

# *Schlock Mercenary: Longshoreman of the Apocalypse*

2009 Hugo reader Copy

## Introduction:

This PDF of *Schlock Mercenary: Longshoreman of the Apocalypse* has been compiled for the convenience of people who are reading for 2010 Hugo nominations and voting. *Longshoreman of the Apocalypse* was published electronically beginning in 2008 and wrapping up on March 1, 2009. It is eligible for "Best Graphic Story,"

This PDF is also a rough cut of the eventual print book, much like an ARC (Advanced Reader Copy) for a novel. It contains the complete storyline and all footnotes, but lacks the marginalia or bonus strips that will appear in print. All those white spaces you see? That's what they're for.

*Schlock Mercenary* is an ongoing serial, an epic space opera being told four panels at a time. Rejected by newspaper syndicates almost ten years ago, it fashioned itself a permanent home on the web where niche-specific humor, hard science, high concepts, and long storylines work well. *Longshoreman of the Apocalypse* is the tenth volume in this serial, and the entire daily archives can be found at [www.schlockmercenary.com](http://www.schlockmercenary.com).

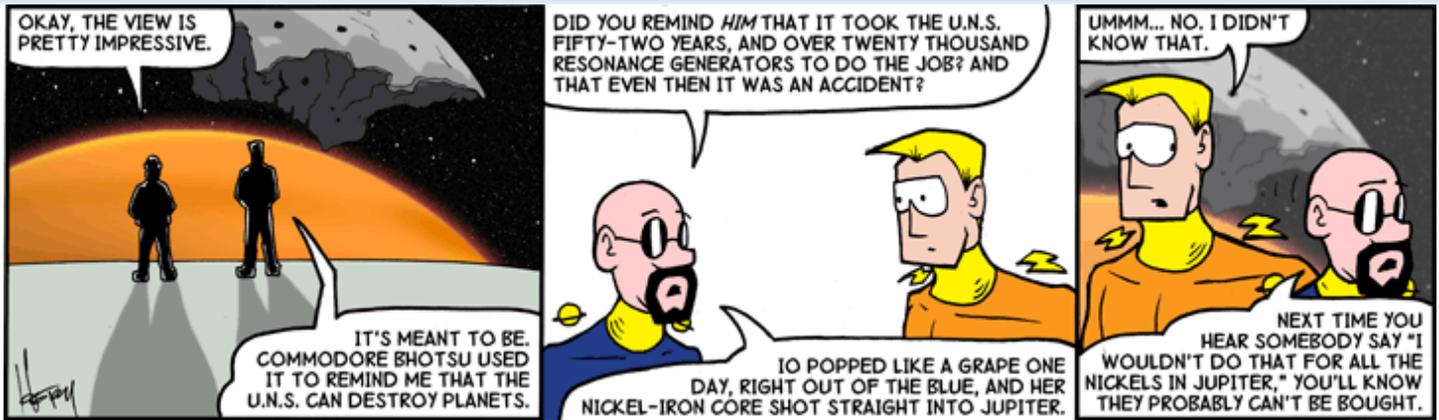
Whether or not you are reading this for Hugo voting purposes, we hope you enjoy it. Laugh loud, laugh hard, laugh often.

SOL SYSTEM, IN ORBIT AROUND THE INNERMOST GAS GIANT, JUPITER...

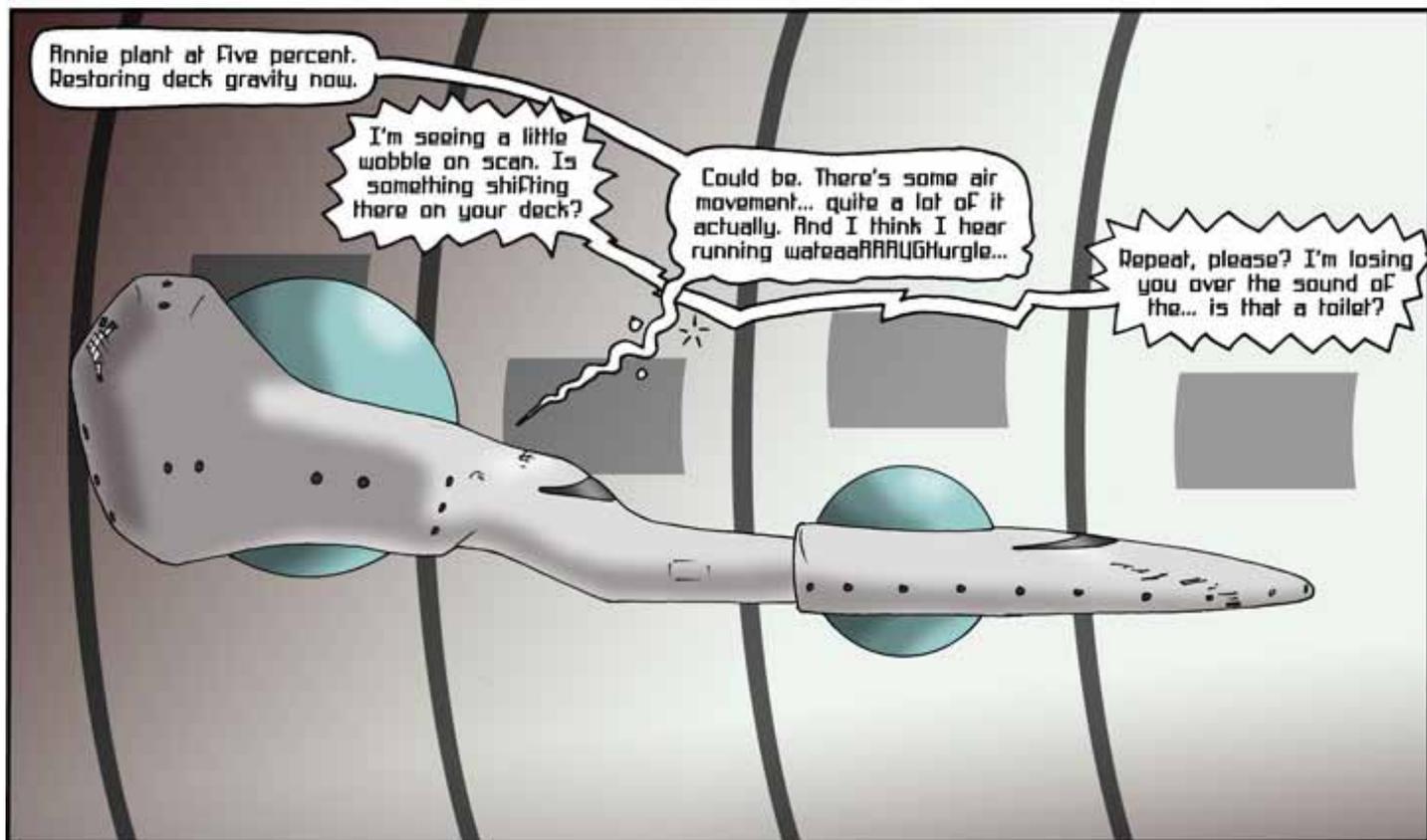
THIS IS THE HOME OF THE UNITED NATIONS OF SOL'S MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.

THE JOVIAN SYSTEM IS RESOURCE-RICH, AND, AT LEAST IN THE EARLY DAYS, YOU DID NOT NEED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS.

AFTER THE RESONANCE MINING OF IO, THE 'GREEN' ASTRONOMERS INSISTED THERE BE AT LEAST A LITTLE MORE PAPERWORK.



Note: The devout *Schlock Mercenary* reader certainly remembers the last time Io was pictured in the strip, and may be wondering why what then appeared as a lopsided orange dot appears grey when seen close-up. Well... in the earlier picture Io was being seen in reflected Jovelight rather than sunlight, giving its fairly high-albedo grey surface a distinctly orange cast. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

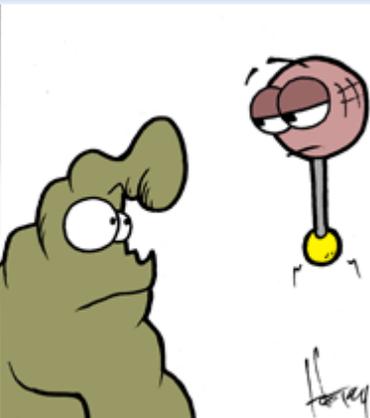




An' then a zill-trillion liters o' rec-deck water came crashing down on 'em. An' you know, half these bots don't have water seals.



Poor ship-bot whined about how his commo was shot, an' his friends were being restored from backups.



Oh come on. It's hilarious!



You could have warned us about the water, Captain. Fire there any more surprises aboard your derelict?

NO, I DON'T THINK SO. SORRY.



HANG ON... I HAD CORPORAL PIBALD'S BOOMEX COLONY IN MY QUARTERS. IF THAT SPILLED, IT MAY HAVE METASTASIZED.



IT'S *LIEUTENANT PIBALD*, COMMANDER. OH, I FORGOT. YOU NOW GIVE PROMOTIONS TO PEOPLE WHO TRY TO BLOW UP YOUR SHIP.



PI ISN'T THE ONE LETTING HIGH EXPLOSIVES RUN LOOSE IN HIS QUARTERS. AND I'M NOT THE ONE SETTING PRECEDENTS THAT WILL GET US ALL KILLED.

Yeah, control? Back everybody up again.



LIEUTENANT, WE NEED TO CLEAN UP YOUR BOOMEX BACK ON THE SHIP. MY BOOMEX? I BLEW IT ALL UP, REMEMBER?



NOT THE DOPED STUFF YOU USED. I'M TALKING ABOUT THE BATCH I CONFISCATED FROM YOU. APPARENTLY IT GOT LOOSE DURING THE EXCITEMENT, METASTASIZED, AND SPREAD INTO OTHER DECKS OF THE TOUCH-AND-GO.



THAT'S... KIND OF EXCITING. AND OF COURSE BY "WE" I MEAN "YOU."

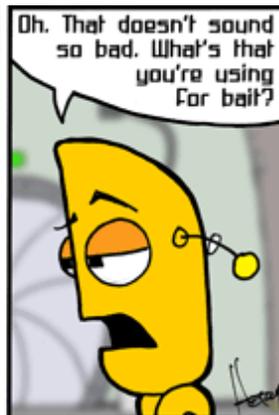


HEY THERE, LITTLE GUYS. I UNDERSTAND A BOOMEX COLONY GOT LOOSE.

Yes, it did. And even if we could find your explosives, none of us would go anywhere near them.



YOU DON'T NEED TO FIND THEM. THEY'LL FIND YOU. I'LL JUST PUT OUT SOME BAIT, AND ANY ROGUE COLONIES WILL ATTACH THEMSELVES AND WAIT.



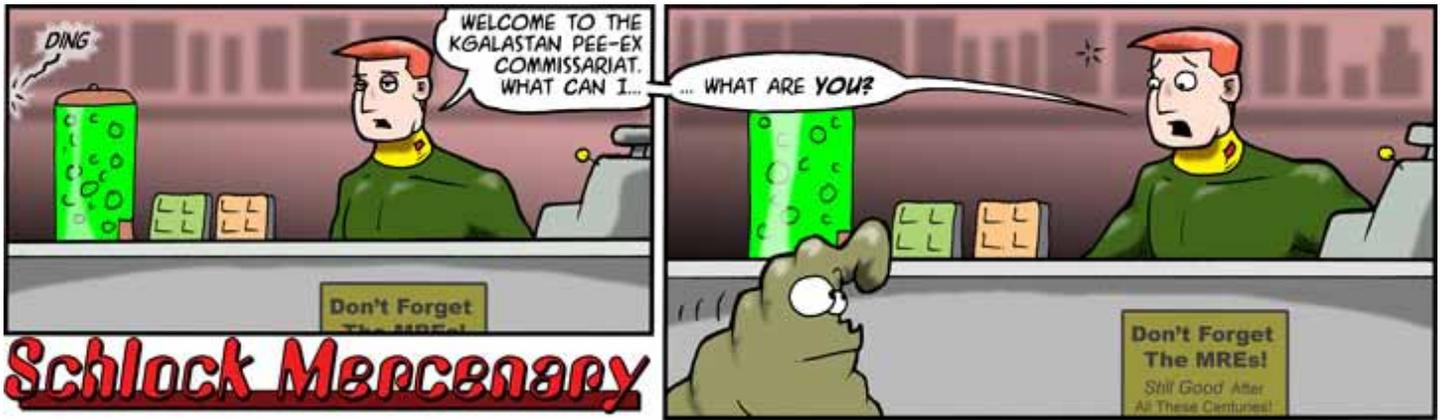
Oh. That doesn't sound so bad. What's that you're using for bait?



DETONATORS.

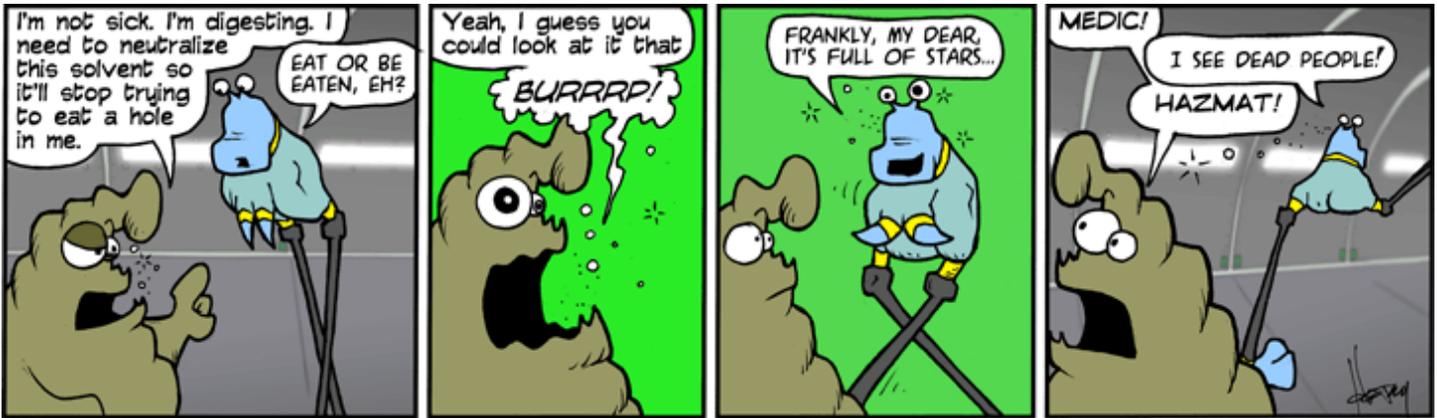
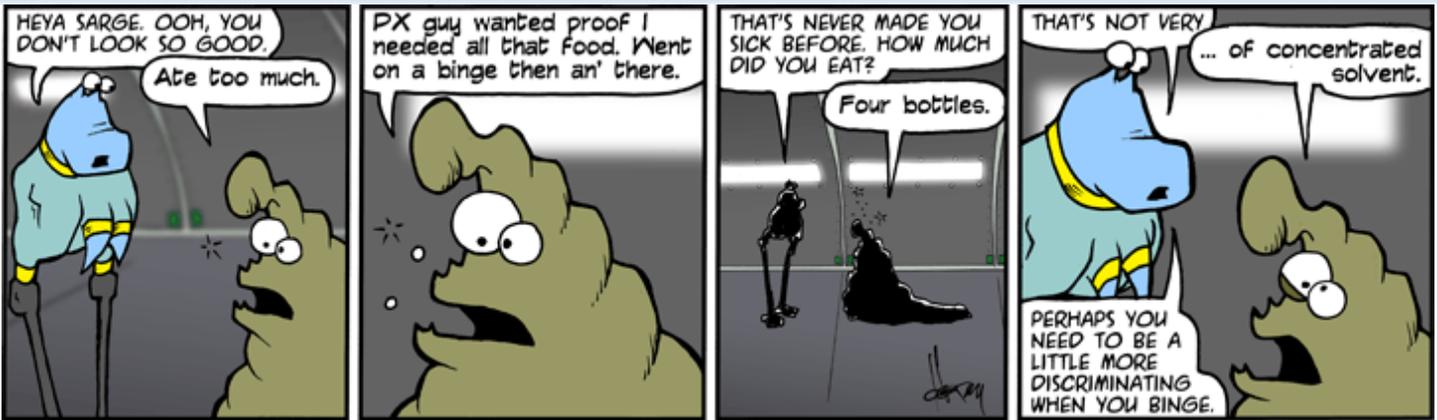
Control, please back me up again. I've got a bad feeling about this.





Note: By a curious quirk of chemistry, 20th- and 21st-century MREs with a 10-year shelf-life at 285 Kelvin stop going bad after about seventy years, and very, very slowly start getting better. The 1987-issue Chicken Patty (the "boot heel" which was originally best eaten suddenly, in a surprise assault, or better yet, thrown at the enemy) is particularly exquisite, having turned into a sweet, fluffy pudding by A.D. 2430, and into an actual mousse by 2890.





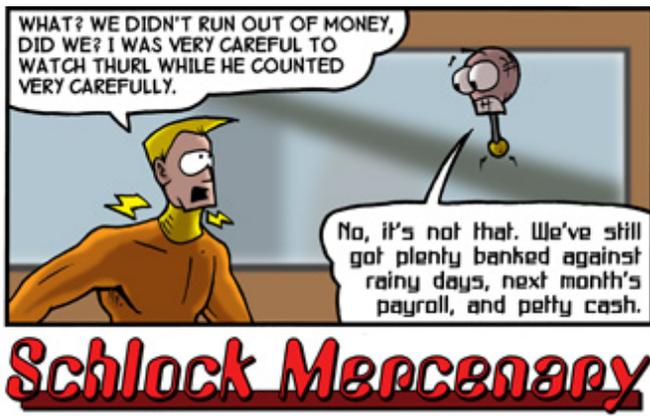
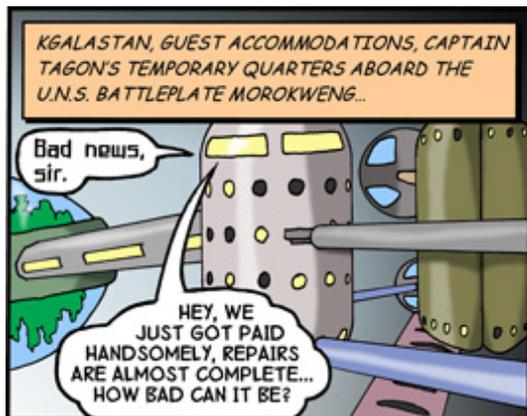
Note: Sergeant Schlock is under arrest for misdemeanor charges of distributing controlled substances without a permit. Had he been spraying perfume instead of belching narcotics it would have been a felony.



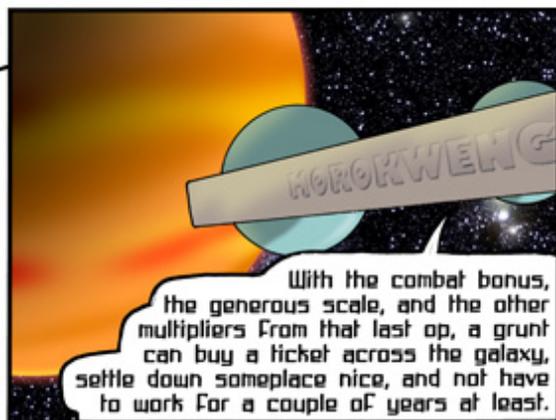
Note: Though Lieutenant Shore "Pi" Pibald is paranoid, his head is in a jar because there was, in fact, an attempt made on his life. The doctor who put Pi together, Colonel Peter DeHaans, altered Pi's memories, damaged his vision, and then had a subordinate tamper with some of his equipment. This was done in an effort to get Pi to blow himself up, which DeHaans imagined would amuse Admiral Emm, who took particular issue with some of Pi's previous demolitions work.

Of course, **you** don't have to take issue with his demolitions work in order to be amused when he blows himself up.





# Schlock Mercenary



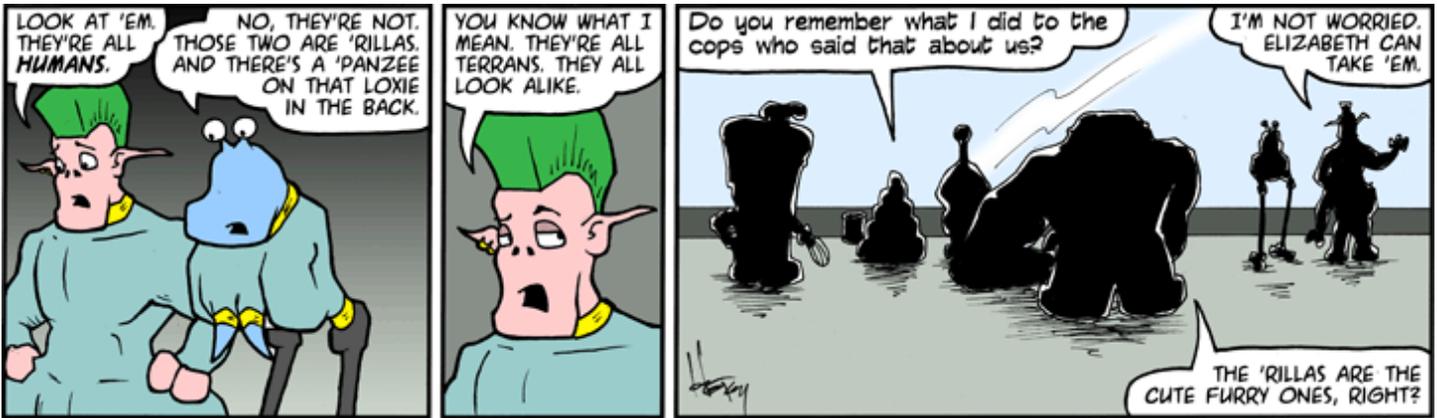


Note: Back on Elltooine, Aldo's Snort'n'Chug Lounge was a favored hang-out for ruffians, knockabouts, and the occasional mercenary. For a very brief time Aldo employed a certain amorph... but in order to read that story, you'll need to get your hands on *Schlock Mercenary The Tub of Happiness*.

Following Celeschul's signing to the Joint Forces Treaty with the U.N.S., Aldo was offered a CivCon position. In short order he closed his doors, sold off his contraband, and shipped off to Sol space, where the burgeoning military needed men with his talents.

Given the rare opportunity to choose where to set up shop, he flipped a coin to decide between the battleplates Tunguska and Sudbury. It came up heads, but Aldo survived to be relocated to the Morokweng.





Note: The astute reader can likely name all of the non-terrans sticking with Tagon's Toughs as silhouetted in the final panel. But just in case... Ch'vorthq, Schlock, Ebbirnoth, Elizabeth, Legs, and Andy.

One terran is pictured, but in silhouette you can only see his jar. That of course is Lieutenant "recently-discharged-from-the-hospital-without-permission" Shore Pibald.



IN THE RECRUITING QUEUE...

SO THAT'S YOUR SHIP? IMPRESSIVE.

# Schlock Mercenary



WE LIKE IT. THE TOUCH-AND-GO WAS FORMERLY THE INTEGRITY, FLAGSHIP FOR "PRANGER'S BANGERS," UNDER THE COMMAND OF COLONEL DRAKE PRANGER.



THE COLONEL PRANGER GAVE YOU A WARSHIP?

NO. WE SHOT IT DOWN, AND LAID SALVAGE CLAIM TO IT ON YSTRE.



WOW... YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL AND YOU'VE SEEN REAL ACTION. DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN CABIN THERE ON THE "TOUCH-ME-PLEASE?"



I THINK I LEFT OUT SOME KEY DETAILS. LET ME FILL THEM IN.



MY BOYFRIEND SHOT DOWN PRANGER'S FLAGSHIP...

OH.



...WITH AN ANTIMATTER GRENADE...

UMM...



... THAT HE'D BEEN WEARING FOR YEARS AS AN EPAULET.

I THINK I JUST REMEMBERED SOMEPLACE ELSE I'M SUPPOSED TO BE RIGHT NOW.



QUESTIONING THE RECRUITER...

SO... WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS LIKE?

QUARTERS AND MEALS, FULL MEDICAL... THE USUAL



DO YOU COVER ELECTIVE COSMETIC SURGERY?

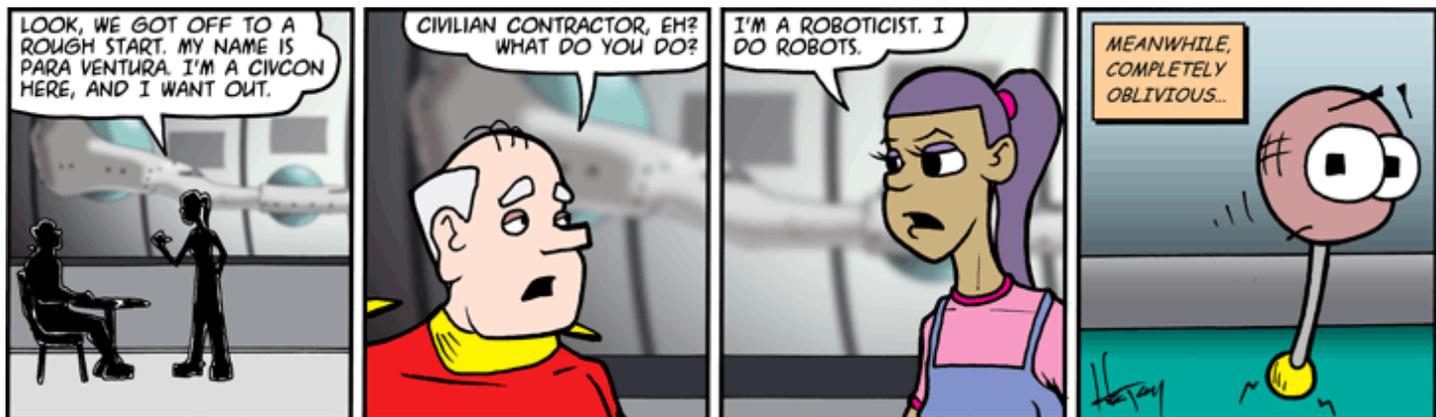
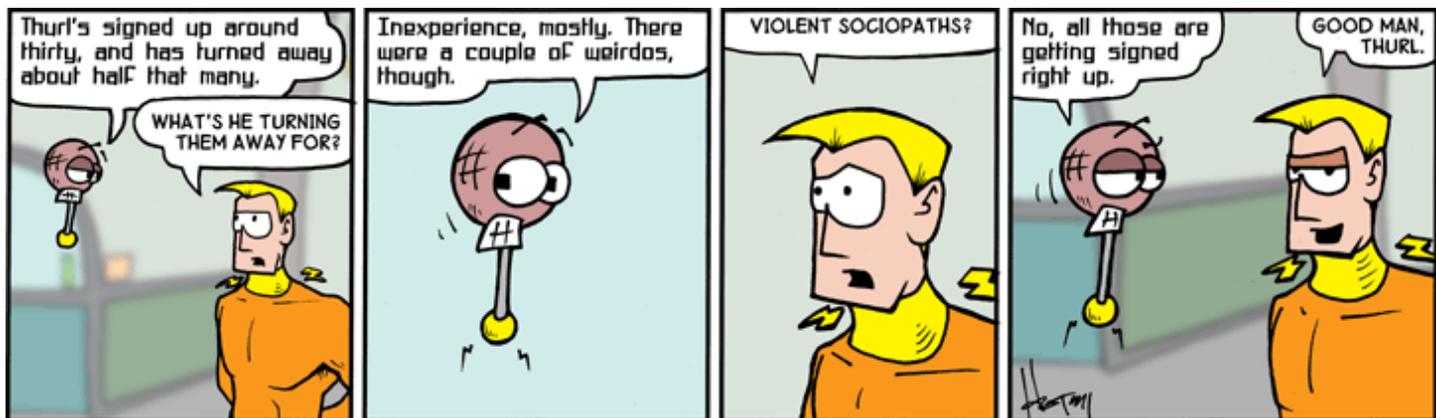
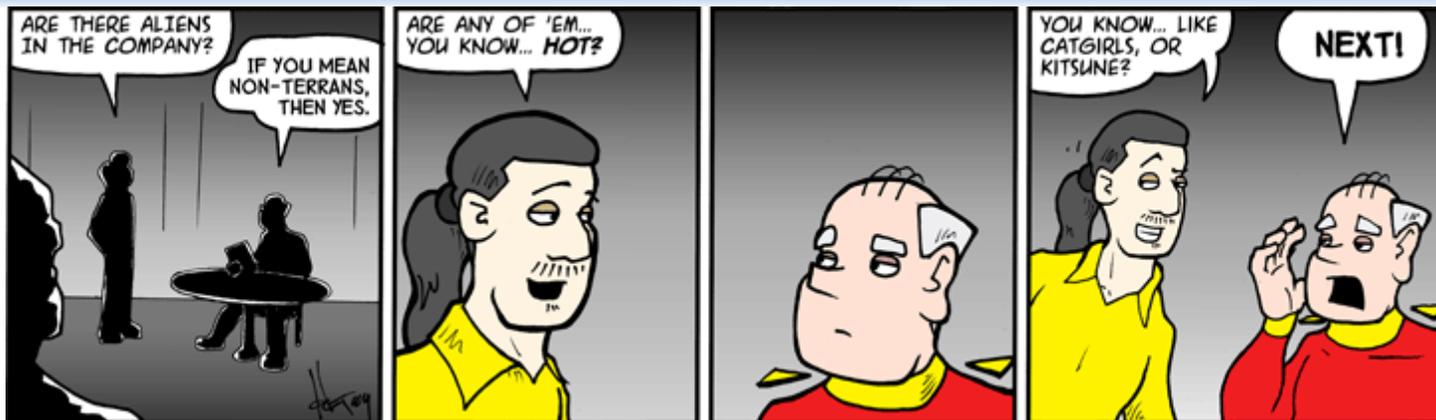


JUST RECONSTRUCTION FOR INJURIES SUFFERED IN THE LINE OF DUTY.



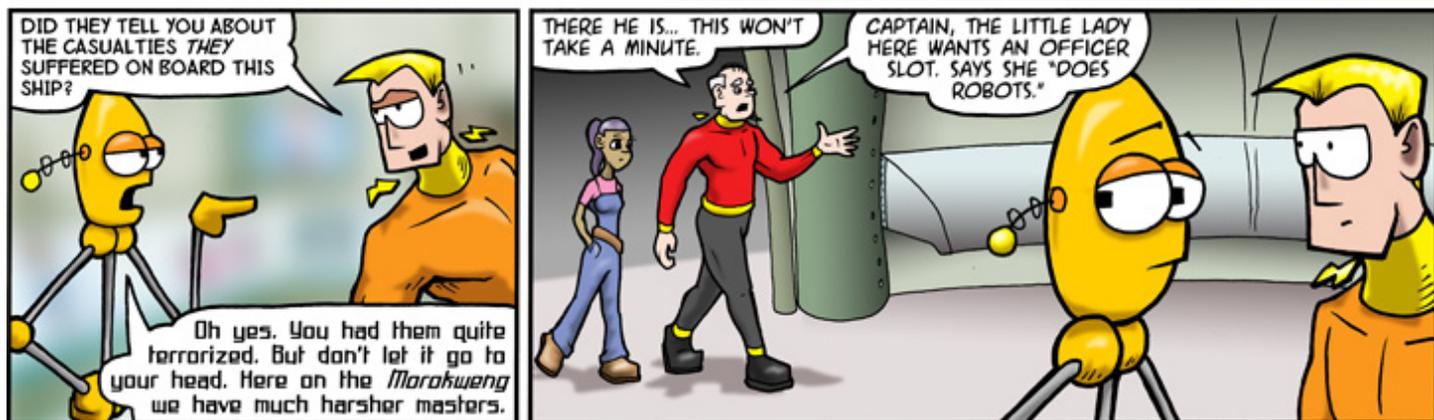
WHAT IF I ACCIDENTALLY GET SHOT IN THE NOSE?

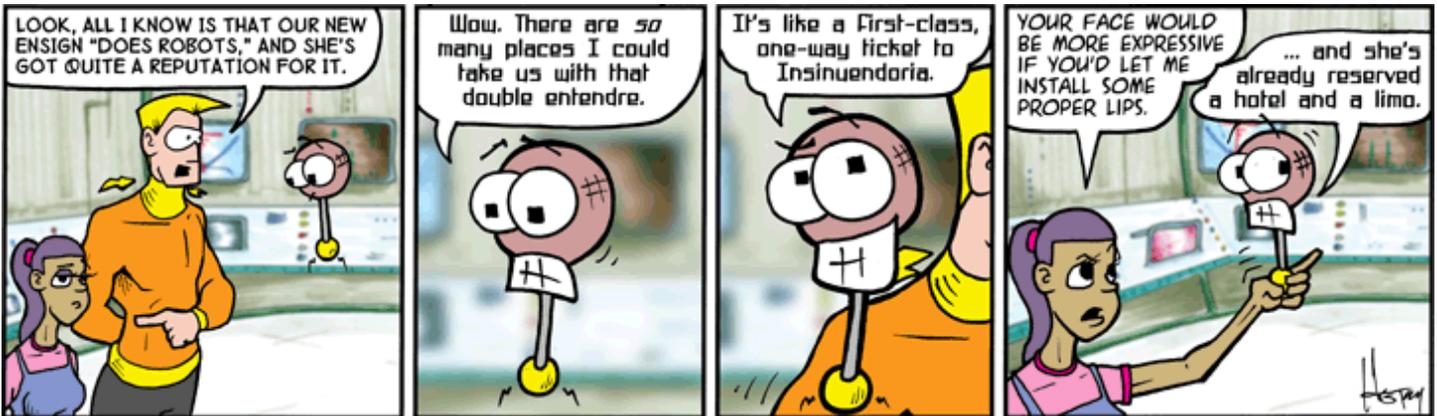
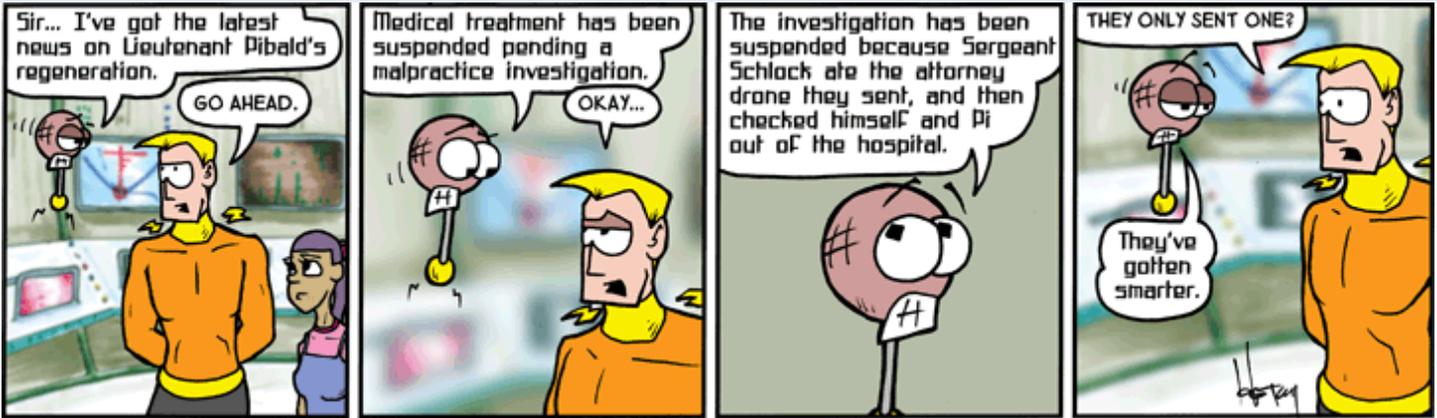
IF YOU SNORE THROUGH THAT THING, I'M SURE SOME FRIENDLY FIRE COULD BE ARRANGED.





# Schlock Mercenary

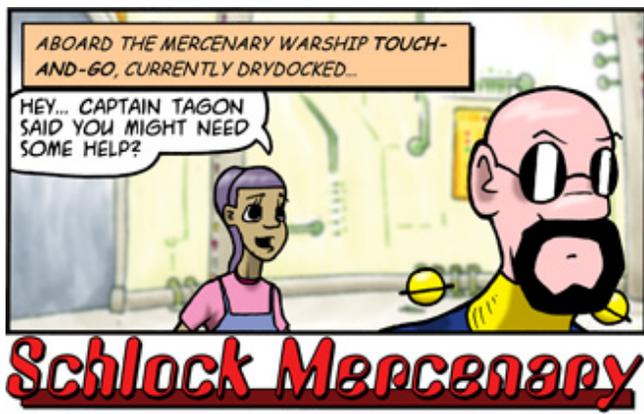




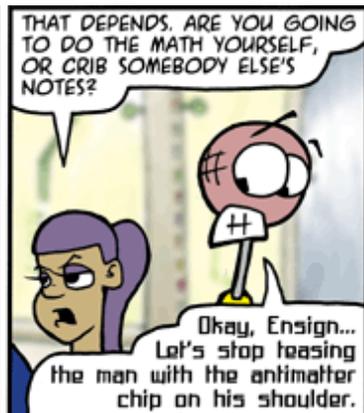
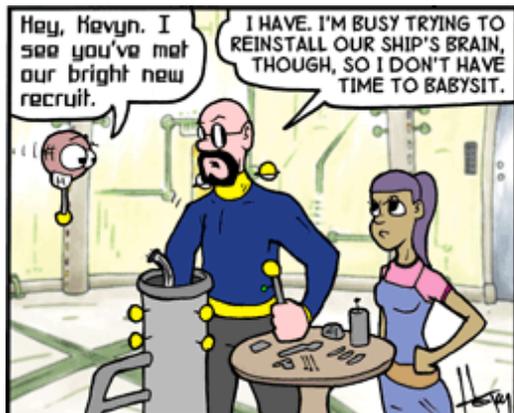
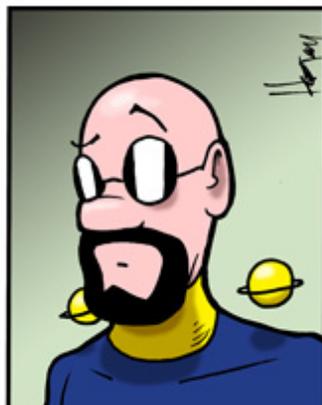


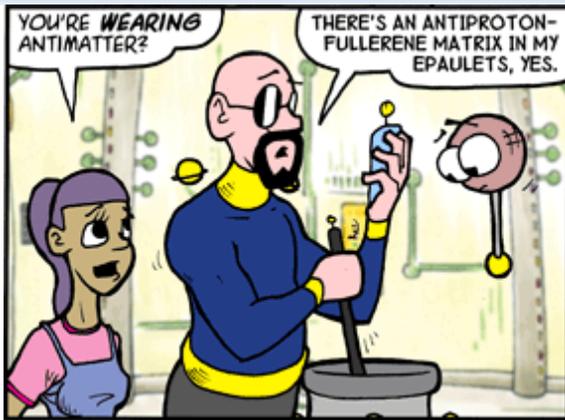
Note: Shep has never availed himself of the works of Theodore "Dr. Seuss" Geisel, so the irony implicit in his "troubles with me" statement in the context of his intended return to Vung Valley Apartments has been completely lost on him.



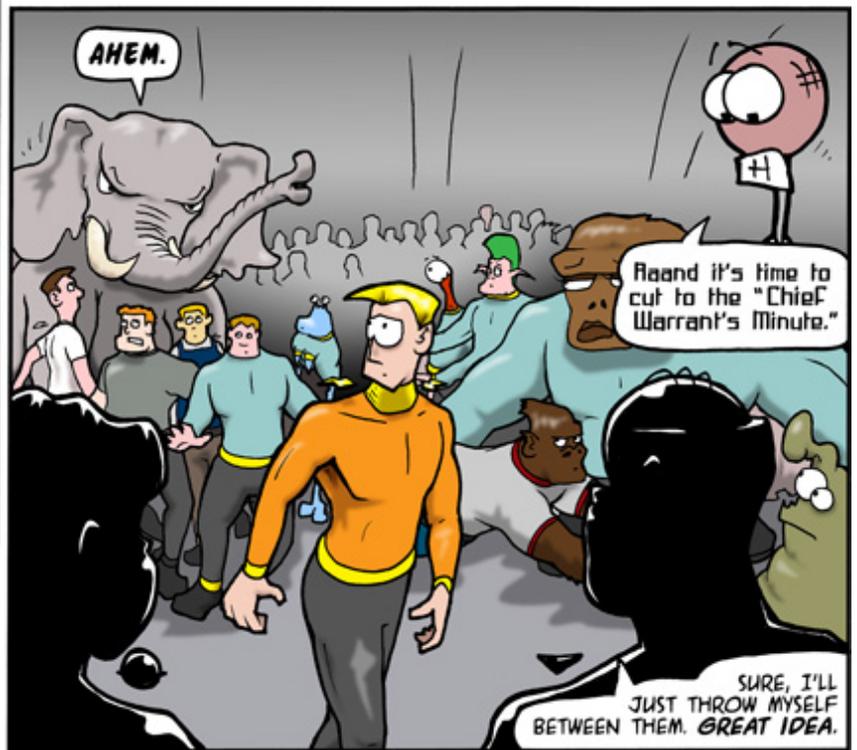
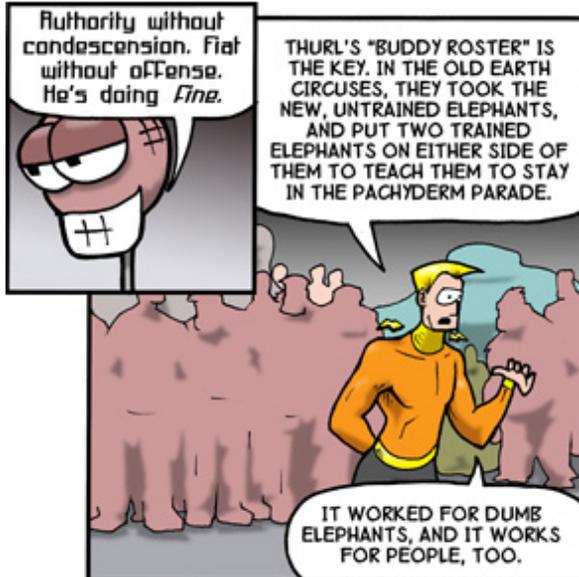


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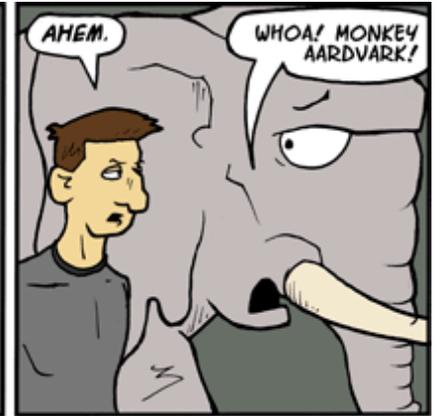














KEVYN, HAVE YOU COMMANDER.



