

# FUTURE

Annotated Script  
by Tom Woodman

Welcome to the script for *FUTURE*!

This isn't something I thought would ever travel outside the creative team, but I hope it's fun and perhaps useful for readers looking at how these things are put together. There are differences between the script and the final work - I thought it'd be more interesting to leave those little last minute tweaks apparent than to doctor the script after the fact.

Cover: We had a couple of options for covers. The story is character-driven rather than action-oriented, so we wanted to have that centre-stage from the start and stay honest about our focus, rather than plastering flaming rockets or funky sci-fi effects across the cover. So, the cover is focused on Kay and Murray, and is beautiful but low-key. The image actually started off as a splash page in the middle of Chapter 1 (which you can see in the process doc), before we realised it should be the cover. It perfectly encapsulated the series' focus and vibe – these two, looking into the unknown, together. So Rupert recoloured the splash page we had, we removed the 'they need you up there' speech bubble (which he's perfectly communicated through body language anyway), added the elegant little lines of the wireframe helmets, and here it is. The title font (designed by Rupert, like almost everything in this darn book) was kept very minimalist. We tried some flashier designs, but again a simple, stripped-back font best fitted thematically.

# **FUTURE (CHAPTER 1 – THE DYING ASTRONAUT)**

Written by Tom Woodman / Art by Rupert Smissen / © 2018

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## **ONE**

**Panel 1:** The Earth, hanging in space, surrounded by satellites like flies on carrion. Much more of it is covered in water than today, and the emaciated land that remains isn't as green – it's mostly grey and industrialized.

1. DOCTOR (OP):                      We're out of time.

**Panel 2:** Refugees (mixed backgrounds, not TV expectations of refugees) pushing through floodwater, carrying children, pets, possessions over their heads/on their shoulders.

2. DOCTOR (OP):                      The situation has developed too quickly.

**Panel 3:** Soldiers, for all their high-tech equipment, cowering in the mud, as explosions go off around them.

3. DOCTOR (OP):                      We discovered the danger too late.

**Panel 4, 5, 6:** Three mini-panels: a hydroponic greenhouse stripped bare; a large machine sinking into the ice of the Arctic, as its operators flee; a robot-drone bee pollinating a sickly flower.

4. DOCTOR (OP):                      And we've exhausted all our options.

**Panel 7:** A Western/European-style city about to be buried under the front of a dust storm.

5. MURRAY (OP):                      How long?

**Panel 8:** A nuclear plant up in flames against a pitch-black night sky.

6. DOCTOR (OP):                      Not long, I'm afraid.

**Panel 9:** MURRAY, late thirties, thin from illness. Medical infusion plaster, liquid bag, and tubes on her arm – resigned rather than surprised, looking straight ahead at the reader. Her face is overly thin, taking up too little of the panel.

7. DOCTOR (OP):                      A month at best.

Chapter Titles: There's no evidence of the chapter titles in the actual finished book, so I guess they're some extra content for you, as a reward for delving in here; congrats.

The first page of a graphic novel is horribly important, especially when it's the first of your career. Prove yourself and set out the book's concept ASAP, please and thank you. Luckily, this page was what leapt into my head before anything else; wrongfooting the reader with a narration seemingly about Earth, before revealing it's a prognosis for Murray and thereby intertwining their terminal diagnoses. I think the page also packs a huge amount of set-up - world-building, stakes, problem, and introducing our protagonist all without losing the character focus.

The script for Murray's first appearance here specifies her looking awful, which Rupert and I discussed in depth. I've seen comics where, no matter what, everyone's gorgeous all the time – and there are a disturbing number of 'sexy corpses' drawn in the industry. We wanted Murray to look old, tired, and dying. To emphasise this, Rupert used the light of the hologram to wash her out and add further shadows under her eyes, which was so simple but genius.

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## **TWO**

**Panel 1:** Wider shot on Murray; she's seated in front of a table, shoulders slumped.

1. DOCTOR (OP):                      I'm sorry, Mrs Mielniczuk. There's nothing more we can-

2. MURRAY:                              End appointment.

**Panel 2:** Over Murray's shoulder, a view of the doctor – a hologram. A classily small read-out, like a taxi fare, reads: '@£716'

3. DOCTOR:                              Thank you for using HealthCare. Is there anything else we can help you with today?

4. MURRAY:                              No.

**Panel 3:** Zoomed out, this conversation has taken place in Murray's living room; she's at a table, which is covered in books and placemats and clutter. The doctor hologram is still on the table.

5. DOCTOR:                              Goodbye.

**Panel 4:** Same angle as Panel 3; the hologram has blinked out.

6. KAY (caption):                      My wife was an astronaut.

I actually forgot the hologram was another little surprise for the reader when first scripted - it seems on P.1 as if Murray is talking to a human doctor, but it's actually just a sophisticated automated service. This highlights the futuristic world we're in, as well as how alone Murray is here, which we doubled down on with the light going out. Also, and this won't be too clear to international audiences, but the read-out, the 'fare' for Murray's treatment, is a clear dystopian signal to Brits, given the free nationwide healthcare currently provided by our (constantly under threat) National Health Service.

## **THREE**

**Panel 1:** From across the water – a fat-bellied helicopter (reference: Bell-Boeing Osprey V-22, battered by a few decades of wear) is sitting in the sea, perfectly still. Voices from within.

1. KAY: Before your lot grounded them.

**Panel 2:** Dangling her legs out the side of the helicopter, as she uses a reinforced tablet-style device, is KAY. Healthy, short-haired, wearing a jumpsuit and bomber jacket. Someone is standing next to her, leaning against the frame of the helicopter, just their legs in view.

2. LAMB: **All** non-military flights are grounded -- temporarily.

3. KAY: Uh-huh. You know, I used to look up at night and see the lights of her station overhead.

4. LAMB: I'd be down here, fiddling with wiring or something, and there she'd be, flying a fucking star.

**Panel 3:** Over Kay's shoulder, her screen is an underwater view; half-crumbled corridors, an open-plan office-turned-aquarium. Text is at the bottom of the screen.

4. LAMB (OP): Take the drone towards the end of the corridor and turn-  
-

5. KAY: I **know**. Chill your little boots, mate.

6. TEXT: Drone 01 Battery 97%

**Panel 4:** Close on Kay as she uses the tablet – Kay is expressive, loud, body language to match.

7. KAY: My point, Mister Brigadier, is yes I'm a fucking decent engineer -- thankyouverymuch -- but sick as she's got, Mur's the bigshot spacegirl.

8. KAY: So when people with ranks come calling, s'not **really** me they're interested in.

9. LAMB: Hmm.

10. LAMB: I'm here because you need help...

**Panel 5:** Same angle; Kay gritting her teeth, holding in sudden anger at Lamb's words.

11. LAMB: ...and your wife's imminent death provides us with a vital opportunity.

12. SFX: SPLOSH

Over PP.2-3, we go from Murray to Kay - quiet to loud. I remember making a conscious choice to amp up Kay's voice here at the start, to help the reader hear it clearly. I think if you go in subtle with a character's voice in a comic/graphic novel, you're in danger of it being missed, so she's at her sweary, chatty, snarky peak here, thanks to Lamb riling her up. You can also see on the finished pages a visual difference between the dark, quiet P.2 and the bright, noisy P.3. Also, our first SFX - Aditya cut several of these throughout the book for being unnecessary, but the 'SPLOSH' survived.

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## FOUR

**Panel 1:** The drone hovering next to the helicopter, dripping, holding an unusual metallic box.

1. KAY: Okay champ, how about you tell me how you're gonna 'help' me...

**Panel 2:** Kay looking up and over her shoulder at Lamb, a neat forty-something man in a three-piece suit, who realises he's just put his foot in it.

2. KAY: ...before I have the drone dunk you in the sea?

**Panel 3:** Angle from above. The drone is hovering next to the helicopter; we can see down into the water, to the ruins of a huge building, marked with the half-deteriorated 'NASA' logo.

3. LAMB: ...

4. LAMB: We have a satellite, in orbit...

We...didn't clear this logo. Huh, maybe I should've thought about that.

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## **FIVE**

**Panel 1:** A tower building – niceish – in the night’s torrential rain. There are balconies. The streets are thick with people. Dialogue from one of the upper floors:

1. INFO BOX:                      Outer London
2. MURRAY (OP):                I’m just letting you know.

**Panel 2:** Inside the flat – Murray is walking through the shadows of her home, a medical infusion plaster, liquid bag, and tubes still on her arm. Her ear piercing is glowing blue in the dark – she’s on a call.

3. MURRAY:                      Yep. I **am** sorry. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Bye now.

**Panel 3:** The blue light is out. Murray is alone in the dark.

4. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray’s head is turned towards the window.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Murray climbing out onto the balcony, seen from the inside. Despite the storm outside, it’s a square of clouded moonlight from the near-blackness.

6. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Overhead view of the streets below, teeming with people, Murray standing at the side of the balcony, not looking down, immediately soaked and looking even thinner thanks to the rain.

7. NO COPY

Before Kay’s big entrance on the next page, emphasis on the quiet here. By the way, when I said ‘rain’, I didn’t expect it to be so gorgeous. One of the beautiful things of working closely with Rupert (this was our second project together after being joint best men at a friend’s wedding) was seeing how effortlessly he makes magic. We both got to impress and surprise each other as we went along with techniques the other hadn’t considered, which is a lovely way to work together, and part of what sets writing for comics apart from other mediums.



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## **SIX**

**Panel 1:** Front door handle, turning.

1. SFX: Tkk

**Panel 2 (Meta-panel):** in front of panels 3-5 – Murray going from sad to amused by Kay. Murray is drained, Kay providing all the energy on the page.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Behind Murray, the front door opens, with a beam of light streaming horizontally through it. Kay marching into the flat, almost cartoonish in her full-steam-ahead gracelessness as she passes the window, beam of light coming from her wristband (to my mind, once phones are tiny enough, they'll be things we put wherever we want with AR screens – earrings, wristbands, etc.)

3. SFX: BAM

4. KAY (OP): Murray?

**Panel 4:** Kay searching around the flat, not noticing Kay.

5. KAY: You awake? Power gone again?

**Panel 5:** Kay's head poking round the windowframe, concerned/annoyed; her wristband is shining in her own face.

6. KAY: Mur? Mu -- hey!

7. KAY: Get the fuck inside!

**Panel 6:** Kay climbing out into the rain; Murray turning to her.

8. KAY: Why're you out here?

Is this on the nose? Kay bashing open the door and letting the light in? Well deal with it. Their two days, the two tones of their stories so far are colliding, both visually and simply in their different volumes.

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## **SEVEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray and Kay holding each other in the rain. Big, windswept – think Wuthering Heights but Kay's a bit less graceful.

1. KAY: ...You good?

2. MURRAY: No.

3. KAY: No.

**Panel 2:** View from inside the flat looking out at the two of them, framed by the window. Kay extricating herself from the hug.

4. KAY: Well, get your meds, we're going out...

This is the first time Kay and Murray are together in the book, and several reviewers picked it as the stand-out panel in this first 22-page chapter. It initially had a bit more dialogue and more panels, but the simplicity of the image asserted itself, especially once I'd seen Rupert's draft. It's hard to just shut up as a writer, but how many pages of long overworked speeches do people forget about in comics, when something like 'Ultron, we would have words with thee' is iconic? Also, there was a moment where P.7 was a left-hand page, but whereas having it as a 'reveal' was an option, I wanted to have that feeling of impatience on P.6, so the reader subconsciously wants to rush to Kay and Murray's reunion on P.7.

## **EIGHT**

**Panel 1:** Kay holding the front door of the building open for Murray, looking at the people as Murray pointedly doesn't. The street is crowded – Oxford Street at Christmas levels, but with drone umbrellas – with the top of a black car in the foreground. Murray and Kay are heavily decked out in rain gear – sowesters, if monsoons had been happening weekly for years. The conversation continues from the previous page.

1. KAY (caption): ...they need you up there.
2. KAY (caption): There's a broken satellite.
3. MURRAY (caption): And? Nothing's flown for six years. There are broken satellites all over the sky.
4. KAY (caption): Lemme finish? The satellite does seismic info, flood warnings. It's a lifesaver, they need it.

**Panel 2:** Kay's hand over the handle of the car door, which glows a deep green (unlocked).

5. MURRAY (caption): Who? Without NASA or UKSA--
6. KAY (caption): Dude, come on.

**Panel 3:** Same angle, door open; Lamb is sitting in the back of the car when the door is opened.

7. KAY (caption): There's always a 'they'.

**Panel 4:** Lamb has moved across, as Kay helps Murray into the middle seat.

8. KAY: Hi.
9. LAMB: Welcome. Driver, estimated journey time?
10. DRIVER (computer): Six hours and forty-three minutes to destination.
11. LAMB: Begin journey.
12. SFX: Bee-yong

**Panel 5:** Same angle, Lamb is talking at Murray. The OP dialogue covers up 90% of what Lamb is saying, as Murray's focus drifts.

13. LAMB (covered): Sorry about the old car. I tried to requisition something a bit peppier but budgets aren't what they once were. Not to mention the austerity boys cutting us to the quick every five minutes. Anyhow, you didn't come to listen to me witter on. But do let me know if you're comfortable, temperature, seats and whatnot. I know car travel often exacerbates the symptoms of your condition, so if you'd like to trade places — though I suppose you'll be facing far worse if you're deemed fit for launch. Still, always happy to circulate some fresher air if you'd prefer, Ms Mielniczuk.
14. KAY (caption): Six days, all in, and we're dropped off in the Atlantic.
15. MURRAY (caption): We?

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16. KAY (caption): Obviously I'm coming. You pilot, me engineer.  
17. MURRAY (caption): Why you?  
18. KAY (caption): Because no-one else can trust your shaky hands?  
19. MURRAY (caption): Kay.  
20. KAY (caption): Because your half-dead face would give other astronauts nightmares?  
21. MURRAY (caption): **Kay.**  
22. KAY (caption): Because flying shittily maintained rockets to malfunctioning space stations is risky. So they need astronauts -- oh shit, I'm gonna be an astronaut -- with big motivations.

'They need you up there'. There was initially a full page splash here of Kay pointing up into space, saying this line, but budget, page turns, and scheduling get in the way. It's a painfully large part of making a comic, and I think Chapter 1 is where you can see the pressure most, as I decided to get us into space and time travelling ASAP. We animated the deleted splash, and you can see the resultant GIF on our Instagram. Oh, and then it was recoloured, and became the aforementioned cover.

ALSO - loved using this technique of Lamb rambling but being completely overridden, with Kay and Murray's words over his. Basically showing what's important here. I'm also very proud of the drone umbrellas, because of course we should have those.

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## **NINE**

**Panel 1:** Same angle as panel 5 of last page; Lamb still talking, inaudibly, as they pass a glaring streetlamp.

1. KAY (caption):                      Treatment, Mur. Every option they have, once we do this.
2. MURRAY (caption):                ...And if I just want to spend this last month with you?
3. KAY (caption):                      We don't give an inch, that was the deal.
4. MURRAY:                              That was the deal.
5. LAMB:                                  Pardon?

**Panel 2:** Murray has put her head back and closed her eyes, holding hands with Kay.

6. LAMB:                                  ...
7. LAMB:                                  Shall we discuss why you're here?
8. MURRAY:                              I'm here because Kay says to be. Kay, wake me when we get there?
9. KAY:                                    Err, yep, you're not sleeping through the fucking launch. That bit's all on you.

**Panel 3:** Kay is leaning round Murray to speak to Lamb, still holding Murray's hand.

10. KAY (soft):                        Yeah, she's asleep.

**Panel 4:** Same as 3, but Kay has rested her head on Murray's shoulder, and closed her eyes.

11. NO COPY

**Panel 5, 6, 7:** A strip of three panels, side-on view: car in the dark city in the rain (busy road), car in the pre-dawn murk on the motorway in the rain, car in the dusty dawn on an empty road. On the last panel:

12. LAMB:                                Oh bugger.

I scripted this little three-car thing. One review said this was a great idea of Rupert's, but NO. It was ME.

One of my writing trademarks might be 'same angle' for multiple panels in a row - Rupert listened to me maybe 50% of the time, which was a wise limit.

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## **TEN**

**Panel 1:** Kay waking up from drooling on Murray's shoulder – Lamb staring fixedly out the front window.

1. KAY: I'm good I'm up. What?  
2. LAMB: Someone leaked.

**Panel 2:** Down the road from the car, a huge fenced-off compound, with a hanger a mile or so in. The gates are surrounded by protestors, and guarded, on the other side, by watchtowers and soldiers with guns. A few protestors have signs, but more of them have tools, sticks. The air is thick with dust.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Murray's view, looking out through the windscreen – Lamb taking the front seat – as they approach the rear of the crowd, some of whom are turning round.

4. LAMB: I knew we should've used the Devon site. Driver?  
5. SFX: Bing  
6. LAMB: Blackout windows, manual control.  
7. SFX: Bee-yong

**Panel 4:** Same view as 3, closer – Kay has leaned forward, one hand still on Murray, the other reaching towards Lamb, most of the crowd are watching the car.

8. KAY: What do they want?

**Panel 5:** The car slowly moving between the crowd of protestors, which parts as they pass, towards open gates. Children are visible in amongst them.

9. LAMB: They've heard there's a launch, after all these years.

**Panel 6:** The gates shut behind the car, leaving the crowd in the dust.

10. LAMB: They think we have a way out.

The signs were an interesting little complication - whether they would be the letterer or artist's domain, Aditya or Rupert's. In the end, Rupert did them so they could tie in with the overall art, though with Aditya's notes welcome.

I considered having more scenes of 'The People of Earth', to focus on the people at risk in Future's future. But I think we were better served by focusing in on Kay and Murray. Plus, too many crowd scenes would've killed Rupert dead; we only have three in the final book, two here in Chapter 1 and one right at the end of the book.

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## **ELEVEN**

**Panel 1:** Strip panel; Murray leaving a sparse bedroom in shorts and tank top, revealing how over-thin she is, as Kay puts on the same behind her.  
Panels 2-7 are split into columns, showing Kay and Murray's differing fitness tests.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Murray squinting into a light, as her eyes are tested.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Kay, eyes wide open, looking into the same light.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray hooked up to wires, attached to her legs, forehead, chest, etc., as she walks on a sleek treadmill, holding the handrail.

4. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Kay hooked up to wires, attached the same ways, -she is puffed out and red-cheeked, but running on the treadmill.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Murray being helped out of a g-force simulator pod, unable to stand. In-panel read-out.

6. TEXT: 2.4G

**Panel 7:** The same simulator pod speeding past, Kay inside, teeth gritted and eyes wide.

7. TEXT: 5.1G

**Panel 8:** A handheld screen; 'Pass' in green for clarity.

8. TEXT: 'K. Mielniczuk: Pass' 'M. Mielniczuk: Pass'

9. MURRAY (OP): No.

Very simple little script for this, our first montage. This page both gives Kay and Murray time to settle in to the facility and shows us exactly how much Murray's illness has weakened her. Speaking of which, Murray's condition goes unnamed throughout Future. I didn't want it to be something we're fighting now, in the fear/hope such problems will be beaten in the book's lifetime, and I also didn't want to create some 'space-cancer' type diagnosis, that distances us from the situation - a fictional illness might trivialise the whole thing. In the end, it's the effects of the illness that matter rather than its name.

## **TWELVE**

**Panel 1:** Down the left side of the page: the rocket on the launchpad against a scratchy dust-storm sky, a riff on current rockets as the tech hasn't been funded to advance much beyond 2020s. On the bridge out to the shuttle, three tiny figures talking – Kay, Murray, and Lamb with a magnification effect into Panel 2.

1. LAMB: I'm sorry?  
2. MURRAY: No. I didn't pass. Are you kidding?

**Panel 2:** Lamb, who's confused, is showing them a wristband screen, with the 'pass' marks. Murray's leaning against the railings, looking down at the activity below.

3. MURRAY: I can barely walk, I need constant medication, and any increase in G-forces, especially in an X-twelve--  
4. KAY: I love when you know space things.  
5. MURRAY: --will leave me unconscious, unable to fly.

**Panel 3:** Murray has turned to Lamb as Kay hangs back, awkwardly.

6. LAMB: Ms Mieln--  
7. MURRAY: It's 'Mrs', this is my wife, now why are we at T-minus six hours with you lying to us about the mission?  
8. KAY: He's not lying to us.

**Panel 4:** Kay, embarrassed and awkward, but not quite apologetic. Murray's dumbfounded face.

9. KAY: He's lying to **you. We're** lying to you.  
10. KAY: ...  
11. KAY: Sorry?

**Panel 5:** Murray collected, ignoring Kay, talking to Lamb.

11. KAY: Okay, listen--  
12. MURRAY: The truth, Brigadier, or I'm gone.  
14. MURRAY: And don't stall, you need me. If you had options you wouldn't have chosen the terminally ill one.  
15. MURRAY: This mission isn't sanctioned, is it? You're rogue.

**Panel 6:** The three of them in a triangle, Kay frustrated by this new information.

16. LAMB: ...well, 'rogue' is a bit strong.  
17. KAY (soft): Oh come on...  
18. LAMB: With the government fragmented--  
19. MURRAY: You've got crowds at the gate, meaning you don't have long until someone official shuts you down. So. Spit it out.

**Panel 7:** Lamb looking slightly uncomfortable.



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20. LAMB:                      The satellite is real, but it needs no repair. It just needs you.

There was a lot to do here - emotion, a kind of betrayal by Kay, and shifting the foundation of what's happening as we reveal that the mission is not what's been described. I think this can be risky in a lot of stories - if you've had the reader read and believe an out-and-out lie from a lead character, you either need to make a big show of that not being the truth after all, or run the risk of leaving them confused; what aspects were fib, what true? Fortunately, we're about to go into a big briefing/infodump, which should clear it all up.

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## **THIRTEEN**

**Panel 1:** The three of them in a dull NASA boardroom, a floor-to-ceiling window behind Lamb (view of rocket on launchpad), who is gesturing at something we can't see. Murray and Kay are sat at a boardroom table – all wear slick VR/AR headsets.

1. LAMB: Earth is, mathematically speaking,

**Panel 2:** The same panel, now within the VR/AR world – the people are sketchy, stylized – wireframes mixed with A-Ha's Take On Me video. The boardroom table is still there. The air is full of stars, and a curved line is arcing up from a VR Earth, which Lamb is gesturing at, to a tiny space station.

2. LAMB: Doomed.

**Panel 3:** Lamb's view of Murray and Kay at the table, the AR Earth looming large between/above them.

3. LAMB: No scientific institute on the planet has a plausible way around it. As such, we've dug in on the *implausible*.

4. KAY: Time travel.

5. MURRAY: Time travel?

6. LAMB: Please don't interrupt.

7. KAY: Please go fuck yourself.

**Panel 4:** Murray is focused on Lamb, Kay biting at a hangnail.

8. LAMB (OP): Hmm. Time travel, yes. Via quantum temporal entanglement.

9. KAY: Really sorry for whatever bullshit he's going to say now.

**Panel 5:** A shining light between two of Lamb's fingers – a single photon.

10. LAMB (caption): Photons, single particles of light, are almost literally everywhere. But a *quantum temporally entangled* photon is incalculably rare, one in quadrillions.

11. LAMB (caption): Despite almost seventy years with the LHC, we've discovered precisely *one*.

**Panel 6:** Lamb has let go of the photon, which has streaked through an 'n'-shaped thread of light, perhaps with the word 'timeline' arcing with it. This is a simple primer for the complexity of the next page. The text is split between the two sides of the panel.

12. LAMB (L-caption): When exposed to extreme energy, a temporally entangled photon unsyncs...

13. LAMB (R-caption): ...cutting a path straight through to a later point in its own timeline. The mission is: for you to go with it.

14. SFX: fwsssshhhh

'Please don't interrupt.' 'Please go fuck yourself.' And please feel free to take this energy into your everyday life. I'm enjoying looking back at this script and seeing the odd influences - A-ha's finest hour is inspiring our VR a little bit, I'm sure you'd agree.

## FOURTEEN-FIFTEEN

Horizontal spread – a single timeline from left-to-right, as if the photon is moving ‘on rails’. As discussed, no traditional panel structure here, but to give you an idea of the ‘plot points’:

**Panel 1:** Lamb striding on-panel, holding the photon as it follows its timeline.

1. LAMB: Now.

**Panel 2:** Lamb holding the photon between two fingers, while he points to panel 3, to his right.

2. LAMB: Photons are incomparably fragile. Fortunately, a prototype photon stabilisation chamber was recovered from former NASA headquarters, by Kay no less--

3. KAY (OP): Let's stick with Mrs Mielniczuk.

4. LAMB: --which gives us a sporting chance.

**Panel 3:** An AR representation of the oblong box Kay pulled from the sea. A handle on the top, a camera now on each side, keyboard, and small screen built in to one side – each with little AR labels. It’s open, completely mirrored inside, the photon at its core.

