

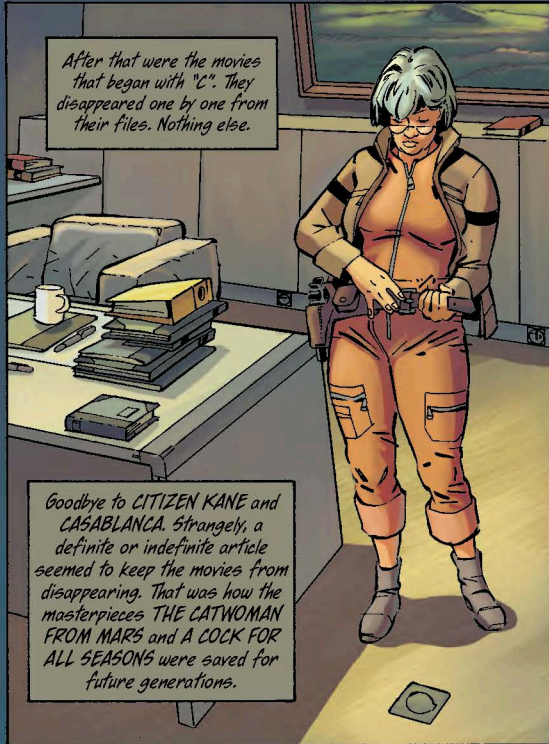
*Small actions,
big effects.*

*As always, everything began
with some little details with no
apparent connection between them.
First there were those oysters
that didn't want to reach adult
size. So. Nothing else.*

*That only mattered to me
because of my job as
commander of the TIME WARP.
Once, I tried an oyster. That
was twelve centuries ago.*



*A unique
experience. One
was enough.*



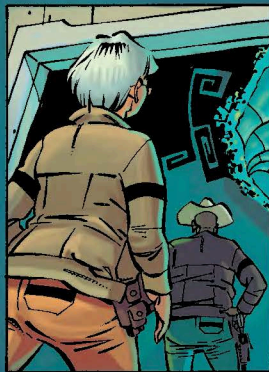
After that were the movies that began with "C". They disappeared one by one from their files. Nothing else.

Goodbye to CITIZEN KANE and CASABLANCA. Strangely, a definite or indefinite article seemed to keep the movies from disappearing. That was how the masterpieces THE CATWOMAN FROM MARS and A COCK FOR ALL SEASONS were saved for future generations.



Then it was the thermostat in the children's pool that went crazy.

Another day it was the air that disappeared from one of the reserve tanks.



Nothing else.

Strange happenings. But they didn't seem too serious. In fact, the loss of oxygen represented only one percent of what was acceptable.

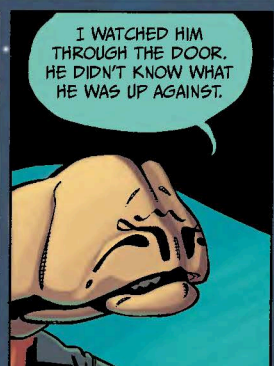


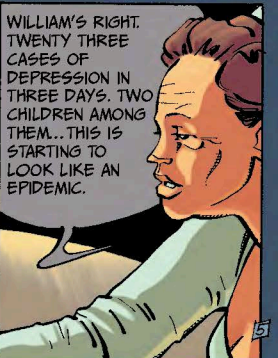
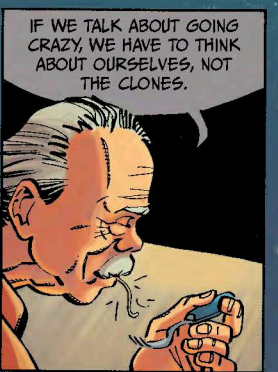
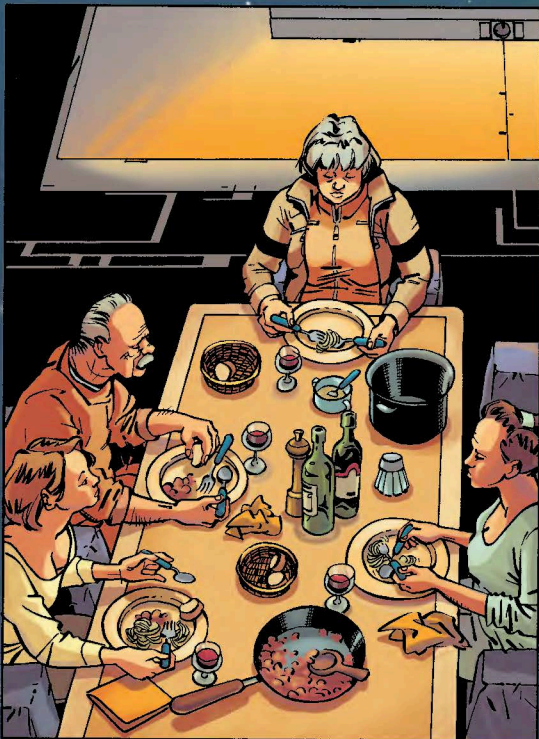


