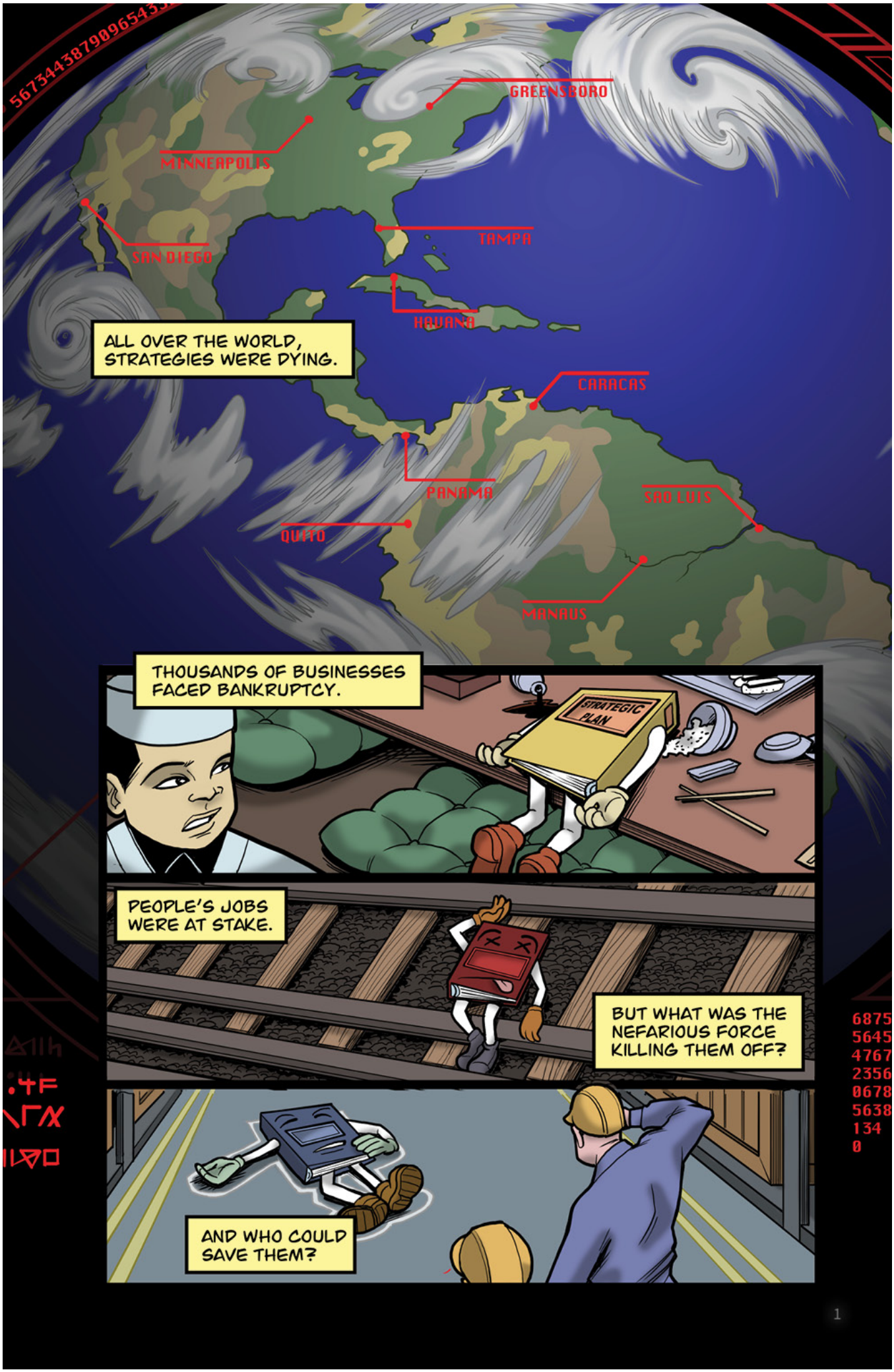
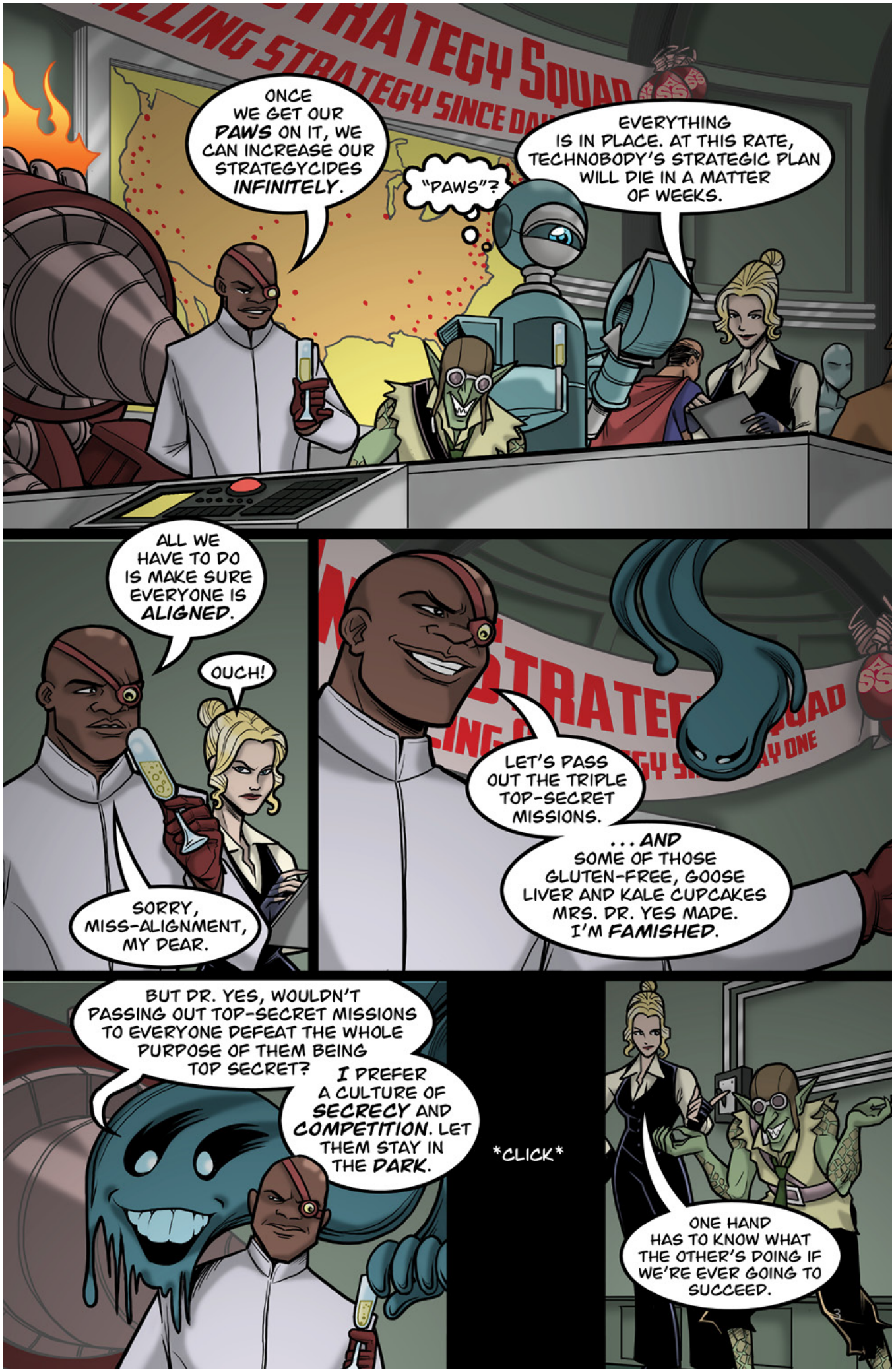
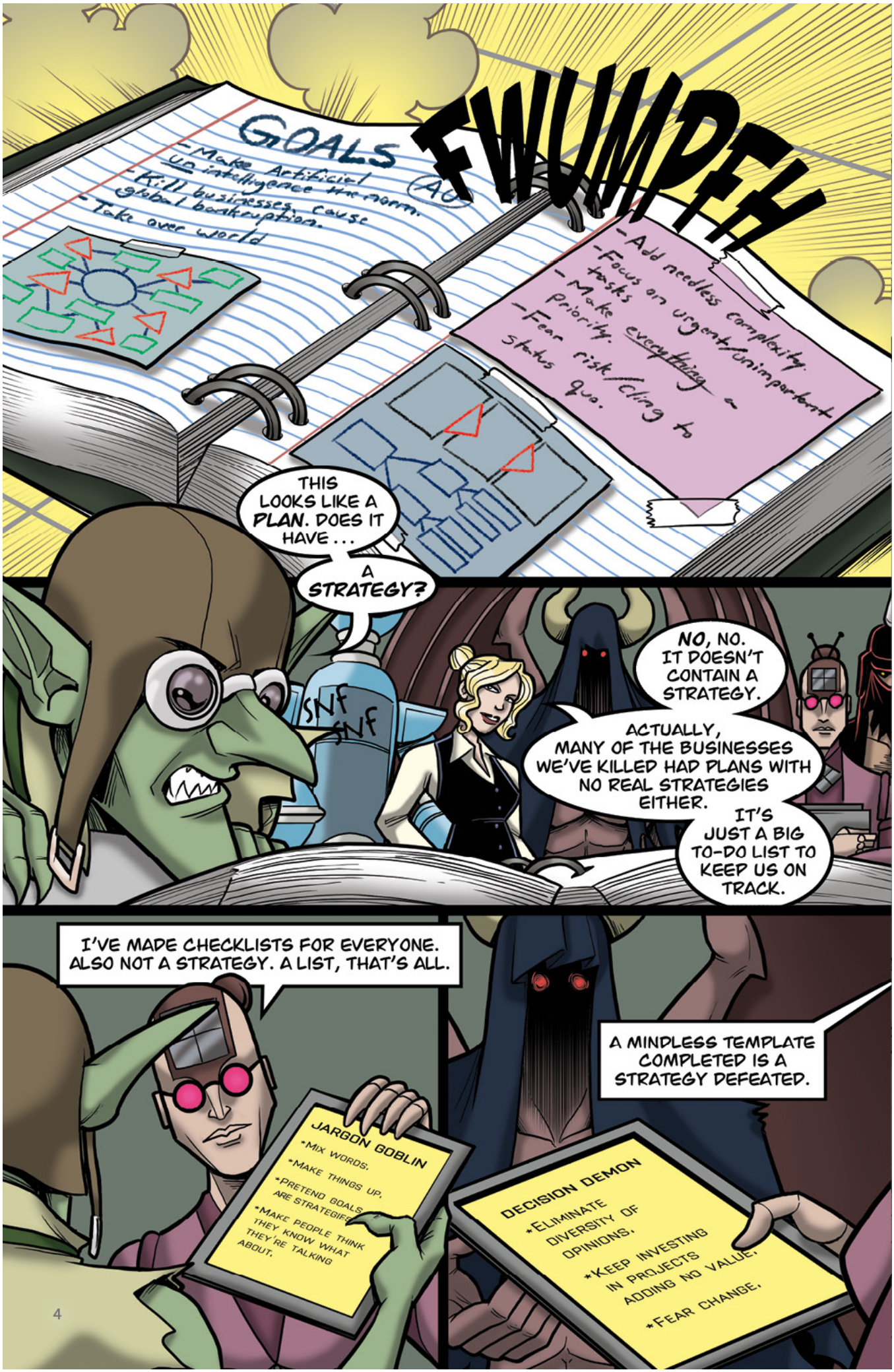
STRATEGYMAN
VS. THE ANTI-STRATEGY SQUAD
USING STRATEGIC THINKING TO DEFEAT BAD STRATEGY AND SAVE YOUR PLAN
RICH HORWATH
ART BY NATHAN LUETH

