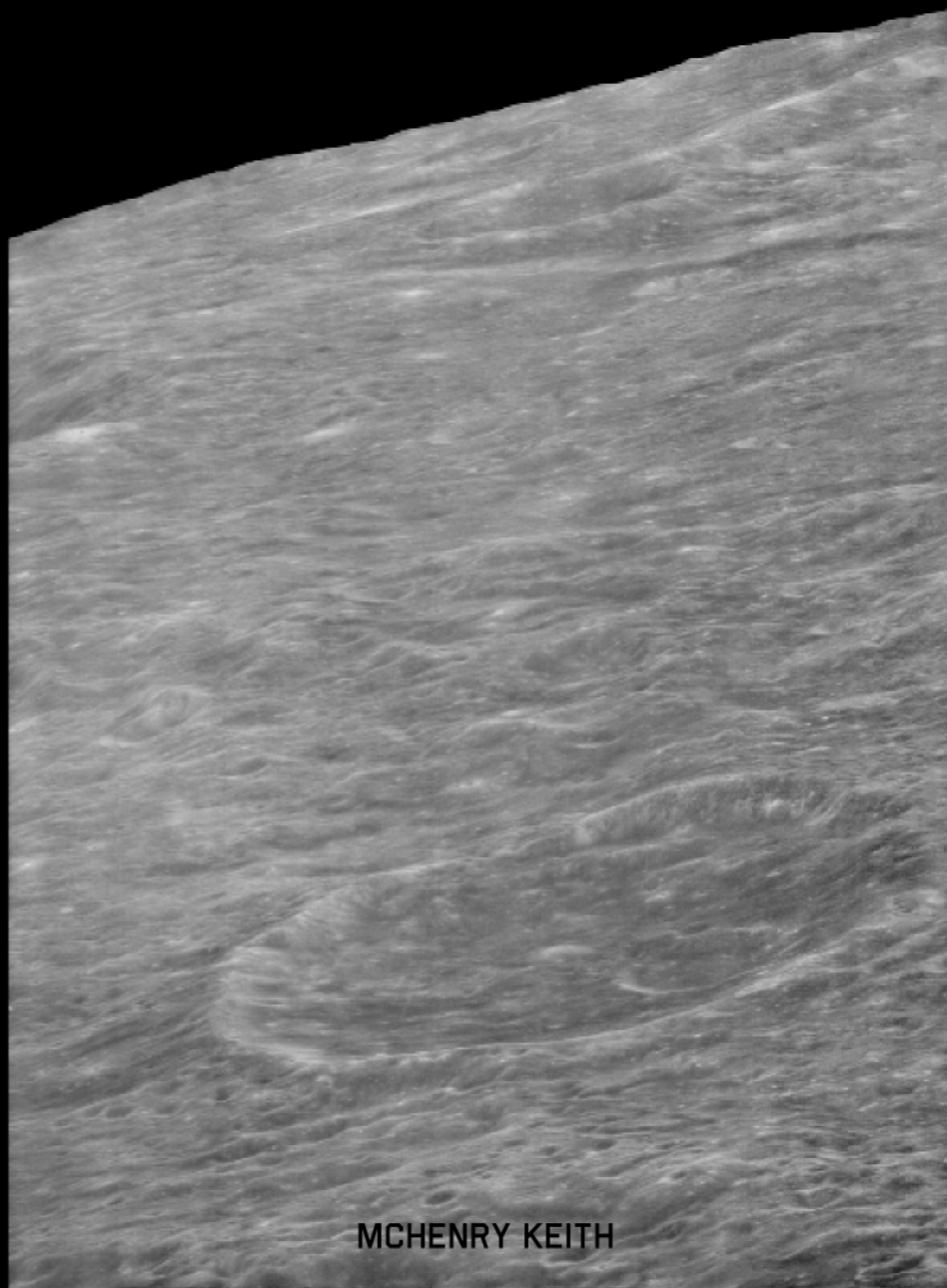





TRANSLUNAR



MCHENRY KEITH





Now, I understand that some believe that we should attempt a return to the surface of the Moon first, as previously planned. But I just have to say pretty bluntly here: We've been there before.

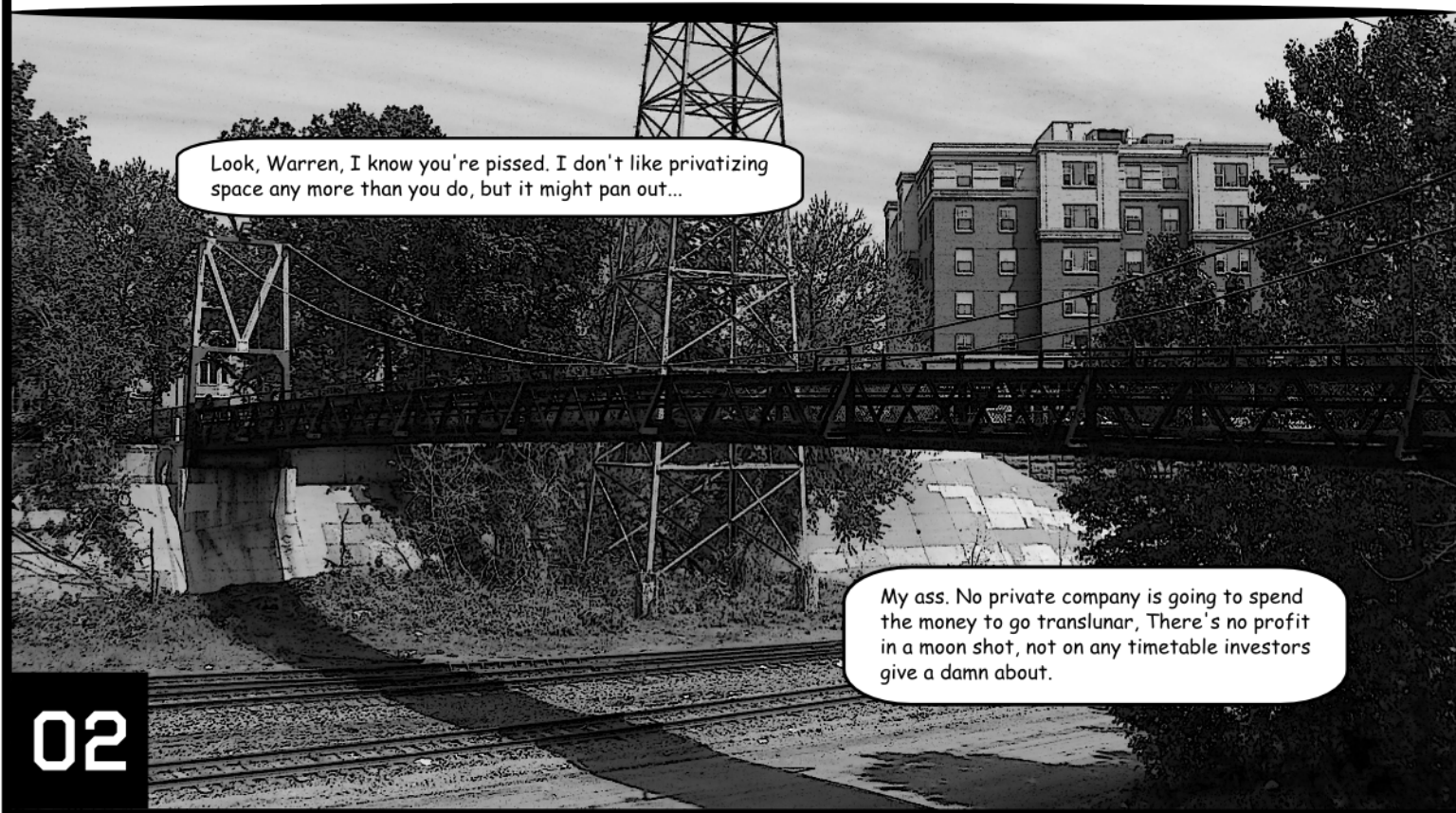
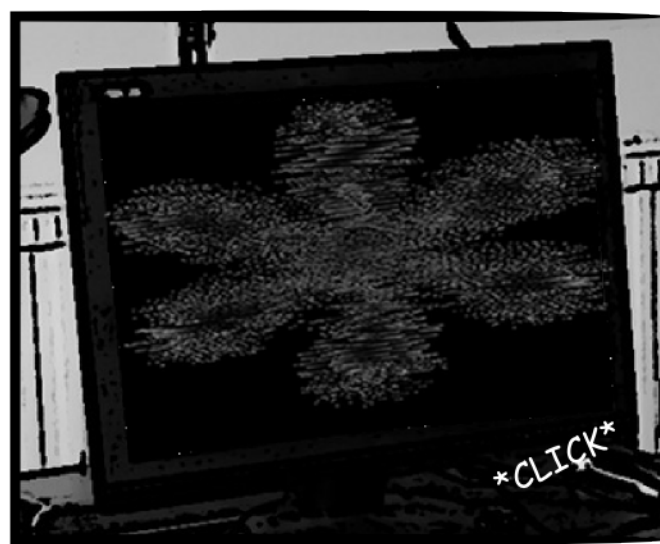
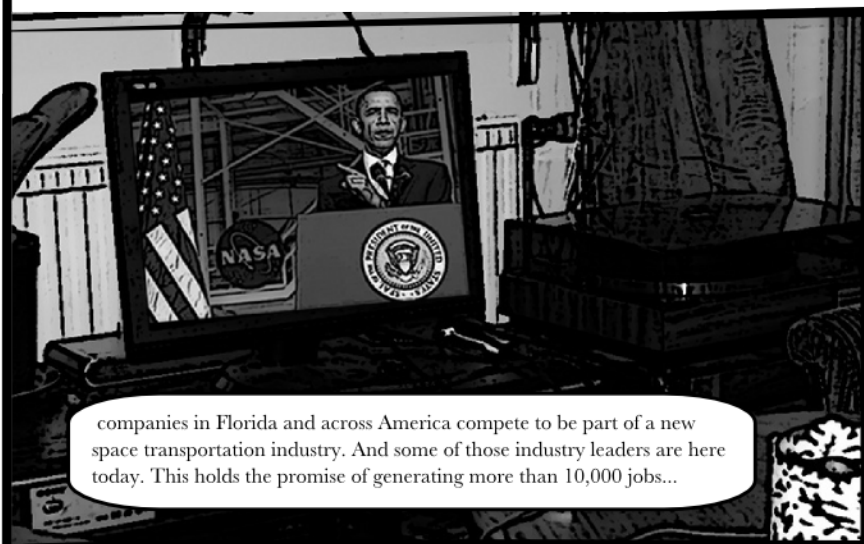
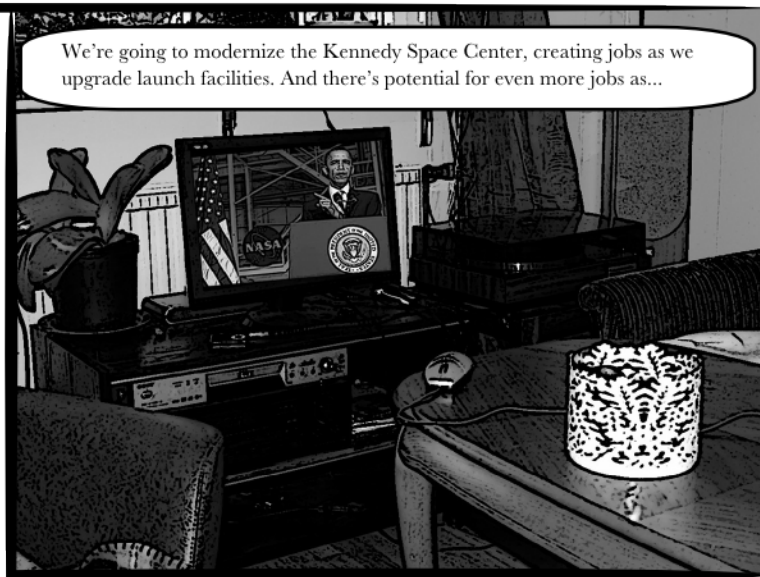
Well, now it's fucking over.

TRANSLUNAR

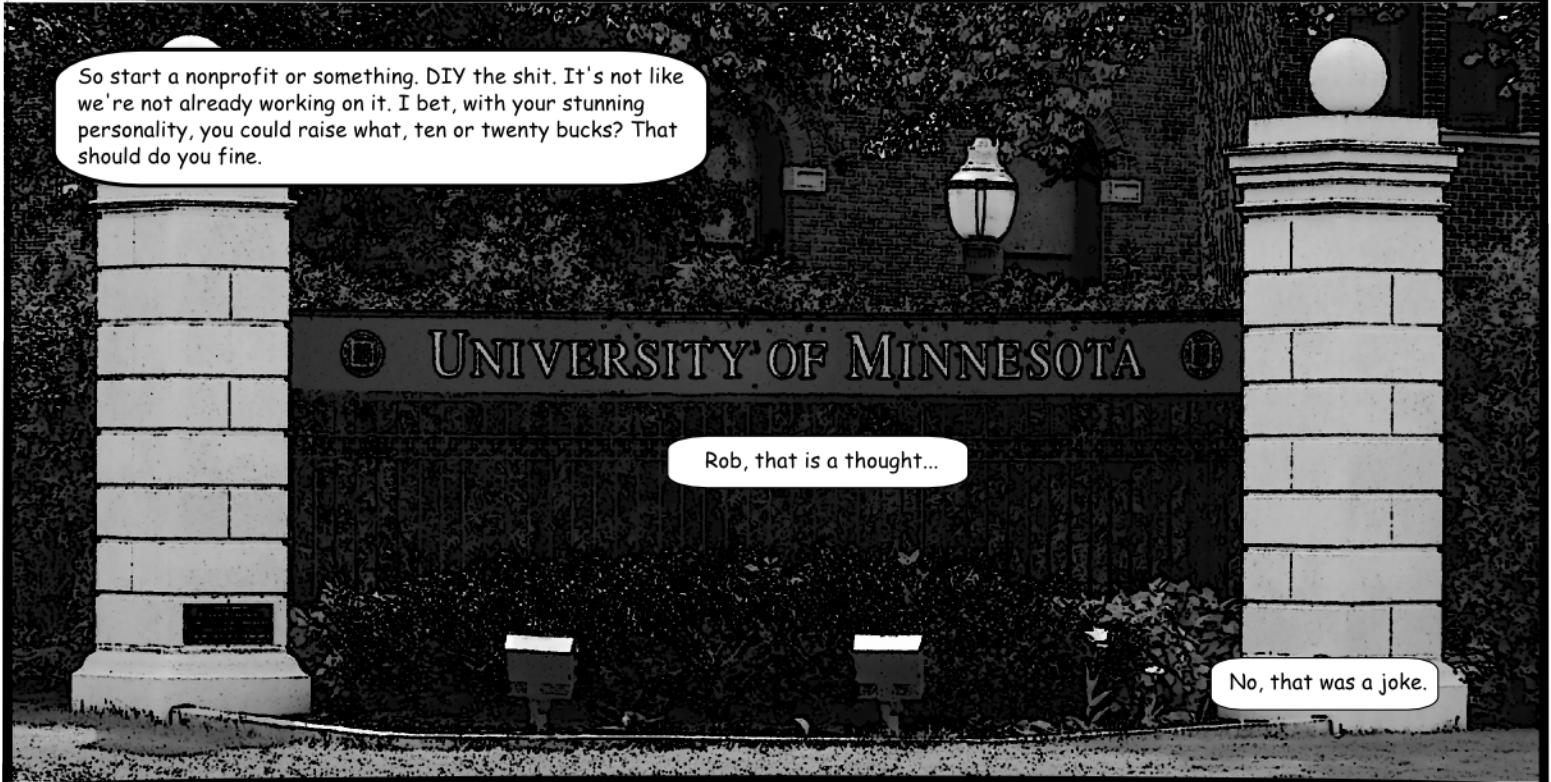
Writing and art manipulation by McHenry Keith

Images by: List names here

This is fiction. All Material is copyright 2010 by McHenry Keith. Unless I change my mind.



My ass. No private company is going to spend the money to go translunar, There's no profit in a moon shot, not on any timetable investors give a damn about.

A black and white photograph of the University of Minnesota's main entrance gate. The gate is a large, ornate stone structure with two tall pillars on either side. Between the pillars is a large archway with the words "UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA" inscribed on it. There are some bushes and a small lamp post in front of the gate.

So start a nonprofit or something. DIY the shit. It's not like we're not already working on it. I bet, with your stunning personality, you could raise what, ten or twenty bucks? That should do you fine.

Rob, that is a thought...

No, that was a joke.

A black and white photograph of a large, multi-story building with a prominent dome on its roof. The building has many windows and a classical architectural style. In the foreground, two people are standing with their backs to the camera, looking at the building. There are some trees and a fence on the left side of the image.

We on for launch this weekend?

Yeah, Pam got us FAA clearance. But she says this one better not explode.

5...4...3...2...1...



Ignition. We have liftoff.

Gyros holding...brennschluss!

