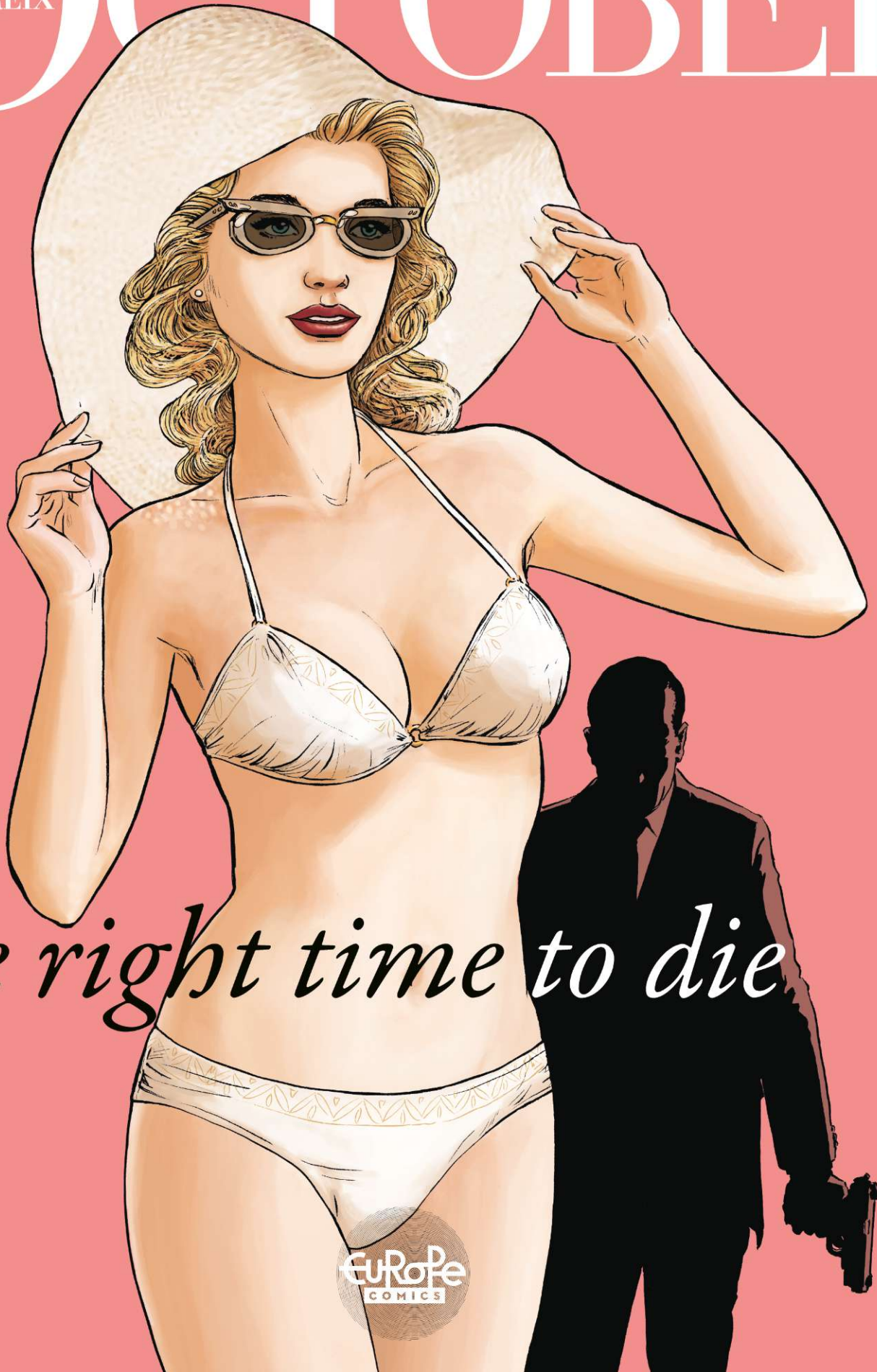


Miss
DESBERG
QUEIREIX

OCTOBER

#2 - MURDER OF THE MONTH



The right time to die

Europe
COMICS



Miss
OCTOBER
Murder of the Month

WRITER

Stephen Desberg

ARTIST

Alain Queireix

COLORIST

Katrin



IT ALL STARTED WITH MISS JANUARY. JUST LIKE IN PLAYBOY.



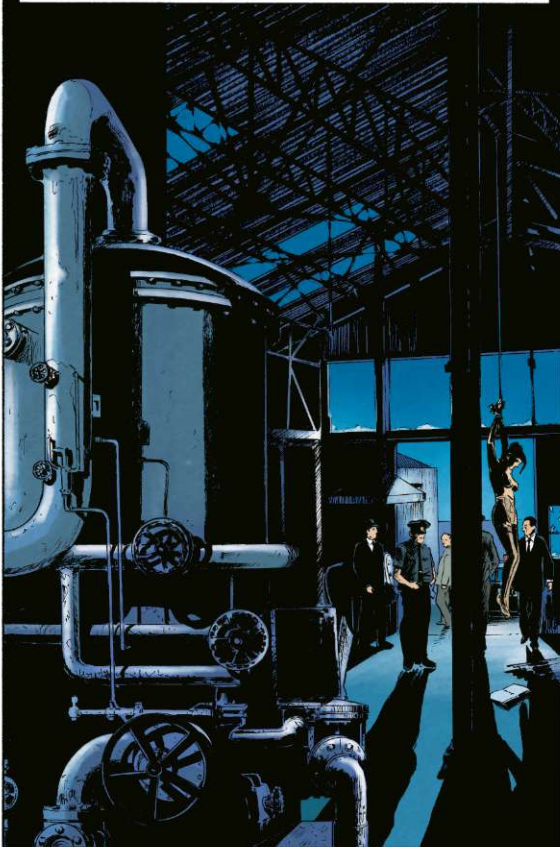
THE PAPERS SAID IT WAS A PITY--THE POOR GIRL--AND DECLARED CULVER CITY WAS GETTING TO BE A DANGEROUS NEIGHBORHOOD.



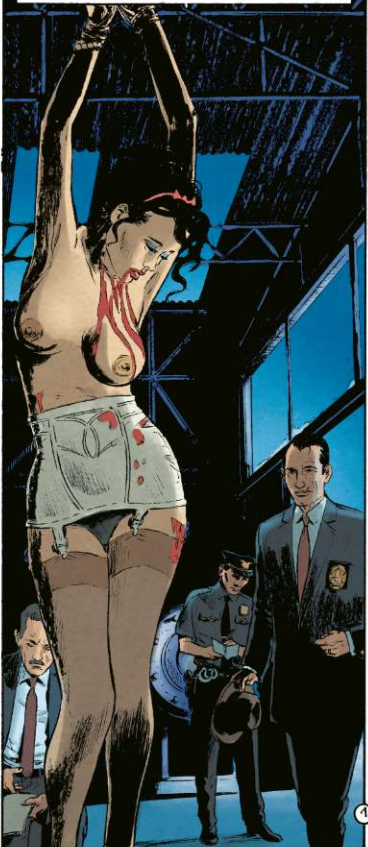
THEN IT WAS MISS FEBRUARY'S TURN. JUST LIKE IN A NIGHTMARE. EXCEPT THIS TIME, IT HAPPENED IN A FANCY HOUSE UP IN BEVERLY HILLS. AND PEOPLE STARTED GETTING SCARED.



WHEN MISS MARCH WAS DISCOVERED NOT LONG AFTER, EVERYONE TURNED TO THE LAPD, WONDERING HOW SUCH A HORRIBLE THING COULD EVEN HAPPEN.



AND THE LAPD TURNED TO THE CITY, WONDERING JUST WHAT KIND OF MONSTER IT COULD BE HIDING.





THREE VERY DIFFERENT YOUNG WOMEN, WITH ONE THING IN COMMON. THEY WERE ALL PRETTY. THEY'D ALL BEEN RAPED. AND HAD THEIR THROATS SLIT.



BEFORE RECEIVING THE POSTHUMOUS TRIBUTE OF A BOUDOIR PHOTO SPREAD.



MAYBE I'D NARROWLY ESCAPED THE SAME FATE. ONE NIGHT, SOMEONE BROKE INTO MY HOUSE AND TRIED TO RAPE ME.



HE HIT ME ON THE HEAD. HARD. I NO LONGER HAVE ANY MEMORY OF WHAT HAPPENED TO ME THAT NIGHT.

Los Angeles Times

March 21, 1961. LOS ANGELES TIMES . 202 West 1st Street.

LOS ANGELES IN SHOCK!

A third victim. Miss March is Tiffany Keys: A horrible tragedy!

work as a guidebook, readers will find them-
directed to those sites and buildings
and protection

or potential destruction, rather than through
any observable curatorial decision. By sheer
numbers alone, the designation process
in a broad sampling of the important
ations that have



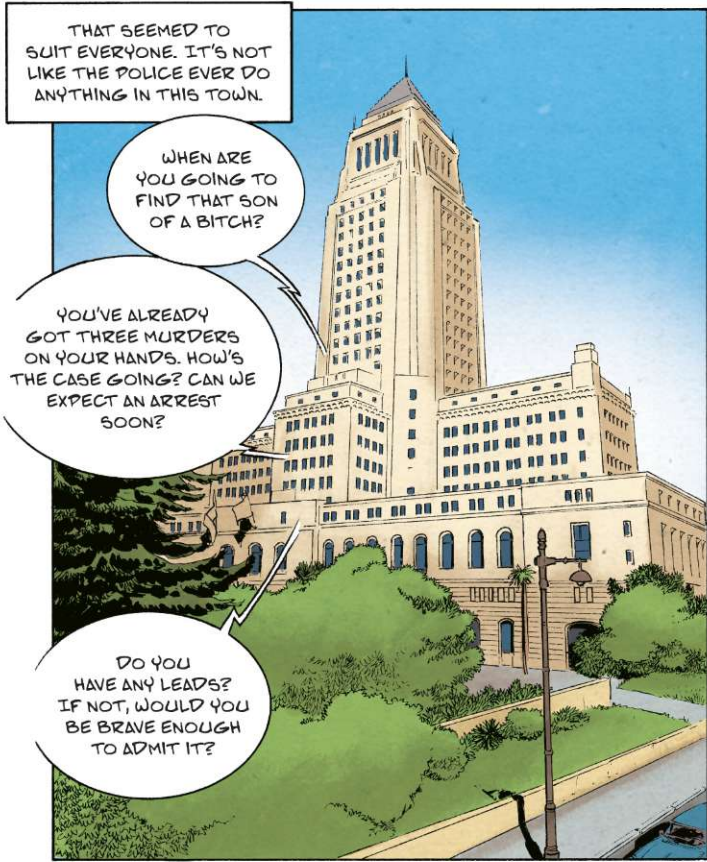
AFTER THAT, MY WORLD WENT QUIET. I CAN'T HEAR A THING ANYMORE. NOT THINGS I LOVE, OR THINGS I HATE.



I'M DEAF NOW.



MY FATHER HAD IT WRITTEN UP OFFICIALLY AS A CAR ACCIDENT, IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE FAMILY'S REPUTATION.



THAT SEEMED TO SUIT EVERYONE. IT'S NOT LIKE THE POLICE EVER DO ANYTHING IN THIS TOWN.

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO FIND THAT SON OF A BITCH?

YOU'VE ALREADY GOT THREE MURDERS ON YOUR HANDS. HOW'S THE CASE GOING? CAN WE EXPECT AN ARREST SOON?

DO YOU HAVE ANY LEADS? IF NOT, WOULD YOU BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO ADMIT IT?



WE'RE ALL ON OUR OWN.

OF COURSE WE'VE GOT LEADS. GIVEN THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION, I WOULDN'T WANT TO GIVE YOU ANY FALSE HOPE, BUT...



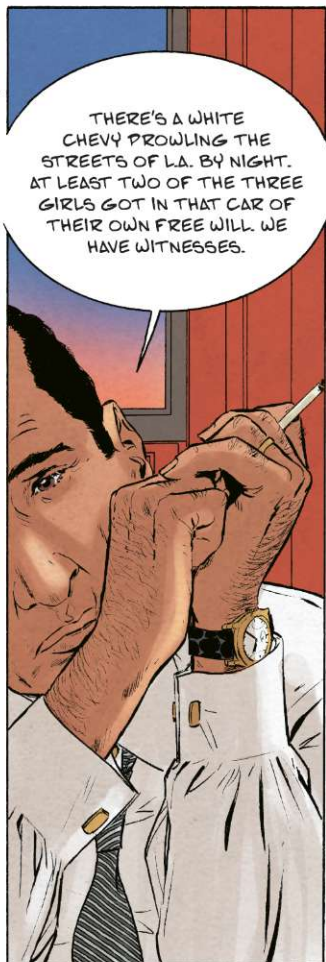
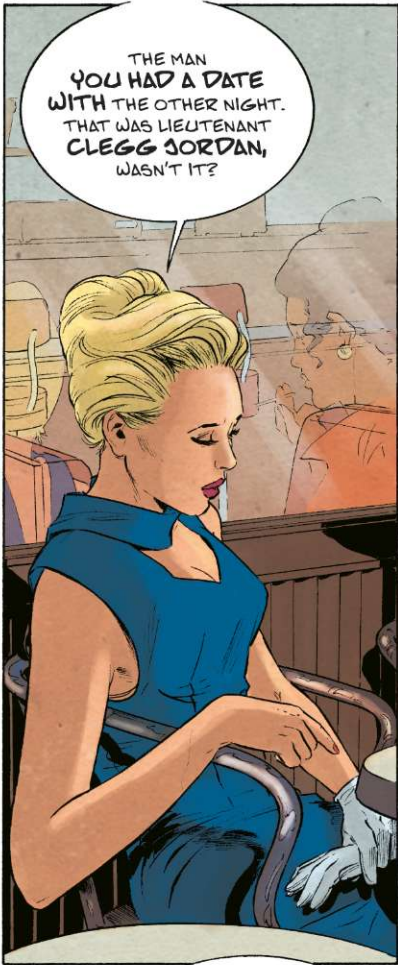
WE'RE RECONSIDERING THE CASE IN LIGHT OF NEW EVIDENCE. WE'LL KEEP YOU UP-TO-DATE ON THE LATEST--



SO I HIRED A PRIVATE EYE. JUANITA SONES, TO BE EXACT.



I PROMISED HER NINE THOUSAND DOLLARS IF SHE COULD FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.





THEN I GOT A SECOND ANONYMOUS LETTER. THE FIRST ONE SAID, "I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU. INTERESTED?"

Want his name?
It'll cost you
\$100,000.

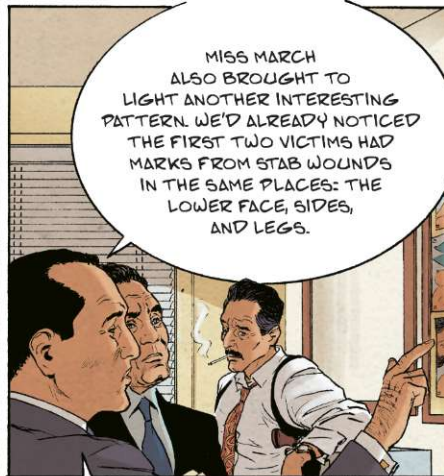


THE THIRD VICTIM DOESN'T TELL US ANYTHING WE DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW. SHE DIED THE EXACT SAME WAY AS THE OTHER TWO.

THE PHOTOS OF THE BODY ARE A BIT DIFFERENT, BUT THE GENERAL IDEA'S THE SAME.

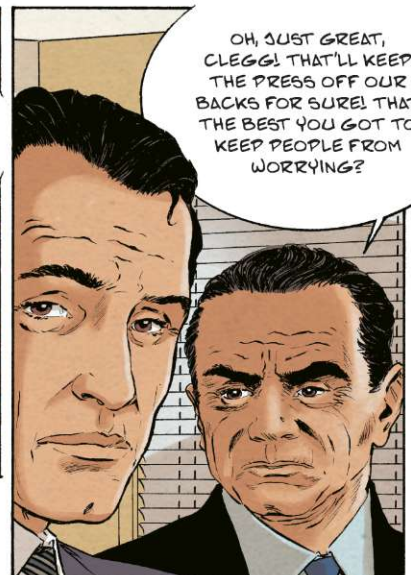


PLAYBOY IN THE MORGUE. THE VICTIM'S BODY SICKENINGLY POSED FOR A NUDE PHOTO SPREAD. GOTTA LOVE THIS TOWN.



MISS MARCH ALSO BROUGHT TO LIGHT ANOTHER INTERESTING PATTERN. WE'D ALREADY NOTICED THE FIRST TWO VICTIMS HAD MARKS FROM STAB WOUNDS IN THE SAME PLACES: THE LOWER FACE, SIDES, AND LEGS.

SAME WAS TRUE OF HER. MIGHT MEAN THE SON OF A BITCH WE'RE DEALING WITH HAS SOME KIND OF SEXUAL FETISH FOR THOSE AREAS.



OH, JUST GREAT, CLEGG! THAT'LL KEEP THE PRESS OFF OUR BACKS FOR SURE! THAT THE BEST YOU GOT TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM WORRYING?



OR MAYBE... I DUNNO... MAYBE HE'S DOING IT TO MAKE HIS VICTIMS... LOOK LIKE SOMEBODY SPECIFIC!

SOMEBODY? WHO?!



IF YOU CAN'T COME UP WITH SOMETHING MORE CONVINCING REAL FAST, WE'RE GOING TO GET SLAUGHTERED IN THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS.



