

THE LAST WARM PLACE

CHAPTER SIX · TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE



LONGYEARBYEN, SVALBARD. THE SAME NIGHT.

SIXTY WINDOWS. SEVENTY. THEY KEEP COMING ON.



DOSE IS UP FROM THE SHIP'S BACKGROUND. FINE FOR A FEW HOURS. NOT FINE FOR A WINTER.

THEN EVERYONE WHO GOES ASHORE WEARS A BADGE. AND EVERYONE COMES BACK.

THEY'VE BEEN BREATHING IT FOR A MONTH, PROFESSOR.

THEN WE'LL LEARN WHAT A MONTH COSTS. PUT THAT ON THE CARD TOO.



FSSSSSS

NO HARBOR PILOT. NOTHING ON THE HARBOR CHANNEL. JUST THE GUIDE LIGHT.

TWO LAMPS ON THE QUAY. THEY'RE SHOWING US THE SAFE EDGE.

OR THE EDGE THEY WANT US ON.



DEAD SLOW. I KEEP OPEN WATER ASTERN UNTIL I KNOW WHO'S WAVING.

AGREED.



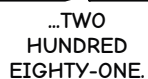
KRRRRM-NNNN

EIGHT HUNDRED MILES FOR FORTY-THREE PEOPLE.

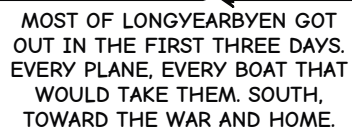
THE WINDOWS SAID OTHERWISE.



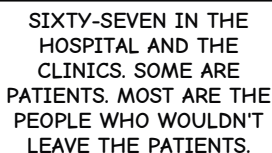




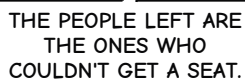
...TWO
HUNDRED
EIGHTY-ONE.



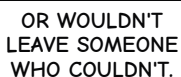
MOST OF LONGYEARBYEN GOT
OUT IN THE FIRST THREE DAYS.
EVERY PLANE, EVERY BOAT THAT
WOULD TAKE THEM. SOUTH,
TOWARD THE WAR AND HOME.



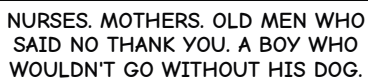
SIXTY-SEVEN IN THE
HOSPITAL AND THE
CLINICS. SOME ARE
PATIENTS. MOST ARE THE
PEOPLE WHO WOULDN'T
LEAVE THE PATIENTS.



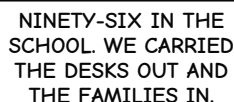
THE PEOPLE LEFT ARE
THE ONES WHO
COULDN'T GET A SEAT.



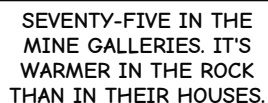
OR WOULDN'T
LEAVE SOMEONE
WHO COULDN'T.



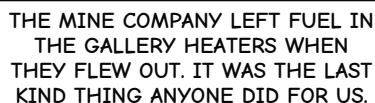
NURSES. MOTHERS. OLD MEN WHO
SAID NO THANK YOU. A BOY WHO
WOULDN'T GO WITHOUT HIS DOG.



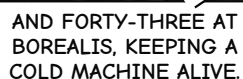
NINETY-SIX IN THE
SCHOOL. WE CARRIED
THE DESKS OUT AND
THE FAMILIES IN.



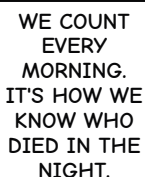
SEVENTY-FIVE IN THE
MINE GALLERIES. IT'S
WARMER IN THE ROCK
THAN IN THEIR HOUSES.



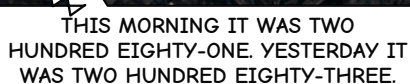
THE MINE COMPANY LEFT FUEL IN
THE GALLERY HEATERS WHEN
THEY FLEW OUT. IT WAS THE LAST
KIND THING ANYONE DID FOR US.



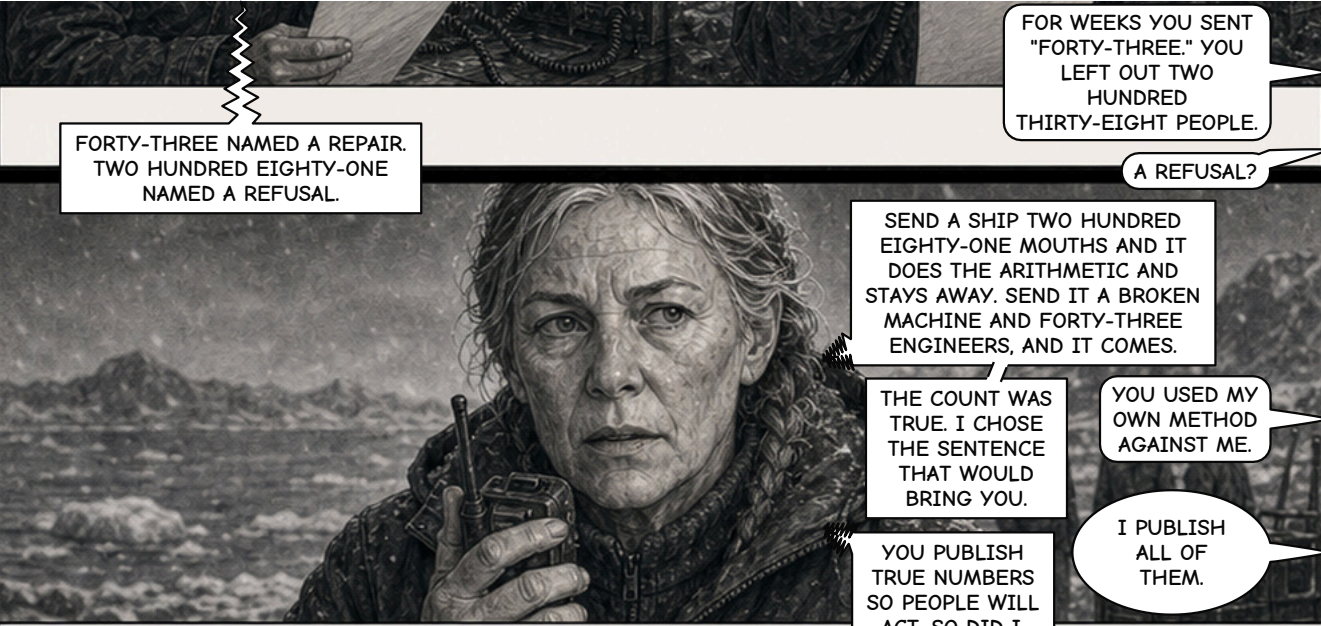
AND FORTY-THREE AT
BOREALIS, KEEPING A
COLD MACHINE ALIVE.



