

JOE HALDEMAN • MARVANO

THE FOREVER WAR

# FOREVER FIRE



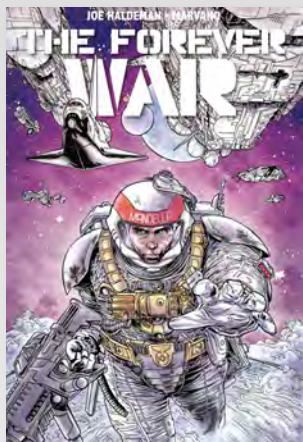
"A FASCINATING MEDITATION ON THE  
FUTILITY OF WAR, INTRICATELY DRAWN AND  
BEAUTIFULLY COLORED."

MAJOR SPOILERS

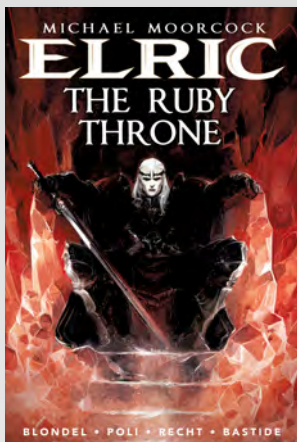


# COLLECTED EDITIONS

## FROM TITAN COMICS



THE FOREVER WAR



ELRIC: THE RUBY THRONE



THE LOST FLEET: CORSAIR



THE BEAUTIFUL DEATH



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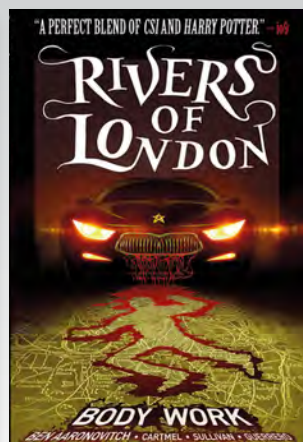
THE DEATH OF STALIN



DEATH TO THE TSAR



ALISIK: FALL



RIVERS OF LONDON: BODY WORK

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THE FOREVER WAR  
**FOIREVEIR**  
**FIREE**

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THE FOREVER WAR  
**FOREVER  
FREE**

