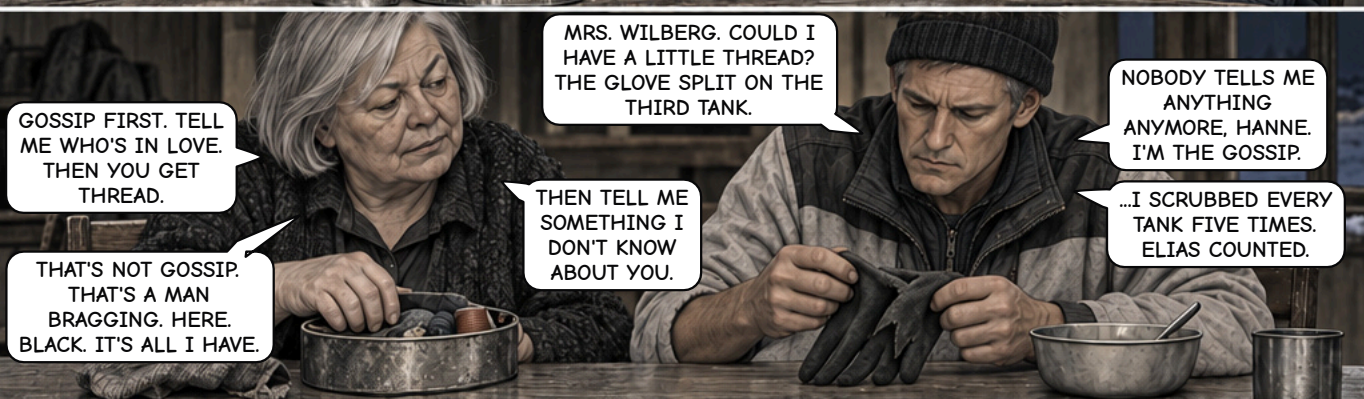
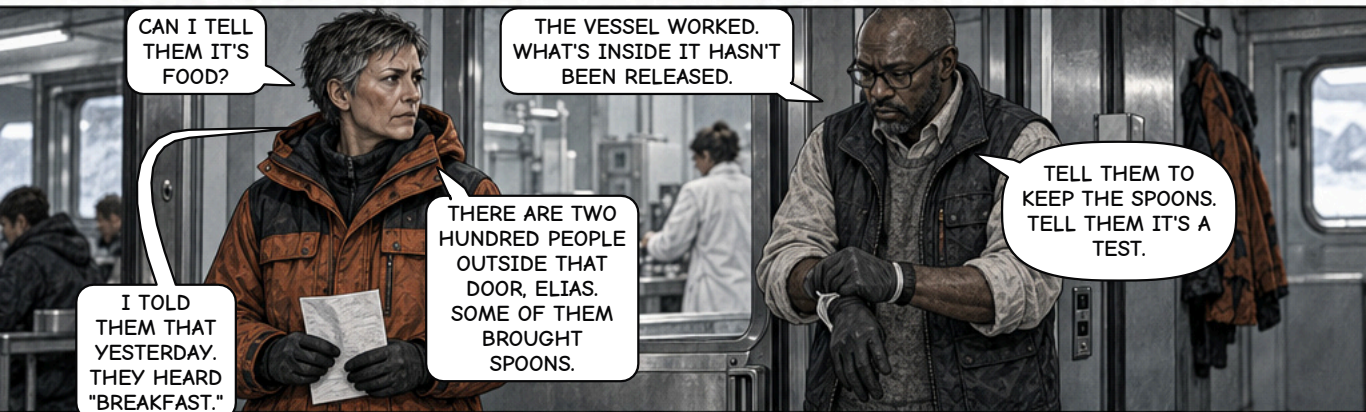
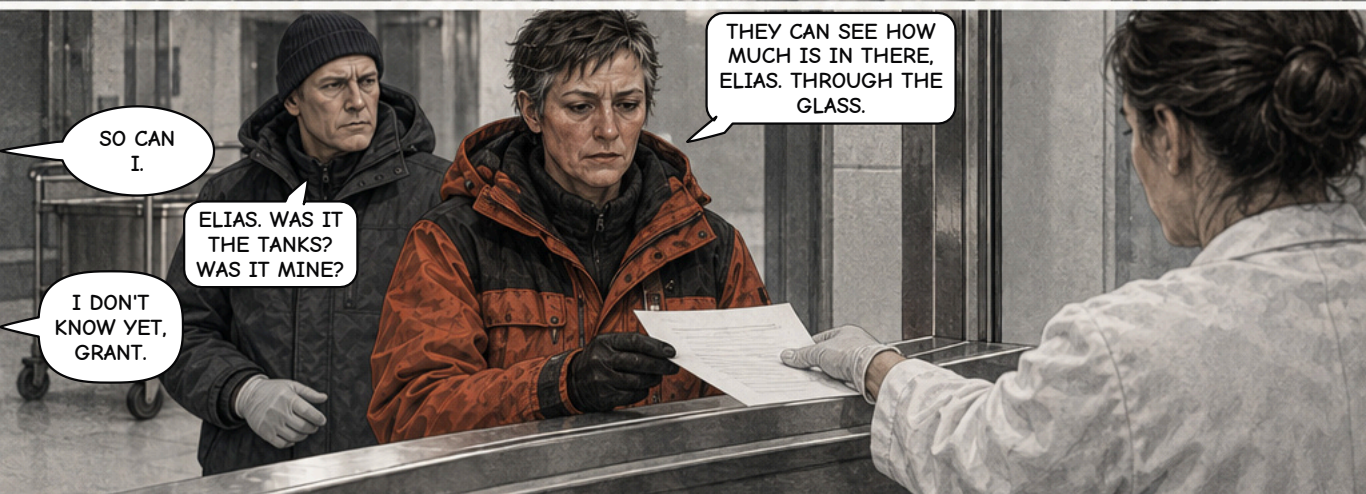
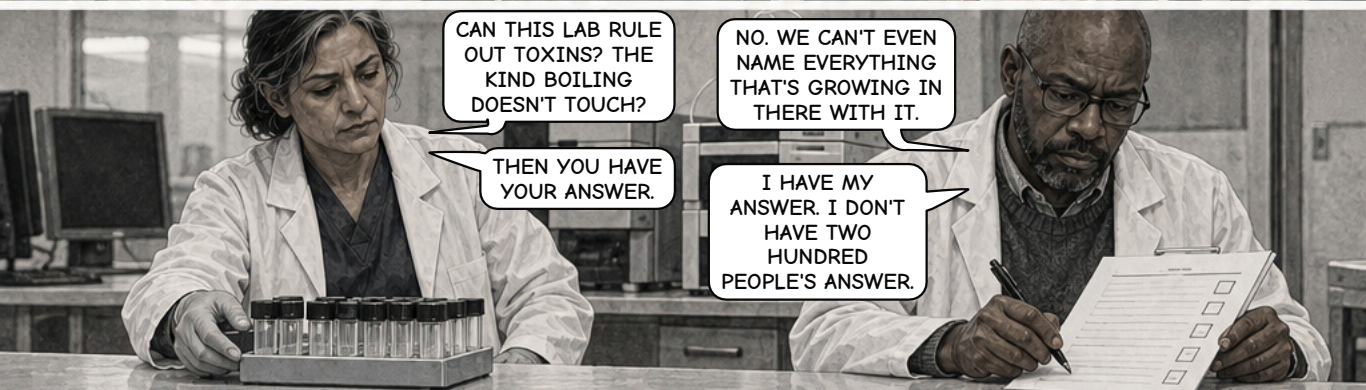


