BIONICLE

YEAR ONE

Featuring content from…

BIONICLE Chronicles 1: Tale of the Toa
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Comic #1: The Coming of the Toa
Comic #2: Deep into Darkness
Comic #3: Triumph of the Toa
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and *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
developed by Templar Studios

THE LEGEND OF MATA NUI

In the time before time, the Great Spirit descended from the heavens, carrying we, the ones called the Matoran, to this island paradise. We were separate, and without purpose, so the Great Spirit blessed us with three virtues: unity, duty, and destiny. We embraced these gifts and, in gratitude, we named our island home Mata Nui, after the Great Spirit himself.

But our happiness was not to last. Mata Nui's brother, Makuta, was jealous of these honors and betrayed him. Makuta cast a spell over Mata Nui, who fell into a deep slumber. Makuta's power dominated the land, as fields withered away, sunlight grew cold, and ancient values were forgotten.

Still, all hope was not lost. Legends told of six mighty heroes, the Toa, who would arrive to save Mata Nui. Time would reveal that these were not simply myths - for the Toa did appear on the shores of the island. They arrived with no memory, no knowledge of one another - but they pledged to defend Mata Nui and its people against the darkness. Tahu, Toa of Fire. Onua, Toa of Earth. Gali, Toa of Water. Lewa, Toa of Air. Pohatu, Toa of Stone. And Kopaka, Toa of Ice. Great warriors with great power, drawn from the very elements themselves. Together, they were six heroes with one destiny: to defeat Makuta and save Mata Nui.

This is their story.

CHAPTER ONE of *Tale of the Toa*
TAHU - TOA OF FIRE

A beach. He was standing on a sweeping expanse of sand sloping gently down to the sea.

As he gazed out at the ocean, he saw waves breaking over a coral reef. Beyond that, there was nothing but water stretching to an unbroken horizon. *Where am I?* he thought, his mind a haze of memories and dreams. ***Who*** *am I?*

…Tahu…

The word - a name? - floated through his mind. It seemed to fit, to make sense somehow. But little else did.

Tahu shook his head in frustration. Why couldn't he remember more? How had he come to this place - and why?

He glanced toward the polished canister that had brought him here. Near it, he saw several red components lying on the sand. Two turned out to be blades, shaped into the form of leaping red flames. They fitted together into a sword, the handle sitting comfortably in his clawed hand. But when he swung the sword, it felt heavy and awkward.

He scowled. "Useless hunk of metal," he muttered, jabbing the blade into the sand.

Then he noticed the mask. It stared up at him with gaping eyeholes, its surface catching the sunlight so that it appeared to come alive in his hands. Taking a deep breath, Tahu lifted the mask to his face.

A surge of power coursed through him. Yes! This was more like it!

Tahu grabbed the flame sword and lifted it. This time, to his surprise, the blade was glowing with crimson fire. When he swung the sword, it sizzled through the air, trailing sparks in its wake.

"Yes!" Tahu said, with grim satisfaction. "Now we're getting somewhere!"

But was he? He let the sword fall to his side, overwhelmed by despair. Why was he here? What was he supposed to do now?

"Why - can't - I - *remember?*" he howled, swinging his sword over his head.

A bolt of fiery energy shot forth, erupting into the sky like a volcano. Sparks showered down onto the beach, but Tahu didn’t feel their heat.

Power… I have such power, he thought with wonder. *The power of fire. Of heat and flame. But where does it come from? What is it for?*

More questions - and still he had no answers. Not knowing made him shake with frustration and rage. It made him want to turn his sword against the earth, the sky, the beach - the very world itself. It was tempting - so tempting - to lose himself in chaos, to strike out with no thought for past, future, or anything else.

Tahu took a deep breath. No. He couldn’t allow himself to give in. Somehow he knew that, just as he’d known his name.

Okay, okay, he told himself. *The knowing will come. At least… I hope it will.*

CHAPTER ONE of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"THE BEACH"

It is dark. A light appears far, far way. From the light comes streaking a large, carved stone. The carvings are that of a kind and peaceful face. The stone lands upright, hard upon the ground. Its glow illuminates the smaller rocks scattered around it. One rock begins to move, and it rolls closer to the stone. Other rocks also begin to move, until six neat piles of rocks have formed around the carved stone.

Suddenly, another stone lands hard upon the ground nearby. This stone is dark and jagged, like basalt or obsidian, with a dark and jagged face etched within it. From the bottom of the dark stone, an inky black darkness spreads, infecting the ground and spreading quickly until it overtakes the carved stone, knocking it over onto the ground. The carved stone sinks slowly into the ground, as if in a deep sleep. Three smaller jagged black rocks emerge from the ground and surround the dark stone.

From the light, six new stones are sent. They are the same light color and shape as the carved stone, but they are unmarked, and of a size between that of the carved stone and the small rocks which still surround it. The six stones land upon the ground surrounding the dark stone.

Soon, the three black rocks surrounding the dark stone disintegrate. Once they are gone, cracks begin to form along the bottom of the dark stone. The cracks race up the dark stone until it completely shatters and explodes.

I awake to find myself upon the beach. I recall that I saw this island from far overhead in a dream, just before the sound of the waves washing upon the shore and birds flying about the sky brought me to consciousness. Indeed, I feel as though I myself fell from the sky and landed here.

Or perhaps, it was this mysterious canister in front of me that has fallen from the sky and landed here. I do not know. In fact, I cannot even recall who I am.

I move toward the canister. It is a light gray metal. Seaweed clings to the bottom. The rounded top appears to have been blown off. There are overly large, deep footprints that

leave from the bottom of the canister and lead to the rocky hills to my right.

I follow the footprints to my right. They end up ahead where a fresh flow of lava meets the sea, steam blowing across the rocks. It is too hot here. I must turn back.

But before I do, I see him. The tall, shadowy stranger stands alone upon the steaming rocks, his back to me. He turns and glances at me, his eyes as fiery as the lava that flows around him. No words are exchanged. He turns back, and then he is gone.

As I head back to where I started, I see a large stone face carved into the side of the cliff. I had not noticed it behind me earlier. Its large mouth appears to be a portal to somewhere, but I am unable to coax it open.

I turn around and find myself back where I had started. On my left in the distance, a bird circles an unusual rocky outcropping. Near the top, the stone is smooth and conical. Are those steps I see? I turn to look more closely.

Those must be steps. There are many more which lead all the way from the beach to the top of the rock. But there, in front of the rock, someone is motioning to me.

She is a bright blue creature with large feet and almost no torso. Her matching blue mask reveals only her glowing yellow eyes. Her overall look is angular, almost mechanical. Behind her, a large green boat floats in the water.

She pleads to me, “Help! Help me! My village has been attacked!”

I ask, “Who are you?”

“My name is Macku, of Ga-Koro,” she replies. “Ga-Koro lies between the sea and Lake Naho, down the coast. It’s a great village of many Matoran, and our leader is the Turaga Nokama. I fear much of it has been destroyed by now!”

I ask, “What happened?”

Macku hesitates, unsure of where to start. “I – I was away when the Rahi attacked, and when I returned the monsters were everywhere, destroying everything in sight. Nokama and the others barricaded themselves into a hut to hide, but the Rahi broke the pump and the hut sank beneath the waves.”

Suddenly, I have a vision. I can see the inhabitants of the floating green village of Ga-Koro going about their daily lives. Then, ominously, a dark monster quickly arises out of the water. The inhabitants all huddle together in one small hut, all except for the one poor soul who is thrown into the hut by the monster. Then, all goes dark.

Macku and her pleading bring me back to the here and now. “Please, there is no time. My people are in great danger. Will you help me?”

I do not know who I am or where I am going. I only know Macku needs my help. “Yes, I will help you.”

Macku directs me. “Go to Ga-Koro and find Nokama. She is very wise and might have a plan for escape! I will try to find Gali. If the Rahi are near the village, she is the only one who can defeat them. She’s on a great quest and may be very far away.

“The only way to get to Ga-Koro from here is by sea, so you must take my boat, and I will search for the Toa on foot. Good luck! And tell Nokama that I am safe!”

I take to my boat and bounce across the waves as I head to Ga-Koro.

CHAPTER TWO of *Tale of the Toa*
LEWA - TOA OF AIR

"This sturdy clingtwiner will do, I expect," the bright green figure murmured to himself, stretching to grab a thick vine that was hanging down in front of him. He glanced into the canyon below, then shook his head and grinned. "No secondthink, just go…!"

With that, he leaped off the tree branch overhanging the canyon. He swung himself halfway across, then let go. Momentum carried him in a graceful arc over and past the gorge.

He laughed with delight as he landed cleanly on a nearby tree.

"Now *that* was fun," he exclaimed.

He hadn't been sure that he could make such a leap. But now he knew at least one thing: The air was his friend!

He didn't know much else. He knew his name was Lewa. At least he thought so. He hked the name - it sounded strong and mysterious.

Lewa, mysteryking of know-nothingness, he thought with a smile. *That's me!*

He glanced down at himself, at his strong limbs the color of the jungle leaves. In one hand he carried an axlike blade, perfect for slicing through thick underbrush or twining foliage. Though he couldn't see it, he knew that his bright green mask swept back in a streamlined shape perfect for cutting through the air.

His smile faded as his mind flashed back to the dreams. Was that all they were? Dreams? He hoped so - for they had been dark and chaotic, and filled him with fear.

"Never mind," he muttered. "Time enough for darkthought later. It's time for some answer-finding."

Lewa had immediately found himself drawn to the lush, dripping jungle. Now that he was here, he felt at home.

As he reached the edge of a large stand of Volo crees, Lewa jumped onto a slender branch. The motion flung something out of a nest of feathers and twigs farther along the branch.

He cried out in dismay, realizing that he had just ejected

a baby Taku out of its nest. Without thought, he flung one arm upward through the air in the direction of the falling chick.

“Up you go!” he cried.

For a moment he thought that the baby bird was flying away. Then he realized the truth.

No, not flying - the wind had caught it and carried it aloft.

Leaping across to a closer branch, Lewa reached up and caught the chick gently in one hand. He placed it carefully back in its nest.

“Now, what kind of happyluck was that?” he murmured. "Or - or was it?”

Struck with a sudden impulse, he flung up his arm. Once again, a quick gust swooped up from below with a swirl of leaves.

“It was *me!*” Lewa breathed in amazement. “*I* did it. The wind answers to *me!*”

CHAPTER THREE of *Tale of the Toa*
ONUA - TOA OF EARTH

Dig, pull, scrape, push. Dig, pull, scrape, push.

Onua fell into comfortable rhythm as he scooped out a new tunnel. He was happy to be underground.

But he still felt uneasy. Aside from his name, he didn't know anything about who or where he was. And he couldn't shake the feeling that he was somehow missing something - missing a piece of himself.

But he pushed that worry aside. There was no sense in wasting energy fretting over what he couldn't control. All he could do was control what he could - like the digging.

Onua powered his huge hand forward through a rocky section of the tunnel wall. It met empty air instead of earth and rock. Interesting.

Pushing through with a shower of stones and clay, Onua found himself in a large cavern. In the center, a tower of rock ended in a flat stone platform. Atop 1t, a lightstone glowed.

So there are others underground, Onua thought. *Perhaps they will have some answers for me.*

He spotted a tunnel in the far wall of the cavern and followed it.

Turning a corner, he was startled to see a familiar-looking figure at the center of a large mural.

"Is that - me?" he whispered, reaching out to touch the image. It portrayed a powerful-looking figure with a wedge-shaped mask and large clawed hands. The figure was standing among five other, similar looking figures.

As Onua touched the lines of the carving, he felt a strange vibration in the wall. Stepping forward, he put his head to it, listening intently.

Thunka thunka thunka thunka thunka…

It was a steady rhythm. Onua had no idea what it meant. But he planned to find out. With one last glance at the picture of himself, he turned and continued down the tunnel, keeping one hand on the wall to follow the vibrations.

The pulsing grew stronger and stronger - and with the next twist of the tunnel, Onua found what he was looking for. Another

enormous cavern lay before him, lit by more lightstone platforms. Dozens of stone columns stretched up to the high ceiling. Between these columns were paths made of cobblestones set into the earthen floor. Stone benches stood beside the paths, and a small, clear stream trickled through the cavern.

It must be a – a park of some sort, Onua realized. *But – down here? Why – and how?*

Stepping forward, he saw that the little stream emptied out into a still, round pool lined with pebbles. In the center, reddish-brown gemstones spelled out a word:

ONU-KORO

Onu-Koro - what did that mean? What kind of connection did it have with his name?

Before he had time to ponder this, Onua saw a small figure hurrying across the park.

Onua leaped forward. “You there!” he called. “Hey, hello!”

The figure glanced over his shoulder, then stopped short. “Oh!” he exclaimed. “Oh, oh.”

Onua frowned. Perhaps this being didn’t speak the same language as he did. He cleared his throat. “Hel-lo,” he said as slowly and clearly as he could. “Me - Onua.” He put a hand to his chest, then pointed toward the other. “Who - you? Do - you - understand - me?”

“Oh, yes!” the small figure cried, bending into a sort of hurried bow. “Oh, Toa Onua - we have been waiting for you such a long time! Come, please - Turaga Whenua will want to see you right away.”

Confused, Onua followed him. “You know my name,” he said. “But I don’t know yours.”

“Oh! Forgive my rudeness, Toa. My name is Onepu. I am a Matoran of this village of Onu-Koro.”

Onepu led the way through a series of tunnels and caverns. Soon they reached another large cavern. On each wall, a series of carved-out dwellings climbed nearly to the ceiling.

“Wait here, please, Toa,” Onepu said, gesturing toward a large stone bench near the fountain. “I will fetch the Turaga.”

Onua nodded, and the Matoran rushed off. Onua took the opportunity to look around. At the center of the cavern was a

fountain filled with crystal-clear water. A sculpture arose from the pool, spouting water out of several spots.

Onua blinked. Was he going crazy, or did that sculpture look an awful lot like - him?

He was still staring at the fountain when he heard someone behind him. Turning, he saw a figure much like Onepu, but a bit taller, and with a different mask. The eyes behind that mask held patience, caution, and great wisdom.

“I am Whenua, Turaga of this village,” the stranger said, bowing. "Welcome, Toa Onua. We have been awaiting you."

“Yes, so I’ve heard,” Onua replied. “And I’ve been awaiting some clue about who I am and what I’m doing here.”

“The legends said that would be the case,” Whenua said. “It was said that the Toa, when they arrived, would remember very little.”

“You said when ‘they’ arrived,” Onua said. “Are there - are there others like me?”

Whenua nodded. “There are five others,” he said."Each of you draws your power from a different element - yours is the earth itself. Your purpose is to use that power to face and fight a mighty evil - Makuta.”

Though Onua wasn’t sure why, the name sent a chill through him. An image floated into his mind - dark, empty eyes in an even darker face, shrouded with gray smoke.

“Makuta?” Onua repeated as the image floated away. “Who or what is this Makuta?”

“He is the darkness, the essence of chaos and emptiness and fear, the spirit of destruction,” Whenua replied in a trembling voice. It is said that only the Toa have the power to stand against him.”

“‘It is said’?” Onua asked. “You don’t sound coo certain about your sources.”

Whenua shook his head sadly. “It serves no purpose to be false, for the earth cannot be deceived,” he said. “Nothing about your quest is certain, except that it is your duty to try. That is all that any of us can do in this life.”

“I will do what I can,” he promised solemnly. “But first, you must tell me all you know of these powers you say I have.”

“Of course, Toa,” Whenua said. “For that is my duty. First,

you should know that the power itself comes from within you, but it is focused through your mask - the Pakari, the Great Mask of Strength."

"My - my mask?" Onua touched his hand to his face, remembering the surge of strength and power when he'd first put it on.

Whenua nodded somberly. "The Pakari gives you power - great power," he said. "But one mask will not be enough…"

CHAPTER FOUR of *Tale of the Toa*
GALI - TOA OF WATER

The waters lifted her, carrying her along in a soft current of warmth. She didn't know who or where she was, but she knew she belonged here in the calm, cool blue of the sea. That was perhaps the only thing she knew for sure.

That and her name: Gali.

But I can't just float here forever, she reminded herself. *I have things to do. If only I knew what they were…*

She had no certain memories, but many uncertain ones - fragments of thoughts and images. There was urgency in those fragments, though some of them hinted at peace as well. Especially one, an endless sea of calm waters surrounding an island, embracing it and soothing its ills…

Gali kicked swiftly forward with her flipperlike feet. Her hooked arms cut through the water, and the ridged edges on her blue mask sent bubbly ripples out to the sides as she swam. The sea was full of life, but Gali felt strangely alone.

As she swam, she felt a shivering tremor radiate through the water. A brightly colored eel raced past her. Several schools of fish followed.

Gali paused and stared in the direction from which the creatures had come. What had frightened them?

More fish rushed past her in a panic, along with several crabs and snails, and even a small shark. Gali pushed forward, swimming against the tide of fleeing sea creatures.

A large coral reef blocked her view of whatever lay beyond. As she swam around it, Gali saw a gigantic creature barreling toward her. The water churned around its vicious-looking snout as its long, powerful arms pulled it forward toward Gali faster and faster.

Gali gasped. She had no idea what the monster might be, but she could see why the other creatures had fled. The predator wore a dingy-looking, ugly mask over its triangular face, and its gleaming red eyes were ruthless and savage.

There was no time to outswim the huge creature - it was already too close. For a fraction of a second Gali thought of using the coral reef for protection. But she couldn't stand to

imagine the creature crashing through the delicate structures, destroying the living coral.

Gali let her instincts take over. Pushing off of the coral, she bulleted through the water off to one side. Then she shot toward the surface. She broke the surface and extended her arms, not sure why she was doing so.

She felt the waters gather and respond to her call. As the giant sea creature burst to the surface a short distance away, an enormous wave formed around her. Her vicious pursuer leaped forward, but the tidal wave rocketed Gali away toward the shore, faster than any creature could swim. Gali smiled as the water carried her to safety. *So this is what I am meant to do*, she thought. *I am here to command the seas. But for what purpose?*

A few minutes later, Gali shook herself dry as she stepped out of the surf onto the beach. She stood there for a moment, looking around, strangely reluctant to leave the water.

She glanced across the beach. A thick, dripping jungle began where the sands left off. The humidity of the place reached out, beckoning to her, and she could not resist its call.

CHAPTER TWO of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"GA-KORO"

I arrive in the calm waters of Ga-Koro. Smoke is billowing into the air from one of the floating green dome buildings. In the distance, three waterfalls cascade down from a cliff carved into a mysterious mask shape. I walk to the gate to the village.

The gate is locked closed. There are rocks of various sizes strewn about the sand. A large rock hangs from one side of the gate. On the other side hangs a large shell. At the top of the gate is a strange text of circular letters. Somewhere, in the back of my mind, I can make out the writing: GA-KORO.

Beneath the letters is a circle within a circle. Each circle has a small blue stone. As I add rocks to the shell, the inner circle rotates and the blue stones grow closer together. When the two blue stones are aligned, the gate opens and I can proceed onto the large green floating pads of Ga-Koro.

Much destruction is evident in the dome buildings. Most are flooded. In one I discover an unusual crystal, a Lightstone, and I pick it up.

At the far end of one of the pads, a strange pump-like machine sits idle. A large pipe sticks up out of the water. I take a closer look at the pipe.

"Who is that? Who's there?" comes from the pipe. "Hurry my friend – you are our only hope!"

"Macku sent me to rescue you!" I reply.

"Macku escaped? We were so worried about her!" says the pipe. "We are trapped here underwater! The door is stuck and we can't open it! If the village pumps are repaired, the hut will rise to the surface, and we can escape. The Rahi smashed them and pieces fell into the water. If you can find the missing piece and put it back in the pump machine, it will float us back up!

"I left a Lightstone in my hut. It might help you see underwater. Please hurry!"

"Hold on. I'll be right back!" is all I can think to say.

"Hurry back! I don't know how much longer we can survive in here, and the Rahi may return!"

I find a pool from which I can descend into the water. Below, there is no indication of the destruction above, only peaceful waters and the swimming creatures of the ocean.

I swim toward the pipe, and a glimmer catches my eye. Here are those with whom I spoke above. They motion to me and pound upon the door. I must find the missing piece of the pump!

I am desperate to find it, when suddenly I remember the Lightstone. I take it out and shine it upon the waters. What once was just another starfish upon the rocks instead gleams with a metallic reflection. This must be the missing piece! I retrieve it and head back to the pump. I place the gear back into the pump and press the button. The pump springs to life and starts rumbling. Soon, the submerged green dome pops back to the surface and the grateful villagers pour forth.

But there is no time for celebration. What must certainly be the Rahi also springs forth from the water. It begins its attack upon the villagers, when suddenly another creature emerges from the sea to defend them. A fierce battle ensues until both drag each other back into the water. The Rahi is the first to appear, but its mask is missing. It falls stunned off to the side to reveal the defender, triumphantly holding the Rahi's gruesome mask. This victorious defender can only be Gali, the Toa of whom Macku spoke earlier.

Gali does not stick around to celebrate her victory however. As quickly as she arrived, she is gone. I notice that the Rahi is being tended to by one of the villagers.

"This is the Tarakava that attacked the village," the villager tells me. "Don't be afraid… he is no longer under the dark influence of Makuta.

"Shhh… he is resting," she says, although I am not aware that I am making any noise. "He has been through a great ordeal. In time he may be tamed. Sometimes Rahi become infected by Makuta's darkness. Only by removing their mask can they be saved."

The villagers quickly return to their fishing and daily lives. There is much work to do to repair the village. Before I leave, I speak to the village elder, Turaga Nokama.

"Thank you for rescuing us. You are bold and true to your word. All the Matoran of Ga-Koro owe you their gratitude. For once I am glad that Macku snuck away from the village, so that she could find you!" she praised.

"Your eyes are filled with questions about the mysteries of Mata Nui my friend. Giving you some of the answers you seek is small payment for your deeds, but I offer you what knowledge I can." "Our astrologer has seen great changes in the skies, and has read the dark future of Mata Nui. The Toa have come and begun their mighty quests to save us from the Makuta. And yet here, in the midst of this upheaval, are you, a brave wanderer in this dangerous land."

"Who am I?" I ask.

"I think someone has plans for you that are greater than your stature would suggest. Perhaps you are to be a hero like the Toa. I do not know." She replied. "The Matoran have forgotten their civilization. Even the Turaga do not have record of all that has come before.

"But the ocean remembers. Like history, the water holds many secrets in its forbidden depths. It surrounds Mata Nui, and it covers it; it watches the island as it sleeps, and remembers. It caught the Toa gently when they descended, and delivered them to us.

"You are an absolute in these uncertain times. Your past is forgotten, and your future is an empty book. You must find your own destiny, my brave adventurer."

"Who is Gali?" I ask.

"Gali, the Toa of water, the great hero of Ga-Koro. Like the other Toa, she descended from the heavens to save us from the Makuta. She is wise, and strong, and quick.

"Gali is the protector of the sea, and of the lakes and rivers that feed it. Her Mask of Power lets her breathe freely beneath the waves."

"What of Macku?" I ask.

"Macku often sneaks out of the village to spy on Hewkii, the Kolhii champion. She tells me she is just practicing her boating, but I know the truth. And it is far too dangerous for her to be outside the village now. For her own safety, I will forbid her to go, even though her wandering saved us this time.

"If in your travels to Po-Koro, you should meet Hewkii, tell him she is safe. He may have heard of the attack and will be worried."

"Thank you. Goodbye," is all I could think to say. Macku has told me that she has heard of trouble in Po-Koro.

I visit with the astrologer before I leave Ga-Koro. I ask her what she is doing.

"I am the astrologer. I watch the stars, and the water. I am charting changes in the skies. Many important things are happening around Mata Nui, and many more will happen. I use the telescope on the cliff. It tells what will happen, and when," she tells me.

"How do I use the telescope?" I ask.

"It's very simple," she replies. "Around the base of the telescope are pictures. They are constellations, patterns of stars in the night sky, and markings that show the prophecies of legends.

"Each picture has a **red star** in it. When the **Red Star** reaches a certain place in the heavens, it means something important will happen here on Mata Nui: one of the prophecies. When you look through the telescope, you will see many stars, and one of them is the **Red Star**.

"Look at the constellations near the **Red Star**. They will look like the ones in the pictures. When the **Red Star** is exactly where it is shown in one of the pictures, then a prophecy may come true.

"If something changes in the sky, it is my job to change the pictures, so that I can better see the future. Even though we Matoran remember the prophecies, nothing is certain… the future can change.

"If you can read the numbers in the telescope, it is even easier to tell the future.

"Have you any other questions for me?" the Astrologer asks. "The heavens are in turmoil, and I must chart their fluctuations."

I have no further questions, so I leave. I find the boat, now moored at the dock, and sail back to Ta-Wahi to get a closer look at the mysterious telescope.

I climb up the many steps to the telescope that sits atop a column out over the water. There are ten panels engraved upon its outside, each with one red stone.

Each panel appears to portend an event. The panels are divided into two parts: top and bottom. Each top picture is adorned with stars. The biggest star is always embellished with a red stone. The bottom panels seem to tell a story. I recognize the cylindrical vessel, the tall fiery stranger, and Toa Gali. Other panels feature creatures I have not seen before and events I do not yet understand.

Inside the telescope, I discover the amazing controls of this magnificent machine. There are circles here like those at the very bottom of the panels outside, only the images inside these circles are changing. In the center of the display, I can clearly see the stars in the heavens. As I scan the sky, I pause when a bright red star comes into view.

As I leave the telescope, I see what I did not before: a small stone monument. As I gaze upon it, I recall the strange dream from which I awoke earlier.

CHAPTER FIVE of *Tale of the Toa*
POHATU - TOA OF STONE

Pohatu glanced over his shoulder. On the wall that surrounded the village of Po-Koro, dozens of Matoran were gathered, watching him go. Grinning, Pohatu shaded his eyes with one hand and gave them a quick wave with the other. The villagers waved back and cheered.

"That was an interesting visit," Pohatu said aloud to himself as he turned away again. "It's not every day you find out you're the Toa of Stone."

He almost tripped on a protruding stone in the path. Glancing down, he saw three words spelled out in the cobblestones beneath his feet -

UNITY

DUTY

DESTINY

"Hmm, now where have I heard those words before?" Pohatu murmured with a chuckle. The Turaga of Po-Koro had told him of many things - the strange, dark history of this island of Mata Nui, the mysterious masks that were hidden throughout the island, and best of all, that there were five other Toa with powers as strong as his own.

As the village elder spoke, three words had come up again and again - unity, duty, destiny. These three concepts had given the Matoran a purpose, something to strive for always.

Now it was time to see the rest of this island.

Turaga Onewa said this mask I wear is the Kanohi Kakama, the Great Mask of Speed, Pohatu thought. *Maybe it's time to put it to the test.*

He hesitated, wondering if it was wise to experiment with his powers when he still knew so little about how they worked.

But what was the worst that could happen? Gathering his energy, Pohatu directed his gaze toward the top of Mount Ihu - and ran.

The desert landscape passed in a yellowish blur, all details obscured by the Toa's immense speed. After a moment, the yellowish blur shifted into a brown one punctuated by flashes of

green, and then quickly grew paler again, until all Pohatu could see around him was white.

He slowed to a stop. He was standing in a snowdrift overlooking a frozen lake. The steep, icy slopes of Mount Ihu rose above him.

"Outrageous," he said breathlessly, a smile spreading behind his mask. "Now that's what I call speed!"

Leaving the frozen lake behind, he started up the mountainside. The Turaga had told him the main temple, the Kini-Nui, was in the exact center of the island on the far side of Mount Ihu. It seemed as likely a place as any to look for the other Toa.

As he turned around to check his progress, he caught a glimpse of movement somewhere further up the slopes. A bird?

"Not unless this island grows its birds awfully big," he muttered, staring at the silver-and-white figure gliding gracefully down a high mountain slope, powdery snow flying up in an arc behind his feet. No, there was only one thing it could be. Another Toa!

His heart pounding, Pohatu leaped up the slopes, gathering speed - careful not to go *too* fast. He didn't want to overshoot his target.

He lost sight of his quarry for a few minutes as he tromped through a narrow valley. Grumbling at the snowdrifts, which came up to his waist in some spots, he glanced upward. At the top of the valley, a rocky bluff hid the higher slopes from his view. He clambered up toward it, finally leaving the deeper snowdrifts behind. Brushing the snow from his body, Pohatu gazed at the precipice standing in his way. If he had judged the distance right, the other Toa should be on the snowy slope just on the other side.

"Time for a shortcut," Pohatu murmured. "I don't want him to start skiing down that hill and get away from me. Besides, I might as well start getting used to this power of mine…"

Taking a deep breath, he hunched his shoulders and raced straight at the sold stone.

CHAPTER THREE of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"TA-KORO"

Down on the beach once more, I decide again to follow the footsteps in the sand that lead away from the cylindrical vessel. Perhaps the lava has cooled down enough for me to pass.

As I arrive at the edge of the beach, I notice that the stranger I saw before is indeed gone. But, as I had hoped, the lava has cooled enough for me to continue to follow his path.

I see in the distance a fortified city at the base of the volcano. I decide to investigate. Outside the gate to the city, I encounter two guards. One cautions: "Jaller says we've got to keep a sharp lookout for Rahi." The other allows that I may pass, and then he adds helpfully that I am to use the winch room if the bridge is down.

The bridge is down, so I head for what I think is the winch room, only to discover someone looking over a three-dimensional map.

He speaks to me: "We have lost communications with Ga-Koro, but I have no Matoran to spare for a reconnaissance unit. There are never enough good warriors to send against the Rahi. You look stout, traveler… you should consider a career in the Guard."

I ask, "Who are you?"

"I am Jaller, Captain of the Guard," he replies. "It's my job to protect the city against the Rahi. I knew they were getting stronger, but no one in the city believed me… until the beasts overran the Tren Krom redoubt.

"I lost a lot of good warriors that day. Then Tahu arrived, and now we know why the Rahi are on the move. Vakama says he'll save us, but I don't see the point in putting ALL our hope in him. You can never have too much security."

"What is a Rahi?" I wonder aloud.

"The Rahi serve the Makuta," says Jaller. "They are horrible beasts, ruthless and fierce. Some can fly, others walk along the ground, some, I have heard, even tunnel beneath it. We have battled many of them.

"In recent times they have become bolder, and have forced us back to here. Ta-Koro used to reach all the way to the coast;

the Charred Jungle used to be a green, peaceful place, but in the fury of our battles it was burnt.

"But we are Ta-Koro Matoran, and we will not surrender. And now Tahu, the great fire-spirit, has come to lead us against them. They can attack at any time, although always when it is least expected.

"That is why we must always be on guard. I have studied them extensively… it is possible that they once were normal creatures, like the others that inhabit Mata Nui, until the Makuta turned them… although I am not certain of this.

"If it is true, there may be another way to fight them. Until then we must patrol our stockades and our trenches day and night, and keep the guard-fires burning."

I ask, "What is Ta-Koro?"

Jaller replies, "Ta-Koro is the city in the great Lake of Fire, in the shadow of the Mangai, the great volcano. This fortress guards the bridge to it. Many Matoran live there — surely you've heard of it?

"Most of the people in Ta-Koro farm the lava fields to the north, beneath the Mangai. Many are surfers, riding the lava rapids for sport. Our people are the most courageous warriors in all of Mata Nui, and we are not afraid to challenge the Makuta's beasts if we must…

"But we cannot confront the enemy alone, and I do not have faith in the other cities of Mata Nui. If they do not join with us in the defense, we will all perish, Toa or not!"

I can think of nothing else to ask him, so I bid Jaller goodbye. "May Tahu protect you, traveler," he replies, and then he goes back to his map.

Suddenly I remember why I am here. I am just about to ask Jaller where the winch room is when I see it off to the right.

I pull on the lever and the bridge stones start rising up out of the lava.

As the gate rises, I pass into Ta-Koro. There are many Matoran here. I stop one as he is passing through. He is carrying something.

"Hey, here is the lava surfboard you asked me to hang on to," he says. I don't recall asking anyone to hold onto a lava

surfboard, but I accept it anyway. “Lava surfing is dangerous, but fun!” he tells me as he departs.

In front of me, two Matoran are talking. “The Rahi have taken the Tren Krom break. No more farming up there!” says one. The other notices me.

“Want to give us a hand? A farmer’s work is never done. It’s up to us to farm all the heat in Ta-Koro.”

Something in the back of my mind tells me that I’m not much of a farmer, so I move on. To the right, another Matoran is busy cleaning. He speaks to me: “Now that Tahu’s here, I’ve got to keep the Shrine spotless. With all the ash and smoke around here, it’s hard to keep that Shrine clean! The Shrine is where Tahu will bring the Kanohi.”

I move forward to the entrance of a tunnel, but the tunnel is closed. As I turn around to leave, I discover a room off to one side from which the light of a fire is flickering. I enter the room and discover someone standing before the fire. He is taller than the other Matoran here in Ta-Koro, and he carries a Firestaff. He turns to face me, bows slightly, and then speaks.

“So. You have found your way back, after all. You are brave. I do not know what brought you to this city, but you should take care… there are some who remember you. The temper of the Ta-Koro Matoran boils as swiftly as the great Mangai in whose shadow we live.

“But in this, our first hour of hope, you may find the villagers’ patience to be greater than usual. Yes, there is hope in Ta-Koro. Tahu is here. It was Jaller who found him. He caught him in a trap intended for a Rahi. It was almost the end of my brave Captain, and of his famous Guard!”

His tale of how Jaller trapped Tahu is so eloquent and vivid that I feel as if I am there. First, the trap is set. Then, out of the darkness, comes a tall stranger. I know at once from his description that it is the same stranger I saw leaving the beach earlier.

Suddenly, the trap is sprung, and tall spikes of wood surround the stranger. He is not trapped for long, though. He raises a sword and it ignites in flame. In no time at all, he has cut down the spikes of his trap with a single fiery sweep of his arm.

Resigned to a fight, Jaller and his Guard descend upon the stranger. But just before the battle begins, the stranger is recognized as Tahu and the Matoran bow before him.

"The people are elated, but I know that their courage will be tested now more than ever," my host continues after the tale is complete. "Tahu's arrival marks the first step in a great struggle. And I have much to do. I am sorry for having so little time for you. As you know, there is a lot to do. Is there anything more you would ask of me?"

"How do you know me?" I ask.

"This is hardly the time for jokes," he replies. "Have you forgotten all of your great deeds, and also the thing that drove you away from us?"

Embarrassed to admit that I have, I press on. "Who are you?"

"I am Vakama," he says. "I am the Turaga of this village. I am the Legend-Keeper, the Takara-Leader, He of the Great Firestaff who farms the Mangai's burning core. Have your aimless wanderings caused you to forget everything? Surely you still have the Board that I gave you, for that was a special gift. Lava Surfing is a difficult skill, and no Matoran other than those that dwell in Ta-Koro have knowledge of it. It would be a pity if you have forgotten it entirely."

Inwardly pleased that I do indeed now have the lava surfing board, I ask about the stranger. "Who is Tahu?"

Vakama replies: "He will save us. He is come from the heavens, as foretold in the ancient Legends of our city, to battle the Makuta with his Sword of Fire and release us from tyranny. He is a great hero, and will struggle against the Rahi of the Makuta, and will face great dangers.

"The Legends prophecy six heroes descend from the heavens to Mata Nui, and of them Tahu is the fiercest. But his passage to Mata Nui has left him… uncertain. He has needed help to understand his long-awaited quest.

"I have told Tahu all I know of the Legends of Mata Nui, and of the Masks of Power. I have done all I can. Now it is up to him to adventure into the wilderness, and find a way to defeat the Makuta."

Then Vakama's mood changes. He clearly has no more time for

me.

"Forgive me, I have much work to do," he says as he turns back to his fire. "I am preparing for the arrival of another… I am not certain, but the stars have revealed a new prophecy, which I do not yet fully understand…"

I leave Vakama and head out over the bridge. On my way back to the beach, I notice a much smaller bridge off to the right. It leads into the charred forest. I decide to follow it. I quickly become disoriented in the forest. All of the charred trees look the same! I don't know where I have been and where I am going. I feel as though I have been walking in circles. Then I see them. Someone has marked some of the trees along the path with an 'X'. I notice that I can scratch the mark again, making it more visible and allowing me to keep track of where I have been.

I also happen across a sign marking the way to the beach. I step out of the forest, turn around, and head back in. I am confident that I will not get lost this time.

As I walk along the path, I come across a stranger who is pacing back and forth very slowly. "I am Kapura," he says. "Are you the Makuta?"

I remember Nokama speaking of the Makuta infecting the Rahi's masks. I ask, "What is the Makuta?"

"If you do not know what is the Makuta, then I guess you are not it," he replies. "That is good. Jaller says I have to be careful of the Makuta when I am in the forest. He says the Makuta is everywhere. He means Rahi. Monsters. Things you can see. But I know the Makuta is here now, in these burnt trees, and in the dead soil. All of these things were destroyed by the Makuta, but the Makuta never left them. That is how he becomes strong. That is what the Makuta does. He destroys things.

"I think the forest looks very beautiful this way too. And when it burned, you could see all the fires perform their Great Takara all the way to the sea, and it was very beautiful."

I long to learn more about the Makuta, but my curiosity about this slow pacing gets the best of me and I ask him, "What are you doing?"

"I am practicing," he replies. "Vakama says that even

though I am slow, I may be faster than all the others, and travel very far. He says I must practice. Jaller says I am being silly. I practice often."

Kapura's pacing has me disoriented again. I ask him, "Where am I?"

"You are where you are," Kapura says. "If I practice, I can be where I am not. I think I can feel it. It is hot here where I am, but where I am not is cold, and I think I can feel it. I must practice more.

"The island has many places to visit. I want to see all of them. But the others do not like to travel. Mata Nui is very big.

"Vakama says that in the beginning of time, Mata Nui fell from the sky, and landed here. The Makuta came after him and made him fall asleep, and sent his monsters out across the world to control it, and destroy its beautiful things, and to make the Matoran his slaves.

"Vakama has told us to wait for more creatures to fall from the sky, who will save us. I think one of them landed on the beach. I saw it fall, when I was practicing before.

"Vakama knows more. You should ask him. He lives in Ta-Koro."

Kapura's pacing has worn me down. I decide it is best not to mention that I have just spoken with Vakama. Instead, I bid him goodbye. I have decided to head back to the boat and try to find a way to Po-Koro to tell Hewkii that Macku is safe. I need to head to Ga-Koro first, for I remember that the worker at the dock can tell me the way to sail to Po-Wahi, where I am certain to find Po-Koro.

CHAPTER SIX of *Tale of the Toa*
KOPAKA - TOA OF ICE

Rumble… rumble… CRAAAAAAASSSH!

Kopaka's ice blade was up and ready as the rocky bluff exploded. But there was no time to dodge as enormous boulders rained down around him.

"Watch out!" a voice cried from somewhere in the storm of stone.

Kopaka lifted his shield, protecting himself as best he could. When the eruption of stone stopped, he found himself trapped between several huge boulders.

Glancing up, he saw a figure about his own size gazing down at him, resting his weight on one of the large stones. The stranger wore a bronze-colored mask, and the eyes behind it were concerned and a bit sheepish.

"Sorry about that," the stranger said. "I was practicing. Are you alright?"

"I would be," Kopaka returned icily, "If you weren't standing on me."

The stranger jumped back a few steps, then stretched out his arm. "Let me help you out."

Kopaka was already pointing his ice blade at the nearest rock. He was annoyed that the stranger's sudden appearance had taken him by surprise, caught him with his defenses down. He would not make that mistake again.

"Thank you. I don't need help," he said.

Focusing his energy, he channeled it through the blade. A thrill ran through him as the rock around him froze solid, becoming brittle and glassy.

The other figure was still watching him anxiously. "Let me do it," he urged as Kopaka lifted his blade again. "It'll be faster."

Kopaka frowned, already tired of the stranger's pushy chatter. "I said, I can do it myself!" Bringing the blade down, he smashed the icy boulder into smithereens, freeing himself.

The stranger looked impressed for a moment. Then he shrugged. "Yeah, well, you missed one," he said, kicking at one remaining boulder.

Kopaka blinked as the huge stone went sailing off toward the horizon. Whoever this stranger was, he was strong - incredibly strong. Kopaka supposed that meant he had to be one of the other Toa that Turaga Nuju had mentioned.

But Kopaka had no interest in meeting other Toa.

Turning away from the stranger, he continued on his way. The Matoran had told him there was a mask at the top of this mountain - the Place of Far-Seeing, they had called it. He meant to find that mask as soon as possible.

But the stranger didn't get the message. "Hey," he called. "Wait! Are you a Toa? I've been looking for you - I am Pohatu. Toa of Stone."

Kopaka considered not answering - maybe if he ignored this annoying Pohatu, he would go away. But it seemed unlikely.

"Kopaka," he said brusquely. "Ice. And if you don't mind, I'm in the middle of something. See you later." He bent and effortlessly rode a slight dip in the ground, his feet sliding smoothly over the ice. He soon left Pohatu behind.

But it turned out that the newcomer was not to be abandoned so easily. "Wait!" he called again, scrabbling up the hill. "Listen, I have a feeling we're both here for the same reason. Why not team up? It might make things easier."

"I work alone."

"By choice?" Pohatu returned quickly, "Or just because no one can stand you?

Kopaka almost smiled at that. Almost. This other Toa was irritating and far too chatty, but he also seemed to be quick-witted. And he was certainly strong. Perhaps he could come in handy after all. Especially if they came across another of those huge, vicious creatures the Matoran called Rahi…

"Alright," Kopaka said after a long moment. "Come along. After all, I might need a mountain moved - or the island lifted."

Pohatu chuckled. "Okay," he said. "So - where are we going, anyway? Should we start looking for masks, or seek the other Toa first?"

Kopaka pointed toward the peak rising just above them. Then he climbed on, not bothering to check whether Pohatu was following.

A few minutes later the two of them were standing at the peak of the mountain. Kopaka immediately spotted a mask lying in the snow.

Pohatu saw it, too. “Good work, brother,” he said. “Go ahead - claim your prize.”

Kopaka nodded. The new Kanohi looked gray and lifeless lying in the snow. Though it was the same size as his own mask, its shape was different -a helmetlike form with angled eyes and three slashes in each cheek.

The Kanohi Hau, Kopaka thought, remembering what the Turaga had told him. *The Great Mask of Shielding.*

Kopaka bent to pick up the mask. He stared at it for a moment, then carefully placed it over his own mask. Immediately, a strange feeling overwhelmed him. As if a cushion of strength had settled in around him, protecting him from all harm.

But what of his other powers? Did this new mask affect them? Kopaka called forth the power of this original mask, which gave him the ability to see through stone and snow to what lay beneath. Glancing down at the ground, he saw the icy snow… and then the raw, cold dirt underneath… and below that, a layer of rock crosscut with veins of minerals.

“The powers of the Mask of Vision are still mine to use.” He was pleased.

As he turned his gaze toward the south, his X-ray vision cut straight through the craggy bluffs to several bright spots of color far below in the foothills. Then he sighed. For a moment he was tempted to turn away, to ignore what he’d seen. But he realized he might as well face up to the inevitable.

“We have to go,” he told Pohatu abruptly, hating the thought of what was to come, but knowing there was no avoiding it. “Now.”

“Why?”

“No questions.” Kopaka was tired of all the conversation. “Just follow me.”

The two of them headed down the mountain, Pohatu skidding and slipping on the icy slopes. Kopaka forced himself to move slowly so the other Toa could keep up.

They were about halfway down when there was an earth-shattering roar from somewhere just ahead of them.

"Uh-oh," Pohatu said. "I don't like the sound of *that*."

Before Kopaka could respond, a massive creature burst through a snowbank a short distance below where the Toa were standing, sending a shower of snow and ice shards out on all sides. Kopaka shielded his eyes, squinting at the enormous, snorting, puffing beast, as it skidded to a stop just a few lengths away.

"Is *this* what you were leading us toward?" Pohatu shouted, sounding dismayed.

"No," Kopaka said grimly.

The creature was like something out of a nightmare. Its red eyes gleamed with hate, and it pawed at the snowy ground with hooflike feet, puffs of steam blowing from its nostrils. Twin horns twisted out of the sides of its enormous head.

"Hmm," Pohatu said. "Do you think this big fellow is an ally or an enemy?"

Kopaka glanced at him, startled, then realized the other Toa was kidding. He rolled his eyes, not amused. "Come on," he said. "I think we'd better - "

At that moment the hideous creature let out another thunderous bellow - and then charged straight at them.

" - run!" Pohatu finished for him.

The two Toa turned and sprinted back up the slope. At least Kopaka sprinted. Pohatu tried to run, but lost his footing on the ice and went down, struggling to keep himself from sliding right back under the beast's charging hooves.

Kopaka skidded to a stop. realizing the other Toa was in trouble. Big, charging, snorting trouble. Letting out a sigh, he skied back down the hill.

"No! Kopaka, don't - it's too dangerous."

"Don't be ridiculous." Kopaka waved his arms and shouted, trying to distract the enemy.

The creature slowed, glancing from one Toa to the other, confused. Then it snorted and bellowed and returned its full attention to the fallen Pohatu, who was just now climbing unsteadily to his feet.

Time for Plan B, Kopaka thought, looking around for new ideas. They were standing in an open field that offered little in the way of hiding places. To one side, the ground dropped

away sharply into a deep, icy ravine. Kopaka paused, his mind clicking into gear. If only he could get the beast to change directions…

There was just one problem - the creature was almost on top of Pohatu. Two more leaps, and its horns would be buried in the other Toa's chest. There would be no time to explain.

He'll just have to go with it, Kopaka told himself grimly, already pushing off smoothly and gathering speed as he skied downhill toward the fallen Toa. *If he doesn't, well…*

There was no sense worrying.

"Here goes nothing," he muttered.

Snort! The beast made another leap forward. It lowered its head, aiming its horns directly at Pohatu. Pohatu took a step backward, almost falling again as his foot hit an icy patch.

Meanwhile, Kopaka skied toward him, gathering speed. This would be close…

"Heads up!" he shouted! "And arms *out!*"

Pohatu looked startled, but flung his arms out to his sides.

Just as the creature lunged forward, snorting eagerly, Kopaka whizzed past and grabbed Pohatu around the chest.

"*Oooof!*" Pohatu grunted as Kopaka yanked him out of the beast's path, just as it lunged forward and buried its horns in the snow.

Kopaka wobbled, nearly losing his balance.

I have to straighten out, he thought. *Otherwise we'll never make it.* Behind him, he could already hear the beast roaring with anger and charging after them.

"Where - are - we - going?" Pohatu panted. To Kopaka's relief, the Stone Toa was hanging loosely in his arms, not struggling against his grip or trying to free himself.

Kopaka couldn't have replied even if he'd wanted to. He was too busy willing his feet to obey him, in a desperate attempt to control the angle of their speedy downhill slide.

It worked. Just three or four lengths from the ravine now, his feet finally settled smoothly into an upright position on the icy snow. Now there was no turning back…

"Hey!" Pohatu cried, suddenly looking forward and seeing the chasm directly in front of them. "What are you - *AAAAAAAAAAAAH!*"

Kopaka held his breath as he felt his feet leave the cold, solid surface of the ice. He held on tightly to Pohatu as they flew up - up - up and over the canyon.

Pohatu was still screaming, but Kopaka didn't let out his breath until he felt his feet slam down again on the far side of the gorge. He teetered and threw himself to the side, allowing himself and Pohatu to pitch face-first into the snow.

"What the - why did you do that?" Pohatu cried, spitting out a mouthful of snow. "You could have gotten us killed!"

"That's why." Kopaka had already turned to stare back at the ravine. He pointed, and Pohatu turned to look just in time to see the snorting, squealing creature skid down the ice and tumble head over hooves into the depths of the fissure. A furious bellow drifted up toward them.

"Oh." Pohatu was silent for a moment. Then he grinned weakly. "Er, thanks. Guess I owe you one - brother."

Kopaka nodded. Then he crawled forward to the edge of the ravine, glancing down. The beast was still bellowing and struggling at the bottom, digging its hooves into the ice as it started to climb.

"It will be able to climb out of there soon enough," Kopaka observed, watching as the beast leaped up to an icy ledge.

"Not if I have anything to say about it," Pohatu replied. He climbed to his feet and strode toward the rocky cliff nearby. "You might want to step aside," he called over his shoulder as he began climbing hand over hand up the sheer rock face.

Kopaka moved a little farther down the slope, keeping an eye on the edge of the gulch. That beast could come charging out of there any moment…

"*Yeeeee-haw!*" Pohatu cried, drawing his foot back and then kicking at a huge chunk of the rock face. The solid stone cracked instantly, and an enormous boulder flew forward, toward the fissure, disappearing over its edge.

Pohatu moved on to another section of the bluff. Once again he aimed a mighty kick, sending a chunk of stone across the snowy ground and straight into the gorge. Kopaka watched with

gruding admiration as Pohatu repeated the movement again and again.

"Okay, this is too slow," Pohatu exclaimed. "Let's try something else."

What was he up to now? Kopaka had no idea. A second later Pohatu brought both fists down on the rock - and the cliff exploded into a thousand shards of stone.

Remembering his first meeting with Pohatu, Kopaka covered his head with his shield. A few pebbles bounced off of it, but the bulk of the explosion of stone showered down into the ravine with a deafening roar.

"Whoa!" Pohatu shouted gleefully after the noise had subsided. "That was so cool! I mean, I was pretty sure it would work, but still…"

While he waited for the other Toa to rejoin him, Kopaka stepped forward and peered again over the edge of the chasm. The creature was buried up to its horns in the rocky mess that now filled nearly half of the deep canyon.

Hearing Pohatu hurrying up beside him, Kopaka turned. "Nice work," he said. "It will be able to escape - but not for a long while."

Pohatu glanced once more at the huge beast trapped below them. "That was close, though. What *is* that thing, anyway?"

"Rahi," Kopaka told him, already turning to lead the way down the snowy slope. "That's what the Turaga said they're called. There are many species, all shapes and sizes. They're not very friendly."

"No kidding."

Both Toa were silent for a few minutes as they climbed and skidded down the mountain, each buried in his own thoughts. Finally, Pohatu spoke again.

"So what did you see up there, anyway?" he asked. "From the peak, I mean."

This time, Kopaka decided to answer. "Strangers," he replied. "Beings of great power."

They came to the top of a steep hill. Standing in an open area below, four bright spots stood out against the drab background of stone and dirt. Four figures - one a bright, burning red, another blue as the sea, a third black as starless

midnight, and the final one the same bright green as the leaves on the trees.

Kopaka stared down at them. The other Toa. It had to be them.

“But are they allies,” he murmered, “or enemies?”