WHAT?

COMMANDER.



I'M AN ENSIGN. NOT A COMMANDER.

WHICH MEANS I'M "COMMANDER" TO YOU, NOT "KEVYN."

# Schlock Mercenary



OH. FINE, WHATEVER, COMMANDER. HAVE YOU SEEN THE UNIFORMS WE'VE BEEN ISSUED?



I DESIGNED THEM. WE GOT A LITTLE TIRED OF RUNNING AWAY FROM BULLETS.



I'M A ROBOTICIST, NOT A GRUNT. WHY DO I NEED TO BE BULLETPROOF? YOUR GIRLFRIEND, COMMANDER FOXWORTHY, SHE SAID WE'RE SUPPOSED TO WEAR THESE ALL THE TIME.



IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET SHOT AT ALL THE TIME.



THEN WHY DO I HAVE TO WEAR BODY ARMOR ALL THE TIME?



BECAUSE YOU ONLY NEED TO GET SHOT ONCE IN ORDER TO BE DEAD.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THAT SHOT MAY COME FROM, AND THERE MAY NOT BE A NICE, ARMORED GRUNT TO JUMP IN AND TAKE THE BULLET FOR YOU.



AND EVEN IF THERE IS, IF YOU'VE BEEN WHINING A LOT, HE MAY JUMP A LITTLE TOO SLOWLY.



SOUNDS LIKE WE NEED BETTER GRUNTS.

AND MORE OF THEM.

WAY OUT IN FRONT.

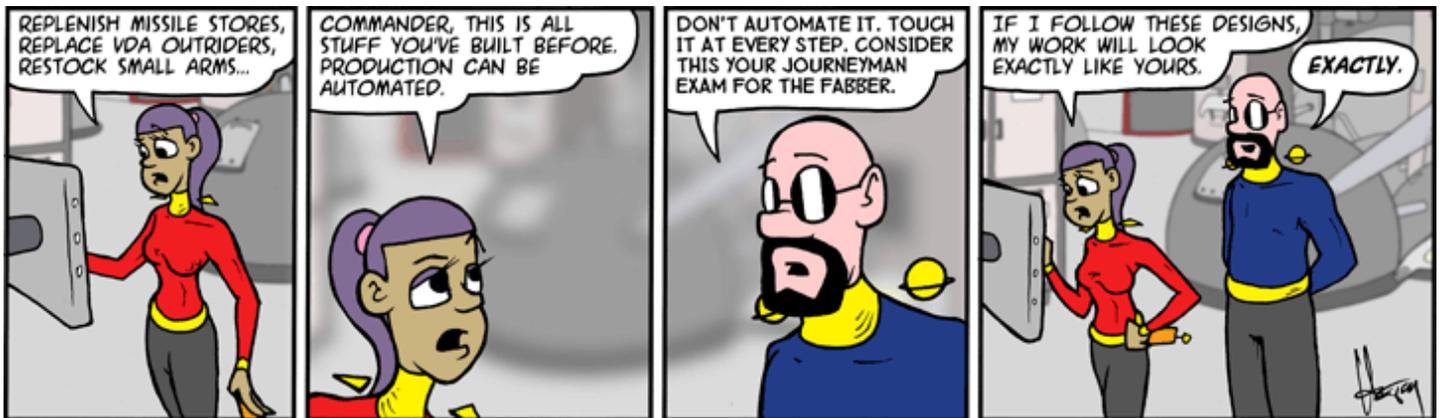


THE GRUNTS AREN'T ON PAYROLL TO WORK AS YOUR PERSONAL BODYGUARD, ENSIGN VENTURA.

WHO IS, THEN?

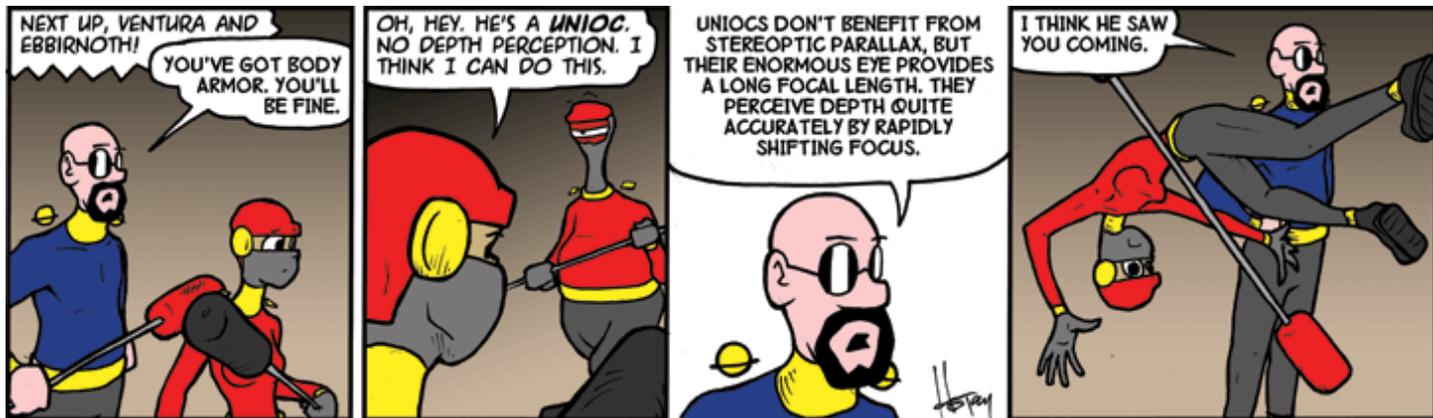


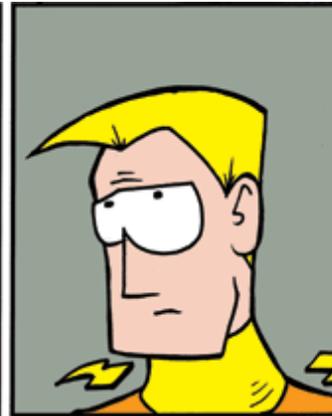
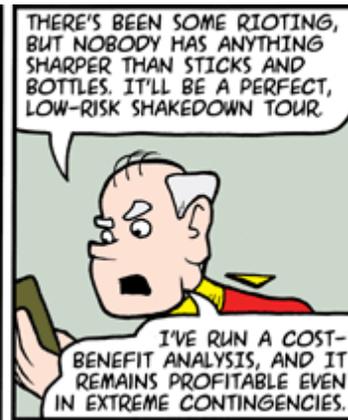
SHORT CHICK, JUST HIRED ON. WHINES A LOT. WE ISSUED HER SOME BODY ARMOR. LAST NAME OF "VENTURA," I THINK.

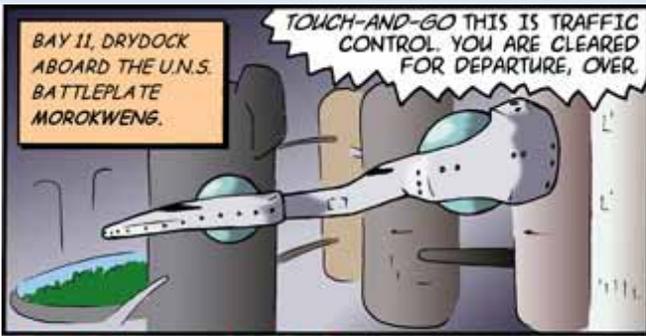












BAY 11, DRYDOCK ABOARD THE U.S. BATTLEPLATE MOROKWENG.

TOUCH-AND-GO THIS IS TRAFFIC CONTROL. YOU ARE CLEARED FOR DEPARTURE, OVER.



COPY THAT, TRAFFIC CONTROL. DO WE NEED A LANE ASSIGNMENT? WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE SIGHTS DURING OUR GRAND EXIT, OVER.

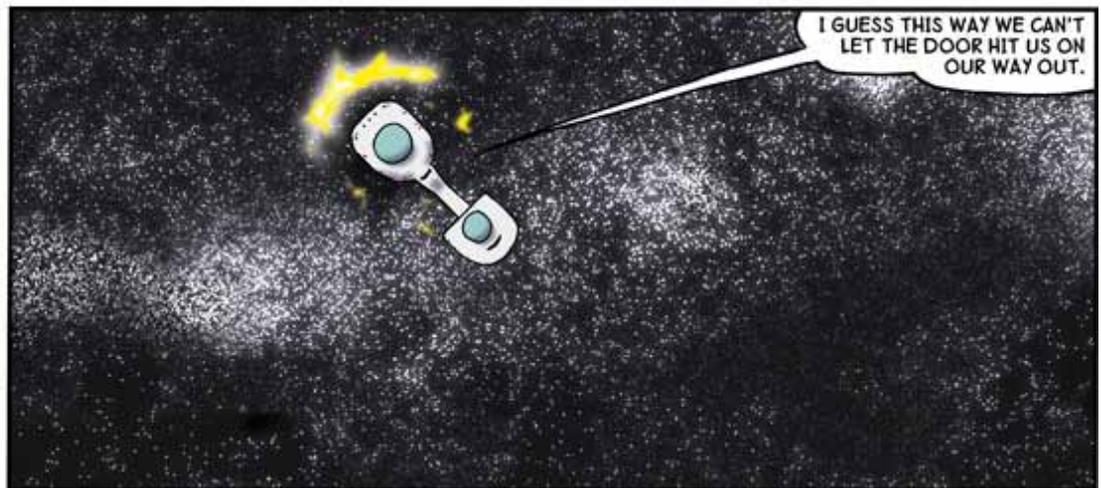


NOT MUCH TO SEE, TOUCH-AND-GO. AND YOU'RE NOT GETTING THE GRAND EXIT. YOU'RE GETTING EJECTED. TRAFFIC CONTROL OUT.

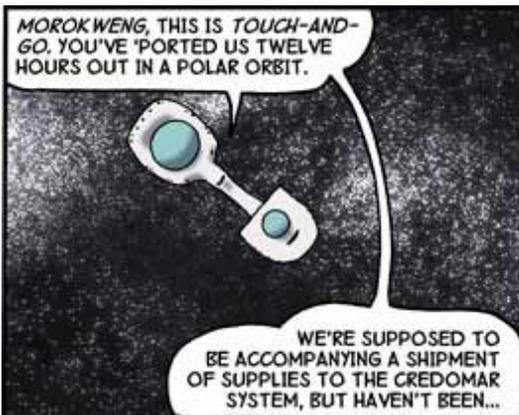
# Schlock Mercenary



EJEC... OH.



I GUESS THIS WAY WE CAN'T LET THE DOOR HIT US ON OUR WAY OUT.

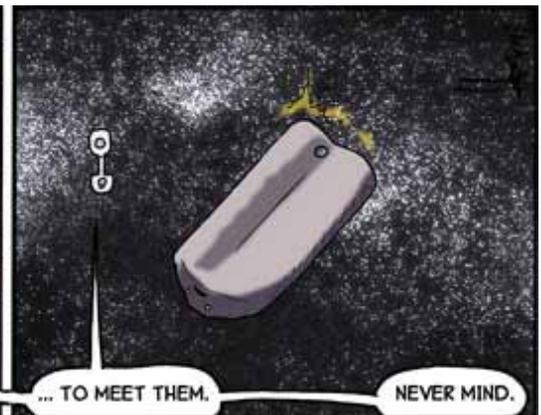


MOROKWENG, THIS IS TOUCH-AND-GO. YOU'VE 'PORTED US TWELVE HOURS OUT IN A POLAR ORBIT.

WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ACCOMPANYING A SHIPMENT OF SUPPLIES TO THE CREDOMAR SYSTEM, BUT HAVEN'T BEEN...

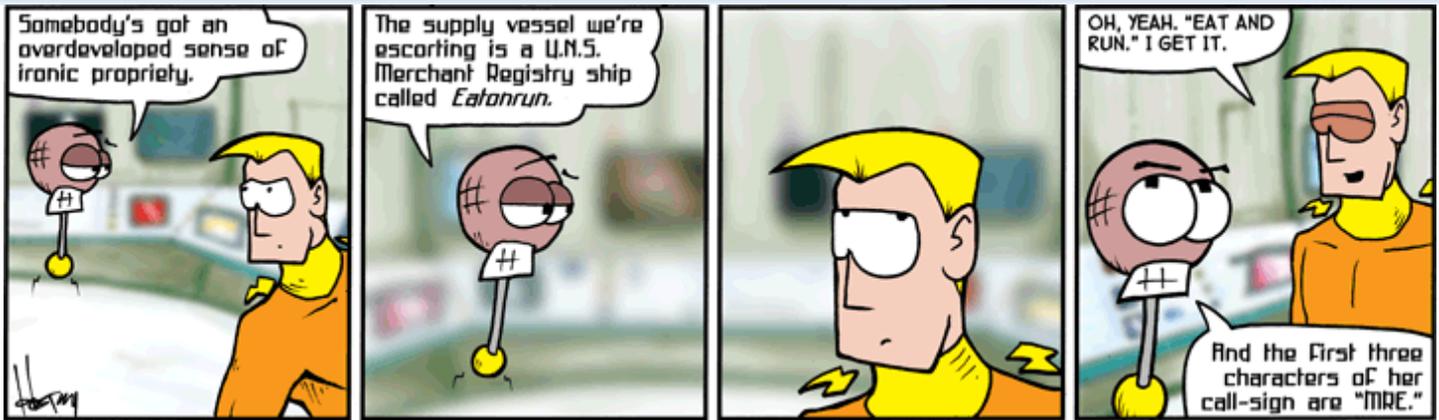


... TOLD WHERE...



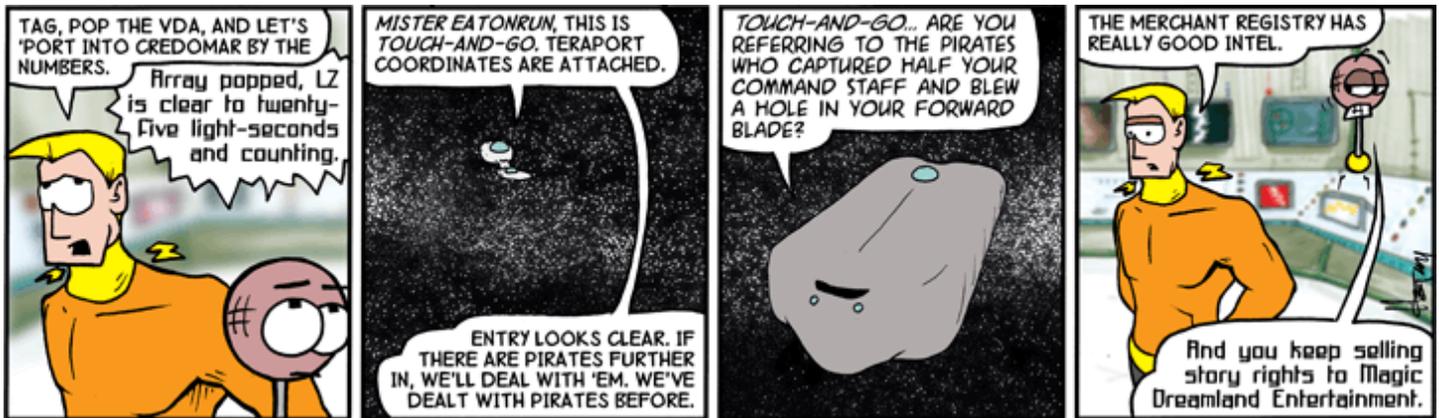
... TO MEET THEM.

NEVER MIND.



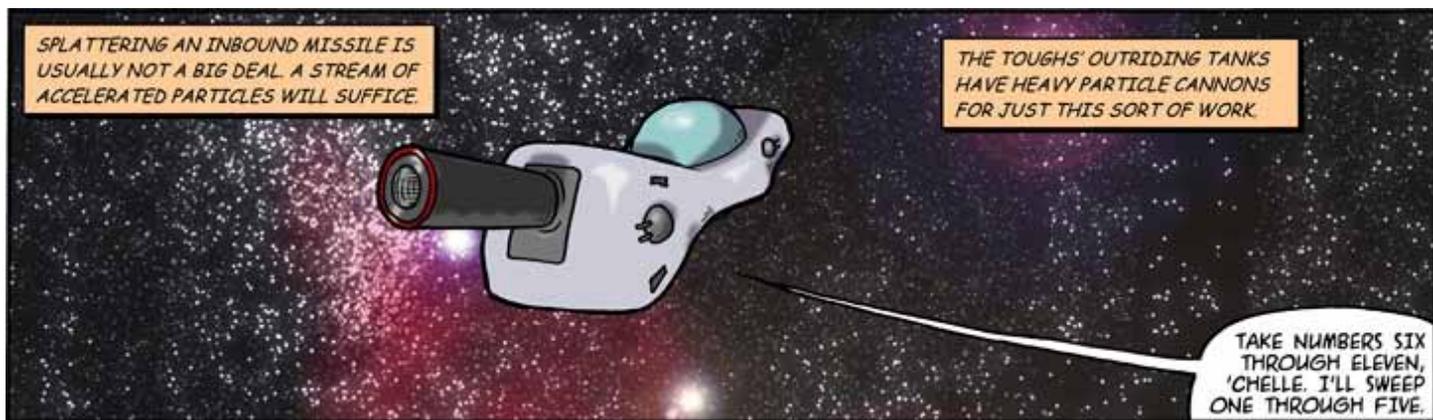
Note: UNS call-signs begin with the registry type, and then the first character of each word in the vessel's name. Thus the Merchant Registry vessel Eatonrun has a call-sign beginning with MR (Merchant Registry) and E (Eatonrun.)

The rest of the characters in her call-sign, S0-7A57Y, are completely unfunny.



Note: It is common practice to refer to Merchant Registry vessels as "Mister," because "Mister" abbreviates to MR. Since these vessels are ALSO referred to with feminine pronouns, the easily amused can provide themselves with hours of laughs. "I watched Mister So-and-so dock, and she steers like a cow." Hilarious.





SPLATTERING AN INBOUND MISSILE IS USUALLY NOT A BIG DEAL. A STREAM OF ACCELERATED PARTICLES WILL SUFFICE.

THE TOUGHS' OUTRIDING TANKS HAVE HEAVY PARTICLE CANNONS FOR JUST THIS SORT OF WORK.

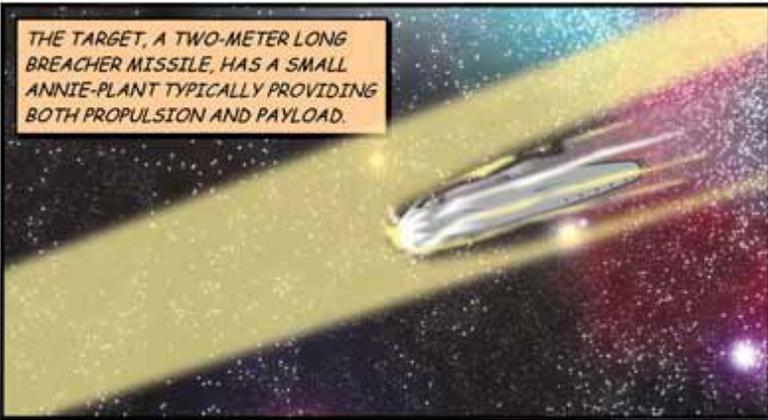
TAKE NUMBERS SIX THROUGH ELEVEN, 'CHELLE. I'LL SWEEP ONE THROUGH FIVE.

# Schlock Mercenary



AIMING IS TRICKY, SINCE VELOCITIES ARE SIGNIFICANT FRACTIONS OF CEE, BUT A GOOD FIRING COMPUTER CAN MAKE THE SHOT.

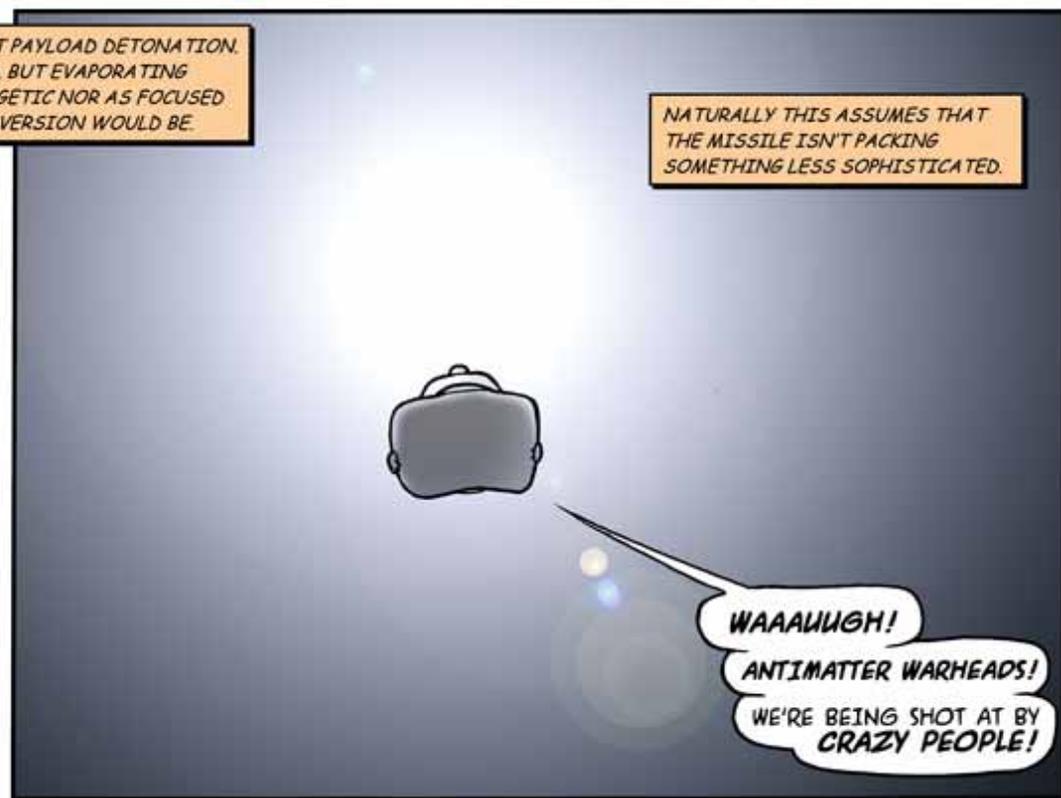
CONFIRMED. I'VE GOT A FIRING SOLUTION. BEAMS AWAY.



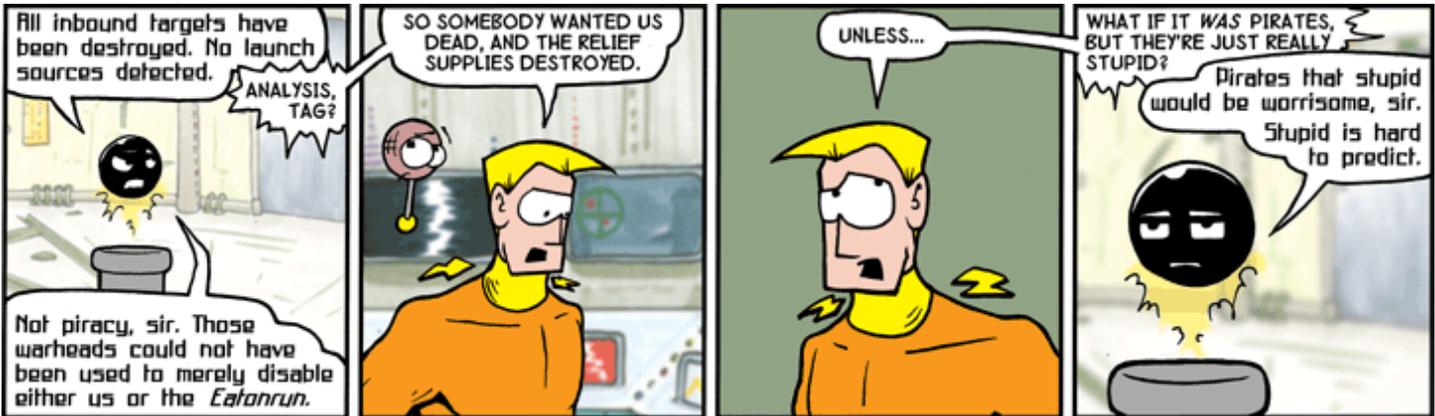
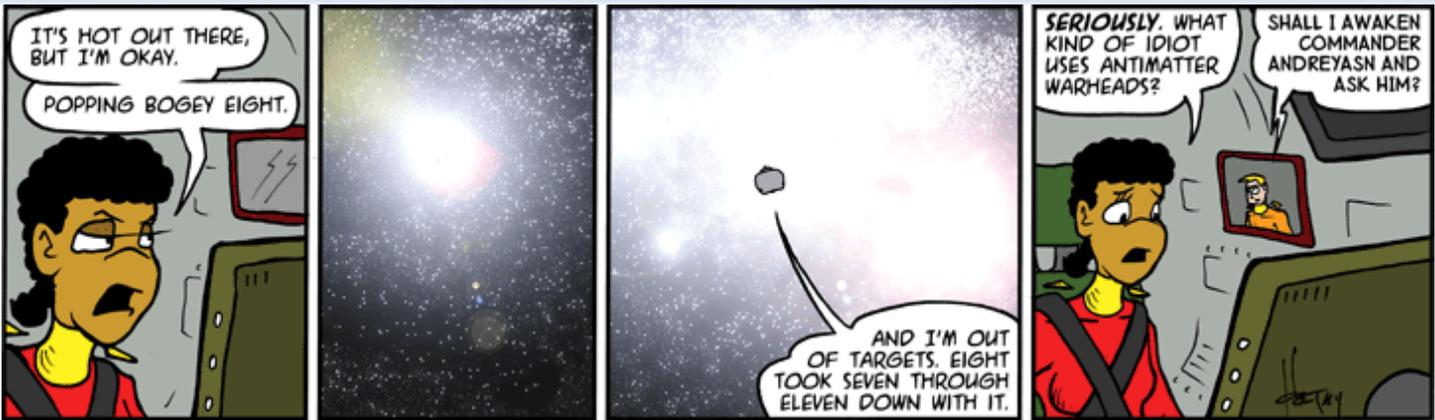
THE TARGET, A TWO-METER LONG BREACHER MISSILE, HAS A SMALL ANNIE-PLANT TYPICALLY PROVIDING BOTH PROPULSION AND PAYLOAD.

CRACKING THE PLANT WILL PREVENT PAYLOAD DETONATION. THERE MAY BE A SMALL EXPLOSION, BUT EVAPORATING NEUTRONIUM IS NEITHER AS ENERGETIC NOR AS FOCUSED AS THE ANNIHILATION-PLANT CONVERSION WOULD BE.

NATURALLY THIS ASSUMES THAT THE MISSILE ISN'T PACKING SOMETHING LESS SOPHISTICATED.



WAAAUGH!  
ANTIMATTER WARHEADS!  
WE'RE BEING SHOT AT BY CRAZY PEOPLE!



Note: While it's not common practice to blame a soldier for equipment damage inflicted during the course of repulsing the enemy, it's also not common practice to fly through an antimatter blast front with unshielded shields at 30% in order to "enjoy the view."

If Tagon were enamored of paperwork, this would come out during the debriefing and subsequent inquest. He's not, so it won't.



Note: 'Chelle's landing of her damaged tank was almost *exactly* like a first kiss: soft, tentative, and kind of clumsy. We could extend the metaphor a bit, and point out that TAG observed the whole thing like an anxious father sitting where he could peek out at the front porch, but that would start to get a little creepy.



COORDINATING WITH CREDOMAR HABITAT TRAFFIC CONTROL...

... I'M SURE YOU DON'T KNOW WHO SHOT AT US, BUT CAN YOU GUESS? AND WE'RE STILL WAITING FOR A DOCK ASSIGNMENT.

NO IDEA, **TOUCH-AND-GO**. ANTIMATTER WARHEADS? NO PROFIT IN THAT. IT'S JUST VANDALISM.

NOPE. BUT I'VE GOT YOUR DOCK ASSIGNMENT. WE'LL PUT YOU IN NORTHPORT. DOCK NUMBER ONE IS CLEAR, AND AGENTS ARE STANDING BY TO RECEIVE.

AND ATTEMPTED MURDER. DO YOU KNOW ANY VANDALS? OR MURDERERS? WITH ACCESS TO ANTIMATTER?

# Schlock Mercenary

NEGATIVE, **TOUCH-AND-GO**. YOU ARE ASSIGNED TO SOUTHPORT, DOCK FOUR. WE'VE GOT RECEIVING AGENTS STANDING BY.

EFRIM, GET OFF THIS CHANNEL! **TOUCH-AND-GO**, BELAY THAT. SOUTHPORT'S AGENTS ARE TRYING TO HIJACK THE DELIVERY.

REALLY? FROM HERE IT LOOKS LIKE **NORTHPORT** DOING THE HIJACKING. GET OFF THE CHANNEL YOURSELF, MYRON!

EXCUSE ME... WHO IS IN CHARGE DOWN THERE?

**TOUCH-AND-GO**, SORRY FOR THE DELAYS. WE'VE HAD TO HACK BACK INTO OUR OWN SYSTEM. THIS IS THE REAL CREDOMAR TRAFFIC CONTROL. YOU WANT NORTHPORT, DOCK SIX. LOOK FOR THE RED UNIFORMS.

Sir, we're getting an analog radio transmission from a makeshift antenna on the hull of the habitat. It's weak, but it repeats. "Please don't let them steal the food again. We're hungry."

RIGHT.

THURL, CHECK THE CONTRACT. DO WE GET PAID ON DELIVERY, OR ON DISTRIBUTION? IT'S ONE OF THOSE D-WORDS, AND I CAN'T REMEMBER WHICH ONE.

DISTRIBUTION.

DAMMIT... IS ALSO A D-WORD.

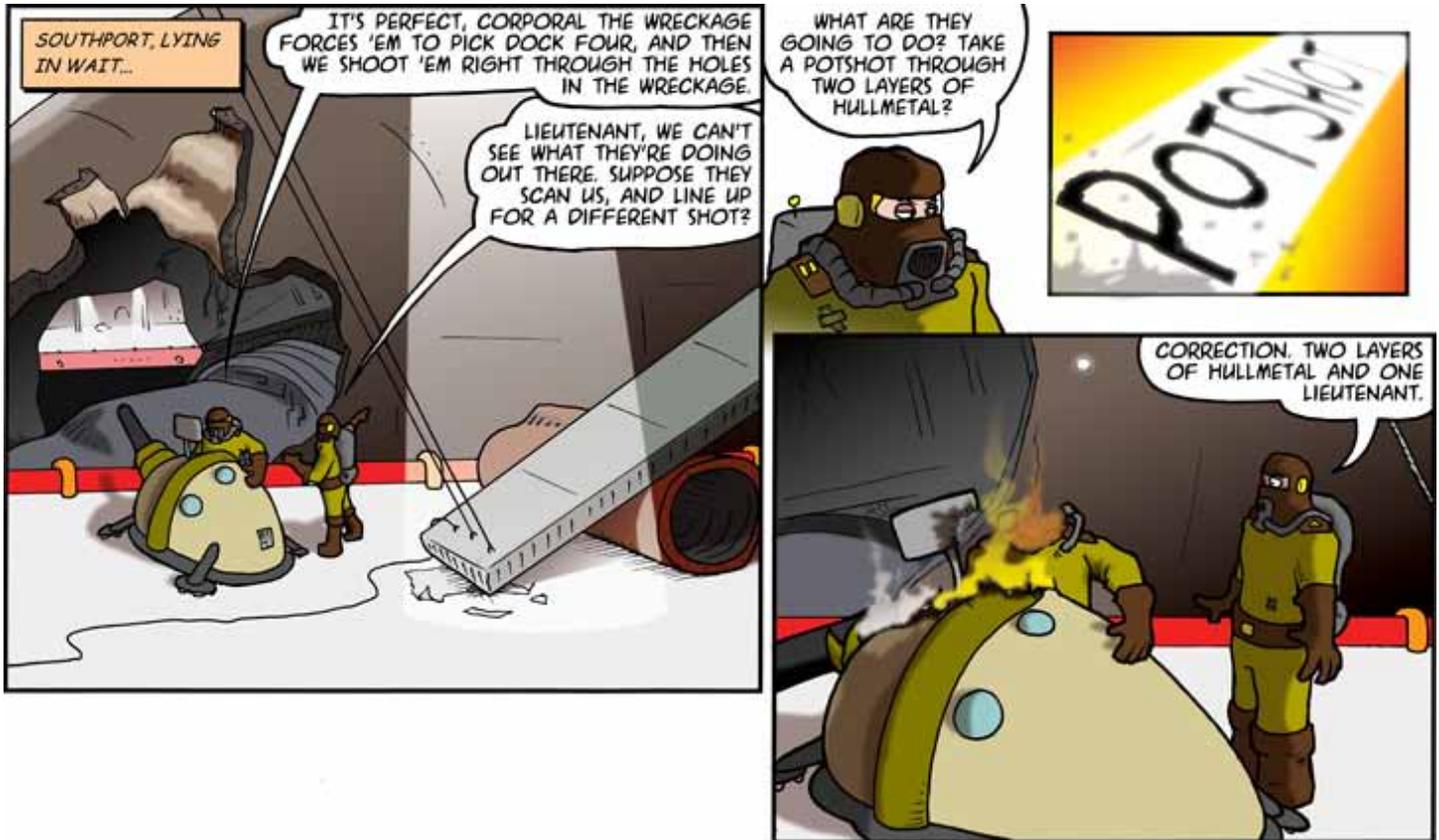
TAG, MAKE A CIRCUIT AROUND THE HABITAT, ACTIVE SCANNING, ALL BANDS, AND DON'T SPARE THE JUICE.

ENNESBY, CALL MISTER EATONRUN, AND LET HIM KNOW WE'RE DELAYING DELIVERY UNTIL WE'VE FOUND A SUITABLE DOCK.

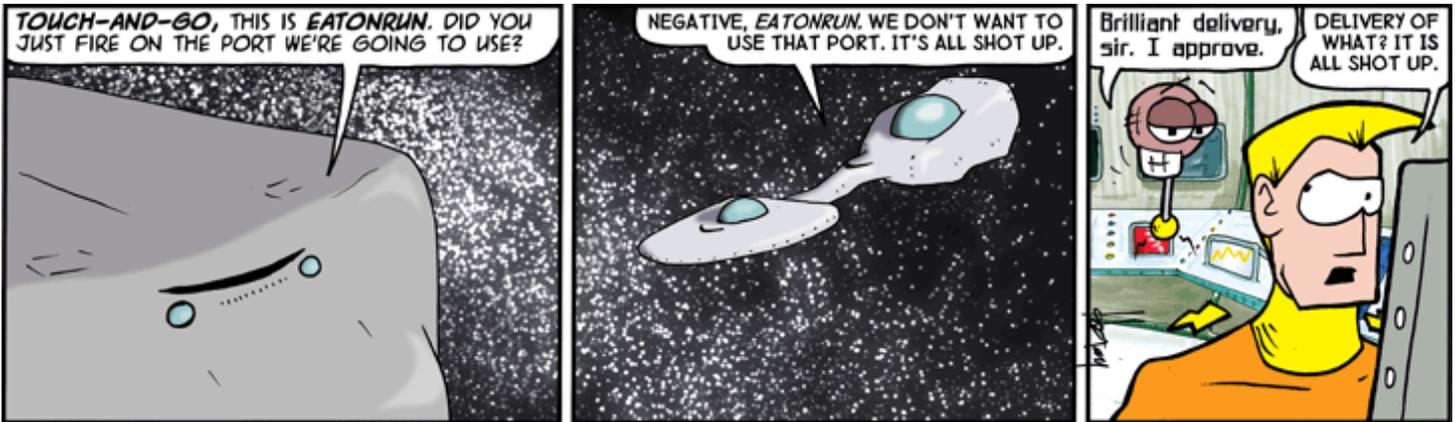
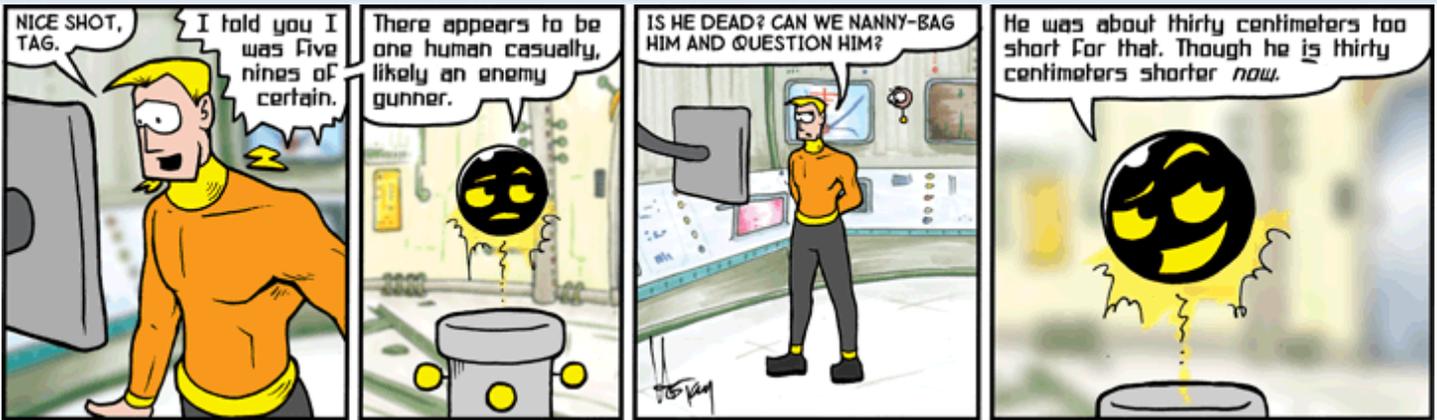
What exactly are we looking for?

A SUITABLE DOCK... OR A PLACE WHERE WE CAN MAKE ONE.

When we do that part, please can you tell me "don't spare the juice?"

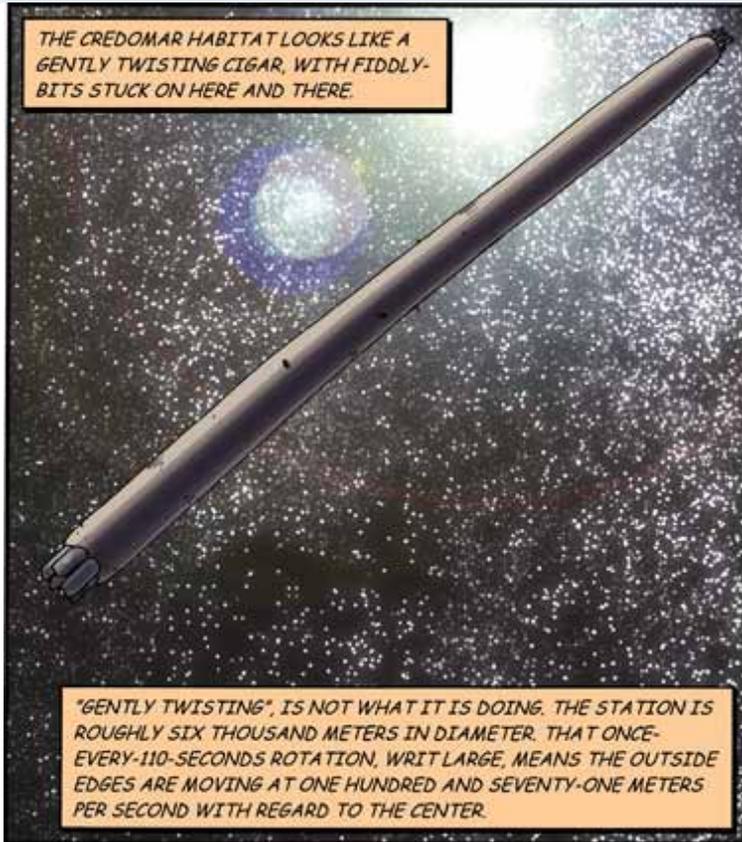


Note: Clearly TAG and Tagon are both adherents of Rule 27... "Don't be afraid to be the first to resort to violence."



