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ABSALOM

TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS



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ABSALOM

TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS



ABSALOM CREATED BY GORDON RENNIE AND TIERNEN TREVALLION

TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS PART ONE

Script: Gordon Rennie

Art: Tiernen Trevallion

Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in **2000 AD** Progs 2053-2060.





WE ARE THE **HOUNDS OF JUSTICE!** THE **DEFENDERS OF ALBION!** SOVEREIGNTY IS OUR SWORD! PATRIOTISM OUR SHIELD!

FOREIGN FORCES OF CORRUPTION BEWARE —

PILLOCK.

SMACK!



SLIM PICKINGS HERE, HARRY. THIS LOT LOOK CAPABLE OF CONJURING UP THE **POWER OF PENDRAGON** TO SWEEP INFERIOR FOREIGN BLOODLINES BACK INTO THE SEA?



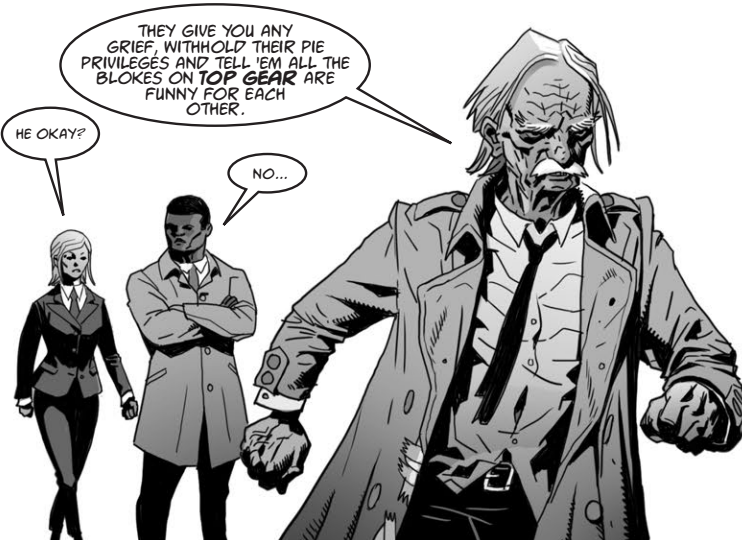
TELL ME ABOUT IT. BLOODY NUTJOB PATROL. THAT'S WHAT WE'VE BECOME...



YOU ALL RIGHT, GUV?

CHIPPER AS A POLITICIAN WHO'S JUST VOTED HIMSELF A PAY-RISE, SON.

ANYWAY, YOU SEE ABOUT GETTING THE CLOWNS OF JUSTICE HERE DOWN THE LOCAL NICK.



THEY GIVE YOU ANY GRIEF, WITHHOLD THEIR PIE PRIVILEGES AND TELL 'EM ALL THE BLOKES ON **TOP GEAR** ARE FUNNY FOR EACH OTHER.

HE OKAY?

NO...



'... I DON'T THINK HE IS.'

BLEEEEEUUUUUGH

OOH, THAT
SOUNDS NASTY.
STILL, ALWAYS
BETTER OUT
THAN IN, I
SAY.



YOU THINK THAT'S
BAD, YOU SHOULD
SEE WHAT I LEFT
FLOATING IN
THE KHAZI THIS
MORNING.

DON'T DOUBT
IT, HARRY
LAD.

KEBAB?

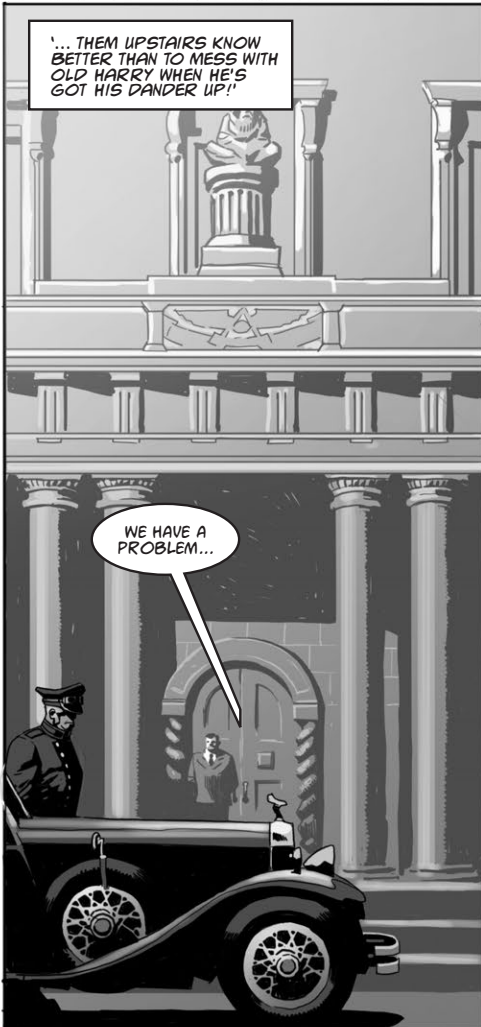


SUIT YERSELF.

YOU
KNOW YOU'RE
FINALLY DYING,
DON'T YOU?

THE
THOUGHT **HAD**
OCCURRED, CHEERS
FOR ASKING.







HIS RELIABILITY
HAS BEEN SUSPECT
FOR A WHILE. HE'LL
BE DEAD IN A
MONTH OR TWO.

HOPEFULLY SOONER,
WITH THE LATEST
CUTS TO NHS
ONCOLOGY
SERVICES.

ABSALOM?
YOU MIS-
UNDERSTAND...



'I MEANT ONE OF OUR
FAMILY RETAINERS.
THE ONE YOU KNOW AS
MISTER CRICH...



'AS WITH YOU AND ABSALOM,
WE HAD BECOME
DISSATISFIED WITH THE
STANDARD OF HIS SERVICE...

'UNFORTUNATELY, WE WERE
NOT SO SUCCESSFUL IN
CONTAINING THE PROBLEM...'



YOU NEED MORE MEDICINE? WHY NOT GO TO THE DOCTOR'S?

CAN'T GET A PRESCRIPTION ON THE NHS FOR WHAT I NEED, SON. NOT FOR WHAT I'VE GOT.



THIS BLOKE YOU'RE TAKING ME TO SEE, HE'S AN ALCHEMIST?

SO HE SAYS. THE BOYS IN THE LOCAL DRUGS SQUAD MIGHT SAY OTHERWISE —

— ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING WHAT I'VE LIFTED FROM THEIR EVIDENCE LOCKER IN WAY OF PAYMENT FOR HIM.



ALL PART OF YOUR EDUCATION, SON. BE GOOD FOR YOU TO MEET SOME OF THE MORE USEFUL TOERAGS ON THE MANOR, FOR WHEN AFTER I'VE —



OH BLOODY HELL.

TICK-TOCK MEN!









AND, BY THE ARTICLES OF THAT SAME ACCORD, I CLAIM PETITION FOR SANCTUARY.

HELLO, DETECTIVES. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.



MY APOLOGIES.
I HAVE
ENDEAVOURED TO
REMOVE FROM
MY BODY ALL
COMPONENTS WITH
WHICH I COULD BE
TRACKED BY
OCCULT MEANS...

IT'S LIKELY, THOUGH,
THAT THERE ARE
ITEMS TOO VITAL
FOR ME TO
REMOVE, OR THAT
MY EMPLOYERS
HAVE OTHER MEANS
WITH WHICH TO
FOLLOW ME.

YOU DID ALL
THAT DAMAGE
TO YOUR-
SELF?

ALAS,
NO...

'I HAD ALWAYS IMAGINED THE
PROCESS OF EXTRACTING MYSELF
FROM SERVICE TO MY EMPLOYERS
WOULD BE A SORELY TAXING ONE...

'... AS, INDEED, IT
PROVED ITSELF TO BE.'





YOU KNOW, I COULD SNEAK THAT'S THE SECOND TIME WE'VE PASSED THAT KEBAB SHOP.

YOU'D BETTER NOT BE MESSING US ABOUT HERE, BARNEY MATE...



YOU KNOW HOW DIFFICULT THIS IS?

FINDING A STEALTH ROUTE ACROSS LONDON WHERE YOU CAN HIDE AMONG THE POWER LINES AND EMANATION FIELDS?

YOU WANT TO TRY IT? YOU WANT TO TRY TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SAXON-AGE LEY LINE AND SOMETHING MORE MODERN THAT COULD —

OH BLOODY HELL —!



QUICK! IF THEY WERE TO SEND SOMETHING AFTER YOU — THE WORST POSSIBLE THING THEY COULD THROW AT US — WHAT WOULD IT BE...?



WELL, I ALREADY TOOK CARE TO ABSCOND FROM SERVICE WHEN I KNEW WEEPING JENNY WAS DEPLOYED OVERSEAS.

AS FOR THE WORST AFTER HER...



THAT WOULD BE EITHER THE CARNIFEX, AUNT'S DARLING FOUNDLING OR —

AH, OF COURSE. HOW FOOLISH OF ME...



IT'S THE
MIASMIC.
THAT'S WHAT
THEY'LL
HAVE SENT.

I DO
APOLOGISE,
DETECTIVES.
I'M AFRAID THIS
IS GOING TO
BE QUITE UN-
PLEASANT FOR
ALL OF US.

SODDING HARRY
ABSALOM!



'WHERE IS HE, WHEN
YOU REALLY BLOODY
NEED HIM...?'









DARLING SIS AND I BOTH WORKED FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO HELP CREATE OUR LARGE FRIENDS HERE —

BY THE WAY, DID YOU KNOW THEY WERE ORIGINALLY GROWN FROM CERTAIN **POTENT BODILY FLUIDS** PROVIDED BY YOUR COLLEAGUE THE **SUVNOR**?



THESE THINGS ARE THAT NUTTER'S SPROGS?

'LARGE, STUPID, OBEIDENT AND EASILY REPLACED.' THAT WAS WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTED, SO THAT'S WHAT WE GAVE THEM.



