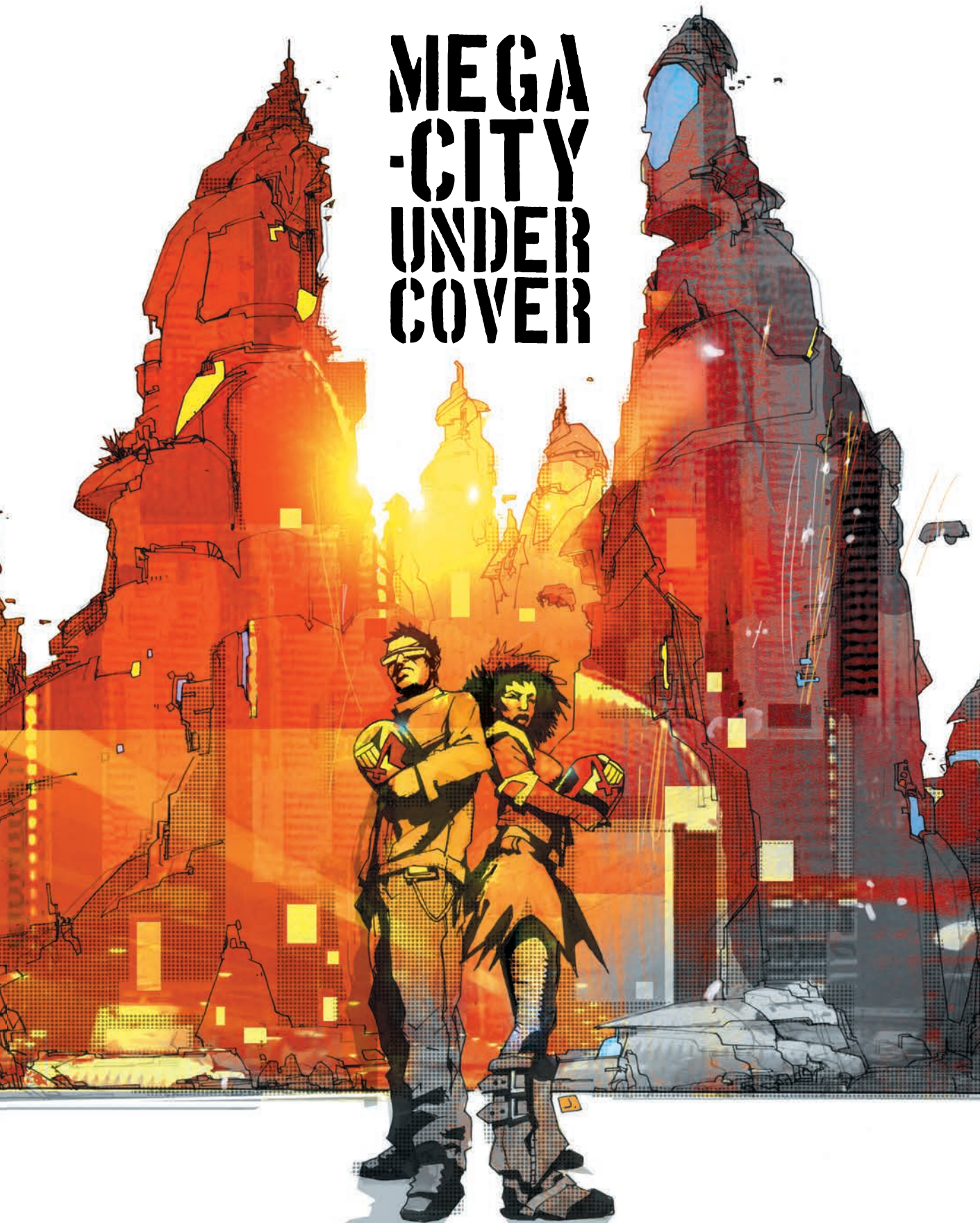


MEGA -CITY UNDER COVER



JOCK ★ ANDY DIGGLE ★ HENRY FLINT ★ ROB WILLIAMS ★ SIMON COLEBY



MEGA -CITY UNDER COVER

ANDY DIGGLE ★ ROB WILLIAMS

Writer

JOCK ★ HENRY FLINT ★ SIMON COLEBY

Artists

JOCK

Cover Artist



Creative Director and CEO: Jason Kingsley

Chief Technical Officer: Chris Kingsley

2000 AD Editor in Chief: Matt Smith

Graphic Design: Simon Parr & Luke Preece

Marketing and PR: Keith Richardson

Repro Assistant: Kathryn Symes

Graphic Novels Editor: Jonathan Oliver

Designer: Luke Preece

Original Commissioning Editors: Andy Diggle, David Bishop
and Matt Smith

MEGA -CITY UNDER COVER

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INTRODUCTION

LENNY ZERO

I've always had a bit of a problem with 'received wisdom.' If you always do what you've always done, you'll only get what you've always had, right? When I started as a lowly assistant-editor at *2000 AD* back in 1997, the received wisdom was that editorial staff shouldn't be allowed to write for the comic. This was a bit of a drag, to say the least, as I'd always wanted to write comics, and had been gearing up to start inundating David Bishop with *Future Shocks* when I unexpectedly landed an editorial role. I suddenly found myself working right at the heart of the Galaxy's Greatest Comic — and I was the *only guy in the world* who wasn't allowed to pitch stories for it. Frustrating much?

Doubly frustrating was the knowledge that just about every previous editor had written (and rewritten) for the comic. At one point in the early 90s, yet another editor (who shall remain nameless) was writing over half of *2000 AD* himself — albeit under a variety of pseudonyms. As a result, the quality nosedived — and so did the sales figures. And that goes to the very heart of David Bishop's edict that editorial staff should not write for the comic: quality control. It's hard to be objective about the quality of your own work. The best writers have a sort of 'internal editor' in their heads that tells them when the writing isn't up to scratch, and prevents them from turning in substandard work. John Wagner certainly has one; I remember at least one instance where he sat on a six-page *Judge Dredd* script because, in his own opinion, it simply didn't make the grade. But that didn't stop me championing at the bit. I was hungry enough, and arrogant enough, to think I had what it took.

By the point I became the *Meg's* editor, the editorial budget had been slashed to the point where it mostly had to be bulked out with reprint. But the 10th anniversary issue was looming on the horizon, and I wanted to make it something special. Maybe I couldn't afford to fill the issue with all-new material from A-list creative talent, but I could at least hire an A-list cover artist. And hey, I've always been a big Frank Miller fan.

I was amazed when he agreed to do it; all I had to do was figure out how I was going to pay for it. Fortunately, I had a cunning plan. If I wrote a 10-page story, unpaid, for a previous issue, I'd save a chunk of editorial budget which I could put towards the cover. I even had this idea for a story I thought would be perfect; a twisty little Mega-City crime

caper called *Lenny Zero*...

But there was still that nagging little voice of doubt at the back of my mind. What if my script sucked, and I was just too close to see it? I needed an objective opinion. So I sent my *Lenny Zero* script to a few writers who were well enough established that they wouldn't be afraid to give me some honest criticism. When John Wagner told me he liked my dialogue, I was walking on air. But I still couldn't be sure they weren't simply telling me what I wanted to hear, just in case I turned out to be the kind of editor who loves to hold a grudge.

So as a last-minute quality-control test, I took my name off the script and ran it past Steve MacManus. When Steve gave it an enthusiastic thumbs up, I figured it was time to publish and be damned. All I had to do then was find an artist to draw it. There was this one guy whose artwork practically jumped out of the submissions pile. I'd already been waving his art samples under Bishop's nose for a while, to no avail. Now that I was my own boss, why not give this new guy a crack at it... ? He went by the name of Jock.

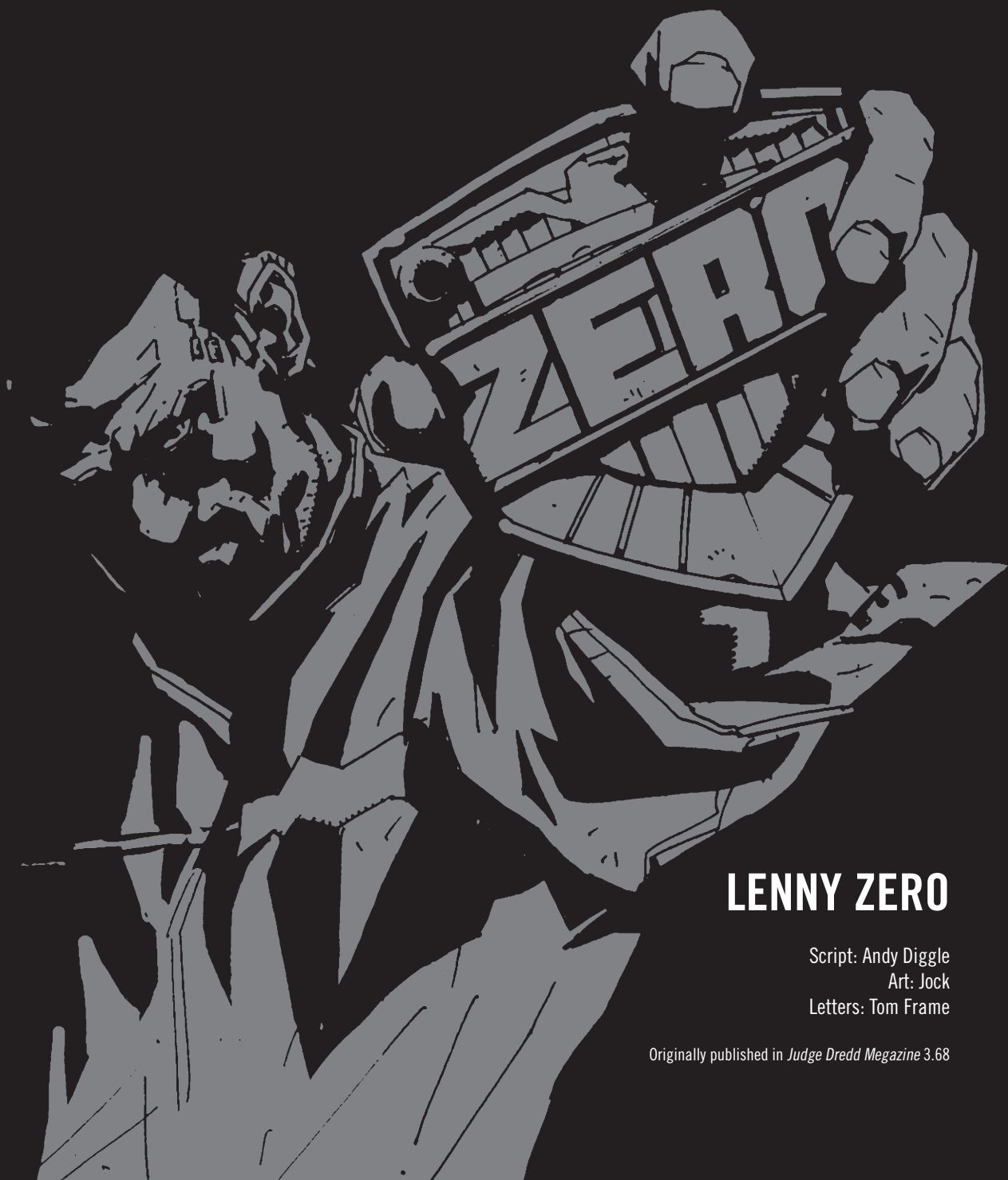
By the time Frank Miller's cover artwork arrived, David Bishop and I had swapped jobs; he was editing the *Megazine*, while I had assumed Tharg's mantle as editor of *2000 AD*. And when Bishop saw Miller's piece, his response was somewhat, shall we say, 'undiplomatic.' Miller promptly withdrew permission to use his artwork and, if memory serves, Bishop commissioned a cover from Siku to replace it.

Our final vindication came when Bishop commissioned a sequel to *Lenny Zero*. For Jock and me, it was quite literally the beginning of a beautiful friendship. We did the two *Lenny Zero* sequels together and went on to create *The Losers* for Vertigo. Jock even drew the wedding invitations when I married Angela, the Managing Director's personal assistant, after we met at the *2000 AD* office

So yeah, 'never date workmates' was another piece of received wisdom I'd chosen to ignore.

Seems to be working out pretty well so far.

