



COBRA

THE LAST LAUGH





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Written by
MIKE COSTA and
CHRISTOS N. GAGE

Art by
Antonio Fuso



Additional Art by
S L GALLANT and CHEE

Colors by
**Chris Chuckry, Lovern Kindzierski,
Peter Dawes, and Arianna Florean**

Letters by
**Chris Mowry, Robbie Robbins,
Neil Uyetake, and Shawn Lee**

Series Edits by
**Andy Schmidt, Carlos Guzman,
and John Barber**

Collection Cover and Design by **Antonio Fuso**
Collection Edits by **Justin Eisinger and Alonzo Simon**
Collection Production by **Chris Mowry**

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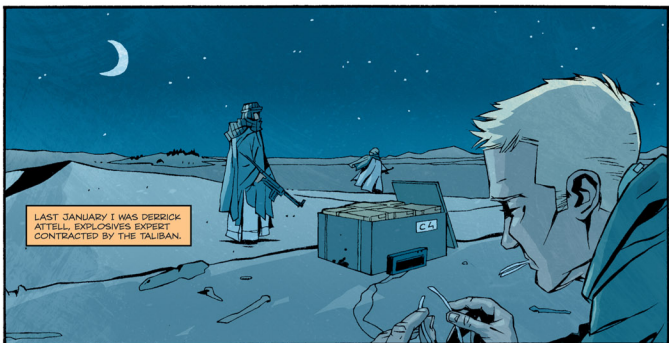
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FUNNY STORY.

I CAN'T REMEMBER
MY NAME TODAY.





BUT TODAY, IN THIS FORMER-SOVIET BACKWATER, DELIVERING POLONIUM-210 TO THE LOCAL MAFIA... WHO AM I TODAY?

YOU HAVE DONE WELL, MR. LANGE.

AH, THAT'S RIGHT.



THE "PACKAGE" HAS BEEN RECEIVED. THE CUSTOMER IS SATISFIED.

YOU'VE EARNED YOUR REWARD.

AND HERE IT COMES. I KNEW I WAS GONNA GET BURNED ON THIS.



NEVER TRUST A COMMUNIST, EVEN ONE WHO'S TURNED CAPITALIST.



THEY JUST HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE IDEA OF FAIR COMPENSATION.



BAM

THE HELL'S THIS NOW--?



I'M SURE YOU
COULD HAVE HANDLED
HIM YOURSELF, BUT
THEN HOW WOULD YOU
KNOW I WAS A
FRIEND?



IS THAT
WHAT YOU
ARE?



THE BEST FRIEND
YOU HAVE RIGHT NOW.
I SUGGEST WE MEET, AS
FRIENDS DO, IN A TAVERN
TOMORROW. THE FALG,
OUTSIDE OF TALLINN.

THERE'S ANOTHER
SNIPER BEHIND HIM,
IN THE WINDOW.



WE HAVE BEEN WATCHING
YOU, MR. LANGE, OR ATTELL,
OR WHATEVER YOUR NAME
WILL BE TOMORROW. IT'S
TIME TO STOP SPLASHING
AROUND IN THE
KIDDIE-POOL.

WE FEEL
YOU ARE READY
FOR DEEPER
WATERS.



DIDN'T EVEN SEE THE
GUY IN THE WINDOW
LEAVE. BUT I CAUGHT
ANOTHER SHOOTER
CLIMBING DOWN FROM
ACROSS THE STREET.

IF THEY WANTED ME
DEAD, I WOULD BE.

TOMORROW, THEN.





COURSE, SO DO I.

YOU CAN
CALL ME
CHUCKLES.

CHARMER



I SEE. VERY HUMOROUS.

HE LIKED THAT. GOOD.

THE SECOND HE STOPS LIKING ME, I'M DEAD.



NOT THAT IT MATTERS. YOUR NAME WILL BE WHATEVER WE SAY IT IS.

CAN'T PLACE THE ACCENT. SOMETHING SLAVIC, BUT SLASHED AND BURNED BY TOO MUCH TRANSATLANTIC TRAVEL.



OKAY. YOU TELL ME TO MEET, I MEET. BUT NOW IT'S TIME TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF.

I ONLY SLUR THE FIRST FEW WORDS. LET HIM THINK I'M PULLING MYSELF TOGETHER.



YOU ARE A MAN OF ACTION. I APPRECIATE THAT. THAT'S WHY WE WANT YOU.

HE SMILES LIKE WE'RE PALS. THE GLANCE I STOLE BEFORE WE SAT DOWN SAYS HE'S PROBABLY NOT ARMED.



YOU'RE ALSO NOT A STUPID MAN. THIS IS ANOTHER REASON.

BUT HIS PAL AT THE BAR DEFINITELY IS.



I'M HERE TO OFFER YOU A JOB.

THINK OF THIS AS YOUR INTERVIEW.

HE'S LEFT-HANDED.



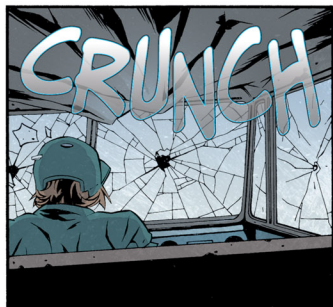














FIVE MILES
SHOULD BE FAR
ENOUGH.

SORRY
ABOUT YOUR
MAN.



HE WAS A
NAMELESS VIPER,
EXISTING ONLY TO
STRIKE AT OUR
ENEMIES. HE SERVED
HIS PURPOSE.

YOU'RE
RESOURCEFUL.
PERHAPS WE CAN
FIND A PURPOSE
FOR YOU TOO.

YEAH, JUST
LOOK AT ALL
THE PERKS.



WE REAP THE
REWARDS OUR
SKILLS EARN US. DO
YOU DOUBT YOUR
TALENTS?

WE'RE ALIVE,
AREN'T WE?

EXACTLY MY
POINT. FOR A MAN
WITH YOUR ABILITIES,
THERE ARE NO
LIMITS.

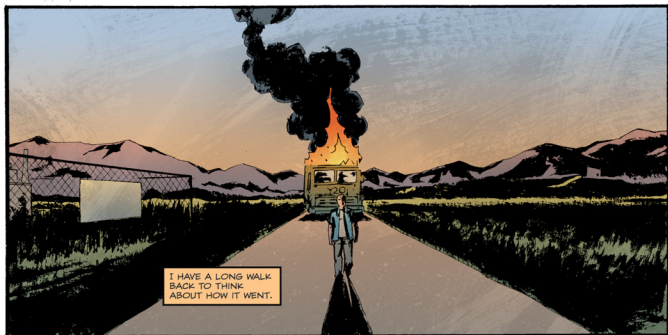
YOU MAY
HEAR FROM
ME AGAIN.



WHATEVER.

NEXT TIME
I PICK THE
PLACE.

WELL, THAT WAS
THE WORST JOB
INTERVIEW EVER.



AROUND 3AM I FINALLY
DRIFT OFF INTO
SOMETHING LIKE SLEEP.



AND THEN...



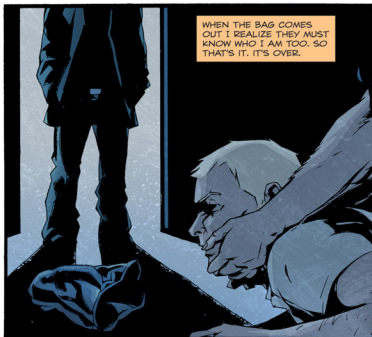
THEY'RE WEARING MASKS.
ONLY SHAPES IN THE DARK.



BUT I CAN SMELL THOSE
FRENCH CIGARETTES. I KNOW
WHO THESE PEOPLE ARE.

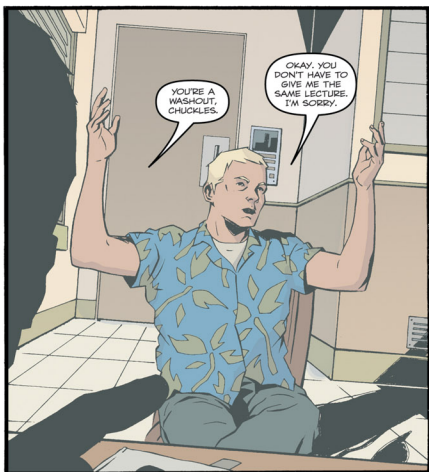


WHEN THE BAG COMES
OUT I REALIZE THEY MUST
KNOW WHO I AM TOO. SO
THAT'S IT. IT'S OVER.

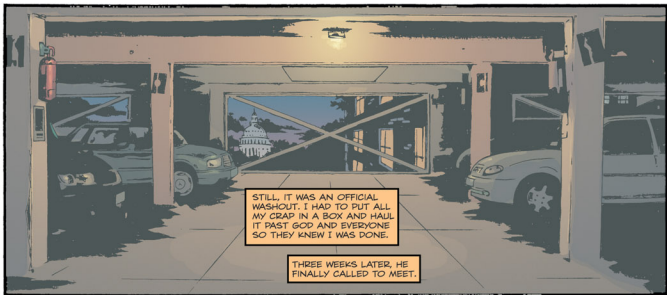


THEY KNOW I'M G.I. JOE.









STILL, IT WAS AN OFFICIAL WASHOUT. I HAD TO PUT ALL MY CRAP IN A BOX AND HAUL IT PAST GOD AND EVERYONE SO THEY KNEW I WAS DONE.

THREE WEEKS LATER, HE FINALLY CALLED TO MEET.



YOU ALWAYS BRING ME TO THE NICEST PLACES.



THIS IS NO TIME FOR JOKES, ESPECIALLY BAD ONES.

I'M SENDING YOU UNDERCOVER.

SORTA FIGURED THAT WHEN YOU WANTED TO MEET IN DEEP THROAT'S PARKING SPOT.



YOU'RE ONLY GLIB BECAUSE YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE BEING ASKED TO DO.

THIS ISN'T BUY-BUST DOWN IN THE GHETTO. YOU'LL BE IN DEEP COVER, WORKING WITH MERCENARY GROUPS ALL OVER THE WORLD.

WORKING YOUR WAY UP THE LADDER THROUGH TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS.



I'M ONLY ASKING YOU TO DO THIS BECAUSE YOU'RE A PUNK AND A SCREW-UP AND PROBABLY A BORDERLINE SOCIOPATH.

YOU'D END UP DOING IT ANYWAY. I'D PREFER YOU DO IT FOR ME.

WELL, IF YOU'RE GONNA SWEET TALK ME.











BUT THERE'S NOTHING
"SAFE" ABOUT THIS.

-GASP!-



AND THE SLEEPER
AWAKES! NICE TO
FINALLY MEET YOU, MR.
CHUCKLES. IT SEEMS I
OWE YOU A DEBT OF
GRATITUDE.

PLEASE, JUST
"CHUCKLES." "MR.
CHUCKLES" WAS MY
FATHER.

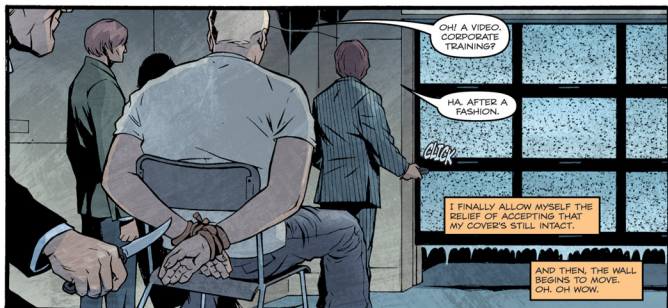
YOU AND MY
LIEUTENANT WERE THE ONLY
MEN THAT MADE IT OUT OF
THAT TAVERN ALIVE. AND I'M
TOLD YOU SINGLE-HANDEDLY
KILLED FIVE MEN.



WELL, ONE WAS
A WOMAN.

YES, AND
A WOMAN.
CUT HIM FREE,
LIEUTENANT.

YOU'RE RUTHLESS,
EFFICIENT AND
RESOURCEFUL. AND THAT
IS WHY I'M SHOWING
YOU THIS...



OH! A VIDEO.
CORPORATE
TRAINING?

HA. AFTER A
FASHION.

I FINALLY ALLOW MYSELF THE
RELIEF OF ACCEPTING THAT
MY COVER'S STILL INTACT.

AND THEN, THE WALL
BEGINS TO MOVE.
OH. OH WOW.

WE MADE IT, JINX.

REALLY DEEP.

WELCOME TO
THE HIGH ROLLERS
TABLE.

ONE THING I NEVER LIKED
ABOUT THE BALKAN STATES...

SEXY

CLUB...

NERD'S

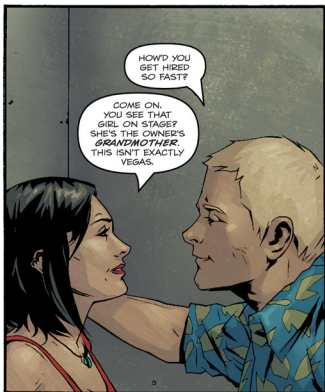


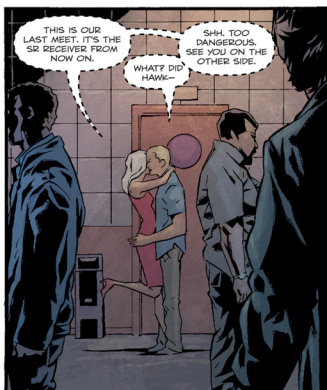
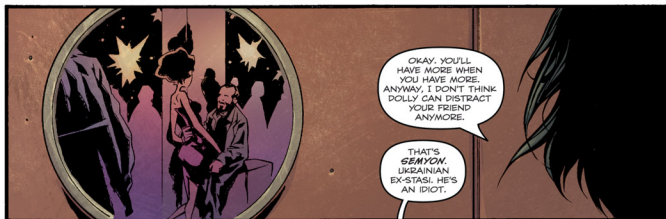


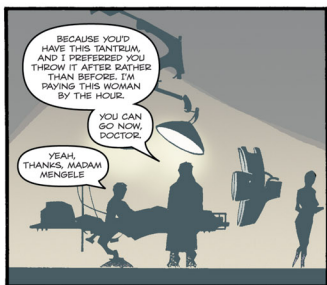
A BEAUTIFUL GIRL.

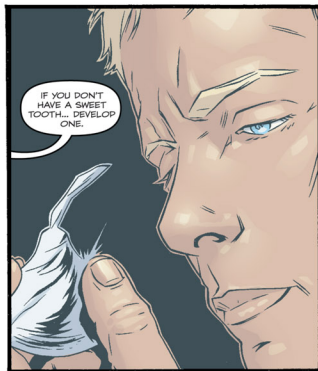
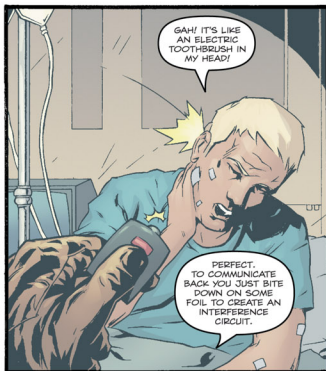
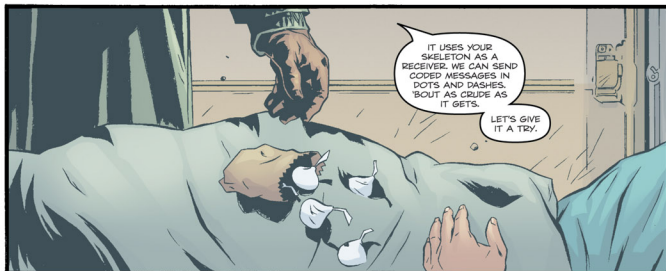
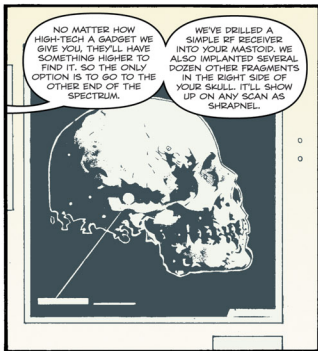
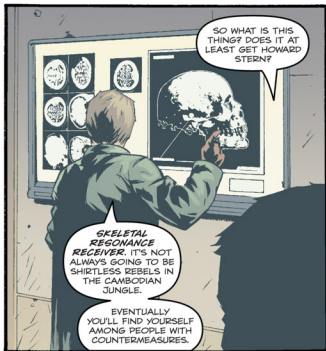
MY ONLY WEAKNESS.

IN THE GRASS









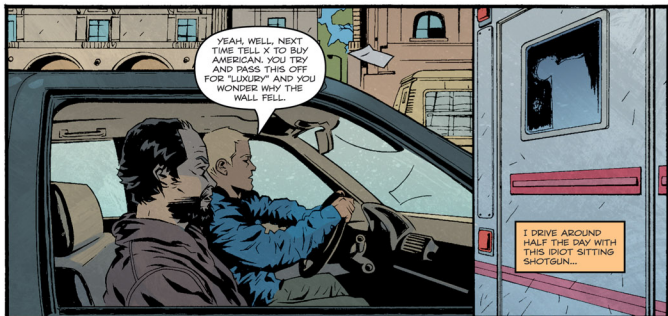


GODDAMN SRR GUARANTEES A MIGRAINE A DAY, AMAZING HOW MANY ORDERS YOU CAN RECEIVE WHEN YOU HAVE NOTHING TO REPORT BACK.

I TAKE WINDOWS DOWN, YES?

NO, YOU DO NOT TAKE WINDOWS DOWN, WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY.

AIR COOLER IS BROKEN!



YEAH, WELL, NEXT TIME TELL X TO BUY AMERICAN, YOU TRY AND PASS THIS OFF FOR "LUXURY" AND YOU WONDER WHY THE WALL FELL.

I DRIVE AROUND HALF THE DAY WITH THIS IDIOT SITTING SHOTGUN...

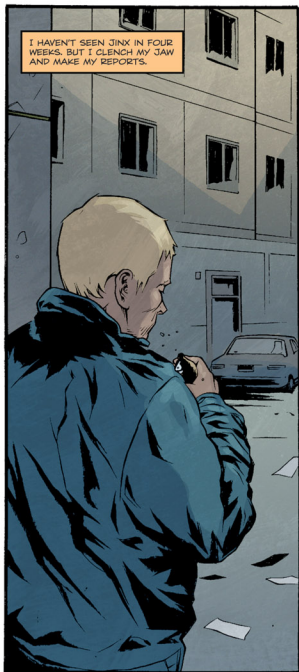
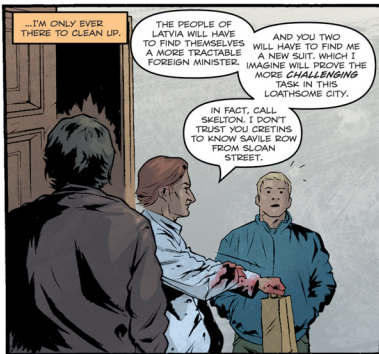


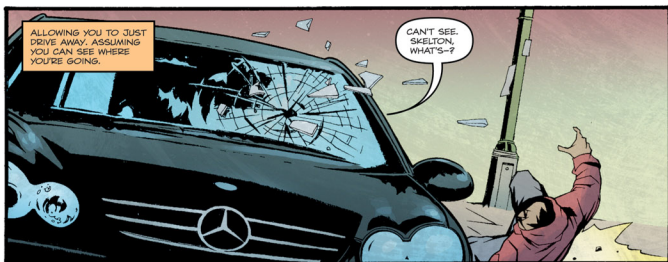
...AND STAND AROUND FOR THE OTHER HALF, OVERHEARING PARTS OF DIRTY DEALS TOO COMPLICATED TO BE INTERESTING.

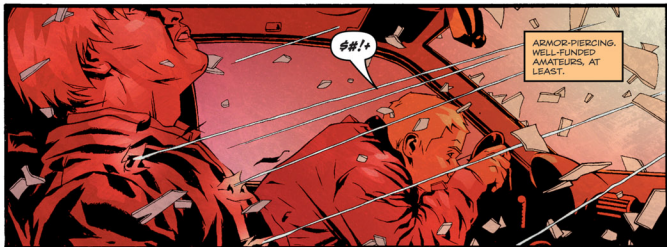
OF COURSE OUR INTEREST IN THE BALKANS ISN'T PURELY FINANCIAL.

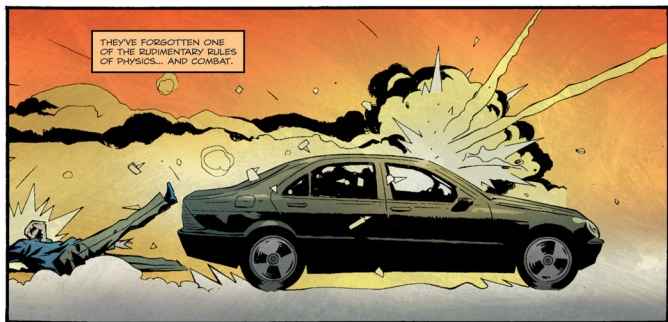
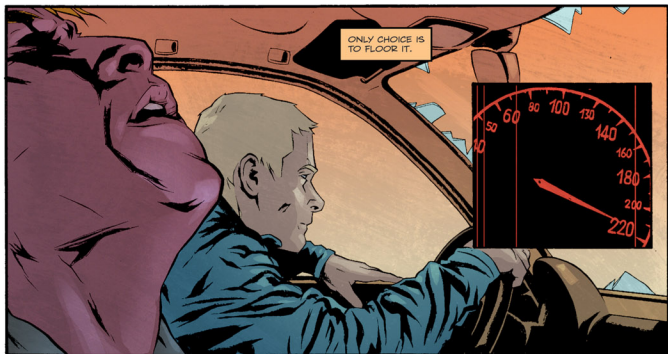
YOU HAVE AN ENTIRE POPULATION THAT'S JUST SLIPPED THE NOOSE OF COMMUNISM AND EVEN NOW HASN'T QUITE LEARNED TO BREATHE ON THEIR OWN YET.

IN TERMS OF SIMPLE-











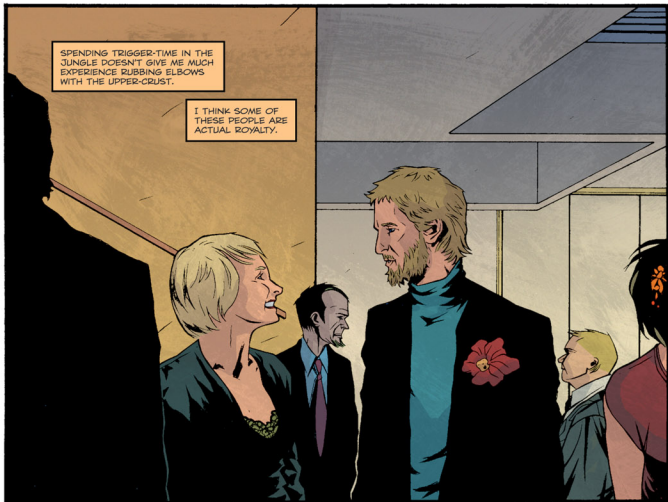
AN OBJECT IN MOTION
TENDS TO STAY IN MOTION.
EVEN IF IT EXPLODES.

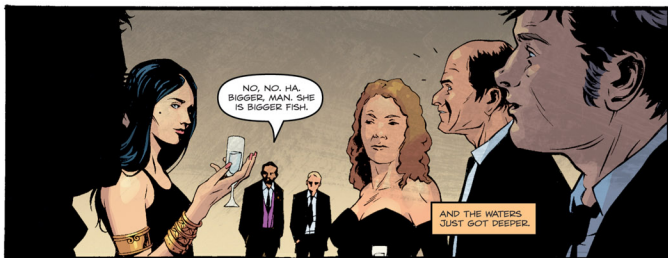


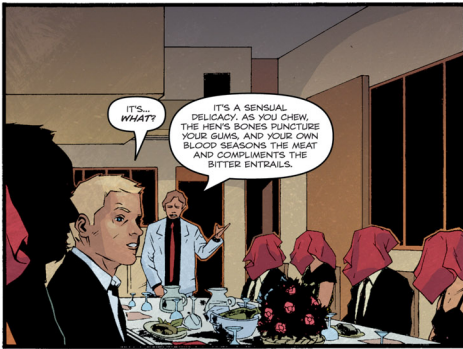
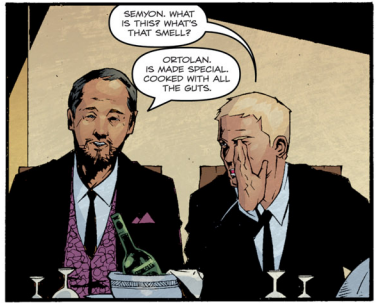
THOSE'LL BE THE EXTRA
ROCKETS GOING OFF.

HOW AM I GONNA
EXPLAIN THIS?



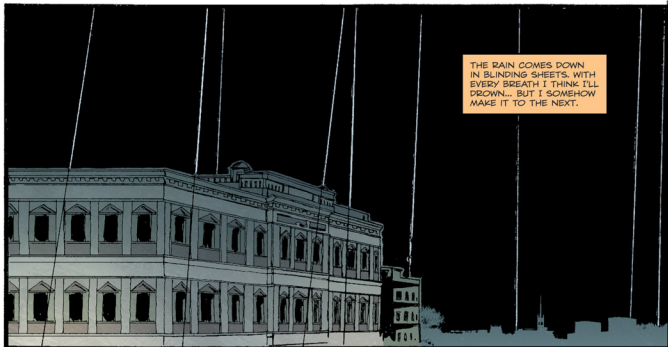




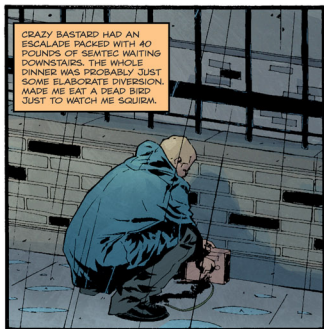








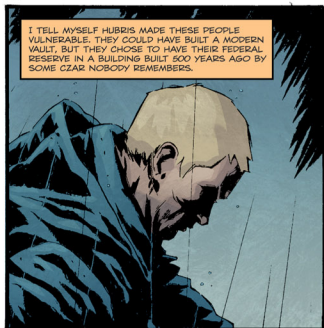
THE RAIN COMES DOWN
IN BLINDING SHEETS, WITH
EVERY BREATH I THINK I'LL
DROWN... BUT I SOMEHOW
MAKE IT TO THE NEXT.



CRAZY BASTARD HAD AN
ESCALADE PACKED WITH 40
POUNDS OF SEMTEC WAITING
DOWNSTAIRS. THE WHOLE
DINNER WAS PROBABLY JUST
SOME ELABORATE DIVERSION.
MADE ME EAT A DEAD BIRD
JUST TO WATCH ME SQUIRM.



I'M ABOUT TO ANNIHILATE
THE CURRENCY SUPPLY OF
A SMALL COUNTRY. I TELL
MYSELF I HAVE TO DO THIS.

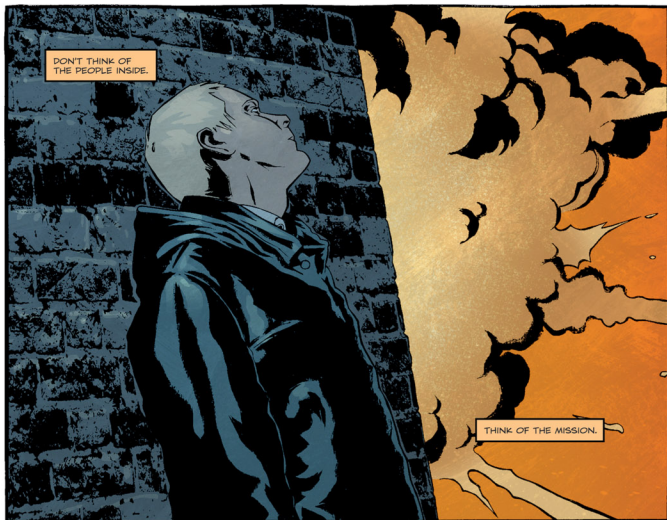


I TELL MYSELF HUBRIS MADE THESE PEOPLE
VULNERABLE. THEY COULD HAVE BUILT A MODERN
VAULT, BUT THEY CHOSE TO HAVE THEIR FEDERAL
RESERVE IN A BUILDING BUILT 500 YEARS AGO BY
SOME CZAR NOBODY REMEMBERS.



I TELL MYSELF I'LL BE KILLED IF
I DON'T DO THIS. IF I DIE, I
DON'T COMPLETE THE MISSION.

AND NOTHING COMES
BEFORE THE MISSION.



DON'T THINK OF
THE PEOPLE INSIDE.

THINK OF THE MISSION.



THE MISSION IS EVERYTHING.



WHEN I GET BACK, SHE'S PLAYING IN THE RAIN LIKE A SCHOOLGIRL.

MR. GOON.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT IN THIS WEATHER?



DESTABILIZING THE ENTIRE REGION. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WAITING FOR YOU, OF COURSE.



HA! YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVED THAT.

AMERICANS. SUCH A FUNNY MIX OF HOPE AND ARROGANCE.



IT'S THE RAIN, I LIKE IT. IT REMINDS ME OF VIETNAM.

BACK WHEN... BACK WHEN I HAD A LIFE. WHEN ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE.

BACK BEFORE YOU STARTED DATING THE GUY ABOVE MY BOSS?



DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR.



ALL AROUND US.
THE RAIN HISSES
LIKE A SNAKE.

WHAT CAN I SAY?

IT'S MY ONLY WEAKNESS.

I HAVEN'T BEEN
SLEEPING WELL.

JUST AS I'M NODDING OFF
I'LL BOLT AWAKE. IT FEELS
LIKE I'M FALLING. MY WHOLE
BODY JOLTS.