THE POOR DEARS. THEY DESERVE BETTER THAN THAT.

THAT'S WHY WE MADE A FEW SECRET LITTLE **IMPROVEMENTS** OF OUR OWN, AND STARTED COLLECTING THE WAIFS AND STRAYS THE GOVERNMENT DIDN'T SEEM TO WANT ANY-MORE.



AND SHE CAN PSYCHICALLY CONTROL 'EM? EVEN IN THAT STATE?

YES, INSPECTOR. I CAN.





WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? **STROKE**, WAS IT?

A SEVERE ONE. IT LEFT THIS BODY MORE OR LESS USELESS.

LUCKILY, THESE OTHER ONES ARE AVAILABLE TO ME.

I'VE BEEN WITH YOU FOR QUITE A WHILE, INSPECTOR, WATCHING YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES THROUGH THESE OTHERS' EYES...

... LENDING A HELPING HAND HERE AND THERE, WHENEVER IT SEEMED NECESSARY.

THAT SHINDIG AT CABLE STREET. THAT WAS YOU.

AND ON ONE OR TWO OTHER OCCASIONS.



INDEED. THOSE TWO YOUNG COLLEAGUES OF YOURS, INSPECTOR — ALWAYS GETTING THEMSELVES INTO THE MOST TERRIFICALLY AWKWARD SCRAPES!





PLEASE.
SAVE
YOUR-
SELVES.

THAT'S WHY
YOU BROUGHT
ME AND THE LAD
HERE? TO THROW US
A LITTLE TEA PARTY
AND TELL US HOW
GRATEFUL WE
SHOULD BE
TO YOU?

NOT
AT ALL,
INSPECTOR!
DOLLY'S GIFT IS
A PRECIOUS
BLESSING, BUT
IT CAN BE A
BURDEN,
TOO.

WE
BROUGHT
YOU HERE
BECAUSE SHE
CAN HEAR THE
CHILDREN
CRYING.



CHILDREN?

THAT
TERRIBLE PLACE
YOU'RE PLANNING
TO GO INTO —
SHE'S BEEN THERE
TOO, IN HER
MIND.



EVERY
NIGHT, SHE
CAN HEAR THEM
SOBBING AND
CALLING FOR
HELP. EVERY
NIGHT.



I THINK THEY'RE
YOUR **GRAND-
CHILDREN**, INSPECTOR.
WE WANT TO HELP
YOU RESCUE
THEM.



IT'S
HERE
FOR
ME.

I'VE BEEN
IN THE
FAMILY'S
SERVICE FOR
A LONG TIME
NOW...

LONDON, 1826—

WAIT.
THAT ONE'S
STILL ALIVE. I
CAN HEAR ITS
BLOOD
MOVING.

THIS ONE? IT'LL
COST YOU EXTRA
FOR ME TO FINISH
IT OFF, YOU KNOW.
I ONLY GET PAID
FOR HAULAGE,
NOT KILLIN' WORK.

CRASH!

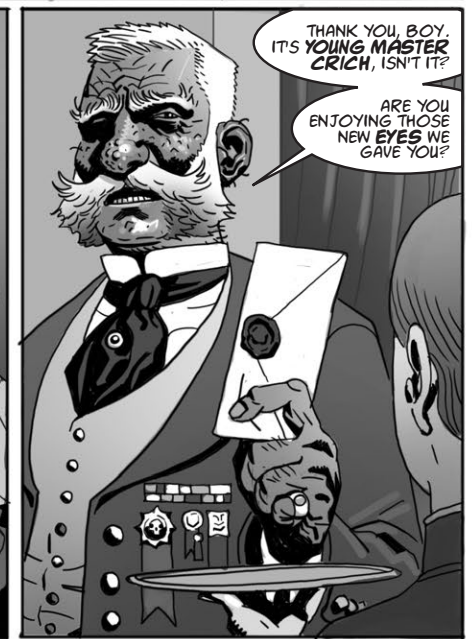
MOSTLY INTACT.
YOU'RE TO BE
CONGRATULATED, LAD.
NOT MANY SURVIVE
THE FAMILY'S
REVELS.

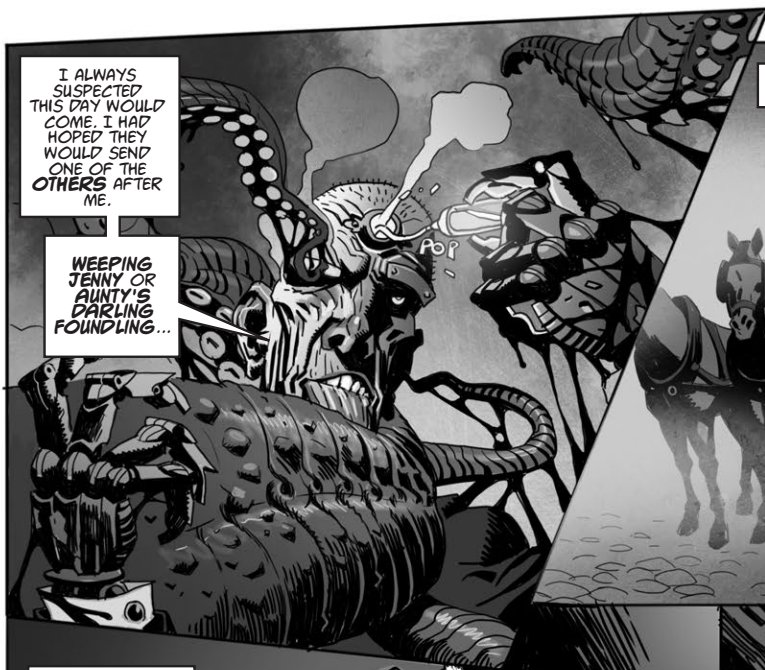
MAYBE WE SHOULD
FIND A MORE
PRODUCTIVE ROLE FOR
YOU. WOULD YOU
LIKE THAT?

THE
GENTLEMAN'S
TALKING TO YOU,
BOY. ANSWER HIM!

OPEN
THE SACK.
LET ME SEE
IT FIRST.

Y-YES,
SIR. I'D LIKE
THAT VERY
MUCH.





I ALWAYS SUSPECTED THIS DAY WOULD COME. I HAD HOPED THEY WOULD SEND ONE OF THE OTHERS AFTER ME.

WEEPING JENNY OR AUNTIE'S DARLING FOUNDLING...

1888 —



... ANOTHER ONE, SIR. THOUGHT YOU'D BEST GET ON TO IT SHARPISH, BEFORE THAT BLOODY STYLITE CLUB AND THEIR PALS IN THE FORCE GET WIND OF IT.

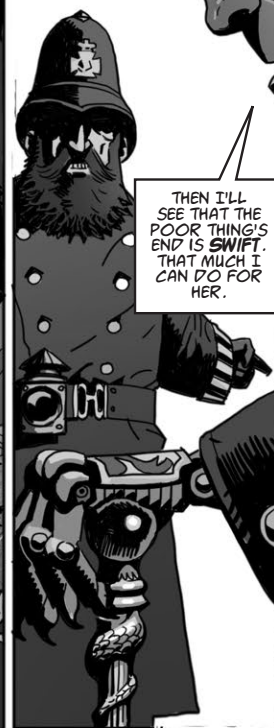
YOU DID WELL TO THINK SO, SERGEANT. AND YOU'LL BE REWARDED ACCORDINGLY.



THOSE ACCORD-WAVING BORES IN PALL MALL HAVE BECOME DISTRESSINGLY EFFICIENT OF LATE.

I EVEN HEAR THEY'RE PETITIONING THE HOME SECRETARY TO HAVE THEIR OWN WATCHDOG SQUAD WITHIN THE METROPOLITAN POLICE.

DOWN THERE, SIR. SHE'S STILL ALIVE TOO. I RECKON.

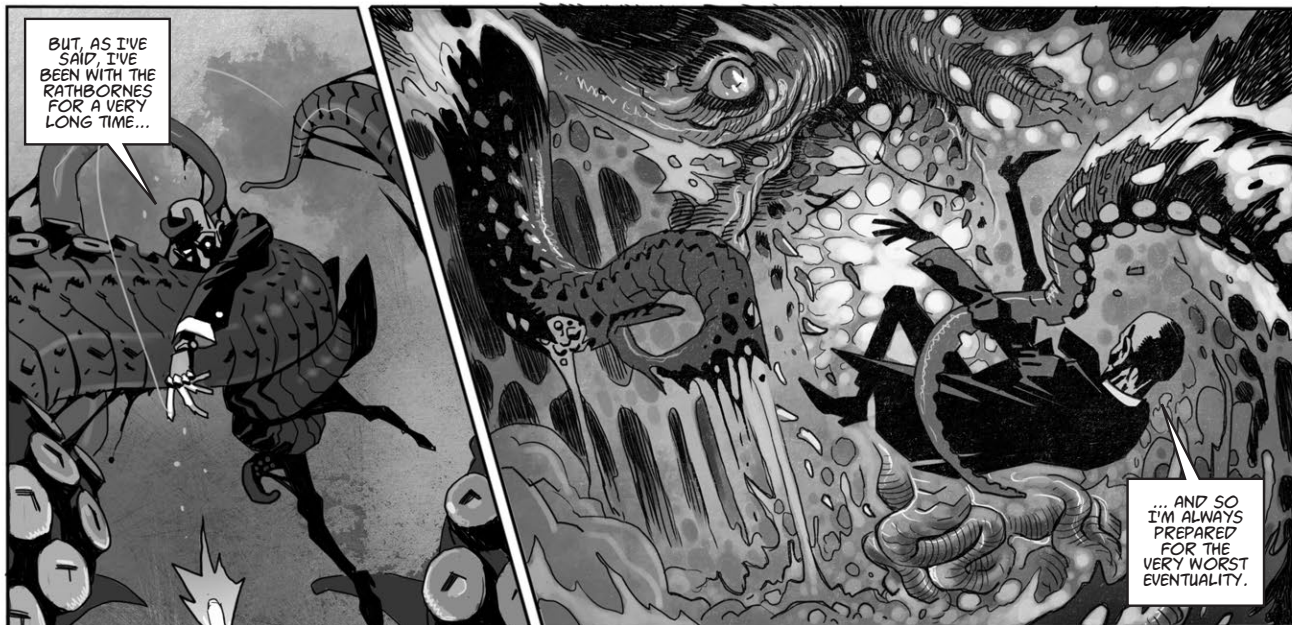


THEN I'LL SEE THAT THE POOR THING'S END IS SWIFT. THAT MUCH I CAN DO FOR HER.



