

THE STATUE'S BREATH

ART AND WORDS BY EDWARD FICKLIN

THE PLANET **CHIRON** IN THE PROXIMA CENTAURI SYSTEM, COLONIZED BY HUMANS IN THE DISTANT FUTURE.

DR. SIMON GALATEA IS LEADING AN ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG AT ONE OF THE SEVERAL SITES OF ALIEN RUINS DISCOVERED DURING INITIAL EXPLORATION. THE ALPHA SITE GARNERED EXTRA ATTENTION AS ORBITAL X-RAY SCANS REVEALED THE POSSIBLE PRESENCE OF AN INTACT, **ROBOTIC** CONSTRUCT. DAY ONE IS CONCLUDING.

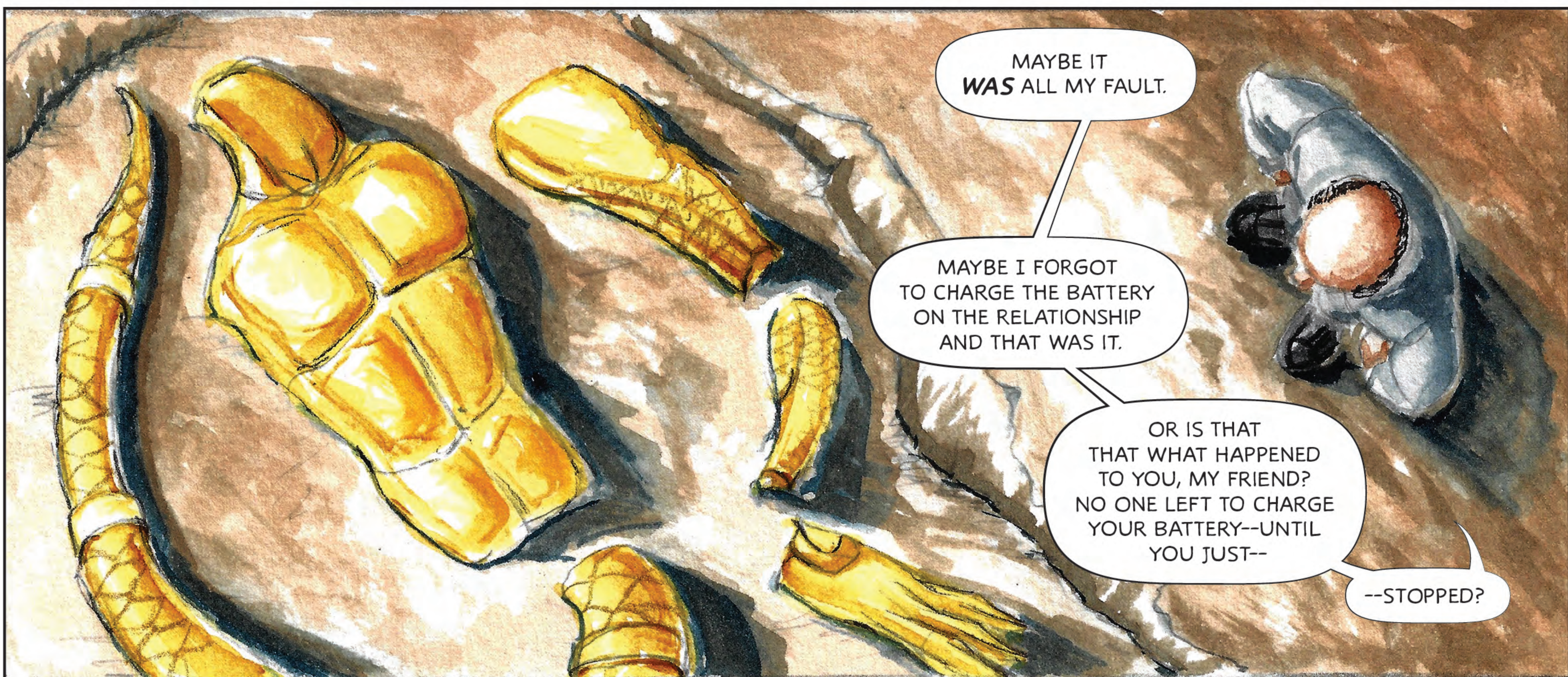
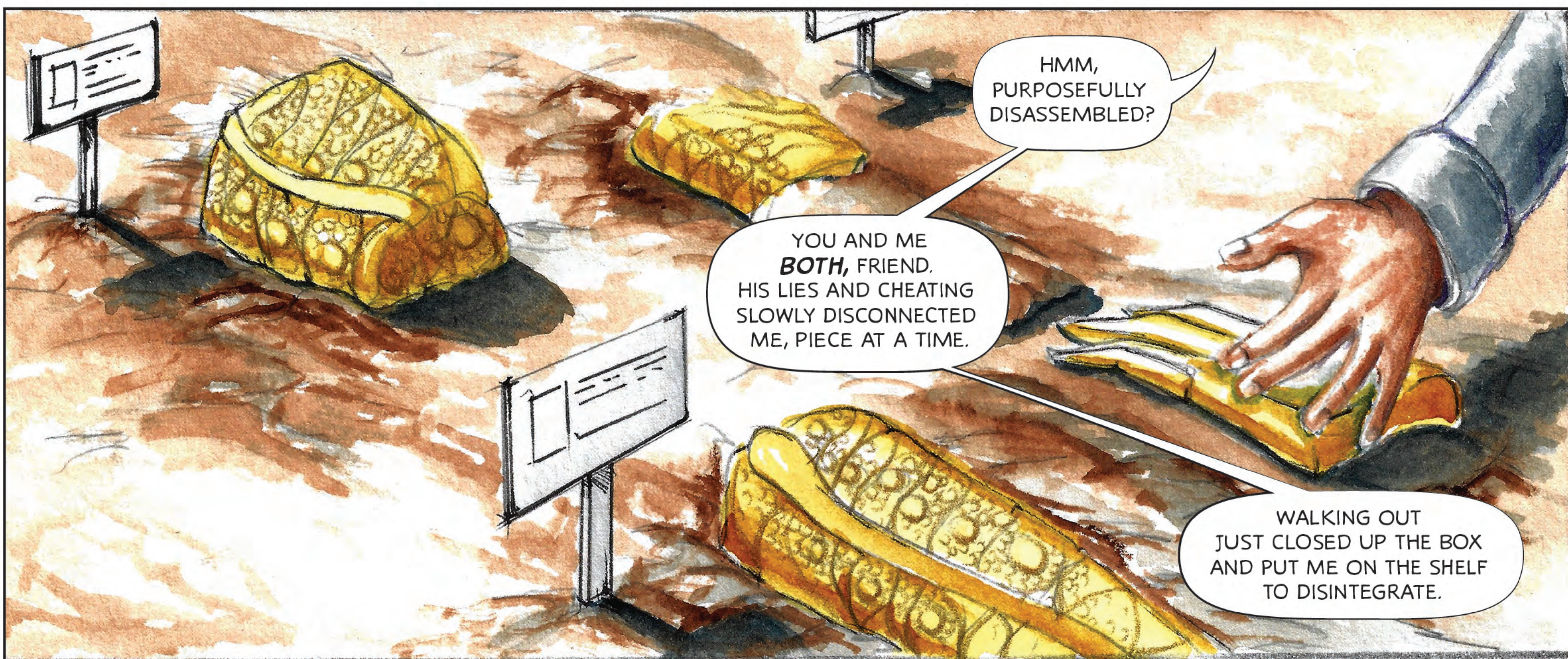
GOOD
NIGHT,
DR. G.

