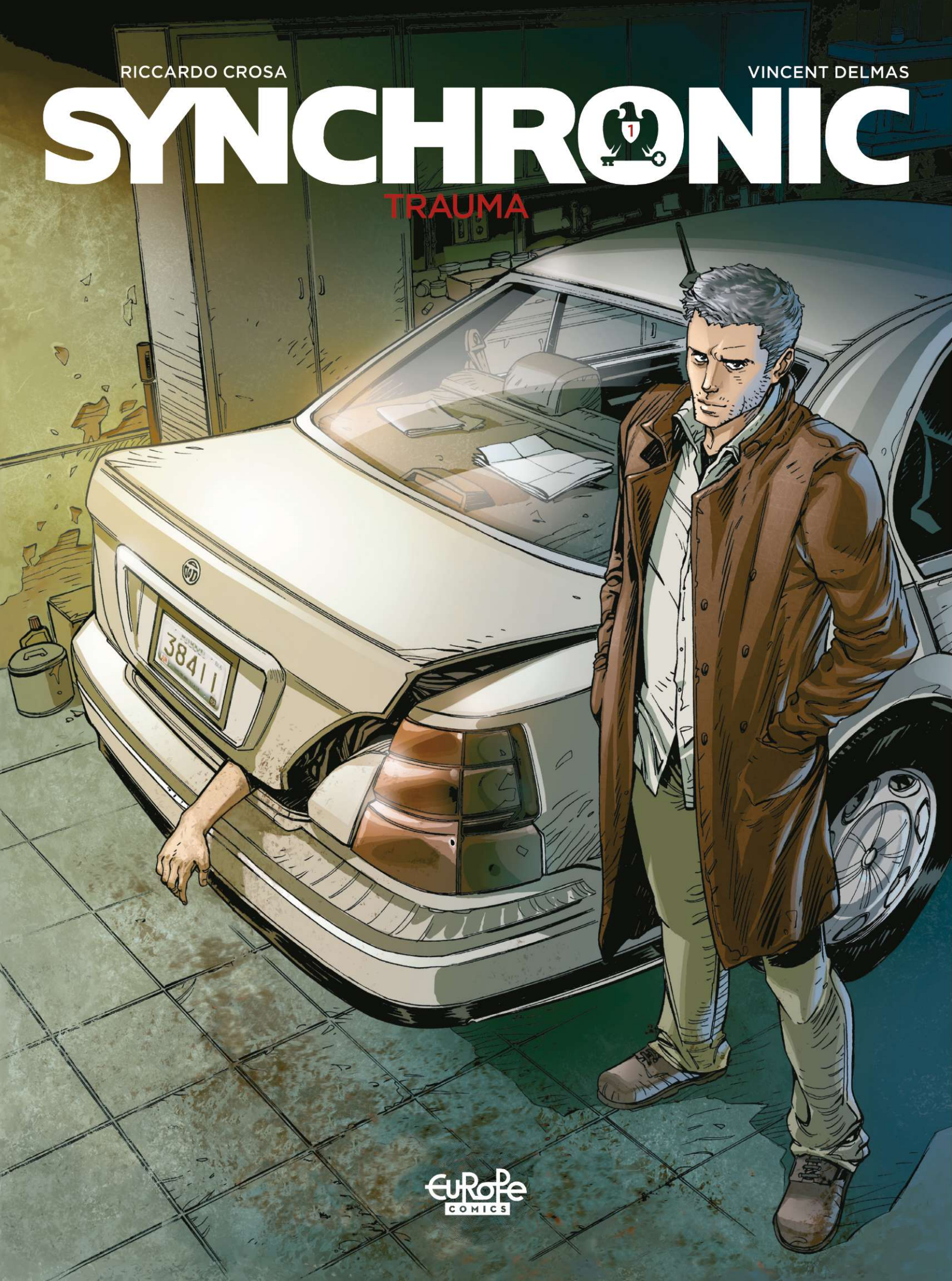


RICCARDO CROSA

VINCENT DELMAS

SYNCHRONIC

TRAUMA



Europe
COMICS



SYNCHRONIC

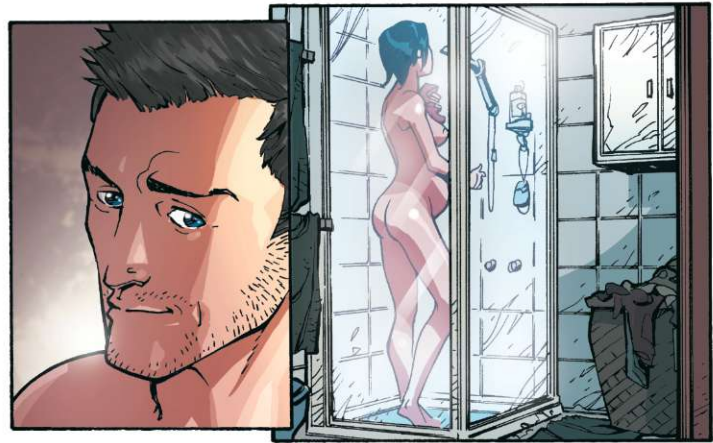
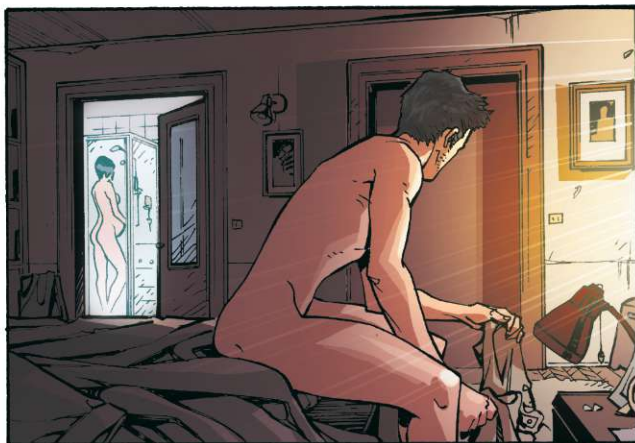
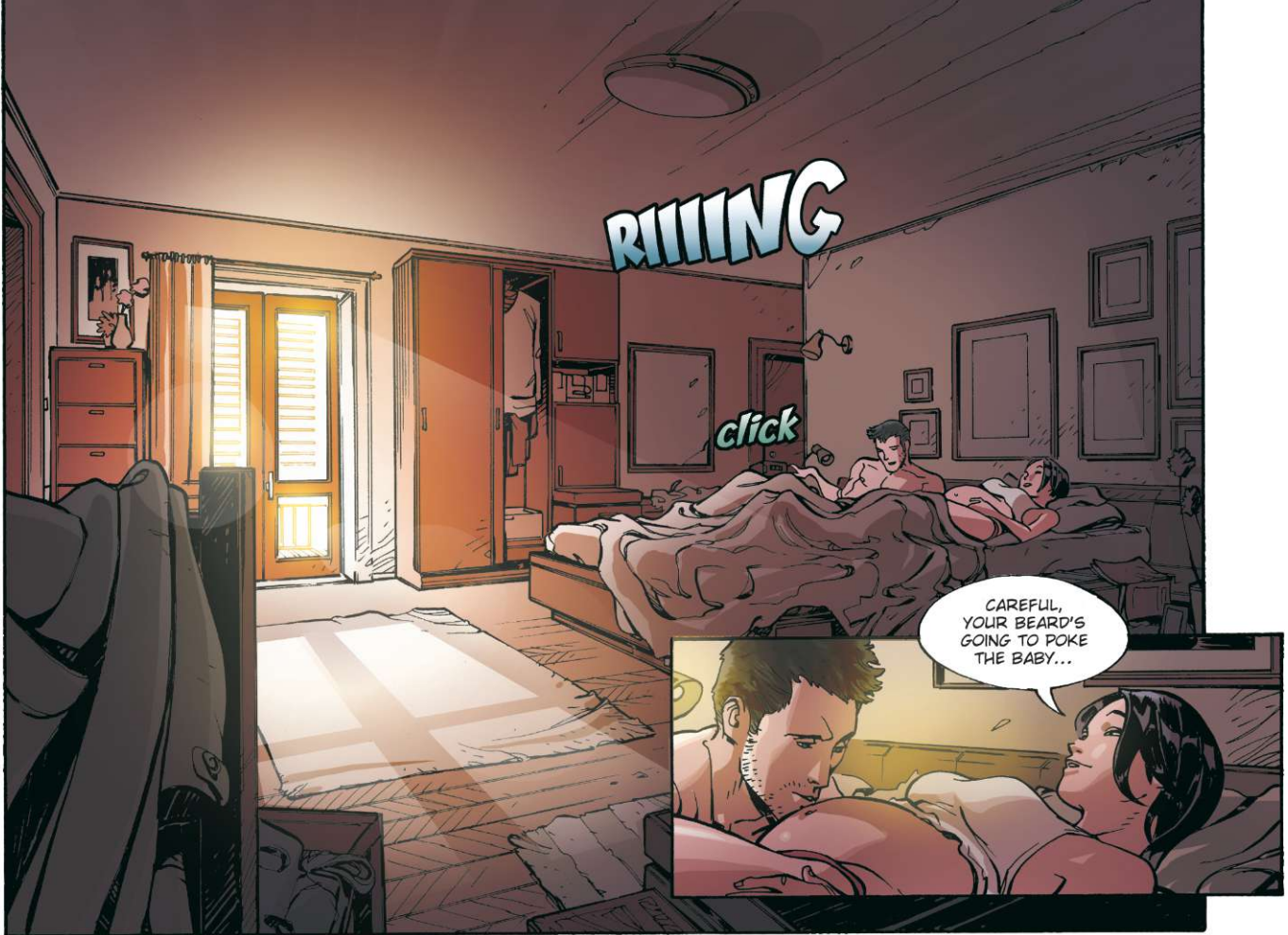
VOLUME 1: TRAUMA

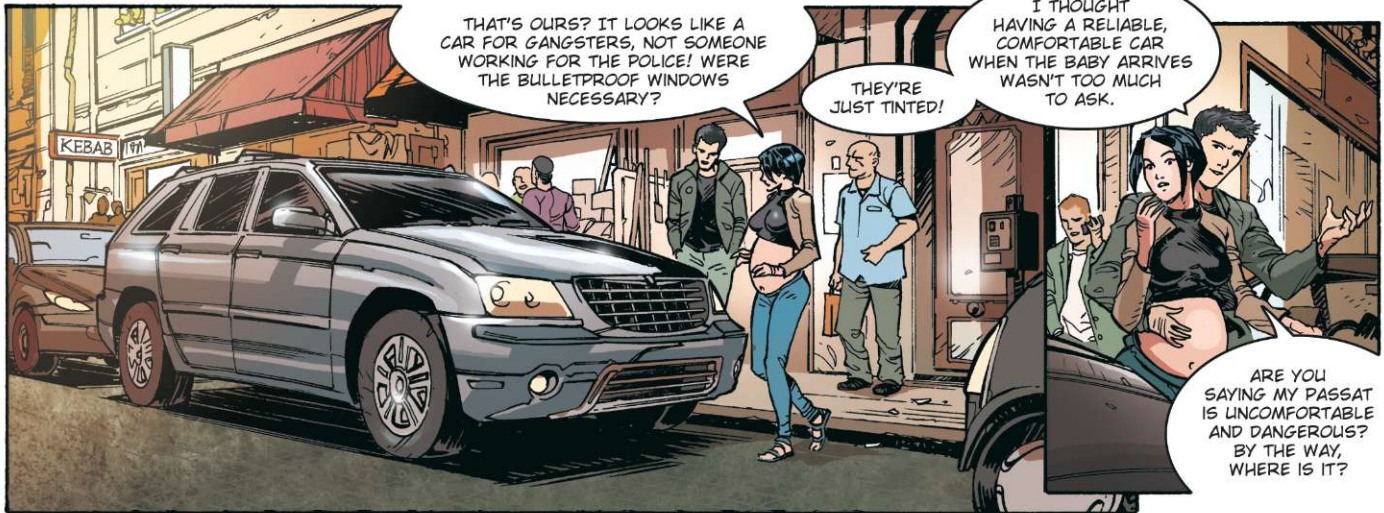
WRITER
VINCENT DELMAS

ARTIST
RICCARDO CROSA

COLORIST
OSCAR CELESTINI







THAT'S OURS? IT LOOKS LIKE A CAR FOR GANGSTERS, NOT SOMEONE WORKING FOR THE POLICE! WERE THE BULLETPROOF WINDOWS NECESSARY?

THEY'RE JUST TINTED!

I THOUGHT HAVING A RELIABLE, COMFORTABLE CAR WHEN THE BABY ARRIVES WASN'T TOO MUCH TO ASK.

ARE YOU SAYING MY PASSAT IS UNCOMFORTABLE AND DANGEROUS? BY THE WAY, WHERE IS IT?



IT'S IN PASSAT HEAVEN...



YOU DIDN'T!!

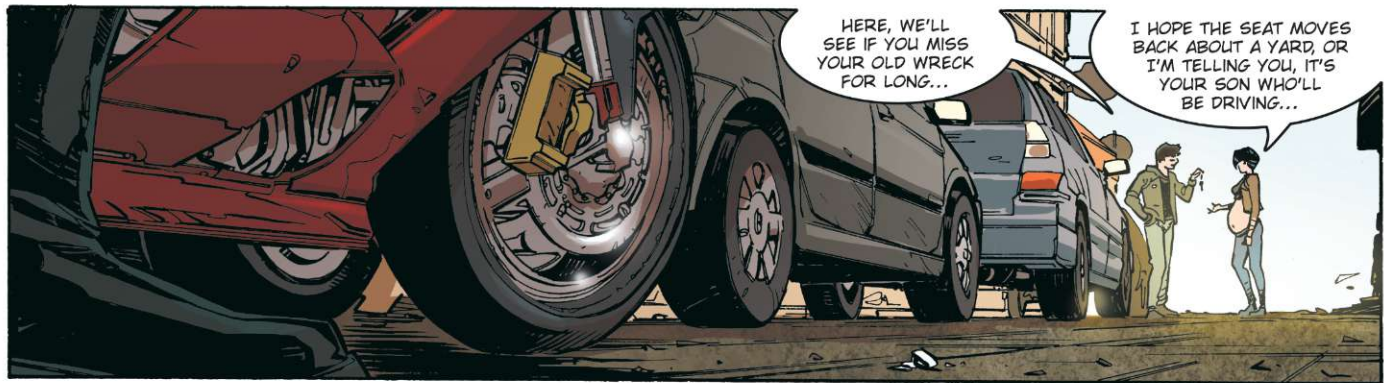


NO, I DON'T WANT TO DIE! I TOOK IT IN FOR A TUNE-UP...



OWW!

THUD



HERE, WE'LL SEE IF YOU MISS YOUR OLD WRECK FOR LONG...

I HOPE THE SEAT MOVES BACK ABOUT A YARD, OR I'M TELLING YOU, IT'S YOUR SON WHO'LL BE DRIVING...

