



ZIDROU HOMS

SHI

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2
THE DEMON
KING



ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THIS SYMBOL?



NO? WELL, GOOD FOR YOU.
BECAUSE IT'S THE SYMBOL OF DEATH!



ZIDROU HOMS

SHI

死



THE DEMON KING





"TO SING WITH HEART AND VOICE!"

Seven months had passed since I first met your mother at the Crystal Palace. The Universal Exposition had closed its doors in October...

"A resounding success that celebrates the glory of the British Empire as well as modern civilization" according to some. "An outrageous financial waste during this time of crisis" according to others.

Seven interminable months had passed during which the devil himself would have been hard put to say who had experienced the worse hell, your mother or me.




Because even if at the time a woman ruled over the world's greatest empire...

...the world still ruled over women!




YOUR MAJESTY!



How can I describe
to you the capital of
the British Empire...

...you who have never
wandered its sordid streets?



At that time,
London was a
demimondaine.


A glutton,
an ogress...



PSST!
MiLORD?

?!


...living off the pillage
of her distant colonies...




ERE, ME SISTER'S
FREEZIN' 'ER BUM OFF,
GUY'NOR. DONTCHA THINK
YOU COULD 'ELP WARM
'ER UP?

AS A GOOD
CHRISTIAN?

OW OLD
IS SHE, YER
CHILLY SISTER?



SHE'S OF AN
AGE THAT MAKES
IT EVEN BETTER,
GUY'NOR!



...and the misery
of her people.



A demimondaine, yes, that's the word! Slathered with make-up and full of airs and grace...



...but all rotten underneath!



To be born then was to enter a cruel lottery; either you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth...



...or else you ended up with something else in your backside.



SO YOU'VE HOLED YOURSELF UP IN YOUR LITTLE DEN ONCE AGAIN, MY DEAR FRIEND?



YOU'RE BEGINNING TO MAKE ME REGRET ALLOWING YOU TO MOVE IN HERE WITH YOUR REPERTORY OF WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY!



IT'S AS IF YOU WERE AVOIDING ME!



DON'T FORGET THAT I'VE INVITED YOUR PARENTS OVER TONIGHT. IT'S THEIR FIRST TIME, TRY TO BE PLEASANT ABOUT IT.

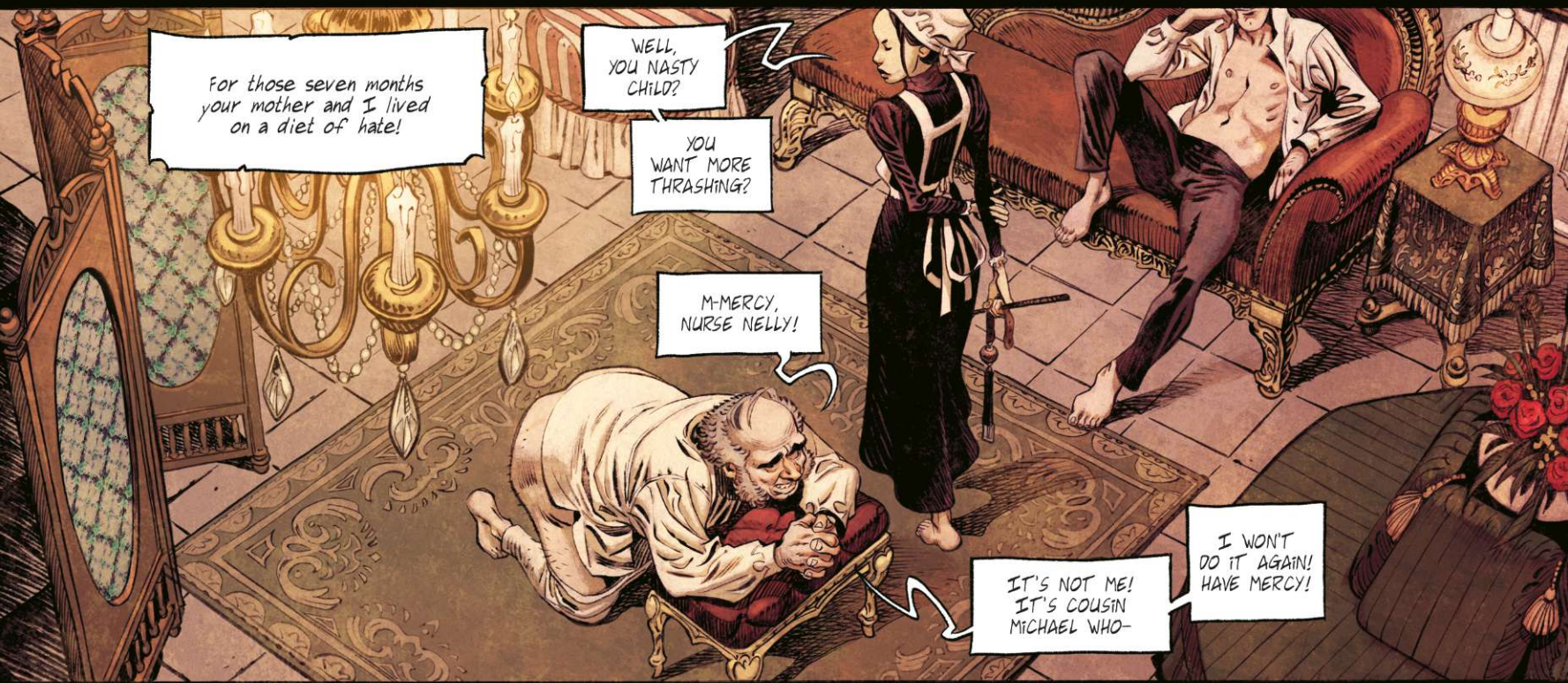


OTHERWISE I WILL HAVE TO PUNISH YOU LIKE I DID LAST TIME. YOU DON'T LIKE IT WHEN I PUNISH YOU...



...OR DO YOU?

Hate!



For those seven months your mother and I lived on a diet of hate!

WELL, YOU NASTY CHILD?

YOU WANT MORE THRASHING?

M-MERCY, NURSE NELLY!

IT'S NOT ME! IT'S COUSIN MICHAEL WHO-

I WON'T DO IT AGAIN! HAVE MERCY!



LIAR! YOU MAKE PROMISE BEFORE! YOU HEART FULL OF FILTH!

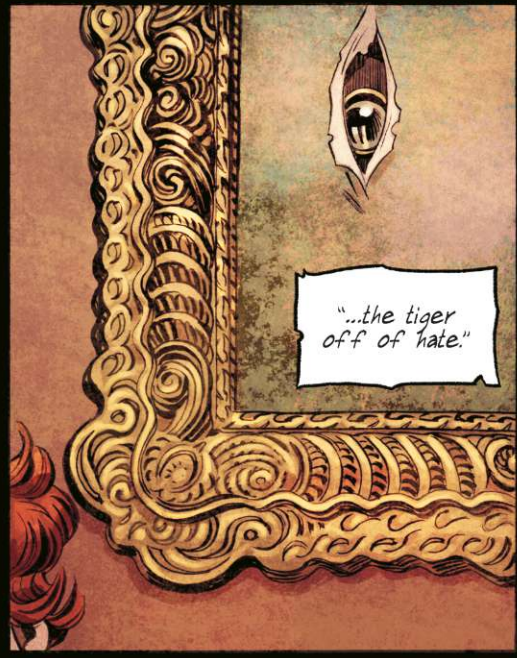


EVERY DAY MORE FIRMLY RESOLVED. AND EVERY DAY MORE MONSTROUS.



Maybe you know the proverb. "The cat lives of-f of mice..."


SLASH!




"...the tiger of-f of hate."



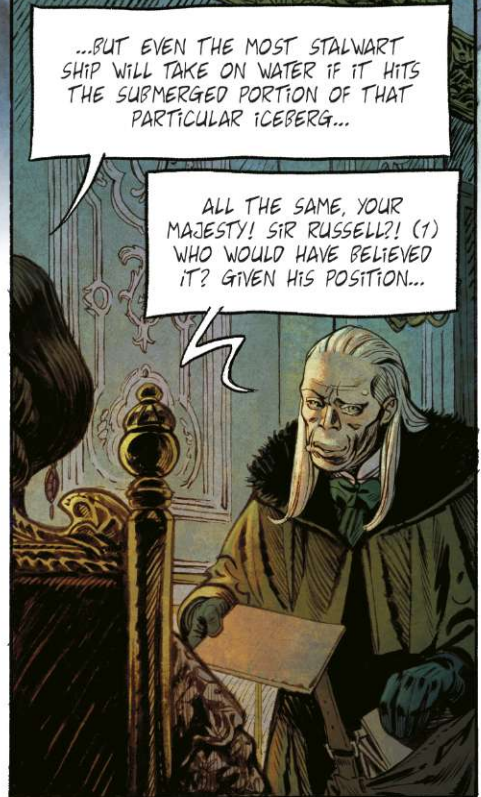
I MUST CONFESS, YOUR MAJESTY, THAT UNTIL NOW I HAVE PAID LITTLE ATTENTION TO THE RUMORS GOING AROUND CONCERNING THE ALCOVE...



...BUT THEN LADY FORTUNE DROPPED THIS IN MY HANDS!




IT TURNS OUT, MISTER KURB, THAT RUMORS ARE MERELY THE VISIBLE PORTION OF OUR MOST SORDID SECRETS...




...BUT EVEN THE MOST STALWART SHIP WILL TAKE ON WATER IF IT HITS THE SUBMERGED PORTION OF THAT PARTICULAR ICEBERG...

ALL THE SAME, YOUR MAJESTY! SIR RUSSELL? (1) WHO WOULD HAVE BELIEVED IT? GIVEN HIS POSITION...



IF MY INFORMANTS ARE TO BE BELIEVED, HOWEVER, YOUR PRIME MINISTER HAS NOT YET BEEN THE VICTIM OF ANY KIND OF BLACKMAIL.



MY MOTHER USED TO SAY THAT THE LONGER THE BULLDOG WAITS TO POUNCE, THE DEEPER HE BITES.

IT'S PRECISELY HIS POSITION THAT MADE HIM BELIEVE HE COULD GET AWAY WITH WHAT I SEE HERE.



INDEED, THAT MAKES THIS ALL THE MORE TROUBLING.

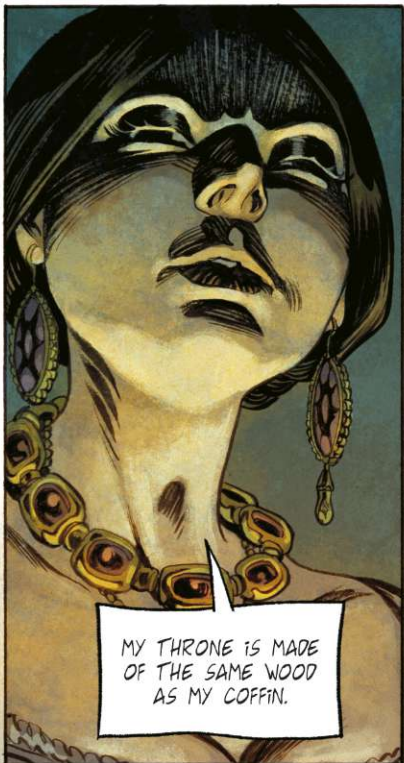
EDWARD OXFORD. JOHN FRANCIS. WILLIAM HAMILTON... DO THESE NAMES MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

(1) John Russell served a first term as Prime Minister under Queen Victoria from June 1846 to February 1852.



OF COURSE! THOSE ARE THE THREE SCOUNDRELS WHO EACH ATTEMPTED TO ASSASSINATE YOU.

TERRIBLE SHOTS, ALL THREE. BUT EXCELLENT TEACHERS. BECAUSE, YOU SEE, THEY TAUGHT ME AN ESSENTIAL TRUTH...



MY THRONE IS MADE OF THE SAME WOOD AS MY COFFIN.



SOMETHING IS BREWING, MISTER KURB. SOMETHING AT ONCE TERRIBLY AMBITIOUS... AND SINISTER IN THE MOST MEDIOCRE WAY.

AS ALWAYS, IN THIS COUNTRY.



YOU SHALL FIND OUT WHAT, AND ABOVE ALL... WHO IT IS!



NOW, IF YOU WILL EXCUSE ME, I AM NEEDED BY THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL MY SUBJECTS...

...MY SEVEN CHILDREN!





P-PATRIOT! (1)

M-MY KNEE. I...
I'VE BEEN SHOT IN
THE KNEE... I NEED
A DOCTOR. I-



A DOCTOR? WHATEVER
FOR, FRIEND? YOU'LL
BE CURED IN TWO
SECONDS FLAT!



