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# DRAT TICUS



ORIGINS: CHAPTER TWO



# DRATTICUS

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You never really understand a person until you  
consider things from his point of view—

Atticus Finch  
*To Kill A Mockingbird*



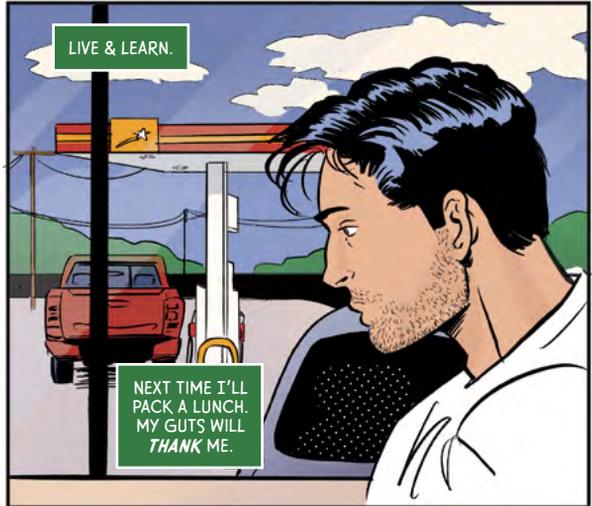
IT ALWAYS SEEMS LIKE A GREAT IDEA AT THE TIME.

WHEN YOU'RE STARVING.



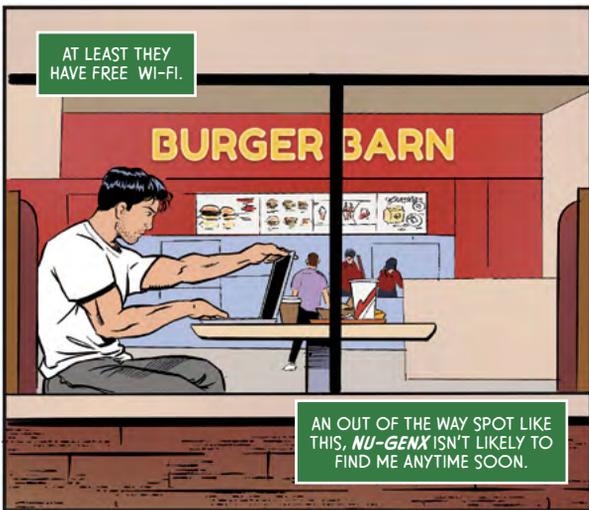
GOES DOWN WELL, BUT THEN... INSTANT REGRET.

UGH... I FEEL SICK. WHY DID I EAT THAT?



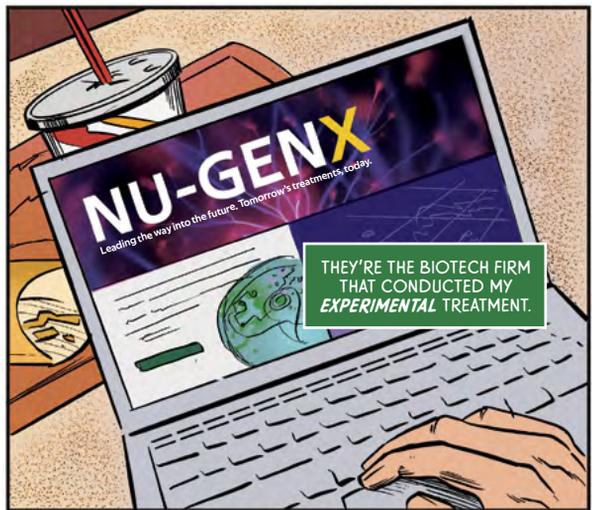
LIVE & LEARN.

NEXT TIME I'LL PACK A LUNCH. MY GUTS WILL THANK ME.



AT LEAST THEY HAVE FREE WI-FI.

AN OUT OF THE WAY SPOT LIKE THIS, *NU-GENX* ISN'T LIKELY TO FIND ME ANYTIME SOON.



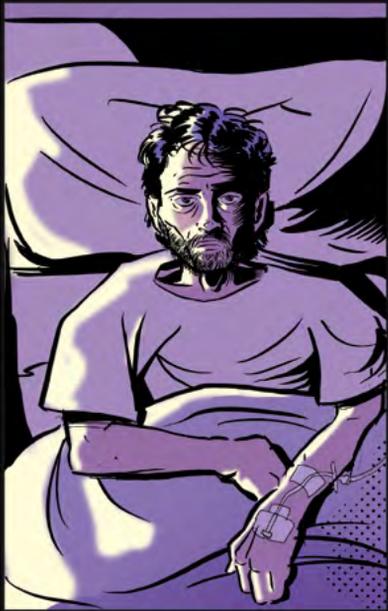
THEY'RE THE BIOTECH FIRM THAT CONDUCTED MY EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT.



WHATEVER THEY DID... I'M NOT EXACTLY THE SAME.

THESE NEW ABILITIES...THESE POWERS.

THEY MUST BE A RESULT OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GENE THERAPY...





DR JAMES ATTICUS?



...MMHRMM?



GOOD MORNING.

I'M VIJAY GUPTA. PATIENT LIAISON FOR **NU-GENX** CORP.



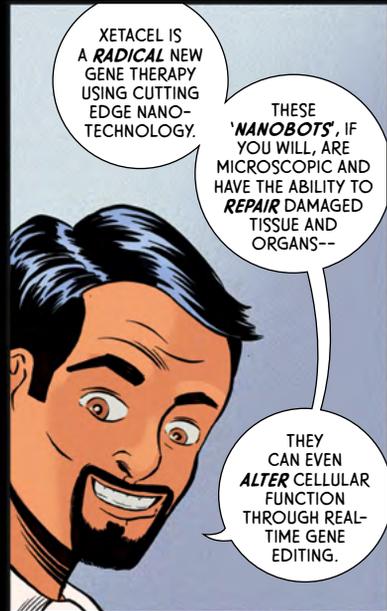
WE DEVELOP A WIDE VARIETY OF **BIOTECHNOLOGY** FOR THE MEDICAL INDUSTRY.

PERHAPS YOU HAVE HEARD OF US?



OUR PRODUCTS HELP MANY PATIENTS AROUND THE WORLD ACHIEVE A **BETTER** QUALITY OF LIFE.

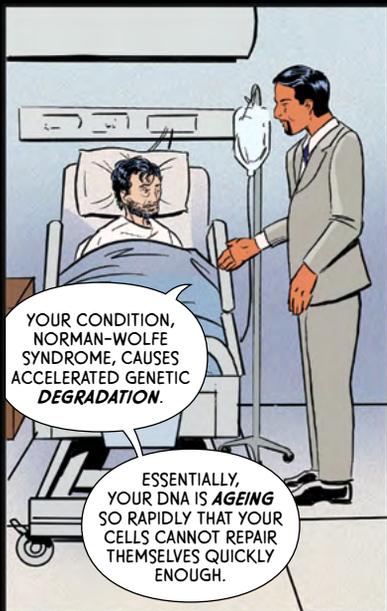
PATIENTS LIKE YOU...WHICH IS WHY I'M HERE. I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE FACING A **TERMINAL** DIAGNOSIS.



XETACEL IS A **RADICAL** NEW GENE THERAPY USING CUTTING EDGE **NANO-TECHNOLOGY**.

THESE **'NANOBOTS'**, IF YOU WILL, ARE MICROSCOPIC AND HAVE THE ABILITY TO **REPAIR** DAMAGED TISSUE AND ORGANS--

THEY CAN EVEN **ALTER** CELLULAR FUNCTION THROUGH REAL-TIME GENE EDITING.



