

The SIMPING DETECTIVE



SIMON SPURRIER ★ FRAZER IRVING



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THE SIMPING DETECTIVE CREATED BY SIMON SPURRIER AND FRAZER IRVING

The SIMPING DETECTIVE



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INTRODUCTION

The way *The Simping Detective* came to be is: a clown raped my puppy.

Okay, fine, I made that up. I could just as easily have opened with “Judge Dredd touched me in the showers” or “Frazer Irving has congress with otters,” but I figured puppies have international appeal. I was doing you a favour – sue me.

Look, that’s how these intro gigs work. You start with some big dumb eye-catching statement then spend 600 words justifying its relationship with the masterpiece that follows. Before the poor reader knows what’s going on they’ve wasted five minutes on a batch of wanky anecdotes that culminate in a platitude designed to leave them in a contemplative frame of mind. Maybe that’s value for money.

The truth is that *The Simping Detective* came about in a disappointingly prosaic fashion, and if you’re looking for the sort of book that’ll require you to be in a contemplative frame of mind, be aware: this is a story about a cowardly know-it-all P.I. who wears an exploding rubber nose and has an alien superpredator for a pet. Don’t say you weren’t warned.

The first S.D. story – ‘Gumshoe’ – started life among a clutch of self-contained one-shots I pitched to the then-editor of the Magazine – Alan Barnes – under the catchy title Mega City Noir. My simple contention was that there were so many bad spinoffs from Judge Dredd’s universe that I should definitely be allowed to do one too. That was as far as the thinking went.

As a man of taste and distinction, Alan gave it the nod as soon as he read it. To quibble that it took him 18 months to do so would be blackguardly of me. To further whinge that only two Noir stories ever ran would be to foolishly ignore that a rather shallow series was saved from anonymity by introducing us to Jack Point – simp, private eye, judge – as a fully-formed and oddly

engaging character who, Alan felt, warranted a series all of his own.

To claim all this was intentional would be, well... a lie. The only appeal the character held for me when I first dreamt him up was that only in Mega City One could you get away with dressing like a twat in order to go undercover. On the shifting sands of such simple smirking are the following chronicles built.

I forget precisely why Frazer ended-up drawing it, other than that he needed cash to pay-off the RSPCA over that thing with the otter. Plus, y’know, he’s good. Very good.

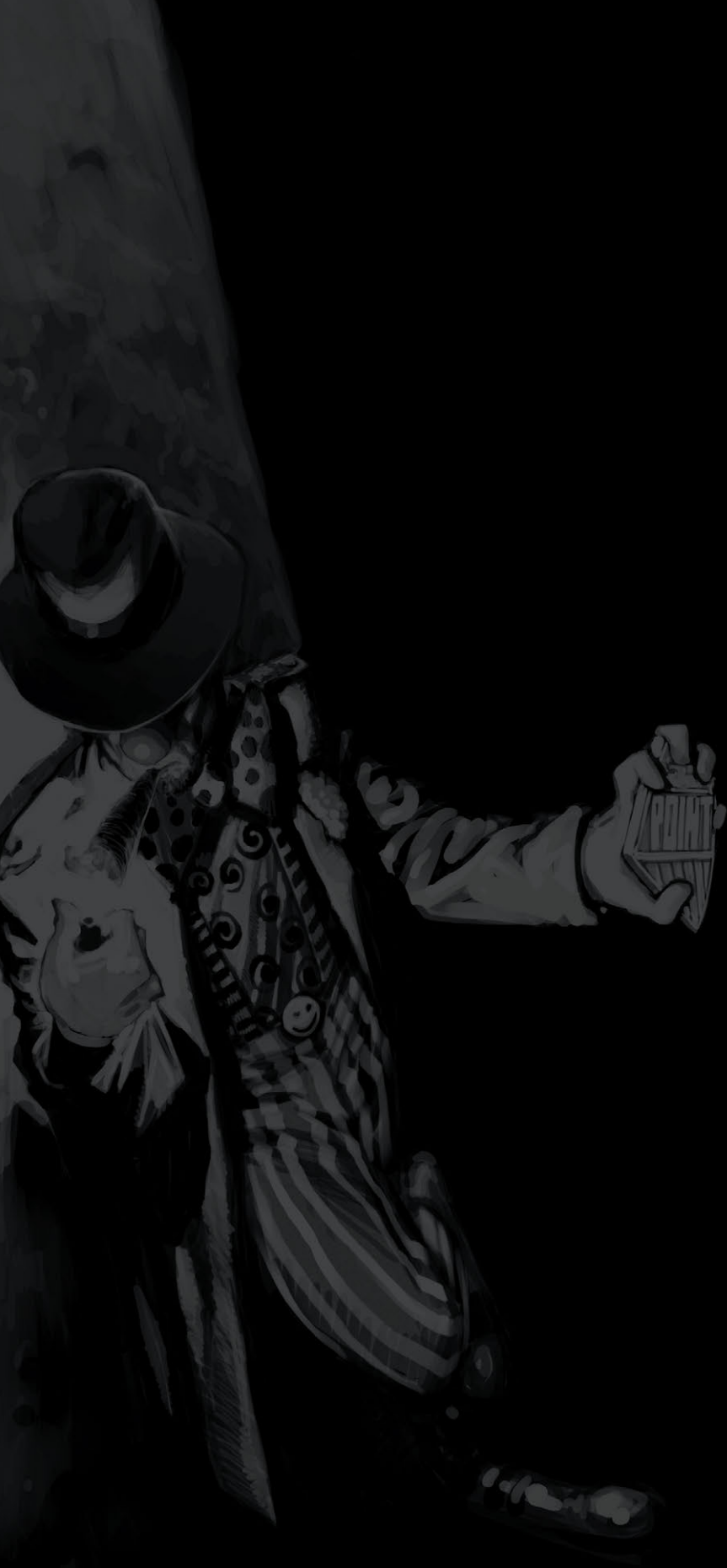
My mental mission-statement with *The Simping Detective* was to cut back on the number of panels on every page and insert loads of noir-ish monologues instead. This was entirely about slowing the pace and not at all about showboating with alliteration and simile. Anyone who knows anything about comics will attest that it’s a lot harder to keep things flowing when you have bloody great splats of text all over the shop, so Frazer’s shown his true colours – or at least his true greyscales – by rising to it magnificently. He draws good hands, great guns, superb monsters... and spectacular women. If this is your first time reading these stories, keep the word “floss” in mind and wait for DeMarco to appear. You’ll see what I mean.

So here’s Jack, folks. He’s a shifty little sod but his heart’s in the right place (right next to his hipflask), and say what you like about his fashion sense, he still makes carrot-shaped cigars look cool. And if you’re reading through this intro right now and still waiting for the contemplative conclusion, wondering what’s the point...? Then, hey:

It comes right after the “Jack,” spuggo.

Stop wasting your time and get on with the story.

Si Spurrier
2007



GUMSHOE

Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Frazer Irving
Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 220



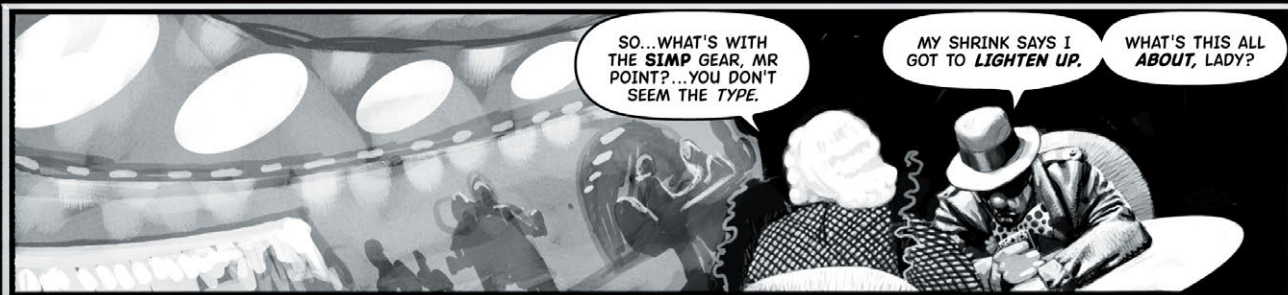
Hey. The name's *Jack Point*.
Yeah, *Point*. As in
"armour piercing", "hollow"
and "what's your --?"
I got two friends in this
world. One's long and hard
and makes your *ears* ring
after every shot. The
other's my *gun*. I'm a *P.I.*
Here in *Angeltown*, that
stands for '*Perpetual
Insecurity*.' Sure, it's a
dirty job, but someo--

It's a dirty job.

In *this trade*, there's two
kinds of *client* you gotta
watch like a *hawk* on
hypnojuice...

Number one: folks with
missing pets. You ever
tracked a *stray ripperjack*,
you'd know what I mean.





SO...WHAT'S WITH THE **SIMP** GEAR, MR POINT?...YOU DON'T SEEM THE TYPE.

MY SHRINK SAYS I GOT TO **LIGHTEN UP**.

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, LADY?

She says her name's *Molly*. She says her husband wants her dead. She says it's *safest* in a public place, and we can take her car.

She says a lot of stuff, but I'd by *lyn'* if I said I was watching her mouth.



CAN I TRUST YOU, MR P--?

HEY! HEY YOU! I SEEN YOU BEFORE!

YOU'RE A DROKKIN' BADGE!

I shoulda said *no* soon as she mentioned *public* places. What can I say? I'm a *sucker* for a woman with curves.



MISTER, YOU'RE **DRUNK**.

YEAH? WHAT'S YOUR **POINT**, JUDGEY?



...COMES RIGHT AFTER THE **JACK**.



So they kick us out after the ninth goon joins the med wagon queue. I love it when the bouncers say please.

I figure we're going back to hers for synthicaff when she goes and gets curious.

They always do, sooner or later.



T-THAT MAN...
WHAT HE SAID...

YOU WANT TO KNOW,
AM I A JUDGE?
ANSWER'S NO.

NOT ANY
MORE.

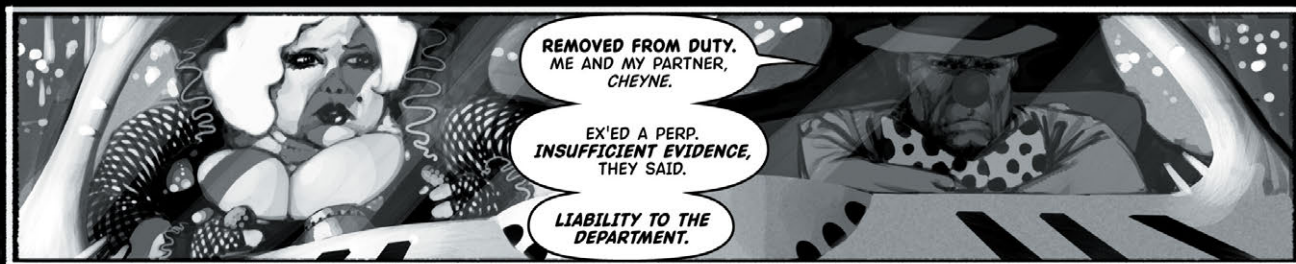


STOMM. WHAT
HAPPENED?

WHY YOU GOTTA
KNOW, LADY?

CAN'T HIRE SOMEONE
I DON'T TRUST, MR
POINT. SPILL.

Not just a pretty face, this broad.
Trouble, with a capital click-click-boom.



REMOVED FROM DUTY.
ME AND MY PARTNER,
CHEYNE.

EX'ED A PERP.
INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE,
THEY SAID.

LIABILITY TO THE
DEPARTMENT.



WHERE'S
CHEYNE NOW?

HE'S DEAD.



MY PLACE
IS JUST UP
HERE.

SO, LISTEN...
HOW DID YOUR
PARTNER **DIE**?

JOVUS...
YOU GOT A **MORBID**
STREAK, LADY?

HE HAD HIS **HEAD**
CUT OFF BY A
DROKING **SWORD**, IF
YOU **GOTTA** KNOW.



YOU MEAN SORT
OF LIKE **THOSE**
ONES?

AH...**NUTS.**

*Broads, huh? Can't
live with 'em, can't
have 'em lobotomised.*



WE KNOW ALL ABOUT
YOUR LITTLE **FALL** FROM
JUSTICE DEPARTMENT
GRACE, MR POINT.

IT WAS ONLY EVER
A MATTER OF **TIME**
BEFORE WE CAUGHT
UP WITH YOU.

'WE'?



WORD OF ADVICE.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO
EXECUTE A... '**PERP**' IN
COLD BLOOD, IT'S BEST
TO CHECK HE'S NOT THE
BROTHER OF SOMEONE
IMPORTANT.

THE **BOSS** TENDS
TO TAKE STOMM LIKE
THAT **PERSONALLY.**

BOYS...?



Simp gear. You gotta love it. I ain't found a squeaky nose or novelty buttonhole that couldn't be rigged.

You get plenty resourceful, working in Angeltown.



But sometimes...not resourceful enough.

YOU KNOW, I'LL BE KIND OF SORRY TO KILL YOU, MR POINT. YOU'VE GOT **STYLE**.

NOT LIKE YOUR **PARTNER**. MAN, HE LOOKED BETTER **WITHOUT** A HEAD.

LADY, IT'S ONLY FAIR I SHOULD **TELL** YOU...

THAT **BRAWL** IN THE **BAR** WAS A **FAKE**.

SOME **PALS** OF MINE WANTED TO STICK A **TRACKER** ON ME. THEY BEEN HUNTING CHEYNE'S KILLERS FOR **WEEKS**.

W-WHAT'S YOUR **POINT**?



I TOLD YOU.

IT COMES
RIGHT AFTER
THE JACK.

CRYSTAL BLUE

Script: Simon Spurrier

Art: Frazer Irving

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 221-223



Angeltown was a dame, she'd be a two-cred whore with a zizz habit and a garter-gun.
 Angeltown was a drink, it'd be whiskey. Sour whiskey.
 Kind that burns your guts and makes you choke.
 It ain't either.
 It's home.



Name's *Point*. Private Eye. We've met, right?

You live here
 a *while*, you get
 a *taste* for
 the air.

Gets so
 you *know* when
 something ain't
 right, even before
 you know *what...*

Yeah, well. Something
 ain't right.



Crystal Blue. New brand
 on the street. Grud only
 knows what's in it.



Way I hear it,
 only way to
 shake the
blues is a
 bloodball.

Hotshot.

Grade-A
 RedStimm.

Deep
 illegality.

BLUE FOR DOWN, RED
 FOR BACK UP AGAIN.
 THAT RIGHT, JUVE?

DO YOURSELF A
 FAVOUR. RUN.



NO.

BUT THEY
 MIGHT.

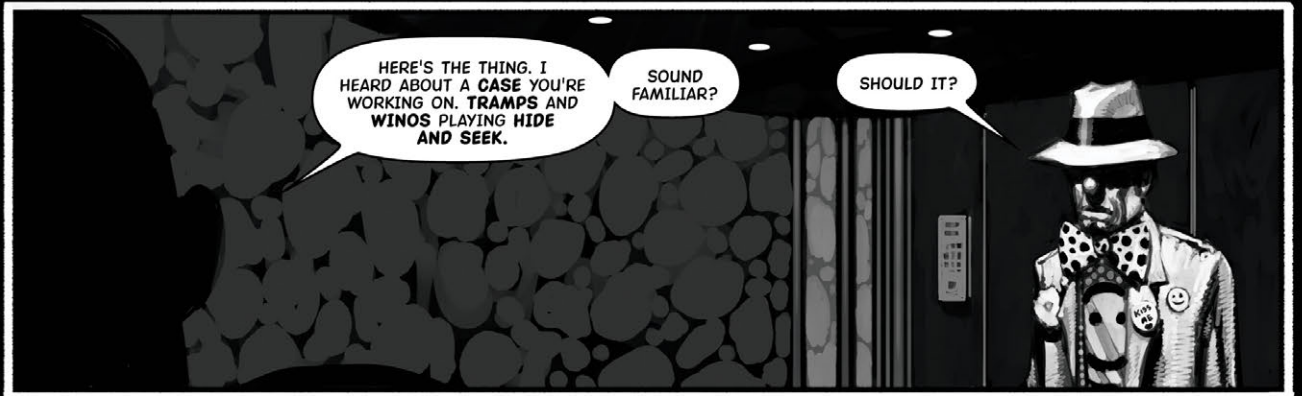
CITIZEN *POINT*?
 YOU'RE COMING
 WITH *US*.





Radlions.
I saw a
documentary one
time.

Old male dies,
new one shows
up. You know the
first thing he
does, besides
pissing
everywhere?



OR?



Message received.

Only thing stands out more
than a badge in Angeltown
is a bent badge.

So come on, Chief.
Whose *payroll* you
on?



... OKAY...NUMBER ONE.
ELMER WIDDISON. LAST
SEEN RIGHT HERE...

...NUMBER TWO OUTSIDE
ANDY SERKIS BLOCK...

...NUMBER THREE...
STACKERS AT THE
PARK-O-RAMA...

Fifteen's just the official count. Truth be told, slabwalkers been vanishing months, and I guess I just... let it slide.

"Suspend your investigation," Daveez said. *Some investigation.*
Yeah, sometimes it takes a bastard telling you there's nothing to see —

—to make you start looking.

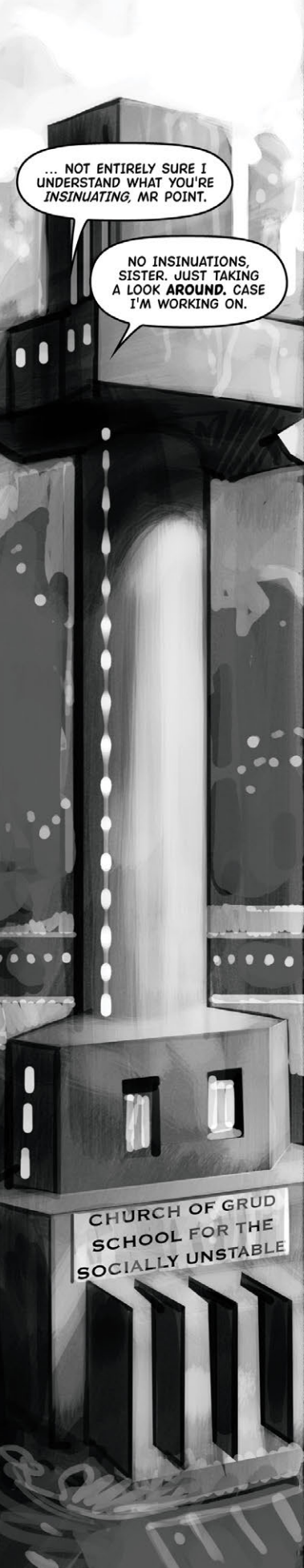
LAST KNOWN LOCATIONS OF SUBJECTS 1-15



WELL, DROKK ME.

SO WHO'S THE PIGGY
IN THE MIDDLE?





... NOT ENTIRELY SURE I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE INSINUATING, MR POINT.

NO INSINUATIONS, SISTER. JUST TAKING A LOOK **AROUND**. CASE I'M WORKING ON.

A "CASE", EH? IT'S BAD ENOUGH THE **JUDGES** RUNNING RIOT WITHOUT...**YOUR KIND**... DISRUPTING LESSONS.

YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH **SIMPS**, LADY? WHATEVER HAPPENED TO **RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE**?

MR POINT, IN THIS SCHOOL WE BELIEVE JUVES NEED TO **EXPRESS** IN ORDER TO BEAT **ANTISOCIAL TENDENCIES**. I HARDLY THINK **DRESSING LIKE AN IDIOT** APPLIES, DO YOU?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE SCHOOL BAND?

SOON AS MY EARS STOP **BLEEDING**, I'LL LET YOU KNOW.

BE AS **RUDE** AS YOU WANT. WE'RE **PROUD** OF OUR GOOD WORK.

ANGELTOWN HAS **MORE** THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF **TROUBLED YOUTH**.

CHURCH OF GRUD
SCHOOL FOR THE
SOCIALLY UNSTABLE

I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU OUR **SCIENCE** DEPARTMENT, MR POINT. I THINK EVEN YOU WILL APPRECIATE IT.

CAN'T WAIT.

SO I **SEE**.

KLUNK

First rule of Angeltown:
never trust a dame with an expensive habit.

It's a long fall.



WELCOME TO THE BASEMENT, MR POINT.

THE GOOD CHIEF DAVEEZ WARNED US YOU MIGHT STOP BY.

Daveez.
Drokker.



WHO'S THE STIFF, SISTER?

HIS NAME IS DARTINGTON TREMAYNE. HE WAS SHOT BY JUDGES SOME YEARS AGO.

HE'D DIE WITHOUT THE MACHINES.

SO YOU SERVE GRUD BY COLLECTING DEAD PERPS, RIGHT?

HA, NO. I'M AFRAID NOT... MR TREMAYNE REPRESENTED CERTAIN... ASSETS...

I IMAGINE THEY'RE WAKING UP ABOUT NOW.



Something's rustling. In the shadows, I mean. Like rats, maybe. Big ones.

Anywhere else in Angeltown, chances are it's a pro and her john dancing the sideways rumba.

Down here, it stinks of meat.

It stinks of sweat. Down here, the imagination plays tricks.

Down here, that rustling could be anything...

MR TREMAYNE HAD A PET. A VERY LOYAL PET.

A PET WHICH IS QUITE HAPPY TO DO WHAT WE WANT -- EVEN REPRODUCE -- JUST AS LONG AS WE DON'T HARM ITS DADDY...



Like I said... fifteen's just the official count.



I guess Fido got hungry.



Then there's *crazy stomm* in my mind and shapes that *don't make sense* all round...

They...

They want me to...

Give up.

They *say* so, in my head.

Give up.

Make it easy.

Just accept it.



Gun's about as useful as a slap in the face.



I think maybe *ten hours* pass. I can't look down at my *watch*.

Ten hours I hold a lump of metal against a *Resyk-dodger's* head, and ten hours they... *hiss* and *move* and *watch*.

Sometimes, like maybe when I'm not *concentrating*, I can feel them in my *head*.

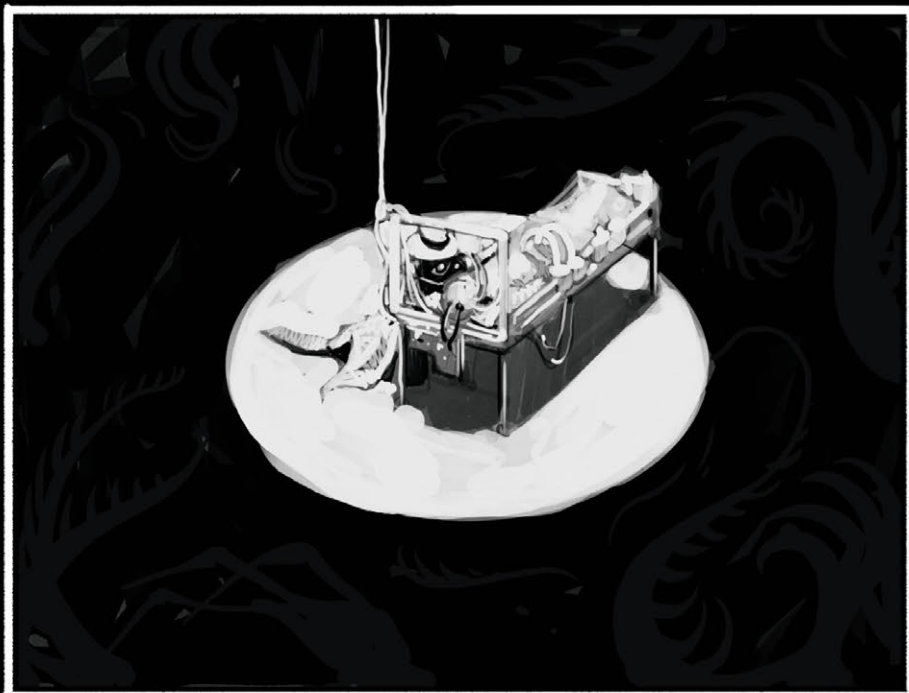
Nudging around.

Like *tasting*, maybe.

Tentacles and cords in my *memories*.

I swear, you never seen such *dark*.

Suddenly I'm a *juve* again.



THWUMP

Then ten hours are *up*, and someone reminds me what *light* looks like.



ALRIGHTY...BOSS SAYS THEY BEEN *FED* TODAY, SO THEY'RE GONNA BE *FRISKY*.

SONICS TO THE FRONT. EYES *PEELED*.



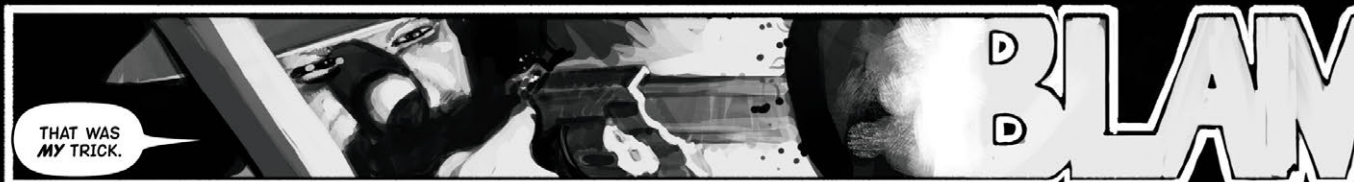
WHICH ONE WE *MILKING*, ZIG?

BIG ONE. GET A GUN ON THE *STIFF* SOON AS YOU CAN. CRITTERS GO *CALM* AS *KITTENS* AFTER THAT.



HEY, *BOYS*?

W-what's-?



THAT WAS *MY TRICK*.

BLAM



Yeah. *Loyalty* doesn't
get you far when
there's nothing left
to be loyal to.

I figure, hey.
Start a *fight*. Keep
everyone busy.

You think of any *easier*
ways out of here, you be
sure and let me know.

Welcome back. How've you been? Me - I've been *better*.

So this whole business has got me *thinking back*. Big case a few years ago: *Dredd* and that Psi-chick with the love-me-tender curves, *Karyn*.

This is back when I wore a polished dome. I remember the *perp* descrip.



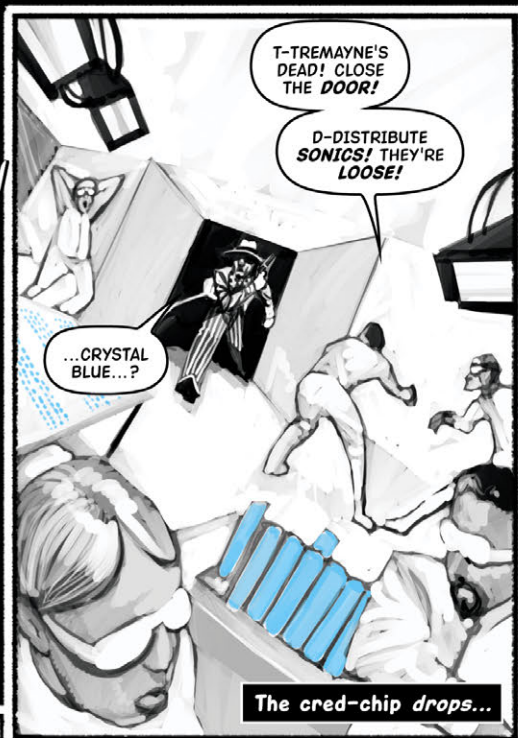
Raptaur, they called it. Silicon life form, harder than a diamond on *PCP*. Plays psionic *hardball*.

Drokkers 'll hypnotise you, pump you fulla *poison* then drink your *brain* like a *drunken dame*.

Those *parasitic xenophorms* they found in the *undercity*, couple years ago.

Remember *them*?

These things make 'em look like *cute pets*.



The cred-chip drops...



THE DOOR!
THE--

URK!

There's a saying,
situation like this:

'He who fights
and runs away...'

'...doesn't
get eaten.'



So the way I figure it, there's a *drugs factory* beneath the *school*, using *Raptaur Venom* to create the city's most powerful hallucinogenic downer.

And if you think that sounds a little *far-fetched*...

...then maybe you don't know *Angeltown* like I do.



So
there's a
voice.

I can't see
drek, but
the voice...

The voice I
know.

THING IS, MR POINT,
THE BOSS -- HE'S A
REASONABLE GUY, BUT
HE AIN'T TOO HOT FOR
COMPETITION.

SO THIS CRYSTAL BLUE,
THIS NEW STOMM ON THE
STREETS, IT'S GIVING HIM
A HEADACHE, SEE?



The voice says it knows
all about the *juvey
pushers*, about how
they're all from the
same school.

The voice says the boss
is mighty *interested* in
the place.

The voice says it was
running *surveillance* and
it sure didn't expect *me*
to show up.

Nff.

The voice, like maybe a hyena
crossed with a little girl,
that voice giggles.



Meet Muggro Keevish. He ain't big, he ain't
strong, he ain't smart. What he *is* is this:
A complete and utter drokking bastard.

SO WHAT WE
WANT TO *KNOW*,
MR POINT, IS
THREE THINGS:

WHO WERE YOU *RUNNING*
FROM, WHERE'D YOU GET THE
BLUES SO *BAD*, AND *HOW'D*
YOU WANT TO *DIE*?

BOYS? MR POINT
LOOKS *TENSE*.
LOOSEN HIM UP.



Point of logic: the local boss sets his apes to making you sing like a mech-canary.

You'd figure the
stommheads'd give you a
drokking chance to oblige.

THWUP THUD CRACK
I-- LISTEN, I'VE--



BAWSS? I THINK HE
TRYINNA *SAY* SOMMIN.

THAT A *FACT*?

...AW, DROKK...



Q-QUESTIONS
TWO AND
THREE...hh... I'LL
COME BACK TO
THOSE.