...A VERITABLE
MIRACLE!

PANG!

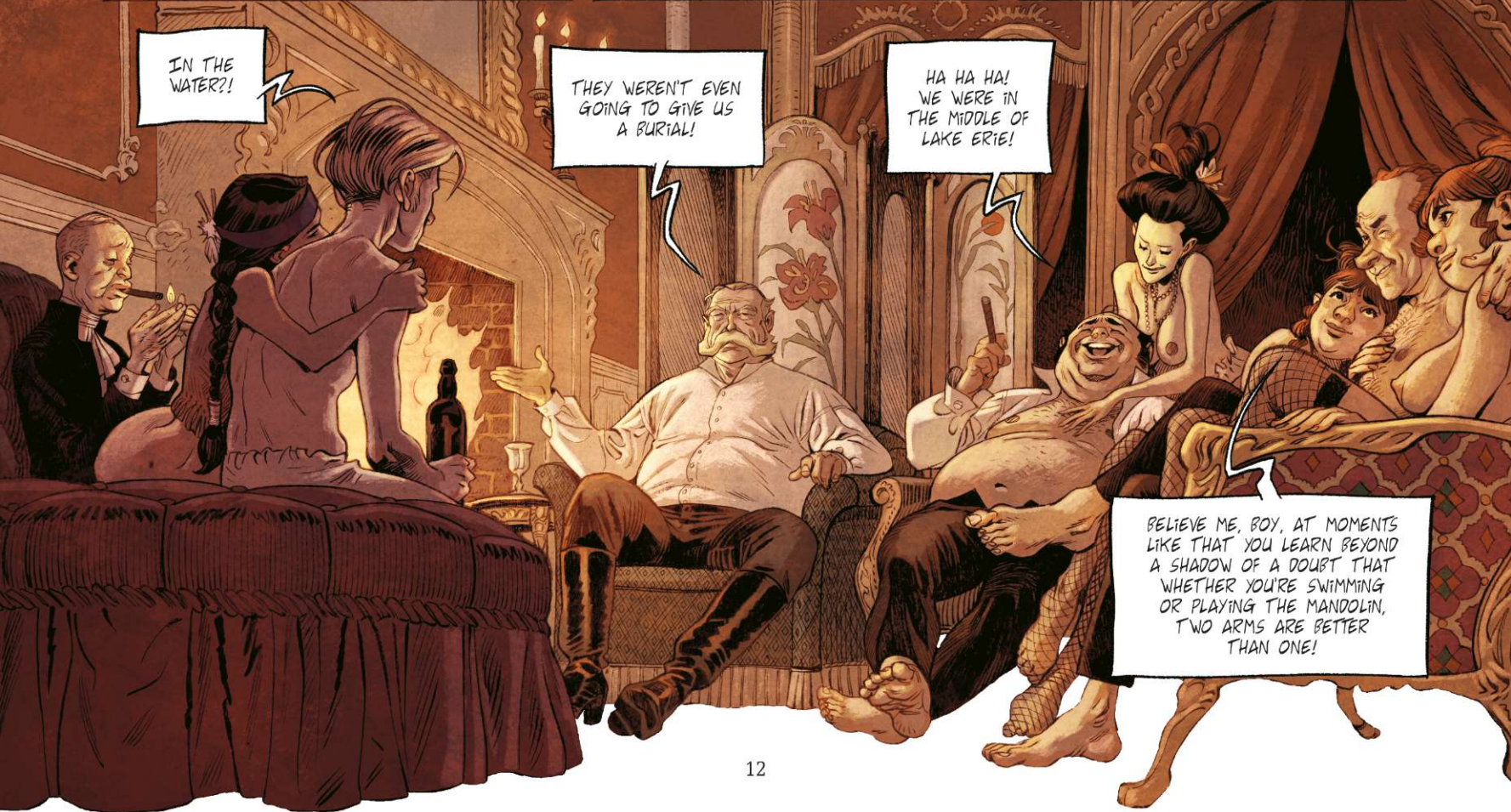
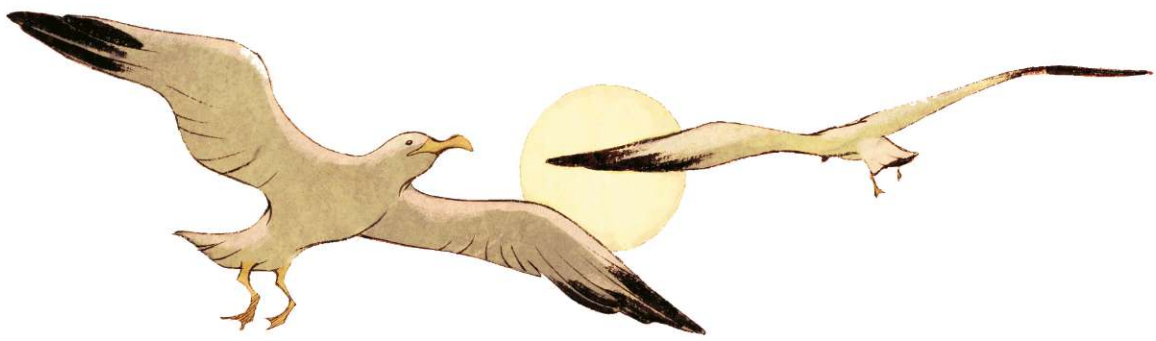
GNNN!
MAMA! ...
MAMA!

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE,
CAP'N! IT'S REALLY
NOT THE TIME TO
BE CALLING FOR
YOUR MOTHER!

THE INSURGENTS ARE CLOSING
IN! AND THEY SURE AREN'T
GOING TO OFFER YOU A TIT!

(1) "Patriot" or "insurgent": nickname given by the British to American revolutionary soldiers.





IN THE WATER?!

THEY WEREN'T EVEN GOING TO GIVE US A BURIAL!

HA HA HA! WE WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF LAKE ERIE!

BELIEVE ME, BOY, AT MOMENTS LIKE THAT YOU LEARN BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT THAT WHETHER YOU'RE SWIMMING OR PLAYING THE MANDOLIN, TWO ARMS ARE BETTER THAN ONE!

WE FOUND OURSELVES ON THE LAKESHORE, MORE DEAD THAN ALIVE, FROZEN STIFF. GRAVELY WOUNDED.

HUMILIATED, ABOVE ALL...



WITHOUT THE ERIE INDIANS, WE NEVER WOULD HAVE SURVIVED. THEY BANDAGED US, FED US...

...TO MAKE US USEFUL TO THEM AS SLAVES, LATER!



BESIDES MYSELF, THERE WAS WARREN'S FATHER...

...RICHARD AND JOSIAH WHO ARE HERE WITH US, AS WELL AS A CERTAIN CARDIFF WHO DIDN'T RECOVER FROM HIS WOUNDS.

AND OF COURSE YOUR GODFATHER, CHARLES ROWAN.

COMMISSIONER ROWAN, THAT IS!

YOUR COMRADES-AT-ARMS HAVE BEGUN WITHOUT YOU. THEY ARE UP THERE IN YOUR... "WIGWAM," AS YOU LIKE TO CALL IT.

EX-COMMISSIONER, MUSE.

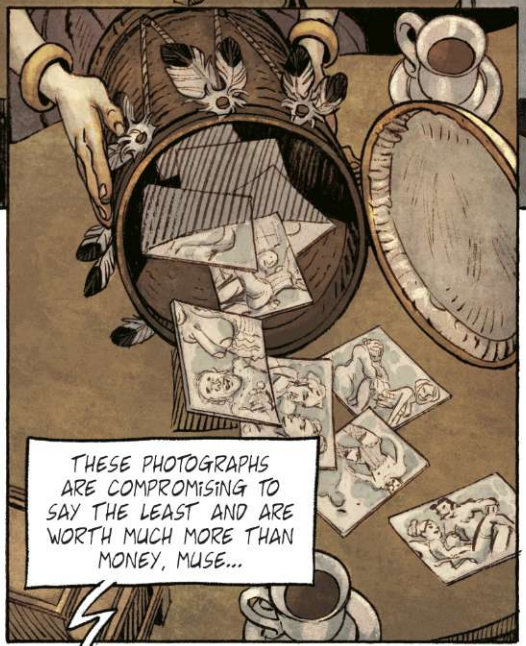
EX!

AND YOUR HEALTH, EX-COMMISSIONER?



ALSO IN THE PAST TENSE, I'M AFRAID.

WHAT A MARVELOUS INVENTION PHOTOGRAPHY IS! INTIMATE MOMENTS REVEALED TO EYES THE WORLD OVER... IN EXCHANGE FOR A FEW THOUSAND POUNDS STERLING, OF COURSE!



THESE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE COMPROMISING TO SAY THE LEAST AND ARE WORTH MUCH MORE THAN MONEY, MUSE...



BUT LET'S TALK ABOUT... ART, SHALL WE?



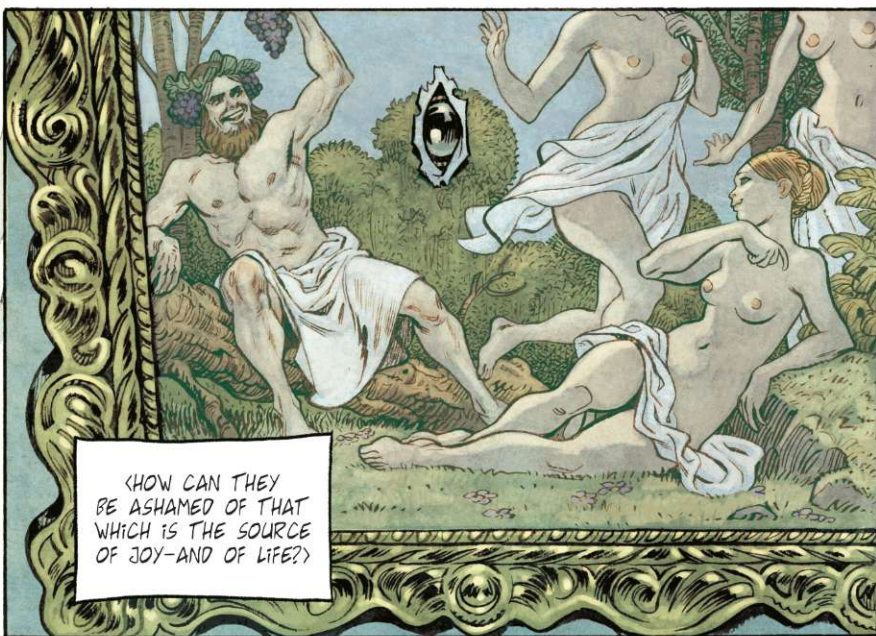
THESE DAGUERREOTYPES REPRESENT POWER!



トモジ、あなたに再び会わせてくれた神々に感謝するわ! (1)



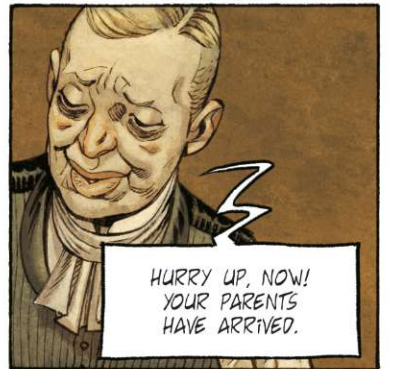
(1) Bless the gods that have brought us back together, Tomoji!



The bracketed dialogue is in Japanese.



YOU'RE STILL NOT READY, DEAR FRIEND?



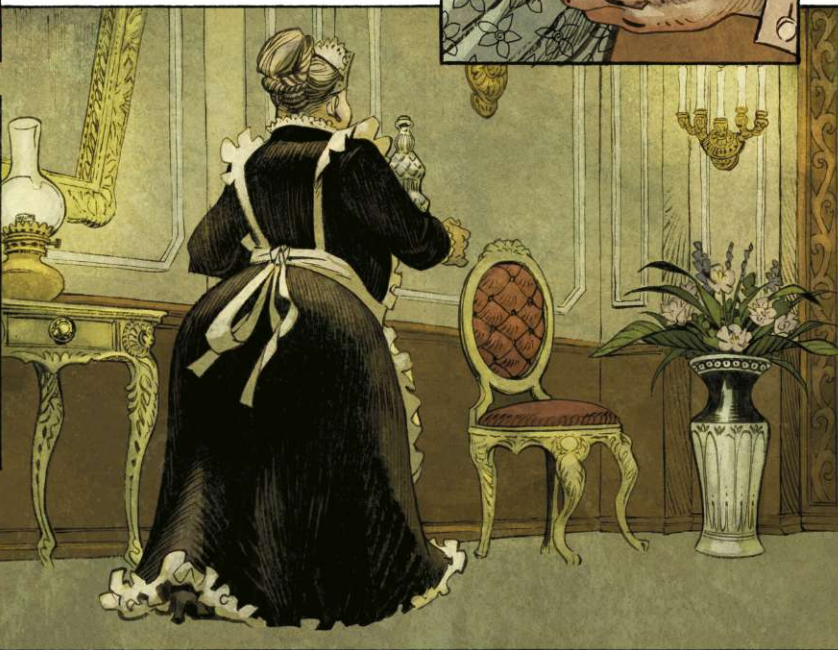
HURRY UP, NOW! YOUR PARENTS HAVE ARRIVED.



