

RAULE & LANDA

# ARTHUS TRIVIUM

1. THE ANGELS OF NOSTRADAMUS

euRoPe  
COMICS





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1. THE ANGELS OF NOSTRADAMUS



When my editor, Yves Schlirf, introduced me to the work of Juan Luis Landa,  
I was immediately won over by the atmosphere his art created.

His drawings are full of life, and wonderfully enhanced by his sophisticated use of color.  
We're dealing with a highly talented and generous artist here, and I recommend you keep a close eye on his work.

That is, at any rate, exactly what I shall do, because books like *Arthus Trivium* are what  
inspire me in my own work, braving every day that accursed blank page.  
Hats off as well to writer Raule, who had already caught my attention with *Jazz Maynard*,  
which he created with the wonderful artist Roger.

Producing a comic book is a marathon. It is long, stimulating, and exciting,  
but also exhausting, and always rewarding when you reach the end.  
When you hold a finished book in your hands, it doesn't matter where you are,  
because you've just conquered a marathon.  
Landa is one of the comic book world's great marathon runners. He has won his wager...  
Put on your running shoes and follow him!

It is an honor to have such outstanding competition!

**ENRICO MARINI**

If it weren't for Juan Díaz Canales, we would never have met,  
and *Arthus Trivium* would never have seen the light of day.

He supported our project right from the first sketch,  
and has always been enthusiastic.

We are sure he'll be delighted to see  
the release of this graphic novel.  
That's just the kind of guy he is.

This album is for you, my friend.

**LANDA & RAULE**



"DEEP WITHIN WESTERN EUROPE..."

...A CHILD WILL BE BORN  
OF A POOR FAMILY..

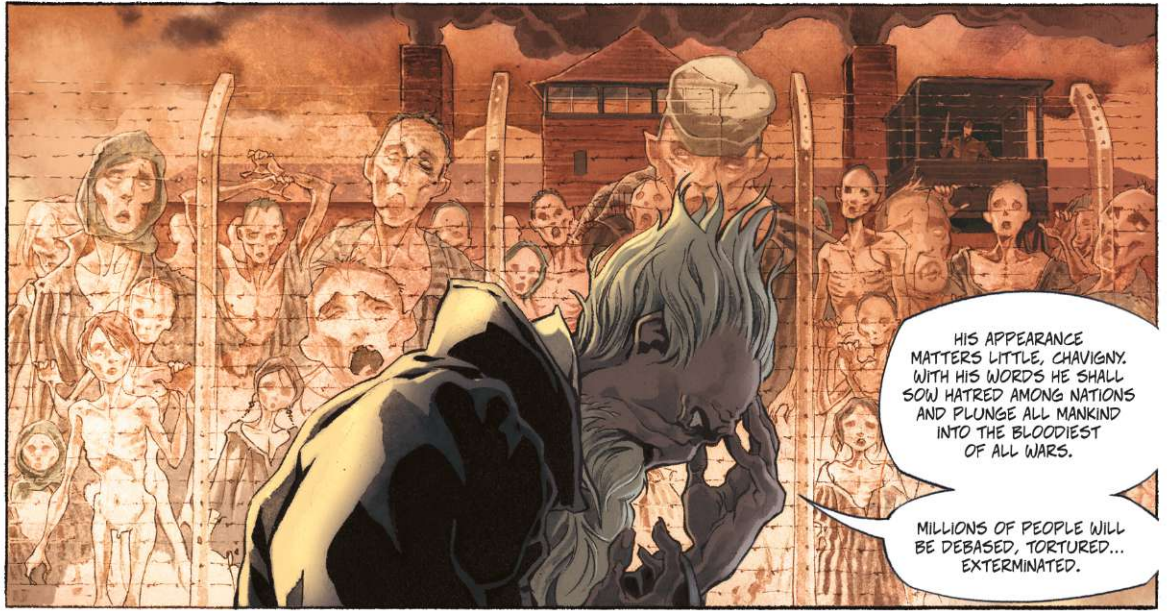
... THROUGH HIS WORDS,  
HE WILL CAPTURE THE HEARTS  
OF A GREAT TROOP...

... AND HIS VOICE WILL CARRY AS  
FAR AS THE EASTERN REALMS."

Salon de Crau (France)



AND WHAT WILL THIS CHILD OF GERMANIA LOOK LIKE?



HIS APPEARANCE MATTERS LITTLE, CHAVIGNY. WITH HIS WORDS HE SHALL SOW HATRED AMONG NATIONS AND PLUNGE ALL MANKIND INTO THE BLOODIEST OF ALL WARS.

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WILL BE DEBASED, TORTURED... EXTERMINATED.



ABSOLUTE EVIL.

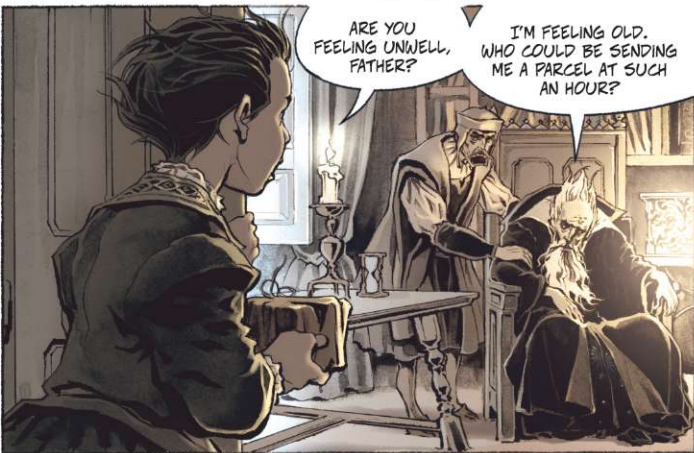
PLEASE, MASTER. SIT DOWN.

I CANNOT FATHOM YOUR DETERMINATION TO RECALL THESE VISIONS AND COMMIT THEM TO PAPER.



IT'S ME, FATHER. I HAVE A PARCEL FOR YOU.

COME IN, CESAR.



ARE YOU FEELING UNWELL, FATHER?

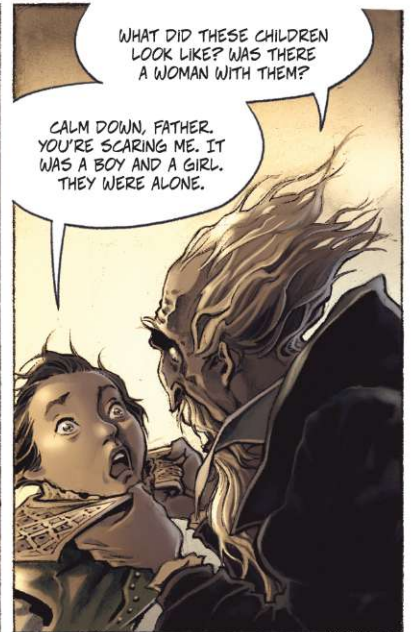
I'M FEELING OLD. WHO COULD BE SENDING ME A PARCEL AT SUCH AN HOUR?

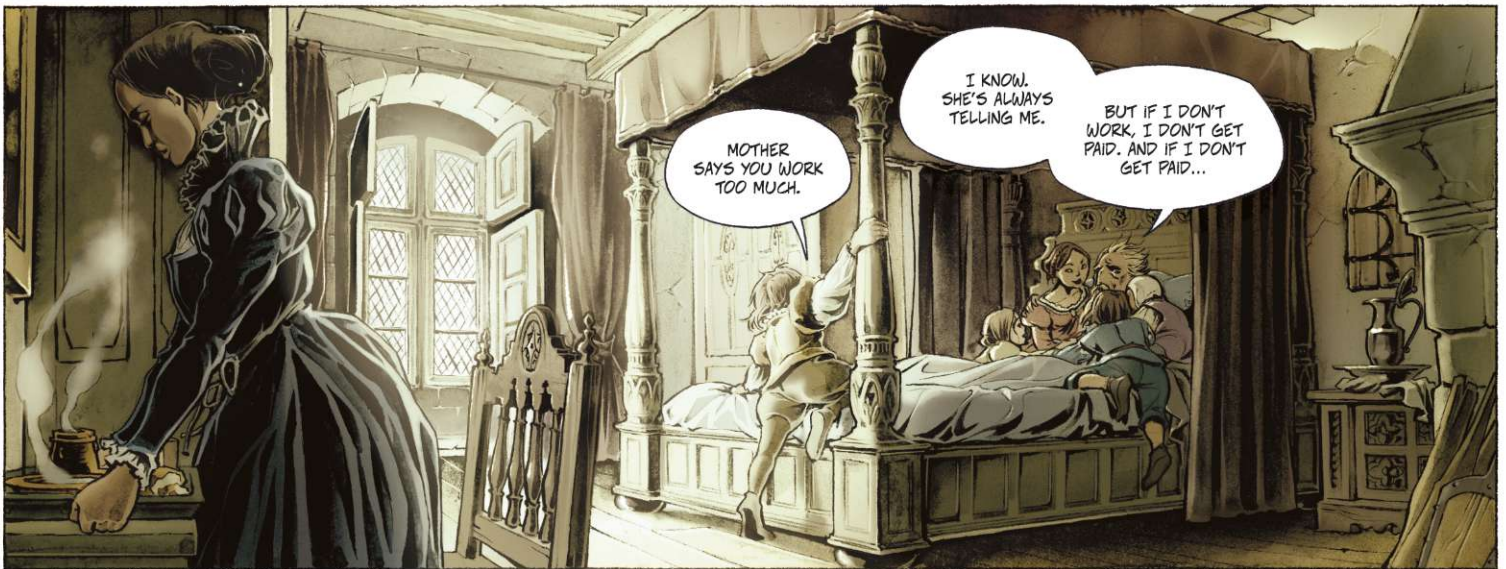
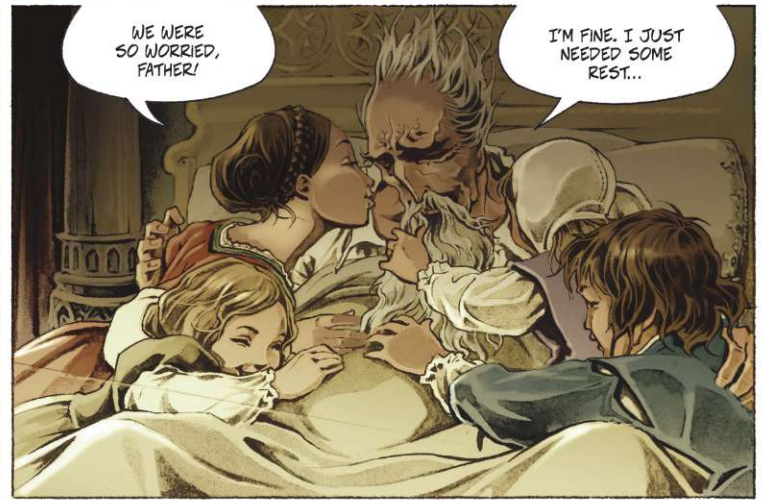
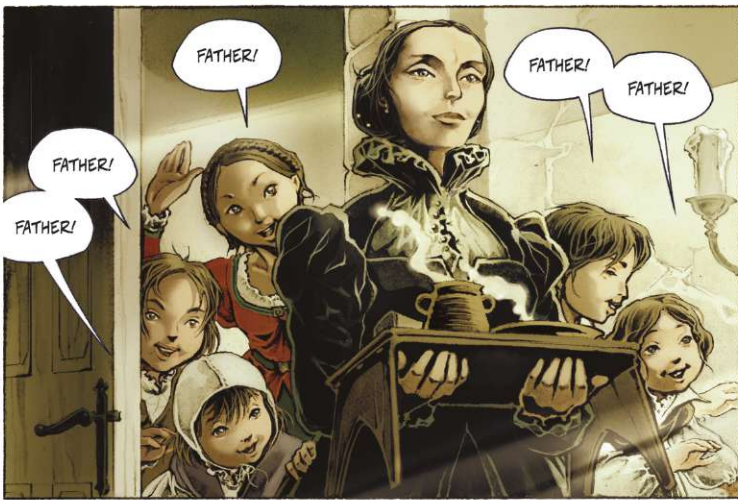


A COUPLE OF CHILDREN JUST HANDED IT TO ME. BUT THEY RAN OFF BEFORE I COULD ASK THEM ANY QUESTIONS.

