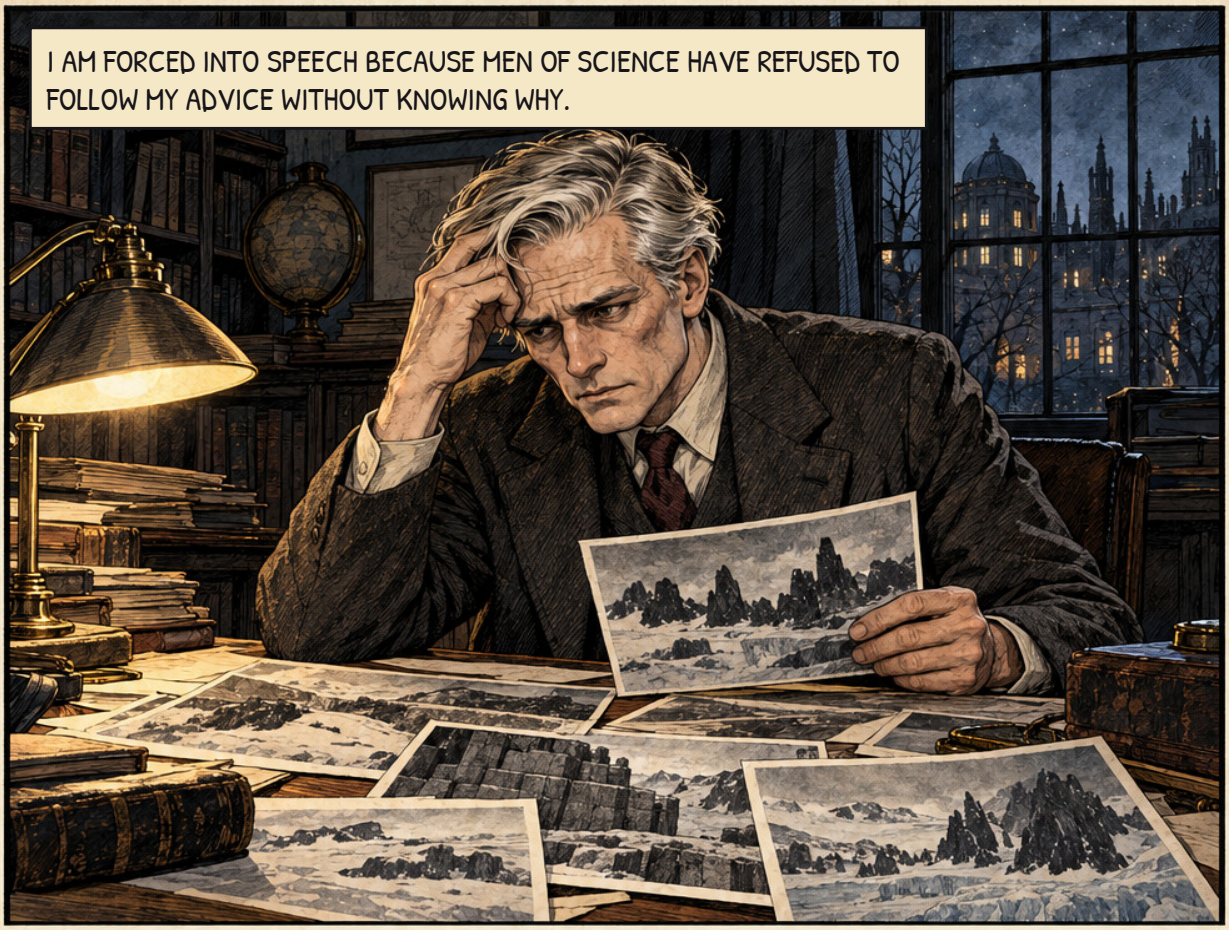
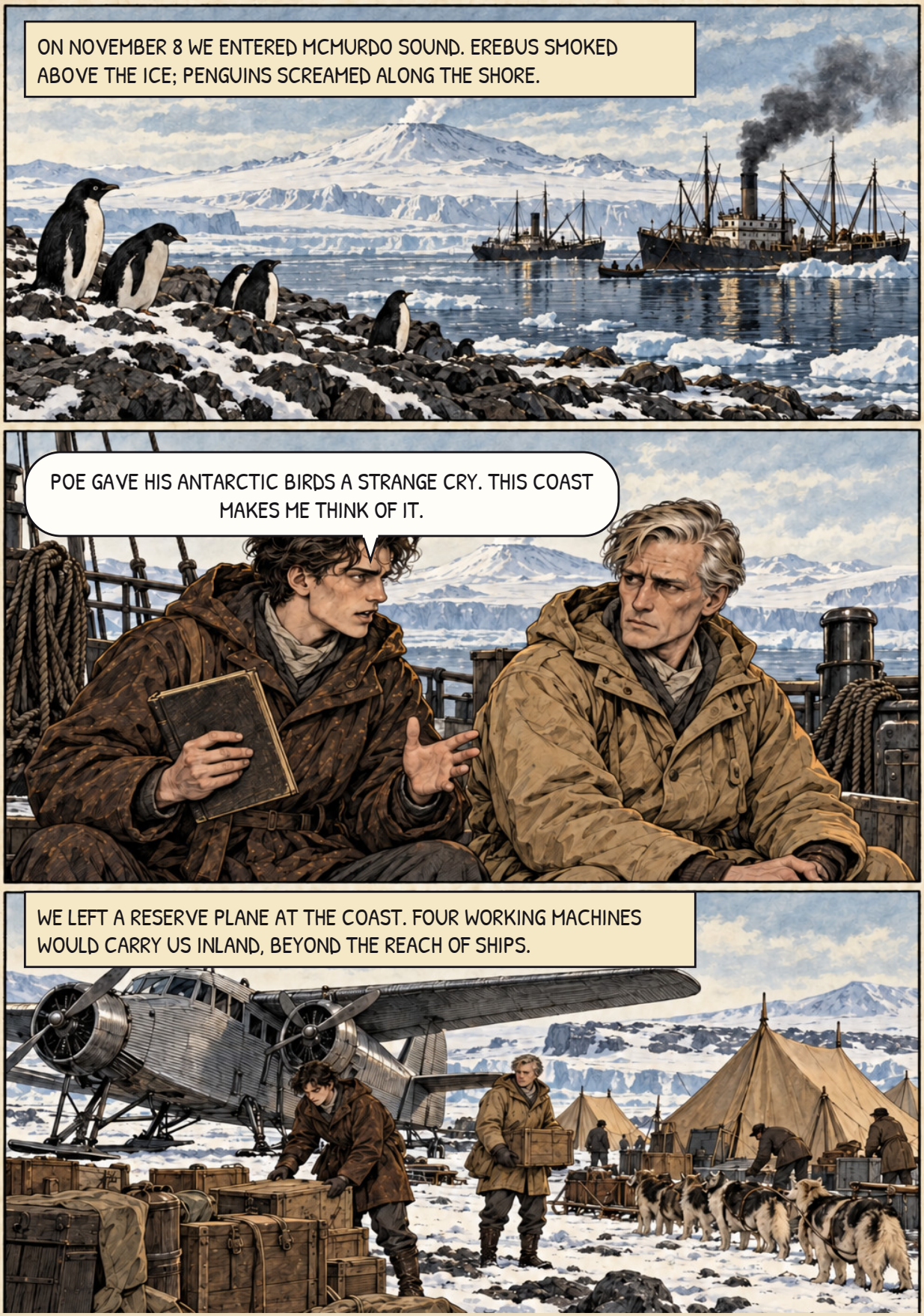
AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS

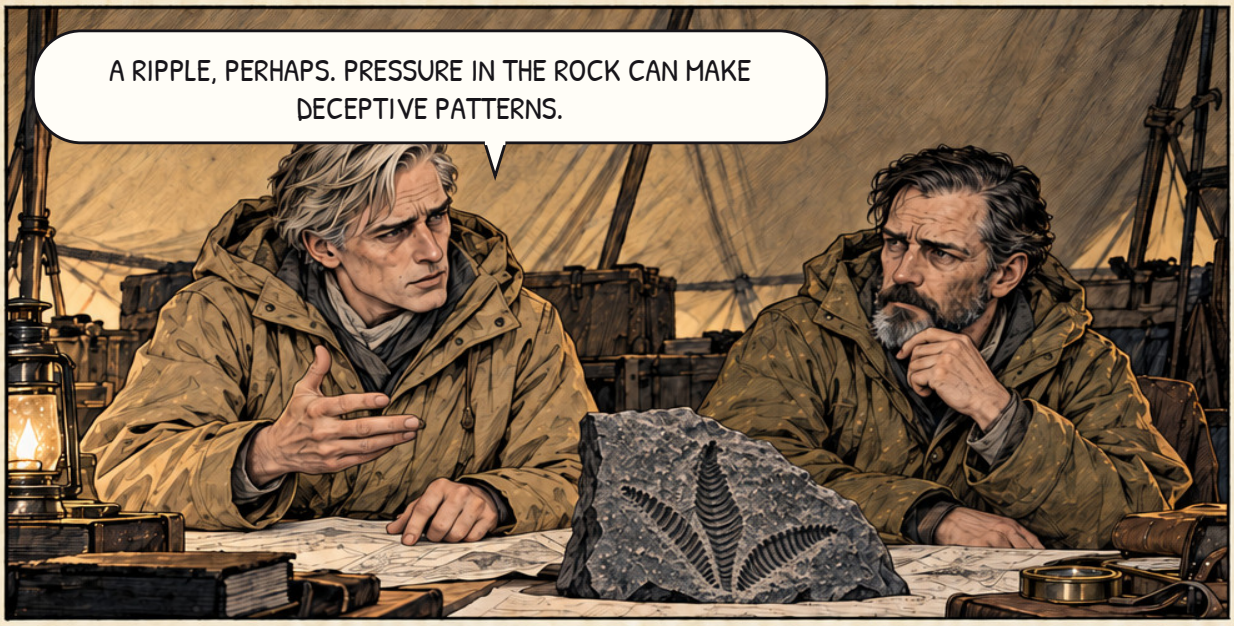




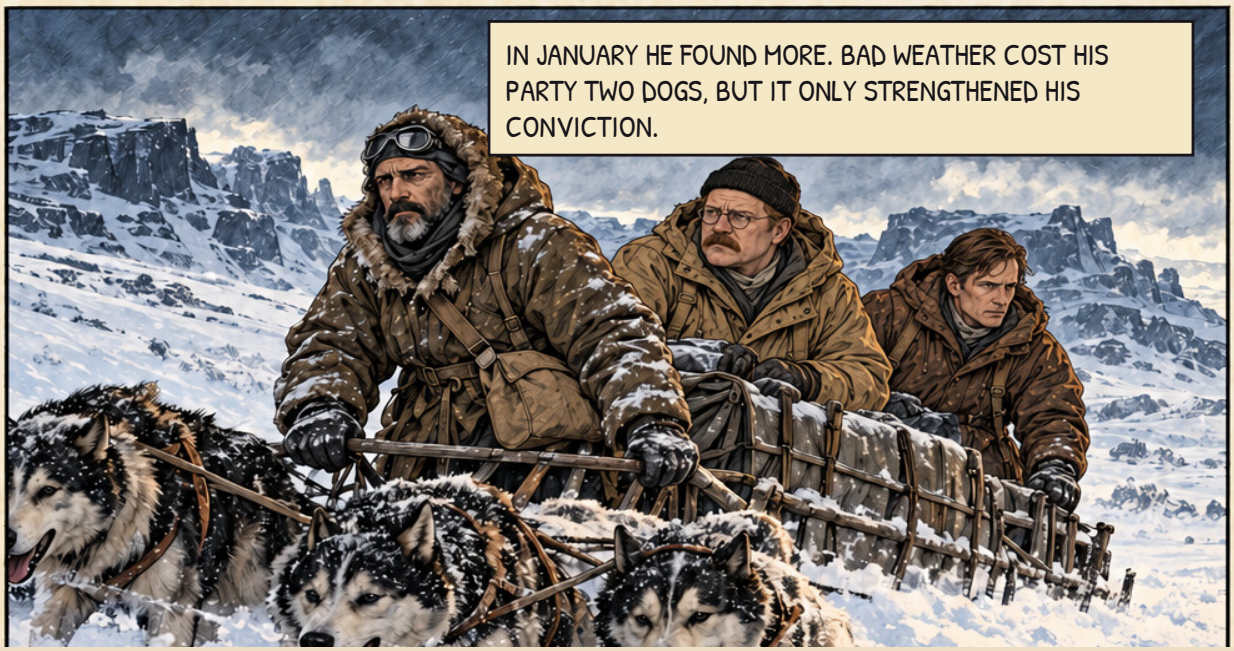

WE SAILED FROM BOSTON ON SEPTEMBER 2, 1930: TWENTY MEN, FIFTY-FIVE DOGS, AND FIVE SPECIALLY EQUIPPED AEROPLANES.
GASOLINE POWER, A COLLAPSIBLE DERRICK, ELECTRICAL ICE-MELTING. WE CAN BRING UP SAMPLES FROM A THOUSAND FEET.
BY OCTOBER WE HAD PASSED HOBART. BEYOND THE ANTARCTIC CIRCLE, THE SEA BEGAN TO FILL WITH IMPOSSIBLE CASTLES OF ICE.

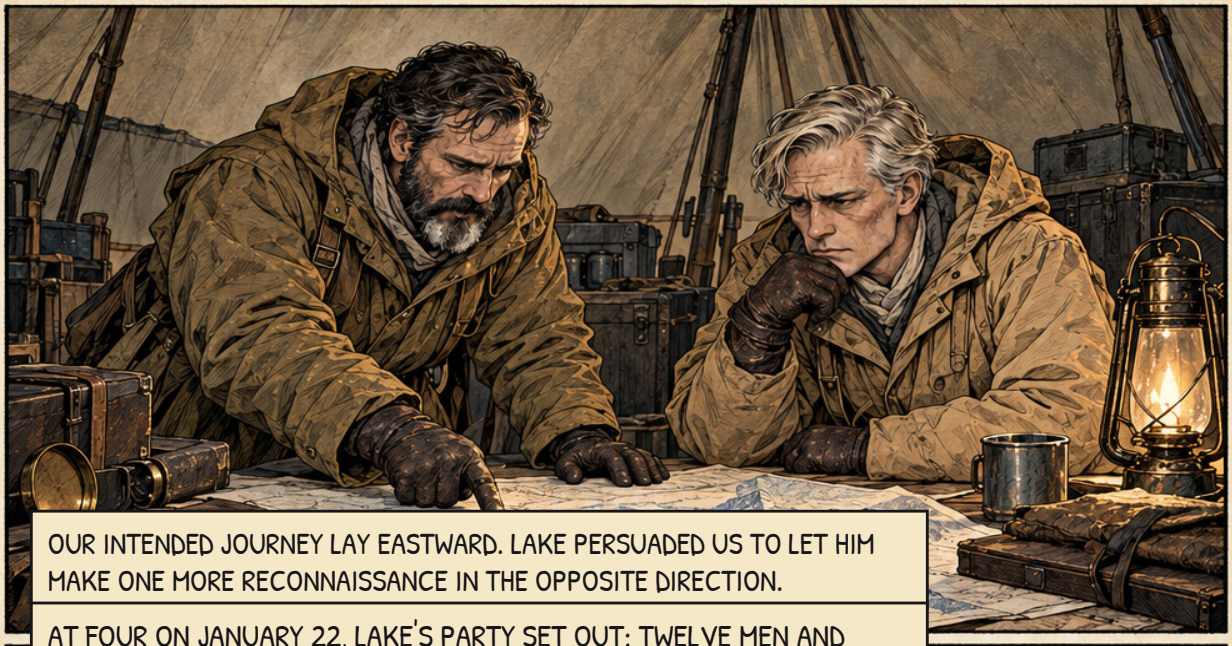

ON NOVEMBER 8 WE ENTERED MCMURDO SOUND. EREBUS SMOKED ABOVE THE ICE; PENGUINS SCREAMED ALONG THE SHORE.
POE GAVE HIS ANTARCTIC BIRDS A STRANGE CRY. THIS COAST MAKES ME THINK OF IT.
WE LEFT A RESERVE PLANE AT THE COAST. FOUR WORKING MACHINES WOULD CARRY US INLAND, BEYOND THE REACH OF SHIPS.


ON NOVEMBER 21 WE FLEW OVER THE BEARDMORE GLACIER TO A PLATEAU EIGHTY-FIVE HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE SEA.
OUR FIRST BORINGS DISCLOSED A WORLD THAT HAD ONCE BEEN WARM: FORESTS, FERNS, AND THE RELICS OF VANISHED ANIMALS.
THIS IMPRESSION IS IN ARCHAEAN SLATE. SOMETHING COMPLEX WAS HERE BEFORE THE LIFE WE THOUGHT WE KNEW.


A RIPPLE, PERHAPS. PRESSURE IN THE ROCK CAN MAKE DECEPTIVE PATTERNS.


THEN WHY DO THESE MARKS RECUR? I WANT TO FOLLOW THEM NORTHWEST.


IN JANUARY HE FOUND MORE. BAD WEATHER COST HIS PARTY TWO DOGS, BUT IT ONLY STRENGTHENED HIS CONVICTION.



OUR INTENDED JOURNEY LAY EASTWARD. LAKE PERSUADED US TO LET HIM MAKE ONE MORE RECONNAISSANCE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

AT FOUR ON JANUARY 22, LAKE'S PARTY SET OUT: TWELVE MEN AND THIRTY-SEVEN DOGS. PABODIE AND I STAYED WITH THE SOUTHERN CAMP.



BY EVENING LAKE WAS SEVEN HUNDRED MILES AWAY. THEN HIS REPORTS BEGAN TO CHANGE EVERYTHING.




LAKE, BY RADIO: MOUNTAINS SURPASS ANYTHING IN IMAGINATION… HIGHEST PEAKS MUST GO OVER 35,000 FEET. EVEREST OUT OF THE RUNNING.
LAKE, BY RADIO: QUEER SKYLINE EFFECTS—REGULAR SECTIONS OF CUBES CLINGING TO HIGHEST PEAKS… LIKE LAND OF MYSTERY IN A DREAM OR GATEWAY TO FORBIDDEN WORLD OF UNTRODDEN WONDER.
EVEN BY WIRELESS, HIS EXCITEMENT WAS CONTAGIOUS. WE WERE ALREADY CONSIDERING HOW TO JOIN HIM.


LAKE CAMPED FIVE MILES FROM THE FOOTHILLS, AT TWELVE THOUSAND FEET. ONE DAMAGED PLANE NEEDED REPAIR.
THE IMMEDIATE ROCK WAS YOUNGER THAN THE MOUNTAINS. A CONVENIENT LIMESTONE OUTCROP OFFERED A PLACE TO BEGIN DRILLING.
THEY DROVE DOWN THROUGH THE STONE. A SMALL BLASTING CHARGE OPENED SOMETHING LARGER THAN A BORING HOLE.


THERE'S A HOLLOW BELOW! BONES—EVERYWHERE!
THE CAVITY HELD THE REMAINS OF AN ANCIENT TROPICAL WORLD, SWEPT TOGETHER ACROSS AGES BY UNDERGROUND WATER.
SOME BONES WERE PIERCED. SOME BORE CUTS THAT NO TOOTH COULD HAVE MADE.

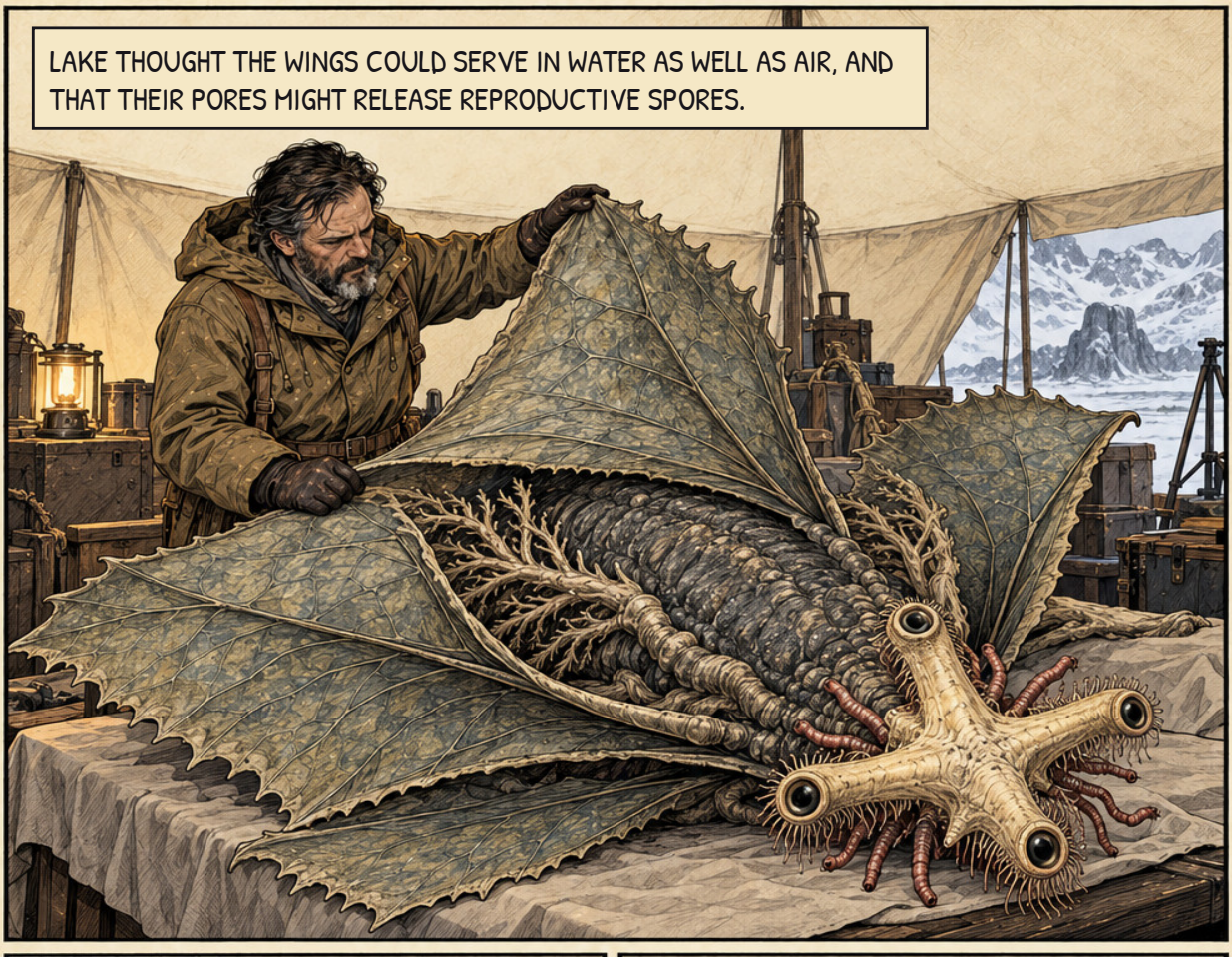

THEY FOUND GREENISH STONES, SIX INCHES ACROSS, SHAPED LIKE FIVE-POINTED STARS. LITTLE GROUPS OF DOTS MARKED THEIR SURFACES.