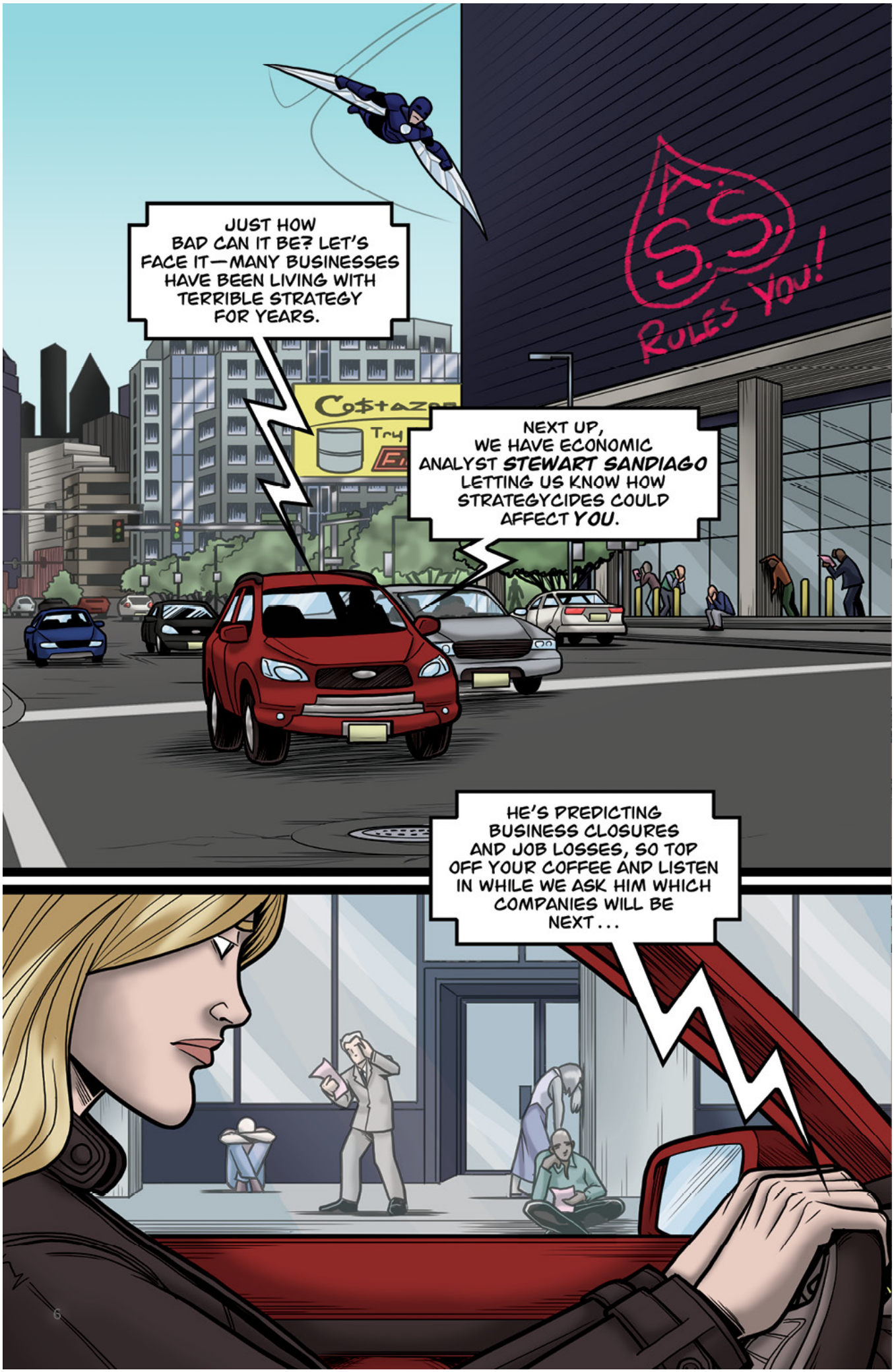

GREENSBORO
MINNEAPOLIS
SAN DIEGO
TAMPA
HAVANA
ALL OVER THE WORLD, STRATEGIES WERE DYING.
CARACAS
PANAMA
SAO LUIS
QUITO
MANAUS
THOUSANDS OF BUSINESSES FACED BANKRUPTCY.
STRATEGIC PLAN
PEOPLE'S JOBS WERE AT STAKE.
BUT WHAT WAS THE NEFARIOUS FORCE KILLING THEM OFF?
AND WHO COULD SAVE THEM?

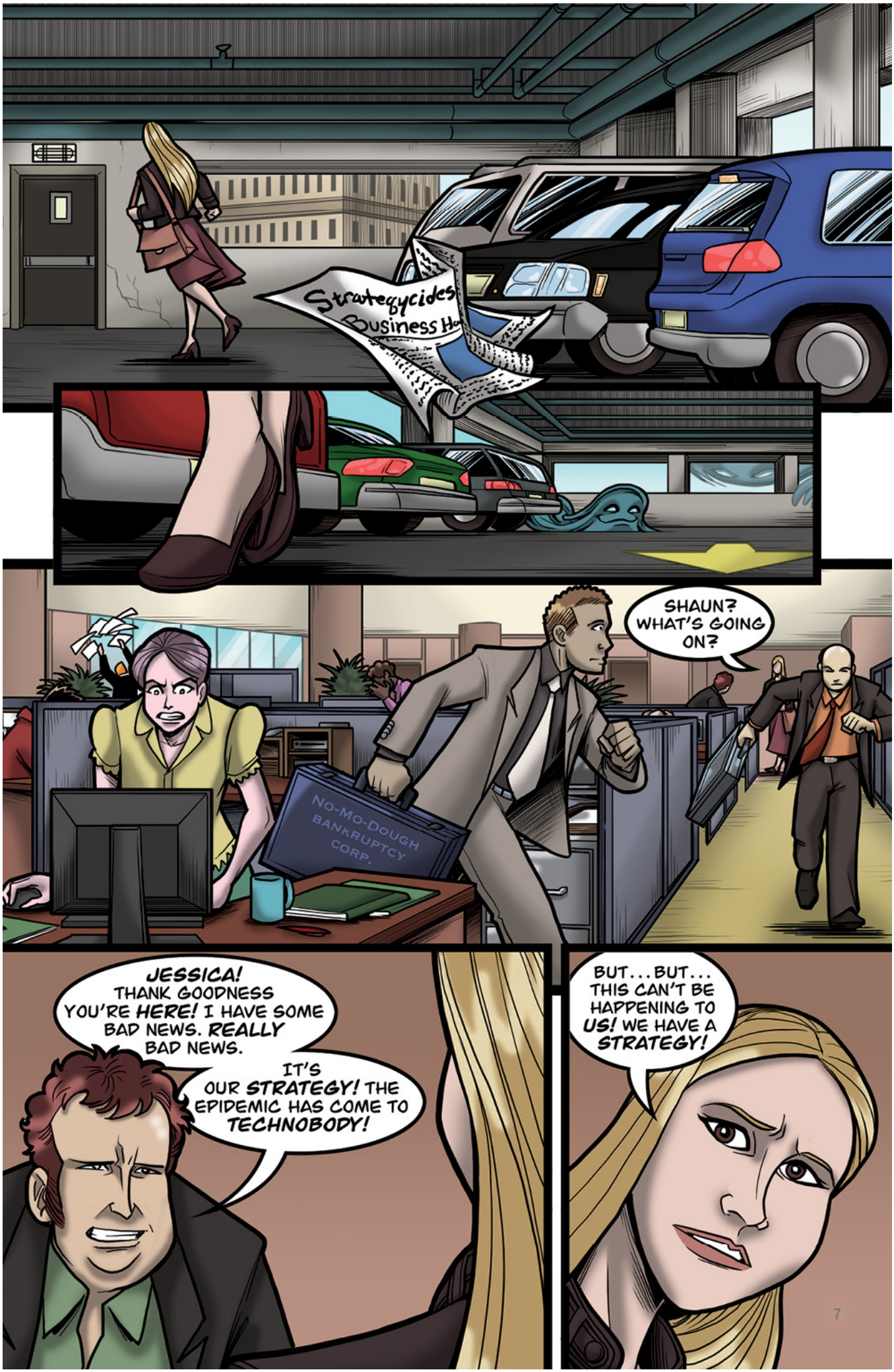
ANTI-STRATEGY SQUAD
KILLING STRATEGY SINCE DAY ONE!
WHOSE STRATEGY ARE WE SCORCHING NEXT?
TECHNOBODY!
THEY'RE WORKING ON A COVERT WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY THAT WILL CHANGE THE WORLD.
MEN WOMEN BOYS GIRLS TECH
technoBODY
Dare to Wear Tech
Developing innovative wearable technologies to improve people's lives.

