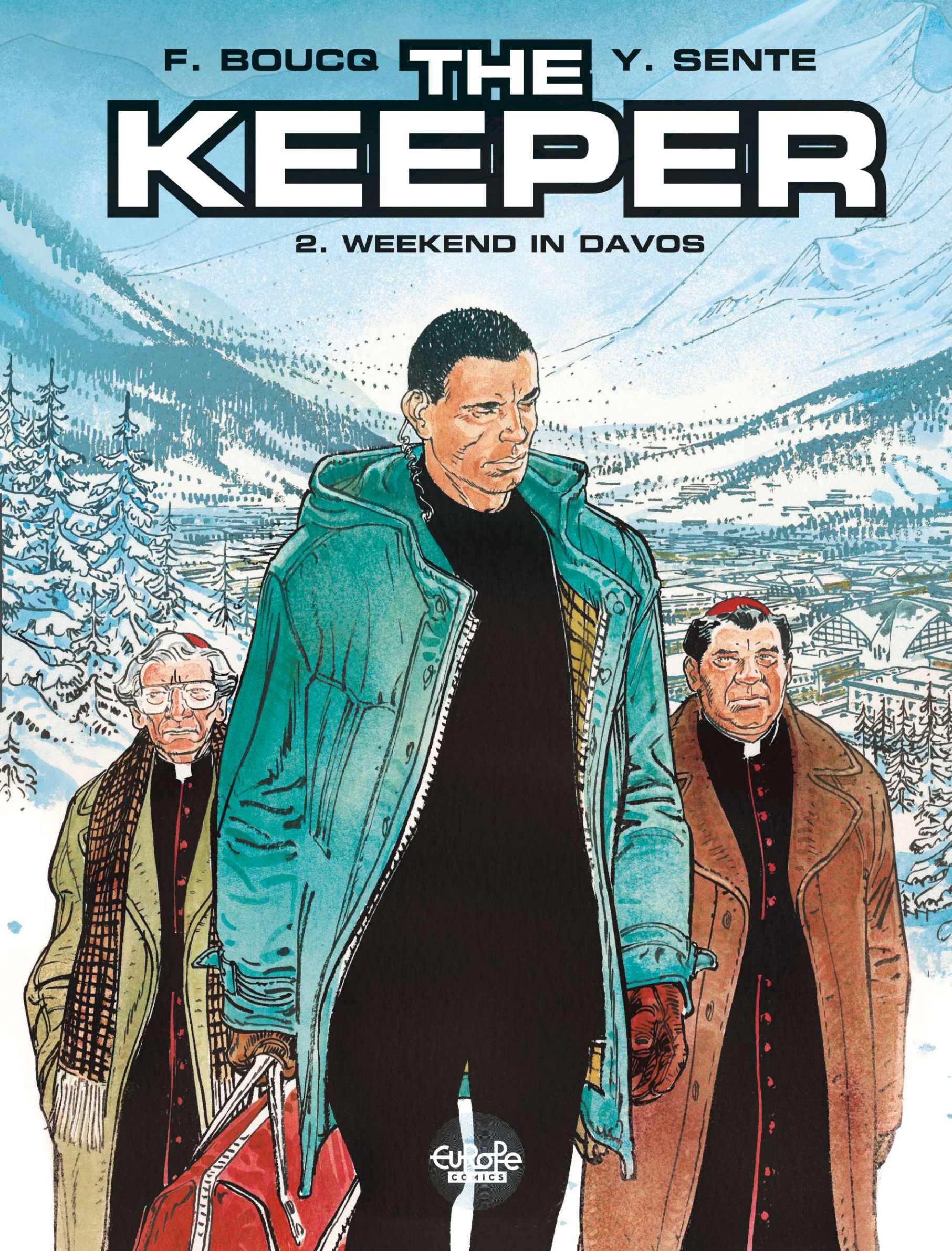


F. BOUCQ THE Y. SENTE

KEEPER

2. WEEKEND IN DAVOS



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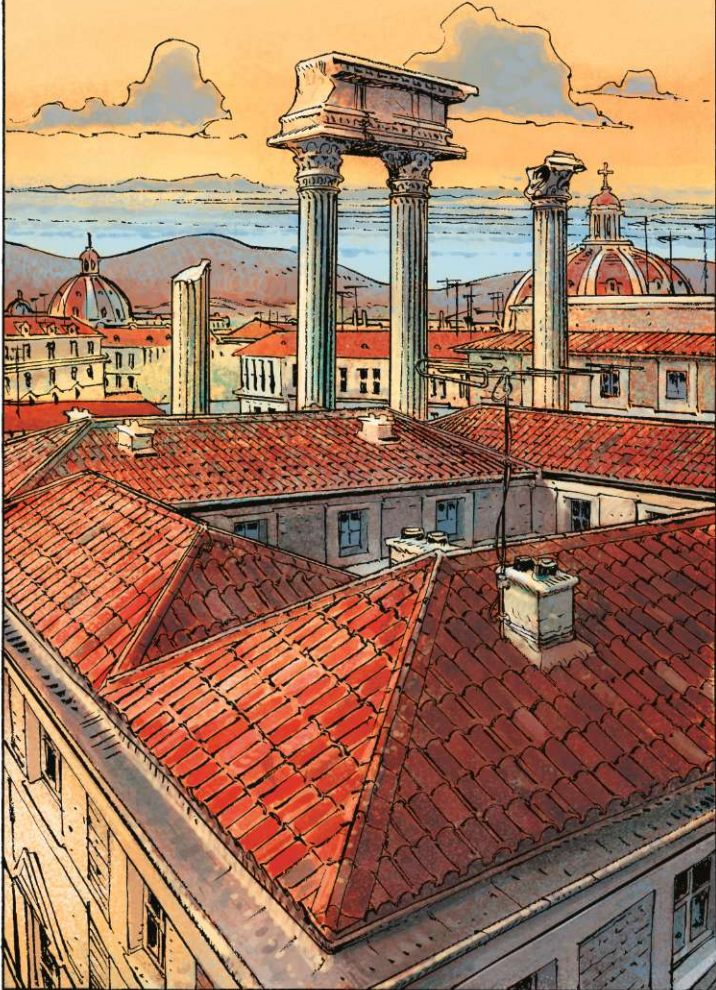
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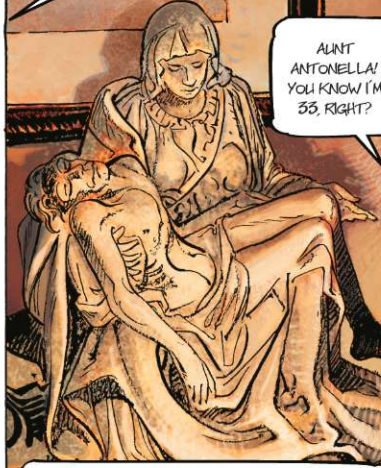


ROME, THE ETERNAL CITY. ON THIS LATE JANUARY MORNING, THE WINTER SUN PROVIDES LESS WARMTH THAN USUAL.



WELL KIDDO, IF IT'S THIS COLD IN ROME, I HATE TO THINK WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE IN DAVOS! DID YOU PACK ENOUGH WARM CLOTHES?

AUNT ANTONELLA! YOU KNOW I'M 33, RIGHT?



NOW, KEEP QUIET AND LET ME CONCENTRATE. I WOULD LIKE TO QUERY MY "FRIENDS" BEFORE YOU LEAVE.



PLEASE... YOU KNOW I'M NOT A BIG FAN OF THESE... PREDICTIONS.

SO? DO YOU REALLY THINK MARY STOPPED WORRYING ABOUT HER BOY WHEN HE REACHED THAT AGE? SINCE YOU'RE MY ONLY FAMILY AND SINCE NUNS DON'T HAVE CHILDREN, ALL MY PROTECTIVE MOTHERLY INSTINCTS ARE DIRECTED AT YOU. DON'T TELL ME YOU HAVEN'T FIGURED THAT OUT YET, VINCE!

OH, HUSH. DON'T BECOME ONE OF THOSE VATICAN OFFICIALS THAT ONLY BELIEVE WHAT THEY SEE. REALITY HAS MANY MORE LAYERS THAN OUR SENSES CAN PERCEIVE, BELIEVE ME.



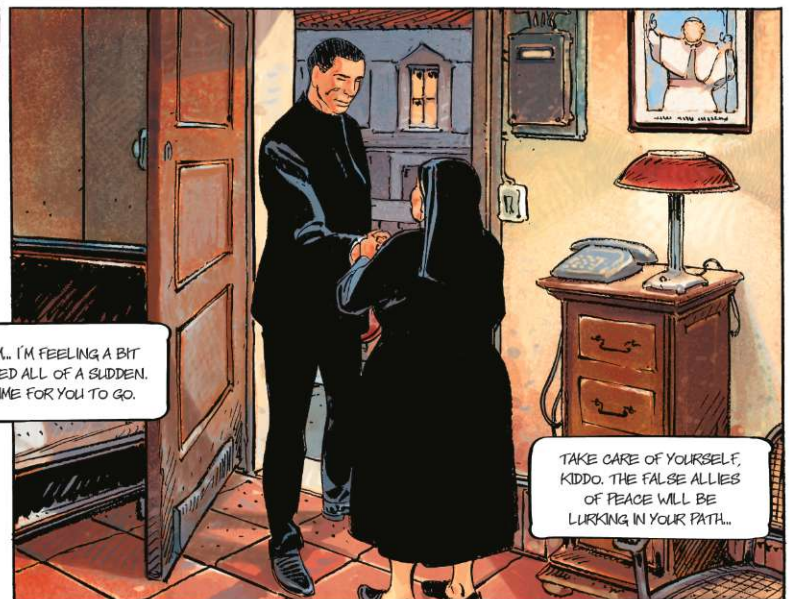
HMM, NOW THIS IS STRANGE...

WHAT IS IT? WHAT DO YOU SEE?

NOTHING... NOTHING TOO SERIOUS, I HOPE.



I'M... I'M FEELING A BIT TIRED ALL OF A SUDDEN. TIME FOR YOU TO GO.

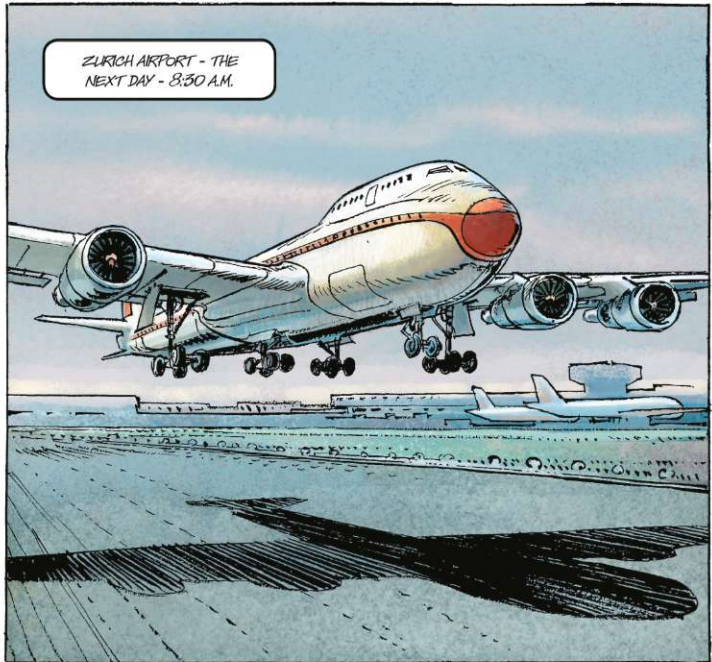


TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, KIDDO. THE FALSE ALLIES OF PEACE WILL BE LURKING IN YOUR PATH...



...AND I'M AFRAID I WON'T BE ABLE TO PROTECT YOU MUCH LONGER.

WHERE THE HECK ARE THEY? THEIR PLANE LANDED AN HOUR BEFORE OURS.



ZURICH AIRPORT - THE NEXT DAY - 8:30 A.M.



ISN'T THAT ARCHBISHOP SALK OVER THERE?



WHY YES, IT IS! MY DEAR OLD FRIEND.

CARDINAL FELBSTER!



HOW WONDERFUL TO SEE YOU! I'M SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WAIT, MY FRIEND, BUT JOHN, MY SECRETARY, ABANDONED ME AT THE BAR TO GO DO SOME SHOPPING. IMAGINE THAT!



DON'T APOLOGIZE, ROBERT, AND DON'T GRIPE ABOUT IT EITHER! GIULIO, MY OWN ASSISTANT, WON'T LET ME OUT OF HIS SIGHT. IT'S OFTEN MUCH MORE CONSTRAINING.

IF YOU SAY SO... WHO IS THAT MAN ON THE PHONE?



THE BODYGUARD THE CURIA INSISTS UPON. WHAT WITH ALL THE INTERNATIONAL TENSION THESE PAST FEW WEEKS, I THINK OUR SUPERIORS ARE GETTING SLIGHTLY PARANOID. THAT SAID, HE'S ALSO AN ATTORNEY WHO SPECIALIZES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW!

HMM. I HOPE IT'S NOT US THEY'RE PARANOID ABOUT. EDUCATED BODYGUARDS MAKE PERFECT SPES, ESPECIALLY WHEN FORCED UPON US.



PLEASSED TO MEET YOU, MONSIGNOR SALK. I'LL BE IN CHARGE OF YOUR SECURITY WHILE YOU'RE IN SWITZERLAND.

SO I HEAR, SON. THANK YOU. WOULD YOU BY ANY CHANCE KNOW WHERE OUR DRIVERS ARE?



THIS WAY, GENTLEMEN. TWO VEHICLES ARE WAITING OUTSIDE. YOUR ASSISTANTS WILL RIDE IN THE FIRST ONE AND I'LL RIDE WITH YOU IN THE SECOND VEHICLE, IF YOU DON'T MIND.

PERFECT! LET'S GO! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE RUGGED BEAUTY OF THE GRISONS AGAIN!



FORTY MINUTES LATER, AFTER DRIVING THROUGH THE CITY, TWO VEHICLES CARRYING THE VATICAN'S ENVOYS JOIN THE HIGHWAY THAT RUNS ALONGSIDE LAKE ZURICH AND HEAD EAST.



HELLO, LAND ONE? REQUESTING COMM. CHECK. I'LL TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK YOU TO PLEASE REDUCE YOUR SPEED TO 100 km/h AND TO MAINTAIN THAT SPEED.



TEN-FOUR, LAND TWO. THE RADIO IS FORECASTING SNOW OVER THE GRISONS. ONCE WE LEAVE THE HIGHWAY IN LANDQUART, WE'LL HAVE TO SLOW IT DOWN TO GO.



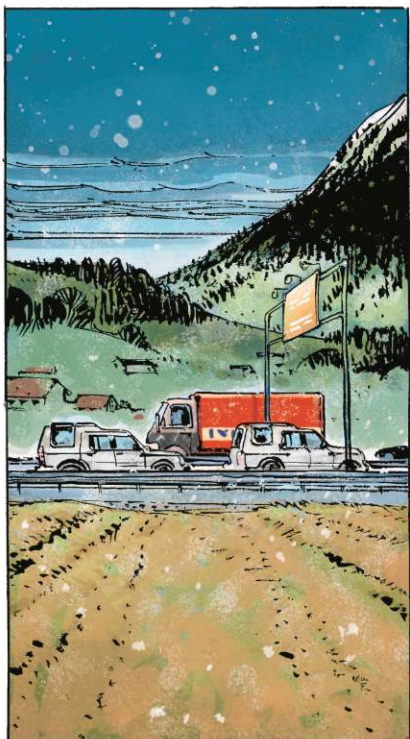
SINCE WE'LL BE ON THE ROAD FOR A FEW HOURS, LET'S GO OVER THINGS, ROBERT. YOU'RE STATIONED IN MEXICO. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE RECENT INCREASE IN THIRD-WORLD DEBT?

IT'S A TICKING TIMEBOMB WAITING TO GO OFF, I'M AFRAID.



THE BIG QUESTION IS HOW MANY YEARS OR MINUTES WE HAVE UNTIL THE INEVITABLE BLAST.

LORD WILLING, MEETINGS LIKE THE ONE WE'LL BE ATTENDING WILL HELP DISMANTLE THE BOMB WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME.





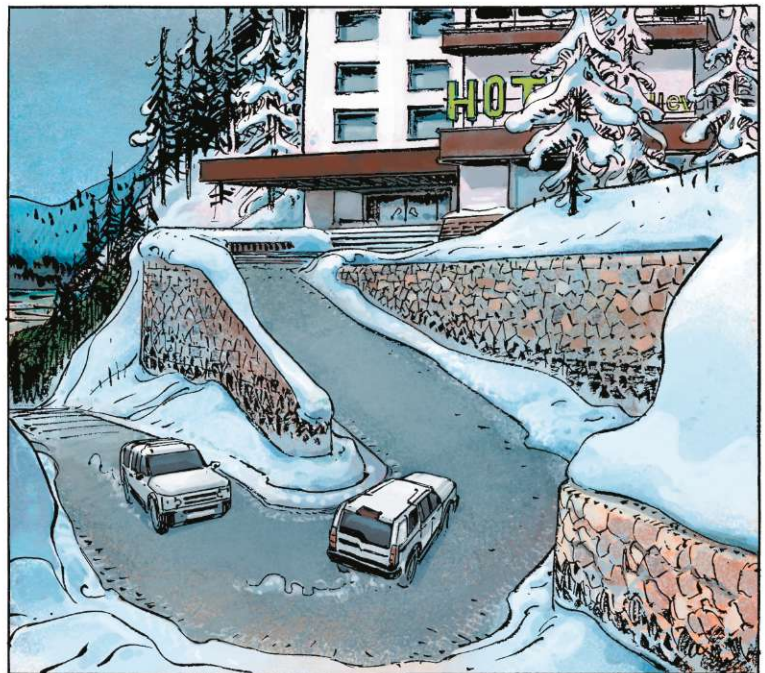
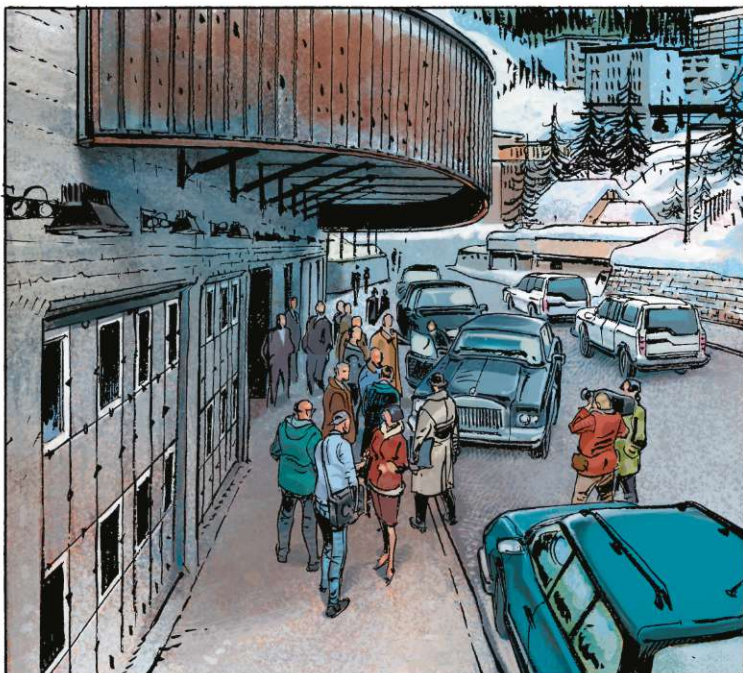
YOU HAVE EXCELLENT TASTE, SON. THAT'S A VERY ATTRACTIVE WOMAN.