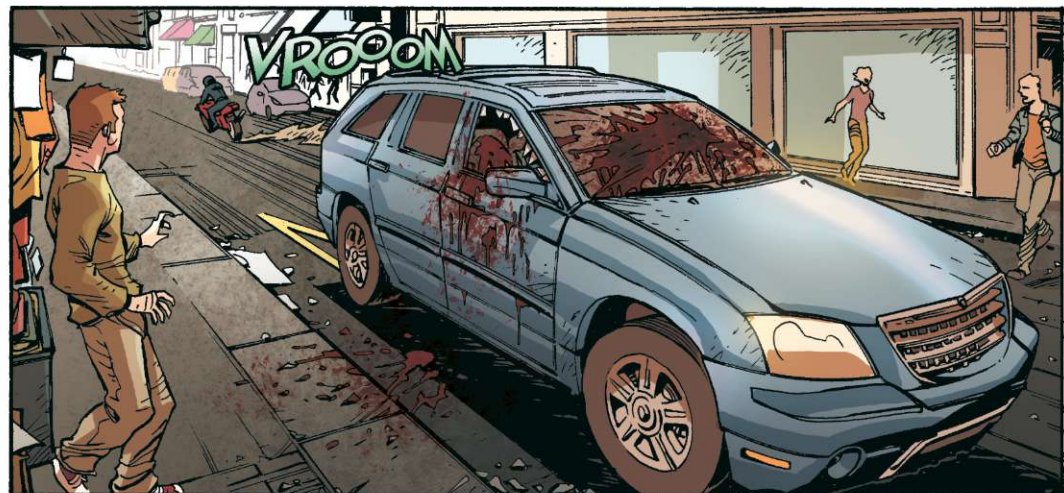
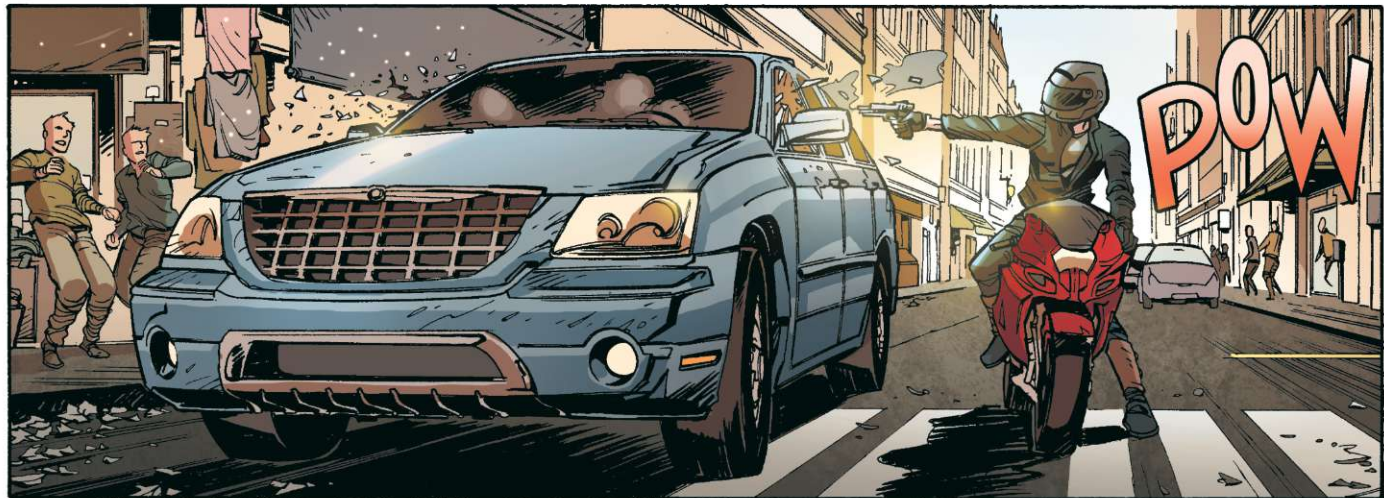
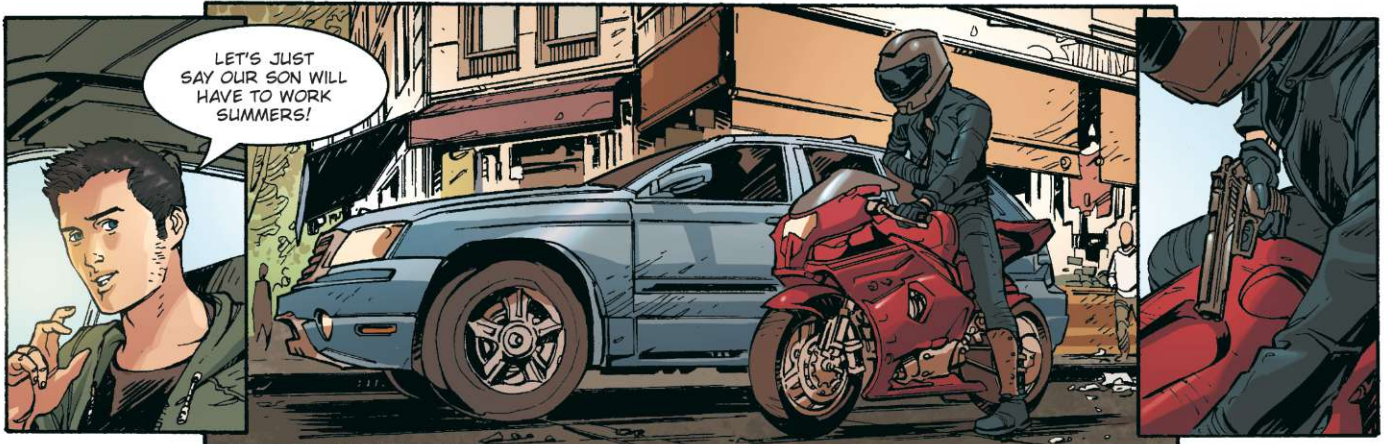


THAT NEW CAR SMELL MAKES ME NAUSEOUS.

OK... AND LITTLE DETAILS LIKE THE STEERING OR HOW IT HANDLES THE ROAD?

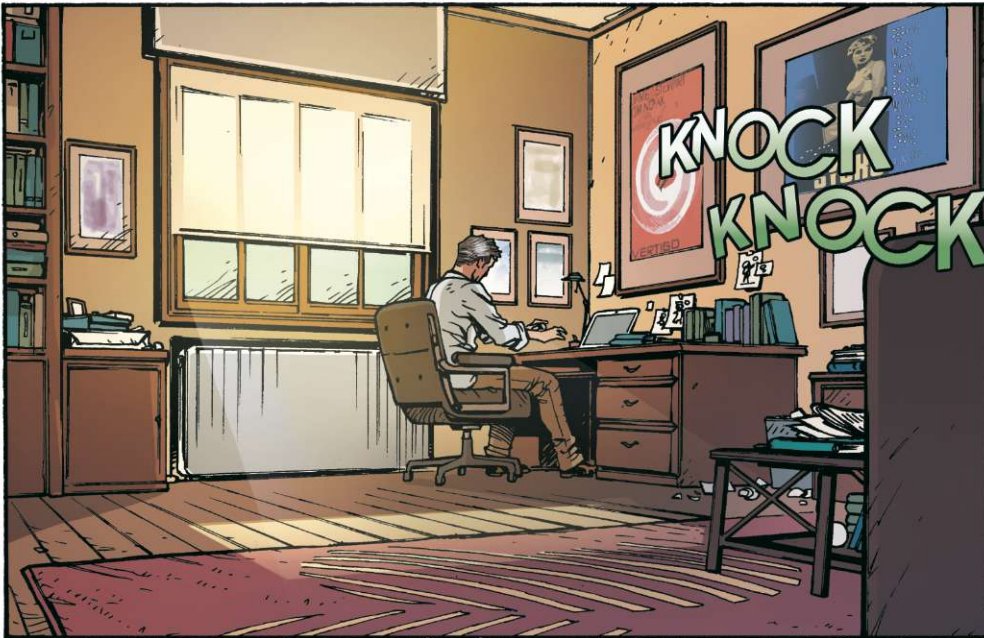


YOU TELL ME FIRST: HOW MANY DECADES DID YOU PUT US IN DEBT FOR?



FIVE YEARS LATER.

tap tap
tip tap
tap



AM I DISTURBING YOU? A COURIER BROUGHT THIS FOR YOU.

IT'S FROM YOUR AGENT.

THAT PUBLISHER OF YOURS IS GOOD. THE COVER'S ALMOST AS DARK AS YOUR STORY!

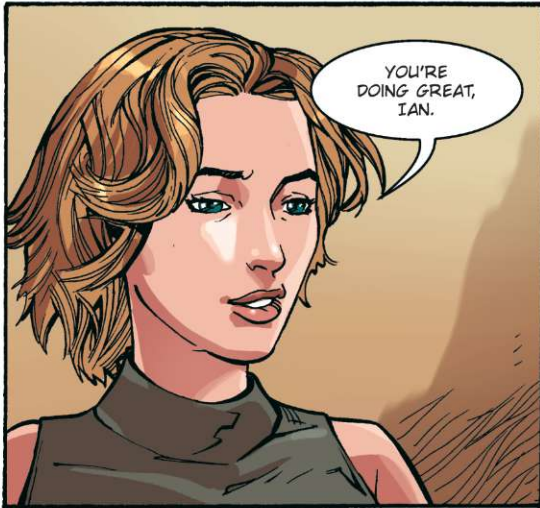
I'M PROUD OF YOU, SWEETHEART. BRAVO. REALLY!

IAN MALLORY
NO WAY OUT

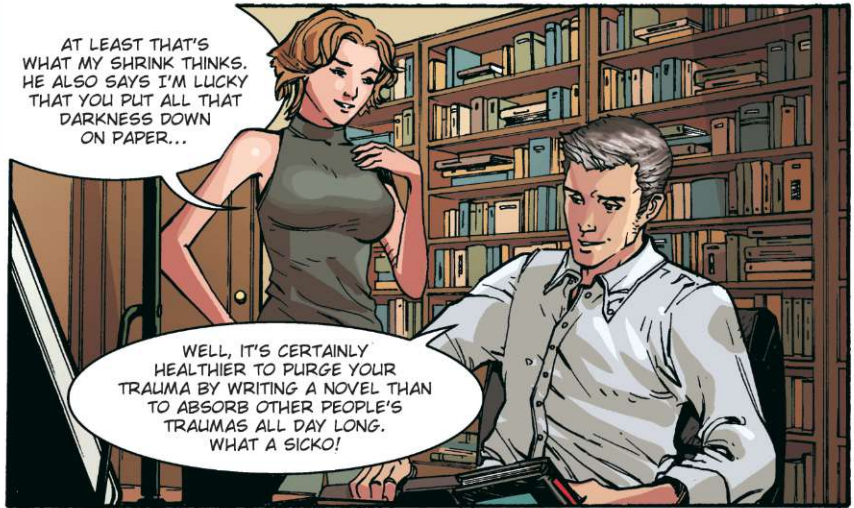
MAINLY, I'M JUST LUCKY THAT I CAN MAKE MONEY OFF MY NIGHTMARES.

RUTGERS
Faculty of Literature
presents
IAN MALLORY
BOOK'S CHOICE AWARD

Mr. IAN MALLORY



YOU'RE DOING GREAT, IAN.



AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT MY SHRINK THINKS. HE ALSO SAYS I'M LUCKY THAT YOU PUT ALL THAT DARKNESS DOWN ON PAPER...

WELL, IT'S CERTAINLY HEALTHIER TO PURGE YOUR TRAUMA BY WRITING A NOVEL THAN TO ABSORB OTHER PEOPLE'S TRAUMAS ALL DAY LONG. WHAT A SICKO!



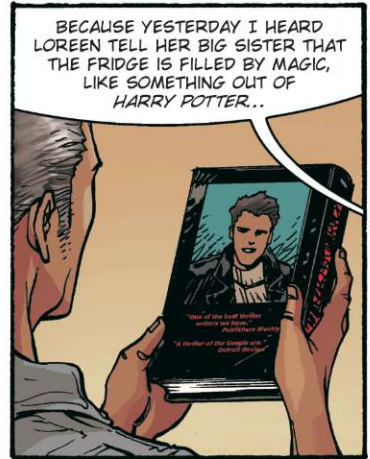
THAT SICKO, AS YOU CALL HIM, ABSOLUTELY LOVED YOUR FIRST BOOK.

DOESN'T SURPRISE ME. TWO SOCIOPATHIC, INCESTUOUS SISTERS WHO KILL THEIR FATHER AND FEED HIM TO THEIR MOTHER... OF COURSE HE'D LOVE IT!

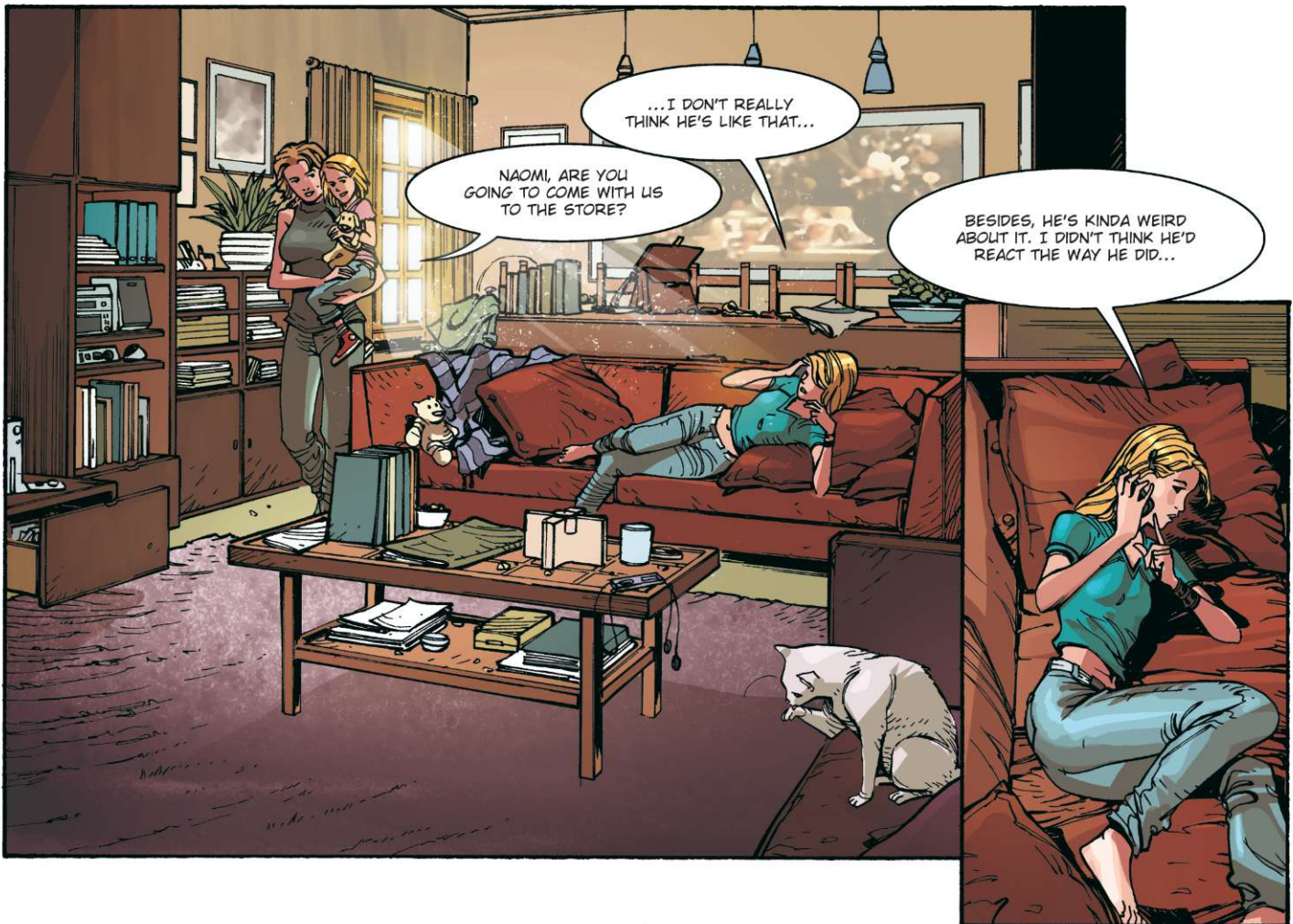


A BIT OF ADVICE: TOMORROW, WITH THE JOURNALISTS, TRY NOT TO PITCH YOUR NEW NOVEL THAT WAY. HEY, ARE YOU COMING TO THE STORE WITH US?

WHY NOT HAVE IT ALL DELIVERED?



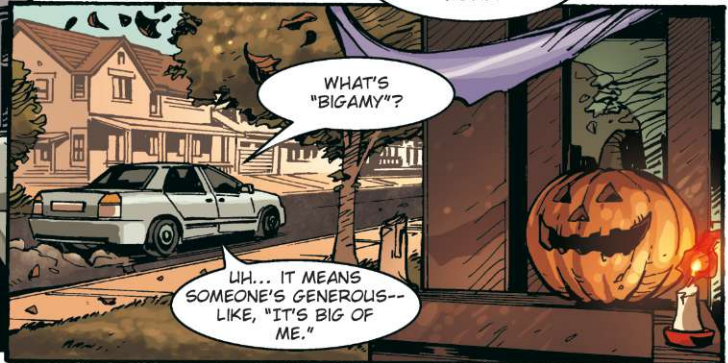
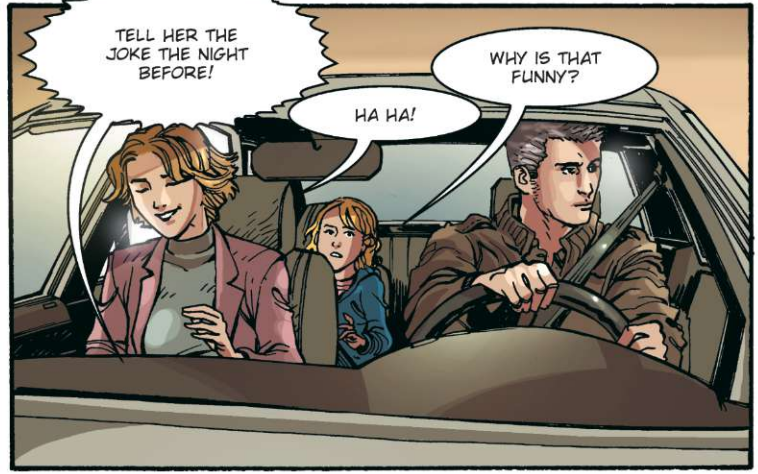
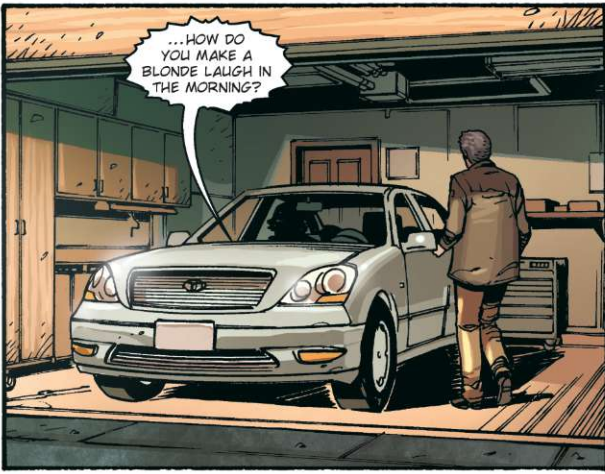
BECAUSE YESTERDAY I HEARD LOREEN TELL HER BIG SISTER THAT THE FRIDGE IS FILLED BY MAGIC, LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF HARRY POTTER...