YOU'RE THE BEST MAN I'VE GOT, CLEGG. YOU KNOW I ALWAYS TURN TO YOU WHEN THE GOING GETS ROUGH. BUT I NEED RESULTS, AND I NEED THEM NOW!

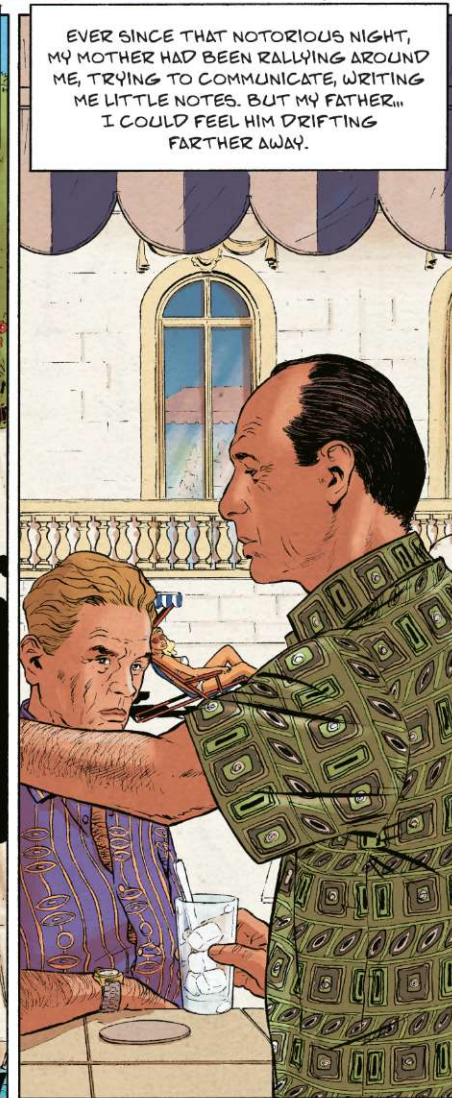
WE'VE GOT ONE LEAD: THAT WHITE CHEVY. MISS FEBRUARY AND MISS MARCH WERE BOTH SEEN IN IT SHORTLY BEFORE THEY DISAPPEARED. I PUT OUR BOYS ON IT. IT'LL TURN UP SOONER OR LATER.



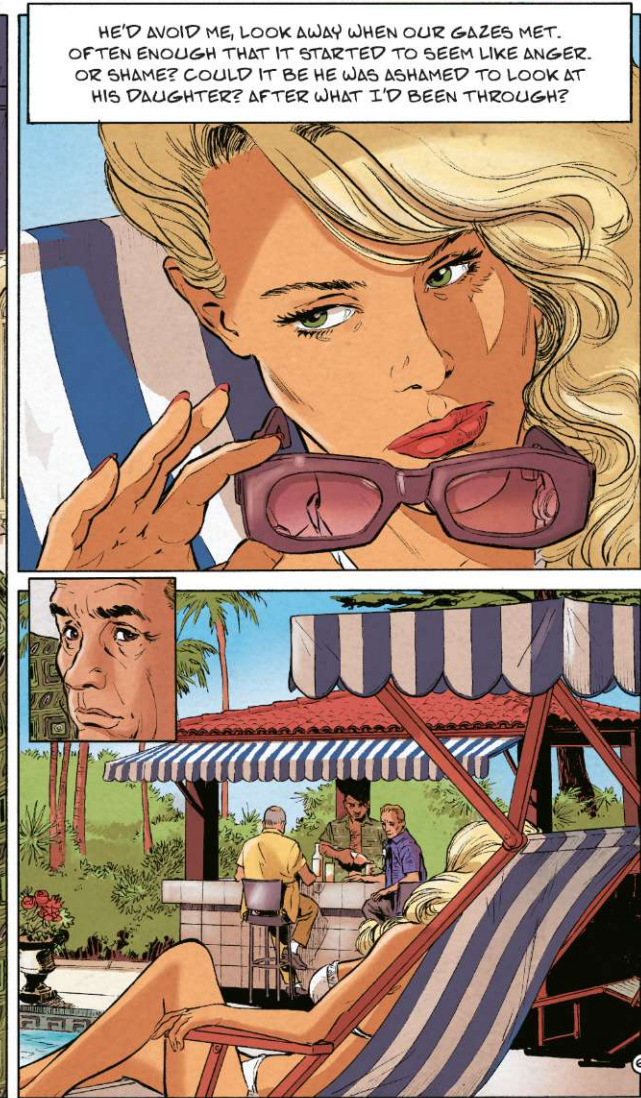
A HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. WHERE COULD I GET IT FROM?



SURE, LOTS OF FOLKS KNEW MY FATHER WAS A MILLIONAIRE. AND ME? WELL, I KNEW I DIDN'T WANT MY FATHER'S MONEY!

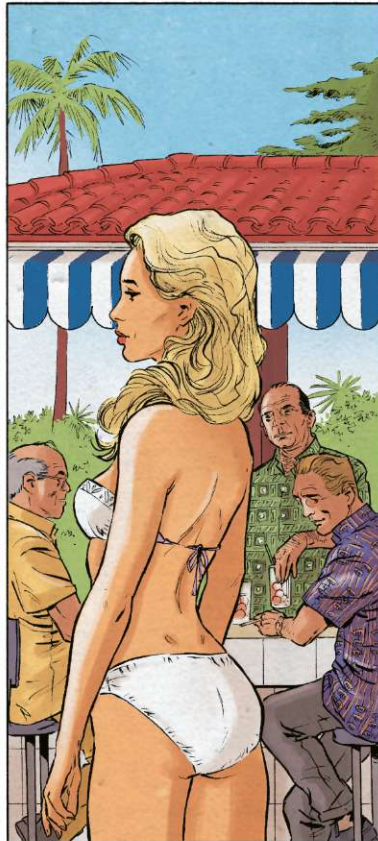
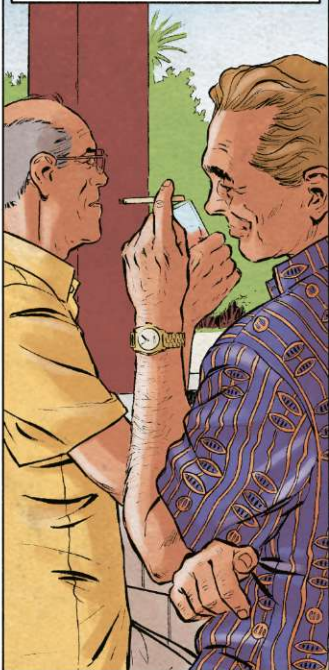


EVER SINCE THAT NOTORIOUS NIGHT, MY MOTHER HAD BEEN RALLYING AROUND ME, TRYING TO COMMUNICATE, WRITING ME LITTLE NOTES. BUT MY FATHER... I COULD FEEL HIM DRIFTING FARTHER AWAY.



HE'D AVOID ME, LOOK AWAY WHEN OUR GAZES MET. OFTEN ENOUGH THAT IT STARTED TO SEEM LIKE ANGER. OR SHAME? COULD IT BE HE WAS ASHAMED TO LOOK AT HIS DAUGHTER? AFTER WHAT I'D BEEN THROUGH?

HIM AND HIS FRIENDS, HOGAN HARLEY, LANG LAUGHTON, THEY WERE PROBABLY LAUGHING AT THE SAME OLD RACIST SOKES, OR FIGURING OUT WHO TO MAKE A MILLION DOLLARS OFF OF NEXT.



THEN IT HIT ME. IT WAS SO OBVIOUS. WHY HADN'T I THOUGHT OF IT BEFORE?



WHO NEEDED MY FATHER'S MONEY, WHEN THERE WAS HOGAN HARLEY'S?

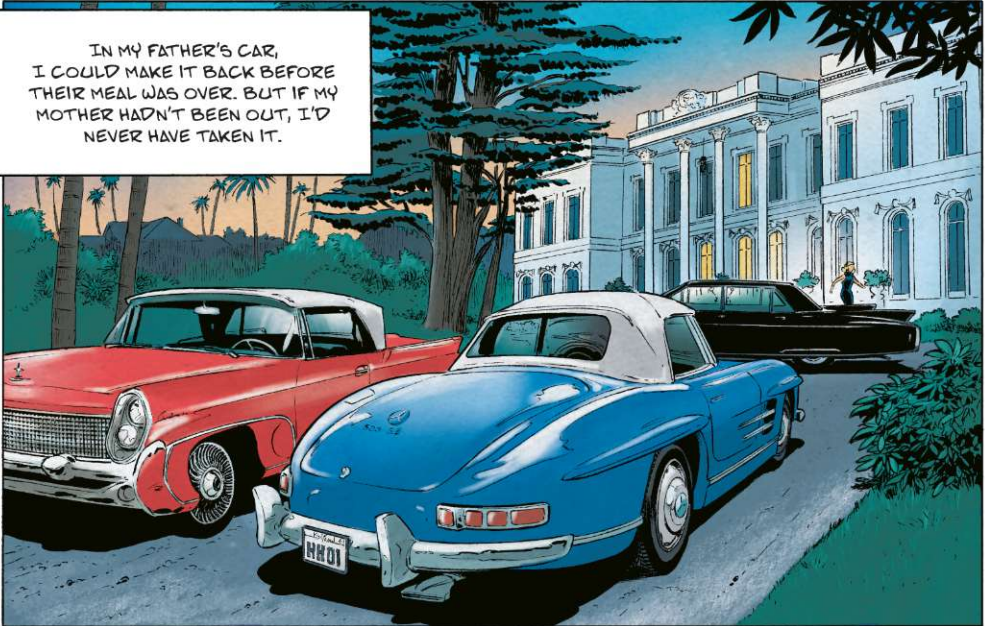


IT WAS SO OBVIOUS, SO SIMPLE. IT WOULDN'T TAKE ME MORE THAN 40 MINUTES TO NIP INTO TOWN AND GET THE KEYS COPIED FOR THE FRONT DOOR AND ALARMS...



...AND GET BACK.

IN MY FATHER'S CAR, I COULD MAKE IT BACK BEFORE THEIR MEAL WAS OVER. BUT IF MY MOTHER HADN'T BEEN OUT, I'D NEVER HAVE TAKEN IT.

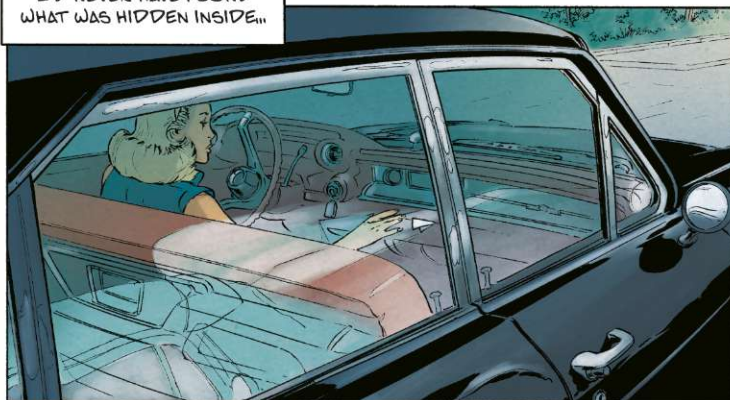


I'D NEVER HAVE THOUGHT TO LOOK FOR ANYTHING AT ALL.

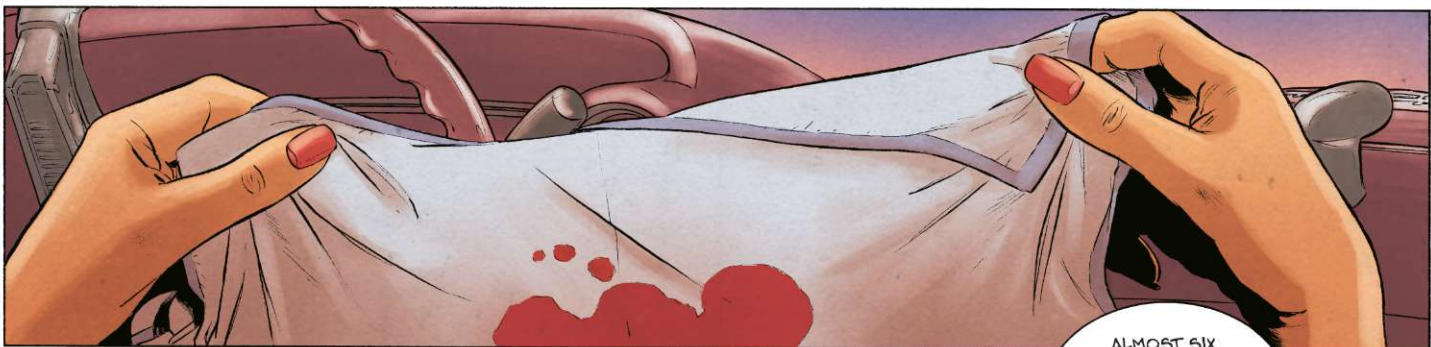




AND IF I HADN'T,
I'D NEVER HAVE FOUND
WHAT WAS HIDDEN INSIDE...



THE HANDKERCHIEF
LET OFF A DELECTABLE
WAFT OF FRENCH PERFUME.



WHAT
TIME IS IT?



ALMOST SIX.
TIME FOR YOU TO
GO HOME AND PLAY
THE PART OF THE
MODEL HUSBAND
AND FATHER.



YOU'RE THE
ONE I SHOULD'VE
MARRIED, SUANITA.
I'D NEVER HAVE ANY
NEED TO LIE TO
YOU.

COPS DON'T
MARRY EX-PROSTI-
TUTES, CLEGG.
IT'S WHAT THEY
CALL SEPARATION
OF POWERS.



YOU CAN HAVE THE CRAZIES AND THE MURDERERS, CLEGG. I'M PERFECTLY HAPPY WITH THE FEW CLIENTS I HAVE, AND MY QUIET LITTLE INVESTIGATIONS.



IF YOU MEAN THAT BLONDE I SAW YOU WITH THE OTHER EVENING, I SURE WISH MY CLIENTS WERE AS PRETTY. AND AS ALIVE!



GOT SOME URGENT INFO FOR CLEGG JORDAN, BUT IT JUST SO HAPPENS I CAN'T SEEM TO REACH HIM.



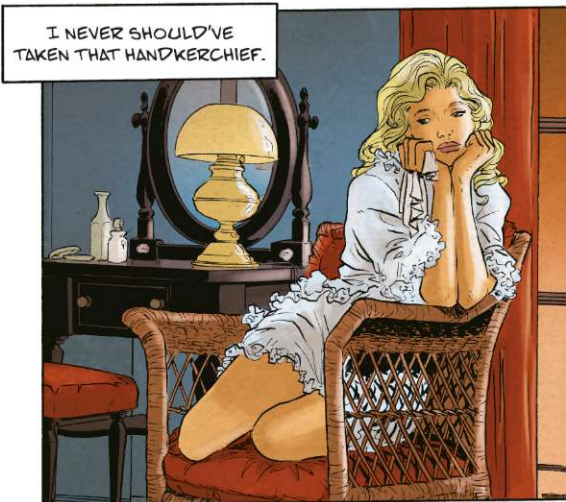
YEAH, AND IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT'S WHY YOU HAD TO RELAY IT TO ME. RIGHT, DICK?

IT'S ABOUT THE WHITE CHEVY, DETECTIVE SAMSON. ONE OF OUR BOYS SPOTTED IT DOWN ON THE SUNSET STRIP.



I'LL HAVE TO TRACK DOWN JORDAN AND TELL HIM, OF COURSE. BUT THIS SHOULD GIVE YOU SOMETHING OF A HEAD START.

HEAD START. SURE, GOT IT. WHERE EXACTLY ON THE STRIP, DICK?

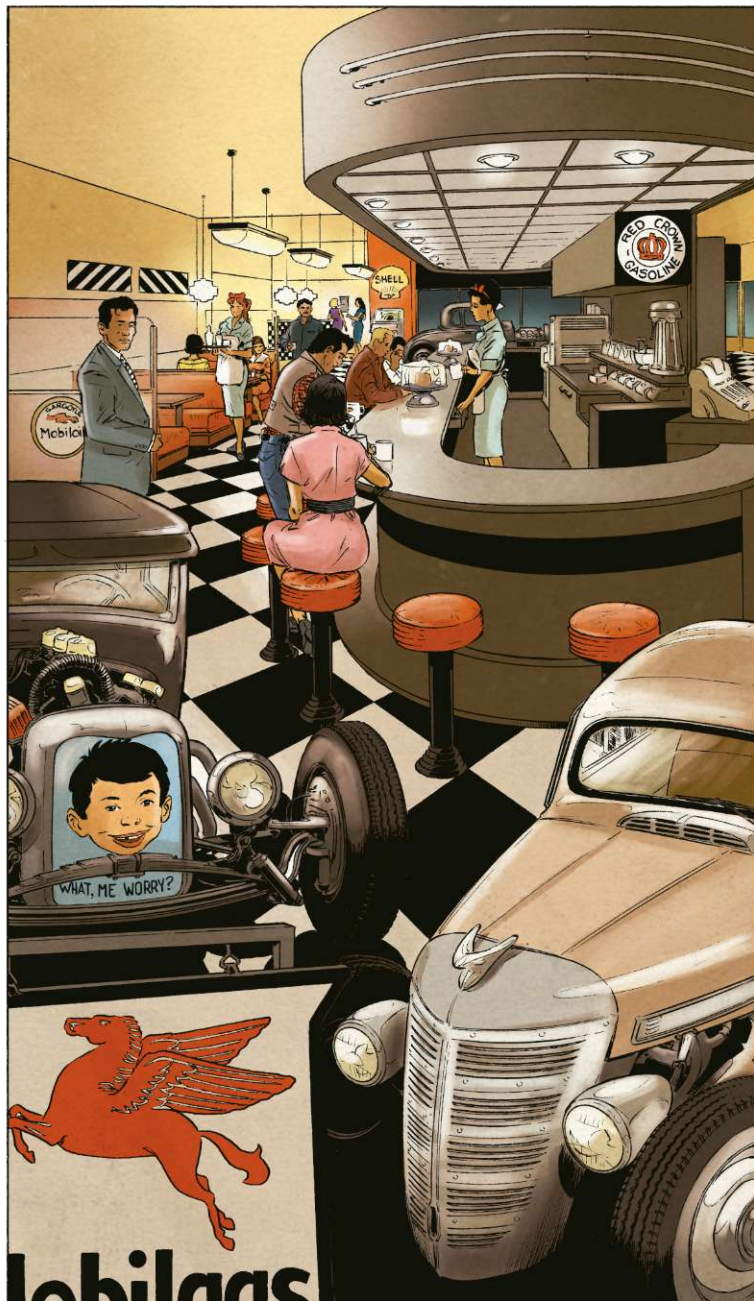


I NEVER SHOULD'VE TAKEN THAT HANDKERCHIEF.