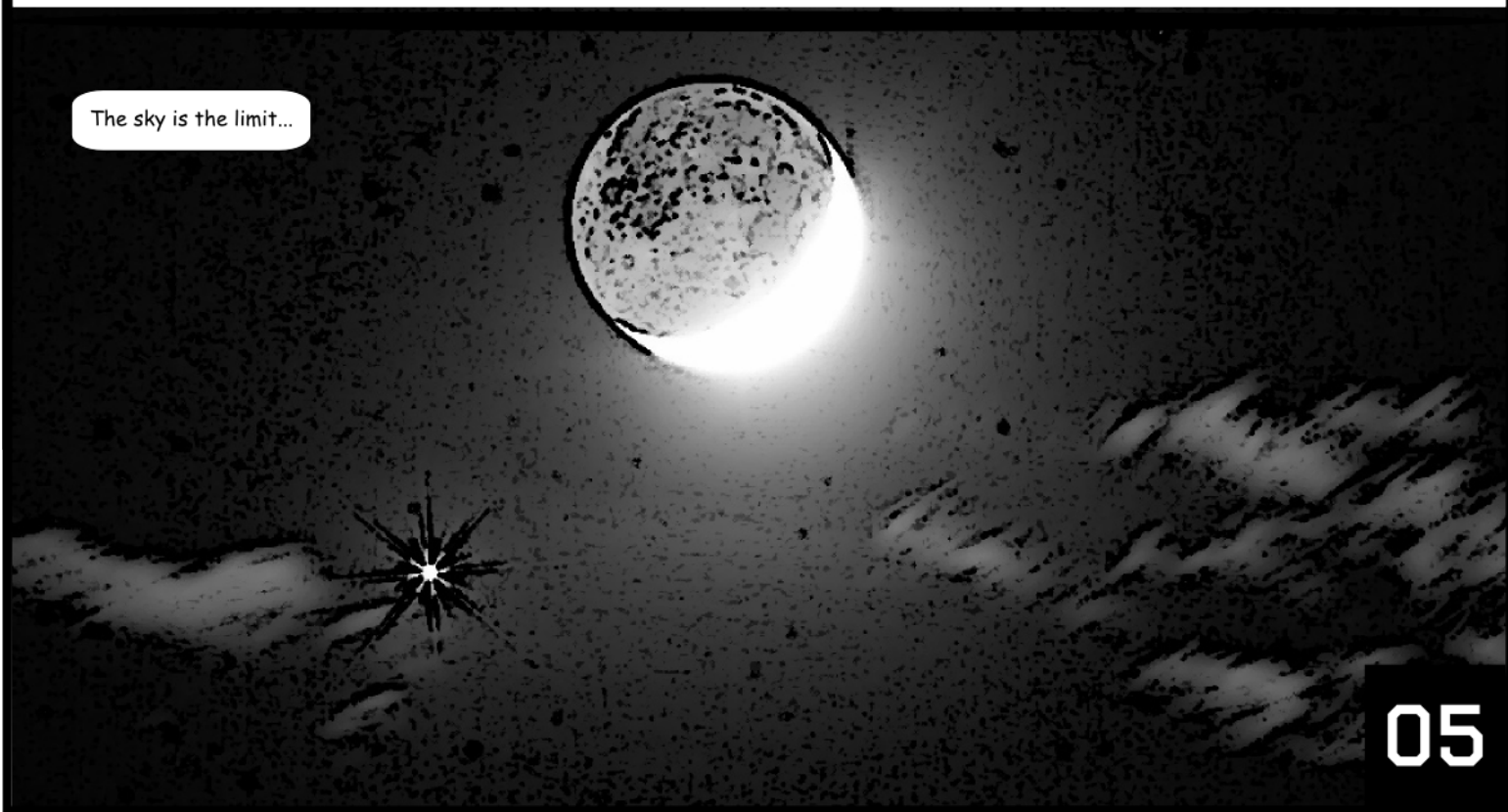
Unclutch and flip!

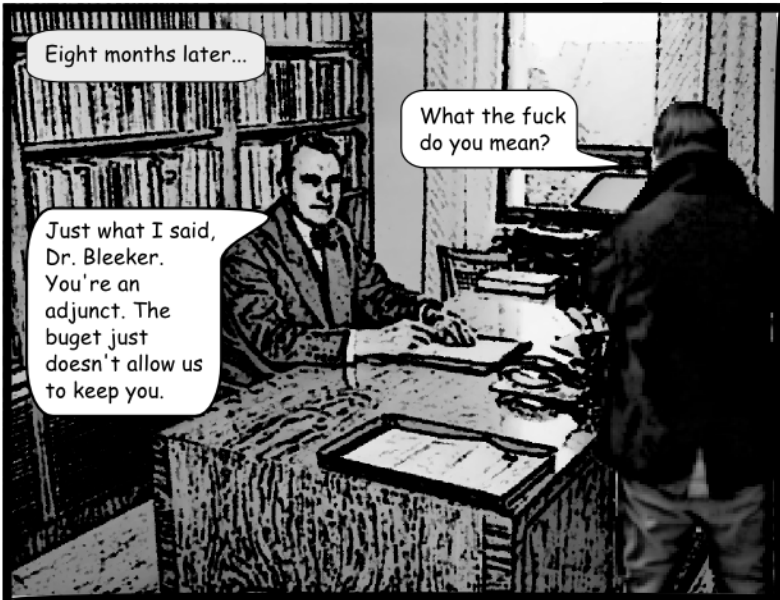
360! We got 360!

Landing burn in 3...2...1...

Holy shit.



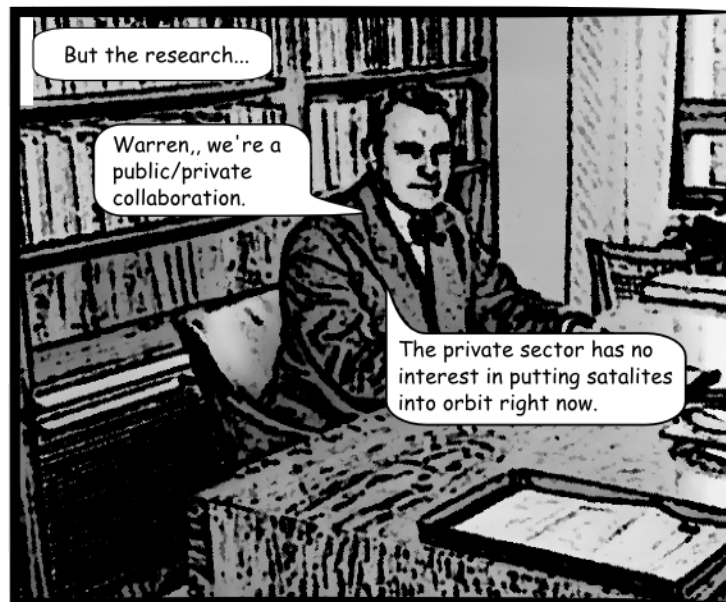




Eight months later...

What the fuck do you mean?

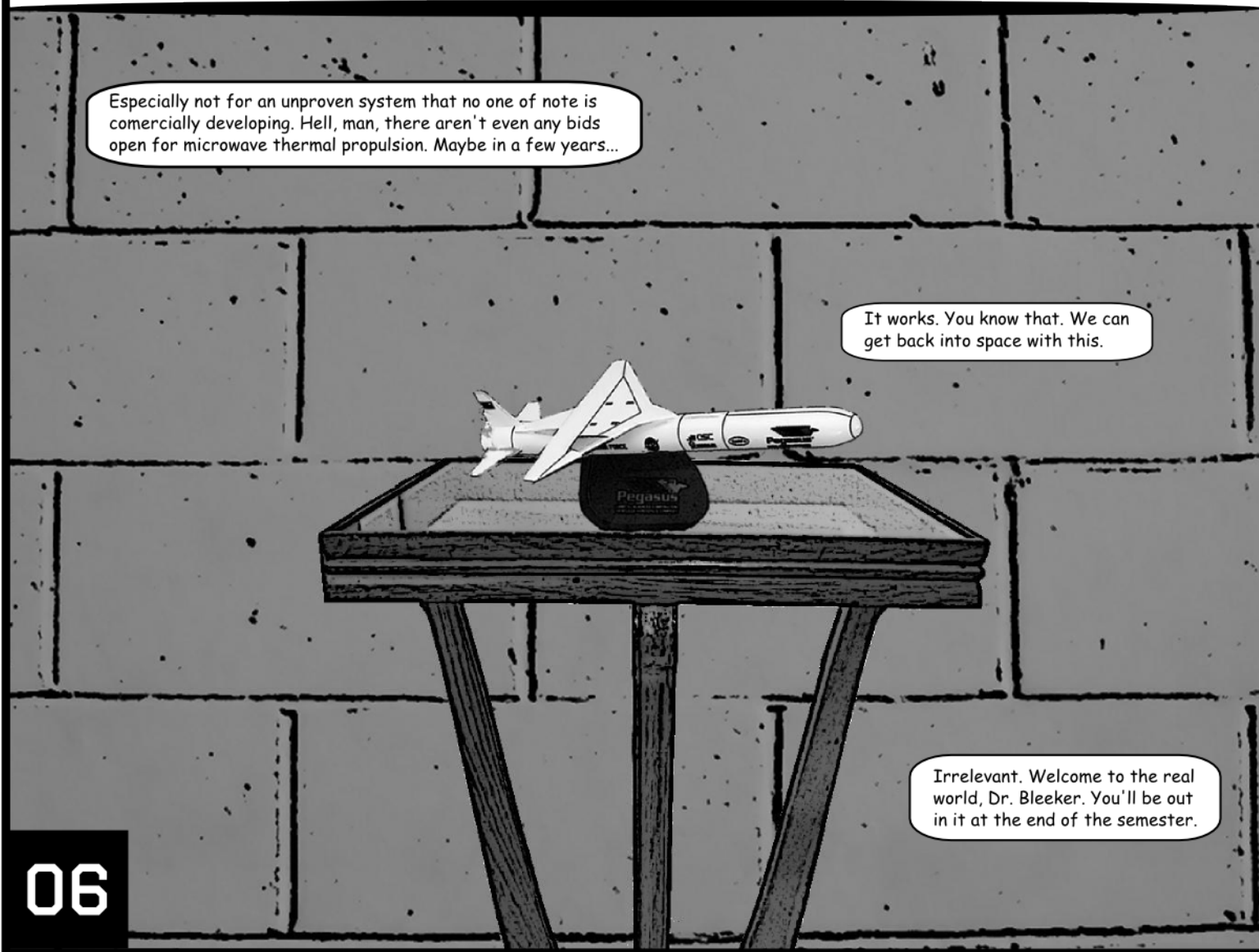
Just what I said, Dr. Bleeker. You're an adjunct. The budget just doesn't allow us to keep you.



But the research...

Warren,, we're a public/private collaboration.

The private sector has no interest in putting satalites into orbit right now.



Especially not for an unproven system that no one of note is commercially developing. Hell, man, there aren't even any bids open for microwave thermal propulsion. Maybe in a few years...

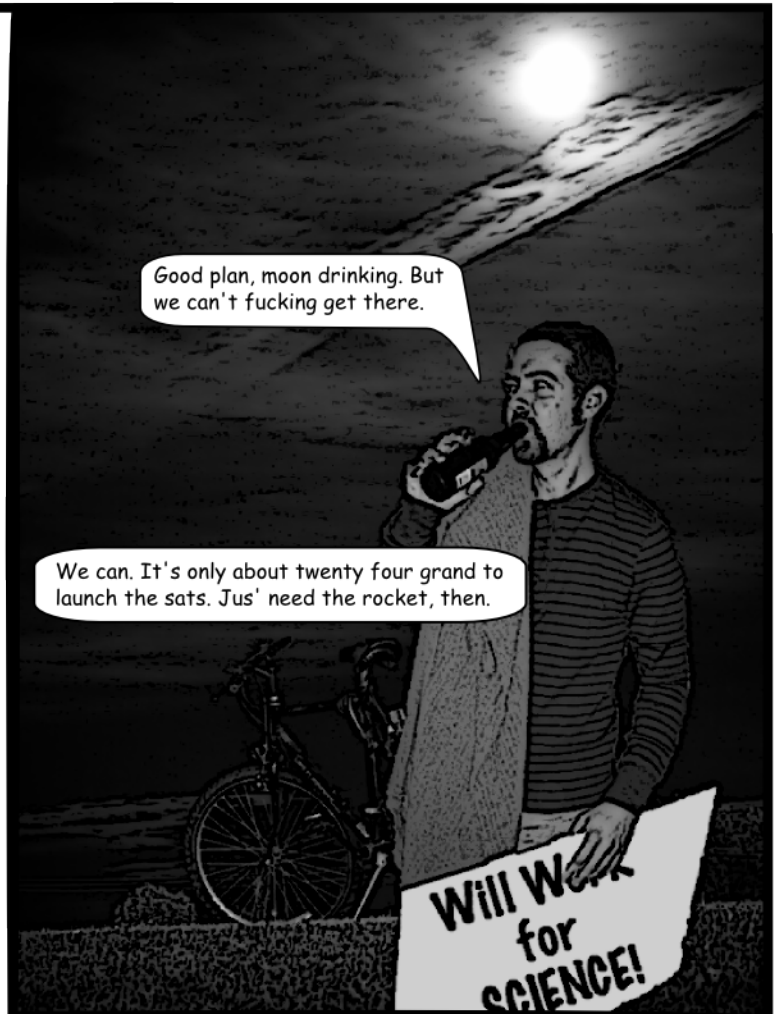
It works. You know that. We can get back into space with this.

Irrelevant. Welcome to the real world, Dr. Bleeker. You'll be out in it at the end of the semester.



So, what now, Warren? We got fired. We can't drink forever.

We go to the moon, Rob. Or we drink ourselves to death. Or drink on the moon.



Good plan, moon drinking. But we can't fucking get there.

We can. It's only about twenty four grand to launch the sats. Jus' need the rocket, then.

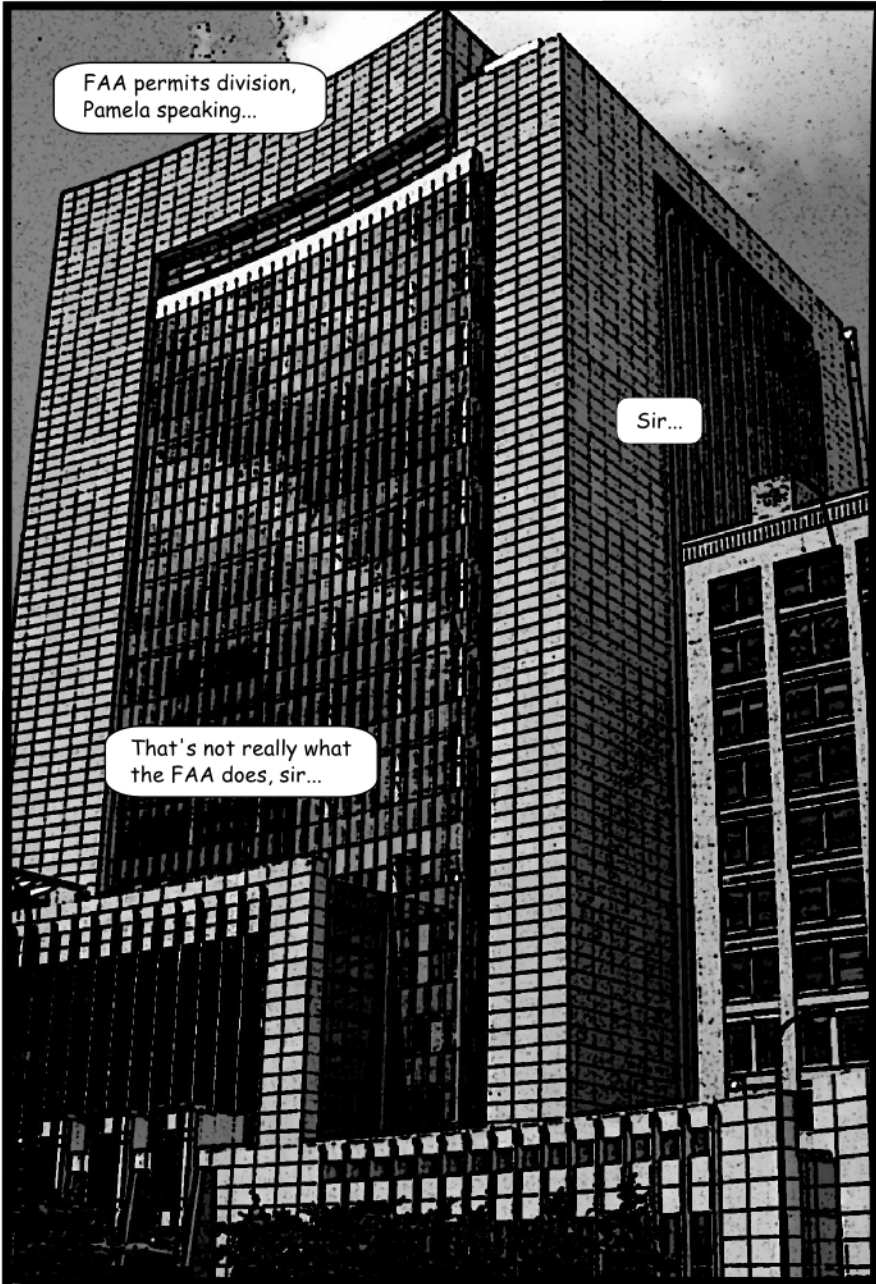


Thass all? Bet we could get that on Kickstarter. Use the extra for moon booze...



Then we'd just have to steal a rocket. Whadda ya call that? GTS? Grand theft spaceship?.

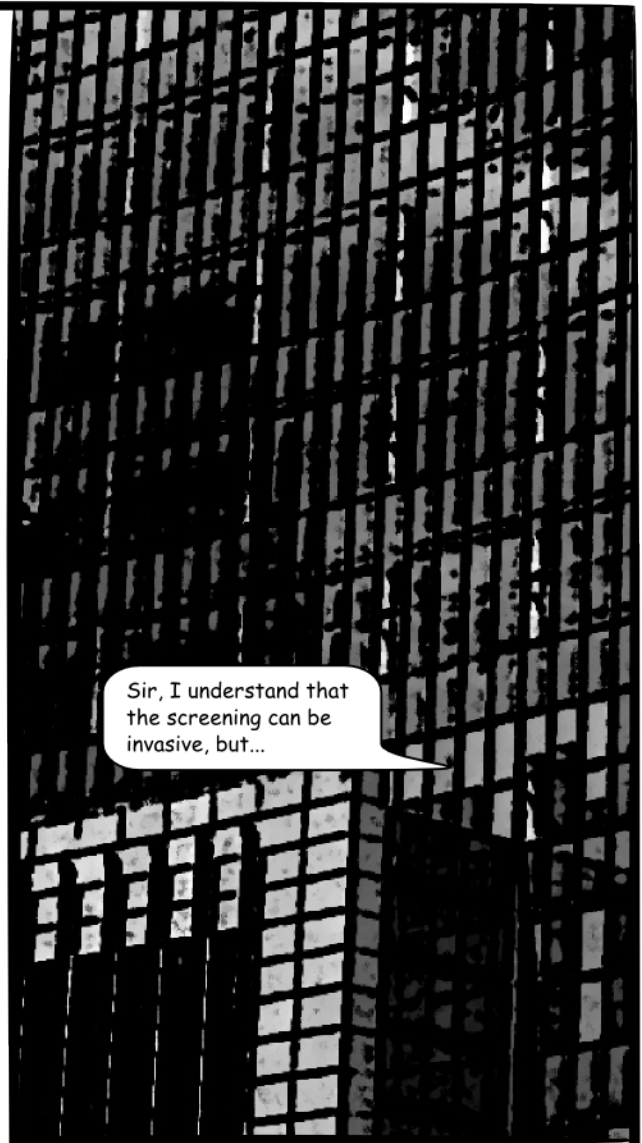
Rob, you get the best ideas drinking...



FAA permits division,
Pamela speaking...

Sir...