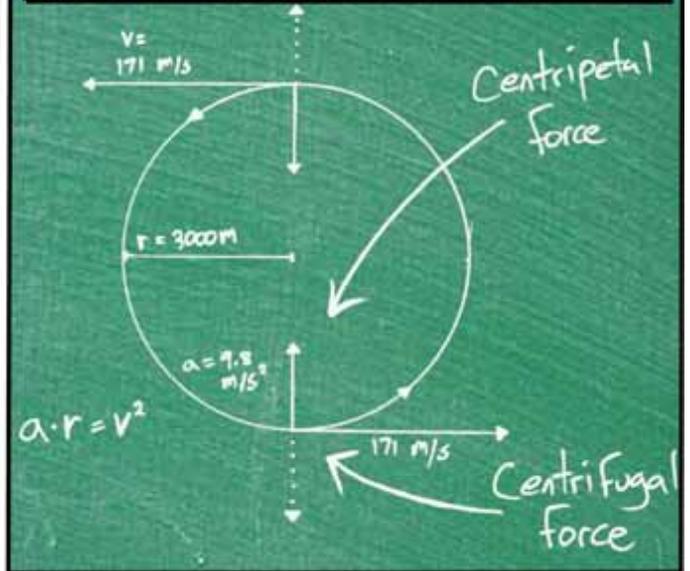
# Schlock Mercenary

THE CREDOMAR HABITAT LOOKS LIKE A GENTLY TWISTING CIGAR, WITH FIDDLY-BITS STUCK ON HERE AND THERE

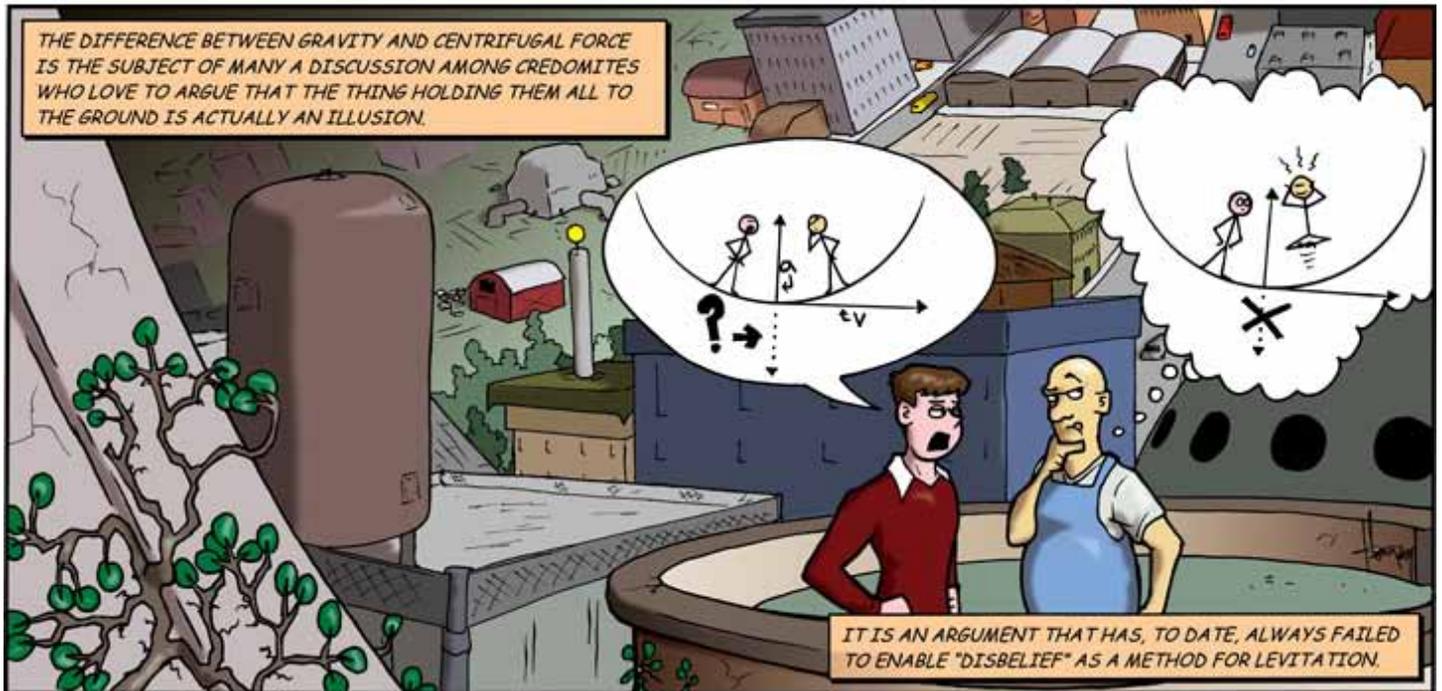


"GENTLY TWISTING", IS NOT WHAT IT IS DOING. THE STATION IS ROUGHLY SIX THOUSAND METERS IN DIAMETER. THAT ONCE-EVERY-110-SECONDS ROTATION, WRIT LARGE, MEANS THE OUTSIDE EDGES ARE MOVING AT ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-ONE METERS PER SECOND WITH REGARD TO THE CENTER.

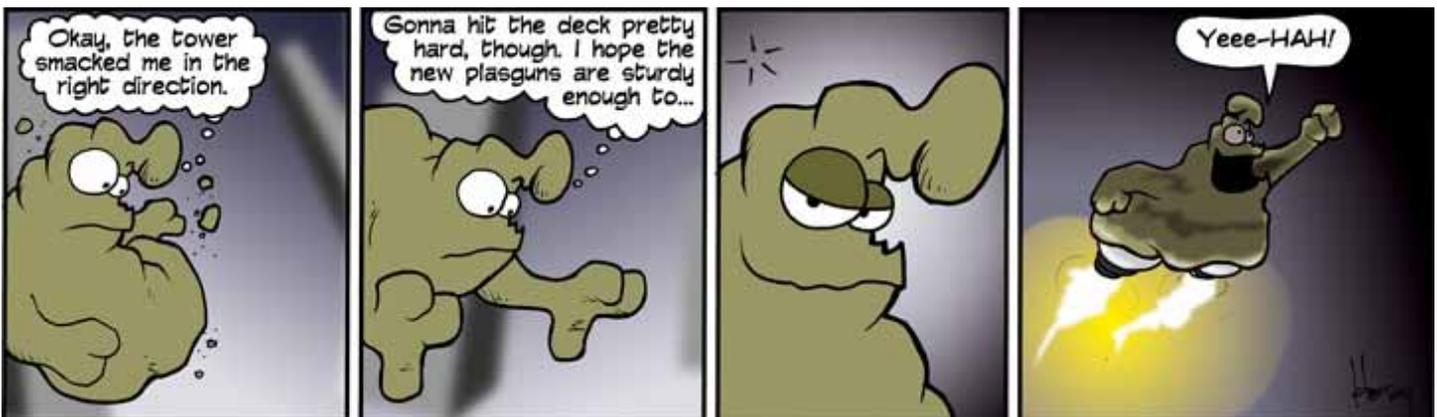
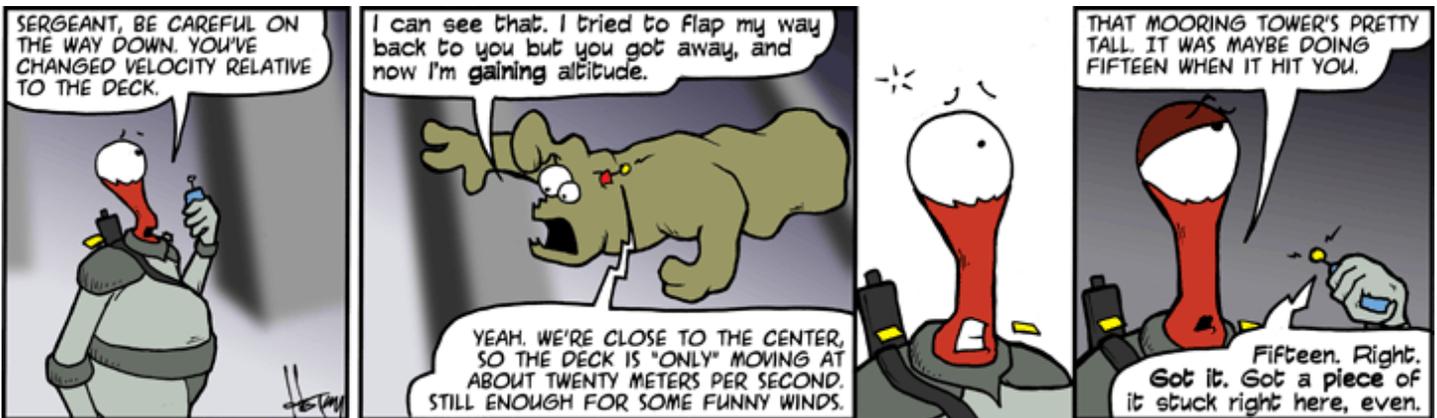
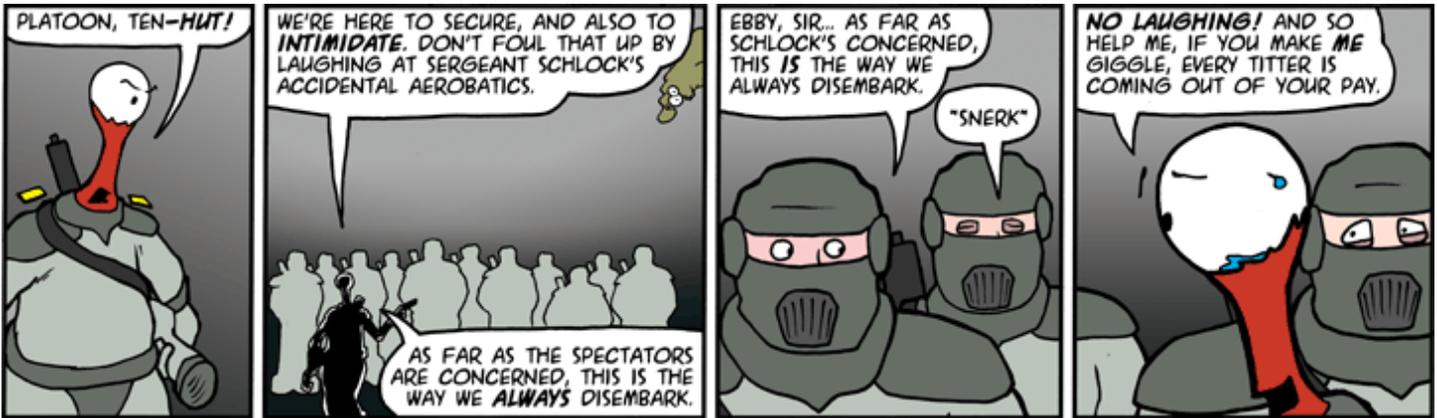
THE ORIGINAL ARCHITECTS DECIDED AGAINST A DEPENDENCE ON ARTIFICIALLY-GENERATED GRAVITY. THEY SPUN THE HABITAT INSTEAD, WHICH MEANT THEY WEREN'T GETTING ANY GRAVITY — JUST A COMBINATION OF INERTIA AND ANGULAR ACCELERATION KNOWN AS "CENTRIFUGAL FORCE."

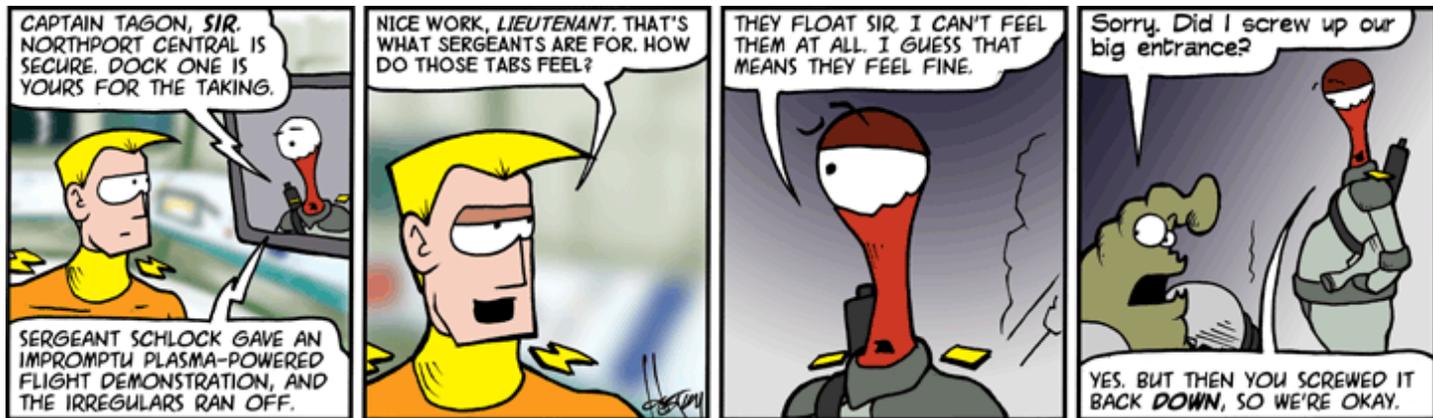


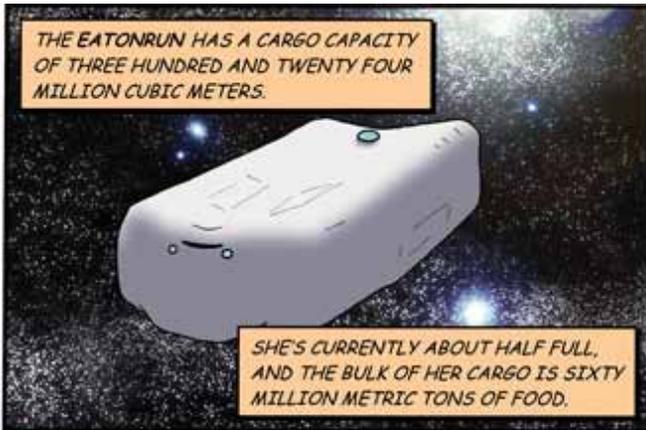
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRAVITY AND CENTRIFUGAL FORCE IS THE SUBJECT OF MANY A DISCUSSION AMONG CREDOMITES WHO LOVE TO ARGUE THAT THE THING HOLDING THEM ALL TO THE GROUND IS ACTUALLY AN ILLUSION.



IT IS AN ARGUMENT THAT HAS, TO DATE, ALWAYS FAILED TO ENABLE "DISBELIEF" AS A METHOD FOR LEVITATION.

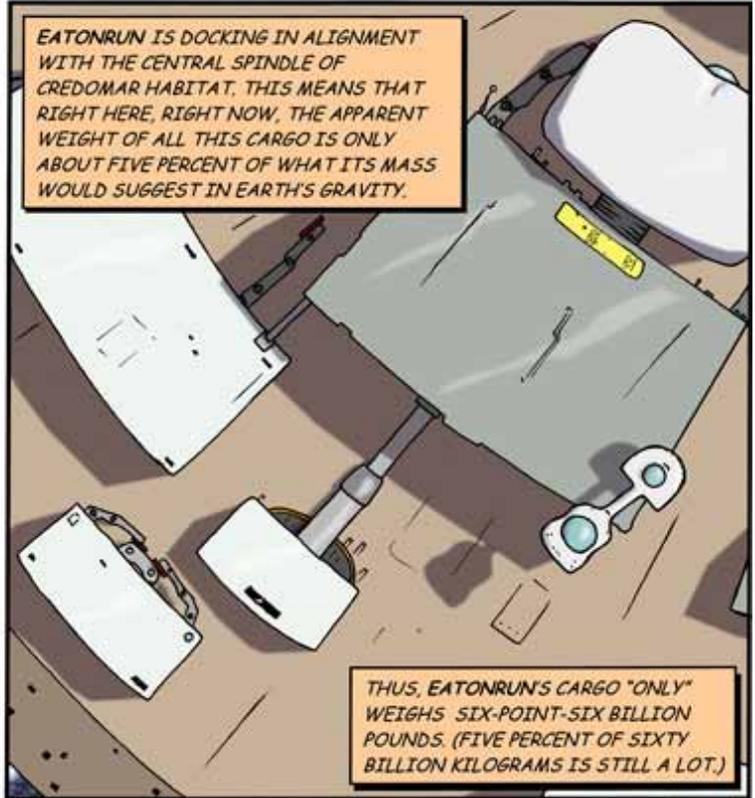






THE EATONRUN HAS A CARGO CAPACITY OF THREE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FOUR MILLION CUBIC METERS.

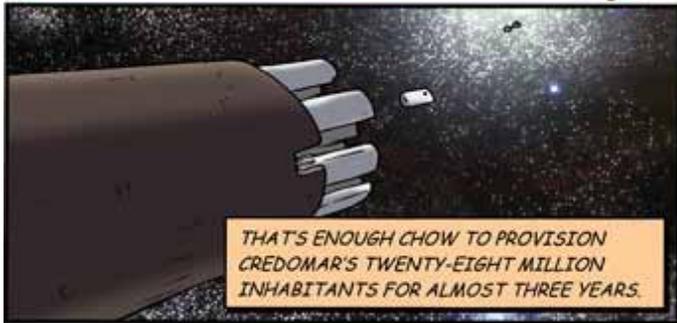
SHE'S CURRENTLY ABOUT HALF FULL, AND THE BULK OF HER CARGO IS SIXTY MILLION METRIC TONS OF FOOD.



EATONRUN IS DOCKING IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE CENTRAL SPINDLE OF CREDOMAR HABITAT. THIS MEANS THAT RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW, THE APPARENT WEIGHT OF ALL THIS CARGO IS ONLY ABOUT FIVE PERCENT OF WHAT ITS MASS WOULD SUGGEST IN EARTH'S GRAVITY.

THUS, EATONRUN'S CARGO "ONLY" WEIGHS SIX-POINT-SIX BILLION POUNDS. (FIVE PERCENT OF SIXTY BILLION KILOGRAMS IS STILL A LOT.)

# Schlock Mercenary



THAT'S ENOUGH CHOW TO PROVISION CREDOMAR'S TWENTY-EIGHT MILLION INHABITANTS FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS.



SEE? THIS STUFF IS LIGHT AS A FEATHER.

THERE'S A LOT OF IT. I BET IT GETS HEAVIER.



FRESH PALLET FOR YOU, CORPORAL.

THANKS. YOU WANNA HAVE A GO?



AT WHAT? CATCHING THREE-HUNDRED-KILO FOOD CRATES? YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?

OH, COME ON, PRIVATE. BE A SPORT. THEY ONLY WEIGH ABOUT THIRTY POUNDS UP HERE.



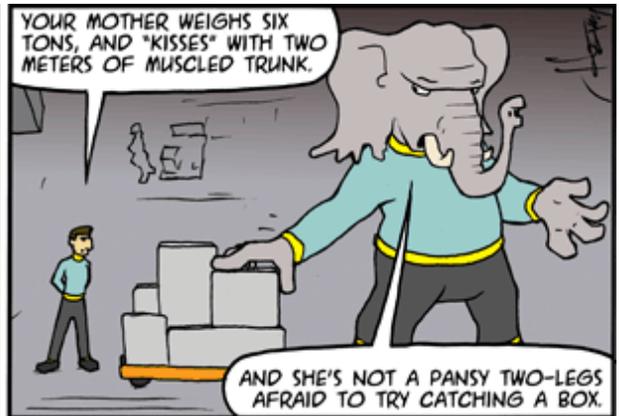
AND I ONLY WEIGH ABOUT TEN POUNDS, SO THE CRATES STILL WIN.

IT'S NO FUN WHEN YOU'VE ALREADY DONE THE MATH.



IT'S SCARY, THE WAY THOSE THINGS JUST ARC THROUGH THE AIR LIKE THAT.

THE PORT'S GOT A PAIR OF GRAV-SLINGERS, ONE ON EACH END. FIRST ONE FIRES THE BOX AT WHERE WE'LL BE WHEN THE STATION ROTATES ENOUGH, AND THE SECOND ONE CATCHES IT AND SETS IT IN YOUR ARMS, LIGHT AS A FEATHER, AND GENTLE AS A MOTHER'S KISS.

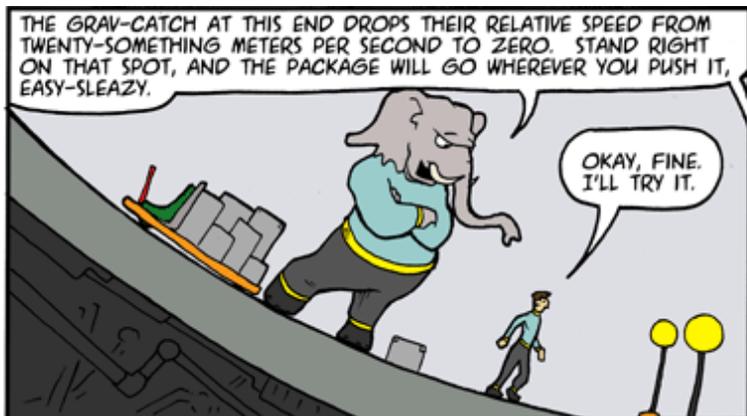


YOUR MOTHER WEIGHS SIX TONS, AND "KISSES" WITH TWO METERS OF MUSCLED TRUNK.

AND SHE'S NOT A PANSY TWO-LEGS AFRAID TO TRY CATCHING A BOX.



YOU'VE GOT POWERED FULLERENE ARMOR, AARDY. SO THE CRATES OUTMASS YOU THREE-TO-ONE? BIG DEAL. YOU CAN TAKE 'EM.



THE GRAV-CATCH AT THIS END DROPS THEIR RELATIVE SPEED FROM TWENTY-SOMETHING METERS PER SECOND TO ZERO. STAND RIGHT ON THAT SPOT, AND THE PACKAGE WILL GO WHEREVER YOU PUSH IT, EASY-SLEAZY.

OKAY, FINE. I'LL TRY IT.



WAIT... WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CATCHER POWERS DOWN?

WE'LL FIND OUT HOW GOOD YOUR ARMOR IS.



HOW'S IT GOING DOWN THERE, LIEUTENANT?

I'M WORRIED, SIR. CORPORAL CHISULO BULLIED PRIVATE AARDMAN INTO CATCHING BOXES. I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.



I KEEP EXPECTING DISASTER, BUT AARDMAN'S DOING A GOOD JOB USING HIS SUIT POWER FOR THE HEAVY LIFTING.



LIEUTENANT, CORPORALS ARE SUPPOSED TO BULLY PRIVATES INTO DOING THE HEAVY LIFTING. UNLESS THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE GOING ON, IT SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE BOTH FITTING IN WELL.



ALSO, HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THAT YOU'RE PARANOID?

PARANOIA IS THE WIND BENEATH MY WINGS, SIR.





LIEUTENANT SHORE "PI" PIBALD HAS JUST IMAGINED A WORST-CASE SCENARIO.

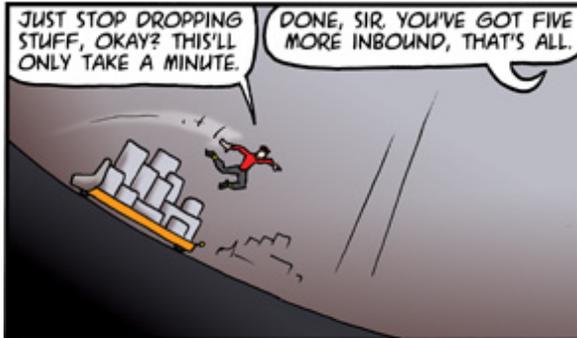
ANDY! STOP SENDING US PACKAGES! I NEED TO CHECK THE CATCHER.



LOOKS LIKE IT'S WORKING FINE, SIR. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

THIS IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR HIM. HE IS PARANOID, AFTER ALL, AND THAT'S JUST ONE OF HIS FLAVORS OF CRAZY.

# Schlock Mercenary



JUST STOP DROPPING STUFF, OKAY? THIS'LL ONLY TAKE A MINUTE.

DONE, SIR, YOU'VE GOT FIVE MORE INBOUND, THAT'S ALL.

GOOD. CHISULO, AARDMAN! PICK THESE LAST FIVE, AND THEN TAKE A BREAK.

NOW THAT HE'S AN OFFICER, HOWEVER, HE FEELS OBLIGED TO HEED HIS PARANOIA FROM TIME TO TIME. IT'S HIS JOB.



I'M PROBABLY JUST CRAZY. SEE? THERE'S ONE, NO PROBLEM. AND NOW TWO... IF NOTHING'S WRONG, I'M GOING TO BE EMBARRASSED. THREE MORE, AND THEN WE'RE IN THE CLEAR...



WOO-HOO! I WAS RIGHT!

IT'S A GOOD THING HE'S NOT IN THERAPY. THIS WOULD UNDO MONTHS OF PROGRESS.



MEANWHILE, ABOARD THE TOUCH-AND-GO...

Sir, this cargo shifting operation is inefficient.

HOW SO? IT LOOKED LIKE PI'S TEAM WAS MOVING A CRATE EVERY FOUR SECONDS.



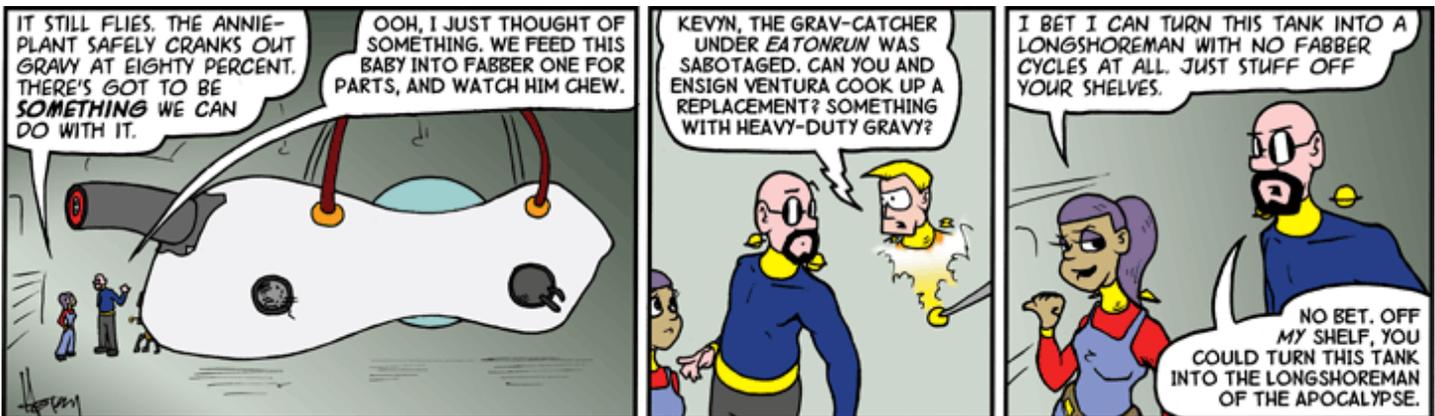
Exactly. They're unloading about four-point-five tons of cargo per minute.

The *Eatonrun* has sixty million tons of cargo to be unloaded.



HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

About twenty-five years. The supplies will keep that long, but the grunts might be a little bit past their "sell-by" date.



Commentary: Today's strip marks eight years of daily *Schlock Mercenary*. The author is pleased to mark the date with the introduction of the term "Longshoreman of the Apocalypse." It bodes so very well for the future.





MEANWHILE, IN THE CHARYNIC DISTRICT OF CREDOMAR...

I THINK YOU WANT TO TAKE A LEFT UP AHEAD, SHODAN.

LOTS OF YOUNG MEN LOITERING AROUND THAT CORNER... DOESN'T LOOK GOOD.



AAAND WE HAVE A ROADBLOCK. I HATE BEING RIGHT.

EVERYBODY OUT OF THE TRUCK!

KEEP THE WHEEL. I'VE GOT THIS.

# Schlock Mercenary



MOVE THE DUMPSTER, MISTER. WE'RE DELIVERING THIS TO THE MAKYRA OUTLET CENTER.

NO, YOU'RE DELIVERING IT RIGHT HERE.



CREDOMAR WAS FOUNDED ON PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY. MY FRIENDS AND I JUST HELD A CAUCUS, AND IT WAS UNANIMOUS. YOUR NEW AUTHORIZED DELIVERY POINT IS THIS CORNER.



WELL, THAT'S WONDERFUL NEWS. YOU AND YOUR CONSTITUENCY MAY PROCEED WITH YOUR RALLY.



RIGHT... START UNLOADING, BOYS! IT'S TIME TO



WRRRK?



OOPS. VETO. I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO NEED TO COME UP WITH A BIGGER LEGISLATURE.



ELF, THE OUTLET CALLED TO SAY YOU'RE LATE, AND THEY'RE WORRIED. THERE'S SOME SORT OF MAJOR RIOT A FEW BLOCKS AWAY.

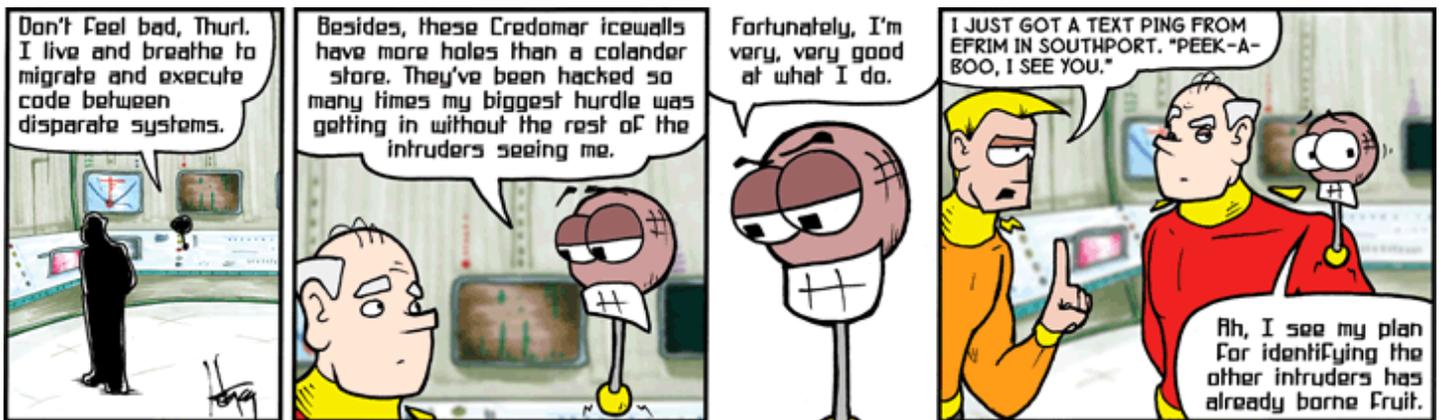
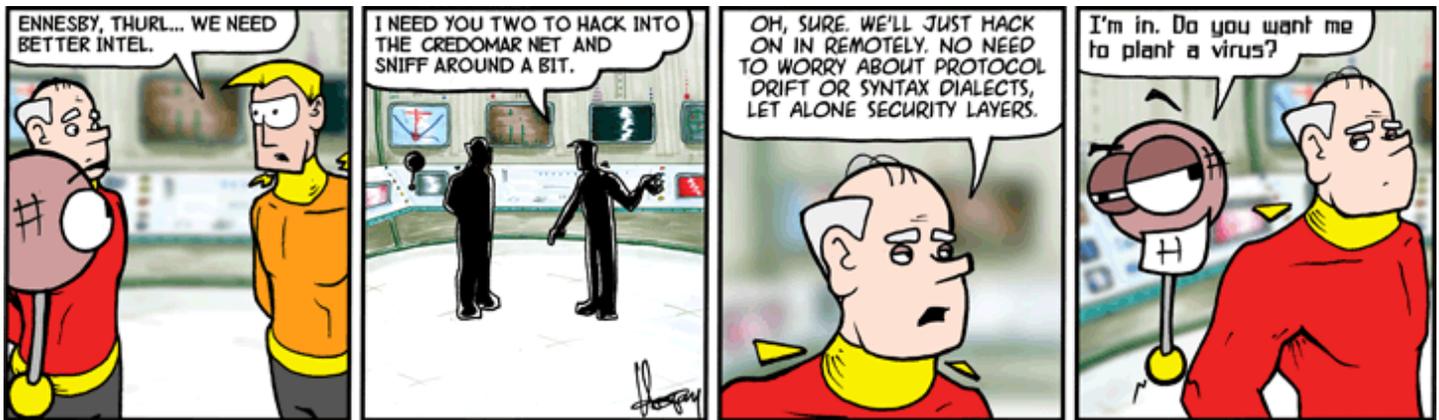
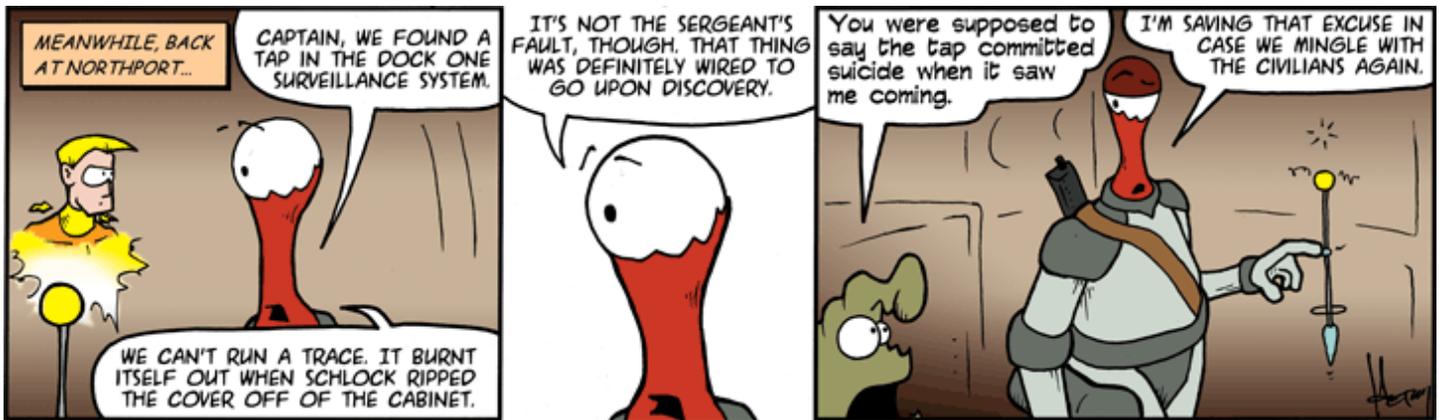
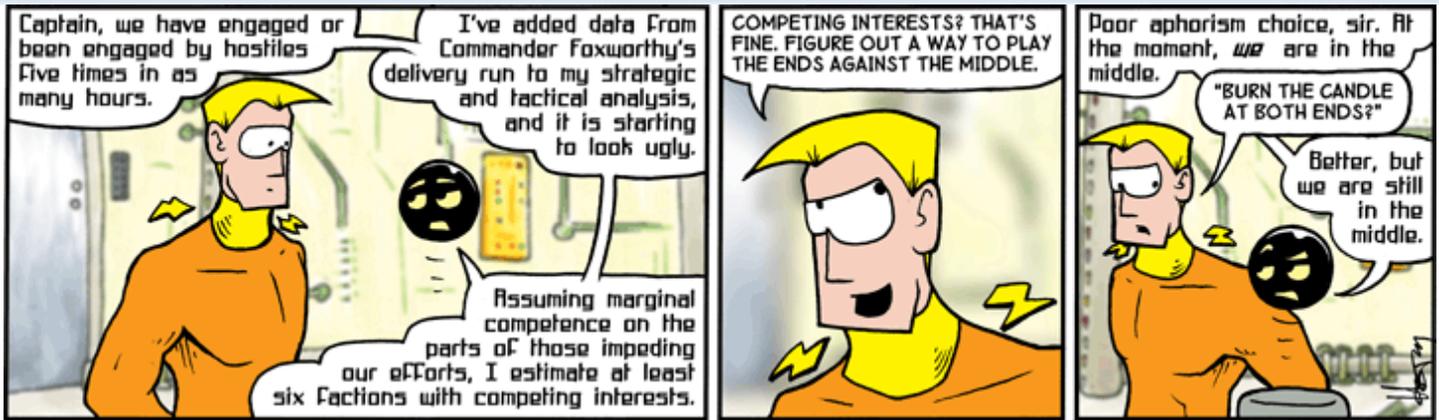


TELL 'EM WE'LL BE THERE IN ABOUT FIVE, MAYBE TEN MINUTES.



WHAT ABOUT THE RIOT?

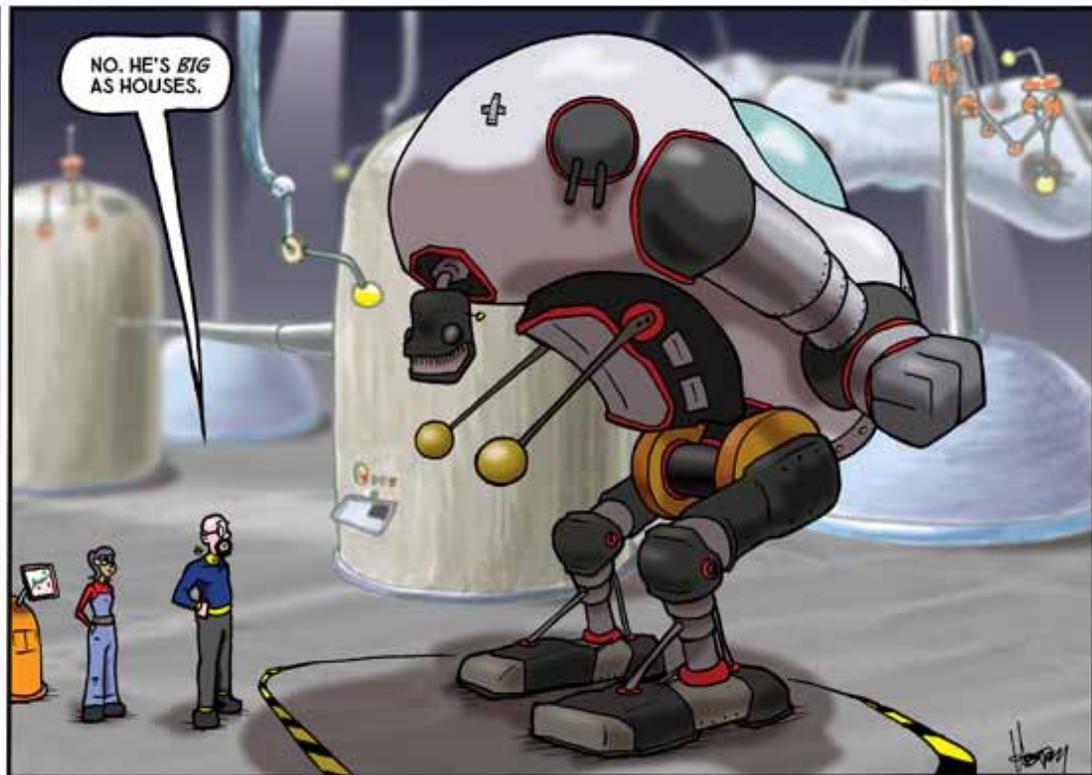
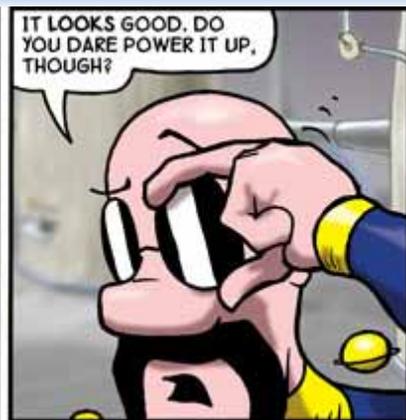
OH, THAT. I THINK THAT'S JUST PEOPLE RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES AS THE GODDESS OF WAR LEADS HER CHARIOTEER TO THE DROP POINT.







# Schlock Mercenary





KEVYN, I NEED YOU TO FAB SOME SURVEILLANCE GEAR FOR US.

WE'RE HURTING FOR LACK OF INTELLIGENCE. I WANT NANNY-CAMS AND VDA NODES SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE HABITAT.



WE NEED TO RUN SOME FIELD TESTS ON OUR ROBOT LONGSHOREMAN, CAPTAIN. HE CHECKS OUT IN SIM, BUT HE WON'T BE READY FOR PRIME-TIME FOR ANOTHER SIX TO EIGHT HOURS.



I NEED THAT SURVEILLANCE GEAR YESTERDAY, KEVYN. SEND THE ROBOT DOWN AS-IS, AND GET FABbing.



WHEN HE SAID "HURTING FOR LACK OF INTELLIGENCE" I DIDN'T REALIZE JUST HOW LITERALLY HE WANTED TO FEEL THE PAIN.



COMMANDER, IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER, I'LL TAKE LOTA TO THE DOCK AND SUPERVISE.

THAT WAY YOU CAN START ON THE SURVEILLANCE GEAR WITHOUT ME UNDERFOOT.