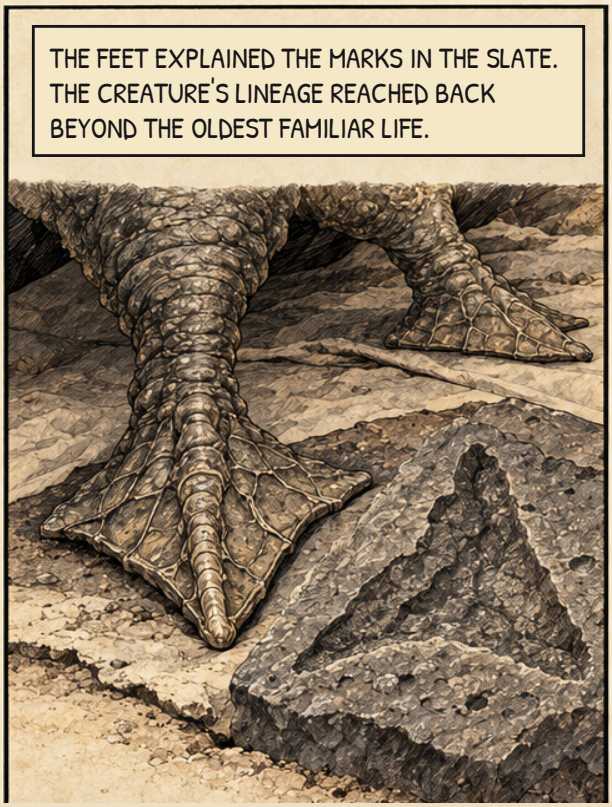

THE DOGS HATED THE SMELL OF THE SPECIMENS. KEEPING THEM AWAY BECAME A CONSTANT TASK.

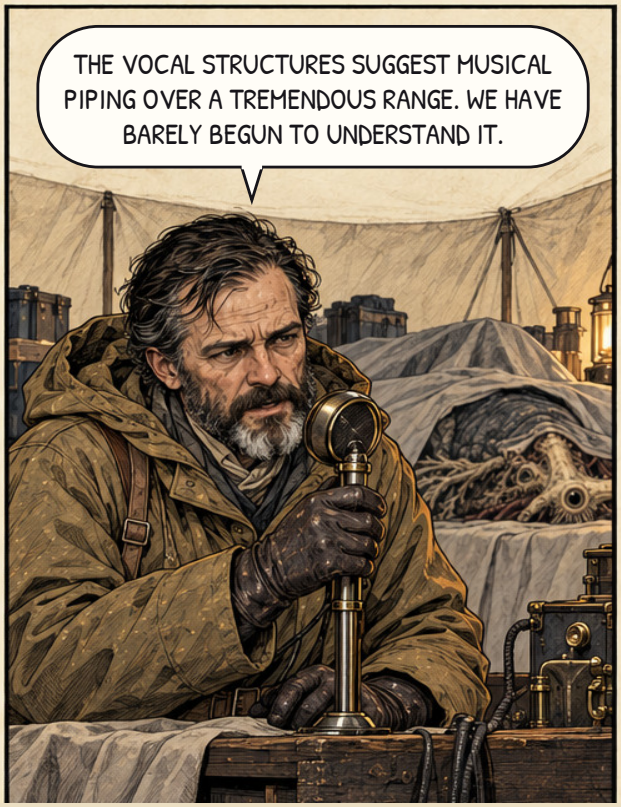

NEAR MIDNIGHT CAME THE FIRST REPORT OF SOMETHING THAT WAS NEITHER AN ORDINARY ANIMAL NOR A PLANT.

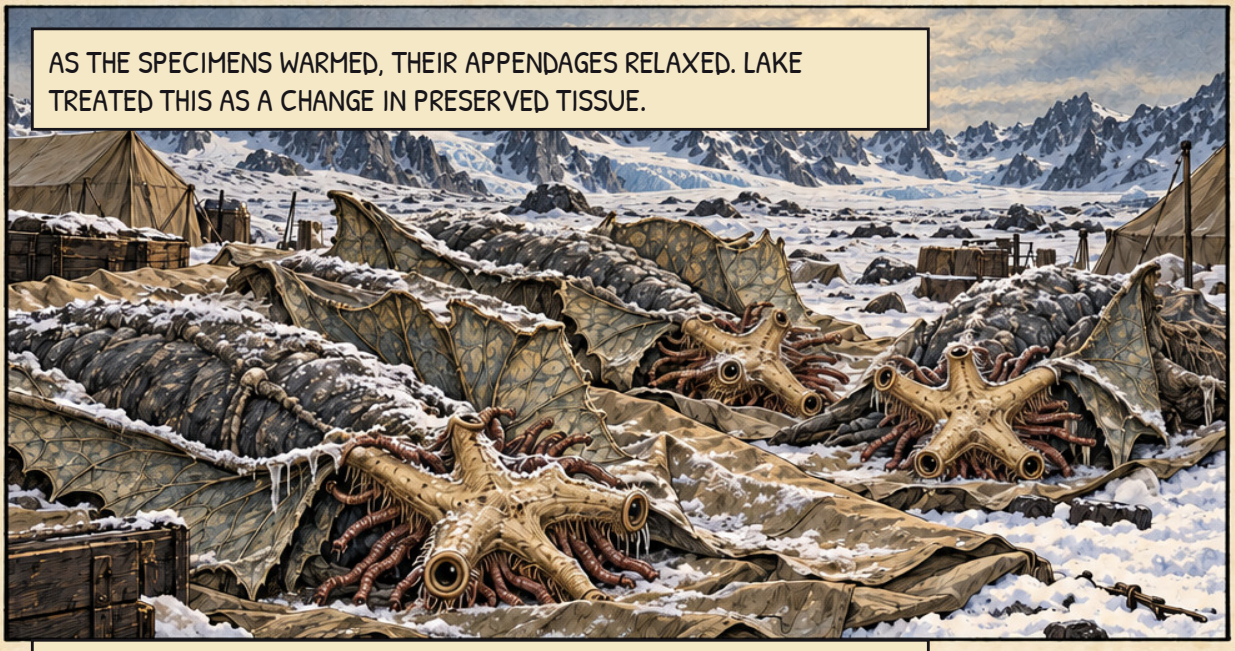

THEY BROUGHT UP FOURTEEN. SIX WERE DAMAGED. EIGHT WERE ASTONISHINGLY COMPLETE.
SIX FEET THROUGH THE BARREL, EIGHT OVERALL. FIVE RIDGES. FIVE SETS OF BRANCHING ARMS. WINGS FOLDED IN THE GROOVES.
THE HEAD IS LIKE A STARFISH. EYES AT ITS POINTS, FEEDING TUBES BETWEEN THEM. THE ORGANIZATION IS BEYOND ANYTHING WE KNOW.


THE TISSUES RESISTED HIS KNIVES. WHEN WARMTH SOFTENED THEM, THE ORGANS PROVED ALMOST UNBELIEVABLY FRESH.
GILLS—AND A MEANS OF BREATHING AIR. AN ELABORATE BRAIN. IT MAY SURVIVE LONG PERIODS WITHOUT FOOD OR WARMTH.
HE COMPARED IT TO THE ELDER ONES OF FORBIDDEN LEGEND. NONE OF US YET UNDERSTOOD HOW LITERALLY HIS WORDS MIGHT APPLY.

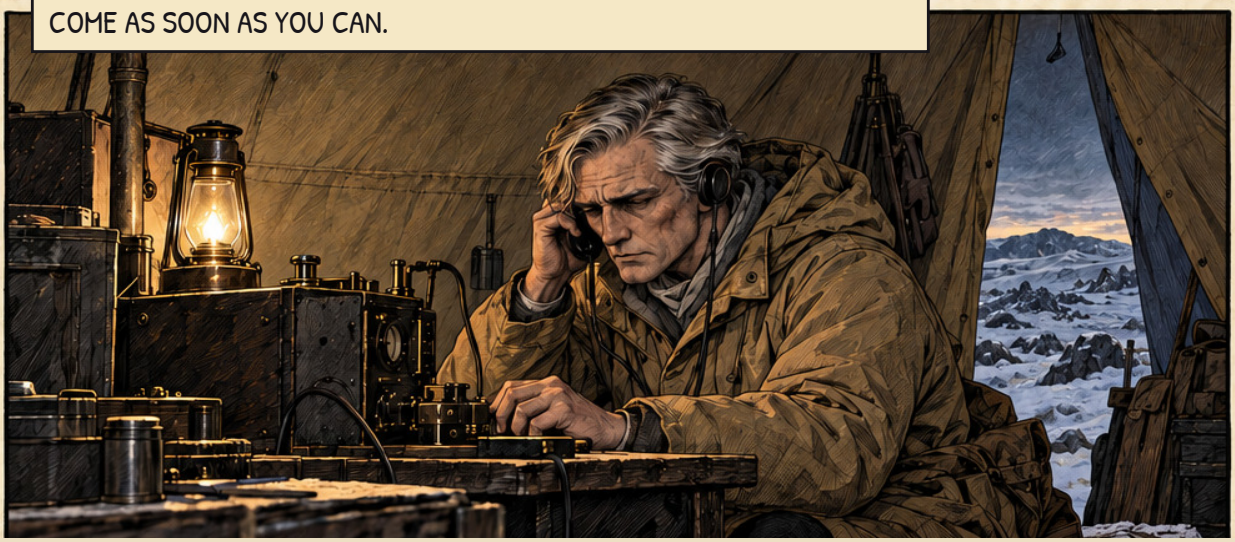

LAKE THOUGHT THE WINGS COULD SERVE IN WATER AS WELL AS AIR, AND THAT THEIR PORES MIGHT RELEASE REPRODUCTIVE SPORES.


THE FEET EXPLAINED THE MARKS IN THE SLATE. THE CREATURE'S LINEAGE REACHED BACK BEYOND THE OLDEST FAMILIAR LIFE.


THE VOCAL STRUCTURES SUGGEST MUSICAL PIPING OVER A TREMENDOUS RANGE. WE HAVE BARELY BEGUN TO UNDERSTAND IT.

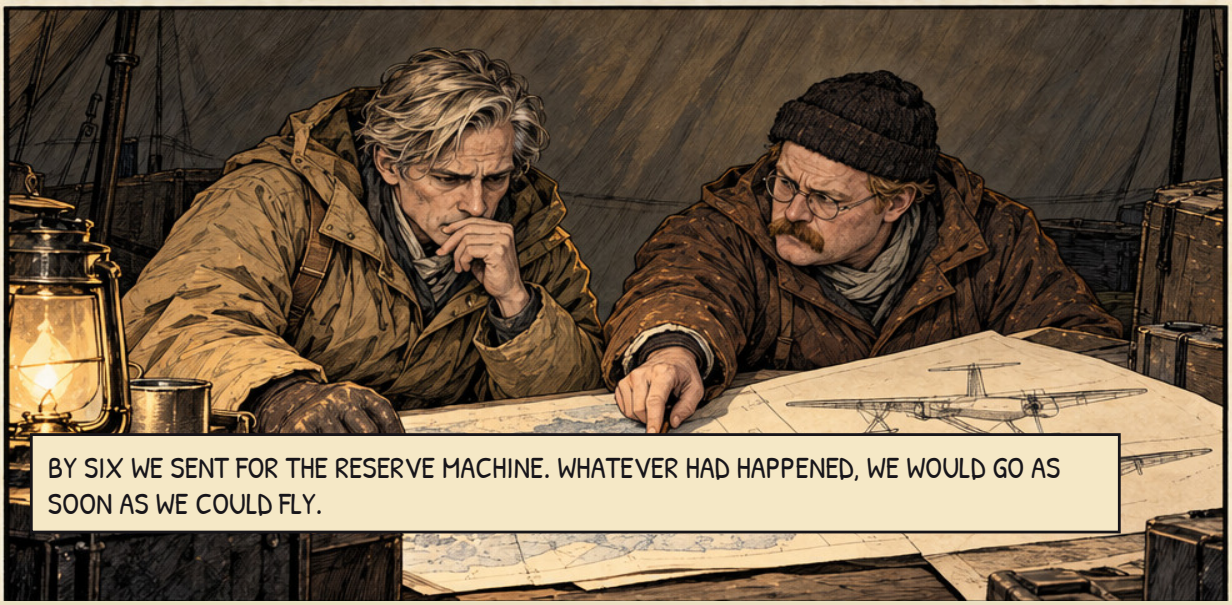

AS THE SPECIMENS WARMED, THEIR APPENDAGES RELAXED. LAKE TREATED THIS AS A CHANGE IN PRESERVED TISSUE.


AT HALF PAST TWO THEY COVERED THE BODIES WITH SPARE TENTING. THE DOGS WERE FRANTIC; THE SHELTERS WERE STILL UNFINISHED.


LAKE, BY RADIO: ALL WELL. WE'RE TURNING IN. CALL US AT TEN—AND COME AS SOON AS YOU CAN.

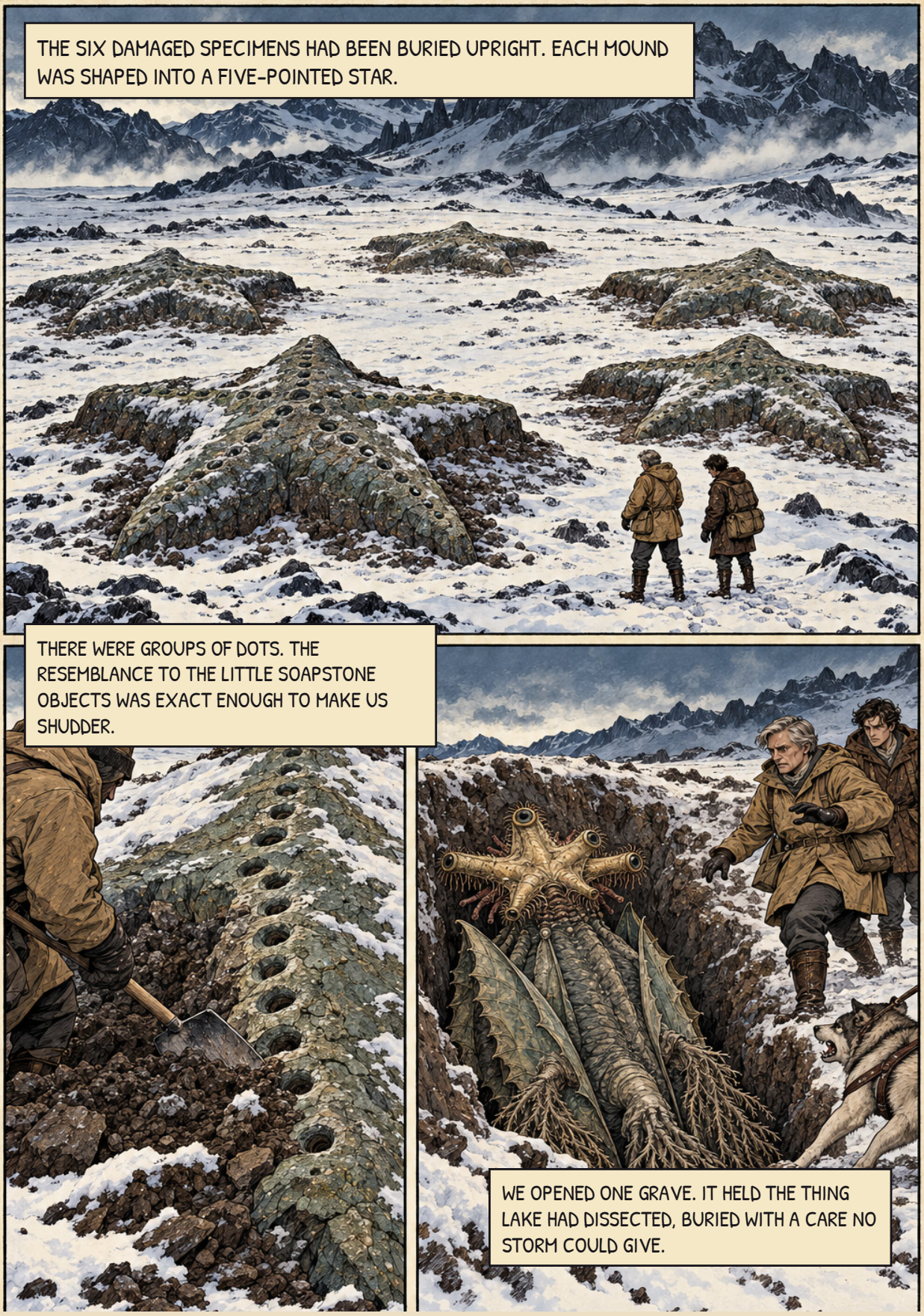

AT TEN THERE WAS NO ANSWER. NONE OF LAKE'S FOUR WIRELESS SETS REPLIED.


THE GALE KEPT US GROUNDED. THROUGH THE AFTERNOON WE CALLED, LISTENED, AND CALLED AGAIN.

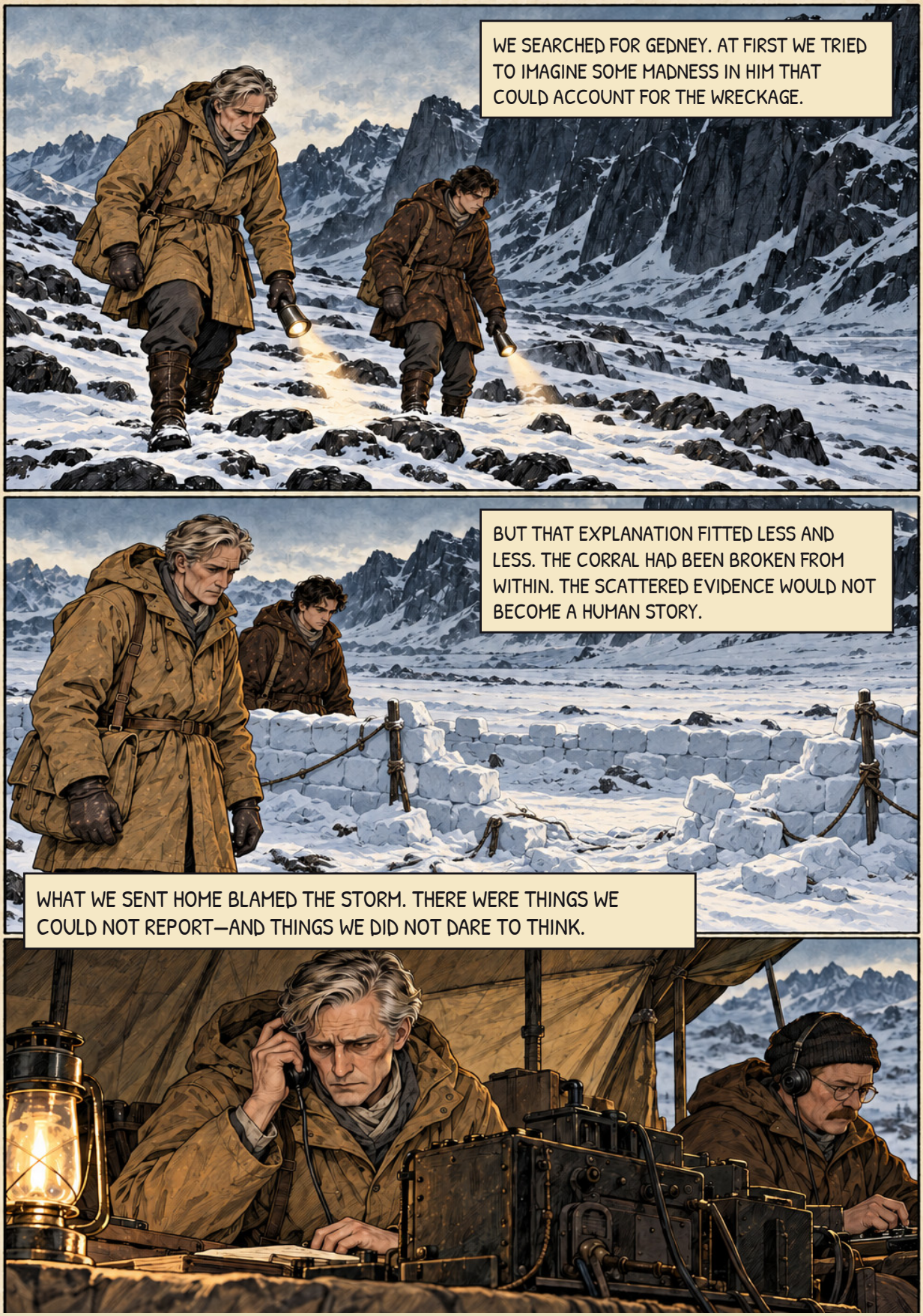

BY SIX WE SENT FOR THE RESERVE MACHINE. WHATEVER HAD HAPPENED, WE WOULD GO AS SOON AS WE COULD FLY.