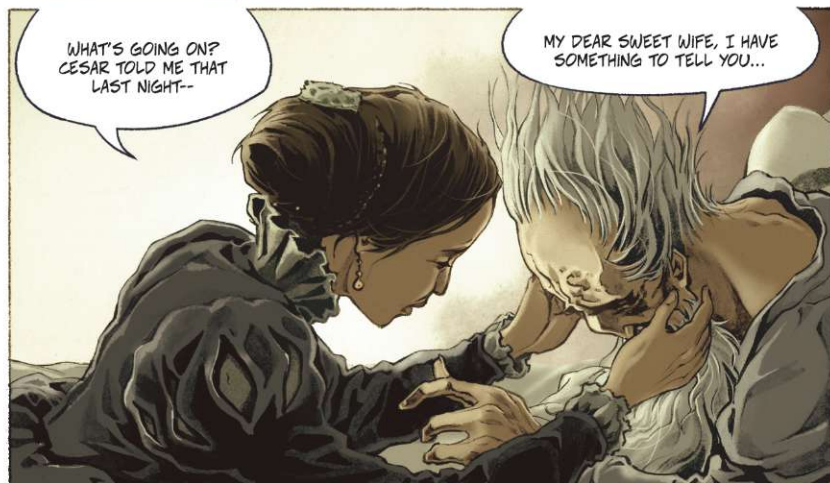
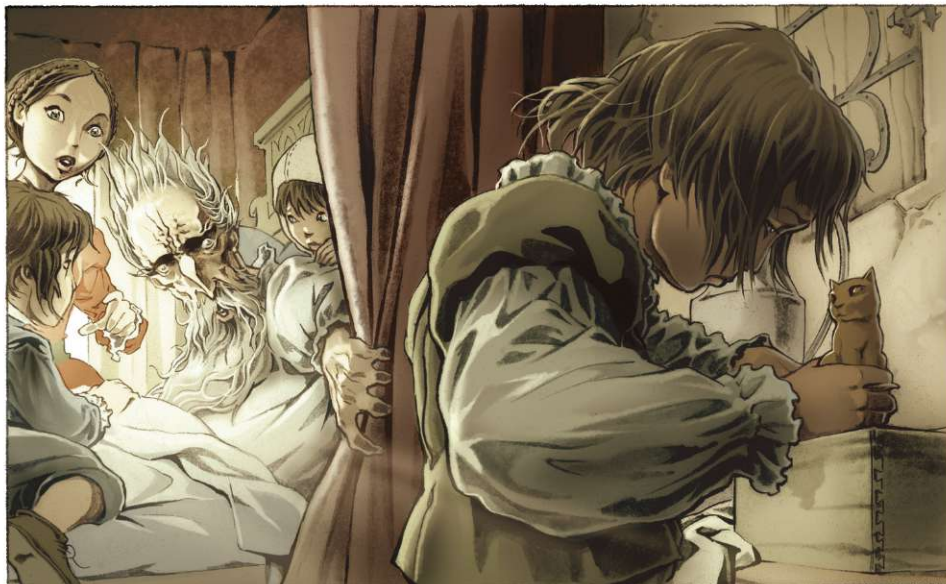
WELL, LET'S OPEN IT.





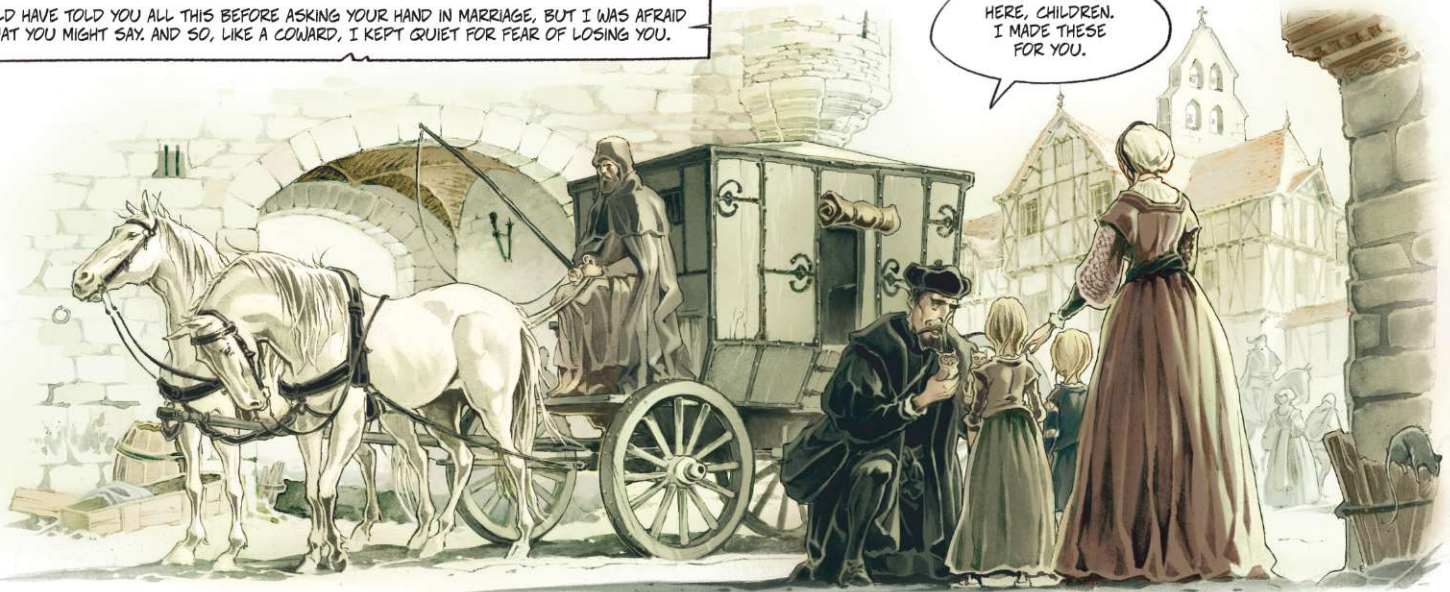






I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU ALL THIS BEFORE ASKING YOUR HAND IN MARRIAGE, BUT I WAS AFRAID OF WHAT YOU MIGHT SAY. AND SO, LIKE A COWARD, I KEPT QUIET FOR FEAR OF LOSING YOU.

HERE, CHILDREN. I MADE THESE FOR YOU.



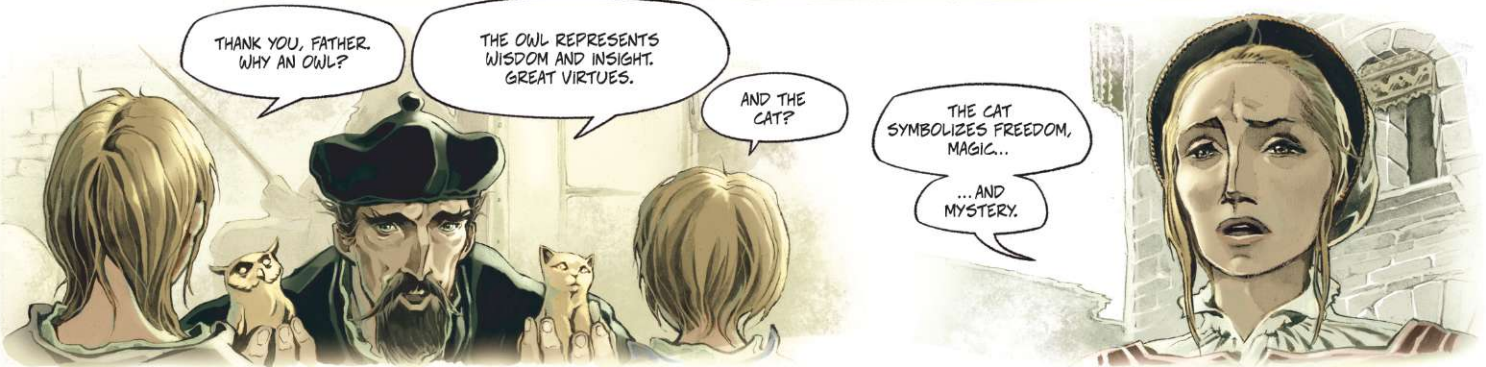
THANK YOU, FATHER. WHY AN OWL?

THE OWL REPRESENTS WISDOM AND INSIGHT. GREAT VIRTUES.

AND THE CAT?

THE CAT SYMBOLIZES FREEDOM, MAGIC...

...AND MYSTERY.



NOW, NOW, HENRIETTA. I'LL BE BACK IN A FEW WEEKS. MY GOOD FRIEND SCALIGER WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU WHILE I'M AWAY.

I DON'T LIKE THAT MAN. I'M BEGGING YOU, PLEASE DON'T GO. THE TOWN OF AGEN NEEDS YOU TOO.

WE HAVE MANAGED TO CONTAIN THE PLAGUE IN AGEN. BUT IN MARSEILLE, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE MIGHT DIE IF WE DO NOT INTERVENE IN TIME.

FATHER, WHEN WILL YOU BE BACK?

SOON. I PROMISE.

SOON.



IT WAS A REAL BLESSING TO BE FIGHTING THE PLAGUE WITH THE FINEST DOCTORS IN THE LAND! BY THEIR SIDE, I WOULD COME TO LEARN WHAT NO UNIVERSITY COULD EVER TEACH.



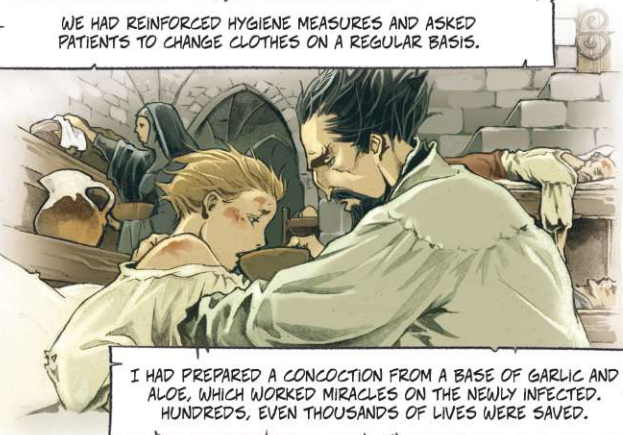
MY THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE CAME BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE.

I VISITED MANY A TOWN AND MET WITH GREAT PHYSICIANS AND APOTHECARIES. TOGETHER, WE STRUGGLED AGAINST THE BLACK PLAGUE WITH ALL OUR MIGHT.



WE BURIED THE BODIES DEEP UNDER SEVERAL LAYERS OF LIME AND BURNED THE REFUSE, WHICH FED THE RATS BEARING THE FLEAS WITH THEIR LETHAL BITE.

WE HAD REINFORCED HYGIENE MEASURES AND ASKED PATIENTS TO CHANGE CLOTHES ON A REGULAR BASIS.



I HAD PREPARED A CONCOCTION FROM A BASE OF GARLIC AND ALOE, WHICH WORKED MIRACLES ON THE NEWLY INFECTED. HUNDREDS, EVEN THOUSANDS OF LIVES WERE SAVED.

MONTHS LATER, I FINALLY MADE MY WAY BACK TO AGEN. I LONGED TO SEE MY FAMILY AGAIN.



BUT THE GRIM REAPER HAD TAKEN HIS REVENGE.