5. TEXT: CAMERAS

6. TEXT: KEYBOARD

7. TEXT: SCREEN

8. LAMB: It's fireproof, waterproof, pressure-resistant, reinforced graphene. Moreover, we've built in an OS, so it can record data throughout its journey.

**Panel 4:** The station, with a highlight of where the pod should be at its core (dashed lines), with two figures within it (more dashed lines). Lamb is pointing right.

9. TEXT: KLP-004

10. LAMB: By placing the entangled photon within that box, linking the box with a pod aboard the station, and delivering a massive jolt of energy into the photon...

**Panel 5:** The left half of Kay and Murray's current Earth – ugly, high seas, covered in grey buildings and lights.

11. LAMB: ...we can **send** the pod, and you...

Oh boy, we spent SO long on this spread. I think, script alone, I took two weeks redrafting over and over, to trim everything I could and make it as clear as could be, while fitting in a tonne of information. As one of my day jobs is literary editing, it was sweat-inducing fun, though a real test. The spread came from the fact I didn't want to be laying out huge infodumps throughout the whole book, so we took what was a 6-page explanation of the science, the tech, the mission, the dangers, the pros and cons, and Rupert and I focused it into a double-page spread, which Aditya's lettering somehow kept uncrowded.

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Mid-point – this half of the spread is a mirror of the first half.  
Perhaps slightly gold tinge the page – idealised.

**Panel 1:** Paired with 14-5. The right half of Kay and Murray's Earth – lush, over-idealised Earth, with sea levels as they should be and plenty of green and blue.

1. LAMB: ...three hundred and seventeen years into the future.

**Panel 2:** Paired with 14-4. KLP station and the pod (pod still coloured as in past, as it's just teleported here).

2. LAMB: Between now and then, the satellite will analyse everything that happens on Earth. Centuries of destabilisation, flood, plague, warfare, and invention, desperate advancement and last-minute discovery. The last gasps of humanity.

**Panel 3:** Paired with 14-3. Lamb is holding the box.

3. LAMB: In the split second of your journey, the photon's transit will open a momentary two-way corridor, enough for an infinitesimally brief data stream to be **returned** to us.

**Panel 4:** Lamb's finger tracing an arc back from the box, under the rest and back to panel 3's station.

4. LAMB: Data we'll use, in the here and now, to stop humanity destroying itself. Using the future to change the future.

5. LAMB: It seems paradoxical, but all models suggest it works.

**Panel 5:** Paired with 14-2. Lamb now holding a small pill, in mirror of holding photon.

6. LAMB: You'll arrive in a future rewritten by your journey, a future more than able to help you.

7. LAMB: We offered you treatment, Mrs Mielniczuk. It's predicted that only another decade would find a cure for your condition -- three hundred-odd years, they'll probably fix you with a single pill.

**Panel 6:** Paired with 14-1. Lamb looking back at the rest of the page, at the journey.

8. LAMB: That's why you should go. Now, that said...

9. LAMB: It is a one-way trip.

10. LAMB: One would need all the universe's energy to reverse the flow of time and... well. If you go, there's no coming home.

When our editor, Lizzie, heard Future was going to be a time travel book, she asked whether I'd thought through the science of it. As soon as I showed her my research reading pile (including Steven Hawking's A Briefer History of Time, which may've been overkill) and started talking about quantum entanglement, we were set. Well, Lizzie asked me to shut up\* anyway, which I think is a good sign.

[\*Politely. I asked him to shut up *politely*. – Lizzie]

FUTURE – Tom Woodman and Rupert Smissen

## **FOURTEEN-FIFTEEN-UNDER**

Run of smaller panels under the main ones above – talking heads.

**Panel 1:** Murray looking at Kay, questioningly. Kay not looking back, playing with another hologram-model of the satellite, spinning it.

1. KAY: ...What? You're dead in a month if we don't go, and there's no-one here I love more than you. Fuck it.
2. KAY (soft): An' it's a chance to help people, which I know you're not passing up.

**Panel 2:** Focus on Kay, animated by a new thought, Murray quietly thinking.

3. KAY: Speaking of people -- why not just automate, send a computer?
4. LAMB: We have precisely *one* attempt. We're sending the most adaptable, low-cost computers there are.
5. KAY: Then why are oh you mean us don't you?

**Panel 4:** Kay now looking confused.

6. MURRAY: And why's she coming?
7. KAY: What?
8. MURRAY: They need someone to go. I need treatment. Why come with me?

**Panel 5:** Murray pulling something from her face, her image fritzing out to a blur.

9. KAY: Because where you go I -- hey!

**Panel 6:** Same angle, Kay has taken her headset off; back in normal reality, Murray is heading through an exit door –

10. KAY: Hey!

**Panel 7:** Kay makes to follow her, backpedalling as she talks to Lamb.

11. KAY: I'll get her.
12. LAMB: If she tries to leave the base--
13. KAY: Well don't fucking shoot her! We'll be right back.
14. LAMB: T-minus four hours fifty-seven minutes!

FUTURE – Tom Woodman and Rupert Smissen

## **SIXTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray bent double outside, in the dusty air, standing on the dry, dying grass. The fence in the distance. Kay is just coming through the door behind her.

1. KAY: 'Why's she coming?'  
2. KAY: Because 'til death do us part, dumbass.

**Panel 2:** Kay approaches Murray from behind, full of righteous fury.

3. KAY: Whether that means a hundred years old in bed or way off in space or when the arse drops out of humanity – **you** and **me** until fucking **death**.  
4. KAY: So if this goes nowhere, I'm with you.

**Panel 3:** Murray has now turned back to Kay.

4. KAY: If there's a cure up there, out there, three hundred years away, then I'm the one who's gonna get it for you.  
5. KAY: And if you're dying, I'm fucking well dying too.

**Panel 4:** Anger burned out, Kay is cautiously smiling, taking hold of Murray's hands.

6. KAY: And fuck it, you think this is about you? I'm going **time travelling**. And I'm not missing out on being 'the woman who saved Murray Mielniczuk'.  
7. KAY: ...You're doing a face.  
8. MURRAY: I knew all that.

**Panel 5:** Side on; Kay looks confused/embarrassed, Murray a bit amused.

9. KAY: Oh.  
10. MURRAY: Just needed some air.  
11. KAY: Find any?

**Panel 6:** Face to face, holding hands.

12. MURRAY: Kay, it's getting worse.  
13. KAY: ...I know.

**Panel 7:** Angle on Murray, as she runs a hand through Kay's hair.

14. MURRAY: My mind'll go next. That'll be ... and if we're doing this, I need to be certain of you. If nothing else.  
15. MURRAY: So promise you won't lie to me again.  
16. KAY (soft): Okay.  
17. MURRAY: Okay.

**Panel 7:** Murray smiling wryly, up at the clouds.

18. MURRAY: It's a one-way trip. You sure?  
19. KAY: Not if you're gonna be mean the whole way there.  
20. MURRAY: Hah! You know why I went to space?

FUTURE – Tom Woodman and Rupert Smissen

**Panel 8:** Murray holding her head.

21. MURRAY:                      You can't...

22. MURRAY (soft):            ...can't breathe down here anymore.

**Panel 9:** Kay catching Murray as she faints.

23. KAY:                          Mur!

Here, they're very much making a pact that will carry them through the rest of the book. Together to the end. There are certain avenues I wanted to address and close off, so here I was deciding that, no, I didn't want Murray freaking out with guilt every few pages that Kay had come with her and probably doomed herself, so instead we're addressing that up front.

FUTURE – Tom Woodman and Rupert Smissen

## **SEVENTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Whiteness.

1. M. CONT (FADING IN): ...inus two minutes.

**Panel 2:** Murray's POV; a framed view-window, looking out into cloud overhead.

2. KAY (OP): Evening.

**Panel 3:** Murray has turned to Kay, who's forcing a smile from inside her open-visored helmet. They're strapped into the spaceplane (Boeing X-37 for reference), the photon containment box duct-taped between them. Both in astronaut suits.

3. KAY: You alright?

**Panel 4:** The shuttle on the launch platform, voice coming from the cockpit of the spaceplane.

4. KAY: Because I'm fucking terrified.

**Panel 5:** Focus on Murray, as Kay babbles over the panel lines.

5. MURRAY: How long until launch?

6. KAY (OP): Two minutes? Less? Sorry. The whole 'rogue' thing meant it was go now or go never, and 'never' means ***I'm*** stuck with the fucking funeral costs, and -- shit, look at all these **buttons** -- just, we're in a spaceship -- I don't like it, and I want to get out. I--

9. MURRAY: Hey. You ever kissed an astronaut before?

**Panel 7:** Murray leaning over and kissing Kay, whose eyes are wide with surprise.

10. NO COPY

**Panel 8:** Same angle, Murray pulled back, leaving Kay hanging – Murray's snapped her visor shut over her face.

11. M. CONT (OP + soft): Truro OTC, close and lock your visors and initiate 02 flow. T-Minus forty seconds and counting.

12. MURRAY: Roger, control.

13. SFX: Snap

This is the only page we actually completely rebooted after the linework - you can see the original layout in the process doc. I think we were always balancing between my preference for super-clear, technical layouts, and Rupert's beautiful and more artistic approach. I \*think\* we both enjoyed that back and forth, and think we managed both in the end, often with some wrangling.



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## **EIGHTEEN**

Panels 1-3 are almost the same image, slowly tilting back, to show what angle Kay and Murray are at.

**Panel 1:** Kay pulls down her own visor as Murray turns to the controls.

1. SFX: Snap
2. KAY: I mean, yeah? I've kissed you a lot.
3. M. CONT (OP + soft): You are go for 02 pressurization. T-Minus twenty seconds and counting, coming up on a go for auto-sequence start.

**Panel 2:** Same, but tilting back, highlighting the angle they're actually at.

4. MURRAY: You're not an astronaut unless you're flying.
5. KAY: Hey, no, I'm flying the -- you **said** you can't.
6. M. CONT (OP + soft): ...we're a go for auto-sequence start, T-minus fifteen seconds, fourteen, thirteen, twelve, eleven...

**Panel 3:** Same, but tilted to show the craft vertical, Kay and Murray horizontal, looking up.

7. M. CONT (OP + soft): ...ten, nine...
8. KAY: **I'm** doing this. It's mostly automated, right?
9. M. CONT (OP + soft): ...eight, seven...
10. KAY: And they took me through the basics. Crash course -- bad choice of words -- I got this.
11. M. CONT (OP + soft): ...six, five...
12. MURRAY: I'm flying. Mars, right?
13. M. CONT (OP + soft): ...main engines start, booster ignition, and...

**Panel 4:** Straight on at Kay's horrified face and Murray looking happier than we've ever seen her, the panel 'shaking' as the craft takes off.

14. SFX: Rrrrrmmmmm
15. MURRAY: I'm kidding.
16. M. CONT (OP + soft): ...lift-off.

**Panel 5, 6, 7:** Reflected in Murray's eye, the dusty brown of the sky, then a murky blue, and then star-studded blackness. Kay's dialogue in a balloon dragging along the top between these.

17. KAY (OP): Oh shit -- fuck! Oh shit, oh shit, oh fuck it.

**Panel 8:** The shuttle releasing the rocket.

18. SFX: T-CHNK

I got Mission Control's lines by watching actual NASA take-offs on YouTube. Little real-world details like that are a huge help to ground a fantastical story, especially when knocking against something less realistic, or when the story's moving as quickly as this (as, again, we had to do to get the journey started this issue without sacrificing any of the character depth).

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## **NINETEEN**

**Panel 1:** The world falling away behind the Truro.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Cockpit view, looking out through the windshield into space, Kay and Murray in their seats.

2. MURRAY:                      Mission control, we've exited the atmosphere, on our way.

3. M. CONT:                      Roger that, Truro, safe flight.

4. KAY:                              I didn't like that.

5. MURRAY:                      I know you didn't, bud.

6. KAY:                              ...Hey, you didn't pass out!

**Panel 3:** Same view, an hour or so has passed; both de-helmeted, Murray's reading the briefing, Kay's peering ahead in fascination. In the distance, there's the tiny shape of KLP-004, barely a squiggle.

7. MURRAY:                      --olar power's still reliable up here, so KLP's drones should stay online, monitor and patch the station up for when we arrive future-side, make sure it's--

**Panel 4:** Same view, an hour or so has passed; Murray still reading, now slumped back in her seat, Kay now sitting sideways on her chair, drumming on her knees, singing. The station is now much larger in the window, its shape visible.

7. KAY (singing):              --cause she's a, hot piece of astronaut, flying through the stars.

8. MURRAY:                      I'm reading the briefing, Kay.

9. KAY (singing):              Yes she's a, hot piece of astronaut--

10. MURRAY:                      I could still land us on Mars.

11. KAY (singing):              Please don't! Cause you're a--

**Panel 5:** Same view, another hour has passed; Kay lying, head on Murray's lap. The station is now right there, bigger than the window; a docking port is visible ahead.

12. MURRAY:                      Ready to go?

**Panel 6:** The Truro docked with the sphere at the centre of the station, via tube; a few drones visible monitoring the station, perhaps 'KLP-004' written on it.

13. NO COPY

**Panel 7:** Low angle shot, just hands; both floating, Murray's hand holding the box, Kay's the other side of it, as the Truro's airlock door opens into the white tube.

14. SFX:                              tssssss

We have three songs in Future, all original. I am open to a songwriting contract. I'm even more open to me humming them at you and you making them sound good; tweet at me? Also, 'Hot Piece Of Astronaut' is a great bit of wordplay and I'm staking my career on it.

## **TWENTY**

**Panel 1:** Large, spherical panel, to get the shape of the pod nice and clear?  
The pod is about 8X8 feet, dim-by-design lights, at the centre an ugly, utilitarian console, sitting atop a ring of restraint seats (rollercoaster-style). The console has a small screen, keyboard, and a big red button on it, under an unlocked but safety-catched plastic case. Other than Kay and Murray's, there are a couple more hatches in the pod's sides, shut but leading into the station proper.  
Zero-grav, upside-down Kay's head pokes down from the top of the panel into the inside of the pod, as Murray heads for the centre.

1. SFX (soft):                      tssssss
2. KAY:                                Huh.
3. KAY:                                Homely.

**Panel 2:** The box being placed down on the console by Murray, as Kay's hands stick magnetic tape one side of it, drawing it over the box.

4. SFX:                                tnk
5. SFX:                                strrrrrrk

**Panel 3:** Murray secures the tape the other side of the box and opens the safety-catch on the plastic case, as Kay plugs a thick cable from the console into the box.

6. SFX:                                Clk
7. MURRAY:                            Okay. Power levels set for a three hundred and seventeen year jump. Ready?

**Panel 4:** Straight on angle of the two of them by the seats, Murray already locking herself into a restraint; big shoulder restraints, and an X-shape of straps within that.

8. KAY:                                Now?
9. MURRAY:                            Photon's in the box, station's ready to supercharge it.  
We just press the button and off we go.
10. KAY:                                Just... the button? Wow. Simple shit.
11. MURRAY:                            For simple folks. So, ready?

**Panel 5:** Kay dropping into the seat next to Murray.

12. KAY:                                Can you wait a minute? Can everything -- can the future wait one minute?
13. MURRAY:                            ...
14. MURRAY:                            You can still head back. Live a whole life, here. You don't have to ...

**Panel 6:** View over Murray's shoulder, of Kay.

15. KAY:                                Would you come home with me?
16. MURRAY:                            I'd have to drop you off, yeah.
17. KAY:                                Yeah.
18. KAY:                                ...

Again, a last confirmation that, if they're doing this, they know the risks, the stakes, and that it's a choice they're both making. Also, a bit of that 'top of the rollercoaster' feeling here, the calm before the plunge.

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## **TWENTY-ONE**

**Panel 1:** Kay's hand grabbing Murray's.

1. KAY: Fuck it.

**Panel 2:** Shot from behind the console – Kay's other hand hitting the button.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Straight-on angle of them in their seats.

3. KAY: ...So when do you think it-

**Panel 4:** A black strip across the page, with negated versions of Kay and Murray in their seats, holding hands; extra blackness around the photon box itself.

4. SFX: VHOOOOOMMM

**Panel 5:** Kay, coming to.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** The same shot as Panel 3, but Kay is alone in her seat.

6. KAY (soft): Mur?

**Panel 7:** Kay at the hatch to the pod, just heading through the airlock, back into the Truro.

7. SFX: tsss

The time travel effect had to be instantly recognisable and clear, so that each time we used it we didn't need characters either side saying 'Guess we should time travel', 'Oh gosh we just time travelled'. Rupert made a gorgeous swell of colour and light, which is now a framed poster up on my wall next to a sketch of Dream by Neil Gaiman and a dusty Nintendo 64. It also became the main promo image for the Kickstarter campaign, and a bookplate, so I guess he succeeded!

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## **TWENTY-TWO**

**Panel 1:** Splash page; Kay, having just entered the Truro (air thick with dust), greeted by Murray's back as she stares out the windscreen, at the Earth; the seas, the water is gone, it's grey, dead, rotten.

1. KAY (soft):                      Mur?

END

When we first pitched Future, we were looking at releasing it as 5 issues, hence this first of the five chapters being the traditional 22 pages. In the end, Cast Iron Books published Future as a single graphic novel, but still with those 5 chapters, hence the little 'end of chapter' notes added to the final version.

Written by Tom Woodman / Art by Rupert Smissen / © 2018

**ONE**

1. KAY: Nothing.

2. KAY: No signals from the surface. It's silent down there.

3. MURRAY: Okay then.

4. MURRAY: We're the last two people in the universe.

'No Future' - after launching off into the unknown, this chapter title signals a cold wake-up call. This page was originally the start of issue 2, then the start of Chapter 2 after a couple of black interstitial pages, and now it follows directly on from Chapter 1 (as it turns out those interstitial pages, for various complex reasons, could have cost us thousands of pounds). So it was reintroducing readers (if they've stepped away after the chapter break) to the hard truth that Kay and Murray have leapt from a seemingly hopeless future into a post-hope one.

FUTURE – Tom Woodman and Rupert Smissen

**TWO**

**Panel 1:** Murray is standing, climbing up and over the windscreen and Kay.

1. KAY: There's nothing from the Moon, only auto-signals from Mars and satellites.
2. KAY (soft): But where'd the seas go?

**Panel 2:** Side-on X-ray of ship; Murray now walking on the roof, tapping at the tablet, as below her, Kay analyses her screen and talks.

3. MURRAY: I don't know.
4. KAY: Over ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the Earth's water, gone -- what could even--

**Panel 3:** Murray, stressed, tight-lipped, ill, as she walks along the roof.

5. MURRAY: Asteroid impact? Nanotech? Overzealous geoengineering?
6. MURRAY: Should I keep guessing or shall we find out when we get down there?
7. MURRAY: Stand-by ignition test.

**Panel 4:** Kay getting out of her chair, heading for the airlock into the station proper.

8. KAY: I'm going onto the station, maybe one of the junk satellites is broadcasting something worth listening to.
9. MURRAY: Keep your comms on.

**Panel 5:** Kay crawling into the tunnel between the Truro and KLP.

10. KAY (soft): And take it slow out there, yeah? Don't go all feeble, I'll have no fucking clue what to do.

I wanted to address the questions readers would have here - what the heck happened to Earth, could there be people anywhere else, etc. - reassuring them that we were on top of these questions, but then putting them aside for a while. This is a story about Kay and Murray, and the global picture isn't our focus at this point, their personal situation is. We were ensuring we gave some of the answers while knowing what questions were on the horizon.

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## THREE

Pairs of panels – with 5 a map in the middle?

**Panel 1:** Murray standing on the aft of the ship, a small figure over the ship's huge engines, a tablet in her hand.

1. KAY (OP): So, we thinking the future-data didn't reach them, back home?
2. MURRAY: I guess so.

**Panel 2:** Kay coming in through the airlock of the station – the hatch hisses at the equalisation of pressure, the station angled up.

3. SFX (soft): Tsssss.
4. KAY (OP): Or you think they just ignored that shit? The centuries-worth of numbers saying 'this is why you'll die, don't do **this**' -- that we just stranded ourselves to get?
5. MURRAY: That's the other option.
6. KAY: Magic.

**Panel 3:** Murray's spacesuited finger hovering over a large 'Engage System Test' button on the tablet.

7. KAY (OP): Positives though, we've got our pick of real estate now. We can bang **anywhere** -- speaking of, anyone ever done it in space?
8. MURRAY: Count on it. Reached the monitoring room yet?
9. KAY (OP): Getting there -- oh! And Minister Rothman's dead.

**Panel 4:** Kay 'swimming' up through the station corridor, pulling herself through; the interior of the station is similar to the ISS, although more streamlined.

10. KAY: So that's cool. Fuck that guy.
11. MURRAY (OP): Standby ignition test.

**Panel 5:** A map of the ship and KLP-004, with Kay and Murray shown as two colour-coded lights, an X marked in the middle of the horizontal station ring, marked:

12. TEXT: MONITORING ROOM

**Panel 6:** Angle from directly behind the engines, Murray slightly obscured by their exhaust. As this isn't very visually explosive in reality, it'll need to be a low angle for the sparks etc. to obscure her at all. The sound effect runs as a solid word across Panels 6-8.

13. SFX: rrrrrmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

**Panel 7:** Kay now arriving outside the door to the comms room.

14. SFX: mmm

**Panel 8:** Same as Panel 7, but the exhaust wisping out now.

15. MURRAY: Full ignition, looks like the drones kept everything operational. The Truro's ready to go when we are.
16. MURRAY: Kay?



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17. SFX (fading out): mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

**Panel 9:** Kay standing with her back to us (albeit zero-grav, so bracing herself against a chair and the bulkhead) inside an alcove, marked with the words 'Monitoring Room' on the wall outside it.

18. MURRAY (OP): Kay do you hear me?

I love the cutaway of the Truro that Rupert did for the last page and the map here; again, I love my clear, diagrammatic approaches, and he integrated them beautifully. They're also just a great way of getting an overall picture of the station so that, when Murray's floating around outside, and especially when the explosions begin, we know something of its geography.

Speaking of the Truro, it was named after the city in Cornwall. It originally had a different name, in honour of a modern-day scientist, but then there was a scandal around them and I thought it best to rename. To avoid messing with the lettering drafts we had, I needed a new name with the same number of letters, while for the flow of dialogue I wanted the same starting letter and number of syllables... so Truro became the name.

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## **FOUR**

Just Kay here, for these two pages.

**Panel 1:** Kay inside the Monitoring Room, holding onto the chair and/or bulkhead for support; the room is stocked with laptops, screens, and control panels at odd angles (see reference).

1. KAY: Shit, Mur. They're all dead.

**Panel 2:** Kay squeezing her eyes shut tight.

2. MURRAY (OP): ...

3. MURRAY (OP): Yeah, they are.

**Panel 3:** Kay sits in the chair.

4. KAY: I knew our lot would be gone, but there were meant to be others here. There were meant to be billions of others and... it's just you and me.

5. MURRAY (OP): We tried to help them. They didn't listen.

**Panel 4:** Kay's face, lit by the computer screens.

6. KAY: That's not -- I don't care if... Look, just come back in when you can, alright?

**Panel 5:** Angle from behind Kay, showing the myriad screens in full.

7. KAY: I'm gonna start in on this, find out what happened down there, where's still habitable, landable at least. Maybe... I don't know. Just beep me when you're coming back.

The screens! I scripted lots of these throughout Future, and Rupert was terrified. Fiddly techy business wasn't his idea of a good time, and he in fact left them all until very last thing. Fortunately, he then found a licensable template, from which he could tweak as appropriate, which I think was the happiest day of his life. (He also had a baby during the project, but I don't think that was quite as deep a joy.)

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## **FIVE**

**Panel 1:** Kay's finger and thumb squeezing a section of the jumpsuit collar.

1. KAY: Kay out.

**Panel 2:** Straight on shot of Kay exhaling, cheeks puffed out, trying to calm herself and soldier on.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Same angle, no longer exhaling but talking.

3. KAY: Computer.

4. COMPUTER: Bliep

5. KAY: Conversation mode.

6. COMPUTER: Good afternoon, Engineer Mielniczuk.

7. KAY: Afternoon is it?

8. COMPUTER: It's four-o-seven PM.

9. KAY: On?

**Panel 4:** Same angle, Kay only half-interested.

10. COMPUTER: Saturday the fourteenth September, twenty-three ninety-one.

11. KAY: Huh. It's a Saturday.

12. COMPUTER: Yes, it is Saturday.

**Panel 5:** Same angle, Kay now leaning forward, squinting at the screens.

13. KAY: I need a summary of notable events on Earth, current broadcast signals, and set me up to broadcast.

14. COMPUTER: This station is currently broadcasting the default active message as scheduled. Would you like to hear it?

**Panel 6:** Kay leaning back in her chair.

15. KAY: No, just put me on air and show me the requested data.

16. KAY: Alrighty... afternoon, everybody! We are not automated, this is a live message from KLP-zero-zero-four in orbit.