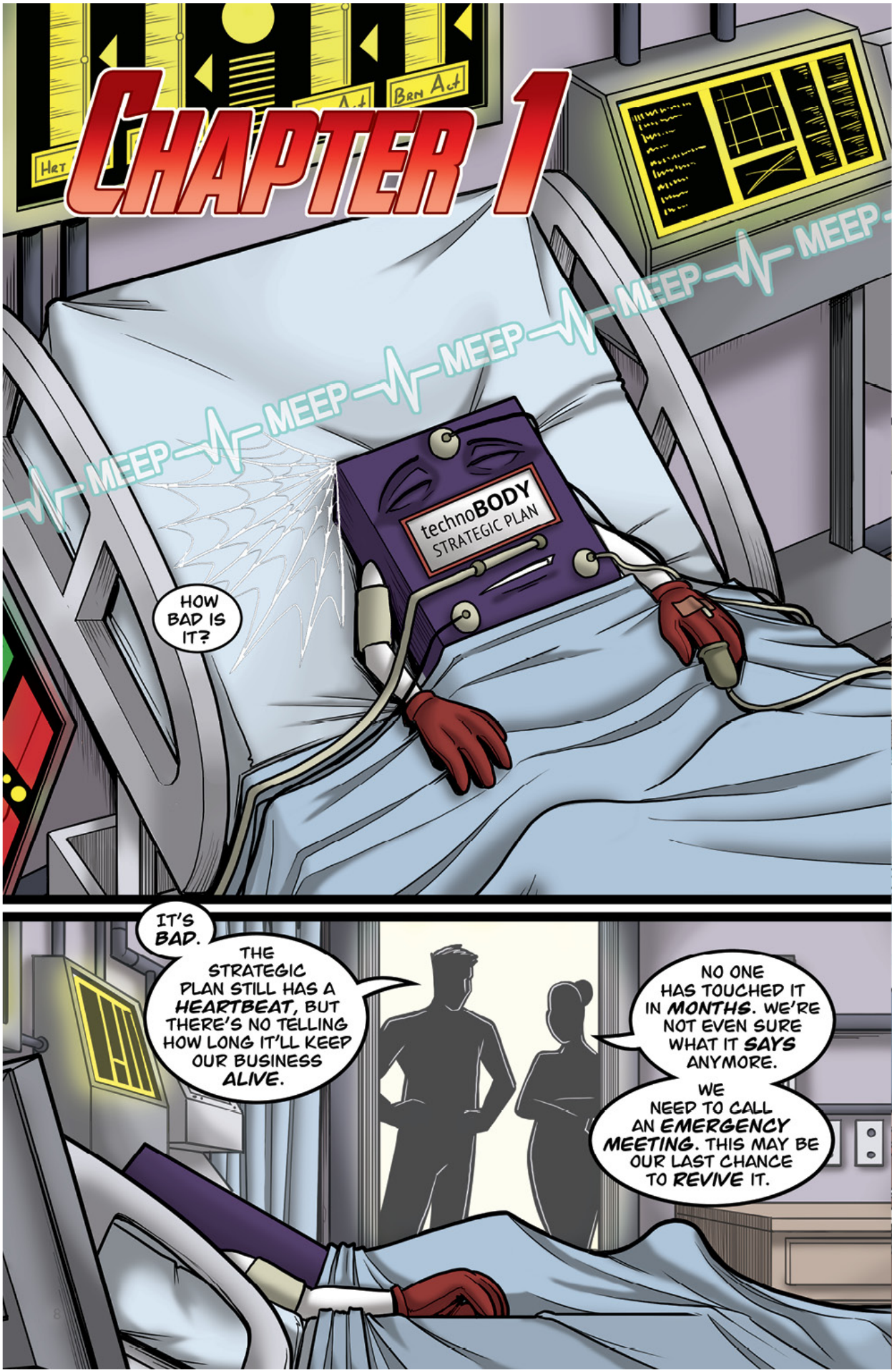

ONCE WE GET OUR PAWS ON IT, WE CAN INCREASE OUR STRATEGYCIDES INFINITELY.
"PAWS"?
EVERYTHING IS IN PLACE. AT THIS RATE, TECHNOBODY'S STRATEGIC PLAN WILL DIE IN A MATTER OF WEEKS.
ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS ALIGNED.
OUCH!
SORRY, MISS-ALIGNMENT, MY DEAR.
LET'S PASS OUT THE TRIPLE TOP-SECRET MISSIONS.
...AND SOME OF THOSE GLUTEN-FREE, GOOSE LIVER AND KALE CUPCAKES MRS. DR. YES MADE. I'M FAMISHED.
BUT DR. YES, WOULDN'T PASSING OUT TOP-SECRET MISSIONS TO EVERYONE DEFEAT THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF THEM BEING TOP SECRET?
I PREFER A CULTURE OF SECRECY AND COMPETITION. LET THEM STAY IN THE DARK.
*CLICK*
ONE HAND HAS TO KNOW WHAT THE OTHER'S DOING IF WE'RE EVER GOING TO SUCCEED.

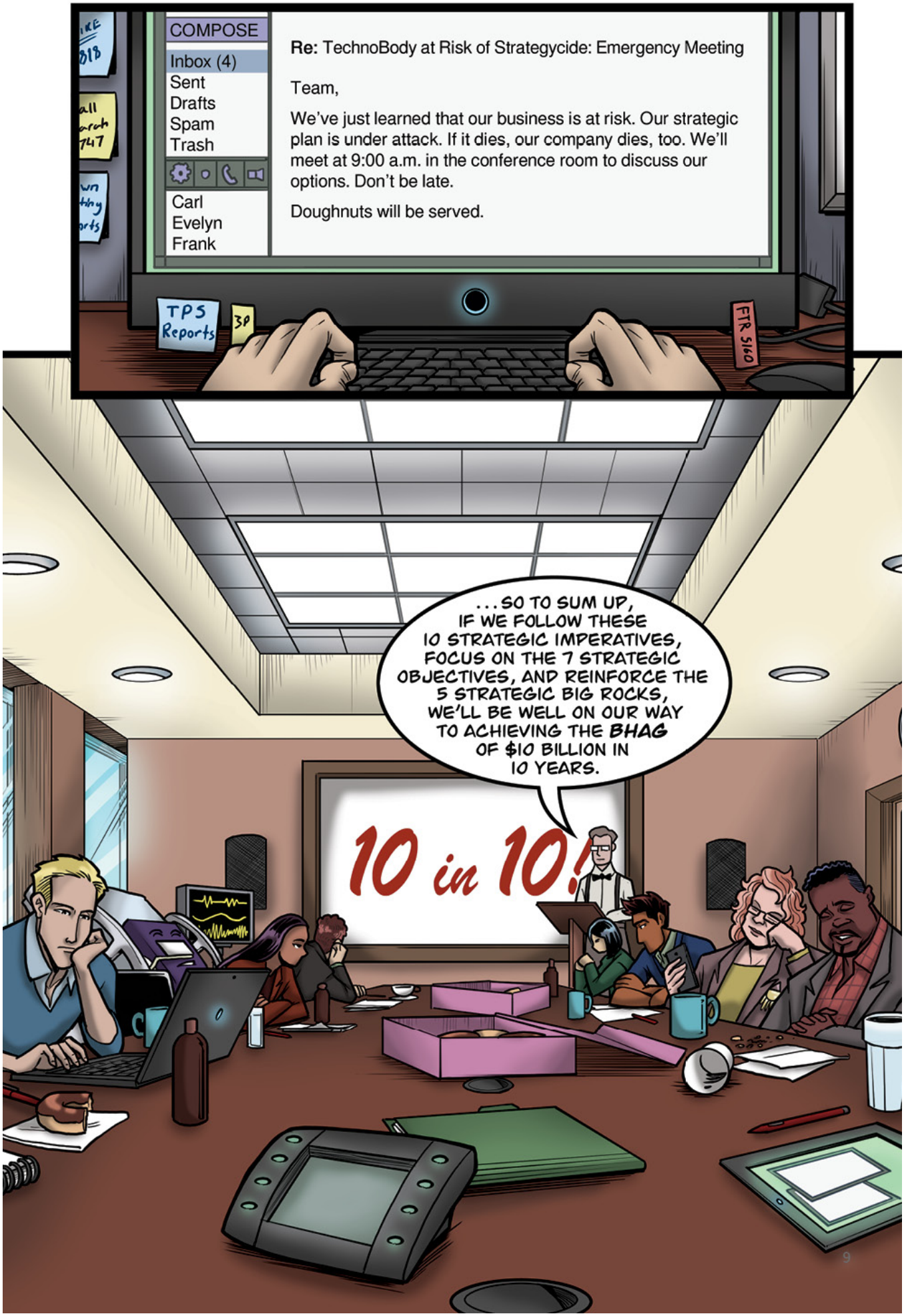

FWUMPH
GOALS
-Make Artificial General intelligence the norm.
-Kill businesses, cause global bankruptcy.
-Take over world
-Add needless complexity.
-Focus on urgent/unimportant tasks
-Make everything a priority.
-Fear risk/cling to status quo.
THIS LOOKS LIKE A PLAN. DOES IT HAVE . . .
A STRATEGY?
SNF SNF
NO, NO. IT DOESN'T CONTAIN A STRATEGY.
ACTUALLY, MANY OF THE BUSINESSES WE'VE KILLED HAD PLANS WITH NO REAL STRATEGIES EITHER.
IT'S JUST A BIG TO-DO LIST TO KEEP US ON TRACK.
I'VE MADE CHECKLISTS FOR EVERYONE. ALSO NOT A STRATEGY. A LIST, THAT'S ALL.
JARGON GOBLIN
*MIX WORDS.
*MAKE THINGS UP.
*PRETEND GOALS ARE STRATEGIES.
*MAKE PEOPLE THINK THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT.
A MINDLESS TEMPLATE COMPLETED IS A STRATEGY DEFEATED.
DECISION DEMON
*ELIMINATE DIVERSITY OF OPINIONS.
*KEEP INVESTING IN PROJECTS ADDING NO VALUE.
*FEAR CHANGE.

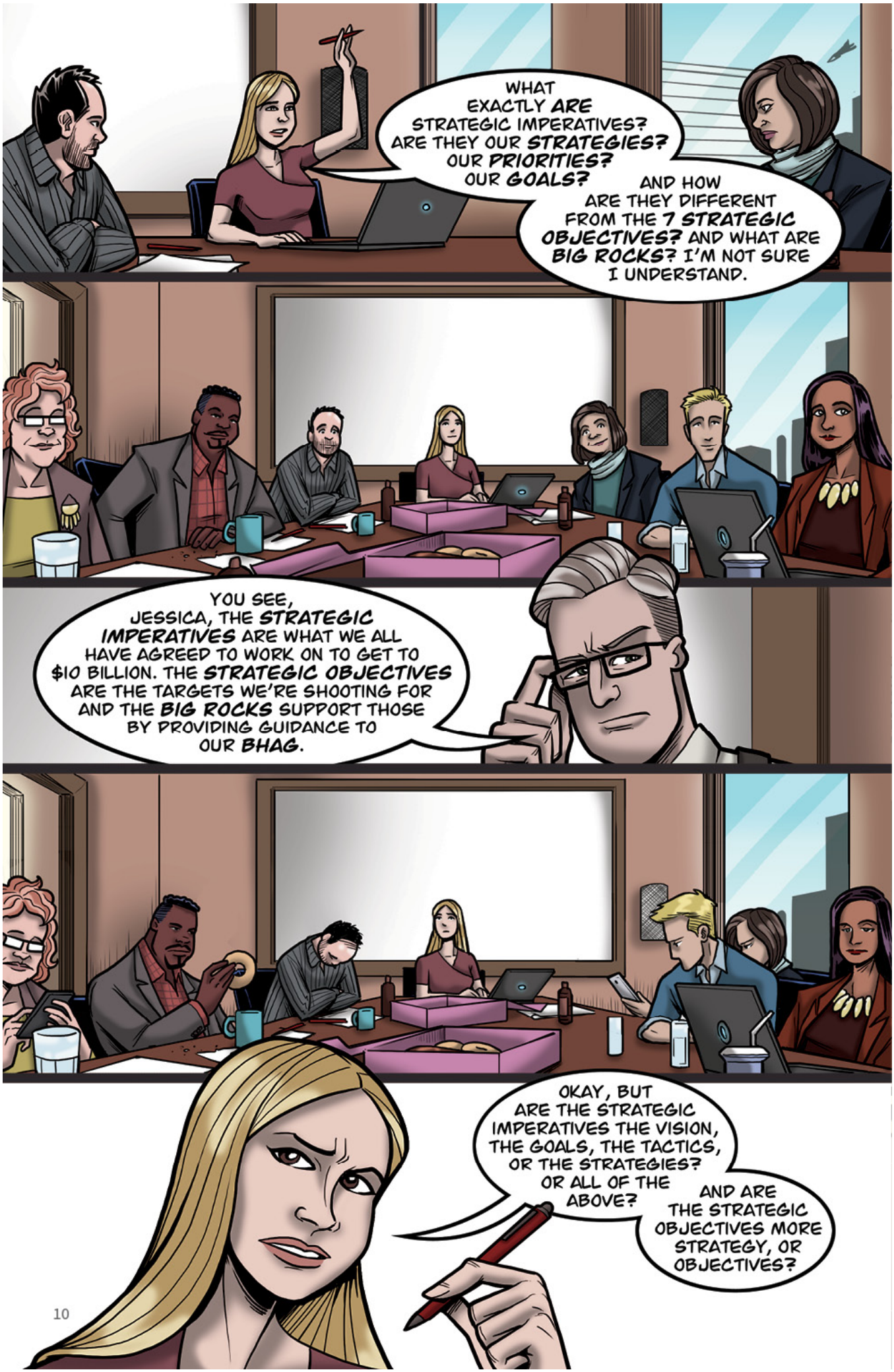
TODAY ON MORNING NEWSCASTER, WE HAVE REPORTS OF STRATEGYCIDES SPREADING TO THE WEST COAST, AMID CONCERNS OF A GLOBAL EPIDEMIC.
WE'LL TAKE YOU TO OUR BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT DAN STILLS NEXT WITH AN UPDATE.
techno BODY
Jackson, Jessica
BUT FIRST, NEWS ABOUT COSTAZON. SHARES ARE UP 10% . . .
GIII
LIVE
New York
7:07 AM ET
STRATEGYCIDE
BUSINESS CRASHING WORLDWIDE


