

VI:  
JUST  
ONE  
BREATH

CORDURIÉ / RADIVOJEVIĆ

euRoPe  
COMICS









# ONE

JUST ONE BREATH

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SAN FRANCISCO.





MARTHA?!

HENRY.

YOU'RE WHITE AS A SHEET!

COME IN! IT'S POURING OUT!



I HEARD YOU GOT A NASTY COLD EARLIER THIS WEEK. NOT THAT I MIND GETTING A VISIT FROM A COWORKER WHO HAPPENS TO BE CHARMING AS ALL GET OUT...

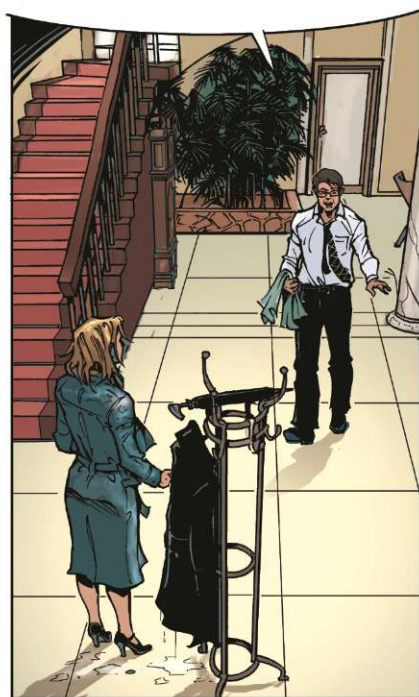
WHAT WAS IT THAT COULDN'T WAIT? SERIOUSLY, MARTHA! YOU DIDN'T EVEN BRING AN UMBRELLA!



BUT STEPPING OUT IN THIS WEATHER, WHEN YOU'RE STILL UNWELL? YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THAT'S NOT A SMART MOVE.

I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN THAT TO A MEDICAL SCHOOL PROFESSOR.

I HAD TO SEE YOU.



I KNOW. I JUST WANTED TO FEEL THE PITTER-PATTER OF THE RAIN ONE LAST TIME.

ONE LAST TIME? I'M NOT SURE I FOLLOW. WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

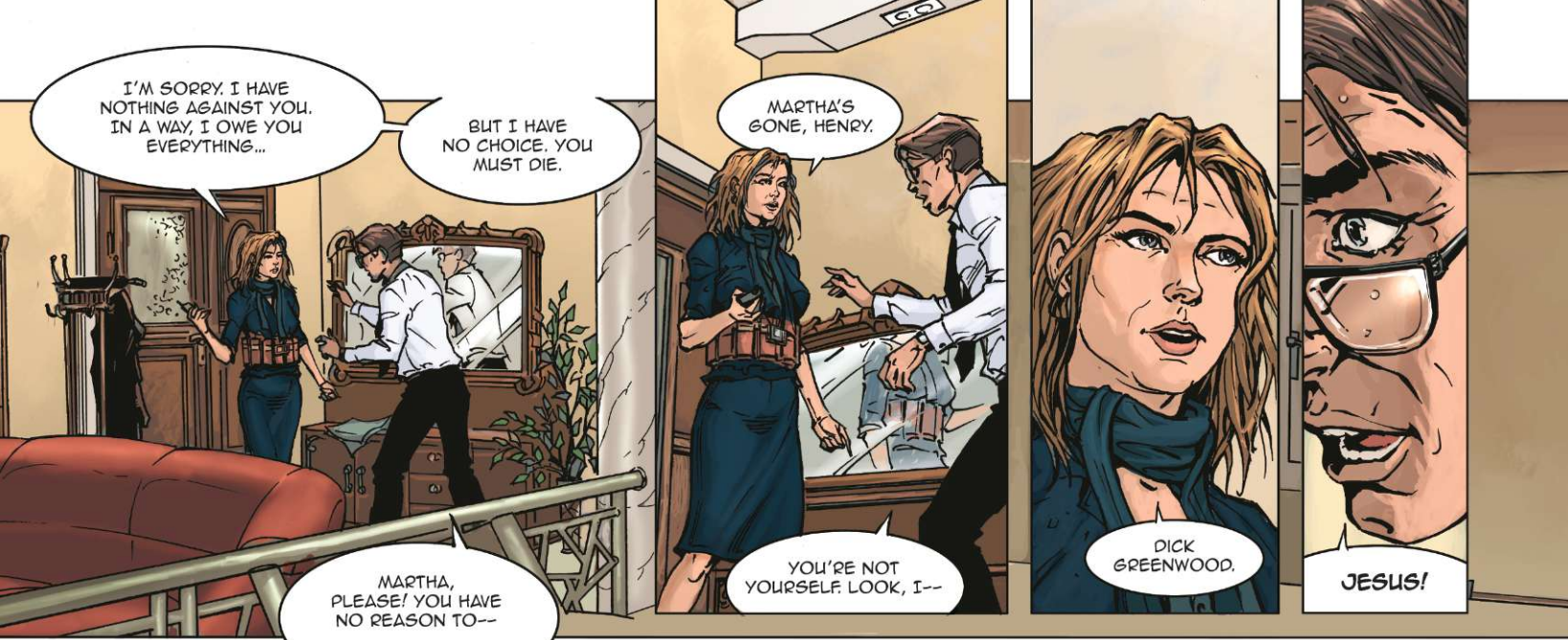


?!  
!!



TRUST ME... I'M JUST AS SCARED OF DYING AS YOU ARE, HENRY.

CHRIST, MARTHA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!





NEW YORK.



HELLO, ABBIE.

MR. LETHERCORE.

CAROL TOLD ME TO SWING BY FOR HER AROUND SIX.



AS YOU CAN SEE, I LIKE TO BE ON TIME.



I THINK MS. TALISBURY'S STILL OCCUPIED, BUT HER MEETING SHOULD BE OVER SOON.

YOU CAN GO UP TO EDITORIAL IF YOU'D LIKE. I'LL BUZZ YOU IN.

THANKS!



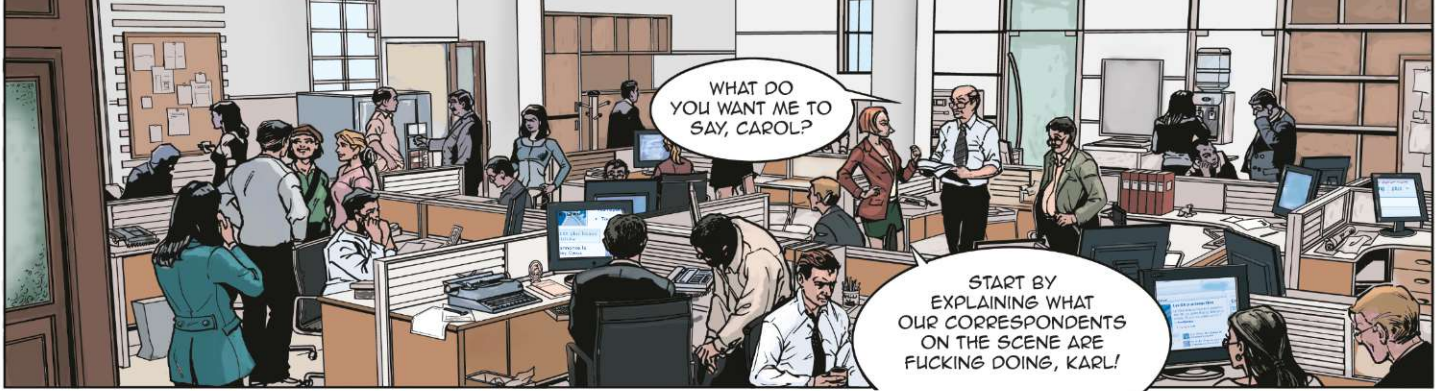
HE'S TAKING THE STAIRS UP TO EDITORIAL?

IN THE SIX MONTHS CAROL'S BEEN SEEING HIM, HE COMES TO PICK HER UP ALL THE TIME. I DON'T REMEMBER EVER SEEING HIM TAKE THE ELEVATOR. NOT EVEN ONCE.



CUTE AND ATHLETIC!

CAROL'S A LUCKY WOMAN!



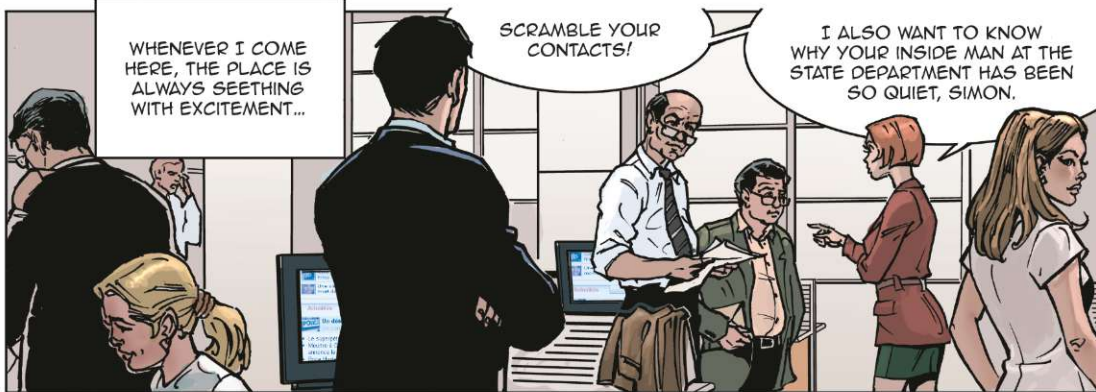
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY, CAROL?

START BY EXPLAINING WHAT OUR CORRESPONDENTS ON THE SCENE ARE FUCKING DOING, KARL!



FORMALIZING INDO-PAKISTANI RELATIONS ISN'T THE KIND OF EVENT YOU DON'T SEE COMING! THERE MUST'VE BEEN FOREWARNINGS: A DIPLOMATIC TANGO, SYMBOLIC GESTURES... SOMETHING THAT WOULD'VE CLUED US IN!

ALL THIS HUSTLE AND BUSTLE, JUST TO BARELY SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF THINGS. WHAT A WASTE OF TIME!



WHenever I come here, the place is always seething with excitement...

Scramble your contacts!

I also want to know why your inside man at the State Department has been so quiet, Simon.



If you had my gift, Carol, you'd understand...

I need something meaty, yesterday!



You look pensive, Julian. You OK?

I should be asking you that.



Don't even get me started. Bugs me just thinking about it!

GOT IT!

Don't forget, Harry! Nine tonight, at the apartment.



If I could throw in my two cents, you won't exactly destress from the job by having your coworkers over.



I'm sure you don't torture yourself that way, Mr. Dilettante! What do you do all day, anyway? You never have anyone over. It's like you don't even have a social life!

That's me, all right. And seeing you just makes me want to stay that way.



HEYA, EILEEN. WHAT LITERARY PEARL HAVE YOU DUG UP THIS TIME?



THIS BOOK'S INSANE! I CAN'T BELIEVE SOMETHING LIKE THAT COULD HAPPEN.



YEAH, IT'S... PRETTY PAINFUL, HUH?



GONNA READ IT?

NO WAY. THAT'S A CERTIFIED BUMMER.

YOU HERE FOR THE PAPER, STEPHEN?



AND THEN SOME.



I GET IT. YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY PERSON WHO THINKS THAT WAY. TO YOU, KEEPING UP WITH THE NEWS IS LIKE TWISTING THE KNIFE IN THE WOUND. BUT HEY--TO EACH THEIR OWN.

IT'S WEIRD... I USED TO DEVOUR THE *TIMES* EVERY DAY, BUT NOW THAT I'M IN THIS CAMP, I CAN'T BEAR TO OPEN ONE. SAME WITH THE NEWS ON TV. EVERYONE ELSE IS GLUED TO THE SCREEN, BUT WHAT'S THE POINT?

