



THE BLACK MESA RESEARCH FACILITY, IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY...

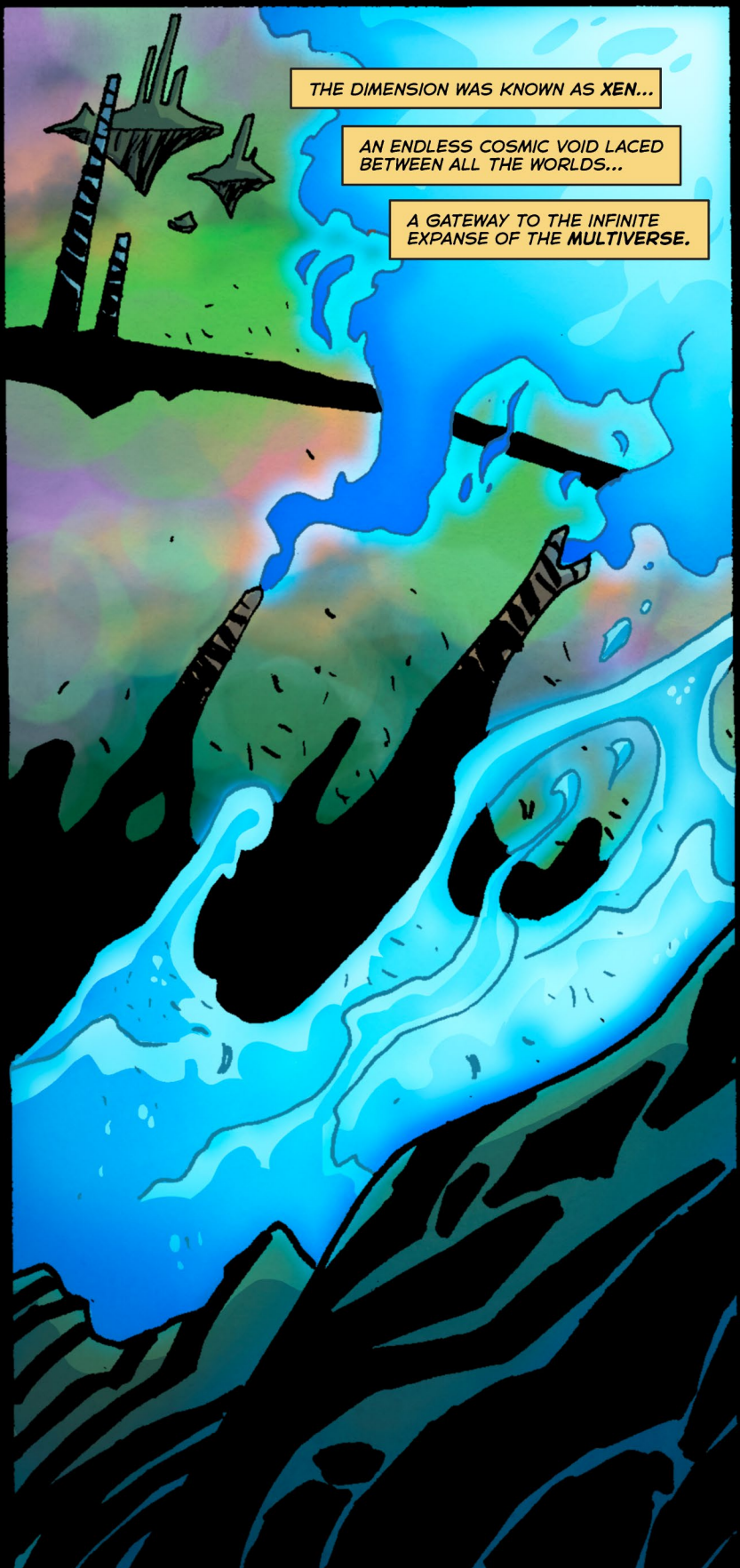
BUILT WITHIN A VAST INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX BENEATH THE NEW MEXICO DESERT, BLACK MESA WAS AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE.