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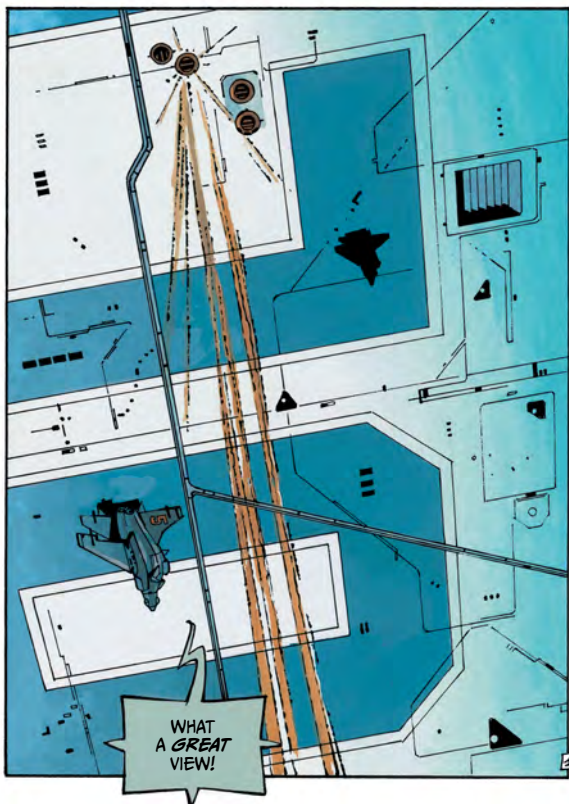
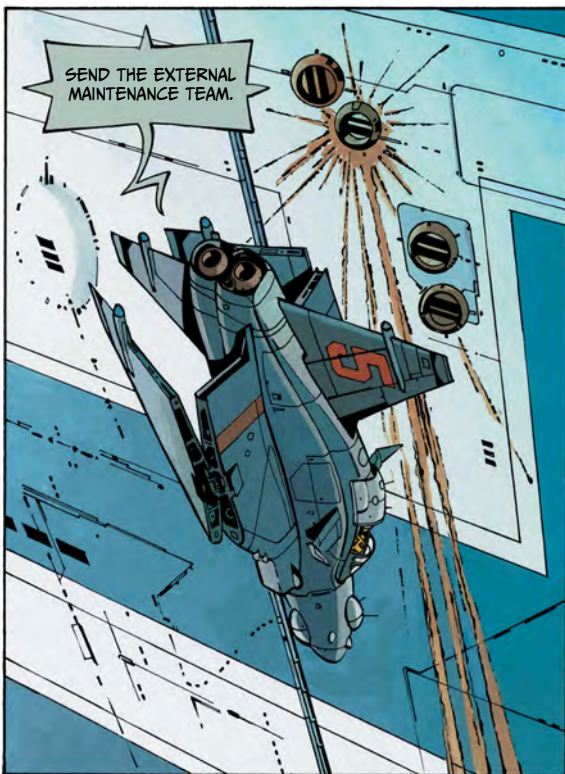
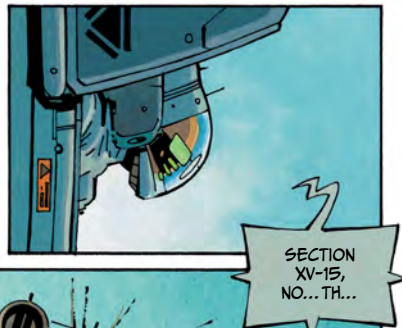
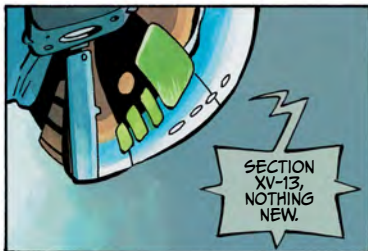
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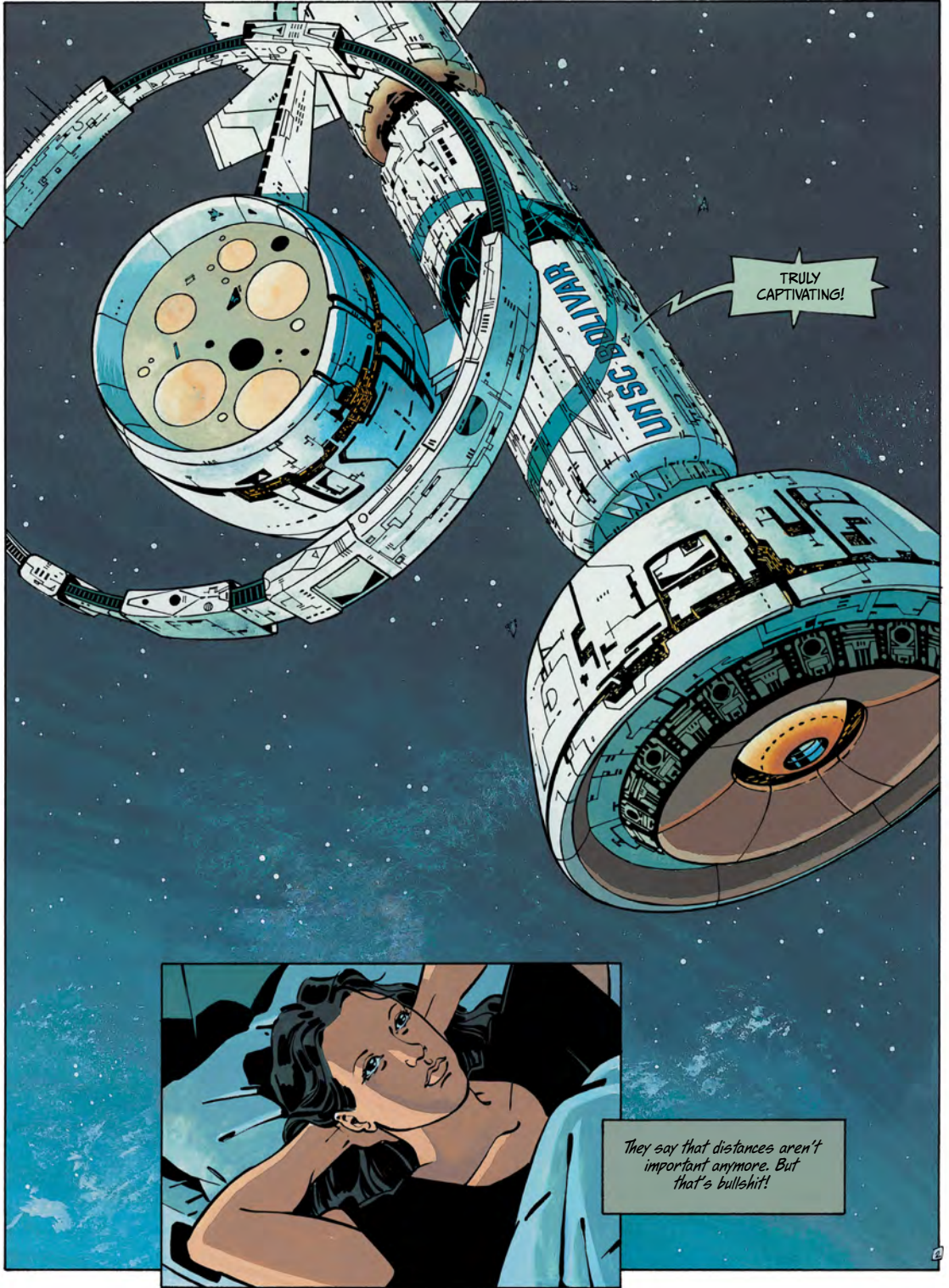
THE FOREVER WAR  
**FOREVER  
FREE**