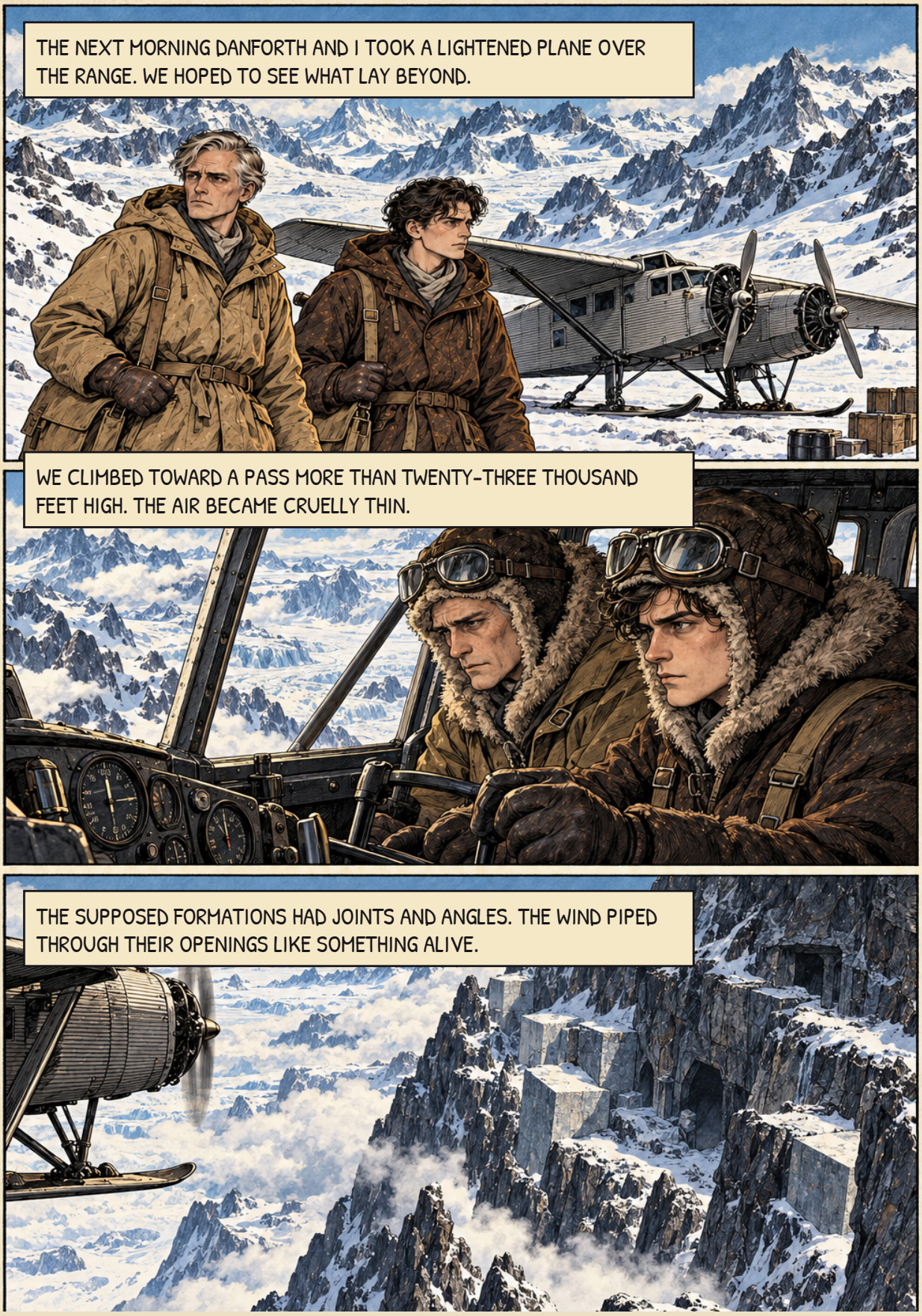

SHERMAN BROUGHT THE COAST PLANE BEFORE MIDNIGHT. AT A QUARTER PAST SEVEN WE SET OUT—TEN MEN AND SEVEN DOGS.
THE MOUNTAINS ROSE OUT OF THE HORIZON, LARGER THAN ANY PICTURE LAKE'S REPORTS HAD PLANTED IN MY MIND.
THEN A CITY APPEARED IN THE AIR. TOWERS, BRIDGES, NEEDLES—AN ELABORATE MIRAGE OF SOMETHING WE HAD NOT YET SEEN.

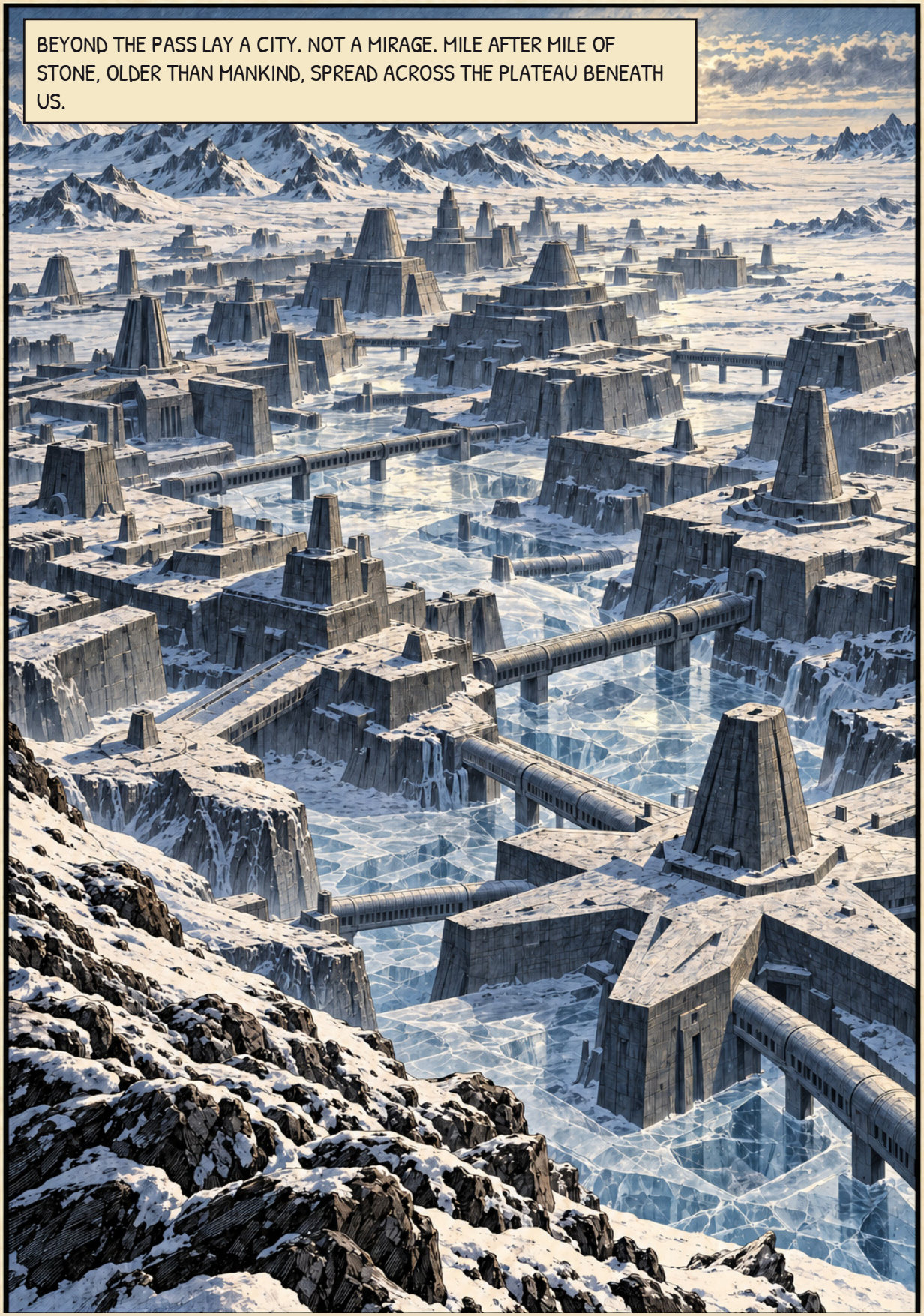

WE LANDED BESIDE A CAMP TORN TO PIECES. THE WIND EXPLAINED SOME OF THE DAMAGE. IT DID NOT EXPLAIN THE REST.
ELEVEN MEN WERE DEAD. GEDNEY WAS MISSING. WE FOUND THE DOGS TOO—EXCEPT, AS WE LEARNED LATER, ONE.
THE EIGHT PERFECT SPECIMENS WERE GONE.

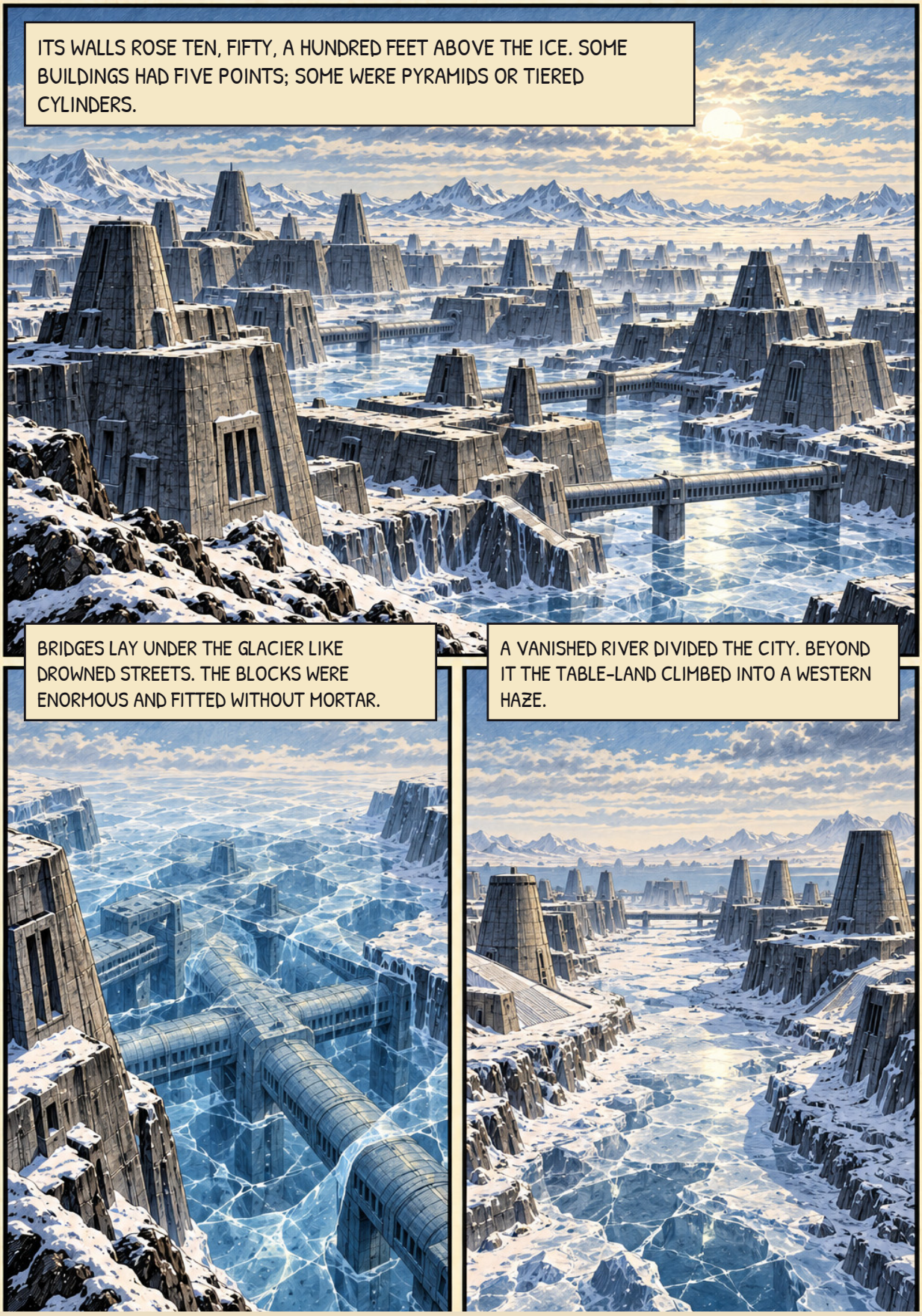

THE SIX DAMAGED SPECIMENS HAD BEEN BURIED UPRIGHT. EACH MOUND WAS SHAPED INTO A FIVE-POINTED STAR.
THERE WERE GROUPS OF DOTS. THE RESEMBLANCE TO THE LITTLE SOAPSTONE OBJECTS WAS EXACT ENOUGH TO MAKE US SHUDDER.
WE OPENED ONE GRAVE. IT HELD THE THING LAKE HAD DISSECTED, BURIED WITH A CARE NO STORM COULD GIVE.


IN THE LABORATORY A MAN AND A DOG HAD BEEN EXAMINED WITH TERRIBLE PRECISION. INSTRUMENTS HAD BEEN USED—AND CLEANED.
TINS HAD BEEN PRIED OPEN IN PECULIAR WAYS. MATCHES LAY EVERYWHERE. MACHINERY HAD BEEN STUDIED, THEN TAKEN APART.
BOOKS, FOOD, FUEL, BATTERIES, AND CLOTHES WERE MISSING. THREE SLEDGES HAD VANISHED.


WE SEARCHED FOR GEDNEY. AT FIRST WE TRIED TO IMAGINE SOME MADNESS IN HIM THAT COULD ACCOUNT FOR THE WRECKAGE.
BUT THAT EXPLANATION FITTED LESS AND LESS. THE CORRAL HAD BEEN BROKEN FROM WITHIN. THE SCATTERED EVIDENCE WOULD NOT BECOME A HUMAN STORY.
WHAT WE SENT HOME BLAMED THE STORM. THERE WERE THINGS WE COULD NOT REPORT—AND THINGS WE DID NOT DARE TO THINK.


THE NEXT MORNING DANFORTH AND I TOOK A LIGHTENED PLANE OVER THE RANGE. WE HOPED TO SEE WHAT LAY BEYOND.
WE CLIMBED TOWARD A PASS MORE THAN TWENTY-THREE THOUSAND FEET HIGH. THE AIR BECAME CRUELLY THIN.
THE SUPPOSED FORMATIONS HAD JOINTS AND ANGLES. THE WIND PIPED THROUGH THEIR OPENINGS LIKE SOMETHING ALIVE.

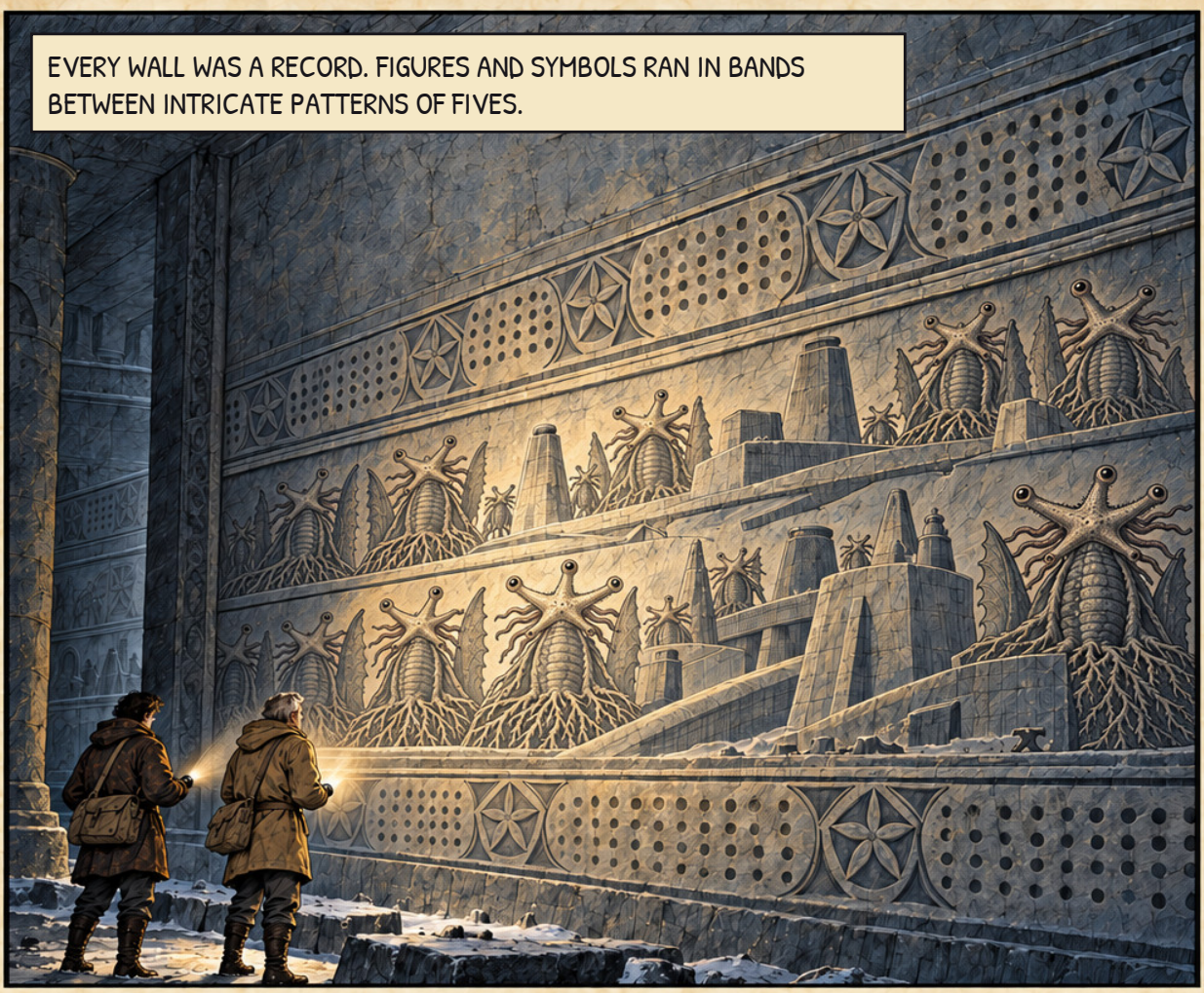

BEYOND THE PASS LAY A CITY. NOT A MIRAGE. MILE AFTER MILE OF STONE, OLDER THAN MANKIND, SPREAD ACROSS THE PLATEAU BENEATH US.

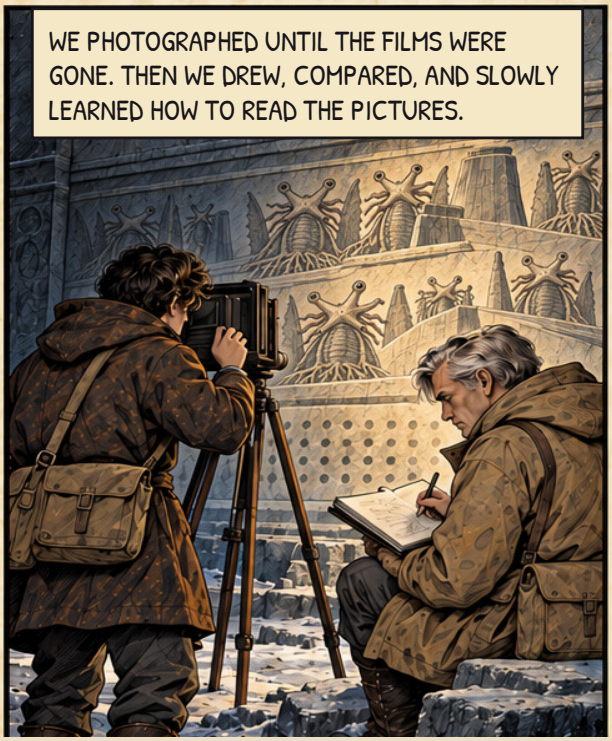

ITS WALLS ROSE TEN, FIFTY, A HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE ICE. SOME BUILDINGS HAD FIVE POINTS; SOME WERE PYRAMIDS OR TIERED CYLINDERS.
BRIDGES LAY UNDER THE GLACIER LIKE DROWNED STREETS. THE BLOCKS WERE ENORMOUS AND FITTED WITHOUT MORTAR.
A VANISHED RIVER DIVIDED THE CITY. BEYOND IT THE TABLE-LAND CLIMBED INTO A WESTERN HAZE.

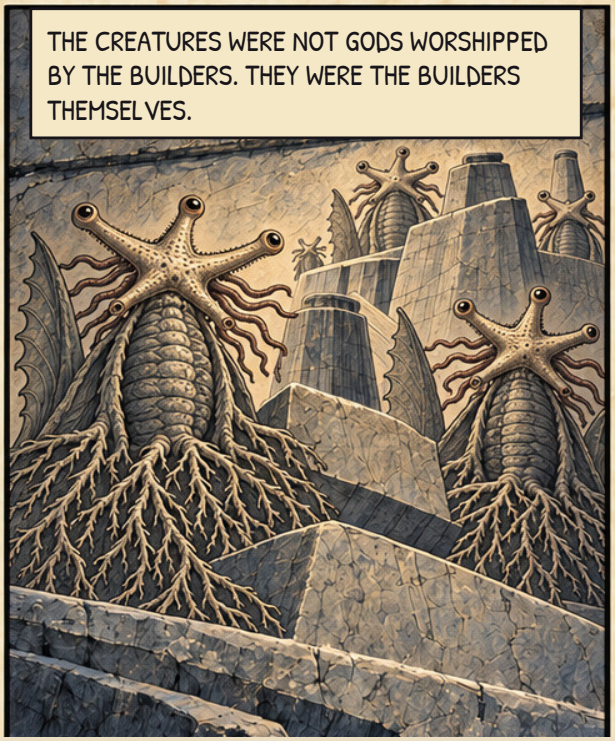

AT HALF PAST TWELVE WE LANDED NEAR THE FOOTHILLS. WE COULD LEAVE THE PLANE ON THE SLOPE AND WALK INTO THE RUINS.
WE TOOK CAMERAS, TORCHES, A COMPASS, NOTEBOOKS, ROPE, AND FOOD. WE BELIEVED WE MIGHT RETURN FOR DAYS OF STUDY.
CURIOSITY HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO OVERCOME FEAR.

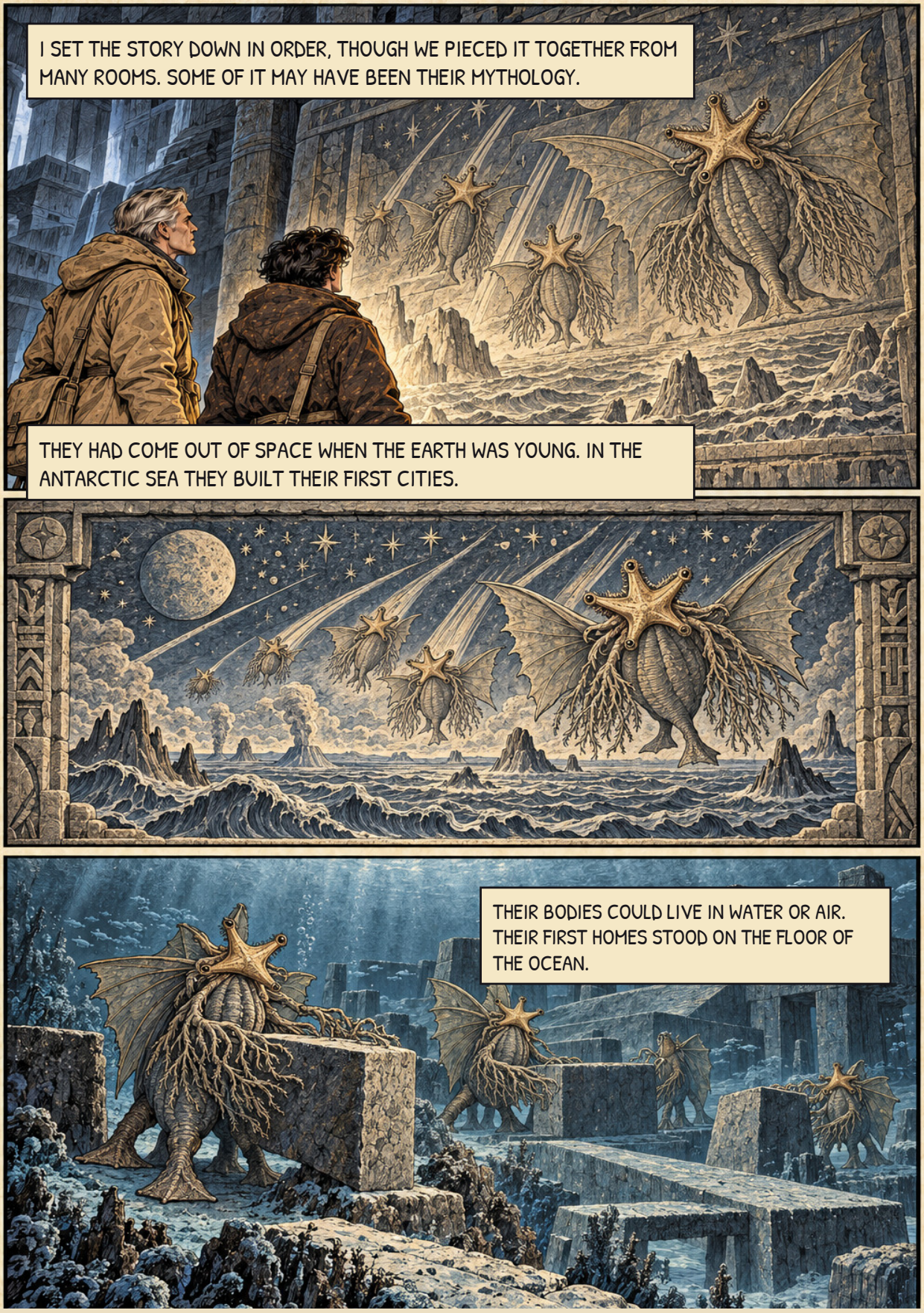

THE FIRST WORN CARVINGS RESISTED US. WE NEEDED BETTER-PRESERVED ROOMS BELOW THE ICE.
WE MARKED OUR TURNS WITH TORN PAPER. IN THAT MAZE, A FAMILIAR-LOOKING ARCH WAS NO ASSURANCE OF DIRECTION.
I THOUGHT I SAW A PRINT AT THAT CORNER. AND HEARD SOMETHING—ALMOST A PIPING.