Andy Diggle, January 2008



LENNY ZERO

Script: Andy Diggle

Art: Jock

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 3.68

LENNY ZERO

FIFTEEN YEARS I'D BEEN BUSTIN' MY BALLS ON THE STREETS OF THE BIG MEG. IN MY LINE OF WORK, THAT'S WAY BEYOND LIFE EXPECTANCY.

I PUT IT ALL DOWN TO TRUST. THE JUDGES, THEY DON'T TRUST NOBODY...

BUT THAT'S 'CAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT LOVE.

BUT I COULD ALWAYS COUNT ON MONA TO COUNT ON ME. WE WERE ONE HELL OF A TEAM. TRUST, Y'SEE?

FIFTY CRED\$ SAYS YER BOYFRIEND CAN'T MAKE THAT SHOT.

GOT YOURSELF A DEAL.

PLOK

SURE. I COULD'VE MADE THE SHOT WITHOUT THE HEADS-UP DISPLAY IN MY NIGHTSHADES, BUT THEY MEAN PEOPLE CAN'T READ MY EYES.

BESIDES, THEY GIVE ME 360 DEGREE VISION... AND SOMETIMES IT PAYS TO HAVE EYES IN THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD.

HEY MARY. WHAT'S UP? YOU PUT MONEY ON THE FAT GUY OR SOMETHIN'?

MARY WAS NAMED AFTER HIS RAP SHEET -- "MULTIPLE ARMED ROBBERY WITH VIOLENCE", YEAH?

A NASTY PIECE OF WORK WHO TOOK A LITTLE TOO MUCH PLEASURE IN CARRYIN' OUT WHACK JOBS FOR LITTLE CAESAR PICCANTE'S MOB.

DITCH THE BITCH, BUDDY. DA BOSS WOULD LIKE A WORD.

BUDDY? WHO ARE THESE GUYS...?

JUST BUSINESS, BABY. HEAD ON HOME, I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU LATER.

I'D BEEN DOIN' SOME LAUNDERIN' WORK FOR CAESAR'S OUTFIT. SUPPLYIN' USED CRED-CARDS FOR RE-CHIPPING.

SOMETHING TOLD ME I WAS ABOUT TO START LOOKIN' FOR A NEW LINE OF WORK.



LITTLE CAESAR WAS BARELY INTO HIS THIRD BIO-CHIPPED CLONE BODY, SO HE WAS PRETTY SPRY FOR A GUY HIS AGE...

I'M TELLIN' YA, IT'S AMAZIN' WHAT THEY GOT FOR KIDS THESE DAYS!

HEY THERE, BUDDY, GLAD YOU COULD JOIN THE PARTY! YOU KNOW WHAT TODAY IS? MY 200th BIRTHDAY!



I WAS RUNNIN' ERRANDS FOR AL CAPONE WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS OLD. I SEEN TWO NUCLEAR WARS, THE BIG NEC, JUDGEMENT DAY... AN' I'M STILL HERE.

AFTER ALL' A THAT, YOU REALLY THINK I'M GONNA LET MYSELF GET SHAFTED BY SOME TWO-CRED STREET PUNK ON THE MAKE?

DO YA?



GRUDSAKE, CAESAR -- WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT?

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M TALKIN' ABOUT. OKAY, WISEGUY, LET ME KNOW WHEN THIS STARTS SOUNDIN' FAMILIAR.



"SOMEBODY TOLD THE JUDGES WHERE TO FIND ALVIN KEYES, MY CHIEF ACCOUNTANT."

"NOW KEYES AIN'T NO DUMMY. MOMENT THE JAYS BUSTED IN, HE CHANGED THE ACCESS CODE TO MY ACCOUNT BEFORE THEY COULD SEIZE IT."



NOW THEY'RE GIVIN' HIM THE TREATMENT IN SOME CUBE, AN' I CAN'T EVEN GET A HOLD OF MY OWN MONEY!

THAT'S THIRTY-THREE MILLION CREDITS, YOU SON OF A BITCH!

WHOA, CAESAR -- TIME OUT! WHY THE HELL WOULD I SELL YOU OUT? I AIN'T GOT NO DEATH WISH!



THAT A FACT? THEN MAYBE YOU CAN EXPLAIN HOW COME I GOT VID FOOTAGE OF YOU AN' YOUR JUDGE PAL COSYIN' UP IN SHAPIRO'S?

HOW MUCH DID THEY PAY YOU FOR RATTIN' ME OUT, HUH?



L-LISTEN, YOU GOT IT ALL WRONG--

YOU'RE DEAD. AN' THAT PIECE OF SKIRT YOU HANG WITH, SHE'S DEAD TOO -- AT LEAST, ONCE MARY HERE'S HAD HIS FUN WITH HER.

OKAY MARY, I'M DONE TALKIN'. SHOOT THIS RAT FINK.



...YOU CAN'T KILL ME, CAESAR. YOU NEED ME.

I CAN GET HIM BACK FOR YOU.



THAT A FACT? YOU'RE GONNA SPRING KEYES FROM A SECTOR HOUSE INTERROGATION CUBE. DEAD MAN?

WHAT ARE YOU, SOME KINDA MAGICIAN?

NO.

I'M A JUDGE.



SON OF A BITCH... ALL'A THIS TIME, YOU WAS WALLY SQUAD...?"

YOU WAS ALREADY DEAD, BUDDY. YOU'RE DOUBLE DEAD NOW!

LEAVE MONA OUT OF IT. SHE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT ME, SHE AIN'T INVOLVED.

JUST... LEAVE HER ALONE, AN' I'LL GET YOU THE ACCOUNTANT.



SOONER OR LATER, KEYES IS GONNA CRACK. AND WHEN THE JAYS GET AHOOLD OF THAT ACCOUNT CODE, YOU CAN KISS YOUR THIRTY-THREE MIL GOODBYE.

CLOCK'S TICKIN', CAESAR.

* WALLY SQUAD: MEGA-SLANG FOR JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S UNDERCOVER DIVISION.

YOU'RE EITHER LOOKIN' FOR A BULLET
OR A ONE-WAY TICKET TO TITAN.
I JUST CAN'T FIGURE WHICH...

OKAY, YOU DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO.
BUT REMEMBER, THERE AIN'T NOWHERE
IN THIS CITY YOU CAN HIDE FROM ME.

YOU TRY ANYTHIN'. YOU GET
TO SEE WHAT RESYK LOOKS LIKE
FROM THE INSIDE. CAPICE?

CAESAR...

TRUST ME.

CAESAR'S GETTIN'
JUMPY. WANTS TO
KNOW WHO SOLD
HIM OUT.

SOUNDS LIKE YOU
SHOULD KEEP A LOW
PROFILE 'TIL THIS
WHOLE THING BLOWS
OVER, ZERO.

I RUN FOR
COVER.
THEY KNOW
IT WAS ME.

SO WHAT'S THE WORD ON
KEYES HERE -- HE GIVEN UP
THE ACCESS CODE YET?

NOT YET. SEEMS HE WAS
IMPLANTED WITH SOME KIND OF
POST-HYPNOTIC MIND LOCK.
HELPS HIM RESIST THE TRUTH
SERUM.

WE'VE REQUESTED A
SPECIALIST FROM PSI
DIVISION. SEE IF THEY
CAN CRACK HIM.

YOU START MESSIN' WITH A MIND
LOCK, YOU'RE LIABLE TO TURN HIS
BRAIN TO MUNCIE -- AN' THEN YOU'LL
NEVER LINK HIM TO CAESAR.

YOU GOTTA MAKE
HIM WANT TO GIVE
YOU THE CODE.

AND I SUPPOSE YOU
HAVE SOME IDEA
HOW WE DO THAT?

SURE I DO.
LISTEN...



UNDERCOVER 101: IN THE LION'S DEN, WALK LIKE YOU OWN THE PLACE AN' YOU WON'T GET BIT.

HOLD THE DOORS, PLEASE!

THANKS.

AT LEAST, THAT'S THE THEORY. IN REAL LIFE, THINGS TEND TO GET A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED.

IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT? I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING SO, BUT YOU'RE BROADCASTING AN AWFUL LOT OF STRESS AND NEGATIVE ENERGY.

NO KIDDIN'. THIS UNDERCOVER WORK'S PLAYIN' HELL WITH MY NERVES.

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT TRANSFERRING OUT OF THE DIVISION. JITTERS LIKE THAT COULD GET YOU KILLED.

FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT, PAL...

I'VE BEEN THINKIN' THE SAME THING MYSELF.

WE GOT MAYBE TWO MINUTES MAX BEFORE THEY REALISE YOU'RE MISSIN' AN' LOCK DOWN THE BUILDING.

GET IN THE FOORD, AN' KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN 'TIL WE'RE CLEAR.

W-WHATEVER YOU SAY...

PIECE O' CAKE.



GOOD SIGNAL FROM THE TRACER. HE'S HEADING NORTH ON ROCKATANSKY OVERZOOM, APPROACHING THE SUPERSLAB FEEDWAY.

SHOULDN'T WE AT LEAST PUT A MOBILE UNIT ON HIS TAIL?

TOO RISKY. IF KEYES SMELLS A DOUBLE-CROSS, THIS WHOLE PLAN IS BLOWN.

ZERO KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.



NOW LISTEN GOOD, MONEY MAN. WE'RE ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE HERE, AN' I'M ONLY GONNA SAY THIS ONCE.

CAESAR'S MOVIN' ALL HIS ASSETS OFF WORLD. HE SAID TO GIVE YOU THIRTY SECONDS TO GIMME THE ACCOUNT CODE.

WHAT? I-I'M ONLY SUPPOSED TO GIVE IT TO CAESAR HIMSELF --



HE ALSO SAID IF YOU DON'T GIMME THE CODE, I'M SUPPOSED TO BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT.

TWENNY SECONDS.

B-BUT... BUT --



I M-MEAN, CAESAR WAS ALWAYS VERY PARTICULAR ABOUT SECURITY... M-MAYBE IF I COULD JUST TALK TO HIM --

I ALREADY TOLD YOU, CAESAR'S OFF WORLD. HE AIN'T TALKIN' TO NOBODY 'TIL THIS HEAT DIES DOWN.

TEN SECONDS, PAL.

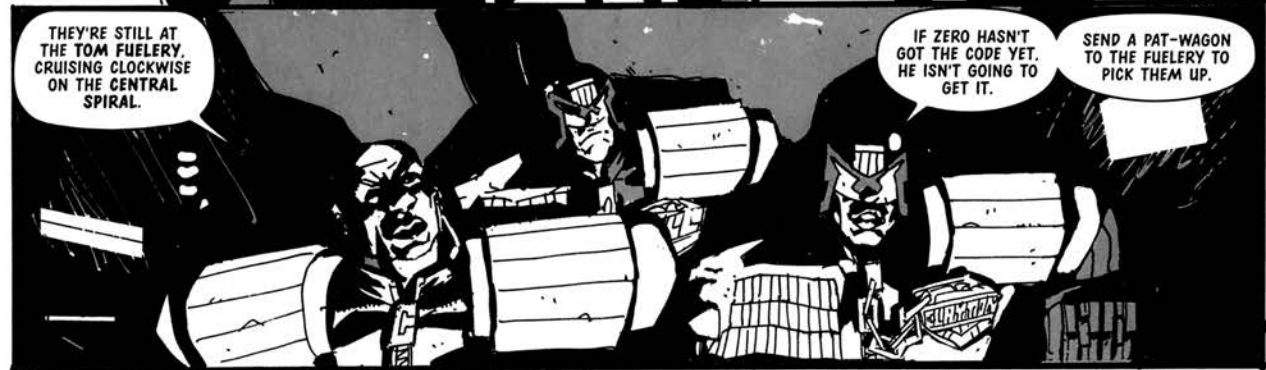
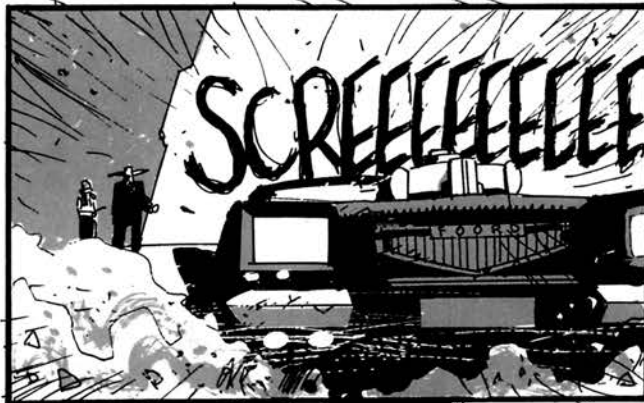


FIVE. FOUR. THREE. TWO. ONE --

O-O-KAY, O-KAY! CHEEZ LOUISE...