WE COUNT
EVERY
MORNING.
IT'S HOW WE
KNOW WHO
DIED IN THE
NIGHT.



THIS MORNING IT WAS TWO
HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE. YESTERDAY IT
WAS TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE.



FORTY-THREE NAMED A REPAIR.
TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE
NAMED A REFUSAL.

FOR WEEKS YOU SENT
"FORTY-THREE." YOU
LEFT OUT TWO
HUNDRED
THIRTY-EIGHT PEOPLE.

A REFUSAL?

SEND A SHIP TWO HUNDRED
EIGHTY-ONE MOUTHS AND IT
DOES THE ARITHMETIC AND
STAYS AWAY. SEND IT A BROKEN
MACHINE AND FORTY-THREE
ENGINEERS, AND IT COMES.

THE COUNT WAS
TRUE. I CHOSE
THE SENTENCE
THAT WOULD
BRING YOU.

YOU USED MY
OWN METHOD
AGAINST ME.

YOU PUBLISH
TRUE NUMBERS
SO PEOPLE WILL
ACT. SO DID I.

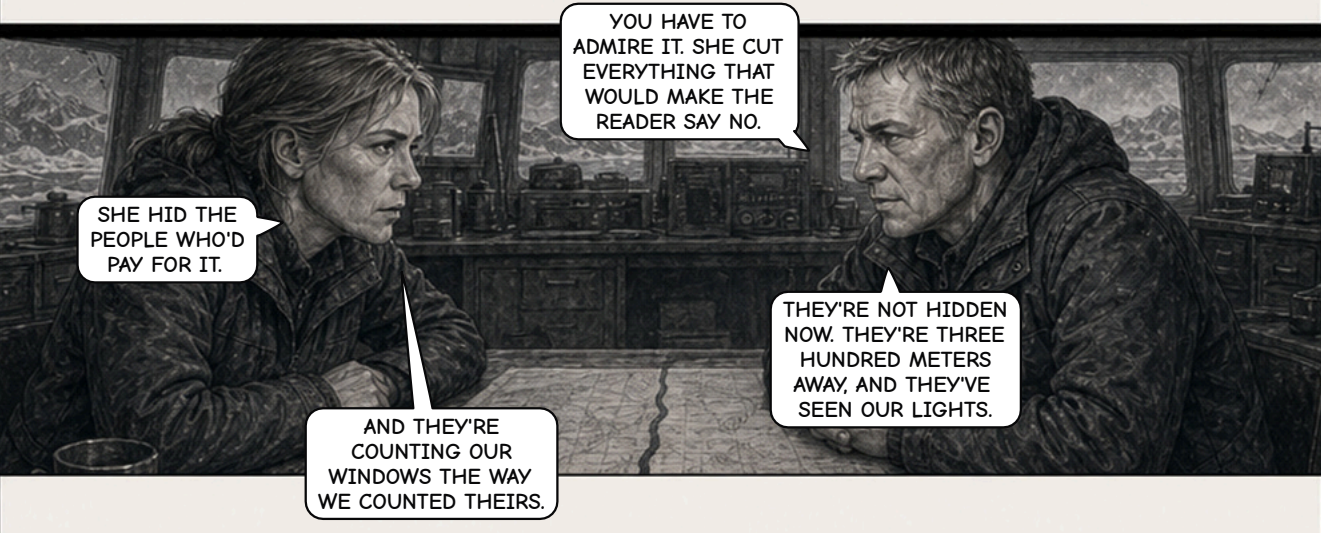
I PUBLISH
ALL OF
THEM.



SHE LIED TO GET US INTO
HER HARBOR. PEOPLE
WHO LIE TO GET YOU IN
DON'T HELP YOU OUT.

SHE TOLD THE
TRUTH VERY
CAREFULLY.
IT'S A
DIFFERENT
CRIME.

ASK THE FJORD
WHICH ONE IT WAS.
IT CLOSES IN THREE
WEEKS EITHER WAY.



YOU HAVE TO
ADMIRE IT. SHE CUT
EVERYTHING THAT
WOULD MAKE THE
READER SAY NO.

SHE HID THE
PEOPLE WHO'D
PAY FOR IT.

AND THEY'RE
COUNTING OUR
WINDOWS THE WAY
WE COUNTED THEIRS.

THEY'RE NOT HIDDEN
NOW. THEY'RE THREE
HUNDRED METERS
AWAY, AND THEY'VE
SEEN OUR LIGHTS.



A HUNDRED
SEVENTY-THREE ABOARD.
TWO HUNDRED
EIGHTY-ONE ASHORE.

FOUR HUNDRED
FIFTY-FOUR.
SOMEBODY HAD
TO SAY IT.

NO MERGER. NO RUNNING. AT FIRST LIGHT
WE WALK HER TOWN AND COUNT WHAT SHE
DIDN'T SEND. FOOD, MEDICINE, HEAT -- AND
WHO CAN'T MOVE.

13 OCTOBER. DAY
TWENTY-NINE.

ONE GANGWAY. EVERY
NAME LOGGED OFF
AND LOGGED BACK ON.

AND NOBODY PAST THE
YELLOW LINE. THAT QUAY
IS MOSTLY HOPE AND RUST.

WHO ARE
THEY FOR?

WE CAME FOR THE PEOPLE.
YOU STILL OWE THEM
THE TRUTH.

YOU CAME FARTHER
THAN THE MESSAGE
DESERVED.

NAMED PATIENTS FIRST.
I CHECK ALLERGIES AND
KIDNEYS BEFORE ANYONE
GETS A DOSE.

I'M A DISTRICT NURSE.
I'VE BEEN DOING A SURGEON'S
WORK FOR A MONTH.
CHECK ANYTHING YOU LIKE.

