ASTRA OBSCURA

THE BLACK LEDGER

ISSUE ONE



A GRIMDARK SPACE-OPERA TALE OF

TRADE, DEBT, AND THE TERROR BEYOND THE BINNENZEE.

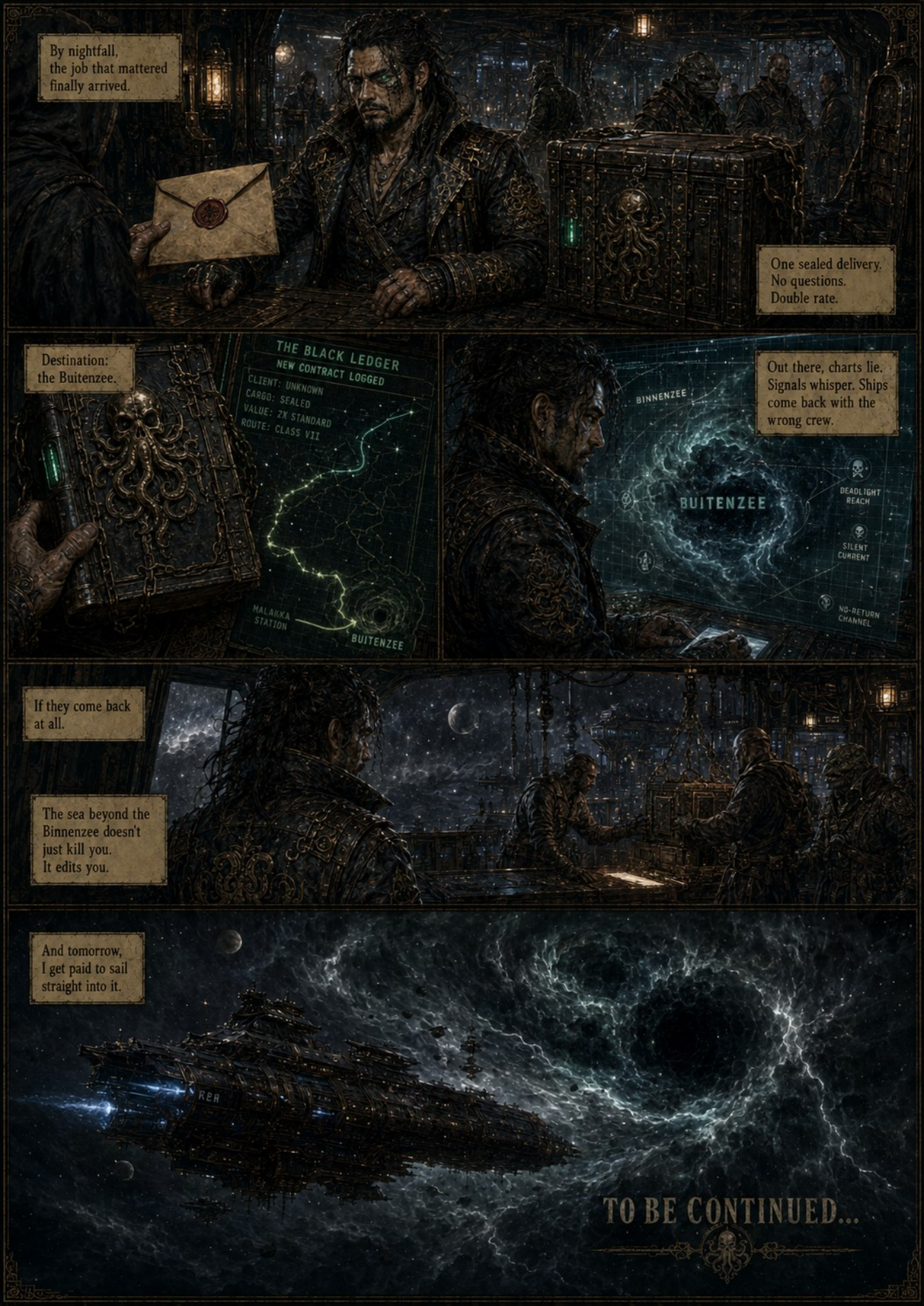
CHAPTER ONE:

PROFIT, DEBT, AND BAD WEATHER




The Astral Caliphates were first. They wanted forbidden route charts.
The charts are acceptable, Captain Storm.
ASTRAL CALIPHATES
They paid on time. Clean credits. No haggling. A rare blessing.
Then so is the price.
ASTRAL CALIPHATES
CREDIT TRANSFER
10,000 CR.
Second stop was the Kami Lattice. They needed a shrine-engine core I definitely wasn't supposed to have.
Memory restored. Debt acknowledged.
Pleasure doing unlicensed business.
Two clients. No gunfire. By noon, I was starting to trust the day.
DEALS MADE
DEBTS KEPT
STAY SHARP


Then came the Khemetari. Elegant, ancient, and allergic to paying full price.
THIS RELIC BELONGS TO THE DEAD.
THEN TELL THE DEAD THEY STILL OWE ME.
They took the relic, disputed the fee, and sent me away with less credit than promised.
THE MARKET HAS SHIFTED. THE VALUE IS... SUBJECTIVE.
CONSIDER IT A GESTURE OF GOODWILL.
GOODWILL DOESN'T PAY MY CREW.
I was still counting the loss when a Rift Covenant raider decided my cargo looked worth stealing.
HAND OVER THE CRATE, CAPTAIN.
YOU CAN HAVE IT AFTER I STOP BREATHING.
That was the moment diplomacy ended and running became a spiritual discipline.
By dusk, I was alive, armed, and in a much worse mood.


By nightfall, the job that mattered finally arrived.
One sealed delivery. No questions. Double rate.
Destination: the Buitenzee.
THE BLACK LEDGER
NEW CONTRACT LOGGED
CLIENT: UNKNOWN
CARGO: SEALED
VALUE: 2X STANDARD
ROUTE: CLASS VII
MALAKKA STATION
BUITENZEE
Out there, charts lie. Signals whisper. Ships come back with the wrong crew.
BINNENZEE
BUITENZEE
DEADLIGHT REACH
SILENT CURRENT
NO-RETURN CHANNEL
If they come back at all.
The sea beyond the Binnenzee doesn't just kill you. It edits you.
And tomorrow, I get paid to sail straight into it.
TO BE CONTINUED...