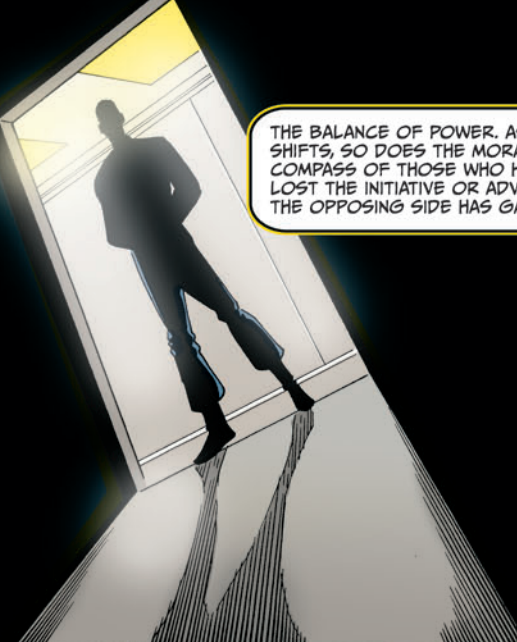
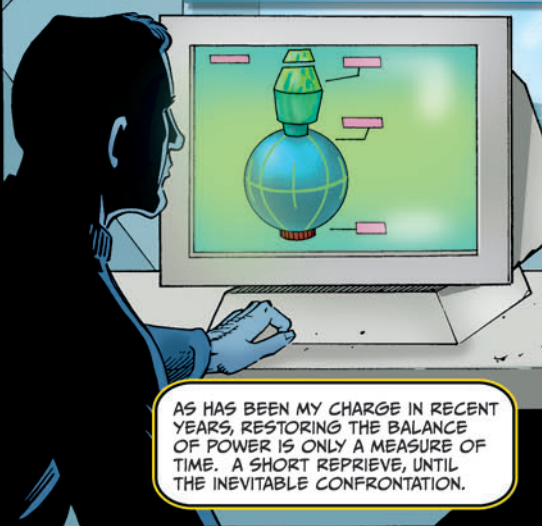