THE ANTIBIOTICS ARE FOR
ASTRID. SHE KEPT OUR
BOILER RUNNING.

THEIR SHORE
CABLE'S OLDER THAN
I AM. AND IT'S BEEN
LYING IN SALT FOR A
MONTH.

NOBODY CONNECTS
ANYTHING TO
ANYTHING TODAY.

NOT THROUGH MY
CABINET, ANYWAY. NOT
UNTIL I'VE PROVED IT
WON'T DO WHAT I SIGNED
OFF ON.

THEN PROVE
IT. THEY'RE
COLD.

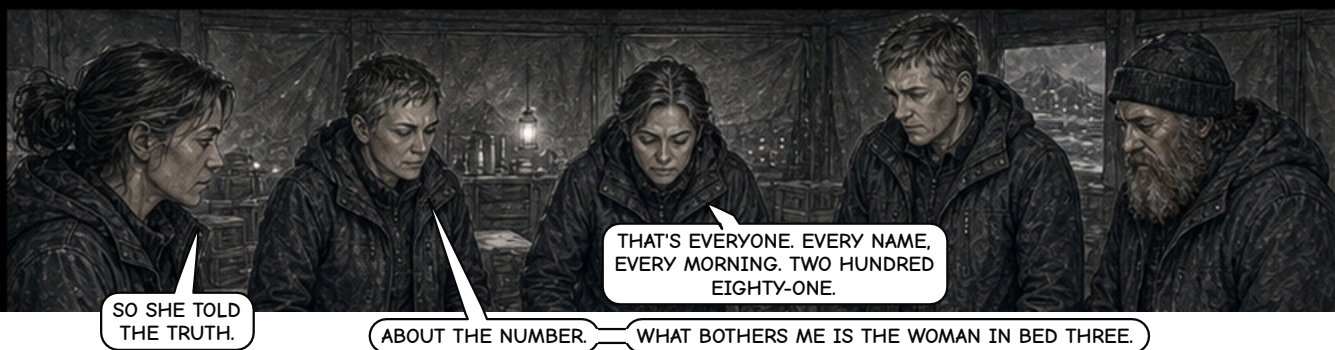
AND THEN?

DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT. YOU
SHOULDN'T. WALK THE TOWN AND
COUNT US YOURSELVES.

THEN DECIDE IF
I'M A LIAR OR A
COORDINATOR.

CAN'T YOU
BE BOTH?

MOST DAYS.





HER BELLY'S RIGID.
SHE'S BLEEDING
INSIDE -- SLOWLY, BUT
SHE'S BLEEDING.

YOU CAN SAY IT TO
ME. I'M RIGHT HERE.

BETTER.

I'M SORRY YOU'RE
BLEEDING INSIDE,
ASTRID.

NO SURGEON. NO
SCANNER. FOUR UNITS
OF BLOOD. I ASKED FOR
A MIRACLE AND YOU
BROUGHT ANTIBIOTICS.

ANTIBIOTICS FIGHT
INFECTION. THEY
DON'T STOP A
BLEED.

I KNOW. I ASKED FOR
THEM ANYWAY. IT
WAS THE ONLY
THING I COULD ASK
FOR.



DON'T SPEND
THE WHOLE
SHIP ON ME.

YOU DON'T
HAVE TO EARN
TREATMENT.

I KEPT THAT BOILER
LIT THREE WEEKS BY
MYSELF. I THINK I
EARNED A LITTLE.

THEN LET
ME PAY YOU
BACK.



THIRTY-ONE PEOPLE IN
THIS TOWN CAN'T
CLIMB A GANGWAY. NOT
TODAY, NOT EVER.

"KARI, WATER PLANT. HER
FATHER." HE CAN'T DO
STAIRS. SHE RUNS THEIR
WATER, AND SHE WON'T
LEAVE WITHOUT HIM.

IF WE SAIL IN TIME,
CAPTAIN, WE SAIL ALIVE.
THE FJORD CLOSES IN
THREE WEEKS.

READ ME
ONE.

SO IF WE SAIL,
THE WATER STAYS
WITH HIM.



THIRTY-ONE NAMES.
KARI'S FATHER WAS
ONLY THE FIRST.

WE CAN
REACH THEM.

WE STILL
CAN'T MOVE
THEM.

THAT EVENING.

WHY NOT JUST TELL US?
TWO HUNDRED
EIGHTY-ONE PEOPLE.
WE'D HAVE COME.

WOULD YOU? YOUR
CHIEF OFFICER
WOULDN'T HAVE ASK
HER.

SHE'D HAVE
ARGUED. SHE'D
HAVE LOST.

I COULDN'T AFFORD "SHE'D HAVE LOST,"
PROFESSOR. I HAD THREE DAYS OF
POWER AND TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE
PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T LEAVE.

SHE'S RIGHT. I'D
HAVE KEPT US IN
THE ICE.

I KNOW EXACTLY
WHO IT LEAVES,
MALIK. I'M HOLDING
THE LIST.

A ROUTE OUT IS REAL,
OKSANA. SO ARE THE
PEOPLE IT LEAVES
BEHIND.

MY PEOPLE COULD MAP THE VALLEY IN TWO DAYS:
EVERY HEATER, TANK AND USEFUL PAIR OF HANDS.

YOUR PEOPLE VOLUNTEERED,
GRANT. ASK THEM.

...WHO'S IN?

I'M ALREADY
ON THE
GENERATORS.

I STARTED THE
SKILLS LIST AT
LUNCH.

NO LISTS OF WHO
GOES. NO CABLE
ASHORE. NO PROMISES.
NOT TONIGHT.

YOU'D HAVE
DONE WHAT I
DID, CAPTAIN.

I DID. IN
SEPTEMBER. TO
MY OWN CREW.

PUT IT ON YOUR BOARD.
MY NAME UNDER IT.

THAT WAS ALWAYS
GOING TO BE MINE.

THE BOREALIS SIGNAL: THE COUNT
WAS TRUE. 238 PEOPLE LEFT OUT
ON PURPOSE. — S. HALDEN

AND EVERYTHING THAT
HAPPENS BECAUSE OF IT.

14 OCTOBER. DAY
THIRTY.

COLD BUYS TIME. IT
DOESN'T TELL US IF
THEY'RE STILL ALIVE.