CHAPTER TEN · STARTER









THAT AFTERNOON.
THE SPORTS HALL.

THAT'S A WHOLE
TANK. WHAT DOES
COOKING IT GET
US BACK?

THERE'S NO WAY
WE KNOW OF TO
MAKE THIS BATCH
SAFE.

"NO WAY WE
KNOW OF." THAT'S
A LOT OF WORDS
FOR NO.

IT'S THE RIGHT
NUMBER OF
WORDS, HENRIK.

THEN BOIL IT. BOILING
KILLS WHATEVER'S ALIVE.

IT KILLS WHAT'S ALIVE.
IT DOESN'T KILL WHAT
THE LIVING LEFT BEHIND.

MY BOY'S BEEN
ASKING ME SINCE
TUESDAY WHAT IT
TASTES LIKE.

THEN I'LL EAT IT. I
SCRUBBED THOSE
TANKS. IF IT'S MY
FAULT, LET IT BE
MY STOMACH.

ONE
HEALTHY
ONE
COULD.

ONE SICK VOLUNTEER
CAN'T TELL ME WHAT'S
SAFE FOR FOUR
HUNDRED PEOPLE.

ONE HEALTHY ONE
TELLS ME ONE MAN
WAS LUCKY. I DON'T
FEED A TOWN ON
LUCK, GRANT.

THE HOLD STANDS.
THE LOSS GOES ON
THE BOARD IN FULL,
WITH MY NAME
BESIDE ELIAS'S.

I DON'T WANT
YOUR NAME. I
WANT A DATE.

I'M NOT GIVING
YOU A DATE I'LL HAVE
TO CROSS OUT.

GIVE THEM THE
HONEST ONE, ELIAS.
THEY'VE EARNED THE
HONEST ONE.

STRIP IT. FIND THE CAUSE. GROW A NEW
BATCH FROM THE STARTER. TEST IT.
FEBRUARY. IF EVERY STEP HOLDS.

TONIGHT I POUR IT AWAY.
ANYONE WHO WANTS TO
WATCH CAN WATCH.

AND THE ONE
IN THERE
NOW?





THEY SAID YOU
THREW AWAY
DINNER.

JONAS SAYS YOU
THREW AWAY *HIS*
DINNER. HENRIK'S
JONAS.

I THREW AWAY A
BATCH I COULDN'T
PROVE WAS SAFE.

JONAS IS RIGHT TO
BE ANGRY. I'D BE
ANGRY.



BIGGER THAN
THE WHOLE
HALL.

IT WAS BIGGER
THAN THIS
ROOM.

YES.

...YES.



CAN DOING THE
SAFE THING STILL
KILL PEOPLE?

YES.



HUNGER KILLS. BAD FOOD
KILLS. I DON'T GET TO MAKE
EITHER ONE DISAPPEAR. I ONLY
GET TO CHOOSE WHICH ONE I
CAN LOOK AT.

WHICH ONE
DID YOU PICK
TODAY?

THE ONE I
COULD
PROVE.

I WISH YOU
COULD MAKE
THEM
DISAPPEAR.



DAD. IT'S *WATER*.
THERE'S A WHOLE
FJORD OF IT.

CAN I HAVE
MORE WATER?

SO DO I.

YOU CAN
HAVE MINE.

ELEVEN DAYS LATER,
THE RATION FELL
AGAIN.

1 DECEMBER.

IT'S THE RULE NOW.
NOT A MISTAKE AT
THE COUNTER. SAY IT
BEFORE ANYONE ASKS.

THEY'LL ASK
ANYWAY.

THEY'LL ASK ME. I'M
THE ONE HOLDING
THE PEN.

ADULT
RATION
— 1,450

IT'S FOR MY
WIFE. SHE
CAN'T STAND
IN THE LINE
ANYMORE.

YOU DON'T HAVE
TO EXPLAIN IT
TO THE QUEUE.

TAKE HER BOWL.
BRING IT BACK
EMPTY.

NEXT! CHILDREN AND THE
SICK, THE LEFT SIDE.
EVERYONE ELSE, I'M
SORRY, THE LONG SIDE.

WHO MOVED THE OLD PEOPLE
TO THE FRONT? IT'S VERY
EFFICIENT. I'M SUSPICIOUS.

NOBODY. IT
JUST
HAPPENED.

THINGS DON'T "JUST
HAPPEN" IN A QUEUE, MR.
CALDER. SOMEBODY MAKES
THEM HAPPEN.

THEN DON'T TELL
THE COUNCIL. I'M
NOT ALLOWED TO
MAKE ANYTHING.

I NEVER
LIKED THESE.

YOU HEARD ABOUT
THE BATCH.

...WAS IT?

GOSSIP ISN'T
EVIDENCE. EAT.

LIAR. I'LL TAKE ONE. NOT
YOUR WHOLE DINNER. YOU'RE
SCRUBBING TANKS ON IT.

EVERYONE HEARD. I HEARD IT
TWICE. THE SECOND TIME,
IT WAS YOUR FAULT.

AT FOURTEEN-FIFTY, THE WHOLE
HALL COULD HEAR THE SPOONS.

IN THE BACK OF MAE'S BOOK,
THE NAMES HAD STARTED.
MOSTLY THE OLD. MOSTLY THE
SICK.

3 DECEMBER.
NOON.

DON'T CUT IT YET!

THERE'S A HERD UP THE VALLEY. TWO HUNDRED, EASY. FAT ON MOSS. WE CAN FEED EVERY SHELTER BY SUNDAY.

GET THE BIG POTS OUT! SOMEBODY TELL THE KITCHEN!