That's not really what
the FAA does, sir...



Sir, I understand that
the screening can be
invasive, but...

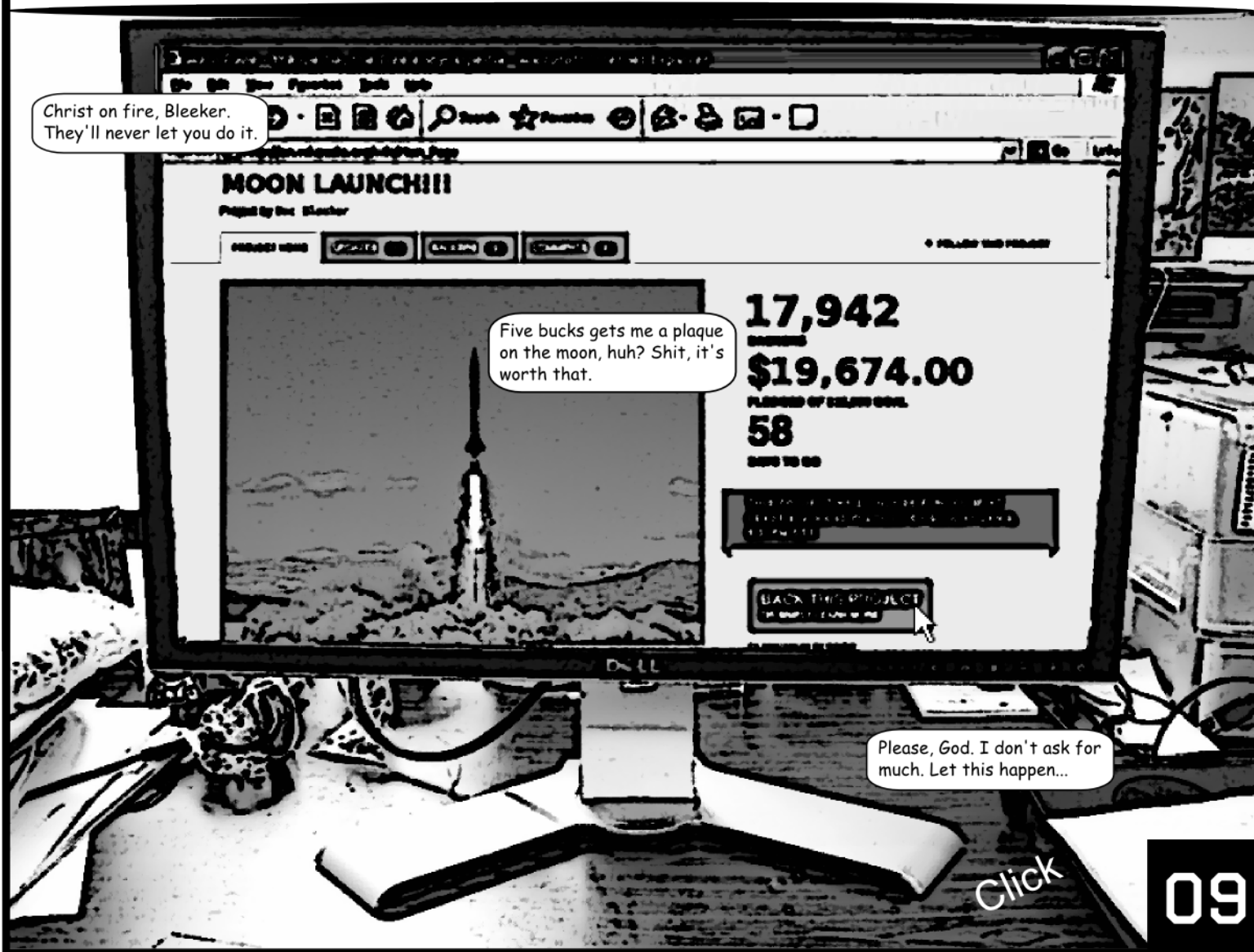
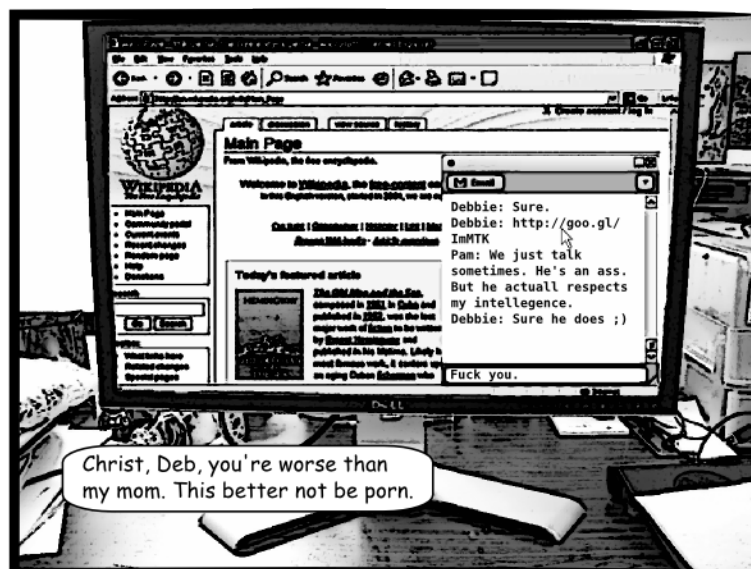
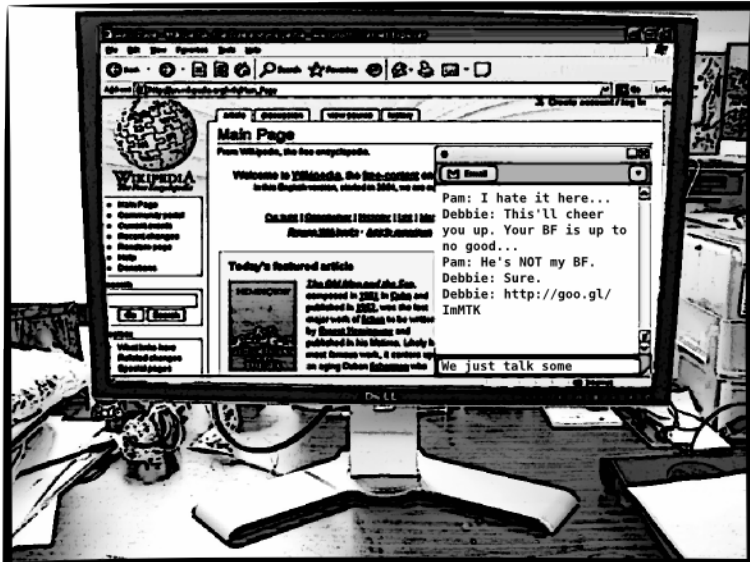


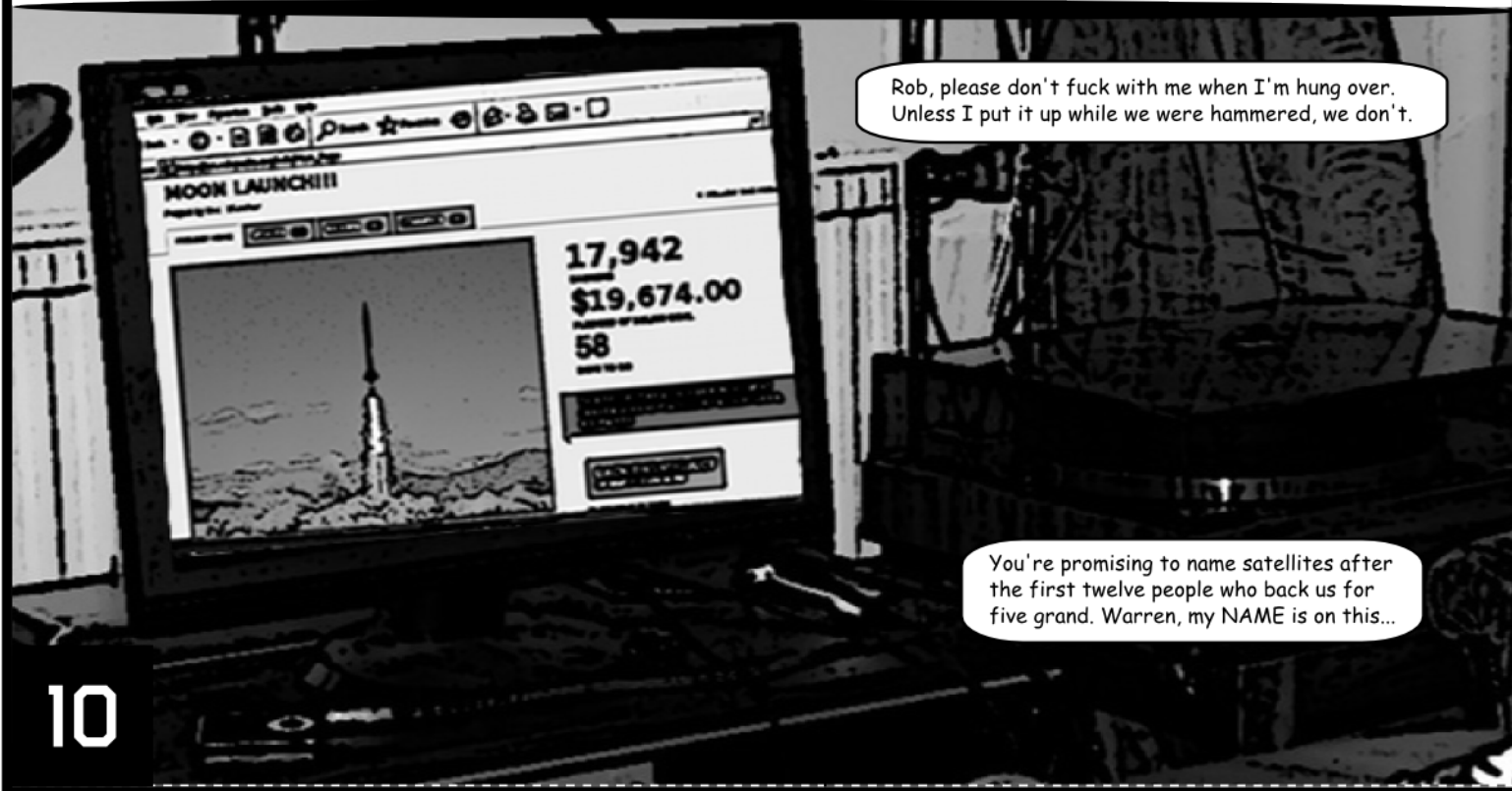
Look, unless your penis is an
experimental aircraft, I can't
help you with the process. Call
the TSA and complain.

08



God, I hate this job.



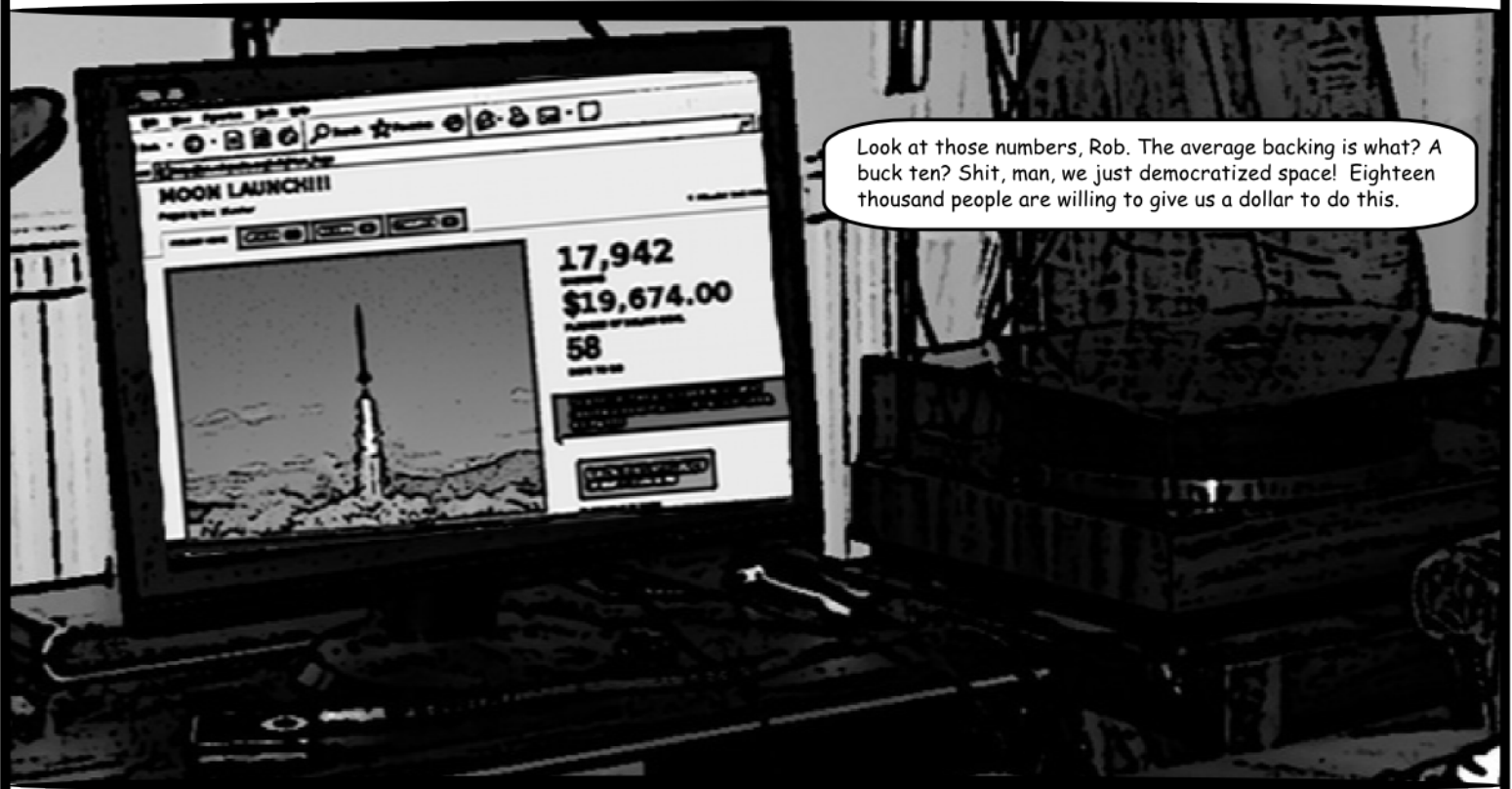




Wait. Did you say twenty grand?



Yeah. It went viral sometime this morning. It was on CNN, Warren.



Look at those numbers, Rob. The average backing is what? A buck ten? Shit, man, we just democratized space! Eighteen thousand people are willing to give us a dollar to do this.



Can we pull translunar injection off, Warren?

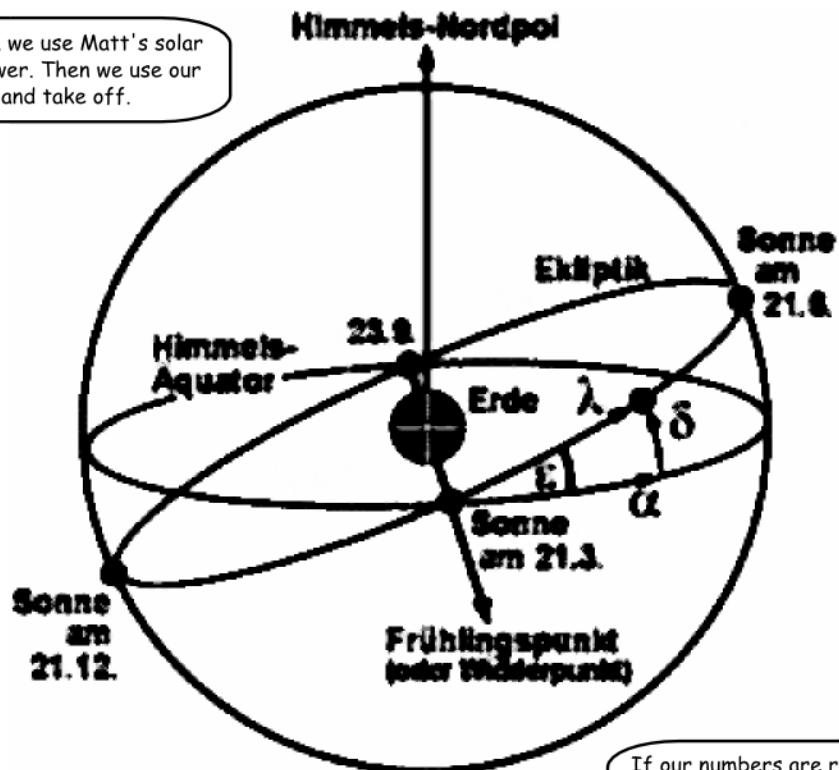


I don't know.

