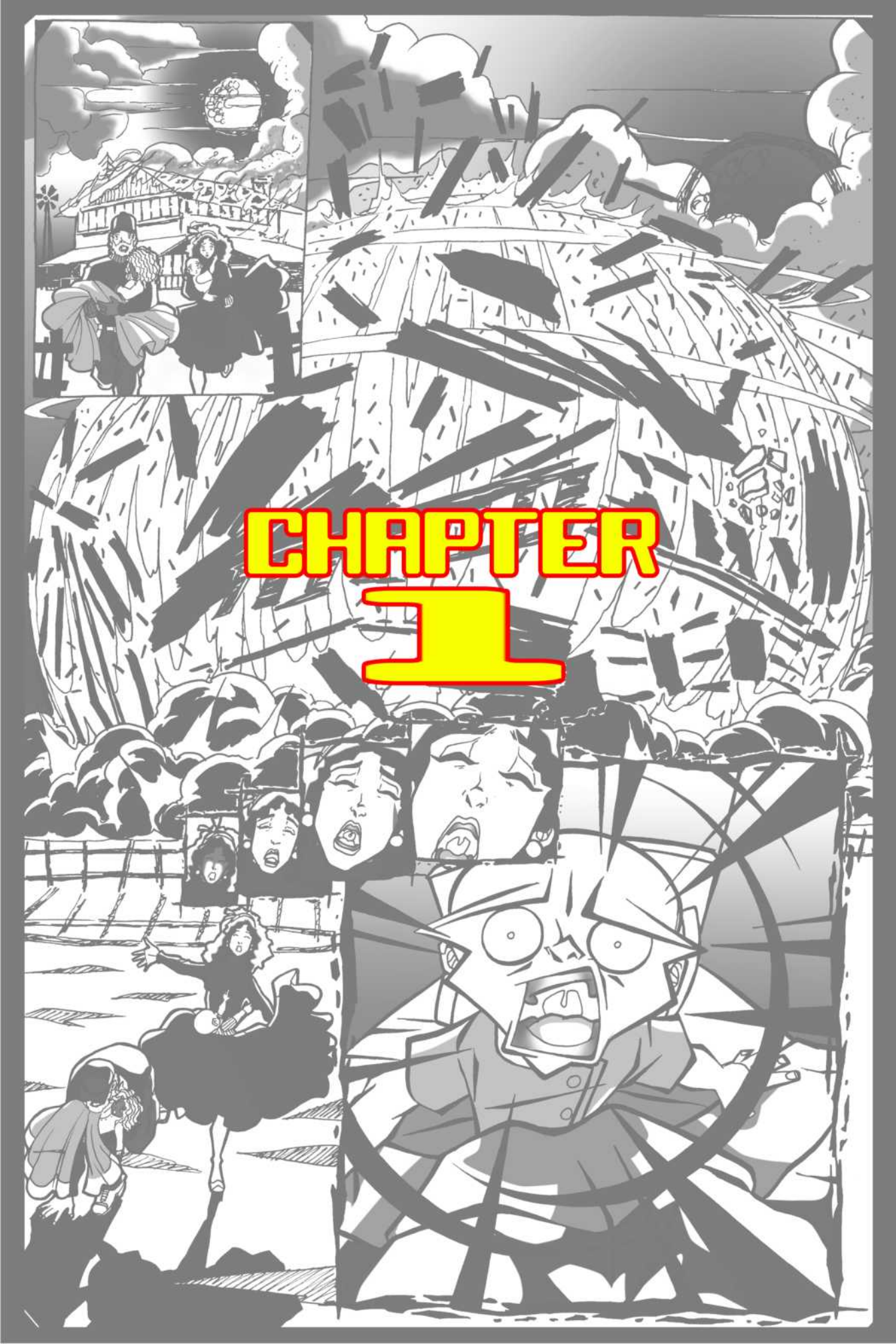




CHAPTER I

HE USED TO TELL ME ABOUT THIS ONE DREAM EVERY TIME HE HAD IT... WHICH WAS OFTEN.



IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME...



HE WOULD BE ASLEEP IN HIS ROOM...



HE MUST'VE BEEN ABOUT FIVE OR SIX YEARS OLD.



AND SUDDENLY...





WAKE UP
RUSS!!!