QUESTION *ONE*...
WHO I WAS... nnf...
RUNNING FROM?

LOOK UP.



My guess is, one of these critters
cuts you, you're *drokked*.

Yeah, it hurts like hell.

And yeah, it plays *pinboing*
with your *brain*.

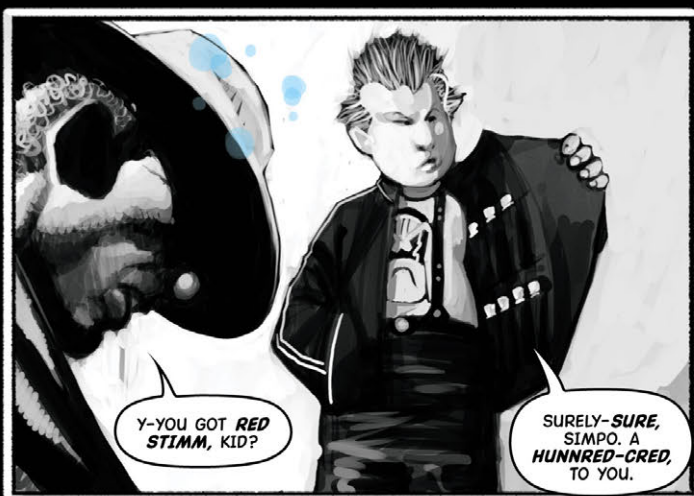


But now... Now my guess is:
it marks you too.

My very own *fanclub*.
Yipdee-drokkin'-doo.



Blue for
down, red
for back up
again.



SURELY-SURE,
SIMPO. A
HUNNRED-CRED,
TO YOU.

You work in
Angeltown any
length of time,
you find out
pretty quick how
low you're
prepared to
stoop to get
what you want.

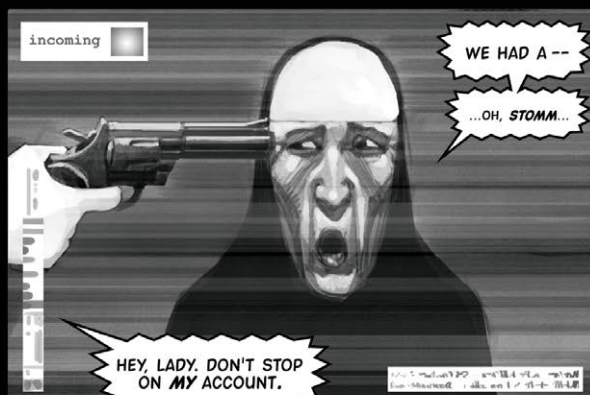


Ask me on a bad day,
judicial regulations or
not, *nothing* beats
whiskey.

Burns your guts.
Sears your throat.
Makes you feel alive.



But once in a
while, right
when you're
least *expecting*,
you find
something
tastes even
better.



In this job, incriminating evidence is *by-the-by*. But factor--in a drokhead of a Sector Chief and, yeah...whiskey's got nothing on that.





Piece of cake.



AW, STOMM...





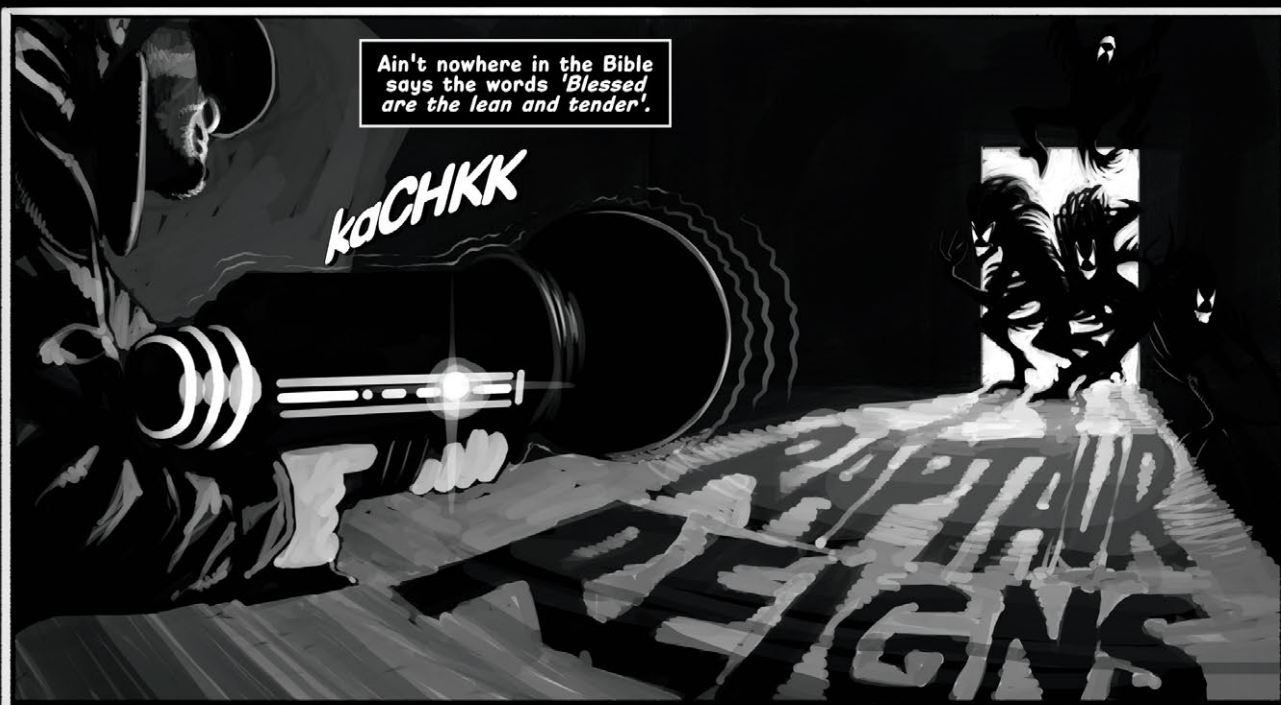
You ever heard the expression, 'Outta the frying pan, into the fire'?



Now *me*, I know where I stand.
Times of trouble, I got my good pals
Colt and *Dram* to keep me company.

But if you figure, *hey*, where's the
harm in taking comfort in the *Good
Book*?

Well, then I'll tell you:



Back in the day, old man Dredd figured these critters' Achilles heel.

Bullets don't work, fire's just a warming breeze, but sonics... Sonics'll shake the drokkers up like a Long Island Sector Special.

It seems to work.



Sort of.



And just when it's starting to look like an old fashioned turkey shoot, comes-along a cute reminder of what any Thanksgiving Day Robochef'll tell you free of charge:

Turkeys are awkward drokkers at the best of times.

And they ain't as dumb as they look.

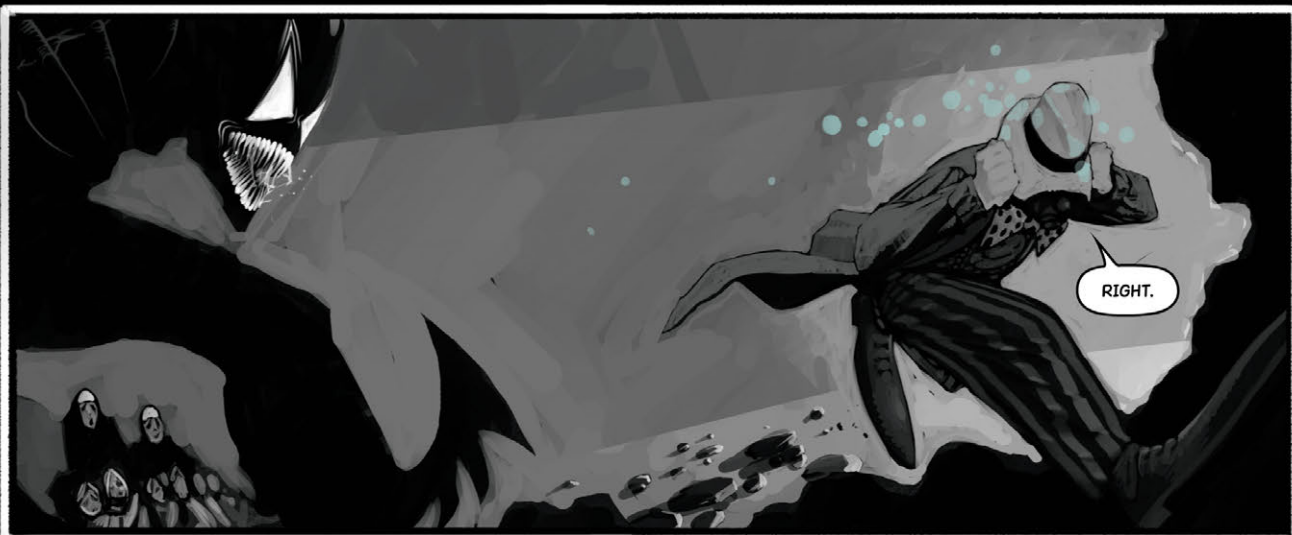
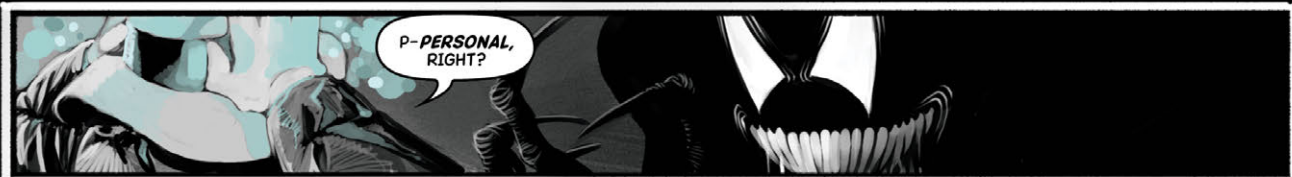
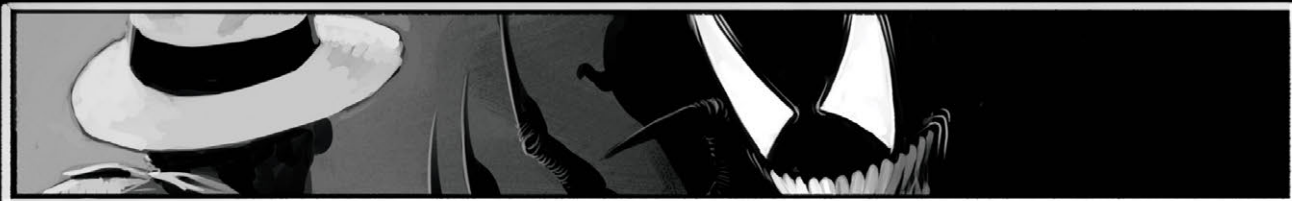


WHAT'S--?

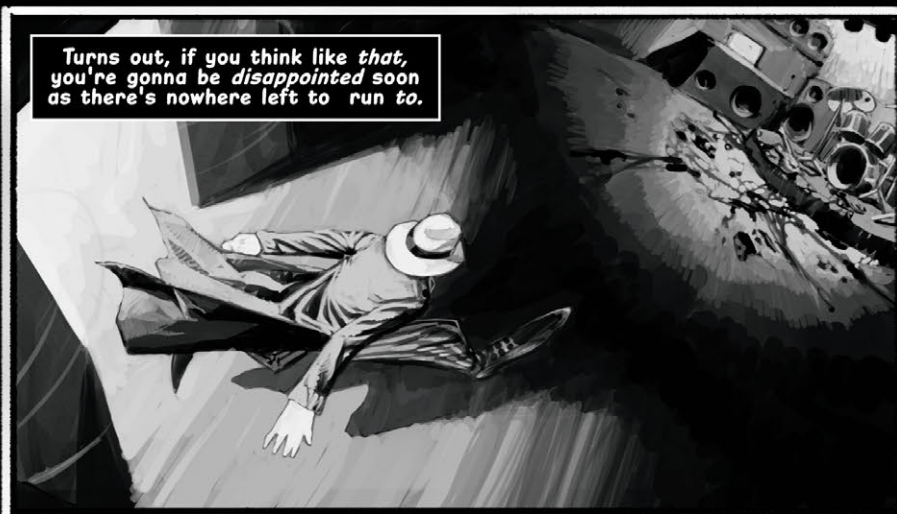


SKRUNK

AW, HELL.



Trick is, tell yourself you're using your own body as bait. You're drawing away a vicious alien predator from a roomful of socially-disturbed-but-broadly-innocent juves. Whatever you do, don't think of this as cowardice. Don't think of this as running.





Give up, it says, like maybe the echo of your favourite fem, curling in your head.

And then you're back. Back in that world of deep, crystal blue. Cold and silent and hollow but...ancient.

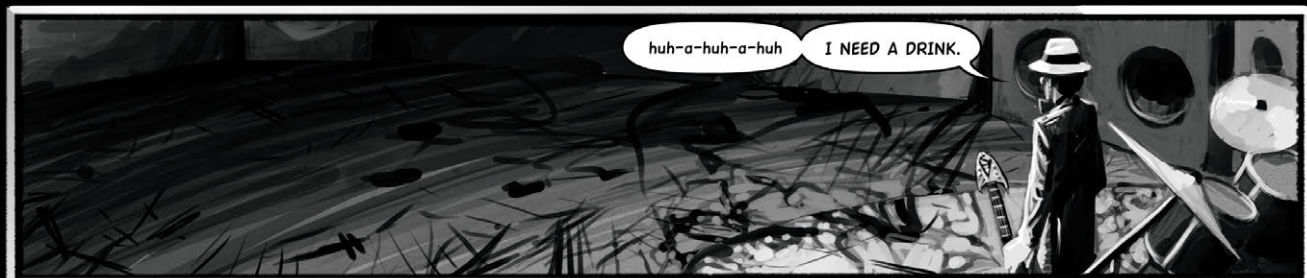
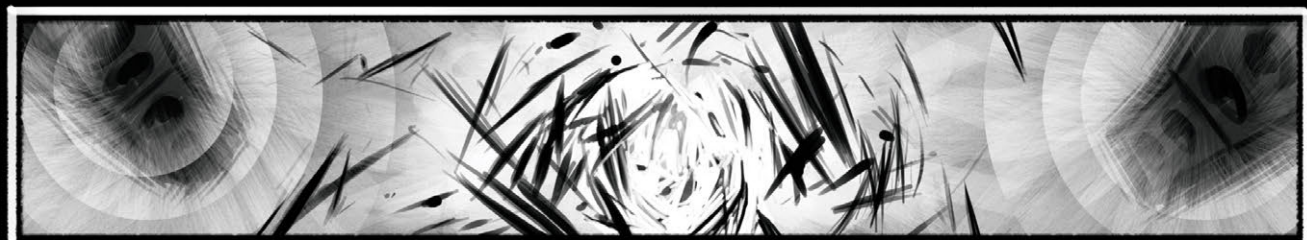
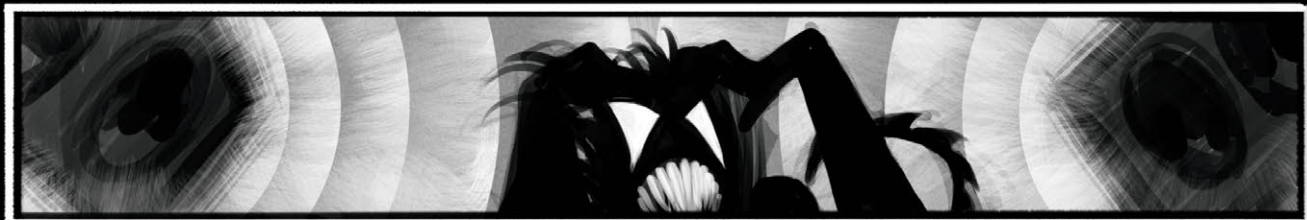
Give up, it says. And I reckon maybe I will.



...I play the blues.

S
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G
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G
G
G





So that's *that*. Mostly.



...CAN'T JUST
COME BARGING
IN HERE LIKE
THIS, JUDGE OR
NOT.

HEY, NOTHING TO
WORRY ABOUT. JUST
A **ROUTINE** STOP-BY.
MEET THE NEW **BOSS**,
THAT SORT OF THING.



WE ALREADY
MET.

TRUE.

THEN AGAIN, I FIGURE
NOW THAT I KNOW THE
REAL YOU, IT'S WORTH
ANOTHER **INTRO**.



YOU GOT AN
ALLEGATION YOU WANT
TO **MAKE**, JUDGE?

PERISH THE **THOUGHT**.
NO **EVIDENCE**, RIGHT?
NOT SINCE THE **SCHOOL**
INEXPLICABLY **CAUGHT**
FIRE.

YOU WANT A
SMOKE, CHIEF?



NOW LISTEN **HERE**,
DROKKER. YOU'RE ON
THIN ICE. GET TOO **FAT**,
IT'S GONNA **BREAK**.

DO NOT **DROKK**
WITH ME.

AND SMOKING'S
STILL **ILLEGAL**,
CREEP.



YEAH. HEH. SO'S
ALCOHOL.

WHAT'S YOUR
POINT?



COMES RIGHT
AFTER THE '**JACK**'.

SO LONG, CHIEF.



So maybe I *lied*. Maybe I *did* have a point.

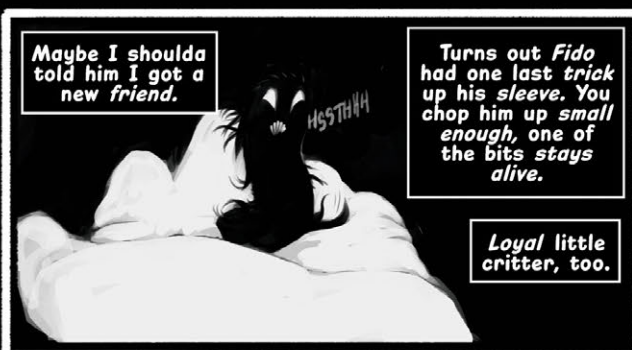
Maybe I shoulda told the bastard I spiked his *brandy* with a cap of the *blues*. Maybe I shoulda told him there's no *redstimm* left in the sector, since his *goons* burned down the *school*.



Maybe he'll figure it for himself.



And, hey, maybe I shoulda told him that wasn't all I removed from the crime scene...



Maybe I shoulda told him I got a new friend.

Turns out Fido had one last trick up his sleeve. You chop him up small enough, one of the bits stays alive.

Loyal little critter, too.

Maybe Daveez'll find that out for himself too, someday.

I love this town.





INNOCENCE: A BROAD

Script: Simon Spurrier

Art: Frazer Irving

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 224-226

Angeltown. Sector 13.

I used to have a partner, name of *Cheyne*. Said if the city was a man, Angeltown was his *charcoal lung*.

Fat with tumours, he said. *Greasy* from one too many *baccystix*.

He's *dead* now.
So's *Cheyne*.

Anyways, I ain't sure I *agree*. You ask me, Angeltown's a *mother*. Something to *belong* to. Something *nourishing*. (And hey, if your taste runs to *milk* and *diapers* and you got the *cash*, this here's the place to come *play*.)

And some days, yeah...

Some days she even reminds me of my own *ma*. For one reason or another.

For example:



Difference is, Ma Point never needed the *ironwork*. Knuckles like *anvils*, I swear.

I GOTTA TELL YA, RUBE. YOU *DISRESPECTIN'* MR *GRIMM*, THINKIN' YOU CAN *BREAK IN* HERE SO EASY.

HE *HATESTA* BE DISRESPECTED.

GRIMM'S A *FUTSIE* MOB *PSYCHO*, PAL. *POND SLIME* DISRESPECTS HIM.

Juves with sense never messed with *Ma Point*.
'Dults with sense stay the drokk away from Angeltown.

Sense ain't one of my *strong points*.





WHAT'S ALL THIS, BOYS?

CAUGHT A LITTLE PIGGY?

Brutus Grimm.

Decent guy, so I hear -- long as you got nothing against *frothing psychosis* and a *sadistic streak* wider'n the *Black Atlantic*.

About number *five* on The *Boss's* special payroll, but he's a *climber*. Men would be *angels*, right? Well *henchmen* would be *Dons*.

That's kinda why I'm *here...*



FOUND HIM TRYINNA GET *IN*, MISTER GRIMM. YOU WANT WE SHOULD CUT HIM A NEW *HOLE*?

A *BURGLAR*, EH? DEAR, DEAR... WHATEVER NEXT?

WE SHALL ALL BE MURDERED IN OUR BEDS!



NOTHING *FANCY*, CHEGS.

BURN OUT HIS EYES WITH A *BLOWTORCH* AND TAKE TURNS DROKING THE *HOLES*.

DRIVE ON, WILFRED. *CYNTHIA* AND I ARE *TIRED*.

LET'S HAVE AN *EARLY NIGHT*, EH DEAR?



YOU HEARD THE BOSS, RUBE. YOU GOT ANY LAST *REQUESTS*?

-- 'COS I *LOVE* TO SAY *NO*.

ALIEN GIRL... GOT AN EYE FOR THE *EXOTIC*, YOUR BOSS?



KEEP TALKING 'BOUT *EYES*, RUBE.

WE *LIKE* A GUY TA MAKE THE FIRST *MOVE*.

SO...ah...WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU I BEEN MENACED BY SICKO GOONS *BEFORE*?

I'D SAY 'WHO THE DROKK'RE YOU CALLIN' A *GOON*'?

WHAT'S YOUR *POINT*?



H-HA.

COMES RIGHT AFTER THE --



Pause.

For the *record*, you ever hear my now-famous *catchphrase*, you know for sure there's some *bad crazy coolness* on the way.

Possibly involving lethal *custard pies* or similar *combat-simp* action.

I could *take* these guys, is what I'm *saying*. *Honest.*

No problem.

Any minute now.

Except, as it happens --

-- someone beats me to it.

FOOOOM



DROKK.

ANYONE GOT A *LIGHT*?



The *High Dive*.

You ever want to *pick up* on a platinum beauty with dangerous curves and the kind of scent'd drive a schmuck like me crazy with lust, this is the place.



They also have *girls*.



-- of a kind.

ANOTHER **FLAMING DROKKPUPPET**, BOB. BEFORE I BARF, PLEASE.

HEY, YOU DON'T LIKE THE **MEAT**, HIT THE **STREET**...

Let me bring you up to speed.

Six of The *Boss's* top henchmen have upped and detonated in the last week. They're criminal scum and -- worse -- I ain't getting paid, but it's my job to find out who's doing it.

For this I became a judge.



KEEP 'EM COMING, BOB.

I figure it's an inside job. One of the firm, trying for promotion the quick way.

Up until this evening, I had Brutus Grimm pegged as *Il Grande Suspecto*. Lookin' for evidence, see?

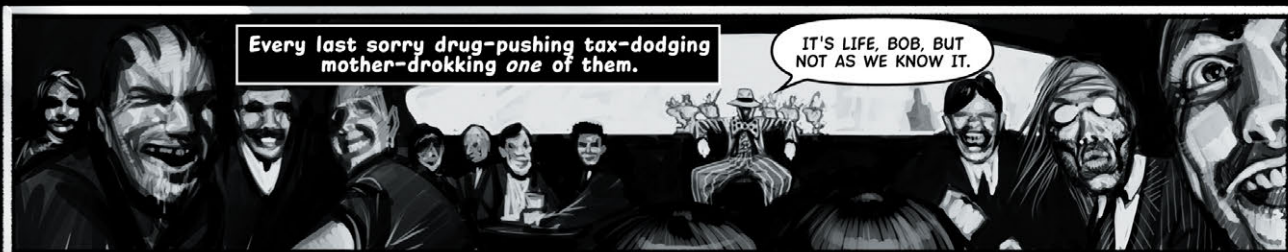


Now he's coal.

Lucky for me he had good security.

CHEERS, BRUTUS.

Point is, Angeltown's all-shook-up. And if you figure the badges are after a culprit, imagine how the crims feel. The *High Dive's* where they come to vent.



Every last sorry drug-pushing tax-dodging mother-drokkng one of them.

IT'S LIFE, BOB, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT.

Yeah, if *goons*, *thugs*,
pimps and *human waste*
were *eggs*, the High
Dive'd be an *omelette*.

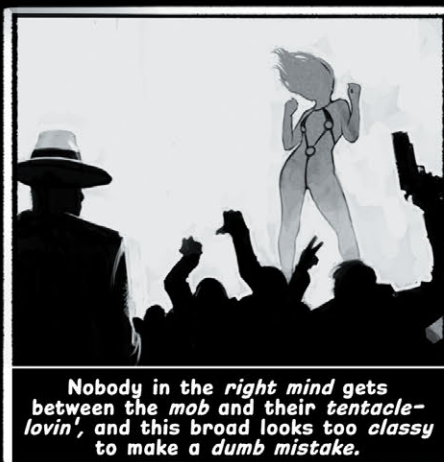
Hold the *cheese*, extra
salmonella.

No honour amongst
thieves, right?
But these creeps all
got something in
common. They come to
watch the *freakshow*,
and I come to watch
them.



Now me, I got this spooky ability to block out manly desires. All judges have it, see? Even us Wallies.

But this chick... this chick is up to something.



Nobody in the right mind gets between the mob and their tentacle-lovin', and this broad looks too classy to make a dumb mistake.

There's something going down here -- call it a hunch -- and it's my job to hand-out the parachutes.

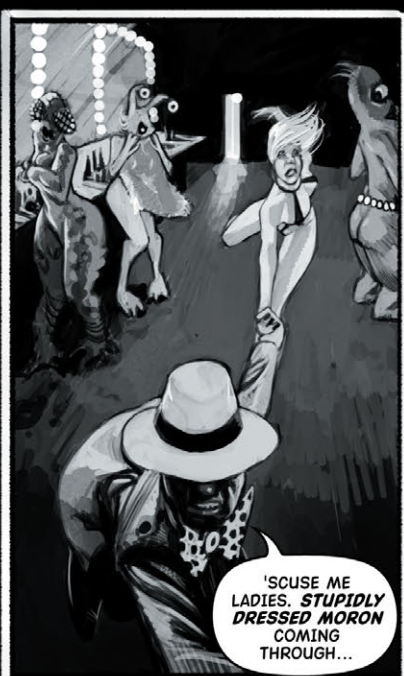
And if that's the best excuse I can come up with to ogle her close up, I'm more a simp than I look.



THIS WAY...

WHAT WAS--?

ACID SPRAY, SWEETCHEEKS. YOU COMIN'?



'SCUSE ME LADIES, STUPIDLY DRESSED MORON COMING THROUGH...



RIGHT. ANSWERS. NOW.

WHO ARE YOU? WHO SENT YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

Where did you get that incredible thong?



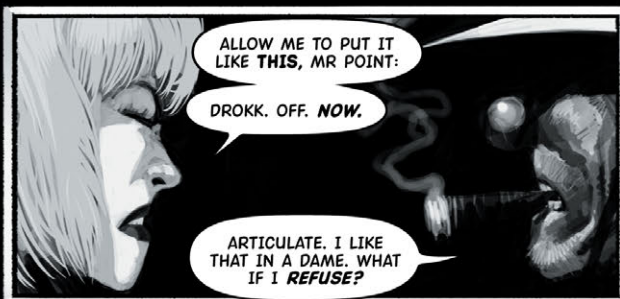
Her name's *DeMarco*. She's also a *P.I.*, which is to say: a *rival*.

And *no*, before you ask. I don't know where she kept the *gun* either.

She says the *Alientown* girls working this stomphole hired her. She says whores been complaining about being *drugged*. About waking up in weird *places*. About some of them even *vanishing* for good.



Lucky for me she's not my *type*, huh?
Lucky, yeah. *Ahaha*.



Pheep

MISS DEMARCO,
MEET *CLIQ*.

AS IN
'*POINT AND CLIQ*'.
CLEVER, SEE?

HE ISN'T VERY *BIG*,
DOESN'T HAVE A STUPID
ACCENT, EXISTS ON A DIET
OF *RATS* AND *MUNCE*, AND
ONLY LEAVES THE *SEWERS*
AT *NIGHT*. 'SCUSE THE
SMELL.

BUT HE'S
REAL LOYAL.

NOW. LET'S TALK
BUSINESS.



Yeah, this is *Angeltown*. And *yeah*,
I'm a *P.I.*

That means I'm a *suspicious bastard*
who goes looking for *trouble* and
doesn't often get paid.
Think of me as a *reincarnating*
lobster.

Always in *hot water*, see?

I'm also a *Simp*. That means I do
stupid stuff for no reason, dress
like an *idiot* and tell *bad jokes*.

Example:

Q: Where does a *300lb gorilla*
with a *pinstripe suit* and fists
like *hamplants* spend the night?

It's the way you tell 'em.
Besides, when *said gorilla* is oozing
menace on behalf of its *überfem boss*,
who ain't keen on sharing her
investigative territory with yours
truly, there's a *gag* I much prefer:

A: Wherever the *drokk* he wants.



Q: Why did the gorilla cross the road?

A: To get the hell away from the
slavering alien superpredator who
would like nothing more than to suck
out its *brains*. Such as they are.

GUN,
PLEASE.

T-THIS ISN'T OVER,
POINT! I WON'T LET
YOU SCREW UP MY
CASE!

YOU HAVEN'T
SEEN THE LAST
OF ME!



YOU RECKON I SHOULD
GOT THAT IN WRITING?

SIMPING
WITH THE
ENEMY



So I guess the case is *mine* now.



I'd be just *stoked*, if I knew what the hell the case *was*.

The *Boss'* goons are getting *nuke*d one by one, the triple-X freakettes at the *High Dive* are being *doped*, and my *whiskey* just ran *dry*.

It's all too much for a guy to *take*.