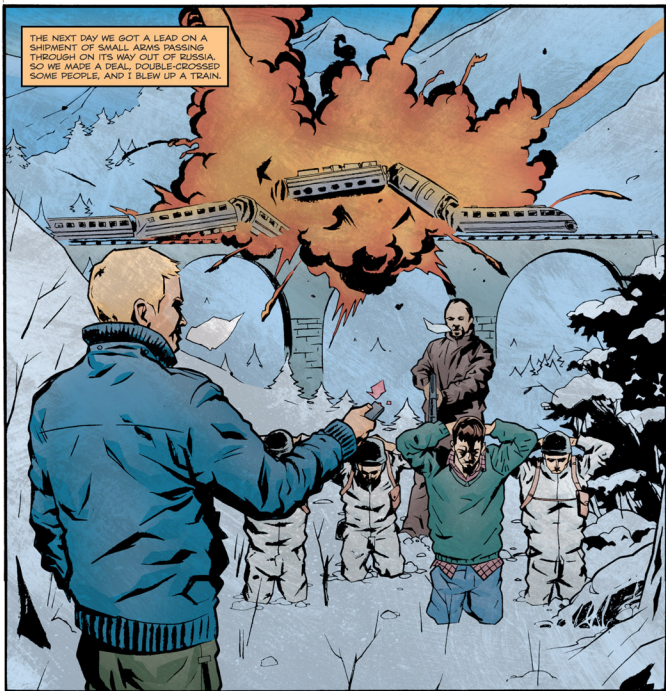
IT'S CALLED A "HYPNIC JERK." APPARENTLY A
GROGGY, STRESSED-OUT BRAIN MISTAKES YOUR
BODY GOING TO SLEEP FOR DYING. SO IT SENDS
OUT A JOLT OF ADRENALINE TO SHOCK YOU BACK.

EVERY NIGHT,
I ALMOST DIE.

EVERY NIGHT BUT TONIGHT.

TONIGHT I'M AT PEACE.

THE NEXT DAY WE GOT A LEAD ON A SHIPMENT OF SMALL ARMS PASSING THROUGH ON ITS WAY OUT OF RUSSIA, SO WE MADE A DEAL, DOUBLE-CROSSED SOME PEOPLE, AND I BLEW UP A TRAIN.

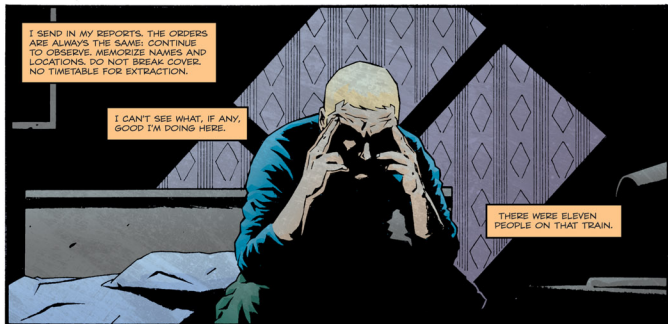


I GO DOWN TO ASSIST THE RECOVERY TEAM...

...SO I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE EXECUTIONS.



BRATTATTA



I SEND IN MY REPORTS. THE ORDERS ARE ALWAYS THE SAME: CONTINUE TO OBSERVE, MEMORIZE NAMES AND LOCATIONS. DO NOT BREAK COVER. NO TIMETABLE FOR EXTRACTION.

I CAN'T SEE WHAT, IF ANY, GOOD I'M DOING HERE.

THERE WERE ELEVEN PEOPLE ON THAT TRAIN.



I DO BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHY WE'RE HERE, IN THE BALKANS. THOUSANDS OF TONS OF ARMS PASS THROUGH HERE.

WE DISRUPT IT, FUNNEL IT TO ENEMIES OF OUR ENEMIES.

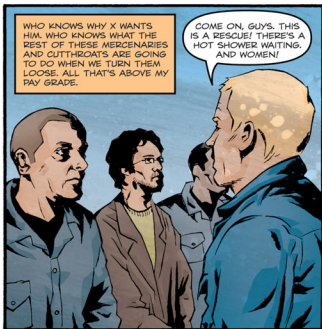


"STOP!
HALT!"

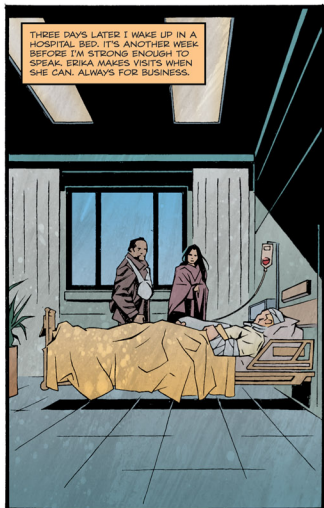
OR WE JUST TAKE
WHAT WE NEED.

*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN













DUBAI .

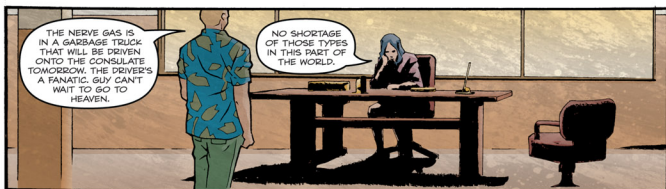


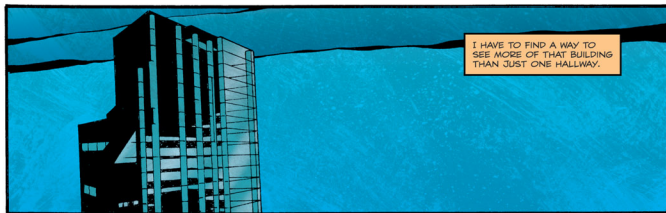
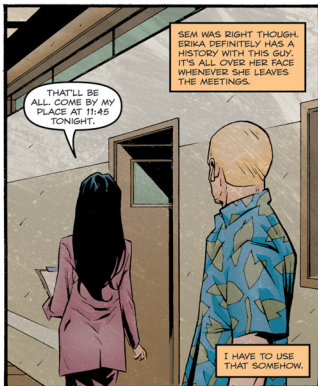


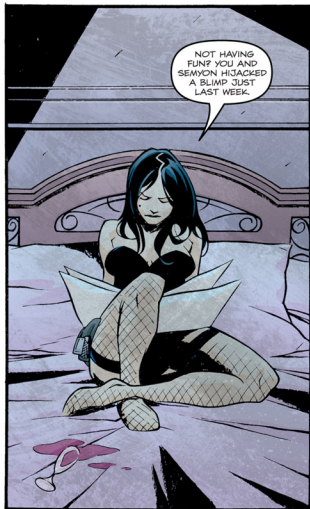
THEY KEEP ME BUSY.

BITE

2010 03







NOT HAVING FUNP YOU AND SEMYON HIJACKED A BLIMP JUST LAST WEEK.



YEAH, THAT'S THE PROBLEM. I'M STILL LIVING IN A BUNKER, PLAYING ARMY-MAN.

I COULD BE DOING THIS IN EUROPE AND NOT HAVE SAND IN MY CRACK.



WELL, I NEVER TOOK YOU FOR A WHINER.



I KNOW YOU'RE NOT DUMB. YOU KNOW SOMETHING HUGE IS COMING, AND YOU WANT TO BE PART OF IT. OKAY.

BUT YOU HAVE TO SHOW SOME INITIATIVE. YOU'VE BEEN SLEEPWALKING THROUGH YOUR DUTIES HERE. WE ALL SEE IT.

TO BE ACCEPTED, YOU HAVE TO WANT IT.



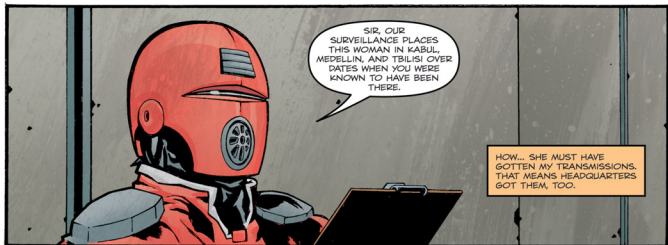
DO YOU?

WANT IT.









SIR, OUR SURVEILLANCE PLACES THIS WOMAN IN KABUL, MEDELLIN, AND TBILISI OVER DATES WHEN YOU WERE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN THERE.

HOW... SHE MUST HAVE GOTTEN MY TRANSMISSIONS. THAT MEANS HEADQUARTERS GOT THEM, TOO.



THE BASTARD KILLED MY FAMILY. SIX YEARS AGO IN CAMBODIA.

YOU DON'T EVEN REMEMBER, DO YOU? YOU USED ME AND LEFT ME BLEEDING IN THE CORNER AND YOU DON'T EVEN REMEMBER MY *FACE*.

SHE'S MAKING UP A COVER STORY ON THE SPOT. OR MAYBE SHE ALWAYS HAD IT UP HER SLEEVE IN CASE SHE WAS CAUGHT.



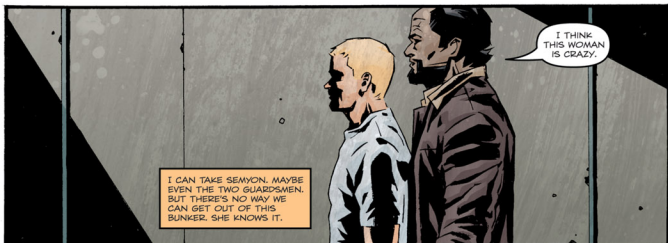
IN CASE... OH GOD, SHE'S *BEEN* CAUGHT. HOW AM I GOING TO GET HER OUT OF HERE?

THREE YEARS AGO, THE NEW PEOPLES ARMY FOUND YOU IN LAOS. I'VE BEEN TRACKING YOU SINCE. I WOULD HAVE MADE MY MOVE IN TBILISI IF NOT FOR THESE GOONS.



REMEMBER JAMES? I KILLED HIM. LAST MONTH. PUT A KNIFE THROUGH HIS JAW JUST LIKE HE DID MY BROTHER.

I CAN'T. I CAN'T GET HER OUT. WE'RE BOTH GOING TO DIE HERE.



I THINK THIS WOMAN IS CRAZY.

I CAN TAKE SEMYON. MAYBE EVEN THE TWO GUARDSMEN. BUT THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN GET OUT OF THIS BUNKER. SHE KNOWS IT.







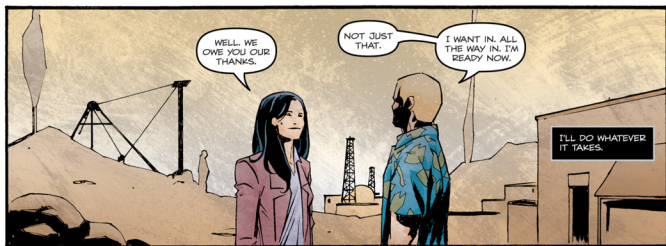
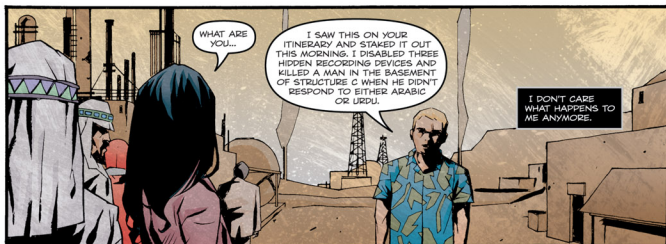
THE FIRST THING I THOUGHT
I THOUGHT.



THE FIRST THING I THOUGHT
WHEN THEY OPENED THE
DOOR AND I SAW HER...



"THANK GOD
IT'S NOT ME."





EYES

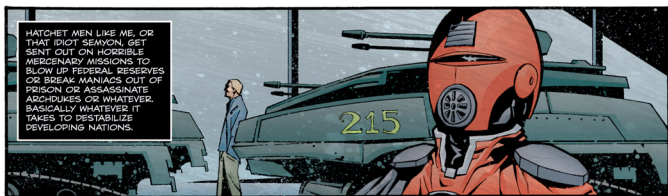
TOO BAD HE HAS TO DIE WITH
ALL THE REST OF THEM.







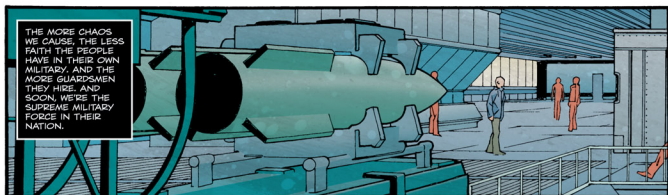
HERE'S WHAT I'VE
FIGURED OUT SO FAR.



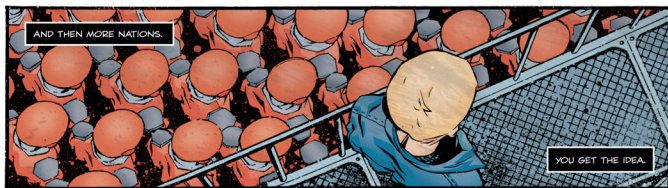
HATCHET MEN LIKE ME, OR
THAT IDIOT SEMOVN, GET
SENT OUT ON HORRIBLE
MERCENARY MISSIONS TO
BLOW UP FEDERAL RESERVES
OR BREAK MANIACS OUT OF
PRISON OR ASSASSINATE
ARCHDUKES OR WHATEVER.
BASICALLY WHATEVER IT
TAKES TO DESTABILIZE
DEVELOPING NATIONS.



THEN, AFTER WE'VE STIRRED UP ALL KINDS
OF MAYHEM, COBRA COMES IN UNDER THE
GUISE OF GOD KNOWS HOW MANY SHELL
COMPANIES AND WE HIRE OUT OUR PRIVATE
ARMY: OUR *CRIMSON GUARD*.

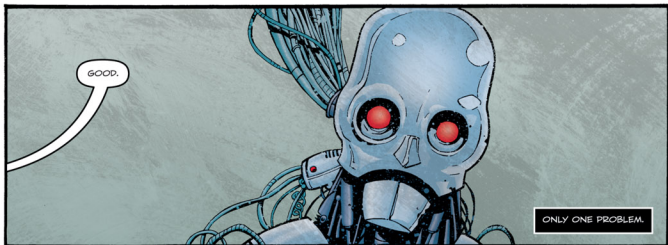
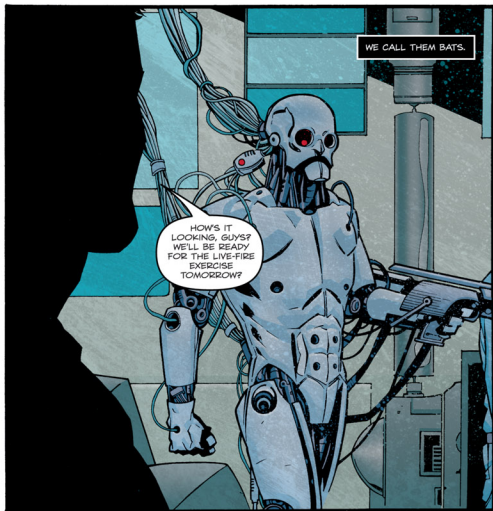


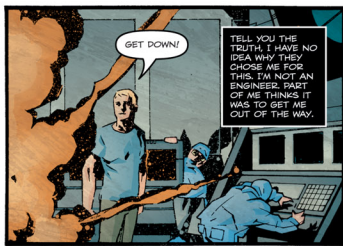
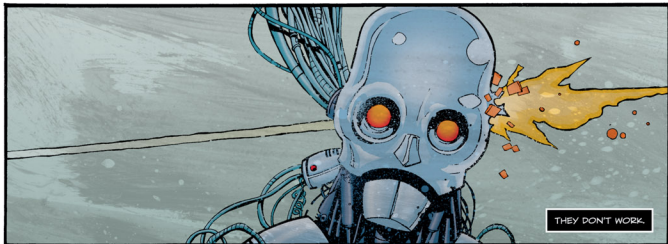
THE MORE CHAOS
WE CAUSE, THE LESS
FAITH THE PEOPLE
HAVE IN THEIR OWN
MILITARY. AND THE
MORE GUARDSMEN
THEY HIRE. AND
SOON, WE'RE THE
SUPREME MILITARY
FORCE IN THEIR
NATION.

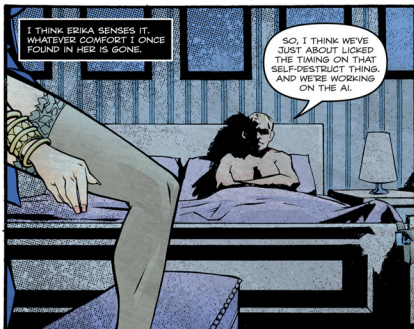


AND THEN MORE NATIONS.

YOU GET THE IDEA.



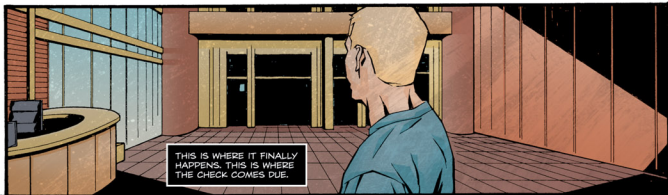








HE JUST STANDS THERE,
SMACKING HIS GUM. IN
THIS HALLWAY SMELLING
OF INDUSTRIAL CARPET.



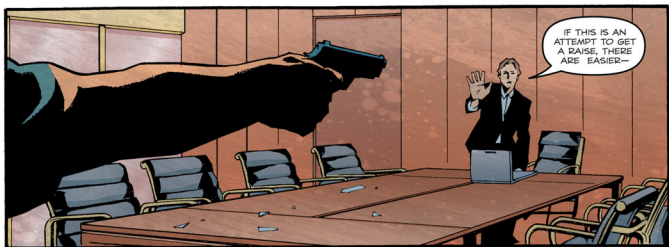
THIS IS WHERE IT FINALLY
HAPPENS. THIS IS WHERE
THE CHECK COMES DUE.

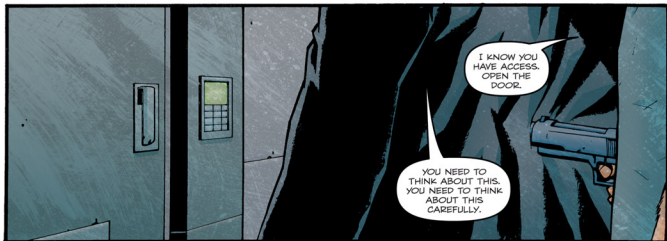


THIS IS WHERE I SAY
GOODBYE TO JINK.



OKAY.



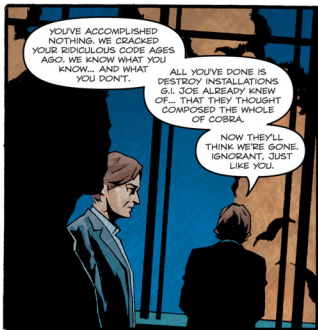




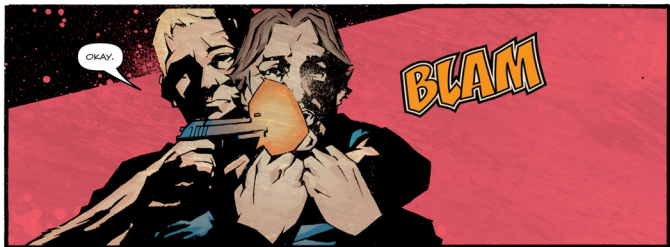


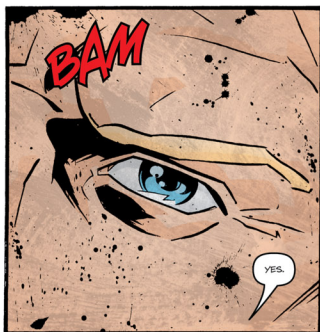




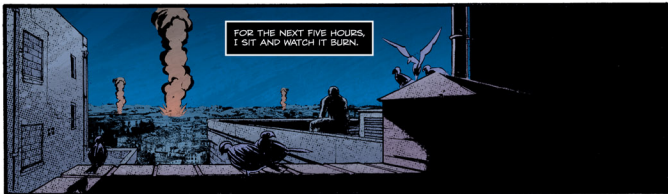












FOR THE NEXT FIVE HOURS,
I SIT AND WATCH IT BURN.



SEMYON'S LAST WORDS
STICK WITH ME. "I THOUGHT
YOU WERE A GOOD GUY."

IF I EVER WAS, I'M
NOT ANY MORE.



I CAN'T GO BACK TO THE JOES.
NOT AFTER WHAT I'VE DONE.

I HAVE NOTHING. ONLY
WHAT JINX DIED FOR.



ONLY THE MISSION.

I WILL FIND THEM. IF IT'S
THE LAST THING I DO.



IT PROBABLY
WILL BE.



LIVES EVIL

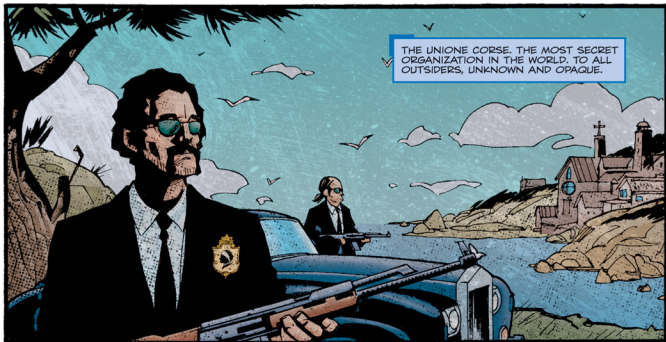


MY NAME IS TOMAX PAOLI,
AND THERE IS SOMETHING
I'VE LEARNED...

...SLAVERY IS FREEDOM.

LIVES EVIL

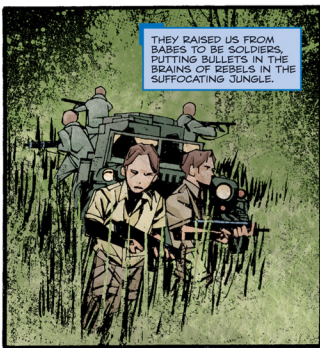




THE UNION CORSE. THE MOST SECRET ORGANIZATION IN THE WORLD. TO ALL OUTSIDERS, UNKNOWN AND OPAQUE.



OLDER AND DEADLIER THAN LA COSA NOSTRA. INTERNATIONAL YET CENTRALIZED IN CORSICA, OUR HOME.



THEY RAISED US FROM BABES TO BE SOLDIERS, PUTTING BULLETS IN THE BRAINS OF REBELS IN THE SUFFOCATING JUNGLE.

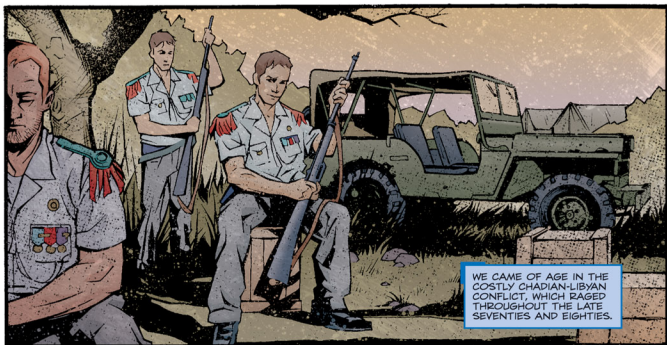


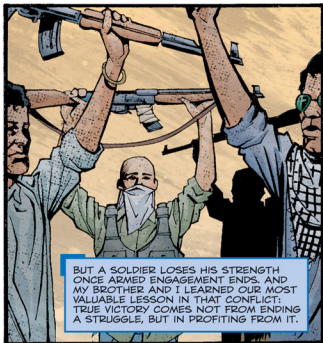
TO BE BUSINESSMEN, THRILLINGLY ANNIHILATING OUR RIVALS THROUGH SUBTLE ECONOMIC POWER.



TO BE SLAVERS, BENDING ALL WITHIN OUR INFLUENCE TO OUR WILL.



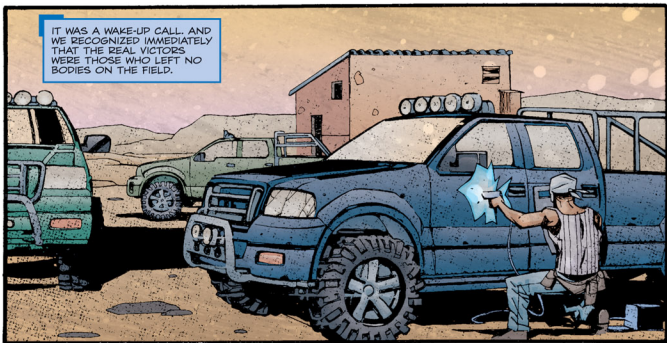




BUT A SOLDIER LOSES HIS STRENGTH
ONCE ARMED ENGAGEMENT ENDS. AND
MY BROTHER AND I LEARNED OUR MOST
VALUABLE LESSON IN THAT CONFLICT:
TRUE VICTORY COMES NOT FROM ENDING
A STRUGGLE, BUT IN PROFITING FROM IT.



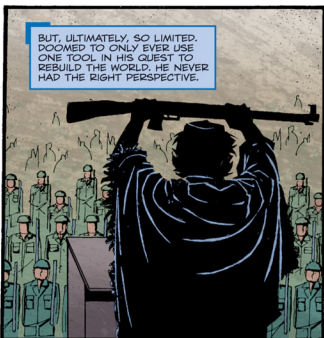
"THE TOYOTA WAR." THAT'S
WHAT THEY CALLED IT.
FORCES ON BOTH SIDES
WERE SO RELIANT ON PICKUP
TRUCKS FOR MOBILITY AND
FIGHTING THAT THE WAR
WOULD HAVE BEEN
IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THEM.



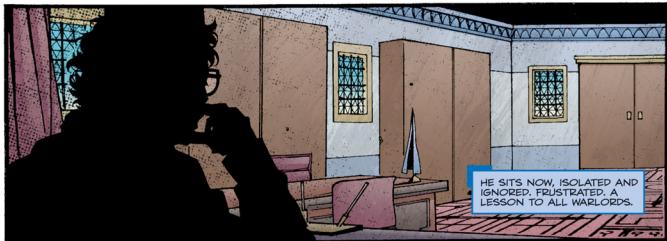
IT WAS A WAKE-UP CALL. AND
WE RECOGNIZED IMMEDIATELY
THAT THE REAL VICTORS
WERE THOSE WHO LEFT NO
BODIES ON THE FIELD.



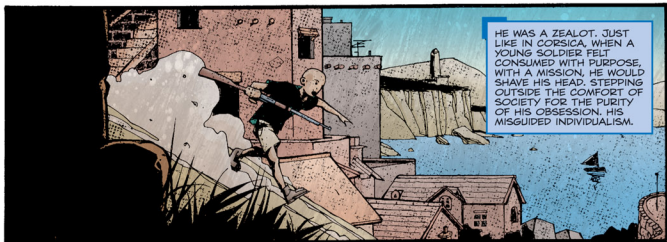
WE SPENT THREE YEARS
WITH AL-GADDAFI. RUTHLESS,
POWER-HUNGRY. SO LIKE
OUR COMMANDER TODAY.



BUT, ULTIMATELY, SO LIMITED.
DOOMED TO ONLY EVER USE
ONE TOOL. IN HIS QUEST TO
REBUILD THE WORLD, HE NEVER
HAD THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE.



HE SITS NOW, ISOLATED AND IGNORED. FRUSTRATED. A LESSON TO ALL WARLORDS.



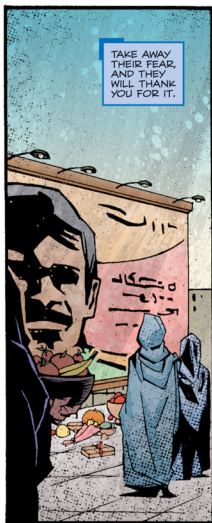
HE WAS A ZEALOT. JUST LIKE IN CORSICA, WHEN A YOUNG SOLDIER FELT CONSUMED WITH PURPOSE, WITH A MISSION, HE WOULD SHAVE HIS HEAD, STEPPING OUTSIDE THE COMFORT OF SOCIETY FOR THE PURITY OF HIS OBSESSION, HIS MISGUIDED INDIVIDUALISM.



IT AGGRIEVES ME, BECAUSE IF THERE IS ONE CONSTANT TRUTH TO HUMANITY, IT IS THIS...



...TAKE AWAY THEIR CHOICES, THEIR NOVELTY, AND YOU TAKE AWAY THEIR ANXIETIES. THEIR FEAR.



TAKE AWAY THEIR FEAR, AND THEY WILL THANK YOU FOR IT.



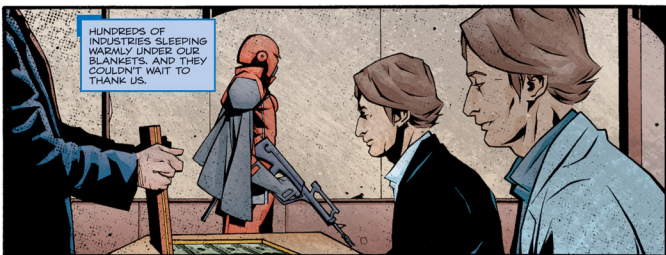
THAT WAS WHAT
THE DREAM OF
OUR BUSINESS
PARTNERSHIP,
EXTENSIVE
ENTERPRISES,
WAS ALL ABOUT.