BUT I JUST COULDN'T HELP MYSELF.







YOU GOT ME.

SINCE YOU SEEM TO KNOW EVERYTHING THAT GOES ON AROUND HERE...

GUY DRIVING AROUND IN A WHITE CHEVY, RING ANY BELLS? CAR'S PARKED OUTSIDE, IN THE LOT.



NOT REALLY. THE LOT'S FOR THE RESTAURANT NEXT DOOR, TOO. AND MOST OF THE SHOPS NEARBY.

THERE'S A BOOKSTORE, A LIQUOR STORE, TWO HAIRDRESSERS, AND EVEN A PLASTIC SURGERY CLINIC. TAKE YOUR PICK!



THOUGH IT'S TOO BAD YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO PICK, HUH?



MY GOD, GEORGE! THAT MAN'S TRYING TO STEAL YOUR CAR!



THIS... IS YOUR CAR?

GEORGE, WE HAVE TO CALL THE POLICE!

HOLD ON--



LOOK, IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK I AM THE POLICE. SEE?



HERE'S MY BADGE. DON'T BE ALARMED. WE'RE SEARCHING FOR A CAR THAT LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE YOURS.



THERE MUST BE LOTS JUST LIKE IT IN L.A. WHY, RIGHT THERE, EVEN, ACROSS THE BOULEVARD... DIDN'T YOU SEE IT?



HOW'RE MY GIRLS? I'M HOME!



DADDY! I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU FOR TWO HOURS! I CAN'T WAIT ANYMORE!



TELL ME, DADDY, HURRY! WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT TODAY? DO YOU KNOW WHO THE BAD GUY IS NOW? THE ONE HURTING ALL THOSE POOR WOMEN?

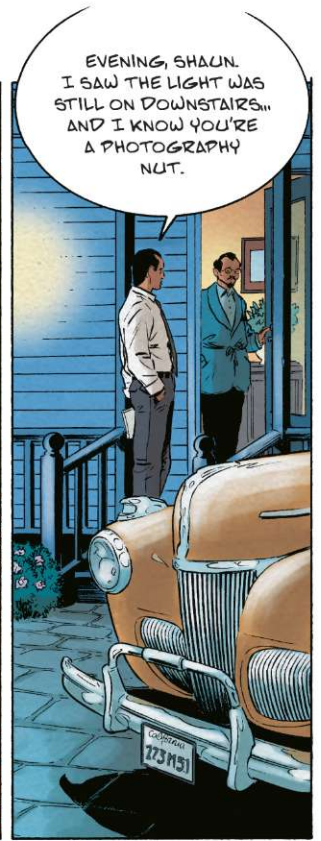
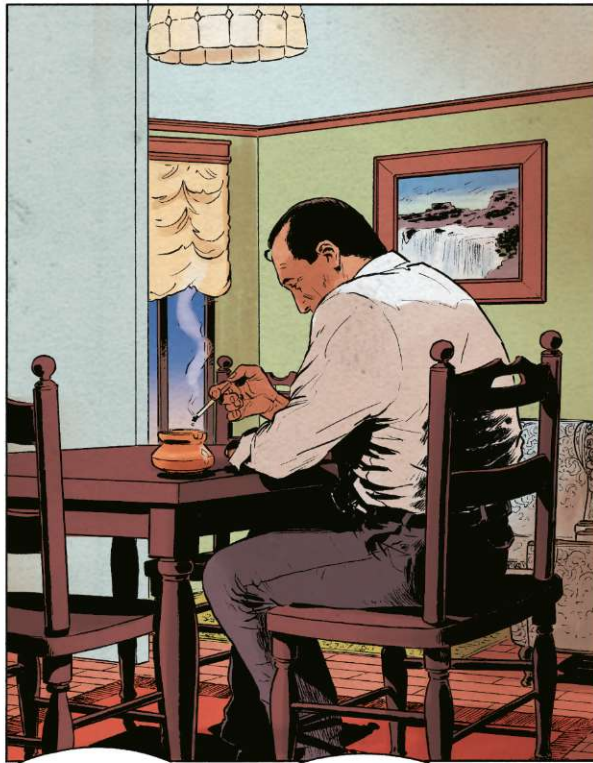


DADDY, EVERYBODY'S COUNTING ON YOU. YOU'RE GONNA KILL HIM, RIGHT?

HELEN! SHUT YOUR MOUTH! STOP THAT RIGHT NOW!



NOT ANOTHER WORD ABOUT THIS BUSINESS. I DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN THIS TOWN ANYMORE. YOU HEAR ME, CLEGG?



EVENING, SHAUN. I SAW THE LIGHT WAS STILL ON DOWNSTAIRS... AND I KNOW YOU'RE A PHOTOGRAPHY NUT.

IT'S KIND OF SENSITIVE, BUT... I'D LIKE YOUR OPINION... AS A PHOTOGRAPHER.



THESE PHOTOS WERE BLOWN UP. BUT THEY'VE RETAINED THEIR SHARPNESS. IF YOU ASK ME, THEY WERE TAKEN WITH A VERY GOOD LENS.



PROBABLY QUITE EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT.

BUT WHOEVER TOOK THEM WAS NO PROFESSIONAL. THERE ARE SOME TINY DETAILS... THAT DON'T LIE.



SUCH AS?

THE BODY'S LIT WITH SPOTLIGHTS. THERE'S A SMALL REFLECTION... HERE, ON THE GROUND... BUT IT SHOULD HAVE CAUGHT HIS EYE.



WHERE?

I'VE GOT A MAGNIFYING GLASS SOMEWHERE.



IT'S GLASS. LOOKS LIKE... A TUBE? A TEST TUBE?



COULD IT BE PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT?

NO. IT LOOKS MORE LIKE IT'S FROM A LABORATORY.

THAT NIGHT, I WAITED 'TIL TWO IN THE MORNING, WHEN EVERYONE WAS ASLEEP.



I KNEW THE HOUSE WELL. I USED TO COME OVER NOW AND THEN TO PLAY TENNIS WITH HOGAN'S DAUGHTER, MADDIE HARLEY. I KNEW I WOULDN'T HAVE MORE THAN A MINUTE BETWEEN THE FRONT DOOR AND THE ALARM KEYPAD.



AND IF I GOT CAUGHT, WELL, GOOD LUCK TRYING TO COME UP WITH AN EXPLANATION!

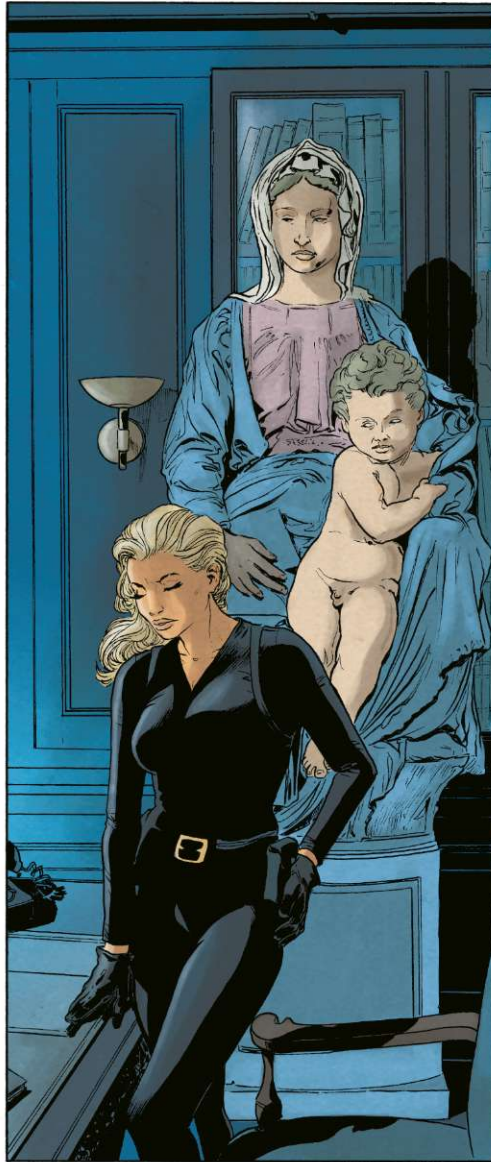


HOGAN HARLEY HAD MADE HIS FORTUNE BY FOUNDING THE FIRST CHRISTIAN RECORD COMPANY. HIS BIG HITS SOLD IN EVERY CHURCH AND CONGREGATION IN THE COUNTRY, GLORIFYING FAITH AND CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

HIS RADIO STATIONS AND TV CHANNELS BROADCAST NONSTOP THE VIRTUES OF LOVE, HUMILITY, ABSTINENCE, AND FIDELITY, WHICH OUR COUNTRY ADMIRERED SO GREATLY, AND WHICH BROUGHT HIM SO MUCH MONEY.



HIS SAFE WAS SURELY BEHIND HIS DESK. I KNEW VERY WELL I HAD NO CHANCE OF OPENING IT.



THERE WAS ANOTHER, MORE RELIABLE WAY OF GETTING WHAT I WANTED. THE IDEA HAD COME TO ME WHEN HOGAN HARLEY'S GAZE HAD LINGERED...



...ON MY SWIMSUIT.



A TUBE FROM A LAB... BUT WHAT WAS IT DOING THERE?

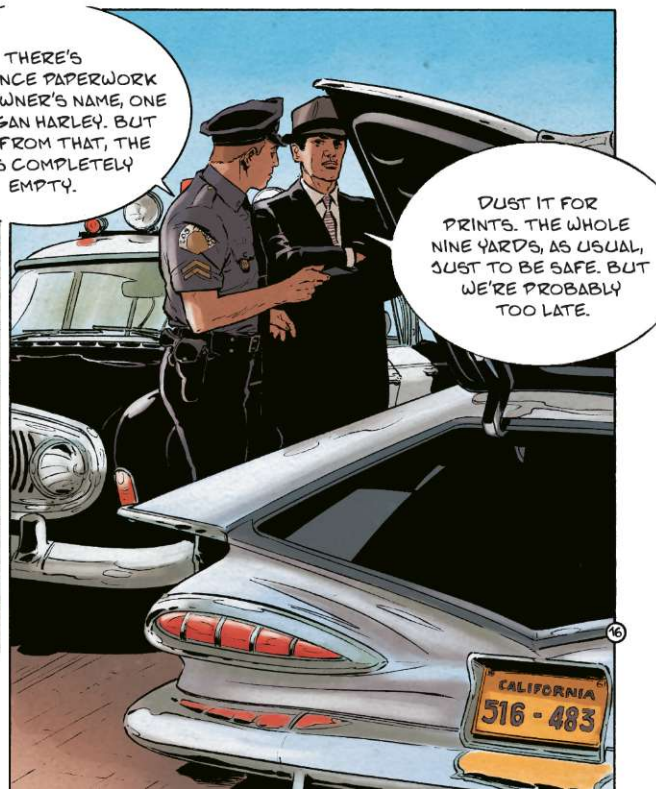
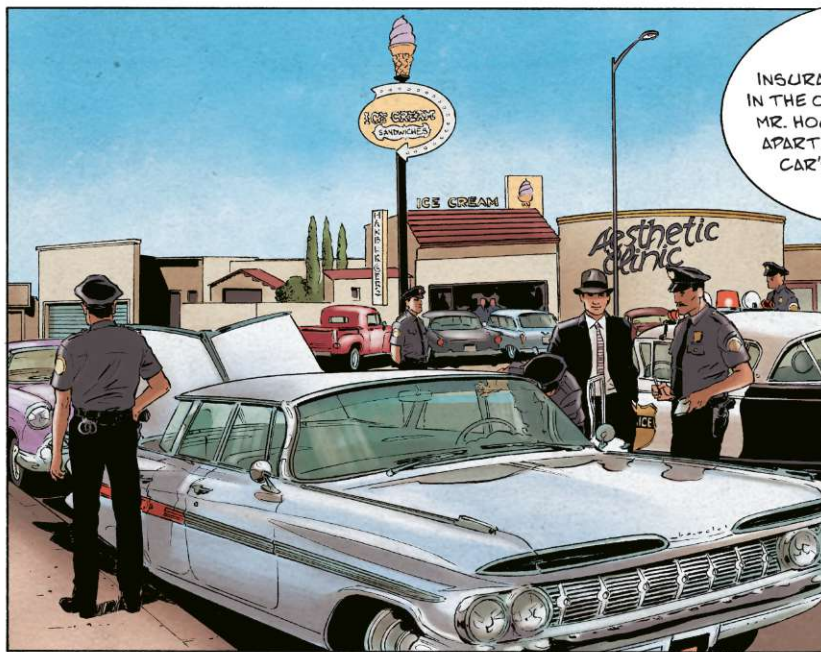


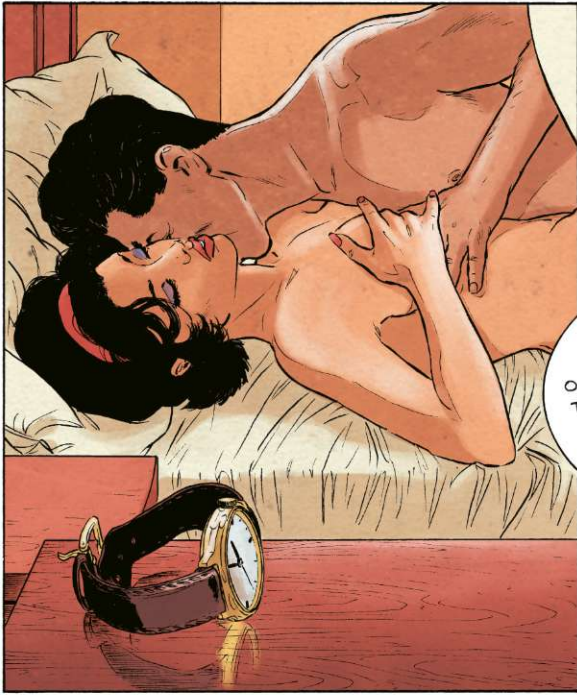


IF THE CAR WAS ABANDONED THERE, THAT MEANS OUR MAN FIGURED OUT WE'RE ONTO HIM! SOMETHING GOT FUCKED UP, DAMMIT! THAT WAS OUR BEST LEAD!

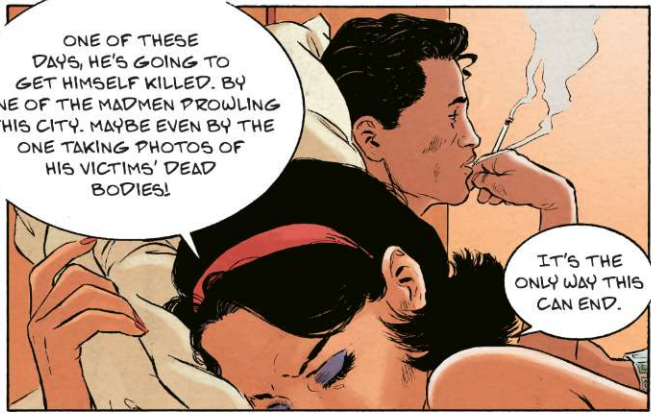


STILL LESS TIME THAN IT'D TAKE FOR YOU TO CLEAR YOUR CASELOAD, SAMSON! LIKE IT OR NOT, THIS MURDERING SON OF A BITCH IS MY INVESTIGATION!





I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE, ARIEL. I'M AFRAID ALL THE TIME FOR MY DAUGHTER. FOR HIM.



ONE OF THESE DAYS, HE'S GOING TO GET HIMSELF KILLED. BY ONE OF THE MADMEN PROWLING THIS CITY. MAYBE EVEN BY THE ONE TAKING PHOTOS OF HIS VICTIMS' DEAD BODIES!

IT'S THE ONLY WAY THIS CAN END.



EVER CONSIDER DIVORCE?



WHAT?