YOUR CONDITION, **NORMAN-WOLFE SYNDROME**, CAUSES **ACCELERATED GENETIC DEGRADATION**.

ESSENTIALLY, YOUR DNA IS **AGEING** SO RAPIDLY THAT YOUR CELLS CANNOT REPAIR THEMSELVES QUICKLY ENOUGH.



IT MAKES YOU AN **IDEAL** CANDIDATE FOR OUR EXPERIMENTAL TRIAL.



A **SECOND CHANCE** AT LIFE...

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

I SAID YES.  
WOULD I AGAIN?

I GOT A LIFE BACK...  
BUT IT'S NOT THE  
ONE I HAD BEFORE.



SYDNEY, NSW

NU-GENX CORPORATION.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN... YOU'VE LOST HIM?

I THOUGHT YOU HAD A HANDLE ON THIS, HUNTER. I MEAN, HE WAS DEAD WASN'T HE?

EVEN IF HE DID... REANIMATE YOU WOULD THINK HE'D BE RATHER... STIFF. SLOW MOVING.

GUPTA AND A SECURITY TEAM WENT TO COLLECT HIM.

BUT... HE WAS ABLE TO EVADE MY MEN.

OBSOLETELY.

HOW?

HE ... DEMONSTRATED SOME... UNEXPECTED ABILITIES.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



HE'S SOME KIND OF **FREAK!**

HE BURNED MY MEN -- WITH HIS **BARE HANDS!** RADIATION BURNS.

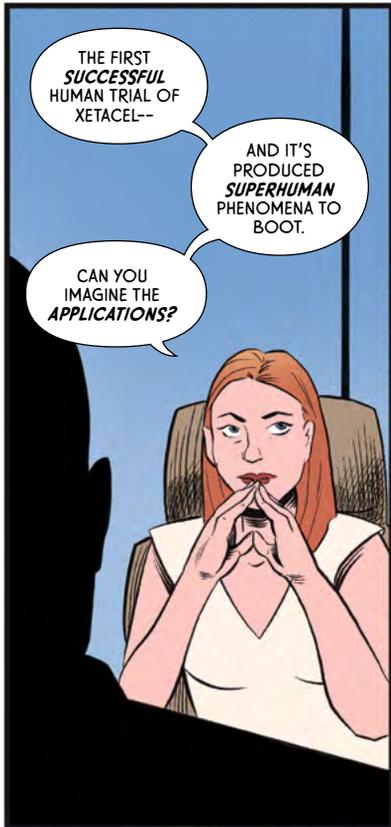


REALLY? NOW **THAT'S** INTERESTING.



THE CORONER REPORTED THAT THE SUBJECT APPEARED TO BE IN **PERFECT** HEALTH WHEN HE UM...

**REANIMATED.**



THE FIRST **SUCCESSFUL** HUMAN TRIAL OF XETACEL--

AND IT'S PRODUCED **SUPERHUMAN** PHENOMENA TO BOOT.

CAN YOU IMAGINE THE **APPLICATIONS?**

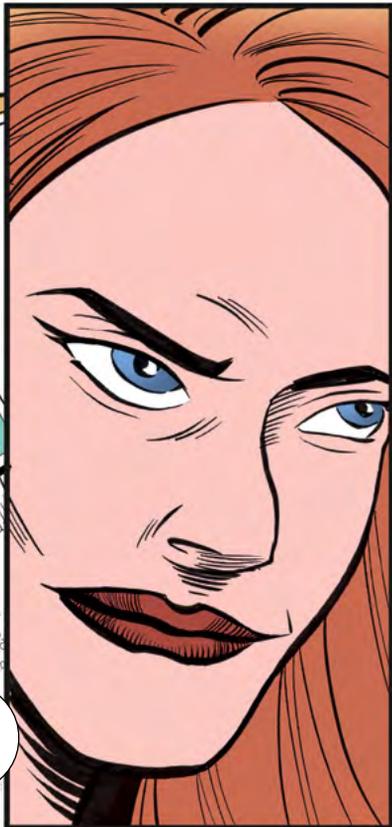


FIND THIS MAN, THIS...

