

THE LAST WARM PLACE

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LIFEBOAT MEETING





15 OCTOBER. DAY THIRTY-ONE.

One table. Two commands. Four hundred fifty-four lives.



SHIPBOARD — 173 / ASHORE — 281 / TOTAL — 454 LIVING

COMBINED FOOD DRAFT — APPROX. 90.9 MILLION KCAL / DATE UNRESOLVED

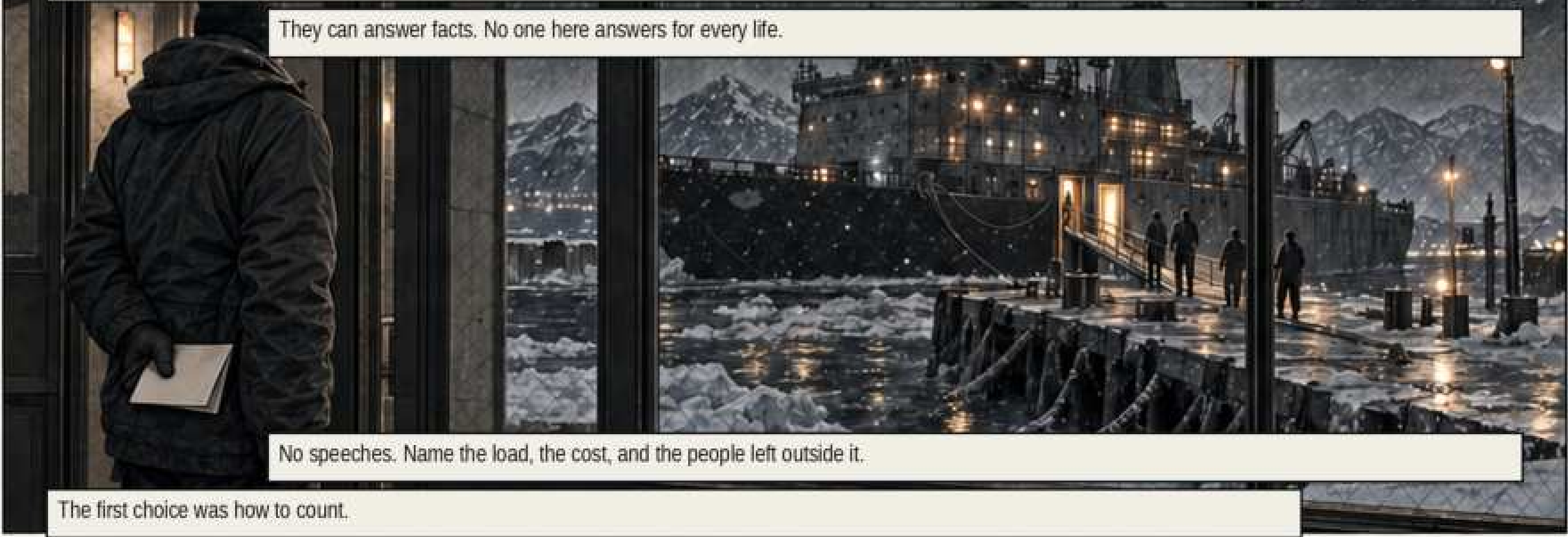


The fjord is closing while we talk.

Then we will make the talk carry weight.



You asked for every option. I brought people who can answer for the shore.



They can answer facts. No one here answers for every life.

No speeches. Name the load, the cost, and the people left outside it.

The first choice was how to count.





OPTION ONE — DEPART WITH UP TO SIXTY ADDITIONAL PEOPLE

CONDITION — SEVERE RATION / REDUCED MARGIN / DEPARTURE BEFORE FJORD CLOSURE



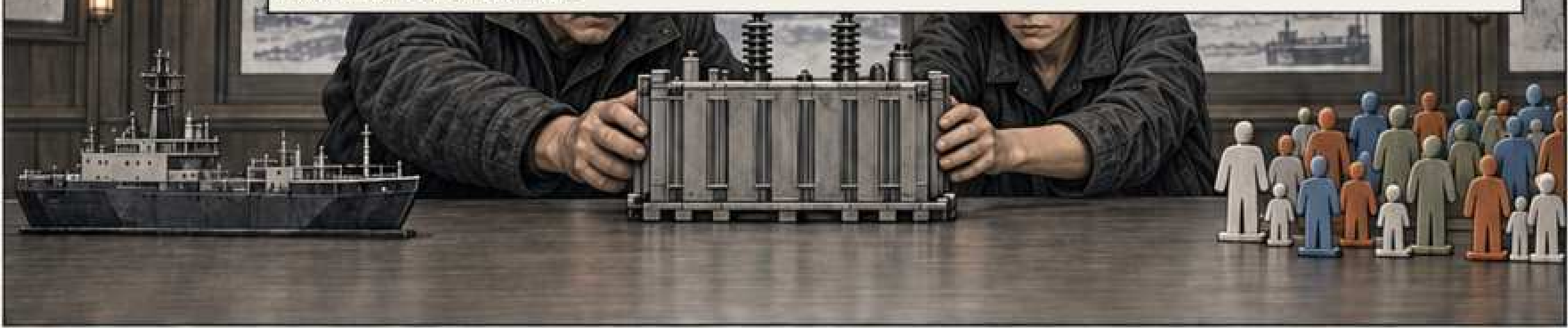
OPTION TWO — TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS ONLY / NUMBER UNSET

The ship survives longer if every added berth preserves a system.



OPTION THREE — LEAVE FOOD / TAKE NO ONE / DEPART

A gift can still be an abandonment.



OPTION FOUR — REMAIN / CONNECT POWER / SHARE FAILURE

The cable joins loads. It does not join governments.



Four sentences. Now put names under them.

A category does not freeze. A person does.



Sixty is the upper bound before berths, sanitation, evacuation, and watchkeeping become fiction.

173 + 60 ABOARD / 221 REMAIN ASHORE



Transportability is not worthiness.

Some people most in need cannot survive the transfer.



If I offer sixty names, I choose the other two hundred twenty-one.

If you offer none, the ice may choose all of them.



The calorie total is approximate. Spoilage, access, labor, and medical need are not reconciled.

NEW COMBINED RATION DATE — NOT SUPPORTABLE



No list until the people outside this room know what the list means.

Capacity was a number. Selection was a verb.





A berth that keeps water running protects more than the person in it.

That is arithmetic, not rank.



Skills do not travel alone.

Children, parents, partners, disabilities, and grief are also load.



