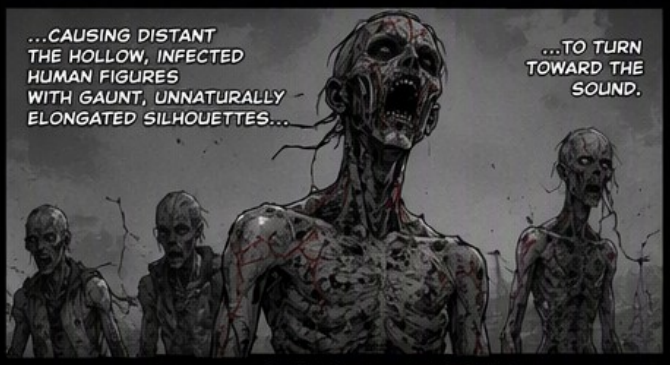


VOSS

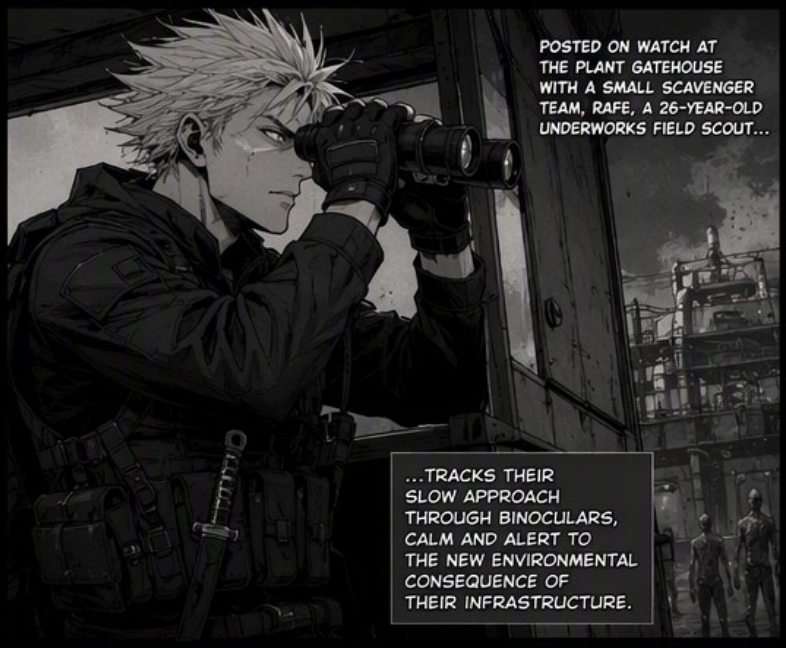
OBSERVATION.
SURVIVAL.
A SHADOW THAT CHOOSES WHEN TO INTERVENE.

CANOPY CELL


OUTSIDE THE MAINLAND WATER PLANT'S HEAVY CONCRETE PERIMETER WALLS, THE MECHANICAL RUMBLE OF THE ACTIVE TURBINE RADIATES ACROSS THE OPEN OVERGROWN GROUND...


...CAUSING DISTANT THE HOLLOW, INFECTED HUMAN FIGURES WITH GAUNT, UNNATURALLY ELONGATED SILHOUETTES...
...TO TURN TOWARD THE SOUND.


THEY EXHIBIT AN EERIE, UNNATURAL STILLNESS THAT SNAPS INTO SUDDEN ERRATIC KINETIC SPEED.


POSTED ON WATCH AT THE PLANT GATEHOUSE WITH A SMALL SCAVENGER TEAM, RAFE, A 26-YEAR-OLD UNDERWORKS FIELD SCOUT...
...TRACKS THEIR SLOW APPROACH THROUGH BINOCULARS, CALM AND ALERT TO THE NEW ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE.


RAFE.
26. UNDERWORKS FIELD SCOUT.
178CM. LEAN. PREDATORY. SWIFT. FOCUSED.
HIS BODY LANGUAGE IS PREDATORY, SWIFT, AND INTRENSELY FOCUSED.


AT THE WATER PLANT'S OUTER CHAIN-LINK PERIMETER FENCE WELL CLEAR OF THE DELICATE INTAKE SYSTEMS, RAFE DROPS TWO APPROACHING HOLLOWS WITH DISCIPLINED, SILENCED RIFLE FIRE.