UH-HUH. TELL US WHAT ALL THE EXCITEMENT IS ABOUT, INSTEAD.



GIVEN THE NUMBER OF HIGH PROFILE PEOPLE ATTENDING THE FORUM OR THE SIDEBAR SEMINARS, THE SWISS ARMY IS MONITORING THE THREE ROADS AROUND DAVOS. EVERY YEAR, MANY SWISS NATIONALS SHOW UP TO PROTEST THE USE OF THE MILITARY FOR PRIVATE PURPOSES.





I SUGGEST YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BEAUTIFUL WEATHER AND YOUR FREE TIME BEFORE THE OPENING DINNER TO ENJOY THE HOTEL'S AMENITIES. IF YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS LIKE TO SKI, EVERYTHING HAS BEEN ARRANGED. AS FOR ME, I MUST LEAVE YOU TO PARTAKE IN THE RITUAL PRESS CONFERENCE.

CARDINAL FELISTER! ARCHBISHOP SALK! WELCOME TO DAVOS! HOW WAS YOUR TRIP?

EXCELLENT, MR. AL QUARD!

WE WISH YOU ALL THE BEST OF LUCK, THEN, MR. AL QUARD.



WHO ARE THOSE GORILLA-ESQUE GUARDS, DO YOU KNOW?

ACCORDING TO THE PRESS KIT SENT TO THE GUESTS, IT'S A PRIVATE SECURITY FIRM HIRED BY OUR HOST. MR. AL QUARD OPTED TO FINANCE THE SECURITY DETAIL HIMSELF INSTEAD OF CALLING ON THE POLICE AND RUNNING THE RISK OF MORE LOCAL DEMONSTRATIONS.



ARCHBISHOP SALK, OUR ASSISTANTS AND I ARE GOING TO REVIEW OUR FILES AND COMPARE NOTES THIS AFTERNOON. SO GO ENJOY YOURSELF, SON. WE'LL MEET UP WITH YOU AT THE OPENING DINNER.

AS YOU WISH, YOUR EMINENCE.





SORRY I CAN'T GO WITH YOU, BUT THE TOWN HIRES ME TO KEEP AN EYE ON THAT CELL PHONE TOWER DURING THE FORUM, AND I HAVE TO--

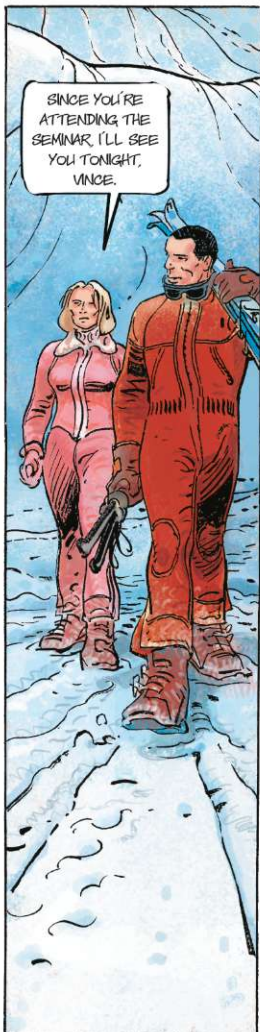
DON'T WORRY, MY GOOD MAN. ALL IS WELL. YOU'VE FOUND ME A CHARMING RESCUER, WHICH IS A GREAT START.



ONCE AGAIN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS, THE ONLY GOAL OF THIS CONFERENCE IS TO HELP THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PLAYERS ON THE WORLD STOCK MARKETS TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER BETTER. THANKS AGAIN FOR COMING, AND HERE'S TO YOU.

BUT BEFORE YOU ENK INTO THAT NICE HOT BATH, LET ME JUST SAY THANK YOU ONE MORE TIME.

SINCE YOU'RE ATTENDING THE SEMINAR, I'LL SEE YOU TONIGHT, VINCE.



WELL, FATHER, IT LOOKS LIKE BLONDE BARBIE THERE IS MOST GRATEFUL TO HER GOOD SHEPHERD FOR WALKING HER BACK TO HER DELUXE STABLE.

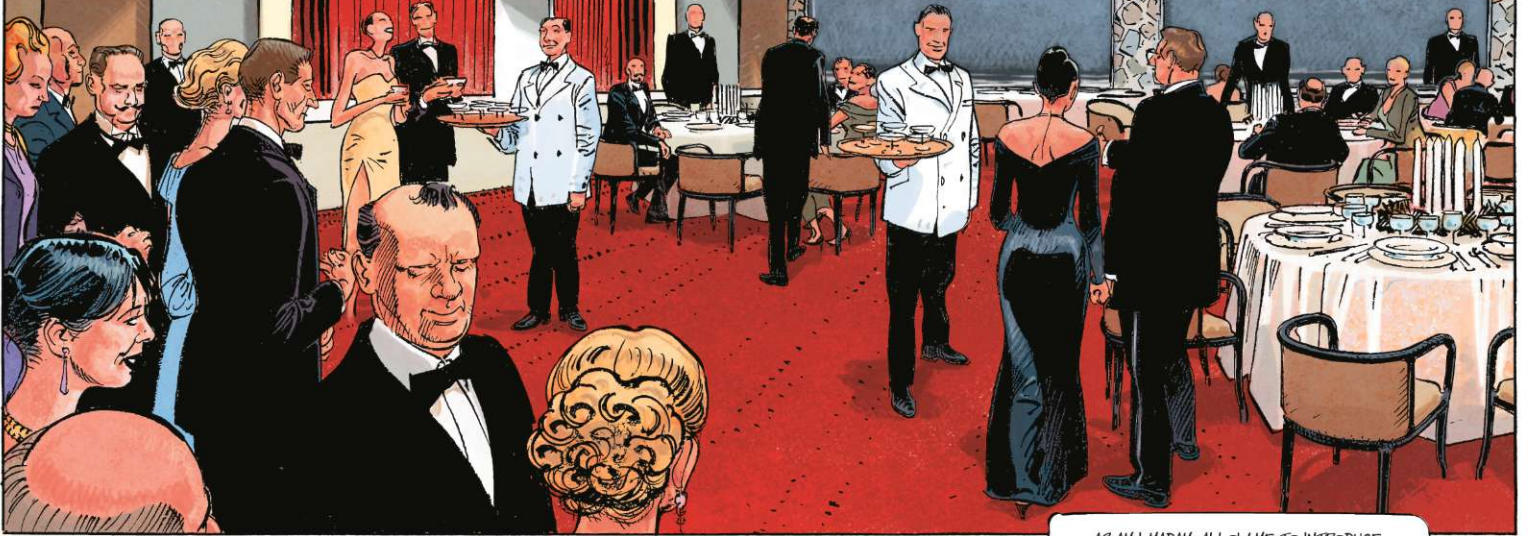
MISS PRIDE? WHAT A PLEASANT SURPRISE! DOES THIS MEAN YOU FINALLY HAVE TIME TO HAVE THAT COFFEE WITH ME?

SORRY FATHER, THE PRESS IS BEING KICKED OUT ALREADY. I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE THE HEAD OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST FINANCE GROUP HADN'T LEFT ANY LIPSTICK ON YOUR MOUTH. YOUR EMPLOYERS MIGHT BE TAKEN ABACK... CIAO!

CIAO...



8:00 P.M. IN THE DINING ROOM OF THE EXCLUSIVE BELLE VUE HOTEL. JUST LIKE IN MOST FUNCTION ROOMS IN DAVOS IN LATE JANUARY, THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN FOR THE BEGINNING OF COCKTAIL HOUR AND AN INFORMAL MEET-AND-GREET SESSION.



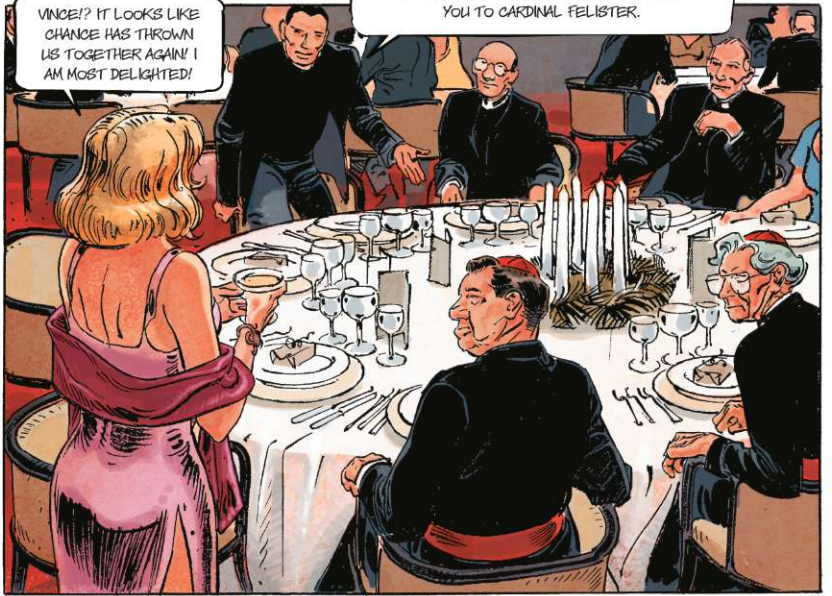
DID YOU ARRANGE EVERYTHING, MY FRIEND?

YES, MADAM. YOU'RE SITTING AT THE MAIN TABLE.



VINCE?? IT LOOKS LIKE CHANCE HAS THROWN US TOGETHER AGAIN! I AM MOST DELIGHTED!

AS AM I, MADAM. ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO CARDINAL FELISTER.

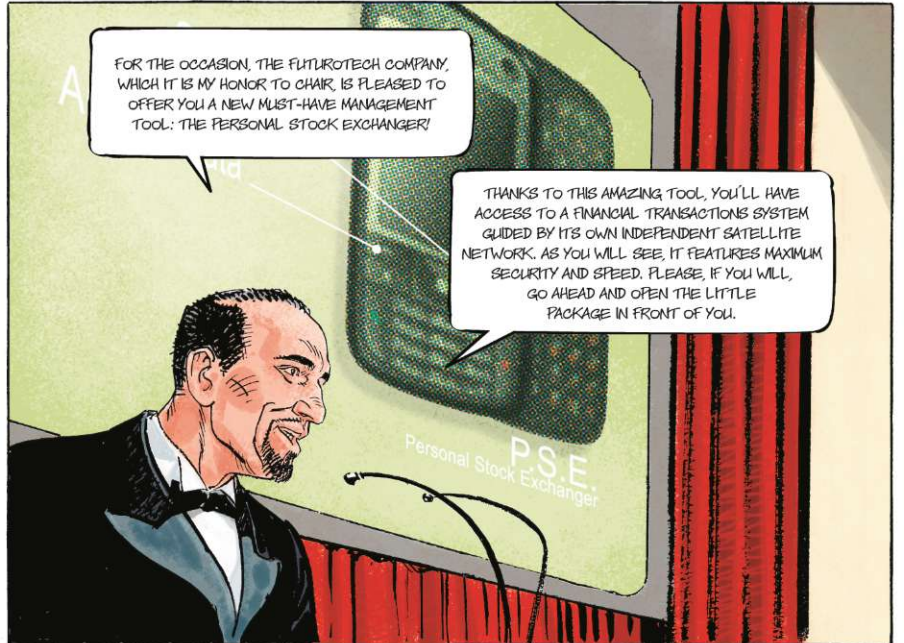


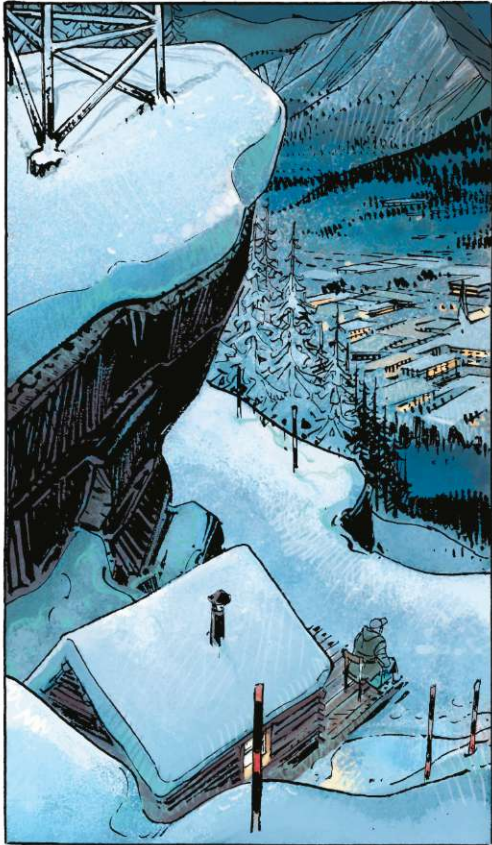
YOUR EMINENCE, MONSIEUR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: WELCOME TO OUR FIRST FINANCE SEMINAR! WE HOPE, AS I'M SURE YOU DO, TO REKINDLE HERE THE SPIRIT OF CAMARADERIE OF THE FIRST SESSIONS OF THE DAVOS WORLD FORUM, BEFORE IT BECAME A VICTIM OF ITS OWN SUCCESS AND LOST A BIT OF ITS SWEET SCENT OF DISCRETION TO ANWAY. WELCOME, DEAR FRIENDS, TO THIS MEETING, WHICH WE HOPE WILL BE AS LOW BECOME... SOMEWHAT "STAR-STUDDED." FRIENDS, TO THIS MEETING, WHICH WE KEY AND FRIENDLY AS POSSIBLE.



FOR THE OCCASION, THE FUTUROTECH COMPANY, WHICH IT IS MY HONOR TO CHAIR, IS PLEASED TO OFFER YOU A NEW MUST-HAVE MANAGEMENT TOOL: THE PERSONAL STOCK EXCHANGER!

THANKS TO THIS AMAZING TOOL, YOU'LL HAVE ACCESS TO A FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS SYSTEM GUIDED BY ITS OWN INDEPENDENT SATELLITE NETWORK. AS YOU WILL SEE, IT FEATURES MAXIMUM SECURITY AND SPEED. PLEASE, IF YOU WILL, GO AHEAD AND OPEN THE LITTLE PACKAGE IN FRONT OF YOU.





LOOKS LIKE THE ARMY'S OUT AND ABOUT...



I AM LIEUTENANT FILLIEZ OF THE SWISS ARMY. FOR REASONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY, WE'VE BEEN ORDERED TO TAKE OVER SURVEILLANCE OF ALL CELL PHONE TOWERS. PLEASE LEAVE THE PERIMETER, SR.

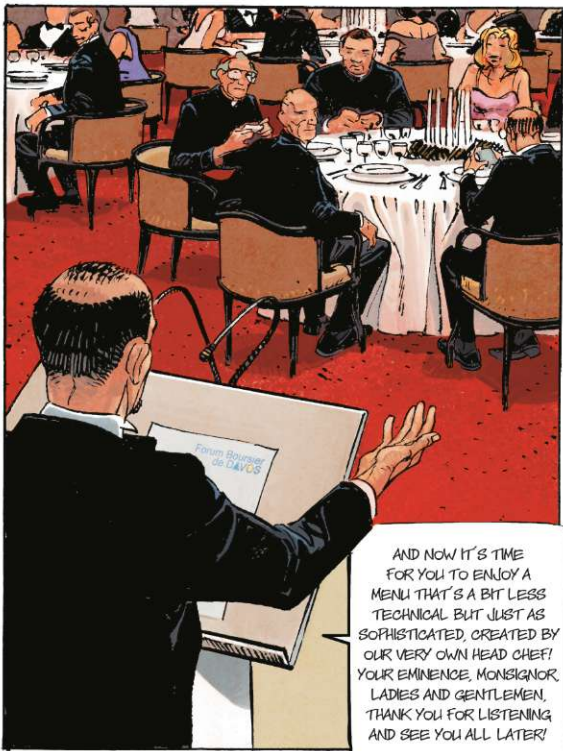
LEAVE? LISTEN HERE, BUDDY, I'M A RESERVE OFFICER AND I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. I WANT TO CALL THE TOWN TO HAVE THEM CONFIRM I CAN LEAVE MY POST.



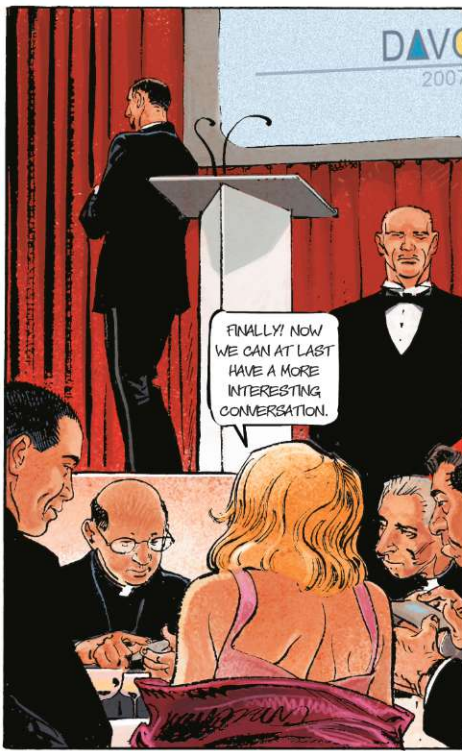
UH-HUH. I ADMIRE YOUR SENSE OF DUTY, SR. SERGEANT, TAKE HIM TO RADIO COMM AND CALL UP THE DAVOS PD FOR CONFIRMATION.



SO THERE YOU HAVE IT. AS YOU CAN SEE, THE SYSTEM IS VERY USER FRIENDLY, AND THANKS TO THE PERSONAL I.D. CODE YOU HAVE EACH JUST SIGNED IN TO YOUR OWN PERSONAL STOCK EXCHANGER, YOUR DEVICE IS NOW ONE HUNDRED PERCENT HACKER-PROOF.



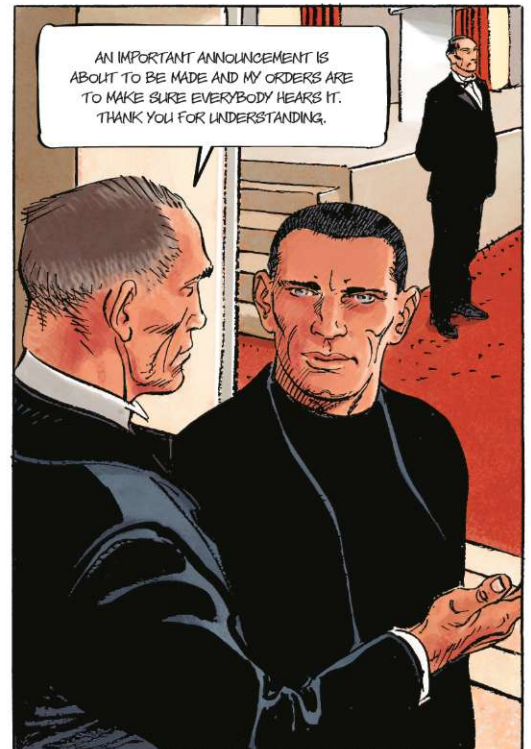
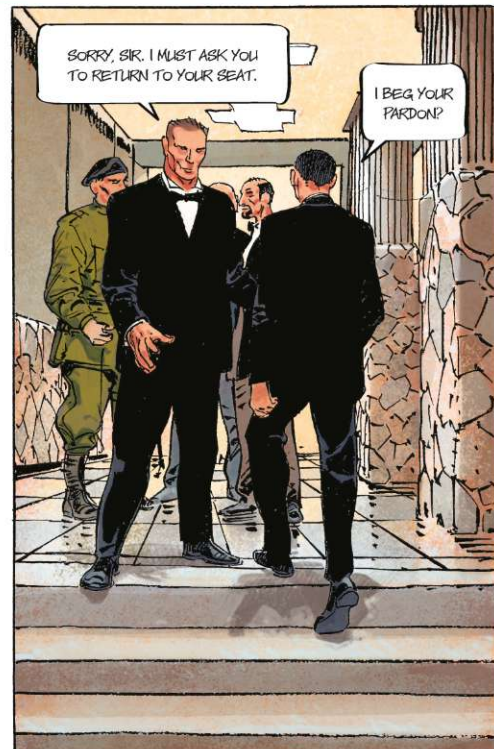
AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO ENJOY A MENU THAT'S A BIT LESS TECHNICAL BUT JUST AS SOPHISTICATED, CREATED BY OUR VERY OWN HEAD CHEF! YOUR EMINENCE, MONSIGNOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THANK YOU FOR LISTENING AND SEE YOU ALL LATER!