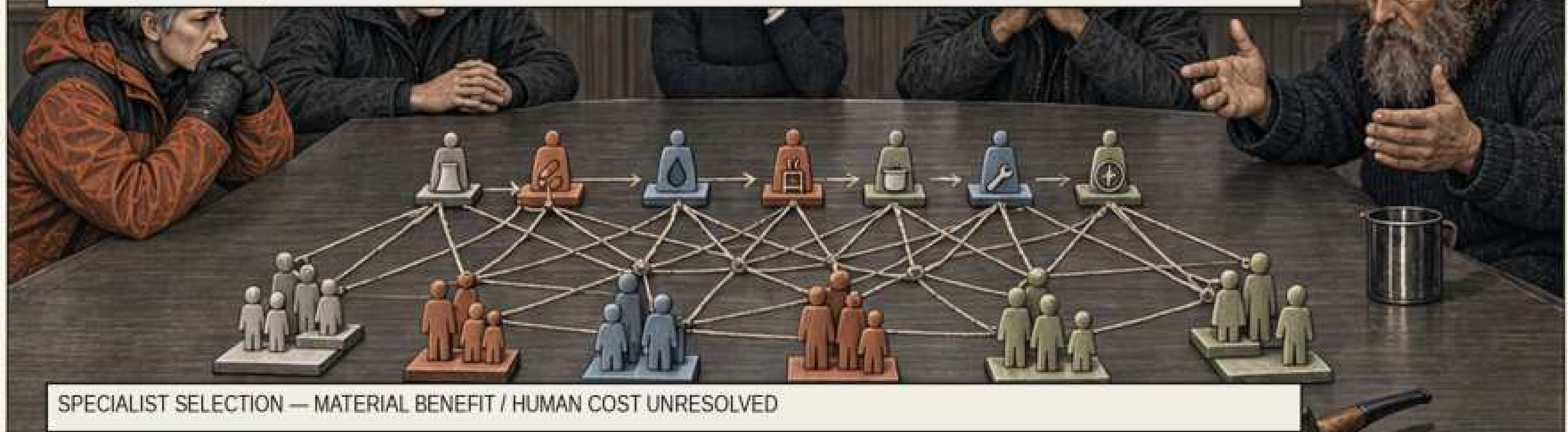
Kari runs the water plant. Her father cannot climb your gangway.

Then say whether your plan takes Kari without him.



If we refuse every cruel calculation, the systems still fail.

Then expose the cruelty with the calculation.



SPECIALIST SELECTION — MATERIAL BENEFIT / HUMAN COST UNRESOLVED

No one leaves a family in the footnotes.





We can leave calories. We cannot leave refrigeration, transport, or certainty.

FOOD TRANSFER — POSSIBLE / SURVIVAL OUTCOME — NOT GUARANTEED



Food left ashore may buy weeks. A ship trapped here cannot buy departure later.

My duty includes the one hundred seventy-three already aboard.



Without ship power, Borealis stays a cold promise.

With ship power, it remains an experiment.



Astrid's pressure is falling again.

Keep warming blood. I am coming.



We will pause.

Astrid does not have our pause.



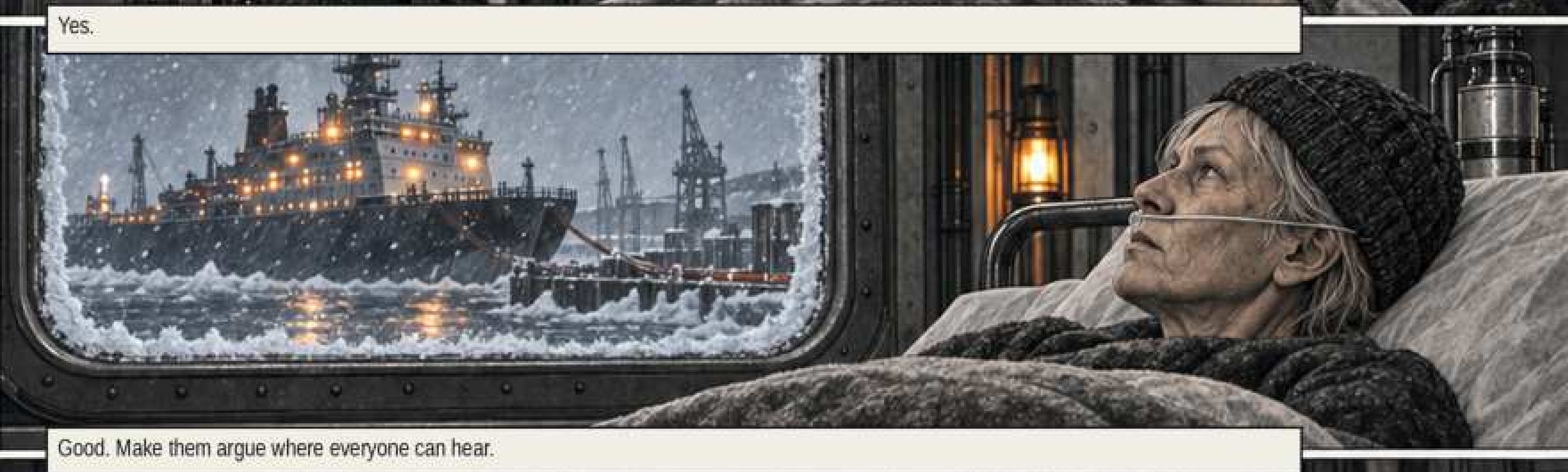
The bleeding has not stopped.

Then do not use a lie to make me comfortable.



Did the ship come?

Yes.



Good. Make them argue where everyone can hear.

Save your breath.



A bounded trial can carry essential loads without promising the full town.

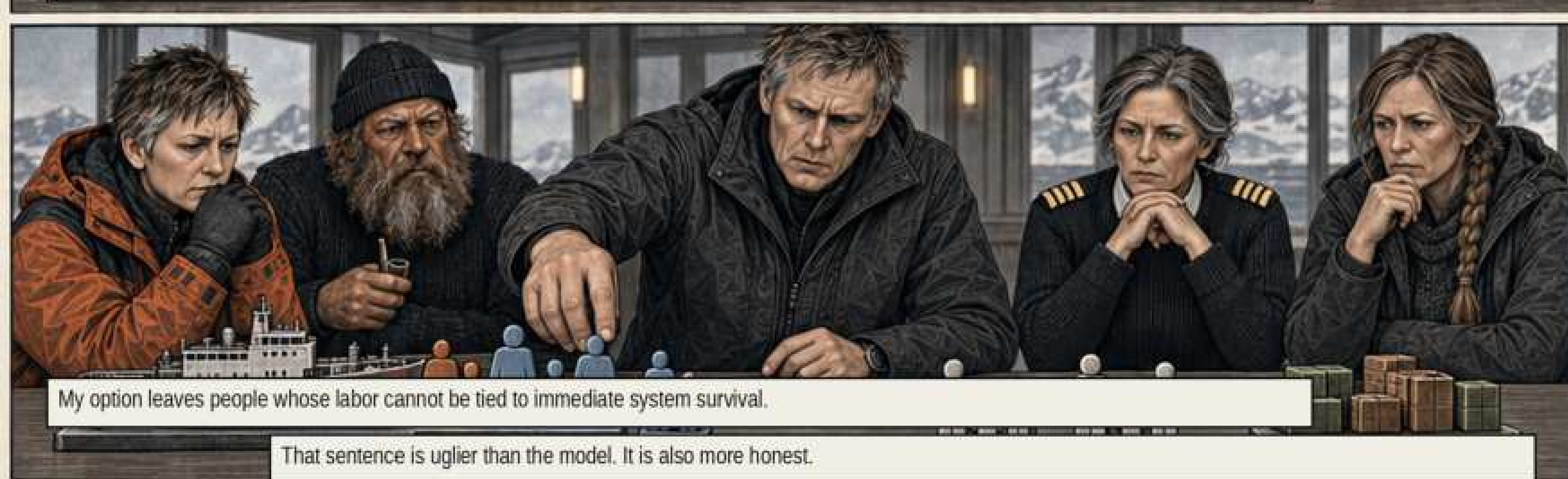
Only if protection, grounding, and stop authority remain ours.