CHIEF AMONG ITS MANY DISCIPLINES, HOWEVER, WAS A SECRET THAT WOULD CHANGE THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY -



TELEPORTATION.

NOT ONLY HAD THE BLACK MESA SCIENCE TEAM DEVELOPED LOCALISED TELEPORTATION, BUT AT THE TIP OF THEIR PRIZED LAMBDA REACTOR THEY HAD CONSTRUCTED AN IMMENSE TELEPORTER CAPABLE OF OPENING A GATEWAY TO ANOTHER DIMENSION.



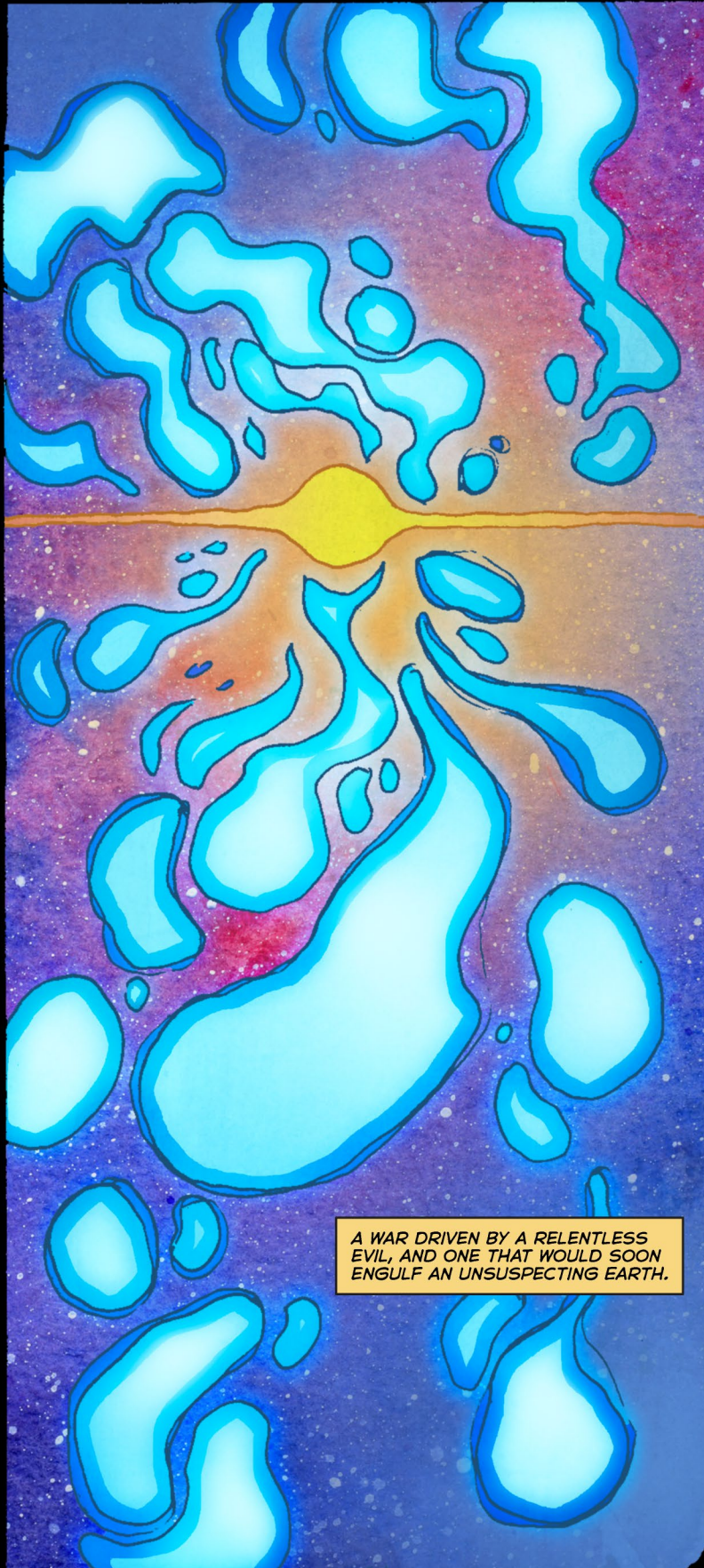
THE DIMENSION WAS KNOWN AS XEN...

