

THE LAST WARM PLACE

CHAPTER THREE · FORTY-THREE



18 SEPTEMBER.
DAY FOUR.

TOTAL ABOARD — 173
5 JANUARY 2035

SIX DAYS. THAT'S WHAT WE COST THEM, ERIK. IT'S RIGHT THERE IN PENCIL.

SOMEBODY ON THIS SHIP WILL DO THAT DIVISION FOR YOU, LIV. DON'T HELP THEM.

IT LOOKS CLEANER THAN YESTERDAY. HONESTLY, KENJI, IT LOOKS LIKE A POSTCARD.

THAT'S WHY EYES ARE POOR INSTRUMENTS.

POSTCARDS WERE INVENTED TO LIE ABOUT THE WEATHER.

DUST?

...WHOSE?

SOOT. SOMEBODY'S CITY, PROBABLY.

CHK

THE FILTER DOESN'T KEEP THEIR NAMES.

WHEN WILL THE SKY TELL US HOW BAD?

AFTER THE HARVESTS ALREADY KNOW.

THAT'S NOT AN ANSWER.

IT'S THE ONLY HONEST ONE I HAVE. ASK ME IN A MONTH.

I'LL BE LESS HONEST AND MUCH MORE USEFUL.

AND WHEN THEY TURN OUT TO BE THE SAME THING?

FIRST, WE STOP MIXING WHAT WE MEASURED WITH WHAT WE FEAR.

THEN I'LL HAVE BEEN RIGHT IN THE WORST WAY A MAN CAN BE RIGHT. I'D STILL LIKE TO GET THERE HONESTLY.

MEASURED HERE

BEFORE THE SILENCE

AFTER

UNKNOWN

RADIATION AT BACKGROUND.
SOOT RISING. WE'RE UPWIND
OF THE WORST, FOR NOW.

"FOR NOW" IS
DOING A LOT OF
WORK IN THAT
SENTENCE.



IT'S THE HARDEST-WORKING
PHRASE I OWN.

WHATEVER THE
SATELLITES SAW
AFTER, IT REACHED
US IN PIECES.

PIECES
ARE DATA.

PIECES ARE A JIGSAW
WITH THE BOX LID
MISSING. YOU'LL SEE
A FACE IN IT, MARA.
EVERYONE DOES.

GIVE ME A
CONCLUSION, KENJI.

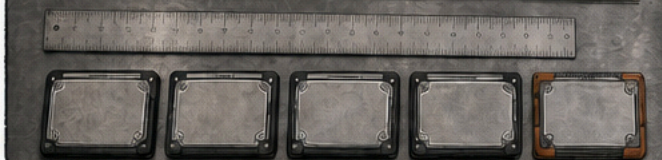
AFTER

FORECASTS FROM
BEFORE THE SILENCE.
GOOD PHYSICS.
WRONG WAR.

WE DON'T KNOW
WHICH WAR WE
GOT.

EXACTLY. THESE ALL
ASSUMED A WAR
SOMEBODY HAD PLANNED. I
DON'T THINK ANYBODY
STUCK TO THE PLAN.

BEFORE THE
SILENCE



I CAN
GIVE
YOU
THREE.



SAME SKY.
THREE
AMOUNTS OF
SMOKE. I
CAN'T TELL
THEM APART
YET.

WARM CLOTHES.
THAT'S TRUE IN
ALL THREE.

MILD

MIDDLE

SEVERE

A HUNDRED
SEVENTY-THREE
PEOPLE ARE GOING TO
ASK ME WHICH ONE
TO PACK FOR.

WHICH ONE
DO I TELL
THEM?

THEN I'LL
SAY THE
WORST ONE
FIRST AND
GET IT OVER
WITH.

ALL THREE. THEY'LL
REMEMBER THE WORST.

LAST. SAY IT
FIRST AND
NOBODY HEARS
THE OTHER TWO.

SAY IT LAST
AND AT LEAST THEY
HEARD THEM.



KENJI HAS THREE
FUTURES. WE DON'T KNOW
YET WHICH ONE WE'RE IN.

WHICH ONE'S
MOST LIKELY?

IF I KNEW THAT, I'D HAVE
BROUGHT YOU ONE. I'M NOT BEING
COY. I'M BEING CAREFUL. I KNOW
THEY SOUND THE SAME.

SICKBAY'S LISTENING.
GO SLOWLY SOME OF US
ARE WRITING IT DOWN.



MILD: SHORTER
SUMMERS.
BROKEN TRADE.

MIDDLE: YEARS
OF CROP
FAILURE.

SEVERE: THE
FARMS LOSE
THEIR
SUMMERS.

SEVERE

CROP BELTS
10-15°C COLDER

FOR YEARS

NOT
TOMORROW'S
WEATHER.
YEARS OF
FAILED
HARVESTS.

THEN
WHERE'S
SAFE?

I'D TAKE DAYS.
I'D TAKE
ANYTHING
WITH A UNIT
ON IT.

DEFINE "A WHILE." HE'S
GOING TO WANT IT IN WEEKS.

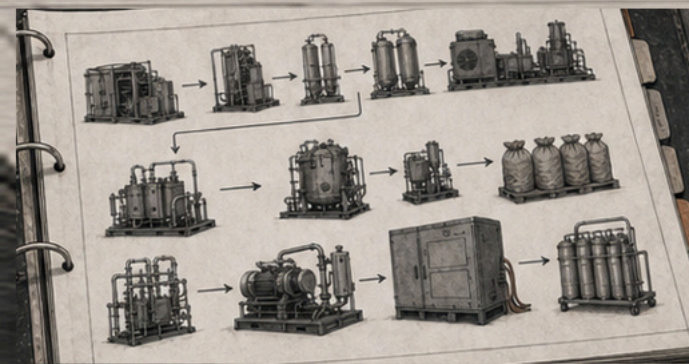
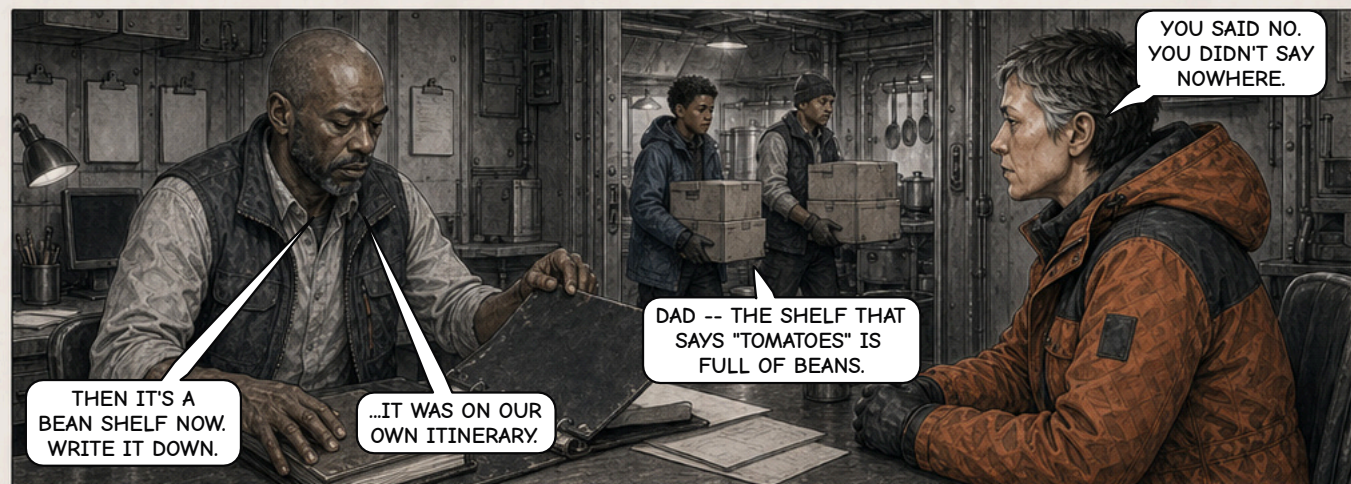
RIGHT HERE.
CLEANEST AIR
ON EARTH.
FOR A WHILE.