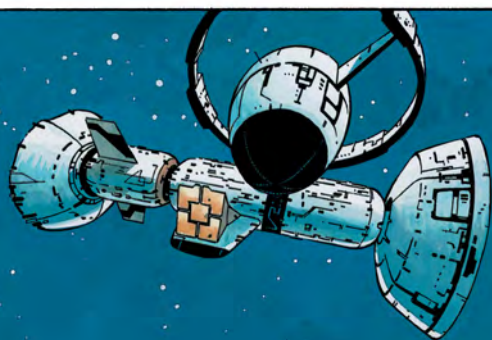






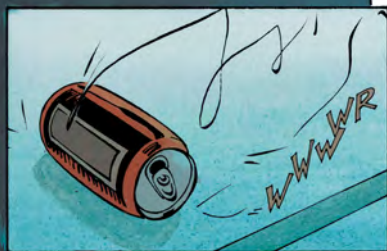
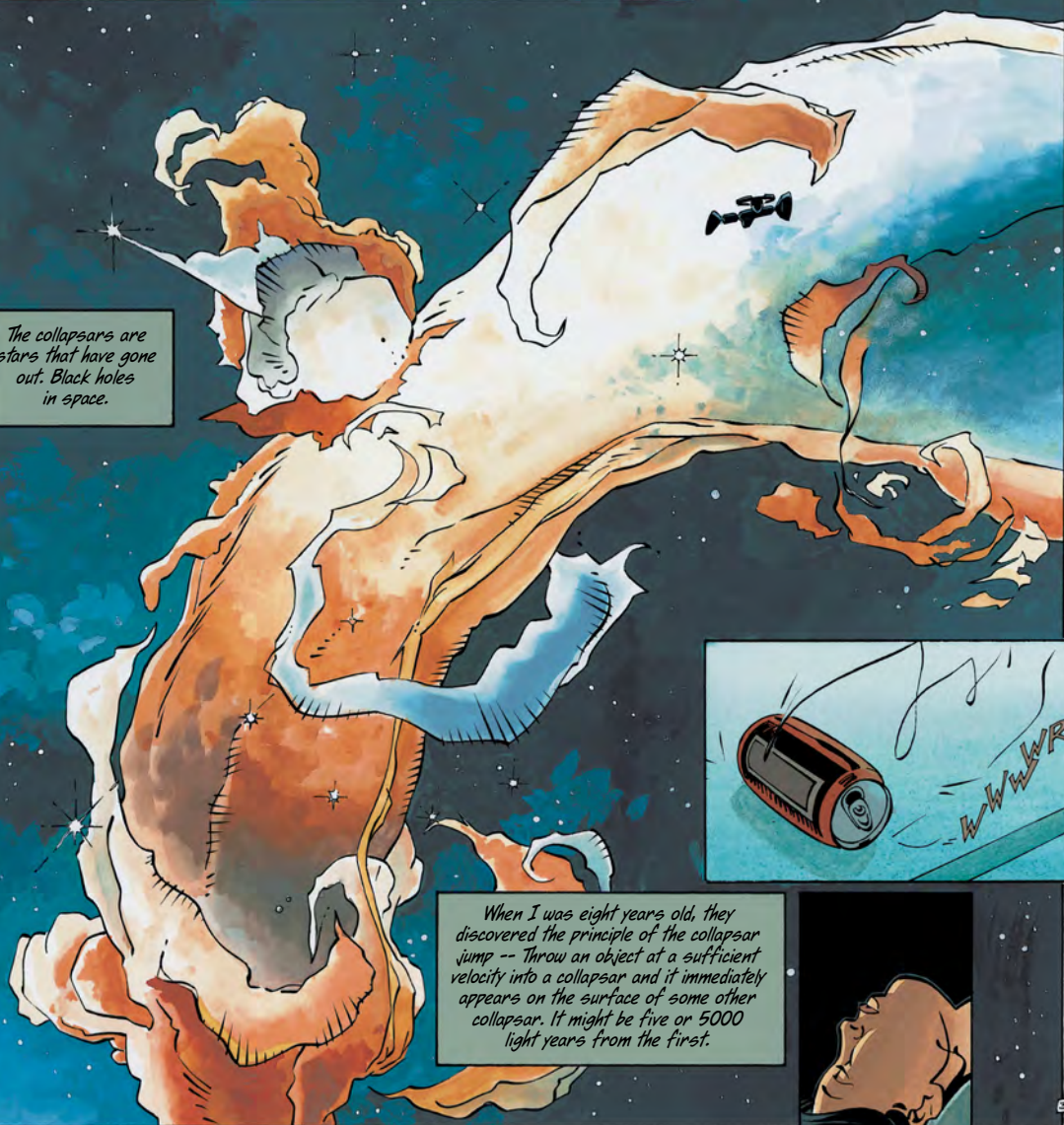