IT'S ACCOUNT NUMBER 779144. FIRST MEGAPOLITAN BANK. ACCESS CODE ALPHA 55 BLUE NINE.

GRAVY.





HUSTLE THAT TUSH, TOUGH GUY. OUR FLIGHT LEAVES IN FIFTEEN MINUTES.

MAN, I COULD KISS MYSELF.

BY THE TIME CAESAR AN' THE DEPARTMENT FIGURE OUT WE SCREWED 'EM BOTH, WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY TO A NON-EXTRADITION PLANET...



FIRST CLASS ALL THE WAY, COURTESY OF LITTLE CAESAR'S THIRTY-THREE MILLION!

JUST WISH I COULD SEE THE LOOK ON KEYES' FACE WHEN THE JUDGES PICK HIM UP WITH A JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TRACER IN HIS HAND!



BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST -- I AIN'T GETTIN' THESE BABIES THROUGH CUSTOMS. DITCH 'EM IN A GRINDER, WILL YA?



BABY...?

FORGET ABOUT CUSTOMS -- THE ONLY TRIP YOU'RE TAKING IS TO TITAN.



HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM, ZERO.

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.



CONTROL, THIS IS KRAMER, SJS.*

I NEED BACK-UP AND A CATCH-WAGON TO JFK POD PARK, UPPER LEVEL.

NO... NO, BABY, NO--

* SJS: SPECIAL JUDICIAL SQUAD, JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S INTERNAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION.





LENNY ZERO: DEAD ZERO

Script: Andy Diggle

Art: Jock

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 4.01-4.02



HEY THERE, VINNIE.
EAT ANY BAD GUYS
WHILE I WAS OUT?

POBY
ROBO
JUNK

VOICE-PRINT RECOGNISED.
WELCOME HOME, FATSO.



I BET YOU SAY
THAT TO --

ALERT!
INTRUDER
DETECTED --



FLOOMPH!



J-JEEZ LOUISE,
BUDDY. YOU KNOW HOW
EXPENSIVE THEM ROBO-
MUTTS ARE...?



I AM TRAPPER KHAN,
AND LITTLE CAESAR WILL PAY
ME TEN THOUSAND CREDITS
FOR THE HUMAN THEY
CALL... LENNY ZERO.

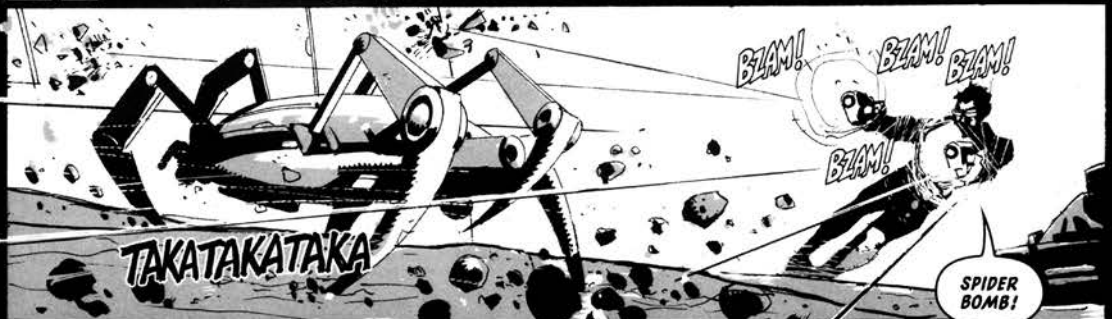
I SMELL HIM ON
YOU. TELL ME WHERE
HE IS... AND I PROMISE
YOU A QUICK DEATH!

H-HEY, THIS
WHOLE OOZIN' MENACE
SCHTICK, IT'S KINDA
STALE, Y'KNOW?

A LITTLE
"PLEASE" GOES A
LONG WAY...

DO NOT TRY ME,
CORPULENT ONE. SPEAK
NOW, WHILE MY
PATIENCE LASTS!

SURE, I'D LOVE TO
STAY AN' CHIT-CHAT,
BUT IT'S GETTIN' KINDA
LATE --





ALMOST TOO EASY.
TEN THOUSAND FOR
SUCH A PUNY
HUMAN...

LISSEN...WHOLE...WHOLE CITY
KNOWS CAESAR DON'T HAVE TWO
CREDS TA RUB TOGETHER...

I SHOULD KNOW-- I'M THE
ONE...LOST ALL HIS MONEY...

WHY D'YA THINK
HE HIRED AN...
OFF-WORLDER...TA
FIND ME...?



YA SEE MY
POINT, DON'T
YA-?

IN A WAY, I WAS ALMOST
GLAD I'D BEEN RUMBLER.

SIX MONTHS DODGIN' P.S.U. CAMERAS AN' LIVIN'
ON TWO-FOR-A-CRED GROT-POTS WAS STARTIN'
TO FEEL LIKE A SORRY ALTERNATIVE TO TITAN.



P.S.U.: JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S
PUBLIC SURVEILLANCE UNIT.

I WAS LIVIN' ON STOLEN TIME,
AN' I KNEW IT. THE DEPARTMENT
ON ONE SIDE, CAESAR'S BOUNTY-
HUNTERS ON THE OTHER...



I NEEDED A WAY OUT,
AN' I NEEDED ONE FAST.

THAT'S WHEN THE PLAN
FIRST CAME TO ME--
AN' IT WAS A BEAUTY.

BUT FIRST I WAS
GONNA NEED A
LITTLE INSURANCE...

STOP! STOP!
PLEASE, YOU HELP
ME--

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM,
BUDDY? I GOT A SCHEDULE
TO KEEP HERE.

IS MY BROTHER!
A HIT-AND-RUN
BASTARDO LEAVE HIM
FOR DEAD--!

MATTER OF FAC',
AM FEELIN' MOCH
BETTER NOW.

WHAT SAY YOU OPEN UP THAT
TROCK OF YOURS AN' WE SEE
WHAT YOU CARRYIN', EH?

OH BOY, HERE WE GO.

LISTEN PAL, I COULDN'T
OPEN THOSE DOORS
EVEN IF I WANTED TO.

MAYBE YOU NO
ONNERSTAN'!

YOU WAN' WE BLOW
YOUR METAL HEAD OFF,
EH? OPEN THE FOCKIN'
DOORS, MAN!

THIS IS BULLSHIT,
MAN! LESS JOST
SHOOT THIS PENDEJO
MEK AN' BLOW THE
DOORS--!

IS SOLID
TITANIUM, CABRON.
HOW WE SUPPOSED
TO --

LOOK, YOU GUYS CAN SHOOT
ME, THREATEN ME, IT WON'T
MAKE NO DIFFERENCE. IT'S
HOW I'M PROGRAMMED, SEE?

WHAT ARE YA
GONNA DO, I'M
A ROBOT.

GUESS THEY STILL
USE HUMAN DRIVERS
DOWN BANANA CITY
WAY, HUH?

MAYBE YOU BOYS
SHOULD'A STAYED
AT HOME.



QUE CARAJOS QUIERES--?

WHO THE FOCK ARE YOU, CAPULLO?



I'M THE GUY WHO CAN GET YOU INTO THAT TRUCK BEFORE THE JAYS SHOW UP.

AN' THEN I MIGHT JUST HAVE A JOB FOR YOU...AMIGO.

MADRE GRUD... YOU GOT SOME COJONES, MY FRIEN'!

WE'RE IN A P.S.U. BLIND-SPOT, BUT THE DROID CAN STILL I.D. YOU. SHOOT THE DROID, AN' YOU'LL NEVER GET INTO THE TRUCK.

YOU WANT IN, GIVE ME YOUR GUN.

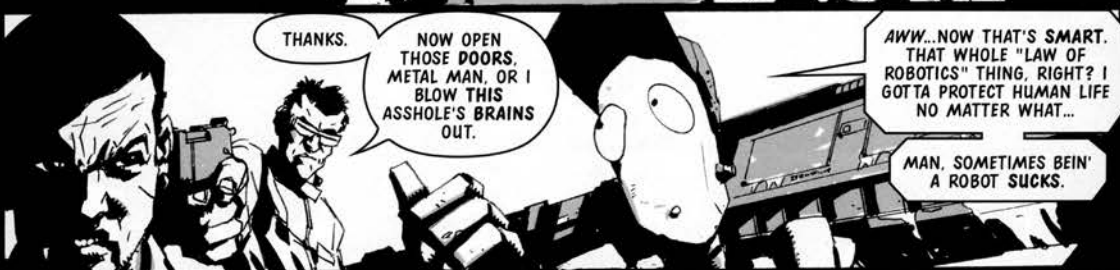


GIVE YOU MY...?

YOU GOT A DEATH WISH, MAN! THIS I GOTTA SEE...

COVER HIM, CHICO.

YOU LOCO, BRO--?



THANKS.

NOW OPEN THOSE DOORS, METAL MAN, OR I BLOW THIS ASSHOLE'S BRAINS OUT.

AWWW...NOW THAT'S SMART. THAT WHOLE "LAW OF ROBOTICS" THING, RIGHT? I GOTTA PROTECT HUMAN LIFE NO MATTER WHAT...

MAN, SOMETIMES BEIN' A ROBOT SUCKS.



GRAVY, SEVENTY GRAND'S WORTH OF HIGHLY ILLEGAL ALLOSUR-HIDE JACKETS, COURTESY OF THE CADAVERE MOB.

NOW YOU CAN SHOOT THE ROBOT.



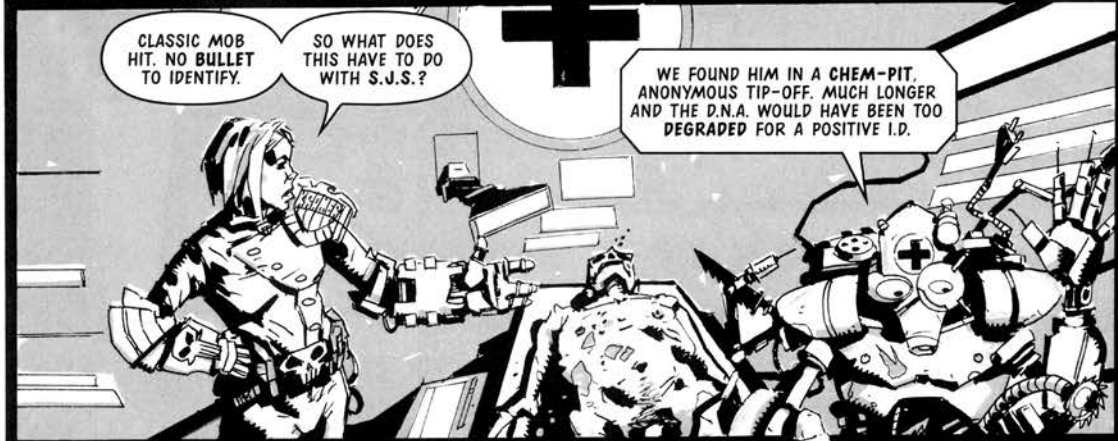
THASS A GOOD IDEA...BUT I HAVE A BETTER ONE.

WHY DON' WE JUST SHOOT YOU...AMIGO?



DEATH WOULD HAVE BEEN INSTANTANEOUS.

SINGLE LASER-BLAST THROUGH THE SKULL. MOST OF THE INTRA-CRANIAL TISSUE WAS FLASH-VAPORISED.



CLASSIC MOB HIT. NO BULLET TO IDENTIFY.

SO WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH S.J.S.?

WE FOUND HIM IN A CHEM-PIT. ANONYMOUS TIP-OFF. MUCH LONGER AND THE D.N.A. WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO DEGRADED FOR A POSITIVE I.D.



AS IT WAS, WE GOT THIS...

FORMER UNDERCOVER JUDGE LEONARD ZERO. HIS FILE WAS FLAGGED FOR YOUR ATTENTION.