...LISTEN TO IT.

TIK TIK-TIK-TIK-TIKTIKTIKTIK

IT'S A REINDEER, KENJI. IT'S EATEN MOSS ON THAT MOUNTAIN EVERY WINTER SINCE BEFORE YOU WERE BORN.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM. THEY LIVE ON LICHEN, AND LICHEN DRINKS FALLOUT.

NO ROOTS. IT TAKES EVERYTHING FROM THE AIR. THEN THEY EAT IT, ALL WINTER, AND KEEP IT.

HOW BAD?

BAD ENOUGH THAT I WON'T ROUND IT DOWN FOR YOU. EAT THIS EVERY DAY, AND YOUR MARROW PAYS FOR IT IN TEN YEARS.

TEN YEARS? YOU THINK I'M WORRIED ABOUT TEN YEARS?

JONAS IS EIGHT. TEN YEARS IS EIGHTEEN.

THERE ARE TWENTY THOUSAND OF THEM ON THIS ISLAND, SOLVEIG. TWENTY THOUSAND. AND WE BURY THEM?

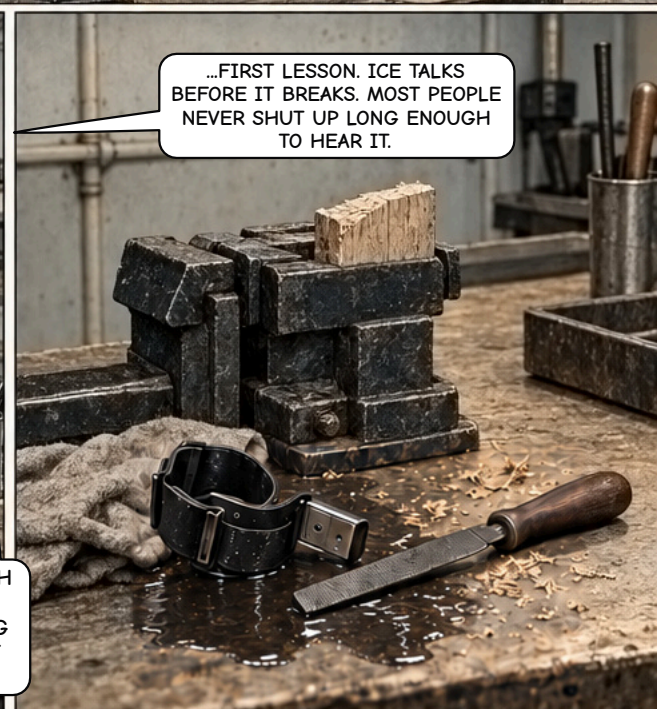
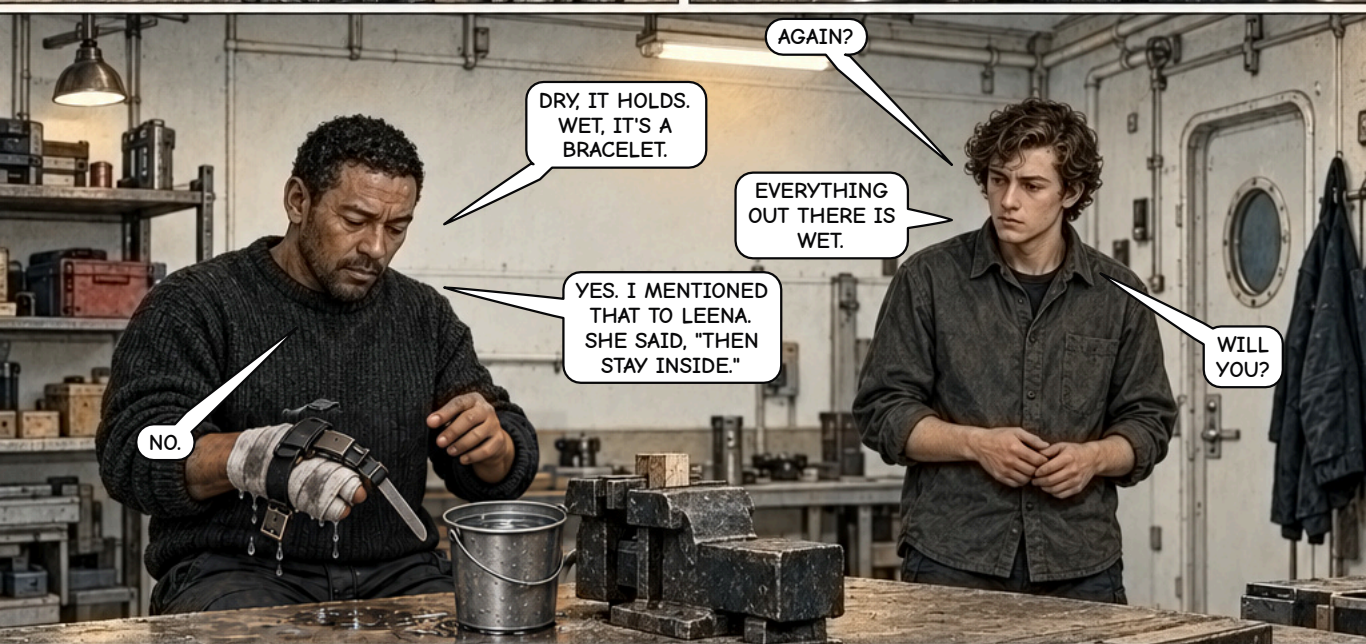
WE BURY THIS ONE.

MR. HENRIK?

THERE'S A DOG OUT THERE. A BIG WHITE ONE.

THERE AREN'T ANY LOOSE DOGS, SWEETHEART --





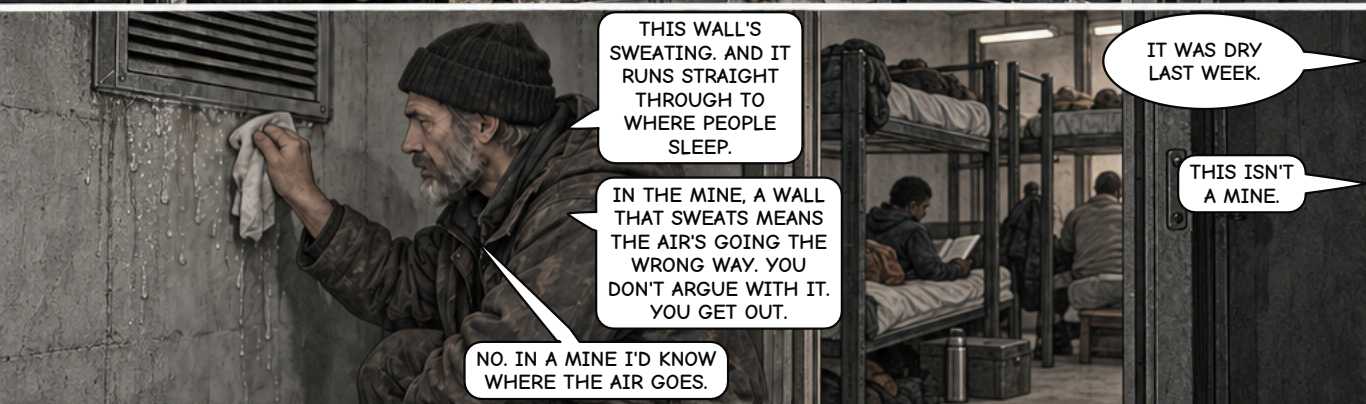


THE SAME DAY. THE NORTH SHELTER.

