



CHARACTERS:

Aaron Burton

Player character whose background is illuminated in these pages.

Appearance:

Like a younger van Damme. See photo reference of art for the game. No uniform.

Geof Kane

Burton's mentor and father figure who is Captain of the Scarab, a medium sized Merchant Marine type ship. Basically a freelancer who is backed by larger concerns. Geof is a practical man who feels responsible for his crew and their welfare but isn't afraid of a fight, he knows his strengths and never folds on the first raise.

Appearance:

Older, with greying hair and a strength that hasn't really faded. Ex-military and looks it. I might cast Brian Denehy with a crew cut and fifteen years added.

Jo "No, I will **not** answer to Jolene" Baker

Burton's confidant and lover on Outpost Aztlan. She is a scientist working on charting mineral deposits edgeward of this outpost. Conversations with her will reveal character and past. She is there when he learns of Mack's death. A.B.'s feeling that his lack of family is a source of strength and moral ambivalence will be stated to her.

Appearance:

Attractive but not glamorous. She is practical = that is, no make up, no Deanna Troi slut suits, probably about to turn thirty. She has the bearing of the actress that plays Ensign Rho on The Next Generation.

Mack Christensen

A.B.'s grandfather. Mack was always a distant person about whom stories were told without ever really being there himself. He wasn't around much and was pretty bad communicating with a kid when he was. He knew that he was at his best with a few whiskey sours in him and that the kid probably wouldn't understand ... but he knew what family was and he wanted to be able to give his grandson some legacy of his own spirit of adventure.

Appearance:

Max von Sydow would be perfect. Older and with an attitude that makes mothers not ask him to tell stories to their kids. His face has lines like a roadmap of central Chicago. Maybe even more like Clint Eastwood in 5 to 10 years.

Jake Rubio

Pilot of the Bella Dona on which Aaron Burton obtains passage to Gemini. Jake is a nobody with big ears and an even bigger mouth when it comes to rumors. He is a merchant / smuggler who thinks shipping a gram of brilliance is high risk. He wants to be thought of as a respected street-smart insider but is basically a coward who thinks too small to ever be a threat to anyone.

Appearance:

Paul Reubens (the way he looked when taken in for exposure or in Buffy the Vampire Slayer). He tries to dress tough but just looks cheap and kind of skanky. He's a Han Solo wannabe without the requisite ambition or guts. Stutters when you call his bluff, which happens often enough that it's easy to make him lose his composure.

THIS STORY:

[[read "=>" as "leads to" this indicates the reason for each plot point]]

1

Burton and Kane arrive at Aztlan -- a deep space science outpost -- latest round of supplies and personnel have gone missing => sets up imminent conflict / introduces Burton and Kane => maybe flashback of other combat and training with Kane.

illustrations

= Burton and Kane on Bridge of the Scarab. Smaller than Enterprise bridge but pretty big. Lots of windows. [none of this view screen B.S.] emphasis on people. 1/2 page

= Exterior of Scarab approaching Aztlan Science Outpost. Only two small ships for traffic. Maybe a Gladius and a tiny science transport. 1/4 page

2

At Aztlan, Burton receives message that his maternal grandfather, Mack Christensen, has died and that Aaron is needed in Gemini for the execution of the will. Relationship with Jo is fleshed out. => Where is Gemini, what is her reputation, set frontier tone. Introduce Mack as A.B.'s role model.

illustrations

● = Jo standing in profile, working at her science station. 1 column by full page.

• = Portrait of Mack, close up. 1/4 page

3

As foreshadowed above, there is trouble on the way out of Aztlan's area, the Scarab is attacked by the Church of Man who are on their way to destroy the science outpost whose tiny guard ships are no match for the well equipped CoM=> demonstration of resourcefulness on Burton's part.

illustrations

= Space battle between C of M and the Scarab. They're in Talons. Maybe Aztlan in background. It should look like a losing battle for the Scarab. 1/2 page

= Scarab limps away in foreground while Aztlan receives heavy abuse in background, small explosions abound like lesions on a leper. 1/4 pg deep x 2 col. wide

● = Burton in a turret blasting away at those C of M bastards. 1/4 pg

4

Kane dies in scuffle with Cof M who go on to destroy the outpost => no family or obligations for AB (explain parents) even Jo is certainly doomed. => go to Gemini!

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= Kane crushed by debris on bridge of Scarab. Maybe Talon outside window if there is room. 1/2 page

● = Jo firing her handgun through an opening airlock. She went down fighting is the point. 1/4 page

• = Burton assumes comand/funeral service for Kane. Wounded and tattered crew are gathered for "burial at void" for Kane. [Not as boring as Spock's, and he doesn't come back to life.] 1/4 pg deep x 2 col. wide

5

Arrive in Gemini -- spent most of his money getting there and works a merchant ship (the Bella Dona) for passage to Troy (?) for the business of the will. => why such a bright young hotshot is so poor also obtains lay-of-the-land info from his ride, Jake Rubio, who tells him of the mob and some of the major political players in Gemini.

illustrations

= Meeting to solicit Jake as pilot to Gemini in front of a Galaxy Class Merchant ship that looks like it needs to employ a full time team of mechanics and has never had an oil change. They are outside on an extremely busy tarmac at a planetside space port. 1/2 page

6

Executor distributes a little cash, the Winnebago, and a letter. => nothing to lose, opportunity to become a Geof Kane with a hint of wouldn't it be easier to go illicit. => PC is morally vague, skilled but without resources, no familial obligations, in a place he's never been, with a ship he doesn't want but can probably trade in.

illustrations

= Looking at Grandpa's bequest (the clunker) as if to say, "What a piece of shit!, but at least it's mine ... and, hey, I can always trade it in." 1/2 page

NEED TO ADD ONE OF PC'S JO TOGETHER ...
PLAYING RAQUETBALL - 1/4 p.

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illustrations

= ~~Aaron and Jo talking in small folding chairs for decor cafeteria.~~

est of Jo in lab.

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1

P.C. and Kane arrive at Sheol -- a deep space science outpost -- latest round of supplies and personnel have gone missing => sets up immanent conflict / introduces P.C. and Kane => maybe flashback of other combat and training with Kane.

art

* Scarab being automatically docked; pulled in to the hangar. 1/2 page.

* Jo, under Scarab, telling a big guard named Hank to put down his gun and get to work, she is clearly in command of the situation. 1/4 pg.

2

At Sheol, P.C. receives message that his maternal grandfather, Mack Christensen, has died and that P.C. is needed in Gemini for the execution of the will. Relationship with Jo is fleshed out. => Where is Gemini, what is her reputation, set frontier tone. Introduce Mack as P.C.'s role model.

art

* P.C., Kane, and Lars Furstenburg, the base captain, standing around a conference table. L.F. is handing P.C. a small electronic tablet (this is the message that Mack is dead). 1/2 pg.

* Mack in front of P.C. as a young boy. Mack is showing off scars that he earned on the frontier. This is a memory of Mack recalling his glory days and the P.C. deciding that he would live a life of adventure like his grandpa. Maybe kid is holding toy Blaster pistol. 1/4 page

3

As foreshadowed above, there is trouble on the way out of Sheol's area, the Scarab is attacked by the Church of Man who are on their way to destroy the science outpost whose tiny guard ships are no match for the well-equipped CoM=> demonstration of resourcefulness on P.C.'s part.

art

4

Kane dies in scuffle with C of M who go on to destroy the outpost => no family or obligations for AB (explain parents) even Jo is certainly doomed. => go to Gemini!

art

* Church of Man, having boarded the science station, destroys a lab - tables upturned, a scientist screaming as his life's work is shattered on the floor, consoles spewing sparks, etc. 1/2 pg.

* Bella Dona has encountered asteroids, Jake has been knocked unconscious and P.C. takes manual control, thus saving the day. (Merchant Cockpit is scene) 1/4 page

5

Arrive in Gemini -- spent most of his money getting there and works a merchant ship (the Bella Dona) for passage to Helen in Troy System for the business of the will. => why such a bright young hotshot is so poor also obtains lay-of-the-land info from his ride, Jake Rubio, who tells him of the mob and some of the major political players in Gemini.

art

* The Bella Dona (merchant ship) landing on Helen, an agricultural planet. Spaceport with water and grass nearby. Idyllic except for the dirty and scarred spaceships all about. 1/4 page

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art

- * P.C. at bar locking eyes with a very self assured woman who's about to make him a job offer, as soon as he crosses to her table. 1/4 deep by 2 col. across.
- * P.C. dropping a few coins out of a bag into Jake's hand. Jake is not happy with his payment but is too chicken to challenge our hero. 1/4 pg.

Misc.

- * Spatrak anatomical design as per Illustrated Guide to Extraterrestrials (Special Missions plot).
1/2 page
- * Spatracs at home; use your imagination, maybe incorporate P.C. for scale. 1/2 pg. (Special Missions Design)
- * Full page illustration to separate the "magazine" section off. This is to represent the Magazine cover and needs to leave room for the title and some feature titles. The mag will probably be called something like *The Frontiersman: For Cutthroat Capitalists Living on the Edge* but who knows right now. This is the section you have already sent us art for.
- * Full page illustration to introduce the narrative history of P.C. This is the frontispiece and should probably be very dramatic and focused on his face. Use your imagination based the story summary.

- =====
- = P.C. and Kane on Bridge of the Scarab. Smaller than Enterprise bridge but fairly large. Lots of windows. [None of this view screen B.S.] Emphasis on people, this introduces P.C. and Kane. 1/2 page
 - = Exterior of Scarab (a merchant marine vessel owned by Kane, probably a crew of twenty with plenty of cargo room, moderately weathered, no insignia) approaching Sheol Science Outpost (a nearly defenseless station with no planet nearby - Sheol is isolated and totally dependent on supply ships). Only two small ships for traffic. Maybe a Gladius and a tiny science transport. 1/4 page
 - = Unloading of much needed supplies from the Scarab going on behind Kane who is receiving payment from the eternally grateful Sheol base commander. Their last two supply ships did not arrive, so everyone is helping to unload. 1/4 page
 - = Introductory portrait of Jo, standing in profile, working at her science station. 1 column by full page.
 - = P.C. and Jo engaged in a heated and passionate futuristic version of racquet ball. Due to their mutual competitiveness, veins are standing out and sweat is flying from their brows. This is when they communicate most effectively, while trying to best the other competitively. 1/4 page
 - = Introductory portrait of Mack, full frontal standing, at work on the bottom of the Clunker. Maybe a drink in background. 1 column by full pg. long
 - = Space battle between C of M and the Scarab. They're in Talons. Maybe Sheol in background. It should look like a losing battle for the Scarab. 1/2 page
 - = Scarab limps away in foreground while Sheol receives heavy abuse in background, small explosions abound like lesions on a leper. 1/4 pg. deep x 2 col. wide
 - = P.C. in a turret blasting away at those C of M bastards, this is to demonstrate that his hotshot abilities helped to save the ship from certain destruction. 1/4 pg.
 - = Kane being crushed by debris on bridge of Scarab. Maybe Talon outside window if there is room. Clearly any extra's are wounded or unable to help. 1/2 page

= Jo firing her handgun through an opening airlock. She is backed into a corner and has clearly been fighting for a while (bruised and tattered). She went down fighting is the point. 1/4 page

= P.C. assumes command/funeral service for Kane. Wounded and tattered crew are gathered for "burial at void" for Kane. [Not as boring as Spock's.] 1/4 pg. deep x 2 col. wide

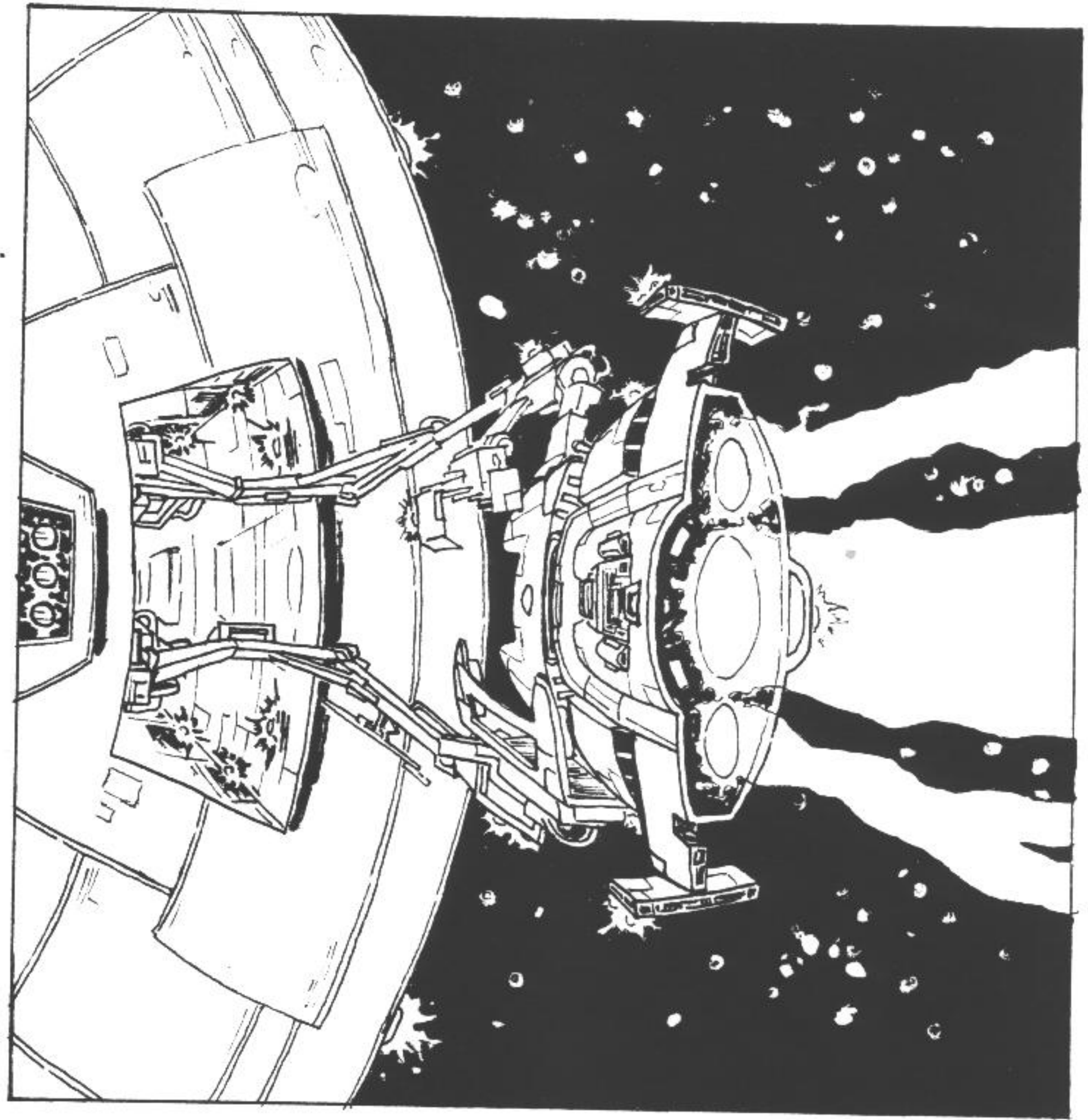
= Scarab in a large dry-dock. P.C. is learning that it's a total loss. Perhaps the back of a mechanic shrugging in the foreground and P.C. looking seriously pissed. There is now nothing left of his former life. The surviving crew, including P.C., have found themselves suddenly unemployed. 1/2 pg.

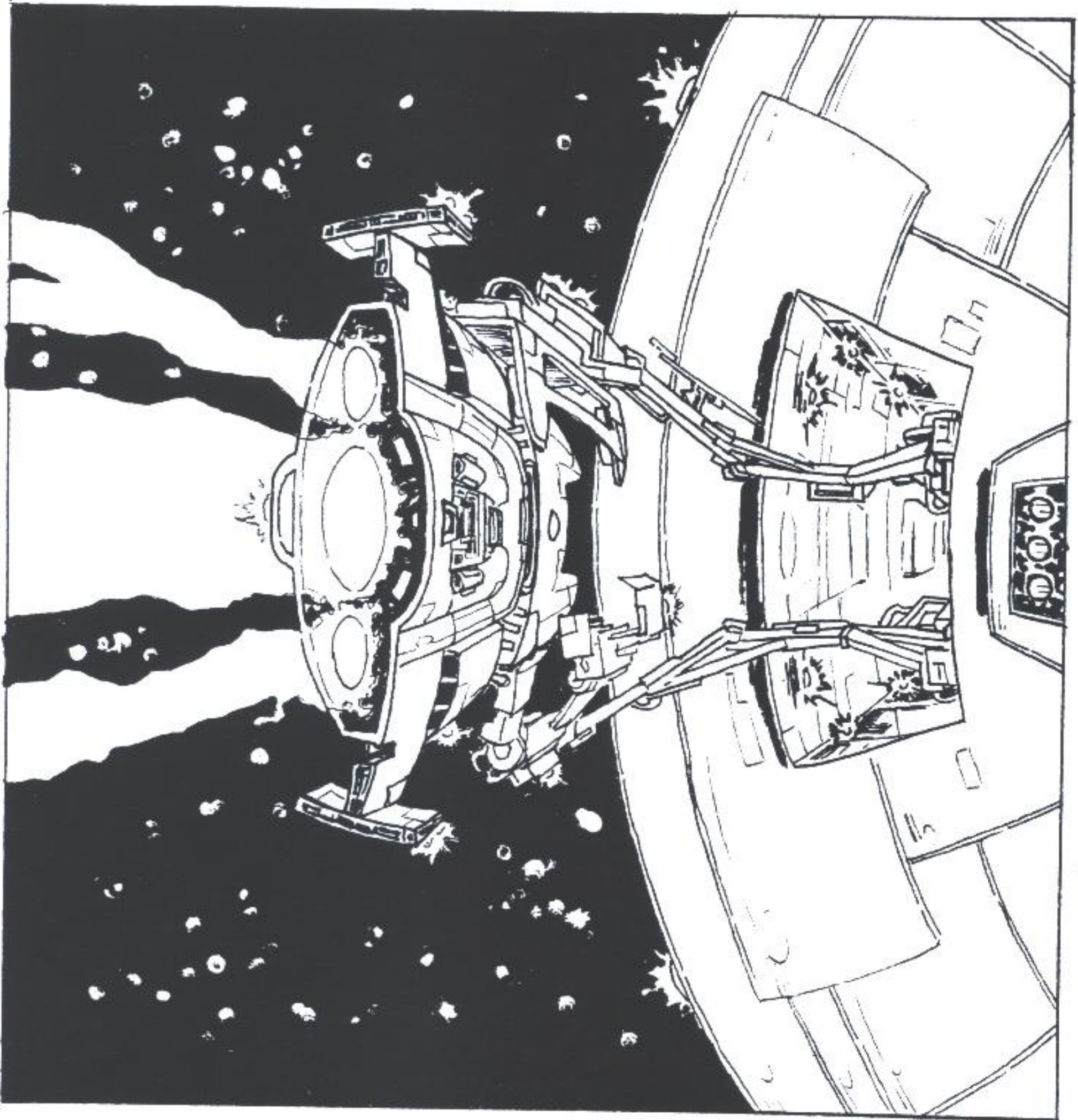
= Meeting to solicit Jake as pilot to Gemini in front of a Galaxy Class Merchant ship that looks like it needs to employ a full time team of mechanics and has never had an oil change. They are outside on an extremely busy tarmac at a planet side space port. 1/2 page

= P.C. holding Jake by his throat against a wall inside the Bella Dona (for trying to take some money) in a clear demonstration of who's in control of the situation. 1/4 page

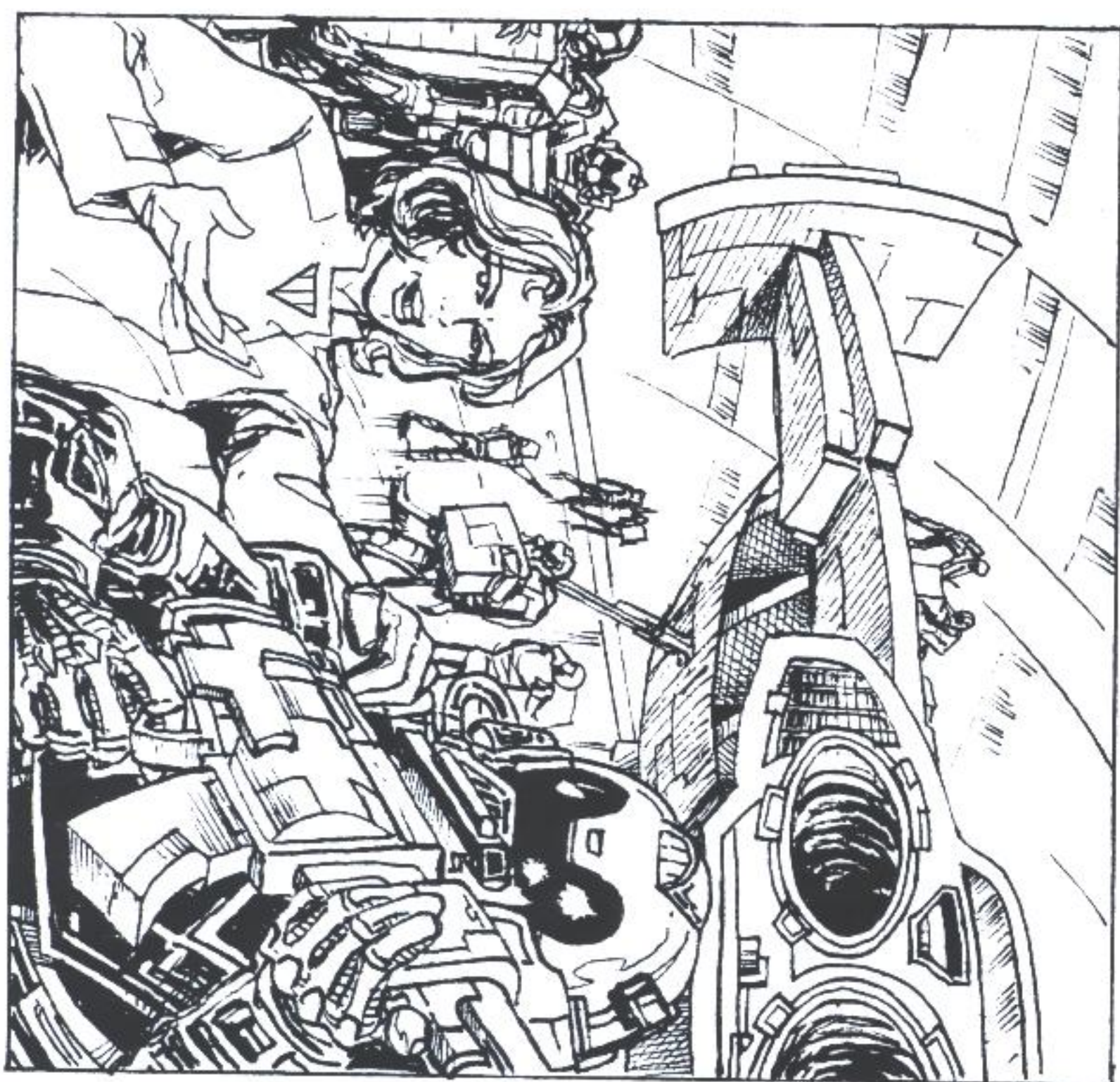
= Looking at Grandpa's bequest (the clunker) as if to say, "What a piece of shit!, but at least it's mine ... and, hey, I can always trade it in." 1/2 page

= P.C. reading the ads in the mission computer. Ready to make some cash, he's looking for that first cargo or scouting run that'll pay for a jump drive. 1/4 pg.