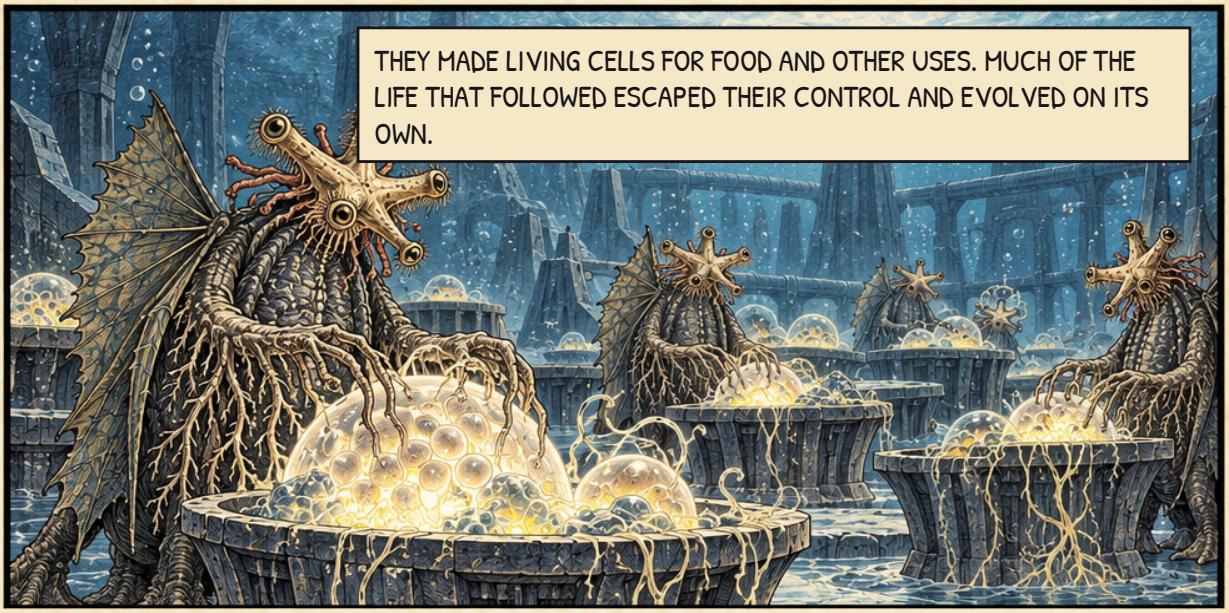

WE PASSED OPENINGS THAT LED TO DANGEROUS DROPS. AT LAST A FALLEN BRIDGE GAVE US A SAFER ENTRANCE.
THE DEBRIS LET US REACH AN UPPER STOREY. FROM THERE THE BUILDING'S OWN RAMPS LED DOWNWARD.
EVERYTHING MOVABLE HAD GONE. THE DOORS AND SHUTTERS SUGGESTED ABANDONMENT BY DESIGN, NOT SUDDEN DESTRUCTION.


EVERY WALL WAS A RECORD. FIGURES AND SYMBOLS RAN IN BANDS BETWEEN INTRICATE PATTERNS OF FIVES.

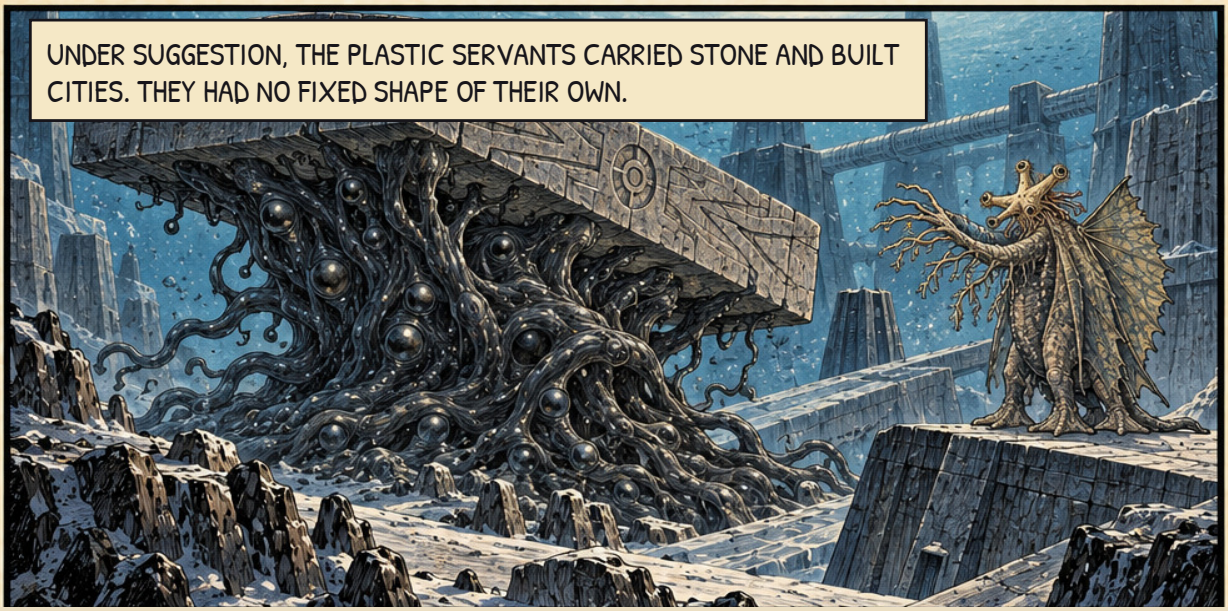

WE PHOTOGRAPHED UNTIL THE FILMS WERE GONE. THEN WE DREW, COMPARED, AND SLOWLY LEARNED HOW TO READ THE PICTURES.

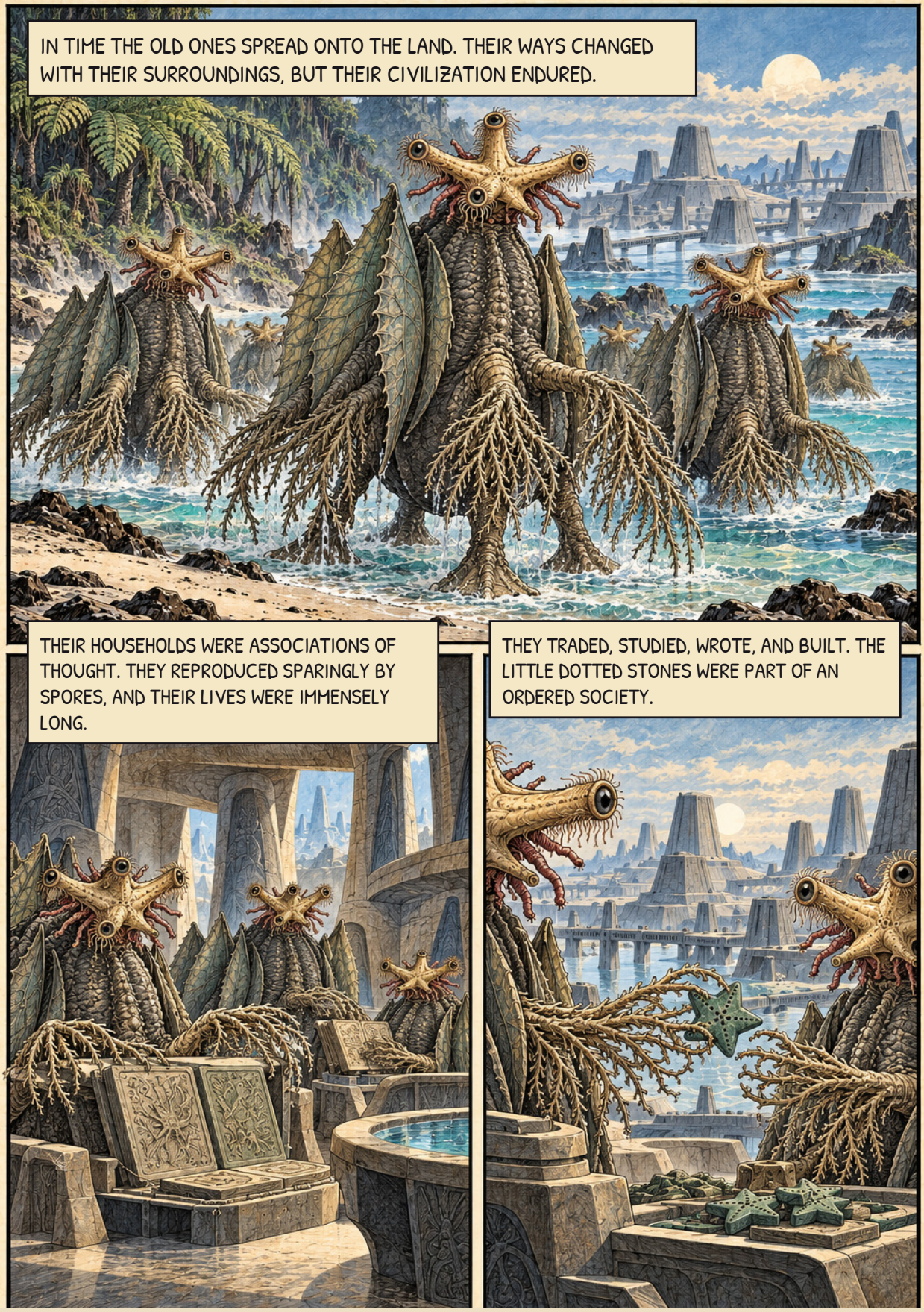

THE CREATURES WERE NOT GODS WORSHIPPED BY THE BUILDERS. THEY WERE THE BUILDERS THEMSELVES.

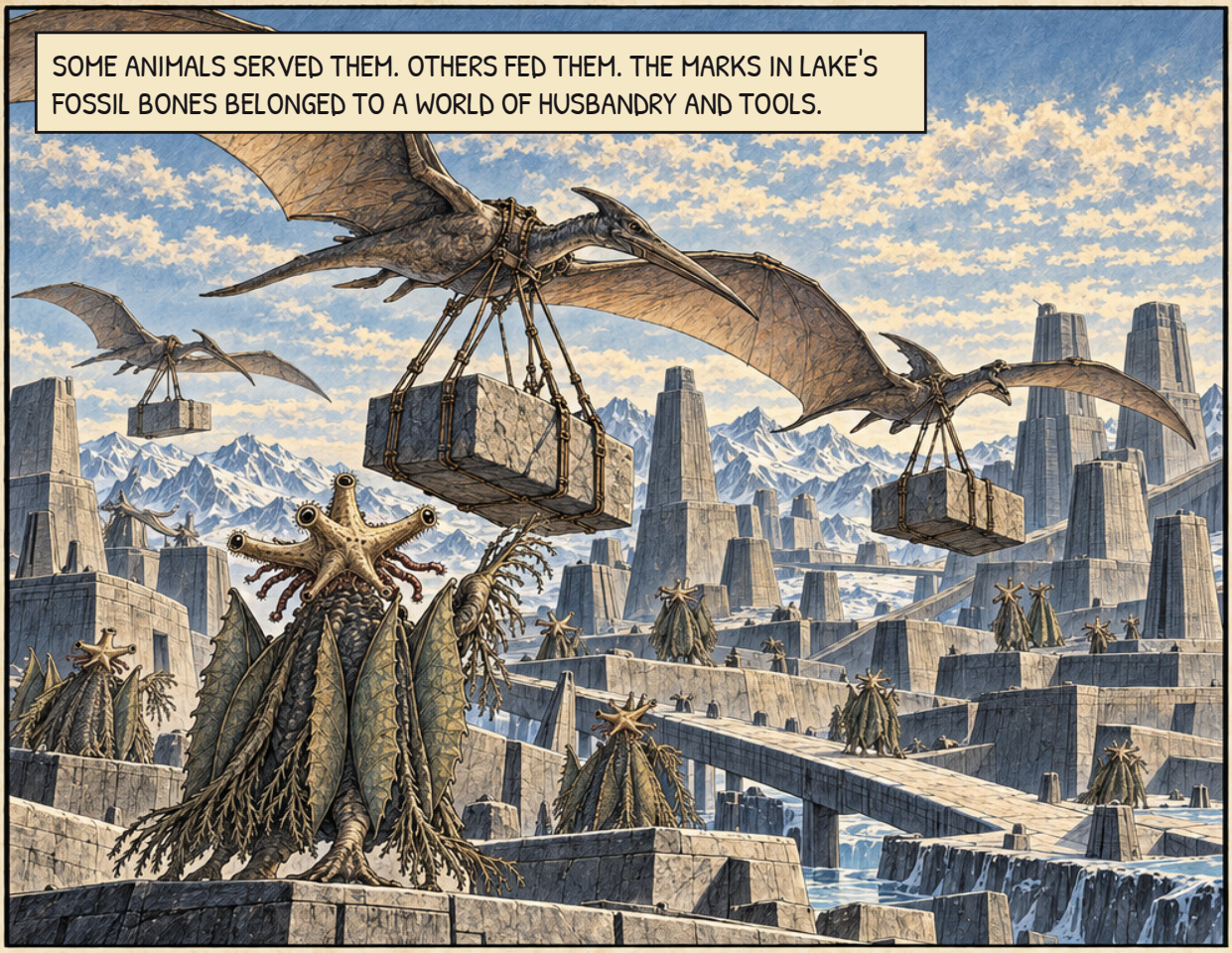

I SET THE STORY DOWN IN ORDER, THOUGH WE PIECED IT TOGETHER FROM MANY ROOMS. SOME OF IT MAY HAVE BEEN THEIR MYTHOLOGY.
THEY HAD COME OUT OF SPACE WHEN THE EARTH WAS YOUNG. IN THE ANTARCTIC SEA THEY BUILT THEIR FIRST CITIES.
THEIR BODIES COULD LIVE IN WATER OR AIR. THEIR FIRST HOMES STOOD ON THE FLOOR OF THE OCEAN.

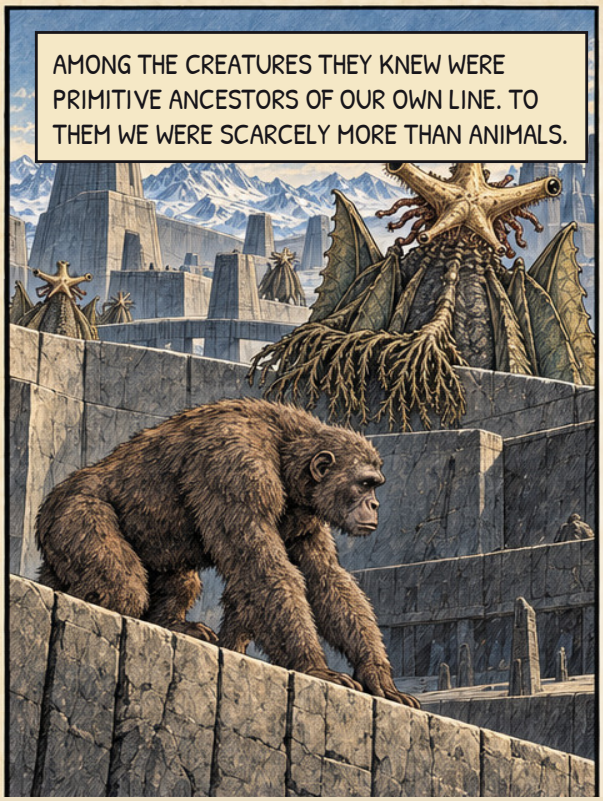

THEY MADE LIVING CELLS FOR FOOD AND OTHER USES. MUCH OF THE LIFE THAT FOLLOWED ESCAPED THEIR CONTROL AND EVOLVED ON ITS OWN.


FOR HEAVY LABOUR THEY CREATED SHOGGOTHS: LIVING MASSES THAT COULD GROW WHATEVER ORGANS A TASK REQUIRED.

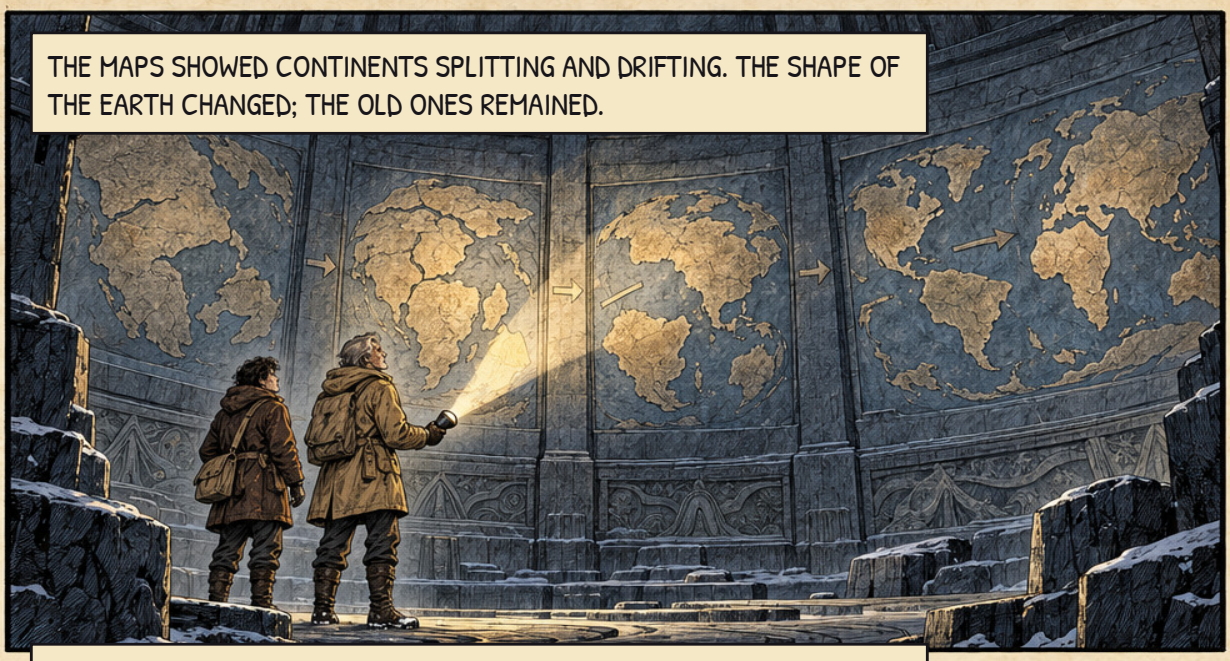

UNDER SUGGESTION, THE PLASTIC SERVANTS CARRIED STONE AND BUILT CITIES. THEY HAD NO FIXED SHAPE OF THEIR OWN.

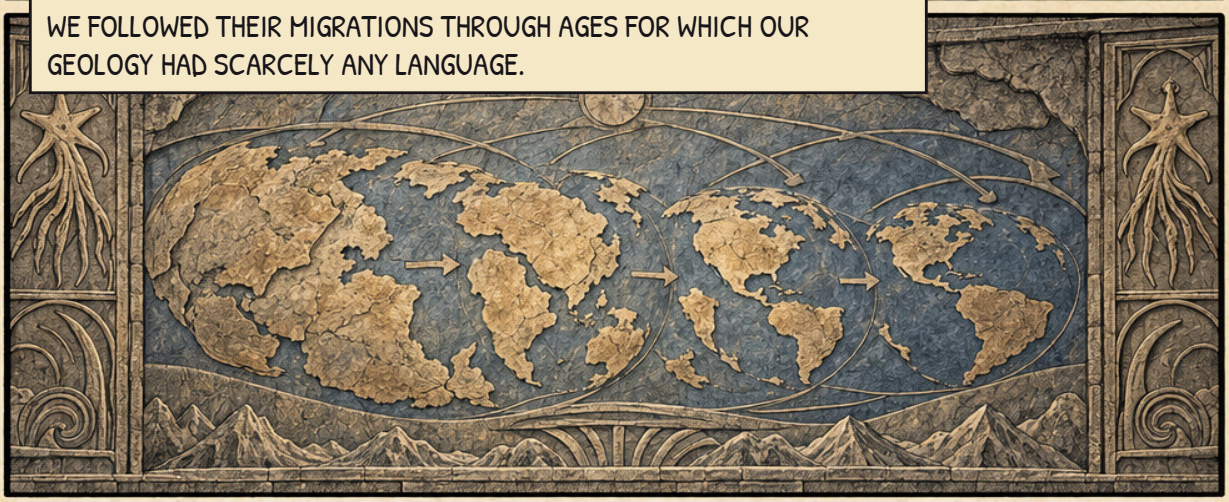

IN TIME THE OLD ONES SPREAD ONTO THE LAND. THEIR WAYS CHANGED WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS, BUT THEIR CIVILIZATION ENDURED.
THEIR HOUSEHOLDS WERE ASSOCIATIONS OF THOUGHT. THEY REPRODUCED SPARINGLY BY SPORES, AND THEIR LIVES WERE IMMENSELY LONG.
THEY TRADED, STUDIED, WROTE, AND BUILT. THE LITTLE DOTTED STONES WERE PART OF AN ORDERED SOCIETY.