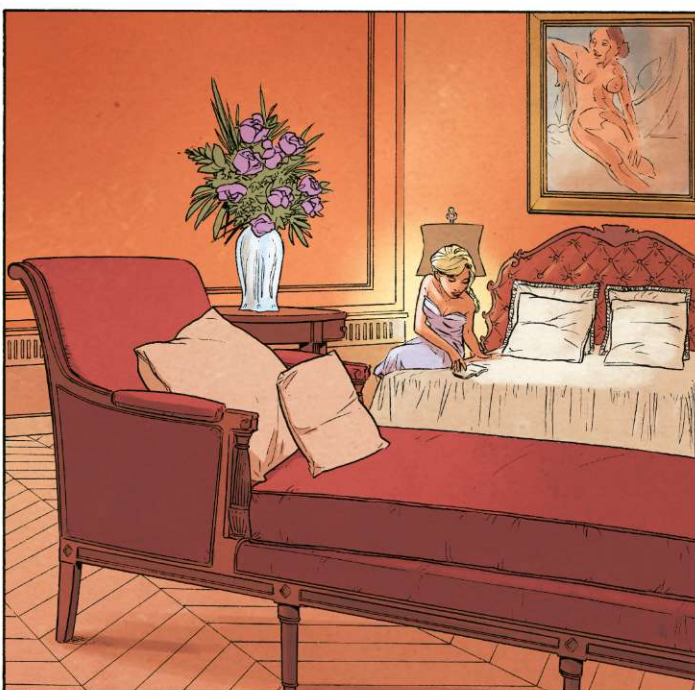
YOU AND YOUR LITTLE GIRL COULD LEAVE. SETTLE IN SOME PEACEFUL SPOT, UP NORTH OR IN OREGON.



HE LOVES YOU, MARGAUX. IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE HE GIVES UP AND JOINS YOU. A COP CAN FIND WORK ANYWHERE, EVEN IN SOME GODFORSAKEN BACKWATER.

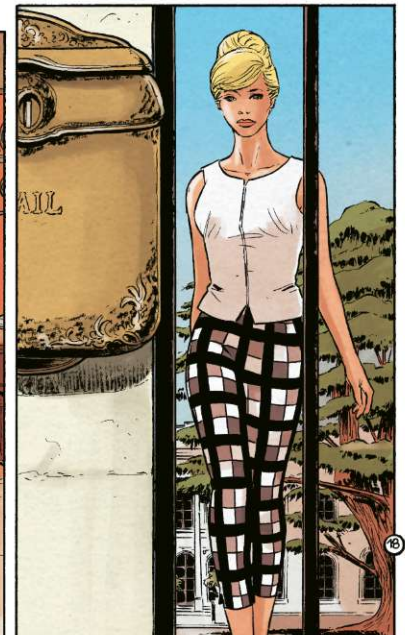
THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, ISN'T IT?





HOGAN HARLEY LIKED WOMEN. YOUNG AND DUMB. SECRETARIES, OPERATORS, WAITRESSES, MARRIED, OR EVEN SAILBAIT. HE HAD WHOLE PAGES AND PAGES OF THEM.

TO A CHRISTIAN FIGURE AS INFLUENTIAL AS HE WAS, THIS LITTLE BLACK NOTEBOOK OF PHONE NUMBERS WAS WELL WORTH A HUNDRED THOUSAND...



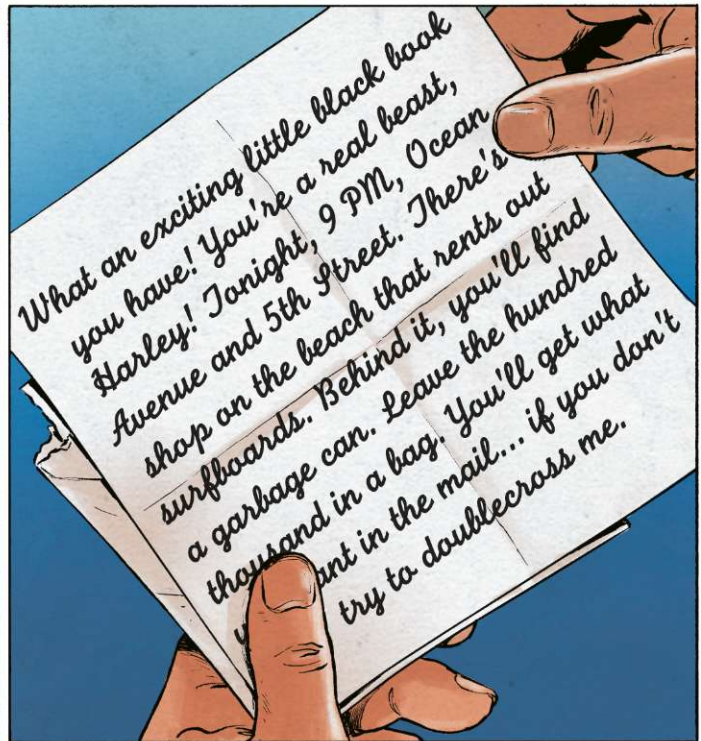
IT WAS ALL JUST A MATTER OF TIMING NOW, OF PATIENCE, AND TWO DAYS LATER...



"TOMORROW NIGHT, 9 PM, OCEAN AVENUE AND 5TH STREET. THERE'S A SHOP ON THE BEACH THAT RENTS OUT SURFBOARDS. BEHIND IT, YOU'LL FIND A GARBAGE CAN. LEAVE THE HUNDRED THOUSAND IN A BAG. YOU'LL GET WHAT YOU WANT IN THE MAIL... IF YOU DON'T TRY TO DOUBLECROSS ME."



I JUST HAD TO SPICE THE LETTER UP A BIT...



What an exciting little black book you have! You're a real beast, Starley! Tonight, 9 PM, Ocean Avenue and 5th Street. There's a shop on the beach that rents out surfboards. Behind it, you'll find a garbage can. Leave the hundred thousand in a bag. You'll get what you want in the mail... if you don't try to doublecross me.



HOLY SHIT! MY BOOK?!



HOLY SHIT! I'M SCREWED!





T-THE POLICE?!

PARDON ME, MR. HARLEY.



I'VE GOT SOME EXCELLENT NEWS FOR YOU, SIR. APPARENTLY, MEXICAN CAR THIEVES WERE NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR VEHICLE.

WE'VE LOCATED YOUR CHEVROLET.

AH. GOOD. IS... IS IT IN GOOD SHAPE?



PERFECT. IN FACT, MAYBE A BIT... TOO PERFECT.



NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, THERE'S NO SIGN IT WAS BROKEN INTO. SURELY YOU REMEMBERED TO LOCK IT?

LOCK IT? I--I HAVE NO IDEA. MY DAUGHTER--MADDIE-- WAS THE ONE WHO TOOK IT OUT. WHY DON'T YOU ASK HER?



YOUR DAUGHTER? DIDN'T YOU SAY IN YOUR STATEMENT YOU WERE PERSONALLY ON THE SCENE?

I DIDN'T WANT TO BOTHER HER WITH IT. DOES IT REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE, DETECTIVE? NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I HAVE OTHER BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO.

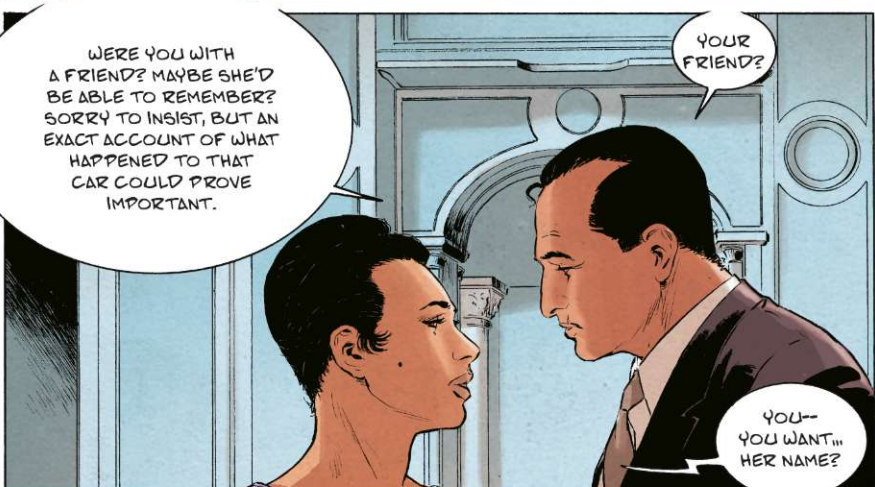


MAYBE I DIDN'T LOCK THE DOORS. IT'S QUITE POSSIBLE. I CAN'T REALLY REMEMBER.



WE WERE IN A HURRY. HEADED TO THE MOVIES.

YOU WEREN'T ALONE?



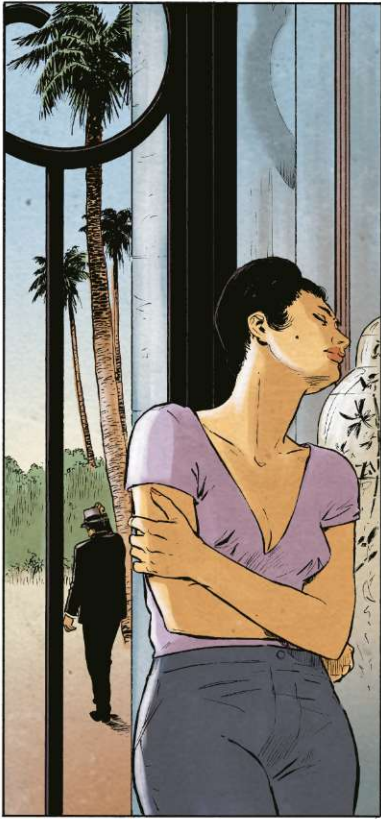
WERE YOU WITH A FRIEND? MAYBE SHE'D BE ABLE TO REMEMBER? SORRY TO INSIST, BUT AN EXACT ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT CAR COULD PROVE IMPORTANT.

YOUR FRIEND?

YOU-- YOU WANT... HER NAME?



UH... VIK. HER NAME IS... VIKTOR SCOTT!



OF COURSE, I KNEW HOGAN HARLEY HADN'T BECOME A MILLIONAIRE BY TOSSING A HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS AT EVERY PROBLEM THAT CAME HIS WAY.

DADDY'S GONE ALREADY?



THAT'S WHY I SENT OUT OTHER LETTERS, TOO. TO THREE ADDRESSES PICKED OUT AT RANDOM FROM THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK. JUST TO PUT ON THE PRESSURE.



"YOUR FATHER HAD TO GO OUT EARLY. BOARD MEETING AT THE OFFICE, ALL DAY LONG. HE'LL BE HOME LATE."

SO CAN I BORROW YOUR CAR TODAY?



THAT LETTER'S ONE BIG BLUFF! NEVER! THEY'LL NEVER GET ME TO PAY A DAMNED CENT!



EVERYONE KNOWS I'M A GOD-FEARING MAN. I'M RESPECTABLE. NO ONE WILL BELIEVE I'VE GOT ANYTHING TO DO WITH THOSE WOMEN...



HOGAN, DARLING, I KNOW YOU TOLD ME NEVER TO CALL YOU AT HOME, BUT... I JUST GOT THE MOST AWFUL LETTER! HOGAN, SOMEONE KNOWS ABOUT THE TWO OF US!



HOGAN, WHOEVER WROTE THIS SAYS THEY'LL TELL THE PAPERS EVERYTHING! WE CAN'T LET THEM DO THAT!

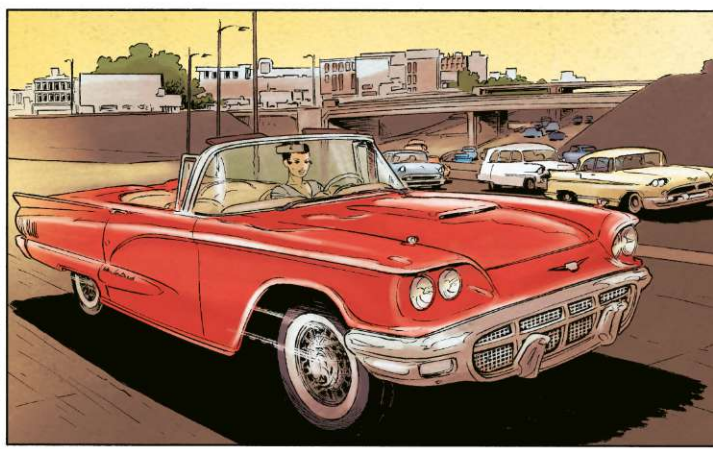


PLEASE, HOGAN, CONSIDER MY REPUTATION. YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST DO SOMETHING!



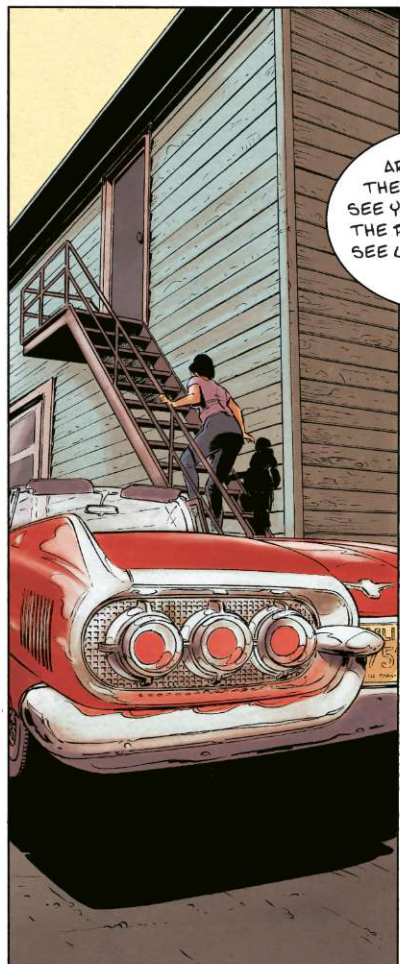
OF COURSE, SWEETIE, DON'T YOU FRET. I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT, WE CAN'T TAKE THE RISK OF ALL THIS BECOMING PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE.



HOLY SH--! HOLY SHIT! A HUNDRED THOU!

MOTHER-FUCKER!



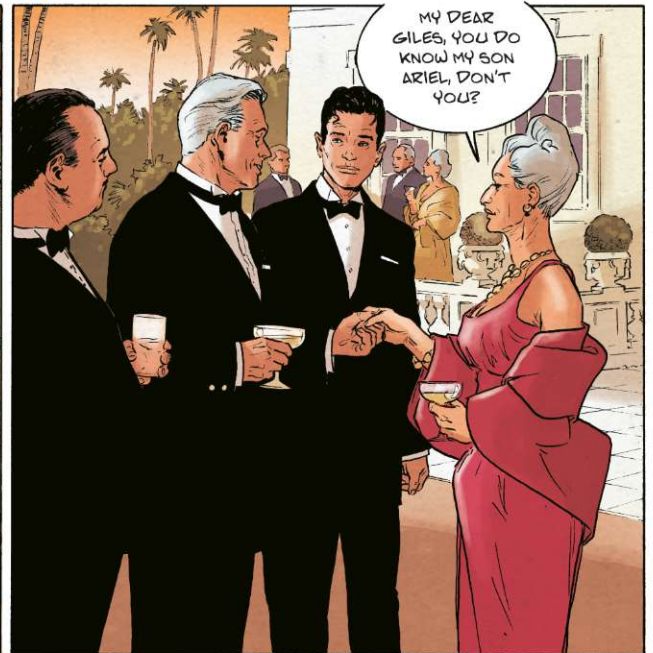
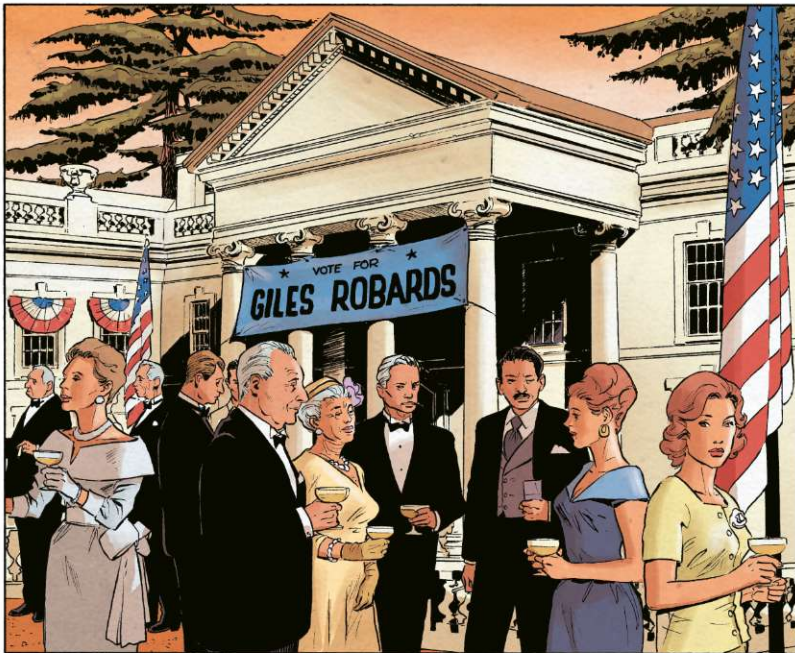
ARE--ARE YOU THERE? I HAVE TO SEE YOU RIGHT AWAY. THE POLICE CAME TO SEE US. IT'S ABOUT THE CAR!



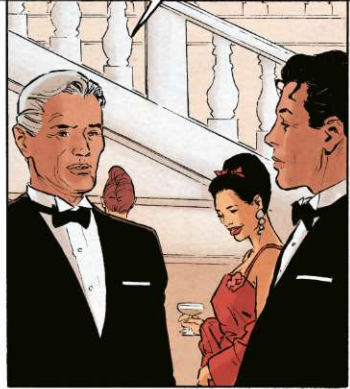
THE OFFICER SAID THEY'D FOUND THE CHEVY. BUT HE WAS A DETECTIVE. WHY--WHY WOULD THEY SEND A DETECTIVE FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?



I KNOW YOU'RE THERE. ANSWER ME! DID SOMETHING GO WRONG?