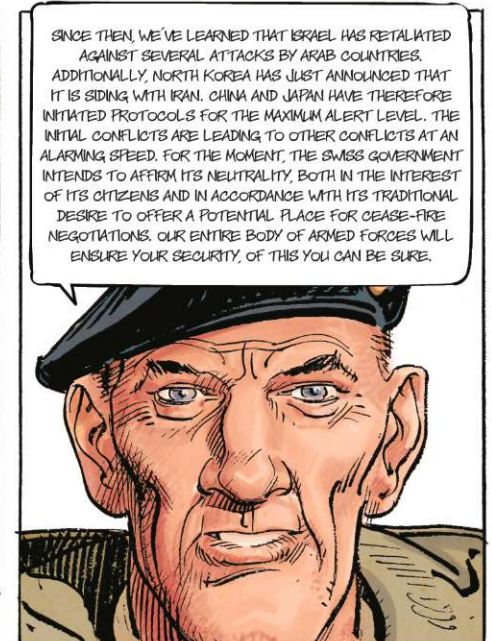
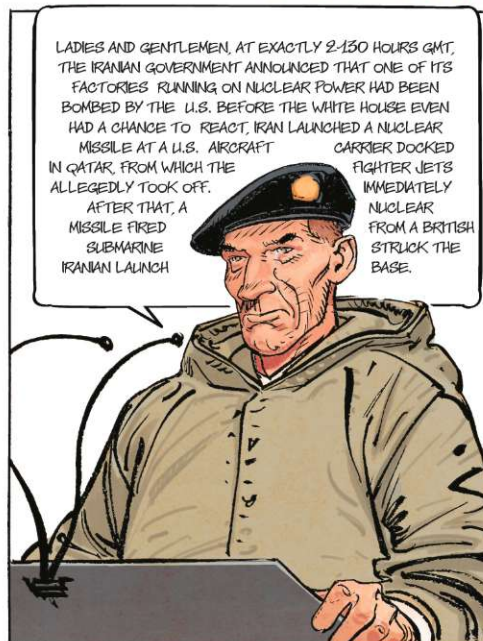
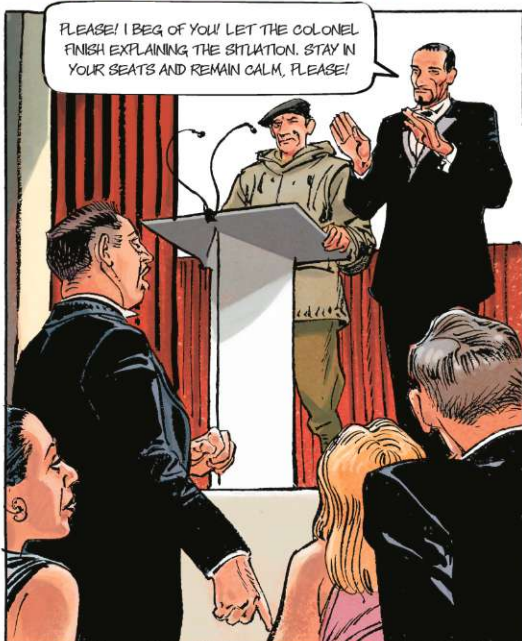
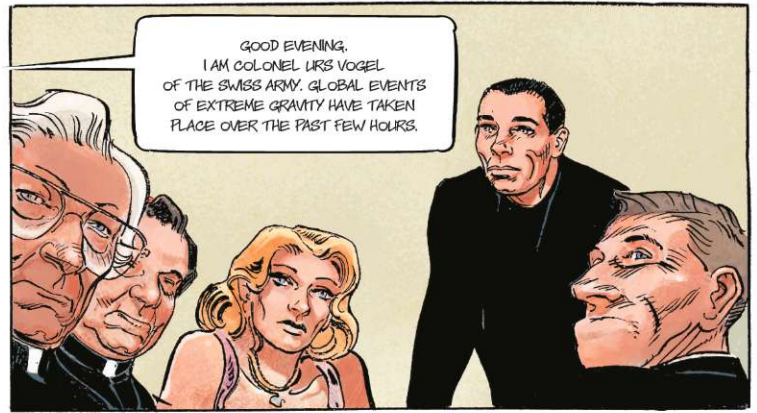


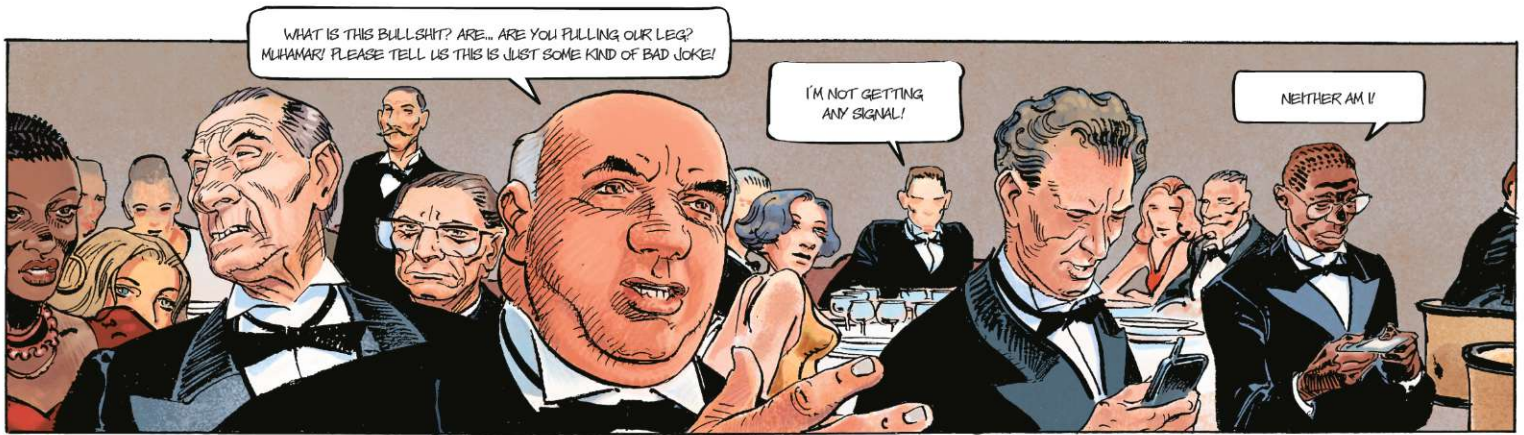
FINALLY! NOW WE CAN AT LAST HAVE A MORE INTERESTING CONVERSATION.



I'M AFRAID I'M ALWAYS RATHER FORTHRIGHT, SO PLEASE DON'T TAKE OFFENSE, BUT HOW IS IT THAT A HANDSOME YOUNG MAN SUCH AS YOURSELF CAN GIVE UP SO MANY OF LIFE'S PLEASURES FOR A CAREER WITH THE CHURCH?







WHAT IS THIS BULLSHIT? ARE... ARE YOU PULLING OUR LEG? MUHAMMAD! PLEASE TELL US THIS IS JUST SOME KIND OF BAD JOKE!

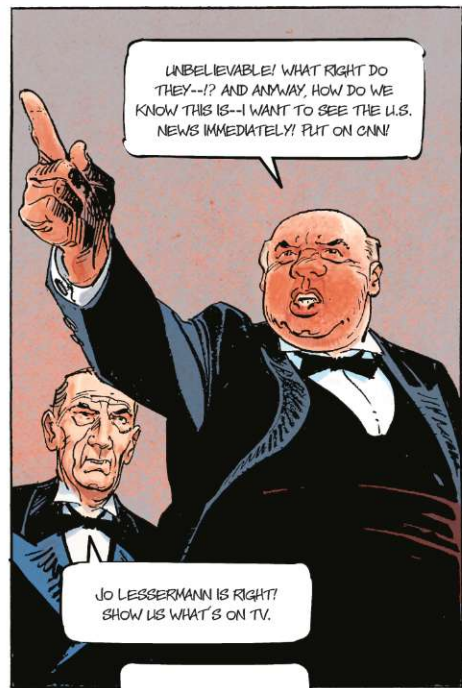
I'M NOT GETTING ANY SIGNAL!

NEITHER AM I!



IF YOU'RE NOT GETTING SIGNAL ON YOUR CELL PHONE, IT'S FOR YOUR OWN SECURITY. OVER THE NEXT FEW HOURS, WIRELESS MESSAGES BY POWERFUL PEOPLE SUCH AS YOURSELVES COULD BE INTERCEPTED BY A POTENTIAL ENEMY AND DRAW UNWANTED ATTENTION TO DAVOS. IT IS TO AVOID SUCH RISKS THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS ORDERED ALL SIGNALS CUT OFF.

MY FRIENDS! PLEASE! LET US TRY TO REMAIN CALM!



UNBELIEVABLE! WHAT RIGHT DO THEY--!? AND ANYWAY, HOW DO WE KNOW THIS IS-- I WANT TO SEE THE U.S. NEWS IMMEDIATELY! PUT ON CNN!

JO LESSERMANN IS RIGHT! SHOW US WHAT'S ON TV.

VINCE! WHAT... WHAT DO YOU THINK? IS IT TRUE? I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO--



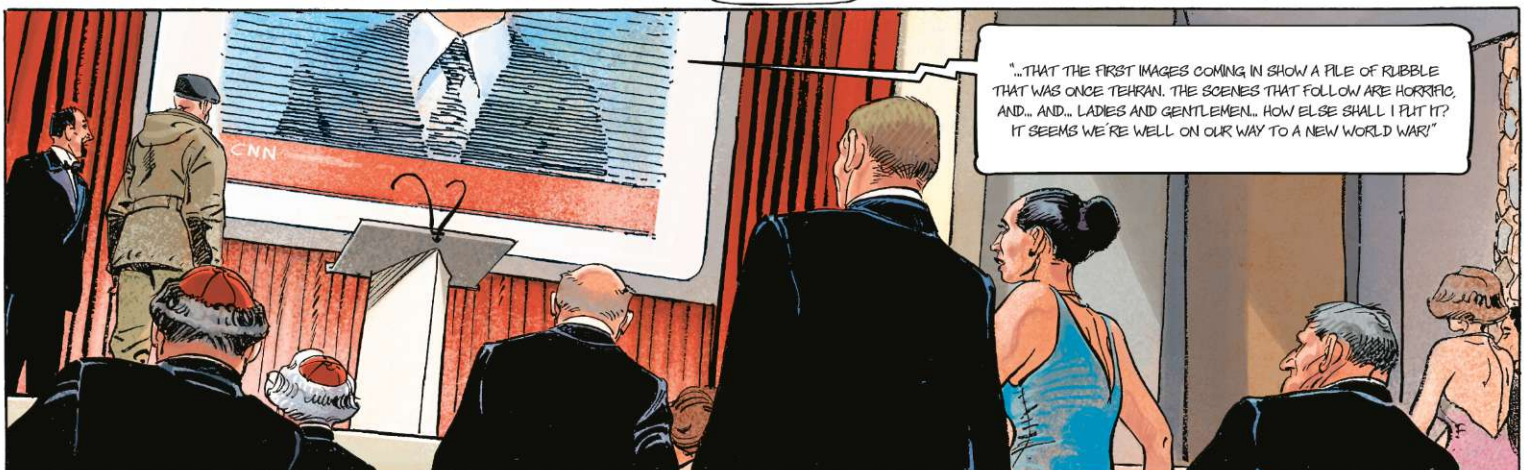
COLONEL?

I HIGHLY DOUBT THE IMAGES YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE WILL BE OF MUCH COMFORT, BUT AFTER ALL, YOU MAY AS WELL FACE REALITY RIGHT AWAY.

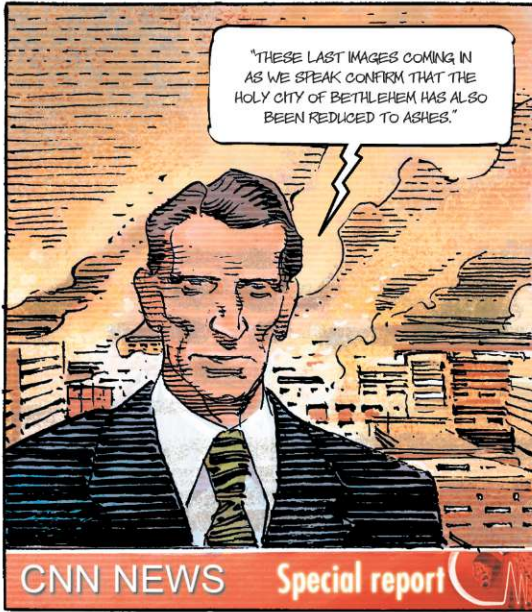


YOU'RE AN IDEALIST, MY DEAR. MAN SEEKS TO DEFY GOD? VERY WELL THEN. WE SHALL WITNESS HIS ANGER, AND I DARE SAY WE SHAN'T BE DISAPPOINTED!

MONSIGNOR! LOOK!

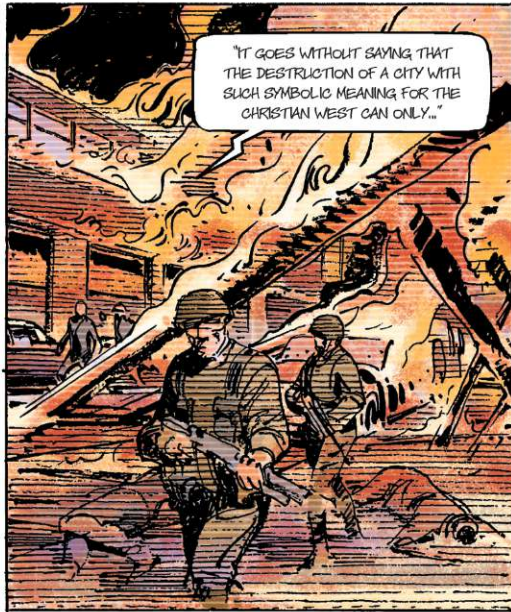


"...THAT THE FIRST IMAGES COMING IN SHOW A PILE OF RUBBLE THAT WAS ONCE TEHRAN. THE SCENES THAT FOLLOW ARE HORRIFIC, AND... AND... LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, HOW ELSE SHALL I PUT IT? IT SEEMS WE'RE WELL ON OUR WAY TO A NEW WORLD WAR!"

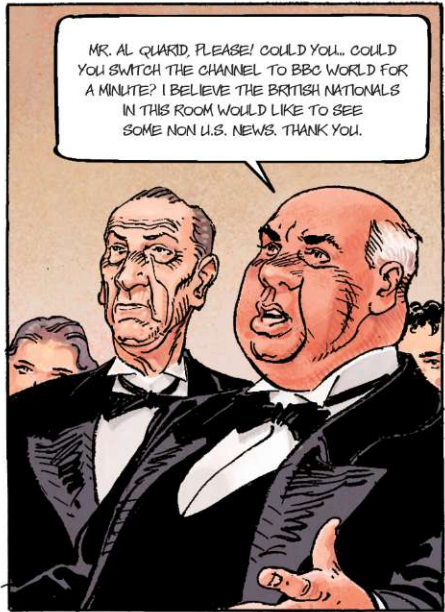


"THESE LAST IMAGES COMING IN AS WE SPEAK CONFIRM THAT THE HOLY CITY OF BETHLEHEM HAS ALSO BEEN REDUCED TO ASHES."

CNN NEWS Special report



"IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF A CITY WITH SUCH SYMBOLIC MEANING FOR THE CHRISTIAN WEST CAN ONLY..."



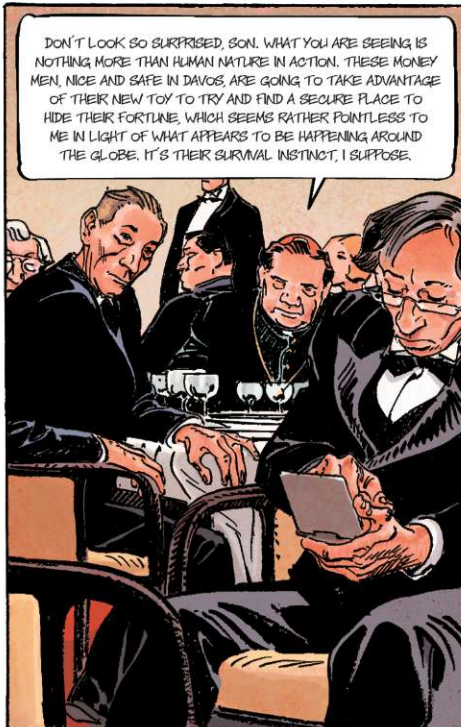
MR. AL QUARID, PLEASE! COULD YOU... COULD YOU SWITCH THE CHANNEL TO BBC WORLD FOR A MINUTE? I BELIEVE THE BRITISH NATIONALS IN THIS ROOM WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOME NON U.S. NEWS. THANK YOU.



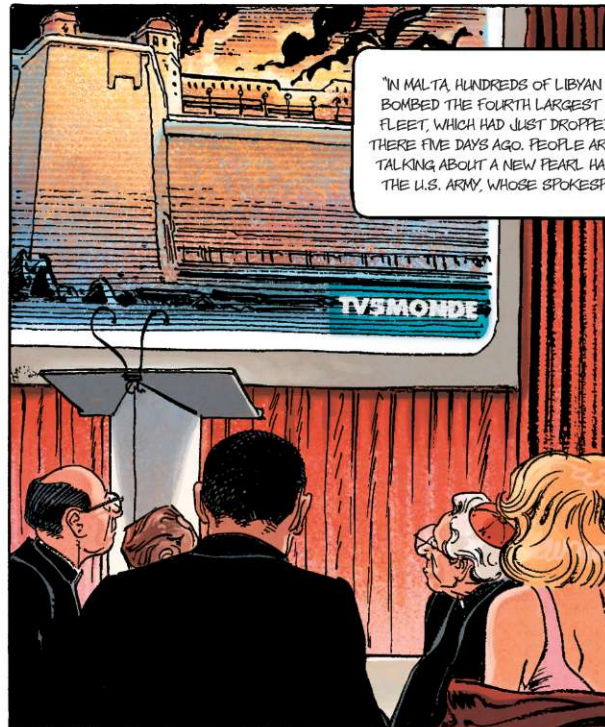
"...CAN SAY WITH ALL CERTAINTY THAT NO SHIP IN THE ROYAL NAVY FLEET IS SAFE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN OR IN THE GULF. THIS FOOTAGE FROM SOUTHERN IRAQ SHOWS THAT..."



THE LACK OF MORAL QUALMS IN SOME MEN IS ALWAYS MOST UNSETTLING.