WAKE UP
HONEY, WE HAVE
TO GO!!!

RUSS 5377

STORY AND LETTERS BY:
JORGE MEDINA
ART BY:
DR. WHO
COLORS BY:
EDWIN DOMINGO

PROJECT: PROTOTYPE

PART 1 OF 6





...HERE, AT AN ORPHANAGE NAMED
LUIS JUDIN HOME FOR YOUTHS.

THIS IS WHERE HE GREW UP,
WHERE THANKS TO THE MIRACLE
OF MODERN SCIENCE HE MET ME,
AND WHERE HE FIRST TOLD ME
ABOUT THOSE AWFUL DREAMS.

WE MADE IT
OUT, BUT WHEN
I WOKE UP, SHE JUST
LAID ON TOP OF ME
PROTECTING ME FROM
THE FLAMES.

WAS SHE DE---?

I- I DON'T KNOW.
I WOKE UP IN A COLD
SWEAT AND I DON'T REMEMBER
ANYTHING ELSE AFTER THE EXPLOSION.
ALL I COULD SEE WAS HER LYING ON TOP
OF ME. I MEAN EVERYTHING SEEMED
SO REAL... LIKE I WAS THERE.
BUT, HOW COULD I BE?

WOW! I CAN'T
BELIEVE YOU'RE
STILL HAVING THAT
TERRIBLE DREAM!

ME NEITHER.
BUT I'M PRETTY
SURE YOU'RE TIRED
OF HEARING ABOUT IT
AND THE LOOK ON
YOUR FACE TELLS
ME SOME-
THING'S UP.

WHAT'S GOING
ON WITH YOU? WE
HAVEN'T CHATTED IN
ABOUT A WEEK AND I
KNOW YOUR DAD IS
OUT OF TOWN.

YEAH, HE'S
ON A WESTCOAST
SWING. HOW DO YOU
KNOW THAT?

HE'S MY
FAVORITE ATHLETE,
REMEMBER?

NOW. WHAT'S
WITH THE LONG
FACE? MISS
HIM?

I USED
TO MISS HIM.
BUT NOW... IT'S
DIFFERENT NOW.
I JUST DO THINGS
TO KEEP MYSELF
BUSY AND...
WHATEVER.

TELL ME,
ABOUT THAT PLACE.
I WANNA COME AND SEE
YOU IN PERSON. A GIRL GETS
TIRED OF CHATTING WITH
A HOLOGRAM
YOU KNOW.

THIS PLACE?
YOU'RE CHANGING THE
CONVERSATION AREN'T YOU?
AND YOU CAN'T COME SEE ME,
YOUR LICENSE IS SUSPENDED.
OR DID YOU FORGET
ABOUT THAT?





BESIDES,
I DIDN'T GET
TO TELL YOU ABOUT
THIS BOY I'M SEEING!
I KINDA LIKE HIM.
A LOT! HE WANTS
TO PLAY BALL LIKE
MY DAD.



TALKS ABOUT
HOW HE WANTS TO MAKE
IT TO THE PROS AND---



SNAP!

TIME'S UP.



OK, I ADMIT IT, I COULD
BE A BIT OF A PAIN. BUT
THAT WAS THE BEAUTY OF
THE RELATIONSHIP RUSS
AND I SHARED.

ANYWAY, SOON AFTER THE
HALF HOUR THEY WOULD
GRANT HIM TO TALK TO ME,
THEY WOULD TAKE HIM...