DON'T
STAY HERE
ALL NIGHT.

HMPH.
MIGHT AS WELL SPEND
MY NIGHTS WITH YOU, FRIEND.
CAN'T GET USED TO SLEEPING
ALONE AFTER SO
MANY YEARS.

ESPECIALLY
AS YOU'RE FINALLY
REVEALING YOUR SECRETS.
A SURFACE--SKIN, REALLY--
COMBINING ORGANIC AND INORGANIC,
BUT SEEMINGLY IMPERVIOUS
TO THE ATMOSPHERE.

OH, THE STORIES
YOU'LL TELL WHEN WE'VE GOT YOU
COMPLETELY UNCOVERED.



DAY 25

DAMN,
I'VE HEARDA
LOVING YOUR WORK,
BUT HE SERIOUSLY
LOVES THAT
THING

SHH!
BEHAVE.

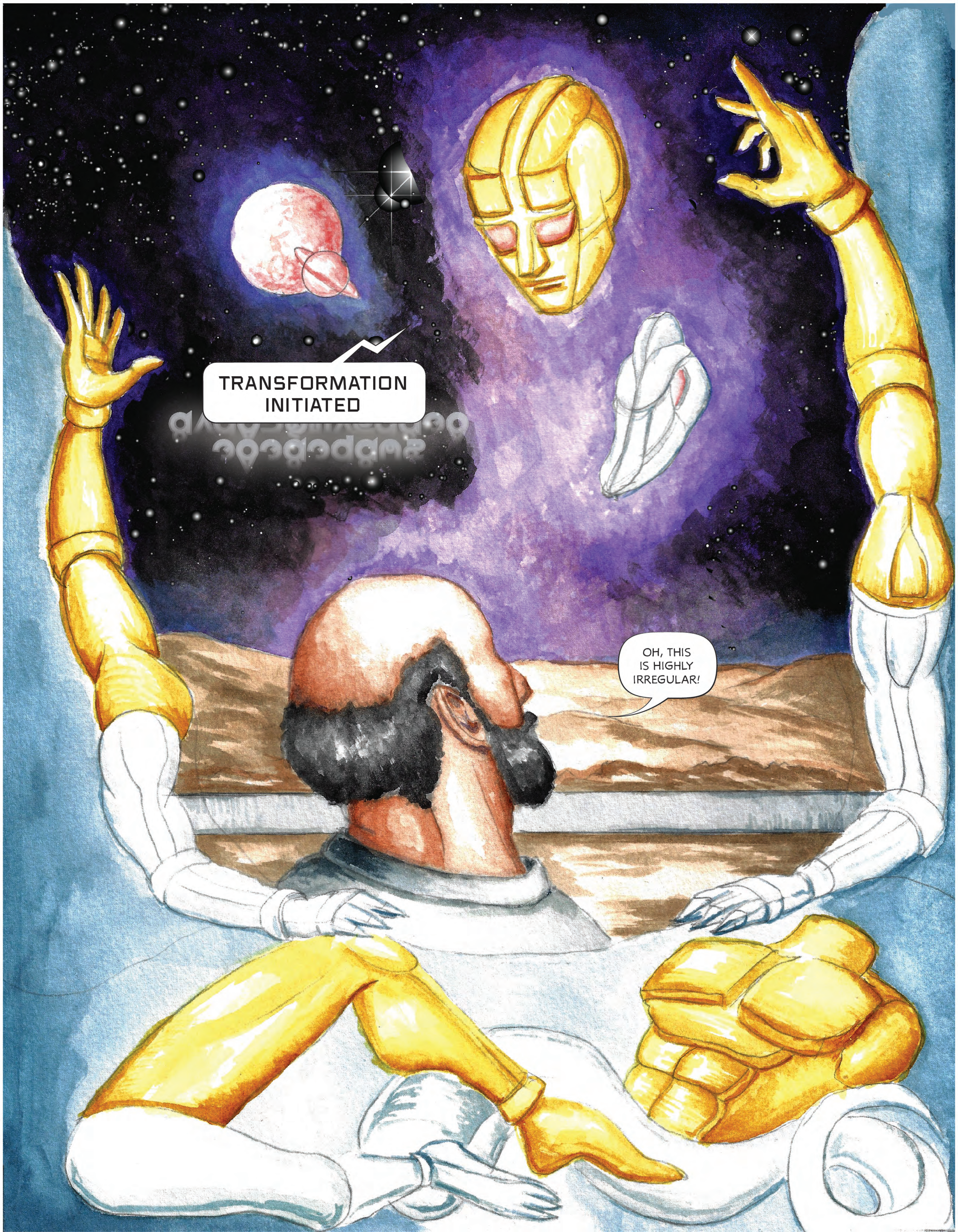
GOOD
NIGHT,
DR. G.

NO MORE
ALL-NIGHTERS, OK?
IT'S NOT
HEALTHY.