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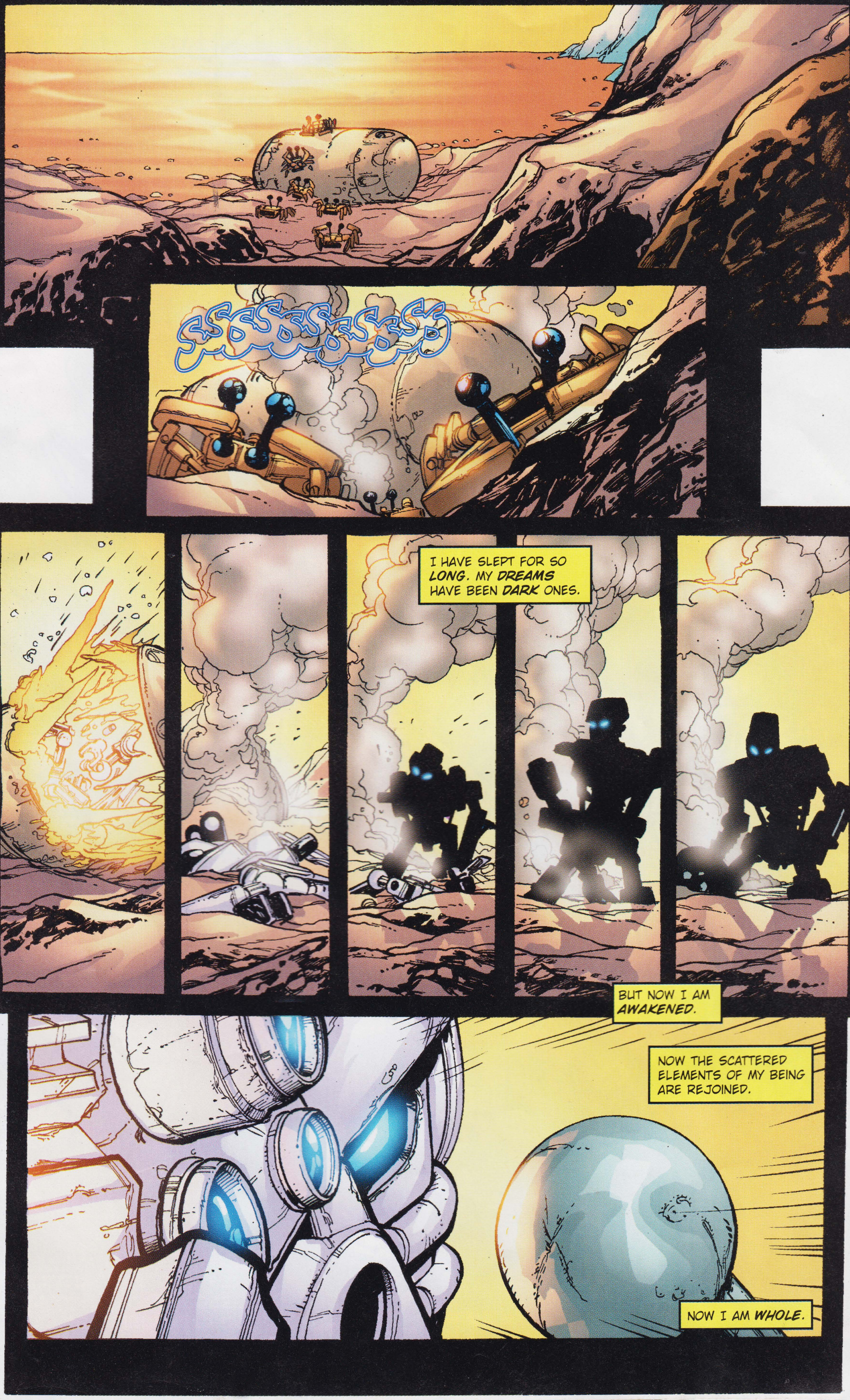
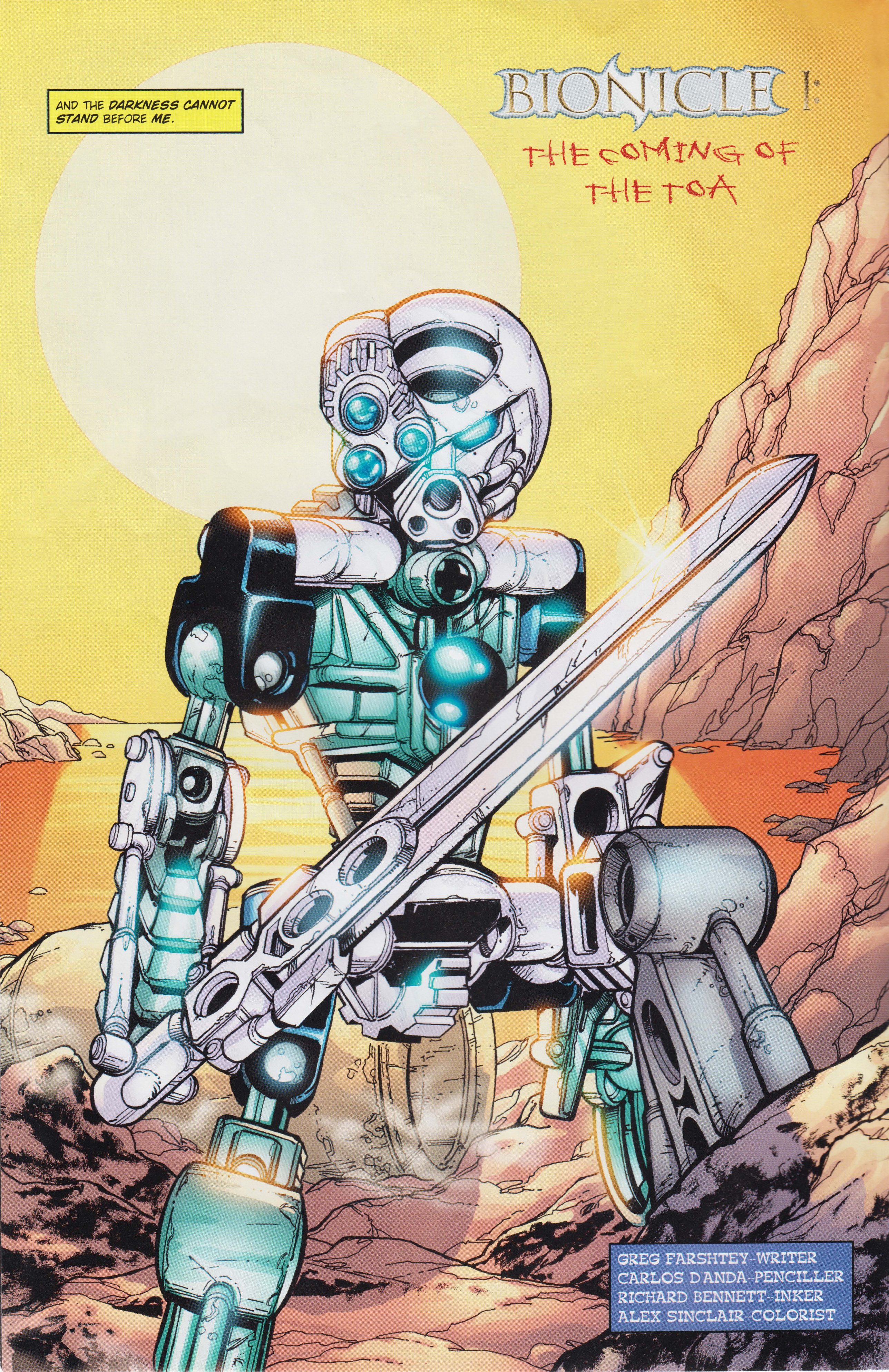

I HAVE SLEPT FOR SO LONG. MY DREAMS HAVE BEEN DARK ONES.
BUT NOW I AM AWAKENED.
NOW THE SCATTERED ELEMENTS OF MY BEING ARE REJOINED.
NOW I AM WHOLE.


AND THE DARKNESS CANNOT STAND BEFORE ME.
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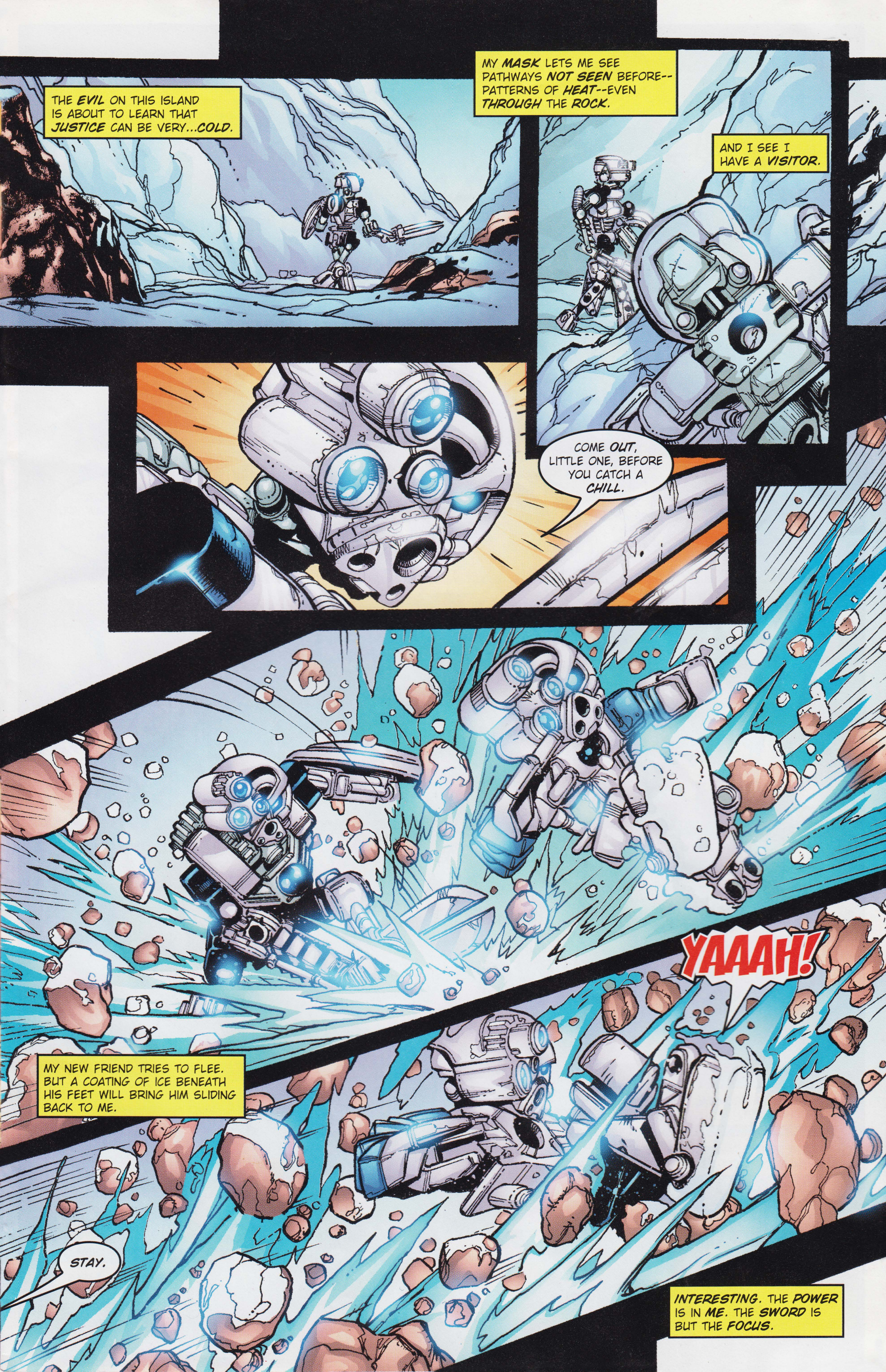
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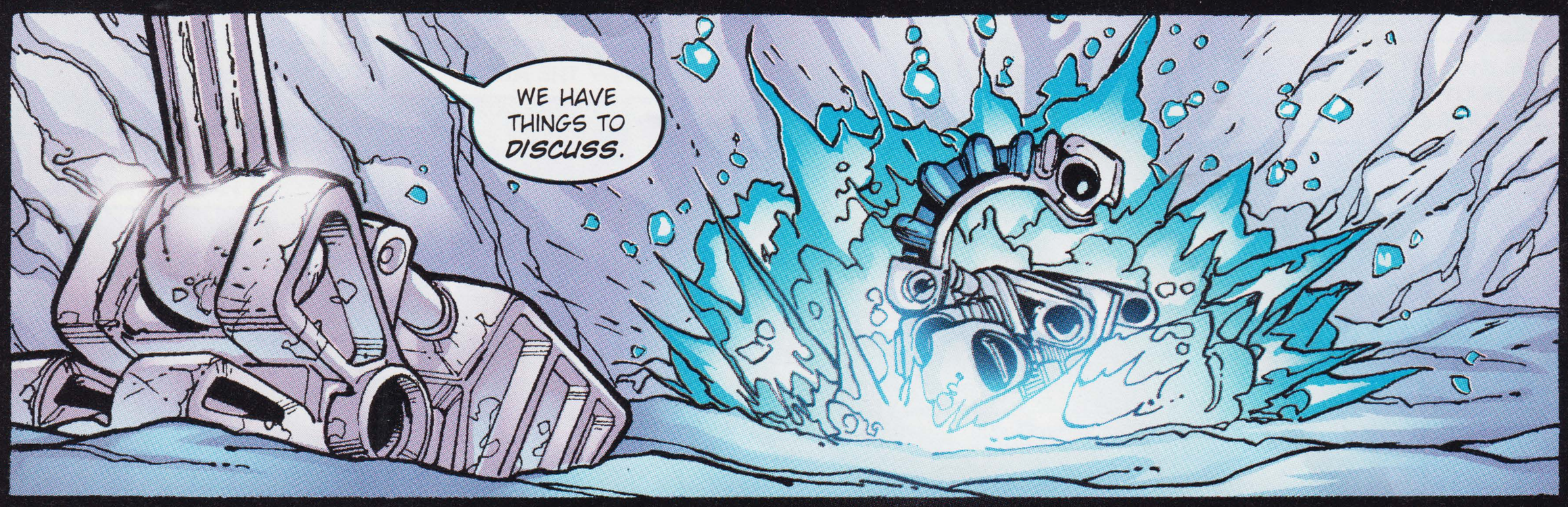
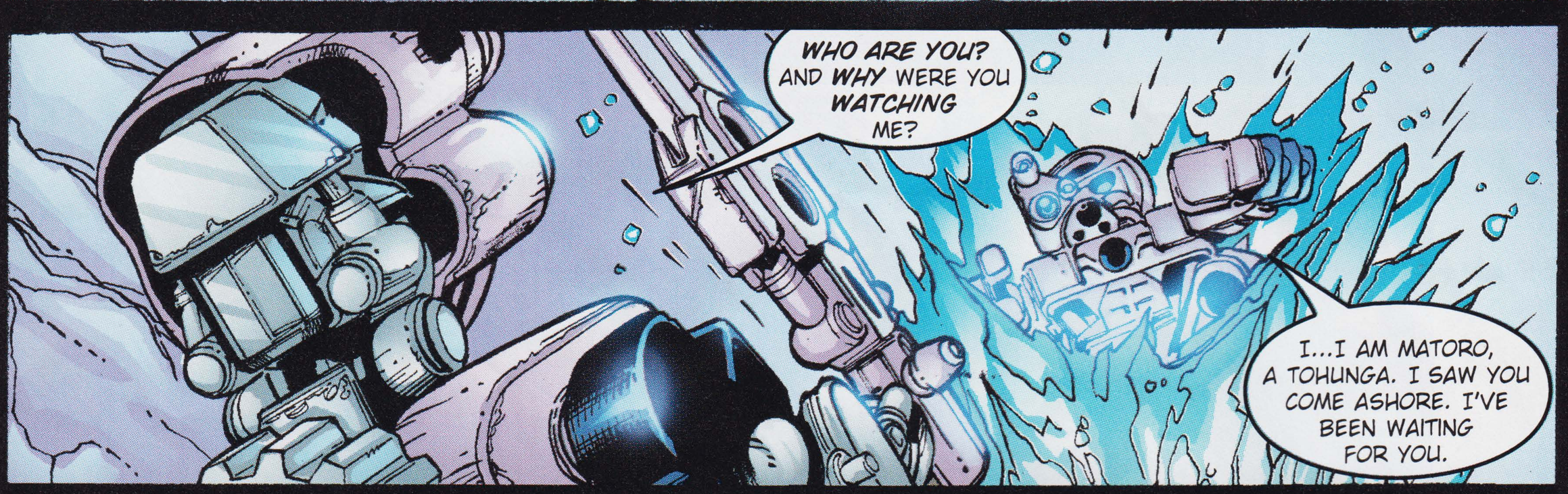
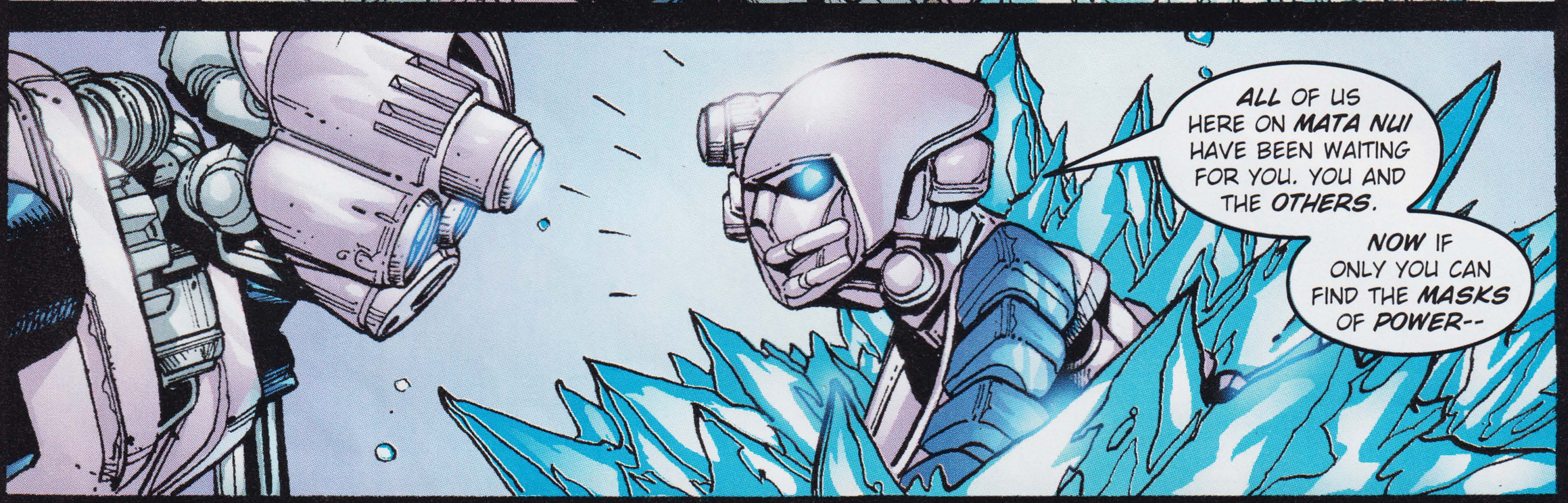
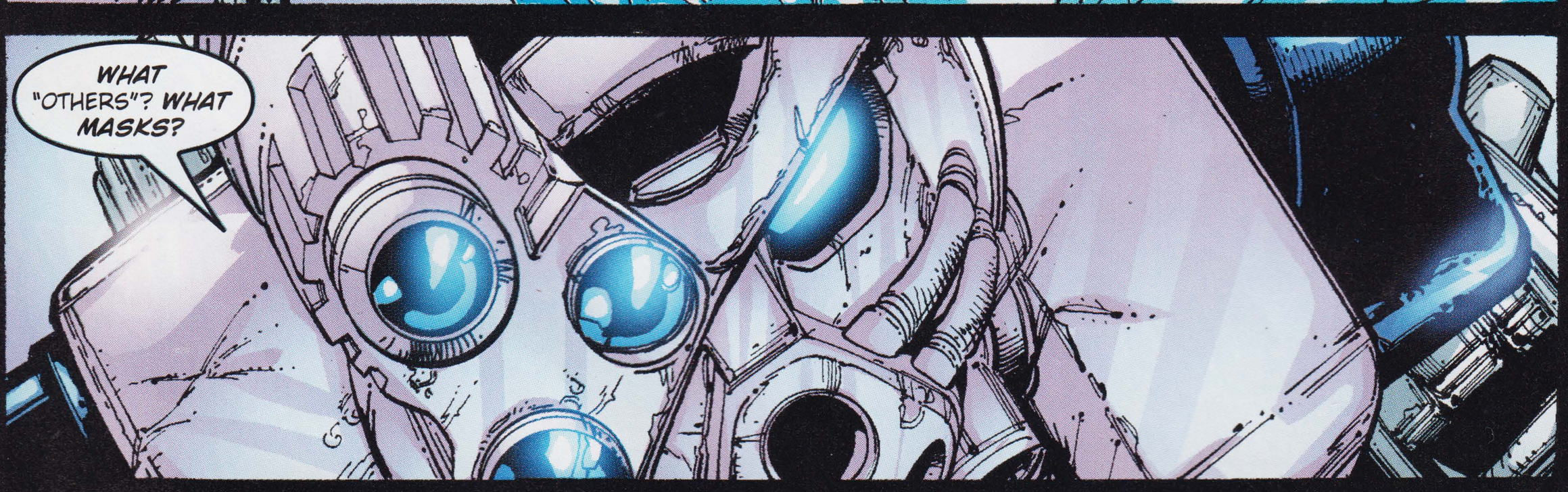
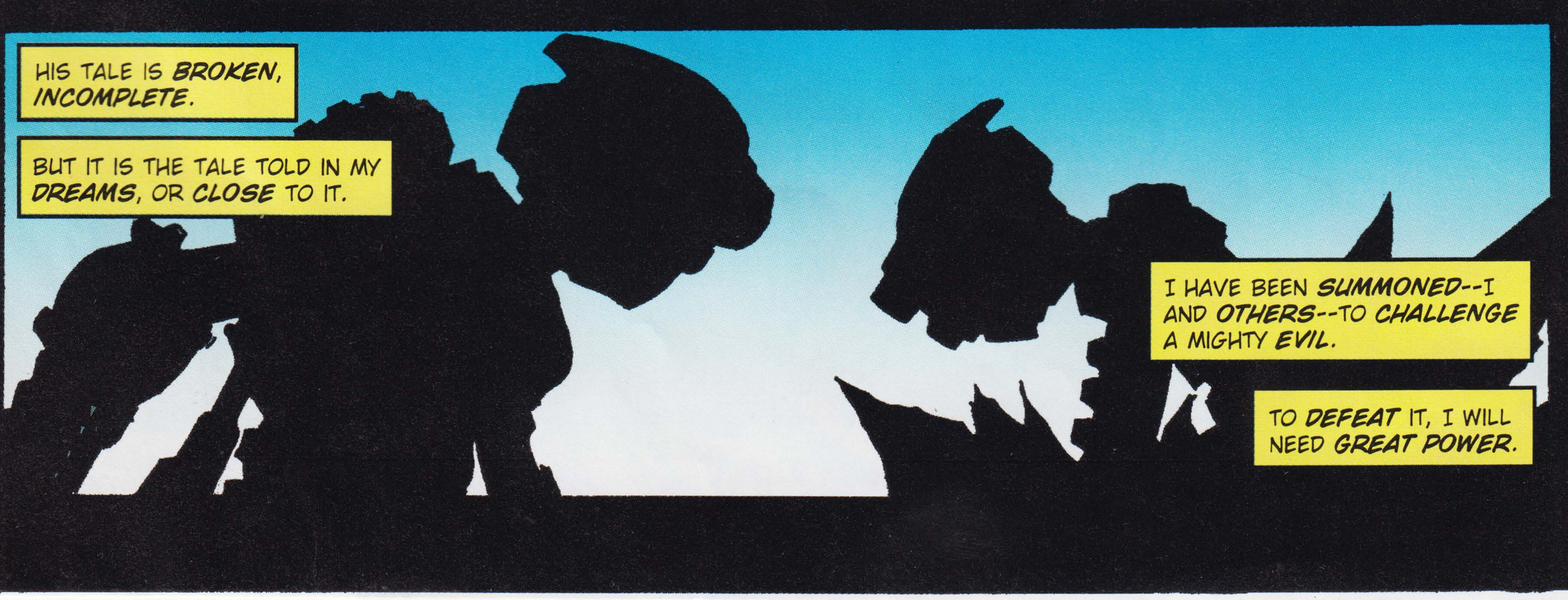
MY MASK LETS ME SEE PATHWAYS NOT SEEN BEFORE--PATTERNS OF HEAT--EVEN THROUGH THE ROCK.
AND I SEE I HAVE A VISITOR.
COME OUT, LITTLE ONE, BEFORE YOU CATCH A CHILL.
YAAAH!
MY NEW FRIEND TRIES TO FLEE. BUT A COATING OF ICE BENEATH HIS FEET WILL BRING HIM SLIDING BACK TO ME.
STAY.
INTERESTING. THE POWER IS IN ME. THE SWORD IS BUT THE FOCUS.

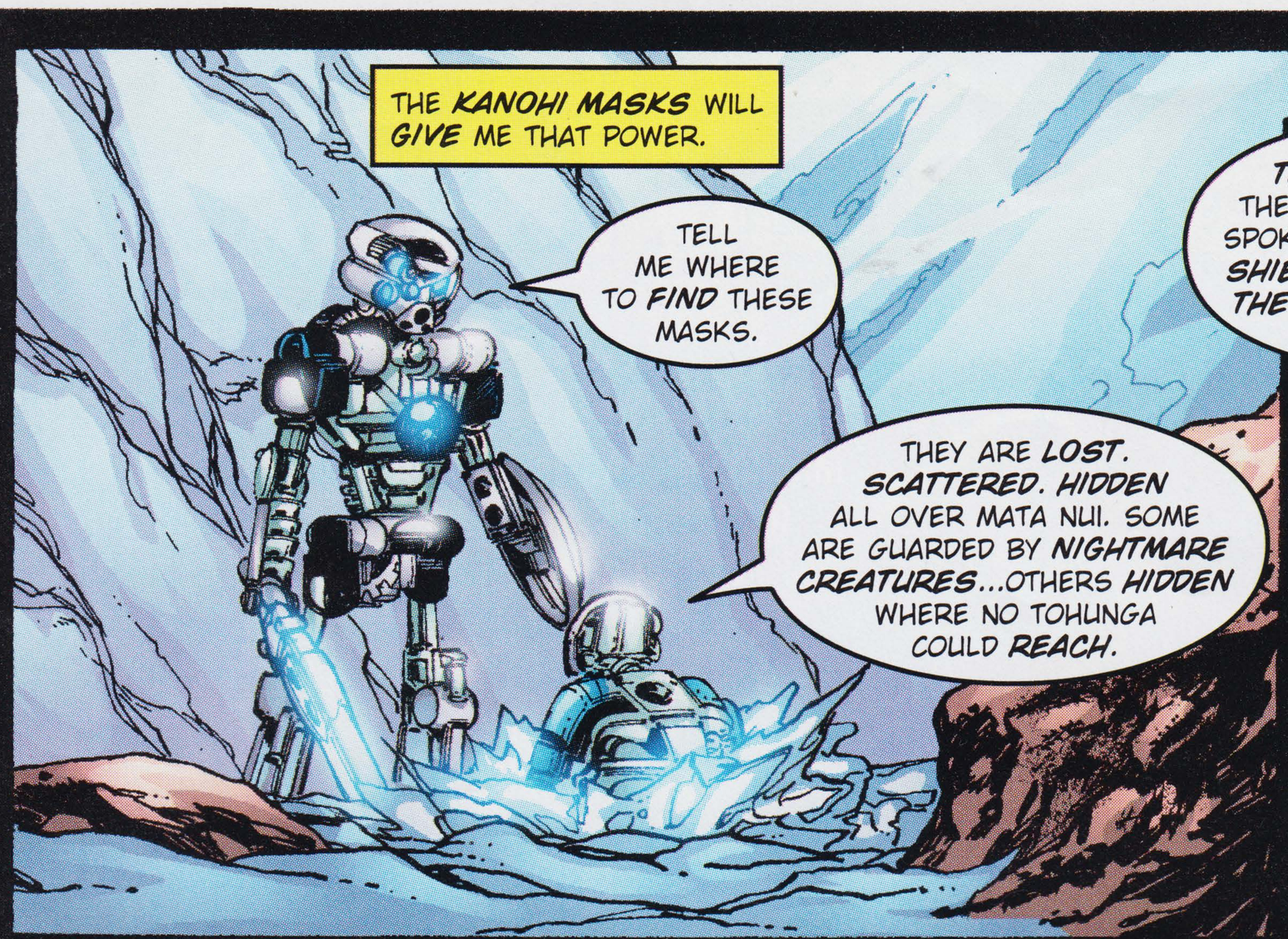

WE HAVE THINGS TO DISCUSS.

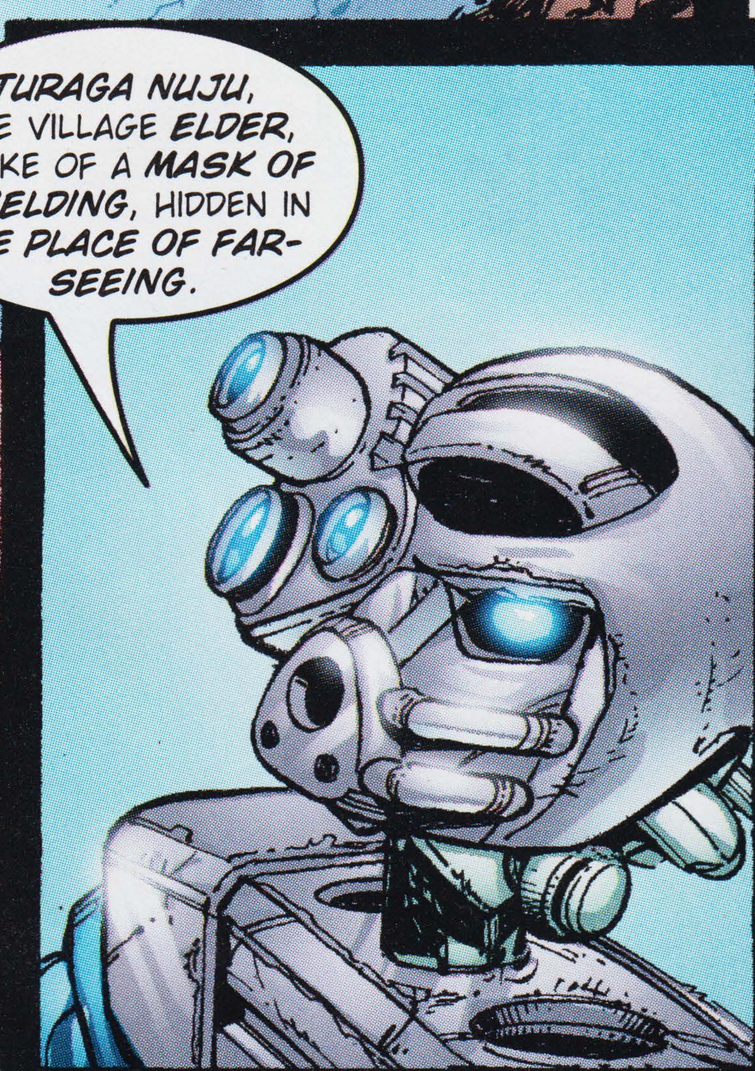

WHO ARE YOU? AND WHY WERE YOU WATCHING ME?
I...I AM MATORO, A TOHUNGA. I SAW YOU COME ASHORE. I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

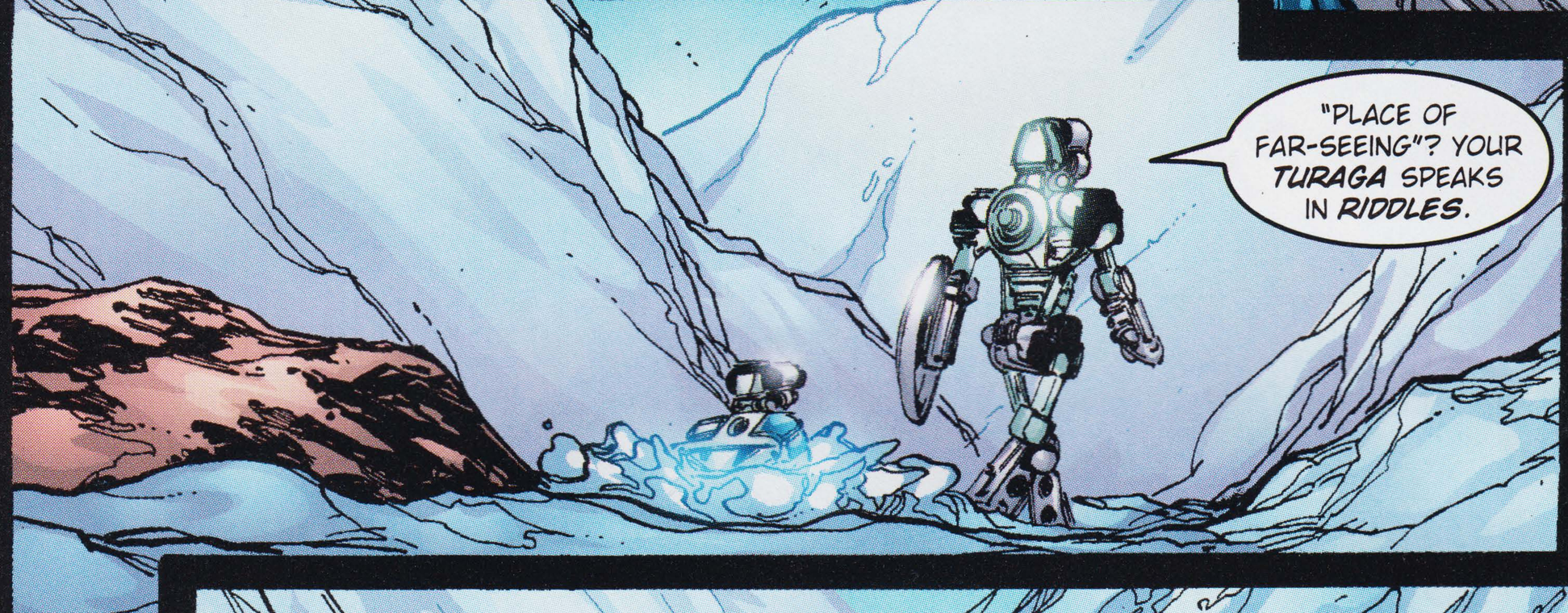

ALL OF US HERE ON MATA NUI HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU. YOU AND THE OTHERS.
NOW IF ONLY YOU CAN FIND THE MASKS OF POWER--

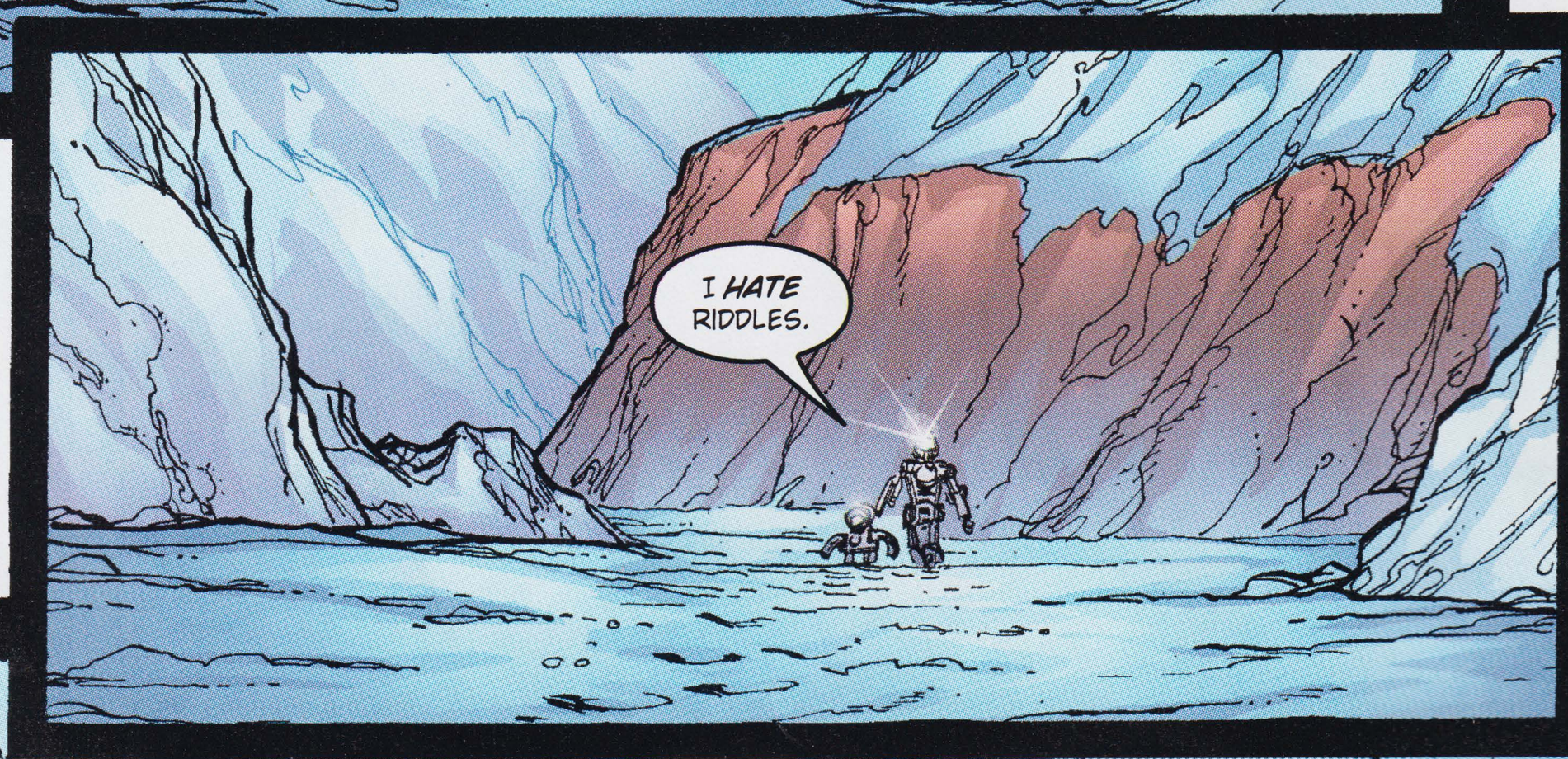

WHAT "OTHERS"? WHAT MASKS?

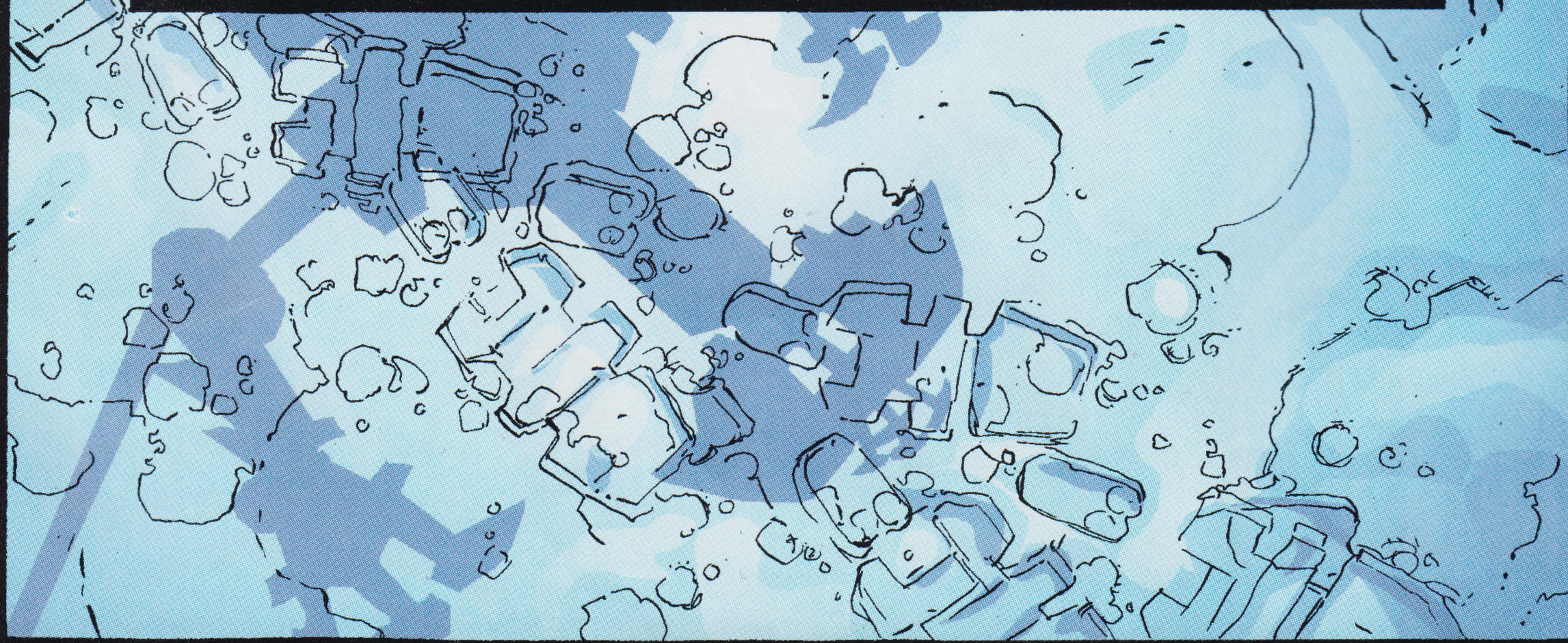

HIS TALE IS BROKEN, INCOMPLETE.
BUT IT IS THE TALE TOLD IN MY DREAMS, OR CLOSE TO IT.
I HAVE BEEN SUMMONED--I AND OTHERS--TO CHALLENGE A MIGHTY EVIL.
TO DEFEAT IT, I WILL NEED GREAT POWER.

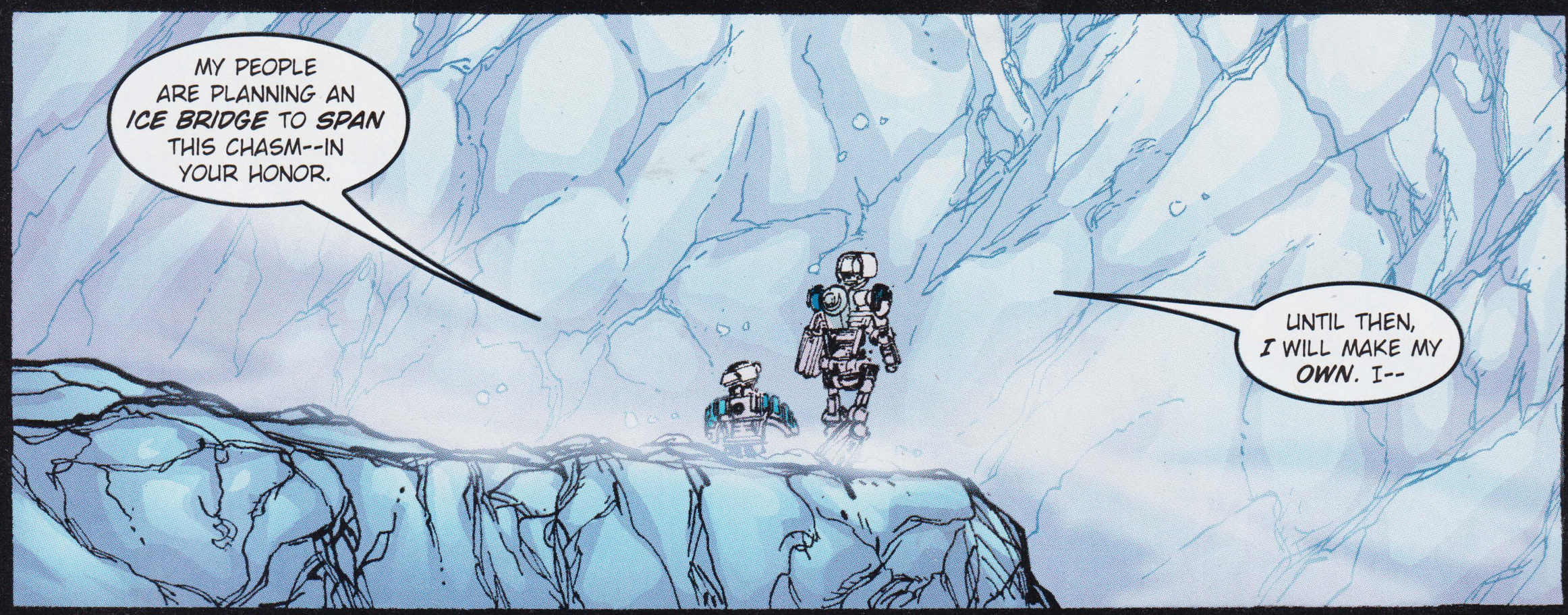

THE KANOHI MASKS WILL GIVE ME THAT POWER.
TELL ME WHERE TO FIND THESE MASKS.
THEY ARE LOST. SCATTERED. HIDDEN ALL OVER MATA NUI. SOME ARE GUARDED BY NIGHTMARE CREATURES...OTHERS HIDDEN WHERE NO TOHUNGA COULD REACH.

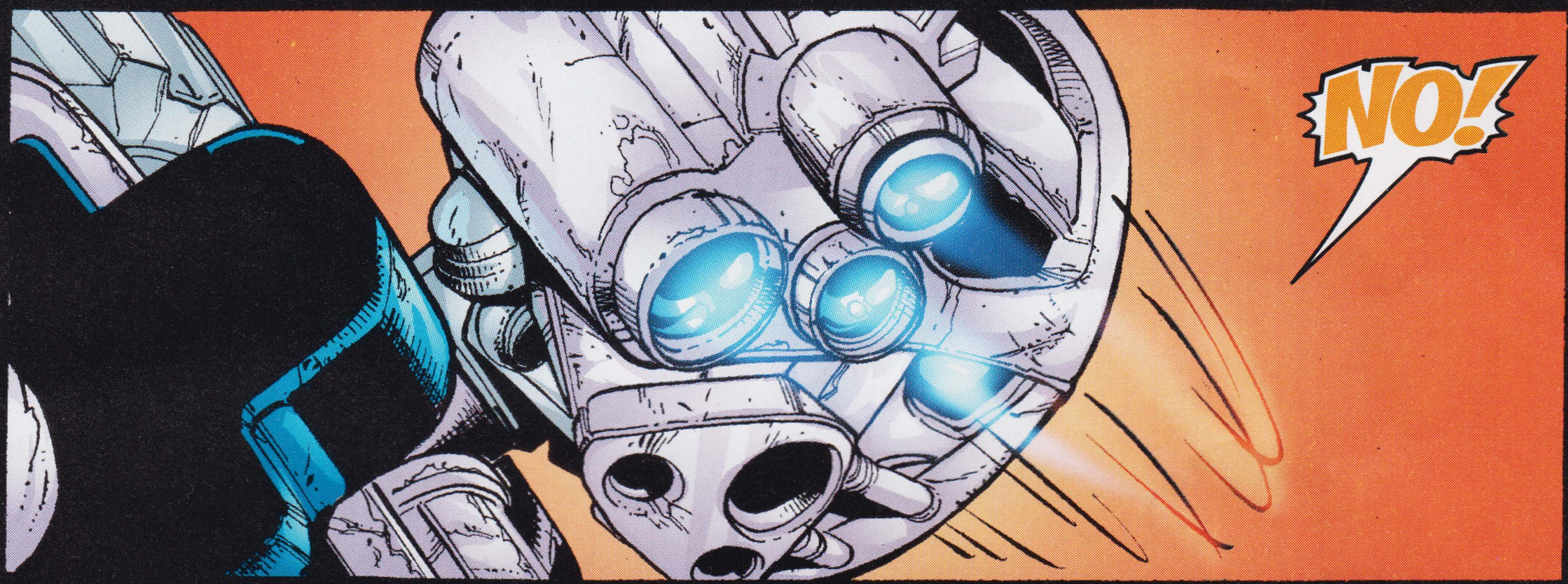

TURAGA NUJU, THE VILLAGE ELDER, SPOKE OF A MASK OF SHIELDING, HIDDEN IN THE PLACE OF FAR-SEEING.


"PLACE OF FAR-SEEING"? YOUR TURAGA SPEAKS IN RIDDLES.

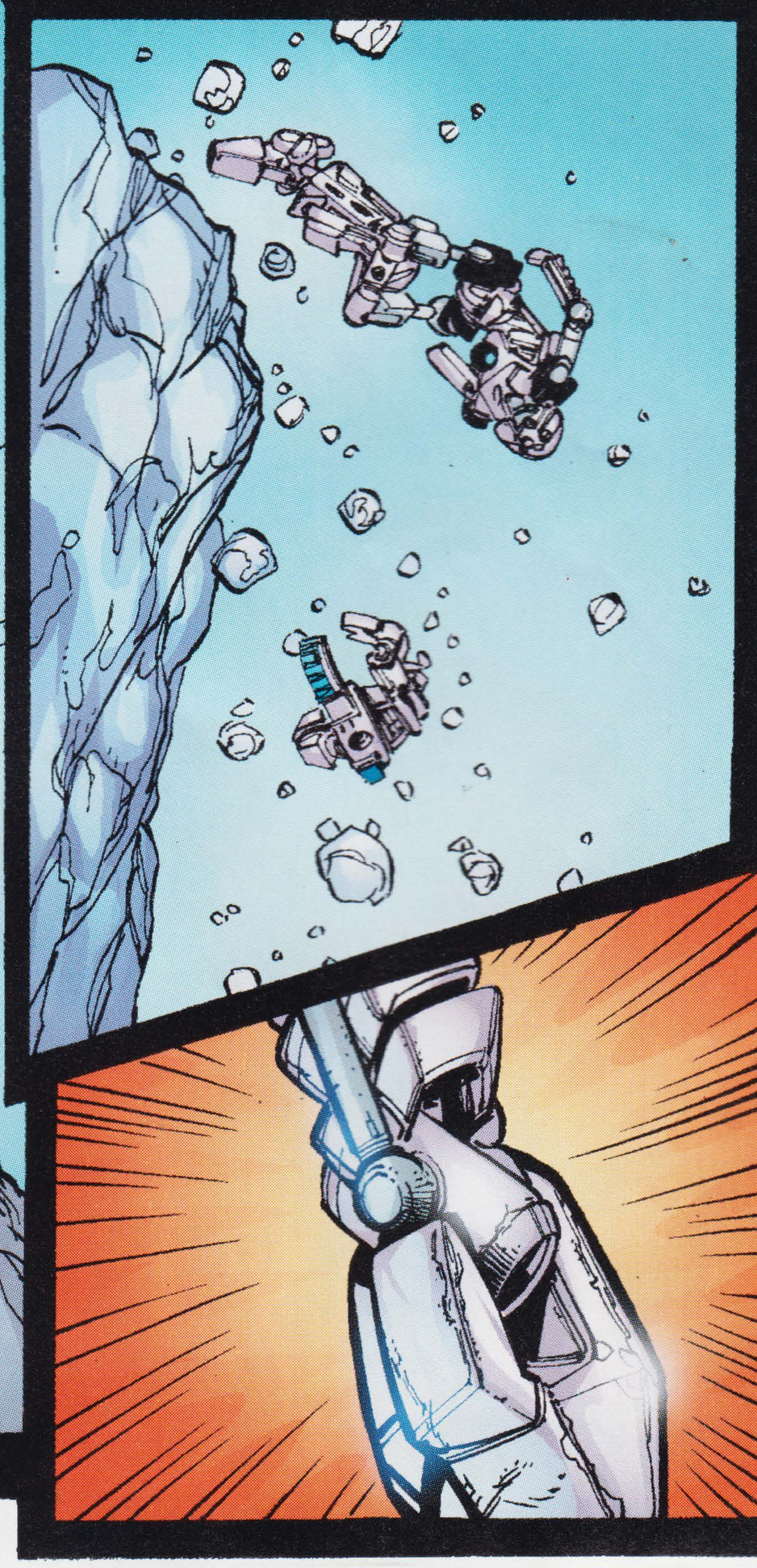

I HATE RIDDLES.

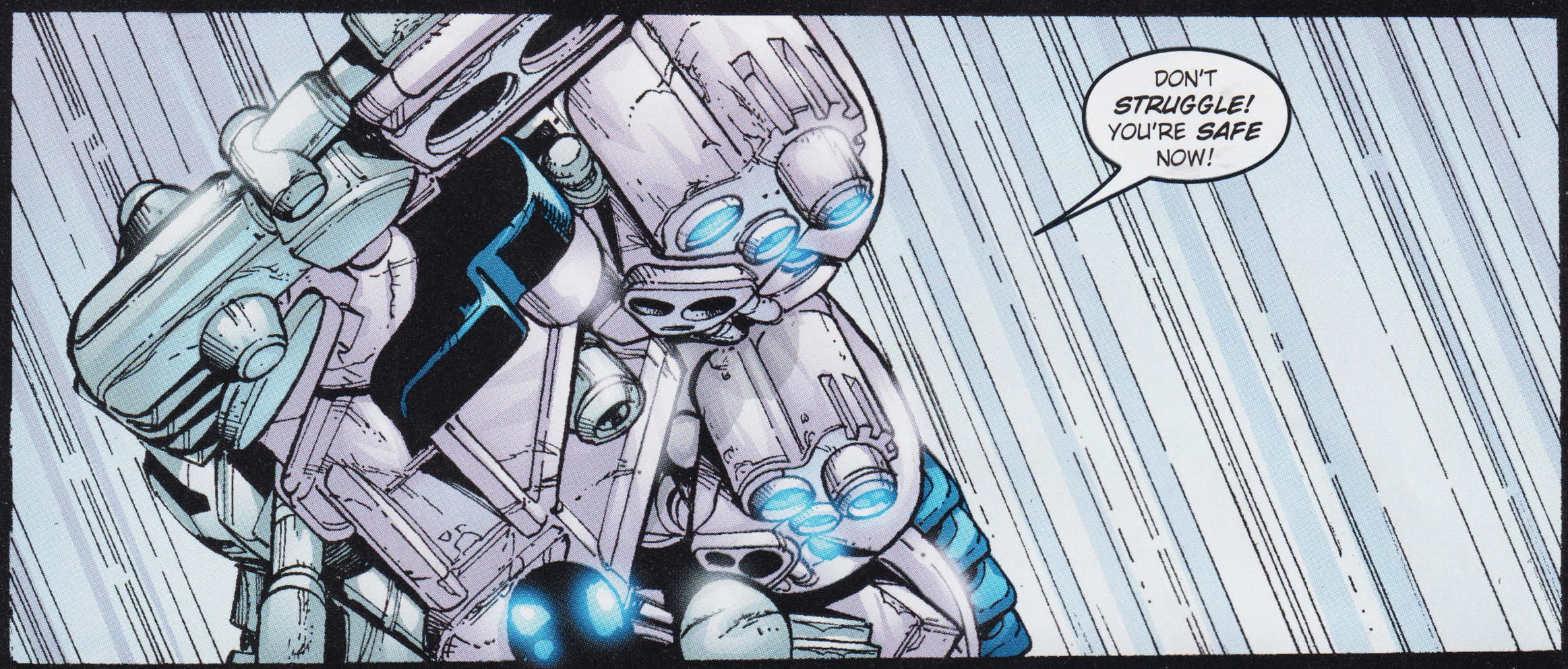


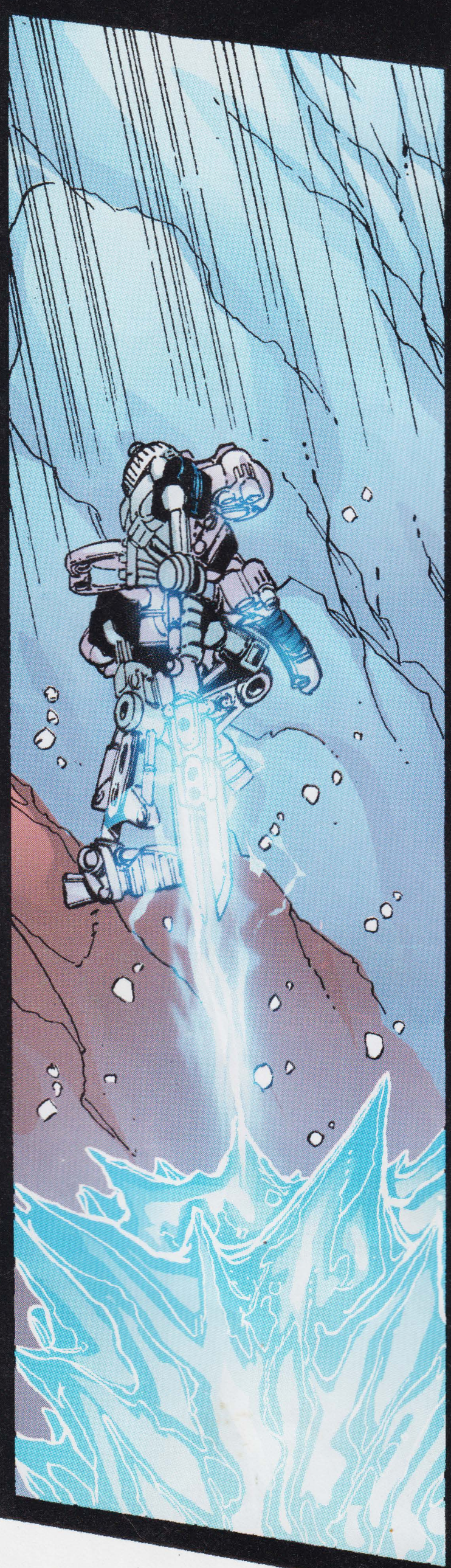

MY PEOPLE ARE PLANNING AN ICE BRIDGE TO SPAN THIS CHASM--IN YOUR HONOR.
UNTIL THEN, I WILL MAKE MY OWN. I--

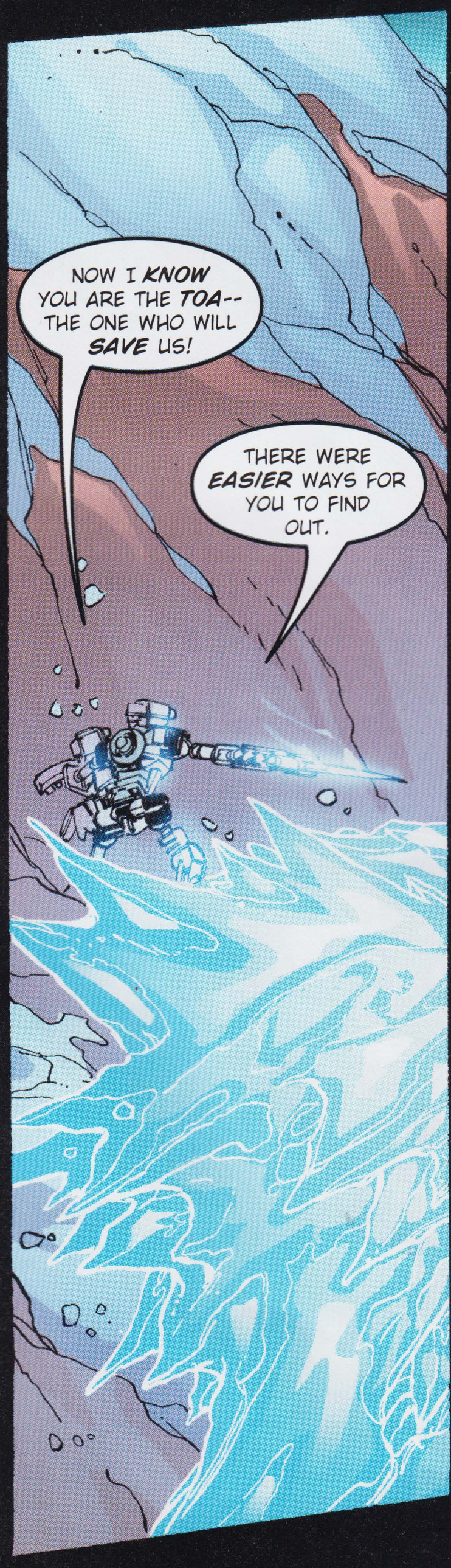

NO!