CLEANING UP BEHIND ONE'S SOCIAL BETTERS.

SUCH IS THE LOT OF WE WHO SERVE.



BUT, AS I'VE SAID, I'VE BEEN WITH THE RATHBORNES FOR A VERY LONG TIME...

... AND SO I'M ALWAYS PREPARED FOR THE VERY WORST EVENTUALITY.

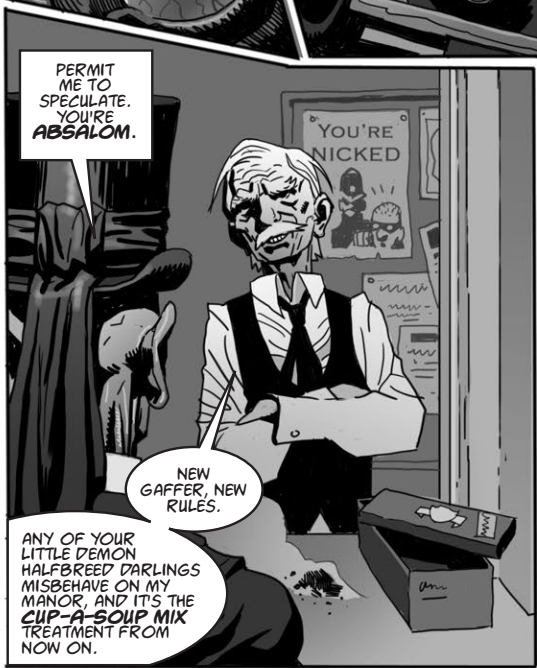
SOME YEARS AGO —

MR CRICH, ISN'T IT?

HERE TO DELIVER A FANCY RATHBORNE FAMILY GET OUT OF JAIL FREE CARD FOR THAT BAD LAD OF YOURS WE LIFTED, I SHOULDN'T WONDER.



WELL, YOU'RE IN LUCK, MATE, 'COS HERE HE IS.



PERMIT ME TO SPECULATE. YOU'RE ABSALOM.

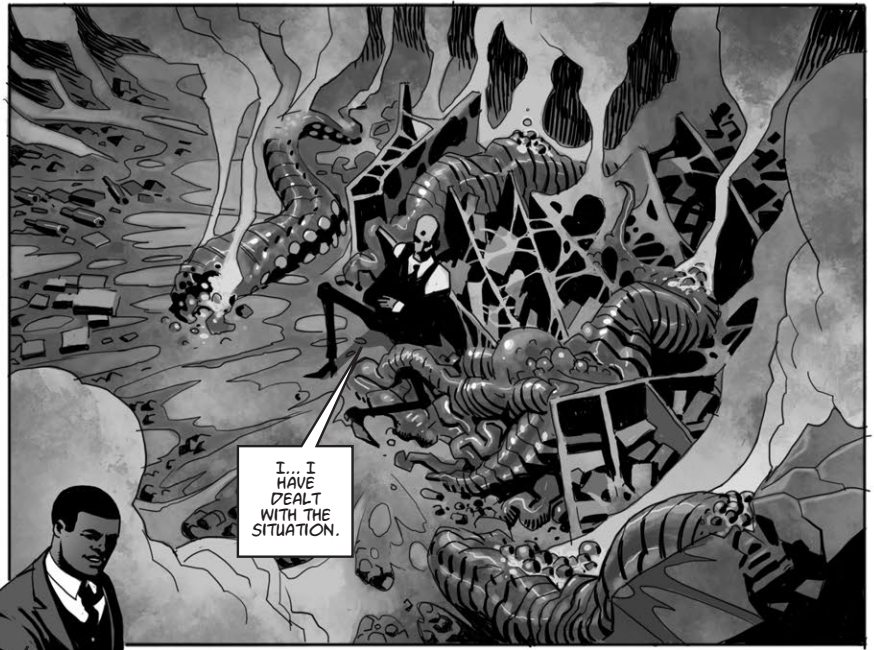
NEW GAFFER, NEW RULES.

ANY OF YOUR LITTLE DEMON HALFBREED DARLINGS MISBEHAVE ON MY MANOR, AND IT'S THE CUP-A-SOUP MIX TREATMENT FROM NOW ON.

I'LL SEE YOUR WORDS REACH THE PROPER EARS. I LOOK FORWARD TO US WORKING TOGETHER MORE, INSPECTOR.

MY COMPLIMENTS TO YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES.







HE'S NOT SUCH A BAD SORT, IS OLD 'ARRY, ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW HIM.



ACTUALLY, NO, THAT'S A TERRIBLE BLEEDIN' LIE, TRUTH TO TELL...

HE'S A HORRIBLE OLD BASTARD AND A RIGHT CONNING PIECE OF WORK.



LEARNED EVERYTHING HE KNOWS FROM HIS OLD GUV'NOR, I'M PROUD TO SAY.



MUCH OBLIGED, SON.

STILL A BIT OF A SOFT TOUCH, THOUGH. 'SPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO THE NIPPERS.

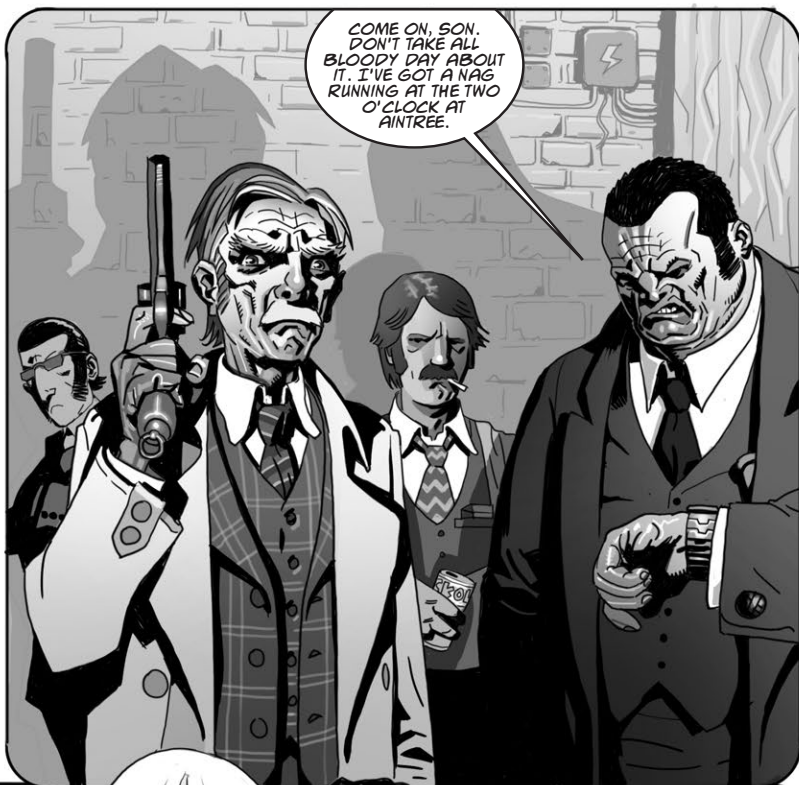


KRAK



OH, STOW IT WITH YER BLEATING. IT'S ONLY A **SNAPPED SPINE**. A FEW WEEKS IN THE MILLS, AND THEY'LL 'AVE YOU RIGHT AS RAIN, I EXPECT.

NOW THEN, BACK TO 'ARRY...



COME ON, SON. DON'T TAKE ALL BLOODY DAY ABOUT IT. I'VE GOT A NAG RUNNING AT THE TWO O'CLOCK AT AINTREE.



STOP BEING A PONCE, AND DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.



THEY'RE JUST KIDS, GUV. I'VE GOT TWO OF MY OWN ABOUT THE SAME AGE.

KIDS, ARE THEY? TELL THAT TO SID HERE AFTER THEY BLEEDIN' NEAR TORE HIS ARM OFF.

OR THAT CASSOCK-LIFTER, AND WHAT THEY DID TO HIM AFTER HE TRIED TO EXORCISE 'EM?

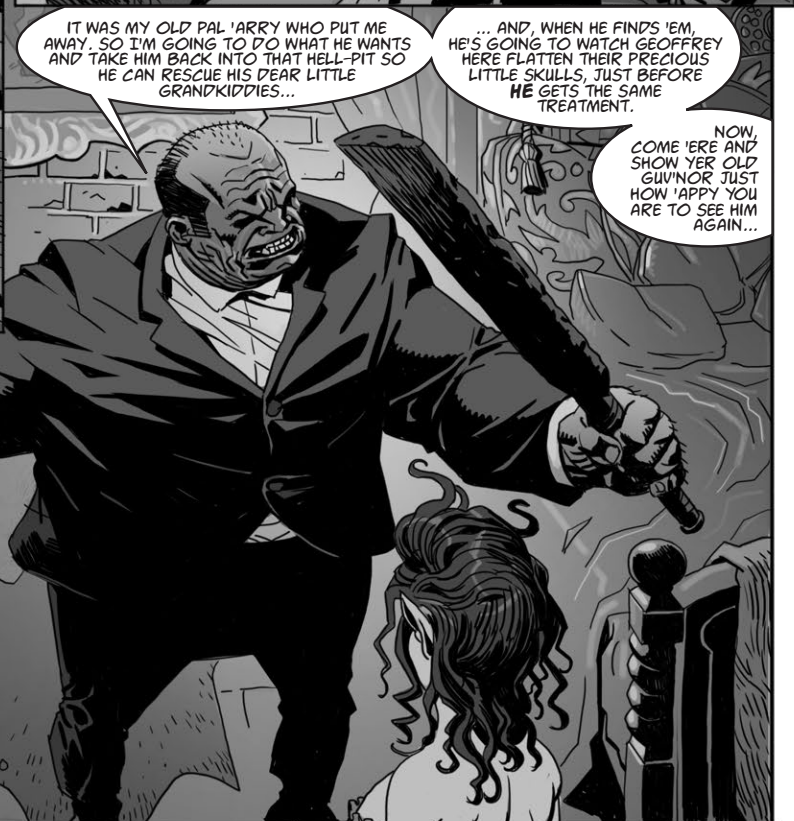


RIGHT, EVERYONE OUT. ME AND GEOFFREY HERE WILL SEE TO THIS.

LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, IF YOU NEED SOMETHING TRULY ORRIBLE DONE, YOU NEED TO DO IT YER-SELF...













THE TWO LOVEBIRDS SETTLING IN, THEN?

PROPS TO YOU, JEMIMA DEAR...



...WHEN I TOLD YOU I WANTED YOU TO INFILTRATE ABSALOM'S SQUAD AND REPORT ON ITS ACTIVITIES, I DIDN'T MEAN FOR YOU TO GO TO ALL THE TROUBLE OF SHAGGING HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND.



IT'S NOT LIKE THAT. NOT THE WAY YOU MEAN IT, ANYWAY.

WHY ARE YOU HERE, YOLANDA?

YOU MEAN OTHER THAN BEING YOUR EMPLOYER AND WANTING TO KNOW WHY MY EXPENSIVE INTELLIGENCE ASSET HAS STOPPED DOING HER JOB?



SO WHERE IS THE DASHING DETECTIVE-SERGEANT SANGSTER ANYWAY?

OH, DON'T BOTHER LYING TO ME. I ALREADY KNOW...



'... HE'S OUT WITH HIS BOSS AND THEIR NEW LITTLE PET PSYCHO, TRACKING DOWN THE LATEST RECRUIT FOR HARRY'S BIG SUICIDE MISSION PLAN.'



BOSS? YOU THERE, BOSS?

HE'S FAST. THIS HELLFIRE SOUL. FASTER THAN ALL THEM OTHER ONES I HUNTED.

HIS NAME'S EMILE, SON. AND YEAH, HE'S A NIPPY ONE.



FULL-BLOOD RATHBORNE. THAT MEANS HE'S DANGEROUS, AND VALUABLE...



JUST REMEMBER THAT, 'COS WE NEED HIM ALIVE.

GOTCHA, BOSS.
NO PROMISES.

NO WORRIES, HARRY. I'M ALMOST THERE. I'LL STOP HIM DOING ANYTHING STUPID.

JUST KEEP EMILE BUSY UNTIL I CAN GET THERE WITH THE KITTENS.



YOU WANT ME TO STOP HARRY GOING INTO THE MILLS AND RESCUING HIS GRAND-CHILDREN?

STOP HIM? OF COURSE NOT.

THE MORE DAMAGE HE DOES TO THAT BLOODY DEMON PACK, THE BETTER.



THE ACCORD'S AN EMBARRASSMENT AND DISGRACE TO THIS COUNTRY, TO THE EXTENT THAT I CONSIDER IT A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE REALM —

— WHICH BRINGS IT VERY MUCH INTO MY DEPARTMENT'S SPHERE OF OPERATION.



'SO NO, DEAR, I WON'T WANT YOU TO SABOTAGE THAT OLD DRUNK'S PLAN TO KILL HIMSELF AND HIS ENTIRE TEAM...

ALL RIGHT, EMILE? REMEMBER ME?



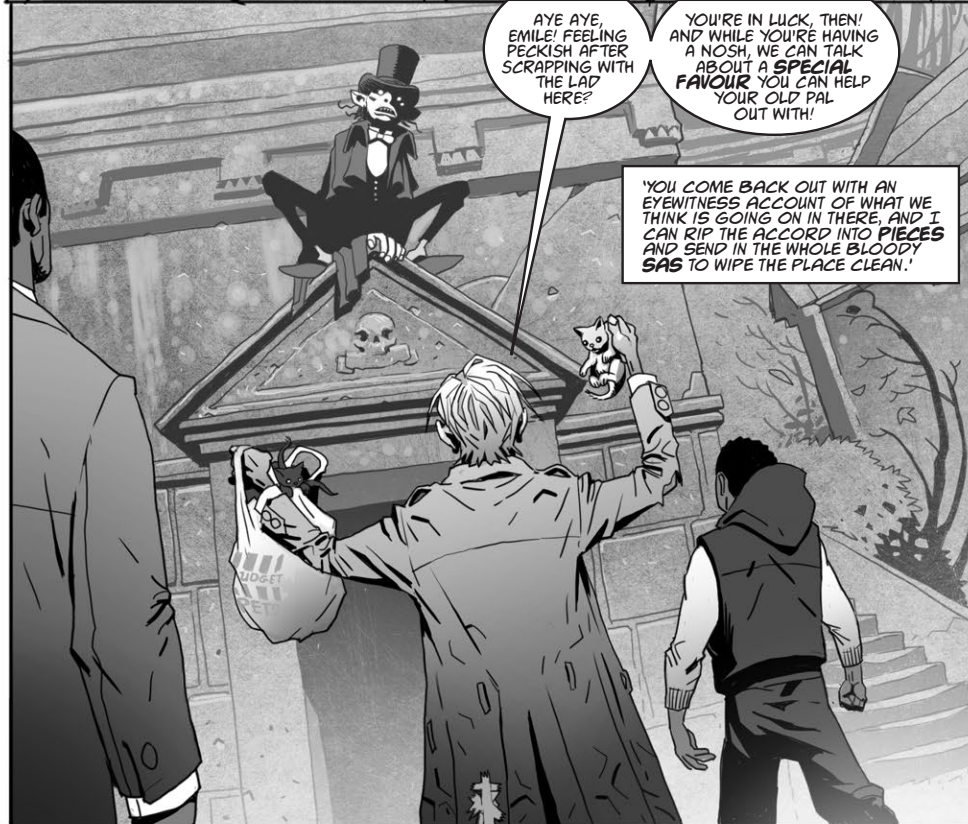
'I WANT YOU TO GO IN THERE WITH HIM. THEY'LL ALL ALMOST CERTAINLY DIE, BUT I NEED YOU TO SURVIVE...

YOUR OLD PAL D.S. SANGSTER? YEAH, 'COURSE YOU DO!



'... SURVIVE, AND GET BACK OUT AGAIN.

AND LOOK, HERE'S YOUR UNCLE HARRY. I BET HE'S GOT A NICE TREAT FOR YOU.



AYE AYE, EMILE! FEELING PECKISH AFTER SCRAPPING WITH THE LAD HERE?

YOU'RE IN LUCK, THEN! AND WHILE YOU'RE HAVING A NOSH, WE CAN TALK ABOUT A SPECIAL FAVOUR YOU CAN HELP YOUR OLD PAL OUT WITH!

'YOU COME BACK OUT WITH AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF WHAT WE THINK IS GOING ON IN THERE, AND I CAN RIP THE ACCORD INTO PIECES AND SEND IN THE WHOLE BLOODY SAS TO WIPE THE PLACE CLEAN.'



DEAL?

THE STYLITE CLUB, SOMEWHERE OFF PALL MALL:

AH, INSPECTOR ABSALOM. I DON'T THINK WE SENT FOR YOU, DID WE?

NO, I DON'T THINK WE DID.

SIR CHARLES AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ARE INDISPOSED AT PRESENT. IF YOU WISH TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT REQUEST IN WRITING THEN WE'LL CERTAINLY TRY TO ACCOMMODATE —

TA FOR THE ADVICE, DOWTON ABBEY, BUT I CAN SEE MYSELF IN, THANKS.

ALL SET? RIGHT...

LET'S STORM THE WINTER PALACE.







IT'S ABSALOM.
HE'S FINALLY
MAKING HIS
MOVE.

SUCH IMPUDENT
INTRUSION INTO
RATHBORNE FAMILY
BUSINESS CANNOT
BE ALLOWED TO
STAND.



IF IT'S ACCESS
TO THE MILLS HE
WANTS, AND THE
THINGS WE CAN DO
THERE TO HUMAN
FLESH...

... THEN
WE'LL GIVE
IT TO
HIM.

RAZZIE

TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS PART TWO

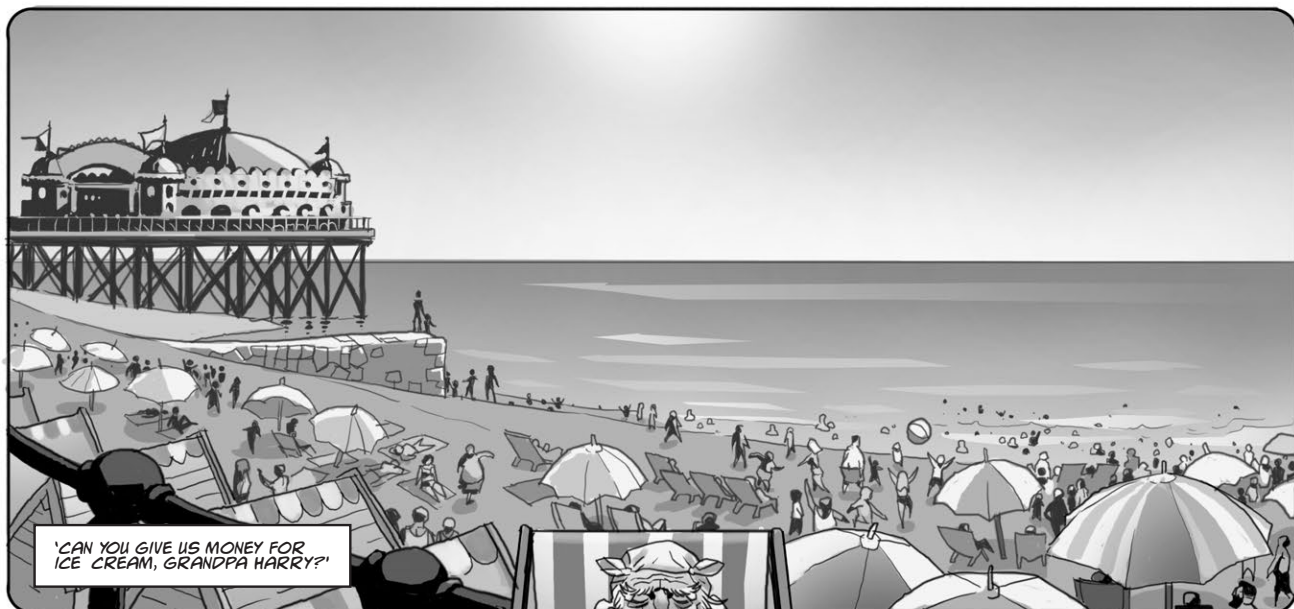
Script: Gordon Rennie

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'CAN YOU GIVE US MONEY FOR ICE CREAM, GRANDPA HARRY?'