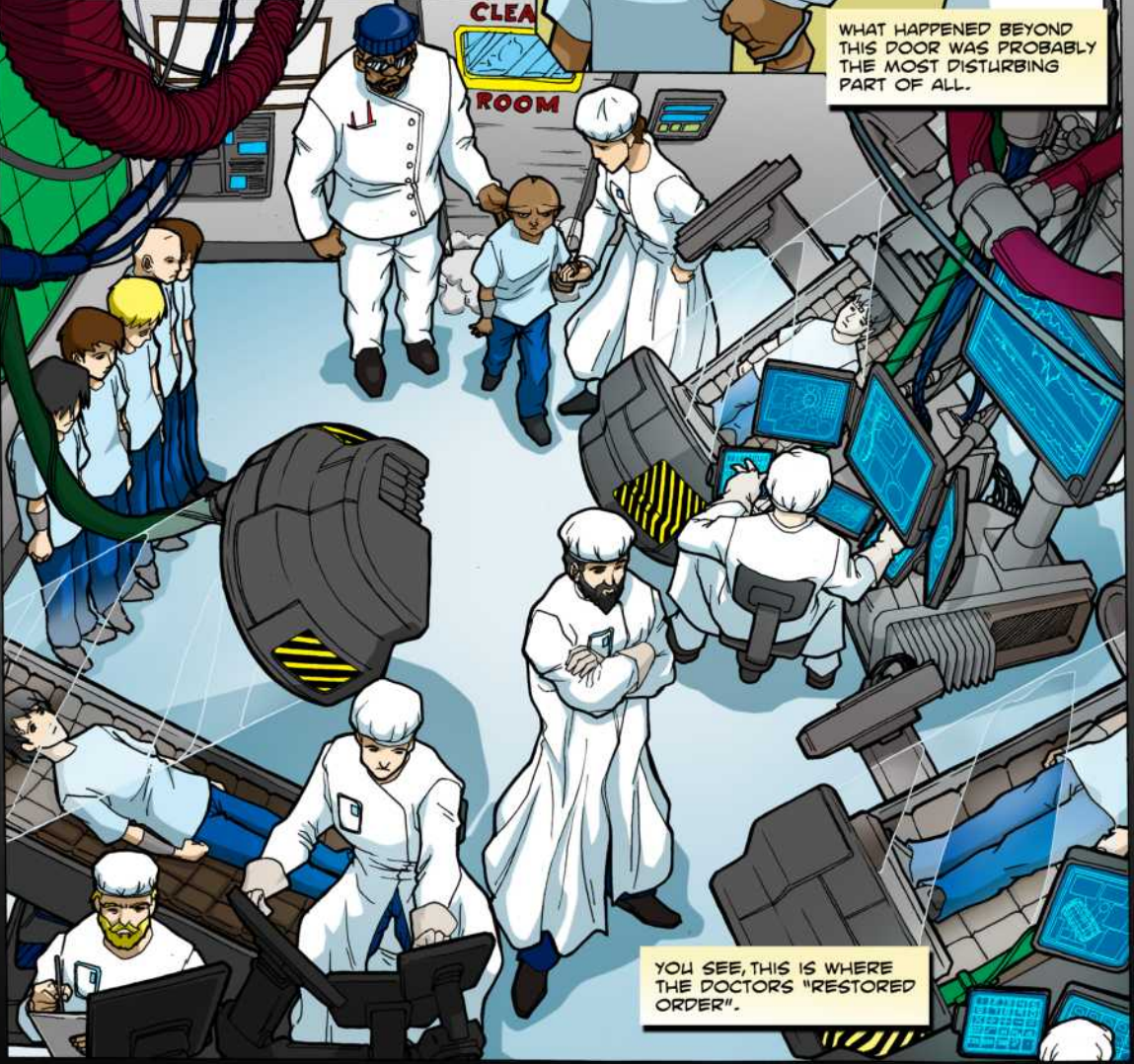


...TO THE SCANNING ROOM.



SCANNING ONLY

WHAT HAPPENED BEYOND THIS DOOR WAS PROBABLY THE MOST DISTURBING PART OF ALL.



CLEAR ROOM

YOU SEE, THIS IS WHERE THE DOCTORS "RESTORED ORDER".

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

THEY'D CHECK FOR SUDDEN CHANGES IN BRAIN ACTIVITY...

...THEY'D TEST THEM FOR--I DON'T KNOW--I MEAN, I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING THOSE POOR BOYS WENT THROUGH ON A DAILY BASIS.

NEURON CHIP
M - SERIES
0234 - 3665
ZIRK INDUSTRIES

NANO FIBRE
INTEGRITY 800

CIRCUIT
DOPPLERS
ENGAGED
THRESHOLD
LEVEL MINIMUM

BLOOD ACTIVITY
NORMAL

FLUX
LOBE
DETECTED

NORMAL BRAIN
IMPULSE
HIGHLY
STABLE

CIRCUIT MODE DEFECT
DETECTED 00: 21:32

MAIN MEMORY COMPRESSION
UNSTABLE HEAVY SIGNATURE
ABNORMAL

TERMAL PACK
NORMAL TEMP
023

NO TISSUE
DETECTED

MARK

BUT THAT DAY...WHEN THEY SAT RUSS DOWN AND SCANNED HIS BRAIN... THEY FOUND SOMETHING...

