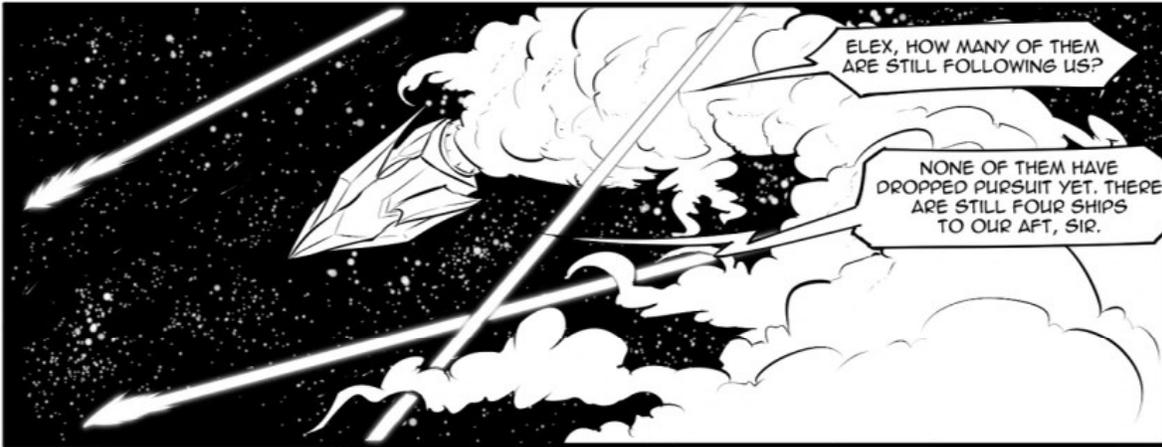


CHAPTER 1: SMALL TOWN BLUES

Terran space, GFII 12:24, 71,316-0,517



ELEX, HOW MANY OF THEM ARE STILL FOLLOWING US?

NONE OF THEM HAVE DROPPED PURSUIT YET. THERE ARE STILL FOUR SHIPS TO OUR AFT, SIR.



GRRR... WE'RE NEVER GOING TO LOSE THEM LIKE THIS.



HAVE YOU FOUND A LANDING SITE YET?

I AM AFRAID SO, SIR.

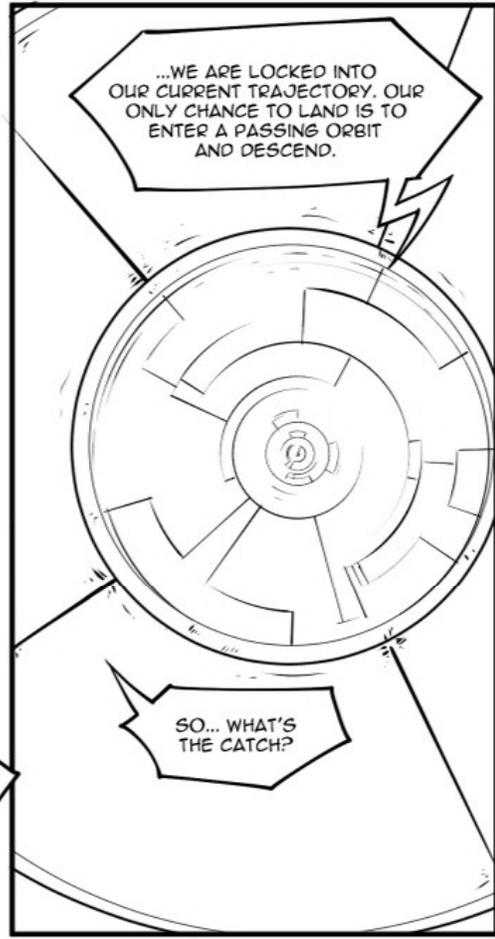
...AFRAID?



YES, SIR. THERE IS ONLY ONE PLANET IN RANGE OF OUR CURRENT FLIGHT CAPABILITIES.

HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE!? WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A STAR SYSTEM!