PLEASE?
MA SAID YOU
WOULD!

LYING
LITTLE BUGGERS.
DID SHE
BOLLOCKS.

TELL YOU WHAT, THOUGH — YOU
PLAY THERE FOR A WHILE MORE AND
LET GRANDAD HAVE A BIT OF A REST,
AND THEN MAYBE LATER WE'LL SEE
ABOUT ICE CREAM AND PERHAPS
A RIDE ON THE DONKEYS
TOO.



SO WHAT DO YOU
SAY TO THAT? NOT
SUCH A BAD SORT AFTER
ALL, YOUR GRANDPA
HARRY, EH?



YOU
HEAR ME? I
SAID —



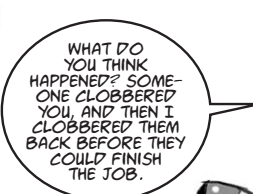


MATTERS ARE
OCCURRING
THAT
REQUIRE YOUR
IMMEDIATE
ATTENTION.



I REGRET,
SIR, THAT
THE DAY WILL
NOT BE
OURS TO
CARRY.

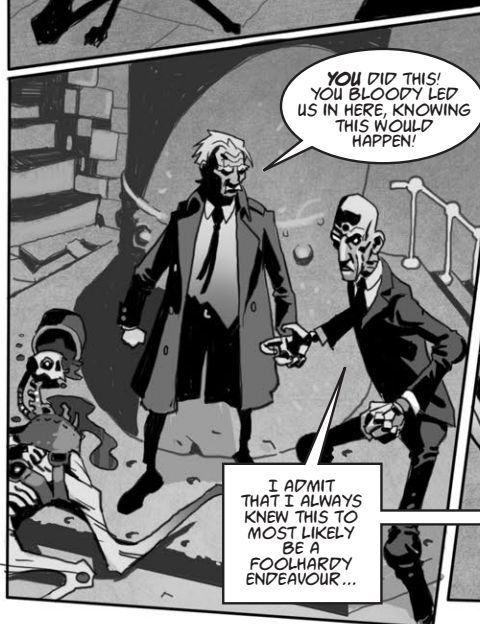
WHAT... WHAT
HAPPENED?



WHAT DO
YOU THINK
HAPPENED? SOME-
ONE CLOBBERED
YOU, AND THEN I
CLOBBERED THEM
BACK BEFORE THEY
COULD FINISH
THE JOB.



NOW GET
UP, YOU DOZY
LITTLE BASTARD!
WE'RE BEING BLOODY
SLAUGHTERED
'ERE!



YOU DID THIS!
YOU BLOODY LED
US IN HERE, KNOWING
THIS WOULD
HAPPEN!

I ADMIT
THAT I ALWAYS
KNEW THIS TO
MOST LIKELY
BE A
FOOLHARDY
ENDEAVOUR...



... ALTHOUGH, AS
A DISGRUNTLED
FORMER FAMILY
RETAINER, I HAD
HOPED TO SEE A
BETTER RECKONING
AGAINST THE
RATHBORNES THAN
THIS.



THEY'VE BEEN SO AFRAID
FOR SO LONG, INSPECTOR.
YOU **MUST** FIND THEM...

MORE
CHAMOMILE,
DEAR? I'LL GET
ANOTHER POT
ON.

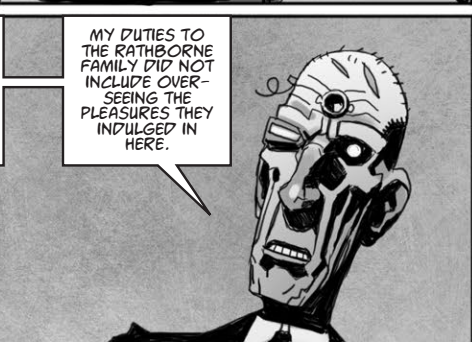
'... AND SHOW THEM THAT SOME-
ONE STILL LOVES THEM, SOMEONE
STILL **REMEMBERS** THEM.'

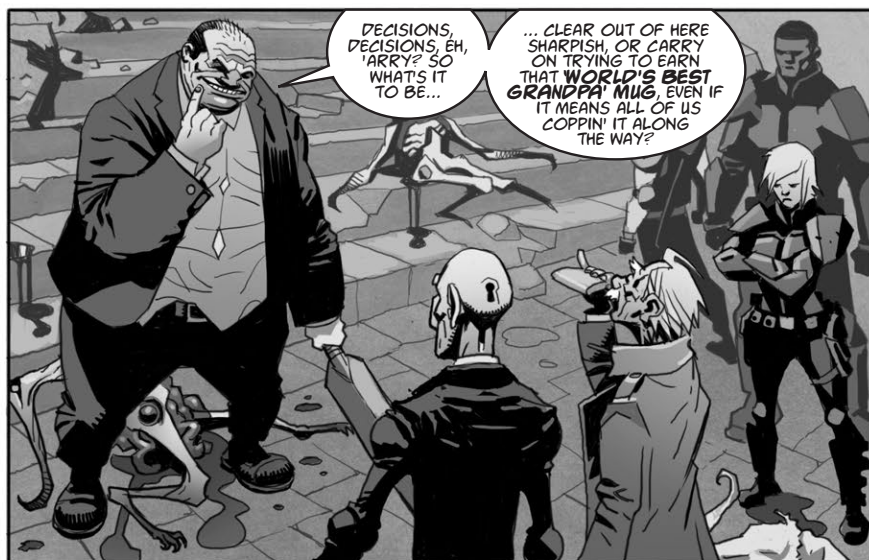
AND
PERHAPS
SOMETHING
A LITTLE
STRONGER
FOR ME.

THEY'RE
LEAVING, MAYBE
THEY REALLY HAVE
HAD ENOUGH,
AFTER ALL.

DON'T
BET ON IT,
LUV.

THAT'S
'OW THEY
OPERATE. YOU
REMEMBER,
'ARRY?







BEWARE
THIS PLACE.
IT FEEDS ON
WEAKNESS.
IT THRIVES
ON **HUMAN**
FRAILTY.



IF YOU HAVE
SECRETS, IT
WILL KNOW
THEM, AND
USE THEM
AGAINST
YOU...



BEWARE
OF EACH
OTHER, AND
THE THINGS
THIS PLACE
CAN MAKE
YOU DO.



SO MANY
YEARS IN
SERVICE. IT WILL
BE A PLEASANT
CHANGE TO
HAVE SOME TIME
TO MYSELF...

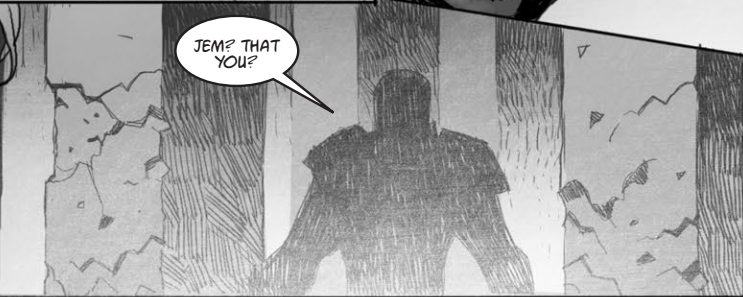
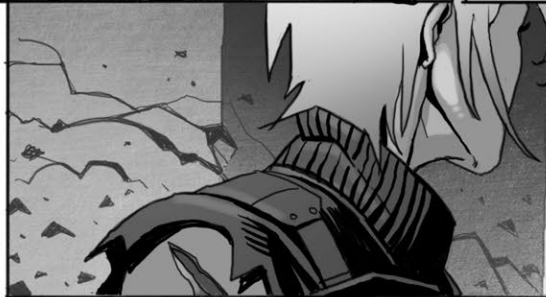














DOWN THE
HATCH, HARRY
OLD SON...



BLERCH!



OR
MAYBE
NOT.



BLOODY HELL,
WHAT A WASTE.
COULD KEEP THE
LOCAL ONCOLOGY
WARD SUPPLIED FOR
A WEEK WITH THAT
LITTLE LOT.

YOU'RE
BACK, ARE
YOU? WHAT
A BLEEDIN'
SURPRISE.



WOULDN'T MISS IT FOR
THE WORLD, SQUIRE. AN
OLD GIT'S QUEST TO RESCUE
THE GRANDKIDNIES, AND
PROVE HE'S NOT OTHERWISE
BEEN A WORLD-CLASS
SEE YOU NEXT TUESDAY
ALL HIS LIFE.

SO HOW ARE
YOU GOING TO
FIND THEM, ALL
ON YOUR
LONESOME?

OH, THAT'S
THE EASY
PART...