SOMETHING THAT WOULD SET FORTH A CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT WOULD CHANGE RUSS'S LIFE FOREVER!

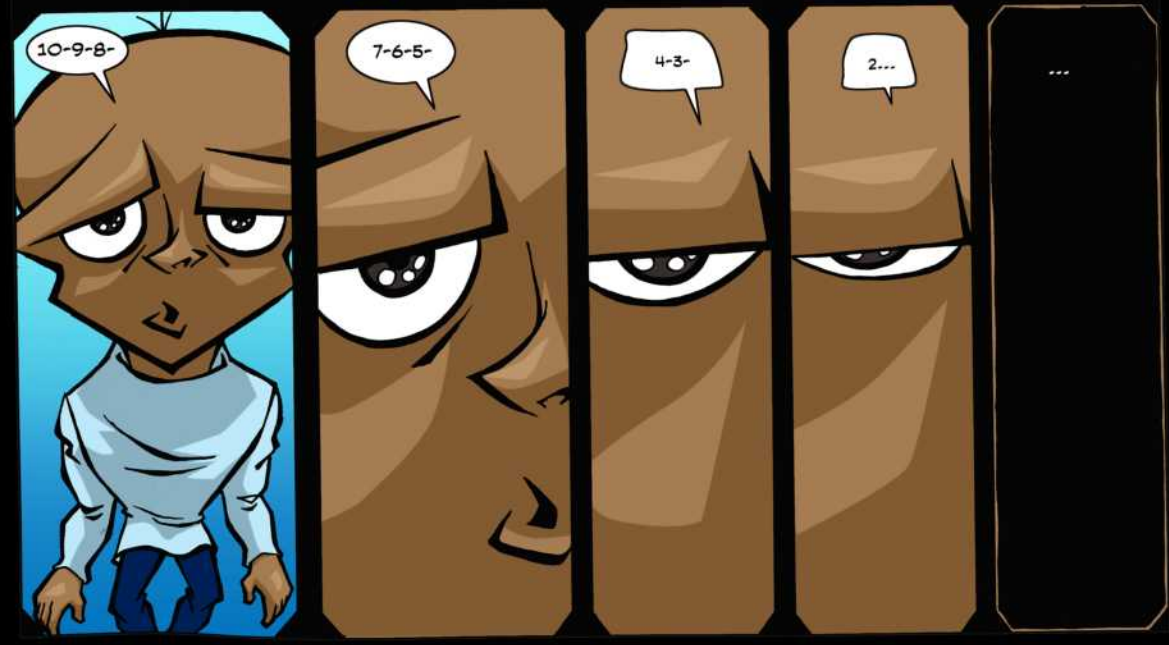
NO TISSUE DEGENERATION
NO TISSUE INFECTION
NO TISSUE ANOMALIES
NO TISSUE REJECTION

NEURON CHIP M - SERIES - 65
0234 - 3655 ZIRK INDUSTRIES
MANUFACTURING DATE 03 - 25 - 2008

ANONYMOUS CONNECTION CIRCUIT
RETECTED RESULTING IN
DETECTIVE MEMORY FLASH
BACK AND REDUNDANT FAULT
SYSTEM LOSS

AN IMPERFECTION
WITHIN THE MSC* HAS
BEEN DETECTED! 5377
MUST BE EVALUATED
IMMEDIATELY!

*MSC= MEMORY SWIPE CHIP.



"I'M IN A PLAYGROUND.
THERE'S THAT LADY AGAIN!"

"DO YOU REMEMBER WHO SHE IS?"

"REMEMBER?"

"THEY'RE DISAPPEARING!
WHERE ARE THEY GOING?"

"WHO'S THE
LITTLE GIRL?"

"EVERYTHING IS GETTING
DARK...I CAN'T REMEMBER..."

"I'M ALONE. I WANNA GO HOME."

"IT'S COLD..."



A FEW HOURS LATER...



BACHEE?
KEENO?

HEY KEENO,
LOOK WHO DECIDED
TO JOIN US.

HOW LONG
WAS I OUT?