I AM AFRAID MY NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN DAMAGED TOO BADLY, SIR...



...WE ARE LOCKED INTO OUR CURRENT TRAJECTORY. OUR ONLY CHANCE TO LAND IS TO ENTER A PASSING ORBIT AND DESCEND.

SO... WHAT'S THE CATCH?



THE PLANET IN QUESTION...

...IS EARTH.



ABSOLUTELY NOT! MAINTAIN HEADING AND LAND SOMEWHERE ELSE.

THE NEXT CHANCE WE WILL HAVE TO LAND IS OVER FOUR HUNDRED LIGHTYEARS AWAY. WE WOULD NOT EVEN MAKE IT 10% OF THAT DISTANCE IN OUR CURRENT STATE.



I'M NOT GOING TO LAND ON ANY INHABITED PLANET WITH THESE MONSTERS ON OUR TAIL!



ESPECIALLY NOT ONE AS UNDERDEVELOPED AS EARTH.



SIR, THE DESTRUCTION OF A SINGLE PLANET WOULD MEAN NOTHING COMPARED TO MY MODULE BEING CAPTURED BY THE ENEMY.

AND BESIDES...



...IF OUR PURSUERS ARE WHO WE ASSUME THEM TO BE...



...THEN THEY WILL BE VISITING EARTH SOON ENOUGH ON THEIR OWN.



UGH... I HATE IT WHEN YOU'RE RIGHT.

MY APOLOGIES, SIR. I WILL TRY TO BE LESS CORRECT IN THE FUTURE.

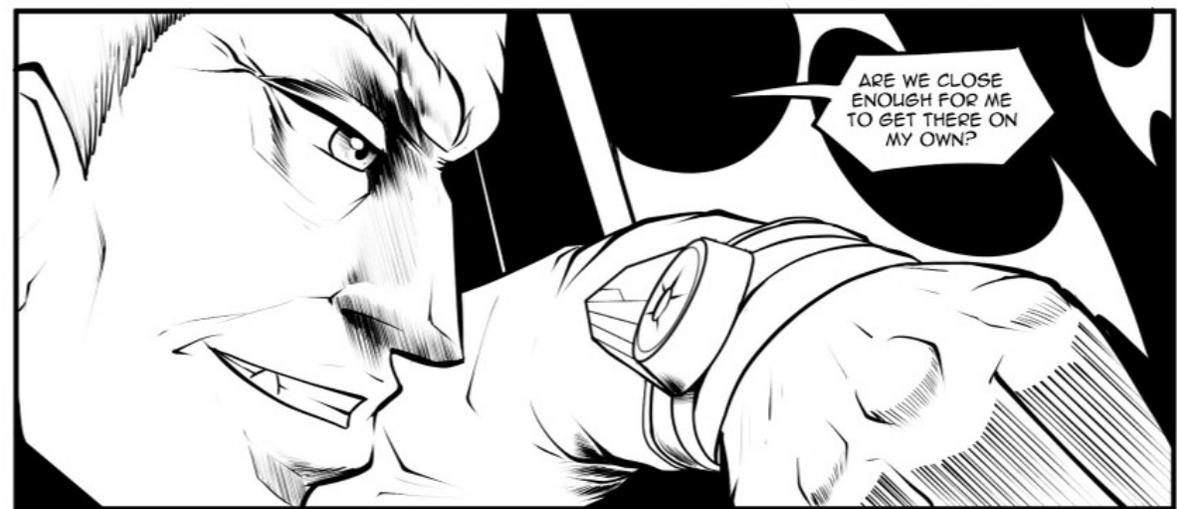


ELEX!
HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO LANDING DISTANCE?!