JUST HAVE TO
KEEP FOLLOWING
THE SOUND OF
CRYING,
DON'T I?



THE MILLS —

TWO LITTLE POPPETS LOST IN THE DARK
POOR LITTLE POPPETS, SO SAD AND ALONE
EYES PLUCKED OUT AND SOCKETS
FILLED WITH STONES...

COME OUT, COME OUT,
POOR BLIND POPPETS
LET ME TAKE YOU BY THE HAND
AND LEAD YOU BACK HOME...



IT'S GONE.
WHAT WAS
IT?

ONE OF
THEIR **SPECIAL**
JOBS. ONE OF
THE REALLY
'ORRIBLE
ONES.



AND NOT
SOMETHING
WE WANT TO
BE SEEING
AGAIN —

OH
BLOODY
'ELL, WHERE'S
'E OFF TO
NOW?



CAN'T EVEN
PUT A LEASH ON
'EM ANYMORE,
MORE'S THE
PITY...



ALL RIGHT,
GUNGA DIN.
WHAT 'AVE YOU
FOUND?

DEMON
STUFF.

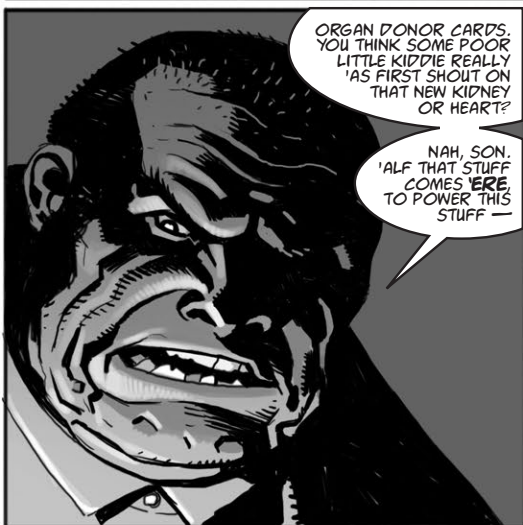


'THE TICK-TOCK MEN. THIS
IS WHERE THEY MAKE THEM.'



THEY REALLY
PUTTING
HUMAN STUFF
INTO THEM?

ESSENTIAL
COMPONENTS,
THAT IS —



ORGAN DONOR CARDS.
YOU THINK SOME POOR
LITTLE KIDNIE REALLY
'AS FIRST SHOUT ON
THAT NEW KIDNEY
OR HEART?

NAH, SON.
'ALF THAT STUFF
COMES **ERE**
TO POWER THIS
STUFF —



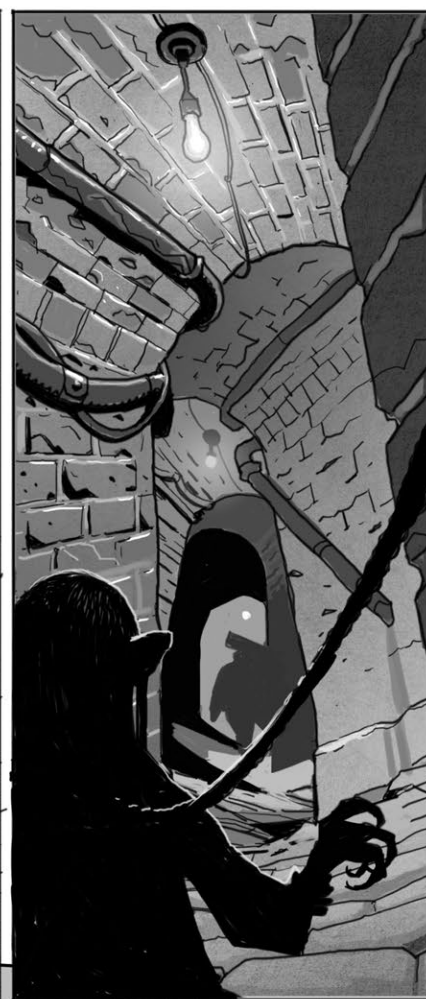
'ERE!' 'ANG
ABOUT —!







LEAD ON, SON.
SOONER WE
FIND 'ARRY,
SOONER WE'RE
OUT OF
'ERE.



♪ TWO LITTLE POPPETS,
LOST AND ALL ALONE
WAITING TO BE FOUND AND
LED BACK HOME... ♪

'FEEL IT NOW, CAN YOU? THE
NASTY LITTLE BLACK CRABS
INSIDE YOU? CUTTING INTO
YOU WITH THEIR CLAWS?

'EATING INTO YOU.
TAKING YOU AWAY, PIECE
BY PIECE, CELL BY CELL.

'NO WAY OUT, HARRY OLD
SON. NOT THIS TIME. LAST
ORDERS FOR YOU.

'CAN'T SLOW DOWN, EITHER,
NOT IF YOU DON'T WANT THEM
TO GET THEIR FANCY MEDICAL-
DEGREE MITTS ON YOU...

'CUT OR BURN AWAY
WHOLE PIECES OF YOU,
THEY WILL. AND FOR WHAT?

'A FEW MORE MONTHS BEING
FED FROM A PLASTIC TUBE
AND WATCHING DAYTIME TELLY?
NAH, BOLLOCKS TO THAT ...'

PALLIATIVE CARE

D.Y.R.



THIS IS WHERE YOU BELONG, MY SON. ALWAYS HAS BEEN, ALWAYS WILL BE.



COME TO MAKE YOUR FAREWELLS, HAVE YOU? WELL, PULL UP A FEW.

ALTHOUGH IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE'S GOING TO BE A CROWD COMING TO SEE US OFF, DOES IT?



WHY DON'T YOU SOD OFF AND FINALLY DIE, YOU HORRIBLE OLD GIT ...

... SIGNED, EVERYONE WHO'S EVER MET YOU.

RIGHT POPULAR OLD BALLBAG, AREN'T WE?



THINK... THINK I GOT OFF THE BANANA BOAT AT WAPPING DOCKS?

ALL OF THIS... NONE OF IT'S REAL...

'COURSE IT ISN'T, YOU DAFT OLD BUGGER...

RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE LYING FACE-DOWN IN HALF AN INCH OF STALE PISS ON THE FLOOR OF SOME DINGY OLD BOOZER, TWITCHING OUT YOUR LAST AND FILLING YOUR SKIVVIES WITH LAST NIGHT'S TAKE-AWAY.

HEART ATTACK, LUCKY OLD YOU. BETTER BUCKET TO BE KICKING THAN SOME YOU MIGHT HAVE GOT.

JUST TAKE THIS ONE, OLD SON. THERE'S NOTHING DOWN HERE THAT'S GOING TO BE AS QUICK AND EASY AS THIS.



YOU KNOW, ALL THIS TIME I WAS THINKING YOU WERE JUST SOME **SIDE-EFFECT**...

...THE BOOZE, THE PILLS, THE LAUDANUM, THE SODDING CANCER.

ALL OF IT TOGETHER MAKING ME SEE YOU, LIKE ME OWN PERSONAL BLOODY BORING **BBC2 REPEAT** PLAYING INSIDE ME NAPPER ALL THE TIME...

YOU'RE SOMETHING **THEY** PUT INTO ME, AIN'T YOU? ANOTHER PART OF THOSE TORMENT GAMES THEY LOVE SO MUCH.

BUT THAT'S NOT RIGHT AT ALL, IS IT?



Grandpa...





SOMEWHERE INSIDE THE MILLS —

HOW **BIG** IS THIS PLACE, ANYWAY? WE SEEM TO HAVE BEEN WALKING FOR HOURS.

REMEMBER WHAT HARRY SAID IN THE BRIEFING...



AND ALSO SOMEWHERE IN THE MILLS —

YOU THINK HE'S STILL ALIVE?

WHO? HARRY?



THIS PLACE, IT MESSES WITH YOU. GETS INSIDE YOUR **HEAD**. THAT'S HOW IT DEFENDS ITSELF.



PROBABLY NOT. WASTE OF BLOODY TIME, THIS WHOLE THING.

THEN WHY ARE WE HERE?



WAIT! YOU HEAR THAT?

I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING.

NO THERE IT IS AGAIN —



'GUNFIRE!'

THOSE KIDS ARE GONERS. WE BOTH KNOW IT.

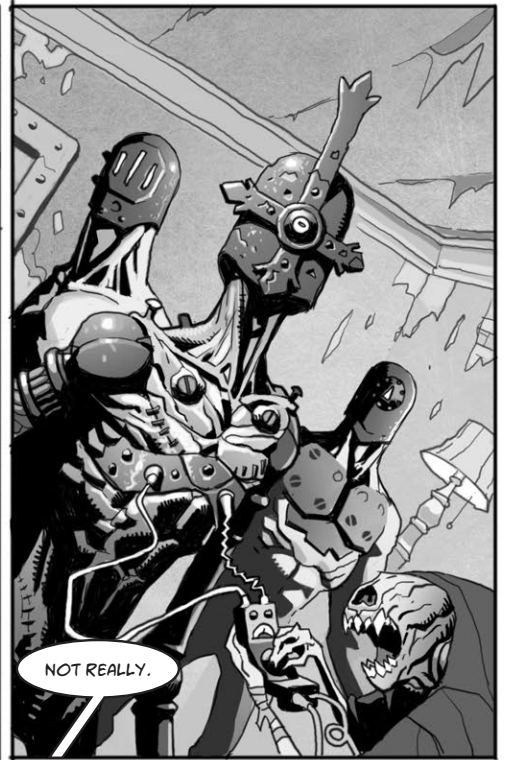
SO WHY ARE WE HERE?















YOU
HEAR THAT?
SOUNDS LIKE
SCREAMING...
IT'S HIM!

I'VE TO BE
MORE SPECIFIC
THAN THAT, SON.
I'VE BEEN 'EARING
SCREAMING
MOST OF ME
LIFE.



... WON'T YOU
COME AND
PLAY?

CAN'T
LET IT GET
PAST US TO
HARRY!