I WANT A FULL AUTOPSY -- THE WORKS! I WANT CAUSE OF DEATH. RETINAL PATTERNS. DENTAL RECORDS. WHAT HE ATE FOR DINNER AND WHETHER HE FLOSSSED AFTERWARDS.

AND RUN A GROUND-UP DIAGNOSTIC ON ZERO'S MEDICAL FILE.

NOW!



...WELL. I'LL BE A MONKEY'S UNCLE. YOU WERE RIGHT -- THE LASER BLAST WAS DELIVERED POST-MORTEM.

THE REAL CAUSE OF DEATH WAS --

A SNOOGY-BIX LODGED IN THE WINDPIPE?

HOW DID YOU --?



WHEN YOU KNOW LENNY ZERO LIKE I KNOW HIM, YOU NEVER TAKE ANYTHING AT FACE VALUE.

GET ME BUELL.

THE BODY WASN'T ZERO. SIR, WE WERE JUST SUPPOSED TO THINK IT WAS.

WE'VE IDENTIFIED IT AS CITIZEN HERB FLACKETT OF GEORGE KAPLAN BLOCK, CHOKED ON HIS BREAKFAST CEREAL LAST WEEK.

HIS BODY WAS STOLEN FROM RESYK THREE DAYS AGO.

UH-HUH. SO HOW DID REGULAR JOE CIT END UP BEING MISTAKEN FOR--

ZERO.

HE MUST HAVE HACKED INTO OUR CENTRAL DATABASE AND SWAPPED HIS MEDICAL RECORDS WITH THOSE OF THE BODY HE'D STOLEN.

SMART. SO ZERO FAKES HIS OWN DEATH TO GET CAESAR'S BOUNTY HUNTERS OFF HIS BACK. BUT HE'S STILL GOT TO WORRY ABOUT THE P.S.U. CAMERAS IF--

NOT IF HE PULLS IT OFF, SIR. ONCE HE'S REGISTERED OFFICIALLY DEAD, HIS FILE GETS REMOVED FROM THE P.S.U. ACTIVE SURVEILLANCE ROSTER.

IN EFFECT, HE'D BECOME INVISIBLE TO OUR CAMERA NETWORK...

THEN YOU'D BETTER FIND HIM, KRAMER. FAST.

I'M GOING TO ASSIGN YOU SOME BACKUP-- SOMEONE WITH EXPERIENCE IN THESE KINDS OF--

WITH RESPECT, SIR, THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.

ZERO WAS INFATUATED WITH ME. I KNOW HIS MOVES. I KNOW HIS--

KRAMER-- SHUT UP!

YOU WILL HAVE ON-THE-GROUND SUPPORT FROM A SENIOR JUDGE. YOU WERE PERSONALLY INVOLVED WITH ZERO EVEN BEFORE HE BLEW YOUR HAND OFF, AND YOU NEED SOME PERSPECTIVE!

LOVE CAN BE A POWERFUL WEAPON IN THE HANDS OF A TRAINED JUDGE... BUT IT CAN ALSO BLOW UP IN YOUR FACE!

OH, AND KRAMER...

INTERRUPT ME ONE MORE TIME AND I'LL HAVE YOU BUSTED DOWN TO TRAFFIC SO FAST YOU'LL THINK THE SLAB CRACKED OPEN AND SWALLOWED YOU WHOLE. CLEAR?

YES, SIR.



SO THIS CAPER YOU PLANNIN', AMIGO. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE SHOULD TROST YOU?

DON'T TRUST ANYBODY. THAT'S MY POLICY.

I PUT THIS CREW TOGETHER FOR A HARDCORE HIJACK. NOT A BLOCK PARK PICNIC. FACT IS, WITH YOUR REPUTATIONS, YOU'D BE CRAZY TO TRUST EACH OTHER.

EVERYBODY KNOWS HOW THE RODRIGUEZ BROTHERS TRIED TO SELL THEIR OWN MOTHER TO OFF-WORLD SLAVERS -- AN' NOW SHE'S PUT A DEATH MARK ON BOTH THEIR HEADS.

WAS WORTH IT, MAN!



DOMINO HERE BLACKMAILED FIFTY GRAND OUTTA THE AMBASSADOR OF ANTARES IV IN AN UNLICENSED SEX-MEK SCAM...

...THEN SLIT HIS THROAT ANYWAY AN' SOLD HIM TO THE ORGAN LEGGERS.



BAD BOB IS WANTED FOR SEVEN JUDGE MURDERS AN' THREE COUNTS OF AGGRAVATED RAPE...

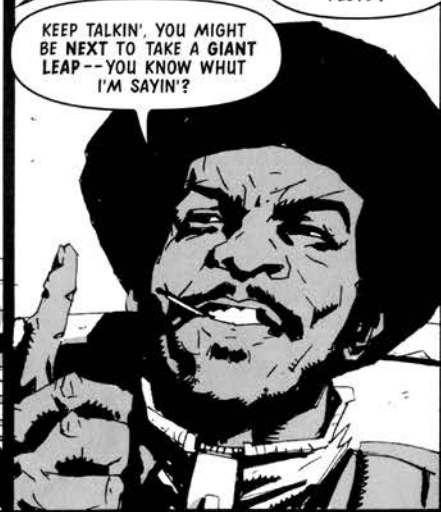
I DON'T LIKE WOMEN IN UNIFORM.



AN' SUGARBOY FLOYD'S OFF-WORLD EXPRESS HAS BEEN CHUMP DUMPIN' FOR THREE YEARS NOW.

HOW MANY POOR SCHMUCKS YOU BLOWN OUTTA THE AIRLOCK ON THE WAY TO THE PROMISED LAND, FLOYD?

KEEP TALKIN'. YOU MIGHT BE NEXT TO TAKE A GIANT LEAP -- YOU KNOW WHUT I'M SAYIN'?



ALL I'M SAYIN' IS, WATCH YOUR BACKS. AN' BEFORE YOU GET ANY IDEAS ABOUT RIPPIN' ME OFF, CHECK OUT THE WATCH.

THIS BABY PACKS A CARDIOMETER WIRED INTO A MICRO NUKE. MY PULSE STOPS, AN' YOU CAN KISS GOODBYE TO HALF A CITY BLOCK.

LET'S JUST SAY MY TRUST IS SOMETHING YOU GOTTA EARN.



OKAY-- YOU'VE HAD THE SALAD, HERE'S THE BEEF. THIS AYEM, THE STAR-FREIGHTER BETTY COLTRANE DOCKED AT J.F.K. CARRYIN' FORTY MILLION CREDS WORTH OF STREET-GRADE UMPITY.

LITTLE CAESAR'S PLANNIN' TO BUY HIS WAY BACK INTO POWER BY FLOODIN THE CITY'S CANDY MARKET. WHAT HE DOESN'T KNOW IS, I'M ONTO HIM.

SECURITY'S LIGHT-- THEY GOTTA PASS A JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INSPECTION. SOON AS THE AIRLOCK DOOR'S OPEN, WE GO IN HARD AN' TAKE THE SHIP.

ONCE WE'RE OFF-WORLD, WE SPLIT THE GOODS SIX WAYS AND IT'S ADIOS COMPADRES. ANY QUESTIONS?

ME? I'M NOBODY, A GHOST. A HOLE IN THE CROWD...

YEAH, I GOT A QUESTION-- HOW COME YOU KNOW SO MUCH? WHO THE HELL ARE YOU...?

A BIG, FAT ZERO.

IT FELT GOOD TO BE BACK ON THE STREETS. THE OLD BUZZ WAS BACK, LIKE WHEN IT'S ALL COMIN' TOGETHER AN' YOU CAN SEE ALL THE ANGLES.

BUT THE CLOCK WAS TICKIN', AN' THERE WAS STILL ONE VITAL PIECE OF BUSINESS I HAD TO TAKE CARE OF...

I RENTED A DOZEN HABS UNDER A DOZEN NAMES, BUT THE APARTMENT IN ROLLO TOMASI WAS THE ONLY PLACE I'D ALWAYS FELT SAFE--

UNNH--!

AW, MAN...

IT'S FUNNY HOW WRONG
YOU CAN BE.

HEARD ABOUT THOSE
QUICK-DRAW PISTOLS.
ZERO.

CARE TO TRY
YOUR LUCK?





THE BODY DOUBLE
ALMOST HAD US FOOLED.
ZERO. WE LET YOU THINK
YOU'D GOTTEN AWAY WITH
IT. AS SOON AS YOU
STEPPED INTO THE LIGHT,
THE P.S.U. CAMERAS
HAD YOU.

YOU'VE BEEN HANGING
OUT WITH A WHOLE
NEW LEAGUE OF SCUM-
BAG. SO WHAT ARE YOU
PLANNING?

YOUR
RETIREMENT
PARTY, OLD
MAN.



THAT'S
RIGHT. MAKE
IT HARDER ON
YOURSELF.

EVERYTHING'S JUST
BLACK AND WHITE WITH
YOU. AIN'T IT, DREDD? NO
ROOM FOR GREY AREAS IN
THAT ACADEMY-DRONE
BRAIN O' YOURS!

WELL LEMME TELL YOU, THIS WHOLE
FRIGGIN' CITY IS ONE BIG GREY
AREA! AN' WHEN YOU'RE WORKIN' MY
SIDE O' THE STREET, ALL BLACK AN'
WHITE'LL GET YOU IS KILLED!



SHIT, WHY
AM I EVEN
BOTHERIN'...

YEAH, I
WENT
ROGUE. I
WAS IN
LOVE.

BUT HOW
WOULD YOU KNOW
HOW THAT FEELS --
WHEN THE WOMAN
YOU'D DIE FOR
TURNS AROUND AND
STICKS A KNIFE
RIGHT THROUGH
YOUR FRIGGIN'
HEART...



IF YOU THINK A
SOB STORY'S GOING
TO SAVE YOU, YOU
DON'T KNOW ME
AT ALL.

SAVE YOUR
BREATH, ZERO.
YOU'LL NEED IT
ON TITAN.



OKAY, DREDD.
YOU WIN.

I'LL COME
QUIETLY.

--WHICH WAS THE CODE PHRASE THAT ACTIVATED
SHERMAN, A BARELY-SMART BRUISER I'D BRICKED INTO
THE SPARE ROOM THREE MONTHS BEFOREHAND.

PROKK!

MY WALLY SQUAD LIAISON
USED TO SAY, "ALWAYS HAVE
A BACK-UP PLAN". ME, EVEN
MY BACK-UP PLANS HAVE
BACK-UP PLANS--

HIDES'S TOO
TOUGH FOR
STANDARD
EXECUTION--

CHEW ON
A HI-EX!

ZERO!

I'D ALWAYS FIGURED THE DROID WOULD GIMME
ENOUGH TIME TO LOSE MYSELF IN THE CROWD.
ANY OTHER JUDGE AND IT WOULD HAVE DONE.

WHY DID IT HAVE
TO BE DREDD?

OUTTA
THE GRUDDAMN
WAY!



ONLY ONE
WAY OUTTA HERE
NOW --

HAD
YOUR CHANCE,
ZERO...

BLAM!

HIT
THE ROAD,
CREEP.

GREED





KOOM

BIKE
CANNON!

BUDDA!

BUDDA!
BUDDA!
BUDDA!

SPONGE
SPONGE!

PEOWIE!

LATER FOR
YOU, ZERO...

RRRRRRRRRRRR



...GRUDDAMN
TIME YOU CALL THIS?
YOU WERE S'POSED TA
BE HERE AN HOUR
AGO --

CUT THE CRAP
AND LISTEN UP.
TIME'S GETTIN'
SHORT--

THE BETTY COLTRANE'S
SCHEDULED FOR A JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT INSPECTION AT
MIDNIGHT. WE'RE NOT
OFFWORLD WITH THE UMPY
BY THEN. THIS WHOLE PLAN
IS SCREWED.



WE'RE USIN'
WIDOWMAKERS.
JUSTICE DEPARTMENT
SURPLUS. TOTALLY
UNTRACEABLE.

YOU LOOK LIKE HAMMERED
SHIT, MAN. WHAT HAPPENED?



DREDD HAPPENED.
HADDA MAKE A
SLIGHT DETOUR
BEFORE I COULD PICK
UP THE OUTFIT.

NOW,
ANYBODY ELSE
GOT ANY STUPID
QUESTIONS...?