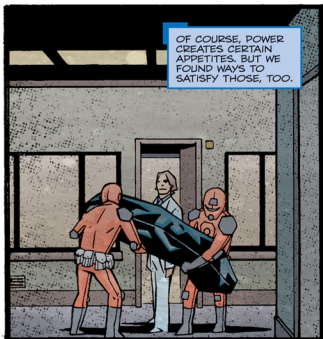
COBBLED TOGETHER
FROM THE DILAPIDATED
INFRASTRUCTURE OF
THE UNIONE CORSES'S
CONTRABAND NETWORK,
WHICH WE WERE THERE
TO SEIZE AND PROP UP.



IT WAS ALL ABOUT
PRESENCE. INSTEAD
OF WAR, WE SOLD
"SECURITY."



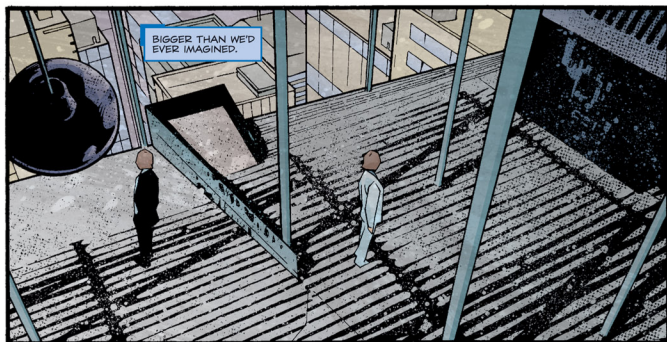
HUNDREDS OF
INDUSTRIES SLEEPING
WARMLY UNDER OUR
BLANKETS. AND THEY
COULDN'T WAIT TO
THANK US.



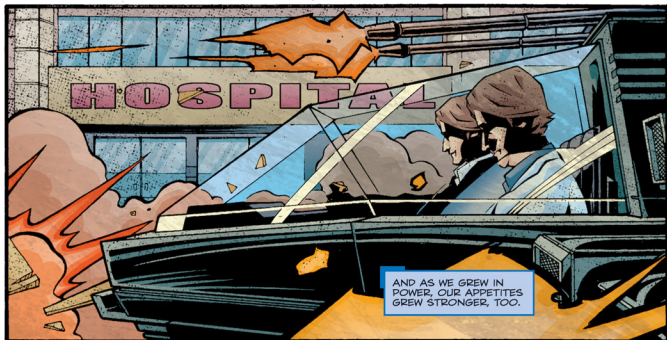
OF COURSE, POWER
CREATES CERTAIN
APPETITES. BUT WE
FOUND WAYS TO
SATISFY THOSE, TOO.



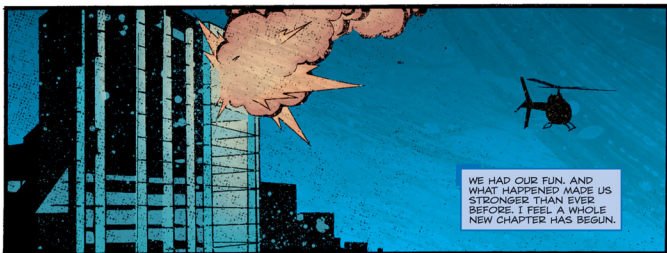
AND THEN, ONE DAY, WE MET
A MAN WHO OFFERED OUR
COMPANY A NEW OPPORTUNITY.
A NEW PLACE IN THE WORLD.



BIGGER THAN WE'D
EVER IMAGINED.



AND AS WE GREW IN
POWER, OUR APPETITES
GREW STRONGER, TOO.



EVERYTHING FEELS
DIFFERENT NOW.





EVERYTHING FEELS
DIFFERENT NOW.



EVER SINCE WE GOT
FREE OF THAT ATTACK.



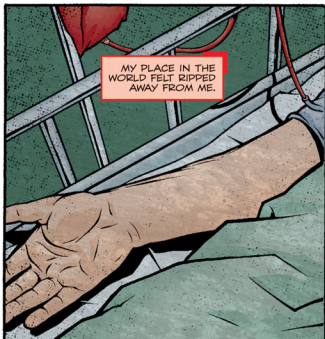
WHEN MY BROTHER
AND I MADE OUR
BRILLIANT REVEAL.



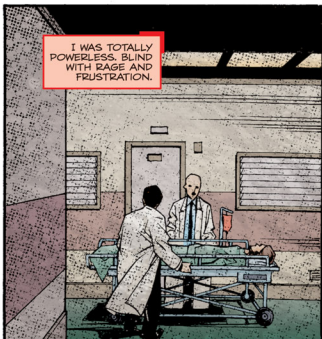
BUT THEN SOMEONE
TAUGHT ME AN
UNINTENTIONAL
LESSON. SHOWED ME
HOW MUCH OF A
PRISONER I'D BEEN.



IT WAS HORRIBLE. I'D
NEVER BEEN IN SUCH A
VULNERABLE POSITION.
AND I COULD TELL A
PART OF MY LIFE WAS
AT AN END.



MY PLACE IN THE
WORLD FELT RIPPED
AWAY FROM ME.



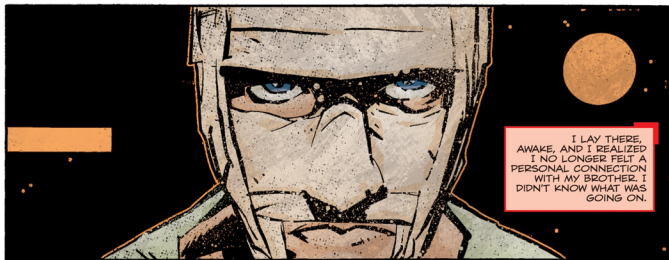
I WAS TOTALLY
POWERLESS, BLIND
WITH RAGE AND
FRUSTRATION.



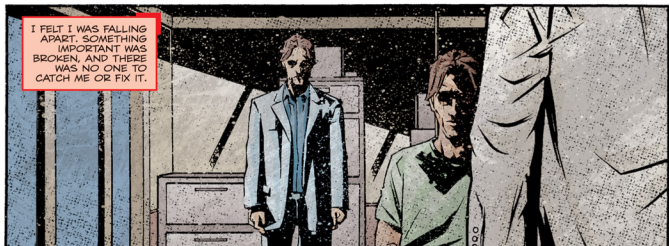
I'D NEVER FELT
SO SMALL.



SO WEAK.



I LAY THERE,
AWAKE, AND I REALIZED
I NO LONGER FELT A
PERSONAL CONNECTION
WITH MY BROTHER. I
DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS
GOING ON.



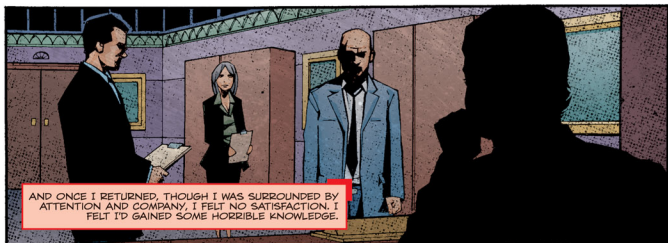
I FELT I WAS FALLING
APART. SOMETHING
IMPORTANT WAS
BROKEN, AND THERE
WAS NO ONE TO
CATCH ME OR FIX IT.



MY BROTHER WAS
PRESENT... BUT NOT HIS
CLOSENESS DID NOT
PROVIDE ANY SECURITY.



AND IN MY
COLD HOSPITAL
BED, I FELT NO
GRATITUDE.



AND ONCE I RETURNED, THOUGH I WAS SURROUNDED BY ATTENTION AND COMPANY, I FELT NO SATISFACTION. I FELT I'D GAINED SOME HORRIBLE KNOWLEDGE.



I BEGAN TO QUESTION MY MISSION, SEEKING MORE AND MORE TIME ALONE IN MY OWN HEAD. THE PURITY OF MY PARTNERSHIP WAS SUDDENLY TARNISHED.



I FELT FEAR.



MY LIFE HAD BECOME FAMILIAR.



THE CONSTANTS OF MY LIFE NO LONGER HELD ANY TRUTH FOR ME. BUT I FELT NO GRIEF.



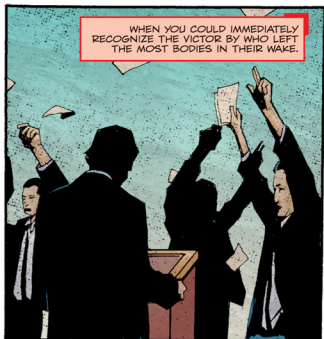
I REMEMBER, IN THE TOYOTA WAR, ALL YOU NEEDED WAS A PICKUP AND A RELIABLE WEAPON AND YOU FELT ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE.



WE HAD STRENGTH IN ARMS, AND VICTORY WAS MEASURED IN STRUGGLE, NOT PROFIT.



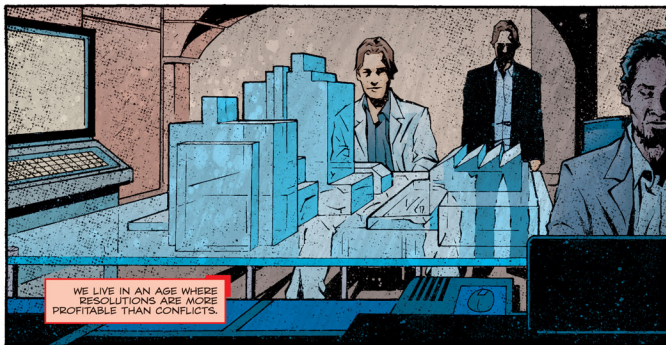
OUR COMMANDMENT TODAY IS TO ACCRUE A DIFFERENT KIND OF POWER. IT MAKES ME MISS MY YEARS WITH THE WARLORDS OF OLD.



WHEN YOU COULD IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZE THE VICTOR BY WHO LEFT THE MOST BODIES IN THEIR WAKE.



BUT NOW OUR REACH HAS BECOME UNLIMITED. WE HAVE SO MANY TOOLS, I'M LOSING PERSPECTIVE.





I NO LONGER
FEEL FREE.



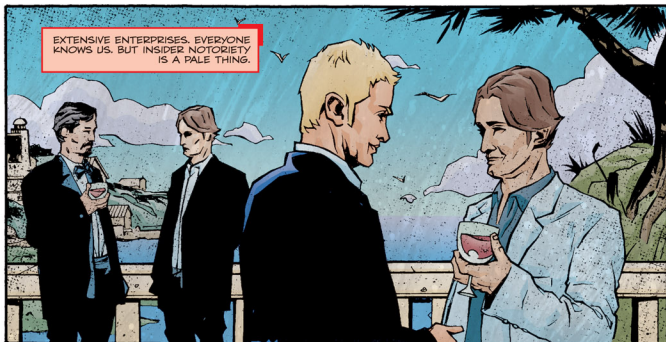
INCREASINGLY, I
FIND MYSELF
PRISONER,
HELD AGAINST
MY WILL.



MY BROTHER
CALLS AND I DO
NOT ANSWER.



LESS AND LESS, I
WISH TO SPEND TIME
WITH HIM. BETWEEN
US, I SENSE A
GROWING TROUBLE.



EXTENSIVE ENTERPRISES. EVERYONE KNOWS US. BUT INSIDER NOTORIETY IS A PALE THING.



I'M A VETERAN BUSINESSMAN, BUT MY HEART REBELS AND LONGS FOR VAST, OPEN FIELDS.



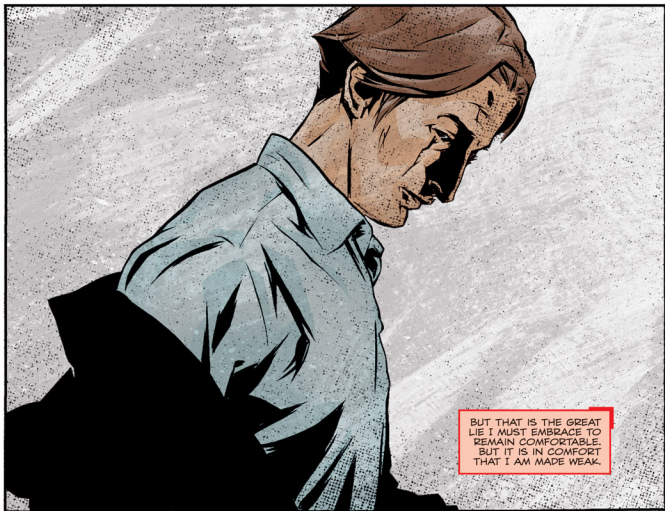
YOUNG, ALIVE, PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR, YET EVERYWHERE AT ONCE.



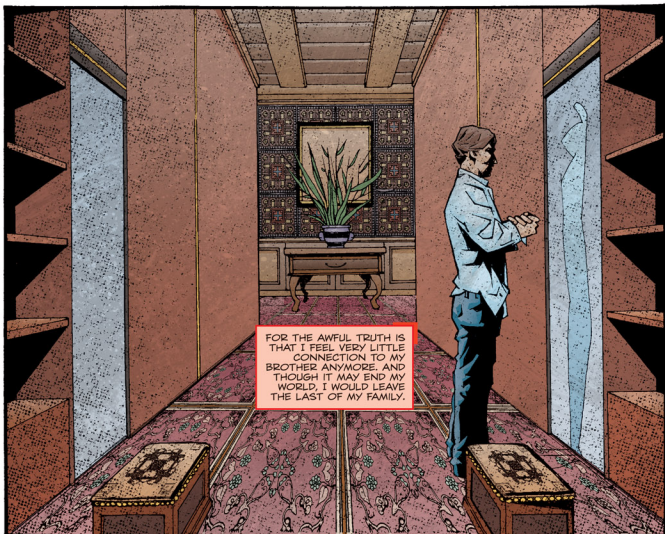
I NEED TO BE LIBERATED—FOR MY WILL TO BE UNFETTERED BY ANY OTHER INFLUENCE.



AS A BUSINESSMAN, I AM MISERABLE. I CREATE NO COMRADES WITH THIS DULL ECONOMIC POWER.



BUT THAT IS THE GREAT
LIE I MUST EMBRACE TO
REMAIN COMFORTABLE.
BUT IT IS IN COMFORT
THAT I AM MADE WEAK.



FOR THE AWFUL TRUTH IS
THAT I FEEL VERY LITTLE
CONNECTION TO MY
BROTHER ANYMORE. AND
THOUGH IT MAY END MY
WORLD, I WOULD LEAVE
THE LAST OF MY FAMILY.

JIVE 23VIJ



CHARMER





NOT SO LONG AGO, I JOINED A CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION. I THOUGHT I KNEW WHAT IT WAS, GOING IN.



I DIDN'T. THE THINGS I SAW, THE THINGS I WAS MADE TO DO... I COULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED.



THERE ARE FACES AND MOMENTS I SEE EVERY NIGHT IN MY DREAMS.



THEN I WAKE UP, AND REALIZE THE REAL NIGHTMARE IS MY LIFE.



"SO, YOU WANT TO POACH ANOTHER ONE OF MY MEN FOR YOUR DREAM TEAM."



ARE YOU? I'M NOT SURE WE'RE EVEN IN THE SAME MILITARY ANYMORE.

YOU REALLY NEED TO ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE ABOUT THIS, COLONEL. AND REMIND YOURSELF I'M A SUPERIOR OFFICER.



YOU RECRUIT MY PEOPLE, GIVING ME NO CHOICE IN THE MATTER, AND NOBODY EVER HEARS FROM THEM AGAIN. THEIR FILES DISAPPEAR. IT'S LIKE THEY NEVER EXISTED.

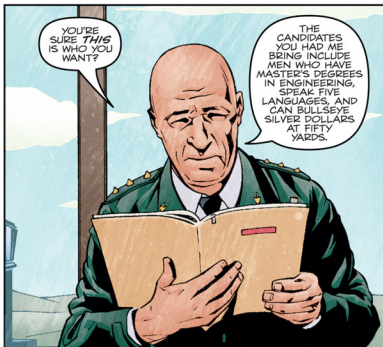
OR I HEAR THEY'VE DIED. KIA. CAR ACCIDENTS. CANCER... PEOPLE IN THEIR *TWENTIES*, MIND YOU, WHICH MAKES YOU UNLUCKIER THAN THE HOPE DIAMOND.

AND NO ONE HAS ANY WAY OF KNOWING WHAT IT IS YOU'RE ACTUALLY DOING WITH THIS UNIT.

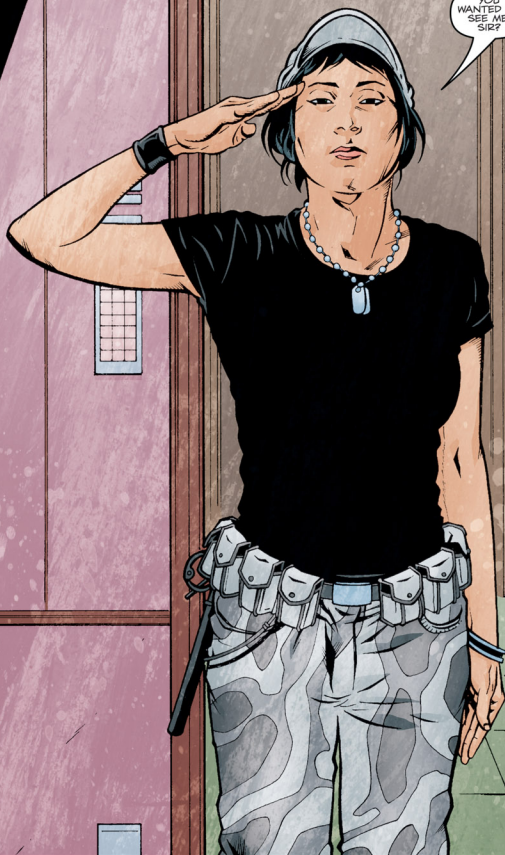
I'M TELLING YOU, GENERAL HAWK, PEOPLE ARE BECOMING LESS AND LESS OKAY WITH THIS.

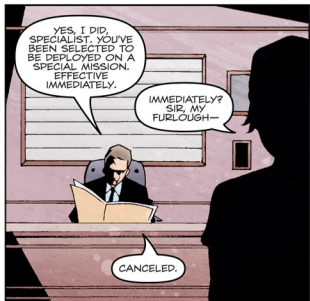


THE *PRESIDENT* IS OKAY WITH IT.



FORKED TONGUE





YES, I DID. SPECIALIST. YOU'VE BEEN SELECTED TO BE DEPLOYED ON A SPECIAL MISSION. EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.

IMMEDIATELY? SIR, MY FURLOUGH—

CANCELED.



SIR...

DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?



NO, SIR. I DON'T.

GOOD. IF YOU DID, I WOULDN'T BE VERY GOOD AT MY JOB. DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING TO YOU HERE?



I COMMAND AN ELITE UNIT WHO ARE THE FINEST AT WHAT THEY DO. THE ONE PERCENT OF THE ONE PERCENT. WE ARE OFF THE OFFICIAL BOOKS, BUT OUR REQUISITION IS ENORMOUS.

WE PERFORM OUR MISSIONS SO YOU AND THE PEOPLE YOU'RE TRAINING WITH GET TO LIE IN YOUR RACKS FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS INSTEAD OF GOING TO WAR WITH SOME NEW TERRORIST-CONTROLLED STATE.

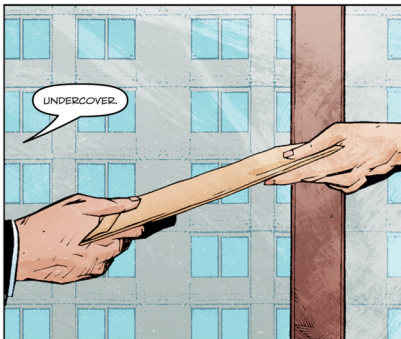


THAT'S ALL I CAN TELL YOU UNTIL YOU AGREE TO THE TRANSFER. WHICH INVOLVES YOUR LIFE AS YOU KNOW IT CEASING TO EXIST.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS. EITHER PLAY THE REAL GAME, OR GO SIT ON THE BENCH WITH THE SECOND-STRINGERS, AND WE'LL CALL YOU WHEN WE NEED YOU AND TEN THOUSAND OF YOUR FRIENDS TO MARCH INTO A WAR ZONE FOR THE SIX O'CLOCK NEWS.



WHAT'S THE ASSIGNMENT?



UNDERCOVER.



WE HAD A MAN INFILTRATE A CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION LAST YEAR. THEY CALL THEMSELVES "COBRA."

IT WAS A BODY WE'D ONLY HEARD RUMORS OF BEFORE. HIS ACTIVITIES FINALLY CONFIRMED THEIR EXISTENCE, AND THEIR THREAT LEVEL.



HIS COMMUNICATIONS GREW MORE AND MORE DISTURBING. FINALLY, THEY STOPPED.

AFTER HIS HANDLER ALSO DISAPPEARED, WE HAD TEAMS MOVE INTO HIS LAST KNOWN LOCATION. THE PARAMILITARY INSTALLATIONS HAD BEEN DESTROYED. NO TRACE OF ANYTHING OR ANYONE.



FOUND THE CORPSE OF THE HANDLER IN A MASS GRAVE.

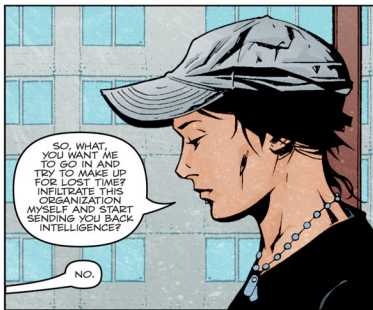


"CHUCKLES."
"JINX." I'M
ASSUMING THESE
ARE CALL
SIGNS.

THEY'RE
NAMES. THE
ONLY ONES OUR
PEOPLE HAVE.
YOURS IS ON
PAGE ONE.



HM. SORTA
SILLY, HUH?



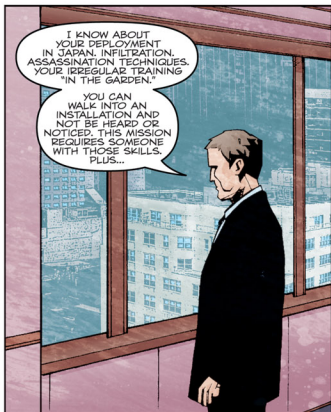
SO, WHAT,
YOU WANT ME
TO GO IN AND
TRY TO MAKE UP
FOR LOST TIME?
INFILTRATE THIS
ORGANIZATION
MYSELF AND START
SENDING YOU BACK
INTELLIGENCE?

NO.



OUTSIDE OF
COBRA ITSELF,
NO ONE KNOWS
MORE ABOUT ITS
INNER WORKINGS
THAN CHUCKLES. WE
CAN'T REPRODUCE
THAT INTEL. HE IS
THE ASSET
HERE.

YOUR
MISSION IS
TO GO IN AND
RETRIEVE
HIM.





IT ALL JUST FEELS TOO EASY.



SECURITY WAVES ME THROUGH.



THE TURRET CAMERAS DON'T SPIN IN MY DIRECTION.



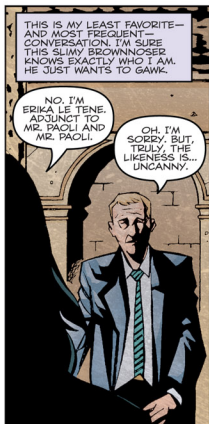
THE ADJUNCTS STANDING IN THE FOYER DON'T EVEN MAKE EYE CONTACT. JUST LIKE THAT, I'M IN.





AND ALREADY MY WEEK IS OFF TO A WONDERFUL START.

BARONESS!



THIS IS MY LEAST FAVORITE—AND MOST FREQUENT—CONVERSATION. I'M SURE THIS SLIMY BROWNNOSER KNOWS EXACTLY WHO I AM. HE JUST WANTS TO GAWK.

NO. I'M ERIKA LE TENE, ADJUNCT TO MR. PAOLI AND MR. PAOLI.

OH, I'M SORRY. BUT, TRULY, THE LIKENESS IS... UNCANNY.



I SEE THESE KINDS OF MEN EVERY YEAR AT THIS SUMMIT. A CHIEF OF STAFF FOR THE ESTATE.

SOMEONE TO ORGANIZE THE BANQUETS, MAKE SURE THE SERVANTS DO THEIR JOBS PERFECTLY AND INVISIBLY, AND COORDINATE WITH ALL THE ADJUNCTS.

CAN I HELP YOU?



THEY ALWAYS ASK ME THE SAME QUESTIONS. BUT IT'S NEVER THE SAME MAN TWICE. THE JOB HAS A HIGH TURNOVER RATE.

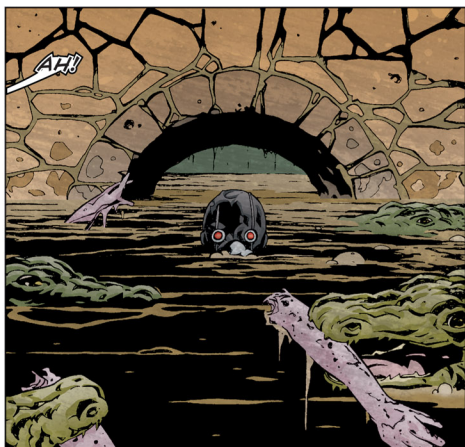
YES. UH, YES, YOUR ITINERARY.



PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY'RE ALWAYS SUCH INCORRIGIBLE GOSSIPS.

ALSO... MR. PAOLI IS HERE, BUT HIS BROTHER HASN'T ARRIVED YET. IS THAT... USUAL?







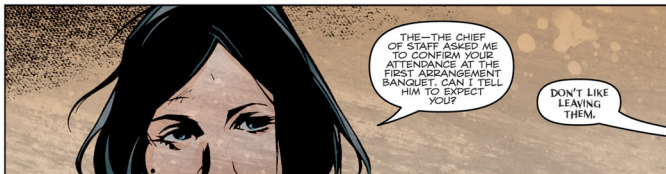
IT WAS THEIR
FAULT FOR SENDING
A PLUMP ONE THE
LAST TIME.

I COULD TELL
WHAT THEY WERE
THINKING. AND I
KNEW I SHOULDN'T,
BUT I ASK YOU.

COULD YOU
RESIST THAT
FACE?



FELT BAD
AFTER.
DISAPPOINTING.
STRINGY.
BUT,
SPILLED
MILK.



THE—THE CHIEF
OF STAFF ASKED ME
TO CONFIRM YOUR
ATTENDANCE AT THE
FIRST ARRANGEMENT
BANQUET. CAN I TELL
HIM TO EXPECT
YOU?

DON'T LIKE
LEAVING
THEM.



THEY'RE VERY BEAUTIFUL.
SIAMESE AND SALTWATER,
IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN.

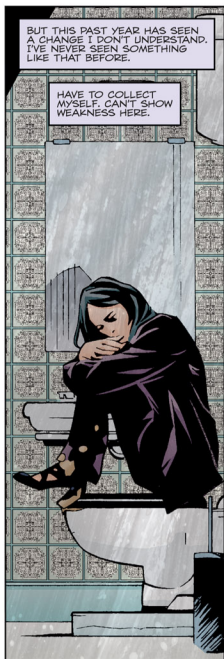
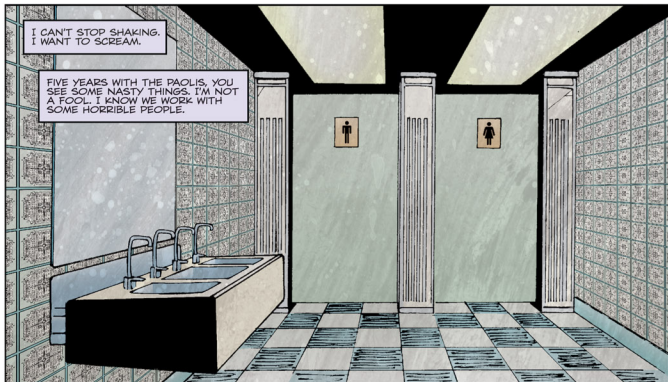
YES,
ENDANGERED,
THE SIAMESE.

THEY'LL BE WELL
TAKEN CARE OF
IN YOUR ABSENCE.
I'LL SEE TO IT
PERSONALLY.

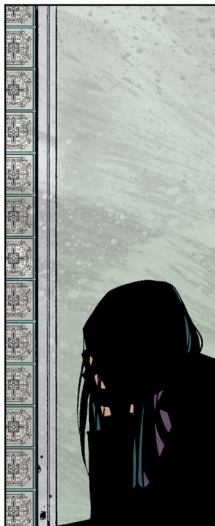
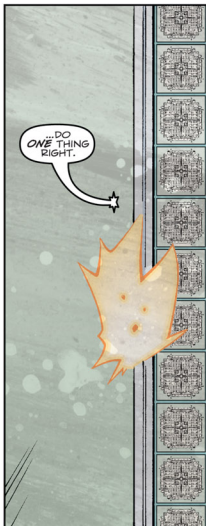


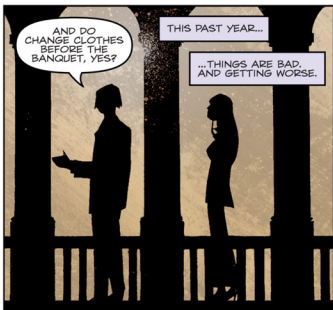
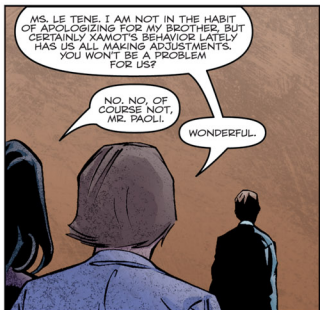
HOPE SO,
WE LIKE YOU
BETTER THAN
THE LAST
ONE.

CAREFUL
LEAVING,
THERE'S A
SLOPE,
WOULDN'T
WANT TO
SLIP.

