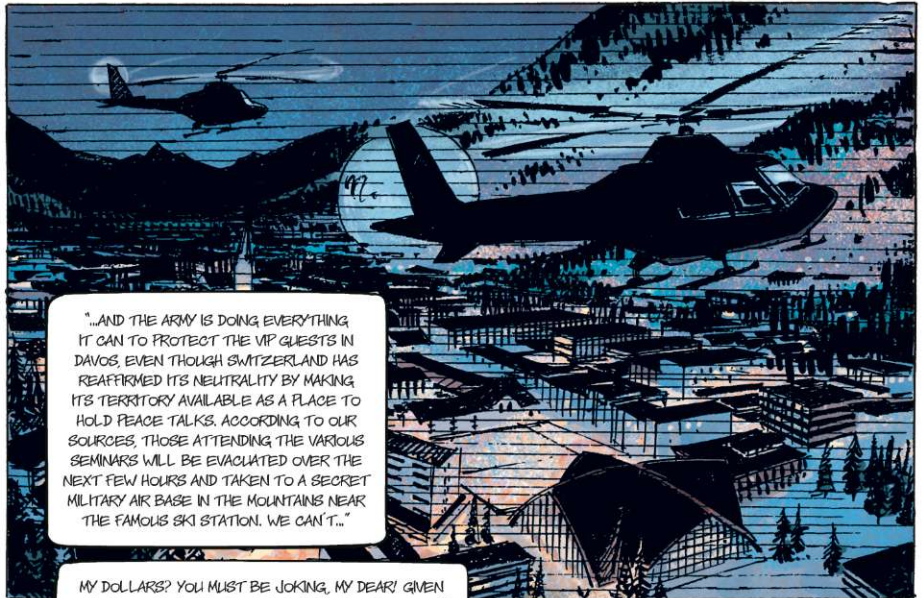
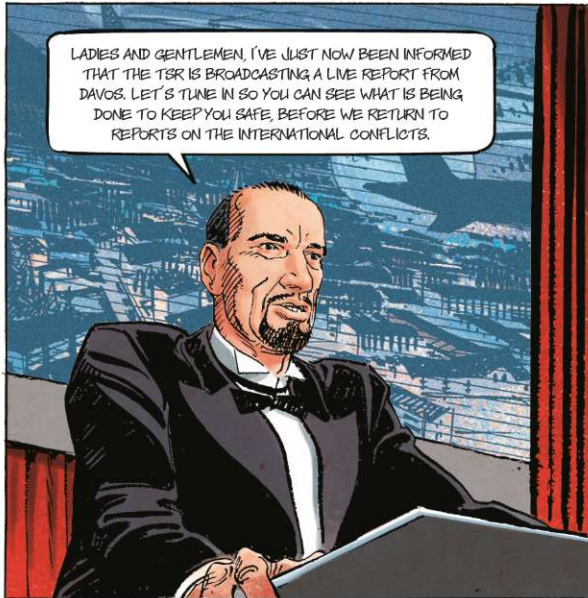


DON'T LOOK SO SURPRISED, SON. WHAT YOU ARE SEEING IS NOTHING MORE THAN HUMAN NATURE IN ACTION. THESE MONEY MEN, NICE AND SAFE IN DAVOS, ARE GOING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR NEW TOY TO TRY AND FIND A SECURE PLACE TO HIDE THEIR FORTUNE, WHICH SEEMS RATHER POINTLESS TO ME IN LIGHT OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE HAPPENING AROUND THE GLOBE. IT'S THEIR SURVIVAL INSTINCT, I SUPPOSE.

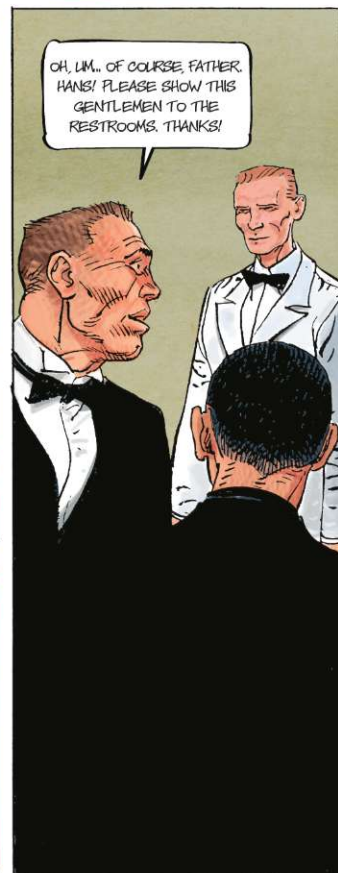


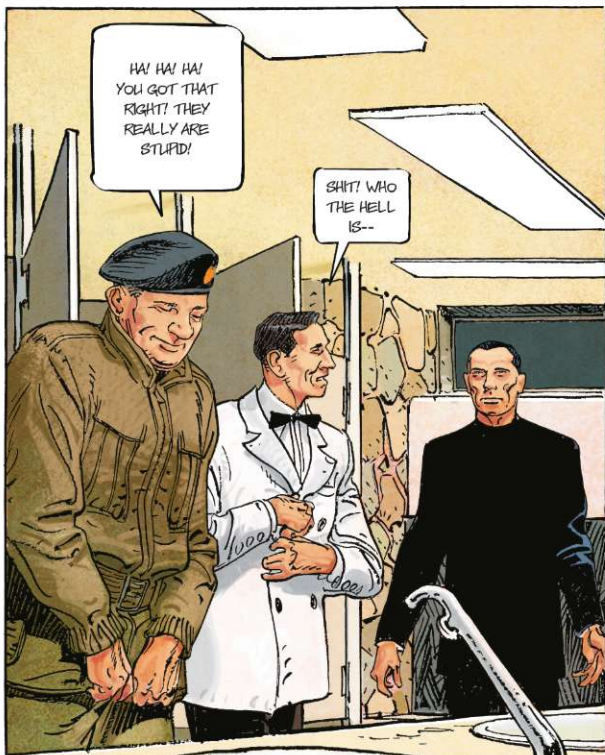
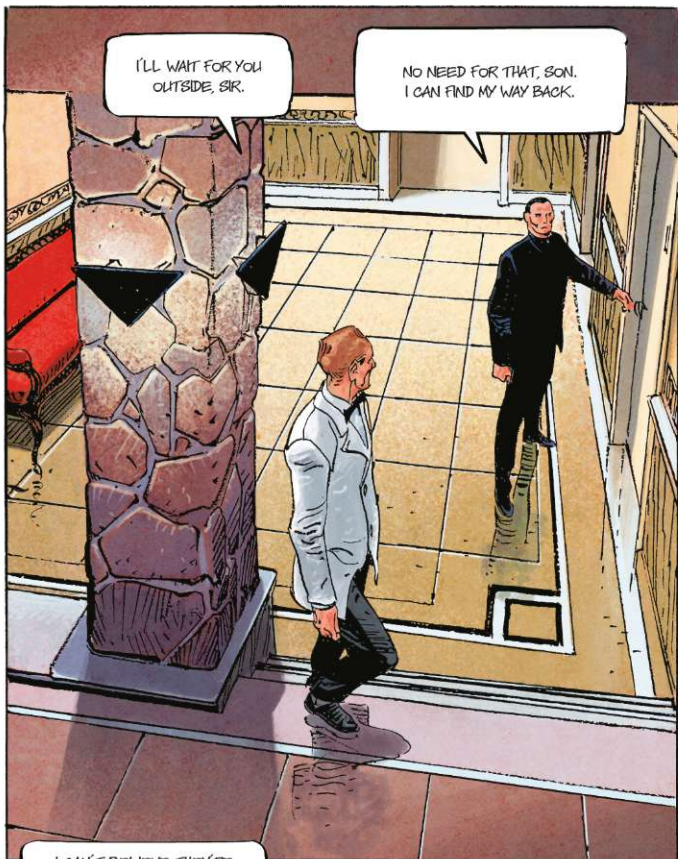
"IN MALTA HUNDREDS OF LIBYAN MISSILES BOMBED THE FOURTH LARGEST U.S. NAVY FLEET, WHICH HAD JUST DROPPED ANCHOR THERE FIVE DAYS AGO. PEOPLE ARE ALREADY TALKING ABOUT A NEW PEARL HARBOR FOR THE U.S. ARMY, WHOSE SPOKESPERSON..."

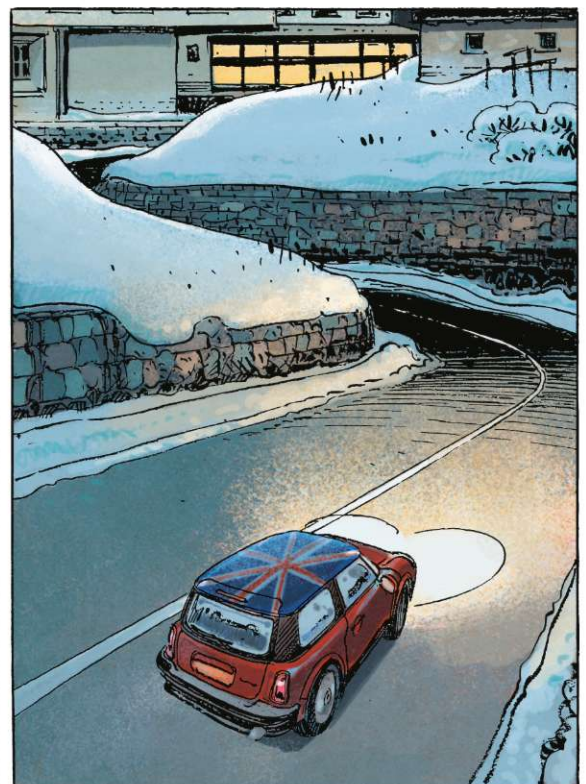
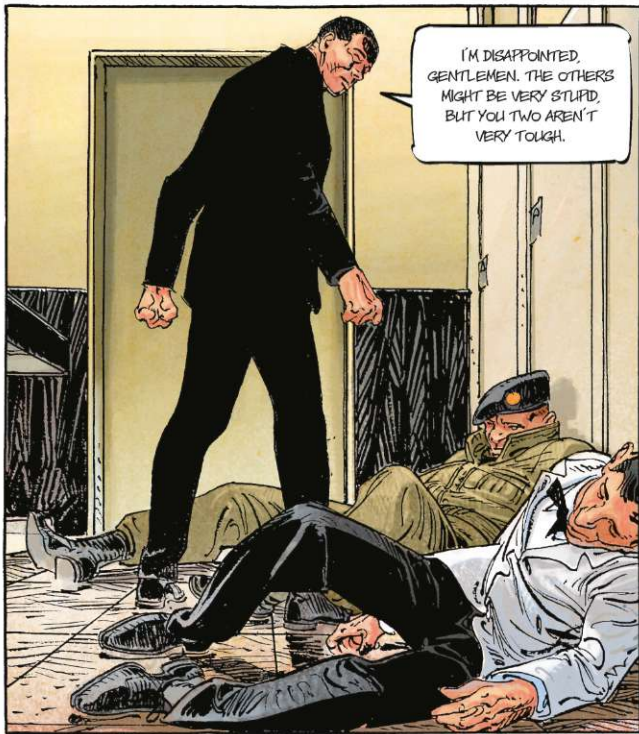


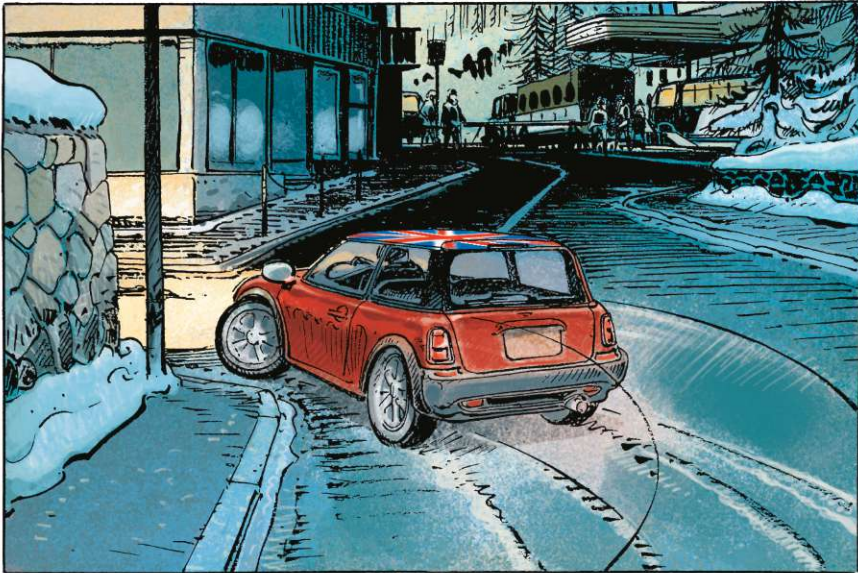


MY DOLLARS? YOU MUST BE JOKING, MY DEAR! GIVEN THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION, MY ADVICE IS TO DUMP YOURS AT ONCE AND REPLACE THEM WITH SAFE HAVEN INVESTMENTS. BUY GOLD! YOU HEARD WHAT THEY SAID, SOON WE'LL BE TAKEN TO ONE OF THEIR BASES DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS, WHERE THERE WON'T BE ANY SATELLITE COVERAGE. THERE'S NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE IF YOU STILL WISH TO BE RICH WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER.













WORLD WAR III HASN'T
BROKEN OUT, HAS IT?



WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING
ABOUT? ARE YOU CRAZY?

OKAY. I HAVE MY ANSWER.
WE NEED TO ACT FAST.
LET'S GRAB SOME SKI GEAR
AND GET OUT OF HERE.



BY THE WAY,
CAN YOU SKI?



MY FAMILY'S BEEN LIVING IN ASPEN,
COLORADO, FOR THREE GENERATIONS.
FATHER, AND BACK IN THE DAY, STRANGERS
WERE OCCASIONALLY HANGED FOR ASKING
LESS OFFENSIVE QUESTIONS THAN THAT! BUT
SERIOUSLY, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I DIDN'T TRAVEL ALL THIS
WAY TO GO HOME EMPTY HANDED, YOU KNOW.



FROM HERE ON OUT, NOT ANOTHER WORD. I'LL
TELL YOU EVERYTHING, BUT IT'LL HAVE TO
WAIT AND IT'LL HAVE TO BE FAR AWAY FROM
HERE. WE'RE NOT IN THE MIDST OF A BUNCH
OF CHOR BOYS HERE, BELIEVE ME.

I ASKED YOU TO KEEP QUIET,
MISS PRIDE.



WELL, I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO COME HERE
IF I DIDN'T WANT MY BOSS TO FIRE ME. FINANCE
PEOPLE AROUND THE GLOBE ARE TRYING TO
FIGURE OUT WHAT'S SENDING THE MARKETS
INTO A TAIL-SPIN, YOU KNOW! AND SINCE
THE MAJOR PLAYERS BEHIND THESE WEIRD
TRANSACTIONS ARE ALL HERE AT THE HOTEL--

MY COMPLIMENTS WILL HAVE
TO WAIT. GO! NOW!



THAT GUARD,
DID YOU DO--?



YEP. SOMETIMES
IT HELPS TO HAVE
GROWN UP WITH THREE
OLDER BROTHERS. ADMIT
YOU'RE JUST A LITTLE
IMPRESSED, FATHER.



STOP RIGHT
THERE!



LOOK AT THE FOOTPRINTS! THEY
CAME FROM THE HOTEL! FIRE! FIRE!



SILENT AND NO WARNING.
PROFESSIONAL KILLERS.



REQUESTING
EMERGENCY BACKUP
BEHIND HOTEL! TWO
PEOPLE FLEEING ON
SKIS HEADING FOR
ZONE 3! AND THEY'RE
NO WIMPS..



YOU SAID YOUR BODYGUARD HAS NOT
COME BACK, FATHER. FINE, BUT WHO
COULD THE OTHER PERSON BE!?

IT DOESN'T MATTER. I SUGGEST YOU
CATCH THEM AND TAKE OUT BOTH AT
ONCE. I'LL GO BACK TO MY TABLE
TO AVOID SUSPICION. LET ME KNOW
WHEN IT'S BEEN HANDLED.



Vroom





YOU TWO, FOLLOW THEIR TRAIL. WE'LL GO AROUND THE WOOD AND WAIT FOR YOU TO DRIVE THE GAME DOWNHILL. LET'S GO!



WELL? DON'T YOU ALL DO OFF-PISTE SKIING IN ASPEN?



OF COURSE WE DO... BUT NOT WHILE BEING SHOT AT. I'M PRETTY SURE THE WOUND IS SUPERFICIAL, BUT WHEN I TRIED TO LEAN ON THIS ARM, IT SORT OF FELL OUT FROM UNDER ME.



WHAT THE HELL? THE SKI TRACKS JUST END HERE AND--LOOK!



OOH, I DON'T LIKE THIS ONE BIT. KEEP AN EYE OUT!

CHACK!

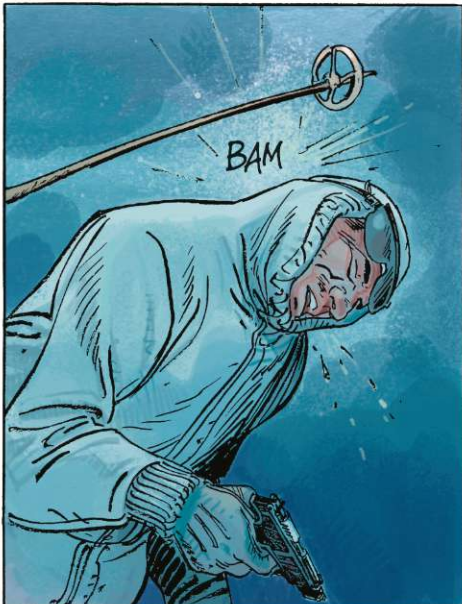


STEP BACK! SHOULDA HIT ME A LITTLE HARDER, PAL!

I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND NEXT TIME.



THERE WON'T BE A NEXT TIME. I HEAR YOU'RE SOME SORT OF PRIEST. IF THAT'S THE CASE, TIME TO START PRAYING, PADRE.



BAM



WELL, WELL! AND HERE I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO DO ALL THE WORK. NICELY DONE, MISS PRIDE. AND IN THE NICK OF TIME. THANK YOU.

YOU'RE WELCOME, FATHER. NOW WILL YOU PLEASE TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?



LATER, WE STILL HAVE TO LOSE THE OTHER TWO. THEY WON'T WAIT FOR US DOWNHILL FOREVER.

WE'LL HIKE BACK UP AND GO AROUND THE WOOD FROM THE TOP. THAT MEANS WE TRADE IN OUR SKI BOOTS FOR THESE GENTLEMEN'S. LET'S GO.



VROOONNN



COLONEL! I HAVE A CALL FROM JAG ONE.

PUT IT ON SPEAKER.



JAG TWO IS OUT OF COMMISSION, COLONEL. THESE GUYS ARE PROS. NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. THEIR TRACKS ARE HEADING UPHILL TOWARDS EAGLE ONE. WHAT ARE THE ORDERS?



GO AFTER THEM. I'LL INSTRUCT EAGLE ONE TO CUT THEM OFF FROM THE NORTH. IT IS ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE THAT THEY NOT CONTACT THE OUTSIDE WORLD BEFORE TOMORROW MORNING. UNDERSTOOD? EXECUTE!



OVER THERE! LOOK! THERE ARE SOLDIERS NEAR THE CELL PHONE TOWER.

LET'S STOP HERE AND STAY OUT OF SIGHT.



THE SOLDIERS MUST HAVE COME TO CHECK WHY THERE'S NO CELL PHONE SIGNAL. THEY CAN HELP US.

I DOUBT IT.