Power is not an answer to the meeting.

It is one reversible act while the answer remains open.









The injury began before the ship arrived.

The clock did not.



Pressure is gone at the wrist.

Start the next unit. Keep the airway ready.



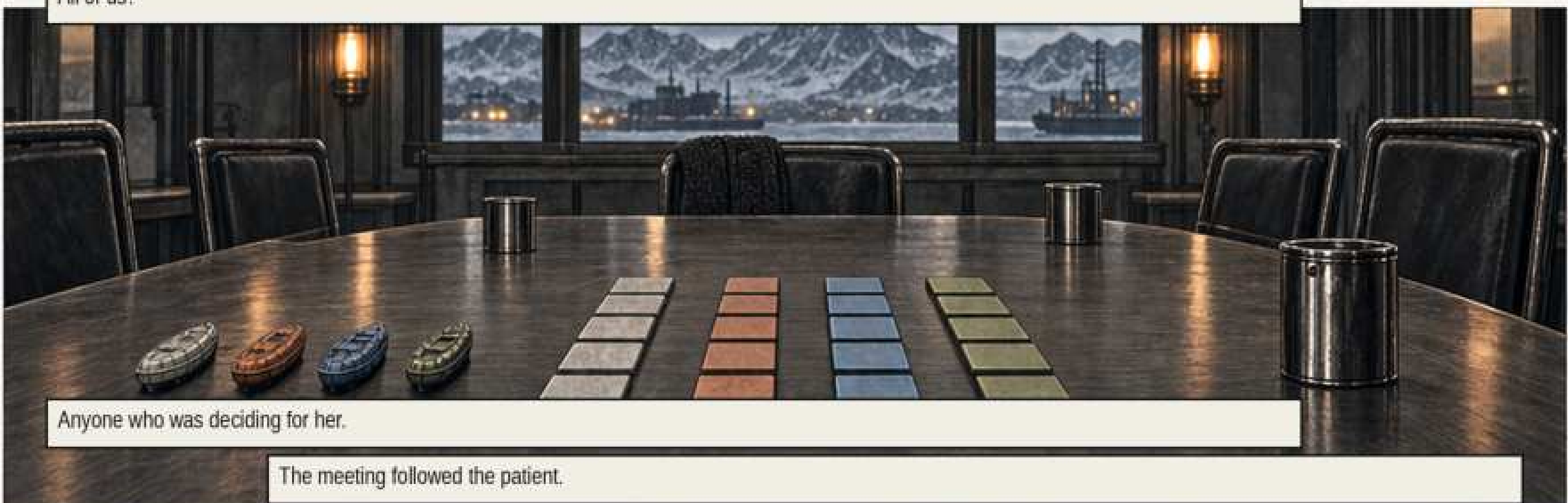
No surgery here could repair what the first injury had already taken.

No transfer could make the lost time reversible.



Doctor Qureshi says you should come now.

All of us?



Anyone who was deciding for her.

The meeting followed the patient.



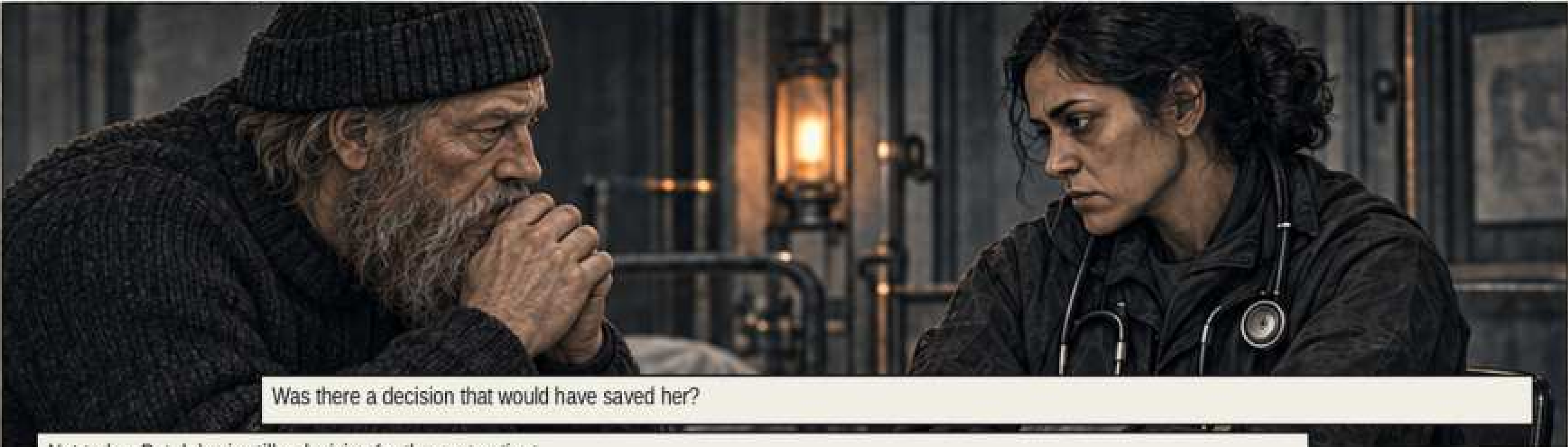
Astrid Nilsen died at zero nine forty-eight.

Severe abdominal trauma. Sustained before we arrived.