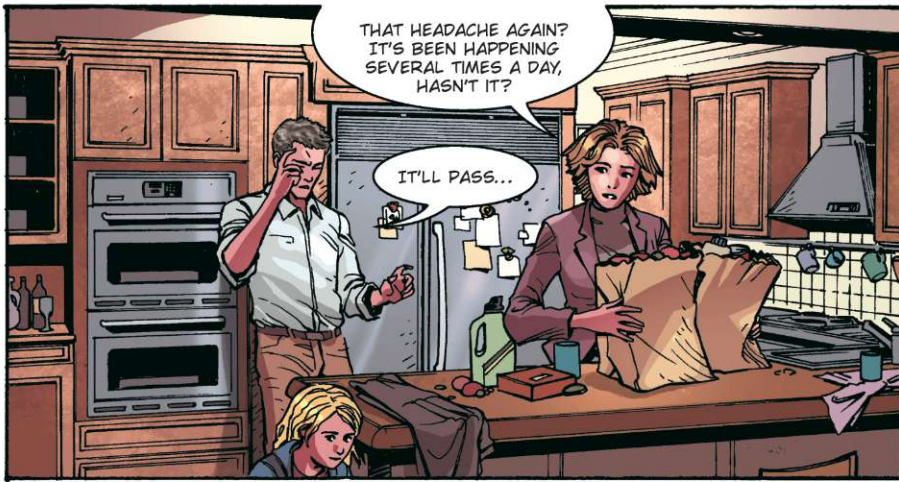


...I DON'T REALLY THINK HE'S LIKE THAT...

NAOMI, ARE YOU GOING TO COME WITH US TO THE STORE?

BESIDES, HE'S KINDA WEIRD ABOUT IT. I DIDN'T THINK HE'D REACT THE WAY HE DID...





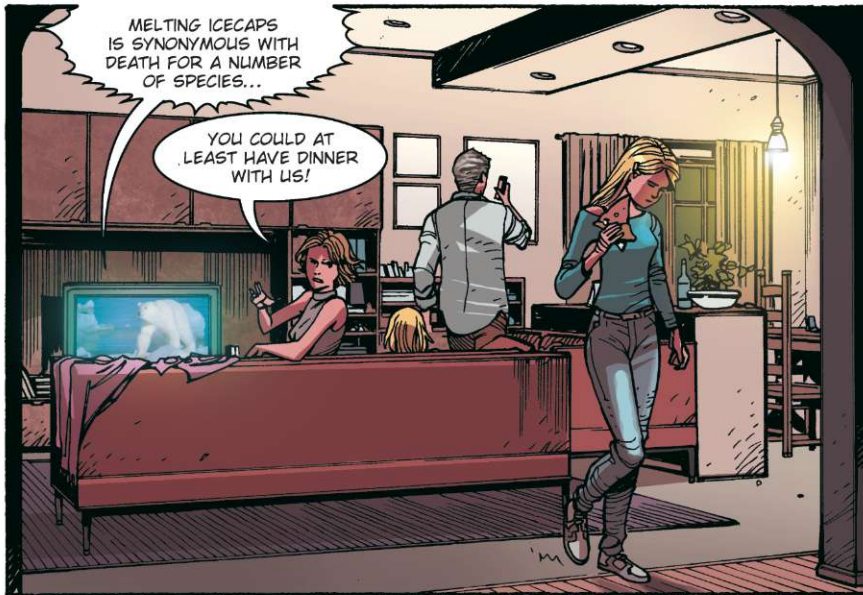
THAT HEADACHE AGAIN? IT'S BEEN HAPPENING SEVERAL TIMES A DAY, HASN'T IT?

IT'LL PASS...



YOU SAY THAT, BUT I CAN TELL THAT IT'S GETTING WORSE. WHY DON'T YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR NEUROSURGEON AGAIN?

IT'LL PASS...



MELTING ICECAPS IS SYNONYMOUS WITH DEATH FOR A NUMBER OF SPECIES...

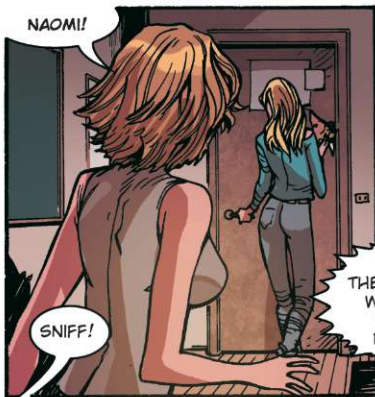
YOU COULD AT LEAST HAVE DINNER WITH US!



THIS ISN'T A HOTEL!

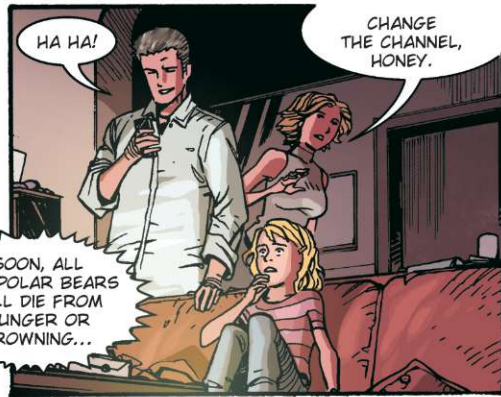
HEY, KYLE...

I'D LIKE IT IF YOU SHOWED UP A HALF-HOUR BEFORE THE PRESS CONFERENCE TOMORROW, SO I CAN PREP YOU A LITTLE ON THE REPORTERS' QUESTIONS...



NAOMI!

SNIFF!



HA HA!

CHANGE THE CHANNEL, HONEY.

SOON, ALL THE POLAR BEARS WILL DIE FROM HUNGER OR DROWNING...



AND JUST WHAT DO YOU FIND SO FUNNY, IAN?

HA HA!

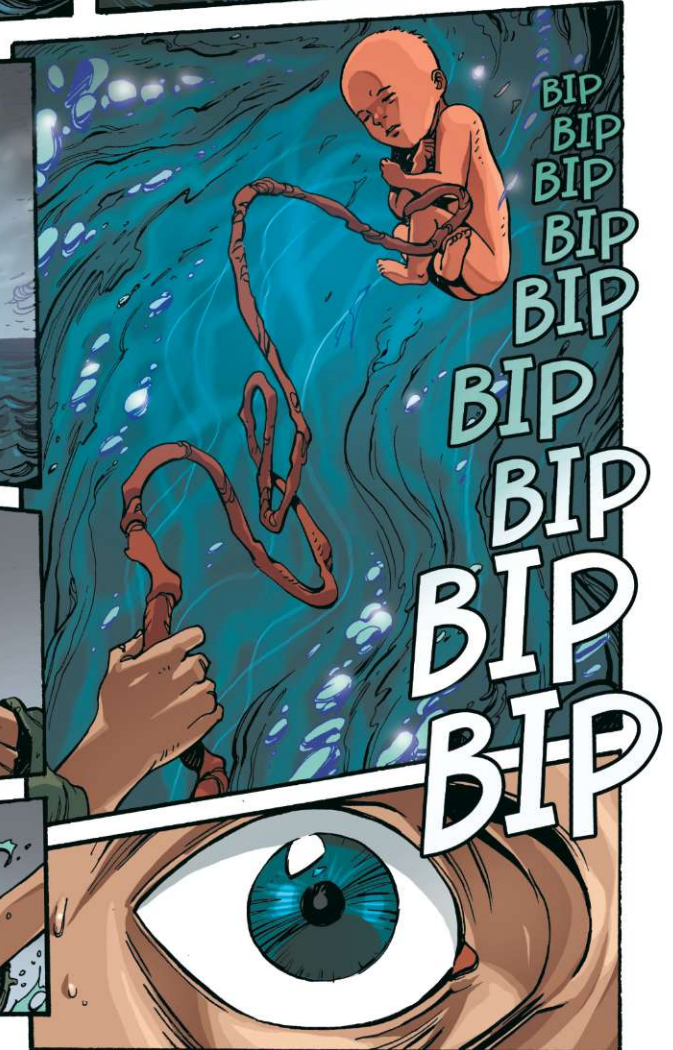


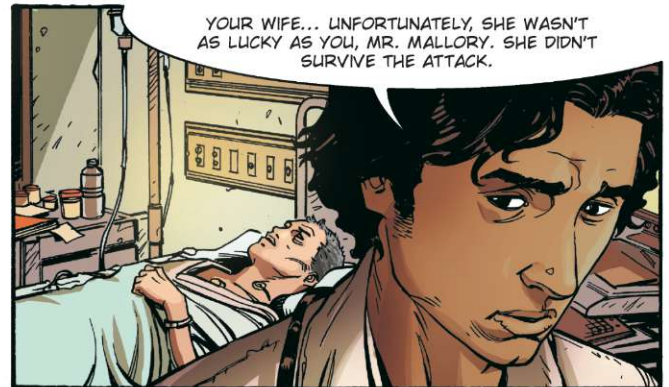
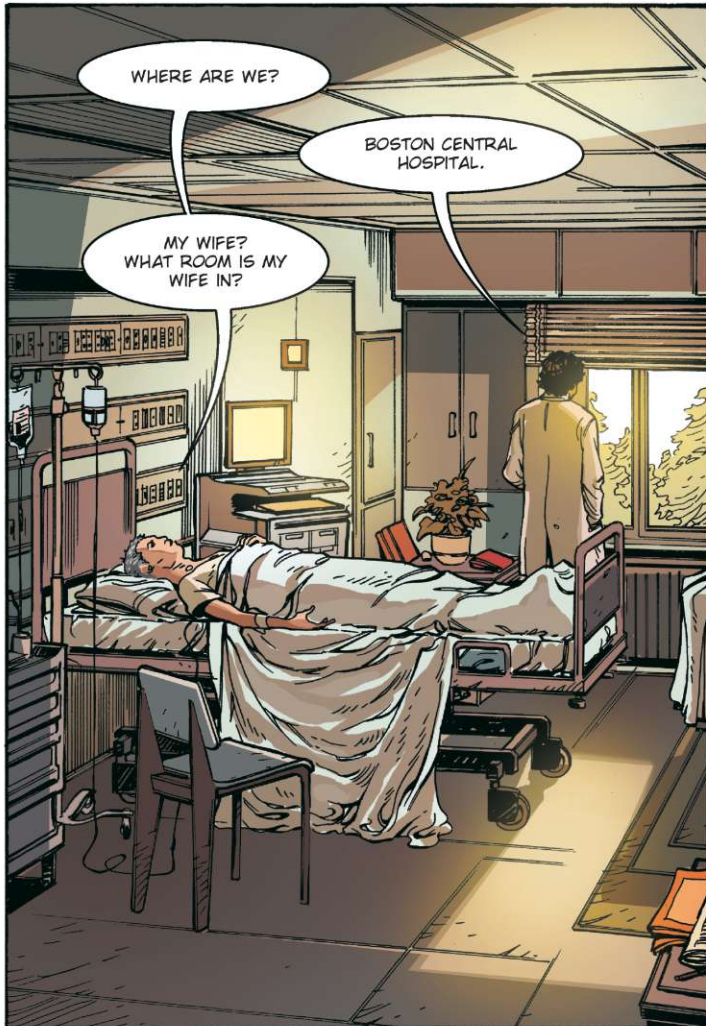
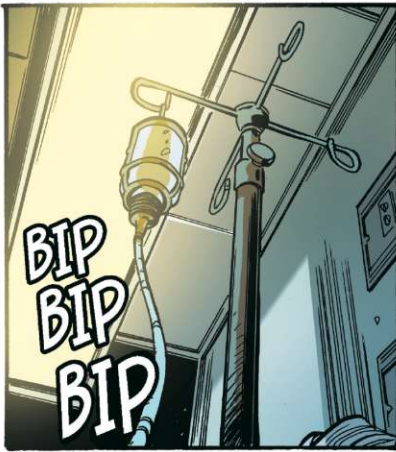
NOTHING. JUST THE JOKE WE HEARD ON THE RADIO...



HA HA!

SERIOUSLY? IT TOOK YOU LONGER TO GET IT THAN A BLONDE, YOU POOR, SWEET DUMMY!







TELL ME THAT THE BABY'S ALRIGHT, DOCTOR.



I'M SO INCREDIBLY SORRY. HE WASN'T ABLE TO BE SAVED, EITHER.

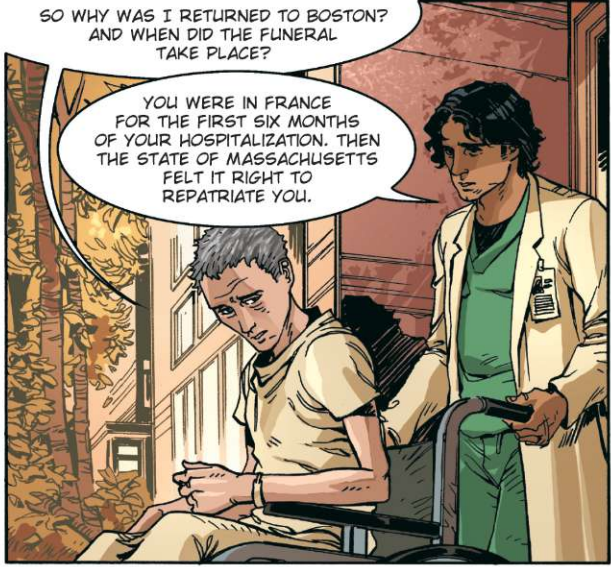


YOU HAVE MY HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES, MR. MALLORY.



WHERE EXACTLY ARE MY WIFE AND SON, DOCTOR?

I READ IN YOUR FILE THAT THEY WERE BOTH BURIED IN PARIS. AT THE MONTMARTRE CEMETERY, IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN.



SO WHY WAS I RETURNED TO BOSTON? AND WHEN DID THE FUNERAL TAKE PLACE?

YOU WERE IN FRANCE FOR THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF YOUR HOSPITALIZATION. THEN THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS FELT IT RIGHT TO REPATRIATE YOU.

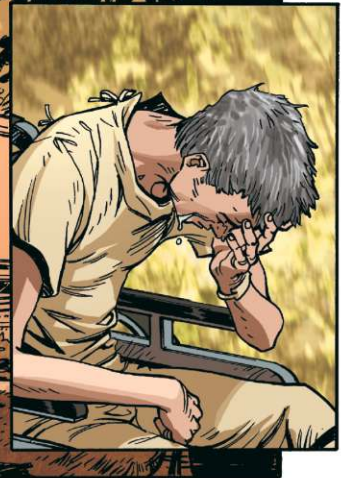


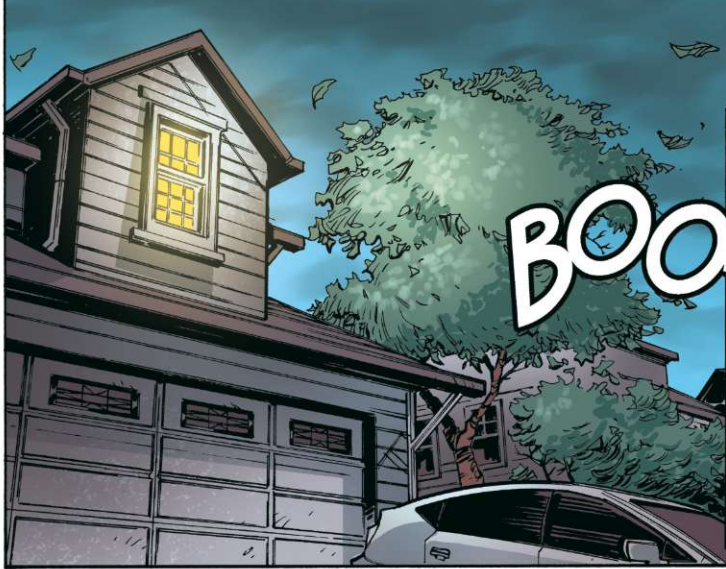
THE FIRST SIX MONTHS? MY GOD, HOW LONG WAS I UNCONSCIOUS FOR?



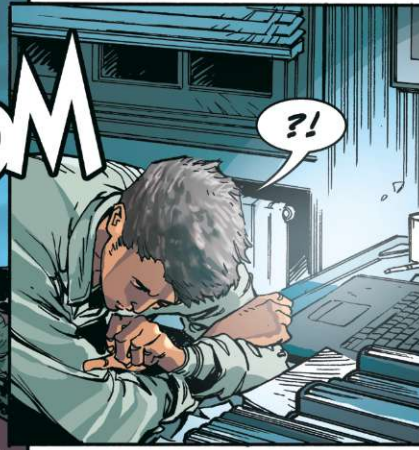
YOUR COMA LASTED THREE YEARS, MR. MALLORY.

THREE YEARS?



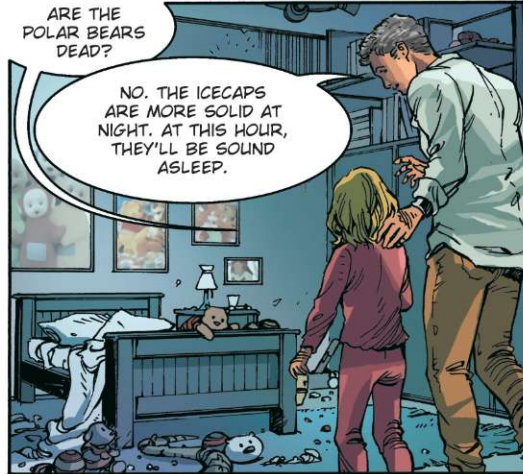


BOOM



MOMMY...

LOREEN? WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP?



ARE THE POLAR BEARS DEAD?

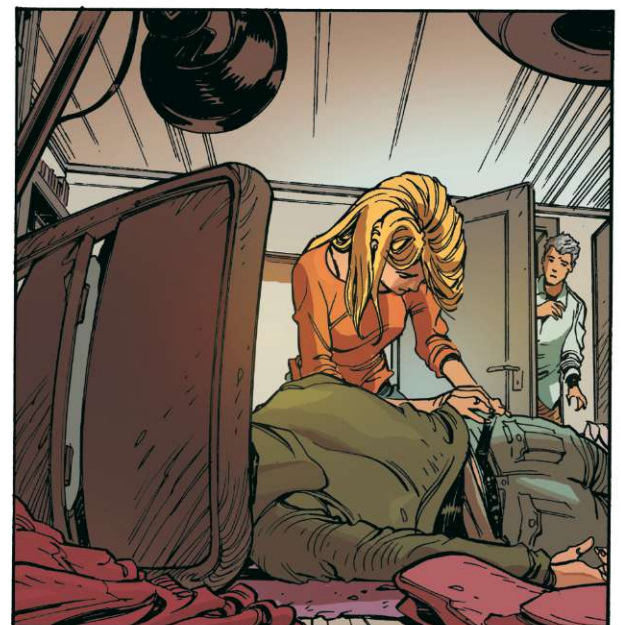
NO. THE ICECAPS ARE MORE SOLID AT NIGHT. AT THIS HOUR, THEY'LL BE SOUND ASLEEP.