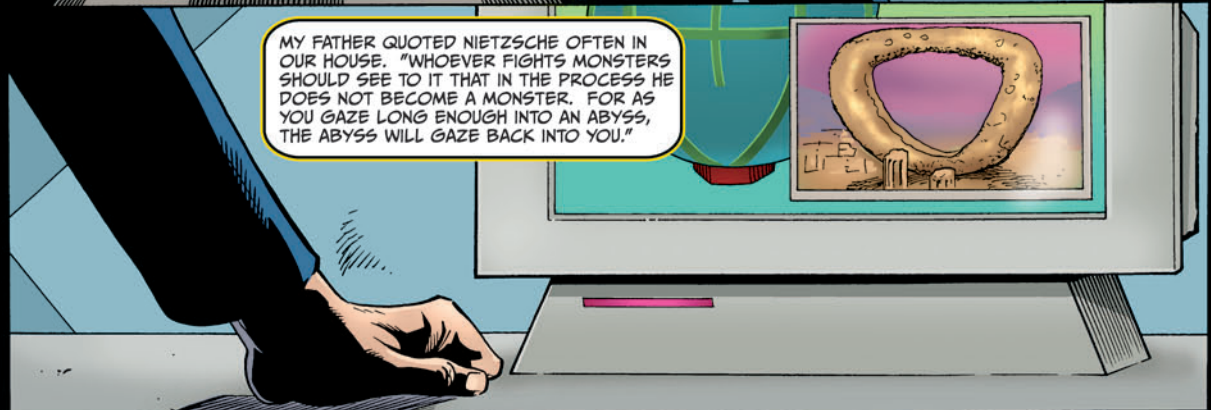
# CHAPTER 1



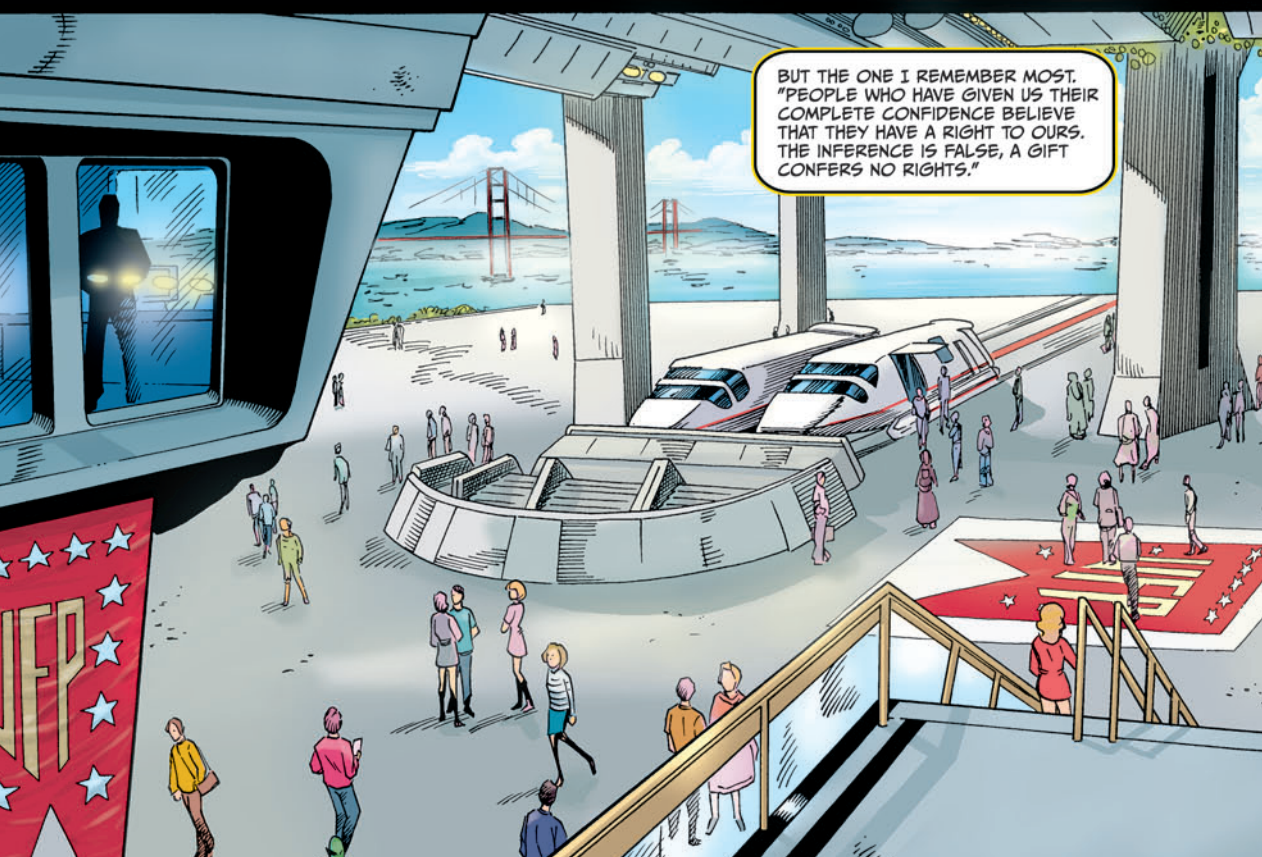
THE BALANCE OF POWER. AS IT SHIFTS, SO DOES THE MORAL COMPASS OF THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THE INITIATIVE OR ADVANTAGE THE OPPOSING SIDE HAS GAINED.



AS HAS BEEN MY CHARGE IN RECENT YEARS, RESTORING THE BALANCE OF POWER IS ONLY A MEASURE OF TIME. A SHORT REPRIEVE, UNTIL THE INEVITABLE CONFRONTATION.



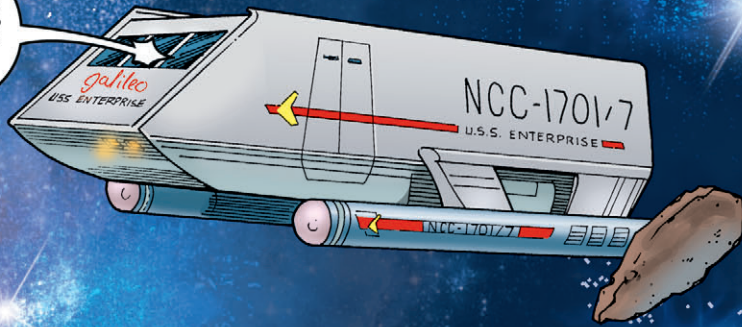
MY FATHER QUOTED NIETZSCHE OFTEN IN OUR HOUSE. "WHOEVER FIGHTS MONSTERS SHOULD SEE TO IT THAT IN THE PROCESS HE DOES NOT BECOME A MONSTER. FOR AS YOU GAZE LONG ENOUGH INTO AN ABYSS, THE ABYSS WILL GAZE BACK INTO YOU."



BUT THE ONE I REMEMBER MOST. "PEOPLE WHO HAVE GIVEN US THEIR COMPLETE CONFIDENCE BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO OURS. THE INFERENCE IS FALSE, A GIFT CONFERS NO RIGHTS."