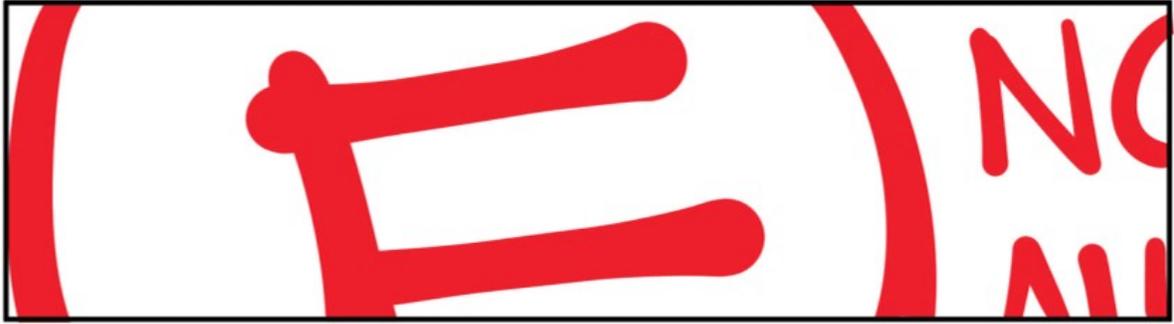
APPROXIMATELY SEVEN MILLION KILOMETERS. WE WILL HIT ATMOSPHERE IN FIVE MINUTES--

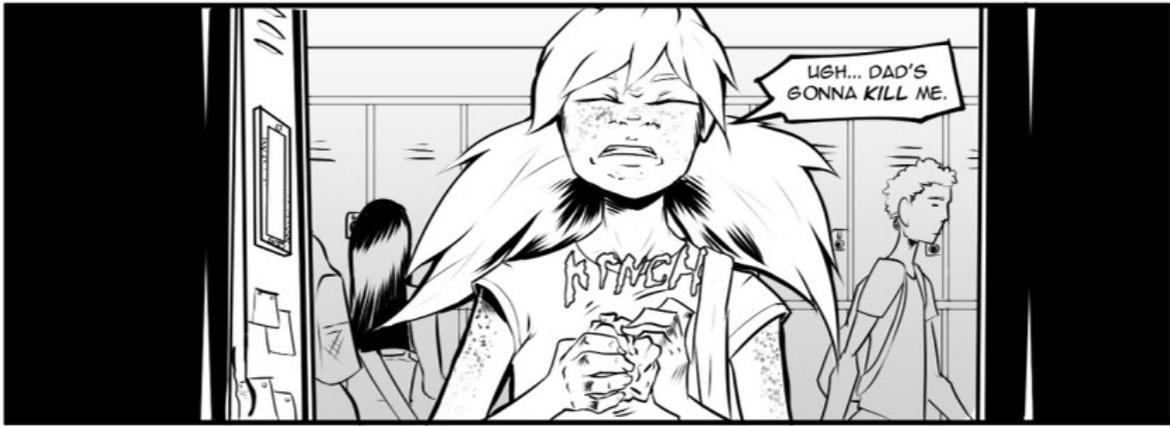
WE'RE NOT GONNA LAST THAT LONG!



ARE WE CLOSE ENOUGH FOR ME TO GET THERE ON MY OWN?