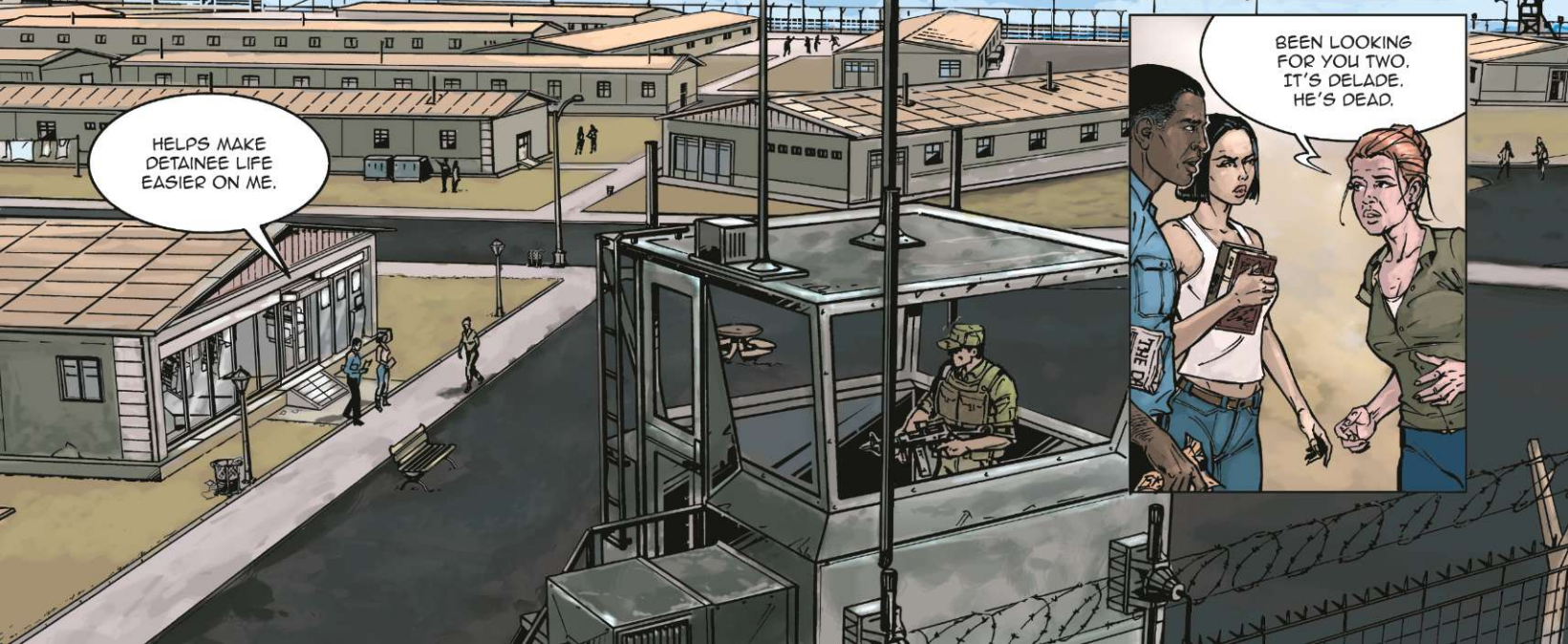


ME, I CLING TO ANYTHING THAT'LL LET ME STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE WORLD OUTSIDE.

HELPS MAKE DETAINEE LIFE EASIER ON ME.



BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU TWO. IT'S DELADE. HE'S DEAD.



...ACCORDING TO OUR EXPERTS, ONLY EXPLOSIVES COULD HAVE CAUSED SUCH EXTENSIVE DAMAGE. THE VICTIM IS RENOWNED BIOLOGIST HENRY DELADE...

THEY'RE CALLING IT A SUICIDE BOMBING.

BUT NO TERRORIST GROUP'S STEPPED UP TO CLAIM IT.

GREENWOOD'S BEHIND THIS!

RIGHT NOW WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING, JIM.

IT'S A CLEAR INDICATION THAT GREENWOOD'S DECIDED TO CLEAN HOUSE!

WHY WOULD HE DO THAT? UP TILL NOW, WE'VE GIVEN IN TO HIS EVERY DEMAND. NO ONE'S TRIED TO ESCAPE FROM STANTON.

OH, CUT IT OUT, NED! WE'VE BEEN AFRAID OF SOMETHING LIKE THIS FOR MONTHS!

I AGREE WITH BARBARA. EVEN IF THIS WAS A MURDER, WE'RE FOLLOWING THE RULES. WE'VE STAYED IN ISOLATION. WE'VE BEEN LOCKED UP IN THIS CAMP FOR MONTHS NOW, WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST INCIDENT!

WE'VE NO REASON TO FEEL THREATENED.

YEAH, WELL... "WE" COULD ALWAYS BE LYING TO OURSELVES, FRANKIE.

I MEAN, LET'S BE HONEST: WE ALL KNOW GREENWOOD WELL.

AND WE KNOW WHAT HE'S READY TO SACRIFICE TO ACHIEVE HIS GOALS.



NO POINT BURYING OUR HEADS IN THE SAND. WE'RE ON THE SAME LIST AS DELADE.

WE'VE GOT TWO CHOICES: EITHER STAY HERE AND WAIT FOR THE OTHER SHOE TO DROP, OR TRY OUR LUCK.



NOT EVERY DOUBTER IS LOCKED UP HERE. I KNOW AT LEAST ONE WOMAN WHO WAS NEVER FOUND OUT. IF WE CAN ESCAPE, SHE MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP US.

GREENWOOD PROMISED TO SPARE OUR LIVES IN EXCHANGE FOR OUR COOPERATION.



OR ARE YOU SERIOUSLY GOING TO STAY HERE LIKE NOTHING'S HAPPENED?

I DON'T KNOW, STEPHEN...



WHY WOULD HE TRY AND KILL US NOW? MAYBE DELADE MADE A MISTAKE...



AND WHO KNOWS--EVEN IF IT WAS A HIT, MAYBE IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HIS PREVIOUS WORK ON PROJECT POCKET...

JIM AND STEPHEN ARE RIGHT.



YOU CAN LOOK AT THIS ANY WAY YOU WANT, BUT DEEP DOWN, WE'VE KNOWN FROM THE BEGINNING THAT WE WERE LIVING ON BORROWED TIME. GOD ALONE KNOWS WHY GREENWOOD'S NEVER TAKEN US OUT.



DELADE'S DEATH IS A WAKE-UP CALL. AND IT'S PLENTY LOUD ENOUGH FOR ME. WHO ELSE IS READY TO GET OUT OF HERE?



YOU'RE PRETTY QUIET TODAY. SOMETHING WRONG, PARKER?

NO, SIR. JUST THINKING ABOUT THE MEETING. THIS INTER-AGENCY SUMMIT IS A WASTE OF TIME.



THE PRESIDENT DOESN'T THINK SO. NEITHER DO I.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, WE ALREADY PLAY WELL WITH THE FBI, THE NSA, THE DIA...



PRESIDENT HARMOND WANTS US TO TAKE OUT THE WHITE CRUSADERS AS SOON AS WE CAN.



BUT IN ORDER TO DO SO, I'D BE OF MORE USE AT LANGLEY.

MR. ROBERTS...



...WE'RE HERE.



GET OUT OF THE CAR!



NO!





I JUST HEARD THE NEWS, SO THE WHITE CRUSADERS REALLY WERE BEHIND THE ATTACK?

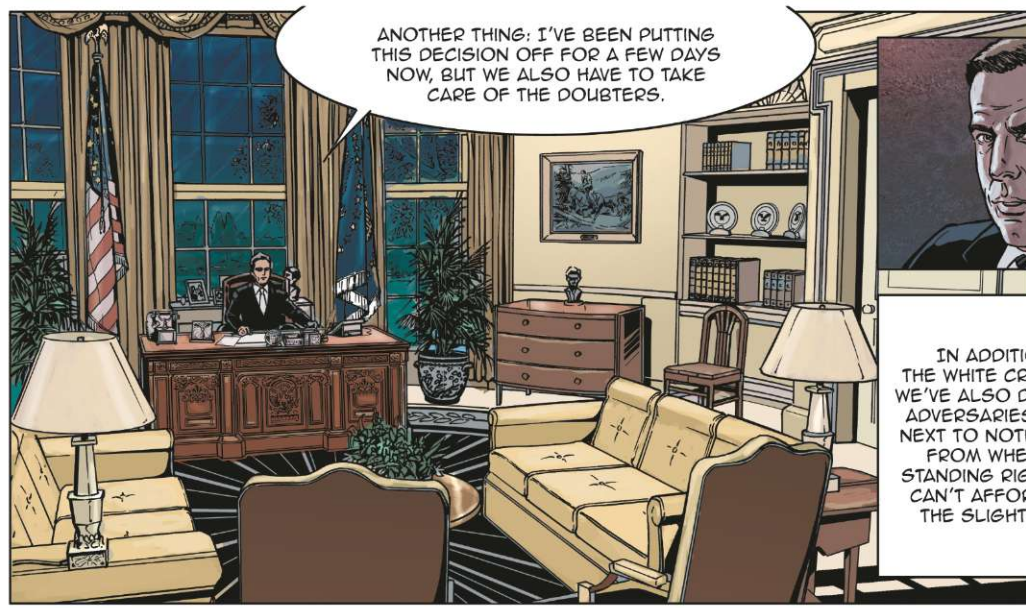
THAT'S WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE. THE CHAUFFEUR AND THE SHOOTER TURNED THEMSELVES IN RIGHT AFTERWARD. THAT FITS THE PROFILE OF THOSE EXTREMISTS' M.O.

THE CRUSADERS ALWAYS LET THEMSELVES GET CAUGHT SO THEY CAN LOUDLY PROCLAIM THEIR IDEALS IN COURT.

NOT THIS TIME!

THEY JUST KILLED CIA DIRECTOR JOE ROBERTS!

MORE THAN EVER, WE NEED TO IDENTIFY THEIR ACCOMPLICES IN OUR AGENCIES AND GET OUR HANDS ON THEIR LEADER, VALERY LUSTROM, BEFORE THEY STRIKE AGAIN. I WANT THAT NEO-NAZI GROUP DISMANTLED BEFORE THE YEAR'S UP.



ANOTHER THING: I'VE BEEN PUTTING THIS DECISION OFF FOR A FEW DAYS NOW, BUT WE ALSO HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THE DOUBTERS.



IS THAT REALLY NECESSARY? AS LONG AS THEY'RE UNDER WRAPS AT STANTON, THEY'RE NOT A DANGER.



IN ADDITION TO THE WHITE CRUSADERS, WE'VE ALSO DISCOVERED ADVERSARIES WE KNOW NEXT TO NOTHING ABOUT. FROM WHERE WE'RE STANDING RIGHT NOW, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE THE SLIGHTEST RISK.



THE DOUBTERS CONSTITUTE A POTENTIALLY MUCH GREATER PROBLEM THAN HENRY DELADE. BY A LONG SHOT.



I'LL DO WHAT NEEDS DOING.



I'LL SAY IT AGAIN: WE'RE SO CLOSE TO ACHIEVING OUR GOAL. I DON'T WANT ANY NEW VARIABLES IN THE EQUATION.

NEW YORK.  
UPPER EAST  
SIDE.

AND IN OUR  
AGE OF NEWS  
COVERAGE IN REAL  
TIME... CAN YOU  
IMAGINE?

FIRST, THE ISRAELIS  
AND THE PALESTINIANS  
COMING TOGETHER, AND THEN  
THE INDO-PAKISTANI  
ENTENTE...

ALL THAT REALLY  
PASSED YOU BY?



YES,  
KENNETH.