BOREALIS. FORTY-THREE PEOPLE STAYED
DOWN THERE TO KEEP THE CULTURES
COLD AND THE FLOORS DRY.

THEN COME
AND ASK THEM.

LOOK, DON'T TOUCH.
NOTHING GETS POWER
UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT
IT'LL DO WITH IT.

I'M LOOKING
AT BOTH OF
US.

YOU'RE
LOOKING AT ME
WHEN YOU SAY
THAT.

WITHOUT POWER,
THE LAST GOOD
FERMENTER STAYS
COLD ALL WINTER.

ALL OF
IT.

SHOW US WHAT
STILL WORKS.
AND WHAT'S
BROKEN. ALL OF
IT, THIS TIME.

I'D LIKE TO FILM
INSIDE. SAY NO, AND
THE CAMERA STAYS
IN THE CASE.

AND IF IT
DOES?

FILM EVERYTHING.
IF IT NEVER WORKS,
I WANT PROOF WE
TRIED.

THEN I WANT
PROOF IT WAS
US.

WHY GAMBLE
ON BACTERIA?
THERE'S A
MOUNTAIN
FULL OF SEED
UP THAT ROAD,
BEHIND ONE
DOOR.

HENRIK.
AND THEN?

BACTERIA
FIRST, MR. --

THEN THE
MOUNTAIN.

THE BOREALIS FOOD ANNEX. A PILOT PLANT THAT TURNS ELECTRICITY AND AIR INTO PROTEIN.

MIND THE CABLES. THEY'RE THE ONLY WARM THING FOR A KILOMETER.

THERE'S NO LIGHT IN ANY OF THE WINDOWS.

FORTY-THREE OF US. WE SLEEP IN SHIFTS, SO SOMEONE'S ALWAYS AWAKE WITH THE CULTURES.

FOR A MONTH?

THIRTY DAYS. NOT THAT ANYONE'S COUNTING.

BARRIER PRESSURE'S UNSTABLE.

IT'S STABLE AS LONG AS THE LITTLE COMPRESSOR IS. PLEASE DON'T BREATHE ON THE LITTLE COMPRESSOR.

AINO WOULD LOVE THIS PLACE. SHE'D MOVE IN.

THREE FERMENTER TRAINS.

BUILT TO RUN ON FIVE MEGAWATTS. RUNNING ON NOTHING.

FIVE MEGAWATTS. THAT'S THE CABLE IN OUR HOLD.

THAT'S WHY WE WERE BRINGING IT. EIGHT HUNDRED MILES AGO IT WAS A SCIENCE TRIAL.

NOTHING'S MADE FOOD HERE SINCE THE GRID WENT DOWN.



CRACKED STRAIGHT
THROUGH THE JACKET.
IT FROZE WITH WATER
STILL IN IT.

DEAD.

DEAD.



THIS ONE'S
WHOLE. COLD, BUT
WHOLE. IT MIGHT
RUN.

"MIGHT."

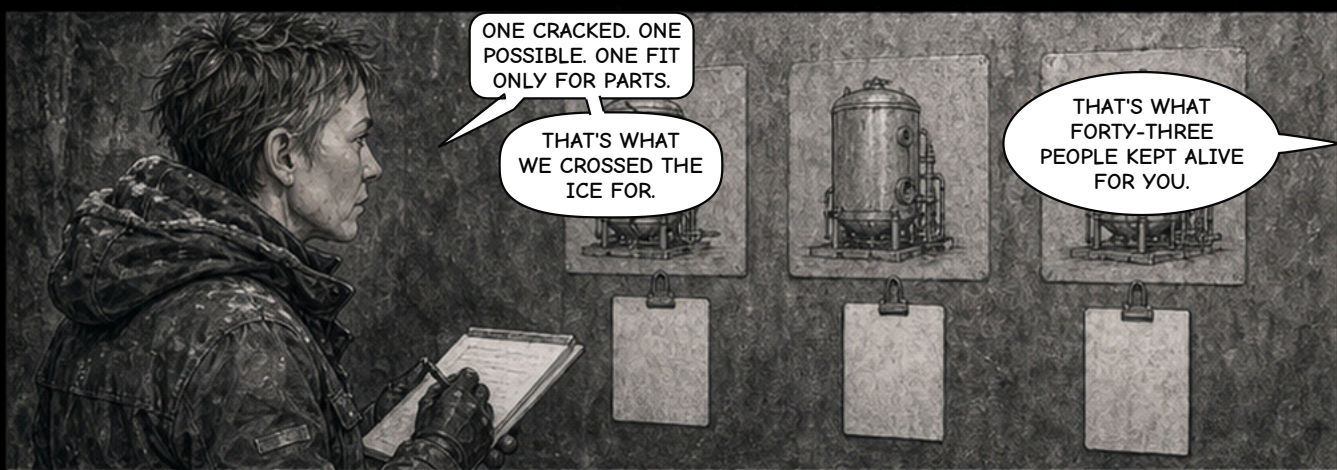
I'M AN ENGINEER,
ELIAS. FROM ME,
"MIGHT" IS A
COMPLIMENT.



WE'VE BEEN ROBBING
THREE TO KEEP TWO
ALIVE. NOW IT'S A
BOX OF PARTS WITH
A LID ON.

EVERY VALVE. EVERY
SENSOR CARD. YOU
GUTTED IT WITH
HAND TOOLS.

WE GAVE TWO ITS
ORGANS. SOMEBODY HAD
TO CHOOSE WHICH ONE
GOT TO LIVE.



ONE CRACKED. ONE
POSSIBLE. ONE FIT
ONLY FOR PARTS.

THAT'S WHAT
WE CROSSED THE
ICE FOR.

THAT'S WHAT
FORTY-THREE
PEOPLE KEPT ALIVE
FOR YOU.



IF TWO STARTS...
HOW LONG
BEFORE
SOMEBODY EATS?

WE'VE ASKED
OURSELVES THAT
EVERY NIGHT FOR A
MONTH, DOCTOR.

ASK HER. SHE'S THE
ONE WHO HAS TO
WAKE THEM UP.



BEFORE ANYONE EATS, THESE HAVE TO WAKE UP. THIS IS THE SEED STOCK.

