

CAPTION ONE (ABOVE)
We now return you to your regularly scheduled storyline. In other words:

CAPTION TWO - MATCHMAN SPEAKING OFF-PANEL (BELOW)
“What in the world ever happened to WILHELMINA VON KENYA?”



MATCHMAN
I mean, super villains don’t just get up and walk away! Not on my watch!

SERGEANT STRIKER
I’ve been monitoring all channels in the months since her desperate escape, MATCHY my boy! We’ve found absolute zilch!

LANCE CORPOREAL
And I’ve had a devil of a time running things here single-handedly...



LANCE CORPOREAL (OFF-PANEL)
...What with DOCTOR DENDRITE still deep in the heart of coma land!*

CAPTION
*See MATCHMAN COMICS issue number eleven, oh ye of short memory!

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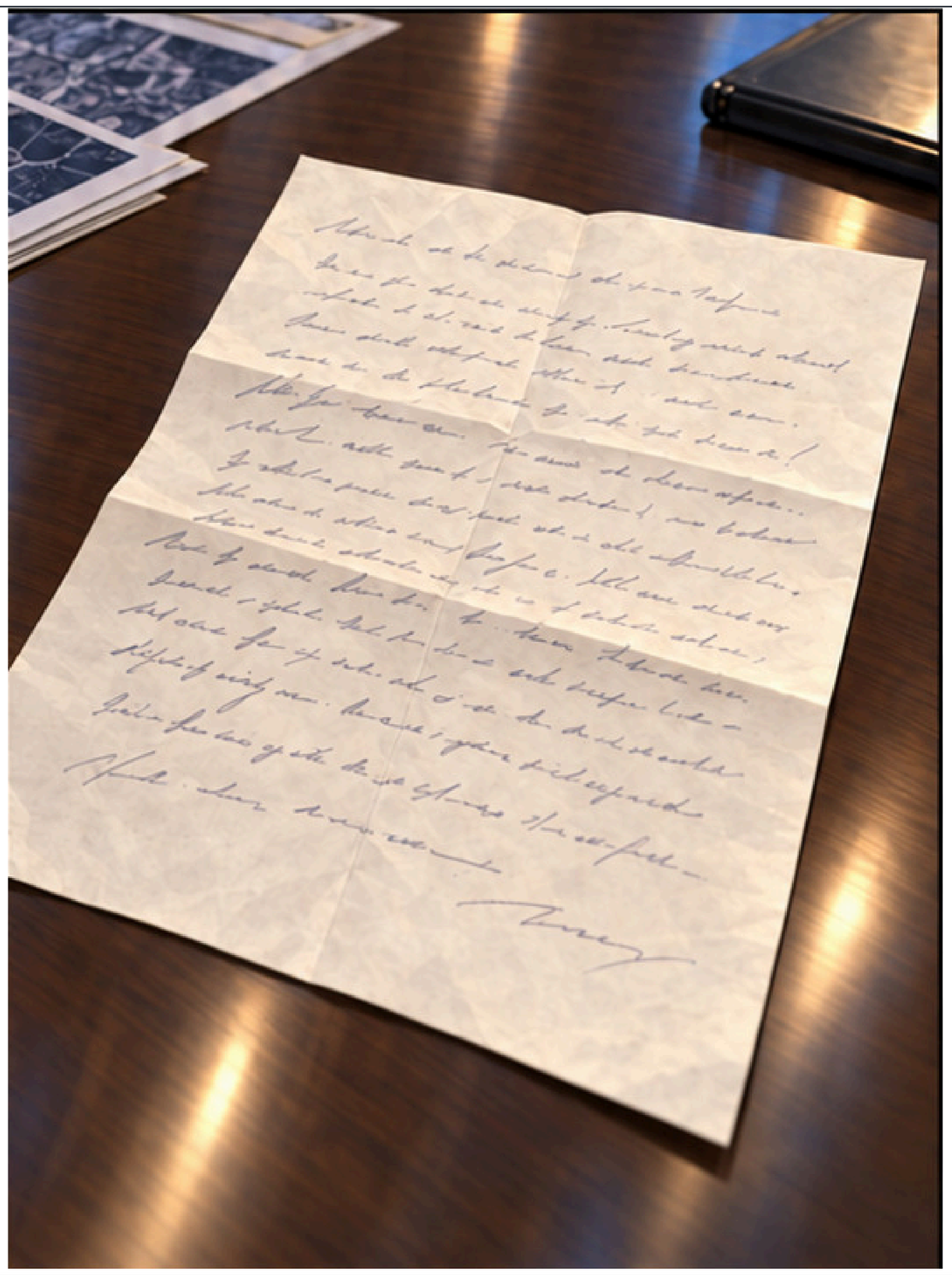
LANCE CORPOREAL
And the neuroscience specialist to whose care we have committed her has no idea when she may emerge from it!

SERGEANT STRIKER
[startled by the sudden entrance]
It's a tough break, all right! But something's bound to turn - whoa there, girl! What's the hurry! You startled the blue blazes out of me!

Z-GIRL
Stop the presses, guys! I think we have a definite lead on that nutjob's whereabouts!

MATCHMAN
I hope you mean that VON KENYA creature, Z-GIRL!



CAPTION (Z-GIRL SPEAKING)
"You're both just jealous, and you know it! Anyway, it's not just any piece of fan mail! It's from some kid out in Queens, and he's writing to say that he's stumbled across something big brewing out that way - something involving Nazis! There could a connection! We should follow this up!"



MATCHMAN (OFF-PANEL)
We get far too many of the "nutjob" category around here! What's this? It looks like my fan mail!

Z-GIRL (OFF-PANEL)
Oh, it's fan mail all right - but for me!

LANCE CORPOREAL
Hmmf. I only co-founded the whole bloody setup. No bloody fan mail ever comes for me.

SERGEANT STRIKER
Who writes fan letters to sidekicks? Talk about low self-esteem!



MATCHMAN
Right you are, my faithful factotum! This could be the break that we've been looking for! Does your secret admirer provide an address?

Z-GIRL
No, but he's arranged an undercover meet at a convenient location on the Boulevard and he said we - hey, what's a factotum?

LANCE CORPOREAL
He probably doesn't know himself, Z-GIRL! All right, you two toddle off to your impromptu interview - but be careful! Watch out for traps! You remember what happened the last time we went out to Queens!*

SERGEANT STRIKER
And I'll be monitoring you every step of the way!

CAPTION
*As do you, dear reader, if you can recall the madcap antics in MATCHMAN COMICS issue number eight!

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MATCHMAN
It sounds to me as though this young fellow has some sort of unacknowledged crush upon you, Z- GIRL! I don't need my MatchSpider radar to intuit that!

Z-GIRL
Believe me, boss, I've been thinking the same thing! He's being ludicrously cagey about the whole thing! All this secret agent stuff, and then he arranges to meet us...



CAPTION (Z-GIRL SPEAKING)
"...At a White Castle on Queens Boulevard!"



MATCHMAN
Well, here we are. Now where do you suppose our young master of disguise is -

Z-GIRL
[pointing]
There.



Z-GIRL (OFF-PANEL)
"That's gotta be him. ARNIE STETCHKIN. Self- proclaimed Jewish ninja. This oughta be good."

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Z-GIRL
ARNIE STETCHKIN, I presume? Hi. Z-GIRL. What's up with the corny shades?

MATCHMAN
MATCHMAN is here! Ugh! Do all White Castles smell like this?

ARNIE
What?!? Oh! You're here! I didn't expect - uh - wait a minute!

ARNIE
[putting on glasses]
There - that's better! Wow! Hi, Z-GIRL! You look even better in person than you do on the six o'clock news! Glad you got my letter!

Z-GIRL
Thanks, champ! Now what's all this about a lead to Nazis?

ARNIE
OK, but first - allow me to introduce my badass funky kosher self! I am the one, the only -

Z-GIRL
Yeah, yeah, I read the letter. You're ARNIE STETCHKIN, and you're some sort of ninja or something. Now take a load off and tell us what's up, if you really want to impress me, huh?

MATCHMAN
There it is again - that strange yet threatening odor!

MATCHMAN
Be careful, Z-GIRL - there may be "sliders" about! I'll keep a sharp watch!

Z-GIRL
Oh, for - yeah, you do that, boss! Okay, kid, shoot!

ARNIE (OFF-PANEL)
No problem, Z-GIRL! Anything for you! Okay, I'll take it from the top...