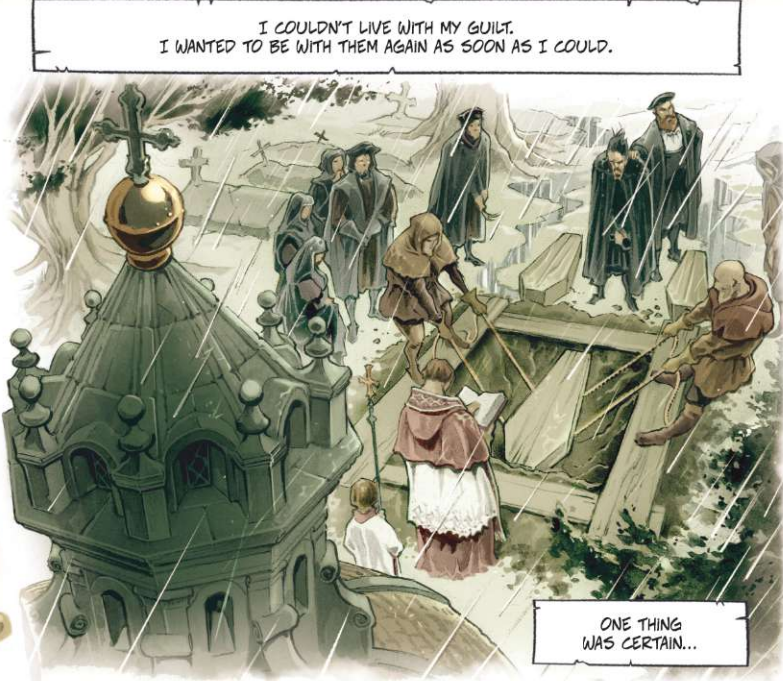


I DID ALL I COULD, MICHEL.

THEY JUST KEPT SAYING YOU'D BE BACK IN TIME TO SAVE THEM...



I COULDN'T LIVE WITH MY GUILT. I WANTED TO BE WITH THEM AGAIN AS SOON AS I COULD.



...I'D HAVE SUCCEEDED, WERE IT NOT MY FRIEND AND MENTOR SCALIGER. MAY HE REST IN PEACE.



ONE THING WAS CERTAIN...



I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU THE TRUTH LONG AGO. I'M SORRY. YOU AND THE CHILDREN ARE MY FAMILY NOW.



PLEASE, ANNE! ANNE!



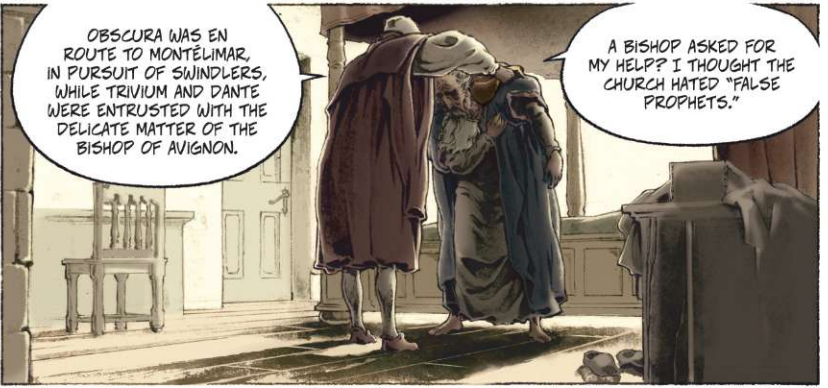
PARDON ME, MASTER. CLEARLY I'VE COME AT A BAD TIME, BUT THE MATTER IS URGENT.

SPEAK, CHAVIGNY. AND HELP ME OUT OF THIS DAMNED BED.



I'M STARTING TO WORRY, MASTER. WE HAVEN'T RECEIVED ANY PIGEONS FROM YOUR STUDENTS.

WHAT'S THE LATEST WORD FROM THEM?



OBSCURA WAS EN ROUTE TO MONTEILIMAR, IN PURSUIT OF SWINDLERS, WHILE TRIVIUM AND DANTE WERE ENTRUSTED WITH THE DELICATE MATTER OF THE BISHOP OF AVIGNON.

A BISHOP ASKED FOR MY HELP? I THOUGHT THE CHURCH HATED "FALSE PROPHETS."



NO, MASTER. WE ARE INVESTIGATING HIM. THE BISHOP IS ACCUSED OF ABUSING DOZENS OF CHILDREN--SONS OF PEASANTS, MOSTLY.

THERE ARE MANY WITNESSES AND MUCH PROOF AGAINST HIM, BUT HE IS TOO POWERFUL FOR THE LAW TO DARE RAP AT HIS DOOR.



FIRST I RECEIVE THESE FIGURINES, AND THEN I LOSE TOUCH WITH MY STUDENTS...

CHAVIGNY, HIRE TWO TRUSTWORTHY MEN-AT-ARMS. THIS HOUSE MUST BE GUARDED DAY AND NIGHT.



MY FAMILY AND I ARE IN DANGER.

Valone, Avignon

THE WITCH  
CONFESSSED TO  
EVERYTHING!

IN THIS DOCUMENT, SHE  
ADMITTED TO NIGHTLY FORNICATION  
WITH THE DEVIL HIMSELF! SHE AVOWS  
TO WORSHIPPING PAGAN GODS, AND  
DESECRATING GRAVES!

THE GRAVES  
OF YOUR DEARLY  
DEPARTED!

WITHOUT A DOUBT,  
A MOST SPIRITED  
WITCH.

LET'S GO EAT.  
I'VE SEEN THIS SPECTACLE  
DOZENS OF TIMES AND KNOW  
THE ENDING BY HEART.

GUIDED BY  
THE EVERLASTING GOD  
ALMIGHTY, MY NEPHEW  
MATHIEU UNCOVERED  
THIS ACCURSED WITCH'S  
DEPRAVED WAYS!

HE'LL BE  
SENDING HER TO  
BURN IN HELL!

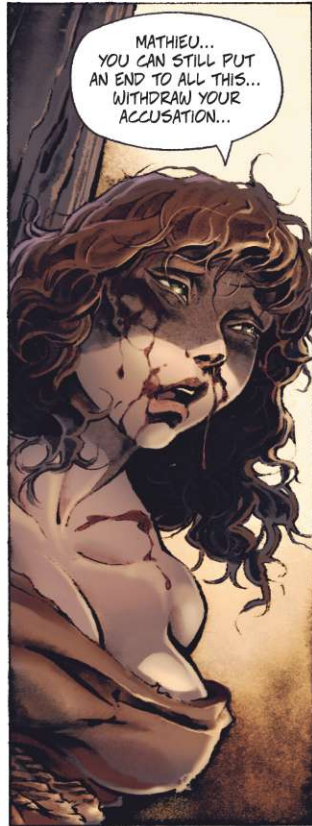
MAMA!  
MAMA!

WHAT WILL  
THEY DO TO YOU,  
MAMA?

LET ME GO!  
LET ME GO!

WE CANNOT  
STAND BY, ANGLUS.

I KNEW YOU'D  
SAY THAT.





\*LATIN: GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN!



LET ME THROUGH!  
MY NAME IS ARTHUR TRIVIUM,  
AND THIS IS MY COMPANION,  
ANGULUS DANTE!



WE ARE STUDENTS OF  
THE GREAT PHYSICIAN AND PROPHET  
NOSTRADAMUS! AS CONFIRMED BY THIS  
DOCUMENT BEARING HIS SIGNATURE!

DID YOU HEAR THAT?  
NOSTRADAMUS!

LIARS!  
MURDERERS!



I DON'T CARE WHO YOU ARE!  
YOU KILLED MY UNCLE WITH THAT  
DIABOLICAL WEAPON, AND YOU'RE  
GOING TO PAY!



ACTUALLY, THIS WEAPON  
IS CALLED A PISTOL, EVEN IF  
"DIABOLICAL" IS QUITE A FITTING  
DESCRIPTION.

SHUT UP AND  
LET ME TALK!



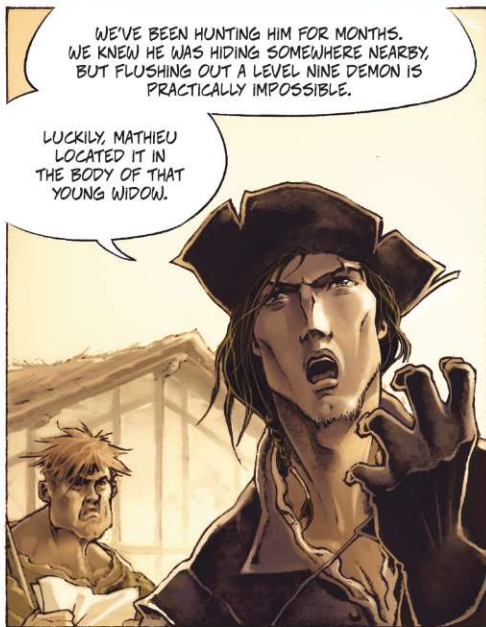
FIRSTLY, WE WOULD  
LIKE TO APOLOGIZE TO THE  
GOOD PEOPLE OF THIS CHARMING  
VILLAGE FOR INTERVENING WHEN THIS  
NO LESS CHARMING WITCH WAS  
ABOUT TO BE EXECUTED.

OUR MASTER  
NOSTRADAMUS, FORMERLY  
THE KING'S PHYSICIAN AND  
KNOWN THE WORLD OVER, SENT  
US HERE ON A PERILOUS  
MISSION...



...TO DESTROY  
THE PRINCE  
OF DEMONS...  
BEELZEBUB!

HOLY VIRGIN!



WE'VE BEEN HUNTING HIM FOR MONTHS.  
WE KNEW HE WAS HIDING SOMEWHERE NEARBY,  
BUT FLUSHING OUT A LEVEL NINE DEMON IS  
PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE.

LUCKILY, MATHIEU  
LOCATED IT IN  
THE BODY OF THAT  
YOUNG WIDOW.



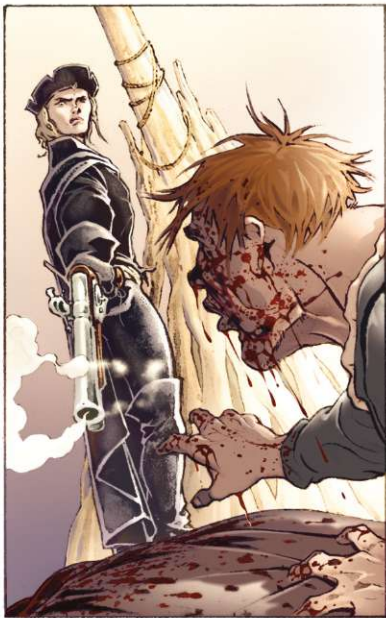
MY COMPANION WILL  
NOW FREE THAT YOUNG WOMAN  
FROM HER BINDINGS, FOR THE  
GREAT DEMON NO LONGER  
POSSESSES HER.

WHEN BEELZEBUB REALIZED  
HIS LIFE WAS IN DANGER, WE SAW,  
THANKS TO OUR THIRD EYE, THAT  
HE'D LEFT THE YOUNG WOMAN  
TO TAKE REFUGE IN THE NEXT  
NEAREST BODY...



... THAT OF  
YOUR BISHOP!







NO NEED FOR NATURAL DISASTERS...



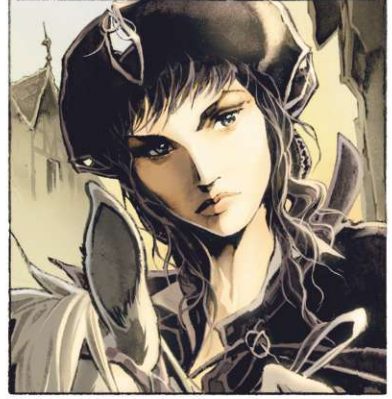
...OR SENSELESS WARS...

...TO SOW CHAOS ON THIS EARTH.

Montelinar



A LESSON OUR ANCESTORS LEARNED WHILE BURNING AND BURYING MILLIONS OF PLAGUE-EATEN CORPSES.



THOUGH TWO CENTURIES HAVE PASSED SINCE THE GREAT PLAGUE, POCKETS OF ILLNESS HAVE SPRUNG UP ONCE MORE IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES.



AND YET THERE ARE FAR WORSE THINGS THAN A PANDEMIC.



THE SCOUNDRELS WHO PROFIT FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S FEAR AND PAIN.



HALT! WHO ARE YOU CARRYING?



A POOR UNFORTUNATE SOUL WHO'S JUST RETURNED TO HIS MAKER. AND WHO MIGHT YOU BE?

MY NAME IS ANGELICA OBSCURA, AND I'VE BEEN ON YOUR HEELS FOR DAYS NOW.

YOU LOWDOWN SCUM HAVE LED ME QUITE THE MERRY CHASE!





KEEP IT DOWN, YOU DRUNKARDS!



?!

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?! I THOUGHT THAT MAN WAS DEAD!

AAAARGH! MY LEEEEE!