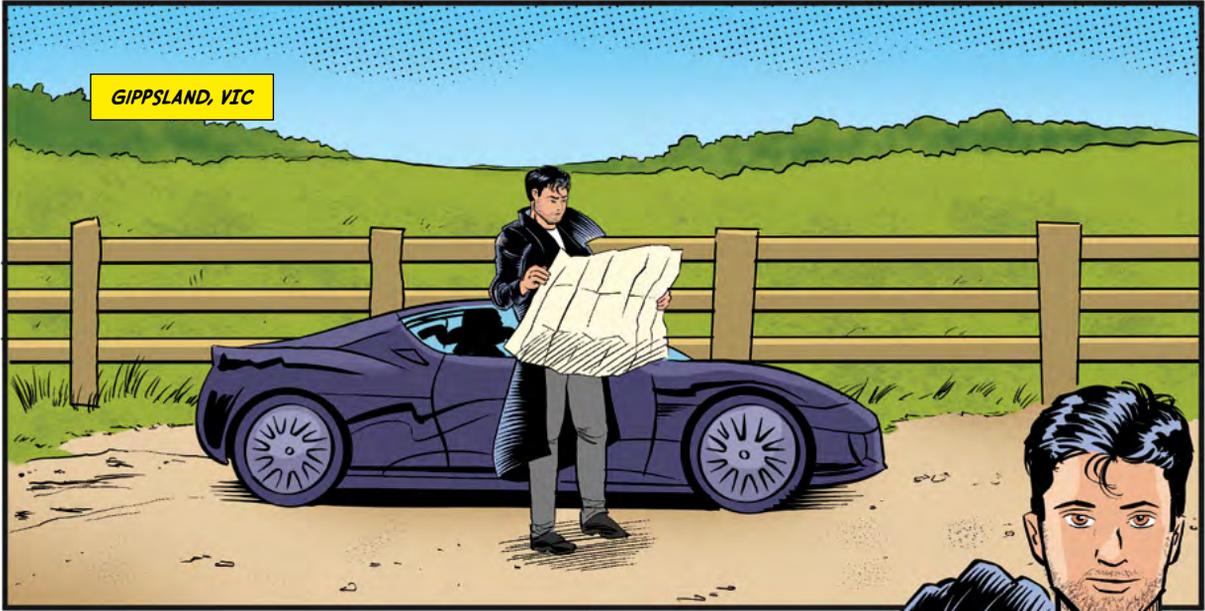
**DR ATTICUS.**

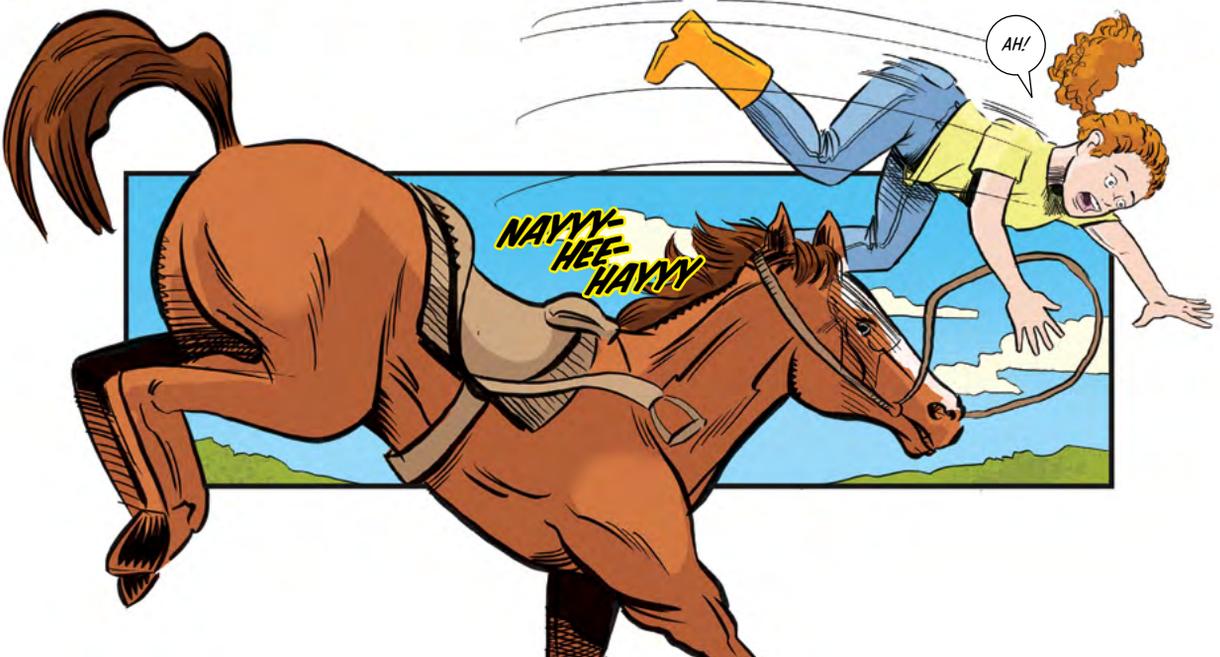
HE'S GOT TWO **BILLION** DOLLARS OF OUR PROPERTY COURSE THROUGH HIS VEINS.

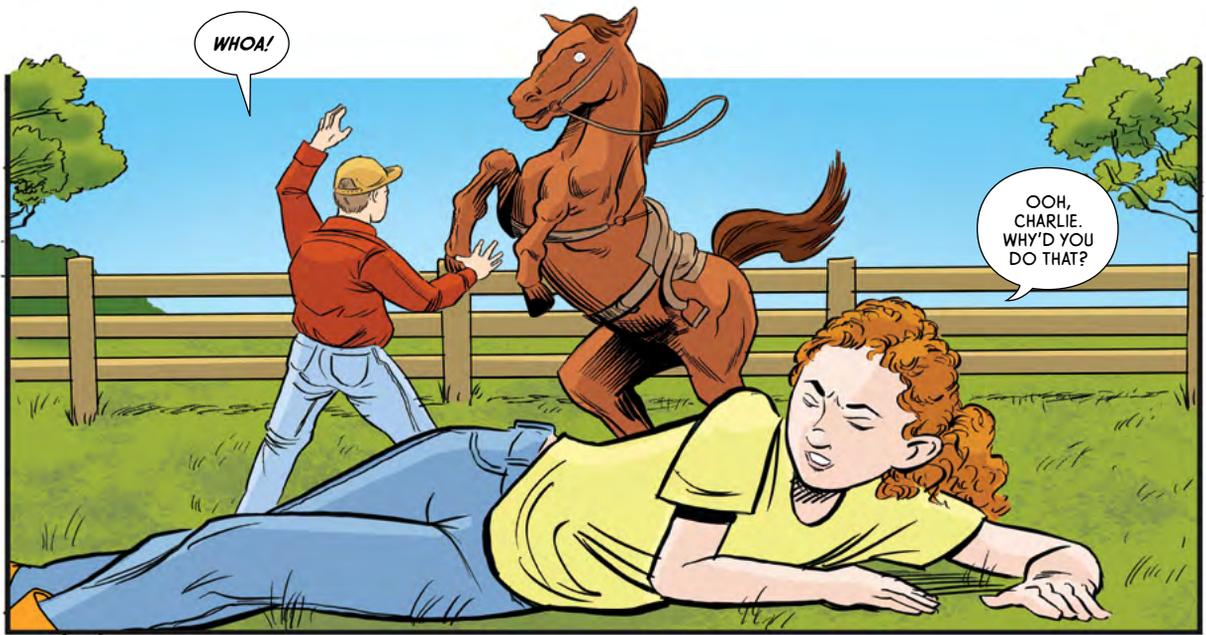
AND HE'S THE KEY TO OUR NEXT **MIRACLE** TREATMENT. BRING HIM IN.



GIPPSLAND, VIC







WHOA!

OOH, CHARLIE. WHY'D YOU DO THAT?



OH...IT REALLY HURTS. I THINK IT'S **BROKEN**.



ARE YOU ALRIGHT? MAY I HAVE A LOOK?

I'M A DOCTOR.

OK.



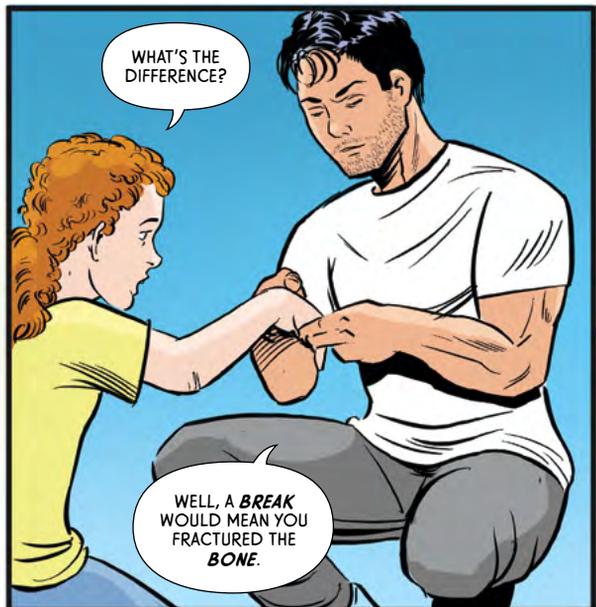
THAT'S A PRETTY **WILD** HORSE, HEY?

AW, NAH. CHARLIE'S PRETTY EASY-GOING.

HE'S **BLIND** THOUGH, AND SOMETIMES HE GETS SPOOKED.