KOPAKA! WATCH OUT!

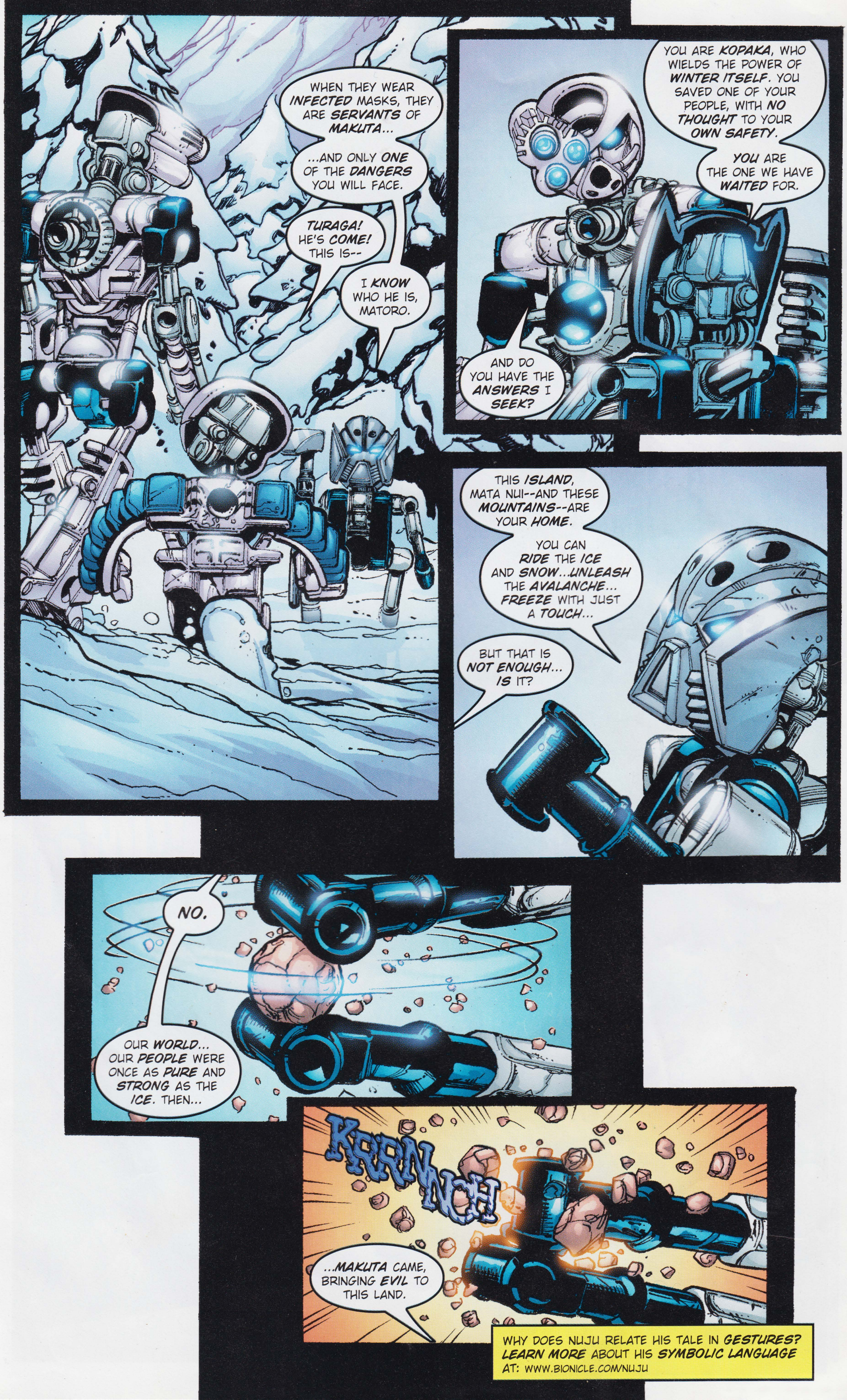



DON'T STRUGGLE! YOU'RE SAFE NOW!



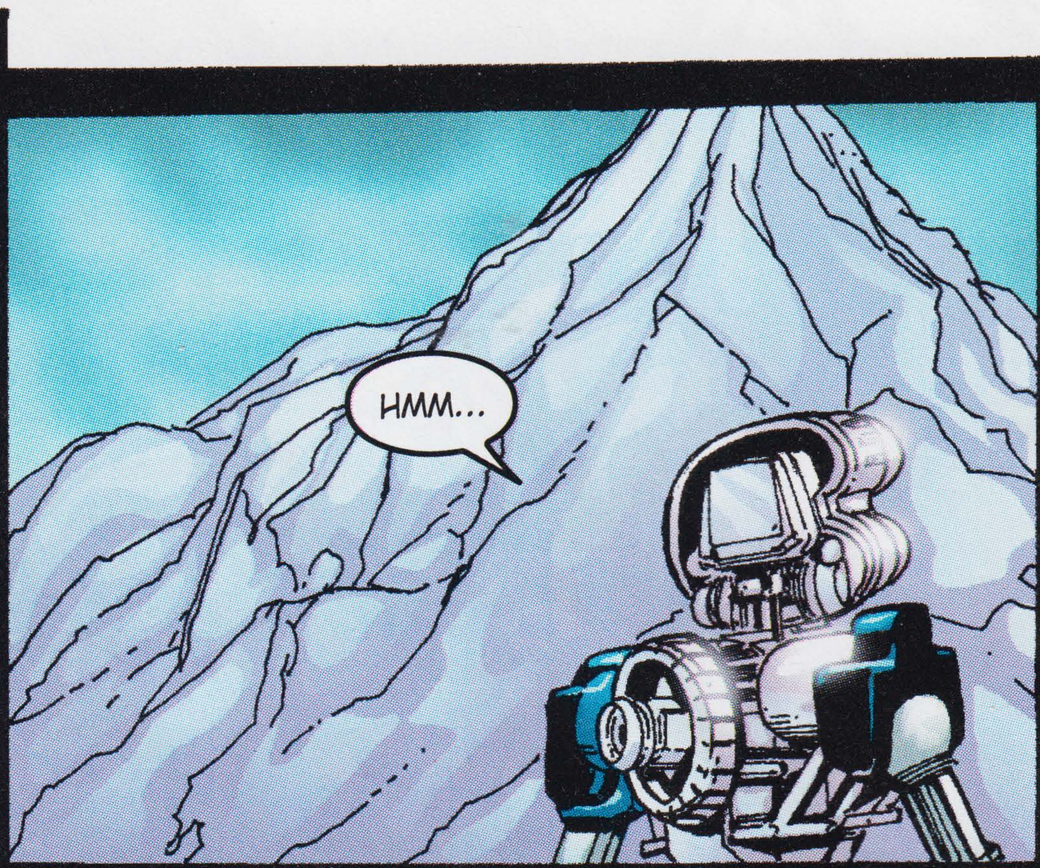

NOW I KNOW YOU ARE THE TOA-- THE ONE WHO WILL SAVE US!
THERE WERE EASIER WAYS FOR YOU TO FIND OUT.

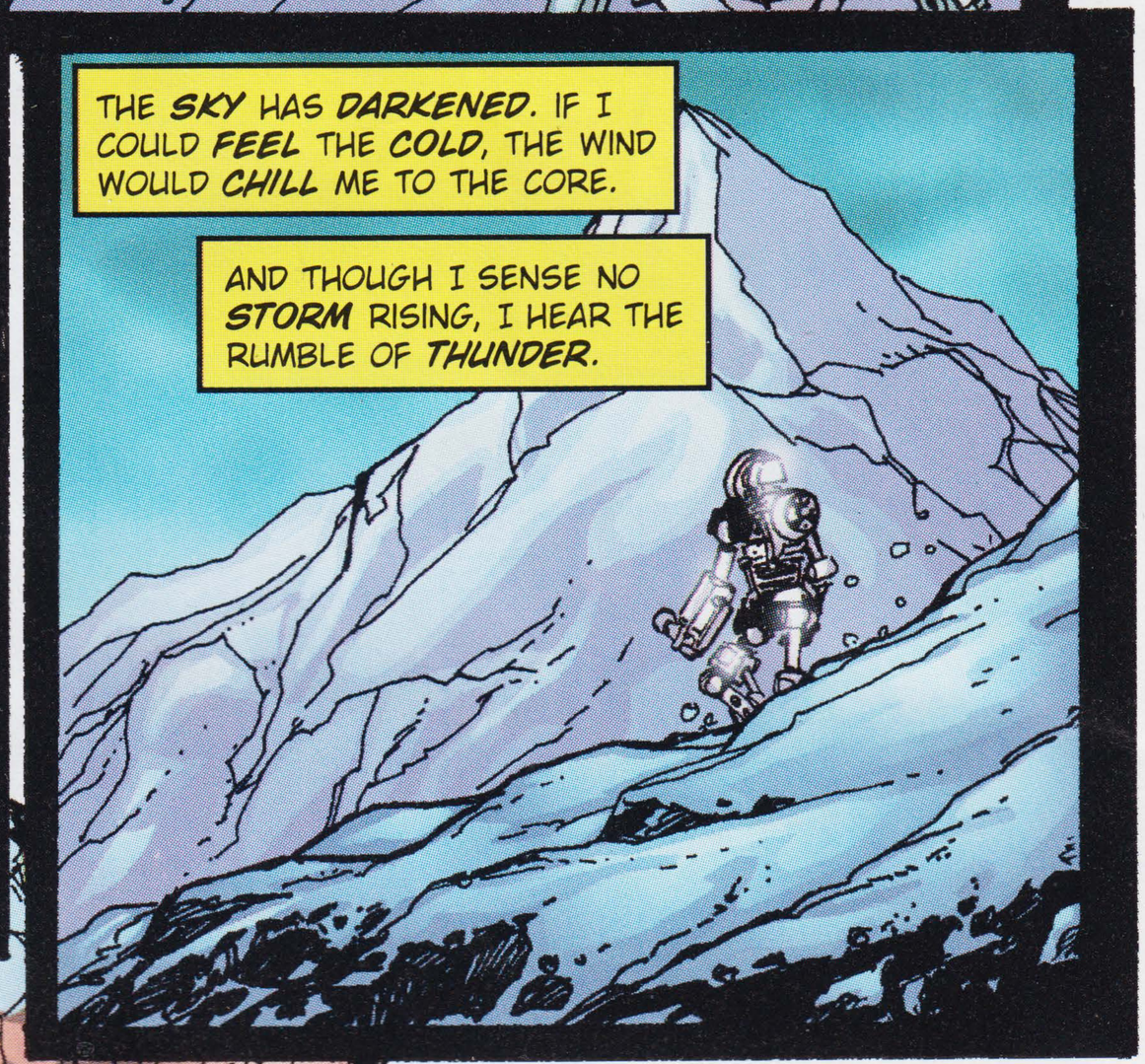
WHAT WAS THAT CREATURE?
WE CALL THEM NUI-RAMA.



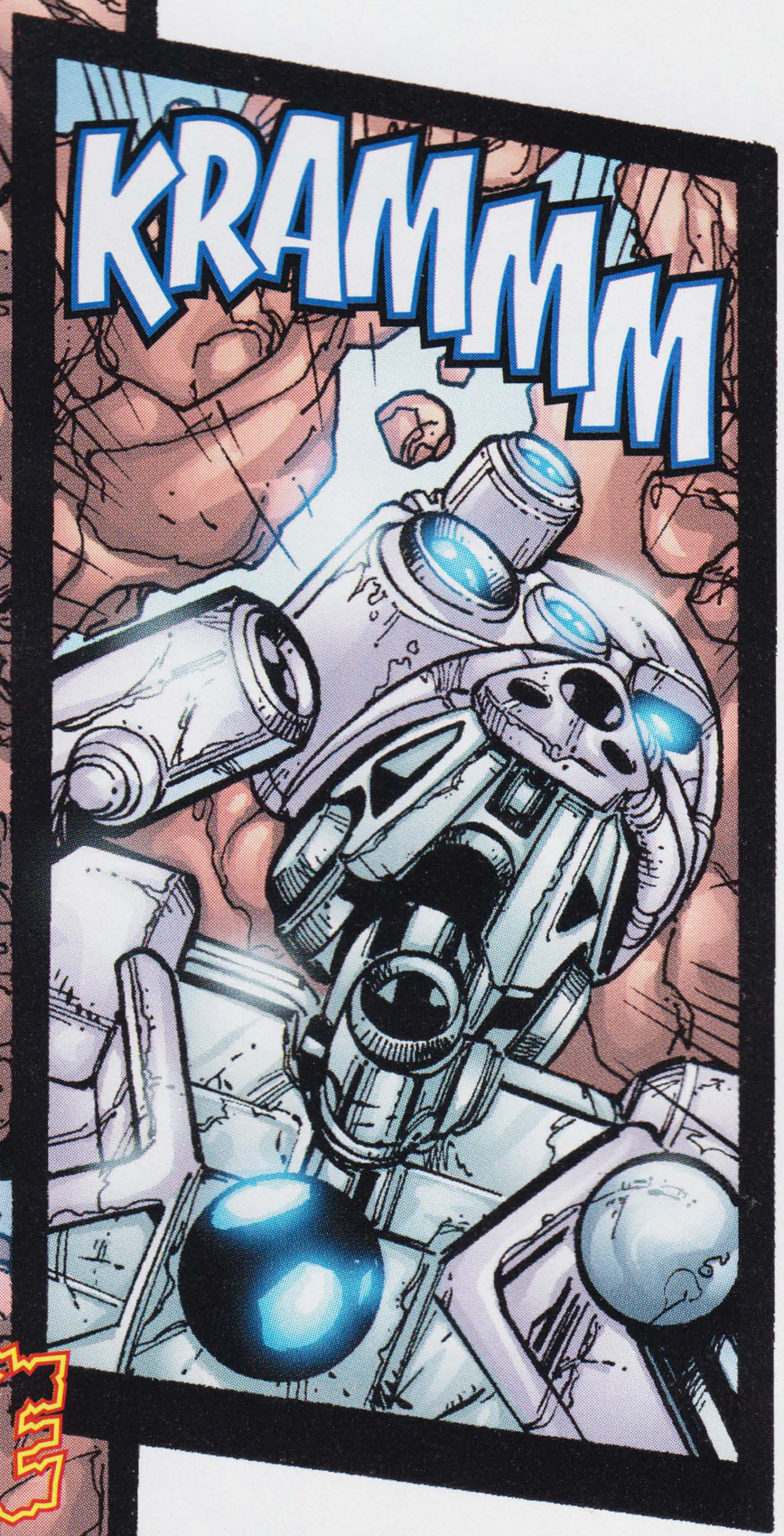
WHY DOES NUJU RELATE HIS TALE IN GESTURES? LEARN MORE ABOUT HIS SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE AT: WWW.BIONICLE.COM/NUJU

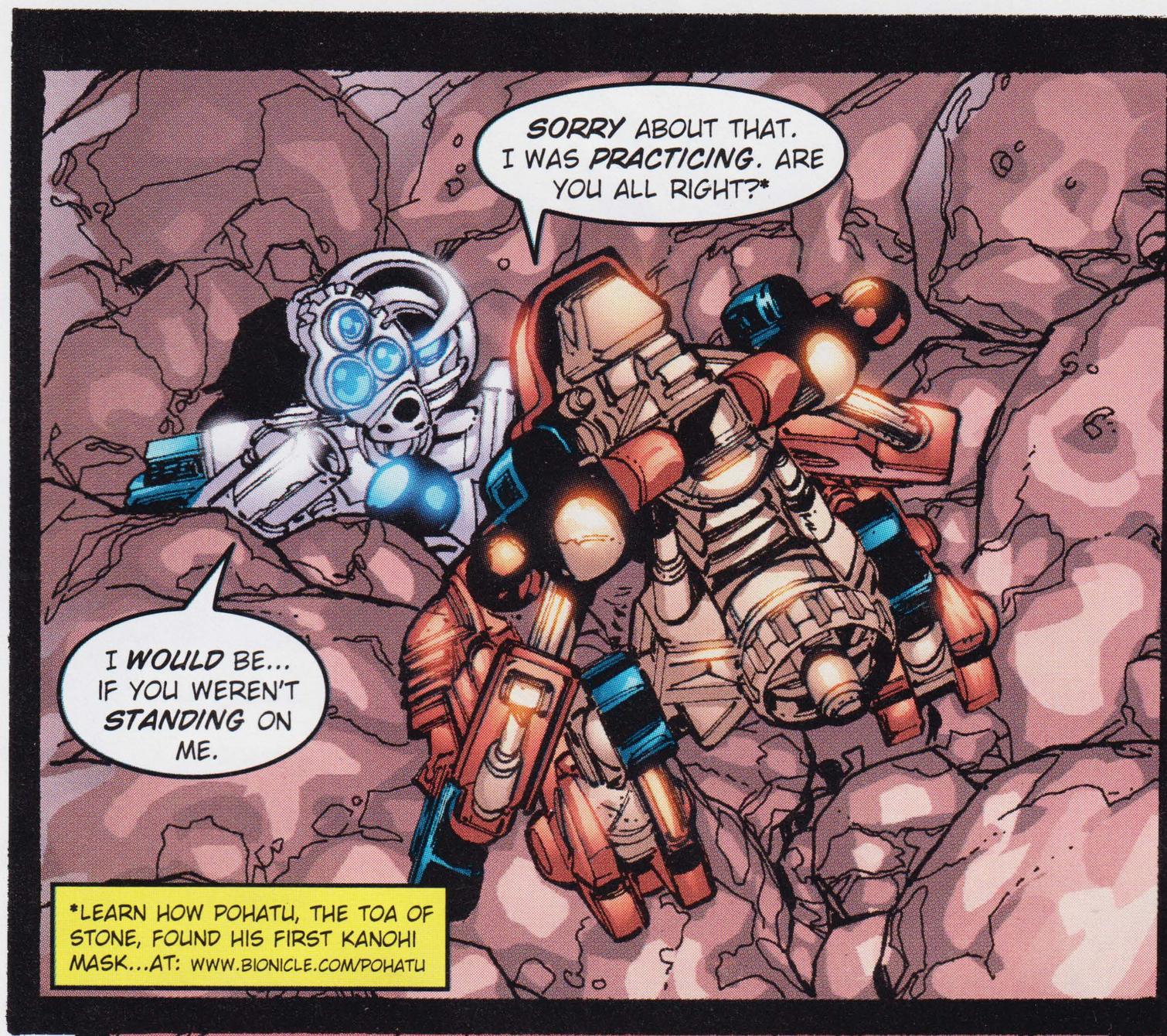
TO DEFEAT MAKUTA AND RESTORE OUR LAND, YOU WILL NEED THE GREAT MASKS OF POWER. YOU'LL FIND THE FIRST AT--
I KNOW--THE "PLACE OF FAR-SEEING."


HMM...


THE SKY HAS DARKENED. IF I COULD FEEL THE COLD, THE WIND WOULD CHILL ME TO THE CORE.
AND THOUGH I SENSE NO STORM RISING, I HEAR THE RUMBLE OF THUNDER.

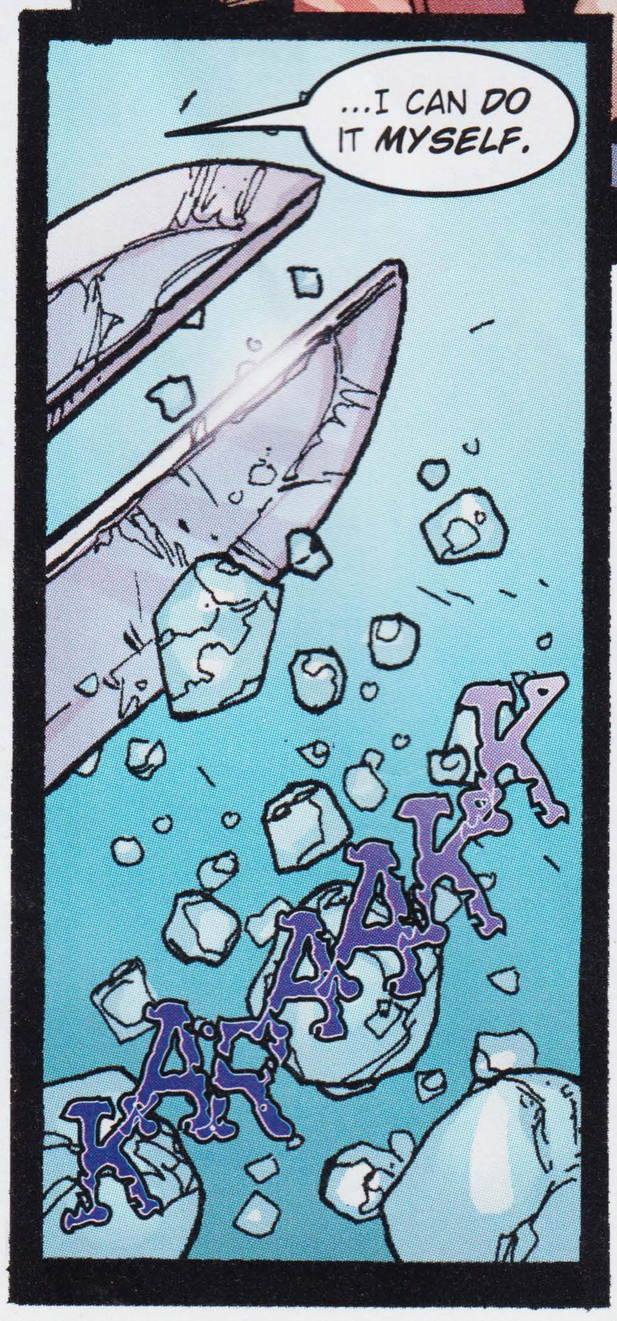
WATCH OUT!
BARUMMBLE


KRAMMMM

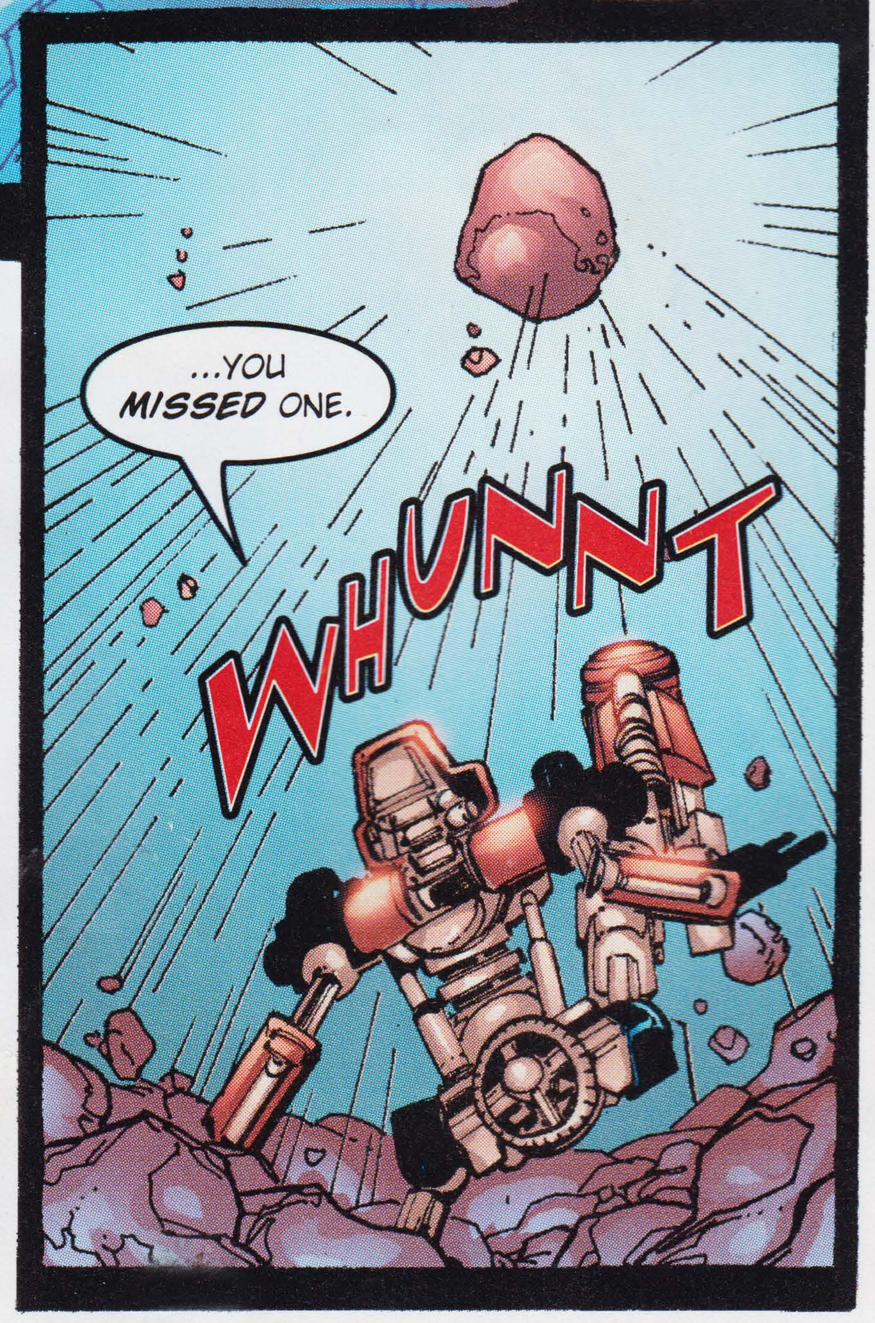

SORRY ABOUT THAT. I WAS PRACTICING. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?*
I WOULD BE... IF YOU WEREN'T STANDING ON ME.
*LEARN HOW POHATU, THE TOA OF STONE, FOUND HIS FIRST KANOHI MASK...AT: WWW.BIONICLE.COM/POHATU

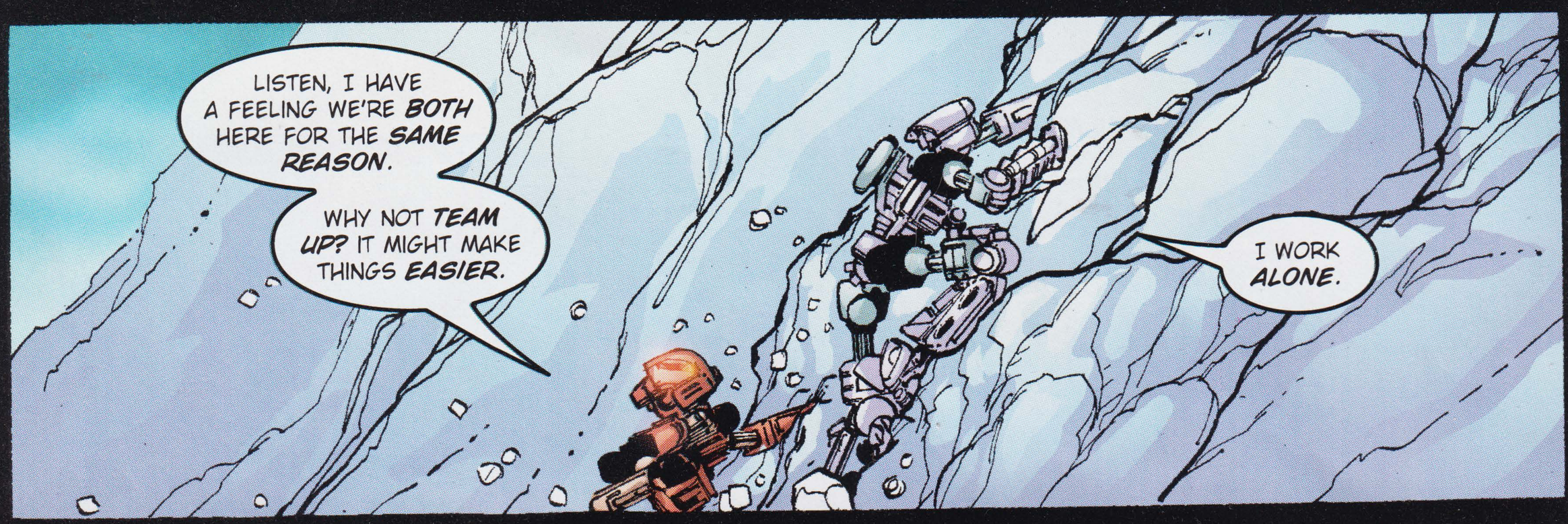
LET ME HELP YOU OUT.
THANK YOU. I DON'T NEED HELP.

LET ME DO IT. IT'LL BE FASTER.
I SAID...

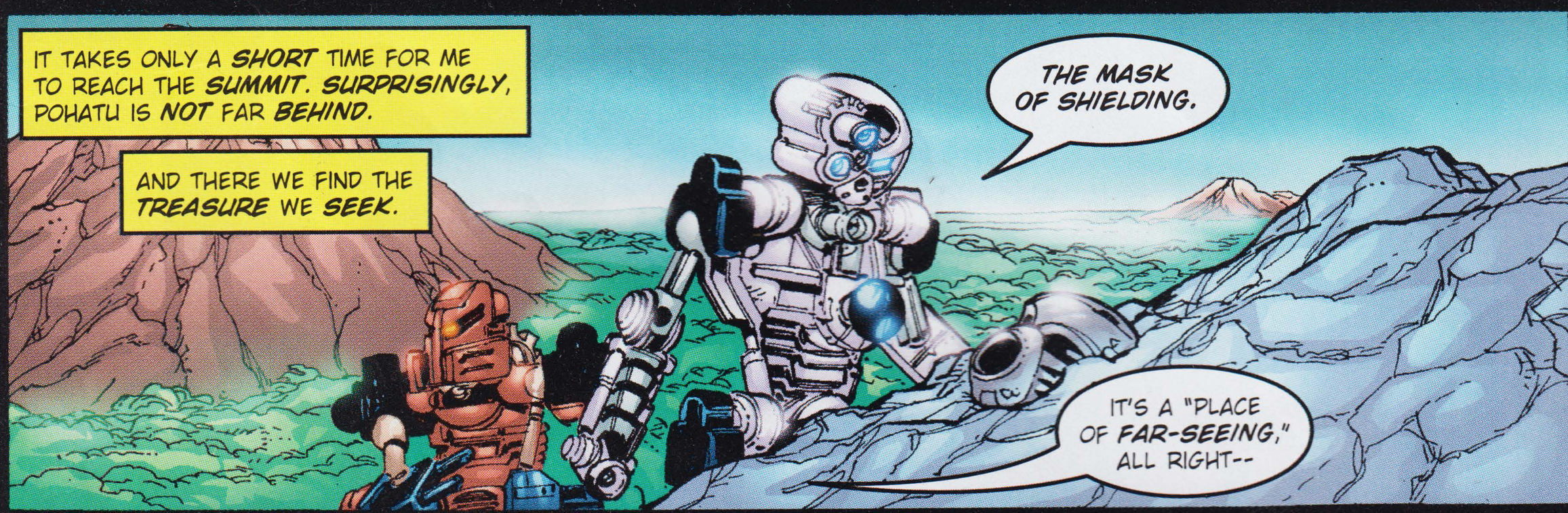

...I CAN DO IT MYSELF.
KRAAK

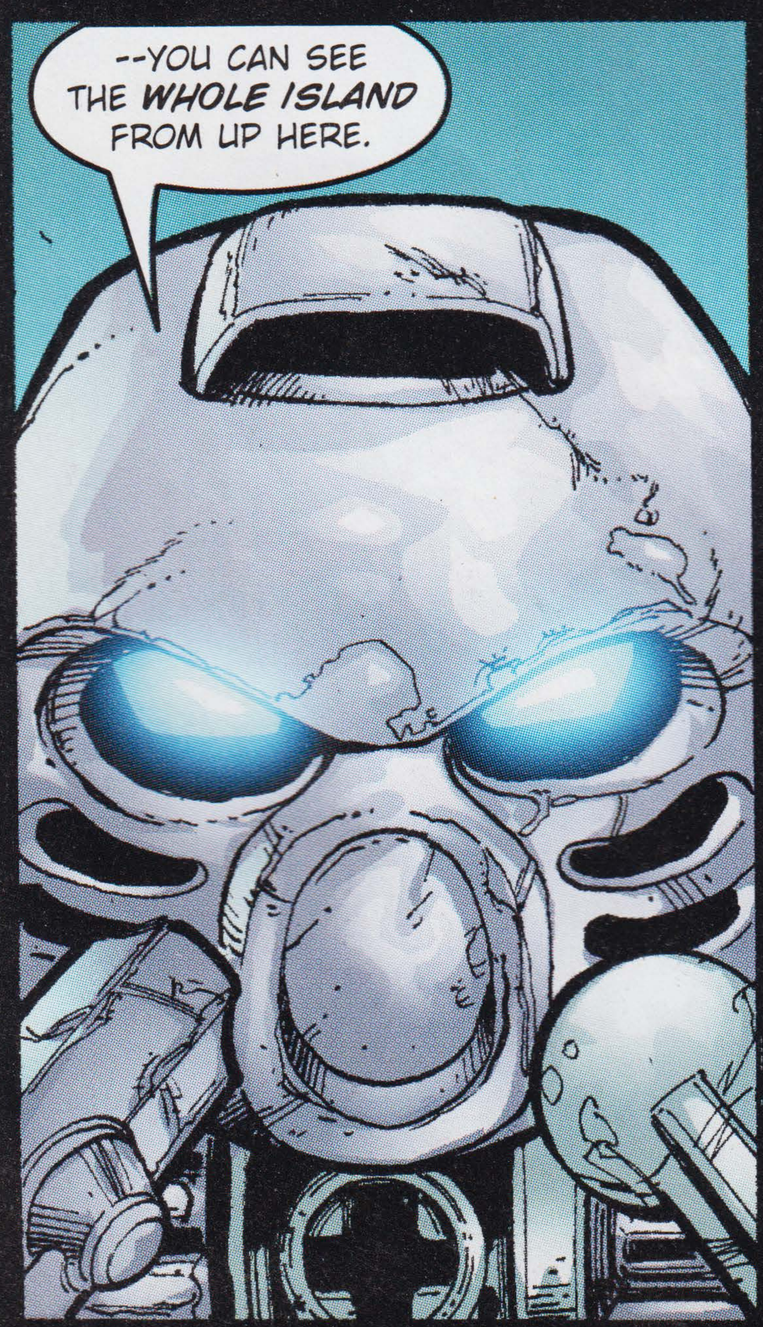
YEAH, WELL...

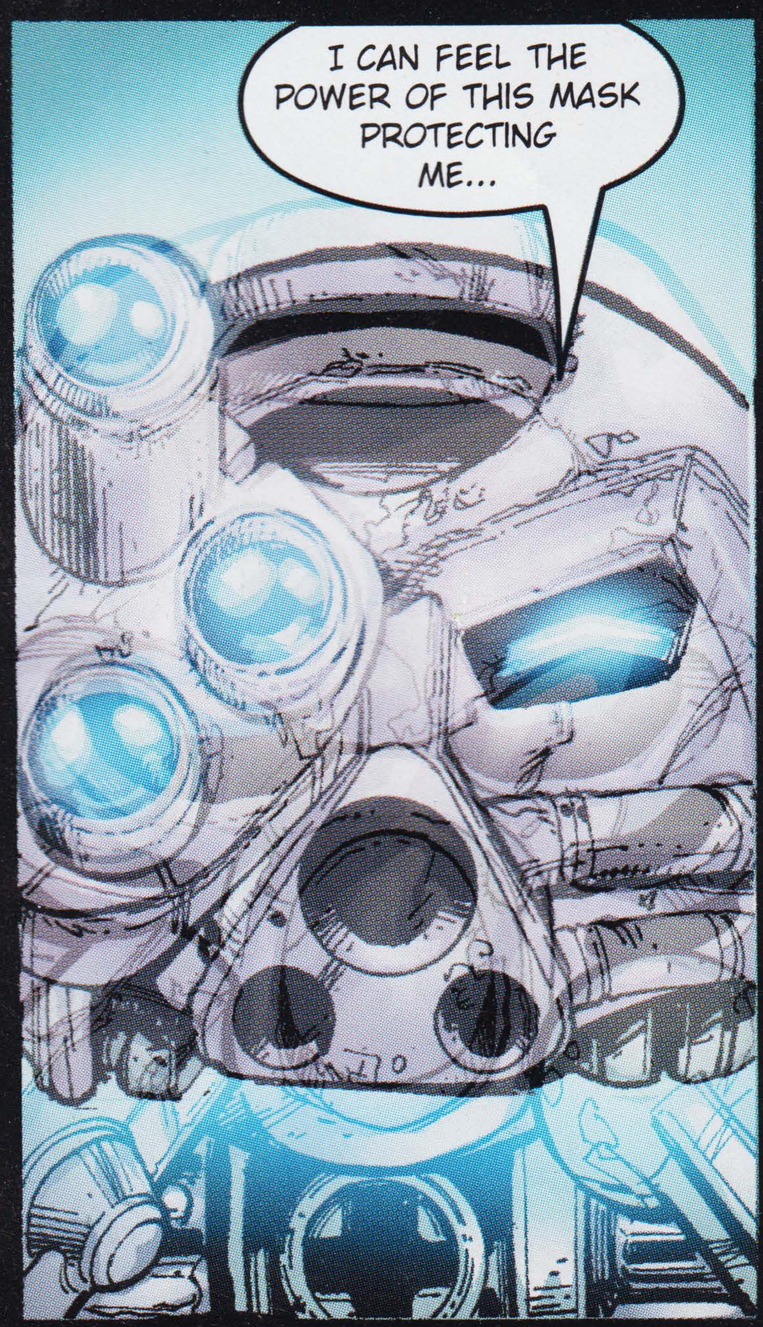

...YOU MISSED ONE.
WHUNNT

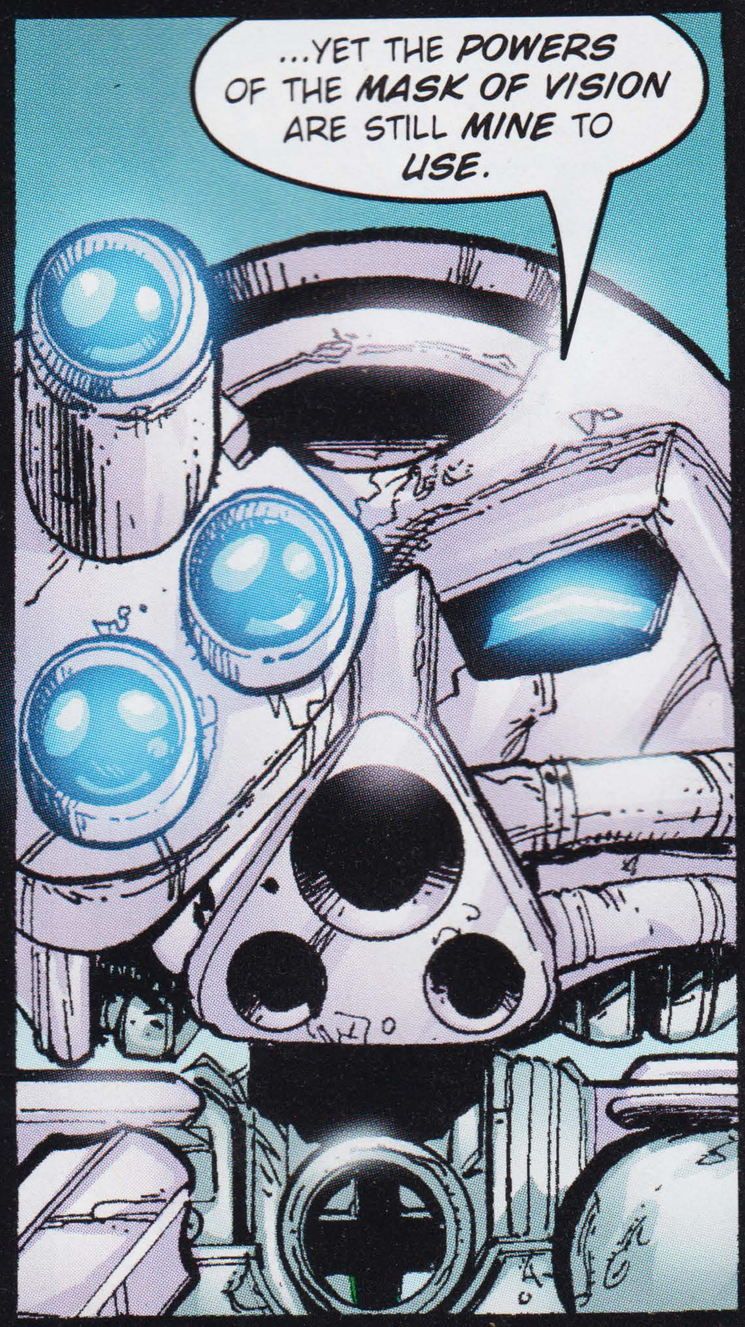

LISTEN, I HAVE A FEELING WE'RE BOTH HERE FOR THE SAME REASON.
WHY NOT TEAM UP? IT MIGHT MAKE THINGS EASIER.
I WORK ALONE.

BY CHOICE, OR JUST 'CAUSE NO ONE CAN STAND YOU?
ALL RIGHT, COME ALONG. AFTER ALL, I MIGHT NEED A MOUNTAIN MOVED...OR THE ISLAND LIFTED.


IT TAKES ONLY A SHORT TIME FOR ME TO REACH THE SUMMIT. SURPRISINGLY, POHATU IS NOT FAR BEHIND.
AND THERE WE FIND THE TREASURE WE SEEK.
THE MASK OF SHIELDING.
IT'S A "PLACE OF FAR-SEEING," ALL RIGHT--


--YOU CAN SEE THE WHOLE ISLAND FROM UP HERE.


I CAN FEEL THE POWER OF THIS MASK PROTECTING ME...


...YET THE POWERS OF THE MASK OF VISION ARE STILL MINE TO USE.

WE HAVE TO GO. NOW.
WHY?
NO QUESTIONS. JUST FOLLOW ME.
WHAT DID YOU SEE?
STRANGERS. BEINGS OF GREAT POWER.
BUT ARE THEY ALLIES...
...OR ENEMIES?
TO BE CONTINUED

CHAPTER FOUR of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"PO-KORO"

Po-Wahi is a dry, arid land of sand and stone. At first, I think there is no one at the dock to greet me. But as I look around, I notice a solitary merchant and his wares.

"Eh? What's that?" he asks. "Sorry. Don't get too many travelers around Po-Wahi these days. What can I do for you? Need a boat? Information? Or a souvenir, maybe?"

Hopeful to get some tips about the local culture, I ask "What is Po-Wahi?"

"Po-Wahi is… well, there's not much to it, really, mostly sand… lots of sand. But there are the canyons, which are real pretty to look at, if the sun or the Rahi don't get you first… and the Path of Prophecies, which the ancient carvers made.

"Po-Koro's a decent place, too, and don't miss the games. Most everyone around Mata Nui turns up to see a Kolhii match, when they're on. Haven't been too many visitors lately, though."

I thank the merchant for his assistance and set out on foot, following the stone path laid before me. "Stay outta the sun!" he calls out to me as I leave.

I soon come to a fork in the road and must choose my path. The writing is becoming more familiar to me now. Is my memory returning? Yes or no, I choose the path to the left, certain that it will take me to Po-Koro.

The path is long and monotonous, but eventually I come to another fork in the road. A stone carver is here, hard at work. As I admire his work, he speaks to me.

"Hot enough for ya?" he asks. "Another Hafu original…" he says as he gestures toward his work. "Wow… Sometimes I impress myself! Can you guess what it is yet?"

I can't, so I shake my head "No".

He seems to sense that I am not here for idle chit-chat. "If you're looking for Po-Koro, traveler, take the right road. My right. Or is it your right?"

I thank him for the help, such as it is, and head out along the path to the right. My right. And soon, I see it.

A marvelous stone gate stands before me. The path is overlooked by six magnificent, enormous stone faces. I wonder if these are also the work of Hafu, the stone carver with whom I just spoke?

I walk through the gate and into the middle of a thriving marketplace. The sounds of animals and bartering fill the air. I speak with a nearby merchant.

"Hello, stranger! Are you looking for a good Kolhii ball? Let me recommend the Comet, our most popular model."

"What is a Kolhii ball?" I ask.

"Why, Kolhii balls are for playing Kolhii, of course," he replies. "You'd want a Comet — our most popular model. Trading for two Husi Pecking Birds, or the equivalent."

I ask him, "Where do you get your Kolhii balls?"

"Well, now, that's privileged information, my friend. Let's just say I have a secret source…"

"How do I buy a Kolhii ball?" I wonder aloud.

"We trade here, like in the rest of the bazaar," he answers. "If you've got something worth trading, I'll give you a Kolhii ball for it!"

I don't have anything to trade, so I tell him goodbye.

"Come back anytime… Our Comet balls are the best on Mata Nui. Everyone wants one! Don't be the only Matoran in Po-Koro without a Comet!"

I see a hut with an open door to my left. I hear someone carving stone within it. I decide to enter the hut. The tall figure within greets me.

"Hail, adventurer! You have come at an unhappy time in Po-Koro, I fear. I am about to announce to my people the news that the next Kolhii match will have to be cancelled. I do not think even great Pohatu could play Kolhii at a time like this."

"Who are you?" I ask.

"I am Onewa, Turaga of the village of Po-Koro," he replies. "The Matoran here are master carvers, and their work is the envy of all Mata Nui. But today I am not carving works of art. Instead, I am fashioning beds.

"I am struggling to bring comfort to the sick people of this village, but it is a fleeting solace. We know nothing of this illness, how long it might last, or where it comes from.

Left unattended, I fear the Madness…"

He does not finish his sentence. Curious, I ask why he is canceling the Kolhii match.

"A dark plague has corrupted my people and my village. Though many still stay at their work, and visit the bazaar, and play Kolhii, they have blinded themselves to the truth, and put strength and duty before fear.

"Hewkii, our greatest Kolhii champion, was one of the first to fall ill. He has become weakened, and cannot move from his bed. I fear that soon we will see in him the beginnings of the Madness, the same diabolical force that grips the wild Rahi when their masks become infected."

If Hewkii is their greatest Kolhii champion, I wonder who then is Pohatu? I decide to ask.

"Pohatu is the Toa of the Po-Koro Matoran," Onewa tells me. "His great strength can fell mountains, and the Kanohi Kakama gives him speed greater than any creature on Mata Nui.

"The irony is that Pohatu's strength and speed cannot help us. An enemy that can neither be seen, nor felt plagues us.

"Vakama, of Ta-Koro, has sent some of his Guard to assist us, but they will not enter the village for fear of falling prey to this disease. Instead, they are combing the hills in search of Pohatu, who is on a grave quest for the Masks of Power. But without knowing even where this illness comes from, there is little anyone can do… even the great Pohatu.

"I am distracted by many of Po-Koro's problems, adventurer, and I can give you little of my time. Do you think you can give me some clue about how to cure this illness?"

I cannot, so I tell Onewa goodbye.

"I wish you the speed of Pohatu, adventurer," he says as I depart. He then returns to his sorrowful task of carving beds for the ill.

Curious, I head down to look at the Kolhii field. There I meet someone playing with a Kolhii ball. He greets me with a vigorous "Hup! Hup! Hup!"

"Are you here for a Kolhii match?" he asks. "I sure could use some more teammates to play with. All the others have gone home. They're not feeling well. Not even Hewkii can play

anymore. And I just got a new Comet! Traded two Husi for it."

I would like to learn more about the game, so I ask, "What is Kolhii?"

"What is Kolhii?" he repeats incredulously. "You must not be from around here! Kolhii is the greatest sport on Mata Nui. It's incredibly simple, but takes much more skill than the sports they play in other villages!

"Kolhii is played in a Kolhii field. You're standing in the biggest one in Po-Wahi, but they don't have to be as fancy as this. All you need is four goals, set up on each side of a square. There are four players.

"Each of the goals has a Matoran to guard it. To win, you have to kick Kolhii balls — like this one — into any of the other three goals, while at the same time stopping other players from getting their balls into your goal. That's it!"

Remembering he has a new one, I ask, "What is a Comet?"

"A Comet is the best kind of Kolhii ball you can get," he says. "Everyone is getting one of these now. They're perfectly balanced, so it's very hard to miss, and when you kick them, they fly as fast as a comet! They only started trading them recently at the bazaar. I don't know where they get them, but whoever carved them is truly a master."

Eager to learn more about him, I ask, "Who is Hewkii?"

"Who is Hewkii!? Why, only the greatest Kolhii player ever. At least… he was. He fell ill a little while ago, and I haven't seen him around much. He lives just on the other side of the Kolhii field."

Now that I know where Hewkii lives, I feel the pressing need to deliver the message that Macku is all right. Perhaps it will make him feel better somewhat. I say my goodbye to the stranger at the Kolhii field, but as I leave, I hear him:

"Hup! Hup! *cough*"

Is he too coming down with this mysterious illness? I see what must be Hewkii's hut as I leave the Kolhii field. It is marked with an 'X' so all may know that the inhabitant within is sick. As I move toward the hut, I pass a lone spectator in the stands, still hopeful that the Kolhii match will go on.

I enter the hut and find Hewkii within. He is very ill, but

shouts at me with great force: "Stay away from me!" And then he continues, much weaker now, "I just want to be left alone."

Perhaps this is not Hewkii after all, I think. I decide that it is better to ask and be certain. "Who are you?"

"I am… Hewkii…" he replies. The words come with much difficulty.

"Why are you sick?" I ask.

"I don't know…" he says with difficulty. "I have been here for — how many days? I'm not sure anymore… I used to know.

"You must go. I feel… strange. No one must come here, especially Macku. Do not tell her I am ill, it will worry her… she must not see me like this, she must not…"

Unable to take any more of this conversation, Hewkii yells "Get out!" I can do nothing more than oblige him.

I decide to check once more on the stranger on the Kolhii field, but I notice that he is gone. He has left behind his Comet! I resolve to find him and take it to him, but as I go to pick it up, a mysterious substance seems to ooze out from within it and coat the ball.

What can this mean? I decide to take the ball to Onewa to see if he knows. At first, he is puzzled.

"What? But this is just a Kolhii ball…

"Hm. But not just any Kolhii ball; this is the special kind that is being traded at the bazaar, and which has become very popular. Thank you, adventurer, for showing this to me. You are as noble as your reputation, and resourceful.

"This opens my eyes to many things. If these balls are the cause of the illness, then we must take them away from the village, and throw them in the sea. But they are very popular and the Po-Koro Matoran value Kolhii above many things. I cannot take these away from my people unless I have proof that they are the cause.

"However, this is a vital clue. I know that a merchant in the bazaar sells these balls — you must find out from him where these balls come from. But take care. If he is somehow involved in this plot, then he will not want you to find out.

"The evil that visited Ga-Koro across the waves has come, it seems, to our ocean of sand. I fear the shadow of the Makuta

has been cast across Po-Koro. I know that the source of this evil must be found or all may be lost.

"If Vakama's Guard can find the Toa, I will suggest to Pohatu that he seek you out, and together I hope you can do what is necessary. Would that the sick did not need me, or I would come to assist you on your quest.

"Perhaps there is some information that I can provide you with that will help you unravel this great mystery!" he asks me.

I can think of nothing more to ask Onewa, so I return to the Comet merchant in the marketplace. He is no more willing to tell me where he gets his Kolhii balls this time than when I asked before. But while he is busy with another customer, I notice a strange object among the Kolhii balls. I slip it into my bag without his noticing.

Not certain where I am going or what I am looking for, I decide to head back the way I came. I soon see Hafu, still hard at work on his latest masterpiece. I keep to the left and head toward what I think is a quarry.

The quarry is filled with enormous mask carvings. Below each mask is a small hole. Do I hold within my backpack the key to solving this mystery? There is only one way to find out. I place the object I "borrowed" from the Comet merchant into each hole, one by one, until I finally find the one for which it opens a door.