I'm a little proud of this. In between the initial AI chat and Kay starting her message, I think the mention of the 'default message' goes almost undetected - in the same way we all click through so many automated messages every day - but as we see on the last page of this chapter, it's the key to everything. That's a benefit to the chatty, scattered script style of Future - we're able to sneak in little mentions of things without them standing out as clunky foreshadowing, or just pepper in some world-building or characterful tidbits without them seeming out of place.

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## SIX

**Panel 1:** Long zoom on the space station, showing it hanging, alone in the emptiness.

1. KAY: Engineer Kay Mielniczuk speaking. Anyone out there?  
Don't all rush at once.

**Panel 2:** Murray walking back along the body of the Truro, head down, reattaching the tablet to a magnetized panel on the arm of her suit. Dialogue physically overlapping?

2. MURRAY: There's no-one, just leave it to--

3. KAY (OP): If you don't know, we came here, me and my wife-slash-pilot, Murray, from twenty-seventy-one.

4. MURRAY: Can you hear me or--

5. KAY (OP): Someone was meant to meet us here.

6. MURRAY: Great.

**Panel 3:** Blackness, a sharp 'Z' of light at the top. This is the interior view of a missile silo, not that the reader will know that yet.

7. KAY (OP): Clearly, you've had your own shitstorm to deal with. But, if anyone can get a signal to us...

**Panel 4:** Murray closer to the reader now, as she walks.

8. KAY (OP): This is from space, by the way. Station KLP-zero-zero-four.

9. KAY (OP): We could do with a pick-up or some idea of what's been going on. See, Murray, my wife, is... sick.

**Panel 5:** Murray, stopped, on the back of the Truro.

10. KAY (OP): If you guys don't have wives anymore, it's like, your teammate you like so much you burn all your money on a party. Well she's... her cells are...

11. KAY (OP): There's supposed to be someone here to help her. We really need help.

**Panel 6:** The crack widening, letting in muddy light, dimly illuminating the shape of a missile.

13. KAY (OP): Please.

14. SFX: Rmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

This was a nice way to get Murray to overhear Kay's fear, without having Kay collapse on her; the classic 'overheard message' technique. I do think the scale (and the view) elevates it. Oh, also, weddings are crazy as an idea, right? They're ridiculous, but we love them. This is my statement on the matter.

FUTURE – Tom Woodman and Rupert Smissen

## **SEVEN**

The 'blips' and signal and computer and tightening focus slowly becoming more claustrophobic and intense.

**Panel 1:** Kay in her seat, her head in one hand.

1. KAY: Computer, **you** got a medical database?
2. COMPUTER: For security, this station was shielded from the internet when it destabilised.
3. KAY: Course it did. Okay, listeners, we're broadcasting co-ordinates, and we'll have ears out for--

**Panel 2:** Same angle; Kay now animated, up close to the screen.

5. COMPUTER: Excuse me, Engineer, but we're receiving a new signal.
6. KAY: Holy **shit** -- there's a -- play it!

**Panel 3:** Murray floating along the ship's hull, pressing a button on her collar.

7. MURRAY: Unmute me already--
8. SFX: blip
9. COMPUTER (OP): Playing signal.

**Panel 4:** A light on Kay's jumpsuit collar is now lit. The lyrics float across both panels.

10. SIGNAL (sung): -ut headlights in the rain.

**Panel 5:** Murray atop the Truro.

11. SIGNAL (sung): An' as the nigh-highhht comes setting in
12. MURRAY (soft): no.

**Panel 6:** Side-on of Kay staring, confused, at the screen, her collar lit up once more; slow zoom in on her collar over the next three panels.

13. SIGNAL (sung): An' whispers its way across the roads
14. SFX: blip
15. KAY: Is this... music?

**Panel 7:** Slightly tighter shot of the collar; Kay incredulous – her words over the lyrics of the song.

16. SIGNAL (sung): Those friiiendly faces that you've seen
17. SFX: blip
18. KAY: Computer, origin point for the broadcast?
19. COMPUTER: The signal is coming from multiple locations -- showing on-screen.

**Panel 8:** Tighter shot of the collar – crowded by 'blips'.

20. SIGNAL (sung): All seem to be just strangers again.
21. SFX: blip

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22: KAY: It's everywhere... is this like a radio station?

23: COMPUTER: Unknown.

24: SFX: blip

25: KAY: If someone's out there, can you go live or --

26. SFX: blip

27. KAY: You know what, hold that thought.

**Panel 9:** Tight shot of the collar. Kay's fingers finally squeezing her lit-up collar.

28. SIGNAL (sung): An' I'm sure if you asked

29. SFX: blip

30. KAY: Murray, *what?*

31. SIGNAL (sung): Those strangers as they passed

32. Murray (OP): Get out! Get to the Truro!

33. KAY: What?

Song number two. Ring me up, and I'll sing it to you. If you're wondering, it's a slow, slightly Johnny-Cashy country song. I initially scripted Men at Work's 'Down Under' here, but Colin Hay's agent understandably wanted us to pay for the rights, and it would have been a whole extra complication in the process which we were all happy to do without. I also loved the chaos of sound here; the mounting pressure of the beeping collar, the lyrics, the computer, the speech - it stresses me out just to look at. The reader doesn't know what is wrong, but you can tell we're building to something.

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## EIGHT

**Panel 1:** A shock – Murray yelling as, behind her, the missile streaks past, about to hit the station.

1. MURRAY: Get to the--

**Panel 2:** Same angle as Panel 1, as the missile explodes; Murray thrown aside, everything lit up by flame, tiny bits of debris shooting past.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Missile impact on the station; part of the horizontal ring blown out in a burst of flame, tearing into the Truro; bright colours contrast with the rest of the page.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray tumbling away from the ship along the main body of the station, sharp debris shooting past, still held by her tether. Drag the song lyrics across the next few panels.

4. SIGNAL (sung): You'd never be a-heard of again.

**Panel 5:** The tether goes taut, holding Murray in place as the debris storms by.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Close-up; a piece of debris hits her visor, cracking it.

6. SFX: tnk

**Panel 7:** Murray's horrified face as the visor pieces (high-impact resistant plastic) scatter up and away, our POV moving with the shards, away from Murray; she's instinctually reaching for them as the air escapes her suit.

7. SFX: hssaa

8. MURRAY: Hkk

**Panel 8:** The quiet after the storm; the broken hulk of the Truro; the station mostly still intact though damaged.

9. SIGNAL (sung): Oh no you'd never be a-heard of again.

Boom. The lack of words hopefully gives space for the explosion to be 'heard', and for the reader to hold their breath.

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## **NINE**

The station is slowly turning towards the sun here.

**Panel 1:** Close on debris, floating through space.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Murray floating, unmoving, her back to the station, behind a scattering of visor shards, her hand still vaguely reaching after them.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Close on Murray's eyes, half-closed; a couple of shards still visible.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray's eyes just about closed, a shard floating past and glinting with light, from which comes a tiny voice, illegible.

4. MEM-MURRAY (OP) (quiet):      Maybe some other time.

**Panel 5:** Murray's eyes open, surprise on her face, her head turned after the shard, which is floating onwards. She's bathed in light from the sun.

5. NO COPY

This page is pretty much prep for the upcoming double spread. I wanted to script the long silence here, and to 'ground' us in Murray's situation before the busy weirdness of the next two pages. Whenever we went into a trippier element, forming a very clear image of the start/return point first was key for me - especially this early on in the story. As we go further into the book and Murray's mind deteriorates, those lines could blur further.



**TEN-ELEVEN**

DOUBLE PAGE-SPREAD! The standard panels here replaced by shards of glass, each one a different snapshot of Murray's memory, so all POV. They're all different sizes, different shaped shards of glass; the important ones shouldn't necessarily be bigger or clearer than the unimportant, nor more centrally placed.

Where parts of her are in shot, Murray's a lot healthier in some of these, and younger too.

**Meta-panel/page:** Murray's POV – dozens of pieces of her visor, floating off towards the sun, each one catching the light, each one a different snapshot.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 1:** Child-Murray sitting beside her towering mother on a sofa, eating pizza, watching TV (a man with the head of a dragon is being defended by a superhero-type holding a flickering green candle).

2. TV (soft): Without the candle, he'll cease to exist!

**Panel 2:** Murray sitting with a South Asian woman in a wetsuit, NOOR, both of them dangling their feet in a Neutral Buoyancy Facility swimming pool, as others in suits work underwater on a facsimile space station module (see references).

3. NOOR: Look at them -- Paul's plugged it in wrong.

**Panel 3:** Murray and Kay's wedding, holding hands at the front of a barn-like room, Kay beaming stupidly.

4. KAY:                        Yep. I mean, do. **I** do. Yes.

**Panel 4:** The Truro's windshield as they break orbit; from Chapter 1, Page 18-5,6,7

5. KAY: Oh shit -- fuck! Oh shit, oh shit, oh fuck it.

**Panel 5:** Child Murray sitting up in bed, knees up to her chest under a duvet, doing homework.

6. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Murray reflected in a bauble; smiling, early 30's. Murray's arm holding something (a phone) to her ear (old tech explained later).

7. KAY (phone): Yeah, Kay, like the letter? But a name?

**Panel 7:** Looking at a desk; a doctor is sitting behind it but we don't need to see their face. Focus is on Kay holding Murray's hand.

9. DOCTOR: It's manageable in the short-term, but long-term, options are limited.

As you can see, a scattering of moments here - some teasing upcoming scenes, some showing us snapshots of other moments from Murray's life. It's almost essential to enjoy a non-linear approach during a time travel story, especially as it means we can shake up the story's tone as we go, rather than being solidly caught in the extremely intense few days Future covers. Also, it sets up some beautiful juxtapositions and lets us highlight why the life Kay and Murray have is worth saving, just in time to make you scared they'll lose it.

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**Panel 8:** Fresh-faced Kay, leaning out through a front door towards Murray, her hair longer than today – meet-cute moment.

10. KAY: Just in time, spacegirl.

**Panel 9:** In space; on a phone-size screen floating overhead, the news; DEFORESTED.

11. NEWSWOMAN: And the protected quarter of Amazon's rainforest has been reduced **again** today, the Brazilian government saying it must 'pull its weight' for the national economy or face relocation. Now, over to Qasim with the weather...

**Panel 10:** Walking with a couple of other children under an urban canopy of trees, down an alleyway.

12. FRIEND 1: I'm going to be a spaceman!

13. FRIEND 2: Fuck off you are. What's the point going to space?

**Panel 11:** Kay down on one knee holding a ring, in front of Murray, who, we can see from her gloved hand, is wearing a full spacesuit.

14. MURRAY: Do I wear it over the glove, or...?

15. KAY: I didn't think about that.

**Panel 12:** From the street, looking up at Big Ben's clockface, ablaze, two people talking in front of her.

16. BYSTANDER 1: They say it was eco-types.

17. BYSTANDER 2: What're they starting fires for then?

**Panel 13:** Kay, sitting on the bed, about a year ago; she's been crying.

18. KAY: So what're you gonna fucking do?

**Panel 14:** Sat on a balcony, looking out at a blue, though slightly smoggy, sky; feet up on the balcony handrail alongside Kay's.

19. NO COPY

**Panel 15:** One of KLP's drones, reflected in space in a shard – DRAW IT RUPERT.

20. NO COPY

This was a great opportunity to show some events I'd love to write in full - the wedding, the diagnosis, the proposal, Murray's first serious girlfriend as seen in the NASA Neutral Buoyancy Lab (where astronauts practise for working without gravity), etc.

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## **TWELVE**

**Panel 1:** Drone grabbing Murray, pulling her away from the shards.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Long view on the station, now quiet, with a big hole blown in it and debris still scattering.

2. NO COPY

Panels 3-6 are one strip, a horizontal view metapanel – Murray's re-entry to the station, from exterior airlock into corridor. Red-tinged emergency lighting to keep the pressure on; remember it's all zero-grav.

**Panel 3:** Murray being dragged to the exterior airlock, nothing but blackness and wreckage behind her.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray at the interior door airlock, as it depressurises; Kay the other side of it, her hands on the viewport, desperate to get to Murray.

4. SFX: tss

**Panel 6:** Murray keeling over the other side of the airlock, Kay catching her and helping her drift along. The babble of dialogue should disappear *behind* Kay and Murray - it's not important, we're just showing she's babbling.

5. COMPUTER (backgrnd): All crew members now aboard -- drones attempting repair, please stand by.

6. KAY: I got the bulkheads sealed but I thought you were dead  
I thought it'd hit you and -- where did it fucking come  
from is the station alright are we safe or what do we do  
are you hurt?

**Panel 7:** Murray lying back against the wall, as Kay crouches over her. Again, the babble can be lost behind the figures.

7. KAY: Should I let you lie down or get you in the recovery  
position or doesn't that work in zero-grav or should we  
go to the Truro is it still there? I can't see it. It's gone. I  
think it's gone we're trapped and--

**Panel 8:** Just Kay, and Murray's arm reaching up; the softest possible slap.

8. SFX (soft): slap

**Panel 9:** Same angle, Murray's hand now resting on Kay's shoulder.

9. MURRAY (OP): You were in shock.

I think, even since the first chapter, you can see how much more adept we'd become at having a lot of text without it flooding a panel. Separate note - we considered putting Kay in a suit and getting her outside for a rescue mission, but the reader would've known how that would end before it even began, and pacing-wise, I wanted to focus in on the scrabble to escape the station, which felt altogether more dangerous.

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## **THIRTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray now sat up next to Kay.

1. MURRAY: Is this broken? The visor?
2. KAY: No -- I don't think so?
3. MURRAY: Right. The Truro's gone. We need to go too.

**Panel 2:** POV mounted on a missile just leaving the atmosphere; a second missile is streaking ahead. Way up above is the tiny shape of KLP-004.

4. MURRAY (OP): There'll be other missiles.

**Panel 3:** Murray pressing a button at the side of her neck to open her visor.

5. SFX: shk
6. MURRAY: We need to get you a helmet, we need food and water, and we need to get to the pod.
7. KAY: The pod? The... the time-hop pod?

**Panel 4:** Kay looking wide-eyed and sceptical.

8. MURRAY (OP): The Truro's gone so the pod's the only way. We jump a day forward, station gets hit, crash-lands on Earth -- and we sync back into the timestream amongst the wreckage.
9. MURRAY (OP): With me? Kay?

**Panel 5:** Kay picking Murray up.

10. KAY: Never slap me unless we're in bed, dickhead.

**Panel 6:** They kiss.

11. NO COPY

**Panel 7:** Kiss over, straight back to business.

12. KAY: You get the helmet and prep the pod, I'll get supplies.

I was worried about the slap joke. But allow me to double down by saying Kay's only half-joking. Also, I love the little kiss Rupert drew and Aditya sound-effected for this; a very small and very sweet moment. This was one of the few times Aditya added a sound effect as well, rather than following the script or removing SFX, and it was perfectly judged.

## **FOURTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray float-hobbling to a storage panel by the airlock, as Kay runs off down the corridor.

1. MURRAY: And keep your comms on this time.

2. KAY: Fair!

**Panel 2:** Murray opening the storage panel, to find a spacesuit inside.

3. KAY (OP): How'd you know the missile was coming?

4. MURRAY: The music. It used to be a low-tech way to block signals before launching an attack, guerrilla-tactics SOMs.

5. KAY: SOMs being...?

6. MURRAY: Surface-to-orbit missiles.

**Panel 3:** Kay pulling herself round a corner.

7. KAY: So there might still be people? Missile-firing asshole people but--

8. MURRAY (OP): More likely just leftover drone missiles. People would've upgraded their weapons tech if nothing else.

9. KAY: You sexy fucking optimist, you.

**Panel 4:** Murray drifting away from the cupboard, which she hasn't bothered to close, the other helmet in her hand.

10. MURRAY: Just hurry.

**Panel 5:** Kay has arrived at the pantry (see reference) – focus on the strapped down red and blue cases of food and water.

11. KAY: You hurry.

Again, a little bit of explaining which hopefully doesn't get in the way but trims a story branch neatly - we're not going to spend ages looking for the source of the missiles, and I don't want the reader wondering about that for the next 70-odd pages. And sadly, Murray's point about 'people would've upgraded their weapons if nothing else' is something I very much believe about our civilisation. Even on the way out the door, we'll still be sharpening our spears.

## **FIFTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray at the open hatch into the pod, letting in a shaft of light.

1. MURRAY: Computer, emergency lighting on in the pod.

**Panel 2:** Kay floating past a single laptop, out of the pantry, with four cases; one red and one blue in each hand.

2. KAY: Set the station's thrusters to try crash-landing on a continent; if we end up on seabed, our supplies won't last us to shore.

3. MURRAY (OP): Got it.

**Panel 3:** Same angle; Kay poking her head back into the room, at the laptop.

4. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray tapping at the little keyboard on the black box.

5. MURRAY: I'm setting a fifty-hour jump, in case orbit takes a while to decay, and removing the chronal padlock safety.

6. KAY (OP): The chronal...? Okay sounds great, be right there.

**Panel 5:** The cases at Kay's feet; she's been distracted.

7. MURRAY (OP): Kay, we have to go **now**.

8. KAY: Is your belt on?

9. MURRAY (OP): Kay!

10. KAY: We need somewhere to go **to**, Murray. I'm not surviving this just for you to die down there. Computer--

11. MURRAY (OP): There's no time--

**Panel 6:** Kay, intent as she stares at the computer screen.

12. KAY: Shh! Computer, location of last live governmental transmission from Earth?

13. COMPUTER: Norway, Svalbard.

14. KAY: The seed vault? **Shit** yeah. Upload co-ordinates to the photon box -- along with as much of your recorded data as you can in the next minute.

**Panel 7:** Kay leaving the pantry, cases in her hands.

15. COMPUTER: Beginning upload.

16. KAY: Mur? Sending you co-ordinates.

17. KAY: Crash us there, baby.

And here we're setting up the mission of the next couple of chapters, again in a speedy way. I wanted to focus in on the Svalbard Seed Vault because, I think, it represents a hope and a forward-thinkingness in our real world that is often lacking - as well as because it would likely be one of the few things that would survive into the world we're looking at here. Yes, I checked that we could include the real-life vault in the book. They said yes, though they sounded a bit tired.

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## **SIXTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Kay awkwardly pushing herself along the corridor.

1. COMPUTER:                      Engineer Mielniczuk, the signal has resumed, would you like to hear it?
2. MURRAY (OP):                Missiles incoming -- are you close?
3. KAY:                              Yes!
4. COMPUTER:                    Playing signal.
5. SIGNAL (sung):                --irror keeps showing you that frow-how-hown?

**Panel 2:** Close on two of the cases falling away (a red and a blue) as Kay hurries down the corridor, having ditched them.

6. KAY:                              Computer, no! Signal off! Stop it!
7. KAY:                              Fuckity fuck fuck.

**Panel 3:** Murray has strapped herself into her seat, the other suit on the seat next to her; her free hand now pulls her visor down.

8. SFX:                                snap
9. MURRAY:                        Where are you?
10. KAY (OP):                    Coming!

**Panel 4:** Murray putting her hand over the red button, holding it steady.

11. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Angle on the empty hatch, as Murray holds her hand still.

12. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Murray's hand millimetres from the button.

13. MURRAY:                        Kay?

The last song! This one is available on iTunes, Spotify, and no I'm just kidding I made it up and have no musical clout. It adds a little bit of 'wasted time' as Kay tries to escape, upping the tension. By adding new problems as they're fleeing the station, even just automated nuisances, the build of pressure remains intense.

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## **SEVENTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Kay at the hatch, dragging the two cases.

1. KAY: I brought lunch.
2. MURRAY (OP): Close the hatch, helmet on and strap in before--

**Panel 2:** A view from outside as a missile hits the ring of the station, exploding.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Kay is thrown into the pod, the cases shooting inside as well.

4. SFX: krrrrrooom

**Panel 4:** Murray's hand closes on Kay's wrist.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Murray drags Kay in close, grips her tight.

6. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Murray's free hand hits the button.

7. NO COPY

**Panel 7:** A black strip across the page, with negatived versions of Kay and Murray holding on to each other.

4. SFX: VHOOOOOMMM

**Panel 8:** Empty space where the pod was a moment ago – the station now looks fragile, hollow, much of it broken apart by the impacts.

9. NO COPY

Here's that time travel effect being repeated - we didn't have time for a rehash of the whole plan on this page, as Kay and Murray are deep in action hero mode, but hopefully as soon as that blue and purple effect hits, readers know what it means.



FUTURE – Tom Woodman and Rupert Smissen

## **EIGHTEEN**

**Panel 1:** The broadcast room; there is now fire in the room, sparks, some of the myriad laptops' screens are smashed.

1. COMPUTER: Engineer Mielniczuk, are you still there?
2. COMPUTER: Broadcast has been idle for fifteen minutes. Cancelling broadcast. Playing default message.

**Panel 2:** Same as Panel 1, the flames have progressed slightly. Low angle on the computer, looking up at it.

3. RUPERT: Message for Kay and Murray Mielniczuk, uh, hi? I'm recording this just before you launch.
4. RUPERT: And I'm whispering because I'm not meant to be, but...

**Panel 3:** Retreating backwards out of the door of the broadcast room, into the fire.

5. RUPERT: ...if everything goes sideways I don't like the thought of you two being stranded out there alone.
6. RUPERT: You see, we could be wrong, about time travel, about everything, and if we are...

**Panel 4:** Further back into the corridor – now nothing but flame.

7. RUPERT: ...well it's worse than you think. It's much, much worse -  
- technically, no-one's ever been in as much danger as you are now.
8. RUPERT: Sorry.

**Panel 5:** Out through the still-sealed airlock, the one Murray got back in by; through the airlock you can still see the fire inside the ship, but out here it's peaceful blackness.

9. RUPERT: But then, if that's the case... **and** if I'm correct...
10. RUPERT: There's a way back.

**Panel 6:** Slightly further back again, the core structure of the station.

11. RUPERT: Only one, and it's only theoretical, but just stay calm, stay together.
12. RUPERT: Everything's going to be--

**Panel 7:** In the distance, the whole station explodes.

13. NO COPY

This was one of the most difficult pages of dialogue to get right, because Dr Sommer's speech shows up three times during the book. It needed to flow and work for the three different dramatic moments, and every time I tweaked it for one I had to tweak for the others as well. But it was worth it, especially as I really enjoyed the bathos of cutting 'Everything's going to be fine' in half, leaving readers on tenterhooks.

For those of you hot on your maths, this chapter was 18 pages. It was originally scripted as 22, way back before we signed with Lizzie and co and Future became a graphic novel, but as we progressed those pages became unnecessary. You can see the script for them over in the Deleted Scenes doc, where I've discussed them a little more.

# **FUTURE (CHAPTER 3 – DOWN TO EARTH)**

Written by Tom Woodman / Art by Rupert Smissen / © 2018

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **ONE**

All of these from the same angle – communicate the lack of life and agency.

**Panel 1:** The red and dusty sky of Earth, seen from the cracked and dry surface of a desert that was once a seabed. Peaceful, as a tiny piece of debris hits the rocky ground like a raindrop.

1. SFX: pnk

**Panel 2:** A light rain of metal now.

2. SFX: pnk pnk pnk

**Panel 3:** The bulk of KLP-004 suddenly bursts through the clouds, massive, aflame, burning up on re-entry, perhaps with an initial groan of metal.

3. SFX: pnk pnk pnk pnk pnk pnk

**Panel 4:** Larger chunks of metal strike the ground, as the station falls nearer.

4. SFX: thnk

5. SFX: pnk pnk pnk pnk pnk

**Panel 5:** The station falls nearer, more and more debris crashing everywhere, the rain now a hail.

6. SFX: thnk thnk thnk

7. SFX: pnk pnk pnk pnk pnk

**Panel 6:** The station fills the panel.

8. SFX: thnk thnk thnk

9. SFX: pnk pnk pnk pnk pnk

**Panel 7:** An explosion as the station hits the Earth. No sound effect would cover the enormity.

10. NO COPY

After the intensity of the escape on Page 39, I wanted to step back from Kay and Murray for a few pages - four pages, as it happens, the longest period without them in the whole book. Here, we go from the huge explosion that ended the last chapter to the tiny 'Pnk' it causes on Earth, at least at first, which I think is a nice reset. I can really hear the last panel of the final page as well, so I'm glad we held back on the sound effect there.

Look how much of this page is the words 'pnk' and 'thnk'. Great scripting work, me.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWO**

**Panel 1:** Same angle, night time; the fires have gone out, bar a few tiny licking flames. The station is a hunk of dead metal.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Same angle; dawn. The pod is suddenly at the centre of the wreckage, undamaged.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Same angle; day, sun higher in the sky behind the murk. There are two trails of footprints leading away from the pod, towards the reader.

3. KAY (OP):                      We got here three hours ago.

From this point on, during the issue, we're going from daybreak to night, colour palette slowly darkening.