HE USED TO
SAY WORK WAS
MORE IMPORTANT
TO ME THAN PEOPLE,
BUT, REALLY, **IN LOVE**
WITH AN INERT
ARTEFACT--

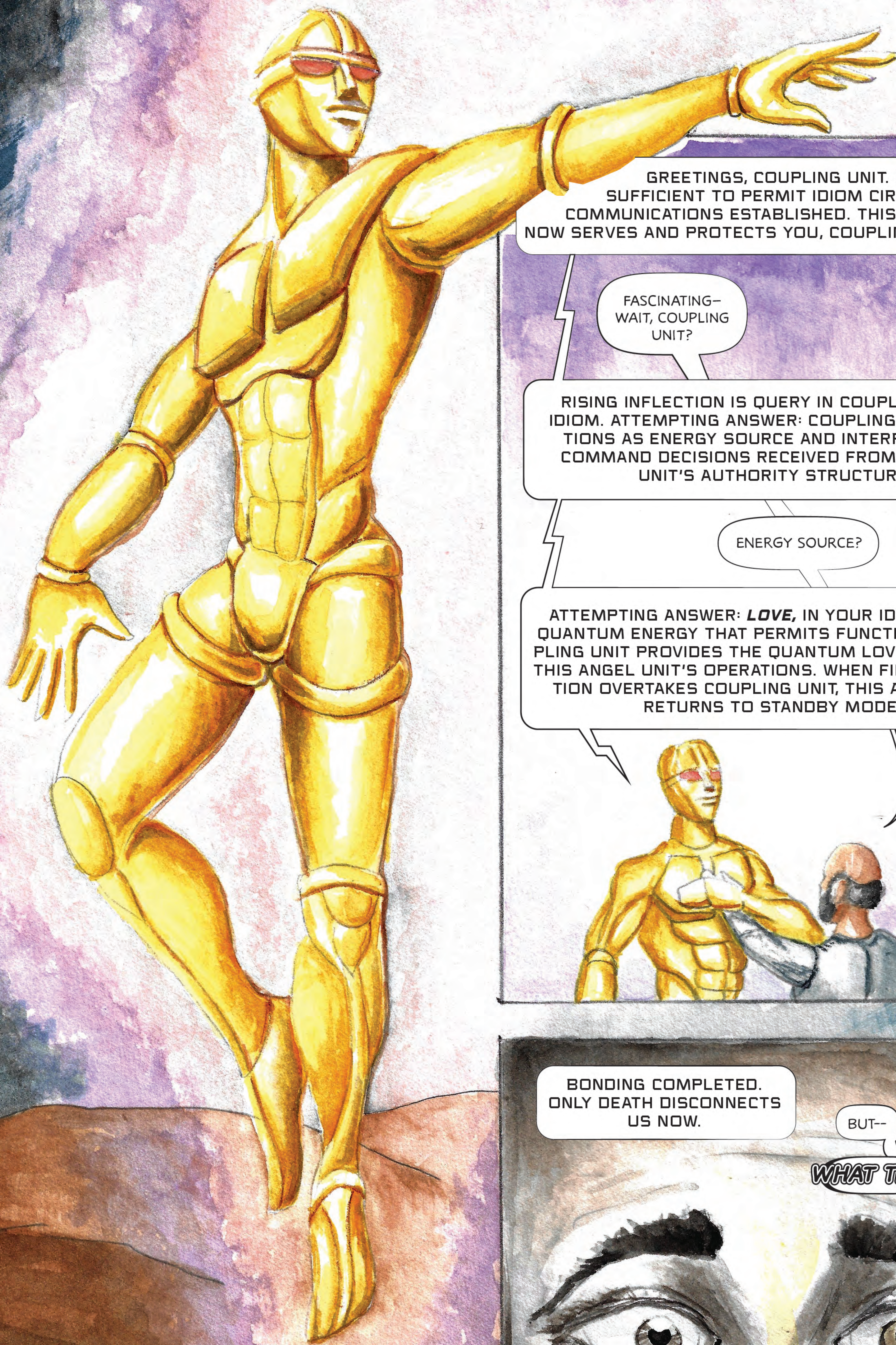
**THE
HEAD!**

WHY IS IT
GLOWING?



TRANSFORMATION
INITIATED

OH, THIS
IS HIGHLY
IRREGULAR!