Some folks got scared. They said that if "something" was capable of gobbling up all the air in a reserve tank, that thing could completely empty the air from the ship.

Result -- Diana Alsever had to treat more and more cases of depression.

And I found myself with a death on my hands.





DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY COME AS MUCH FROM BIOCHEMISTRY AS FROM BEHAVIOR, AND THEY ARE CONTAGIOUS. AT TIMES FATAL. MAX'S ACT COULD HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY A REPRESSED SUICIDAL IMPULSE.

CONTAGIOUS... DO YOU GUYS THINK WE'RE ALL GOING NUTTY? ...THE SHIP OF FOOLS...

SHIP?

WILLIAM?

William had blind confidence in the ship. I didn't. At times it gave me the impression it was becoming more and more an automaton.

TELL ME, SHIP, IF WE ALL GO CRAZY, WILL YOU MAKE SURE THE FLIGHT COMES OUT OKAY?



SOME OF YOU ARE ALREADY CRAZY, BUT PERHAPS I'VE SET THE BAR TOO HIGH... IF THE COMMANDER GIVES ME THE ORDER, I CAN FINISH THE MISSION WITH NO HUMAN INTERFERENCE IN THE PROCESS.



LET'S IMAGINE THAT THE COMMANDER ISN'T IN A STATE TO GIVE ORDERS...



IF THAT'S THE QUESTION, YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER, COMMANDER.



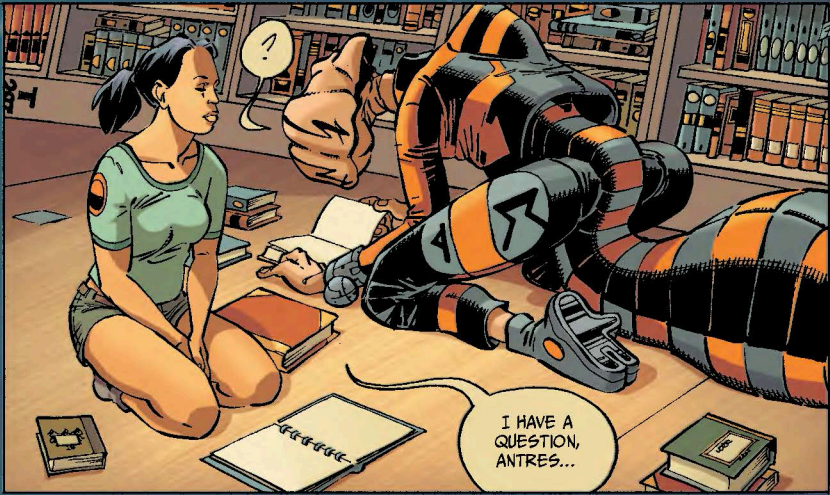
YES. YOU KNOW WHAT? ALL THIS SEEMS DEPRESSING TO ME!



The sheriff decided that Antres 906 had acted in self defense and within the law. Nobody contradicted him. So we avoided the annoyance of an interspecies trial.

Otherwise, the Tauran didn't seem to comprehend the notion of a "trial." What do "crime" and "punishment" mean, after all... with any notion related to the "moral" and the "ethical" in a community with no individuals?

In spite of the serenity that reigned on board, for his own safety, we set up a kind of body guard for Antres in the days following the incident. Sara volunteered immediately...



I HAVE A QUESTION, ANTRES...