A CHANGE OF SUCH SCOPE  
TO THE INTERNATIONAL LANDSCAPE,  
AND NO WORD LEAKING OUT?  
UNBELIEVABLE.



AT ANY RATE,  
IT'S A COLOSSAL  
SUCCESS FOR  
HARMOND'S  
ADMINISTRATION.

WE'D PREFER  
IT IF THE WHITE  
HOUSE ACTUALLY  
COMMUNICATED  
WITH THE PRESS.  
BUT INSTEAD, WE'RE  
FORCED TO PLACE  
BETS ON WHAT THE  
STATE DEPARTMENT  
WILL PULL OUT OF  
ITS HAT NEXT.



THAT COULD BE  
FUN. I'LL PUT MY  
MONEY ON TEHRAN AND  
WASHINGTON BECOMING  
SISTER CITIES.

AND YOU,  
JULIAN? WHAT DO  
YOU SEE?

LONG SHOT,  
RIGHT?

WHAT  
DO I SEE,  
SIERRA?



WHAT I SEE ARE SNAPSHOTS OF  
THE LIVES YOU, YOUR HUSBAND,  
AND HARRY RUB IN MY FACE.

EVERY TIME YOU  
EXHALE, YOU'RE  
INVADING MY  
MENTAL SPACE.





I SEE YOUR SCARS,  
HOW FRAGILE YOUR  
EXISTENCES ARE...

...THE WAYS YOU  
MAKE IT EASIER ON  
YOURSELVES TO GET  
THROUGH THE DAY...



I SEE THE  
FACES BEHIND  
THOSE SMILES  
YOU WEAR...

...THE SHAMEFUL SECRETS  
AND THE MORAL HIGH GROUND  
YOU CLAIM WHENEVER IT  
SUITS YOU...

SAME GOES FOR YOU, CAROL.  
YOU CAN'T HIDE ANYTHING FROM  
ME. BUT YOU'RE NOTHING  
LIKE THEM.



YOU RADIATE A  
GRACE THE LIKES OF  
WHICH I'VE RARELY  
TASTED.

I'D GLADLY STAY BY  
YOUR SIDE... EVEN IF IT  
MEANT PUTTING UP WITH  
YOUR FRIENDS.

ALAS, I'VE GOT  
OBLIGATIONS.



THE EVENING STRETCHES ON,  
AND I STAVE OFF BOREDOM  
AS BEST I CAN... UNTIL THEY  
DECIDE TO GO AT LAST.

SHE HOLDS MY  
UNCOUTH SILENCES,  
MY LACK OF MANNERS,  
AGAINST ME.

USUALLY, SHE GETS OVER  
IT QUICK. BUT NOT THIS TIME.  
I DON'T WANT US TO END ON  
A BAD NOTE LIKE THIS.



I WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HER TO CALM  
DOWN. I TELL HER WHAT SHE WANTS  
TO HEAR. WHAT COULD BE SIMPLER  
FOR SOMEONE WHO CAN READ HER  
WISHES AND DESIRES?

I WISH I COULD TELL  
YOU WHY I HAVE TO GO...



BUT IF I DID, YOUR  
LIFE WOULD BE IN  
DANGER.

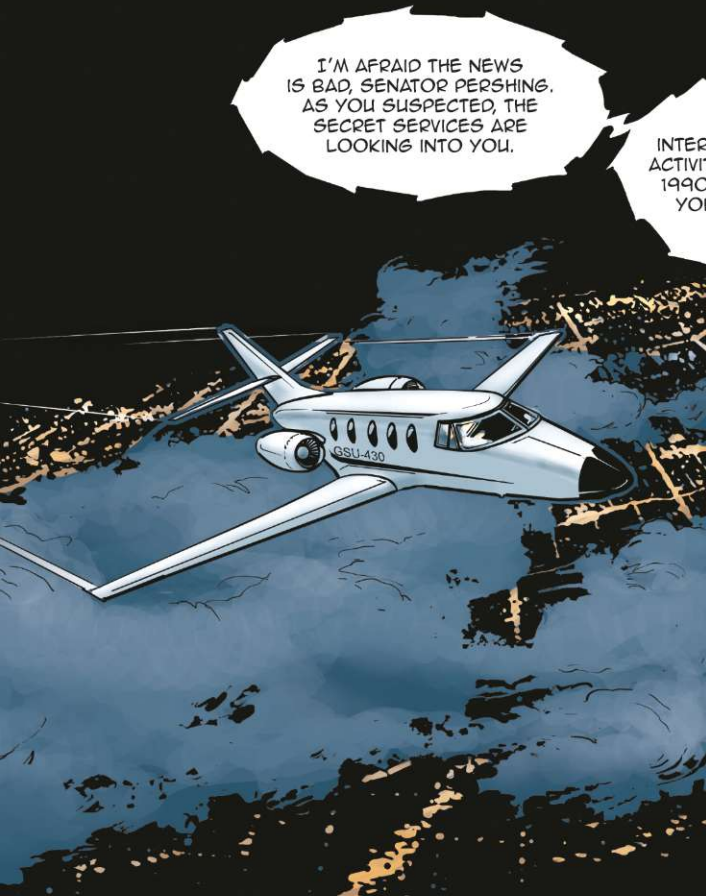


FAREWELL,  
CAROL.



I'LL THINK OF  
YOU OFTEN.





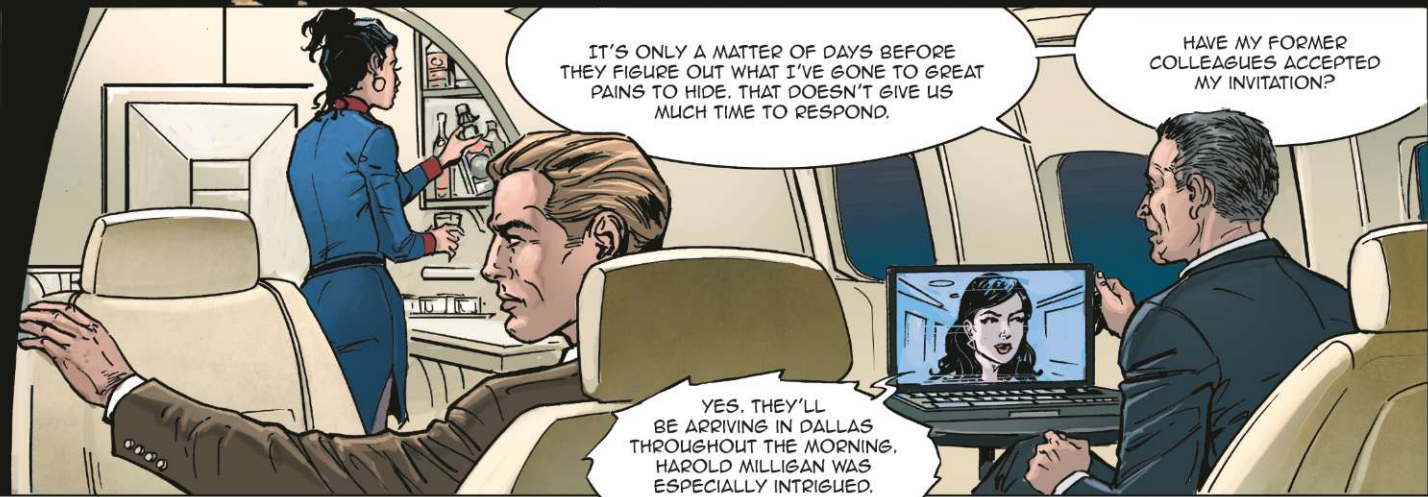
I'M AFRAID THE NEWS IS BAD, SENATOR PERSHING. AS YOU SUSPECTED, THE SECRET SERVICES ARE LOOKING INTO YOU.

THEY'RE INTERESTED IN YOUR ACTIVITIES DURING THE 1990S, ESPECIALLY YOUR RESEARCH LABS.

GOOD WORK, KATE. AT LEAST I KNOW WHAT I'M UP AGAINST.



THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING WINTERS' DISAPPEARANCE HAS BEEN CLEARED UP. THE AUTHORITIES HAVE HIM.



IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF DAYS BEFORE THEY FIGURE OUT WHAT I'VE GONE TO GREAT PAINS TO HIDE. THAT DOESN'T GIVE US MUCH TIME TO RESPOND.

HAVE MY FORMER COLLEAGUES ACCEPTED MY INVITATION?

YES. THEY'LL BE ARRIVING IN DALLAS THROUGHOUT THE MORNING. HAROLD MILLIGAN WAS ESPECIALLY INTRIGUED.

14



PERFECT! I'VE SUMMONED JULIAN LETHERCORE. HE'LL BE JOINING US THERE.

NELLY! A MACPHAIL'S.



SENATOR, YOUR MEDICATION...

OH, I'LL BE FINE.

DON'T MOTHER ME SO, KATE. THERE'S NO BETTER CURE THAN HAVING FUN.



YOU ROUND THEM ALL UP YET?

AS WE SPEAK, MR. MACOLLEAR.



EILEEN ASKELY WAS WOUNDED DURING AN ESCAPE ATTEMPT. WE'VE PUT HER IN A CELL.



MY MEN ARE HUNTING DOWN THE OTHER FUGITIVES. THEY WON'T GET FAR.



I WANT TO SEE ASKELY.



WHAT AN HONOR! AL MACOLLEAR, IN THE FLESH.

...SO TO SPEAK.



YOU WORRIED ABOUT MY HEALTH?

IF SO, REST ASSURED: I'M NOT AT DEATH'S DOOR YET.





STEPHEN!  
WAIT! I'M OUT  
OF... BREATH...

WE CAN'T  
STOP, JIM!  
THEY--

**RATATATATAT**  
**RATATATATAT!!**

JIM!

RUN!

RUN!  
GET AWAY!

**RATATATATAT!!**

DALLAS.

HAROLD. MATTHEW. YOU MUST KNOW MY INFLUENCE IS WANING DAILY.

USUALLY, ALL I'D HAVE TO DO IS GREASE A FEW PALMS, THREATEN THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO GET A LITTLE... CONSIDERATION.

THIS TIME, NO DICE.

GIVEN THE POLICIES HARMOND'S BEEN DEVELOPING, IT'S CLEAR MY OUSTING FROM THE HALLS OF POWER OWES NOTHING TO CHANCE.

I WAS EXPECTING A GENERAL OUTCRY WHEN OUR ARMED FORCES WITHDREW FROM THE STRATEGIC POINTS THEY'D BEEN OCCUPYING IN THE PERSIAN GULF...

...BUT EVEN THE PARTY'S HARDLINERS HAVE KEPT THEIR MOUTHS SHUT.

AND THE SOCIAL REFORMS VOTED IN BACK IN JANUARY! THE RAND CORPORATION DEEMED THEM "WORRISOME."

WORRISOME?! THEY'RE GOING TO TANK OUR ECONOMY!

UNTIL RECENTLY, I'D MADE DO WITH MORE... TRADITIONAL MEANS TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON DEEP IN THE PRESIDENT'S ADMINISTRATION...

BUT I'VE DECIDED TO CHANGE TACK.

WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SHOW YOU, ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT.

IN THE EARLY '80S, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL CORPS, I FINANCED AN EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF HAVRE DE GRACE.

Restricted Area

PUT SIMPLY, WE SUBJECTED SOLDIERS FROM GROUP O TO A VERY SPECIAL TREATMENT. OUR GOAL WAS TO FORCE THE BODY TO PRODUCE RED BLOOD CELLS AT SUCH A PACE AS TO MAKE OUR VOLUNTEERS TANTAMOUNT TO WALKING BLOOD BAGS, READY FOR TRANSFUSION...



IT TOOK US A LITTLE OVER A DECADE TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL, JUST IN TIME FOR OUR GUINEA PIGS TO JOIN MEDICAL UNITS DURING OPERATION DESERT STORM.