CAPTAIN?
YOU'VE GOT A
FACE.

NO.

I ALWAYS HAVE
A FACE,
PROFESSOR.

CLEAN AIR.
CAN IT FEED
US?

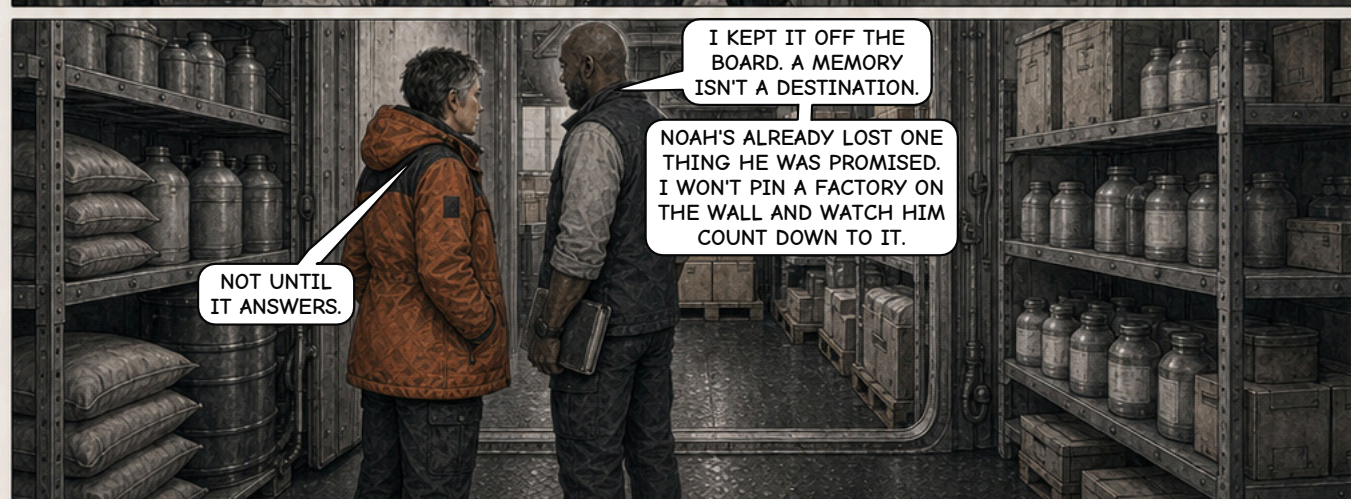


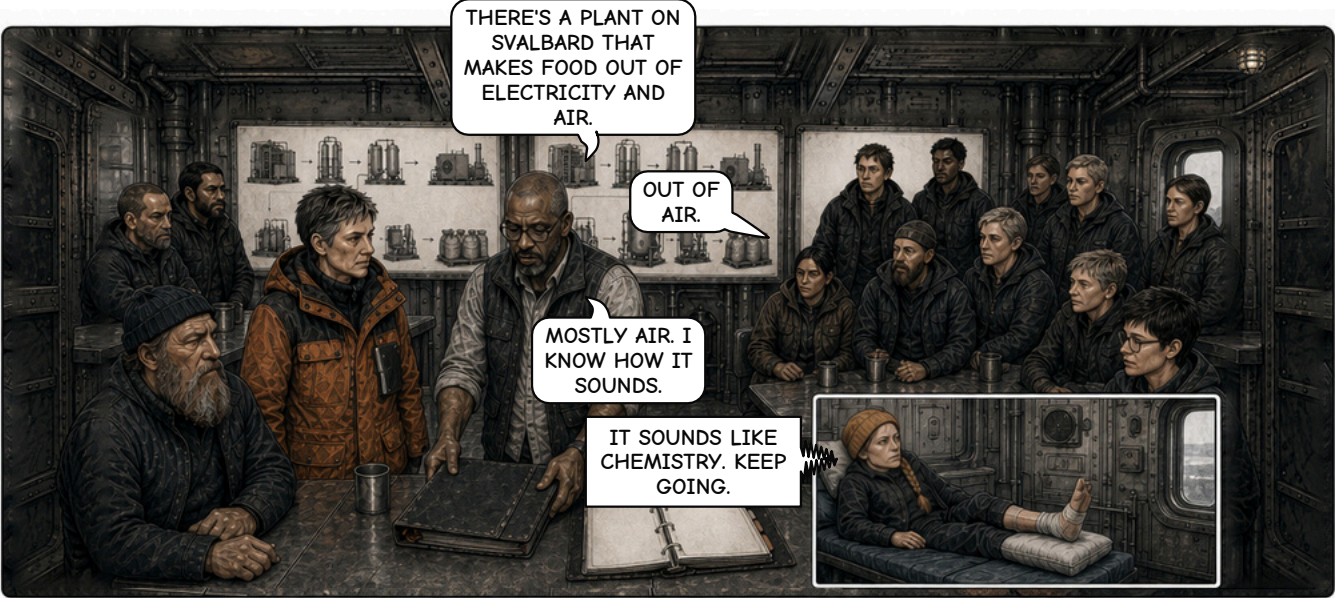
POWER + WATER + AIR -> PROTEIN

SHORE-POWER PACKAGE — 5 MW

OUR LAST PORT CALL BEFORE THE ICE. YOU SIGNED FOR IT IN MARCH.

I SIGNED FOUR HUNDRED PAGES IN MARCH, ELIAS.