AN ENDLESS COSMIC VOID LACED BETWEEN ALL THE WORLDS...

A GATEWAY TO THE INFINITE EXPANSE OF THE MULTIVERSE.



LITTLE DID THESE SCIENTISTS KNOW, XEN WAS INHABITED BY REFUGEES FROM COUNTLESS OTHER WORLDS, EACH SEEKING SAFETY FROM A DISTANT COSMIC WAR...



A WAR DRIVEN BY A RELENTLESS EVIL, AND ONE THAT WOULD SOON ENGLUF AN UNSUSPECTING EARTH.

SOON AFTER THIS DISCOVERY, AN ALIEN CRYSTAL WAS SURREPTITIOUSLY DELIVERED TO BLACK MESA BY A MYSTERIOUS MAN IN A SUIT...

FOR ELI VANCE, ONE OF BLACK MESA'S LEAD RESEARCHERS, THERE WERE RESERVATIONS.

BUT ULTIMATELY, CURIOSITY OUTWEIGHED CAUTION...

AND BLACK MESA'S ADMINISTRATOR, DOCTOR WALLACE BREEN, CHARGED A YOUNG PHYSICIST NAMED GORDON FREEMAN WITH CARRYING OUT A TEST ON THE SPECIMEN...

IN TIME, GORDON FREEMAN WOULD BE REMEMBERED BY MANY NAMES, BUT IN THE MOMENT THE CRYSTAL ENTERED THE BEAM...

GORDON FREEMAN WAS THE MAN WHO NEARLY ENDED THE WORLD.

PREPARE FOR UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCES...



THE INCIDENT IN THE TEST CHAMBER TORE OPEN A DIMENSIONAL RIFT BETWEEN XEN AND THE BLACK MESA FACILITY.



THE INITIAL ONSLAUGHT SAW THE ARRIVAL OF FEROCIOUS ALIEN WILDLIFE...



...SWIFTLY FOLLOWED BY A COORDINATED ASSAULT FROM A XENIAN ARMY.

HAUNTED BY THE SPECTRE OF AN ENEMY THEY KNEW TO BE HUNTING THEM, THE XENIANS HIT THE COMPLEX WITH FORCE.

IN RESPONSE, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT DISPATCHED A SPECIAL MILITARY FORCE TO THE FACILITY.



THEIR ORDERS WERE TO CONTAIN THE INCIDENT, REPEL THE INVASION, AND SILENCE ALL WITNESSES.