COME NOW! LET ME HELP...



AH LA LA! DO YOU EVER THINK WHERE YOU WOULD BE WITHOUT ME?



THE MEAL WAS ABSOLUTELY DIVINE, REVEREND GREEN...



...OR SHOULD I CALL YOU "STEPSON"?

"DIVINE" IS THE WORD, MY DEAR CAMILLA! AND THIS MALAGA WINE IS THE RIBBON AROUND THIS MEAL WE HAVE JUST BEEN SERVED BY OUR LOVEBIRDS.



WOULD YOU LIKE A BIT MORE OF MY... "RIBBON," LORD WINTERFIELD?

I DON'T KNOW IF MY FAMILY DOCTOR WOULD APPROVE...

LOOK UPON ME ONLY AS YOUR BROTHER, OCTAVIUS. THE DOCTOR LEFT HIS BAG AT THE OFFICE.



REFILL MY GLASS, TOO, BACCHUS, OLD FRIEND! MINE, STRANGELY, APPEARS TO HAVE A LEAK!



WILLIAM, MY SON, IN ALL THINGS A GENTLEMAN MUST REMAIN THE MASTER OF HIS DESIRES.

AND WHOEVER GAVE YOU THE IDEA THAT I WISHED TO BEHAVE LIKE A GENTLEMAN, PATER?



OCTAVIUS! YOUR HEART...

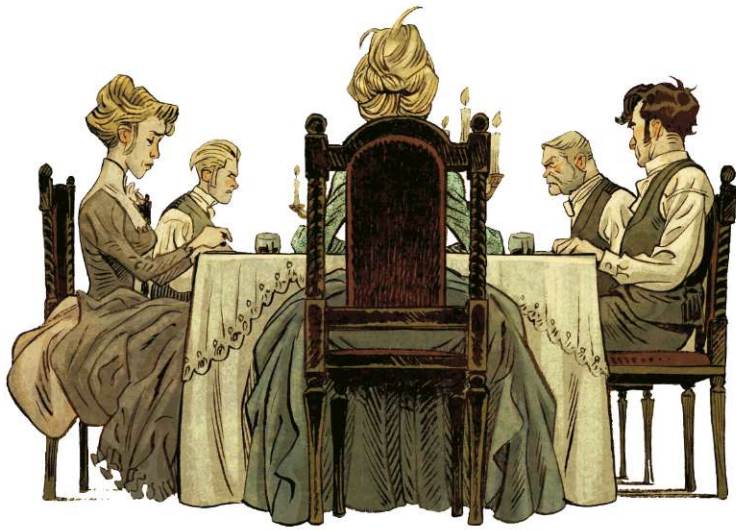
PUT THAT GLASS DOWN!

WHEN IT IS EMPTY. AND I, FULL!



PUT THAT GLASS DOWN!





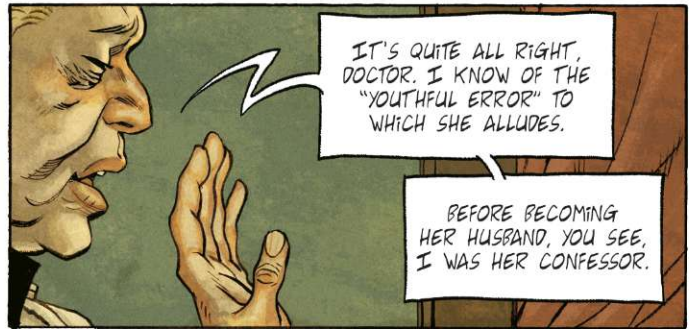
AHEM! ...WELL THEN, MY GIRL, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE US A LITTLE GOOD NEWS?



THE LAST TIME I GAVE YOU "GOOD NEWS" OF THAT SORT, MOTHER, I SEEM TO RECALL THAT IT HARDLY SEEMED TO PLEASE YOU.



COME NOW, JAY! IS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO STIR UP THE PAST? PERHAPS YOUR HUSBAND DOESN'T CARE TO-



IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT, DOCTOR. I KNOW OF THE "YOUTHFUL ERROR" TO WHICH SHE ALLUDES.

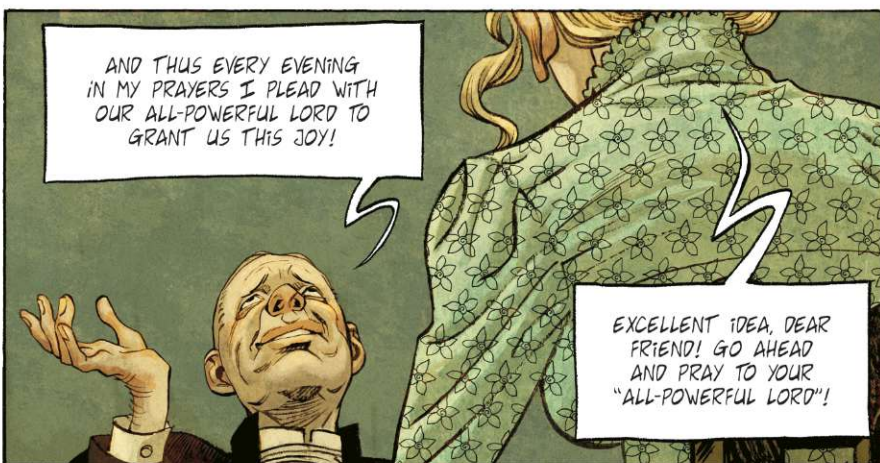
BEFORE BECOMING HER HUSBAND, YOU SEE, I WAS HER CONFESSOR.



I WON'T HIDE THE FACT THAT CONTINUING THE GREEN FAMILY LEGACY IS ONE OF MY MOST PRECIOUS DESIRES...



WHAT MAN DOESN'T DREAM OF BECOMING A FATHER?



AND THUS EVERY EVENING IN MY PRAYERS I PLEAD WITH OUR ALL-POWERFUL LORD TO GRANT US THIS JOY!

EXCELLENT IDEA, DEAR FRIEND! GO AHEAD AND PRAY TO YOUR "ALL-POWERFUL LORD"!



YOU WILL NEED ALL OF THE POTENCY HE CAN MUSTER TO COMPENSATE FOR YOUR SHORTCOMINGS IN THAT DEPARTMENT!

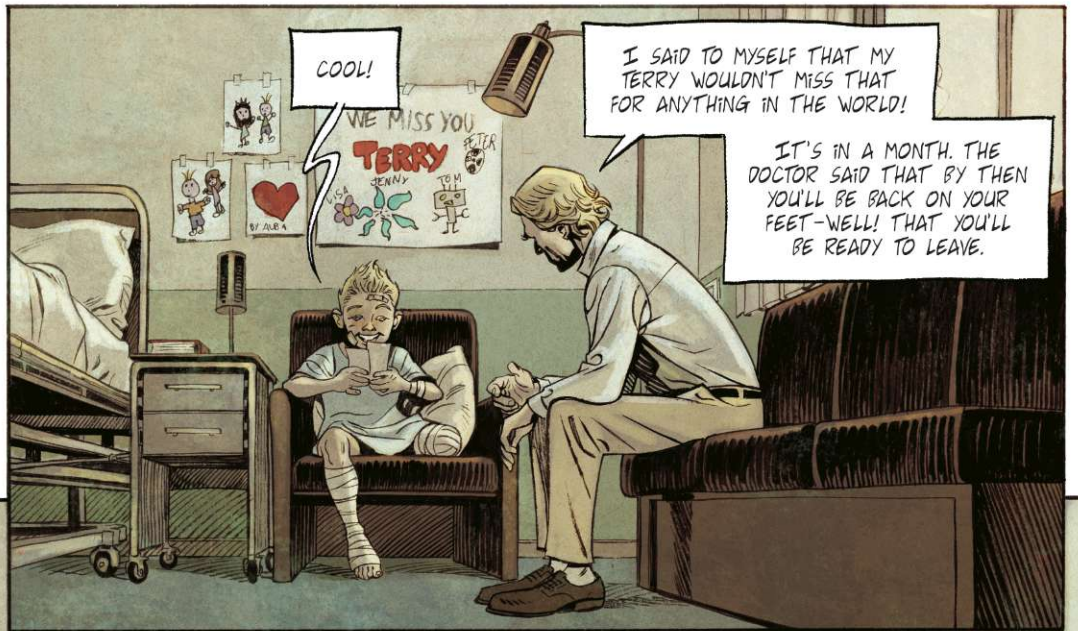


M... MERRY CHRISTMAS!



A PRESENT!

CHELSEA V. MAN CITY.



COOL!

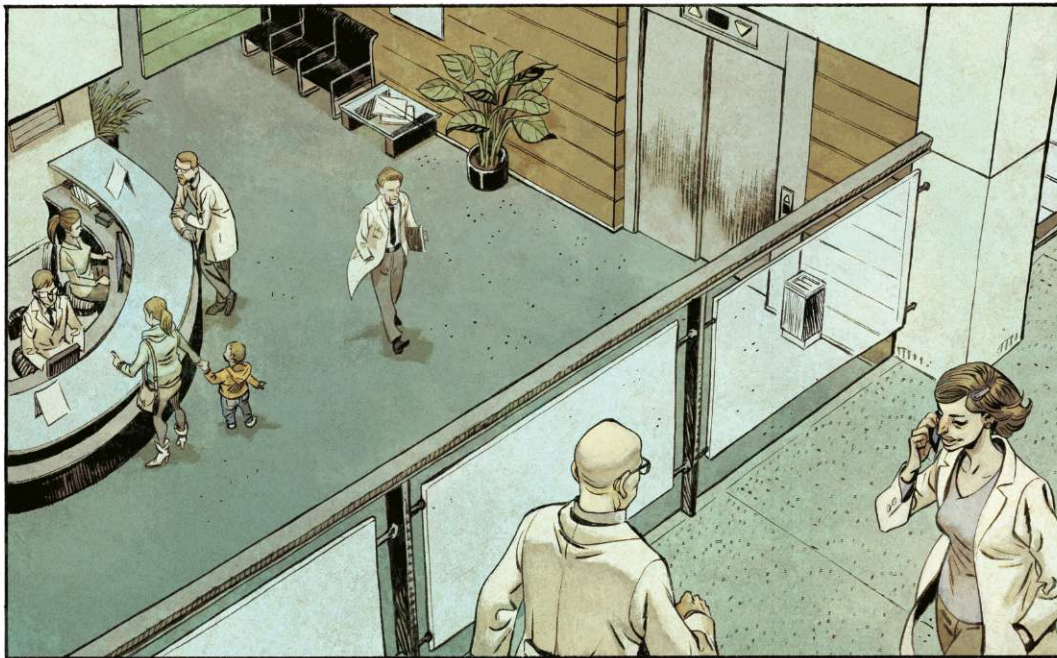
WE MISS YOU TERRY JENNY TOM BY ALBA

I SAID TO MYSELF THAT MY TERRY WOULDN'T MISS THAT FOR ANYTHING IN THE WORLD!

IT'S IN A MONTH. THE DOCTOR SAID THAT BY THEN YOU'LL BE BACK ON YOUR FEET - WELL! THAT YOU'LL BE READY TO LEAVE.



WITH A BIT OF LUCK, YOU MAY EVEN GET TO WATCH THE GAME FROM THE FIELD!



(1) The arms company run by Lionel Barrington.





...ONCE AGAIN, I'M TERRIBLY SORRY FOR THIS UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT!



LET'S NOT MAKE MORE OUT OF IT THAN IT DESERVES, REVEREND!

MY NIECE WAS DRUNK. WE ALL ARE.

AFTER ALL, CHRISTMAS IS ONLY THREE DAYS AWAY. WE MUST LET OURSELVES BE GUIDED BY THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT.



WELL!



I DON'T KNOW WHICH I SHOULD PUNISH MORE SEVERELY: THE INSULT OR THE BLASPHEMY!



THE HOUR OF THE FINAL PUNISHMENT ALWAYS ARRIVES SOONER THAN ONE THINKS, JENNIFER!



TURN AROUND!



TURN AROUND!

NO!

HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL YOU THAT THE ONLY THING I WANT TO HEAR OUT OF YOUR PRETTY MOUTH IS THE WORD "MORE"?