IT'S
HARRY!
COME ON! HE'S
CLOSE!

'ANG ON
A TICK THERE,
MO FARAH. NOT
SO FAST...



GOOD
IDEA, SON...



'AVE YOU
FORGOTTEN
ABOUT **WHAT'S**
BEEN FOLLOWING
US ALL THIS
TIME?

NAUGHTY LITTLE POPPETS
TRYING TO HIDE ALL DAY,
WE'VE FOUND YOU
NOW, THOUGH...



AAAAHH!

KRAK!







WE WERE GOING TO GET MARRIED, YOU KNOW. AFTER HIS DIVORCE CAME THROUGH.



CHILDREN? WELL, HE HAD A COUPLE ALREADY, AND I WAS NEVER REALLY SURE KIDS WERE MY THING...



MISS HOPKINS?

IT WAS ONE OF THE THINGS WE PUT OFF TALKING ABOUT UNTIL AFTER WE GOT MARRIED...



... UNTIL AFTER WE FOLLOWED BLOODY HARRY ABSALOM DOWN HERE ON HIS **SUICIDE MISSION**.



PLEASE, MISS HOPKINS. IT'S ME — **DOLLY**...



"YOU POOR DEAR. I KNOW YOU'VE SUFFERED SO HORRIBLY, BUT THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME LEFT..."



IT'S TOO LATE FOR CECIL
AND I, BUT THERE'S STILL
OTHERS WHO NEED HELP...

... LIKE THAT NICE,
QUIET YOUNG MAN.

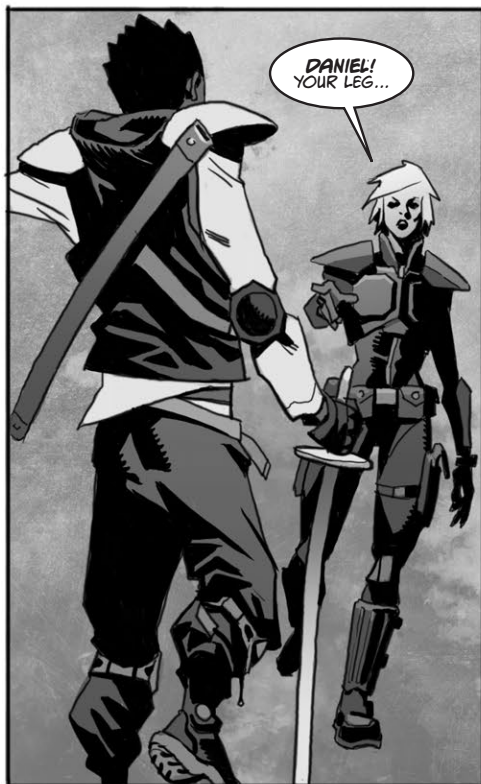
LITTLE POPPET,
LOST AND ALL
ALONE...

BUT NOW
AUNTIE'S FOUND YOU
AND WANTS TO TAKE
YOU HOME...

OFF
YOU GO,
YOUNG MAN.
I'LL SEE TO
THIS HORRID
THING.









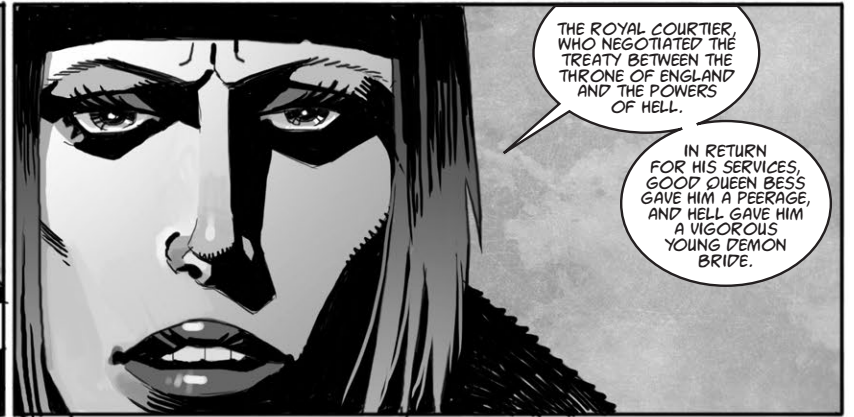
STILL GETTING THE SAME MAYDAY CALL FROM INSIDE, MA'AM. MAINTAINING RADIO SILENCE AS PER PROTOCOL, BUT —

— WELL, THINGS IN THERE SOUND RATHER GRIM.



LORD EDWARD RATHBORNE...

MA'AM?



THE ROYAL COURTIER, WHO NEGOTIATED THE TREATY BETWEEN THE THRONE OF ENGLAND AND THE POWERS OF HELL.

IN RETURN FOR HIS SERVICES, GOOD QUEEN BESS GAVE HIM A PEERAGE, AND HELL GAVE HIM A VIGOROUS YOUNG DEMON BRIDE.



HE GAVE US THE ACCORD, AND THAT ABOMINATION DOWN THERE.

ALL BECAUSE LORD EDDIE'S BEDCHAMBER TASTES RAN TO THE **HIGHLY EXOTIC**, AND WE NEEDED A QUICK FIX TO STOP THE SPANISH ARMADA.



DIPLOMATIC TREATIES NEED TO BE RESPECTED. BUT BAD AND OUTDATED ONES **DON'T**.

YES, MA'AM!



'GET A SHIFT ON, 'ARRY! WE 'AVEN'T GOT ALL BLEEDIN' DAY!'



MIND YOU, I 'AVEN'T BASHED IN THIS MANY STUPID BINTS' EADS SINCE GREENHAM COMMON!



CERTAINLY LOOKS LIKE IT.

THAT THEM, THEN?



HAVEN'T AGED A DAY, SO MUCH FOR THEM PICTURES THEY USED TO SEND YOU OF 'EM.

NASTY TRICK, THAT, TO BE EXPECTED, THOUGH, REALLY.



SPEAKING OF WHICH...

YOU KNOW WHAT HE'S GOING TO DO TO YOU AND THE KIDS, RIGHT?

THE THOUGHT HAD OCCURRED THANKS FOR ASKING.



BLOODY 'ELL, 'ARRY, YOU'RE FUMBLIN' ABOUT THERE LIKE A NOVICE PRIEST AT HIS FIRST CHOIR BOY!

HERE IT COMES, SQUIRE, YOUR HEROIC LAST STAND.

I'LL BE POPPING OFF NOW. SEE YOU SOON ENOUGH ON THE OTHER SIDE.



YOU HAD
A GOOD RUN
AT IT, 'ARRY LAD,
BUT YOU'RE JUST AN
EMBARRASSMENT
TO YOURSELF
NOW.

K
R
K

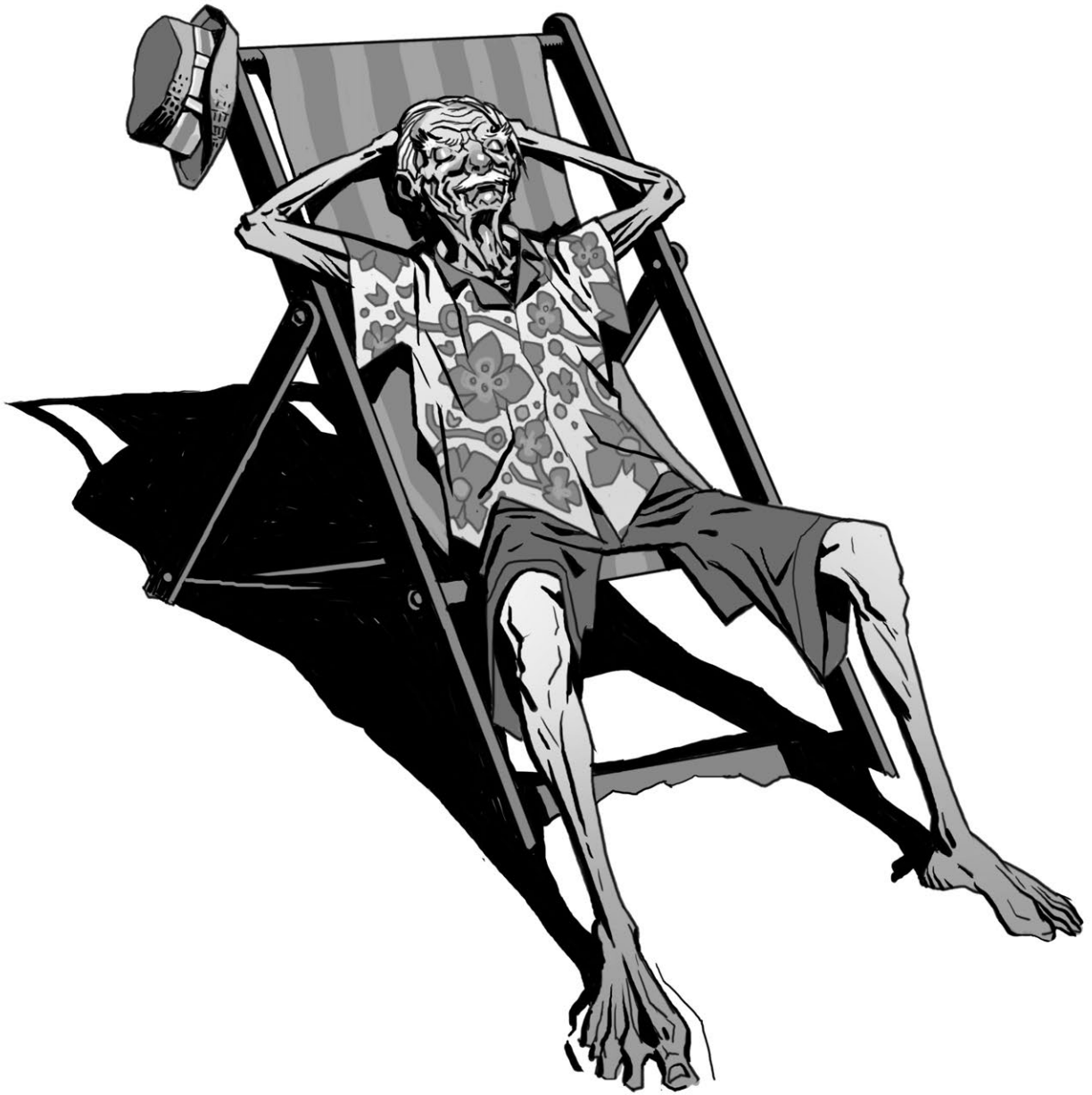
YOU SIT THERE,
TAKE THE WEIGHT OFF
YER FEET WHILE I
SEE TO THE
YOUNG 'UNS...