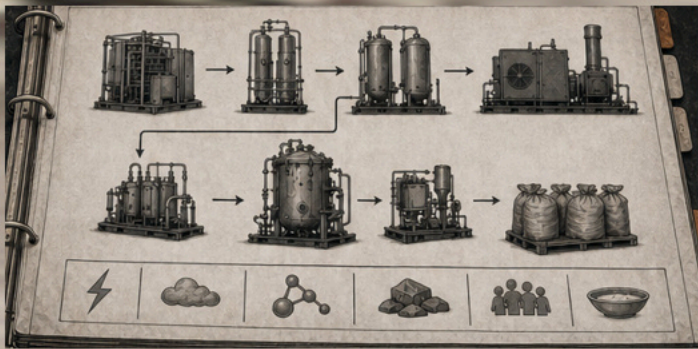


THERE'S A PLANT ON SVALBARD THAT MAKES FOOD OUT OF ELECTRICITY AND AIR.

OUT OF AIR.

MOSTLY AIR. I KNOW HOW IT SOUNDS.

IT SOUNDS LIKE CHEMISTRY. KEEP GOING.

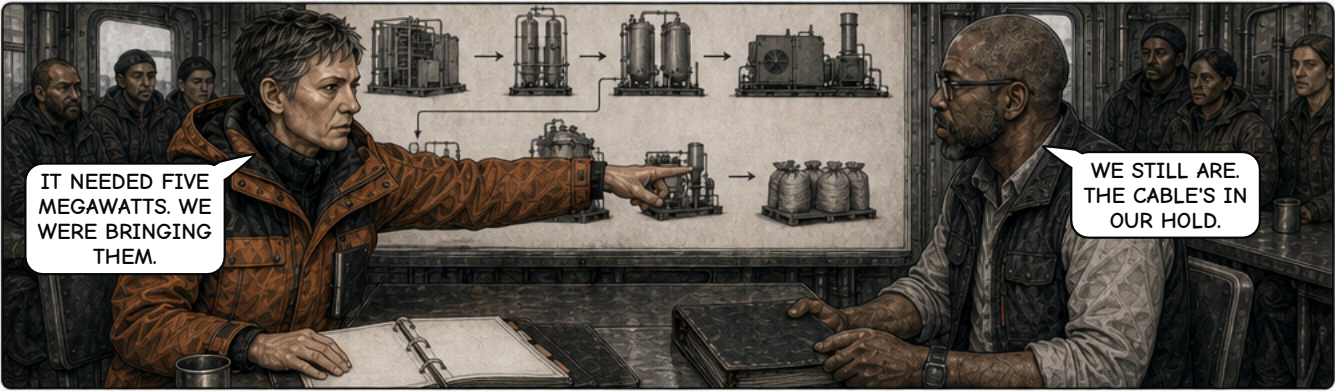


BACTERIA FED ON HYDROGEN. THEY MAKE PROTEIN, IF THEY'RE ALIVE.

"IF THEY'RE ALIVE." IS THAT A FOOTNOTE, OR IS THAT THE WHOLE BUSINESS PLAN?

THAT'S THE WHOLE BUSINESS PLAN, MR. CALDER.

POWER + WATER + AIR -> PROTEIN



IT NEEDED FIVE MEGAWATTS. WE WERE BRINGING THEM.

WE STILL ARE. THE CABLE'S IN OUR HOLD.



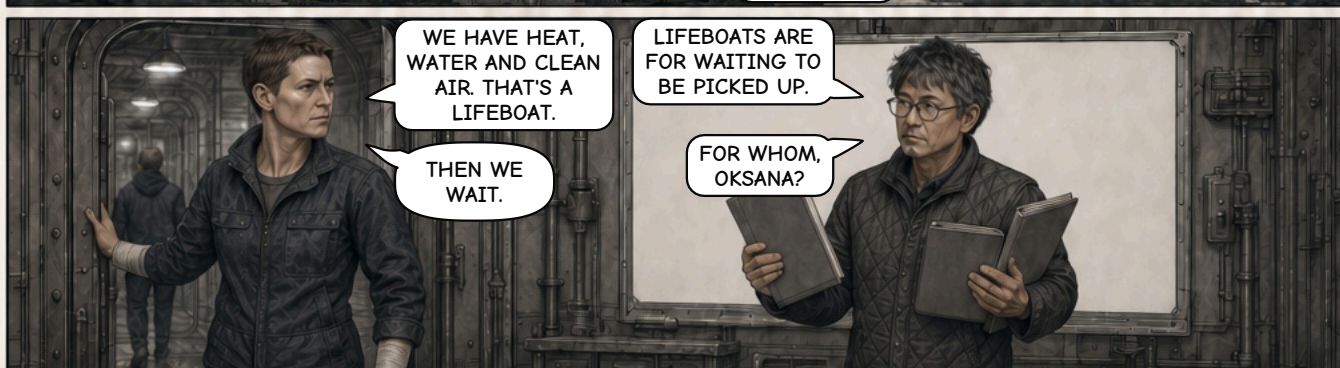
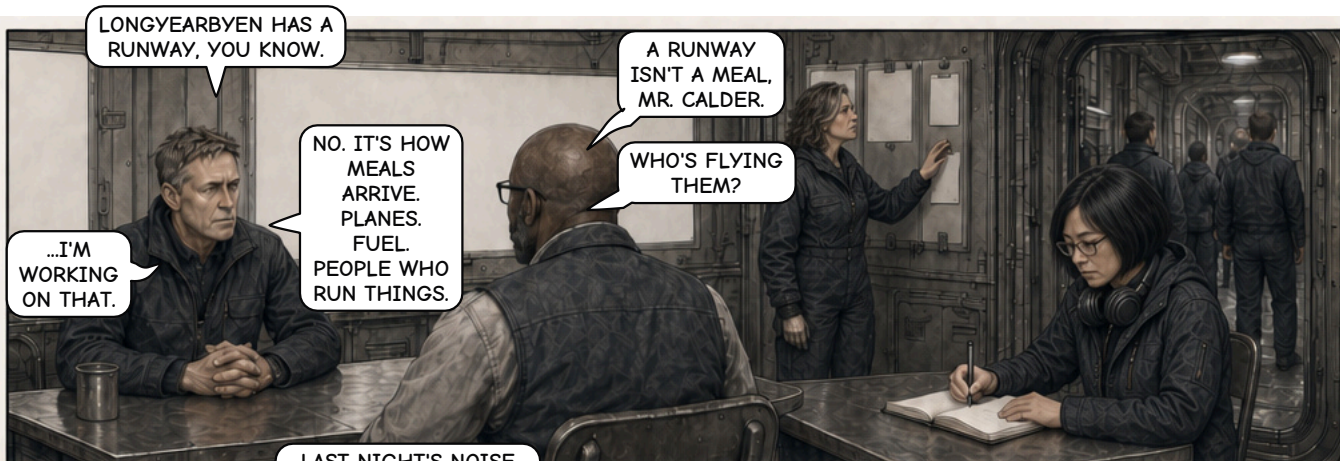
HAS IT EVER FED ANYONE?

