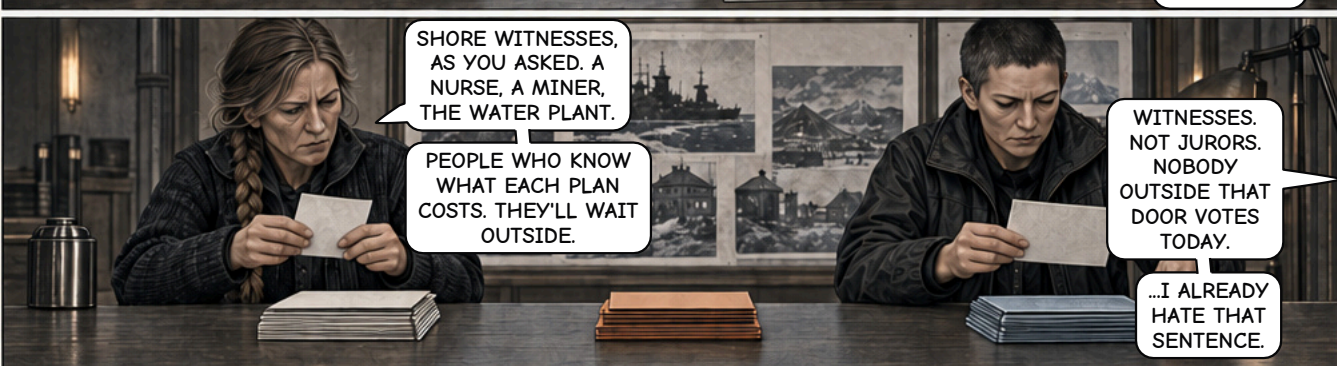


THE LAST WARM PLACE

CHAPTER SEVEN · THE LIFEBOAT MEETING





OPTION ONE. WE TAKE SIXTY MORE AND SAIL BEFORE THE FJORD SHUTS.

CHILDREN FIRST. THEN THE SICK WHO CAN SURVIVE THE LADDERS.

AND THE OTHER TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE?

OPTION TWO. EVERY EXTRA BERTH GOES TO SOMEONE WHO KEEPS A SYSTEM ALIVE.

DOCTORS. ELECTRICIANS. WATER. FOOD PROCESSING. I'M NOT PROUD OF IT.

I'M ALSO NOT WRONG.

THAT'S MY SIXTY WITH A RÉSUMÉ ATTACHED.

OPTION THREE. LEAVE THEM OUR FOOD. TAKE NO ONE. SAIL.

I'M PUTTING IT ON THE TABLE SO SOMEBODY HAS TO SAY NO OUT LOUD.

IT'S VERY QUIET FOR A NO.

OPTION FOUR. WE STAY. WE PUT THE SHIP'S POWER INTO THE TOWN.

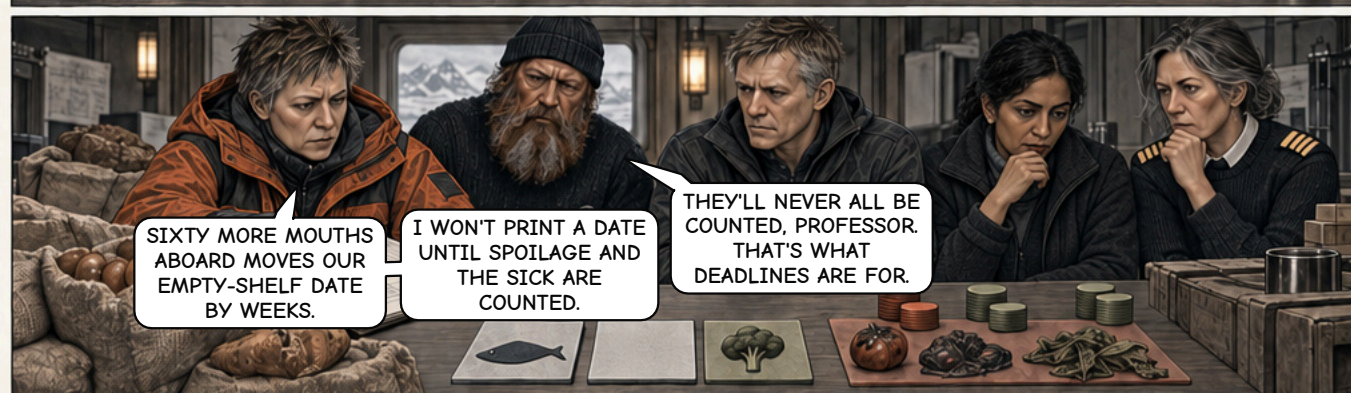
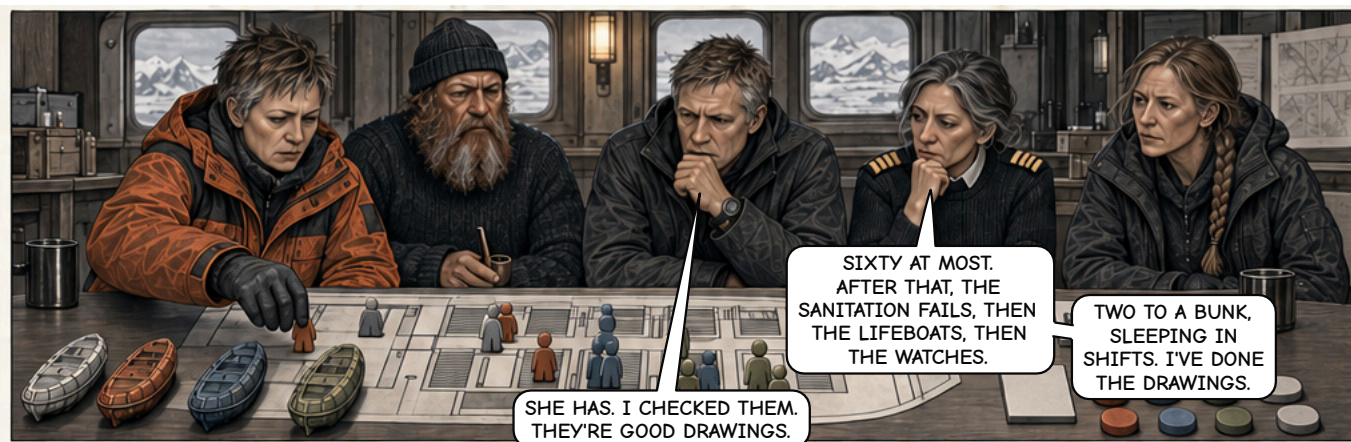
THE CABLE JOINS LOADS. IT DOESN'T JOIN GOVERNMENTS.