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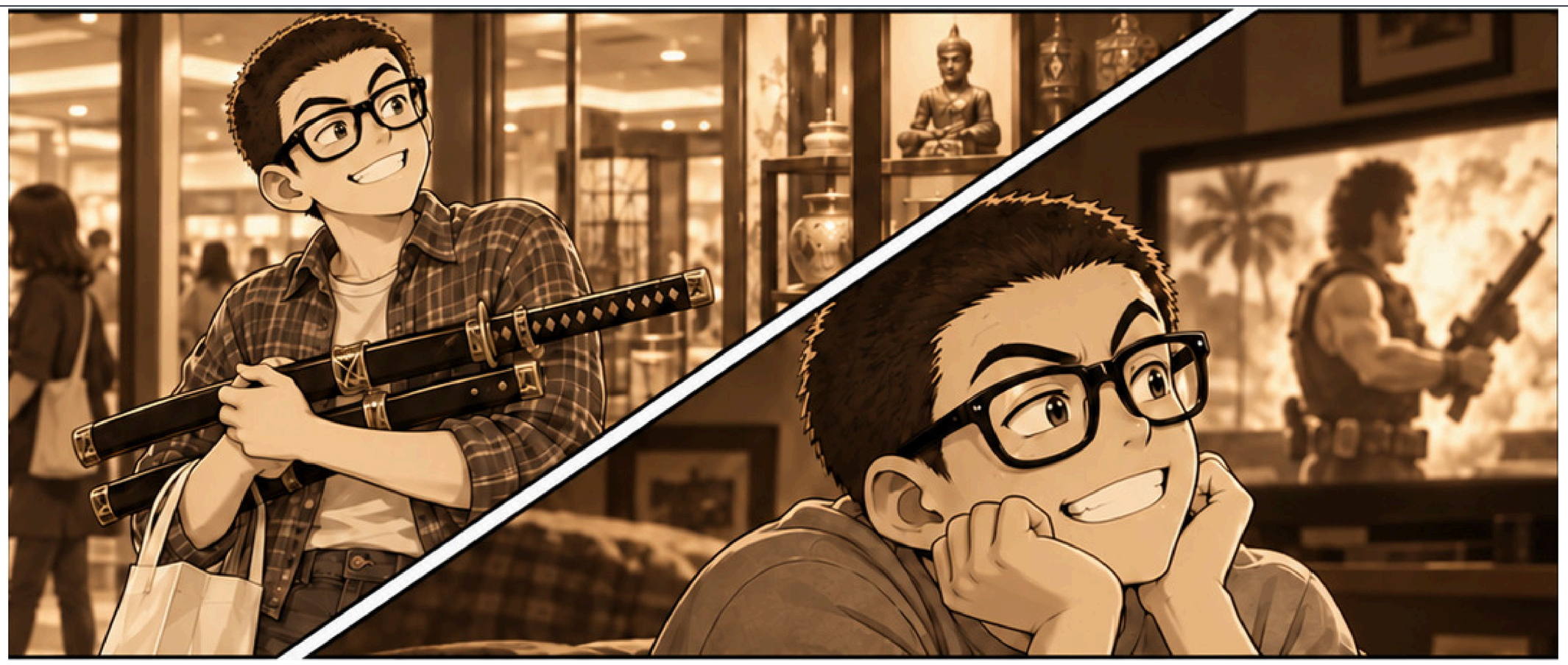
ARNIE (OFF-PANEL)
As I was saying, my name’s ARNIE STETCHKIN! I grew up here in Rego Park, and the first I heard about you guys, you were all over the news for capturing that crook Mezuzah* - right here in my own back yard, practically!

CAPTION
*Anybody remember Matchman Comics issue number 8?



CAPTION (ARNIE SPEAKING)
So I picked up a couple of swords at the Pier One and started taking classes in ninjitsu at City College! My parents thought I was completely meshugganah! I also watched a ton of bad action flicks - Invasion USA, Delta Force, Commando, Cobra, the Missing in Action movies, all the Rambo movies, of course, and anything with Dolph Lundgren in it! Or Wesley Snipes! The classics!



CAPTION (ARNIE SPEAKING)
But mostly, I decided to devote my life to fighting crime because of you, Z-GIRL! I wanted to prove myself worthy of your love! You’re the meaning in my life, Z-GIRL - you’re the inspiration!

CAPTION (Z-GIRL SPEAKING)
[amused yet oddly flattered]
The road to a girl’s heart isn’t paved with Chicago lyrics, kid! Movin’ on...

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ARNIE (OFF-PANEL)
...So, I busted my butt down at the dojo, taking every class I could to further my combat skills! Not just ninjitsu, but kojitsu, the Way of the Sword, and also some unarmed fighting styles. Anytime anyone made a joke about “jew-jitsu” in my presence, he went home wearing his teeth for a necklace! ‘Cause homey don’t play that!



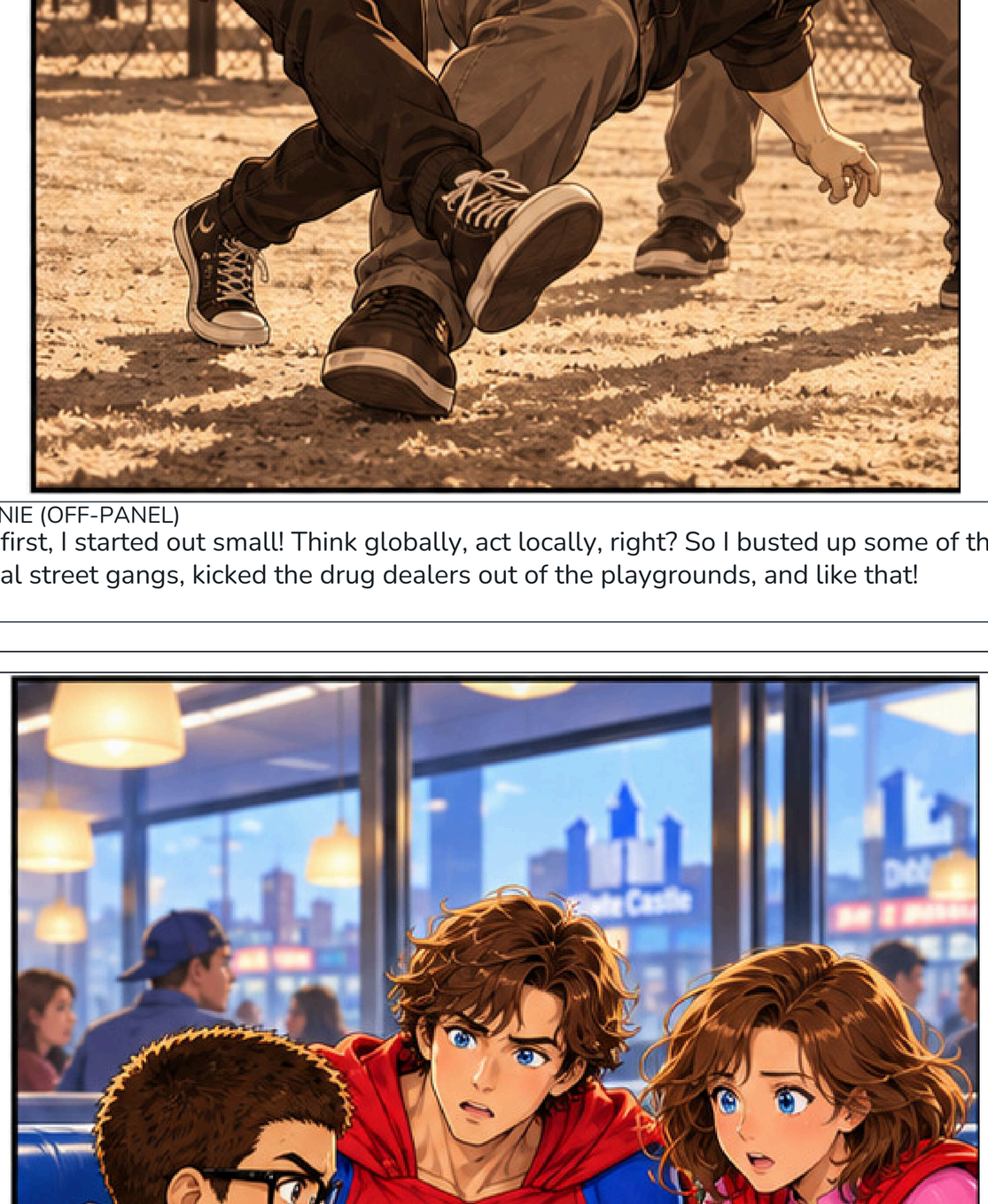
ARNIE (OFF-PANEL)
At first, I started out small! Think globally, act locally, right? So I busted up some of the local street gangs, kicked the drug dealers out of the playgrounds, and like that!



ARNIE (OFF-PANEL)
But then, I stumbled across proof of an operation so big, that the implications rocked me! I knew that I was in over my head! So I decided to call in the big guns - you guys! Besides, I owed you some fan mail, Z-GIRL - I just never signed any of the others!

Z-GIRL (OFF-PANEL)
Great. You’re not that weirdo who keeps sending me black jellybeans, are you?

ARNIE AGAIN (OFF-PANEL)
No! I hate black jellybeans! Almost as much as I hate Nazis! And that’s what I’m talkin’ about here, MATCHMAN! Nothing less...



ARNIE
[agitated, with great emphasis]
...Than an international Nazi conspiracy! I’m talkin’ about the Fourth Reich here, guys!

Z-GIRL
More like the Eighth or Ninth Reich!

MATCHMAN
This is very serious stuff, ARNIE! Show us to the evidence, pronto!

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ARNIE (OFF-PANEL)
[triumphantly]
Check it out!

MATCHMAN AND Z-GIRL (OFF-PANEL IN UNISON)
What?!?

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ARNIE
What are you, blind? It’s a toy monkey!

Z-GIRL
Yeah, we can see that, champ! But what does this ugly thing have to do with an international Nazi conspiracy?

MATCHMAN
I always knew those things were pure evil!

ARNIE
Here, see what I’m sayin’?

SOUND F/X
Keerunch!

Z-GIRL
Huh? What the - !? But that’s - a transmitter of some kind!

ARNIE
Damn skippy! It’s a brainwashing device, tuned so as to convert innocent youth to the seductive specter of idiotic and obsolete racial doctrines!

MATCHMAN
We must strike at the source! Back to VALCom at once - LANCE needs to be briefed! Stat!

SALESPERSON
[running up all irate]
You break it you bought it buddy!