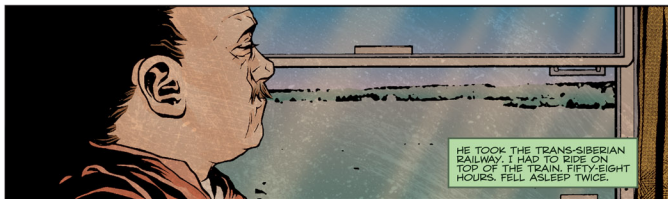
I PICKED UP CHUCKLES' TRAIL IN ISTANBUL. HE'D BOUGHT PHONY VISAS OFF AN OLD CONTACT FROM HIS MERCENARY DAYS.



I MISSED HIM BY TWO MONTHS. IN AZERBAIJAN, ACCORDING TO HIS FORMER GUN-RUNNING PARTNERS. I HAD TO KILL TWO OF THEM.



HE TOOK THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY. I HAD TO RIDE ON TOP OF THE TRAIN. FIFTY- EIGHT HOURS. FELL ASLEEP TWICE.



THE TRAIL WENT COLD IN Khabarovsk Krai UNTIL I OVERHEARD A LOCAL OFFICER TALKING ABOUT BAD BUSINESS WITH A WESTERNER.



IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO FIND WHERE THEY'D PUT HIM.

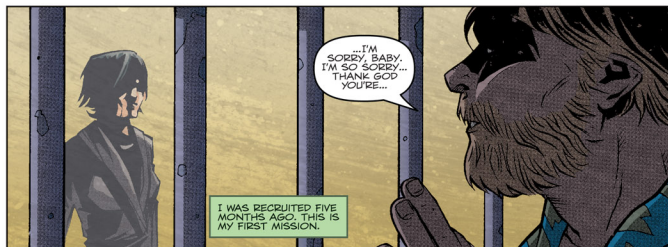




AND SO HERE I AM.

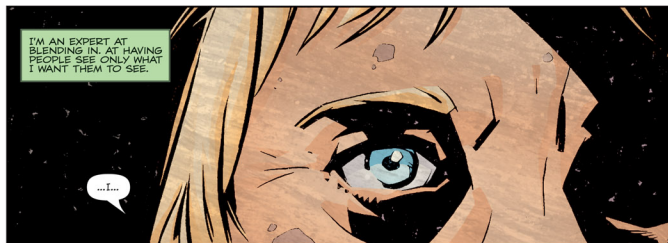
JINX...

I AM PART OF AN ELITE
UNIT CALLED G.I. JOE.



...I'M
SORRY, BABY.
I'M SO SORRY...
THANK GOD
YOU'RE...

I WAS RECRUITED FIVE
MONTHS AGO. THIS IS
MY FIRST MISSION.



I'M AN EXPERT AT
BLENDING IN. AT HAVING
PEOPLE SEE ONLY WHAT
I WANT THEM TO SEE.

...I...



WHO ARE
YOU?

MY NAME ISN'T JINX.



MY NAME IS
CHAMELEON.

I'M HERE TO
RESCUE YOU.

SCALES





YOU THINK I'M HERE BECAUSE OF DISPLACED GUILT? I CAN LEAVE ANY TIME I WANT.



YOU JUST MISTOOK ME FOR A DEAD WOMAN. YOU'RE DELUSIONAL FROM DEHYDRATION, MALNUTRITION AND ISOLATION. I'M NOT TAKING YOUR WORD FOR IT.



YOU LISTEN TO ME.

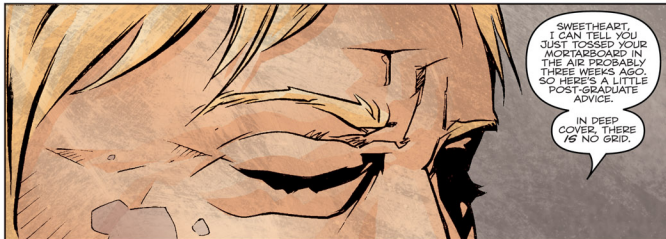


I AM HERE BECAUSE THERE IS A MAN ONE WING OVER WHO WAS A BODYGUARD TO COBRA HIGH COMMAND.

THEY USUALLY "RETIRE" THESE PEOPLE WITH A BULLET TO THE HEAD. HE'S THE *ONE* GUY THAT ESCAPED.



I'VE SPENT THE LAST THREE MONTHS GAINING THIS MAN'S TRUST. WE'VE BEEN TRADING WAR STORIES. I'M ON THE VERGE OF GETTING THE *ENTIRE* PICTURE OF COBRA'S TOP LEVEL.





YOU WAIT A WEEK, AND NOT ONLY DO YOU GET ME, YOU GET COBRA WITH A BOW ON IT.

OR PICK THE LOCK AND COME IN THIS CELL TO SEE IF YOU CAN DRAG ME OUT.



ONE WEEK?

I'LL GIVE YOU COORDINATES FOR THE MEET.

GUARDS CHANGE OUT IN EIGHTEEN MINUTES.

HOW MANY DID YOU KILL?

FOUR.



THERE'S A CRAZY SICILIAN IN THE NEXT HALL, LIKED TO SLICE PEOPLE UP WITH RAZORS. BREAK HIM OUT OF THE CELL AND HAND HIM THE SWORD. NOBODY'LL BELIEVE HIM. YOU HAVE AN EXTRA BLADE AFTER THAT?

YES.

GOOD. I'LL NEED IT. ANYBODY ELSE SEE YOU?

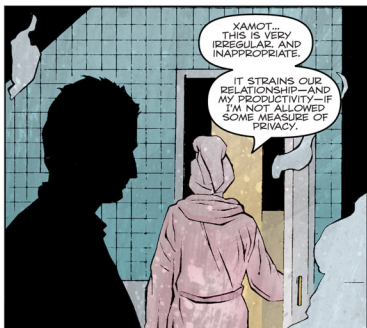
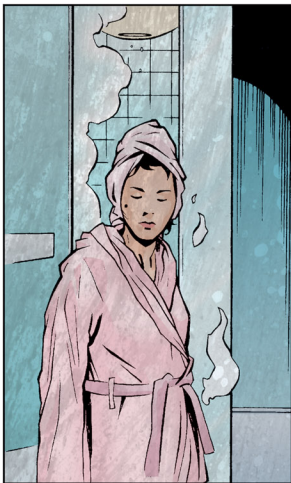


ARE YOU KIDDING?

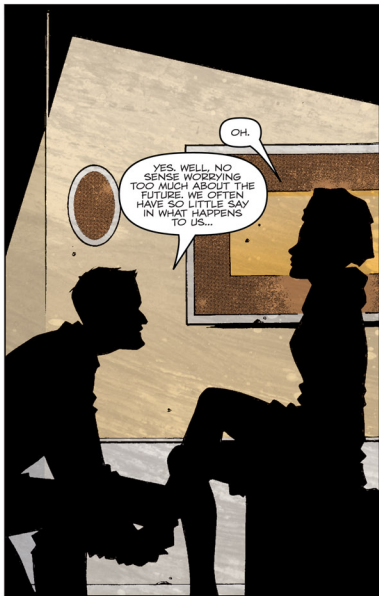


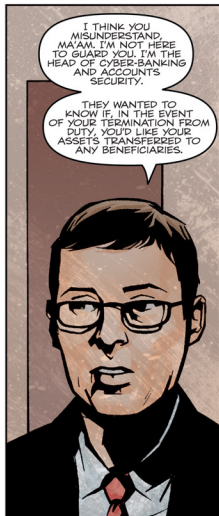
ONE WEEK.

BE THERE OR I COME FIND YOU.



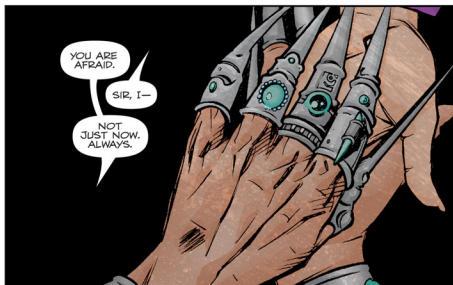




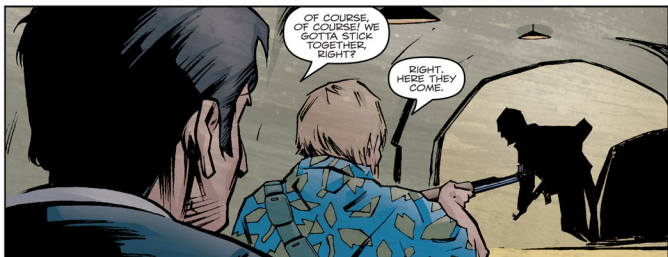




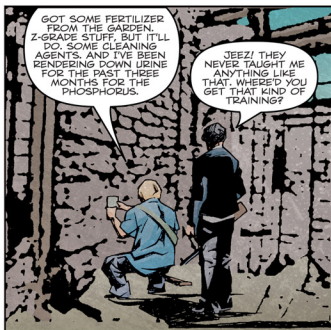


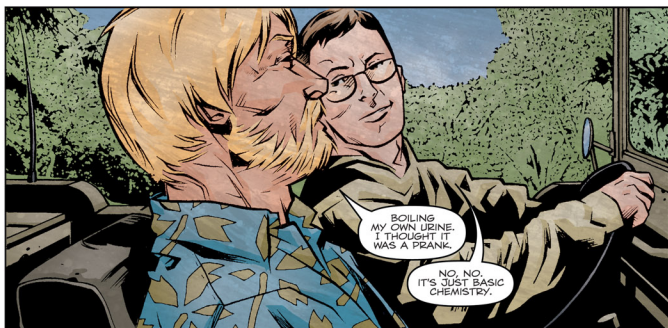
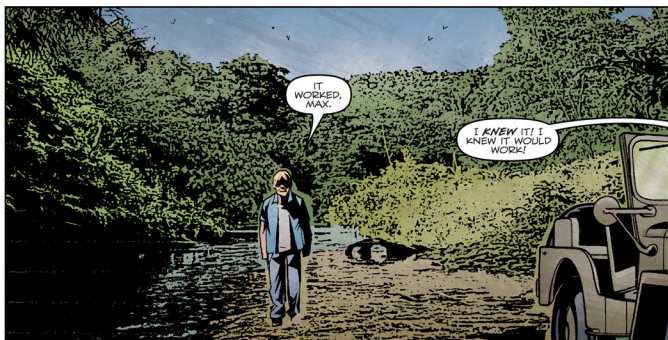


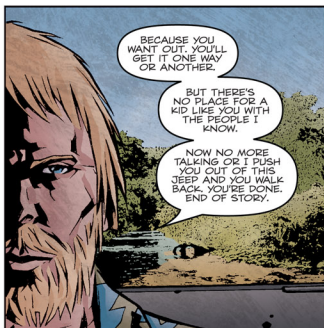












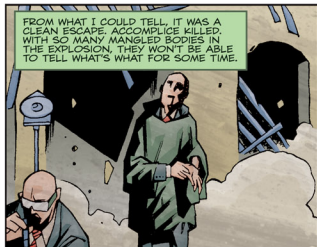


TWO DAYS PAST THE DEADLINE.
HE STILL HASN'T SHOWN.

HE'S NOT COMING.



I DOUBLED BACK TO
THE PRISON. DIDN'T
REALLY EXPECT TO
FIND HIM THERE.



FROM WHAT I COULD TELL, IT WAS A
CLEAN ESCAPE. ACCOMPLICE KILLED.
WITH SO MANY MANGLED BODIES IN
THE EXPLOSION, THEY WON'T BE ABLE
TO TELL WHAT'S WHAT FOR SOME TIME.



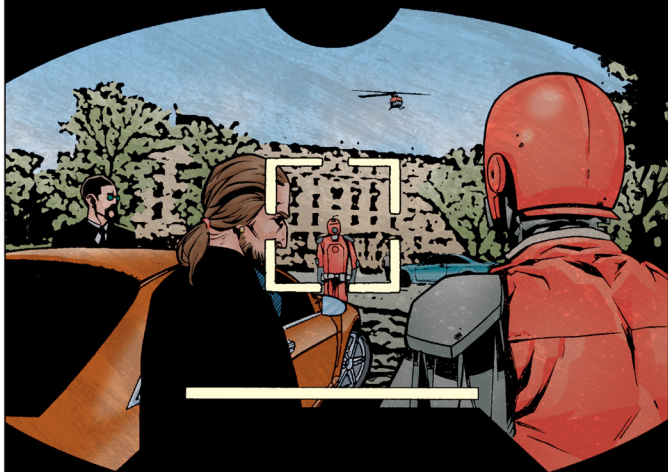
I COULD GO AFTER HIM. I COULD
PROBABLY PICK UP HIS TRAIL.
BUT HE WAS SMART. HE GAVE ME
SOMETHING TO DISSUADE ME.



THOSE COORDINATES
FOR THE MEET MADE
GOOD ON ONE PROMISE.

COBRA—

—WITH A
BOW ON IT.



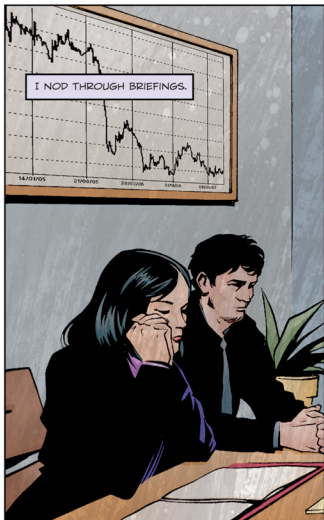




YOU TALK TO
YOURSELF A LOT,
LITTLE MAN.

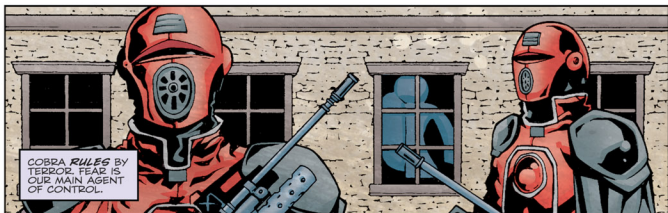
HOW ABOUT
YOU SIT DOWN
AND TALK TO
ME?

FANGS





SOME SMALL PART OF ME KNOWS HOW PATHETIC IT IS TO BE THIS UNNERVED.



COBRA RULES BY TERROR. FEAR IS OUR MAIN AGENT OF CONTROL...



THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE IN THIS ORGANIZATION LIVE EVERY DAY IMMERSSED IN IT. HOW DO THEY FUNCTION?



LIKE THIS RIDICULOUS, NERVOUS KID... MATT? NO, *MAX*, HE LOOKS TERRIFIED.

I-I'M SORRY, MS. LE TENE, I SEEM TO HAVE LOST MY PLACE AGAIN...



I CAN'T STAND THIS IN MYSELF. SEEING IT IN SOMEONE ELSE IS ALMOST UNBEARABLE.

...S-SO WHAT I WAS SAYING WAS, BASICALLY, UH...

...OH, MAN...

...THESE NEW PROTOCOLS ARE COMPLICATED, SO—



OH, WHO CARES ABOUT THE DAMN PROTOCOLS? I'VE BEEN ADJUNCT TO TWO HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS FOR YEARS NOW, I THINK I CAN READ A BRIEF ON MY OWN WITHOUT THEM SENDING DOWN SOME STAMMERING IDIOT TO WASTE MY TIME!



OR IS THERE SOME GAP IN YOUR REASONING THAT'S RESULTED IN YOU SOMEHOW GETTING THE IDEA THAT YOU ARE *NOT* THE LEAST IMPORTANT PERSON I HAVE TO TALK TO TODAY?

M-MA'AM, I... I'LL END THE BRIEFING THEN, IF IT PLEASES YOU.



DAMMIT.

LOOK, FORGIVE ME, THIS HAS BEEN A... TRYING WEEK FOR EVERYONE.

YOU'RE DOING A FINE JOB, AND IT BENEFITS NO ONE IF YOU'RE TERRORIZED WHILE YOU DO IT, RIGHT?



MA'AM, I'M AT YOUR SERVICE.

I KNOW, AND THAT IS APPRECIATED.





A FEW HOURS LATER I SEE HIM SPEAKING WITH THEIR INQUISITOR, "CRYSTAL BALL."



THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT ME. THE BOY IS TELLING HIM I'M COMING APART. THAT I'M CRUMBLING UNDER THE PRESSURE, I'M NOW EVEN LESS TRUSTWORTHY, AND IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE—

THEY'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT YOU.



WHAT? I WASN'T—

OF COURSE YOU WERE, ERIKA. YOU'VE BEEN ON EDGE SINCE YOUR LITTLE INTERVIEW. BUT THAT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.

MAX IS CRYSTAL BALL'S SON.

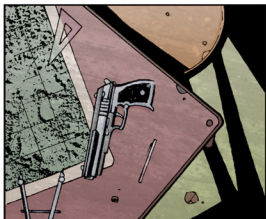


HIS SON?

I KNOW HE DOESN'T LOOK IT, BUT DON'T BE SO SHOCKED. JUST BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE FAMILY DOESN'T MEAN THEY HAVE TO BE EXACTLY THE SAME.



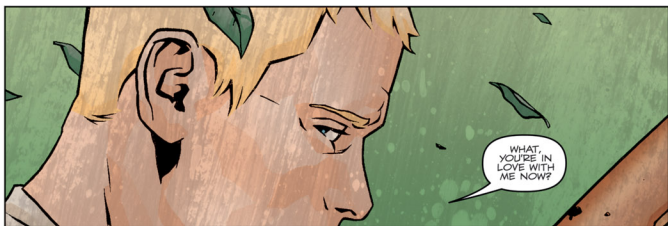
WE KNOW THAT BETTER THAN ANYONE, DON'T WE?



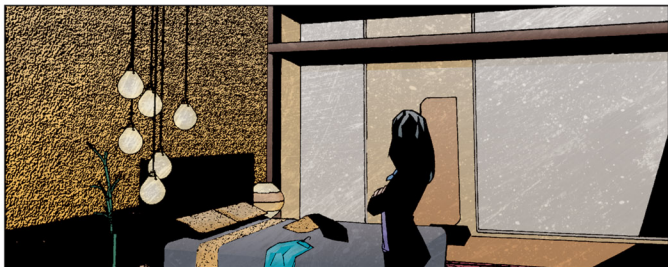
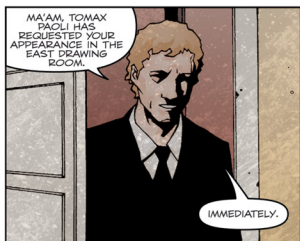
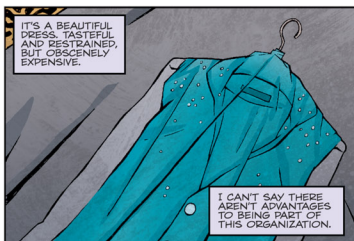


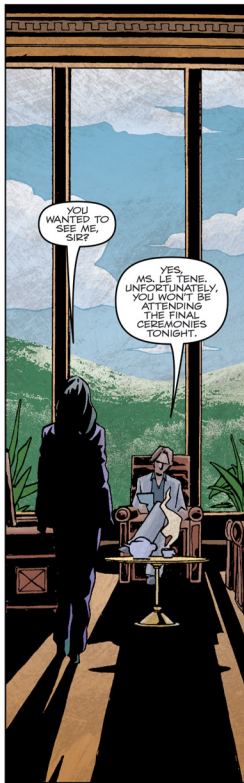












YOU
WANTED TO
SEE ME,
SIR?

YES,
MS. LE TENE.
UNFORTUNATELY,
YOU WON'T BE
ATTENDING
THE FINAL
CEREMONIES
TONIGHT.



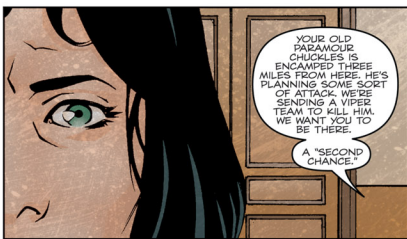
I
WON'T?

I'M YOUR
FOURTH-YEAR
ADJUNCT. I THOUGHT
THIS WAS THE YEAR I
MATRICULATED TO THE
SENIOR WARDENS. IS
THAT NOT THIS
EVENING?



OH NO, THAT'S
THIS EVENING. THAT
PLUS MUCH MORE, BUT
YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE A
RAIN CHECK. XAMOT AND
I HAVE COME TO A
DECISION.

OH?



YOUR OLD
PARAMOUR
CHUCKLES IS
ENCAMPED THREE
MILES FROM HERE. HE'S
PLANNING SOME SORT
OF ATTACK. WE'RE
SENDING A VIPER
TEAM TO KILL HIM.
WE WANT YOU TO
BE THERE.

A "SECOND
CHANCE."



SIR,
I—

THEY'RE
EQUIPPING
IN THE SOUTH
MOTOR POOL.
MOVING OUT IN
TEN MINUTES. YOU
CAN THANK
ME LATER.



I DON'T NEED TO
TELL YOU HOW *RARE*
SECOND CHANCES
ARE IN OUR
ORGANIZATION.







OH, GOD... THIS IS INSANE.

XAMOT'S INSANE. THAT MUCH HAS BECOME CLEAR. FOR ME TO ACTUALLY BE LISTENING TO HIM...

...BUT IT'S NOT AS IF I HAVE ANOTHER OPTION, IS IT?



AND IF THERE WAS EVER A TIME THIS MIGHT ACTUALLY WORK, IT'S NOW.

THERE'S JUST A SKELETON CREW WATCHING THE PERIMETER. ALL THE OTHERS ARE GUARDING THE CEREMONY. EVERY BIT OF SECURITY IS FOCUSED ON IT.

AND RIGHTFULLY SO. ALL THE EXECUTIVES ARE THERE. WHICH MEANS I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT LUNATIC "CROC MASTER."



HIS PETS ARE ANOTHER MATTER. BUT IT'S JUST A FEW METERS TO THE PIPE, AND FROM THERE A SHORT CRAWL OUTSIDE.

ALMOST. ALMOST. ALMO—



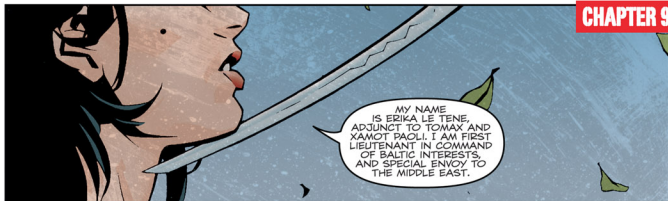
-AAA!





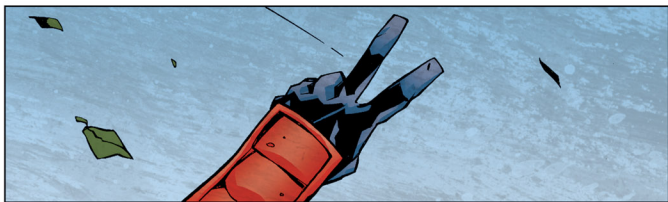




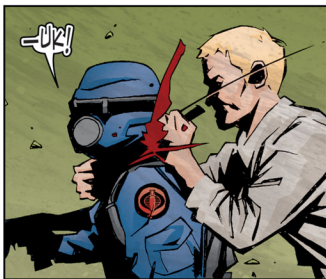


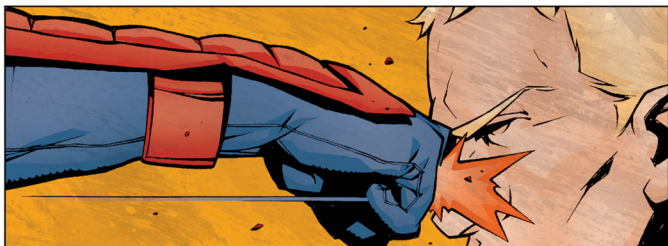
COLD-BLOODED

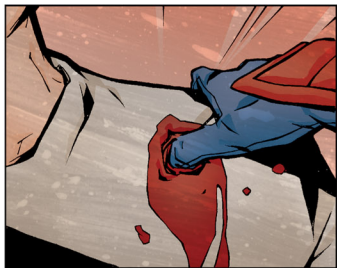
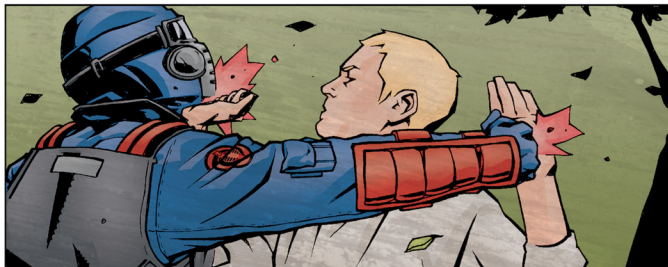


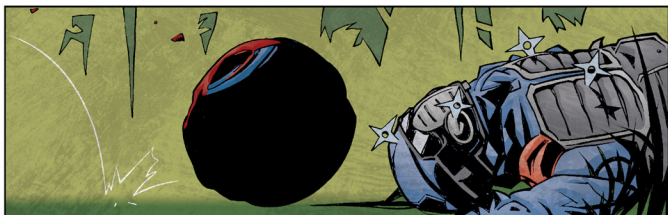
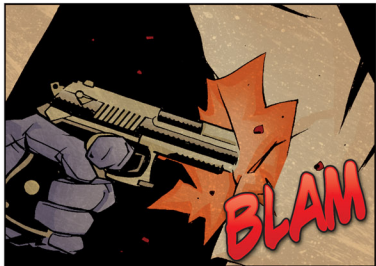


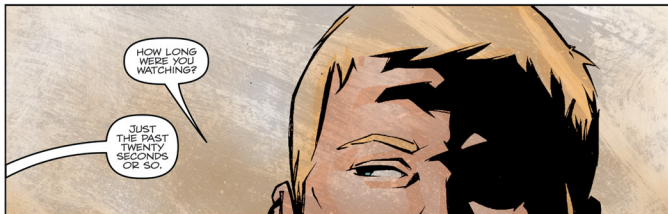


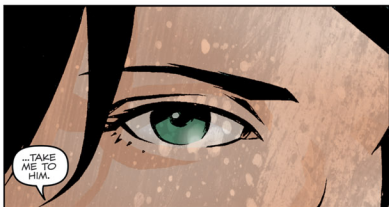
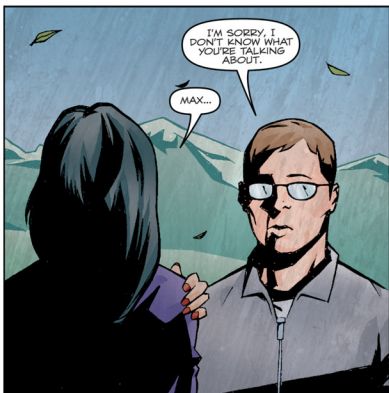




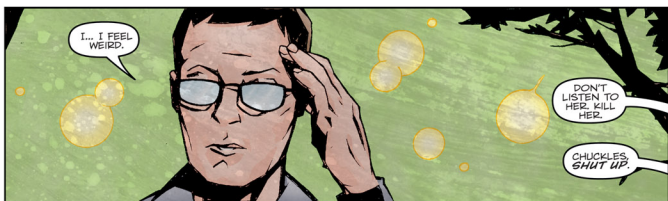
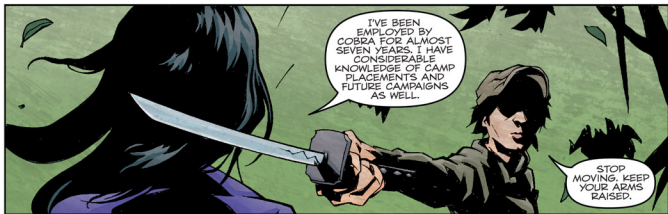














SO STUPID. RULE NUMBER ONE: YOU NEVER TURN YOUR BACK ON ANYONE THAT IS NOT IN YOUR UNIT. *EVER.*

IF I COULD RAISE MY ARMS, YOU'D BE DEAD. YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?



GUN!

BUT HE WAS JUST A KID. WEAK AND NERVOUS. I DIDN'T GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT.



AND I WASN'T LOOKING.



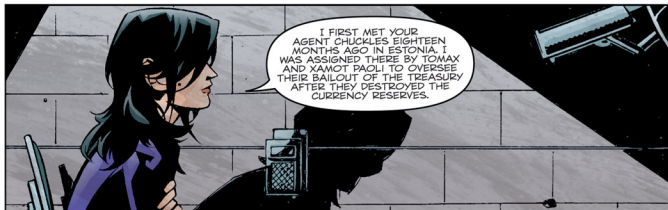
DAD? I...

...I CAN'T HEAR YOU...

DAD, IT'S DARK... I'M SC-

OH MY GOD.



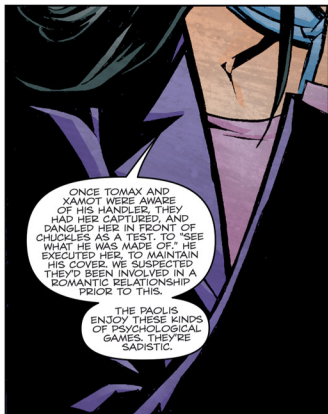


I FIRST MET YOUR AGENT CHUCKLES EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO IN ESTONIA. I WAS ASSIGNED THERE BY TOMAX AND XAMOT PAOLI TO OVERSEE THEIR BAILOUT OF THE TREASURY AFTER THEY DESTROYED THE CURRENCY RESERVES.