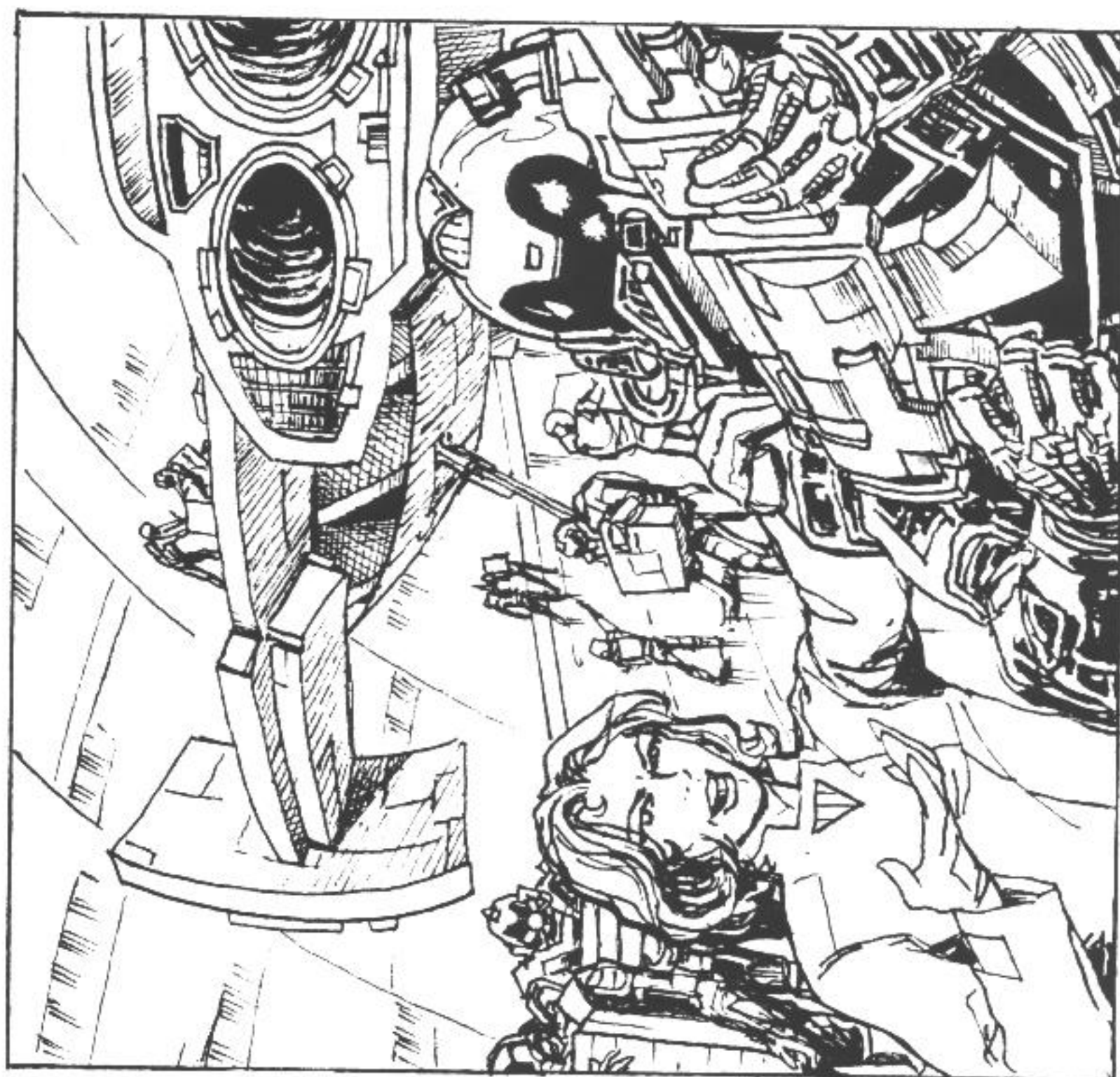




Scars being auto loaded.



So telling all your.