THEY WERE INEXHAUSTIBLE BLOOD BANKS--VITAL ON THE GROUND, WHERE, AS YOU KNOW, SURGEONS WERE PERFORMING EMERGENCY OPERATIONS WITHOUT KNOWING PATIENTS' BLOOD TYPES. IN SHORT, OUR HOPES WERE SATISFIED.



THEN IT ALL WENT WRONG.



BEFORE THE IRAQ WAR, WE'D NEVER HAD OUR GUINEA PIGS GIVE BLOOD. WE RESTRICTED OURSELVES TO TESTS. WHO COULD'VE IMAGINED THE COMPATIBILITY ISSUES BETWEEN OUR UNIVERSAL DONORS AND THE RECIPIENTS?



SOLDIERS WHO'D HAD TRANSFUSIONS SOON DEVELOPED MENTAL DIFFICULTIES: SCHIZOPHRENIA, HIGHLY AGGRESSIVE DEPRESSION, PARANOID DELIRIUM... I'VE LOST COUNT OF HOW MANY POOR SOULS ENDED UP CATATONIC. A TRUE NIGHTMARE...



WHAT HAPPENED NEXT WON'T SURPRISE YOU, DONORS AND RECIPIENTS ALIKE WERE BROUGHT HOME AND LOCKED UP. IT WAS SUCH A FIASCO THAT THE ARMY DROPPED HENRY DELADE AND DEMANDED THAT PROJECT POCKET BE SHUT DOWN. IN 1991, IT WAS.



HAROLD AND I ARE UP TO SPEED ON THIS SAD AFFAIR.



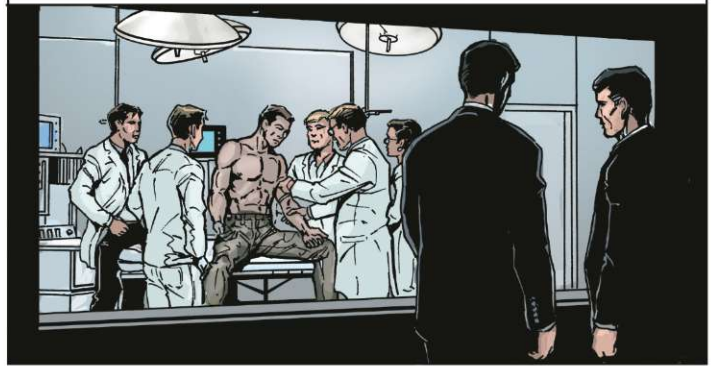
BUT YOU DON'T KNOW THE NEXT PART, MATTHEW.



I ASKED THE PENTAGON TO LET ME KEEP THE RECIPIENTS UNDER OBSERVATION. AN EXCELLENT INITIATIVE, BECAUSE SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENED A FEW MONTHS LATER.



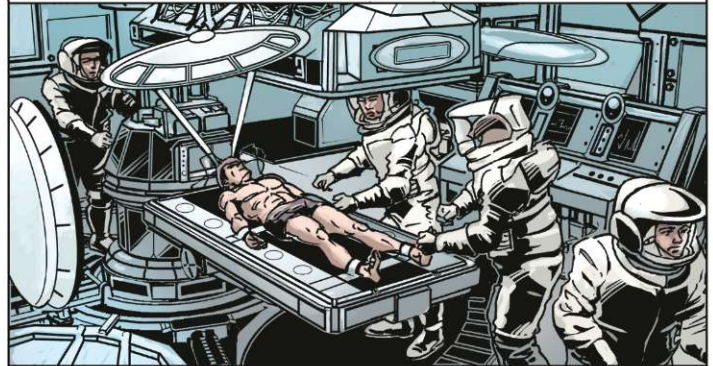
ONE OF OUR PATIENTS BEGAN SURFACING FROM HIS MENTAL PROBLEMS BRIEFLY, NOW AND THEN.



IN THOSE MOMENTS, HE EXHIBITED THE MEMORY AND PERSONALITY OF HIS BLOOD DONOR! IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE, AND YET...



A NEW PROJECT WAS BORN. ONE THAT PRODUCED RESULTS BEYOND MY WILDEST DREAMS.



IT LET US CREATE AGENTS WITH EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES, WHO WE CALLED BLOODCOGS.



FOUR MEN AND ONE WOMAN WITH THE POWER TO READ THOUGHTS BY CHEMICALLY DECODING MOLECULES FROM SALIVA OR ANY OTHER AIRBORNE BODILY FLUID WITHIN REACH. AMAZING, RIGHT?

AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, I WAS DEEPLY TEMPTED TO USE THESE PEOPLE AGAINST MY ADVERSARIES. BUT I REFRAINED.



BLOODCOGS WERE BANNED FROM ENTERING THE NATIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SECTORS.

OF COURSE, I JEALOUSLY GUARDED THE SECRET AND PRIVILEGE OF THEIR GIFT. BUT THE COUNTRY WAS ABLE TO BENEFIT. MY AGENTS INFILTRATED OUR EMBASSIES IN RUSSIA, NORTH KOREA... EVERYWHERE I DEEMED THEM USEFUL.



BY APPROACHING FOREIGN DIGNITARIES, THEY WERE ABLE TO GATHER INFORMATION THAT WAS THEN PASSED ON TO INTELLIGENCE. I WAS THUS ABLE TO STRENGTHEN MY POSITION AT THE TABLE AMONG THE PRESIDENT'S ADVISORS. I DON'T THINK THERE WAS A SINGLE WAR HAWK MORE HEADED BEFORE THAT BLESSED TIME...



AFTER COLIN HARMOND WAS ELECTED, EVERYTHING CHANGED. NO SOONER HAD HE TAKEN OFFICE THAN HE WENT ABOUT REDISTRIBUTING POWER, CUTTING ME OUT. SUDDENLY, THE CIA, ONCE MY BIGGEST CLIENT, WAS IGNORING MY INTEL.





AT THE SAME TIME, THEY TRIED TO UNEARTH MY SOURCES, WHICH FORCED ME TO WITHDRAW THE BLOODCOGS FROM ACTIVE DUTY. I COULDN'T AFFORD TO LET THEM BE DISCOVERED.

NOT LONG AGO, I SENT ONE, CAMPBELL WINTERS, OUT ON A MISSION. HE WAS SUPPOSED TO FEEL OUT THE PRESIDENT'S INNER CIRCLE. EXTREME TIMES, YOU KNOW...

MR. PERSHING, JULIAN LETHERCORE IS IN THE MEETING ROOM.



THANKS, REBECCA.

CONRAD... HOW DO I PUT THIS? IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU BETTER, I'D SAY YOU'D LOST YOUR WITS.

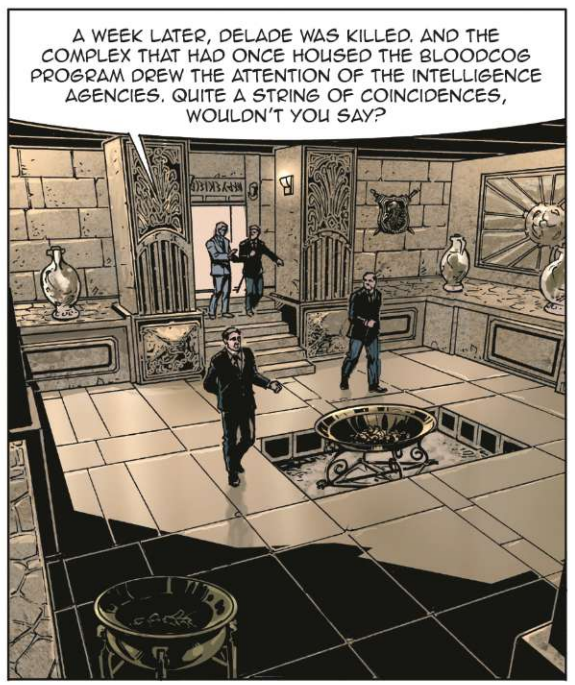
OH, CANCER'S BLESSED ME ALREADY. ALZHEIMER'S CAN GET IN LINE.



GETTING BACK TO WINTERS: HE VANISHED WITHOUT A TRACE. HIS INVESTIGATION LED TO A RECEPTION AT THE PAKISTANI EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON.



HE HAD AN EPILEPTIC FIT DURING THE EVENT. AN AMBULANCE TOOK HIM AWAY. IT NEVER REACHED THE HOSPITAL.



A WEEK LATER, DELADE WAS KILLED. AND THE COMPLEX THAT HAD ONCE HOUSED THE BLOODCOG PROGRAM DREW THE ATTENTION OF THE INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES. QUITE A STRING OF COINCIDENCES, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?



WHY TELL US ALL THIS?

COLFOLK, LIMAN, ARKINSON, AND SOME OTHER OLD HANDS ALL MET WITH SUSPICIOUS ENDS IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. I'M CONVINCED IT'S ALL CONNECTED.



THE ONLY WAY TO EXPOSE THEM IS TO THROW ANOTHER BLOODCOG INTO THE FRAY. BUT I DON'T WANT TO LOSE ANOTHER ONE.

YOU'VE GOT THE MOST QUALIFIED STAFF WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL SECURITY. AND YOU'RE THE ONLY ONES I CAN TRUST. HELP ME PROTECT MY AGENT EFFECTIVELY.



OUR NATION'S ENEMIES ARE IN CONTROL, AND THEY'RE BUSY DESTROYING WHAT OUR GENERATION SPENT OVER HALF A CENTURY BUILDING.



MAY I PRESENT JULIAN LETHERCORE.

GENTLEMEN.

OF THE FIVE, HE'S THE MOST EXPERIENCED AND THE MOST CAPABLE OF SUCCEEDING WINTERS. I'LL LET YOU GET ACQUAINTED.



CAN HE...

...READ YOUR THOUGHTS?

NO, MR. MILLIGAN. WE'D NEED TO BE CLOSER TO EACH OTHER. AND THE A.C. IN THIS ROOM IS SET TO DRY OUT THE AIR.



SO YOU HAVE THIS INCREDIBLE GIFT... THAT SEEMS HARD TO CONTROL. HOW MANY MINDS HAVE YOU READ, WOULD YOU SAY?

OH, TENS OF THOUSANDS, I GUESS. I READ THE THOUGHTS OF EVERYONE I MEET, REALLY.



HAS ANYONE STOOD OUT FROM THE CROWD?

HMM... I DON'T THINK THE SENATOR WOULD APPROVE.

GO ON, JULIAN!



SOMEONE CLOSE TO MR. PERSHING WAS CONVINCED HER EX-PRESIDENT HUSBAND WAS CHEATING ON HER. TO BE NICE TO HER, THE SENATOR ASKED ME TO... LOOK INTO THE AFFAIR.



IF I RECALL CORRECTLY, DIDN'T YOU SAY THEY WERE BANNED FROM MEDDLING IN POLITICS?

THE EXCEPTION THAT PROVES THE RULE!



I'M STILL AMAZED BY THE TWISTED SEXUALITY OF A MAN WHO HELD THE REINS TO THE FREE WORLD.

THAT'S HARDLY SURPRISING. THAT DEGENERATE DEMOCRAT WAS KNOWN FOR HIS ESCAPADES!