I DON'T KNOW, MAN
MAYBE A FEW HOURS. AFTER
LUNCH YOU CAME IN, DIDN'T SAY
A WORD, AND JUST FELL OUT
COLD ON YOUR BED!

WHAT'S
HE DOING?

SHHH,
KEEP IT
DOWN!



HE'S DOING
RESEARCH!

IMPORTANT
RESEARCH!



LAST NIGHT
I SAW SOME GUYS
TAKE HIM AND HE
NEVER CAME
BACK.

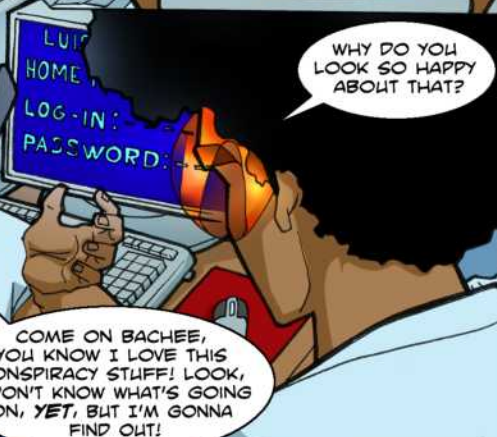
WHO?

6878.

WHO?



THE BOY IN
THE ROOM NEXT DOOR!
HIS ID NUMBER IS 6878
AND LAST NIGHT HE
DISAPPEARED!



WHY DO YOU
LOOK SO HAPPY
ABOUT THAT?

COME ON BACHEE,
YOU KNOW I LOVE THIS
CONSPIRACY STUFF! LOOK,
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING
ON, YET, BUT I'M GONNA
FIND OUT!

MEANWHILE...

FTFTFT



FTFTFT



WELCOME
PROFESSOR
MORB.

SORA,
WHAT'S GOING ON
WITH THE MSC'S?

FTFTFT



IT'S GOOD
TO SEE YOU TOO
SIR.

WHEN DID THE
CHIPS BEGIN
MALFUNCTIONING?

JUST WITHIN
THE LAST COUPLE
OF MONTHS, SIR.



WHY WASN'T
I TOLD ABOUT
THIS SOONER?





I DIDN'T WANT TO BOTHER YOU WITH SOMETHING SO TRIVIAL AS THE MSC'S, PROFESSOR, ESPECIALLY SINCE THAT'S A PROBLEM THAT MY LAB TECHS HAVE ALREADY REMEDIED.

THIS REPORT ILLUSTRATES WHERE THE PROBLEMS OCCURRED.



ONE OF THE MORE SEVERE CASES IS THE TEST SUBJECT 5377. HE IS DUE FOR TESTING TOMORROW.



WE ARE MORE THAN EIGHTY PERCENT THROUGH ALL OF THE SUBJECTS WITH THE DEFECTIVE CHIPS.

WE ARE DOING ONE FINAL SWEEP OF THE HOME TONIGHT.



HERE IS THE LIST OF THE SUBJECTS SCHEDULED. ATTACHED IS THE MANIFEST OF ALL OF THOSE WHO HAD THE MALFUNCTION.



WE RECENTLY DID A SWIFT CLEAN UP OF HIS MSC AND DECIDED IT WOULD BE BEST TO WAIT UNTIL WE TESTED ENOUGH SUBJECTS BEFORE WE BROUGHT HIM IN.



I ALSO WANTED TO DISCUSS THE "PROJECT: PROTOTYPE" TESTS... THEY HAVE YET TO REACH THE RESULTS YOU'RE EXPECTING, PERHAPS---

I WANT A FULL REPORT ON 5377. WHERE HE CAME FROM, HOW HE GOT HERE, HIS PARENTS' BIOS, EVERYTHING!

HE STILL HAS NO RECOLLECTION OF HIS LIFE PRIOR TO THE HOME, CORRECT?



ACTUALLY SIR, THAT IS ONE OF THE MALFUNCTIONS WE ARE EXPERIENCING WITH HIS MSC.

THOUGH IT IS DESIGNED TO SURPRESS HIS CHILDHOOD MEMORIES, DREAMS ABOUT HIS PAST HAVE BEGUN TO IGNITE THEM.

RUSS 5377



WHAT ABOUT HIS PARENTS?

HIS PARENTS SIR?



YES! TELL ME ABOUT HIS PARENTS?