IF I'M ELECTED MAYOR
IN A FEW WEEKS, WE'LL ROOT
OUT CORRUPTION AND BACKROOM
DEALING. AND I INTEND TO PUT
YOU IN CHARGE OF THE CLEANUP
CREW, AS CHIEF OF POLICE.



WHY, IF IT
ISN'T EVERYONE'S
FAVORITE
DETECTIVE!



THIS
GODDAMNED
JOB HAS WRUNG
ME DRY.

I'VE GOT NOTHING. I'M IN OVER MY HEAD. I'VE TURNED THIS
CASE OVER EVERY WHICH WAY, AND THERE'S NOTHING
TO HOLD ON TO.

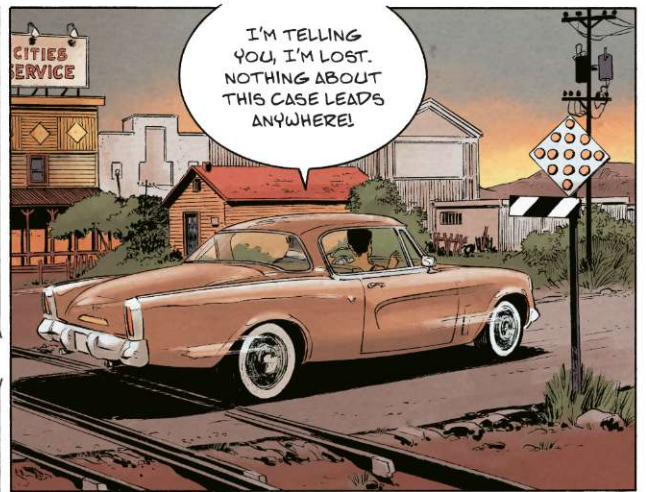


WOMEN ARE
DYING. SOME BASTARD'S
TAKING NUDIE PICS OF
THEIR DEAD BODIES.
AND I HAVEN'T GOT A
SINGLE LEAD!

MIGHT AS
WELL THROW IN
THE TOWEL AND
GO LIVE IN SOME
STINKING BACK-
WATER!

MAYBE I'M STILL
GOOD FOR FINDING
LOST DOGS OR
GETTING CATS DOWN
FROM TREES.

OH, CUT IT OUT,
CLEGG! YOU'RE GONNA
MAKE ME CRY. HOW MANY
TIMES HAVE I HEARD THE
SAME OLD BULLSHIT
FROM YOU?



I'M TELLING
YOU, I'M LOST.
NOTHING ABOUT
THIS CASE LEADS
ANYWHERE!

YOU WANT TO MOVE SOMEWHERE AND PUT IT ALL BEHIND
YOU, CLEGG? THAT'S A WHORE'S DREAM. I OUGHTA KNOW.



BUT HERE WE ARE, STILL. AND WHEN YOU'RE UP
AGAINST THE ROPES, YOU GOTTA TAKE IT ON THE
CHIN AND GIVE BACK AS GOOD AS YOU GET!

YOU? YOU'RE THE BIGGEST BASTARD OF THEM ALL. THERE'S NOT A THING YOU WOULDN'T DO TO GET WHAT YOU WANT. TO BE RIGHT. AND NOW YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU'VE GOT SCRUPLES?



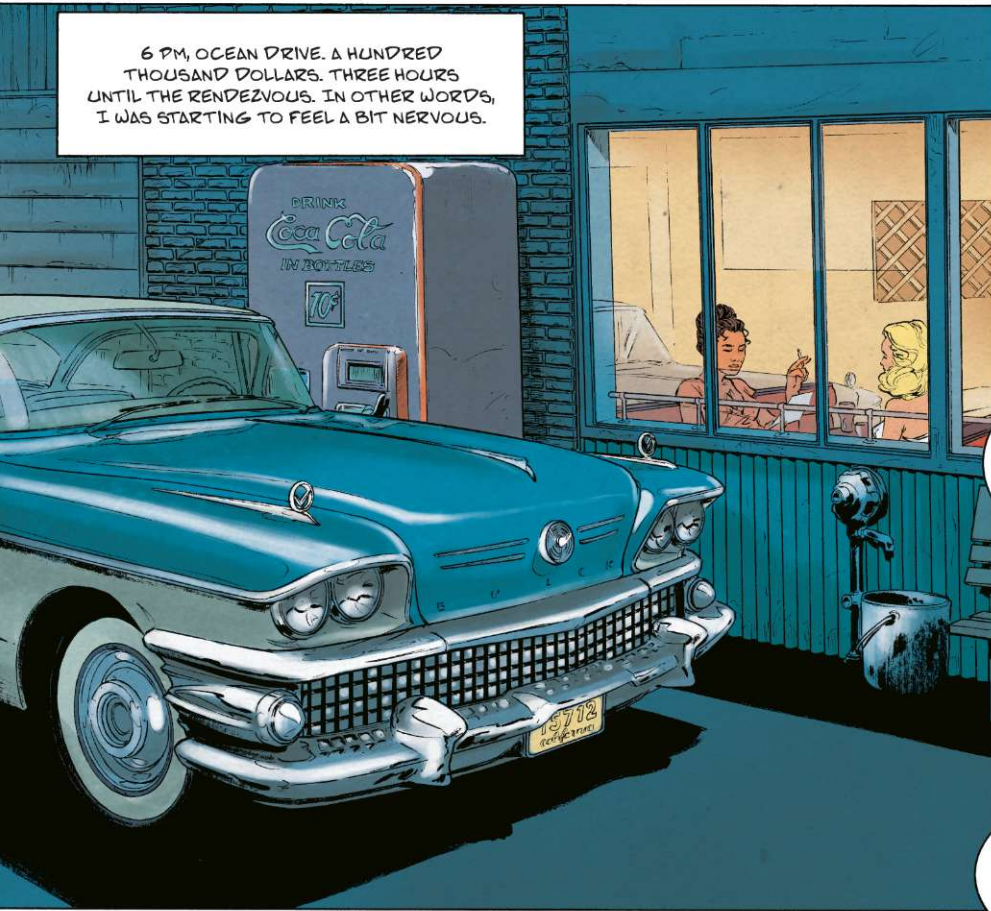
SAVE IT FOR YOUR WIFE, CLEGG. TELL HER YOU DON'T FEEL UP TO DEALING WITH THE LUNATICS WHO LIVE HERE. ME, I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE...



AND HOW THIS'LL END ONCE YOU'RE DONE FEELING SORRY FOR YOURSELF.



6 PM, OCEAN DRIVE. A HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. THREE HOURS UNTIL THE RENDEZVOUS. IN OTHER WORDS, I WAS STARTING TO FEEL A BIT NERVOUS.



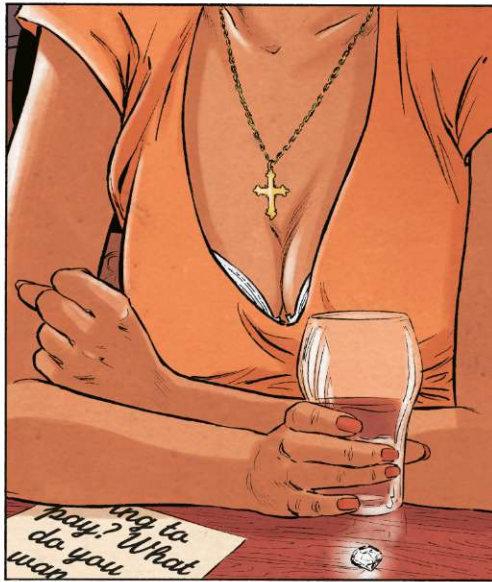
You're going to pay!
What do you want me to do?

I WANT TO KNOW WHO WROTE THAT LETTER, WHAT HE KNOWS, AND HOW HE KNOWS IT!



I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP!

THIS WILL DEFINITELY BE DANGEROUS!



FOR A MOMENT, SHE HESITATED. HER BODY LANGUAGE WAS TELLING ME NO. THEN, JUST AS I'D HOPED, SHE UNCROSSED HER ARMS, AND I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON HER.



I LIKE IT WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY.



SOON YOU WON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ANYMORE. A NEW KIND OF COP IS COMING UP THE RANKS. YOUNG GUYS, BY THE BOOK, TOO RESPECTABLE TO WASTE THEIR TIME WITH WHORES!



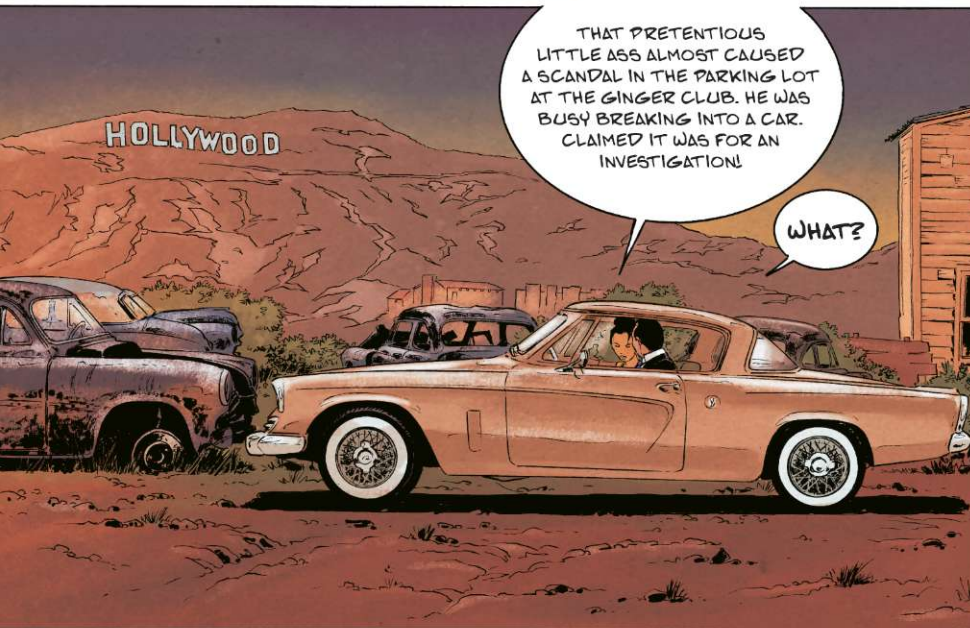
ONCE YOU'VE SEEN ARIEL SAMSON AND HIS ILK, YOU'LL KNOW WHAT THIS CITY IS GOING TO TURN INTO.



I KNOW ABOUT SAMSON. HE'S ALREADY ROUNDED UP A LOT OF GIRLS. ONE OF MY FRIENDS SAW HIM COMING THE OTHER NIGHT ON THE STRIP AND TRIED TO RUN THE OTHER WAY.

THAT PRETENTIOUS LITTLE ASS ALMOST CAUSED A SCANDAL IN THE PARKING LOT AT THE GINGER CLUB. HE WAS BUSY BREAKING INTO A CAR. CLAIMED IT WAS FOR AN INVESTIGATION!

WHAT?



ON SUNSET? WHAT KIND OF CAR? WHEN?



I CAN'T REMEMBER. THREE DAYS AGO, I THINK. WANT ME TO CALL MY FRIEND UP? SHE MIGHT REMEMBER THE MAKE.



HEY, CLEGG!
AREN'T YOU USUALLY
HOME BY NOW
ALREADY?

WHEN YOU
GOT THE TIP ON THAT
WHITE CHEVY ON SUNSET
AND YOU COULDN'T GET
A HOLD OF ME, DICK... YOU
WOULDN'T HAVE TALKED
TO ANYONE ELSE,
WOULD YOU?

NOW WHY
WOULD I DO A
THING LIKE THAT?
IT'S YOUR CASE,
AIN'T IT, CLEGG?



GOOD
QUESTION.
WHY?
NGH!?



JESUS
CHRIST, CLEGG!
L-LIEUTENANT!
YOU GAVE SAMSON
MY INFORMATION!
YOU LET HIM IN ON THE
WORKINGS OF MY
INVESTIGATION!

YOU--YOU
WERE NOWHERE TO BE
F-FOUND. I--I THOUGHT
IT SEEMED IMPORTANT, SO...
WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED
TO DO?



SAMSON SHOWED UP ON SUNSET. FOR ALL
I KNOW, HE MIGHT'VE SCARED OUR MAN AWAY!

YOU WORK FOR ME! ANYTHING YOU FIND
OUT, YOU REPORT TO ME AND ME ALONE.

IF THERE'S A SINGLE ONE OF YOU BOYS I CAN'T
TRUST, I WANT HIM OUT OF THIS ROOM RIGHT NOW!



ACTUALLY, CLEGG... WE MEANT TO TELL YOU.
WE--WE WERE ABLE TO FIND SOMETHING IN
THE CAR AFTER ALL.

NOT FINGERPRINTS. IT'D ALL BEEN WIPED CLEAN, JUST LIKE YOU SAID IT WOULD BE. BUT IN A HOLLOW UNDER THE MATS, BY THE SPARE TIRE, THERE WAS SOMETHING HE MISSED.

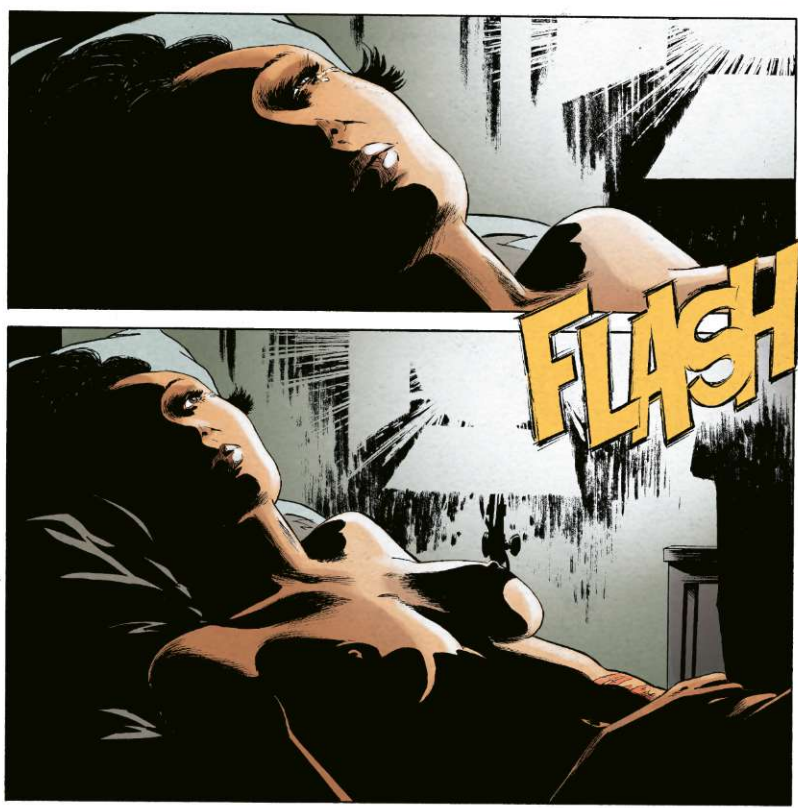
A LITTLE VIAL A GLASS TUBE. SLIGHTLY CRACKED.

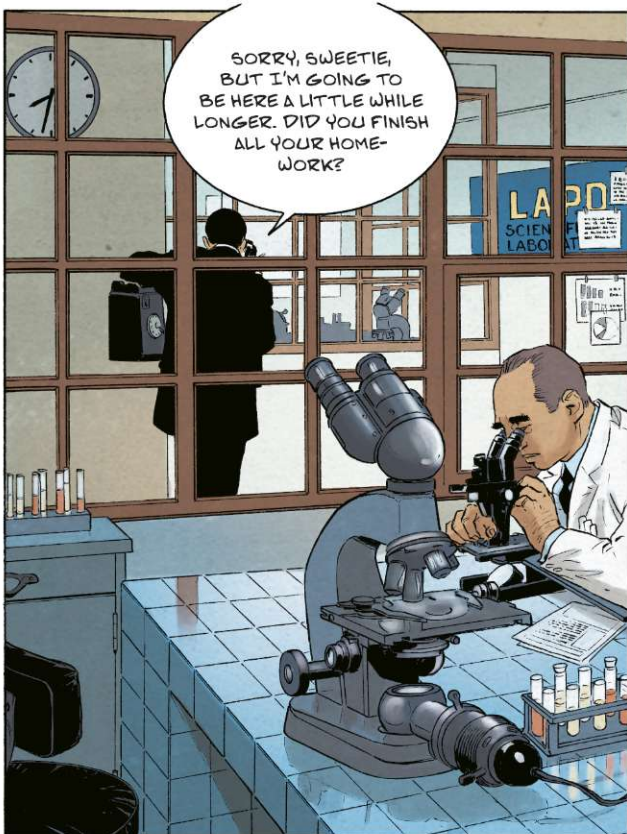
A TUBE?

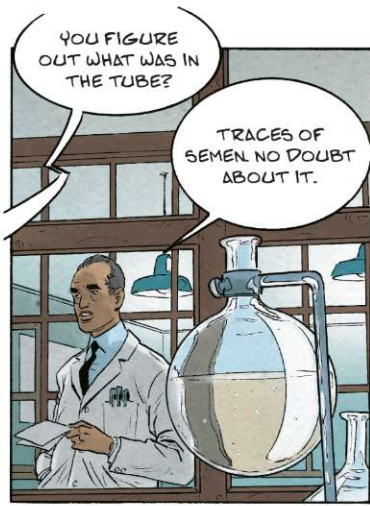
WASN'T ALWAYS EMPTY, FROM THE LOOKS OF IT. MAYBE THERE USED TO BE DRUGS INSIDE? DOESN'T SMELL LIKE ANYTHING, THOUGH.