KAK

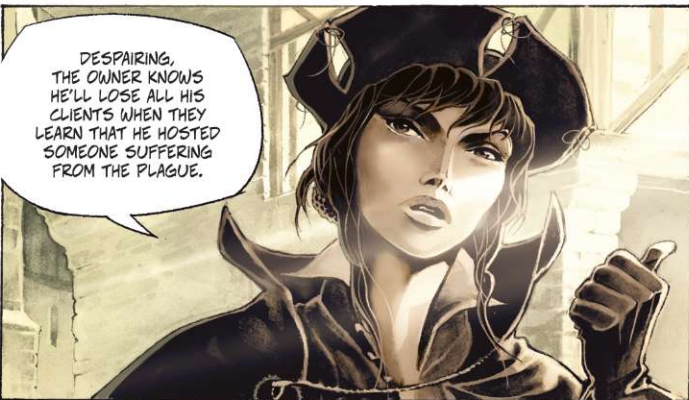


A DYING MAN GOES TO AN INN AND ASKS FOR A ROOM FOR THE WEEK.

HE LOOKS SICKLY, BUT HE'S WELL-DRESSED, AND HE PAYS IN ADVANCE. THE OWNER WELCOMES HIM WITH OPEN ARMS.



THE NEXT DAY, HE TAKES A TURN FOR THE WORSE AND DIES. HE DISPLAYS ALL THE SYMPTOMS OF THE PLAGUE.



DESPAIRING, THE OWNER KNOWS HE'LL LOSE ALL HIS CLIENTS WHEN THEY LEARN THAT HE HOSTED SOMEONE SUFFERING FROM THE PLAGUE.



AND THAT IS WHEN, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, YOU APPEAR.



IN EXCHANGE FOR A RATHER LARGE SUM OF MONEY, YOU AGREE TO DISINFECT THE ROOM AND DISCREETLY DISPOSE OF THE BODY.

A MEDIOCRE ACTOR AND A LITTLE MAKEUP SUFFICE TO RUN A BUSINESS BOTH LUCRATIVE...



...AND LOATHSOME!



YOU EXPLOIT PEOPLE'S FEAR OF THE GHASTLIEST OF MALADIES.



NOW LET'S SEE IF YOU HAVE IT IN YOU TO FACE YOUR OWN FEARS!



ON YOUR KNEES! DROP YOUR WEAPONS!



IF ANY OF YOU SO MUCH AS TWITCH, YOU'LL HAVE ME TO ANSWER TO!

MERCY, NO!



WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHO ARE YOU?

YOU BUNCH O' CROOKS! GIVE ME BACK MY MONEY!



MY NAME IS ANGELICA OBSCURA. I'VE BEEN TRACKING THESE CRIMINALS FOR SEVERAL DAYS NOW.

WHO DO YOU WORK FOR?



AS YOU CAN READ RIGHT HERE, I WORK FOR THE PROPHET NOSTRADAMUS. THIS DOCUMENT AUTHORIZES ME TO ACT IN HIS NAME.

BENEATH MY MASTER'S SIGNATURE, YOU'LL FIND THE ROYAL SEAL.



I KNOW THE ROYAL SEAL WHEN I SEE IT!

TELL ME, WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK FOR A FRAUD? A MASTER IN THE ART OF NONSENSE?



AS NOSTRADAMUS IS THE KING'S ADVISOR, I SHALL SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION TO THE COURT NEXT TIME I'M UP AT THE PALACE. WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO GIVE ME YOUR NAME?



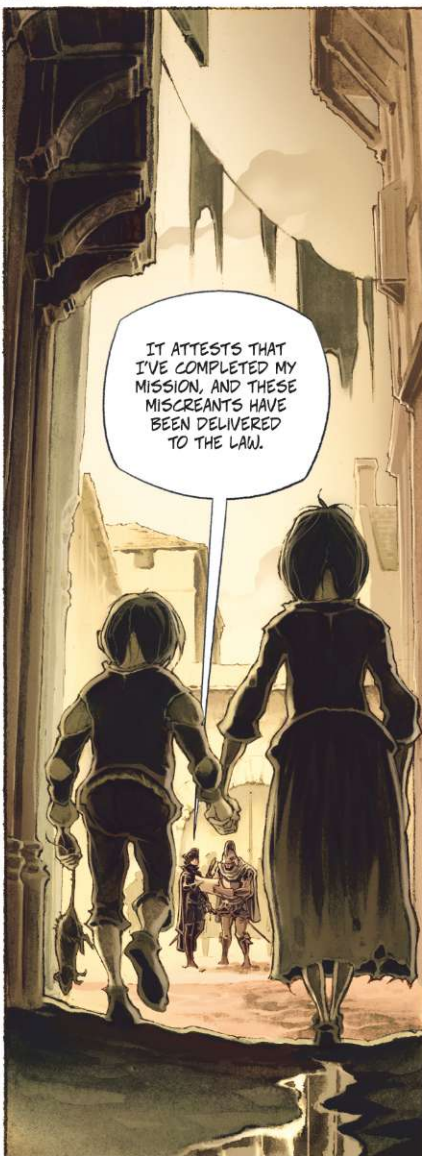
YOU PARISIANS THINK YOU'RE SO CLEVER, DON'T YOU? LET'S SEE HOW CLEVER YOU ARE WHEN I SHOVE THIS PARCHMENT AND ITS ROYAL SEAL UP YOUR ASS!

MY MEN AND I ARE GOING TO GIVE YOU EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN ASKING FOR, AND MORE. I'D ADVISE YOU NOT TO PUT UP A FIGHT. IF YOU DO, I'LL BE FORCED TO CLAP YOU IN IRONS.



NOW, HOLD ON! SHE STOPPED THESE FELONS! SHE DOESN'T DESERVE THAT.

SHUT UP AND GO BACK TO YOUR FILTHY INN!







I TOLD THE BISHOP'S NEPHEW TO LEAVE THE WIDOW ALONE.

OR ELSE WE'D COME BACK TO THE VILLAGE AND, THIS TIME, HE'D BE THE ONE WHO WAS "POSSESSED"! HA HA!

TELL ME... THAT STUFF ABOUT THE "LEVEL NINE DEMON" AND THE "THIRD EYE," DID YOU MAKE THAT ALL UP YOURSELF?

I WISH I HAD! I MUST'VE COME ACROSS IT IN ONE OF THOSE IDIOTIC TREATISES ON DEMONOLOGY OUR MASTER MADE US READ.

I DIDN'T THINK THEY WERE IDIOTIC.

GOOD GOD, ANGULUS, YOU'RE A MATHEMATICIAN! THERE'S NOTHING IN HIS LIBRARY BUT LUDICROUS TREATISES ON MAGIC MEANT TO FRIGHTEN LITTLE OLD LADIES AND CHILDREN!

MAGIC AND THE SUPERNATURAL ARE REAL. JUST NOT IN THOSE BOOKS.

AND THE DIVINE? THE MASTER CLAIMS GOD GIVES HIM HIS VISIONS BY MEANS OF A COSMIC REVOLUTION.

NOSTRADAMUS IS NOT A MAN OF THE FAITH. HE PRETENDS TO BELIEVE IN GOD SO THE CHURCH WILL LET HIM WORK IN PEACE AND NOT ACCUSE HIM OF HERESY.

NOSTRADAMUS MIGHT BE THE MOST LEARNED MAN I KNOW, BUT HIS CENTURIES AND HIS ALMANACHS ARE ALL JUST HOT AIR...

HOT AIR? JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND HIS HERMETIC LANGUAGE DOESN'T MEAN HIS VISIONS ARE NECESSARILY FAKE!

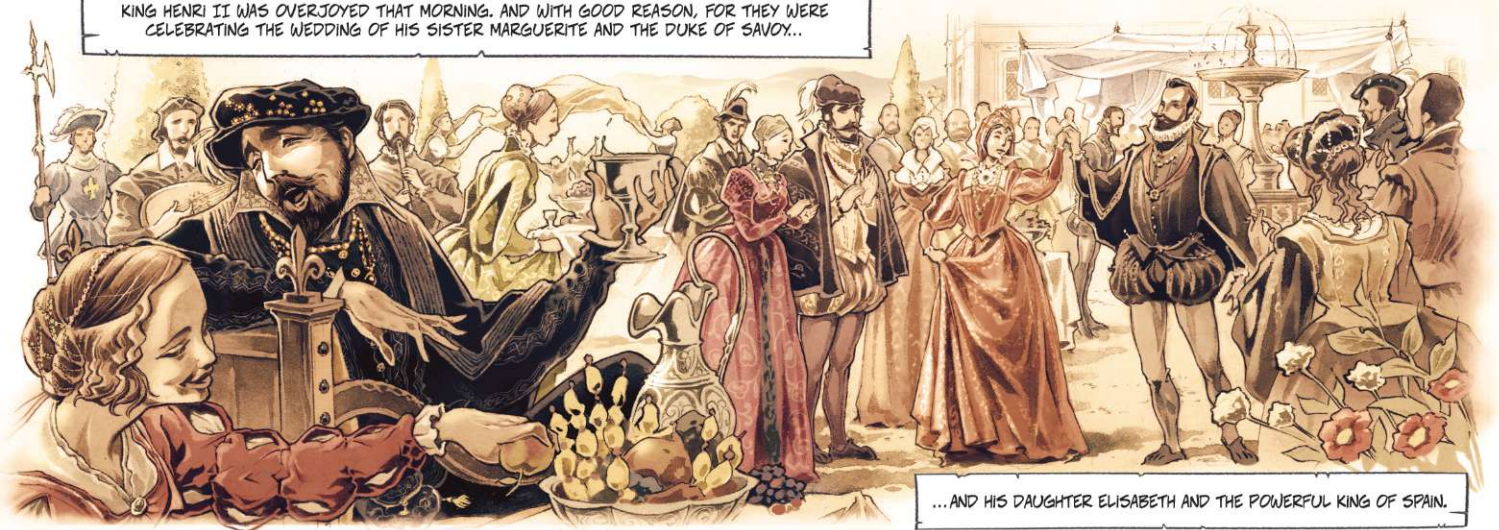
MUST I REMIND YOU, FOR EXAMPLE, OF HIS DIVINATION CONCERNING THE DEATH OF KING HENRI?

NO! I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EARS! ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO GIVE ME YOUR ABSURD INTERPRETATION OF THAT EVENT FOR THE THOUSANDTH TIME?

WHENEVER YOU DOUBT THE GREAT POWER OF NOSTRADAMUS!



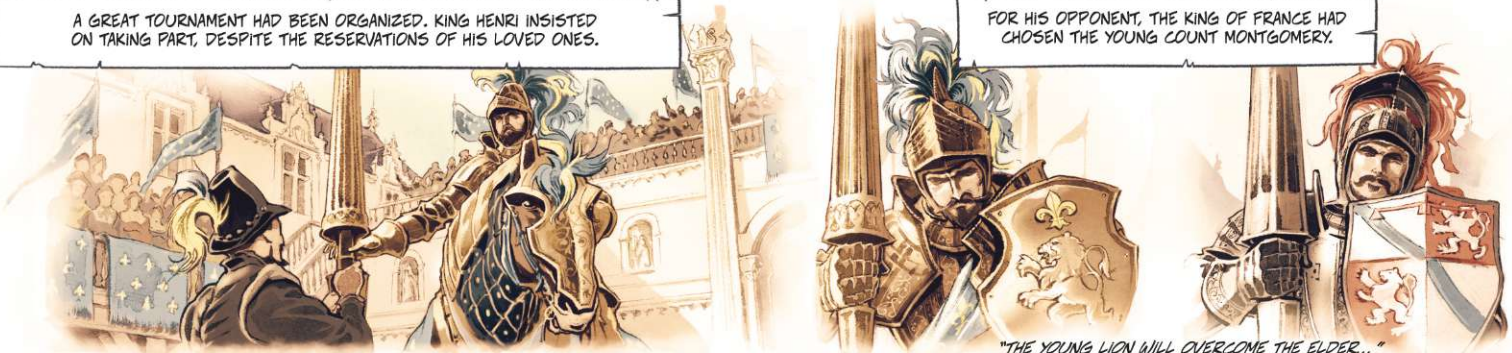
KING HENRI II WAS OVERJOYED THAT MORNING. AND WITH GOOD REASON, FOR THEY WERE CELEBRATING THE WEDDING OF HIS SISTER MARGUERITE AND THE DUKE OF SAVOY...