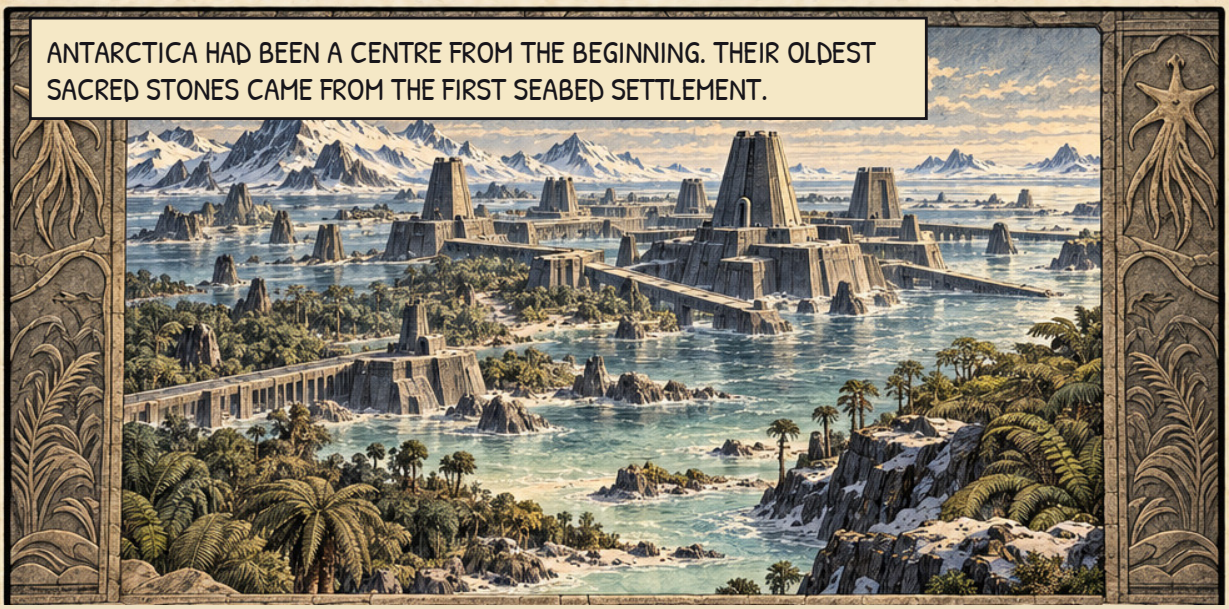

SOME ANIMALS SERVED THEM. OTHERS FED THEM. THE MARKS IN LAKE'S FOSSIL BONES BELONGED TO A WORLD OF HUSBANDRY AND TOOLS.


AMONG THE CREATURES THEY KNEW WERE PRIMITIVE ANCESTORS OF OUR OWN LINE. TO THEM WE WERE SCARCELY MORE THAN ANIMALS.

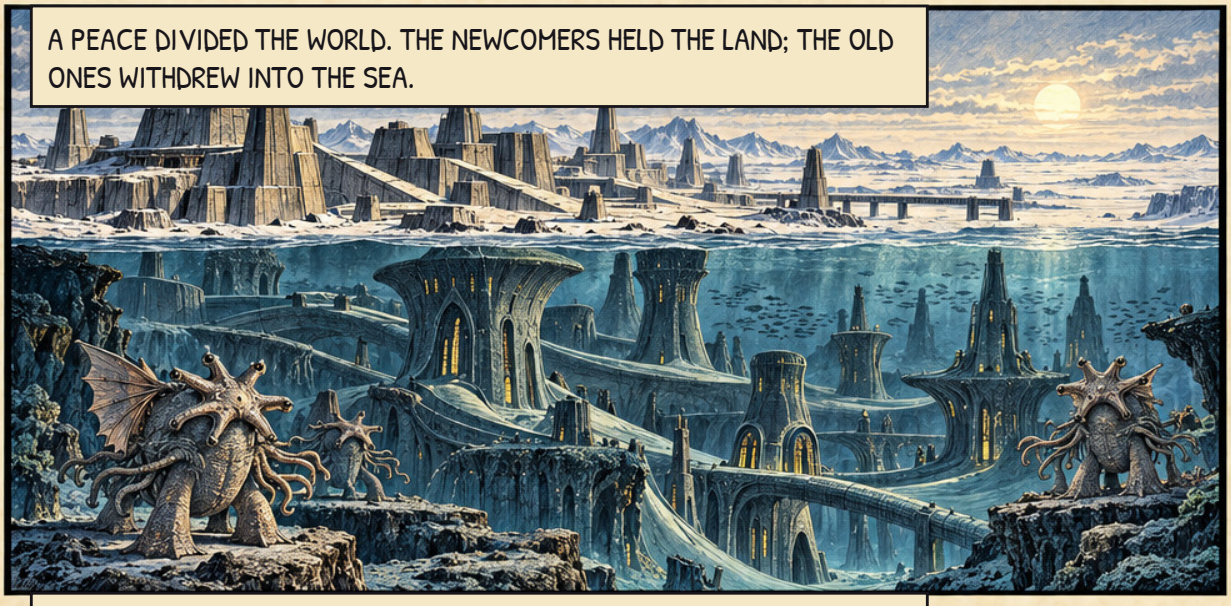

THEIR DEAD STOOD UPRIGHT BENEATH STAR-MARKED GRAVES. AT LAST THE MOUNDS AT LAKE'S CAMP HAD A MEANING.


THE MAPS SHOWED CONTINENTS SPLITTING AND DRIFTING. THE SHAPE OF THE EARTH CHANGED; THE OLD ONES REMAINED.

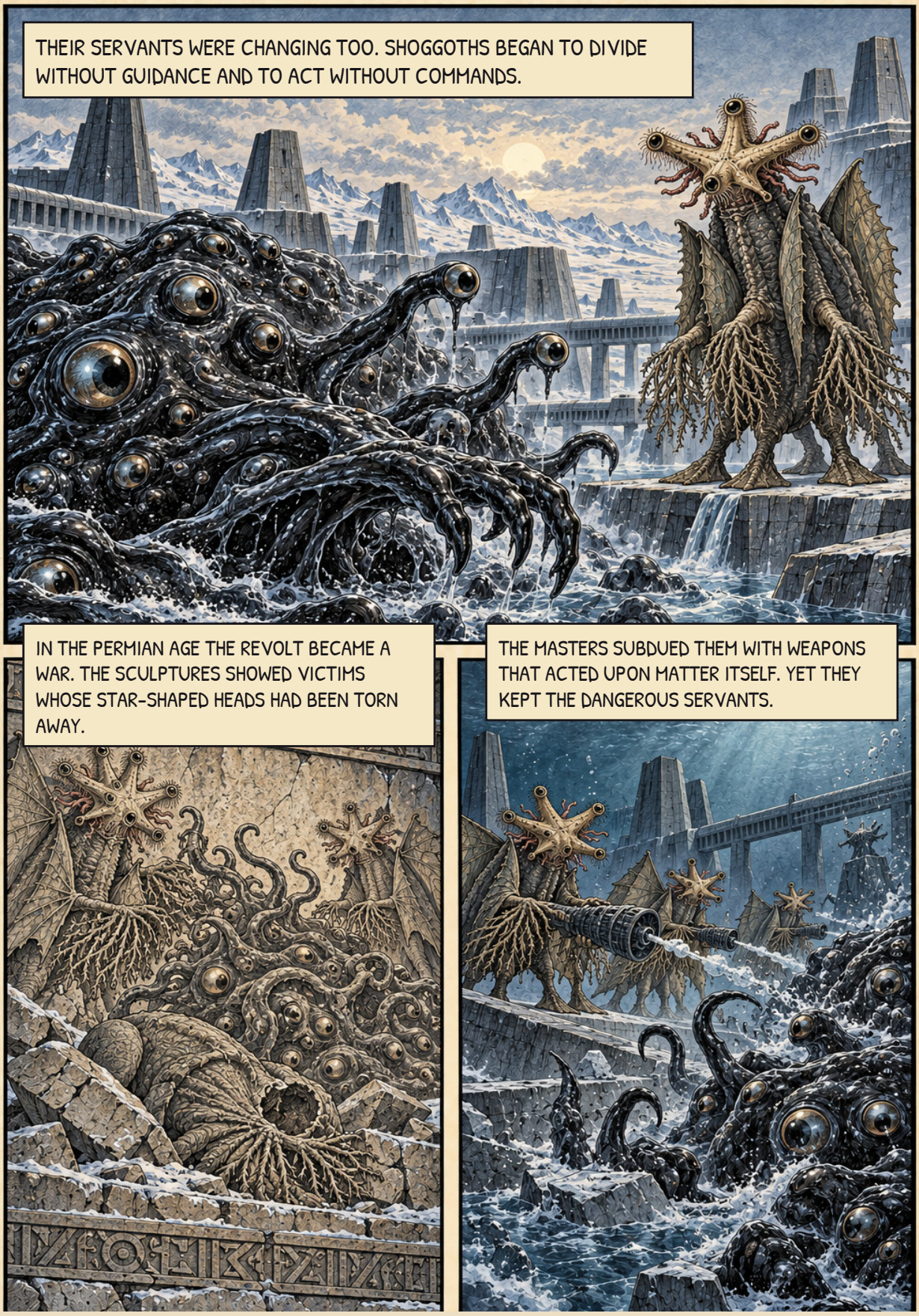

WE FOLLOWED THEIR MIGRATIONS THROUGH AGES FOR WHICH OUR GEOLOGY HAD SCARCELY ANY LANGUAGE.

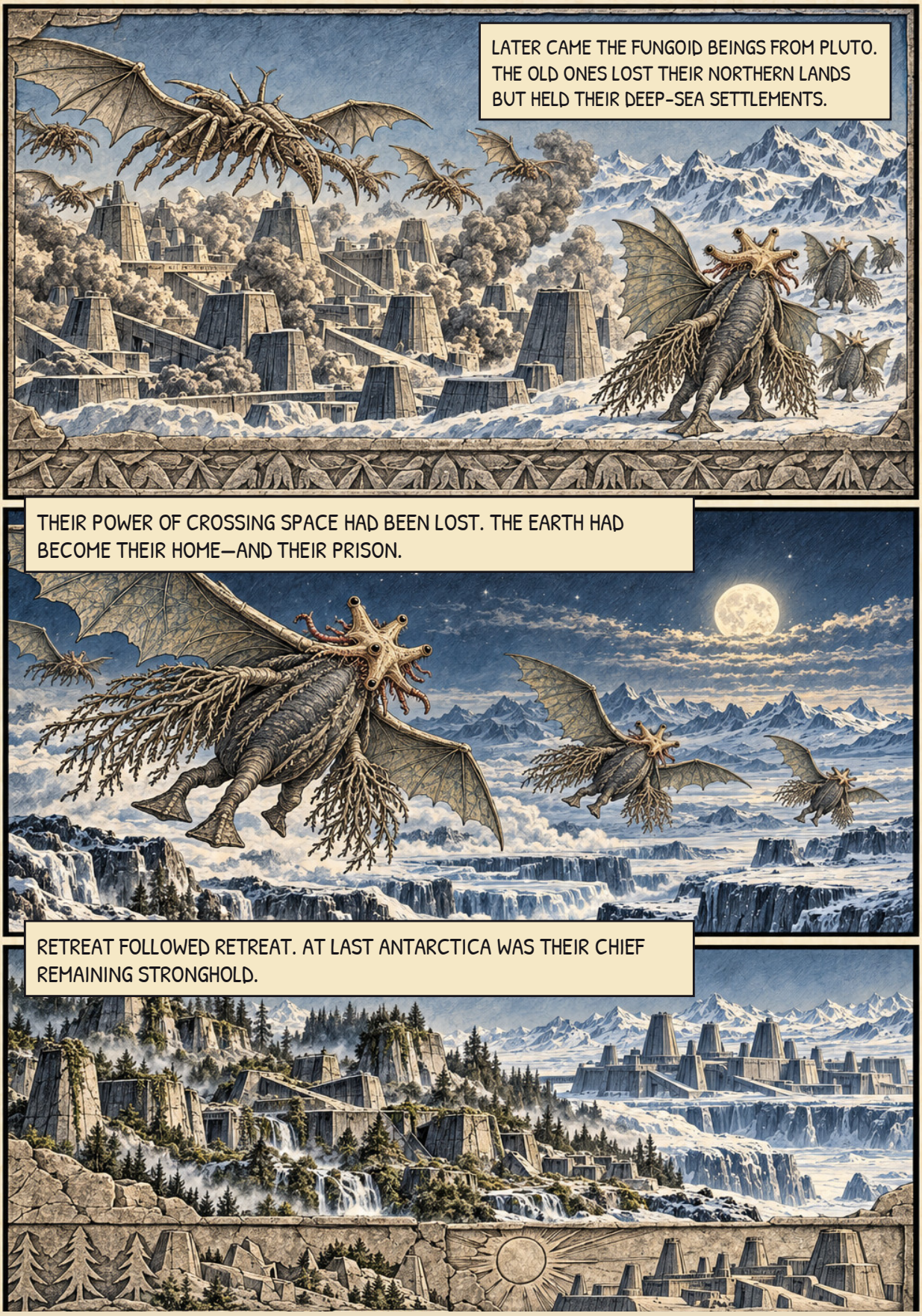

ANTARCTICA HAD BEEN A CENTRE FROM THE BEGINNING. THEIR OLDEST SACRED STONES CAME FROM THE FIRST SEABED SETTLEMENT.


OTHER BEINGS CAME FROM THE STARS. THE CARVINGS TOLD OF WAR WITH THE SPAWN OF CTHULHU AND THE LOSS OF LAND.

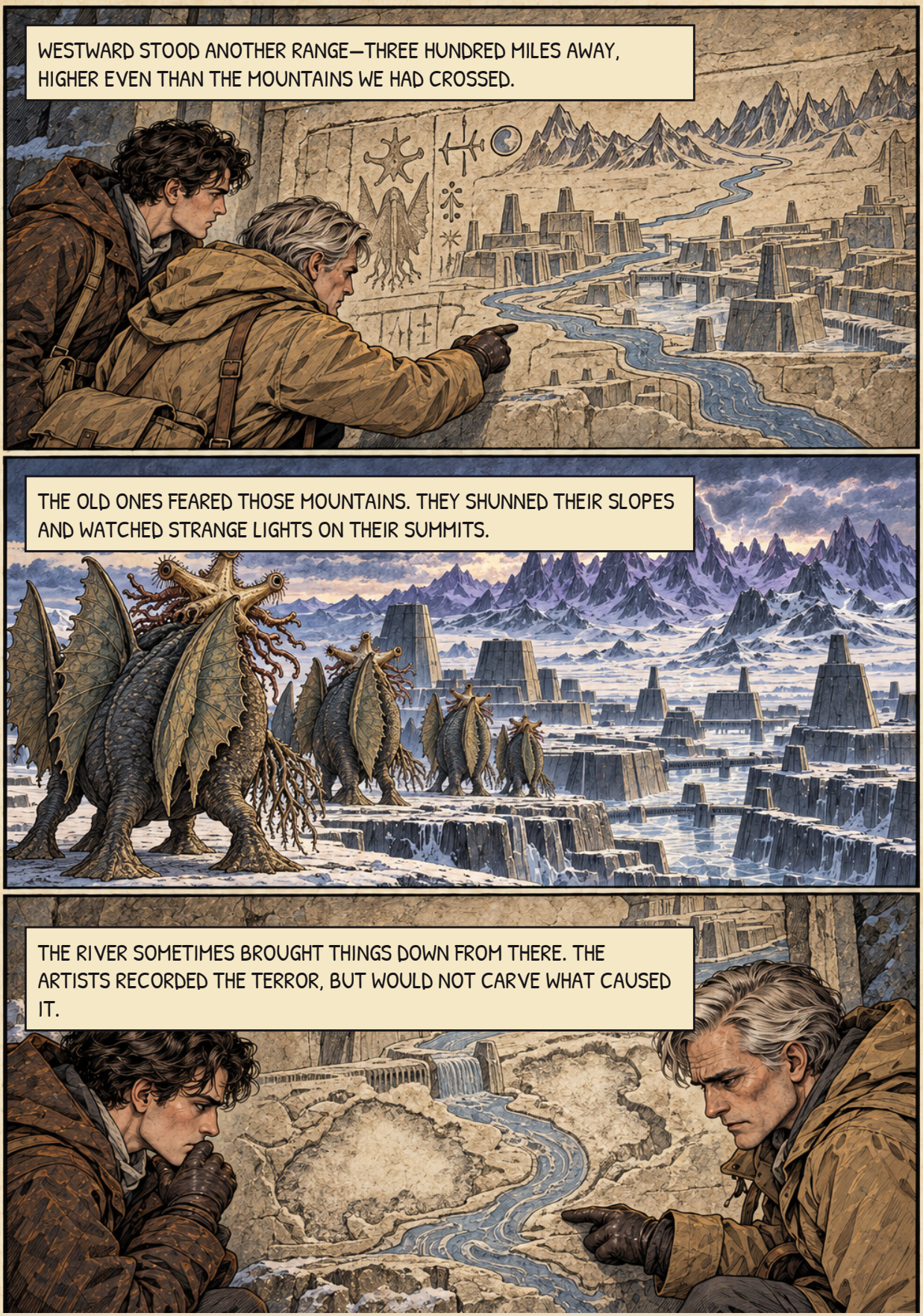

A PEACE DIVIDED THE WORLD. THE NEWCOMERS HELD THE LAND; THE OLD ONES WITHDREW INTO THE SEA.

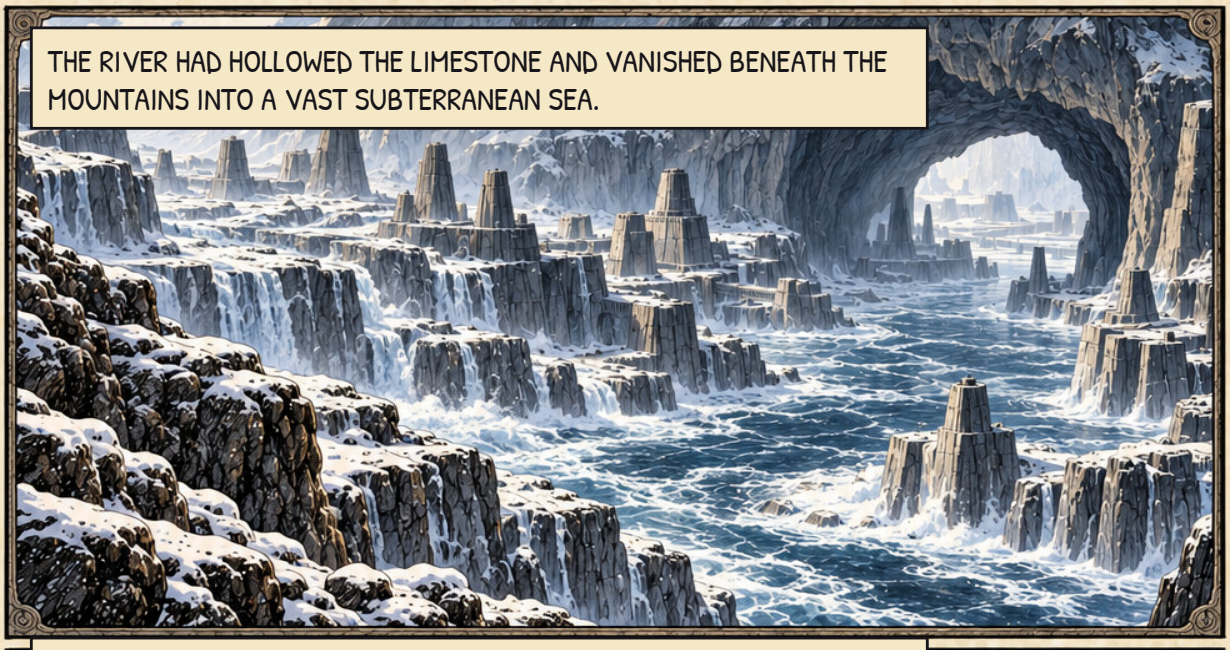

THEN THE NEWCOMERS' CITY SANK. THE OLD ONES AGAIN SPREAD OVER THE EARTH—THOUGH NOT WITHOUT ANCIENT FEARS.

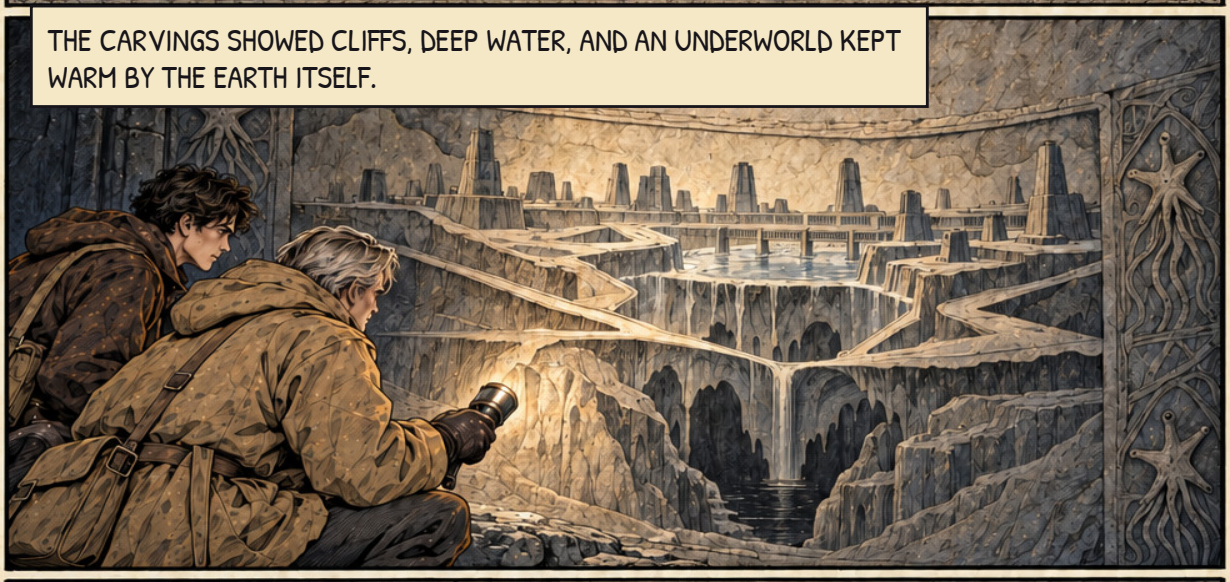

THEIR SERVANTS WERE CHANGING TOO. SHOGGOTHS BEGAN TO DIVIDE WITHOUT GUIDANCE AND TO ACT WITHOUT COMMANDS.
IN THE PERMIAN AGE THE REVOLT BECAME A WAR. THE SCULPTURES SHOWED VICTIMS WHOSE STAR-SHAPED HEADS HAD BEEN TORN AWAY.
THE MASTERS SUBDUED THEM WITH WEAPONS THAT ACTED UPON MATTER ITSELF. YET THEY KEPT THE DANGEROUS SERVANTS.