LOG IT SEPARATELY. IT CAN'T CARRY THE FOOD PLAN.

NOT ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE. BUT SOMETHING THAT ISN'T PASTE. SOMETHING THAT CHEWS.

IT'S NOT TRYING TO CARRY THE PLAN, ELIAS. IT'S TRYING TO CARRY TUESDAY.



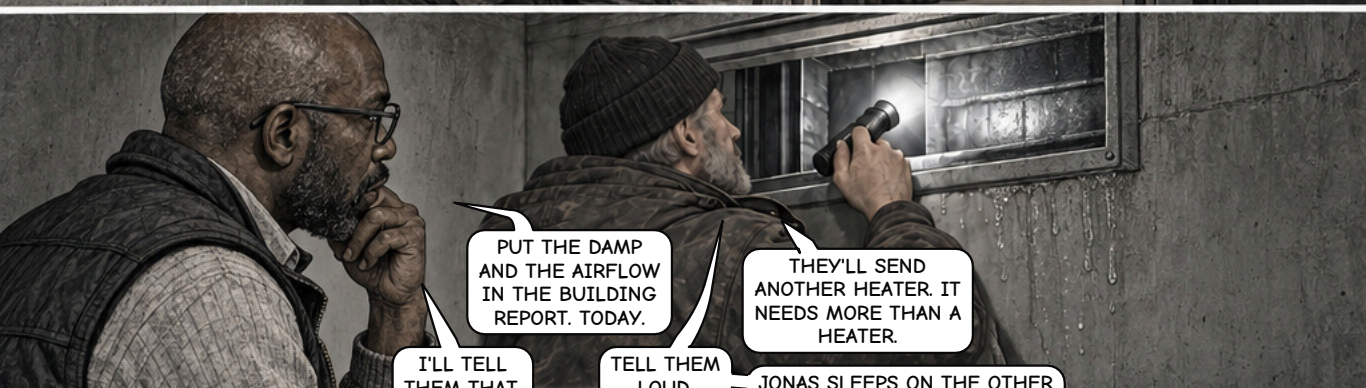
THIS WALL'S SWEATING. AND IT RUNS STRAIGHT THROUGH TO WHERE PEOPLE SLEEP.

IN THE MINE, A WALL THAT SWEATS MEANS THE AIR'S GOING THE WRONG WAY. YOU DON'T ARGUE WITH IT. YOU GET OUT.

NO. IN A MINE I'D KNOW WHERE THE AIR GOES.

IT WAS DRY LAST WEEK.

THIS ISN'T A MINE.



PUT THE DAMP AND THE AIRFLOW IN THE BUILDING REPORT. TODAY.

THEY'LL SEND ANOTHER HEATER. IT NEEDS MORE THAN A HEATER.

I'LL TELL THEM THAT.

TELL THEM LOUD.

JONAS SLEEPS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS WALL.



THE WARMEST ROOM IN THE SHELTER SHARED A WALL WITH THE WETTEST ONE.

MRS. WILBERG? THAT'S A LOT OF COUGHING FOR KEEPING SCORE.

THEN I'M WINNING.

HKH -- HKH HKH



SEPARATE THE AIR. DRY THE WALL. MOVE THE PEOPLE OUT WHILE YOU DO IT.