...AND HIS DAUGHTER ELISABETH AND THE POWERFUL KING OF SPAIN.

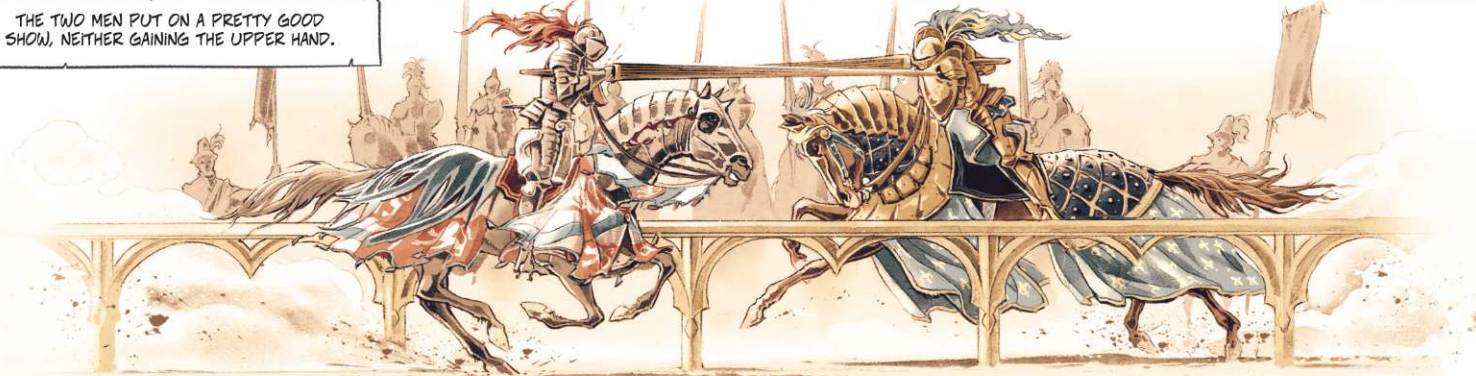
A GREAT TOURNAMENT HAD BEEN ORGANIZED. KING HENRI INSISTED ON TAKING PART, DESPITE THE RESERVATIONS OF HIS LOVED ONES.

FOR HIS OPPONENT, THE KING OF FRANCE HAD CHOSEN THE YOUNG COUNT MONTGOMERY.



"THE YOUNG LION WILL OVERCOME THE ELDER..."

THE TWO MEN PUT ON A PRETTY GOOD SHOW, NEITHER GAINING THE UPPER HAND.



"... ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE IN SINGLE COMBAT..."

BUT KING HENRI CHALLENGED HIS OPPONENT TO ONE MORE JOUST. PERHAPS IT WAS BECAUSE OF THE ELEGANT COUNT'S AFFAIR WITH THE QUEEN, WHICH HAD BECOME AN OPEN SECRET.

BEFORE HIS GUESTS' HORRIFIED EYES, MONTGOMERY'S SPLINTERED LANCE PIERCED THE KING'S VISOR, WOUNDING HIM GRIEVOUSLY IN THE NECK AND FACE.

THE KING LAY DYING FOR TEN DAYS.



"HE WILL PIERCE HIS EYE THROUGH A GOLDEN CAGE..."

"... TWO WOUNDS MADE ONE, THEN HE SHALL DIE A CRUEL DEATH."



THE MASTER PUBLISHED THAT PROPHECY FOUR YEARS BEFORE THE ACCIDENT! FOUR YEARS!

DONE YET?

DO YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW WHEN OUR KING DIED?



PURE COINCIDENCE, ANGULUS. YOU KNOW VERY WELL I LOVE OUR MASTER MORE THAN ANYONE. WITHOUT HIM, I WOULDN'T BE ALIVE.

BUT HIS SUCCESS IS BASED ON THE MOST FOOLISH AND DEEPLY-ROOTED SUPERSTITIONS THAT RULE US ALL, FROM THE KING TO THE LOWLIEST VILLAGER.



YOU SPEAK AS IF WE ALL STILL LIVED IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

WORSE THAN THAT! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? PEOPLE PREFER WIZARDS AND SEERS TO SCIENTISTS!

THAT'S WHY WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US. AND LOTS OF IT!



INDEED. AND AS I AM UNABLE TO SPREAD THE VOICE OF REASON ACROSS THE ENTIRE CONTINENT... I'M PLANNING ON BUYING OUR MASTER'S BUSINESS FROM HIM.

YOU MIGHT END UP WORKING FOR ME!



I'D RATHER JOIN A MONASTERY!





MASTER, IS THIS INTERROGATION REALLY NECESSARY?



MR. CHAVIGNY KNOWS OUR LOYALTY.



I SHALL BE THE JUDGE OF THAT.

I'M ABOUT TO ENTRUST YOU WITH MY OWN LIFE AND MY FAMILY'S. YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THAT I CAN'T AFFORD TO LEAVE ANYTHING TO CHANCE.



YOU'RE RIGHT. PLEASE FORGIVE ME. I WAS WOUNDED IN THE LEG AT THE BATTLE OF GRAVELINES AND HAD TO LEAVE THE ARMY.

THEY SAVED MY LEG, BUT IT COST ME MY CAREER.



THEY SAY THE SPANISH ARQUEBUSIERS ARE VERITABLE DEMONS WHO NEVER MISS THEIR TARGET.



MY LEFT LEG IS PROOF. AND I'D NEVER HAVE MADE IT WERE IT NOT FOR PIERRE.

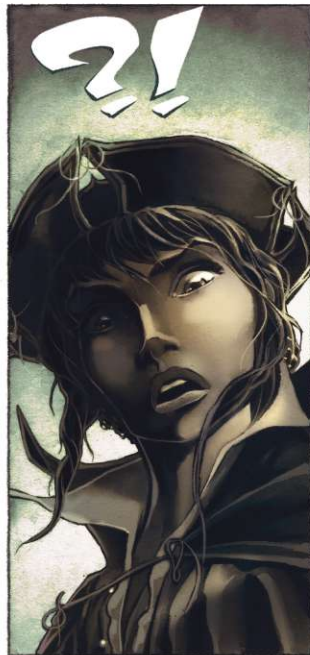


WELL THEN, WE'VE TWO HEROES AMONG US! I HOPE THAT WHEN THE TIME COMES, YOU'LL PROVE JUST AS HEROIC WHERE MY FAMILY'S CONCERNED.

ALL DUE RESPECT, MASTER. WE HOPE WE NEVER HAVE TO PROVE HOW RIGHT YOU WERE TO HIRE US.



GOOD NIGHT, GENTLEMEN.





I KNEW YOU'D BE UNABLE TO RESIST MY CHILDREN'S INVITATION. YOUR MORBID NECROMANCER'S CURIOSITY GOT THE BETTER OF YOU.



WHAT'S YOUR NAME? DID YOU GIVE THE ORDER TO INTERCEPT MY PIGEON?



MY NAME MATTERS LITTLE. BESIDES, YOU'RE THE FIRST TO PROUDLY BEAR A FALSE NAME WHEREVER YOU GO.

SO WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?



YOU ARE ONE OF NOSTRADAMUS' THREE STUDENTS.  
HE RAISED YOU AND CARED FOR YOU AS IF YOU WERE HIS OWN CHILDREN.



IN EXCHANGE, YOU SPREAD HIS LIES THROUGHOUT ALL FRANCE.

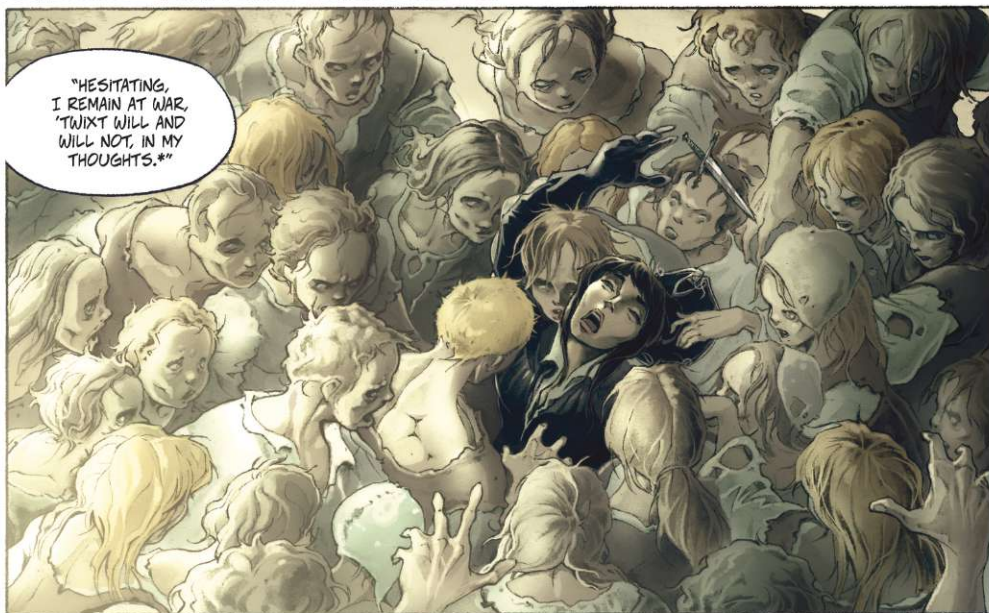
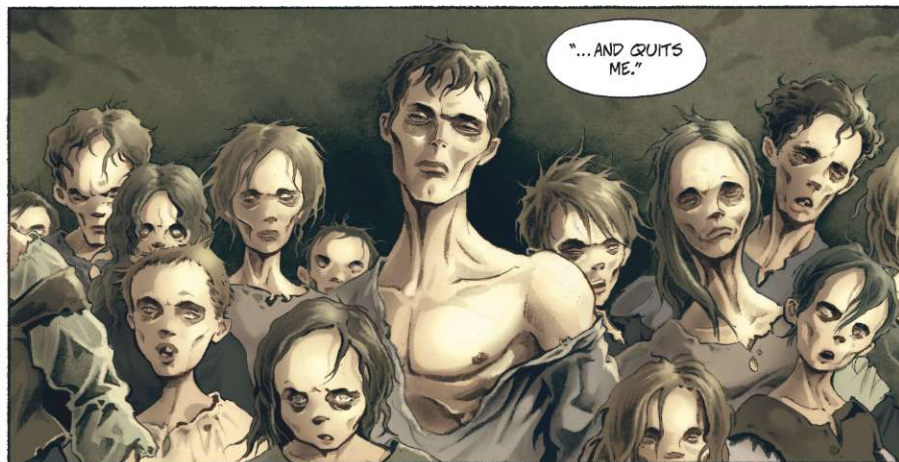


I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS. WE SHALL MEET AGAIN, MADAME.



YOU ARE MISTAKEN, MY DEAR. THE FESTIVITIES ARE JUST BEGINNING. AND I FEAR YOU SHALL NOT FIND THEM AT ALL TO YOUR LIKING.





\*DANTE ALIGHIERI, THE DIVINE COMEDY, CANTO VIII.



SALON DE CRAU CAN'T BE FAR NOW.

HALF A DAY'S TRAVEL. WE'D BE THERE ALREADY IF WE DIDN'T HAVE TO SPEND THE NIGHT HERE. BUT THE HORSES NEED FOOD AND REST.



LAST YEAR, THE JOURNEY SEEMED TO TAKE FOREVER.

I RECKON TRAVELING IN A CARRIAGE WITH YOUR MOTHER HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT.



HA HA HA!

RIGHT YOU ARE. LUCKILY, YOU'RE BETTER COMPANY THAN SHE WAS. ANYONE WOULD BE!



EVENING, GENTLEMEN! MY BROTHERS AND I ARE CELEBRATING. WOULD YOU CARE TO JOIN US?



I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE CELEBRATING, FRIEND, BUT I'M AFRAID WE MUST POLITELY DECLINE, ALAS.

WE'VE A LONG ROAD AHEAD TOMORROW, AND WE'D LIKE TO TURN IN EARLY.



WE'VE HAD ONE HELL OF A DAY.