I saw this page as quite functional (and this and the next were originally squeezed into a single page), but the art Rupert made from it is gorgeous. We're just showing time passing, but he turned it into something I now have on my wall, and we managed to communicate everything so elegantly here, in the footsteps and the changing colour of the sky, and then dusty, tired-looking Murray in her spacesuit, looking so alien on the steps of the church. It's at once clearly Earth, and clearly not a place of safety.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **THREE**

**Panel 1:** An astronaut's footprint in the dust, as if on the Moon.

1. KAY (OP): Murray's alive.

**Panel 2:** A more horizontal angle, showing two trails of footprints, heading away from us, through a narrow, tumbledown alleyway in this relatively old-fashioned town and out onto the former beachfront.

2. KAY (OP): And I'm alive.

**Panel 3:** The footprints follow the beachfront, continuing to a church with a tall, half-ruined stone tower, on a rock-face above the sand (see reference). A helmeted astronaut – Murray, though face hidden to give full focus to the weirdness of the image – sits on the stoop, looking tired.

3. KAY (OP): So in some ways, this is going better than I expected.

We also ended up doing vertical, rather than our originally planned horizontal strips, which I think work much better, especially now we're outside after a claustrophobic Chapter 2. I did say to Rupert that, any time I'd scripted one thing and he saw a better option, he should go for it. Admittedly, a few times I nudged him into reverting, but at least as often he found something much visually cooler (and hopefully more fun for him), as is his way.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **FOUR**

**Panel 1:** Murray sitting on the stoop. She's pale and grey-faced – after all that walking, she's not doing well. The supply cases sit beside her. Kay's voice comes from up above.

1. MURRAY: Well?

2. KAY (OP): Uhh... yeah.

**Panel 2:** Kay's finger pressing the box's screen, which is showing a map of the area downloaded from KLP-004, with a blue circle on the distant mountains the other side of the sea, as well as a text notification.

3. TEXT: Pause recording

4. KAY: So, box's GPS confirms it. The vault's thataway, to the east.

**Panel 3:** View over the tower; huge panel for a huge dust-storm, which is a couple of miles out, lit internally by 'dry lightning', oncoming and dwarfing the quiet once-seaside fishing town like a tsunami. Beached, rusted ships line the coast, huge tankers to tiny fishing boats.

5. MURRAY (OP): The other side of the--

6. KAY: Other side of the shitstorm, yeah.

This town is mostly based on the town of Longyearbyen, the nearest town to the Svalbard Seed Vault, but I actually took inspiration for this church from one in Sitges, Spain; you can see it here if you fancy a look: <https://tinyurl.com/y5zyyyla>. It sits at the edge of town, looking out over a vast sea, and it was perfect for this half-pager.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **FIVE**

**Panel 1:** Kay, peeved, on top of the tower, calling over her shoulder. The box is perched on the broken-up stones.

1. MURRAY (OP):                      You're sure?
2. KAY:                                      The vault's dug into the sodding mountains! Yes I'm sure!
3. MURRAY (OP):                      I meant, 'are you sure the vault's where we should go?'

**Panel 2:** Kay, reassessing her annoyance.

4. KAY:                                      Oh.

**Panel 3:** Murray's view of the porch – a much more enclosed, grey, dull space, getting across her relative uselessness here.

5. KAY (OP):                              Yeah, fair question. Sorry, sweetie. You good down there?
6. MURRAY:                              Peachy.
- Panel 4:** View upwards from down below – Kay is leaning over the edge of the tower, calling down to Murray.
7. KAY (cont'd):                              Look, the Svalbard Seed Vault's this fucking super bunker, built into big ol' mountains--
8. MURRAY:                              --like you said.
9. KAY:                                      --like I said, to protect seeds of endangered plant species from floods, or bombs, or who-knows-what-shit.

**Panel 5:** Kay's view down on Murray.

10. KAY:                                      Then it expanded to DNA of endangered animals, then tech blueprints, *medical* samples...
10. KAY:                                      Basically, they were planning for the end of the world before it was cool.
11. MURRAY:                              I know.

**Panel 6:** Close on Kay, explaining.

12. KAY (soft):                              She knows, great.
13. KAY:                                      But it's also the place KLP said last sent out a government signal, and maybe, as it's a big ol' deep-dug underground bunker, scans might've missed anyone still there *now*.

**Panel 7:** Kay holding up three fingers for Murray to see.

14. KAY (cont'd):                              Bunker, plus medicine, plus, *maybe*, people.
15. MURRAY (OP):                              Seed vault it is then. So, we just wait out the storm.

**Panel 8:** Kay now squinting at the storm, frustrated/determined.

16. KAY (cont'd):                              ...Box GPS says we're a hundred and fourteen miles out.
17. KAY (cont'd) (soft):                      Fuck my nuts.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

18. KAY (cont'd):                      Okay, I'm getting naked.

Once again, laying out the chapter's mission in a succinct little discussion, so we can get into it. I think there are four 'briefings' as I called them throughout the book - the VR one in Chapter 1, the escape plan in 2, this, and the plan in Chapter 5. All of them were edited down and down, and - hopefully - remain fun and characterful, while you wait for the journey to get back underway.

Really impressed by how tidy Aditya kept the lettering here, despite all the back and forth and vertical difference between the speakers. Murray's speech bubbles peeking over the wall in the first panel are a particular favourite.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **SIX**

**Panel 1:** The tower, speech bubbles appearing at intervals down it as Kay makes her way downstairs.

1. MURRAY: Kay, keep the suit on.  
2. KAY: I'm not going a hundred fourteen miles in this--  
3. MURRAY: There could be airborne toxins.  
4. KAY: Shallow breaths then.  
5. MURRAY: That's not--  
6. KAY: And the station didn't report any! And it's **boiling**!  
7. MURRAY: The suit's got built-in cooling.  
8. KAY: Which clearly isn't doing a fuck-of-a-lot.

**Panel 2:** Kay trotting out the door of the tower, past Murray, struggling one-handed with the neck of her suit as Murray, pulling herself to her feet, protests.

9. MURRAY: You'll only be hotter without it.  
10. KAY: Thanks sweetcheeks, now how do you--  
11. SFX: snap

**Panel 3:** Kay, paused in the street, has lifted off the helmet and is sniffing the air, warily. Murray approaching from behind.

13. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Kay more relaxed, breeze in her hair, eyes closed, smiling, as she undoes the collar of the suit. Murray looks unsteady.

14. KAY: Eh, smells better than London. Bit thin. Come on, ditch the suit.

**Panel 5:** Kay has looked round – pulling the main suit off her shoulders, revealing the long-john-type undersuit – to see Murray unconscious in the street.

15. KAY: Seriously, it's fi--  
16. KAY: Oh shit.

**Panel 6:** Kay's head looming over Murray, the sandstorm approaching behind her, as Murray's vision fritters away into blackness, like that of the next page.

17. KAY: Mur?  
18. LEILA (soft): It isn't a matter of willpower, of tenacity.

We initially discussed adding logos or colour schemes to Kay and Murray's suits, to differentiate between them, but it would've been a lot of extra fiddliness to work into every single panel. So instead, to ensure readers knew who was who, we couldn't keep them in the helmets for the whole issue - especially not when Kay has that hair. I've also been reliably informed that our third panel here is a 'thirst trap'.



FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **SEVEN**

1-3 a horizontal line of panels, as Murray comes to?

**Panel 1:** Blackness.

1. LEILA (OP):                      You **are** going to die.

**Panel 2:** The blackness giving way to patches of colour and hazy light.

2. LEILA (OP):                      Soon.

**Panel 3:** Murray's POV, looking up at heavy, orange-grey clouds. A water packet with a straw is being held in her face – paralleling Leila telling Murray she'll die with Kay doing the basics to keep her alive.

3. KAY:                                  Drink this.

**Panel 4:** Murray is sat up on top of a car, now holding the bottle, in the middle of a vast outdoor car park filled with rusted, though futuristic, cars. The box and supply cases are next to her, while Kay (jagged broken girder in hand) is already off again, checking on a nearby car. Strong winds, so Kay's shouting over her shoulder and eddies of dust are already brushing past.

4. KAY:                                  What's that now, twice in two days? Wish we'd saved your meds from the Tyson.

5. MURRAY:                          Why am I on a car?

6. KAY:                                  So I don't lose you while I try to break into one of these bastards.

**Panel 5:** Murray rubbing at her eyes as Kay pries, with the girder, at the pressure-plate (door handle) of a car.

7. KAY:                                  They're all bio-locked, I think. And you've gotten really light. Hungry?

7. MURRAY:                          Not really.

8. KAY:                                  Eat anyway.

9. MURRAY:                          Shouldn't we be inside somewhere?

**Panel 6:** Murray getting down off the car as she looks up at the storm, which is now billowing above them, Kay still prying.

10. KAY:                                No, we're getting a car an' going to the vault. Even if it's through the shitstorm.

11. KAY:                                Literal storm, metaphorical shit.

12. MURRAY:                          Kay, we need to get inside right--

13. KAY:                                Oh wow shut up!

'You are going to die' - this is a little tease of a scene coming up in Chapter 4 of Murray and her mother, a scene which has sat at the core of the self-defeating pessimist Murray has become. That scene could have felt a little isolated or 'out of nowhere', especially as its partner is now a deleted scene (again, available to read in that document), so having this lead-in was important.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **EIGHT**

**Panel 1:** Kay straining with the stone in the pressure plate. Maybe some of the words lost off-panel, or 'under' the wind; she's rambling/raging.

1. KAY: Mur I've got no medicine no gadgets no transport because this has gone **massively** tits-up,
2. KAY: No fucking medical training outside of ACPR, so I'm scared you're gonna stop breathing any second, and then I'm left with your corpse, buried in a sandstorm, in the distant fucking future.
3. KAY: So we're gonna find a cure before you **fucking** die, so we're going to the **fucking** vault, so let me get us a fucking car before we **fucking--**

**Panel 2:** The door pops open in Kay's hand.

4. SFX: knk

**Panel 3:** The bonnet opens up with a pressurised hiss; Kay's groping in the passenger's footrest, as Murray waits beside the car.

6. SFX: hss
7. KAY: Oh shit!

**Panel 4:** Kay looking excitedly at Murray, as Murray looks down into the bonnet, at the engine.

8. KAY: Oh shit!

**Panel 5:** The engine; a silver and white block that looks very little like a car engine.

9. KAY (OP): Oh. Shit.
10. KAY (OP): This is... I **think** it's an engine?

**Panel 6:** Kay with her hand on Murray's shoulder, gently pushing her away.

11. KAY: Okay, lemme get into this.

Kay's face, and the reflection of her face Rupert made for this first panel. Amazing. As was how far we've come from Chapter 1 - again, Kay pours out all of this text but it fits so much better on the page, because myself, Rupert, and Aditya have grown in concert. Well okay, maybe Aditya was already fully-grown, but Rupert and I definitely got better at dealing with this sort of dialogue as we went along.

Let's also address the 'Oh shit!' joke, which took quite a bit of reworking. My background is comedy, so I'm brutally precise on jokes; if a single element is out of place, it won't sell. Panel 4 was going to have the deadpan 'Oh, shit.' but it just didn't work with the layout Rupert wanted. So we changed Kay's unhappy face in Panel 4 to her happily having not yet looked at the engine, and the joke worked again! Phew.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **NINE**

**Panel 1:** From the storm's perspective, bearing down on the town and the cars like a wave; time is passing.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Kay shielding her sweaty face as she comes back from the bonnet, down the left of the car, towards the driver's window; Murray is seated behind the wheel, the supply crates and box on the back seat.

2. SFX: kthunk

**Panel 3:** Kay leaning over the top of the driver's side door.

3. MURRAY: It thinks it stun-shocked you while you were breaking in. Forty-eight times. Authorities have been called.

4. KAY: They'll never take us alive.

**Panel 4:** Close on Kay, impatient to relay all the info.

5. KAY (cont'd): So, bad news, I can't jumpstart the engine. I'm pretty sure it's powered by quantum entanglement, which is... I mean even if I had my tools I wouldn't have the tools, y'know?

6. KAY: Good news though, I **can** cut the handbrake, and, from the edge of town it's all downhill for a while, giving us a chance to get it going.

**Panel 5:** Kay kissing Murray on the forehead over the open door.

7. KAY: Grab the wheel, I'll do the rest.

8. SFX: smk

9. KAY: And remember, Norwegians drive on the right.

**Panel 6:** Same angle, door closed, Kay has walked away, Murray looks exhausted.

10. NO COPY

**Panel 7:** Same angle – Murray looking surprised as the car is pushed through the panel; Kay is at the back, straining, pushing the car with unending determination. These last three panels are basically a metaphor for the whole damn book.

11. KAY: hff hff

I love this opening exchange, very proud. Also, Kay pushing a car full of sad Murray is a perfect encapsulation of their relationship here. Wait, I've already mentioned that in the script itself - you know, it's hard for present-Tom to add detail when past-Tom never shuts up.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TEN**

**Panel 1:** The front wheel of the car just at the edge of the hill, ready to roll away downhill, the sound effect the wheel coming to rest in the sand.

1. SFX: crk

**Panel 2:** Kay bent double by the back of the car, having just pushed it here.

2. KAY: hff hff

3. KAY (cont'd): Cars... have not gotten any lighter.

**Panel 3:** The tiny car on the precipice before the brunt of the 80-foot storm, the wind whipping around them. The bulks of several beached ships are being engulfed as the storm approaches.

3. KAY: So... need a pee break first?

4. KAY (cont'd): ...Alright then.

**Panel 4:** Kay pushing at the car door – sound of the sand shifting under the wheel.

5. SFX: crk

**Panel 5:** The car rolling down the hill as Kay pulls herself into it, shutting the door.

6. KAY: Budge up!

7. SFX: crkcrkcrkcrkcrkcrk

**Panel 6:** The car shooting into the storm, sound effect fading out.

8. SFX (soft): crkcrkcrkcrkcrkcrk

**Panel 7:** Silence, stillness, the sound of the car's wheels has faded away.

9. NO COPY

**Panel 8:** Car engine starting.

10. SFX: Brrrrmmm

11. KAY: Yes baby!

For the next ten pages, we intentionally planned a degree of monotony. No, honest. Kay and Murray are starting a long trudge across the seabed, and it's only going to get harder and more difficult - and we wanted readers to feel that, to suffer with them. Don't blame me, it's for your own good.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **ELEVEN**

**Panel 1:** View through the windscreen, only vague shapes of ships looming and visibility a couple of feet ahead. Kay is peering forward, putting on her seatbelt, Murray has the box on her lap and is looking at its screen. Sand is rattling against the windscreen, a thousand tiny impacts.

1. SFX: ptt ptt ptt ptt ptt ptt  
2. KAY: Nice and slow. Niiice and slow, can't see shit. How far?  
3. MURRAY: Ninety-six point four miles.

**Panel 2:** The car, passing between the hulking shapes of beached ships.

4. KAY: Okay, at this speed, day's drive.  
5. SFX: clnk

**Panel 3:** Murray's found a passport-style driver's license/registration in the glove compartment.

6. KAY: What's that?  
7. MURRAY: License, last renewed twenty-one thirty-two.  
8. MURRAY: ...they only lasted a few decades after we left.

**Panel 4:** Kay, processing, staring out the front window.

9. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Same angle, Kay scared into expressive waving about.

10. KAY: Or maybe he just ditched his car -- or maybe cars went out of fashion, or got banned or the town flooded, whatever!

**Panel 6:** Same angle, Kay calmer again.

11. KAY: ...  
12. KAY (cont'd): Or maybe it's not so bad we got gone when we did.

That aforementioned monotony is reflected by the unrelenting red/brown colour palette for these few pages. We also used the distance (starting here at ninety-six-point-four miles) to try and tackle the problem from a few angles, making it clear this is a pretty long, intense journey (especially when, spoiler, they end up on foot).

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWELVE**

**Panel 1:** Car from above, driving through the maze of rusted hulls, though they're thinning out now.

1. KAY: I think we're almost through the ships. How far now?

**Panel 2:** Murray half asleep, Kay shaking her with her free hand.

2. MURRAY: Mmm?

3. KAY: Come on, I don't... you shouldn't fall asleep. Just wait 'til we get there, yeah?

4. KAY: How far?

5. MURRAY: Seventy-four.

**Panel 3:** The light is slightly redder – sunset is approaching.

6. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray looking out her window, her eyes heavy, her face even greyer than before, Kay chattering behind her.

7. KAY: ...eep hearing it, you know? It's catchy.

**Panel 5:** Murray's POV - lids shutting, blurring over the image – Murray's falling asleep.

8. KAY (OP): Or maybe it's PTSD, I dunno.

**Panel 6:** Lids open again – everything's underwater.

9. KAY (OP): You listening?

**Panel 7:** Still Murray's view, out the windscreen – a dead whale on the seabed ahead.

10. KAY: Shit you're not asleep again are y--

**Panel 8:** Murray's hands grabbing the wheel.

11. KAY: Hey whoa!

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## THIRTEEN

**Panel 1:** The car skidding through the sand, at an angle, as Murray pulls them off-course.

1. SFX:                      screee

**Panel 2:** Kay pushing Murray back into her seat with one hand, the other on the wheel, Murray looking out the windows, confused.

2. Kay: Mate, fuck off!

3. MURRAY: I thought we... we were underwater.

4. KAY: Yeah it's called a dream, you big floppy tit! Jeez, you could've made us--

**Panel 3:** Same image; they've hit something, Kay's side of the car part caved-in from the impact, as she's thrown about, the side windscreen cracked but not broken in.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Kay and Murray inside the car, both dishevelled, a couple of cuts etc., neither seriously hurt.

6. KAY: Ow.

**Panel 5:** From outside, the car has come to rest diagonally, one wheel in a crack in the ground.

7. COMPUTER (soft): Accident recorded, emergency services notified.

'Big floppy tit' - there was a point where Kay had many more super-colourful insults, but they got in the way and felt too 'written', too much like a game the writer was playing, which pulled you out of the story. It was a real kill your darlings moment, but I'm sure I'll get round to playing that game sometime. In fact, I'll include all those swears in the Deleted Scenes doc, why not?

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## FOURTEEN

**Panel 1:** Kay looking at Murray, who's undoing her seatbelt.

1. KAY: You good? What'd we hit? Did we hit something?
2. MURRAY: I think maybe we did.

**Panel 2:** Murray climbing into the back, looking out the rear window.

3. KAY (OP): This trip isn't going great.

**Panel 3:** Through the rear window, the skeleton of a whale in the middle-distance, half-hidden in the dust storm. Part of it has been broken off by the car's impact and scattered across the desert.

4. KAY: Wow. I didn't see.

**Panel 4:** Murray sitting back into the seat, exhausted, confused, still staring at the whale skeleton.

5. KAY: Is the box okay?
6. MURRAY: It's here.
7. KAY: And... you? You awake?

**Panel 5:** Murray looking away from the skeleton, forcing a smile for Kay.

8. MURRAY: That woke me up, actually.

I feel bad about some of the reference images I made Rupert look up. But here in the finished page, he's created an incredibly intricate whale skeleton, even though it's only going to be seen in the distance for one panel. Madness. It's easy, as the writer, to forget how much you're asking in certain panels, but to Rupert's immense credit he never complained. Well, he did say he didn't like drawing spaceships... but that wasn't until halfway through, and he'd already signed the contract, so that's his own fault.



FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **FIFTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray in the seat behind Kay, wrapping her arm round her neck affectionately.

1. KAY: Engine's stopped, I can't restart it without a hill or... shit, we're gonna have to walk. Can you walk?
2. MURRAY: Could we jump-start it?
3. KAY: With?

**Panel 2:** Murray has picked up the box, dangling it next to Kay.

4. KAY: No. Nuh-uh, that's our GPS -- plus our record of everything that's happened to us, to **Earth**.
5. MURRAY: Record for **who**? There's no-one--

**Panel 3:** Kay outraged, pushing the box back into the back seat, into Murray's arms.

6. KAY: Look I'm not hooking it up to fuck-knows-what voltage and hoping!
7. KAY: You astronaut, me engineer. Next time we're in space, you can make decisions again.

**Panel 4:** Straight on view of Murray behind Kay, one arm still wrapped round her, which Kay is grasping on to.

8. KAY: ...
9. KAY: So, fifty miles without a car?
10. MURRAY: Forty-eight.
11. KAY: Grand. Suits on, we should go.

**Panel 5:** Both of them looking a little deflated.

12. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Same angle.

13. KAY: Want to make out first?

I like the fact that, now they've hit Earth, Kay has an excuse to take command as the car-fixing, vault-hunting wife. But it's also that Murray's running on fumes. If I ever get stuck on how to say something in a script, I have a couple of techniques, one of which is to try to say the other half of the statement instead of the bit that won't come out. So if 'It's daytime' is sounding too on the nose, instead I'll approach it as 'It's not night'. So rather than pushing Murray's weakness here, we've been focused on Kay picking up responsibilities, which hopefully says the same thing, albeit more subtly.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **SIXTEEN**

Maybe close angles, so that we're not watching them, we're lost with them.

**Panel 1:** The car, obscured by the storm, Murray sitting next to it. Kay, fully suited and helmeted, climbing out through the door of the car, box in one hand, supplies strapped to her shoulders. Murray is waiting for her on the ground.

1. KAY: So you don't think there's anyone at the vault?

2. MURRAY: Neither do you. Not really.

**Panel 2:** Kay leading the way, looking at the box screen for directions.

3. KAY: ...

4. KAY: This way.

**Panel 3:** Walking, as the light continues to dim, going from reddish to grey. Murray's helmet lights are lit up, Kay just switching hers on.

5. SFX (soft): bmmm

**Panel 4:** Walking, lights cutting through the sandstorm.

6. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Walking past a huge drilling platform – advanced but rusted and collapsed now, a shape in the storm.

7. NO COPY

This is one of those pages where Rupert seemed to copy + paste from my mind. And that drilling platform, once again given how briefly it features in the story, is so meticulously detailed.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **SEVENTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Kay at the top of a slight dune, looking up for the sky, not that she can see far, Murray not even looking up from her feet.

1. KAY: Is the storm getting worse or--  
2. MURRAY: It's getting dark.

**Panel 2:** Kay coming back down the dune to pull Murray up.

3. KAY: We've gotta come out the other side sometime, right?  
This'd be easier without a hundred tonnes of flying desert.  
4. MURRAY: Could be \*hff\* could be a thousand miles of this yet.

**Panel 3:** Having reached the top, Kay starts off again, just as Murray is distracted by shapes in the storm.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Kay's back foot still in-panel, another Kay and Murray wander the other way, in the background, half-observed by the storm, their words illegible. They're not in suits, and walk as if there's no storm in their way.

6. ALT-MURRAY (observed): The engine anyway.

7. ALT-KAY (observed): Aw man I hate that fucker. But if we hook it up to the...

**Panel 5:** They walk off panel, Murray's headlamps go out.

8. SFX (soft): bmmm

**Panel 6:** Murray stumbling after them, tripping on something as they fade into the storm.

9. MURRAY: ***Wait!***

10. SFX: tnk

**Panel 7:** Murray falls into the sand.

11. NO COPY

**Panel 8:** Murray looking back at what she caught her foot on – a half-buried, cracked astronaut helmet; hers, from the missile attack on the Tyson – despite the fact she's wearing it.

12. NO COPY

The final lines and originally scripted lines for 'Alt' Kay and Murray are quite different. In the end, they're discussing a patch job on some machinery, which is because... well I'm not going to tell you. Look, it seems silly to hold anything back on the wild off-chance of ever returning to these characters. But that's what I'm going to do.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **EIGHTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray picking up the helmet, staring into the blurred reflection in the visor.

1. MURRAY:                      That's not...

2. KAY (OP):                      Murray!

**Panel 2:** Kay approaching Murray from behind, so we can't see what she's holding.

3. KAY:                              I couldn't see you. Your lamp battery die too?

4. MURRAY (soft):                      There's something wrong with... I don't get it.

**Panel 3:** Murray holding up her hand to Kay; nothing but sand, running from her gloved fingers.

5. MURRAY:                      I found this.

**Panel 4:** Kay's shocked face, as she realises something's wrong with Murray.

6. KAY:                              Right, that's...

**Panel 5:** Kay trying to pull Murray up to her feet and away, Murray confused.

7. KAY:                              Come on, we gotta keep going...

8. MURRAY:                      No, sorry, I... I know that wasn't...

9. KAY:                              Forget it, just come on, we've got a long way left to go.

10. MURRAY:                      I can't. I can't go further.

**Panel 6:** Kay squinting into the desert, making a decision.

11. KAY:                              ...Okay. We'll stop, but not here.

**Panel 7:** Kay lifting Murray up to her feet and away.

12. KAY:                              Just hold on to me, alright? I found a place.

There was a draft of Future where we explained Murray's hallucinations far more, what's real and what isn't, but it reduced their effectiveness and unsettling edge. I wanted this one in particular, where Murray realises she's not holding a helmet at all, to feel like when you wake up confused in the middle of the night, half still in your dream, half embarrassed as you realise that what you're doing or saying has no basis in reality. I... sleepwalk a lot.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **NINETEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray, half-conscious, being walked forward by Kay, as it grows truly dark, the sandstorm buffeting them.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Kay and Murray approaching a crevice in the desert, within which it's pitch black (please see start of 4, for what crevice-design will work for both).