JEEZ. DON'T GET YOUR
KALVINS IN A BUNCH. I
WAS JUST ASKIN'...



JUDGE JUDGE?
THASS REAL SLICK, MY
MAN. SHOULD GET YOUR
OWN VID SHOW, NAME
LIKE THAT.

MAN, THIS CAPER IS
BULL. I'M TELLIN' YOU, WE
OUGHTA SHITCAN THE PLAN
'FORE WE UP TO OUR
NECKS IN ICE--

RELAX, FLOYD.
IT'S STEALIN' CANDY
FROM A BABY.

TRUST ME...
I'M A JUDGE.

YOU ARE A
MAN OF YOUR WORD.
ZERO. THE OFFWORLD
WARRANTS ON THESE
FIVE COME TO OVER
TWO HUNDRED
THOUSAND
CREDITS...

THAT WAS THE
DEAL--MY FREEDOM
IN RETURN FOR
TWENTY TIMES THE
PRICE ON MY OWN
HEAD.

PLUS MY
FINDER'S FEE,
OF COURSE...

EVEN SAVED YOU THE
JOB OF HUNTIN' 'EM
DOWN -- SERVED 'EM
UP ON A PLATTER.

AN' NOW, IF YOU'LL
JUST UPHOLD YOUR
END O' THE BARGAIN,
YOU CAN UNLOCK THIS
EXPLOSIVE TIMER YA
TAGGED ME WITH!

ATTENTION THE SHIP!
THIS IS JUDGE DREDD!

WE HAVE YOU SURROUNDED!
MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO START
YOUR ENGINES, OR YOU WILL
BE FIRED UPON!

SON OF A
BITCH--

HE ACTUALLY
THINKS HE COULD
HAVE RUN ME OFF
THE ROAD.

THE ARROGANCE
OF THIS CREEP...

IF YOU'D MISSED
HIS BIKE WITH THE
TRACER DART, YOU
REALLY WOULD HAVE
LOST HIM.

IF I'D TAKEN HIM DOWN AT TOMASI,
WE'D NEVER HAVE KNOWN WHAT THEY
WERE PLANNING. THIS WAY WE TAKE
THE WHOLE CREW RED-HANDED.

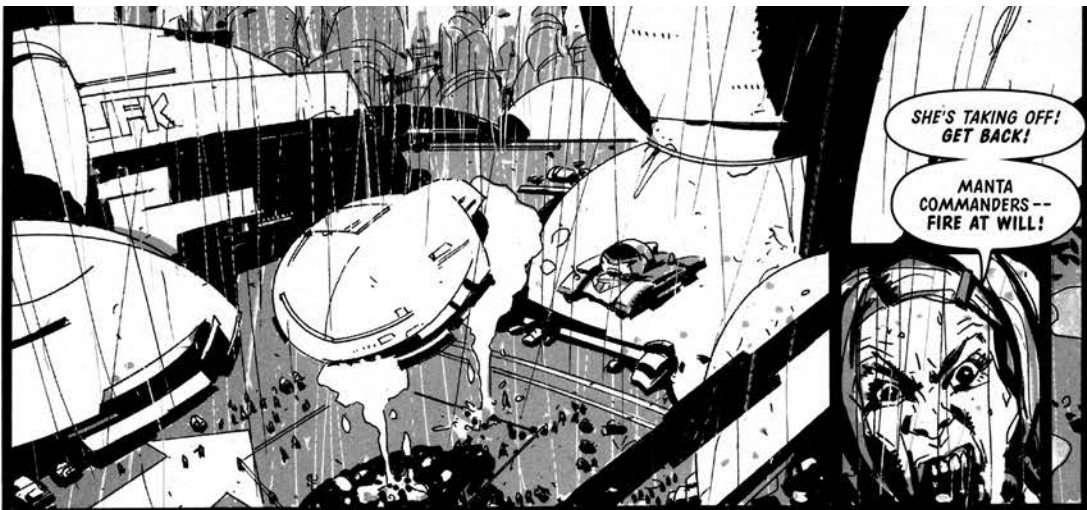
YOU DO THE JOB
YOUR WAY, KRAMER--
AND I'LL DO IT MINE.

FINE. LET ME
SHOW YOU MY
WAY, DREDD.

ASSAULT
SQUADS--
MOVE IN!

NO GOOD--
MAINTENANCE HATCH
IS BOOBY-TRAPPED
WITH A FLESH
DISINTEGRATOR!

WE'LL HAVE
TO FIND ANOTHER
WAY IN!



SHE'S TAKING OFF!
GET BACK!

MANTA
COMMANDERS --
FIRE AT WILL!



THIS IS
DREDD -- BELAY
THAT ORDER!

YOU'LL BRING
HER DOWN ON
THE CITY!



I CAN'T
BELIEVE YOU'RE
JUST LETTING
THEM GO,
DREDD...



WHO SAID
ANYTHING ABOUT
LETTING THEM
GO?

CONTROL -- PATCH
ME THROUGH TO ORBITAL
WEAPONS PLATFORM
McGRUDER.

ATTENTION STARSHIP
BETTY COLTRANE!

POWER DOWN YOUR
ENGINES IMMEDIATELY,
OR BE DESTROYED!

BETTER TO DIE A
HUNTER'S DEATH
THAN ROT IN A MEGA-
CITY ISO-CUBE!



SUITS ME, BUB.



VAPORISED.

LOOKS LIKE WE
CAN CLOSE THE CASE
FILE ON ZERO ONCE
AND FOR ALL.



ALMOST
A SHAME,
THOUGH. FOR
IT TO END
LIKE THIS, I
MEAN.

WHAT I WOULD
HAVE GIVEN TO GET
MY HANDS ON HIM
ONE LAST TIME. THIS
THING STILL HURTS.
YOU KNOW...



LET IT GO, KRAMER.
A JUDGE SHOULD NEVER
LET IT GET PERSONAL.



I KNOW,
AND YET...

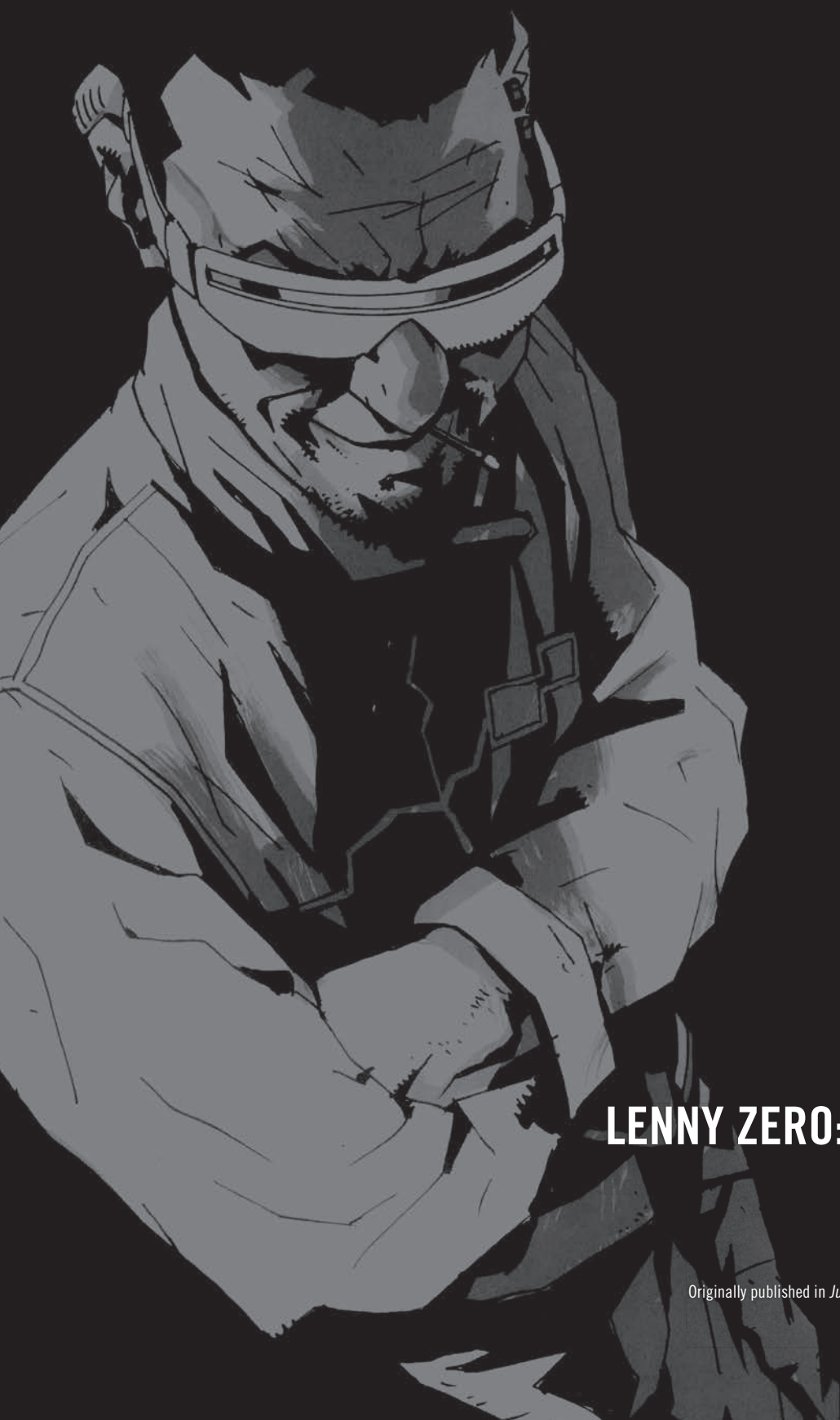
I CAN'T SHAKE
THE FEELING THAT
SOMEHOW HE'S STILL
LAUGHING AT ME...



THERE ARE NO
GREY AREAS. IT'S
BLACK AND
WHITE.



LENNY ZERO
IS DEAD.



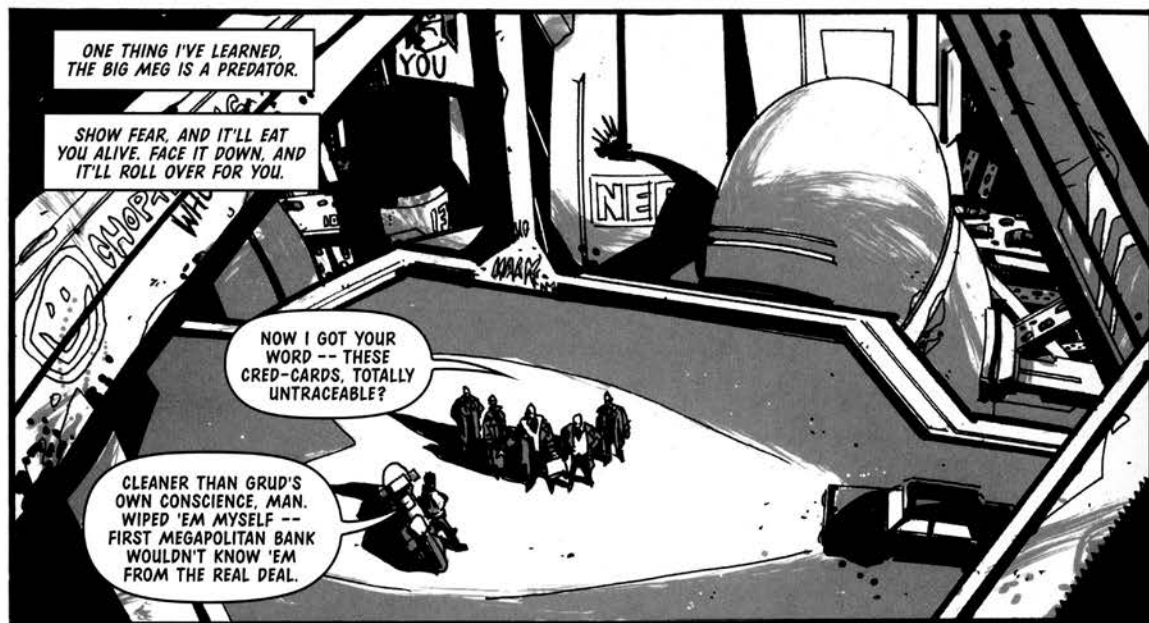
LENNY ZERO: WIPEOUT

Script: Andy Diggie

Art: Jock

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *Judge Dredd Magazine* 4.14-4.15







CAR! GET ME THE HELL OUTTA HERE--!