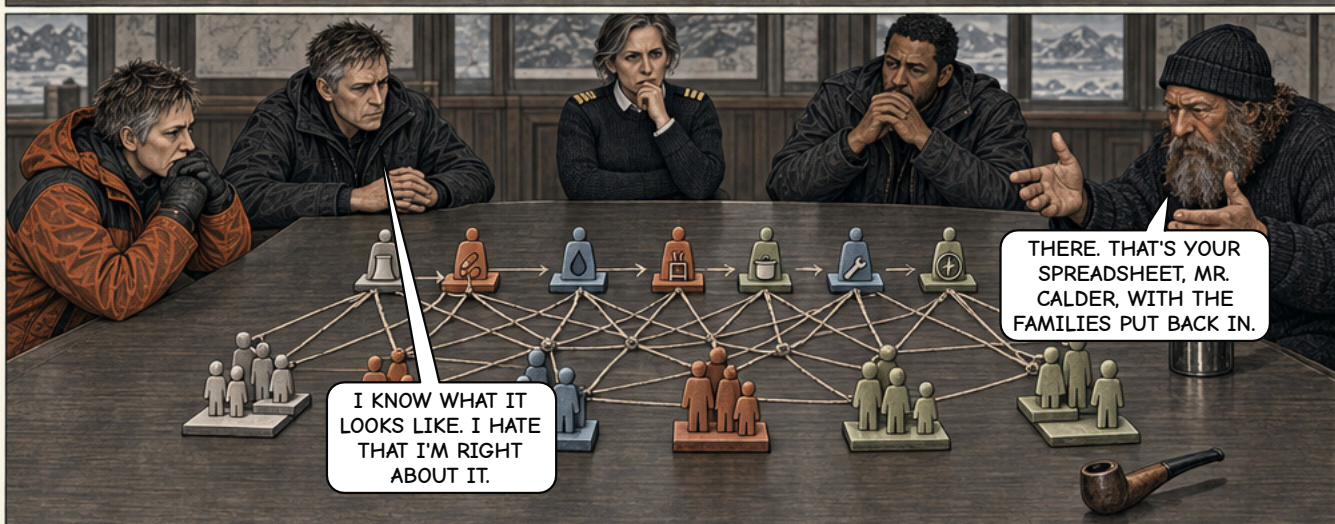
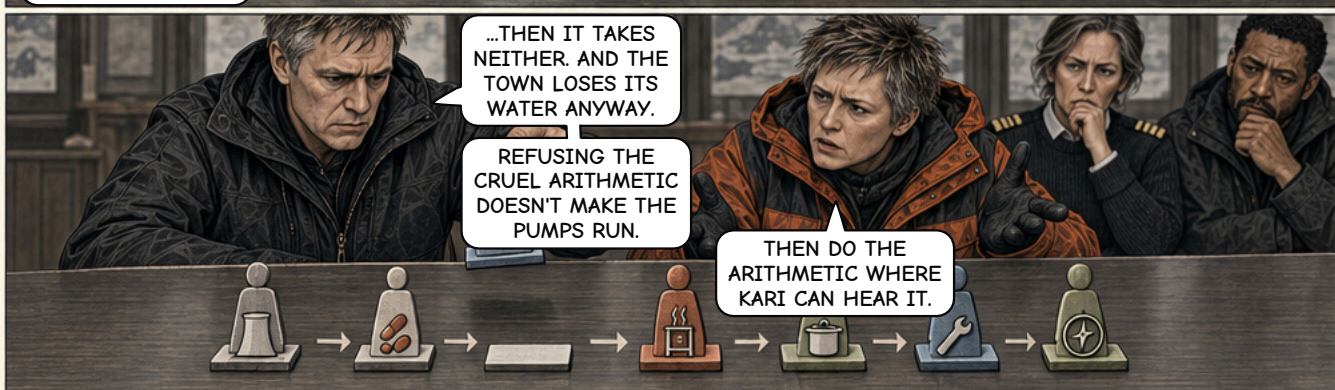
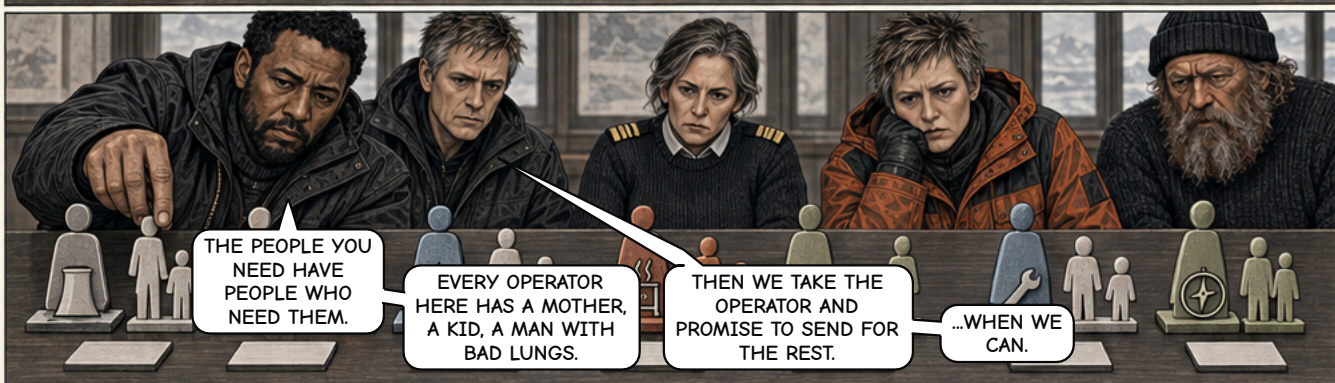
IT JOINS FAILURES TOO. THEIRS BECOME OURS. OURS BECOME THEIRS.

FOUR PLANS. GOOD. NOW THE PART NOBODY WROTE DOWN.