THE PERIMETER HOLDING FIRM WHILE THE TURBINE'S STEADY GRINDING HUM CONTINUES UNDISTURBED INSIDE.
THE DANGER IS KEPT COMPLETELY SEGREGATED FROM THE MACHINERY.
DANGER
KEEP OUT


THE GREENHOUSE STUDY.
ISLAND SETTLEMENT.
DAY 947.
THE CIVIL-DEFENSE WATER CHARTS DON'T LIE.
CROSS-REFERENCE MILITARY LOGS.
REGIONAL CIVIL-DEFENSE WATER CHARTS.
REGIONAL CIVIL-DEFENSE WATER CHARTS
EASTERN SEABOARD SECTOR
GRID REFERENCES: 7A–22F
CLASSIFIED: FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
MILITARY LOG / EXCERPT
DATE: 12 OCT 2023
SOURCE: U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
DIVISION: NORFOLK DISTRICT
FACILITY CODE:
NOR-07WTR-19
SUBJECT: STRATEGIC WATER ASSET
STATUS: ACTIVE / MONITORED
FACILITY CODE
NOR-07WTR-19
NORFOLK WATER TREATMENT PLANT
STRATEGIC ASSET REPORT
PRE-FALL CONTINGENCY FILE
NOTES:
REDUNDANT SYSTEMS
DEEP WELL ACCESS
INDEPENDENT GRID
HIGH-VALUE ASSET
ASSET PRIORITY INDEX
LEVEL 1
CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
SUSTAINMENT / POPULATION
WATER SECURITY
CONTINGENCY ANCHOR
ALREADY PRIZED BEFORE THE FALL.
DECADES BEFORE THE FALL...
THEY KNEW.
IT WASN'T BUILT FOR THE APOCALYPSE...
IT WAS BUILT FOR WHAT THEY KNEW WOULD COME.
AND THEY MADE SURE IT WOULD SURVIVE EVERYTHING.


THE BADGER
BADG3R


RED LATITUDE ISLAND SETTLEMENT


THE BADGER
THE BADGER
BADG3R


...


WHO WELDED THIS.




WHOEVER'S STILL ALIVE FROM THE OLD SHOP THAT BUILT IT.
WHY.






CLANG


ALL UNITS.
THE HOLLOW ARE ON THE MAINLAND.
CONVERGE ON GREENLINE.
DEFEND THE BRIDGE.




GREENLINE DEFENDERS


NEWLY ARRIVED CIRCUIT RESIDENTS


UNDERWORKS TECHNICAL OBSERVERS


BARRICADES DEPLOYED


GREENLINE

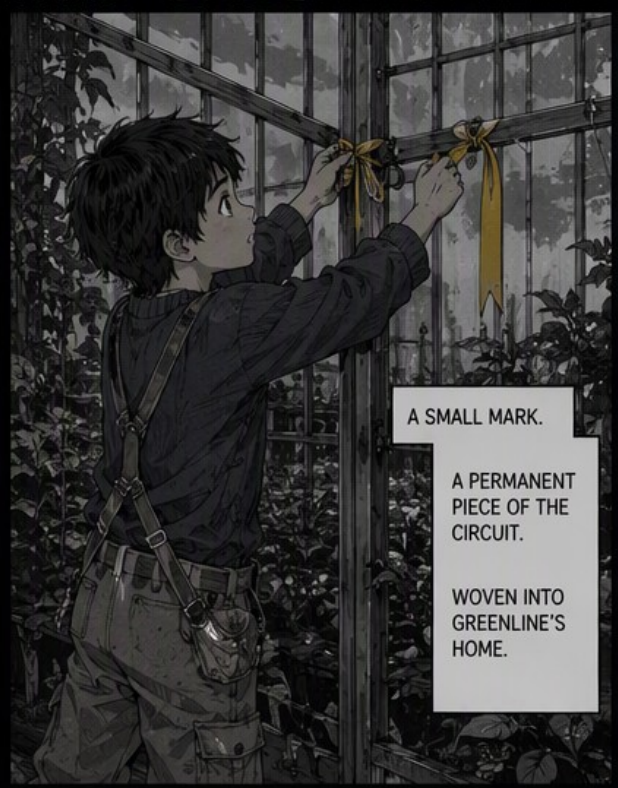

BACK HER UP.
MAKE 'EM COME TO US.
THE BADGER
BADG3R
ALL SYSTEMS GREEN.
BADGER IN REVERSE.
RRRMMAMMBLLL!
RRRAAAAAHHHHH!!
LEFT FLANK. LOCKED.
RIGHT FLANK. SET.
SUPPRESS AND CONTROL.
I'LL PICK THE STRAYS.
BRRRAAAATTTTT!!!
KRAK!


KRRRNNGGHH!!
THE BADGER
BADG3R
GROOANNNK!!
KZZZT!!
BRRRTTT!!
THE BADGER
BADG3R


THEY NEVER MADE IT THROUGH THE GATE.
THE HOLLOW DIDN'T EITHER.
RED LATITUDE DIDN'T JUST SURVIVE.
IT HELD.


ISLAND VILLAGE SQUARE


GREENHOUSE THRESHOLD
WE DON'T NEED TO MARK THE WAY BACK ANYMORE.
WE'RE ALREADY HERE.


A SMALL MARK.
A PERMANENT PIECE OF THE CIRCUIT.
WOVEN INTO GREENLINE'S HOME.












THE BADGER
BADG3R


HENRA ADMITS PLAINLY.


DESSA IS ALREADY THINKING STRUCTURALLY.


THEN WE BUILD ROOM. THAT'S WHAT THE MAINLAND WATER RECONCILIATION PLANT WAS ALWAYS GIVING US THE CHANCE TO DO.