MY HAIR!! STOP! I-

I'M GOING TO POUR THAT WITCH'S BREW DOWN YOUR THROAT!



CHLAK!!





BASTARD!

AND FOR YOUR INFORMATION, THIS IS NOT A "WITCH'S BREW"...



...IT'S MERCURY HEATED UP TO 170 DEGREES!

AAAAH! DAMN YOU!

OH MY GOD! WHAT HAVE I DONE?

DAMN YOU!



WHAT HAPPENED?

I DUNNO, REALLY. I CAME TO DELIVER TH' COAL. THEN I SEES THE GREENS'S GOVERNESS ALL IN A STATE, AS IF SHE'S JUST SEEN NAPOLEON BONAPARTE 'IMSELF LANDING AT DOVER, YOU KNOW WHA' I MEAN?



SEEMS THE GOOD REVEREND'S YOUNG WIFE HAD A FIT OF SUDDEN 'YSTERIA AN' THREW SOME SOR' OF ACID IN 'IS FACE.

HORRORS!

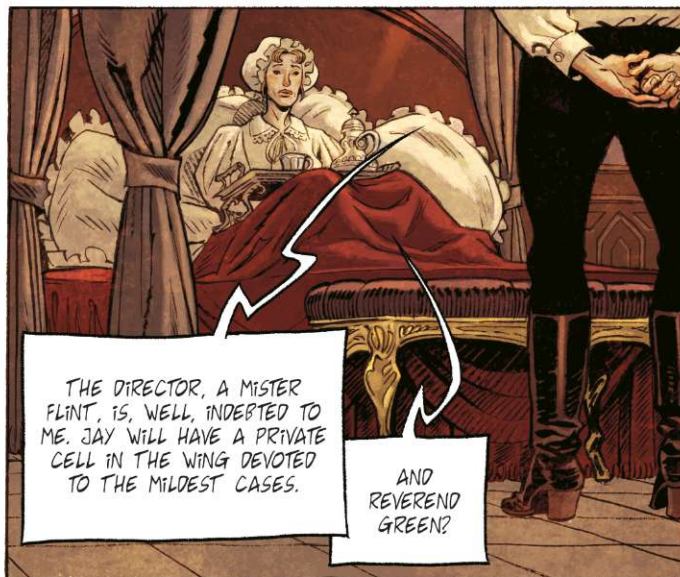


WHERE ARE THE PEELERS TAKING HER?

NOT TO A SPA IN BATH, THAT'S FOR SURE!

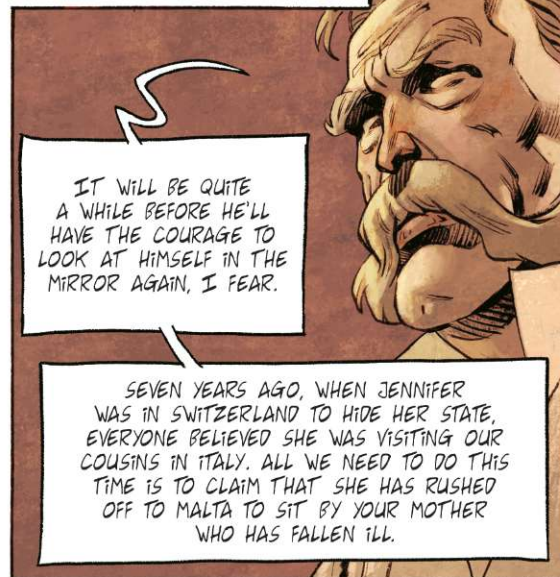


TO HITCHBOROUGH ASYLUM?



THE DIRECTOR, A MISTER FLINT, IS, WELL, INDEBTED TO ME. JAY WILL HAVE A PRIVATE CELL IN THE WING DEVOTED TO THE MILDEST CASES.

AND REVEREND GREEN?




IT WILL BE QUITE A WHILE BEFORE HE'LL HAVE THE COURAGE TO LOOK AT HIMSELF IN THE MIRROR AGAIN, I FEAR.


SEVEN YEARS AGO, WHEN JENNIFER WAS IN SWITZERLAND TO HIDE HER STATE, EVERYONE BELIEVED SHE WAS VISITING OUR COUSINS IN ITALY. ALL WE NEED TO DO THIS TIME IS TO CLAIM THAT SHE HAS RUSHED OFF TO MALTA TO SIT BY YOUR MOTHER WHO HAS FALLEN ILL.



"IT MATTERS LITTLE WHICH THREADS ARE USED TO WEAVE A LIE AS LONG AS IT COVERS UP THE RAW NAKEDNESS OF THE SCANDAL..."



...RIGHT IN HIS FACE! ACID OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. ON HIS WAY TO THE HOSPITAL THE REVEREND GREEN WAS SQUEALING LIKE A PIGLET THAT'D JUST BEEN SNATCHED FROM THE SOW'S TEAT!



DOCTOR SMITH TOLD ME ABOUT IT. YOU KNOW, THE ONE WHO ALWAYS COMES TO GIVE ME A "COURTESY CALL" WHILE HE'S ON DUTY... BEFORE HE HEADS HOME TO HIS LAWFULLY BETROTHED.



WHERE IS... REVEREND WIFE?



IN THE ASYLUM, OF COURSE!




REVEREND GREEN? ISN'T HE THE ONE WHO'S BEEN VISITING THE "WIGWAM" WITH THE BOSSES THESE LAST FEW MONTHS?


THE ONE WITH... STRANGE TASTES?

AND HOW MANY CLIENTS DO YOU KNOW THAT HAVE NORMAL ONES?


HA HA HA!



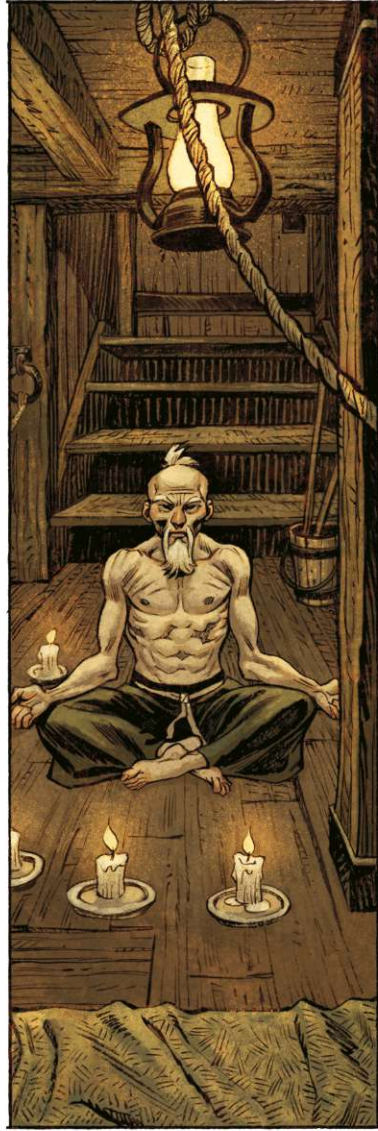
IT'S HARD TO SNEAK OUT MORE THAN THAT WITH OUT MY MISTRESS NOTICING.



MAYBE MUSE DIDN'T EAT ENOUGH SOUP AS A LITTLE GIRL BUT IT CERTAINLY DIDN'T STUNT HER SMARTS!



NOW TELL ME ABOUT THESE BIGWIGS WHO MEET AT THE ALCOVE-AND THE ERIE WOMAN-THIS... CHINOWE-WHO SEEMS TO BE RESERVED FOR THEM EXCLUSIVELY...



SO SORRY I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO VISIT YOU SOONER. IT'S JUST THAT, YOU SEE, I'M ORGANIZING A LITTLE "SHOW" TONIGHT WHICH IS BOUND TO CAUSE A SENSATION IN THE WORLD OF CHESS... AND ALSO AMONG MY ALIENIEST COLLEAGUES!

AM I TO BELIEVE THAT YOU ENJOYED YOUR LAST VISIT SO MUCH THAT YOU DID EVERYTHING IN YOUR POWER TO GET BACK IN, MRS. GREEN?

OR SHOULD I CALL YOU "MISS BULLDOG"?!

YOU'LL HAVE THAT SMIRK WIPED OFF YOUR FACE WHEN MY UNCLE GETS ME OUT OF HERE, DOCTOR FLINT!

OH, I WOULDN'T GET YOUR HOPES UP REGARDING YOUR UNCLE IF I WERE YOU...

...HE'S THE ONE WHO SIGNED YOUR INTERNMENT PAPERS!

...O-OCTAVIUS WANTED ABOVE ALL TO AVOID ANY HINT OF SCANDAL HE DECIDED IT WOULD BE BETTER THAN LEAVING HER AMONG THE COMMON PRISON POPULATION: CRIMINALS, PROSTITUTES, BABY KILLERS...

...SO, BEING A GOOD LITTLE LAP DOG FOR YOUR BIG BROTHER, YOU SACRIFICED MY GIRL ON THE ALTAR OF CONVENIENCE!!

REMEMBER, CAMILLA, JENNIFER IS A BIT MINE TOO!

NO, TREVOR, NO!

IN THIS WHOLE DRAMA YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED MORE THAN THE PITIFUL LITTLE BACKGROUND ROLE OF A "HOLY SPIRIT!"



WELCOME TO THE ALCOVE AND TO ITS SECRETS, MY DEAR FRIEND OF THE NIGHT AND ITS FORBIDDEN PLEASURES!



IS "SHE" HERE?

KITA IS RESERVED FOR YOU FOR THE ENTIRE EVENING, GENERAL.

BONFON, WOULD YOU PLEASE ESCORT THE GENERAL TO THE "CIPANGU" ROOM?



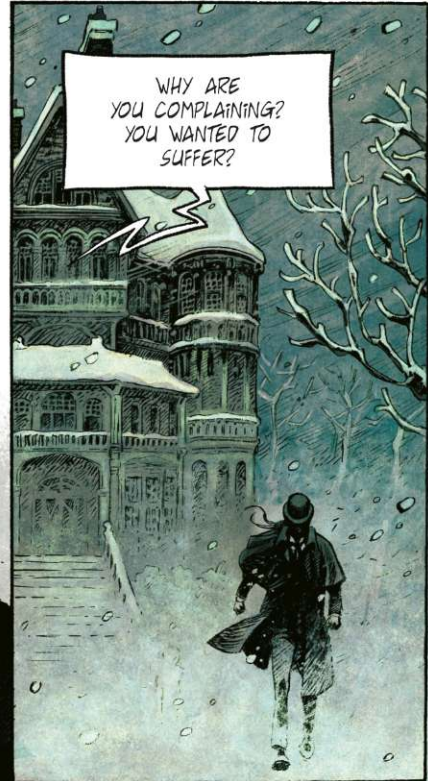
I KNOW THE WAY FROM HERE. THANK YOU, BONFON.



I HOPE I DIDN'T MAKE YOU WAIT TOO LONG, MY SWEET- ???



DISAPPOINTED?



WHY ARE YOU COMPLAINING? YOU WANTED TO SUFFER?



WELL, THEN: I'LL MAKE YOU SUFFER!



CALCULATING THE AMOUNT OF YOUR BOMBS IT WOULD TAKE TO RAZE THE CAPITAL, SIR BARRINGTON?



SPARE ME YOUR SIMPLISTIC, ANTIMILITARY SARCASM, WOULD YOU, MISS SHANKAR?

THE SURGEON WHO OPERATED ON MY SON ALREADY GAVE ME A FULL DOSE THIS MORNING...



IS THE M.I.'S INVESTIGATION MOVING FORWARD AT LAST? I HAD A VISIT THIS MORNING FROM THE SCOTLAND YARD INSPECTOR THEY PUT IN CHARGE, A CERTAIN ASCOT. YOU KNOW HIM?

WOULDN'T PUT MUCH STOCK IN ASCOT IF I WERE YOU. HE'S AN OAF, UNWORTHY OF HIS FAMILY NAME.



CUP OF TEA? IN WEATHER LIKE THIS, IT'S THE ONE CONSOLATION OF BEING BORN ENGLISH AND NOT JAMAICAN.

NO, THANK YOU. I ALREADY HAD SOME COFFEE.



I'VE MANAGED TO GATHER A DECENT PILE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE TWO WOMEN YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THE OTHER DAY... THESE FAMOUS... "SHI" WHO MADE THE BRITISH EMPIRE TREMBLE 150 YEARS AGO.



SECRET LODGES, SEX, CONSPIRACIES, FAMILY SECRETS... RIGHT UP TO THE MACHIAVELLIAN ROLE PLAYED BY QUEEN VICTORIA HERSELF!