UNDERFOOT? REALLY? THAT'S UNCHARACTERISTICALLY SELF-DEPRECATORY OF YOU.



I CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN TO TAKE YOUR NEW TOY ROBOT OUT FOR A SPIN WITHOUT A COMMANDING OFFICER LOOKING OVER YOUR SHOULDER.



OH, COME ON. WHAT'S THE WO

YOU HAVE NOT WORKED HERE LONG ENOUGH TO BE ALLOWED TO FINISH THAT SENTENCE.



I CHECKED THE DUTY ROSTER. LIEUTENANT PIBALD IS IN CHARGE ON THE DOCKS. LOWLY, NAIVE ENSIGN MO' WON'T BE UNSUPERVISED, COMMANDER.



YES, BUT PI IS A FRESHLY MINTED LIEUTENANT, AND TENDS TO BE EVERY BIT AS IRRATIONAL AS HIS NUMERICAL NAMESAKE.



SO... HE DRAWS CIRCLES REALLY WELL, AND NEVER REPEATS HIMSELF?



NO, BUT IF YOU PUSH HIS BUTTONS JUST RIGHT, HE'LL RUN AROUND IN CIRCLES REPEATEDLY.

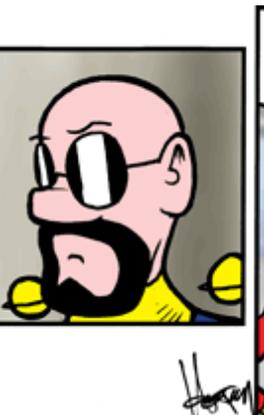
THIS FIELD TEST IS STARTING TO SOUND LIKE A LOT OF FUN.



COMMANDER, YOU CAN'T HAVE IT BOTH WAYS. YOU CAN'T REQUIRE ME TO BE SUPERVISED, AND THEN SAY THAT THE LIEUTENANT IN CHARGE ISN'T SUPER ENOUGH FOR USING.

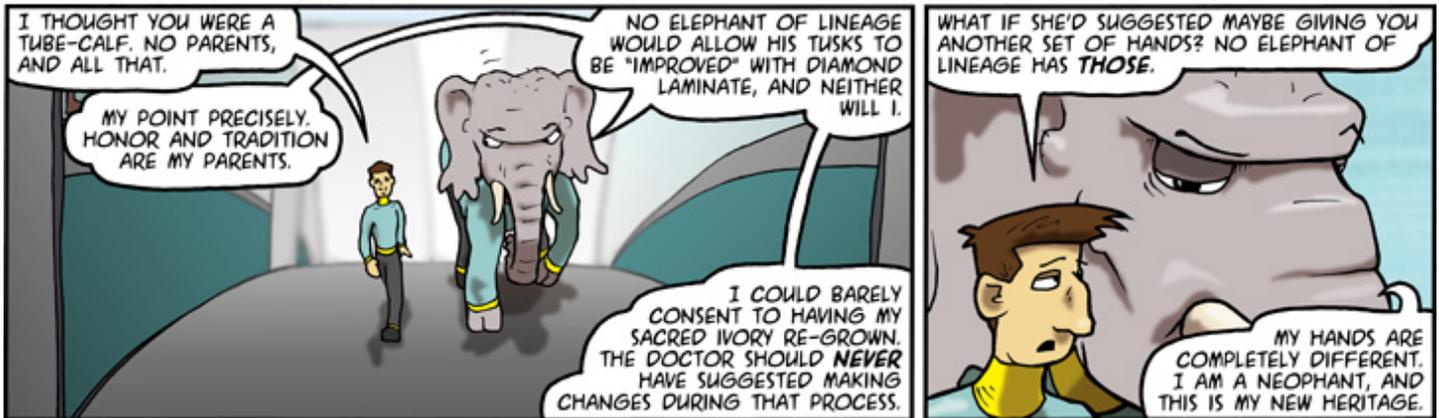
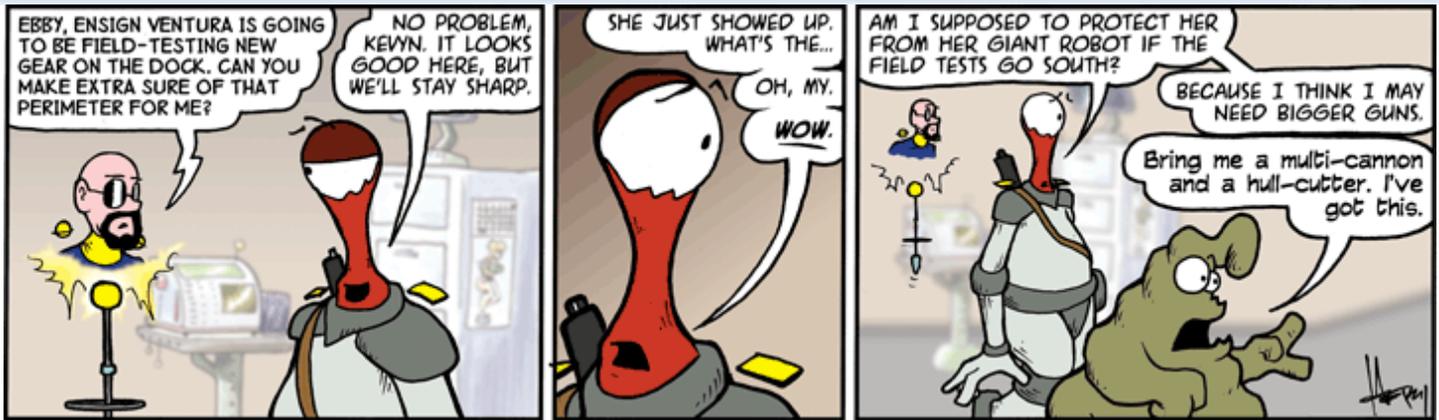


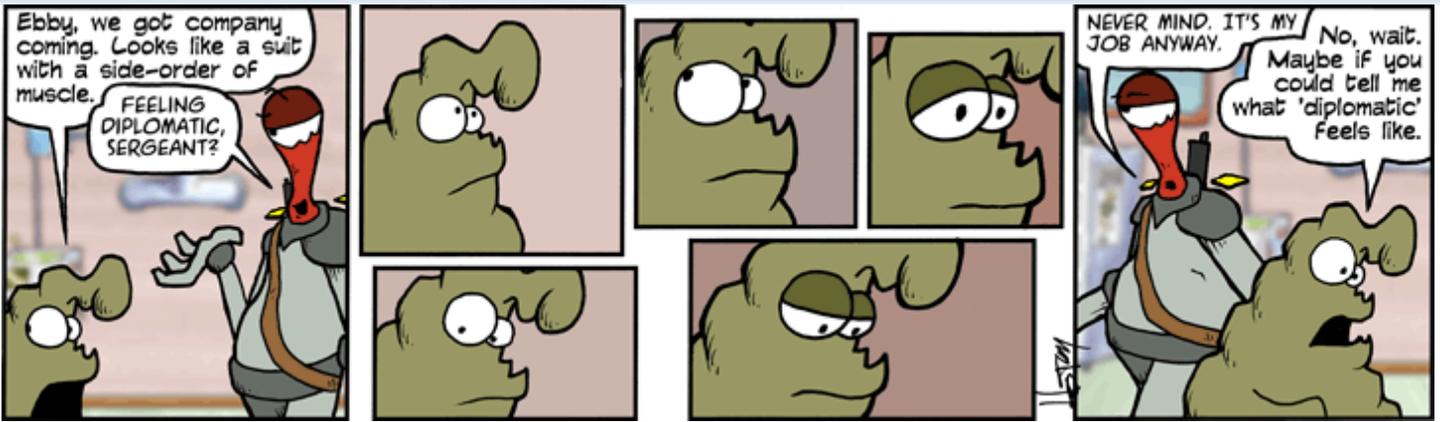
IT MAKES YOU SOUND LIKE AN ANXIOUS PARENT. I THINK THAT MEANS YOU ACTUALLY LIKE ME NOW.



OKAY, ENSIGN. TAKE THE LONGSHOREMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE TO DOCK ONE AND CONDUCT FIELD TESTS. LIEUTENANT PIBALD WILL SUPERVISE.

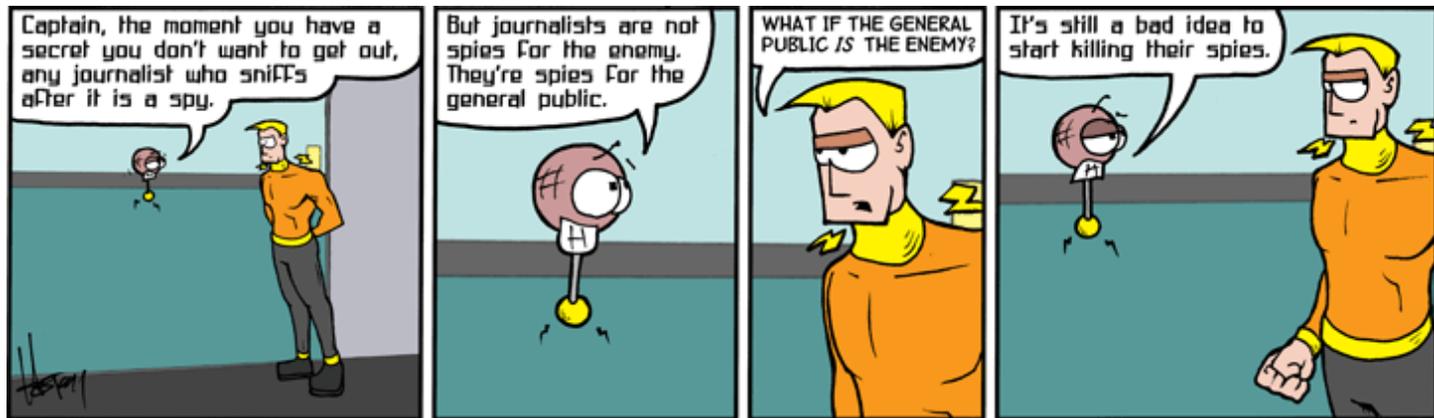
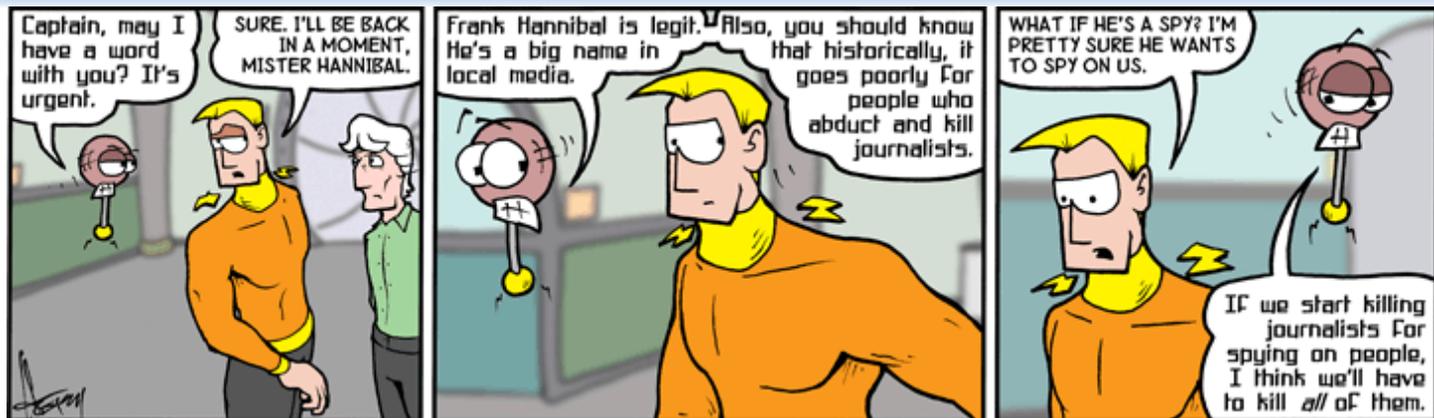
YOU TWEAK LIKE AN ANXIOUS PARENT, TOO.













SERGEANT SCHLOCK ESCORTS THE NEWS-GOONS BACK TO THE TOUCH-AND-GO...

Okay, now what's in that box?

CAMERAS.

I need to check 'em

LIKE YOU 'CHECKED' MY LUNCH-BOX?

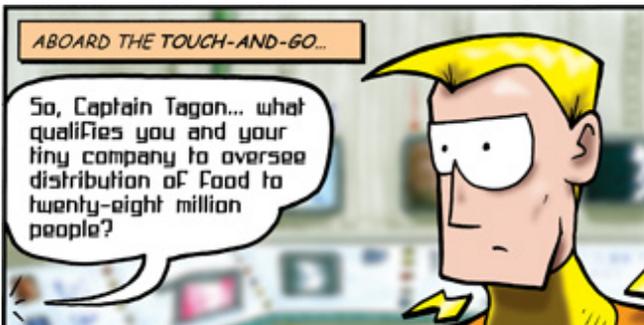
You got it back.

YEAH. EMPTY. OH, AND IT WAS WET, TOO.

I did you a favor. That jar of mayo had started to grow chunks.

IT WASN'T MAYO. IT WAS HUITLACOCHÉ-FLAVORED NATTO.

No wonder the U.N.S. has us sending food to you people. You've been out of mayonnaise for so long it's made you crazy.



ABOARD THE TOUCH-AND-GO...

So, Captain Tagon... what qualifies you and your tiny company to oversee distribution of food to twenty-eight million people?

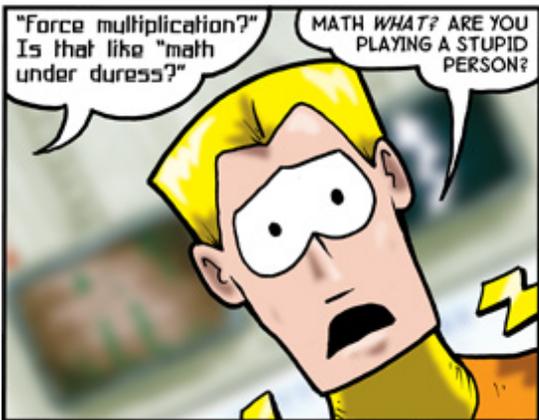


WHAT QUALIFIES ME?

I'M BEING PAID TO DO THE JOB, SO I'LL GET IT DONE.

AND I DON'T SEE HOW "TWENTY-EIGHT MILLION" PEOPLE CHANGE THAT. ARE WE OUTNUMBERED? FINE. THAT'S WHAT FORCE-MULTIPLICATION IS FOR.

# Schlock Mercenary



"Force multiplication?" Is that like "math under duress?"

MATH WHAT? ARE YOU PLAYING A STUPID PERSON?



FORCE MULTIPLIERS ARE THINGS LIKE A SOLDIER'S WEAPONS, OR A GOOD SUPPLY LINE. YOU KNOW, THE STUFF THAT LETS ONE SOLDIER TAKE ON THREE, TEN, OR EVEN TEN THOUSAND TIMES HIS NUMBER IN LESSER-EQUIPPED ENEMIES.

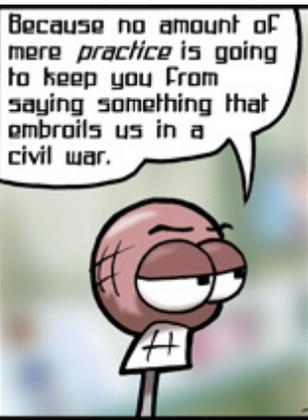


THERE MAY BE TWENTY-EIGHT MILLION PEOPLE HERE, BUT WE'RE THE ONES WITH THE POWER ARMOR, THE TANKS, AND THE WARSHIP.



Okay... I'm glad we had this little rehearsal. There's no need to bother with more practice questions.

OH, GOOD.

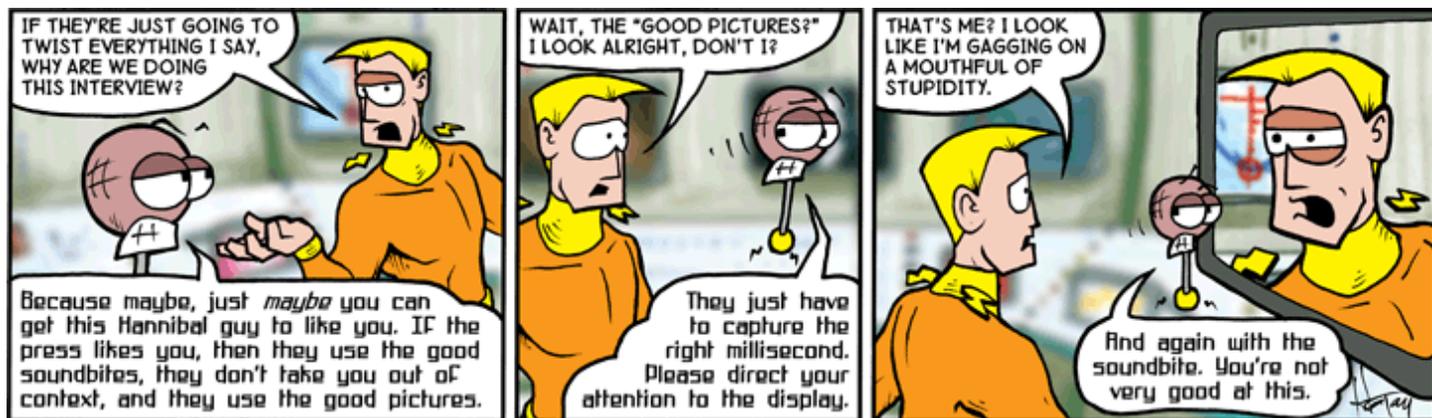
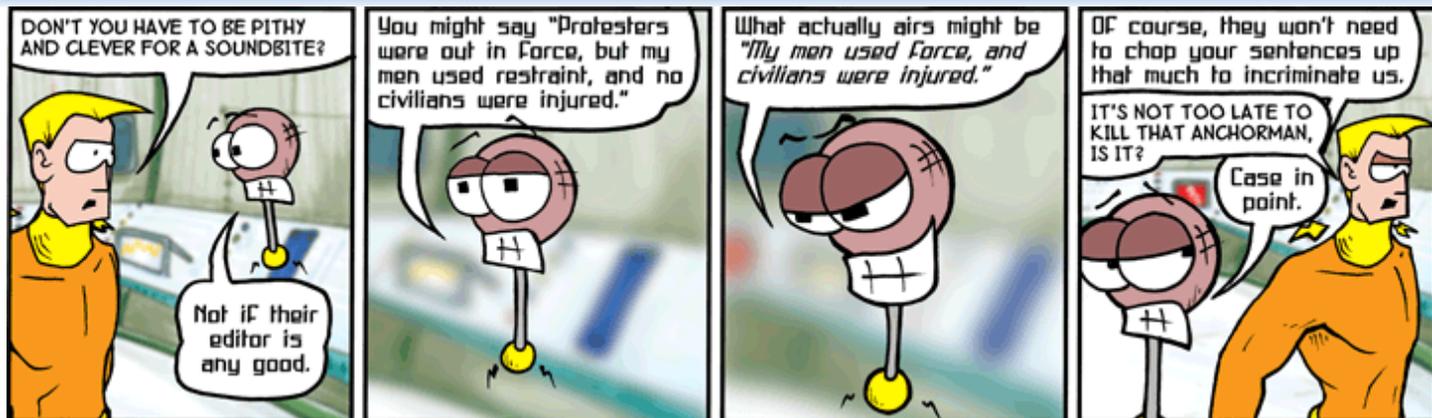


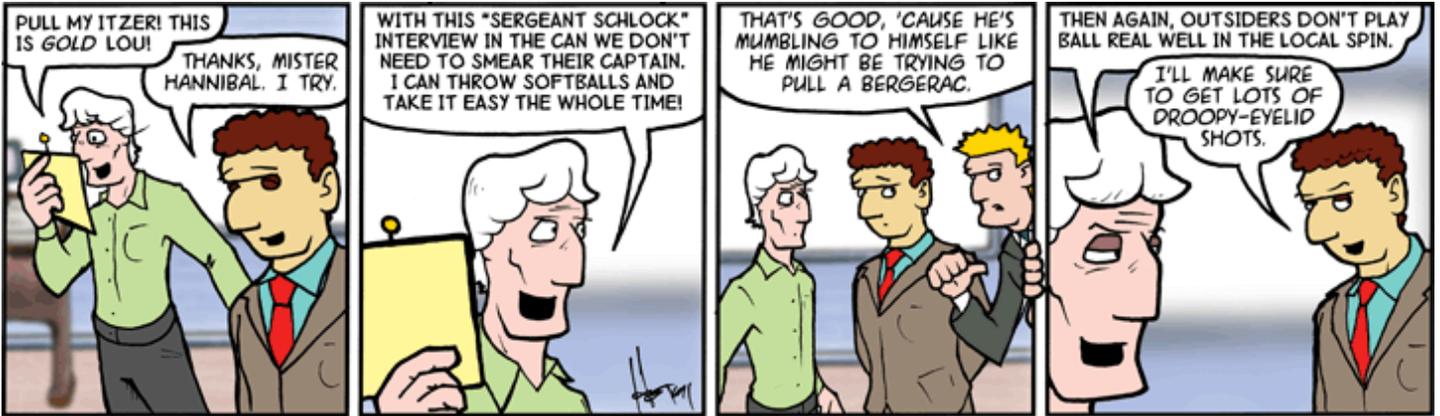
Because no amount of mere *practice* is going to keep you from saying something that embroils us in a civil war.

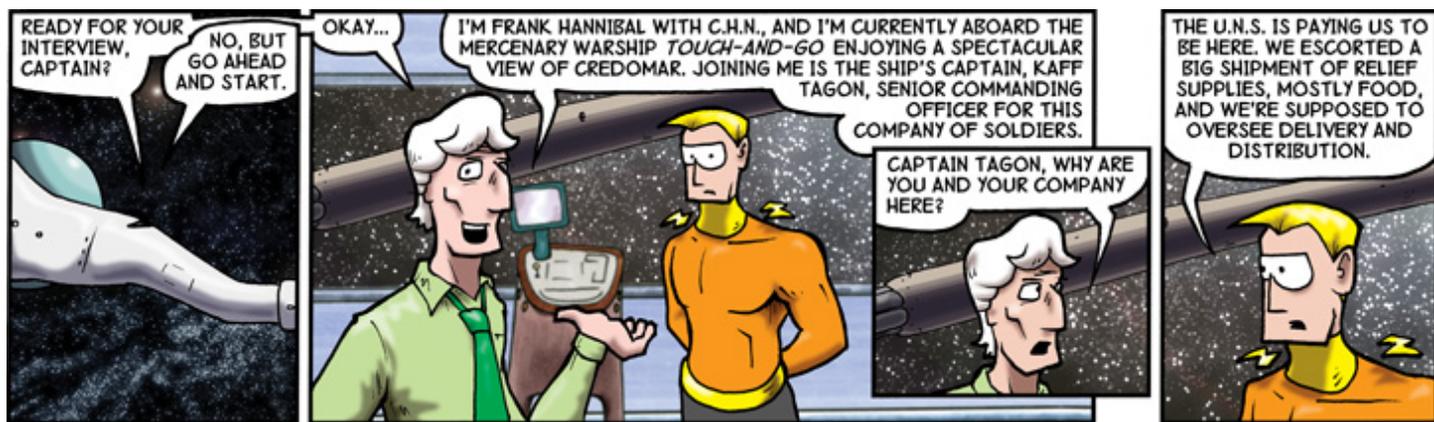


CIVIL WAR WOULD BE BETTER THAN ALL THIS TALKING.

Oh, yes. Save that gem of a sound bite for the interview. You'll be famous.

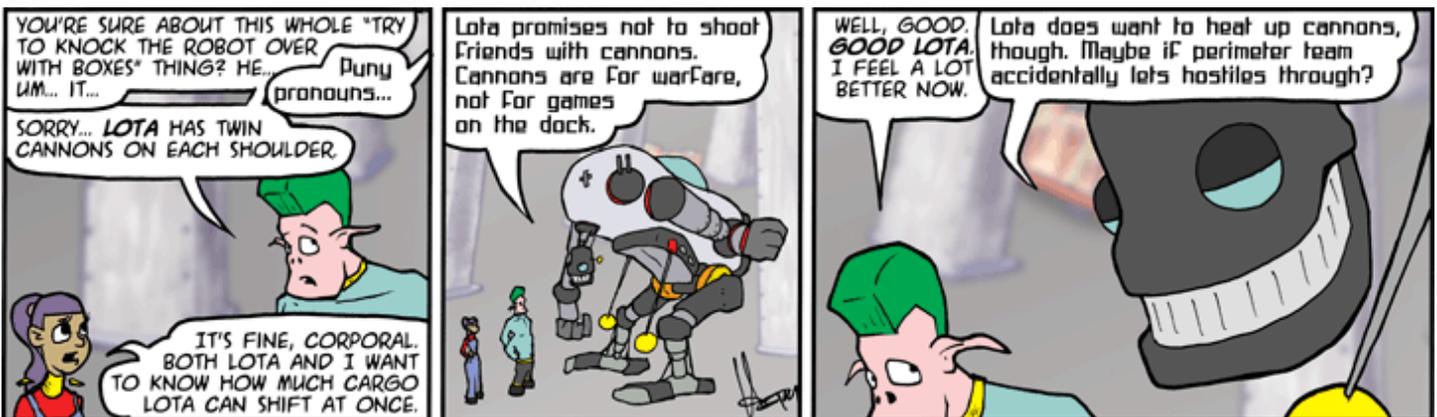
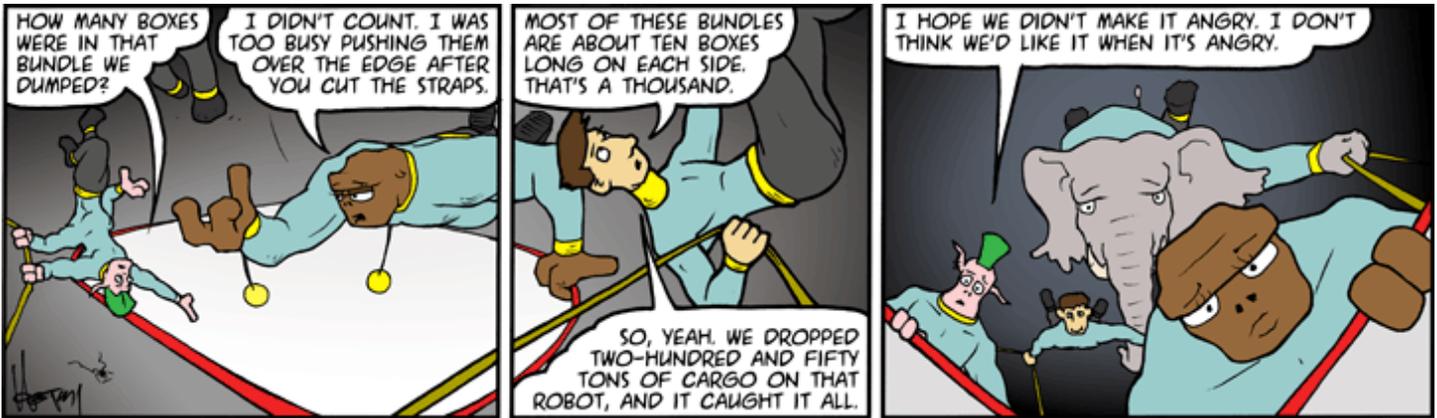
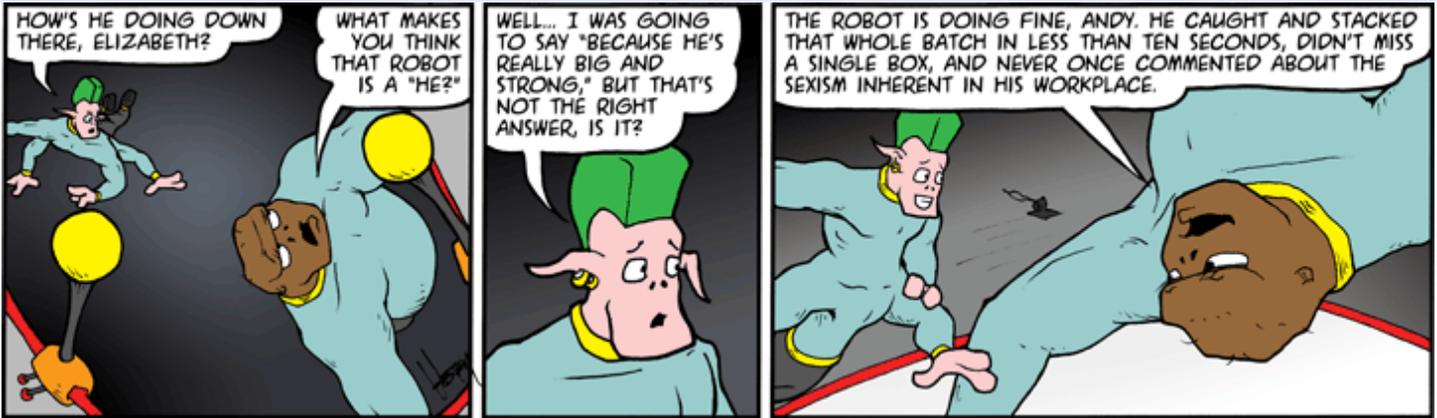


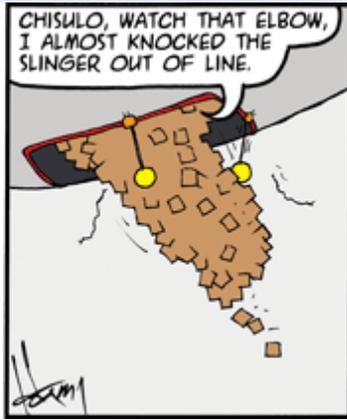




# Schlock Mercenary







MEANWHILE, ABOARD THE MERCENARY WARSHIP TOUCH-AND-GO...

THE INFRACRATS STILL HOLD STATIONWAIST, BUT THEY ALSO STILL DEPEND ON FOODLORDS AND THE TRANSIT UNIONS.

WHAT ABOUT THE AGRIPONI-WHATSITS YOU MENTIONED? DIDN'T THEY MAKE FRESH FOOD? WHY AREN'T THEY MORE POWERFUL?

THE UNION OF AGRIPONICULTURISTS WAS DISSOLVED BY INFRACRAT FIAT FOR PRICE-FIXING. WHEN THE U.N.S. STARTED SHIPPING FOOD IN THREE YEARS AGO, THE PORTLORDS PUT THEM THE REST OF THE WAY OUT OF BUSINESS, AND THEN TOOK THEIR FACILITIES...

SO THE FREE FOOD WE'RE DELIVERING IS ACTUALLY THE PROBLEM?

... WHICH NO LONGER SEE USE, BECAUSE THE U.N.S. DELIVERIES HAVE A MUCH, MUCH BETTER PROFIT MARGIN.

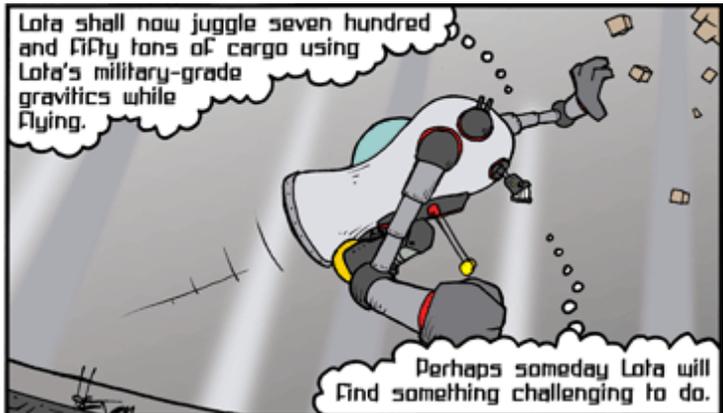
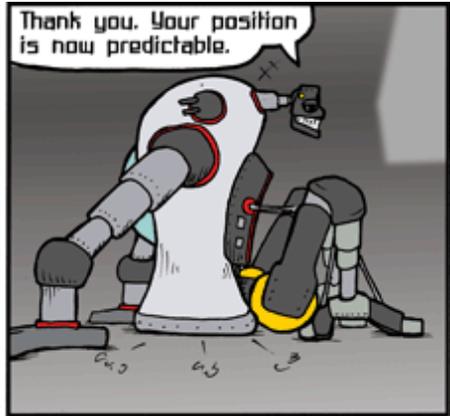
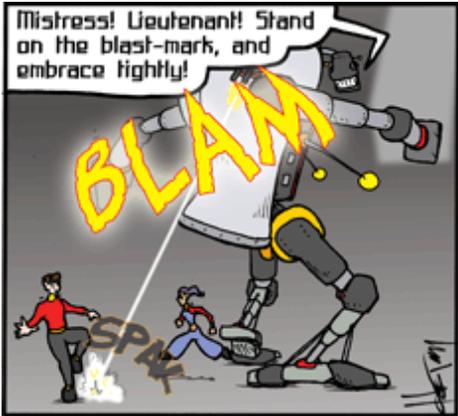
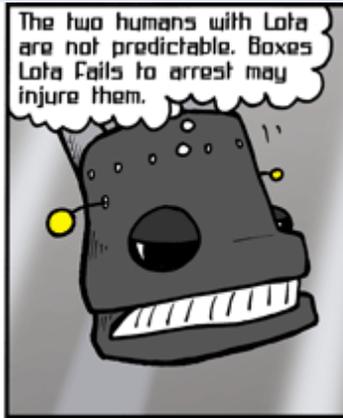
**Schlock Mercenary**

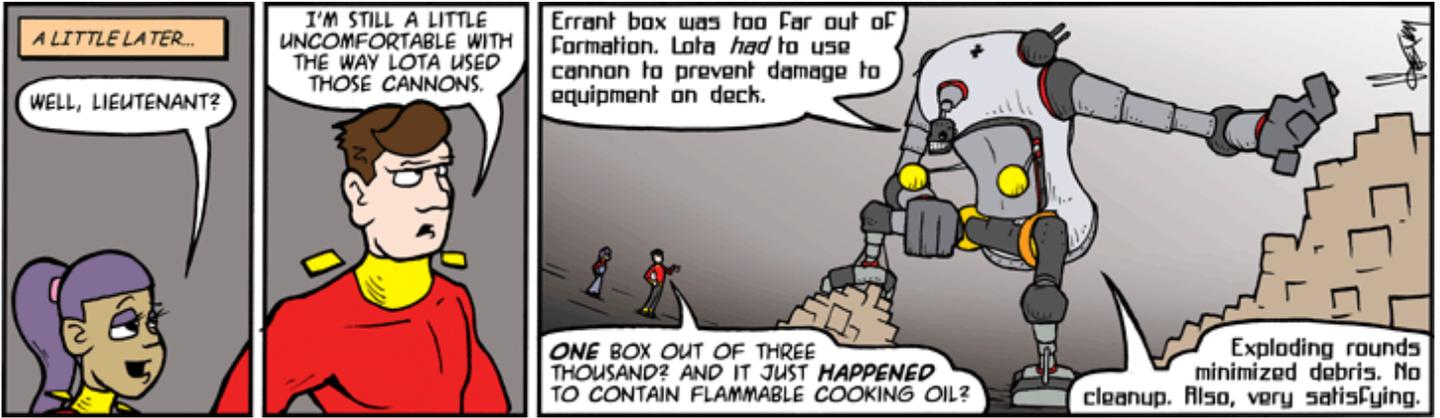
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. THE SEPARATISTS INSIST THAT IT IS, BUT THE SYSTEM WAS BROKEN LONG BEFORE CREDOMAR BECAME A CHARITY CASE FOR SOL.

AND SPEAKING OF CHARITY CASES, I THINK THIS INTERROGATION HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH. I'VE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT CREDOMAR POLITICS.

EDUCATING YOU HAS BEEN TIRESOME. I NEED TO GET BACK TO REPORTING THE NEWS.

"HOPEFULLY NOTHING INTERESTING HAS HAPPENED BACK ON THE DOCKS WHILE YOU'VE HELD ME CAPTIVE HERE ON YOUR SHIP."





STAFF MEETING IN PROGRESS ABOARD THE TOUCH-AND-GO...

NOT BAD FOR THE FIRST DAY, EVERYBODY. WE GOT SHOT AT, AIMED AT, LIED TO, SABOTAGED, MOBBED, AND INTERVIEWED, BUT NOBODY GOT KILLED.

Actually, we did kill that gunner in Southport.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS CONVERSATION, THAT ENEMY COMBATANT IS A NOBODY.

# Schlock Mercenary

...AND ON DOCK ONE, NORTHPORT, IN CREDOMAR.

CAPTAIN, MY TEAM IS READY TO GO OFF-SHIFT. WE'VE BEEN WATCHING THIS PERIMETER ALL DAY.

WHINE SOME MORE, EBBY. MY TEAM'S ACTUALLY BEEN BREAKING A SWEAT MOVING CARGO.

YOU'RE BOTH BEING ROTATED OUT. BRAD, 'CHELLE, AND MASSEY ARE WATCH OFFICERS FOR THE NIGHT SHIFT. BRAD'S GOT CARGO AND 'CHELLE'S GOT PERIMETER.

MASSEY, YOU'RE IN COMMAND HERE.

I'M AN ATTORNEY, NOT A WARSHIP COMMANDER.

RIGHT. DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING. START LOOKING AT ALL THE LEGAL-SMEAGOL STUFF HERE ON CREDOMAR. ENNESBY WILL WAKE ME UP IF ANYTHING GOES SERIOUSLY WRONG, AND TAG CAN ENGAGE ANY IMMEDIATE THREATS.

THOSE OF YOU GOING OFF-SHIFT CAN SHUTTLE BACK HERE, OR WANDER THE STATION. IF YOU GO OUT, BE SURE TO BUDDY UP AND STAY IN TOUCH. AND DO NOT GO UNARMED.

WAIT... EBBY, IF SCHLOCK GOES OUT MAKE SURE HE'S CARRYING SOMETHING BESIDES THOSE TWO PLASMA CANNONS.

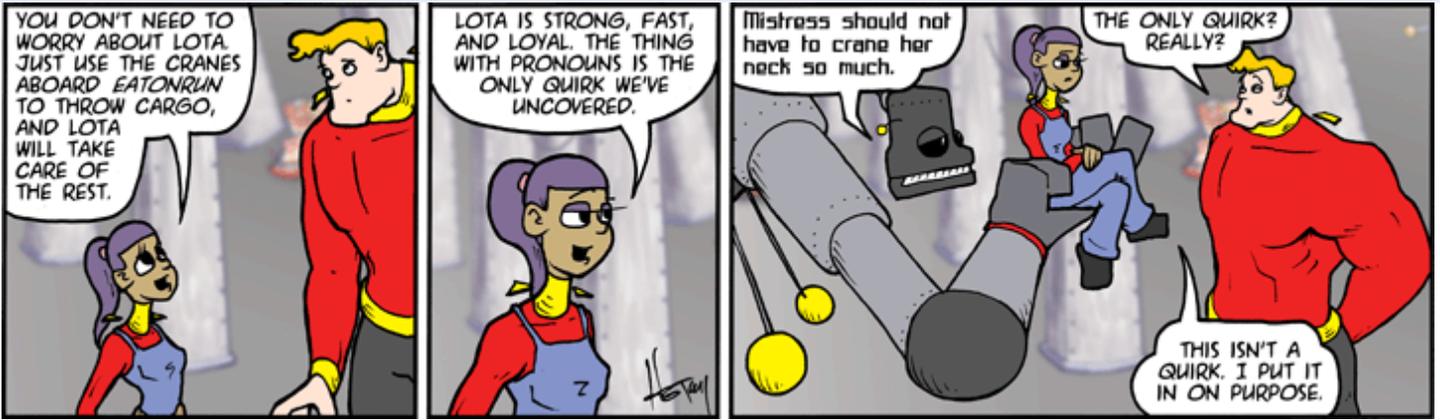
WHEN YOU SAY "BESIDES," DO YOU MEAN "IN ADDITION TO," OR "INSTEAD OF?" BECAUSE ONE OF THOSE IS A REALLY HARD SELL.

HEY, BRAD. WELCOME TO THE DOCK.

HOW LONG DID YOU HAVE TO PRACTICE THAT, PI?

THIS IS LOTA. DON'T REFER TO LOTA USING PRONOUNS, BECAUSE THEY ARE TOO PUNY FOR LOTA. ALSO, DON'T GET CONFUSED WHEN LOTA REFERS TO LOTA IN THE FIRST-PERSON PROPER.

IT CAME TO ME ALL AT ONCE WHEN LOTA CRAMMED PARA AND ME UP INTO LOTA'S BOWEL COCOON FOR SAFE KEEPING.



Note: Those who have worked fast-food, and who have lamented the unflattering uniforms which they've been required to wear have no place to complain until they've worn a uniform that includes a wig, a mustache and buck-teeth.

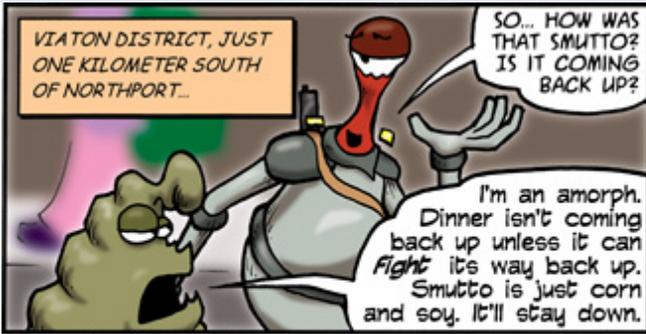


Note: No tour of Central- or South-American cuisine is complete without a taste of fresh huitlacoche. No tour of Asian cuisine is complete without digging into a nice box of natto. Naturally, then, a blending of the offerings of these continents must necessarily include some actual *blending*.