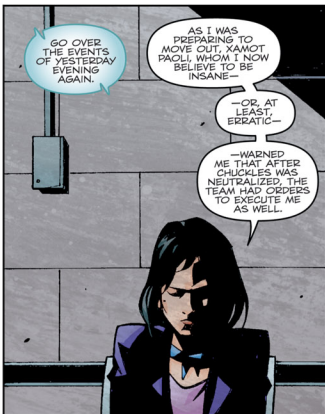
WE BEGAN A RELATIONSHIP. AT THAT TIME, HIS COVER WAS STILL INTACT. IT WASN'T UNTIL THE NEXT MORNING THAT I NOTICED THE SKELETAL RESONANCE TRANSMISSIONS. I ALERTED THE PAOLIS RIGHT AWAY. WE BEGAN MONITORING HIM REMOTELY THROUGH SENSORS IN HIS WEAPON HOLSTER. WITHIN A WEEK, WE'D BROKEN YOUR CODE.

ONCE WE'D DETERMINED THE AGENCY HE WORKED FOR AND THE NATURE OF HIS ASSIGNMENT, EVERYTHING HE DISCOVERED FROM THAT POINT ON WAS MISINFORMATION INTENTIONALLY FED TO HIM SO THAT WE COULD EVENTUALLY AFFECT OUR ESCAPE, LEAVE HIM DEAD, AND HAVE G.I. JOE BELIEVE HE'D BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DESTROYING OUR OPERATION.



ONCE TOMAX AND XAMOT WERE AWARE OF HIS HANDLER, THEY HAD HER CAPTURED, AND DANGLED HER IN FRONT OF CHUCKLES AS A TEST. TO "SEE WHAT HE WAS MADE OF." HE EXECUTED HER, TO MAINTAIN HIS COVER. WE SUSPECTED THEY'D BEEN INVOLVED IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP PRIOR TO THIS.

THE PAOLIS ENJOY THESE KINDS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL GAMES. THEY'RE SADISTIC.

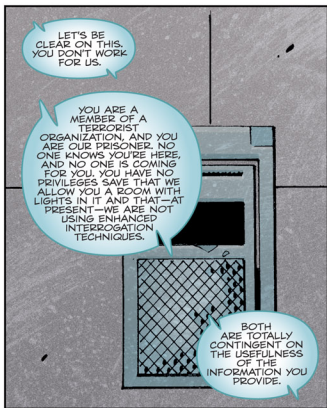
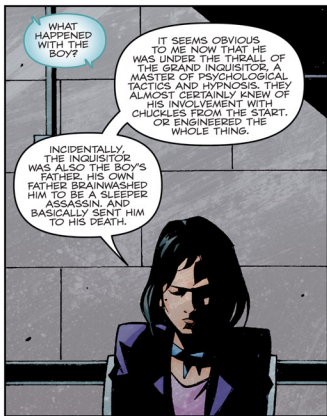


GO OVER THE EVENTS OF YESTERDAY EVENING AGAIN.

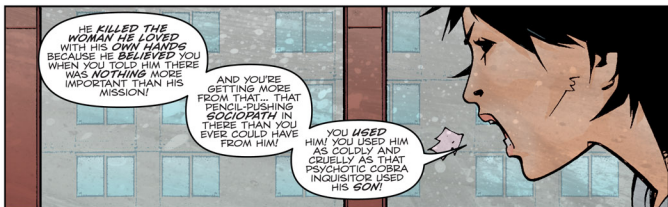
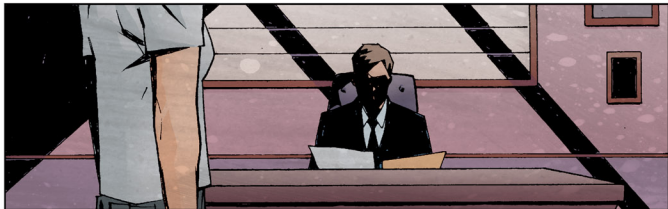
AS I WAS PREPARING TO MOVE OUT, XAMOT PAOLI, WHOM I NOW BELIEVE TO BE INSANE—

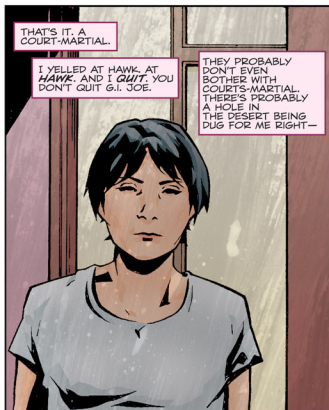
—OR, AT LEAST, ERRATIC—

—WARNED ME THAT AFTER CHUCKLES WAS NEUTRALIZED, THE TEAM HAD ORDERS TO EXECUTE ME AS WELL.













AH, YOU'RE AWAKE.



NO, NO, DON'T TRY TO MOVE. YOU'RE STILL TOO WEAK. ALSO, WE'VE GOT RESTRAINTS ON YOU SO YOU DON'T INJURE YOURSELF.

MF



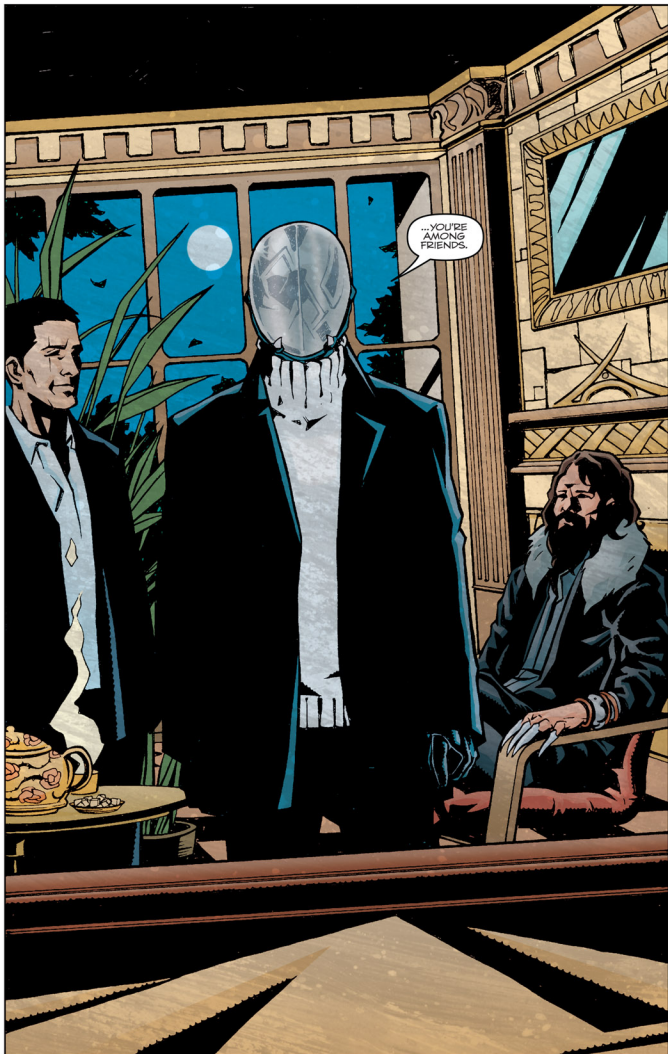
DON'T WORRY, THIS ISN'T THE CASTLE. THAT WAS EVACUATED A FEW HOURS AFTER YOU WERE DISCOVERED. WE'RE IN A SAFE LOCATION HERE.



IT REALLY IS BLIND LUCK WE FOUND YOU. YOU WERE PROBABLY LESS THAN AN HOUR FROM DEATH. BUT WE'RE GETTING YOU THE BEST CARE MONEY CAN BUY. YOU SHOULD MAKE A FULL RECOVERY.

YOU MADE IT NEARLY SIX MILES. YOU REALLY ARE A REMARKABLE MAN. THAT'S WHY, WHEN I HEARD YOU'D SURVIVED, I WANTED TO SEE YOU MYSELF. TO ASSURE YOU...

click



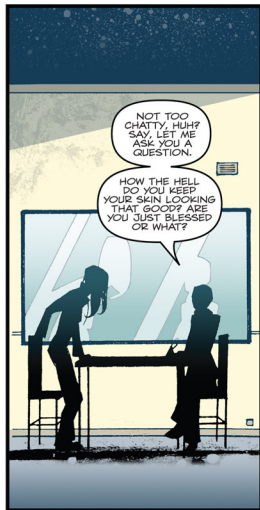


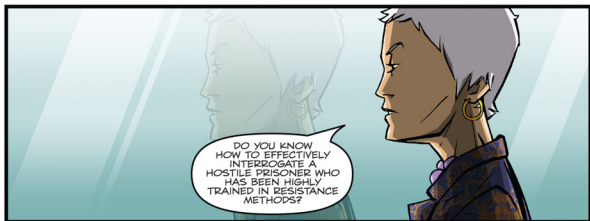
CHARMER

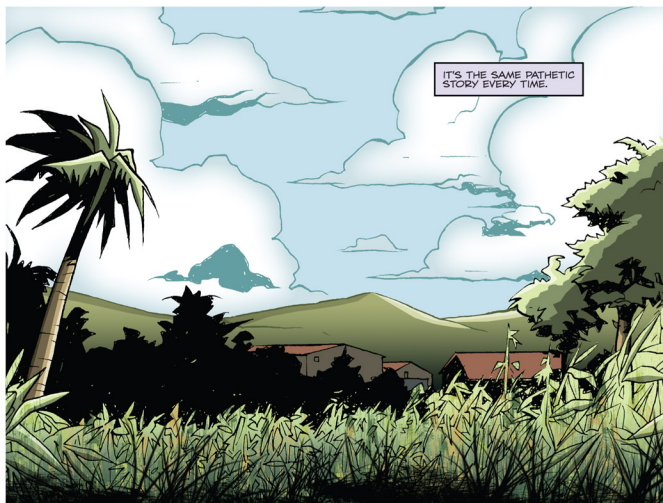
THEY TOOK EVERYTHING AWAY.













"CHON THANH, AFTER THE WAR, WAS NOT SUCH A BAD PLACE. BY THE TIME I WAS BORN, THE RE-EDUCATION CAMPS HAD CLOSED AND THE EXODUS AND BLOODSHED WERE ALL BUT OVER.



"HOME WAS A FORMER RUBBER PLANTATION. MY FAMILY HAD SHARES IN THE FRENCH TERRES ROUGES COMPANY, AND SOMEHOW RETAINED SOME LAND AFTER THE FALL OF SAIGON.

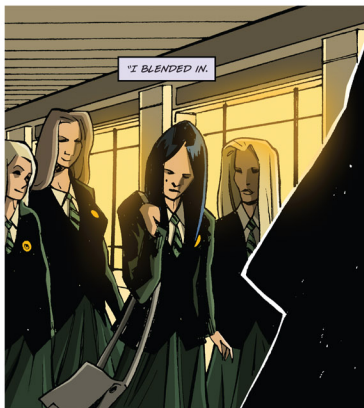
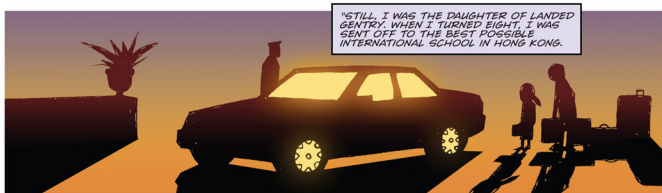
"I CAN ONLY ASSUME IT WAS BRIBERY AND DIPLOMATIC DIRTY DEALING. YOU'D BE SURPRISED THE PULL VERY, VERY OLD EUROPEAN ARISTOCRACY STILL HAS IN THE WORLD.



"OUR GROUNDS KEEPER, PHAM, WAS A VETERAN OF THE SINO-INDOCHINESE WAR. HE'D FOUGHT HOUSE-TO-HOUSE IN LANG SON.

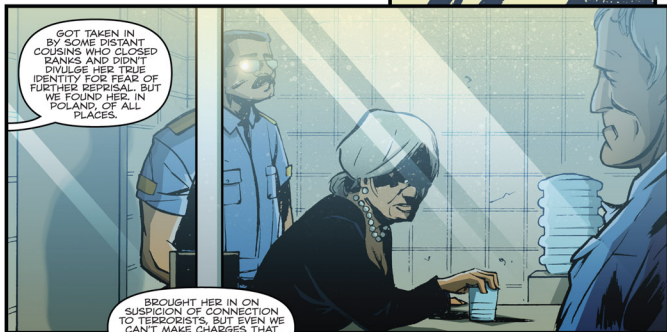
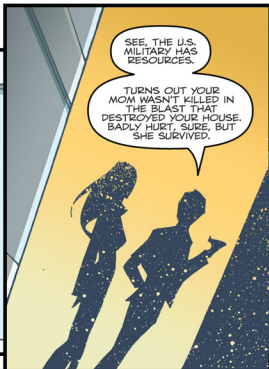
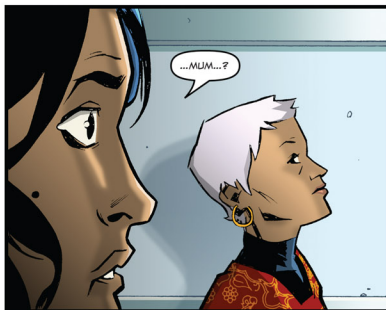


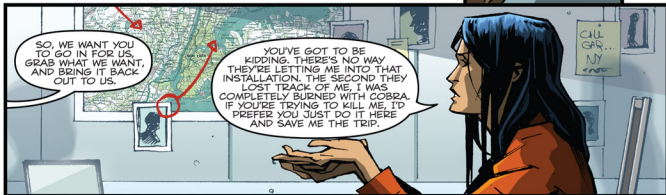
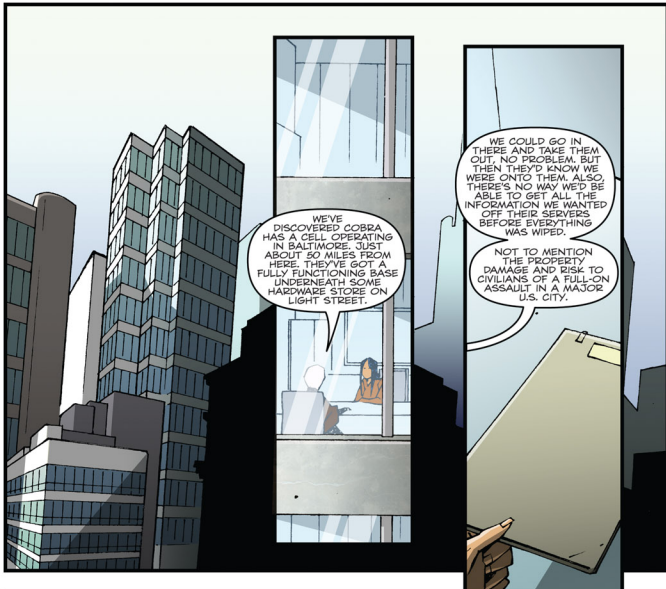
"HE DOTTED ON ME, AND THAT WAS ALL IT TOOK FOR THE VILLAGE GIRLS TO ACCEPT ME. LITTLE EUROPEAN GIRL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, BUT I BLENDED IN."

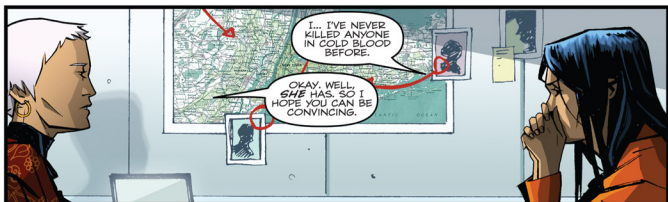
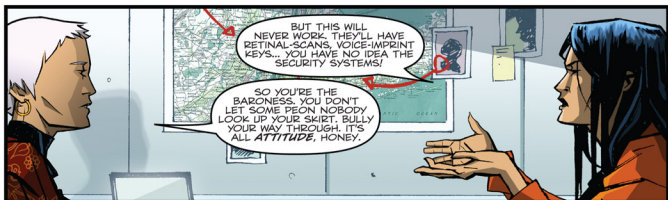
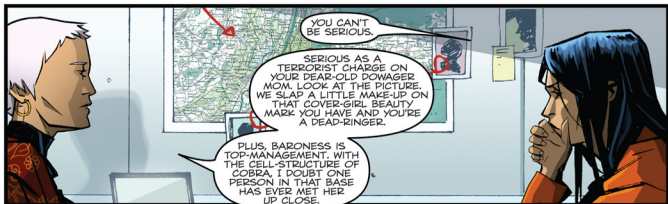


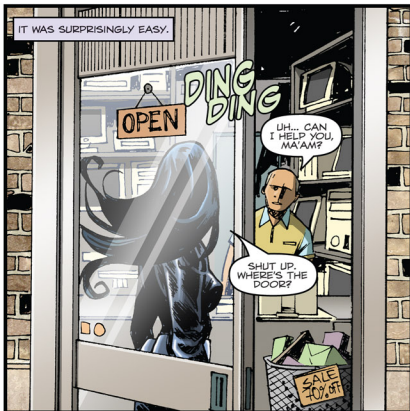












IT WAS SURPRISINGLY EASY.

UH... CAN I HELP YOU, MA'AM?

SHUT UP. WHERE'S THE DOOR?



UH, THE DOOR YOU—
WHERE IS THE DOOR.

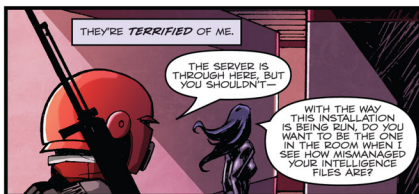
I JUST THINK ABOUT HER, AND I HAVE ALL THE ANGER I NEED.



MA'AM, WE NEED AN IDENT-CHIP OR SERIAL NUMBER—

A TWENTY-FIVE-MILLION-DOLLAR FACILITY, AND THIS IS THE SECURITY? IS THIS CELL RECRUITING OUT OF COMMUNITY THEATER?

IT'S A RESERVOIR OF ANGER. BOTTOMLESS.



THEY'RE TERRIFIED OF ME.

THE SERVER IS THROUGH HERE, BUT YOU SHOULDN'T—

WITH THE WAY THIS INSTALLATION IS BEING RUN, DO YOU WANT TO BE THE ONE IN THE ROOM WHEN I SEE HOW MISMANAGED YOUR INTELLIGENCE FILES ARE?



IT'S GOING SMOOTHLY UNTIL...

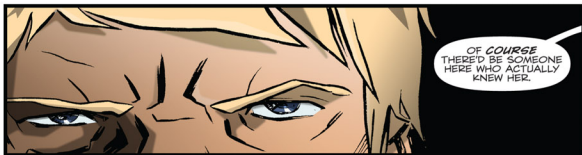
THEY TOLD ME YOU WERE HERE. I'VE BEEN PETITIONING THE 6TH RING FOR MONTHS FOR BETTER RECRUITMENT OR AT LEAST SOME TRAINING.

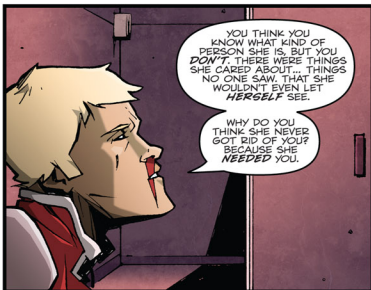
THEY SAID YOU WERE ON THE WARPATH, SO I BROUGHT OUR FAVORITE—

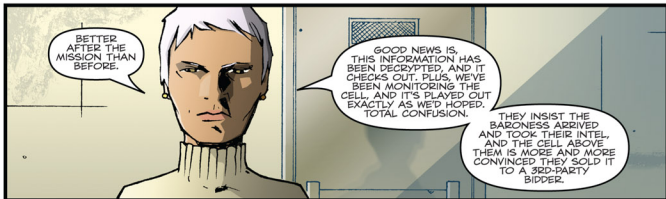


—WAIT, WHO ARE—

—URK!











NOBODY,
IT DOESN'T
MATTER.

IT'S VERY DIFFICULT
TO EXPLAIN. WHEN I WAS
YOUNG, THERE WERE A LOT
OF IDEAS THAT ATTEMPTED TO
SHAKE THE FOUNDATIONS OF
OUR WORLD. *OUR LIVES*.
RADICAL IDEAS FOR A GIRL LIKE
ME, WHO HAD SO MANY...
EXPECTATIONS THRUST
UPON HER.



THE MAN I AM
MARRIED TO... HE IS
NOT A CRUEL MAN,
BUT HE WAS NOT WHAT
I WANTED. NOT WHAT I
THOUGHT I WANTED.
I THOUGHT I DIDN'T WANT ANY
OF THIS. I MARRIED YOUNG
AND I JUST WANTED *OUT*.
I WANTED TO GET AWAY.
I WANTED TO REVENGE
MYSELF ON EVERYONE
WHO HAD PUSHED ME
INTO THIS *LIFE*.



I WAS SO
FOOLISH...

...NOW I SEE
HOW SHORTSIGHTED
THAT IS. I *LOVE* MY
HUSBAND. THIS LIFE WE
HAVE TOGETHER, IT'S
TOO IMPORTANT...

...WELL, SOME
OTHER DAUGHTER
FROM NOWHERE. IT'S
JUST NOT *DONE*. ALL
THIS POINTLESS
DRAMA...



...YOUR
TRUST IS
SUBSTANTIAL.
YOU'LL BE
CARED FOR.

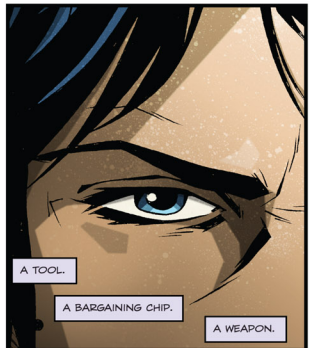
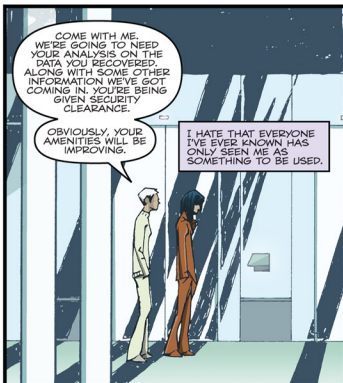
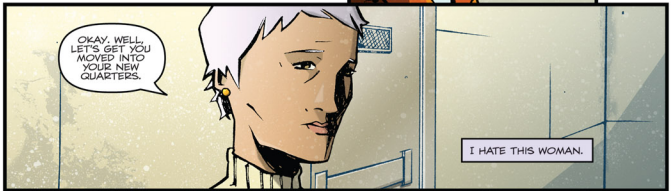


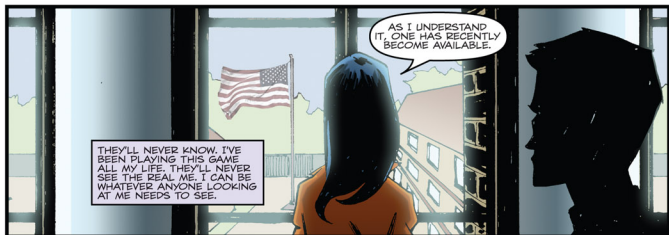
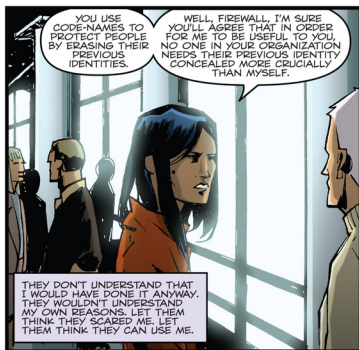
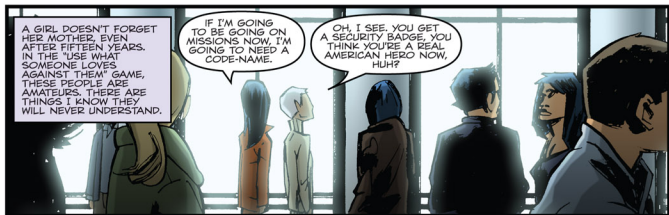
I DON'T
UNDERSTAND.
WHAT... WHAT
DO YOU MEAN
REVENGE?



YOU.

YOU WERE
MY REVENGE.

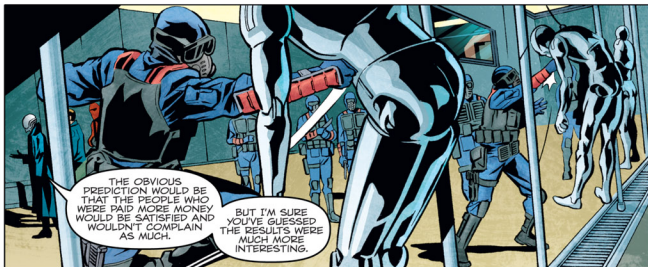
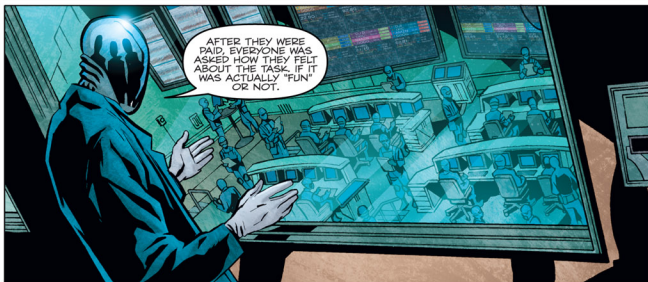


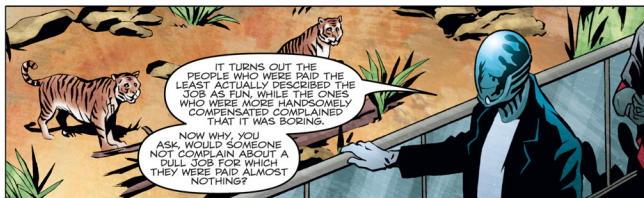




CHARMER







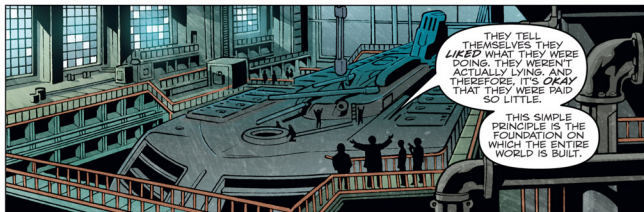
IT TURNS OUT THE PEOPLE WHO WERE PAID THE LEAST ACTUALLY DESCRIBED THE JOB AS FUN, WHILE THE ONES WHO WERE MORE HANDSOMELY COMPENSATED COMPLAINED THAT IT WAS BORING.

NOW WHY, YOU ASK, WOULD SOMEONE NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT A DULL JOB FOR WHICH THEY WERE PAID ALMOST NOTHING?



THE REALITY THAT THE JOB IS BORING IS DISSONANT FROM THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE TO EXPLAIN TO ANOTHER PERSON THAT IT WAS ENJOYABLE. ONE DOLLAR IS NOT ENOUGH EXTERNAL JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS DISSONANCE.

SO, THEY LIE, TO THEMSELVES.



THEY TELL THEMSELVES THEY *LIKED* WHAT THEY WERE DOING. THEY WEREN'T ACTUALLY LYING, AND THEREFORE, IT'S *OKAY* THAT THEY WERE PAID SO LITTLE.

THIS SIMPLE PRINCIPLE IS THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH THE ENTIRE WORLD IS BUILT.



THE WAY WE CHOOSE TO DEFINE OURSELVES BASED ON OUR ACTIONS, DESPITE HOW OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT CHOOSE TO DEFINE US.

MEN WHO ROB OR KILL FOR MONEY ARE SELDOM ACTUAL CLINICAL SOCIOPATHS. THEY ARE NOT INSANE.

THE MONEY SIMPLY JUSTIFIES WHAT OTHERS MIGHT FIND UNACCEPTABLE. JUST AS ANYONE WITH A JOB CAN JUSTIFY DOING THINGS THEY FIND UNPLEASANT, AND RIGHTLY SO.

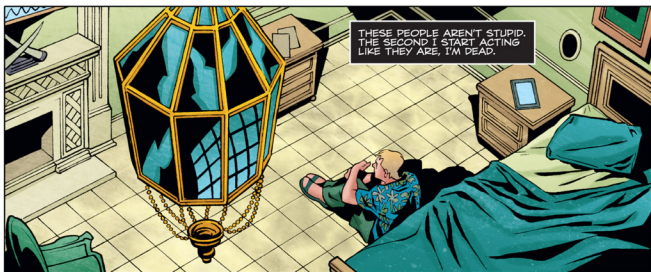


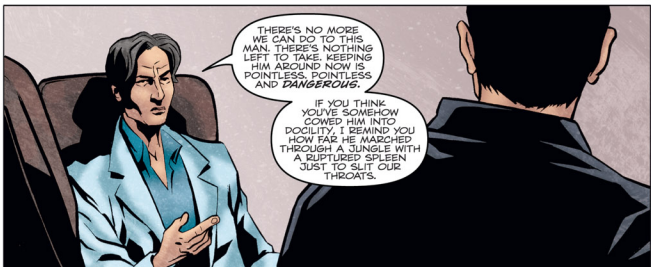
WE DEFINE OUR *OWN* PARAMETERS. WE ARE *FREE*.

BUT ONLY THOSE WHO *REALIZE* IT ARE *TRULY* FREE.











I FEEL YOUR
INCREASINGLY
CONTRARIAN OPINIONS
KEEP ME "ON MY TOES"
QUITE ENOUGH FOR MY
LIKING. WHY DO YOU
INSIST ON—



ENOUGH.
HE LIVES
BECAUSE I WISH
HIM TO. THERE IS
NO FURTHER
DEBATE.



AND AS WEARY
AS YOU THINK YOU'VE
BECOME OF THIS BICKERING,
TOMAX, THE THRESHOLD OF
MY PATIENCE IS FAR MORE
TREACHEROUS.

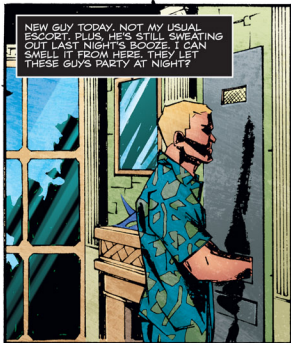


DON'T
APPROACH IT
AGAIN.