*Between the collapsars Aleph-10 and Sade-138, there are 150,000 light years. Light moves at 300,000 kilometers per second. Do the calculation if you want.*

*The collapsars are stars that have gone out. Black holes in space.*



*When I was eight years old, they discovered the principle of the collapsar jump -- Throw an object at a sufficient velocity into a collapsar and it immediately appears on the surface of some other collapsar. It might be five or 5000 light years from the first.*



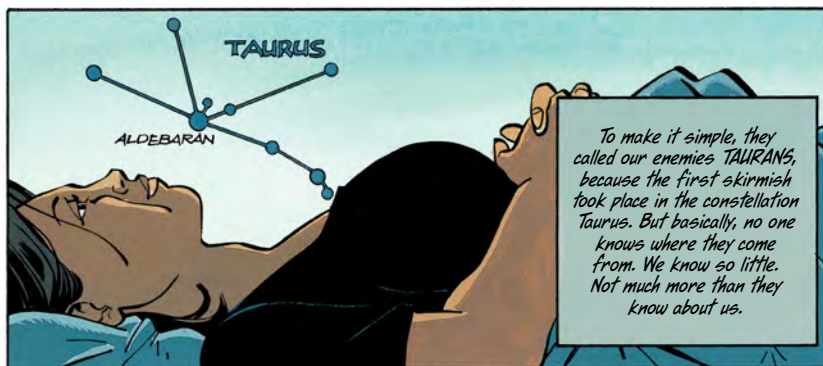
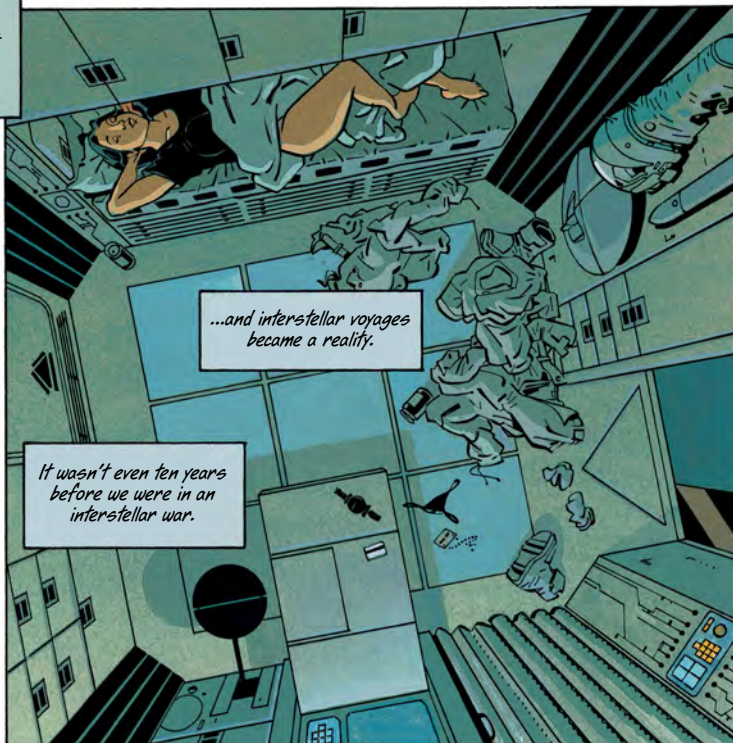