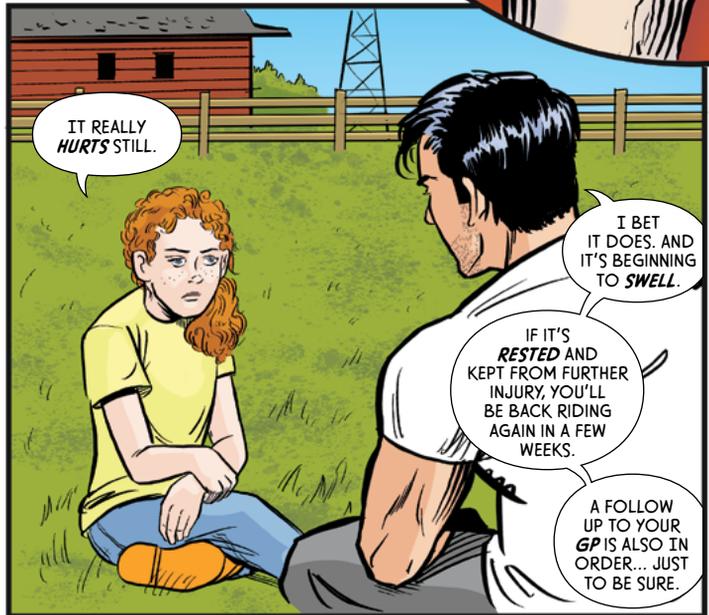
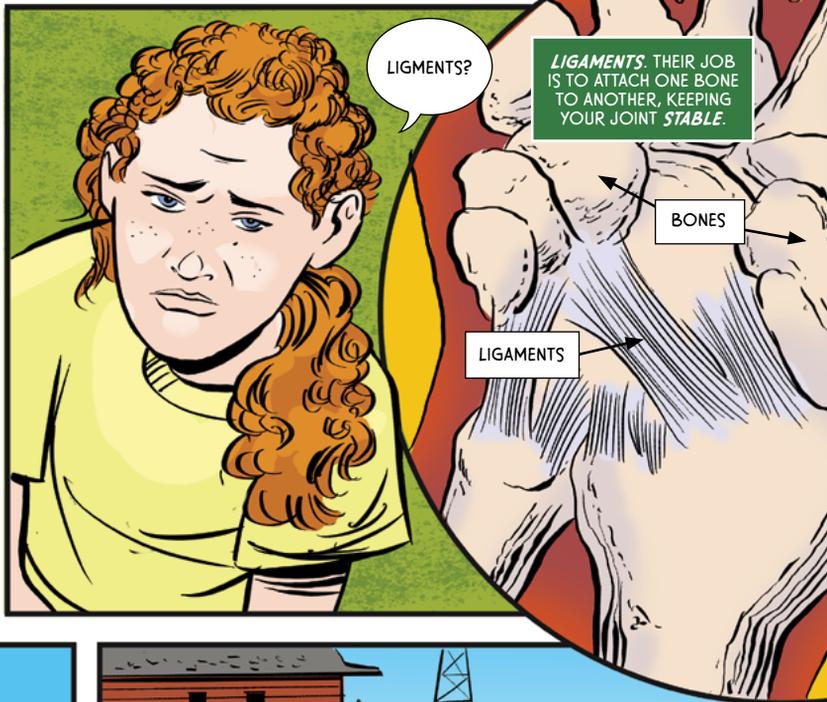


WELL, GOOD NEWS. IT'S NOT BROKEN. JUST A BAD **SPRAIN**.

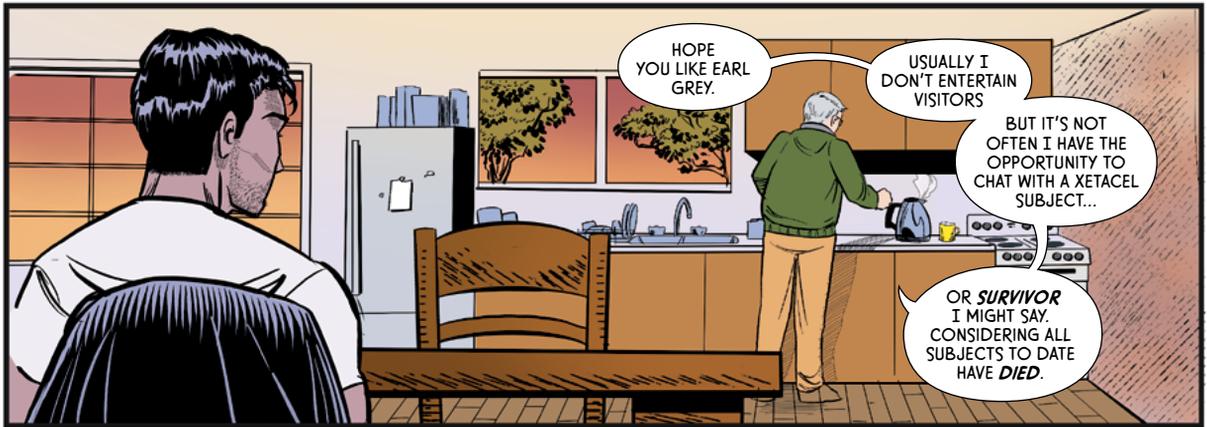


WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

WELL, A **BREAK** WOULD MEAN YOU FRACTURED THE **BONE**.









I HAD BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL FOR MONTHS, DUE TO A **RARE** GENETIC DISORDER. MY CONDITION WAS ONLY **WORSENING**, DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF THE HOSPITAL STAFF.

WHEN NU-GENX APPROACHED ME ABOUT THEIR **EXPERIMENTAL** TREATMENT, I HAD NOTHING TO **LOSE**... I SIGNED THEIR FORM.



BUT OVER SEVERAL WEEKS, AND **MULTIPLE** TREATMENTS. I GREW EVEN MORE SICK. THE GENE THERAPY WAS A **FAILURE**, OR SO I THOUGHT.

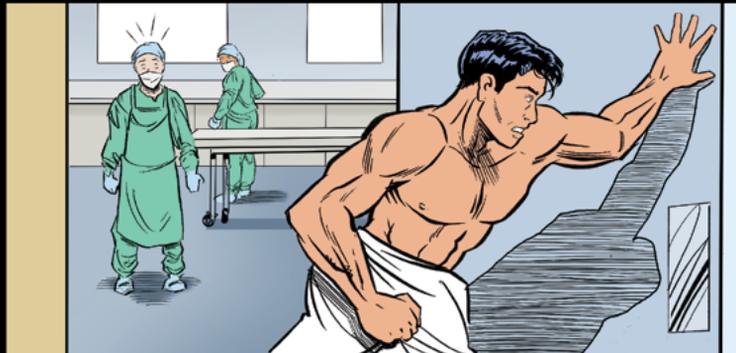
AND THEN...**NOTHING**. I DON'T REMEMBER.

I GUESS I **DIED**.



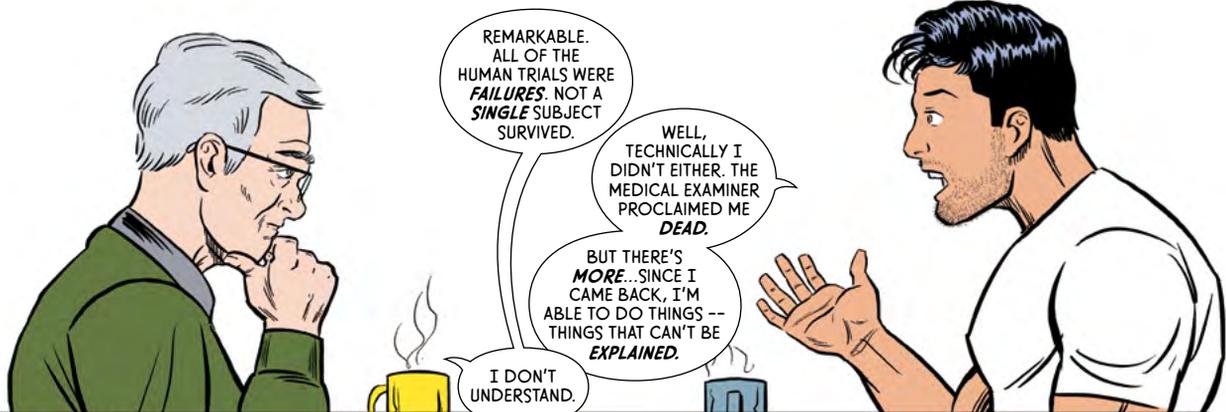
MY BODY WAS NOW NU-GENX **PROPERTY**. IT WAS IN THE **SMALL** PRINT.

MY FAMILY BURIED AN **EMPTY** CASNET.



BUT THEN I AWOKE IN A **COLD** ROOM OF A NU-GENX MEDICAL FACILITY.

THE CORONERS WERE SO **SURPRISED** THAT THEY JUST WATCHED AS I WALKED OUT.



REMARKABLE. ALL OF THE HUMAN TRIALS WERE **FAILURES**. NOT A **SINGLE** SUBJECT SURVIVED.