WHAT TIME IS IT?

WE HAVE TO GET THIS OVER TO THE LAB RIGHT AWAY!







YOU FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS IN THE TUBE?

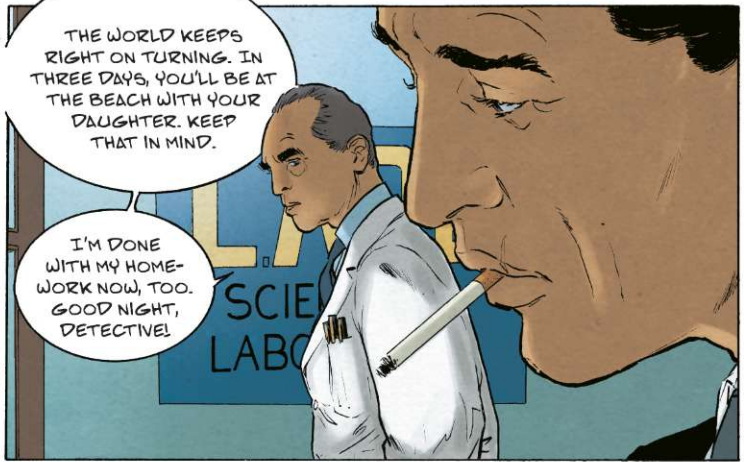
TRACES OF SEMEN NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.



S... SEMEN?

BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE! WHY WOULD HE... SEMEN! IN A TUBE? IN THE TRUNK?

WHO KNOWS? YOU'RE A COP IN L.A. YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE, ANYTHING GOES IN THIS TOWN.

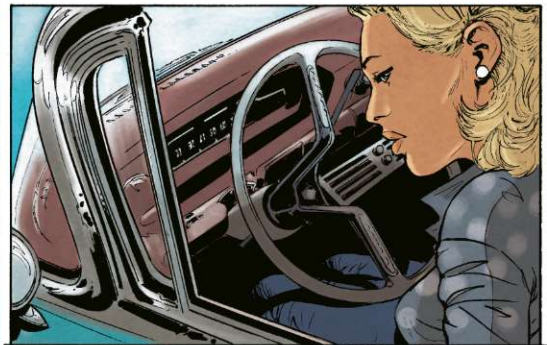
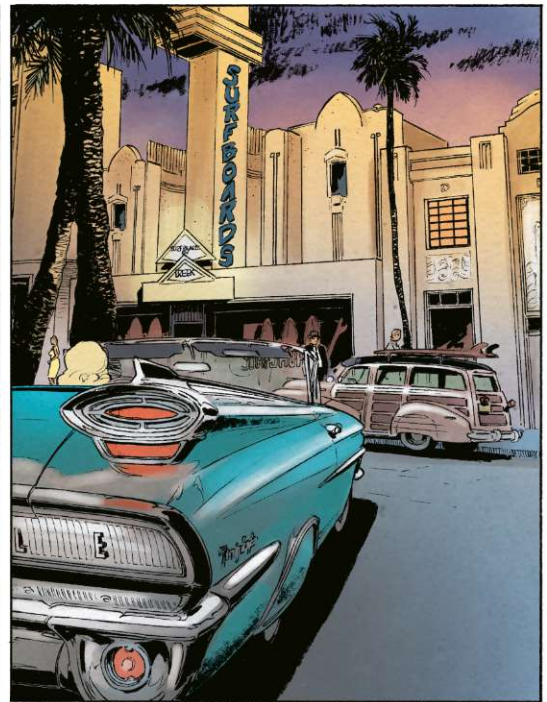


THE WORLD KEEPS RIGHT ON TURNING. IN THREE DAYS, YOU'LL BE AT THE BEACH WITH YOUR DAUGHTER. KEEP THAT IN MIND.

I'M DONE WITH MY HOME-WORK NOW, TOO. GOOD NIGHT, DETECTIVE!



OCEAN AVENUE. HOGAN HARLEY WAS ABOUT TO SHOW UP ANY MINUTE NOW. AND WHOEVER WROTE THAT LETTER WOULDN'T BE FAR BEHIND. THE MAN WHO KNEW THE TRUTH.



THE MAN WHO KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO ME THAT NIGHT AND THE NAME OF WHOEVER HAD TRIED TO RAPE ME, WHO'D HIT ME AND MADE MY WORLD GO FOREVER SILENT.





AN AUNT OF MINE HAS A HOUSE IN COHASSET, NEAR BOSTON. WE TRY TO HAVE A FAMILY REUNION THERE EVERY YEAR AT EASTER.

I THINK YOU'D LIKE IT. THE HOUSE IS A BIT OLD-FASHIONED, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING JUST SO VERY NEW ENGLAND ABOUT IT.

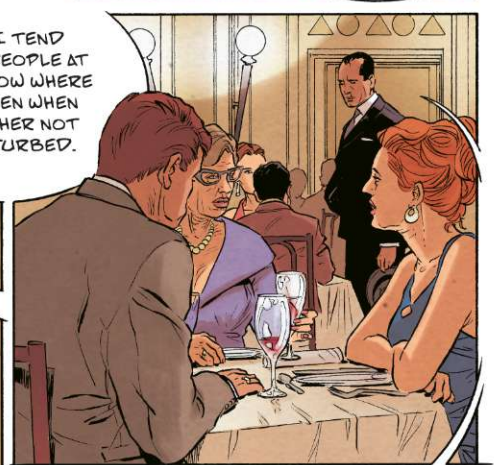


IT'S PROBABLY STILL A BIT TOO EARLY TO MAKE THINGS OFFICIAL, BUT I'D LOVE TO MEET YOUR AUNT.

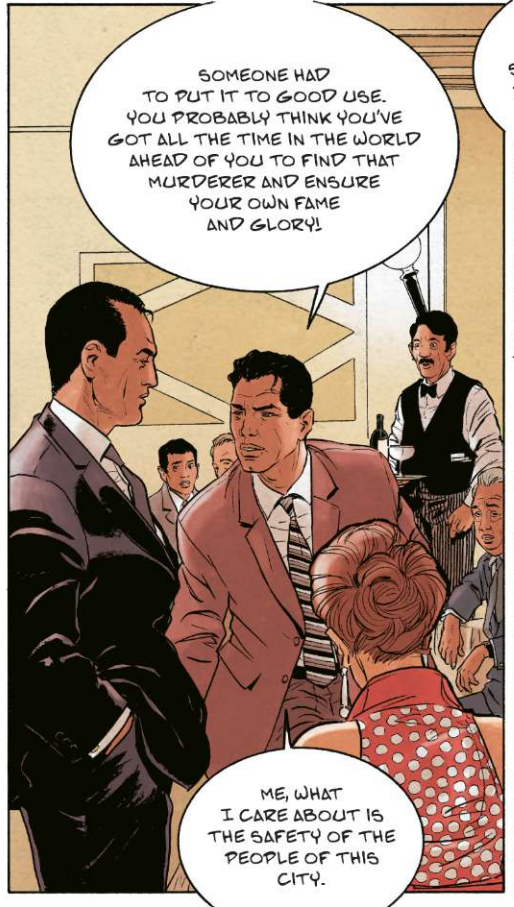


YOUR BUDDIES SAID I'D FIND YOU HERE, SAMSON.

YEAH, I TEND TO LET PEOPLE AT WORK KNOW WHERE I AM. EVEN WHEN I'D RATHER NOT BE DISTURBED.



SAMSON, NEXT TIME YOU HELP YOURSELF TO MY TIPS AND STICK YOUR NOSE IN MY BUSINESS, I'LL HAVE YOU THROWN OFF THE FORCE. WE CLEAR?



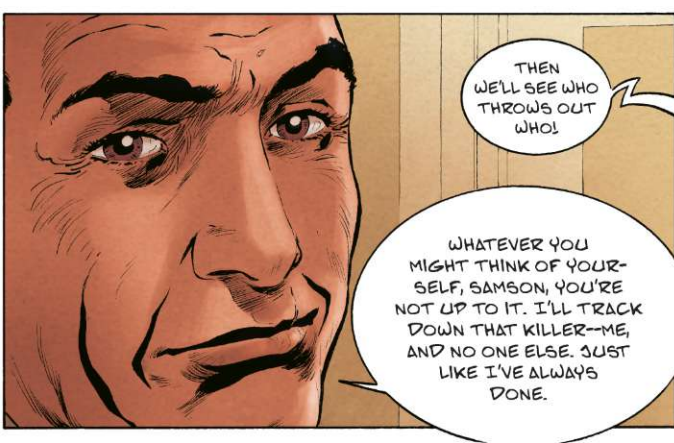
SOMEONE HAD TO PUT IT TO GOOD USE. YOU PROBABLY THINK YOU'VE GOT ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD AHEAD OF YOU TO FIND THAT MURDERER AND ENSURE YOUR OWN FAME AND GLORY!

ME, WHAT I CARE ABOUT IS THE SAFETY OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY.



SMOOTH WORDS. YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN A POLITICIAN, NOT A POLICEMAN.

YOU USED TO BE THE BEST, CLEGG. STILL GOT THAT SHARP SENSE OF DEDUCTION, I SEE. YOU'RE RIGHT, THIS IS ABOUT POLITICS. ONCE THE ELECTIONS ARE OVER, IT'LL BE MY JOB TO GET RID OF THE DEADWOOD ON THE FORCE.



THEN WE'LL SEE WHO THROWS OUT WHO!

WHATEVER YOU MIGHT THINK OF YOURSELF, SAMSON, YOU'RE NOT UP TO IT. I'LL TRACK DOWN THAT KILLER--ME, AND NO ONE ELSE. JUST LIKE I'VE ALWAYS DONE.





SUDDENLY, A THOUGHT
CROSSED MY MIND: THE MAN
WHO'D STRUCK ME MIGHT BE
HIDING RIGHT NEARBY!



INTERESTING.
YOU REMEMBERED
TO HIRE SOMEONE
ELSE TO DELIVER
THE CASH.



THAT MEANS
YOU MUST BE HIDING
SOMEWHERE AROUND
HERE, WATCHING TO MAKE
SURE IT GOES
RIGHT.

NOT
SUSPECTING
THAT WHAT I WANT
MUCH MORE THAN
THE MONEY... IS
YOU!



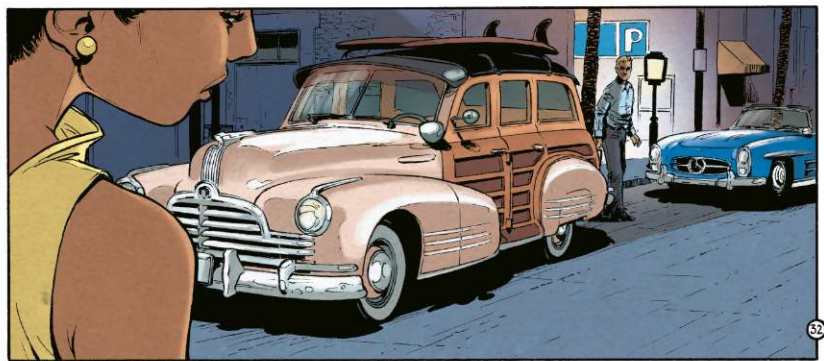
HOLY SH--!
\$100,000!
I REALLY AM THE
WORLD'S BIGGEST
MORON...



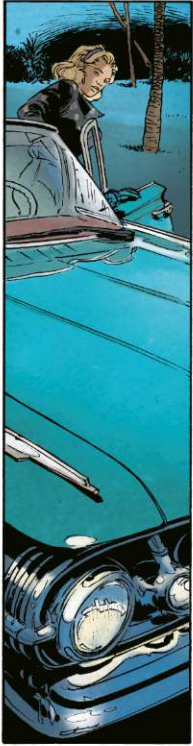
PAGES...
PAGES FROM
MY BOOK!



*The rest of the
pages tomorrow,
in the mail.
Take it
or
leave it*



THE MOMENT OF CONFRONTATION WAS CLOSE AT HAND, AND MY HEART WAS BEATING FASTER AND FASTER, AS IF I KNEW I WAS ABOUT TO FIND OUT SOMETHING I DIDN'T WANT TO...



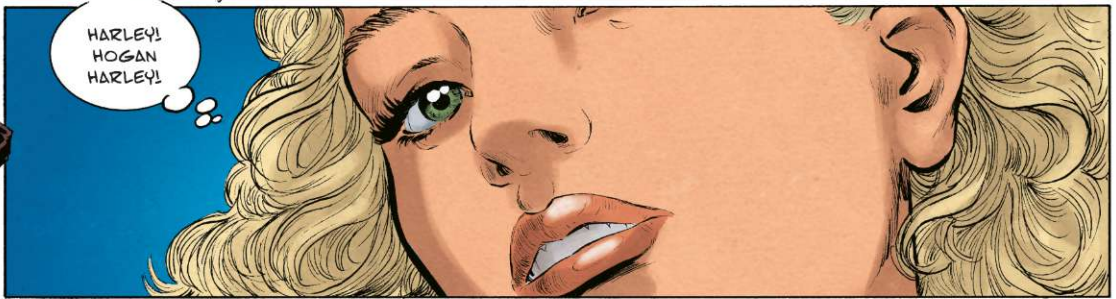
IN THE GRIP OF FEAR, I SAW THE KNIFE GLEAM. AND MY BODY FROZE. I RECOGNIZED THAT MAN FROM THE WAY HE MOVED. I WENT RIFLING... RIFLING THROUGH MY MEMORIES...



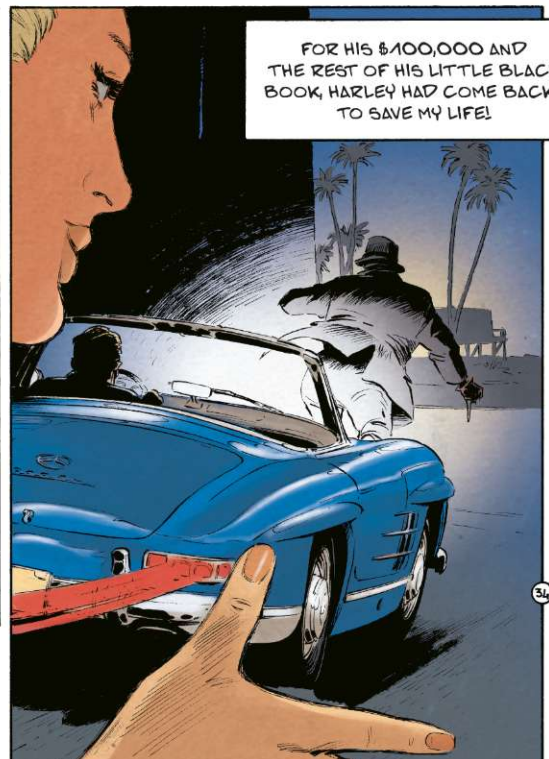
BUT THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I KNEW FOR SURE. I HAD TO GET TO THAT KNIFE FIRST!



HARLEY!
HOGAN
HARLEY!



FOR HIS \$100,000 AND THE REST OF HIS LITTLE BLACK BOOK, HARLEY HAD COME BACK... TO SAVE MY LIFE!

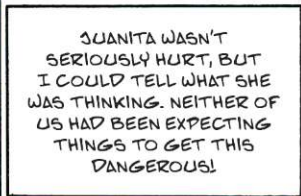
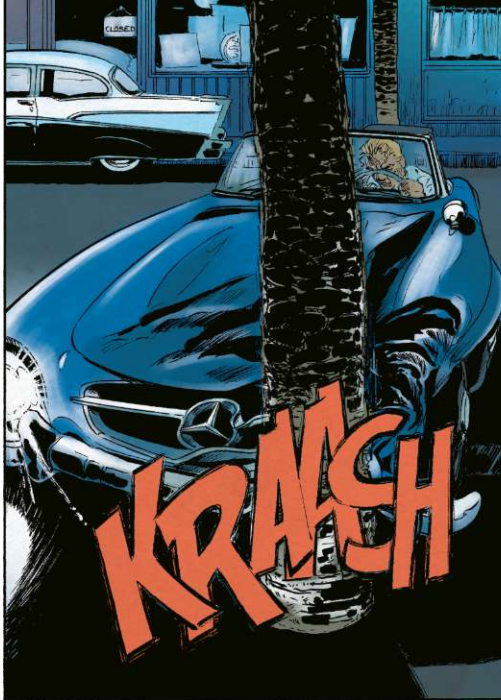




NO ONE COMES AT HOGAN HARLEY AND HIS FORTUNE WITHOUT PAYING FOR IT!



YOU DON'T BECOME THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MUSIC PRODUCER IN THE COUNTRY WITHOUT RUNNING OVER A FEW ENEMIES...



JUANITA WASN'T SERIOUSLY HURT, BUT I COULD TELL WHAT SHE WAS THINKING. NEITHER OF US HAD BEEN EXPECTING THINGS TO GET THIS DANGEROUS!



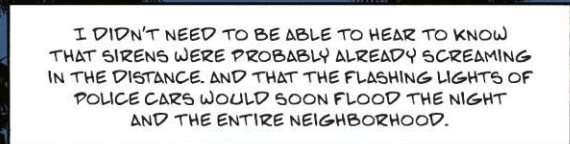
YOU'RE GONNA PAY FOR THIS, YOU BASTARD! WHERE ARE YOU?



I-- YOU? IT WAS YOU? BUT...