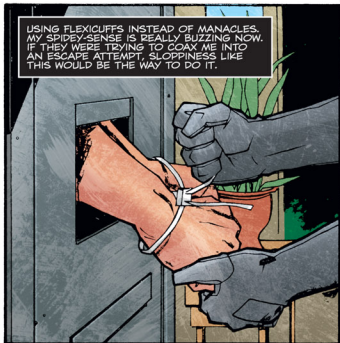


HE'S VERY
SERIOUS.

NEW GUY TODAY, NOT MY USUAL ESCORT. PLUS, HE'S STILL SWEATING OUT LAST NIGHT'S BOOZE. I CAN SMELL IT FROM HERE. THEY LET THESE GUYS PARTY AT NIGHT?



USING FLEXICUFFS INSTEAD OF MANACLES. MY SPIDEY-SENSE IS REALLY BUZZING NOW. IF THEY WERE TRYING TO COAX ME INTO AN ESCAPE ATTEMPT, SLOPPINESS LIKE THIS WOULD BE THE WAY TO DO IT.



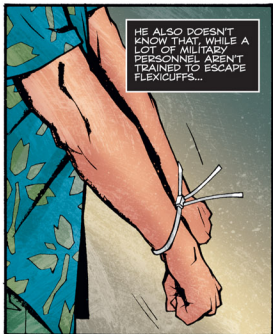
BUT THEN WE WALK PAST THE HANGAR AND I KNOW I HAVE TO TRY ANYWAY.



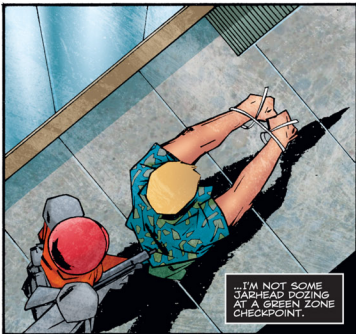
NEW GUY DOESN'T KNOW MY BODY LANGUAGE. HE WON'T KNOW HOW TO READ MY STRIDE AND ANTICIPATE SOMETHING.

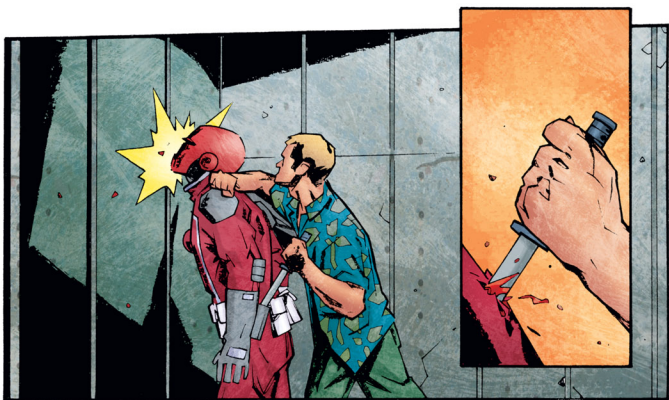
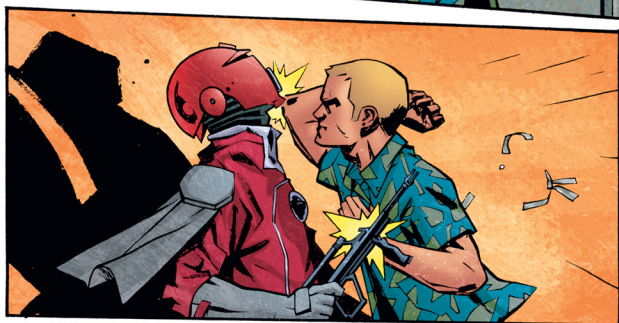
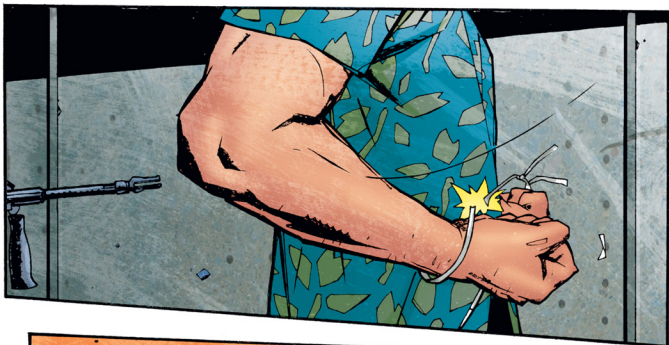


HE ALSO DOESN'T KNOW THAT, WHILE A LOT OF MILITARY PERSONNEL AREN'T TRAINED TO ESCAPE FLEXICUFFS...

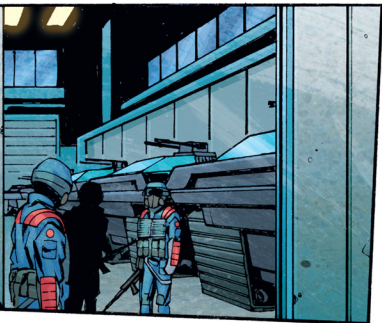


...I'M NOT SOME JARHEAD DOZING AT A GREEN ZONE CHECKPOINT.

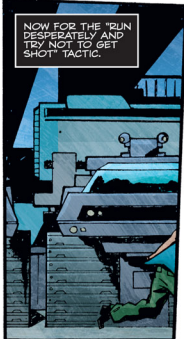




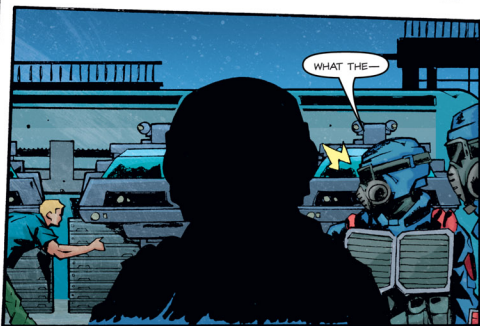
HAD THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE THERE, I'D BE LUCKY TO TAKE ONE OF THESE GUYS IN A STRAIGHT FIGHT.



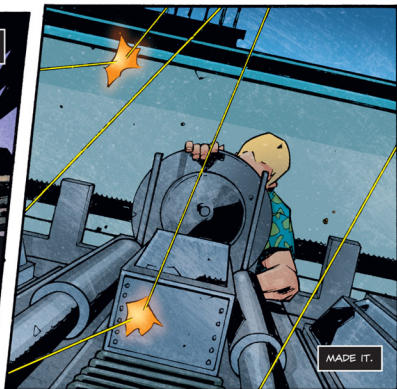
NOW FOR THE "RUN DESPERATELY AND TRY NOT TO GET SHOT" TACTIC.



WHAT THE—



KEY COMPONENT TO EVERY TERRIBLE PLAN.



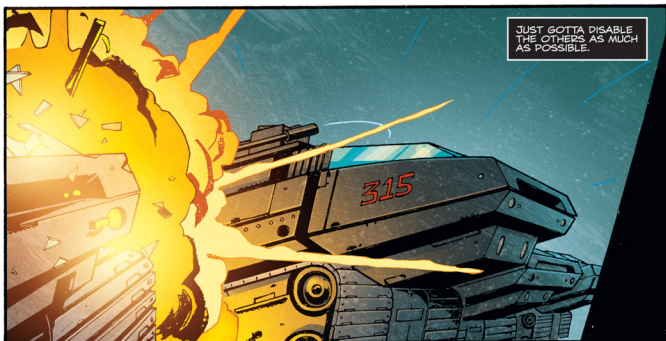
MADE IT.



TAKE ME ALIVE. REHABILITATE ME. BRING ME TO AN INSTALLATION WHICH HOUSES HEAVILY ARMED ARMORED VEHICLES THAT I SPENT SEVERAL MONTHS TRAINING ON BACK IN DUBAI.



THIS REALLY DOES SEEM TOO EASY.



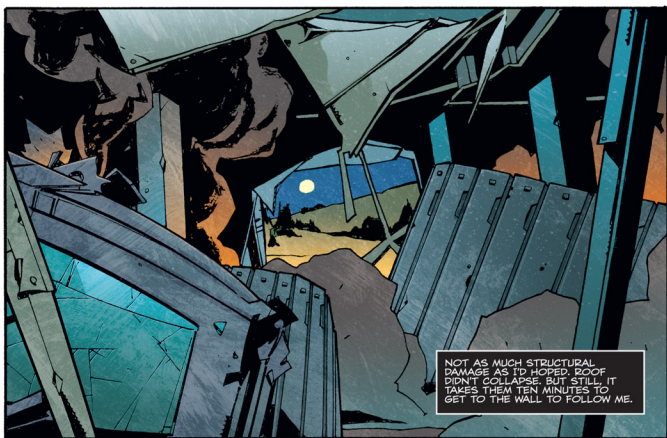
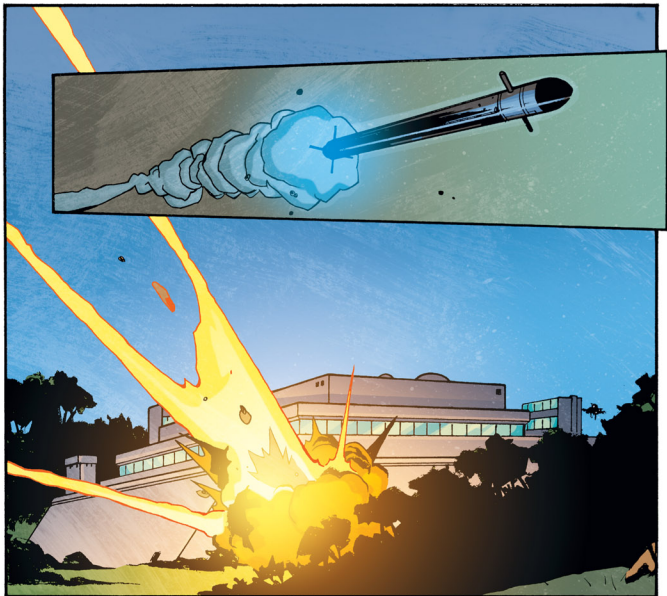
JUST GOTTA DISABLE THE OTHERS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

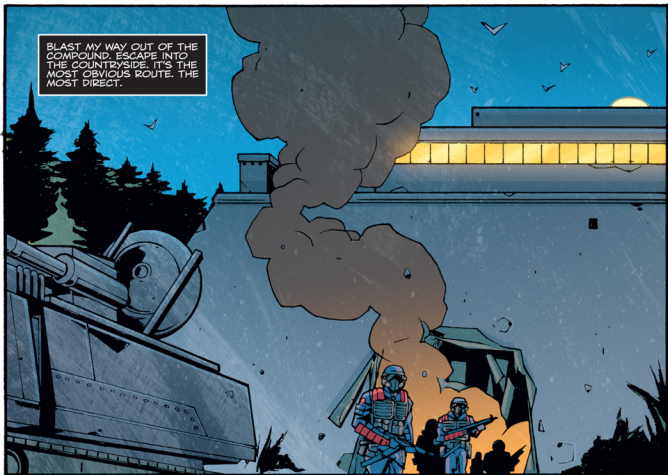


TARGETING...

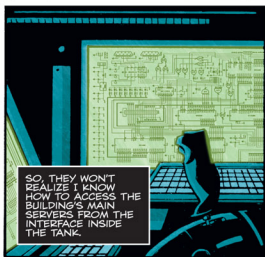


AND MAKE MY EXIT.





BLAST MY WAY OUT OF THE COMPOUND. ESCAPE INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE. IT'S THE MOST OBVIOUS ROUTE. THE MOST DIRECT.



SO, THEY WON'T REALIZE I KNOW HOW TO ACCESS THE BUILDING'S MAIN SERVERS FROM THE INTERFACE INSIDE THE TANK.

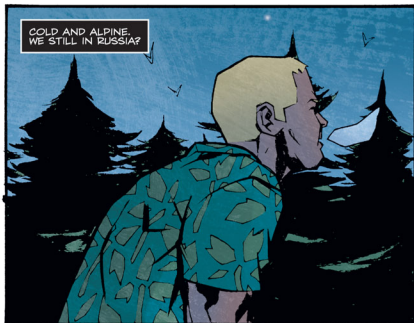


AND THEY WON'T KNOW I FOUND A SCHEMATIC AND MAP OF ALL THE SECURITY TRIPWIRES.



AND THAT I'M MAKING MY WAY TO THE BACK DOOR WHILE THEY ALL RUN OUT THE FRONT.





—THEY'RE VULNERABLE.







THEN I'LL
JUST BEAT YOU
TO DEATH.

TEAR
YOUR HEAD
OFF WITH
MY BARE
HANDS.



NO, YOU
WOULDN'T WIN
THAT FIGHT.

I'LL TAKE
THAT BET.



THERE'S
NO POINT TO THIS.
WE'RE ON AN ISLAND.
SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES
FROM A CONTINENTAL
LANDMASS. THERE'S
NOWHERE YOU CAN
HIDE WE WON'T
FIND YOU.

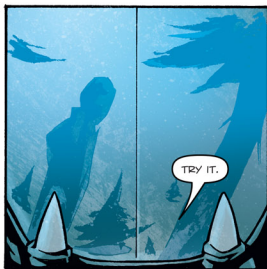
WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO
DO, HOTWIRE A
SUBMARINE?

YOU WON'T
FIND ME
BEFORE I FIND
YOU AGAIN.



MAYBE, THEN
WHAT? WHAT WILL YOU
DO TO US? EVEN THE
SMALL SLIVER OF THE
ORGANIZATION YOU'VE
SEEN—HOW WILL YOU
HARM US?

KILLING
YOU SEEMS
LIKE A GOOD
START.



TRY IT.





I'D GET THEM ANYWAY.

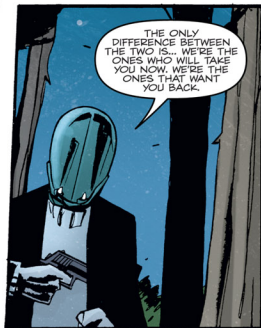
MAYBE. BUT EVEN IF YOU DID, WHAT THEN? YOU'LL HAVE NO PURPOSE. A MAN WITH YOUR SKILLS SHOULDN'T BE WITHOUT A PURPOSE.



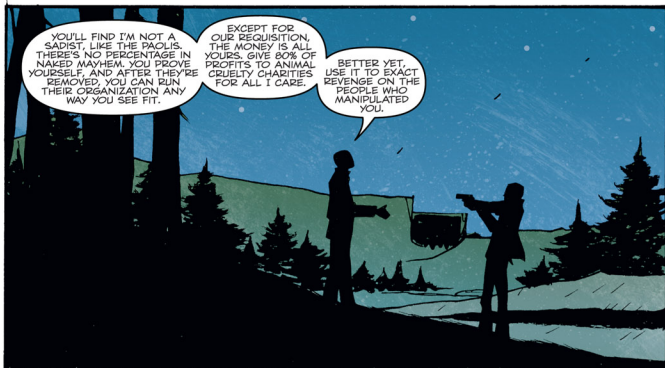
G.I. JOE, COBRA—BOTH OF THESE ARE AMORAL ORGANIZATIONS. BOTH OF THEM PAVE THE ROADS TO THEIR OBJECTIVES WITH INNOCENT BODIES.

YOU WERE MADE TO EXECUTE YOUR PARTNER, YOUR LOVER. XANTOT PUT THAT GUN IN YOUR HAND, YES.

BUT WHO PUT YOU ON HIS DOORSTEP? YOU WERE SERVING BOTH COBRA AND G.I. JOE WHEN YOU PULLED THAT TRIGGER.



THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO IS... WE'RE THE ONES WHO WILL TAKE YOU NOW. WE'RE THE ONES THAT WANT YOU BACK.



YOU'LL FIND I'M NOT A SADIST, LIKE THE PAOLIS. THERE'S NO PERCENTAGE IN NAKED MAYHEM. YOU PROVE YOURSELF, AND AFTER THEY'RE REMOVED, YOU CAN RUN THEIR ORGANIZATION ANY WAY YOU SEE FIT.

EXCEPT FOR OUR REQUISITION, THE MONEY IS ALL YOURS. GIVE 80% OF PROFITS TO ANIMAL CRUELTY CHARITIES FOR ALL I CARE.

BETTER YET, USE IT TO EXACT REVENGE ON THE PEOPLE WHO MANIPULATED YOU.



OR DIE HERE IN THE COLD.



OKAY.
LET'S SEE
WHAT YOU CAN
DO FOR ME.



WONDERFUL!



I KNEW
YOU'D SEE
THE LIGHT.



ARE WE SURE THIS IS WISE, COMMANDER? ARE YOU CERTAIN HIS CHANGE OF HEART IS *GENUINE*?

YES, ANASTASIA, I AM.

WE'VE TAKEN AWAY EVERYTHING THE MAN HAS.



"IF HE'D LOST LESS, MAYBE YOU'D HAVE CAUSE FOR CONCERN."

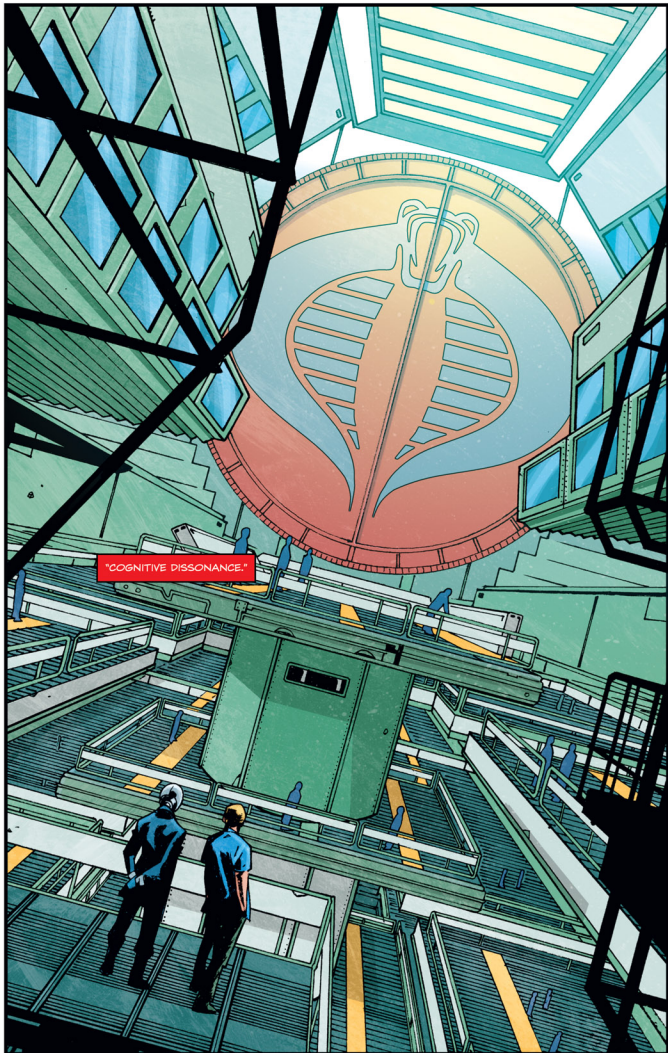


"MILD INITIATIONS, MAKE FOR DISLOYAL AND DISGRUNTLED MEMBERS. BUT THE HARSHER THE TRIAL FOR MEMBERSHIP, THE MORE INTENSE THE DESIRE TO ACCEPT THE GIFT OF ALLEGIANCE."

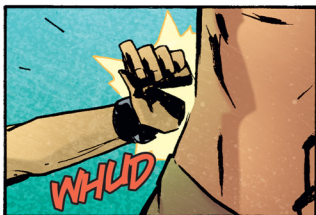
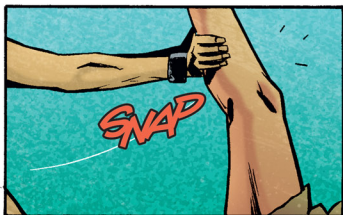


"A MAN WILL DISTORT ANY HARDSHIPS TO BELIEVE THE END RESULT IS 'WORTH IT'."

"G.I. JOE DEPENDS ON THIS. SO DO WE."

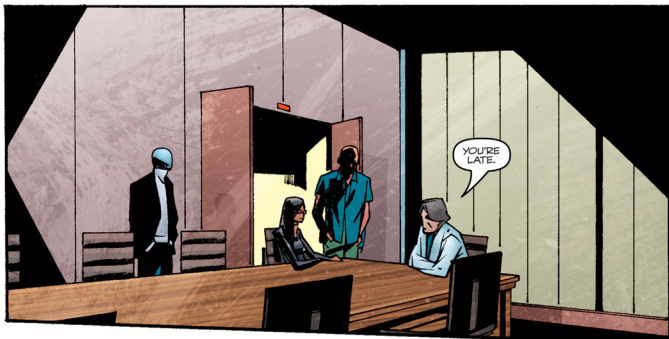


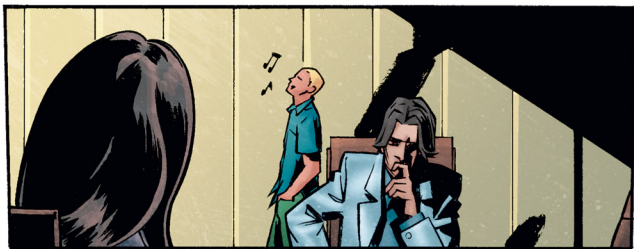
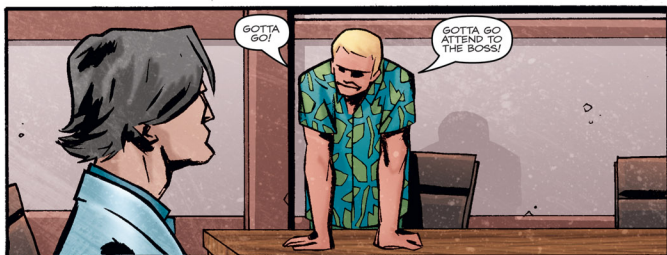
"COGNITIVE DISSONANCE."

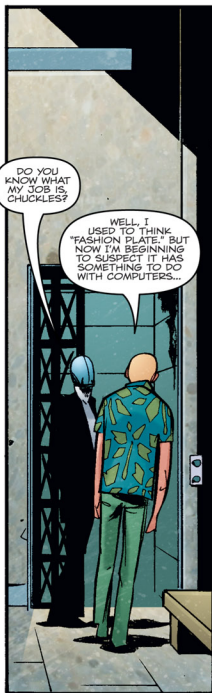


CHARMER











I KEEP EVERYTHING IN MY HEAD. ALL OF THIS. EVERYONE HERE.



I KEEP TRACK OF ALL OF YOU, NOT JUST WHERE YOU ARE, BUT WHERE YOU'RE GOING AND WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO.

ALL OF YOU HAVE YOUR ROLES. I'M THE **DIRECTOR**.



SO YOU MIGHT NOT SEE WHAT ROLE TOMAX AND XAMOT PLAY ANYMORE... THOUGH I ASSURE YOU, IT'S AN IMPORTANT ONE.

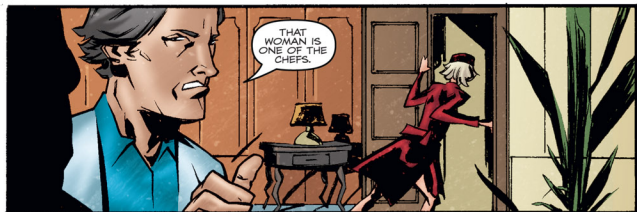
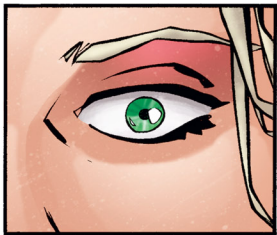
BUT IT'S ALSO COMING TO AN END, AND WHEN IT DOES, YOU WILL KNOW. THERE WILL BE NO DOUBT OF THAT.



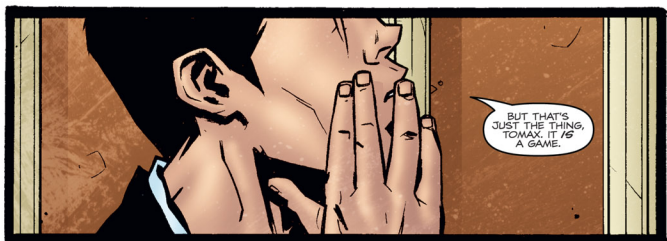
BECAUSE YOU ARE MY NEW STAR.

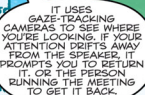
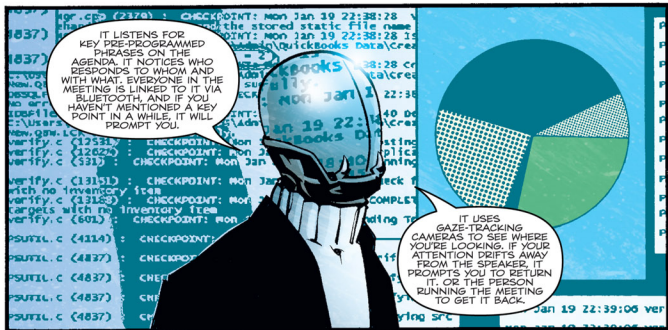
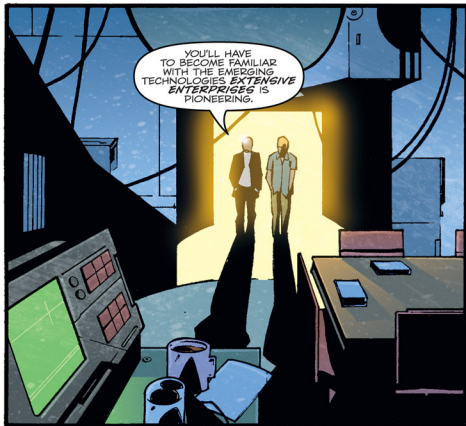


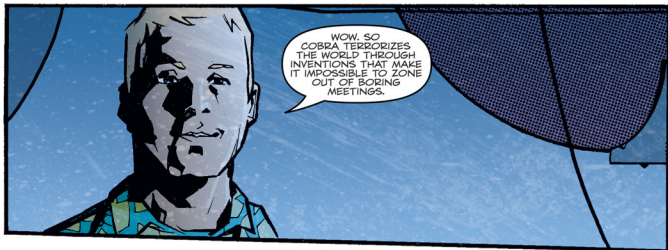
NOW LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT WE HAVE DOWN HERE...











WOW. SO
COBRA TERRORIZES
THE WORLD THROUGH
INVENTIONS THAT MAKE
IT IMPOSSIBLE TO ZONE
OUT OF BORING
MEETINGS.



FIRST OF
ALL, INVENTIONS
AND PATENTS
LIKE THIS MAKE
US **WEALTHY**.

AND SECOND,
COBRA'S END GOAL
IS NOT TO "TERRORIZE"
THE WORLD, BUT TO
STABILIZE IT, ON OUR
TERMS... AND IN
OUR FAVOR.

THE SAME THING
EVERY COMPANY,
COUNTRY AND
MILITARY HAS EVER
WANTED, INCLUDING
G.I. JOE.



LOOK AT THIS
DEVICE AND THINK
ABOUT IT. YOU'RE
SEEING AUTOMATED
BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION.
A BENIGN FORM IN
CORPORATE MEETINGS,
OF COURSE... BUT THAT'S
HOW YOU SELL IT
AT FIRST.



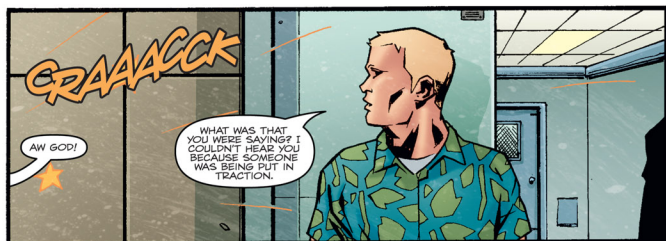
ALSO, MILITARY
APPLICATIONS ARE ALMOST
LIMITLESS. IN PLACES WHERE
WE HAVE OPERATIONS INVOLVING
ALLIES WITH DIFFERENT CULTURAL
BACKGROUNDS, THIS SERVES AS
A FLAWLESS INTERPRETER
OF LOCAL CUSTOMS.

WE NEVER
HAVE TO RISK
LOSING ALLIES TO
ACCIDENTAL INSULT,
OR SLOW, UNRELIABLE,
AWKWARD HUMAN
TRANSLATORS.

THIS MACHINE
SEES AND HEARS
EVERYTHING, AND
TELLS YOU EXACTLY
WHAT TO DO.



THIS IS WHAT
YOU WANT ME
IN CHARGE OF?
MORE ROBOTS?





"BIG BOA IS ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO HELPS US NAVIGATE THE MORE DIFFICULT ONES."

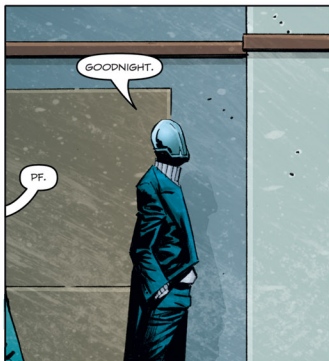
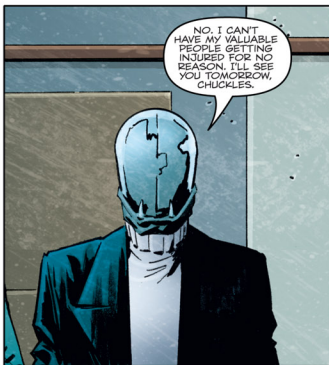


"WHAT DOES HE DO? JUST GRIEVOUSLY INJURE YOUR MEN HERE?"