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Kay helping Murray down into the crevice; it's dark, like slipping into a shadow.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** 1/2 page of blackness.

4. NO COPY

This page slowly descends into dark; I wanted to creep to the edge of complete hopelessness here, until Kay lights the fire on the next page. I'm not here for over-subtle imagery, folks.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY**

**Panel 1:** 1/2 page of blackness, equal size to panels 1-3 on page 20. Tiny sparks of light at the centre bottom of the panel, coming from wires.

1. SFX: ktkk

2. SFX: ktkk

**Panel 2:** The sparks blossom into flame – illuminating Kay and Murray. Murray is lying back against the rock wall, looking up at the clouded sky. Kay is helmetless again, has sparked two wires from underneath the box's keyboard to start the fire, using a lump of crusty old wood. The box is at her side, disconnected from the suit.

3. KAY: Found the driftwood out in the sand.

4. KAY: And yeah I'm messing with the wires but... desperate times.

**Panel 3:** Kay lifts the helmet off Murray's head; Murray looks very ill, tired.

5. KAY (cont'd): We'll stay here 'til it's light or 'til the storm's passed, cuddle for warmth, yeah?

**Panel 4:** Kay opening up one of the supply crates.

6. MURRAY (soft): How far?

7. KAY: About thirty-six miles. So... one more day, easy.

8. MURRAY (soft): I can't--

9. KAY: Well you're gonna.

**Panel 5:** Kay feeding Murray with a straw, the fire crackling between them.

10. KAY: And the storm'll clear and the air'll be fresh and it'll be light again. Alright?

11. KAY: Hey, stay awake.

12. MURRAY (soft): Yeah.

This whole sequence in the trench, the pause in their journey across the wasteland, was our greatest chance across the book to pause the plot and get philosophical, right at the mid-point, as you do when you're looking up at the stars round a campfire.

The 'soft' lettering for Murray is genuinely difficult to read. We wanted readers to be basically leaning in, as if listening to Murray's faint whispers.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY-ONE**

**Panel 1:** Kay has taken hold of Murray's hand, is looking up at the storm and sky.

1. KAY: Last two people on Earth, sitting in a hole.
2. MURRAY: No-one'll know how far we got.
3. KAY: I told you--
4. MURRAY: I don't mean us, I mean... like Christmas.

**Panel 2:** Murray leaning her head on Kay's shoulder, exhausted.

5. MURRAY: Presents, jingles... we did that for **thousands** of years. Who'd believe it unless they'd seen it?
6. MURRAY: Everything humanity ever did, and no-one will know.

**Panel 3:** Murray's wry smile, sleepy eyes.

7. KAY: Yeah well, yesterday 'humanity' was extinct. And now here we are again, making fire.
8. MURRAY (soft): We... we going to repopulate the Earth?
9. KAY: Happy to try if you are.

**Panel 4:** Murray looking down into the fire.

10. MURRAY (soft): I saw things. In the storm.
11. KAY: So? You're exhausted.
12. MURRAY (soft): And up on the station. It's not exhaustion or... It's me. My head. Everything's coming apart.

**Panel 5:** Their hands holding each other in front of the flickering fire.

13. MURRAY (soft): So even if there was a cure at the seed vault – and we both know there isn't – but even if there was, it's too late.

**Panel 6:** Murray drifting off.

14. MURRAY (soft): I'm sorry.
15. KAY: Just hold on to me, we'll figure something out.

**Panel 7:** Kay checking the sleeping Murray's pulse.

16. KAY (soft): Just keep breathing, bud.

A tiny refuge in the dark and also, in a multitude of ways, their lowest point. I'm only now realising that Rupert has used black borders for the last six pages, which adds to that oppressive, hopeless feel, and the idea of night falling and visibility reducing. Nice.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY-TWO**

All from same POV – Murray's, if she was awake.

**Panel 1:** Kay looking up and out of the crevice, considering.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Talking to Murray, down on her shoulder.

2. KAY: Maybe aliens? Maybe aliens will know how far we got.

**Panel 3:** Warming to the idea, more expressive – like a child playing make-believe while Murray sleeps.

3. KAY: You know? And they'll find, like, half an old Christmas CD and laser it back together and they'll be all, 'huh, these earthlings were pretty good'.

**Panel 4:** Kay gently leans Murray against the wall instead of her shoulder.

4. KAY: I know you're always like, 'meh meh meh, Fermi Paradox, all the aliens must've self-destructed' but... shit, Mur, I wasn't made for pessimism.

**Panel 5:** Kay picks up her helmet, brushes it off.

5. KAY: Which is why I gotta go.

6. KAY: I'll leave half the supplies, and the box. I'll use my suit GPS, an' hopefully the storm'll clear soon enough and...

The way Rupert approached Kay's speech here has a dreamlike quality to it, mostly delivered from Murray's half-conscious POV. It's an approach which reminds me a little of Puck's closing monologue in Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* - the first comic to win the World Fantasy Award, so, hint hint.



FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY-THREE**

This page done from Murray's POV, if she was awake.

**Panel 1:** Talking to Murray.

1. KAY: Here's the thing, Murray Mielniczuk. I still think we're gonna get home. And I still think you're gonna get better.

**Panel 2:** Still talking to Murray, still expressive.

2. KAY: I don't have any more reason to hope than you do, and sure, the world's never been tougher. Even before we crashed out here, even before your diagnosis.
3. KAY: But I can't give up on you the way you gave up on yourself.

**Panel 3:** Talking to Murray.

4. KAY: Because the past is gone and the present is fucked and the future is all we've got. It's all anyone ever fucking had.
5. KAY: And you're my future, and I'm yours.

**Panel 4:** Looking away, hurt.

6. KAY (soft): So why aren't you raging to the fucking end to stay with me?

**Panel 5:** Kay getting up, moving toward panel, kissing Murray's head.

7. KAY: Fuck it, I'll leave a note.
8. SFX: smk

**Panel 6:** Blackness, the sound of the fire going out.

9. KAY (OP): Just stay here.
10. SFX: tss
11. KAY (OP): Hold on.

This is also one of my favourite bits of dialogue from the book, and the longest monologue as well. It's a speech I needed to hear, hope against all odds. And the flow of silliness into hopefulness into anger and affection - I think - works wonderfully, the contrast making each more acute. It's also the bit of the book that makes me most reliably tear up. I really hope to get at least one out-loud laugh and snuffle from every reader.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## TWENTY-FOUR

**Panel 1:** Murray's hand, un-held. It's day. The storm has passed, leaving just a light haze in the air.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** The box now hooked to Murray's suit by a carabiner – a note typed out on the screen (needn't be legible). A single spark of electricity arcs over the box.

2. TEXT: Gone for medicine. Not going to let you die. K

**Panel 3:** Rising view looking down on Murray (see reference). She's part-buried by the sand.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Our view still rising, as voices, like when Murray was out in space with a cracked visor, come from nowhere, illegible.

4. VOICES (soft): \*\*

**Panel 5:** A black strip across the page, negative version of Murray on the ground; extra blackness around the photon box itself.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Same as 5, but the whole seabed is now on the bottom of the sea, the voices flowing through the water like currents.

6. VOICES: You won't be missing out on much.

7. VOICES: It's silent down there

8. VOICES: Just hold my hand

9. VOICES: Desperate times

10. VOICES: I'm almost done out here

11. VOICES: This isn't the sad human condition I'm talking about.

12. VOICES: What's the point going to space?

13. VOICES: Just in time, spacegirl.

**Panel 7:** Same as 6, but Murray's eyes opened, looking up at us in panic, a stream of bubbles from her mouth rising towards the reader, almost lost within the voices, a random mishmash of dialogue from throughout the series.

14. VOICES: \*Any\*

This time, the time travel effect even comes without the sound effect - but it's clear, right? The last panel of this page is scripted as 'Any' (which wasn't really fair of me, was it?), and because I forgot to replace that placeholder, the lettered draft was delivered without letters for this panel. I started putting lines in there for the second draft of Aditya's letters, but eventually decided it was best without - the horror of Murray's face as she wakes hits harder without.

# **FUTURE (CHAPTER 4 – VAULT)**

Written by Tom Woodman/ © 2018

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **ONE**

**Panel 1:** Night - feet clambering over moonlit sandstone, up an incline, in the sandstorm.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Kay, determined, grubby and exhausted and badass, eyes narrowed, looking up ahead at something huge, as she drinks from one of the water packets from the ration cases via straw. She's still carrying a supply case.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** The seed vault, built into the cliff face. The door to the vault is the same as today (<https://tinyurl.com/yb6f8bw8>), albeit reinforced – and dented. The ice is, of course, gone. The vault as a whole has undergone a huge amount of reinforcement and expansion, something like an oil rig built into the now-sandstone cliff face, some of the 'legs' damaged and bent by hundreds of years of wear. Can't see over it due to the dark and the storm, for the sake of chapter 5.

3. NO COPY

The start of Chapter 4; this chapter was actually called 'Vault / Drowned' in most drafts, as it's made up of two very separate stories - Kay's in the vault, and then Murray's walking across the seabed. I was quite nervous about the effects of splitting the two of them up for a chapter, whether they'd still be entertaining without the double act approach, but it turns out they could stand on their own, that the 'wrongness' of their separation makes the reunion more satisfying, and that they were both constant presences in each other's stories, as motivation and, frequently, hallucination.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWO**

**Panel 1:** The seed vault door, a light on a half-functional panel by the door as Kay approaches.

1. SFX: Byong
2. SVALA: Hallo. Hvilket språk vil du foretrekke?
3. KAY: Engelsk.
4. SVALA: Okay, English.

**Panel 2:** Focus on the lit-up panel.

5. SVALA: Hello, citizen, I'm Svala. Welcome to the Svalbard Seed Vault. The vault is closed for tours today, please contact--

**Panel 3:** Kay sat against the outer frame of the door, exhausted, the panel over her shoulder.

6. KAY: Emergency interface, Svala. Anyone in there? Any people?
7. SVALA: The vault is currently unoccupied.

**Panel 4:** Kay hanging her head, defeated.

8. KAY: ...No people?
9. SVALA: Correct, there are currently no on-site staff, though security alarms are functional throughout--

**Panel 5:** Kay's head up, back to business.

10. KAY: I need the vault database. What do I do?
11. SVALA: Scheduled maintenance has been missed over a number of years. There has been a cataclysmic event.
12. KAY: Shit **yeah** there has.

**Panel 6:** Kay standing herself up.

13. SVALA: You will therefore be granted access to basic systems.
14. KAY: Yeah? ...ooh, dizzy. Long walk.
15. SVALA: Do you need medical assistance?
16. KAY: Yeah maybe.

**Panel 7:** The door begins to grind open, slowly – darkness inside.

17. SVALA: Searching... no assistance available.
18. KAY: Fucking delightful.

**Panel 8:** Kay slipping, impatient, through the part-opened door, into the vault.

19. SVALA: Welcome in, citizen.
20. SVALA: Shame about the weather.

Svala is a lovely comedic partner for Kay. I really didn't want Kay talking to herself or wandering around mutely - that's not why Svala came about, but I'm definitely pleased I included her! It's also just fun to write a polite, imperfect AI, as they can do things that trip humans up, and provide conversation without company. Also, there's a tiny little Travis (the band) reference in the final line of this page, but don't tell them or they'll want royalties.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **THREE**

A guided tour of the seed vault, expanded from: <https://qph.fs.quoracdn.net/main-qimg-07ee90cf799997b348dac5eb4bc853b6>.

**Panel 1:** A shaft of moonlight down a reinforced tube-shaped corridor (see 'Deep inside the mountain' ref), outlining Kay's silhouette; her breath is freezing and visible.

1. KAY: I need food supplies, tools, and access to your medical database. That last one first.
2. KAY: Oh, and lights, Svala.
3. SVALA: byong

**Panel 2:** The corridor outside a control room, spilling light into the corridor, Kay's breath trailing out. On the corridor floor, the arrow points into the room.

4. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Same corridor, Kay now leaning against the control room doorframe on her way out of the room – crestfallen.

5. KAY (soft): They never cured it.
6. SVALA: I didn't catch that, please repea--
7. KAY: Just shut up.
8. KAY: ...Okay, food. Show me the way.

**Panel 4:** Kay's feet as she hurries up a staircase, well-lit, arrows up the sides. (i2.wp.com/www.curious technologist.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/71f45e72780a49519fa5bea1afb8d69a\_18.jpg?w=1000)

9. KAY: Svala, I know it's gotta stay kinda cold to keep the seeds intact but... can you turn the heat up?
10. SVALA: No.
11. KAY: No.

**Panel 5:** Kay sitting, hunched over, mouth full, an empty nutrition packet in her hand.

12. KAY: This tastes like crap.
13. SVALA: Rather than emergency rations, visitors are directed to enjoy our cafe, which opens at -- something went wrong. Apologies, citizen.
14. KAY: My name's Kay.

**Panel 6:** Kay looking doubtful, paused in her chewing.

15. SVALA: Alright. Kay, I would like to direct you to the Staff Room, to meet the team.
16. SVALA: Please be aware, they are all deceased.

So you can see that Rupert cut something here, the arrows on the floor. He didn't usually tell me when he was going to do this throughout the book, but he was pretty much always right; here they would've distracted a bit, and perhaps without explanation just felt a bit odd. And I think Rupert always knew that, if something was important, I'd argue for it being put back in.

I had to have Kay get food here, in order for the story, and Kay herself, to feel real - she's just walked a couple of marathons, remember. I probably should have made time for them to pee too. Just assume they went in their suits, okay?

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **FOUR**

**Panel 1:** Kay, lit-up arrow at her feet (having guided her here), at the door to a living space/dining area, in which is a round table surrounded by chairs, a deactivated little hologram projector in the middle. In the chairs, six centuries-old corpses, all partly preserved by being frozen. Each of them has a book in front of them, open and written in.

1. KAY (soft): Hey, look Mur. I found people.
2. SVALA: Would you now like to see the medical supplies?
3. KAY: No -- fuckin' hell, Svala, just... chill for minute.

**Panel 2:** Kay has slouched down into one of the unoccupied chairs.

4. KAY: I need to go get my wife. Take her painkillers, adrenaline maybe, or...
5. KAY: Then we come back here, we... maybe we try and get access to an internet archive or...

**Panel 3:** Close on Kay, beaten.

6. KAY: Someone, **some**where musta been working on a cure. Someone.
7. SVALA: Twelve point four billion was the peak population of planet Earth.
8. SVALA: Based on current available data, population is now: two.

**Panel 4:** Kay looking towards the door.

9. KAY: I still gotta go back out there. You don't have a car, in storage or summin'?
10. SVALA: No.
11. KAY: Always **no** innit?
12. SVALA: Perhaps you'd like to see the hanger?

**Panel 5:** Kay, eyes wide, shocked.

13. KAY: See the shitting **what**?
14. KAY (caption): Svala...

We almost - almost - offered 'your face on a corpse' here as a backer reward. Would it have been welcomed? Who knows. But the timing wasn't right - the art was complete by the time we were Kickstarting. This page is also the closest Kay comes to admitting defeat. Even if she had, she would've kept going nonetheless, but here, functionally alone, in a dead future, miles from Murray and with no cure to bring back to Murray, she's on the edge of despair.

## **FIVE**

**Panel 1:** Main panel – Kay is at a railing overlooking a hanger, its roof caved in and letting in the hazy dawn light through the falling sand. Half the room is empty bays, like in a cupcake tray, but in the others are dozens of white spheres, each about eight feet across. At the back of the room, on lifts, three spaceplanes, one with a broken wing from the fallen roof.

At the bottom of the image, Kay is pointing, undramatically, over her shoulder at the spheres (bit of bathos).

1. KAY: ...these fuckers are spaceships.

**Panel 2:** Kay now looking out at the spheres. Behind her, over the entrance to the door, is a security camera, lit up like the panel to the vault; Svala's 'eye'.

2. KAY: Which... I probably can't fly. Murray could fly 'em...

3. SVALA: Forename combination recognised -- please state surname.

4. KAY: ...Mielniczuk?

**Panel 3:** Close on the camera.

5. SVALA: I have a message for you. Now playing:

6. RUPERT (recording): Message for Kay and Murray Mielniczuk, uh, hi?

4-7 same-size strips?

**Panel 4:** Pulled back down the corridor, Kay staring up at the camera, disbelieving, rooms lining the corridor.

7. RUPERT (recording): --ould be wrong, about time travel, about everything, and if we are... well it's worse than you think. It's much, much wor--

**Panel 5:** Outside the Svalbard Vault's main door; dawn.

8. RUPERT (recording): --a way back. Only one, and it's only theoretical, but just stay calm, stay together. Everything's going to be alright.

**Panel 6:** View over the sand-dunes, in negative; the time travel effect again. If possible, a spliced image of sand-dune seabed and sea (as it would've looked hundreds of years back).

9. RUPERT (recording): Oh, except for the box. That might go haywire, and then, um...

**Panel 7:** The dark sea.

10. RUPERT (recording): ...that'll be a problem.

There was a draft where another time travelling team, father and son, were going to turn up from 20 years after Kay and Murray left, and the rest of this chapter would've been their team-up, the father eventually turning on Murray as the success of K+M's mission might've meant his son being erased from the timeline, and then Kay arriving in a spaceplane to kick his ass. It was a very different, more action-focused approach, and it was the right move to eventually leave it out. This second half of Chapter 4 took the longest to come together as a concept, and I'm sure will be the most Marmitey. For non-English readers, that means people will either love it or be wrong.

Also, note the second use of the Dr Rupert Sommer dialogue - I cheated the re-use a bit by jumping between bits of his speech, as otherwise the page would've been flooded with dialogue.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **SIX**

Chaos.

**Panel 1:** Murray, panicked, without her helmet, reaching upwards, bubbles spewing from her mouth.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Murray's hand, nothing but blackness ahead, no hint of the surface.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Murray's reaction; she's choking, she knows she won't make it.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Kicking back down for the depths.

4. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Murray hitting the sandy floor, beside the crevice, kicking up sand.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Grabbing frantically down into the crevice at her helmet.

6. NO COPY

**Panel 7:** Pulling the helmet onto her head, her eyes rolling.

7. NO COPY

**Panel 8:** Murray gasping violently, as the suit pressurizes (little green light) and the water drains from the helmet.

8. SFX: Hkk

9. COMPUTER: Drainage in progress. Return to station. Drainage in progress. Return to--

**Panel 9:** Blackness.

10. NO COPY

Back to Murray, where we left her. Actually, the page I'm most upset about cutting is the cover concept for Issue 4, which would've just been a tiny Murray, swimming up through the dark from the seabed towards an unseen surface. What we have here instead is a very simple page (and a 9-panel grid one too, for fans), but hopefully quite a distressing one.



FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **SEVEN**

**Panel 1:** Blackness, a couple of bubbles.

1. MURRAY (caption):        long way from home.

Here's a secret - this page exists for the sake of the page turns. We cut a page from somewhere else, and to maintain the page turns, something needed to replace it, so this single line got a page all to itself. That said, I quite like it - the words lost in this endless dark. Also, this line is placed in the top-left of the page because we didn't want it to look like the 'End of Chapter' notes.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **EIGHT**

**Panel 1:** Blackness. Dialogue stretched thinly across the page, dissociative, Murray half-conscious.

- |                      |                                 |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. MURRAY (caption): | Maybe this was a dream          |
| 2. MURRAY (caption): | And she's safe                  |
| 3. MURRAY (caption): | Back home.                      |
| 4. MURRAY (caption): | I'm dying in                    |
| 5. MURRAY (caption): | a hospital bed. Coming apart.   |
| 6. MURRAY (caption): | And she's holding my hand       |
| 7. MURRAY (caption): | and she's safe.                 |
| Long gap.            |                                 |
| 7. MURRAY (caption): | But maybe she's not.            |
| 8. KAY (OP):         | Shit, we're gonna have to walk. |

The most poetic Future gets. The half-thoughts you have when trying to rouse yourself from sleep, this really plays into the theme that Murray keeps thinking she's given up, but at the slightest hint that Kay might need her - 'and she's safe. But maybe she's not' - she's back on her feet. This woman won't die, because her Kay needs her.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## NINE

**Panel 1:** Murray suddenly lifting her helmeted head out of the sand, blearily, sand encrusted on helmet, eyes hollow. Small panel.

1. MURRAY: Kuh?

**Panel 2:** The seabed, melting off into the dark, no-one there. But there's a faint light far off ahead, on the seabed. Portrait-like.

2. NO COPY

Again, the image here is a perfect metaphor for Murray's state. A faint light in the distance, the faintest hope. And of course, when she reaches it...

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TEN**

The phone words without speech bubbles, just trailing like water currents or reeds – or like the scents that lure Looney Tunes.

**Panel 1:** Murray's feet stumbling on the sandy seabed, the box connected by carabiner on her hip. Voice coming from ahead.

1. MURRAY (soft): Not real.
2. PHONE (soft) (OP): Hey, who's this?

**Panel 2:** On the box's screen is a map – the bunker highlighted – and a '1' notification, showing that Kay has left a message.

3. MURRAY (soft): The sea, the voice. None of it.
4. TEXT: DESTINATION: 33.72 MILES
5. TEXT: 1
6. PHONE (soft) (OP): Er...

**Panel 3:** Murray entering the small island of light – something glowing on the seabed, from which comes the voice.

7. MURRAY (soft): You're hallucinating.
8. PHONE: She just handed me the phone, so...

**Panel 4:** Murray now crouched over the phone.

9. MURRAY (soft): Plenty of air left.
10. MURRAY (soft): So just breathe.
11. MURRAY: ...Kay?

**Panel 5:** Straight on of Murray, eyes shut, close to tears.

12. PHONE: To take a pud out, I think?

**Panel 6:** Flashback – same angle, Murray totally healthy, seven years younger (31), wrapped up warm for a London Christmas, poking at things in a magical, Fortnum & Mason's-style department store, all the twinkling lights and tinsel around her over-exposed and dreamlike in contrast to the seabed's blackness. She's looking confused and a little frustrated by the conversation.

13. MURRAY: 'Pud'?
14. KAY: Christmas pud, yeah, you don't like pud?
15. MURRAY: I--
16. KAY: You coming to the party? I'll save you some.
17. MURRAY: No I -- actually, can you tell Tess that Murray can't make it?

...it's Kay. Well, a hallucination-memory of Kay. I decidedly don't want to go into the explanations for everything weird in Future, but you have an exhausted, traumatised person whose illness is affecting their grasp on reality, carrying a deteriorating time travel device. That accounts for most of the weirdness, right?

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **ELEVEN**

Same angle throughout page, as a snapshot of memory?

**Panel 1:** Murray, disinterested, in the shop, surrounded by warm light and colour.

1. KAY: Murray -- **you're** Murray Rui?  
2. MURRAY: Hi.  
3. KAY: Oh dude you're an astronaut! You've got to come. Like I say, we've got pud and, urr... breadsticks? I don't think she planned the food out well.

**Panel 2:** Murray slightly disbelieving of this drunk stranger on the phone.

4. KAY: Woah are you calling from space? No, obviously. Are you?  
5. MURRAY: No I'm--  
6. KAY: No, right, sorry, I'm drunk. Well, tipsy. Drunk though.

**Panel 3:** Murray toying with some hanging tinsel, now amused.

7. MURRAY: Do you need to hand the phone to someone less tipsy?  
8. KAY: No, I can do **basic tasks**, thankyouverymuch. But why aren'tcha coming? Dude, it's Christmas.  
9. MURRAY: It's New Year's.  
10. KAY: ...It's New Year's, yes!

**Panel 4:** Murray smiling despite herself.

11. KAY: Hang on, I'm heading outside, it's too noisy in here and **everyone's** drunk.

**Panel 5:** Murray has moved aside to let other shoppers pass.

13. KAY: Okay I'm outside and I've been thinking. You're probably dizzy and shit from being weightless in space.  
14. MURRAY: And I'm an hour and a half away.  
15. KAY: And you're an hour and a, yeah.

**Panel 6:** Murray plugging her other ear so she can hear, listening intently now.

16. KAY: So you're thinking you need a nap, maybe, but no, you need someone looking after you, Murray Rui.  
17. MURRAY: That's nice of you but... I just landed, I haven't even found a present for Tess.

**Panel 7:** Murray laughing.

18. KAY: Give her my scarf!  
19. MURRAY: Sorry?  
20. KAY: Yeah! It's a real nice scarf, from my aunt, but I have a warm neck, don't need it. And it's **really** ugly.