Inside the cave, I discover a pile of Comet Kolhii balls. They are all infected like the one I gave to Onewa. But I am not alone in the cave. A large, blue scorpion-like Rahi beast has spotted me.

Just then, a tall stranger appears in the cave with me. The scorpion takes aim and strikes him a blinding blow. He appears to be okay, except that he cannot see. He speaks to me.

"Adventurer, the scorpion has blinded me for the moment. It will be some time before my sight returns! Tell me where to kick the ball, and together we can destroy the Nui-Jaga's nest!"

The stranger moves with astonishing speed. Although the Nui-Jaga knocks away several of our shots, we quickly begin breaking the green columns which constitute the Nui-Jaga's nest. After the last strands have been snapped, the Nui-Jaga quickly

retreats as the ceiling threatens to collapse upon us.

"Let's get out of here," says the stranger. We both turn to flee. I am running as fast as I can, but I can sense that I am not going to make it. The stranger begins to accelerate, and then suddenly we are far outside the cave, looking down upon it as a cloud of dust and stone comes shooting out of its mouth.

"Excellent, my friend!" the stranger exclaims. "We make a good team! My sight has returned to me. This was an evil plan, indeed. Onewa was right to call upon me. That was an infected mask set beside the Kolhii balls… But who left it there, and placed the balls beside it?

"Though Po-Koro will be safe now, we have uncovered an even greater mystery. I fear the Makuta's influence may extend beyond the Rahi, now…

"I will take this news back to Po-Koro, and help them carry the infected Kolhii balls into the sea. My Mask of Power will let me to get to the village quick enough, I think, to save even Hewkii.

"You are a cunning ally, friend, and brave. I hope that we shall meet again, someday."

And with that, he is gone. I can only conclude that I have encountered the Toa known as Pohatu. I return to Po-Koro as fast as my legs will carry me. I seek out Onewa to tell him what has happened.

"Hail, hero!" cries Onewa. "Pohatu has already been here, and gone. The infected Kolhii balls have been taken to the sea, and they will bother us no more. The Matoran of my village are recovering from their illness. I'm not certain what became of the merchant who sold those Kolhii balls, however. He disappeared before Pohatu returned.

"Pohatu has told me of all your adventures. We, like the Ga-Koro Matoran, will long honor your deeds! Nokama was right when she said you would be witness to many important things transpiring throughout our land. She asked me to watch you, and tell her if I also feel this.

"I know now that you are the one her astrologer has spoken of. Take this Carving Tool, which is the proud symbol of our greatest Carvers. Show it to Nokama and she will give you the

Book of Chronicles.

"I trust your travels are going well. I wish you the speed of Pohatu, adventurer."

Before heading back to Ga-Koro, I decide to check on Hewkii's progress. The Kolhii field is now full of Kolhii players, and fans are crowded round shouting cheers of support.

At Hewkii's hut, Hewkii is now up and about, seemingly bursting with energy.

"I will soon be fit enough to return to Kolhii, and to Macku," he tells me. "If you see her in your travels, tell her I am well!"

I agree to do so and immediately head out to do just that.

"Hello again," Nokama greets me. I show her the Po-Koro chisel.

She gets straight to the point. "Take this book, and attend to it, and travel to the villages. It will store all that you see. If the Toa fail, and Mata Nui is destroyed… this, at least, will remain. And the ocean will keep it safe for us."

Honored by this task, I say goodbye and turn to leave when she says it: "Good luck, Chronicler." Chronicler. I now have some identity and purpose to cling to at last.

Not exactly knowing how I am to travel to the villages, nor how many villages there may be, I decide to head back to Po-Wahi by boat. Once there, I plan to head toward the mountain along the stone path I have not yet taken.

CHAPTER SEVEN of *Tale of the Toa*
THE MEETING

Gali was the first to notice the two newcomers. "Brothers," she said quietly. "Look."

One of the newcomers wore a bronze mask. He leaped easily down to land among them. "Mind if we join the party?"

Tahu stepped forward. "I am Tahu, Toa of Fire. Who are you?"

The bronze stranger seemed unintimidated by Tahu's fiery glare. "I'm Pohatu," he said. "Toa of Stone. My talkative friend here is the Ice Toa, Kopaka." He gestured to the silver-and-white figure standing silently behind him.

The second newcomer stepped forward. Kopaka. Gali looked him up and down, feeling a chill ripple through the air as he came closer.

This one - this one has many layers, she thought uncertainly. *He is cold. But I sense his frosty exterior may hide a blazing fire deep within…*

At that moment, Kopaka turned his icy gaze upon her, catching her stare. He said nothing, but Gali quickly turned away.

More introductions were made, and soon they were trading stories of how and where they each had awakened.

As the others chatted, Kopaka said little. He was thinking about the future. What else lay in store for them here? And what of the mysterious Makuta, the evil one his villagers had spoken of?

He glanced at the red one, Tahu, who was blustering on about his journey to find his village, Ta-Koro, at the top of a volcano. *This Fire Toa is full of hot air*, Kopaka thought. *Will he be prepared for the heat of battle, or will he burn out quickly?*

Then there was Onua, the Toa of Earth. He spoke less than the others, while listening to all that was said. Did that subdued exterior hide a busy mind, or an empty one? Just then Lewa, the Toa of Air, punctuated a comment he'd made by backflipping up onto a nearby boulder and doing a handstand. *So much energy*, Kopaka thought. *But it blows out of him*

uncontrolled, in all directions, like the wind. Not exactly someone I'd want to trust my life to in a tough spot.

Hearing Pohatu's cheerful laugh, Kopaka turned to gaze at him. The Toa of Stone had surprised him in their battle against the horned Rahi. He had fought bravely. He had also been willing to entrust his life to Kopaka in that wild ski jump over the ravine.

I don't know if I could have done the same, Kopaka admitted to himself. Then he shook his head. *But why* ***should*** *he trust someone he doesn't know? It turned out well in that case, but he was foolish to be so ready to turn his life over to a stranger. I would not make that same mistake.*

Finally Kopaka turned his gaze to Gali. Now this was one he couldn't read. The way he had caught her looking at him a few moments ago - it was as if she could see into his mind, his heart, just the way he could see through the earth and stone with his Mask of Vision. But that was impossible. Wasn't it?

Gali spoke, interrupting Kopaka's thoughts. "Well, brothers," she said, turning her gaze to take in all of them, "I suppose that's enough talk of the past. We should start discussing what comes next, yes? For despite all the interesting elemental powers we may have, I expect that our best weapon is our minds."

Kopaka almost smiled. At last, someone was talking sense!

"You're right, Gali," Tahu said. "We need to find these masks we seek - as quickly as possible. The Turaga of my village told me they will give us great powers. I know my own mask gives me the powers of protection or shielding…"

"That's right," Pohatu interrupted. "Brother Kopaka has found a Mask of Shielding, too."

Tahu frowned. "Yes," he said shortly, sounding irritated. "Well, there are five more masks out there for each of us."

Once again, Kopaka held back a smile. Obviously Tahu was annoyed that someone else had beaten him to the first mask.

Onua looked thoughtful. "According to my Turaga, the masks are hidden all over the island, and Makuta has set his Rahi creatures to guard them. So our quest won't be easy."

"Fine, fine." Tahu sounded impatient. "Anyway, the important thing is to find them - fast. We'll split into smaller

groups. Gali and Lewa, you can search the jungle and beaches together. Onua and Kopaka can check the caves of Onu-Wahi. And Pohatu, you can come with - ”

“Hold on a quicksecond, brother Tahu,” Lewa interrupted. “If speed is what we’re after, why bother with the pairmaking? Why not each of us journeysearch on our own?”

Onua shrugged. “Our fiery brother has a good plan,” he said calmly. “Working in pairs makes sense. It strikes a balance between speed and caution.”

Gali was shaking her head. “Brothers, we have been brought together for a reason. I think we ought to stick together, at least until we know exactly what we’re up against.”

Pohatu nodded. “She’s right,” he said. “Trust me, these Rahi creatures are nothing to face alone. But if we travel together they should give us little trouble. Right, Kopaka?”

Kopaka shrugged, doing his best to chill the impatience he felt in listening to this conversation. Why hadn’t he already departed? “I can’t agree, Toa of Stone,” he said, “We should split up. As I already told you, I prefer to work alone.”

Pohatu looked slightly hurt. “You may prefer it,” he replied, “But would you also prefer being chased by that sharp-horned beast if I hadn’t been there to help you trap it?”

“Enough of this bickering,” Tahu broke in impatiently. “We will accomplish nothing by standing here and having a debate. The decision is made - we split into small groups. It’s the best of both worlds, can’t you see that?”

All I see is one who believes that power belongs to whoever shouts the loudest, Kopaka thought in disgust. *Well, I, for one, am not ready to bow to such a ‘leader.’ Not as long as I have life in my body.*

Tahu noticed Kopaka’s stare. What thoughts lay behind his mask? The Ice Toa’s silence and intense gaze made Tahu uneasy, though he didn’t like to admit it even to himself.

It doesn’t matter, Tahu told himself, pushing such feelings aside. *There are more important things to worry about.*

The others were already back to arguing, several of them speaking at once.

Crrrrrraaaaaaaaak!

Suddenly, without warning, the very earth yawned open in front of them, splitting the clearing in half. All around, the earth shuddered and trembled, smaller cracks opening here and there as the trees shook and birds took off into the air in a panic of cries.

Jagged streaks of white-hot lightning streaked across the sky, striking down only a few lengths from where the Toa stood.

"Get back!" Onua shouted as the air crackled with electricity and several trees and shrubs burst into flame.

Tahu leaped away with the others, though the fire held no terror for him. What was happening? A huge bank of dark clouds rolled in above them, releasing a torrent of rain and hail. A violent gust of wind howled down from farther up the mountain.

"What kind of crazystorm is this?" Lewa yelled over the noise of the pounding rain and shrieking wind. "An earthquake, thunder and lightning, rain and hail and wind all at once?"

Gali shook her head, shielding her face against the driving wind. "This can be no regular storm," she cried. "It must be the work of Makuta."

As the word left her mouth, the storm suddenly stopped. The earth lay still. The only hint of the storm was the smoldering remains of the lightning-scorched foliage - and the huge, gaping fissure in the ground.

"Eerie," Pohatu remarked.

Tahu nodded grimly. "Clearly, Makuta knows we're here. There is no time to lose. We need to find those masks - now."

CHAPTER FIVE of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"ONU-KORO"

The path to Onu-Koro is uneventful. The sands of Po-Wahi slowly give way to the rocks of the mountain. Eventually, I reach the entrance to a tunnel. Two large crab-like creatures are here along with their attendant. He speaks to me.

"Howdy, Traveler. Need a Crab to Onu-Koro? Awful dark in there, but Pewku knows the way. I heard there's another Ussal race coming up. Make sure you catch it if you're in town."

"What race?" I ask.

"The Ussal Crabs are strong and loyal," he begins. "They help us with many things here, from mining to transportation, but mostly racing. I'm usually at the track, but with all the problems these days, there isn't much time for it."

"Who is Pewku?" I inquire.

"Pewku's a retired racing crab, used to belong to none other than Onepu himself. Took the title three times with him. She's a bit long in the tooth now, but still fast!"

"What is Onu-Koro?" I wonder aloud.

"Onu-Koro is the great undercity of Onu-Wahi, where the mines sink as deep as Mount Ihu is tall! The wise Whenua rules here."

Having promised to visit the villages, I resolve to press on to Onu-Koro. A fast companion who knows the way seems like a very good idea to me, even if it is an Ussal Crab, so I quickly befriend Pewku and we are off down the long, dark tunnel.

We reach the city quickly. Pewku is indeed still fast. There are many huts here in the darkness, lit only by the occasional torch or candle. A guard is posted here at the entrance. He has a large disk strapped to his back. I decide to seek out Whenua.

The first hut I encounter seems to house more Ussal Crabs. Someone is tending to them. "You there! Fetch those saddles!" he shouts to me. "And we need more Discs. Step to it!

"Try to stay out of the way, Traveler. We're organizing a patrol. With all the lights out in Onu-Koro, the Rahi have stepped up their raids.

"Take care when traveling in the deep mines and tunnels—the Kofo-Jaga can appear at any time. Battling them takes special skill."

"Who are you?" I ask.

"Onepu, at your service," he replies. "I am the Captain of the famous Onu-Koronan Ussalry Regiment, Champion of Ussal Racing, and Special Aide of Whenua, our great Turaga."

I ask him, "What are Kofo-Jaga?"

"They are small creatures," he begins, "but incredibly fierce and cunning… they attack by surprise, and always in large numbers. They shun bright light and use darkness and fear as weapons.

"Their nests are scattered throughout the Underworld, and woe betide the miner who breaks through to one! Usually, Whenua uses his special drill to detect these nests before they are opened, but he has been busy and the miners have been desperate to find more protodermis veins."

Worried, I inquire, "How do I battle the Kofo-Jaga?"

"The Regiment depends on its gallant steeds, and a healthy supply of Discs, when fighting the Kofo-Jaga," Onepu replies. "The darkness gives the Makuta's minions strength. It's good to have a Lightstone with you, if you can find one."

I thank Onepu for his help and then I tell him goodbye.

"May your Crab ride swift and true!" he says as I exit.

I wander among the huts, wondering which one belongs to Whenua. Finally, I come across a large hut with a shrine in front of it that reminds me of the one I saw in Ta-Koro. Perhaps Whenua is here. I begin to enter the hut, but I discover that there is a meeting taking place within it.

"Turaga," begins the purple fellow with the large disk strapped to his back, "the mining guilds have hit an underground rock layer that they cannot break through. We fear the protodermis will run out if we cannot continue our digging!"

"How far does it run?" asks the one with the staff that looks like a drill. This must be Whenua speaking.

"Shaft 3 and Shaft 8 have ceased protodermis mining because they cannot break through this rock layer."

"That's the entire mining area!" Whenua exclaims.

"Yes, Turaga," the purple fellow replies. "For all we know, the strata extends beneath all of Mata Nui, except perhaps the Mangai volcano."

"Are you certain there is no soft spot to dig through, Captain?" asks Whenua.

"We've been over every inch of the surface," replies the Captain. "There are no fractures, no fault lines, nothing!"

Whenua inquires, "How much remains of the surface deposits?"

The Captain looks down at his feet. "They are running out. We may have to look elsewhere for more protodermis. Like Ta-Wahi, or Po-Wahi."

"What is this layer made out of?" asks Whenua.

"Our prospectors believe it to be rock, but it has higher organic levels than any mineral composite we've seen."

"Organic?" Whenua seems surprised.

"Yes," the Captain affirms. "It seems to have more in common with an Ussal Crab shell than any normal stone strata."

"Strange. I wonder what we will find if we break through?" wonders Whenua.

The Captain seems eager to press his point. "Turaga, I must have more men and more machines if we are to know. You must allocate more resources to the mining guilds!"

"Captain, I am doing everything I can," replies Whenua. "No one wants to see the protodermis run out. But Onu-Koro has many problems right now."

As if to support Whenua's statement, one of the other attendees volunteers one of those many problems. "Without a fresh supply of Lightstones, we cannot light the digging site."

"Have you been able to continue the tunneling at all?" Whenua asks.

"Yes, but we are working at about 25 percent capacity. It is too dark down there to work safely!" complains the miner.

"The Le-Koro Highway must be completed soon," Whenua insists. "We need safe passage between the villages."

"Turaga, we cannot ask our workers to continue under these conditions!" exclaims the worker.

"Taipu says he can dig by torchlight, without difficulty," states Whenua.

"Taipu is very stubborn, and strong," says the miner. "But he is slow even when he has a team of diggers to help him. One Matoran cannot dig a tunnel to Le-Koro!"

"Foreman," says Whenua resignedly, "until we can repair the flood damage, there is little I can do."

"You can give us more Matoran, and more equipment!" pleads the Foreman. "The Guilds and the Traders have extra. We can use those!"

"They do not have extra," Whenua corrects. "And how would it help if they did?"

"The air is bad because of the torches, and the Rahi attack frequently because of the darkness," states the Foreman. "If we had more workers, we could alternate teams before they get ill. We could put more guards on duty."

"Foreman, I understand the problems you are facing," Whenua commiserates. "I am doing everything in my power to get you the help you need. But you must be patient."

But a lack of patience is on view everywhere. The third attendee facing Whenua speaks. "Turaga Whenua, I will not tolerate this kind of delay! The Trade Guilds have contracts with four of Po-Koro's most influential artists."

"I understand that," says Whenua, "and I am doing everything I can."

"Protodermis production is stopped," complains the tradesman. "Stonemasons are slowed by the darkness. And half the shipments were lost to Rahi attacks!"

"Ta-Koronan torches are being used to light the stone quarries now," Whenua explains. "Those deliveries will be made."

"The Kofo-Jaga are not afraid of torchlight," the tradesman insists. "And what of the protodermis? The Po-Koronans cannot trade stone for nothing!"

Whenua continues, "The Mine Captains are working to break through this rock layer. Until then there is little we can do."

"They make goods from the protodermis. Without it they cannot trade for stone! We will lose that market." The tradesman is clearly concerned.

Whenua is less so. "There are other markets," he says.

The tradesman presses on. "And what of the Le-Koro highway? It was to be finished months ago. My caravans refuse to travel

to the south until it is complete!”

“The Le-Koronans will have to come trade at our market until it is finished,” offers Whenua.

“They try, Turaga!” exclaims the tradesman. He is now quite agitated. “But they can no more come north than we can go south!”

“Perhaps the sea is a better route,” ponders Whenua.

“There are even more dangerous Rahi in the waters than on land!” the tradesman complains. “What of Onua? Is he doing nothing to help Onu-Koro?”

“Onua did not descend from the heavens to help your profits, Guildmaster.” It is Whenua who is agitated now. “He is pursuing a great quest that may yet save us all.”

The Guildmaster will not be dissuaded. “I demand that more attention be paid to the needs of the Trade Guilds! The Great Market is Onu-Koro’s most valuable asset!”

“Guildmaster,” begins Whenua wearily, “I will speak with Onepu. Perhaps he can spare an escort for your caravans until the Highway is complete.”

Whenua clearly has no time for me, and I have no more time to listen to the many complaints of the people of Onu-Koro. I decide that perhaps I had best be going.

Beyond Whenua’s hut is another tunnel. Outside the tunnel is a map with symbols upon it. Among the fire and wavy lines, I see what looks like a Lightstone. It is very dark here in Onu-Koro. I wonder if perhaps I might find a Lightstone brighter than my own. I head into the tunnel to do just that.

The tunnel is very dark, even with my Lightstone held out in front of me. I inch forward in the darkness cautiously. Finally, I see a light up ahead. It is a Lightstone marking the fork in the tunnel. Recalling the map, I decide to follow the left path.

Two flickering torches mark the entrance to the Lightstones mine. I wander in a ways until I meet up with some of the miners. There appears to have been some sort of disaster here. There is lava flowing everywhere out of the pipes and onto the floor.

The miner to my right, who is holding a large key, speaks

to me. “Better steer clear of this area, traveler. There’s a runaway lava flow that burst from Ta-Koro. No way to get to the Lightstone mines until it’s rerouted.”

“We lost a bunch of drilling equipment when that flow burst,” says the miner to my left. “It’s all stuck on the other side of the firelake! If only we could get across!”

I can get across, I think to myself. But then I wonder why I think that. And then I remember: the Lava surfboard! *I must know how to surf across the lava if I have a Lava surfboard*, I tell myself. *Right?*

There is only one way to find out. Before I can change my mind, I take the surfboard out of my backpack, throw it down into the lava, and making a running jump for it.

It is an exhilarating ride as I glide across the top of the lava. Fortunately, just when I think all of the momentum has just about left my surfboard, I arrive at the other side of the lava pool.

There is a pump here, but it clearly is not working. I take a closer look. Only a few of the buttons are lit up. I need to somehow get all of the buttons to light. I begin pressing a few buttons to see what happens. After a few presses, I have it figured out. In no time at all, all of the buttons are lit and the pump springs to life.

As the lava starts flowing through the pump, the valves on the leaking pipes begin to close until no more lava is flowing into the hallway. Soon, the lava has receded and the miner with the key has arrived and re-opened the Lightstone mine. I go in to take a look.

It is a room unlike any I have ever seen. A million stars light up the night sky, only the sky is made of rock and the stars are made of glowing stone. A prospector is surveying the room while the miners are hard at work.

“Great work, stranger!” says the prospector. “There’s a lot of folks in Onu-Koro who will be glad you found a way to the Lightstones. The Lightstone deposits in this cave will keep Onu-Koro lit for a long time. Pretty sure they’ll keep the Rahi back, too.”

Pleased with myself, I head back to a now much-brighter Onu-Koro. The miners have very quickly taken Lightstones from

the mine and distributed them among the village and tunnels. I decide to head into the Great Mine, to see what troubles might persist there.

The tunnel is long and dark. I am amazed at the amount of work that has gone into making this mine. Where only a few idle Ussal Crabs and abandoned equipment had been before, all is now abuzz with activity, thanks to the Lightstones. At the end of the tunnel, I see someone surveying the mine near an elevator shaft. He notices me.

"Who are you?" I ask.

"I'm the Chief Prospector for Mine Shaft 8," he replies. "We dig for protodermis and stone here."

"Have you brought word from Whenua?" asks the prospector. "Has he figured out how to get through this rock layer?"

"What rock layer?" I ask.

"At the bottom of Shaft B; the elevator goes down there," he replies. "Onu-Koro's had real problems since we hit this strata. Can't dig through it or blast it. Not even Onua could claw through it; it's just too strong.

"The Mining Captains have been trying to get Whenua to give us more workers and machines," he continues. "If we don't find a way through this rock, there won't be any more protodermis."

Not eager to relive the heated discussion in Whenua's hut, I merely say that there is no word yet from Whenua. The prospector does not seem surprised.

"Look out for Rahi in the tunnels! It's dark down here!" he warns me. "Take care when traveling in the deep mines and tunnels; the Kofo-Jagas can appear at any time. Battling them takes special skill."

I thank him and say goodbye. I resolve to ride the elevator down to the bottom of Shaft B and take a look for myself at this mysteriously impenetrable rock layer.

The elevator has but one control. I grab the lever and pull it down. My descent begins. The ride is uneventful, but I did not realize just how deep this shaft goes. At the bottom, I step out of the elevator and see someone pondering the ground in the distance.

I move closer. This must be the layer everyone is talking

about. All about it are broken and shattered tools.

"That strange disk on the ground is the only feature this rock layer has. I'm not sure what it is," says the miner, half to himself and half to me. "They look like astrological symbols… if I knew an astrologer, I'd sure have a few questions for him! Hey, do you know any Astrologers by any chance?"

"Who are you?" I ask.

"I'm a prospector for the Mining Guild," he says. "We're trying to figure out how to get through this rock layer and mine more protodermis and stone."

"This strange disk?" I ask.

"Yes, the one on the ground over there," he replies. "It's covered with strange symbols. We have no idea how it came to be here, buried so far underground, and sunk into this hard rock. It's very mysterious."

"I know an astrologer!" I finally admit.

"You do? Great!" the prospector exclaims. "Take this message and deliver it. I've sketched out this disk. Maybe your friend can figure out if it means anything important."

With the prospector's letter to the astrologer in my backpack, I begin the elevator ride back up the shaft. I only realize just how far I have come when I make the long journey back to the astrologer in Ga-Koro.

"Strange…" she says. "A prospector found this in Onu-Koro? Underground? Who would build a sundial underground? Perhaps there was an earthquake, and it fell beneath the earth…

"Yes, this is an ancient sundial, used many ages ago. I am certain that its purpose has been completely forgotten. The strange thing about it is that it has an indicator at four o'clock. No other sundials have this marking. I have always been curious as to why.

"Take this gnomon and see if it fits in the center of the sundial. You see, I found it in the foothills of Mount Ihu a long time ago, and since then have been looking for the sundial to which it belongs. You may have found it for me!

"If it is in a cave, then we may not ever find out what happened every day at four. Unless you have some way to fake sunlight underground!"

I take the gnomon and place it into my backpack. As I ride the boat, walk the paths, ride Pewku the Ussal Crab, walk the dark tunnels, and ride the elevator down to the prospector, I can only hope that he and the astrologer have no more items to exchange.

"So it's a sundial after all," says the prospector. "Very odd! Who would put a sundial underground!? Well, the astrologer said something's supposed to happen at four o'clock each day. Maybe if you can fake sunlight somehow, we can find out what!

"We can't dig it, we can't drill it, we can't blow it up… How do we get through?!"

I take a closer look at the sundial. After traveling all the way from Ga-Koro, I have almost forgotten why I have come back: the gnomon! I take it out of my backpack and place it on the sundial.

As I stare at the sundial, I suddenly have an idea. I take out my Lightstone and cast its light upon the gnomon such that its shadow falls upon what I believe to be the number four. At first, I don't think it is going to work, but then the dial begins to glow. Soon, the sundial has disappeared and a spiral staircase further down into the depths appears in its place.

"Looks like we had the right idea, stranger," says the prospector. "That disk was a passage through the rock after all!"

I head cautiously down the spiral stairs. At the bottom, I am amazed to see a gold mask floating in the air above a stone column. I am unable to touch it or do anything with it. As there is nothing else down here, I reluctantly head back up the stairs.

I decide to drop in on Whenua before I leave Onu-Koro to look for other villages. When I reach his hut, the others who were there previously have gone.

"Thank you, adventurer, for helping with so many of Onu-Koro's problems!" says Whenua gratefully. "I thought the guild masters would never leave me alone! Now that I have some peace, is there anything you would ask of me?"

Just to make certain I know who I am talking to, I ask "Who are you?"

"I am Whenua, Turaga of Onu-Koro," he replies. "It is my job to keep things running smoothly around here. A hard task in these difficult times."

"What is Onu-Koro?" I ponder aloud, to see what Whenua thinks of his village.

"Onu-Koro is the wondrous under-city of Mata Nui," Whenua beams. "Matoran come from near and far to trade at our great Market, and marvel at the work of our engineers. Stone dug from our quarries fuels the creations of Po-Koronan carvers. Protodermis, the stuff of life, is brought from deposits within the earth and traded amongst the Matoran. We also mine Lightstones, and many other precious resources."

Not having anything else to ask, I say goodbye to Whenua.

"Good luck in your travels, adventurer," says Whenua as I leave. "May Onua protect you."

I remember the name from when Whenua was speaking with the guild masters. I ask him, "Who is Onua?"

"Onua is the Toa of our village. He is a great hero, engaged on a quest to find the Masks of Power, which he will need to defeat the Makuta…"

I thank Whenua and set off for the tunnel beyond his hut. I am determined to follow the path of the three wavy lines.

CHAPTER EIGHT of *Tale of the Toa*
WHAT LIES BENEATH

Tahu hadn't had a destination in mind when he had stomped off from the group of Toa. He was too angry to think straight.

No matter how often he had repeated his plan to split into pairs, the other Toa had refused to agree with it. Kopaka and Lewa had insisted on taking off on their own. Even Gali had seemed too distracted to argue the point - she was the only one among them who hasn't visited her village, and she was eager to find it now. And so the Toa had all gone their separate ways.

Tahu's anger drove him aimlessly over the foothills around the base of Mount Ihu, then onto the fiery slopes of the volcano.

Kopaka found one of his masks up there in the snow of his homeland, Tahu thought as he headed up the fiery mountain. *Why shouldn't I start my search here in my own home region?*

Thinking about Kopaka made him clench his fist tighter on the handle of his fire sword.

It's like he just sits back and listens to us talk, thinking he's better than us, Tahu thought with a snort. *Like it's not worth his time to get involved.*

"It's not worth *my* time to worry about the likes of him," he said aloud. "Especially now…" He swung his sword to punctuate the point, accidentally sending a finger of flame shooting out and melting a nearby pile of stones into lava.

"With all due respect, great Toa, you might want to watch where you point that thing," a voice said from nearby.

Tahu whirled around. Standing before him was the broad-shouldered, sturdy-looking figure of a Ta-Matoran.

"I know you," the Toa said. "It's Jaller, right?"

The Matoran nodded and bowed. "I am the Captain of the Guard of your village of Ta-Koro."

"Hello again," Tahu said. "And while we're giving out advice, you might not want to sneak up on a Toa. It could be hazardous to your health."

"Sorry, Toa," Jaller said with a grin. "I didn't mean to startle you."

"Apology accepted. But what was your intention in tracking me here?"

Jaller's expression turned serious. "I came to see how your search for the masks was going. Don't take this the wrong way, but… do you have any kind of plan for finding them?"

Tahu frowned, feeling his fiery temper rising. How dare this lowly Matoran question his tactics?

"Of course I have a plan," he snapped. "I'm searching… I'm searching for the masks… Okay. Perhaps I don't have an exact plan as such. But I'm working on it."

Jaller bowed again. "Of course, Toa," he said. "In any case, I thought it might be helpful for you to know that legend has it that a Kanohi Akaku - a Great Mask of X-Ray Vision - lies within the deepest cavern of Onu-Wahi."

"Onu-Wahi," Tahu repeated, "Those caves and tunnels that Onua spoke of?"

"Yes," Jaller replied. "The network of underground passageways lies beneath much of Mata Nui. There is an entrance just over that way, beyond that lavastone wall. It leads to - "

"Thanks," Tahu interrupted, turning away.

"Toa Tahu!" Jaller called after him. "Wait!"

Tahu paused, glancing over his shoulder. "Yes? What is it?" he demanded impatiently.

Jaller touched one fist to his mask in a salute. "I just wanted to wish you luck," he said. "Take care in the dark underground. We just got you - we don't want to lose you again."

Tahu smiled. "Worry not," he said. "You'll not get rid of me so easily."

With that, he leaped over the wall and hurried toward the cave opening that lay beyond.

It wasn't long before Tahu realized why the Matoran had been so worried. Everything about the dark, twisting tunnels of Onu-Wahi felt wrong. Even with the glow cast by his fire sword, the darkness seemed to huddle around him, suffocating in its closeness.

Taking a deep breath, he forced himself to move on. Some dark part of his mind protested - *No! We don't belong here, we shouldn't be here, we'll be crushed…*

But Tahu shook his head fiercely, willing such thoughts away.

The air grew cold and still. The flame on his sword sputtered and flickered, but the force of his will kept it burning.

Almost there, he told himself grimly. *I can feel it. These tunnels can't possibly go much deeper.*

And yet they did. Deeper, and deeper, and deeper, until Tahu started to wonder if he hadn't just imagined that there was a surface world at all. Deeper - until he started seeing strange shapes moving in the shadows just beyond his glowing red light. And still deeper.

Finally he stepped out of the end of a tunnel into an enormous cavern. A raw, howling wind whipped through it. Only steps ahead, the floor dropped away into nothingness. Tahu couldn't see the bottom.

Great. Just great, he thought bitterly. *What am I supposed to do now?*

He wasn't sure what made him look up then, but as he did, he caught the glint of something across the chasm. Squinting against the darkness beyond his sword glow, he made out the vague shape of a ledge on the opposite wall of the cavern. On that ledge was a small gray shape - a mask? He wasn't sure.

In any case, the yawning depths of the chasm lay between him and the object. How was he supposed to get over there?

Tahu took a few careful steps along the near wall of the cavern. As he neared the edge, he finally spotted the answer to his problem - a bridge. A narrow stone span, stretching out from the wall and disappearing into the darkness.

The damp wind chilled him as he stood for a moment, uncertain. Then he shook his head. He hadn't come this far to turn back now.

He stepped out onto the bridge. It was even narrower than it had looked, and it took all of Tahu's concentration to maintain his balance.

After a few minutes he seemed no closer to the far ledge than when he'd started. *This is ridiculous*, he thought impatiently. *It's going to take forever to get across at this rate.*

He swung his foot out, taking a larger step this time. When it touched the rock, it skidded slightly to one side just as another violent wind gust swept past - and Tahu suddenly felt himself slipping sideways into the chasm!

He grabbed at the bridge, wrapping his left arm around it and holding tight. His legs swung loose over the abyss. He threw his right hand up and over the bridge as well, nearly losing his grip on his sword as he did so. With a grunt, he flung his legs up, clinging upside down to the underside of the bridge.

He focused on pulling himself up and to one side, inching his way around to the top of the bridge. Finally he heaved a breath of relief as he pulled himself right side up once again. After resting for a moment, he pushed himself into a crouch, then back into a standing position.

Okay, slow and steady it is, then, Tahu told himself. *One foot in front of the other.*

He took a step, wavering slightly and resisting the urge to look down.

One step, two steps - almost there…

Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!

Suddenly the air was filled with a loud, violent hiss that seemed to come from everywhere at once. Startled, Tahu slipped, one foot sliding out over the nothingness. Just in time, he flung himself sideways, arms outstretched, regaining his shaky balance on the narrow beam.

Dozens of bright red creatures had appeared out of nowhere, swarming across the narrow bridge from both directions. Each was the size of a clenched fist and looked like a cross between a scorpion and a giant wingless firefly. Their deadly-looking pincers clamped open and shut rhythmically as they buzzed toward Tahu, their legs moving too fast to see.

"Hey!" Tahu cried in annoyance, kicking at several of the creatures that were already swarming up over his feet. "Get away!"

The glowing scorpions paid no attention. More and more of them swarmed around him, until they completely covered his legs.

"Ow!" he cried as one of them sank its pincers into his ankle. He smacked at it, but already two more of the creatures were clamping onto his knee and thigh.

"Enough of you," he muttered, pointing the sword just above the thickest cluster of the creatures on the bridge nearby. Focusing his energy, he blasted a spurt of flame, hoping to scare them away.

But the creatures merely glowed brighter, seeming to fuck in the heat of the fire.

"What?" Tahu exclaimed. "So you like fire, eh, you stupid little pests? I'll show you fire!" He pointed his sword again, sending flame roaring out of the end of it. But once again, it only seemed to make the creatures stronger. The bridge, however, was glowing ominously as the stone started to melt beneath the intense heat.

"Uh-oh," Tahu said with a gulp as lava dripped off into the abyss.

The creatures were swarming thicker now, dozens of them clamping onto every part of his body.

Must… get… away… Tahu thought desperately as he tried to shake them off.

How could he fight the scorpions? His best weapon - fire - seemed to be completely useless against them. And he was trapped on this bridge, forced to fight gravity and wind as well as the swarms of creatures.

Suddenly Gali's voice floated into his head: *Our best weapon is our minds.* That was what she had said back in the clearing. At the time, Tahu had paid little attention to her words. Now, though, they burned within his mind. And with them, suddenly, came an idea.

"Okay, pests," he said aloud. "Last chance to back off before it's too late. No takers? Oh, well, don't say I didn't warn you…"

With that, he dropped his sword onto the bridge, then bent and grasped the stone with both hands. Flinging his feet off the edge, he let himself hang loose once again over the abyss.

He closed his eyes, picturing Lewa. The Toa of Air seemed unable to stand still for more than a few seconds and had spent much of the time back at the clearing doing backflips and handstands. At one point, Tahu remembered, Lewa had even jumped up and grabbed onto an overhanging branch and swung himself around it by both hands, flipping around and around.

Keeping that image in mind, Tahu swung his legs as vigorously as he could. It took a few tries, but finally he flung himself over the bridge and back round the other side. Gripping tightly with both hands, he pumped with his body, taking advantage of the momentum. He flipped around the narrow bridge again and again, building up speed.

Tahu spun faster and faster, and before long, the scorpion creatures started losing their grip. One by one at first, then dozen by dozen, they flew away into the darkness.

It's working! he thought gleefully. *It's working! They can't hold on!*

Still he kept spinning, around and around, until he felt the last fiery wounds of the creatures' pinches fade away and could no longer hear their buzzing. Only then did he slow down enough to flip himself back upright onto the bridge.

There, he thought, breathing hard from the effort. *Even Lewa would be impressed by that.*

He glanced up and down the bridge. There was no sign of the swarm in either direction. Then he felt a pinch and looked down to see that one scorpion creature had managed to hang on.

"I think I can handle one of you," Tahu said, yanking the creature loose. "Time to go join your - wait a second. What's that?"

He paused in the act of tossing the glowing creature into the chasm. What was on its head? Looking closer, he saw that it was wearing a tiny mask over its face. The mask was pitted and pockmarked. But it was a mask nonetheless.

"Strange," he muttered, poking curiously at the mask with his finger.

The small creature buzzed angrily, struggling against Tahu's grip. When his finger came close enough, it flung its pincers out and grabbed it, clamping down viciously.

"Ow!" Tahu yanked his hand away, once again winding up to throw the little beast down and be done with it. But again, something made him hesitate. Why would a creature such as this wear a mask?

He shifted his grip on the scorpion creature until he managed to trap its pincers within his hand. Then he used the other hand to carefully peel the little mask free.

As soon as he did so, the creature went limp in his hand. For a second he thought he'd accidentally killed it. But then its legs waved weakly, and it chittered woozily up at him.

He set the creature down on the bridge at his feet, being careful not to put his fingers within reach of its pincers. But he needn't have bothered with such caution. Showing no interest in him whatsoever, the little scorpion scurried quickly away down the bridge, disappearing a moment later into the darkness.

Tahu blinked, wondering what that might mean. Had the creature run away because he'd removed its mask? Or because it had suddenly realized it was now all alone in its attack?

He opened his hand, staring at the tiny mask. A gust of wind swooped past, nearly sending him off balance once again. It also swept the small mask off Tahu's palm and away into the chasm.

Tahu grabbed for it - but it was too late. The mask was gone. Blowing out a sigh of frustration, he did his best to shrug off the loss. The important thing was that he'd defeated the scorpion creatures. Now he could continue with his quest.

He picked up his sword. After all that had happened, the walk across the bridge no longer seemed quite so daunting, and it wasn't long before he was stepping onto the ledge.

The mask was lying there waiting, its empty eyeholes staring up at him blankly. He picked it up and settled it on over his own mask.

Energy exploded within him. He staggered forward, remembering the drop off just in time to stop himself from stepping right over the edge.

So much power! He looked around, seeing his surroundings with new eyes aided by the mask's powers of X-ray vision. Even in the near darkness he could see the veins of minerals buried within the stone walls around him, the trickles of water cutting through the solid rock beneath his feet.

Tahu blinked, trying to get used to his new way of seeing. "Okay," he whispered to himself in awe. "Now we're getting somewhere…"

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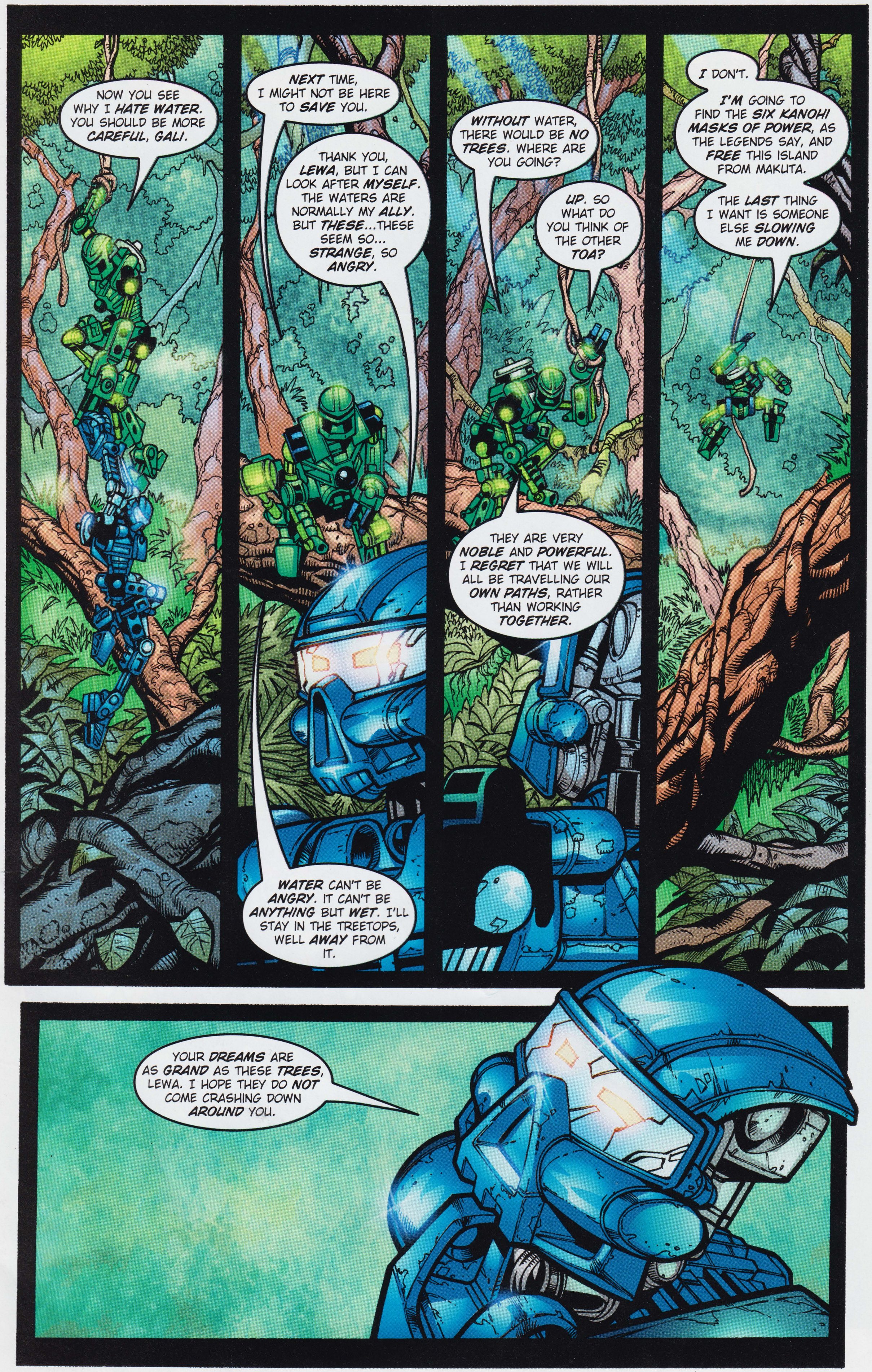
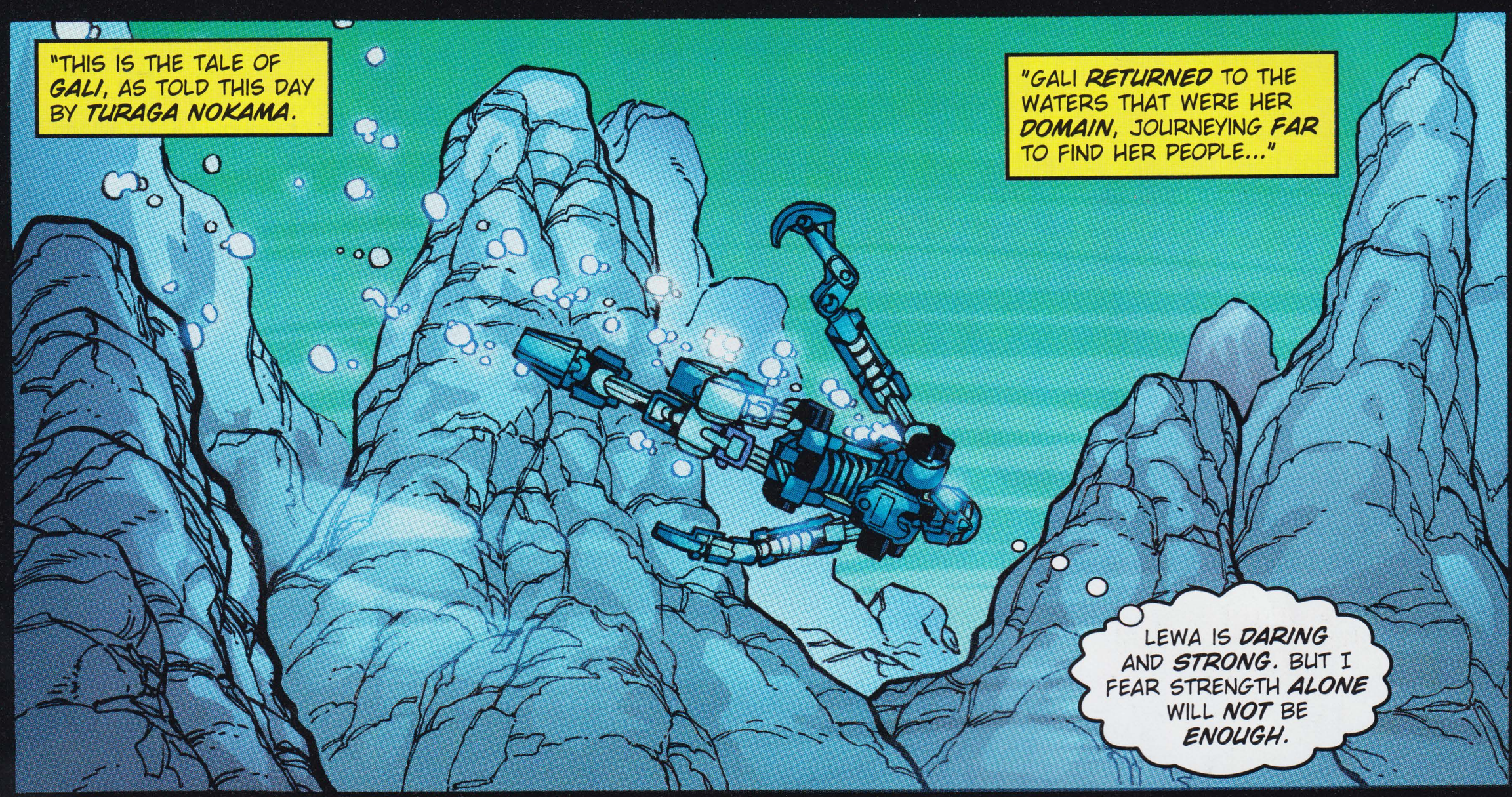
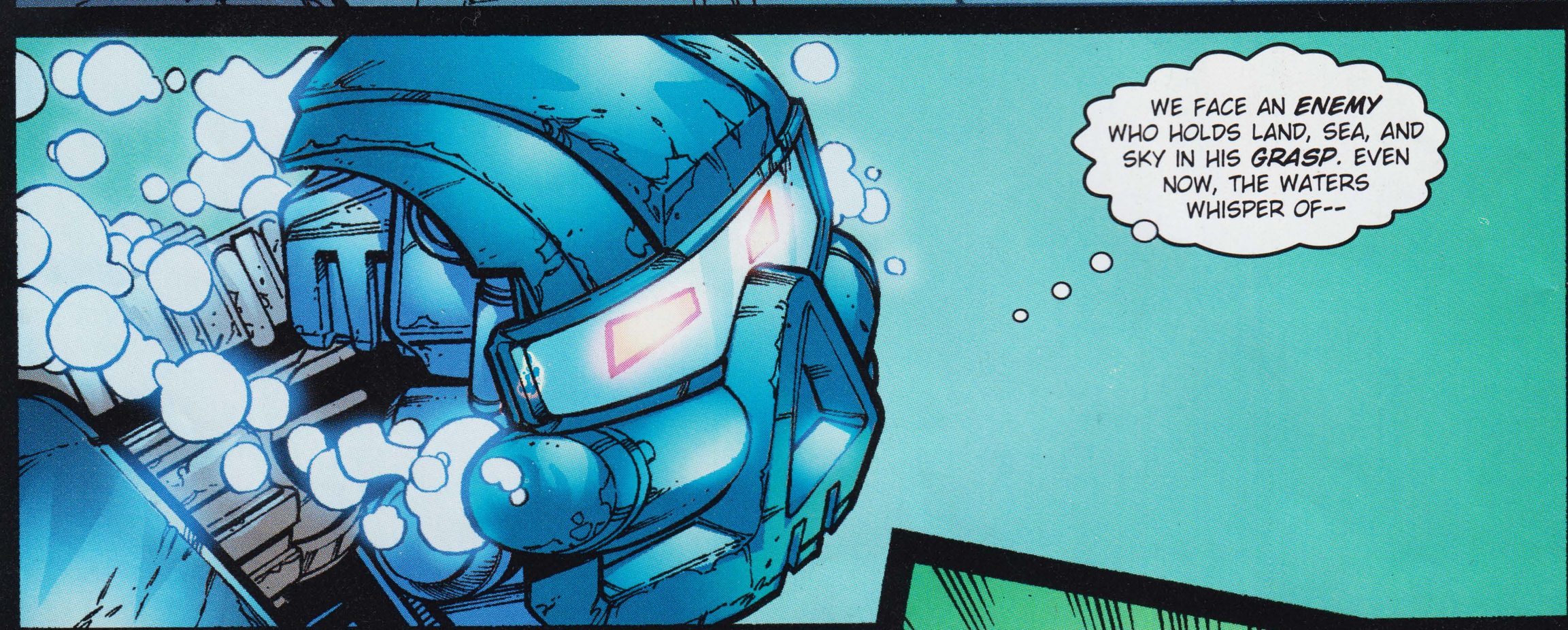
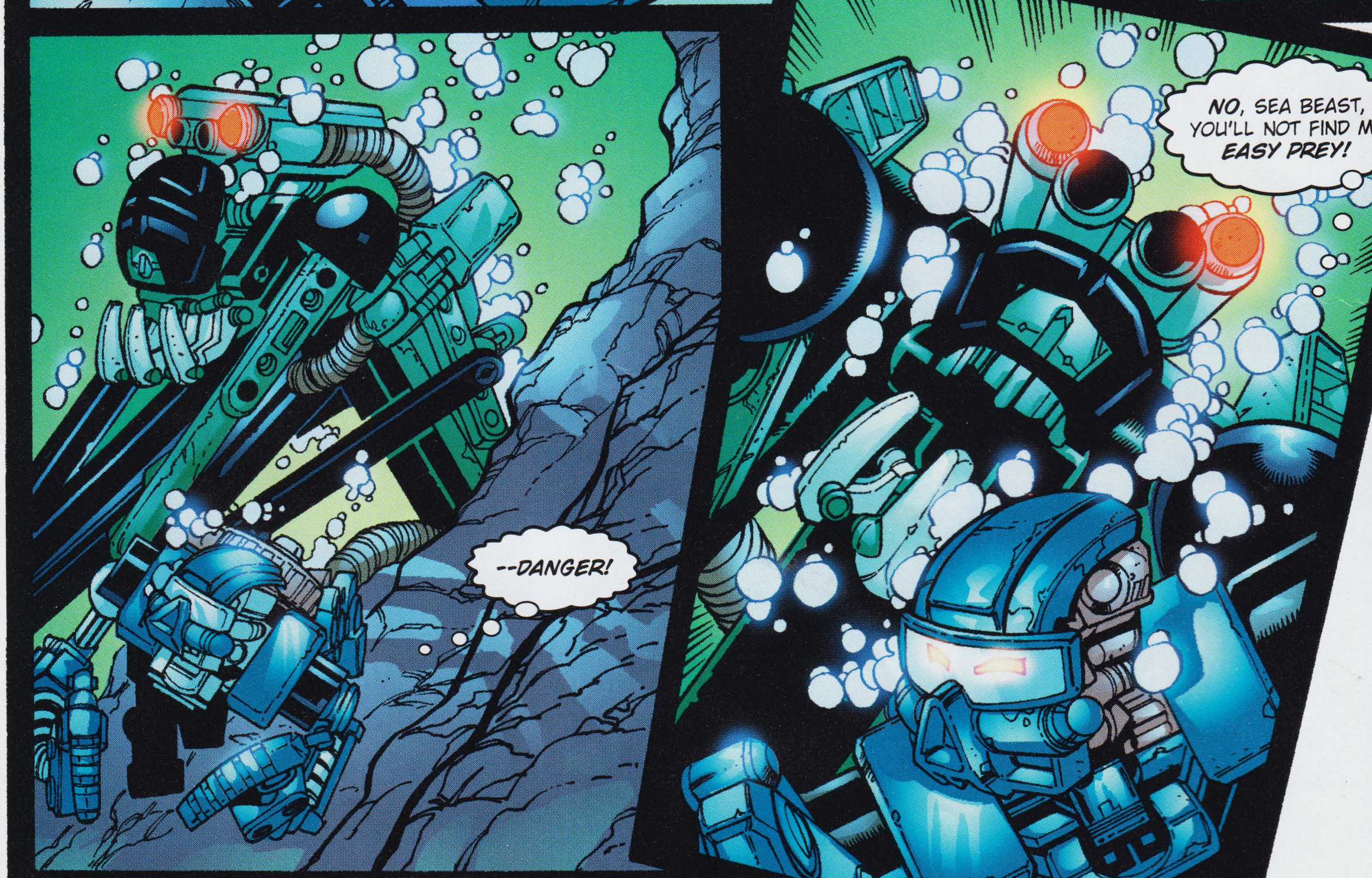
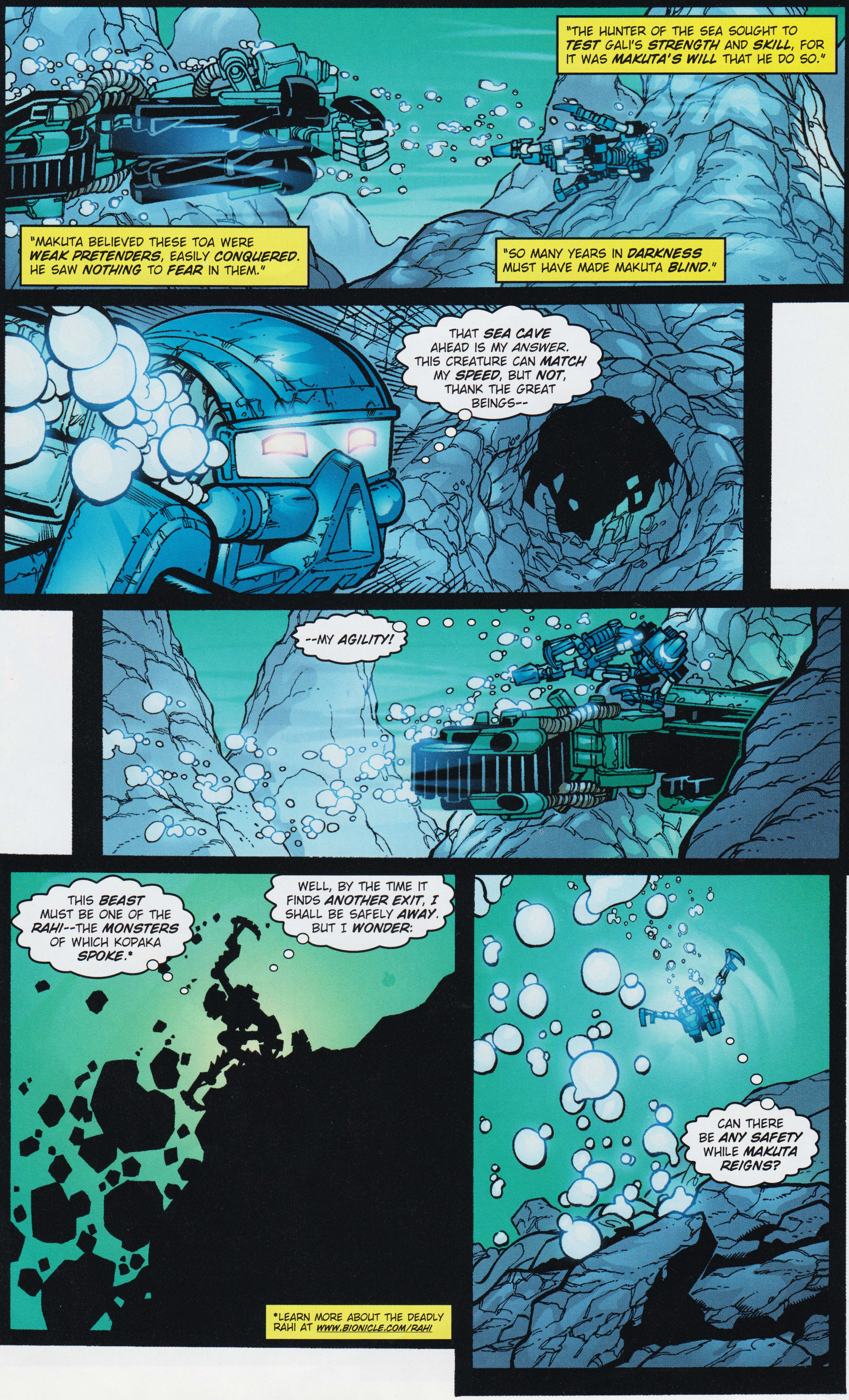

NOW YOU SEE WHY I HATE WATER. YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL, GALI.
NEXT TIME, I MIGHT NOT BE HERE TO SAVE YOU.
THANK YOU, LEWA, BUT I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF. THE WATERS ARE NORMALLY MY ALLY. BUT THESE...THESE SEEM SO... STRANGE, SO ANGRY.
WITHOUT WATER, THERE WOULD BE NO TREES. WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
UP. SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE OTHER TOA?
I DON'T.
I'M GOING TO FIND THE SIX KANOHI MASKS OF POWER, AS THE LEGENDS SAY, AND FREE THIS ISLAND FROM MAKUTA.
THE LAST THING I WANT IS SOMEONE ELSE SLOWING ME DOWN.
THEY ARE VERY NOBLE AND POWERFUL. I REGRET THAT WE WILL ALL BE TRAVELLING OUR OWN PATHS, RATHER THAN WORKING TOGETHER.
WATER CAN'T BE ANGRY. IT CAN'T BE ANYTHING BUT WET. I'LL STAY IN THE TREETOPS, WELL AWAY FROM IT.
YOUR DREAMS ARE AS GRAND AS THESE TREES, LEWA. I HOPE THEY DO NOT COME CRASHING DOWN AROUND YOU.