LOOK OVER THERE, BEHIND THE MAIN GROUP OF MEN IN UNIFORM. THE OLD MAN IN THE SNOW, WITH THE HAT... HE WAS THE ONE HIRED BY THE TOWN TO GUARD THE TOWER. THESE SOLDIERS ARE IMPOSTERS, JUST LIKE THE ONES AT THE HOTEL.





LISTEN! DO YOU HEAR THAT?



THE OTHER SNOWMOBILE IS ON THE WAY. THE ONLY WAY TO GO IS STRAIGHT AHEAD. WE'LL BE IN OPEN FIELD FOR ABOUT A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YARDS. THEY MIGHT NOT HEAR US IF WE RUN. READY? GO!



LIEUTENANT! OVER THERE!

THOSE ARE OUR TARGETS! TAKE THEM OUT!



FOLLOW ME. WE HAVE TO RUN IN ZIGZAG SO THEY CAN'T TAKE AIM.



OVER THERE! WE'VE GOT THEM!



WE'RE OUT OF OPTIONS. CLOSE YOUR EYES AND...



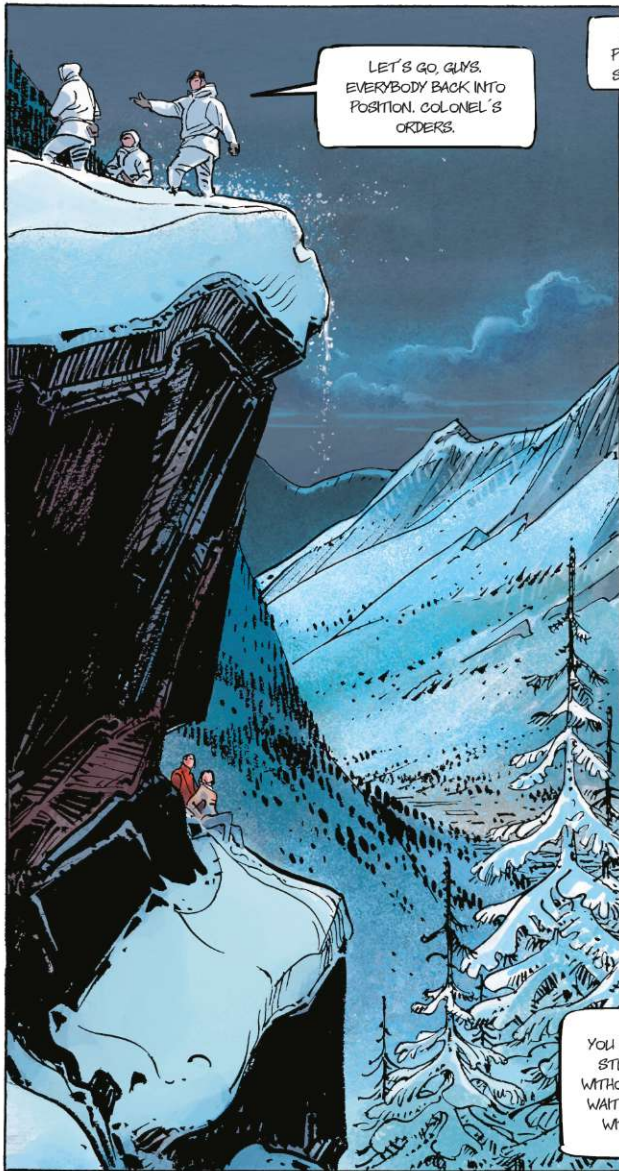
...JUMP!



WELL, LIEUTENANT? MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?



UNLESS THEY SURVIVED A ONE-HUNDRED-METER DROP, MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, COLONEL. OKAY... ROGER THAT.



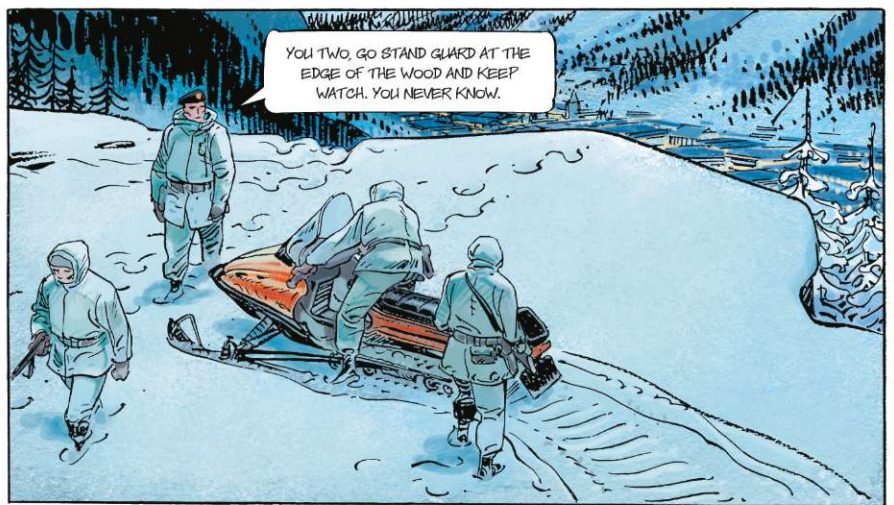
LET'S GO, GUYS. EVERYBODY BACK INTO POSITION. COLONEL'S ORDERS.



WELL? PROBLEM SOLVED?

APPARENTLY. BUT THE PHONE-TAPPING TEAM STILL HAS TO BE EXTRA VIGILANT. YOU GUYS GOT THAT?

YES SIR, COLONEL.



YOU TWO, GO STAND GUARD AT THE EDGE OF THE WOOD AND KEEP WATCH. YOU NEVER KNOW.



THE SNOWMOBILE'S LEAVING. LOOKS LIKE YOUR FAKE TRACKS LEADING OFF THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF DID THE JOB. ADMIT IT, YOU'VE HAD OTHER TRAINING BESIDES EMERGENCY RESPONSE!

YOU COULD SAY THAT. THAT SAID, WE'RE STUCK NOW. TRYING TO CLIMB DOWN WITHOUT GEAR WOULD BE SUICIDE. LET'S WAIT FOR THEM TO LEAVE AND COME UP WITH A PLAN. QUICKLY, IF POSSIBLE.



HOW ABOUT YOU FINALLY SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE SITUATION? WHAT'S GOING ON IN DAVOS THIS WEEKEND?

...AND IT WAS WHEN I SAW THE FOOTAGE FROM MALTA THAT ALARM BELLS WENT OFF IN MY HEAD. I WAS THERE A FEW DAYS AGO, AND THE MASSIVE U.S. NAVY FLEET THAT WAS MEANT TO BE THERE... WASN'T. ON TOP OF THAT, THE FOOTAGE SHOWED THE RAMPARTS TO BE INTACT AT THE EXACT PLACE WHERE I WAS... THE RAMPARTS WHICH WERE NO LONGER INTACT AT THAT MOMENT.



THEN, SEVERAL OTHER FACTORS BACKED UP MY THEORY THAT WE WERE THE VICTIMS OF A HUGE HOAX. I NEEDED TO LEAVE TO GO LOOK FOR HELP. AND THAT'S WHEN I RAN INTO YOU.

I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THIS WHOLE ACT IS ALL ABOUT. IT'S... UNBELIEVABLE.



THESE PEOPLE TRIED TO GET THE QUESTS TO BELIEVE THAT THESE GLOBAL EVENTS WERE REAL SO THAT THEY WOULD MOVE FUNDS IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE DURING WARTIME, SUCH AS BUYING UP HUGE AMOUNTS OF SAFE HAVEN INVESTMENTS, FOR EXAMPLE. AND SINCE THEY HAD JUST SO "CONVENIENTLY" BEEN GIVEN THE PERFECT TOOL TO DO JUST THAT, WELL...



PLUS, THE ATTACKS THAT REALLY DID TAKE PLACE RECENTLY IN IRAN HELPED MAKE THE SCENARIO BELIEVABLE. LASTLY, THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF PANIC IN THE DINING ROOM KEPT THESE FINANCIERS FROM MAKING DECISIONS IN THEIR USUAL CALM AND COOL MANNER.



AND SO THAT IS HOW THE BIGGEST INSIDER CRIME IN THE HISTORY OF MODERN FINANCE IS BEING PERPETRATED AS WE SPEAK. BECAUSE THIS CRIME, OF COURSE, IS GOING TO LINE THE POCKETS OF THOSE WHO PLANNED THEIR FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS WITH THIS WIDESPREAD PANIC IN MIND! AND I REGRET TO INFORM YOU, FATHER, THAT THE VATICAN JUST HAPPENED TO PUT A LOT OF MONEY INTO SAFE HAVEN INVESTMENTS OVER THE PAST MONTH.



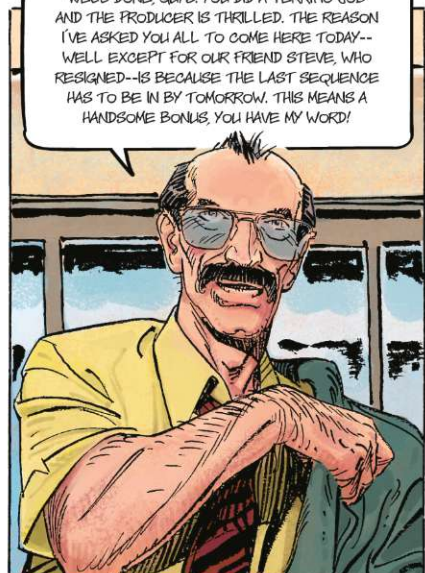
I CAN JUST IMAGINE WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH STOCK MARKETS WORLDWIDE. IF YOU HAD SEEN HOW REAL THE FOOTAGE LOOKED, LAURA... THESE WERE NEWS ANCHORS KNOWN THE WORLD OVER! WE ARE DEALING WITH PROFESSIONALS WITH ENORMOUS RESOURCES. NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE ABILITY TO USE SOPHISTICATED SPECIAL EFFECTS TO TAMPER WITH FOOTAGE!



LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA



WELL DONE, GUYS. YOU DID A TERRIFIC JOB AND THE PRODUCER IS THRILLED. THE REASON I'VE ASKED YOU ALL TO COME HERE TODAY-- WELL, EXCEPT FOR OUR FRIEND STEVE, WHO RESIGNED-- IS BECAUSE THE LAST SEQUENCE HAS TO BE IN BY TOMORROW. THIS MEANS A HANDSOME BONUS, YOU HAVE MY WORD!



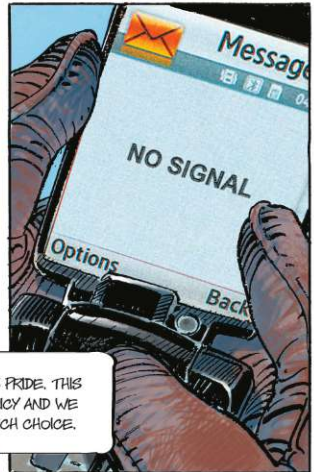




SO IF I UNDERSTAND CORRECTLY, YOU'RE ACTUALLY ASKING ME TO TRUST A MESSAGE FROM A STRANGER ASKING YOU TO GO BREAK YOUR NECK ON THAT PLATEAU BECAUSE A CHOPPER WE DIDN'T CALL FOR IS ON THE WAY?



AND LORD ONLY KNOWS HOW YOU GOT THE MESSAGE! I STILL DON'T HAVE A SIGNAL!



TRUST ME, MISS PRIDE. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY AND WE DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE.



COLONEL! THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE! WE'VE JUST INTERCEPTED A TEXT MESSAGE ON THE CELL PHONE OF RUNAWAY NO. 1! AND YET OUR SIGNAL SCRAMBLERS ARE FULLY OPERATIONAL AND THE QLV IS SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD.

LET ME SEE!



SCHIESS! CALL JAG ONE NOW!



OK, NO NEED TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO. I'LL ADMIT THAT YOUR MESSAGE WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE PASSAGE TO THE PLATEAU. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN--

LISTEN! IT SOUNDS LIKE...



REGA TO REGA 3. PACKAGE LOCATED. THEY MADE IT TO PLATEAU B4. WE CAN LAND, OVER AND OUT.



WE'RE TOO LATE! HE'S GONNA LAND BEHIND THE RIDGE! SHOOT HIM DOWN!

NO TIME TO TAKE AIM. STOP. HE HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO LIFT OFF RIGHT IN FRONT OF US. AND THEN...



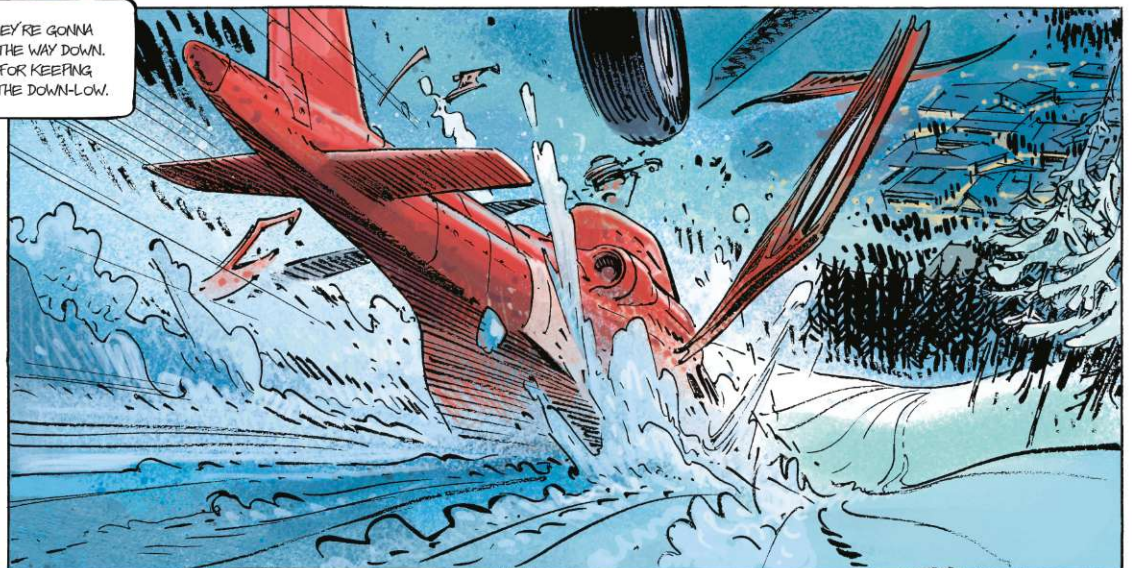
OK, SOUNDS LIKE THE BIRD'S IN THE AIR. YOU READY??

SO READY I ALMOST FEEL BAD. IT'S MORE FUN WHEN THE TARGET HAS A CHANCE.



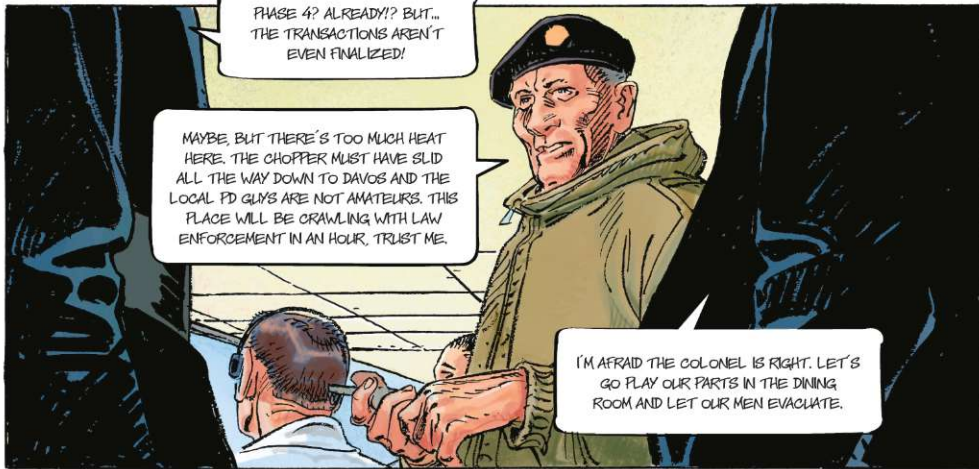
WATCH OUT! SNIPER ON THE LEFT!







GREAT. NOW THE LOCAL PD AND THE ARMY WILL BE SHOWING UP. NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT IF ANY OF THE PASSENGERS SURVIVED, THEY'LL POINT THEM IN OUR DIRECTION. OKAY. LISTEN UP. PACK EVERYTHING UP AND INITIATE PHASE 4 OF THE PLAN. NOW, YOU MORONS!



PHASE 4? ALREADY!? BUT... THE TRANSACTIONS AREN'T EVEN FINALIZED!

MAYBE, BUT THERE'S TOO MUCH HEAT HERE. THE CHOPPER MUST HAVE SLID ALL THE WAY DOWN TO DAVOS AND THE LOCAL PD GUYS ARE NOT AMATEURS. THIS PLACE WILL BE CRAWLING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT IN AN HOUR. TRUST ME.

I'M AFRAID THE COLONEL IS RIGHT. LET'S GO PLAY OUR PARTS IN THE DINING ROOM AND LET OUR MEN EVACUATE.



THAT'S CORRECT... FIVE WOUNDED AND ONE MISSING PRESUMED DEAD. YES... WE WON'T MOVE THEM UNTIL THE AMBULANCE IS HERE. HURRY. COPY THAT.



AN... OFFICER. QUICK... I... MUST SPEAK TO AN OFFICER.



NORTHERN LEBANON

WALLID!

Look, WALLID!

CALM DOWN, KIDS. I'M NOT IN THAT BIG A RUSH TO GET MY PAPER!



SEE THIS GUY IN THE PICTURE? THAT'S THE ONE WE SAW!

I SWEAR, WALLID, THAT'S HIM! THAT'S THE GUY WE SAW DRESSED UP AS A SARACEN AT THE KRAK DES CHEVALIERS!



من السياسيين يقومون بتصفية الحسابات ويهموننا بما
التائب المر قريب لنا سياسياً وعائلياً ونحن



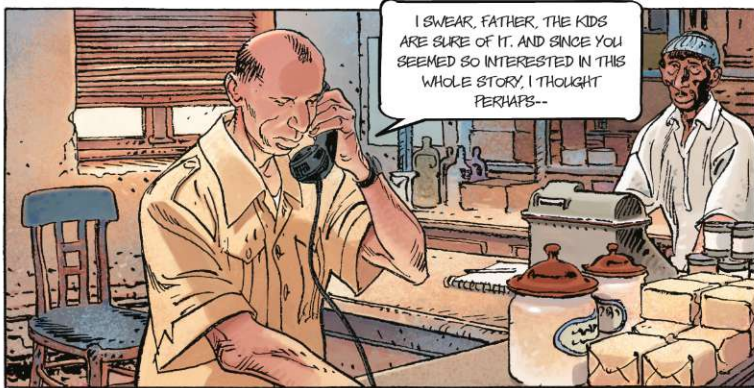
I HEAR YOU'VE ASKED TO SPEAK WITH ME IMMEDIATELY, SIR. PLEASE HAVE A SEAT.



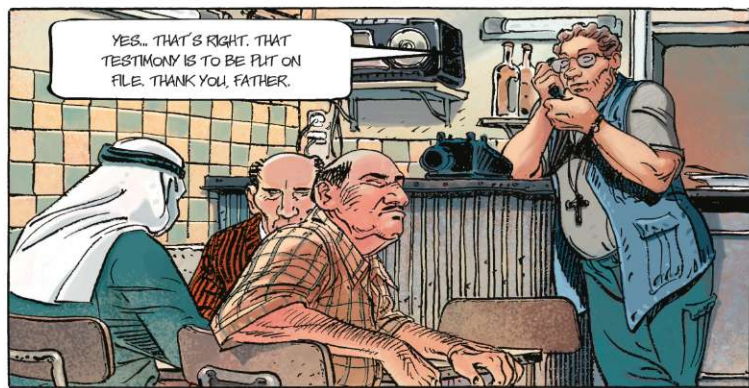
PLEASE CALL THIS NUMBER AND TELL THEM TRIAS NEEDS TO SPEAK WITH FATHER SOFFRANELLO. AND PLEASE LEAVE THEM A CALL BACK NUMBER. IT'S VERY URGENT.