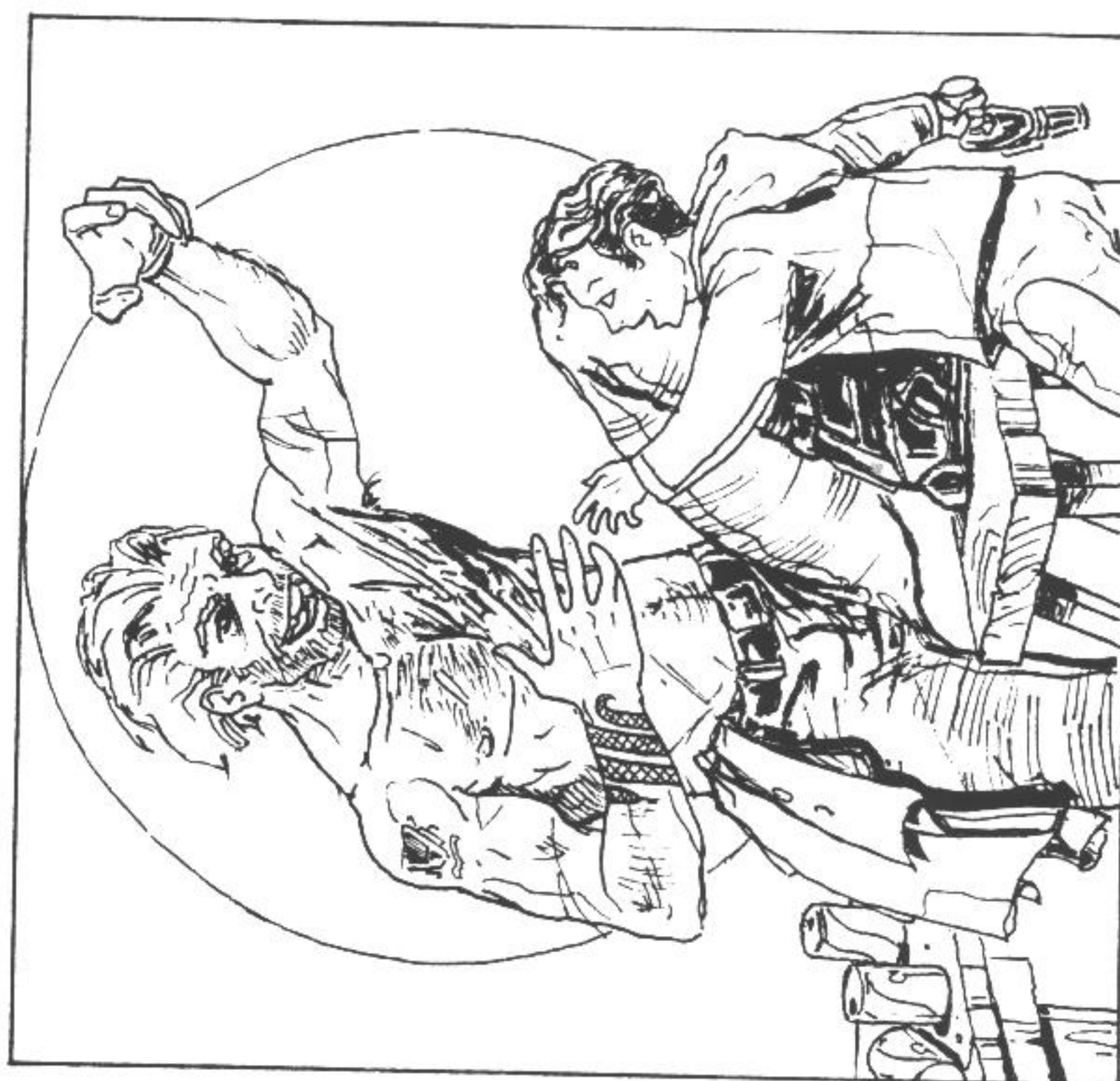


MESSAGE THAT MARK IS DEAD





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Cup M destroys a lab @ Shed

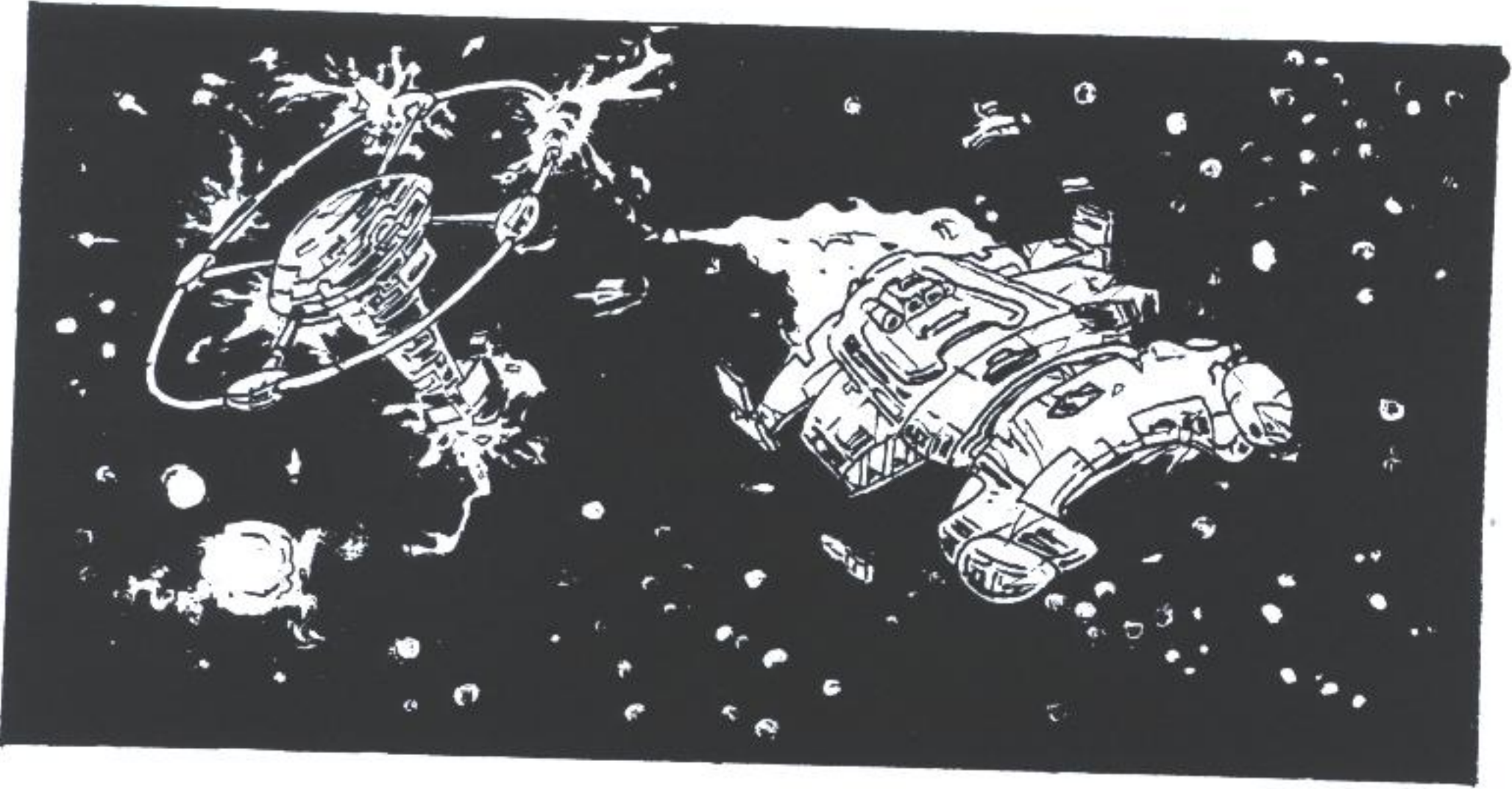


P.S. says Bella Donna / Jakee Virovany





Stations
limbs
from steel



Landing @ Helen,
Arrival in Gemini

About to get 1st job offer





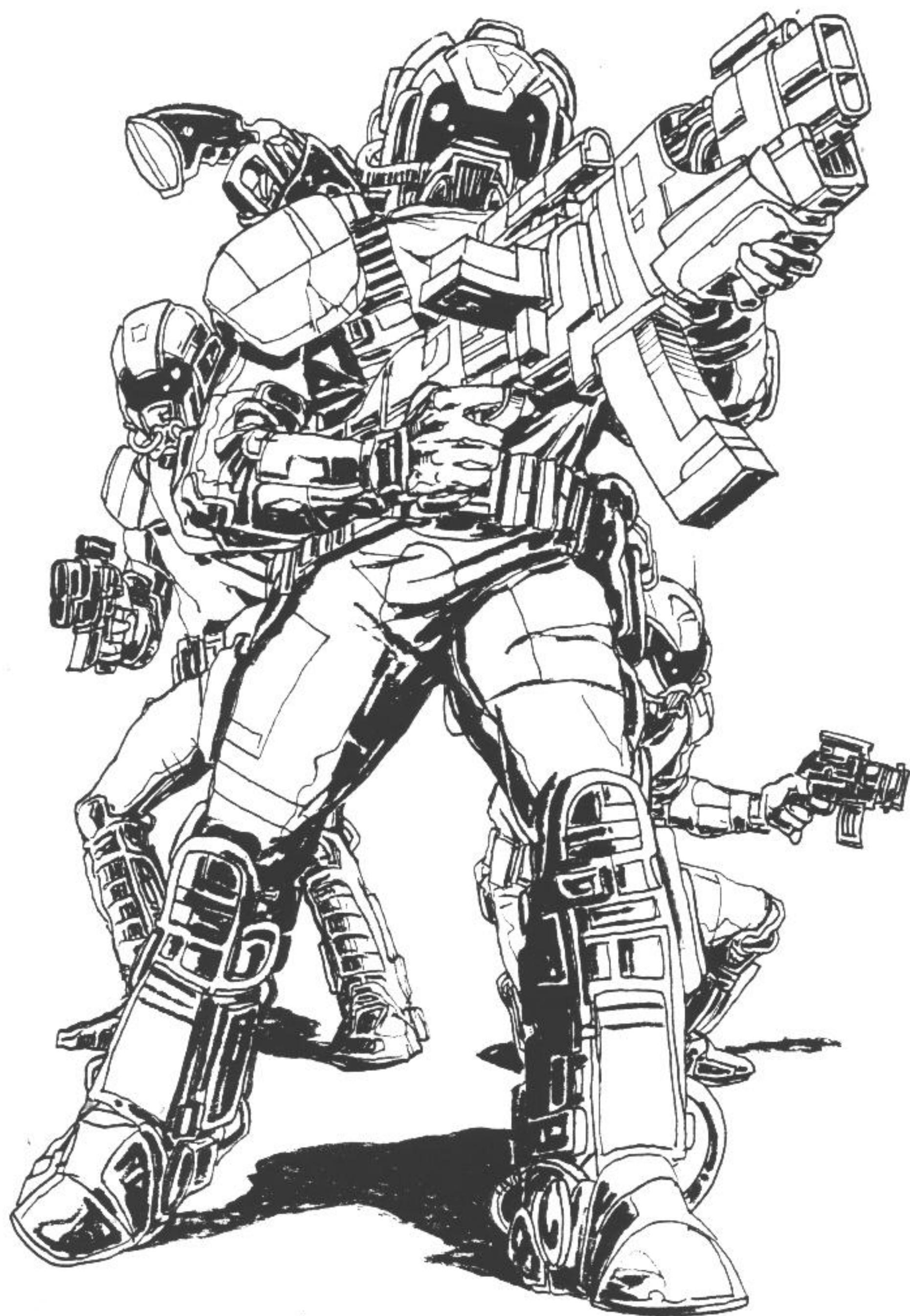


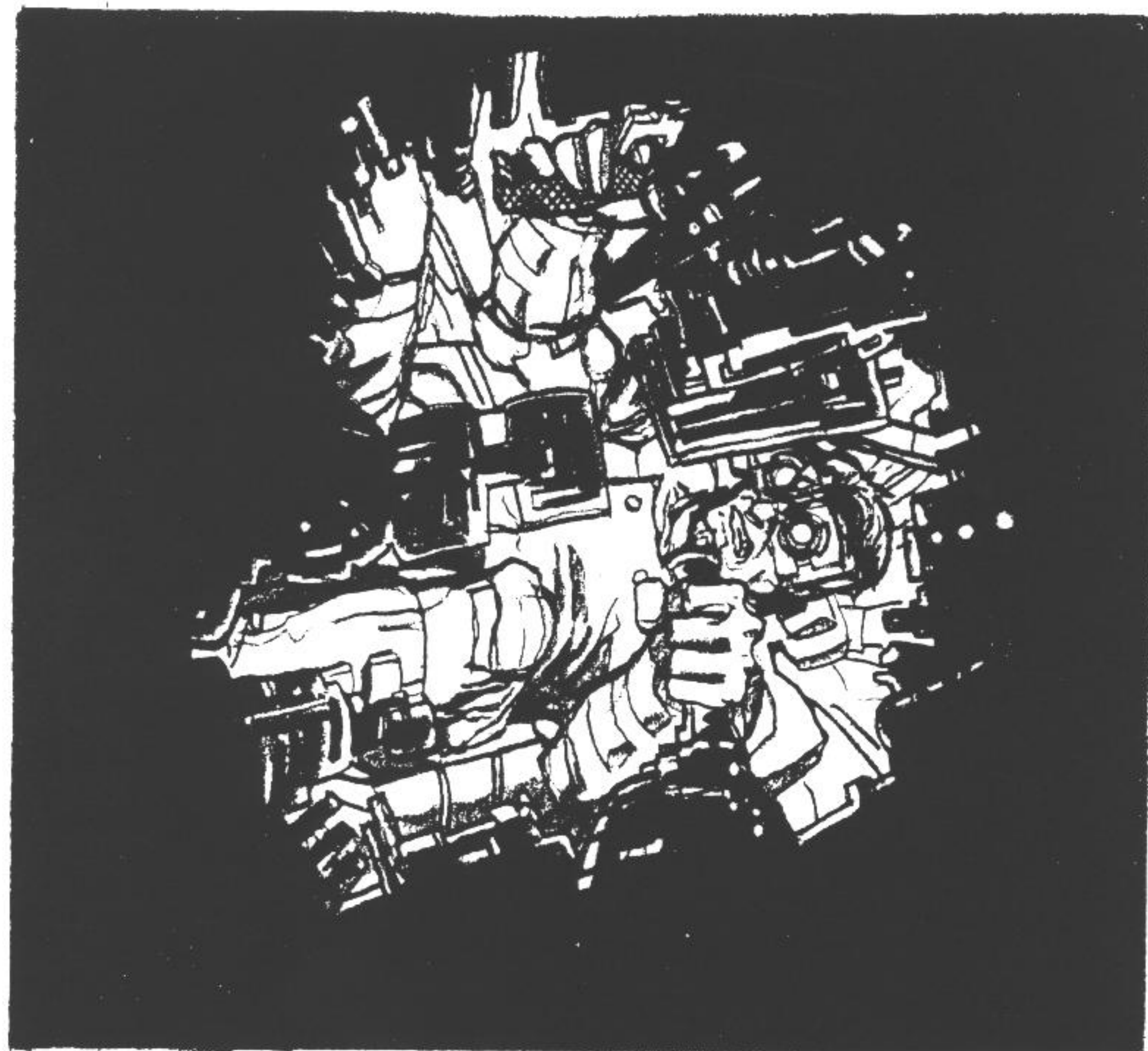


Paying Dale with the dollars





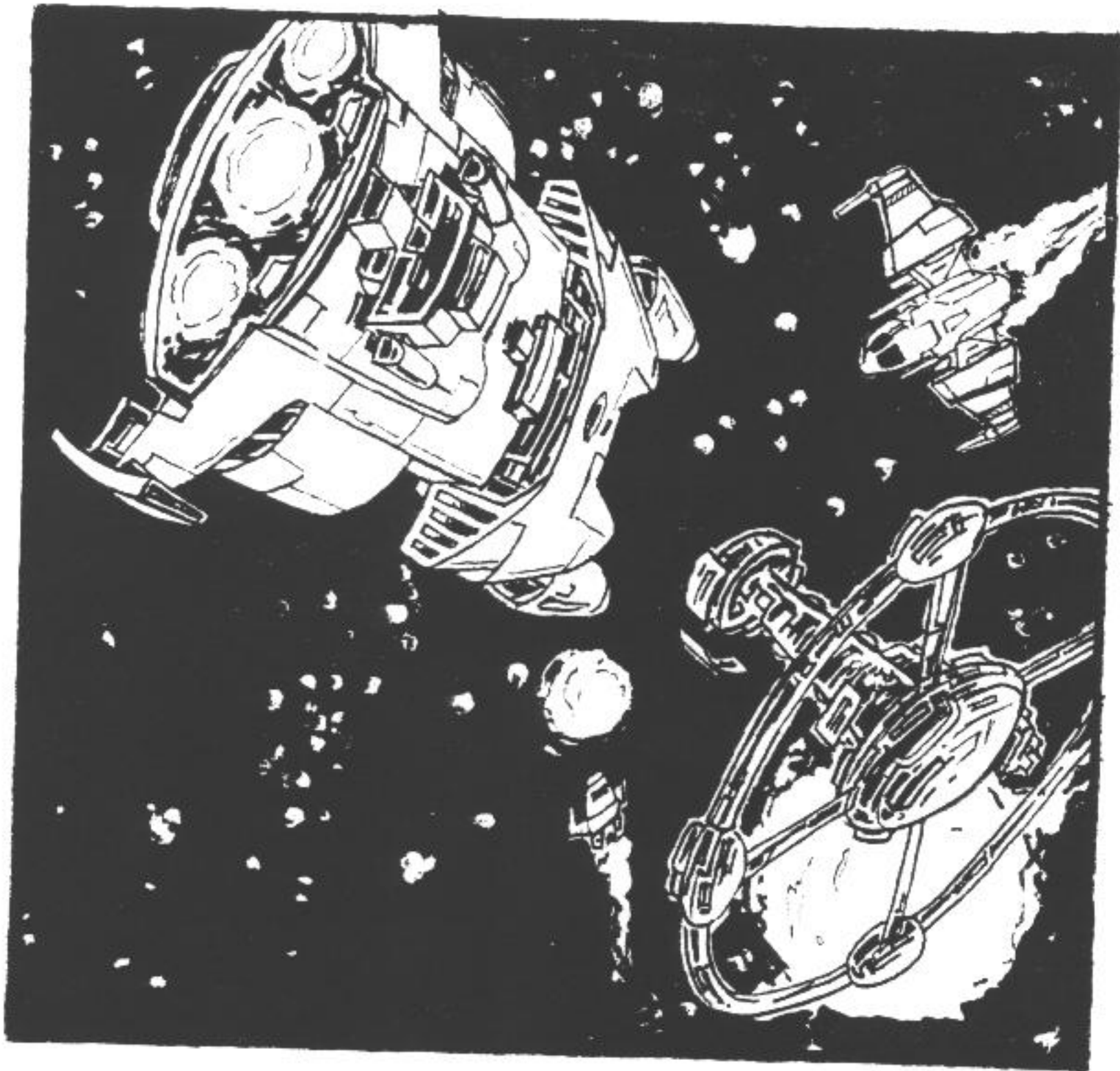


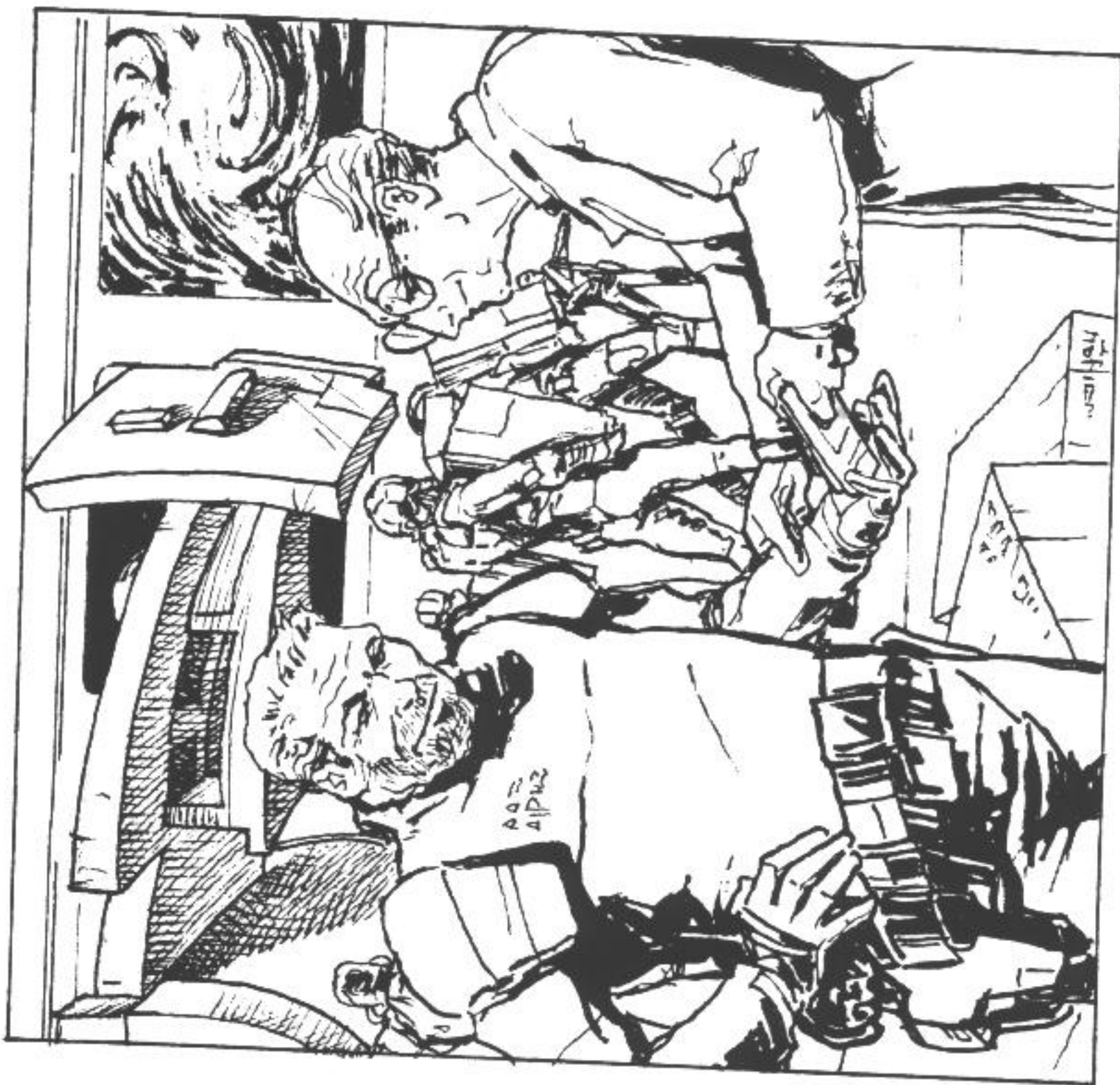




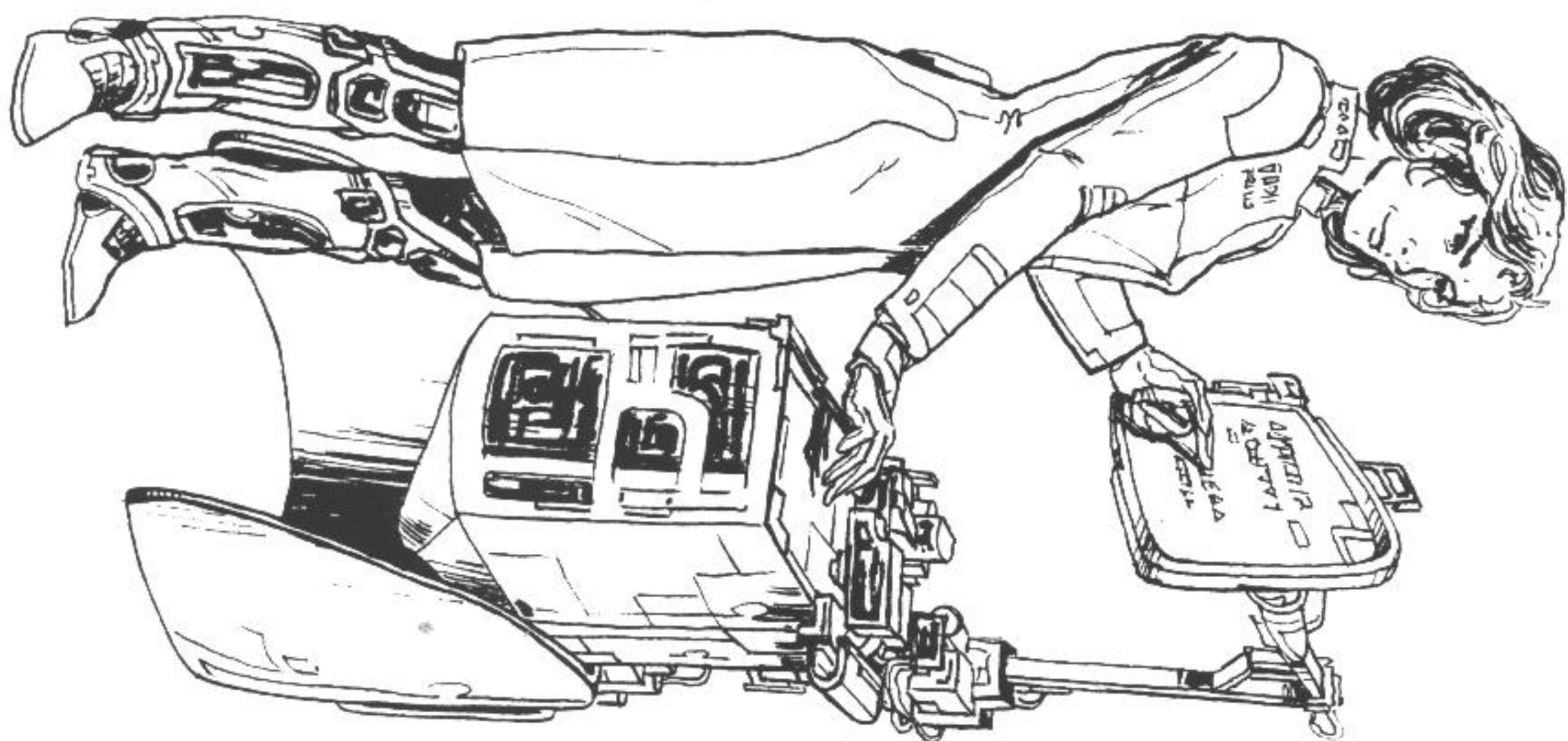
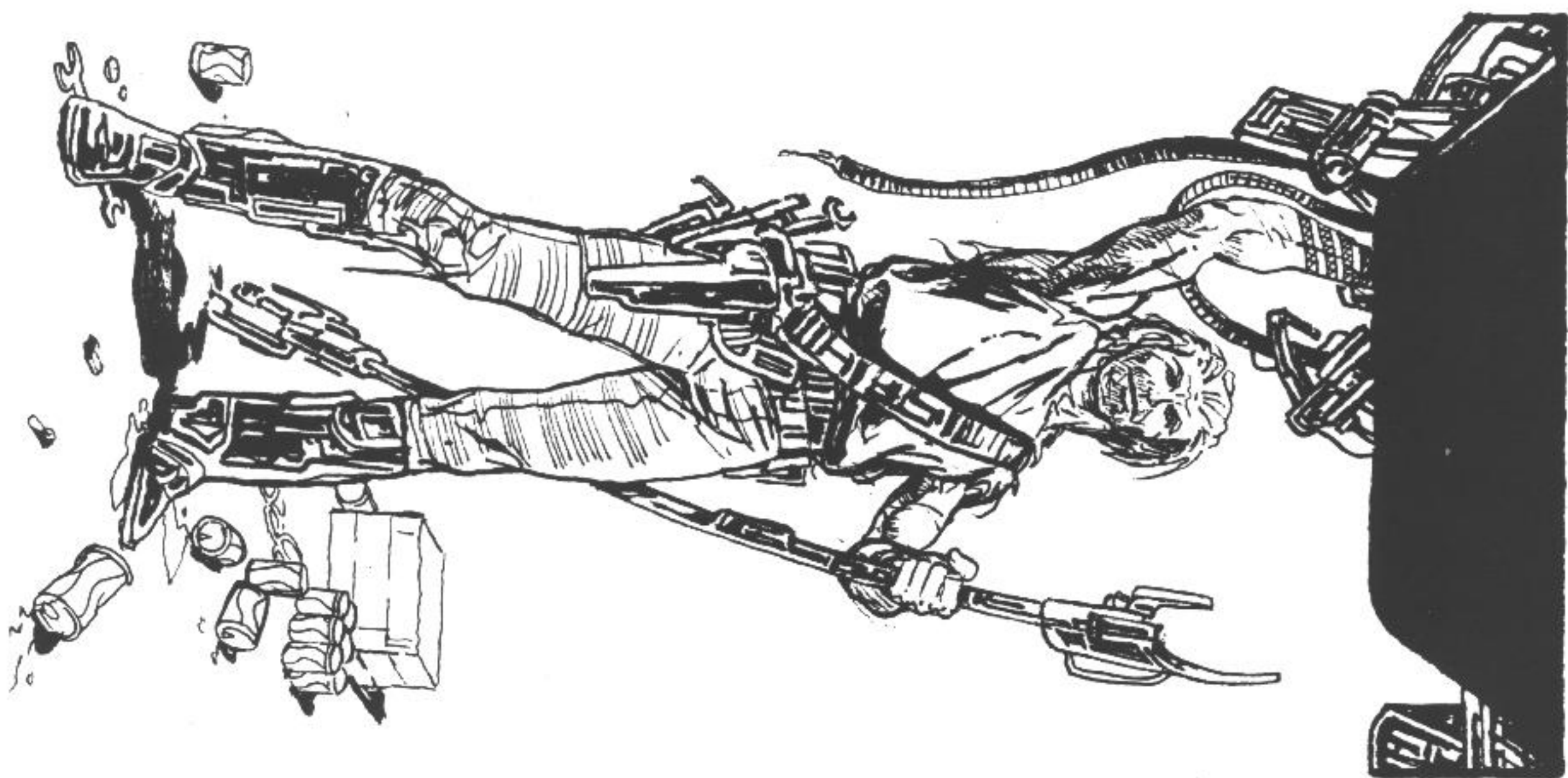
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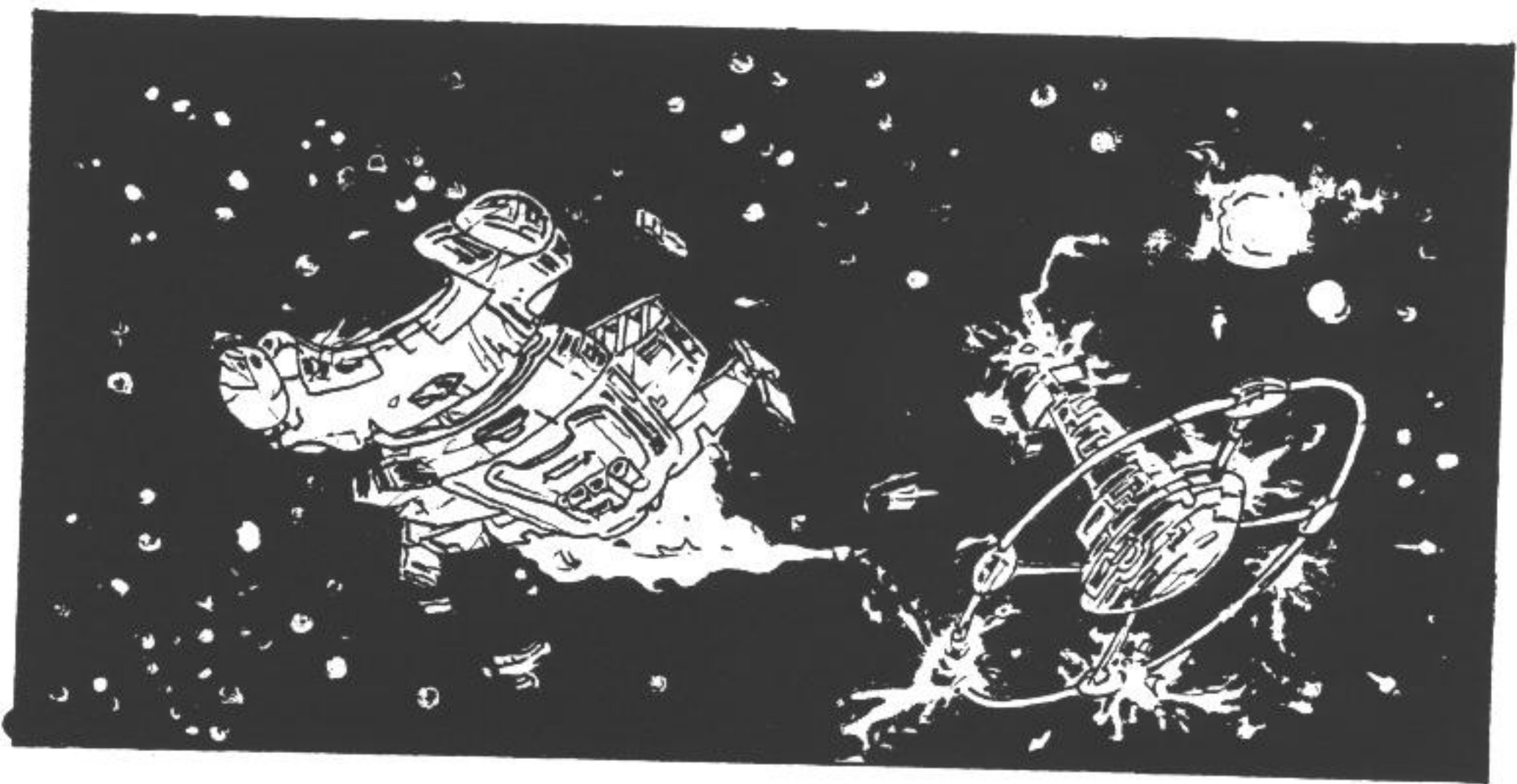
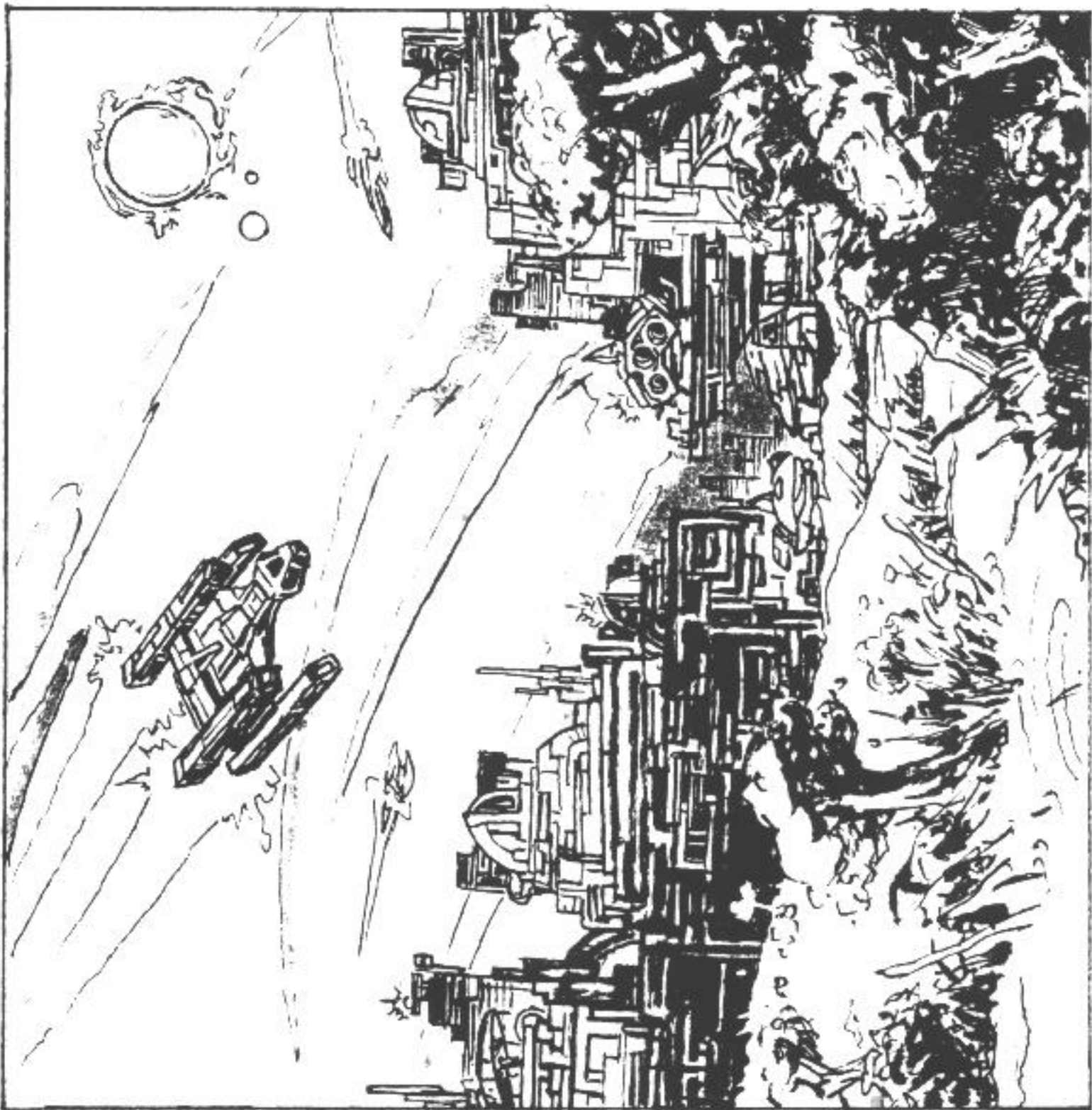