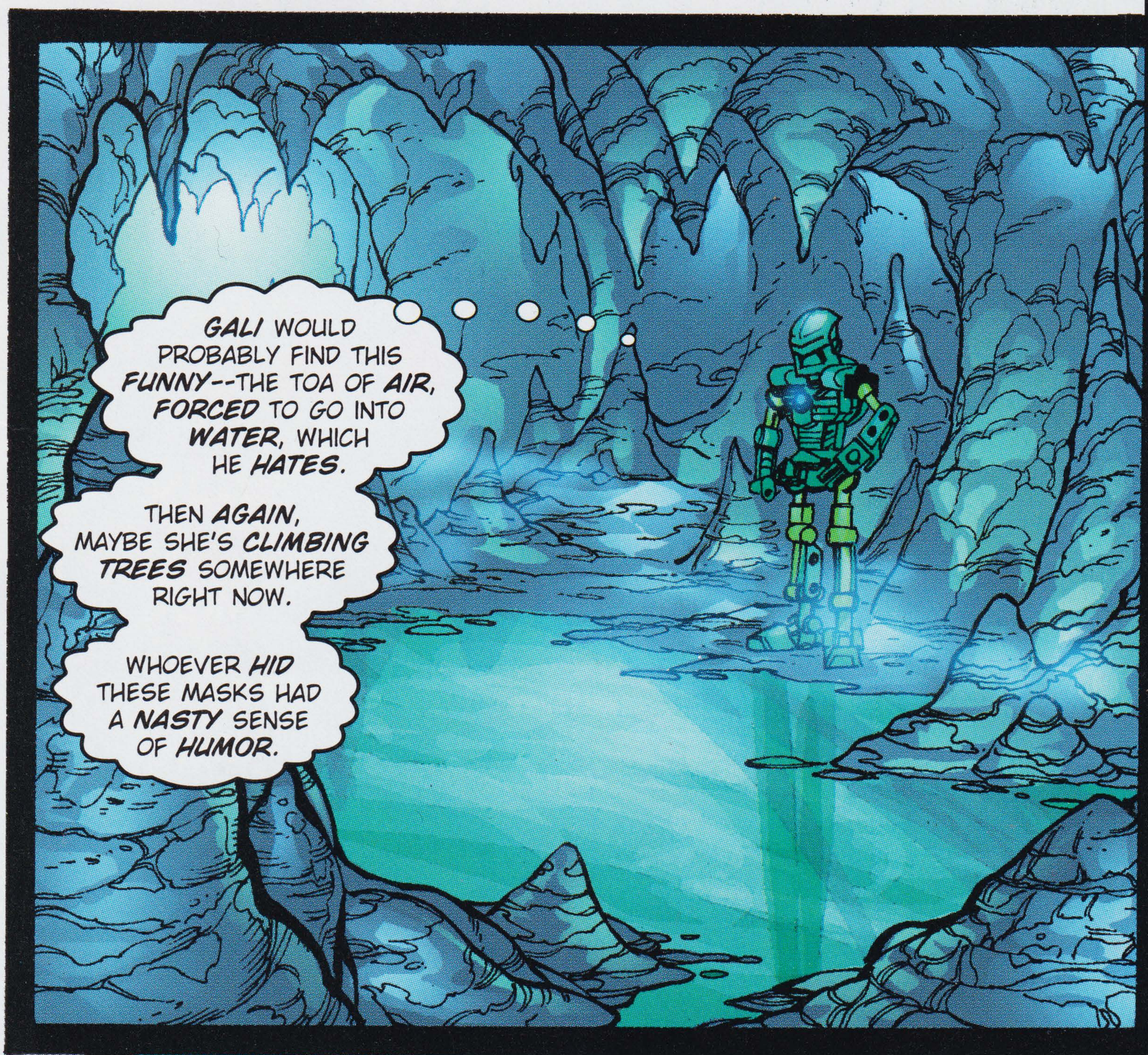

"THIS IS THE TALE OF GALI, AS TOLD THIS DAY BY TURAGA NOKAMA.
"GALI RETURNED TO THE WATERS THAT WERE HER DOMAIN, JOURNEYING FAR TO FIND HER PEOPLE..."
LEWA IS DARING AND STRONG. BUT I FEAR STRENGTH ALONE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH.

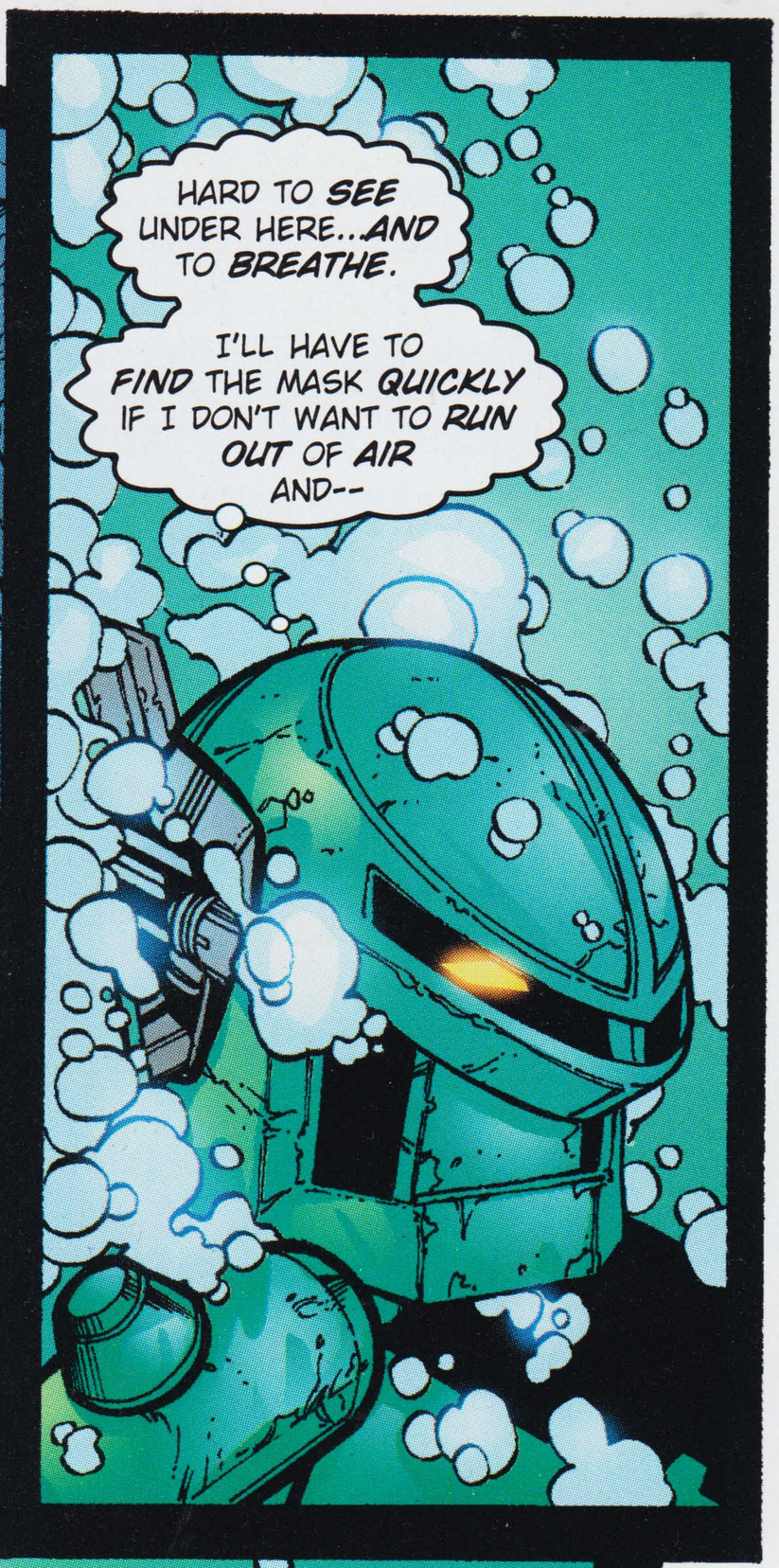

WE FACE AN ENEMY WHO HOLDS LAND, SEA, AND SKY IN HIS GRASP. EVEN NOW, THE WATERS WHISPER OF--

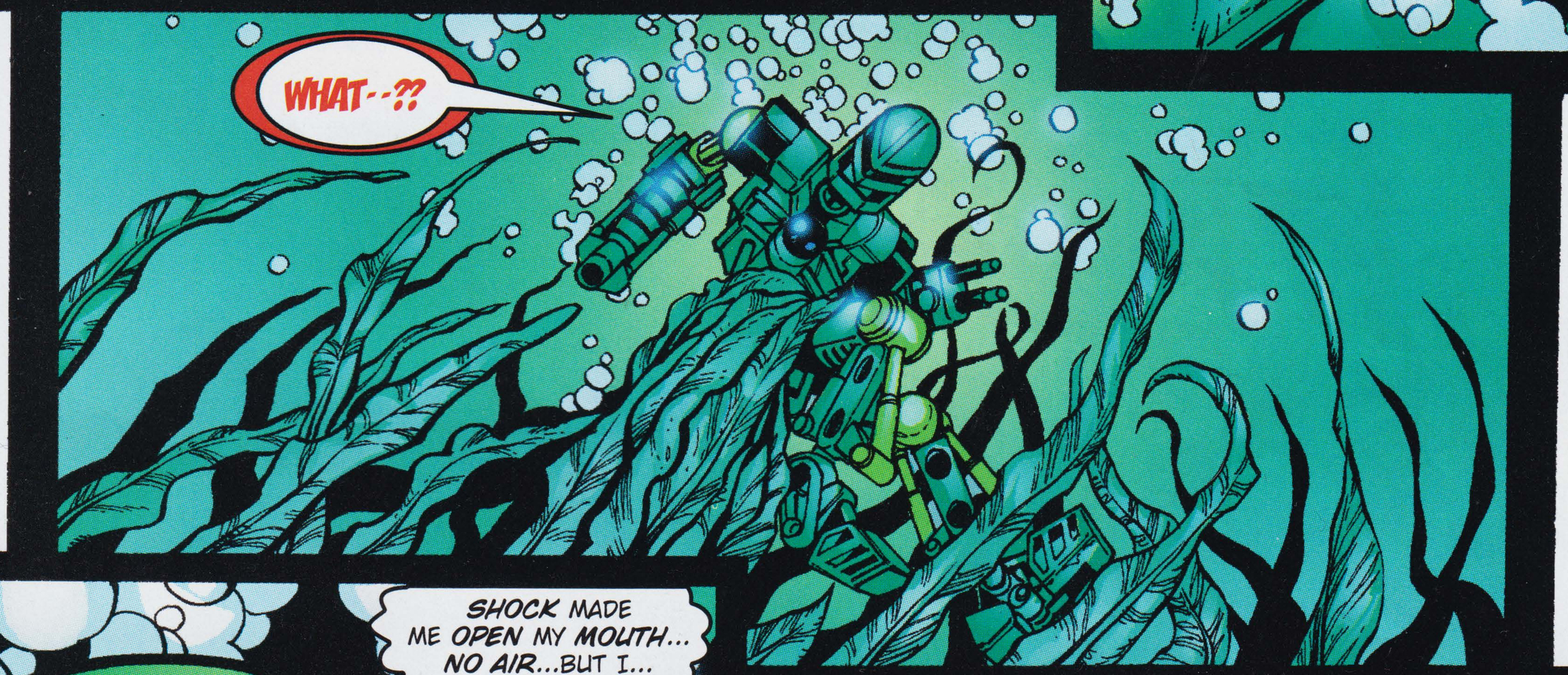

--DANGER!
NO, SEA BEAST, YOU'LL NOT FIND ME EASY PREY!

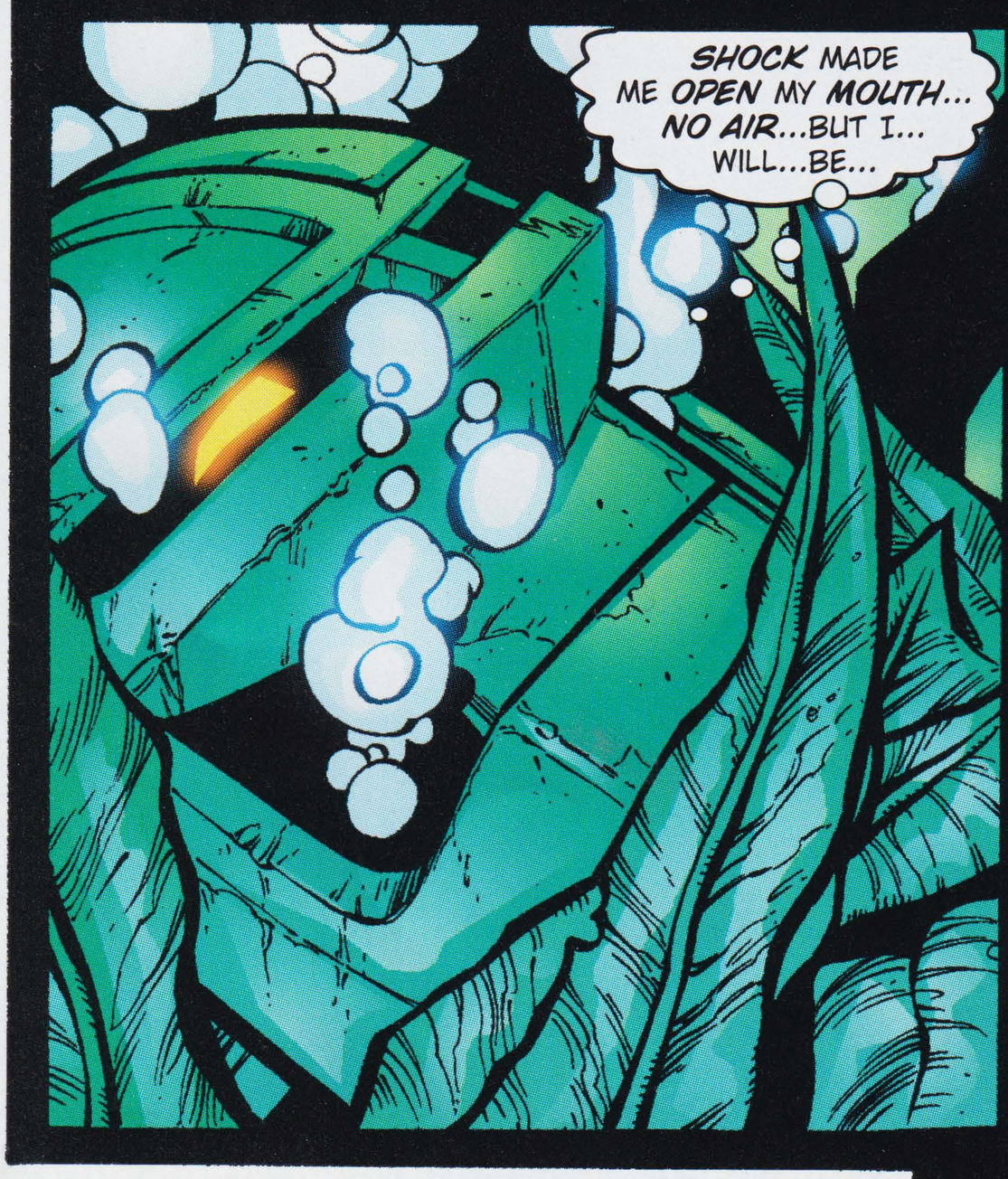

"THE HUNTER OF THE SEA SOUGHT TO TEST GALI'S STRENGTH AND SKILL, FOR IT WAS MAKUTA'S WILL THAT HE DO SO."
"MAKUTA BELIEVED THESE TOA WERE WEAK PRETENDERS, EASILY CONQUERED. HE SAW NOTHING TO FEAR IN THEM."
"SO MANY YEARS IN DARKNESS MUST HAVE MADE MAKUTA BLIND."
THAT SEA CAVE AHEAD IS MY ANSWER. THIS CREATURE CAN MATCH MY SPEED, BUT NOT, THANK THE GREAT BEINGS--
--MY AGILITY!
THIS BEAST MUST BE ONE OF THE RAHI--THE MONSTERS OF WHICH KOPAKA SPOKE.*
WELL, BY THE TIME IT FINDS ANOTHER EXIT, I SHALL BE SAFELY AWAY. BUT I WONDER:
CAN THERE BE ANY SAFETY WHILE MAKUTA REIGNS?
*LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DEADLY RAHI AT WWW.BIONICLE.COM/RAHI

"THIS IS THE TALE OF LEWA, AS TOLD BY TURAGA MATAU.
"WHILE GALI TRAVELED HOMEWARD, LEWA HAD SOUGHT MY COUNSEL. BUT HE DID NOT WELCOME THE NEWS I GAVE HIM:"
UNDERWATER.
THE MASK OF SPEED IS UNDERWATER.
HOW INCREDIBLY... ANNOYING.
BUT IT'S NOT A PROBLEM. I CAN HANDLE IT. A WALK IN A CAVERN...A SWIM IN THE WATER...A FAST SWIM...
...AND A VERY, VERY LARGE MONSTER.
ORDINARILY, I'D LOVE TO STAY AND CHAT...
...BUT I CAN SEE YOU'RE JUST BURIED.
SKKRRAKKK

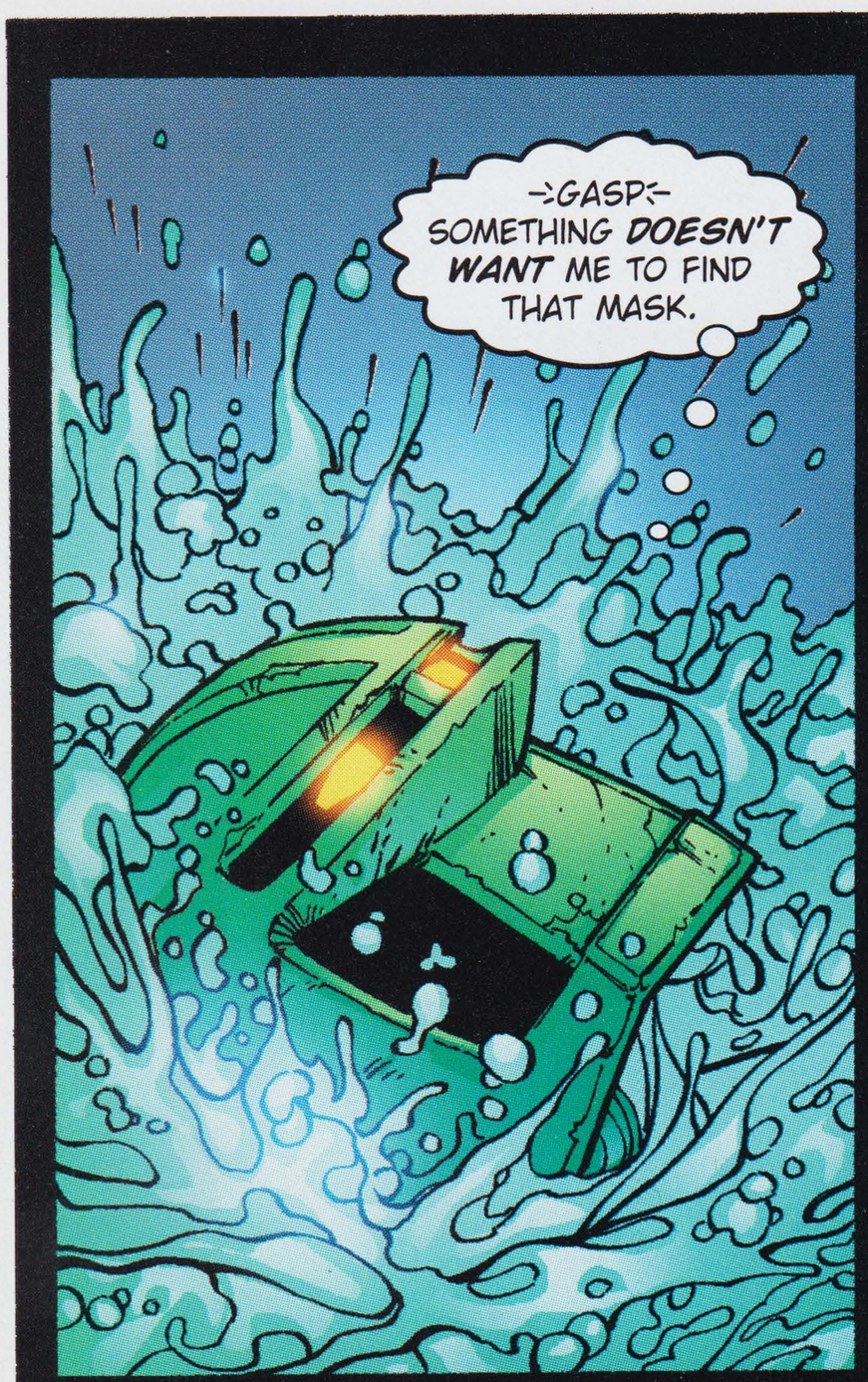

GALI WOULD PROBABLY FIND THIS FUNNY--THE TOA OF AIR, FORCED TO GO INTO WATER, WHICH HE HATES.
THEN AGAIN, MAYBE SHE'S CLIMBING TREES SOMEWHERE RIGHT NOW.
WHOEVER HID THESE MASKS HAD A NASTY SENSE OF HUMOR.

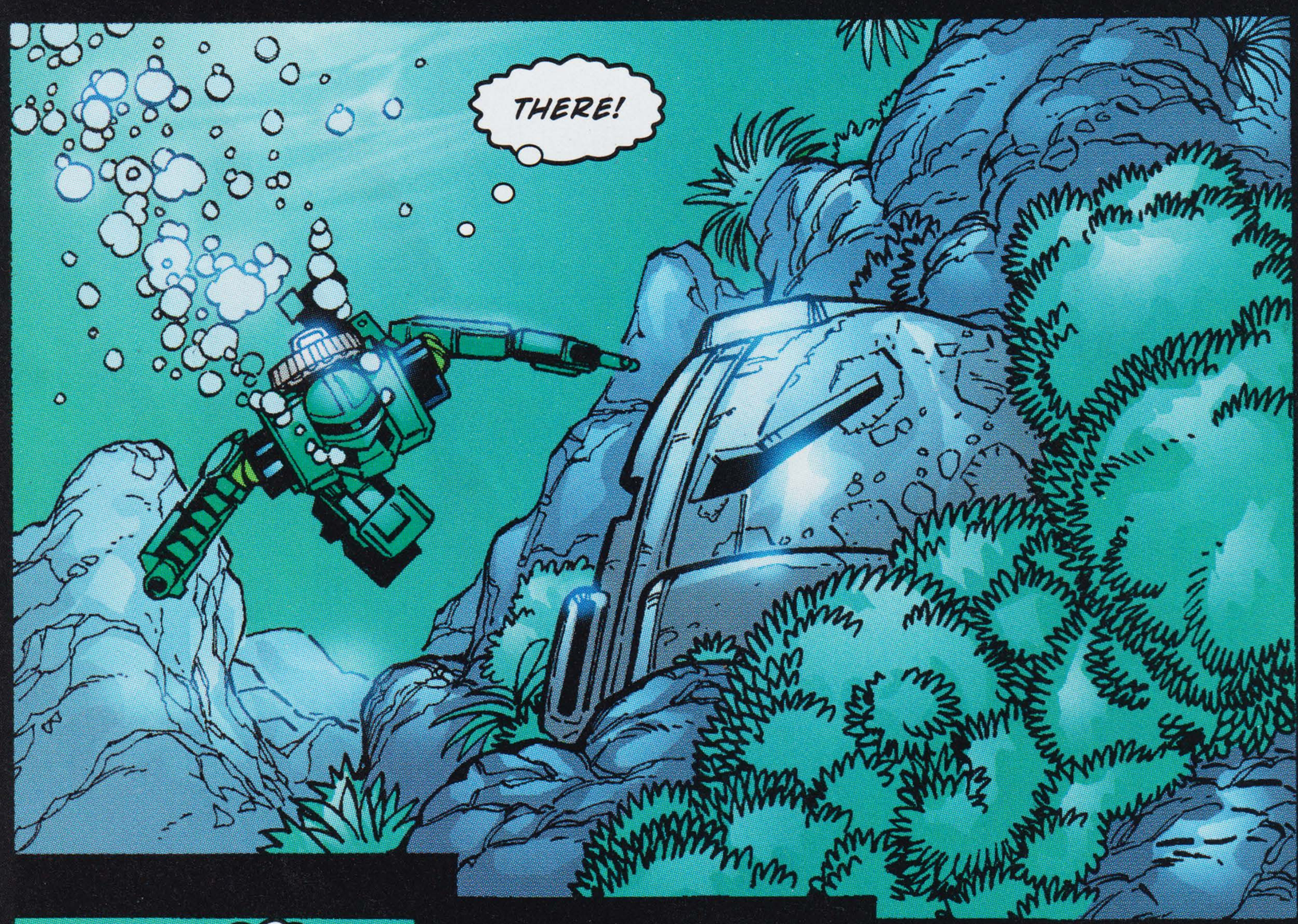

HARD TO SEE UNDER HERE...AND TO BREATHE.
I'LL HAVE TO FIND THE MASK QUICKLY IF I DON'T WANT TO RUN OUT OF AIR AND--

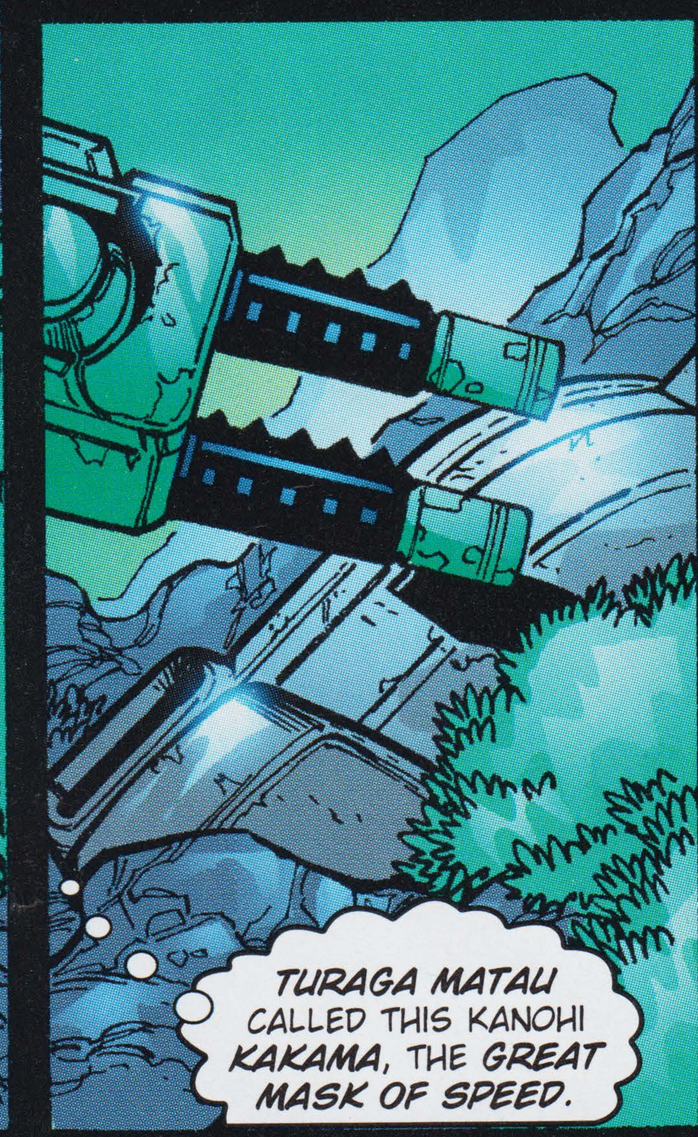

WHAT--??

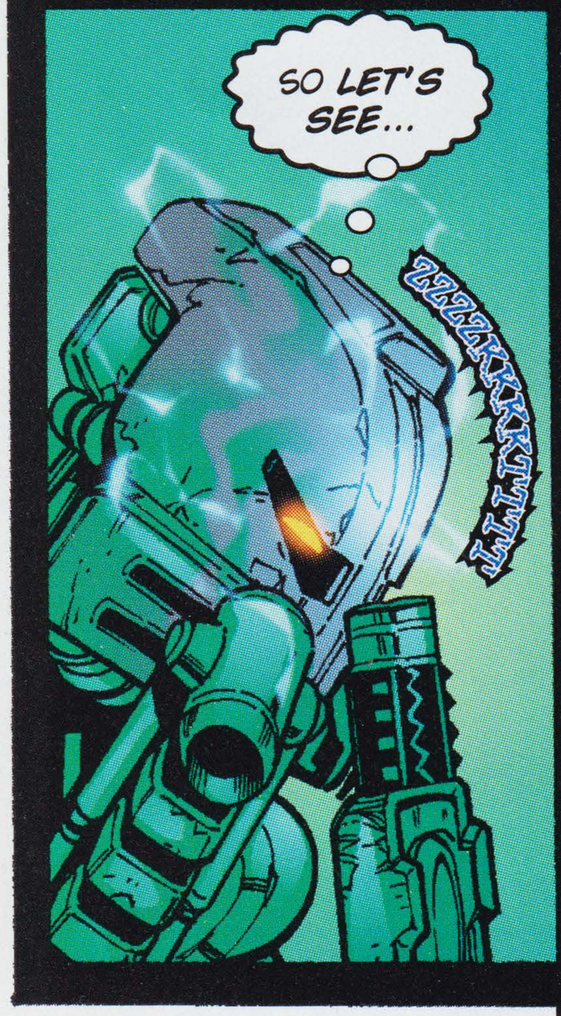

SHOCK MADE ME OPEN MY MOUTH... NO AIR...BUT I... WILL...BE...

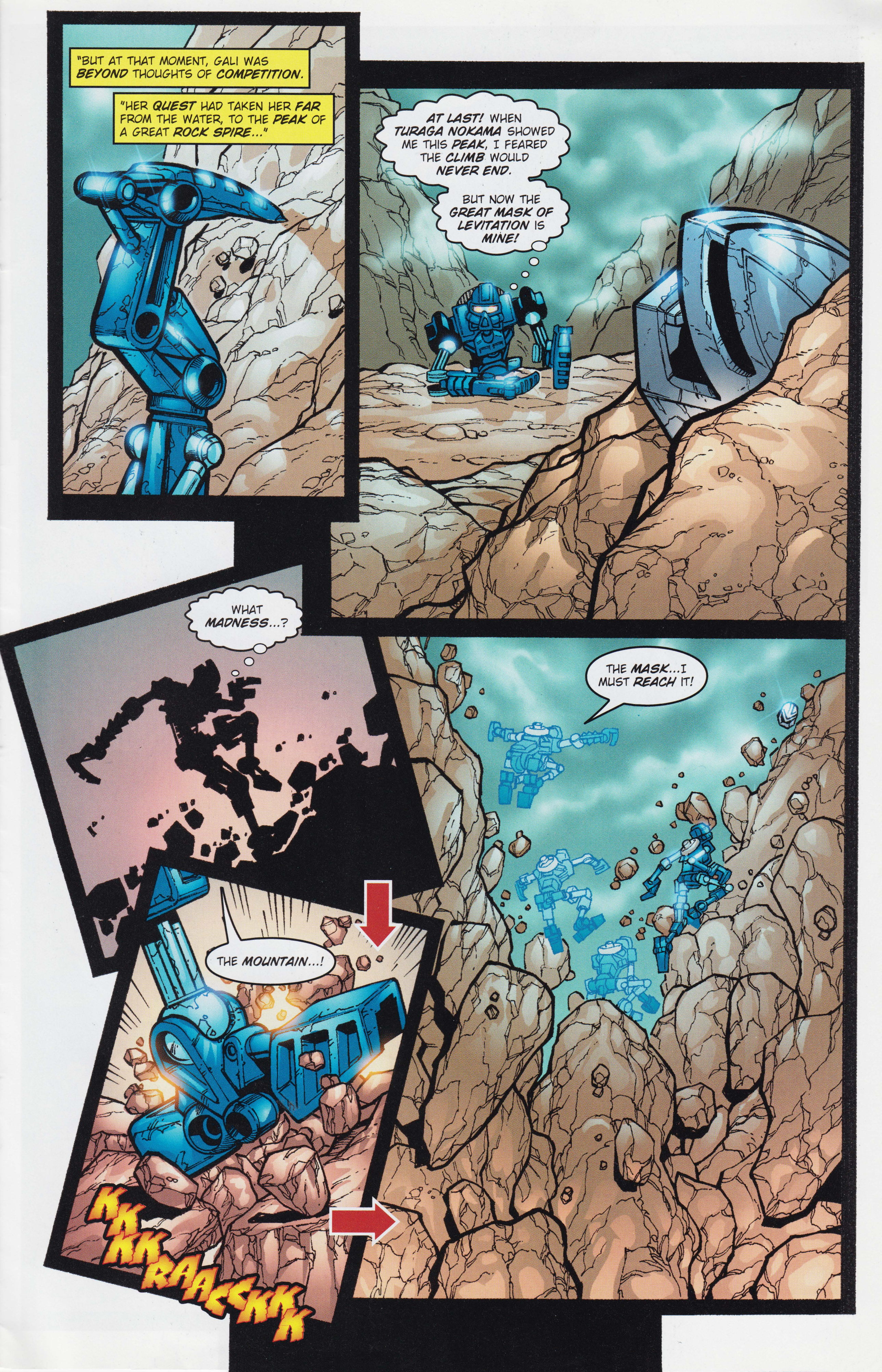
...FREE!
RRRRRRIIIIIIIIPPPPPPP





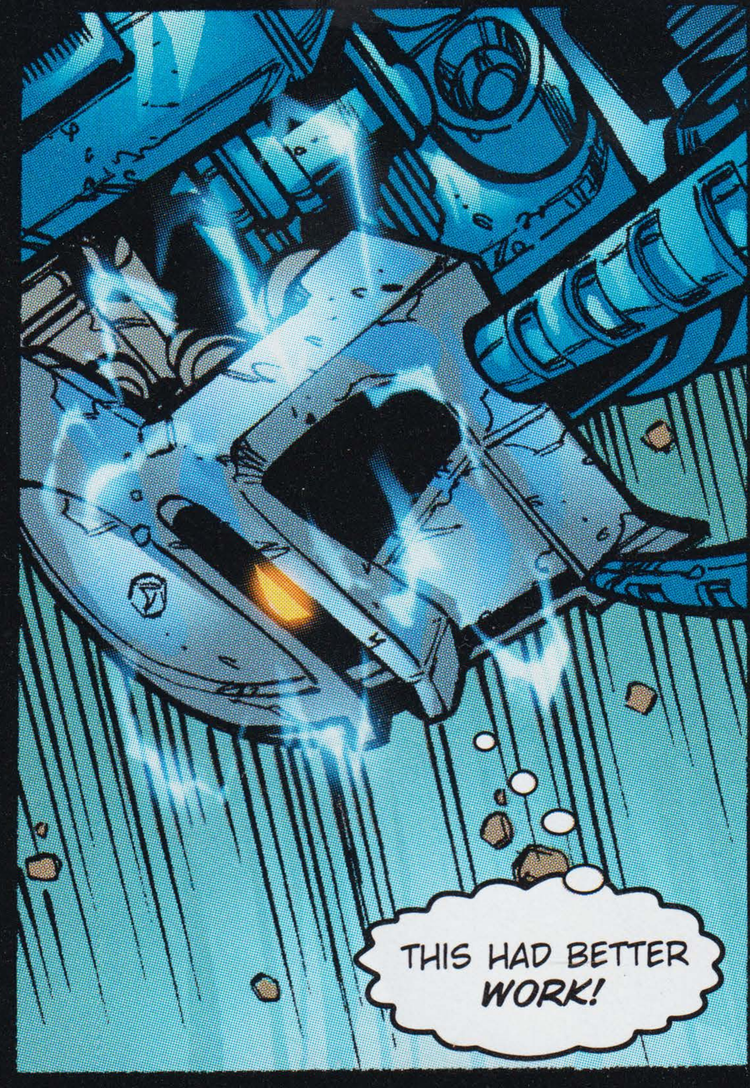


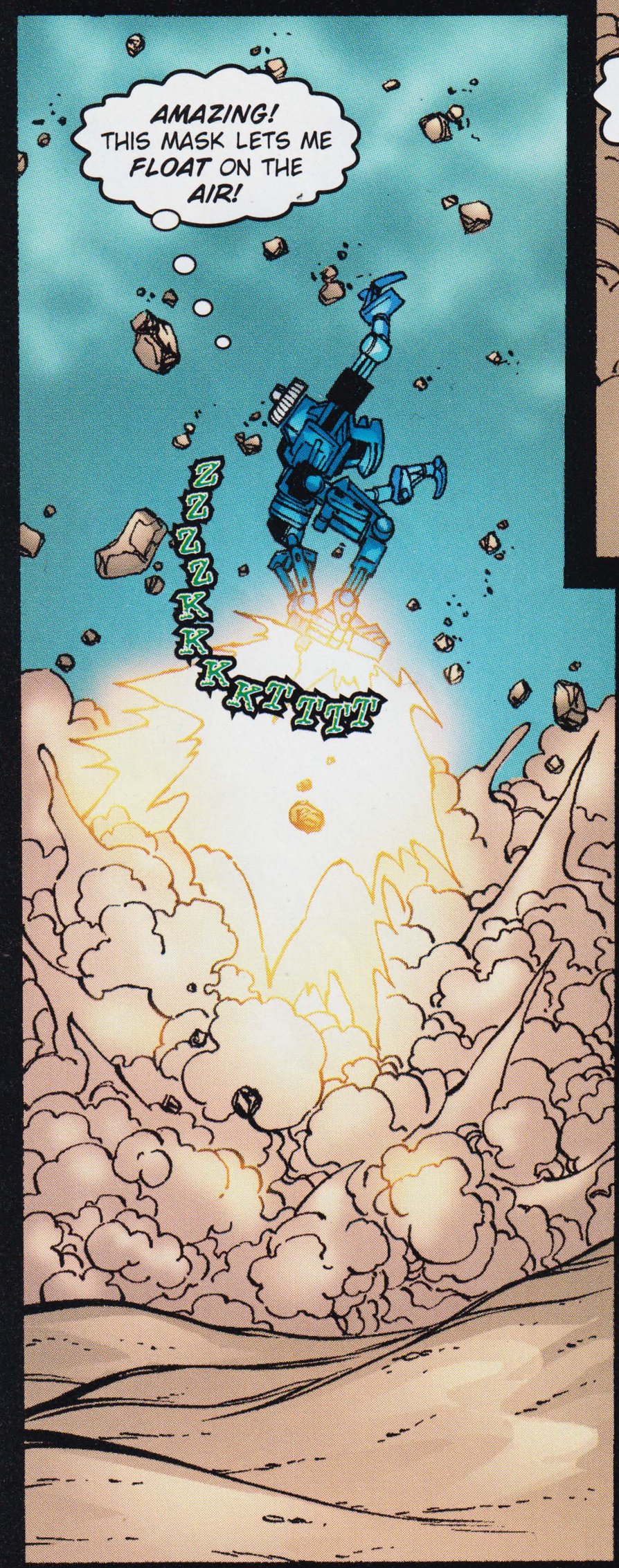

SO LET'S SEE...
ZZZ

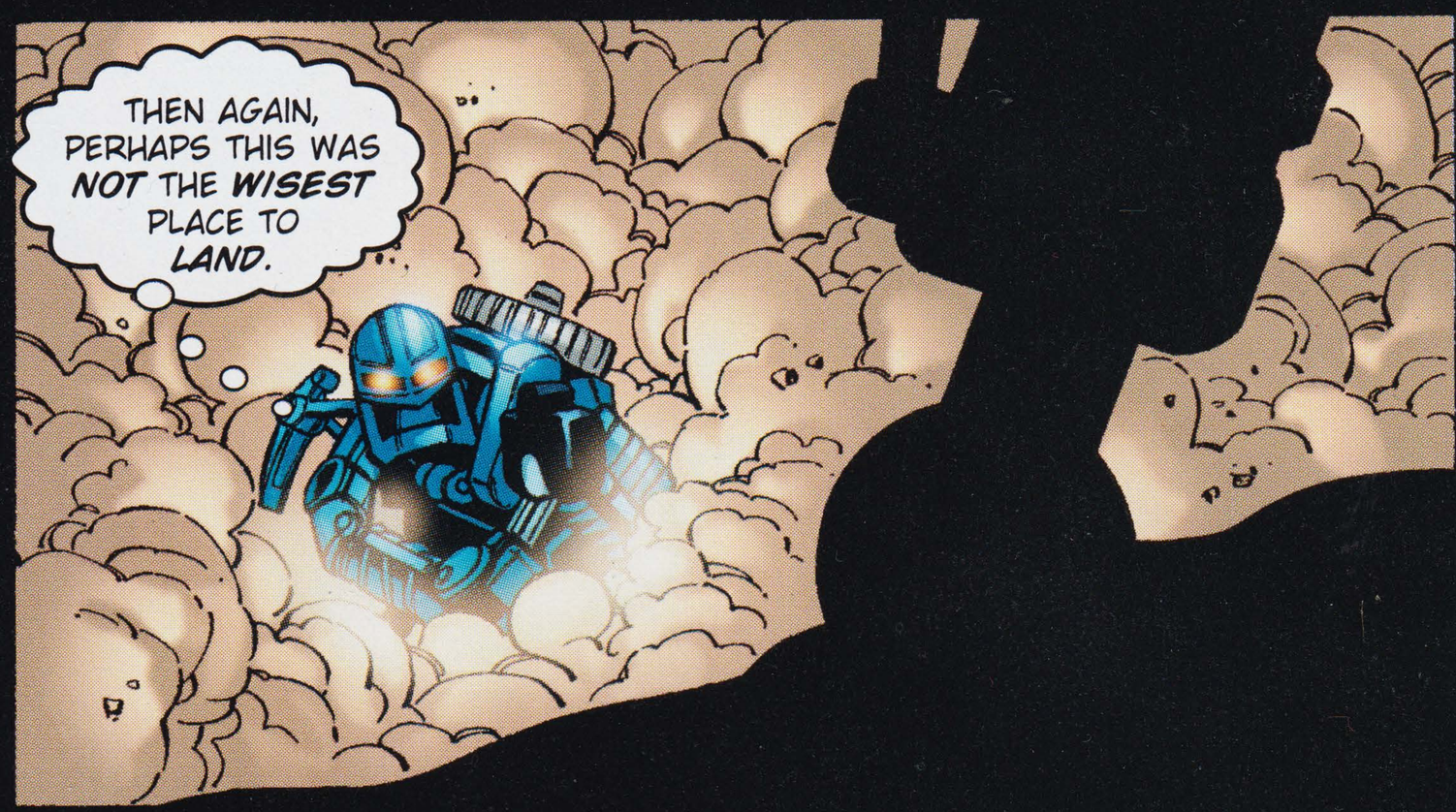

"BUT AT THAT MOMENT, GALI WAS BEYOND THOUGHTS OF COMPETITION.
"HER QUEST HAD TAKEN HER FAR FROM THE WATER, TO THE PEAK OF A GREAT ROCK SPIRE..."
AT LAST! WHEN TURAGA NOKAMA SHOWED ME THIS PEAK, I FEARED THE CLIMB WOULD NEVER END.
BUT NOW THE GREAT MASK OF LEVITATION IS MINE!
WHAT MADNESS...?
THE MASK...I MUST REACH IT!
THE MOUNTAIN...!
KK KK RAACKK K

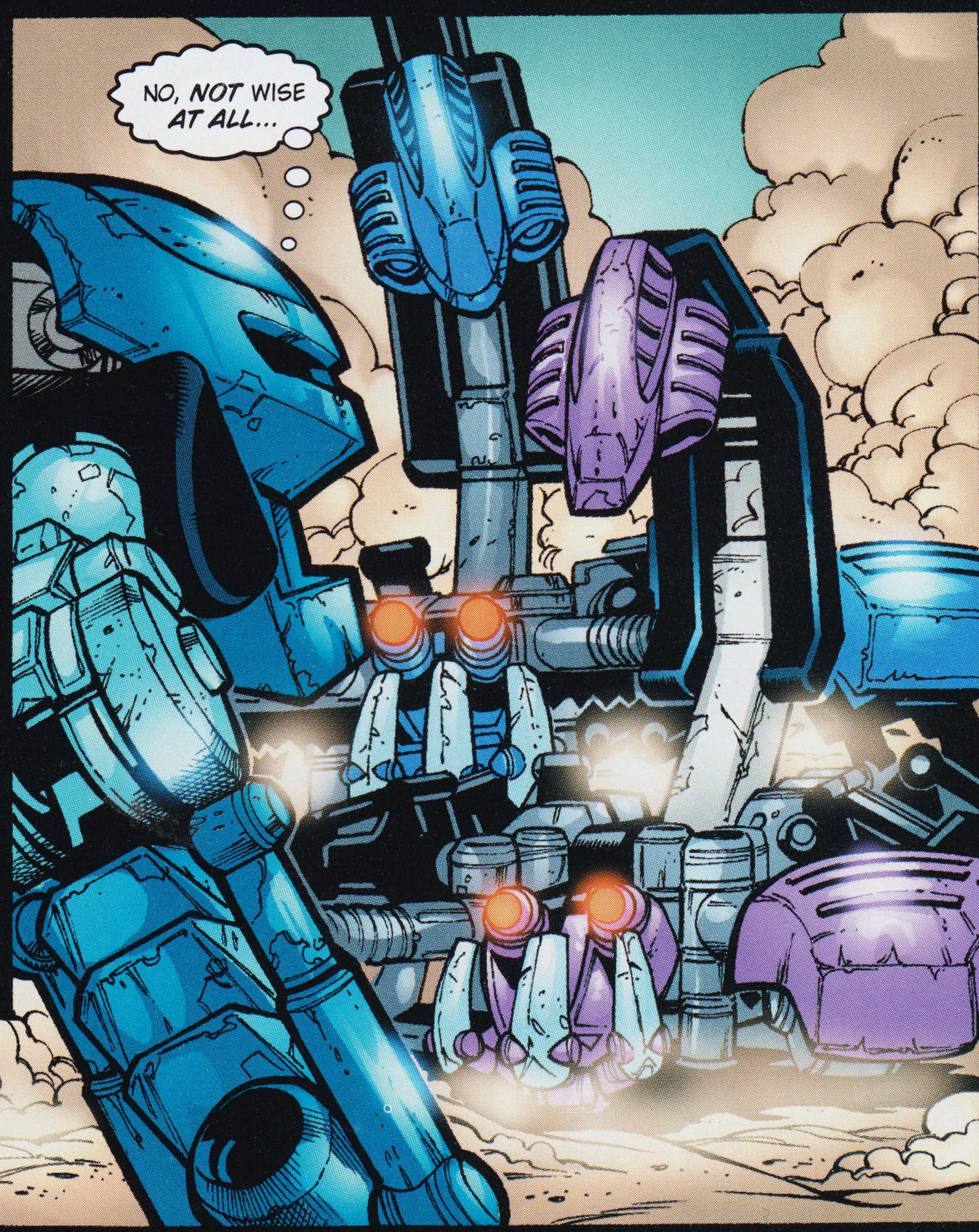
A LITTLE CLOSER...PLEASE, JUST A LITTLE CLOSER...!

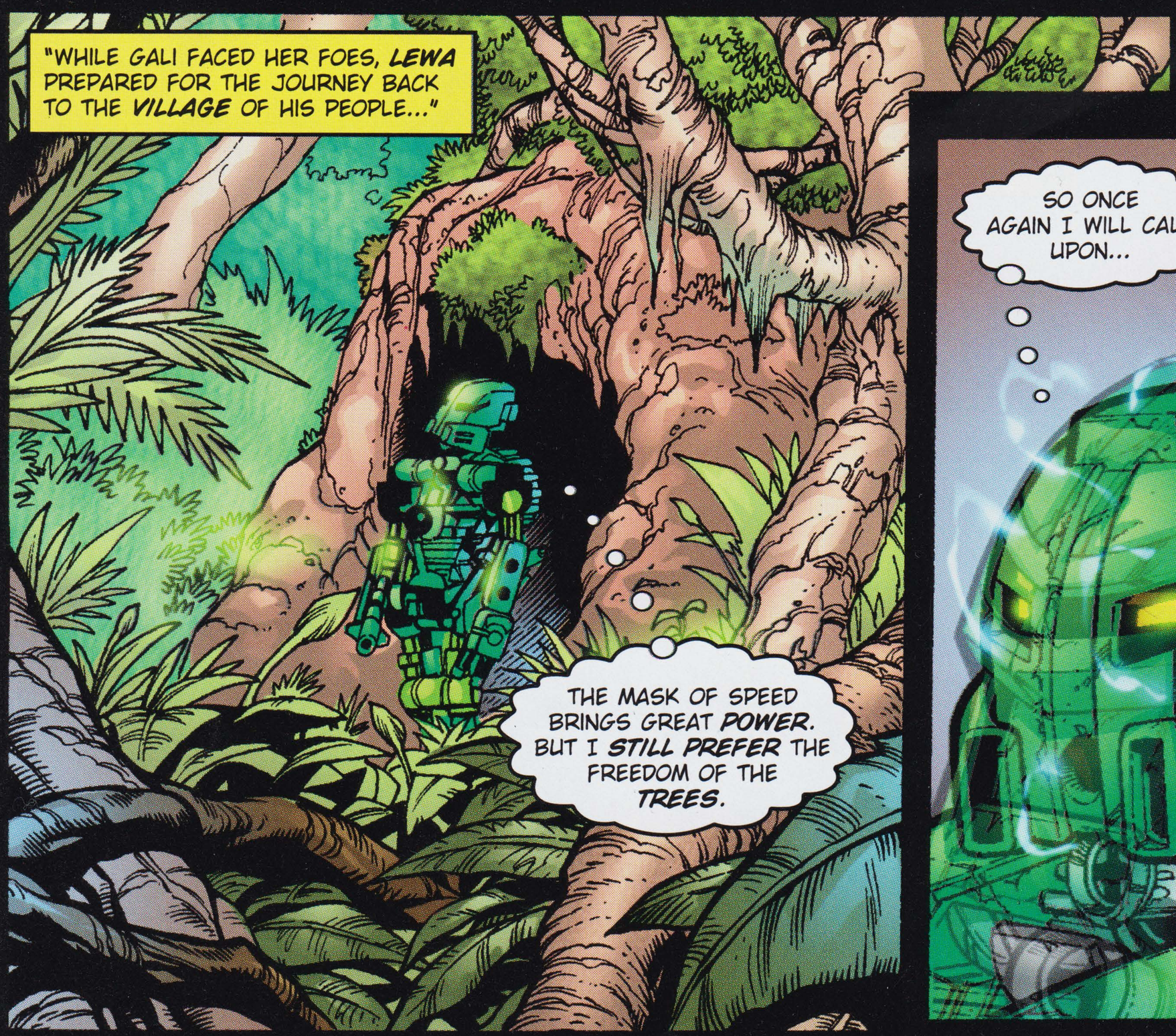
GOT YOU!