They soon deduced the formula that let them calculate the trajectory of the object (for the eggheads -- it's an Einsteinian geodesic line)...

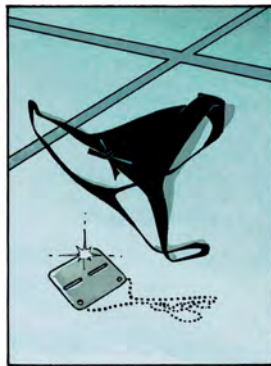


...and interstellar voyages became a reality.

It wasn't even ten years before we were in an interstellar war.



To make it simple, they called our enemies **TAURANS**, because the first skirmish took place in the constellation Taurus. But basically, no one knows where they come from. We know so little. Not much more than they know about us.



The first things the two races exchanged were missiles.



This war lasted for several centuries, but I lived it from the beginning.





Just like William.



And some others, of course.



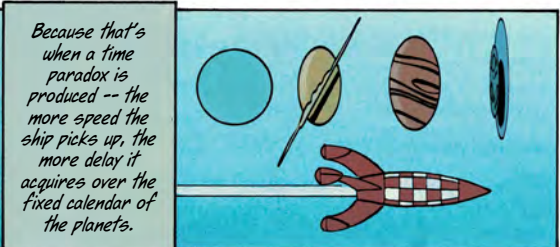
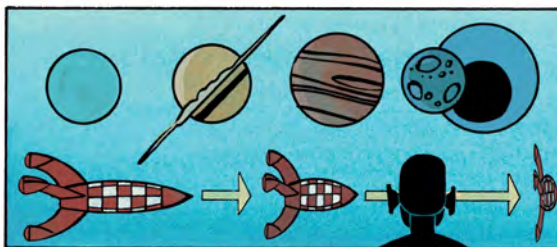
It's because of the  
collapsar jumps.



The jump lasts exactly zero  
seconds. But in order to be able  
to execute it, a space ship must  
produce an acceleration equivalent  
to 99% of the speed of light.  
That takes months...



...and those  
months are what  
cause the problem.



Because that's  
when a time  
paradox is  
produced -- the  
more speed the  
ship picks up, the  
more delay it  
acquires over the  
fixed calendar of  
the planets.

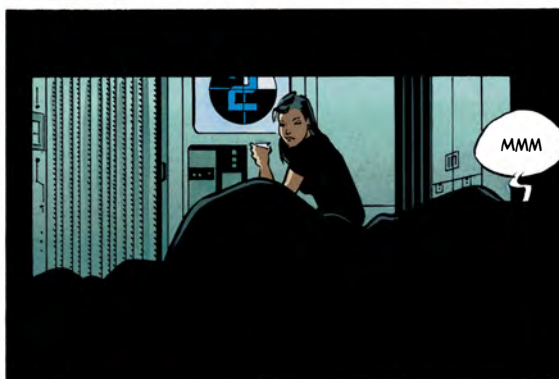


In other words -- while  
months pass on the ship,  
years pass on the planets  
-- even centuries.



The phenomenon  
undoubtedly has its  
advantages.







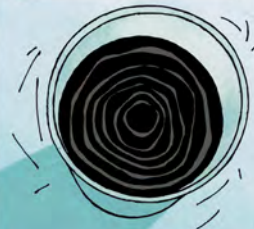
One time, a terrestrial expeditionary force bumped into some Taurans that were many centuries behind.



It was an easy victory.



But the opposite has also happened.



The list of lost ships keeps growing.



When William and I were sent to the same campaigns, everything was straight forward. But now I'm on the way to Aleph-10...



...And he's going to Sade-138.

DEFCON 2

If William dies in a nova bomb explosion, the bright ash of the conflagration will take 1500 centuries to reach Aleph-10.



BEEP!

DEFCON 3

Tell me about distances!