Colman attacking Scarab

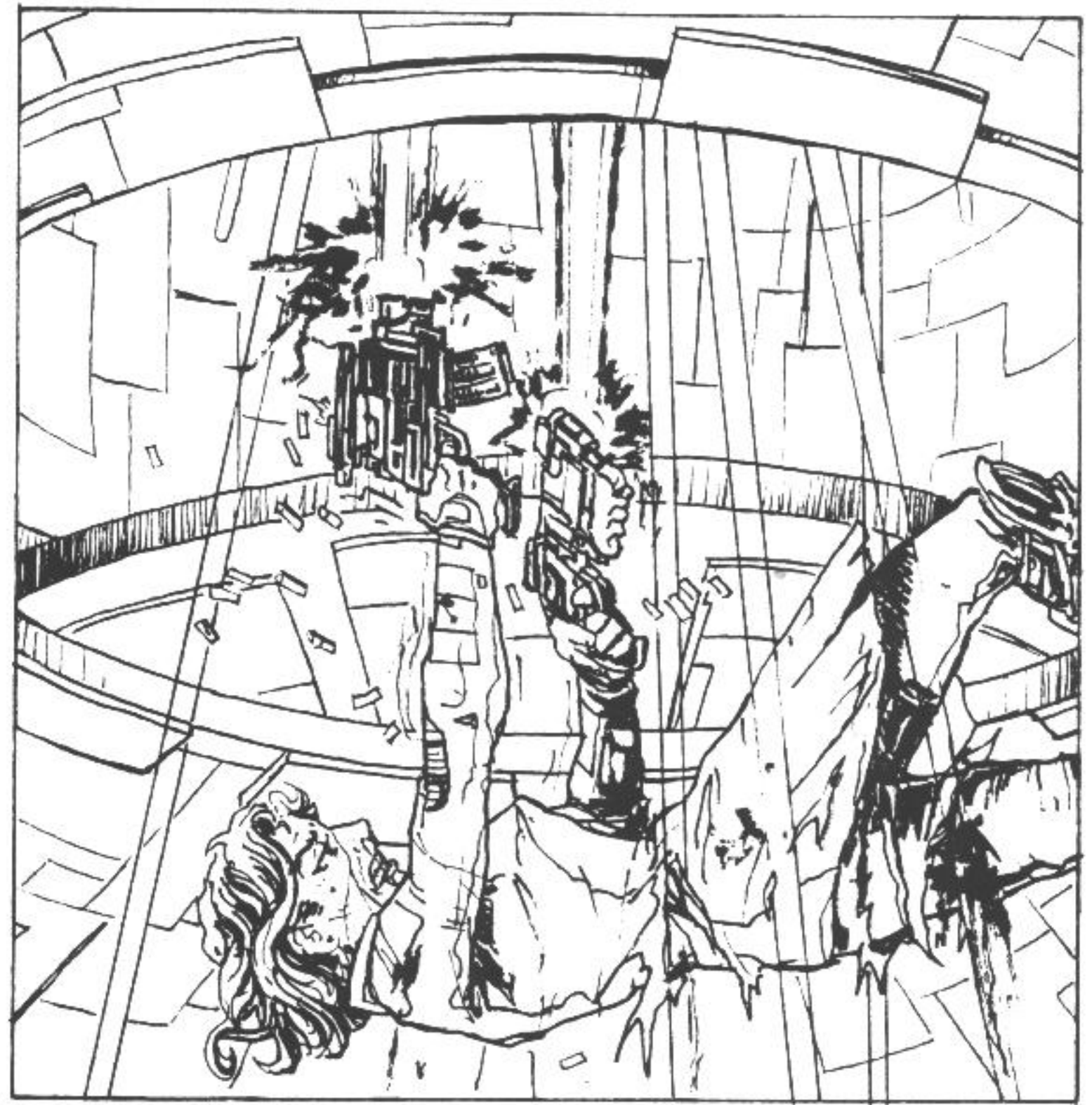






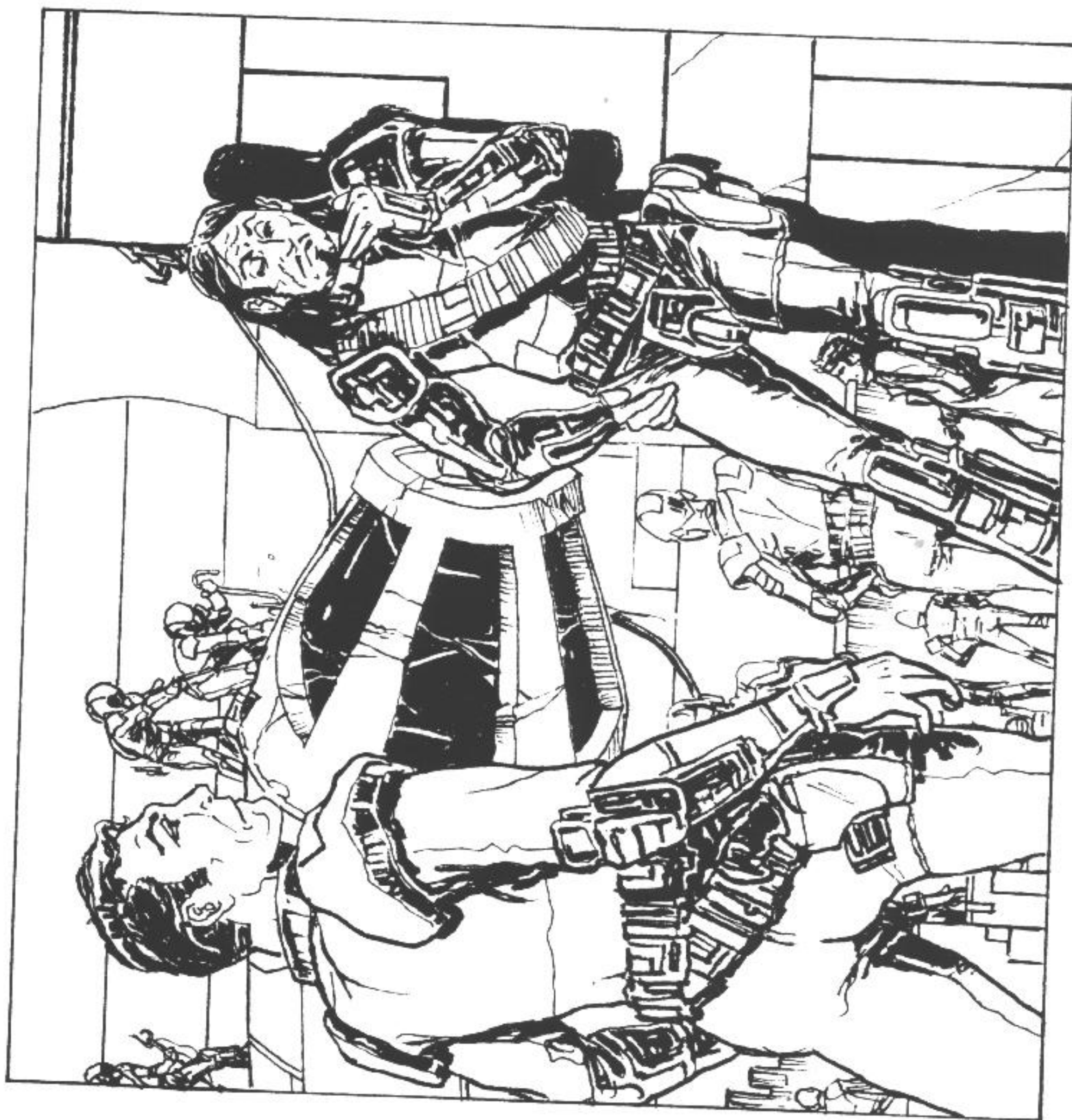
Kame crashed during attack



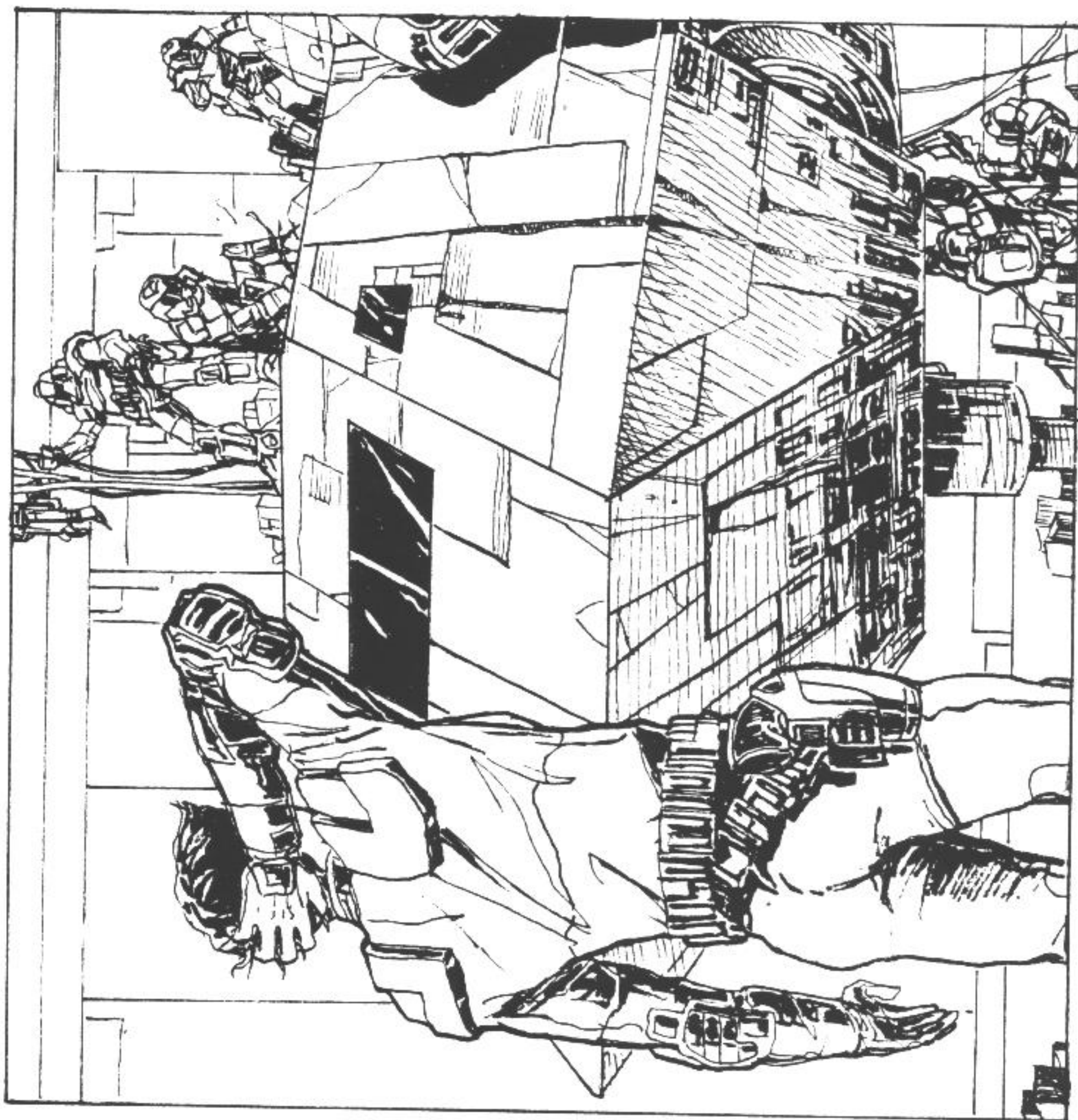














The Frontiersman: Interview with a Privateer
By Chandra Karr

For the forth installment of our ongoing series on the young pilots who make a killing prospecting the open space lanes of Gemini, I went to find out what brings a hot shot pilot to risk it all on a possibility, to seek out new challenges, to come to our little corner of the war. I was curious what these young people were leaving behind and what they hope to achieve, knowing the odds against them. I chose Helen, a small agricultural planet in Troy System, to find my subject.

Helen doesn't have much to recommend it, but at least there's a bar. Out in this part of the Confederation there are only three kinds of people in a bar; those looking for the kind of work that doesn't get publicly advertised, those offering that kind of work, or anyone looking to blow a paycheck on some Mjolnarian Stout. I was hoping to attract one of the former by posing as a *fixer*, and it worked.

I was sitting at a small table near the door, listening to the bartender give away advice, when I spotted my target. A young but weathered red head walked in with an air of confidence that advertised for him. He moved into the room comfortably, lifted his personal computer from his belt with the ease of someone who has performed this gesture a million times. As he checked his mission roster I was drawn to the vertical scar through his left eyebrow. He looked hungry for work so I threw him a morsel.

"You looking for work or just to get drunk?", I said, winking from my table.

"Both if that's an option. But I'll settle for either." He smiled, laid his computer on the table, straddled the chair across from me, and said, "What can I do for you, Ma'am?"

I explained we were doing an article and wanted to hear what had brought him here. He was interested, eager even. What follows is his story as he told it to me over too many drinks in the cheap bar of a nowhere agricultural planet.

[All names have been changed to prevent this from becoming a vehicle for self promotion. To the best of our knowledge, all the events are actual. Ed.]

Six weeks ago I was first mate on the Scarab, a bucket of bolts merchant ship held together by bootlaces and luck. We were jumping out to a deep space science station, Sheol. It was a good contract running supplies, food and equipment. We'd made the run before and I was looking forward to spending some quality time with Jolene. She was heading an investigation of unstable jump points in the area and we had found each other, well, compatible. I was on the bridge thinking about the phase ball rematch I owed her, not watching the consoles at my station. The heavy sound of Geof Kane's boots clanking on the metal deck brought me to attention.

Kane was a big man who was always most comfortable wearing the mantle of command. He was a bull of a man, always moving forward, unable to form the concept of retreat. That's why he went freelance, too many rules of engagement in the military. Kane only obeyed the laws of expediency and profit. He had trained all nineteen of us, forming pilots, gunners and mechanics from the soft clay of street urchins and stowaways. We depended on him for leadership and each of us owed him our life. Kane came in and stood heavily by a large bay window, turning his Academy ring deliberately.

"We'll be arriving soon. I want you on your toes, I don't feel good about this run." He spoke slowly.

"Why so nervous, boss? You know something or just got a feeling?"

"I don't know yet. Just do as I say. Maybe it's nothing." He fidgeted with the console next to him, glanced nervously at the windows, and left.

The trip out was uneventful except for Kane's nervousness. After several days we jumped out to Sheol's system. I was on the bridge. As the streamers of light settled into a more familiar starfield two gray Talons raced towards us. I was edgy and damn near fired on them before realizing they were our escort. The huge and ungainly Scarab made her way to Sheol's main hangar, the Talons moving beside her like remoras on a shark.

The science outpost was made up of a series of launching platforms off a central hub that housed personal quarters and open office areas for data analysis. They primarily sent out probes or small vessels in search of new jump points and asteroids rich in mineral deposits, as well as the smaller more esoteric astrophysics work with no exploitable payoff for another generation or two. Because of their isolation

there was no one except the researchers, no service personnel. The dingy Apocalypse Bar was staffed by whoever was available, usually someone waiting for a probe to reach its target system or for an automated analysis to finish. Administration, repairs, and distribution of food, clothing, and equipment worked the same way. The only full time position belonged to Lars Furstenburg who was Base Captain. He was held accountable for anything that might go wrong and ignored when significant progress was made. Lars was new. He had arrived sometime after our last run and seemed to be still in the midst of finding his footing among the staff and crew.

"I have regret that I did not find you, to warn you of our uncomfortable situation. The last two supply ships were destroyed. First one got blown up when leaving, second before it left the jump sphere on its way in system. But you had pleasant trip, no? We will unload and then have a drink, yes? Thank you." Said Lars, greeting us in the sparse, unfinished hangar we had docked in.

All around us the inhabitants of Sheol moved to unload the supplies we'd brought. I'd thought to assign a few of our men to security. Now that we were here it appeared my concerns were unwarranted. The men and women unloading the cargo were careful, organized, and visibly relieved. Only one of the men was having any problem at all.

"What's your name, sir?"

It was Jo who was beating up my security detail, her voice echoing across the hangar.

"Uh, Hank. Hank Slater ..." Security personnel weren't used to answering questions.

"And, Mr. Slater, just why in the Sam Hell are you standing around, carrying nothing but that stupid side arm, when we've got work to do?"

"Well, Ma'am, I uh ... my boss says there might be looting, and he says ..."

"Hank, be a good grunt and go tell your fraggin' boss that there may be violence if he doesn't get you guys away from your pretty little guns and into a few waiting cargo loaders."

By now I'd crossed under the Scarab's still cooling engines to where this conversation was taking place. Standing behind Jo I announced my arrival, "What seems to be the problem?"

Jo answers, her back still facing me, "The problem is that this big ape's boss won't let him do an ounce of real work."

"You must mean me."

She turned, looked me square in the eyes, smiled, and said, "Well, if it isn't Mr. Precaution back from the hinterlands to save our starving village from itself. Will you make these men useful or do you plan on spending your time here alone?" Her wink softens the remark but I get the point.

"It's all right, Hank, do as she says. Collect Al and Frank and the others and report to Captain Furstenburg for unloading assignments." I turned my attention to Jo, "Here's a proposal for you Doctor, you promise to quit harassing my men and I'll buy you the best dinner this tin can has to offer. How about it?"

"How about I make no such promise and we skip dinner for healthier activities?"

"Deal. Oh, and I do expect a rematch if you guys still have a phase ball court."

"We do and you're on."

She turned to go settle a dispute that was developing over fuel storage. I watched her cross the hangar, pleased to finally be here. The hustle to unload was pulling people out of the lethargy that had plagued both the Scarab and Sheol before our arrival. Finally we had a task with a clear, accomplishable goal, it was a welcome change of pace. Geof was taking the whole operation very seriously, it was his impression that there was a force out there preparing to assault the base. I figured that if he was right then it must be a small one. If you've got the fire power to destroy a couple of Drayman, then you've got the fire power to destroy an outpost like Sheol unless, of course, you didn't have the fuel or munitions to do both.

Now that we had arranged for the unloading and distribution of cargo I headed off to discuss security concerns with Furstenburg and Kane. Lars' office looked out over the hangar and into the void. We could clearly see our staffs cooperating to unload the Scarab. I moved into the room, expecting something a little more commanding but pleased to see that Lars was a busy man, definitely not a delegator. He had both a desk and small conference table, the latter cluttered with chips and tablets that made it clear he only used his desk occasionally, probably not enough surface area to hold the clutter of "current" projects and files.

The two captains were already deep in discussion when I arrived, a small hologram of the base flickering between them. As I entered, Lars began shuffling through the mountains of correspondence on the conference table.

"There is, on this table, a message that did come for you, couple of days ago." I was surprised to hear this. Who would send me a message? Everyone I knew was here; Jo, Geof, the Scarab's crew. Unless it was some kind of a recruiting message from the Confederation Militia ...

"Ah ha! Here is your message sent from the Gemini sector. I see you have frontiersmen friends, yes?", he said, handing me the disk. "Use the monitor on my desk should you want to take it now."

"That's all right, we've got business to attend to." I pocketed the disk and joined them at the conference table. I only knew one person in Gemini and I didn't figure he'd be sending me anything more important than a birthday card, not that I'd ever gotten one. The security analysis was top priority. I was hoping that there would be some sort of clue in the final transmissions of the lost probes. Knowing who our enemy was would be the first step in defeating them.

We divided up the tasks amongst ourselves. Lars took charge of readying the base's launchers and shields as well as preparing a schedule for the volunteer security team. Kane would coordinate with both the Sheol's and Scarab's pilots to develop a more effective patrol pattern. Analysis of data sent by the missing probes and cargo ships fell to me. I was to work with a team of scientists, including Jo, who would be able to spot anomalies in the transmissions. Furstenburg pulled a monitor over to his seat, nearly up turning a cup of coffee in the process, to inform the members of our teams of their new assignments and that they had only three hours to report for their first meeting. My group was to meet in Blue Deck, Lab 37, close to my quarters. I had just enough time to eat, shower, and read my junk mail from the edge of nowhere.

With the team notified, I headed for my room in Green Deck. The halls were filled with blue jumpsuits carrying crates of newly arrived supplies. I stopped to help a young man move a too heavy box into one of the smaller dining areas that were spread throughout the base. Not counting this delay, it took nearly twenty minutes to reach to my quarters. There was no intra-base transportation except walking. I didn't mind. It was a nice opportunity to reacquaint myself with Sheol's color coded corridors and windowless workspaces.

Fortunately, my luggage preceded me. The room's dull grayness stood in stark contrast to the bright green of the hallway. The bed, night stand, and desk, with its small communication console, all reflected a unified Spartan vision. Comfort was not a priority in the design. All the same, I felt relaxed by the very austerity of the room. As I emptied my pockets of I.D., personal computer, and a few loose coins from Firekka I dropped the disk Lars had given me. It was time I read my mail. I switched on the comm unit, put the disk in and sat back, expecting propaganda or a postcard from Grandpa Mack.

The screen filled with the typical sender information. It was from Mack all right, and had apparently been forwarded six or seven times before someone knew where I'd be. It had been sent nearly a month and a half ago, marked priority one. Better late than never, I thought. I hit the key to proceed. Mack's face came onto the screen, he took a drink of something that wasn't water and began his message.

"Look, kid, you know I'm not much of a talker so I'll get straight to the point. I'm dead. This is my last will and testament and whatever. You're all I got in the way of family and your mother made me promise to see that you were taken care of. So, here goes," he paused to take another drink, winced and continued, "I, Mack Christensen, being an old man and of ill health do leave whatever hasn't been repossessed to you, my only daughter's only kid. Right now I've got a Tarsus class ship that I bought from an Exploratory Services officer with too many debts and a little cash that I plan on spending before you get this. Sorry, but you know how it is. Whatever's left is yours. It may not sound like much but what I'm trying to give you is an excuse to come see Gemini. I was charting new jump points and getting in bar brawls out here when you were born. There's been a lot of development since then but it's still the best place to make a quick buck. I may not have given you much over the years and now that I'm dead I figure you could benefit from a little frontier action. I guess I better go before I get all sentimental and ..." he looked down at his glass and the screen went blank. A small green light indicated that there was a second message waiting.

I went over to the sink, washed my face, took a long hard look at myself as the only heir of an old lush. I guess I needed a second to take in the fact that Mack was dead. I was sure that the second message was probably the executor telling me what had happened and how to contact him. Details that

could wait. It wasn't the first time I'd gotten a message like this. There were still a couple of hours before I had to meet with the investigative team and I was planning on spending them figuring out whether or not Mack's bequest was worth dropping everything to go out and deal with. There was a lot of work coming up for the Scarab and getting to Gemini wasn't exactly a day trip. We had contracts to fulfill. I had a career with Kane, who treated me as a first officer and a son. This was a terrible time to take an extended vacation.

I was pacing, looking over at the faint green light on the communications console when my reverie was interrupted. It was Jo opening the door.

"What happened to you? You look more confused than a Firrekan hatchling."

"Have a seat, Jo. It's nothing, really. Just that I got this message that my grandfather died and they want me to go out to Gemini, of all places, to take care of the estate," I said, pointing to the console.

"Oo, an estate? Really? I thought you said Mack was an old drunk, spent his time remembering his glory days for anyone who'd listen and a few that wouldn't." She was shaking her hair, as if its tangles took priority over my dilemma.

"Turns out he had a ship. A Tarsus. Maybe even a little cash, who knows."

"I think you should quit the Sheol. Go out there and get that ship," she got up to pace, "I think you should drop everything, me, Kane, the Scarab, and run away to where you'll be poor and a nobody. Look, I don't think you should do it. If you decide to leave the Scarab, come here and work with us but don't go taking risks if the only upside is a ship that hasn't even been manufactured for ten years."

I didn't answer. I didn't have an answer, not yet. And we had business to attend to. After a quick change we headed over to our meeting.

It was a good team. We got along well and understood what needed to be done. With all the equipment at their disposal it was easy to set up a detector for non-standard emissions. We focused our search on the nearby asteroids. We were frustrated that there was no immediate discoveries and resolved to be thorough and patient. It wasn't long before it paid off. A message had indeed been sent but not the way we expected. It had come from the base.

"Can we pin point where they are?" I wanted to know.