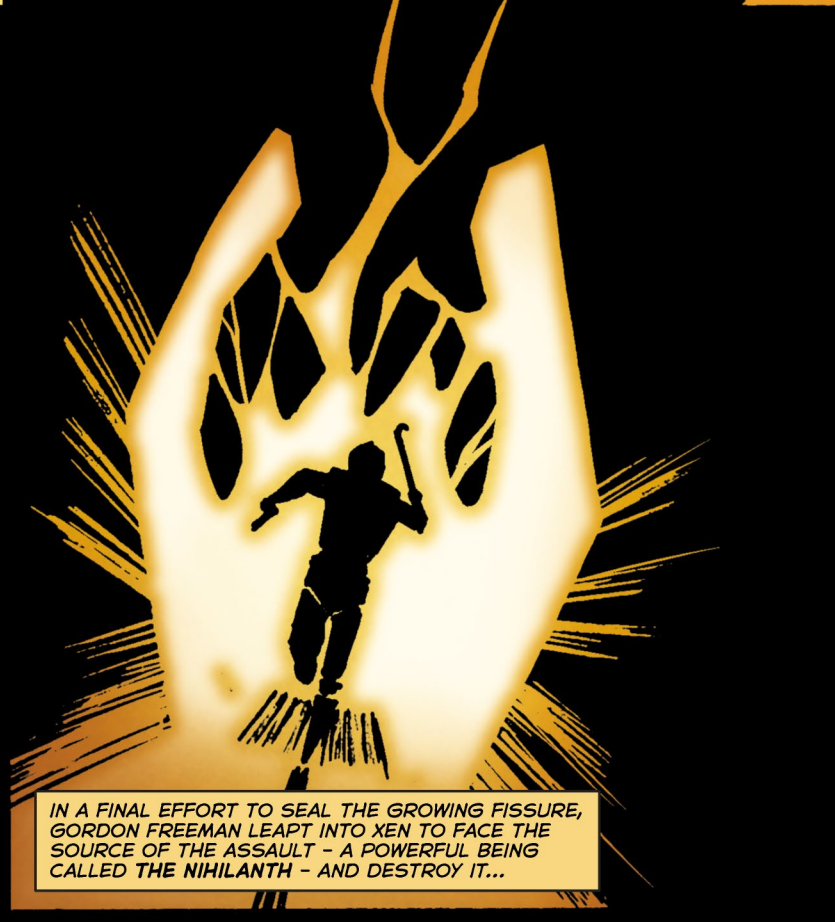


THE ALIEN ATTACK PROVED OVERWHELMING, OUTMANOEUVRING THE SOLDIERS AT EVERY TURN.

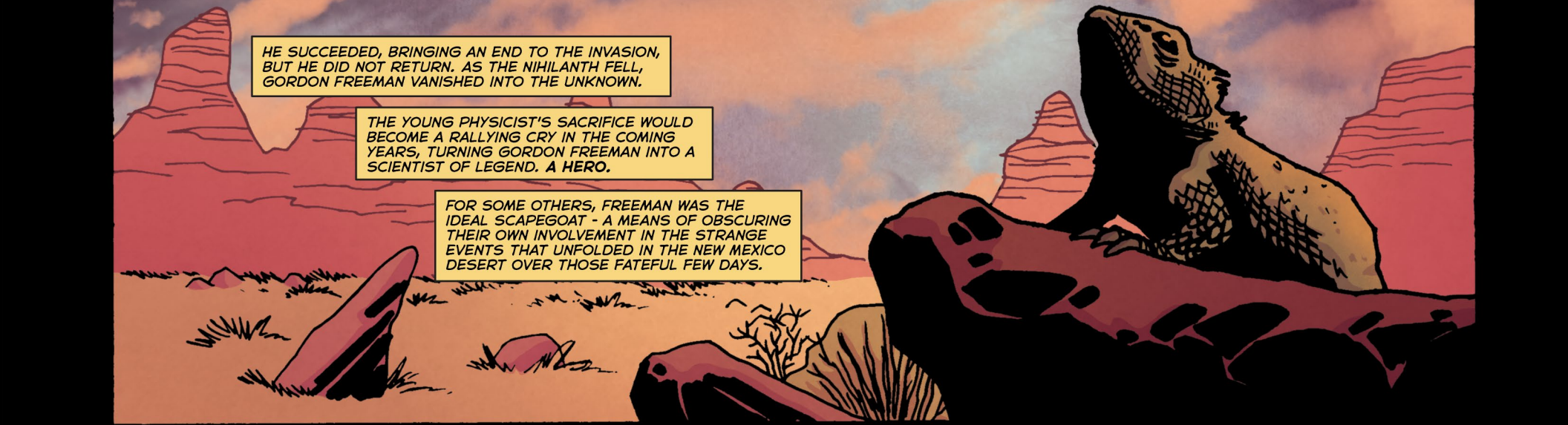
IN THE BATTLE FOR BLACK MESA, HUMANITY FOUND ITSELF IN A DESPERATE RETREAT.



