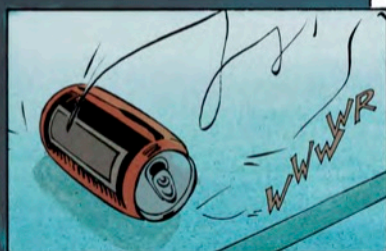
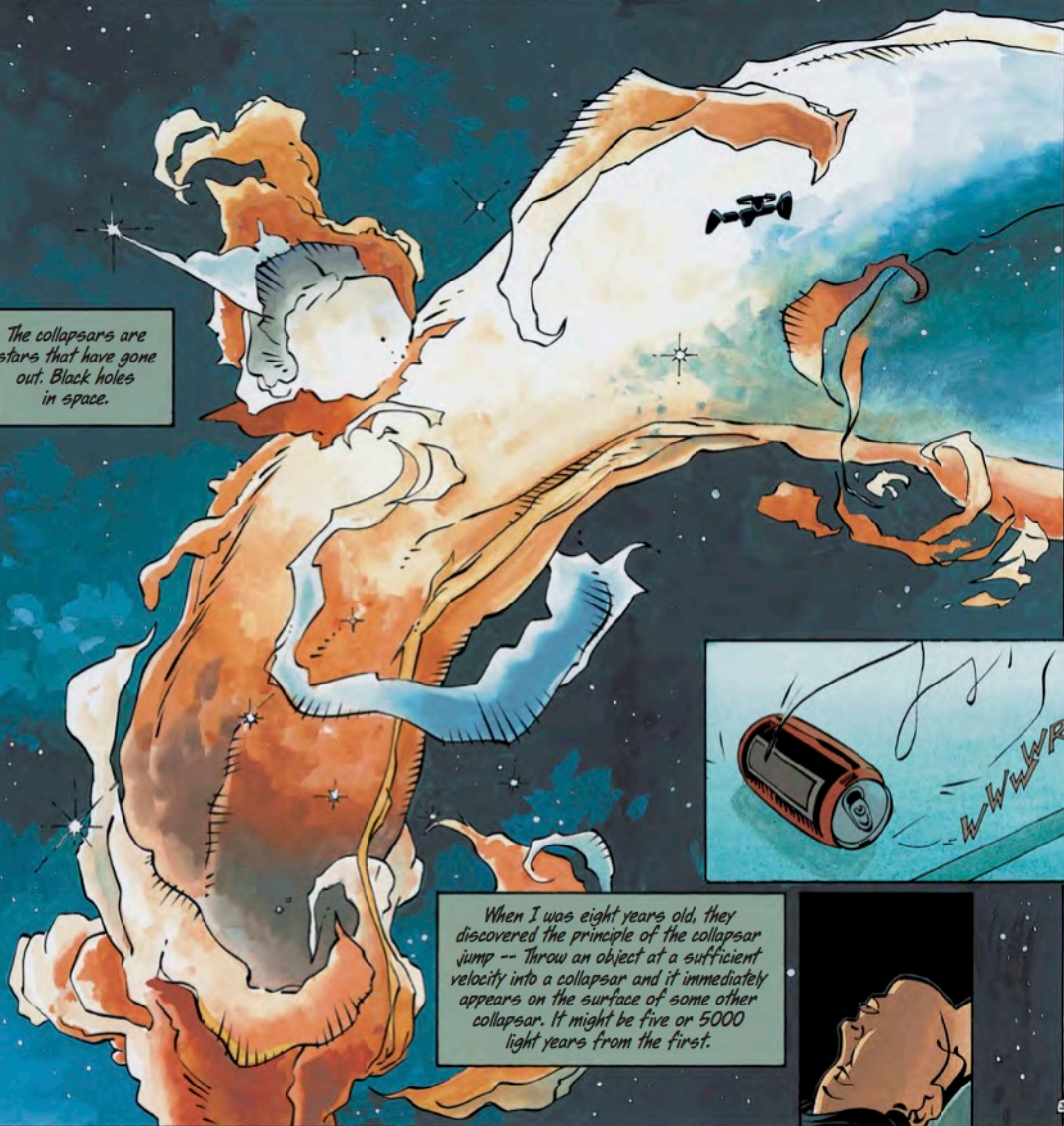


Between the collapsars Aleph-10 and Sade-138, there are 150,000 light years. Light moves at 300,000 kilometers per second. Do the calculation if you want.