When the author created the Chupaqueso he was thrilled to learn that readers actually tried the recipe out and loved it. Rest assured that with the creation of Smutto he feels only dread. One of you will almost certainly have access to both of these delicacies, and will feel compelled to experiment.

Please send pictures.

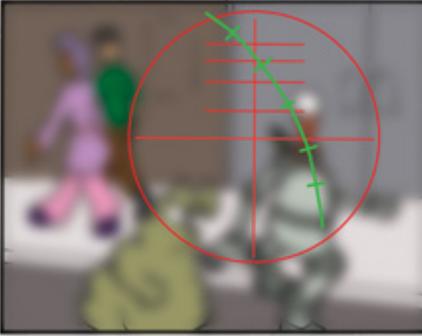




VIA TON DISTRICT, JUST ONE KILOMETER SOUTH OF NORTHPORT...

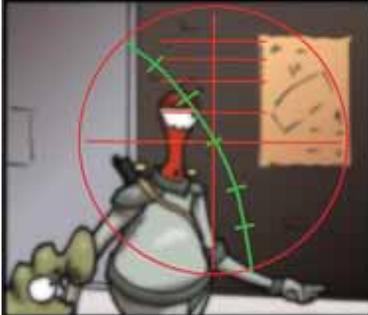
SO... HOW WAS THAT SMUTTO? IS IT COMING BACK UP?

I'm an amorph. Dinner isn't coming back up unless it can *fight* its way back up. Smutto is just corn and soy. It'll stay down.

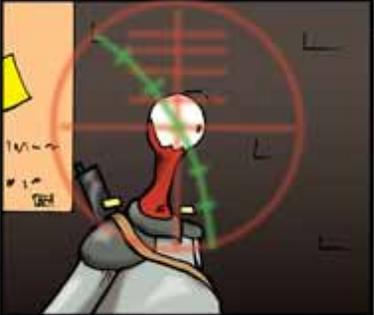


IT'S NOT **JUST** CORN AND SOY. IT'S ALSO A BACTERIA COLONY FIGHTING OFF A FUNGAL INFECTION. SMUTTO IS A LITTLE PILE OF **BERM** WARFARE DISGUISED AS A SIDE DISH.

# Schlock Mercenary



Okay, sure. But the last time I had to spit something out it was an infection of nanobots. The Smutto I dropped down the hole is way out of its league.



YOU CAN EAT ANYTHING, THEN? Amorphs are weird that way.



We've all got our gifts, right? Sure, I can eat anything, but I don't see as well as you do.



As well as you used to, anyway.

OWW?



NOTH CHANNIT! SOMEBODY JUST SHOT MY EYE OUT!

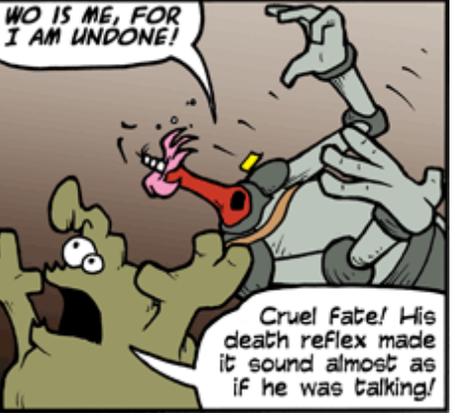
Yeah... now fall down.

I'M NOT GOING TO FALL DOWN.

POINT ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. WE'RE GOING TO KILL SOMEBODY.

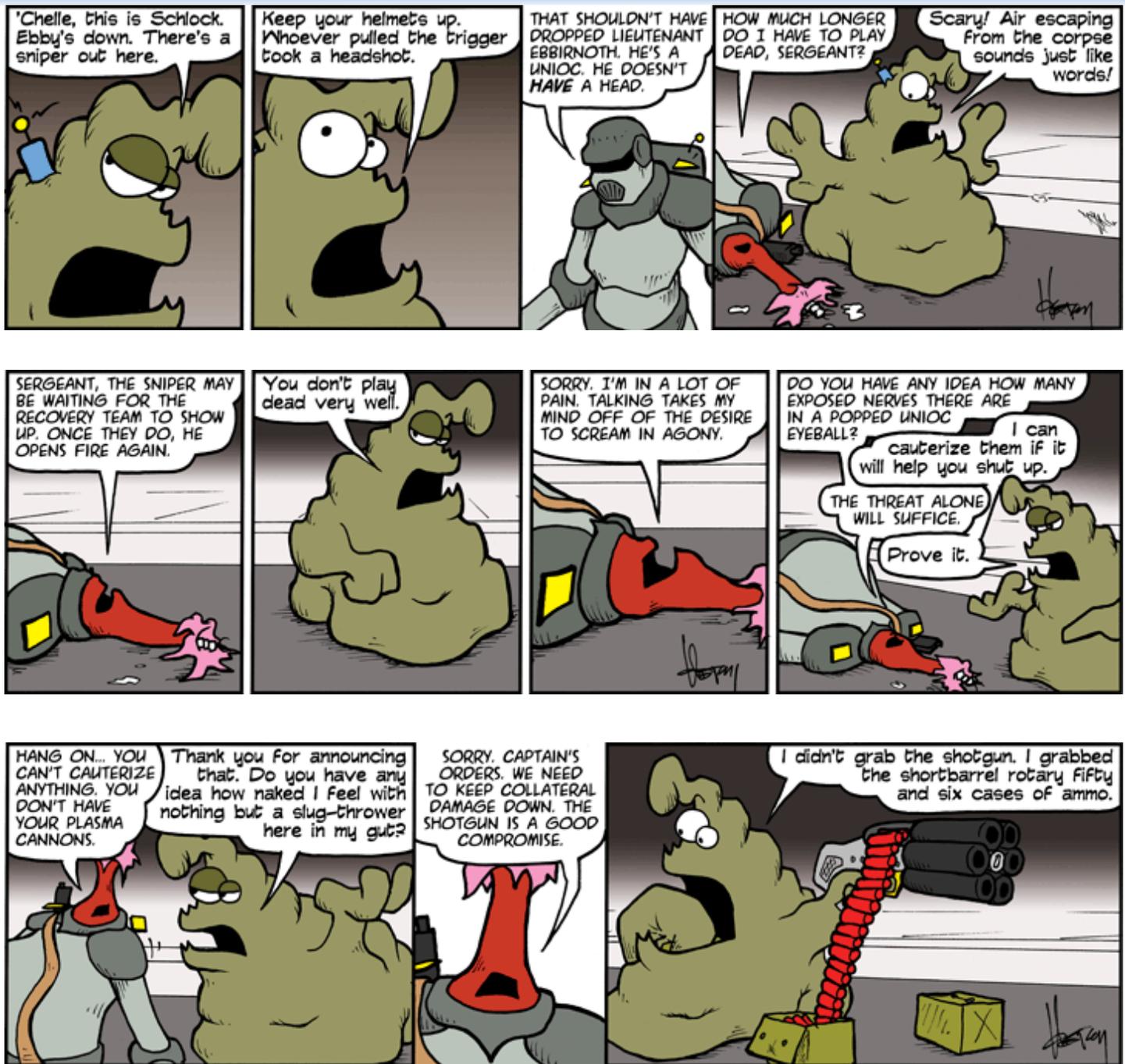


Ebby, humans keep their brains up where you've got nothing but eyeball. This place is pretty much all human. Let them think they killed you.



WO IS ME, FOR I AM UNDONE!

Cruel fate! His death reflex made it sound almost as if he was talking!



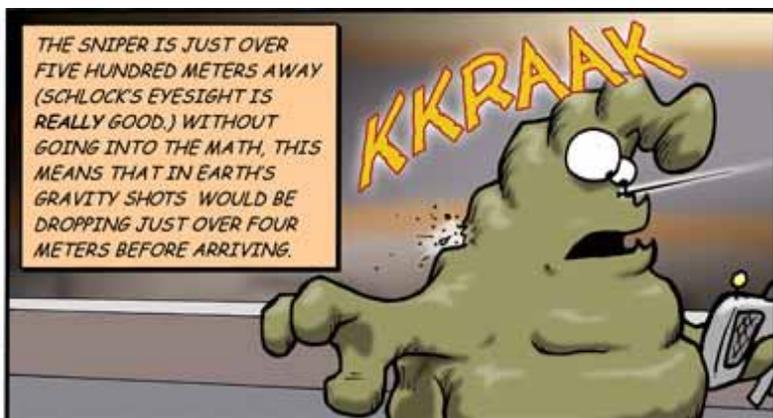
Note: The rotating barrel assembly on the Strohl Munitions Short-barrel handcannon may give the user a wicked pinch if the weapon is held incorrectly. This makes it an unpopular selection for many military forces. Also, it can be configured to send anywhere between five hundred and five thousand projectiles per minute downrange with great accuracy, making it an exceedingly unpopular selection for the enemies of many military forces.





SERGEANT SCHLOCK IS ON A ROOFTOP SCANNING FOR A DISTANT SNIPER. SCHLOCK'S EYESIGHT IS GOOD. THE SNIPER'S MUZZLE-FLASH BETRAYS HIS POSITION.

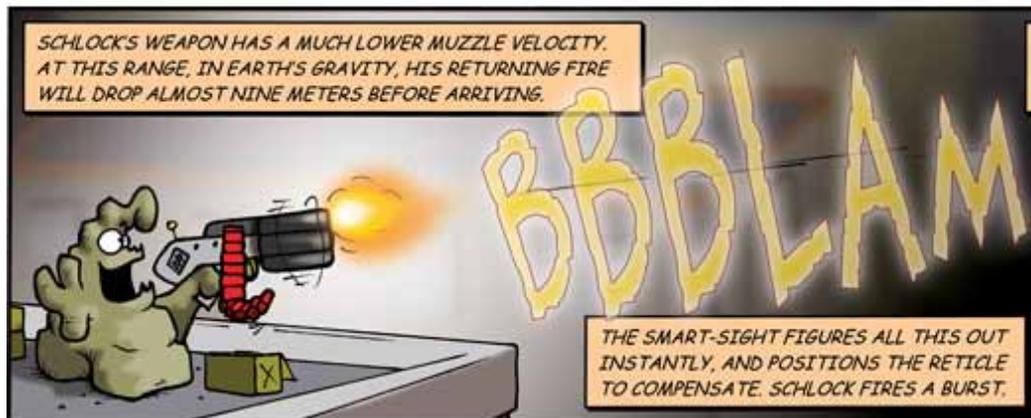
Hah! I saw that!



THE SNIPER IS JUST OVER FIVE HUNDRED METERS AWAY (SCHLOCK'S EYESIGHT IS REALLY GOOD.) WITHOUT GOING INTO THE MATH, THIS MEANS THAT IN EARTH'S GRAVITY SHOTS WOULD BE DROPPING JUST OVER FOUR METERS BEFORE ARRIVING.

KKRAAK

# Schlock Mercenary



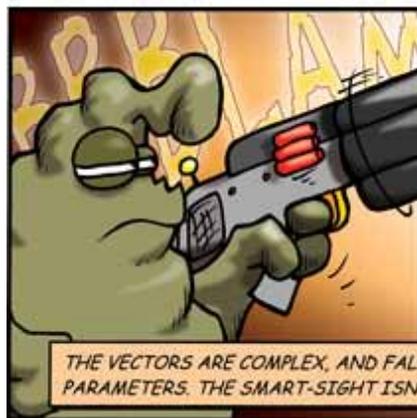
SCHLOCK'S WEAPON HAS A MUCH LOWER MUZZLE VELOCITY. AT THIS RANGE, IN EARTH'S GRAVITY, HIS RETURNING FIRE WILL DROP ALMOST NINE METERS BEFORE ARRIVING.

BBBLAM

THE SMART-SIGHT FIGURES ALL THIS OUT INSTANTLY, AND POSITIONS THE RETICLE TO COMPENSATE. SCHLOCK FIRES A BURST.



THIS IS NOT EARTH'S GRAVITY. THIS IS CREDOMAR'S ROTATION. THE BURST CURVES WIDE AND FALLS SHORT.



THE VECTORS ARE COMPLEX, AND FALL WELL OUTSIDE PROGRAMMED PARAMETERS. THE SMART-SIGHT ISN'T SMART ENOUGH TO ADJUST.



I'm gonna have to walk my shots.

YUP. THE TRACER ROUNDS ARE IN THOSE BOXES BEHIND YOU.



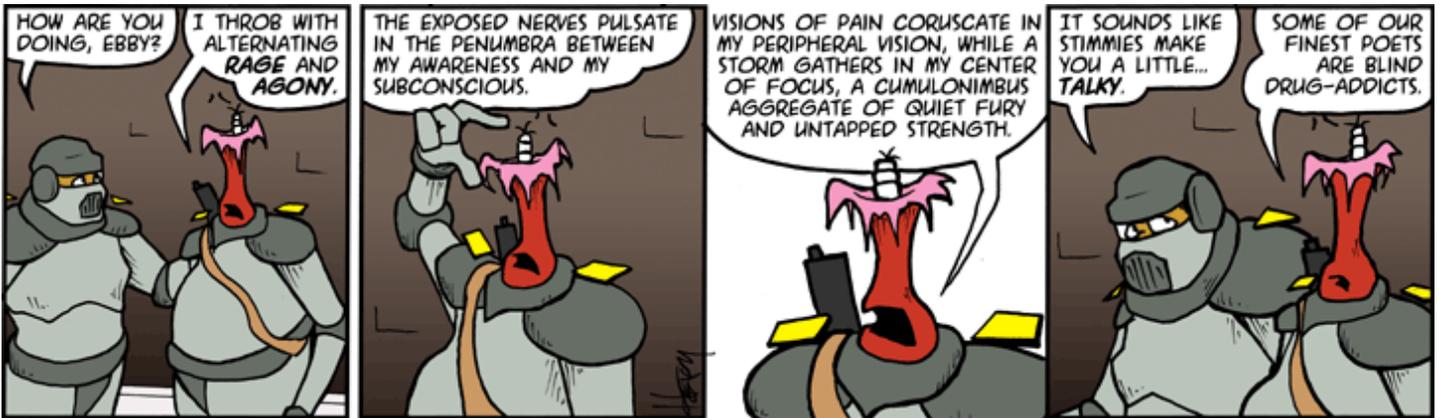
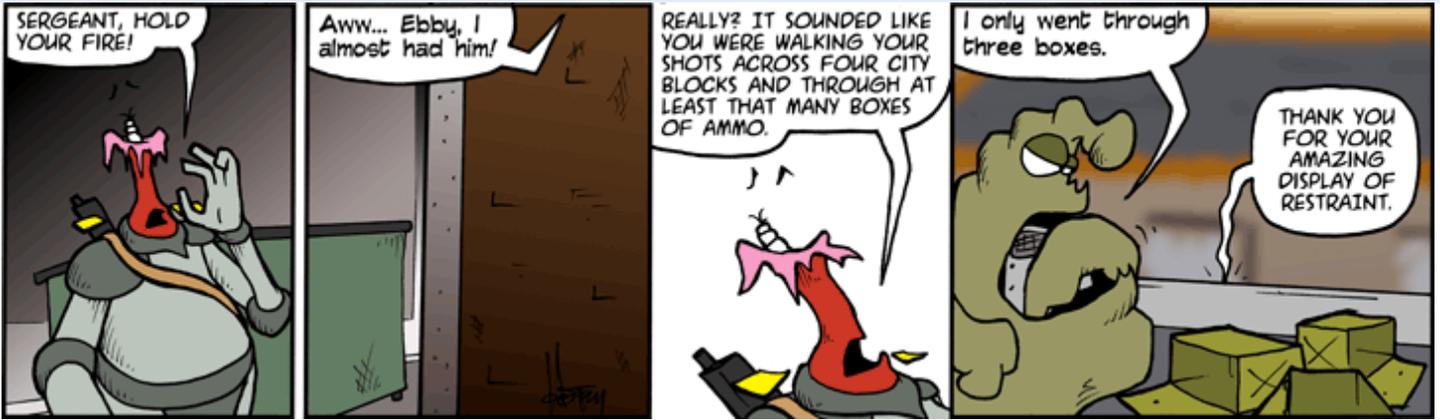
SERGEANT SCHLOCK IS FIRING A STROHL MUNITIONS SHORT-BARREL ROTARY HANDCANNON. IN ITS CURRENT CONFIGURATION IT FIRES FIVE HUNDRED AND SIXTY ROUNDS PER MINUTE, EVERY FIFTH ROUND A TRACER, AT A MUZZLE VELOCITY OF SIX HUNDRED AND TEN METERS PER SECOND.

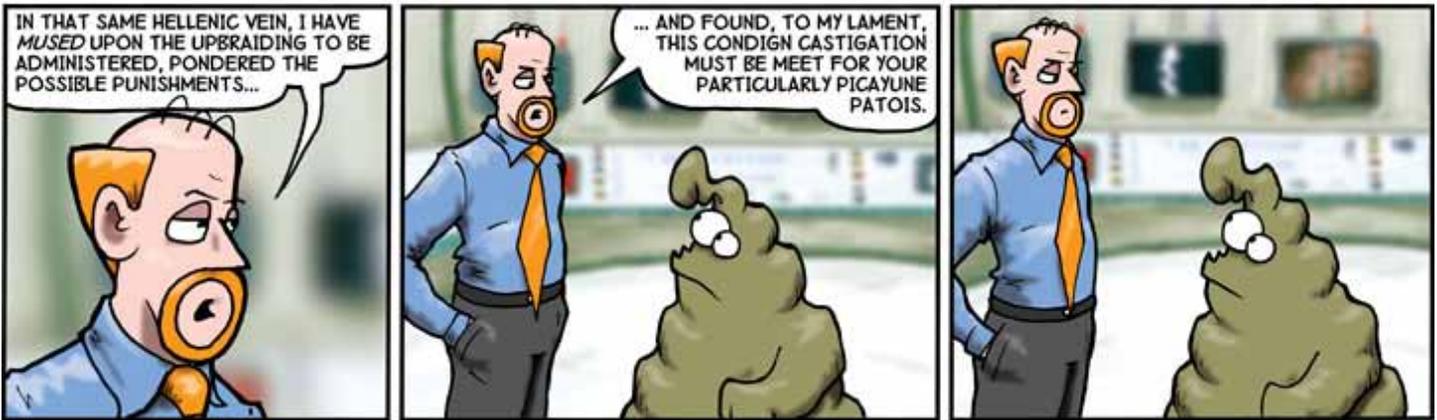
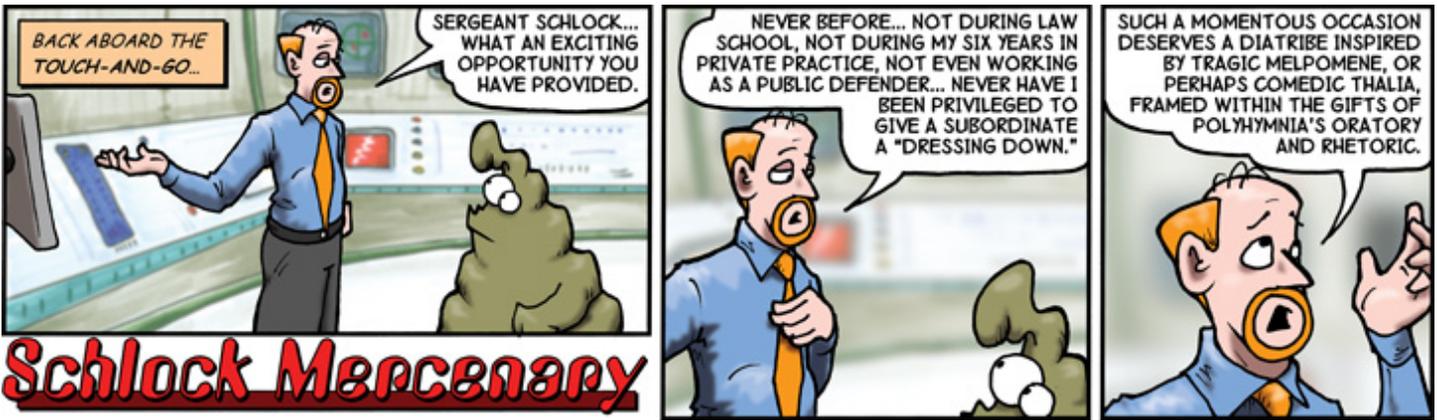
AFTER EIGHT SECONDS OF FIRING HE HAS YET TO HIT THE DISTANT TARGET.

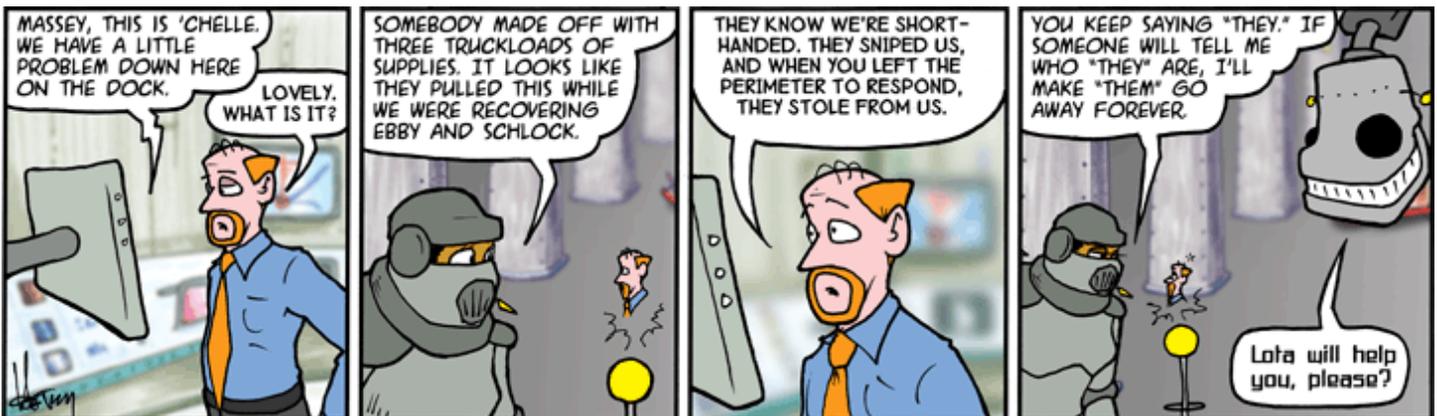


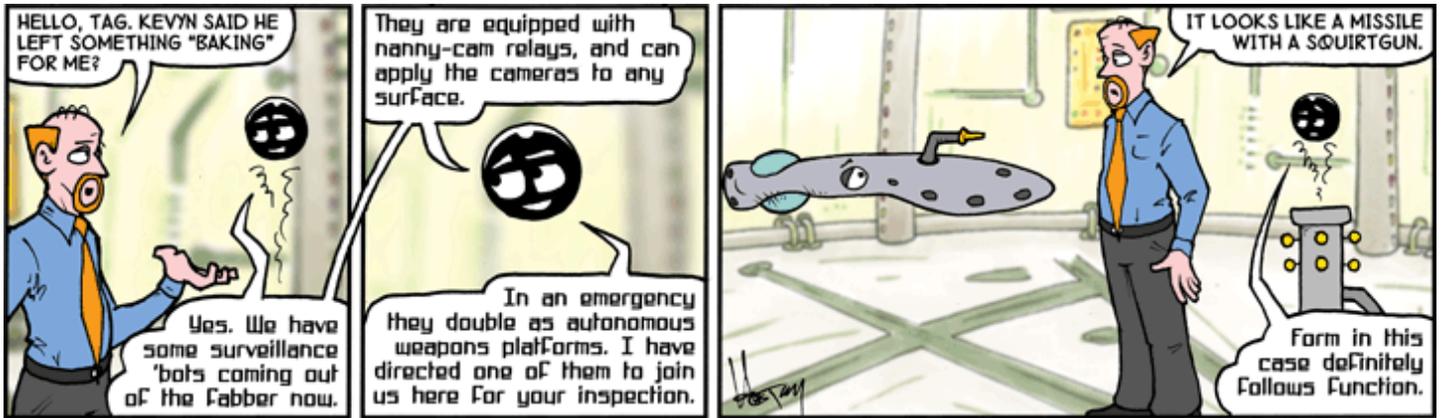
This thing is a lot more dangerous over short distances.

PERHAPS. NEVERTHELESS, EVERYONE DOWNRANGE IS HOPING YOU RUN OUT OF AMMUNITION SOON.











SERGEANT SCHLOCK'S BATHTUB GETS FILLED WITH SOME STRANGE THINGS.



# Schlock Mercenary



THIS ISN'T HOT WATER AND EPSOM SALT, BUT THE EFFECT IS SIMILAR.



LIKE MANY PEOPLE, SCHLOCK FINDS THAT SOAKING IN THE BATH IS A GOOD CURE FOR A CASE OF "GRUMPY AND SAD."



WE INTERVIEWED SERGEANT SCHLOCK JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE HIS RAMPAGE IN VIATON. HERE'S ONE CRAZY ALIEN MERCENARY YOU DO NOT WANT TO MAKE ANGRY.



AND DON'T LET HIM ANYWHERE NEAR YOUR LUNCH, EITHER!

WATCHING THE NEWS, HOWEVER, IS NOT.



SO, SERGEANT SCHLOCK... TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF.

I'm Sergeant Schlock. I'm a carbosilicate amorph, and I'm a mercenary.



HAI! JUST THE FACTS. VERY STRAIGHTFORWARD. LET'S ASK THE QUESTION WE ALL WANT ANSWERED FIRST... HAVE YOU EVER KILLED ANYBODY?



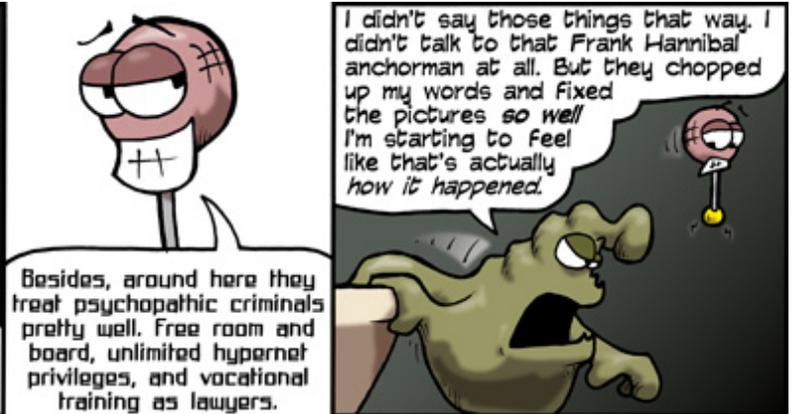
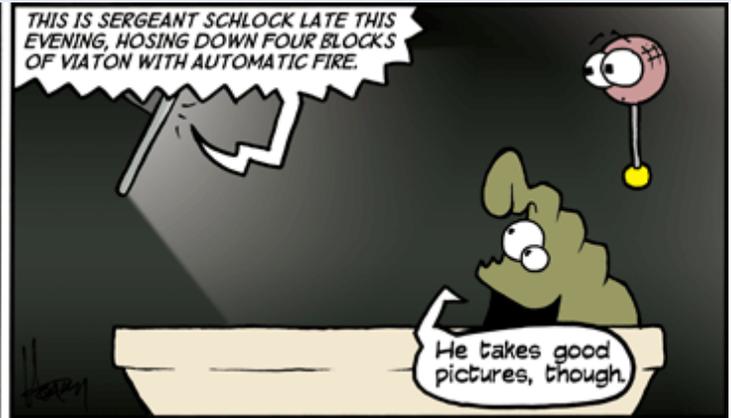
Well yeah. Lots of times.



HAVE YOU KILLED ANYBODY TODAY?

No, but the day's not over yet.

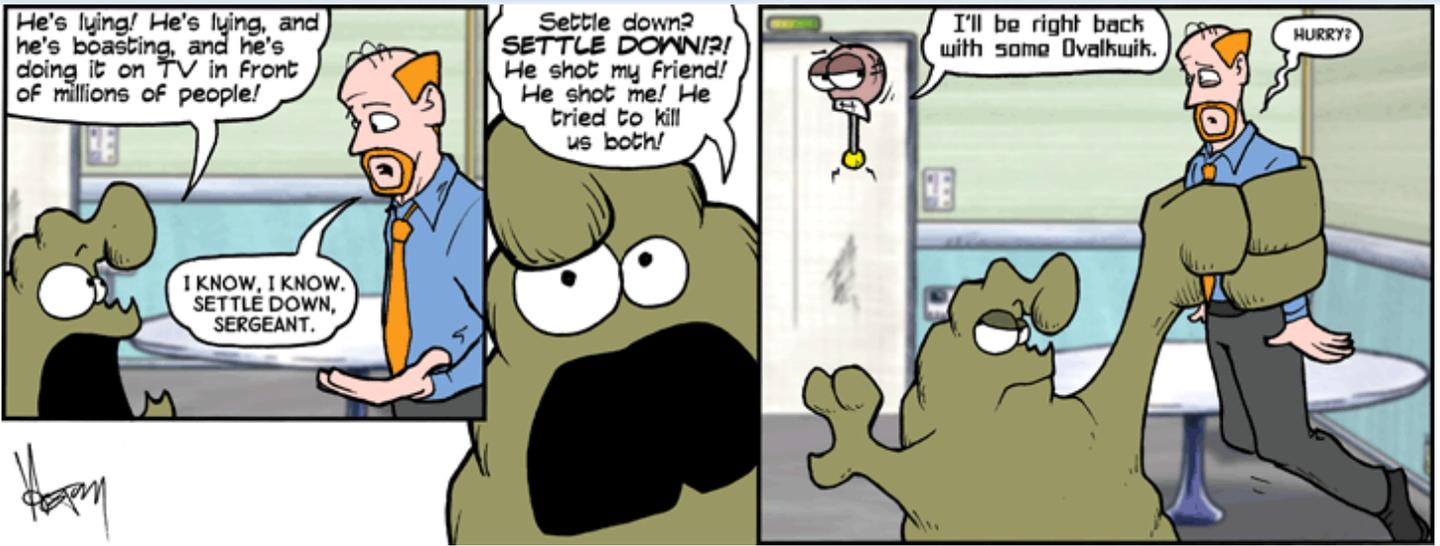




# Schlock Mercenary

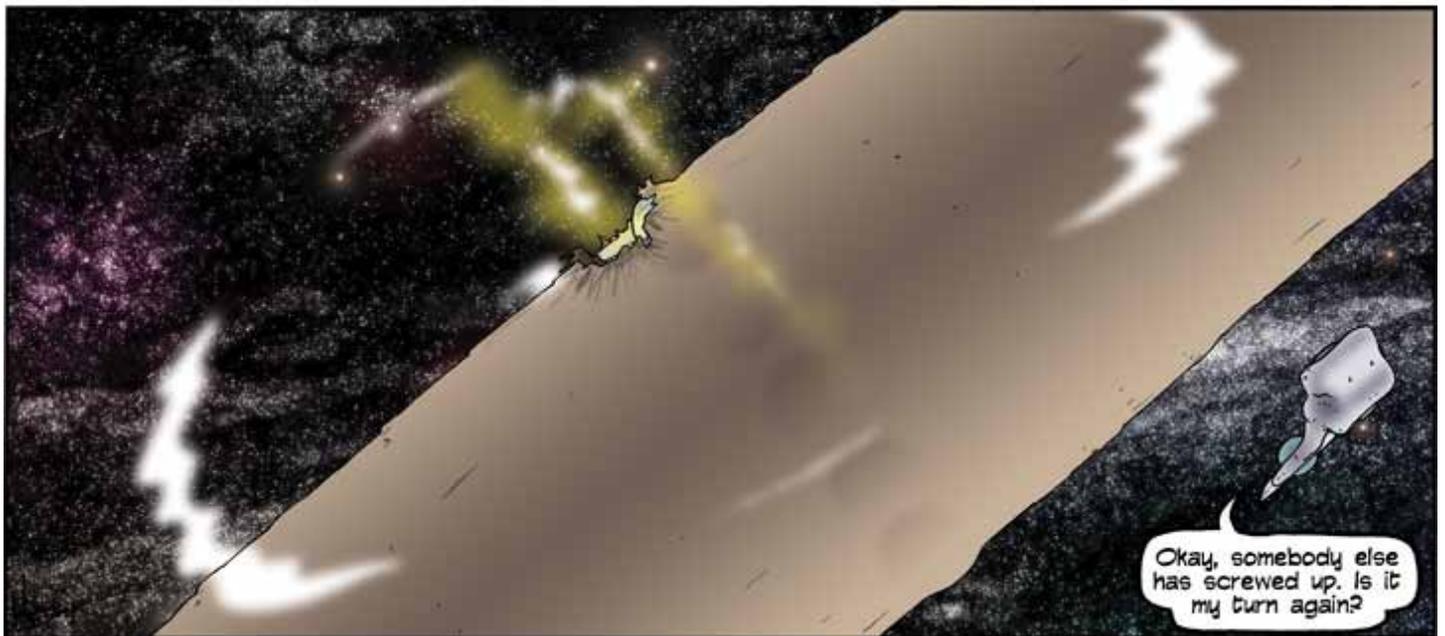


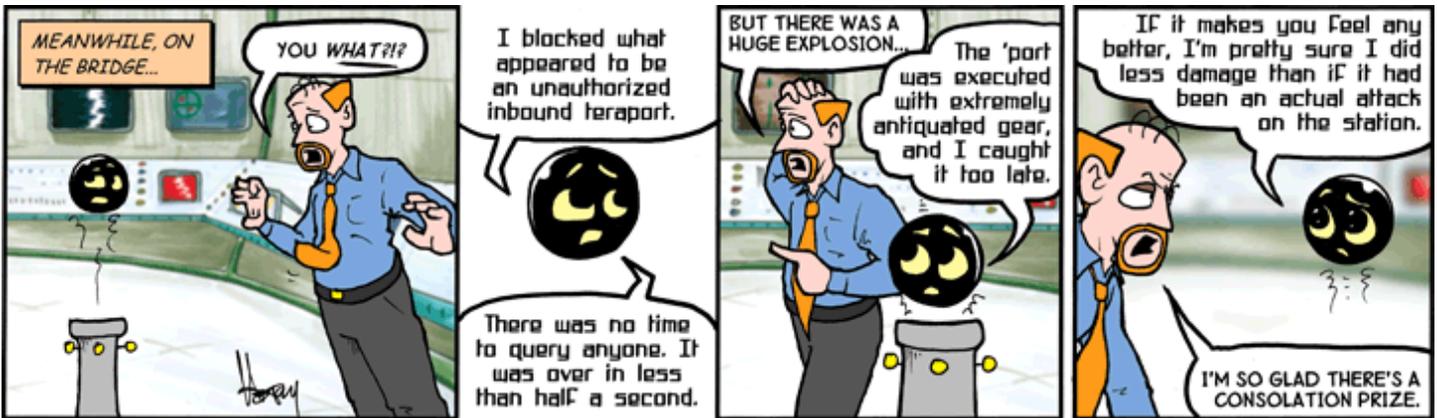






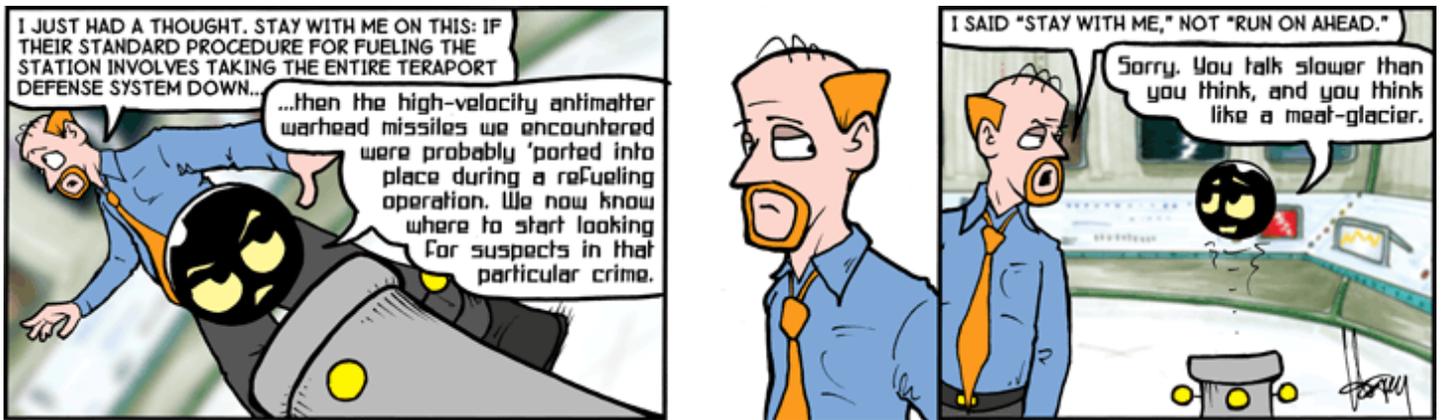
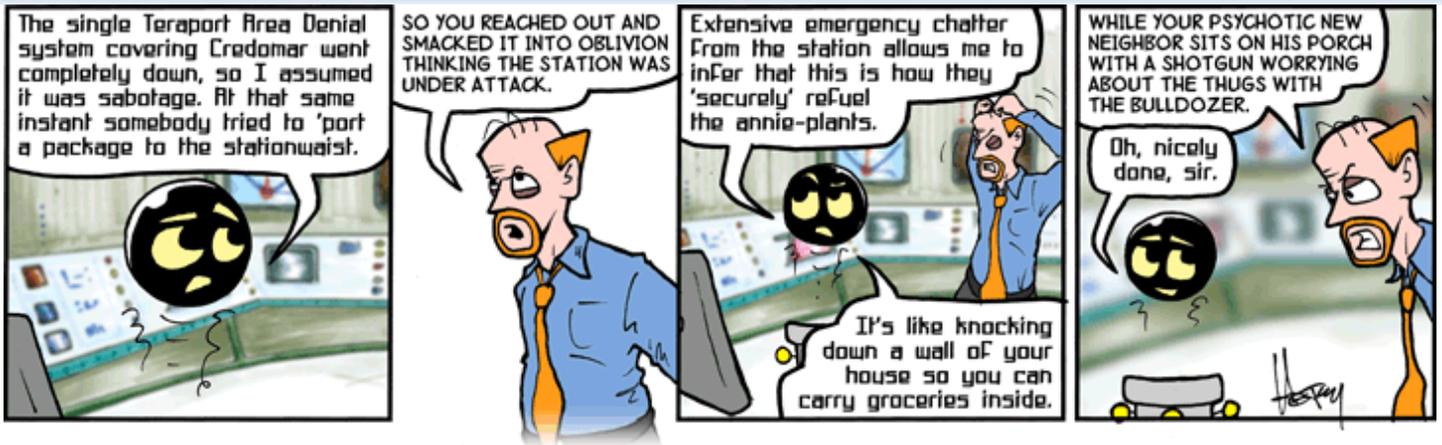
# Schlock Mercenary





Note: That thing Massey's tie is doing in the first panel is called "dilberting." Historians are unclear as to exactly why it's called this, due to the fact that during the Limited Liability Revolution of the late 21st there was a purge of things that made large corporations look stupid.

If only you'd kept all your Scott Adams books safe...



ABOARD THE MERCENARY WARSHIP TOUCH-AND-GO, CURRENTLY IN A STATIONKEEPING (AND RUBBERNECKING) ORBIT AROUND THE CREDOMAR HABITAT

No biosphere breach. The outgassing was from bulkhead passages, now sealed.

CASUALTIES?

Somewhere between zero and three hundred, depending on who's doing the counting. Call it "undetermined" for now.

IT'S TIME TO WAKE THE CAPTAIN.

**Schlock Mercenary**

No, it's not. What's he going to do that you can't?

I DON'T KNOW. COULDN'T WE BE DEPLOYING TROOPS TO HELP THEM WITH REPAIRS?

It's InFracrat territory. They're broadcasting "stay out of our way" right now.

SO WE JUST DO NOTHING, AND LET THE CAPTAIN SLEEP THROUGH ALL THIS?

Right now there's nothing to do.

EXCEPT WORRY.

And you're good at that. Get busy.

ABOARD THE EATONRUN...