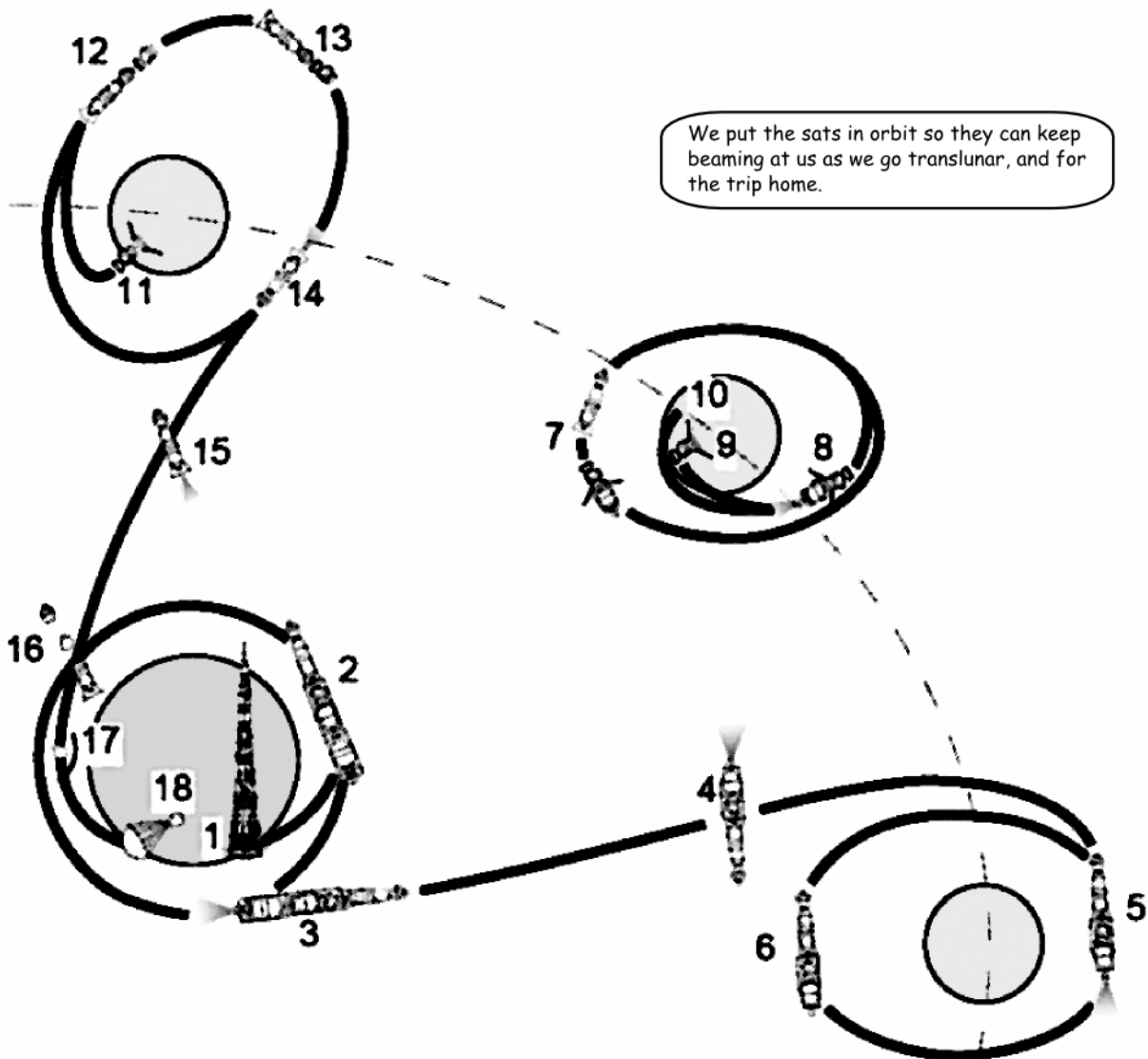
But eighteen thousand people want us to try.



Once the sats are in place, we use Matt's solar arrays to generate the power. Then we use our beam to activate the fuel, and take off.



If our numbers are right, we should be able to get translunar way cheaper than Apollo did. With twelve microsats, we have a big safety margin.



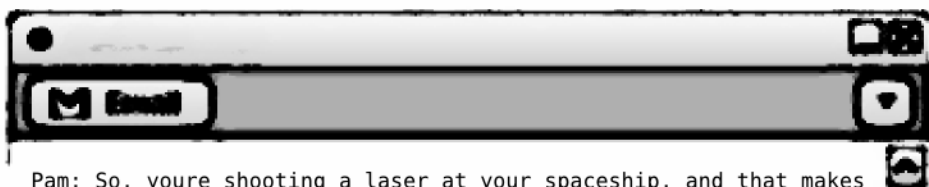
That's it. Easy peasy. Where are we gonna get a hull? Fuel? I mean, we can build an engine, but the other shit costs money.

Well, anything over our goal goes towards that, according to drunken Kickstarter. Don't worry, I know some people, they owe me favors.

The favor economy won't get us translunar.

Well, not with that attitude. And we have to do this.

Yeah. We do. Let's get on it, then.



Pam: So, you're shooting a laser at your spaceship, and that makes the rocket go.

Doc Bleeker: In a nutshell. It's more dangerous than it sounds :)

Pam: All of this controlled by software you wrote while drinking?

Doc Bleeker: Was sober when we tested it. It worked.

Pam: When you die, can I have your stuff?

Doc Bleeker: Rob has dibs on my phone. Far as I'm concerned, you can have everything else. Sadly, that doesn't amount to much.

Pam: Seriously. This rocket will kill you.

Doc Bleeker: Do I detect some concern?

Pam: If not by exploding, then some other way. Your friends keep messaging me to see if you're OK.

Pam: Answer your phone. I am not your goddamn answering service.

Doc Bleeker: Been busy. No time for people unwilling to go to the moon. I have satellites to build, gotta find rocketship parts cheap, etc.

Doc Bleeker: Sorry about people phone spamming. I'll change my voicemail to say "Don't call Pam, she's the only person that's still willing to listen to me type. Annoy her and I'll kick you in the living brain."

Pam: That's so sweet.

Pam: Kickstarter got funded fully?

Doc Bleeker: And then some. We're up to

Doc Bleeker: 35,805 as of now. Still got a month to go, to.

Pam: I heard about a bunch of guys at KSC who are pooling their money to get a sat named after them.

Doc Bleeker: :) I hadn't heard that.

Pam: Where are you gonna get a rocketship?

Doc Bleeker: Um, rather not say on open comm line. It's sensitive intel, and the NSA might be interested in me.

Pam: FAA sure is. I had a sit down with my boss about you the other day. Sounds like higher echelons are wondering if this whole thing is a scam.

Pam: I told them you were serious as taxes, btw.

Doc Bleeker: FTW!

Doc Bleeker: You're a good friend, girl.

So take me out to dinner.



Pam: Thx :)

Doc Bleeker: Srsly, should i be worried?

Pam: definatly.

Pam: I secretly lust after ur bones ;)

Doc Bleeker: :P

Doc Bleeker: About your boss, is what i meant...

Pam: Not sure. Hes a dick, but he playes by the rules. Predictable. I can't find official policy that says u can't blow yourself into space. It may be unofficial, and pressure from above can affect him. Dunno at this juncture.

Pam: Hypothesis - he'll deny it unless upper bosses tell him to okay it.

Doc Bleeker: Sorry. don't mean to make this all about moon shot. How have u been? outside of work?

Pam: My mom keeps trying to hook me up w/people i rejected in high school. She'd try the same w/people i rejected in grad school if she knew any of them :)

Doc Bleeker: Thats why I move a few states away.

Pam: She keeps trying to get me to move back to Bismark :(

Doc Bleeker: Go back to get ur PhD. I sitll got friends at UMN. I'd be happy to pull a few strings for you.

Pam: In this economy? I dont have a moon shot to keep me busy.

Pam: Wouldn't be so bad if there was a BF in the picture.

Doc Bleeker: Listen, I gotta go. I'll talk to you later, k?

Pam: Yeah, it's late. Work is early.

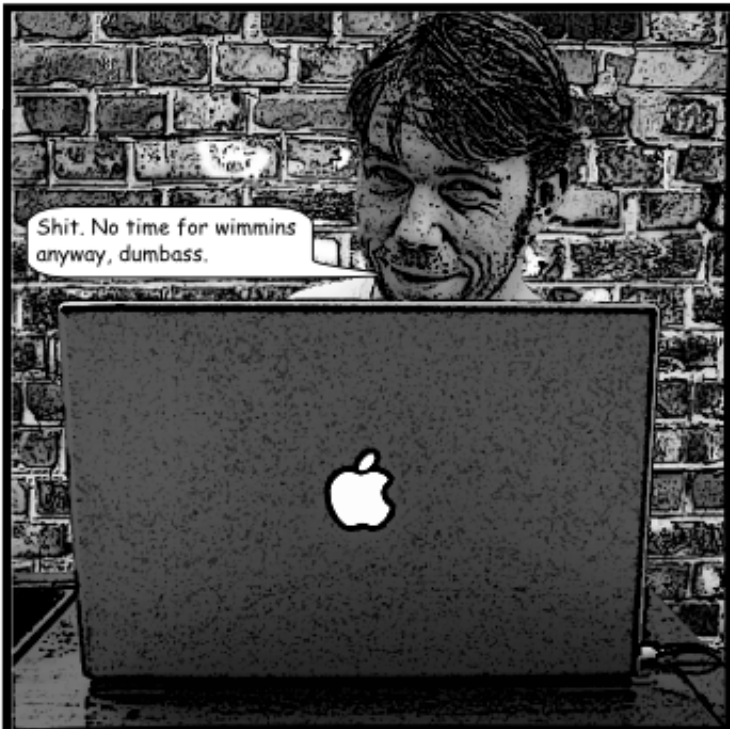
Doc Bleeker: Take care of yourself. Don't listen to your mom :)

Pam: You too.

Pam is offline

Hey, wanna get dinner sometime?





Rob? ROB! Where the fuck did you go?
Talk some sense into me, goddammit!

Doctor Bleeker, check this link,
it may help you out. It accidentally
didn't get posted worldwide...

<http://goo.gl/Hy5ib>

Okay. Breathe. What to do?

Only one thing to do.

Doctor Bleeker, check this link,
it may help you out. It accidentally
didn't get posted worldwide...

<http://goo.gl/Hy5ib>

Compose: signed and encrypted message

File Edit View Options Enigmail Tools Help



Send



Contacts



Spell



Attach



OpenPGP



S/MIME



Save



From: doc.bleeker@translunar.org

To: a.non.y.mouse@remailer.co.uk

To:

Subject: THANK YOU AND I WILL DO BIOLOGICALLY IMPROBABLE THINGS FOR YOU

If this is legit, I will find a way to pay you back. I know a biologist who is working on ways for XY chromosomal individuals to gestate offspring, if you want me to carry our child. Or I could name something after you. A colony, or someone else's kid or something.

Please do not ever tell me how you managed to pull this off. If there are repercussions for you, I'll do anything I can to help you out.

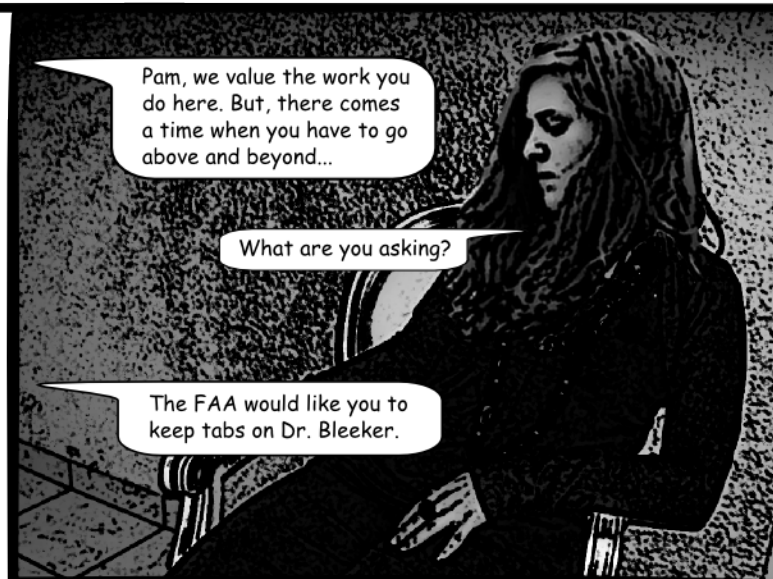
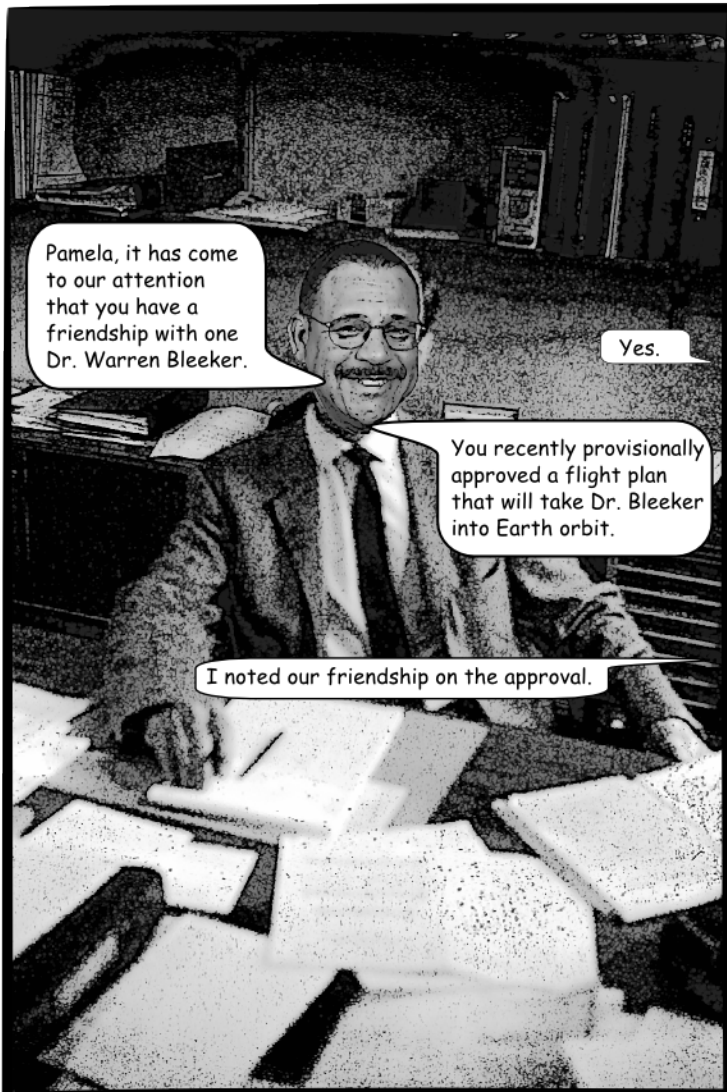
If you ever contact me directly, just mention how much you dig on Tycho Brahe, and I'll know.

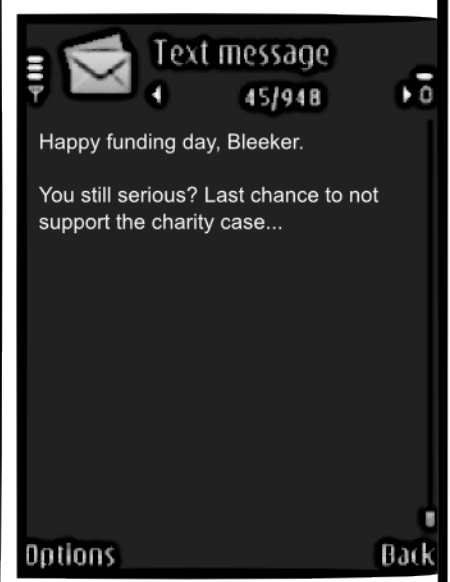
Thank you. This means we're going.

Your pal (and I'm serious about being the mother of your child if you want, I know another gal working on cloning)

Bleeker









Okay, no going back now. He's my boss.



Will it set feminism too far back if I fantasize about my boss?

You're no help. Fish don't have to worry about this shit.



At least I finally get to meet him. And see what he and Rob are building...

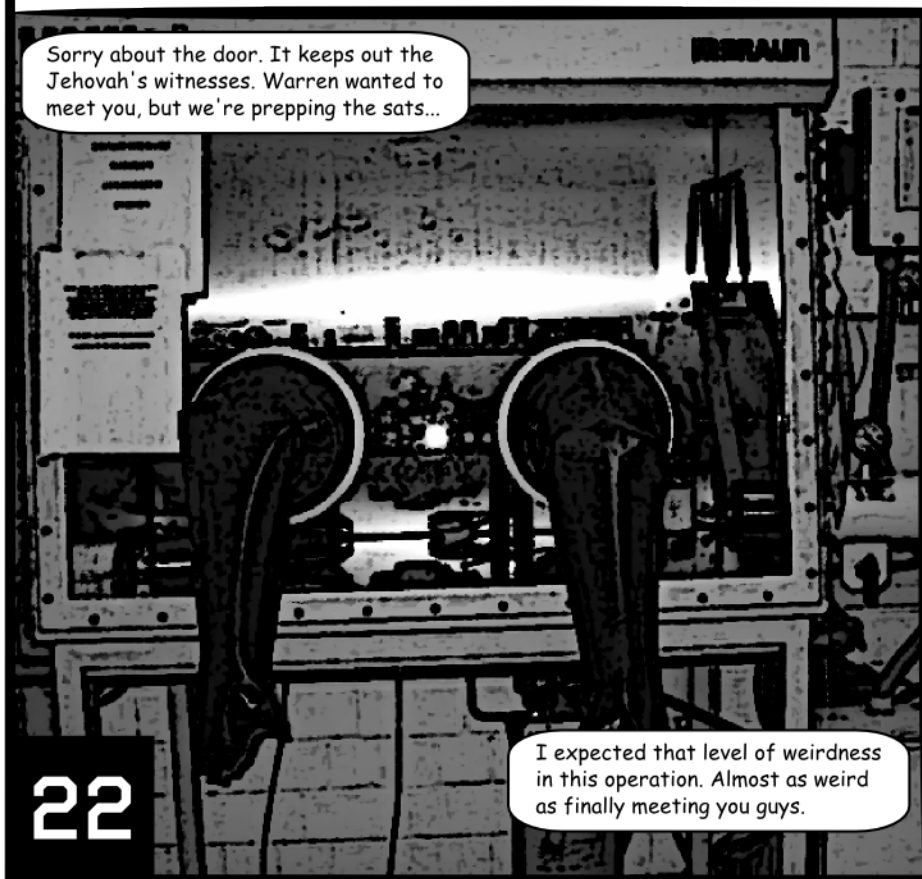


Here we are.

Odd door?



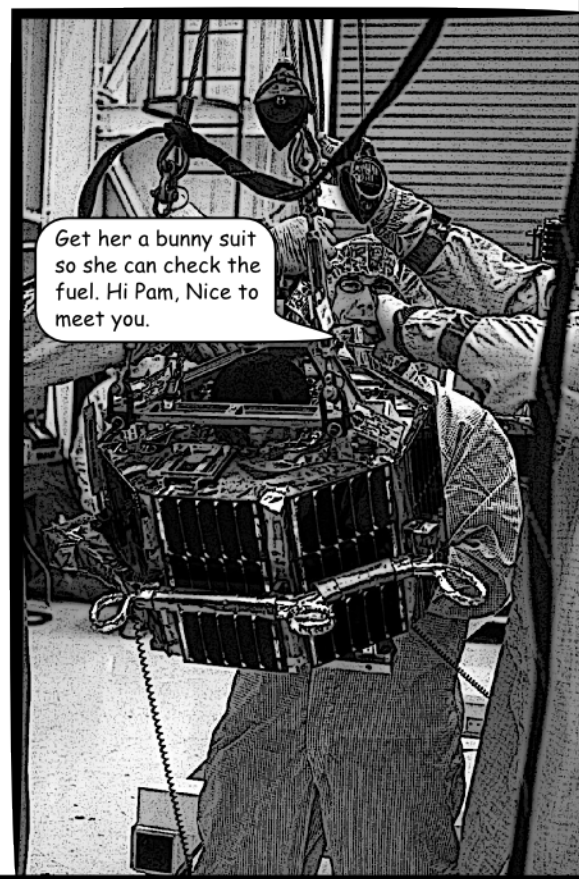
I guess I just knock? Or run...