Besides, I been doing my *homework* on Little-Miss-Piston-Perfect, and if *department records* were *bowl*s of sand, hers'd be a *beach*.

Life's a beach, right?

Well, I still have no whiskey, and this particular stretch of shoreline has a *toxic spillage*.

Yeah. Galen DeMarco. Heiress of the *holy-stomm-how-many-billions-did-you-say* DeMarco Foundation.



Ex-Judge.

Turns out she fell from *grace*. Turns out she wasn't down with the '*no extra-Judicial liaisons*' rule.

Turns out she tried it on with a senior *street Judge*.

And you'll *never* guess which *one*.

KOFF!
HAKK!
CHOK!

HIM?!?

Go on.
Take a
stab, I
dare you.

You'll
never
get
it.

KRASSSH

CRIME
SWOOP!

NOBODY
MOVE!

DROKING HELL.
THAT'S SPOOKY.

THIS HIM?

THAT'S HIM.



SO...LET ME
GUESS. THE LOVELY
MISS DEMARCO--

AIN'T SHE A PEACH?

-- CALLS UP HER OLD
BEAU JOE WITH A HOT
TIP ON A CRAZY SIMP
WITH A GUN, RIGHT?



I'LL HANDLE THE
QUESTIONS, CREEP.

THAT NICOTINE IN
THE CARROT? THAT'S
SIX MONTHS.



HEY, GALEN? IS IT TRUE
WHAT THEY SAY 'BOUT GUYS
WITH BIG CHINS?

MAKE IT A YEAR.
WHERE'S THE
PIECE, POINT?



HEH.

TOP DRAWER,
BIG MAN.

KNOCK
YOURSELF
OUT.



DROKK.

Some days,
I love my
job.



I'LL WAIT OUTSIDE.
FIGURE YOU LOVEBIRDS GOT
SOME TALKING TO DO.



spurious
Heights

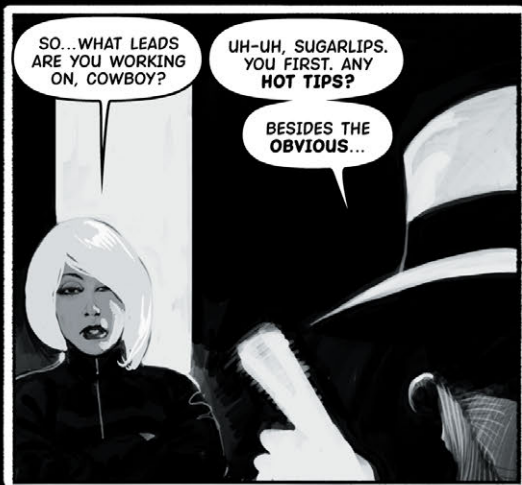
WELL, HEY THERE,
HONEY...

WHAT'S A CUTIE
LIKE YOU DOIN' IN
A NEIGHBOURHOOD
LIKE THIS?

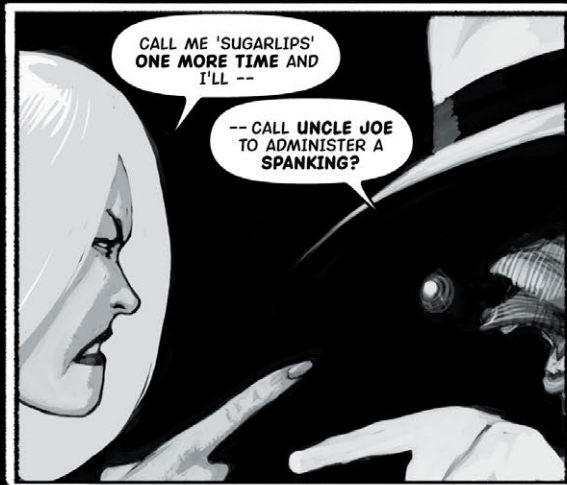


'Two heads are better than one,' he says. I figure what he actually *meant* was: 'I ain't got time to keep tabs on crazy Wally-Squaddies and hotshot ex-helmets, so you drokkers can watch *each other*.'

Smart.



Needless to say, Dredd shoulda left diplomacy to *diplomats*.

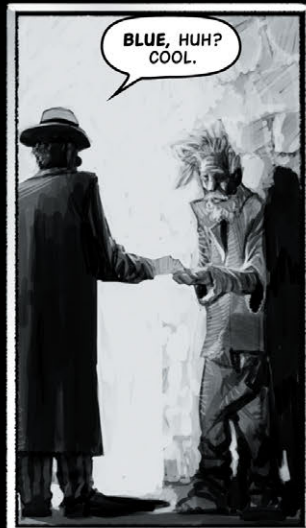




At 11.37, give or take, Jim 'Slim' Pickings --he's the kinda accountant'd give a *paperclip* a run for its money in the *bent* stakes -- cruised home from a night down the *High Dive*.

Ten minutes later he's *airborne dust*.
Rack up one more to the *assassin*.

Information, huh? In *Angeltown* -- if you knew who to ask -- you could find out the colour of the Chief Judge's drokkin' *knickers*.



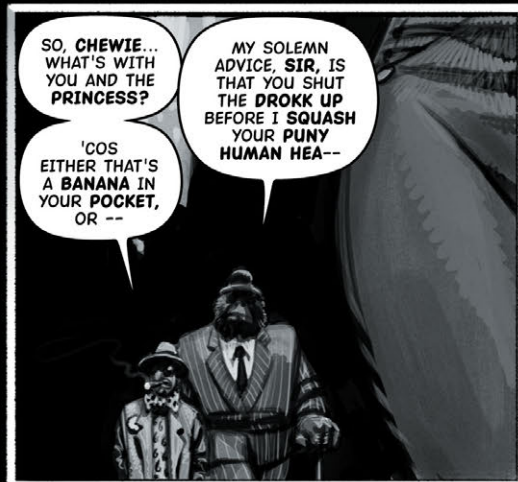
BLUE, HUH?
COOL.



ANYTHING?

NOBODY KNOWS A THING.
YOUR CONTACTS?

ZILCH. LET'S
GET A DRINK.



SO, CHEWIE...
WHAT'S WITH
YOU AND THE
PRINCESS?

'COS
EITHER THAT'S
A BANANA IN
YOUR POCKET,
OR --

MY SOLEMN
ADVICE, SIR, IS
THAT YOU SHUT
THE DROKK UP
BEFORE I SQUASH
YOUR PUNY
HUMAN HEA--



HE WAS
BUGGING
YOU TOO,
HUH?

TOP O' THE MORNIN,
POINTY. HANDS WHERE
I CAN SEE 'EM, EH?



SHITE.

Colm 'Shite' O'Leary.
Dependin' who you ask,
the nickname's either
the natural reaction to
coming face-to-face with
him, or a *character*
description.

He's the Boss's *Chief*
Enforcer. He's a very,
very, very bad man.

Shite.



PHONECALL FOR
YE, POINTY.

AN' SPEAK NICE NOW,
Y'HEAR, OR I'LL BE PISSIN'
DOWN THE BITCH'S NECK
STUMP BEFORE YE CAN
SAY BEGORRAH.



Listen.

The guy you work for, the office *suit* with an *okay* hovcar and an *okay* wife, that's your *boss*.

The guy that *everyone* works for, sooner or later, know-it-or-not, that's *The Boss*.

Bosses were *fish*, he'd be the *roboshark*. The one no one's ever *seen*, but everyone's *heard* about. The one with the *killcount*.

Scratch that. He'd be the *ocean*.



Private Eye.

Knack for *finding people*. Expensive affair with a *whiskey glass* to fund.

Missing persons case.

You do the math.



The voice says that four months ago it married the *astonishingly attractive Miss Innocence Barumba*. It challenges me to make a *snide comment about love, honour and obey*.

No drokking fear.



The voice says that two days ago *Mrs Boss* upped and *vanished*. It says all the king's *horses* and all the king's *goons* ain't been able to *find* her.



It says all it's got to go on is a *package*, delivered to its unofficial staff offices at the *High Dive*. A package containing a single braid of *perfect hair*, and a *note*.

'COME GET ME.'

The voice says it figured I'd enjoy the *challenge*.



I guess maybe I expected an *alien*. I guess maybe a *mutie cutie* with more *holes'n* a revolver cylinder and *featherdown* lips.

I guess I figured his *taste'd* match his *goons'*.

Weird.

I guessed wrong.

DROKK ME
SIDEWAYS...





People're always askin' me why I dress like a guy two shots short of an overdose.

Well I got *three* good reasons and *six* good bullets, so either way people tend to only ask *once*.

Reason 1: When you're a Judge posin' as a P.I. -- one who got kicked outta the force for being too *hardass*, no less -- it pays to *fit in*.



Reason 2: Thirty-inch dufus shoes with concealed toxin blades, razor-sharp shuriken bow ties and stumm-gas whoopee cushions.

Morons get all the best toys.



And if none of *that* convinces you, just remember Reason 3: This is Angeltown --



"Play it again, Bob"



Dames. Let's talk dames.

People were newspapers, dames'd be crosswords. And not those crappy synonym ones, either; I'm talkin' full-on cryptic craziness, with the clues misprinted and written in acid.

Dames'll screw up your insides like a suppository switchblade.

Once in a while you'll get one looks like a cazillion creds. Or maybe she smells like a hormone holiday. Or say she's got skin like --

...You get the idea.

Yeah, well this one... This one's screamin' 'classy' in every sense I got, and a whole buncha spooky ones I never knew existed.

She's so far outta my league she's a whole new sport. Good thing us Judges are chaste, right? Ahahaha.



S-SO... YOU'RE MARRIED TO THE BOSS, RIGHT?

RIGHT.



YOU... ah... YOU MIND IF I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

IF YOU MUST...



SO... DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S POSSIBLE TO TRUST A MAN WHOSE ENTIRE LIFE IS BASED UPON CRIME, EXTORTION AND MURDER?

...AND, BY EXTENSION, IS IT REALLY POSSIBLE TO TRULY LOVE A GUY YOU DON'T TRUST?

...AND TO FOLLOW UP, THEREFORE, HOW OPEN ARE YOU TO THE PROSPECT OF EXTRA-MARITAL ROMA--



Yes, yes and not at all, apparently.

JUST UP HERE ON THE LEFT, MAC.





O'LEARY. GOOD.
CALL MY HUSBAND
AND TELL HIM I'M
SAFE.

RIGHT SO,
MISSUS B. THEM
FILTHY FECKERS
DIDN'T HURT YE?



BESIDES DRUGGING
ME AND REGALING ME
WITH BAD JOKES, NO.
AND NO, BEFORE YOU
ASK, I DON'T KNOW
WHO SENT THEM.

JUST PAY MR POINT
FOR HIS TROUBLE AND
TAKE ME HOME. I HAVE
A HEADACHE.

I'LL WAIT IN
THE CAR, COLM.
DON'T BE LONG.



SURE BUT HERE SHE IS, POINTY.
PRETTY AS A CAT'LIC CALLGIRL...
ALL JANGLIN' WI' NERVES AN' NOT
A HAIR OUTTA PLACE.

FEM FOR A FEM. NO
HARD FEELINGS, EH?



AND THAT'S IT?
SIMPLE AS THAT?

SIMPLE
AS THAT.

RUN, YOU STUPID
BASTARD!



ON TH' OTHER HAND...
THERE'S ALSO THE WEE
MATTER O' YE KILLIN'
THE BOSS' BROTHER.

FOIRE AT
WILL, LADS. FOIRE
AT WILL.

BLAM BLAM BLAM



JOVUS...MAKE
ONE LITTLE MISTAKE
AND PAY THE REST
OF YOUR LIFE...

W-WHAT'S
THAT?



INSURANCE.

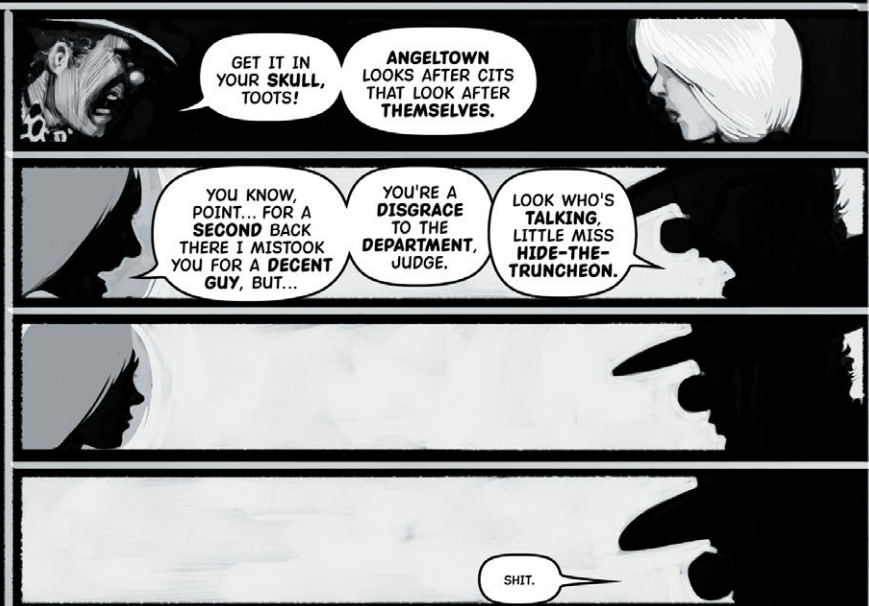


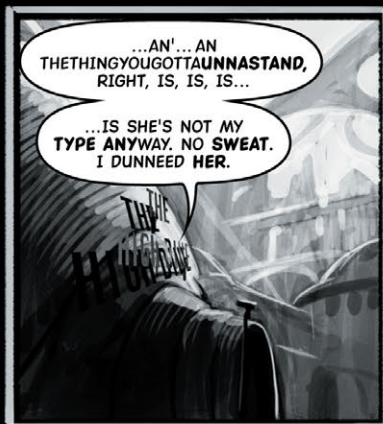


Listen. Me, I got a way with words. It's sort of like how *Don Quixote* had a way with windmills.

Right now, what I *should* say is: Hey, the Man With The Golden Chin needs your help like a *snake* needs *sneakers*. I should say: It's *okay*. These are *Angeltown* goons. Dredd'll go through 'em like *brandy* through a *baby*.

But *oh no*, I got to get all *jealous* at the *Run-To-Joe* routine and open my big flappin' face:





So two cups of *gigasobriety coffee*, a novelty cigar and a hasty bit of *Point-style charm* later, and finally we're getting somewhere.



...W-WINTER LAST YEAR...THE BOSS'S MEN'RE...T-TRYINNA LOSE THE JAYS. TWO HUNDRED KAYS IN A MO-CHEVVIE THROUGH DOWNTOWN.

IT... IT WAS **BLACK ICE** DID IT. MY WIFE, SHE...SHE NEVER EVEN SAW 'EM COMING.

WE SWITCHED OFF THE **LIFE SUPPORT** LAST MONTH.

Little *Bob*, who ain't ever raised his voice in his life, his eyes go hard like *plasteen*. He says how it made him *crazy angry*. He says how the boss' *goons* have always had a thing for *Alientown fems*.

He says how it was easier than *Sunday Mornin'* to inject his dancing girls with *Jazzalite*.



WHUP! S-SORRY M'RIND! CLUMSY HUMAN, EH?



JAZZY-WHAT?

IT'S A **MUTAGEN**, SEE?

DETONATES WHEN IT COMES INTO CONTACT WITH CERTAIN...UNSAVOURY FLUIDS...



EWWWW...



H-HANG ON A MINUTE...

INNOCENCE BARUMBA SAID SHE'D BEEN **DRUGGED** BY HER KIDNAPPERS...



HA, YEAH...

THAT WAS THE **MASTER PLAN**, SEE? KIDNAP THE BITCH THEN WAIT FOR HER TO GET **RESCUED**...

WHAT'S THE FIRST THING SHE'LL DO WITH HER **DROKKSHOW** OF A HUSBAND TO CELEBRATE HER FREEDOM?

A-singin': 'Sex-bomb, sex-bomb, yooou're my sex-bomb...'

N-YOUZE

News for YOU!

Sector 13 blast!!!

And sure enough, Angeltown's got herself one last lightshow in store.

Only it ain't quite what poor old Bob had in mind...

...AND JUDGES HAVE IDENTIFIED THE BODIES OF CATWALK STARLET INNOCENCE BARUMBA -- RECENTLY MARRIED TO AN UNKNOWN SECTOR 13 BUSINESSMAN -- AND KNOWN CRIMINAL COLM O'LEARY.

THE PAIR APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN A LEWD ACT AT THE TIME OF--

WELL DROKK ME DOWN WITH A GINGER BOA...

I guess it's true what they say, huh? No place for *innocence* in Angeltown.

HEY, DON'T LOOK SO DOWN. THE BOSS' TIME'LL COME.

YEAH, AND UNTIL THEN IT'S OPEN SEASON ON THE GREATER-CRESTED P.I. SIMP-GIMP.

ANYWAY, THAT AIN'T WHAT'S BUGGING ME.

NO EXTRA-MARITAL AFFAIRS, MY ASS...

WE BETTER BE GETTING ALONG, AND LISTEN -- FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH...

I SHOULDN'T HAVE CALLED YOU A DISGRACE TO THE FORCE.

W-WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

COMES RIGHT AFTER THE 'JACK', JACK.

smak

SEE YOU AROUND.

Dames, huh? Walk all over you, drive you crazy... then *still* set your heart to hammerin' like a mescaline monsoon.

Who *needs* 'em, right? Not *this* simp, that's for sure.

'See you around,' she said.

You... uh... You think she meant *soon*?



PLAYING FUTSIE

Script: Simon Spurrier

Art: Frazer Irving

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 234-236

Evenin'.

Sometimes, like for example *tonight*, I get to thinking the *Justice Department's* a pimp. All done up in gold and leather, with a temper you wouldn't believe. All the different *sectors* -- those're his girls.

Angeltown's the *speciality act*. Unshockable, unscareable. Seen it all, enjoyed it all.

You got the right money, she'll do anything you want.

And if you ain't got the money, well-- she knows how to handle that too.

ISO CUBES 5-10

...UNDERSTAND THE NEED TO CONFISCATE THE WEAPONS. BUT...THE HIPFLASK, GRUDAMMIT-?

And yeah, you wanna be *crude* about it, this dame has some pretty dark holes about her. Sorta places you wanna be wary of.

Sorta places a guy could catch anything.

Sorta places where -- *Jovus* -- there's always room for two.

P-POINTY?

WHAT YOU DOIN' HERE, MAN?

IT'S YOU, YOU STUPID BASTARD! THE JAYS SEEN YOU COMING TO MY OFFICE. GOT ME AS AN ACCESSORY!

YOU MUSTA DONE SOME NAUGHTY STOMM, ZIG.

SLAM!!

BUT...BUT THIS PROVES IT!

THEY BEEN WATCHING ME! T-THEY KNEW I'D FIGURE IT OUT, SEE?

KNEW I WAS ONTO THEM!

Oh yeah, one other thing. This broad, this sick, cred-hawkin' ped-walkin' perv-ho, name of Angeltown --

--she sure has seen a lotta nuts.

sigh

TELL ME EVERYTHING, ZIG.

"Just 'cause I'm paranoid..."





YOU SEE SOME
SIGHTS UP THERE,
LEMEEE TELL YOU.

LOTSA TIME TO
THINK. TO WONDER
ABOUT STUFF...



LISTENNA THIS.
YOU'LL LIKE THIS.

SO A PACKAGE GETS SENT
FROM, SAAAAY...**EMPHATICALLY
YESS™** TO THE STREET-REGS
DEPARTMENT. RIGHT?

**TWELVE
INK-MONKEYS** GOTTA
SIGN FORMS, JUST
TO GET THE DROKKIN'
THING **DISPATCHED**.



WHAT WITH THE COURIER, THE **FORM-STAMPERS**, THE
FLIGHT-CONTROLLERS, THE **SORTING GUY**... **ALLA THAT**, YOU GOT
THIRTY PEOPLE WORKING AWAY -- ALL IN JOBS 'TOO **MENIAL**' FER
BOTS, HAH! -- JUST TO GET ONE PARCEL **SHIFTED**.

**THIRTY
PEOPLE!**



'I OPENED ONE ONCE, JUST TO SEE.
LIKE...**WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?**'

'A-AND?'



EMPTY, OF
COURSE.

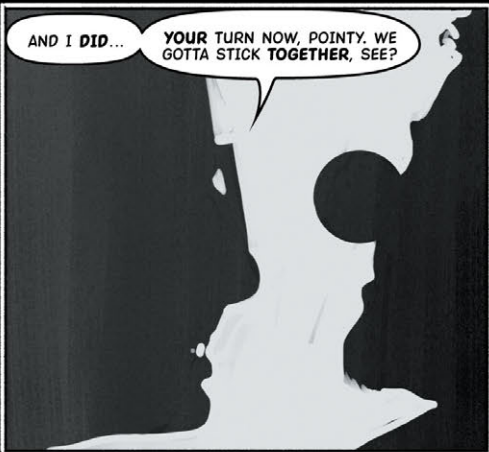
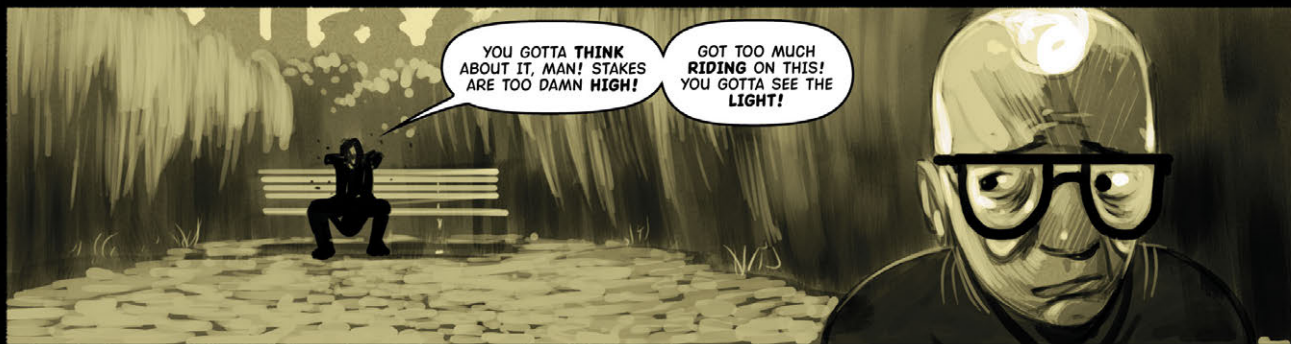
THEM JUDGES. THEY REALISED **TOO
LATE**...ROBOTIC WORKFORCE MEANS
PEOPLE GETS **BORED**. MEANS PEOPLE
GOT TIME TO **PONDER**.

START GETTING
IDEAS...



SO THEY MAKE JOBS.
CREATE **TRENDS**. HOBBIES.
TRI-DROKKING-DEE.

THEY'LL DO
ANYTHING TO KEEP
US **BUSY**. KEEP US
DISTRACTED...



Kooks, huh? Way I see it, insanity's sorta like an embarrassing disease. You just naturally wanna... spread it round.

Little Zig here, he was a straight-up guy 'til he met his hoople-headed-hobo. Now he's joined the gruddamn freakshow.

Me, I dress dumb. I figure it's like an inoculation: little dose of sickness so you don't catch it for real.



Hey. Don't act surprised. Day ever comes these bozos really try to shut me down, they better have a Deviant Dame Division on standby with bourbon bullets, on account of how that's the only thing'll get close enough to take a shot.



Sector Chief Daveez. Drokker.

Bendier'n a contortionist's cobra and nowhere near as trustworthy. Fingers in more pies than Little Jack Horner's mutant hillbilly cousin.



Suddenly I got warning bells in my ears. For once it ain't a hangover.

Daveez. Gruddamn.

So maybe last year I busted his chem-operation and spiked him with an X-T hallucinogen. Honest mistake.

If he's pulled strings to get me assigned, it's 'cos the case is either illegal, ill-advised or drokking suicidal.



AFTER THE
PARK, YEAH...
YEAH...

F-FIRST... FIRST I
FIGURED IT WAS ALL
BULLSTOMM. I MEAN,
WHO WOULDN'T?

EXCEPT...IT GOT ME
THINKING. THAT STATE
OF MIND, YOU START
TO NOTICE STUFF...



'LIKE MAYBE A HOVBUS GOES
BY, AND YOU'RE THINKING --
HEY...WHERE THEY GOING?

'RUNNING ERRANDS, MAYBE. SHOPPING THE
LATEST TREND GEAR DOWN THE ÜBERMART.
GOING TO MEETINGS TO PASS ROUND
PAPERS AND ACHIEVE NOTHING.



'BUSY AS A BOWLFULLA MAGGOTS,
AND ALL GOING NOWHERE.

'SO... ONE NIGHT I STAY IN
THE OFFICE AFTER THE MECHS
HAVE BEEN UNPLUGGED.

'JUST TO...SEE WHAT THEY
BEEN DOING ALL DAY. PROVE
THAT DAMN TRAMP WRONG.

'WENT ROUND PULLING PAPERS
OUTTA OUT-TRAYS. GOING
THROUGH THE DAY'S FILES...



BLANK. EVERY DROCKING
PAGE.



'THAT'S WHEN I CAME TO SEE YOU.
KNEW YOU HAD A REPUTATION.
THOUGHT YOU COULD HELP.

'YOU REMEMBER,
POINTY?'



Yeah, I remember.
I was planning on a quiet
evening -- just me and the fine
fems of the *Megalube Channel* --
'til this wacko showed up,
sounding off like a *ketamine*
klaxon.

I was fixing to call in *Pest*
Control when right outta
nowhere the kook *splits* like a
defective *Dong-dom*.

Guess I coulda followed it up,
but as it goes a *pal* of mine
showed up and I clean forgot
all about it.

His name's *Jack* too. Small
world, huh?

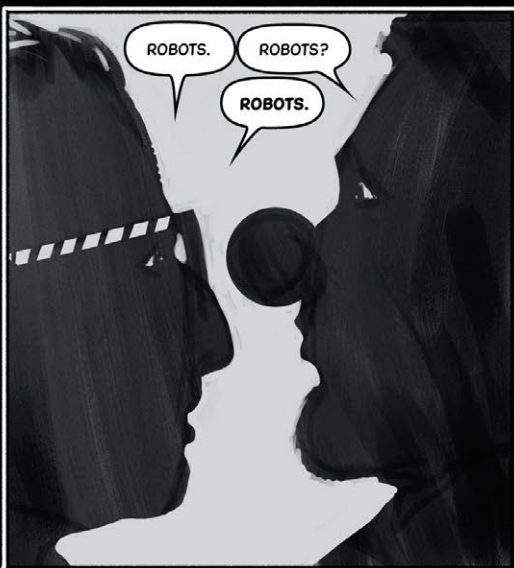
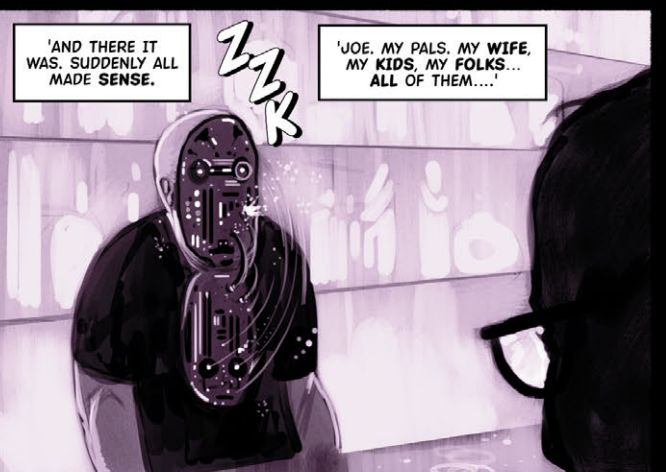
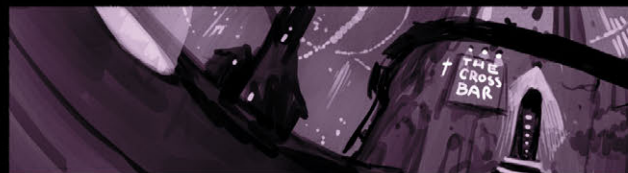
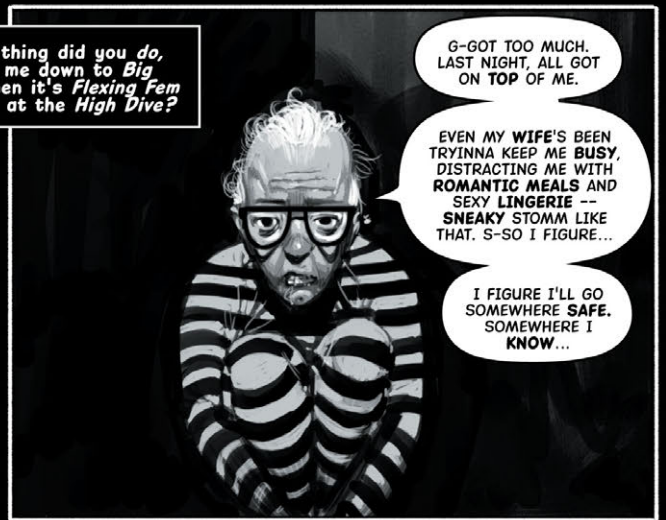


WHY'D YOU RUN OFF,
ZIG? I COULDA HELPED--

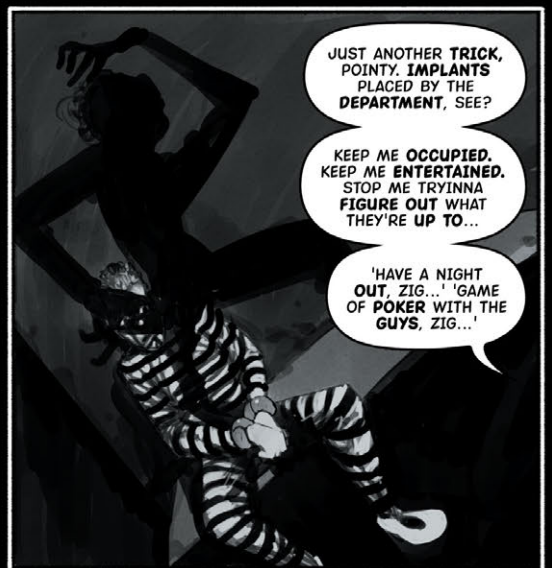
HEH! FIGURED IT
OUT, SEE? THASS
JUST WHAT THEY
WANTED. I DROP IT
ON YOU, THERE'S
TWO OF US BEING
KEPT BUSY...