WHERE TO, SIR?

I COULD GIVE A JACKRAT'S ASS! JUST DRIVE!

MARV? THIS IS LOU -- LISTEN TO ME!



PLEASE SPECIFY A DESTINATION, SIR.

LENNY ZERO IS STILL ALI--

BZAM!



SHADES, INTERCEPT AND REPLAY.

LENNY ZERO IS STILL ALI--

LENNY ZERO IS STILL ALI--

LENNY ZERO IS STILL ALI--



THE WORD WAS OUT. LITTLE CAESAR WAS GONNA COME LOOKING FOR ME.

AN' I'D BE ON THE RUN AGAIN. BACK TO SQUARE ONE -- LYIN' LOW, HIDIN' IN THE SHADOWS.

LIVIN' LIKE A SCHNOOK.



SCREW THAT.



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. CAESAR WAS ONLY THE BOSS 'CAUSE EVERYONE BELIEVED HE WAS.

IF THEY STOPPED BELIEVIN' IT, HE STOPPED BEIN' IT.

I WENT TO WORK.

CAESAR'S CATHOUSE WAS BLACKMAILIN' HALF THE CITY'S COUNCILLORS -- UNTIL THE WHOLE SCAM BLEW WIDE OPEN.

I...I'D LIKE TO OFFER MY RESIGNATION FROM THE CITY COUNCIL...

THE JUDGES STARTED GETTIN' ANONYMOUS TIP-OFFS ABOUT SCORES ON CAESAR'S PATCH.

WE THINK THAT'S GREAT!!

THEN ONE OF CAESAR'S WAREHOUSES MYSTERIOUSLY EXPLODED, INCINERATING A HALF-MIL'S WORTH OF TOP-CRED HONDO VI-ZINES.

NATURALLY THE JAYS FIGURED IT WAS ARSON, AN' RAN CAESAR'S FRONT COMPANY IN FOR INSURANCE FRAUD.

VA-DOOM

ANOTHER LITTLE TWIST OF THE KNIFE, COURTESY OF YOURS TRULY.





I DON'T LIKE THIS, BOSS. MAYBE COMIN' HERE WASN'T SUCH A GREAT IDEA--

WHAT, I CAN'T COME WATCH THE FIGHT NOW? WHAT DO YOU WANT I SHOULD DO, HIDE UNDER THE BED?

I DON'T SHOW I'M ON TOP OF THIS THING, THE OTHER BOSSES'LL EAT ME FOR FRICKIN' BREAKFAST--



HEY, FRANZONE! LONG TIME NO SEE...

EAST SECTOR RACKETS BEIN' GOOD TO YA?



BETTER'N YOU, WHAT I HEAR.

WORD IS YOU BEEN HAVING SOME TROUBLE...



WHAT, YOU HEARIN' VOICES? THOSE FUMES OFFA THE BLACK ATLANTIC MUSTA MESS'D UP YOUR HEAD OR SOMETHIN'.

YOU KNOW TROUBLE AIN'T BEEN INVENTED THAT CAESAR PICCANTE CAN'T TAKE CARE OF.

I AM TROUBLE. MY MIDDLE NAME IS --

YEAH, OKAY. WHATEVER YOU SAY, CAESAR.



GOOD TO SEE YOU.

YOU TAKE CARE NOW.



SMUG SONUVABITCH TURNS HIS BACK ON ME AGAIN. I'LL PUT A FRICKIN' BULLET IN IT.

HE'S LAUGHIN' AT ME...



COVER THE DOOR. I GOTTA TAKE A DUMP.

RAT BASTARD BETTER
PRAY HE GETS WHACKED
BEFORE HE COMES FACE
TO FACE WITH M--



WHAT THE
DROKK--?



HI, CAESAR.

CATCH YOU
WITH YOUR PANTS
DOWN?



YOU TELEPORT
ME STRAIGHT OUTTA
THE JOHN...?

MAN, THAT'S LOW --
EVEN FOR A MOTHER-
LESS RAT BASTARD
LIKE YOU...

DON'T GET YOUR
UNDIES IN A BUNCH,
CEEZ. I AIN'T GONNA
WHACK A TEN YEAR-
OLD KID...

...EVEN IF HE DOES
HAVE THE BIO-CHIPPED
PERSONALITY OF A
TWO HUNNERD-YEAR-
OLD PSYCHOPATH.

I JUST FIGURED IT'S
TIME YOU AN' ME HAD
A CONVERSATION.

Y'KNOW, IT'S LIKE
WE'VE COME FULL CIRCLE. I
BEEN WIPIN' OLD CRED-CARDS,
RE-CHIPPIN' 'EM... JUST LIKE
I USED TO DO FOR YOU, BACK
IN THE DAY.

YOU EVER WISH YOU
COULD DO THAT WITH
YOUR LIFE? ERASE THE
PAST, WIPE OUT YOUR
OLD MISTAKES AN'
JUST... START OVER?

IT'S THE FUTURE
YOU SHOULD BE
WORRYIN' ABOUT.

AS IN, YOU
DON'T HAVE ONE.

I GUESS YOU'RE
PROBABLY EXPECTIN'
SOME KINDA DOUBLE-
CROSS, A STING IN THE
TALE. WAY THINGS HAVE
BEEN BETWEEN US,
I CAN'T SAY I
BLAME YA.

BUT THAT AIN'T
WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.
I JUST WANNA TALK.

AN' I SWEAR,
EVERY WORD I SAY TO
YOU HERE WILL BE
THE TRUTH.

'IT DON'T COME EASY TO ME
NOW. THE TRUTH, I MEAN.

'BEEN LIVIN' A LIE SO LONG,
I CAN BARELY REMEMBER
WHO I AM ANY MORE...

'EVEN AS A KID, I ESCAPED INTO
A FANTASY WORLD. REALITY WAS
THE INSIDE OF A LOUSY ONE-BED
MOPAD, SLAB BLURRIN' PAST AT
TWO HUNNERD PER.

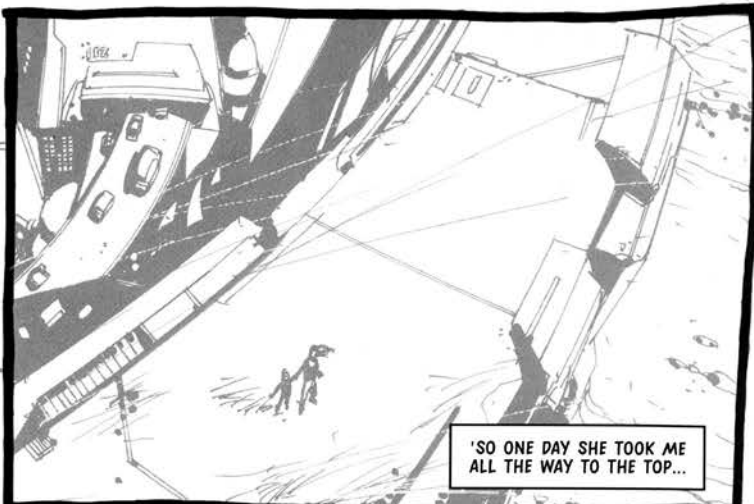
'I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD WHEN
CAL'S JUDGES TOOK DAD AWAY.

'WE EVENTUALLY HEARD HE
GOT SHOT DEAD TRYIN' TO
ESCAPE FROM A WEST WALL
CONSTRUCTION CREW.

'THAT WALL CAST A SHADOW
OVER MOM. SHE SAID IT
WASN'T BUILT TO KEEP THE
CURSED EARTH OUT...

'IT WAS BUILT TO KEEP
THE CITIZENS IN.

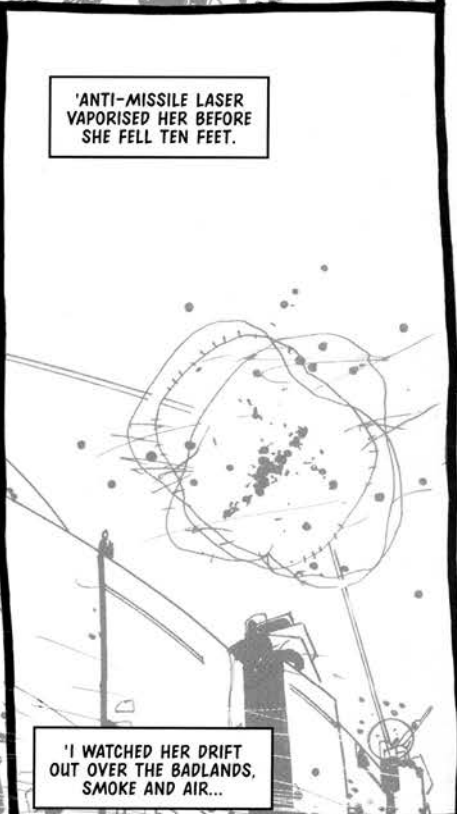
'One lane
Wonder'



'SO ONE DAY SHE TOOK ME
ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP...



'ANTI-MISSILE LASER
VAPORISED HER BEFORE
SHE FELL TEN FEET.



'I WATCHED HER DRIFT
OUT OVER THE BADLANDS,
SMOKE AND AIR...

'MOM ALWAYS SAID, BAD
THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD
PEOPLE IN MEGA-CITY ONE.
SHE'D KNEW SHE'D NEVER
BE ABLE TO KEEP ME SAFE...

M--MOM SAID
I SHOULD GIVE
YOU THIS...



'...UNLESS I BECAME THE THING TO FEAR.

'AFTER THAT, ALL I WAS SUPPOSED
TO CARE ABOUT WAS THE LAW.

ACADEMY OF LAW
ENROLMENT
FORM

name: LAYMA, ZEEQ
d.o.b.: 14-1-1004
sector: hospital 12

'BUT AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS ON THE STREET,
YOU START TO REALISE THE LAW AIN'T GOT
NOTHIN' TO DO WITH RIGHT AN' WRONG.

'IT'S DOG EAT DOG OUT THERE, AN' THE JUDGES ARE
JUST THE WOLVES WITH THE SHARPEST TEETH.

'WASN'T 'TIL I MET MONA
THAT IT ALL FINALLY CAME
INTO FOCUS. I REALISED I'D
BEEN LIVIN' A LIE.

'I WOULD'VE DIED FOR HER.

'AN' WHEN YOU BLEW MY
COVER... I ALMOST DID.'



BOO. FRICKIN'. HOO.

WHAT IS THIS, *SOB* STORY? WHY ARE YOU TELLIN' ME ALL THIS? JEEZ, YOU EXPECT ME TO... TO FORGIVE YOU OR SOMETHIN'?



I GUESS I JUST NEEDED TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANYTHING HUMAN LEFT IN THAT BLACK, TWISTED LITTLE HEART O' YOURS.

LISTEN, THIS WAR BETWEEN US, IT'S OVER. YOUR MONEY'S GONE, YOU GET NO PERCENTAGE OUTTA MAKIN' ME DEAD.

SAME TIME, THE OTHER BOSSES FIND OUT HOW I PLAYED YOU, THEY'D WHACK YOU IN A HEARTBEAT.



SO WHADDAYA SAY, CAESAR? WE QUILTS?



WHAT, YOU TELLIN' ME YOU DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE? YOU THINK YOU CAN RIP ME OFF FOR THIRTY MIL AN' THEN EXPECT ME TO JUST FORGET ALL ABOUT IT?

SCREW YOU, YA SELF-PITYIN' SON OF A BITCH! YA CAN BLOW IT OUT YER ASS!



THAT'S WHAT I FIGURED. JUST HAD TO BE SURE.

W-WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO? W-WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING...?





TIME TO HAVE SOME
FUN IN THIS CITY.



INTRODUCTION

LOW LIFE

It seems appropriate that I'm writing this introduction during a stomach bug that's turned my New Year's into a digestive disaster movie. You see, *Low Life* was always supposed to be about the nastier things. The decaying, rotting sector of Judge Dredd's hometown.

Matt Smith, *2000 AD*'s editor, asked if I was interested in pitching an undercover Judge series. I was heavily into the excellent US cop drama *The Shield* (the star of which, Michael Chiklis, I met soon afterwards, a story I'll come back to) at the time and the idea of an undercover Judge operating in the same grubby surroundings as Vic Mackay and co. seemed perfect.