Sorry about the door. It keeps out the Jehovah's witnesses. Warren wanted to meet you, but we're prepping the sats...

I expected that level of weirdness in this operation. Almost as weird as finally meeting you guys.

22



Get her a bunny suit so she can check the fuel. Hi Pam, Nice to meet you.



Why do you need fuel for these, anyway?

The company launching them puts them in a two week degrading orbit. We're going to relocate them into something a little more stable.

Why me? I'm betting people are lining up to work on this.



Let's face it. I'm hands down the least credentialed person in this room...

We passed your Masters thesis around. My chem buddies tell me that you're some sort of genius. Eddy, the most critical bastard I know, said that the biggest problem you had was font choice.

I have no response for that. How did you even get a copy of it? By the way, your fuel looks good. As long as your math works, this should do it.

I know people. Let's lock these down and hurl them into orbit.

T-Minus ten...nine...eight...



Let this work. Please don't make the last few months be a waste.



Seven...six...five...four...

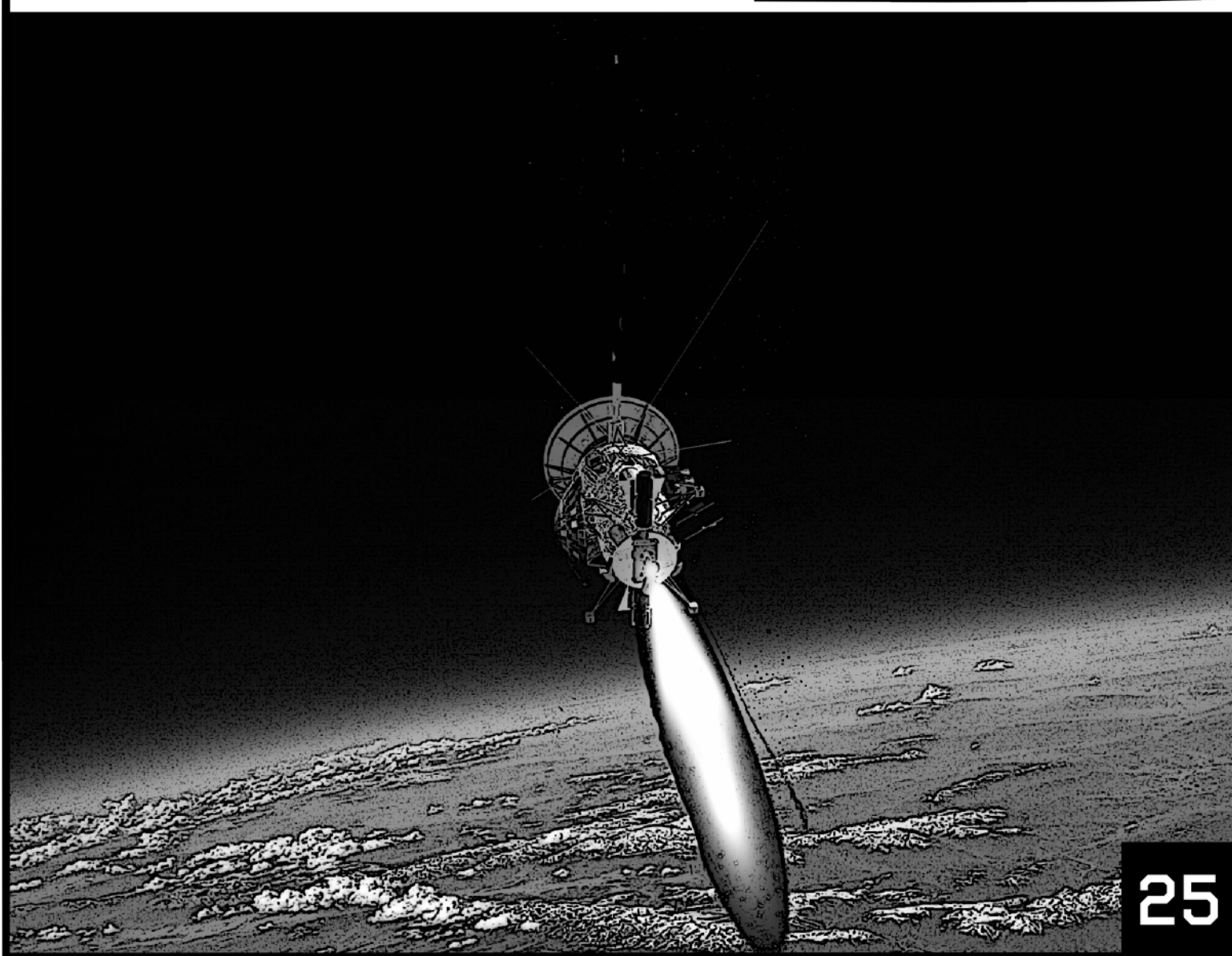
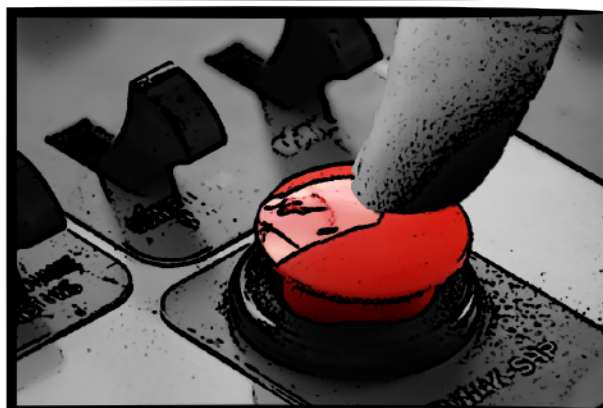
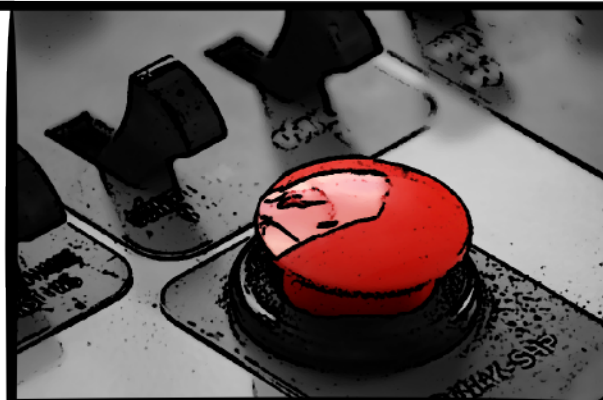
Why the fuck do we have to smoke outside, Warren?

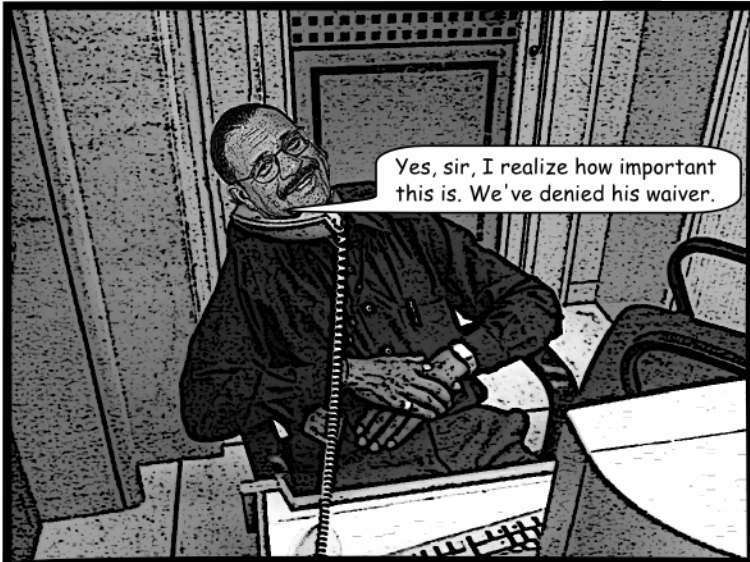


Three...two...one...

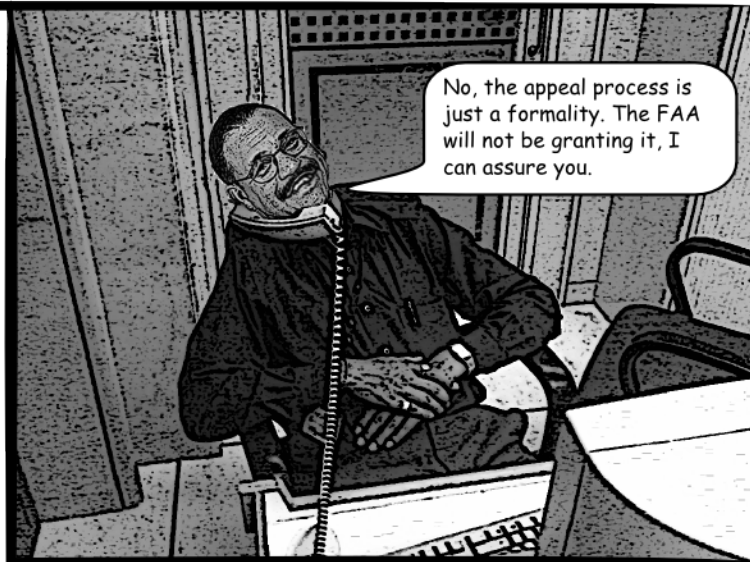
Relax, it's just the launch. Start worrying when we change orbits.



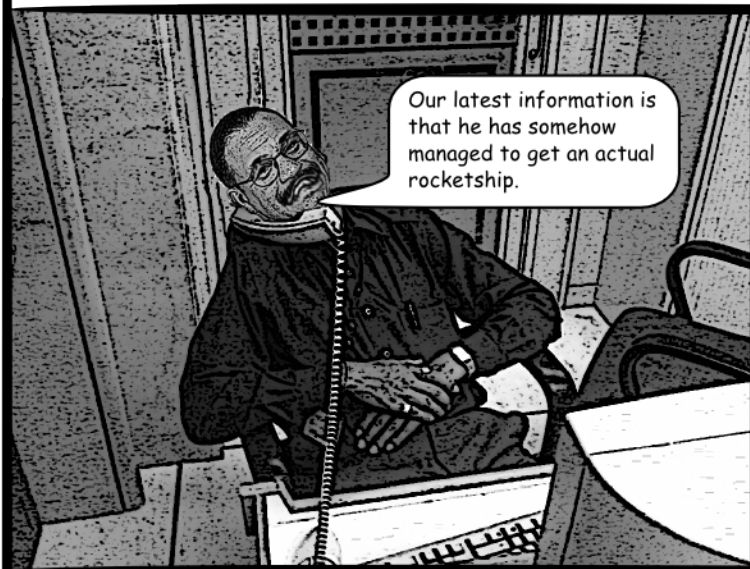




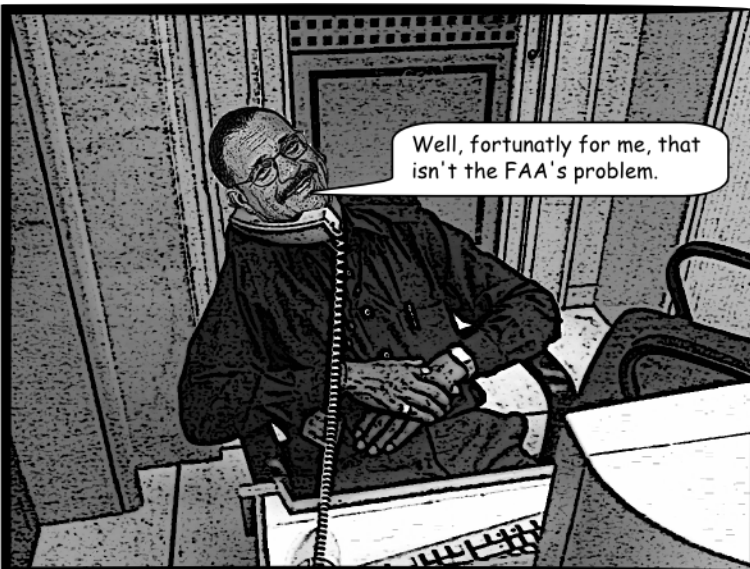
Yes, sir, I realize how important this is. We've denied his waiver.



No, the appeal process is just a formality. The FAA will not be granting it, I can assure you.

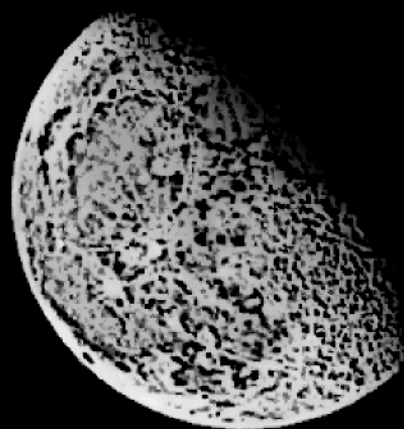


Our latest information is that he has somehow managed to get an actual rocketship.

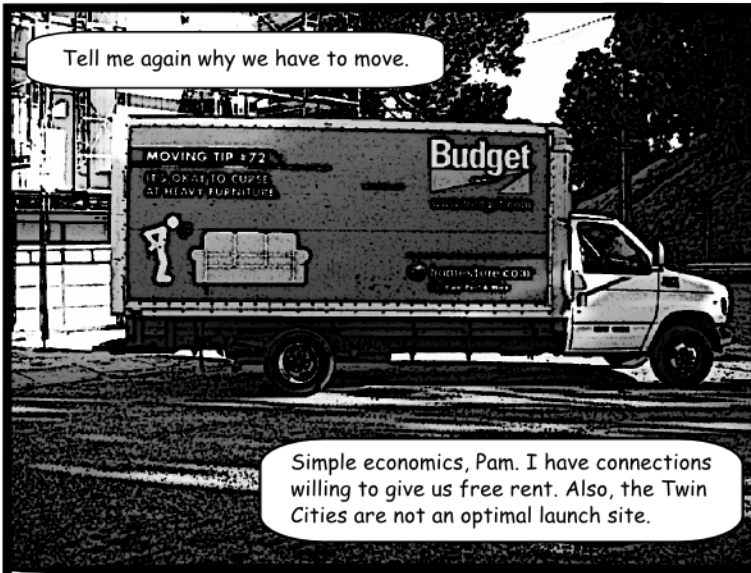


Well, fortunately for me, that isn't the FAA's problem.

Some other agency is going to have to figure out how to keep him from launching at Baikonur Cosmodrome.

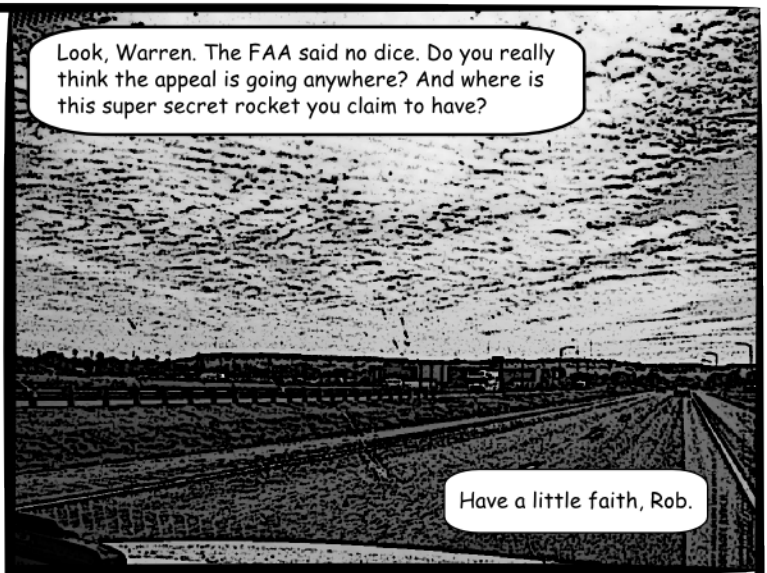


Don't take that tone with me. I'm doing all I can to keep this man grounded. Have the DOD make his ship a matter of national security or something. Then you can just send him to Gitmo.



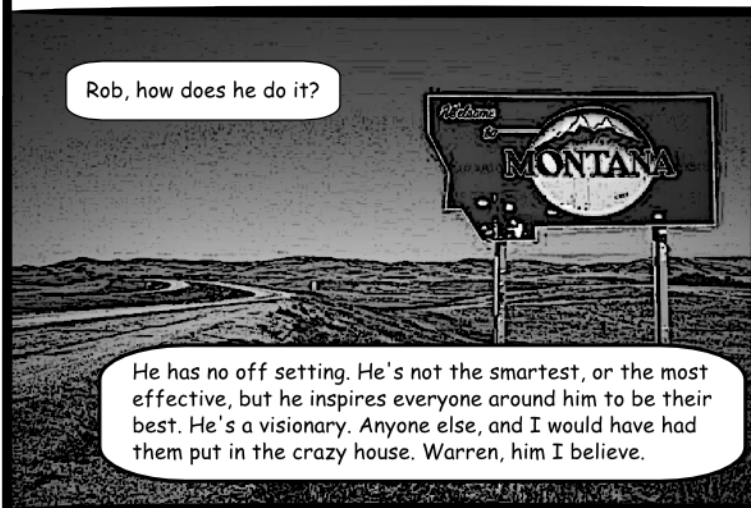
Tell me again why we have to move.

Simple economics, Pam. I have connections willing to give us free rent. Also, the Twin Cities are not an optimal launch site.



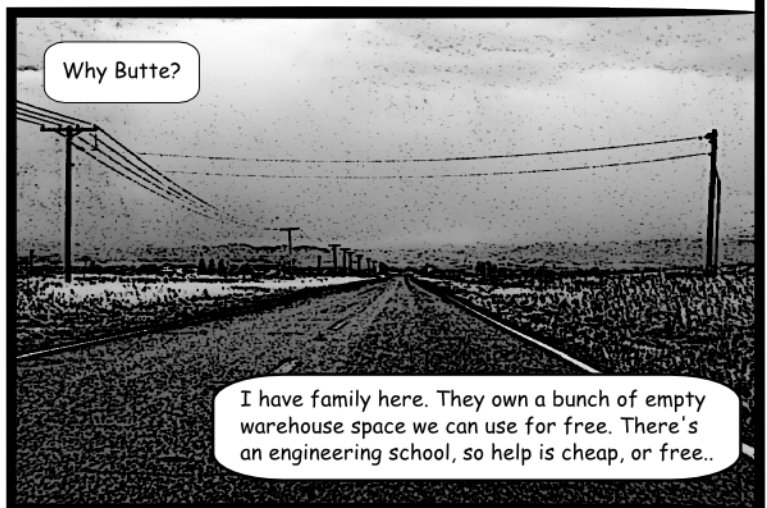
Look, Warren. The FAA said no dice. Do you really think the appeal is going anywhere? And where is this super secret rocket you claim to have?