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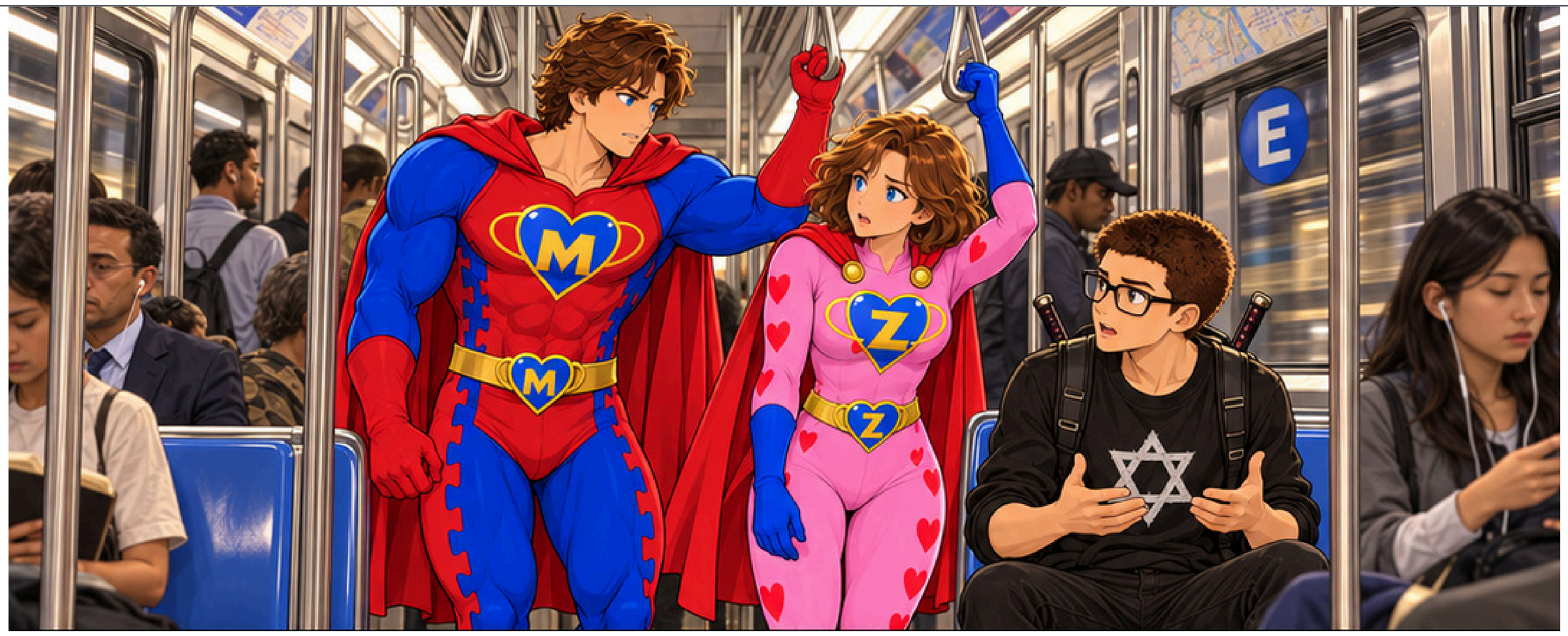
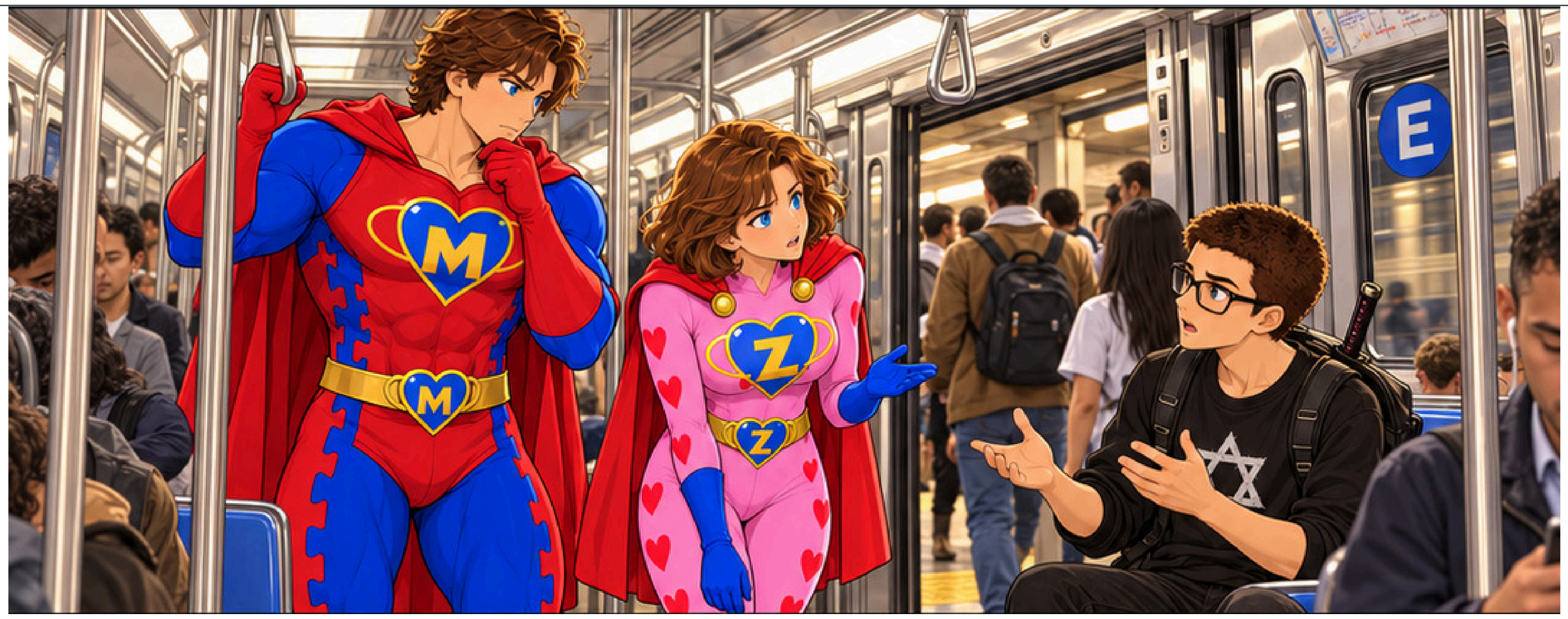


MATCHMAN
Well, this certainly does explain the rise in neo-Nazi attitudes among the ignorant and wayward youth of America!

Z-GIRL
Inserting brain scramblers into children’s toys! Who on earth would do such a thing?

ARNIE
[matter-of-factly]
JORG MEISTERBADER.



Z-GIRL
Come again?

ARNIE
JORG MEISTERBADER. He’s a renegade toy manufacturer based out of the Black Forest region of Lower Swabia in south-western Germany. I go to work, honey lamb.

MATCHMAN
MEISTERBADER! I wonder if there could be a connection between him and VON KENYA! This is getting deep!



MATCHMAN
Nazis of a feather flock together! I’ll bet that by manhandling this MEISTERBADER for a while, we could extract some information about VON KENYA’s current whereabouts!

Z-GIRL
This is taking forever! We should have flown back! I can’t believe you’re that afraid of flying!

ARNIE
I’m not afraid of flying! I’m afraid of plummeting thirty thousand feet to a hideous death by cement poisoning! There’s a big difference!

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CAPTION
Finally, back at VALentine Complex...

LANCE CORPOREAL
(OFF-PANEL)
[speech balloon emanating from building]
I don't like it, MATCHMAN! It's too chancy!

MATCHMAN
[speech balloon emanating from building]
It's a risk that we're going to have to take, LANCE! There's no two ways about it!



LANCE CORPOREAL
[agitated]
But if the two of you go wafting off to Swabia, that will leave us short-handed here at home! What if DOCTOR DEJECTION decides to strike while you're away?

MATCHMAN
He's been fairly quiescent lately! Besides, we absolutely must nab VON KENYA while there's still time! I recall her fiendish monologue about her plans to rule the earth! The fox must be run to ground!

ARNIE
Wow...I can't believe I'm actually in the VALCom lounge itself! This rocks ass! So what do you guys do in here?

Z-GIRL
[somewhat abashed]
Um, drink coffee and watch the news, mostly...



Z-GIRL
I have to agree with MATCHMAN! Although I never encountered her personally, this WILHELMINA VON KENYA character sounds like one the toughest and most resourceful threats that VALCom has ever had to face!

MATCHMAN
And this MEISTERBADER may be our only link! The sooner we get to Swabia and spank both him and his monkeys, the sooner we can rest easy!

LANCE CORPOREAL
I still don't like it! That'll leave me, SERGEANT STRIKER, and the DOUBLESIGN TWINS to mind the shop - what with the kiddies in school again now!

ARNIE
How exactly are we getting to Swabia? You know I don't -



ARNIE
- Like flying! Are we there yet? It's freaking freezing up here!

MATCHMAN
Have no fear - Swabia is near! And the jet stream is nice and clear...today.

Z-GIRL
Ouch! You're slipping, boss!