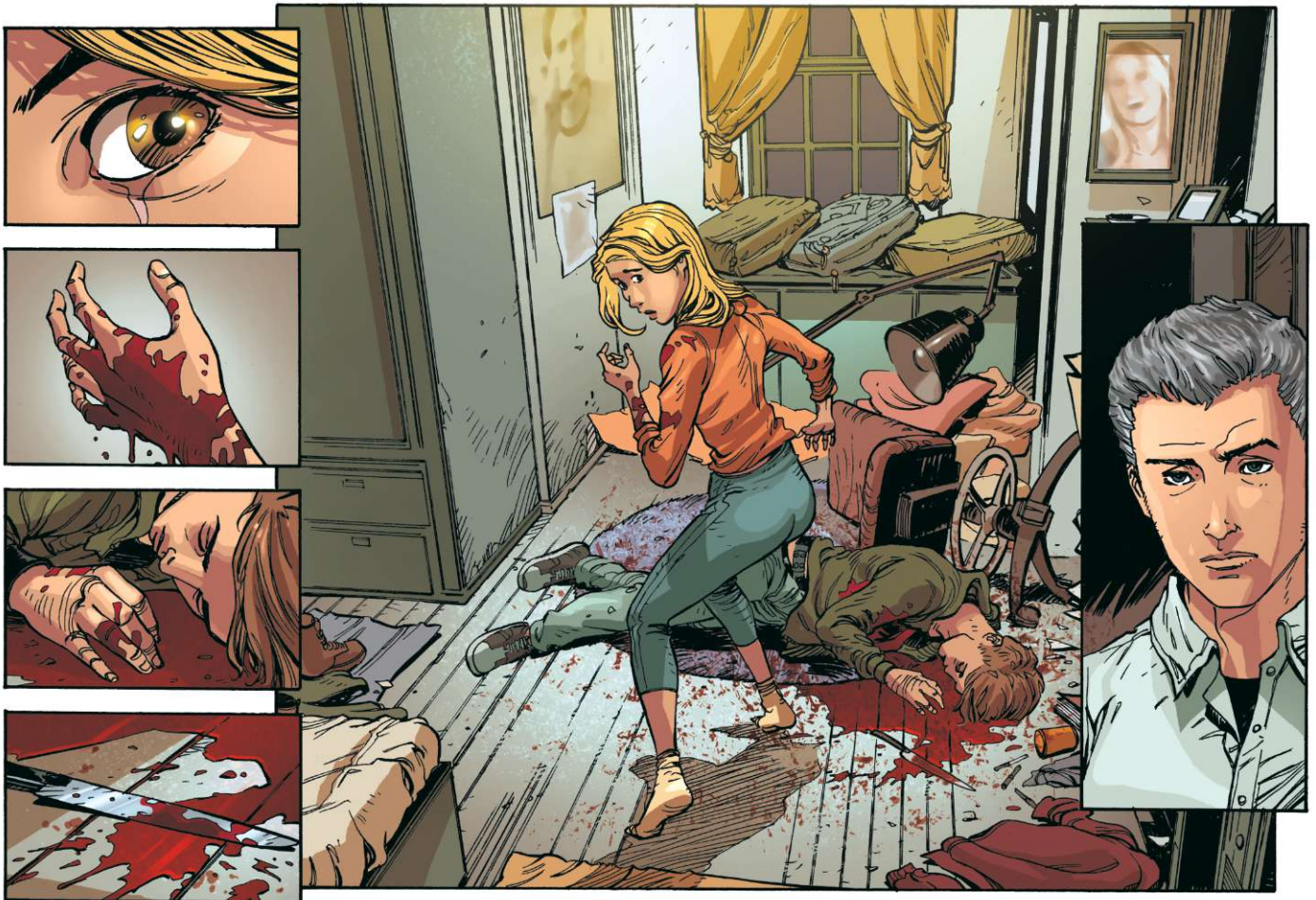
WHAT'S THAT?

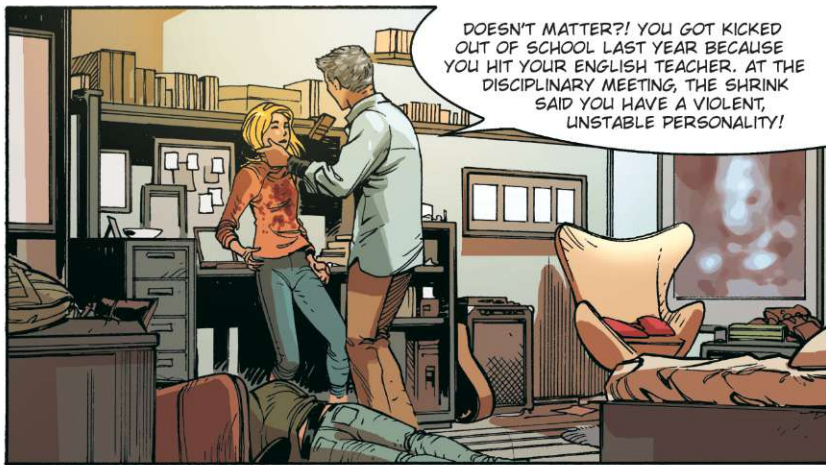
BOOM

NOTHING... THE WASHING MACHINE. NOW, SLEEP!



WHA--?!





DOESN'T MATTER?! YOU GOT KICKED OUT OF SCHOOL LAST YEAR BECAUSE YOU HIT YOUR ENGLISH TEACHER. AT THE DISCIPLINARY MEETING, THE SHRINK SAID YOU HAVE A VIOLENT, UNSTABLE PERSONALITY!



YOU CAN BE SURE THAT THE BOY'S PARENTS WILL USE THAT EPISODE AGAINST YOU AT YOUR TRIAL!

TRIAL? BUT HE TRIED TO FORCE ME... WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO?



I'M TRYING TO UNDERSTAND, NAOMI. WHAT WAS THAT KITCHEN KNIFE DOING IN YOUR BEDROOM?



IT'S MY LETTER OPENER...



IT'S A GODDAMN FUCKING BUTCHER'S KNIFE!

BUT I'M TELLING YOU, IT WAS AN ACCIDENT...



THE PROBLEM, NAOMI, IS THEY'LL CONSIDER IT A CRIME OF PASSION...



ARE YOU GONNA CALL THE COPS?



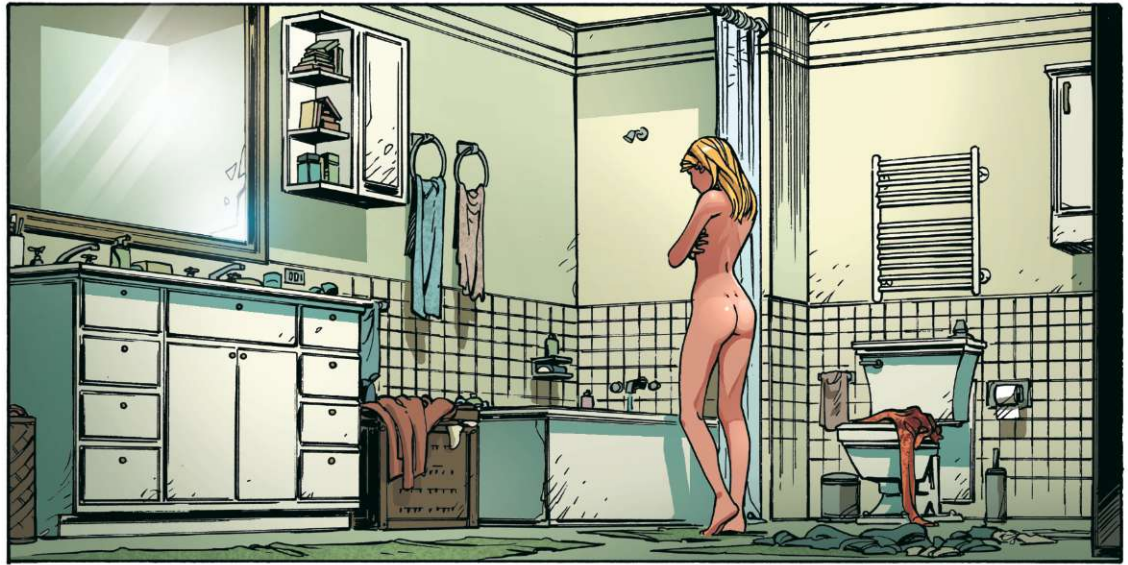
NO. GO GET UNDRRESSED AND RUN A BATH. AND STAY THERE!

AND WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?



WHAT'S NECESSARY. NOW, GET GOING!





WHAT WERE YOU LOOKING FOR IN HIS POCKETS, NAOMI?



AH!



HE TOOK YOUR ADVICE, SERVANE. "DON'T PUT YOUR PHONE NEXT TO YOUR BALLS!"



???



FUCK, NAOMI. NOW THIS, TOO?



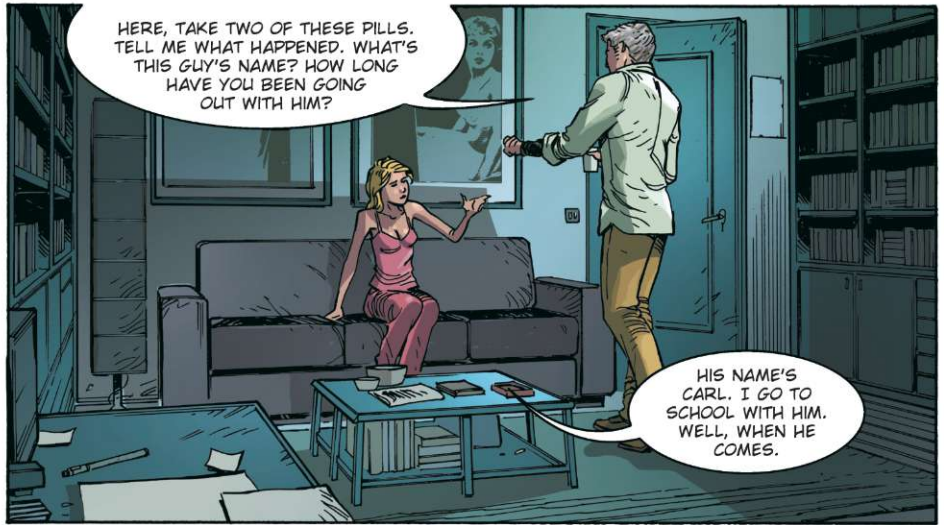
FROM NAOMI, 8:13 PM: "NOT BFORE MIDNIGHT. IN DA GARDEN" SENT TO NAOMI, 11:57 PM: "OPEN 4 ME!"



SENT TO NAOMI, 8:12 PM: "HAV 2 SEE U TONIGHT!"



THIS GUY WAS NO FUCKING SHAKESPEARE!



HERE, TAKE TWO OF THESE PILLS. TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED. WHAT'S THIS GUY'S NAME? HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GOING OUT WITH HIM?

HIS NAME'S CARL. I GO TO SCHOOL WITH HIM. WELL, WHEN HE COMES.



HE'S BEEN PESTERING ME SINCE SCHOOL STARTED. THE LAST TWO WEEKS... LET'S SAY I'VE BEEN LEADING HIM ON.



YOU CAN SLEEP OUT HERE TONIGHT. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE REST. NOW, TELL ME, WHO KNOWS ABOUT THE TWO OF YOU?

WE'RE NOT REALLY A "THING". BESIDES A KISS OR TWO, NOTHING EVER HAPPENED!



I CAN'T EVER GO BACK INTO MY ROOM, IAN. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT CARL?



YOU SPEND HOURS ON YOUR PHONE, NAOMI.



YOU MUST TELL YOUR GIRLFRIENDS ABOUT THAT SORT OF THING!



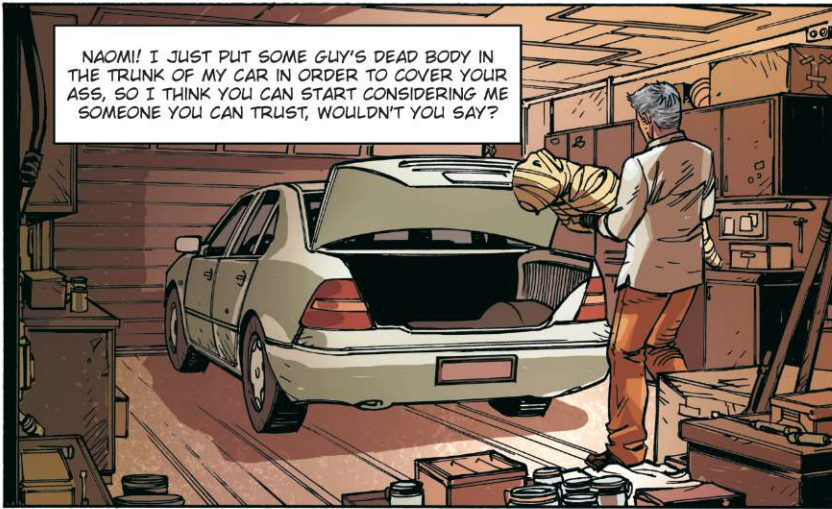
CARL'S NOT THAT POPULAR AT SCHOOL, Y'KNOW, SO I DIDN'T REALLY BRAG ABOUT IT.



HE'S GOOD LOOKING, HE SKIPS CLASS, AND DOES COKE, BUT HE'S NOT "POPULAR"! DO YOU THINK I'M AN IDIOT? BY THE WAY, IS THIS WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR EARLIER?



I SWEAR TO YOU, I NEVER USE THAT...



NAOMI! I JUST PUT SOME GUY'S DEAD BODY IN THE TRUNK OF MY CAR IN ORDER TO COVER YOUR ASS, SO I THINK YOU CAN START CONSIDERING ME SOMEONE YOU CAN TRUST, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?



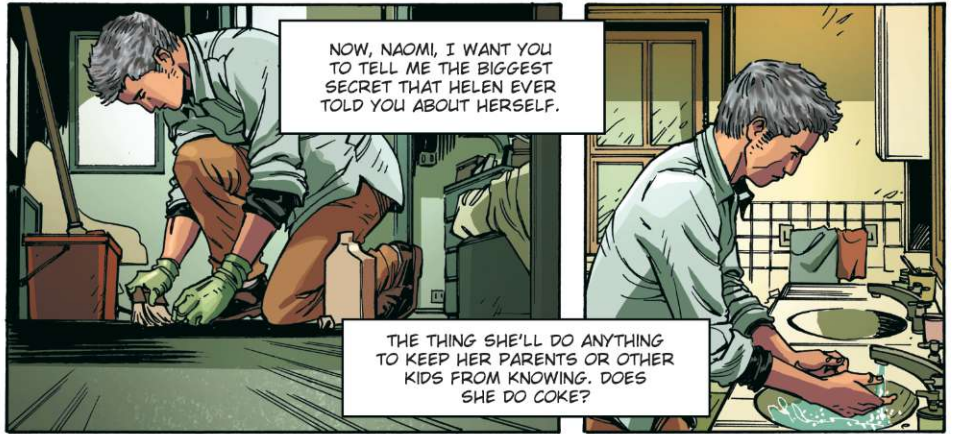
WHO KNOWS THAT CARL WAS HERE TONIGHT?



HELEN KNOWS ABOUT CARL AND ME... AND THAT HE WAS COMING OVER.

HELEN WHO?

HELEN PEABODY.



NOW, NAOMI, I WANT YOU TO TELL ME THE BIGGEST SECRET THAT HELEN EVER TOLD YOU ABOUT HERSELF.

THE THING SHE'LL DO ANYTHING TO KEEP HER PARENTS OR OTHER KIDS FROM KNOWING. DOES SHE DO COKE?



WELL, NO... I SWEAR, I DON'T GET WHAT... SHE'S LIKE A NUN. SHE DOESN'T EVEN SKIP GYM!



COME ON, THINK. THEN I'LL LET YOU SLEEP.



OH, WAIT... THIS SUMMER, SHE... GOT HER CLITORIS PIERCED.

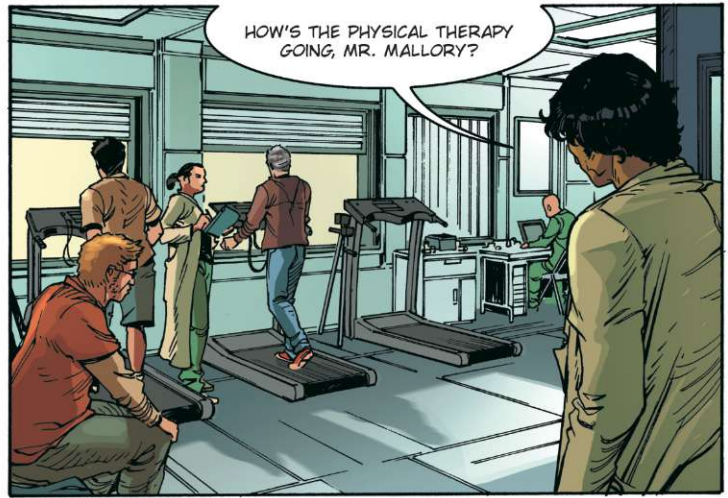


A REAL NUN! YOU HAVEN'T SPENT MANY SUNDAYS SITTING IN MASS, HAVE YOU?