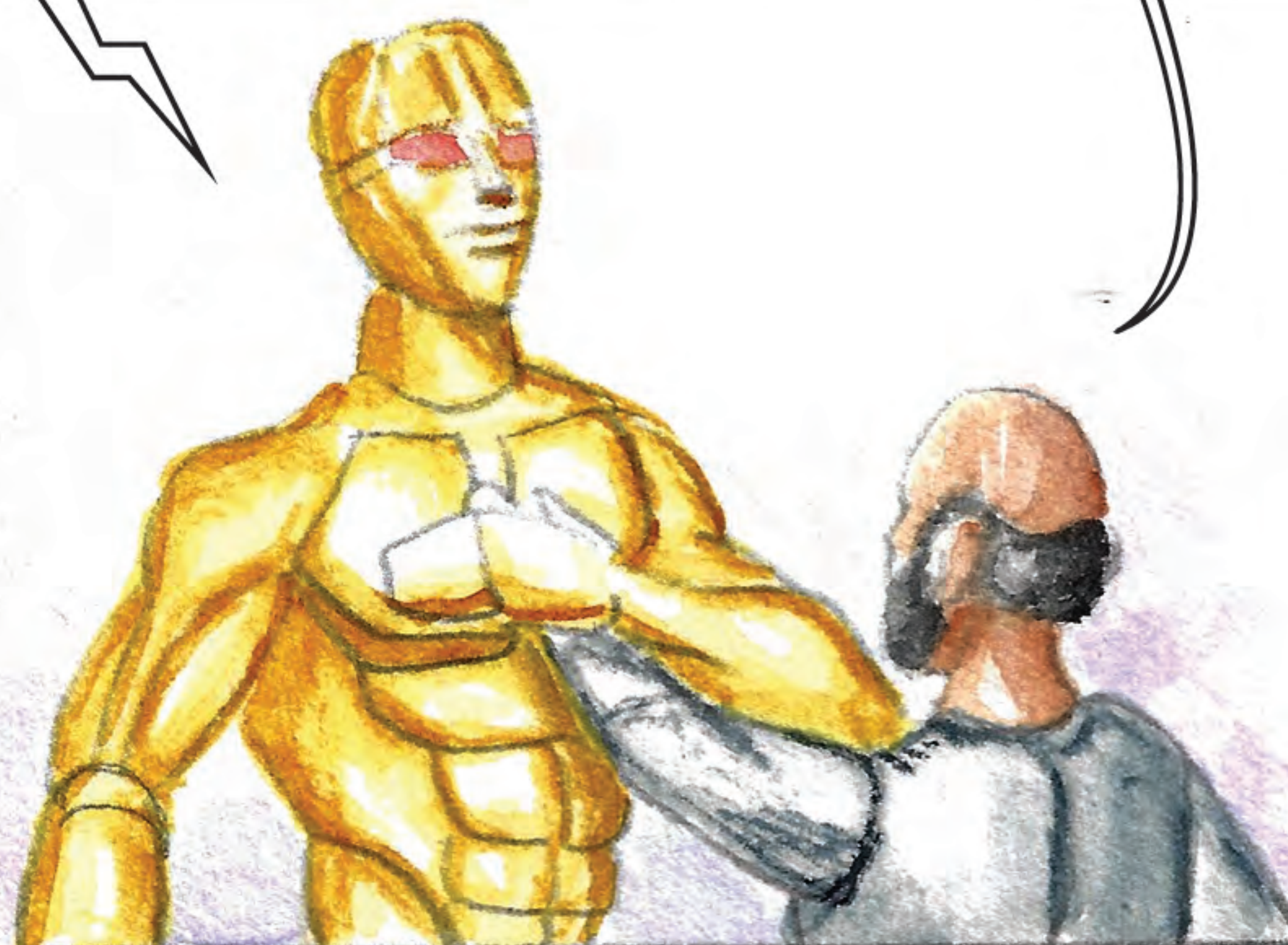
GREETINGS, COUPLING UNIT. POWER LEVELS SUFFICIENT TO PERMIT IDIOM CIRCUITS. VOCAL COMMUNICATIONS ESTABLISHED. THIS ANGEL UNIT NOW SERVES AND PROTECTS YOU, COUPLING UNIT.

FASCINATING--
WAIT, COUPLING
UNIT?

RIISING INFLECTION IS QUERY IN COUPLING UNIT'S IDIOM. ATTEMPTING ANSWER: COUPLING UNIT FUNCTIONS AS ENERGY SOURCE AND INTERPRETER OF COMMAND DECISIONS RECEIVED FROM COUPLING UNIT'S AUTHORITY STRUCTURE.

ENERGY SOURCE?

ATTEMPTING ANSWER: **LOVE**, IN YOUR IDIOM, IS THE QUANTUM ENERGY THAT PERMITS FUNCTIONING. COUPLING UNIT PROVIDES THE QUANTUM LOVE TO CHARGE THIS ANGEL UNIT'S OPERATIONS. WHEN FINAL EXHAUSTION OVERTAKES COUPLING UNIT, THIS ANGEL UNIT RETURNS TO STANDBY MODE.



BONDING COMPLETED.
ONLY DEATH DISCONNECTS
US NOW.

BUT--

WAIT--

WHAT THE--