"I don't think so. It was really sort of an accident we caught the transmission at all. Whoever these guys are they're definitely using the asteroids for cover right now."

Running up to Kane's quarters, I nearly smashed into Furstenburg who said he wanted to get the Scarab fired up and into space as soon as I was ready. He wanted to come along. Though a strange request, I agreed. Furstenburg looked harried. He didn't seem to be himself.

Geof Kane was definitely himself. He was wrestling with the problem of why we hadn't been attacked on the way in. He paced the room, occasionally scratching at his once black, now white, crew cut. When I filled him in on Lars' request and that a message had been sent from the base using a unique frequency it all came together. It looked to Kane like Lars Furstenburg was out to sabotage the base and needed to ensure safe passage out of the system. He expected us to be that ticket.

Kane and I headed for the hangar where Lars was waiting for us. Geof wasn't one to let talking get in the way of action. He moved toward Lars with the ferocious look of a predator closing for the kill. Furstenburg stood his ground, only his eyes revealing a kind of nervous fear. There were people throughout the hangar preparing for some sort of attack. Geof backed Lars up the ramp and into the Scarab's hold. I was close behind.

Kane roared, "When is it coming? When are your people gonna attack the base?"

Furstenburg answered with a gesture, pulling a blaster from beneath his coat with faster reflexes than I'd given him credit for. He spoke slowly, steadying his nerves, "It does not matter. There is no way this evil fount of technology can survive our onslaught. You will pilot me off base. Now! Your lives may be spared despite your high tech alliances."

Kane hadn't stopped moving toward him. Behind my captain's advancing bulk I was able to draw my gun, an old fashioned laser that worked well on flesh without damaging a bulkhead.

I dove to the side firing past Kane on my way to the ground, a burst of brilliant red light slicing into the former base commander turned Retro. Kane looked down on me, "I'd of decked him, son. No need to get dramatic."

We had no idea how much time we had remaining. All we could do was get out and try to stop the assault before they reached the base. I headed for the bridge as Kane went to assemble a skeleton

crew. I had all engines ready for launch when I heard the entry close and the pounding of gunners feet on the metal floors as they headed for battle stations. I didn't wait for clearance to launch. The Scarab was ready and perhaps the bases only defense. We could only guess that Lars had disabled automatic defenses. I hoping to be proved wrong.

Out in the void we turned toward the not so distant asteroids, white Talons emerging from their lair headed to intercept. Definitely Retro ships, the Church of Man was continuing their campaign against all things technological and we were their next target. Kane took the helm as I headed for a vacant turret. It wasn't long before we were in amongst them, the all seeing eye of their agrarian deity emblazoned on their fighters. These were maniacs, unafraid of death, willing to ram you just destroy both your ship and theirs. From the turret I could see flames from our hull, a quick burst of Plasma destroying an enemy only brought the count down to five.

Then my radar went red. I thought it was glitch. There was a swarm headed past us straight for the base. We'd been suckered into a trap, separated from the base the way wolves separate a calf from its mother. Before I could get a lock on any of the ships I was slammed against the inside of the turret. We were out of control, spinning without purpose. I unstrapped myself and clambered from the turret. I wasn't the only one headed for the bridge but there was nothing we could do. At least not for Kane.

The bridge was filled with smoke and debris, red warning lights flashing in the half light. A ceiling panel had fallen and crushed our captain. The wiring it had supported hung lifelessly into the room. There wasn't much we could do but fight for our lives. I assumed command, sent most back to their guns and the rest to repairing our maneuverability. This was too big a job for our one repair droid.

There were three Talons circling us at this point, two of them damaged. I knew we couldn't do much but there had to be a way. Switching power from guns to shields I resolved to use the ships bulk as her own defense. It didn't take long for a Retro to make the mistake of flying directly in front of us. I engaged afterburners and sent the Scarabs weighty prow through the tiny ship. I had the com on open lines and was shouting orders into the air.

"I'm taking the shields down. Hank and Johansen use the extra power to blast those freaks. Everyone else hold your fire. On my mark ... NOW!"

Johansen's was dead but Hank only managed to clip his target. Its shields were down but there was no hull damage. The quick Talon turned to approach from behind us. Textbook, I thought. I hit dead stop, freezing our position. He blew past and Hank nailed him with a torpedo, feeling vindicated. We were in the clear for now but Sheol was dying. Lights blinked out all along as power was cut. We could see they had been boarded, and all I could think of was Jo fighting for her life against those bark-eating, anti-urban, anti-stellar, neo-pagan, hypocritical, knowledge-destroying fanatics. I went red trying to turn the Scarab to her rescue. They had to pry me from the controls. The Sheol was a loss and we weren't doing much better.

By the time we had jumped back to a civilized world I was numb with grief. Jo was certainly dead, we had buried Kane in space during the trip, and the Scarab had received much more damage than we had the finances to repair. We sold the ship for scrap, divided the cash and each went our separate ways. Some of the crew went together hoping to find financial backing, some went back to far away families left waiting months ago. I had no choice. I exchanged work for passage on a small merchant ship, the Sword of Damocles, and headed for Troy in Gemini. A new beginning, a chance to be the explorer I had admired in Mack Christensen and the master of his own fate I had admired in Geof Kane.

Mack's bequest had the unfortunate side effect of actually costing me money. The Tarsus he left was no longer in working order and I lost most of my money and what little he left on repairs and hangar fees. It's been nearly two months since that day I last saw Jo, and I'm ready to move on. I have a my own ship and a new destiny as Gemini's newest privateer.

Player ships: 4pp

Getting Past the Salesman: Know your ships before going to the dealership.

by J.Q.Westerhaus

There are four basic models of single person ship available to the general public, the Tarsus, Centurion, Galaxy, and Orion. Recently I went to several dealerships posing as a naive newcomer to Gemini and asked which ship would be right for me. The salesman pitched his poor little heart out and managed not to tell me a thing. The best way for you to make the right choice is to be well informed.

Below are the latest statistics available followed by my impressions of each vehicle. The popularity of these four ships has made it easy to obtain parts and service through any dealership.

Tarsus

The mainstay of the Exploratory Services fleet just a few years ago, these slow but sure craft are now a familiar part of private enterprise. The Tarsus has been discontinued. We list it here because of its popularity and general availability in the used markets.

Cockpit

- Low visibility, especially through the small side windows. Cockpit placement prevents any over the shoulder view.
- Offers one MFD in addition to standard radar and armor displays. See illustration.
- Comfort is comparable to the Orion but claustrophobic by comparison with the other two models reviewed.

Speed / Maneuverability

- Top speed: 300 kps. With afterburners: 900 kps.
- The Tarsus may seem sluggish in turns and rolls.
- Supports up to level 2 engine upgrades.

Ordinance / Protection

- No slots available for turrets.
- Supports only level one shield upgrades.
- One gun rack and one weapon or tractor beam rack.

Overall Performance Rating

-I would give it a B in peacetime. With the war so close and the rise of piracy I have to downgrade my rating to a D. Longevity in Gemini is worth the extra expense of purchasing a better ship or paying for protection.

Centurion

This is the workhorse of the mercenary community. The Centurion is a heavy fighter with the ability to do almost any gun-for-hire work. The limited cargo hold can contain more than an overnight bag but not by much. This is our pick ship for those pilots who love to fly but it won't make you a living on the trade circuit.

Cockpit

- High visibility. The dome cockpit of this single seater affords the pilot clear view of his target. Ride is comfortable at high speeds and in tight turns.
- One MFD in addition to standard armor and radar displays. See illustration.
- Instrument placement is intuitive and easy to read, overall design highly ergonomic.

Speed / Maneuverability

- Top speed: 500 kps. With afterburners: 1295 kps.
- We were very impressed with the roll rate of the Centurion although it can easily be out maneuvered by light fighters such as the Talon. For a fighter of its class this ship offers clean tight flight dynamics.
- Supports engine upgrades through level 3.

Ordinance / Protection

- A rear turret is a popular option for this ship.
- Supports up to level 3 shield upgrades.
- There are places for 4 guns and three weapons or tractor beams sans turret.

Overall Performance Rating

-For the mercenary community this ship earns an A while those with more mercantile ambitions will find its small cargo hold and inability to support a cargo hold expansion a definite turn off. Consider your needs before investing.

Galaxy

A versatile merchant's vessel the Galaxy is perfect for those with an entrepreneurial spirit. She is by no means a military vessel but the Galaxy can easily protect herself and the large amount cargo she's able to carry.

Cockpit

-This large roomy cockpit offers excellent visibility despite the bulky ship behind it. Some pilots may take a while to adjust to the HUD area. Unlike most modern ships the Galaxy's HUD is not built into the main window, instead it is suspended above the MFDs in front of the window. The front window is just too expansive to build the HUD into it.

-Dual MFDs have been standard since the 2669 model and are a popular feature.

-All displays are conveniently placed for ease of use.

Speed / Maneuverability

-Top Speed: 300 kps. With afterburners: 900 kps.

-Supports up to engine upgrade level 3.

-For a ship of its bulk the Galaxy is extremely maneuverable although not as fast as we would have hoped.

Ordinance / Protection

-Due to the large size of this ship it is able to support both top and bottom turrets.

-Shield level 3 is the maximum supported by the Galaxy.

-Before turrets there are slots for only two guns and one weapon or tractor beam.

Overall Rating

-The Galaxy is successful in its role as the top of the line mercantile vessel available outside to the public. I give it an A without reservation. Trigger happy pilots may be a little disappointed in its moderate top speed but the availability of two turrets adds a comfortable measure of safety.

Orion

The Orion is perhaps the safest of all the vehicles mentioned here. The Orion is powerhouse. It is can carry the most armor and shields of all ships listed here at the expense of its maneuverability. This is a sturdy ship designed to last.

Cockpit

-Low visibility. The cockpit is dark and somewhat cramped with less window area than the Tarsus.

-Dual MFDs are standard and easy to use. See illustration.

-Instruments are not as easy to use as in the Centurian but are simple to get a handle on.

Speed / Maneuverability

-Top Speed: 350 kps. With Afterburners: 1000 kps.

-Supports up to engine upgrade level 5.

-Although the Orion has better than average speed it is difficult to pull through tight turns.

Ordinance / Protection

-Supports addition of a rear turret.

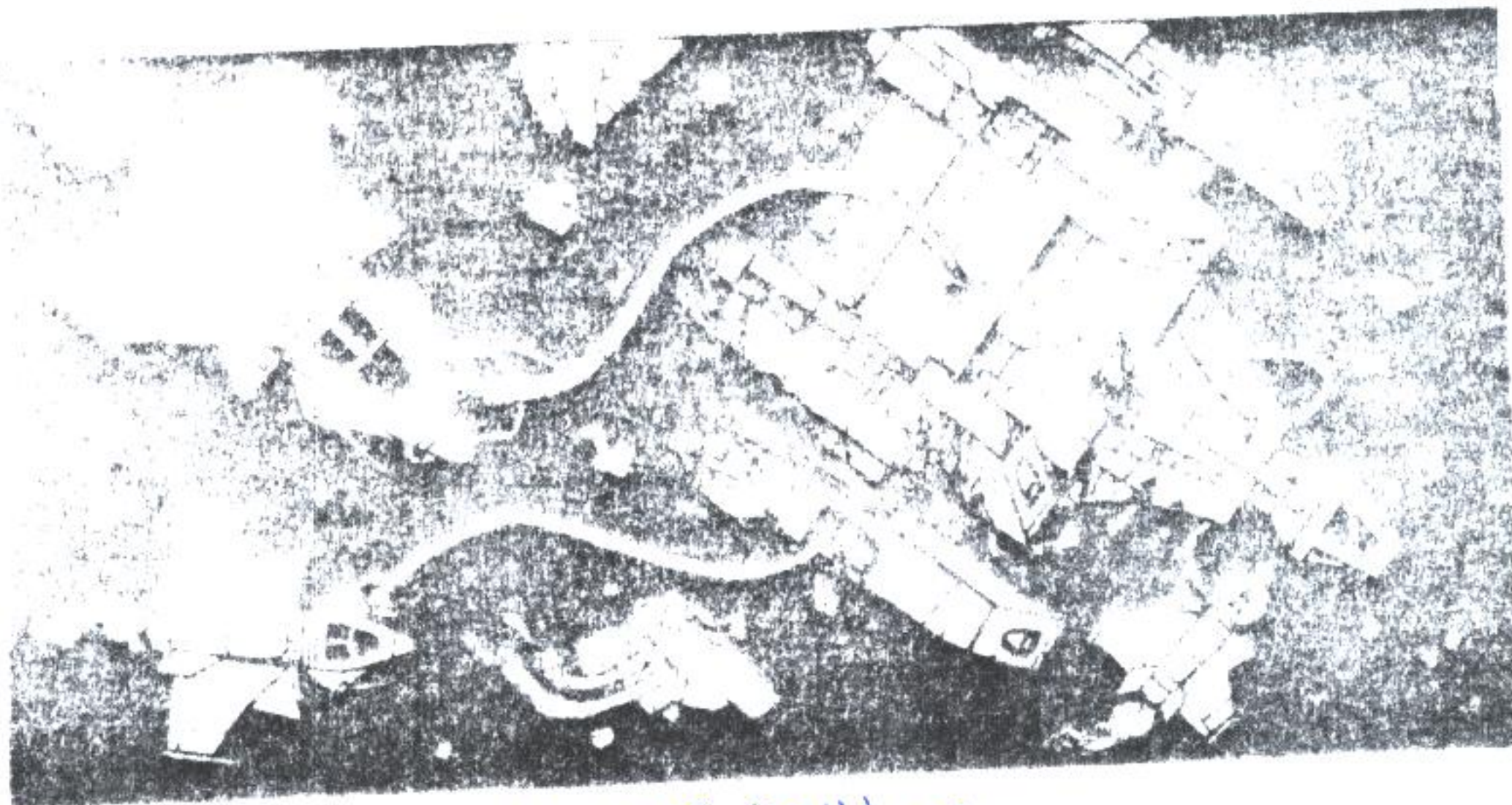
-Without the turret there is room for two guns and one weapon or tractor beam. With level 5 engine upgrades there is no reason not to pick a high quality gun with a high energy drain.

-Supports up to shield upgrade level 5.

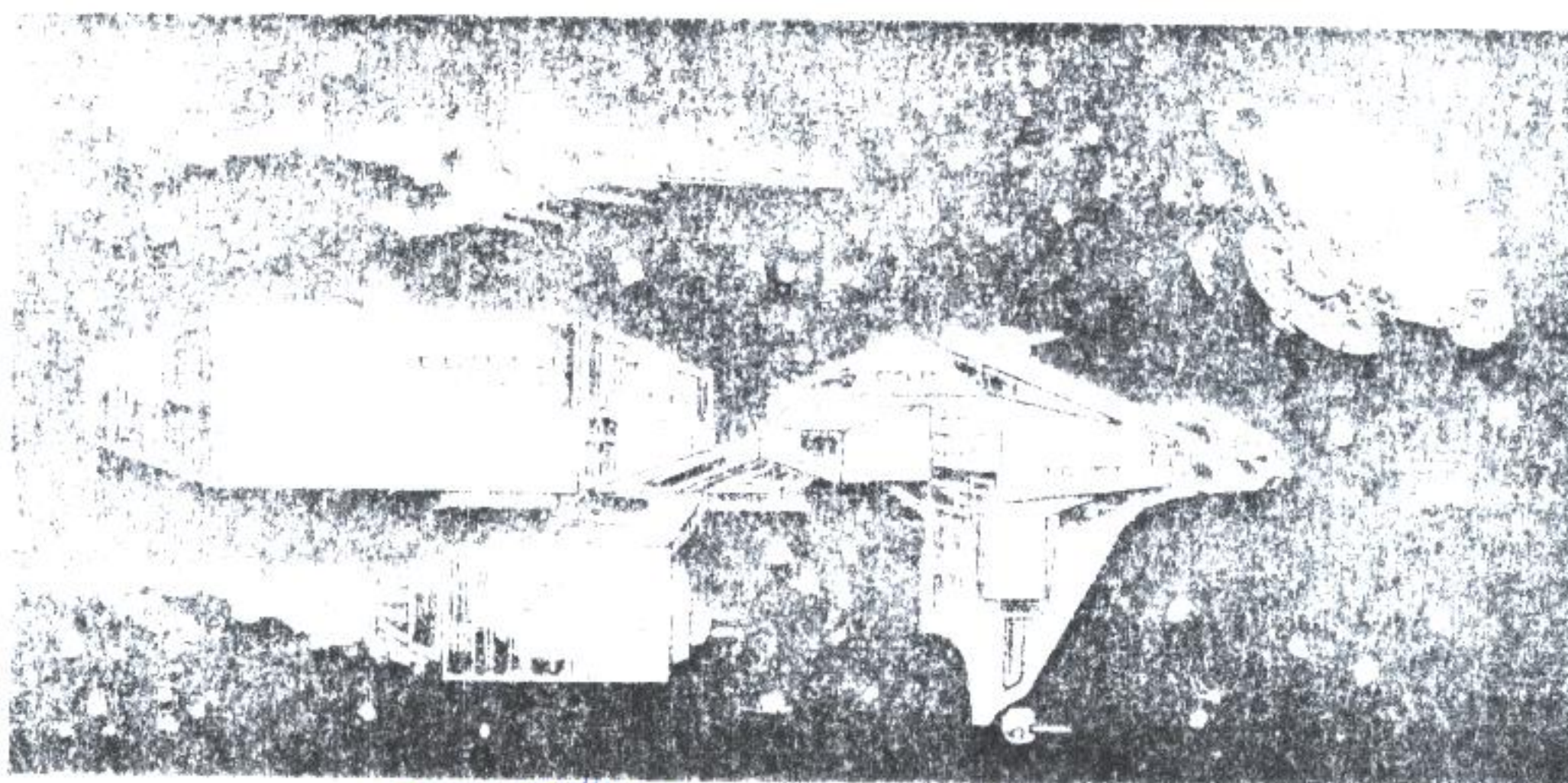
Overall Rating

-Due to its low maneuverability, limited cargo hold, and the expense of outfitting it, I give the Orion a B. With money, though, you can make this ship a high A. I highly recommend the full option package for this ship. The Orion is nearly indestructible and did the best of any ship in our 90 kps collision test.

Next Issue

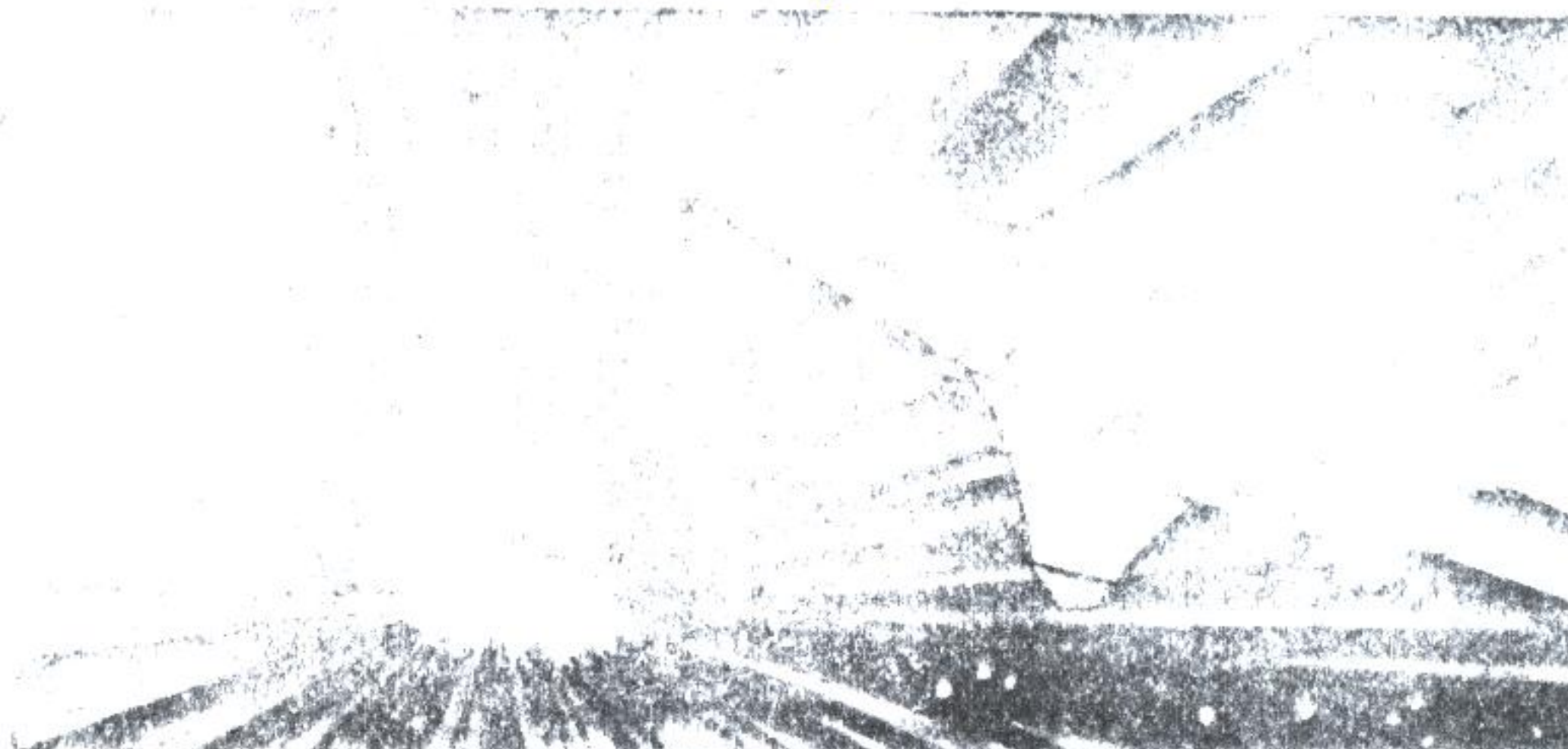


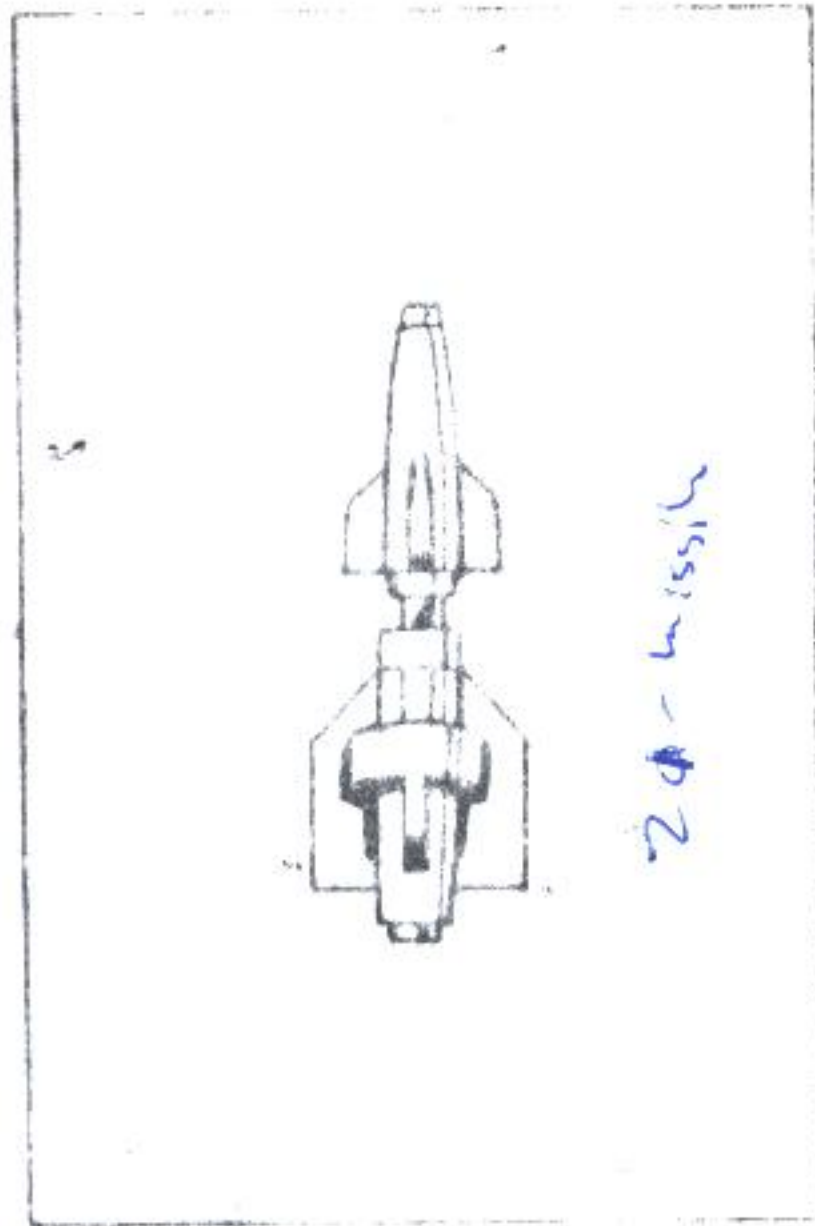
6 - Pirates 'Boarding' a merchant ship.