LATER CAME THE FUNGOID BEINGS FROM PLUTO. THE OLD ONES LOST THEIR NORTHERN LANDS BUT HELD THEIR DEEP-SEA SETTLEMENTS.
THEIR POWER OF CROSSING SPACE HAD BEEN LOST. THE EARTH HAD BECOME THEIR HOME—AND THEIR PRISON.
RETREAT FOLLOWED RETREAT. AT LAST ANTARCTICA WAS THEIR CHIEF REMAINING STRONGHOLD.


AN UPHEAVAL DESTROYED THEIR EARLIER CAPITAL. ON ITS RUINS THEY RAISED THE CITY WE HAD ENTERED.
FIFTY MILLION YEARS BEFORE OUR ARRIVAL, THESE COURTS AND BRIDGES HAD BEEN ALIVE WITH WORK.
THE MORE WE UNDERSTOOD, THE LESS THEY SEEMED LIKE MONSTERS FROM A LEGEND. WE WERE READING THE HISTORY OF A PEOPLE.


WESTWARD STOOD ANOTHER RANGE—THREE HUNDRED MILES AWAY, HIGHER EVEN THAN THE MOUNTAINS WE HAD CROSSED.
THE OLD ONES FEARED THOSE MOUNTAINS. THEY SHUNNED THEIR SLOPES AND WATCHED STRANGE LIGHTS ON THEIR SUMMITS.
THE RIVER SOMETIMES BROUGHT THINGS DOWN FROM THERE. THE ARTISTS RECORDED THE TERROR, BUT WOULD NOT CARVE WHAT CAUSED IT.


THE RIVER HAD HOLLOWED THE LIMESTONE AND VANISHED BENEATH THE MOUNTAINS INTO A VAST SUBTERRANEAN SEA.

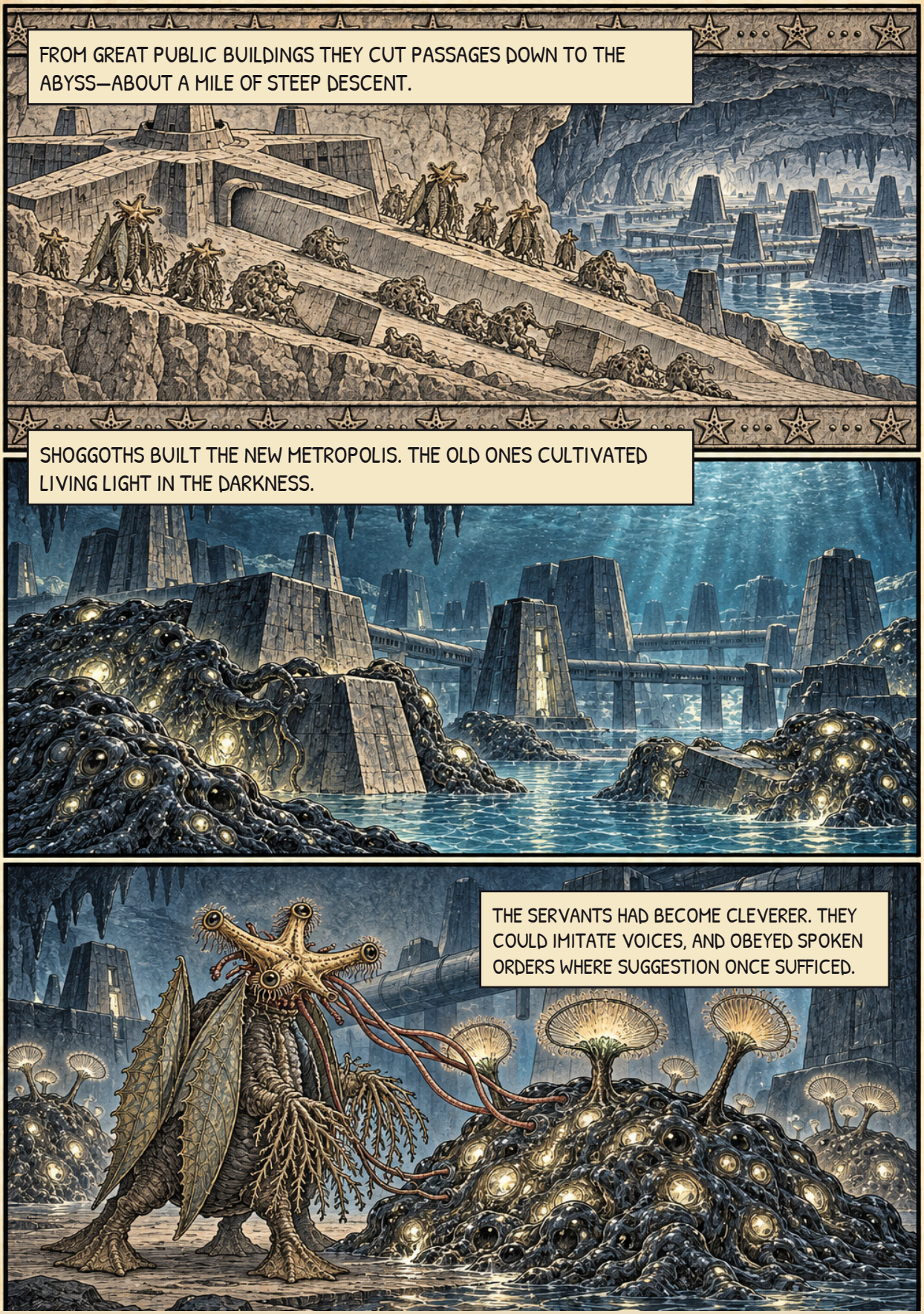

THE CARVINGS SHOWED CLIFFS, DEEP WATER, AND AN UNDERWORLD KEPT WARM BY THE EARTH ITSELF.


THEY EXPLORED IT. LONG BEFORE THE FINAL COLD, THEY HAD PREPARED ANOTHER HOME BELOW.

COLD CREPT OVER ANTARCTICA. THEY HEATED THEIR ROOMS AND WRAPPED THEIR BODIES, BUT THE WORLD KEPT CHANGING.

AT FIRST THEY SPENT THE WINTERS BELOW. LATER, SUMMER ITSELF COULD NO LONGER SUSTAIN THE UPPER CITY.

FINALLY THEY ABANDONED THE STREETS FOR GOOD.


FROM GREAT PUBLIC BUILDINGS THEY CUT PASSAGES DOWN TO THE ABYSS—ABOUT A MILE OF STEEP DESCENT.
SHOGGOTHS BUILT THE NEW METROPOLIS. THE OLD ONES CULTIVATED LIVING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.
THE SERVANTS HAD BECOME CLEVERER. THEY COULD IMITATE VOICES, AND OBEYED SPOKEN ORDERS WHERE SUGGESTION ONCE SUFFICED.


THE LATER SCULPTURES GREW CLUMSY. MUCH WAS COPIED FROM OLDER WORK. THE HISTORY THINNED TOWARD SILENCE.
SEALS, WHALES, AND PENGUINS SURVIVED WHERE OTHER ANIMALS VANISHED. LIFE HAD NOT WHOLLY DESERTED THIS HIDDEN WORLD.
IT WAS EIGHT IN THE EVENING. WE HAD A FEW HOURS OF BATTERIES LEFT—AND AN INTOLERABLE WISH TO SEE THAT SEA.


THE NEAREST TUNNEL BEGAN UNDER A FIVE-POINTED BUILDING A QUARTER-MILE AWAY. WE SAVED ONE TORCH AND MARKED OUR ROUTE.


WE CLIMBED RAMPS, CROSSED BRIDGES, AND RETRACED FALSE TURNS. THE MAP COULD NOT TELL US WHICH PASSAGES HAD COLLAPSED.


WAIT. DO YOU SMELL IT?


IT WAS THE SMELL FROM THE OPENED GRAVE AT LAKE'S CAMP.
THE RUBBLE HAD BEEN DISTURBED. SOMETHING HEAVY HAD RECENTLY PASSED THROUGH THESE ROOMS.
THEN ANOTHER SMELL REACHED US—ORDINARY GASOLINE. HERE, AFTER MILLIONS OF YEARS.

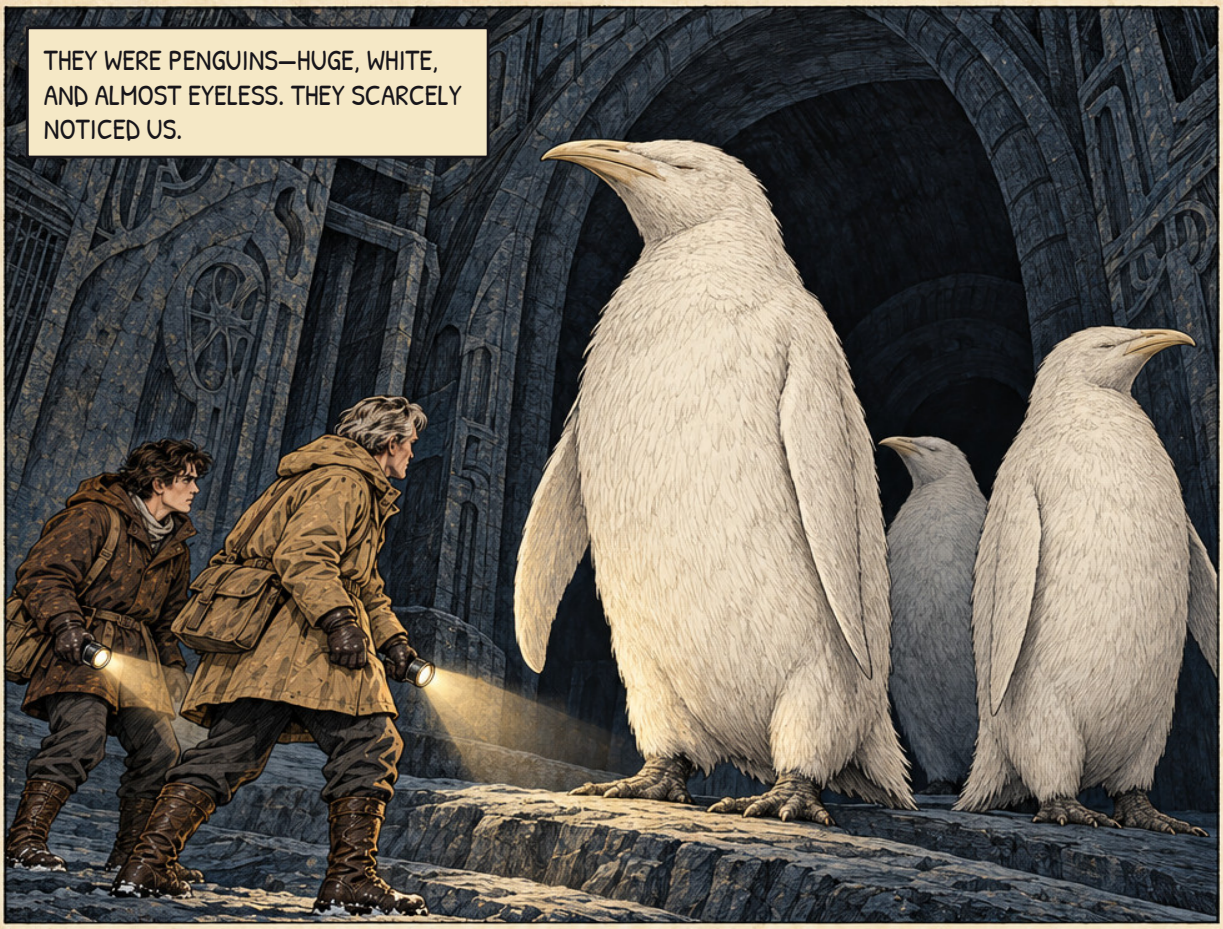

BEYOND A NEWLY CLEARED OPENING LAY THE THINGS TAKEN FROM CAMP: TINS, BOOKS, FABRIC, BATTERY PAPERS.
THERE WERE DRAWINGS TOO. THEY SHOWED A ROUTE ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS AND THROUGH THE DEAD CITY.
GEDNEY COULD NOT HAVE DRAWN THIS. THE HAND IS THE SAME AS THE ANCIENT CARVINGS.


THE EIGHT PERFECT SPECIMENS HAD NOT BEEN FOSSILS. THEY HAD AWAKENED IN A WORLD THEY COULD NOT RECOGNIZE.
THEY HAD LEARNED WHAT THEY COULD, GATHERED SUPPLIES, AND MADE FOR THEIR OLD CITY.
THEIR FIRST ROUTE TO THE ABYSS WAS BLOCKED. THE DRAWINGS POINTED TO ANOTHER ENTRANCE FARTHER NORTH.

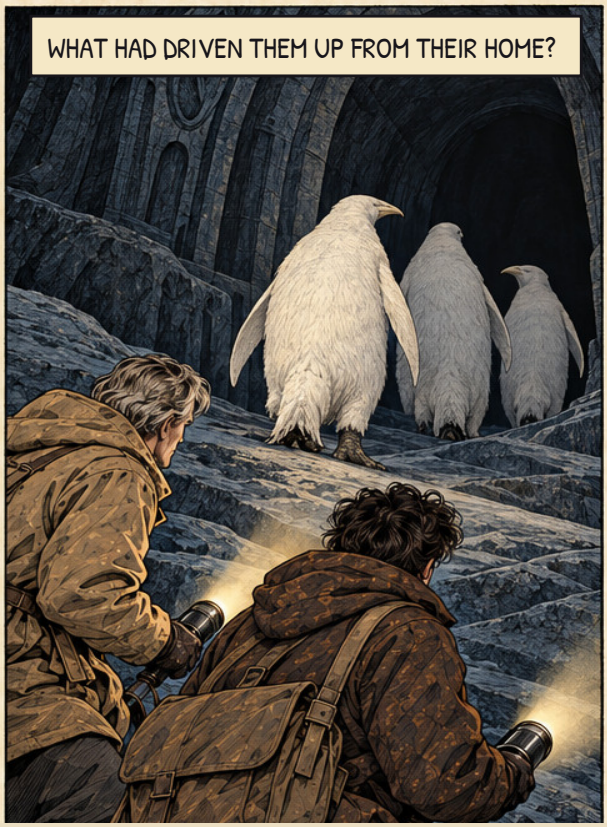

WE REACHED A GREAT CIRCULAR SPACE, TWO HUNDRED FEET ACROSS. DAYLIGHT ENTERED ABOVE A WINDING RAMP.
UNDER THE RAMP STOOD THE MISSING SLEDGES. THEIR OWNERS HAD LEFT EVERYTHING FOR A SHORTER JOURNEY BELOW.
ONE BUNDLE HAD BEEN WRAPPED WITH EXTRAORDINARY CARE.


IT WAS GEDNEY. THE MISSING DOG LAY BESIDE HIM. BOTH HAD BEEN PRESERVED AS SPECIMENS.
THE WOUNDS HAD BEEN CAREFULLY REPAIRED. WE COULD NO LONGER BLAME HIM FOR ANYTHING.
AND THEN WE HEARD A LIVING VOICE.


NOT THE PIPING WE FEARED. A PENGUIN'S CRY—ABSURDLY FAMILIAR IN THIS IMPOSSIBLE PLACE.
THE SOUND CAME FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE NORTHERN TUNNEL. IT MEANT WATER, WARMTH, AND LIFE.
SOMETHING WHITE MOVED IN FRONT OF US.


THEY WERE PENGUINS—HUGE, WHITE, AND ALMOST EYELESS. THEY SCARCELY NOTICED US.

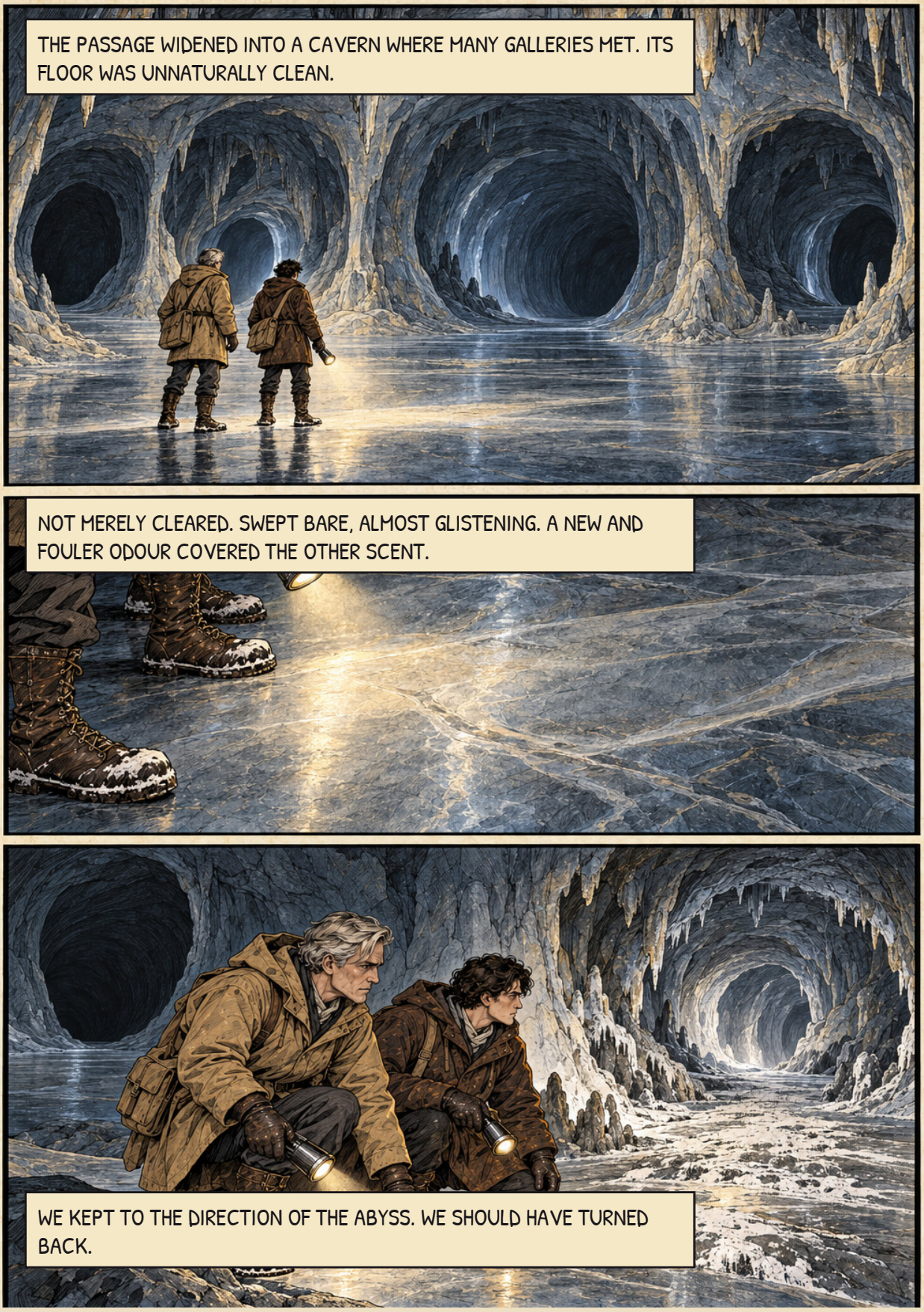

GENERATIONS IN THE DARK HAD TAKEN THEIR COLOUR AND SIGHT. THEIR ANCESTORS WERE PICTURED ON THE WALLS.


WHAT HAD DRIVEN THEM UP FROM THEIR HOME?

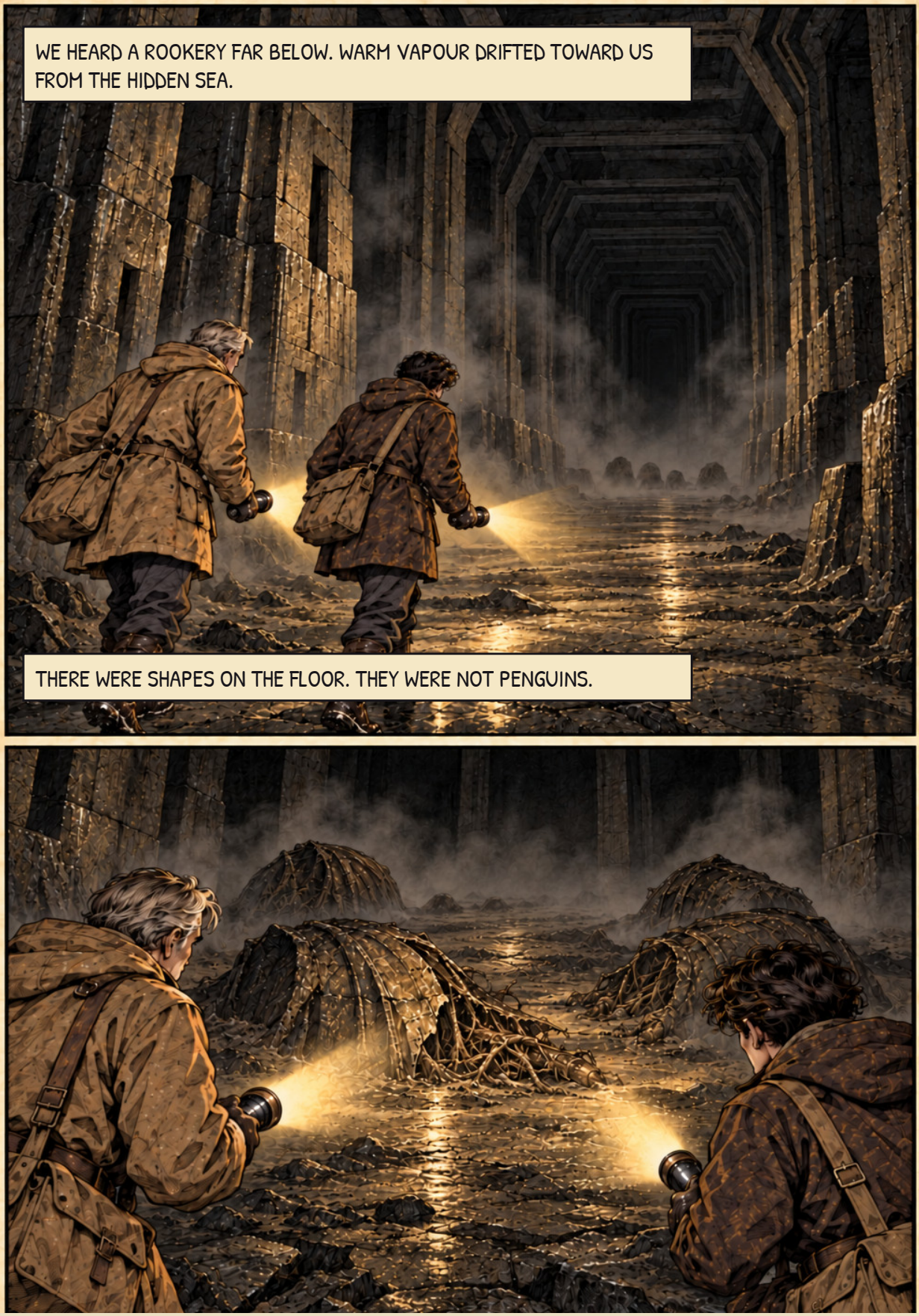

BEYOND A LONG DESCENT OPENED A PERFECT HEMISPHERE. ITS ROOF BORE AN ANCIENT IMAGE OF THE HEAVENS.
THE GREAT APERTURE WAS FIFTEEN FEET HIGH. WARM AIR DRIFTED OUT OF IT.

AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS



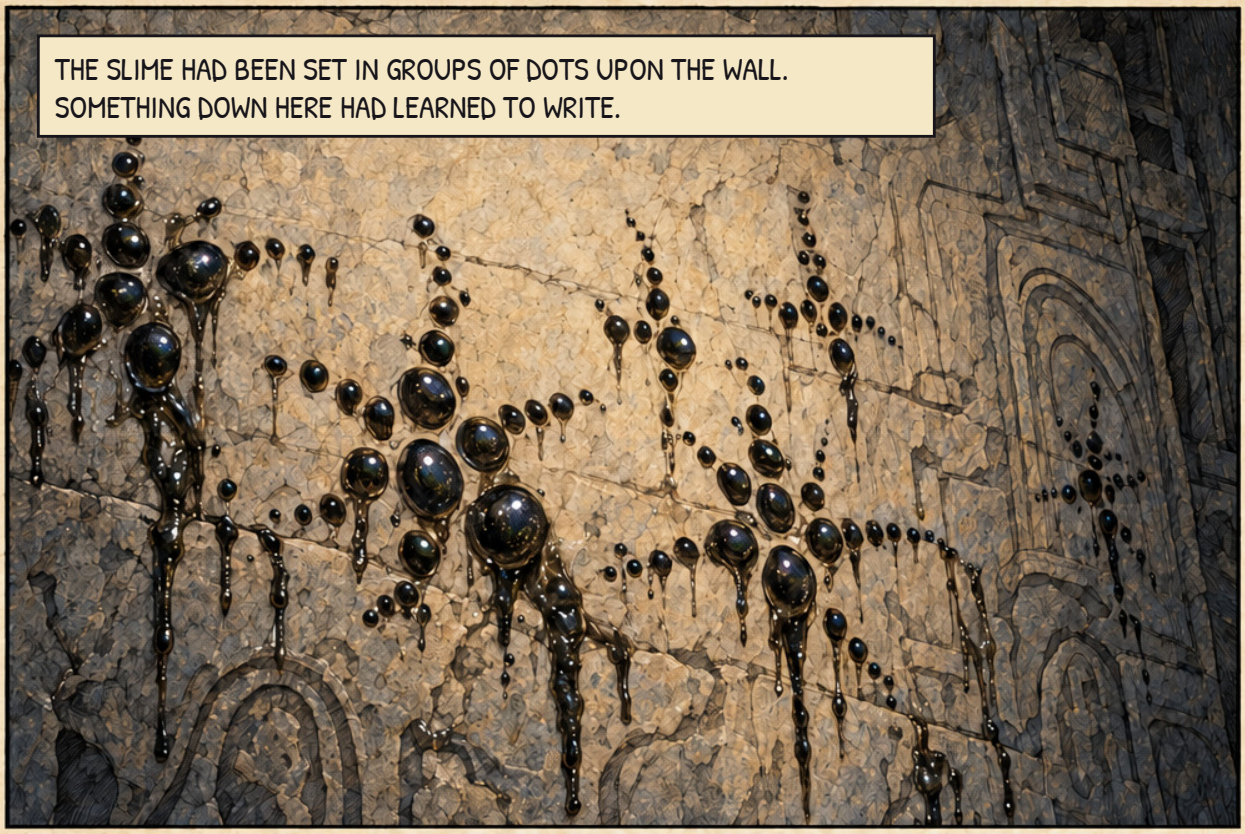

THE PASSAGE WIDENED INTO A CAVERN WHERE MANY GALLERIES MET. ITS FLOOR WAS UNNATURALLY CLEAN.
NOT MERELY CLEARED. SWEPT BARE, ALMOST GLISTENING. A NEW AND FOULER ODOUR COVERED THE OTHER SCENT.
WE KEPT TO THE DIRECTION OF THE ABYSS. WE SHOULD HAVE TURNED BACK.

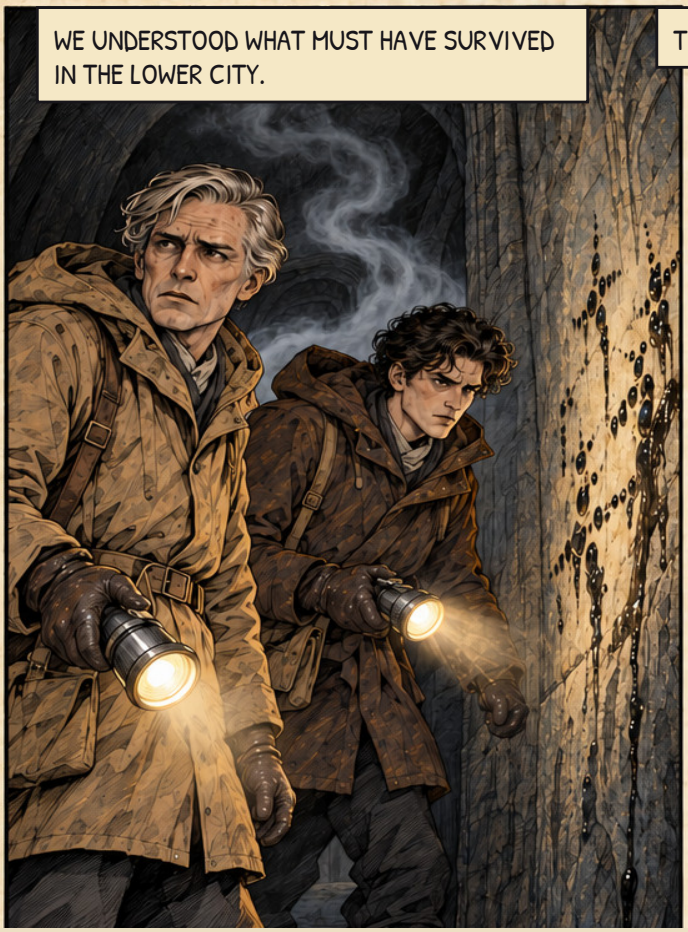

BEYOND THE CAVERN THE CARVINGS CHANGED. THIS WAS MORE THAN FAILING SKILL.
SOMEONE HAS CUT OVER THE OLD DESIGN. IT IMITATES THE PATTERN—BUT THE MIND BEHIND IT IS DIFFERENT.
ANOTHER TRAVELLER HAD STOPPED HERE TOO. A SPENT BATTERY LAY UNDER THE WALL.


WE HEARD A ROOKERY FAR BELOW. WARM VAPOUR DRIFTED TOWARD US FROM THE HIDDEN SEA.
THERE WERE SHAPES ON THE FLOOR. THEY WERE NOT PENGUINS.

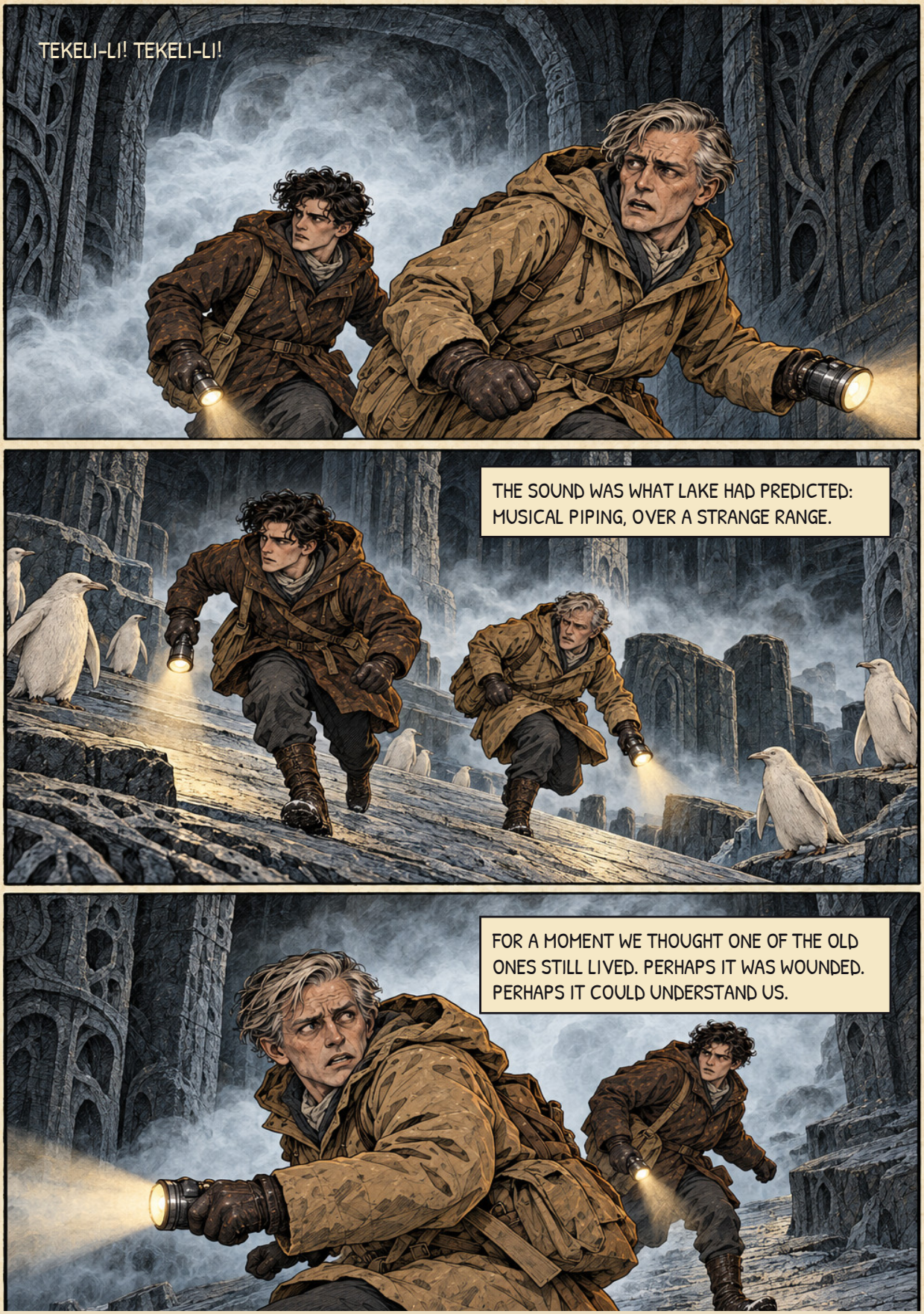

FOUR OF THEM LAY THERE. WHATEVER HAD HAPPENED WAS RECENT.
THEIR HEADS HAD BEEN TORN AWAY. BLACK SLIME CLUNG TO THEM, GLEAMING WITH COLOURS OUR LAMPS BARELY CAUGHT.
THE CARVINGS—THE REVOLT. THE SHOGGOTHS!


POOR DEVILS! AFTER ALL, THEY WERE NOT EVIL THINGS OF THEIR KIND. THEY WERE THE MEN OF ANOTHER AGE AND ANOTHER ORDER OF BEING.
SCIENTISTS TO THE LAST—WHAT HAD THEY DONE THAT WE WOULD NOT HAVE DONE IN THEIR PLACE?... RADIATES, VEGETABLES, MONSTROSITIES, STAR-SPAWN—WHATEVER THEY HAD BEEN, THEY WERE MEN!
THEY HAD CROSSED THE MOUNTAINS TO COME HOME. AND THIS WAS WHAT REMAINED TO WELCOME THEM.


THE SLIME HAD BEEN SET IN GROUPS OF DOTS UPON THE WALL.
SOMETHING DOWN HERE HAD LEARNED TO WRITE.


WE UNDERSTOOD WHAT MUST HAVE SURVIVED IN THE LOWER CITY.


THEN A VOICE CAME OUT OF THE VAPOUR.


TEKELI-LI! TEKELI-LI!
THE SOUND WAS WHAT LAKE HAD PREDICTED: MUSICAL PIPING, OVER A STRANGE RANGE.
FOR A MOMENT WE THOUGHT ONE OF THE OLD ONES STILL LIVED. PERHAPS IT WAS WOUNDED. PERHAPS IT COULD UNDERSTAND US.


WE SEEMED TO GAIN GROUND. THEN THE MIST BEGAN TO MOVE FASTER.
THE BIRDS WERE TERRIFIED. WHATEVER WAS BEHIND US HAD STOPPED—AND NOW WAS COMING ON AGAIN.
THE GALLERIES! DIM THE LIGHTS. KEEP STRAIGHT THROUGH!


WE MEANT TO LOSE IT AMONG THE BIRDS AND THE INTERSECTING TUNNELS. FIRST, WE LOOKED BACK.
THE SMELL SHOULD HAVE CHANGED IF AN OLD ONE WERE FOLLOWING US. IT HAD ONLY GROWN MORE FOUL.

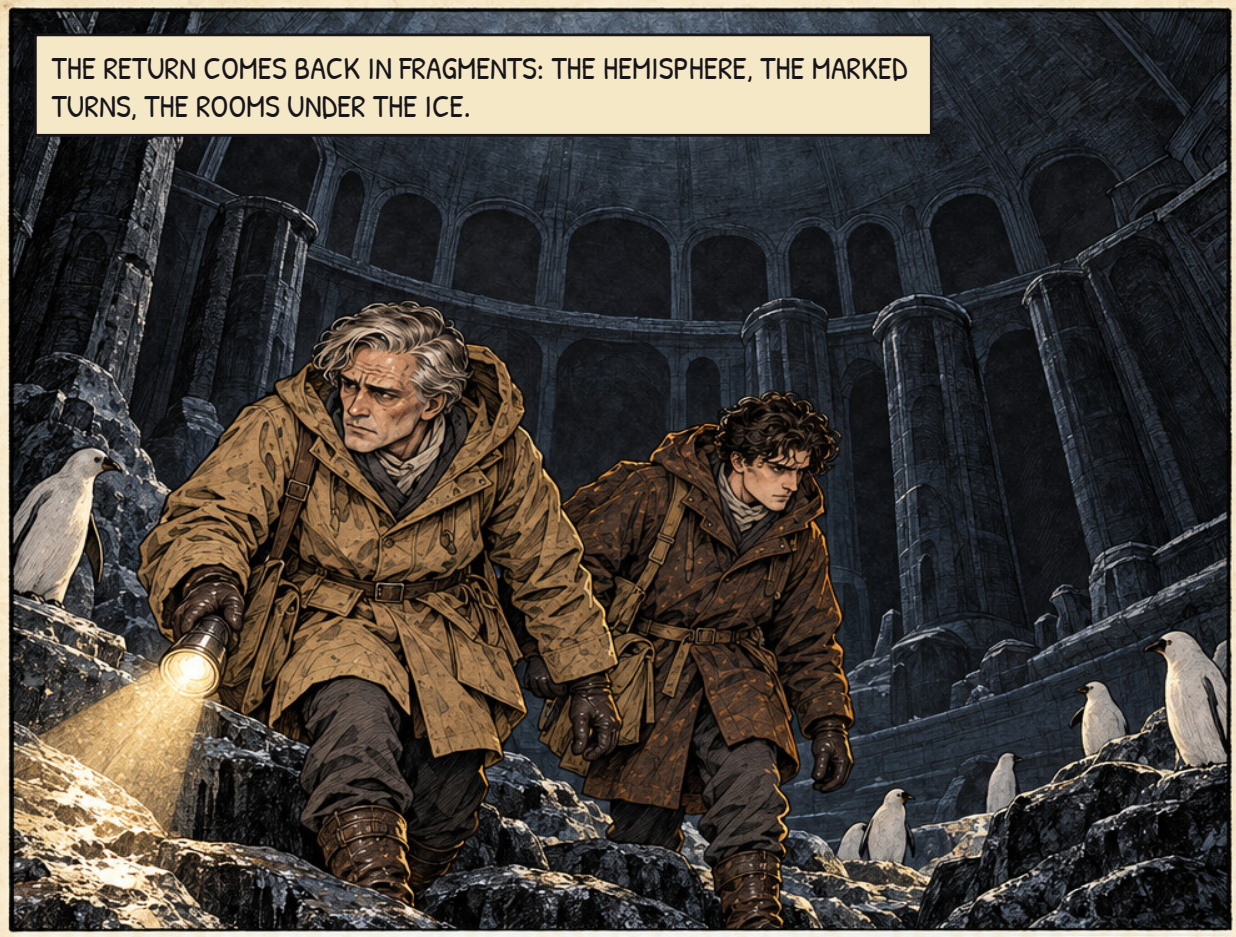

IT WAS A TERRIBLE, INDESCRIBABLE THING VASTER THAN ANY SUBWAY TRAIN—A SHAPELESS CONGERIES OF PROTOPLASMIC BUBBLES, FAINTLY SELF-LUMINOUS, AND WITH MYRIADS OF TEMPORARY EYES FORMING AND UNFORMING AS PUSTULES OF GREENISH LIGHT...

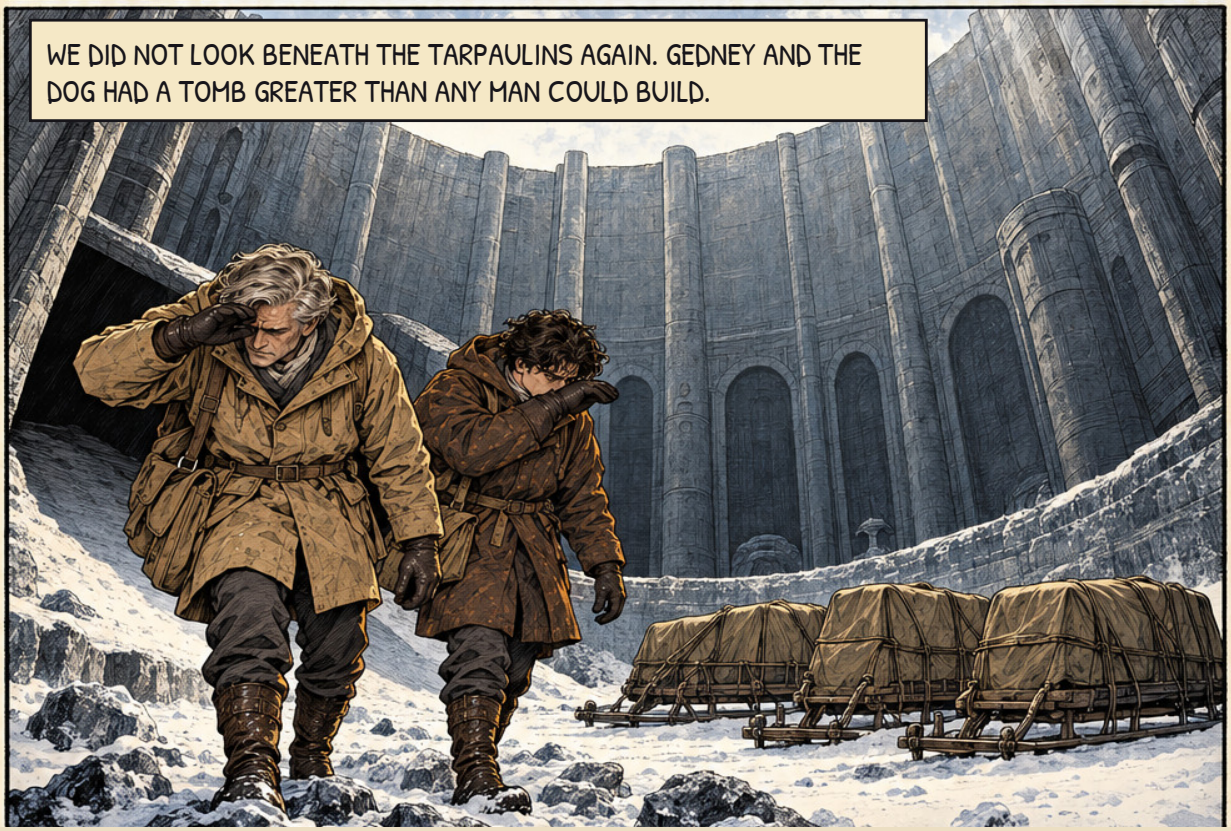

TEKELI-LI! TEKELI-LI!
WE DIMMED OUR TORCHES AND FOUND THE RIGHT PASSAGE. THE THING TOOK ANOTHER.
SHOGGOTHS HAD NO VOICES OF THEIR OWN. THEY IMITATED THEIR VANISHED MASTERS.


SOUTH STATION UNDER—WASHINGTON UNDER—PARK STREET UNDER—KENDALL—CENTRAL—HARVARD...

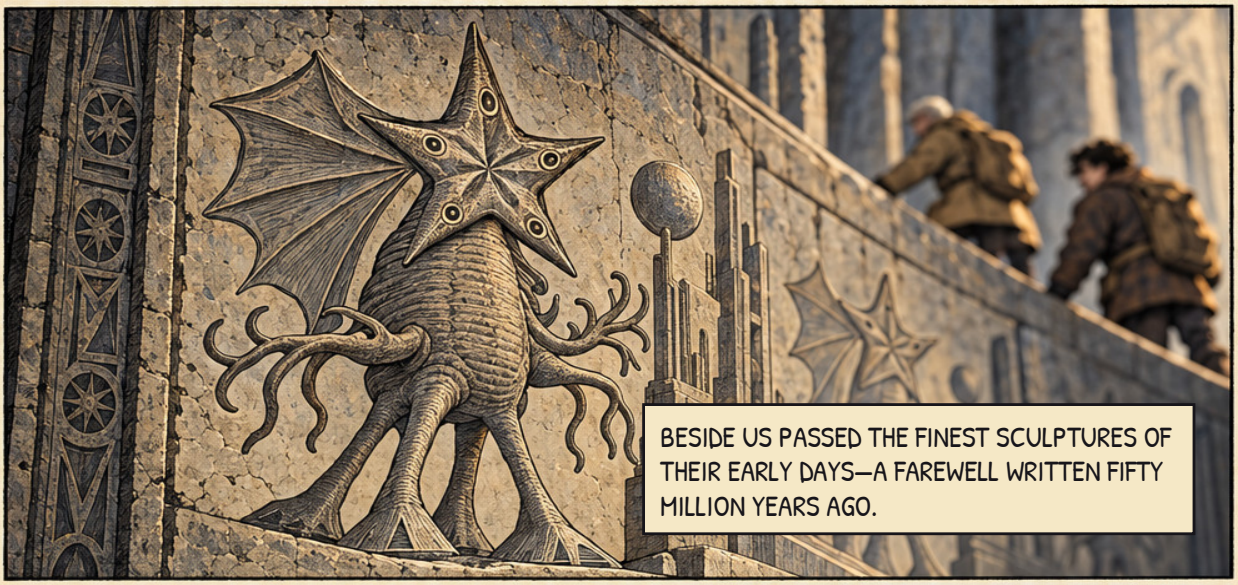

HE WAS RECITING THE STATIONS OF THE BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE TUNNEL. I KNEW WHY.