BUT, AGAINST ALL ODDS, THE SURVIVING SCIENCE TEAM RALLIED AROUND THE HEROIC FIGURE OF GORDON FREEMAN, WHO MOUNTED A FEARLESS RESISTANCE AGAINST THE HOMICIDAL SOLDIERS AND THE ALIEN THREAT.



IN A FINAL EFFORT TO SEAL THE GROWING FISSURE, GORDON FREEMAN LEAPT INTO XEN TO FACE THE SOURCE OF THE ASSAULT - A POWERFUL BEING CALLED THE NIHILANTH - AND DESTROY IT...



HE SUCCEEDED, BRINGING AN END TO THE INVASION, BUT HE DID NOT RETURN. AS THE NIHILANTH FELL, GORDON FREEMAN VANISHED INTO THE UNKNOWN.

THE YOUNG PHYSICIST'S SACRIFICE WOULD BECOME A RALLYING CRY IN THE COMING YEARS, TURNING GORDON FREEMAN INTO A SCIENTIST OF LEGEND. A HERO.

FOR SOME OTHERS, FREEMAN WAS THE IDEAL SCAPEGOAT - A MEANS OF OBSCURING THEIR OWN INVOLVEMENT IN THE STRANGE EVENTS THAT UNFOLDED IN THE NEW MEXICO DESERT OVER THOSE FATEFUL FEW DAYS.



THE U.S GOVERNMENT, FOR THEIR PART, SOUGHT TO BURY THE BLACK MESA INCIDENT.

BUT IT WAS FAR TOO LATE.

THE CATAclySM IN THE TEST CHAMBER HAD WEAKENED THE VEIL BETWEEN THE WORLDS, AND SOON ENOUGH STRANGE AND DESTRUCTIVE PHENOMENA BEGAN TO APPEAR ACROSS THE GLOBE...

THE PORTAL STORMS.



AND THROUGH THEM SPILLED ALIEN FAUNA THAT RAPIDLY SPREAD, DEVASTATING TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS.



AS HUGE TRACTS OF THE PLANET BECAME UNINHABITABLE, HUMANITY WAS FORCED TO SEEK SHELTER IN ITS LARGEST CITIES, SEALING THEMSELVES OFF FROM A WORLD IN THE THROES OF A VIOLENT AND CHAOTIC TRANSFORMATION.



IN THEIR DESPERATION, EARTH'S BELEAGUERED GOVERNMENTS TURNED TO DOCTOR BREEN, WHO HAD SURVIVED THE BLACK MESA INCIDENT, TO ADVISE THEM ON THE CRISIS.

IT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF HIS RISE TO POWER.



EVENTUALLY, THE STORMS ABATED, BUT THEY HAD RAGED LONG ENOUGH TO SEND OUT RIPPLES ACROSS SPACE...

...A PULSE DETECTED BY THE INSTRUMENTS OF A COLOSSAL TOTALITARIAN ORGANIZATION. AND SO, FROM THE FAR SIDE OF THE GATEWAYS, EMERGED THE SCOURGE OF THE XENIAN REFUGEES...

THE COMBINE.

STARK AND OPPRESSIVE COSMIC TOWERS APPEARED INSTANTANEOUSLY ACROSS THE PLANET - THE CITADELS - FROM WHICH Poured THE COMBINE'S WAR MACHINES.

BLACK MESA HAD REVEALED EARTH TO THEM...



AND THEY HAD COME TO CLAIM IT.



RESISTANCE LASTED ALL OF SEVEN HOURS.



BUT BEFORE HUMANITY COULD BE ERASED FOREVER, DOCTOR BREEN INTERVENED, AND SURRENDERED THE PLANET TO THE DARK INVADERS.

A TOTALITARIAN NIGHTMARE QUICKLY DESCENDED UPON THE OCCUPIED WORLD.

THE SURVIVORS BECAME CAPTIVES OF THEIR OWN CITIES, WHERE THE OMNIPRESENT CITADELS DOMINATED THE SKYLINES.