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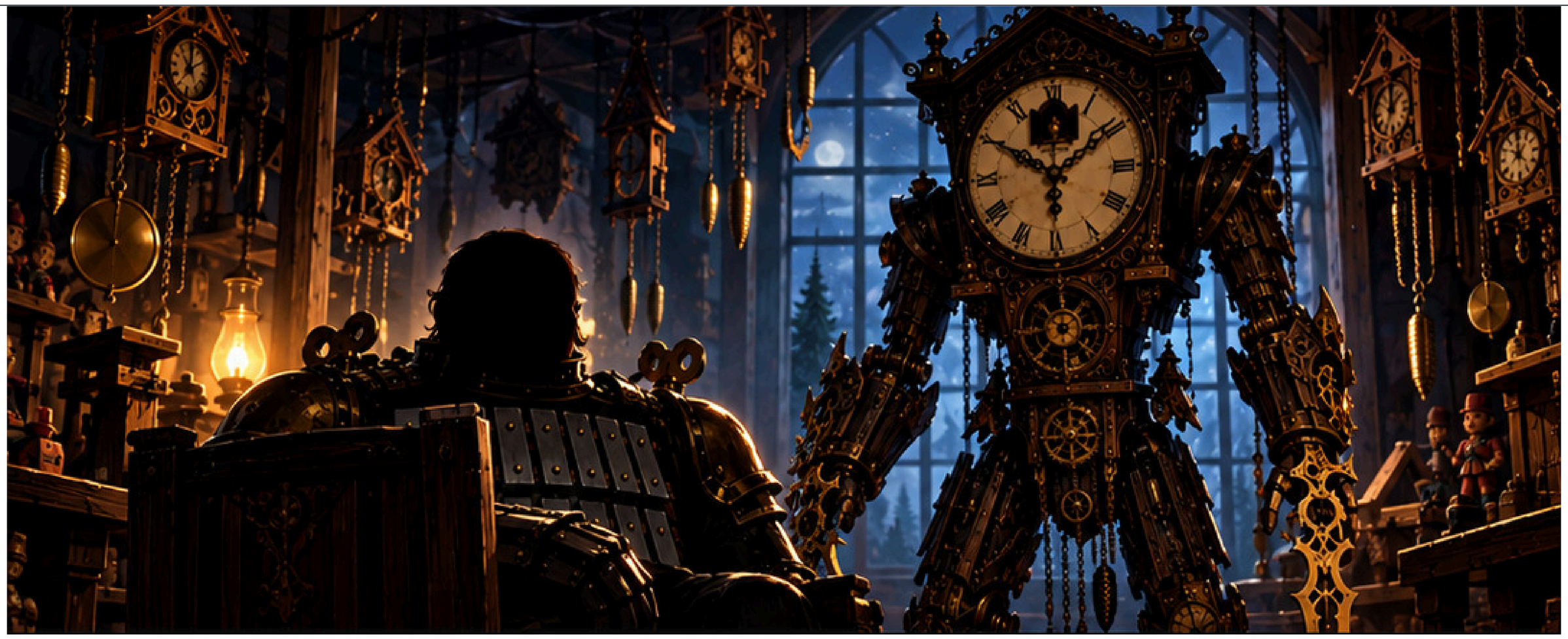
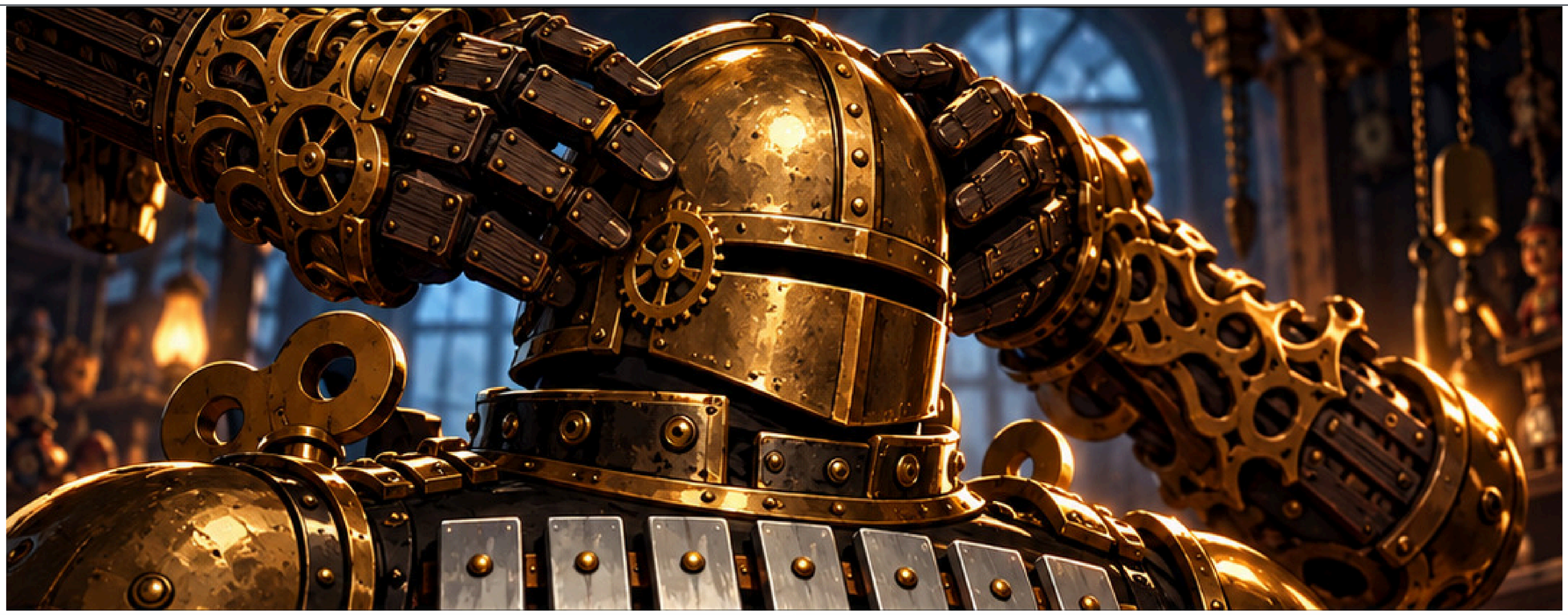


JORG MEISTERBADER
Is my battle armor ready, CLOCKFACE?

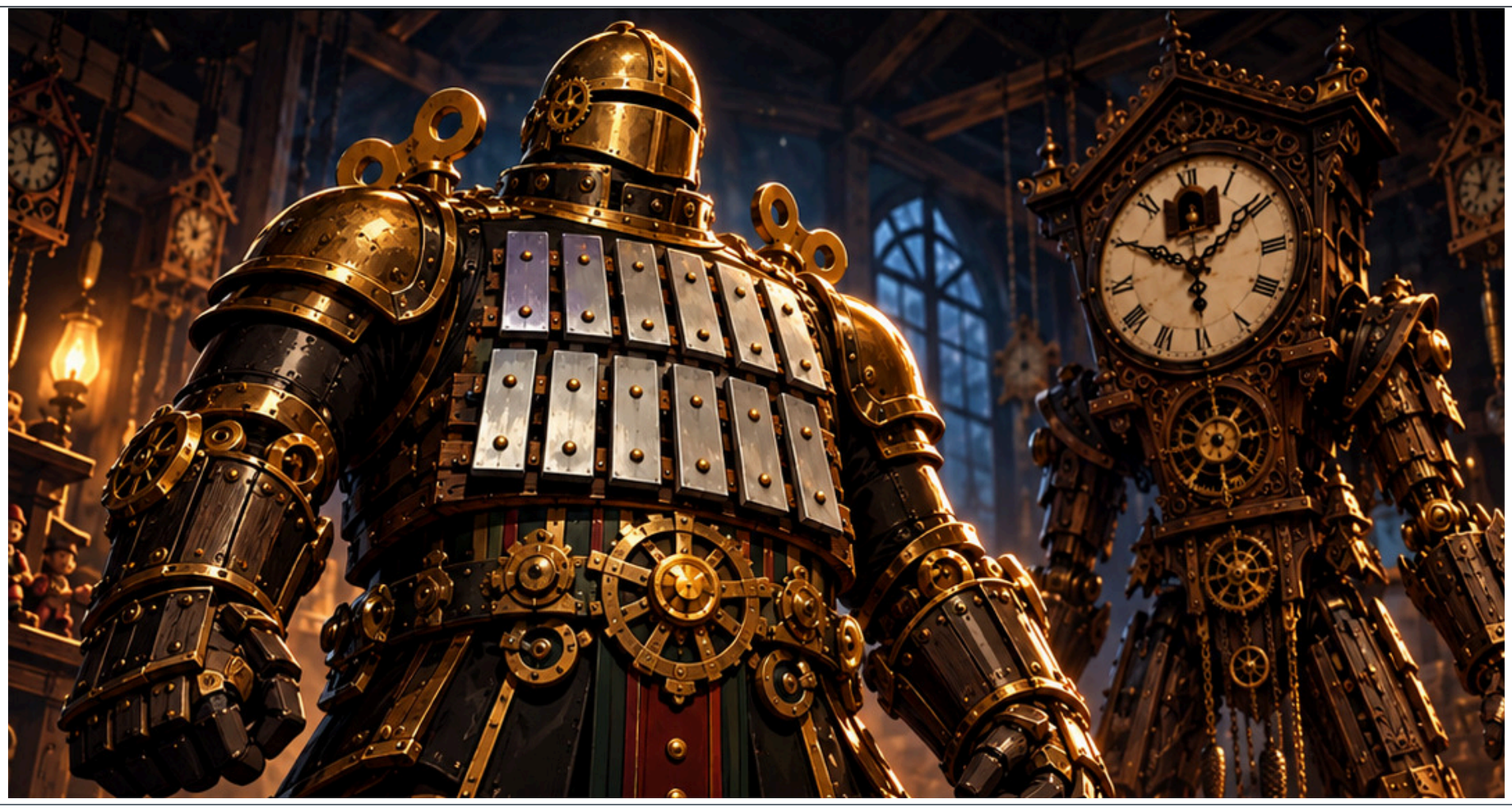
CLOCKFACE
Almost, (tick) mein Spielzeugfuehrer!*

CAPTION
*literally, “Toy Leader,” in German.



CLOCKFACE
Final touch (tock) - the helm! Now iss complete (tick)!

JORG MEISTERBADER
Splendid!



JORG MEISTERBADER
No longer shall I be known to the world as JORG MEISTERBADER, mild-manner manufacturer of quality playthings! From this moment on, I am...