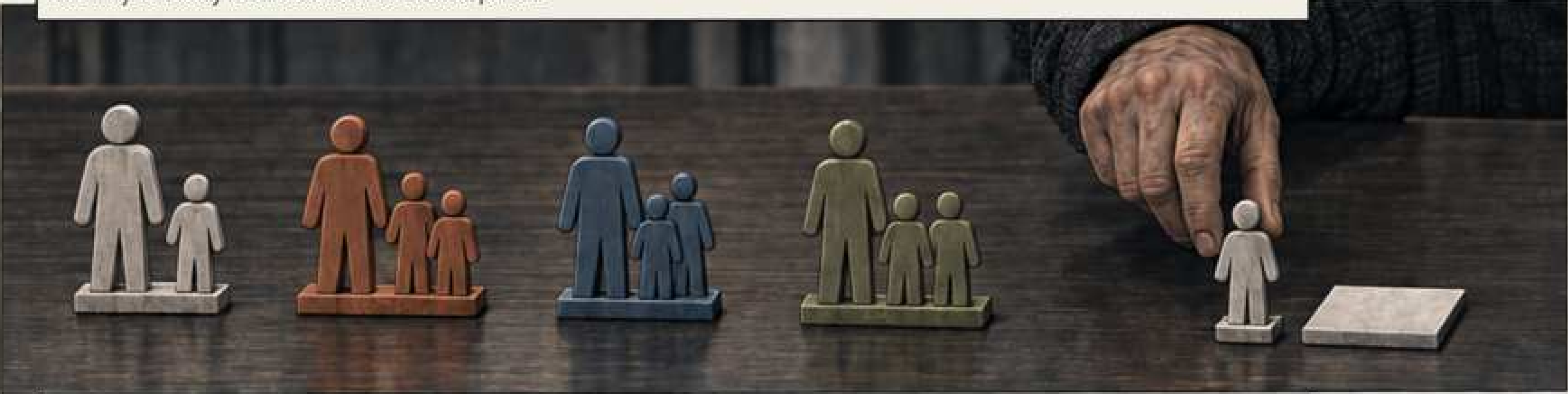
She kept the hospital boiler records.

She hated cardamom.



Was there a decision that would have saved her?

Not today. But delay is still a decision for the next patient.



LIVING — 453

ASTRID NILSEN — DECEASED / PREARRIVAL ABDOMINAL TRAUMA



Her death chooses nothing for us.

It removes the lie that waiting chooses nothing.





They are building a passenger list in a closed room.

They said no list was adopted.



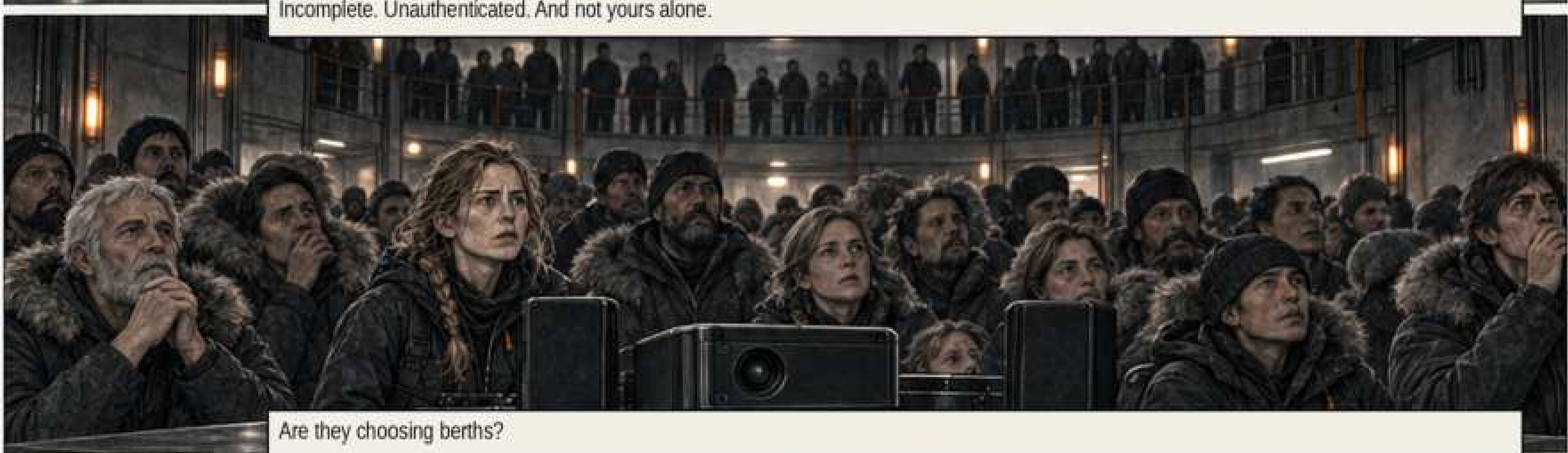
The public cannot consent to words it never hears.

You do not have their consent either.



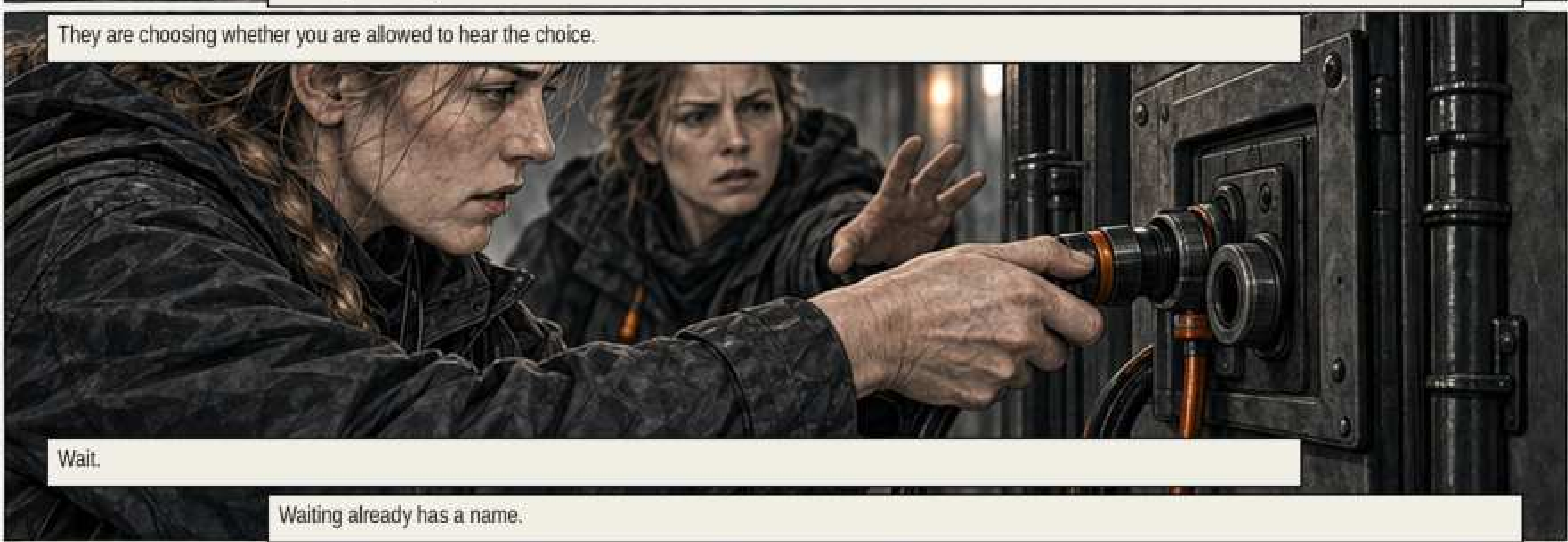
He withheld a recall direction toward Murmansk.