For me, though, what made *Low Life* interesting, and (hopefully) transcended it above cop clichés, was the idea of class. The *Low Life* was the scum area of MC1 not just in nastiness and crime, but also in terms of a lack of economic regeneration. Coming from the South Wales valleys, as I do, and growing up there in the '80s when the area fell into decay, it felt familiar to me.

And Aimee Nixon WAS the *Low Life*. The perfect liar (mainly to herself), someone who stays an undercover Judge in order to sustain the no-good life she lives. I loved Aimee from the off, and certainly felt that she was far more complex than your bog standard 'screw authority' anti-heroine.

Low Life started gritty then slipped into comedy. The fault lay with demented co-star Dirty Frank, who was just too much fun to write. Frank was named after a Pearl Jam B-side and his penchant for speaking in the first person was based on Tony Adams, ex-captain of Arsenal, who would self-importantly proclaim in interviews that: "Tony Adams is as Tony Adams does, etc."

An enormous amount of credit for *Low Life* goes to its two artists — Henry Flint and Si Coleby. Henry co-created *Low Life* — his suggestion of giving Aimee a broken nose nailed the character immediately, it was Henry who drew Frank

as Alan Moore. He gave the strip the ugliness it needed. Henry's insane imagination makes him a genius one-off, yet few people ever comment on just how good his storytelling is. My favourite page from 'Paranoia' hangs on my wall. It's Aimee approaching a transport, looking in and seeing the scummy refugees she has to join now she's defeated. There are two silent panels where Henry superbly conveyed her inner horror, the turning point in the strip. As a writer you hand your script to an artist and they either make it better or make it worse. Henry made every page of *Low Life* better than I wrote it.

Si took over after Henry went back to *ABC Warriors*. His beautifully oppressive blacks suited the noire feel, even if we did immediately dive into comedy. Si and I both have misguided backgrounds in heavy metal, and we would knock around ideas on the phone for 'Rock And A Hard Place.' It was a lot of fun and I loved the energy and weight of his pages.

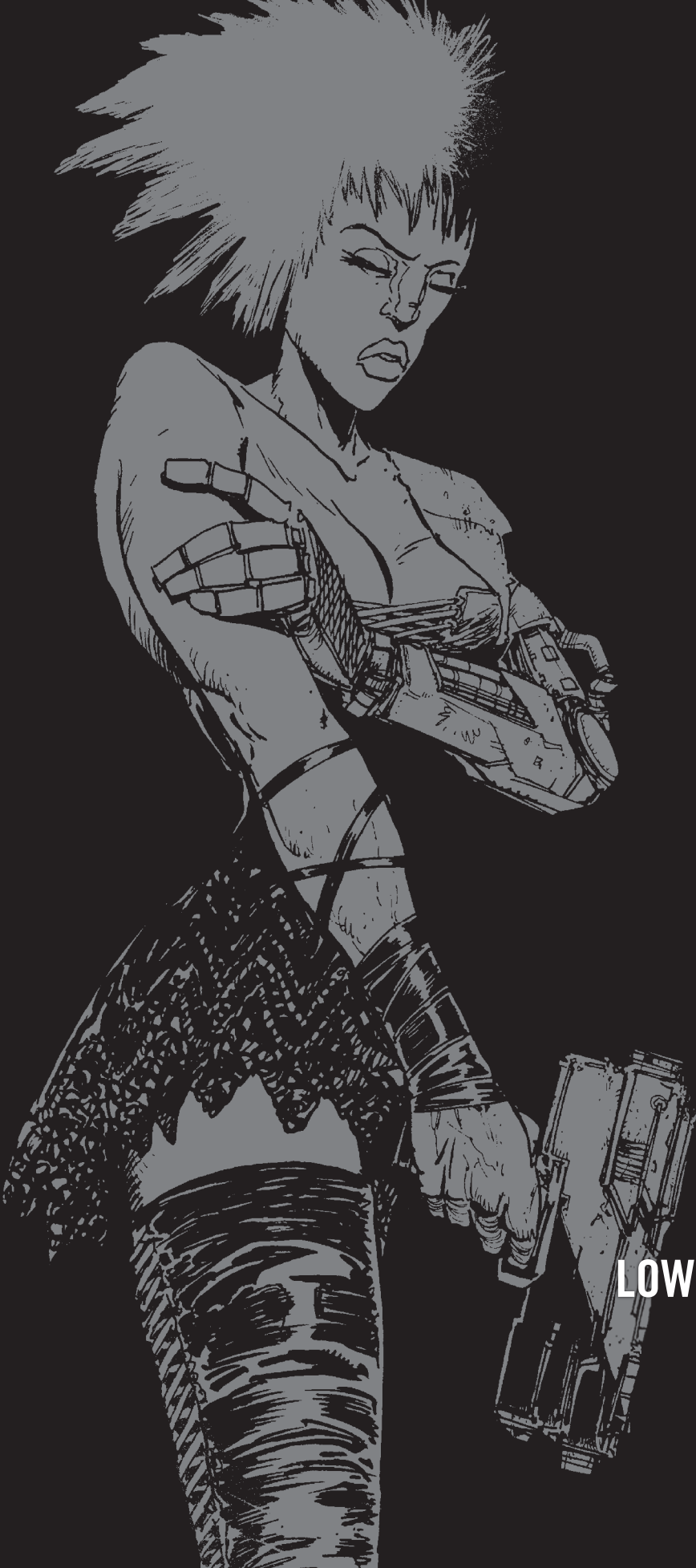
Anyway, before you get down and dirty in the effluent end of Mega City 1, let me warn you just how nasty this world can be — as promised earlier, my Michael Chiklis story:

I was at the San Diego Comic Con and Chiklis was there promoting *The Fantastic Four*. By chance, I bumped into him. I shook his hand and told him how much I loved *The Shield*. Upon hearing my Welsh accent the baddest cop on US TV promptly decided, quite unexpectedly, to reply in a faux Dick Van Dyke cockney twang — "awwriight mate, awwwriight." Somewhat taken aback by this cor blimey display, my mouth ran off before my brain could stop it: "You're not going to get many English parts with that accent," I said.

"Fuck you!" came his reply.

Truly, these are the mean streets.

Rob Williams, Jan 08



LOW LIFE: PARANOIA

Script: Rob Williams

Art: Henry Flint

Letters: Ellie De Vill

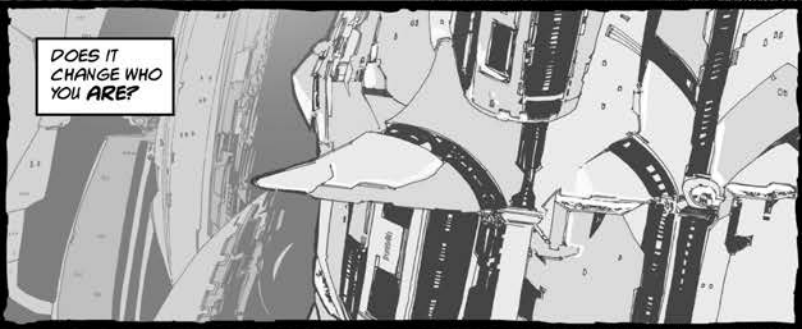
Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1387-1398

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT
THE PLACE YOU LIVE IN
DEFINES YOU?



LOW LIFE

DOES IT
CHANGE WHO
YOU ARE?



IF YOU'RE IN A GOOD
ENVIRONMENT, WILL
YOU BE A GOOD
PERSON? AND IF
YOU'RE SURROUNDED
BY CRAP, WILL YOU...
Y'KNOW?



SEE, I'VE BEEN
THINKING ABOUT
THIS A LOT LATELY.
I'VE BEEN LIVING
THE LOW LIFE FOR
ELEVEN YEARS
NOW...



... THAT'S A LONG TIME
TO BE IN THE NASTIEST
PART OF MEGA-CITY
ONE. THAT HAS TO
CHANGE YOU, RIGHT?



... EVEN WHEN
YOU'RE A WALLY
SQUAD JUDGE.

GRUD! THAT
WAS CLOSE!

SHUT THE
DOOR, BILLY.

DAMN JUDGES'RE
FOLLOWING ME, I
TELL YA!

YOU ALWAYS
THINK JUDGES ARE
FOLLOWING YOU.

THAT'S 'CAUSE
THEY ALWAYS
ARE!

SHUT UP, BILLY.
YOU GET IT?

DUDE, I
ALWAYS GET
IT.

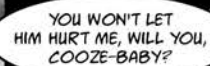
SADOMASOCHISTIC
JUNKIE FOOD, BABY. THE
NEWEST THING. FOR ALL THOSE
FILLED WITH ADDICTION AND
A DESIRE TO CAUSE
THEMSELVES PAIN.

THEY USE THESE TO GET THEIR
HIT AND SELF-MUTILATE, ALL
AT THE SAME TIME.

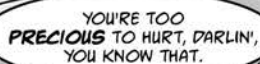
YOU DONE
GOOD, BILLY.

WANNA TRY IT,
BABY-DOLL?

GET THAT
THING AWAY FROM ME!



YOU WON'T LET HIM HURT ME, WILL YOU, COOZE-BABY?



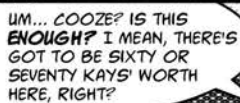
YOU'RE TOO PRECIOUS TO HURT, DARLIN', YOU KNOW THAT.



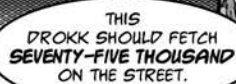
OH, COOZEY...



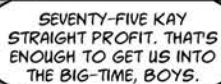
AW, JEEZ...



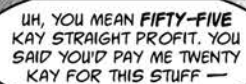
UM... COOZE? IS THIS ENOUGH? I MEAN, THERE'S GOT TO BE SIXTY OR SEVENTY KAYS' WORTH HERE, RIGHT?



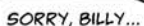
THIS DROKK SHOULD FETCH SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND ON THE STREET.



SEVENTY-FIVE KAY STRAIGHT PROFIT. THAT'S ENOUGH TO GET US INTO THE BIG-TIME, BOYS.



UH, YOU MEAN FIFTY-FIVE KAY STRAIGHT PROFIT. YOU SAID YOU'D PAY ME TWENTY KAY FOR THIS STUFF —



SORRY, BILLY...



... I'M REGURGITATING.



UH, YOU MEAN 'RENEGOTIATING', RIGHT, COOZE?



THASS RIGHT.



SEE, I HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT A VERY BIG JOB'S ABOUT TO GO DOWN IN THE LOW LIFE, BILLY. AND I WANT IN ON IT.



FOR A SEVENTY-FIVE KAY INVESTMENT I KNOW A GUY WHO CAN GET ME IN. I CAN BE GOLD.



SO I'M TAKING YOUR GEAR. NOTHING PERSONAL, BILLY. YOU KNOW THE SCORE, MAN.

IT'S ALL BUSINESS...



FREEZE! YOU ARE ALL UNDER ARREST!

JUDGES!



I KNEW I WAS BEING FOLLOWED!

COOZE!



RUN, DARLIN! I'LL PROTECT YOU!

BDAM

BDAM



AT LEAST WE GOT THE GEAR, EH, COOZE?

YEAH, MAX. SEVENTY-FIVE KAY, RIGHT HERE...



... AND IT'S ALL MINE!



COOZE?

BABY, WE NEED THE SEVENTY-FIVE KAY TO GET IN ON THIS DEAL. THIS CAN GET US OUT OF THE LOW LIFE —



COOZE!

AAAAHHH!

BLAM



IDIOT!

SPA!



OH, DROKK IT, BABY...

COOZE, LISTEN TO ME —

I-I'M LOOKING AT A CUBE STRETCH, HERE. YOU'LL WAIT FOR ME THOUGH, RIGHT? T-TWENTY YEARS, MAYBE? TWENTY-FIVE?

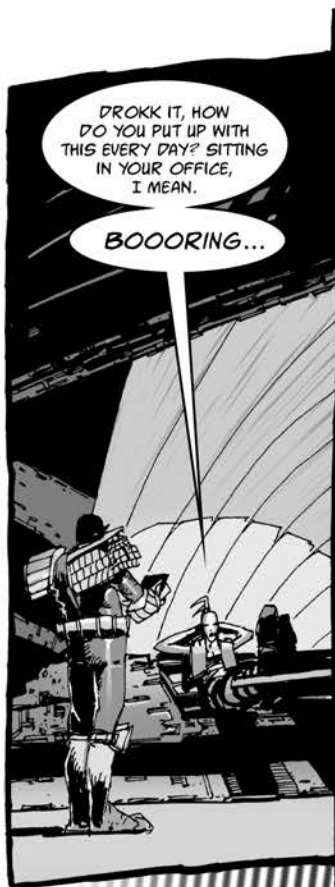
I LOVE YOU...