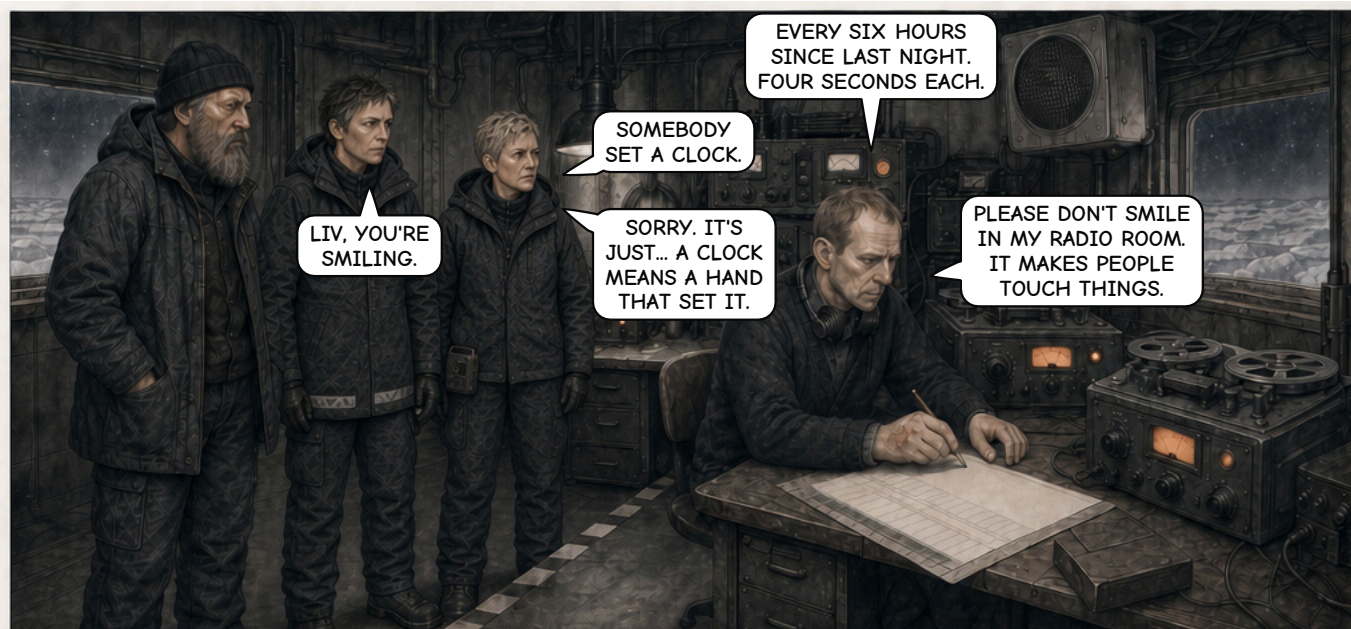


MACHINERY, WE KNOW HOW TO FIX.

A DOZEN VOLUNTEERS. FOR A WEEK.

THEN IT'S MACHINERY. NOT SALVATION.







RECORDING.



KRRR-TKTKTK-KSH



BOTH COPIES TOOK IT.

FOUR POINT THREE SECONDS.



NOT YET. IT'S COMPRESSED, AND IT'S BROKEN.

LONGER, IF YOU KEEP ASKING.

HOW LONG?

CAN YOU READ IT?



WE REBUILD WHAT ARRIVED. ONLY THAT.

NOBODY FILLS A HOLE BECAUSE THE SENTENCE WANTS A WORD.

IS IT THEM?
IS SOMEBODY ALIVE?

19
SEPTEMBER.
DAY FIVE.

THIRD
REPEAT.
THE HOLES
ARE
CLOSING.

NOT THAT
ONE. THAT
ONE STAYS
A HOLE.

HOW SURE
ARE YOU?

OF THE WORDS, VERY. OF WHO
SENT THEM, NOT AT ALL.

43 AT BOREALIS. GRID DOWN.
CULTURES COLD.
POWER 72 HOURS. CAN FEED
IF RESTARTED.

78°13'N
15°38'E

THAT'S
BOREALIS.

...IF IT'S
STILL ALIVE.

CAN THEY
HEAR US?

MAYBE. THEY'RE NOT
ASKING FOR AN ANSWER.

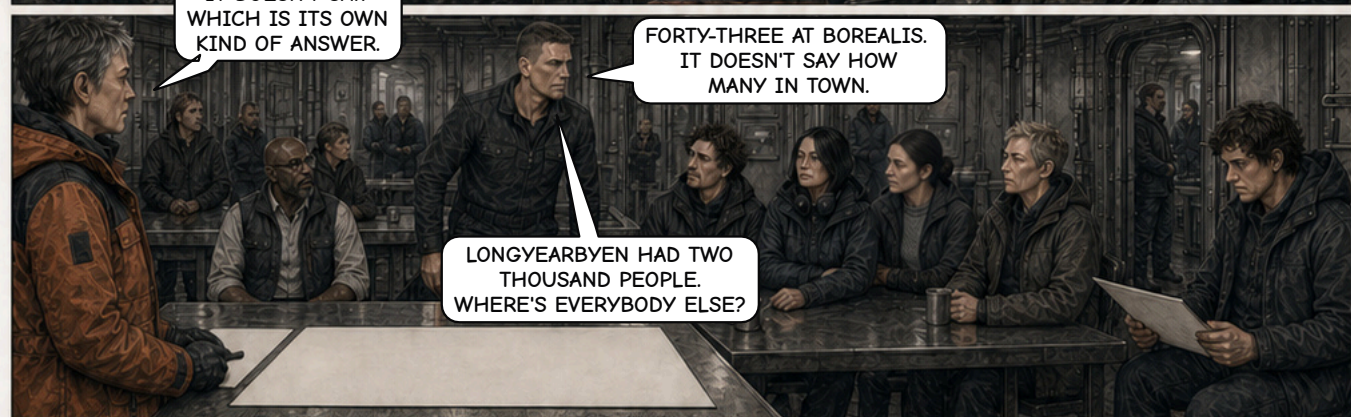
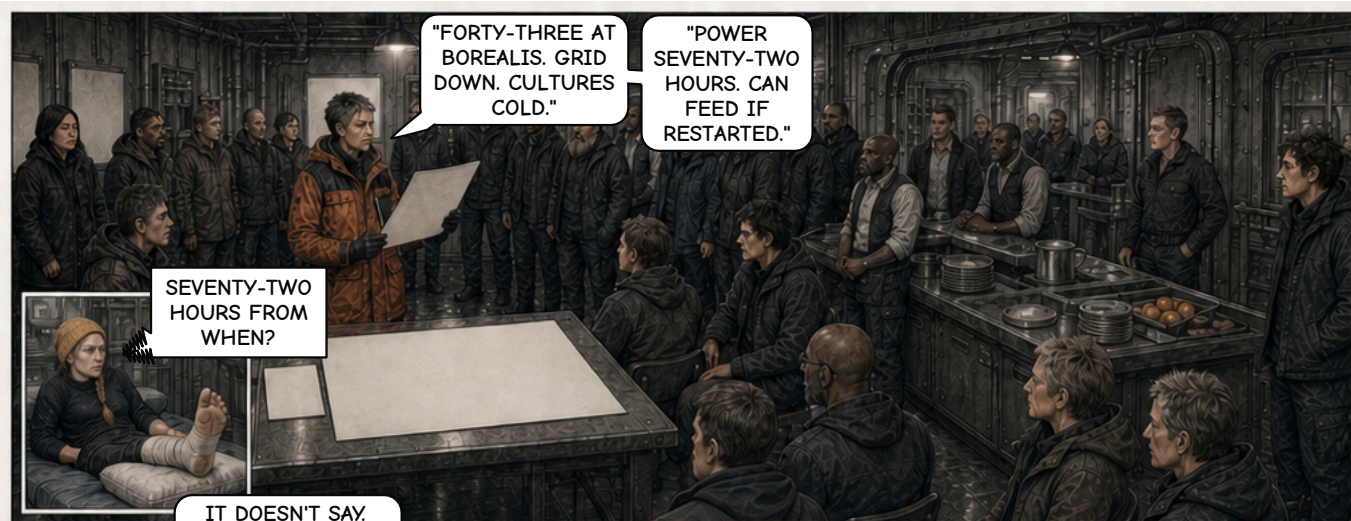
THEY'RE
ASKING FOR A
SHIP.