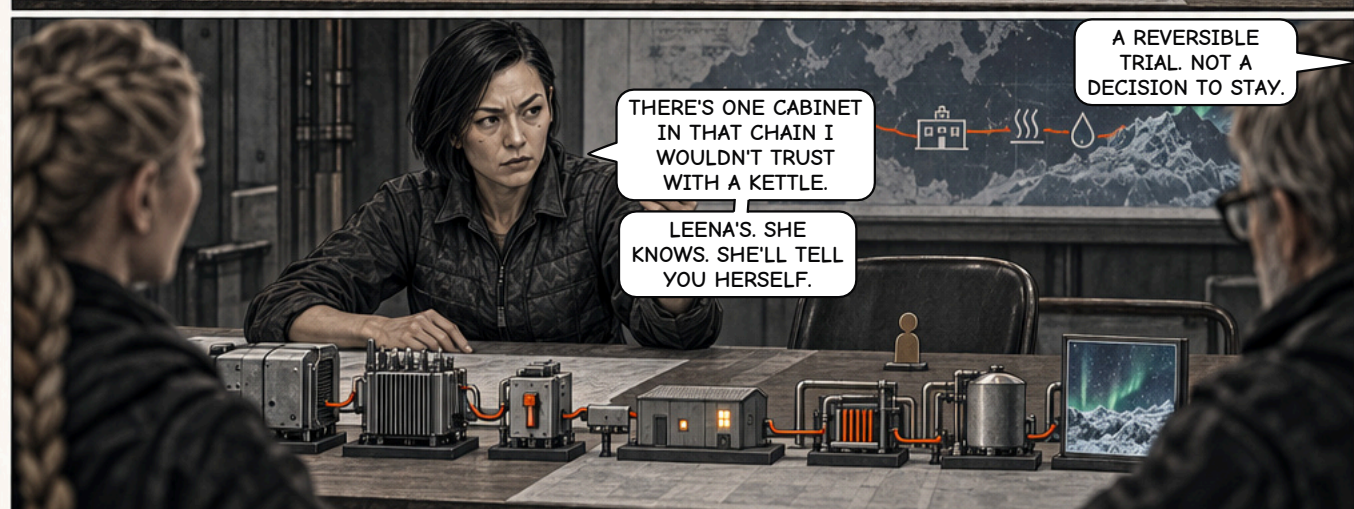
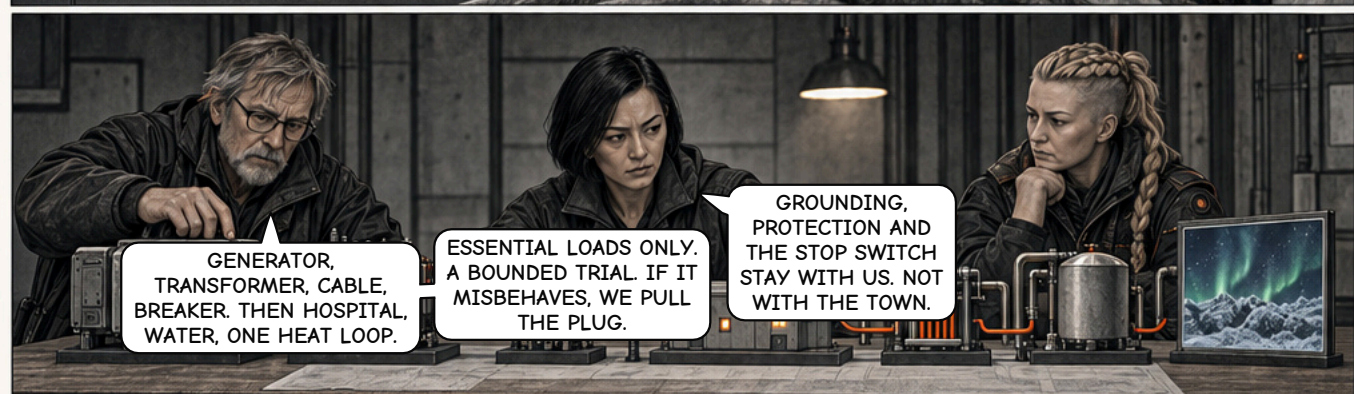
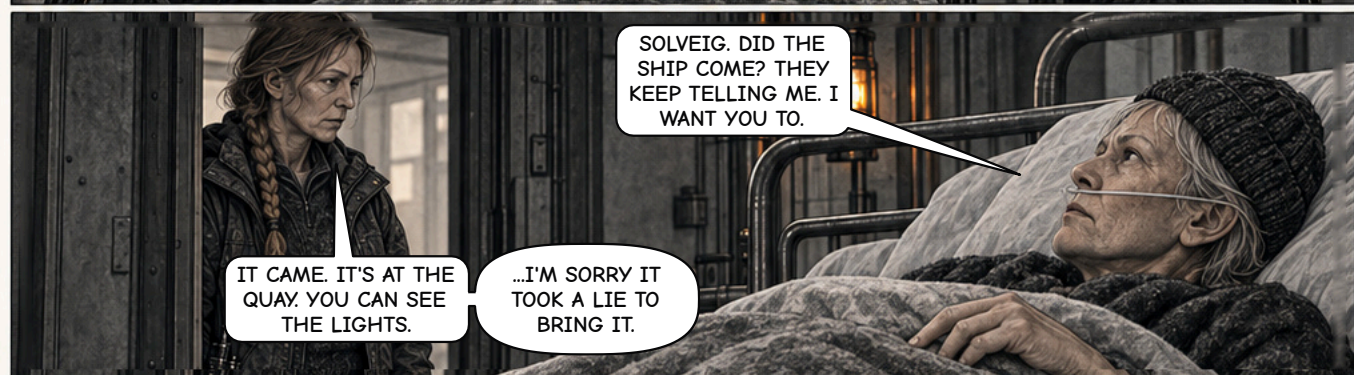
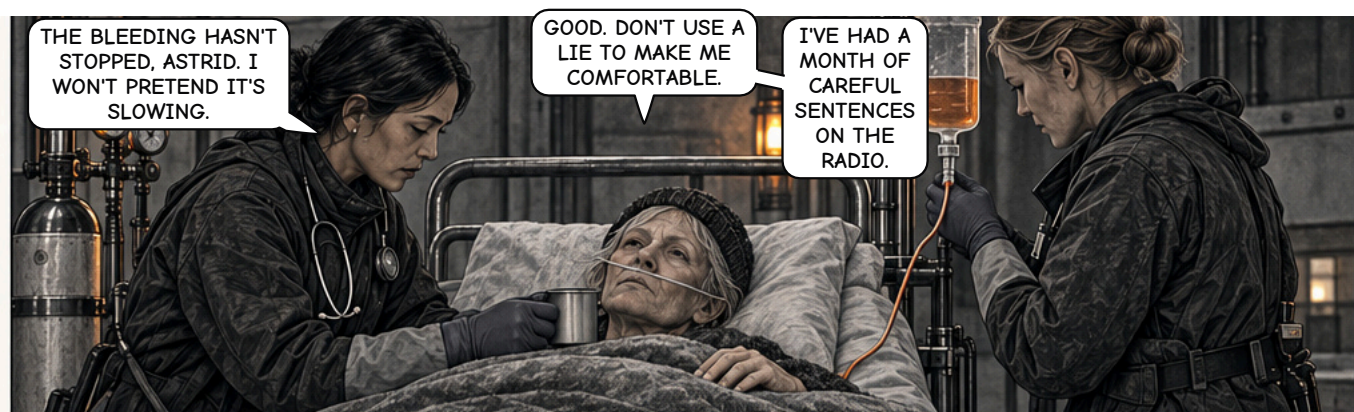
NAME THE PEOPLE EACH PLAN LEAVES BEHIND. NAMES, NOT CATEGORIES.