The collapsars are stars that have gone out. Black holes in space.



When I was eight years old, they discovered the principle of the collapsar jump -- Throw an object at a sufficient velocity into a collapsar and it immediately appears on the surface of some other collapsar. It might be five or 5000 light years from the first.



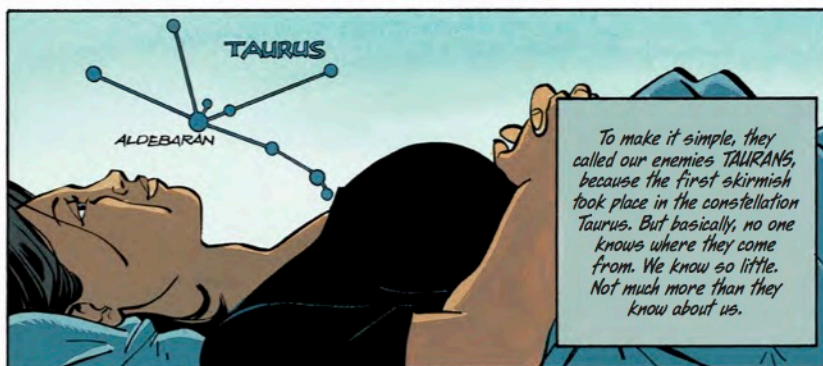


They soon deduced the formula that let them calculate the trajectory of the object (for the eggheads -- it's an Einsteinian geodesic line)...

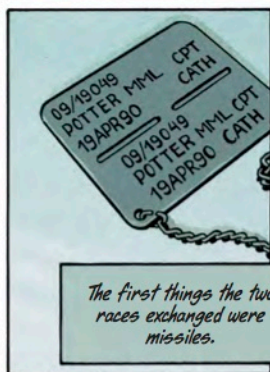
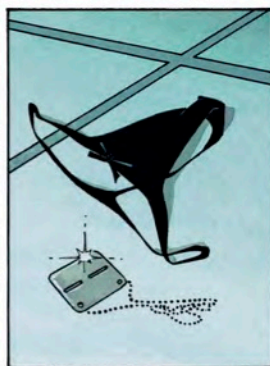


...and interstellar voyages became a reality.

It wasn't even ten years before we were in an interstellar war.



To make it simple, they called our enemies TAURANS, because the first skirmish took place in the constellation Taurus. But basically, no one knows where they come from. We know so little. Not much more than they know about us.



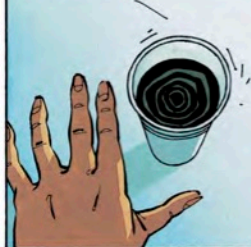
The first things the two races exchanged were missiles.



This war lasted for several centuries, but I lived it from the beginning.



One time, a terrestrial expeditionary force bumped into some Taurans that were many centuries behind.



It was an easy victory.



But the opposite has also happened.



The list of lost ships keeps growing.



When William and I were sent to the same campaigns, everything was straight forward. But now I'm on the way to Aleph-10...



...And he's going to Sade-138.

DEFCON 2

If William dies in a nova bomb explosion, the bright ash of the conflagration will take 1500 centuries to reach Aleph-10.

BEEP!

DEFCON 3

Tell me about distances!

ATTENTION! ALL TROOPS, DEFCON 3. WE REPEAT: 3.

DEFCON 3