Incomplete. Unauthenticated. And not yours alone.



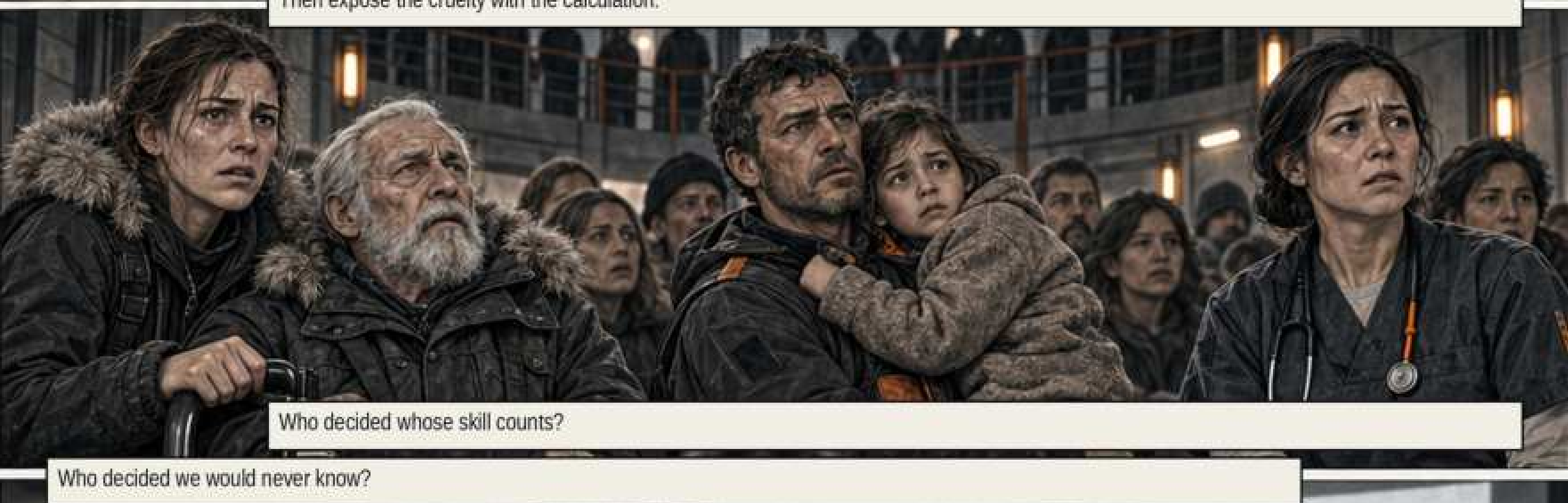
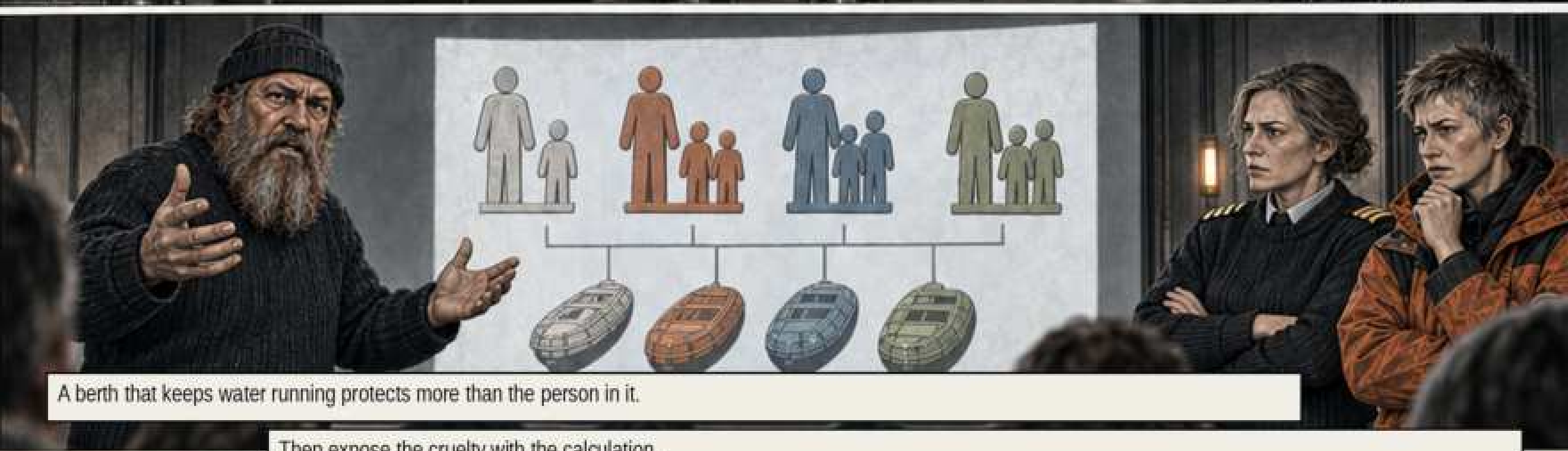
Are they choosing berths?

They are choosing whether you are allowed to hear the choice.



Wait.

Waiting already has a name.







A recall direction pointed this nuclear ship toward Murmansk.

The captain withheld it.



The packet was incomplete, late, and not fully authenticated.