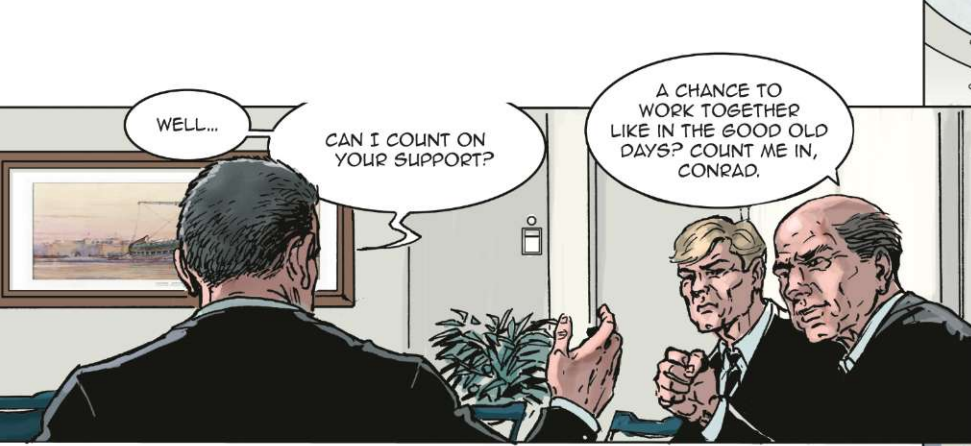
OH, I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT HIM.

THE THINGS CLINTON DID WITH A CIGAR WERE CURIOUS INDEED, BUT YOU'D BE SURPRISED TO FIND OUT HOW MANY OTHERS WERE JUST AS CREATIVE. THE MAN I'M REFERRING TO HAD--PERHAPS STILL HAS-- AN OUTSIZED TASTE FOR CRUCIFIXES.



I'LL SPARE YOU THE DETAILS, BUT I DOUBT THE CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS WHO BACKED HIS CANDIDACY WOULD APPROVE OF HIS USES FOR THEM.





WELL...

CAN I COUNT ON YOUR SUPPORT?

A CHANCE TO WORK TOGETHER LIKE IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS? COUNT ME IN, CONRAD.



MILES CUSTERO HERE WILL STICK WITH JULIAN WHEREVER HE GOES, AND COORDINATE YOUR MEN ON THE GROUND.

WELL! SINCE ALL THAT'S SETTLED--



MATTHEW?

IF YOUR MAN WILL TAKE HELP FROM A CONSERVATIVE WHO TAKES PRIDE IN HIS RELIGIOUS VALUES, HE'LL HAVE ALL THE RESOURCES HE NEEDS.



I'D LIKE TO CONSULT WINTERS' FINAL BACK-UP.



BACK-UP?

WHEN BLOODCOGS ARE OUT ON MISSION, THEY'RE REQUIRED TO REGULARLY SEND BACK BLOOD SAMPLES OF THEIR FINDINGS. THESE SAMPLES ARE STORED IN ARCHIVES FOR THEIR PEERS TO REVIEW.



I PROMISED MY AGENTS I WOULDN'T LET ANYONE ACCESS THOSE ARCHIVES UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. BUT WITH THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE...



PERMISSION GRANTED, JULIAN. IT'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU IN WASHINGTON.



LEATHERCORE AND CUSTERO WILL BE IN WASHINGTON TONIGHT.

EVERYTHING'S SET FOR THEIR ARRIVAL, SENATOR.



COVEN AND MILLIGAN'S MEN ARE ALREADY AT THE AIRPORT.

A TEAM WILL BE ON THEM AS SOON AS THEY GET OFF THE PLANE.



KATE, I KNOW YOU DON'T LIKE SEEING MATTHEW AND HAROLD MIXED UP IN ALL THIS...



BUT THEIR CONTRIBUTION IS NECESSARY. THEIR PEOPLE ARE BETTER ABLE TO LOOK OUT FOR LEATHERCORE.

I UNDERSTAND.



WAS WINTERS' BACK-UP DELIVERED?

I SAW IT. LEATHERCORE WILL FIND IT IN HIS ROOM.



ONCE HE'S DONE WITH IT, GET IT BACK IN PERSON.

WOULDN'T WANT MY OLD COLLEAGUES GIVING IN TO THE TEMPTATION.

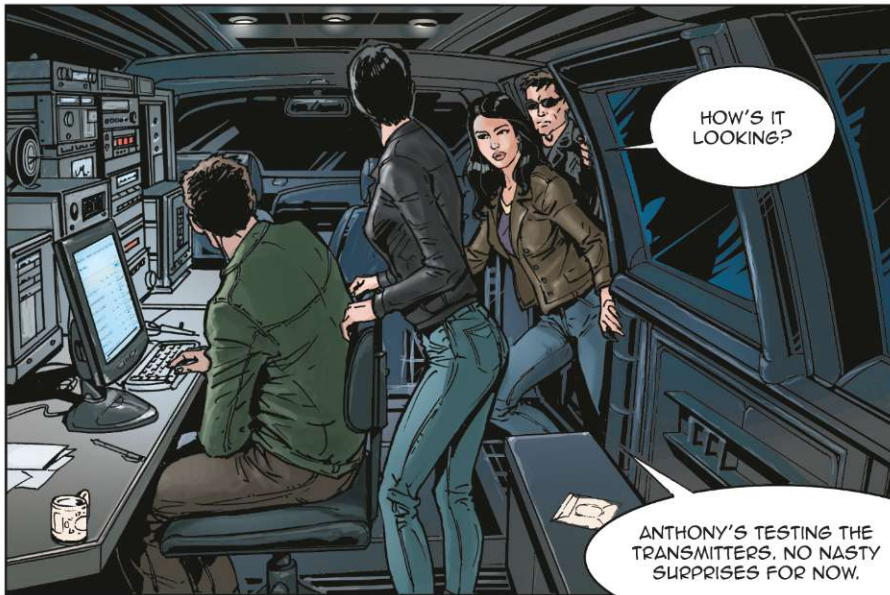


GOT IT, SIR. WILL DO.



HE'S NOT ON TO YOU?

WHY WOULDN'T HE TRUST ME, CLINT? I'VE PUT A LOT OF TIME INTO MAKING SURE HE WOULD.



HOW'S IT LOOKING?

ANTHONY'S TESTING THE TRANSMITTERS. NO NASTY SURPRISES FOR NOW.



LET'S JUST HOPE COVEN & CO.'S GOONS DON'T NOTICE ANYTHING.

NO WORRIES.



WHAT I PUT IN LETHERCORE'S CLOSET IS COMPLETELY UNDETECTABLE.

I EARN MY BIG BUCKS, BOSS.



IT'D BETTER BE. IF YOU'RE WRONG, MS. CLIFFBRIDGE HERE IS BLOWN INTO THE BARGAIN.

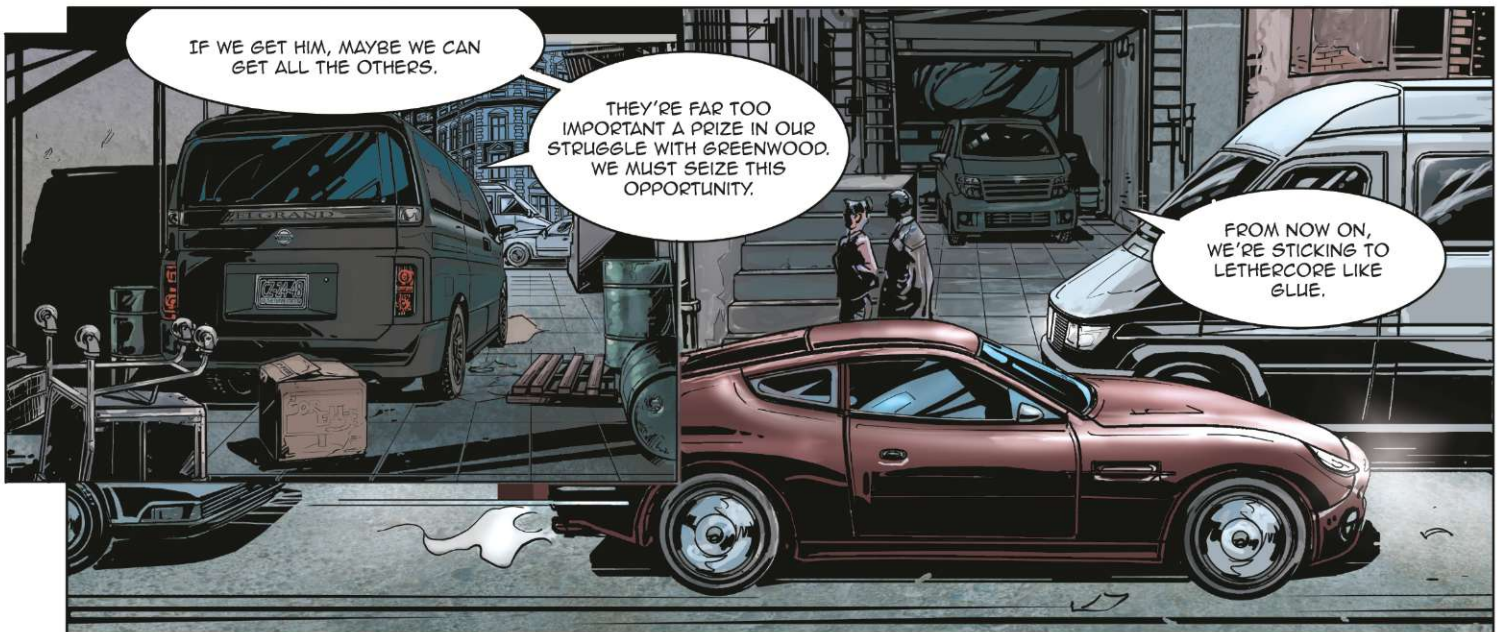


IT WON'T TAKE PERSHING LONG TO FIGURE OUT HOW THAT BUG WOUND UP IN HIS BLOODCOG'S CLOTHES.

IT'S A RISK I HAVE TO TAKE, DONNA.



THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE SENATOR'S GIVEN ME A CHANCE TO GET THIS CLOSE TO ONE.



IF WE GET HIM, MAYBE WE CAN GET ALL THE OTHERS.

THEY'RE FAR TOO IMPORTANT A PRIZE IN OUR STRUGGLE WITH GREENWOOD. WE MUST SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY.

FROM NOW ON, WE'RE STICKING TO LETHERCORE LIKE GLUE.



I HATE CLOSE, CROWDED SPACES. MOVIE THEATERS, SUBWAYS, TRAINS, ELEVATORS...



PLANES, TOO. EVERYONE'S EXHALATIONS COMBINE TO FORM A COMPACT, INDIGESTIBLE BRICK OF THOUGHTS.



FOR A CHANGE OF PACE, I FOCUSED ON CLUSTERO'S DURING THE FLIGHT. NO PERSONAL LIFE. NO WIFE OR CHILD. DEVOTED TO PERSHING, HEART AND SOUL.

HE WOULDN'T THINK TWICE ABOUT TAKING A BULLET TO KEEP ME SAFE. KNOWING HE'S READY TO DO SO THOUGH WE'RE PERFECT STRANGERS IS, IN A WAY, MORE DISTURBING THAN REASSURING. I COULD ALMOST FEEL BAD FOR HIM...



MY GUARDIAN ANGELS FREAK OUT WHEN I INSIST ON TAKING A CAB, BUT EVENTUALLY GIVE IN.



I LIKE CABS. THEY'RE NOT LIKE PLANES. A LIMITED NUMBER OF PASSENGERS...



...AND READING THE DRIVER IS MORE INFORMATIVE THAN ANY TRAVEL GUIDE.

NO BETTER WAY TO FIND OUT ALL ABOUT A CITY IN A FLASH.

THAT BEING SAID, A PERSISTENT THOUGHT HAS BEEN NAGGING AT ME THIS TRIP, FROM THE AIRPORT ALL THE WAY TO THE HOTEL.

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT FOR FOREVER... IN FACT, EVER SINCE I FOUND OUT I WASN'T THE ONLY BLOODCOG.

I DO MY BEST TO HIDE FROM CUSTERO HOW EAGER I AM TO GET INTO MY ROOM.