**Panel 8:** Same angle, phone still pressed to Murray's ear.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

21. MURRAY:

But--

22. KAY:

Dude, dude! And you just landed! You **just** landed and you're, what, going home to sleep? That's for baby astronauts, not grown-ass astro-women. Just get on a train and

I can't talk about this without you looking at the background, the colours of this page. Just look! Rupert did a perfect Christmas glow here. This scene was a bit inspired by my wholly inaccurate memories of the bit in Star Trek Generations where Picard has a vision of a perfect Christmas with his imagined, idyllic family. Just the swirl of the lighting, and boom, Rupert made it happen. Also, I like that slow charm offensive Kay pulls off over this page, taking Murray from formal and bored to charmed as hell.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## TWELVE

**Panel 1:** Same angle, Murray, walking away from the phone, having left it in the sand.

1. PHONE:                    come to the party!  
2. MURRAY (soft):        It's not real.

**Panel 2:** Murray, stopped in her tracks, phone visible in the sand over her shoulder.

3. PHONE: I'm Kay, by the way.

**Panel 3:** Murray looking back at the phone.

4. PHONE: Like the letter, but a name?
5. PHONE: Yeah you get it.

**Panel 4:** Murray has picked up the phone again and is connecting it, magnetically, to her arm.

6. MURRAY (soft): Still not real.
7. PHONE: But c'mon though, that's sad. You climb down off your launchpad and you come eat pud.

**Panel 5:** Murray walking in the distance, helmet lights on and trailing footprints, halfway into the dark.

8. PHONE: Tell you what, if you come, I'll stay on the phone the whole time.
9. PHONE: **Yes** that's a good thing!

And back to the dark here - it's a sudden drop back into the cold colours and loneliness. Hopefully, you'll have bought into the joy and cuteness of the previous page and this should feel like a loss - but Kay's voice has carried over and will be - very literally - the light in the dark, as, against her better judgement, Murray takes the phone with her.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **THIRTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray, walking, head down.

1. MURRAY (soft): Kay was going to the vault.  
2. PHONE: So, you're on your way now, right? To the station?  
3. MURRAY (soft): Just follow the box map to her.  
4. PHONE: I mean, you'll make it before midnight and new year. Probably.

**Panel 2:** Murray climbing up a dune, through the murk.

5. MURRAY (soft): Don't wander off-course.  
6. PHONE: Nah I'm good, just gotta find a beer or something, I'm gonna get dehydrated with all the talking.

**Panel 3:** Murray's hands in the sand, pulling herself up the dune.

7. PHONE: While I'm at it, lemme mix you a cocktail for when you get here?  
8. PHONE: Uh, I said a **cocktail**. G and T is like... Murray, are you a boring person?

**Panel 4:** As she climbs, we see the box screen on Murray's hip.

9. TEXT: DESTINATION: 24.7 MILES.  
10. PHONE: You live in **space** and you can't even -- okay, okay!  
11. MURRAY: Just keep walking.

**Panel 5:** Unnoticed by Murray, the background slowly changing into a house's kitchen.

12. PHONE: I'm gonna make you an elderflower spri... with some mint and...

**Panel 6:** Background is now half-sea, half kitchen (underwater kitchen, basically). Murray is looking at the phone, confused by the signal breaking up.

13. PHONE: I ... ight be doing this too earl... if y...

**Panel 7:** Murray is now in a kitchen, a voice coming from ahead of her.

14. LEILA (OP): Honestly, Murray, you have to think these things through.

I like G+Ts. In fact, buy me a G+T. No-one's paying me to write these annotations, it's 1.22 a.m., I deserve a - okay, I left and made a G+T. Where were we? Oh right. On into the next memory. Rupert has commented on this in the process doc, but we consciously had some of the flashbacks hit out of nowhere, and some be drifted into. So here Murray walks into a slowly appearing kitchen, while the phone call (visually at least), was sudden.



FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **FOURTEEN**

**Panel 1:** A flower on a table.

1. LEILA (OP): I'm not going to water it.

**Panel 2:** Child Murray, 7 years old, blank-faced, holding the flowerpot, the flower almost as tall as she is.

2. LEILA (OP): Because there's no point! It'll die eventually, and what's it going to do for us until then?

**Panel 3:** LEILA (41, has Murray's hair, fit) putting on her uniform – military airforce. In front of child-Murray, there's a bowl of porridge.

3. LEILA (OP): It's good of you to remember, it is, but something practical next time, alright?

4. LEILA: School soon, eat up.

**Panel 4:** Leila's finger taps the table in front of the unmoved Murray.

5. LEILA: Murray, come on. Eat.

**Panel 5:** Child Murray's face.

6. MURRAY: I'm thirty-eight, Mum.

7. MURRAY: I was in the future, with Kay. I was... sick.

**Panel 6:** Same angle; adult Murray now, half-conscious, dry lips, dark rings under her eyes.

7. MURRAY (soft): What's happening?

**Panel 7:** Adult Murray stumbling away from the table, confused.

8. LEILA (OP): I need to impress this on you.

This page always floors me. The colours are like coming up for air.

Murray's mother isn't a bad person, per se - she's trying to shield herself, and her daughter, from the pain of hope for the future. But that shields you from the future itself, too. She could've had a nice flower, but she knows it's going to die, so no, the flower may as well die now. Which leads us to:

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

# FIFTEEN

**Panel 1:** Leila is now late 60's, hair white, more crumpled up. She's hunched at the table, opposite a second Murray, 36ish, still healthy-looking, who has her back to our Murray.

1. LEILA: The harder you ignore it, the blunter I'll have to be. You need to hear this for your own good.

**Panel 2:** Leila's face, as Murray remembers it from her POV – every wrinkle and cold detail.

2. LEILA: Your condition is terminal. You **are** going to die.

3. LEILA: It isn't a matter of willpower, of tenacity. You are going to die.

**Panel 3:** Mem-Murray staring back at her as Leila continues, as if hammering the word into her.

4. LEILA:                                        Soon.

**Panel 4:** Us looking over Memory-Murray's shoulder, at present-Murray, who's watching from the doorway.

5. MEM-MURRAY: I'm still here now.

6. LEILA: Look at it this way. You get to be one of the last. You **got** to be one of the last.

**Panel 5:** Murray turning away, as Leila looks out a window to an unseen landscape.

7. LEILA: And you'll hardly be missing out on much.

**Panel 6:** Murray has tripped, fallen to the seabed, sand between her gloved fingers.

8. NO COPY

**Panel 7:** Zoomed out, the house is gone.

9. PHONE: kssh

10. PHONE: --perly cause getting the blueprints for printing spare bike parts takes **ages**.

That scene teased back in Chapter 3. Once again, death is coming, may as well happen now - both for Murray and the world. It's an understandable feeling from Ms Rui, one I've even felt myself. But it's also bullshit, as I hope this book attests.

On another note, you can see that I made a point of throwing the rules of the hallucinations and flashbacks around - sometimes Murray is in them herself, sometimes she's watching them, sometimes she's imagining them wholesale. I wanted the reader to be off-balance, not to gather up a set of rules they could use to ground themselves.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **SIXTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray's feet, trudging on.

1. PHONE: But then, you know, learn by doing.  
2. PHONE: One fire! **One!** An' that was my ex's fault, he left a--  
3. PHONE: You're not focusing on the -- **I built three motorbikes!**  
You built, err, howmanybikes?

**Panel 2:** Murray's face in her helmet; she's drinking from an in-suit drink bag (hence sound effect).

4. SFX: fttttp  
5. PHONE: Oh, no bikes? Zero bikes?  
6. PHONE: Alrighty, I'm hanging on... hanging on... why'm I hangi

**Panel 3:** Same angle on Murray's face; she's sat on a train, happy. Her earpiece is glowing blue – not the exact same model as she has seven years later in issue 1. Again, all lighting over-exposed and flaring.

7. KAY: ng on?  
8. MURRAY: Switched you to my headphones.

**Panel 4:** Murray grinning, smitten.

9. KAY: Ah, so now I'm in your heeeeeead.  
10. KAY: Wait, you were on a **handset?**  
11. MURRAY: Yeah, no wild signals allowed in orbit, so no earpieces.  
12. KAY: I miss proper phones. You could lose 'em.

**Panel 5:** Murray, still on the train, holding up her phone to look at, the same phone she's now holding on the seabed.

13. MURRAY: Swap mine for your scarf?  
14. KAY: Now that is a gener

**Panel 6:** The phone magnetised to Murray's arm as she marches along underwater.

15. PHONE: ous offer.  
16. MURRAY: You stayed on the call because you could tell I was lonely.  
17. PHONE: Whoa, it's like, eleven fifteen.

**Panel 7:** Bubbles left behind – time passing.

18. PHONE: Reckon you'll make it?

It's a smaller flashback to that first night for Kay and Murray, but again a little splash of hope in the dark ocean. Going back to that first conversation between Kay and Murray, juxtaposing that first journey Murray made to Kay with this one, kept this chapter from being a 'slog' in the way we chose to pace Chapter 3. I wanted this to feel like an epic journey, but even though it's over twice as long as Ch.3's, there's no (intentional) monotony, everything's constantly changing, we're seeing new titbits and jokes and meet cutes. And oh boy, I could write meet cutes all day. You want one? You and a neighbour both think you're the only one feeding a stray cat - and then you meet and you adopt it together! Adorable. Don't have a cat nearby? Steal one.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **SEVENTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray jumping/hopping across a small ravine.

1. KAY: So new question. Are. You. Pretty?  
2. KAY: Is all I wanted to ask.

**Panel 2:** Murray lands messily, almost falling.

3. MURRAY: And I said... 'I can't say if I'm--'  
4. KAY: Come on, yes you do!  
5. MURRAY: 'Can't **know** if I'm pretty,' that was it.

**Panel 3:** Murray is up and walking again without a thought.

6. KAY: Like, 'oh gosh, you think so?', no that's bullshit. I am a solid eight with a weird chin.  
7. MURRAY: 'We're doing numbers?'  
8. KAY: Hey, s'reductive but effective.  
9. KAY: You're right, I'll just wait 'til you're here.

**Panel 4:** Murray smiling, nigh-delirious, as she trudges.

10. MURRAY: 'I'm a nine but with an extremely unsettling face.'  
11. KAY: Oh yeah?  
12. MURRAY: 'It's shocking.'  
13. KAY: ...You getting closer? 'Cause I'm getting drunker.

**Panel 5:** Murray grabs for the phone as the signal starts breaking up again, not noticing the ledge she's approaching in the dark.

14. KAY: An... if you don't m... it by midni...

**Panel 6:** Her foot slips.

15. SFX: ksssh

**Panel 7:** She tumbles off the edge.

16. NO COPY

Writing half a conversation in one time and half in another is strange. I liked the theatrical aspect of this, and the magical, Christmas miracle feel. Kay is coaxing Murray into a very out-of-character journey, here on their first night 'together', which of course is why Murray's remembering it here in the barren future, as she hurries after her wife. She had to get some of her 'lines' wrong though, for realism, and then the distraction of that, the momentary joy of it, comes back to bite her in the ass with the fall.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **EIGHTEEN**

Iterations of Murray sinking between/over each panel; soft borders, a bit 'Eternal Sunshine'y: (<https://tinyurl.com/yacueqr4>).

**Panel 1:** Kay and Murray's bedroom; window at the back. Both younger, bringing a bed frame into the room.

1. MURRAY: Left, left! You'll scratch the wallpaper.

2. KAY: Dude, I'll scratch **you** if

**Panel 2:** Kay kneeling up on the edge of the bed in her yellow shorts pyjamas, hair tousled, arms around an UKSA-hoodied Murray.

3. KAY: Always prouda you.

4. MURRAY: I'll wave as we pass overhe

**Panel 3:** Kay sitting up reading in bed, curtain open to the night sky, couple of stars visible through the light pollution – as Kay described Chapter 1 p.3.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray sitting on top of the covers, while sickly Kay lies next to her with a red nose.

6. MURRAY: More tea?

7. KAY: Myes please.

8. MURRAY: Foot rub?

9. KAY: Myes ple

**Panel 5:** Kay and Murray kissing, entwined under the sheets.

10. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Murray is skinnier, sitting on the end of the bed, alone.

11. MURRAY: I can be there at ten. Okay. What's the doctor's na

**Panel 7:** Murray falls through blackness – her shape against a completely formless dark.

12. NO COPY

**Panel 8:** Blackness

13. SFX: thmp

This is Rupert's favourite page. Again, a series of moments from their lives - different tones, different energies. I think perhaps the most subtle reference here is the panel of Kay looking out the window at the stars, as mentioned in her very first dialogue back in Chapter 1. I think most people without the script won't get the connection, so please feel free to point it out to them and feel smug. Oh, and how cute is coldy Kay?

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## NINETEEN

**Panel 1:** Murray on her back, looking upward.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Murray grabs the phone off her arm.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** She holds the phone in front of her helmet-light; the screen is cracked, the light gone. Dead.

3. MURRAY: No...

**Panel 4:** Murray holds her head in her hands, alone in the dark.

4. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Murray scared, looking over as voices come from out of the dark.

5. KAY: You're too young.

6. KAY: You're not even going grey yet -- there's an order to this shit, you know?

The worst moment to crack your dream-phone screen in history. She's lost her light, she's lost Kay, and she's lost in general - and then the voice starts, and it's not a comfort, but the closest to a nightmare we get - have you ever had a dream where you know the monster is there, and you don't want to look at it, because then it'll get you? That was the feeling I wanted here, which we achieved by keeping Kay off-page, adding that little hint of apprehension.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY**

I'm thinking this page from Murray's remembered POV, to make it intense and a little ghostly-creepy - thoughts?

**Panel 1:** Kay looking directly at Murray, impressionistic, just some lines sitting up in bed, illuminated by the lights from Murray's helmet (filling in for the remembered moonlight). Mem-Murray's words trail out of the dark still, watched/heard by Murray.

1. KAY: There's no other treatments? More gene therapy or...
2. MEM-MURRAY: They want to delay it.
3. KAY: They're *gonna* delay it.
4. MEM-MURRAY: By a few months.

**Panel 2:** Kay looking away.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Kay looking back at Murray.

6. KAY: So now what?
7. KAY: Don't just stare at me, now what?
8. MEM-MURRAY: Now nothing.

**Panel 4:** Kay outraged.

9. KAY: **Nothing?** Like fuck!
10. MEM-MURRAY: There's no cure--
11. KAY: So you hold on until there is!

**Panel 5:** Closer on Kay, lines of tears down her face.

13. KAY: You know what nothing *means*, Mur?
14. KAY: It means you get sicker and sicker 'til you fall apart, and I lose you, you disappear and you never come back.

**Panel 6:** Kay wiping away the tears, annoyed at herself.

- KAY: You're not meant to let go of me.
- KAY: That's nothing. There's no fucking middle ground, you let it take you from me or you *fight*.

**Panel 7:** Murray turning away, the light coming off the scene.

17. KAY: So what're you gonna fucking do?
18. MURRAY (soft): Enough.

Scripted here, we were looking at doing just an outline of Kay, as Murray remembered a conversation in the dark. I think it would've been beautiful, but it might have confused some readers; perhaps they would've been unsure about the identity of the speaker, and we've no time for confusion. This was also a hugely rewritten page, with material about religion, euthanasia, and similar heavy topics included - and all removed to refocus on the core emotion between these two. Moreover, I didn't want to reduce either of them to straightforward, figureheads for complex issues here - especially as Kay's not necessarily right or wrong. This isn't a rational moment, which is why Kay can be so unfair here - she's scared and upset, not a mouthpiece for an intellectual debate.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY-ONE**

**Panel 1:** Murray begins to climb up the short cliff-face, up the other side of the drop. Behind her, the flashback is still playing out.

1. MURRAY:                      Not *real*.
2. KAY:                            If it gets nasty, *let it*. If it's hard, you fight *harder*.
3. KAY:                            You don't ever give up, you don't ever give up on you, or *me*, or us.

**Panel 2:** Murray, teeth gritted, climbing.

4. MEM-MURRAY (OP):      Kay, you're making this harder--
5. KAY (OP):                    I'm not trying to make it fucking *easy*!

**Panel 3:** Murray's hand, grabbing up at the rock.

6. KAY (OP):                    That's it, isn't it? A fucking death sentence makes it easier.
7. KAY (OP):                    The less hope there is, the less you have to hate yourself for stamping it down.

**Panel 4:** Murray stopped short of climbing up by Kay's line, eyes squeezed shut - perhaps angle over her shoulder down at the memory.

9. KAY (OP):                    When did you give up, Mur?

**Panel 5:** Murray, defeated, hanging her head.

10. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Close of Murray, eyes shut, head leaned forward against the wall.

11. MURRAY:                    It only got worse. Every day, the whole world. And I couldn't make it better.
12. MURRAY:                    So I gave up when everybody else did.
13. MURRAY (soft):            ...as soon as I could.

**Panel 7:** Murray looking up, astonished, as a hand comes down into frame from atop the rock wall - the speech comes from above too.

14. KAY (OP):                    No you didn't.
15. KAY (OP):                    S'close, but you made it. You found me. Bang on midnight.

I think what Kay tells Murray here she may not even really internalise, but, look. Murray's saying she gave up, when she's travelled hundreds of years from home, and is climbing an underwater mountain to get where she has to go. I know a lot of people who keep saying that they themselves have given up, but they don't stop climbing.



FUTURE/Tom Woodman

**TWENTY-TWO**

**Panel 1:** Kay, in the doorway, hand out for Murray as she climbs up over the ridge. Fully drawn (as opposed to line art), colours over-exposed as in other flashbacks to this first night. Young, shining, joyful – seeing as they’ve already got to know each other a bit, it’s love at first sight. Her earpiece is glowing purple, showing she’s still on the call.

1. KAY: Just in time, spacegirl.

So, I don't believe in love at first sight. Sure, the basis of love, but you have to talk first, have to know the person, not just see a nice face and go 'Gotta kiss some of that'. But then, Kay and Murray have been speaking for an hour and a half or so, so... yeah, love at first sight. Also, kickass line, Kay. And once again, power-hair.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY-THREE**

**Panel 1:** Kay puts the scarf around Murray's neck, grinning.

1. KAY: Welcome in.

**Panel 2:** Kay's gaze turns from Murray, following where Mem-Murray would be as she enters the house, one hand pressing her earpiece.

2. KAY: Guess I can hang up now.

3. KAY: Thanks! And you **are** a nine. With the extremely disturbing face.

4. KAY: Like you said earli... it's a callback, see.

**Panel 3:** Angle from the stairs above Kay; Kay hurrying up the stairs opposite the door, her hand trailing behind her for Murray. Murray is looking past her, up the stairs at something amazing.

5. KAY: Come on!

**Panel 4:** Kay halfway up the stairs, excitedly beckoning Murray after her. She doesn't see the sun, shimmering as if through water, at the top of the stairs.

6. KAY: You're gonna miss the fireworks.

Once again, we're hearing part of a scene, with another part that will be filled in later, in Chapter 5. There's something really satisfying about digging back into moments we've already seen for more detail, compared to always grabbing new moments for the next scene. In improv comedy (yes, I'm one of those guys), we talk about the concepts of 'deepen' v 'expand' - detail v breadth. And it's an important balance, which I hope we struck. Not too navel-gazey, not too scattered. But hey, this is my 87th page of comments on my own work, so the navel may have won out.

The little illegible bubble was actually added in the very final round of revisions, to make it clear that Memory-Murray had a line here and to make sense of the flow of the scene.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY-FOUR**

**Panel 1:** Murray from behind, shielding her eyes as she climbs the stairs.

1. KAY (soft): Ooh – and the pud.

**Panel 2:** Same angle - Murray shielding her face from sunlight, now climbing an underwater incline instead.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Murray breaking the surface of the water, disoriented.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Murray falling to her knees at the edge of the surf.

4. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** The same image, but inverted – same effect as when they've time travelled.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Murray, on all fours, on sandstone – the sea is gone.

6. KAY: Mur!?

One last line from Memory-Kay, again like the last thing you hear as you're pulled from a dream, so it's just silly and charming. I love that stair-climbing panel here - but why are you listening to me talk about it, you should go read the process doc instead, where magic Rupert talks about his magic art.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **TWENTY-FIVE**

**Panel 1:** Kay's running feet over the sandstone.

1. KAY: ***Mur?***

**Panel 2:** Kay skidding down to cradle Murray.

2. KAY: What're you doing here?

**Panel 3:** Kay cradling Murray – close so we can't see the surroundings – just Mur's face, her dried lips, Kay's arms wrapped around her.

3. MURRAY (soft): You real? C'n you hear me?

4. KAY: Yes I can hear you! Now shut up and -- I've gotta get you some meds from inside.

**Panel 4:** Kay's other hand on the box, protectively – we'll see why next chapter.

5. KAY: But you brought the box. Thank fuck for that, you beautiful dumbass.

6. KAY: You have no idea how much we need this.

**Panel 5:** The sun beating down on Murray's face.

7. KAY: Take the helmet off already.

8. MURRAY (soft): M'never taking it off again.

9. KAY: How'm I gonna kiss you then?

**Panel 6:** Kay helping Murray take off the helmet.

10. KAY: So, look, some shit's happened since I got here.

11. MURRAY (soft): Find a cure?

12. KAY: No, but...

**Panel 7:** Kay leaning down, to give Murray a tender kiss on her dry lips.

13. KAY: ...I found a way home.

Kay and Murray, back together. Hopefully, their distance felt difficult - we've seen it from both of their POVs, and though it's only been 25 pages (about one single issue of a comic), I know that I couldn't truly relax until they were reunited. The whole last chapter was, in effect, one bad dream Murray needed to wake from.

I've also got to tell you that Kay's skid in the dust is once again, apparently, a thirst trap.

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## **TWENTY-SIX**

**Panel 1:** Full-page - Murray still cradled in Kay's lap, semi-conscious. Behind Kay, the Svalbard Seed Vault, built into the cliff face. The door to the vault is the same as today, albeit reinforced – and open. The vault as a whole has undergone a huge amount of reinforcement and expansion, something like an oil rig built into the sandstone cliff face, some of the 'legs' damaged and bent by hundreds of years of wear.

Above the vault, leading off into the mountains, a maglev track ([wikipedia.org/wiki/StarTram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/StarTram)), damaged in places but still functional, heading up 'towards' the Sun. A spaceplane sits on it, pointing into the mountains and towards the sky – hope.

1. KAY: But we need to go right fuckin' now.

This geography was tough - I even did some little sketches of it myself. It's reliant on it having been night and there being a dust storm when Kay arrived (Ch.4, P.1). Basically we needed to not see any of this there, so that it could have an impact here. Obviously, in our real-world present day, the main entrance to the seed vault is the biggest visible element of it, which hopefully aids the surprise. By simply showing that there's some huge buildings/setup here, along with Kay's lines about finding a way home, the reader gets the idea that the two are connected. And if not, we've got the whole plan to unveil in the next chapter.

# **FUTURE (CHAPTER 5 – OUT OF TIME)**

Written by Tom Woodman/ © 2019

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **ONE**

**Panel 1:** Whiteness – this speech is in memory.

1. KAY (memory):                      You're gonna miss the fireworks.
2. KAY (OP):                              ...ittle... piece of...

**Panel 2:** View from the bottom of Murray's sickbed up at her as her eyes open – She's propped up on pillows, an oxygenator tube in her nose, a bio-monitor attached to her neck (screen showing her vitals), nose oxygen tube in, and tubes running down her arm, looking our way.

3. SFX:                                      ktnk
4. KAY (OP):                              Shit!
5. MURRAY:                                Kay?
6. KAY:                                      Mur! Don't freak out.

**Panel 3:** Main panel, framed by the doorframe between the hanger and sick bay; Kay was halfway through soldering a continent onto a 10ft planet Earth. She has lifted up a futuristic soldering mask and has on gloves and a metalwork apron.

7. KAY:                                      I think I've fixed everything.

**Panel 4:** Murray lurching out of the bed, towards the door, Kay moving to meet her.

8. KAY:                                      Hey, no no no.

The start of this final chapter was again trimmed and reshaped hard. I wanted to give as much time to the end of the journey as possible, so this setup and plan-making needed to not feel rushed... but be dense and over quite quickly. It's really hard not to drop some of the character moments and jokes in those instances, but if you do, you're left with some very bare bones plot-pushing. Anyway, that's why this chapter is 27 pages, deal with it.

## **TWO**

**Panel 1:** Wide shot, high angle of the hanger. Tiny, Kay has caught Murray at the door. The hanger's roof has caved in and is letting in sunlight. The spheres now look like planets; there are dozens of other Earths, each in a different stage of decay: one pristine, one like our 2019 Earth, one barren, one flooded (tinyurl.com/yd7x49us), etc. If necessary/useful, also other planets and suns.

1. KAY: You're gonna pull out your tubes.

**Panel 2:** Kay and Murray, close-up at the door; Murray looking out into the hanger.

2. KAY: Dude, back to bed.

3. MURRAY: Where are we?

4. KAY: Back to **bed**. You just spent three days shivering and sweating your balls off, you're on **so much** painkiller right now.

**Panel 3:** Murray has a hand on Kay's cheek, lovingly, and Kay's clasping it with her gloved hand.

5. MURRAY: This is the vault. And you're you. I made it?

6. KAY: It is, I am, and yeah you did.

7. KAY: We're actually **under** the main vault but... there's nothing up there we need.

8. MURRAY: No cure? No people?

**Panel 4:** Silent, sad 'no'.

9. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Murray pointing into the hanger, Kay looking over her shoulder at the planets.