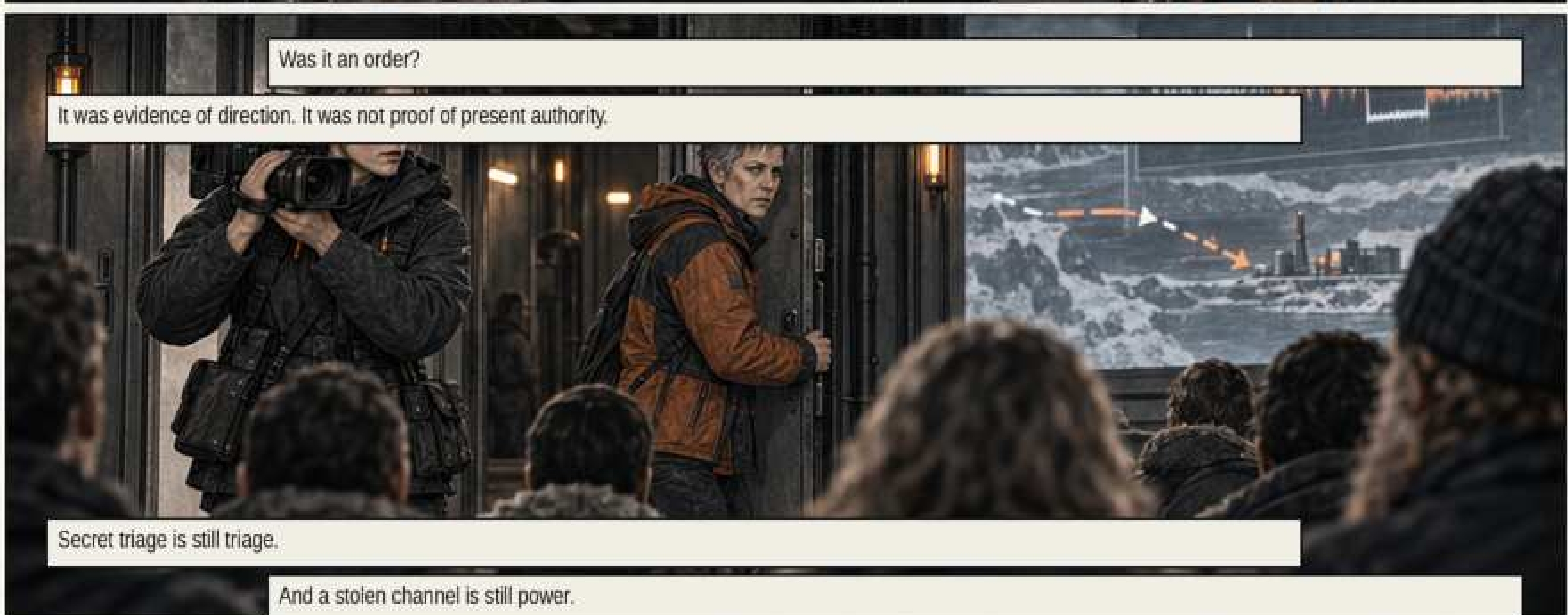
The destination was a likely nuclear target.



He also withheld it from officers responsible for the ship.



That breach is real even if his judgment was right.



Was it an order?

It was evidence of direction. It was not proof of present authority.

Secret triage is still triage.

And a stolen channel is still power.



They had a right to know selection was being discussed.

You did not have a right to control how every frightened person learned it.



If I asked permission, the answer would belong to the people inside this room.



You replaced their control with yours.

The room cannot close again.

Then it must become a room large enough for evidence, not rumor.



Open records. Verifiable numbers. A delay only for fact checking and immediate safety.

Medical privacy remains private.



The archive stays intact.

Yes. No one repairs trust by deleting evidence.





PUBLIC SESSION — SOURCES OPEN / MEDICAL PRIVACY PROTECTED

COMMUNAL CHANNEL — CONSENT + VERIFICATION DELAY



SHIPBOARD — 173 / ASHORE — 280 / LIVING — 453

DEATHS AFTER CONTACT — ASTRID NILSEN — 1



The food draft is approximate. Borealis is cold. Neither gives us a clean date.

FIRST SAFE INGREDIENT — ROUGHLY THREE WEEKS IF EVERY STAGE HOLDS



Departure margin is shrinking.

Power connection has not been proved.



No selection list exists.

Ask the questions that make one harder to write in secret.



My skill does not make my father disposable.

No. It makes the system's dependence on you public.



Can we connect power and still leave?

For now. Every day, less easily.



We energize a limited bus in stages.

Borealis does not receive power until protection proves stable.



AUTHORIZED — BOUNDED SHORE-POWER TRIAL ONLY

NOT DECIDED — SELECTION / DEPARTURE / PERMANENT STAY / MERGED GOVERNMENT



One reversible act.

With a stop switch on both sides.





17 OCTOBER. DAY THIRTY-THREE.

EXPORT PACKAGE — 5 MW NAMEPLATE / TEST LOAD BELOW RATING



Tide crack is widening under the east run.

Shift the cable bridge two meters west.



Ground verified. Ship breaker open. Shore breaker open.



Local bus dead and tagged.

No fault masking.

Monitored test path only. Any disagreement trips us out.



CABLE LAID / GROUNDED / DE-ENERGIZED

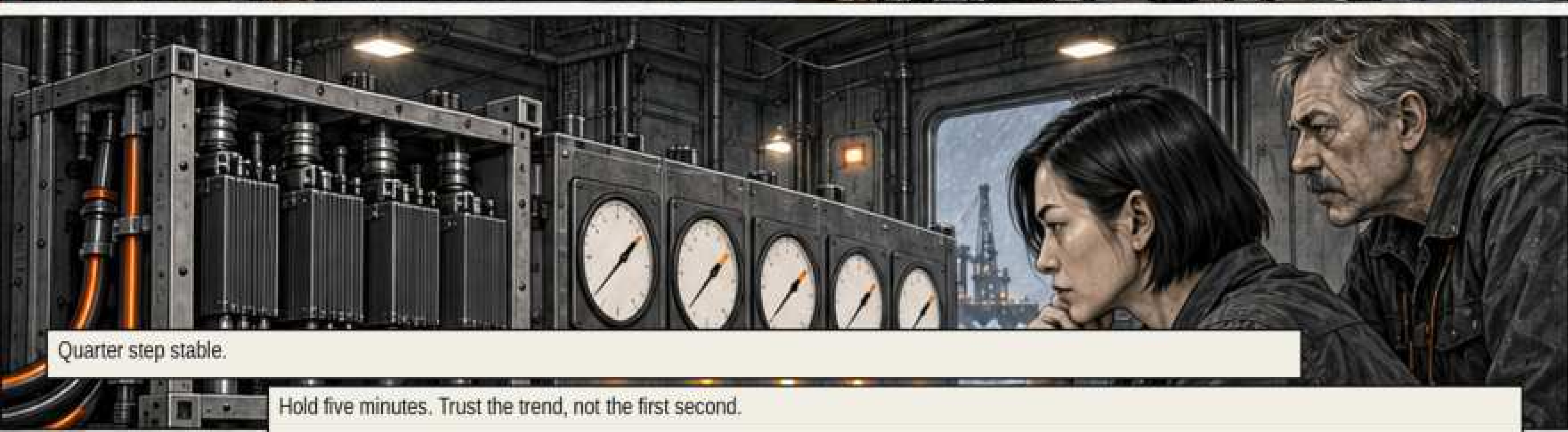
Physical connection is not permission to close a breaker.