JUST HOW BAD CAN IT BE? LET'S FACE IT—MANY BUSINESSES HAVE BEEN LIVING WITH TERRIBLE STRATEGY FOR YEARS.
NEXT UP, WE HAVE ECONOMIC ANALYST STEWART SANDIAGO LETTING US KNOW HOW STRATEGYCIDES COULD AFFECT YOU.
HE'S PREDICTING BUSINESS CLOSURES AND JOB LOSSES, SO TOP OFF YOUR COFFEE AND LISTEN IN WHILE WE ASK HIM WHICH COMPANIES WILL BE NEXT . . .
S.S. RULES YOU!

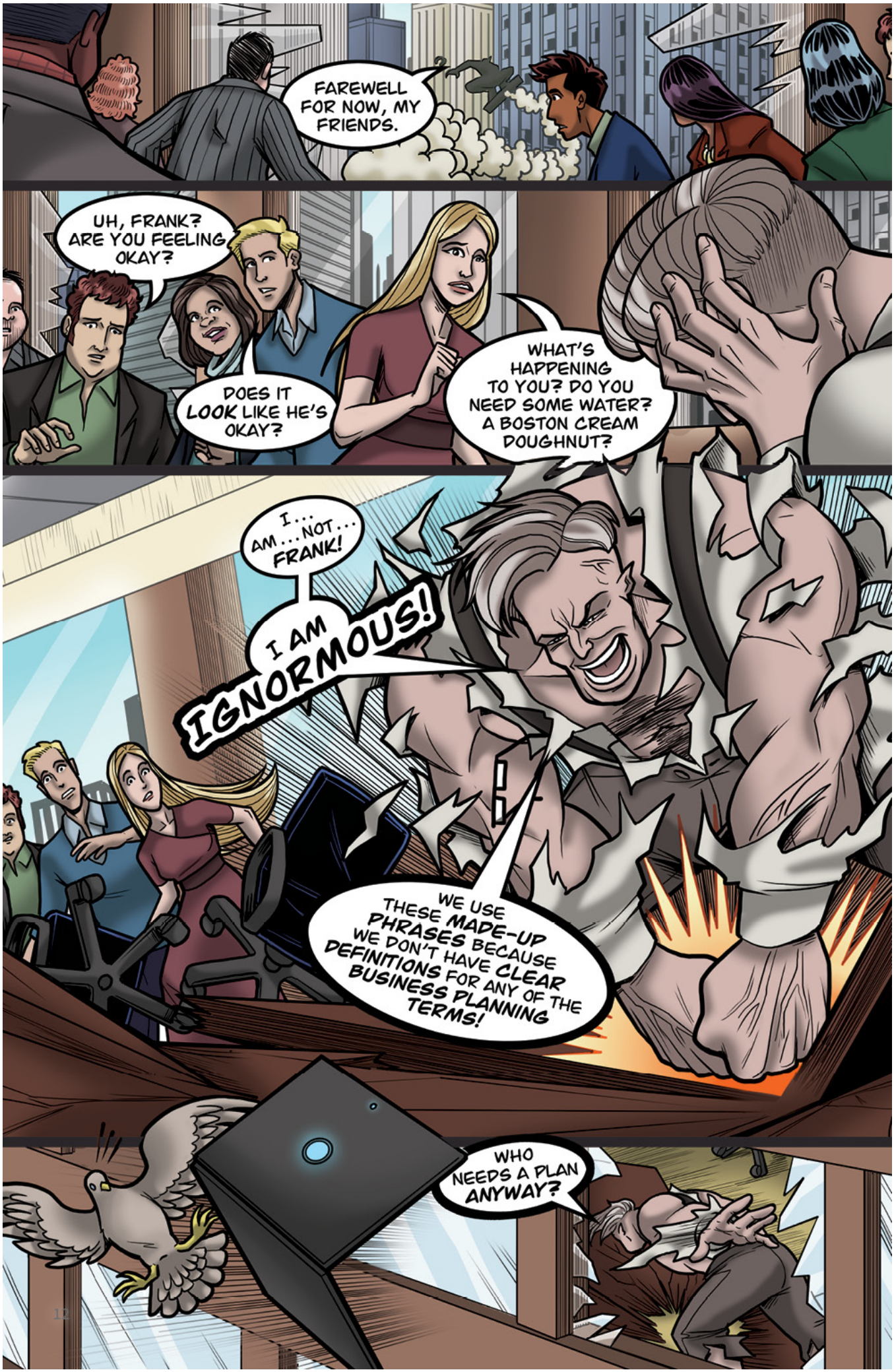

Strategycides
Business He
SHAUN? WHAT'S GOING ON?
NO-MO-DOUGH BANKRUPTCY CORP.
JESSICA! THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE HERE! I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS. REALLY BAD NEWS.
IT'S OUR STRATEGY! THE EPIDEMIC HAS COME TO TECHNOBODY!
BUT... BUT... THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING TO US! WE HAVE A STRATEGY!


CHAPTER 1
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP
technoBODY
STRATEGIC PLAN
HOW BAD IS IT?
IT'S BAD.
THE STRATEGIC PLAN STILL HAS A HEARTBEAT, BUT THERE'S NO TELLING HOW LONG IT'LL KEEP OUR BUSINESS ALIVE.
NO ONE HAS TOUCHED IT IN MONTHS. WE'RE NOT EVEN SURE WHAT IT SAYS ANYMORE.
WE NEED TO CALL AN EMERGENCY MEETING. THIS MAY BE OUR LAST CHANCE TO REVIVE IT.

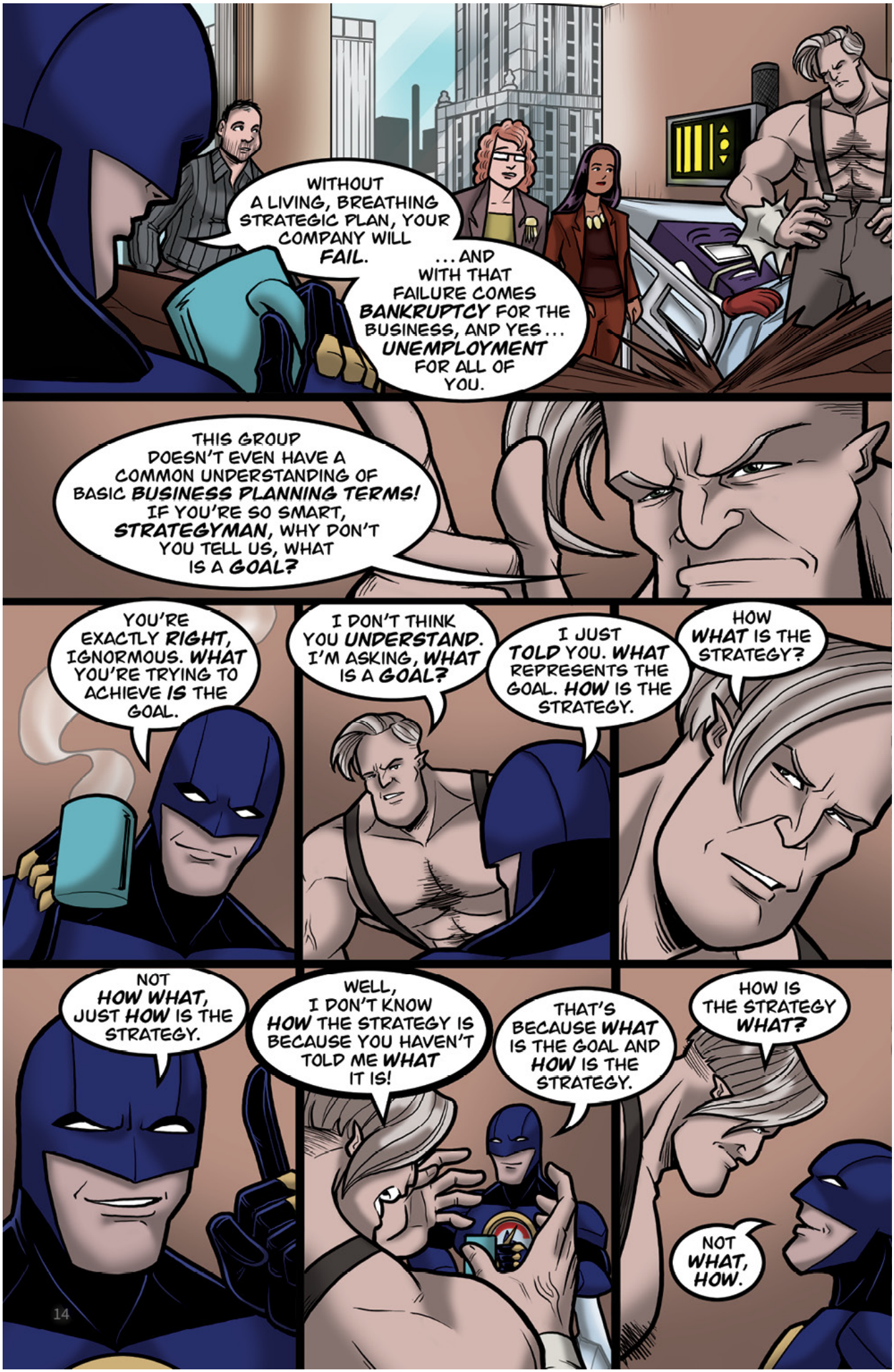

COMPOSE
Inbox (4)
Sent
Drafts
Spam
Trash
Carl
Evelyn
Frank
Re: TechnoBody at Risk of Strategycide: Emergency Meeting
Team,
We've just learned that our business is at risk. Our strategic plan is under attack. If it dies, our company dies, too. We'll meet at 9:00 a.m. in the conference room to discuss our options. Don't be late.
Doughnuts will be served.
TPS Reports
3P
FTR 5160
...SO TO SUM UP, IF WE FOLLOW THESE 10 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES, FOCUS ON THE 7 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, AND REINFORCE THE 5 STRATEGIC BIG ROCKS, WE'LL BE WELL ON OUR WAY TO ACHIEVING THE BHAG OF $10 BILLION IN 10 YEARS.
10 in 10!