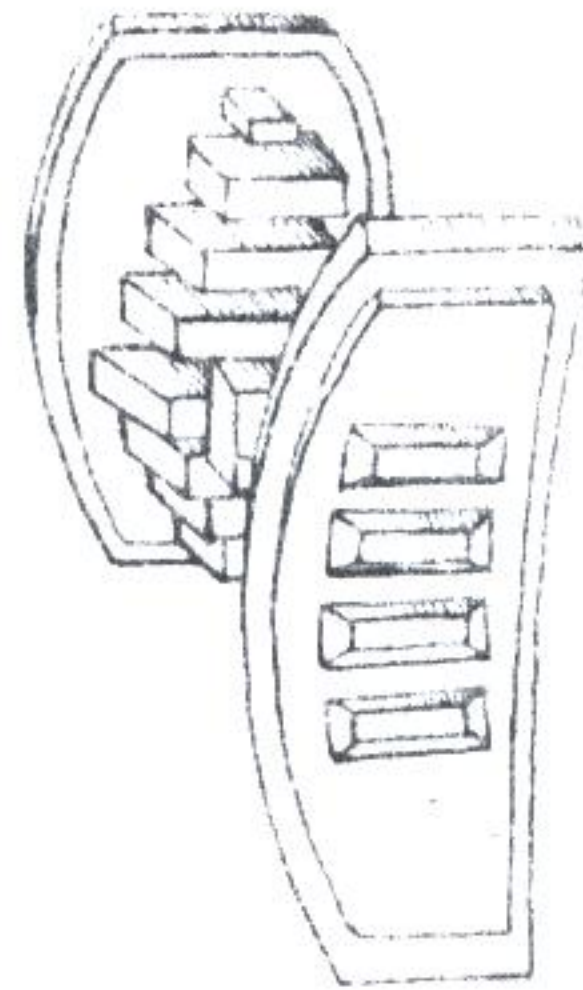
13 - St. Helena escorting drayman

4 - waiting to land

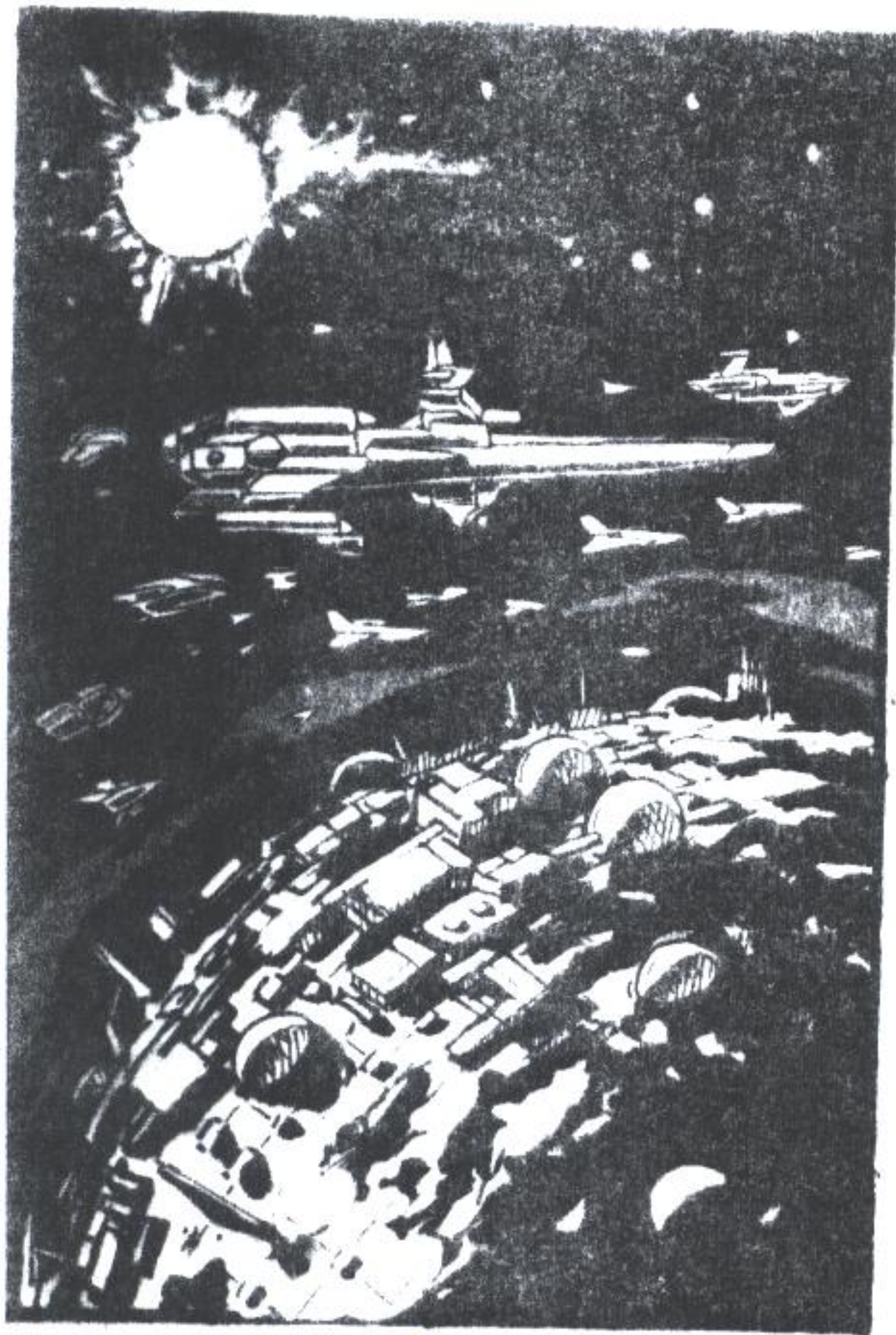




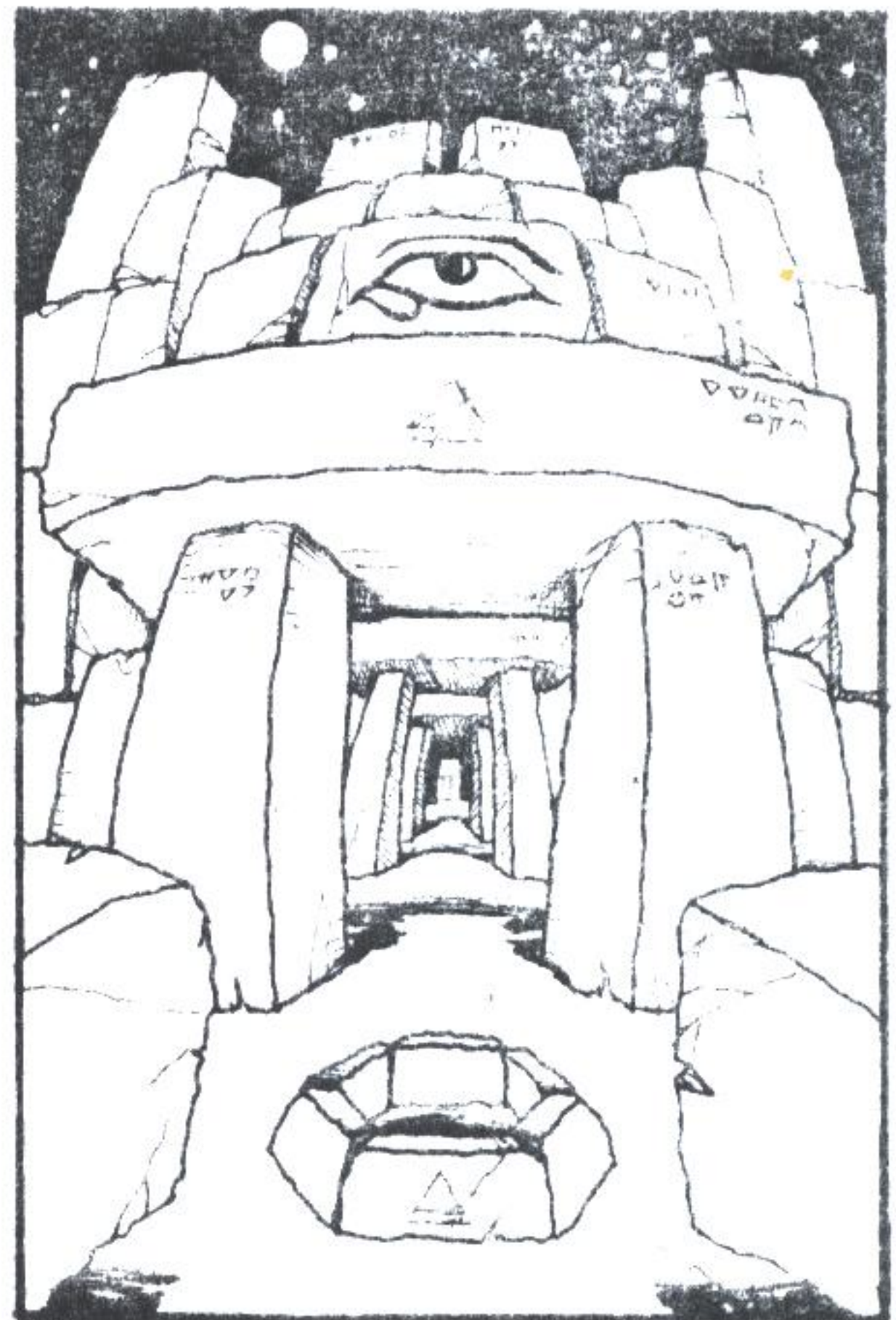
20 - missile



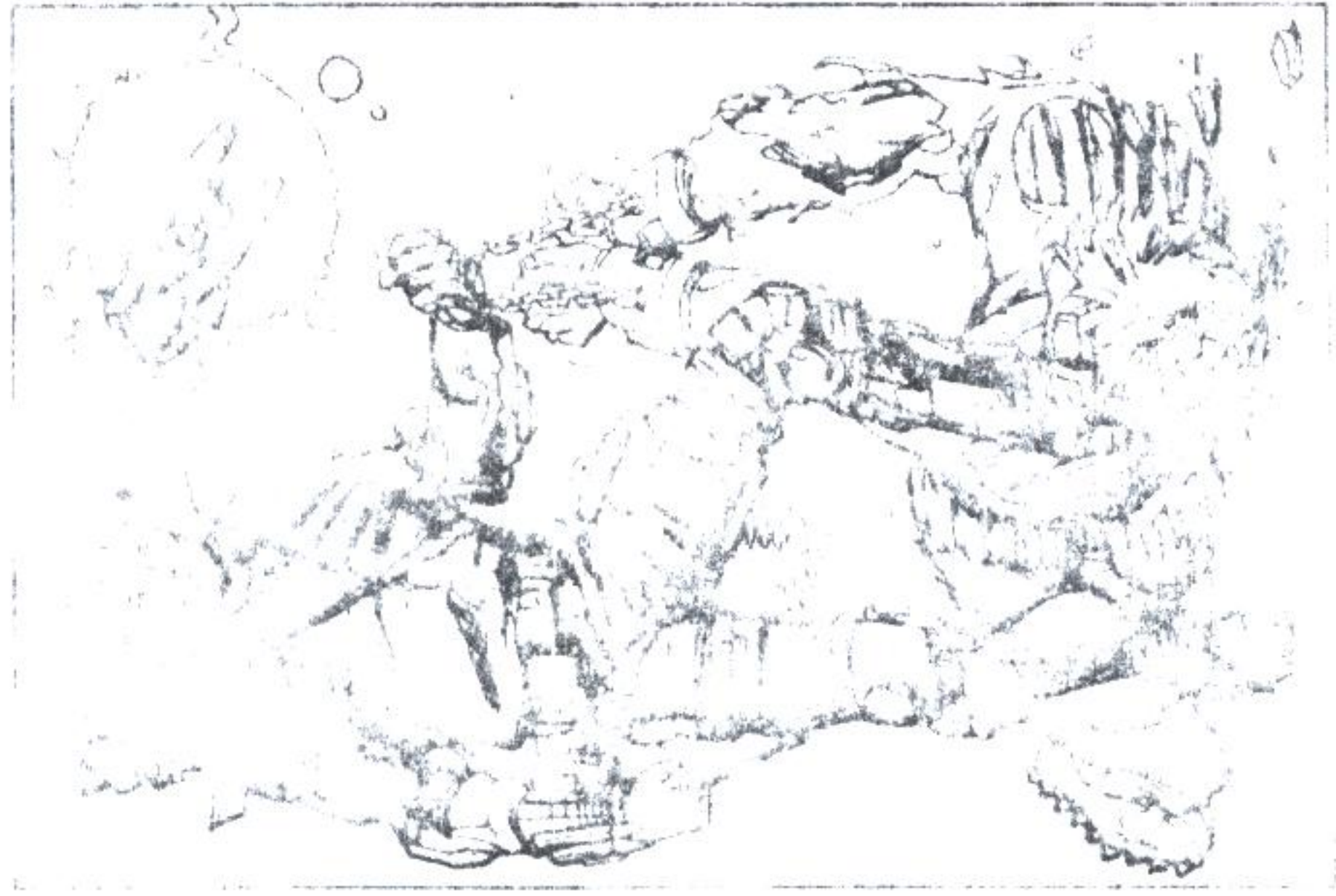
21 - scanner



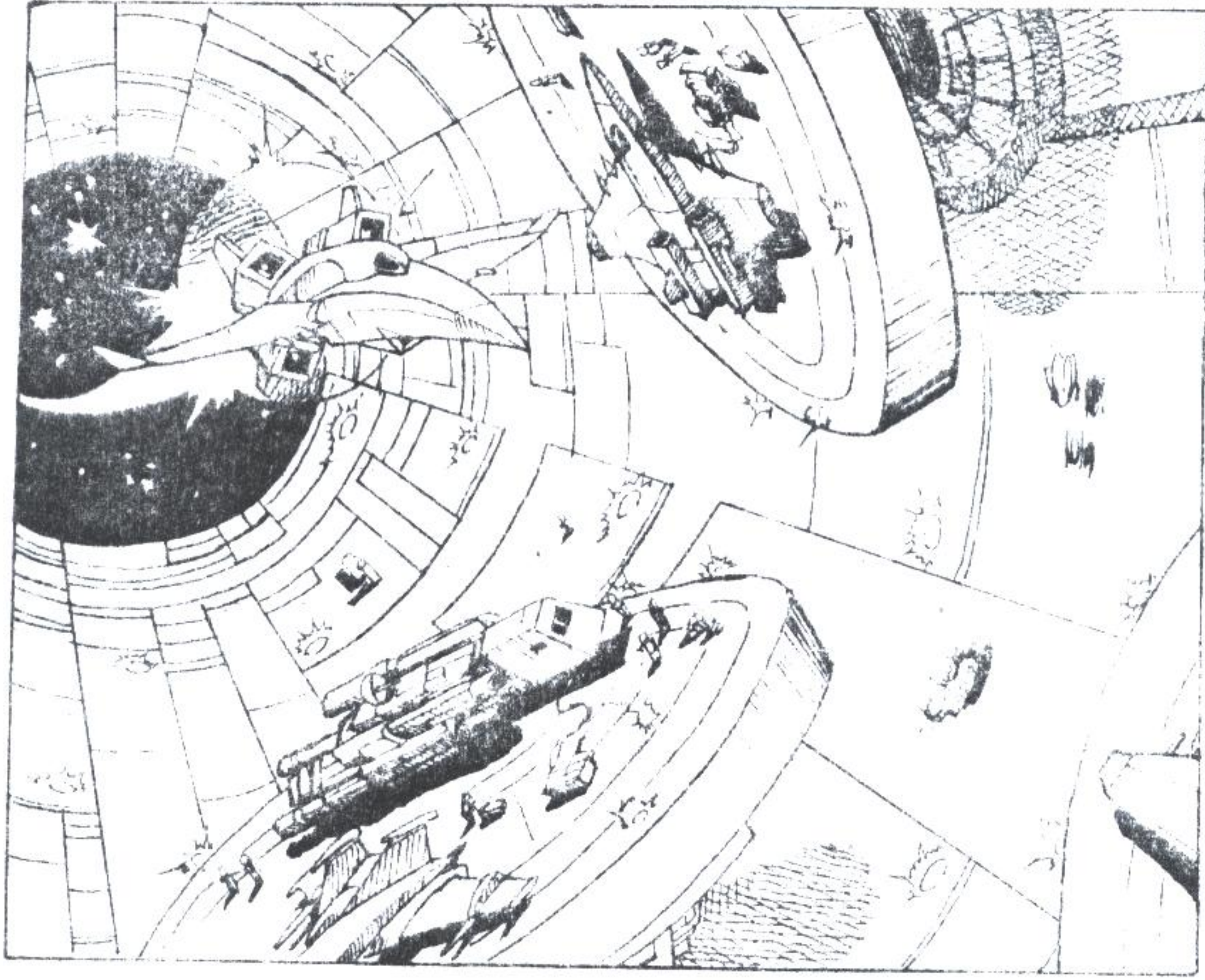
9 - space traffic around
a mining asteroid