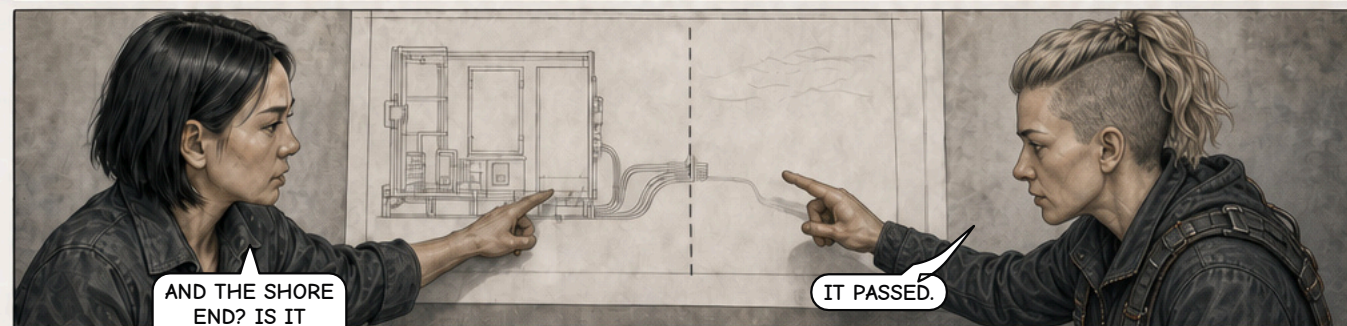
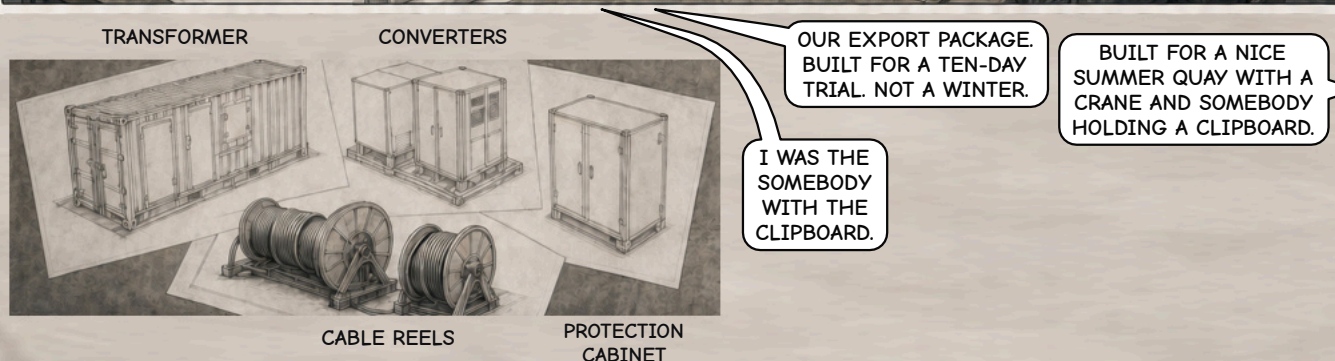
THEY'RE ASKING FOR
ANYONE, PROFESSOR. IT
ISN'T THE SAME AS
ASKING FOR US.

WHO DO
WE TELL?

EVERYONE. WHAT IT SAYS,
AND WHAT IT DOESN'T.

THAT'S MY
LINE,
CAPTAIN.





THAT NIGHT.

TK-KRR-TK-TK-

<NEW CARRIER.
FLEET FORMAT.><NOT SVALBARD...
SOMEBODY'S STILL
GIVING ORDERS.><FLEET
COMMAND.
PRIORITY. I'M
CHECKING
THE CODES.>

FLEET COMMAND — PRIORITY

NUCLEAR ASSETS

MURMANSK

<CHECK
THEM
TWICE.><I ALWAYS
CHECK TWICE.
TONIGHT I'LL
CHECK THREE
TIMES.><ADDRESSED
TO WHOM?><EVERY
NUCLEAR SHIP.
THAT'S US.><...MURMANSK,
CAPTAIN. THEY'RE
CALLING US HOME.><I CAN
READ,
ANTON.>SOMETHING
FROM HOME,
CAPTAIN?WEATHER. GO
BACK TO YOUR
WATCH....AYE,
CAPTAIN.IT'S IN THE
LOG, CAPTAIN.THEN IT
STAYS IN THE
LOG.LET THEM READ IT
IN THE MORNING.
TONIGHT IT'S
MINE.THE LOG ISN'T A
DRAWER. PEOPLE
READ IT.



20 SEPTEMBER.
DAY SIX.

02:40 — FLEET
COMMAND, PRIORITY.
COPY TO CAPTAIN.

