

Death Squad

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Capricorn Alpha

The station hung in space like an unwanted toy. It could have meant hope to many tired and weary travellers. The problem was that it had been a long time since a traveller had appeared on the station's main viewscreen.

It had been built seven years ago, when that particular area was thought to be perfect for colonisation. Unfortunately, a war started and the plan was forgotten. The nearby planets, which had once offered the promise of new life, were now ruined.

The fighting was over, but it meant little to the crew of the station. For seven years, they had remained in this "dead end", looking after the station in case it was ever needed. They had spent seven long years making unnecessary repairs, reading the same books over and over, and starting arguments just for the sake of it. However, all that was about to change.

Lieutenant Jane Warner was supposed to be monitoring the communication channels, but what was the point? As usual, nothing was going to happen, so the young woman spent her shift drawing silly pictures. As she ran her fingers through her short, blonde hair, she happened to look up from her sketch pad at the main viewscreen. Her face froze.

She reached across the control console, hit the intercom switch and spoke into the microphone.

“Commander Maxwell! You’re needed in the control room immediately!”

The door opened and Lieutenant John Peterson entered the control room.

“I came to take over monitoring.”

“Don’t bother. I wouldn’t leave now. Even if you tried dragging me away.”

“So what’s all the fuss about?”

Then he noticed the screen.

“I don’t believe it.”

“Believe it. It’s very real and very large.”

“But where did it come from? How come our scanners didn’t detect it? And how come it didn’t set off our alarm system?”

The two officers turned round quickly when they heard the door open. Standing in the doorway was Commander Gareth Maxwell. He was a tall man with grey hair and a thin moustache. He always seemed very dignified.

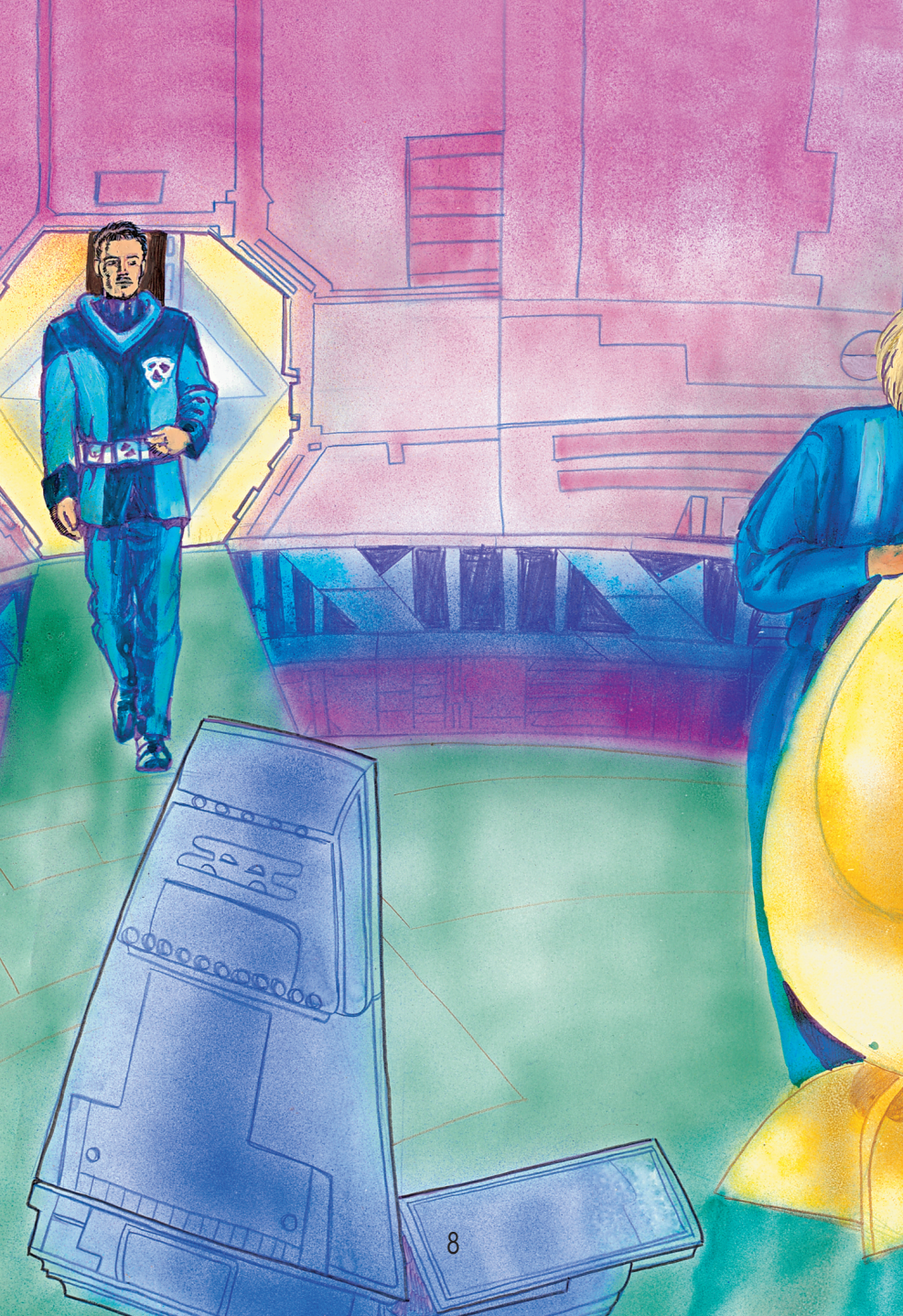
“What is the situation, Mr Peterson?”