TO MANAGE THIS BRUTAL POLICE STATE, A REGIME KNOWN AS THE COMBINE OVERWATCH WAS USHERED INTO BEING. GOVERNED BY COLLABORATORS, IT CRUELLY PITTED HUMANITY AGAINST ITSELF.



AS THE COMBINE SET ABOUT PLUNDERING EARTH'S RESOURCES, IT IMPOSED AN ASSIMILATION PROGRAM ON THE POPULACE, TRANSFORMING THOSE IT DEEMED USEFUL INTO TRANSHUMAN SLAVES...



...AND CONDEMNING THOSE WHO IT DID NOT - OR WHO DARED TO RESIST - TO AN UNSPEAKABLE FATE.



SOME SLIPPED THROUGH THE CRACKS, FLEEING THE COMBINE CITIES AND RISKING THE PERILS OF THE WASTELAND.

A DANGEROUS EXISTENCE, BUT THE LAST HAVEN OF FREEDOM ON A DYING WORLD.

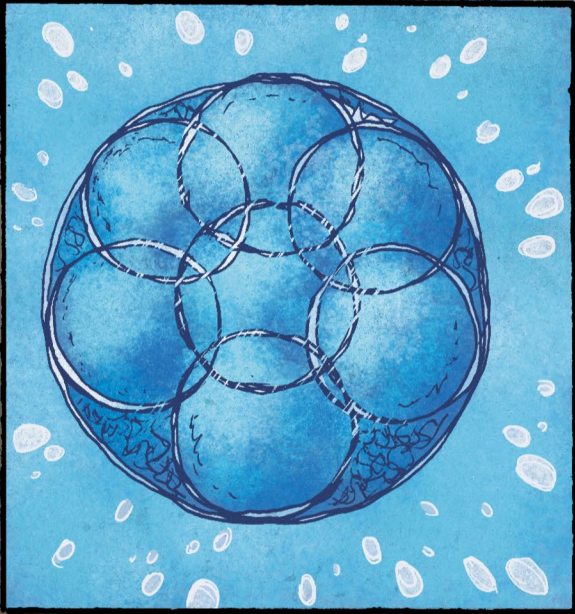
AS FOR DOCTOR BREEN, THE COMBINE REWARDED THEIR BROKER WITH POWER. HE BECAME THE HUMAN FACE OF THE OCCUPATION, ADMINISTERING OVERWATCH FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS IN THE EASTERN EUROPEAN METROPOLIS, CITY 17.

WE OWE OUR BENEFACTORS OUR GRATITUDE AND, IN NO SMALL MEASURE, OUR ADMIRATION, FOR EXERCISING GUIDANCE OVER OUR COMPARATIVELY NASCENT SPECIES.

THEY HAVE LIT THE PATH TO THE STARS, AND REWARDED OUR COMPLIANCE WITH THE GIFT OF TECHNOLOGICAL IMMORTALITY...

PROCREATION WAS PROHIBITED BY WAY OF A GLOBAL SUPPRESSION FIELD, ENSURING THE CURRENT GENERATION WOULD BE THE LAST.

THE COMBINE'S DIRECTIVE WAS CLEAR: THERE WOULD BE NO MORE CHILDREN, AND WHILST IT WOULD SUSTAIN HUMANITY INDEFINITELY, IT WOULD DO SO WITH A HAND CLASPED AROUND ITS THROAT.




AND YET, THERE WERE SCATTERED PARTICLES OF HOPE, ONE OF WHICH RESIDED IN A GROWING MYSTERY TO THE WEST, IN A NOW RAVAGED AMERICA...

...WHERE ONE OF THE COMBINE'S CITADELS, DESTINED FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON DURING THE WAR, NEVER MATERIALISED.

UPON LEAVING THE COMBINE OVERWORLD IT HAD DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE, AND A FLICKER OF FEAR PRICKLED THE COMBINE HIERARCHY...