HOW COLD DID THEY STAY?



COLD ENOUGH, MOSTLY. THE GENERATOR DIED TWICE IN THE NIGHT. I DON'T KNOW FOR HOW LONG. I WAS ASLEEP.

SOME OF THEM MOVE. SOME OF WHAT MOVES ISN'T OURS.

ENOUGH TO KEEP TRYING. NOT ENOUGH TO FEED ANYONE.



ENOUGH TO KEEP TRYING?



THEN WE GOT LUCKY ONCE. LUCK ISN'T A FOOD SUPPLY.

DON'T LET ANYONE IN TOWN HEAR "ALIVE" WITHOUT THE REST OF THAT SENTENCE.

ALIVE, CLEAN, AND DOING IT TWICE IN A ROW. THEN THEY GO NEAR A TANK.

AND IF THEY'RE CLEAN ONCE?

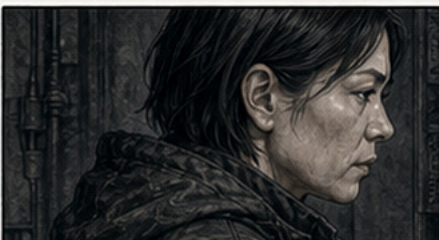


I KEPT TELLING THEM THESE WERE WORTH SAVING. EVERY NIGHT, ON THE RADIO. TO NOBODY.

AND IF THEY AREN'T?

THEY MAY BE. THIS IS WHERE WE FIND OUT.

THEN YOU BROUGHT A SHIP HERE FOR THE OTHER TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT. WHICH IS WHAT YOU WANTED.

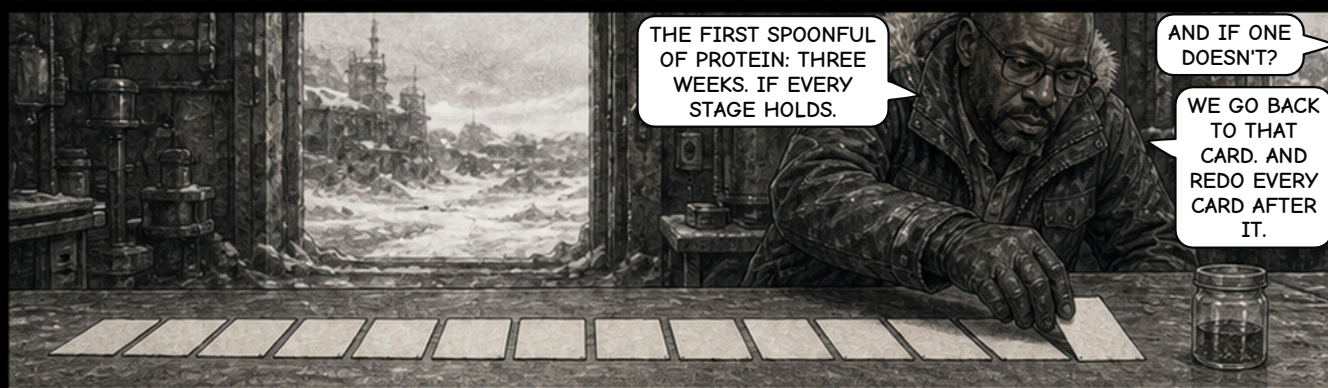


COLD STORAGE FIRST. CLEAN AIR SECOND. THE FERMENTER LAST, AND ONLY IF BOTH HOLD.

ELIAS. GIVE THEM A DATE. THEY'RE GOING TO ASK.



THEY'VE ASKED ME EVERY NIGHT FOR A MONTH. AFTER THE SECOND WEEK, I STOPPED ANSWERING.



CAPTAIN, WE'RE TAKING TWO MINE CARRIERS UP TO THE VAULT. ME, ELIAS, SAMIRA. AND HENRIK, BECAUSE HE KNOWS THE ROAD.



NINETY MINUTES, PROFESSOR. BADGES ON, ALL FOUR OF YOU. IF THE WEATHER TURNS, YOU TURN, AND I DON'T WANT TO HEAR WHY.

THE MINE KEPT THAT ROAD OPEN THIRTY YEARS, CAPTAIN. NOBODY'S KEPT IT OPEN SINCE SEPTEMBER. NINETY MINUTES, IF IT HOLDS.

MINE 7 ROAD. LAST COAL MINE ON THE ISLAND. WHEN THE COMPANY SHUT IT DOWN, I HELPED TAKE IT APART.

MOSTLY EXPLOSIVES.



HOW DO YOU DISMANTLE A MINE?

...IS THERE ANY LEFT?

SOME.

MY BOY. JONAS.



WHO'S THIS?

HOW OLD?

OLD ENOUGH TO ASK ME WHY WE STAYED.

PLATÅBERGET. THE MOUNTAIN ABOVE THE AIRPORT.

NOBODY COMES UP HERE ANYMORE. RUNA MADE SURE OF THAT.

RUNA?

RUNA SOLBERG? NORDGEN? SHE ONCE SENT BACK A SAMPLE OF MINE BECAUSE I'D WRITTEN THE LABEL IN PENCIL.

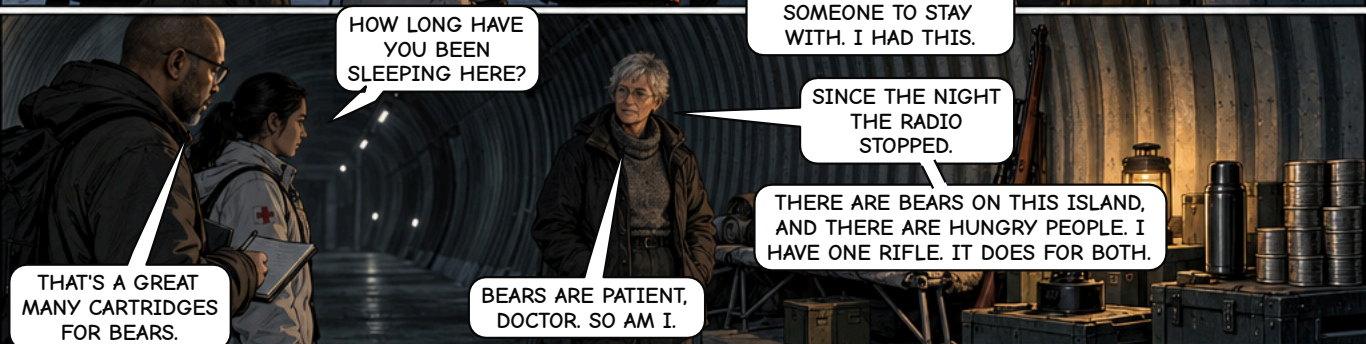
THAT'S HER. YOU'LL SEE.