PERSHING KEPT ME IN THE DARK FOR A LONG TIME ABOUT HOW MANY OF US WERE IN THE PROGRAM. THEN HE CHANGED GEARS WHEN SOME OF US GOT SICK.

BUT WE'VE NEVER MET.

TA-DAA. TIME TO UNWRAP MY GIFT. I'M READY...

IT'S AN ALMOST RELIGIOUS MOMENT.

AN EXPECTED REVELATION...



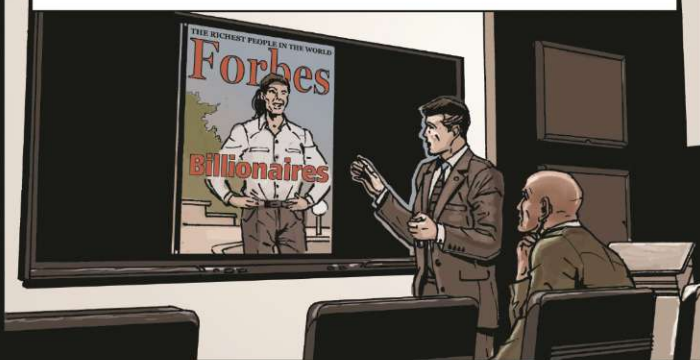
IT'S EASY TO SORT THROUGH THE THOUGHTS. I USE WHAT WE'VE GOT IN COMMON TO GROUND MYSELF. WE USED TO GO TO THE SAME EXAM ROOM DAILY.



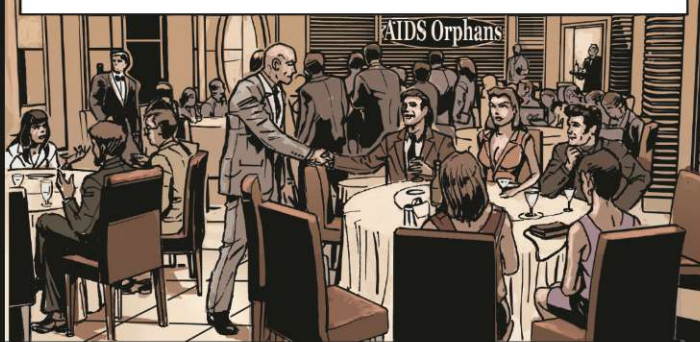
LIKE ME, WINTERS WENT THROUGH THE BLOODCOG PROGRAM WITH NO KNOWLEDGE THAT OTHER SUBJECTS WERE UNDERGOING THE SAME PROTOCOLS.



WHEN HE ENTERED ACTIVE DUTY, HIS MISSIONS DIDN'T TAKE HIM INTO THE DIPLOMATIC SPHERE, WHERE I OPERATED. WHILE I WAS SPYING ON POLITICIANS...



...HE WAS PROBING FOREIGN CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY WHOSE CHOICES OF CONTRACTORS WERE CONSIDERED DETRIMENTAL TO OUR ECONOMY. WHAT WINTERS FOUND OUT, PERSHING USED FOR THE PURPOSES OF BLACKMAIL.



WINTERS HAD TO TAKE A BREAK. THE TREATMENT WE WENT THROUGH TOOK ITS TOLL ON OUR HEALTH. HE WAS HOSPITALIZED FOR EPISODES OF CHRONIC FATIGUE AND BURN-OUT.



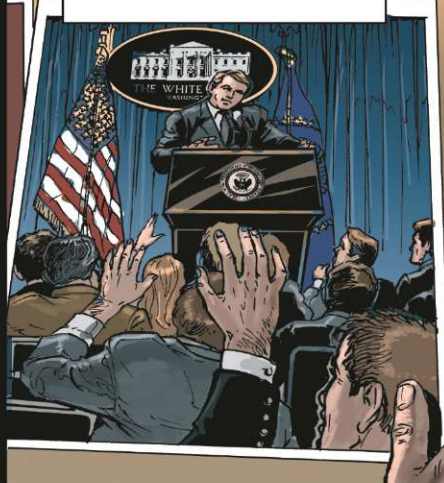
ONCE HIS CONVALESCENCE WAS OVER, PERSHING TASKED HIM WITH INVESTIGATING COLIN HARMOND'S CIRCLE.



WINTERS SET HIS SIGHTS ON THREE PROMINENT FIGURES.



EDWARD CONSTANTINE, WHITE HOUSE SPOKESPERSON...



AND EMILIO PALIKAO, THE PRESIDENT'S FAITHFUL COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR.



NATHANIEL DRESDEN, A DIPLOMAT WITH AN EXEMPLARY CAREER. RECENTLY DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF BY PLAYING AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN THE INDO-PAKISTANI RECONCILIATION...



ALL THREE WERE VERY POPULAR AND WELL-PROTECTED. WINTERS WAS FRUSTRATED.



UNTIL HE GOT HIMSELF INVITED TO A STYLISH SOIRÉE.

*Mister Campbell Winters  
The Embassy of the Islamic  
Republic of Pakistan  
It is happy to request the pleasure of  
your company at the evening held for  
Mister Nathaniel Dresden.  
This invitation is personal and will be required at the entrance.  
10/18*



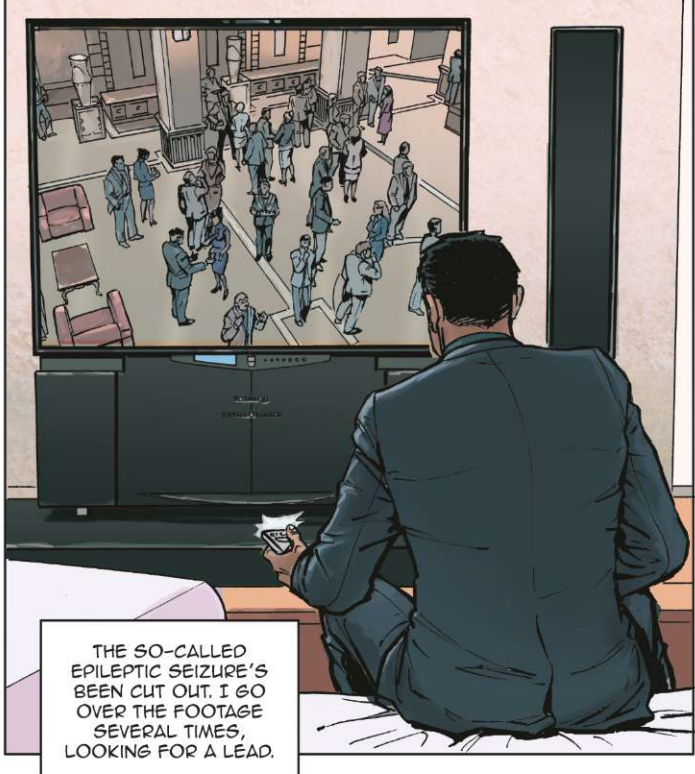
WHICH TOOK PLACE THE DAY AFTER HIS FINAL BLOOD SAMPLE.



APART FROM SOME INFO ON HOW METEORICALLY THESE MEN ROSE TO POWER, THE FILE I'VE BEEN GIVEN DOESN'T HELP MUCH.



BUT THERE'S STILL THIS COPY OF FOOTAGE FROM THE EMBASSY'S SECURITY CAMERAS.



THE SO-CALLED EPILEPTIC SEIZURE'S BEEN CUT OUT. I GO OVER THE FOOTAGE SEVERAL TIMES, LOOKING FOR A LEAD.



PAUSE

THAT WOMAN... SHE WAS TALKING WITH DRESDEN WHEN WINTERS WALKED UP TO THE DIPLOMAT. SHE PROBABLY SAW WHAT HAPPENED.



TO BE CONFIRMED.

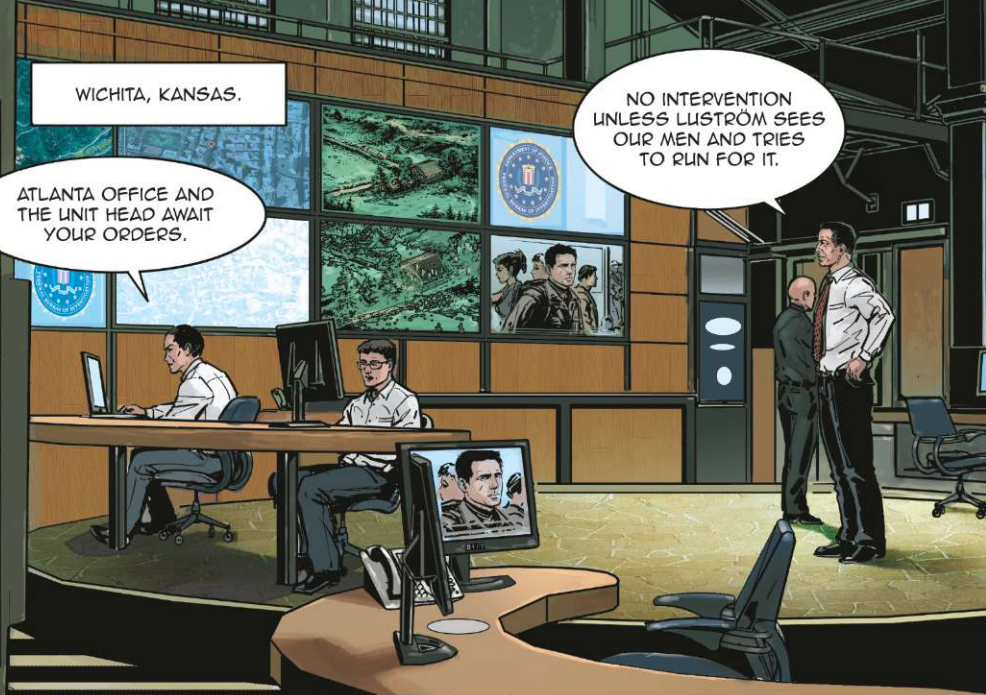


OUR UNIT ON THE GROUND CONFIRMS IT, SIR: VALERY LUSTRÖM AND SIX OTHER HOSTILES IN THE CHALET, INCLUDING ONE ON GUARD.

WICHITA, KANSAS.

ATLANTA OFFICE AND THE UNIT HEAD AWAIT YOUR ORDERS.

NO INTERVENTION UNLESS LUSTRÖM SEES OUR MEN AND TRIES TO RUN FOR IT.



APART FROM THAT CONTINGENCY, THE ATTACK CAN WAIT TILL I'M ON THE GROUND. TELL THEM I'M COMING.



ROGER THAT. HELICOPTER'S READY TO TAKE YOU TO THE AIRBASE.

THE PRESIDENT'S ON LINE FOUR.

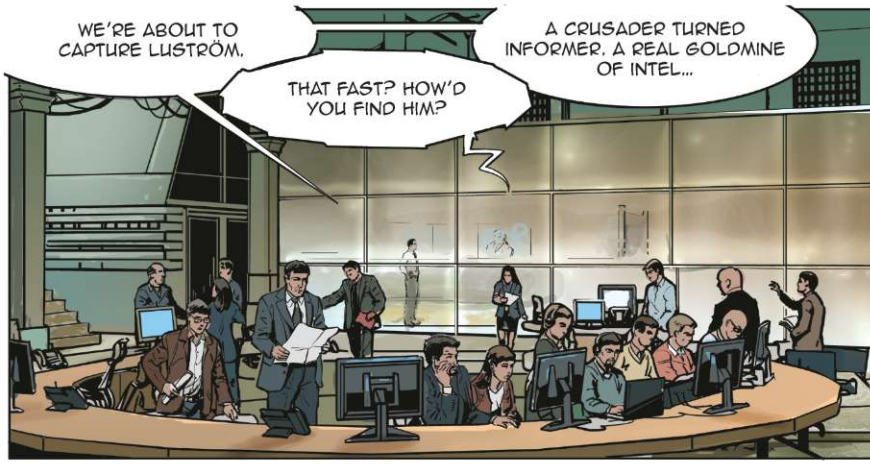
THANKS. YOU MAY GO NOW.