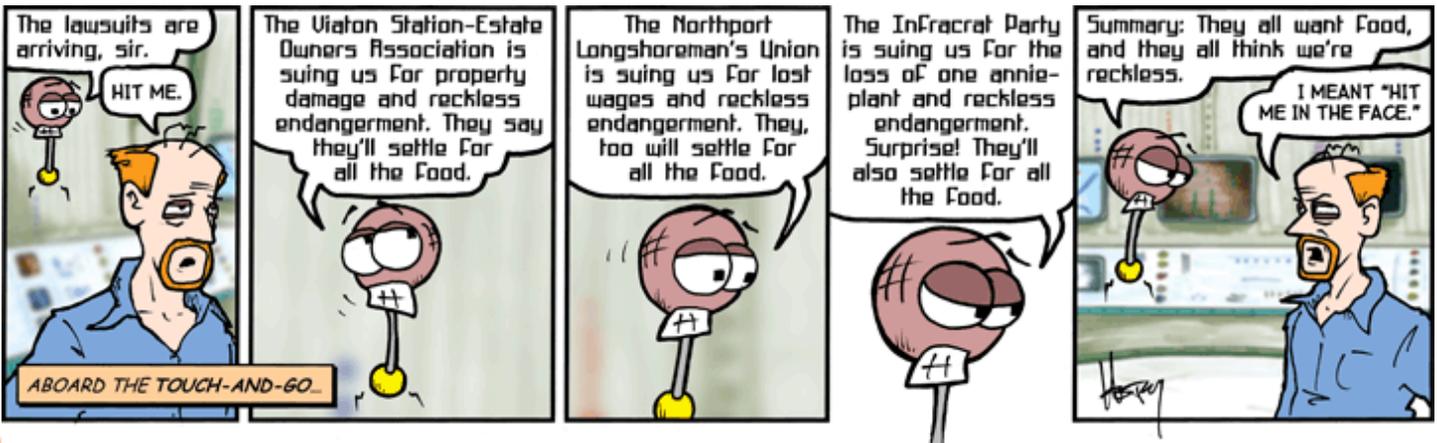
PERMISSION TO COME ONTO THE BRIDGE, SKIPPER?

HULLNUTS! YOUR MOMMA RAISED YOU WELL-MANNERED, KID.

THAT MEANS YOU CAN COME IN, JUNIOR. THE DOOR'S OPEN.

HULLNUTS AN' JIBBENS! YOUR MOMMA RAISED YOU BIG, TOO.

I THINK SHE TRIED NOT TO. BUT THANKS FOR NOTICING.





Note: Stinkeye™ brand ocular implants will allow the fulfillment of this particular fantasy. Available at Planet Mercenary outlet stores near you! (A three-day waiting period may apply. Financing not available on some items.)



SHIFT-CHANGE ABOARD THE MERCENARY WARSHIP TOUCH-AND-GO...

WE'RE BEING SUED. A LOT. I'VE FILED COUNTERSUITS.

WE'RE ALSO BEING EXCORIATED BY THE PRESS. IT'S FAIR THOUGH. WE DID ACCIDENTALLY ALMOST PUNCTURE THE HABITAT.



WHOA! MASSEY, YOU HAD ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER. WHY DIDN'T YOU WAKE TAGON FOR HELP?

THERE'S NOT MUCH HE COULD HAVE DONE BEYOND YELLING AT ME. AND THAT WOULD HAVE SLOWED THE COUNTERSUING DOWN MORE THAN A LITTLE.

# Schlock Mercenary



BESIDES, ENNESBY SAID THE CAPTAIN NEEDS HIS SLEEP. APPARENTLY TAGON IS ONLY SUPPOSED TO BE AWAKENED IF HE IS ON FIRE.

And those are his own words.



He was on duty for almost three days straight. He needs to wake up on his own time.



UNLESS HE'S ON FIRE?

In his own words, yes.



DOES THIS COUNT?

MURDERSCENARIOS SHOULD BE EATEN

NO BLOOD FOR FOOD

BURN THE AN TAGON-IST

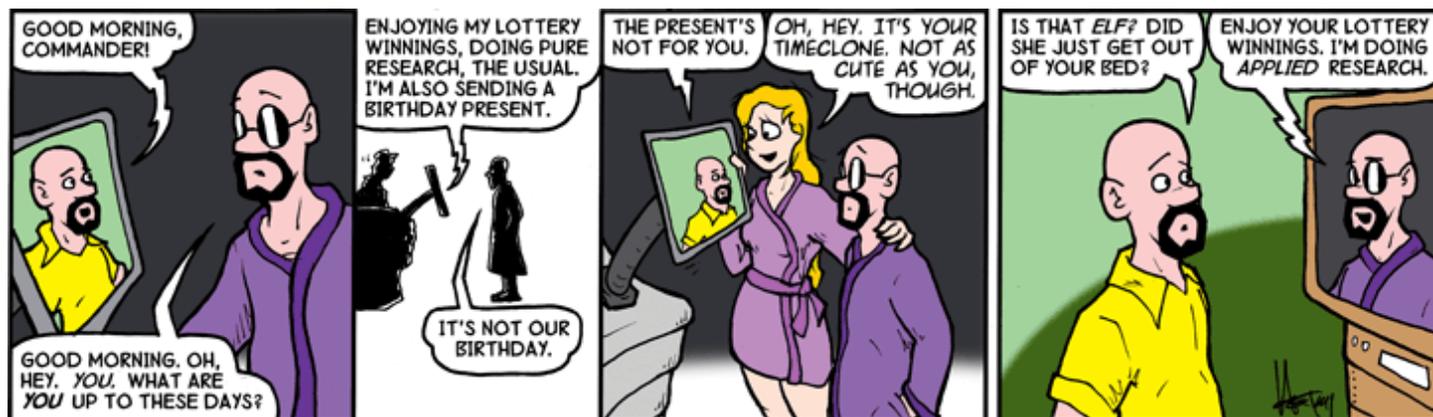
... THIS MORNING'S DEMONSTRATION HASN'T TURNED VIOLENT YET, BUT THEY ARE SETTING AT LEAST ONE THING ON FIRE...

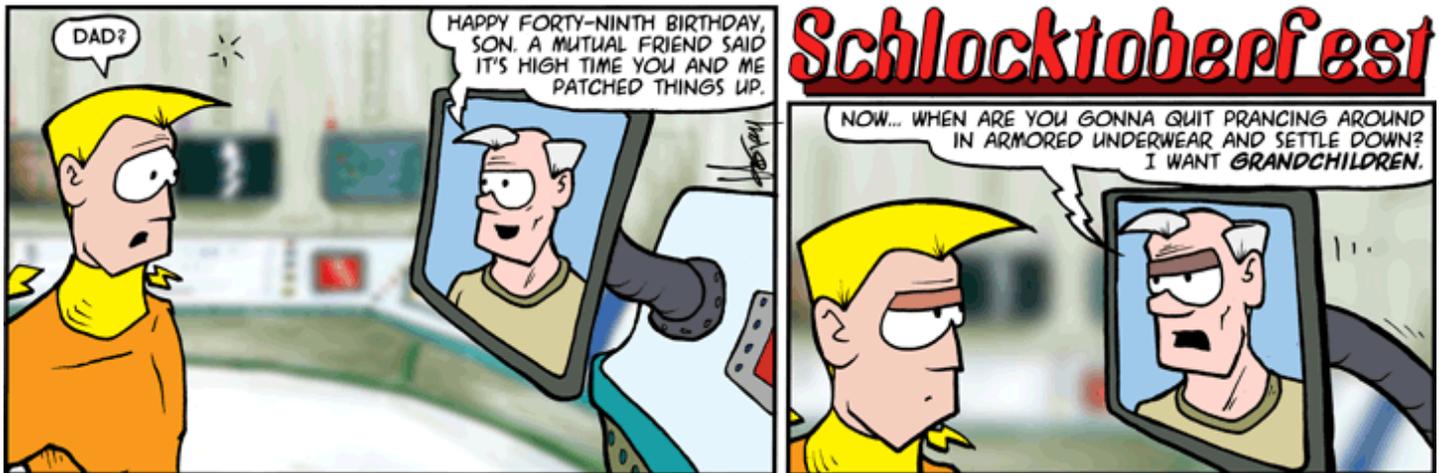


AS EFFIGIES GO, THAT ISN'T TOO BAD.

IT LOOKS MORE LIKE AQUAMAN.

I bet it is easier to steal an Aquaman mannequin than to find a good looking orange shirt.







# Schlock Mercenary





WE GOT SOME BAD PRESS... I THINK WE ALL SAW THAT COMING.

SCHLOCK GOT INTO A FIREFIGHT AND THERE WAS PROPERTY DAMAGE. NOT UNEXPECTED.

LAWSUITS, COUNTERSUITS, COUNTER-COUNTERSUITS... PRETTY STANDARD STUFF.

TAG ALMOST BLEW UP A CITY OF THIRTY MILLION PEOPLE... OKAY, THAT'S THE SORT OF UNEXPECTED THING I'D RATHER NOT SLEEP THROUGH.

We have recordings of the blast if you're worried about missing out.



SIR, I SPOKE TO THE M.R. EATONRUM'S SKIPPER

HE SAID IF WE CAN PUT HIM AT SOUTHPORT INSTEAD, WE CAN UNLOAD A LOT FASTER.

SOUTHPORT'S WHERE THOSE GUYS WITH THE FIELD GUN WERE WAITING TO AMBUSH US, RIGHT?

YES, SIR. BUT THOSE DOCKS ARE FULL OF DISABLED, WRECKED, AND SCUTTLED SHIPS.

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO ENJOY A TARGET-RICH ENVIRONMENT.



TAG, I WANT TO TAKE SOUTHPORT.

Shouldn't be hard, sir. Surveillance is online now.

The wrecks can be cleared with ship weapons and tractors, and I can neutralize the heavies without anybody setting foot on the dock.

HMMM... THAT DOESN'T LEAVE MUCH FOR THE REST OF US TO DO.

I am sure that once you do set foot on the dock additional resistance will materialize for you to shoot at.

YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE A BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

It is one you can unwrap with a pistol and an entrenching tool.



SERGEANT, PUT TOGETHER A TEAM. WE'RE GOING TO SWEEP SOUTHPORT.

Are you sure you want me, Captain?

The news said I'm a reckless, dangerously violent sociopath.

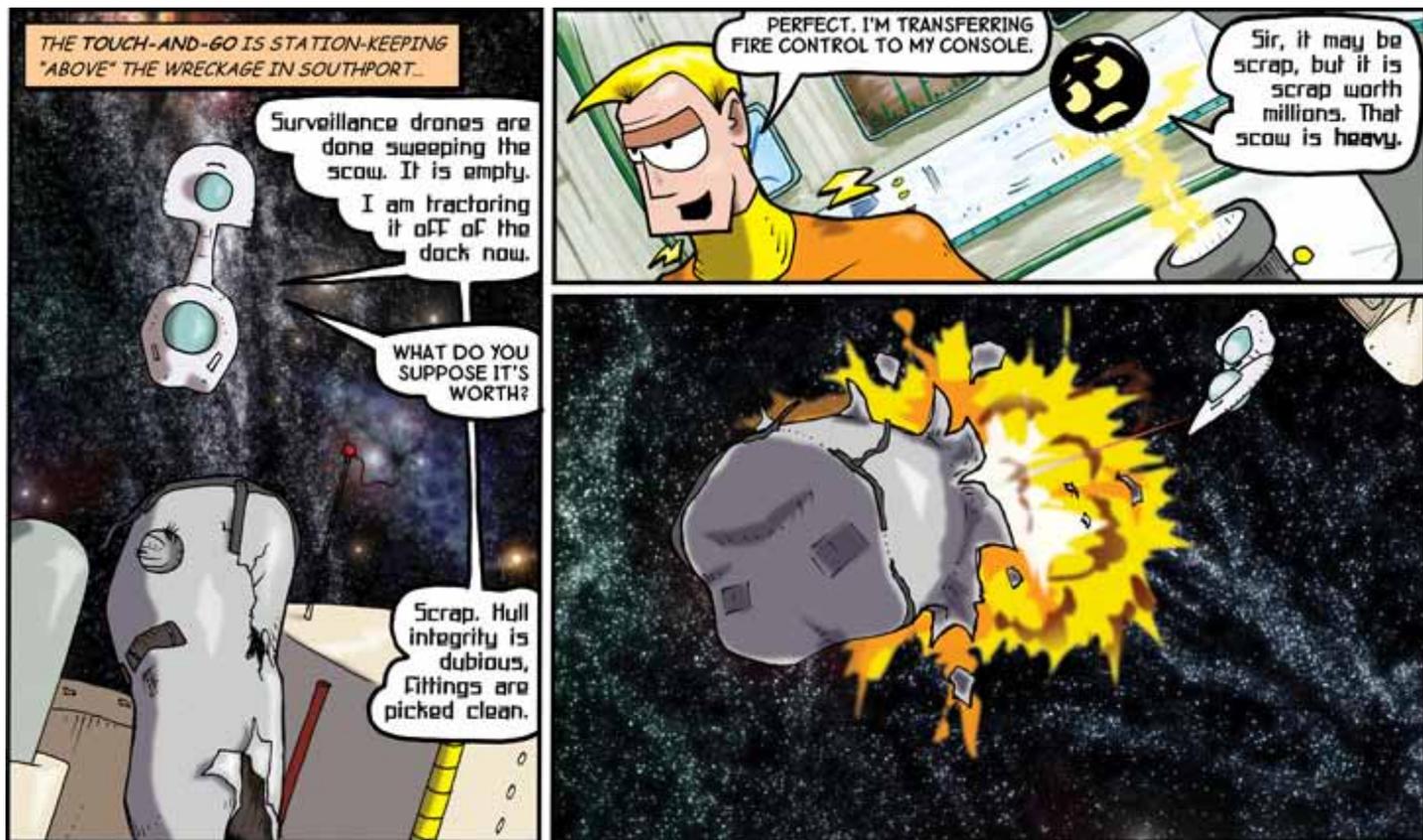
YOU ARE.

BUT YOU'RE MY RECKLESS, DANGEROUSLY VIOLENT SOCIOPATH.

I think I love you, sir.

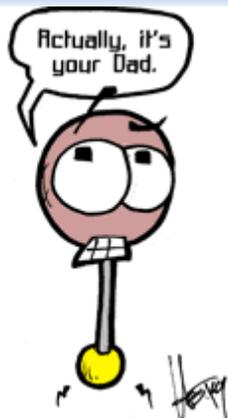
LET'S HOPE MY FATHER ISN'T THAT DESPERATE FOR GRANDCHILDREN.

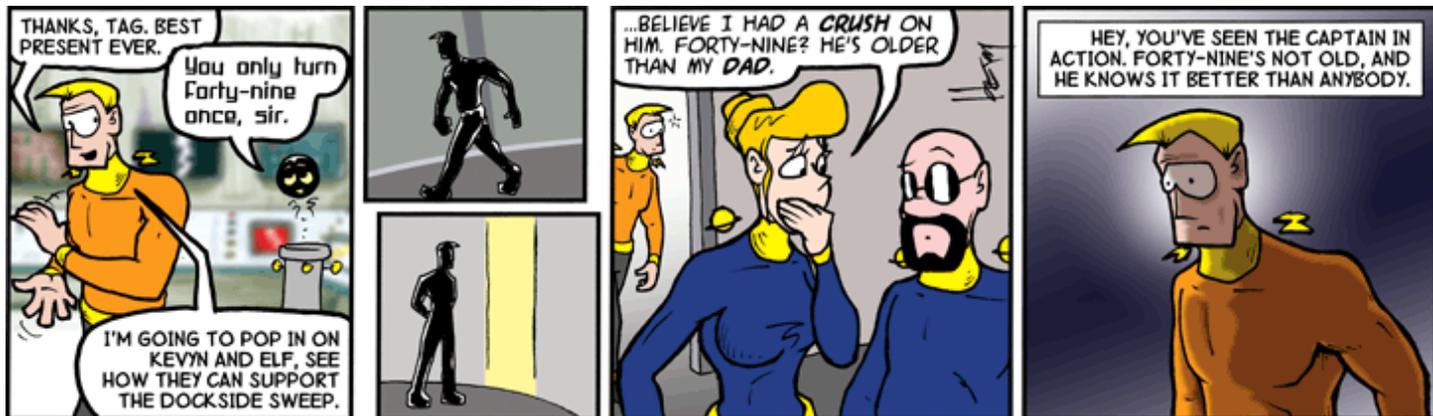
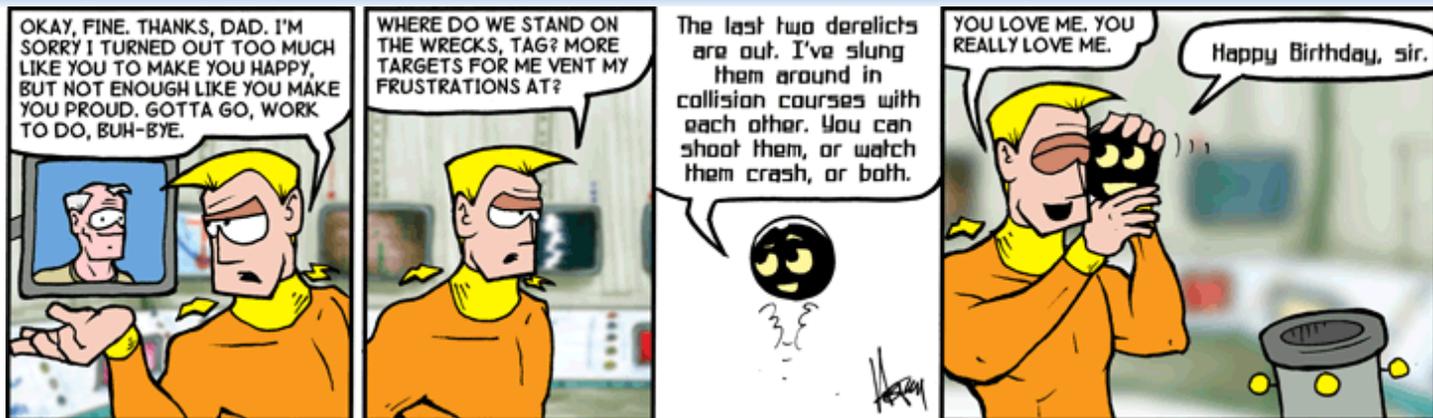


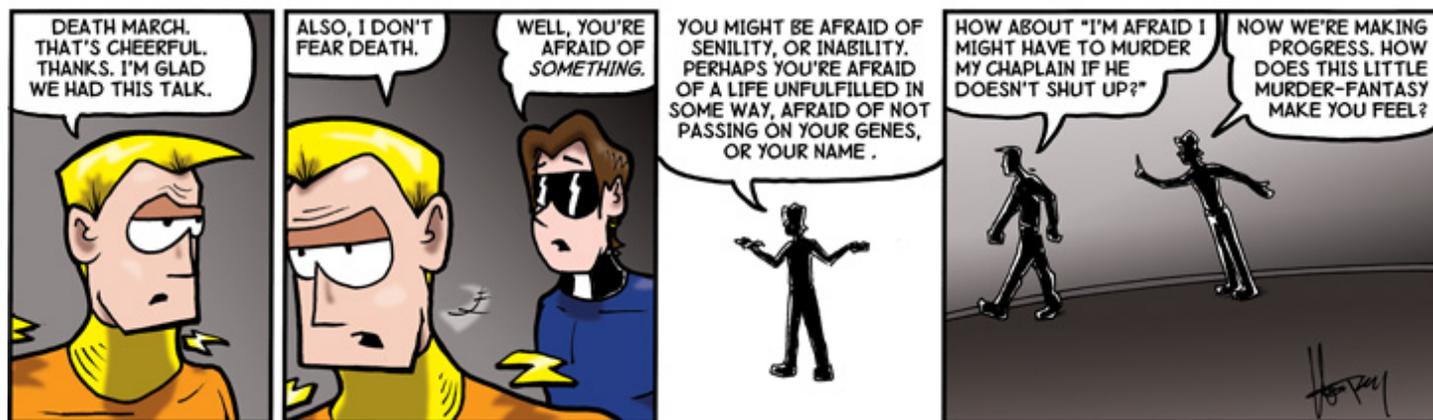
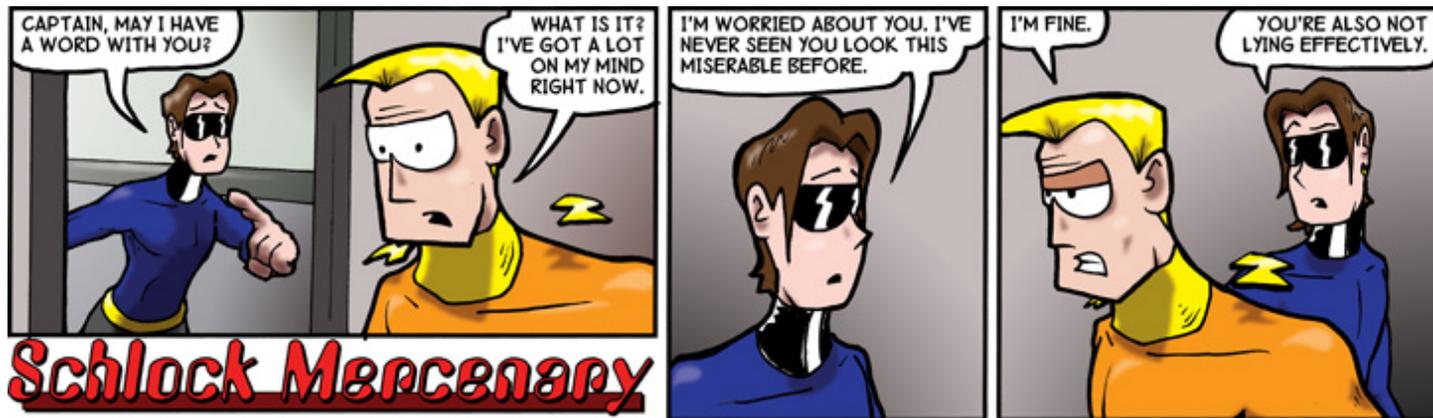


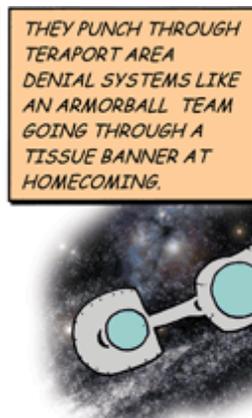
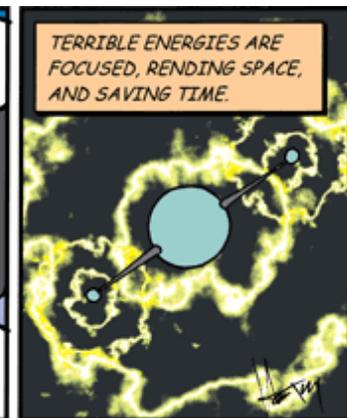
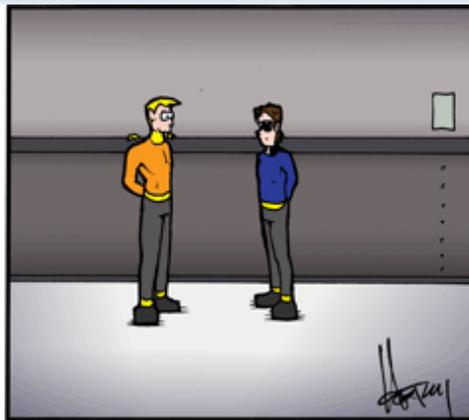
# Schlock Mercenary













**FITTING IN PROGRESS...**

This style nicely delivers the dignity and authority appropriate to a commander in his fiftieth year.

I'M NOT FIFTY. I'M FORTY-NINE.

When you were born you began your first year. That year ended with your first birthday.

UGH. BIRTHDAYS ARE ENDINGS INSTEAD OF BEGINNINGS?

After a fashion. You might also say that your first "birth day" was the day you were born. Each year thereafter is an anniversary. Today is the forty-ninth anniversary of that day, but it is the fiftieth time that day has come if you include the originating event.

WAIT... SO I JUST HAD MY FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY? SUDDENLY I'M ABOUT TO TURN FIFTY-ONE???

Yes and no. Your forty-ninth birthday is the fiftieth occurrence of that date during your lifetime. It begins your fiftieth year, which year ends with your fiftieth birthday, which anniversary will also begin your fifty-first year.

But let's not talk about age. How do you like the uniform?

**Schlock Mercenary**

WHERE'D THAT WRINKLE COME FROM?

All the wrinkles, folds, and pleats you see in the fabric are a result of the slightly stiffer fabric conforming to your shape as you change position.

I'M TALKING ABOUT THE WRINKLE IN MY FOREHEAD.

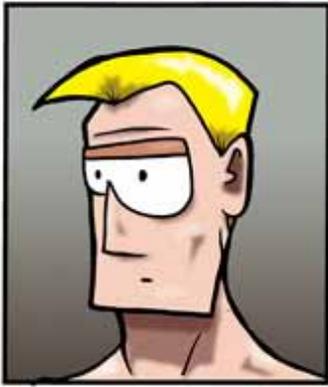
Same principle. It looks good on you.

They are a deliberate stylistic choice, and add to the dignity of the garment.

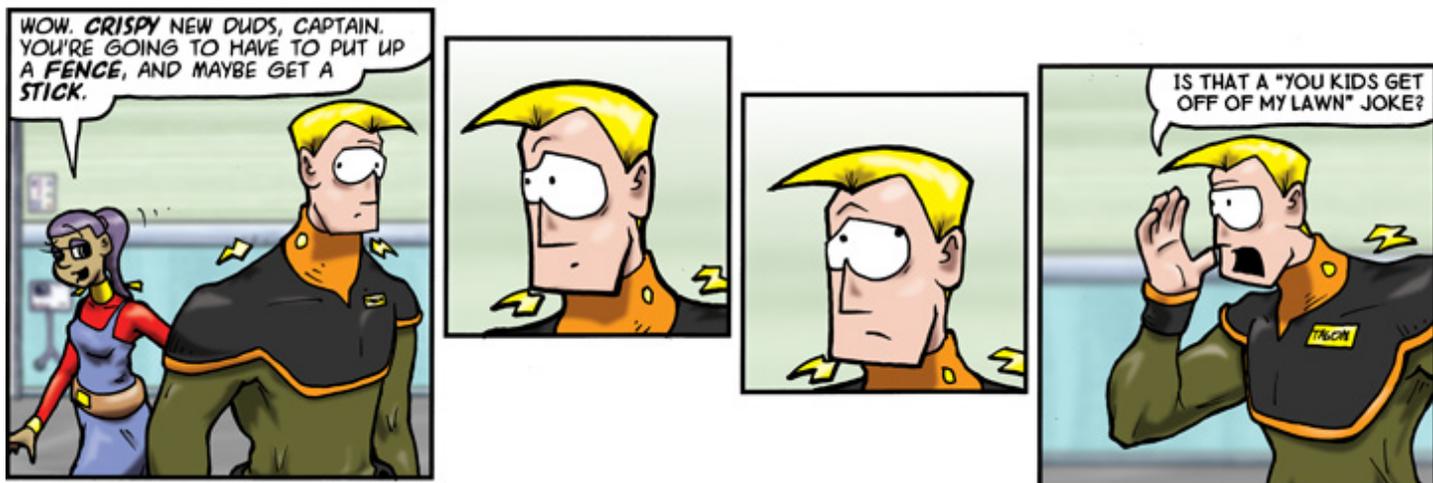


# Schlocktoberfest









STAGING BAY ONE ABOARD THE MERCENARY WARSHIP TOUCH-AND-GO...

Suit up, tool up, and pick it up! The captain wants us deployed yesterday.

WE DID DEPLOY YESTERDAY, SARGE. DID THE CAPTAIN FORGET?

GET YOUR HELMET UP, NICK. I THINK YOUR BRAIN MIGHT BE EVAPORATING.

# Schlock Mercenary

Officer on deck!

THANK YOU, SERGEANT.

LIEUTENANT EBBIRNOTH HASN'T FULLY RECOVERED FROM LAST NIGHT'S AMBUSH, SO I'LL BE YOUR C.O. FOR THIS MISSION.

I WANT YOU SHARPER THAN RAZORS AND FROSTIER THAN SNOWMEN.

WE'RE GOING TO SWEEP SOUTHPORT FOR HOSTILES. WE'VE GOT GOOD SURVEILLANCE IN PLACE, BUT THERE ARE PLACES OUR 'BOTS CAN'T SEE, AND WE'VE GOT A LOT OF GROUND TO COVER.

WAIT FOR ME! IT CLOSED UP! I CAN SEE!

Ebby?

EBBY, LOOK OUT. SCHLOCK'S RIGHT IN...

... FRONT OF YOU.

OW! WHOOPS! CRASH SPOLOOSH

THINGS ARE STILL A LITTLE BLURRY.

AND A LITTLE LITTLE. I DON'T THINK IT'S DONE GROWING YET.

Good soup. Needs more noodles, though.

IN SOUTHPORT, DOCK TWO...

LET'S GO! LOCK YOUR BOOT TRACTORS, AND STAY LOW!

SURVEILLANCE SHOWS A SUSPICIOUS "DEAD POCKET" BEHIND BAY SIXTEEN. SERGEANT SCHLOCK WILL...

THOOOOM

... UMM... LEAD FROM ABOVE, AND WAY OUT IN FRONT. EVERYONE TRY TO KEEP UP.



How do I look?  
Did somebody  
get a picture?



YES, AND IT'S ALREADY FOR SALE  
AS A DESKTOP WALLPAPER.



HUSTLE! WE NEED TO  
GIVE THE SERGEANT  
SOME SUPPORT!

HE'S GONNA HIT BAY SIXTEEN WHETHER  
WE'RE NEXT TO HIM OR BEHIND HIM  
BECAUSE HE DOESN'T KNOW THE  
MEANING OF "SLOW DOWN."

Hey, I know what  
'slow down' means.

OH, GOOD.  
YOU ARE  
LISTENING.



I just haven't figured out  
how to do it while dual-  
wielding.



I'm almost there. I'll try to  
save something for the  
rest of you to do.

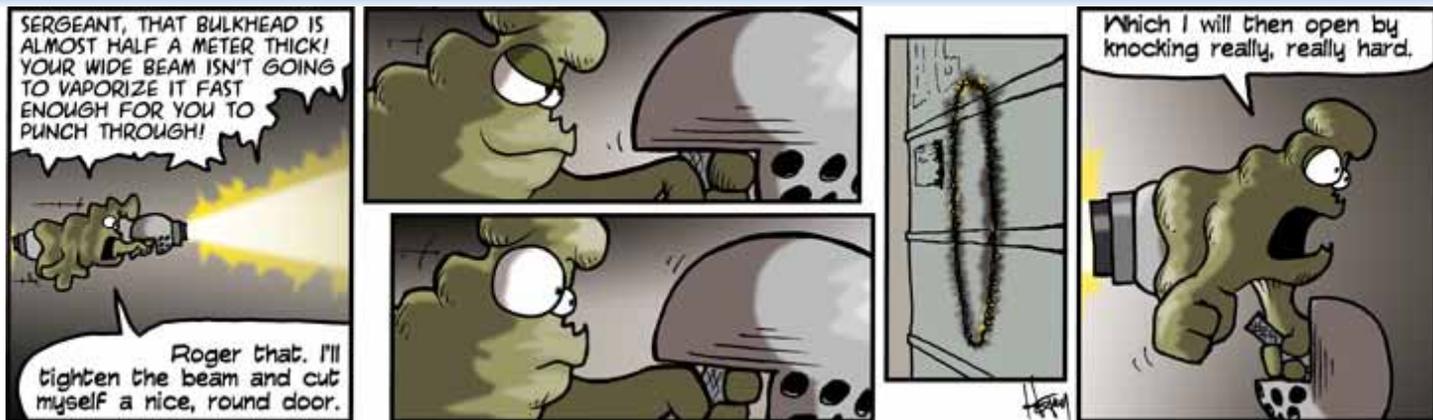


SERGEANT, IF YOU CAN'T  
CONTROL YOUR SPEED, HOW  
ARE YOU PLANNING TO  
ROUND THE CORNER AND  
TAKE THE BAY DOOR?

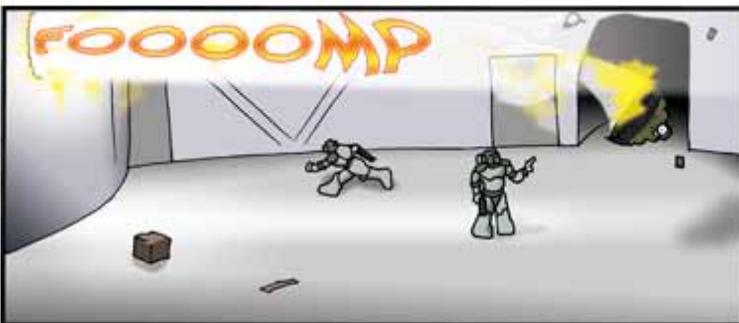
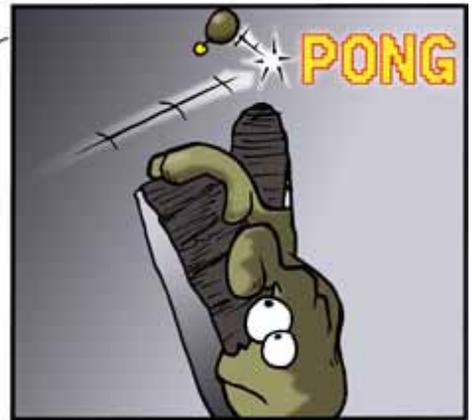


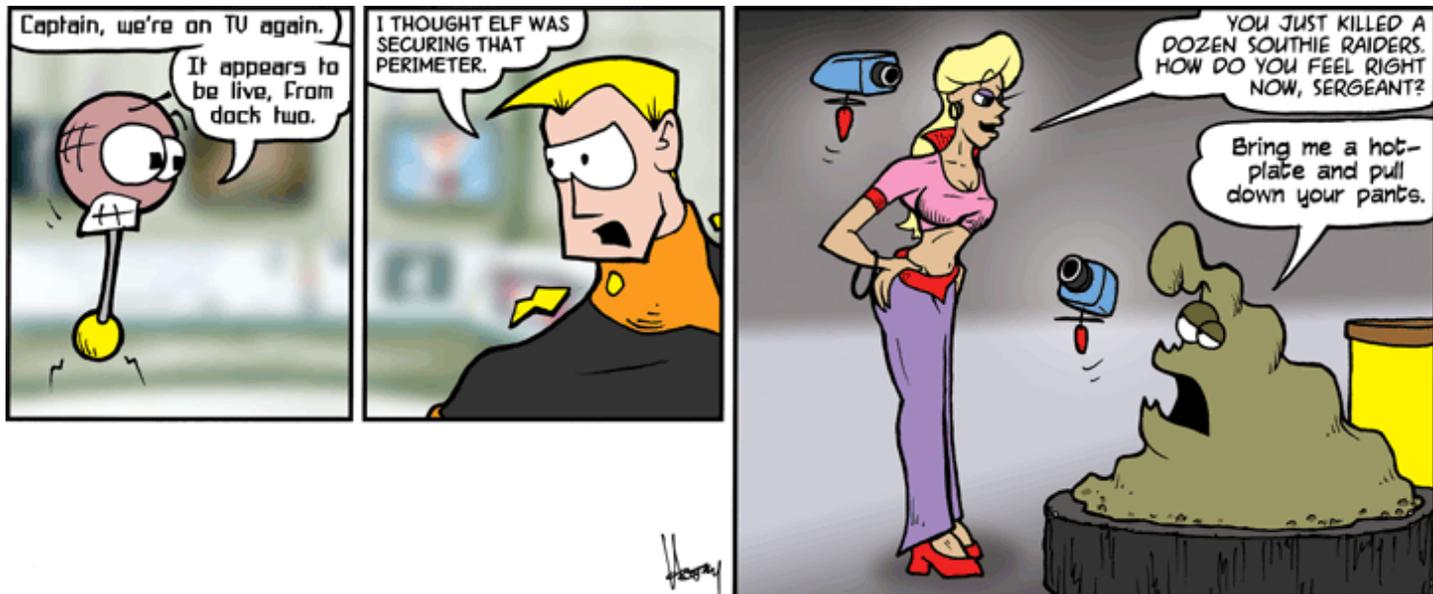
I'm going to control my  
speed by going through  
the bulkhead.

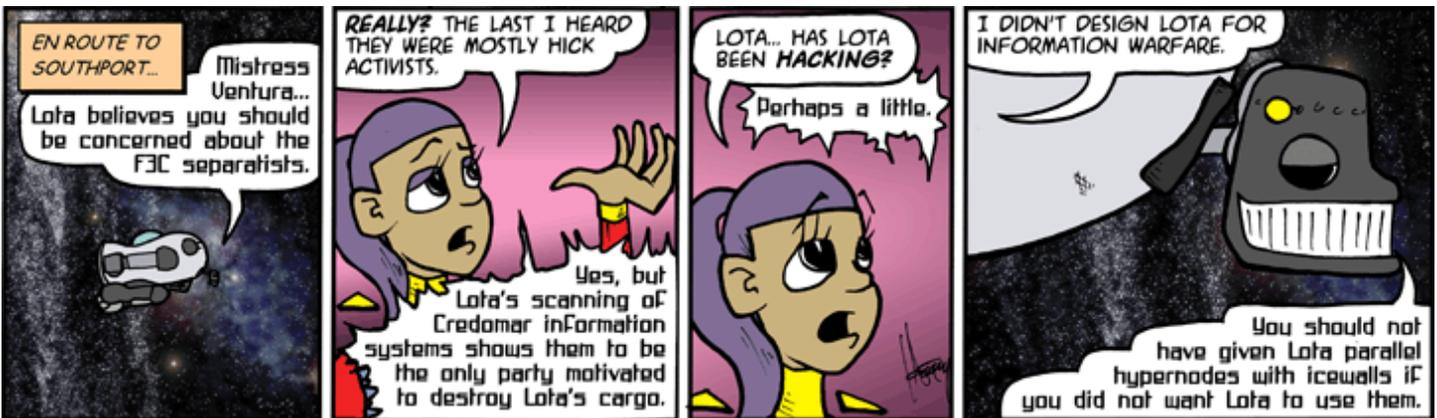
FUNNY. THAT MAKES IT  
SOUND LIKE YOU WON'T BE SAVING  
ANYTHING FOR THE REST OF US.