Have a little faith, Rob.



Rob, how does he do it?

He has no off setting. He's not the smartest, or the most effective, but he inspires everyone around him to be their best. He's a visionary. Anyone else, and I would have had them put in the crazy house. Warren, him I believe.



Why Butte?

I have family here. They own a bunch of empty warehouse space we can use for free. There's an engineering school, so help is cheap, or free..



And if anyone tries to stop us, we can throw them in the giant toxic pit that melts geese.

Play Panorama

Okay, kids. Welcome to your new home. There's a surprise inside!

CAR WASHING



Everyone close your eyes!

28



Holy christ, Warren. Is that a Griffon?

Where the fuck did you get that, Bleeker?

Yes, it is a Griffon hull, Rob. And I got it from a salvage auction that somehow managed to not be advertised. I told you guys I knew people.



We need a motor. And to get her spaceworthy. And we still have to convince the jackasses at the FAA to let us fly. Also, pack shit for a moon launch. And figure out how to make a french press work in freefall.

Let's get to it.



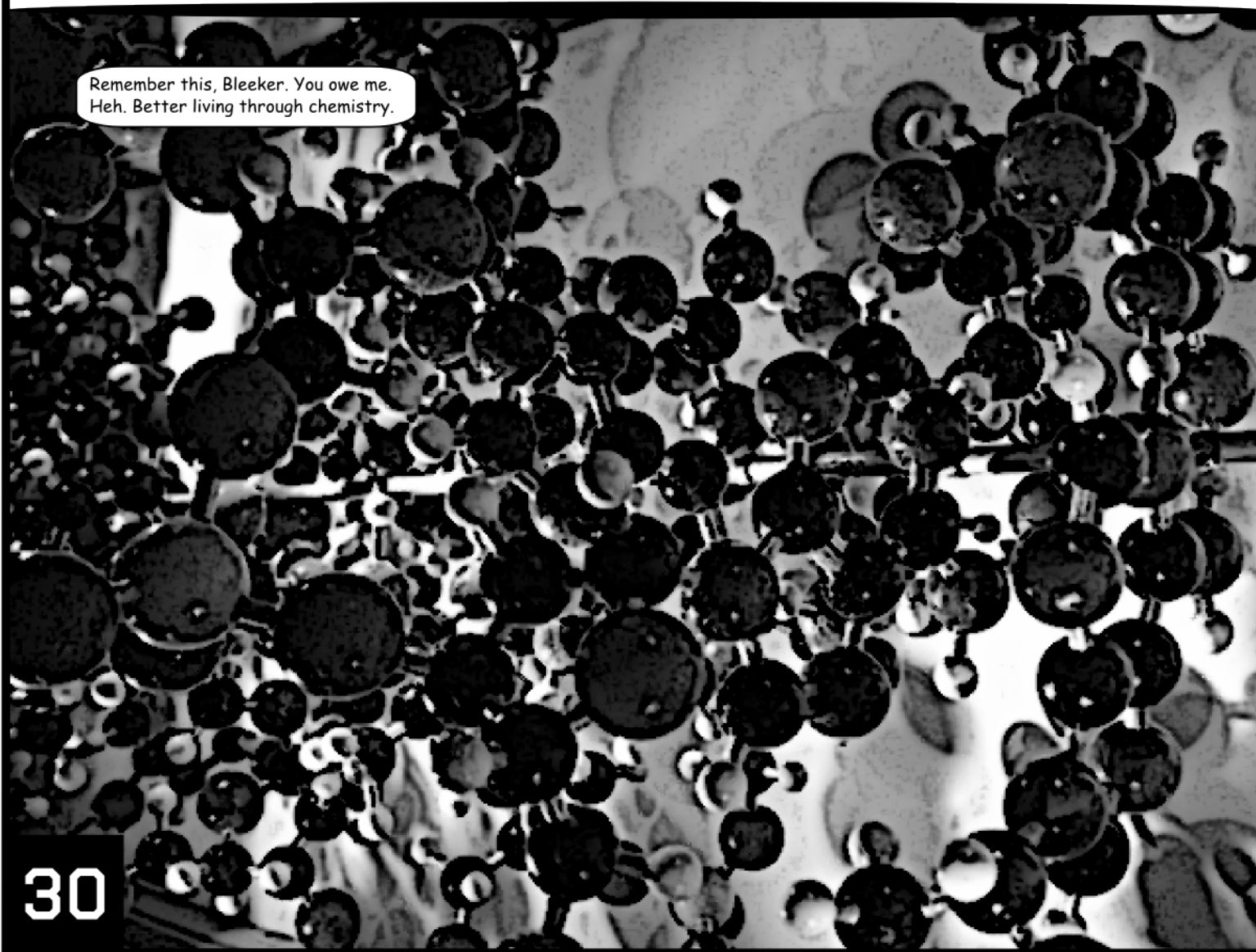
Who designed this fuel?
It's not so great.



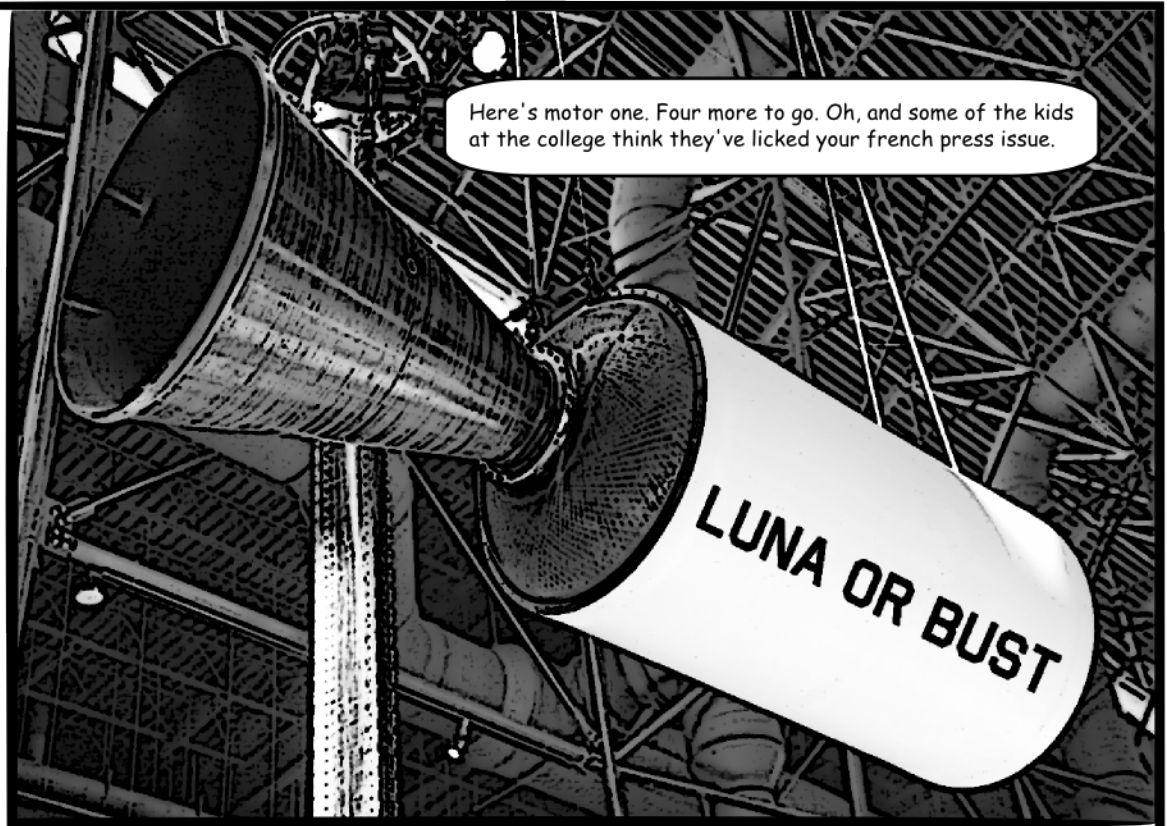
20
My buddy Mackenzie. What
do you mean, not so great.

15
10
It's inefficient. With a little tweaking, I
can get about 15% more yeild out of it.

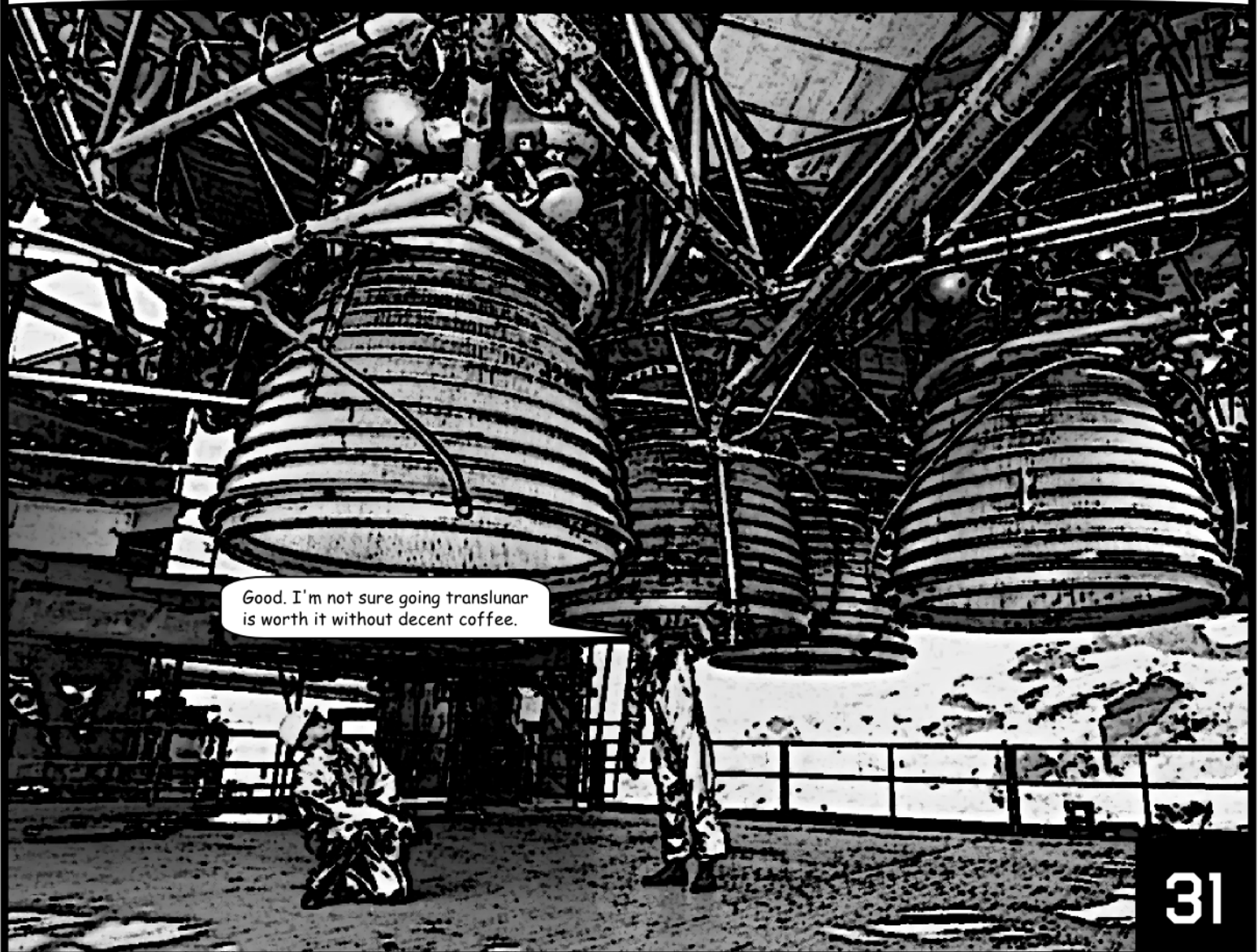
Holy fuck. Make that happen. And save
your notes. Sounds like a doctoral thesis.



Remember this, Bleeker. You owe me.
Heh. Better living through chemistry.

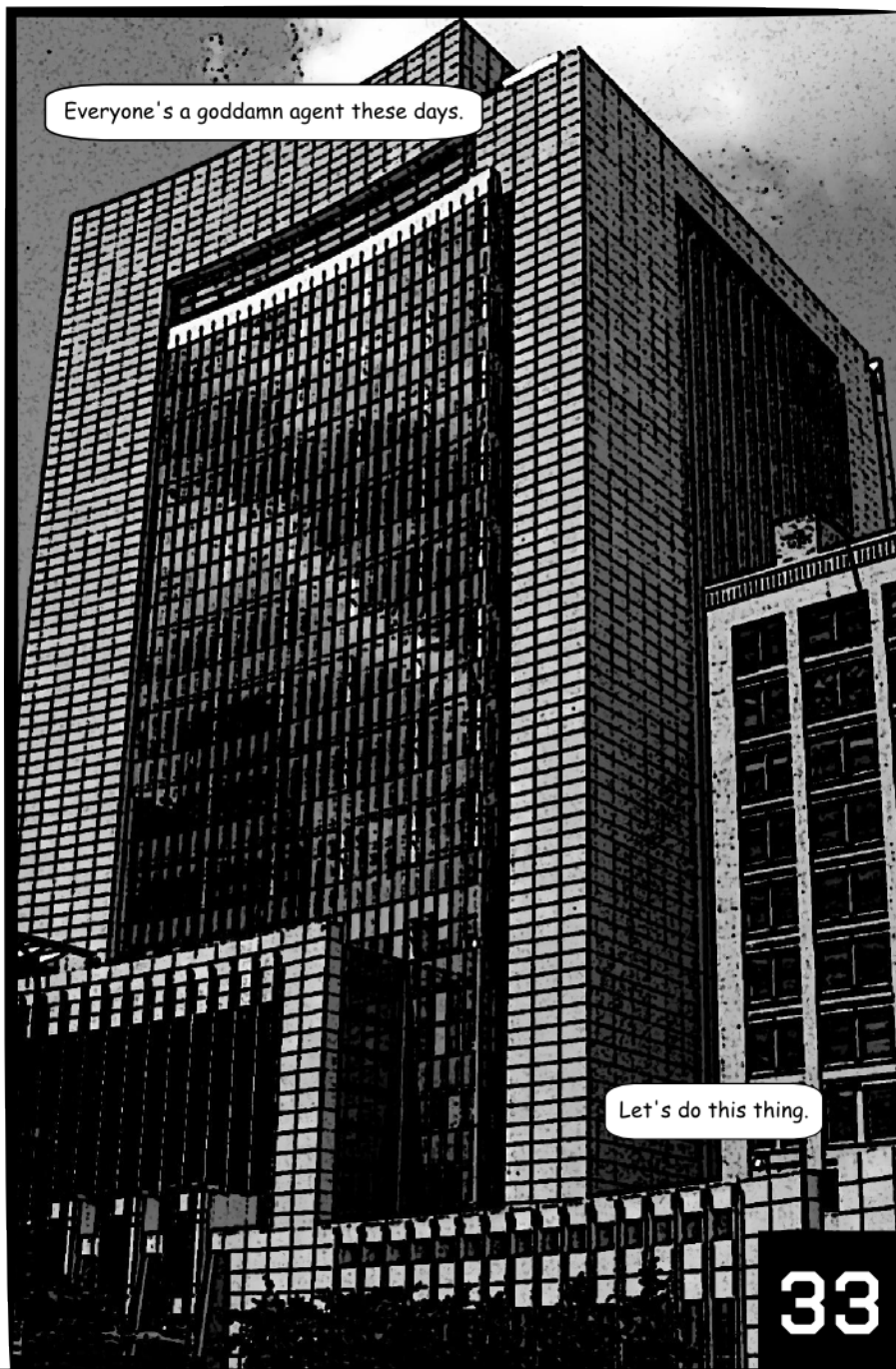
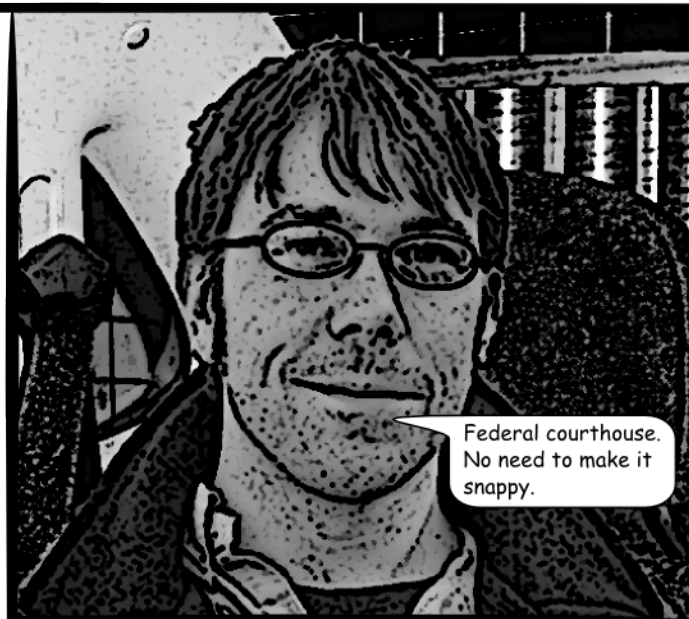


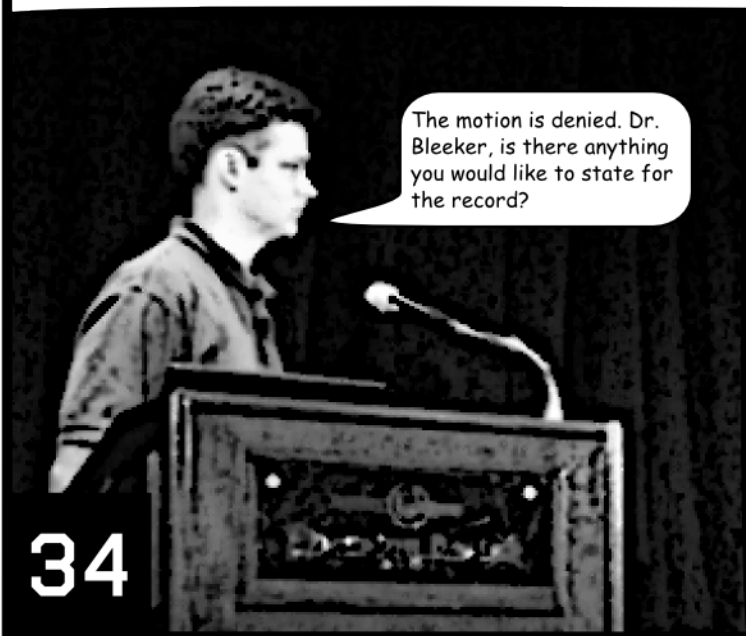
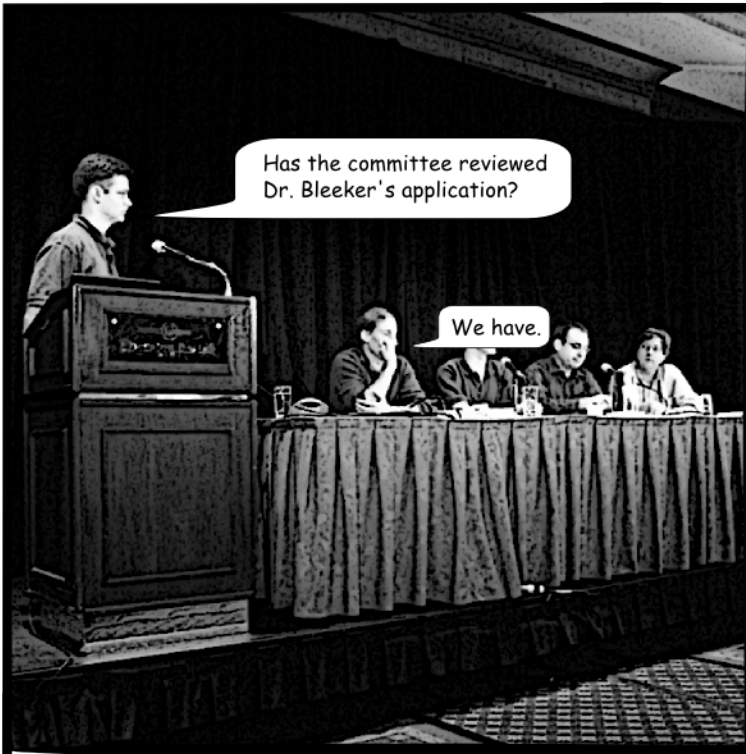
Here's motor one. Four more to go. Oh, and some of the kids at the college think they've licked your french press issue.