WHAT EXACTLY ARE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES? ARE THEY OUR STRATEGIES? OUR PRIORITIES? OUR GOALS?
AND HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT FROM THE 7 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES? AND WHAT ARE BIG ROCKS? I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND.
YOU SEE, JESSICA, THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES ARE WHAT WE ALL HAVE AGREED TO WORK ON TO GET TO $10 BILLION. THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ARE THE TARGETS WE'RE SHOOTING FOR AND THE BIG ROCKS SUPPORT THOSE BY PROVIDING GUIDANCE TO OUR BHAG.
OKAY, BUT ARE THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES THE VISION, THE GOALS, THE TACTICS, OR THE STRATEGIES? OR ALL OF THE ABOVE?
AND ARE THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES MORE STRATEGY, OR OBJECTIVES?

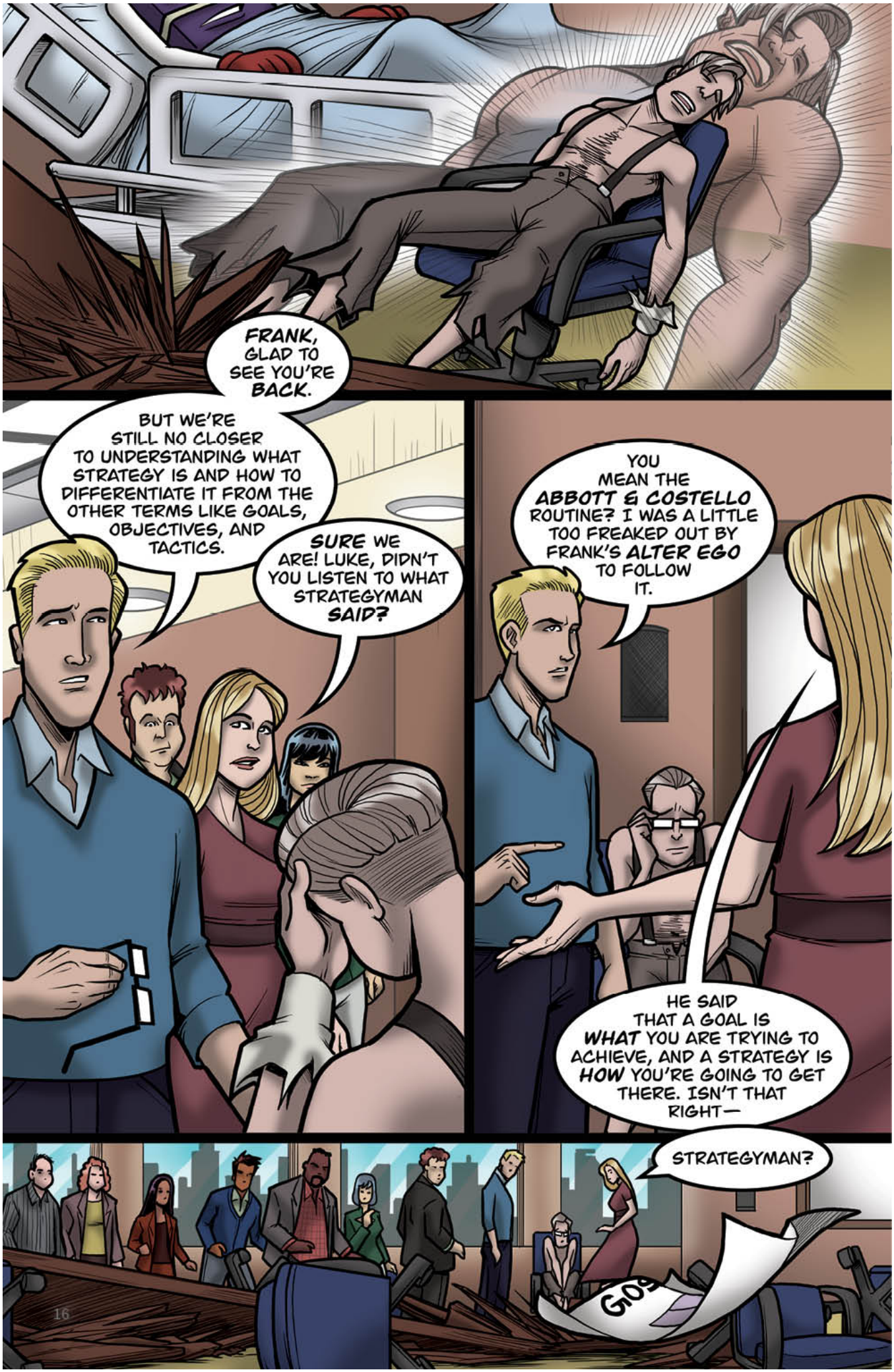
KRAKOOM
PERHAPS I CAN HELP, FRANK!
SEEMS LITTLE MISS MARKETER HERE DOESN'T QUITE GET IT. IT'S NOT THE WORDS THAT MATTER, IT'S THE GENERAL IDEA OF THE THING.
THIS GROUP HAS USED PHRASES LIKE "STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES," "STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES," AND "STRATEGIC BIG ROCKS" FOR YEARS AND EVERYTHING'S BEEN JUST FINE.
AS LONG AS "STRATEGIC" IS ATTACHED TO ANOTHER IMPORTANT-SOUNDING WORD, THEN IT MUST BE RIGHT.
A-ACTUALLY, I'M A BIT CONFUSED MYSELF.
WE SEEM TO MASH TOGETHER LOTS OF WORDS WITH "STRATEGIC" AND PRETEND THAT EVERYBODY GETS IT. BUT I'M NOT SURE WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE.
WORDS, SCHMERDS! IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S HOW IMPORTANT IT SOUNDS.
WASN'T IT PINK FLOYD WHO SANG, "WE DON'T NEED NO STRATEGY"?

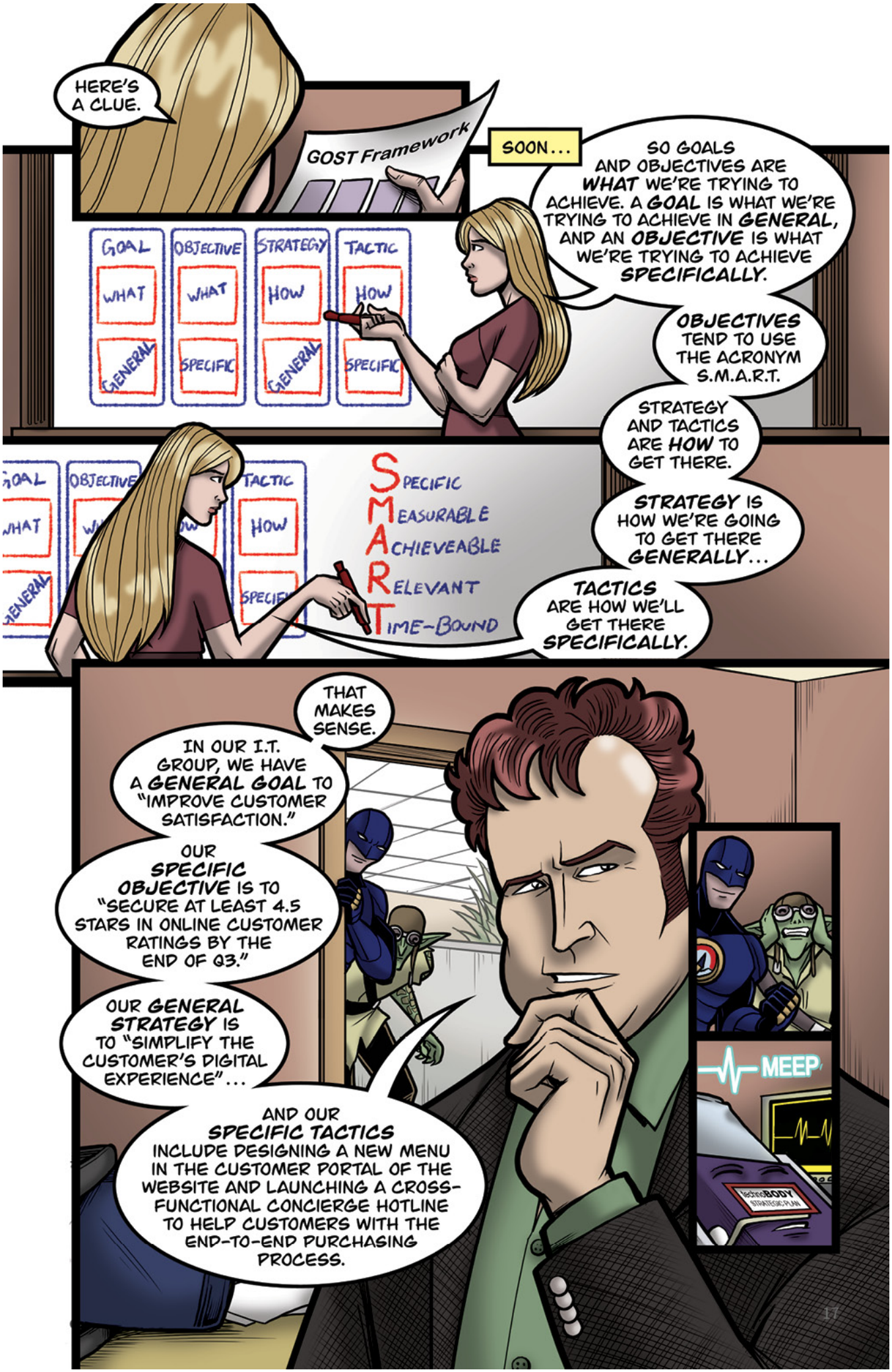

FAREWELL FOR NOW, MY FRIENDS.
UH, FRANK? ARE YOU FEELING OKAY?
DOES IT LOOK LIKE HE'S OKAY?
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU? DO YOU NEED SOME WATER? A BOSTON CREAM DOUGHNUT?
I... AM... NOT... FRANK!
I AM IGNORMOUS!
WE USE THESE MADE-UP PHRASES BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE CLEAR DEFINITIONS FOR ANY OF THE BUSINESS PLANNING TERMS!
WHO NEEDS A PLAN ANYWAY?