"GET OFF!
GET OFF
MY MAT!"

"BIG BOA IS OUR HEAD TRAINER FOR ON-SITE SECURITY."







SO, WHAT
MADE YOU
WANT TO BE A
SUPERVILLAIN?



ME? PLEASE.
I COULD GIVE A
DAMN WHAT THESE
PEOPLE DO WHEN
THEY LEAVE.

I'M NOT HERE TO
RUN AROUND IN SOME
RIDICULOUS UNIFORM
WITH A RIFLE. I'M JUST
HERE TO BOX.

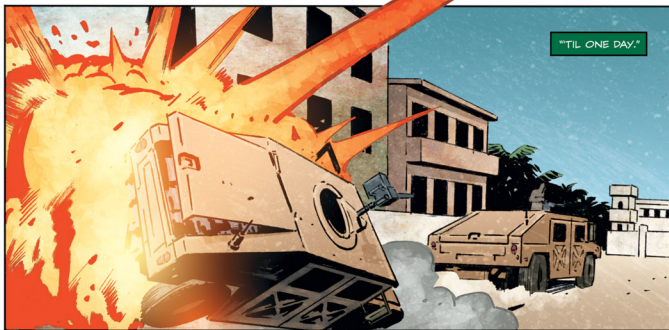


THAT DIDN'T
MUCH LOOK
LIKE THE SWEET
SCIENCE. YOU'VE
HAD MILITARY
TRAINING.

MARINES,
ACTUALLY. I WAS
IN THE SANDBOX.
YEARS BACK.

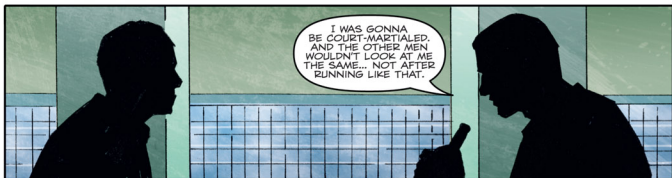


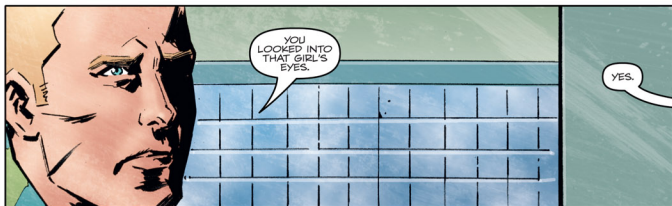
"DIDN'T CARE MUCH FOR
THE MISSION. JUST THE
GUYS I WAS IN IT WITH.

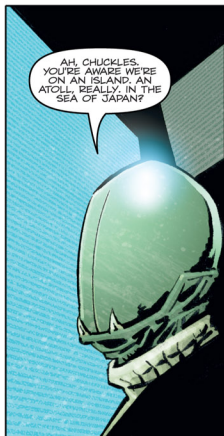


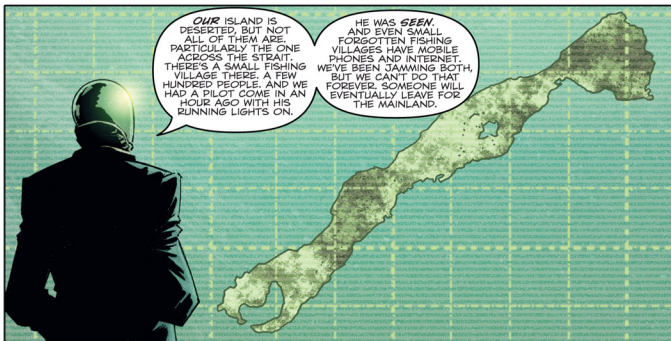
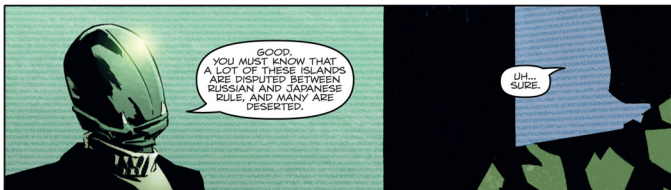
"TIL ONE DAY."

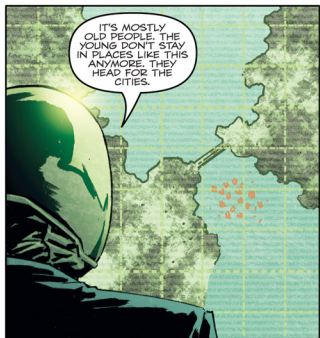






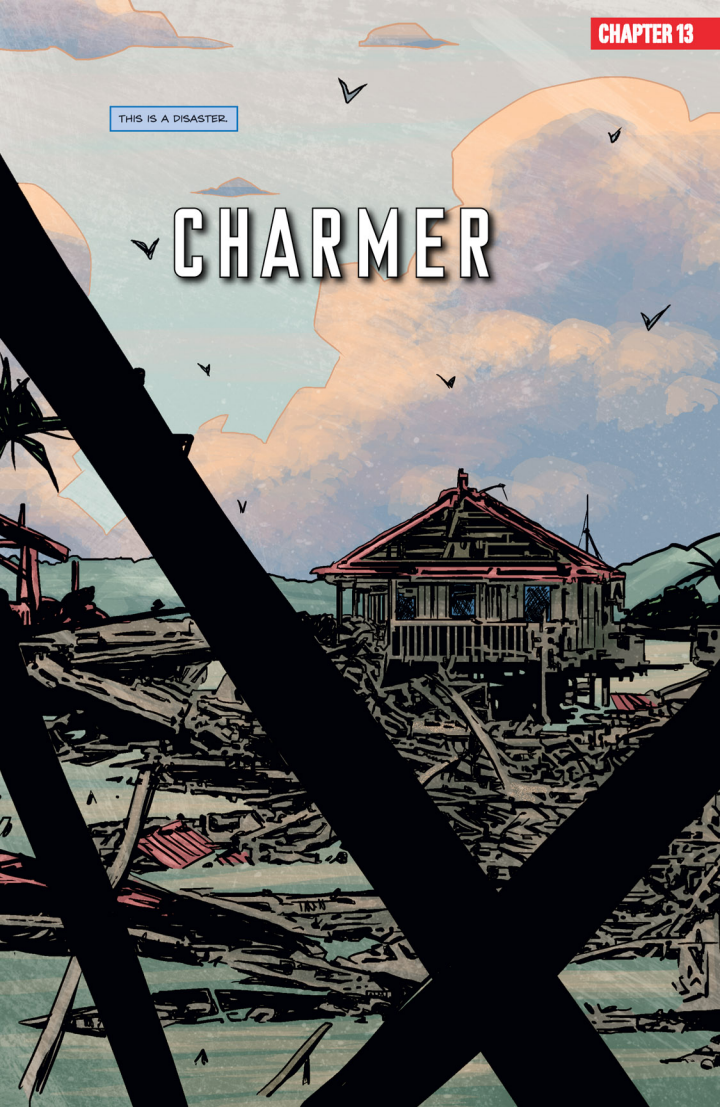


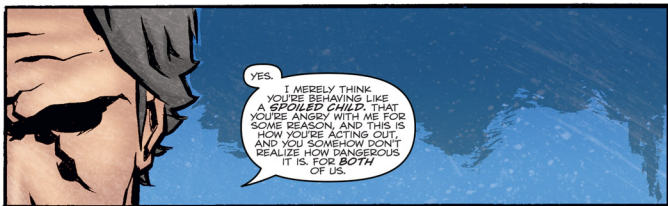
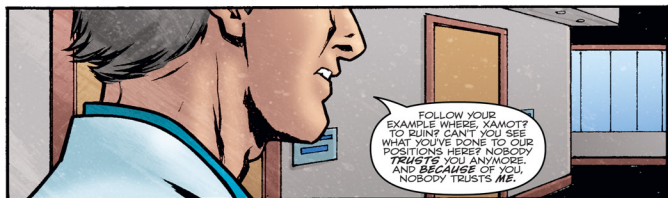
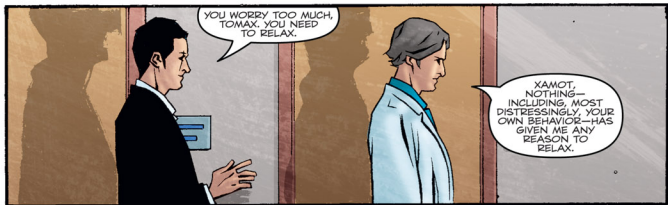




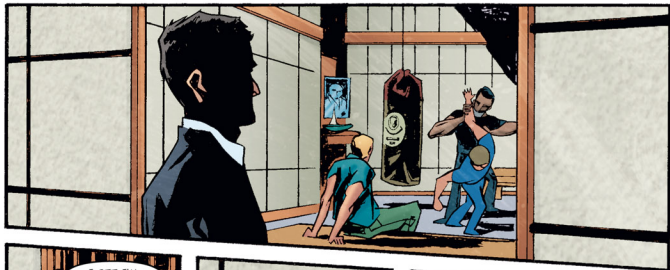
THIS IS A DISASTER.

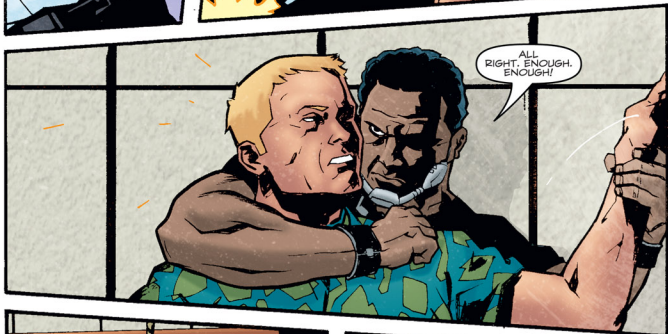
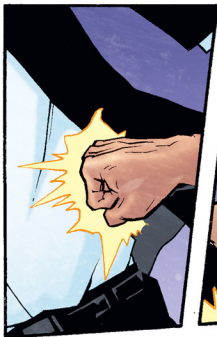
CHARMER



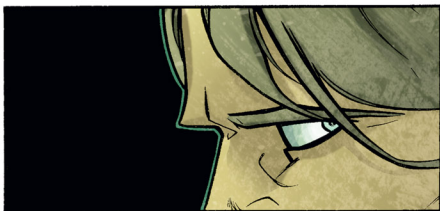
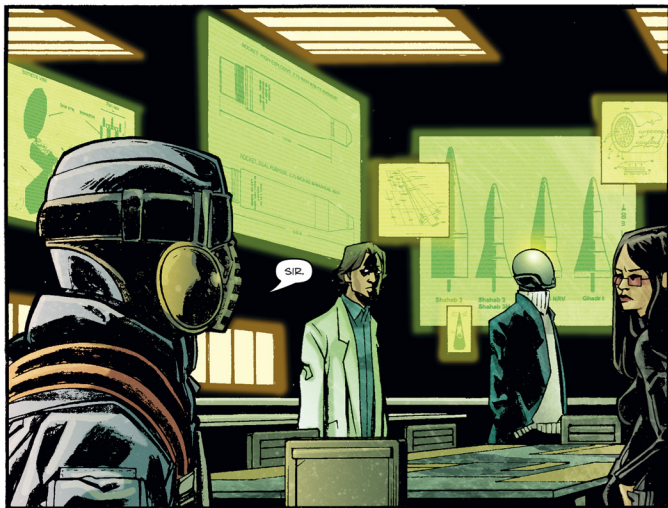


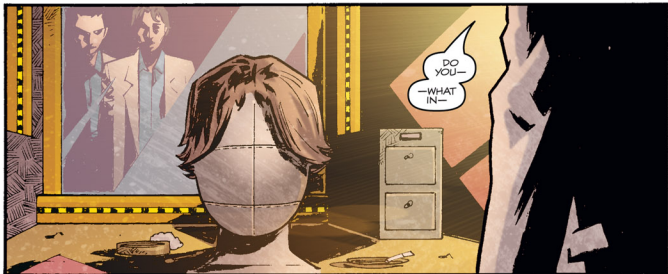


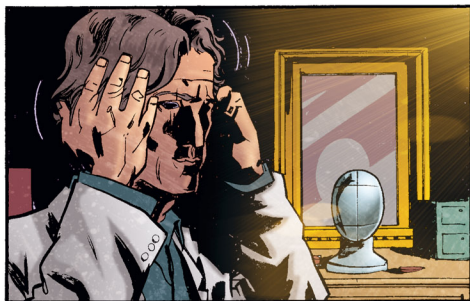
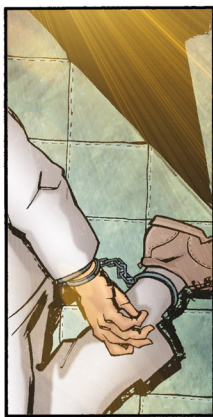




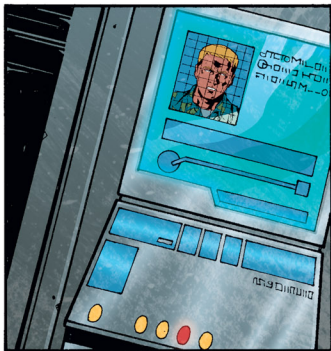
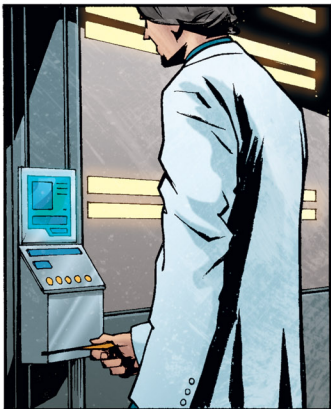






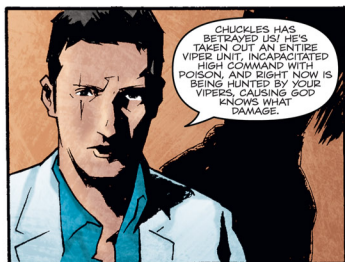


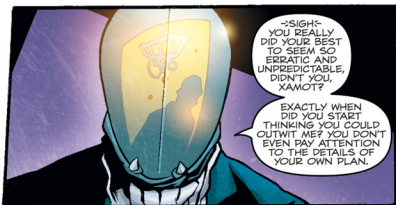
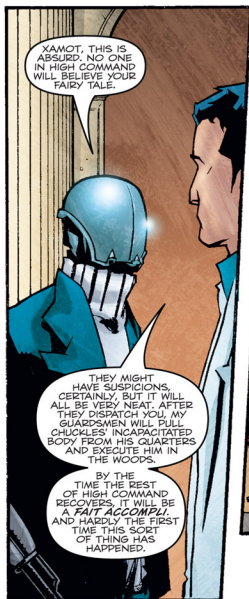
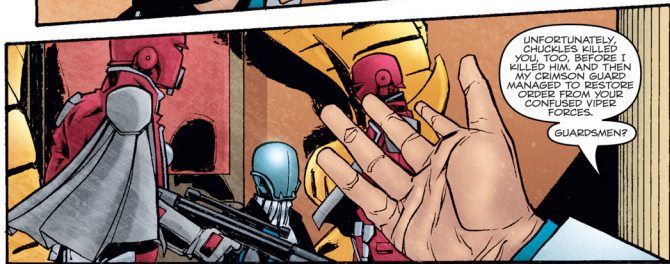








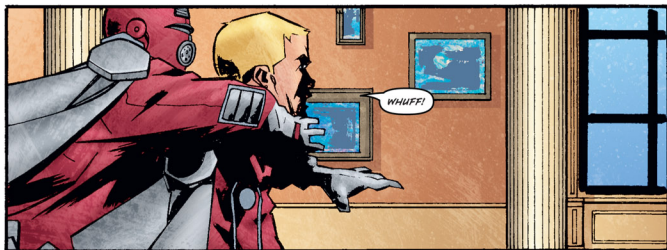


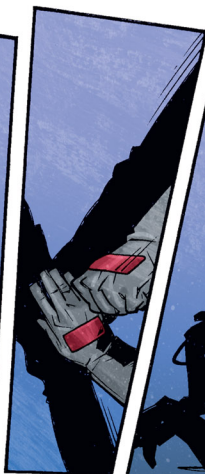




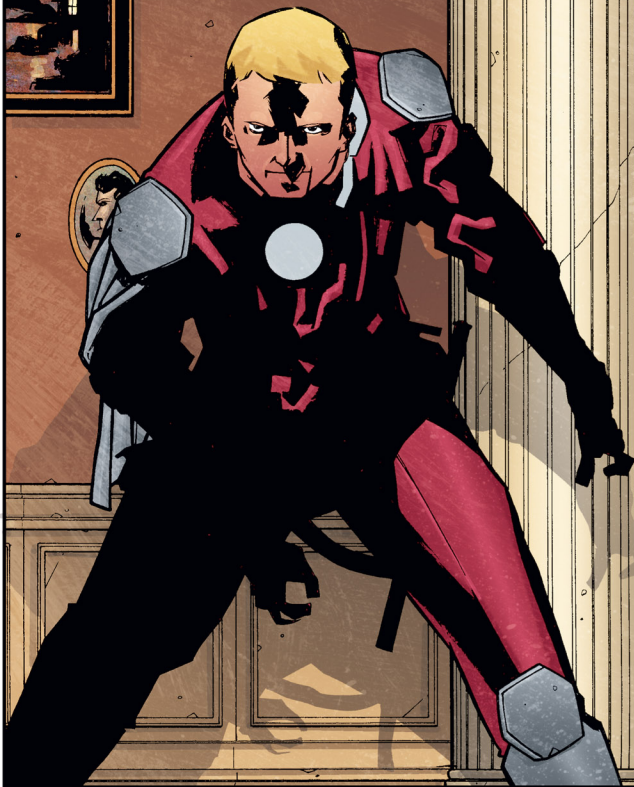








AND NOW I'M GOING TO
KILL EVERYONE IN THIS
BUILDING.









CHARMER





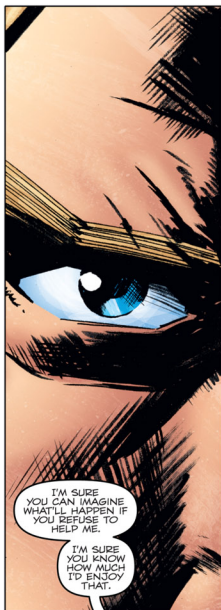


BECAUSE
YOU'RE A
COWARD.



YOU'RE
ISOLATED FROM
YOUR LOYALISTS,
INCLUDING OTHER
MEMBERS OF HIGH
COMMAND. EVERYONE
IN THE BUILDING KNOWS
YOUR BROTHER
ATTEMPTED A FAILED
COUP. AND NOBODY
KNOWS THE
COMMANDER
IS DEAD.

NO ONE
WILL QUESTION
WHERE I'M TAKING
YOU, OR LISTEN TO
WHAT YOU SAY.



I'M SURE
YOU CAN IMAGINE
WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF
YOU REFUSE TO
HELP ME.

I'M SURE
YOU KNOW
HOW MUCH
I'D ENJOY
THAT.

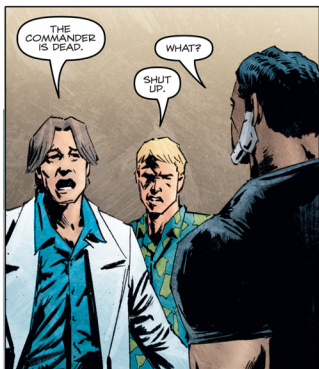
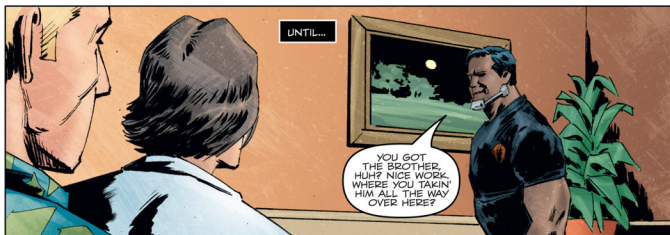


HE DOESN'T
HAVE TO SAY
ANYTHING. HE
WOULDN'T
ANYWAY.

I KNOW WHO
HE IS. AND
NOW HE
DOES, TOO.



IT'S ALWAYS THE
ONES WHO LOVE
TO MAKE PEOPLE
HURT THAT FOLD
THE FASTEST.





DON'T BLINK. I LIE FOR A LIVING. I'VE STARED MASS MURDERERS IN THE FACE AND SOLD THEM STORIES SO COMPLICATED I COULDN'T EVEN REMEMBER MOST OF THE DETAILS LATER. THEY ALWAYS BELIEVED ME.

I CAN HANDLE THIS. JUST DON'T BLINK.

YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS. THIS IS A GUY STANDING AT THE GALLOWS AND TAP-DANCING TO KEEP HIS HEAD OUT OF THE NOOSE FOR A FEW MORE SECONDS.



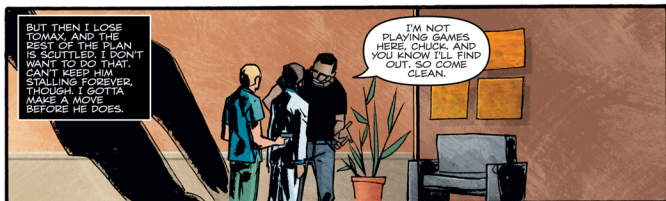
NO... NO, YOU'RE LYING. YOU DID IT. I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR FACE.

GREAT.



ARE YOU SERIOUS? YOU'RE BUYING *THIS* FROM HIM? COME ON, MAN. DID YOUR MAMA TELL YOU LIFE WAS LIKE A BOX OF CHOCOLATES?

THE SMART THING TO DO WOULD BE TO PUT A BULLET IN TOMAX RIGHT NOW. HOPE IT PENETRATES THROUGH TO BOA. SLOW HIM DOWN SO I COULD PROPERLY AIM THE NEXT ONE.



BUT THEN I LOSE TOMAX, AND THE REST OF THE PLAN IS SCUTTLED. I DON'T WANT TO DO THAT. CAN'T KEEP HIM STALLING FOREVER, THOUGH. I GOTTA MAKE A MOVE BEFORE HE DOES.

I'M NOT PLAYING GAMES HERE, CHUCK. AND YOU KNOW I'LL FIND OUT. SO COME CLEAN.



YEAH... I GUESS I OWE YOU THE TRUTH. SO HERE IT IS.

"BIG BOA" IS JUST A REALLY STUPID NAME.



HELL WITH IT.



HE CRUSHES MY
WRIST LIKE IT WAS
STYROFOAM.



STRIPPED THE SLIDE
OFF THE GUN. NOW IT'S
HAND-TO-HAND. AND
HAND-TO-HAND COULD
GO BADLY FOR ME.



THOSE GUYS SURE
ARE GOOD AT
RUNNING AWAY.





-SKOFF-
-SKOFF-

BARONESS,
YOU SHOULDN'T BE
ON YOUR FEET. WE
HAVEN'T YET IDENTIFIED
THE AGENT THAT WAS
USED ON YOU.



IT'S
JUST SOME POISON.
VENOMOUS MAXIMUS
AND I TAKE THESE THINGS
RECREATIONALLY. I
REFUSE TO LIE IN BED LIKE
A FRENCHMAN WITH
A HANGOVER.



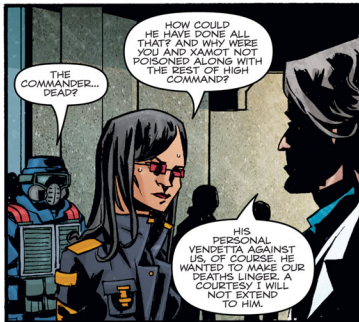
THE
COMMANDER
IS DEAD.

WHAT?!



CHUCKLES
BETRAYED US.
HE POISONED
HIGH COMMAND AND
MANAGED TO DIVERT
MY GUARDSMEN. I JUST
BARELY ESCAPED
FROM HIM.

I'M TAKING
A TEAM TO
ROOT HIM OUT
AND ELIMINATE
HIM.



THE
COMMANDER...
DEAD?

HOW COULD
HE HAVE DONE ALL
THAT? AND WHY WERE
YOU AND XAMOT NOT
POISONED ALONG WITH
THE REST OF HIGH
COMMAND?

HIS
PERSONAL
VENDETTA AGAINST
US, OF COURSE. HE
WANTED TO MAKE OUR
DEATHS LINGER. A
COURTESY I WILL
NOT EXTEND
TO HIM.



I DON'T
THINK SO. I HAVE
QUESTIONS FOR
THIS MAN OF
MANY TALENTS. I
WILL LEAD THE
VIPERS. YOU
STAY HERE.

AS EVER,
BARONESS, YOU ARE
MOST PERSUASIVE.
BUT IF I CAN OFFER
ADVICE: DO NOT TOY
WITH HIM. SHOOT
HIM ON SIGHT.

HAND'S SHATTERED.
PROBABLY THE DUMBEST
PLACE TO PUNCH HIM,
BUT I'M RUNNING ON
INSTINCT NOW.



BRIDGE OF MY
NOSE CRACKS.
PAIN BLINDS ME.



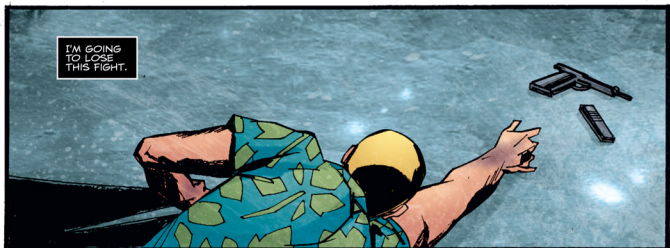
I GO FOR THE
SOFT PARTS, BUT
HE HITS ME IN MY
CRACKED RIBS AND
I CAN'T GET AIR.

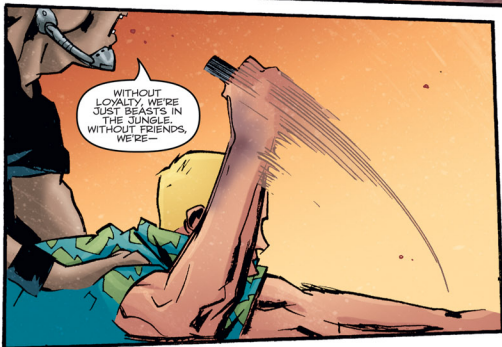
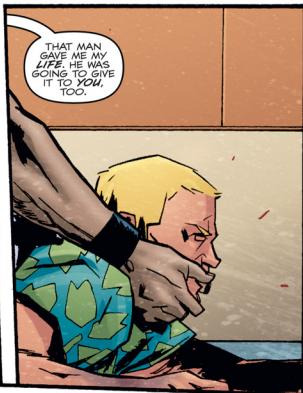


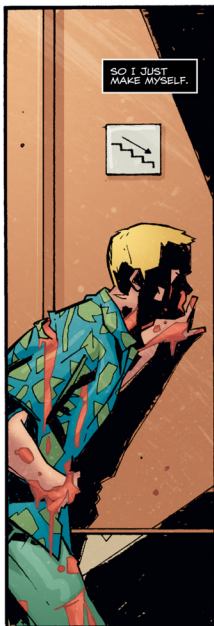
DISLOCATING HIS
KNEE SHOULD PUT
HIM DOWN. HOW IS
HE STILL STANDING?



I'M GOING
TO LOSE
THIS FIGHT.



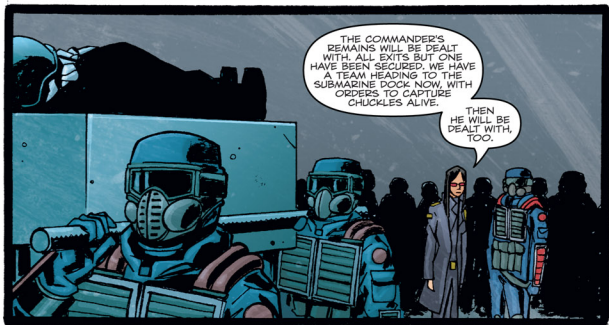












THE COMMANDER'S REMAINS WILL BE DEALT WITH. ALL EXITS BUT ONE HAVE BEEN SECURED. WE HAVE A TEAM HEADING TO THE SUBMARINE DOCK NOW, WITH ORDERS TO CAPTURE CHUCKLES ALIVE.

THEN HE WILL BE DEALT WITH, TOO.



HEH HEH. SCOUGH. I TOLD YOU, HE'S DEAD.

IF I DON'T LEAVE HERE, NEITHER DO YOU.



YOU DON'T GET IT, XAMOT.

JINX. YOU WERE SO MUCH BRAVER THAN ME.



WAIT. IS THAT SUBMARINE STILL OUTFITTED WITH NUCLEAR WARHEADS?

YES, MA'AM. OF COURSE.



YOU LAID DOWN YOUR LIFE NOT OUT OF ANGER, OR DESPAIR... BUT FOR DUTY, TO PROTECT OTHERS.

I WAS NEVER LEAVING HERE.



GET THE
COMMANDER'S
BODY ON THAT
TRANSPORT AND
EVACUATE ALL
HIGH COMMAND!
IMMEDIATELY!



IT'S A
GOOD THING YOU
GUYS DON'T CARE
ABOUT THINGS LIKE
"SAFETY" OR "MORAL
OBLIGATIONS."

I NEVER HAD THAT
KIND OF STRENGTH
INSIDE ME.



WAIT!
WHERE ARE
YOU GOING?
XANOT IS STILL
DOWN THERE!



TAKE YOUR
HANDS OFF
ME! I'M NOT
LEAVING UNTIL
WE FIND
MY-GUH!



ALL I'VE EVER HAD
IS THIS ANGER. THIS
STUPID, SENSELESS
RAGE THAT ONE
GENERAL AFTER
ANOTHER HAS USED
ME FOR. POINTING
ME AT TARGETS AND
LETTING ME GO.