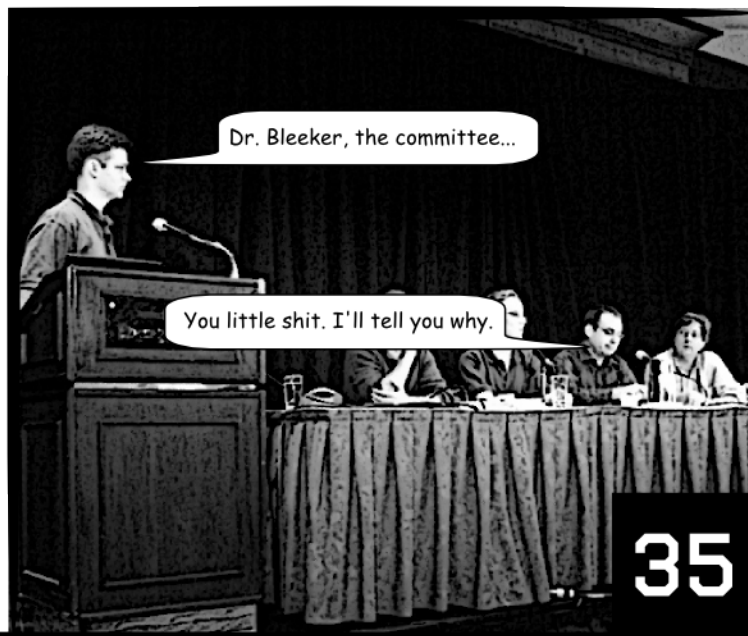
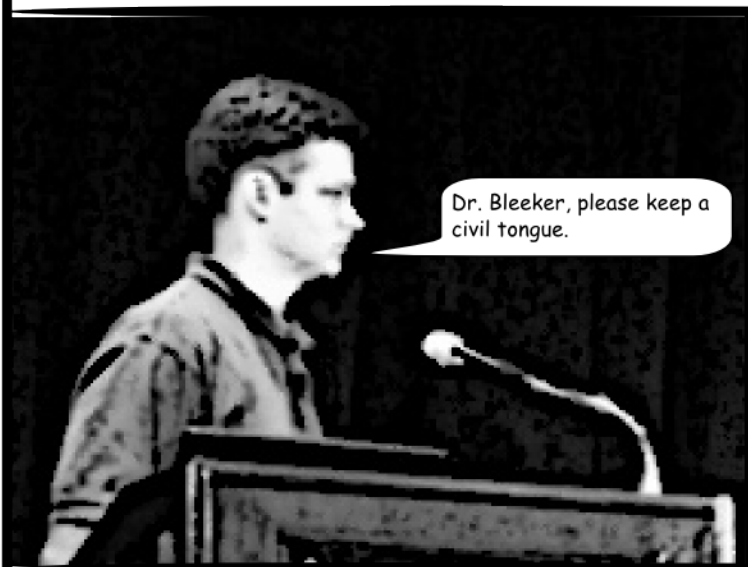
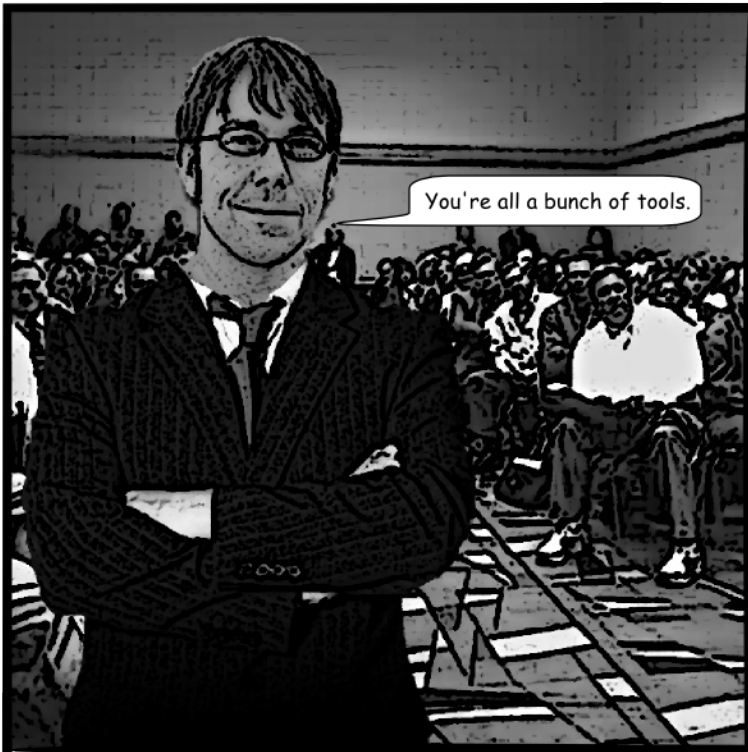


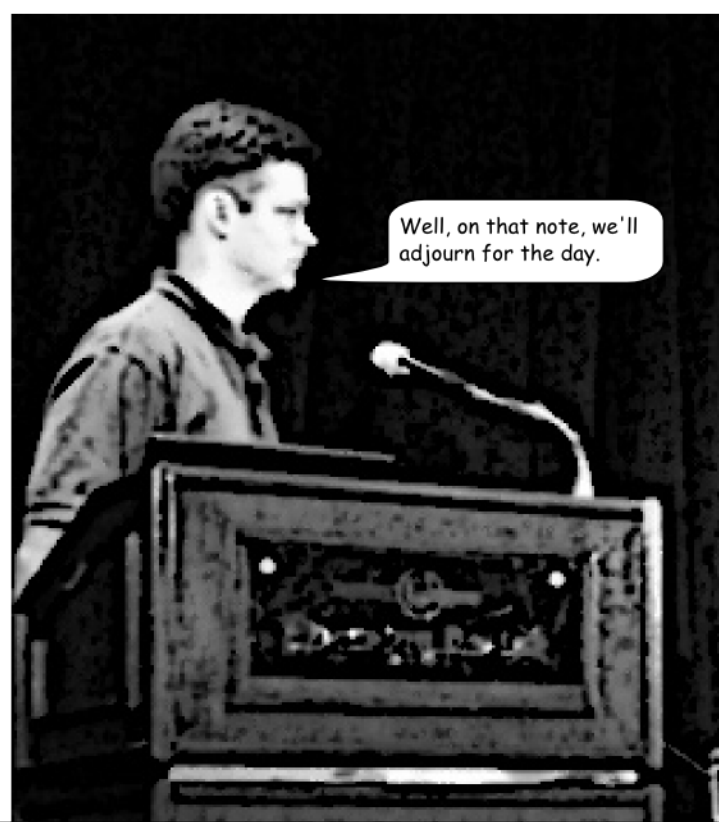
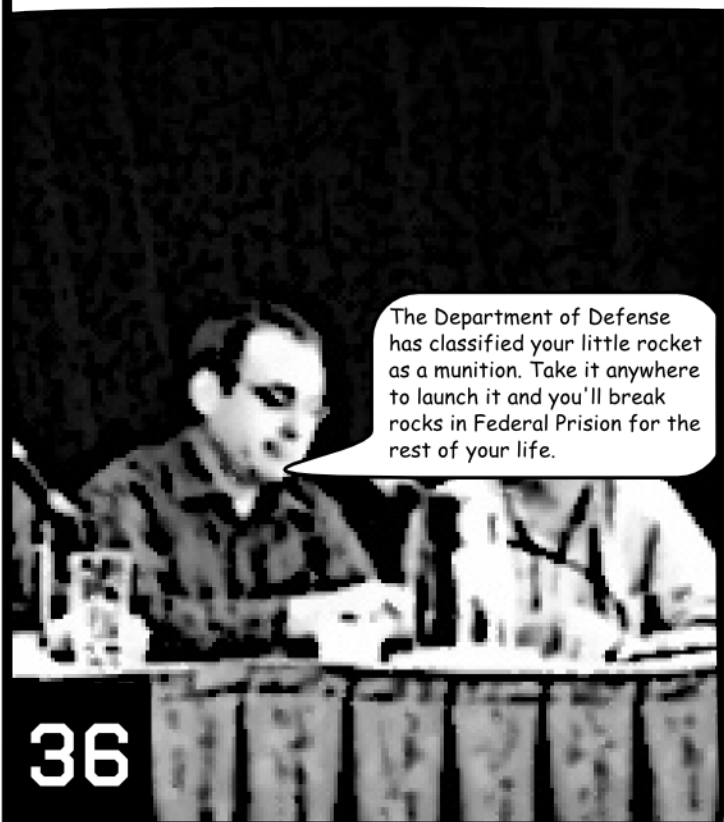
Good. I'm not sure going translunar is worth it without decent coffee.












A black and white photograph of a man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He has his arms crossed and is standing in a crowd of people. The background is slightly out of focus, showing other individuals and what appears to be an outdoor setting.

So what you're telling me is that if I do it the old fashioned, all American way...

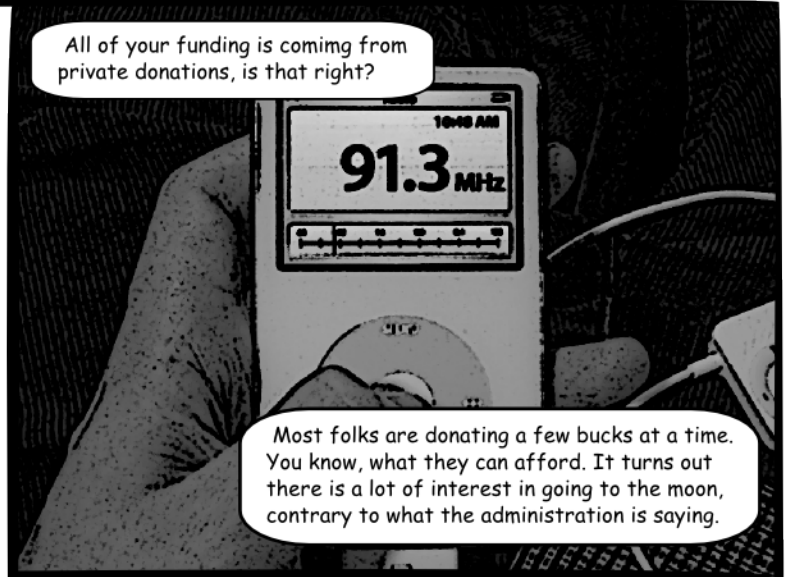
...the terrorists win?

I'm Michelle Norris with NPR. Joining me tonight is Dr. Warren Bleeker, who is attempting to fly a rocket to the moon. I understand there was a major setback, today?



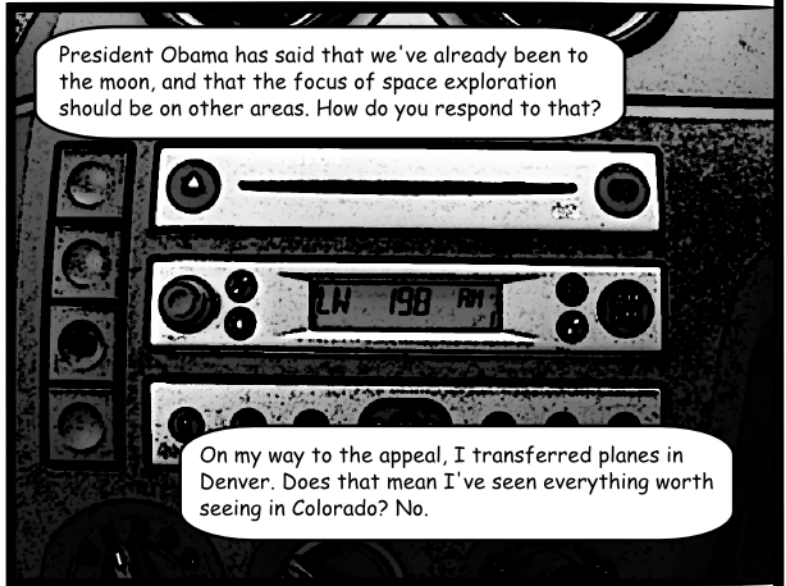
Well, Michelle, the FAA denied our appeal for a flight plan that would take our rocket into orbit. If we launch, we'll be violating all sorts of laws. So, yes, that's a setback. One I'm pretty sure we'll overcome.

All of your funding is coming from private donations, is that right?



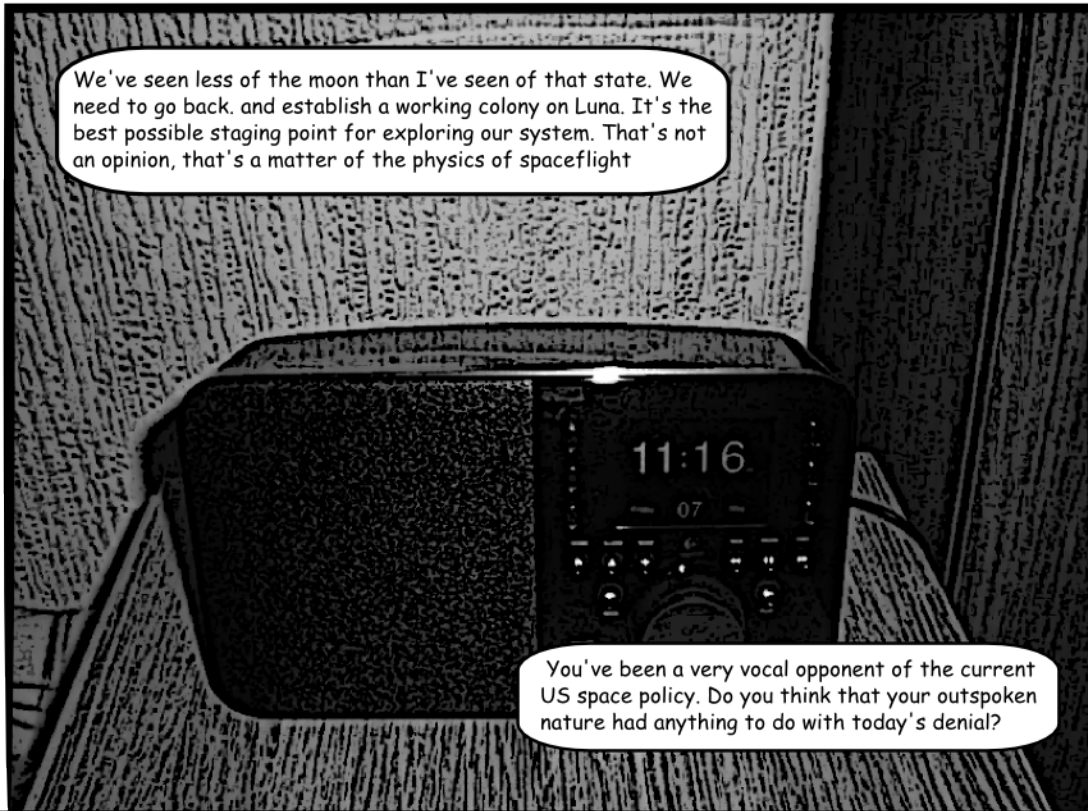
Most folks are donating a few bucks at a time. You know, what they can afford. It turns out there is a lot of interest in going to the moon, contrary to what the administration is saying.

President Obama has said that we've already been to the moon, and that the focus of space exploration should be on other areas. How do you respond to that?




On my way to the appeal, I transferred planes in Denver. Does that mean I've seen everything worth seeing in Colorado? No.

We've seen less of the moon than I've seen of that state. We need to go back, and establish a working colony on Luna. It's the best possible staging point for exploring our system. That's not an opinion, that's a matter of the physics of spaceflight



You've been a very vocal opponent of the current US space policy. Do you think that your outspoken nature had anything to do with today's denial?



Michelle, I was told today that the future doesn't belong to the people. That is the single most BLEEPed up thing I've ever heard. The US government is doing everything in it's power to stop me and my friends from going to the moon.

At this point, I could care less what the government says. We're going to go translunar. We owe it to the people who've given us a few bucks that they can spare.

Dr. Bleeker, the government has threatened to arrest you if you attempt a launch.

BLEEP 'em.

It's ON now, fuckers. **ER**

You can learn more about Dr. Bleeker's moon launch, as well as read a transcript of the FAA appeal hearing at our website, npr.org.