THIS HAD BETTER WORK!

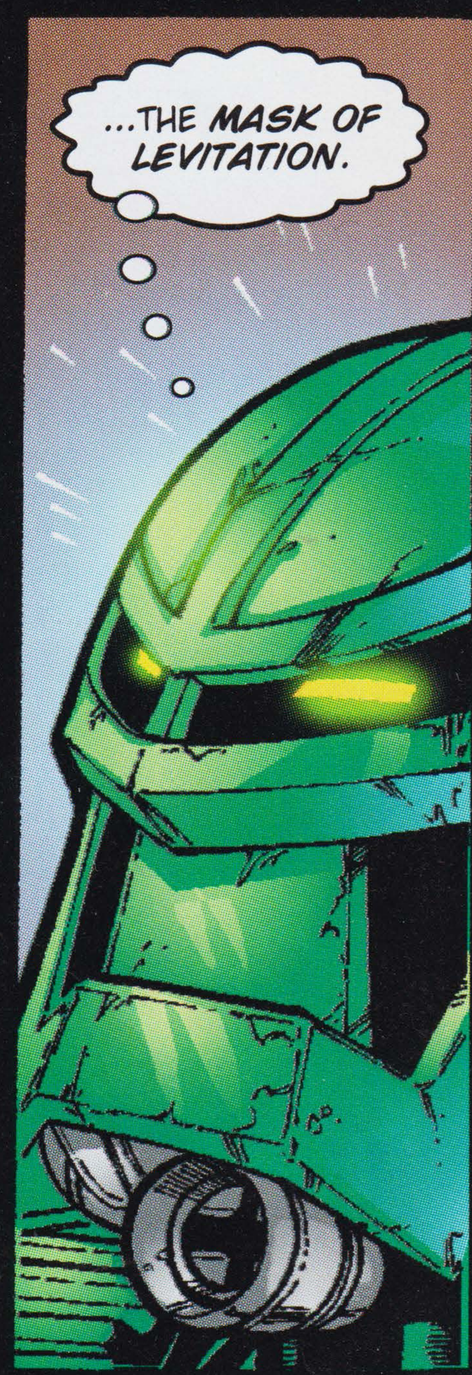

AMAZING! THIS MASK LETS ME FLOAT ON THE AIR!
ZZZZKKKKTTTT

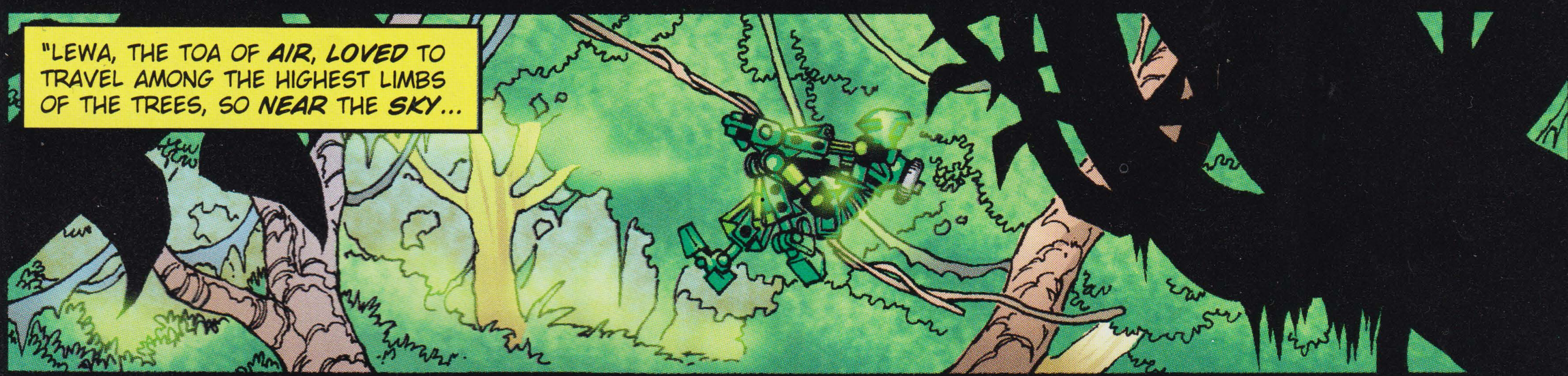

THEN AGAIN, PERHAPS THIS WAS NOT THE WISEST PLACE TO LAND.

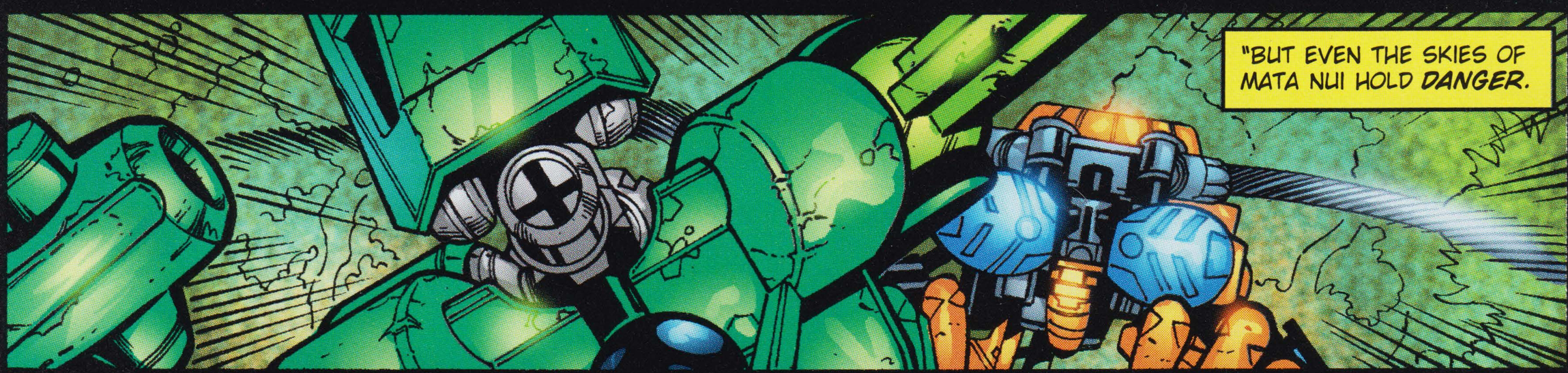

NO, NOT WISE AT ALL...

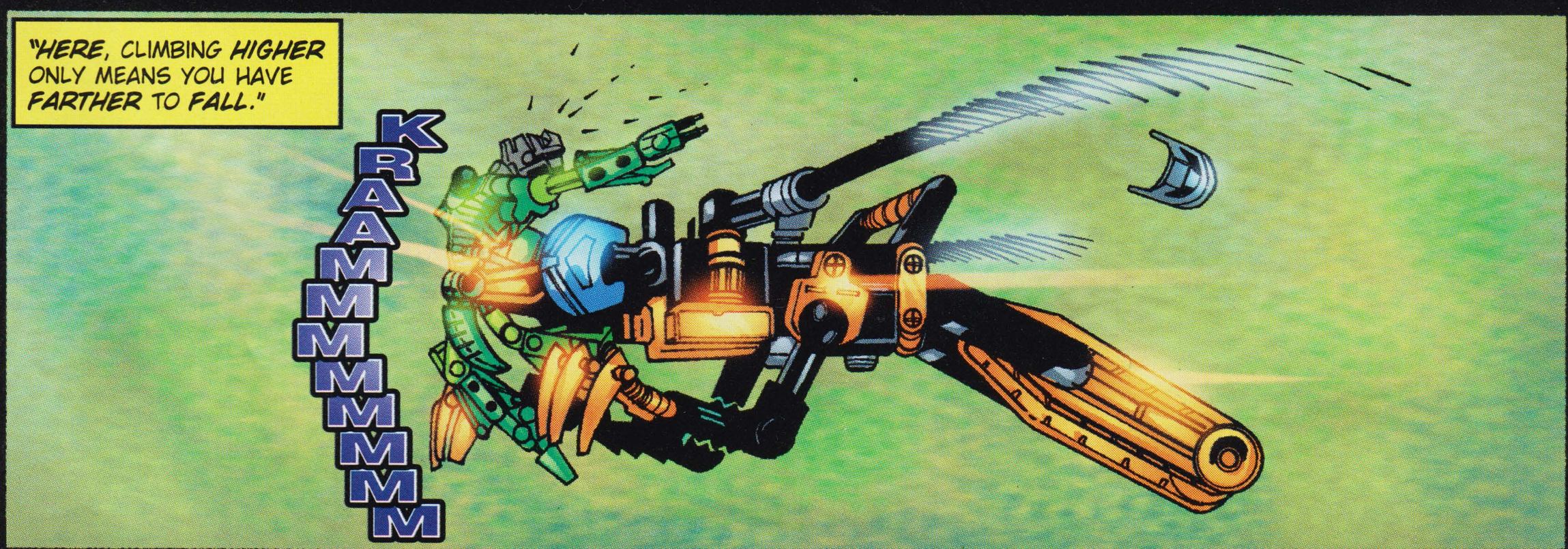

"WHILE GALI FACED HER FOES, LEWA PREPARED FOR THE JOURNEY BACK TO THE VILLAGE OF HIS PEOPLE..."
THE MASK OF SPEED BRINGS GREAT POWER. BUT I STILL PREFER THE FREEDOM OF THE TREES.

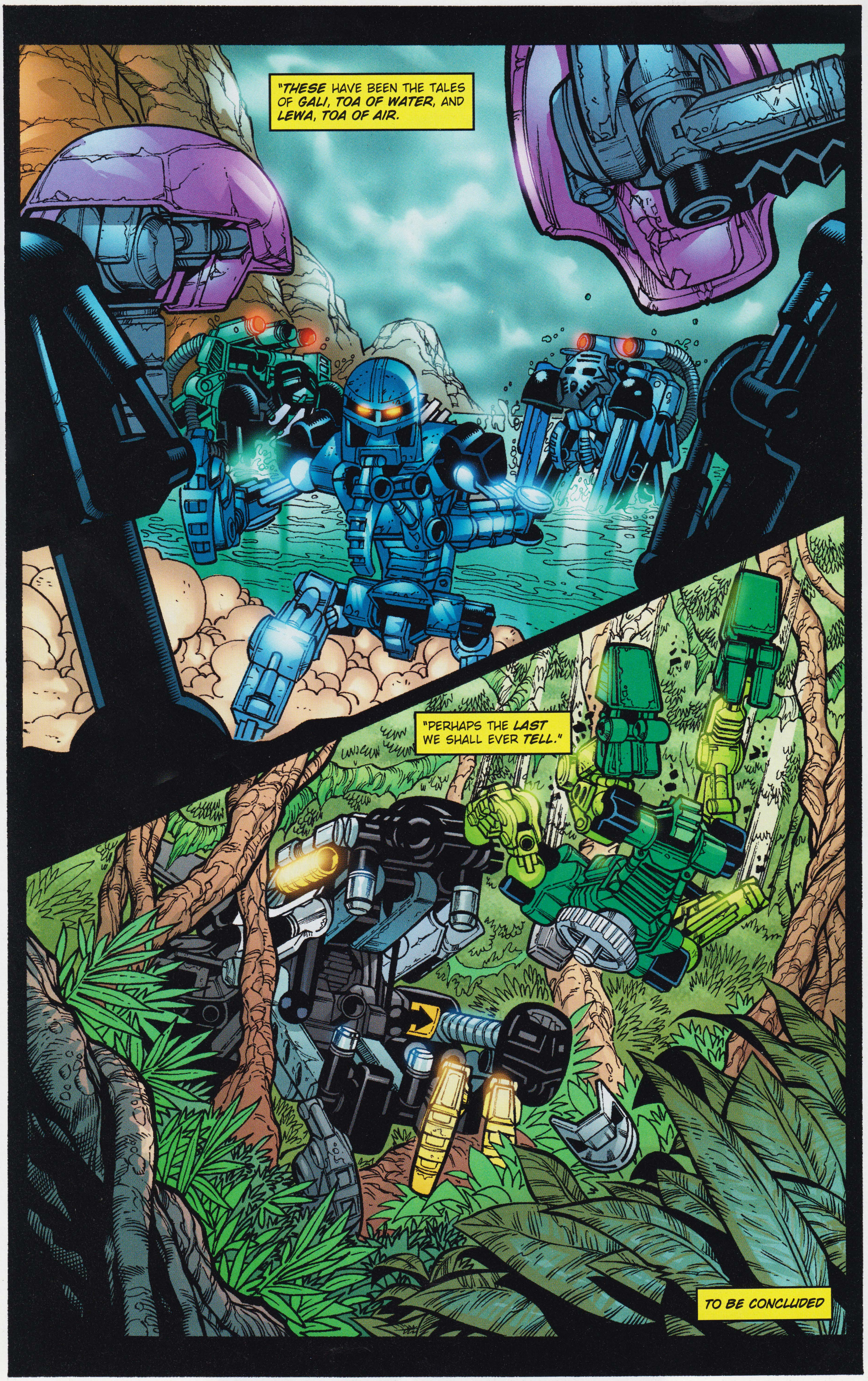
SO ONCE AGAIN I WILL CALL UPON...


...THE MASK OF LEVITATION.


"LEWA, THE TOA OF AIR, LOVED TO TRAVEL AMONG THE HIGHEST LIMBS OF THE TREES, SO NEAR THE SKY...


"BUT EVEN THE SKIES OF MATA NUI HOLD DANGER.


"HERE, CLIMBING HIGHER ONLY MEANS YOU HAVE FARTHER TO FALL."
KRAAMMMMMMMM


"THESE HAVE BEEN THE TALES OF GALI, TOA OF WATER, AND LEWA, TOA OF AIR.
"PERHAPS THE LAST WE SHALL EVER TELL."
TO BE CONCLUDED

CHAPTER SIX of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"LE-KORO"

I follow the tunnel along the path of the three wavy lines. I discover that it is not yet complete. There are miners here hard at work. I speak to the one I believe to be Taipu, of whom Whenua spoke earlier.

"Onepu told me you found a way to the lightstones," Taipu says. "Thank you, adventurer. We can dig much more quickly now. I am sure the highway will reach Le-Koro soon!" Then he adds, "If the Rahi attack the site, traveler, stay near me. I will protect you."

"Why are you digging?" I ask.

"We are building a highway to the village of Le-Koro. Whenua says I am the strongest of the Onu-Koronan Matoran, so I am leading the way."

"What is Le-Koro?" I wonder aloud.

"It is a village in the south, where the Le-Koronan Matoran live in trees. I have never been there. Onepu says there are tall, pretty forests, and huts built in the sky! Onepu says the Le-Koronans are great musicians, too, and play music all day long from the treetops."

I have met Onepu already, but I wonder what Taipu thinks of him, so I ask, "Who is Onepu?"

"Onepu is my best friend in all of Onu-Koro. He is very smart and knows a lot about Ussal Crab racing and fighting Rahi. He is supposed to be digging, too, but he showed me how I can do both of our digging at the same time. *That's* how smart he is!"

And with that, he takes another swing at the rock in front of him. Suddenly, light shines through where once was rock. The tunnel appears to be complete.

"We did it! We've made it through!" exclaims Taipu. "Onepu was right. It is so beautiful here. Whenua said I should make camp when we break through, but I want to go to see Le-Koro and the tree-Matoran…

"Le-Koro is right through those trees, I bet. Won't you take me with you to see it?"

I see no reason not to do so. After all, Taipu was willing

to protect me in the tunnel. The others can make camp. “Yes, I will take you, Taipu,” I reply.

“Thank you! I bet it is more beautiful even than the Great Mine! Let’s go!”

Taipu is so excited; he is practically dancing as he runs ahead of me into the trees. He occasionally stops and looks around as he waits for me to catch up. “I wonder where the people of Le-Koro are?” he asks during one such stop.

And then, during another stop, he motions excitedly from atop a rock. “It’s here! Le-Koro! I’ve found it! It’s beautiful!” he shouts. No sooner have the words escaped his mouth than a large creature swoops down from the treetops, picks up Taipu, and flies away with him! *Oh no! What have I done!?*

I rush ahead. Perhaps the inhabitants of Le-Koro can help me save Taipu. But where is Le-Koro? All I see is a large tree in a swamp.

But a closer look at the base of the tree reveals what appears to be some sort of elevator, carved out of large pods and attached to long vines. I climb in the nearest pod. The controls resemble the three wavy lines I saw on the map back in Onu-Koro. A few presses of the buttons, and I am soon ascending up into the high branches of the tree.

As I step out of the elevator, I am amazed to discover an entire village in the treetops. But all of the huts appear to have been closed up and abandoned. Where are the inhabitants? Who will help me save Taipu? I decide to search the village to see if there is anyone, or anything, here to help me.

I don’t go far before I discover an abandoned flute outside one of the huts. I pick it up. At first, I place it into my backpack and continue my search. But later, I decide to take it out again and examine it more closely.

I press a large, blue key. As I do so, the other keys of the flute light up in sequence. I decide to try my hand at playing the flute using the same sequence of keys. When I do, a short, hauntingly beautiful melody issues forth.

Before the last note has died away, the village suddenly springs to life. Windows pop open and inhabitants peek out. Other villagers appear from higher up in the trees. They eagerly

jump down to greet me, some more skillfully than others. One begins to speak to me.

"Forgive but village attacked by Makuta's evil beasts! Feared you were Rahi but no Rama plays Flute like that, so downtree we come and greet!"

"What attack?" I ask.

"In last rainfall Kongu on patrol saw Rama-hive growing topleaf-high, far in dark forest. Lateknowing Matoran, Rama infected by Makuta! One drift ago, cloudsneaking Nui-Rama fly on Le-Koro to destroy all. Quicksoaring Kahu-riders treelaunch, and great battles fought! Village still stands, but many lost!"

"What is a Rama?" I wonder aloud.

"Nui-Rama, buzzflying Rahi!" he answers. "Hundred-eye, allseeing, fright and fury! Makuta-Madness makes even worse! Wings mash, pincers grab! No chance for Matoran alone, only Toa bold enough to stand against it, yet cunning Rama sneak-swoop-smash and fly out of reach!"

"Who are you?" I inquire.

"Tamaru of Le-Koro!" he replies. "Highfly Vinesman, deepwood Wayfinder! Chief Kahu-tamer! Matau's best! You are the brave wanderer that some speak of! Braver still, for coming to Le-Koro!"

I am a little embarrassed that my reputation precedes me, especially since it is fear of the Nui-Rama and what has happened to Taipu that has brought me here, not bravery.

"Traveler beware — darktime come," interrupts the villager next to Tamaru. Matau stolen, Lewa gone! Le-Koronans prepare for battleflight!"

"Who are you?" I ask.

"Kongu, fastest Leaf-Runner!" he replies. "Everquick pilot! Weaver, mapmaker! Le-Koro Matoran!"

"And who is Matau?" I continue.

"Matau the Singer!" replies Kongu. "Down talk, up singing! Friend and laughter! In lifedawn years past, was known Matau Kewa Champion! Matau, great Turaga of Le-Koro and soul of the forest people! Gone! Gone! Taken by Makuta's Rahi!"

The villagers here speak in an odd manner, but I think that I understand what they mean. "Who is Lewa?" I press on.

"Lewa, great Toa of Air!" says Kongu. "Hero of Le-Koro!

Gone away in quest for the Great Kanohi. If he were here, he would save us, for he has faced greater dangers than this, and survived!

"Are you here to help in the defense, traveler? Le-Koro needs brave windriders to face the Rama!" Kongu asks me.

I am not certain. Kongu senses my hesitation.

"Uptree battle, downtree peace! You choose, but if Rama come, try to stay under cover!" says Kongu.

"The forest can protect you, traveler, if you heed it!" adds Tamaru.

I know I can't save Taipu by heading back down. Perhaps if I help the villagers, then they can help me retrieve Taipu. I have no other options. I head "uptree". As I do so, I notice a dark cloud growing in the distance.

"Rama-swarm! Scramble!" someone shouts.

Large birds appear, the villagers mount them, and then they fly off into the sky toward the dark cloud of Rama. Kongu mounts a bird close by and motions for me to come over.

"Traveler, will you be my second?" Kongu asks me when I arrive. "My Kahu stays treebound without a Disc-thrower!"

I immediately agree and mount the Kahu bird.

"I hope your Disc-arm is as great as your nerve!" says Kongu. "Lewa protect us! Let's go!" And with that, we are off into the skies to face the Rama swarm.

There is chatter among the pilots as we race toward our foe. "Stay with your wingman!" one shouts.

"May the wind be ever underneath your wings!" shouts another.

And then we are there. Rama after Rama comes at us, eager to swat us out of the sky. I launch my discs as fast and as hard as I can, aiming carefully to knock the Rama down. I get many. Others retreat.

Kongu flies like a determined madman. First we are up in the clouds. Then we dive down into the trees. Yet the Rama still come.

Emboldened by our successes, Kongu pushes on to take the fight to the Rama. What at first appears to be a small mountain in the distance soon becomes clearer. It is the Rama hive.

Incredibly, Kongu takes us into its very mouth!

We fight valiantly, and as best we can, but there are too many of them. Soon, our Kahu is injured. How Kongu guides the bird to a landing, I will never know. But we arrive safely. At least, as safely as one can arrive in the hive of a swarm of Nui-Rama!

There are other villagers here. And I think I see Taipu hard at work nearby! All are watched closely by small electric blue bugs. Kongu speaks with the tallest of the prisoners. I move closer, and the tall prisoner speaks to me.

"It is an honor that you sought to save me, traveler, but I am sorry that you made the attempt. But with song we will know hope, and hope brings freedom! Keep your voice down, traveler, and sing as you work. And hope Lewa comes to save us."

"Who are you?" I ask.

"I am Matau, called the Singer by the people of Le-Koro," he replies. "I am their Turaga. I have been imprisoned here since leafdawn."

"Will Lewa come to save us?" I inquire.

"You are not of this tribe, so I will tell you of Lewa, but you must swear not to reveal what I am about to say to anyone. Lewa is here. But he will not save us.

"The great Toa is the same in body, in strength, and in speed. But his mind is gone. He has been attacked by the Makuta and enslaved by evil. His Great Mask of Power has been replaced with an infected mask, and the only way to bring him back is to take it off. And I know of nothing with the strength to overcome him. He has become more fearsome and horrible than any Rahi. We shall never escape this place. All that is left to us is song, and what small comfort it brings.

"Take care, and do your work without resistance. Nui-Rama are not clever, but they see much. They know when we are plotting."

I am about to begin my work when I see him. He is just a point, high up the walls of the hive. But then he comes closer, accompanied by his Nui-Rama handler. I know instantly from his infected mask that this must be the once-great Toa Lewa.

Everything about him seems dark. I can see within the claws

of the Nui-Rama beside him what must have been Lewa's original mask. The shock among the prisoners at this sight is palpable. Suddenly, another tall stranger springs from the very ground beneath our feet. It is instantly clear that Lewa and the stranger are set upon destroying each other. Lewa raises his battle axe and charges at the stranger.

The mask of the stranger changes shape and appears to power up. Lewa's attack is thwarted by some sort of shield emanating from the mask. Lewa is thrown backwards into the wall of the hive. The jolt appears to have changed him.

"What… what's happening to me?" he asks himself. "My body… not my own…" he mumbles. "My mind… get out of *my mind!*" he screams. And then the darkness returns to him.

Lewa and the stranger begin to battle again. The fight moves quickly all over the hive. Lewa scores a frightening blow, and the stranger is knocked partially into the wall of the hive. As one of the electric blue bugs crawls out to survey the damage, the stranger's mask changes once again.

Small bits and pieces of debris suddenly float up into the air around the stranger. And then, the electric blue bug joins the floating cloud of debris. Before Lewa realizes what is happening, the cloud is hurtling toward him, bug and all. Lewa tries to react, but the bug strikes him a blow to the head, knocking the infected mask off of his face and onto the floor.

"His mask! Get his mask!" exclaims Matau.

The stranger looks to the Nui-Rama that is hovering nearby. The beast can no longer hold onto Lewa's uninfected mask. Instead, the mask floats down to the seemingly confused Lewa, who puts it on.

Instantly, a change comes over the Toa. He leaps high into the air and onto the back of the Nui-Rama. It is Lewa's mask that changes now. As it does, the Nui-Rama ceases its struggling. The beast appears to be fully under Lewa's control.

Victorious, Lewa and the tall stranger, who must be Toa Onua of Onu-Koro, collect the prisoners and we all escape the hive aboard the Nui-Rama and our faithful Kahu bird, now nursed back to health. There is to be much rejoicing back at Le-Koro with the return of the prisoners and, especially, Matau.

But before the festivities begin, Lewa approaches the shrine of Le-Koro. It opens up, and he descends into it. When he returns, his mask has changed from green to gold. It is yet one more reason to celebrate in Le-Koro! Even Taipu is dancing!

"Traveler, it is good to see you again after all our adventures!" Matau says to me. "Return to treebright Le-Koro was so long hoped for in the darkwet Rama Hive! Take this Flutesong; it fits in the Flute you found. Whenever you need help from sunsoaring Le-Koro, playsong and you will have it!"

"What of Lewa and the Golden Kanohi?" I ask.

"By bringing all the Great Masks of Power to the Suva, it has given to Lewa a Golden Kanohi," Matau replies. "Some legends say that after the Golden Kanohi are found, there will come the Toa Kaita – but I do not know what this is."

As much as I enjoy a good party, I feel that perhaps I need to keep moving on. I tell Matau goodbye.

"Many thanks to you, adventurer, for helping us to highbranch home!" he says as I leave. "Goodbye, traveler, and fare well!"

CHAPTER SEVEN of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"KO-KORO"

As I re-enter the tunnel and observe the workers as they widen the entrance, I think back to Jaller, Captain of the Guard at Ta-Koro. What was it that he had said about the North March? Perhaps I can be of some assistance there. I follow the tunnel to Ta-Koro and seek out the Captain.

When I find him, my instincts are confirmed. "Stranger, have you heard?" he asks when I greet him. "We're falling back. And the Toa have completely disappeared."

"My scouts delivered reports from the other villages today. The news is not good. The Rahi are closing on all sides, and their numbers are too great to count. After the fall of Tren Krom, I completely lost contact with the North March."

"But we will not go quietly into the shadow of Makuta, as long as the light and heat of the great Mangai still blazes! I know of one maneuver that none will expect. I only hope Vakama and the others will listen."

"What news from the other villages?" I ask.

"You, at least, have seen some small victories, but Makuta's evil infection is still spreading throughout Mata Nui," Jaller says. "The other villages are holding on while they can. Onepu is so hard pressed; he can't spare me even one Ussalry regiment! Not a single regiment!"

"What maneuver?" I query.

"It is imperative that the villages build fortifications and prepare for a final defense," Jaller confides in me. "I expect many Rahi to threaten the villages very soon."

"Vakama says the Toa are gathering at the Kini-Nui, at the center of the island. We must try to protect them while they fulfill their mission. The Turaga must each send heroes to help the Toa at Kini-Nui. The Makuta will not expect it.

"I must know what happened to North March," Jaller broods. "I have no warriors to spare, and you have proven resourceful and true. So I ask you: will you join the Guard?"

"I will join the Guard," I reply. "What do you need me to do?"

"It warms me that you have chosen to accept our trust,"

begins Jaller. “Vakama will be pleased.”

“The North March is an icy pass where Ta-Wahi meets Ko-Wahi. The Ko-Koronans have been seen little during the past months, and heard from even less. But it may not be that they are troubled; silence has always been their way.

“The Guard has a small outpost there, only reachable by cablecar. They watch against Rahi from the frozen heights. They also keep watch on Ko-Koronans.

“I fear the servants of Makuta have taken all my scouts. Take this Ensign and show it to the sentry at the cablecar. He will let you through. Then, make contact with our scouts in North March and get a report for me on the Makuta’s efforts in the mountains. Good luck, traveler.”

I bid Jaller goodbye and head out for the perimeter of Ta-Koro. I ascend the many steps along the outer wall until I meet the sentry.

“Only guards may pass,” he tells me.

I show him my ensign. “You may pass,” he says. Ta-Koro guards are not exactly known for their stimulating conversation.

I climb onto the cablecar and it whisks me up the mountain. It is quite a contrast in temperature as I move from the fiery lava of Ta-Koro to the snowy clime of Ko-Wahi.

At the top of the cablecar run, I discover a small hut. It appears to be an abandoned outpost. Within the hut is a Heatstone. I feel foolish for not having thought to bring one myself. I pick it up and place it in my backpack.

Outside the hut, there are footprints in the snow leading up the mountain. Having no other directions to Ko-Koro, I decide to follow them through the drifts.

I soon come across an astonishing sight. Some poor villager has been encased in ice! Perhaps I am not too late. I take out the Heatstone to see if I can melt the villager out of the ice.

The villager quickly revives. He is startled to see me, and he runs away. I follow him. He appears trapped at the base of a large drift when suddenly a door opens revealing an icy tunnel. He disappears down the tunnel and I follow him once more.

Safely within the confines of the tunnel, the villager sees no need to continue to run away. He is examining himself in the

reflection on the ice as I approach him. “Who are you?” I ask.

“Kopeke,” he answers.

Mindful of the task Jaller has sent me on, I get straight to the point. “What happened to the Ta-Koronan Guard?”

“The Makuta led them into the ice, and I fear they will not return,” Kopeke answers. “Had you not come and saved me, I would be facing a similar fate.”

“Where am I?” I ask.

“I do not wish to be questioned,” says Kopeke. “If you seek answers, do so in Ko-Koro. There you will find meditation and contemplation. It is Turaga Nuju’s way to think on all things, and from his Sanctum on Ihu’s peak one can see far ahead and far behind.

“In Ko-Koro, we respect knowledge above all things. You must have great knowledge even to step foot within it. You are the one who seeks to chronicle this era, and so you will doubtless travel the icy drifts in search of answers. But true sight reveals many things, and knowing the future can be dangerous. That is your choice.

“Wisdom is ever the burden of the Turaga. I do not expect it from you.”

Kopeke returns to looking at the icy reflections on the wall. I discover that he is not looking at himself. Rather, from his vantage point he can see both the cablecar and the hut. Perhaps he is a sentry, guarding this tunnel entrance.

I appear free to continue on to Ko-Koro, so I continue to head farther into the tunnel. My progress is soon stopped however when I come to a locked gate.

The lock appears to be controlled by the carved blocks of ice scattered about me on the floor. Each block displays an image of a mask. I recognize a few: Toa Lewa’s mask, Turaga Matau’s mask, and Toa Pohatu’s mask. I also note the symbols at the bottom of each column.

I am clearly supposed to place the icy blocks into the slots of the columns. At first, I am not certain which blocks go where. But very soon I have figured it out and the gate opens up to reveal the steps beyond. I continue on my way to Ko-Koro.

The path is precarious, what with all of the ice and snow and blowing wind. I am not alone out here however. Two guards stand duty outside the main entrance. They shake off their drifts of snow as they greet me.

I enter what appears to be the main building of Ko-Koro. There is a large pot over a fire in the center. A large mask overlooks the well-lit room. There are several villagers here. They appear to be studying the writing on the wall. I interrupt the villager nearest to me.

"Welcome, traveler, to the Sanctum," he says. "You may join us in our meditation if you wish. Nuju honors all wise Matoran that they may join in the Seeking. If you wish to speak with our Turaga, you must wait for Matoro to return. He is the only one that can translate Nuju's wisdom. Is there anything you wish to know?"

"What is the Seeking?" I ask.

"Written upon these walls and tablets are the great Prophecies," he tells me. "To understand even a fraction of what they speak takes years of meditation and patient decryption."

I don't have years. I need answers now. I press on. "Who is Nuju?"

"Nuju is the Turaga of Ko-Koro. His mediations reach into the past and into the future, and he has deciphered much of the ancient Prophecies. He has Visions.

"He does very little that is not significant in some way to the future of Mata Nui, and the Kanohi Matatu gives him the power to move objects by sheer force of will."

Perhaps Nuju can give me the answers I seek. But this fellow says I need Matoro to speak to him. "Where is Matoro?" I ask.

"Matoro is alone, hunting Rahi in the Drifts," he replies. "You may seek him if you wish, but be warned: Ihu is not merciful, even to the Ko-Koronan."

Suddenly, part of the wall gives way and another icy tunnel appears.

"Take this passageway to enter into the Drifts. Matoro often leaves behind signal flags so that he does not get lost. If you follow them you may come to him."

I thank the villager and head once more down an icy tunnel.

When I arrive at the other end, I discover one of Matoro's signal flags and his footprints in the snow. I follow them as the snow begins to fall heavily.

Soon, I am headed up the slippery, snow-covered slopes of Mount Ihu, following Matoro's trail of red signal flags. Although cold and windy with falling snow, the path is not too difficult to follow at first.

Then suddenly, it strikes. A blinding whiteout of a blizzard! I can hardly see my own hand in front of my face. Everywhere I turn, I can only see the white of the blowing snowstorm. Reluctantly, I press on in the hopes of finding Matoro.

I am so cold, and I am beginning to tire from trudging through the thick drifts of snow. Have I seen that rock before? Am I going in circles? Ah, another signal flag up ahead! If I can just reach it.

I am thrilled to finally reach the bright red signal flag flapping vigorously in the wind. But where is Matoro? Which way do I go? My victory is brief. I must continue to search for Matoro in the blinding snow.

At first my spirits lift, as the signal flags are now easier to find. I move from one to another, each time thinking that this will be the one that brings me to Matoro. But each time I am disappointed.

And then, the signal flags are gone. There is nothing to see but snow, snow, and more snow. I am very tired now. So sleepy. At least I'm not cold anymore. I feel a warm sensation all over. I decide to take a brief rest.

All is dark as I close my eyes. I am grateful to bid rid of the omnipresent white. I am dreaming. Words are floating through my head, racing away from me. And then a symbol floats before me. It grows larger as it comes closer to me. Closer, closer, closer.

Before I can figure out what the symbol means, it disappears and I hear someone speaking to me. "Energy…" he offers. I take it. "Rest…" he says. I close my eyes once more.

When I awake, I am in a cave. Matoro is nearby. I recognize

him by the signal flag he carries. Before I can speak to him, Matoro is alerted to something outside. Perhaps he has trapped a Rahi. He leaves the cave. I have strength enough only to watch.

A tall stranger is barely visible on the horizon. But he is not responsible for tripping Matoro's wire. No, certainly the very large and angry Rahi nearby has done that.

Matoro is caught off-guard, but raises his pickaxe to protect himself. It is of no consequence however as the Rahi easily swats him into a snowbank. It appears all is lost for Matoro as the Rahi moves in for the kill.

The Rahi's attack is stopped though by the sudden appearance of the tall stranger. He is armed with a sword and shield, and he is blocking the Rahi's path. The Rahi strikes out at the stranger, but too late. The stranger has quickly moved away.

As he turns to face the beast, the stranger's mask changes shape and, instantly, he is gone. The Rahi looks about for the stranger, confused by his disappearance. Soon, the sound of sword striking Rahi armor echoes around us.

The stranger retreats and circles around invisibly for another attack. His footprints in the snow give him away however, and the Rahi strikes. The stranger is caught within the jaws of the beast, shaken, and thrown into a drift.

The stranger reappears from the drift. His mask changes again. As it does so, two more strangers appear. They all look exactly alike.

Now even more befuddled, the Rahi looks first from one stranger, then to the next, and then to the next as they back him onto an overhang of cliff. The three strangers draw their swords together. Apparently surrounded with no chance of escape, the Rahi chooses his target and strikes.

Unfortunately for the Rahi, he has chosen incorrectly. The stranger he attacks is but a chimera who merely shimmers and disappears after the assault. The remaining two strangers thrust their swords into the ground, breaking off the overhang. The roar of the Rahi echoes mournfully as it plummets downward into the swirling mists of snow.

Matoro, having regained his feet, walks up next to the stranger and gazes over the cliff. No sooner has he done this

than he is alone, for the other stranger's mask has returned to its original form and his doppelganger is gone.

Some time later, we are safely back in the Sanctum. The stranger, whom I now know to be Toa Kopaka, has left us. Matoro is by Turaga Nuju's side. I approach them both.

"I will translate Nuju's words for you, traveler," says Matoro. "He has been watching you for a long time. Your role in Mata Nui's destiny is more important than you know. Mata Nui sleeps, but you, like the Toa, shall be an agent of his awakening.

"Nuju knows that you wish to ask questions of him and he will answer them. When you are done, he wishes to ask a question of you. What questions do you wish to ask Nuju, traveler?"

"Where are the Toa?" I ask Nuju.

Nuju erupts in a string of beeps, clicks, and whistles. Matoro is listening intently and nods his head.

"The Toa will unite and find more power in the joining," Matoro translates. "They shall merge their skills, their knowledge, their wills to become Wisdom and Valor, named in prophecy Wairuha and Akamai. In these forms, they are the Toa Kaita. The Toa Kaita will, at last, confront the Makuta.

"During their absence, the people of Mata Nui must work together to protect their homes and all that they know. They will need great courage, for the Toa will not be here to protect them."

"What will happen to Mata Nui?" I wonder aloud.

There are more clicks and whistles, and then Matoro continues. "Nuju says that you must understand this: that in creation, there is destruction. In destruction, there is rebirth. There is no such thing as void; all things are in flux.

"If the Toa triumph, Mata Nui will know great joy… and great change. The darkness will be dispelled, but we will have to guard our island well to ensure no other evil rises to take its place."

I contemplate this for a while. When the silence becomes awkward, I reluctantly ask, "What question?"

"You are the one that will guide the Matoran," Matoro translates after Nuju's flurry of sounds. "But only if you have

learned what was necessary to learn during your travels.

"With the Toa Kaita beneath the earth, the Matoran must fortify their villages and brace for a great battle. There must also be created an alliance, a small group assembled from whomever the Turaga can spare, to help the Toa on their final quest.

"Nuju's question is this: To what place shall you lead the alliance?"

This is an unanticipated question. I thought perhaps Nuju would ask me to do something. Instead, he is telling what I am to do testing me to see if I am up to the task.

I consider all of the places I have seen on my journey. I think hard upon where an alliance can do the most good. Then suddenly it comes to me. I know where we must go, and I tell Turaga Nuju. Nuju nods his head in the affirmative. "So be it," says Matoro. "Nuju believes that you are the one who can accomplish this task. Take this message to all the Turaga of the villages, and they can begin their fateful preparations. Nuju believes in you, adventurer."

CHAPTER NINE of *Tale of the Toa*
COOL AS ICE

With every step, Kopaka cursed the heat, smoke, and choking ash of Ta-Wahi. Why did a Mask of Strength have to be hidden in such a place? He had no idea, and he hoped that the Matoran who had given him the tip had not led him astray.

Pausing as another wave of heat overwhelmed him, Kopaka raised his ice blade to his neck, letting its welcome coldness revive him. How could anyone spend any time on this infernal volcano, let alone live here?

An image of Tahu floated through his mind, and he grimaced. If the Toa of Fire could see him now, he would probably laugh his mask off.

Of course, I'd like to see Tahu trying to get along in Ko-Wahi, Kopaka thought. *He'd probably melt a hole in a glacier and spend so much energy yelling at the ice that he couldn't climb out.*

The thought amused him, giving him the strength to get moving again.

After a few more minutes of climbing, he crested a peak and found himself overlooking an amazing landscape. He knew it had to be what he was looking for: the Lava Lagoon.

Several of the slopes of the mountain met here, forming a deep, broad basin filled with lava. At least two hundred lengths across, the simmering lagoon glowed yellow and red and orange. A waterfall of lava poured into the far end, sending up constant sprays of steam and smoke.

Kopaka looked around, wondering where in this bubbling wasteland a mask might be hidden.

Then he noticed a small, craggy island jutting out of the center of the lagoon. Was the heat making him see things, or was that the gray shape of a Kanohi mask sitting on the island?

He groaned. Why couldn't the mask have been guarded by another Rahi instead - or two, or twelve? He would rather face all the Rahi on Mata Nui at once than have to deal with this.

Makuta showed quite a sense of humor when he hid these masks, he thought grimly. *But I'll have the last laugh - no matter what it takes.*

Pointing his ice blade at the lagoon, Kopaka focused his energy.

Zzzzzzzt!

A small patch of lava froze - for about half a second. Then the ice cracked, steam escaped, and a moment later the frozen section had melted back into its original fiery form.

Kopaka frowned and tried again. But his efforts had little effect.

Time for a new plan, he thought. *If I can't go straight across, maybe I can go over.*

Changing his focus, he concentrated on the steam in the air over the lagoon. He aimed his ice blade towards it.

Zzzzzzzt!

The particles of moisture in the air froze solid, forming together into an icy bridge reaching over the first section of the lagoon.

Zzzzzzzt!

Zzzzzzzt!

Kopaka felt his energy draining away as he pointed his blade again and again. But when he was finished, he smiled with triumph. His ice bridge stretched all the way across the lagoon to the island!

Now all I have to do is go get that mask, he thought, stepping onto the near end of the bridge. He hurried forward a few steps, then paused. What was that sound?

Drip… Szzzzz! …drip… Szzzzz! …drip… Szzzzz!

Glancing down, he saw with alarm that the bridge was already melting away.

"No!" he cried, pointing his blade toward it to refreeze it.

But it was no use. As fast as he could refreeze one section, another melted. Within seconds, the middle part of the bridge collapsed into the lagoon. Kopaka barely had time to leap back to shore as his section of the bridge, collapsed, too.

There had to be an answer. Turning the challenge over in his mind, Kopaka searched through his options.

Finally he had to admit the only likely solution: the other Toa. *If Tahu were here, he would have no trouble retrieving that mask*, Kopaka thought reluctantly.

He shook his head, annoyed with himself. Why waste thought on a solution that wouldn't work? He had found two masks already without help from the other Toa. He could find a way to get this one without them as well.

As he wandered toward the end of the little beach, Kopaka noticed a plume of steam coming from a crack in the rocky wall behind him. Unlike the sooty, smoky steam hovering over the lagoon itself, this steam looked pale and clean.

Curious, Kopaka climbed up the rocky wall for a look. He soon discovered a hot-water spring bubbling up from the depths of the mountain.

"Interesting…" he muttered.

He glanced out toward the island where the mask lay, measuring the distance with his eyes. Then he stared again into the steaming spring. An idea was forming in his head.

He analyzed the information again and again. The depth and size of the spring. The distance to the island. The probable heat of the lava.

Still, he couldn't quite convince himself that it would work. The probably was fairly high, but nothing was certain…

Kopaka clenched his fists as he imagined Tahu's mocking laughter; Lewa's perplexed glance. Neither of them would have the patience to waste so much time worrying over probabilities. Perhaps just this once, he should live by their example.

Besides, it's this or nothing, Kopaka reminded himself. Of that, he was one hundred percent certain.

Not giving himself time to doubt his decision, Kopaka pointed his blade.

Zzzzzzzt!

The spring froze solid.

Kopaka smiled. As he had suspected, the water in the spring had been much cooler than the lava.

Now came the hard part - getting the miniature iceberg out of its hollow and down the slope to the lagoon. Little by little, Kopaka froze and then chipped away the outer wall of the hollow. until all he had to do was push the large chunk of ice straight out and over the edge.

There was no time to waste - the lava was already eating away at the edges of the ice floe. Without hesitating, Kopaka leaped down onto the ice.

Using the blade as a paddle, he rowed toward the island with all his might. The ice continued to melt, but Kopaka kept his gaze focused on his goal.

By the time he reached the rocky little ledge, his ice "boat" had melted away to about half its original size.

More than half, Kopaka told himself as he leaped onto the island and scooped up the mask. *It's still more than half there. That will be enough - especially with the added strength of my new Kanohi to help me row.* He jammed the Mask of Strength over his face, feeling its power seep through him.

Still, he hesitated as he stepped back onto the floe. It would take him almost as long to row back to shore as it had taken to get here. Would the ice last that long?

Just go! he chided himself. *There's no other choice.*

Jabbing his blade into the lava, Kopaka put all the strength of his new mask into his effort as he pushed away from the island.

I'll make it, he told himself firmly, squashing the thought. *Whatever it takes, I'll do it. If the floe melts away too soon, maybe I can freeze enough of the lava to hop across the rest of the way a step at a time. Or -*

As he jabbed his blade into the lava again, he misjudged and hit the edge of the floe instead. The force of the blow sent several large chunks of ice flying - one straight toward him! The Ice Toa didn't have time to dodge it. The ice chunk connected solidly with the side of his head, knocking him to his knees.

He clung woozily to the ice, fighting to retain consciousness. But darkness seeped out from the corners of his mind… and then, suddenly, an intense vision overwhelmed him, sweeping away the floe, the lagoon, the heat, and everything else.

First he found himself looking with a bird's-eye view over all of Mata Nui. The image suddenly rushed closer, almost as if he were falling straight toward the slopes of Mount Ihu in the center of the island. The image shifted slightly to one side,

swooping down one of the mountain's slopes until it reached a large clearing. There, Kopaka saw a great temple built out of stone.

Then a strange, echoing voice spoke out of the darkness. "*Welcome, Toa of Ice*," it said, fading in and out as Kopaka struggled to free himself from the vision. "*Do not be… your mind can journey to… behold the future of… you and the others shall… all the Great Masks of Power… together and defeat… three shall become… path of wisdom… myself, Akamai… of the warrior… only by uniting… farewell…*"

With that, Kopaka's mind snapped back to reality. He found himself on his hands and knees on the floe, still clutching at the rapidly shrinking chunk of ice.

That little accident was bad luck on top of bad judgment, he thought bleakly as he finally faced the truth — the ice floe wasn't going to make it back to shore. That meant he had two choices: Try the frozen-footstep method, or wait as long as he could and then attempt an enormous leap to solid ground.

He decided that the second plan had a more likely chance of success. But the distance to shore seemed impossibly far…

Kopaka reminded himself that he now wore the Great Mask of Strength. Perhaps it would give his legs the extra power they would need to propel him such a tremendous distance. Perhaps…

Gathering his strength, Kopaka got into position and then waited. One long moment, then another, then another, coolly patient as he gauged the footing beneath him. All he needed was enough to push off from —

"Now!" he shouted, leaping forward with all his might. The energy of the Pakari flowed through him, giving him extra strength.

But it wouldn't be enough.

That Great Mask of Levitation would come in awfully handy right now, he thought bleakly as he felt himself start to fall toward the bubbling lava.

"Kopaka!" a voice shouted from the direction of the shore.

Kopaka glanced forward, but saw only a flash of green as he suddenly felt himself caught up in a blast of wind.

"Aaaaaaah!" he cried as he flew helplessly through the air.

Crash!

He smashed into the ground face first.

"Sorryoops, brother," Lewa's voice said from somewhere nearby. "I didn't have thought-time to plan a softer landing."

"Ugh," Kopaka groaned. Every limb in his body ached. But he was still in one piece - and unmelted! "It's alright, brother Lewa," he added, realizing that it was Lewa's wind gust that had saved him. "I owe you one. I shall not forget this."

"Anytime, brother," Lewa said. "And at least I see you got a mask out of it."

Kopaka nodded, touching the new Kanohi on his face. He wondered if he should tell the other Toa about his vision. What had it meant? Who had sent it? Was it a foreshadowing of something important — or merely a trick sent by Makuta?

Whatever it was, it nearly got me boiled, he reminded himself. *Isn't that the best evidence of all that it must have come from Makuta?*

Disturbed by the thought, he remained silent about his vision as Lewa chattered on about finding his own Great Mask of Strength in Onu-Wahi.

"Had to fight a nastyugly Rahi to get it, too," he said cheerfully. "But I suppose it was worth it - gave that quickbreeze I sent you some extra oomph."

Kopaka nodded. "These Rahi — they seem to stop at nothing to guard these masks."

"Oh, this fellow quickstopped as soon as I knocked off its own mask," Lewa said. "It panicfled into the depths of the tunnels everquick."

"Really? Hmm." Kopaka filed that away in his mind. It could be useful to him later.

That reminded him — he still had masks to find. "My thanks to you again, brother Lewa," he said with a formal little bow. "Now I must take my leave and continue my search."

"Oh! I almost mindlost why I came looking for you in the first place," Lewa cried. "I just luckymet Onua and Pohatu downmountain. Onua has called a meeting."

Kopaka frowned. "But I haven't found all my masks yet."

"None of us have." Lewa shrugged. "We're all learnfinding that this searchquest is trickier than we thought. That's why Onua wants to get together. I'm not one for groupworking, but I

think he may be right. We need to compare notes, do some teamplanning.”

Kopaka opened his mouth to protest again, but shut it before speaking a word. How much time might he have saved just now if he’d had Lewa along in the first place — or Tahu, or Onua?

He sighed. As much as he hated the idea of joining in on some big, happy, crowded Toa-fest, the facts were staring him in the face. The mission would be more successful if the Toa attacked it as a team.

“All right,” Kopaka said at last. “Let’s go.”

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TRIUMPH OF THE TOA
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I AM THE SHAPE IN THE SHADOWS. I AM THE DARKNESS IN THE HEART OF MATA NUI.
I LIVE IN THE DREAD STORIES TOLD BY THE TURAGA AROUND THE VILLAGE FIRES.
THE DARK CREATURES -- THE MANAS, THE RAHI -- ARE MY SERVANTS.
I AM MAKUTA.

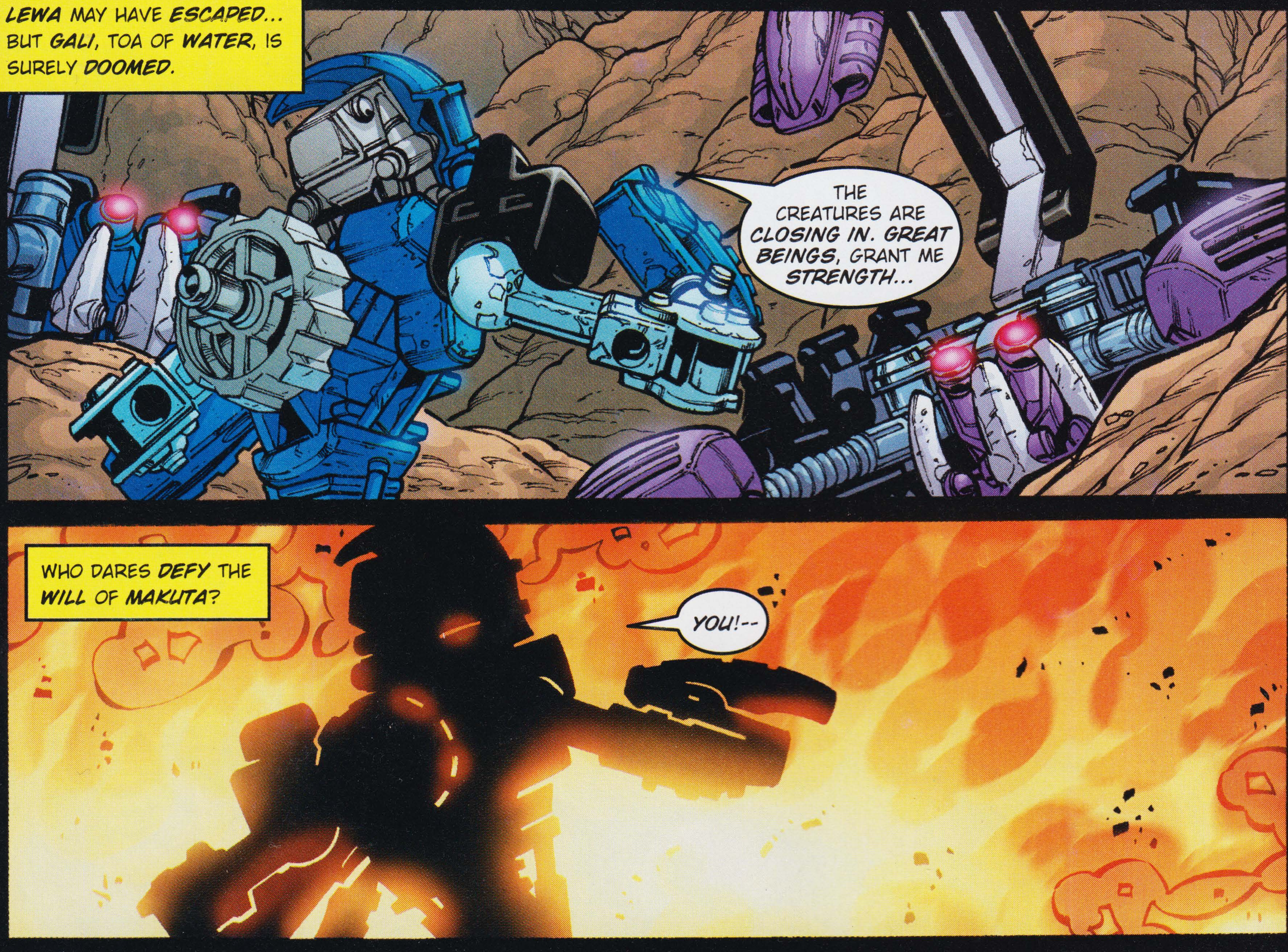
BIONICLE
TRIUMPH OF THE TOA
THOSE WHO DARE TO CHALLENGE ME...AS THE TOA HAVE DONE...
...WILL BE DEFEATED.
GREG FARSHTEY
writer
CARLOS D'ANDA
penciller
RANDY ELLIOTT
inker
PETER PANTAZIS
colorist

LEWA'S SAFETY IS AN ILLUSION.

ONE THE JAWS OF MUAKA WILL DISPEL.
KRANCH

LEWA WILL BE THE FIRST TO FALL, AND THEN-- BUT WHAT IS THIS??