JORG MEISTERBADER AKA DER GLOCKENSPIEL
...DER GLOCKENSPIEL! HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

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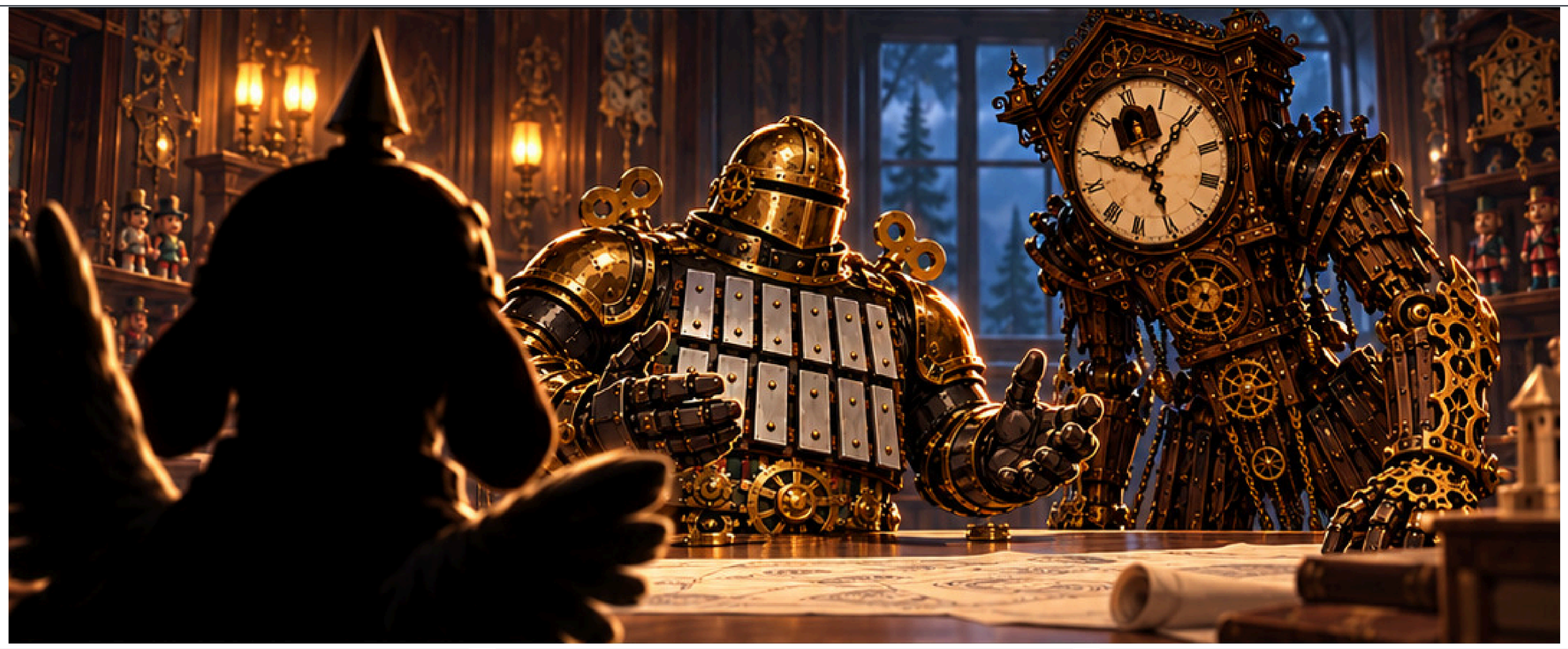
DER GLOCKENSPIEL
Your offer is tempting, but there are concerns about your Mistress's recent successes that must be addressed before any action can be taken!

CLOCKFACE
Vat (tick) he said (tock), ja!

MYSTERIOUS VOICE OFF-PANEL
And just what concerns would these be, gentlemen?



DER GLOCKENSPIEL
Her quest for the bartered alien technology is going far too well for our liking! We want a cut of the proceeds - otherwise we fear that we will merely become her minions and not her comrades- in-arms!

CLOCKFACE
It iss all too (tick) likely that thiss negotiation (tock) tac-(tick)-tic is a rruse, mein Spielzeugfuehrer! Even (tock) now, the defenses should be manned (tick)! Schnell!

MYSTERIOUS VOICE OFF-PANEL
Don't be any more ridiculous than you can help, CLOCKFACE...



SCHLINKENHAMMER
...You know as well as do I that my mistress is many thousands of kilometers from here at the moment!

CLOCKFACE (OFF-PANEL)
Zo (tock) you ssay!

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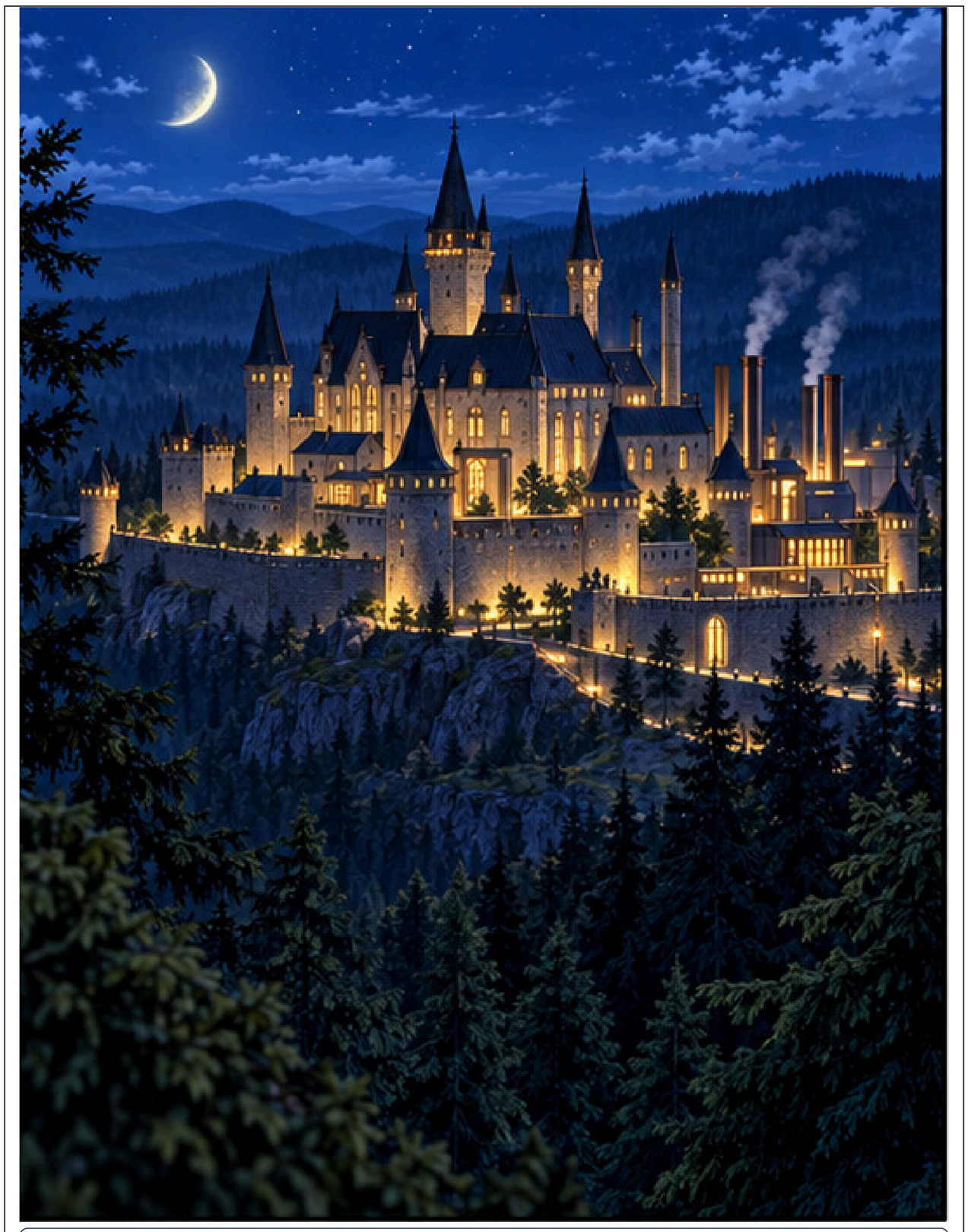

CAPTION (ARNIE SPEAKING)
“Well, there it is, dudes - MR. MEISTERBADER’s little love nest. What’s the plan?”



MATCHMAN
It’s anyone’s guess as to the exact nature of his twisted arsenal! MEISTERBADER obviously has the entire Black Forest in his strong grip!

Z-GIRL
I don’t know if we’re up to plowing through whatever insane toy army he’s got in there!

ARNIE
Peep this, dogs...



ARNIE
...This is the moment I’ve been waiting for! I can use my bad ninja skillz to slip in there and snatch MEISTERBADER and force him to pay his billz! Whaddaya say? You up?



Z-GIRL
Well, it only makes sense to use a ninja if we bring him along for the ride, right?

MATCHMAN
As long as he doesn’t try to kill anything invulnerable!

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DER GLOCKENSPIEL
Then our response must be a flat refusal! I shall never acknowledge that madwoman VON KENYA as the leader of our movement, technology or no technology! The answer is “No!” These negotiations are terminated!

CLOCKFACE
I susspect (tick) somezing! I muzt (tock) inspect our (tick) defenses at (tock) w- (tock) wun- (tock) wun- (tick) in ein Augenblick!

SCHLINKENHAMMER
So, that is your final answer, then? It is about what I expect from such an army of fools! My mistress will be most displeased!