BUT WHEN WE SAW YOU TWO COME THROUGH THAT DOOR, WE KNEW LUCK WAS BACK ON OUR SIDE.



WATER?

WHAT KIND OF MAN DRINKS WATER IN A TAVERN?



IT'S HIGH TIME MY FRIEND AND I CALLED IT A NIGHT.

BUT BEFORE WE DO, WE'D LIKE TO BUY YOU A DRINK.



I'VE A BETTER IDEA.



HAND OVER YOUR PURSES AND WE'LL BUY IT OURSELVES.



MY FATHER, PEACE BE WITH HIM, ALWAYS SAID...

"NO SENSE LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, SON..."



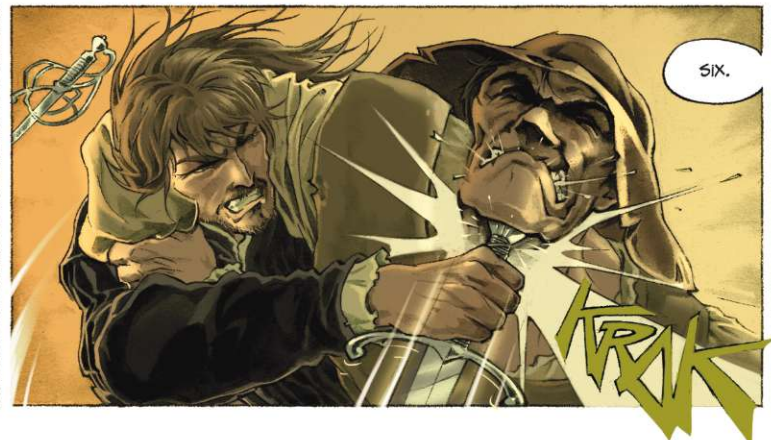
AAAAAARGH!!

SHAK



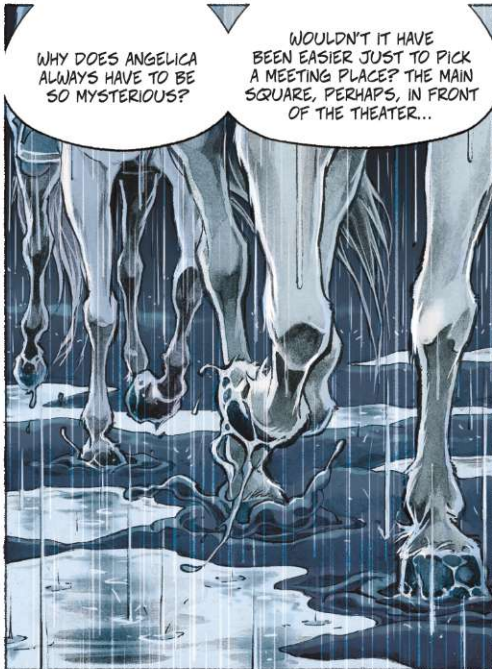
"...IT'LL FIND YOU SOON ENOUGH!"











WHY DOES ANGELICA ALWAYS HAVE TO BE SO MYSTERIOUS?

WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN EASIER JUST TO PICK A MEETING PLACE? THE MAIN SQUARE, PERHAPS, IN FRONT OF THE THEATER...



... BUT NO! THE LITTLE NECROMANCER HAS TO LEAVE A TRAIL OF SMELLY LITTLE BAGS IN THE HOPE OUR HORSES' NOSES WILL LEAD US TO HER!



IF SHE EVER FINDS OUT YOU CALLED HER A NECROMANCER, YOU'RE A DEAD MAN.

THERE'S NO SURER WAY OF DYING AT HER HANDS.



THE ONLY DEATH I'M SURE TO CATCH RIGHT NOW IS FROM COLD. I'M SOAKED FROM HEAD TO TOE!

YOU DO WHAT YOU WANT. I'M GOING TO HOLE UP IN AN INN. SHE CAN FOLLOW HER OWN DAMNED TRAIL OF MUSK BAGS BACK TO US!



LOOK!



NICE WORK, COUSIN! YOU'VE JUST EARNED YOURSELF AN EXTRA HELPING OF ALFALFA!

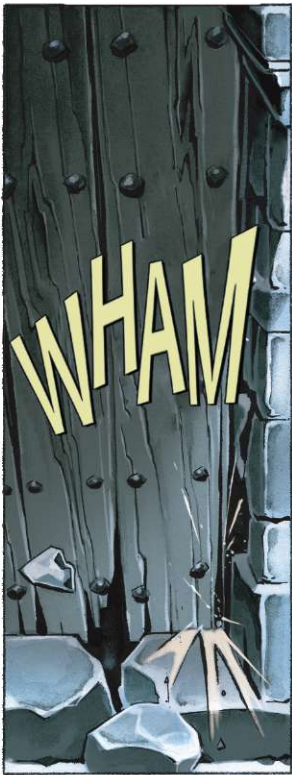
SOMETHING TELLS ME ANGELICA'S DOZING PEACEFULLY AWAY RIGHT NOW IN A NEARBY INN.



I DOUBT IT. SHE'D NEVER LEAVE HER HORSE OUT IN THE STREET.



?!



SOMEONE WAS SPYING ON US FROM BEHIND THAT DOOR! HE MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING!



OPEN UP, PLEASE. WE'RE LOOKING FOR THE OWNER OF THE HORSE OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR.

BAM BAM

STEP ASIDE.



ANYONE HOME?

HUSH! LISTEN!



TAP

TAP TAP



YOU DON'T THINK ANGELICA WAS CRAZY ENOUGH TO VENTURE INTO SUCH A GRIM PLACE ALL BY HERSELF?

DOES POPE PIUS IV SHIT IN THE WOODS?



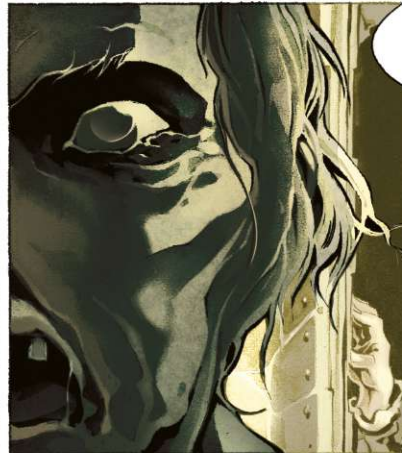
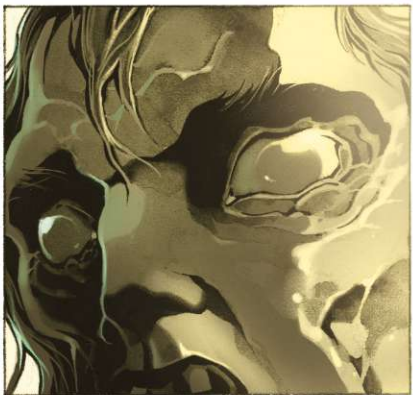
LET'S GET THE HORSES SOMEWHERE SAFE FIRST.

YOU SEEM CONVINCED YOU'LL FIND ANGELICA HERE.



DO YOU NOT DETECT A RATHER DISTINCTIVE SMELL AMIDST THE GENERAL REEK?

MUSK!





MAGIC IS A LIAR. IT MAKES PROMISES IT HAS NO INTENTION OF KEEPING!

MAGIC WILL TAKE EVERYTHING FROM YOU. USE YOU UP AND TOSS YOU IN A PAUPER'S GRAVE!



MAMA!



SORRY, MY DEAR, BUT WE MUST BE GOING.



MMMF! MMMFF!

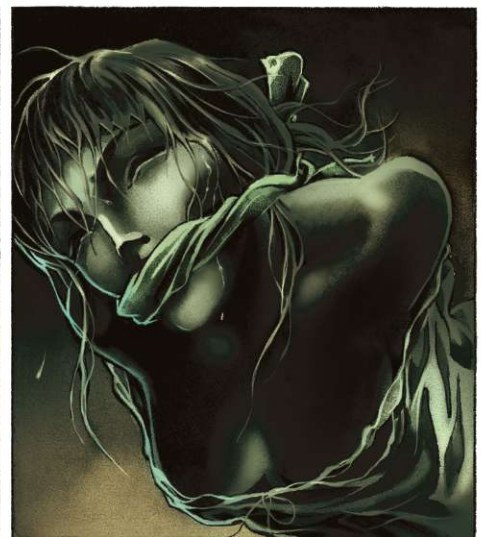
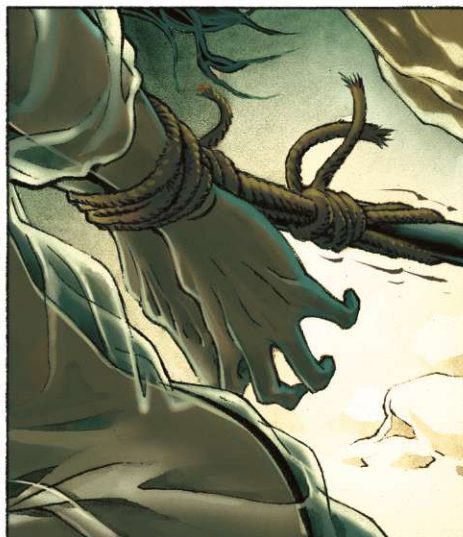
SETTLE DOWN. YOU WON'T BE ALONE.

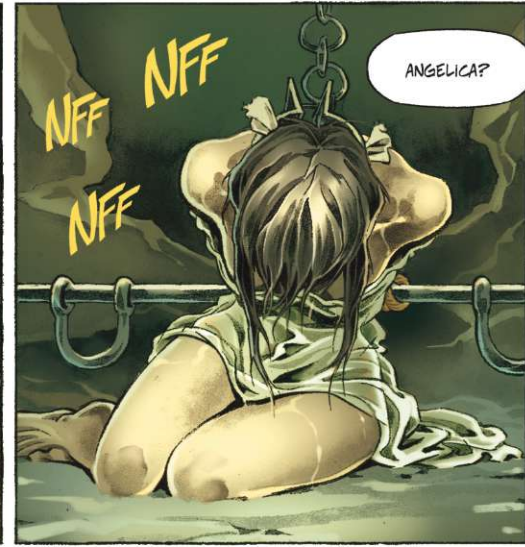
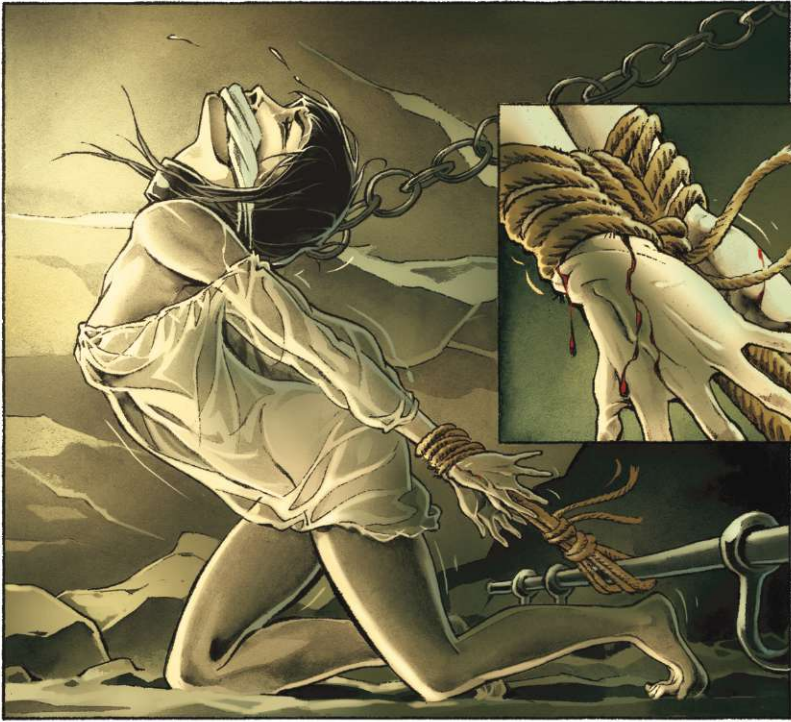


YOU'LL HAVE MAGIC TO KEEP YOU COMPANY.



MMMF! MMMFF!









DID IT REALLY TAKE BOTH OF YOU TO FREE ME? WHEN YOU SAW THE DOOR AJAR, DIDN'T YOU THINK FOR A MOMENT IT MIGHT BE A TRAP?!