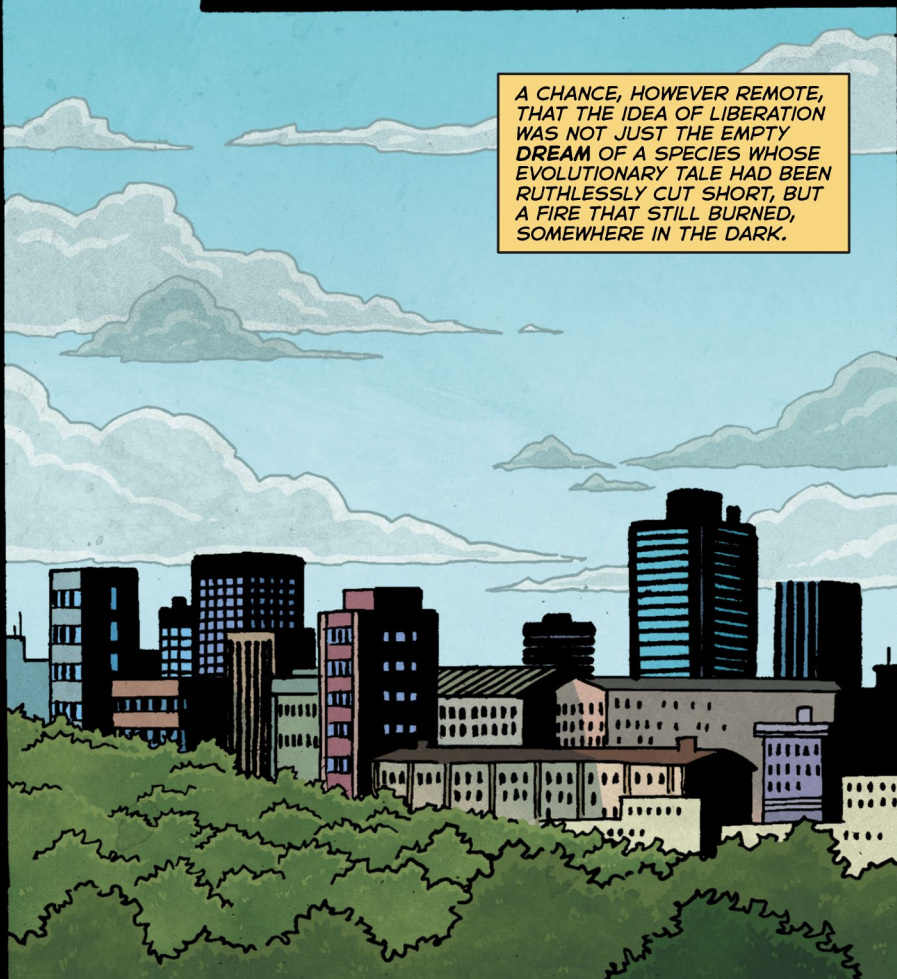
IN THEIR FURY, THE COMBINE
REDUCED BOSTON TO ASH AND
RUIN, BEFORE ABANDONING
THE REGION COMPLETELY AND
DECLARING A QUARANTINE IN
MASSACHUSETTS.

BUT THE MYSTERY OF THE
MISSING CITADEL PERSISTED.

FOR THE DOWNTRODDEN
CITIZENS OF EARTH, IT
REPRESENTED A DENT IN
THE COMBINE'S SEEMINGLY
IMPENETRABLE ARMOUR.



A WEAKNESS. A VULNERABILITY.



A CHANCE, HOWEVER REMOTE,
THAT THE IDEA OF LIBERATION
WAS NOT JUST THE EMPTY
DREAM OF A SPECIES WHOSE
EVOLUTIONARY TALE HAD BEEN
RUTHLESSLY CUT SHORT, BUT
A FIRE THAT STILL BURNED,
SOMEWHERE IN THE DARK.



AND THEN, ONE DAY, MORE THAN A DECADE
AFTER THE BLACK MESA INCIDENT...

!رئیس مکتوبه:

...THE TOWER RETURNED.