WELL, TECHNICALLY I DIDN'T EITHER. THE MEDICAL EXAMINER PROCLAIMED ME **DEAD**.

BUT THERE'S **MORE**... SINCE I CAME BACK, I'M ABLE TO DO THINGS -- THINGS THAT CAN'T BE **EXPLAINED**.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.



I HAD **NOTHING** BUT A PAIR OF SCRUBS I HAD GRABBED AT THE FACILITY.



I JUMPED ONTO A BUS, AND MY **VISION** STARTED GOING FUNNY. I COULD SEE **THROUGH** PEOPLE'S SKIN, SEE THEIR **ANATOMY**.

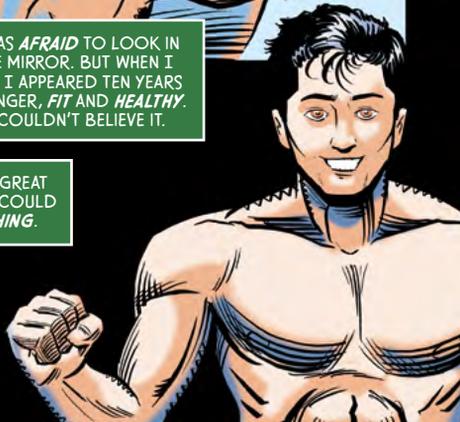


**PANICKED**, I RACED HOME. I DIDN'T HAVE A KEY SO I HAD TO **BREAK** INTO MY OWN HOUSE.



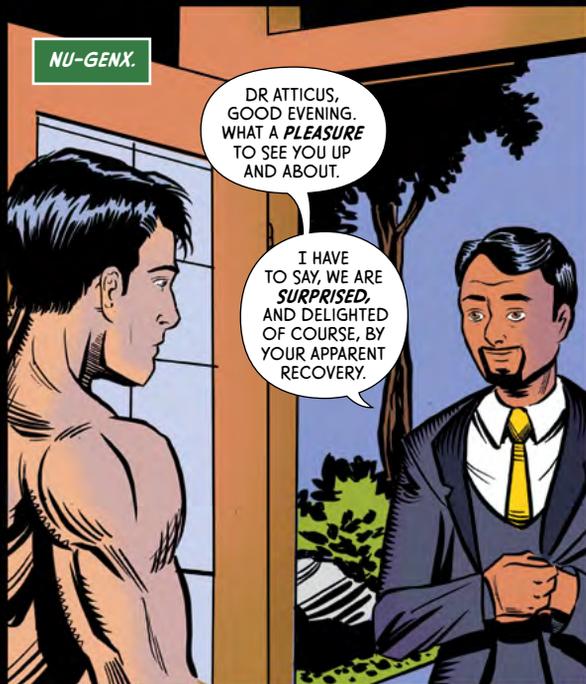
I WAS **AFRAID** TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR. BUT WHEN I DID, I APPEARED TEN YEARS **YOUNGER**, **FIT** AND **HEALTHY**. I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT.

AND I FELT GREAT TOO. LIKE I COULD DO **ANYTHING**.





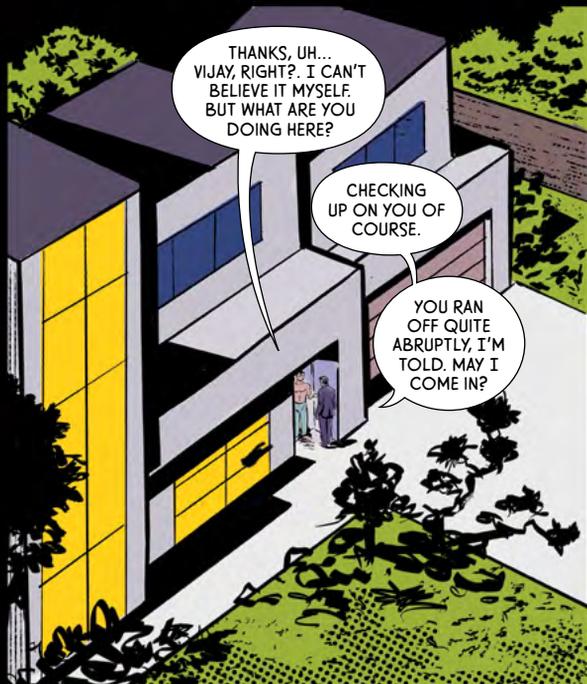
I'D ONLY BEEN HOME FOR TWENTY MINUTES OR SO, WHEN THERE WAS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.



NU-GENX.

DR ATTICUS, GOOD EVENING. WHAT A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU UP AND ABOUT.

I HAVE TO SAY, WE ARE SURPRISED, AND DELIGHTED OF COURSE, BY YOUR APPARENT RECOVERY.



THANKS, UH... VIJAY, RIGHT?. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT MYSELF. BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

CHECKING UP ON YOU OF COURSE.

YOU RAN OFF QUITE ABRUPTLY, I'M TOLD. MAY I COME IN?



UH YEAH, PLEASE.

I WAS... SORT OF DISORIENTATED. WAKING UP IN A MORGUE AND ALL.

YES OF COURSE.

WE'D LOVE YOU TO COME IN FOR A CHECK UP.

JUST TO BE SURE YOU ARE IN A STABLE CONDITION.



WHAT, RIGHT NOW?

YES, I HAVE A CAR WAITING OUTSIDE. IT WON'T TAKE LONG, I PROMISE.



LISTEN, I JUST WANT TO SPEND A NIGHT AT HOME. HOW ABOUT TOMORROW?

THERE'S NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT DR ATTICUS. BESIDES, ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE.

IT'S CRITICAL YOU'RE MONITORED AT THIS DELICATE TIME. WHO KNOWS WHAT STATE YOUR BODY IS IN AFTER THIS ORDEAL.

WE WANT TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY CARE YOU DESERVE.

I'M FINE.

I'LL MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS, THANKS. TONIGHT, I'D LIKE TO SLEEP IN MY OWN BED.

I APPRECIATE THE CONCERN, BUT YOU SHOULD GO.



I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND, DR ATTICUS. THIS IS NOT A REQUEST.

YOU EXIST BECAUSE OF OUR TECHNOLOGY, OUR PROPERTY.



BY EXTENSION, YOUR BODY, WHICH HAS ASSIMILATED AND HOSTS THIS TECHNOLOGY, IS ALSO OUR PROPERTY.



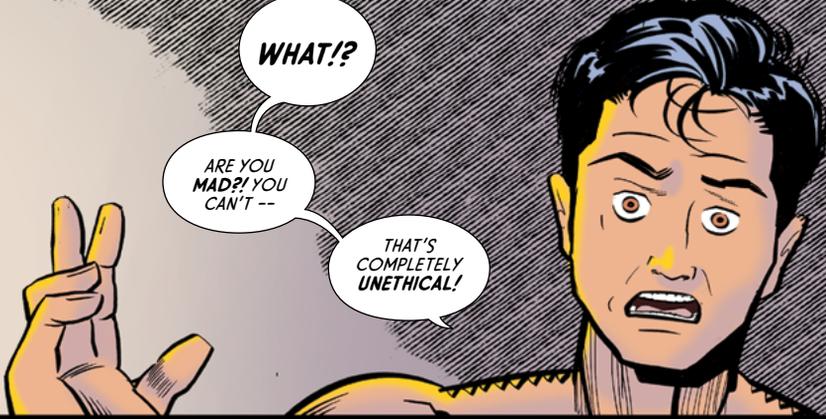
WE OWN YOU.