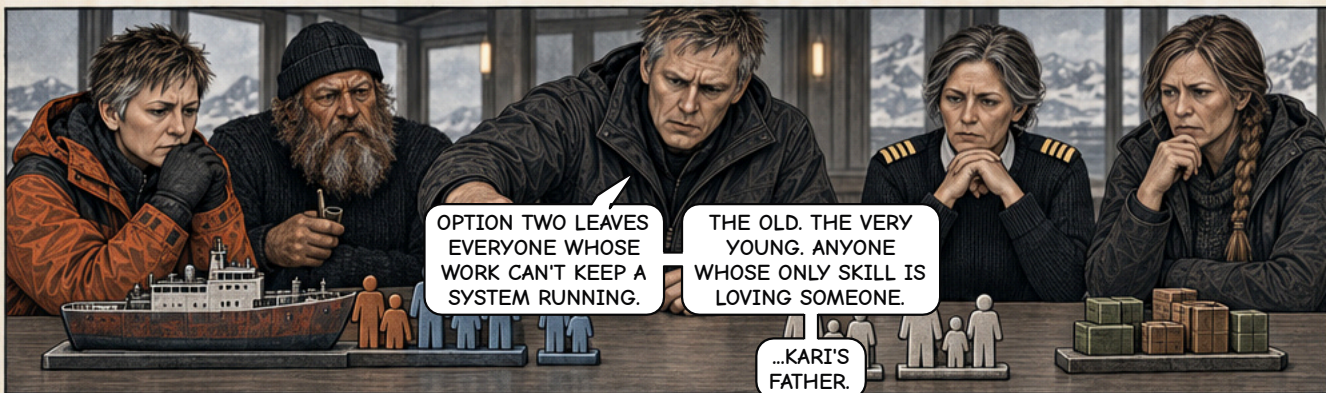
CATEGORIES DON'T FREEZE. PEOPLE DO.











09:36.

I'M GOING TO THE HOSPITAL. SOMEONE FROM THIS TABLE SHOULD BE THERE.

GO. BRING BACK WHATEVER THE DOCTOR WILL LET YOU TELL US.

PRESSURE'S GONE AT THE WRIST. I CAN'T FIND IT.

NEXT UNIT. SQUEEZE IT IN. KEEP THE AIRWAY READY.

ASTRID. ASTRID, STAY WITH ME. LOOK AT ME.

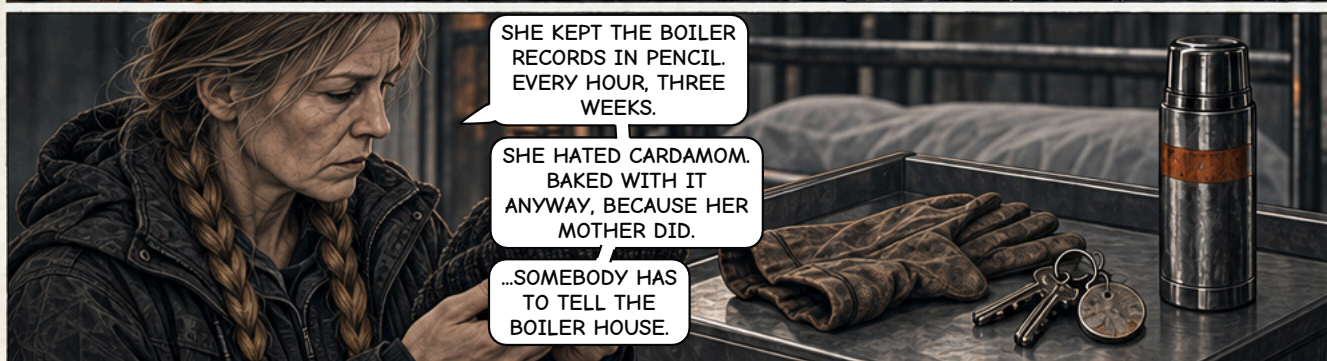
THE INJURY WAS A MONTH OLD. NOTHING ON THE SHIP COULD HAVE CLOSED IT.

SAMIRA SAYS COME NOW.

ALL OF US?

THE MEETING FOLLOWED THE PATIENT.

EVERYONE WHO WAS DECIDING FOR HER.



THEY'RE BUILDING A PASSENGER LIST BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR, PROFESSOR.

ASTRID'S BEEN DEAD TWENTY MINUTES. THE VALLEY DOESN'T KNOW THERE'S A LIST.

THERE IS NO LIST. NOBODY ADOPTED ANYTHING.

WHAT'S THAT CABLE, RACHEL?

EVERY WORD SINCE SEVEN THIS MORNING. OKSANA'S SIXTY. GRANT'S USEFUL PEOPLE.

KARI'S FATHER, DISCUSSED LIKE A VALVE.

YOU RECORDED A CLOSED MEETING.

NOBODY IN THERE AGREED TO THAT.

YOU TOLD SOLVEIG YOU PUBLISH ALL OF THEM. ALL THE NUMBERS.

THESE ARE NUMBERS, PROFESSOR. THEY JUST HAVE NAMES ATTACHED.

IT'S NOT THE SAME. PEOPLE IN THAT ROOM SAID THINGS TO THINK OUT LOUD.