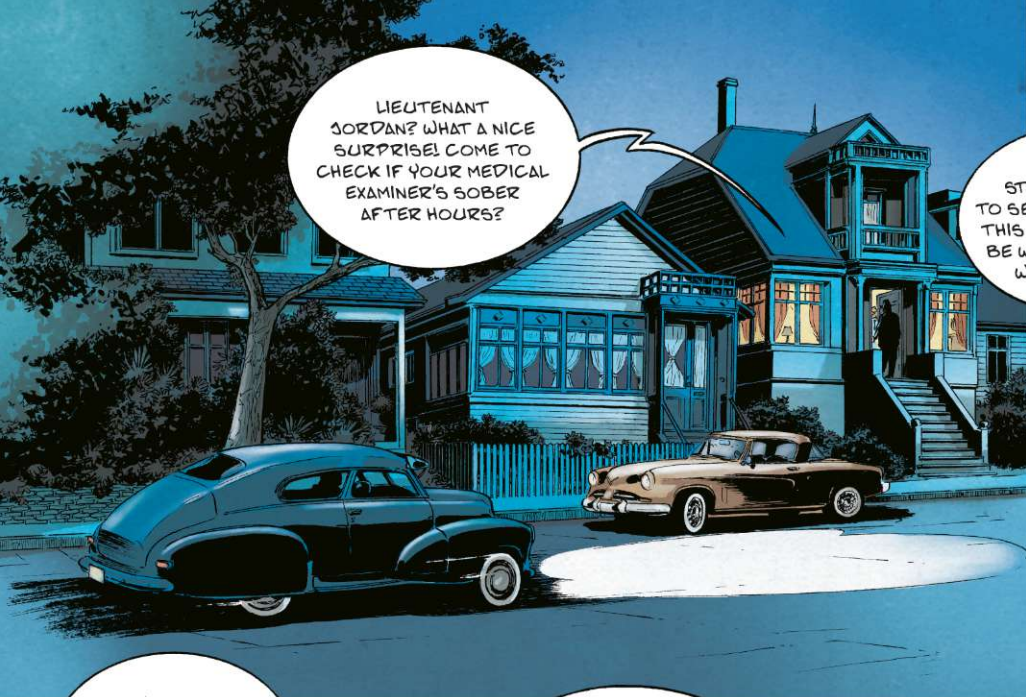


!?! BUT IT CAN'T BEL IT CAN'T--



I DIDN'T NEED TO BE ABLE TO HEAR TO KNOW THAT SIRENS WERE PROBABLY ALREADY SCREAMING IN THE DISTANCE. AND THAT THE FLASHING LIGHTS OF POLICE CARS WOULD SOON FLOOD THE NIGHT AND THE ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD.

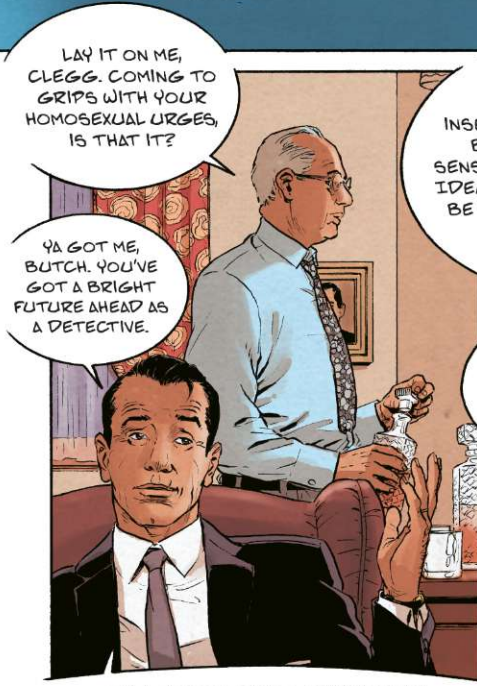
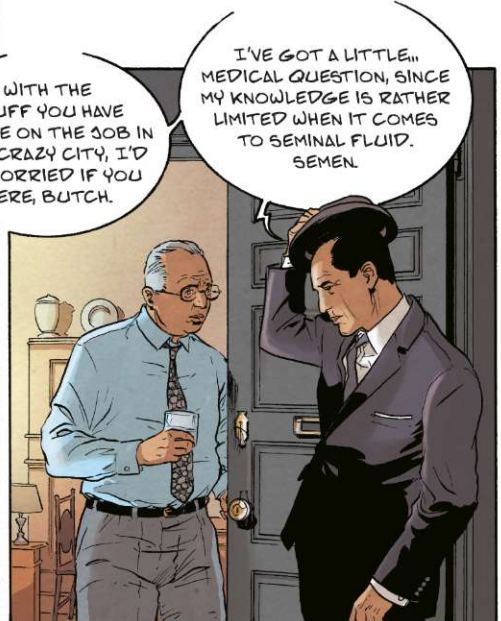




LIEUTENANT JORDAN? WHAT A NICE SURPRISE! COME TO CHECK IF YOUR MEDICAL EXAMINER'S SOBER AFTER HOURS?

WITH THE STUFF YOU HAVE TO SEE ON THE JOB IN THIS CRAZY CITY, I'D BE WORRIED IF YOU WERE, BUTCH.

I'VE GOT A LITTLE... MEDICAL QUESTION, SINCE MY KNOWLEDGE IS RATHER LIMITED WHEN IT COMES TO SEMINAL FLUID. SEMEN



LAY IT ON ME, CLEGG. COMING TO GRIPS WITH YOUR HOMOSEXUAL URGES, IS THAT IT?

YA GOT ME, BUTCH. YOU'VE GOT A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD AS A DETECTIVE.

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION, I SUPPOSE. BUT SPERM IS FAIRLY SENSITIVE TO TEMPERATURE. IDEALLY, IT WOULD NEED TO BE STORED USING LIQUID NITROGEN.

OTHERWISE... I DON'T KNOW. LAB EXPERIMENTS, MAYBE?

TELL ME SOMETHING. WHY WOULD ANYONE KEEP SEMEN IN A TEST TUBE?



YOU PERSONALLY PERFORMED THE AUTOPSIES ON THE BODIES OF THOSE THREE YOUNG WOMEN: MISS JANUARY, MISS FEBRUARY, AND MISS MARCH?

THERE'S NO QUESTION THEY WERE RAPED BY THE SAME INDIVIDUAL?

YES.

WE FOUND ROUGHLY THE SAME CONTUSIONS AND IMPACT MARKS ON THE THIGHS AND AROUND THE PUBIS--NOT TO MENTION, OF COURSE THE LARGER WOUNDS, LIKELY UNRELATED TO THE RAPE. THE LAB ALSO CONFIRMED THAT THE SEMEN FOUND ON EACH OF THE VICTIMS CAME FROM A SINGLE PERSON.





I'M SO SORRY. I NEVER FOR A MOMENT THOUGHT THINGS WOULD TURN OUT THE WAY THEY DID.

WITHOUT YOU, I MIGHT--



THE MAN HAD MISTAKEN HER FOR ME. AND AS STREET-WISE AS SHE WAS, SUANITA HAD ALMOST GOTTEN KILLED. INSTEAD OF ME.



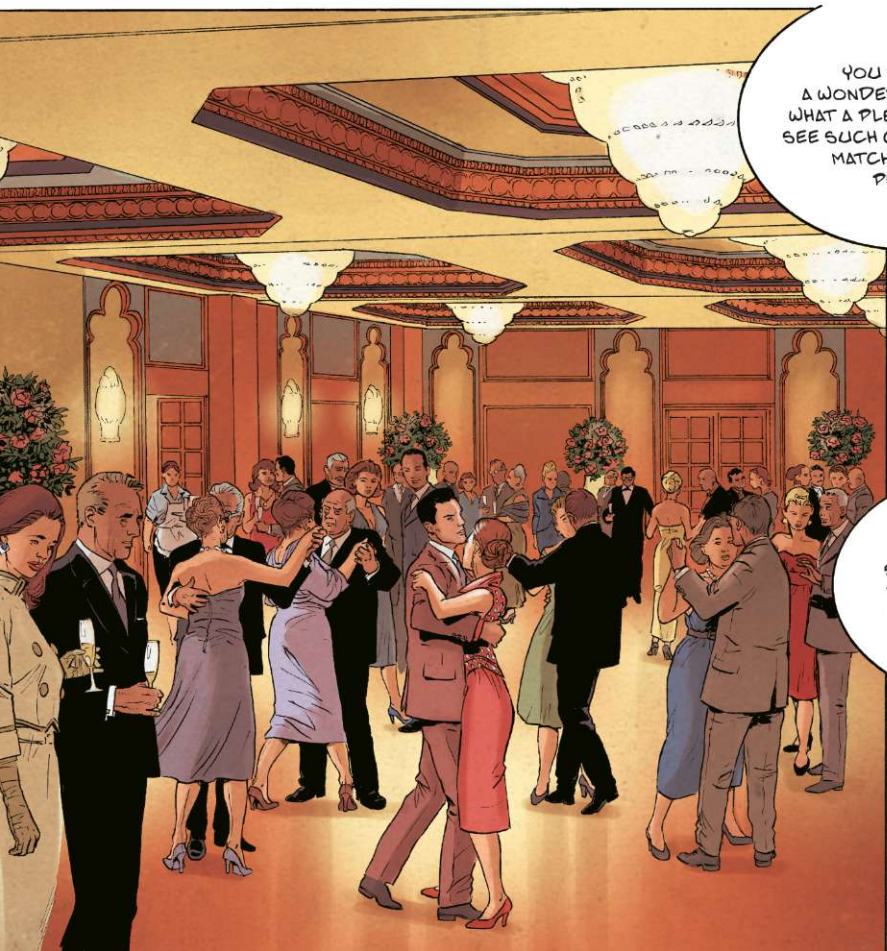
What's your game, Viktor?
Who was that man?
Why did he want to kill you?



I REALLY HAVE NO IDEA, SUANITA. I WAS WILLING TO PAY FOR A NAME, NOT TO GET STABBED!



FORGIVE ME. I HOPE THIS WILL HELP YOU PUT ME AND THIS ENTIRE BUSINESS BEHIND YOU.



YOU TWO MAKE A WONDERFUL COUPLE. WHAT A PLEASURE IT IS TO SEE SUCH CHARMING, WELL-MATCHED YOUNG PEOPLE!



ARIEL, THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU. I WANT YOU TO ANSWER ME HONESTLY.

I KNOW WE BOTH AGREED TO WAIT 'TIL WE WERE MARRIED TO... TO GIVE OURSELVES TO EACH OTHER, BUT... ARIEL, I--I HOPE THIS HASN'T BEEN TOO... DIFFICULT FOR YOU.

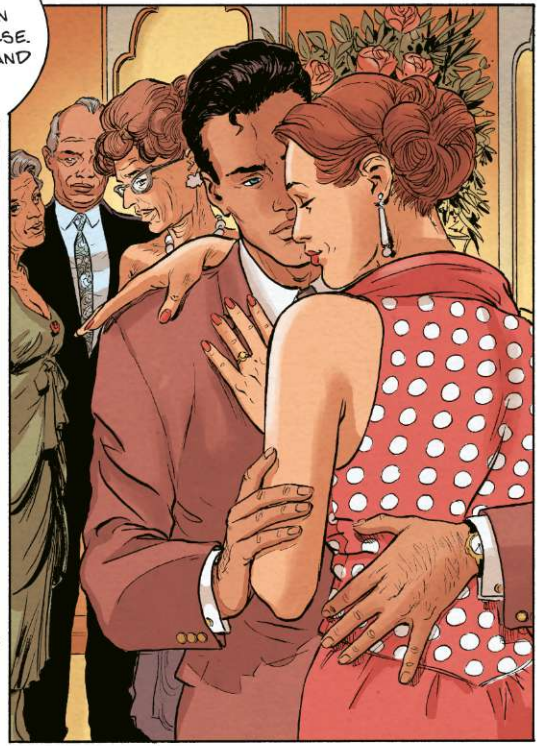


AVA, I LOVE YOU, AND EVEN IF IT'S BEEN DIFFICULT, I HAVE TO TELL YOU A SECRET.

I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I--I CAN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT ANYONE ELSE. I... DREAM ABOUT YOU, AND FINALLY TAKING OFF YOUR DRESS.



I DREAM ABOUT SEEING THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD BEFORE ME, MAKING ME THE HAPPIEST MAN ALIVE. THERE'S NO ONE BUT YOU AND NEVER WILL BE.



I'D SEEN HOGAN HARLEY'S BODY LYING ON THE GROUND. THE MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THE HARDER I TRIED TO BELIEVE HE WAS STILL ALIVE. I HAD TO SPEAK TO MADDIE.



I KEPT TELLING MYSELF SHE'D KNOW WHAT HAD HAPPENED, WHAT THE POLICE WERE SAYING. WITHOUT THINKING, I DASHED OVER TO HER PLACE.



IT WAS THAT MAN. THE POLICE DETECTIVE I'D SEEN WITH SUANITA JONES!



I BELIEVE WE'VE MET ONCE. YOU KNOW JUANITA JONES, DON'T YOU?

FORGIVE ME. I CAN'T HEAR YOU. I'M... DEAF!



ALL... ALL THE LIGHTS ARE OUT AT THE HARLEYS'. WHAT'S GOING ON?



I'M... A FRIEND OF MADDIE'S. BUT-- THERE'S NO LIGHT IN HER WINDOW.

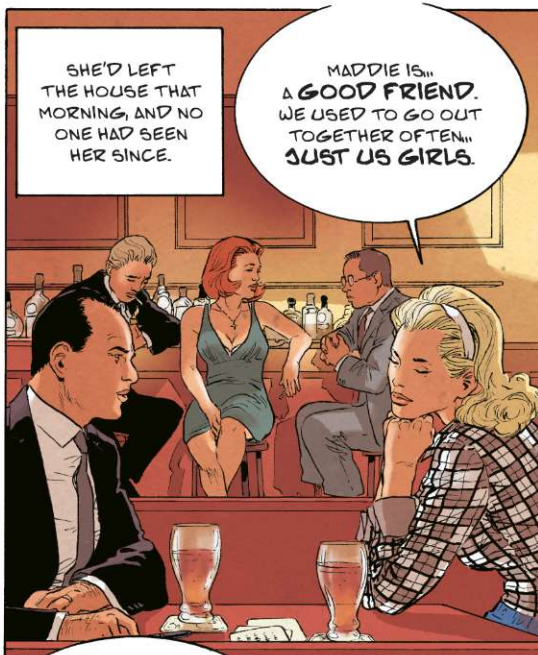


Harry's Bar, a bit later.

FOR A FEW LONG MINUTES, MY HEART KEPT RIGHT ON POUNDING. THEN WHAT HE WAS TELLING ME BEGAN TO SINK IN: SOMETHING BAD HAD HAPPENED TO HOGAN HARLEY.



AND MADDIE HAD DISAPPEARED!



SHE'D LEFT THE HOUSE THAT MORNING, AND NO ONE HAD SEEN HER SINCE.

MADDIE IS... A GOOD FRIEND. WE USED TO GO OUT TOGETHER OFTEN... JUST US GIRLS.



WITH OTHER GIRLFRIENDS? SHE MIGHT BE WITH ONE OF THEM.



NO, I MEANT... JUST HER AND ME. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT OTHER GIRLS. WHEN WE WENT OUT, IT WAS JUST US.



I'M GLAD I MET YOU.

I USED TO THINK THE POLICE IN THIS TOWN WERE JUST GHOSTS.



HE SAID GHOSTS WEREN'T THE WORST THINGS IN L.A. RIGHT NOW. AND INSISTED ON SEEING ME HOME.



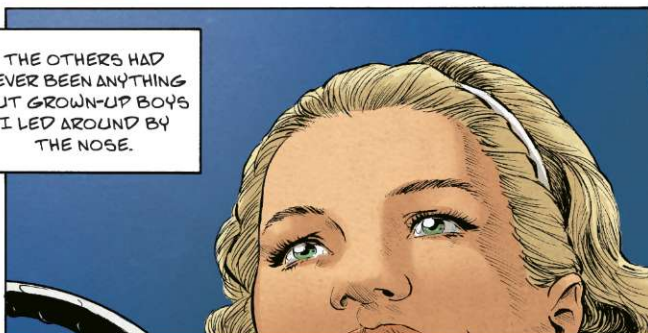
THAT WAS WHEN I BEGAN TO REALIZE I LIKED HIS PRESENCE BEHIND ME. THE BEAMS OF HIS HEADLIGHTS, WATCHING OVER ME.