HOW IS IT THAT HOLLYWOOD STILL HASN'T GOTTEN ITS HANDS ON THIS STORY, I WONDER?



BUT GOOD LUCK TRYING TO UNTANGLE THE TRUTH FROM THE FANTASY IN THIS SERIAL STRAIGHT OUT OF DUMAS!

FANTASY OR NOT, THESE TWO WOMEN HAVE DISCIPLES. THESE DAYS, "SHI" IS A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH.

TO GIVE JUST ONE EXAMPLE, REMEMBER THE "OJO POR OJO" MATTER IN THE 80S.

THE TARGETS OF REVENGE WERE MILITARY DOCTORS IMPLICATED IN THE FALSE VACCINE SCANDAL IN GUATEMALA BETWEEN 1946 AND 1948.

DURING THAT PERIOD, FALSE POLIO VACCINES WERE USED TO INOCULATE DOZENS OF GUATEMALAN BABIES WITH SYPHILIS AND GONORRHEA- AMONG OTHER DELIGHTS. (1)



(1) True event.

THE CENTRAL AMERICAN "SHI" TOOK THEIR REVENGE BY INJECTING THE GRANDCHILDREN OF THE US MILITARY DOCTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATROCITY WITH THE SAME INFAMOUS COCKTAIL: "AN EYE FOR AN EYE..."



...OR IN THIS CASE, MORE LIKE, "SORROW FOR SORROW, CHILD FOR CHILD!"



S.V.P.P.B. IS THE TARGET OF ONE OF THE "SHI'S" ACTION CELLS. WE HAVE DISCOVERED THAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR A TOTAL OF SEVEN "H-TOUCH" TYPE ANTIPERSONNEL MINES WERE STOLEN FROM ONE OF YOUR STORAGE FACILITIES IN BELGIUM.



ER... THAT'S TRUE. WE ARE UNDERTAKING AN INTERNAL INVESTIGATION TO SEE IF-



IF WE WANT TO AVOID SEEING ANY MORE VICTIMS, SIR BARRINGTON, I NEED YOU TO GIVE ME THE ADDRESSES FOR THE MANAGERS OF ALL OF YOUR INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATES SO THAT WE CAN ENSURE THEIR SAFETY AND THAT OF THEIR LOVED ONES!



VERY WELL! I'LL HAVE MY SECRETARY SEND YOU ALL THE RELEVANT INFORMATION.



DO YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN, INSPECTOR?

A GIRL.

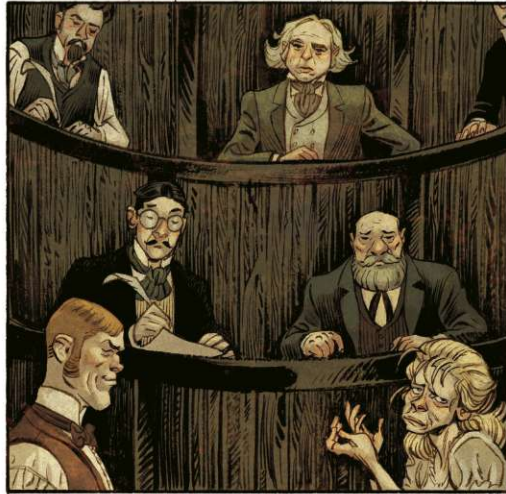
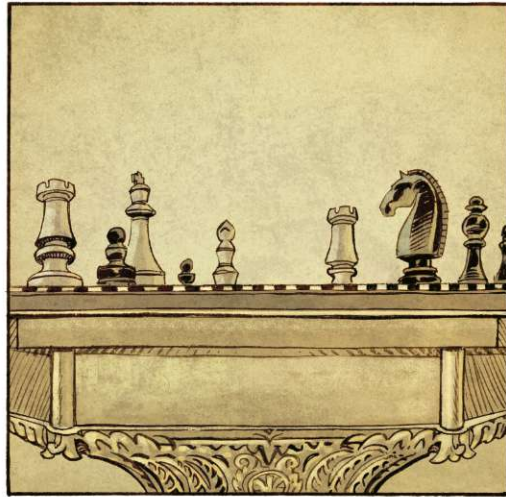
AN ONLY CHILD. A BIT OLDER THAN YOUR SON.



IN THAT CASE YOU CAN EASILY UNDERSTAND WHY I'LL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO MAKE SURE THESE... "AVENGING MOTHERS" NEVER STRIKE AGAIN!

I'VE NEVER DOUBTED IT, SIR.





CHECKMATE!



THE...
THE "BISHOP'S
RITORNELLO!"

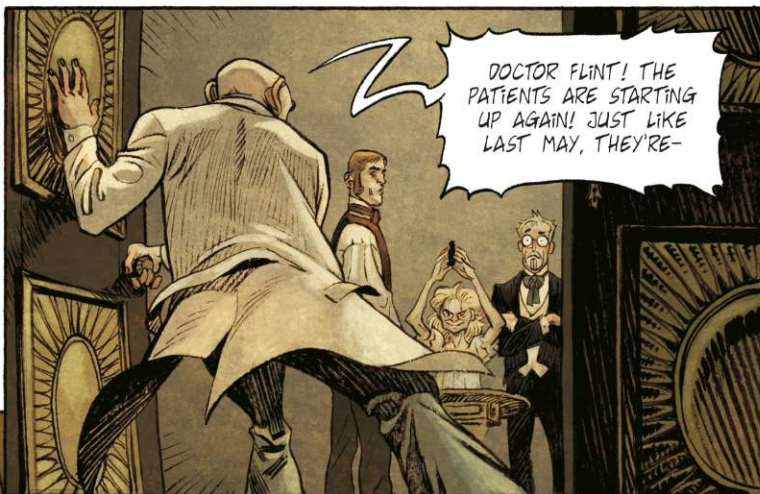


THE SAME
MASKED ATTACK
USED BY KERMUR DE
LEGAL IN BERLIN
IN 1788!?

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DEAR COLLEAGUES
FROM THE ENGLISH CHESS FEDERATION, AFTER
FIVE GAMES, I AM NOW CONFIDENT IN AFFIRMING
THE IMPROBABLE HYPOTHESIS ADVANCED
BY PROFESSOR FLINT...

...THIS POOR WOMAN IS INDEED
POSSESSED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE
FRENCHMAN KERMUR DE LEGAL, ONE
OF THE GREATEST GENIUSES IN
THE HISTORY OF CHESS!







...OF COURSE I WANT TO GO TO THE CHARITY CHRISTMAS CONCERT, MY DEAR. IT'S JUST THAT... I WAS WONDERING WHETHER... MAYBE THIS WOULDN'T BE THE BEST TIME FOR US TO APPEAR IN PUBLIC.



LOOK THEM IN THE EYE, DEAR!



IT'S THE RULE FOR ANY SOLDIER: LOOK YOUR ENEMY IN THE EYE. AND WHAT MORE FEARSOME ENEMY THAN A SCANDAL, HA HA-



HA?!



OCTAVIUS?

W-WHAT'S THIS YOU'RE TELLING ME NOW, UNCLE TREVOR?

THE FACTS, WILLIAM: THERE WAS A RIOT AT THE HITCHBOROUGH ASYLUM. YOUR SISTER, JAY, ESCAPED.

I WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE FOR THE ROYAL OPERA WHEN THEY CAME TO--



NOOOOOOO!



OCTAVIUS!!





HE... HE ALREADY HAD AN ATTACK LAST SPRING. ALL THE AGGRAVATION OF THESE LAST MONTHS HAS WORN HIM DOWN.



GOOD GOD!! HIS P-PRIVATES!?



BUT IF HE DOESN'T HAVE A...?



THEN HOW COULD HE HAVE...?

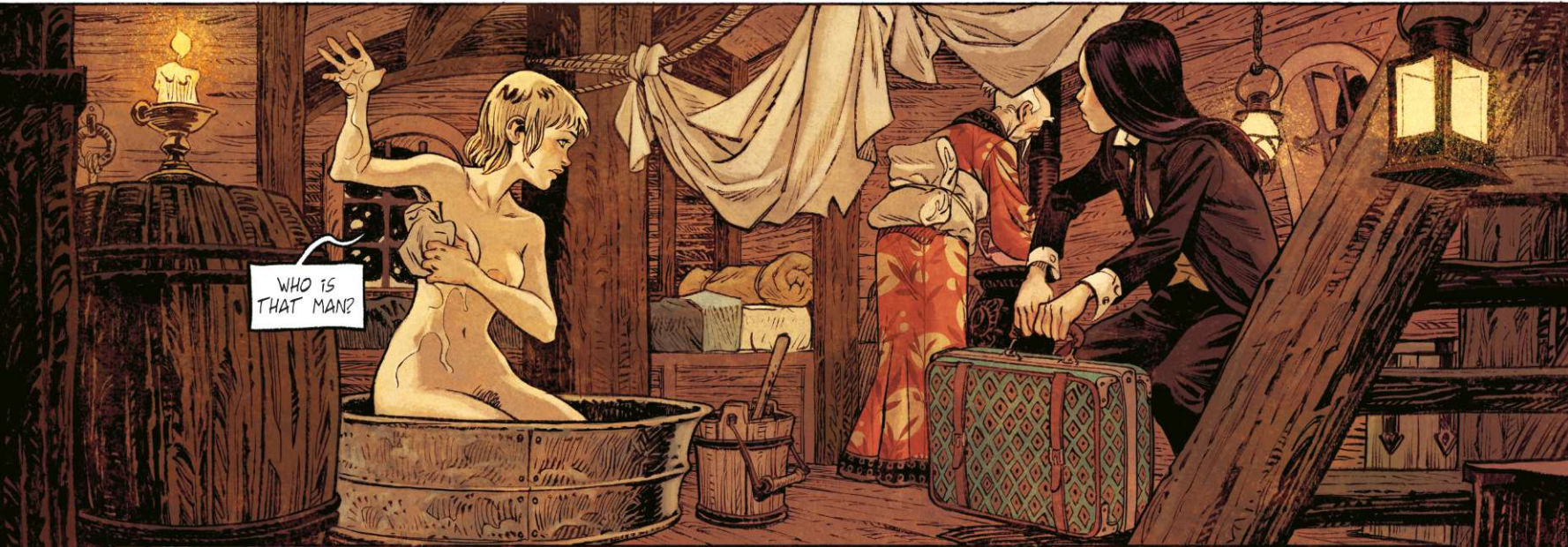


THERE ARE TWO OF THEM!

BE ESPECIALLY WARY OF THE ORIENTAL! SHE'S A FORMER PATIENT OF OURS.



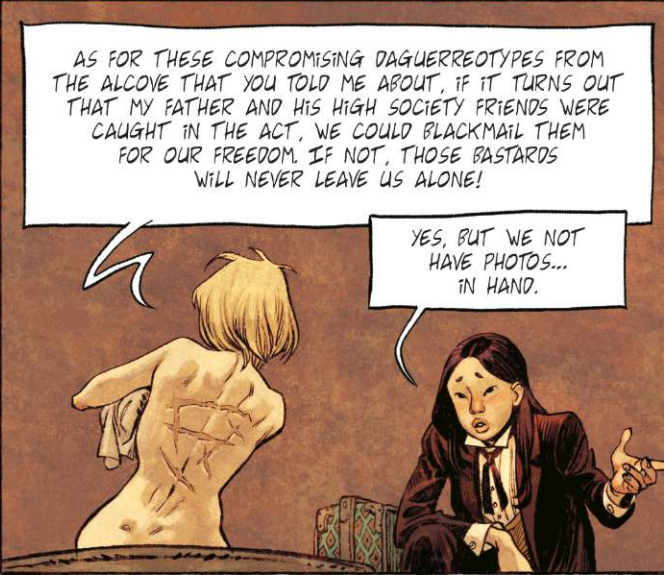
SHE-SHE SEEMS TO BE POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL HIMSELF!



WHO IS THAT MAN?



SENSEI... HE MY TEACHER.



AS FOR THESE COMPROMISING DAGUERREOTYPES FROM THE ALCOVE THAT YOU TOLD ME ABOUT, IF IT TURNS OUT THAT MY FATHER AND HIS HIGH SOCIETY FRIENDS WERE CAUGHT IN THE ACT, WE COULD BLACKMAIL THEM FOR OUR FREEDOM. IF NOT, THOSE BASTARDS WILL NEVER LEAVE US ALONE!

YES, BUT WE NOT HAVE PHOTOS... IN HAND.