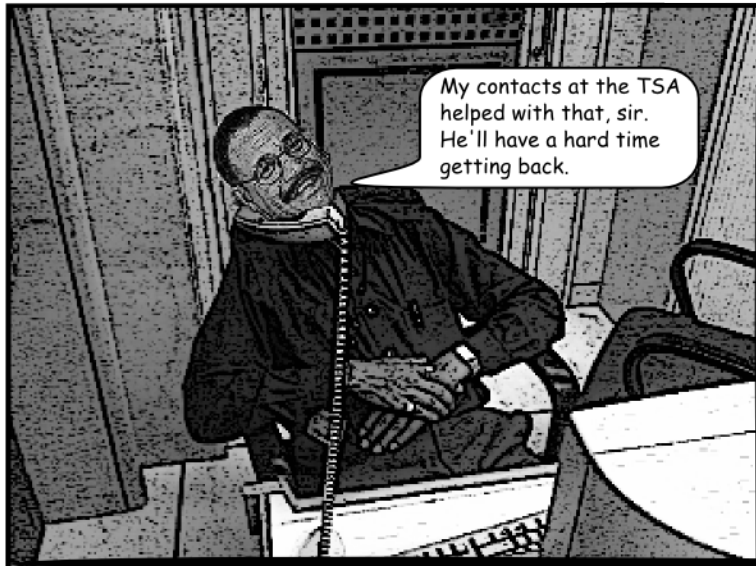
They put me on the goddamn no fly list, Rob. I'm getting on a bus.



Listen, I don't care what they threatened you with. Prep everything for launch. I'll be there soon.

Yes, sir. His associates have been warned off. The local authorities have been alerted to the illegality of his actions.

Honestly, sir, I have no idea. Western sheriffs sometimes don't play by the rules.



My contacts at the TSA helped with that, sir. He'll have a hard time getting back.



No, I doubt it. We have this well in hand

Rob, you can't bitch out now. I need you.



Fine. Run ground control, then. When they arrest you, tell 'em I was threatening you life, or some shit. Now put Pam on the phone.

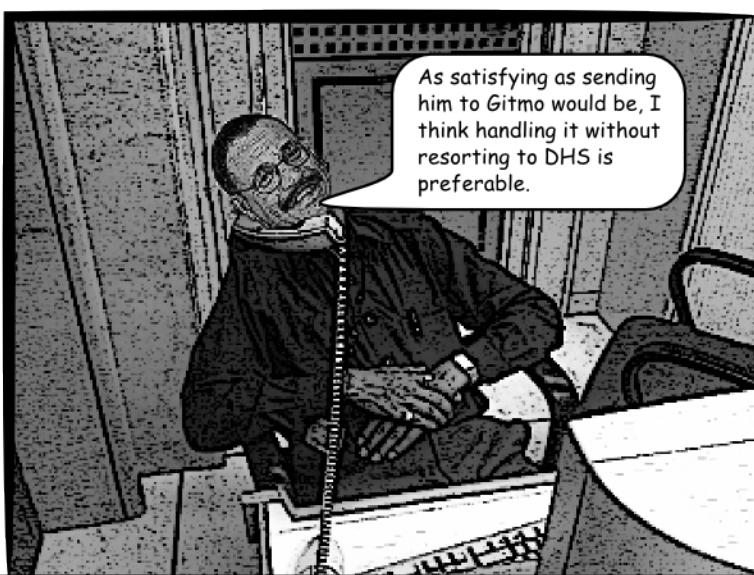
Pam, I know I've been shitty, and I've been consciously avoiding thinking about you in any terms other than research partner.



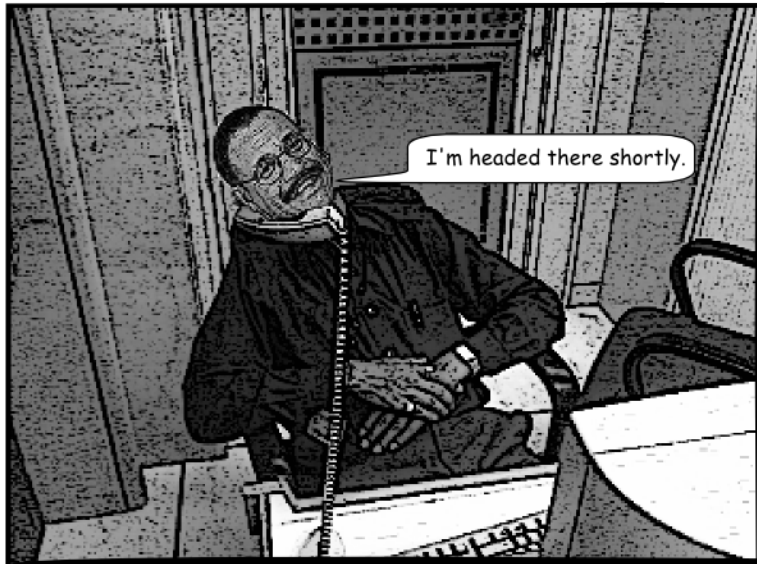
I've been obsessed and crazy and everything is spinning out of control right now.



No, sir, that won't be necessary.

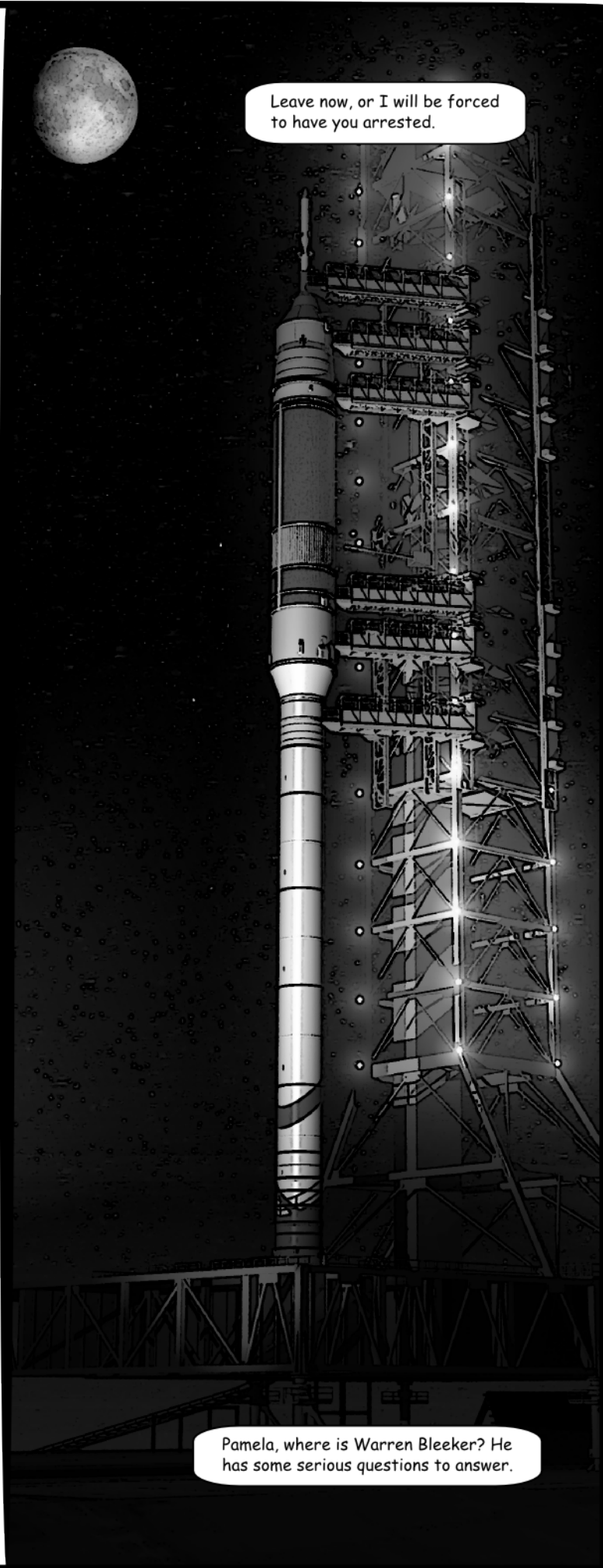


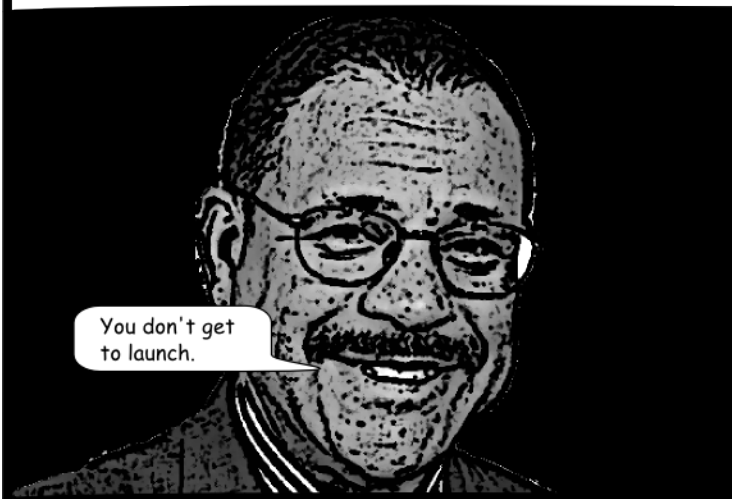
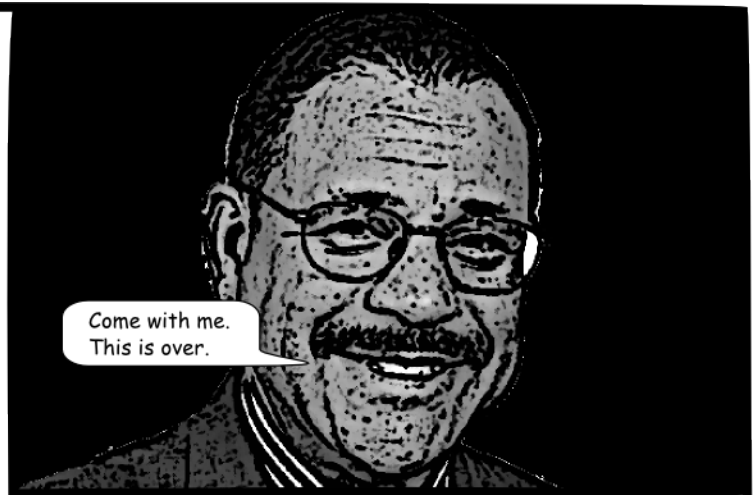
As satisfying as sending him to Gitmo would be, I think handling it without resorting to DHS is preferable.

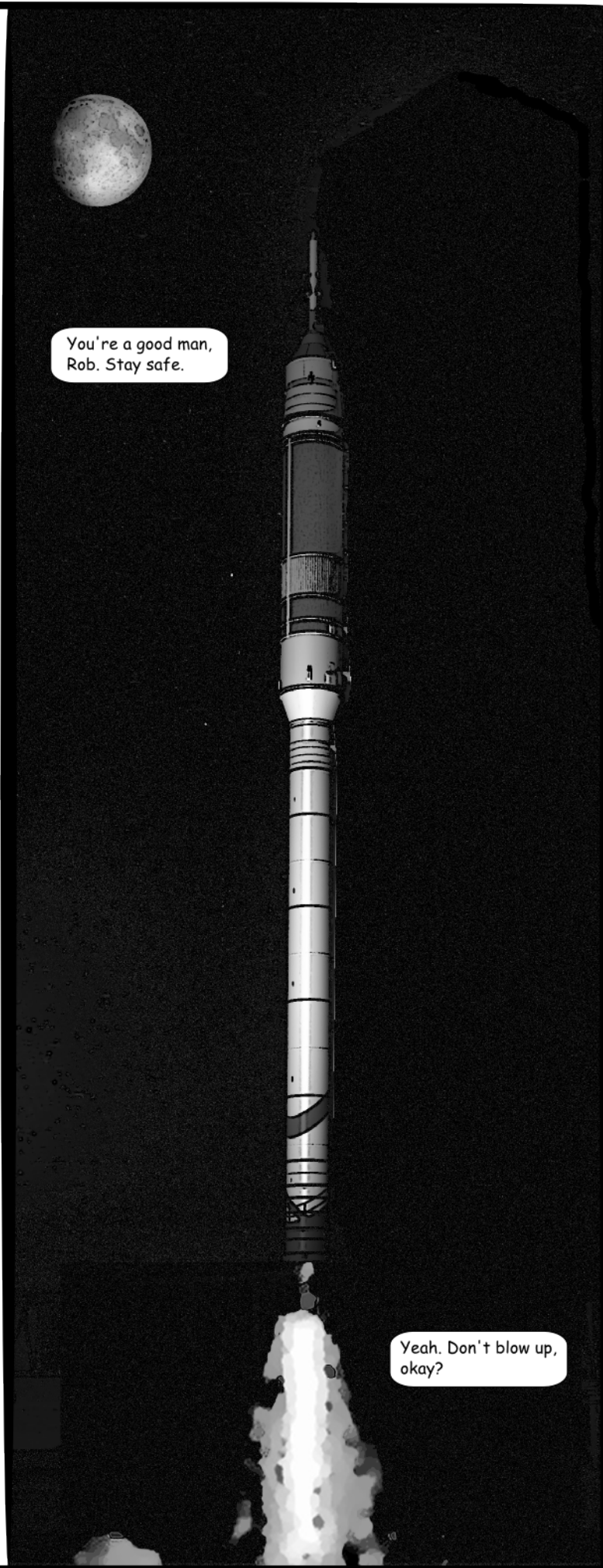


Look, you're the only woman I've ever really wanted to impress. I have a lot of shit I'd like to say to you, but this fucking pay phone wants more quarters.

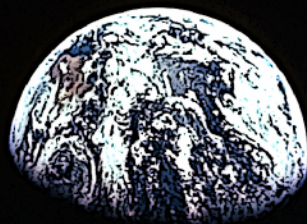








Hey, Pam? Would it be okay for me to call you my girlfriend?



Jesus, Bleeker. Yes. Stop looking at me and check out the view.

IMAGE CREDITS:

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO GENEROUSLY MADE THEIR IMAGES AVAILABLE UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LISCENSE.
TRANSLUNAR WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU.

TOOBYDOO - WE DID IT!
PAULSHAFFNER - APARTMENT 1-20
MISTERAITCH - SELF-PORTRAIT, WALKING AWAY
JURVETSON - ARMY CLUSTER FLIGHT
MR T - PROTECTIVE WALL
ALEX BARTH DRUPALCON DEBRIEF
HOUSINGWORKSAUCTIONS - VINTAGE GLASS TOP TABLE
#IARDYIII - LINUS DRINKING BEER?!
MICHEL FILION - "PARKING SPACE"
NIGHTSANFRANANNIE - BLAST OFF!
ED YOURDON - YEAH, I'M SMOKING A CIGARETTE. YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT -
IF I STAND HERE LONG ENOUGH, MAYBE SOMEONE WILL CALL ME...
LIEWCF - DELL 2407WFP 24-INCH WIDESCREEN ULTRASHARP LCD MONITOR
(FRONT)
RILEYROXX - PASSED OUT ALASDAIR!!
QUINN.ANYA - DAY 149: ANDY - ANDY - DAY 66: ANDY HAS A PROPOSAL - KATE
ZENOBIA_JOY - MAX
KARPIDIS - KALI TYPING HER SCRIPT
MIKECOGH - THE OTHER 66!
VANESSAEDUCATION - BLOGGING
XDMAG - TYPIN' LATE
SHARESKI - MR. LAZY MAN
JESSE GARDNER - POWERBOOK G4 - REAR
VIZZUAL.COM - THE BRICK WALL
WOOKIE - MY OWN TRANSPARENT SCREEN
XJRLOKIX - HD MOON WALLPAPER
ANDREWEICK - LARS KIHNBORG AT DESK
TIPOYOCK - WOMAN FEMME CHAISE FAUTEIL ON THE CHAIR BAROQUE
WHATLEYDUDE - I'M ON THE RIGHT TARIFF! WOO! :)
SOUTHERNTABITHA - FISH TANK
OLD SARGE - WAREHOUSE DOOR
#IEXOTHERMIC - DARK BRICK WAREHOUSE DOOR
RUNE.WELSH - GLOVEBOX
NLNNET - HAGGIS CAFE CHALKBOARD

EUTHMAN - CHEMISTRY LAB
JEMSWEB - TEENA THE YOUNG SCIENTIST
MATTHEW VENN - THE ENGINE ROOM CONTROL ROOM
ANDERS LJUNGBERG - OPERATING
WŁODI - THE BIG RED BUTTON
CELLIOS - NIGHT SHIFT - HARD@WORK
(IOF8)BLMURCH - EMPTY MOVING TRUCK!!
BRADLEYGEE - DRIVING ON THE INTERSTATE
XNATEDAWGX - MONTANA WELCOME SIGN
KEN LUND - U.S. 191, NEAR CHIRICAHUA NATIONAL MONUMENT (3)
KOLOPRES - BERKELEY PIT2
DIESELEDEMON - CAR WASH
JOE MABEL - WAREHOUSE NEAR 11 ST. BRIDGE
OSHORIA VARLAN - TEST TUBES AND OTHER RECIPIENTS IN CHEMISTRY LAB
BOBJGALINDO - CLINICAL LAB EQUIPMENT
CLIFFIO66™ - ROCKET MOTOR, SOLID FUEL, X-259
NET_EFEKT - DNA MOLECULE DISPLAY, OXFORD UNIVERSITY
EDI WEISSMANN - YOUR REGULAR KITCHENETTE ITEMS
ROCKNROLL_GUITAR - A CLEAN KITCHEN. [DAY 112/365]
HENRIQUE VICENTE - CORSA BACK SEAT
JOE MADONNA - JIMMY THE CAB DRIVER
JOEBEONE - CA TTB REVIEW PANEL AT USENIX SECURITY
PAUL STEVENSON - SUIT
STEVE BURT - BLOG PANEL DISCUSSION AT NSBA IN CHICAGO
ALAN STEWART - RADIO MAST AT GALLANACH
DAN TAYLOR - IPOD FM RADIO REMOTE
NEDRICHARDS - CAR RADIO
REEDY - SQUEEZEBOX RADIO
LIFTARN - MY NEW STEREO
CJ SORG - VIBE 56 RACK 1 (2)
CLOSEDMOUTH - MIDNIGHT PHONE BOOTH
MAHFROT - "PUNCH ME IN THE FACE"
JASON CLAPP - LOVE HURTS

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