A THANK YOU MIGHT BE NICE.



HMM... TRAPPING ALL THREE OF THE GREAT NOSTRADAMUS' BRATS WASN'T SO HARD AFTER ALL.

JUST AS I THOUGHT! YOUR SUPPOSED SUPERNATURAL POWERS ARE JUST SO MUCH FLIMFLAMMERY!



MY DEAR LADY... OR WHOEVER YOU ARE...

AS OUR MASTER TAUGHT US, AND I QUOTE HIM WORD FOR WORD...



"BEFORE SETTING FOOT IN THE LION'S DEN, ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A BACKUP PLAN IN CASE THINGS GO PEAR-SHAPED."



YOUR PLAN MUST BE TRULY INGENIOUS IF YOU THINK YOU CAN ESCAPE A LOCKED CELL GUARDED BY MY CHILDREN.



ACTUALLY, OUR PLAN COULDN'T BE SIMPLER. INDEED, I THINK I CAN SUM IT UP IN THREE LITTLE WORDS.

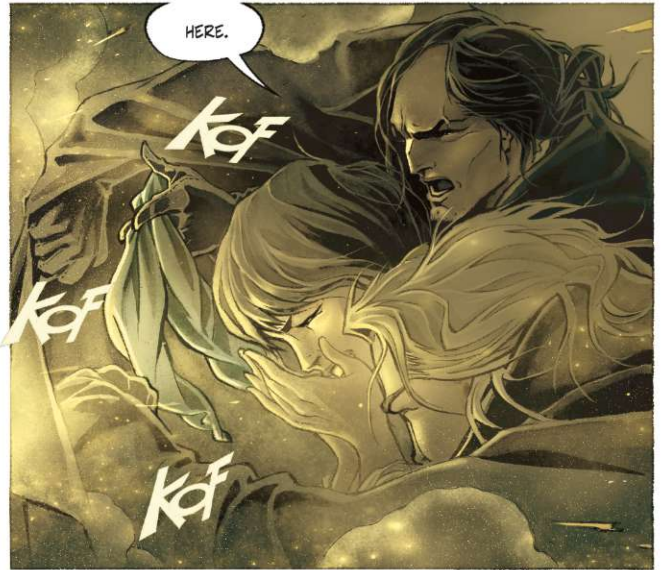


CHARCOAL.

SULFUR.

SALTPETER.







DON'T LET THEM ESCAPE!

STOP THEM, MY CHILDREN!



SO LONG, MY "CHILD."



PLEASE, NO! THEY DON'T MEAN TO HURT US!

HAVE YOU GONE MAD?! DON'T EVER TRY THAT AGAIN!



MOVE IT!



STOP THEM FROM ESCAPING! GRAB THEM!





GREETINGS, GENTLEMEN. MAY I HELP YOU?

GREETINGS. WE'D LIKE A WORD WITH MASTER NOSTRADAMUS.



IT'S TOO EARLY. COME BACK LATER AND THE MASTER MIGHT CONSENT TO SEE YOU.



FORGIVE MY INSISTENCE, BUT WE'VE COME A LONG WAY.

THE GREAT NOSTRADAMUS WILL BE DELIGHTED TO RECEIVE US. WE'RE OLD ACQUAINTANCES.



ALL RIGHT, THEN, I'LL WAKE HIM. BUT KNOW THIS: IF YOU'RE LYING, YOU'LL REGRET IT.

WHO SHALL I SAY IT IS?



CHARLES IX, KING OF FRANCE. I THINK THAT SHOULD DO NICELY.





PLEASE EXCUSE US, YOUR MAJESTY. IF WE'D KNOWN YOU WERE HONORING US WITH YOUR PRESENCE, WE'D HAVE PREPARED--

PLEASE, MADAME. IT IS I WHO SHOULD ASK YOUR PARDON, FOR CALLING ON YOU UNANNOUNCED.



PIERRE, ALAIN, HAVE YOU SEEN TO THEIR HORSES?

OF COURSE, MASTER. WITH YOUR PERMISSION, WE SHALL RETURN TO OUR POSTS.



POSTS? EXPECTING TROUBLE, MASTER?



LEAVE US NOW, PLEASE.



JOHANN, BE SO KIND AS TO LEND THE MASTER'S GUARDS A HAND? THANKS.

AS YOUR MAJESTY WISHES.



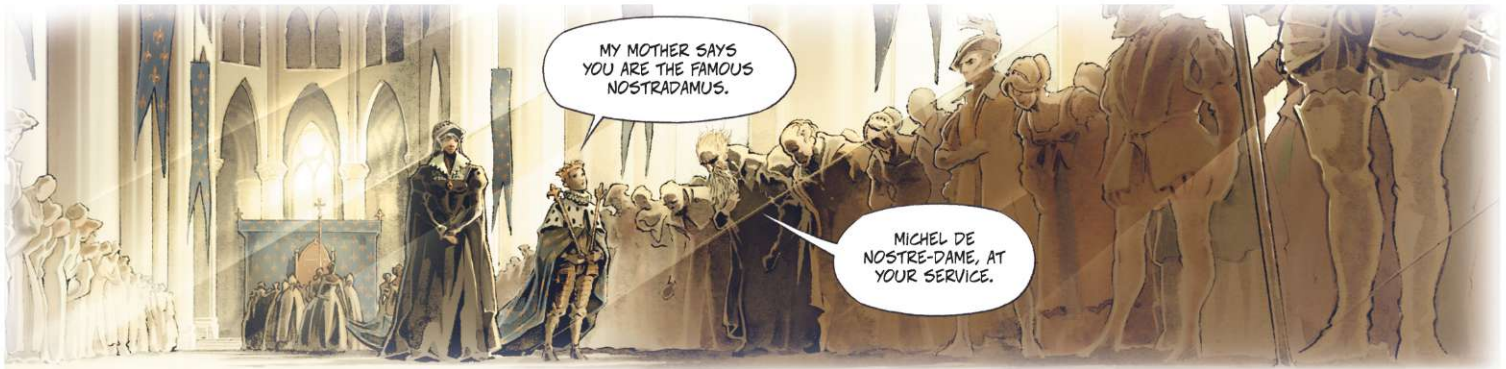
I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE MY FAMILY IS IN DANGER.

BUT MORE ABOUT THAT LATER. TELL ME, HOW MAY I BE OF SERVICE TO YOUR MAJESTY?



OH, DO GET UP, PLEASE. DO YOU REMEMBER MY CORONATION DAY?

HOW COULD I EVER FORGET? IT WAS FOUR YEARS AGO, ON ASCENSION DAY.



MY MOTHER SAYS YOU ARE THE FAMOUS NOSTRADAMUS.

MICHEL DE NOSTRE-DAME, AT YOUR SERVICE.



I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A QUESTION. WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME, WHAT DO YOU SEE? A CHILD, OR A KING?



I SEE A CHILD OF TEN WHO SHALL BE A GREAT KING OF FRANCE.

YOUR REPUTATION AS A PROPHET PRECEDES YOU. I AM DELIGHTED TO HEAR SUCH WORDS FROM YOUR MOUTH.



I HOPE WE MEET AGAIN SOMEDAY.

IN THREE YEARS, YOUR MAJESTY. YOU AND YOUR MOTHER WILL PAY A VISIT TO ME AT MY HUMBLE DWELLING IN SALON DE CRAU.

YOU WILL DO ME THE GREAT HONOR OF NAMING ME ADVISOR TO THE CROWN, AND I SHALL BECOME YOUR PERSONAL PHYSICIAN.



AND INDEED, SO IT WAS. SADLY, YOUR FRAGILE HEALTH HAS KEPT YOU FAR FROM THE PALACE.

ALAS, IT SADDENS ME SO...

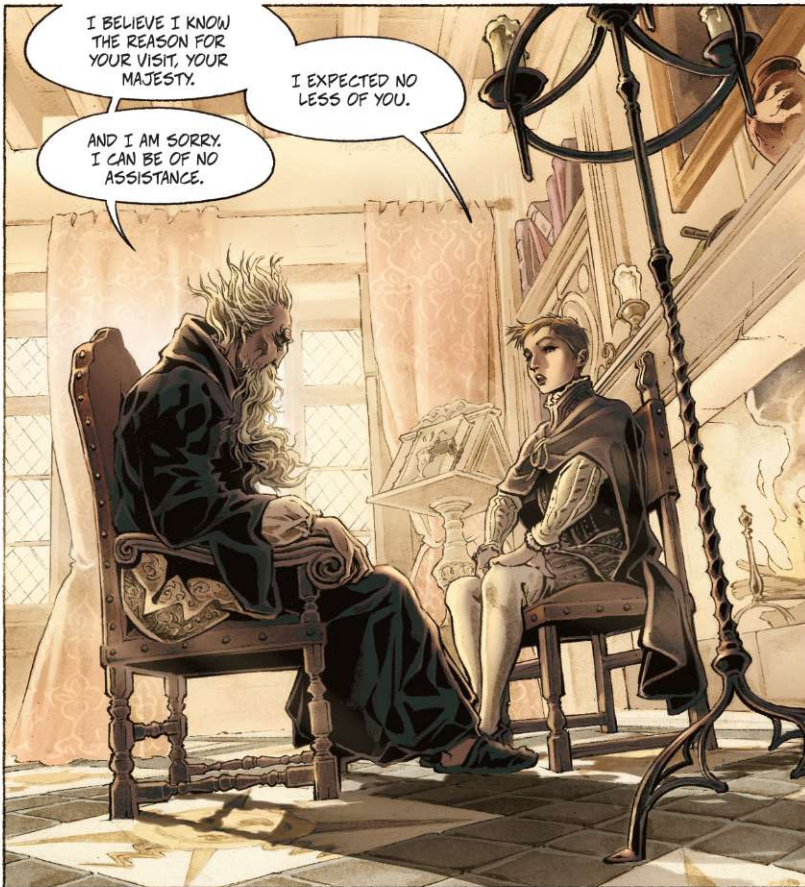


NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE. I KNOW HOW VERY BUSY YOU ARE.

BESIDES, YOU HAVE MANY CHILDREN WHO DEMAND YOUR ATTENTION.



MY MOTHER'S SPIES TRACK MY EVERY MOVE. I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO FLEE, THAT I MIGHT SPEAK PRIVATELY WITH YOU.



I BELIEVE I KNOW THE REASON FOR YOUR VISIT, YOUR MAJESTY.

I EXPECTED NO LESS OF YOU.

AND I AM SORRY. I CAN BE OF NO ASSISTANCE.



I'M GOING TO TELL YOU A SECRET. ON MY CORONATION DAY, I WEPT. I WAS AFRAID. I DIDN'T WANT TO BE KING.



IT TOOK TIME FOR ME TO ACCEPT THAT I'D BEEN BORN TO RULE THIS LAND, AND HAD TO DEVOTE MYSELF TO MY PEOPLE.

I'D HAVE LIKED TO SPEND MY DAYS AT SCHOOL, PLAYING WITH OTHER CHILDREN BESIDES MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS...



... BUT TODAY, I KNOW WHO I AM: CHARLES IX, KING OF FRANCE.

MASTER, I WISH TO BE THE BEST OF ALL KINGS. AND TO DO SO, I MUST BE ABLE TO SEE WHAT'S COMING.



I'M ASKING AS A FRIEND.

YOU WILL HAVE TO COMMAND ME, AS MY KING, INSTEAD.



SO BE IT. IF I AM TO FACE MY MOTHER'S WRATH UPON RETURNING TO THE PALACE, THIS LONG AND PERILOUS JOURNEY MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN WORTH IT.



THE DAY OF MY CORONATION, I ASKED YOU A QUESTION. YOU GAVE ME THE ANSWER I WANTED TO HEAR.