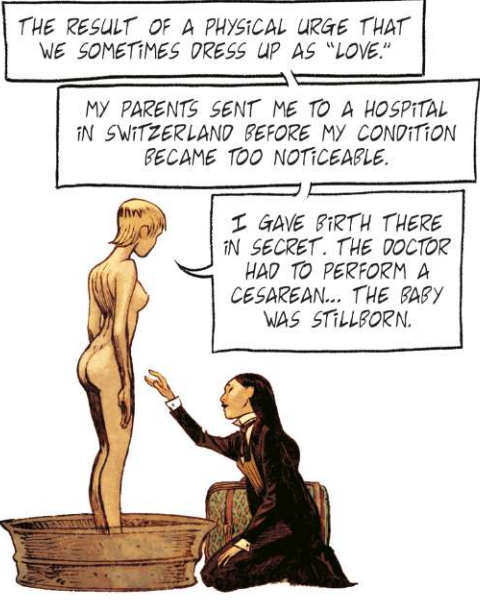


I THINK I KNOW HOW WE CAN GO ABOUT GETTING OUR HANDS ON THESE VERITABLE SPOILS OF WAR!



I WAS SEVENTEEN.

I GOT PREGNANT.



THE RESULT OF A PHYSICAL URGE THAT WE SOMETIMES DRESS UP AS "LOVE."

MY PARENTS SENT ME TO A HOSPITAL IN SWITZERLAND BEFORE MY CONDITION BECAME TOO NOTICEABLE.

I GAVE BIRTH THERE IN SECRET. THE DOCTOR HAD TO PERFORM A CESAREAN... THE BABY WAS STILLBORN.



IT WAS A LITTLE GIRL.

I FOUND OUT LATER, THANKS TO A NUN WHO HAD TAKEN A LIKING TO ME.



HERE! CLEAN CLOTHES FOR YOU!

WHERE'D YOU FIND THAT?



ON SOMEONE WHO VERY, VERY COLD NOW!



PFFT! IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE AN' THERE AIN'T ONE SINGLE LOUT IN ALL OF LONDON WHAT WANTS TO STICK 'IS LI'L JESUS IN ME MANGER?!



I'LL TELL YA: CHRISTMAS IS A CELEBRATION OF 'YPOCRISY, IT IS. THEY ALL PRETEND TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. THEY SAY THEY AIN'T GONNA SMACK THEIR WIVES IN FRONT OF THEIR BRATS, THEY'S GONNA DRINK WINE ONLY AT MASS...

THEN, SOON AS THEY'VE GOBBLED DOWN THEIR CHRISTMAS PUDDING, THEY GET RIGHT BACK TO IT.



ERE 'E COMES, NOW, YER LI'L JESUS!

LOOKS LIKE A REAL TOFF, WHAT'S MORE!

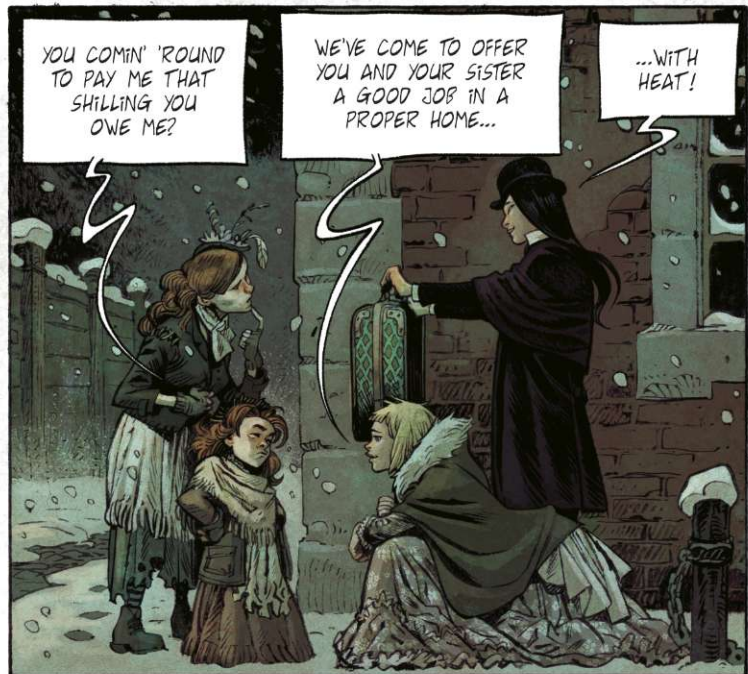


AH, CRUD, 'E'S WIF 'IS WIFE!



WELL I'LL BE! IT'S THEM TWO NUTTERS FROM THE CRYSTAL PALACE!

NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, TOO, PICKLES!



YOU COMIN' 'ROUND TO PAY ME THAT SHILLING YOU OWE ME?

WE'VE COME TO OFFER YOU AND YOUR SISTER A GOOD JOB IN A PROPER HOME...

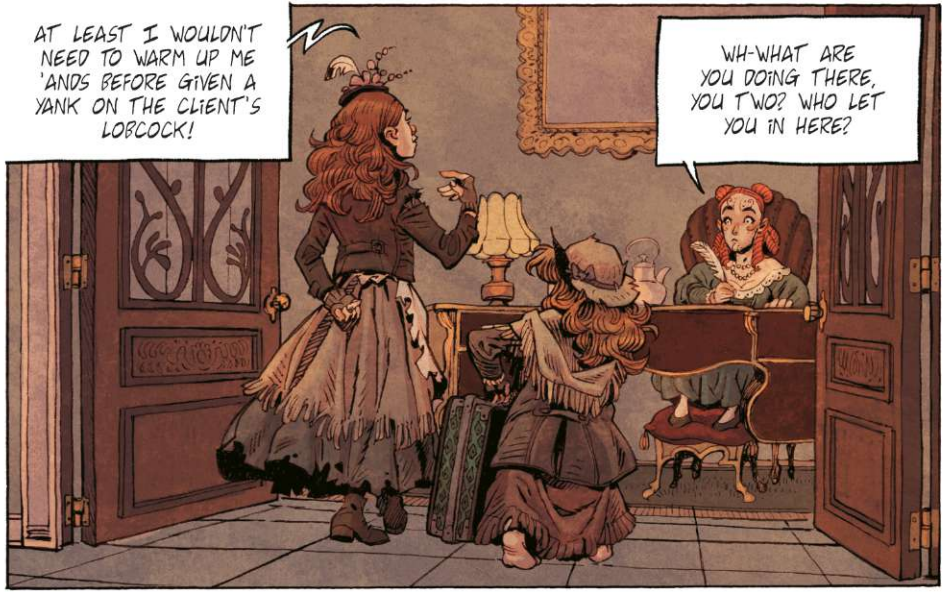
...WITH HEAT!



ERE, ARE THESE A COUPLA TOMS?



MY GOODNESS!
I SURELY WOULD
BE 'APPY TO
WORK 'ERE!



AT LEAST I WOULDN'T
NEED TO WARM UP ME
'ANDS BEFORE GIVEN A
YANK ON THE CLIENT'S
LORCOCK!

WH-WHAT ARE
YOU DOING THERE,
YOU TWO? WHO LET
YOU IN HERE?



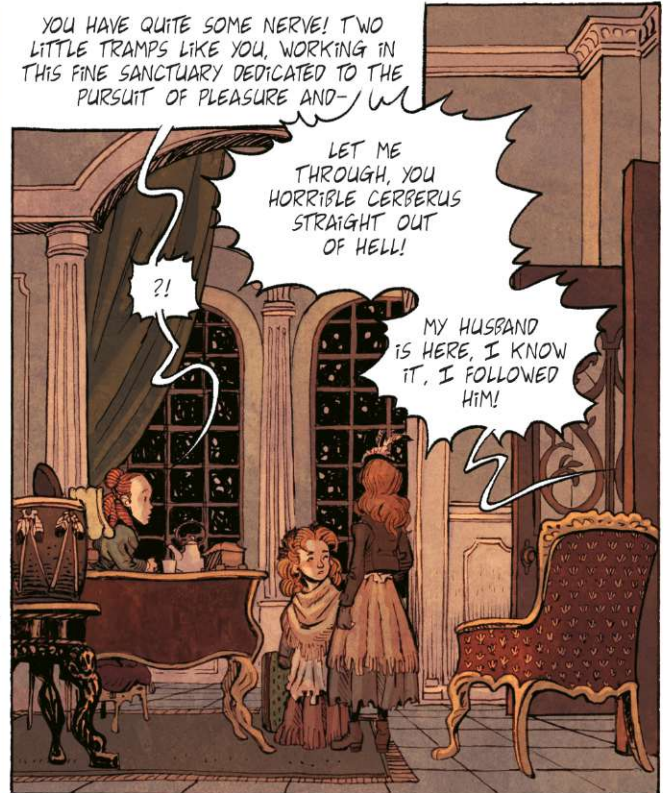
WE ARE
THE PICKLE
SISTERS!

WE'RE 'ERE, YOU KNOW, TO
'UMBLY PROPOSE OUR CANDIDACY
AS 'IGH CLASS WHORES!



HA HA HA!!

NOW THAT HAS
TO BE THE BEST
ONE THIS YEAR, AND
NOT FOR LACK OF
OTHER CHOICES!



YOU HAVE QUITE SOME NERVE! TWO
LITTLE TRAMPS LIKE YOU, WORKING IN
THIS FINE SANCTUARY DEDICATED TO THE
PURSUIT OF PLEASURE AND-

LET ME
THROUGH, YOU
HORRIBLE CERBERUS
STRAIGHT OUT
OF HELL!

MY HUSBAND
IS HERE, I KNOW
IT, I FOLLOWED
HIM!

?!

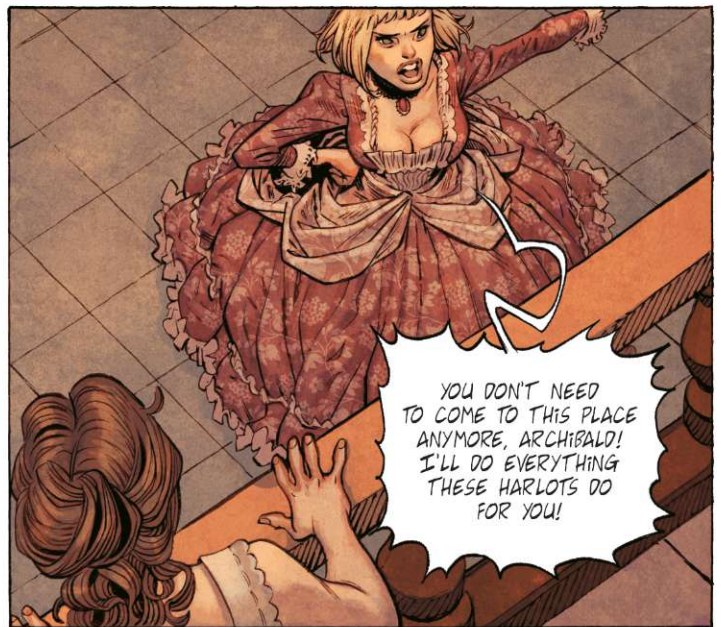
?!



WHO IS THIS
WOMAN?

I KNOW YOU'RE UP THERE,
ARCHIBALD! COME HOME,
DEAR! I'VE ALREADY
FORGIVEN YOU.

NO IDEA, MISTRESS! I FOUND
HER AT THE ENTRANCE, MORE
LIT-UP THAN BIG BEN ON
NEW YEAR'S EVE!



YOU DON'T NEED
TO COME TO THIS PLACE
ANYMORE, ARCHIBALD!
I'LL DO EVERYTHING
THESE HARLOTS DO
FOR YOU!



BONBON, THROW THIS MADWOMAN OUT THE DOOR!

WE CAN EVEN DO IT WITH THE LIGHTS ON IF THAT IS YOUR DESIRE, ARCHIBALD!



WHAT ARE YOU STILL DOING HERE?!

WELL, WE'RE WAITIN' ON OUR CONTRACT TO SIGN! WIF AN X! YOU KNOW, INSTEAD OF A SIGNATURE?

AN' THEN YOU'LL NEED TO SHOW US OUR LODGINGS.

SO AS WE CAN PUT OUR THINGS AWAY.



GET OUT!



PARDON ME, GUV!

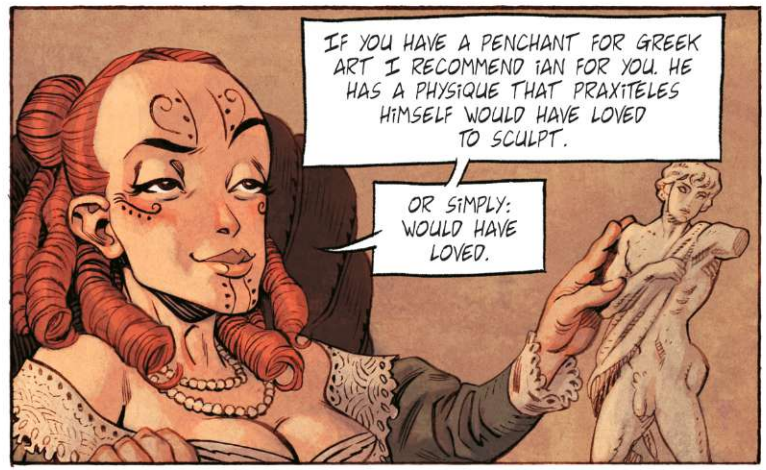
IF YER COMIN' IN TO FISH FER A JOB AS AN 'IGH CLASS WHORE, DON'T COUNT ON IT: THAT LITTLE LADY'S A TOUGH ONE!