10. MURRAY: Why're there tiny planets?

**Panel 6:** Same angle, Kay looking back at Murray, grabbing hold of the bio-monitor.

11. KAY: Maybe **too** much painkiller.

Another example of me scripting one thing, and Rupert just saying, 'Nah, I can do better'. The high angle scripted didn't interest him, I think (perhaps too like the panel that first revealed this hanger in the Ch.4), so instead he gave us a focus on what was worth the attention, these many different Earths. There was actually a version of Future that went down the whole 'parallel realities' route, but I think every time I got into headier sci-fi concepts I got further from Kay and Murray, and that was always a mistake.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

## **THREE**

**Panel 1:** Kay grabbing Murray's bio-monitor.

1. KAY: This thing lets me adjust dosage, **and** tells me how you're doing, **and** if you think I'm pretty.
2. SFX: blip
3. MURRAY: I always think you're pretty.
4. KAY: Yeah you do.

2-4 metapanel, moving across Kay's chest as she works.

**Panel 2:** Murray's POV of Kay getting between her and the 10-foot Earth, starting to block out it, the spheres, and the hanger.

5. SFX: blip
6. KAY: Says you're hydrating well. So, the 'tiny planets', they're -- you know how this place stockpiled all the seeds--
7. MURRAY: Yes.
8. KAY: --for all the crops in the--
9. MURRAY: Yes.
10. KAY: --wait a minute!

**Panel 3:** Hanger now mostly blocked from view as Kay works.

11. KAY: When the shit finally clogged the fan, the staff here started 'The Svalbard Project'.
12. KAY: Basically, they'd punt some seeds into deep space, try kickstarting micro-organic ecosystems on other planets. So life'd go on, somewhere.

**Panel 4:** Hanger fully blocked from view as Kay works.

13. KAY: That's what those are -- a bunch've old launch modules an' escape pods retrofitted as life-rafts.
14. KAY: They got a few dozen up there, funded by donations from all over, even when everyone was running out.

**Panel 5:** Kay has stepped aside. The 'planets' are revealed to be the white spheres Kay saw before in the hanger.

15. KAY: I made a few adjustments to one -- took out the seed dispersal system, threw in some seats, control screen. Oh -- **air**.
16. KAY: An' now, once we get one into orbit, they're gonna get us home.

**Panel 6:** Murray leaning against the wall, staring at the pods.

17. MURRAY: I didn't dream that -- you really found a way back?
18. KAY: Course! I'm **very** talented. Painkillers reduced, FYI... you see they're not tiny planets now, right?
19. MURRAY: ...Yeah.

**Panel 7:** Kay frowning in thought.



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20. MURRAY: So one of the pods gets us out into deep space. How does that help us get back to our time?
21. KAY: Right, *well*, umm...
22. KAY: S'complex. Briefing room?

What Kay describes here is an actual project, an actual idea that actual people have in our actual world. I love it - it feels very Earth-centric, but also completely selfless - like even if we were doomed we could actually give something to the universe beyond. We'd just have to make sure that we targeted completely barren worlds, to avoid creating invasive interplanetary species, but other than that, wanting to save the concept of life even if we're not able to save ourselves is kind of beautiful.

## **FOUR**

**Lettering note:** on this page, the Rupert-text is under the rest – needn't be legible.

**Panel 1:** The briefing room from 4.5-4. All the bodies are gone, one of the chairs turned away from the table. There's a water packet, bits of kit and metal left on the table. Kay is helping Murray into the room, Murray leaning heavily on her.

1. KAY: Let's get you sat down. Svala?
2. SVALA: Yes, Kay?
3. KAY (soft): Svala's the computer here, she's real nice.
4. KAY: Play Doctor Sommer's message, audio-visual.
5. SVALA: Sure.

**Panel 2:** Kay sitting Murray down in one of the chairs, as Murray watches the text message, amazed, her face lit by the holo-projection on the table (don't need to see it if it over-clutters the panel).

6. SFX: blp
7. RUPERT (soft): Message for Kay and Murray Mielniczuk, uh, hi? This is, ah -- well it doesn't matter, but I'm recording this just before you launch.
8. KAY: Svala had this on file.
9. MURRAY: How'd he get it to us?
10. KAY: Apparently he's an engineer working in quantum AI, so... pretty easily, I guess?

**Panel 3:** Kay leaning over the back of Murray's chair, showing off. Again, Rupert text faint, behind Kay and Murray's.

11. RUPERT: And I'm whispering because I'm not meant to be, but it's fine. I mean, if you're listening to this it's not fine, but if everything goes sideways I don't like the thought of you being stranded out there alone, that's--
12. KAY: Personally, I'd've set up a link to an isolated cloud-based audio file server, set it to run for a certain user and fold the code into--
13. MURRAY: Kay.
14. KAY: Jeez alright. Svala, end audio playback.
15. SFX: blp

**Panel 4:** Kay sitting on the table, with a hologram of the box in her hands.

16. KAY: Look, gist is, when we supercharged the photon, it went **forward** through time and took us with it.
17. MURRAY: Mm-hmm.
18. KAY: And when it runs dry, it'll **poof** into nothingness, like Lamb said.
19. MURRAY: Mm-hmm.

**Panel 5:** Kay has plucked the photon from within the box; a tiny speck of light.

20. KAY: Except no, that's just how it **looks** to **dumb-dumbs**.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

21. KAY: This Sommer guy thought that, post-jump, it might take a constant smidge of energy for the photon to stay here, unsynced with its own time.

**Panel 6:** Kay holding her fingers together – ‘tiny’.

22. KAY: So while you were sleeping, I got Svala to check it out, and yeah, it’s constantly using a **teeny** bit of energy.

23. SVALA: Happy to help.

24. KAY: And, according to Sommer, when that power runs out, the photon won’t ‘poof’, it’ll bungee, fall back along its timeline.

**Panel 7:** Murray, shocked.

25. MURRAY: Back **home**.

I miss Svala once she’s gone. I considered having Kay and Murray take her with them, but that was an extra complication at this stage. At least someone will be here to look after the Vault, right? In case anyone else swings by.

As you can see (depending on the draft of the script we end up using), Doctor Sommer’s first name is Rupert, just like our artist. Maybe because Mr Smissen is a wise and calming influence, or maybe because we communicated using time-displaced holo-messages across a gap of centuries. One or the other.

## **FIVE**

**Panel 1:** From the other side of the hologram, Kay's back as she thumbs over her shoulder – the photon bright red, overcharged, putting a field around two little figures.

1. TEXT (reversed): Overcharged to detonation
2. KAY: Here's Sommer's plan. We **overcharge** the photon, creating the energy field ready to drag us forward with it...

**Panel 2:** From the photon, a line heading down, arrows showing the direction, the photon bursting along its trajectory. Behind the hologram, Kay is reaching under the table, as Murray watches the hologram intently, disbelieving.

3. KAY: ...then the photon **detonates**, starting a chain reaction back through its timeline, dragging the photon back and pullin' anything attuned to its frequency with it.
4. KAY: Which, thanks to a little bit of code that came with the message, now includes...

**Panel 3:** Murray's helmet on her still-amazed head, Kay's hand having placed it there.

5. KAY (OP): Taa-daa! The box, our suits, and whatever's **in** the suits.
6. KAY (OP): That'll be us.
7. MURRAY: This can really work? We can get home?
8. KAY (OP): Oh yeah. Hang on, throat's dry.
9. SFX: slrp

**Panel 4:** Kay holding the water bag, having just drunk from its straw.

10. MURRAY: But... how do we overcharge it -- it took a whole space station to power our trip here.
11. KAY: **He** wanted us to use nuclear power plants, which, finding an' getting one working before you keel over -- no.

**Panel 5:** Kay's hand placing the water down, angle on Murray listening intently.

12. KAY: But, if we leave the pod an' just jump in our suits, we need sixty-two percent less charge and, lucky us...

**Panel 6:** Kay standing up on the table.

14. KAY: ...the pods in the hanger, each one's plated with solar panels. So...
15. KAY (soft): Svala, next slide.
16. SFX: blp

I would like to take this entire annotation to talk about the thinking behind 'Hang on, throat's dry'. This is basically my admission that Kay's talking a lot here, and that I talk, a lot, in comics. But that isn't something to be ashamed of, if it's in concert with your collaborators and serves a purpose. Moreover, I don't like the idea peddled by some writers that comics are art that they have disgracefully besmirched with their ugly dialogue. It's a symptom of writers trying to rightly praise the work of the art team. But that shouldn't mean lessening your own work, writers. Telling your team they're collaborating with a chump just makes them seem like chumps and... well, you get it, right? You're great, they're great, make something great together.

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## **SIX**

**Panel 1:** Kay now on the table, presenting like a circus ringmaster, the Earth tiny on the left, a huge hologram of the Sun, and a flight trajectory marked out between them.

1. KAY:            So, we're gonna throw ourselves at the Sun!

2. KAY:            Yaaay...

**Panel 2:** Kay's fingers pointing out the key points on the hologram (Earth, first jump, and where the pod disappears).

3. MURRAY:    We--

4. KAY:            It's all inputted, we pick up a **teeny** solar charge for one lil time-hop a few months into the pod's flight--

5. MURRAY:    So--

6. KAY:            --fully charge the solar panels, then a **second** hop takes us home! S'easy!

7. MURRAY:    Kay, listen.

**Panel 3:** Explaining at Murray.

8. KAY:            Dude this is -- this **works**.

9. KAY:            Maybe, given a few months, we could prep something safer but the photon's already **crazy** unstable and you don't **have** a few months, do you?

**Panel 4:** Kay frustrated.

10. MURRAY:    Kay--

11. KAY:            Fine, it's a shitty plan, shithead! But we passed all the good ones a long way back!

12. KAY:            That's what you **do** when they tell you to make your wife 'comfortable' in her last **fucking** days.

**Panel 5:** Kay lying down on the table, exhausted.

13. KAY:            We saw every doctor, we tried every treatment, we went **time-travelling**, and we fucked with cause and effect.

14. KAY:            And now **this** is the best shot we have. We keep **taking** best shots until we're empty. And then...

15. KAY:            Hang on...

**Panel 6:** Same angle, Kay now looking up at Murray as Murray's fingers grab the tiny dot of the pod from the hologram between her fingers.

16. KAY:            ... you smiling?

17. MURRAY:    They didn't give up. I knew **you** wouldn't, but... neither did they.

**Panel 7:** Murray standing up again, walking out, Kay looking after her with adoration and awe.

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

18. MURRAY: They made these pods instead, and that's going to get us home.

19. MURRAY: So what am I flying?

'Throw ourselves at the Sun' is not the worst idea put forward in the last few years. For a long time here, Murray did actually try to talk Kay out of this, but eventually it clicked that no, that didn't make sense. K+M are all in, and Murray has finally, to some degree, accepted that she isn't done trying to live, so of course she's going to fly the damn spaceship at the Sun. I think I hit a few brick walls during the book, trying to make characters do or say certain things, which is a good sign overall - it means the character's voice is clear enough that you can tell when something doesn't fit it.

## **SEVEN**

**Panel 1:** Big damn heroes – Kay and Murray in their beaten, dusty spacesuits, carrying their helmets out across the broken tarmac, Murray smiling at what she sees up ahead.

1. KAY: Sent it up from the hanger yesterday, to see if the track'd still work. It works.

**Panel 2:** Long shot; the space-plane sitting on the rollercoaster-style mag-lev rail (<https://tinyurl.com/y8657tw4>), which heads off into a tunnel and up towards the mountains. A suggestion of a lift which has brought it up from the hanger straight to the track would be great. On the ground next to the plane is the discarded cockpit door, and various other bits and bobs Kay's ripped out of the plane in her refit.

2. KAY: Patched it up best I could, but there's another sandstorm less than an hour out.

3. KAY: So I'm gonna run you through this real quick 'cause ***we need to go.***

**Panel 3:** View underneath the plane, Kay crouched, pointing at the track, Murray peering under.

4. KAY: Mag-lev track.

5. MURRAY: Okay.

**Panel 4:** Kay starts to pull the door open with one hand, pointing at the plane with the other.

6. KAY: Space-plane.

7. MURRAY: Okay.

**Panel 5:** The door now open, Kay pointing in at the eight-foot-high planet Earth strapped inside the plane, which looks like K+M's 2070's Earth. The roof of the plane is an openable hatch ([tinyurl.com/yb4o92sd](https://tinyurl.com/yb4o92sd)). There is a safety tether coiled on the floor, one end attached to the Earth (just round the curve of it so we can't see the join).

8. KAY: Seed pod thing.

9. MURRAY: ...Okay.

**Panel 6:** Kay pulling herself onto the plane, as Murray looks back past the rear of the plane, down into the dried-up seabed she walked.

10. KAY (OP): You launch the ***plane*** from the ***track***, then we get in the pod, eject it into ***space***, fly it at the ***Sun***, and time travel ***home***.

11. KAY (OP): Simple shit for simple folks.

Machinery isn't Rupert's favourite, but I think he's done wonderfully crafting mildly futuristic but realistic space-tech throughout Future, especially the suits which - if you look up the suits actually being used now, a few years after we started on the book - are bang on. This space-plane uses maglev tech to accelerate into launch, as I felt Kay and Murray couldn't feasibly launch the traditional launchpad setup by themselves, and because this is a real technology being considered for the future of space launches. It's very, very cool, but I still want a skyhook too. (Look up skyhooks, folks.)

Also, 'simple shit for simple folks' is a little callback to P.20, just before they launched.

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## EIGHT

**Panel 1:** Kay helping Murray into the plane – she’s looking at the pod, which now looks like a pod again.

1. KAY: We can do the ins and outs when you get us off this barren shite of a planet.

**Panel 2:** Murray approaching the control panel, dauntingly complex.

2. KAY (OP): I guess you don't know the plane, but, if anything it looks like they simplified it over the years, so...

**Panel 3:** Murray looking out the front window, ill, squinting. Kay looks uncomfortable behind her.

3. KAY (OP): An' if you can't fly it I can try, but, you know. You're the hot piece of astronaut. And we really gotta go. Fifty minutes til' sandstorm.

**Panel 4:** Murray's hand on one of the levers.

4. KAY (OP): So can you fly it?

**Panel 5:** Murray taking her seat, cocky, Han Solo-esque.

5. MURRAY: Better than you can.

**Panel 6:** Kay grinning, hitting a button by the door, the door closing up.

6. KAY: In that case...

7. SFX: vrrrm

And then another callback to 'hot piece of astronaut', now going platinum on all good streaming platforms.

I was so glad to hit this point, to get them up into the air and moving. At one point, more of the plan was going to be unveiled once they left the atmosphere, but that's just not realistic, is it? You discuss the plan before launching the spaceship. And I'd rather have a heavier setup and then build momentum from there, rather than continually stopping to explain what's about to happen as we go.



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## **NINE**

**Panel 1:** The space-plane, hovering slightly off the tracks.

1. SFX: vhmhhh

**Panel 2:** Kay, grimly determined, snapping her visor into place.

2. SFX: Snap

3. KAY (soft): Hoo boy. We're doing this again.

4. MURRAY: Yes we are. Ready?

**Panel 3:** Kay and Murray, all business in the cockpit seats, now in their full spacesuits and belted in.

5. KAY: Mag-lev track's engaged, engine ignition should happen when we hit the other end of the tunnel, I guess, I mean I dunno I just read a fuckin' manual and--

6. MURRAY: Kay.

**Panel 4:** Murray's smile; she's going to fly.

7. KAY: Alright, just fly already.

8. MURRAY: I'll probably pass out, but the autopilot'll deal once I get us off the ground.

9. KAY: **What?**

10. MURRAY: (soft): Let's get you home.

**Panel 5:** Murray's hand pushing a lever forward.

11. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** The spaceplane has shot off towards the tunnel.

12. SFX (soft): tff

13. KAY: Whoa shit!

In fact, throughout this lift-off we have a lot of callbacks to the first one. Another improv idea is that the end of your story can be found in the beginning; they were astronauts on a reckless mission, so let's take you back to that. Also, flying into the Sun seems epic and reckless enough for a finale, right?

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## **TEN**

**Panel 1:** Cockpit view – smooth ride, elevator-like, the plane approaching the tunnel.

1. KAY (soft):                      Shit, shit shit shit

**Panel 2:** Cockpit view – the plane is in the tunnel, Kay can't look.

2. KAY:                                Shit shit shit!

3. MURRAY:                        Kay!

**Panel 3:** Cockpit view – the plane zooms down the tunnel, dim, intense emergency lighting inside, Murray's hands on the controls.

4. KAY:                                What if it's blocked the other end?

5. MURRAY:                        You didn't check?

6. KAY:                                I did but shit could've fallen on it since or--

**Panel 4:** Engines ignite.

7. SFX:                                FOOM

**Panel 5:** Cockpit shakes, streams of light coming from the end of the tunnel.

8. KAY:                                Aaaah fuckity fucknuts!

**Panel 6:** Plane bursts out of the end of the tunnel, heading up.

9. NO COPY

'Fuckity fucknuts' are also on sale now, from all good supermarkets.

There are little worries, complications, and mishaps throughout this journey, that don't necessarily lead to anything. Here, it's Kay's worry that the exit to the tunnel will be blocked; these little problems keep the tension up and keep everything unpredictable - as a canny reader, you know this can't all go smoothly, so by having lots of elements on the edge, you're hopefully constantly tense and mistrusting of everything.

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## **ELEVEN**

**Panel 1:** The plane, climbing through the dusty skies.

1. KAY (OP): I freaked out again.
2. MURRAY (OP): Yeah you did.

**Panel 2, 3, 4:** As in issue 1, reflected in Murray's eye, the dusty brown of the sky, then a murky blue, and then star-studded blackness. Her eye closing more on each.

3. MURRAY (trailing off): Transferring to autopilot.
4. KAY: We good now?
5. KAY: Mur?

**Panel 5:** Kay unbuckling her seatbelt to get to Murray, whose head is lolling, sunlight flooding the cockpit.

6. SFX: clk
7. KAY: I gotcha, here we go.

**Panel 6:** Kay drags Murray towards the pod.

8. KAY: Computer, how long until scheduled pod separation?
9. COMPUTER: Seventy-one seconds.
10. KAY (soft): You're killin' me.

**Panel 7:** Kay dragging Murray into the pod; panel as big as possible to introduce this 'set'. Kay has welded in two seats in the middle, side by side. The box is strapped in place between them. Along the walls are flush compartments for seeds, but otherwise the pod has been stripped of as much as possible – there would've been a seed delivery system previously.

Notes for both **Rupert** and **Aditya** for upcoming text:

CTRL SCREEN is the set of screens in front of them, between them and the front viewer, currently closed: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cqJLUB2e2w> – see 2.45 for screens), ([https://youtu.be/6xd\\_ZAPZIDk?t=194](https://youtu.be/6xd_ZAPZIDk?t=194))

DOOR SCREEN is a smaller screen by the door/hatch, for the sake of showing info while doing a reverse angle on Kay and Murray.

11. NO COPY

Right, so *The Matrix Revolutions*. Bear with me. The film as a whole didn't quite work, but there's one scene where Neo and Trinity are in the real world, flying their ship under the dark clouds and being swarmed by hundreds of many-tentacled machines, and they pull up, break through the storm clouds... and for a moment they're above the clouds, and it's the only glimpse of the real-world sky you get in the whole series, and it's unexpected and beautiful. I wasn't thinking of that, but it deserves props. Oh, and the sky here reminds me of that, the moment of catching your breath - but then we're straight back into the countdown, as Kay drags Murray from one ship into another.

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## **TWELVE**

**Panel 1:** Kay seatbelting Murray into the pod.

1. SFX: clk

**Panel 2:** Kay attaching the safety tether from the outside of the pod to her belt, moving floatily.

2. KAY: There goes the gravity. Computer, how long now?

3. SFX: clnk

4. COMPUTER: Twenty-eight seconds.

**Panel 3:** The ship against the pale sky, stars now showing through the atmosphere.

5. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Kay's finger on a button.

6. KAY (soft): And... open the hatch.

**Panel 5:** Kay has strapped herself back in at the spaceplane's controls. As all the air in the plane escapes, she's screwed her eyes shut, riding it out.

7. COMPUTER: Warning, cockpit door malfunctioning. Warning, cockpit door mal

**Panel 6:** Part of the hatch breaks off.

8. NO COPY

**Panel 7:** The hatch smashes into the wing, breaking part of it into debris.

9. NO COPY

The seatbelt 'klk' is functional, but also very sweet and caring. Rupert and Aditya pitched it perfectly.

Another thing I wasn't referencing, but I can never read 'there goes the gravity' without thinking of Eminem.

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## **THIRTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Kay clinging to the cockpit doorway as the plane jolts around her, the chair's safety straps flailing behind her (to remind readers she's freed herself from them).

1. COMPUTER:                      Warning, impact. Engine one functionality lost.  
2. KAY:                              Computer, keep us on autopilot course!

**Panel 2:** Kay pulling herself past the cockpit doorway, towards the sphere, maybe one hand bracing the tether.

3. COMPUTER:                      Unable to maintain course. Please abort flight plan.  
4. KAY:                              I ***fucking*** hate you.  
5. KAY:                              Launch the pod ***now!***

**Panel 3:** The pod rocketing up from the plane, a big expulsion of gas behind it, Kay's safety tether trailing behind it.

6. SFX:                                fhouff

**Panel 4:** Kay hanging on to the safety tether, which is hooked to her waist still, as she's pulled away from the plane.

7. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Kay pulling herself along the tether; very low gravity so it's not necessarily 'up' as much as 'towards'.

8. KAY:                                This is \*hff\* fine.  
9. KAY:                                This is \*hff\* all \*hff\* fine.

**Panel 6:** Kay pulling herself into the pod. Murray's head snaps up as she wakes.

10. MURRAY (comms):            M'awake.

**Panel 7:** Kay's hand hits a button by the hatch.

11. KAY:                                Don't worry. I got this one.

**Panel 8:** The hatch closes.

12. NO COPY

This is maybe the most action-hero thing either of them does in the whole book, and Kay styles it out like it's no big deal. As far as I can tell from reading up, as long as Kay didn't whack against the rocket as the pod ejects, it would actually be no big deal, given the almost total lack of gravity by this point in the launch. I think it shows how desperate she is to make this work, that she tries to brush it off, but it also shows how much of a bad-ass she is.

## **FOURTEEN**

**Panel 1:** The pod calmly floating along, sunlight glimmering on the front panels.

1. MURRAY: Pod's fully pressurised, solar panels charging.

**Panel 2:** Kay and Murray are huddled around the hatch viewport, helmets off. Murray is scratching the back of Kay's neck affectionately. It's a small window; the light of it is illuminating their faces.

2. MURRAY: Ever find out what happened down there?

3. KAY: Ignored what they knew, burned up what they had.

**Panel 3:** Angle of the same from behind Kay and Murray – they're looking back at Earth, large and dead in the viewport, its glow lighting their faces.

5. KAY: The usual.

**Panel 4:** Their faces, grimly unsurprised.

6. KAY: When it looked profitable, some anti-science regime decided **they'd** fix everything.

7. KAY: Instant uninhabitable Earth, for almost a century. It's only been breathable for a few decades.

**Panel 5:** Kay turning away from the viewport, Murray transfixed.

8. KAY: The folks down in the seed vault had a self-sustaining atmosphere but... their notes said they also had families out in the world.

9. KAY: And there were castor seeds in storage. Poison. So.

10. SFX: blp

**Panel 6:** Kay reaching over one of the seats, tapping at the screen; box in view next to her, as Murray looks around in surprise at the sunlight beginning to hit her face from the opposite side of the pod to the little window.

11. SFX: RNNNN

12. KAY (soft): Five-seven-four kilowatt hours...

13. KAY: Okay, we're charged up for the first hop, panels running.

14. KAY: How about we leave this shit behind?

As I mentioned way back in Chapter 2, I didn't want to make a big mystery out of what happened to Earth. We know what happened to Earth, don't we, what's going to happen to our Earth if everything doesn't change. There's no revelation there, but I included a few specifics here so that it didn't feel brushed off. Rupert also really wanted me to include a bit of cut dialogue that didn't fit in here without creating a very forced argument at this point, when they're the most aligned they've ever been; it was basically: 'The ugly thing is they didn't need us to come. Those shitheads knew what to do before they sent us. And they're not gonna do it.' Grim.

## **FIFTEEN**

**Panel 1:** A second viewport has slid open – a larger, front window – straight ahead, the Sun, still currently far off in the distance. Murray, impressed, bathed in the sunlight, just having floated over to her seat.

1. MURRAY:                      You installed a **window**?  
2. KAY:                            **Re**installed, from when this was an escape pod.  
                                      Figured it'd be good to see where we're going.  
3. KAY:                            An' I built-in filters against heat, radiation, light,  
                                      etcetera. Not just a pretty arse.  
4. MURRAY:                      It's very pretty though.