YOU'D PUT A FIRST DRAFT ON EVERY SPEAKER IN THE VALLEY.

DOWN THE CORRIDOR, THE ASSEMBLY HALL. A PROJECTOR, TWO SPEAKERS, AND SILENCE.

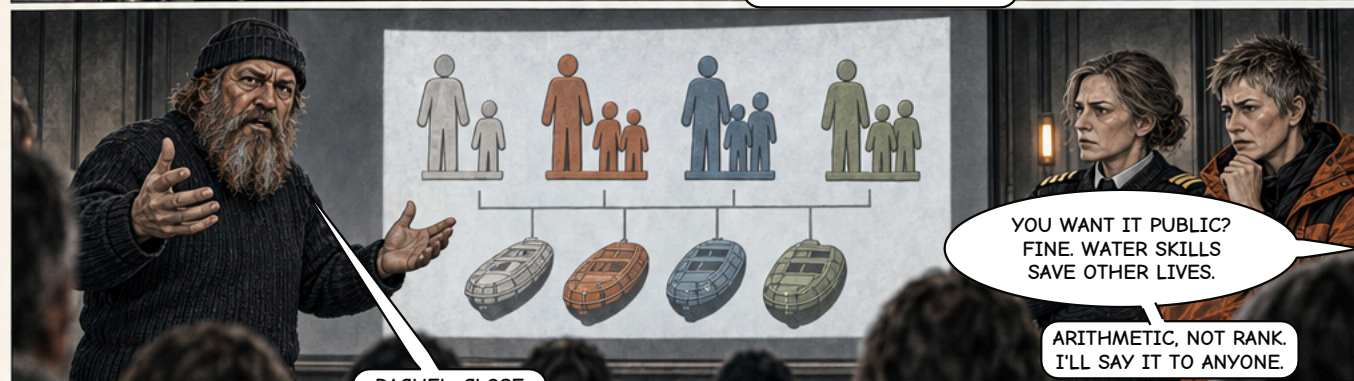
ARE THEY CHOOSING BERTHS IN THERE? IS THAT WHAT THIS IS?

NOBODY'S TOLD US ANYTHING SINCE THE SHIP CAME. NOBODY.

IT'S PATCHED INTO THE HALL AND THE TOWN'S EMERGENCY SPEAKERS. IT ISN'T LIVE.

I'M NOT GOING TO THROW IT. I DON'T GET TO.

YOUR CALL, PROFESSOR.



THE ASSEMBLY HALL. TWENTY MINUTES LATER.

THIS CARD HAS EVERY WORD FROM THAT ROOM SINCE SEVEN. UNEDITED.

NOBODY CUTS IT. NOT ME, NOT THEM. YOU CAN HEAR ALL OF IT.

PLAY THE PART WHERE THEY NAMED US.

I'M MAREK WRONA. I DIDN'T OPEN THIS ROOM. I WON'T CLOSE IT.

I KEPT MOSCOW'S ORDER FROM MY OWN CREW IN SEPTEMBER. THEY KNOW.

WHEN THIS IS DONE, PROFESSOR, YOU AND I WILL TALK.

IN A ROOM WITH A DOOR.

TALK ALL YOU LIKE. THE DECIDING HAPPENS OUT HERE NOW.

OPTION FOUR. THE SHIP'S CABLE, FROM THE QUAY INTO THE OLD POWER STATION.

HOSPITAL, WATER, HEAT. THE ONLY PLAN THAT LEAVES NOBODY OUTSIDE.

AND THE ONLY ONE NOBODY'S TESTED. TELL THEM THAT PART TOO.

AFTER THAT, THE ROOM COULD NEVER CLOSE AGAIN.

LEAVE IT OPEN. TOMORROW WE DO THIS HERE, IN FRONT OF EVERYONE.

16 OCTOBER. DAY THIRTY-TWO. THE WHOLE VALLEY, IN ONE HALL.

EVERYONE'S HERE WHO CAN WALK. THE HOSPITAL'S LISTENING ON THE SCREEN.

FOUR IN MY WARD CAN'T BE MOVED. WRITE THAT ON EVERY PLAN.

FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE LIVING. SAY THAT NUMBER WITH IT.

I'LL SAY MY PLAN AGAIN, SO NOBODY SAYS I HID IT.

SIXTY BERTHS, FILLED BY WHAT EACH PERSON KEEPS RUNNING. EFFICIENT. UGLY.

APPROXIMATE STORES. BOREALIS STILL COLD. I WON'T GIVE YOU A NEW DATE YET.

IF EVERY STAGE HOLDS, THREE WEEKS TO THE FIRST SPOONFUL. NOT A MEAL.

WITHOUT POWER, NEVER. THAT CONTAINER IS THE ONLY THING THAT CHANGES IT.