MADAME "MUSE," IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN?

MISTER KURB?! I SUSPECTED THAT ONE DAY THE ALCOVE WOULD BE HONORED BY A VISIT FROM YOU.

A VISIT WITH A MOTIVE, I PRESUME, HMMM?



IF YOU HAVE A PENCHANT FOR GREEK ART I RECOMMEND IAN FOR YOU. HE HAS A PHYSIQUE THAT PRAXITELES HIMSELF WOULD HAVE LOVED TO SCULPT.

OR SIMPLY: WOULD HAVE LOVED.



IT SEEMS ONE IS NEVER AS VOLUBLE AS WHEN ONE'S MOUTH IS FU--

I WANT THE PHOTOGRAPHS!



I REFUSE, MISTER KURB! EX-COMMISSIONER ROWAN PROMISED ME THAT--

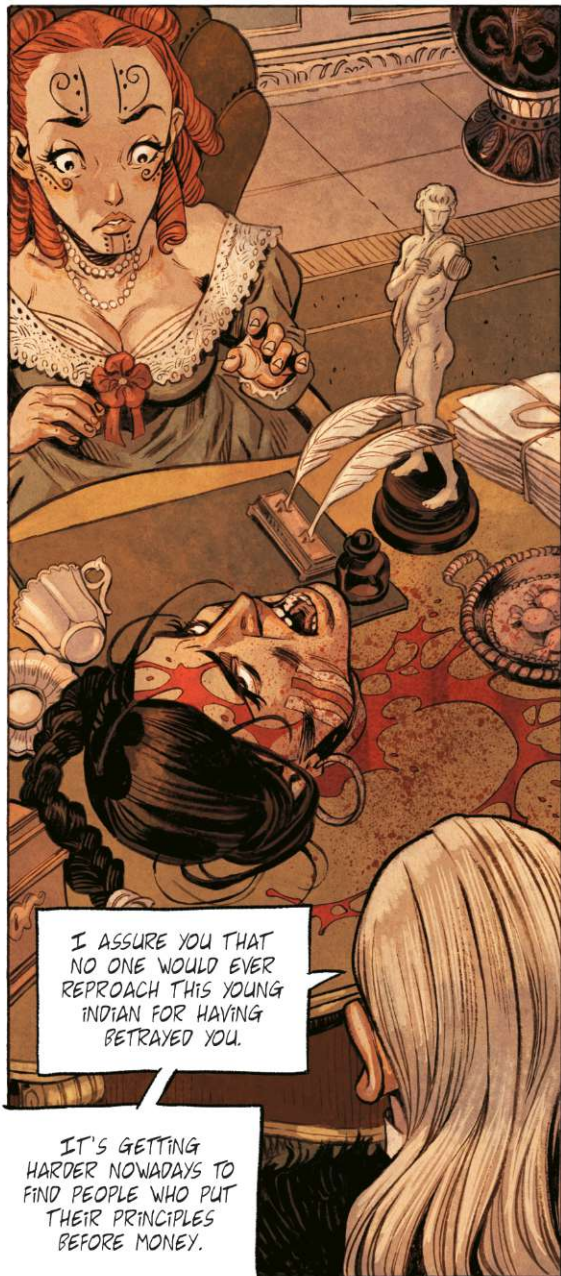
THE PREFIX "EX" MEANS PRECISELY THAT SIR ROWAN IS NO LONGER IN COMMAND OF THE LONDON POLICE.



THE PHOTOGRAPHS!

BUT... I'M NOT THE ONE WHO HAS THEM!

OH, I BET YOU DO!



I ASSURE YOU THAT NO ONE WOULD EVER REPROACH THIS YOUNG INDIAN FOR HAVING BETRAYED YOU.

IT'S GETTING HARDER NOWADAYS TO FIND PEOPLE WHO PUT THEIR PRINCIPLES BEFORE MONEY.



WOULD I BE WRONG IN HOPING THAT YOU, MUSE, ARE NOT A MEMBER OF THAT... DISAPPEARING RACE?



VERY WELL!

I'LL GIVE YOU THE DAGUERROTYPES I STILL HAVE IN MY POSSESSION. MOST OF THEM ARE NO LONGER HERE. EVERY WEEK I PASS MY "HARVEST" ALONG TO THE TRUE OWNERS OF THE ALCOVE.



YOU SEE, MISTER KURB, ANOTHER DISADVANTAGE OF BEING A MIDGET IS THAT EVERY TIME A NORMAL-SIZED PERSON PARTS, IT IS WE WHO GET A FACEFUL OF--



?!? THOSE LITTLE TRAMPS!!!

THE SUITCASE!



WE HAVE TO CATCH THEM QUICK!



THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING. BUT FIRST I HAVE A LITTLE FORMALITY TO TAKE CARE OF...



...MAKE THAT TWO!



"HE WHO BUILDS HIS HOUSE ON BETRAYAL, FROM BETRAYAL SHALL PERISH." MY MOTHER, A WOMAN OF PRINCIPLE, USED TO SAY THAT.



DIDN'T YOUR MOTHER ALSO TEACH YOU THAT IT'S NOT FAIR TO PICK ON PEOPLE WHO ARE SMALLER THAN YOU?

HA HA! I LIKE YOU, MUSE! I LIKE YOU VERY MUCH!



BUT ONE MUST NEVER MIX WORK AND SENTIMENT.



THAT'S SOMETHING I LEARNED FROM MY FATHER.





WAIT!

BEST 'AND OVER OUR MONEY!

REALLY! NOT NOW!

WE WON'T BE SAFE 'TIL WE'VE MADE IT TO THE BARGE!



?!
?

AND 'OO EVER SAID I WANTED TO GO FER A BOAT RIDE WIF YOU ON TH' THAMES?!

THE MONEY! NOW!



HEY! WHAT--?!



THE DAGUERROTYPES OR THIS WASTREL'S LIFE!

COME NOW! AS SOON AS I'VE HANDED THEM OVER YOU'RE GOING TO BREAK HER NECK EITHER WAY!



YOU'VE SUSSED ME OUT, MISS!



IN THAT CASE: THE WASTREL'S LIFE...

KRAK



...AND THE PHOTOGRAPHS!

NOOO!!

?!



I SCARCELY KNOW WHO YOU ARE, LADIES, MUCH LESS WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO WITH THIS WHOLE AFFAIR...



I-I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DID THAT, BUT Y-YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR IT!!

"THE CHECK IS THE BEST CURE FOR DRUNKENNESS EVER INVENTED." MY FATHER USED TO SAY THAT, AND HE KNEW A THING OR TWO ABOUT THE SUBJECT!



HALT! NOBODY MOVE!

?!
!!



ARREST THIS MAN, OFFICERS! HE'S JUST MURDERED THIS YOUNG GIRL IN COLD BLOOD!



"ARREST THIS MAN"?!
⚡

HA HA! DIDJA HEAR THAT, BOYS?



YEP, THE LITTLE LADY HERE IS ASKING US TO ARREST... OUR BOSS, COMMISSIONER KURB!



IN FACT, IT'S YOU TWO WE'VE COME LOOKIN' TO ARREST, "MISTER DINGO" AND "LADY CRAZY"!



SHIT! THE DOGS!

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THEM?!



STOP THAT!

RIGHT NOW!



AAAARR!



COURTESY OF "LADY CRAZY"! SINCE YOU WANT THESE DAGUERROTYPES SO BADLY, WHY DON'T YOU EAT THEM!!



HURRY!



WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, YOU OAFS?!

SIC THE DOGS ON THEM!



THE DOGS!? THEY'RE UNLEASHING THEIR BLASTED 'OUNDS ON OUR ARSES!

THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING CHASED BY DOGS AND NOT BY CATS...



...IS THAT WE CAN ESCAPE BY THE ROOFTOPS!!





I-IT'S HORRIFIC!



COUGH!
COUGH!



AND HERE I HAD ALWAYS DREAMED OF DYING PEACEFULLY, LIKE SOCRATES, SURROUNDED BY MY FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS, A CUP OF HEMLOCK IN MY HAND AND AN ENIGMATIC SMILE DANCING ON MY LIPS...



BE CAREFUL!



AS MY MOTHER USED TO SAY, "THE ROAST IS ALMOST DONE..."

"...TIME TO BARE YOUR TEETH!"



TH-THE ROOF!
IT-

CRACK!
CREK!



TH-THE ROOF!
IT-

CRACK!
CREK!





BUT...
WHAT IN
THE...?

A DEMON!

HELP!

WHAT'S HAPPENING
IN THERE? IT SOUNDS
LIKE THEY'VE SEEN THE
FOUR HORSEMEN OF
THE APOCALYPSE!

BY
JOVE!





SHITE! I-IT'S LIKE THE FIRE EATER AT FINSBURY CIRCUS... BUT IN REVERSE!



KITA! THERE!



GRAB HOLD, QUICK!

WHERE ARE WE GOIN'?



TO TAKE NICE BATH. YOU COULD USE ONE BADLY!



J-
JAY?

HERE!

I'M
HERE!



ARE YOU QUITE
READY TO GET OFF
MY BACK NOW?!



"TO SING WITH HEART AND VOICE!" (1)

(1) From "God Save the Queen."

ARE YOU LEAVING ON A VOYAGE, COMMISSIONER KURB?

ON A VOYAGE? WHY NOT, YOU COULD SAY THAT, YOUR MAJESTY...



...BUT TO SODOM AND GOMORRAH!