OK, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF IT. IN THE MEANTIME, TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW BEFORE THE AMBULANCES ARRIVE, OKAY?



I SWEAR, FATHER, THE KIDS ARE SURE OF IT. AND SINCE YOU SEEMED SO INTERESTED IN THIS WHOLE STORY, I THOUGHT PERHAPS--



YES... THAT'S RIGHT. THAT TESTIMONY IS TO BE PUT ON FILE. THANK YOU, FATHER.



GIUSEPPE? CAN YOU BRING ME FILE TE-67-8542 PLEASE?



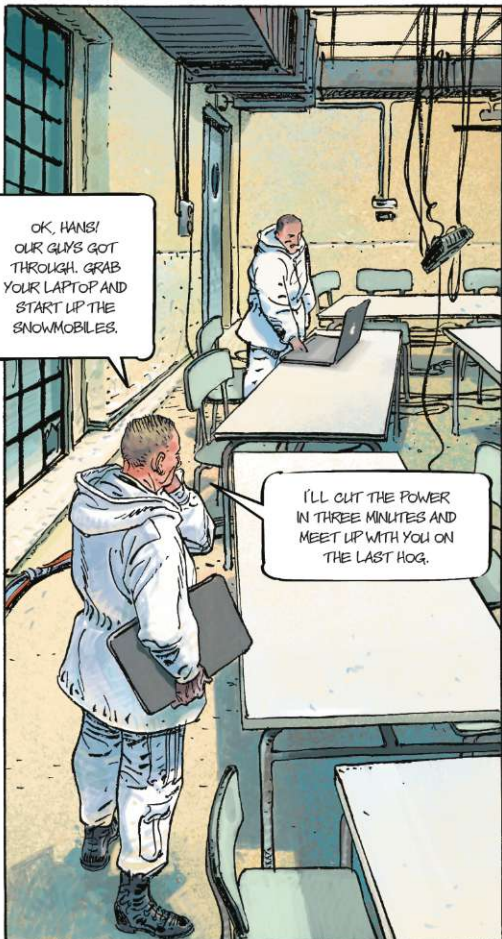
YES, I UNDERSTAND. ROGER THAT, SIR. RIGHT AWAY, SIR.



YOU ARE CERTAINLY WELL CONNECTED! YOU MADE YOUR FIRST CALL LESS THAN 30 MINUTES AGO AND MY SUPERIORS HAVE JUST ORDERED ME TO CONSIDER YOUR INFORMATION THE GOSPEL TRUTH!

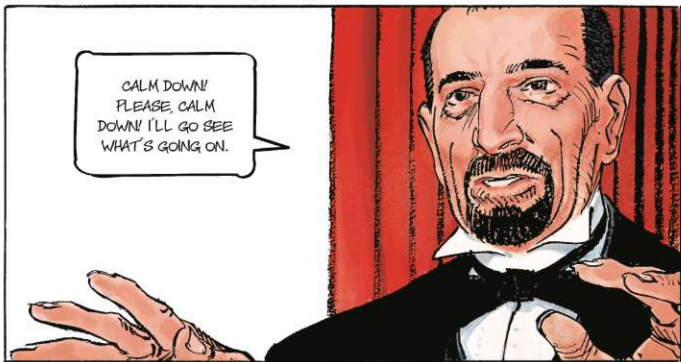
IN THAT CASE, LIEUTENANT, ASSEMBLE YOUR MEN. WE'RE GOING IN!







LET'S GO! WE'LL GO THROUGH THE WOOD TO AVOID RUNNING INTO THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS.

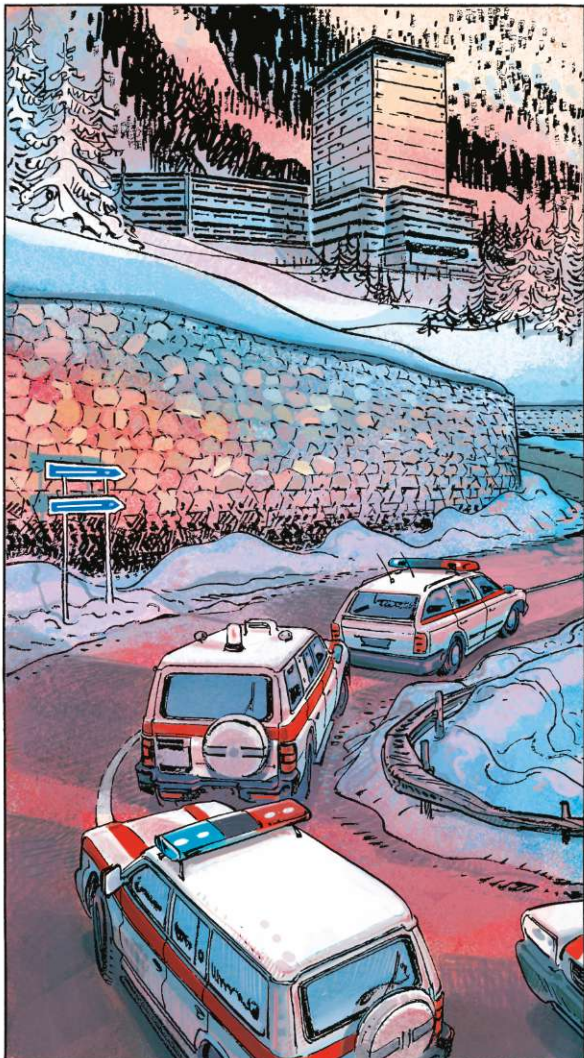


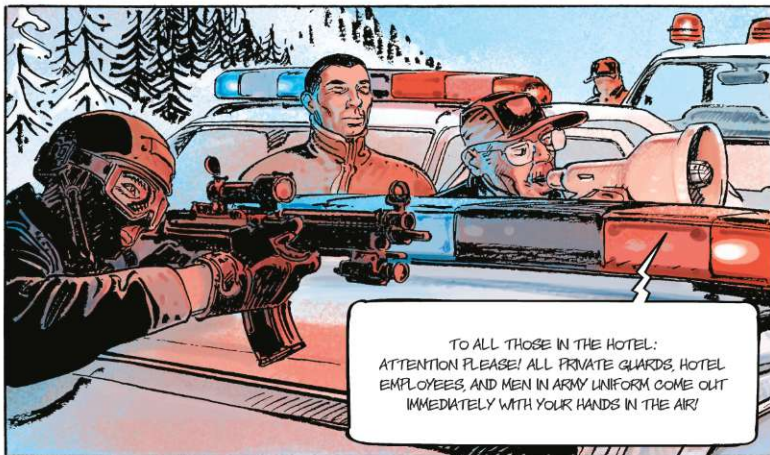
CALM DOWN! PLEASE CALM DOWN! I'LL GO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON.



WHAT OF YOUR YOUNG COMPANION, YOUR EMINENCE? WHERE IN THE WORLD IS HE?

BELIEVE ME, DEAR MADAM, WE ARE JUST AS ANXIOUS TO KNOW AS YOU ARE.





TO ALL THOSE IN THE HOTEL:
ATTENTION PLEASE! ALL PRIVATE GUARDS, HOTEL
EMPLOYEES, AND MEN IN ARMY UNIFORM COME OUT
IMMEDIATELY WITH YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR!



I REPEAT. COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS
IN THE AIR AND WITHOUT THE GUESTS.

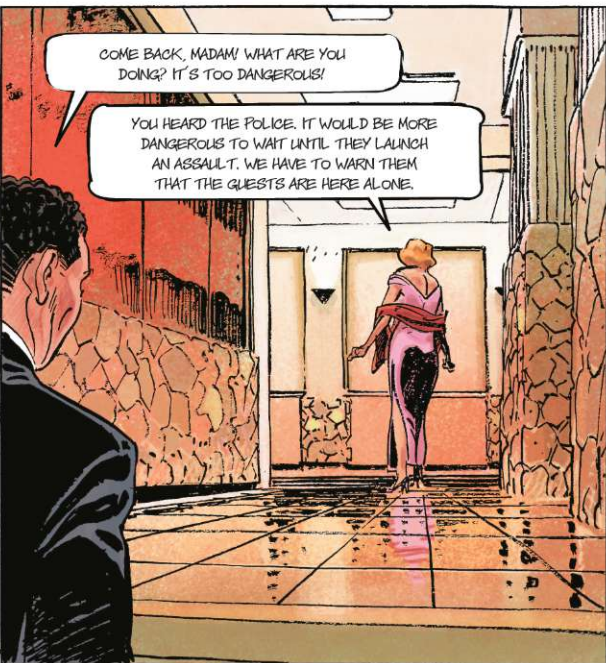
DID YOU HEAR
THAT?



HEY... THE GUARDS ARE GONE!
IT LOOKS LIKE... THE ENTIRE
HOTEL STAFF HAS VANISHED!

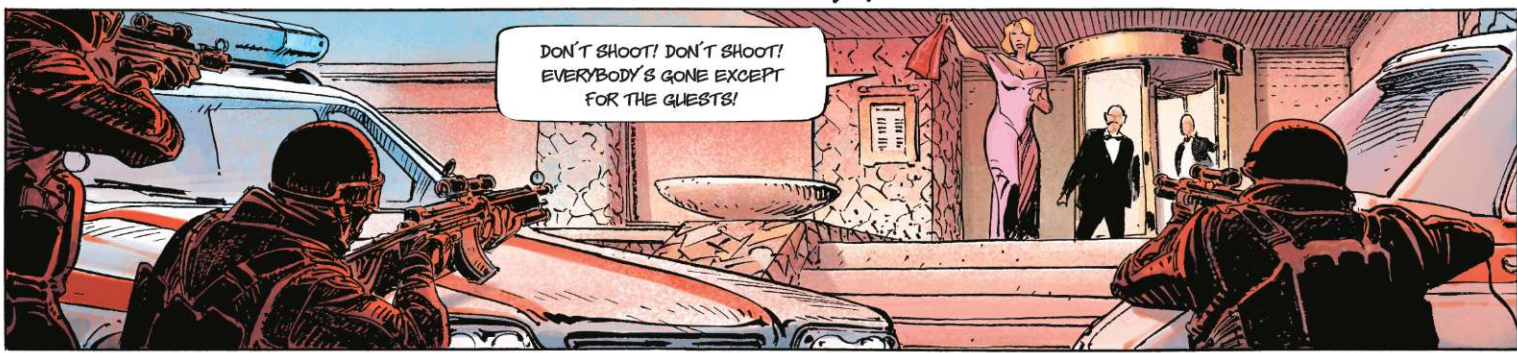


LAST WARNING BEFORE WE GO IN.
EXIT THE HOTEL WITH YOUR HANDS ON
YOUR HEAD AND WITHOUT THE GUESTS,
AND NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU.



COME BACK, MADAM! WHAT ARE YOU
DOING? IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!

YOU HEARD THE POLICE. IT WOULD BE MORE
DANGEROUS TO WAIT UNTIL THEY LAUNCH
AN ASSAULT. WE HAVE TO WARN THEM
THAT THE GUESTS ARE HERE ALONE.



DON'T SHOOT! DON'T SHOOT!
EVERYBODY'S GONE EXCEPT
FOR THE GUESTS!



I KNOW THAT WOMAN.
SHE REALLY IS A GUEST.
I'M AFRAID THE CAVALRY
IS TOO LATE.



EVERYTHING CHECKS
OUT, MR. AL QUARD.
HAVE A NICE TRIP.

THANK YOU, SERGEANT.
GOOD NIGHT.



MONDAY, ROME. A LATE MORNING SUN DOES ITS BEST TO HEAT THE TARMAC AT THE FIUMICINO AIRPORT.



THERE WAS NO NEED FOR YOU TO MEET ME HERE, FATHER SOFFRANELLO. I WAS PLANNING ON COMING STRAIGHT TO YOU WITH MY REPORT.

I KNOW, VINCE. I KNOW.



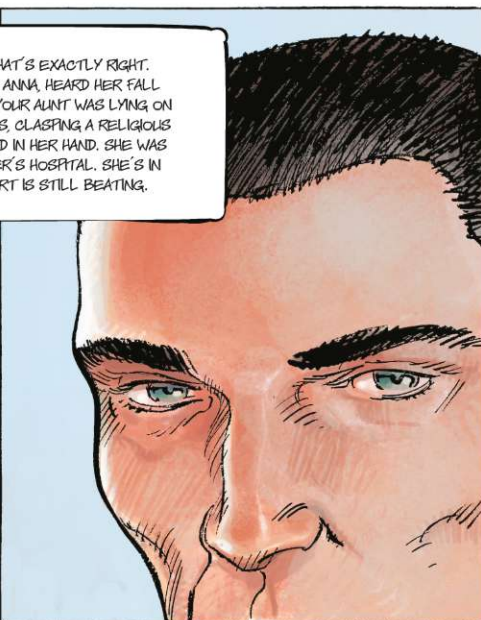
BY THE WAY, ARE CARDINAL FELISTER AND ARCHBISHOP SALK BACK IN ROME?

YES THEY ARE, SON. THEY RETURNED TO THE VATICAN LAST NIGHT. A LITTLE SHAKEN UP, BUT OTHERWISE FINE, DON'T WORRY. BUT... THE REASON I CAME, VINCE, IS BECAUSE SOMETHING TRAGIC HAS HAPPENED THAT I WANTED TO TELL YOU ABOUT IN PERSON.



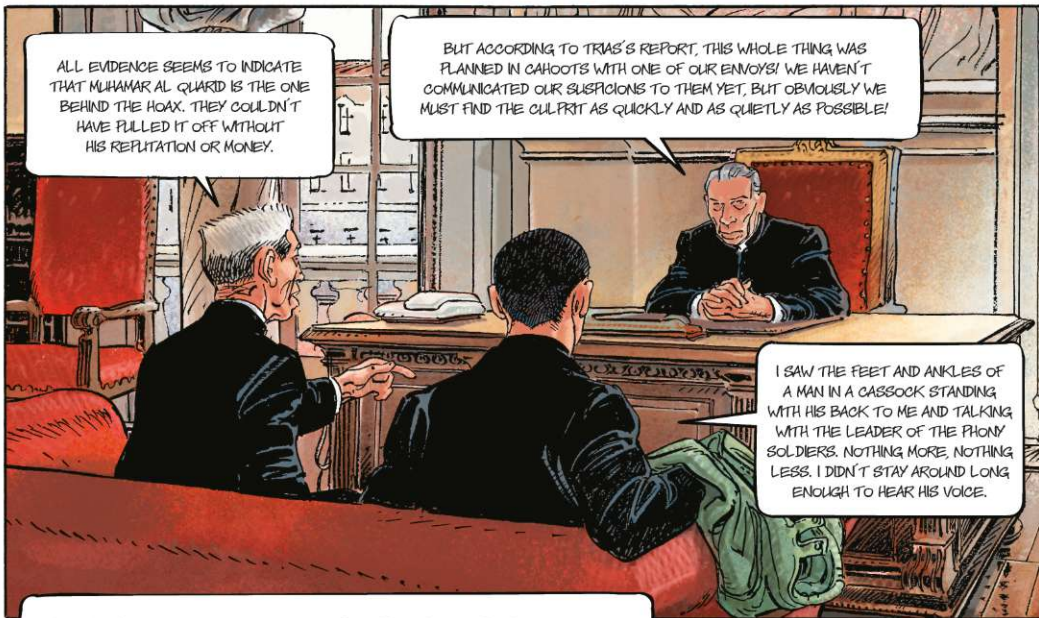
MY GREAT AUNT ANTONELLA SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK. I KNOW. SHE SORT OF TOLD ME TELEPATHICALLY THE NIGHT THE SEMINAR KICKED OFF.

SHE--WHAT? WELL THAT'S EXACTLY RIGHT. HER NEIGHBOR, SISTER ANNA, HEARD HER FALL DOWN AND RAN TO HER. YOUR AUNT WAS LYING ON THE FLOOR UNCONSCIOUS, CLASPING A RELIGIOUS IMAGE OF SAINT BERNARD IN HER HAND. SHE WAS RUSHED TO SAINT PETER'S HOSPITAL. SHE'S IN A COMA, BUT HER HEART IS STILL BEATING.



UNFORTUNATELY, I MUST ASK YOU TO POSTPONE YOUR HOSPITAL VISIT A FEW HOURS. WE MUST GO SEE ARCHBISHOP BLACKROSE AT ONCE. HE WANTS TO HEAR YOUR REPORT AND TRY TO CLOSE THIS NASTY DAVOS FILE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

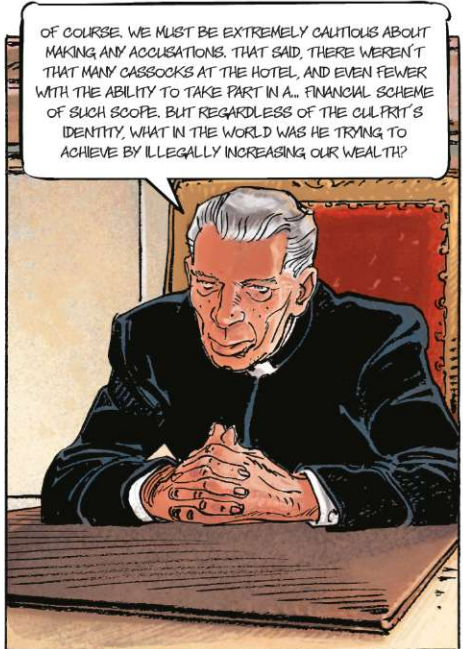
I UNDERSTAND, FATHER.



ALL EVIDENCE SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT MUHAMAR AL QUAID IS THE ONE BEHIND THE HOAX. THEY COULDN'T HAVE PULLED IT OFF WITHOUT HIS REPUTATION OR MONEY.

BUT ACCORDING TO TRIAS'S REPORT, THIS WHOLE THING WAS PLANNED IN CAHOOTS WITH ONE OF OUR ENVOYS! WE HAVEN'T COMMUNICATED OUR SUSPICIONS TO THEM YET, BUT OBVIOUSLY WE MUST FIND THE CULPRIT AS QUICKLY AND AS QUIETLY AS POSSIBLE!

I SAW THE FEET AND ANKLES OF A MAN IN A CASSOCK STANDING WITH HIS BACK TO ME AND TALKING WITH THE LEADER OF THE PHONY SOLDIERS. NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS. I DIDN'T STAY AROUND LONG ENOUGH TO HEAR HIS VOICE.



OF COURSE, WE MUST BE EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS ABOUT MAKING ANY ACCUSATIONS. THAT SAID, THERE WEREN'T THAT MANY CASSOCKS AT THE HOTEL, AND EVEN FEWER WITH THE ABILITY TO TAKE PART IN A... FINANCIAL SCHEME OF SUCH SCOPE. BUT REGARDLESS OF THE CULPRIT'S IDENTITY, WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS HE TRYING TO ACHIEVE BY ILLEGALLY INCREASING OUR WEALTH?