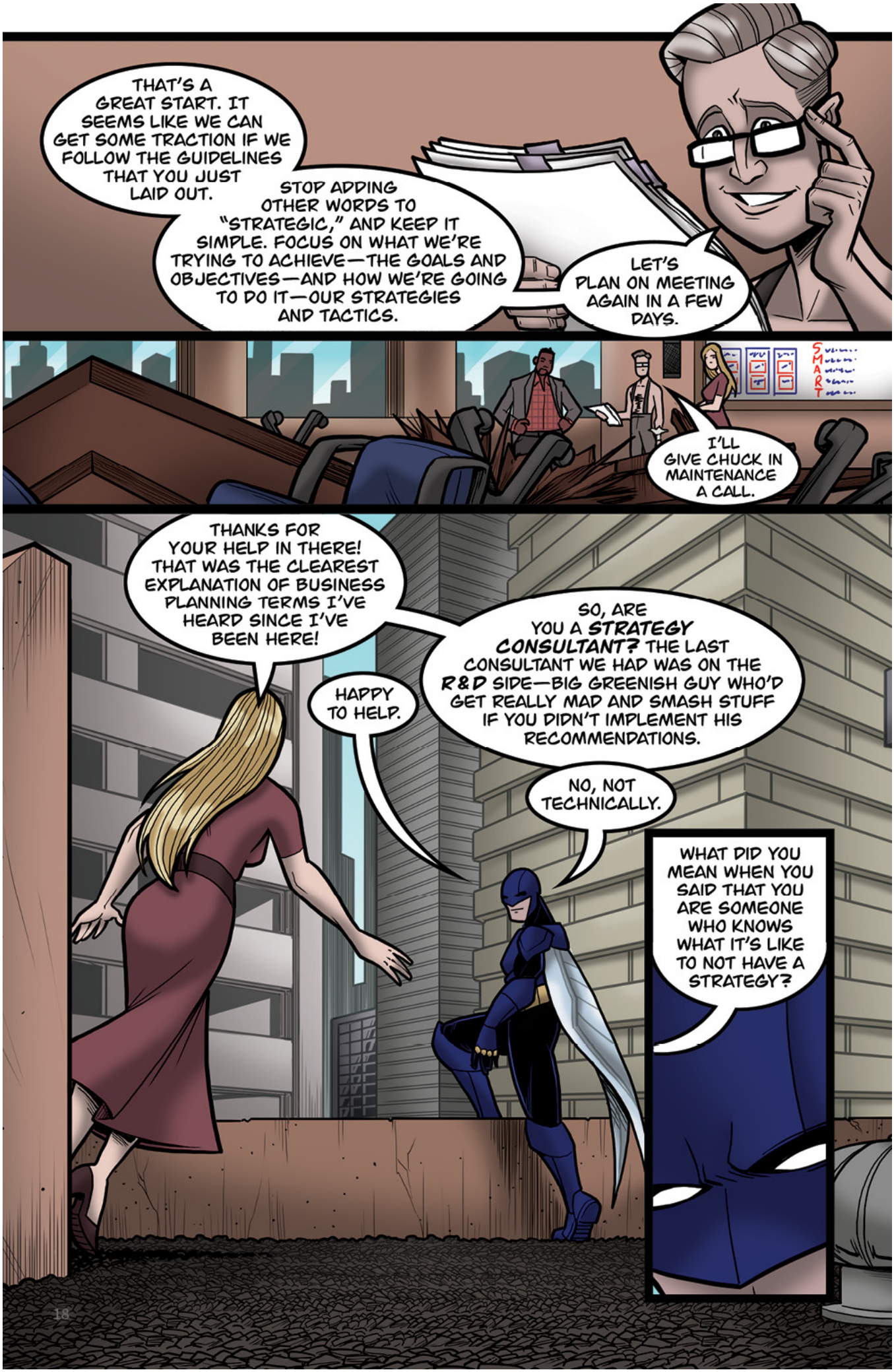
TECHNOBODY DOES. CLEARLY, YOUR PLAN IS IN TROUBLE.
IT COULD DIE ANY DAY NOW.
YOU NEED A CLEAR PLAN THAT OUTLINES YOUR GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND TACTICS.
WITHOUT THIS, YOUR TEAM WILL NEVER BE ON THE SAME PAGE.
YOU'LL WASTE TIME AND BUDGET, AND ULTIMATELY, TECHNOBODY WILL BE...
NO...
MORE.
WHO ARE YOU?
SOMEONE WHO SEES THE CONFUSION OF BUSINESS PLANNING TERMS...
SOMEONE WHO SEES THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF STRATEGY...
SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO NOT HAVE A STRATEGY...
I AM...
STRATEGYMAN
NICE ENTRANCE.

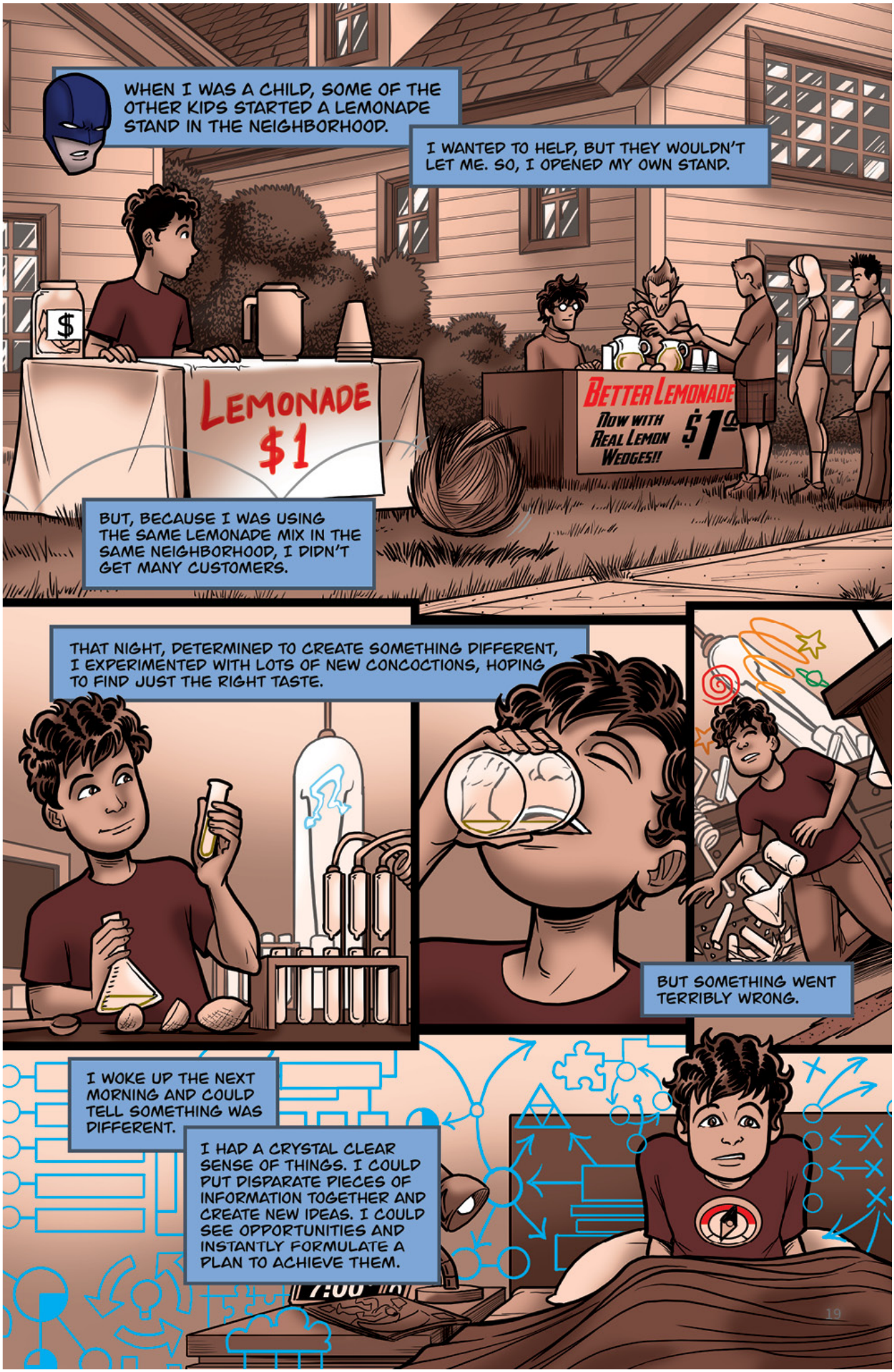

WITHOUT A LIVING, BREATHING STRATEGIC PLAN, YOUR COMPANY WILL FAIL.
... AND WITH THAT FAILURE COMES BANKRUPTCY FOR THE BUSINESS, AND YES ... UNEMPLOYMENT FOR ALL OF YOU.
THIS GROUP DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF BASIC BUSINESS PLANNING TERMS! IF YOU'RE SO SMART, STRATEGYMAN, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US, WHAT IS A GOAL?
YOU'RE EXACTLY RIGHT, IGNORMOUS. WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE IS THE GOAL.
I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND. I'M ASKING, WHAT IS A GOAL?
I JUST TOLD YOU. WHAT REPRESENTS THE GOAL. HOW IS THE STRATEGY.
HOW WHAT IS THE STRATEGY?
NOT HOW WHAT, JUST HOW IS THE STRATEGY.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW THE STRATEGY IS BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHAT IT IS!
THAT'S BECAUSE WHAT IS THE GOAL AND HOW IS THE STRATEGY.
HOW IS THE STRATEGY WHAT?
NOT WHAT, HOW.