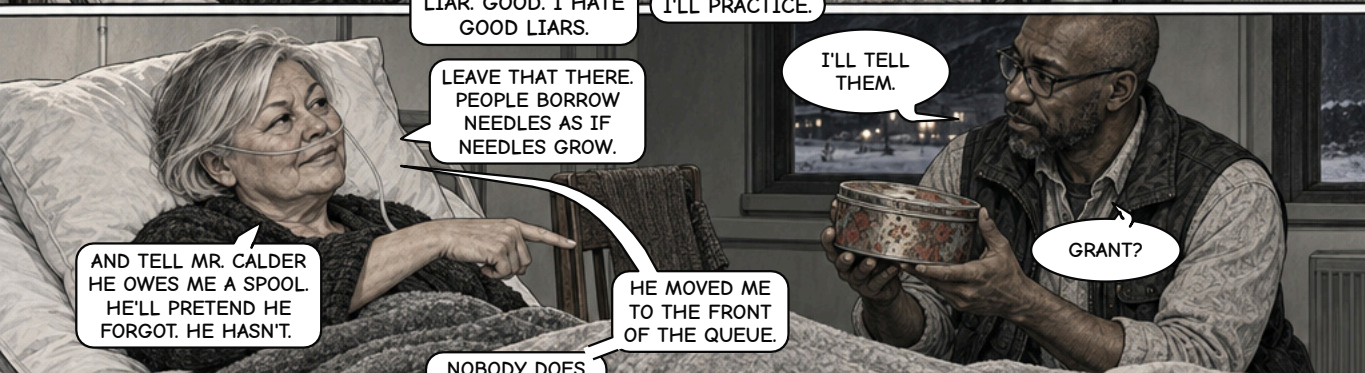
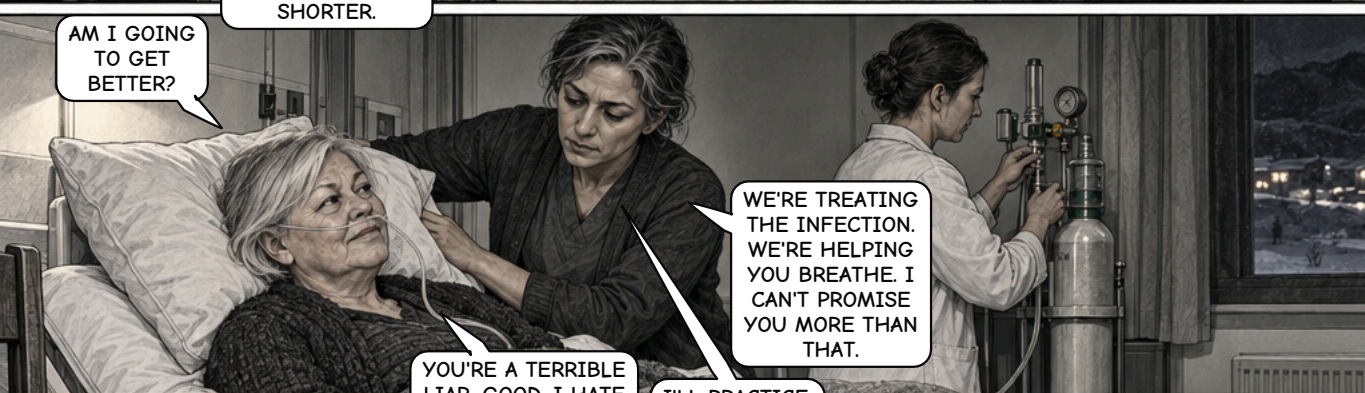
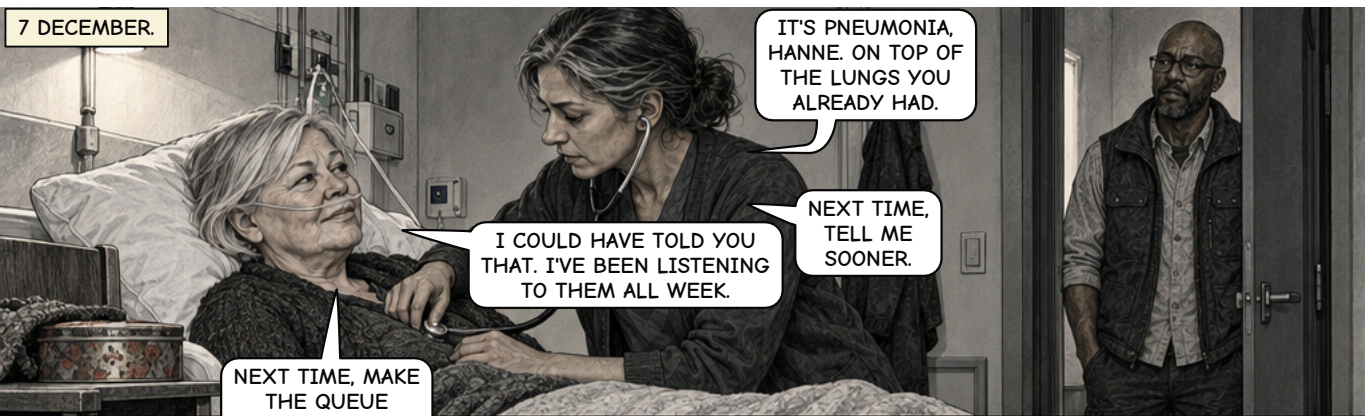
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT.

I'LL TAKE IT TO THE SHELTER ALLOCATION. NO NEW GROWING BLOCKS TILL THEN.

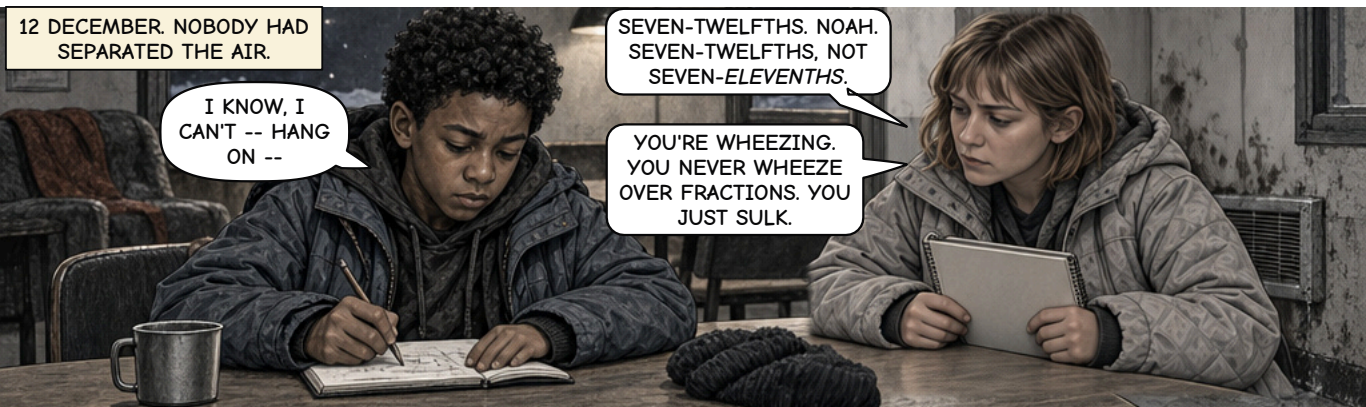
AND THE CROP THAT'S IN THERE NOW?

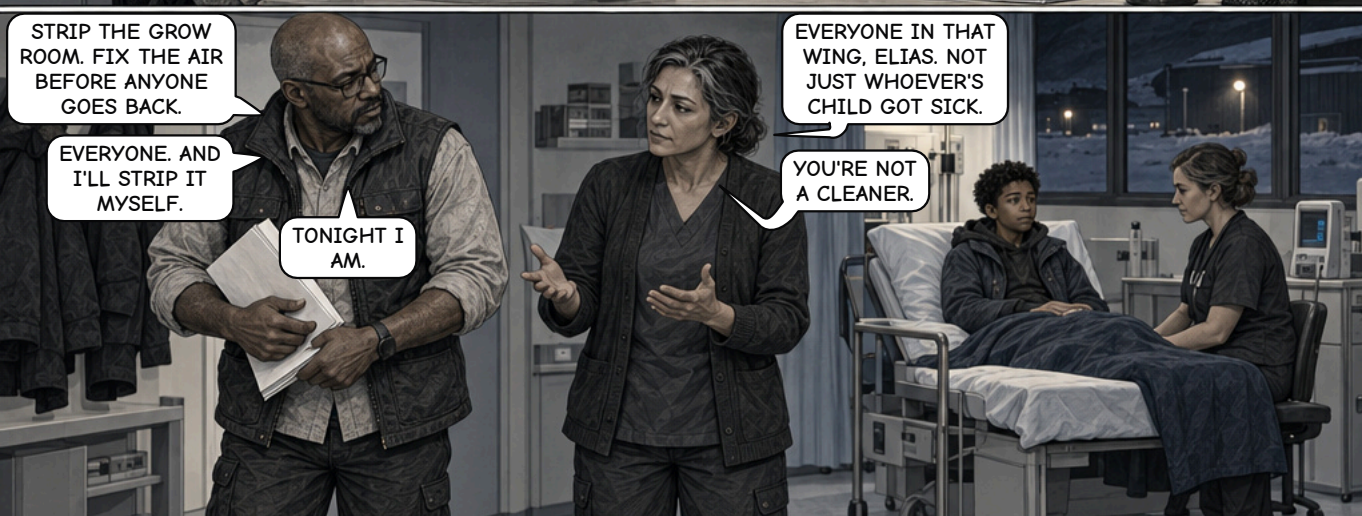
...IT'S READY NEXT WEEK. A WEEK WON'T HURT.