OH!

HIS FATHER WAS ASSASSINATED AND HIS MOTHER DIED IN A FIRE.



AND HE WAS THE ONLY SURVIVOR.

YES

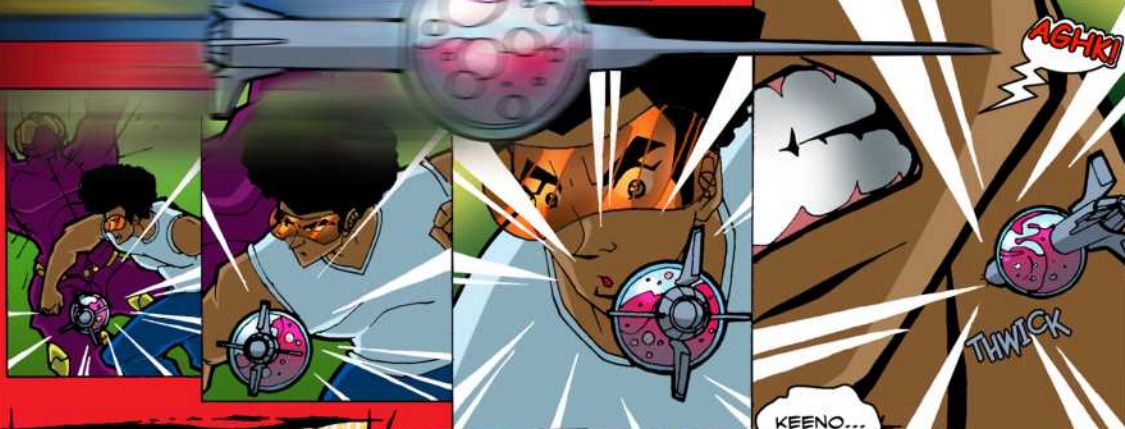
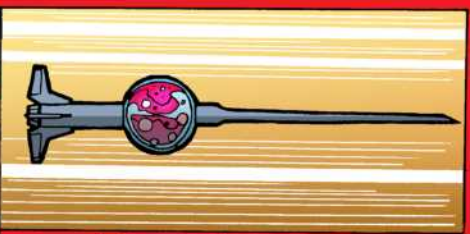
IMPOSSIBLE.

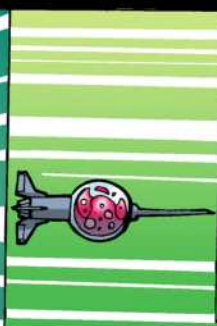
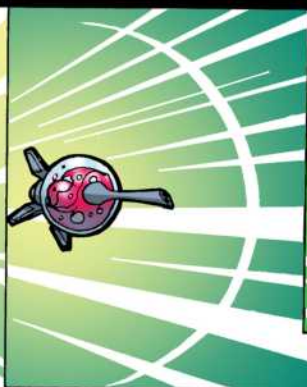
THAT NIGHT...

UH, GUYS?
KEE? ARE THESE
THE GUYS YOU WARNED
US ABOUT?

KEENO!
KEENO!
WAKE UP!

THAT'S HIM!









THEY ARE THE REASON, SIR. THOSE TWO BOYS. THERE WAS A THIRD. HE'S GONE MISSING.

MISSING? I BELIEVE THE WORD IS **KIDNAPPED**. I TOLD YOU, THEY CAME IN THROUGH THAT WINDOW AND SHOT MY FRIEND BACHEE WITH A POWERFUL TRANQUILIZER.



MY FRIEND RUSS WAS ALSO SHOT. LOOK, I KNOW WHO THEY WERE. THEY ABDUCTED 6878 LAST NIGHT!



TAKE THEM AND PUT THEM IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.

WHAT?!



NO! NO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THIS IS A TREMENDOUS MISTAKE! YOU CAN'T DO THIS! THE CULPRITS ARE OUT THERE! THEY ARE OUT---

GET HIM OUT OF HERE!



FOOLS!

MEANWHILE, SEVERAL STORIES ABOVE GROUND...

THE SUBJECT
HAS BEEN ACQUIRED,
PROFESSOR

GOOD.
SEPTER, PLACE
6237 IN THE TESTING
CHAMBER.

YES, SIR!

WHAT OF
HIS CELL
MATES?