WHAT!?

ARE YOU MAD?! YOU CAN'T --

THAT'S COMPLETELY UNETHICAL!





I ASSURE YOU, ETHICS HAVE **NOTHING** TO DO WITH IT.

**NU-GENX** HAS INVESTED A LOT OF **TIME** AND **MONEY** IN YOU.

WE EXPECT A **RETURN** ON THAT INVESTMENT.

!

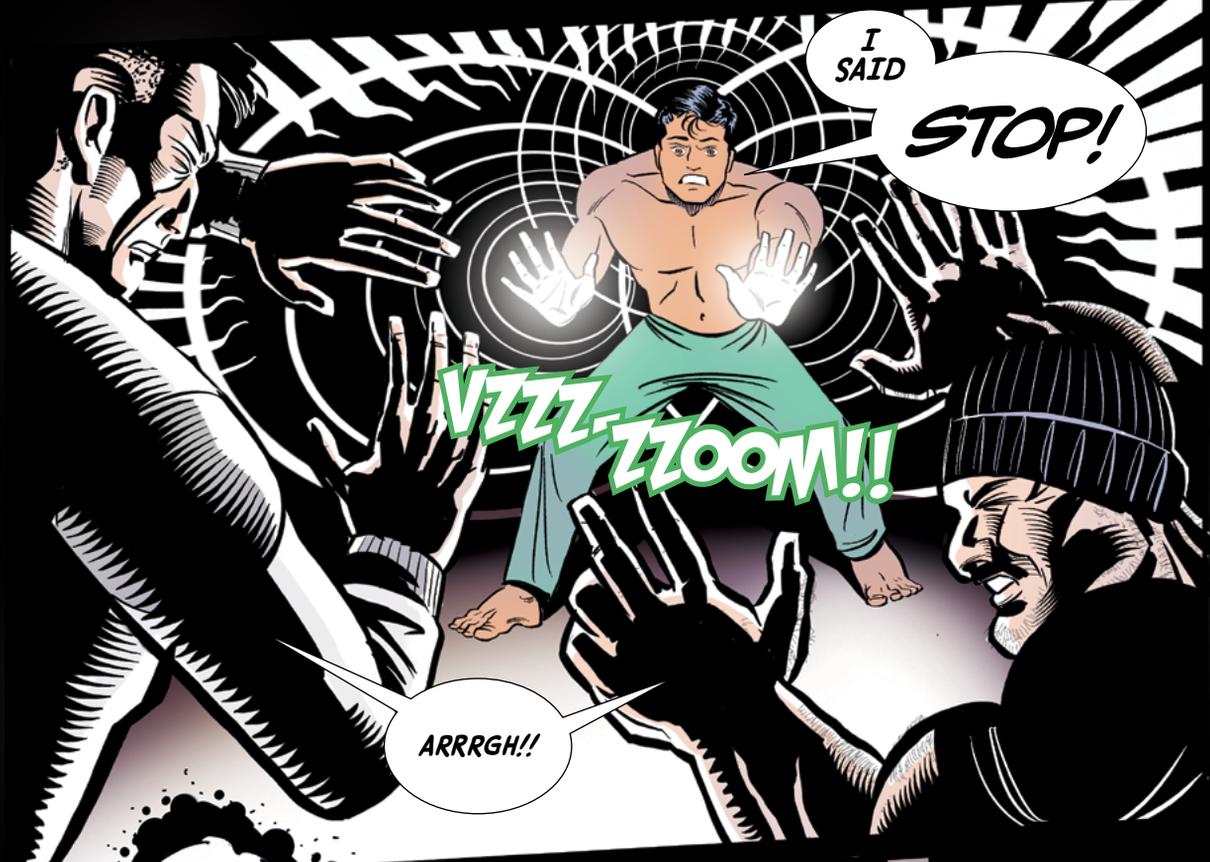


BESIDES, THIS DEATH CERTIFICATE CONFIRMS THAT YOU ARE, IN FACT, **DECEASED**.

I DON'T THINK ANYONE WILL MISS A **CORPSE**.

GENTLEMEN, ESCORT DR ATTICUS TO THE VAN. BY **FORCE** IF NECESSARY.

**NO! STOP!**



I SAID  
**STOP!**

**VZZZ-ZZOOM!!**

ARRRGH!!



WHOA.



WAS THAT...  
**ME?**

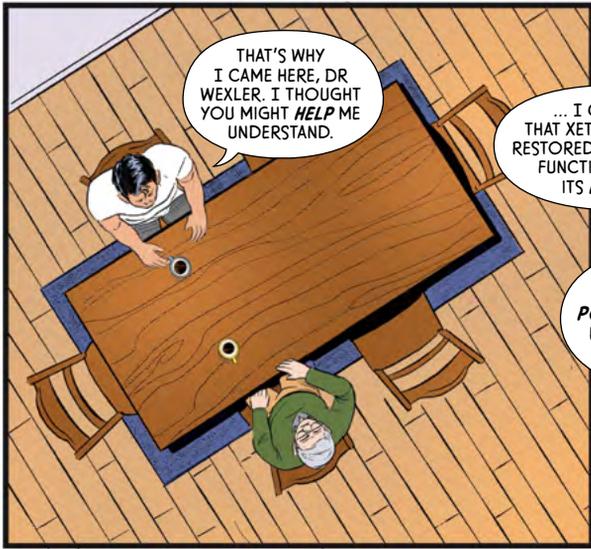


I HOPE YOU  
DON'T MIND IF I  
**BORROW YOUR  
CAR, GUPTA.**

I'LL  
CALL YOU AN  
AMBULANCE...

**JERK.**

I'VE BEEN ON THE RUN EVER  
SINCE. TRYING TO FIGURE  
THIS WHOLE THING OUT.  
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?



THAT'S WHY I CAME HERE, DR WEXLER. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT *HELP* ME UNDERSTAND.

... I CAN ACCEPT THAT XETACEL *MAY* HAVE RESTORED YOUR CELLULAR FUNCTION. THAT WAS ITS *PURPOSE*.

BUT X-RAY VISION, *SUPER POWERS*. NOW THAT'S HARD TO SWALLOW. YOU'RE *JOKING*, SURELY.



YOUR TEA HAS GONE *COLD*.

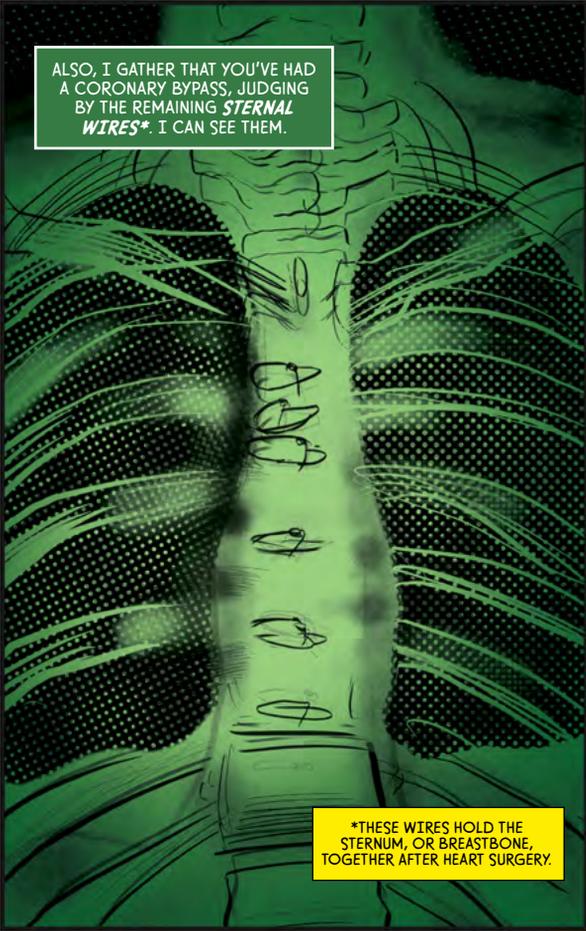
ALLOW ME.