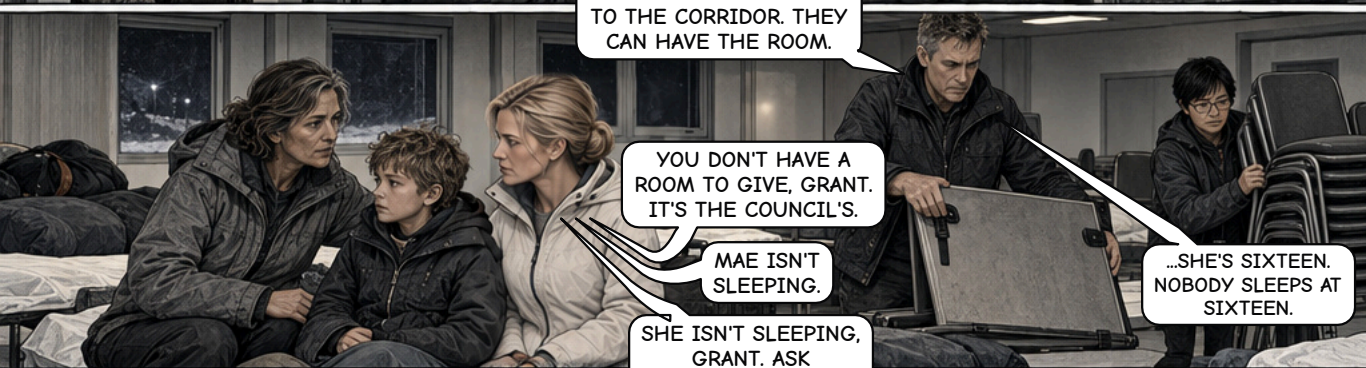
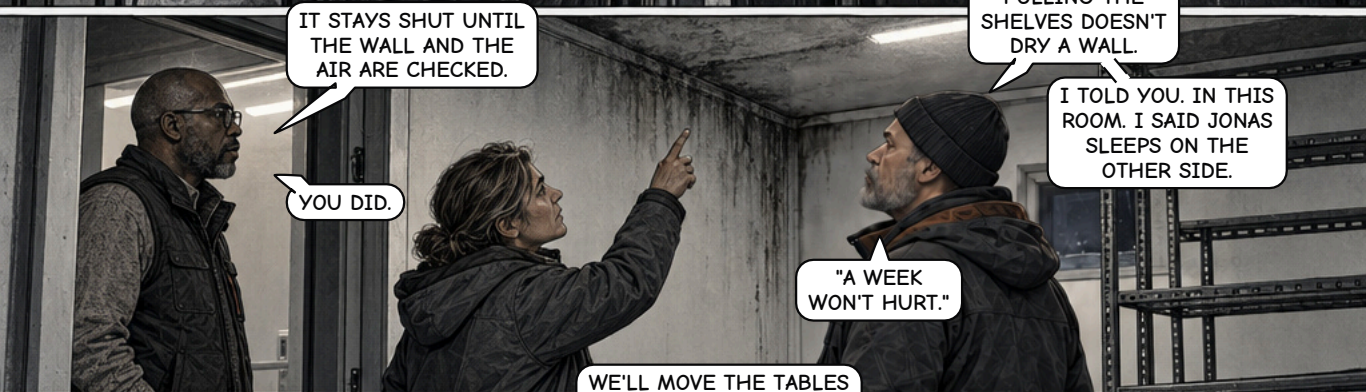
7 DECEMBER.