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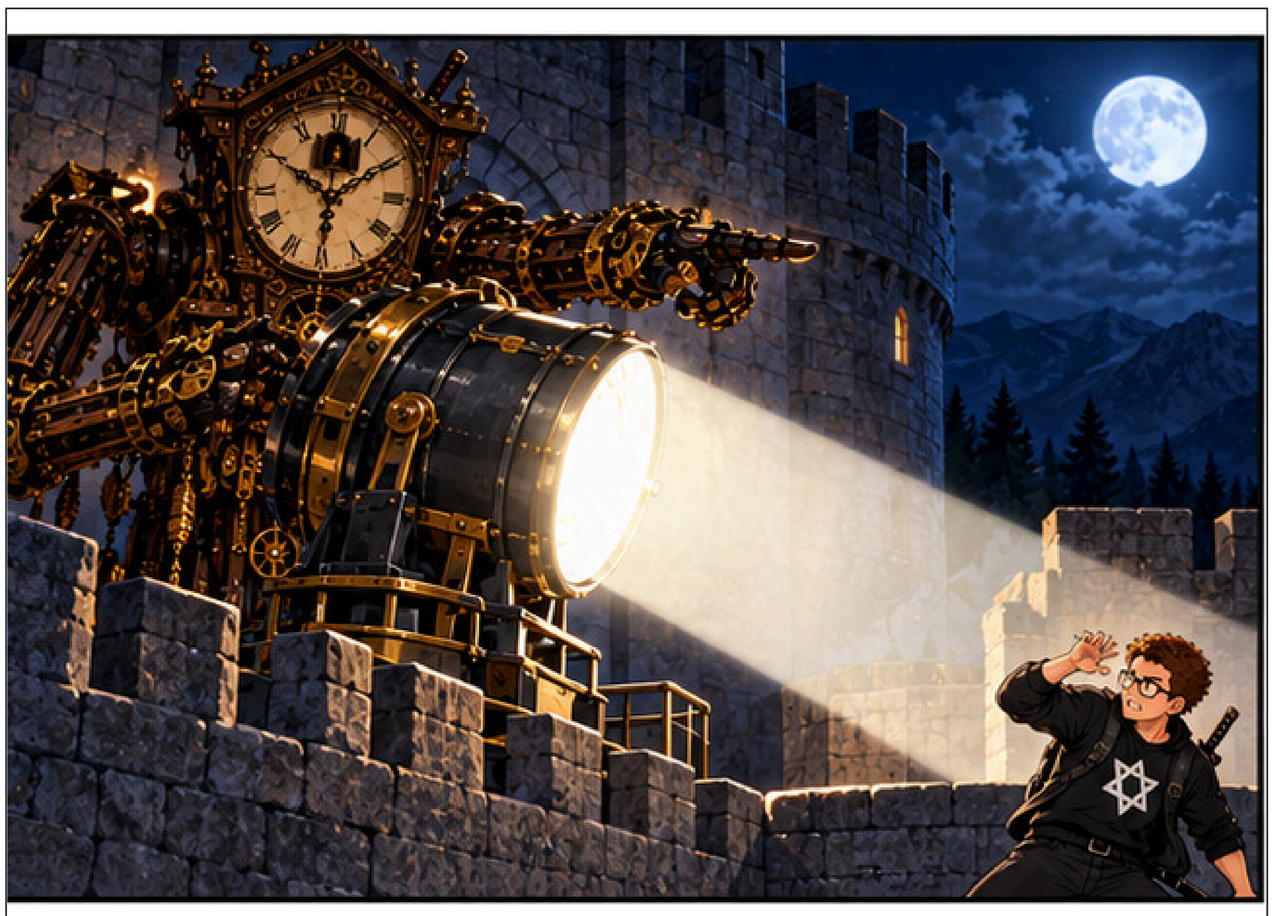
ARNIE
[thinks]
Sword of Gideon!

SOUND F/X
Wsssssshh! Thunk! Thunk!



ARNIE
[thinks]
Throwing stars of David!



CLOCKFACE
Aha! It (tick) iss a sneak attack (tock) after all! Halten sie!

ARNIE
[thinks, surprised]
Golan Globus!



ARNIE
Your mother's an astronaut!

SOUND F/X
Fwizzzzzzz!



CLOCKFACE
Aaaaaaaaa(tick)aaaaaaaaargh!

SOUND F/X
Skrash!

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CAPTION
And...all hell breaks loose!

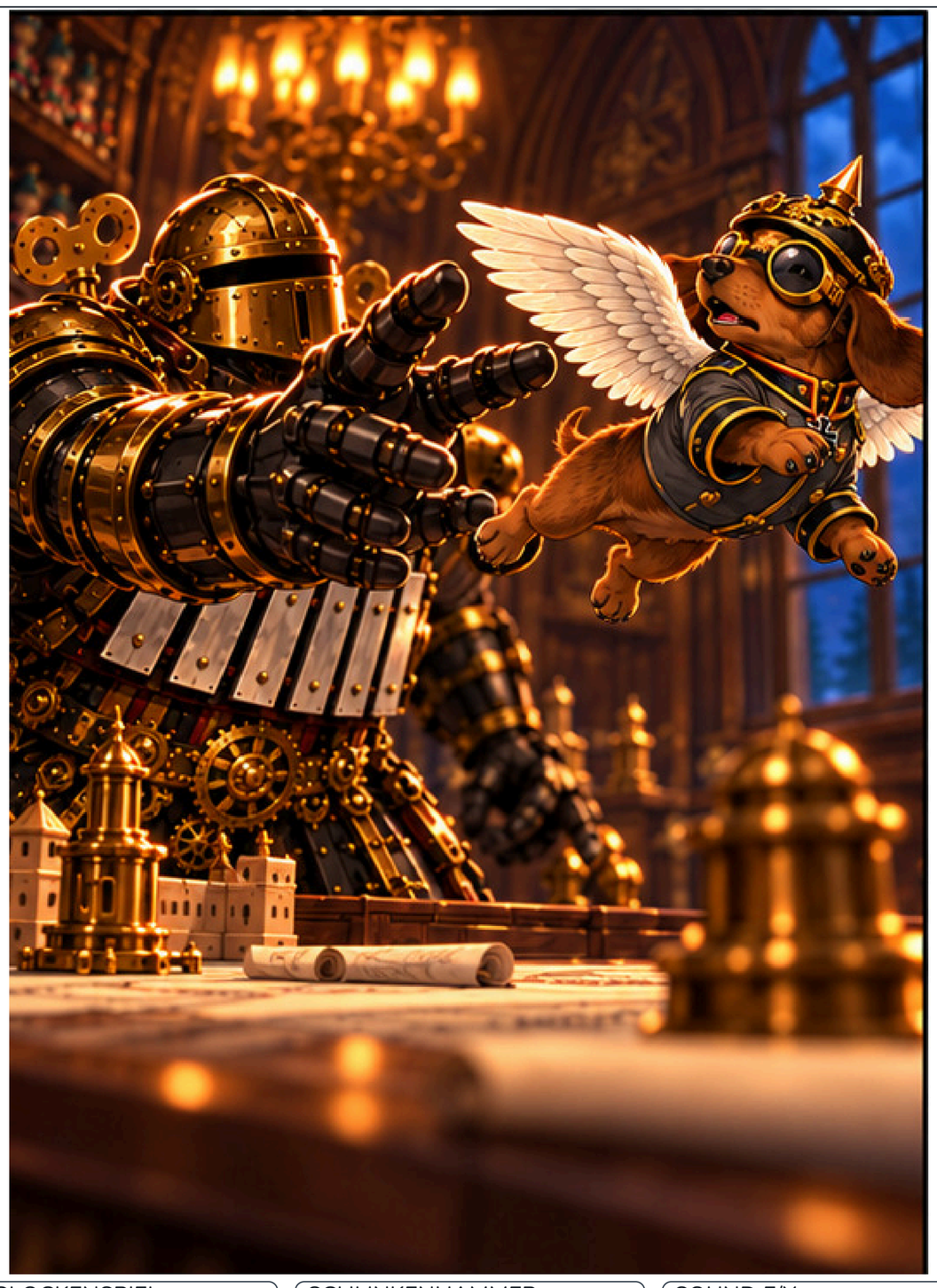
SOUND F/X
Wreeeeeooooow! Wreeeeeeeooooooow! Whonk! Whonk! Wreeeeeooooow! Whonk! Klang klang klang klang! Etc. Etc. Etc.



DER GLOCKENSPIEL
[visibly surprised]
What the - ! So CLOCKFACE was right! It was a trap, all along! Even now, your two-faced owner is attacking us!

SCHLINKENHAMMER
[fluttering up agitated]
Impossible! She is thousands of kilometers away in the Antarctic! This is the truth! I swear it!

SOUND F/X
Wreeeeeooooooow! Wreeeeeeooooow! Wreeeeeooooow!



DER GLOCKENSPIEL
[furious]
I will crush you with my bare hands, schweinhund!

SCHLINKENHAMMER
Butterfingern!

SOUND F/X
Grab! Swisssh!



DER GLOCKENSPIEL
Your mistress will suffer a thousand deaths for this outrageous attack upon a blood brother!

SCHLINKENHAMMER
You are a fool, and, like all fools, must fight your own battles! Spater!

SOUND F/X
Wreeeeeooooooow! Wreeeeeeooooow! Wreeeeeooooow!

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MATCHMAN
There’s no time to lose! We have to save ARNIE’s hide before MEISTERBADER gets a grasp on the situation!

Z-GIRL
Are you talking like that on purpose?

SOUND F/X
Whap! Bam! Pow! Krunk! Whomp! Biff! Socko!

DER GLOCKENSPIEL
[thinks]
And to think that she tried to convince me that VALentine Complex was threatening to attack me - just so that she could divert my suspicions from her own attack, here, now! VALCom would never suspect me! After all, I haven’t done anything yet to attract their attention! They can’t possibly be on to me! Such perfidy!

SOUND F/X
Wreeeeeeoooow! Wreeeeeoooow! Wreeeeeooooooow!

MATCHMAN
Take that! (urfff) Like what?

Z-GIRL
You know, that constant (umph) stream of...you know, references, to... Oh, forget I said anything!

SOUND F/X
Wham! Clink! Clatter! Pow! Boff! Thunk! Whoom!

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DER GLOCKENSPIEL
[eyes wide in disbelief]
Gott im Himmel! It is them! VALCom has come for me! The dog was not lying! The vixen was right - dead right! Now what do I do?