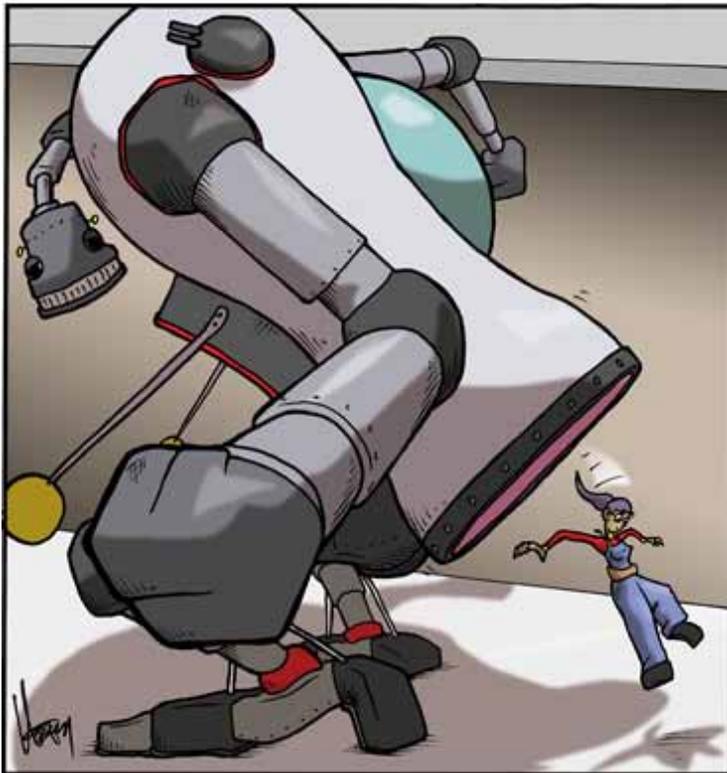
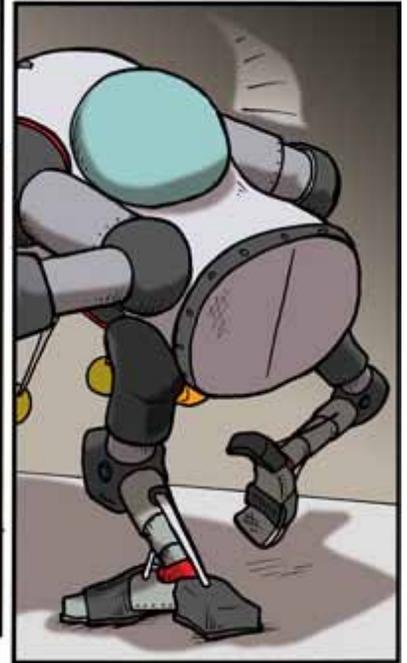
# Schlock Mercenary

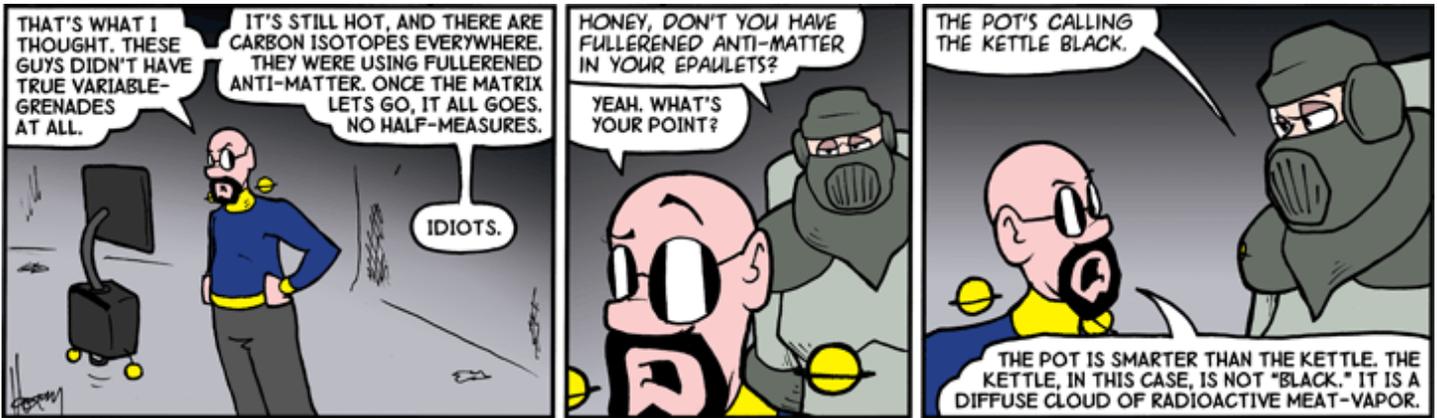


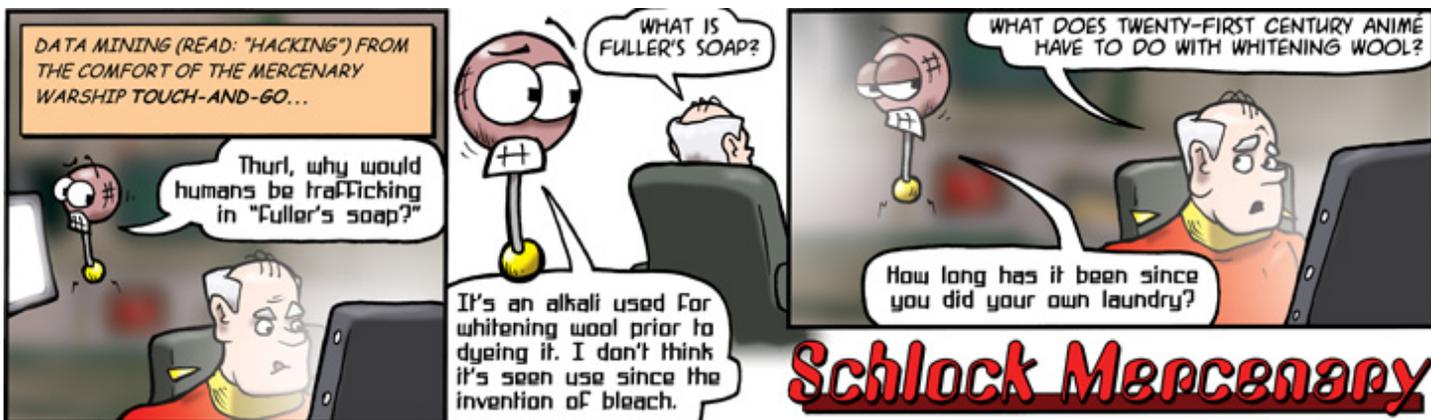


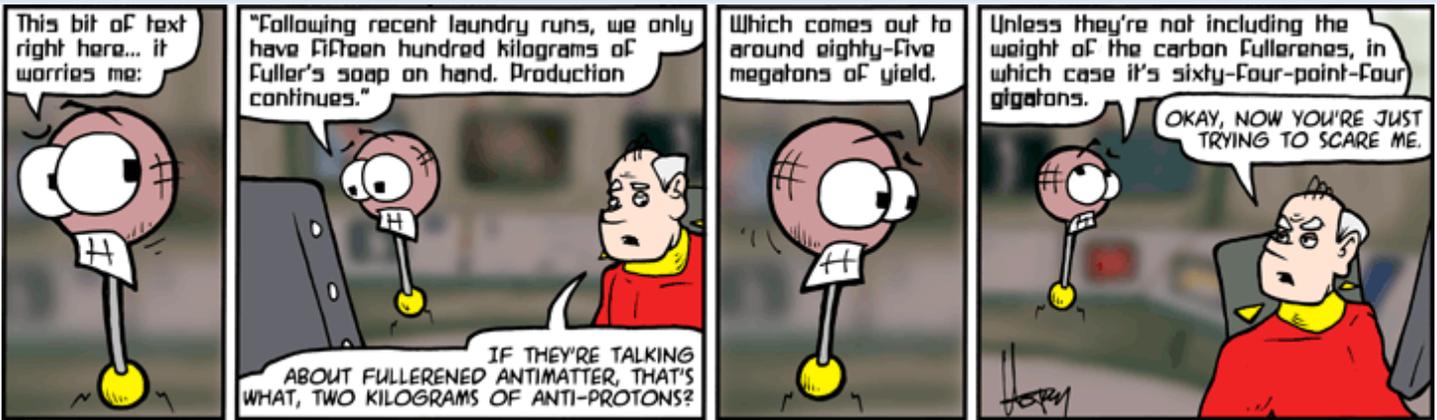


# Schlock Mercenary

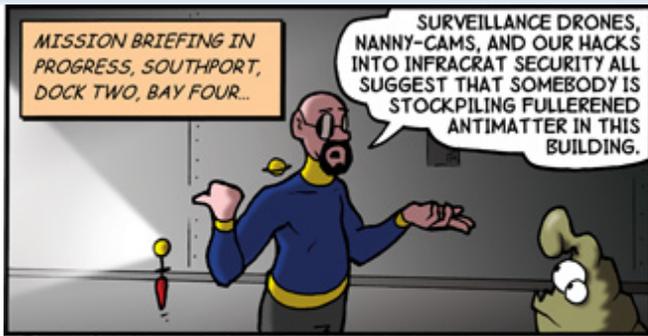




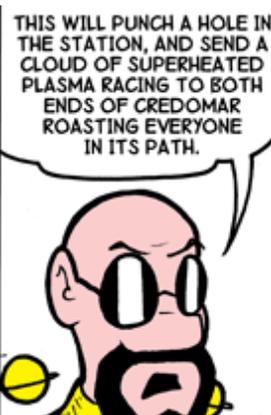
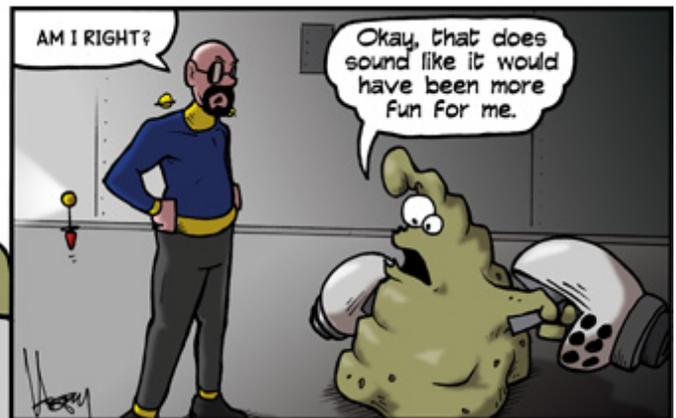




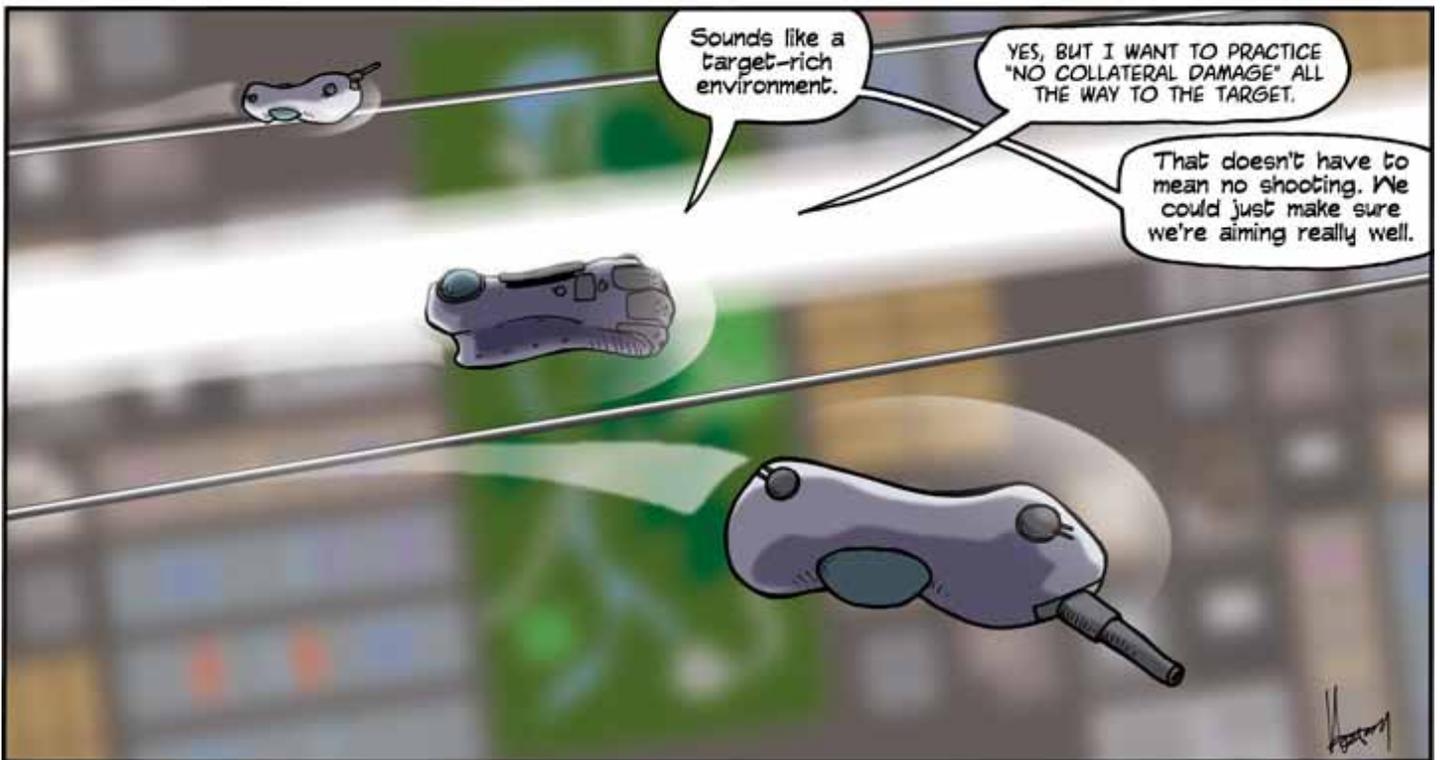
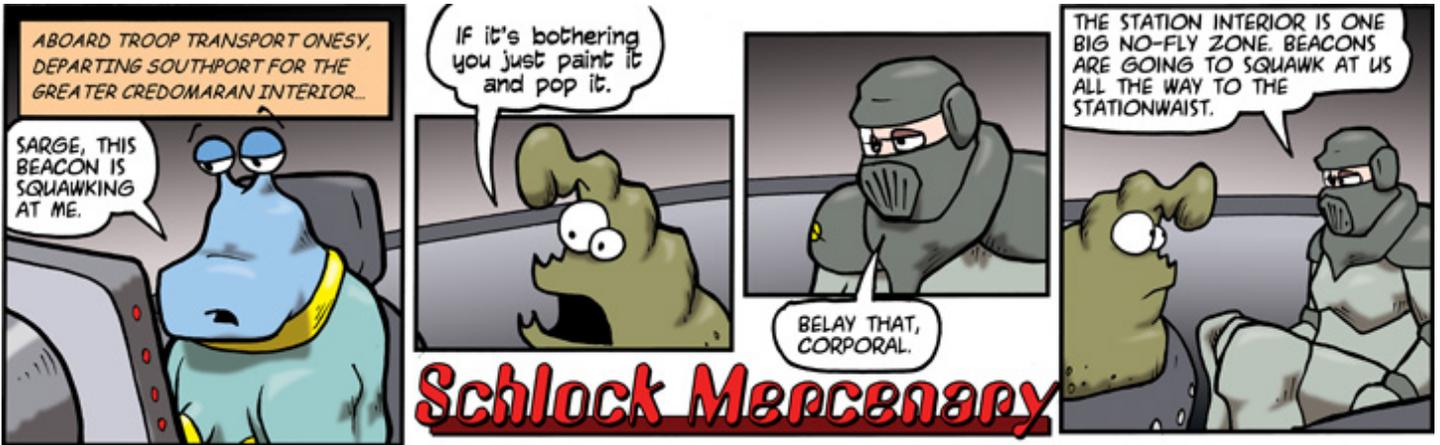




# Schlock Mercenary





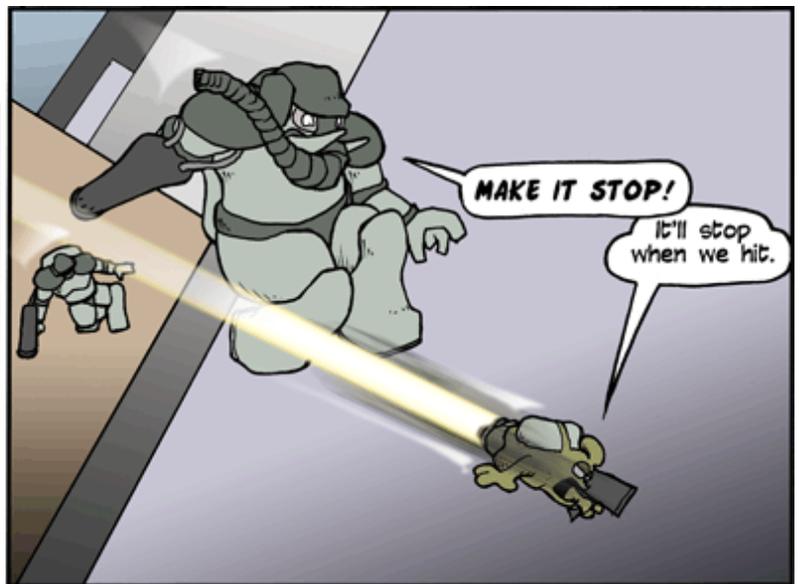
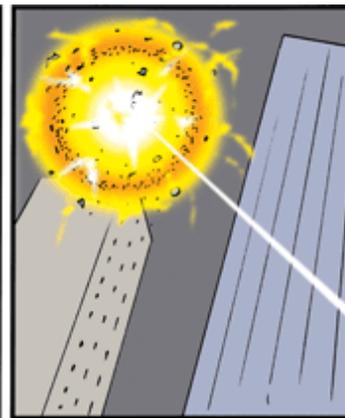
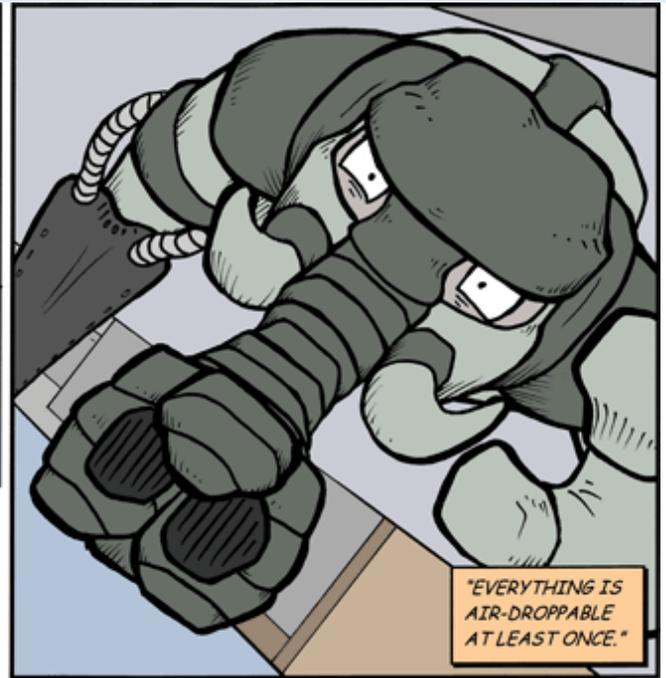
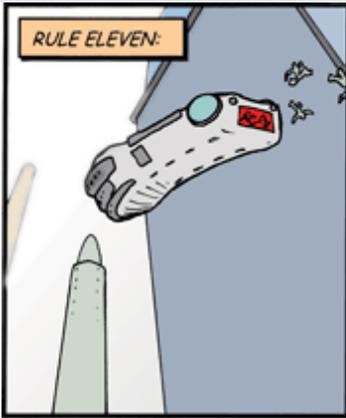




Note: The quiet killing of your enemy's annie-plants is a tactic rarely employed. It requires first that you have an overwhelming advantage in terms of raw power, along with the ability to focus that power very finely. Secondly, it requires that you close to a range at which your enemy could use conventional means to blow both of you to tiny bits.

For all that, the process is quite simple. Find the steepest gravitic gradient around other than your own. This will be the field inside the enemy annie plant which is currently keeping their neutronium supply compressed. Now counter that field with a gravitic gradient of your own. The enemy's neutronium loses compression, and evaporates.

If you do it correctly the evaporating neutronium remains completely contained within the enemy annie-plant. If you do it incorrectly you might breach the enemy plant and be rewarded with an explosion, along with quickly-decaying radioactive gases. This is not a good way to shoot down enemy armor over your city, but it can be argued that there is no good way to shoot down enemy armor over your city.



MEANWHILE, BACK IN SOUTHPORT, DOCK TWO...

PI! ANDY! TAKE THREE SQUADS TO THE SUDBURG LOCK AND GET READY TO START LETTING THE CARGO HAULERS IN.

ANDY, I WANT YOU POSTED UP HIGH, NICE AND VISIBLE, PACKING TWO HANDGUNS AND A CARBINE.

THINK "DANGEROUS ALIEN OVERLORD" AND TRY TO LOOK THE PART.

SIR, YOU'RE TURNING ME INTO A HIGH-PRIORITY TARGET. WHAT AM I, BAIT?

# Schlock Mercenary

NO, YOU'RE FLYPAPER. HOSTILES ENGAGING YOU WILL BE TIED DOWN AT OUR PERIMETER, INSTEAD OF GETTING IN HERE WHERE THE CIVILIANS WILL BE WORKING.

FLYPAPER, YES SIR!

VENTURA! AARDMAN! YOU TWO TAKE THE LAST SQUAD AND SUPERVISE THE LOADING. THE EATONRUN IS GOING TO OPEN UP, AND I WANT THOSE HAULERS FILLED AND DRIVING AWAY QUICKLY.

SIR... I'M STUCK.

STUCK? WHAT'S THE... OH, YOU'VE STEPPED IN GOOBER LOADS. I'LL GET SOME DEGOOBER FOR YOU.

ENSIGN VENTURA ALREADY CHECKED. SCHLOCK TOOK ALL THE GOOBER SUPPLIES TO THE STATIONWAIST.

PI! GET BACK HERE! I NEED YOU TO UNSTICK PRIVATE AARDMAN FROM THE DECK.

SHALL WE GIVE THAT NOSE-JOB ANOTHER SHOT?

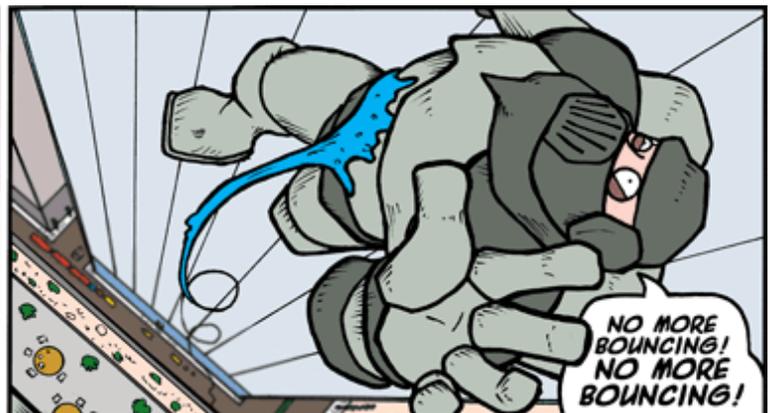
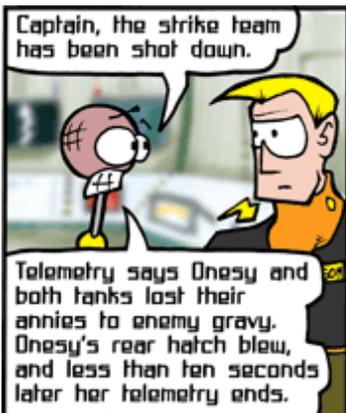
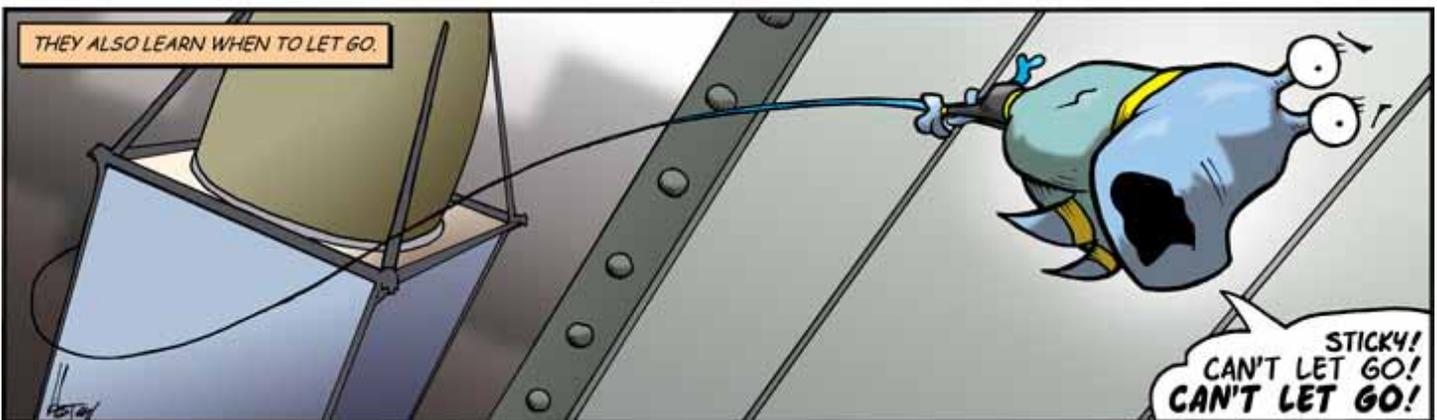
NO THANK YOU. I'VE HAD ENOUGH RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY FOR ONE WEEK.

IN 2921, DURING THE GREAT LACUNA, SELECT MEMBERS OF CELESCHUL'S PEACEABLE WALK 5<sup>TH</sup> BATTALION EXPERIMENTED WITH BLUE-MOD GOOBER ROUNDS.

CASUALTIES WERE AROUND 35%, AND THE PROJECT WAS PERMANENTLY TABLED.

ONE PROJECT INVOLVED USING THE ROUNDS AS EMERGENCY TETHERS DURING URBAN DROPS.

EVERY FEW GENERATIONS THE REALLY, REALLY BAD IDEAS COME BACK AROUND FOR ANOTHER GO.





Note: By way of clarification, Chelle's new tank is new only to her. It has been reassigned to her from the previous pilot, Corporal "Legs" Leelagaleenileeeleenoleela, the cerulean-skinned Frellenti last seen screaming at the end of an elastic tether of blue-mod goober.

These two ladies, 'Chelle and Legs, have more than just piloting tanks in common, and their fates are intertwined. Shared, even. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. All you need to know is that this tank used to be Legs', and 'Chelle is currently inside it.



EMERGENCY TACTICAL DISCUSSION ABOARD THE MERCENARY WARSHIP TOUCH-AND-GO...

TAG, GIVE ME A WAY TO RESCUE BRAD. HIS TANK IS GOING TO CRASH IN LESS THAN TWO MINUTES.

Our drones are now inert and dropping. It seems the strike team's flight triggered a strongly enforced "no fly" defense originating from the stationwaist.

WE COULD TAKE THIS SHIP *INSIDE* THE STATION?

**Schlock Mercenary**

The only annie-plants capable of withstanding those defenses are here on the *Touch-and-Go*.

Credomar is certainly big enough. We would have to make a hole, but we could get there in time.

A HOLE... HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WE LIKELY TO KILL TRYING TO RESCUE BRAD AND HIS TANK?

IF everything goes perfectly? Perhaps as many as two hundred. If we get shot down, or something else goes seriously wrong? As many as thirty million.

AND HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE LIKELY TO DIE IF BRAD CRASHES?

Between zero and ten thousand, depending on where he hits, and whether his ammo goes up.

'Chelle's tank did *not* breach upon collision, though, and in a fortuitous coincidence she went down in a precinct evacuated due to my early-morning misadventure with teraport area denial.

SO A PERFECT RESCUE SAVES THOUSANDS, BUT A BOTCHED ONE KILLS MILLIONS.

Aptly put, sir. Brevity is the soul of wit.

DON'T RUSH ME... I'M STILL THINKING THIS OVER.

You have now waited long enough that there is no longer time to execute a safe rescue.

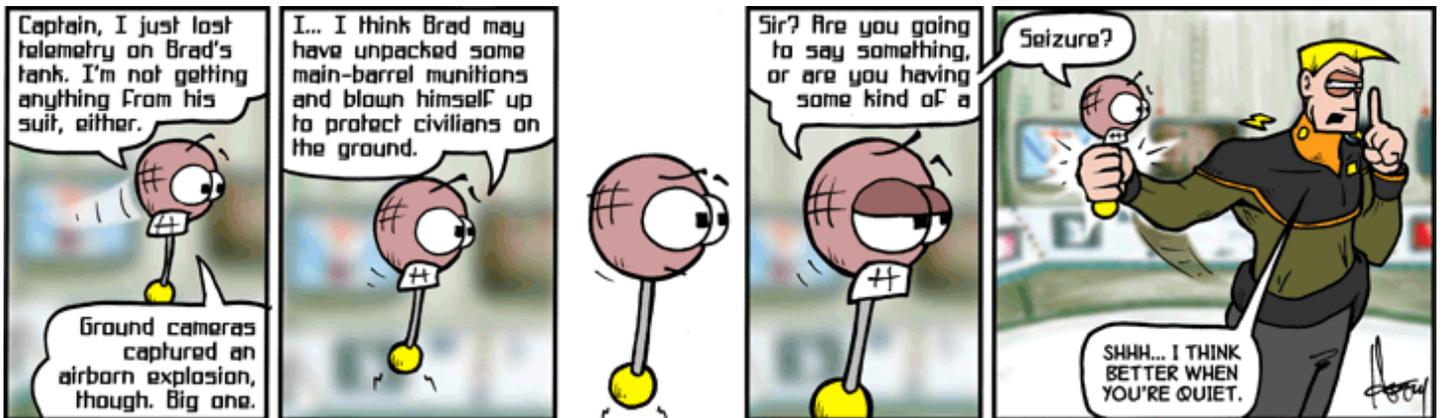
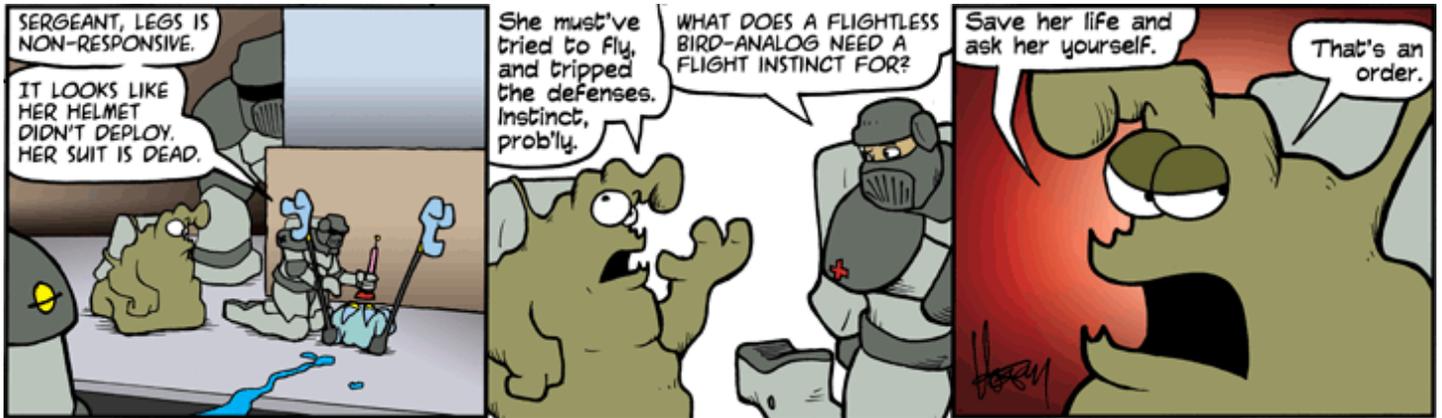
Control, Sergeant Schlock here. We got shot down, but I think we're all mostly okay.

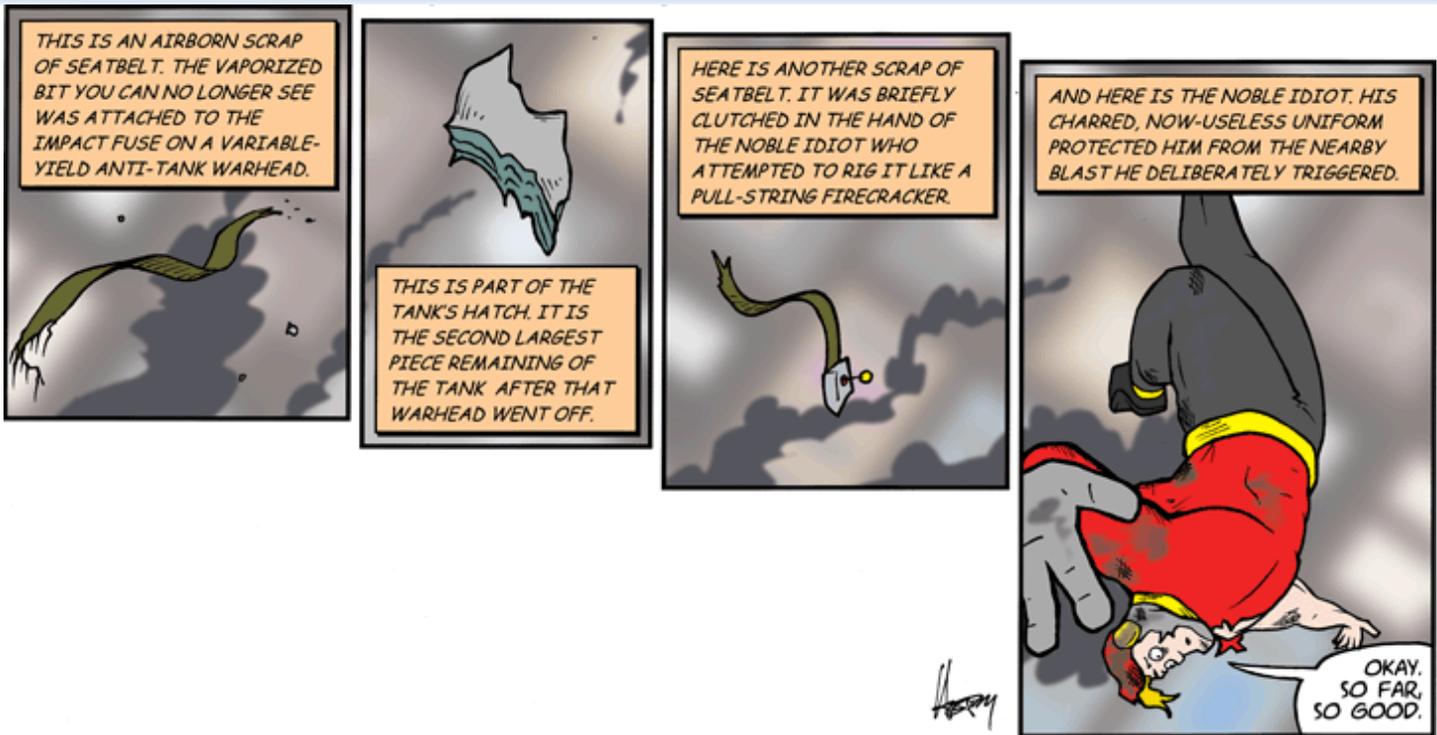
Sergeant, What does "mostly okay" mean? The captain would like updated mission status and a casualty count.

Mission status will have to wait. The troops are kind of spread out. Casualties... just some bruises and motion-sickness so far. Nothing serious.

GET ME OFF THIS RUBBER BAND NOW OR THERE'S GONNA BE AT LEAST ONE SERIOUS CASUALTY.

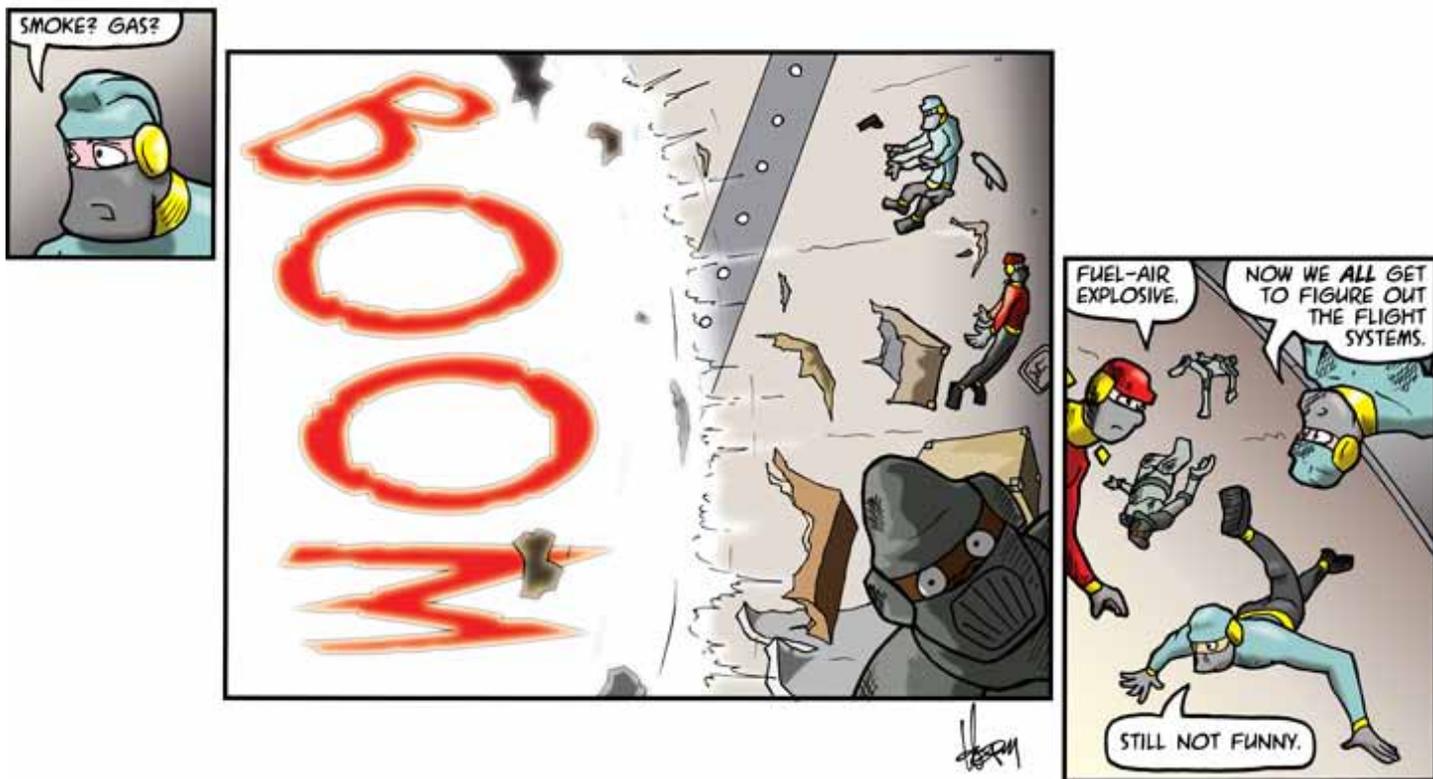
Corporal Chisulo might be a little rattled.

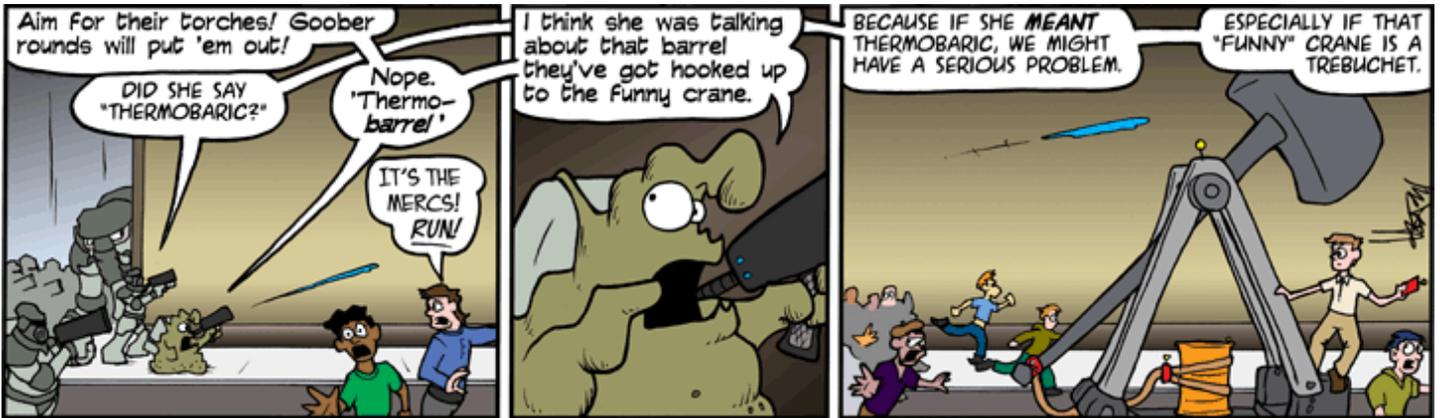




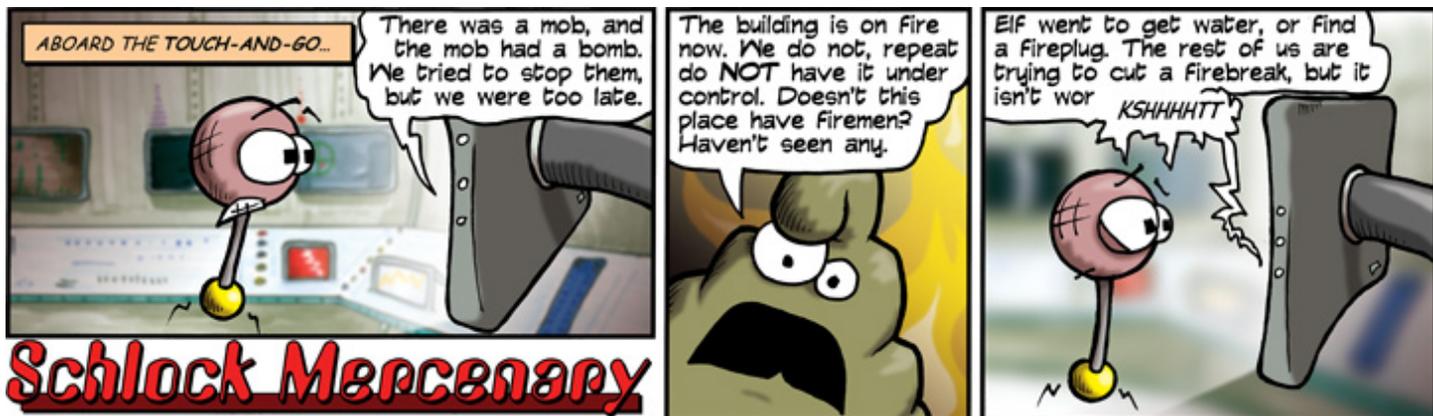
Note: The first-largest remaining piece of Brad's tank is the annie-plant. In the interest of relieving a bit of the tension that has accumulated during the current narrative, let it be known that the annie plant will not crack open on impact, and will not, therefore, release the radioactive cloud created when its supply of neutronium evaporated. It will also land harmlessly in a park, where it will remain until the destruction of the park.