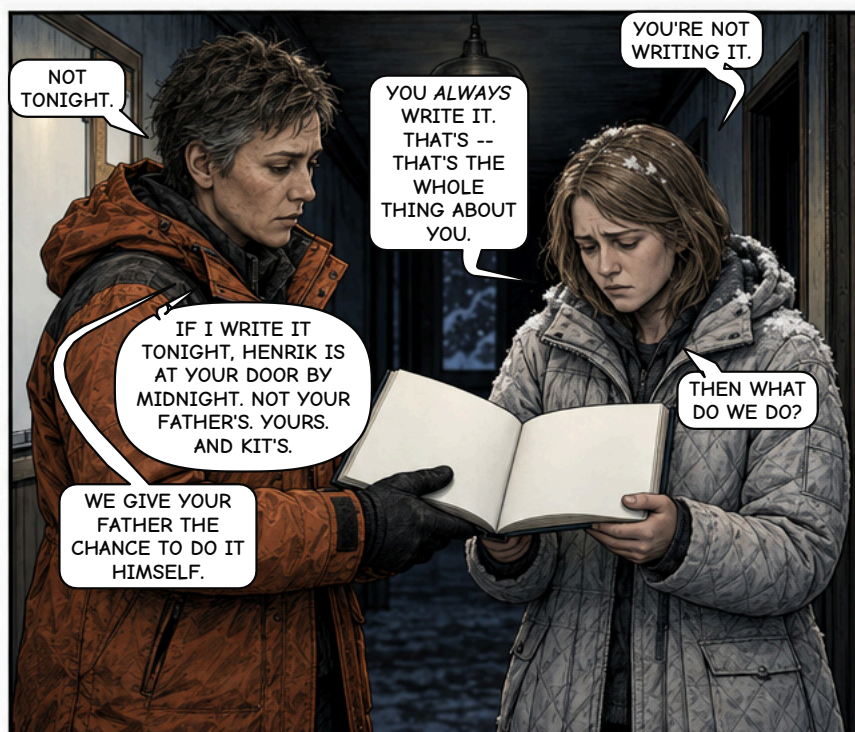
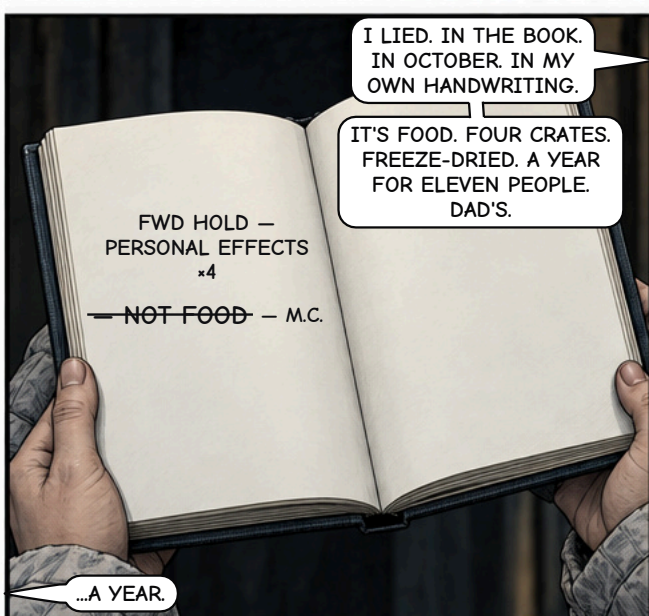
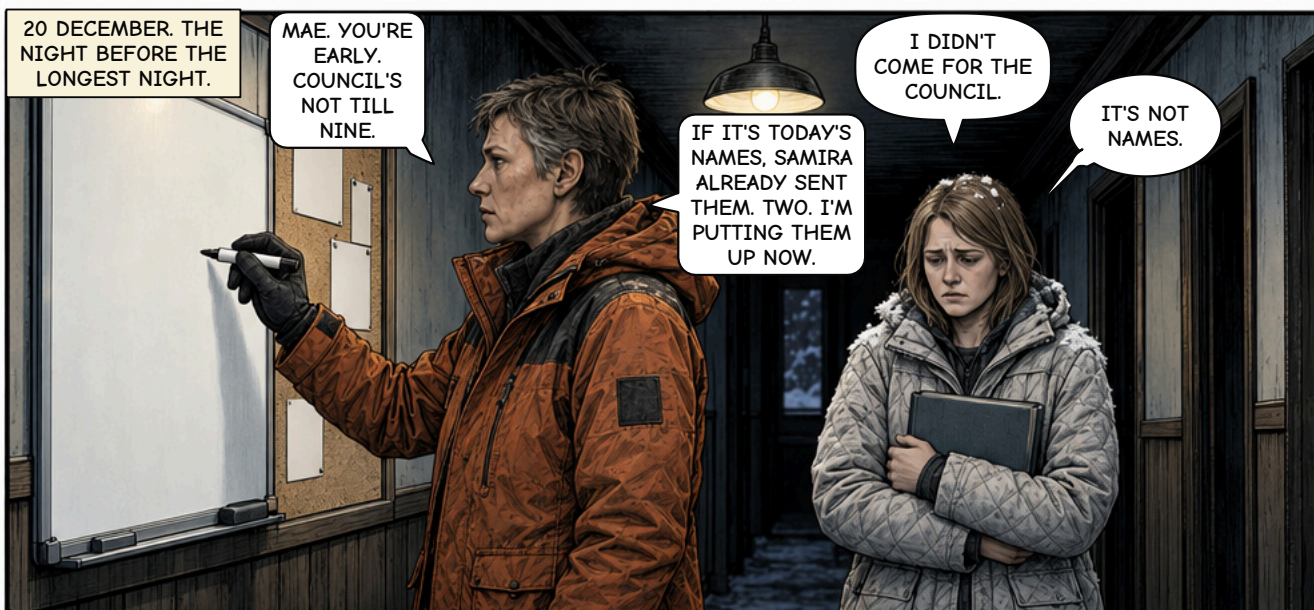














IF YOU CAME TO TELL ME IT WAS MY TANK, ELIAS ALREADY HAS. IT WASN'T. IT WAS A SEAL.

FIVE TIMES. I SCRUBBED EVERY TANK FIVE TIMES, AND ONE LITTLE RING OF RUBBER NOBODY --

I KNOW. JUNE FOUND IT. A SEAL NOBODY SIGNED FOR.

GRANT. MAE CAME TO SEE ME.



NO. SHE'S SIXTEEN, AND SHE'S BEEN CARRYING YOUR PANTRY AROUND IN HER HEAD FOR TWO MONTHS.

...IS SHE ALL RIGHT?

IT'S NOT A PANTRY, IT'S --

FOUR CRATES. A YEAR FOR ELEVEN PEOPLE. DON'T TELL ME WHAT IT ISN'T.



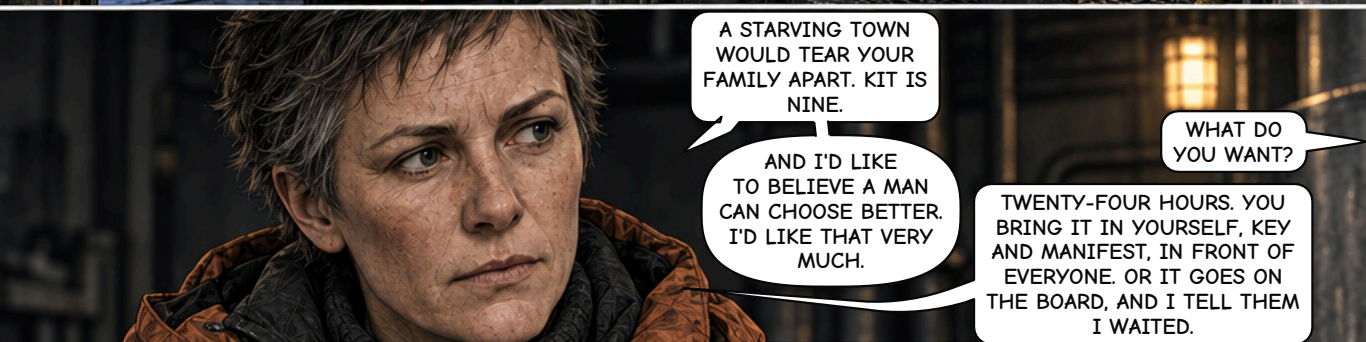
I SHOULD. I SHOULD'VE DONE IT AN HOUR AGO. EVERYTHING I'VE EVER BELIEVED SAYS I SHOULD.

THEN WHY ARE YOU STANDING IN MY TANK ROOM?

SO POST IT. YOU POST EVERYTHING. PUT ME ON THE BOARD UNDER "CALORIES, MISSING."

IT ISN'T YOUR TANK ROOM.

NOTHING'S YOURS ANYMORE, GRANT. THAT'S THE POINT.