HAD THE OPERATION GONE ACCORDING TO PLAN, PERHAPS THE PROFITS WOULD HAVE IMMEDIATELY LANDED INTO THE BACKER'S ACCOUNTS. AS LONG AS THE TRAITOR HAD ACCESS TO OUR FINANCIAL SECURITY CODES, HE COULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CHAOS AND THE SPEED OF THE TRANSACTIONS TO ENSURE THEY WENT UNNOTICED BY OUR INSPECTORS AT THE END OF THE YEAR. BUT HE NEGLECTED TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THAT THERE WAS A FINANCIAL CHRONICLE REPORTER WHO'S BEEN KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON OUR INVESTMENTS.

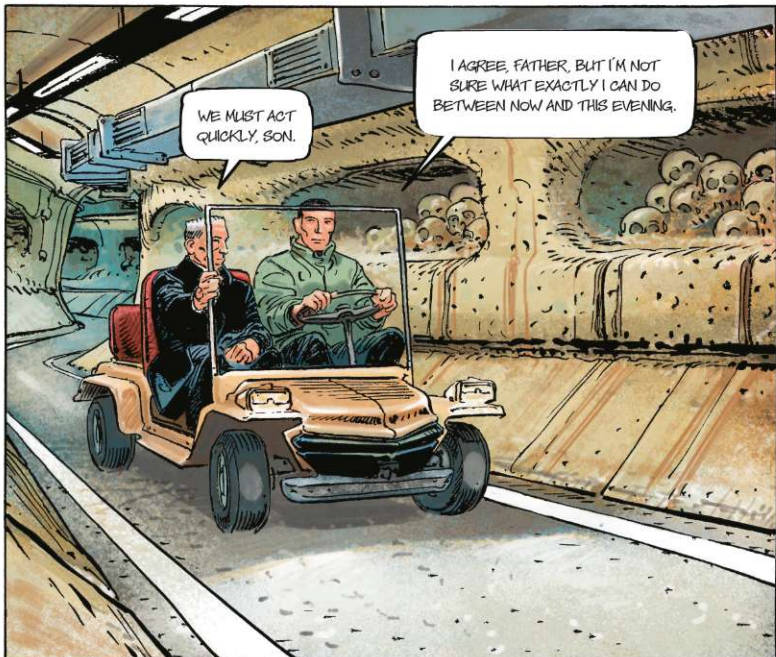


THAT SOUNDS LIKE A PLAUSIBLE THEORY, TRIAS. YOU'VE DONE AN EXCELLENT JOB SO FAR, CONGRATULATIONS. BUT NOW YOU MUST FINISH IT, AND UNCOVER THE IDENTITIES OF OUR BLACK SHEEP AND HIS EMPLOYER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.



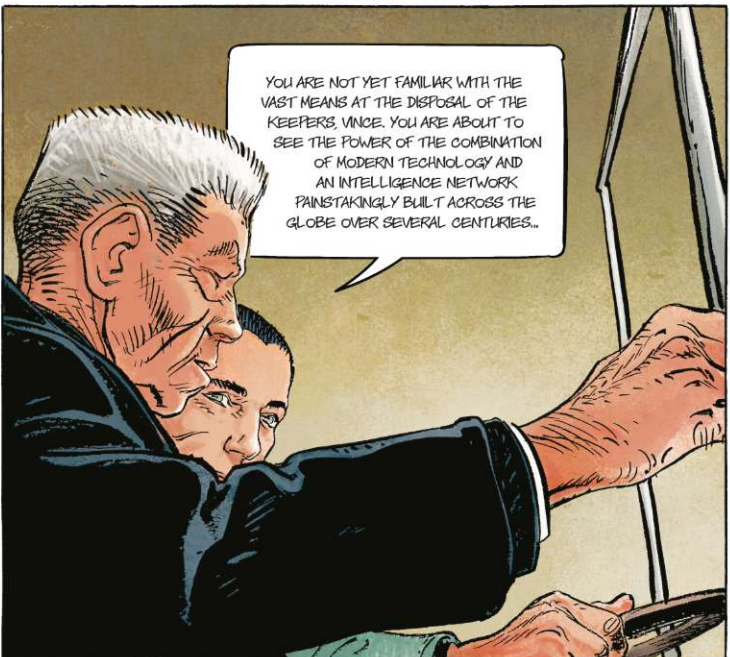
I WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE TO OUR SECRETARY OF STATE, THIS VERY EVENING, THAT THE MATTER HAS BEEN SETTLED... DISCRETELY.

WE SHALL DO OUR BEST, MONSIGNOR.

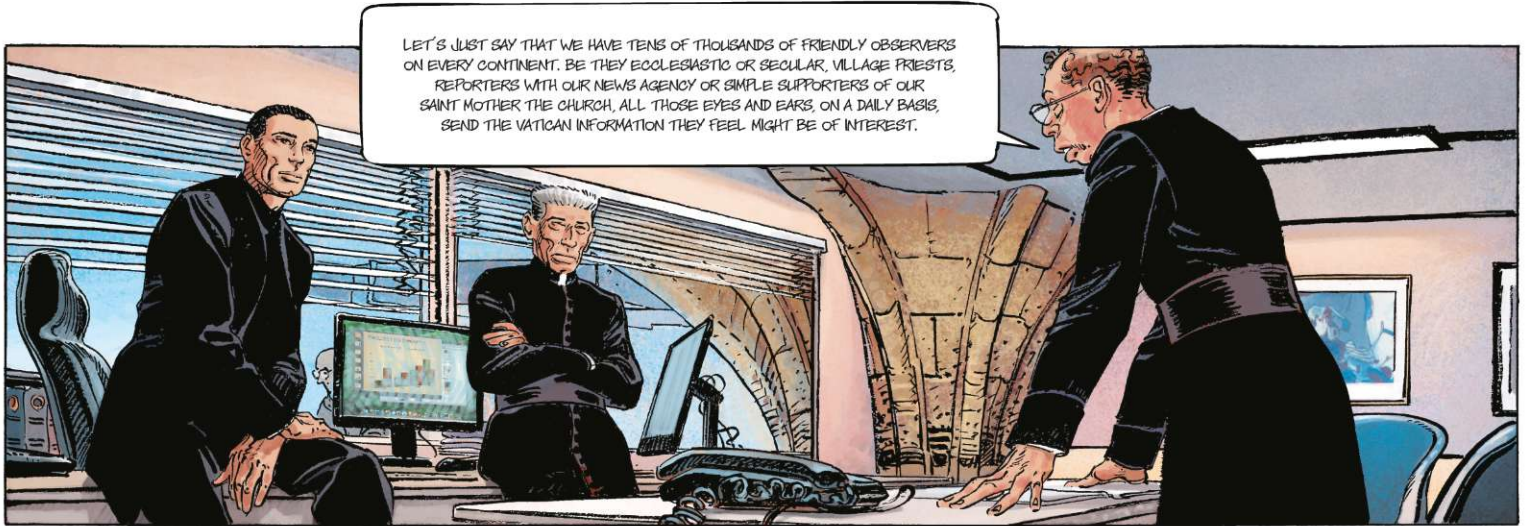


WE MUST ACT QUICKLY, SON.

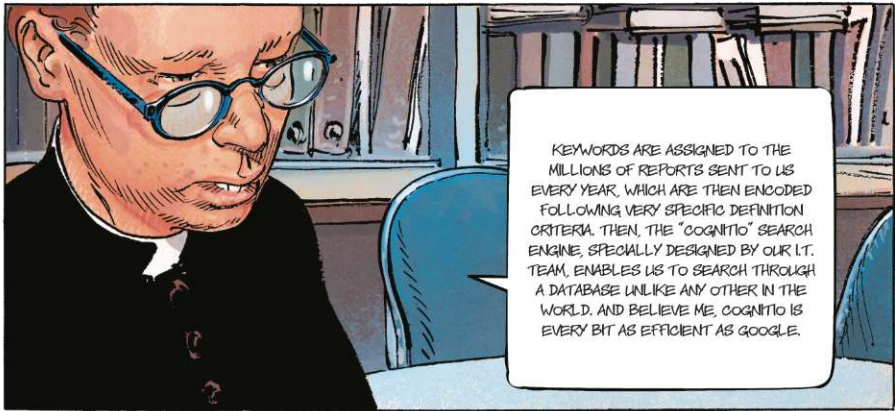
I AGREE, FATHER, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT EXACTLY I CAN DO BETWEEN NOW AND THIS EVENING.



YOU ARE NOT YET FAMILIAR WITH THE VAST MEANS AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE KEEPERS, VINCE. YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE THE POWER OF THE COMBINATION OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND AN INTELLIGENCE NETWORK PAINSTAKINGLY BUILT ACROSS THE GLOBE OVER SEVERAL CENTURIES...



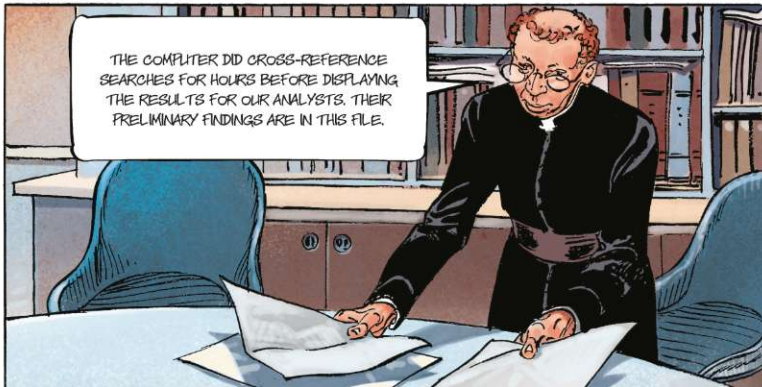
LET'S JUST SAY THAT WE HAVE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF FRIENDLY OBSERVERS ON EVERY CONTINENT. BE THEY ECCLESIASTIC OR SECULAR, VILLAGE PRIESTS, REPORTERS WITH OUR NEWS AGENCY OR SIMPLE SUPPORTERS OF OUR SAINT MOTHER THE CHURCH, ALL THOSE EYES AND EARS, ON A DAILY BASIS, SEND THE VATICAN INFORMATION THEY FEEL MIGHT BE OF INTEREST.



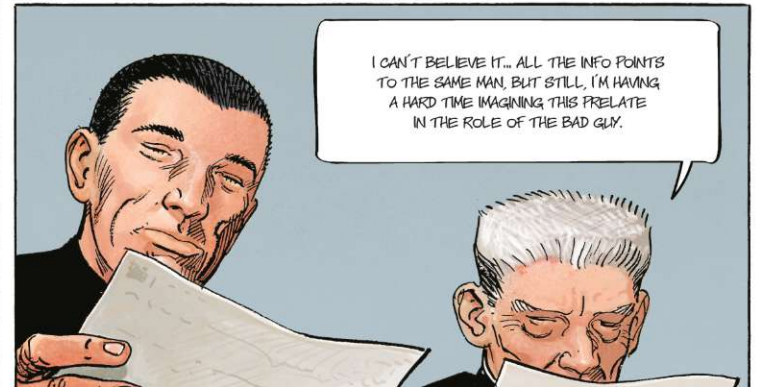
KEYWORDS ARE ASSIGNED TO THE MILLIONS OF REPORTS SENT TO US EVERY YEAR, WHICH ARE THEN ENCODED FOLLOWING VERY SPECIFIC DEFINITION CRITERIA. THEN, THE "COGNITO" SEARCH ENGINE, SPECIALLY DESIGNED BY OUR I.T. TEAM, ENABLES US TO SEARCH THROUGH A DATABASE UNLIKE ANY OTHER IN THE WORLD. AND BELIEVE ME, COGNITO IS EVERY BIT AS EFFICIENT AS GOOGLE.



HERE, SEE FOR YOURSELF. YESTERDAY, FATHER SOFFRANELLO ASKED ME TO LOOK AT TWO NAMES, AS WELL AS KEYWORDS SUCH AS "DAVOS FORUM," "MUHAMMAD AL QUARDI" AND ONE OF AL QUARDI'S COMPANIES: THREE DEE TECH IN LA JOLLA.



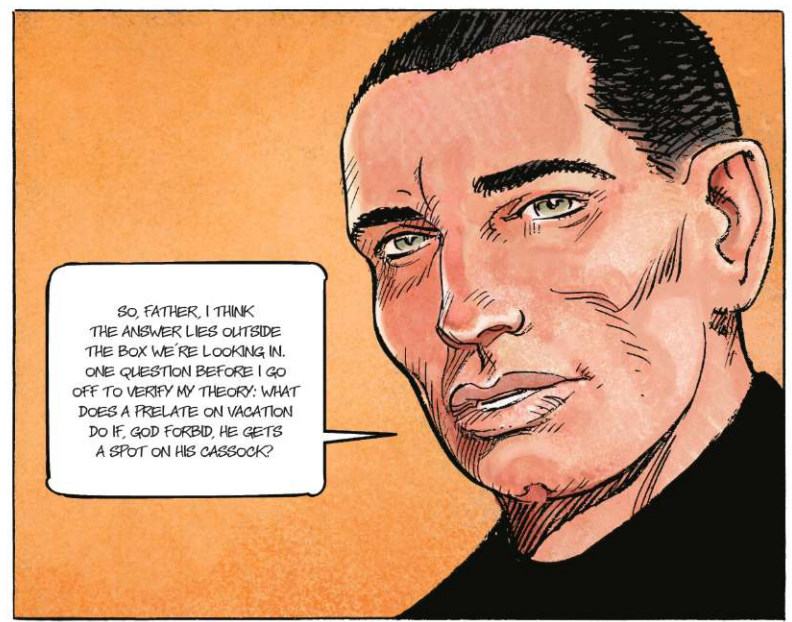
THE COMPUTER DID CROSS-REFERENCE SEARCHES FOR HOURS BEFORE DISPLAYING THE RESULTS FOR OUR ANALYSTS. THEIR PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ARE IN THIS FILE.



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT... ALL THE INFO POINTS TO THE SAME MAN, BUT STILL, I'M HAVING A HARD TIME IMAGINING THIS PRELATE IN THE ROLE OF THE BAD GUY.



AND THERE'S A MAJOR PROBLEM: THE FILE INDICATES HE WAS IN HOSPITAL AT THE TIME THIS SURREAL SWORD FIGHT TOOK PLACE. SO?



SO, FATHER, I THINK THE ANSWER LIES OUTSIDE THE BOX WE'RE LOOKING IN. ONE QUESTION BEFORE I GO OFF TO VERIFY MY THEORY: WHAT DOES A PRELATE ON VACATION DO IF, GOD FORBID, HE GETS A SPOT ON HIS CASSOCK?



YES, AFTER THE DAVOS EVENTS, HIS EMINENCE GENEROUSLY GAVE ME A FEW DAYS OFF, WHICH I'M USING TO GO VISIT FAMILY IN THE SOUTH.



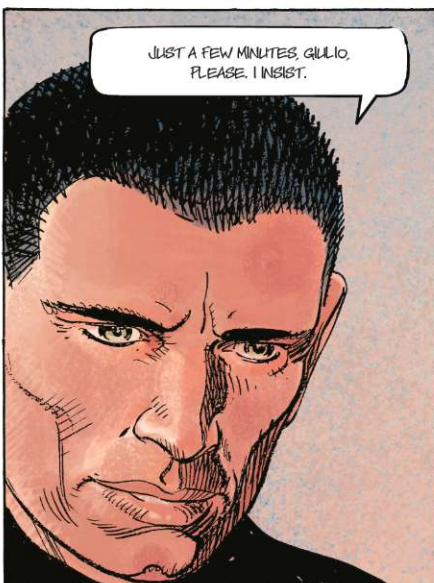
VINCE? WHAT A SURPRISE!

HOW ARE YOU, GULLIO? ARE YOU GOING AWAY?



EXCELLENT IDEA GULLIO. WE ALL NEED A LITTLE REST AND RELAXATION ONCE IN A WHILE. I'D STILL LIKE A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME THOUGH, IF YOU DON'T MIND. THERE ARE A COUPLE OF THINGS I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH YOU.

IT'S JUST THAT... MY CAB'S WAITING OUT FRONT. I DON'T WANT TO MISS MY PLANE.



JUST A FEW MINUTES, GULLIO. PLEASE. I INSIST.



OH, VERY WELL. IN THAT CASE, LET'S GO BACK UP TO MY ROOM. I CERTAINLY HOPE THIS IS IMPORTANT.

I THINK IT MIGHT BE.

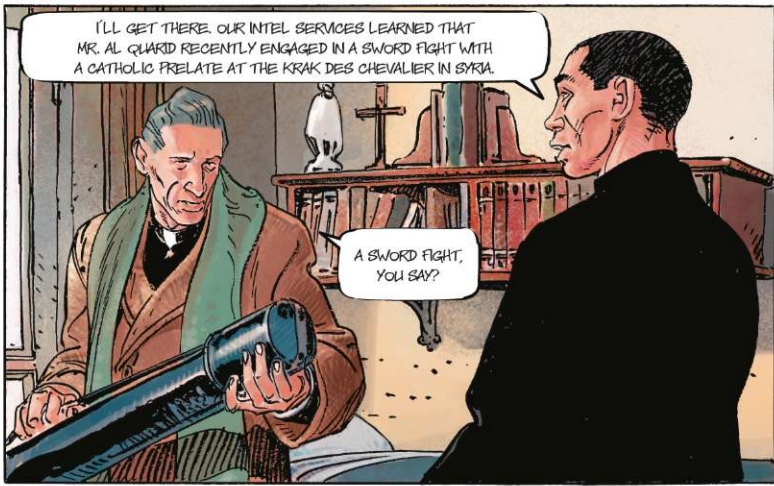


HERE WE ARE. PLEASE REMEMBER I'M PRESSED FOR TIME.



OUR HIERARCHY KNOWS THAT ONE OF OURS IS INVOLVED IN THE DAVOS HOAX. SOMEONE WITH ACCESS TO VATICAN FINANCES WHO VERY CLEVERLY TRANSFERRED FUNDS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STOCK MARKET TRANSACTIONS MADE BY SEMINAR GUESTS IN A PANIC. SOMEONE WHO WAS THERE AND COULD MONITOR THE OPERATIONS ALONGSIDE MR. AL QUARD AND HIS ACCOMPLICES.

WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN BY "ONE OF OURS"?



I'LL GET THERE. OUR INTEL SERVICES LEARNED THAT MR. AL QUARD RECENTLY ENGAGED IN A SWORD FIGHT WITH A CATHOLIC PRELATE AT THE KRAK DES CHEVALIER IN SYRIA.

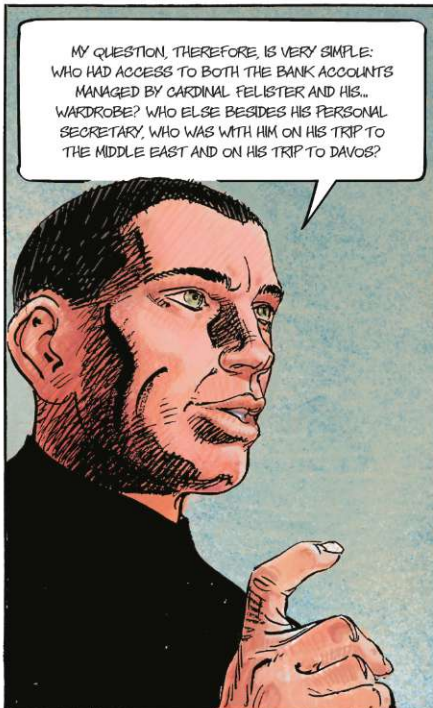
A SWORD FIGHT, YOU SAY?