WEATHER,
CAPTAIN?

THAT ISN'T
AN ANSWER.

ANTON LOGS
EVERYTHING.

IT'S THE PART
OF ONE I CAN
GIVE YOU.

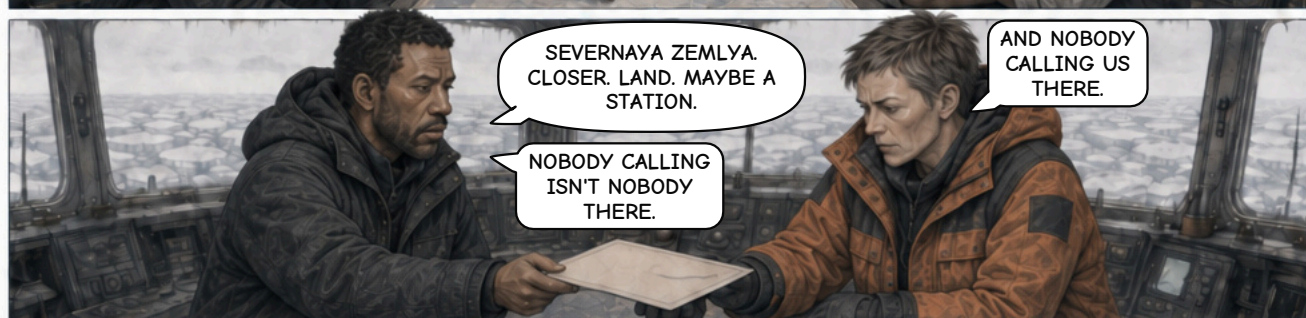
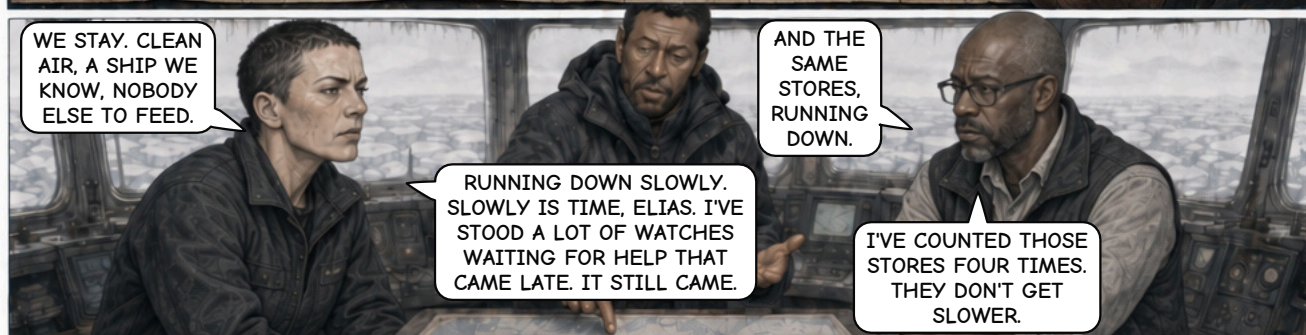
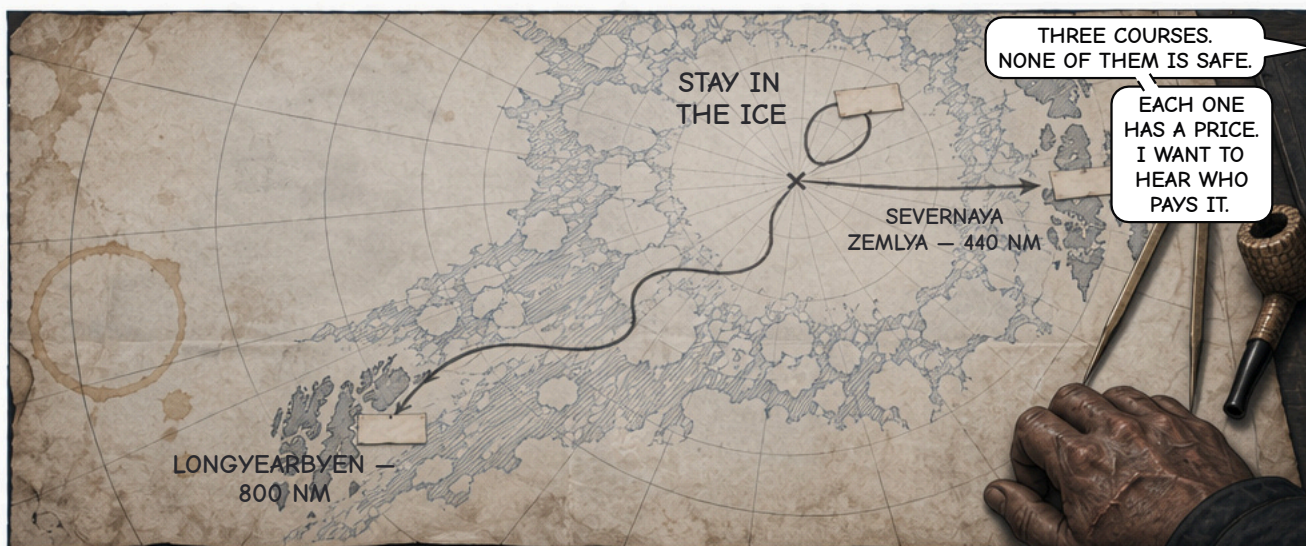
<WAS IT
FOR US?>