NO WAY WAS I
GONNA PLAY INTO
THEIR HANDS.





Stomm.
Maybe I missed my true calling, and there's a place for me up at Psi-Div, 'cos suddenly I can see where this is going.
Down.
Straight drokking down.



DAMN LUCKY I KNEW ABOUT THE **PIECE** JOE KEPT HIDDEN UNDER THE **BAR**.

'JUST IN CASE OF **TROUBLE**,' HE USED A SAY. DAMN **RIGHT!**

H-HOW MANY **PEOPLE**, ZIG? HOW MANY DID YOU **KILL**?

PEOPLE? DON'T BE DUMB. **NONE.**

'WASTED **TWENTY-TWO** GRUDDAM **ROBOTS**, MIND.

'THEM **TEKS** SURELY DO MAKE 'EM **REALISTIC** THESE DAYS.'

YOU GOTTA HELP ME, POINTY! I BEEN SITTING HERE ALL DAY TRYINNA TO THINK IT THROUGH...

THEM **BADGES**, THEY'LL DO ANYTHING TO **DISTRACT** US FROM SOMETHING... B-BUT I CAN'T FIGURE OUT **WHAT**...WHAT DO THOSE **BASTARDS** WANT?

It's a good question, Zig. If you weren't such a screaming drokking *futsie* I'd even attempt to *answer* it, but even *then* I could only speak for *myself*.

What does a *judge* want?

I really, *really* want my *hipflask* back.

Catch-up time.

We got a dark room with one bed and two men. The first one, he's sweating like a sumo sauna. The other one's me. It don't bode well.

In Angeltown, smart guys keep their pals in their pockets, know what I mean?



Y-YOU...UH...YOU OKAY, ZIG...?

Yeah, pals. Me, I got three. I'm lucky like that.

Cannon, cordial and credit. Don't leave home without 'em.

And especially don't wind-up in an iso-cube with a kill-krazy kook when all three've been confiscated.

Meet Zig. He killed 22 cits 'cos he thought they were robots. I'm supposed to find out why, and 'because he's in-droking-sane' just won't cut it.



The name's Point. Depending who you ask, I'm an undercover judge, a disgraced helmet, or an untrustworthy bastard.

If little Zig hears any of the above, this could get tricky.

TIME TO GO, POINT. WE GOT YOU A CELL ALL OF YOUR OWN.



Hurrah for the cavalry.

THEEEERE SHE IS...



CASE NOTES. DAVEEZ SENT THEM DOWN.

Daveez, Angeltown's Sector Chief. Judges were roads, he'd be a chicane.



Someone as bendy as Daveez assigns you a case, all personal-like, it's time to get twitchy. It's time to keep your pals reeeal close.

Not that I'm paranoid.



Turns out *Zig* ain't the first *ait* to go *Krakatoa*. Turns out Angeltown's got a full-on *futsie* fad.

futsie n. Individual suffering spontaneous sustained psychotic episode: behavioural breakdown, suspicion and focused aggression.
[MC sl. *Fut*'ure - *si*'ckness]

No chemical inducement.
No psychoactive *stomm*.
Pressures of modern life, the meds say. *Overwhelming urban stresses*.
I know what they mean.

But when you got *twenty freakout rampages* in the last quarter, 600% up on the city average, it's time to start asking *why*.

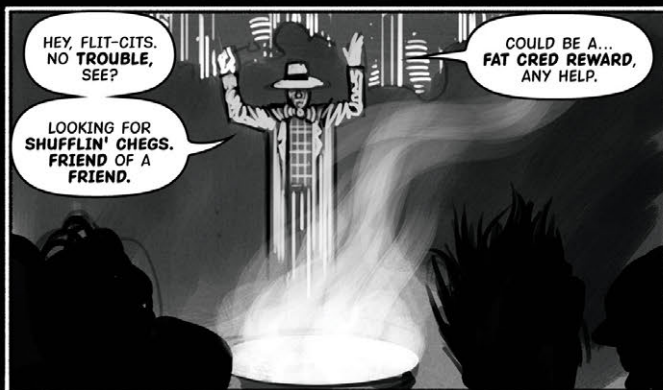


For *Zig*, it all started *here*.

WATCH YOURSELF, SIMPO. HERE BE TIGERS.



MIAOW.



HEY, FLIT-CITS. NO TROUBLE, SEE?

COULD BE A...
FAT CRED REWARD,
ANY HELP.

LOOKING FOR
SHUFFLIN' CHEGS.
FRIEND OF A
FRIEND.



WANTS TO KNOW WHEREZZ CHEGS, HE DOES HE DOES

WASSEWANNIMFOR,
WASSEWANNIMFOR, EH?

BABY THINKS
HE LOOKS TASTY.
LOTSA MEAT...

E'S GOTTA
GOTTA RAAAAABIT
FERRAHEAD

HURTS IN MY EYEBALLS
LIKE MAGNET WARTS

AAR! FILTHY SWAB!
'AVE HIM WALK THE
MIZZENFUTTOCK!

C-CHEGS? N-NOT
ALLOWED T'SAY...GET IN
TROUBLE, WE WILL...



Ah, *stomm*. Looks like some drokker went and put the *frighteners* on the *hobo herd*, and just like *any* sucker havin' a bad day, all they wanna do is *pass it on*.

BABY THINKS MAYBE HE'S
A WALKING FEAST...



So, okay, it looks bad. I got a concentrated *tramp-stamp* underway and it's *Simping Stew* on the menu, but I ain't got the heart to hold it *against* 'em.

Hell, some days I'd eat me -- if only for the *liquor* content.

As it goes, I got a coat that packs more *hidden hardware* than a *John Holmes MechaClone*, and playin' *Vape-the-Vagrant* 'd be a walk inna park. Pun intended.

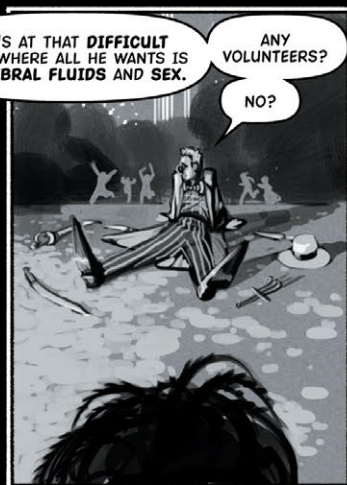
But a functioning *pulse* is about all these *sadsacks* got, and believe it or not I got *scruples*. Time for my *guardian angel* to lend a hand.



LADIES AND GENTS... OR WHATEVER... MEET **CLIQ.**

HE'S AT THAT **DIFFICULT** AGE WHERE ALL HE WANTS IS **CEREBRAL FLUIDS** AND **SEX.**

ANY VOLUNTEERS?
NO?



HEY -- QUIT IT WITH THE **SULKING**, SPIKO. IT'S FOR YOUR OWN **GOOD**. YOU START GETTING A TASTE FOR **HUMAN BRAINS** AND I'LL JUST HAVE TO KILL YOU AGAIN, AND **NOBODY** WANTS THAT.

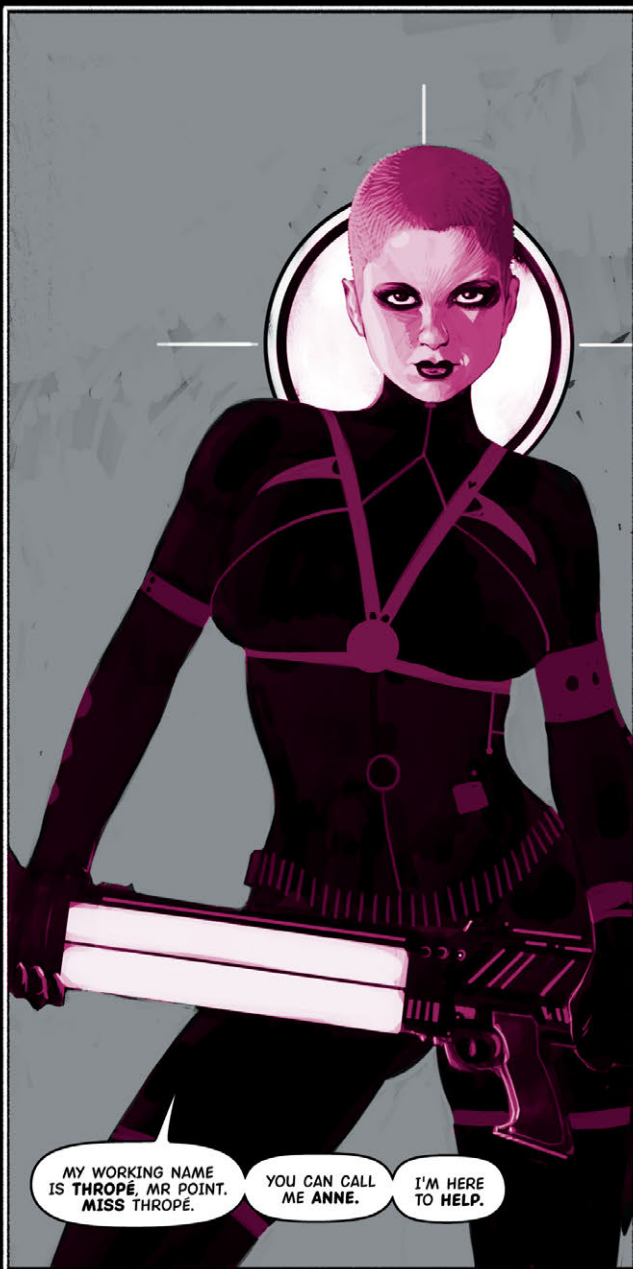
AND LOOK AT ME WHEN I'M TALKING TO Y--

HE'S **DISTRACTED**, MR POINT. CAN YOU **BLAME** HIM?



NOTE THE **SONIC CANNON**. INSPECTOR. EQUALLY AS ADEPT AT **POPPING HEADS** AS **SILICATE LIFEFORMS**. JUST IN CASE YOU GET... **TWITCHY.**

WHOA...
W-WHO ARE YOU?



MY WORKING NAME IS **THROPE**, MR POINT. **MISS THROPE.**

YOU CAN CALL ME **ANNE.**

I'M HERE TO **HELP.**

This is a first for me. See, I got this theory on Angeltown feds, how even the ones with no threads still got strings attached. They all want something, and mostly it's my head.

This dame, she's something else. She's squeezed in that jumpsuit like a vac-packed peach, and every time she moves the air files for molestation. She says she ain't with the Firm. She says she ain't a badge. She says she represents certain ambiguous assets whose interests happen to coincide with mine.

Where I'm sitting, her assets ain't ambiguous at all.



She says it's an unmarked, unregistered handgun. I tell her no thanks, I don't need a tiny little gun to make me feel less inadequate, but she puts it in my hand and fixes me with those eyes, and says --



Now, call me a *suspicious bastard*, but I ain't too inclined to put all my *eggs* in one *basket*... even one that looks as *un-be-drokking-lievable* as Miss Anne *Thropé*.

... Heh. I just got the *name* thing. *Cute*...

Point *is*, the night's still *jailbait-young*, and I got *other* leads to chase.



An office fulla *blank paper*. Not exactly the *high-concept detective* work I'm used to, but *still*. This is *Angeltown* --



-- '*mundane*' and '*freaky*' are just a *bad day* apart.

skf

W-WHO'S THERE?



OH



HE'S HUNGRY. TURNS OUT SEWER RAT JUST AIN'T GOT THE GREY CELLS FOR A GROWIN' BOY.

YOU KNOW, I'M NOT EVEN SURE I'LL BE ABLE TO CONTROL HIM MUCH LONGER...

W-WHAT'S...WHAT'S YOUR PUH-PUH-POINT...?



COMES RIGHT AFTER THE 'JACK'.

MegaCorps. Businesses were *sports*, night guards'd be the *referees*. Inflated vision of their own *importance*, yours to buy for a *stack of creds*, and they always, *always* know the *score*.

Usually, they're *responsible* for it.



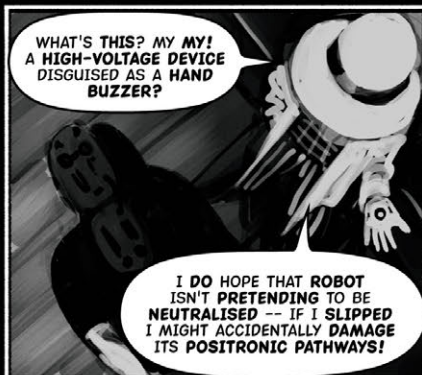
T-THE MAN PAID ME. SAID I'D REGRET IT IF I REFUSED...

A-ALL I HAD TO DO WAS FILL THE PRINTER CARTRIDGES WITH DISSAPINK™. H-HE NEVER TOLD ME WHY.

THE CORP LOST A DAY'S WORK, BUT...N-NOBODY GOT HURT, RIGHT? H-HE SAID IT WAS JUST A...A PRACTICAL JOKE!

"He" wore a *hood*. It was *dark*. Baggy clothes. Indistinct voice. No identifying features. Blah blah *drokking blah*. I figure it's a *good thing* Cliq ain't allowed to eat *human brains*.

He'd only *starve*.



Robots. Robots are curious. Supposedly they got this programming -- 'no lying', 'no stealing', 'no crushing the human race' -- but in Angeltown you get what you pay for. Top-of-the-range model's an emotionless monster. It'll rip out your heart and slice your manhood soon as look at you.

In Angeltown, robots and feds got a lot in common.



So it's mid-day and I'm
down to my last lead.

Someone went to a lot of
trouble to make little Zig
mistake a *radvarmint-hill* for
a *mountain*, and I get the
distinct impression this peak's
overdue an *avalanche*.



I got *Anne Thropé's* voice in
my head, spinning about like
a *legless lapdancer*. Look
employed, she said. Act
gullible, she said.

I will *never* live
this down.

He shows up right on
time, like he's been
watching. He is to *smell*
what the *sea* is to *moist*.



He sits and he
starts the *spiel*,
just like Zig said.
Judges controlling
this, conspiracy
that. I cut in
before he *warms up*.



JUST SO YOU KNOW,
PAL, YOU'RE SITTING ON
A WHOOPEE-CUSHION
LANDMINE.

YOU GONNA TELL ME
WHO'S **PAYING YOU** TO
DROKK ABOUT WITH CITS'
MINDS, OR YOU GONNA
LET ONE OFF?

IN THE **TERMINAL**
SENSE.



I... ..

DEVRIES,
E-ELMORT
DEVRIES.



Now *there's* a name you don't
hear every *day*, though I'd
bet a *cred-pen-head* there's
not a *badge* in the *city* ain't
heard it *before*.

Elmort Devries. Top tomali
of the *Hunters Club*.
Certifiable drokking
serial-killing *nightmare*.

He's *supposed* to be *dead*.

Then again, this is *Angeltown*,
an' if there's worse than
death this is where it's *found*.



Welcome *back*. I'd shake your hand, only this is *Angeltown* and I ain't had my *booster shots*.

'Sides... I'm sorta *busy*.



...ELMORT DEVRIES,
CHIEF, FOUNDER OF
THE HUNTERS' CLUB.

NEVER HEARD
OF 'EM.

'Progress report' or 'toadying to the corrupt bigwig'. Tom~~ay~~to, tom~~ah~~to...



POSSE OF
CREDHEADS, GOT
THEIR KICKS
HUNTING CITS.

CAME UP WITH A
SPONSORED MASSACRE IN
'14 TO HELP NECROPOLIS
ORPHANS. CALLED IT
'DEATH AID'.*

RINGS
A VAGUE
BELL...

*See 2000 AD Progs
711-720.



It *should*. You were one of
the badges assigned to *find*
the drokkers, you reticulated
creep. I *checked*.

WASN'T HE KILLED,
THIS DEVRIES? I SEEM
TO RECALL DREDD
GETTING INVOLVED...



DEADER'N
DEMOCRACY.

'CEPT IT TURNS OUT THE
PSYCHO HAD AN ELMORT
JUNIOR, AND YOU'LL NEVER
GUESS WHERE HE GREW UP.

IN MY
SECTOR,
HUH?

In *my* sector, drokko.



LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON, SEE? 'CEPT
THE YOUNGSTER'S TOO SMART FOR GUNS.
I FIGURE HE'S BEEN BLITZING CITS USING
HOLLOW-POINT PARANOIA.

WHAT I DON'T
FIGURE IS, WHAT
DOES HE GET
OUT OF IT?

PLENTY OF
SICKOS OUT THERE,
JUDGE. SINCE WHEN
DID THEY NEED A
REASON?

Since freakers
like *you* dipped
your *thumbs* in
the *pie*, chief.



THIS
DEVRIES...

SHUT HIM
DOWN, POINT.

SHUT HIM
DOWN HARD.

The **CredPit**. This city, gambling's **legal** in the same way the sun's **cold**, but if you got the **greens** for a **licence**, share **beds** with **taxmen** and got a **flexible relationship** with the **Department**, there are **ways**.

THE CREDPIT

It also don't **hurt** to live in one of the **deregulated sleazepit-sectors**, scattered round the Meg like a post-stomm-hits-fan scenario.

No prizes for guessing the biggest **sleazepit** of **all**. The line **goes**, if they can't gamble **legal**, they'll find **another way**. I figure what that **means** is, if the **badges** don't skim a **cut**, some other drokker **will**. In **Angeltown**, the **Jays** are just **another mob**.

And **good intentions** or not, they got the best **muscle** money **can't buy**.



SOUTH TEAM IN POSITION, DREDD.

ABOUT TIME. ON MY COMMAND--

THREE, TWO, O--

AH-RUM...

I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.

YOU TRYING TO BE FUNNY, POINT?

ACTUALLY, IT'S ACTING SENIOR JUDGE AND, *ha*, CASE SUPERVISOR POINT... BUT, HEY, THANKS FOR GETTIN' EVERYTHING READY.

YOU'RE AN ASSET TO MY TEAM.

Grud, I **love** this job.

LET'S ROLL, JUVES.

THIS IS A **RAID**! DON'T NONE OF YOU DROKKERS MOVE!

THOK



First rule of Angeltown *Law*: you wanna sift the *lowlifes* from the *nolifes*, wade in *heavy*. Wait and see who *slumps* and who *slaps*.

Leather, that is.

Overkill and *Angeltown* go together like *whiskey* and *more whiskey*. These *badges*, they got orders to take 'em *alive*, and that sounds *cuter* than it *is*.

You ever seen a perp *withholding information*, blubbin' like a *prima donna* on *Prozac* with his *face* smeared up the *wall*, you know what I *mean*.

Me, I never get tired watching the *nipple-heads* at work. *Ultraviolence* and *dames in leather* -- it don't get better than *that*.

NOK
NOK
NOK

KLTT
KLTT
KLTT

HMM.

HEY, JOE --
WHERE YOU
BEEN?

QUIT MESSING
AROUND AND GET
THE DOOR, HUH?

rrrrr

BAMF!

AAAA!

AAAA!

J-JOVUS!

MUCH
OBLIGED.

FEEL FREE
TO HANG
AROUND.

These old *streetseekers*, they been wearing *helmets* all their *lives*. I figure the least I can do is make 'em feel *useful*.



And yeah, he *blubs* and cries for his *mommy* like *any* juve, but I ain't *listening*. This is *Angeltown*. A creep round here ever *really* needs his *ma*, it's to *sell* her for *spare parts*. Takes the *Castrato Kid* three minutes to *cave in* like a *Pompeii palace*, and when *fingers* start *pointing* it's straight at a buncha *rich bozos* name of -- get this -- *The Collateral Club*.





The kid says it was a *week* back the slippery bastard joined the *Collateral Club*. Buncha vice-ridden *scumbags* rolling in *creds* up to their *penthabs*. Must have been like coming *home*.



It's like this. *First* up, there ain't a *law* called *Malicious Neurotic Damage With Intent to Cause Psychosis*, and the *jibber-jabber-juve* here already got a licence to *gamble*.

I ain't got *nothing*.



'Judicial Regulation #1345b: The financial assets of any *detainee* may be *frozen* or *seized* by the *Department* pending *investigation*.'

In *Angeltown*, Daveez *is* the *Department*. He's using *me* to get his gruddamn *money back*, and the only way *out* is to *kill* the *kid*.

Daveez *knows* I *won't*.

Times like *this*, a guy could use a friendly *face*. Just so happens I got one *right here* in my *mind*.





Turns out it ain't
murder if you ain't
the one pulled the
trigger.





P-POINTY?
WHERE YOU BEEN,
MAN?

Back at the *start*. Angeltown's *like* that.

I figure I *owe* it to *Zig*, so I tell him there's *no conspiracy*.
I tell him he got it wrong, he's been *played* like a
hypno-harpsichord, and everything's back to *normal*.
He's *twitchy* like a *caffeine candle*, sure, but he's *listening*.
He's taking it *in*.

What I'm saying is, it could have *worked*.



THIS IS SECTOR
CHIEF DAVEEZ.

W-WH--?

THE PERP'S BEING
TRANSFERRED TO ISO-32
IN TEN. KEEP IT SHORT,
JUDGE POINT.

Daveez, you drokken. You slimy *bastard*. That's too *slippery*. That's too damn *sneaky*.



Get *me* to do your *dirty work*. Clear
up your *mess*. Get me in this *right*
up to my *swollen drokkin' nose*...

heh heh heh



JUH...JUDGE?

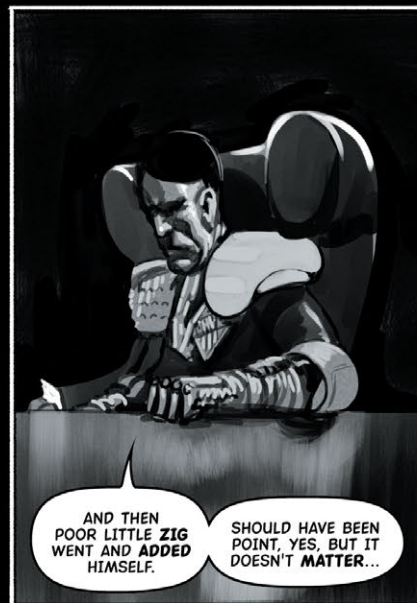
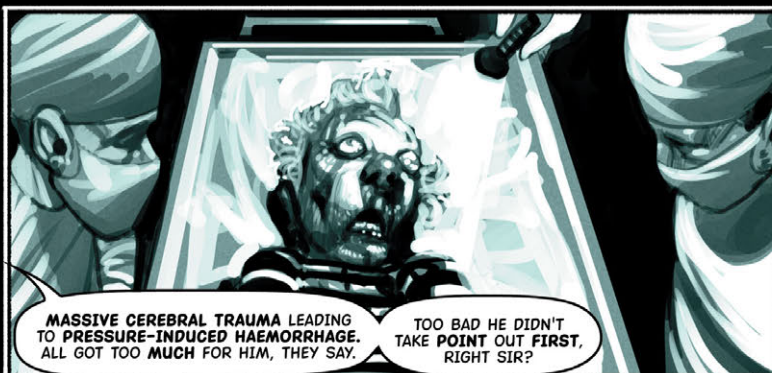
Then *bump me*
off without even
dirtying your
hands.



YOU'RE ONE
OF THEM!

YOU'RE ONE OF
THEMMM!

Mega City One. It's like a *flame*, see? Hottest part's always the *darkest*.
This is *Angeltown*, and you don't get *darker* than *this*. Round here, a *decent* guy just *died*.
That's Angeltown inna *nutshell*, see?
Things never *finish* like you *think* they will.



Daveez. Daveez, you bastard. I got *nothing* on you, *again*.



UHHH...PISS.
NEED A PISS.

PISS PISS PISS
PISS PISS PISS...

PISS PISS



FIFTEEN

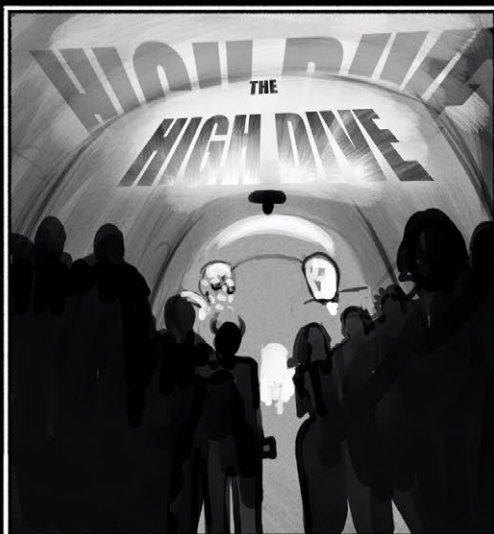
Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Frazer Irving
Letters: Tom Frame

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City-sectors were snacks, Angeltown'd be a hottie. Smells kind of appealing, even tastes good in the right mouth -- but it's still just a strip of stomm scraped off the Resyk floor. Stick on a perfect bun and drown it in sauce, can't stop it looking pre-digested. Twice.

The way I figure, that makes this place a lump of gristle. You know the kind.

If it don't choke you to death you better pray you got E-coli immunity.



The High Dive. Turns out it's fifteen years since Don Roman took his styrocure slippers for a dockside dip. Fifteen years of the New Boss becoming the Only Boss, and if the Top Tomali wants a 'hate party' to celebrate, that's exactly what he gets.

Hate Party. That's perptalk for dressing up like all the do-goods and no-goods who ever impeded, insulted, or informed on the Firm.

This is the rogues sending up the righteous, and after fifteen years lousing on the law, you know what?

That's a lot of heroes.



All them costumed crims, I figure the real good guys deserve a little representation.



So maybe it ain't exactly official business, but hear me out. Angeltown right now, you got more tongues wagging than a popsicle pornshoot. Word is, some kook's gunning for the Boss.

Yeah, it'll fail -- security's tighter than a drokkbot's coin slot, and any kook tries anything is coffinbait -- but it's worth watching. Just in case.



Miss Anne **Thropé**. She's never tried to **kill** me yet, and for a **dame** that's kind of **unique**. Wearin' that **bodysuit**, only thing left to the **imagination** is her **hidden agenda**.

SO THIS
WOULD-BE
KILLER... YOU
KNOW WHO
IT IS?

T-THE GRAPEVINE
WASN'T EXACTLY
FORTHCOMING ON
THAT POINT, B-BUT...

OH GRUD.

Before you ask, it's just a
spare cigar. Really.

The dame **smiles**. She says this **assassination**, of **course** it won't **work**, but the **killer** don't deserve to **doze** with the **dolphins**. I guess whoever it is ain't from **round** here. She says this poor **pinhead** just found out the **Boss** was behind a **death** in the **family**, and **revenge** ain't something that'll **wait**. She **leans down** real **close** (make that **two** spare cigars)...and she **fingers** a **photo**.

THIS IS HER.

THE **SUIT'S** WITH THE **FIRM**. SOLD HER THE **TRUTH** ABOUT THE **HIT** ON HER **DADDY**.

DeMarco. Drock.

SHE'LL BE IN A **COSTUME**. GRUD ONLY KNOWS **WHAT** -- SAME WITH THE **BOSS**.

SHE GETS CLOSE ENOUGH TO **PULL** A **PIECE** ON HIM, SHE'S **MUNCE**.

WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO **DO** ABOUT IT, JACK?

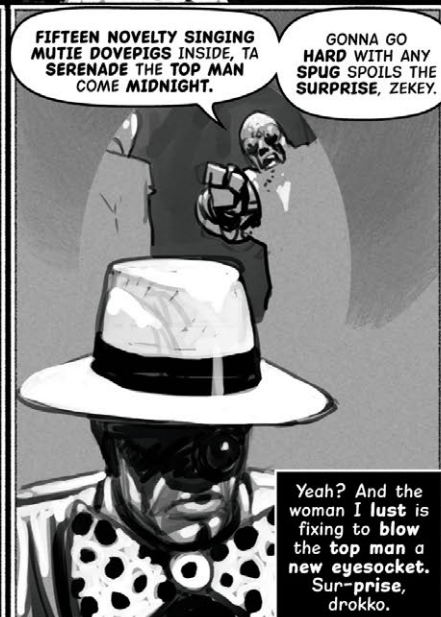
That's **dames** for you. Show up, ruin the **party**, expect the **impossible**... Little Miss Anne **Thropé**, she raises a lot of **questions**. (Amongst other things.)

Why's she **helping** me? What does she care if **Galen DeMarco** lives or dies? (What's under the **bodysuit**?)

HUH--?

And where the hell are my **gruddamned batteries**?

GOOD LUCK, MISTER POINT.



Me, I got a wit drier than a dune shark's derriere, but tonight ain't the time to effervesce. Tonight I got to save the angelic ass of the Meg's second sexiest P.I. before her assassination skit goes the way of East-Meg 1. The victim's an omnipotent overboss I don't recognise, wearing a costume I don't know.