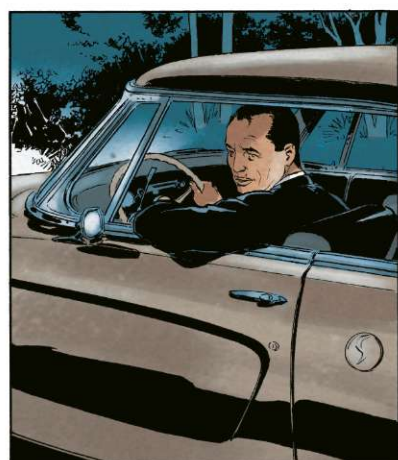


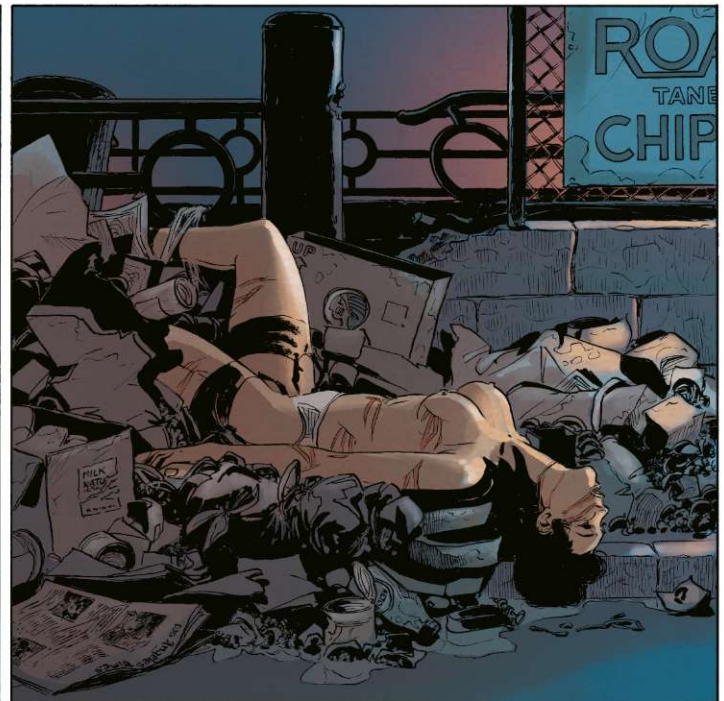
CLEGG JORDAN. WHEN I SPOKE HIS NAME ALOUD, I REALIZED IT WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST TIME I'D EVER BEEN INTERESTED... IN A MAN!



THE OTHERS HAD NEVER BEEN ANYTHING BUT GROWN-UP BOYS I LED AROUND BY THE NOSE.







I HAD WHAT WAS LEFT OF HARLEY'S \$100,000. AND, SOONER OR LATER, MY MYSTERIOUS AND DANGEROUS LETTER-WRITER WOULD INEVITABLY COME BACK AND TRY TO SELL ME HIS INFORMATION AGAIN.



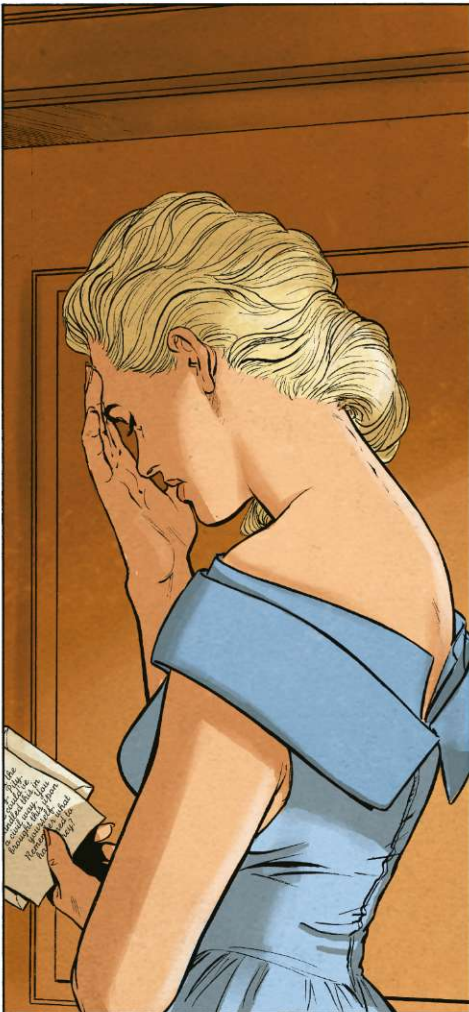
THE NAME OF MY ATTACKER. WHICH WAS PROBABLY HIS OWN! COULD I AFFORD TO RUN SUCH A RISK?



AND WHAT FOR? WHAT IF HE ATTACKED ME AGAIN?



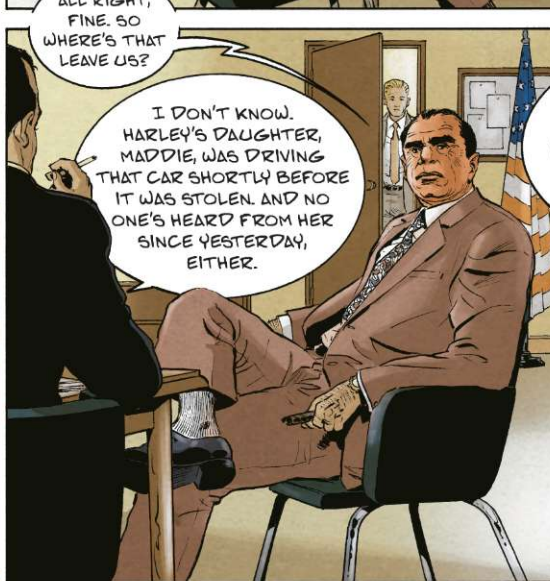
Didn't get the money. Pity. We could've handled this in a civil way. You brought this upon yourself. Remember what happened to Audrey?



IT CAN'T BE A COINCIDENCE. TWO OF THE YOUNG WOMEN, MISS FEBRUARY AND MISS MARCH, WERE SEEN IN A WHITE CHEVROLET JUST BEFORE THEY DISAPPEARED.

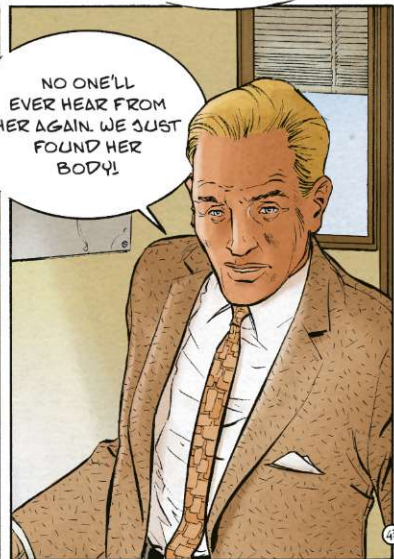
KNOCK KNOCK

THAT CHEVROLET BELONGED TO HOGAN HARLEY. IT WAS STOLEN FROM HIM LAST MONTH. THE SAME HOGAN HARLEY WHO JUST GOT STABBED LAST NIGHT!



ALL RIGHT, FINE. SO WHERE'S THAT LEAVE US?

I DON'T KNOW. HARLEY'S DAUGHTER, MADDIE, WAS DRIVING THAT CAR SHORTLY BEFORE IT WAS STOLEN. AND NO ONE'S HEARD FROM HER SINCE YESTERDAY, EITHER.



NO ONE'LL EVER HEAR FROM HER AGAIN. WE JUST FOUND HER BODY!

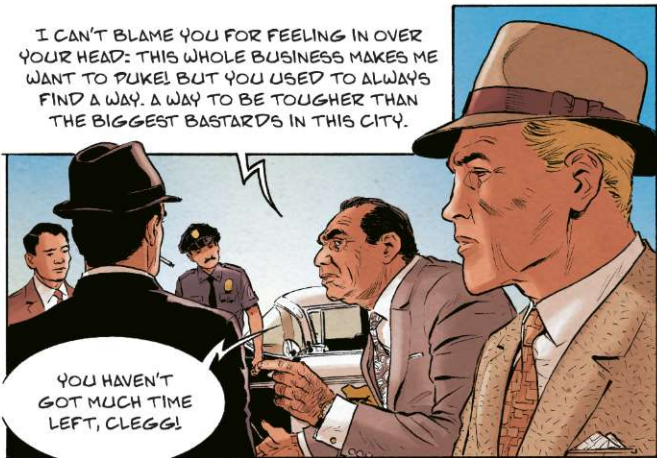


NO, LIEUTENANT. WE SEARCHED THE WHOLE AREA. NO PHOTO. AND NO TRACES OF RAPE ON THE VICTIM... NO INJURIES, EITHER.

EXCEPT THE KNIFE WOUNDS, OF COURSE.

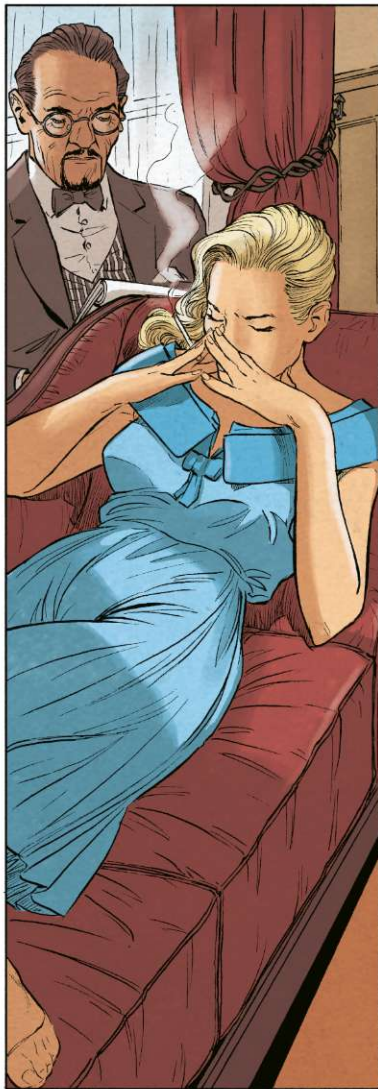
IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE SHE'S MISS APRIL, CLEGG. IT'S PROBABLY UNCONNECTED. YOU'RE JUST FLAILING, TRYING TO STAY AFLOAT.

KEEP THIS UP, AND I'LL HAVE TO TELL SAMSON HE WAS RIGHT. HEAR ME, CLEGG?



I CAN'T BLAME YOU FOR FEELING IN OVER YOUR HEAD: THIS WHOLE BUSINESS MAKES ME WANT TO PUKE! BUT YOU USED TO ALWAYS FIND A WAY. A WAY TO BE TOUGHER THAN THE BIGGEST BASTARDS IN THIS CITY.

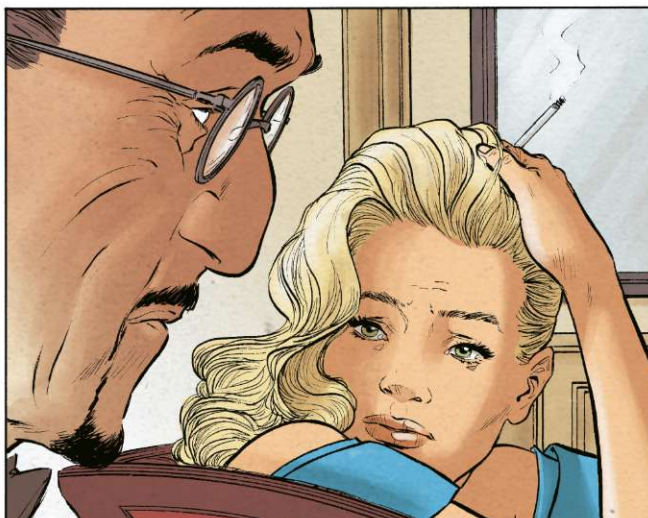
YOU HAVEN'T GOT MUCH TIME LEFT, CLEGG!



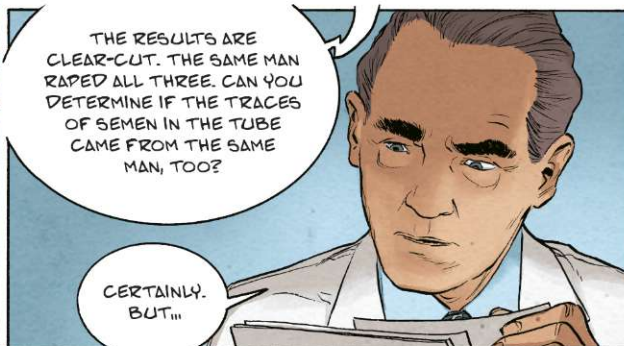
HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN SEEING YOU, DOCTOR? SINCE LAST DECEMBER?



IN ALL THAT TIME, HAVEN'T I ALWAYS SAID I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING FROM THAT NIGHT?



THAT'S THE TRUTH, BUT I ONLY LOST A FEW HOURS. I KNOW PERFECTLY WELL WHAT MY LIFE BEFORE WAS LIKE, AND I'M PERFECTLY AWARE OF WHAT'S CHANGED.



THAT'S TRUE. AT FIRST GLANCE, IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. BUT THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WE'RE MISSING. THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT INTERESTING!



HER FATHER'S PULLED A FEW STRINGS, SO SHE'S GOT NO RECORD. BUT SHE'S RUN INTO TROUBLE WITH THE POLICE BEFORE.

TROUBLE, YOU SAY. WHAT KIND OF TROUBLE?

CONTEMPORARY ART SHOW. ONE OF THOSE NUTTY, HYPED-UP NEW YORK PAINTERS. THE GALLERY COULD NEVER PIN IT ON HER, BUT ALLEGEDLY VIKTOR SCOTT MANAGED TO WALK OFF WITH ONE OF THE PAINTINGS.



BEING A SUSPECT?

OLD SCOTT DIDN'T WANT ANY BAD PUBLICITY. PASSED IT OFF AS A CAR ACCIDENT.



TAKING RISKS. SURPRISING EVERYONE. ANSWERING TO NO ONE.

AS YOU KNOW, THERE'S NO OFFICIAL POLICE REPORT ON ANYONE ATTACKING YOUR CLIENT. NO REPORT FILED FOR BREAKING AND ENTERING, OR ATTEMPTED RAPE.



AT A SURPRISE PARTY FOR WEALTHY YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS, A PRE-COLOMBIAN MASK GOES MISSING. ONCE AGAIN VIKTOR'S A SUSPECT. I COULD BE GOING OUT ON A LIMB HERE, BUT... I GET THE FEELING SHE LIKES THIS.

I STILL HAVE CONTACTS AT THE CENTRAL PRECINCT FROM WHEN I WAS A REPORTER. SNAGGED A COPY OF THE WRITE-UP FOR THE ACCIDENT.



SOMETHING ABOUT IT DOESN'T SIT RIGHT, SUANITA. NOT AT ALL.



OH MY GOD!!!



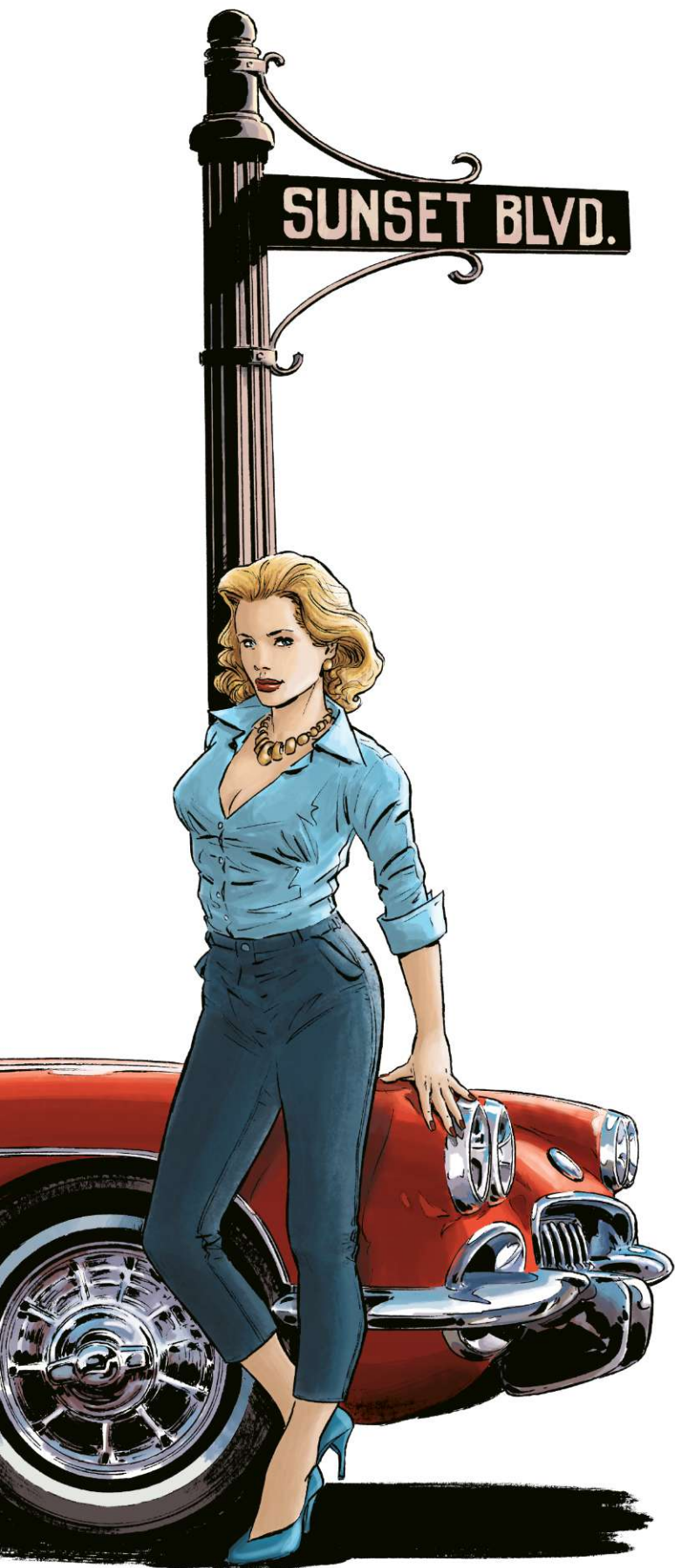
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LE LOMBARD





Miss OCTOBER

In Los Angeles, the skies are often hazy, the rain is warm, and the women are beautiful: glamour goddesses, fading stars—to die for, but they're the ones dying. In a string of grisly murders, the victims' bodies are found posed like playmates of the month: Miss January, throat slit. Miss February, tortured.

Clegg Jordan, the detective in charge of the case, crosses paths with Viktor, a gifted burglar. Viktor doesn't know it yet, but the killer has already decided she will be...
Miss October.