DON'T TELL HER I TOLD YOU... SHE'D BE SO PISSED OFF AT ME.



AND THAT WOULD BE A BIG DEAL, HUH?



HOW'S THE PHYSICAL THERAPY GOING, MR. MALLORY?



CAN I TALK TO YOU, DOCTOR?



OF COURSE. WHAT IS IT?

LET'S GO.



NOW THAT MY CONDITION'S STABLE, I HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW: HAVE THEY FOUND MY WIFE'S KILLER, YES OR NO?

I'M NOT ACTUALLY IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE FRENCH POLICE.



TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW, DOCTOR. AND I MEAN EVERYTHING!

ALRIGHT.



ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE HOSPITAL IN PARIS, IT'S STILL AN ONGOING INVESTIGATION. I'M TRULY SORRY.

BUT WHY?



I DON'T HAVE DETAILS, BUT BASICALLY: THE BIKER HAD A HELMET ON, THE BIKE WAS STOLEN, AND THE GUN WAS NEVER FOUND.

WHAT ABOUT THE BALLISTICS REPORT? WAS THE GUN REGISTERED?



WHAT REPORT? MR. MALLORY, THERE WAS ONLY ONE BULLET FIRED...



...AND THAT BULLET'S STILL INSIDE YOUR HEAD!





AAAAAAAAAAAAAARGH!!!



THE PROOF IS RIGHT HERE, DOCTOR.

I KNOW. AND BELIEVE ME, IF THERE WAS ANYTHING I COULD DO...



HAVE SOME FAITH IN THE FRENCH POLICE. YOU PROBABLY HAVEN'T HEARD THE LAST FROM THEM YET.



PPFF... I USED TO TRAIN THEM IN TRACKING CRIMINALS ON THE INTERNET. BECAUSE IT'S THE FUCKING MIDDLE AGES OVER THERE!



CAPTAIN MASSART, I THINK. DOESN'T THAT PROVE HE'S MOTIVATED?



WHAT I MEAN IS, ONE OF YOUR FRENCH COLLEAGUES CAME TO SEE ME, A WHILE AFTER YOU ARRIVED HERE.



I BARELY KNEW HIM. WHAT EXACTLY DID HE WANT?



THE SAME THING AS YOU. FOR ME TO OPEN UP YOUR SKULL!

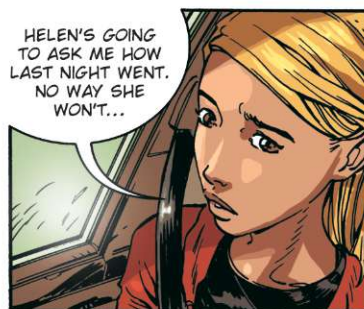
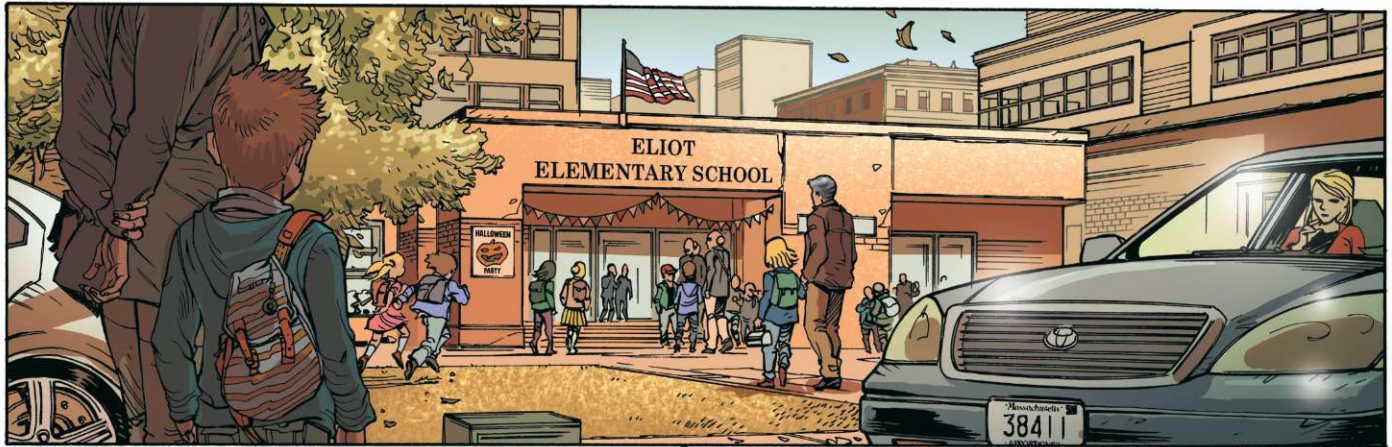
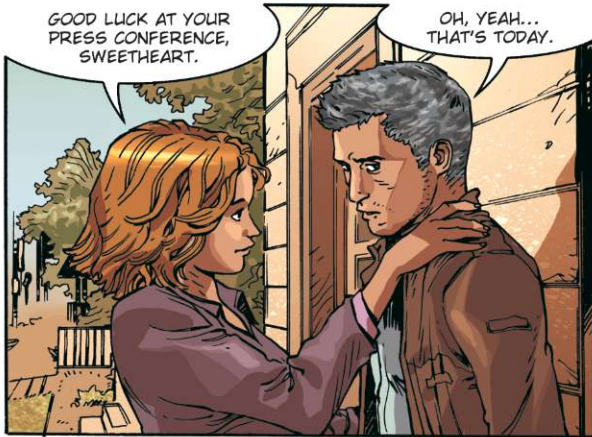


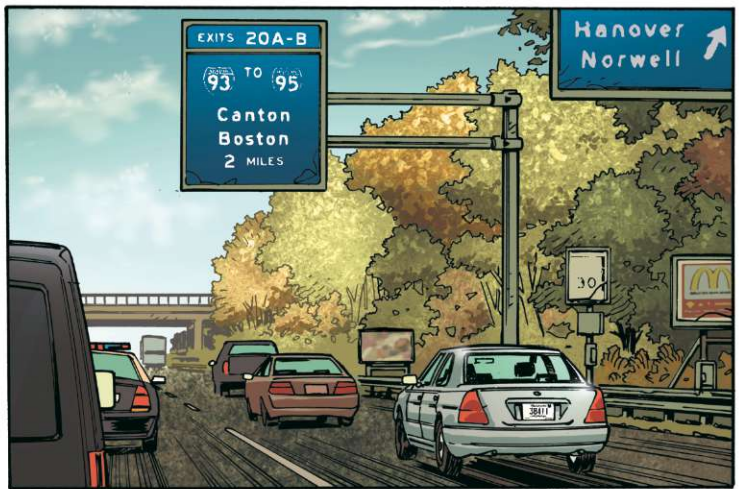
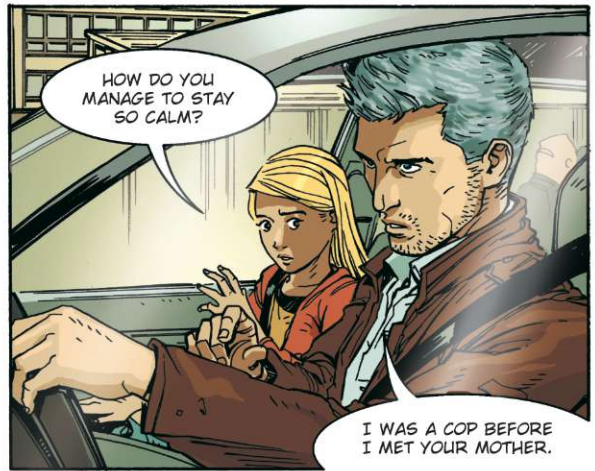
YOU WERE CONDEMNED TO LIFE IN A VEGETATIVE STATE, SO HE DIDN'T SEE WHAT THE PROBLEM WAS. AND IT WOULD INCREASE THEIR CHANCES OF CATCHING THE BIKER CONSIDERABLY.

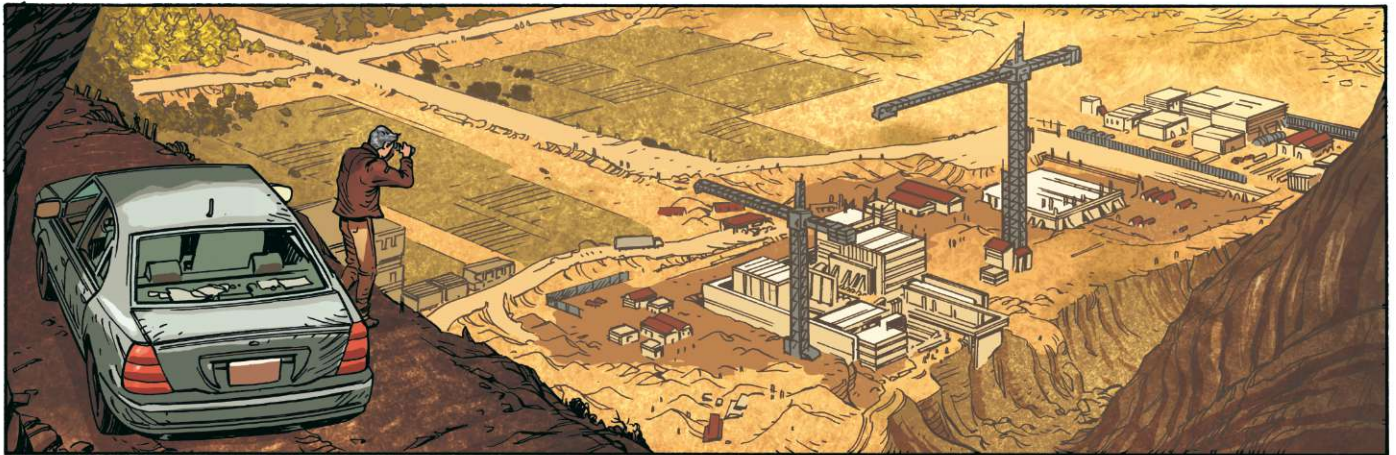
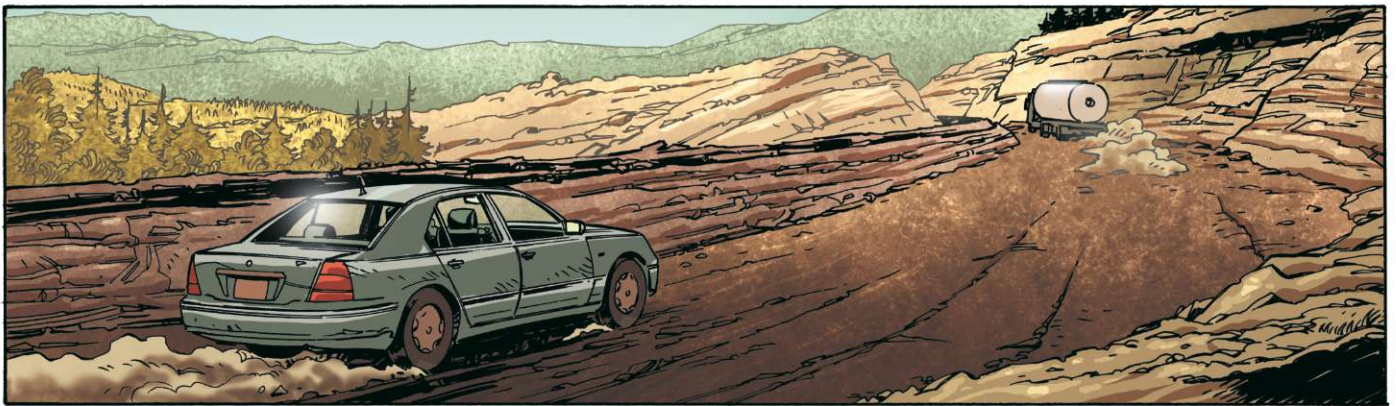
OBVIOUSLY. YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE WHAT HE ASKED YOU TO!

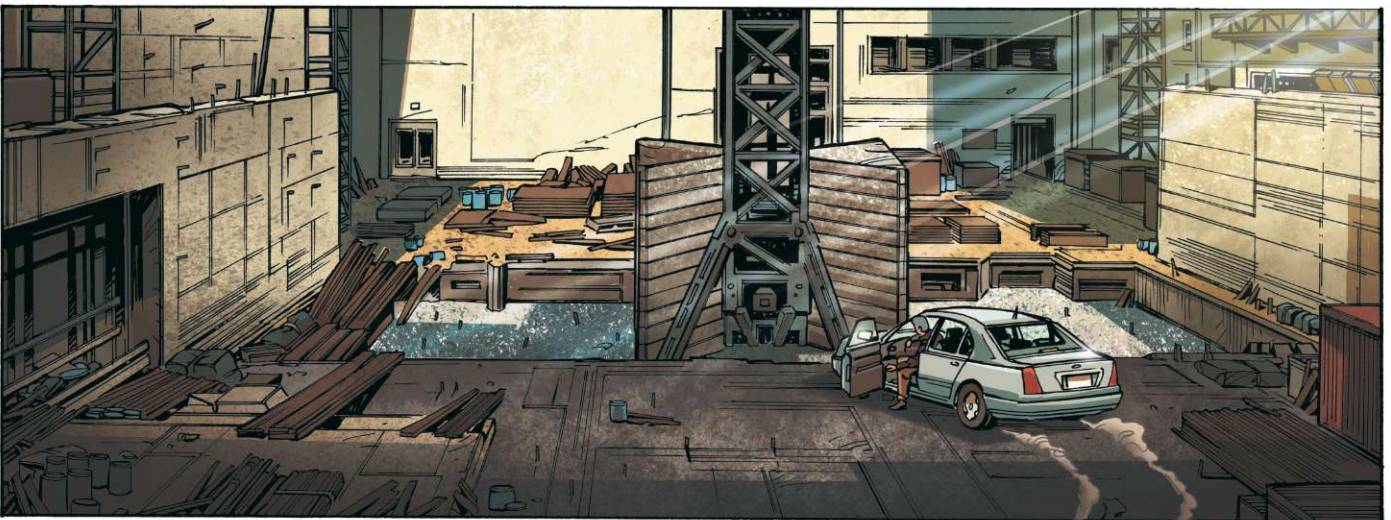
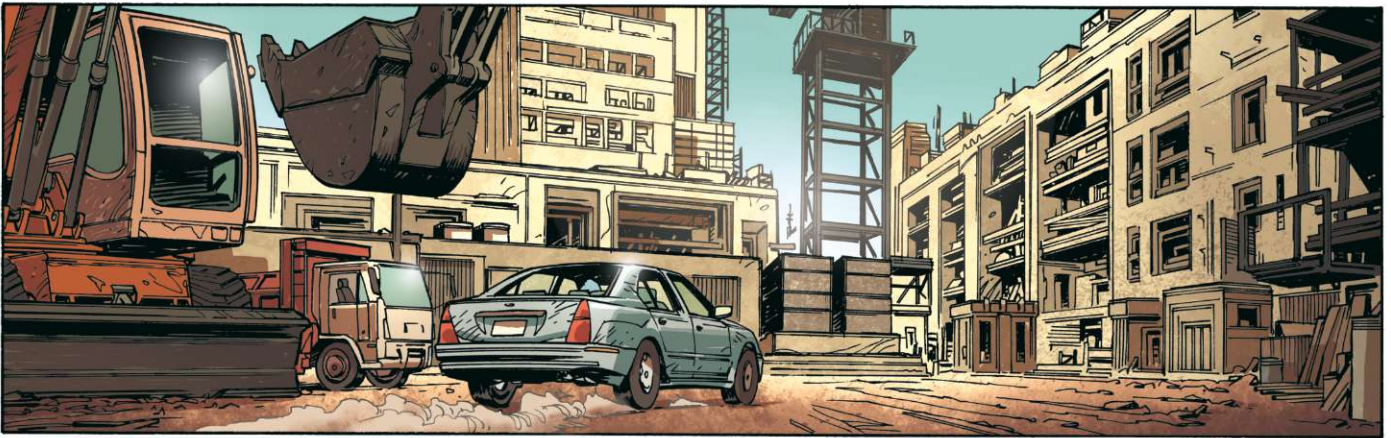
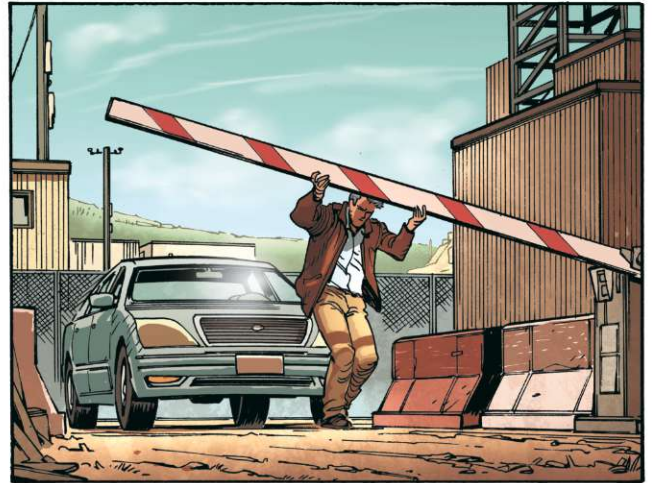
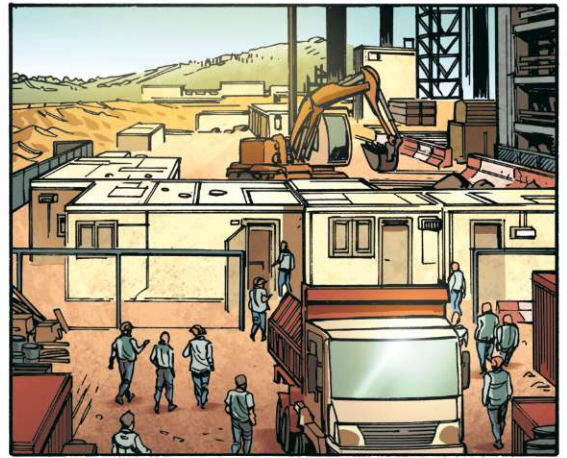


I ONLY HAVE THE RIGHT TO KILL MY PATIENTS INVOLUNTARILY, MR. MALLORY!