'ELLO, KIDDIES.
'OO WANTS TO PLAY
A GAME OF **WHAT
DO BRAINS**
LOOK LIKE WITH
UNCLE GEOFFREY
'ERE?

BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!



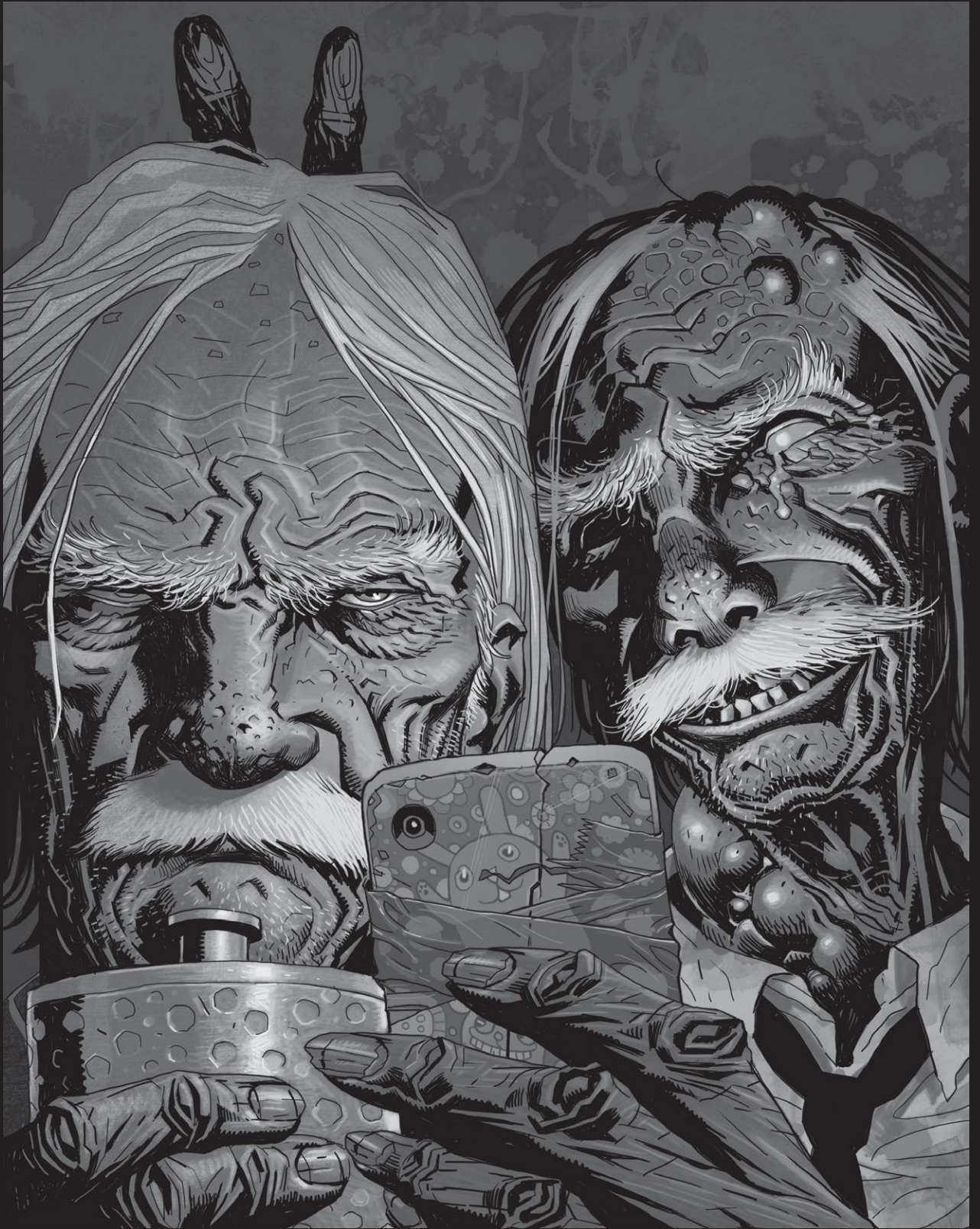


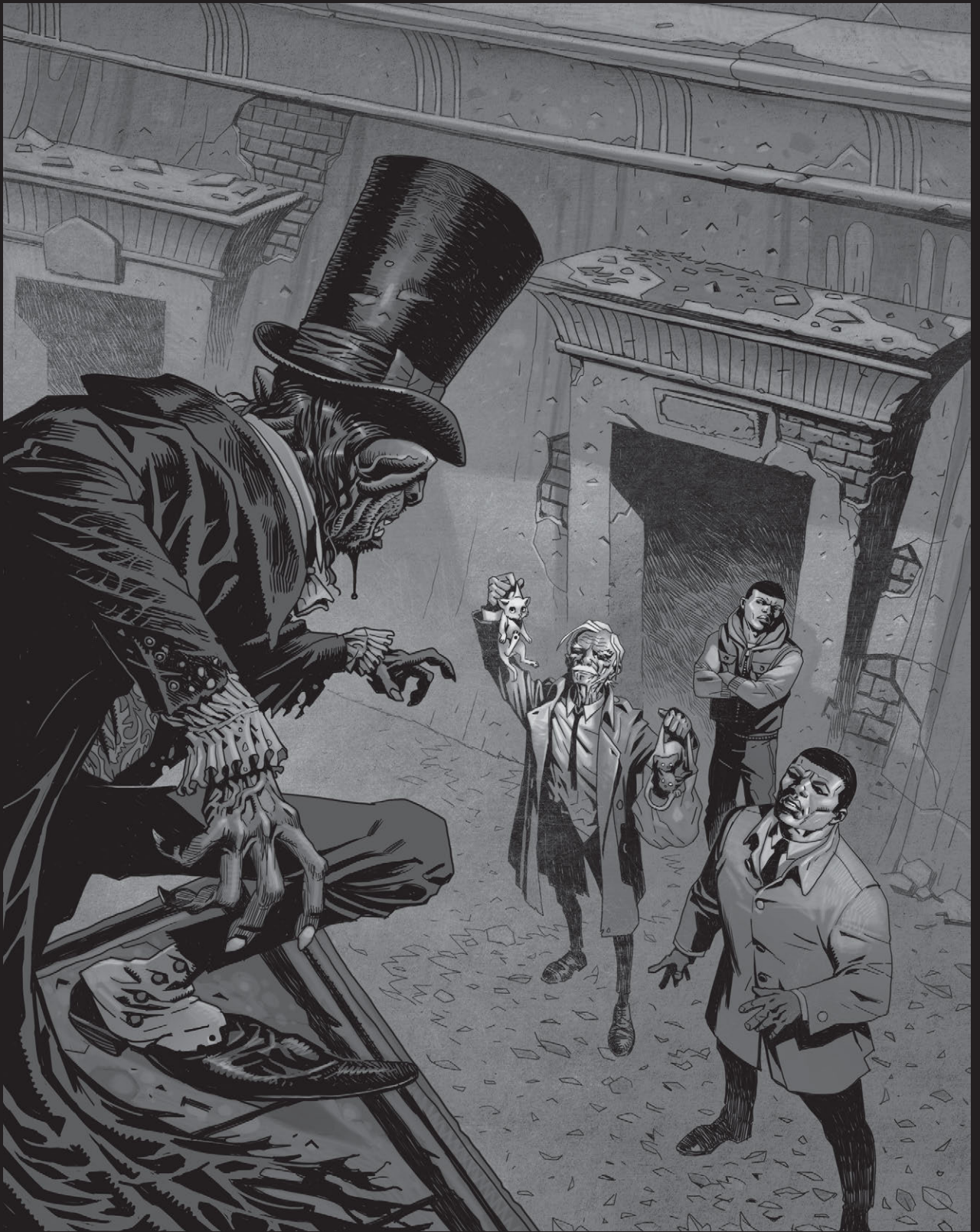


JP Ren'19 **THE END**

COVER GALLERY













WRITER

Gordon Rennie is one of **2000 AD** and the **Megazine's** most prolific creators, with co-creative credits for *Caballistics, Inc.*, *Glimmer Rats*, *Missionary Man*, *Necronauts*, *Storming Heaven*, *Absalom*, *Aquila*, *Jaegir* and *The Alienist*. He has also written *Daily Star Dredd* strips, *Judge Dredd*, *Harke and Burr*, *Mean Machine*, *Past Imperfect*, *Pulp Sci-Fi*, *Rogue Trooper*, *Satanus*, *Terror Tales*, *Tharg the Mighty* and *Vector 13*.

ARTIST

Tiernen Trevallion has worked as an illustrator since he was convinced to leave school in the mid-eighties. His first comic commissions were for *Inferno Magazine* on the strip *Tales from the Ten-Tailed Cat* and *Daemonifuge 3* with Simon Spurrier for *Warhammer Monthly*. For **2000 AD** he has worked on several series including *Tharg's Terror Tales*, *Tharg's Future Shocks*, *Tales from the Black Museum* and *Judge Dredd*. As well as working with Gordon Rennie on *Absalom*, he has also worked with him along with Emma Beeby on the Graphic novel *Robbie Burns: Witch Hunter*. Tiernen also works as an illustrator and concept artist. He also works on his own projects, some of which may or may not involve angry puffins.



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