A STARVING TOWN WOULD TEAR YOUR FAMILY APART. KIT IS NINE.

AND I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE A MAN CAN CHOOSE BETTER. I'D LIKE THAT VERY MUCH.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. YOU BRING IT IN YOURSELF, KEY AND MANIFEST, IN FRONT OF EVERYONE. OR IT GOES ON THE BOARD, AND I TELL THEM I WAITED.

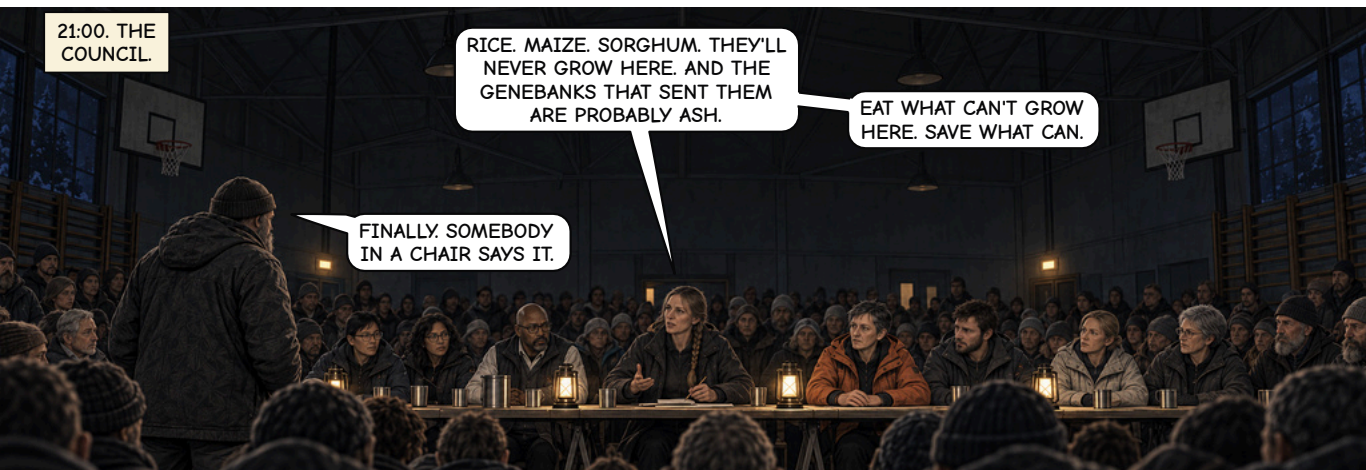


IT'S WHAT YOU ASKED MAE FOR. I'M TOLD IT'S VERY HEAVY.

...THE COUNCIL MEETS TONIGHT. ABOUT THE VAULT.

YOU'RE GIVING ME TIME.

I KNOW. I'LL BE THERE. WILL YOU?



21:00. THE COUNCIL.

RICE. MAIZE. SORGHUM. THEY'LL NEVER GROW HERE. AND THE GENE BANKS THAT SENT THEM ARE PROBABLY ASH.

EAT WHAT CAN'T GROW HERE. SAVE WHAT CAN.

FINALLY. SOMEBODY IN A CHAIR SAYS IT.



THAT'S THE WORLD'S RICE. WHEN THE SUN COMES BACK, SOMEONE IN ASIA WILL NEED IT.

SOMEONE IN ASIA ISN'T EIGHT, LYING IN A BUNK WITH HIS FACE TO THE WALL.

ELIAS POURED OUT A WHOLE TANK LAST MONTH, AND HE KEPT THE STARTER. YOU DON'T EAT THE STARTER. THAT'S ALL SEED IS.

ELIAS POURED OUT POISON. YOUR RICE IS DINNER.

YOU DON'T KNOW THAT. NEITHER DO I. THAT'S WHY IT STAYS SHUT.

IT STAYS SHUT BECAUSE YOU SLEEP IN THE DOOR WITH A GUN.

THREE MONTHS OF DINNER. THEN GONE FOREVER, FOR EVERYONE.

PROFESSOR -- IT'S THREE MONTHS OF DINNER NOW.

YES. THAT TOO.



THE MOTION: OPEN THE BOXES THAT CAN'T GROW HERE, FOR FOOD. DELEGATES, THOSE FOR.

MARA?

NOT ONE PACKET.

...FOR.



I'M SORRY. I'VE FOLLOWED YOU SINCE I WAS TWENTY-TWO. I CAN'T FOLLOW YOU PAST JONAS.

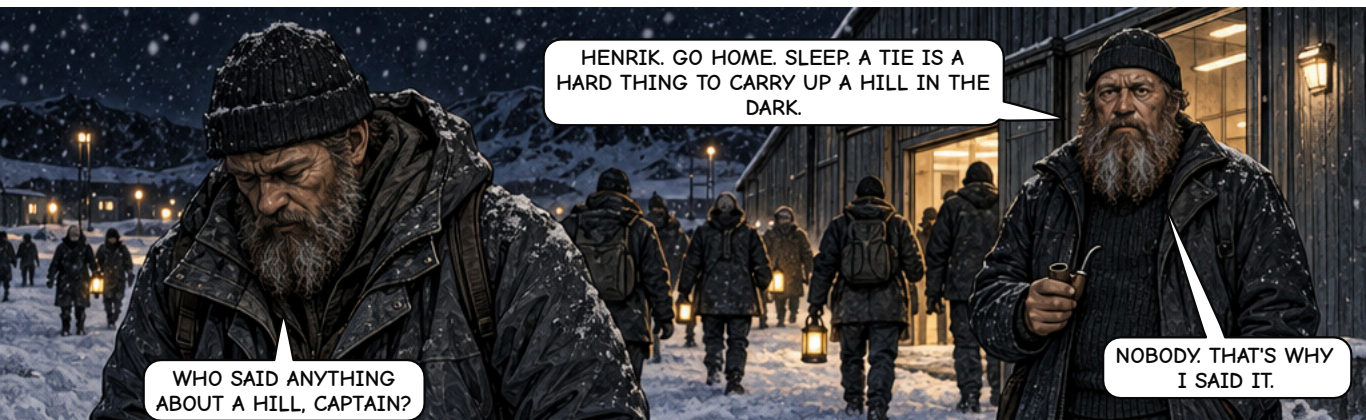
HE VOTED. THAT'S THE PART TO NOTICE.

I NOTICED.



SIX FOR SIX AGAINST.

A TIE OPENS NOTHING. THE MOUNTAIN STAYS SHUT.



21 DECEMBER. THE LONGEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR.

THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS RAN OUT THAT EVENING.

GRANT HADN'T COME FORWARD.