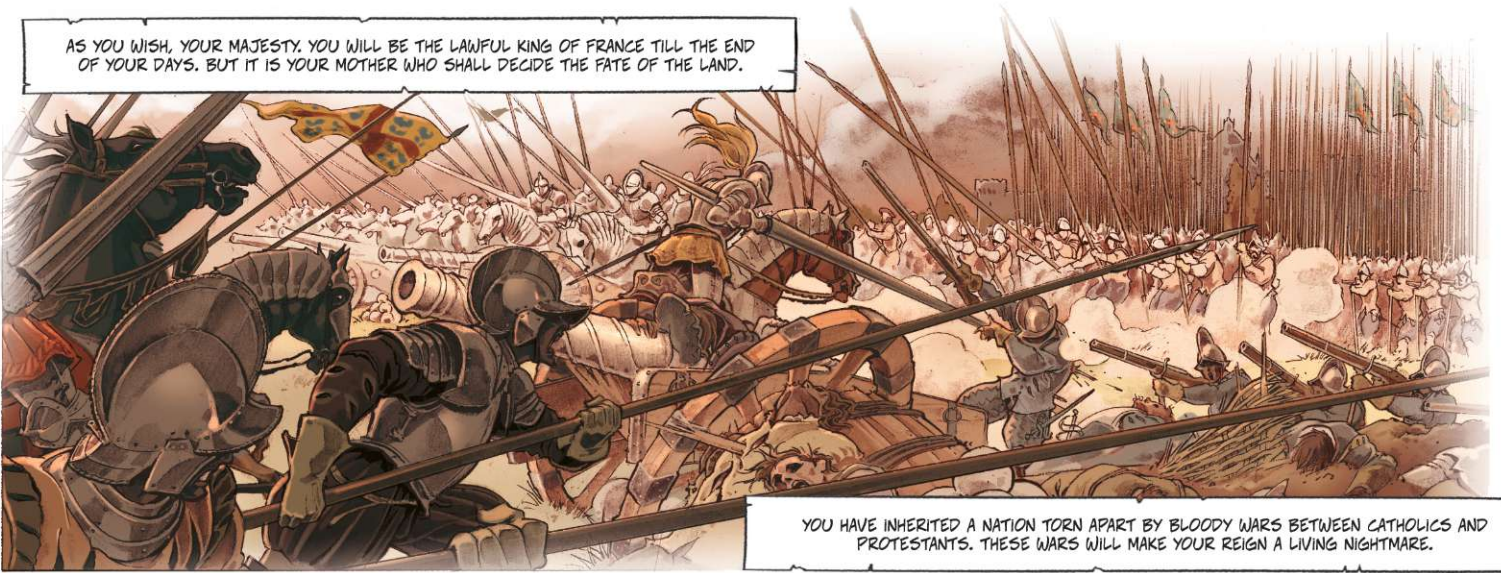
BUT YOUR EYES SPOKE OTHERWISE.



TODAY, I WANT TO HEAR THE TRUTH.

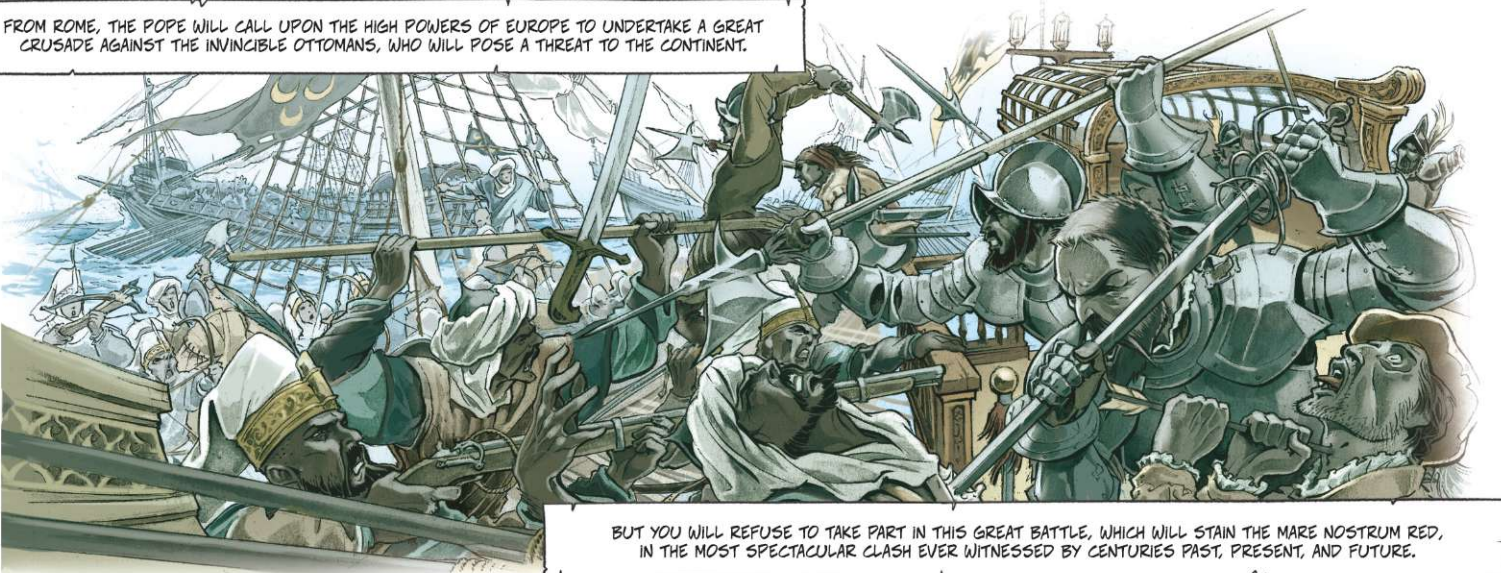


AS YOU WISH, YOUR MAJESTY. YOU WILL BE THE LAWFUL KING OF FRANCE TILL THE END OF YOUR DAYS. BUT IT IS YOUR MOTHER WHO SHALL DECIDE THE FATE OF THE LAND.



YOU HAVE INHERITED A NATION TORN APART BY BLOODY WARS BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS. THESE WARS WILL MAKE YOUR REIGN A LIVING NIGHTMARE.

FROM ROME, THE POPE WILL CALL UPON THE HIGH POWERS OF EUROPE TO UNDERTAKE A GREAT CRUSADE AGAINST THE INVINCIBLE OTTOMANS, WHO WILL POSE A THREAT TO THE CONTINENT.



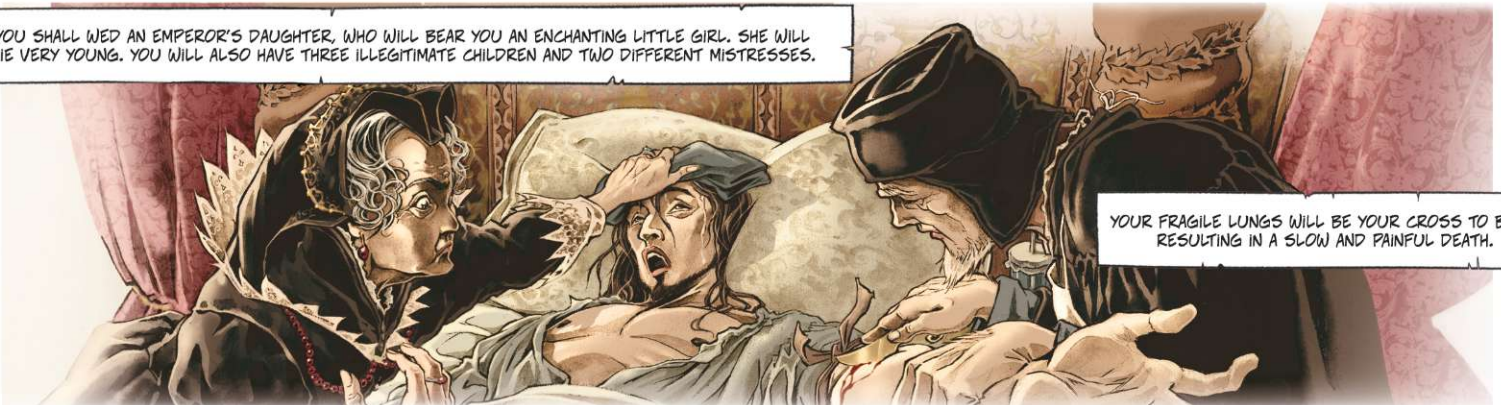
BUT YOU WILL REFUSE TO TAKE PART IN THIS GREAT BATTLE, WHICH WILL STAIN THE MARE NOSTRUM RED, IN THE MOST SPECTACULAR CLASH EVER WITNESSED BY CENTURIES PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

YOU WILL BE THE TARGET OF ATTEMPTED ABDUCTIONS AND PALACE INTRIGUES, UNCEASINGLY BESET BY THE DISCONTENT OF YOUR SUBJECTS.



YOU HAVE THE SOUL OF A POET, BUT HISTORY SHALL KNOW YOU AS THE MAN WHO ORDERED THE MASSACRE OF THOUSANDS OF HUGUENOTS ALL ACROSS FRANCE.

YOU SHALL WED AN EMPEROR'S DAUGHTER, WHO WILL BEAR YOU AN ENCHANTING LITTLE GIRL. SHE WILL DIE VERY YOUNG. YOU WILL ALSO HAVE THREE ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND TWO DIFFERENT MISTRESSES.

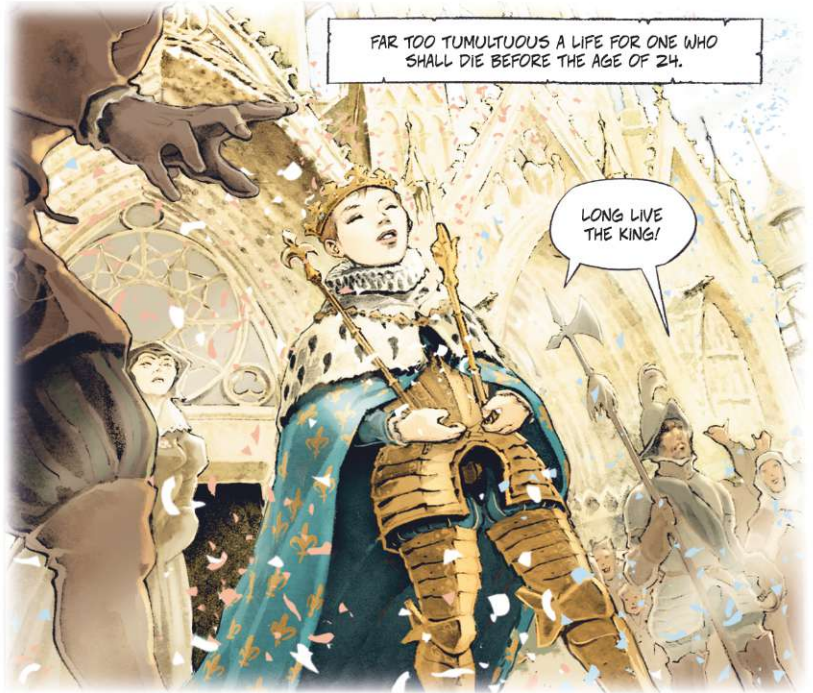


YOUR FRAGILE LUNGS WILL BE YOUR CROSS TO BEAR, RESULTING IN A SLOW AND PAINFUL DEATH.



YOUR MAJESTY, THESE ARE THE VISIONS I HAD A FEW DAYS BEFORE YOUR CORONATION.

HENCEFORTH, YOU KNOW WHAT NO MAN SHOULD EVER KNOW.



FAR TOO TUMULTUOUS A LIFE FOR ONE WHO SHALL DIE BEFORE THE AGE OF 24.

LONG LIVE THE KING!



I HAVE BUT NINE YEARS LEFT TO LIVE... NINE YEARS!



WHAT A SURPRISE, MONSIGNOR! YOU'LL GET TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE: MY ACCURSED NOSTRADAMUS AND THE YOUNG KING OF FRANCE.

SEE TO IT YOU DON'T OVERLOOK YOUR PART OF THE BARGAIN.



I SHALL BE VERY GENEROUS WITH YOU, MY LOYAL SCALIGER. I'VE NEVER TASTED THE SOUL OF A KING.



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France, 1565.

A decade since physician and astrologer Nostradamus published his *Prophecies*.

Since then his reputation has only grown.

The master receives a number of letters beseeching his help on matters that beggar belief, but his advancing age and fragile health prevent him from replying to all these demands.

His three young students, Arthus Trivium, Angelica Obscura, and Angulus Dante, roam the land in his name, solving mysteries neither science nor religion can settle.



Manda 2016