ATTENTION! ALL TROOPS, DEFCON 3. WE REPEAT: 3.

DEFCON 3





Although we may both survive, we've lost each other forever.

The numerous collapsar jumps will put CENTURIES between us.



M!

We had each other, the only link with our past.



On the worlds that we're going to, nobody speaks the language of our childhood. Only the military argot still derives from ancient English.



Babies aren't born from their mother's womb. They're brought up in boxes and their DNA code is modified.

Heterosexual relations have become an anachronistic perversion.

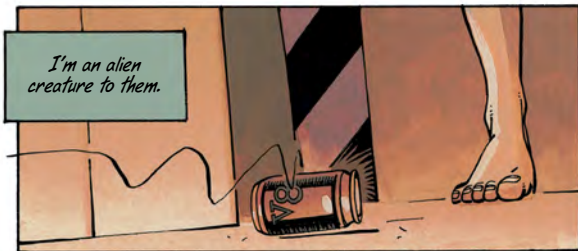


The marching orders of the soldiers who still haven't been born are directed by officials of the Major State. Those same officials will die of old age while their orders are being carried out.



For the rest, here, aboard the BOLIVAR, I am a kind of monster -- a hetero, born like an animal.

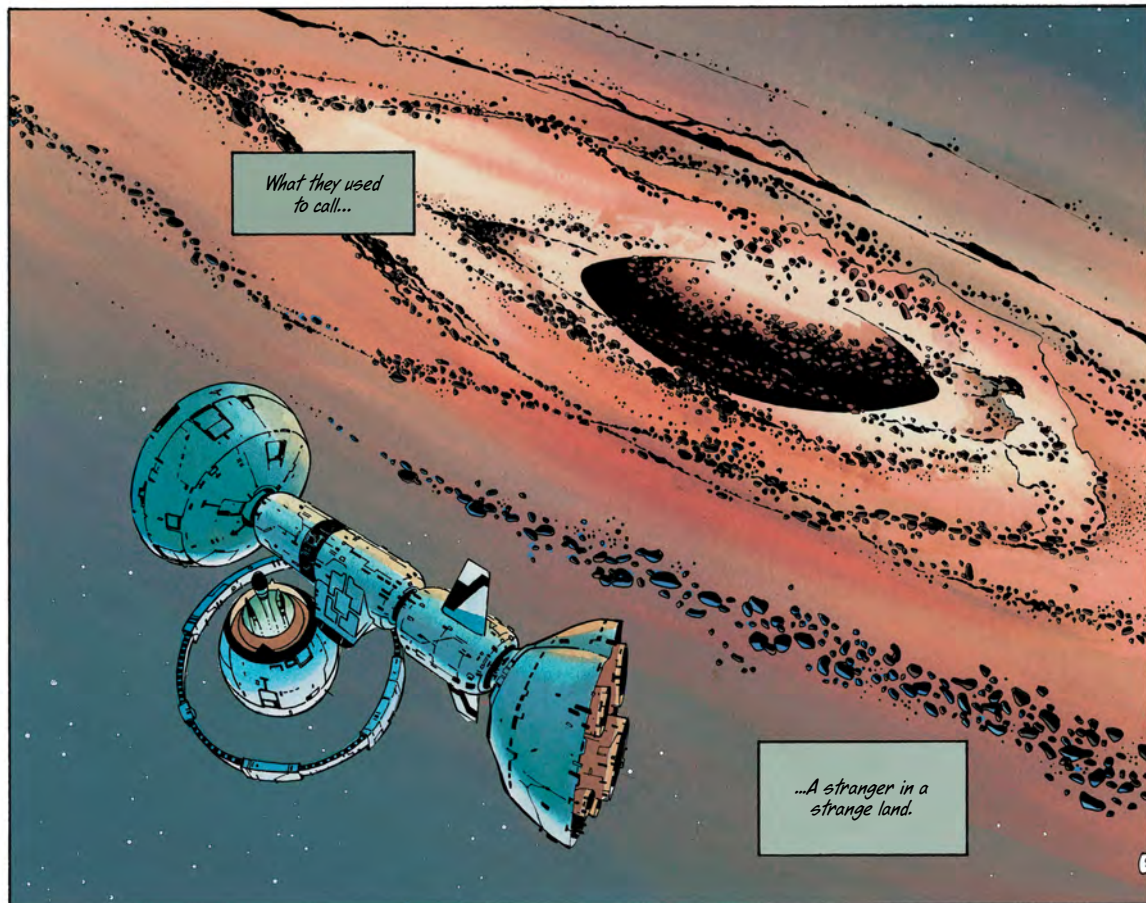




*I'm an alien creature to them.*



*No one word in their language defines me.*



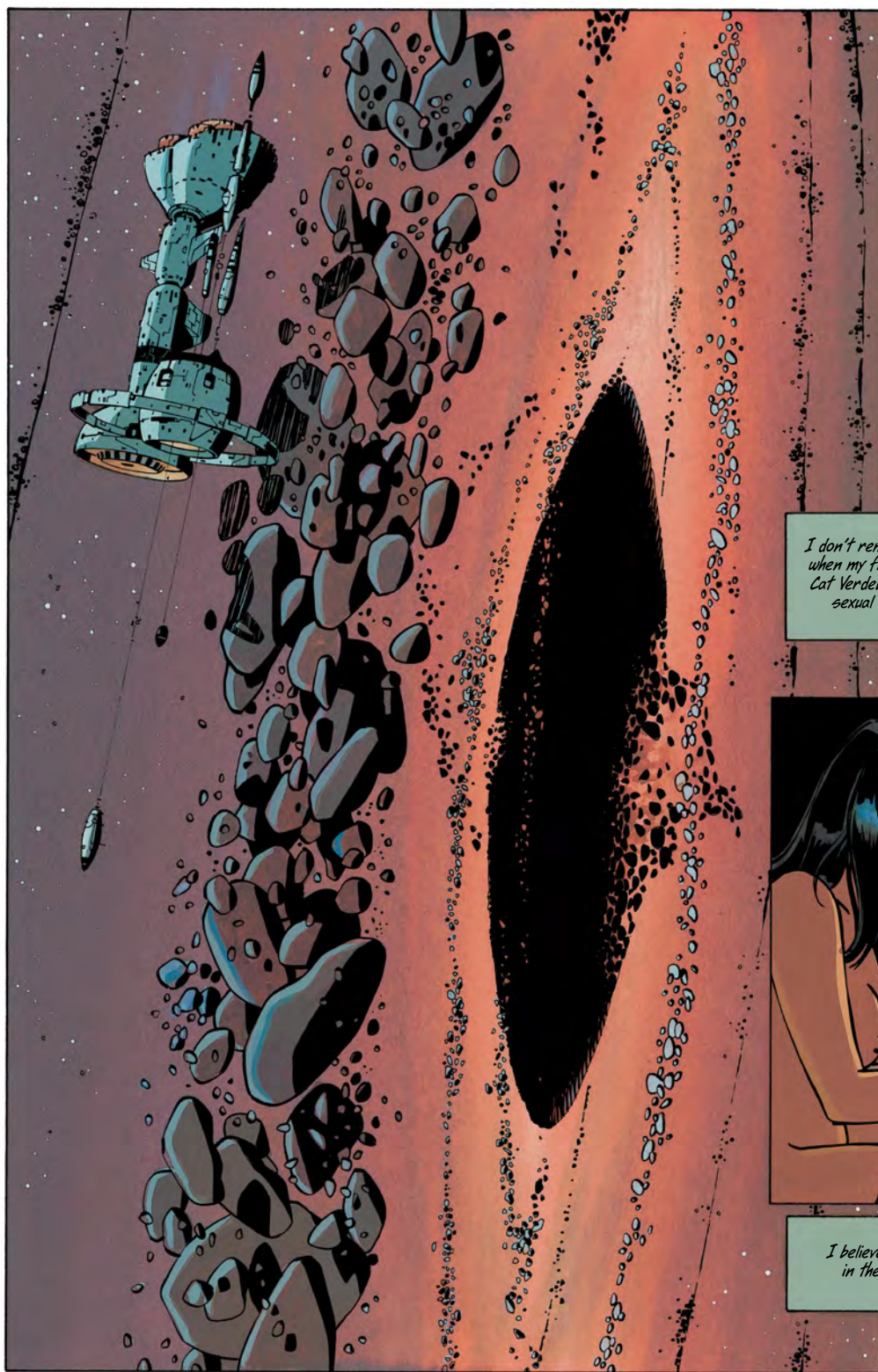
*What they used to call...*

*...A stranger in a strange land.*

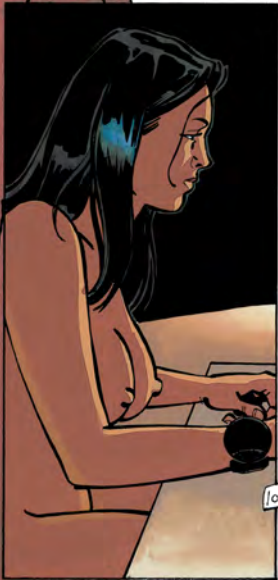
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*...five centuries ago.*