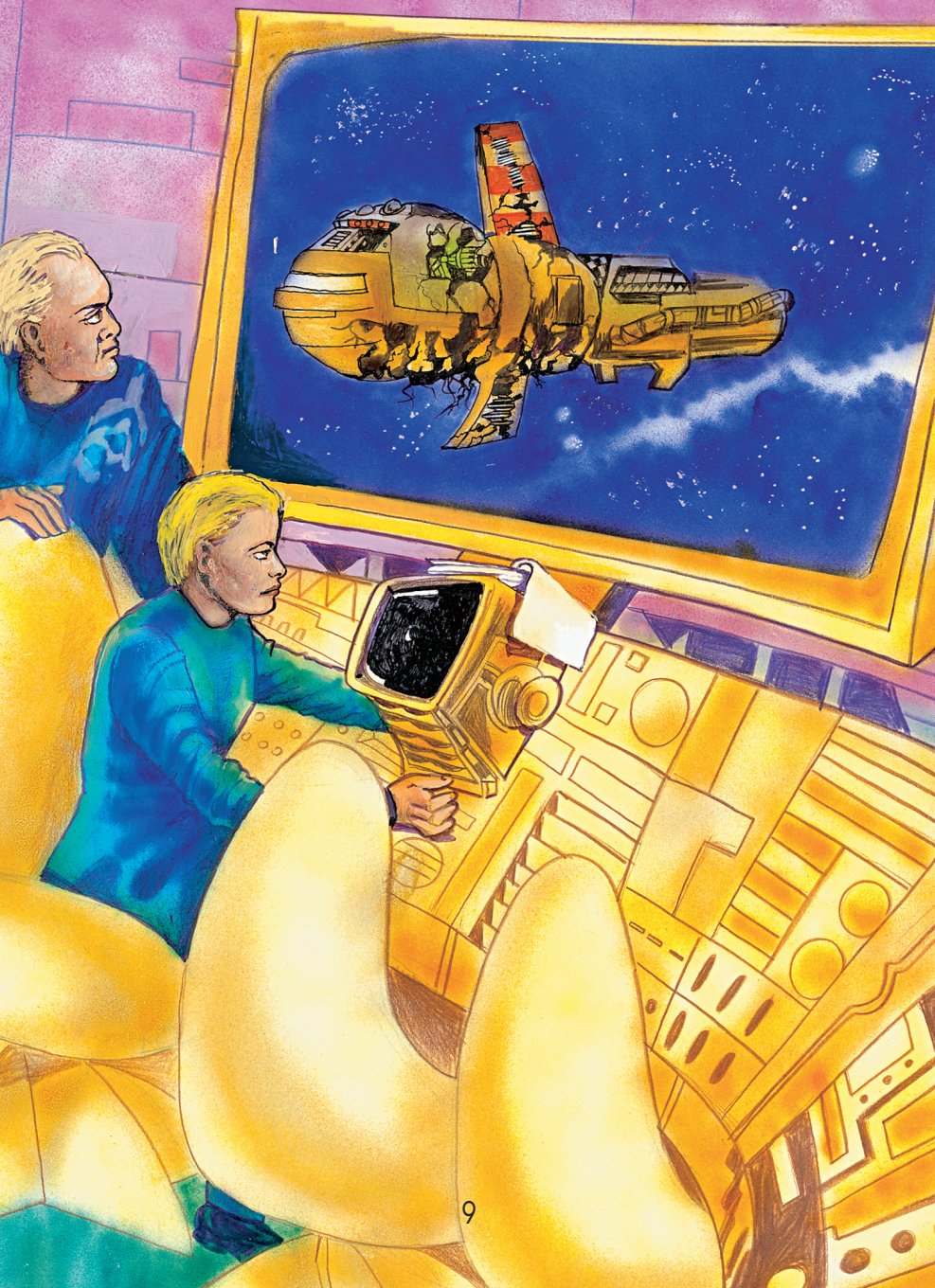
“We have company.”

The commander looked at the screen in silence. What he saw was a spaceship – about half a mile long, with what appeared to be a tiny control cabin at the front. There were burn marks all along one side of the ship, and parts of it were missing. It continued to approach the station.

“It’s obviously seen better days. Warner, open a communication channel. Let’s see what these fellows have been up to.”

Warner did that quickly. The commander then cleared his throat and spoke aloud.





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- *Who are the two mysterious men asking Capricorn Alpha's crew for help?*
- *What's their grave secret?*
- *Who or what has been lurking deep inside the visiting vessel's hold?*
- *Can death beat life?*

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