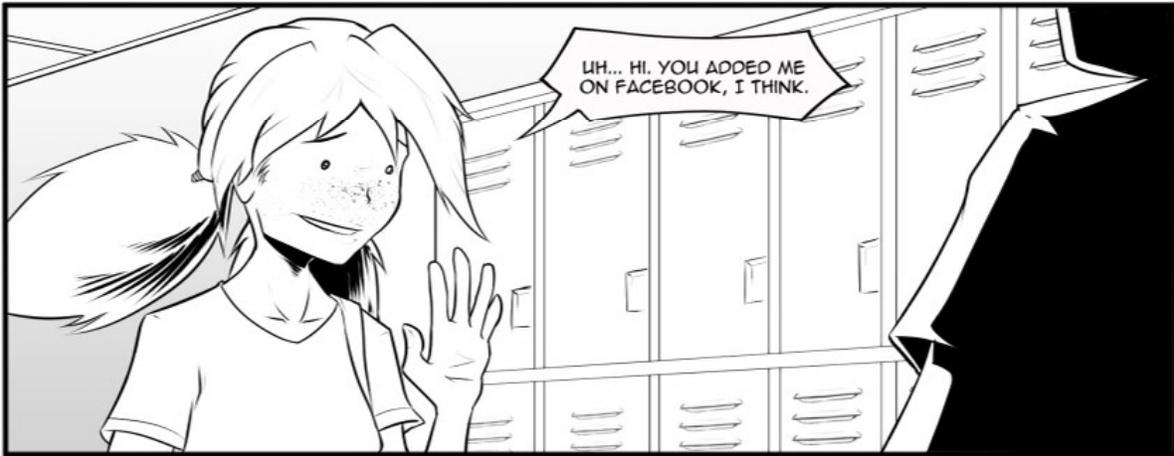








YOU'RE PIPER, RIGHT?
THE NEW KID? I SIT BEHIND
YOU IN GEO. SEAN.



UH... HI. YOU ADDED ME
ON FACEBOOK, I THINK.



YEAH, I DID. YOU NEVER
RESPONDED, THOUGH.



I GOT LIKE...
THREE MILLION
FRIEND REQUESTS
WHEN I MOVED HERE.
I DON'T EVEN RECOGNIZE
HALF OF THEM.

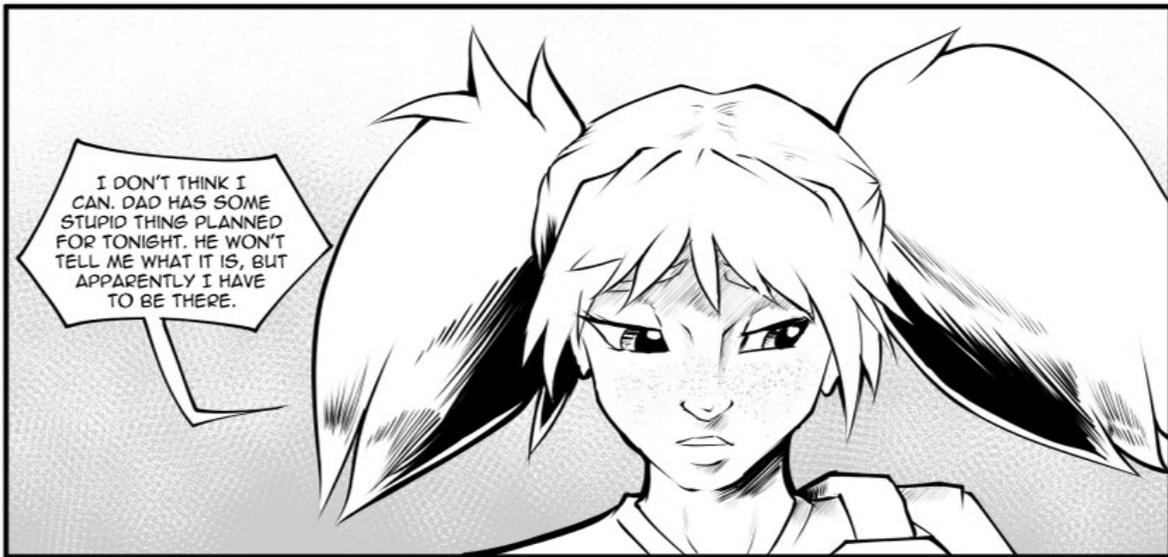


I'LL ADD YOU
WHEN I GET HOME
TONIGHT, THOUGH.



HEY, IF YOU'RE FREE...
AFTER SCHOOL, ME AND A FEW
OF MY FRIENDS ARE HEADING DOWN
TO THE PIER. THERE'S THIS AWESOME
ABANDONED WAREHOUSE WE'VE BEEN
WANTING TO SNEAK INTO.

WANNA
COME?



I DON'T THINK I
CAN. DAD HAS SOME
STUPID THING PLANNED
FOR TONIGHT. HE WON'T
TELL ME WHAT IT IS, BUT
APPARENTLY I HAVE
TO BE THERE.



OH, ALRIGHT, UH...
MAYBE ANOTHER TIME?



YEAH, ANOTHER
TIME FOR SURE...