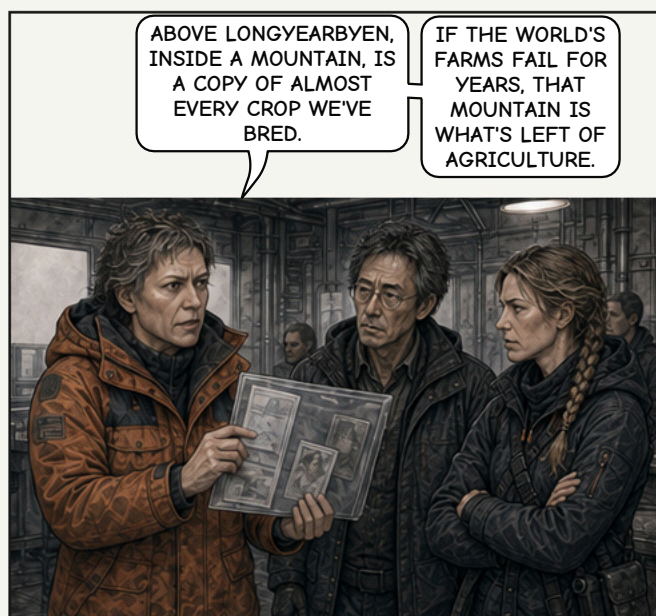
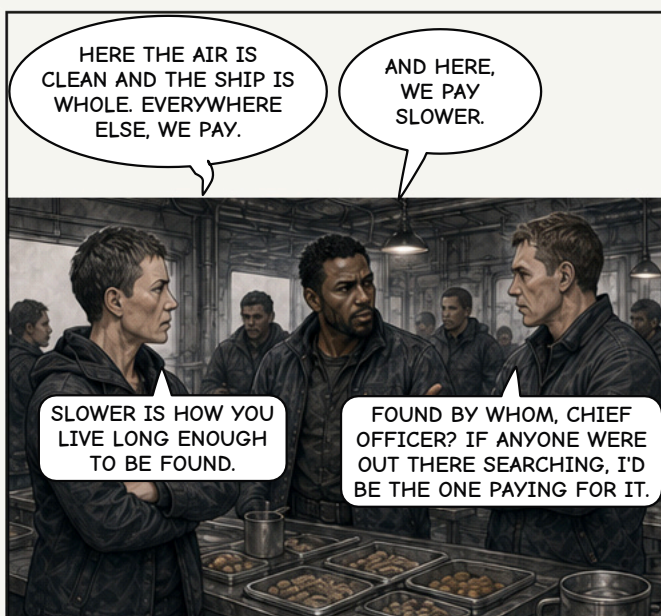
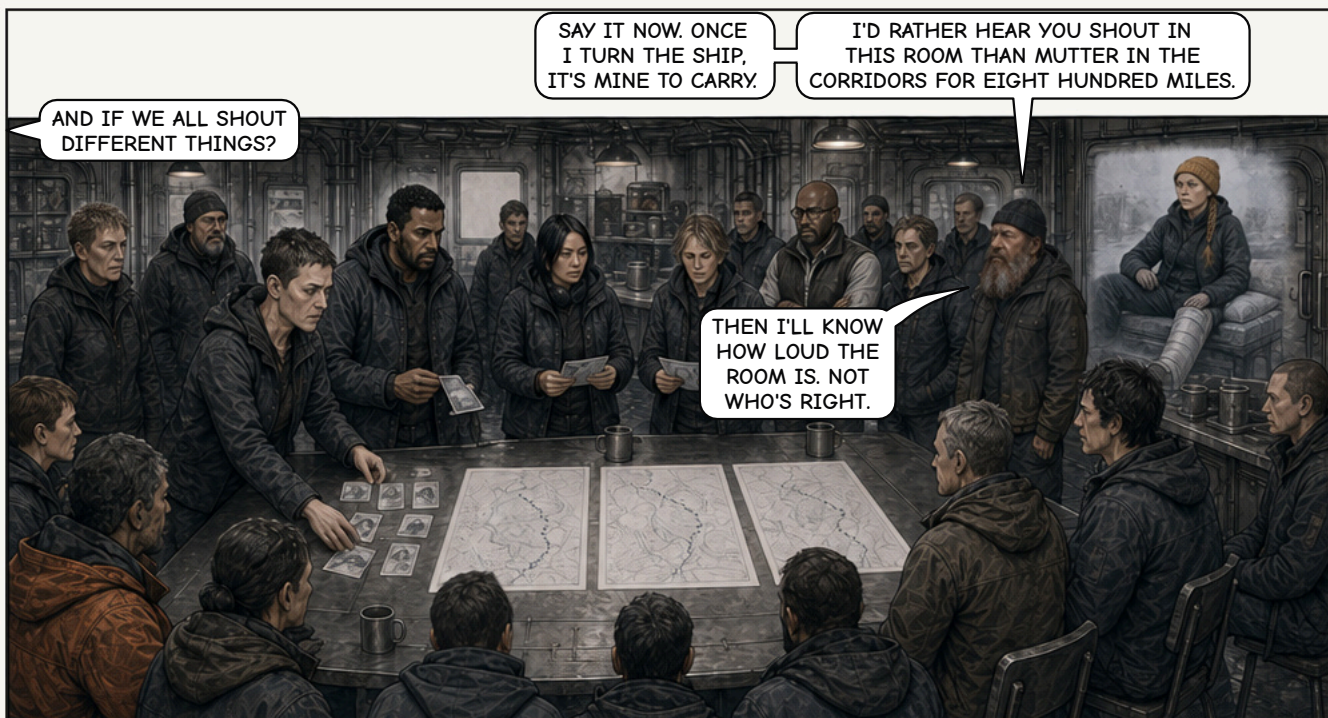
<FOR A FLEET
THAT MAY NOT
EXIST ANYMORE.>

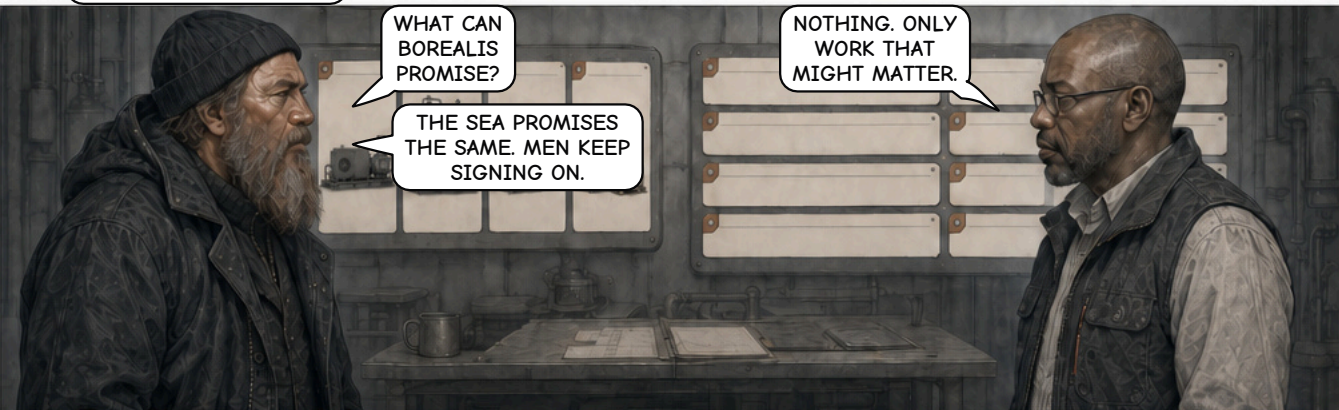
<MY WIFE AND
MY TWINS ARE IN
MURMANSK.>

<THEN YOU
KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
ASKING ME NOT TO
ASK.>

<I KNOW
WHERE YOUR
FAMILY IS.>







21 SEPTEMBER.
DAY SEVEN.

THE LEADS CLOSED A
THIRD OVERNIGHT. THE
ICE DOESN'T ATTEND
MEETINGS.