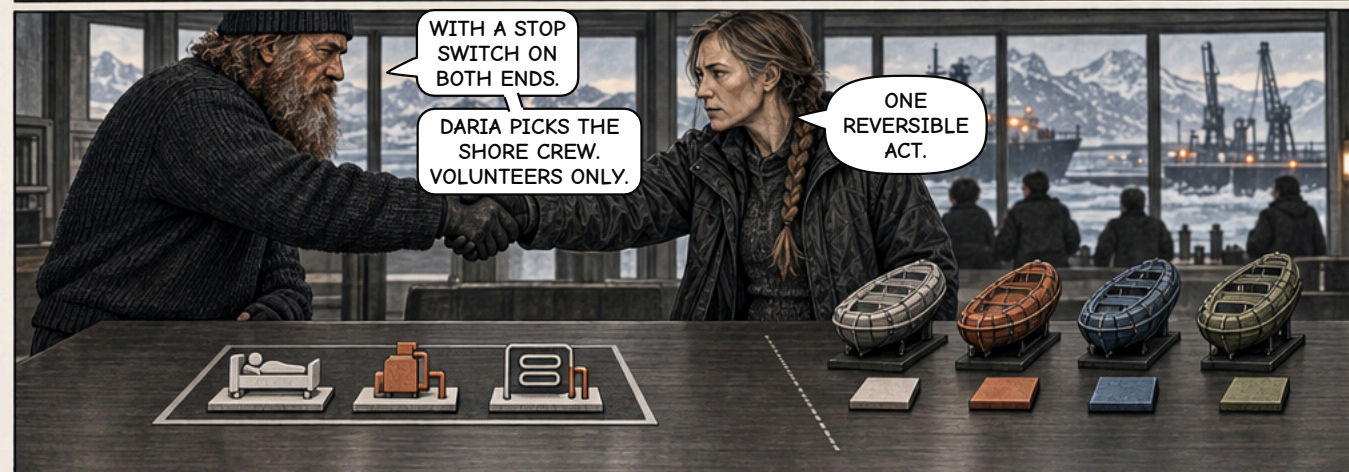
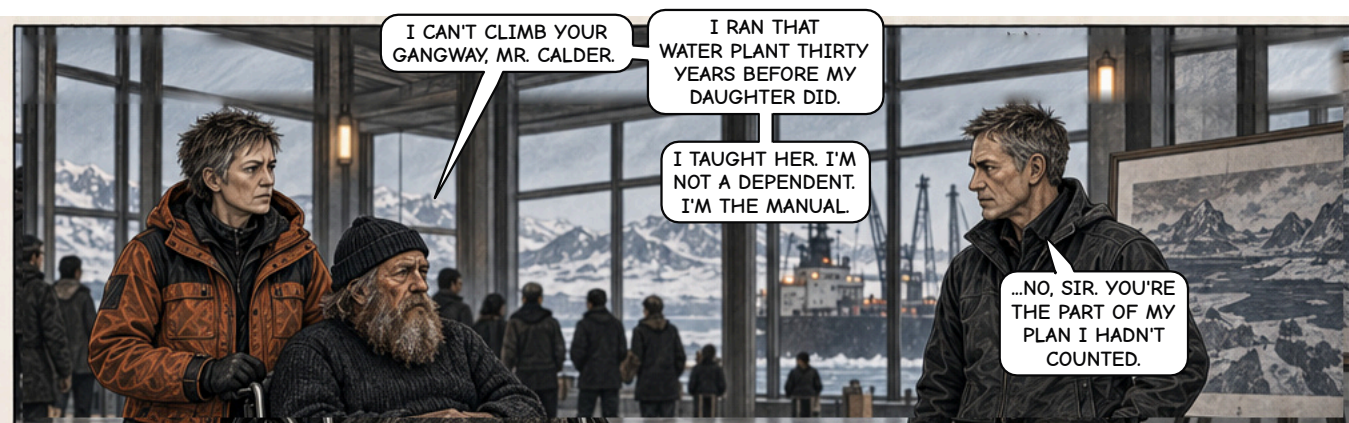
EVERY DAY WE STAY PLUGGED IN, THE WAY OUT GETS NARROWER.

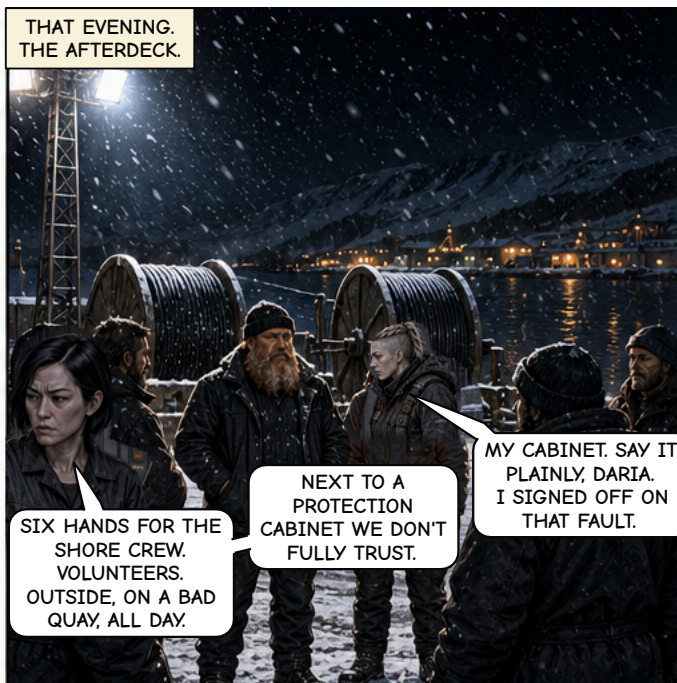
THREE WEEKS, I SAID. THAT WAS THREE DAYS AGO.

AND NOBODY'S PROVED THE PLUG WORKS. LEAST OF ALL ME.

THERE'S NO LIST. THERE WON'T BE ONE MADE IN A BACK ROOM.

SO TELL US WHAT THESE PLANS LEAVE OUT. OUT LOUD. ANYONE.





17 OCTOBER. DAY
THIRTY-THREE.

ALL THE WAY
TO THE OLD POWER
STATION. EVERY
METER OF IT ON
ICE.

EASY ON THE
BEND! IT'S ARMORED,
NOT MAGIC. WALK IT,
DON'T DRAG IT.

IF THE QUAY
CRACKS UNDER IT, WE
LAY IT AGAIN.

STOP. TIDE
CRACK'S OPENING
UNDER THE EAST
RUN. HEAR IT?

THAT'S THE QUAY
TELLING YOU IT'S TIRED.

SHIFT THE CABLE
BRIDGE TWO METERS
WEST. MOVE!

GROUNDED.
BOTH
BREAKERS
OPEN. TAGGED
ON MY SIDE.

LOCAL BUS DEAD
AND TAGGED. I
TESTED IT TWICE.

LEENA, YOU'RE
GLARING AT THAT
CABINET LIKE IT
OWES YOU MONEY.