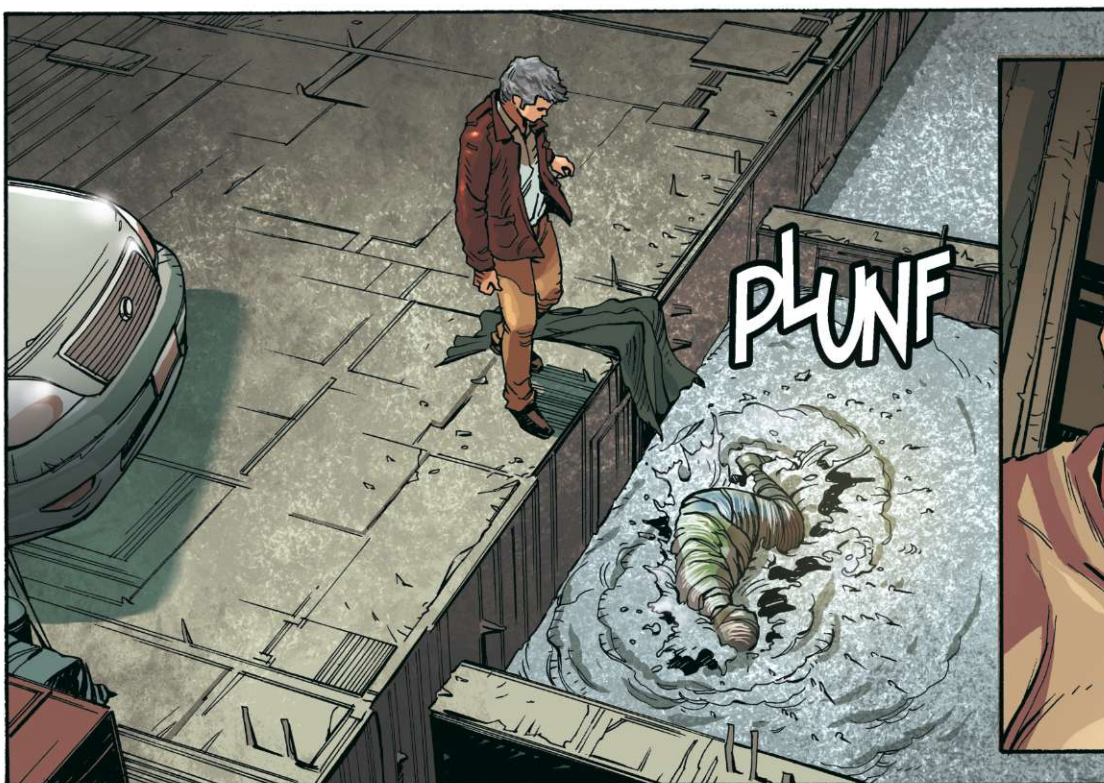
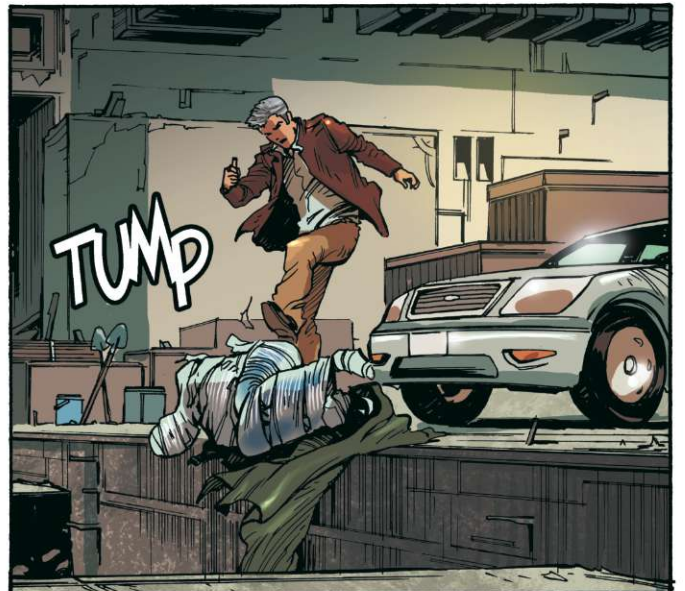


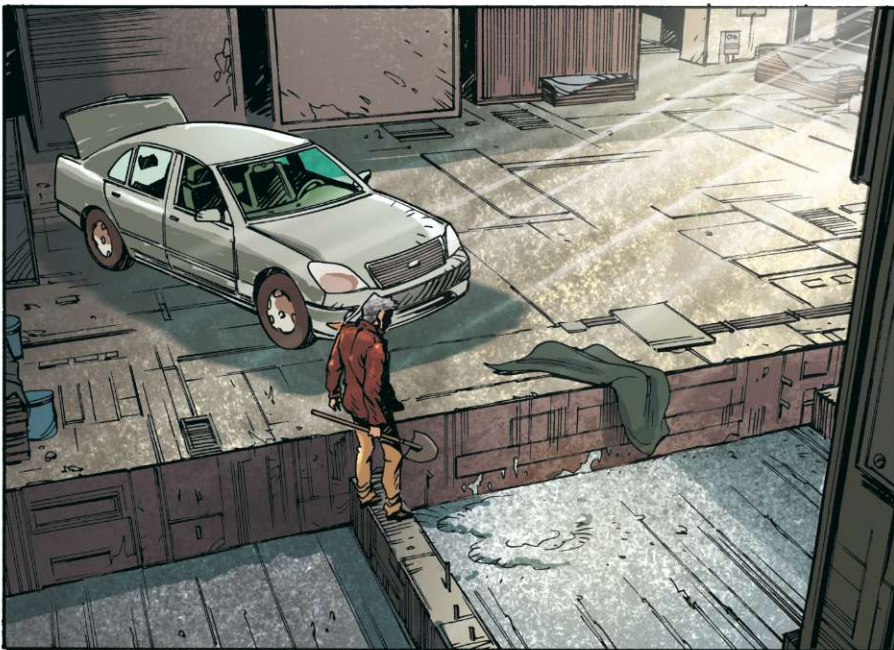


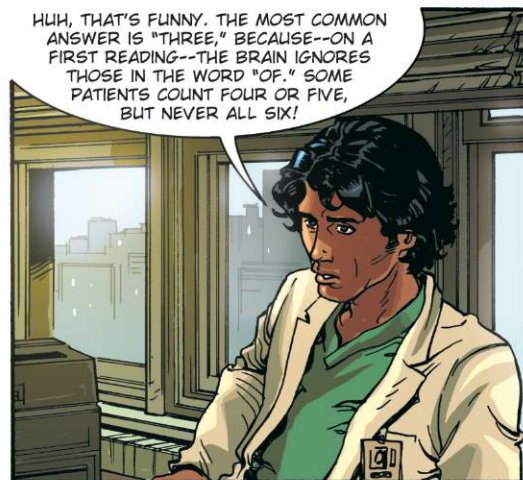
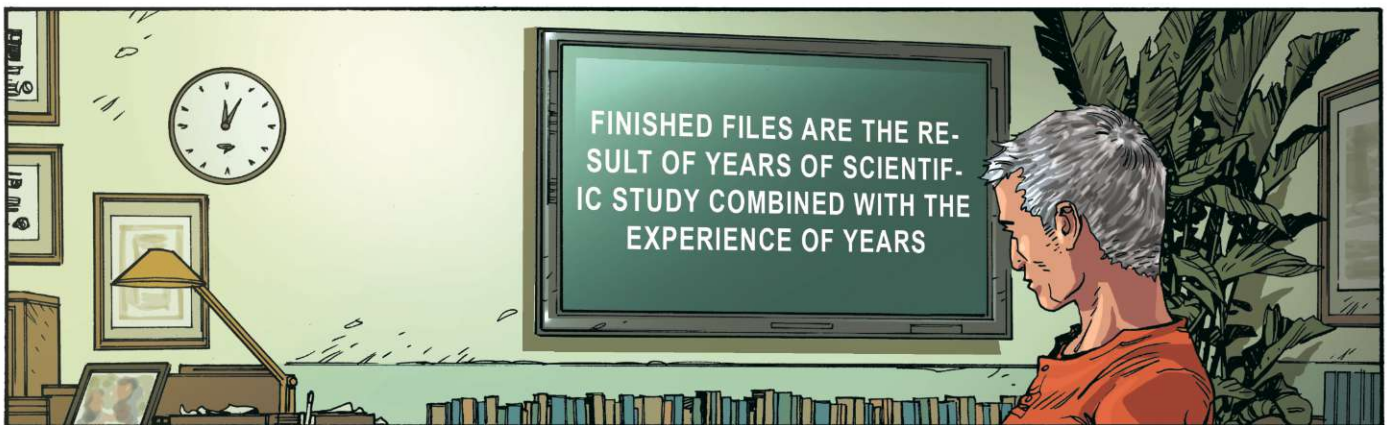
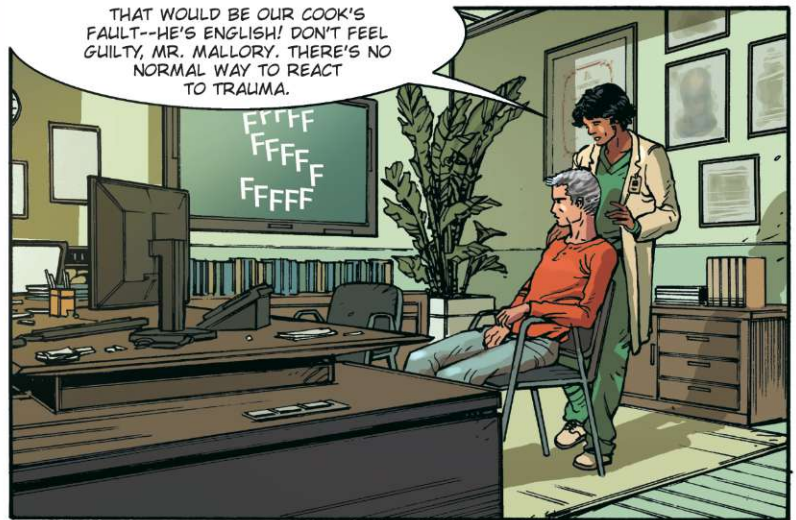
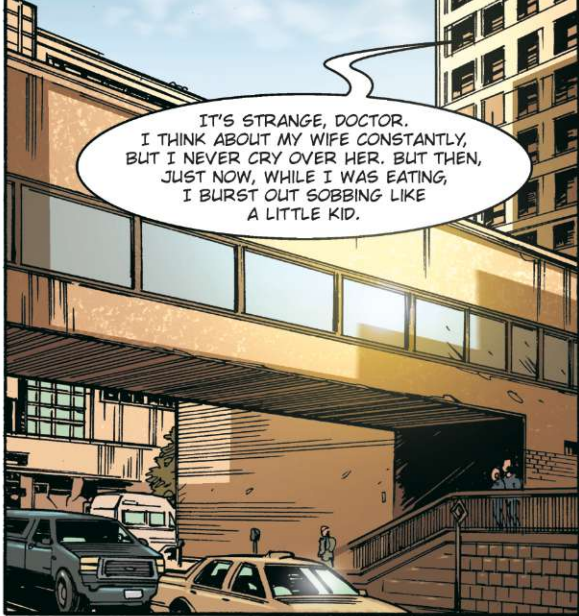


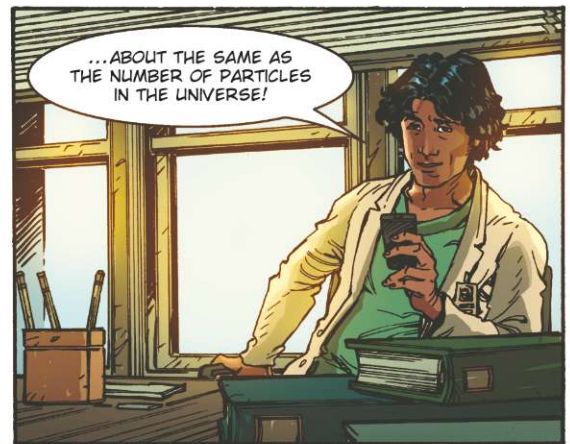
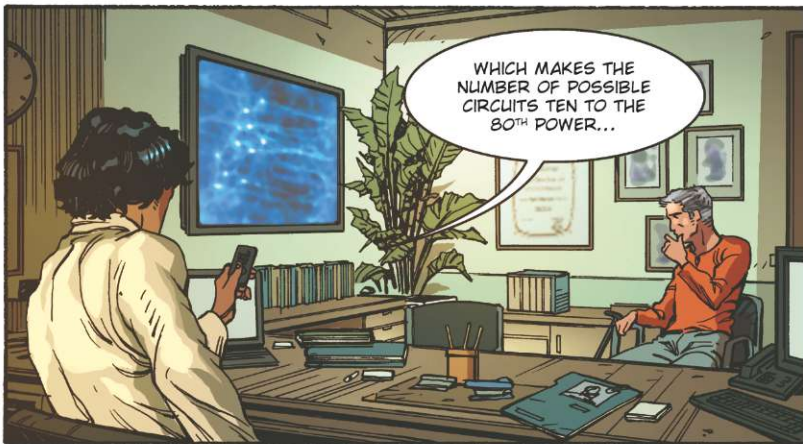
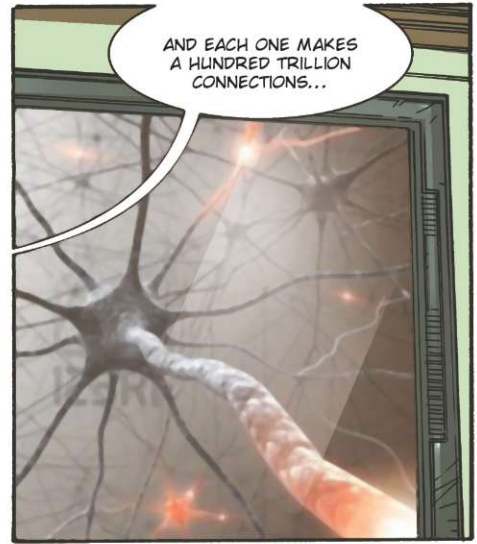
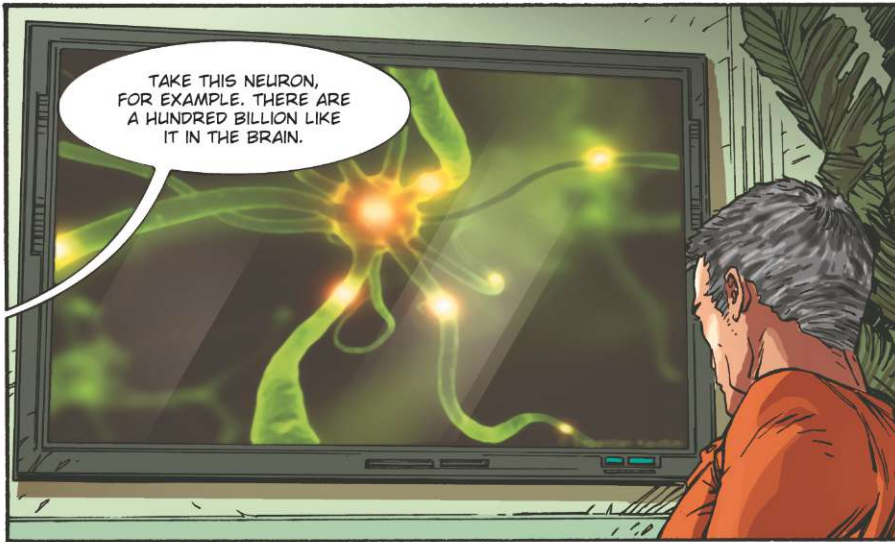
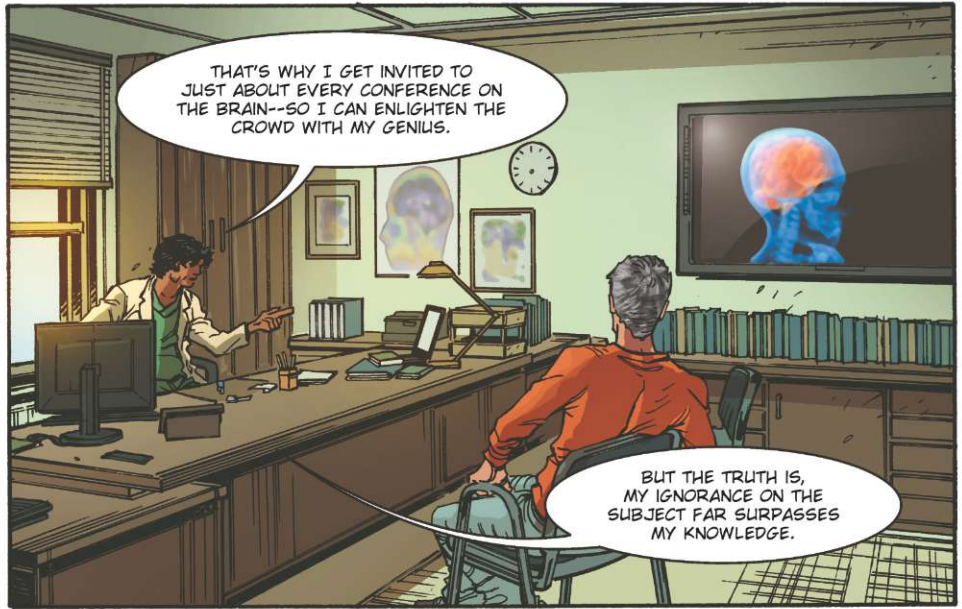