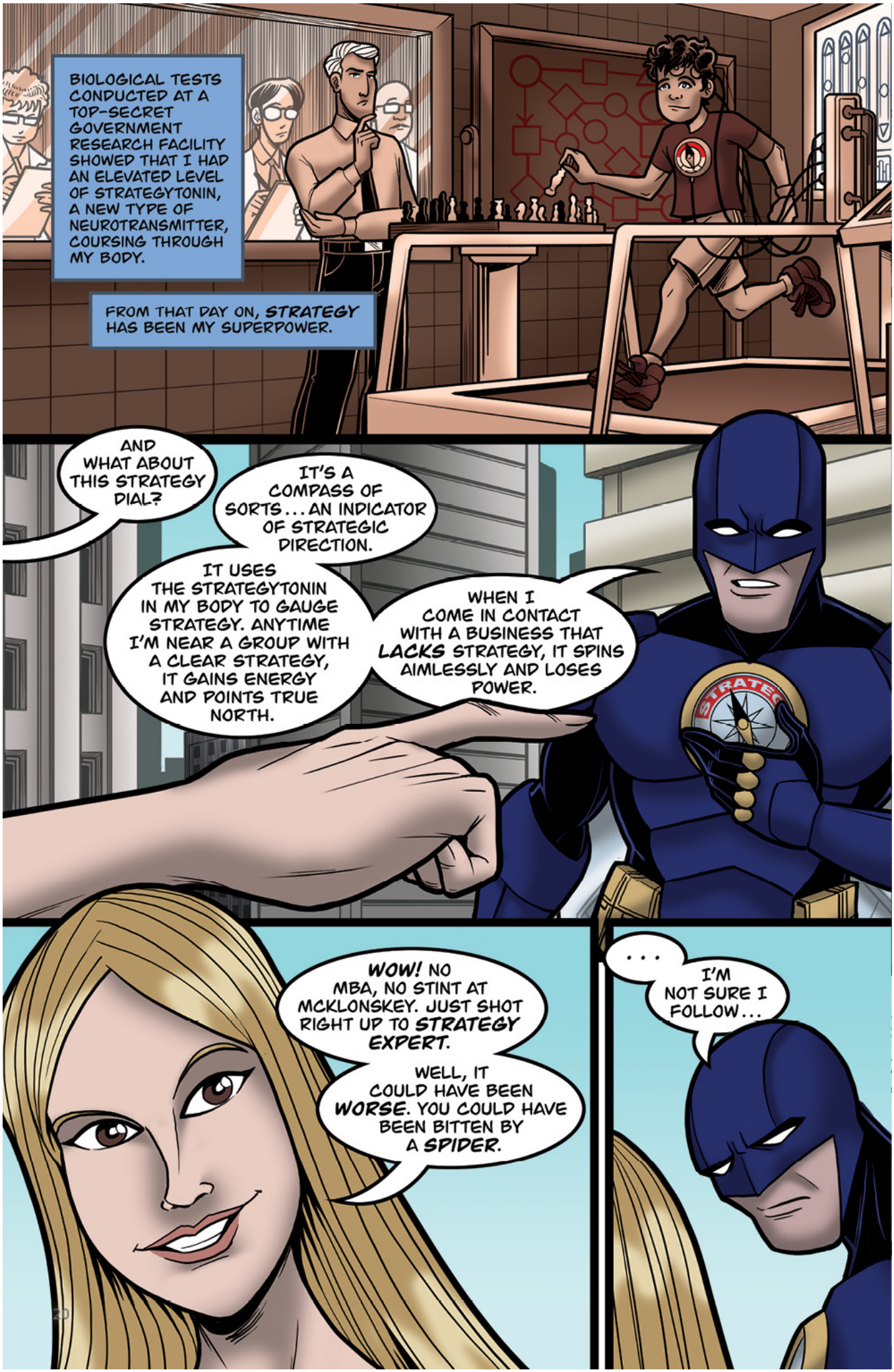
HOW DO I KNOW WHAT THE STRATEGY IS IF YOU WON'T TELL ME?!
THE GOAL IS WHAT, THE STRATEGY IS HOW.
AND I SUPPOSE WHO'S ON FIRST.
NO, WHO IS YOUR TARGET CUSTOMER.
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN IF YOU WON'T TELL ME WHO IS THE CUSTOMER, WHAT IS THE GOAL, AND HOW IS THE STRATEGY?!
EXACTLY!
STRATEGY
GAAAAAAAHHH!!!


FRANK, GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE BACK.
BUT WE'RE STILL NO CLOSER TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT STRATEGY IS AND HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE IT FROM THE OTHER TERMS LIKE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND TACTICS.
SURE WE ARE! LUKE, DIDN'T YOU LISTEN TO WHAT STRATEGYMAN SAID?
YOU MEAN THE ABBOTT & COSTELLO ROUTINE? I WAS A LITTLE TOO FREAKED OUT BY FRANK'S ALTER EGO TO FOLLOW IT.
HE SAID THAT A GOAL IS WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE, AND A STRATEGY IS HOW YOU'RE GOING TO GET THERE. ISN'T THAT RIGHT—
STRATEGYMAN?

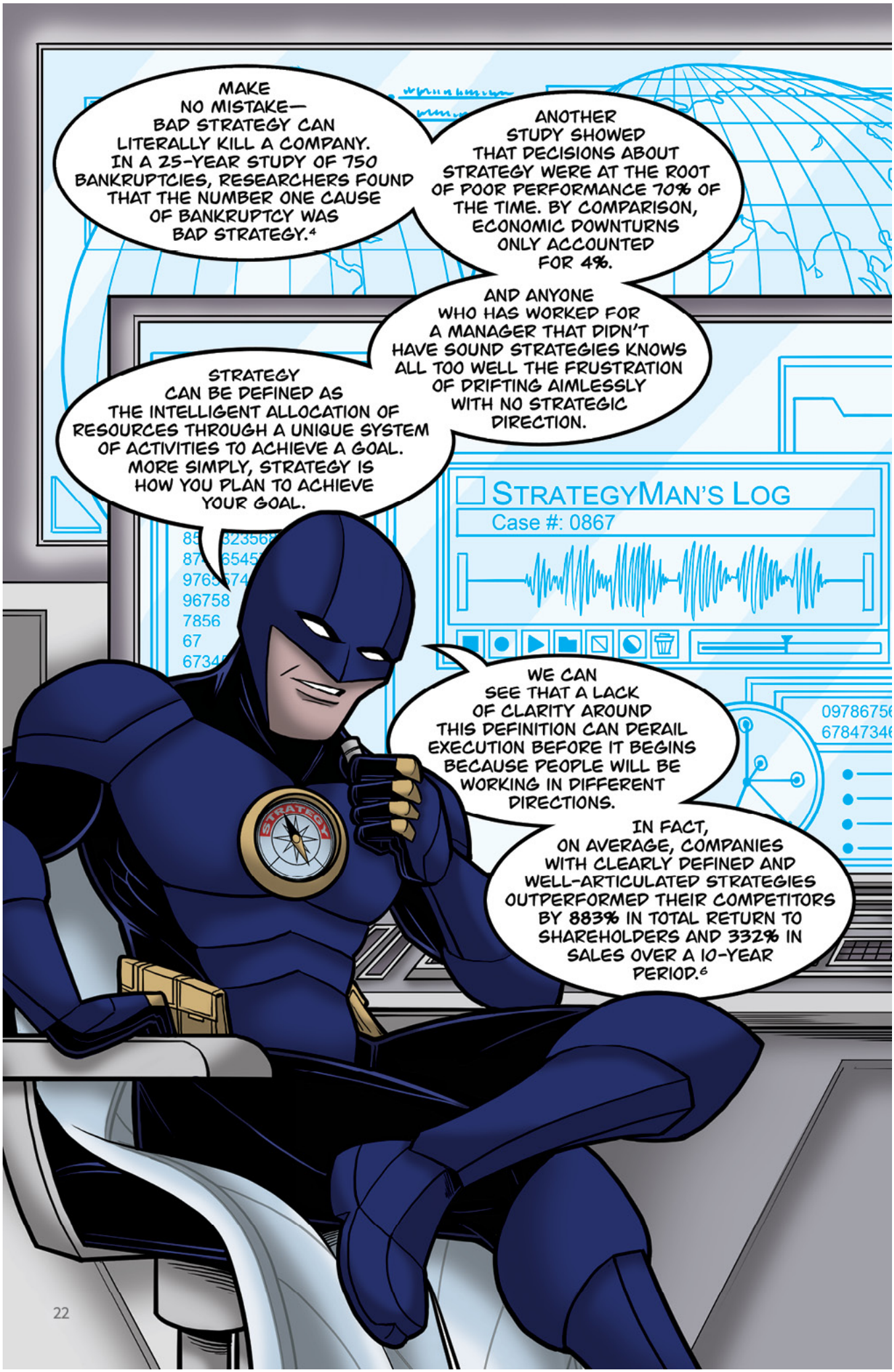

HERE'S A CLUE.
GOST Framework
SOON...
SO GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ARE WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE. A GOAL IS WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE IN GENERAL, AND AN OBJECTIVE IS WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE SPECIFICALLY.
GOAL
OBJECTIVE
STRATEGY
TACTIC
WHAT
WHAT
HOW
HOW
GENERAL
SPECIFIC
GENERAL
SPECIFIC
OBJECTIVES TEND TO USE THE ACRONYM S.M.A.R.T.
STRATEGY AND TACTICS ARE HOW TO GET THERE.
STRATEGY IS HOW WE'RE GOING TO GET THERE GENERALLY...
TACTICS ARE HOW WE'LL GET THERE SPECIFICALLY.
SPECIFIC
MEASURABLE
ACHIEVEABLE
RELEVANT
TIME-BOUND
THAT MAKES SENSE.
IN OUR I.T. GROUP, WE HAVE A GENERAL GOAL TO "IMPROVE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION."
OUR SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE IS TO "SECURE AT LEAST 4.5 STARS IN ONLINE CUSTOMER RATINGS BY THE END OF Q3."
OUR GENERAL STRATEGY IS TO "SIMPLIFY THE CUSTOMER'S DIGITAL EXPERIENCE"...
AND OUR SPECIFIC TACTICS INCLUDE DESIGNING A NEW MENU IN THE CUSTOMER PORTAL OF THE WEBSITE AND LAUNCHING A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL CONCIERGE HOTLINE TO HELP CUSTOMERS WITH THE END-TO-END PURCHASING PROCESS.
MEEP
techno BODY
STRATEGIC PLAN


THAT'S A GREAT START. IT SEEMS LIKE WE CAN GET SOME TRACTION IF WE FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES THAT YOU JUST LAID OUT.
STOP ADDING OTHER WORDS TO "STRATEGIC," AND KEEP IT SIMPLE. FOCUS ON WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE—THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES—AND HOW WE'RE GOING TO DO IT—OUR STRATEGIES AND TACTICS.
LET'S PLAN ON MEETING AGAIN IN A FEW DAYS.
SMART
I'LL GIVE CHUCK IN MAINTENANCE A CALL.
THANKS FOR YOUR HELP IN THERE! THAT WAS THE CLEAREST EXPLANATION OF BUSINESS PLANNING TERMS I'VE HEARD SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE!
HAPPY TO HELP.
SO, ARE YOU A ***STRATEGY CONSULTANT?*** THE LAST CONSULTANT WE HAD WAS ON THE ***R&D*** SIDE—BIG GREENISH GUY WHO'D GET REALLY MAD AND SMASH STUFF IF YOU DIDN'T IMPLEMENT HIS RECOMMENDATIONS.
NO, NOT TECHNICALLY.
WHAT DID YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAID THAT YOU ARE SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO NOT HAVE A STRATEGY?