10 - C of K home temple

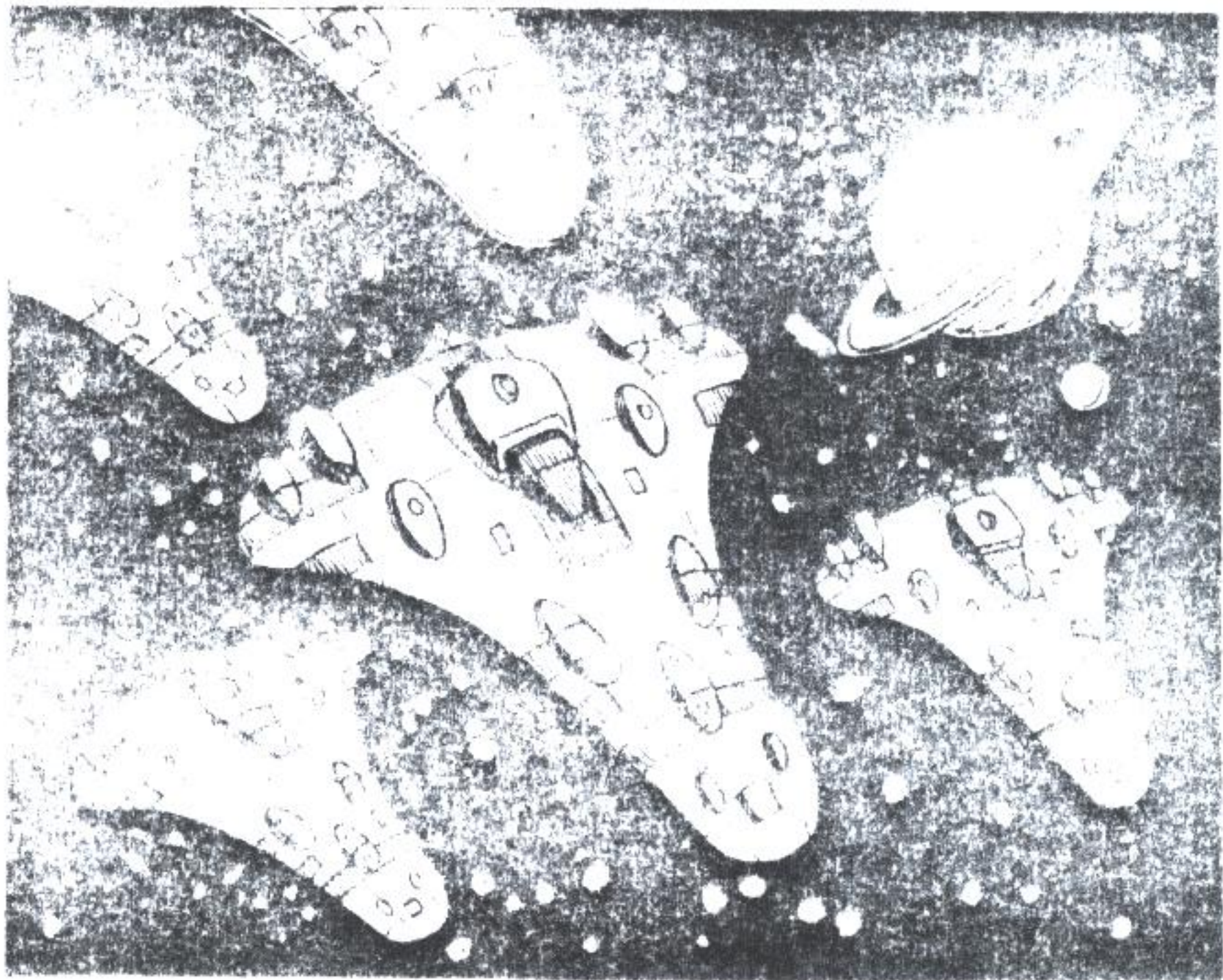
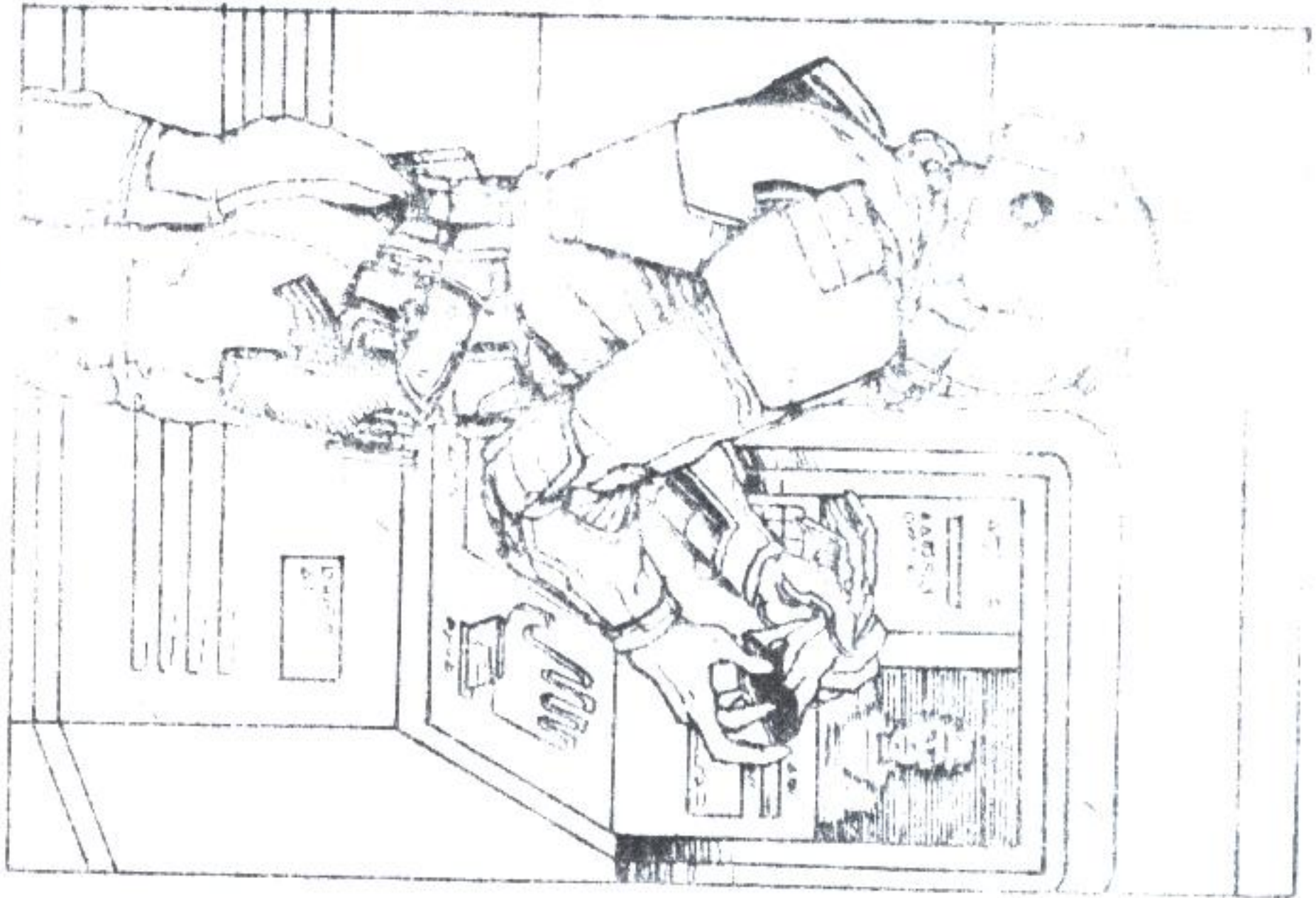


12 - Bounty hunter to
glaciers.

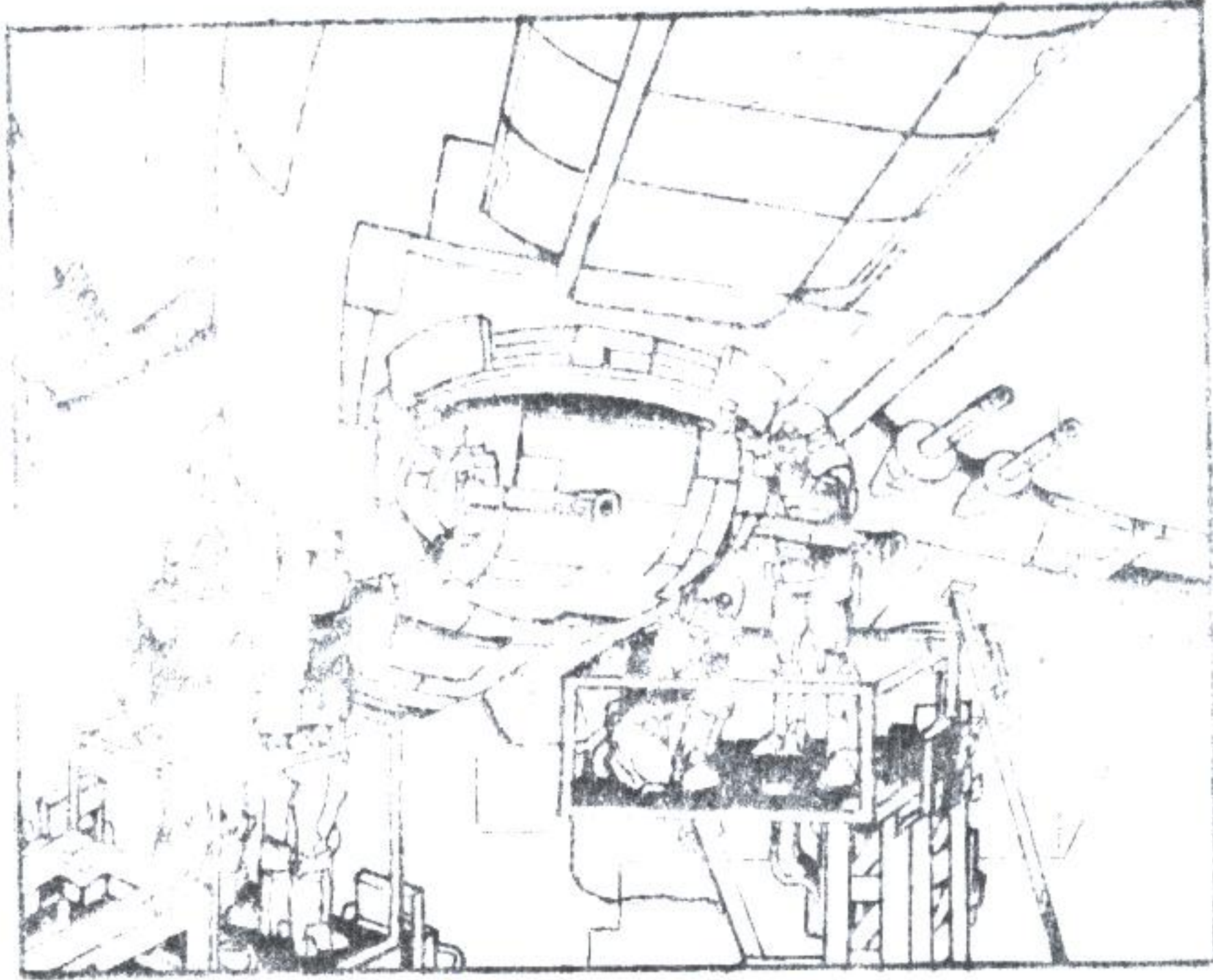


19 - Huge Hangar seen w/ Ketur, landing, busy stuff

17 - Person @ Mission - Computer.

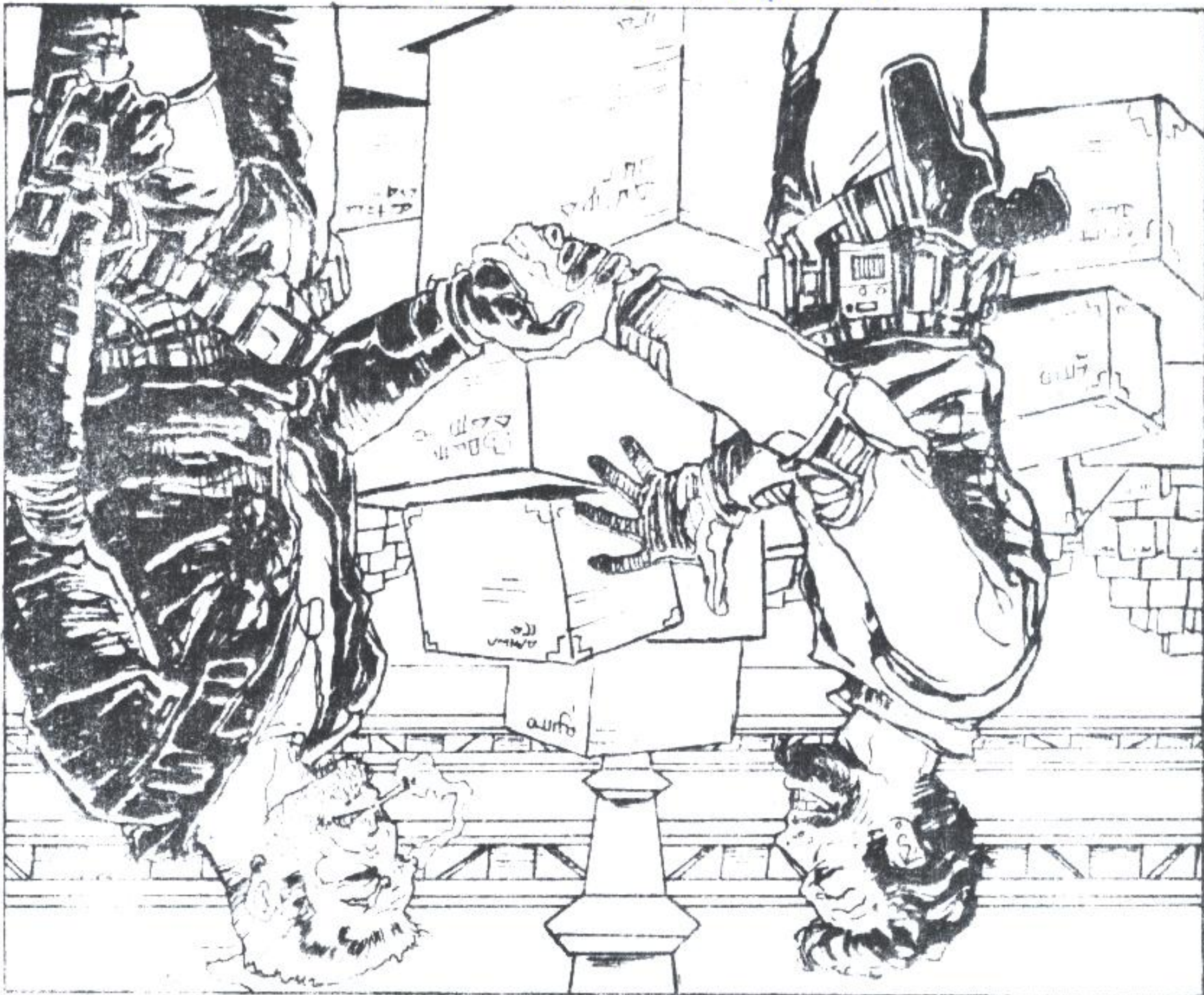


18 - Power of the Confederation / Big Control slips w/ plant.



8 - installing a turret

16 - 3 making heads of section is covered by



15 - local militia in formation



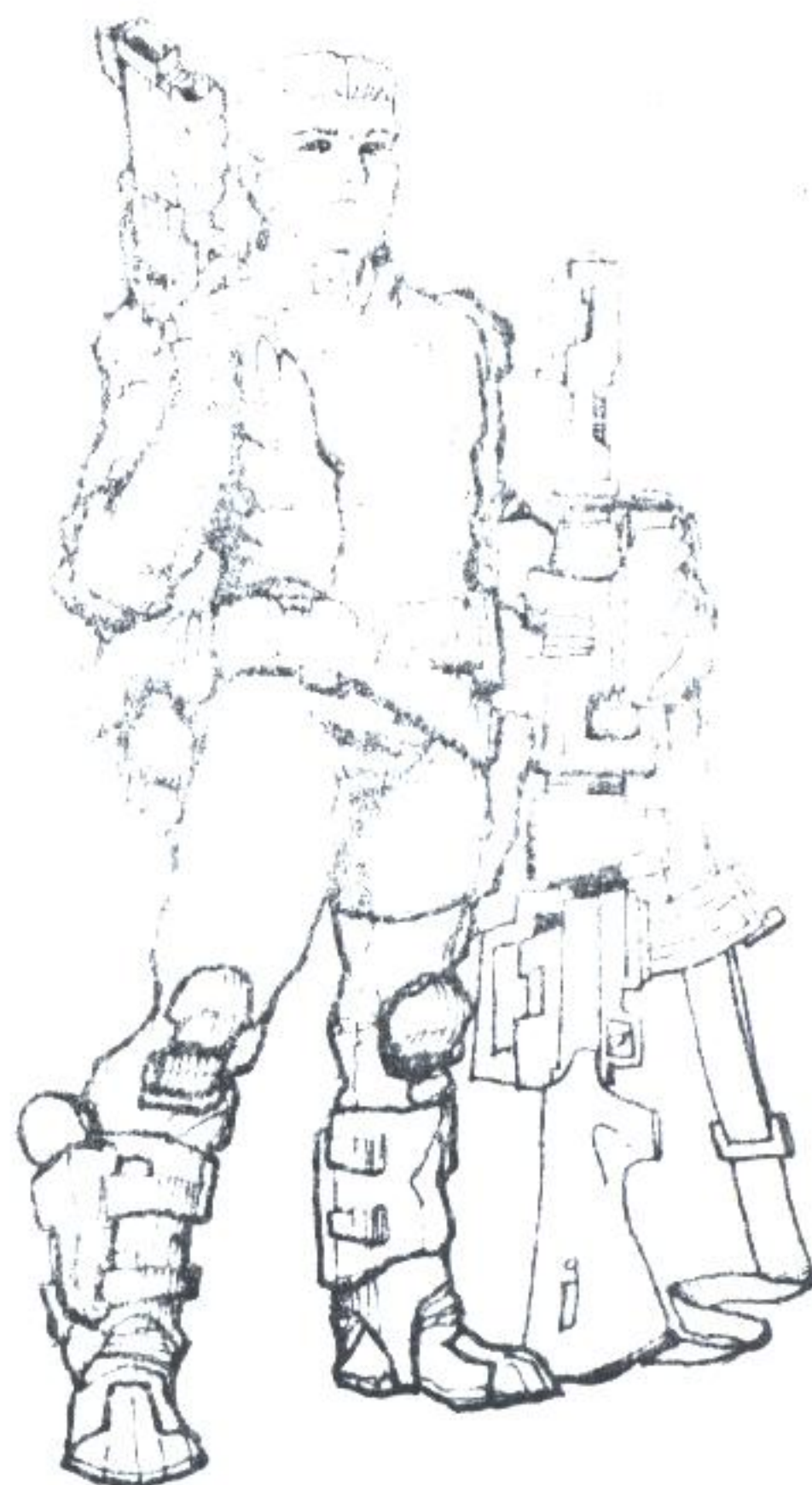
Kilnati: attacking Explorer Services (S)



King's Arms
A. Bunt's account
(43)



14 - Software Modifications



1 - Mercenary Guild ad.



7 - Landscape for pleasure plant



Late
afternoon
dance
therapy...



It helps me
to shed my
old tired skin...



So that I may
don my new self
and face the oncoming
day with renewed
vigor...



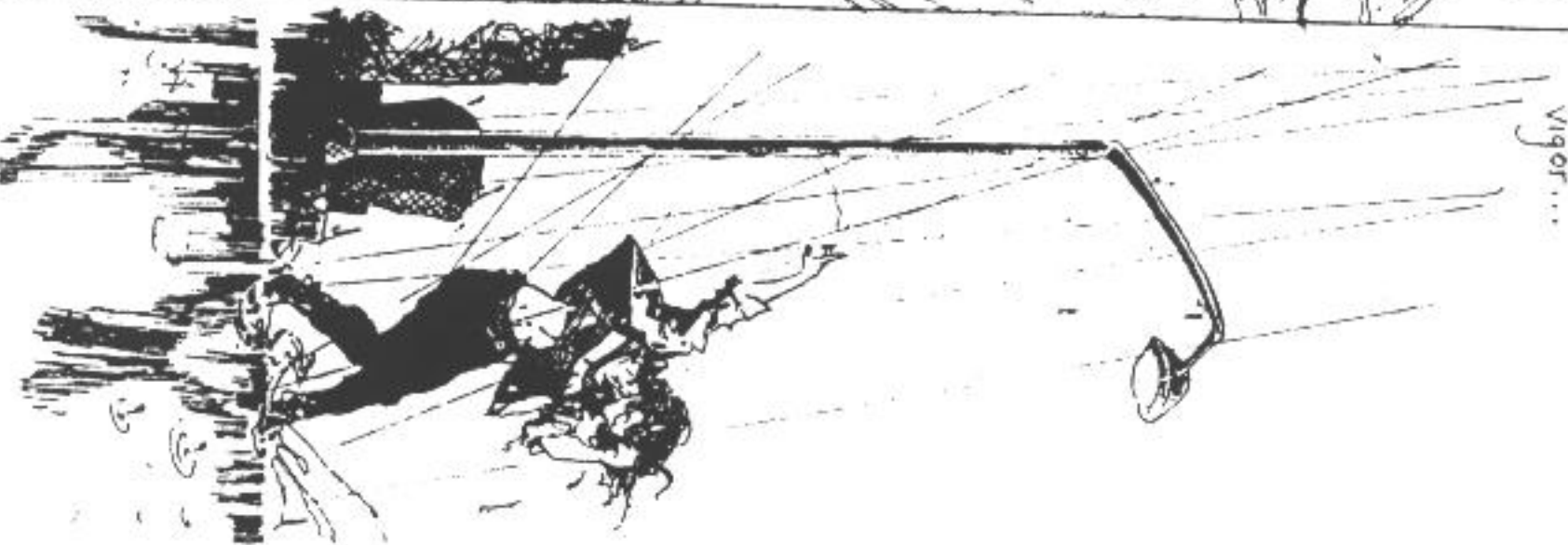
~ CHESEY
OLD COMIX
STUFF
YOU'VE SEEN
IT BEFORE...
JUST TO
DEMONSTRATE
MOOD &
LINEWORK, ETC.



Late
afternoon
dance
therapy...



It helps me
to shed my
old tired skin...



So that I may
don my new self
and face the oncoming
day with renewed
vigor...



... our fiery little firebrand
is mixing it with the Skins on the
docks ...

WHY DO THE HEATHENS R A G E

?

I CAN TASTE THEIR FEAR.
IT IS A WARM
SALINE RUSH THAT WASHES
BITTER THROUGH MY
TEETH...



AND IT
IS VERY
SWEET,
INDEED.



THEY KEEP COMING, REGARDLESS...
IT'S BLOOD THEY WANT...

I'LL GIVE THEM BLOOD.



OHMYGOD, OHMYGOD!!!
Somebody stop them, for
Chris's sake!

PERSISTANT LITTLE VERMIN, TOO...
IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO THEM
THAT THEY BEAT ME TO A PULP
THAN HELP OUT THEIR BUDDIES
THAT I'VE CRITICALLY INJURED.

After you, kiddo...

DEKKAH!!!
WHYNNNN



- AND THERE ARE
SO MANY OF THEM.

I SOON REALIZE THAT THE
TIME FOR RATIONIZATION IS
OVER....