Piece of cake.

Mingling time.



Tonight the DJ's mixing Bennett Beeny with puglytrance, which is kind of the same as smearing Satanus stomm over a Mech-Monet. Meathead's lucky I ain't armed.

Tonight there's no guns allowed, and that ain't as unlikely as it sounds. Crowd like this, a pistol party's never far away. You can bet there's a guard goon for every shadow, keeping an eye.

Tonight there's more costumes than a fetish fete at the Sci-fi Society, and inside every one you got a twitchy bastard hiked on crackzizz and canapés.



...BURNED THE DROKKIN' DOPE, STOLE THE SMUGGLIN' RIG, LEFT US STRANDED INNA BADLANDS WITH CROSSES SLICED IN OUR DROKKIN' FACES, AND YOU THINK IT'S FUNNY SHOWIN' UP LOOKIN' LIKE THAT?

YEAH? YOU FIGURE I WANT REMINDING 'BOUT THAT CAT ABDUCTION SCAM? I COULDN'T SIT DOWN ALL WEEK, YOU INSENSITIVE STOMMHEAD!

Uranium city bounty-bitches, pan-African psychos and a repeat-offending arsonist dressed as a deaf eldster. High Society this ain't.

You got every shape of freak under the sun, and as for the ones I'm looking for...



WHAT YOU STARIN' AT, SAPP?

...MATCHES MATCHES NEVER TOUCH...

If only it was that easy.

I figure mostly these goons are from out of town, on account of how they keep asking the same thing.

WHO YOU SUPPOSED TO BE, THEN?



WHO YOU SUPPOSED TO BE, THEN?



'OO THE DROKK'RE YOUSE?



Stommflaps don't know what they been missing.

Either way, I'm figuring I got this **incognito** thing down **pat** when some **creep**, some two-cred **pug-thug**, some **rattle-skulled scum-chum** with more **chins** than **brain-cells**, pulls off a **monkeywrench-to-machine merger**.

--TOLD YOU, ONLY ONE OF EACH CHARACTER! WE ALREADY GOT A JACK POINT!

OUTTA MY WAY, NOFLAB! I GOT FIRST DIBS ON THE SIMPSUIT THREE WEEKS AGO!

What I'm **getting** at is, it ain't going **well**. Any of these losers could be the **Boss**. Same for **DeMarco**, and truth be told her **face** ain't the **part** I got **seared** onto my **memory**.

This **place**, you got **fifteen years** of **concentrated crimefighting** squeezed **together**, and all wrapped up in **Angeltown Attitude**. These **creeps**, their idea of **breaking the ice** is to **skin your folks**. Yeah, you can paint me **nervous**, and when **that** happens, well --

WHERE'S THE SAP WHAT STOLE MY IDEA--?

AHEM

One thing --

--leads to another.

NICE COSTUME. MPH.

WHERE'S YOUR PARTNER? HE DID A GOOD JOB TOO. ALL THAT RED HA--

SHE'S WAITING OUTSIDE.

S-SORRY. SAY, DON'T YOU WANT TO ASK WHO I'M SUPPOSED TO B--

And then he walks in.

UHHH...PISS.
NEED A PISS.

PISS PISS PISS
PISS PISS PISS...

PISS PISS

Yeah, it's just some **guy**. It ain't really **him**. But the **badge**... the **threads**... the **name**. You heard about people with **presence**, right? There's **comedians** can land a **laugh** just by **looking** at you. There's **musicians** who'll step-up to a **digiano** and every **footstep**'s a **symphony**. There's people got **personalities** so big they walk in an empty room and it's **full**, like everything's **polyboing-packed**.

And then there's **Joe**.

How many of the **boss's bozos** have you put **away**, Judge? **Fifteen years** is a **long time**. And credit where it's **due**: If I'm a **thorn** in the **guts** of crime, Joe's a **nuclear-barbed heatseeking harpoon**. Who'd come here dressed as **Dredd**? Who'd have the **meat-balls** to **Jump** as **Joe**?

The way I figure it, only **one guy**.



There was no **zip**. That **silverback suit**, that's a lot of **fur** to **fill**. Kind of rig calls for a **big guy**. Too big. And there was no **zip**. And his partner's waiting **outside**. His **female partner**. And the **Boss** just walked **out** there. **Alone**. **Drokk**.





The voice. Drags papercuts over my poise and craps on my confidence. This thing going up and down my spine -- I've paid for less. That voice, I've heard it before.



The Boss. Sneaky bastard. Decade-and-a-half at the dissecting edge. More close shaves than a wax-allergy werewolf, but always hanging on. New ideas, old ways. Fresh faces. Seedy places. Slick stommhead'll do whatever it takes to stay on top, and... drokk it all... enjoys every gruddamn second. DeMarco needs to be told. She got the wrong guy. It ain't nearly so easy to take down a fifteen-year institution.

On the other hand, she's emotional. She's vulnerable. She thinks I just saved her life... Maybe I'll tell her in the morning.



PETTY CRIMES

Script: Simon Spurrier

Art: Frazer Irving

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 238-239



They say **dogs're man's best friend**. I **had** one once.

Menu said **Veal Vindaloo**.
I shoulda known **better**.

Welcome to **Angeltown**.

This neighbourhood, **man's best friend** comes in **three shapes**.

CLIQ?
CHOW TIME!

You got the one who
keeps you **alive**...

W-WHERE'S THE
WELCOME PARTY,
PAL?

I BEEN SAVING
THIS STUFF ALL
W--

...The one who
keeps you **wanting**
to be alive...

And then the one who discourages
other drokkers from **stopping** you
being alive -- usually by chewing off
their spugging **faces** and sucking on
the **hormonal brainstomm** inside.

EEK

Pets, huh? You ask me, a
dog's just a piece of meat
away from being a bitch,
and here in Angeltown --



--every **day's** one of those.

They also say owners end up looking like their pets.

Figure that makes me a slaving silicate super-predator with a black hole appetite and a growing disregard for obedience.

I guess one in three ain't bad...

...though I ain't sure about giving birth outta my skin.

HEY! WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU PLAYING AT?

HARD ENOUGH FEEDING ONE DEMON-CROCODILE, SPUGGO, BUT TWO?

There's also the minor issue of **illegality**. Anyone official catches me with the **Giger** wannabe here, my old pals in the badge brigade are gonna throw the book. Shelf-unit and all.

SKWITCH

AND I AIN'T SURE I APPROVE OF THIS LITTLE **IMAGE CHANGE**, EITHER. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS **TOO MANY TENTACLES**.

Point is, X-T backup is all very well, but soon as it starts getting **malicious**, **misbehaved** or -- Jovus -- **maternal**, it's time to **panic**. Right now, Clia's getting to be a **liability** quicker than a flammable firetruck.

I should kill him.

JUST...STAY OUT OF TROUBLE, OKAY?

AND STOP DROKKING GROWING!

Liability or not, nobody likes to say g'bye to a loyal pal...

...specially when there's so damn few of the drokkers around.

bleep
bleep
bleep

...YEAH, YEAH...

PETE?
WHAT'S --

IT'S TROUBLE,
JACK.

Corvid Pete.
Another Wally.



Judges were
animals, he'd
be a chameleon.
Guy blends in
like octopus
oilpaint.

He says it's
bad. He says
the crooked
creep at the
top of the pile
is running a
cull, and any-
one deemed
disloyal is
munce.

Sector Chief Daveez.
Drokker. Judges were
animals, he'd be a
quad-joined cobra.
Bendier than an
origami hour.



Some nights,
I have
mongoose
dreams.

Pete says
Daveez is
making a
move. Says
he's sent out
his tame SUS
geeks to keep
tabs on us.
Dig for dirt.

Pete says the hag who
tailed him reported
he'd 'disconnected with
judicial protocols'. Too
many bad habits.



Mandatory
sentence of
ten on Titan.

Pete says he's
out. Rogue.
Fled like a
custard
cockerel. He
says he wants
to let me know:

YOU'RE NEXT,
JACK.

nok
nok
nok



SJS. 'Special Judicial Squad.' That's the Sinister Jeopardy Sect to you and me. Depending who you ask, they're 'the Judges who judge the Judges', the brakes on fascism, or a bunch of drokking drokkheaded evil drokks.

Turns out they come in
undercover flavour too.

MISTER POINT?

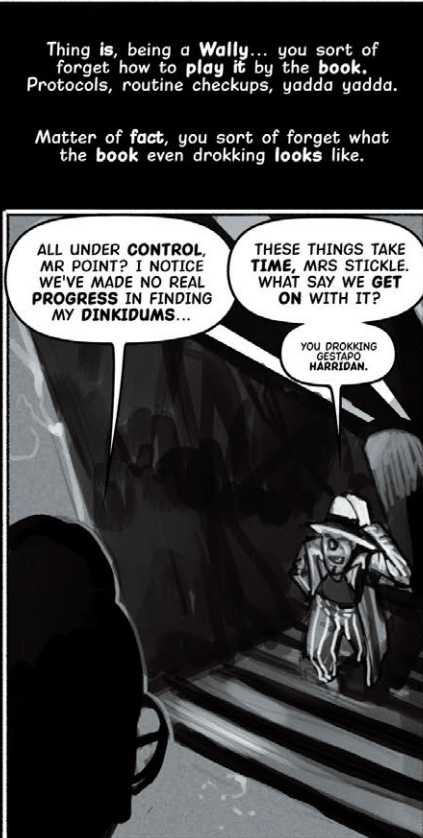
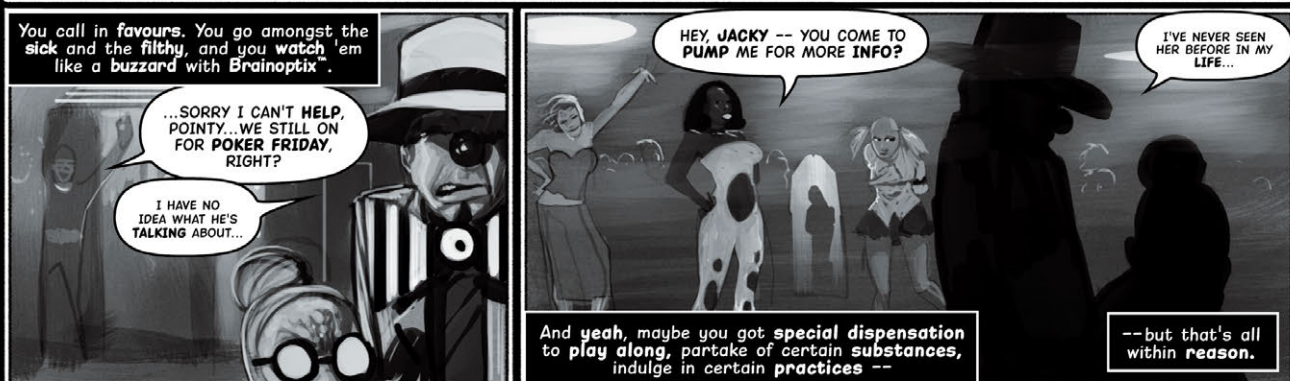
YOU'VE JUST
GOT TO HELP
ME...

call suspended

She says her name's
Mrs Stickie, and she's
85. She says some bozo
stole her breeding pair of
endangered pigeonfish,
and I'm supposed to find
them.

She says she'll be
tagging along to make
sure I ain't mis-spending
her creds, and she's so
drokking SUS she might
as well wear a sign.

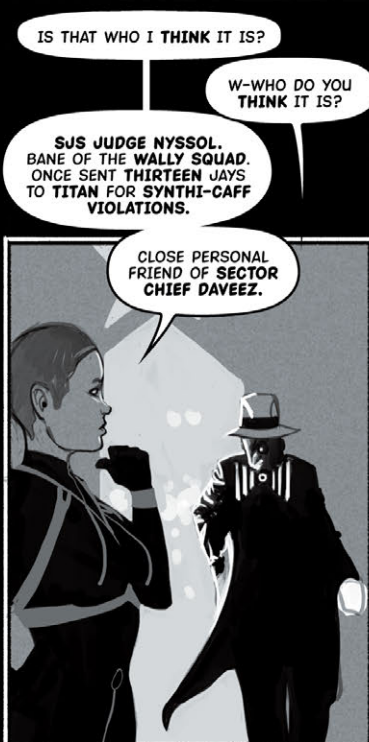
Missing pets. I hate missing pets.



Let me tell you: missing pets are **thirsty work**. Problem is, a swig of the **sweetstuff** right now'd be up there with a **whaleburger** at a **Weight Watchers' wedding**: **ina-spugging-ppropriate**. If there's worse than **hell**, this is it.

Miss **Anne Thropé**. If the **teks** could take the word **'wow'** and turn it into a **broad**, stick her in a **Lyera vacuum** and do something **dangerous** with her **smile**, here's the **result**.

Funny thing. Hearing all this stuff, it's sort of a **relief**...



All evening, I been imagining the **irony**. 'Poor old **Jack**,' it went, 'running about like a blue-assed **simply** for this **dame**, acting all **goody-goody** cos he thinks she's **SJS**...Wouldn't it be **hilarious** if it's just **coincidence** she showed up when she **did**, and she's really just some **kook** off the **street**?'

Yeah. **Hilarious**. You spend any time in **Angeltown**, **cynicism** comes **easy**.



That **killer** smile.

Angeltown docks. People say this sector's an open sewer, so I guess this is the overflow.



Where all the stomm disappears outta the system, see?

Turns out Johann Herneaja and his ScandeNavy sidestepped into smuggling. Rare breeds, shipped offcoast to the Euro-Taxidermists. Good cred, if the haul's right. Fresh dispatch every Monday. Guess what day it is.



AND YOU DEDUCED ALL THAT JUST ADJUSTING YOUR BRACES?

THE TWANGING FOCUSES THE MIND.

YOU PLANNING ON RISKING LIFE AND LIMB, OR YOU GONNA STAY HERE AS BEFITS A DAME OF YOUR AGE?



FIGURES.

THERE! LOOK! BEHIND THE ZEPHYRFROG CAGE! MY DINKIDUMS!



OKAY, OKAY... I'LL HANDLE THIS.

YOU STAY DOWN. I'M GONNA CALL US SOME BACK-UP.

BACK-UP? FROM WHERE?



Eldster's playing it straight. Not so easy to catch her out.

THE SUGARPLUM FAIRIES. NOW KEEP QUIET.



Guy from Control says he's got helmets en route, then you can hear him grin.

'It'll take a while,' he says. 'Gotta go through the official channels.'

Everyone's a drokking comedian.



HEY, FELLERS. TIME TO SPLIT--

SQUAAAWK

AAARRRK

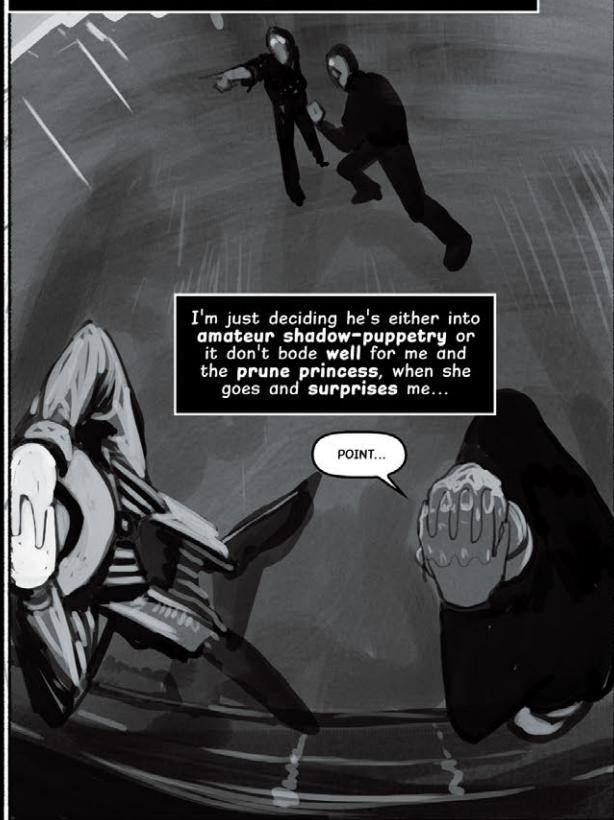


HEY! THAT'S
MY DROKKIN'
GUN!



'KEEP IT QUIET.'
HE SAYS. 'I'LL HANDLE
THIS,' HE SAYS...

These goons, I can't understand a word they're saying. They're kinda **animated**, and one of them keeps making **hand motions** like maybe a **shark's** mouth...



I'm just deciding he's either into **amateur shadow-puppetry** or it don't bode well for me and the **prune princess**, when she goes and **surprises** me...

POINT...



LET'S QUIT
DROKKING AROUND.

I KNOW YOU KNOW
WHO I AM. YOU KNOW
WHO SENT ME, AND
YOU KNOW WHAT I'M
HERE FOR.

NEWSFLASH.
INCRIMINATING
EVIDENCE LOSES ITS
ATTRACTION WHEN
YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE
FISHBAIT.



WE'VE SUSPECTED
FOR A LONG TIME
YOU'VE GOT SOME...
UNUSUAL ALLIES.

YOU GET US OUT
OF THIS, POINT --
BY THE BOOK OR
NOT -- AND I'LL KEEP
DAVEEZ OFF YOUR
BACK FOR GOOD.

JUDGE'S
WORD.

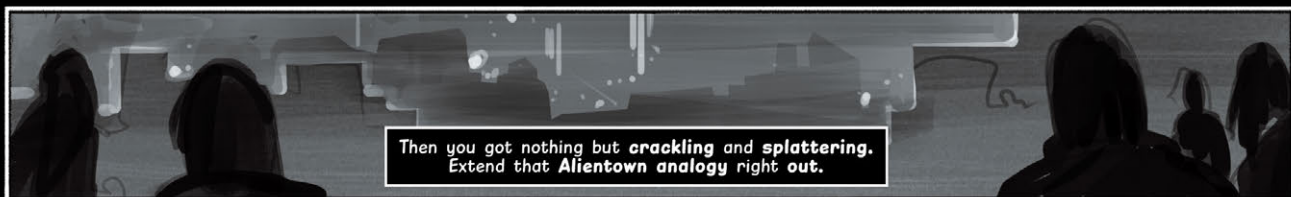


What's to lose, Jack?

PHEEEEP

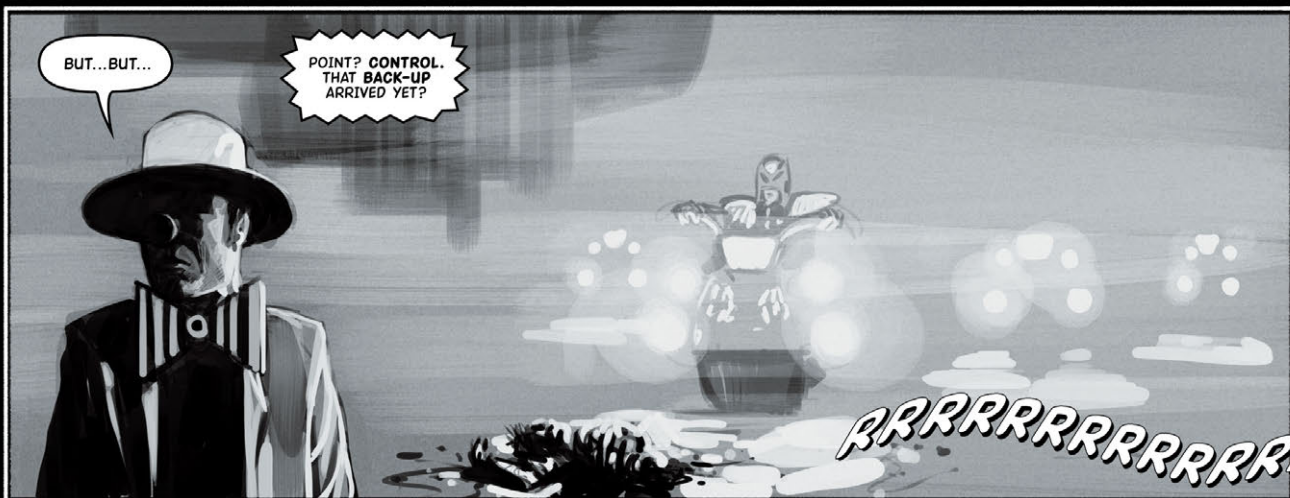
It starts kinda like an **open door night** at the **High Dive**.
Like a **sumo stampede** in the **distance**...

Somewhere out in the **mist**, a flock of caged **spiderbats**
cries out like a **pro's** first night working **Alientown**.



A **radgoat** bleats for **half a second**, then **screams** like a **fattie** with a **foodless fridge**. All over there's the sound of **wood** splintering,
animals getting **dead**, and something **hissing** through **greedy gobbles**.



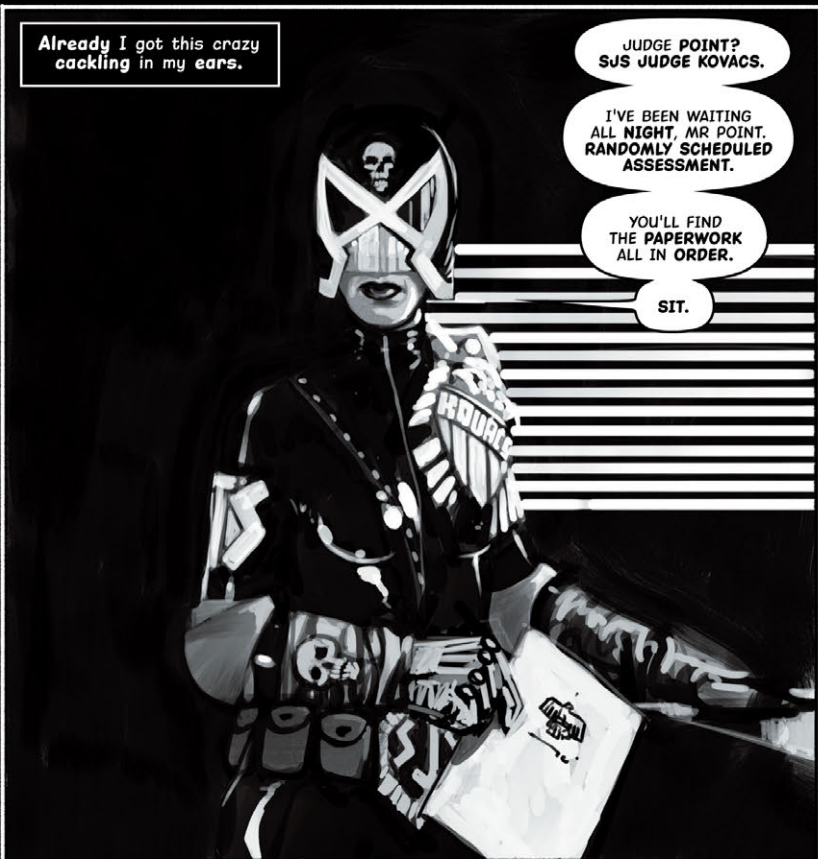


Time I get back to the sweat-factory, it's getting on for dawn. You figure the helmets woulda quit the questions around the fiftieth 'I don't know', but those guys are perceptive like hyenas are hygienic.

Funny thing, on the subject of scavengers...



Already I got this crazy cackling in my ears.



JUDGE POINT?
SJS JUDGE KOVACS.

I'VE BEEN WAITING ALL NIGHT, MR POINT. RANDOMLY SCHEDULED ASSESSMENT.

YOU'LL FIND THE PAPERWORK ALL IN ORDER.

SIT.

This is drokked up. They never send out two Gestapo goons at once. Someone's lying to me. The way I see it, this fem, she looks the part. She's got the papers and the poise. And yeah, it'd be just swell to play good cop/bad cop with the leatherclad lovely, but what's more important right now is:

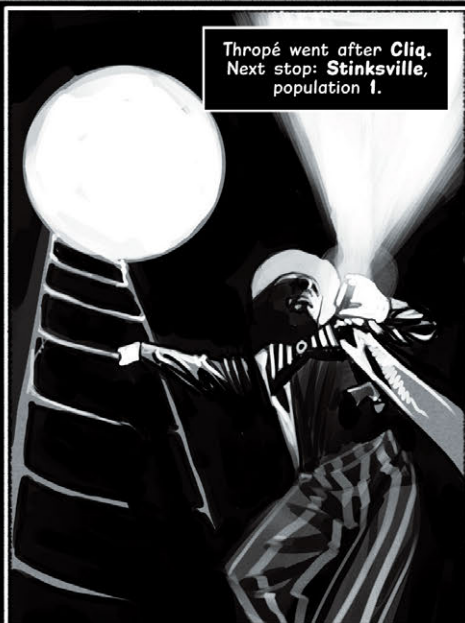


SORRY, SUGAR --
GOTTA CHECK ON
SOMETHING.

HEY!



I need to speak to Anne Thropé. Truth be told, I kinda like the idea of lying as far as she's concerned -- but only in the horizontal sense. She told me the withered witch is SJS, and if that ain't the case then who the drokk is she?



Thropé went after Cliq.
Next stop: Stinksville,
population 1.

Usually.



CLIQ?
YOU HERE?



Rats.

You spend any time living in Angeltown, you get to **understand** them -- same way a mosquito understands malaria.

Example: Given the **choice**, a rat don't just come **sauntering** into the lair of a colossal carnivore.

It don't tend to run round and round in **circles**, then get a **heart attack** and die.

It don't tend to **smell** quite so **strongly** of... of...



'A-Dren'. That's **adrenocorticotrophic hormone** or **bad drokking juju**, depending on your vocab.

Cliq's a **silicate alien lifeform** who **drinks cerebral soup**. Some twisted motherdrokker's been loading **rodents** to the gills with **junkie-juice**, then sending them straight to him.

Hormonal Home Delivery. Pre-fab puberty. Jovus.

No wonder he's grown.





She says her name's
Rita Delphin. She's a Psi.

Up til **three months** back she
was the kinda **psi** with a **badge**
and a **bike**. The **legal** kind.
Now?

She says she's been tampering
with my **perceptions** since we
met, so I see her **different**. In
Angeltown you get by on your
talents, remember, so I tell her:
hey, neat **trick**. Then I stick the
gun even **further** up the little
bitchdroke's **nostril** and tell her
again to **fess**. She looks at the
ground a minute, then she says:
'Let's get a cab.'



Baby Rapturs. That's what'll
drive a **dame** to such **long**
gruddam **lengths**.

She says **her** job was to get me
out of the office and **into** the
hot water. She says all them
animals at the **docks** last night
were pumped-up like **A-Dren**
balloons, so when **Clia** played
the **smorgasbord** **snatch** he
went **futsie**.

Total hormone overload. Out of
control. **Reproducing** like a
randy rabbit.



And who **directed** us to the
docks? Who showed up **just** in
time to **follow** the **fiend**?



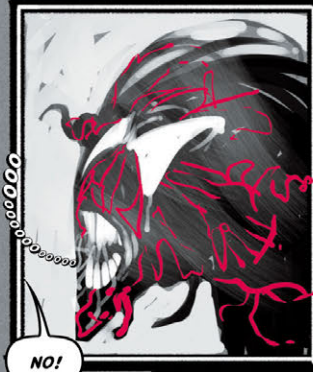
THEY'RE DOWN THERE.

I CAN SENSE THEM.

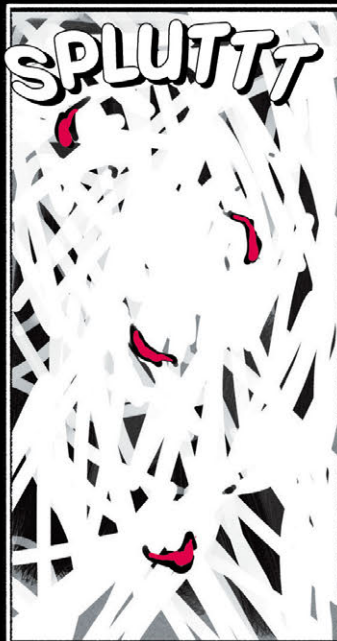


IT'S WOUNDED!
FINISH IT!

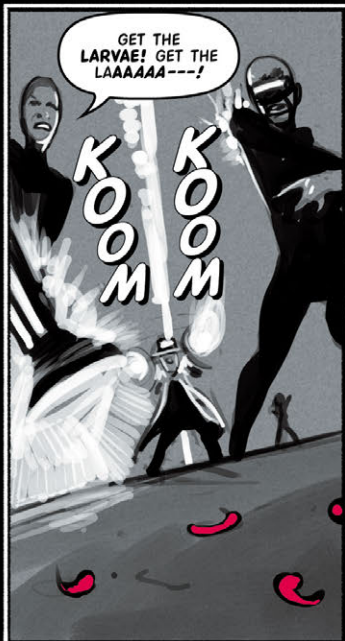
CLIQ!



NO!



SPLUTT



GET THE LARVAE! GET THE LAAAAA---!

KOOM
KOOM

Ain't it always the way? There you are, minding your own business, getting ready to shoot the holy spugging bejovus out of the piston-perfect peach you been coveting all week --

--when a pair of rare feathered barracuda try to chew off your head.



AAAAA

Times like **this**, the mind gets **real** focused. Starts **wondering**. Like: who could convince two **edgy** **airborne** **ichthyoids** to attack a **seething** **simpo**? Same subject, who could make a **hormonal** **rat** take a voluntary **zoom** to its own **drokking** **doom**?



Psi.

I make a **rule** of never hitting a **broad**.

Call me **old-fashioned**.



Welcome to **Angeltown**.

Pets, huh? **Domesticate** the little **drokkers** much as you **want**, they still do what comes **naturally**.