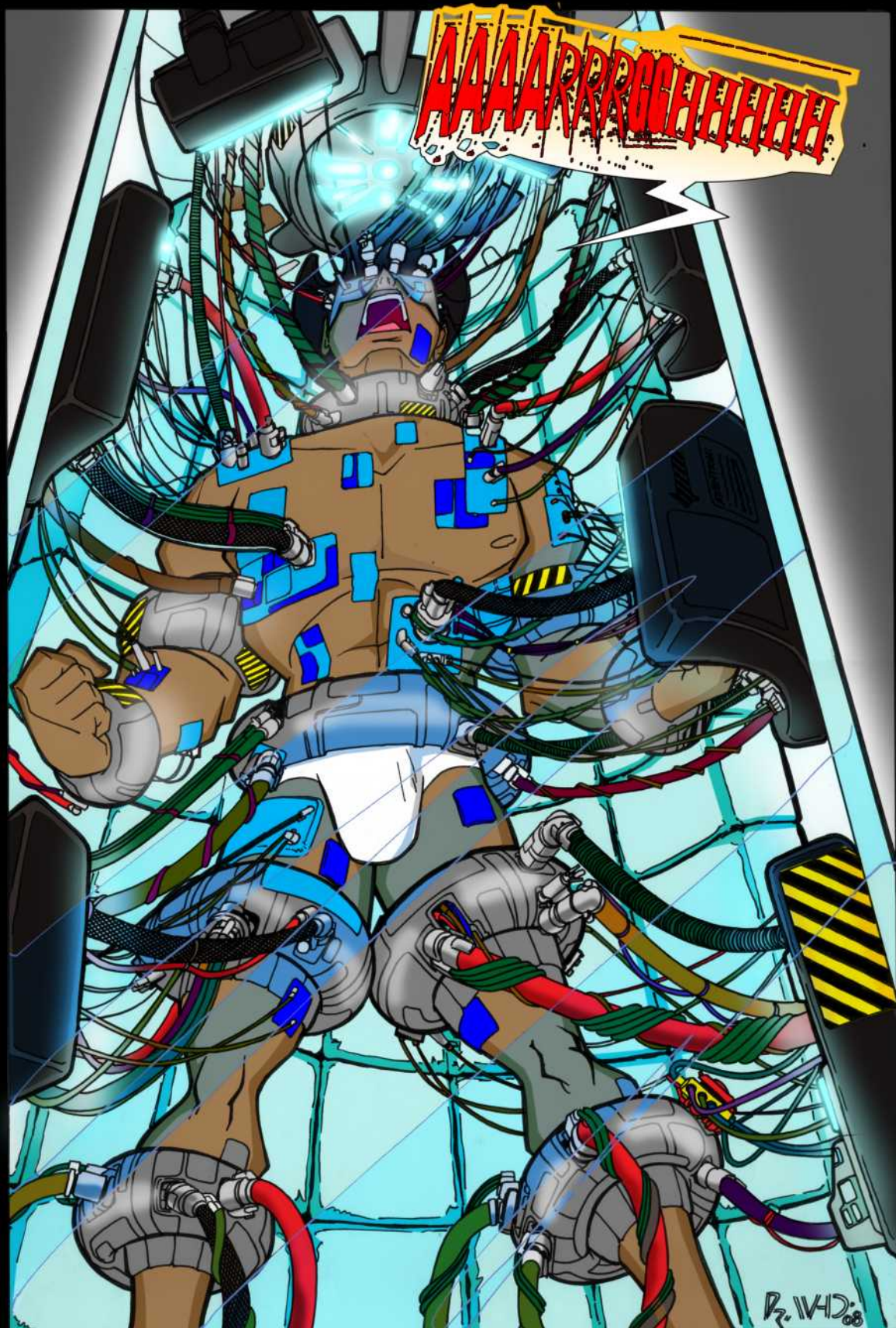
EVERYTHING
IS GOING AS
PLANNED, SIR.
THEY'VE BEEN
DETAINED.

REPAIR
THE CHIP IN 6237
AND PUT HIM
THROUGH "PROJECT:
PROTOTYPE".

AS YOU WISH.

AND SORA,
IT'S TIME I MET
RUSS 5377! TAKE
ME TO HIM!

WE MAY
BEGIN.



NEXT... CHAPTER 2