CIRCUIT
UNDERWORKS
GREENLINE TERRITORY
NEW BRIDGE
WATER PLANT
MOTORWAY MALL
WHY NOTHING HERE?
BECAUSE NOBODY WHO WENT THERE CAME BACK.
THIS WASN'T DECAY.
IT'S A BLADE CUT.
SOMEONE MADE THIS AFTER THE POLE CAME DOWN.


THE BADGER
BADG3R


"WE JUST GOT HERE," KAEL WHISPERS.
"THEN COME BACK." MIRA ANSWERS WITH TENDER LONGING.



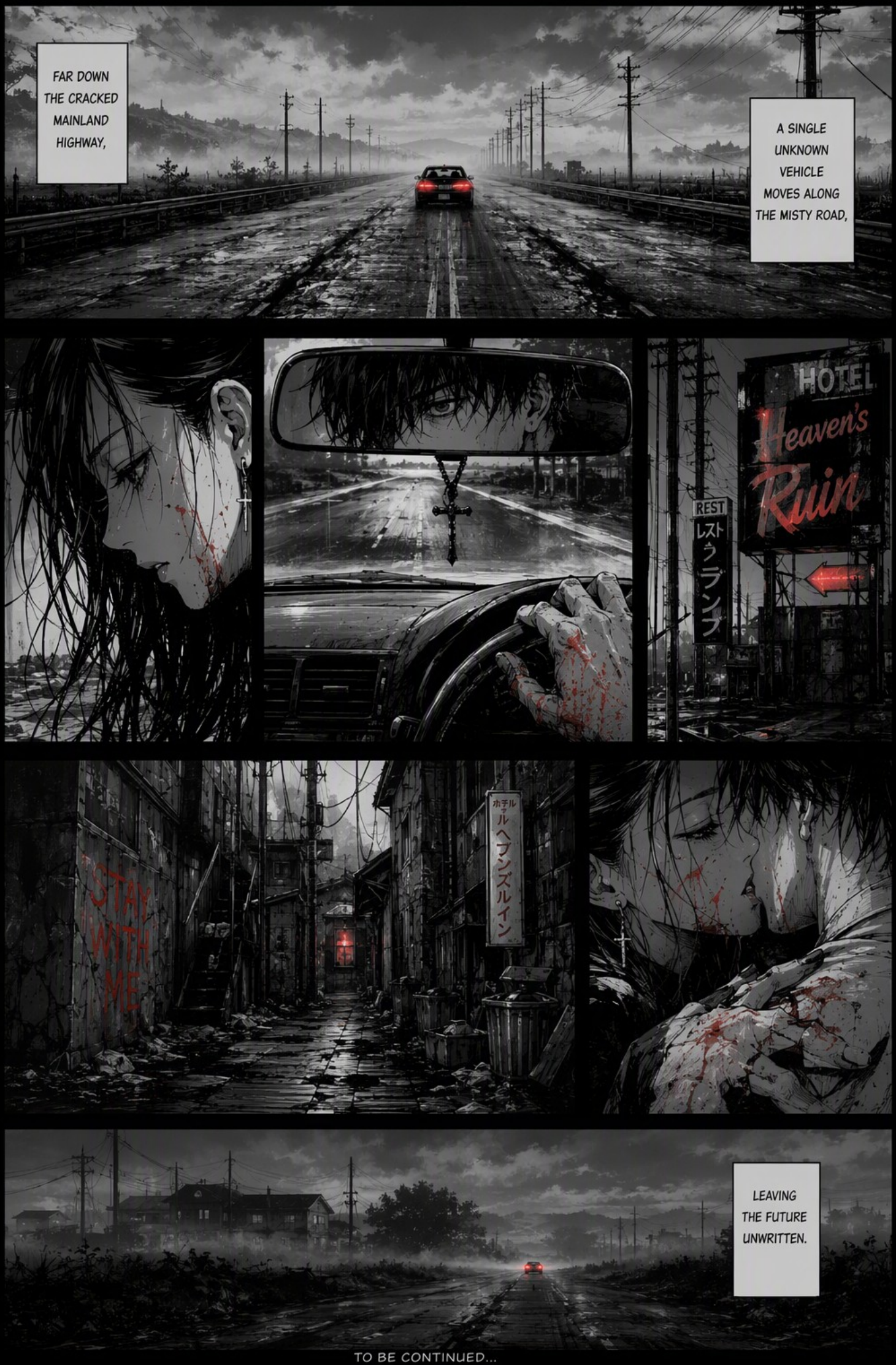









THE BADGER
CIRCUIT
BADG3R


FAR DOWN THE CRACKED MAINLAND HIGHWAY,
A SINGLE UNKNOWN VEHICLE MOVES ALONG THE MISTY ROAD,
HOTEL
Heaven's Ruin
REST
レストラブンブ
STAY WITH ME
ホテルヘブンズルイン
LEAVING THE FUTURE UNWRITTEN.
TO BE CONTINUED...