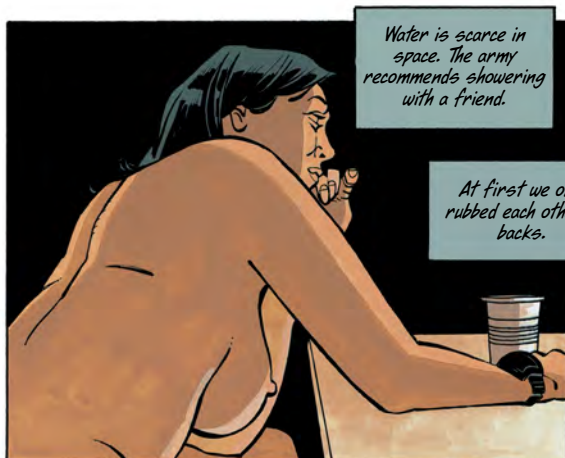


*I don't remember exactly when my friendship with Cat Verdeur turned into sexual attraction.*



*I believe it started in the shower.*





Water is scarce in space. The army recommends showering with a friend.

At first we only rubbed each other's backs.



A little later, the rest of the body...



My heart still belongs to William. But I know I'll never see him again.



A while back, there was a song -- a long while back -- by Crosby, Stills & Nash...



"If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with..."

That pretty much covers the situation.

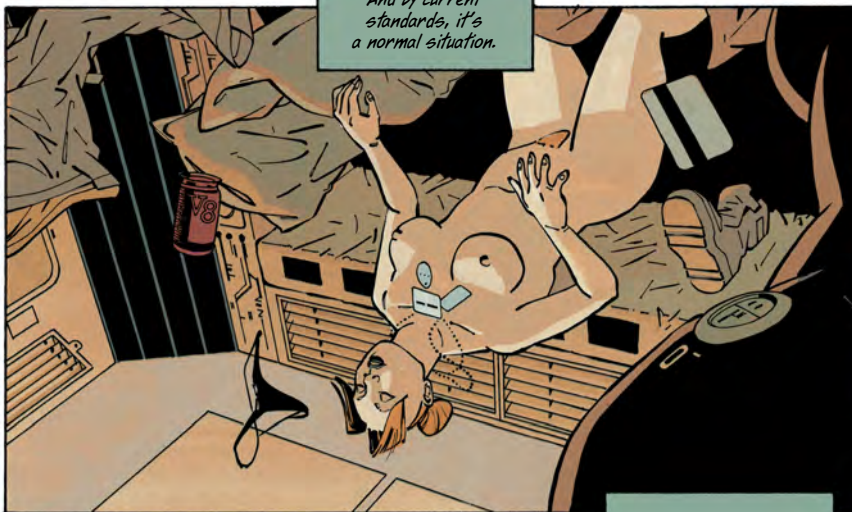


What I feel for Cat is...

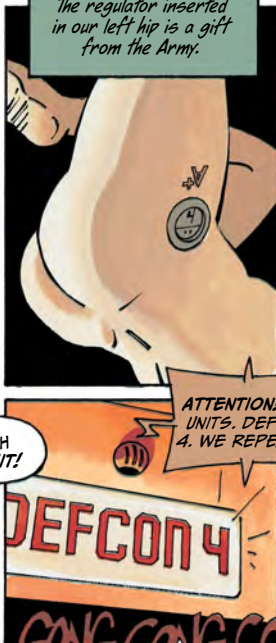


...something more than friendship...





And by current standards, it's a normal situation.



CAT!

WAKE UP, CAT!

HUH?

WHAT...?

OH SHIT!

The regulator inserted in our left hip is a gift from the Army.

DEFCON 4

The last acceleration before the collapsar jump is so strong that you can only survive it inside an acceleration tank.

ATTENTION! ALL UNITS. DEFCON 4. WE REPEAT: 4.

GANG GANG GANG GANG GANG