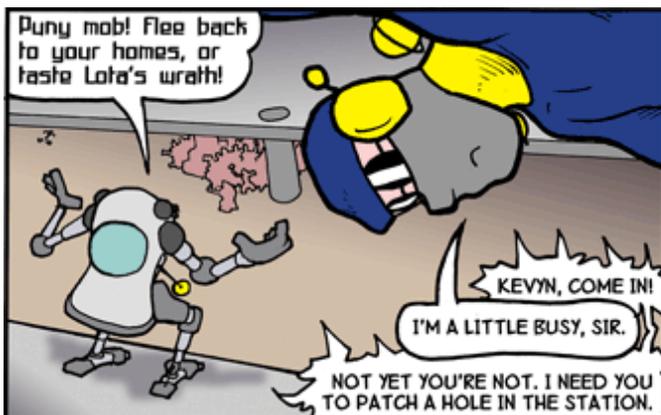
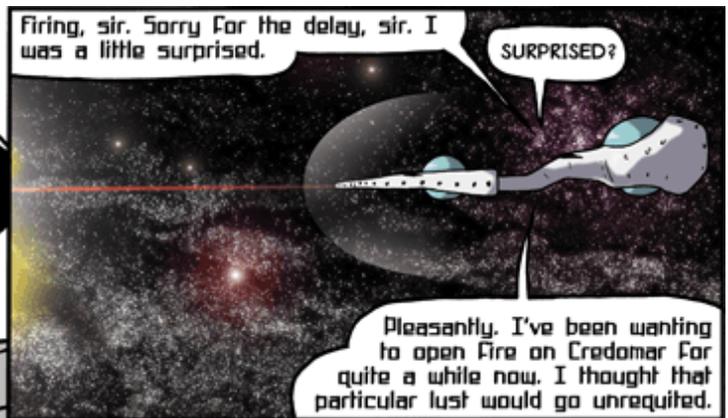
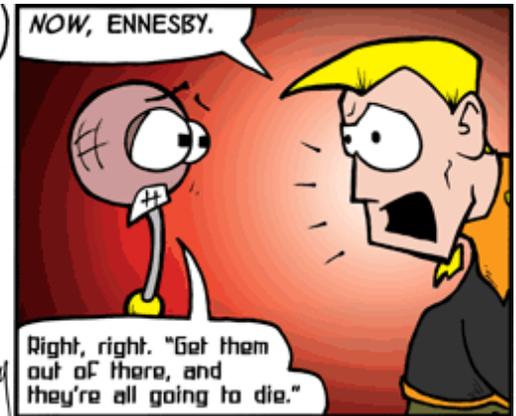
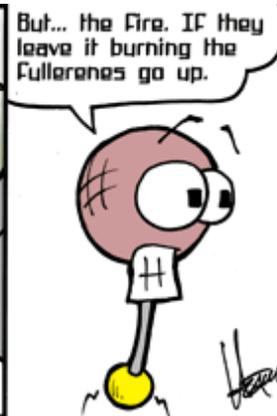
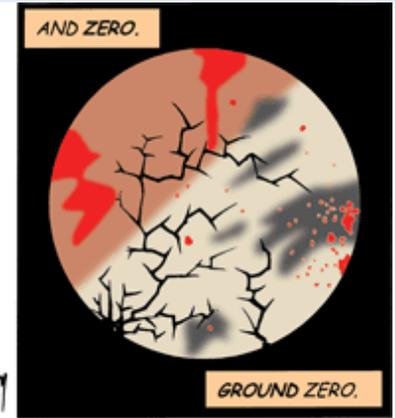
# Schlock Mercenary

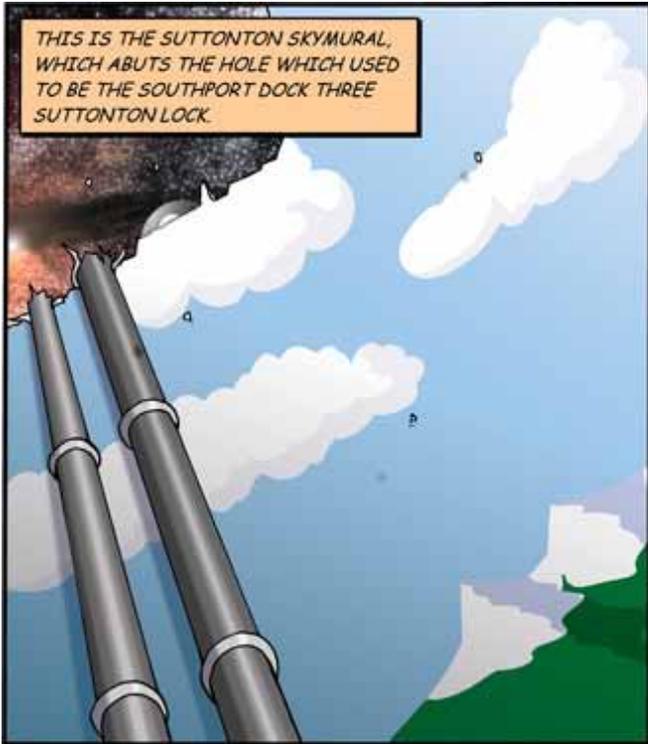


SERGEANT SCHLOCK KNOWS THE SNIPER CAN STILL SEE HIM.

THANKS TO KEVYN'S WORK, SCHLOCK ALSO KNOWS EXACTLY HOW LONG HIS OWN MICROGRENADE ORDNANCE WILL TAKE TO FALL.

AND ZERO.





# Schlock Mercenary



THE HOLE IS ABOUT TO GET BIGGER. THE MURAL IS ABOUT TO BECOME "PERFORMANCE ART."



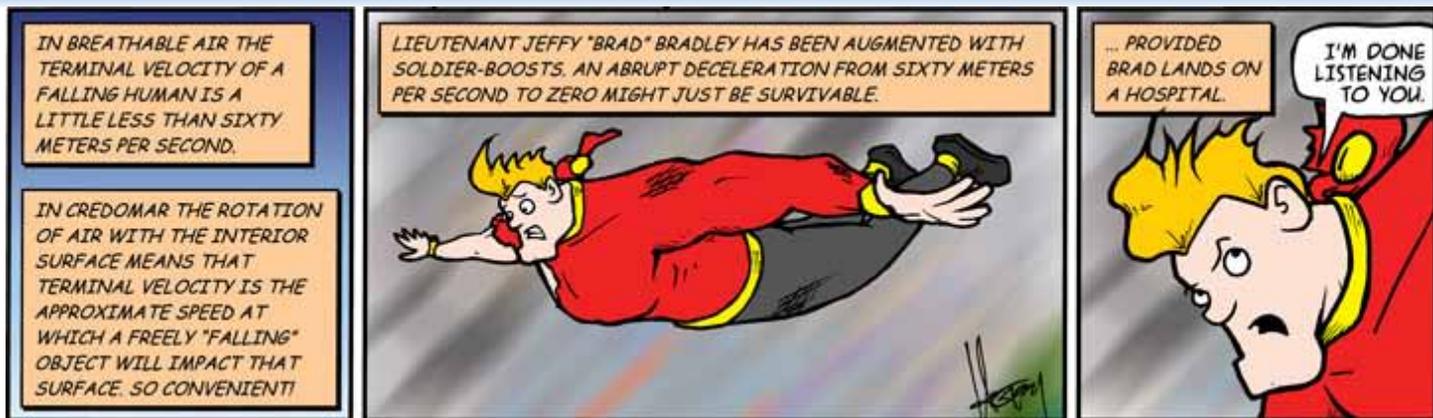
IN BREATHABLE AIR THE TERMINAL VELOCITY OF A FALLING HUMAN IS A LITTLE LESS THAN SIXTY METERS PER SECOND.

IN CREDOMAR THE ROTATION OF AIR WITH THE INTERIOR SURFACE MEANS THAT TERMINAL VELOCITY IS THE APPROXIMATE SPEED AT WHICH A FREELY "FALLING" OBJECT WILL IMPACT THAT SURFACE. SO CONVENIENT!

LIEUTENANT JEFFY "BRAD" BRADLEY HAS BEEN AUGMENTED WITH SOLDIER-BOOSTS. AN ABRUPT DECELERATION FROM SIXTY METERS PER SECOND TO ZERO MIGHT JUST BE SURVIVABLE.

... PROVIDED BRAD LANDS ON A HOSPITAL.

I'M DONE LISTENING TO YOU.



AS BRAD APPROACHES IMPACT HIS FINAL THOUGHTS POINT UP HIS NOBLE CHARACTER.

OH, MAN... TAGON IS GOING TO HAVE TO CALL MY MOM.

I HOPE I DON'T LAND ON ANYBODY.

I SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST TRIED TO KISS HER.

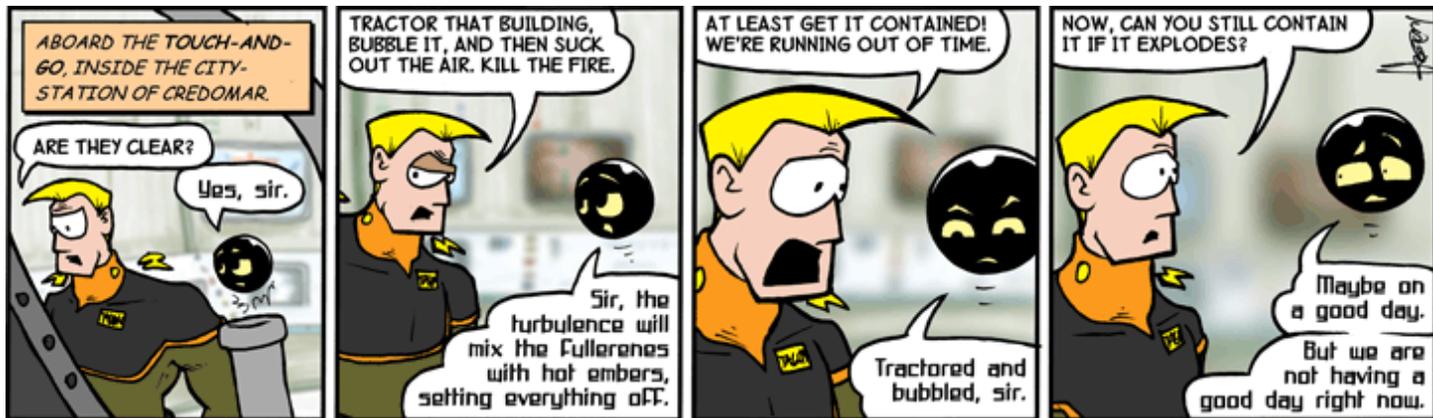


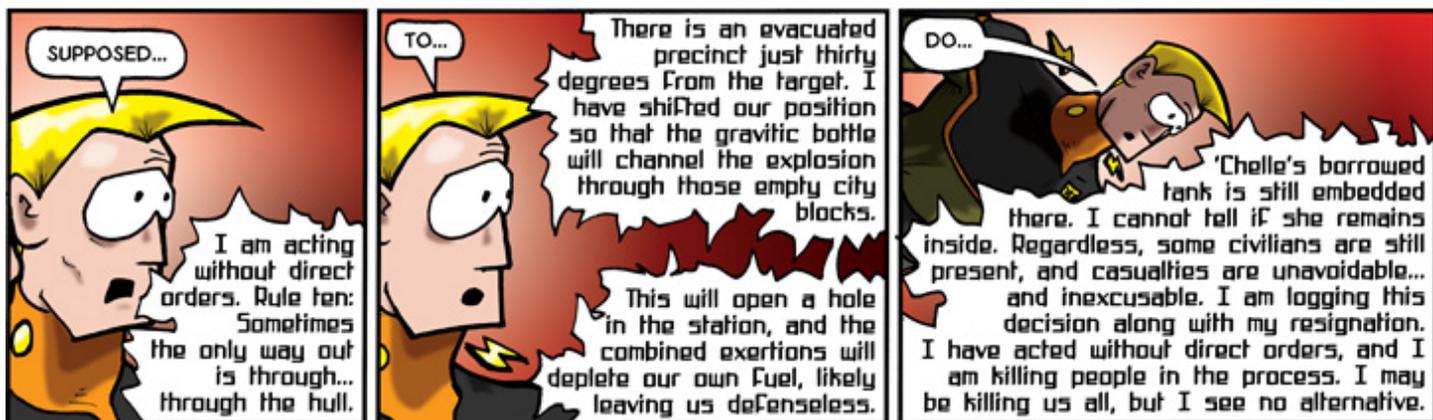
BRAD HITS THE SIDE OF A CONDOMINIUM. THE CONDO DOES NOT YIELD. **WHAM**

SOMETHING JUST HIT THE BUILDING!

HIS IMPACT GOES OTHERWISE UNNOTICED, OVERSHADOWED AS IT IS BY THE FIRE AND THE GIANT INDOOR WARSHIP.









MEANWHILE, IN SOUTHPORT...

FORGET THE MOB! EVERYBODY FALL BACK TO THE *EATONRUN*! WE CAN USE HER TO PLUG THE DOCK THREE HOLE!



BLAM OW!



OH... OW. ARMOR PIERCING?

# Schlock Mercenary



ONE OF YOU... \*GASP\*... MORONS DROPPED YOUR WEAPON!



... AND NOW THE MOB CAN HURT US...



COMMANDER, THE *EATONRUN* IS GONE!



LOO... LOO! \*GASP\*... TENANT!! PUT PL... IN... CHARGE...



OH... WE ARE IN TROUBLE.



ABOARD THE M.R. *EATONRUN*...

BREACH MY BRITCHES! DID YOU DO THAT?



Lota did do that. It was not large enough.



Now Fly the plotted course, or Lota shall actualize the metaphorical breach in your britches.



ABOARD THE *TOUCH-AND-GO* AT THE *CREDOMARAN* STATIONWAIST...

THE ANTIMATTER IS GONE?

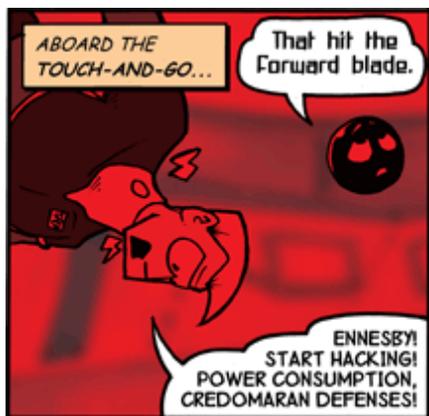
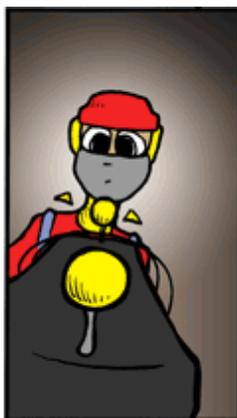
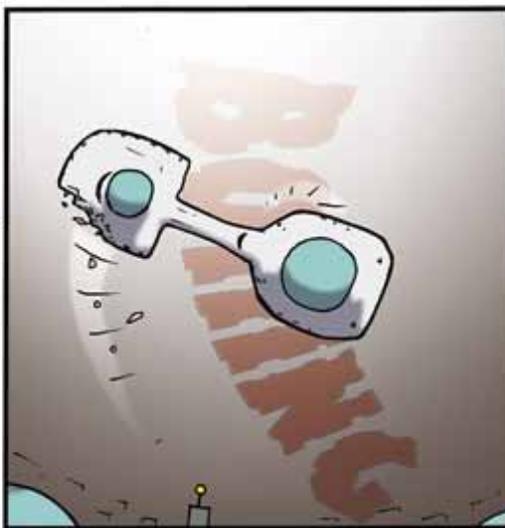
Yes. But there are now two holes in the station.

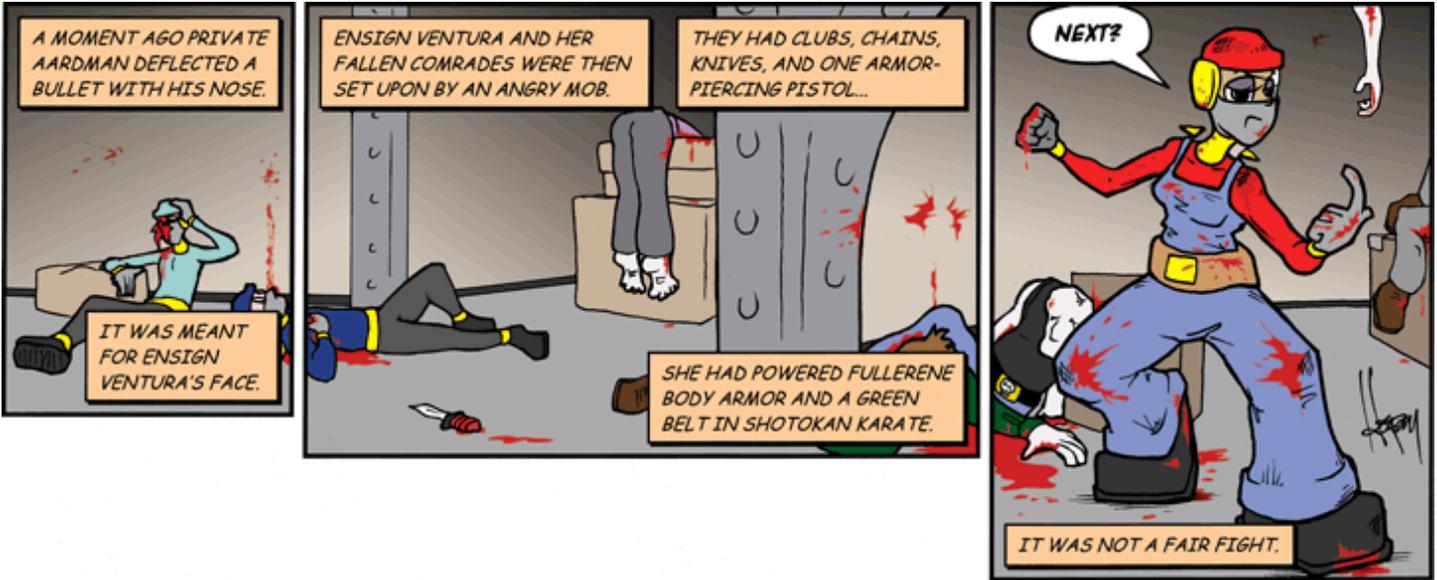


... which we are now powerless to patch.

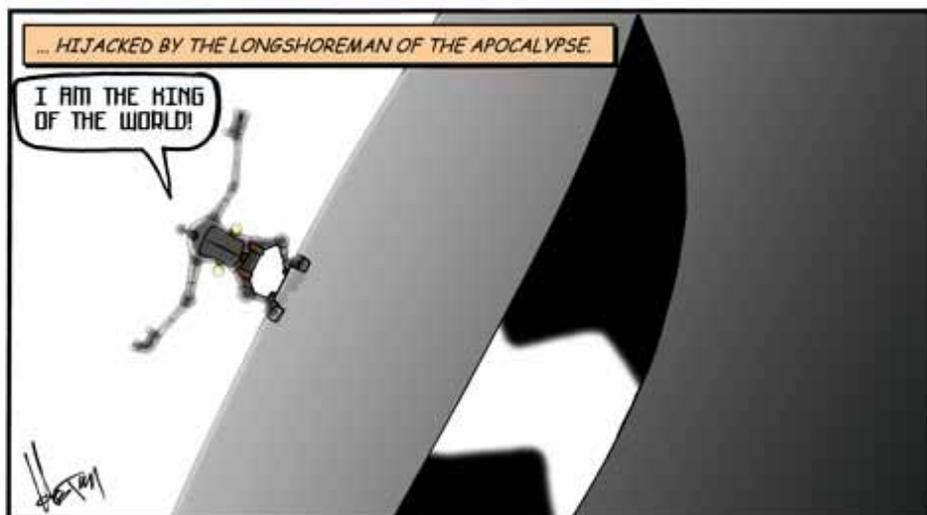
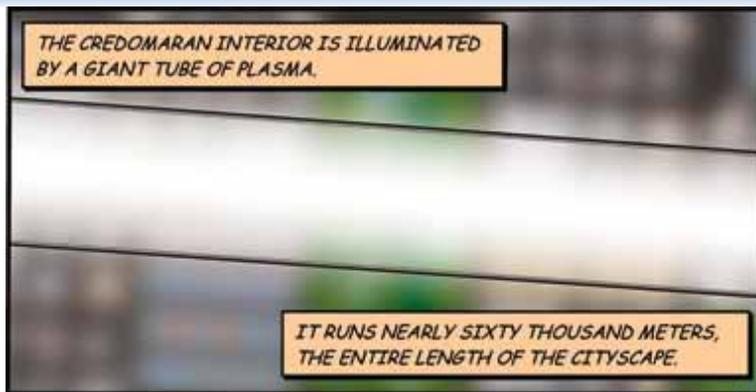
I HATE PLAYING "GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS."

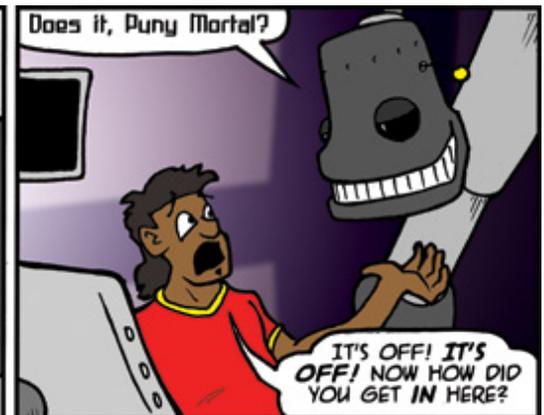
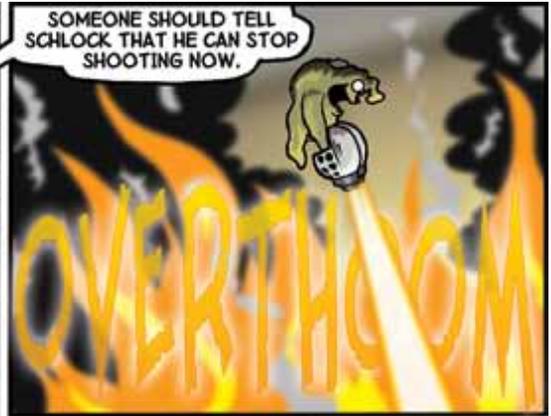
Also, we are going to crash in three... two...





# Schlock Mercenary



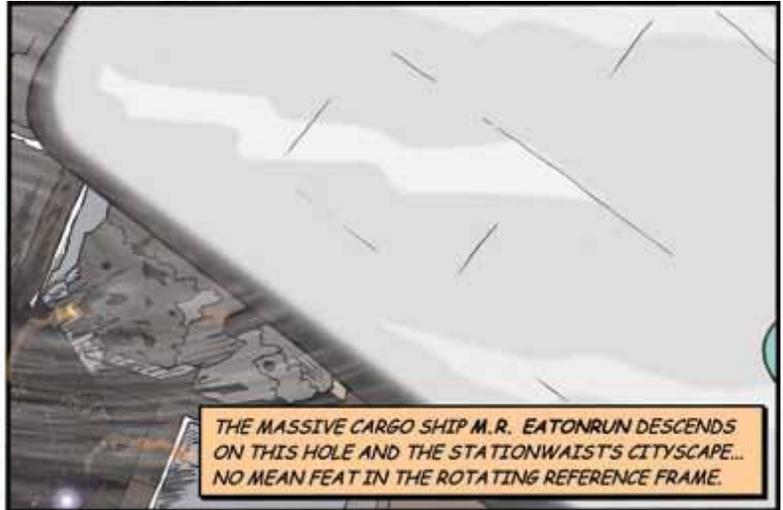






A HURRICANE ROARS AT THE CREDOMARAN STATIONWAIST.

THERE IS A HOLE IN THE WORLD.

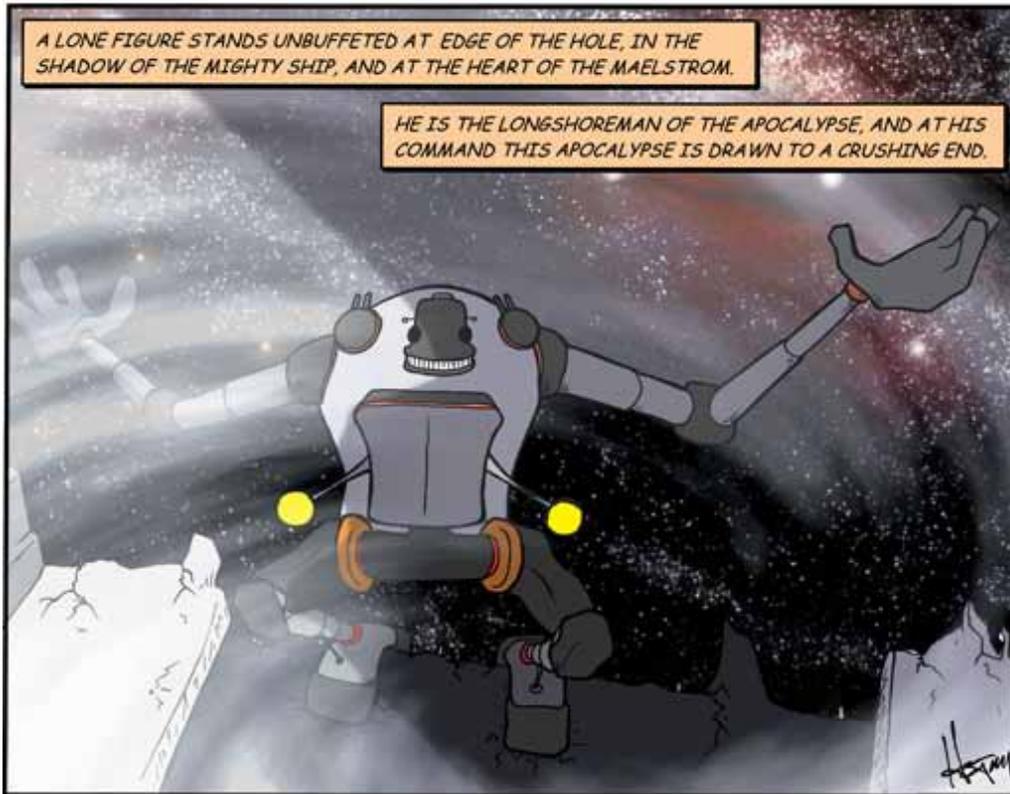


THE MASSIVE CARGO SHIP M.R. EATONRUN DESCENDS ON THIS HOLE AND THE STATIONWAIST'S CITYSCAPE... NO MEAN FEAT IN THE ROTATING REFERENCE FRAME.

# Schlock Mercenary



TURBULENT WINDS RIP AROUND AND THROUGH THE CHANGING GAP THROWING DUST AND DEBRIS, SMOKE AND FIRE, AND ANY CAUTION LEFT LYING AROUND.



A LONE FIGURE STANDS UNBUFFETED AT EDGE OF THE HOLE, IN THE SHADOW OF THE MIGHTY SHIP, AND AT THE HEART OF THE MAELSTROM.

HE IS THE LONGSHOREMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE, AND AT HIS COMMAND THIS APOCALYPSE IS DRAWN TO A CRUSHING END.



ARE YOU GETTING ALL THIS?

ARE YOU KIDDING?

HE IS GOING TO MAKE THE NEWS.



THE HOLE IN THE STATION HAS BEEN PLUGGED, BUT THERE IS STILL SOME HEMORRHAGING.

I'M LOSING HER. SHE DOESN'T HAVE HER KIT AND MY UNIVERSAL NANNIES WENT DOWN WITH ONESEY.

SHE MAY HAVE LEFT HER KIT IN HER TANK...

THE TANK 'CHELLE HAD WHEN WE WERE ALL SHOT DOWN.

THAT EXPLAINS WHY THESE PAINKILLERS TASTE FUNNY.

ALSO, THEY DON'T WORK.

I'm warbucking the Forward annie right now. You may wish to align yourself with the floor before I restore deck gravity.

THANKS FOR THE WARNING, TAG.

Success.

HAI! WE'RE BACK IN THE FIGHT!

The fight is over, sir.

HAI! THE FIGHT'S OVER, AND WE'RE STILL STANDING!

ENNESSY! THE ONLY TERAPORT AREA DENIAL HERE IS US, SO LET'S MAKE THE MOST OF IT.

LOCK ONTO TROOP TELEMETRY, AND 'PORT EVERYBODY BACK HERE. GIVE PRIORITY TO THE WOUNDED.

COMMANDER, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

SHHH... IT'S NICE AND WARM HERE.

YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE. I'M GOING TO

TERAPORT

UMMM... HELP THE DOCTOR PATCH YOU UP?

NOT UNTIL YOU SCRUB UP YOU'RE NOT, KIDDO.

Hevyn, Chelle, and Flardy are in surgery. Legs is in stasis. Lots of sprains, strains, and flash-wounds. We've got everybody back except Brad.

FIND HIM.

CAPTAIN, I NEED YOU HERE IN MEDIBAY ONE. ENSIGN VENTURA IS COVERED WITH BLOOD.

I'M KIND OF BUSY. ISN'T THAT WHAT WE PAY YOU TO DEAL WITH?

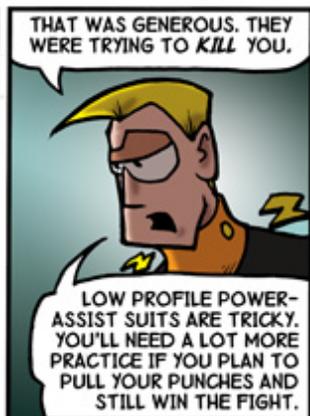
IT'S NOT HER BLOOD, SIR.

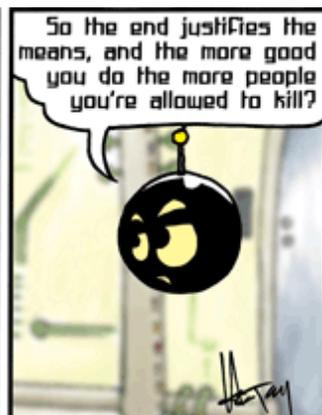
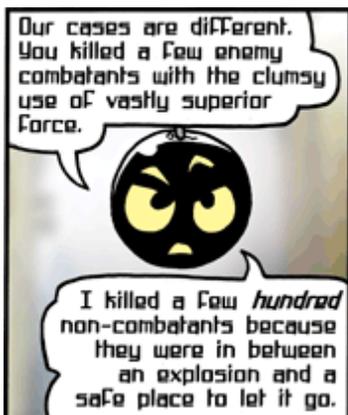
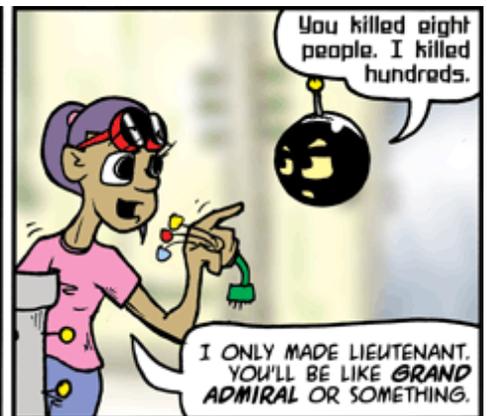
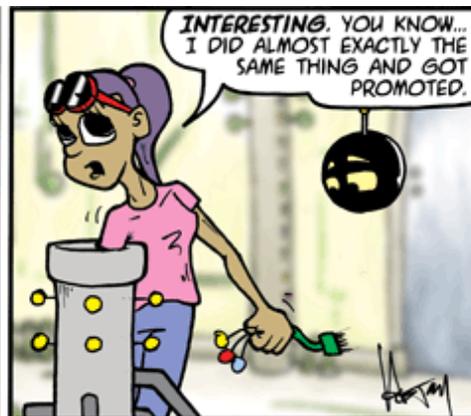
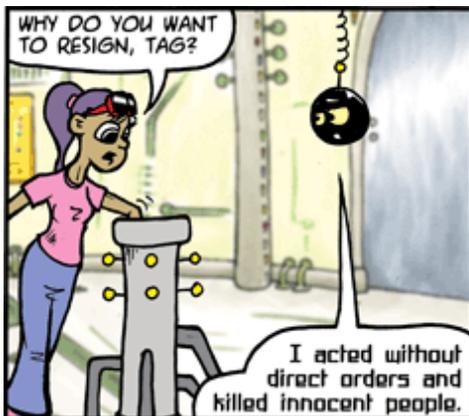
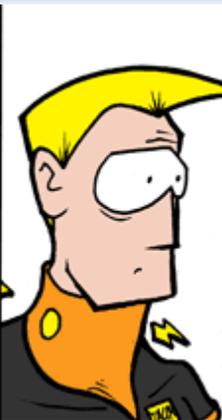
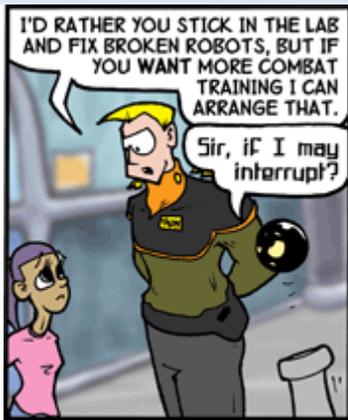
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO, GIVE HER A BATH?

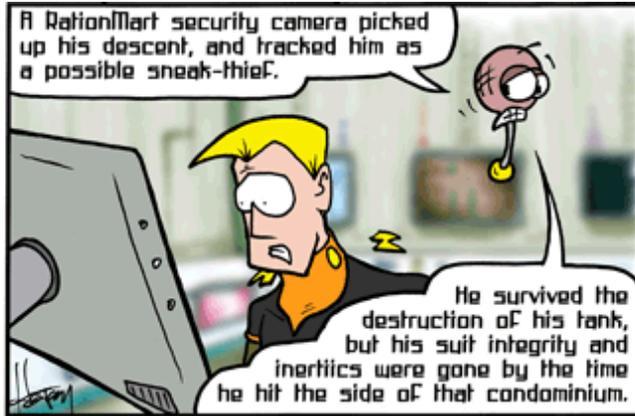
IT'S WORSE THAN THAT. I THINK SHE NEEDS A HUG.



# Schlock Mercenary

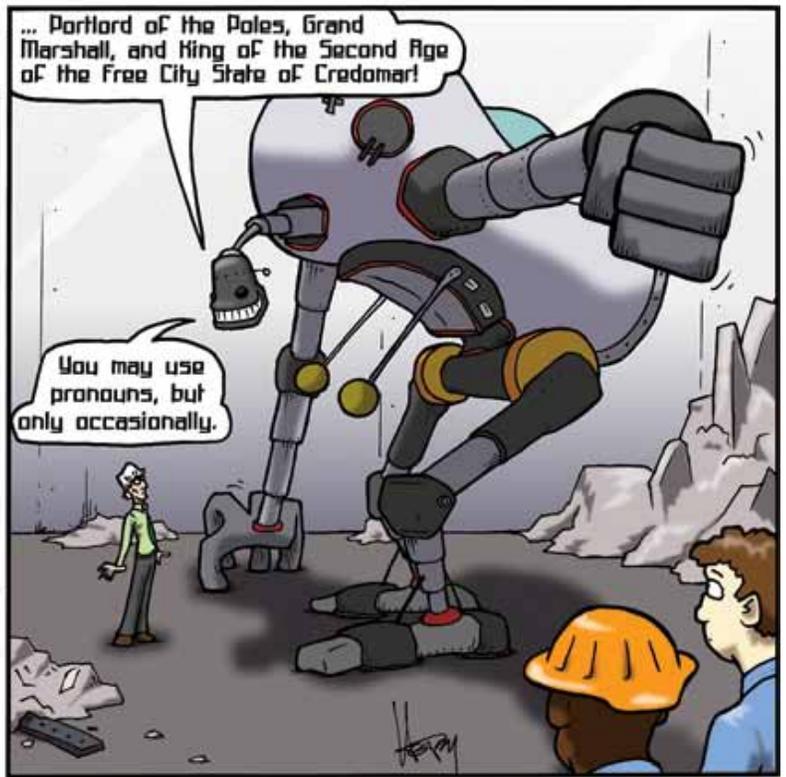


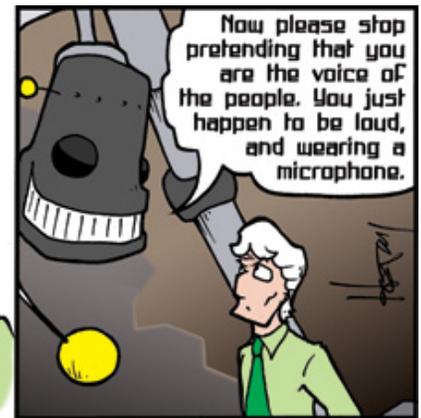
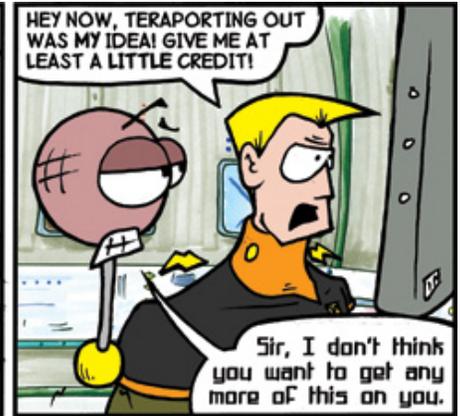
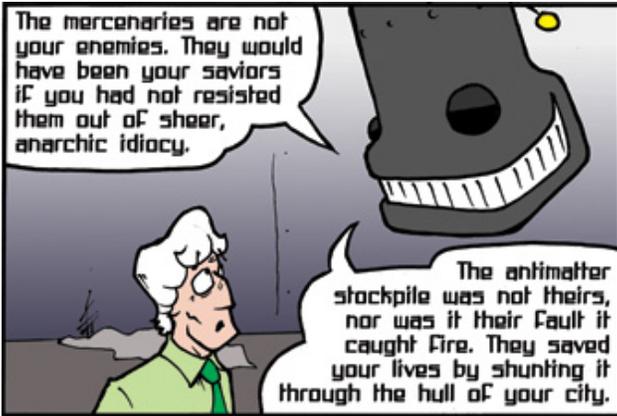
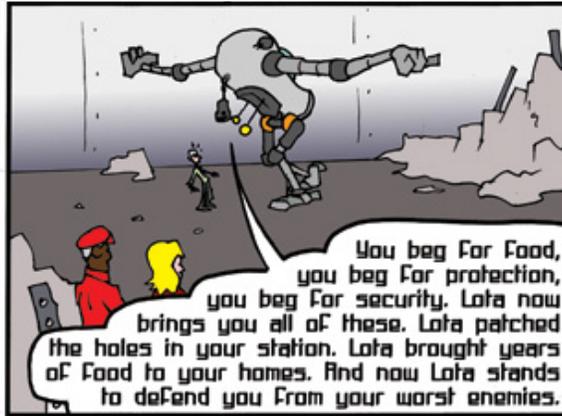






# Schlock Mercenary





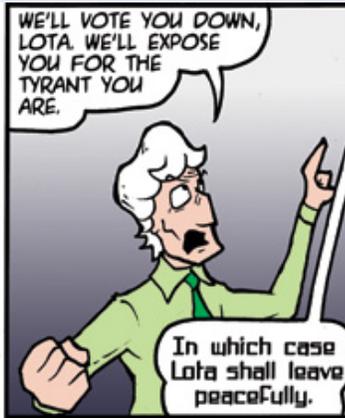


There will be a general election in thirteen days.

REALLY?!



Yes. And between now and then Lota shall restore sufficient order that the citizens of Credomar may vote safely.



WE'LL VOTE YOU DOWN, LOTA. WE'LL EXPOSE YOU FOR THE TYRANT YOU ARE.

In which case Lota shall leave peacefully.

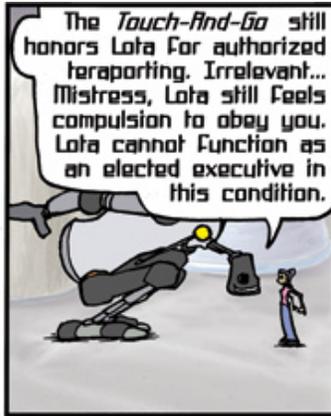


But the voters shall all have full bellies.



Mistress Ventura...

YIPE! HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?!



The *Touch-And-Go* still honors Lota for authorized teleporting. Irrelevant... Mistress, Lota still feels compulsion to obey you. Lota cannot function as an elected executive in this condition.



IF I REMOVE THAT COMPULSION, WHAT'S TO STOP YOU FROM BECOMING A TYRANT?!



IF you leave it in place, what is to stop you from becoming a tyrant?!

I MADE YOU TOO SMART. I *KNEW* I WAS MAKING YOU TOO SMART, BUT I DID IT ANYWAY.



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Note: As to the question of whose idea it was to take the death benefits for enlisted men and officers out of the Captain's pay, it was the Captain's idea. It brings a measure of fiscal responsibility and bottom-line management to life-and-death decisions, it is inherently noble, and Tagon has forgotten that he put it in the original charter.

EPILOGUE: IT HAS BEEN TWO WEEKS, AND THE TOUCH-AND-GO IS READY FOR DEPARTURE. BARELY.

LOTA WAS ELECTED KING YESTERDAY. THE U.S.S. VOICED STRONG PROTESTS, BUT GOT DROWNED OUT BY 83% OF THE NOW-WELL-FED CREDOMARAN VOTERS.

TAG IS STILL OFFLINE, THURL. TELL TAGON TO LET ENNESBY FLY US OUT OF HERE.

LIEUTENANT JEFFY "BRAD" BRADLEY'S BODY WAS SHIPPED HOME AND LAID TO REST IN A PRIVATE SERVICE ON HIS HOMETOWN.

TELL HIM YOURSELF, KIDDO. HE'LL BE SHUTTLING UP IN A FEW MINUTES... JUST AS SOON AS HE'S DONE SAYING GOODBYE.

THERE WAS A PUBLIC SERVICE IN CREDOMAR THIS MORNING IN NEWLY-RENAMED MERCY PARK WHERE BRAD'S TANK'S ANNIE-PLANT LANDED. THE PLANT IS INERT, BUT INTACT.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A FITTING MEMORIAL, BUT IT NEEDED MORE THAN JUST A PLAQUE.



King Lota thinks it is a little too big.

Brad's best friend thinks it's almost big enough.

Thanks for reading!

If you want more *Schlock Mercenary*, you can find it at  
[www.schlockmercenary.com](http://www.schlockmercenary.com)