WHEN I WAS A CHILD, SOME OF THE OTHER KIDS STARTED A LEMONADE STAND IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.
I WANTED TO HELP, BUT THEY WOULDN'T LET ME. SO, I OPENED MY OWN STAND.
LEMONADE $1
BETTER LEMONADE
NOW WITH REAL LEMON WEDGES!!
$1
BUT, BECAUSE I WAS USING THE SAME LEMONADE MIX IN THE SAME NEIGHBORHOOD, I DIDN'T GET MANY CUSTOMERS.
THAT NIGHT, DETERMINED TO CREATE SOMETHING DIFFERENT, I EXPERIMENTED WITH LOTS OF NEW CONCOCTIONS, HOPING TO FIND JUST THE RIGHT TASTE.
BUT SOMETHING WENT TERRIBLY WRONG.
I WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING AND COULD TELL SOMETHING WAS DIFFERENT.
I HAD A CRYSTAL CLEAR SENSE OF THINGS. I COULD PUT DISPARATE PIECES OF INFORMATION TOGETHER AND CREATE NEW IDEAS. I COULD SEE OPPORTUNITIES AND INSTANTLY FORMULATE A PLAN TO ACHIEVE THEM.


BIOLOGICAL TESTS CONDUCTED AT A TOP-SECRET GOVERNMENT RESEARCH FACILITY SHOWED THAT I HAD AN ELEVATED LEVEL OF STRATEGYTONIN, A NEW TYPE OF NEUROTRANSMITTER, COURSING THROUGH MY BODY.
FROM THAT DAY ON, STRATEGY HAS BEEN MY SUPERPOWER.
AND WHAT ABOUT THIS STRATEGY DIAL?
IT'S A COMPASS OF SORTS... AN INDICATOR OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION.
IT USES THE STRATEGYTONIN IN MY BODY TO GAUGE STRATEGY. ANYTIME I'M NEAR A GROUP WITH A CLEAR STRATEGY, IT GAINS ENERGY AND POINTS TRUE NORTH.
WHEN I COME IN CONTACT WITH A BUSINESS THAT LACKS STRATEGY, IT SPINS AIMLESSLY AND LOSES POWER.
WOW! NO MBA, NO STINT AT MCKLONSKEY. JUST SHOT RIGHT UP TO STRATEGY EXPERT.
WELL, IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE. YOU COULD HAVE BEEN BITTEN BY A SPIDER.
...
I'M NOT SURE I FOLLOW...

LATER, AT THE STRATEGIC THINKING INSTITUTE . . .
WELCOME BACK, STRATEGYMAN! WELL DONE.
I'M JUST DOING THE LATEST RESEARCH FOR OUR CURRENT CASE . . .
A survey of 400 managers found that only 44.3% of organizations have a universal definition of strategy, and less than half (46%) have a common language for strategy.[1]
This inconsistent understanding leads to confusion, inefficiency, and bad strategy. In fact, research published in the *Harvard Business Review* showed that 67% of managers surveyed believe that their companies are bad at developing strategy.[2]
When you couple these facts with research showing that the number one cause of business failure, more than 80% of the time, is bad strategy, it makes for a dangerous combination.[3]
RICH, THAT REMINDS ME OF SOME OF OUR BIGGEST CASES OF MISTAKEN STRATEGY IDENTITY.
"STRATEGIES" AT COMPANIES ACROSS INDUSTRIES, INCLUDING FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES
—Become more profitable.
—Grow our audience.
—Become number one in the market.
—Execute integration and capture synergies.
—Strengthen core business and reduce costs.
—Find people who were customers and didn't come back.


MAKE NO MISTAKE— BAD STRATEGY CAN LITERALLY KILL A COMPANY. IN A 25-YEAR STUDY OF 750 BANKRUPTCIES, RESEARCHERS FOUND THAT THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF BANKRUPTCY WAS BAD STRATEGY.[4]
ANOTHER STUDY SHOWED THAT DECISIONS ABOUT STRATEGY WERE AT THE ROOT OF POOR PERFORMANCE 70% OF THE TIME. BY COMPARISON, ECONOMIC DOWNTURNS ONLY ACCOUNTED FOR 4%.
AND ANYONE WHO HAS WORKED FOR A MANAGER THAT DIDN'T HAVE SOUND STRATEGIES KNOWS ALL TOO WELL THE FRUSTRATION OF DRIFTING AIMLESSLY WITH NO STRATEGIC DIRECTION.
STRATEGY CAN BE DEFINED AS THE INTELLIGENT ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES THROUGH A UNIQUE SYSTEM OF ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE A GOAL. MORE SIMPLY, STRATEGY IS HOW YOU PLAN TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL.
STRATEGYMAN'S LOG
Case #: 0867
WE CAN SEE THAT A LACK OF CLARITY AROUND THIS DEFINITION CAN DERAIL EXECUTION BEFORE IT BEGINS BECAUSE PEOPLE WILL BE WORKING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.
IN FACT, ON AVERAGE, COMPANIES WITH CLEARLY DEFINED AND WELL-ARTICULATED STRATEGIES OUTPERFORMED THEIR COMPETITORS BY 883% IN TOTAL RETURN TO SHAREHOLDERS AND 332% IN SALES OVER A 10-YEAR PERIOD.[6]
STRATEGY

THINKTION:
Transforming thinking into action.

# How to Defeat Jargon Goblin and Ignormous

***1. Stop mixing words.***

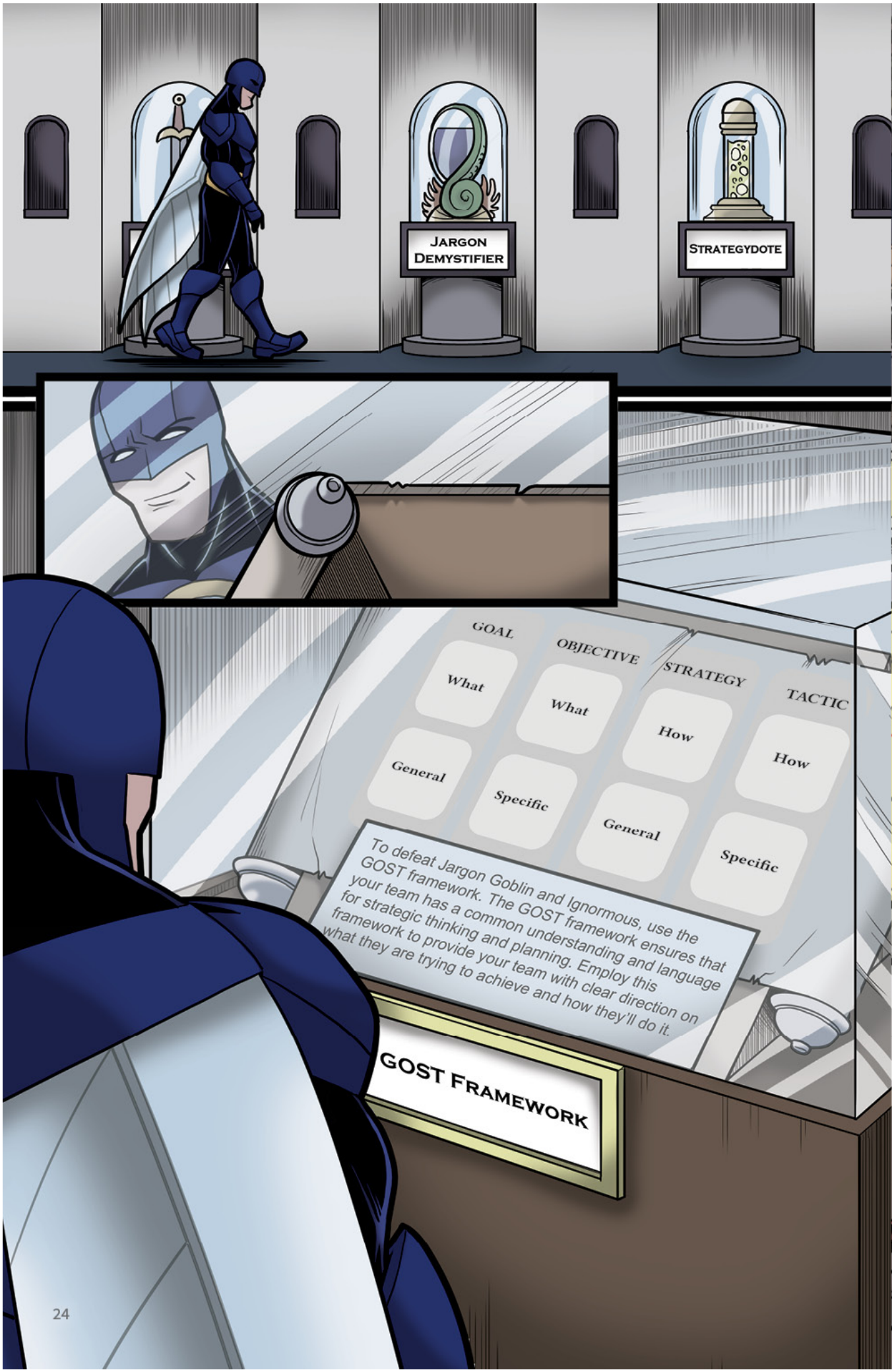
*Since "strategy" is an abstract term, it's challenging enough to define it without combining it with other words to make it that much more confusing. Many companies use terms such as "strategic goals" and "strategic objectives." Why? Goals and objectives are different than strategies, so cramming the words together into one term only serves to muddy the waters. To refresh, the goal is generally what you are trying to achieve (e.g., increase sales). The objective is specifically what you are trying to achieve (e.g., increase sales by 15% in the east region by Q4). The strategy is how you will achieve the goal/objective (e.g., develop a real-time service model to support top-tier product users). Keep your plan simple by using the right word, and only the word, that you mean.*

***2. Stop making things up.***

*Creativity is great. However, when it comes to setting strategic direction, creating new terms is inefficient and potentially harmful. Words such as "goal," "objective," "strategy," and "tactic" all have concrete definitions that originated in the military arena thousands of years ago. Terms like "strategic imperatives" or "business drivers" are not foundational planning terms. And because they are not foundational concepts, they can be interpreted in lots of different ways. This can lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misdirection. When planning, use real words, not made-up ones.*

***3. Stop pretending.***

*If a leader in your company passes down a strategy that isn't really a strategy, stop pretending it is. Correct it! In the examples listed earlier, many of the so-called strategies are actually goals or operating initiatives. Anyone working under similar "strategies" should choose the right forum and appropriate time to talk to leadership about how to modify their statement to more accurately reflect a strategy.*


JARGON DEMYSTIFIER
STRATEGYDOTE
GOAL
OBJECTIVE
STRATEGY
TACTIC
What
What
How
How
General
Specific
General
Specific
To defeat Jargon Goblin and Ignormous, use the GOST framework. The GOST framework ensures that your team has a common understanding and language for strategic thinking and planning. Employ this framework to provide your team with clear direction on what they are trying to achieve and how they'll do it.
GOST FRAMEWORK