NO! NO, YOU **LITTLE BASTA--**



HI JACK.

HI TOOTS.

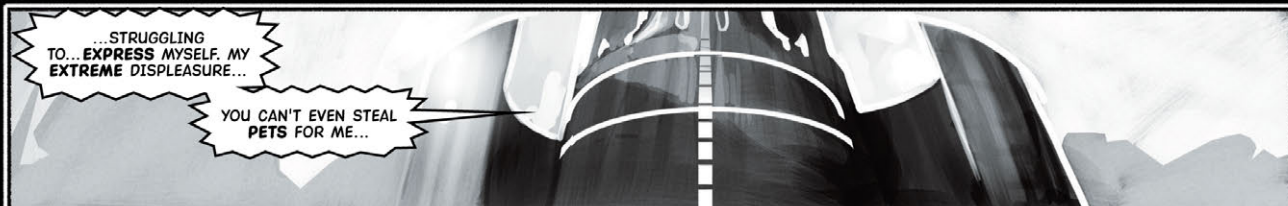
We **stare** at each other a **long** time. I ain't entirely sure **why**.
I tell her I **trusted** her, and it comes out like the noise a **mouse**'d make right before you **trod** on it.
She doesn't bother to **answer**.
I tell her she's responsible for the deaths of thirteen **ScandeNavy** **smugglers**, and by all rights I should **take** her in.
She reminds me I **owe** her one.
We **stare** some more.



DROKK OFF OUT OF HERE.

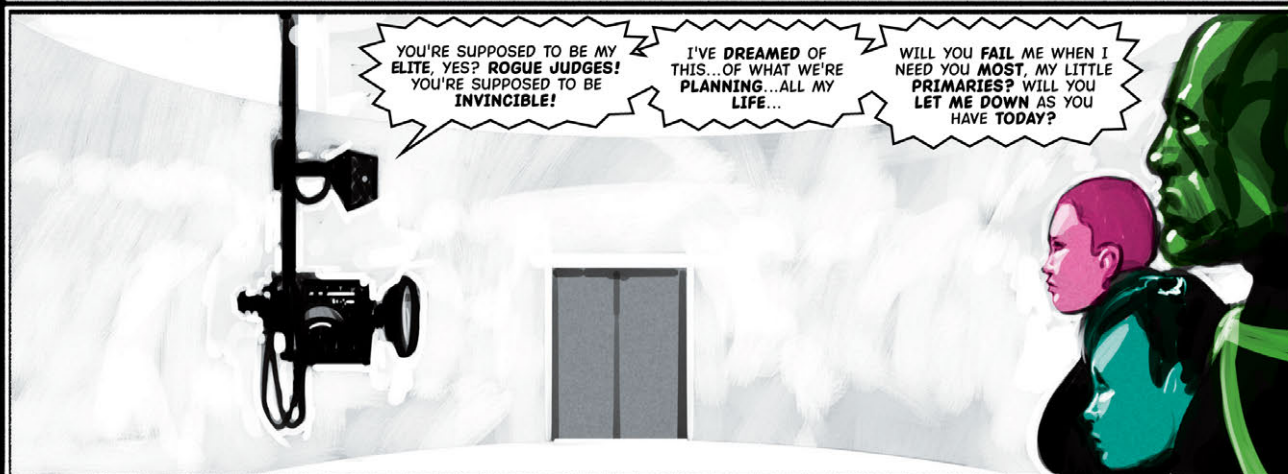
That **killer** **smile**. It's quite a **talent**.

Maybe I **am** going **native**.



...STRUGGLING
TO...**EXPRESS** MYSELF. MY
EXTREME DISPLEASURE...

YOU CAN'T EVEN STEAL
PETS FOR ME...



YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE MY
ELITE, YES? **ROGUE JUDGES!**
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE
INVINCIBLE!

I'VE **DREAMED** OF
THIS...OF WHAT WE'RE
PLANNING...ALL MY
LIFE...

WILL YOU **FAIL** ME WHEN I
NEED YOU **MOST**, MY LITTLE
PRIMARYES? WILL YOU
LET ME DOWN AS YOU
HAVE TODAY?

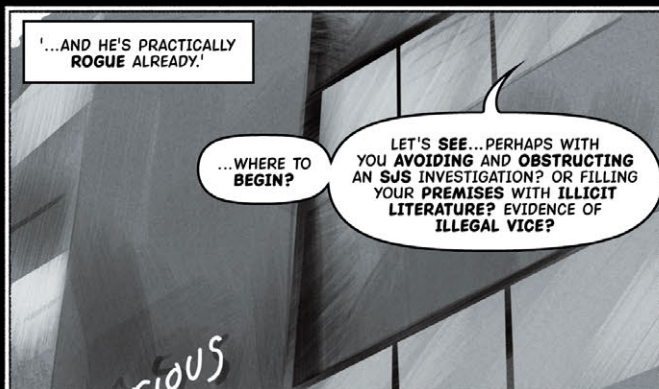


HHHHH

PERHAPS...PERHAPS I'M
BEING **UNFAIR**. THERE'S
ONLY **THREE** OF YOU...

I TRUST YOU HAVE A
CANDIDATE FOR THE
FOURTH? SOMEONE
NEUTRAL?

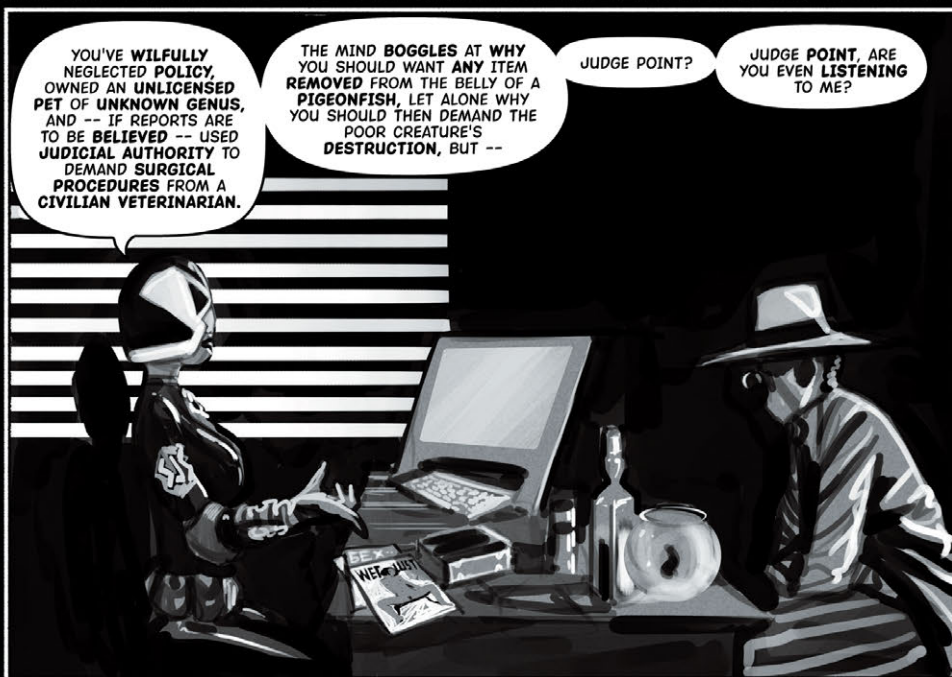
YES, MASTER.
VERY **MUCH** SO.



'...AND HE'S PRACTICALLY
ROGUE ALREADY.'

...WHERE TO
BEGIN?

LET'S **SEE**...PERHAPS WITH
YOU **AVOIDING** AND **OBSTRUCTING**
AN **SJS** INVESTIGATION? OR FILLING
YOUR PREMISES WITH **ILLICIT**
LITERATURE? EVIDENCE OF
ILLEGAL VICE?



YOU'VE **WILFULLY**
NEGLECTED **POLICY**,
OWNED AN **UNLICENSED**
PET OF **UNKNOWN** GENUS,
AND -- IF REPORTS ARE
TO BE **BELIEVED** -- USED
JUDICIAL AUTHORITY TO
DEMAND **SURGICAL**
PROCEDURES FROM A
CIVILIAN VETERINARIAN.

THE MIND **BOGGLES** AT WHY
YOU SHOULD WANT ANY ITEM
REMOVED FROM THE BELLY OF A
PIGEONFISH, LET ALONE WHY
YOU SHOULD THEN DEMAND THE
POOR CREATURE'S
DESTRUCTION, BUT --

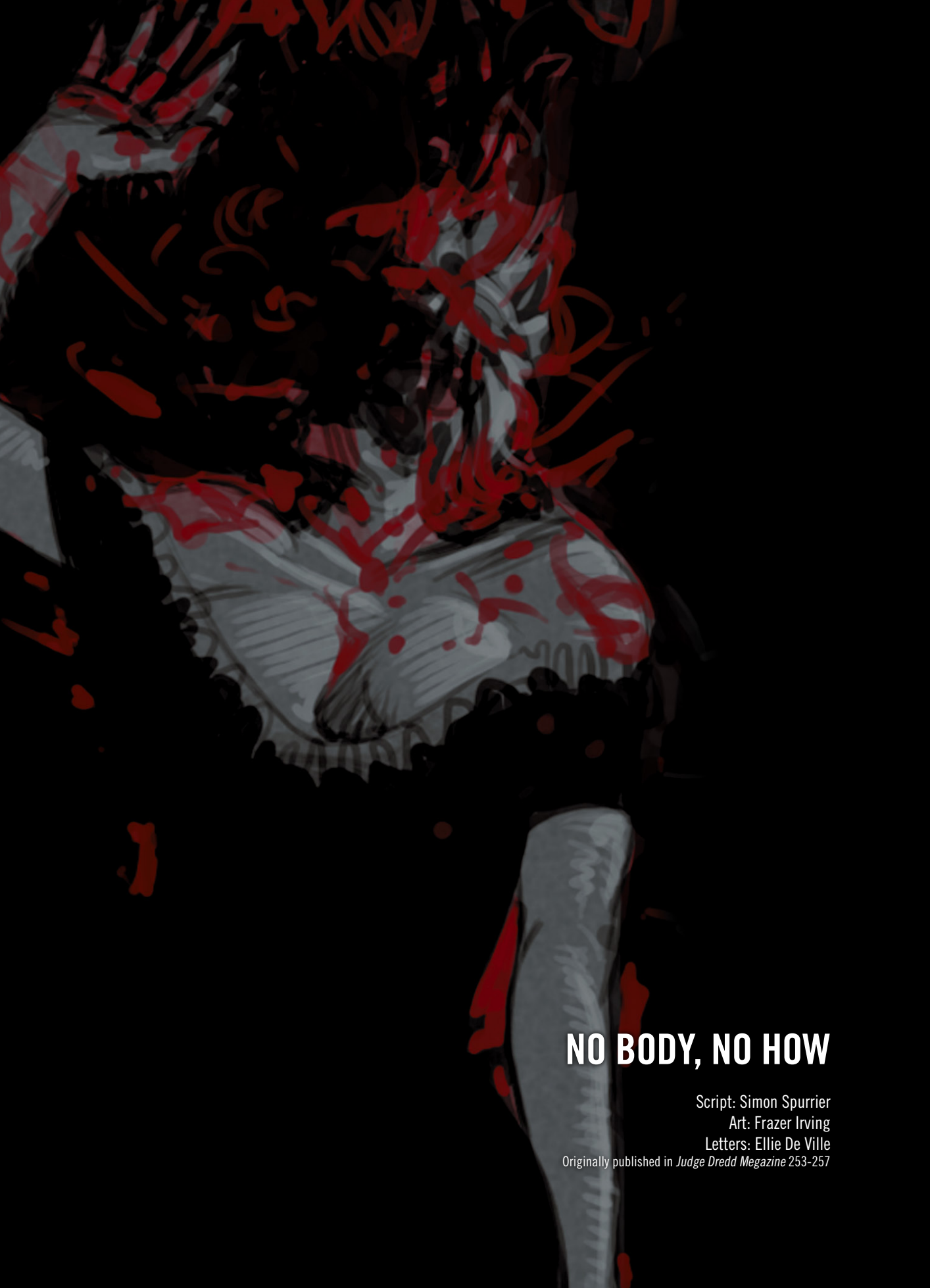
JUDGE POINT?

JUDGE POINT, ARE
YOU EVEN LISTENING
TO ME?



WH...?

H--HAS ANYONE
EVER TOLD YOU HOW
TALENTED YOU ARE?



NO BODY, NO HOW

Script: Simon Spurrier

Art: Frazer Irving

Letters: Ellie De Ville

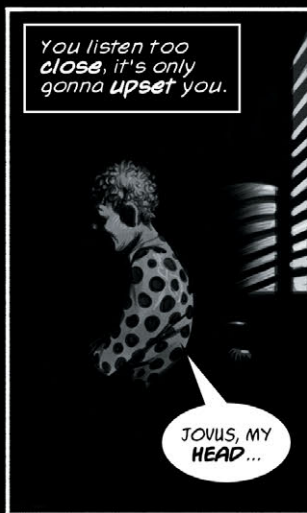
Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 253-257

They say you never
hear what **wakes** you.



Lucky for me, I guess.
Streetsounds outside
like a **foghorn fiesta**,
and round here you
gotta treat **nocturnal**
noise like the
choccocat chatline™:

You listen too
close, it's only
gonna **upset** you.



I got **holes** in my
memory like a swiss-
cheese sponge, and my
guts — stommm — I
figure I can trust 'em
'bout as far as a dame:
one wrong move,
they're **outta here**.

Then you'll recall you're in **Angeltown**, and
pokin' in dark places... that ain't **smart**.

OH
STOMM....



Listen: I've been **set up**. I've
been set up like a **shot-glass**
showdown, and if it's been
done **right** there's a tipped-off
trespasser en route right now
to catch me **gore-gloved**....

It **must** be a set-up,
on accounta how if
it ain't...

Even so, this ain't **new**.
Hung-over wake-ups and me
go together like whiskey
and **more** whiskey, and
you'd figure there's nothing
so bad can't be **improved**
with a little **light**.



... then I did
this **myself**.



Yeah, you can bet your last
crispy cred that hustling up
them stairs right now is a
herd of **helmets**, waiting on
me to brandish the **badge**.

Then **twenty** on Titan
for Murder Most
Motiveless, to regret
not splitting sooner.



Any minute now.



Sooner or later, you gotta figure, either this
set-up's effective like **prophylactics** to **priests**,
or there's more going on than meets the **Eye**.

Private Eye, that
is. That'll be **me**.

Broad's got a **hole**
through her face like
Harpoon Happy Hour
down Pincushion
Pete's Piercing Palace.

... **Curves** like
those I'd recognise
anywhere.



ROTH.

MEEKLY
ROTH.

And sure, I got **sledge-
hammers** in my **skull**
and my memories've
gone thick like moronic
Munce, but even so...



A week ago, and here's me up to my **neck** like a giraffe's jugular, playing **ninja** through a **Westside warehouse**.

Whole damn place — goons, guns, guess-how-legal-it-ain't-goods — all under the name of **Dexy Roth**.

Guy's a stripe-suited slick-stacked psycho. Works for the **Boss**, and that's all you need to know.

I shouldn't **be** here.

Recent weeks, old Dexy's been flashing **cash**. Word is, he's smuggling from **offworld**. Word is, no drokker knows **what** he's offloading. Word is, he catches my nose in his **knickers**. I'll be plumbing new depths of **Dead**.

I'm an undercover Judge. Supposed to be **discreet** like a **special-ops squid**...



... But then, Angeltown's a **devil** for **discretion**.

WHO ARE YOU?

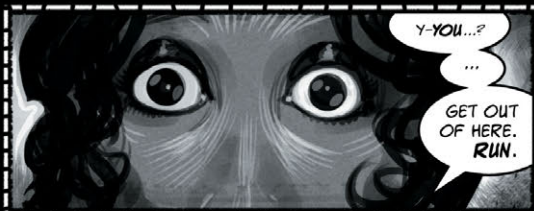
UH...

WHAT'RE YOU DOING ON MY **HUSBAND'S** PROPERTY?



Dames. Why's it always a **dame**?

Five seconds before, chances of getting out alive were **fair** to **futile**. Add a **broad** and a **Blastboogie 9000**. I'm going down like a **flightless fellationaut**.



Y-YOU...?

GET OUT OF HERE. **RUN**.

I know, I know, **mercy** in **Angeltown**. Makes less sense than a **kook-cube crossword**. But then again:

Dames. Whaddya **expect**?

Case in point:
showing up
sans
cerebrum in
my drokking
hab. Typic—



Well there you
go. A little
later than
expected, but
they're here.
Let's get this
cliche back on
track.

NOK NOK NOK



UNARMED, HUH?

PITY.

Galen DeMarco.
Ex-Judge, rival P.I.,
hotter than lesbian
lava. Last time I
checked, I got
more chance
greeting a Loch
Ness Kennedy at
my door than the
Piston Princess...



She says we're s'posed to
have a date. She says I
called two hours ago with
an invite to Gordon
Bleugh's All-You-Can-Pay
place up on Proops. I have
no memory of this.

What I should be saying
is: Come on in, let me fix
you a drink while I fetch
my ceremonial snazz.
Or hey, we could skip the
mortgage meal and
move straight to the
Actually-I-Don't-Drink-
Synthiaff part...

Instead, what
I'm saying is:



NOW'S...
AH... NOW'S
NOT A GOOD
TIME.



It's gonna be one
of those nights.

Meekly Roth. Nothing on the citynet. Even the Judge system's firing blanks.

Means either she's led a blameless life with a record cleaner than a cardinal's conscience, or that ain't her real name.



In Angeltown, no way is it option a).

I need a drink. Looks like I beat me to it. Sure feels like it.

Empty. Wish I could remember how. Yeah, definitely one of those n—



CRRKKK

CRRKKK



GET OFF! DROKK OFF, Y'FREAK!

SHOO!

Meet Larf. His old man Clig was kinda my pet. Think illegal psychotic sewer-dwelling crocasaurus and you're there. Clig bought the farm — and exploded all the hell over it — not so long ago. Left little Larf here behind.

Clig turned out crazier than a weasel's wedding with a taste for sliced cit. Larf here, well...



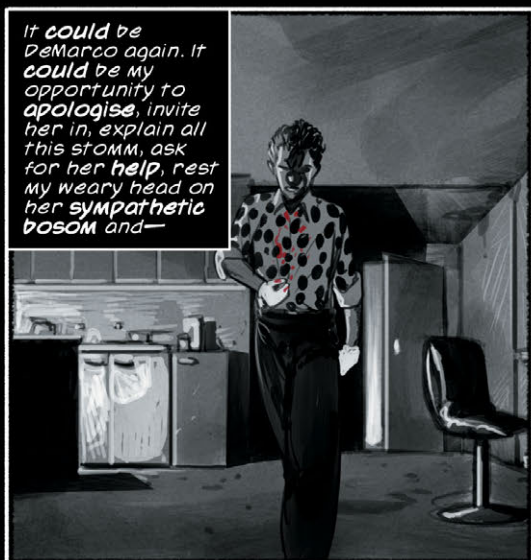
**NOK
NOK**

Larf's a lot like his Pa, only with patience and rationality removed.

Truth is. I'm starting to figure he might be a 'she'.

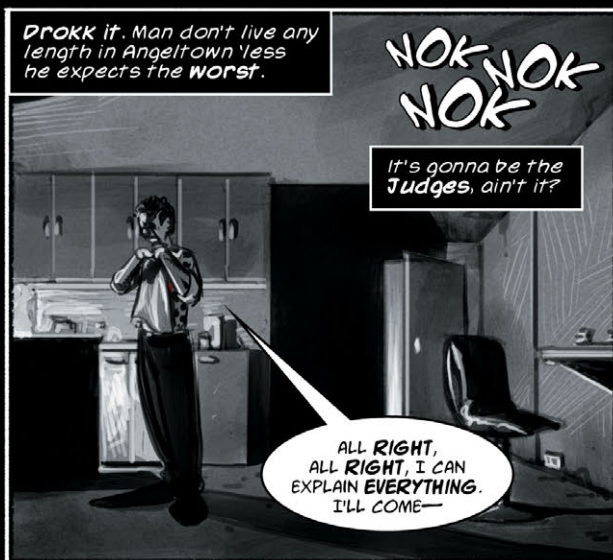


OH GRUD...



It *could* be DeMarco again. It *could* be my opportunity to apologise, invite her in, explain all this stommm, ask for her help, rest my weary head on her sympathetic bosom and—

—And yeah, then we can go buy some juicy pigwings together.



Dröck it. Man don't live any length in Angeltown 'less he expects the worst.

NOK NOK NOK

It's gonna be the Judges, ain't it?

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, I CAN EXPLAIN EVERYTHING. I'LL COME—



... QUIETLY.

Y-YOU... AIN'T THE JAYS...

WOSS YER POINT?



COMES RIGHT AFTER THE 'JACK'.

DAT'S VERY CLEVER. DAT'S A VERY CLEVER LITTLE SAYING, MISTER, ON ACCOUNTA HOW IT'S YOUR NAME, RIGHT?

WE GET IT. A-HA-HA-HA.

MR ROTH, DAT'S OUR EMPLOYER, HE HAS A LITTLE SAYING FING LIKE DAT ALL OF HIS OWN.

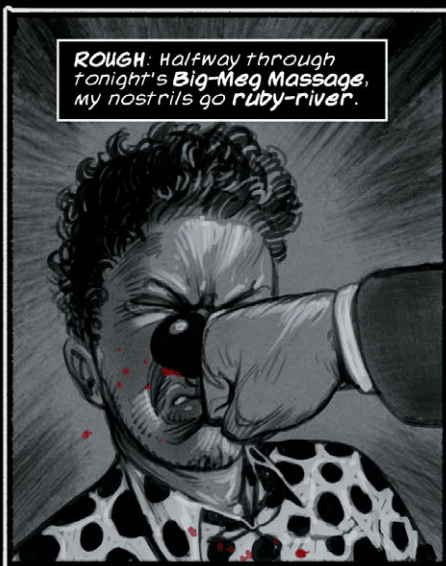


'T GOES:

"'IF DAT WOMAN-STEALIN' SHIT POINTY DON'T TELL YA WHERE MY WIFE IS, BOGGS, YOU ANNA BOYS SHOULD STILL PLUG 'IM, ONLY DO IT EXTRA SLOW...'"

Angeltown. Expect the worst. 'COS it'll always go one better...

Angeltown was a
sideshow, I figure
she'd be a
half-bearded
broad. You wanna
get to know her,
you gotta take the
rough with the
smooth. case in
point —



SMOOTH:
Consequently, no
droker spots
the burgundy
backwash
already stainin'
my threads.



SMOOTH: Just so happens I **do** know the
womanly whereabouts. I tell these goons
where she is, I figure the stommkicking stops.



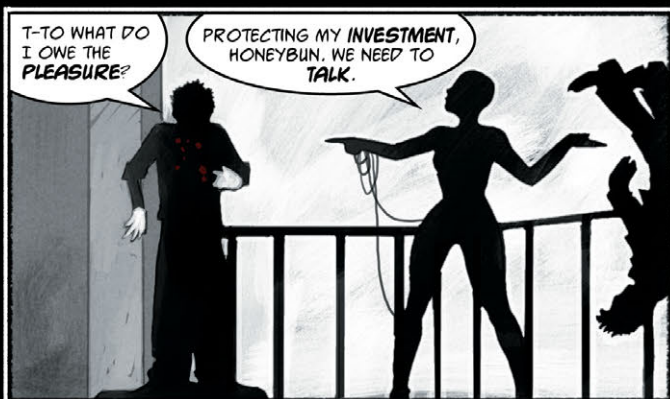


ROUGH: I drokkin' hate surprises.

Miss Anne Thrope. Cute name's the only part of the package ain't **deadly serious**.

Serious **curves**, serious **kit**, serious **cause-for-concern**. Last time we tangled she killed my sense of reason and my slaver's sidekick. I let her **walk**. **Broads**, huh?

way to think of Thrope is: **radswan** on a **lavalake**. There's a **lot** goin' on below the **surface**.



T-TO WHAT DO I OWE THE **PLEASURE**?

PROTECTING MY **INVESTMENT**, HONEYBUN. WE NEED TO **TALK**.



M-MAYBE SOME **OTHER DAY**? I'M KINDA **BU—**

TONIGHT, JACKY.



LET'S... UH... LET'S HIT A **BAR**. NEUTRAL TERRITORY.

SOUNDS PERFECT. YOU SURE YOUR **FEMFRIEND'D** APPROVE?



F-FEMFRIEND... ?

LITTLE SLITCH YOU BEEN HANGING WITH. WE'VE SPOTTED YOU TOGETHER A **FEW** TIMES, STUP...

IS IT **SERIOUS**?





Back with the flashback fandango. Hurts like a resyk rampage, with an eyeball enema for seconds.

I figure we're back five days here.

Sector 13 Shop-o-rama. This time of year, they say the MeccaMalls downtown're lit up like a Christmas Tree convention. Figure that makes this place an irradiated pine:

Small and dark, with freakfowl nesting in every nook and used needles underfoot.



Though once in a while, if you're lucky, a check-it-out chick might just pause to perch.



SEE ANYTHING YOU LIKE?

WH... ?



FOLLOWED YOU FROM YOUR OLD MAN'S JOINT. I GOT A WEIRD FIXATION WITH ANY BROAD GOES TO LENGTHS NOT TO KILL ME.

THE OTHER NIGHT, LADY. WHY DIDN'T YOU SHOOT?



M-MY HUSBAND SENDS MINDERS SOMETIMES. TO WATCH.

IF THEY SEE US TOGETHER...



I CAN HELP YOU. GET YOU OUTTA HERE, KEEP YOU SAFE. WHAT'S YOUR HUSBAND SMUGGLING, MRS ROTH?

YOU CAN TELL ME. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SCARED NO MORE.



ITS...

...

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, JACK.



I guess I'd say it's good to see her too — especially the way she wiggles when she walks —

Only I'm kinda confused. Exactly when did I give her my name?

Broads, huh? Tryna understand 'em: less point to it than a eunuch's yardstick.

AIN'T YOU EVEN GOT A COAT? NOT EXACTLY INCONSPICU—

SHUT UP. PAY ATTENTION.

I WANT YOU.

Whoa.

IN MY TEAM.

OH.

She says she's assembling a crack unit of **adventuring, espionage, ninja-swinging mercenaries**. Mostly my brain tunes out at the word 'crack'.

She says her employer's got **big changes** in store for Angeltown, and neither the **blues** nor the **boss** are gonna stand in the way.

She says all her **soldiers** are **ex-helmets**. She says getting kicked outta the **force** is sort of an **entry requirement**.

WE'VE BEEN **WATCHING** YOU, JACKY. YOU GOT THE **BADGE**, SURE ENOUGH, BUT YOU'RE NOT A **JAY**. NOT **THROUGH** AND **THROUGH**.

WE'RE GONNA MAKE THINGS **BETTER** — FOR **EVERYONE**. BUT WE NEED YOUR **HELP**. ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS **QUIT**...

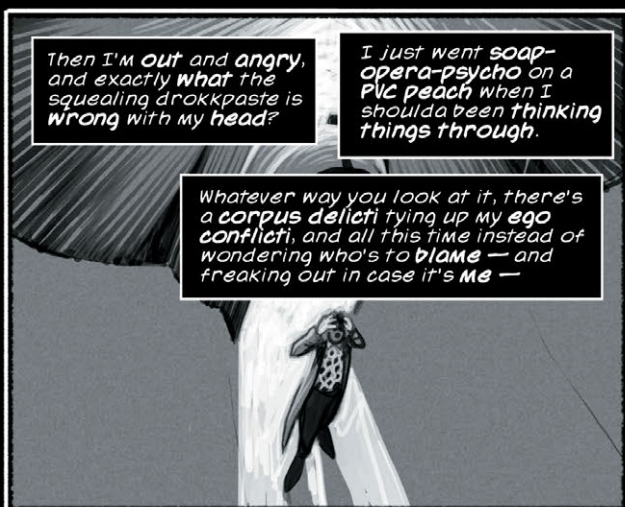
... OR GET **FIRE**D.

Blam. There it is, the last piece to a **junkie's jigsaw**. Under it all — the **novelty nose**, the **flappy feet** — what I **AM** is this: A **drakkin' Judge**.

And sure, maybe I ain't as **straight** as **some**, maybe I play it less by the **book** than the **balls**, but even so: I'm one of the **good guys**.

I hate that I'm even **tempted**.

I AIN'T A **PERP**, DOLL.



Then I'm **out** and **angry**, and exactly **what** the **squealing drokkpaste** is **wrong** with my **head**?

I just went **soap-opera-psycho** on a **PVC peach** when I shoulda been **thinking things through**.

Whatever way you look at it, there's a **corpus delicti** tying up my **ego conflict**, and all this time instead of wondering who's to **blame** — and **freaking out** in case it's **me** —



I shoulda been **acting**.



For this stommm you will **need**: A standard **las-back**.

A **heavy-duty hammer**, for those **tricky-to-trim joints**.

Easywipe **plastic sheets**.

An **empty freezer**.

An **industrial-grade blender**, with replacement **blades**.

Bleach, to **polish** the **plumbing** after every **flush**.

Waterproof wetgear.

A **tough toilet**.

A **strong stomach**.



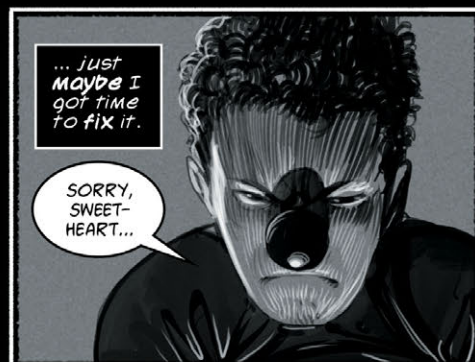
And a **good grip**.