MR. PRESIDENT. PERMISSION TO SPEAK FREELY?



I'M ALL ALONE.



WE'RE ABOUT TO CAPTURE LUSTRÖM.

THAT FAST? HOW'D YOU FIND HIM?

A CRUSADER TURNED INFORMER. A REAL GOLDMINE OF INTEL...



LUSTRÖM CAN'T BE TAKEN ALIVE. I DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU WHY.



VERA EASTERBROOK'S DAYS ARE AS ORDERLY AS LINES IN A NOTEBOOK.



THE DAILY ROUTINE OF A CIVIL SERVANT, WITH HER LITTLE QUIRKS AND HABITS.



AMONG THEM, ALWAYS LUNCHING IN THE SAME SNACK BAR...



...AND FINISHING OFF HER MEAL WITH A CIGARETTE.



I QUIT SMOKING, BUT I ALLOW MYSELF THIS RELAPSE...



...JUST THIS ONCE.



A WHIFF OF MENTHOL...



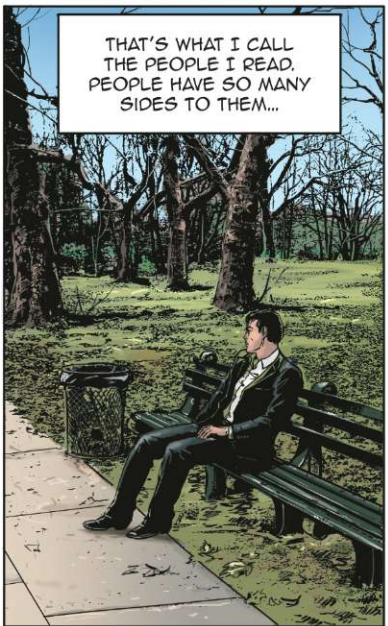
...AND I LEAVE WITH VERA'S LIFE ALL PACKED INTO MY MIND.



THE LIVES PARADING THROUGH MY HEAD NO LONGER MOVE ME.



NOT THAT I'M JADED. EACH INDIVIDUAL IS A TREASURE TROVE OF UNSUSPECTED WEALTH...



THAT'S WHAT I CALL THE PEOPLE I READ. PEOPLE HAVE SO MANY SIDES TO THEM...



BUT I CAN'T LET MYSELF BE DISTRACTED BY THE SPECTACLE OF MY PRISMS.



I DRAW BACK THE VEILS OF MEMORY, LOOKING ONLY FOR THAT NIGHT AT THE EMBASSY.



VERA WAS EAGERLY AWAITING THAT NIGHT.



SHE WANTED TO WORK HER CHARMS ON DRESDEN.



AND WAS DOING QUITE WELL...



...UNTIL WINTERS SHOWED UP.



WHATEVER HAPPENED, IT HAPPENED THE MOMENT HE READ DRESDEN.



ANOTHER SIDE EFFECT OF THE BLOODCOS PROTOCOL?



OR AN ACTUAL EPILEPTIC FIT? FROM A DISTANCE, THAT'S WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE.



BUT WINTERS' MEDICAL FILE DIDN'T SHOW ANY PRIOR HISTORY OF EPILEPSY.



AS THE POLICE REPORT INDICATES, HE WAS WHEELED AWAY...



...BEFORE VANISHING INTO THIN AIR.



THE WAY HE WAS STARING AT DRESDEN... DID READING THE DIPLOMAT REALLY HAVE SUCH AN EFFECT ON HIM?



ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.

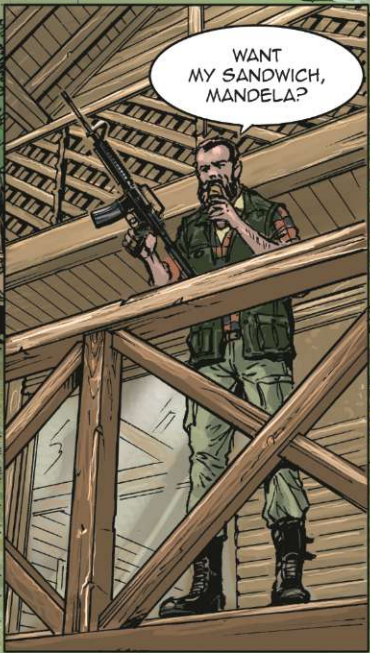


LEARN ANYTHING FROM HER?

YES.



I'LL NEED DRESDEN'S PLANNER. HE DOESN'T KNOW IT, BUT WE HAVE AN APPOINTMENT.





BARKING'S STOPPED, MELVIN'S DONE PISSING OFF THE DOG.





RATATATATAT



RATATATATAT



CHALET IS SECURE. HOSTILES NEUTRALIZED.



LEAVE US.

YOU HEARD THE MAN, BOYS!

EVERYONE OUT!



THE CRUSADERS ARE OVER, LUSTRÖM.

YOU'D BEST SHOOT ME DOWN RIGHT HERE.

I WON'T TALK!



YOU WANT TO DISAPPEAR? I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU THAT PLEASURE--BUT NOT EXACTLY IN THE WAY YOU THINK.

AS FOR NOT TALKING...

36



BELIEVE ME, YOU WILL.



AND I CAN ASSURE YOU, THE WHOLE COUNTRY WILL BE LISTENING.

DENVER.

I'VE BEEN THROUGH HIS FILE, BUT NATHANIEL DRESDEN REMAINS A COMPLETE MYSTERY.

SOUTHERN ASIA:  
DURABLE  
APPEASEMENT ?



IT'S NORMAL, EVEN COMMON, FOR A POLITICIAN'S CAREER TO GO THROUGH ALL SORTS OF TURNAROUNDS...



BUT DRESDEN'S ANOTHER KIND OF CREATURE ALTOGETHER. HIS COMMITMENT BESPEAKS A STANCE, MAYBE EVEN IDEALS. HOW RARE...



...CHANGING SIDES WHENEVER IT SUITS THEIR QUEST FOR POWER.



THESE QUALITIES MADE HIM AN ESSENTIAL THINKER WITHIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.



THEN, SWEEPING ASIDE THIRTY YEARS OF HIS CAREER, HE JOINED PRESIDENT HARMOND'S CREW: ANTI-LIBERAL POSITIONS FAR REMOVED FROM HIS OWN LEANINGS.



NOT TO MENTION THE REST: WATCHING A PRO-MILITARY MAN CAMPAIGN FOR DISARMAMENT IS ASTONISHING. HIS CONSCIENCE COMING BACK?

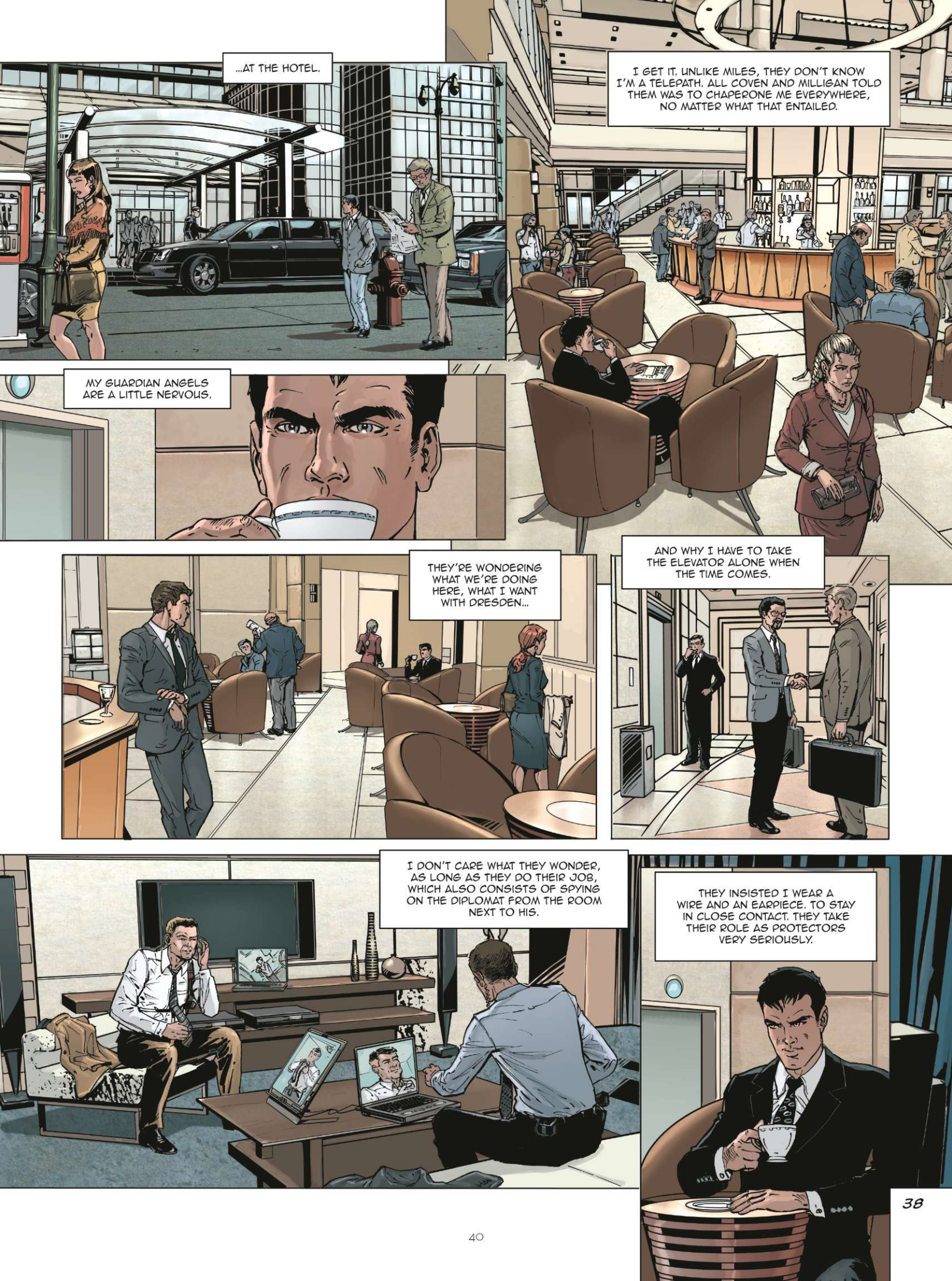


THE SECURITY TEAM WON'T LET ANYONE NEAR HIM. TOO BAD. IT COULD'VE BEEN OVER AND DONE WITH.



GUESS I'LL WAIT TILL TOMORROW...





...AT THE HOTEL.

I GET IT. UNLIKE MILES, THEY DON'T KNOW I'M A TELEPATH. ALL COVEN AND MILLIGAN TOLD THEM WAS TO CHAPERONE ME EVERYWHERE, NO MATTER WHAT THAT ENTAILED.

MY GUARDIAN ANGELS ARE A LITTLE NERVOUS.

THEY'RE WONDERING WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE, WHICH ALSO CONSISTS OF SPYING ON THE DIPLOMAT FROM THE ROOM NEXT TO HIS...

AND WHY I HAVE TO TAKE THE ELEVATOR ALONE WHEN THE TIME COMES.

I DON'T CARE WHAT THEY WONDER, AS LONG AS THEY DO THEIR JOB, WHICH ALSO CONSISTS OF SPYING ON THE DIPLOMAT FROM THE ROOM NEXT TO HIS.

THEY INSISTED I WEAR A WIRE AND AN EARPIECE. TO STAY IN CLOSE CONTACT. THEY TAKE THEIR ROLE AS PROTECTORS VERY SERIOUSLY.



DRESDEN SHOULD TURN UP ANY MINUTE NOW. HE HAS A LUNCH MEETING.