*HOW!* WHAT'S IN YOUR HANDS...?!

NOTHING. I JUST BOILED THE TEA.

WITH MY *BARE* HANDS.



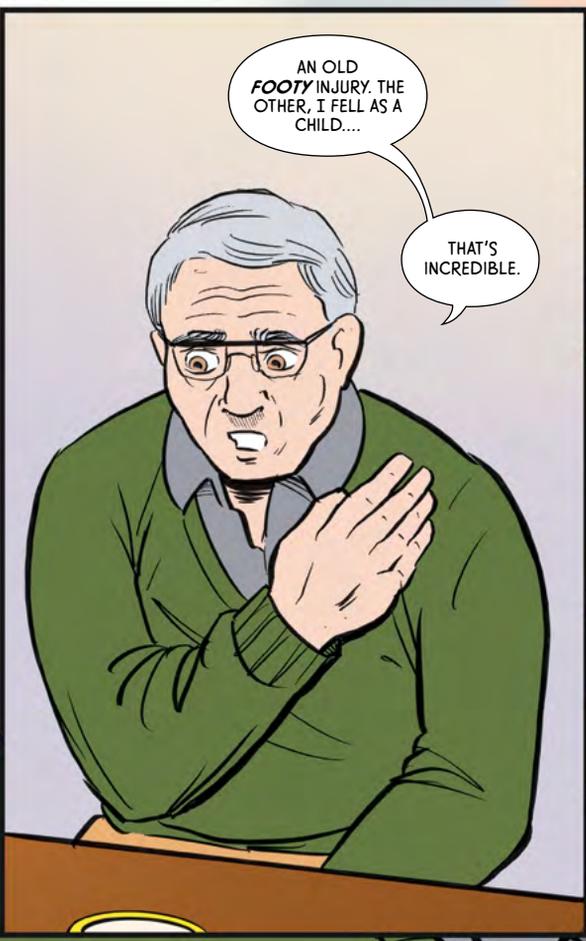
ALSO, I GATHER THAT YOU'VE HAD A CORONARY BYPASS, JUDGING BY THE REMAINING *STERNAL WIRES*\*. I CAN SEE THEM.

\*THESE WIRES HOLD THE STERNUM, OR BREASTBONE, TOGETHER AFTER HEART SURGERY.



AND... YOU'VE *BROKEN* YOUR RIGHT COLLAR BONE

ACTUALLY... THERE REMAINS A SLIGHT DEFORMITY IN *BOTH* CLAVICLES, INDICATING HEALED *FRACTURES*.



AN OLD *FOOTY* INJURY. THE OTHER, I FELL AS A CHILD....

THAT'S INCREDIBLE.



LET'S SAY I *DO* BELIEVE YOU.

IN *THEORY*, IT'S POSSIBLE THE NANOTECHNOLOGY *COULD* HAVE RADICALLY ALTERED YOUR GENETIC CODE.

GRANTING YOU THESE... *ABILITIES*.



I WAS HOPING FOR SOMETHING MORE CONCRETE THAN A **THEORY**.

WELL, I DID HELP DEVELOP XETACEL. BUT EVERYTHING WAS COMPARTMENTALISED.

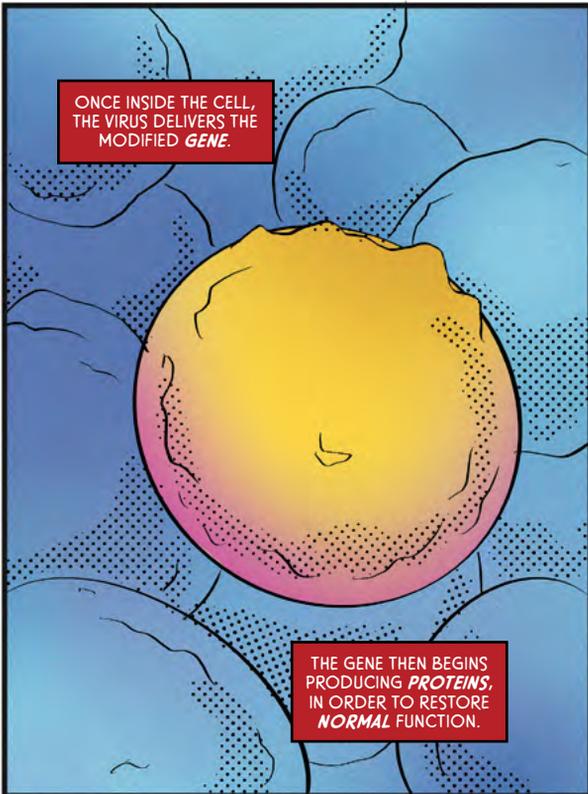
NO ONE KNEW THE FULL SCOPE OF THE PROJECT.



I OVERSAW THE INTEGRATION OF THE **VECTOR** FOR GENE THERAPY. THAT IS, THE DELIVERY METHOD FOR INTRODUCING **MODIFIED GENES**.

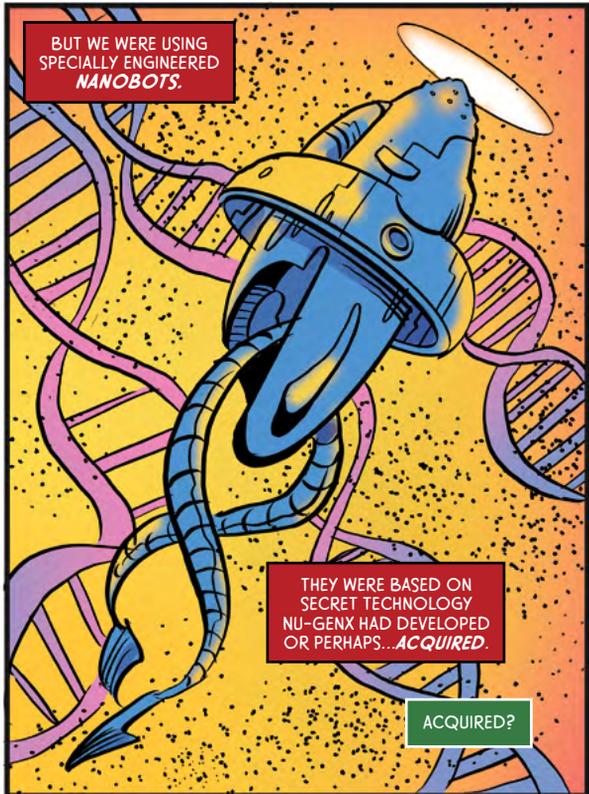


USUALLY, AN INERT **VIRUS** IS INTRODUCED AS THE **VECTOR**.



ONCE INSIDE THE CELL, THE **VIRUS** DELIVERS THE **MODIFIED GENE**.

THE **GENE** THEN BEGINS PRODUCING **PROTEINS**, IN ORDER TO RESTORE **NORMAL FUNCTION**.



BUT WE WERE USING **SPECIALLY ENGINEERED NANOBOTS**.

THEY WERE BASED ON **SECRET TECHNOLOGY** NU-GENX HAD DEVELOPED OR PERHAPS...**ACQUIRED**.

ACQUIRED?