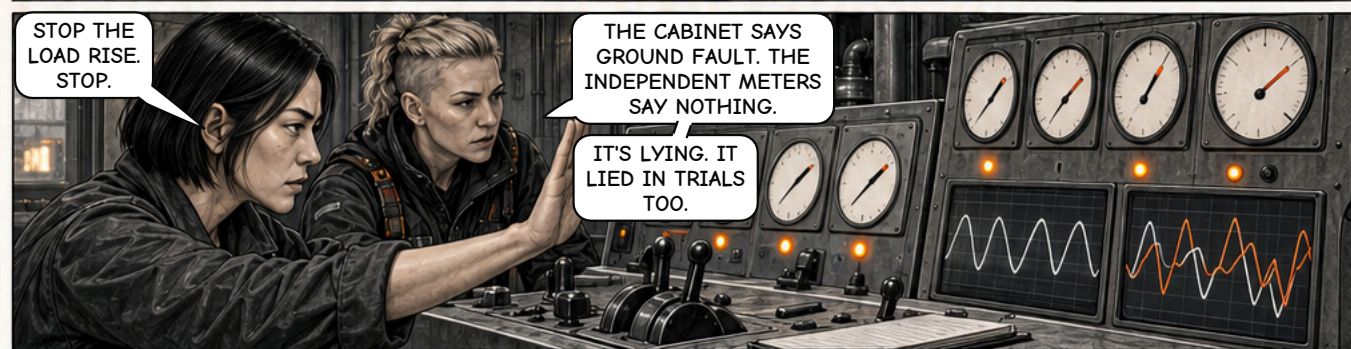
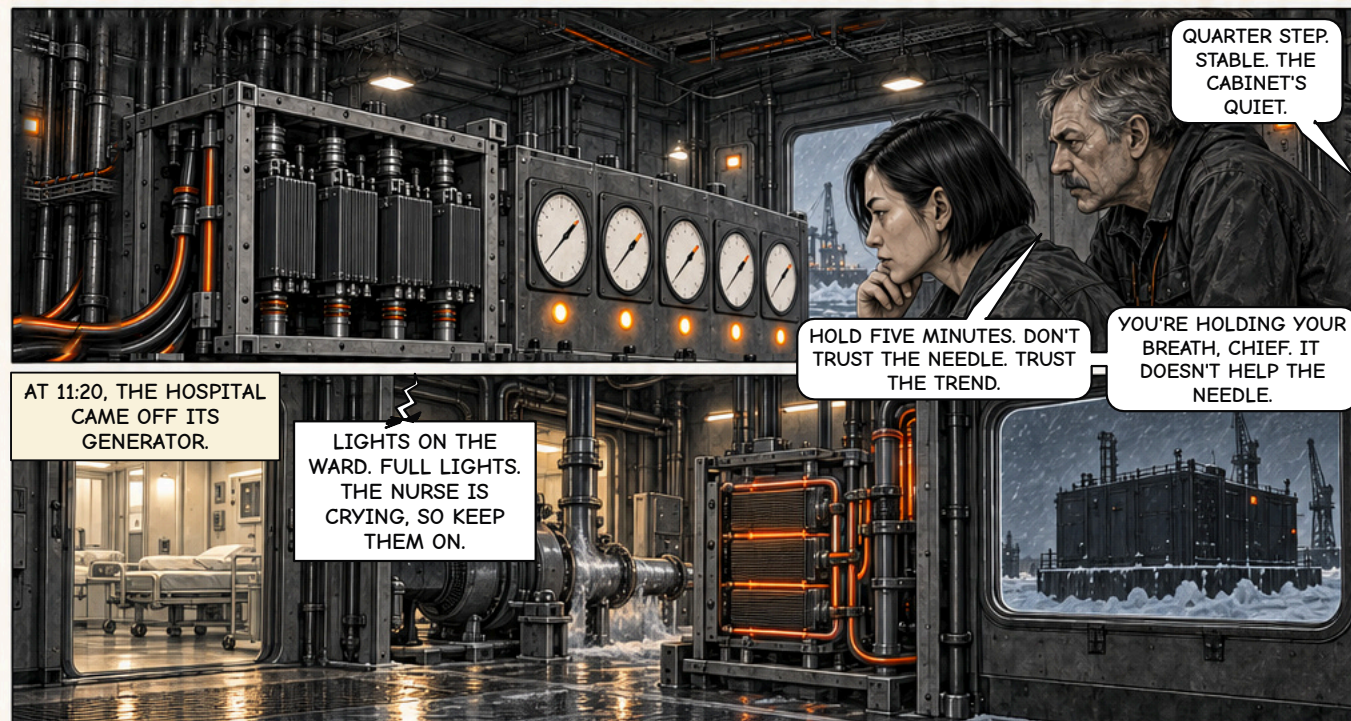
YOUR OLD
RECORD.
HARMONICS,
MISREAD AS A
GROUND FAULT.
TWICE IN
TRIALS.

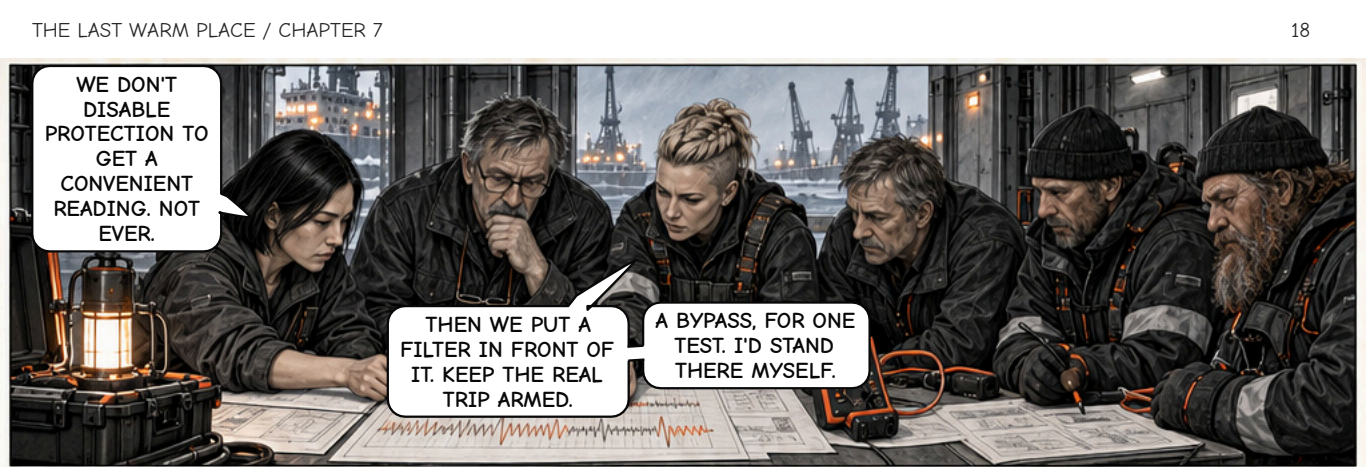
THREE TIMES. I
WROTE DOWN
TWO.

IF THE METERS DISAGREE
WITH IT, WE TRIP OUT. NO
ARGUMENTS.

CABLE SEATED.
BREAKERS STAY
OPEN UNTIL I SAY
OTHERWISE.

THE HOSPITAL FIRST.
THEN WE'LL SEE IF THIS
TOWN REMEMBERS
ELECTRICITY.