Close ship isolation. Hold shore breaker open.

Ship isolation closed. No unexpected current.



Quarter step stable.

Hold five minutes. Trust the trend, not the first second.



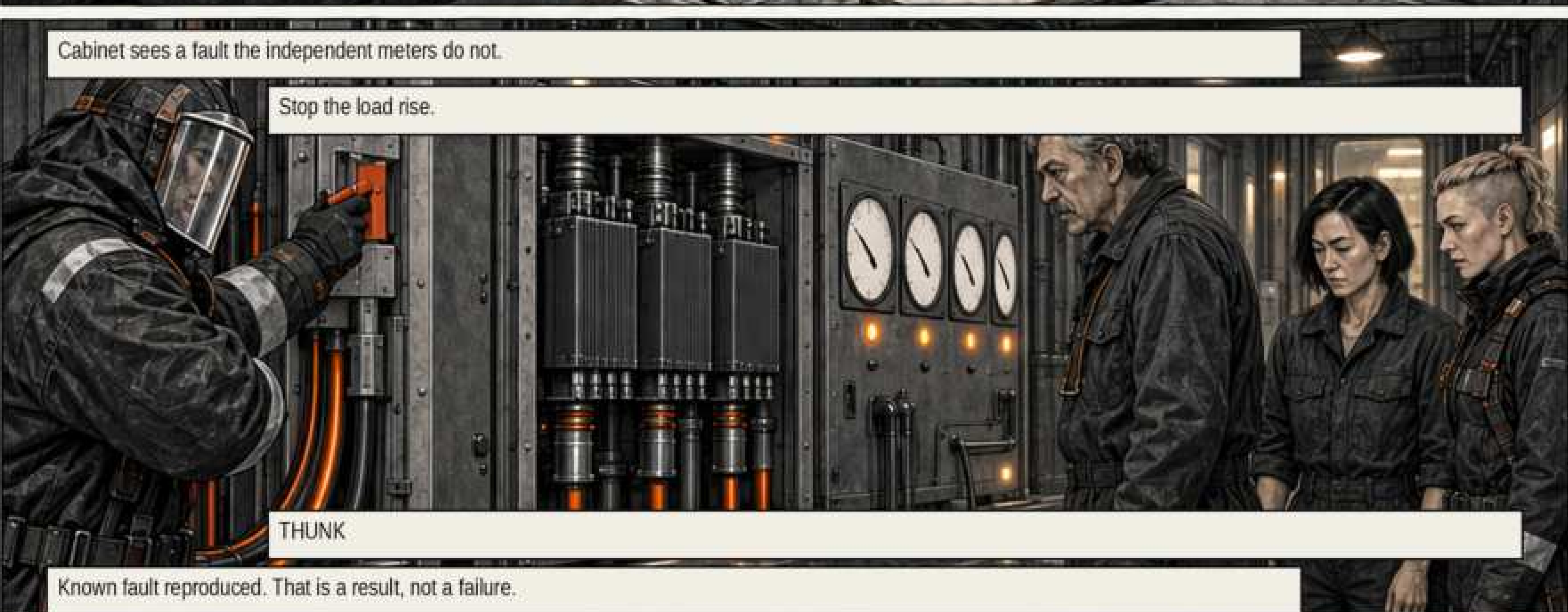
LIMITED MICROGRID — HOSPITAL / WATER / ONE HEAT LOOP

BOREALIS — COLD / NOT ENERGIZED



Cabinet sees a fault the independent meters do not.

Stop the load rise.



THUNK

Known fault reproduced. That is a result, not a failure.





The cabinet is misreading harmonic current as ground fault.

We do not disable protection to make the reading convenient.



One low-load comparison. Independent ground-fault trip remains active.

Local manual trip at my hand.



I own energization. Sergei owns the local stop. Either side ends the test.

No production pressure outranks that sentence.



Barrier clear. Cover secured. Manual trip tested.

Independent channel ready.



Hold at the test step.

Do not advance.



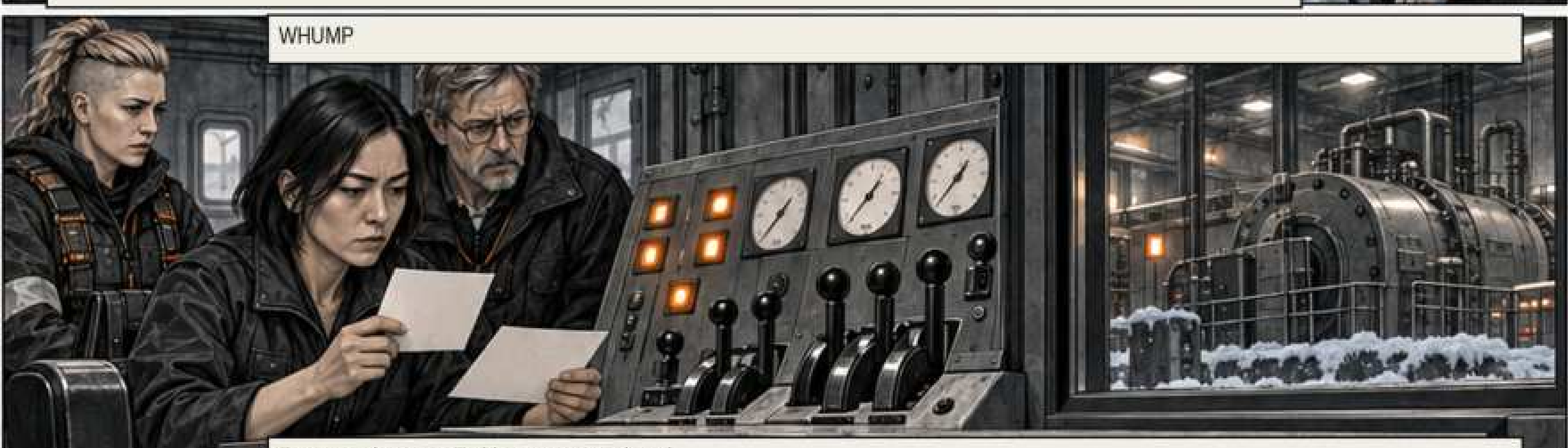


Filter output is unstable.