THE SVALBARD GLOBAL SEED VAULT.

IT WAS BUILT FOR THE END OF THE WORLD.







MINUS EIGHTEEN. THE POWER DIED, BUT THE MOUNTAIN HOLDS THE COLD. IT GIVES UP A DEGREE A MONTH, MAYBE LESS.

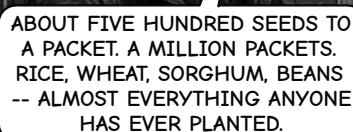
AND WHEN IT GETS DOWN TO THE PERMAFROST?

AND IF THE GENE BANK'S GONE?

MINUS FOUR. DECADES INSTEAD OF CENTURIES. MIND THE STEP.

EVERY BOX BELONGS TO THE GENE BANK THAT SENT IT. ONLY THEY CAN ASK FOR IT BACK. WE DON'T OPEN THEM. EVER.

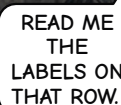
THEN NOBODY CAN.



ABOUT FIVE HUNDRED SEEDS TO A PACKET. A MILLION PACKETS. RICE, WHEAT, SORGHUM, BEANS -- ALMOST EVERYTHING ANYONE HAS EVER PLANTED.

EVERYONE DOES. IT ISN'T A GRANARY, DOCTOR. IT'S A LIBRARY.

I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BIGGER.

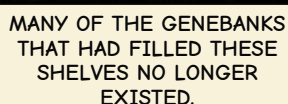


READ ME THE LABELS ON THAT ROW.

...FORT COLLINS IS AN HOUR FROM MY HOUSE.

MARA --

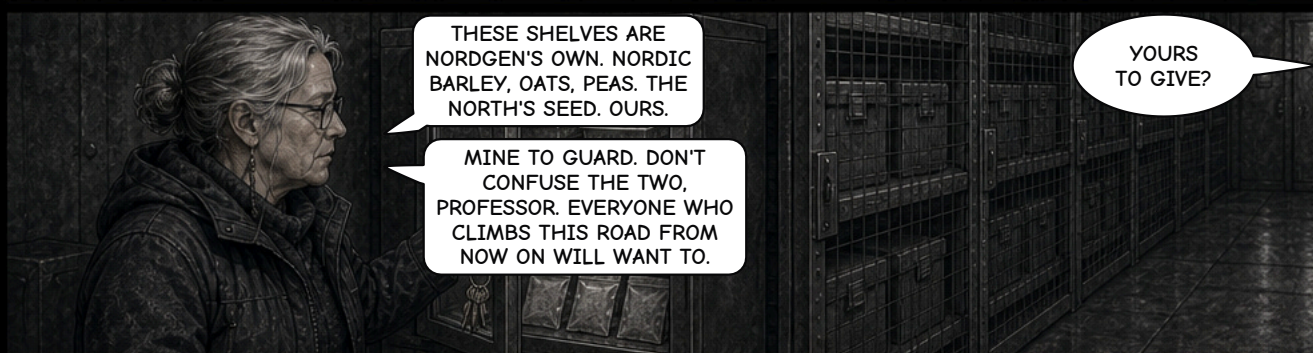
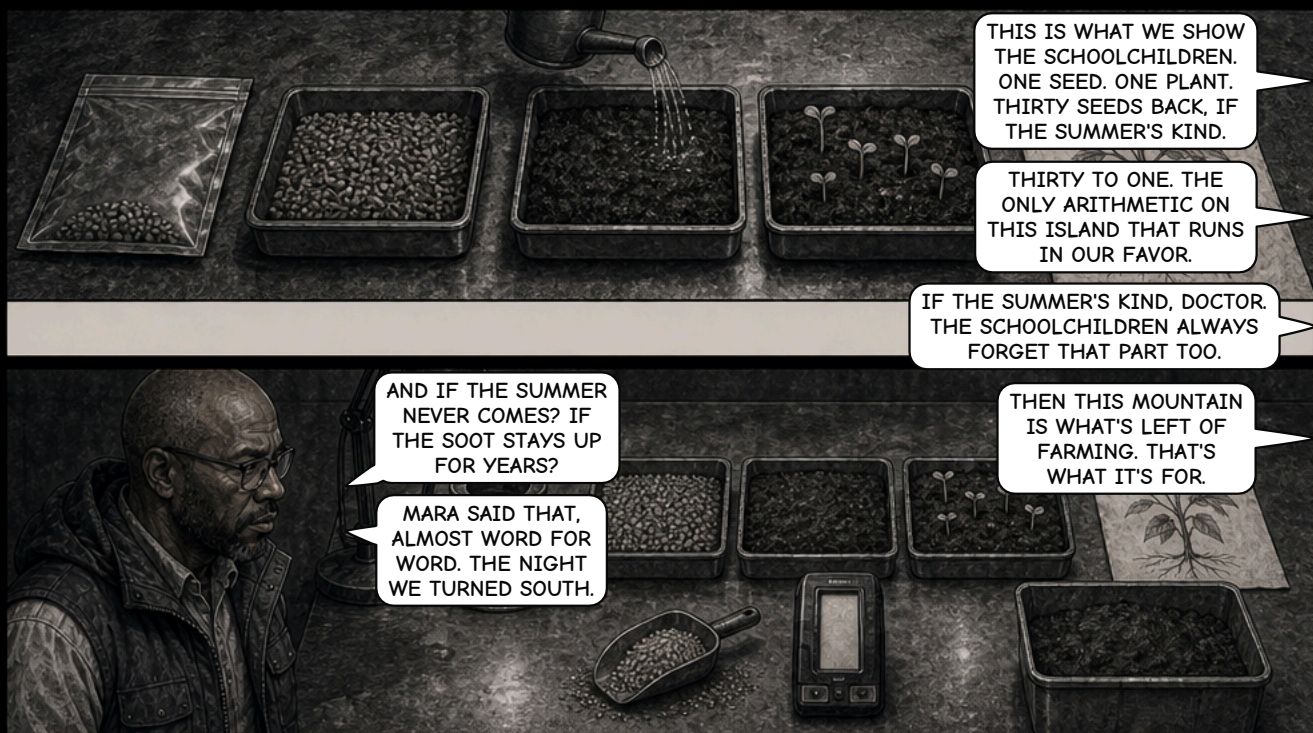
SYRIA. MANILA. SUWON. SAINT PETERSBURG. NEW DELHI. FORT COLLINS.