CLOSED
WHICH WAY?

EVERY
WAY.

THEIR SEVENTY-TWO
HOURS RAN OUT
LAST NIGHT.

FOOD — 5
JANUARY

43 AT BOREALIS

POWER 72
HOURS

ICE — CLOSING

AND THEY'RE
STILL
TRANSMITTING.

ON
WHAT?

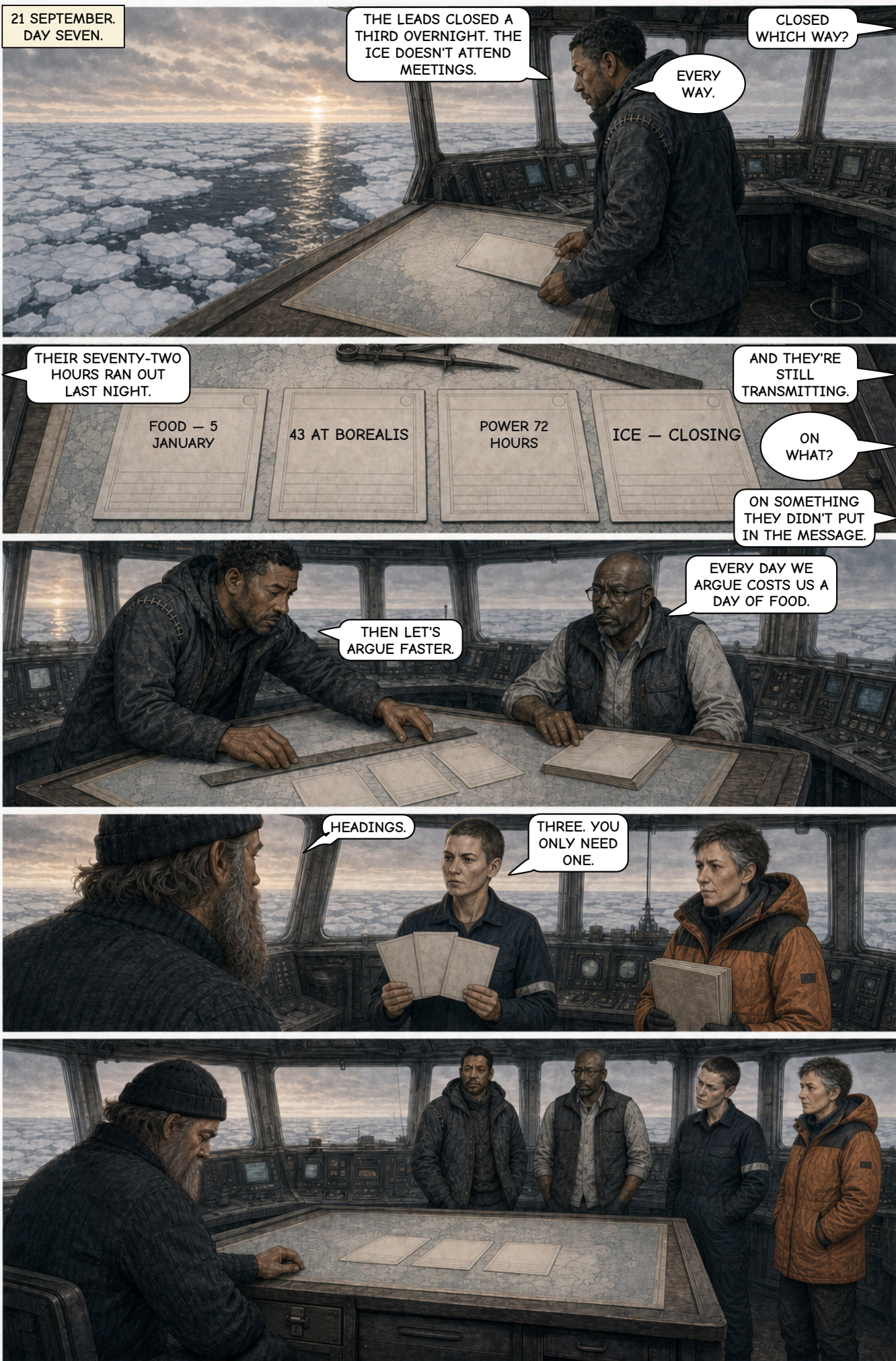
ON SOMETHING
THEY DIDN'T PUT
IN THE MESSAGE.

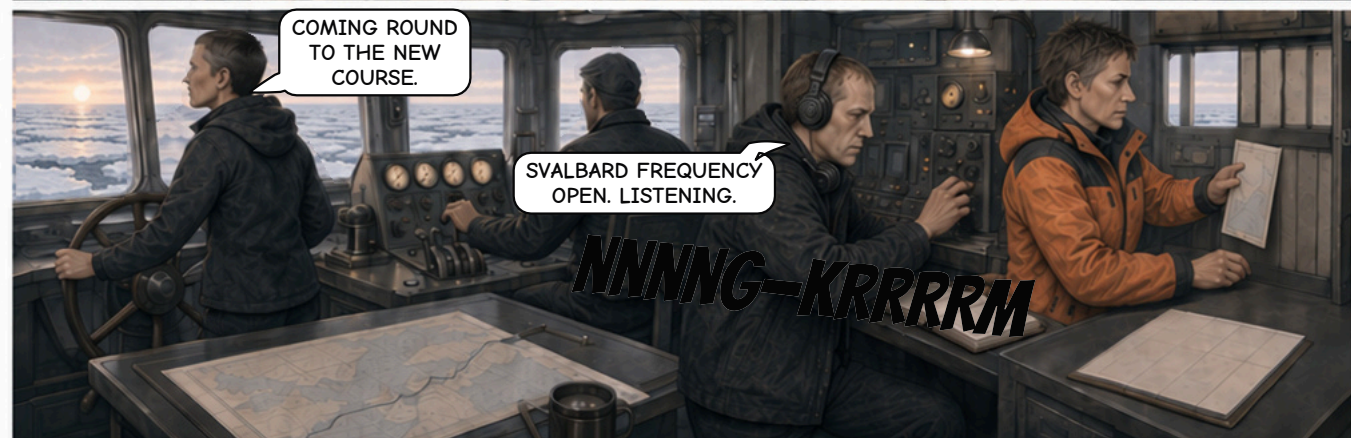
THEN LET'S
ARGUE FASTER.

EVERY DAY WE
ARGUE COSTS US A
DAY OF FOOD.

HEADINGS.

THREE. YOU
ONLY NEED
ONE.





THEY TURNED SOUTH
THE DAY BEFORE THE
EQUINOX.



LONGYEARBYEN — 800 NM

STEADY ON
COURSE.

<DID MOSCOW
ORDER THE
OPPOSITE?>