THANK GOD, THE ECHOES NOW CAME FROM EMPTY VAULTS BEHIND US.

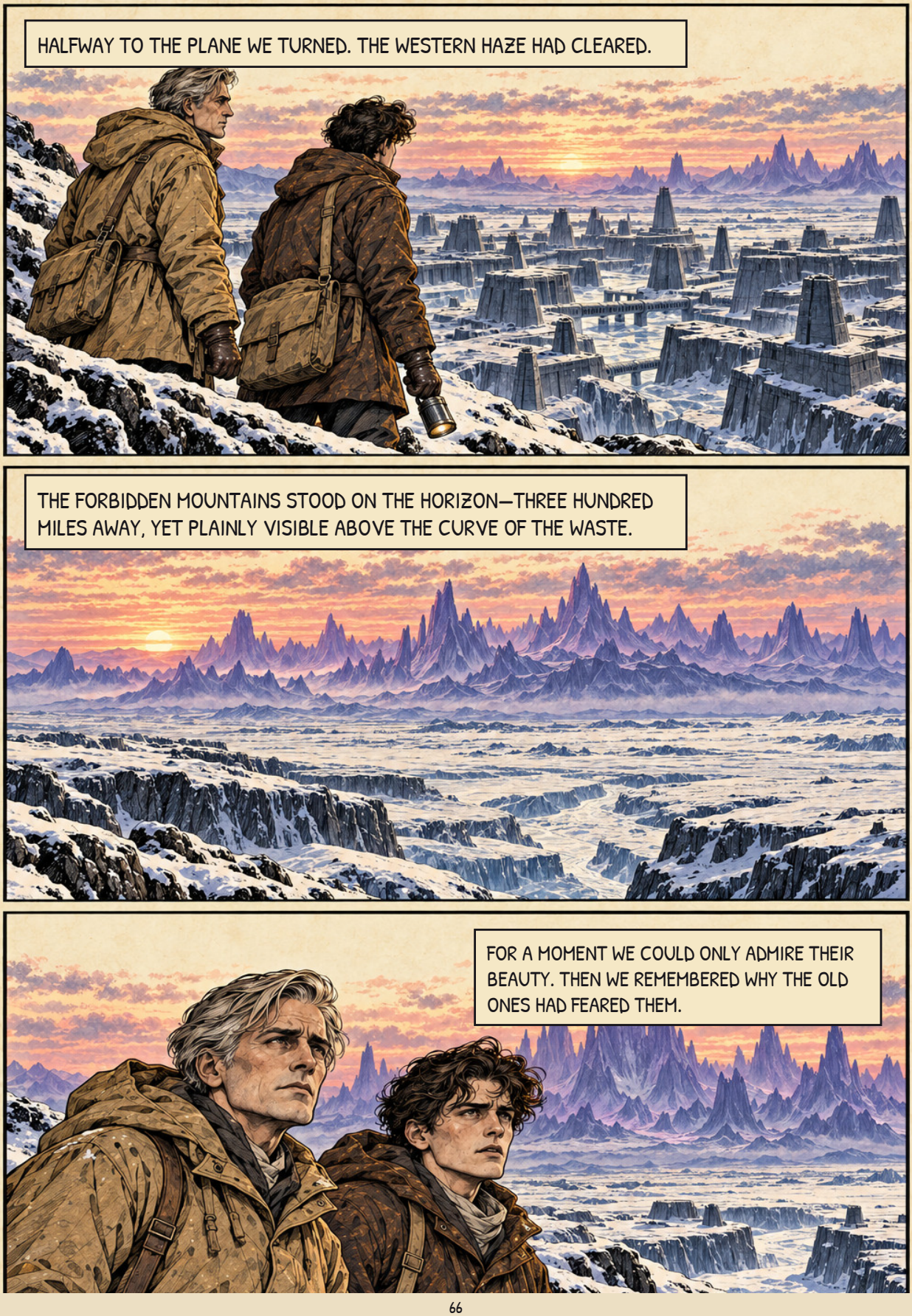

THE RETURN COMES BACK IN FRAGMENTS: THE HEMISPHERE, THE MARKED TURNS, THE ROOMS UNDER THE ICE.

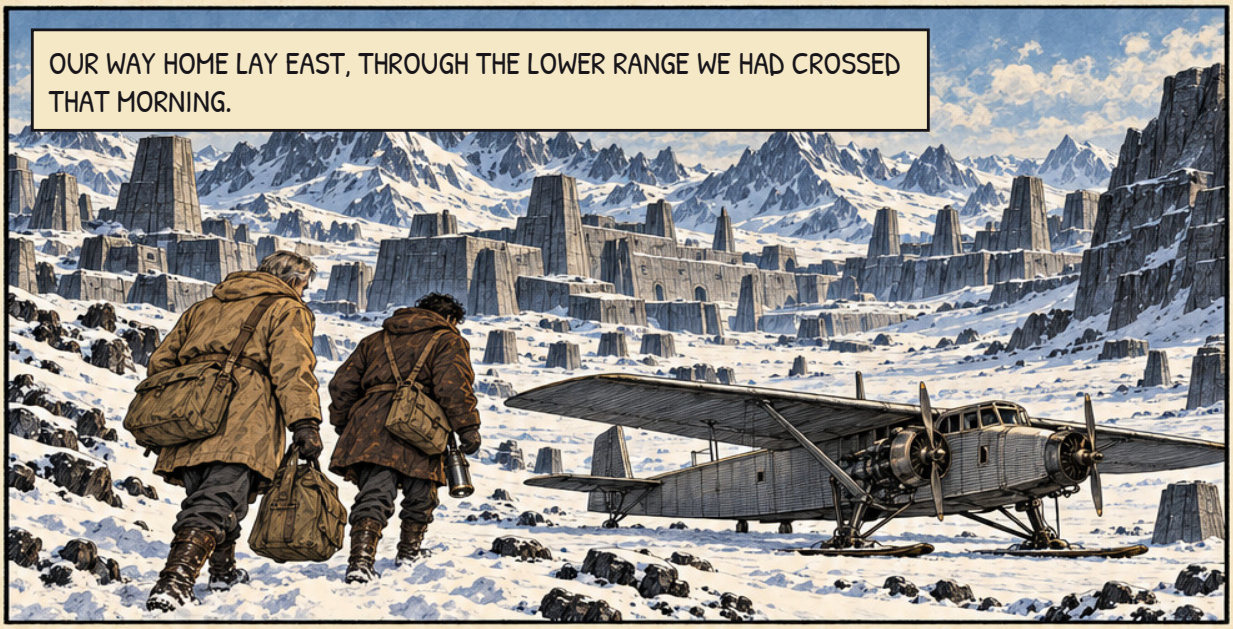

WE DID NOT LOOK BENEATH THE TARPAULINS AGAIN. GEDNEY AND THE DOG HAD A TOMB GREATER THAN ANY MAN COULD BUILD.

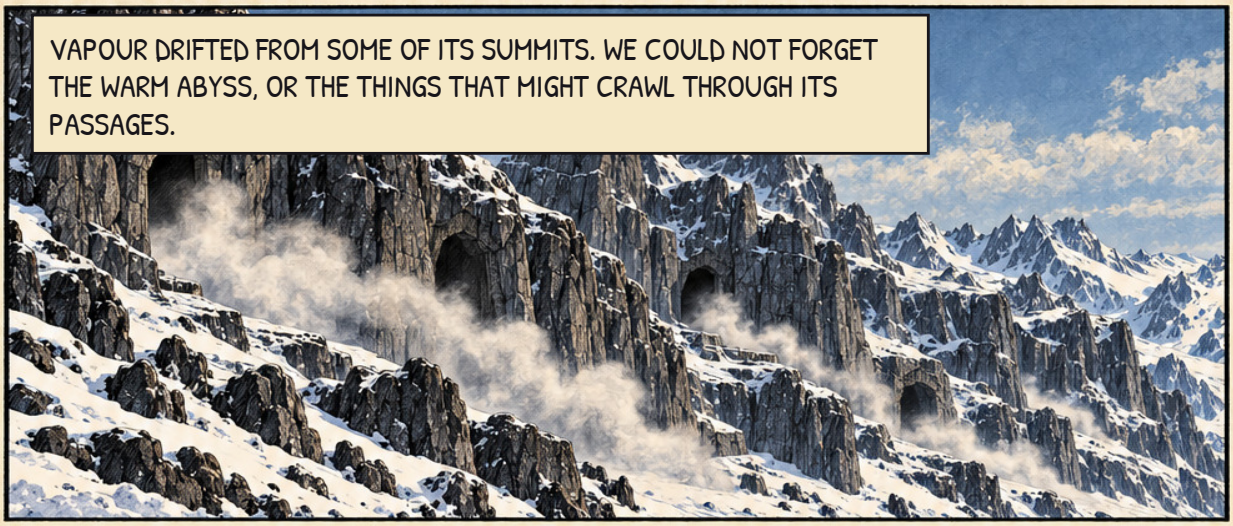

THE THIN AIR TORE AT OUR LUNGS. WE COULD NOT REST UNTIL WE REACHED THE SKY.

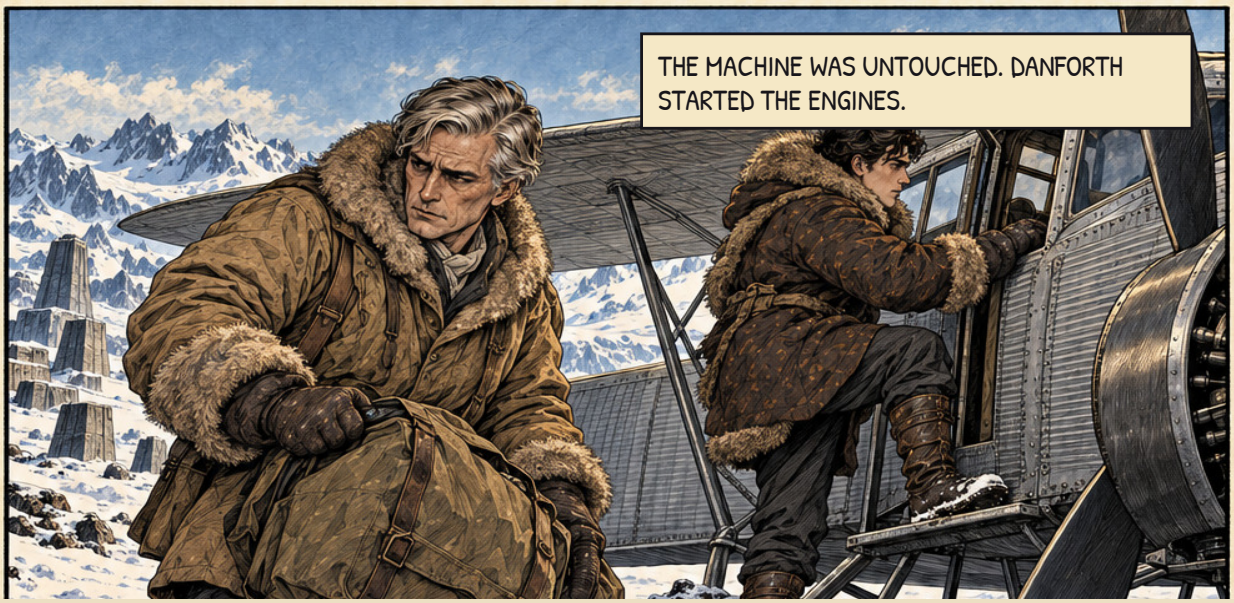

BESIDE US PASSED THE FINEST SCULPTURES OF THEIR EARLY DAYS—A FAREWELL WRITTEN FIFTY MILLION YEARS AGO.


OUTSIDE, THE FAMILIAR COLD CLUTCHED US. MIDNIGHT SUNLIGHT LAY ACROSS THE DEAD CITY.

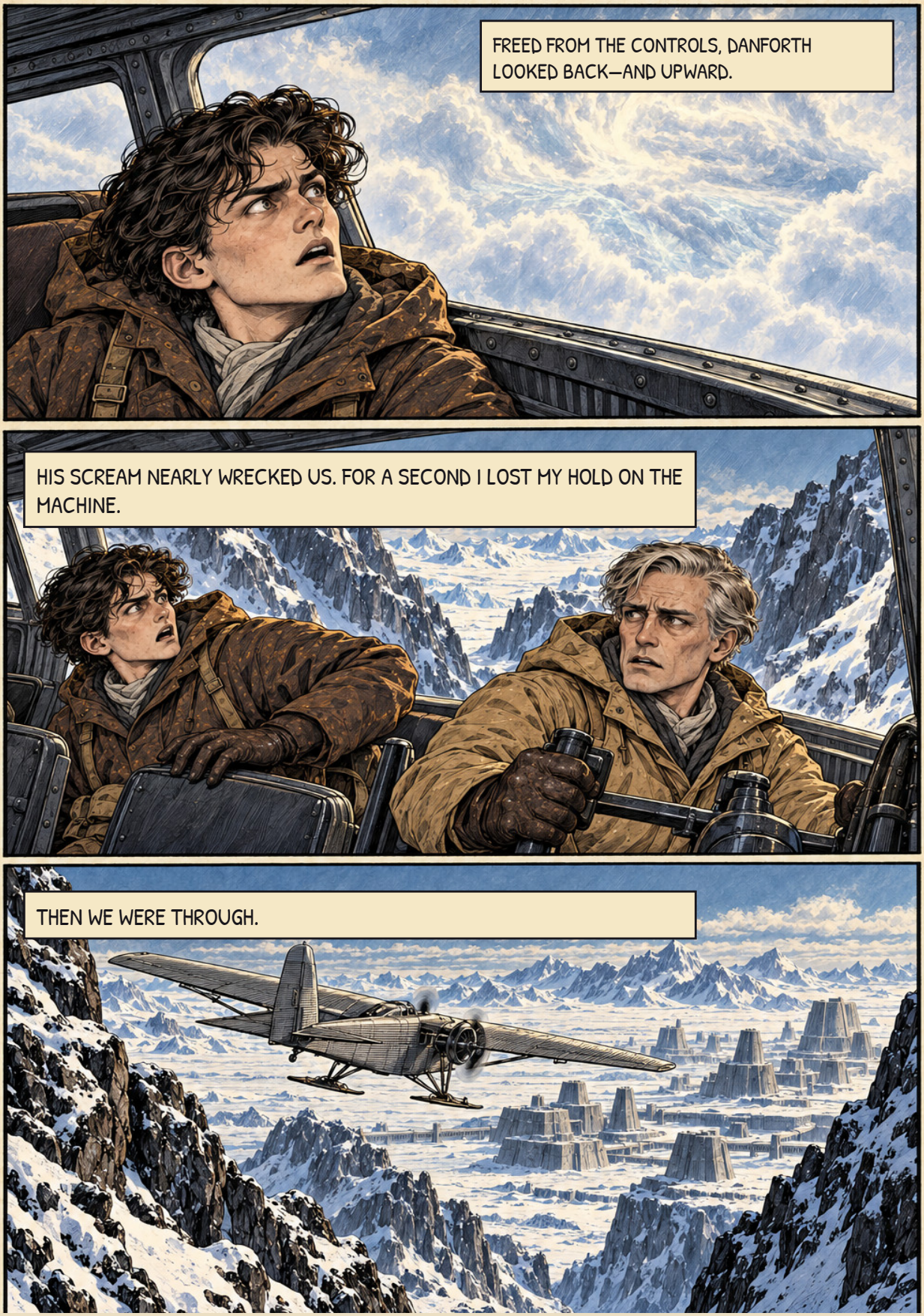

HALFWAY TO THE PLANE WE TURNED. THE WESTERN HAZE HAD CLEARED.
THE FORBIDDEN MOUNTAINS STOOD ON THE HORIZON—THREE HUNDRED MILES AWAY, YET PLAINLY VISIBLE ABOVE THE CURVE OF THE WASTE.
FOR A MOMENT WE COULD ONLY ADMIRE THEIR BEAUTY. THEN WE REMEMBERED WHY THE OLD ONES HAD FEARED THEM.

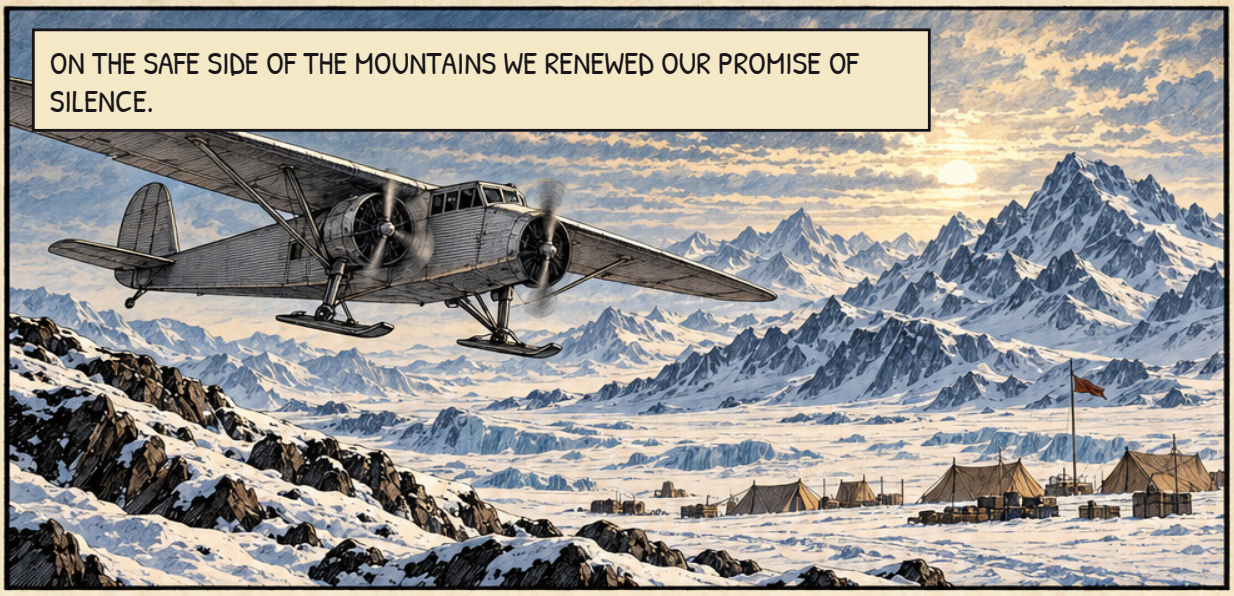

OUR WAY HOME LAY EAST, THROUGH THE LOWER RANGE WE HAD CROSSED THAT MORNING.


VAPOUR DRIFTED FROM SOME OF ITS SUMMITS. WE COULD NOT FORGET THE WARM ABYSS, OR THE THINGS THAT MIGHT CRAWL THROUGH ITS PASSAGES.

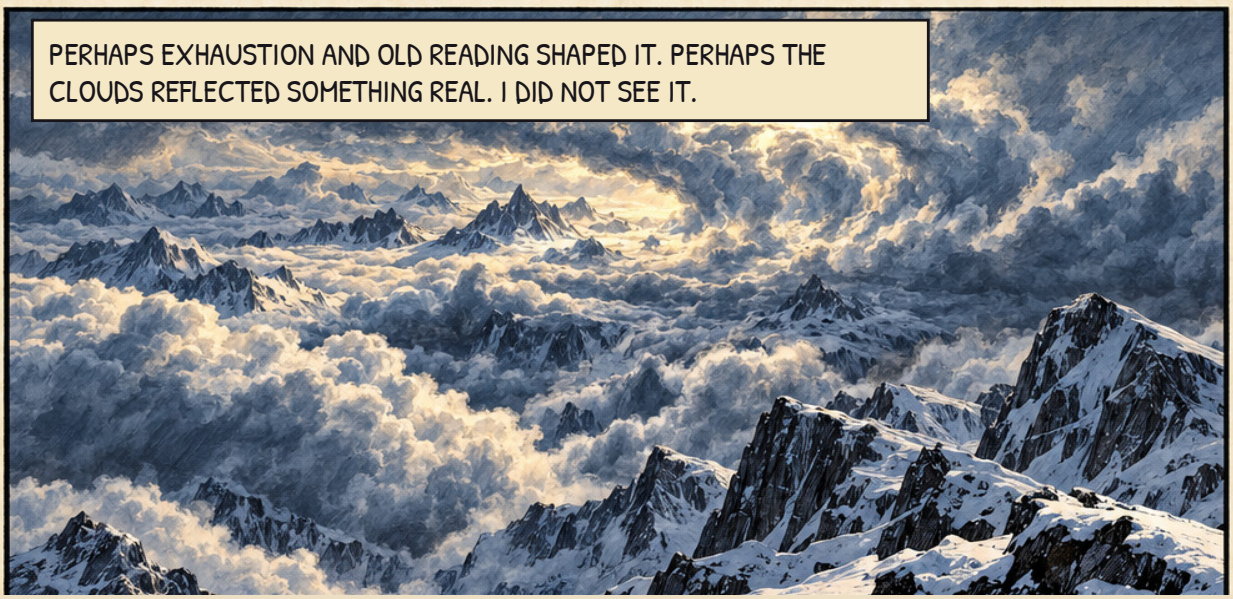

THE MACHINE WAS UNTOUCHED. DANFORTH STARTED THE ENGINES.


WE CLIMBED TO TWENTY-FOUR THOUSAND FEET AND TURNED TOWARD THE PASS.
LET ME BRING US THROUGH. KEEP CLEAR OF THE CONTROLS.
THE WIND PIPED AROUND THE CAVES. I FIXED MY EYES UPON THE STRIP OF SKY AHEAD.


FREED FROM THE CONTROLS, DANFORTH LOOKED BACK—AND UPWARD.
HIS SCREAM NEARLY WRECKED US. FOR A SECOND I LOST MY HOLD ON THE MACHINE.
THEN WE WERE THROUGH.


ON THE SAFE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS WE RENEWED OUR PROMISE OF SILENCE.


DANFORTH HAS NEVER TOLD ME PLAINLY WHAT HE SAW. HE SAYS IT WAS A MIRAGE OF SOMETHING BEYOND THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS.


PERHAPS EXHAUSTION AND OLD READING SHAPED IT. PERHAPS THE CLOUDS REFLECTED SOMETHING REAL. I DID NOT SEE IT.


I BREAK OUR PROMISE ONLY TO STOP ANOTHER EXPEDITION. SOME CORNERS OF THE EARTH MUST BE LEFT ALONE.


AT THE TIME HIS SHRIEKS WERE CONFINED TO THE REPETITION OF A SINGLE MAD WORD OF ALL TOO OBVIOUS SOURCE:


TEKELI-LI! TEKELI-LI!