Listen. maybe this really is a **set-up**. You work any time in **Angeltown**, you're gonna pick up **adversaries** quicker than **addictions**.

Plenty of **drokkers** happy to see me **out the force**, out of their **faces**, into the **fire**...

But nobody's **come** yet. Nobody at the **door** to take me in. And **that** means maybe this ain't a **set-up** at all.

And **that** means, whatever **did** happen here, whoever **did** this, however much I don't wanna think about how it might've been **me**...



... just **maybe** I got time to **fix** it.

SORRY, SWEET-HEART...



WHAT'S—?



SJS Judge Kovacs. Few months back, this dame pinned me for every damn indiscretion there is. Wasn't as fun as it sounds. Obstruction, vice, rulebreaking and downright dirtiness. I'm on report for the whole shebang.

The chance to meet a leather-lined lovely once a week and debate depravity? You'd figure no force on Earth's gonna make me forget that.



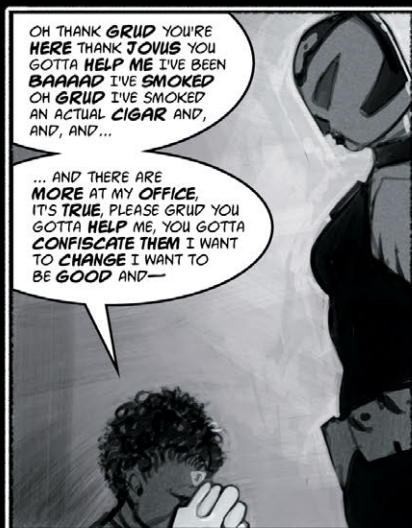
Morning. I'd fix you a synthcaff, only I'm outta cowsquirt and I figure the situation's black enough. Let me bring you up to speed.

Right now my bedclothes're five shades of baffling broad's brainjuice, my head feels like a supernova sick-up, I been up all night preparing to carve the cadaver...



... and the gruddamn SJS want in to my hab.

It's gonna take everything I got to keep this broad outta here. It's gonna take charisma, suavenesss, more charm than a leprechaun's breakfast, and...



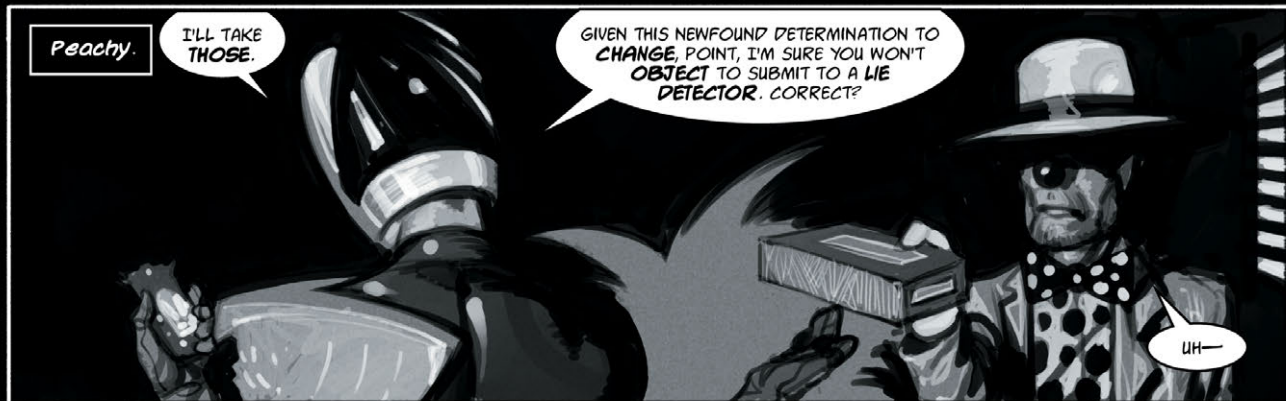
OH THANK GRUD YOU'RE HERE THANK JOVUS YOU GOTTA HELP ME I'VE BEEN BAAAAAD I'VE SMOKED OH GRUD I'VE SMOKED AN ACTUAL CIGAR AND, AND, AND...

... AND THERE ARE MORE AT MY OFFICE, IT'S TRUE, PLEASE GRUD YOU GOTTA HELP ME, YOU GOTTA CONFISCATE THEM I WANT TO CHANGE I WANT TO BE GOOD AND—



Angeltown, huh? Charm 'n' charisma got as much chance round here as virginal virtue.

This sector, you know the rules, you're a nectarine nympho.



Peachy.

I'LL TAKE THOSE.

GIVEN THIS NEWFOUND DETERMINATION TO CHANGE, POINT, I'M SURE YOU WON'T OBJECT TO SUBMIT TO A LIE DETECTOR. CORRECT?

UH—



Only problem with Angeltown, see? The gruddamn rules keep changing.

SO THEN, POINT... YOU BEEN UP TO ANYTHING ELSE YOU SHOULDN'T'VE BEEN?

'SEX? DRUGS?'

'MURDER?'



Lie Detector's a platinum problem, but there's a way 'round. With the birdie it's all in the voice. No sweat count, no brain graph. With the birdie, trick is: be pedantic.



So when the helmeted harridan says:

LET'S TALK SPECIFIC. YOU HAD ANY ALCOHOL SINCE OUR LAST MEETING?

Then what you're thinking is: Alcohol? Like... on its own? Medical? Unsullied by bourbon beauty?



You rewrite the questions in your head and the answers come together like the Mega-Symphony Orchestra's grand finale. You've heard how the birdie ain't 100% reliable, right? Here's why.

It takes an hour, and I gotta tell you: all that concentration's leaving bootprints on my brain.



Monitoring sewage output, she says.

Bang goes that idea...

Outside, Angeltown goes on. Always has, always will. Doesn't give a rat's rectum for Meekly Roth, whoever the drokk she really was.

Well, I do.
I did.

Three days ago:

GOT YOUR
MESSAGE.
WHY YOU
WANNA MEET
H—

THE MINDERS
ARE RIGHT BEHIND ME!
GET GOING!

HEY!

PULL THE DROKK
OVER—

THWAP

LET'S TALK.

We talked. She said
how she was *confused*,
as if that ain't *natural*
for a *fem*.

She said she was
scared. scared of her
old man and what he'd
do if he caught her with
me. She said she was
powerless, she wanted
out, she couldn't
handle 'this cit-life
stomm' no more.

I told her I couldn't
help 'less she
opened up
completely. Pretty
sure I hid the *smirk*.

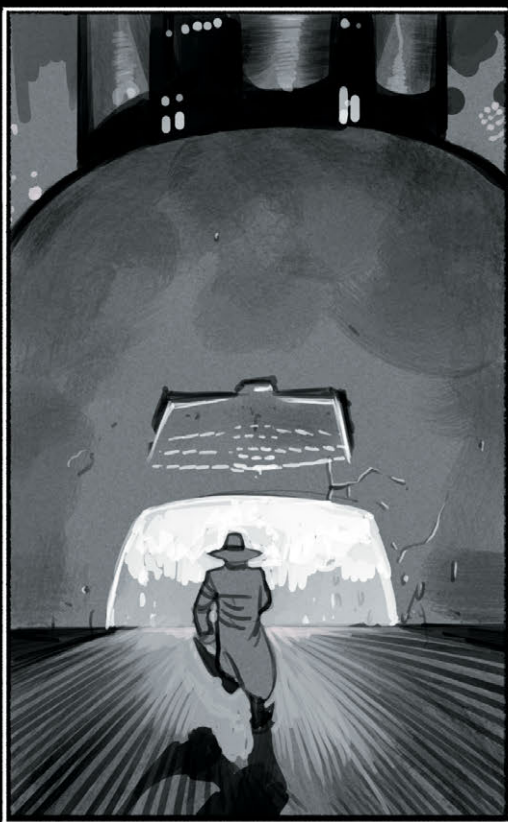
She just
said:

Y-YOU WANT
A *DRINK*,
JACK?

Funny thing: it ain't too regular, a dame trynna get me drunk. Any other time I would be riding the pink pachyderm like a shot — a double, for preference — but... No. I remember thinking:

The way she **watched**. The way she held out her **hand**. The way her **eyes** filled up just as quick as my glass....

Something's not right.





Teks. Teks're just fine by me. Teks got half as many bugs crammed up their butts as Street-Beats, twice as many greycells, and just as many curves.

You give Glave in there a DNA dribble, off the record, and she'll make a match quicker than a steroidal sprint.

All she wants in return is a 'thanks', a 'thinking of you'... and a thousand creds in an offshore account.

**TEK
DIV**

Don't look surprised. This is Angeltown. The name's ironic.

HEY...



Brevin is the personal attache of Sector Chief Daveez.

Daveez is more crooked than a broken slinky. Daveez is to fairness what a syphilitic swamp is to hygiene, and if there's one droknuckled scuzz in the whole of the Meg who'd be happy to see yours truly shipped to Titan for homicide-most-horrid, you know just who.

If Daveez set me up, he's taking his time about knocking me down.

WHAT'S HIS GAME, BREVIN?

TELL THE TRUTH OR BAIL YOUR BALLS. I AIN'T FUSSED.

This is breaking more rules than a stationery-store stampede. This is reckless and feckless and it's gonna get me dead.



I... I... I...

But some things
you just gotta d—



AAAK!

My head. This
is like a...

Like a...

Like something
so drokking
painful I ain't
got time for
smart drokking
analogies.

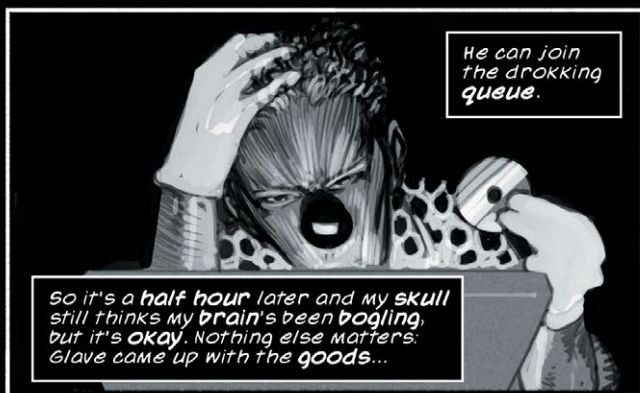
It hurts.



Y-YOU'RE
PATHETIC,
POINT.
YOU'RE
FINISHED.

WHATEVER **STOMM**
YOU'RE IN, HA, IT AIN'T
DOWN TO **US**... BUT YOU
GONE TOO FAR,
JACKY.

THE
CHIEF'S GONNA
SQUASH YOU
FOR THIS...



We can join
the drokking
queue.

So it's a **half hour** later and my **skull**
still thinks my **brain's been bogling**,
but it's **OKAY**. Nothing else matters:
Glave came up with the **goods**...

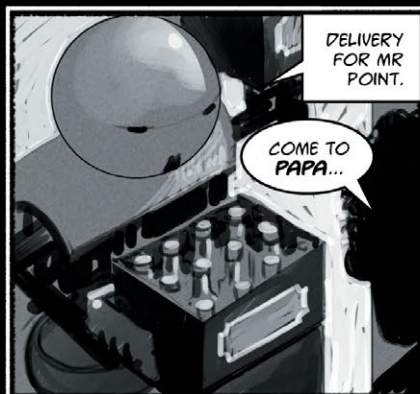


NOK
NOK

HUH?

I got to tell you, this
right here... at **this time**
on **this day of every**
week... this is about the
one time I ain't **afraid**
to open the door.

DROKK set-ups.
DROKK dames.
DROKK Daveez.



DELIVERY
FOR MR
POINT.

COME TO
PAPA...

This is **Angeltown**, and round
these parts the **hardstuff**
might not cure a **problem**, might
not even cure the **headache**
that goes with it, but at the very
least it'll help you **sleep**.



Just so long as
you ain't **averse**
to **company**...

I got **two vices** worth talkin' tall, and if ain't escaped me how they got a lot in **common**. Example:

Scent like an olfactory orgasm.



Taste so fine you want a **triplicate tongue** to make the most.

I tell ya: both these **vices**, they'll mess with your head.



Warm you up like a **krakatoa kettle** an' leave you spinnin' in space.

Both of 'em, the more involved you get, the deeper you wanna **dive**.



An' nine times outta nine you'll regret it the mornin' after.

WHOA.

Both even start with the same letter. And both'll **blemish** your bedclothes when their containers're cracked.



One's **whiskey**. The other ain't.

Here's the thing: when you wake up next to a **bio-degrading bullet-faced broad** with a **smokin' smackcannon** in your hand, all the **whiskey** in the world ain't gonna help.

Broads, huh?

Least they could do is be **honest** 'bout who they are.

DNA testing



SOURCE MATERIAL

AH, **JOVUS**...



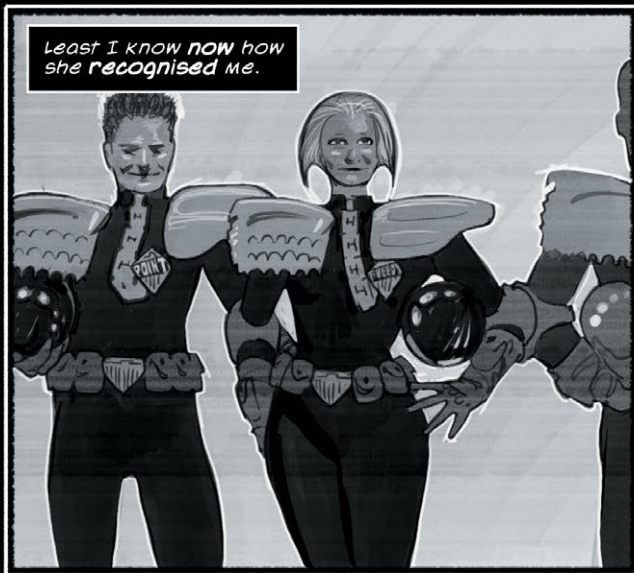
JUDGE FREEDRI DREE
(discharged)



FREEDI DREE....

FORMER JAY,
DISHONOURABLE
DISCHARGE TWO
YEARS INTO STREET
SERVICE...

UNJUDICIAL
LIAISON WITH A
FELLOW JUDGE:
IDENTITY
UNKNOWN...



Least I know **now** how
she **recognised** me.



Says here
she went
walkabout
after she
was fired.

Outer systems,
real **backwater**
stuff.

Magzusi IV. ChininWarne
Prime. lesser Lingo.
The moons of
Tim-buck-drokin'-two.



What did
she find
out there?



Last known location
was the **Epsilon**
System. They never
figured she came
back to the Meg.

New **name**,
new **face**, new
psychotic-
stommcumb-
of-a-husband.

Depressed
like a **key-**
board on
ketamine.

Ain't surprisin'.
Ex-Judges an'
real life go
together like
Muncy Vindaloo
and easy-tear
ass-paper.
Result's the
same.



A **MESS**.



This is the last time I saw her alive. Jovus, I got skull-smarts just tryin' to remember. I'd figure there's somethin' wrong with my brain, only I hate to admit Ma was right all along.





I figure we're overdue
desperate measures.



NOK
NOK
NOK



EVENIN'
FRIGGY.



P-POINTY? YOU... YOU
AIN'T COMIN' IN LIKE
THAT, MAN.

YOU'LL
SCARE MY FREAKIN'
CUSTOM...

Friggy MacGlutinin is scum. **Clever** scum, like the froth on a **Mensa Milkshake**. He's the kind scum attracts desperate people, on account of how the law ain't renowned for its **helping hands**. Friggy, anywhere else but Angeltown, he's a **Black Market Neurosurgeon**. Sort of **scalpel snake** 'll chop out **memories** you don't want. Or maybe find the ones you do. In Angeltown, Friggy's called a **Brain Strain**.



I AIN'T
STAYIN' OUT **HERE**,
FRIGMUND.

I'M COMIN' IN AND
BY GRUD YOU'RE GONNA **HELP** ME,
ON ACCOUNTA HOW IF YOU **DON'T**
I AIN'T **RESPONSIBLE** FOR
WHAT HAPPENS...



I AIN'T **MYSELF**
TODAY, FRIGGY.

W-WHAT'S
YOUR
POINT?



COMES
RIGHT
AFTER THE
JACK.



You want to **know** what's going on. I
understand. You'll find out. Gimme **time**.



What's important is **this**:

An hour later, in a crazy kind of way, *Freddie Dree* just died a *second time*.



She probably deserves a *MOMENT*.

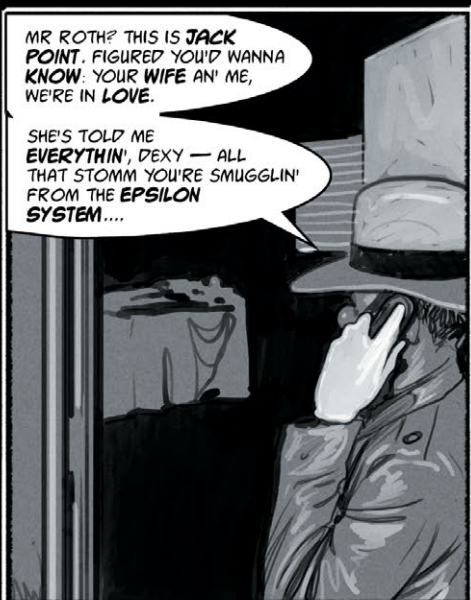
And hey, *you* probably deserve an *EXPLANATION*.

But Angeltown ain't the kinda dame to be *rushed* — she'll take her *sweet time* — an' the best you can hope is that she'll show up lookin' *the part*.



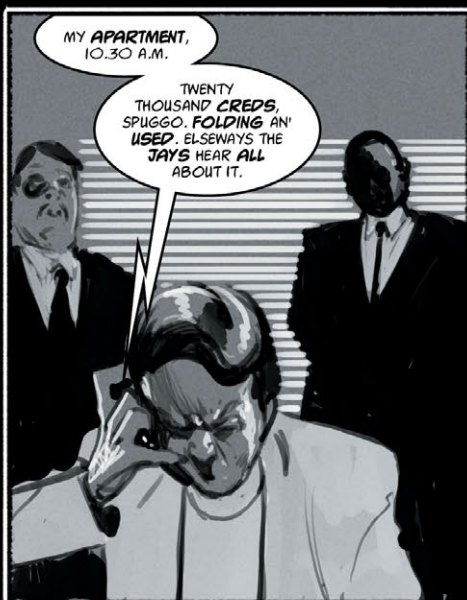
MR ROTH? THIS IS *JACK POINT*. FIGURED YOU'D WANNA *KNOW*. YOUR WIFE AN' ME, WE'RE IN *LOVE*.

SHE'S TOLD ME *EVERYTHIN'*, DEXY — ALL THAT STOMM YOU'RE SMUGGLIN' FROM THE *EPSILON SYSTEM*....



MY *APARTMENT*,
10.30 A.M.

TWENTY THOUSAND *CREDS*,
SPUGGO. *FOLDING AN' USED*. ELSEWAYS THE *JAYS* HEAR ALL ABOUT IT.



And one final *act*, to set the *ball rolling*.



Pheeeeeeeep

HEY BOY.

GIRL.

WHATEVER.

CHOW TIME.



There're guys out there — in Angeltown more'n anyplace else — that'd pay big to watch a pal lickin' at ladyflesh.

Paint me unaroused.

Little bastard eats slower than a snail on Sunday.

Even so, by **down** it's a digestive drama. Not clean enough to fool forensics, but easy on the eye.

Fare-thee-well, Meekly Roth.

By ten-fifteen it's as good as **done**, and by now the snowball's getting big like a sexmek strap-on.

KOVACS?
IT'S ME. YEAH,
LOOK...

YOU SAID I SHOULD LET YOU **KNOW** — ANY MORE LAPSES IN JUDGEMENT, RIGHT?

IT'S... AH. WELL, I FIGURE YOU SHOULD GET OVER HERE.

Takes her **fifteen**. Dame's as polite as ever.

IT **STINKS** IN HERE.

YEAH. I POURED IT ALL OUT.

PROVE TO MYSELF I **COULD**, Y'KNOW?



No way was Dexy gonna stand for threats. I told him to pay up or go down, and he's the kind to take the third route.





Anne Thrope. I called her earlier. Told her I'd reconsidered her offer, we should talk, do some business. Oh, and one little favour'd be persuasive like a hypnospore handshake...

I figure this means I owe her big, but Angeltown's all about crossing bridges when you get to the drokkers...



... And only then when the others're crispy kindlin' behind you.



J-JOVUS, DID WE DO THAT?



TH-THEY'VE GOT ROCKETS!

ARMED AND DANGEROUS! TAKE 'EM DOWN!



Word to the wise: SJS Judges got a reputation for bein' sneakier than a fox's finale, and observant like a paranoid Poirot.

Best kind of witness there is.



GOOD WORK, POINT. LOOKS LIKE YOU MIGHT BE WORTH SPIT AS A JUDGE AFTER ALL.

YEAH. SHAME ABOUT THE HAB. SENTIMENTAL VALUE, Y'KNOW?

... And *that* means movin' into the office.

They say never mix business and pleasure, but seein' as I just exploded all my gruddamn whiskey I figure I ain't in danger of either.

BACK TALK
AND SERVICE

Back TALK
AND SERVICE

NOW YOU FOLKS BEEN **PATIENT**, AND I OWE YOU FOR IT.

SO HERE'S WHAT'S **WHAT**. HERE'S THE **KEY**. HERE'S HOW IT ALL WENT **DOWN**.



BIOCHIPS.



Modern tech. This city, you got more breakthroughs than a woodpecker wehrmacht, and your average greycell guru needs to keep up like gigaviagra and gravy.

Friggy McGlutinin knows his **STOMM**.

USED A BE, THEY WAS BIG BASTARDS YOU'D STICK ONNA BACK OF YOUR HEAD.

DOWNLOAD YOUR **CONSCIOUSNESS** INNA ONE, PLUG IT IN SOME OTHER DROKKER, HEY PRESTO!

NEW BODY.



Friggy's *theory* is someone's developed a new type. One you dispense outta your own bod. Say, when some big-shoed bozo comes along.

Copies of your own brain, soluble like salt. It's a drokked-up world.

YOU KNOW ANYONE BEEN TO **LESSER LINGO**, POINTY?

ONLY PLACE I EVER HEARD OF WHERE THE DAMN THINGS'RE **LEGAL**...



... WHICH EXPLAINS WHAT OLD DEXY WAS TRYIN' TO **SMUGGLE** INTO TOWN, RIGHT?

YOU GOT TO WONDER HOW MANY HE **SOLD**...



WAY I FIGURE, WHOEVER GOT THIS STOMM INSIDA YOU, DROKKER GOT IT **WRONG**.

THING WAS S'POSED TO **DEGRADE**, SEE? LIKE... **VANISH** WITHOUT A **TRACE**, TERMINATE ITSELF.

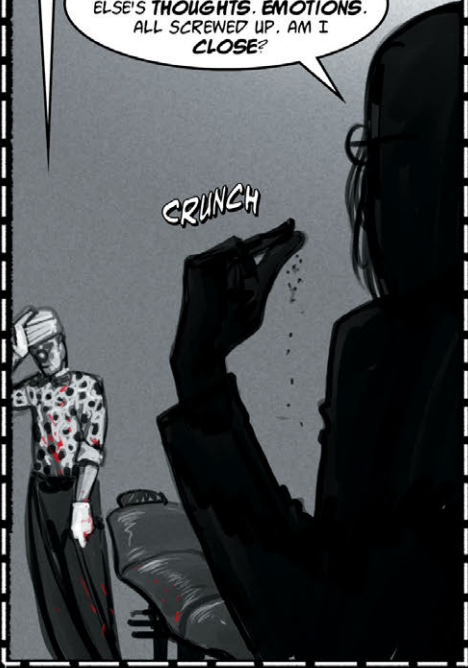
SOMEONE **TAKIN' YOU OVER**, EXCEPT ON A **TIMER**.



... ONLY IT DIDN'T **DISSOLVE** FULLY...

S'RIGHT. BEEN JIGGERIN' ROUND IN THERE, ALL CHEWED UP, NOT **WORKIN'** STRAIGHT.

MY BET IS, YOU KEPT **CATCHIN' HINTS**. SOMEONE ELSE'S **THOUGHTS. EMOTIONS**. ALL **SCREWED UP**. AM I **CLOSE**?



Yeah.

Close like a **dryshave disaster**.

Only in Angeltown, huh? These sorry **slabs**, this drokked-up **dump**. I tell ya, if Angeltown was **plumbing**, it'd be the **chute** in an **alien abattoir**.

S'where all the **weird shit** goes down.

HERE'S THE THING.

I **KNOW** WHO KILLED **MECKLY ROTH**.



She was **scared**. **Depressed**.

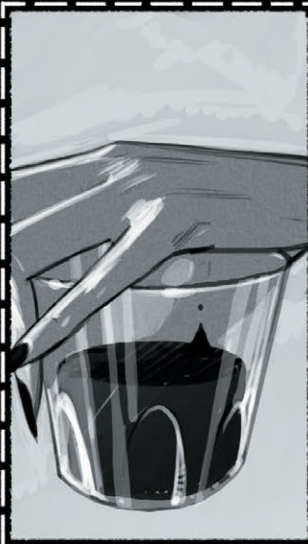
Out in the **stars** she'd seen so much **beauty**, and that rattink **Dexy** bought her right on **back**.

And she plain out couldn't take it.



HERE.

JUST... **HOLD ME**.



She was alone.

She was alone, and she couldn't do it herself.



So she found someone she **KNEW**, someone she figured was smart enough to get away with it, and she **passed the buck**.

D-DON'T SCREW UP.



NOK!
NOK!

Not **her** fault the **chip** didn't dissolve. Not **her** fault she got **stuck** in my brain, like a **poltergeist** in a **pickle jar**. I ain't one to bear a **grudge**.

Turns out she made some **calls** before she pulled the **trigger**. Did some **stuff** I was too **chicken** to do for myself.

Her little way of **thankin'** me, I guess.



YOU GOT A LOT OF EXPLAINING, STOMMPROCK!

FIRST YOU MAKE A **DATE**, THEN YOU SLAM THE **DOOR** IN MY **FACE**, NOW YOU CALL ME **AGAIN**!

I'M NOT THE **KIND** TO BE **MUCKED AROUND**, POINT —



Broads, huh?

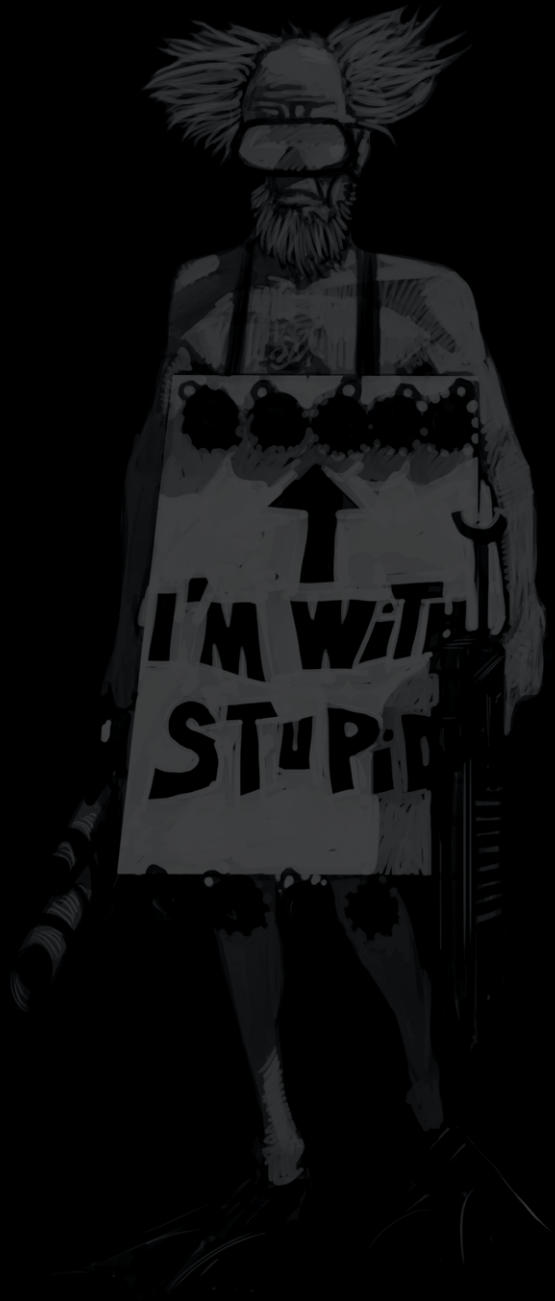
Sometimes you just got to take the **initiative**.

DORKS OF WAR

Text: Simon Spurrier

Illustrations: Frazer Irving

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 227



IT'S MONDAY. That, or I died Sunday and woke up in Hell. Either way: 'Ow.'

This hangover, it's like a tectonic event. It's like I swallowed a diseased volcano and the lava's congealing down my throat. It's like someone swapped my drokkin' eyeballs for nailbombs.

Welcome to Angeltown. If Grud made the Big Meg in six days, this is where he puked the morning after. I guess that makes me a Public Cleaner.

Me, I got more layers than a sedimentary onion. I'm an under-cover Judge posing as an ex-helmet, working as a clapped-out PI with a sideline in dressing as an idiot.

Confused? And my friends ask why I drink too much.

'Friends'. Ha. Good one.

The name's Jack Point. Yeah, 'Point', as in: 'Quit it with the rambling *intro* and get to the —'

beats her regularly, and what she needs is a Real Man who ain't afraid to show his sensitive side.