MANY OF THE GENE BANKS THAT HAD FILLED THESE SHELVES NO LONGER EXISTED.

SOME BOXES CAME WITH LETTERS. "KEEP IT SAFE FOR US." SINCE SEPTEMBER, MOST OF THE "US" HAVE STOPPED WRITING.

FOR SO MUCH OF THIS... IT'S THE ONLY COPY LEFT.



YOU'VE HAD YOUR TOUR.

THEY'VE SEEN WHAT THEY CAME
TO SEE, HENRIK.

SO HAVE I. I'VE BEEN LOOKING
AT THAT DOOR FROM THE VALLEY
FOR A MONTH.

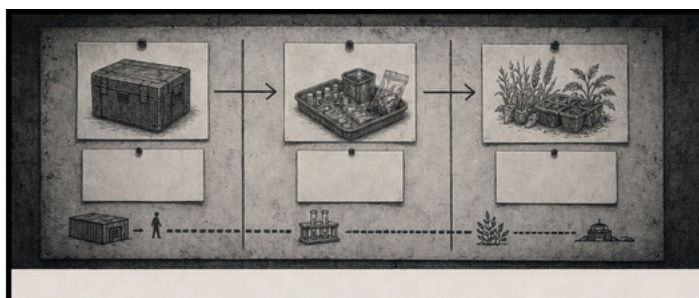
I'VE KNOWN YOU THIRTY YEARS,
RUNA. SO I'LL JUST ASK.

THAT'S IT? THE DOOMSDAY VAULT?
IT LOOKS LIKE A SKI LODGE.

SOMEBODY SHOULD HAVE A PLAN
FOR THAT DOOR. BEFORE A CROWD DOES.

SOMEBODY ALWAYS HAS A PLAN
FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S DOOR.

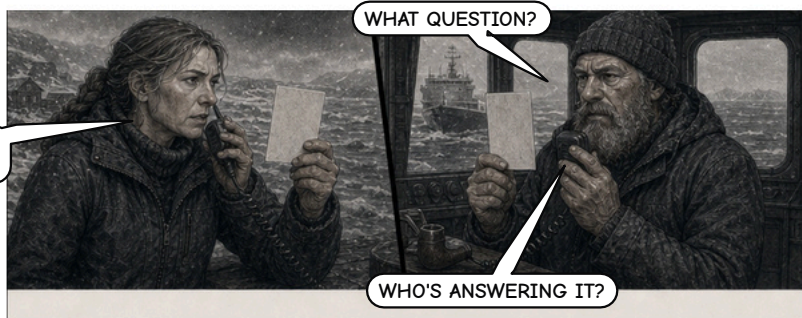
THE ONE THAT WHOLE TOWN WILL
BE ASKING BY MORNING.



DON'T.

HOW MUCH FOOD IS IN THERE?

IT'S A DOOR, GRANT. EVERYTHING
ELSE IS INSIDE THE MOUNTAIN.



WHAT QUESTION?

WHO'S ANSWERING IT?