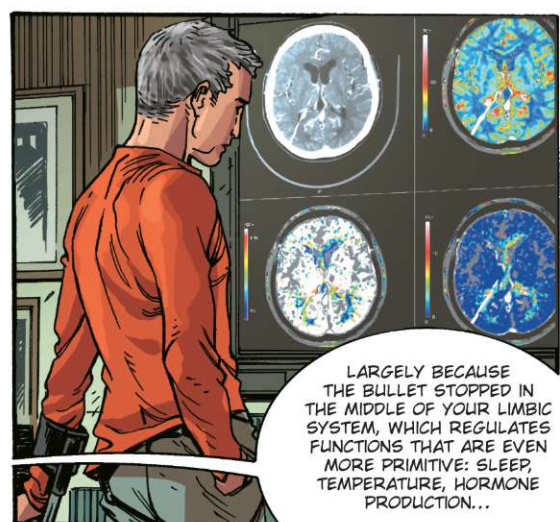






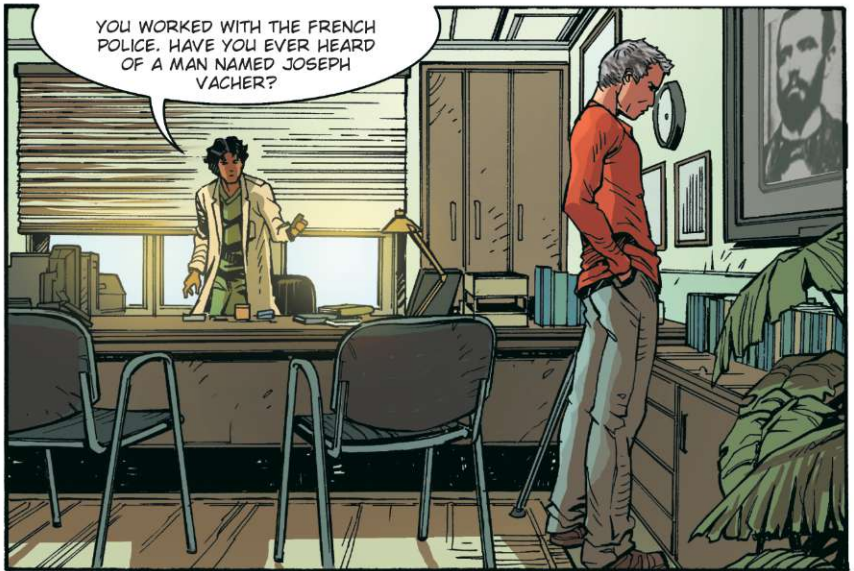




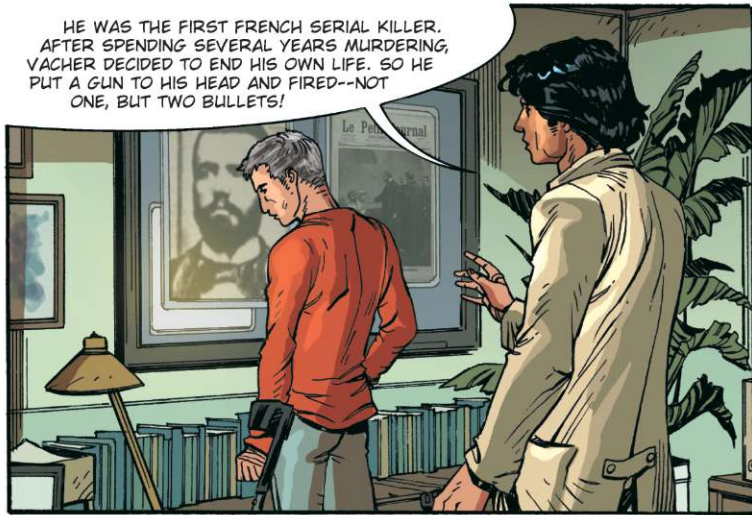




HOW IS A MIRACLE LIKE THAT POSSIBLE, DOCTOR?



YOU WORKED WITH THE FRENCH POLICE. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A MAN NAMED JOSEPH VACHER?



HE WAS THE FIRST FRENCH SERIAL KILLER. AFTER SPENDING SEVERAL YEARS MURDERING, VACHER DECIDED TO END HIS OWN LIFE. SO HE PUT A GUN TO HIS HEAD AND FIRED--NOT ONE, BUT TWO BULLETS!



GOD MUST'VE BEEN DISTRACTED THAT DAY, BECAUSE VACHER SURVIVED!



WERE HIS FACULTIES STILL INTACT?



THEY SURE WERE. HE CONTINUED TO KILL FOR YEARS!

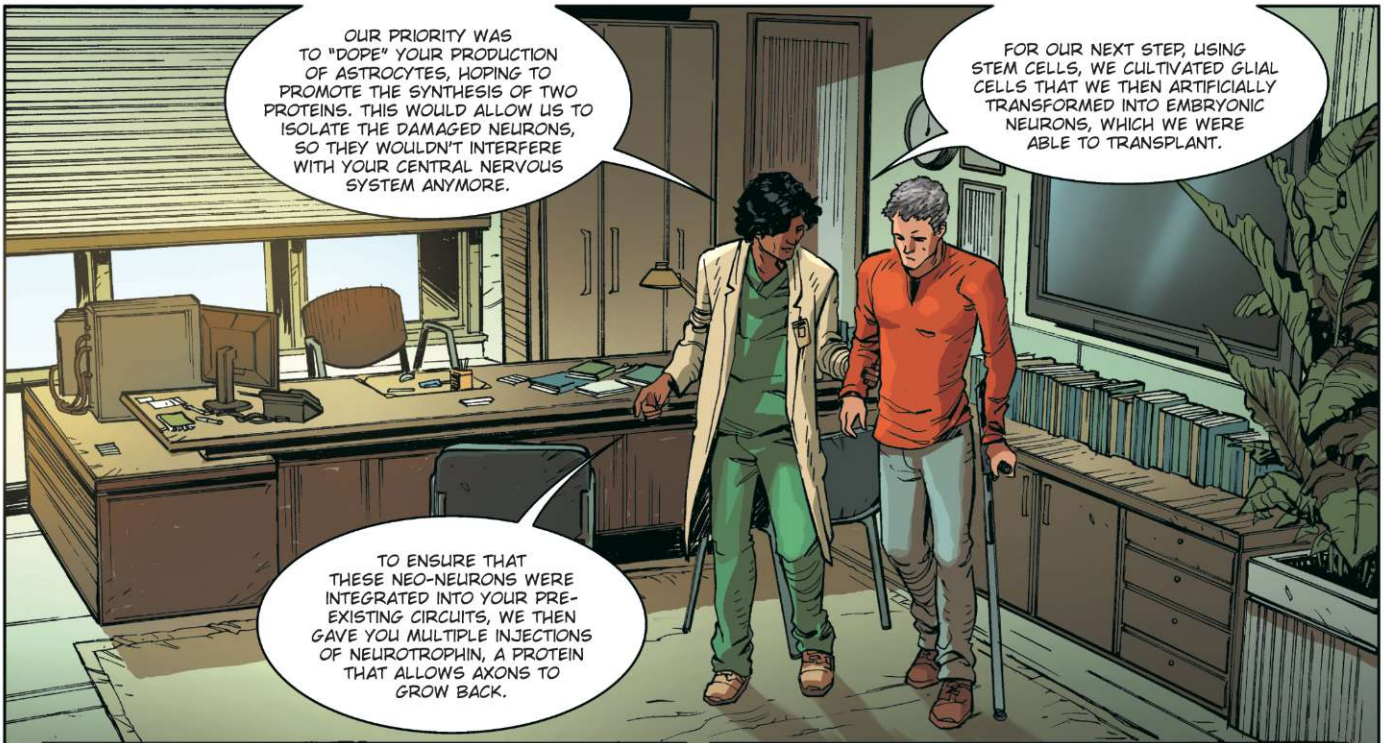


IT'S THOUGHT THAT THE TWO BULLETS LODGED THEMSELVES IN RELATIVELY INACTIVE ZONES.

WHICH ISN'T MY CASE!



BASICALLY, FOR YOU, WE HAD TO COMBINE TREATMENTS FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASES: HUNTINGTON'S, PARKINSON'S, ALZHEIMER'S, STROKES...



OUR PRIORITY WAS TO "DOPE" YOUR PRODUCTION OF ASTROCYTES, HOPING TO PROMOTE THE SYNTHESIS OF TWO PROTEINS. THIS WOULD ALLOW US TO ISOLATE THE DAMAGED NEURONS, SO THEY WOULDN'T INTERFERE WITH YOUR CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM ANYMORE.

FOR OUR NEXT STEP, USING STEM CELLS, WE CULTIVATED GLIAL CELLS THAT WE THEN ARTIFICIALLY TRANSFORMED INTO EMBRYONIC NEURONS, WHICH WE WERE ABLE TO TRANSPLANT.

TO ENSURE THAT THESE NEO-NEURONS WERE INTEGRATED INTO YOUR PRE-EXISTING CIRCUITS, WE THEN GAVE YOU MULTIPLE INJECTIONS OF NEUROTROPHIN, A PROTEIN THAT ALLOWS AXONS TO GROW BACK.



TO SUM UP, WE REPLACED YOUR DEAD NEURONS WITH BRAND NEW ONES!



IT'S INCREDIBLE... WITHOUT ANY AFTER-EFFECTS?



I DIDN'T SAY THAT. YOUR BRAIN CREATES NEW CONNECTIONS EVERY DAY, AND NO ONE CAN PREDICT WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES WILL BE. I HOPE NONE OF THEM IS... REGRETTABLE, BUT THAT WOULD SURPRISE ME.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "REGRETTABLE"?



MAYBE THE BRAIN HAS A GOOD REASON TO WANT TO IGNORE CERTAIN "F'S."





DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, MISS. WHICH PAPER IS IT YOU WRITE FOR?

THE *BOSTON LITERARY MAGAZINE*. BUT I'VE JUST COME TO PICK UP A COLLEAGUE. HAS EVERYONE ALREADY LEFT?



WELL, MISS, TODAY'S YOUR LUCKY DAY. HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO IMPRESS YOUR BOSSES. WHAT DO YOU SAY TO AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH MR. MALLORY?



WHY NOT...?



MALLORY: IAN MALLORY. A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.

KIRSTIN MCNEIL. HONORED.



SHOULD I ASSUME THAT YOU'VE READ MY BOOKS?

ONLY THE FIRST ONE. FOR THE TIME BEING, MY EMPLOYERS HAVE CONFINED ME TO THE PHOTOCOPIER.



BUT NOT FOR MUCH LONGER, BELIEVE ME. IS IT OK IF I RECORD THIS?



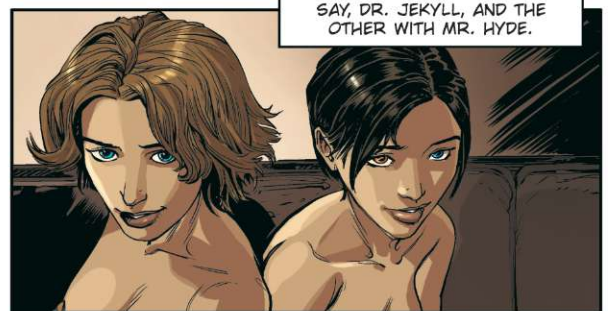
GO AHEAD. BASICALLY, *NO WAY OUT* IS THE STORY OF TWO CONJOINED TWIN SISTERS WHO SHARE A HEART. WHICH BEATS FOR THE SAME MAN.



THEY'VE FOUND IN THIS MAN THE SOLUTION TO THE INEVITABLE JEALOUSY THEY EXPERIENCE WHENEVER THEY SHARE A LOVER.



FOR THE MAN IS SCHIZOPHRENIC...

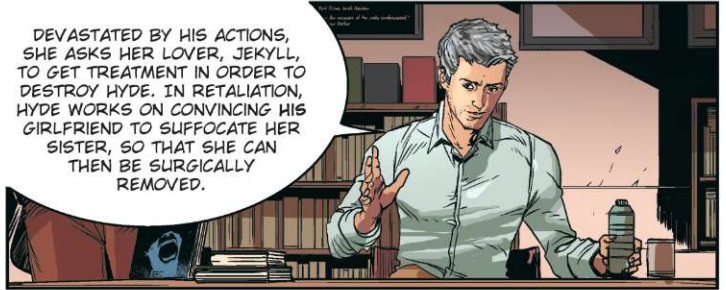


ONE'S IN LOVE WITH, LET'S SAY, DR. JEKYLL, AND THE OTHER WITH MR. HYDE.

THEIR STRANGE RELATIONSHIP HAS NO TROUBLE FINDING AN EQUILIBRIUM, UNTIL ONE DAY THE SMARTER SISTER REALIZES THAT HYDE, WHO IS NOT HER BOYFRIEND, PRETENDED TO BE JEKYLL SO HE COULD SLEEP WITH HER.



DEVASTATED BY HIS ACTIONS, SHE ASKS HER LOVER, JEKYLL, TO GET TREATMENT IN ORDER TO DESTROY HYDE. IN RETALIATION, HYDE WORKS ON CONVINCING HIS GIRLFRIEND TO SUFFOCATE HER SISTER, SO THAT SHE CAN THEN BE SURGICALLY REMOVED.



I SEE YOU'VE STUCK TO COMEDY! THE THEME OF SOUL MATES WHO'VE BEEN SEPARATED IS A RECURRING ONE WITH YOU. IS IT A REFERENCE TO SOMETHING PERSONAL?

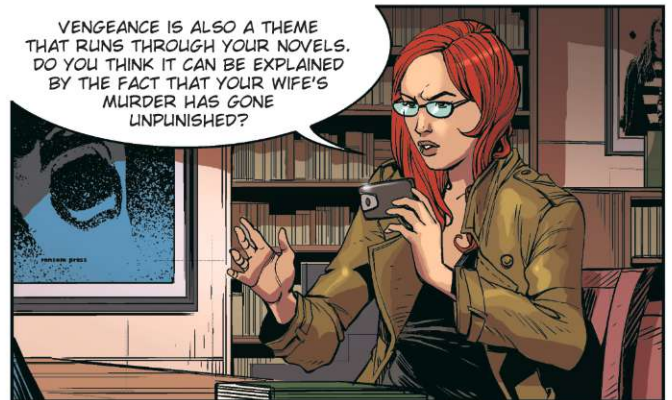


MR. MALLORY PREFERS NOT TO TALK ABOUT HIS PRIVATE LIFE.

IT'S OK, KYLE.



VENGEANCE IS ALSO A THEME THAT RUNS THROUGH YOUR NOVELS. DO YOU THINK IT CAN BE EXPLAINED BY THE FACT THAT YOUR WIFE'S MURDER HAS GONE UNPUNISHED?

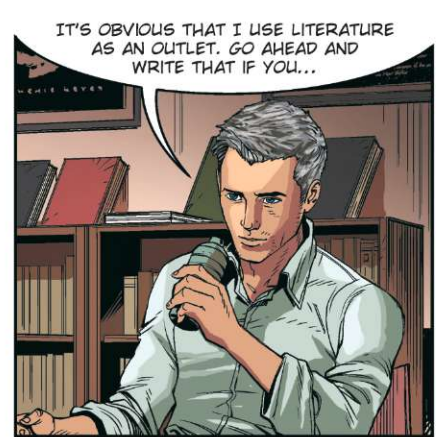


FOR A NEW RECRUIT, YOU'VE REALLY DONE YOUR RESEARCH.

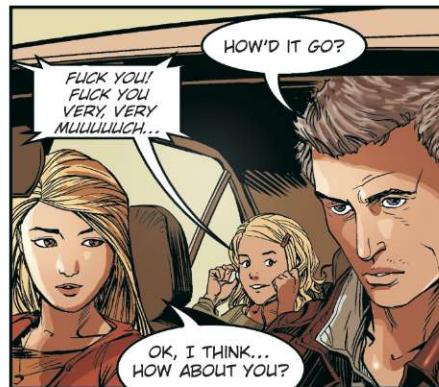
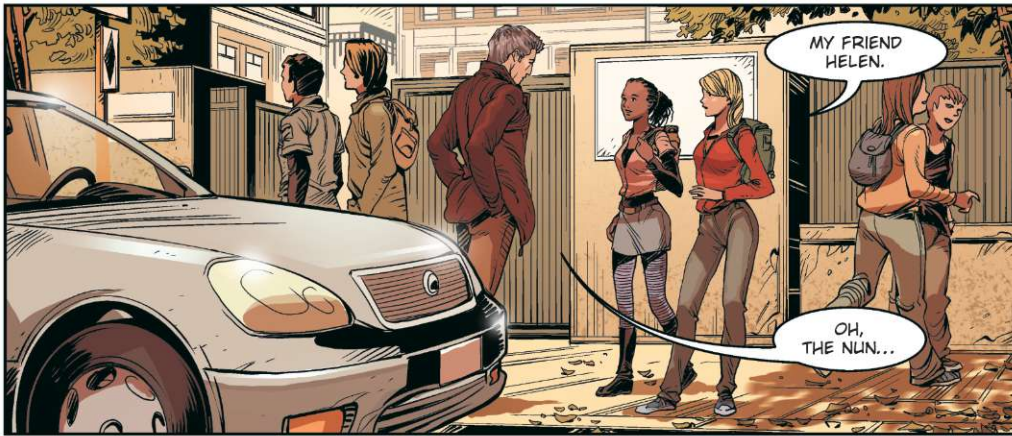
I TOLD YOU THAT I WASN'T GOING TO BE AN INTERN FOR LONG!