Opening local—



KRAK



WHUMP

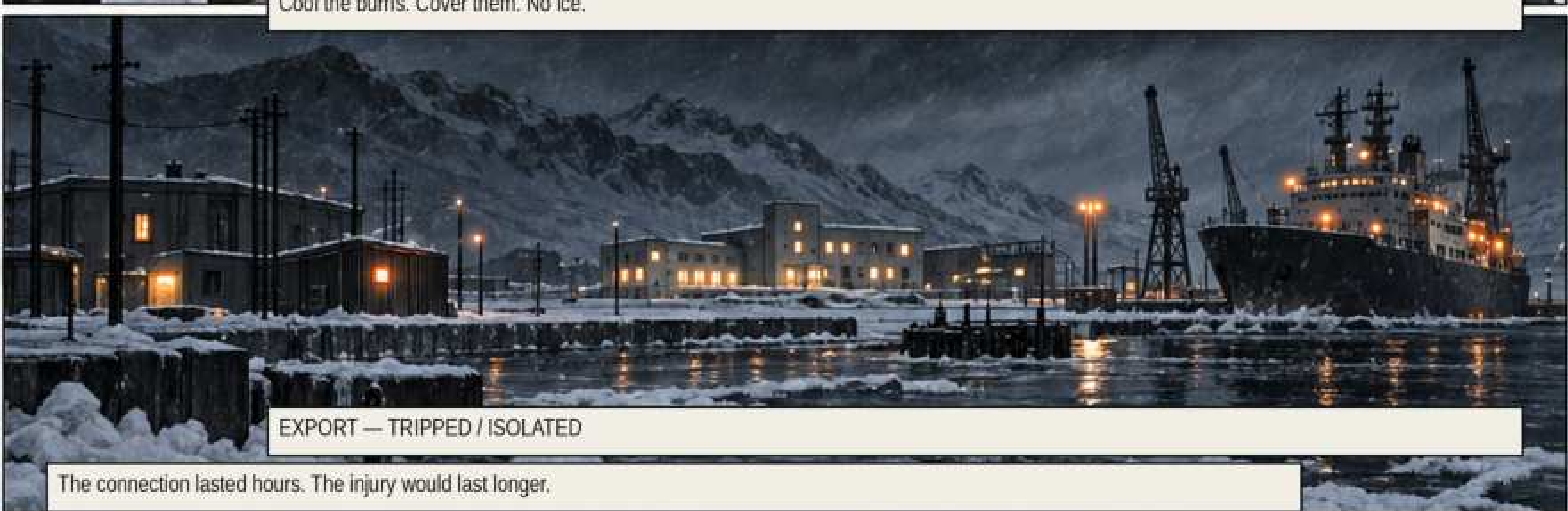
Export feeder open. Turbine generator tripped.

Reactor A stable. Hold all reclose.



Sergei is clear. He is breathing.

Cool the burns. Cover them. No ice.



EXPORT — TRIPPED / ISOLATED

The connection lasted hours. The injury would last longer.





SERGEI MALKOV — ALIVE / CRITICAL / ARC-FLASH BURNS

He survived the first injury. That is all I can promise.



No reclose until grounding and protection are rebuilt.

Your refusal stands.



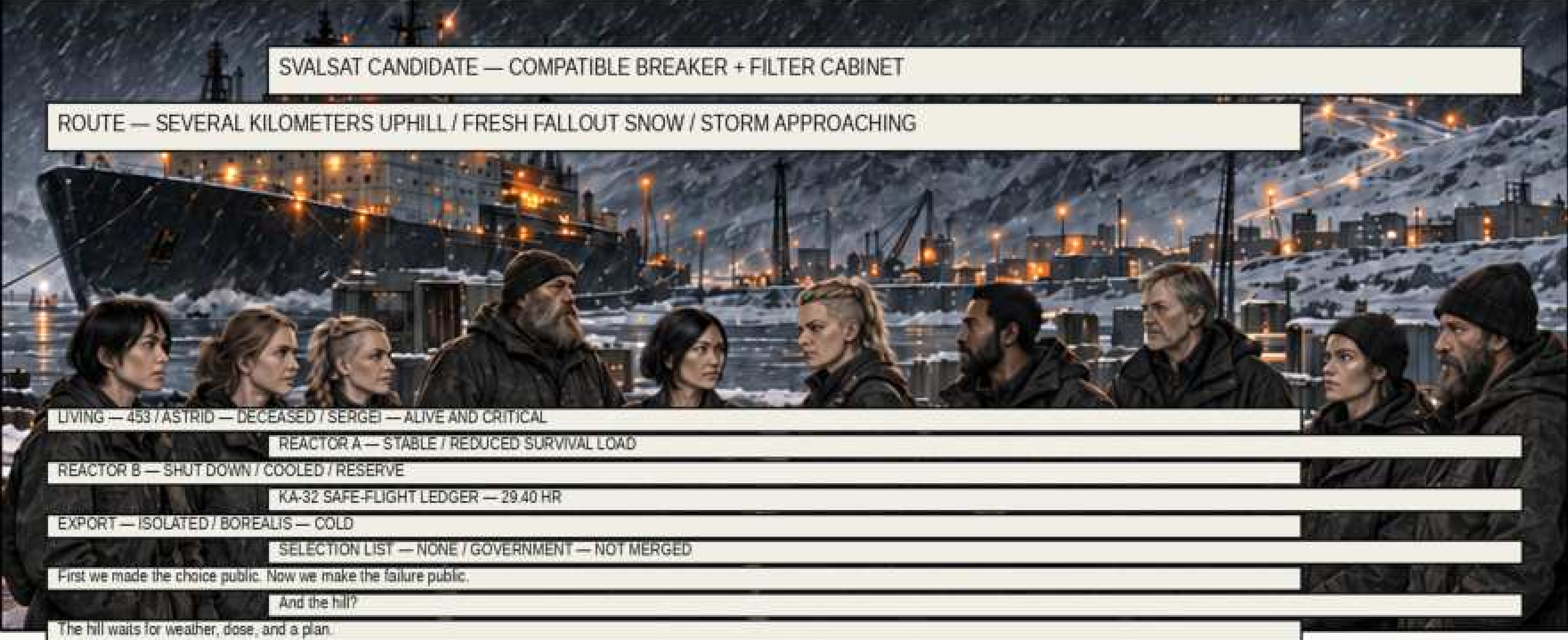
COLD ROOM — WARMING / LOSS NOT YET BOOKED

BOREALIS — COLD / NO PRODUCT / NO SUSTAINED POWER



SVALSAT CANDIDATE — COMPATIBLE BREAKER + FILTER CABINET

ROUTE — SEVERAL KILOMETERS UPHILL / FRESH FALLOUT SNOW / STORM APPROACHING



LIVING — 453 / ASTRID — DECEASED / SERGEI — ALIVE AND CRITICAL

REACTOR A — STABLE / REDUCED SURVIVAL LOAD

REACTOR B — SHUT DOWN / COOLED / RESERVE

KA-32 SAFE-FLIGHT LEDGER — 29.40 HR

EXPORT — ISOLATED / BOREALIS — COLD

SELECTION LIST — NONE / GOVERNMENT — NOT MERGED

First we made the choice public. Now we make the failure public.

And the hill?

The hill waits for weather, dose, and a plan.