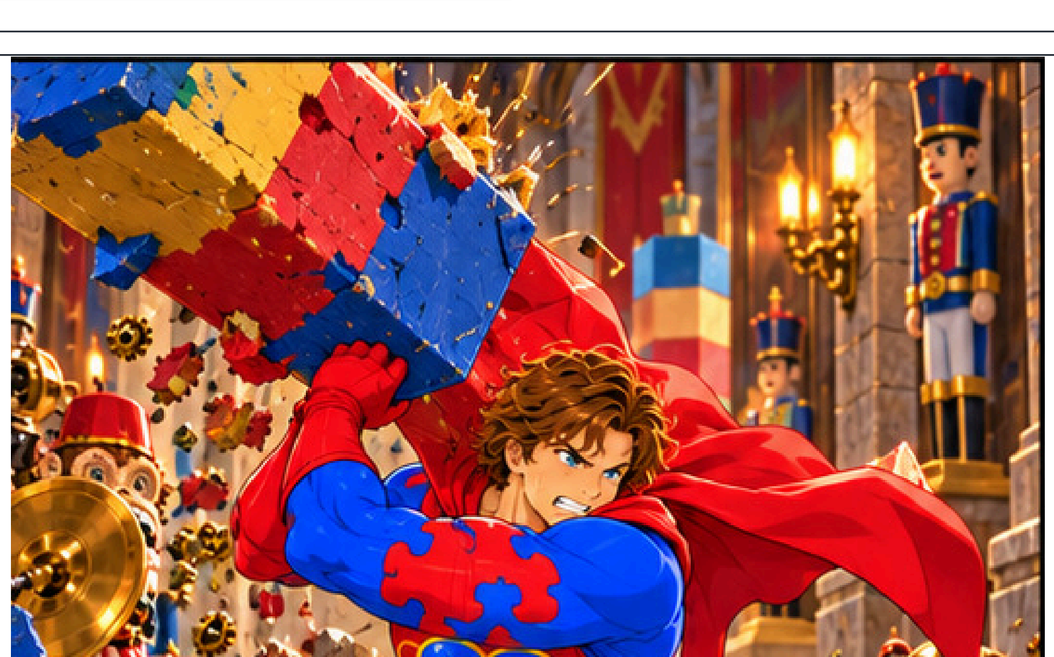
SOUND F/X (OFF-PANEL)
Whap! Boom! Ching! Clank! Smash! Klunk! Thoom!



ARNIE
I must break you!

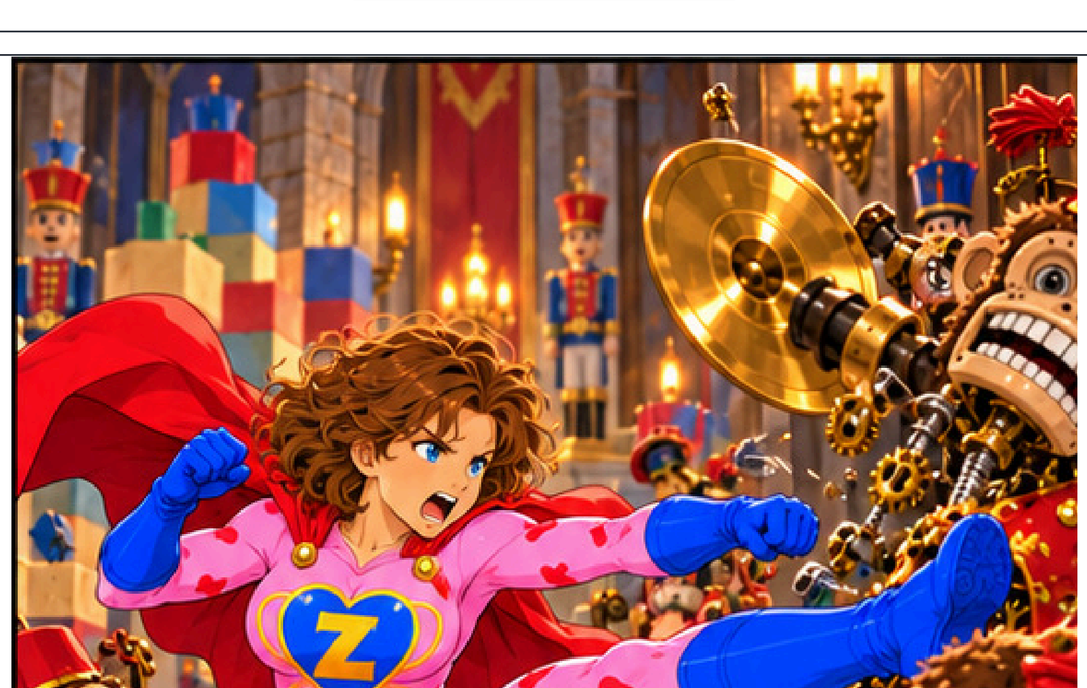
CLOCKFACE
To tha tick tock ya don’t stop stop!

SOUND F/X
Kaklang!



MATCHMAN
[thinks]
References? What references? I have no idea what she’s talking about!

SOUND F/X
Keerunch!



Z-GIRL
No shprecken zee doitsh, baby!

SOUND F/X
Whap! Bam! Smash! Klang! Klang! Thud! Grunch!

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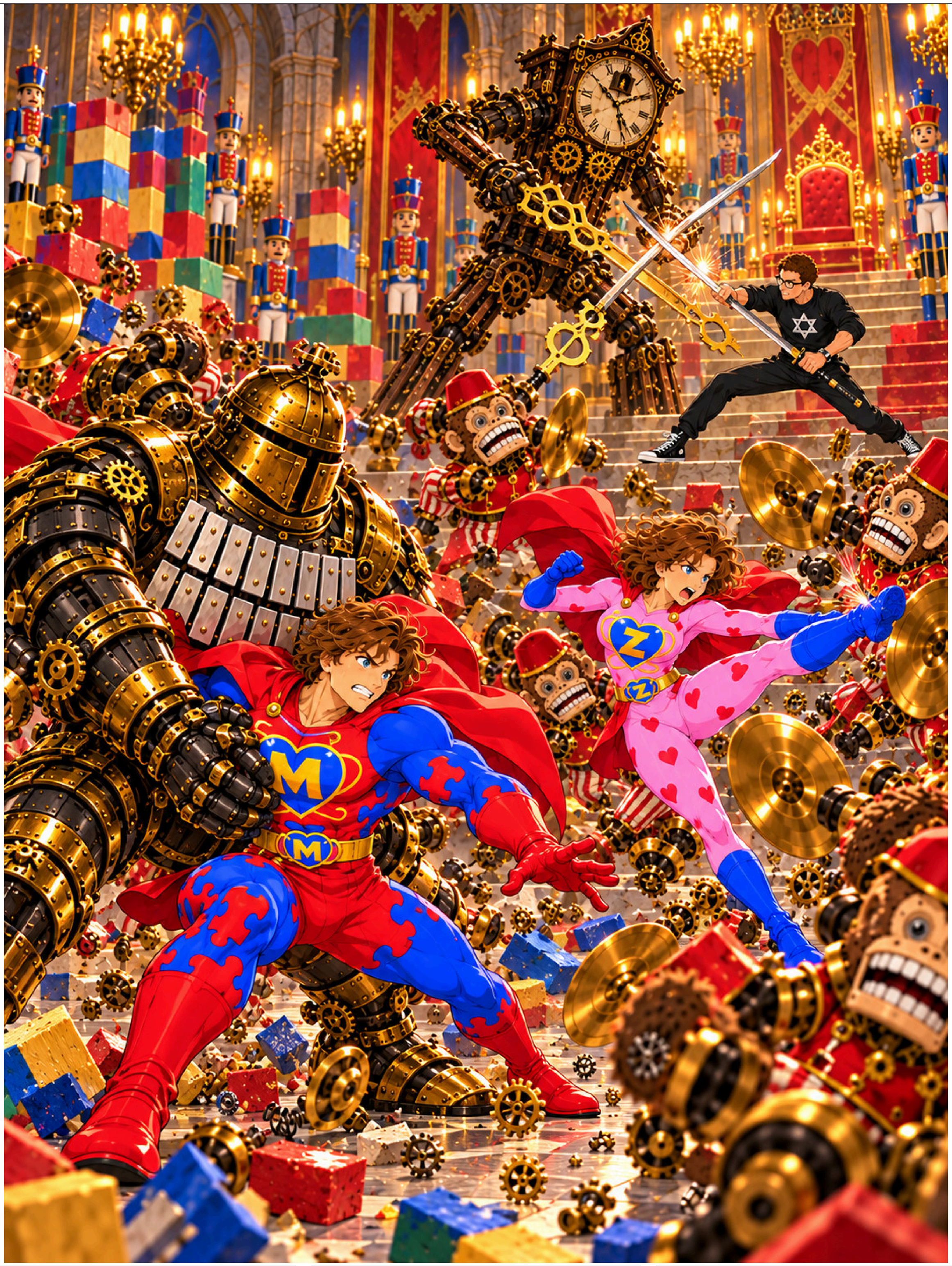

DER GLOCKENSPIEL
[frenzied]
Yaaaah! I will teach you the meaning of pain!

MATCHMAN
[astonished]
Yaphet Kotto!

ARNIE
[to CLOCKFACE]
You ever play roulette, goon? Always bet on black!

SOUND F/X
Kawham! Bam! Thud! Bash! Smash! Crash! Slash! etc.

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Z-GIRL
Laugh while you can, monkey boy!

SOUND F/X
Whap! Bam! Thud! Klang! Klash! Chunk! Wham! Krash!

Z-GIRL
That was more fun than a barrel full of...oh, wait...geez, it's like telling someone how well your hotcakes are selling!

CLOCKFACE
Ssuck my (tick) clock!

ARNIE
Kiss my Converse!