I TAKE THIS BRIEF MOMENT TO CLEAR MY MIND. IT'LL HELP ME ORGANIZE THE FLOOD OF INCOMING MEMORIES.



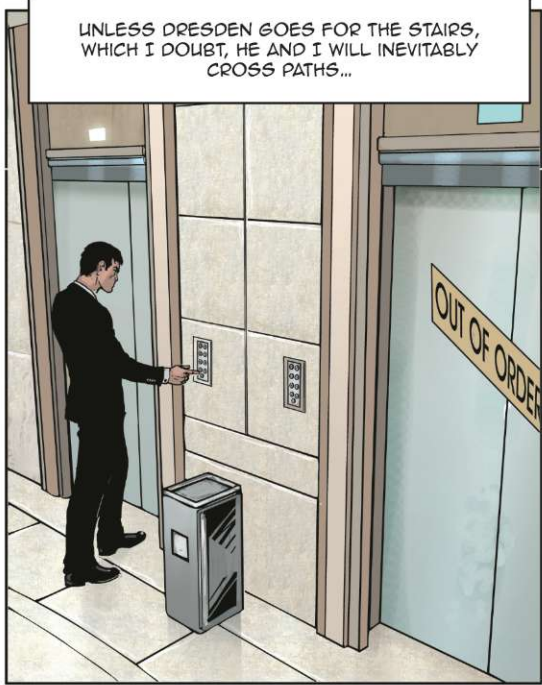
I DON'T HAVE TO WAIT LONG. MILES WARNS ME DRESDEN IS ON THE MOVE. HIS GOONS ARE KNOCKING AT HIS DOOR.



MY GUYS HAVE HACKED INTO THE HOTEL'S CAMERAS, WHICH START GLITCHING. A USEFUL PRECAUTION, IN CASE THERE'S A HITCH.



THEY'VE ALSO TAMPERED WITH THE BUTTONS IN ONE OF THE ELEVATORS.



UNLESS DRESDEN GOES FOR THE STAIRS, WHICH I DOUBT, HE AND I WILL INEVITABLY CROSS PATHS...



INTIMATELY, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.



SHIT!



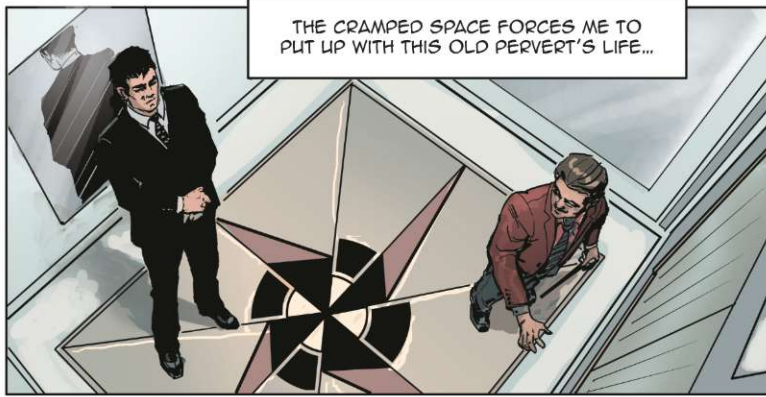
MAKE SURE NO ONE GETS ON WITH ME--THAT'S ALL I ASKED! IT WASN'T SO MUCH!



MILES IS YELLING AT HIS MAN. HE LETS ME HEAR IT, LOUDLY LAYING INTO HIM UNTIL MY EARDRUMS HURT. BUT IT'S TOO LATE.



A SPECIALIST IN ADULTERY IN HOTEL SETTINGS. I FEEL SICK...



THE CRAMPED SPACE FORCES ME TO PUT UP WITH THIS OLD PERVERT'S LIFE...



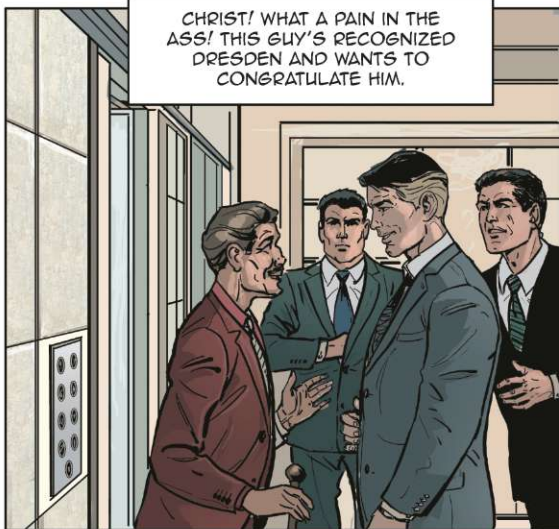
DON'T GET HUNG UP ON HIS THOUGHTS, JULIAN! FLUSH THEM AWAY LIKE THE SHIT THEY ARE.



I'M READY.



MILES INFORMS ME THAT DRESDEN AND HIS GOONS ARE OUTSIDE THE ELEVATOR.



CHRIST! WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS! THIS GUY'S RECOGNIZED DRESDEN AND WANTS TO CONGRATULATE HIM.



WHY ARE THEY SO NERVOUS? HE'S NO THREAT.

DOES DRESDEN FEEL THAT VULNERABLE?

C'MON, NATHANIEL...

GIVE ME YOUR SECRETS.

?!!

MY GOD! WH-WHAT'S... HAPPENING?

IT'S LIKE AN... OVERPOWERING...

WHAT--?!



MY SKULL'S FILLED WITH BUZZING.



I HEAR THE FIREWORKS OF THE ELEVATOR GIVING UP THE GHOST.



I KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS: I'M IN TROUBLE. MILES IS SWITCHING TO THE EMERGENCY PLAN. SEAL OFF THE FLOOR AND COME OUT GUNS BLAZING.



EVERYTHING GOES CRAZY.



THE GUNSHOTS JOLT ME, ENOUGH TO MAKE ME GET UP...



...AND JOIN THE PARTY.



I SHOOT LIKE IT'S THE MOST NATURAL THING. THE GRAVITY OF THE ACT ESCAPES ME.



NO, DRESDEN, WE SAW TO EVERYTHING. THE FLOOR'S LOCKED DOWN ELECTRONICALLY, INCLUDING THE FIRE STAIRS.



MILES YELLS FOR THE GOON TO DROP HIS GUN.



MIGHT AS WELL ASK A SOLDIER TO THINK FIRST, ACT LATER.



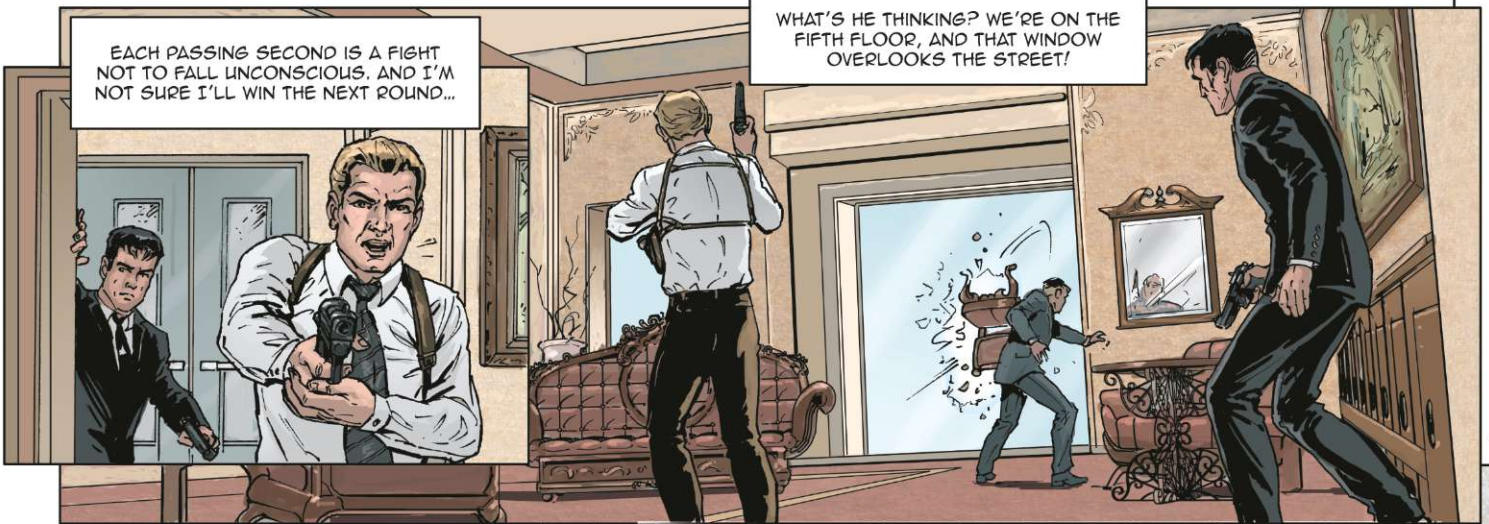
MOVE IT, JULIAN! YOU'RE GOING TO GET SHOT!



BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO FOCUS. WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?



I STRUGGLE WITH MYSELF WHILE MILES CLEANS HOUSE.



EACH PASSING SECOND IS A FIGHT NOT TO FALL UNCONSCIOUS. AND I'M NOT SURE I'LL WIN THE NEXT ROUND...

WHAT'S HE THINKING? WE'RE ON THE FIFTH FLOOR, AND THAT WINDOW OVERLOOKS THE STREET!



THAT LOOK!



HE'S DOING IT!



NO!!





THAT'S INSANE!  
HE DIDN'T EVEN  
HESITATE!



JESUS!  
I CAN HARDLY  
STAND UP!



IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE  
DRESDEN'S MEN GET THEIR  
ACT TOGETHER AND COME  
FOR US.



GOOD THING WE  
HAVE AN ESCAPE  
PLAN.



I TRY TO KEEP IT  
TOGETHER, BUT IT'S HARDER  
AND HARDER.



RAPPELLING  
DOESN'T HELP.



MILES IS YELLING FOR  
ME TO STAY WITH HIM.



I'D LIKE TO.

ALAS...



MY PRISMS... IT'S LIKE THEY'RE ALL COMING BACK TO THE SURFACE AT ONCE!

BUT I DON'T RECOGNIZE ANY OF THEM.



SORRY, LETHERCORE.

YOU'VE BEEN OUT FOR TWO HOURS. YOU'VE GOT A MASSIVE GOOSE EGG, BUT APART FROM THAT, YOU SEEM FINE.




URGH... I FEEL LIKE MY SKULL'S SPLITTING IN TWO.



WHERE ARE WE?

THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF UNTENANTED OFFICES IN DENVER. SOME ARE GOOD SAFEHOUSES.



HARMOND MADE A TELEVISED SPEECH, DECLARING THAT DRESOEN'S MURDERERS WILL BE PUNISHED.



WHERE'S MILES?

NEXT DOOR.

YOU HAVE TO GET OUT OF TOWN BEFORE IT'S COMPLETELY LOCKED DOWN.





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Translation: Edward Gauvin  
Editing: Dan Lockwood  
Lettering: Cromatik Ltd  
Original title: One – T1 : Rien qu'un souffle  
Originally published in French by LOMBARD in 2009.  
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**LE LOMBARD**









# ONE

WORLD PEACE HAS A PRICE: FREEDOM

The world is a better place. The violence that used to tear nations apart is coming to an end, and President Harmond's administration had a little something to do with that.

A former war hawk removed from power, Senator Pershing wants to uncover the backstory behind this shake-up of the international scene. To do so, he calls on agents of a specific sort: bloodcogs. Collateral damage from an experiment gone wrong, these people have developed telepathic abilities.

Julian Lethercore is one of them. Ever since he's had access to other people's most private thoughts, nothing surprises him anymore. But his gift can't prepare him for the unimaginable...