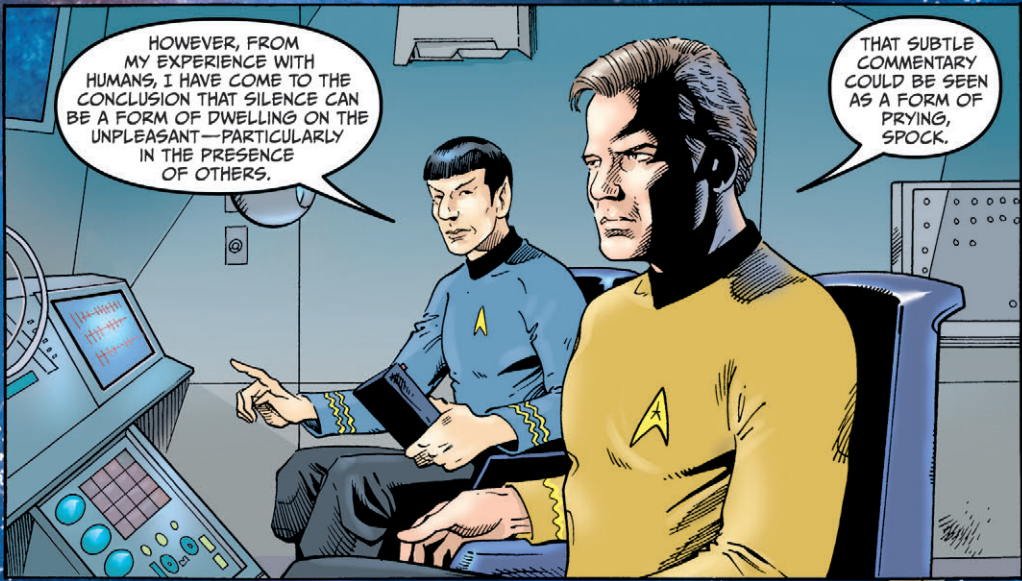


I FIND IT MOST CURIOUS; THE VULCAN SCIENCE ACADEMY TEACHES VULCANS HOW TO MAINTAIN A PEACEFUL MIND THROUGH LONG PERIODS OF SILENCE AND ISOLATION.



HOWEVER, FROM MY EXPERIENCE WITH HUMANS, I HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT SILENCE CAN BE A FORM OF DWELLING ON THE UNPLEASANT—PARTICULARLY IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS.

THAT SUBTLE COMMENTARY COULD BE SEEN AS A FORM OF PRYING, SPOCK.



TO "PRY," AS YOU PUT IT, CAPTAIN, WOULD BE A HUMAN EXERCISE.

AND THAT'S NOT AN ACCURATE PORTRAYAL?

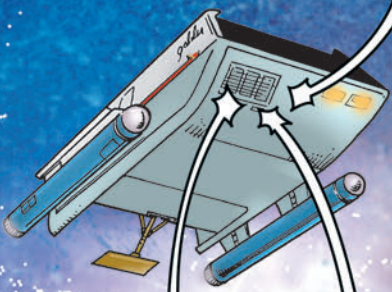
I DO NOT BELIEVE SO. I MERELY EXPRESS CONCERN THAT MY CAPTAIN AND FRIEND HAS BEEN INORDINATELY QUIET OF LATE. QUITE UNLIKE YOU.











KIRK TO  
ENTERPRISE—GOOD  
WORK, MR. SCOTT. YOU'VE  
SUCCESSFULLY ELUDED OUR  
SEARCH EFFORTS. I'LL OWE  
YOU THAT SAURIAN BRANDY  
AFTER ALL.

NO REPLY,  
CAPTAIN.

ENTERPRISE, THIS IS  
SHUTTLECRAFT GALILEO.  
DEACTIVATE THE CLOAKING  
DEVICE. IT'S TIME FOR US  
TO COME HOME.

STILL NO  
RESPONSE.

WELL, I'D  
SAY OUR LITTLE  
EXPERIMENT JUST BECAME  
INTERESTING.





WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HER? MR. SCOTT'S A CAPABLE OFFICER. I CAN'T IMAGINE HE'D LEAVE THE EXERCISE PERIMETER.



I DO NOT BELIEVE HE HAS, CAPTAIN.

A PROBLEM WITH THE CLOAKING DEVICE?

THAT WOULD BE MY ASSUMPTION. IN ANY CASE, IF WE DO NOT FIND THE ENTERPRISE SOON, WE WILL NOT SURVIVE. THE SHUTTLE IS NOT EQUIPPED FOR MORE THAN A 12-HOUR FLIGHT.



WE HAVE TO FIND HER. IF THIS NEW CLOAK STARFLEET INTELLIGENCE HAS GIVEN US DOES WHAT THEY CLAIM, IT COULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. UNLESS WE CRASH INTO HER.

DIFFICULT, BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

CARE TO EXPLAIN?



I BELIEVE I CAN ACTIVATE THE HANGAR DOORS USING THE AUTOMATED LANDING SYSTEM OVERRIDE, BUT ONLY IF WE ARE WITHIN 2,000 KILOMETERS OF THE ENTERPRISE.



PRETTY CLOSE—GIVEN WE HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THEY ARE.