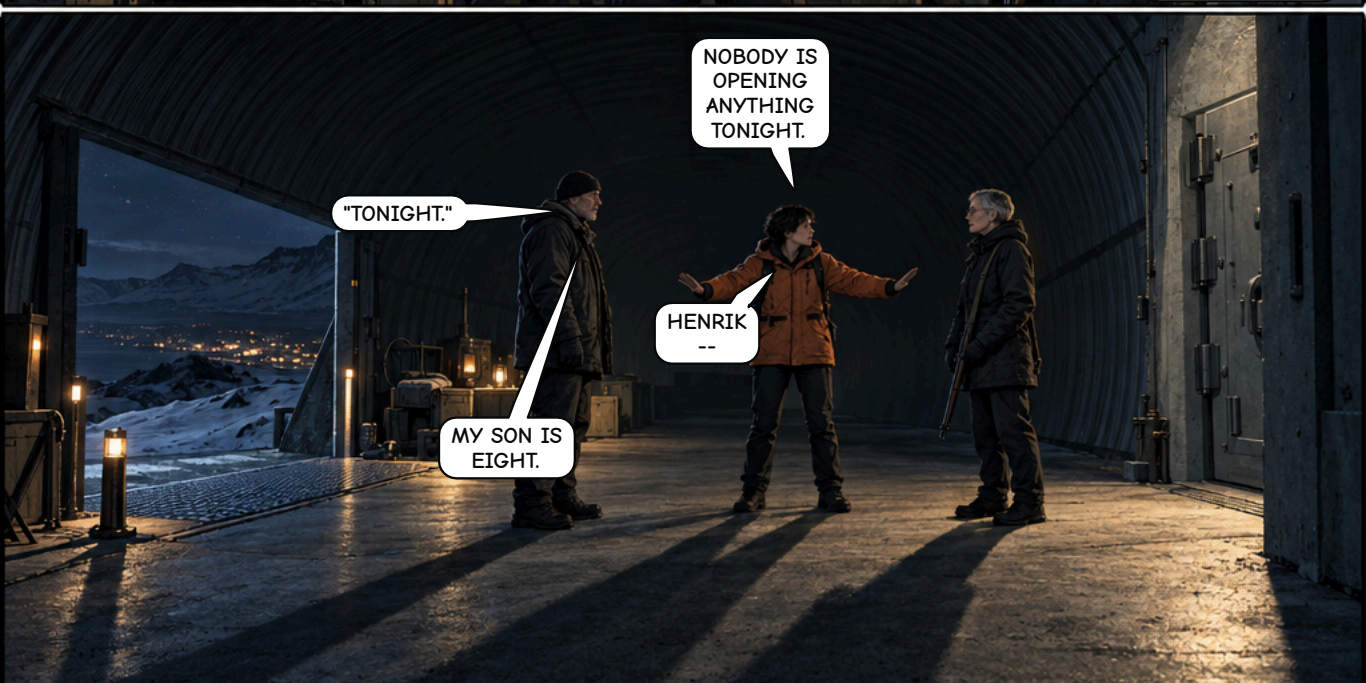
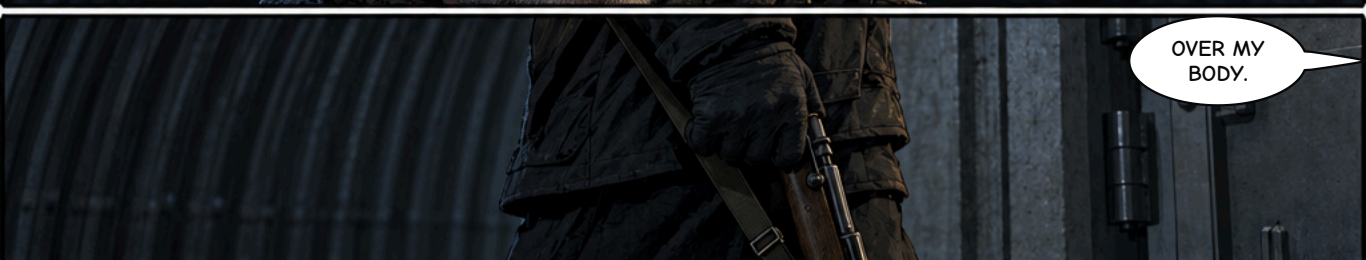
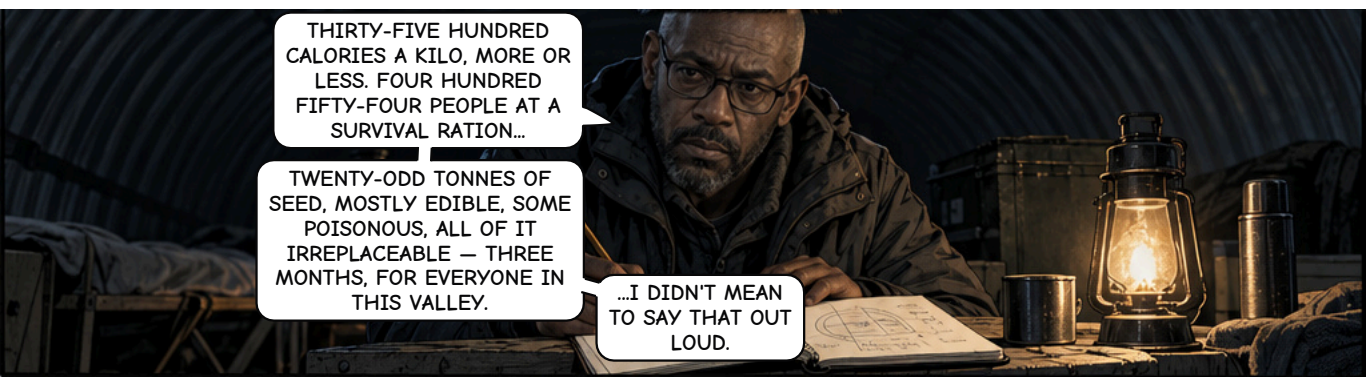
FIVE HUNDRED SEEDS PER
PACKET. A MILLION PACKETS.
ABOUT TWENTY GRAMS
EACH—MORE FOR BEANS,
LESS FOR GRASSES.

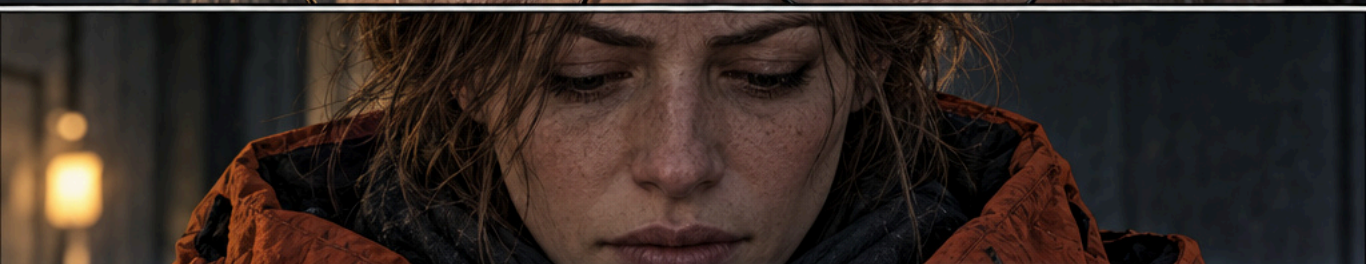
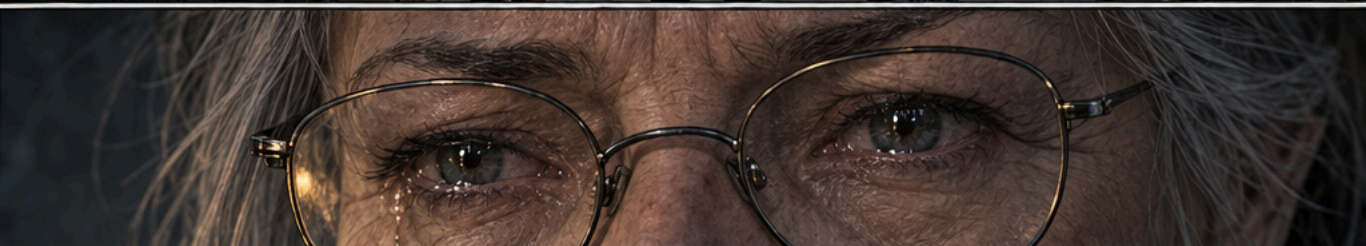
DOCTOR. STOP.

NO. LET HIM FINISH.
IN FOOD, DOCTOR. IN DAYS.

ELIAS --







NOBODY ANSWERED
HIM. NOT THAT
NIGHT.



FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY-FOUR
PEOPLE NOW OWNED THE
NEXT QUESTION.