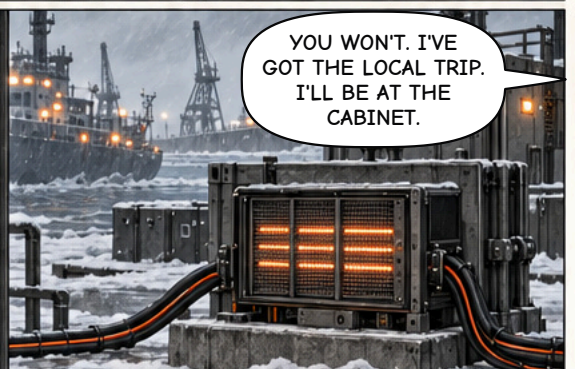
WE DON'T
DISABLE
PROTECTION TO
GET A
CONVENIENT
READING. NOT
EVER.

THEN WE PUT A
FILTER IN FRONT OF
IT. KEEP THE REAL
TRIP ARMED.

A BYPASS, FOR ONE
TEST. I'D STAND
THERE MYSELF.



ONE LOW-LOAD
COMPARISON. THE
INDEPENDENT
GROUND-FAULT TRIP
STAYS LIVE.



YOU WON'T. I'VE
GOT THE LOCAL TRIP.
I'LL BE AT THE
CABINET.



THE HOSPITAL LOST
ITS LIGHTS IN FRONT
OF EVERYONE. I FEEL
THE PRESSURE.

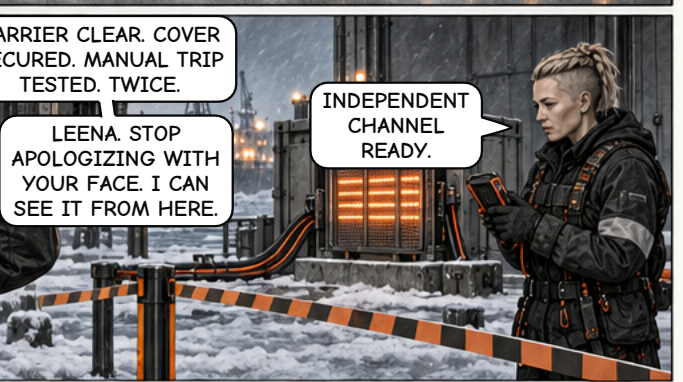
NO WARD'S LIGHTS
ARE WORTH A MAN.
ANY OF YOU CAN
STOP IT.

I ENERGIZE. SERGEI
HAS THE LOCAL STOP.
EITHER SIDE ENDS
THE TEST.



BARRIER CLEAR. COVER
SECURED. MANUAL TRIP
TESTED. TWICE.

LEENA. STOP
APOLOGIZING WITH
YOUR FACE. I CAN
SEE IT FROM HERE.

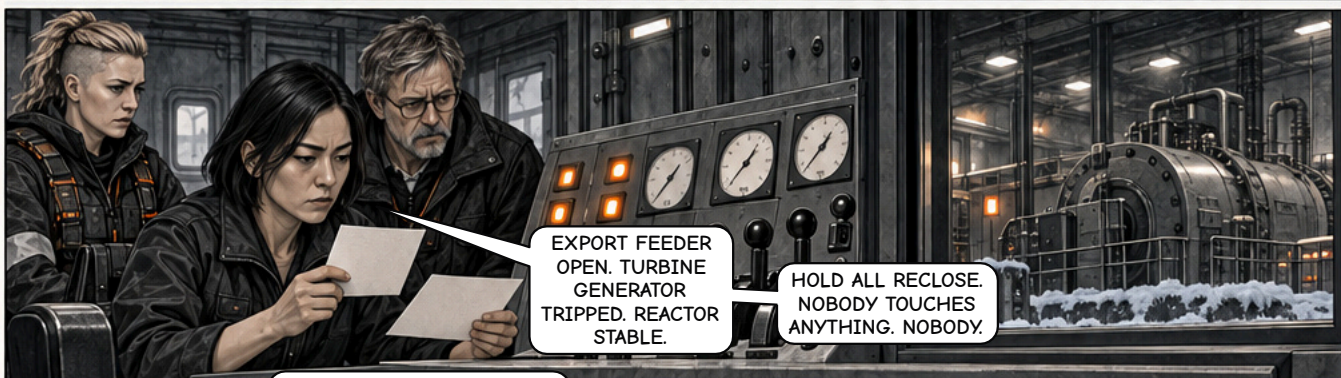


INDEPENDENT
CHANNEL
READY.



LOW LOAD ON.
HOLD AT THE
TEST STEP.

THEY AGREE.
BOTH INSTRUMENTS
AGREE. DON'T
ADVANCE.



18 OCTOBER. DAY
THIRTY-FOUR.

HE SURVIVED THE
FIRST INJURY.
THAT'S ALL I CAN
PROMISE YOU.

BURNS THIS DEEP
TAKE DAYS TO
DECIDE. SIT WITH
HIM IF YOU WANT.

...HE TOLD ME
TO STAND
NEXT TO HIM.

NO RECLOSE. NOT WITH
THAT CABINET. I WON'T
BURN ANOTHER ONE.

FIND ME A MATCHING
BREAKER AND FILTER,
OR THE TOWN STAYS
DARK.

YOUR REFUSAL
STANDS. NOBODY
OVERRIDES IT.
INCLUDING ME.

BY NOON THE COLD ROOMS
WERE WARMING. BOREALIS
NEVER GOT A WATT.

THE SATELLITE STATION'S
MAINTENANCE SHED.
SAME BREAKER, SAME
FILTER. SPARES, IF
THEY'RE THERE.

SEVERAL KILOMETERS
UP PLATÅBERGET.
THE VAULT ROAD,
THEN HIGHER.

THROUGH FRESH
FALLOUT SNOW. I'M
GOING. IT'S MY FAULT
IT'S NEEDED.

A BREAKER ON A
MOUNTAIN. FALLOUT
SNOW, AND A STORM
COMING.

TELL ME WHAT
COST WE ACCEPT
BEFORE ANYONE
CLIMBS.

LEENA, BECAUSE IT'S
HER CABINET. MALIK,
TO READ THE
WEATHER. AND ME.

I OPENED THE ROOM. I
DON'T GET TO STAY IN IT.

FOUR HUNDRED
FIFTY-THREE PEOPLE
WAITED IN THE DARK TO
LEARN THE PRICE.