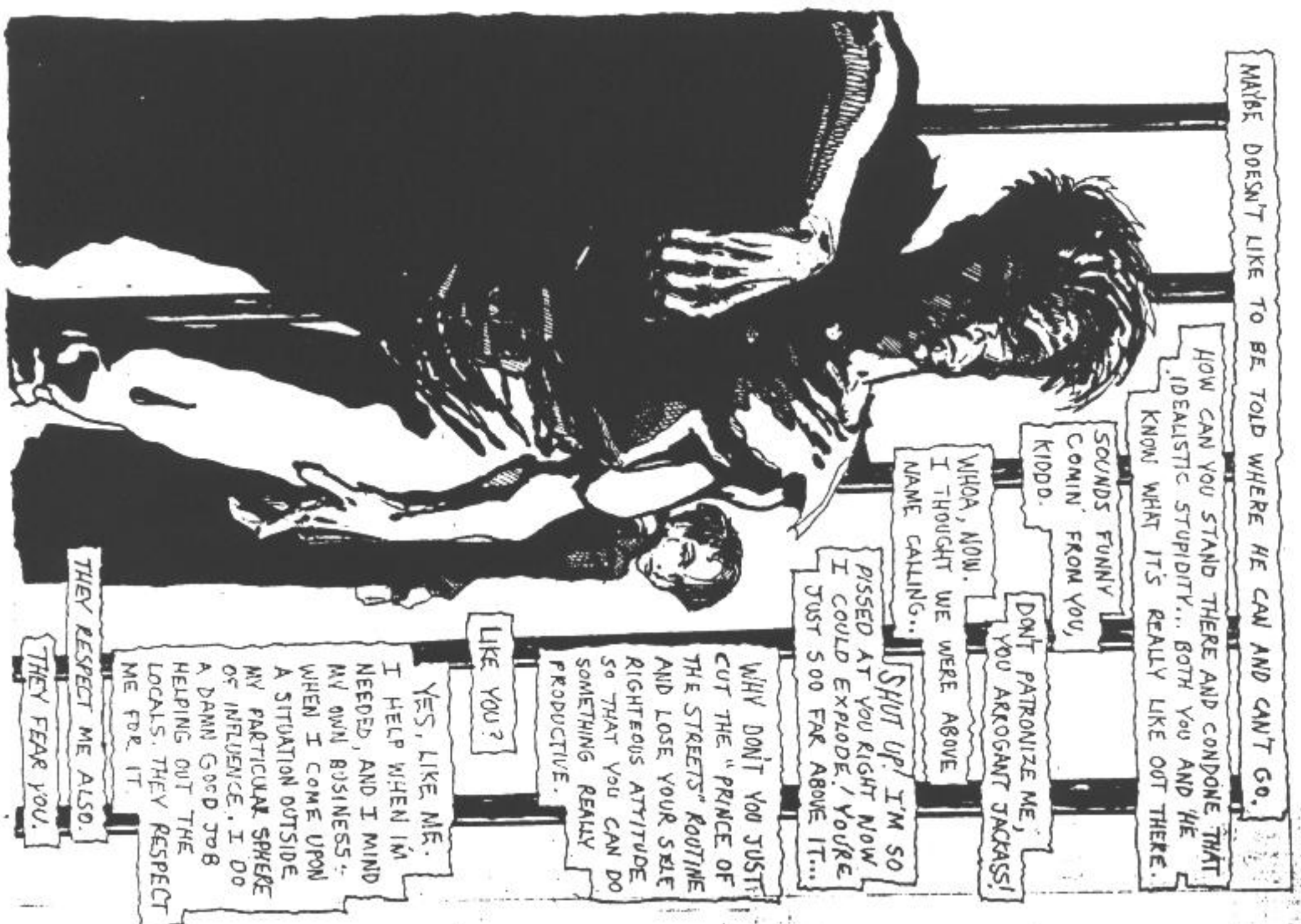
I GO BERSERK.



TOO LATE I HEAR
THE CRACKLE OF
RIOT-GUNS
ECHO DOWN THE
STREET.



45



MAYBE DOESN'T LIKE TO BE TOLD WHERE HE CAN AND CAN'T GO.

HOW CAN YOU STAND THERE AND CONDONE THAT IDEALISTIC STUPIDITY... BOTH YOU AND HE KNOW WHAT IT'S REALLY LIKE OUT THERE.

SOUNDS FUNNY COMIN' FROM YOU, KIDDO.

DON'T PATRONIZE ME, YOU ARROGANT JACKASS!

WHA, NOW. I THOUGHT WE WERE ABOVE NAME CALLING...

SHUT UP! I'M SO PISSED AT YOU RIGHT NOW I COULD EXPLODE! YOU'RE JUST 500 FAK ABOVE IT...

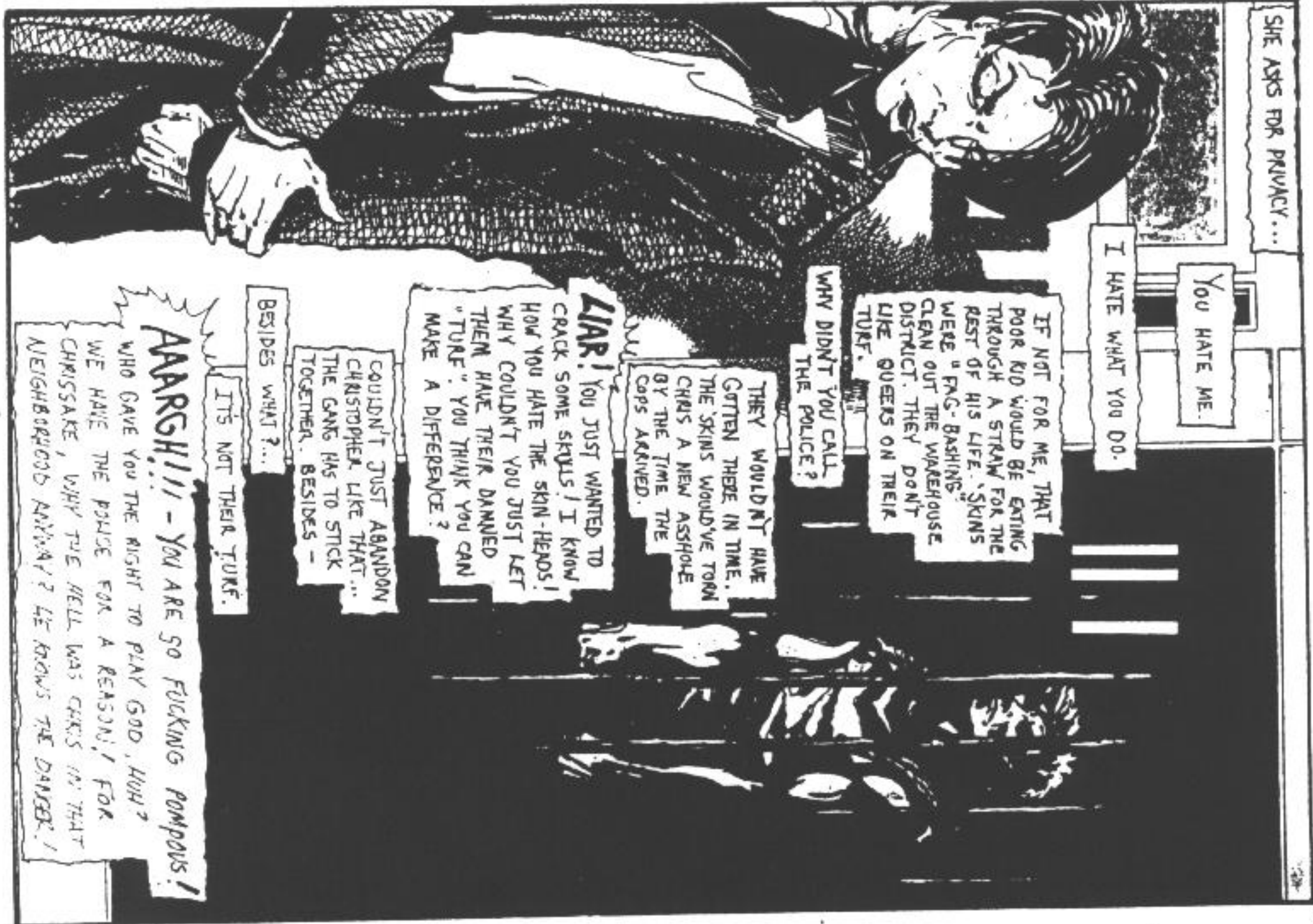
WHY DON'T YOU JUST CUT THE "PRINCE OF THE STREETS" ROUTINE AND LOSE YOUR SKEL RIGHTEOUS ATTITUDE SO THAT YOU CAN DO SOMETHING REALLY PRODUCTIVE.

LIKE YOU?

YES, LIKE MR. I HELP WHEN I'M NEEDED, AND I MIND MY OWN BUSINESS. WHEN I COME UPON A SITUATION OUTSIDE MY PARTICULAR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, I DO A DAMN GOOD JOB HELPING OUT THE LOCALS. THEY RESPECT ME FOR IT.

THEY RESPECT ME ALSO.

THEY FEAR YOU.



SHE ASKS FOR PRIVACY...

YOU HATE ME.

I HATE WHAT YOU DO.

IF NOT FOR ME, THAT POOR KID WOULD BE EATING THROUGH A STRAW FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE. "SKINS" WERE "FAG-BASHING" CLEAN OUT THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT. THEY DON'T LIKE QUEERS ON THEIR TURF.

WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL THE POLICE?

THEY WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN THERE IN TIME. THE SKINS WOULD'VE TOWN CHRIS A NEW ASSHOLE BY THE TIME THE COPS ARRIVED.

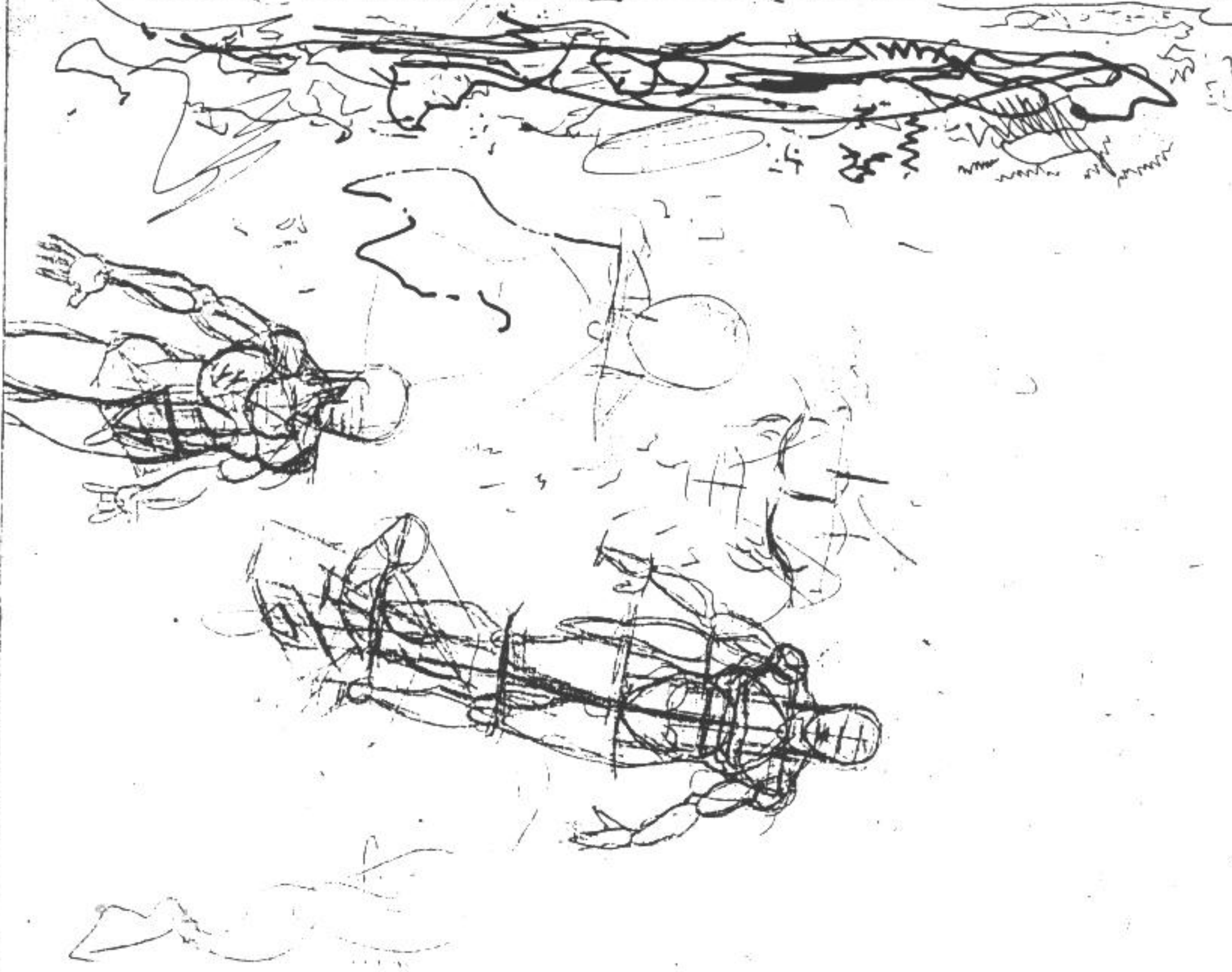
LIAR! YOU JUST WANTED TO CRACK SOME SKIDS! I KNOW HOW YOU HATE THE SKIN-HEADS! WHY COULDN'T YOU JUST LET THEM HAVE THEIR DAMNED "TUNE". YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

COULDN'T JUST ABANDON CHRISTOPHER LIKE THAT... THE GANG HAS TO STICK TOGETHER. BESIDES -

BESIDES WHAT?...

IT'S NOT THEIR TURF.

AARGH!!! - YOU ARE SO FUCKING POMPUS! WHO GAVE YOU THE RIGHT TO PLAY GOD, HUH? WE HAVE THE POLICE FOR A REASON! FOR CHRISTSAKE, WHY THE HELL WAS CHRIS IN THAT NEIGHBORHOOD ANYWAY? HE KNOWS THE DANGER!





THE NEXT DAY, IN THE DOCKS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT.

AVENUE X...

GODDAMNED SKINHEADS OUT
IN FULL FORCE! ON THE MARCH
AND PISSED AS HELL!

JINX, YOU AND DEYDRA
GET THE WORD OUT AND
GET THE GANG TO SAFETY!

BUT WEASEL...
WHATTAABOUT...

HE'S GONNA
STICK AROUND
AND GET HIS
ASS KICKED FOR
HIM, JUST LIKE
HIS HERO! GOD,
THE COPS'R
GONNA SWARM!

C'MON!





— CONFRONTATION
ON
AVE. X ...

BUT THERE WILL BE NO
MORE FIGHTING TODAY.
BAD NEWS TRAVELS FAST AND
SOON NEW YORK'S FINEST HAVE
SUCCESSFULLY LIMITED THE TWO
PARTIES TO THE EXCHANGE
OF THREATS AND WORDS
INSTEAD OF BLOWS.



NATASHAI!

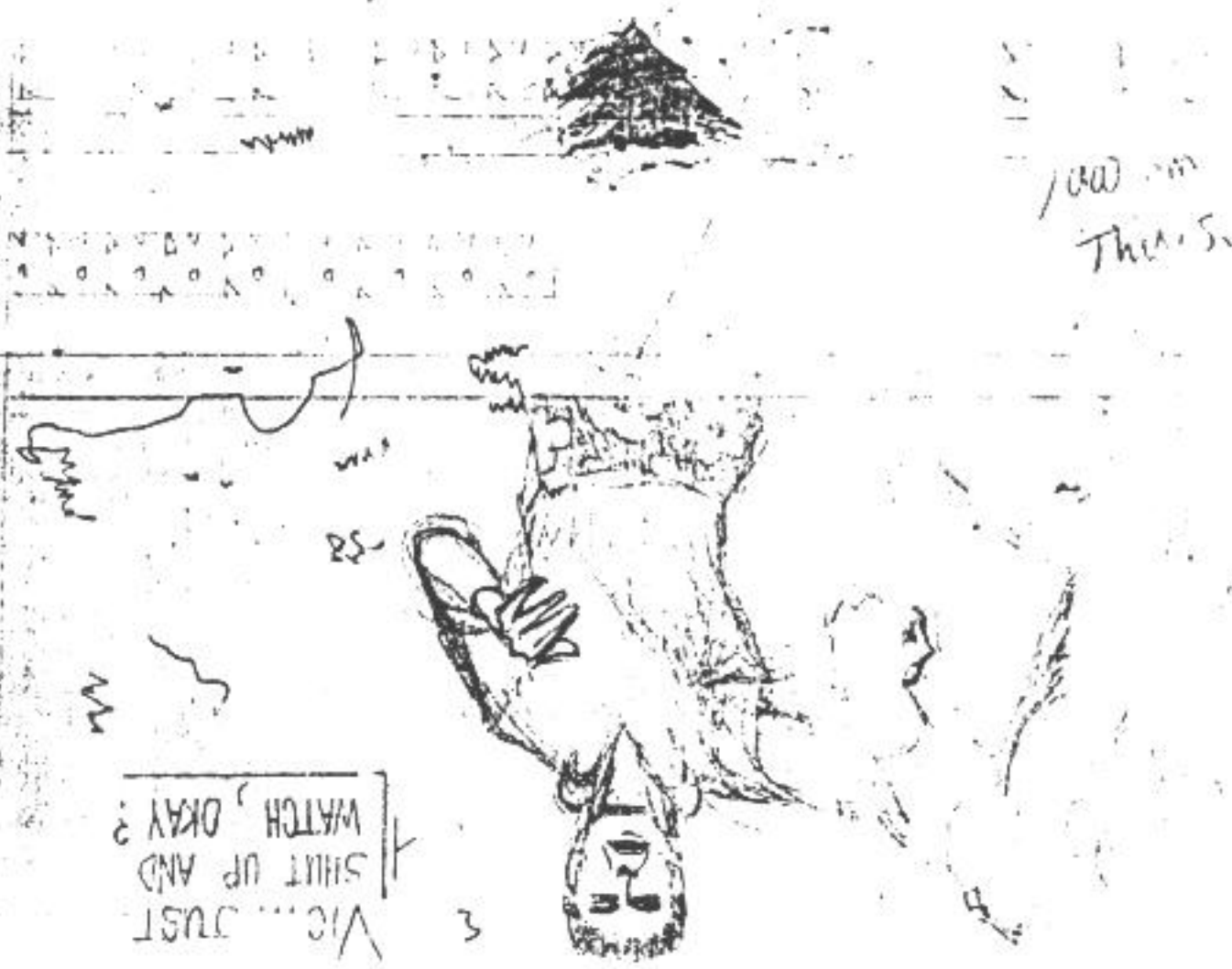
Oh god oh god oh god.

WEASEL'S IN THERE, TASHA...

I KNOW... I KNOW!!! BUT THERE'S NOT A
THING WE CAN DO FOR HIM RIGHT NOW,
DEYDRA - WE'D NEVER GET TO HIM THROUGH
THAT MOB...

WE'D BETTER SCRAM
BEFORE THE COPS START
ARRESTING RANDOMLY...

QUICK!!
KEEP YOUR HEAD LOW AND RUN
FOR THE POWER-HOUSE...



MEANWHILE - IN A PRISONER HOLDING CELL, BENEATH THE M.I.D. COMPOUND...

HEY!
HEY!

HEADS UP, REFLECT...

SEEMS YOU'VE GOT COMPANY.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD!

THANK YOU, OFFICER...

MR. DUDRUK...

THIS HAS REALLY GOT TO STOP. I'VE COME TO APPREVE YOU BEFORE YOU START ANY MORE TROUBLE. I ALSO HAVE A SMALL PACKAGE FOR YOU.

Good.

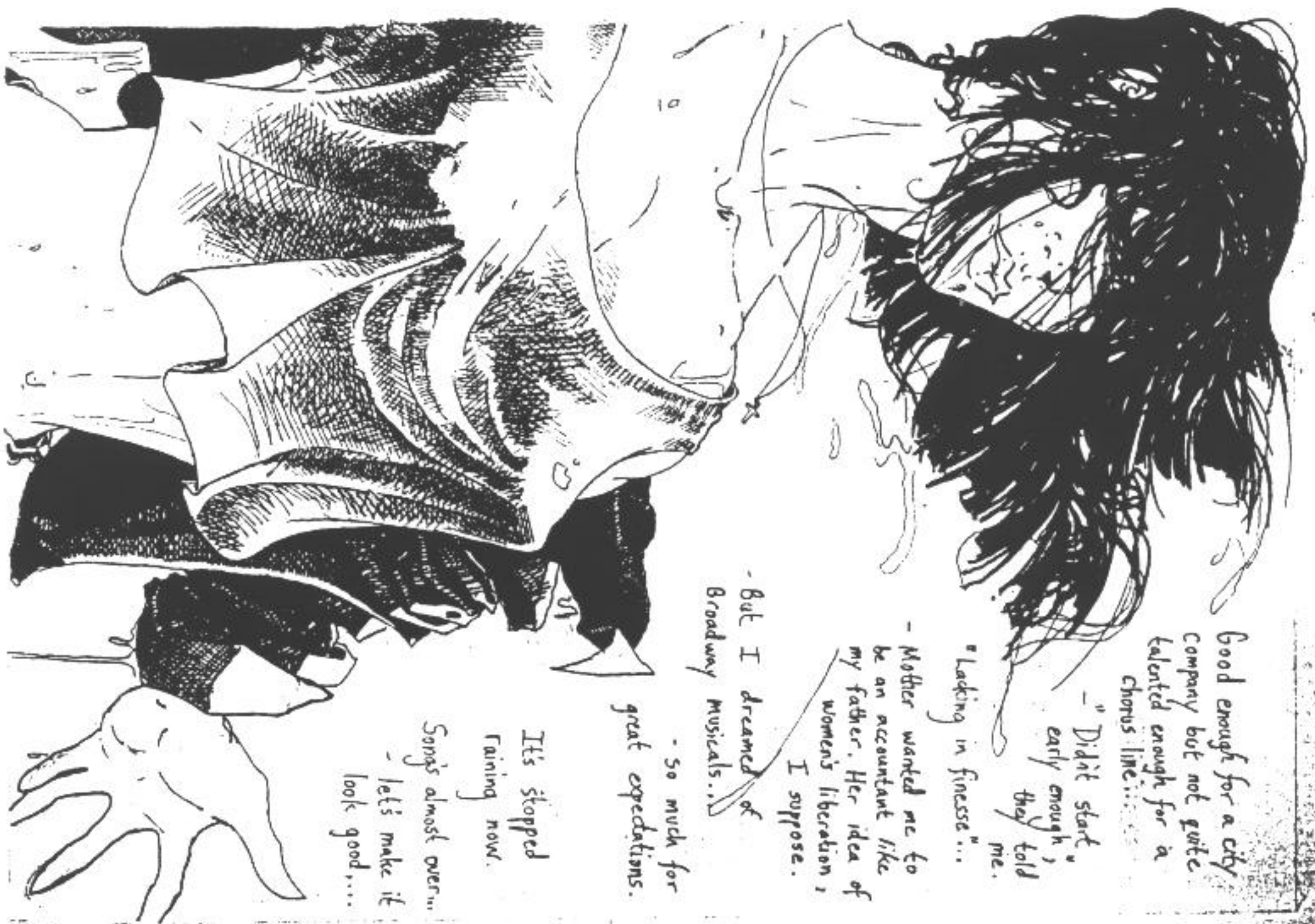
ROCKMAN IS THE ONE CONDENSING... AS ALWAYS... DOESN'T HELP THE POUNDING IN MY HEAD AT ALL.

ESCAPEE, THAT EVENING...

SEMPER PEREVIATVR LEO

FIAT VOLUNTAS TUA.

again... faster...



Good enough for a city
company but not quite
talented enough for a
chorus line...

"Didn't start
early enough,"
they told
me.

"Lacking in finesse..."

- Mother wanted me to
be an accountant like
my father. Her idea of
women's liberation;
I suppose.

- But I dreamed of
Broadway musicals...

- So much for
great expectations.

It's stopped
raining now.

Songs almost over...
- Let's make it
look good....



"Tasha... we've got trouble..."