**Panel 2:** Murray reaches for button on the box.

5. MURRAY:                      At the Sun, then?  
6. KAY:                            Woah woah woah! Is your suit online? Or you'll get  
                                      left behind.

**Panel 3:** Murray looking at her wrist panel, checking. Kay nervous.

7. KAY:                            Remember, the **pod** doesn't jump, we just reappear  
                                      in it a few days down the timeline. Hopefully. Probab-  
                                      -  
8. MURRAY:                      Suit's online. Yours too.  
9. MURRAY:                      This is as safe as the plan gets.  
10. KAY:                            ...Alrighty.

**Panel 4:** Kay kisses her.

11. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Both their hands hit the box's button at once.

12. KAY:                            At the Sun.

**Panel 6:** Negatived space, coming from the pod's viewports (one in door, the other the main viewer).

13. NO COPY

**Panel 7:** The interior of the pod, empty, Kay, Murray, and the box gone.

14. NO COPY

The window is absolutely just there because it makes this whole thing cooler. The time travel effect is used a lot in this chapter, so again it had to be clear what it meant by this point. The time travel is also used quite differently, as Kay and Murray are basically 'stepping out' for chunks of the journey, giving me a way to get them up close to the Sun in just a few pages. Otherwise, it would've been a long, slow haul. More points to Rupert, by the way, for another adorable little cheek kiss.

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## **SIXTEEN**

**Panel 1:** Negatived of 15-7, Kay and Murray and the box back in place, posed exactly as they were pre-jump.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Murray looks up at the screen as she unbuckles, Kay looks shellshocked. From the seed cupboard, a mess of plants has grown.

2. MURRAY: Two and a half months.

3. KAY: Hey, we missed Christmas -- aw and Halloween!

**Panel 3:** Kay's finger on the screen's map, showing a line from Earth to the Sun, as well as the sphere's current position, having jumped just over halfway towards the 'danger' area around the Sun, the 'missed time' marked as a dotted line.

4. CTRL SCREEN TEXT: Jump +74 days.

5. CTRL SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 11:04:27

6. KAY (OP): The solar panels are picking up energy at... a **lot** faster.

**Panel 4:** Murray examining the plants.

7. KAY (OP): Just a few hours, then we jump home.

8. KAY (OP): Whatcha looking at?

9. MURRAY: Seeds must've gotten loose.

**Panel 5:** Kay now peering over Murray's shoulder, floating beside her.

10. KAY: Huh. They were GM'd to survive on water vapour, an' I guess they got sunlight through the viewport?

11. MURRAY: Keep them out of the circuits?

12. KAY: Good shout.

13. KAY: Now, we've got eleven hours to kill, so...

**Panel 6:** Kay has pulled herself round in front of Murray, helmet off.

14. KAY: ...come here often?

These are the titular seeds of the 'Svalbard Seed Vault'. Their 'escape' does make things feel a bit more uncontrolled again, but moreover it's just a nice visual of time passing, a way to make the interior of the pod develop so it feels like time's actually gone by.

I love the cheese Rupert used to compliment Kay's pick-up line - the all white background really focuses on the flash of smile.



## **SEVENTEEN**

9-PANEL GRID! ALL SAME ANGLE! DO IT! HOORAY! Kay and Murray's day montage – all the 'Full charge' text only visible on the screen if it fits the angle you want – let's not overuse crappy floating labels at this late stage.

**Panel 1:** Kay floating upside down, standing on the ceiling, nose to nose with Murray who is still seated (accounting for size of pod).

1. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 10:49:40
2. KAY: ...and cake from Benedictine's. And a week in bed -- **our** bed. They can bring the hospital to you. Oh or--
3. MURRAY: And we should get a puppy.
4. KAY: We **should** get a puppy!

**Panel 2:** Kay pulling at collar, awkwardly, floating about. Murray is in her seat, eyes closed, resting.

5. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 09:53:02
6. KAY: It's hotter now, right?
7. MURRAY: We're forty-five million miles closer to the Sun. Almost halfway.
8. KAY: Ah, gotcha.

**Panel 3:** Kay and Murray both floating now, Kay has taken off her suit and is in her undersuit, is more expressive and enthused, Murray puzzling, thinking.

9. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 08:14:31
10. MURRAY: So, it might be recursive, so whatever we **do** just leads to this future.
11. KAY: Or rewriteable, so what we take back can still stop this happening, though then it gets all paradoxy.
12. MURRAY: Or it might be a situation of different timelines, so

**Panel 4:** Kay and Murray, making out, Kay tugging off Murray's spacesuit leggings as they float - comedic, graceless.

13. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 07:26:50
14. MURRAY: Wait there's a pressure clamp.

**Panel 5:** They're gone from panel.  
NO COPY

**Panel 6:** Down to their undersuits, post-sex, Kay not wearing her shirt but tucked in behind the seats, knees hiding her body from view. Both of them smiling.

15. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 07:04:18
16. KAY: I'm a bit naked in space.
17. MURRAY: This is the furthest out that's ever -- the furthest people have ever come from Earth.
18. KAY: Hah. Phrasing. And welcome to the, umm... forty-fiveish million mile high club.

**Panel 7:** Kay is lying on Murray's lap on the seat, only wearing her helmet and the undersuit, biting on the water pipe in her helmet, talking out of the side of

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

her mouth. Both strapped in, Kay having wedged in under Murray's belt, her legs free.

19. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 06:29:37

20. KAY: Dude I'm **so** hungry.

21. MURRAY: Well did you bring food?

22. KAY: ...No.

23. MURRAY: Sorry then.

**Panel 8:** Same, but Kay's hands thrown up in the air in protest.

24. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 06:12:49

25. KAY: But the extra weight of the seats was a bell-end to balance out!

26. MURRAY: Oh well, now you have a good reason, we can eat the moral high ground.

27. KAY: ...**This** is why you got banned from flying, you snarky dick!

**Panel 9:** Kay sleeping, feet belted onto her chair, head on Murray's lap. Murray is stroking her hair.

28. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Full charge in 05:28:49

29. KAY (soft): Shut the curtains.

Rupert's talked about this page himself in the process doc, so go read that for his side of things. I wanted to give Kay and Murray a last bit of downtime, to just hang out and bicker and chat and other things, before the high drama of the end of the story. 'Benedictine's' here is named after 'Eggs Benedict', by the way, a cake shop near my flat that renamed itself to 'Café Gusto' just before lockdown and now doesn't look like it's going to re-open. But it made the very best cake, and if they ever come back they're the cake shop of choice for Kay and Murray Mielniczuk, and those two are astronauts so you know it's good.

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## **EIGHTEEN**

**Panel 1:** The pod dark because the front viewer is closed.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Murray is reaching out for the screen, glancing down at the sleeping Kay for any sign of movement.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Murray's finger pressing the attachment link button (6.). (Use as much or little of '8. CTRL SCREEN TEXT' as fits the panel)

3. CTRL SCREEN TEXT: Full charge 01:07:41

4. CTRL SCREEN TEXT: a way back. Only one, and it's only theoretical, but just stay calm, stay together. Everything's going to be alright. Oh, except for the box. That might go haywire, and then, um... that'll be a problem. But just look at the attached calculations, find a power source - I've included some ideas - and... look, I hope you don't need this. I really do. I hope I'm wrong. But that's not enough.

5. CTRL SCREEN TEXT: Speech-to-text transcript

6. CTRL SCREEN BUTTON: Attachment-CALC.txt

**Panel 4:** Calculations reflected in Murray's eyes, as Kay sleeps on. Again, only a few symbols plucked out of here.

7. CTRL SCREEN (reverse): 299.8GHz 1.239847meV ( $1.99 \times 10^{-22} \text{J}$ )

**Panel 5:** The outside of the pod, drifting. Use this as a time gap - so perhaps a horizontal strip across the page?

8. NO COPY

**Panel 6:** The screen is now off, Murray staring ahead, stroking Kay's hair.

9. DOOR SCREEN TEXT: Fully charged

10. MURRAY: Kay?

11. KAY: Mm?

12. MURRAY: Time to go home.

**Panel 7:** Kay springs upright, her face off-panel as Murray broods.

13. KAY: Oh shit! Good morning!

14. KAY: Ow. Ooh, you can crick your neck in space?

My scripted 'full charge' signage was rightly cut here. This way, the page is ominously quiet, and 'time to go home' covers the actual timeframe aptly.

Rupert took the direction really well in the last panel here too; Kay can act her usual cheery self, but by focusing on Murray's stony face, we know something fundamental has shifted due to what she's read.

## **NINETEEN**

**Panel 1:** Kay sitting up in her chair, rubbing her eye with one hand as the light comes back in through the re-opened front viewer.

1. KAY: We're getting max solar uptake off the panels. No better time.
2. KAY: When it works, no more pod, we'll be back where we left from, KLP station. So... prep yourself.

**Panel 2:** Kay looking at Murray, concerned by how quiet she is.

3. KAY: Mur, you good?
4. MURRAY: I'm good.
5. MURRAY: This'll really work?

**Panel 3:** Kay pulling her helmet on, not letting Murray see her worry.

6. KAY: Mate, if anything on Earth -- sorry, **off** Earth -- can get us home, this is it. I promise.

**Panel 4:** Kay turned back to Murray as she puts on her own helmet, Kay's cocky face back on, one hand over the button. SFX from the helmet.

7. SFX: blp
8. KAY: Either way, this is the last time you're flying me **anywhere**.

**Panel 5:** Kay squeezing her hand into a fist over the button.

9. KAY (soft): This is gonna work.

**Panel 6:** Same angle, her hand hitting the button.

10. KAY: We're going ho--

**Panel 7:** Negatived space coming from the pod's viewports, view from behind the pod of it heading at the Sun.

11. NO COPY

One last holding-of-the-breath before the chaos of the next page. This is something unique to comics actually - using a page turn to make the reader complicit in the action. Perhaps video games do it to a degree, but not with the same regularity - here, Kay and Murray jump away from the page, but it's your page turn that gets them into trouble. You monster.

## **TWENTY**

**Panel 1:** Negatived of the box, back in place, and the screen by the door. From the seed cupboard, the plants have now grown across much of the interior and blossomed.

1. DOOR SCREEN TEXT:     Jump +57 days.

**Panel 2:** Reverse shot, the Sun now filling the viewport, searing through it, the on-screen map showing them inside the danger area with a stream of warnings. Kay and Murray in their seats, angled down towards the viewport to indicate gravity; Kay holding on tight to her restraints, Murray tapping at the screen.

2. CTRL SCREEN TEXT:     Warning: Proximity

3. CTRL SCREEN TEXT:     Warning: Temperature

4. CTRL SCREEN TEXT:     Warning: Radiation

5. CTRL SCREEN TEXT:     Warning: Integrity

6. CTRL SCREEN TEXT:     Warning: Proximity

7. KAY:                    No, no no **no!**

8. MURRAY:                We're falling -- ship's in the Sun's gravity. One-point-one Gs.

9. KAY:                    It didn't **work!**

10. MURRAY:              Reversing thrusters to slow our descent, put the gravity beneath us. Just stay calm.

**Panel 3:** The pod, falling downwards towards the Sun, solar flares reaching up from the surface. Tiny bursts of thrust from between the solar panels on the pod, which are blistering and melting in the heat ([youtube.com/watch?v=xnfwz7J5gTE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnfwz7J5gTE)).

11. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** Kay gripping her restraints, trying not to panic. Murray focused on the controls and the viewport.

12. MURRAY:              Thrusters cancelled out the acceleration, but the gravity's too much. We've got minutes.

13. KAY:                   Okay, we go again.

14. MURRAY:              Kay, we've run out of room -- another full charge will drop us into the Sun.

**Panel 5:** Just Murray's face, defeated – making a decision she doesn't want to, not looking at Kay.

15. KAY (OP):            Not if it works! The panels are almost recharged already this close up -- we go again.

**Panel 6:** Murray turned to Kay, the flames of the Sun visible through the viewport. Murray's face deadpan, though saying this is a defeat – she's setting something in motion she didn't want to.

16. MURRAY:              We need to go outside.

17. KAY:                   Out **there?**

18. MURRAY:              Solar panels must've been damaged when we separated from the plane. If that's not factored in,

FUTURE/Tom Woodman

we'll keep getting insufficient power input, preventing the photon overloading.

19. MURRAY:

We repair what we can, turn functional panels towards the Sun.

20. MURRAY:

Then we jump.

Again, Rupert cut all the 'Warning' messages. I was going for the kind of cluttered, failure cascade visual, but a huge broiling Sun does the work for us, right?

I was a little worried here that we wouldn't be able to capture Murray's look of resignation, but I think by using that same technique as a couple of pages ago - focusing on Murray even as Kay is the one passionately planning - we know that this is the important moment, and possibly even to draw that link between the two pages. It's not the most complex technique, but there's something beautiful in seeing any technique work on the page, so effortlessly, after you've discarded more complex, clumsy methods (a mini-flashback or similar).

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## **TWENTY-ONE**

On this page, Murray's voice comes through on comms from Panel 4 onward.

**Panel 1:** Kay getting up, Murray sadly watching her go.

1. KAY: Shit, alright, I'm going out.

**Panel 2:** Kay attaches the safety tether's hook to the buckle on the inside of the pod.

2. SFX: clnk

3. MURRAY: You won't have long. The suit'll give you a few minutes, then get back inside.

4. MURRAY: And remember the gravity. Keep the tether short.

5. KAY: Gotcha -- and **you** stay strapped in.

6. KAY: Opening the door.

**Panel 3:** Kay's fist hitting the button to open the hatch.

6. KAY: Four minutes, start the clock. Love you.

**Panel 4:** Kay in the doorway, one hand holding the tether to steady herself, framed against the heat-rimmed dark, air escaping.

7. MURRAY (comms): Love you too.

8. SFX: fshh

**Panel 5:** Kay outside, door now shut, reattaching the tether to the outside instead of the inside of the pod (no SFX in vacuum), while Murray taps at her suit arm controls.

9. KAY: Be right back.

10. MURRAY (comms): Kay? Turn around.

**Panel 6:** Through the window – Murray, no lights on her suit.

11. KAY: Dude, I gotta hurry here! What're you--

12. MURRAY (comms): I've shut off my suit. Next time the box jumps, it goes without me.

We had lots of discussion about whose bubbles had the 'comms' effect and when. It's a tiny thing but you don't want to distract readers with tiny things just as you're hitting the endgame. In the end, Murray's words are normal if we're seeing from inside the pod - otherwise, everything over comms.

This has also just reminded me that a (4-star) review for my first piece of writing said that it descended into repeated 'I love yous' towards the end. Which was an absolutely true criticism, dammit. Kay and Murray don't say it all that often, and I like how off-hand it is here; and how Rupert and Aditya have it follow Kay out of the pod, as if it's her safety tether as much as the rope.

## **TWENTY-TWO**

On this page, we're inside the pod, so Kay is speaking over comms instead.

**Panel 1:** Reverse shot – inside the cabin, looking out at Kay, who's scared.

1. KAY (comms):                   What?
2. KAY (comms):                   Mur, you're scaring me. Lemme back in.
3. MURRAY:                        You're going home, Kay.
4. KAY (comms):                   **Murray, open up.** I can shut off my suit too you kn-

**Panel 2:** Murray, hand hovering over the button, trying to steel herself.

5. MURRAY:                        **Don't.** Don't move. If you do I'll press it, and we won't get to say goodbye.
6. KAY (comms):                   Remember you're sick, you're--

**Panel 3:** Kay's face, horrified – caught.

7. MURRAY:                        I read Doctor Sommer's message while you were sleeping.
8. MURRAY:                        The jump home needs more energy to carry more mass. At peak charge, a single photon can take maybe one-point three, one point four people?

**Panel 4:** Kay distracted by the door, looking for a way in.

9. MURRAY:                        One of us might make it, but not both.
10. KAY (comms):                   Well you've gotten skinny and I'll hold my breath -- **open up!**

**Panel 5:** Murray – resigned but relieved that she was right, that she can maybe get Kay home.

11. MURRAY:                        Kay, there's still no cure. I'm still seeing things.
12. KAY (comms):                   We have to try!
13. MURRAY:                        I'm still dying. Even if you got me home, I'd only have a few weeks.

**Panel 6:** Kay's hand on the viewport, instinctually reaching for Murray.

14. KAY (comms):                   A few weeks! We'd do something -- we'd **find** a cure.
15. KAY (comms):                   Just let me stay. Please let me stay. Let's do this together.

**Panel 7:** Kay, eyes shut, squeezing away the tears.

16. MURRAY:                        You're going home, you're going to tell them what we've seen.
17. KAY (comms):                   But I wasn't trying to save **them**. I was only ever trying to save you.

You know, I have nothing to add to this page; it's all out there already. I hope I'd do what they're doing for each other here - Murray refusing to risk Kay's life for her own, while Kay is refusing to give up on Murray for her own safety. They're in conflict and complete support of each other.



## **TWENTY-THREE**

Match to panel layout of last page.

**Panel 1:** Kay glaring, suddenly angry, both fists on the airlock.

1. KAY (comms): Ah this is **bullshit**. Let me in!
2. KAY (comms): You let me in you fucking **coward**!
3. KAY (comms): I don't give up on you and you don't give up on me.  
That's the deal.

**Panel 2:** Murray, taking in this last sight of Kay, despite her anger.

4. MURRAY: I didn't. I know you think I did, with the diagnosis, or the... with everything.
5. MURRAY: I **wanted** to, but I didn't. How could I give up on the world when there's someone like you in it?

**Panel 3:** Kay leaning her head on the outside of the viewport, eyes shut.

8. KAY (comms): I'll find a way back to you. You send me home, I'm just gonna find some way **right** back here.

**Panel 4:** Pointing viciously through the viewport, anger masking tears.

9. KAY (comms): I'm gonna knock on this **fucking** door with your cure in one hand and a fuck you in the other... and you're gonna let me the fuck **in**!
10. KAY (comms): Got it? However hard you try, it's you an' me, 'til fucking **death**.

**Panel 5:** Kay, defeated, imploring.

11. KAY: And this... this can't be that. Not yet.
12. KAY: We were gonna get home.

**Panel 6:** Murray, smiling sadly back, holding onto herself – mirroring Kay on opposite page's Panel 6.

13. MURRAY: Yeah.
14. MURRAY: We were.

**Panel 7:** View from behind Murray's hand of Kay, as Murray presses the button.

15. KAY (comms): **NO!**

Kay's promise - there's a lot you can read into that, when put alongside the ending. The specifics of what's happening on the final pages are slightly up to the reader's optimism. I didn't want to leave it all up to interpretation, which is why we know for sure that Kay comes back and Kay and Murray leave together, but does Kay bring a cure? And are they going somewhere better than this future? Kay here states her case for yes, but the question still stands.

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## **TWENTY-FOUR**

**Panel 1:** Kay, in negative, in the doorway.

1. NO COPY

**Panel 2:** Same angle – Kay gone, the safety tether trailing outside the window, detached.

2. NO COPY

**Panel 3:** Murray, having taken off her helmet, turning back towards the viewer, and the fire.

3. NO COPY

This was actually the only place in the book where Rupert asked to turn the next two pages of script into four art pages, to draw out the shock and emotion of the separation. Considering how tired he must have been this late in the project, that's impressive. But it's well worth it - the pages were all pretty intensely packed as we came towards the end (in part for pacing, in part for budget, in part for schedule), but I'm so glad we managed to work in this bit of breathing room.

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## **TWENTY-FIVE**

**Panel 1:** Murray, on the edge of tears.

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. MURRAY (caption): | I missed midnight?  |
| 2. KAY (caption):    | No you didn't.  |
|                      | 3. KAY (OP): S'close, but you made it. You found me. Bang on midnight. Just in time, spacegirl. |

**Panel 2:** Heading into the party seen in Chapter 4, Kay beckoning Murray in through the crowd.

- |         |                       |
|---------|-----------------------|
| 4. KAY: | Stay close.           |
| 5. KAY: | Don't wanna lose you. |

**Panel 3:** Murray taking her seat, Murray fiddling with the controls.

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 6. MURRAY:   | Computer? How long until hull integrity fails?   |
| 7. COMPUTER: | Three minutes, twelve seconds.                   |
| 8. MURRAY:   | And if I shut off the thrusters?                 |
| 9. COMPUTER: | One minute, forty-four seconds. Not recommended. |

One more beautiful breeze through that Kay-hair. It's actually quite strange to see people who aren't Kay and Murray here in the crowd scene, but it helps push the idea that Kay might be about to be lost, to become just another face in the crowd, as does the gold tinge to everything here. It's the classic move of saying goodbye to a character who might not be gone - or rather, of Murray saying goodbye, prematurely. I did, however, staunchly avoid any fake-out deaths.

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## **TWENTY-SIX**

**Panel 1:** Murray, staring out at the sun.

1. MURRAY: ...
2. MURRAY: What if I use the thrusters to accelerate descent?
3. COMPUTER: Twenty-nine seconds. Not recommended.

**Panel 2:** Flashback again – Kay puts the scarf around Murray’s neck, grinning drunkenly, Murray smitten.

4. KAY: Guess I can hang up now.
5. MURRAY: Hey, you lied, your chin’s not weird.
6. KAY: Thanks! And you **are** a nine. With the extremely disturbing face.
7. KAY: Like you said earli... it’s a callback, see.
8. MURRAY: I got it.

**Panel 3:** Murray sat behind the controls, looking forward.

9. MURRAY: Mm-hmm.
10. MURRAY: On my mark, forward thrust.

Here’s that other part of the scene I mentioned before! A flashback to the first face-to-face with Kay and Murray. By leaving something (Murray’s line) out back in Chapter 4, revisiting this moment doesn’t feel empty, we’re still gaining a little crumb more of the moment. I love little flashbacks, but I hate reading something when I already know every detail of the conversation, so this was a real plus for me.

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## **TWENTY-SEVEN**

**Panel 1:** Murray's eyes closed, her hand over the controls.

1. MURRAY (soft): I got her home.

**Panel 2:** Kay on the stairs, Murray following her up, about to take her hand.

2. KAY: Come on!

**Panel 3:** Same angle.

3. MURRAY: ...

4. MURRAY: Come on.

5. MURRAY: Come on, knock.

**Panel 4:** Same angle – silence.

6. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** Murray looking up, disbelieving.

7. SFX (soft): thnk thnk thnk

Murray chooses to hold on for these few seconds here, just long enough. I wanted both her and Kay to have agency in this final action - it's not just Murray rescuing Kay by sending her away and then Kay returning to rescue Murray, it's also Murray having learned to hold on, Murray listening to what Kay's been saying in order to make that rescue possible. Basically, they save each other, repeatedly.

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## **TWENTY-EIGHT**

**Panel 1:** Murray turning from the viewscreen, disbelieving but so damn happy.

1. SFX (soft):                      thnk thnk thnk

**Panel 2:** Pulled back – Murray standing up.

2. MURRAY:                      You came back.

3. KAY (OP) (comms):        Hey, Mur.

**Panel 3:** Pull back; the back of Kay; she's in a notably different spacesuit, maybe black and gold, at the viewport; we don't know her age, whether she has the cure, but she has come back. We can see Murray standing up to let her in.

4. KAY (comms):                You lettin' me in?

**Panel 4:** Pull in – alongside Kay's shoulders, Murray with her hand on the door control, unable to take her eyes off Kay, grinning. Door is opening.

5. SFX (soft):                      fshh

6. MURRAY:                      You're older.

7. KAY (comms):                Urr, thanks? It's been a while. You've missed a few anniversaries, so...

**Panel 5:** Pull in again – chest height, as Kay and Murray hold each other.

8. KAY (OP) (comms):        Ah, just shut up and hold tight.

We didn't want to distract with Kay's older face, but it's been a few years, as you can tell, meaning that Kay is now the older one in the couple. I'd love to see Rupert's aged-up Kay design.

Damn, look how they still have time for a cuddle - I'm going to miss these two.

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## **TWENTY-NINE**

**Panel 1:** Pull in again from last page – their fingers interlocking.

1. MURRAY (OP) (comms): Where're we going?

**Panel 2:** Their hands have clasped each other.

2. KAY (OP) (comms): Somewhere else.

**Panel 3:** Same angle – the colours inverted – they're time travelling.

3. NO COPY

**Panel 4:** The hands are gone – the light burns through the viewer.

4. NO COPY

**Panel 5:** The light engulfs the panel – whiteness.

5. NO COPY

We originally scripted this page with a big zoom-out, as the pod disappeared against the Sun; but I'd actually seen that in someone else's book, and moreover whereas it worked for that book, I didn't like it for Kay and Murray. We're not telling a cosmic story of stars and space, we're telling the story of these two - so instead it ends on their hands, holding each other. And then the white of the last panel turns into the white of the next page, so that it isn't a sudden stop, but a fade-out.

Anyway, off they go, to somewhere else. I'd love to see where that is sometime. Thanks for listening to me ramble through all this. Read the Acknowledgements. You're in them.