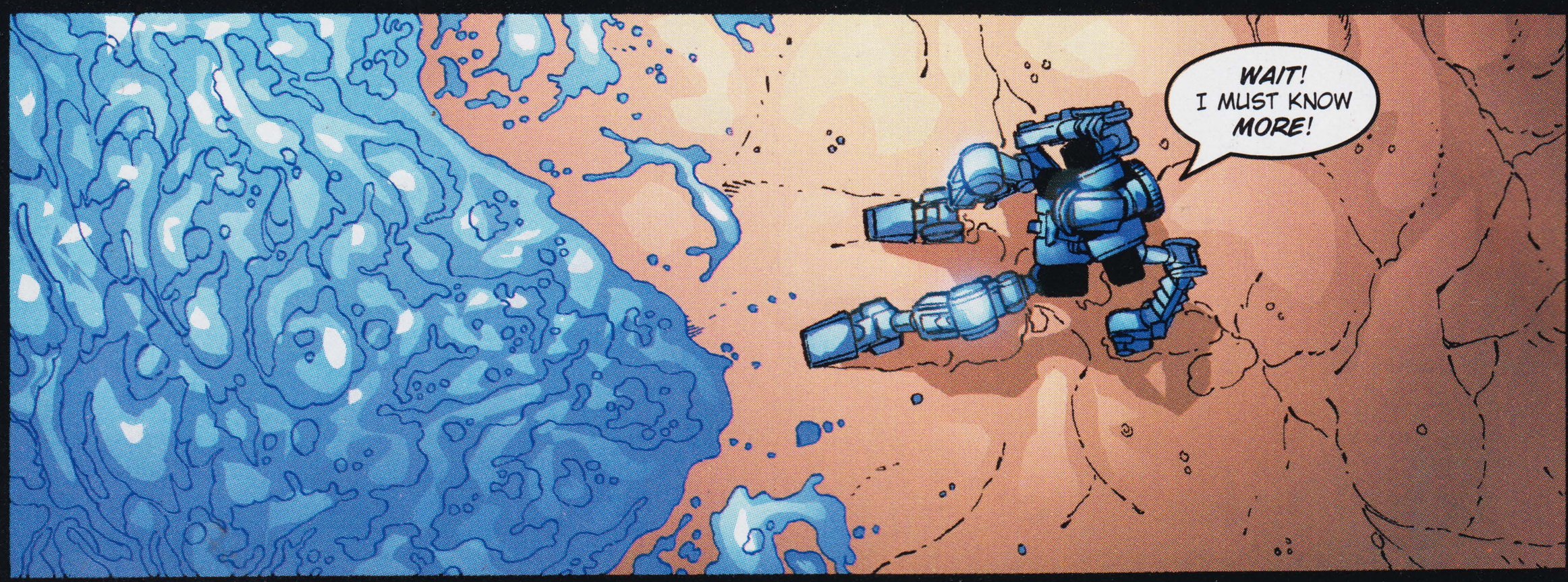
NO! RAHI CANNOT BE DEFEATED!
SKRRUUNNNCCH


LEWA MAY HAVE ESCAPED... BUT GALI, TOA OF WATER, IS SURELY DOOMED.
THE CREATURES ARE CLOSING IN. GREAT BEINGS, GRANT ME STRENGTH...
WHO DARES DEFY THE WILL OF MAKUTA?
YOU!--

TAHU!
GALI, BEHIND YOU!

SO. THE TOA NOW WORK TOGETHER...?
THEN THEY CAN FALL TOGETHER AS WELL.

Unnnnhhhhhh!
KWAAAASSH
WELCOME, TOA OF WATER. DO NOT BE AFRAID-- YOUR BODY IS SAFE IN THE OCEAN'S EMBRACE. ONLY YOUR MIND HAS JOURNEYED HERE TO BEHOLD YOUR FUTURE.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHO ARE YOU?
WE ARE WHAT YOU AND THE OTHER TOA SHALL BECOME. WHEN EACH OF YOU HAS FOUND ALL THE GREAT MASKS OF POWER, THEN SHALL YOU BE READY TO JOIN TOGETHER AND DEFEAT MAKUTA.
THREE SHALL BECOME WAIRUHA, AND WALK THE PATH OF WISDOM. THREE SHALL BECOME MYSELF, AKAMAI, AND WALK THE PATH OF THE WARRIOR.
REMEMBER, GALI. ONLY BY UNITING WILL THE TOA FIND THE STRENGTH TO TRIUMPH. FOR NOW, CHILD OF THE WATERS, FAREWELL...

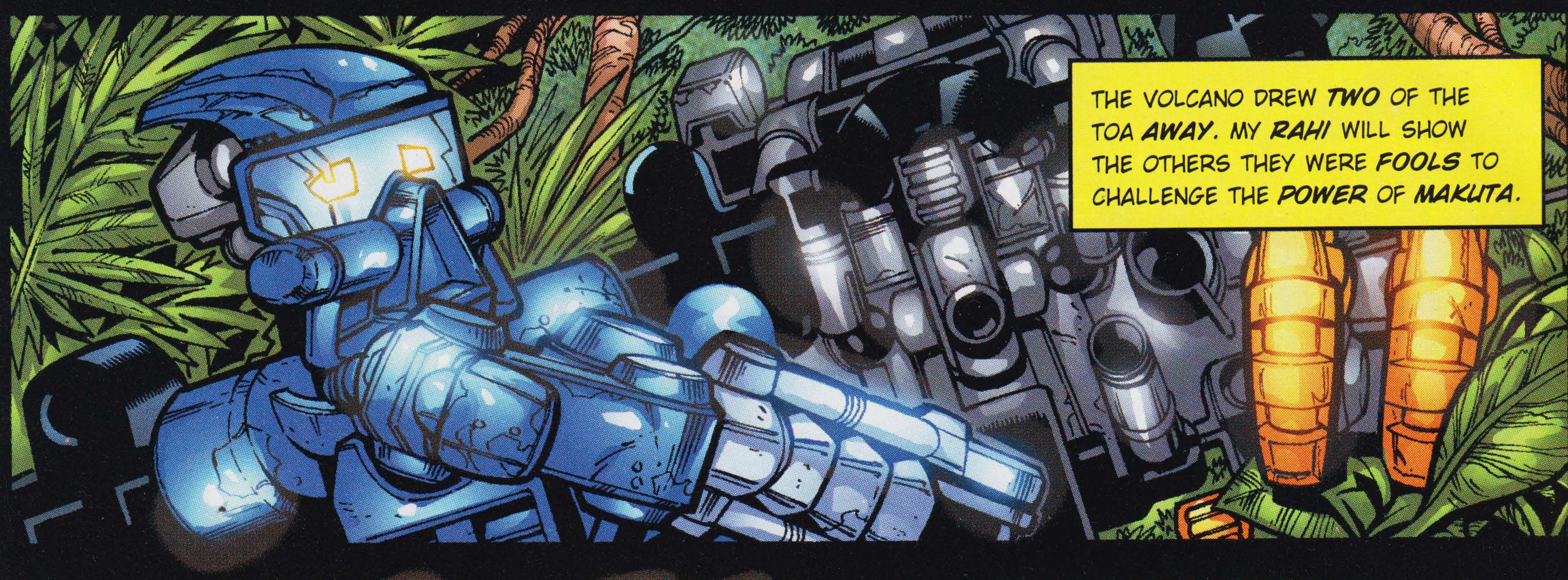

WAIT! I MUST KNOW MORE!

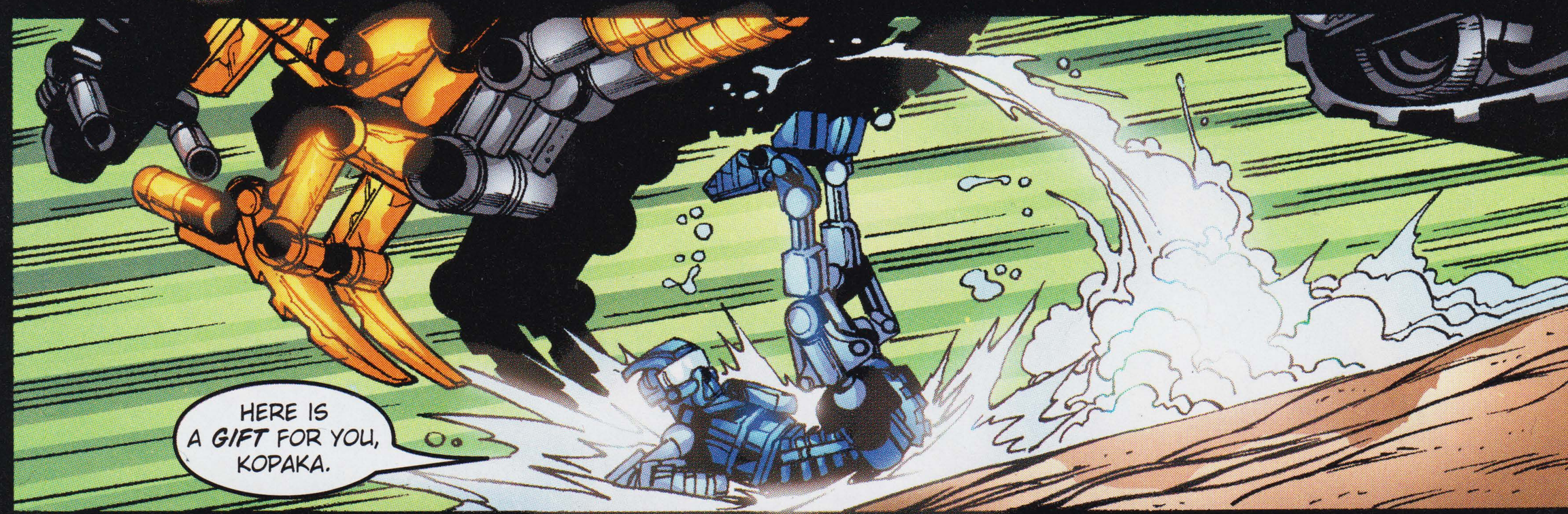
IT'S ALL RIGHT, GALI. THE RAHI HAVE FLED.
TAHU? I HAD THE STRANGEST VISION...
WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT LATER. ONUA HAS CALLED A MEETING -- THE OTHERS ARE WAITING FOR US NEAR HIS LANDING SITE.

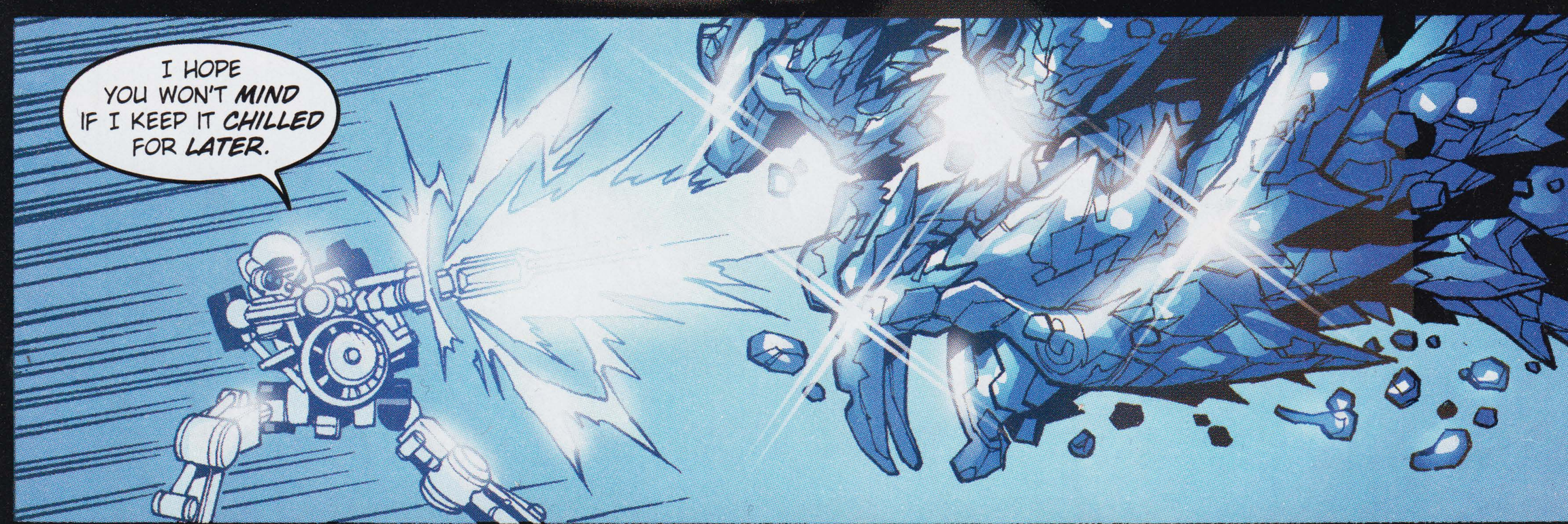
HOW CONVENIENT. THE TOA HAVE GATHERED TOGETHER...SAVING ME THE TROUBLE OF HUNTING THEM DOWN.
I FELT IT WAS TIME WE MET AGAIN. THIS PLACE HOLDS DANGERS WE NEVER DREAMED OF... MAYBE EVEN MORE THAN ANY OF US CAN HANDLE ALONE.
WE NEED TO LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER. OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON IT.
I DON'T KNOW. I'M STILL NOT MUCH FOR TEAMING UP.

BARRUMMMBLE
THEN AGAIN, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A LITTLE TOGETHERNESS.

THAT LAVA FLOW COULD DESTROY THE ENTIRE ISLAND. YOU HAVE THE MASK OF SPEED-- CAN YOU GET ME THERE?
SURE, ONUA. BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ONCE WE'RE THERE?
WATCH AND LEARN.
I THOUGHT TAHU WAS THE EXPERT ON LAVA.
HE IS. BUT MY PEOPLE LIVE UNDERGROUND-- MOLTEN ROCK IS NOTHING NEW TO ME.
YOUR SPEED AND MY DIGGING COMBINED...
...CREATE A TRENCH TO CATCH THE LAVA FLOW...
...SO IT DOESN'T HARM THE ISLAND.
TAHU COULDN'T HAVE DONE BETTER.

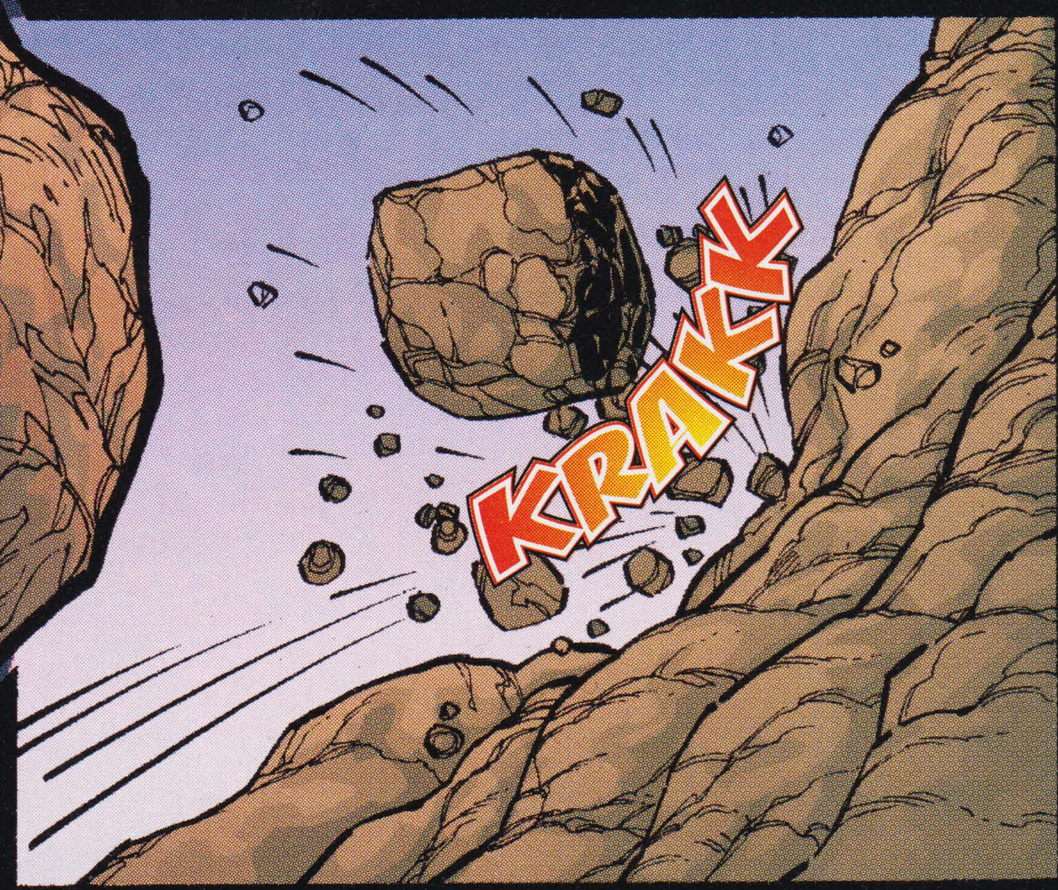

THE VOLCANO DREW TWO OF THE TOA AWAY. MY RAHI WILL SHOW THE OTHERS THEY WERE FOOLS TO CHALLENGE THE POWER OF MAKUTA.


HERE IS A GIFT FOR YOU, KOPAKA.

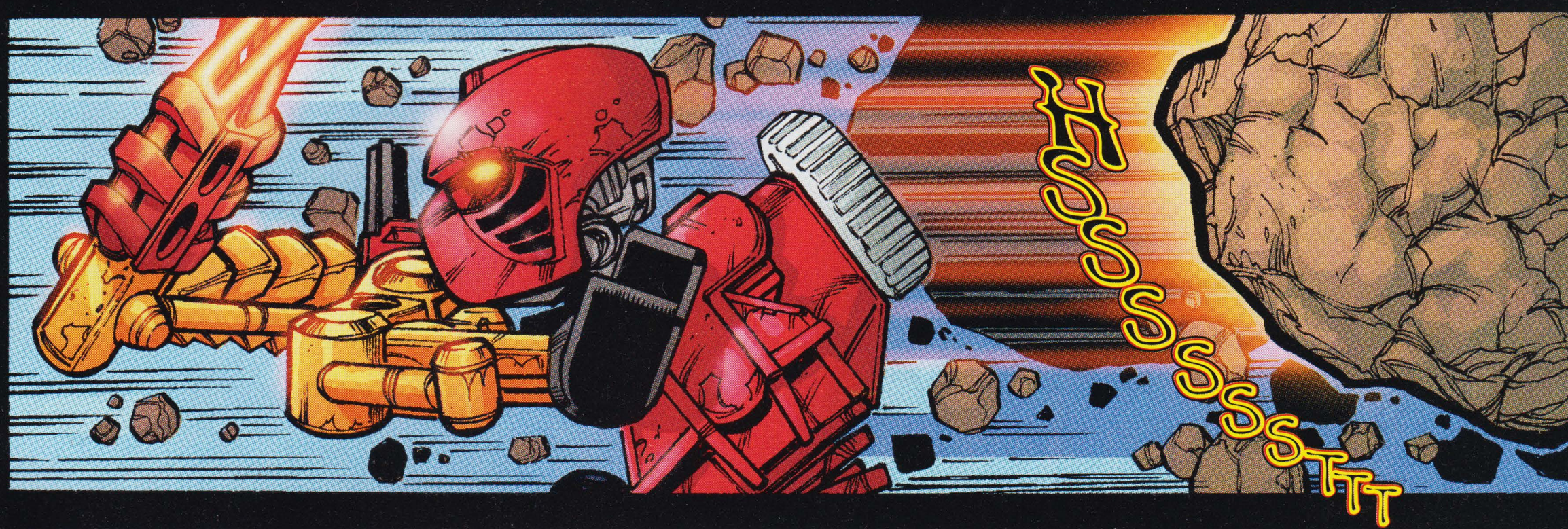

I HOPE YOU WON'T MIND IF I KEEP IT CHILLED FOR LATER.

UH-OH. LOOKS LIKE TAHU'S ABOUT TO HAVE SOME UNPLEASANT COMPANY.

WHUNNNT


KRAKK

KRAK

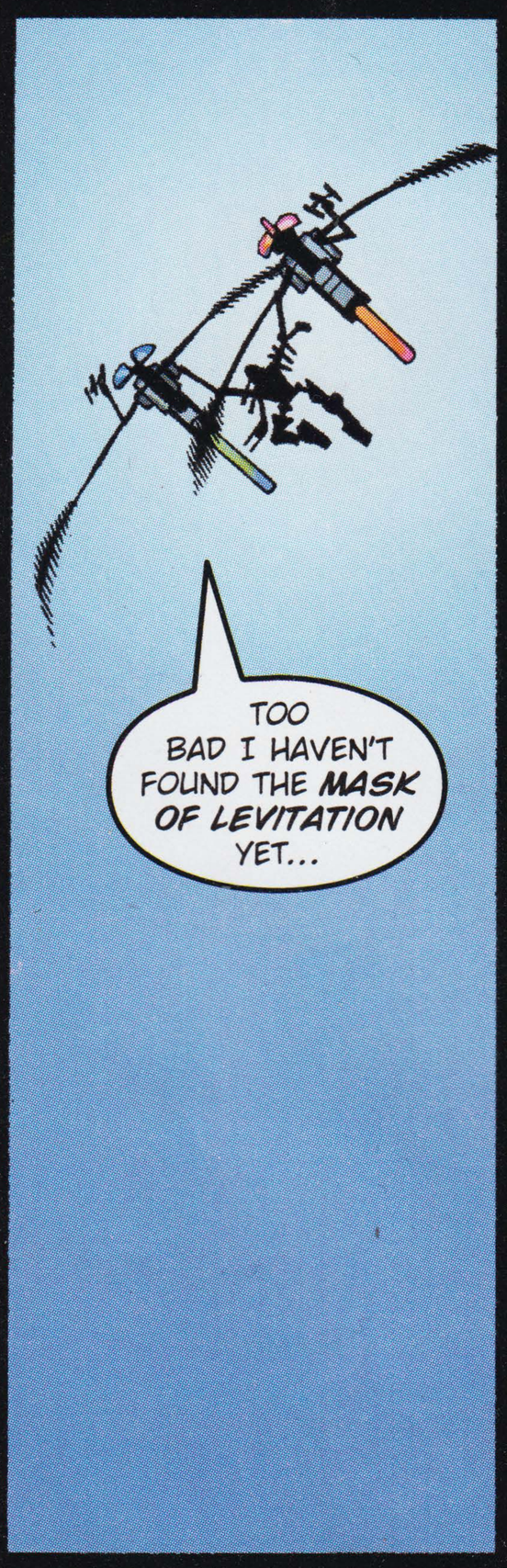

HSSSSSSSTTT

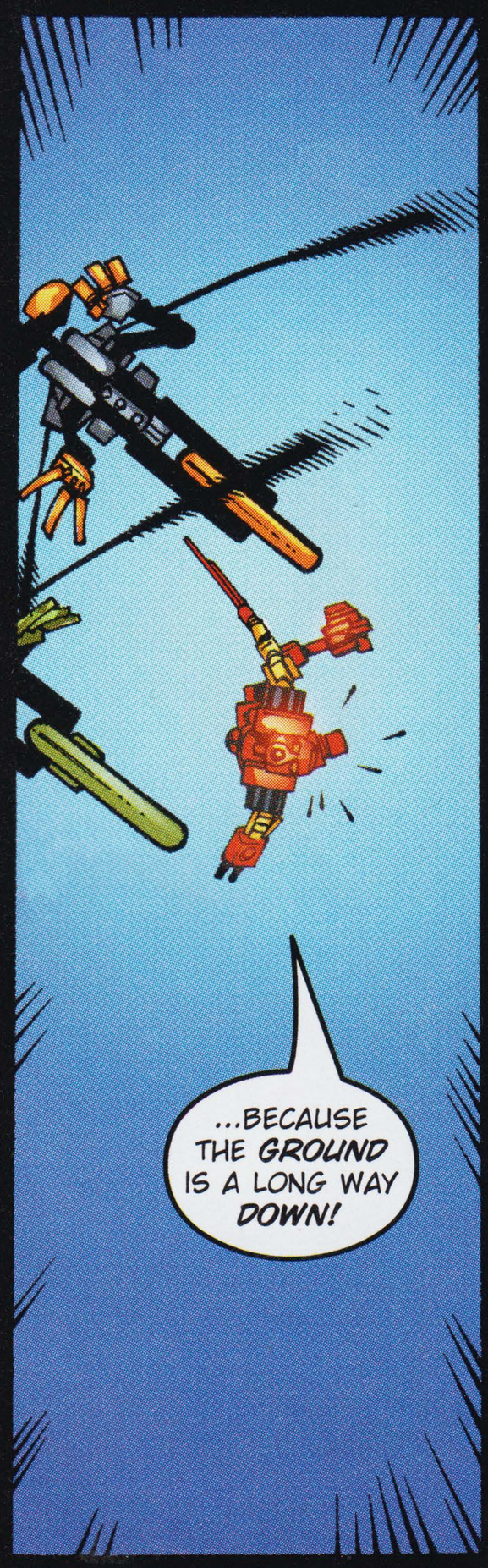
WHAMMMM

A FEW *THOUSAND TONS* OF *SAND* WILL DOUSE TOA TAHU'S FIRE FOR *GOOD*...

MAKUTA TURNS THIS VERY ISLAND *AGAINST* US! BUT WITH ONLY A FRACTION OF MY *POWER*...

WHAT--?

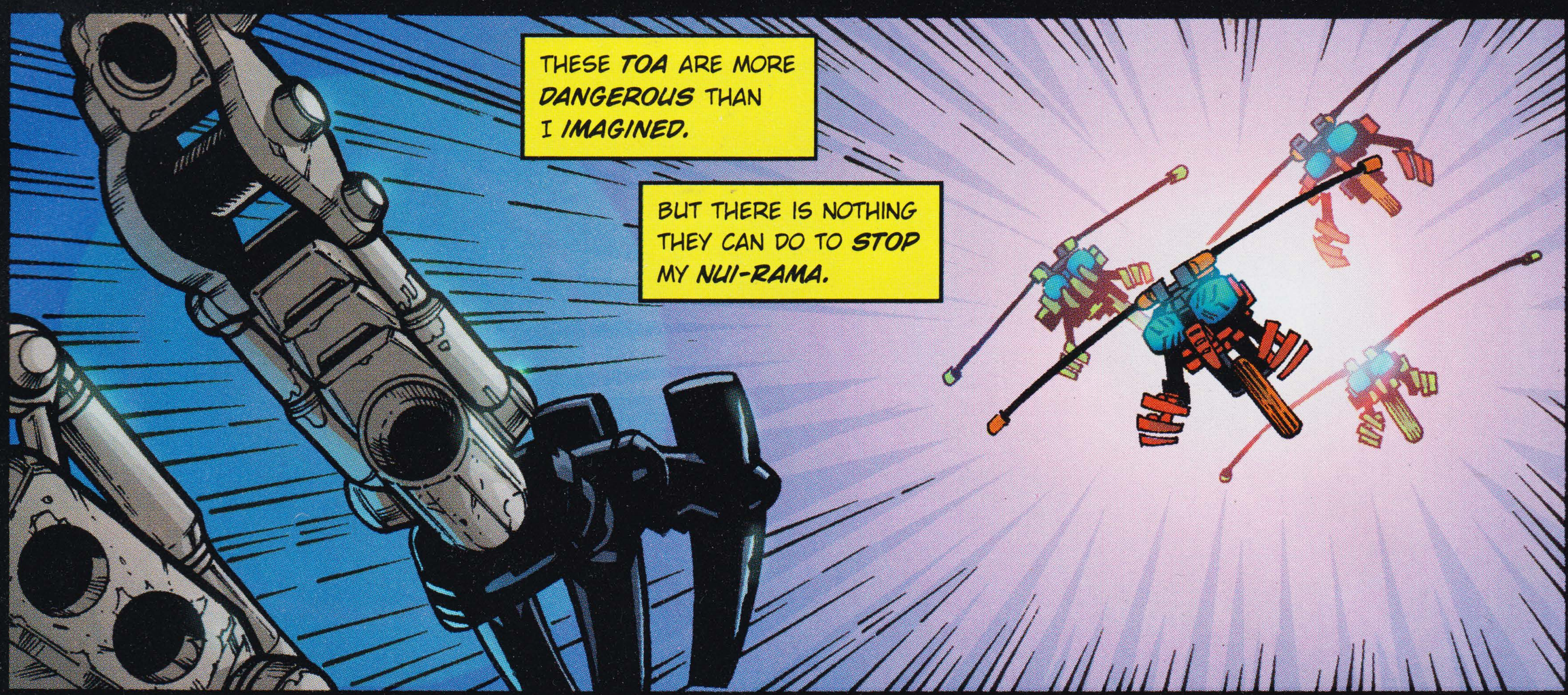

TOO BAD I HAVEN'T FOUND THE MASK OF LEVITATION YET...

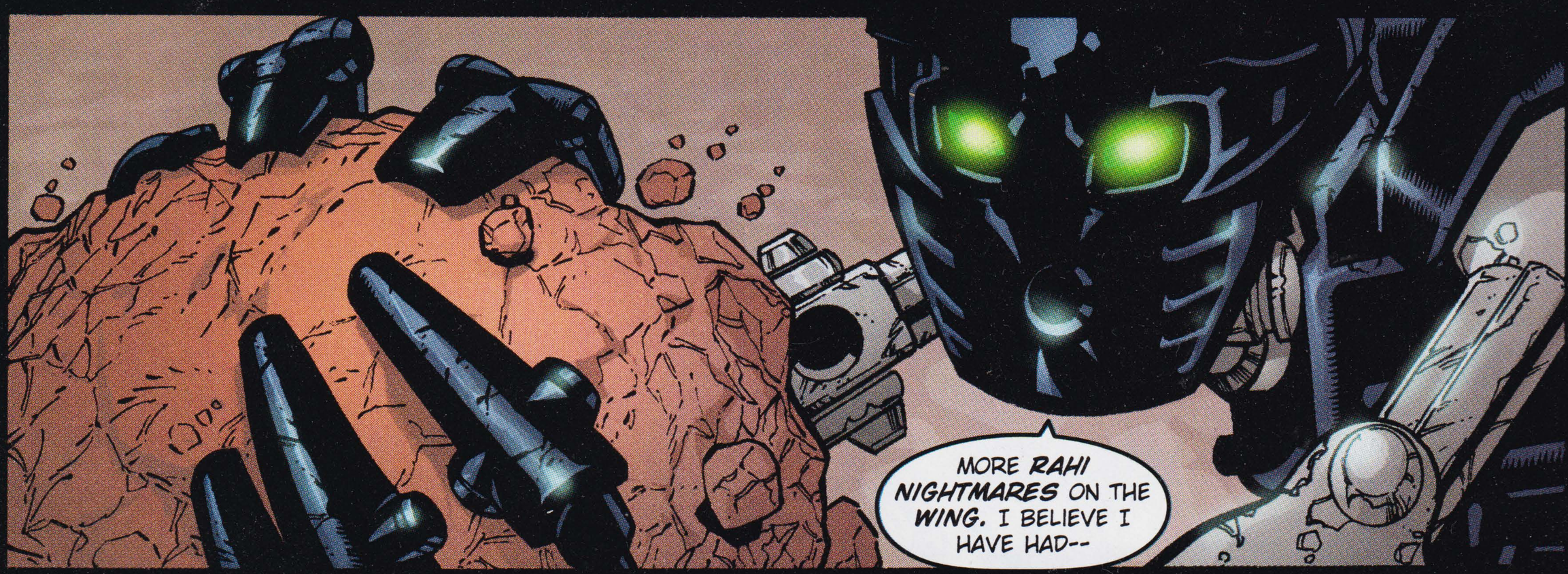

...BECAUSE THE GROUND IS A LONG WAY DOWN!

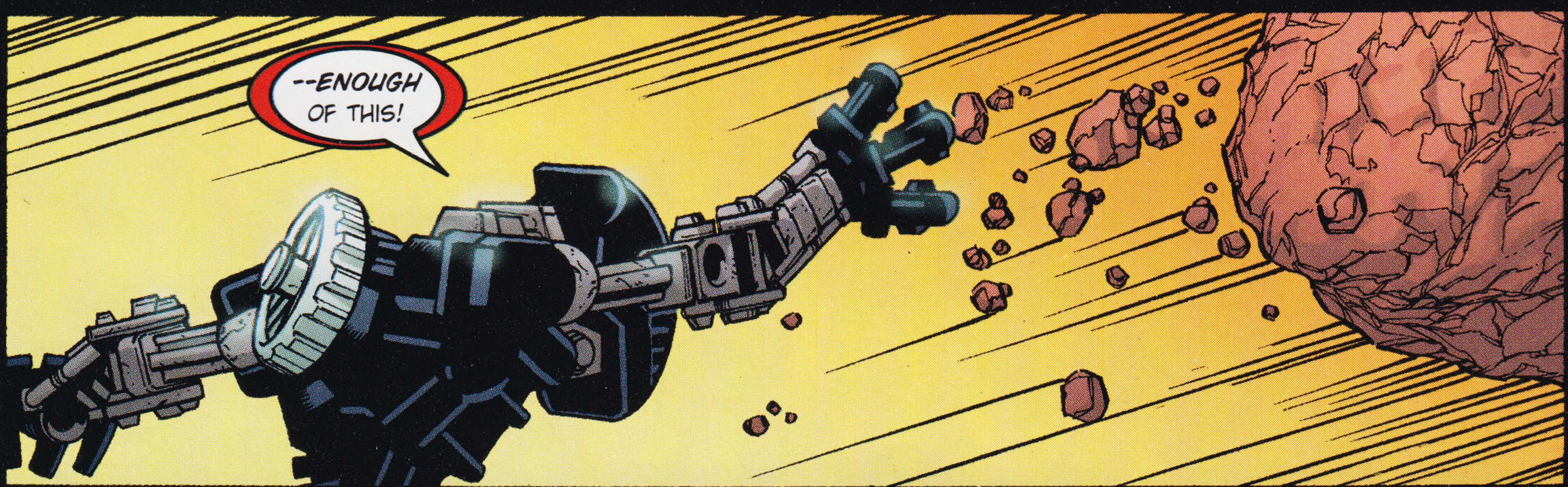
BUT PERHAPS... IF I HEAT THE AIR BELOW ME... IT WILL MY SLOW MY FALL ENOUGH...

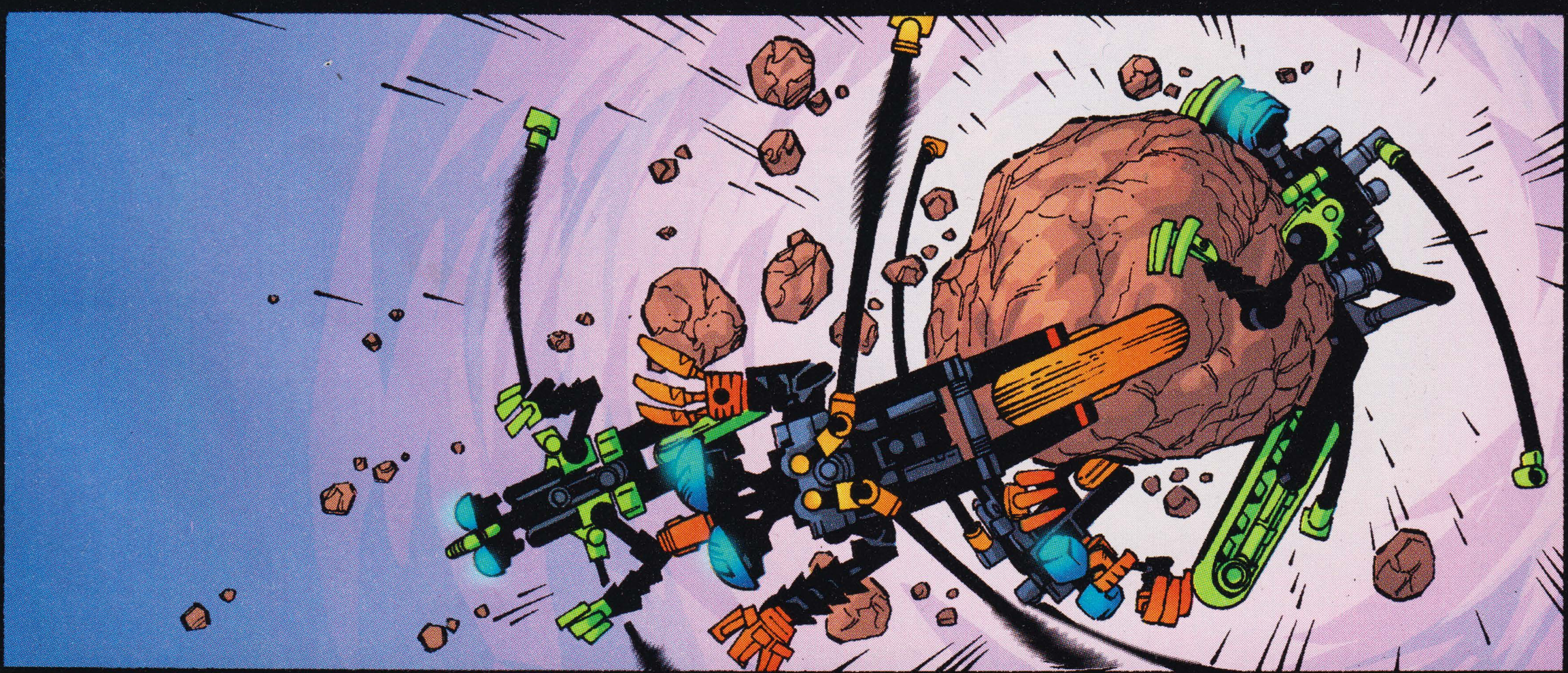
...THAT I CAN CATCH YOU WITH EASE, TAHU. YOU SHOULD REALLY SEEK OUT--
THE MASK OF LEVITATION. I KNOW, I KNOW.

I HAVE THE POWER OF THE MASK OF SHIELDING, BUT YOU HAVE NO PROTECTION FROM THEIR ATTACK, GALI.
AS LONG AS THE UNDERGROUND WATERS OBEY MY COMMANDS...
...IT IS MAKUTA AND HIS CREATURES THAT NEED PROTECTION!
SPLASH


THESE TOA ARE MORE DANGEROUS THAN I IMAGINED.
BUT THERE IS NOTHING THEY CAN DO TO STOP MY NUI-RAMA.


MORE RAHI NIGHTMARES ON THE WING. I BELIEVE I HAVE HAD--


--ENOUGH OF THIS!



IT'S OVER...FOR NOW. BUT WHEN NEXT THE TOA CHALLENGE MAKUTA, NOT ALL THEIR POWER WILL SAVE THEM.
WE HAVE WON OUR FIRST BATTLE...BUT THERE WILL BE MORE.
WE MUST BE PREPARED TO FIGHT THEM, SEPARATELY AND TOGETHER.
I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR MAKUTA, TRYING TO TAKE US ALL ON.
I HAVE NO USE FOR TEAMS...BUT I WILL ASSIST WHEN I'M NEEDED.
SAME HERE. THE MASKS OF POWER ARE AS GOOD AS OURS!
THEN LET MAKUTA TREMBLE THIS DAY--
WE STAND TOGETHER, UNTIL MATA NUI IS FREE!
END

CHAPTER EIGHT of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"THE ALLIANCE"

As much as I welcome Nuju's beeps, clicks, and whistles of trust in me, I have to admit to myself that I am not as confident. Still, I take the message and set out to fulfill the task.

Once clear of the Sanctum, I take out the flute from Le-Koro. If I am to travel to all the Turaga, I will need to do so quickly. I play the new flutesong, and look to the skies. Soon, as promised, a Kahu bird appears, ready to fly me anywhere on the island. I decide to start with Turaga Vakama in Ta-Koro. But first, I have to deliver some bad news to a friend.

"So," says Jaller. "It is as I feared. My North March scouts have been taken by the Makuta. There may still be hope for them. They will not be forgotten."

I leave a somber Jaller and take Nuju's message to Vakama. "Thank you, adventurer, for showing this to me," Vakama says after I show him the message. "You are as noble as your reputation, and as resourceful."

The other Turaga convey similar sentiments to me when I present them with Nuju's message. Soon, all have been alerted, and I head back to Ko-Koro to tell Nuju it is so.

Before I reach Nuju though, I come suddenly upon Kapura. I would have sworn he was not there a moment ago. He looks very out-of-place in the snowy white of Ko-Koro.

He greets me. "Hello. You are the Chronicler. I have been looking for you. Vakama wishes to speak with you."

"Where is Vakama?" I ask.

"Vakama is in Ta-Koro," Kapura replies.

Well, I was just in Ta-Koro delivering Nuju's message. Why did he not tell me then? Perhaps he realized I needed to finish delivering Nuju's message to the other Turaga first. "What does Vakama want?" I ask.

"I know only that it is a matter of great urgency," says Kapura.

"How did you get here?" I query.

"It is as Vakama said. I practiced, and became skilled. I

now know the secret art of traveling great distances by moving very slowly. It is a small matter for me to be wherever I am not. It is a useful skill.

"You should go to Vakama now," he urges. "It is important."

I agree to go.

"I am to accompany you," says Kapura. "Let us go together."

We ride the cablecar together down the mountain to Ta-Koro and then walk into Vakama's hut.

Vakama greets us. "Chronicler, it is good of you to come. And thank you, Kapura, for fulfilling your mission so quickly. I see that you have indeed gained skill.

"The Toa have left for the Kini-Nui, to begin their final quest. We must help them, but our villages are beset by Rahi on all sides. I ask that you pursue a mission of grave importance."

"What are the Toa doing?" I ask.

"The Toa have begun their quest to destroy the Makuta, and bring light and happiness back to Mata Nui. They have recovered the Golden Kanohi, and are en route to Kini-Nui. In the temple is a passage through which they will enter the Makuta's dark realm.

"Once inside, the Makuta will attempt to destroy them, and they will be beset by Manas: unimaginable horrors that guard his domain. They will face these fearsome challenges as the Toa Kaita, and there will be great battle."

"The Toa are much stronger than I!" I protest. "How can I be of help to them?"

"The Makuta is treacherous," says Vakama. "I believe he knows the Toa are coming, and is massing Rahi to attack the Kini-Nui after the Toa have passed through.

"I fear he will attempt to seal the Toa in his underworld, imprisoning them there forever. Or, worse, should the Toa attempt to flee, he will set the Rahi to ambush them as they emerge through the passage. With the horrible Manas in front and the Rahi behind, the Toa are caught in a vice that will assuredly crush them."

I ponder this for a moment, and then I ask reluctantly, "What is my mission?"

"You must defend the Kini-Nui against the Rahi while the

Toa are underground," replies Vakama. "I know you are brave and resourceful, but even you cannot do this alone.

"You must assemble a fellowship. Of my left and right hands, Jaller should remain here to command his Guard and defend Ta-Koro. My left hand is Kapura, who is with you now.

"He will go. He may seem slow and strange to you, but his simple words often carry a hidden wisdom.

"Go first to the other villages. They are besieged, but I have talked with the Turaga. I'm certain that they can all spare at least one Matoran to aid in this task. Once your Company has been gathered, you must travel to the Kini-Nui. Its road begins where the river ends at Ga-Koro, and falls from a great height.

"This mission is vital. The Toa, and indeed all of Mata Nui, need you now."

Although I am not eager to begin this task, I sense that our conversation here is over and I bid Vakama goodbye.

"May Mata Nui smile on you and your party, Chronicler," Vakama says as we leave. "We shall face our own hardships here, but they will bear better knowing you have sped on your task."

Kapura and I first ride the cablecar back to Ko-Koro to speak with Turaga Nuju. I only hope Matoro is still at his side.

"Nuju is pleased that you have delivered the messages, Chronicler," Matoro translates, for he is indeed still here in the Sanctum with Nuju. "Now Fate is upon us; Rahi have come out of the Drifts like a storm, and press against our walls!

"He sees that you are seeking a hero to join your Company. The Ko-Koronans try to stay out of the affairs of others, but this time they have no choice but to act.

"Nuju says to find Kopeke, his left hand. He dwells in a cave near the cablecar. Kopeke will not offer great company, for he is hard and likes solitude; but you will find that what he lacks in cheer is made up for with strength and skill. He is our greatest sportsman, and also the most skilled in ice-craft.

"In his hands, a block of ice can become like anything in imagination, from a delicate crystal flower to a gleaming statue of Kopaka, perfect in every detail."

I thank Nuju for his time, then Kapura and I head back toward the cablecar, for we passed Kopeke without stopping on

the way here. This time, we stop.

"Will you join my party and come to Kini-Nui?" I ask Kopeke.

"I will come," is his reply.

The three of us take the cablecar down to Ta-Koro and then head through the tunnel to Le-Koro. There, at the bottom of the tree, we meet one of the villagers. We hear him sniff, as if he were crying.

"Oh – hello," he greets us. "Matau Singer and Kongu Pilot, uptree they are. Rama-swarm threatens and all good Le-Koronans fly defense. Highbranch home locked and protected. Downtree guard am I, set here because… I fly not."

With no way up to the top of the tree, I appear to have no other choice than to seek help from this fellow. "Will you join our Company?" I ask.

"Join I will!" he replies eagerly. "Highbranch home safely guarded, no Rahi approach through brush, only from sky! I am Tamaru, highfly Vinesman and deepwood Wayfinder! Of great help to you can I be!"

I am not so certain of that, as I seem to recall that Tamaru is the villager who fell out of the tree and onto his head when I first came to Le-Koro. Be that as it may, the four of us head back to the tunnel and on to Onu-Koro to speak with Turaga Whenua.

"I have been expecting you, traveler," Whenua greets us. "You are here to find Matoran that might join your quest. It is a hard choice, since the Rahi have been massing underground, and will attack us at any moment!

"Onepu is brave and strong, and would be the best choice. But he and his Ussalry regiments are needed to defend the caves. Taipu, instead, should go. He is not, perhaps, the brightest Lightstone in Onu-Koro, but his strength is equaled only by his heart.

"With all the work that goes on here, it is dangerous to let any go with you – let alone our strongest digger. But Taipu has spoken of nothing but you and adventure since his visit to Le-Koro, and so I feel it would be wrong to keep him here.

"You may take Taipu. He is in the Great Mine, hard at work, as usual."

Taipu is indeed in the Great Mine, but I would not say that he is hard at work. His mind most certainly does seem to be elsewhere.

"It's you!" exclaims Taipu when he see us. "Are we to go on another adventure together?" he asks. "I would like that very much. Mata Nui is truly a wondrous place. I should like to see more of it!"

"Will you join our Company?" I ask.

"Yes, I will join you!" is his enthusiastic reply.

We all head back to Onu-Koro and then out toward Po-Koro to speak to Turaga Onewa.

"Hello again, Chronicler," Onewa greets us. It seems that dark times have fallen again across my village. Nui-Jaga, and worse, are secretly massing in the deserts outside town. I fear that even the great skill of our stone-workers cannot fashion walls high enough to defend us. But we must try.

"I have heard of your mission. You are seeking Matoran to join your Company. These are trying times, and it is hard to part with even my least able craftsmen, but nonetheless I know of the importance of your task.

"Hewkii I would send, but he is still recovering from his illness, and he is sorely needed here besides. So instead take my left-hand, Hafu. Hafu is very proud, and does not always listen to wise counsel, but his digging and stone-craft are matched by none in Po-Koro.

"Take him with you. Doubtless he is out in the desert, caring for the waysigns on the road, and seeing that no harm comes to his masterworks."

Hafu is indeed caring for the waysigns. We passed him on our way into the village. We head back out to speak to him.

"I'm not giving any carving lessons today," he says, misunderstanding our intent. "Don't you know there are Rahi about?

"If you want to see my artwork, you should do so in Po-Koro. It is safer there, although I do not know for how long. Please don't bother me. I have to finish my masterpiece before

the Rahi attack."

We explain what we are doing and ask him to join our Company.

"So, you have need of my great skills," Hafu boasts. "Who am I to deny fame and glory, even if I do not last to see it? I will join your Company."

The six of us set off for the beach of Po-Wahi. From there we take the boat to Ga-Koro to speak with Turaga Nokama.

"Hello again, adventurer," says Nokama when she sees us. "It is nice to see you, even though trouble often walks alongside you. Even now, the waters are filled with horrible Rahi, bent on our destruction!

"I confess I have feared your arrival. Kotu and Macku are very dear to me, so I am sorry to send them with you on such a dangerous mission. It is harder even to choose which one I would rather see go.

"Kotu, I think, needs to stay here with me and maintain the village's defense. So it is Macku, my right hand, which you should take. She has been told to stay in her hut until now, and her love of Hewkii and adventure has made it a hard punishment. I fear her cheer at being allowed to go outside will blind her to the dangers of your task. Yet, she is good with boats, and her agility and acrobatic training makes her a valuable warrior!

"The way to the Kini-Nui lies behind the waterfall near our village. It is likely that Macku can find a boat to get through the falls. You will find her in her hut."

"Hello, Chronicler!" says Macku when we stop by her hut. "I heard Hewkii was sick, and that you helped him become better. Thank you! I mean… that is, I'm sure the Po-Koronans are glad to have him back.

"I wish Nokama would let me go visit Hewkii, but the Rahi are going to attack again, and everyone is building barricades around the village."

"Will you join our party?" I ask.

"Yes, I will come with you!" is Macku's eager reply. "It will be good to go out on adventures again!"

CHAPTER TEN of *Tale of the Toa*
THE TEMPLE

Gali was very glad that Onua's meeting had gone more smoothly than the last. It had ended in one unanimous decision: The Toa would work as a team.

Each of the Toa had encountered at least one Rahi during their travels, and Gali was no exception. After encountering another of the monstrous swimming Rahi she'd seen just after her awakening, she respected the creatures' power more than ever. She now knew that such beasts were known as Tarakava. The Turaga had told them that all the Rahi were native beasts of the island — controlled by Makuta to do his dark bidding.

Perhaps when we've found all the masks, we'll also find a way to set the Rahi free, Gali thought.

She only wished that the mission were going more smoothly. They had wasted too much time on petty disagreements. Lewa kept getting distracted and wandering away from the group. Tahu seemed determined to completely disable every Rahi they encountered. Kopaka periodically got fed up with the bickering and threatened to go off again on his own.

Through it all, Gali did her best to maintain the peace. She could tell that Onua was working toward the same goal in a quieter way and found her respect for the strong, reserved Toa of Earth growing more and more. Now, as they approached the shoreline just south of Po-Koro, she glanced toward him.

"Onua," she said. "If what the Ta-Matoran told us is accurate, we will need to go beneath the waters to retrieve Tahu's levitation mask."

Lewa overheard her and groaned. "Not again!" he cried. "I already took one wetdive to get my Mask of Speed. I still haven't got all the wateryuck out of my ears!"

"Don't be foolish," Kopaka spoke up. "Obviously, only those among us who already hold the Kanohi Kaukau should go on from here. Pohatu, Lewa, Tahu — you can wait on the beach."

Tahu glared at him. "Thanks for pointing out the obvious," he retorted. "But it's my mask we're after here — my villager was the one who revealed its location. I think I should be the one to decide whether or not I go."

Gali rolled her eyes. “It would be helpful to have several of us standing guard on the beach, brother Tahu,” she pointed out.

“That’s true,” Tahu admitted, though he still shot Kopaka an irritated glance. “Go with good fortune, Gali. We’ll keep a careful watch for danger while we wait here for your return.”

Onua was already leading the way into the surf, with Kopaka a step behind. Gali followed, feeling some of her anxiety wash away at the touch of the warm, familiar water. She dove into the waves, swimming quickly out into deeper water.

Soon the three of them reached the broad, open sweep of the sea valley.

Kopaka pointed to a large, shadowy shape visible in the water. Gali shuddered as she recognized the Tarakava.

“I escaped from one Tarakava by blinding it with waving seaweed, and from another by luring it into a cave where it got stuck,” Gali told the others. “These Rahi are strong, but not very clever, I think. All we need is a plan…”

Soon the three of them were swimming slowly toward the Tarakava. A moment later the creature spotted them and let out a roar.

“Okay, it knows we’re here,” Gali whispered, floating in place. “Kopaka, get ready.”

The Ice Toa nodded. The Tarakava barreled toward them. Soon it was only a short distance away, then closer… Still Kopaka didn't move.

Gali held her breath. The beast would be upon them within seconds.

As she was about to cry out, the Ice Toa finally made his move. With a twitch of his ice blade, he sent a blast of intense cold out ahead of him, instantly freezing the water — and the Tarakava - into a solid block of ice.

“Nice work!” Onua cried, his deep voice rumbling through the water like an earthquake "Now it’s my turn…”

With that, he struck the sandy ocean floor with his fists. The ground swelled up, arcing over the giant Tarakava ice cube until it completely surrounded the frozen area.

“That should hold it for a while,” Gali said, relieved. “Now all we have to do is — ”

"Wait," Onua interrupted, staring at the Tarakava, whose head protruded out of the dirt-and-ice mound that trapped it. "I just want to see something…"

He swam toward the creature, carefully staying out of range of its jaws. Patting the dirt mound before him, he caused it to burst upward in a small explosion, knocking the Tarakava's mask from its face.

The creature's violent spasms stopped immediately. After a moment it let out a wail of dismay and started to wriggle again, but this time it completely ignored Onua.

"I thought that might happen," Onua said. "When Pohatu and I encountered a pair of Nui-Rama, he knocked off the masks of one of them. The creature suddenly changed — flew away instead of continuing the fight."

Kopaka nodded thoughtfully. "Something similar happened when I met a Kuma-Nui on my way to Po-Wahi."

"I wish I'd mentioned it earlier," Onua said. "I didn't realize it might be important — until just now."

Gali noticed that Kopaka didn't make the same apology. "We have learned something important here, I think," she said. "It is through these masks that Makuta controls the Rahi." Noticing the gray shape of a mask against the white sand nearby, she darted forward to scoop it up.

"Mission accomplished," Onua said. "Come on, let's get back."

"Don't be stupid," Kopaka snapped. "You'll only end up killing yourself — and making a mess for the rest of us to clean up."

Pohatu sighed, wondering if it had been a mistake to split into two groups. If Onua or Gali were here, maybe one of them could settle this argument between Kopaka and Lewa. But they, along with Tahu, had gone to Le-Wahi in search of Pohatu's second-to-last mask.

Now Pohatu stood atop the highest bluff in his own home region, staring at the mask that hung tantalizingly halfway down the sheer rock face. At the bottom of the cliff was an enormous Nui-Jaga. The Rahi knew the Toa were there — every few seconds,

it turned its masked face toward them and rattled its tail stinger.