IT WAS EXTREMELY ADVANCED. ALMOST... *ALIEN* IN DESIGN. I STILL CAN'T COMPREHEND HOW IT WAS ENGINEERED.

MY GUESS IS IT WAS OBTAINED, OR EVEN *STOLEN*... BUT FROM WHERE I DON'T KNOW.



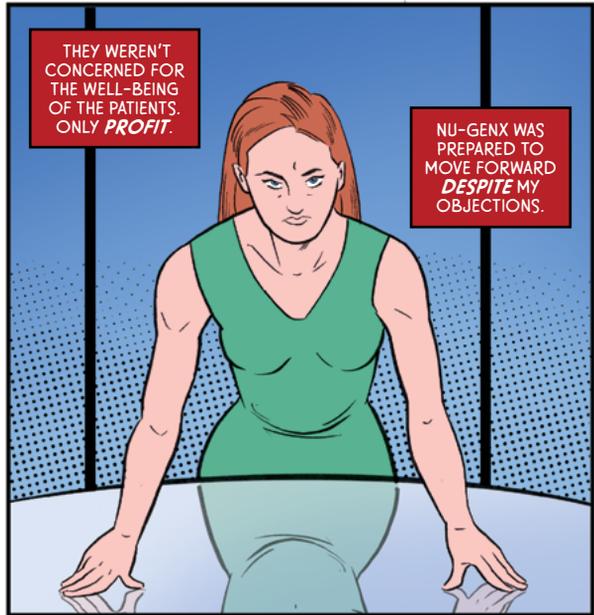
ULTIMATELY, THE TREATMENT WAS UNSUCCESSFUL IN *EVERY* CASE. IN FACT, THERE WAS *EVIDENCE* IT WAS ACTUALLY CAUSING *HARM* TO THE PATIENTS.



I RAISED MY CONCERNS, BUT THEY FELL ON *DEAF* EARS.

*PRESSURE* WAS MOUNTING FROM THE BOARD MEMBERS TO MAKE XETACEL *WORK*.

THE COMPANY HAD INVESTED *MILLIONS* OF DOLLARS IN THE PROJECT.



THEY WEREN'T CONCERNED FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE PATIENTS. ONLY *PROFIT*.

NU-GENX WAS PREPARED TO MOVE FORWARD *DESPITE* MY OBJECTIONS.



ANOTHER SCIENTIST, GERALD HENDRICKSON, TOOK *CONTROL* OF THE PROJECT.

HIS LAB HAD *SUPPLIED* THE NANOBOT TECHNOLOGY.



I TURNED IN MY *RESIGNATION* AND LEFT THE COMPANY.

UNDER THREAT OF *LEGAL* ACTION IF I EVER SPOKE OF IT.



SO YOU UNDERSTAND MY **RELUCTANCE** TO DISCUSS ANYTHING RELATED TO NU-GENX.

WHY ALL THE **SECRECY**? WHY WOULD NU-GENX KEEP THEIR OWN SCIENTISTS IN THE DARK?

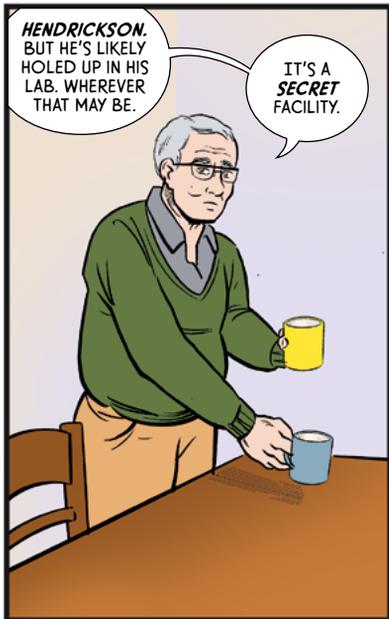


NU-GENX **AGGRESSIVELY PROTECTS** ITS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY.

DON'T BE **FOOLED** BY THEIR PHILANTHROPIC WORK, THEY ARE RUTHLESS AND PARANOID.



WHO WOULD HAVE **ACCESS** TO THE ENTIRE PROJECT? I **NEED** TO FIND OUT.



**HENDRICKSON**. BUT HE'S LIKELY HOLED UP IN HIS LAB, WHEREVER THAT MAY BE.

IT'S A **SECRET FACILITY**.

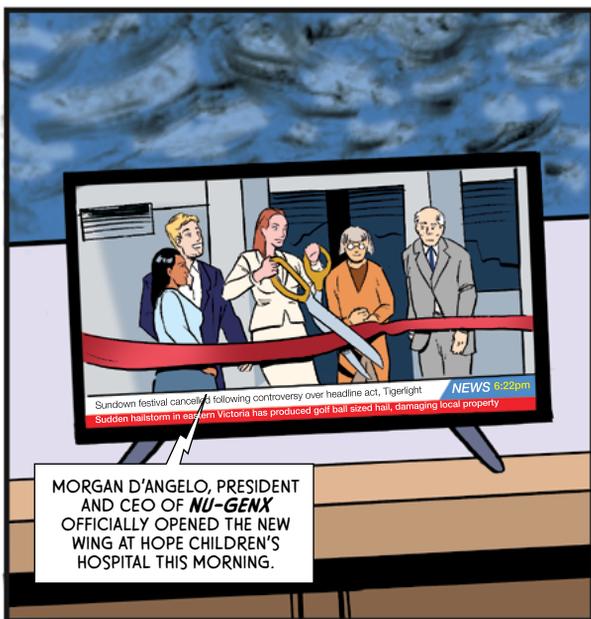


**\*SIGH\***

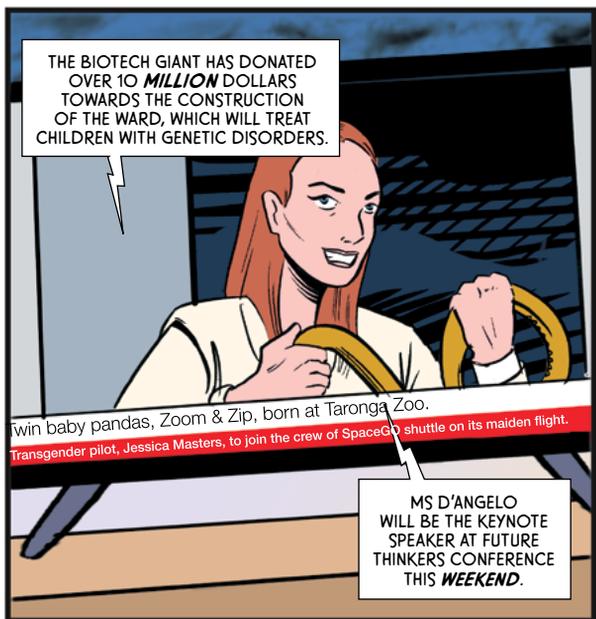
A **DEAD END**.



WELL, YOU **COULD** GO STRAIGHT TO THE TOP...



MORGAN D'ANGELO, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF **NU-GENX** OFFICIALLY OPENED THE NEW WING AT HOPE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL THIS MORNING.



THE BIOTECH GIANT HAS DONATED OVER 10 **MILLION** DOLLARS TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WARD, WHICH WILL TREAT CHILDREN WITH GENETIC DISORDERS.

twin baby pandas, Zoom & Zip, born at Taronga Zoo.  
Transgender pilot, Jessica Masters, to join the crew of SpaceG shuttle on its maiden flight.

MS D'ANGELO WILL BE THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT FUTURE THINKERS CONFERENCE THIS **WEEKEND**.



COMICS • DRINKS • EVENTS



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