THOSE
THINGS JUST
GET IN THE WAY,
RIGHT? SO, EVEN
THOUGH ON A SUB
OPERATED BY A SANE
MILITARY, YOU'D NEED
AT LEAST TWO
KEY-HOLDERS, PLUS
A FEW MORE LAYERS
OF PROTOCOL...







END.

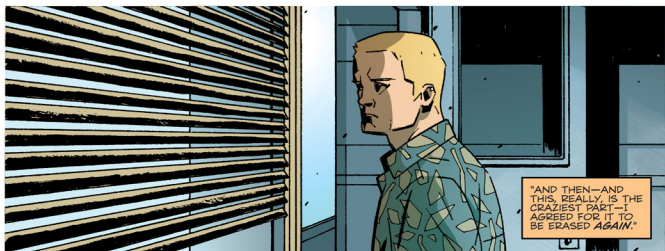
24 months ago, "Cobra" was just the whisper on the lips of a dying man. The largest paramilitary, organized crime, and terrorist organization in the world was so clandestine, the top operatives of America's most elite unit had never even heard of it.

However, after the assassination of their leader, Cobra elected a new Commander—one who had no use for secrecy. He marched Cobra from the shadows, invaded a sovereign country, engaged in all-out warfare and detonated nuclear weapons. Cobra is now a fearsome military power with legitimate political influence on the world's stage. From a whisper to a war-zone, in the space of 24 months.

And it all started with one man...

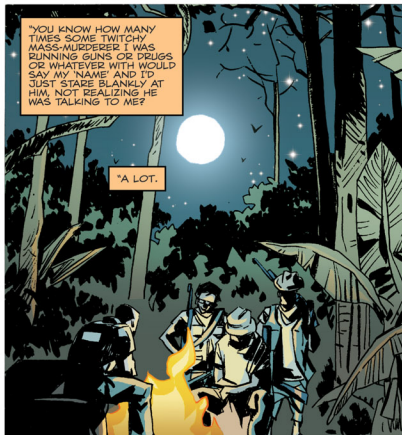
"MY NAME IS
PHILLIP M. PROVOST."







"AND THEN I TOOK ON SO MANY NAMES THAT I COULDN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHICH ONE WAS WHICH SOMETIMES.



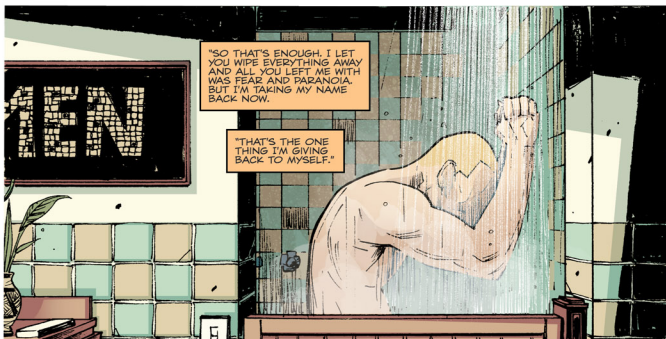
"YOU KNOW HOW MANY TIMES SOME TWITCHY MASS-MURDERER I WAS RUNNING GUNS OR DRUGS OR WHATEVER WITH WOULD SAY MY NAME? AND TO JUST STARE BLANKLY AT HIM, NOT REALIZING HE WAS TALKING TO ME?

"A LOT.



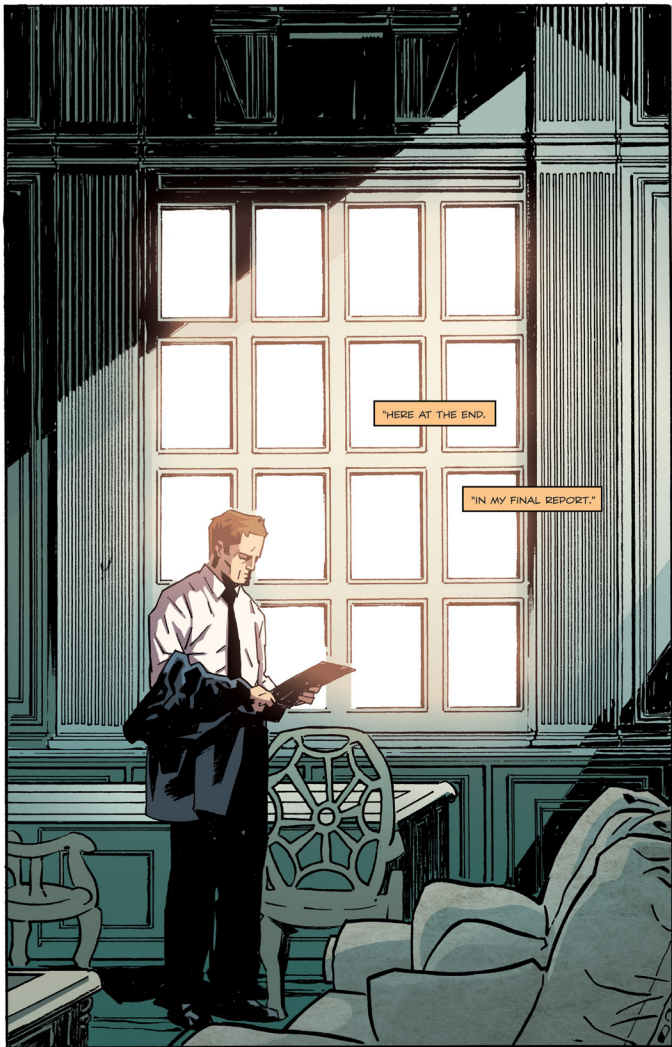
"YOU KNOW HOW MANY TIMES THAT MADE THEM SUSPICIOUS?

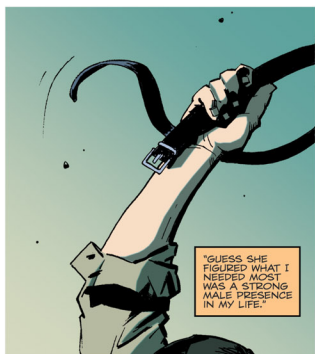
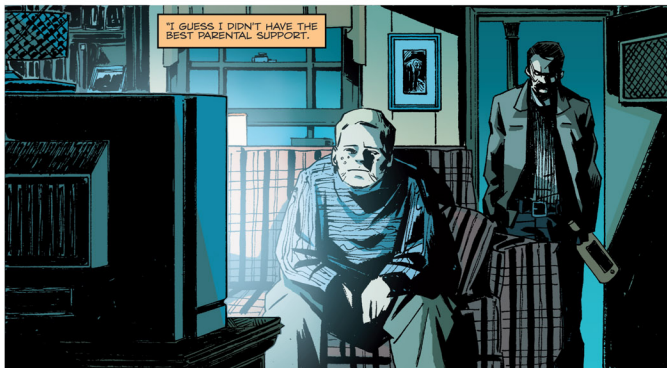
"EVERY TIME, EVERY SINGLE TIME.

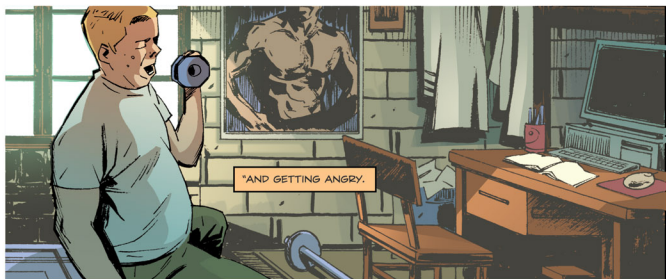


"SO THAT'S ENOUGH. I LET YOU WIPE EVERYTHING AWAY AND ALL YOU LEFT ME WITH WAS FEAR AND PARANOIA. BUT I'M TAKING MY NAME BACK NOW.

"THAT'S THE ONE THING I'M GIVING BACK TO MYSELF."







"THEY APPRECIATED MY ABILITY TO ABSORB PUNISHMENT."



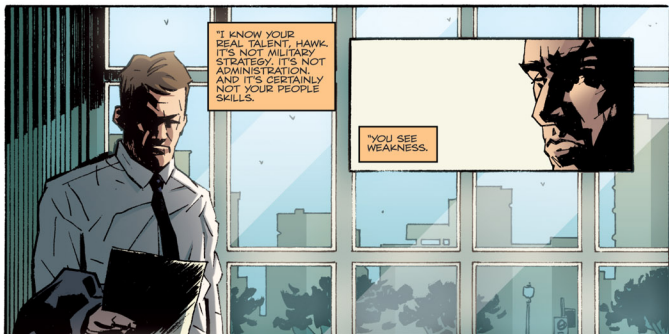
"BUT NOT SO MUCH MY MOUTH. ULTIMATELY, THE ARMY DOESN'T HAVE MUCH USE FOR A TOTALLY SELF-DESTRUCTIVE SOLDIER."



"BUT *YOU* DID. YOU KNEW JUST WHAT TO DO WITH ME, DIDN'T YOU?"



"IF THERE'S A LIVE GRENADE IN YOUR LAP, THROW IT AT THE ENEMY."



"I KNOW YOUR REAL TALENT, HAWK. IT'S NOT MILITARY STRATEGY. IT'S NOT ADMINISTRATION. AND IT'S CERTAINLY NOT YOUR PEOPLE SKILLS."

"YOU SEE WEAKNESS."



"YOU LOOK AT A GROUP, OR A PERSON, AND YOU CAN SEE EXACTLY WHAT WILL MAKE THEM BREAK."

"AND HOW THEY'LL BREAK WHEN THEY DO."

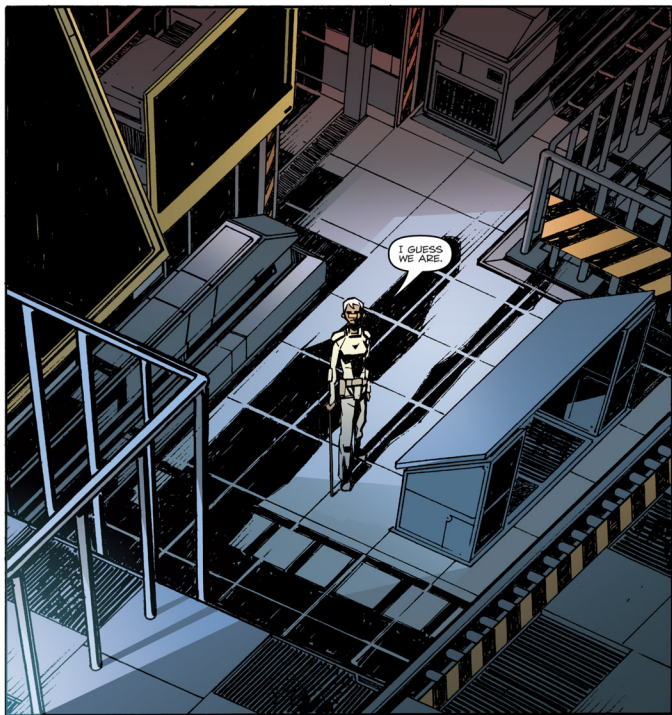


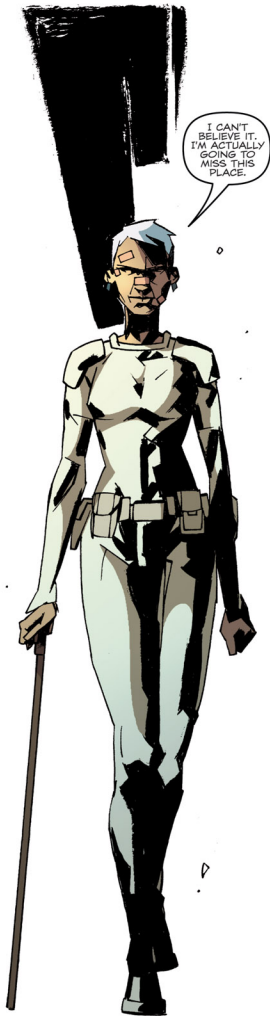
"THEN YOU JUST BALANCE THE RIGHT PEOPLE AGAINST EACH OTHER, SO THINGS BREAK IN DIRECTIONS THAT BENEFIT YOU."



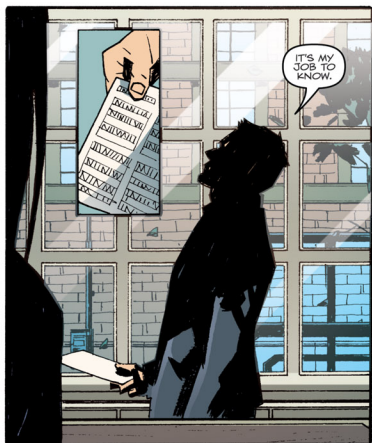
"COST" DOESN'T EVEN FACTOR INTO IT."











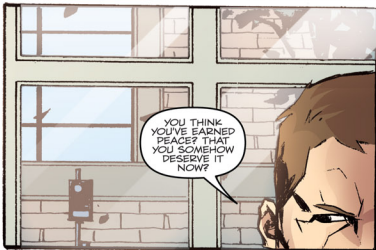
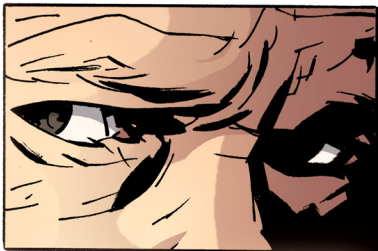


WELL, I DON'T HAVE IT ANYMORE. THE BOYS UPSTAIRS AREN'T PLEASED WITH THE WAY I'VE BEEN RUNNING THINGS, AND THEY'VE DECIDED THAT THE JOES REQUIRE NOT JUST RELOCATION, BUT A TOTAL RESTRUCTURING.

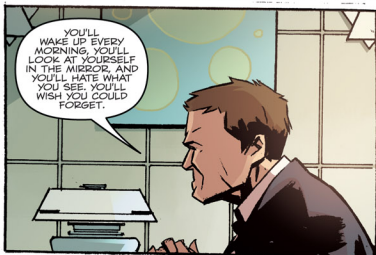
BUT *YOUR* JOB HAS NOT CHANGED, I SUGGEST YOU GET TO IT.



NO. I DON'T WANT TO WORK FOR THIS ORGANIZATION ANYMORE. MY PART IN THIS LITTLE WAR IS DONE. IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE LONG AGO.



YOU THINK YOU'VE EARNED PEACE? THAT YOU SOMEHOW DESERVE IT NOW?



YOU'LL WAKE UP EVERY MORNING, YOU'LL LOOK AT YOURSELF IN THE MIRROR, AND YOU'LL HATE WHAT YOU SEE. YOU'LL WISH YOU COULD FORGET.



I ALREADY
WISH THAT. AT
LEAST I WON'T BE
CREATING ANY
NEW HORRIFIC
MEMORIES.



YOU THINK YOU'LL
ENJOY THE SQUAREJON
LIFE? YOU GREW UP ON A
PLANTATION, MATRICULATED
THROUGH AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERNATIONAL BOARDING
SCHOOL, STOOD AT THE
RIGHT HAND OF BILLIONAIRE
TERRORISTS AND LIVED IN A
MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR
MILITARY INSTALLATION.

YOU FIGURE
YOU'LL JUST RENT AN
APARTMENT IN SKOKIE
AND CHAT UP THE CLERKS
AT DOMINICKS? HOW'S ALL
THAT GOING TO LOOK ON
YOUR ONLINE DATING
PROFILE?



I'D AT LEAST
LIKE THE CHOICE
INSTEAD OF BEING
TREATED LIKE SOME
CHILD, CONSTANTLY
BEING MONITORED
AND SCOLDED—

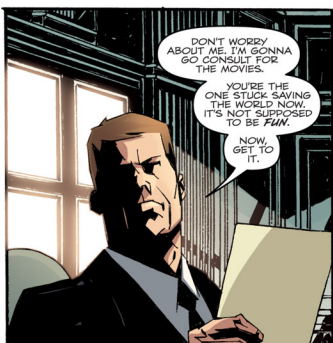
NONE OF
US EVER HAD
A CHOICE.



YOU'RE A
CHILD OF THIS
WAR, WHETHER YOU
LIKE IT OR NOT.
YOU'VE BEEN
BAPTIZED IN
BLOOD.

THERE IS
NO OUTSIDE
ANYMORE.
THERE'S ONLY
THE WAR.





"MY MISSION IS OVER."





"I ASSASSINATED THEIR COMMANDER. THAT'S MORE THAN YOU ASKED ME TO DO. MORE THAN YOU COULD HAVE EVEN EXPECTED. HOW ABOUT THAT? I SHOWED *INITIATIVE*."

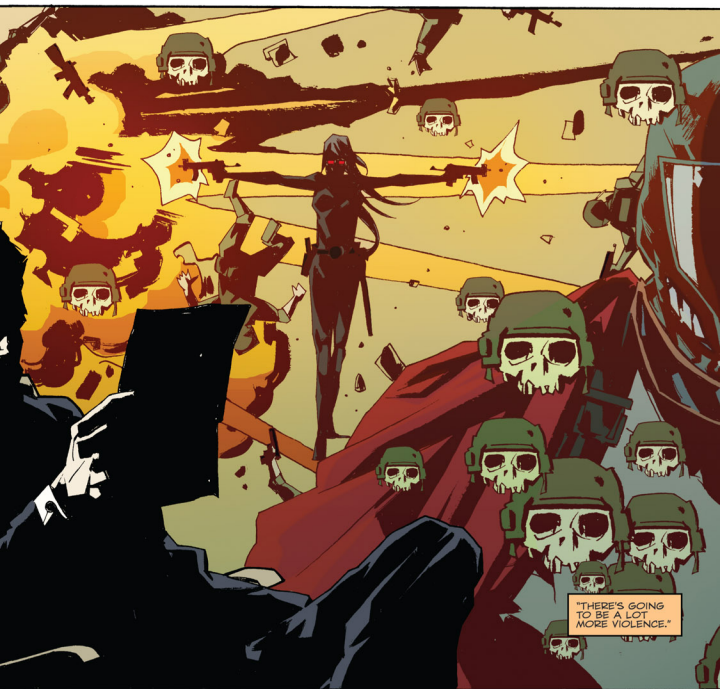
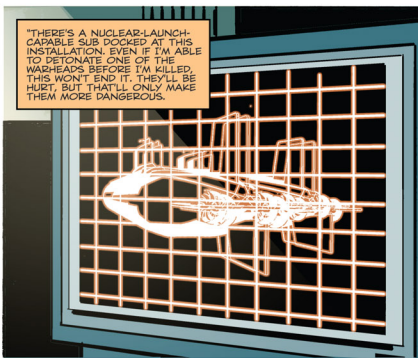


"BUT DON'T BE TOO PROUD. COBRA ISN'T ORGANIZED THE WAY THAT WE ASSUMED. THERE'S NO SUCCESSOR WAITING IN THE WINGS. THEY *ELECT* THEIR LEADERS. IN SOME WEIRD OCCULT CEREMONY THEY HOST EVERY SEVEN YEARS. THE CURRENT MAN'S BEEN RE-ELECTED *FIVE TIMES*."





"THERE'S A NUCLEAR-LAUNCH-CAPABLE SUB DOCKED AT THIS INSTALLATION. EVEN IF I'M ABLE TO DETONATE ONE OF THE WARHEADS BEFORE I'M KILLED, THIS WON'T END IT. THEY'LL BE HURT, BUT THAT'LL ONLY MAKE THEM MORE DANGEROUS."



"THERE'S GOING TO BE A LOT MORE VIOLENCE."



"SO THAT'S THAT. WENT ON FOR A WHILE, I KNOW. COULD HAVE JUST TOLD YOU THE MISSION-PERTINENT DETAILS AND LEFT ALL THE REST OUT. BUT I NEEDED TO GET THIS OFF MY CHEST. AND WHO ELSE AM I GOING TO TALK TO?"



"AND THE FUNNY PART—THE REALLY FUNNY PART—IS THAT I KNOW YOU READ ALL OF IT. YOU DIDN'T SKIP ANY OF IT. YOU COMBED THROUGH EVERY WORD, MAKING SURE THERE WASN'T SOME EXTRA, ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE IN THERE."

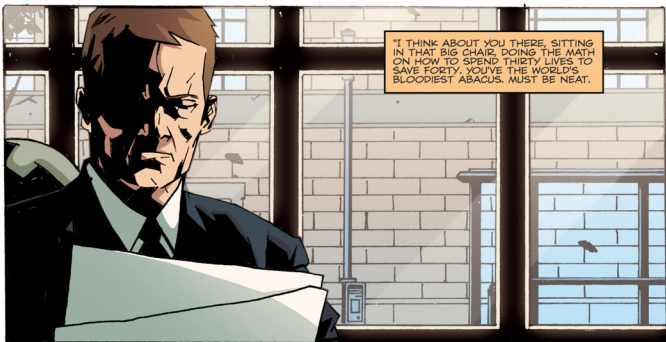


"WELL, THAT'S THAT."

"AND THEN, EVEN AFTER YOU WERE SURE THERE WASN'T, YOU READ IT AGAIN, AND THEN AGAIN. RIGHT? OF COURSE I'M RIGHT."



"HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU READ THIS THING NOW? I DON'T EVEN WANT TO KNOW. YOU POOR, LONELY, SAD BASTARD."



"I THINK ABOUT YOU THERE, SITTING IN THAT BIG CHAIR, DOING THE MATH ON HOW TO SPEND THIRTY LIVES TO SAVE FORTY. YOU'VE THE WORLD'S BLOODIEST ABACUS. MUST BE NEAT.



"BY NOW, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, I'M ONE OF THE LIVES YOU SPENT.

"I'M NOT TELLING YOU THIS TO MAKE YOU FEEL GUILTY. I'M NOT AN IDIOT. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SHED A TEAR OVER ME.



"I'M TELLING YOU THIS BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO KNOW: THIS ISN'T ABOUT YOU. THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH *YOU*. YOU'RE ABSOLVED OF THIS. EVERY BOY YOU SENT TO HIS DEATH. EVERY WIDOW WHOSE CRIES YOU IGNORED. EVERY COLD-BLOODED, MONSTROUS THING YOU'VE EVER DONE IN THE NAME OF LIFE AND LIBERTY—THAT'S THE POISON THAT SUSTAINS YOU NOW. BUT YOU DON'T GET TO HAVE *THIS*. THIS ONE IS ON *ME*.

"SEE, I KNOW *YOUR* WEAKNESS, TOO."

"NOW I HAVE
A JOB TO DO."

"BUT, BEFORE I
SIGN OFF, I GOT
A JOKE FOR YOU."

"HOW MANY FOUR-STAR
GENERALS DOES IT
TAKE TO SCREW IN A
LIGHT BULB?"

"ONE."

When he
screw in a light
One.
He just holds it in place and the whole
world revolves around him.



HEH.

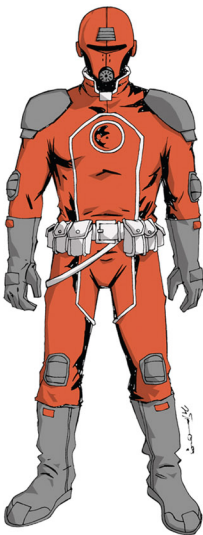
Last The Laugh

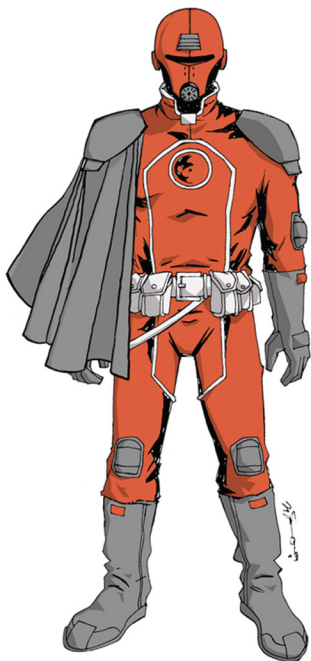
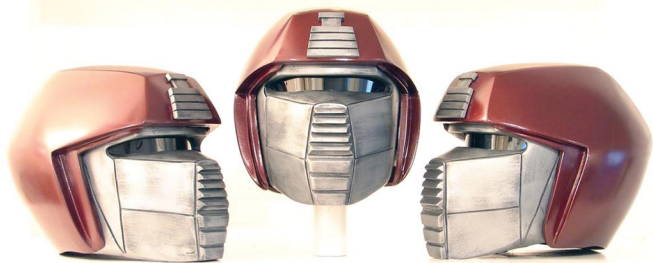


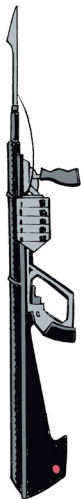
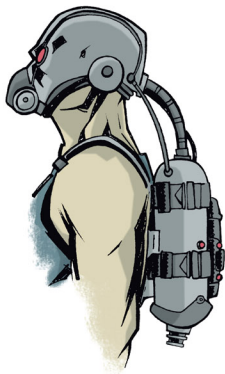
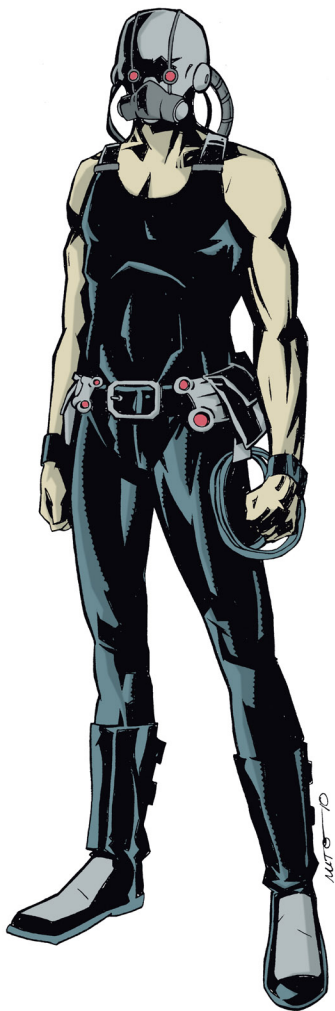
ART GALLERY



Here are some design studies for the new Crimson Guard uniforms. Notice that the familiar helmet has been modified, but still retains the defining characteristics that made this such a classic design.











Art by Howard Chaykin
Colors by Edgar Delgado



Art by Howard Chaykin
Colors by Edgar Delgado



Art by Howard Chaykin
Colors by Edgar Delgado



Art by Howard Chaykin
Colors by Edgar Delgado



Artwork by Antonio Fusco



Artwork by Antonio Fusco



Artwork by Antonio Fusco



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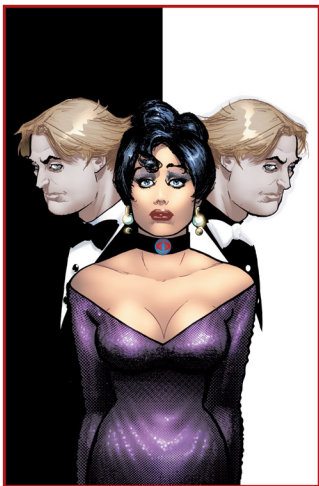
Artwork by Antonio Fusco



Artwork by Antonio Fusco



Art by Howard Chaykin
Colors by Edgar Delgado



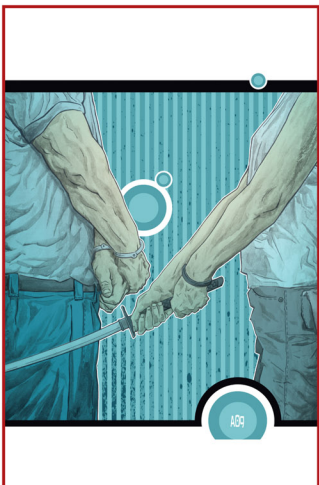
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Colors by Edgar Delgado



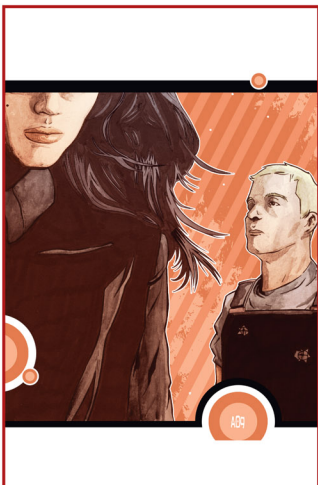
Art by Howard Chaykin
Colors by Edgar Delgado



Art by Howard Chaykin
Colors by Edgar Delgado



Artwork by Antonio Fuso



Artwork by Antonio Fuso



Artwork by Antonio Fuso



Artwork by Antonio Fuso



Artwork by Antonio Fusco



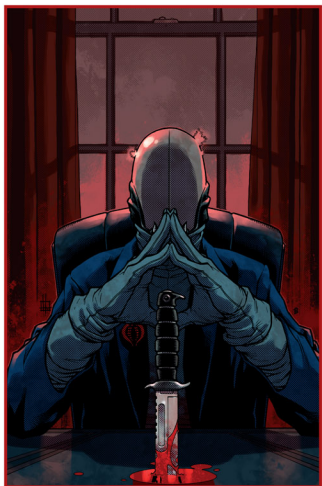
Artwork by Antonio Fusco



Artwork by Antonio Fusco
after John Byrne



Artwork by Antonio Fusco



Art by Zach Howard
Colors by Nelson Daniel



Art by Zach Howard
Colors by Nelson Daniel



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Colors by Nelson Daniel



Art by Zach Howard
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COBRA

THE LAST LAUGH

The critically acclaimed series that changed all of G.I. JOE and Cobra forever. His name is Chuckles. He is G.I. JOE's top undercover agent and he's just infiltrated a top secret, highly organized terrorist group. But deep cover takes its toll—in isolation, in fear... in blood.

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