"Perhaps our icy brother is right, Lewa," Pohatu suggested. "If you miss your mark and fall — well, anyway, I'm sure we can find another way if we put our minds together."

Lewa shrugged, his smile never faltering. "Why worrybother?" he said. "After all, this way is so much more funnnnnnnnnn…"

The last word was lost in a rush of movement as Lewa launched himself off of the cliff with both arms outstretched.

"That fool!" Kopaka muttered savagely.

Pohatu couldn't speak. He could only hold his breath, hardly daring to watch. It was his own Kanohi Kaukau that Lewa was trying to grab as he swept past — how could Pohatu live with himself if Lewa's bold attempt ended in catastrophe?

"*Wheeeeeee!*" Lewa cried, snatching the mask in one hand as he swooped past, then sweeping one arm through the air to call the wind to his aid. The sudden gust that resulted gave him a quick lift. But he soon left the wind behind, floating upward on his own power.

"He uses the Mask of Levitation well," Kopaka admitted grudgingly as he watched the grinning Lewa ascend toward them.

Pohatu shot a glance at the Ice Toa. Beneath all his coldness, Kopaka had an honest heart.

A second later, Lewa landed beside them. "One Kanohi Kaukau, as ordered," he said breathlessly, tossing the mask to Pohatu. "Hope it fits, because I'd sorryhate to have to return it."

Onua squinted uncertainly toward the tree tops. The sun was bright here in the rainforest of Le-Wahi, and his eyes ached with the effort of trying to see through its brightness.

"Is that it?" he asked Gali and Tahu, who stood beside him.

Gali nodded. "It is a Kanohi Kakama," she confirmed. "It seems to be stuck in the knot of this tree, up near the top. Too bad brother Lewa isn't here to play monkey for us."

"Indeed. Sister, you hold the Mask of Levitation — do you think you can get it?"

"I can try." Gali stared upward. "I haven't yet had much time to practice. But if I move slowly…"

Tahu let out a noisy, impatient sigh. "Look, we don't have all day for this," he said abruptly. "Why not try an easier way?"

With that, he pointed his sword at the tree.

"Tahu, no!" Gali cried.

But even as the words left her mouth, flames shot out of Tahu's sword and enveloped the tree's trunk. Within seconds the fire had consumed the entire tree, burning it into a black skeleton sprouting from a pile of cinders. Only the mask remained untouched by the flame, falling intact to the ground with a puff of embers.

Onua frowned as he picked up the mask. *He'll set the whole forest ablaze!* he thought, as runaway flames licked at several neighboring trees.

Beside him, he saw Gali gesturing with her arms. A moment later, a drenching rain shower poured down over them, dousing all the fires.

"Thanks," Tahu said, wiping rainwater from his mask. "I didn't think the fire would spread."

"Right." Gali's voice sounded almost cold enough to have come from Kopaka. "I suppose you also didn't think about the birds who called that tree home, or the plants and animals that relied on it for shade. In other words, you didn't *think*."

With that, she turned and stalked off into the jungle.

"There!" Tahu crowed triumphantly as the demasked Rahi scurried away down the drifts of lower Mount Ihu. "The Great Mask of Water Breathing is mine. And that means — "

" - all the masks have been found," Kopaka finished for him."

"Good," Gali said shortly, hardly smiling at Tahu's obvious glee as he placed the Kanohi Kaukau over his face, and the dull gray surface of the mask suddenly gleamed bright red.

Kopaka was strangely pleased to notice that Gali and Tahu didn't seem to be getting along. He wondered what had happened between them, though he wasn't about to ask.

"Now we come to the next question," Onua said. "What are we supposed to do now?"

Tahu shrugged. "We have all our powers now," he pointed out. "So let's go take out the rest of the Rahi. Now that we know how to disable them — "

"Seems like timefoolery to me," Lewa interrupted. "The Matoran know the secret now, too. With that knowledge, they should be able to safekeep themselves against the Rahi for the nowtime. And I have a hunchthought that other tasks lay in store for us."

Kopaka winced at the Air Toa's comment. Didn't anyone else recognize how absurd it was to rely on hunches and premonitions? At the same time, though, he couldn't help flashing back to the vision he'd had on the Lava Lagoon.

Did it have some kind of meaning, or was he turning into a foolish dream-follower like Lewa himself?

"Perhaps our next duty has to do with the golden-colored Kanohi my Turaga mentioned," Gali said. "Does anyone know anything more about them?"

"Not I," Onua said as the others shook their heads. "What exactly were you told?"

"Not much." Gali frowned, looking puzzled and frustrated. "I — I suppose we will have to go back and ask. All I really know is that somehow, we are supposed to find such a golden mask."

Finally Kopaka spoke up. "I think I know where we might find it," he said quietly.

The others glanced at him in surprise. "Huh?" Tahu said. "What are you talking about?"

"I had a vision," Kopaka said. "Right before you found me on the Lava Lagoon, brother Lewa." He glanced at the Air Toa, who had stopped leaping around for once. "In it, I saw a temple — a huge temple at the center of the island. I think we're meant to go there."

Tahu snorted. "And when exactly were you going to let us in on this secret?"

"He just did, Tahu," Gali pointed out quietly. "And that's fine. There was no need of knowing it until now."

Kopaka gazed at her, touched that she'd come to his defense. *It's just because she's annoyed with Tahu over something or other*, he told himself.

Still, he couldn't help giving her a brief, grateful smile.

"It looks just as it did in my vision," Kopaka murmured, sounding surprised.

The others were already exclaiming over the grand temple. But Onua's mind turned immediately to more practical matters.

"Look," he said, pointing to the life-size carvings of the six Toa cut out of the temple walls, complete except that the carvings wore no masks at all. "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"I am, if you're thinking our masks would fit perfectly over these carved faces," Tahu said, ripping off his Kanohi Kaukau and holding it over the carved Tahu figure.

"Wait!" Kopaka said. "Let's not throw away our powers foolishly."

Tahu frowned at him. "Who says we're throwing them away?" he challenged him. "It was your vision that led us here. Now you say we're being foolish?"

"That's not what I meant," Kopaka said.

Gali placed a hand on Kopaka's arm. "It's okay, brother," she said. "I think Tahu is on the right track — this time."

"Thank you, sister Gali." Tahu smiled at her. "I appreciate the support."

Gali smiled back, and Kopaka scowled in irritation. Whatever had been bothering those two earlier seemed to be over. Kopaka opened his mouth to argue further, but something stopped him.

*Maybe this isn't the wrong thing to do just because it seems impulsiv*e, he thought. Then he frowned. *What am I doing? Am I turning into Lewa or Gali, trusting passing whims and feelings?*

Tahu pushed his mask onto the stone Tahu's face. As the mask melted into the stone, he pulled off his Kanohi Miru, and then his other masks, placing each one onto the carving's face.

Lewa and Pohatu followed Tahu's lead. Even Gali stepped forward toward her sculpture, her Kanohi Akaku in hand.

Onua glanced over at Kopaka. “Normally I, like you, would be against this rush to move,” he commented. “But I’m getting the strangest feeling that this is what we are meant to do.”

Kopaka nodded. “I — I, too, am beginning to get that feeling.”

That was enough for Onua. He had already observed enough to know that the Ice Toa wasn’t one to make rash decisions — not without good reason, anyway.

The two of them walked over to their own likenesses. Onua pulled off his Kanohi Kakama. Taking a deep breath, he set it into place on the stone Toa’s face. The stone seemed to suck it in, swallowing it into itself. Onua fed it another mask, and another. Soon he was placing his last mask onto the carving. It melted into the carving like the others but remained visible, tinting the stone black. Without any mask at all, Onua’s face felt strange and vulnerable.

For a moment, nothing happened. Onua felt his heart sink. Had they just given away their Masks of Power for no good reason? Had this all been a trick of Makuta?

Then there was a peal of sound, like great bells blended with laughter. Onua gasped in amazement as a new mask suddenly appeared on the face of each stone carving — a golden Kanohi, glowing with light and power.

Onua carefully lifted the golden Kanohi from the carving’s face and placed it on his own. He staggered back a step as waves of power blasted through him. Then he smiled. This new mask united all the powers of the other six — only it was even stronger!

“So this was what we were really seeking,” Gali said, sounding awed. “Now we truly have the power to take on the Makuta…”

Her last few words were nearly drowned out by a mighty rumble from somewhere deep within the earth. The Toa jumped back as a group, even as the ground began to shake and groan beneath their feet.

A chasm yawned open in front of them, right in the middle of the main temple area. It turned into a tunnel about two lengths wide.

Then everything stopped. The earth lay still again, as if nothing had happened.

The Toa stared at the hole in the ground. Then they stared at one another. There was a moment of silence.

Finally, Onua spoke.

“Come on,” he said, stepping toward the tunnel. “I guess we’d better see where this goes.”

CHAPTER NINE of *Mata Nui: The Online Game*
"KINI-NUI AND MANGAIA"

Our party of misfits is complete. We walk to the beach and head toward the waterfall. I have seen it before, but others of my Company have not.

"This land is a place of beauty, and also of sadness. There is no greater craftsman than Mata Nui!" says Hafu.

"The waterfall is so beautiful! Like a million Lightstones tossed in the air!" adds Taipu.

"Vakama says the road to the Kini-Nui lies on the other side of those falls," says Kapura.

"I can swim, if we need to cross the falls," says Tamaru. "But I'm not sure about the others."

"By Pohatu!" exclaims Hafu. "Horrid stuff, water. I wouldn't swim in it if the Makuta himself were at my back, and don't know how besides!"

"I can help us cross!" says Macku. "I used to go boating here, in safer times. If it's weathered the storms, my canoe is still hidden in the bushes along the bank."

Macku finds her boat among the bushes and motions for us to help put it into the water. We all board, and Macku steers us into the waterfall. Behind it is an underground stream.

We travel the underground waterway inland until we emerge from the tunnel and reach green, forested hills. This is clearly an ancient path. We come upon a bridge that appears to have given way. I don't know how we can continue.

"That's odd," says Macku. "There used to be a bridge here… what can have happened to it?"

"Whether by storm or some darker force, the bridge that stood here is gone for good. Not even I can craft a new one!" proclaims Hafu.

"When I stand at the edge and look down, it makes me dizzy," adds Taipu unhelpfully.

"Perhaps a flying Le-Koronan can figure a way across," hints Macku.

Tamaru thinks quickly. In no time at all, he has fashioned a rope of vine and tied it to a nearby tree. He then hurls himself out over the chasm and swings up to the other side. He

lands in a bush, but he signals that he is OK. He secures the rope, and one by one we work our way to the other side. When all are safely across, we continue down the pathway through the dense forest.

The chatter among our Company is cheerful and upbeat.

"With such Company, Makuta-beasts have much to fear!" says Tamaru.

"It is good to be on an adventure with you again!" says Macku. "I thought Nokama would keep me locked up in the village forever."

"Are we there yet?" asks Taipu.

"If you practice, you can move quickly," replies Kapura.

As the trees begin to clear, it becomes apparent that another obstacle has been strewn across our path. Where there was once a passage through these rocky hills, we now reach a wall of fallen rocks and stone.

"I came this way once," says Macku, "and this rockslide was not here. Something calls forth the very earth to block our path! This is a fell sign."

"My stonecraft is great indeed, Chronicler! I can cut through these stones," says Hafu. "But I should also need great skill at digging, such as Taipu possesses."

"Digging in rock is what the Onu-Koronans do best," says Taipu proudly. "I will clear a route with your help."

Taipu quickly begins clearing rocks as Hafu sets about cutting away the stone. They work quickly and a large cloud of dust surrounds them as they do so.

"Another Hafu original," proclaims Hafu as the dust settles. We are surprised to see an enormous statue of Hafu standing next to the newly opened pass. We admire it for but a moment, and are once again on our way.

Our trip takes us higher up into the snow-capped mountains. We come upon a large, stone carving of a face.

"This is the portal to the Kini-Nui," says Macku. "On the other side lies our destination! But I fear our long journey is for nothing, for our astrologer has spoken of these gates."

"These gates are ancient, and fashioned by a hand whose skill rivals even my own," says Hafu. "I have not much hope for any who try trespass without the key. Perhaps Kopeke can wield

some ice-lore to get us past this place?”

Kopeke, who has had little to say on our journey, does not speak now either, but instead sets to work. He carefully examines the lock in the mouth of the face. He travels a short way to an icy drift. The sun has melted large icicles onto its lip. He breaks one off and begins crafting a key.

The key fits perfectly into the lock and the door opens swiftly. We are free to pass through the portal. On the other side, deep in a protected green valley, is Kini-Nui. We climb down to the valley and cross the woods to the temple.

Here are assembled all six Toa. They are deep in discussion among themselves. “This is where we begin our final task,” says Tahu. “If any of you question our choice, or doubt our chances if we work together, speak now!”

“I have doubted you in the past, Tahu,” replies Kopaka, “but no more. I think I speak for all of us when I say that our only hope is to work together. So I cast my sword with yours, if you will have it.”

“I will have it gladly, Kopaka,” affirms Tahu. “You are all in assent?”

All of the Toa nod their heads in agreement.

“Then it is decided!” proclaims Tahu. “Together, the Makuta cannot resist us!”

“Wait, Tahu!” Lewa interjects. “Have you given no thought to our return? If the Rahi attack the Temple while we are below, how can we escape?”

“I do not know the answer to that question, Lewa,” replies Tahu, and he hangs his head. “So grim is this task, that I have not thought it much use to consider anything beyond our meeting with the Makuta.”

“Hold!” shouts Onua. “There is an intruder among us!” Onua turns and looks upon us. “But… what is this?”

“Stay your claws, Onua!” Gali urges. “It is the Chronicler, and his Company!

“Little one, you are brave indeed, to have come all this way,” Gali says as she turns to us. “And I see you have gathered help from all the villages around!”

“Tahu, it is as I hoped,” continues Gali. “These Matoran

can guard the Kini-Nui while we descend, and see that no Rahi attacks us from behind."

"The Rahi are fearsome," says Lewa. "May their hearts prove greater than their size would suggest!"

"In truth it is said that great power can be found in small packages…" says Pohatu, "and that aid can come from places least expected. And besides, we have few options."

"So be it," says Tahu. "Chronicler, it is your doom to remain here, and guard the Kini-Nui at all costs. This deed will be remembered as long as any remain to sing of it!

"Friends," Tahu says to the other Toa, "we have much to do and little time. Let's go!"

Tahu and the other Toa move away toward the temple. Gali stays behind for a moment to address me.

"Before I go, Chronicler," says Gali, "Know that there is a bond between us. Your struggles and those of your friends will be much to bear. I shall be with you in heart.

"Look for me in your dreams. I will come to you then, and speak to you of the things we see underground. Remember them. Goodbye! And do not let the Temple fall!"

With that, Gali and the other Toa ascend the steps of the Temple. They gather in a circle at the top. Their masks change color to gold. They each hold out a fragment of stone.

The pieces of stone levitate out over the center of the Temple and then join together to form a ball. As they do so, the Temple opens up and the Toa descend into its gaping maw.

CHAPTER ELEVEN of *Tale of the Toa*
INTO THE DARKNESS

Lewa’s heart pounded with anticipation as the Toa made their way down the tunnel. But after so much confusion and uncertainty, it felt good to have a plan at last.

Follow tunnel, he thought. *Find Makuta. Destroy Makuta. Sounds plainsimple enough…*

The tunnel twisted and turned through the earth, traveling deeper and deeper. Tahu's sword cast enough of a glow to light their way, though deep, ominous shadows still lurked ahead.

Finally Tahu let out a shout as he turned a corner. “Hurry!” he cried. “I think we’ve found it.”

“What?” Lewa skidded around the corner and stopped.

They were in a cavern, broad and long. Thick slashes of lightstone in the walls cast an eerie pale glow over the place. At the far end, an immense iron door filled most of the wall. Several other passageways snaked off in various directions along the sides of the cave, but Lewa didn't spare them a glance. His eyes were trained on that giant door.

“That’s it,” he whispered in awe. “That’s where we’ll find Makuta.”

Nobody answered, but he could feel that they were all in agreement. Tahu gripped his sword tightly. “Alright, then,” he said. “If he’s in there, let’s go in and get him.”

“Tahu, wait,” Pohatu protested. “We can’t just rush in there without a plan, or — ”

Skreeeeee!

A piercing shriek filled the room, echoing wildly. Whirling around, Lewa saw a pair of monstrous Rahi skittering out of two side passageways. They were immense, broad, and squat, but surprisingly fast. Their powerful arms ended in dangerous-looking pincers.

“What are those?” Pohatu cried.

Lewa gasped, recognizing the creatures from a Turaga’s description. “Manas. I rememberthink they’re called Manas.”

“They’re just more Rahi,” Tahu shouted, already swinging his fire sword. “Nothing we can’t handle. Come on!”

Lewa hesitated — the Turaga had warned then that no single Toa could hope to take on the Manas. But perhaps together… He somersaulted through the air toward one of the creatures, landing on its back. He grabbed it and tried to flip it over, but it was larger than he'd expected, and tossed him off easily.

"Oof!" he grunted, landing hard on the stone floor.

He leaped back into the fray, joining Tahu and Onua as they battled furiously against one of the Manas. Pohatu raced past, pausing long enough to whisper in Lewa's ear.

"Gali has set a trap," he said. "Help me lead the Manas toward that small tunnel back there."

Lewa nodded. Pohatu let out a whoop and raced to the back of the cave. Lewa jumped forward and smacked the nearby Manas on its shell-like back before somersaulting away. "Catch me if you can, uglypincher!" he taunted.

The Manas paused, turning toward him. But then it returned its attention to Onua, snapping at him with its deadly claws.

"This way, brother," Lewa shouted, waving his arms at Onua. "Run this way."

Onua managed to dodge the creature's blows and raced toward Lewa. "What is it, brother?" he asked breathlessly.

"A plan," Lewa told him. "Come on, we need to lead them this way."

Nearby, he saw that Kopaka was doing his best to lure the second Manas in the same direction. He wielded his ice blade coolly, backing up a few steps each time the Manas lunged at him. Beside him, Gali served as a distraction whenever the creature seemed to be getting the better of the Ice Toa.

Step by step, the six Toa led the Manas toward the tunnel. Lewa glanced behind him, noting the water lapping at the mouth of the tunnel. He didn't know the details of the plan, but he could guess them.

If we can get this monsterpair trapped in that tunnel, sister Gali can ask the waters to awaycarry them, he thought. *Then we can stoneblock the tunnel, and get back to finding Makuta.*

Lewa felt his body quivering with eagerness to move, but he forced himself to wait. They had to act together, or the plan would fail.

When Gali spoke, it was a single word. “Now,” she said.

The Toa all acted at once. Lewa, Tahu, Pohatu, and Onua rushed forward and leaped past or over the two Manas, putting the creatures between themselves and the tunnel. Meanwhile, Gali rushed closer to the tunnel’s entrance, and the waters within started to churn.

But what is our icebrother doing? Lewa wondered even as he began to swing his blade at the Manas, driving them back.

He soon understood. As the water in the tunnel entrance splashed out onto the cavern floor, Kopaka pointed his ice blade at it, freezing it solid. Soon a slick coating of ice covered much of the floor between the Manas and the tunnel. Once the creatures reached the ice, it would be easier to push them into the watery trap.

“Almost there!” Tahu shouted. “Come on, brothers! Let’s finish this!”

Lewa leaped forward again, swinging at the closer of the two Manas. The creature hissed furiously, striking back with deadly accuracy. Its claw struck the Air Toa on the shoulder, sending him rocketing backward.

Ignoring the pain in his shoulder, he leaped back into action. The Manas took another step backward, then another… until it finally hit the ice.

“Push!” Tahu howled, hurling himself at the creature. By this time Kopaka had joined the fighters, and the five of them leaped at the two Manas, shoving them toward Gali’s tunnel.

Lewa could see the creatures’ claws striking his comrades again and again — he felt powerful blows land on his own body. But he ignored the pain. All that mattered was the plan…

The Manas skittered across the ice, heading straight toward the tunnel.

“Come on!” Tahu shouted, pointing his fire sword at the ground to melt the ice that now lay between the Toa and their quarry. “Don’t give them a chance to escape.”

But before the Toa could reach the Manas to give them a last push into the cave, the two crablike creatures spun toward each other. Hissing loudly, each of them reached out its claws, locking them together until they seemed to merge into one even more enormous creature.

"Oh, no!" Onua cried. "Look at them — they're too big for the tunnel now!"

"They're working together," Kopaka said grimly. "I didn't think the Rahi were capable of such intelligence."

Pohatu shook his head. "These Manas creatures are not ordinary Rahi."

Lewa was already leaping into action. "We are not planlost yet," he cried. "I'll separate them if I can…"

Without waiting for a reply, Lewa somersaulted forward. He crashed headlong into the tangle of claws that held the two Manas together.

The creatures let out a furious hiss. Acting together, they swung their joined claws outward, sending Lewa flying across the cave. He smashed against the wall and landed in a heap, dazed.

As he climbed to his feet, he saw the paired Manas bounce off of the too-small tunnel entrance. Soon they had rocketed back across the remains of the ice onto dry ground. There, they separated and returned their attention to the surprised Toa.

These are no ordinary Rahi, Lewa thought as he saw the Manas' pincer land a powerful blow on Tahu, knocking him into the wall. *No ordinary Rahi at all.*

CHAPTER TWELVE of *Tale of the Toa*
THE POWER OF SIX

Kopaka saw Tahu fly by and crash into the wall. As the Fire Toa slid to the floor, stunned, Kopaka aimed his ice blade in front of the Manas that was moving in on the fallen Toa. The floor in front of the creature instantly froze once again, slowing it down long enough for Lewa to somersault in and drag Tahu out of range.

"This is ridiculous," Gali cried as she defended herself against the second Manas. "They're just too strong! We'd better retreat."

"Never!" Tahu croaked, his voice hoarse but determined. "We must stay united. We must defeat them!"

Kopaka blinked, wondering why Tahu's words had struck such a chord in his mind. *Where have I heard something like that before?*

He glanced toward Gali and found her watching him. "What is it, brother?" she asked. "Do you know something? I — I think I do. I had a vision. It told me that something would happen after we found all the Masks of Power. That we would need to — unite."

Kopaka hesitated. Could it be?

The words from his vision returned: *…behold the future… you and the others shall… all the Great Masks of Power… together and defeat… three shall become… path of wisdom… myself, Akamai… of the warrior… only by uniting…*

"I think I had the same vision," he admitted at last. "I didn't understand it at the time. I — I still don't understand it."

"Don't you see?" Gali stared into his eyes, almost seeming to forget about the Manas, who were attacking the other Toa nearby. "I was told that three shall become Wairuha and walk the path of wisdom. Three shall become Akamai and walk the path of the warrior. Only by uniting will the Toa find the strength to triumph."

Kopaka shook his head. "No," he said. "It doesn't make sense. How could such a thing happen?"

"I sense that it will happen if we want it to," Gali replied quietly. She glanced briefly toward the battle behind

them. “I'm thinking that I want whatever will help us all. Do you?”

Kopaka stared at her for a moment. How could he want such a thing? Three become one — it would mean giving up his own individuality. No! It was impossible…

Or was it? Haven’t I found that sometimes my own powers fell short? he thought reluctantly. *Haven’t I found myself wishing at times that the others were with me?*

Gali was still watching him. “Unity, duty, destiny,” she said urgently. “Think about those words, brother. Do you believe in them?”

“Yes,” Kopaka said at last. “Yes. I don’t like them much right now, but I believe in them.” He took a deep breath. “Let’s do it.”

“Brothers!” Gali shouted. “We need to retreat - just for a moment.”

Pohatu and Onua glanced at each other. Then they used their powers simultaneously to tumble down part of the ceiling and create a wall of rubble right in front of the advancing Manas.

“That won’t hold them for long,” Pohatu said breathlessly. “Now, what is it?”

Gali quickly described the vision she’d had. “We need to unite,” she finished. “Combine our powers. Otherwise, there is no hope of victory.”

The others nodded. “At this point,” Tahu said, “I’ll try anything.”

As if part of one of his own dreams, Kopaka moved toward Gali and Lewa. Nearby, Tahu turned to face Pohatu and Onua. In each group, three Toa locked eyes… and became one.

As we wait, I take stock of our Company's strengths and weaknesses.

"Fire-Matoran always fare well against Muaka and Ice Rahi," says Kapura. "It is Water-Rahi, Tarakava and Nui-Rama, that we fear."

"Onu-Koro always fares well against Water Rahi such as Nui-Rama and Water Tarakava," says Taipu. "But we fear the swift Nui-Kopen of Air!"

"The Nui-Kopen are beasts of Air and cannot resist my mighty strength!" brags Hafu. "Muaka and other Ice Rahi are sometimes a challenge."

"All Jagas feared by Le-Koro!" says Tamaru. "Send me instead against Earth-beast Kuma-Nui, and victory will I bring!"

"Like Le-Koronans, we of Ice fear the fiery Kofo-Jaga," says Kopeke. "But we easily crack the hard Nui-Jaga and Sand Tarakava, beasts of Stone!"

"My people have always fought best against Fire Rahi, such as the Kofo-Jaga," says Macku. "But the Earth-Rahi Kuma-Nui is hard for us to battle."

We have no time to consider the fate of the Toa, for there is a cry of "Here come the Rahi!" and we are ambushed by a Nui-Rama. All of our brave little Company assembles to protect the Temple. Each Matoran lets fly disc after disc until the Rahi is defeated.

Then all goes dark. Perhaps the Rahi has struck a blow against me. But no, this is a vision of what is transpiring below. I see the Toa, only I don't see them whole. Instead, it is as though they have been taken apart. Their parts are mixing and combining together.

"It is here that we join. Spirit of Valor, hear me!"

Tahu, Pohatu, and Onua have joined to become one. "I – am – *Akamai!*" he says.

Gali, Lewa, and Kopaka have also joined to together. "Spirit of Wisdom, hear me!" he says. "I – am – *Wairuha!*"

"So, Wairuha, you are joined," says Akamai. "Let us now choose a path and go into the darkness to face our destiny… be it good or ill."

"Our way lies not together, Akamai," replies Wairuha. "We must face what evils are before us alone. I choose this road.

You take the other. With luck we will come together again, at the gates of Mangaia!”

With that, the two Toa Kaita part ways. I am not certain, but I think I see two more eyes in the darkness awaken and follow one of them.

Another fierce battle with the Rahi ensues. There are more of them this time, but we fight hard and hold our ground.

"Stay here!" Kapura counsels. "We can fall back, but not far. If they push us back over the Kini-Nui, all will be lost. We must win against the Rahi!"

"Stop them here," Kopeke agrees. "It is here the Toa will return to, though it may be days. We must not fall back from here, whatever the cost."

The battle begins anew. Discs are flying furiously. The Rahi battle long and hard, but ultimately we are victorious. Then, I am hit with another vision. Akamai has stumbled upon a nest of crab-like creatures. These must be the terrible Manas I heard of earlier.

Another cry rings out. Even more Rahi descend upon us. I don't know how much longer we can hold out. The Company chatters among themselves, trying to keep their spirits up.

"Stonecraft requires great dexterity!" says Hafu, more to the Rahi than to us. "When I take aim, I hit my mark! And my strength, too, is to be reckoned with!"

"Whenua says I am the strongest in all of Onu-Koro," adds Taipu. "I just wish the Rahi would stand still!"

"In battle I am quick, Chronicler, and can often strike quickdodge Rahi," says Tamaru. "Highjump and lowduck I do too! Strike lightly but often!"

"In Ga-Koro we train in acrobatics," says Macku. "I am quick enough to send against the fastest Rahi! In battle it is skill I rely on, rather than strength."

"Slow I am, and quick," says Kapura. "Engaged, it is hard to avoid the blows of Rahi, or strike at the masks of the quick ones. But I travel instantly. I can go far without tiring, if it is your will, Chronicler."

"We of Ko-Koro are balanced in strength and agility," says Kopeke. "Only hardy Matoran can withstand the wind and ice of Ko-Koro. These Rahi will find me tough to overcome."

"Some of these Rahi are very big!" notes Macku. "If they manage to strike me, I may not withstand it. But they will find that hard to do!"

"Rahi are strong, hardluck have I lest quickdodge save me," says Tamaru.

"Like the great statues of Po-Koro I stand!" brags Hafu. "I am not as stout as Taipu, perhaps, but far more clever!"

"A long time ago, many rocks fell on my head," says Taipu. "That did not hurt much. Neither do these Rahi."

Greatly battered and nearing exhaustion, our Company repels this latest assault by the Rahi. I have no time to rest before I am overcome by darkness once more.

Wairuha too is beset by the horrible Manas. He fends off a frontal assault, but he is caught unaware by an attack from behind. A Manas strikes him a mighty blow, and Wairuha falls to the floor.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN of *Tale of the Toa*
THE TOA UNITE

The two Toa Kaita were a worthy match for the powerful Manas, and this time, the battle raged more furiously than ever.

Akamai fended off one with a series of powerful blows. "What, you scurry away like a tiny Hoto bug?" he cried with a roar of laughter.

"Do not taunt them, Akamai," Wairuha said. "Remember that they are unwilling servants of Makuta. Let us finish this quickly."

The words had hardly left his mouth when one of the Manas leaped at him. Despite his immense strength, the strike sent Wairuha staggering backward a few steps as the enemy clamped its pincers onto him. Using all of his strength, Wairuha managed to rip the Manas free and fling him against the wall.

The Manas hit the stone with a solid crunch. But it recovered quickly and skittered back toward the battle.

Turning toward the Manas that was scurrying toward him, Wairuha sucked in a deep breath, feeling his powers — of ice, water, and wind — expand and merge within him. A moment later, a raging blizzard erupted in the cavern.

Akamai, too, was using his combined powers. A giant crater exploded in the cavern floor, spraying stone, earth, and lava in every direction. Another crater appeared, and another, until the Manas were trapped on an island of solid floor surrounded by a moat of boiling lava.

Wairuha focused his energy through the blizzard, controlling it. He concentrated with everything he had — logic, instinct, and impulse guiding him all at once. Soon he had compressed the might of the storm into a single, focused beam of pure cold energy.

He turned it toward the trapped Manas. As the beam passed over them, the creatures froze solid.

"Nice work, brother," Akamai said. "But I fear it will take more than that to kill them."

Wairuha was already moving toward the lava moat. "There is no need to kill them, brother," he said. With one acrobatic

leap, he crossed the moat and stood beside the frozen Manas. "I'll need your assistance to remove these masks."

Akamai nodded and leaped over as well. Touching one finger to the mask of one of the Manas, he soon melted the ice surrounding it. Wairuha reached out and pulled it free, dropping it into the lava, where it sank out of sight.

The Toa Kaita turned to the other Manas, repeating the process. Soon both Manas were free of their controlling masks.

"There," Wairuha said, leaping back across the moat. "That takes care of that."

"Not quite." Akamai bent and touched the ground at the edge of the lava moat. There was a rumble, as the edges moved toward each other, closing off the moat as if it had never existed.

Wairuha looked around. Except for the frozen forms of the Manas, the cave looked as empty and peaceful as when the Toa had arrived.

"Our work is done," he said. "And now…"

He felt his mind slipping away, as if in the moment just before sleep. He closed his eyes…

Tahu opened his eyes. *Is it really me?* he wondered.

Yes. He was himself again. Becoming part of Toa Kaita Akamai had been electrifying, but it was nice to have his own mind and will to himself again.

Glancing around, he saw the other Toa standing nearby, all of them looking as dazed as he himself felt.

Lewa was the first to speak. "Well," he said, stretching and bending, "That was a powerfeeling that you don't get every day."

Laughter bubbled from Gali like a spring. "Brothers," she cried, stretching her arms wide. "We did it! We became a part of something larger — and did what we never could have done otherwise."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN of *Tale of the Toa*
OUT OF THE SHADOWS

"Quicklook!" Toa Lewa cried, pointing across the huge underground cavern. "The Manas are thawing. Once Makuta sees his hardluck creatures running for their lives, he'll be out of our way everquick."

Pohatu glanced where the Air Toa was pointing. He and the other five Toa watched as the mask-free Manas thawed from the deep freeze that Toa Kaita Wairuha's icy power had put them in and scuttled away, disappearing into the darkness of a nearby tunnel.

It had been a hard-fought victory for the Toa. A moment worthy of celebration. Somehow, though, Pohatu found it impossible to relax and enjoy it. There was something — a shudder of stone against stone, the faintest tremor in the rocky ground — that told him there might be more to come.

The Toa of Earth was thinking along much the same lines. "Don't be so certain that we have truly defeated the Great Evil One," Onua warned Lewa solemnly. "While these Manas were powerful, they were but guardians. Makuta himself - "

"What's that?" Gali interrupted. The Water Toa was staring intently toward the back of the cavern. "Something moved back there. Onua, can you see anything?"

Kopaka peered into the darkness along with the others, gripping his ice blade uneasily.

Drip. Drip.

Water trickled onto stone somewhere far off - or was it nearby? Down here it was hard to tell.

"Does anyone see anything?" Lewa's whisper broke the near silence.

"Shh!" Gali chided him. "Did you hear — "

Creeeaaaaaaaaaak!

The sudden sound exploded through the cave.

"*Toa…*"

Pohatu spun around. Had he really just heard that whisper?

"*Toa…*"

"Who is it?" Tahu called boldly. "Who's there? Step forward and reveal yourself at once, or suffer the wrath of Toa Tahu!"

Mocking laughter echoed through the underground chamber. “But of course,” a low, reverberating voice hissed with delight. It seemed to be coming from nowhere and everywhere at once. “Toa Tahu, with a heart of fire and a temper to match. Just how hot can you burn?”

Makuta. Without knowing how he knew, Tahu’s mind formed the name.

This, then, was the Dark One they had sought for so long.

There was a glimmer of movement in one of the tunnels leading off from the larger central chamber. Tahu leaped toward it instantly and struck with all his strength. But his fire sword sliced through empty air.

“Wait!” Pohatu cried, even though it was too late. “Tahu, wait a moment. We don’t even know what it is we face yet.”

Once again, laughter filled the chamber. “Ah, and this must be the famous Toa Pohatu, with a mind like a stone,” the mysterious voice cooed. “Always ready to wait and watch and ponder — even as Mata Nui crumbles around him.”

“It is easy enough to mock us from the shadows,” Onua said evenly, stepping into the center of the chamber. “But your words will never defeat us.”

“No doubt,” the voice responded silkily. “But it matters not, as I have only to sit back and watch as you defeat yourselves.”

Confused, Gali waited to hear more. But the voice had faded away, as if it had never been.

“What was that supposed to mean?” Lewa asked, breaking the silence.

Before Gali could answer, she caught a flash of movement out of the corner of her eye. Spinning to face it, she saw a dark figure racing toward Tahu, wielding a deadly-looking sword.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN of *Tale of the Toa*
TOA VS. TOA

"Tahu! Look out!"

The Fire Toa turned just in time to raise his sword against the onslaught. The face of his attacker was hidden behind a blackened, pitted mask, and black smoke billowed from its sword.

Tahu held the stranger off as best he could. He channeled the power of his flame through his fire sword, pointing it toward the sandy ground beneath his attacker. It instantly crystallized into glass and broke under the stranger's weight. The attacker plummeted out of sight.

But Tahu barely had time enough to smile before the stranger leaped out of the pit. "Hate to shatter your illusions," it said in a sizzling, crackling voice, "but it will take more than that to get rid of me."

The words only drove Tahu to greater fury. He shot white-hot flames out of the sword, but his movements were too fast, careless, striking the walls and boulders of the cavern until sparks flew in all directions, showering over the other Toa.

"Take care, Tahu," the attacker spoke again, "lest the fire of your anger blaze out of control."

Tahu gritted his teeth. "We'll see how you like my fire now," he said.

He pointed his sword at the stony cavern floor. Fire poured from the end, melting the rock into steaming, glowing lava.

"Brother Tahu!" Onua's voice sounded distant, almost lost in the bubbling sound of the boiling lava. "Watch what you're doing - you'll endanger us all!"

Tahu's mysterious opponent leaped off its rock and surfed across the bubbling lava. Its smile broadened. "Come, give in to the flame," it whispered. "Let it consume you and all you hold dear - I know you can feel it burning deep inside."

Tahu gasped, startled out of his own anger. What sort of enemy was this? He looked around for help and saw that five more attackers had suddenly appeared, as if out of the shadows themselves, each moving in on a different Toa…

Nearby, Gali struggled against another mysterious attacker. The stranger's form mirrored her own, but rather than the clean blue of the open sea, its body was the muted, sickly brownish-black of an oil slick.

"Who are you?" Gali gasped as she released a raging flood of water toward her attacker.

A chuckle poured out of the attacker, who seemed unaffected by the flood. "Who am I?" it said. "Is the wise, all-seeing Gali really so blind? I am — you!"

Pohatu jumped atop an enormous boulder just in time to avoid being swept away by Gali's flood. "Hey!" he cried, his usual good nature overwhelmed by near panic. "Gali, take care not to fight your friends as well as your enemy!"

His opponent smirked. "So much for teamwork," it said in its gravelly voice. "This is how your friends repay your loyalty. Makes one wonder why one should bother with friends at all, doesn't it?"

"Not at all." Pohatu leaped to the ground and immediately swung his weapon at the boulder. It shattered into hundreds of flying shards, ricocheting off the walls toward the mysterious attacker.

The stranger laughed as he dodged the rocks. "Too bad, Pohatu," it taunted. "Good thing you expect nothing in return for your loyalty to your friends. Because now that the chips are down, it seems they've left you to fight me all alone."

It was getting hard for Lewa to concentrate on his own battle. First he'd nearly backflipped into the pool of lava that had suddenly appeared to cover half the cave. Then a flood of water had washed through.

"*Ai-ai-ai-ai-ai!*" he yodeled, flipping himself up and over his attacker's weapons and out of the boulder's path.

Crrrraaaaaack!

The cavern shuddered as the boulder struck the wall. Lewa glanced hopefully back toward it, wondering if his opponent might be trapped behind it.

"Looking for me, Toa of Air?"

What is this creature, this quickdodging darkstranger? Lewa wondered as he leaped into the air to escape another blow. *It looks like me — but not like me.*

He took in the stranger's pitted mask, blackened as if by a creeping forest mold. Its skin beneath was green - the washed-out green of a diseased leaf.

Tumbling out of range and lifting his arms, Lewa focused his energies on the air all around him. Soon a whirlwind roared through the cavern. It swept up Lewa's enemy, and the Toa of Air laughed with delight.

But his opponent merely laughed in return as it glided easily through the currents, and soon landed back beside the startled Toa.

It hadn't taken Kopaka long to realize What happening - Makuta had created these shadowy versions of the Toa to challenge them where the Manas and all his other creatures had failed.

And so far, the plan seemed to be working.

Kopaka fought on grimly. Neither he nor his enemy was wasting any energy on words. Kopaka found his frustration rising as each of his carefully executed moves was met and returned with equal precision.

This isn't working, he thought. *There has to be a better way…*

He touched his ice sword to the ground and focused his energy. Instantaneously, the cavern floor froze into a solid sheet of ice.

Even as he did it, Kopaka realized he'd miscalculated. His enemy smiled as it glided across the ice, its moves more graceful and controlled than ever.

"I see you've just recognized the cold, hard truth," it whispered in a voice as sharp as an icicle.

Onua shook his head, willing himself to focus, to think through this problem. He had already tried overpowering his enemy with raw strength, but its might matched his own. He had attempted to trap it by tunneling through the cavern wall and

then collapsing the tunnel atop it, but the creature had burrowed out easily.

We can't go on this way, he thought desperately.

Right now the Toa were at an impasse, evenly matched with their enemy. But if even one of them went down, it could mean the end of all of them.

Feeling uncharacteristically desperate, the Earth Toa struck the ground before him with all his might. The earth rumbled at the blow, shaking the entire cavern and sending a hailstorm of rocks and earth raining down on all the fighters.

Onua felt despair grip him as he saw that while the other Toa had been knocked off their feet, his own opponent merely leaped over the torn earth and moved in to press the attack.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN of *Tale of the Toa*
UNITY, DUTY, DESTINY

Kopaka hit the ground hard as the quake rumbled beneath him. His enemy was on him in a flash.

He managed to block the blow with his shield and then swing his ice blade upward. If he could just aim…

Skreeeeeeek!

Kopaka smiled as he saw that his enemy was frozen in place. Kopaka sent the frozen enemy skittering across the ice until it smashed into the cavern wall. The creature shattered into hundreds of icy shards.

And each of the ice shards was forming into a new enemy!

Nearby, Onua glanced over and gasped when he saw Kopaka's predicament.

This is bad, Onua thought helplessly, dodging another blow from his own enemy. *How can I fight one so much like myself? How can any of us?*

He blinked as the answer dawned on him at last. Of course!

"Listen up!" he shouted. "We're going about this all wrong. We can't hope to defeat our own shadow doubles - but that's why we're a team!" He wanted to say more, but he didn't have the chance - he had to dive aside to avoid another blow from his opponent's weapon.

Pohatu heard Onua's words, but he couldn't respond for a moment. He was too busy fending off his own attacker. But in the back of his mind, he turned over the Earth Toa's plan and found that it made sense.

"Who are you kidding?" his opponent chortled mirthlessly, as if reading his thoughts. "They're not going to fight *for* you, Toa of Stone, or even *with* you. They'll use your strength to save themselves, then leave you behind."

"No," Pohatu said firmly, putting all his strength into one leg as he shattered another boulder with a mighty kick. His enemy fell back to avoid the shrapnel of stone, but instead pressing the advantage, Pohatu spun away and glanced quickly around the cavern.

He saw the Fire Toa desperately trying to fend off a volley of blows with his fire sword. “Tahu!” Pohatu shouted. “Stand back!”

Gathering his energy, he leaped upward and struck the ceiling of the cave with a mighty blow of his fist. As the pieces broke off and fell, Pohatu directed them straight onto the Fire Toa's opponent.

“*Aaaaaaaah!*” the smoky stranger cried, raising its arms to protect itself. Flames shot out of its sword, but it was no use. It couldn’t melt the falling stones fast enough. Within seconds it was buried beneath a mound of rocky debris.

Tahu stared at Pohatu in surprise. “What did you do that for? I was just about to - ”

“Never mind,” Pohatu yelped, turning to defend himself against his opponent. “Help Gali!”

Tahu glanced over his shoulder and saw that the Water Toa was on the ground at the edge of the the lava pool, her enemy advancing upon her.

“Gali!” Tahu cried. “Hold on, I’m coming!”

“Tahu!” Gali gasped. “Don’t - this thing is too strong!”

But Tahu didn’t hesitate. As the Shadow Gali whirled to face him, he pointed his fire sword. Heat and flame danced out from the end, wrapping around the enemy as it howled in surprise.

Steam hissed out in all directions, obscuring his view. When it faded, nothing remained of the Shadow Gali but a puddle on the cavern floor.

The defeat of two of the shadow enemies gave the other Toa new strength of purpose. Gali re-formed her flood and sent it gurgling toward the Shadow Onua. It cried out in dismay as water pounded against it, eroding it away into nothing but a bit of sand.

The distraction gave Onua the chance to help Lewa. Seeing that the Air Toa’s enemy was somersaulting high in the air out of reach, Onua quickly summoned the earth beneath his feet to rise up, trapping the high-flying enemy in a floor-to-ceiling column of dirt and stone.

Freed from his enemy, Lewa saw that Kopaka and Pohatu alone remained under attack.

While Pohatu was holding his own, the ice-shard enemies had Kopaka surrounded.

"I'm coming!" Lewa shouted, tumbling through the air around the icy battle. "Kopaka!" he cried. "*Duck!*"

The Ice Toa looked startled, but threw himself to the floor. A split second later, the whirlwind roared down around him, grabbing the shard soldiers into its grasp and spinning them around and around at dizzying speed.

The icy shard-soldiers crashed against one another again and again. Before long they had disintegrated into tiny sparkles of ice.

"Bad move," Kopaka said bleakly. "What if they all form into enemies again?"

"Not a problem," Tahu said, blasting the ice crystals with his fire sword. Within seconds, they had melted and evaporated into steam.

"Guys?" Pohatu called breathlessly. "Um, hey — anyone want to give me a hand here?"

The Toa of Stone was still trading blows with his shadow self. "Oops!" Lewa said.

"I'll take care of this," Kopaka said. "Stand back."

Taking a deep breath, the Ice Toa blew out a frosty blast, freezing the area around Pohatu into a sheet of ice. The Shadow Pohatu skidded across, winding up in Tahu's pool of lava, where it sank with a gurgle.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Once again, the cave was nearly silent. The Toa stood there for a long moment, staring at one another. Then, as a group, they collapsed wearily to the ground.

After catching his breath, Tahu sat up and glanced at Onua, who was watching the others thoughtfully. "What do you think, brother?" he asked the Earth Toa.

Onua smiled, though there was a hint of wariness in his eyes. "I think,' he said, "that we have won an important battle, and of that we can be proud. But there is more to come."

Tahu nodded, his grin fading as he gripped his fire sword more tightly. Yes, Onua was right. He could feel it, burning in his mind like a half-remembered dream.

There was much more to come.

Once more the Rahi come. We have no more energy for talking. Discs are flying once more. We fight hard, but it is not going well. Several of our company have lost their masks and had to retreat. Finally, the Rahi have had enough, and they also retreat.

Then out of the forests they come. From all around they come. The Rahi surround us.

"It's horrible," says Macku.

"There must be hundreds of Rahi out there," notes Hafu.

"We're doomed, doomed!" adds Taipu.

"I will stand with you Chronicler, no matter what," says Kapura.

"I shall never see sing-song Le-Koro ever again. Oh, woe!" mourns Tamaru. And then he points to the sky and shouts. "Here they come!"

Suddenly, the Nui-Rama that is about to swoop down upon us is struck. Its mask falls to the ground at our feet.

"Look to the sky!" cries Tamaru. "Kongu! It's Kongu!"

The Kahu riders of Le-Koro have come to our rescue! And they are not alone. From the depths of the ground spring forth Onepu and his regiments of Ussalry. And then Jaller appears, along with his Guard, from behind a ridge. They let fly with a barrage of discs. Perhaps we stand a chance after all. But then the darkness overtakes me again.

Wairuha gets back up on his feet. Another Manas leaps at Wairuha, but Akamai has arrived and swats it away. The victory is minor however. The two Toa Kaita are clearly outnumbered.

"This, then, is how it ends, Wairuha," says Akamai.

"For these monsters also, Akamai!" replies Wairuha. "We will not go down without a fight!" Another Manas strikes, and Wairuha is knocked backward into a small metallic tower, destroying it. Sparks fly, and then one of the Manas goes limp.

"Wairuha, wait!" shouts Akamai. "These strange towers… maybe…"

Soon, the two Toa Kaita are carving up control towers left and right. As they do so, the Manas go dark and collapse. Eventually, all of the Manas are lying lifeless on the floor.

"We have survived!" declares Akamai.

"For now," Wairuha replies. "We were lucky. Wisdom provides

only when valor is in its service." The two Toa Kaita move toward a large, engraved door. It opens at their approach and they walk through it.

"I feel… strange," says Akamai. "Feels like – being torn apart!"

And with that, the two Toa Kaita fall. In their place, the six Toa now stand.

"What has happened?" asks Tahu.

Gali answers. "The spirit of Makuta… is the spirit of destruction. This is his inner realm. The Toa Kaita cannot exist here."

"The Manas nearly destroyed the Toa Kaita," frets Pohatu. "And the Makuta is ten times greater than they. What hope do we have?"

"The Toa Kaita merely gave physical form to the force of our unity," Gali says. "We still possess it, in our hearts."

"But the Toa Kaitas' wisdom and valor were unmatched," Lewa interjects.

"Where wisdom and valor fail," replies Tahu, "All that remains is faith. And it can overcome all."

"Gali is right," Tahu continues. "We must go on."

All of the Toa nod in agreement.

"Heed us, Chronicler!" Gali is addressing me directly now. "We step, now, through the gates of doom! Our link is broken. If you wish to fulfill your destiny, and record the last moments of this time… you must find us."

And then her eyes narrow and she stares hard at me. "*Find us!*" she implores.

"Chronicler, wake up!" I struggle to open my eyes. Is that Macku talking to me? "Please wake up!" she says.

The battle for Kini-Nui is over. The Rahi are gone and the Matoran are victorious. My Company surround me, congratulating each other on our good fortune.

"Rahi disappear, and Matau confused," says Kongu, explaining their arrival at Kini-Nui. "Thought: Rahi fallback here, to destroy Kini-Nui. So fastfly we come, to aid!"

"The Kini-Nui is safe now," says Jaller. "I think, though, that this day's trials are far from over. The Toa are still underground."

"Something strange has happened in Onu-Koro," says Onepu as I turn around. "Whenua says you should come there, and quickly. But not on foot."

"Take Pewku! She followed us all the way here. I think she has been looking for you."

Pewku does look eager to greet me. "Okay, girl," I say to myself. "Let's go!"

We quickly arrive in Onu-Koro. It is good that Pewku knows the way, for the tunnels have been barricaded. I seek out Whenua.

"You are safe, Chronicler," Whenua greets me. "That is good. The Prophecies, then, are still truthful.

"They say Gali has called on you. There has been a disturbance in the Great Mine. The Golden Mask you discovered has disappeared, and a passage has opened there.

"My workers are too afraid to go near it. We believe it is another entrance to the Makuta's lair. It is your destiny to find the Toa, Chronicler, no matter what the outcome. I hope you have the courage to face it."

There does not seem to be anything else to say. I bid Whenua goodbye, and then I head for the Great Mine. I, too, hope I have the courage to face my destiny. When I reach the bottom of the Great Mine, the Golden Mask is indeed gone. I can now approach the pedestal.

When I push the button, the pedestal disappears into the floor. Suddenly, the walls retract far away from me. Now the floor itself is descending swiftly, down, down into the darkness below. It stops when I reach the floor of a large, dark chamber.

I work my way forward, past the damaged towers and the lifeless Manas, toward the large, open doorway.

Through the doorway, I see them. All six Toa have assembled around a swirling vortex of debris. “Makuta!” shouts Tahu. “We have come!”

From the unseen depths of the chamber, a small Matoran steps forward.

“What?!” exclaims Tahu in disbelief.

“I have been waiting for you,” says the Matoran as he steps into the light. He is covered from head to toe in pockmarks, corrosion, and ooze.

“But you – you are – ” objects Tahu.

“I am that which you are sworn to protect,” says the Matoran.

“Tahu, it’s a trick!” interjects Kopaka. “We must destroy him!”

“Destroy me?” says the Matoran defiantly. “You cannot destroy me. No more than you can destroy the sea, or the wind. Or… the void.”

“You are like the sea?” objects Gali. “The sea bears life! The sea bore us!”

“I bore you,” says the Matoran. “For I am Nothing. And out of Nothing, you came. And it is into Nothing that you will go.

“I stand with Mata Nui,” he continues, “side by side. I am his brother.

“The people of the world are builders. But look into their hearts… and you will find that they also have the power to destroy. I am that power. I am destruction. And I *will* destroy you.”

“But…” says Tahu, still not believing, “You are but a Matoran!”

“You expected something else?” asks Makuta. “Something like… *this!?*”

And as he says this, Makuta transforms himself, joining with the swirling debris. He reaches out with long twisting arms to swat away the Toa, one by one. Even the protective forces of the Hau mask can not protect Onua as Makuta’s arms approach him from behind and take him unaware.

“Our only hope is to work together!” shouts Tahu over the

now-roaring sound of the vortex.

Tahu brings the full force of fire upon Makuta in a swirling inferno of flame. Kopaka likewise lets loose a stream of swirling ice. Gali directs a twisting torrent of water at Makuta. Lewa unleashes a vortex of his own in a strong gust of air. Onua summons forth a blast of earth that reaches the Makuta at the same time as a mighty shockwave issued forth from Pohatu's stomping foot. The converging forces of all six Toa are too much for Makuta to bear.

"You cannot destroy me," says Makuta defiantly. "For I am Nothing."

And with that, the vortex collapses and Makuta is gone. It appears that the Toa have completed their task, for they are now being transported, one by one, out of the chamber.

"But – what has happened to the Chronicler?" asks Gali. And then she too is transported away.

I peek out from behind the now-lifeless pile of debris. There is a door at the other side of this chamber. I step through it and discover a room that stretches endlessly in each direction. The wall is not solid, but is instead a collection of stacked pods. I move closer to get a look into one of the pods.

As I gaze into the pod to see what is inside, I notice something moving as if awakening from a very long sleep. Suddenly, it looks right at me and I get a funny feeling that perhaps I should not be here. The creature comes bursting out of its pod and faces me. As I turn and run, I hear another. And another. And another…

I am running as fast as I can away from the creatures, desperately trying to find a way out of these chambers and back to the surface. Then I see it: a golden device with a missing piece. I know that piece! I have it in my backpack.
I am searching desperately in my backpack for it. No, not the flute. Not the Heat Stone or the letter or the ensign. Ah, here it is! The golden chisel!

I place the chisel into the device. I am instantly surrounded by a bubble of energy and lifted from the floor just as the creatures converge upon me. I am floating up, upward out of the chamber. Then I am whisked swiftly along a dark tunnel. A door opens up ahead, and I am spit out upon a beach.

I am back where I started this adventure. Vakama is here, watching the water and waiting for me. I go to him.

"So. You have surprised us again, Chronicler," says Vakama. "We feared your courage led you to a final adventure. But it seems you may have many more in the future.

"You seem afraid," Vakama continues. "I know what you saw in that cave. Our Prophecies said the Makuta's defeat would end our troubles. But the Prophecies have changed.

"Something yet darker looms ahead of us. But for now, put these thoughts from your mind. There are many reasons for the people of Mata Nui to rejoice!

"When we first met, and you found my mask – and my Firestaff – and indeed fulfilled requests for all the Turaga – you were thought to be an outcast.

"No Matoran travels from village to village, having adventures. The people of Ta-Koro did not trust you and feared your adventurous ways. They were certain it would bring us ill luck.

"But you have proven us all wrong, Takua. You stand like the Toa among Mata Nui's greatest heroes. Come! Let us leave this windy beach and return to the light and heat of Ta-Koro.

"Many friends await you there!"

I look up into the night sky. The red star has moved into its final position from the telescope panels. And then the sky erupts with many beautiful colors as fireworks go off in celebration. After my long adventure, it is good to be going home.