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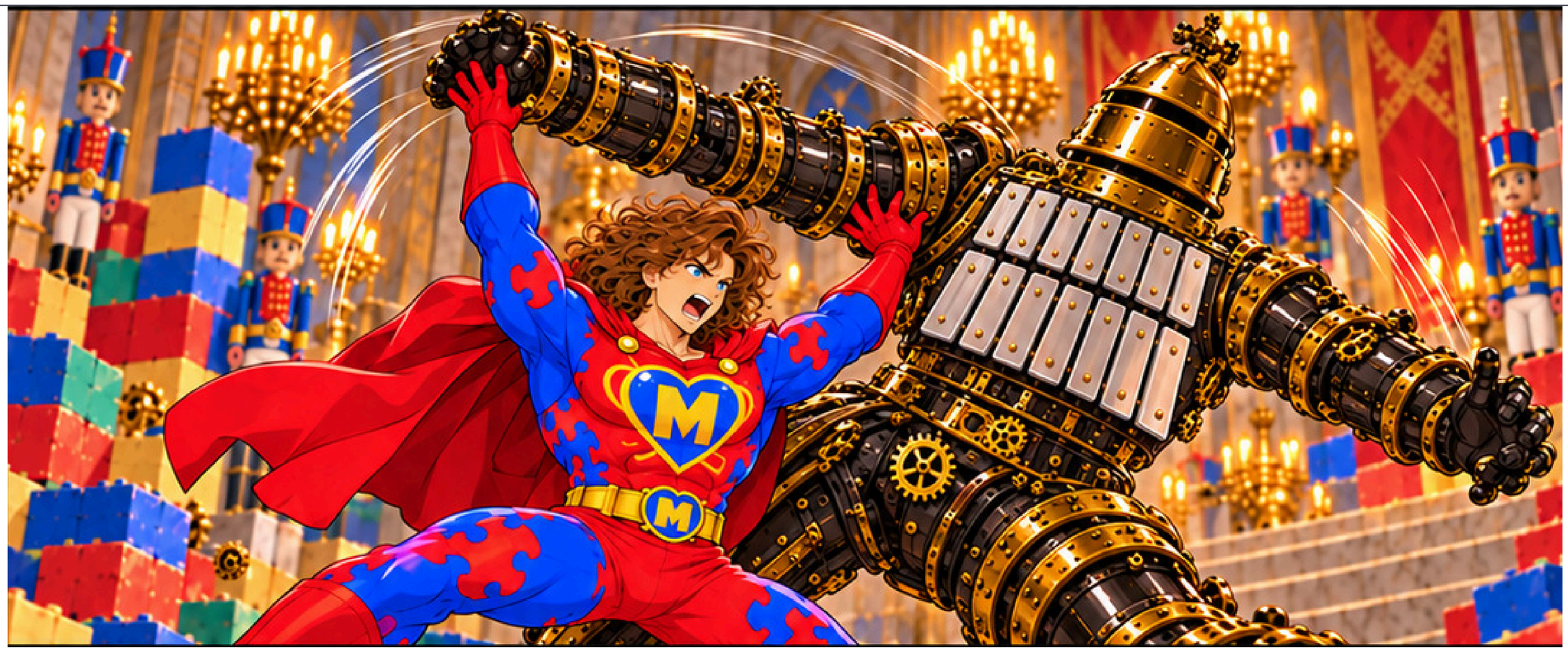
SOUND F/X
Fwizzzzsh! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!



MATCHMAN
Hands off the merchandise, Nazi scum!

DER GLOCKENSPIEL
Urmff! Slipped through my fingers!

SOUND F/X
Whomp!



MATCHMAN
This just doesn’t sound the same without a sousaphone and a drum majorette!

DER GLOCKSPIEL
Urrrrgh!

CAPTION
MATCHMAN is actually playing a crude rendition of “Greensleeves” here, folks!

SOUND F/X
Plink! Plonk! Tink! Tank! Tink! Plink! Plonk!

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ARNIE (OFF-PANEL)
Peace out, adversary! You weren't half bad...for a punk! I am the shiznik!



MATCHMAN
Allow me to lend you a helping hand, Z-GIRL!

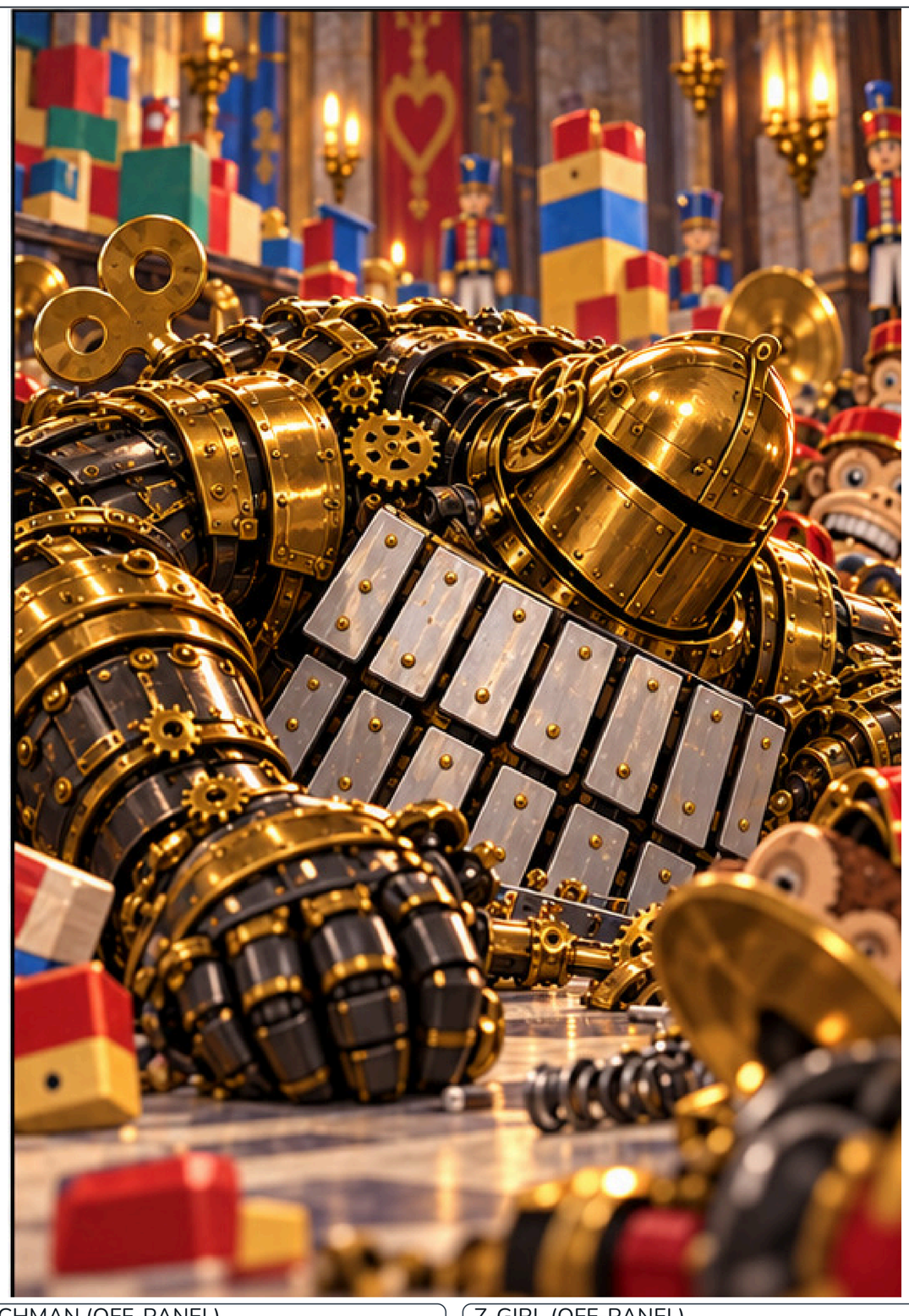
Z-GIRL
Thanks, big guy! Looks like ARNIE made out okay over there in his first big battle!



MATCHMAN
Congratulations, MR. STETCHKIN! Excellent work! You'll make a welcome addition to the team...that is, if your parents will sign the release form!

Z-GIRL
Awesome work, ARNIE! You've taken your first step into a larger world!

ARNIE
[embarrassed at the praise and the kiss]
Awww...um...Ain't no thang!



MATCHMAN (OFF-PANEL)
Now all that remains is to choke some secrets out of this chicken! I'm sure it'll be a gripping saga!

Z-GIRL (OFF-PANEL)
There! You did it again! Twice! Do you listen to yourself when you talk?

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Z-GIRL
Three guess as to who that is!

ARNIE
Hey! That's that clown MEISTERBADER! I recognize him from the research I did at the library! Wonder where he got the wacked-out armor?

MATCHMAN
Right you are, true believers! And now...

SOUND F/X
Clunk!



MATCHMAN
All right, you wretched racist toymonger! Talk! Where is WILHELMINA VON KENYA?

Z-GIRL
You heard the man! Spill it!

ARNIE
I could maybe persuade him a little?

JORG MEISTERBADER
No, no...I'll tell you everything...(sob)...my beautiful toy empire...(sniff) dissolved into thin air! Like that! And all because of...(sob)...her!

CAPTION
"...He's going to tell us everything he knows about a certain madwoman who's run amok!"



JORG MEISTERBADER
She isn't even (choke) here, MATCHMAN! She never was! She's thousands of kilometers away in (sob) Antarctica! She gave me what I (sniff) thought was a cock-and-bull story about alien technologies bartered to the original Nazis decades ago during the war, and since abandoned in the ice! Oh yes - one idea was uppermost in her mind! She wanted to find an actual flying saucer - one that the Third Reich had left on autopilot high in the atmosphere - and loaded with enough thermonuclear warheads to turn an entire continent into a sea of radioactive glass!

MATCHMAN (OFF-PANEL)
Gasp! The nuclear frisbee! Then there's no time to lose!



MATCHMAN
If VON KENYA gets her grubby Nazi mitts on that thing, then the safety of the entire world will be at stake! Our course of action is clear! Form up, team! We've got to locate that lunatic in Antarctica tout suite and stop her before she finds that nuclear frisbee!

ARNIE
Um...the what?

Z-GIRL
It's a long story! I'll tell you later!

CAPTION
Talk about a cliffhanger ending! Tune in next time for the third and final installment of the Ultima Thule Project storyline, as MATCHMAN and WILHELMINA VON Kenya go head-to-head in the wastes of Antarctica as they battle for nothing less than global supremacy! Don't dare miss MATCHMAN's stunning sixteenth issue:

CAPTION
UNTERGANGSTA!

CAPTION
THE END

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