40 YEARS?! NORMALLY THAT SHOULD BE PLENTY OF TIME FOR ONE'S WOUNDS TO HEAL, MISTER KURB!



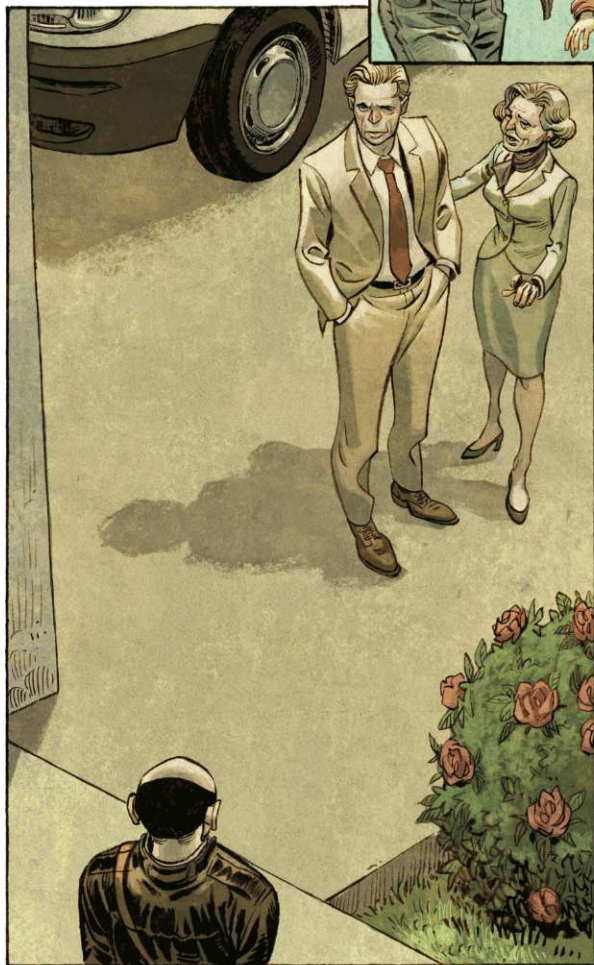
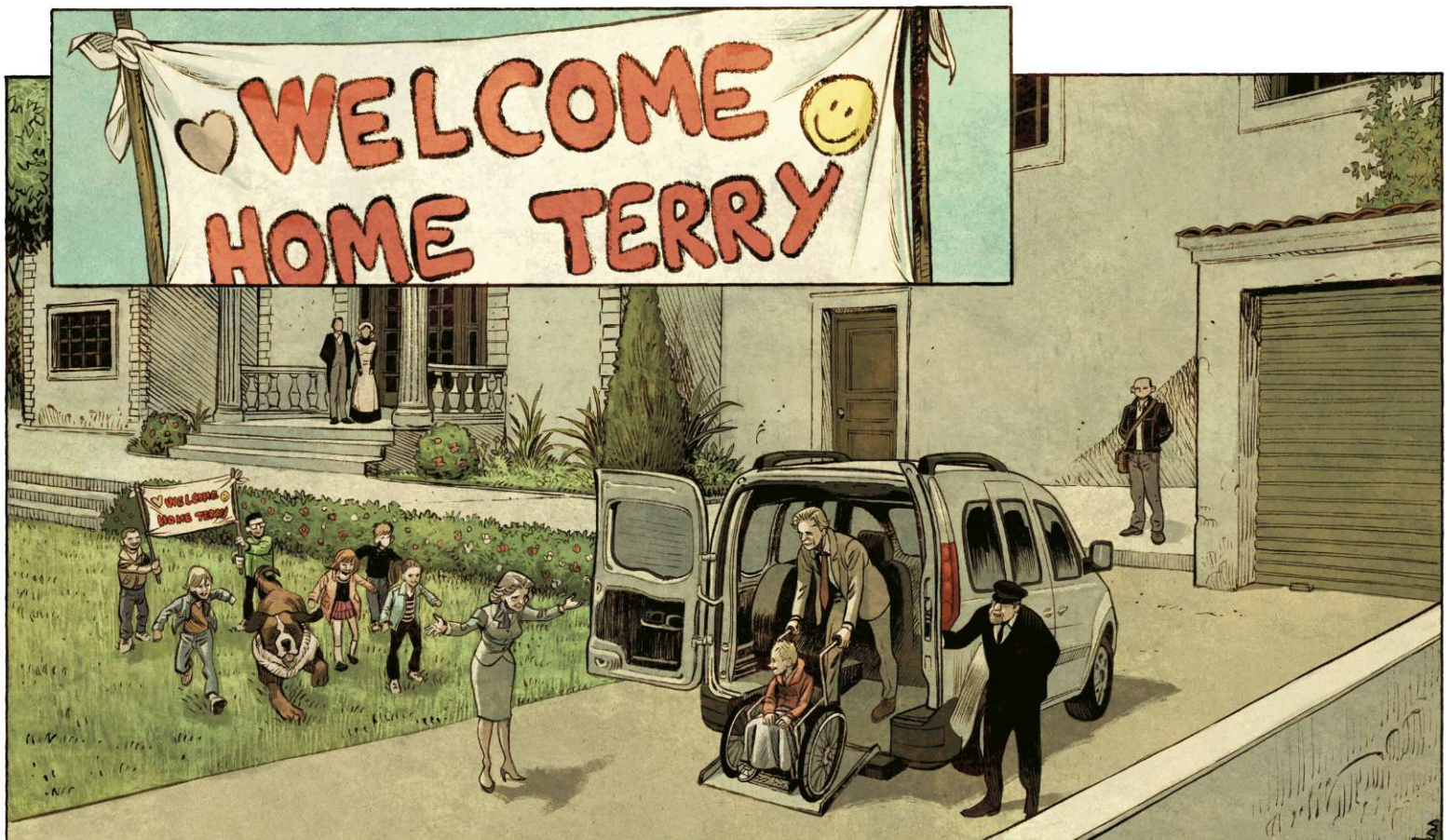
CERTAIN LESIONS OF THE SOUL REMAIN AND FESTER FOREVER, YOUR MAJESTY.

AND YOU CLAIM THAT THESE "GLORIOUS ERIES" DREAM OF WINNING BACK THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA?

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW THEY IMAGINE THEY'LL PULL IT OFF, BUT THAT SEEMS TO BE THEIR GOAL, YES.



WELL, THEN, MISTER KURB! WE MUST HELP THEM!



AN ANTIPERSONNEL MINE WENT OFF TWO HOURS AGO AT THE HOME OF THE DIRECTOR OF YOUR SOUTH AFRICAN AFFILIATE.



V-VAN PERSIE?

THAT'S RIGHT. HIS THREE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER LOST HER LIFE.

A HALF HOUR LATER, TWO OTHER MINES EXPLODED WHILE THE DIRECTOR OF YOUR SPANISH AFFILIATE, OSCAR NORMA, WAS PLAYING TENNIS WITH HIS FIFTEEN YEAR OLD DAUGHTER ON HIS PRIVATE COURT.



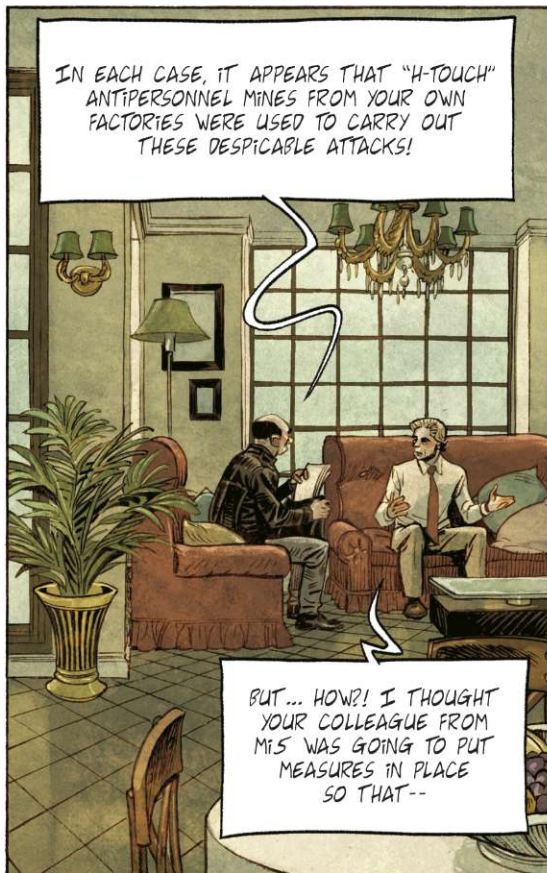
THEY BOTH LOST THEIR LIVES.

AT THE SAME MOMENT, A MINE WENT OFF IN THE GARDEN OF YOUR COMPANY'S VICE PRESIDENT, JARVIS GALE, IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, LEAVING HIM ONLY SUPERFICIALLY WOUNDED, FORTUNATELY.



JARVIS?!

IN EACH CASE, IT APPEARS THAT "H-TOUCH" ANTIPERSONNEL MINES FROM YOUR OWN FACTORIES WERE USED TO CARRY OUT THESE DESPICABLE ATTACKS!



BUT... HOW?! I THOUGHT YOUR COLLEAGUE FROM M&S WAS GOING TO PUT MEASURES IN PLACE SO THAT--



MY COLLEAGUE FROM M&S? WHAT COLLEAGUE?



LAKSHMI SHANKAR, OF COURSE! YOU KNOW, THE WOMAN OF INDIAN DESCENT WHO'S IN CHARGE OF THE INVESTIGATION.



I CAN ASSURE YOU, SIR BARRINGTON, THAT THERE IS NOBODY MATCHING THAT DESCRIPTION WHO WORKS FOR THE SECRET SERVICE.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WEREN'T THE VICTIM OF SOME KIND OF MEAN-SPIRITED PRANK?



...SOON, MY DARLING! ONE WEEK FROM NOW, TWO AT THE MOST.



IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I HELD YOU IN MY ARMS!

HOW ARE YOU?

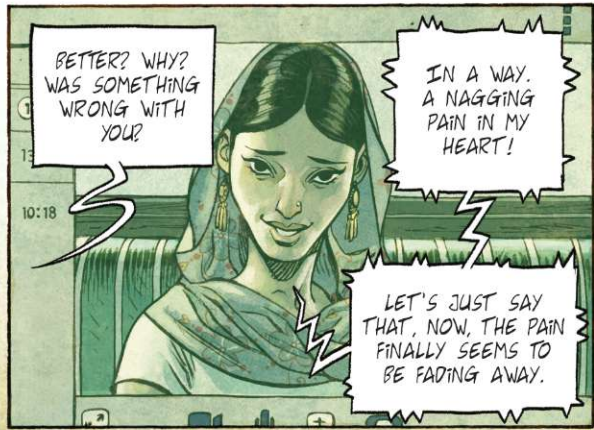
GREAT!



I LEARNED A NEW SONG ON THE STAR. I'LL PLAY IT FOR YOU WHEN YOU GET BACK.

AND HOW ABOUT YOU?

BETTER.



BETTER? WHY? WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOU?

IN A WAY. A NAGGING PAIN IN MY HEART!

LET'S JUST SAY THAT, NOW, THE PAIN FINALLY SEEMS TO BE FADING AWAY.



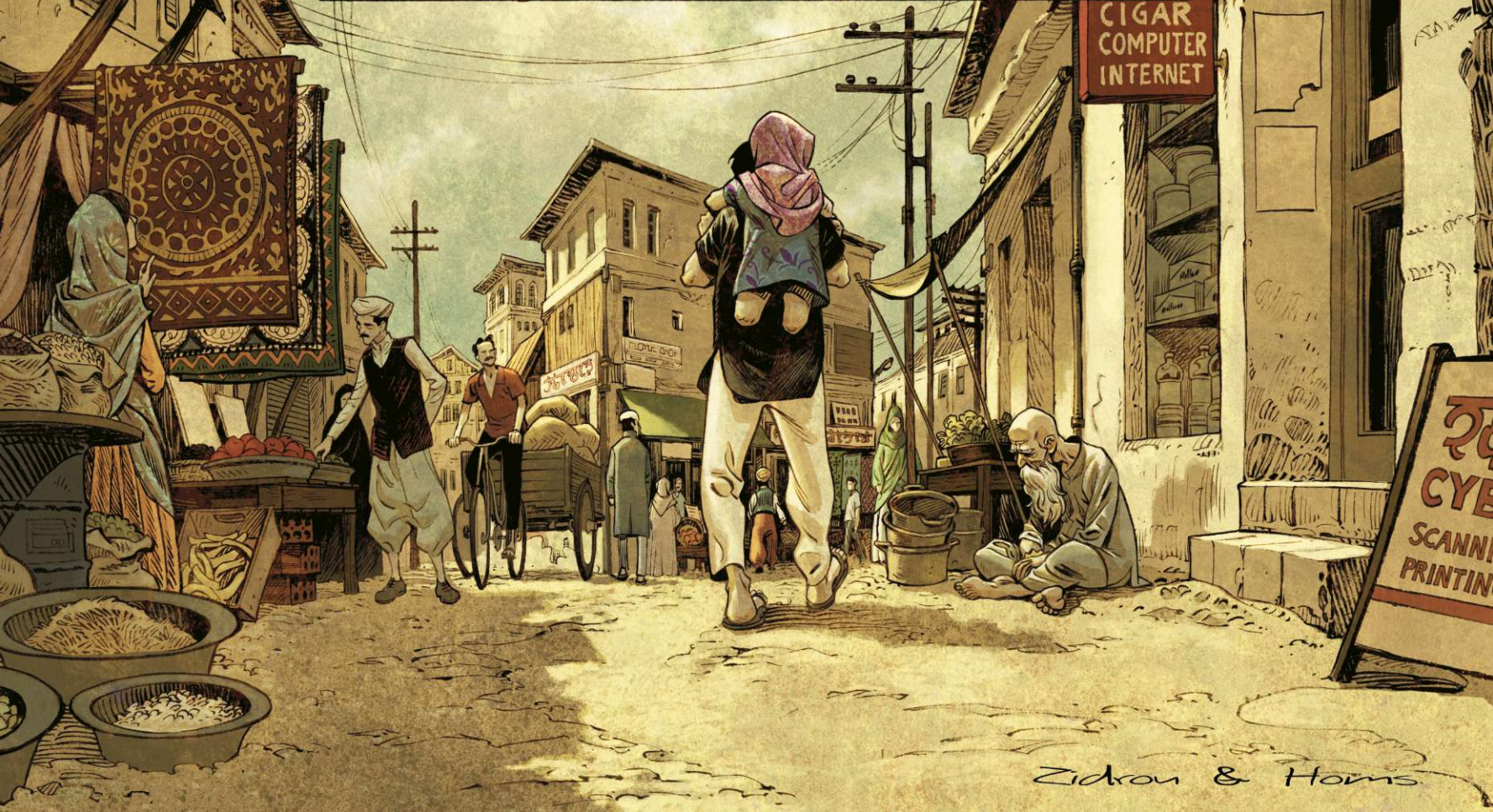
I LOVE YOU, MAMA!

ME TOO, MY SWEET LITTLE GIRL! ME TOO!



I'M FINISHED, NUSRAT!

LET'S GO!



To Yves,
with thanks.

Homs

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TWO WOMEN
AGAINST AN EMPIRE!



A FIRST ARC IN FOUR VOLUMES