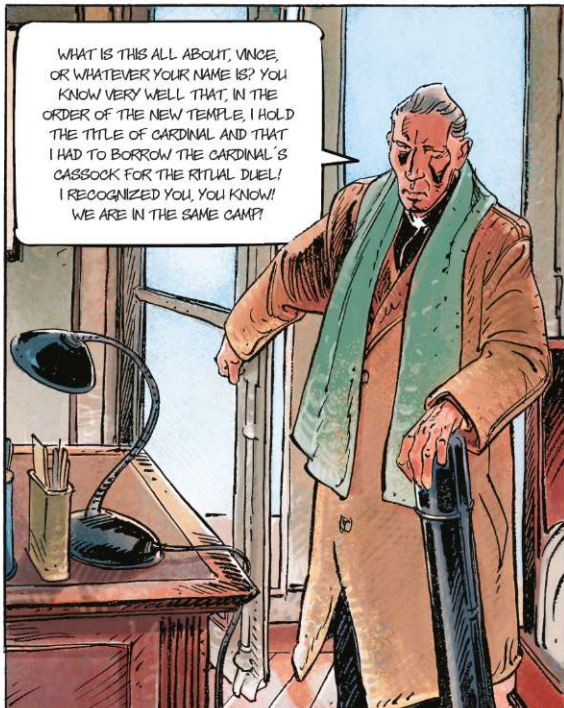
PRECISELY. DURING THAT INITIATION DUEL, OUR PRELATE LOST ONE OF THE BUTTONS FROM HIS CASSOCK. THIS BUTTON WAS IDENTIFIED AS BELONGING TO CARDINAL FELISTER. THEY ARE VERY DISTINCTIVE, BECAUSE THE CARDINAL'S BROTHERS GAVE HIM BUTTONS ENGRAVED WITH THE FAMILY CREST AS A GIFT, WHEN THE HOLY FATHER APPOINTED HIM. AN ELEGANT GIFT MOST USEFUL TO MY INVESTIGATION, AS IT TURNS OUT.



WE CHECKED. THE DAY THIS FRIENDLY DUEL TOOK PLACE, CARDINAL FELISTER, WHO WAS IN THE SAME REGION ON BUSINESS, WAS LAID UP IN A HOSPITAL BED WITH A NASTY CASE OF INDIGESTION.



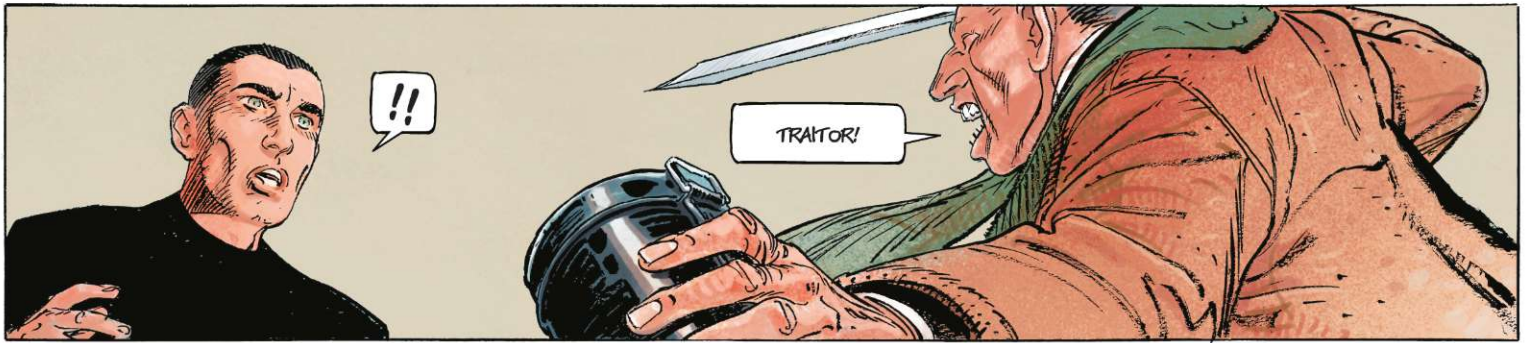
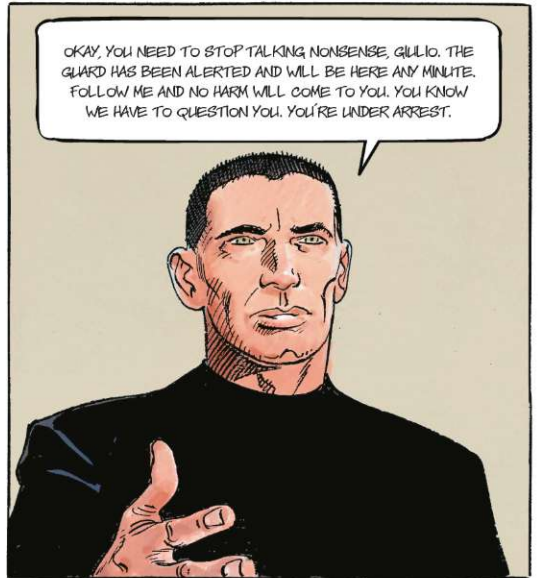
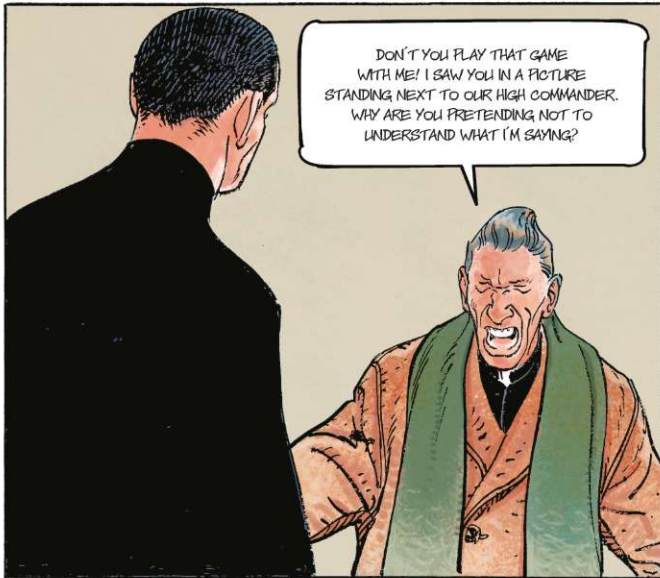
MY QUESTION, THEREFORE, IS VERY SIMPLE: WHO HAD ACCESS TO BOTH THE BANK ACCOUNTS MANAGED BY CARDINAL FELISTER AND HIS... WARDROBE? WHO ELSE BESIDES HIS PERSONAL SECRETARY, WHO WAS WITH HIM ON HIS TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND ON HIS TRIP TO DAVOS?

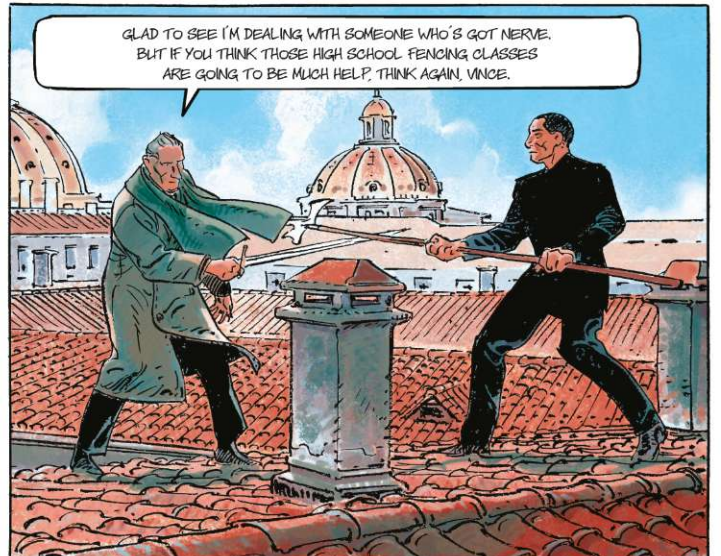
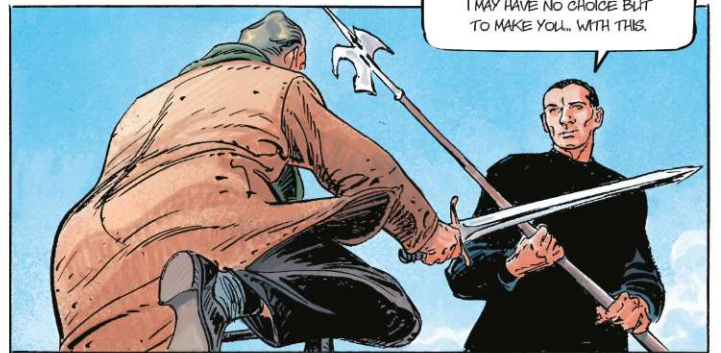


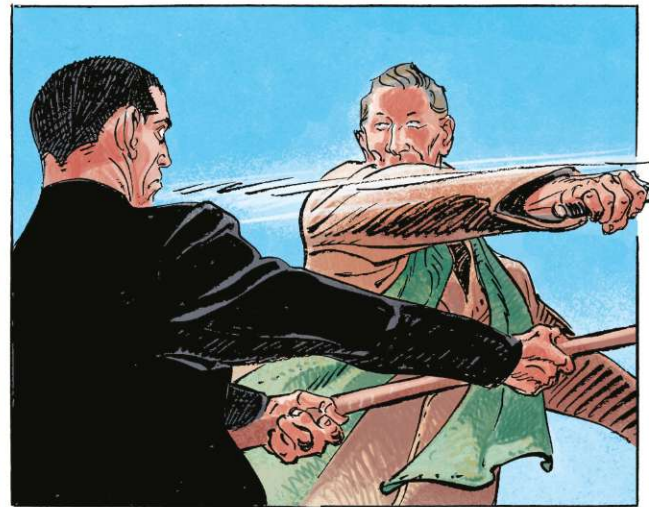
WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT, VINCE, OR WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS? YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT, IN THE ORDER OF THE NEW TEMPLE, I HOLD THE TITLE OF CARDINAL AND THAT I HAD TO BORROW THE CARDINAL'S CASSOCK FOR THE RITUAL DUEL! I RECOGNIZED YOU, YOU KNOW! WE ARE IN THE SAME CAMP!



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, GUILIO? WHAT CAMP? WHAT ORDER OF THE NEW TEMPLE?







THAT THERE'S SOME FANCY SWORDPLAY, VINCE, I MUST ADMIT. BUT IT ONLY SERVES TO POSTPONE YOUR UNAVOIDABLE MEETING WITH THE LORD.



I'M NOT SURE YOU AND I SERVE THE SAME LORD, GULLIO.



YOU'RE RIGHT, ACTUALLY. BUT YOUR GOD'S TIME IS UP, VINCE. I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU BETRAYED HIM, BUT PREPARE TO ANSWER TO MY GOD!



OOPS... THERE GO THE FEET!



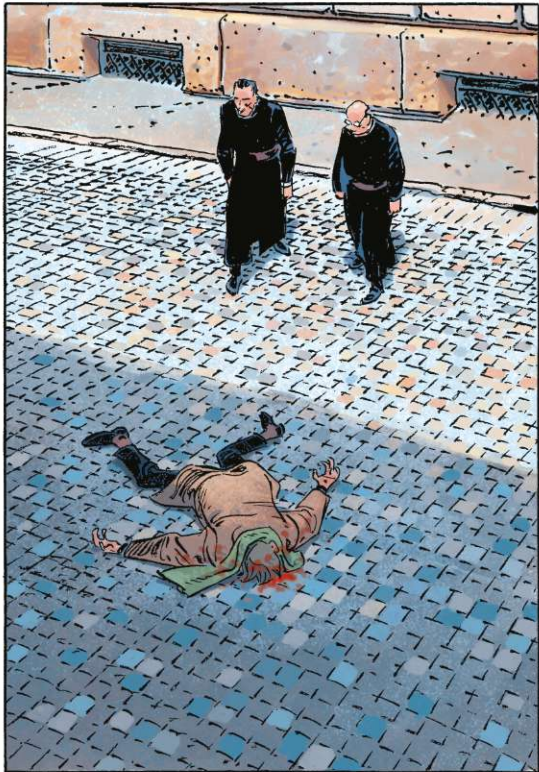
HOW... HOW DID YOU DO THAT?

EVER HEARD OF KENDO?



TURPITUDO PEJUS EST QUAM MORIS! FAREWELL!





TURPITUDO PEJUS EST QUAM MORBS...

"DISHONOR IS WORSE THAN DEATH." B-MOVIE LINES LIKE THAT SMACK OF FANATICISM.

LAURA! HOW GOES THE CONVALESCENCE? THREE DAYS, ALREADY? THAT'S FANTASTIC! MAYBE WE CAN FINALLY GRAB THAT COFFEE!



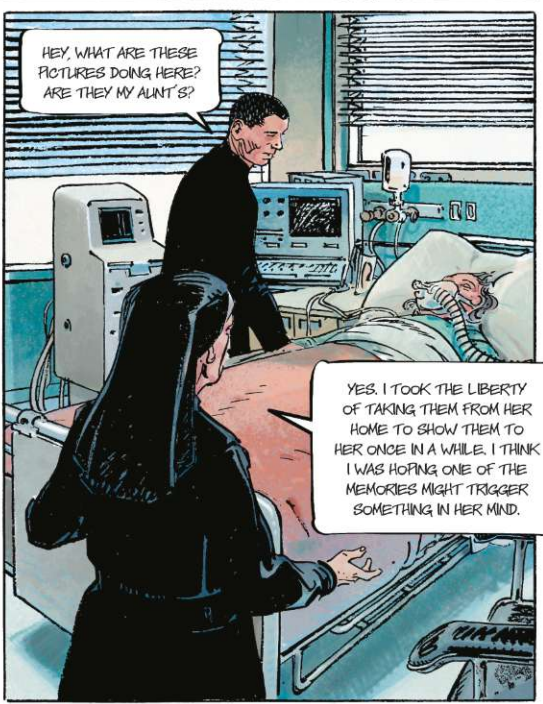
SAINT PETER'S HOSPITAL - ONE HOUR LATER.

HOW IS SHE, DOCTOR?

STABLE. IT'S VERY STRANGE. SHE KEEPS HER EYES GLUED TO THE CEILING AND SHOWS NO RESPONSE TO ANYTHING. WE HAVE TO USE FEEDING TUBES.



SHE'S NOT SUFFERING, VINCE. I DON'T KNOW IF SHE CAN HEAR US, BUT SHE'S NOT SUFFERING. I PRAY FOR HER A LOT. OUR DEAR ANTONELLA IS SUCH A GOOD PERSON.



HEY, WHAT ARE THESE PICTURES DOING HERE? ARE THEY MY AUNT'S?

YES. I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF TAKING THEM FROM HER HOME TO SHOW THEM TO HER ONCE IN A WHILE. I THINK I WAS HOPING ONE OF THE MEMORIES MIGHT TRIGGER SOMETHING IN HER MIND.



SISTER... SISTER ANNA? DO YOU... DO YOU KNOW WHO THIS IS?



AH THEY'RE SO CUTE, AREN'T THEY? THAT'S YOUR GREAT AUNT ANTONELLA ON THE LEFT, AND HER TWIN SISTER, VINCE.



SISTER ANOTELLA ONCE TOLD ME THAT THE PICTURE WAS TAKEN BY THEIR MOTHER BARELY TWO HOURS BEFORE THE GERMANS TOOK THEM AWAY--ALONG WITH THEIR YOUNGER BROTHER MICHAEL, YOUR GRANDFATHER--TO AUSCHWITZ. HER SISTER DIDN'T MAKE IT BACK.



FATHER, WHY IS HE PLAGUING ME WITH ALL THESE APPARITIONS AND QUESTIONS? WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN? AND GIULIO, HE CALLED ME A TRAITOR WITH SUCH CONVICTION-- TRAITOR TO A CAUSE I DON'T EVEN KNOW. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ALL THIS?



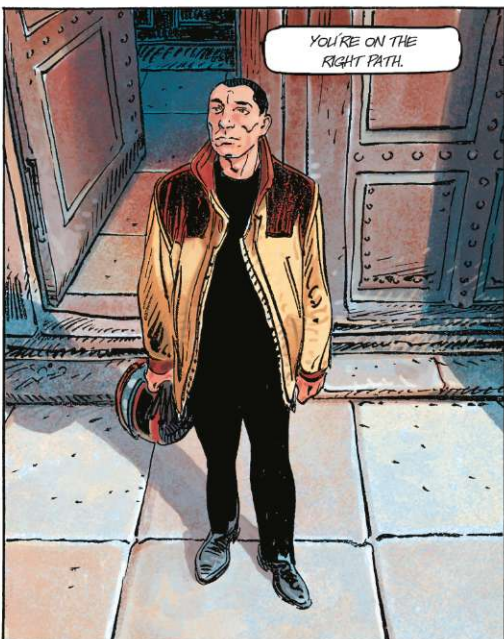
COME NOW, VINCE, YOU KNOW VERY WELL I CAN'T ANSWER THOSE QUESTIONS. ONLY YOU CAN, IN TIME.



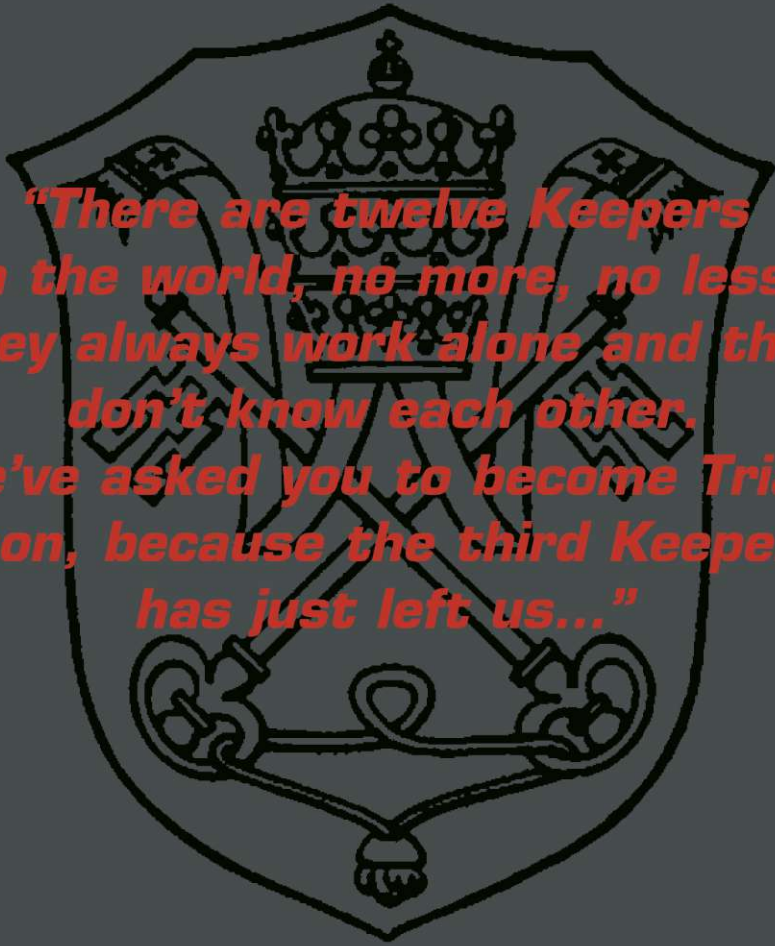
BUT I CAN SEE YOU'RE MAKING PROGRESS.



KEEP THE FAITH, SON.



YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT PATH.



***"There are twelve Keepers
in the world, no more, no less.
They always work alone and they
don't know each other.
We've asked you to become Trias,
son, because the third Keeper
has just left us..."***

In the same series:

1. The Angel of Malta
2. Weekend in Davos
3. The Ghosts of Porto Cervo
4. The Wounds of the Past