IT'S OBVIOUS THAT I USE LITERATURE AS AN OUTLET. GO AHEAD AND WRITE THAT IF YOU...









DON'T JUST WALK AWAY!



NAOMI!

INGRRR...
IIIIIGRRR-
RRRRR...



I SAW THE VIDEO. CARL WAS TRYING TO BLACKMAIL YOU, YEAH?



YOU SAW THE VIDEO?!

DON'T WORRY, I STOPPED WATCHING IN TIME. NOW, OPEN UP.



IT WASN'T COKE THAT YOU FOUND. IT WAS ICE.*

CARL WANTED ME TO BRING SOME BACK FROM NEW MEXICO.

*ROCK-LIKE CHUNKS OF METHAMPHETAMINE.



HE SAID WITH MY LOOKS THERE WAS NO RISK. BUT WHEN I REFUSED, HE THREATENED TO POST OUR VIDEO...

...AND I LOST IT.



WHO'S STUART?

STUART??



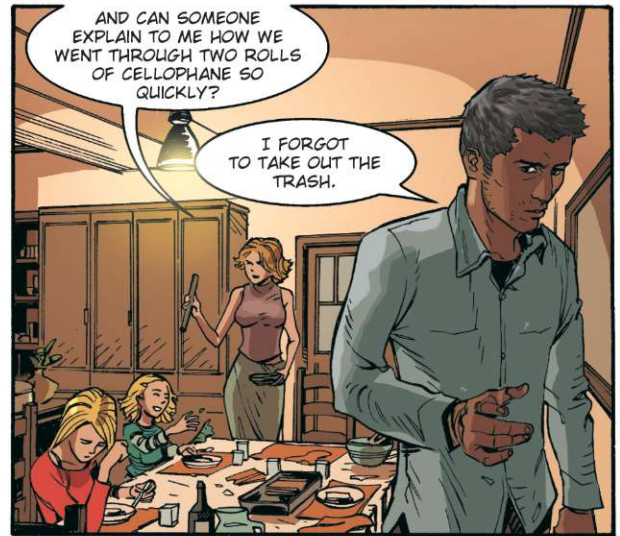
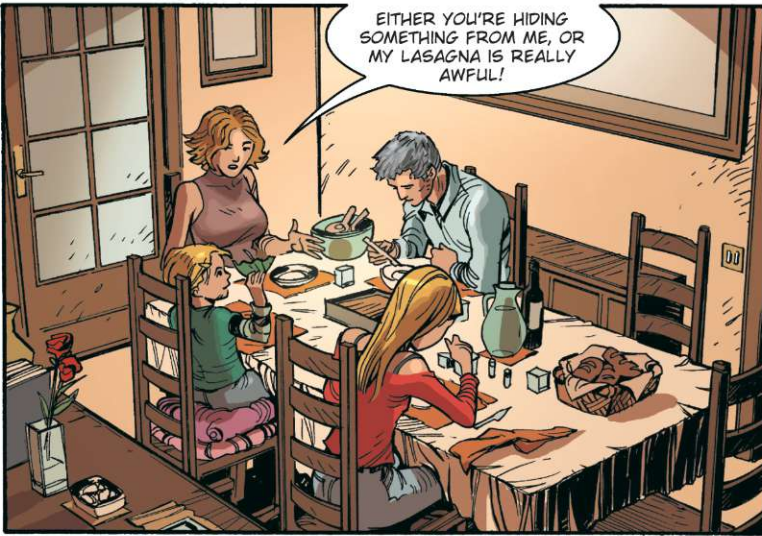
YOU WON'T TELL MOM WHAT I DID WITH CARL, WILL YOU?



YOU'VE MADE ME AN ACCOMPLICE IN A MURDER, NAOMI. NOW MY LIFE DEPENDS ON YOUR ABILITY TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT, SO DON'T EVER SAY THAT NAME AGAIN. EVER!

OR I SWEAR, I'LL VANISH INTO THIN AIR AND LET YOU DEAL WITH THE LAW ON YOUR OWN. GOT IT?







MAKE IT QUICK. I'VE HAD A LONG DAY.



I TOOK THE TROUBLE TO OBSERVE YOU PERSONALLY TODAY. AND THE LEAST YOU COULD SAY IS THAT I WASN'T DISAPPOINTED.



WHY IS THE FORT* HAVING ME FOLLOWED? I CALLED IT QUITS AT THE NSA FIVE YEARS AGO, THE DAY MY JOB COST ME MY WIFE AND SON!

* NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY HEADQUARTERS.



WE'RE DEEPLY SADDENED BY WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, MR. MALLORY. BUT YOU'RE MISTAKEN--YOUR WIFE DIDN'T DIE BECAUSE YOU WORKED FOR OUR AGENCY.



SERVANE WAS A SIMPLE LABORATORY EMPLOYEE. THE KILLER SHOT THROUGH TINTED WINDOWS. IT'S OBVIOUS HE WAS TRYING TO SHOOT ME.

THAT'S WHAT WE THOUGHT, AT FIRST. EXCEPT THAT, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, EVEN THOUGH YOU WORKED FOR US, YOU WERE STILL JUST A MODEST COMPUTER ENGINEER.



I TRAINED DCRI* AGENTS IN HUNTING DOWN CRIMINALS ON THE WEB. I'M SURE THAT MADE CERTAIN PEOPLE A LITTLE UPSET...

* DIRECTION CENTRALE DU RENSEIGNEMENT INTERIEUR, THE FRENCH INTERIOR MINISTRY'S INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.



YOU OVERESTIMATE YOUR IMPORTANCE, MR. MALLORY...



OUR AGENTS INTERCEPTED THIS SKYPE COMMUNICATION FROM THE DAY THAT YOUR WIFE DIED.



TU M'ENTENDS?*

*YOU HEAR ME?



THAT KID LIVED IN A GROUND-FLOOR APARTMENT ON YOUR STREET, BY THE MARKET. LOOK CAREFULLY OUT OF THE WINDOW BEHIND HIM.



OPTIMIZING THE IMAGE ALLOWS US TO SEE THIS...



NOW, TELL ME, DO YOU RECOGNIZE THE BIKER?



SERVANE!



AS YOU CAN SEE, WE WEREN'T ENTIRELY INDIFFERENT TO THE DEATH OF YOUR WIFE.



IT'S HIM!



SO YOU AGREE THAT THAT MAN HAD TO HAVE KNOWN THAT IT WAS IN FACT YOUR WIFE WHO WAS DRIVING.



CAN I HAVE THE FLASH DRIVE?



IT HAS A PRICE, MR. MALLORY!





THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH HUMAN BEINGS...

I SAW YOU IN ACTION, IN A SITUATION THAT WOULD HAVE CAUSED ANY OTHER CIVILIAN TO PANIC! YOUR ANALYSIS WAS IMMEDIATE, OBJECTIVE, AND NEARLY FLAWLESS. AND THEN YOU ACTED ACCORDINGLY, WITH FRIGHTENING EFFICIENCY.



YOU DON'T KNOW THE STATE I'M IN.

PLUS, I'VE GOT A NEW FAMILY. THESE MISSIONS THAT YOU MENTIONED COULD PUT THEM IN DANGER.



THEY ALREADY ARE, MR. MALLORY!



I DID WHAT I DID TODAY TO MAKE SURE THEY NO LONGER ARE.

UNLESS THE POLICE WERE TO LEARN WHERE YOUNG CARL'S BODY IS LOCATED...

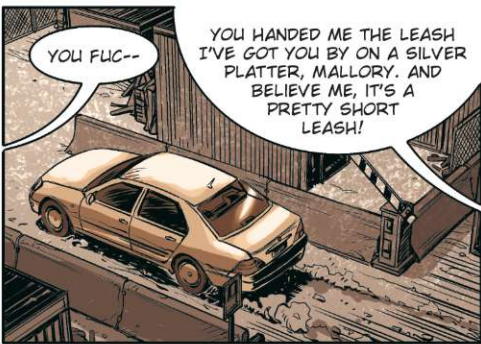


YOU WOULDN'T DARE...



ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU BURIED HIS BODY IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, WHERE THE DEATH PENALTY IS APPLICABLE STARTING AT AGE 17. SEE WHERE I'M GOING?

SO, YOU EITHER RE-ENLIST OR YOU'LL ANSWER FOR YOUR ACTIONS IN COURT. DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?

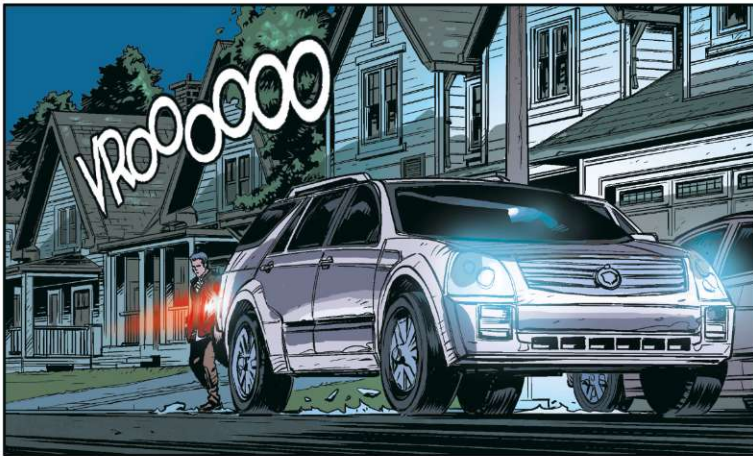


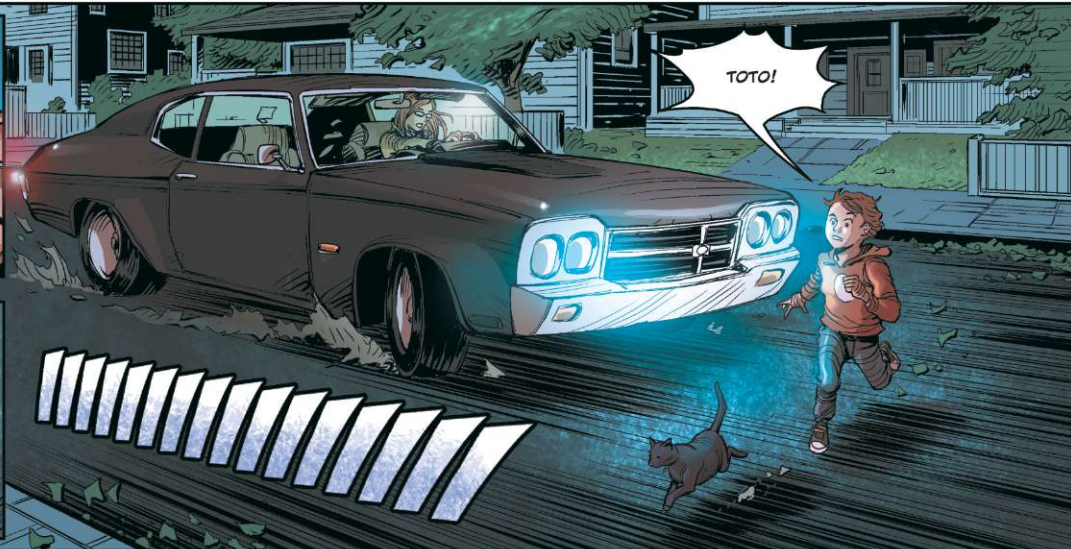
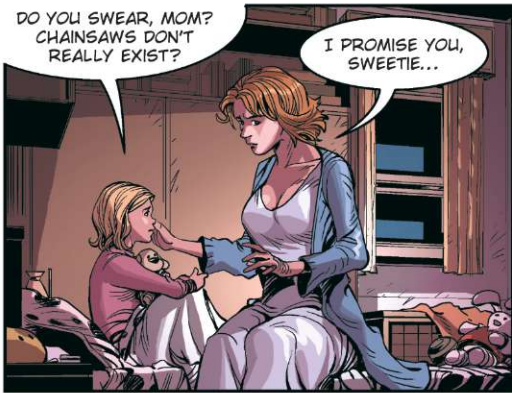
YOU FUC--

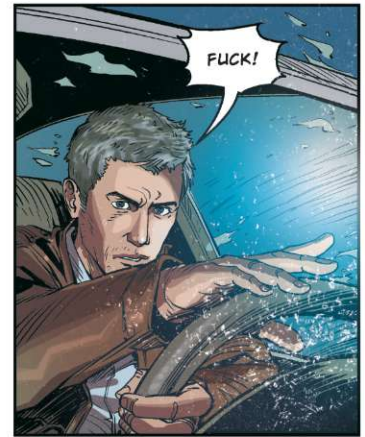
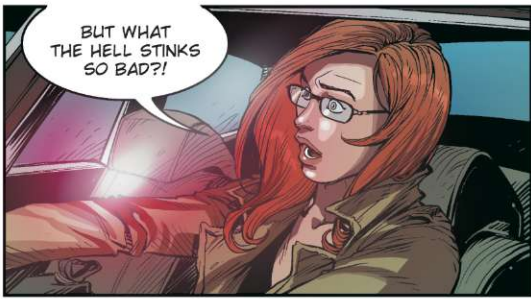
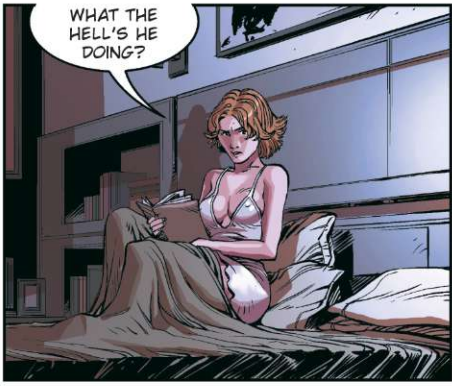
YOU HANDED ME THE LEASH I'VE GOT YOU BY ON A SILVER PLATTER, MALLORY. AND BELIEVE ME, IT'S A PRETTY SHORT LEASH!



PERFECTLY.









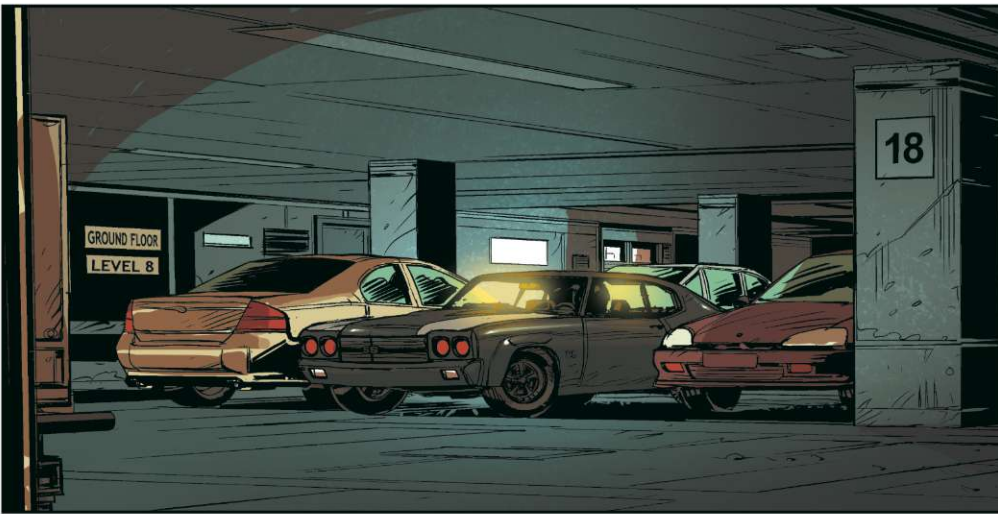
HELLO, BOSTON LITERARY MAGAZINE? THIS IS IAN MALLORY. YOUR EMPLOYEE, KRISTIN MCNEIL, FORGOT HER TELEPHONE AFTER OUR INTERVIEW.



I'M SORRY, SIR. THE ADDRESSES OF OUR EMPLOYEES ARE CONFIDENTIAL. COME BY OUR OFFICES TOMORROW...



I'D LIKE TO RETURN IT TO HER PERSONALLY. WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO GIVE ME HER ADDRESS, PLEASE?



YOU'VE GOT TO BE FUCKING KIDDING ME...



WELL, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT LITERATURE ISN'T YOUR ONLY OUTLET, MR. MALLORY!

END OF PART 1

A huge thank you to Emma Melin for her enlightening suggestions and her work on the *Synchronic* bible.

To Nazim Meslem, Bogdi Bog, and Chapel for participating in the trailer.

To my Delphine, who deserves praise for living with a writer.

To Alain, Brigitte, and Karine.

And finally, thanks to my son for waiting a few years before getting to open this volume!

VINCENT

To my guardian angels, Giulia, Greta, and Domino.

RICCARDO

I'd like to dedicate my work on this splendid book to my brother, Andrea, for his help; to my dearest Rosita for her patience; and to Camilla, whose professionalism got me this far, which is no small matter.

OSCAR

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SYNCHRONIC

The bullet that killed Ian Mallory's wife also sent him into a coma. Three years later, he wakes up, suffering from a strange pathology: he experiences his emotions on a time-delay. Attracted by the idea of an emotionless agent, the NSA has a proposal for him: in exchange for information on his wife's murder, he'll be assigned the most extreme missions. Ian accepts their offer, without abandoning his rather particular style. Because, contrary to what his employers think, he's still human... just a few hours out of sync!