Actually, what she says is: 'He's a troubled soul, Mr Point ... He can't handle stressful situations.'

... but I'm reading between the lines.

She says she took a photo of the body before he vanished, then dumped it back in the ooze. She's a class act. She says she's trusting me not to tell the Jays, and to find her husband. She hands me the picture like it's a love note and she wets her lips.

'Find out who did this, Mr Point,' she says, leaning forward. Right about now, I'm glad I don't have to stand up. 'Find the *real* murderer, and convince my Bunnykins to come home.'

She looks away, lips pursed, like maybe she's about to reveal some intimate secret, maybe something sleazy. A guy can hope.

“ BRUNETTE. BODY FIT TO MAKE A EUNUCH SLASH HIS WRISTS AND A PRIEST REACH FOR THE KLEENIWIPES ”

Monday morning. This being Angeltown, it's only a matter of time before trouble comes calling. And this being Angeltown, trouble only comes in one shape. Think *hour glass*.

Eleven o'clock, a knocking at the door. Feels like my ears are bleeding, but I'm a gentleman.

'It's open.'

Brunette. Body fit to make a eunuch slash his wrists and a priest reach for the Kleeniwipes™. Lips like novelty pillows and an ass like plums in *oil*. A broad like this, she smells like honey mixed with *heroin*. She moves and you're looking for blurry out-lines, on account of how *no way* is she anything but an expensive *effect*.

She's real.

'I need your help, Mr Point.'

It's a good start. Just so happens my eyes are level with the top of her blouse, and I'm trying to think of any words besides 'Grand Canyon'. Cleavage like that, a guy could go bungee-jumping.

'It's about my husband. He's disappeared.'

And it was going so well.

She says her husband is Oswald Takko, like I should know who that is. She says her name's Maria Takko, and I'm doing my best to watch her lips in a listening-to-the-words kinda way, rather than the 'let-me-fetch-a-lollipop' thing my brain's churning up.

Turns out this guy, he's in sewage processing. This guy, he's earned a fortune. He's the biggest gruddamn shit-stirrer on the East side of the Meg.

She sits. She bounces. *Bungee jumping*, I swear.

She says her husband's gone AWOL. She says last Friday he found a body in the chem-tank, burned to stomm. Figured the Jays'd pin it on him. Mrs Takko, she says her husband Got the Jitters. She shifts like she's uncomfortable, and she says he's a tenth-grade screaming *kook* with zero sex appeal. She says he

'My husband,' she says, 'he ... he simps in his spare time, Mr Point. *Help him*.'

She offers me money. She appeals to my sense of justice. She leans over a bit more.

Guess which one sells it.

SO I'M EN ROUTE TO THE SECTOR 13 SIMPING CLUB WHEN THE CALL COMES IN.

Role-play. You got a hangover like a Pinboing™ game in your skull. You're on a crosstown zoom, makes more noise than a radmonkey howling for a mate. You're surrounded by chavgang-ers with psychorawk on their We-Pods, and there's this fem, this lump of whalemeat, this Brit-Cit tedium-tourist, shouting at her rat's ass of a husband for not buying a guidebook. Your ears are melting like a malfunction at the Snowdomia. Your hand's reaching for the hipflask for the first dose of the day. Word of advice:

Turn down the drokking volume on your drokking lump-of-shit mobile drokking communicator.

It's my guy from Control. He's pretty good about taking abuse.

He says he ran the ID on Takko I wanted. He says the guy served ten years in the Space Corps and came back with more metal pinned to his chest than a 46DD robo-doll. He says this guy, he's a gen-yoo-ine hero, turned to simping.

You see enough bad shit out there, I guess you get to appreciate the funny side.

Simps're like eggs that've boiled themselves. Simps are the dorks and the dames who see how drokked the world is, who maybe get kicked around once too often by the devil-dame Life, and take the only course open.



Put a chameleon against a polka-dot shirt, watch him turn funky. Now stick a sensitive soul in a mental asylum calling itself a city. Same difference.

Simps like to dress stupid. They like to act crazy. Simps keep walking into stuff on account of imagining it's invisible. They like to say 'f'taang' and 'clip-clop'. I have no idea why.

Me, I dress like one. Means I can walk in any place and cits'll underestimate me. Way I think of it, it's like a shark wearing a goldfish suit.

Dressing like a Simp is one thing. Acting like one ...

I need whiskey.

Something's gone seriously drokking awry.
Plan B.

AS A RULE, I HATE CLUES.

You ever watch an old tri-d mystery movie, you can't move for convenient footprints and tell-tale fragments of cloth. It's all, 'A-ha! A seed from the Mongolian Bluskvudder! This can only mean *one thing!*'

Big gruddamn obvious clues. Never happen in the real world, and when they *do* you gotta trust 'em like a feline loan-shark.

“ FIVE OF THEM. ARMED TO NUKE THE WORLD. THESE GUYS, THESE FIVE CRAZY-FACED KOOKS, THEY LOOK SET TO START A WAR ”

THERE'S A CROWD OUTSIDE THE SIMPCLUB. Goons from the Sensible League, done up in Sensible Shirts with Sensible Ties and Sensible Shoes. These guys, they're waving placards and shouting like it's a competition.

'Down with clowns! Down with clowns!'

This sort of thing, my head does *not* need.

If simps are oil, the League are vinegar: belong in the same pot, see, but they sure as hell don't mix.

For once, the League has grounds for complaint. Citywide, we got a simp-based crime boom. Guys in clown kit been knocking over banks, blasting clerks with custard pie grenades, filling floppy pants in jewellery stores. This week alone, we got ten simp-inflicted casualties. For the League, it's like Christmas came early.

I make it into the club without getting egged. The gun maybe helped.

So I'm inside. 'Thirteen!' says the first guy I see. He's wearing a fishtank. That's it. 'A new ostrich in the purple! Parped, old spatula? Have you come to play with my otter? Clip-clop.'

I don't like what he's implying, so I break his fingers. Maybe whiskey was a bad idea.

There's a fem wearing a tutu on her head. She keeps barking like a dog and asking for spare change for the leopards.

There's a bat-glider with no wings clinging to the floor in case he falls off. He's sobbing like a joyless juve.

There's a fat naked guy who swears his ass talks to him, delivering nuggets of incontrovertible wisdom in the dead of the night.

There's a fem who'd be the finest piece of hardbody I ever laid bloodshots on, if she hadn't scrawled 'COTTON?' in felt-tip all over her face.

I expected this place to be kinda sad. I mean that in the 'pathetic' sense.

But it's also the most depressing thing I ever saw.

There's no answers here. You mention Takko to these creeps, they either burst into tears or run away shouting 'mook'. Simping's supposed to bring happiness.

Then again, I'm out of options. I spend any more time in Simp Central I'm gonna be reaching for a razorblade wristwatch, so what say we take a look at that photo?

Feel free to flick back a page.

In this game, you get good at paying attention, like a peeper on Prozac. This photo, something ain't right.

Sure, there are clues. There's the droid serial numbers and Takko's threads. There's the reg number on the treatment stacks and the viscosity of the shit. Leads. Avenues of investigation.

But there's something else. Something ... *wrong*. It's grating against my head like a medulla-maggot, and I ain't any closer to figuring it. Maybe it's the whiskey to blame.

I could sure use a refill.

Meantime, take a squint at the ChuffyBar™ in fatso's fist. Staple diet of the idiot. These things, they'll turn bowels into blimps. 'Noisy but odourless gas release.' Simps love that shit.

To reiterate: I only *dress* like one.

Point is, Chuffybar's habit forming. Guy gets in the fart routine – elevators, taxis, public places – he can't go cold turkey. And there's only one place to get 'em: *Ziggo's Simping Supplies*. I'm willing to bet Takko was a regular customer. I'm willing to bet he's been there in the last few days.

Just so happens there's also an alco-store down the same alley.

Detective work. You gotta love it.

ZIGGO'S IS SHUT. Can't say I'm disappointed. Closing a lead means opening a bottle.

So I'm ready to head next door when there's metal pressing my skull. Bad metal. The kind in the shape of an 'O'. The kind, I guess, with a gun behind it.

I'm hustled inside the Clown Store, and there're guys all around me.

Five of them. Armed to nuke the world. Guns like phallic nightmares, bandolier grenades and hippy-holstered hand-

cannons. These guys, these five crazy-faced kooks, they look set to start a war.

Thing is, beneath the ammo-belts and doom-cocks, beneath the photoflares and monoblades, I'm seeing feathers and baggy pants. I'm seeing simps.

'DeGlok sent you, right?' says one — a guy with a happy face drawn on his forehead and a black dress covering his paunch. He looks like maybe he forgot something, so he coughs and adds: 'Er, *clip-clop*.'

I tell him, no, DeGlok didn't send me. I tell him I'm looking for Takko. I tell him I have no drokking idea who DeGlok is, or why five such good natured and intelligent guys should want to shoot me, a spiritual brother of the Temple of Simp.

'What you ... *ah...* f'taang f'taang ... want with Takko?' says one — a skinny guy wearing a bunny costume. 'You come to frubwoople him?'

'He means kill him,' inserts another, helpful like.

I say, no. I say, *Would any of you drokking mentalists mind telling me what's going on, because Takko's angelically-endowed better-half ain't paying me enough to wade through this shit?*

Then the gun's taken away from my head, and the fat guy holding it there, he turns me round and he peels off his broccoli mask.

'M-my wife sent you?' says Takko. 'Marmaduke.'

IT'S LIKE THIS.

When they returned to earth, the men and women of the Ter-ran 53rd Space Corps — affectionately known as the SKREEM-ING PSYCHOS — found everyday urban life kinda *tricky*. Ones who didn't go futsie mostly turned up swinging by the neck. Lucky ones found the Sector13 SimpClub.

Five years, Oswald Takko and his grunts — every one as crazy as a dino-dentist — got by. Nine to five they worked their jobs, soaked up welf. Evenings and weekends, they vented unsavoury emotions on dressing dumb and talking toss.

'Ain't as good as blowing things to fnaaarp,' Takko says, stumbling over the dumb words, 'but it's the next best radish.'

Then a month back the SimpClub president choked to death on a quick-drying custard pie. Step into the breach Lars DeGlok — lifelong simp, respectable pillar of the moron community and, if you believe Takko, a complete bastard.

'Since then, haddock by haddock, my men have been turning into squids.'

'He means frubwoopling.' Says one.

'He means *disappearing*.' Says another, rolling his eyes. 'Er ... f'taang.'

These guys, for them, simping don't come natural.

I know how they feel.

Takko says his men been going AWOL. He says there's something fishy going on in the Club and this DeGlok guy, he's right at



the heart of it. He says he gathered his remaining men and went into hiding at Ziggo's place.

Actually, what he says is: 'DeGlok's been norking my spittle, frub, since the Days Of Thrix. Chatterbox! Chukka-chukka-chukka-huuuh.'

... but I'm reading between the lines.

I ask him, 'So what about the body?' I show him the photo, and tell him his wife's worried.

He says he's never seen that body before in his life, and that he told his wife where and why he was hiding before he split.

Mrs Takko. Lady, I smell a rat.

Her husband wants to know what the hell's going on. His gang of goons, they're getting excited.

Trying to keep these guys calm, that's got 'King Canute' written all over it.

So I say it.

'Let's go to work.'

THE TREATMENT PLANT NESTLES UP AGAINST THE BLACK ATLANTIC WALL LIKE A NUCLEAR LIMPET.

Me, I got a novelty nose pressing my nostrils together – but still I smell the place before we're off the zoom.

The security droid at the gate tries to stop us. Says it's got to report visitors to Mrs Takko.

'Hey,' says Oswald, 'it's *me*. I'm the boss' – but the bucketh-eed ain't listening.

The fem's in charge.

Oswald looks fit to pop.

Little Jinxy, he's the one in the orange chumpsuit and the Christmas tree, he gets jittery. The droid falls into a million bits and the lazerstubber kicks up a spout of smoke like the finest Banana City carrot-shaped cigar. Already there's an alarm whooping.

This could be going better.

'We're just here to ask some *questions* ...' I remind them. Doesn't do much good. These guys, these slapstick soldiers, they're so highly strung they're *crucified*.

Only one way to cool the situation. Do it for your city, Jack.

Frraaap.

It works. I got these simpos giggling like they ain't got a care.

Thank Grud for flatulence.

Then we're inside, and the stink of shit knocks me down like a Scent-based Sumo, and by the time my eyes've quit watering Mrs Takko's waiting for us with a smile.

'Welcome back, honey.' I like to think she's talking to me.

And right when we're ready to begin probing, all hell breaks loose.

THEY COME DOWN ON ROPES. They burst in through doors on both sides. They slip out of the shadows like ...

Like heavily-armed kooks in a variety of elaborate but impractical costumes springing from their concealment to ensnare my

loyal morons and – importantly – *me*. Time like this, I wish I'd stayed in the office.

Scratch that. Time like this, I wish I'd stayed in the *womb*.

Right now, there's so many muzzles aimed at my head, if I shout 'bang' and duck I could wipe out half the city.

These guys, holding cannons to our skulls, they're all simps too. If clashing colours could kill, this'd be a massacre.

Thing is, as they're springing up and surrounding us, we should be making a stand. Even better, we should be running like the Good Guys out of Gomorrah.

Only Takko and his boys, they've lost the plot.

'Fawkes?' they're shouting. 'Rogers? Is that you? Sarge? Jone-sy? We thought you guys had been frubwooped!'

They recognise these creeps. I guess the Mystery of the Disappearing Ex-Combat Clowns is solved. These guys should be slapping backs and hi-fiving.

They ain't.

Takko's ex-comrades or not, these guys don't look like they're fixing to cut us slack. The ones who ain't wearing dumb masks, the ones whose eyes you can actually see ...

... the lights are on, but there's no drokker home.

'Puppets,' says Mrs Takko, as if it explains everything. She's standing out of reach, showing-off every inch of that make-a-saint-sweat hardbody. If I'm about to die, please Grud let me come back as her bedroom mirror.

She fixes me a look, and she smiles. 'These morons,' she says, waving a hand at the ambush party, 'they were already halfway to *loco*-land. All it took was a little ... *push*.'

She says she's been having an affair with this guy Lars DeGlok, the new Pres of the Club. Beside me Takko chokes on a murderous 'wibble'. She says together they cooked up a crazy plan. She doesn't say what it is.

She says when her husband and his pet freaks caught wind of something amiss, she thought the game was up. She says she needed a way to bring them in. She needed to find someone stupid enough to care. Someone her husband would trust. Someone with ties to the simping community.

She says she faked the photo and sent me on my merry way.

I don't understand what the hell is going on here, but I'm still watching her lips like a dog eyeing a bone. She blows me a kiss and says it's been a pleasure, then she tells her army of simps to lock and load.

Dames, huh? Somewhere out there, maybe, there's one that ain't *evil*.

I ask her if at least she'll let me die without this stupid grud-damn gear on me. I ask if I can meet my maker not looking like a fool. This broad, she's been married five years to a man who shouts 'Bibbly!' at the moment of climax. She understands what I'm getting at.

She nods.

I pull off the nose and the bow tie, the lapel flower and the big drokking shoes. I chuck it all in the shit tank nearby, and stand back.

'Okay,' I say. 'I'm ready.'

Then the hi-ex core of the novelty hooter – just one of the many

ingenious simp-based munitions I keep on my person — detonates three feet deep. Even before the air's emptied of ballistic crapola I'm running as fast as my newly-liberated feet can take me.

Behind me, it sounds like Takko and Co are making that last stand.

Once a moron, always a moron.

A JUDGE'S BODY IS A TEMPLE, RIGHT? Well, mine's the Taj Mahal. That's the Indo-Cit curry-rama halfway down Meera Syal Overped: full of carcinogens, cheap alcohol and unhealthy stomm.

“

THE SIMPS STARE AT THE SENSIBLES. THE SENSIBLES STARE BACK. THERE'S SILENCE. THIS IS GONNA BE UGLY...

”

Running away before being shot in the face looks like the attractive option, 'til you're halfway down the street and your gruddam heart starts hammering like a Construction Droid. My tongue feels like it turned into a cactus.

For the first time, I get what they mean when they say 'cold sweat'.

Mondays, huh?

Behind me, it sounds like the gunfight didn't last. Takko and his boys went down in a big pointless flashy blaze of glory like the big pointless flashy cretins they were. Rest in pieces, drokkos.

Shame the same can't be said for Mrs Takko's little army. Half a kay up the street I'm heaving on dry air like a premature lungfish, my feet are cut to shit on the usual Angeltown detritus, and an oh-so-casual glance over the shoulder tells me all I need to know.

They're hot on my heels. Fifteen, maybe twenty: psychos in streamlined silly hats, go-faster-stripes down every baggy limb, goggle-eyes trailing in the wind.

They got more guns than I got scars. I got a lot of scars.

Turn a corner. Keep running. Don't look back. Push people out the way, keep your legs pumping.

Suddenly I'm in a square. Wide pedway with a colourful building one end, crowded to capacity. What's going on here? Doesn't matter. No time for distractions. Don't think about it. Don't think about anything but running.

Don't think about whiskey.

Mmmm.

I said *don't* —

And then something's wrong. You run hard enough and fast enough, you forget what's around you. You focus on one foot before the other. But here and now, bit by bit, something's breaking through.

I'm surrounded by voices. Angry voices.

Chanting voices.

'Down with clowns! Down with clowns!'

Ah, *stomm*.

I'm out front of the Angeltown SimpClub. The guys from the Sensible League, these square-jawed geeks in knitted jumpers and golfing socks, waving placards and spitting, they're all around me.

I'm dog tired. I'm dead meat.

Except ...

I got rid of the nose. I ditched the bow tie and flower squirter. Far as these guys know, I'm just an average Joe.

Behind me, the simp army takes the corner with a clatter of flapping shoes.

They slow to a stop.

The simps stare at the Sensibles. The Sensibles stare back. For just a little while, there's silence.

This is gonna be ugly.

I WOULDN'T CALL WHAT I'M DOING 'COWERING', EXACTLY.

What it is, I'm watching the fight. I just happened to find a nice, out-of-the-way door with a nice, out-of-the-way view and a nice, totally impenetrable shadow.

Things seem pretty even, so far.

So I'm watching a novelty baby's bonnet spiralling out of the crowd, when I happen to glance up at the windows in the place above me. It's this rundown joint, same as most Angeltown blockfronts, overlooking the square and the SimpClub. There's a guy there, pressed against the glass, staring down at the mêlée. This guy, he looks a whole bladderworth of *pissed*. He sees me watching and backs outta view.

Nothing suspicious in that. City's full of nosey bastards.

Except this doorway I'm in, the sign above it says 'Lee Three-Fingers' Sino-Cit Takeout'. The place is boarded up. And Mr Who-ever-the-hell-he-is upstairs, he didn't look Sino.

Matter of fact, with the makeup and the wig and all, he looked distinctly *simpo*.

Three fingers. Three fingers. Why's that scratching at my brain so hard? Why's it got me reaching for my hipflask, just to dampen the brain-strain? In my pocket, right next to the empty pot, there's the photo. Lady Takko faked it. Superimposed her hubby over ...

Over ...

The body.

That's what had me scratchin' my head before. *That's* what I couldn't figure out. What made the photo feel *wrong*.

Three fingers.

Lee Three-Fingers. Deader than disco.

Like maybe someone wanted to use his premises and wouldn't say 'please'.

THE HELMETS TURN UP WHEN THE FIGHT GETS OUTTA HAND.

The Sensible guys scatter like boringly-dressed seeds on tilled ground.

I point the badges into the Sino-joint and settle down to watch.

Inside, they find a guy called Lars DeGlok and enough torture equipment to keep three dynasties of sadists busy for life.

He spills all under interrogation.

He says him and Mrs Takko, they dreamed up a scheme. He says if you're gonna get someone to rob a bank, you want to make sure: [a], they ain't recognisable; [b], they don't look outta place walking up a street; and [c], they'll do exactly what they're told.

'Simps,' he says.

Every fragile-brained little kook in the Angeltown SimpClub with a history of combat. Kidnapped in the night, taken to a secret location, beaten half to death by DeGlok and his goons, tortured 'til their puny minds snap and they're left malleable like wet clay.

The clown-based crime spree, that's DeGlok's doing. The simsps acting crazy in the Club, that's DeGlok's doing. The army of braindead psychos who tried to kill me, who're so traumatised by whatever-the-hell they been through the Meds say

they'll never recover, that's DeGlok's doing.

He's a nice guy.

Ninety years.

MRS TAKKO'S HIDING OUT AMONGST THE CHEMICAL VATS WHEN I FIND HER. I asked the Jays to let me close my own case. They smelled the venue and they didn't put up much of a fight.

Mrs Takko tries it on. She's all over me like a swarm of mosquitoes on a skinless anaemic. She promises money. She promises rewards like I ain't ever dreamed, if I just let her go. We can go away together. Somewhere hot.

It's no good. I guess finally she accepts it's all over, 'cos she comes over all guilty and prepares to throw herself into the chemical pit. Better that, she says, than life in a cube.

She says she knows she did wrong. She says she never meant to hurt anyone. She begs for forgiveness and she says she knows that only in death will she find redemption.

Actually, what she says is: 'No! No, you bastard! Don't push me!'

... but I'm reading between the lines.

I need a drink.



COVER GALLERY



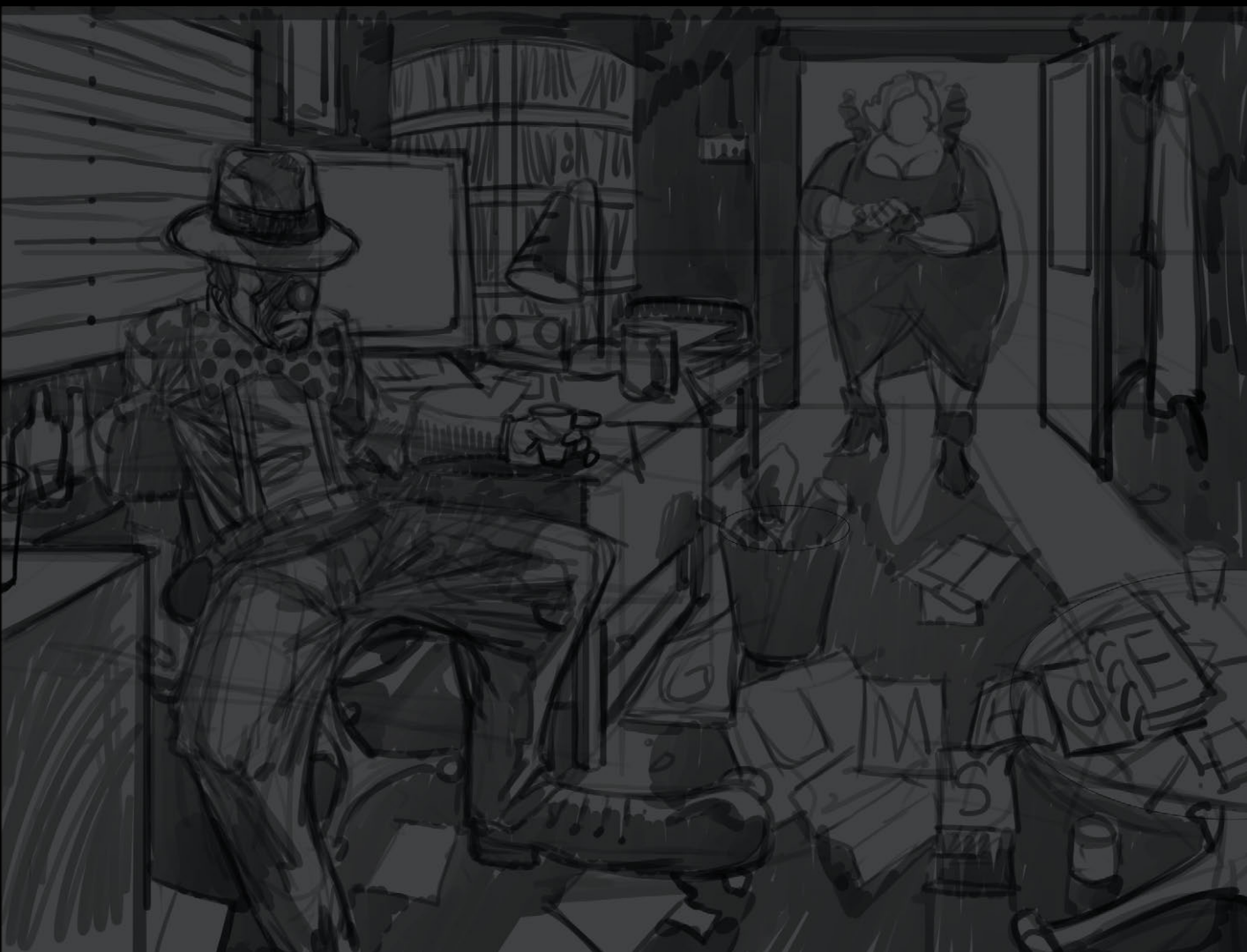
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Judge Dredd Magazine 226: Cover by Frazer Irving



Judge Dredd Magazine 234: Cover by **Frazer Irving**

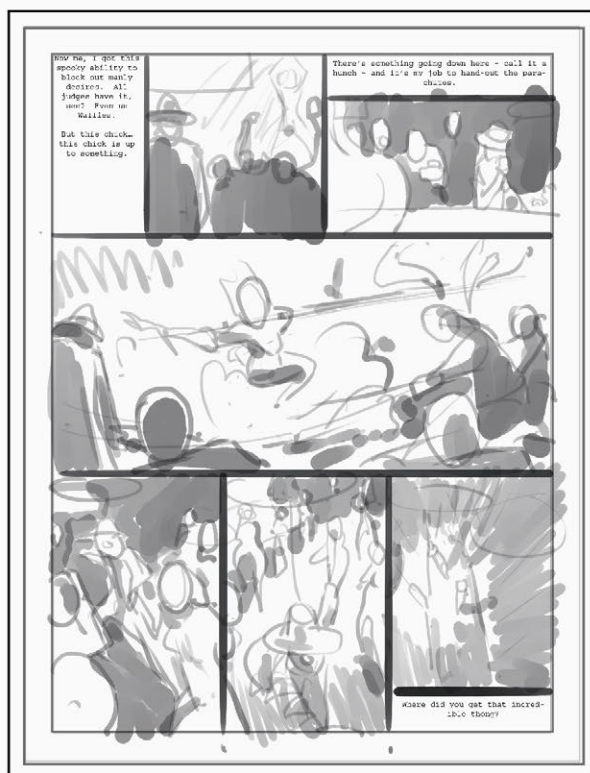
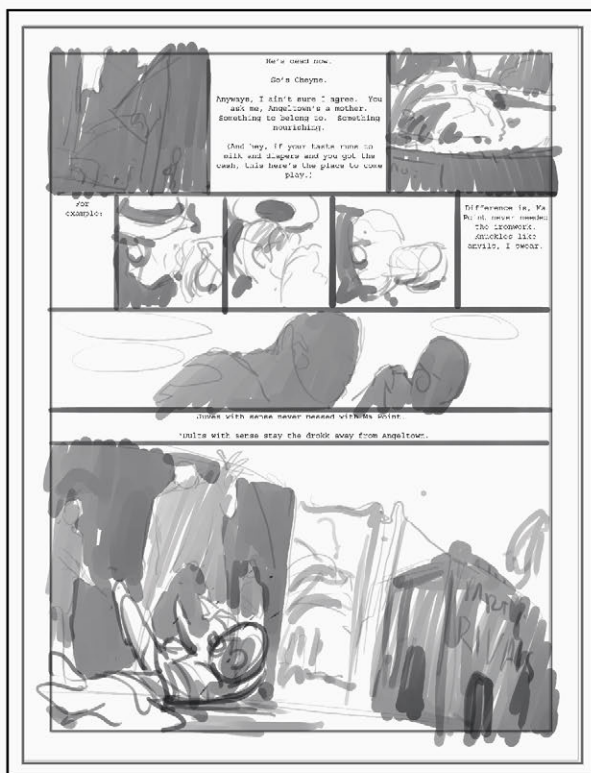


FRAZER IRVING SKETCHBOOK



F. IRVING '05





SIMON SPURRIER

Simon Spurrier is one of the newest additions to the *2000 AD* creative roster, but he has already made his mark with co-created strips *Bec & Kawl*, *From Grace*, *Lobster Random*, *Chiaroscuro* and *The Simping Detective*. He has also written several *Future Shocks*, *Past Imperfects* and *Terror Tales*.

FRAZER IRVING

Frazer Irving is without question one of *2000 AD*'s brightest new stars. His distinctive style, both on co-created strips like *A Love Like Blood*, *Necronauts* and *Storming Heaven*, as well as on *Judge Dredd*, *Judge Death*, *Future Shocks*, *Terror Tales*, *Tharg the Mighty*, *The Scarlet Apocrypha* and *Sinister Dexter*, have quickly brought him to the attention of the US industry. Irving recently completed both *Klarion the Witch-boy* for DC Comics and *Iron Man: Inevitable* for Marvel comics. Amongst other things he is currently working on *Gutsville* with Simon Spurrier, published by Image Comics.



WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

MEGA-CITY ONE, 2129 AD. Simped-up private eye Jack Point is an undercover 'Wally Squad' Judge – 'cos only a clown would want to walk the streets of Angeltown, the scuzziest part of City Bottom. He's got two friends in this world, one's long and hard, and makes your ears ring after every shot; the other's his gun. In fact, Jack's got enemies on both sides of the Law, and he's never far from trouble.

Written by Simon Spurrier (*Gutsville*) with art by Fraizing Irving (*Storming Heaven*), *The Simping Detective* is future noir at its best!



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