LOVE
LIFE





DROKK IT, HOW DO YOU PUT UP WITH THIS EVERY DAY? SITTING IN YOUR OFFICE, I MEAN.

BOOORING...



THIS IS BEING A JUDGE, NIXON.

NOT TO ME.



JUDGES OBEY RULES. FOR INSTANCE, WE DO NOT ASSAULT FELLOW JUDGES.

IT WAS SELF-DEFENCE.

WE DO NOT TORTURE PERPS FOR INFORMATION.

COOZE FELL ON THAT THING WHEN HE WAS SHOT.



HE NEARLY DIED —

SO? HE'S A STUPID, NASTY PIECE OF WORK.

AND YET YOU WERE LIVING WITH HIM.

YOU MAY NOT HAVE HEARD, BUT I'M AN UNDERCOVER JUDGE.



AND DOES THAT JOB REMIT INCLUDE **SLEEPING** WITH PERPS?



OOPS. LOOK AT THAT. GUESS THE SPRING IN MY ROBOTIC FINGER MUST BE FAULTY. BETTER GET THAT LOOKED AT.

NIXON: GRADE-A STUDENT AT THE ACADEMY. AMAZING ABILITY TO BEAT ANY LIE DETECTOR.

MADE YOU PERFECT FOR WALLY SQUAD DUTY.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

JUDGE AIMEE NIXON

PAGE 17 OF 200... CURRENT STATUS GO TO PAGE 30



ROBOTIC ARM (left arm removed)



TRACKING DEVICE



EYE SCAN

DEPT JUSTICE SCAN AUTHORITY LAW CONTACT ?

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

Navigation icons: back, forward, search, etc.

AT EIGHTEEN YOU WENT ON THE STREETS. VOLUNTEERED TO HAVE YOUR ARM SURGICALLY REMOVED, THE BETTER TO BLEND IN.

IS THERE A POINT TO THIS? DO YOU KNOW HOW RISKY IT IS FOR ME TO BE HERE? IF I'M SEEN —

A POINT? YES, NIXON. WE'RE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING WHETHER OR NOT YOU SHOULD BE RECALLED TO UNIFORM.

YOU'VE BEEN WALLY SQUAD FOR ELEVEN YEARS. MAYBE THAT'S TOO LONG.

YOU ASSAULT ANOTHER JUDGE? TORTURE INFORMATION FROM A PERP?

DO YOU EVEN REMEMBER WHY YOU BECAME A JUDGE, NIXON?

I DON'T... I'M JUST DOING MY JOB...







GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY I SHOULDN'T PULL YOU BACK IN.



SOMETHING **SERIOUS** IS GOING DOWN IN THE LOW LIFE. COOZE GAVE ME A LEAD...

WHICH IS?

I DON'T KNOW YET.

LOOK, I'M A GOOD JUDGE, FARNSWORTH. I CAN DO THIS.



GO. CHECK IN WITH **DIRTY FRANK**, SOME OF THE OTHERS. FIND OUT WHAT THEY KNOW.

WILL DO.



OH, AND NIXON?

BEHAVE YOURSELF.



CREEP...



I'LL BE WATCHING...

LOW LIFE

WOO-HOO! AM I GLAD
THE ELEVATOR'S WORKING!
I HATE HEIGHTS!

THANK YOU
FOR COMING, MR
FLEISCHMANN.

CALL ME LUIGI.

HE'S CLEAN, MR
FLEISCHMANN.
NO WEAPONS.

DROIDS?

DROIDS CAN'T
BE BOUGHT OFF. THAT'S
HOW I'VE STAYED ALIVE
THIS LONG.

NOW, ARE
YOU HE?

MY EMPLOYER WAS DETAINED.
HOWEVER, HE OFFERS YOU THIS
SUBSTANTIAL INCENTIVE AND HOPES
TO SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH
THIS PHONELINK.

HELLO?

GOOD AFTERNOON,
MR FLEISCHMANN. I'M SORRY
I CAN'T BE THERE, BUT I HOPE
THE CONTENTS OF THE SUITCASE
PROVE MY GOOD
INTENTIONS.

OH YES.
YES, INDEED.

SO DO WE
HAVE A DEAL?

WHY YOU WANT TO BUY UP
CRUMMY LOW LIFE BUILDINGS
IS YOUR BUSINESS, MISTER. BUT
I'M HAPPY TO SELL THEM
TO YOU...

TO CLOSURE DEAL-THATBRNNT HERE



I AM CONTROLLING YOUR **MOTOR FUNCTIONS** THROUGH A SMALL, LOCALISED ELECTRIC FIELD GENERATED BY THIS EARPIECE, MR FLEISCHMANN.

BOSS?

TELL THEM TO STAND DOWN OR I FRY YOUR CEREBRAL CORTEX.

S-STAND... DOWN... BOYS...

N-NO PROBLEM...

DO YOU... KNOW WHO I AM, YOU SONOFABITCH? UHHH... YOU HARM ME AND YOU'RE... DEAD. MY BROTHERS —

— WERE KILLED THIS MORNING, MR FLEISCHMANN. I KNOW YOU. I KNOW YOUR PAST CRIMES...



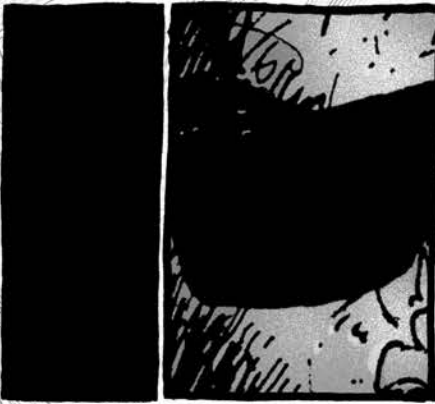
I'M AWARE OF THE MOB'S PENCHANT FOR REVENGE. SO THIS MORNING MY MEN WENT TO YOUR HOME AND KILLED YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY. YOUR WIFE...



... AND ALSO YOUR TWO SMALL BOYS. THEY WOULD HAVE JUST GROWN UP TO BE CRIMINALS. I AM DOING THE CITY A SERVICE, WIPING OUT YOUR KIND.



I OWN THE LOW LIFE NOW.



DIRTY
FRANK IS
HERE.

DIRTY FRANK — MY MENTOR IN MY FIRST DAYS IN THE LOW LIFE. BEEN WALLY SQUAD TWENTY-THREE YEARS. TOO LONG FOR ANYONE. CAN BE A LITTLE... **ECCENTRIC**.

LINK — NERVOUS, WEASLY LITTLE JUDGE. EATS LIKE HE'S GOT PARASITES AND NEVER PUTS WEIGHT ON. PROBABLY **DOES** HAVE PARASITES.

PARKER — 32-YEAR-OLD 13 YEAR OLD. FACE CHANGE MACHINE KEEPS HIM YOUNG AND PRETTY. WORKING AS HOME HELP FOR A PERVY OLD MOB BOSS CALLED **WHEELS TIERNAN**. DON'T ASK.



TAKING A RISK, AIMEE, GETTING US ALL TOGETHER LIKE THIS...

DIRTY
FRANK IS NOT
IMPRESSED.

GOOD
TO SEE
YOU GUYS,
TOO.



HEY, CAN I GET A DRINK OVER HERE?

YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO BE IN HERE, SONNY. GO PLAY OUTSIDE, EH?



YEAH? HOW ABOUT I PLAY MARBLES WITH YOUR SEVERED EYEBALLS, YOU STUPID —

I'M SORRY ABOUT MY SON. HE HAS **TOURETTE'S**, YOU SEE...

DIRTY FRANK WILL PUNISH HIM LATER. REST ASSURED.



WHEN DID FRANK START TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON?

I HAVE NO IDEA. AIN'T SEEN HIM FOR MONTHS.

DIRTY FRANK CAN HEAR YOU. WHY ARE WE HERE, AIMEE?



SOMETHING **BIG'S** COMING DOWN. I HEAR STREET WHISPERS. YOU GUYS?

ME TOO. DON'T KNOW WHAT, THOUGH.

NOT ME. WHEELS HASN'T SAID ANYTHING.



SOMETHING **BIG?** LIKE WHAT?

I DON'T KNOW. SOMETHING'S BEING PLANNED. I'VE JUST GOT A WORD — **RAGNAROCK**. THAT MEAN ANYTHING?

NOT TO ME.

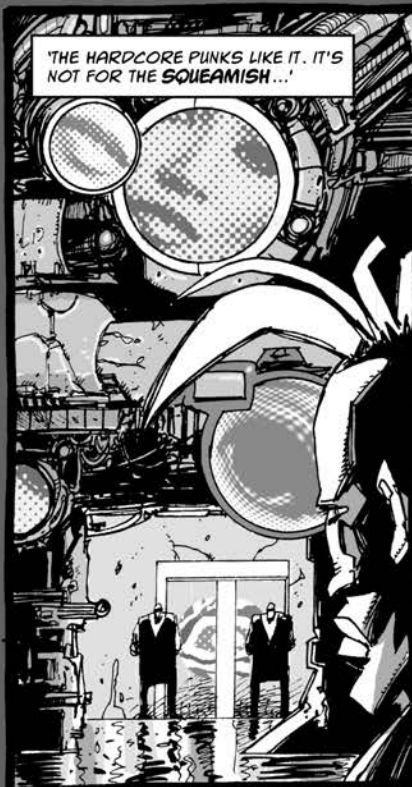


OH, WAIT! I KNOW!

GRUD'S SAKE, LINK, GROW UP...

IT'S A SECRET UNDERGROUND CLUB. I BEEN THERE. NASTY STUFF.

NASTY STUFF? LIKE WHAT?



'THE HARDCORE PUNKS LIKE IT. IT'S NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH...'



DROKK...



SHE'S HERE. JUST ARRIVED.

GOOD. TRY TO GET TO KNOW HER BETTER, EH?



HI. THIS YOUR FIRST TIME AT RAGNAROCK?

UH-HUH. NICE PLACE YOU GOT HERE.

WE LIKE IT. LENNIE, GET THE LADY A DRINK.



HOW'S ABOUT I GIVE YOU THE FULL TOUR? WE'RE ALWAYS KEEN TO APPEAL TO MORE WOMEN...

I BET YOU HAVE NO TROUBLE APPEALING TO WOMEN. THAT TOUR SOUNDS GOO —



W-WHASSSSS HAPPENIIIIIIINNNGG...?



I SEE YOU, LITTLE GIRL.

PICK UP THE GUN...



THERE'S SO MUCH EVIL IN THE WORLD...

... GOOD. NOW, POINT IT AT HIM.



... AND YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME STOP IT.

NOW, PULL THE TRIGGER, BABY.



PULL THE...

... TRIGGER.



OH... OH GRUD...



WHAT...
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
W-WHAT IS THIS?

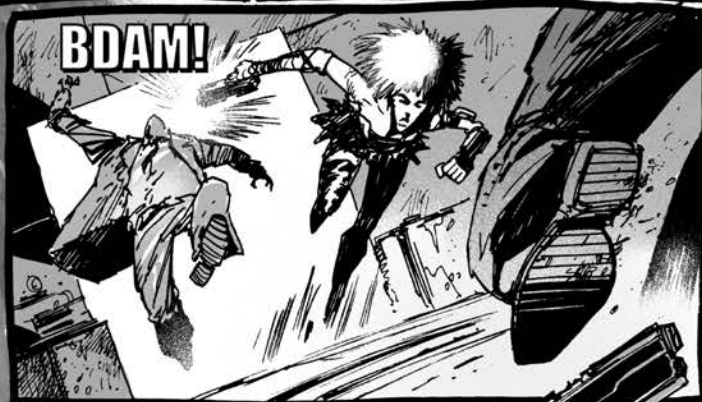


OH NO...



MR GATTUSO, YOU
FINISHED WITH HER
YET — ?

DROKK... I
DIDN'T...



BDAM!



SPAK!

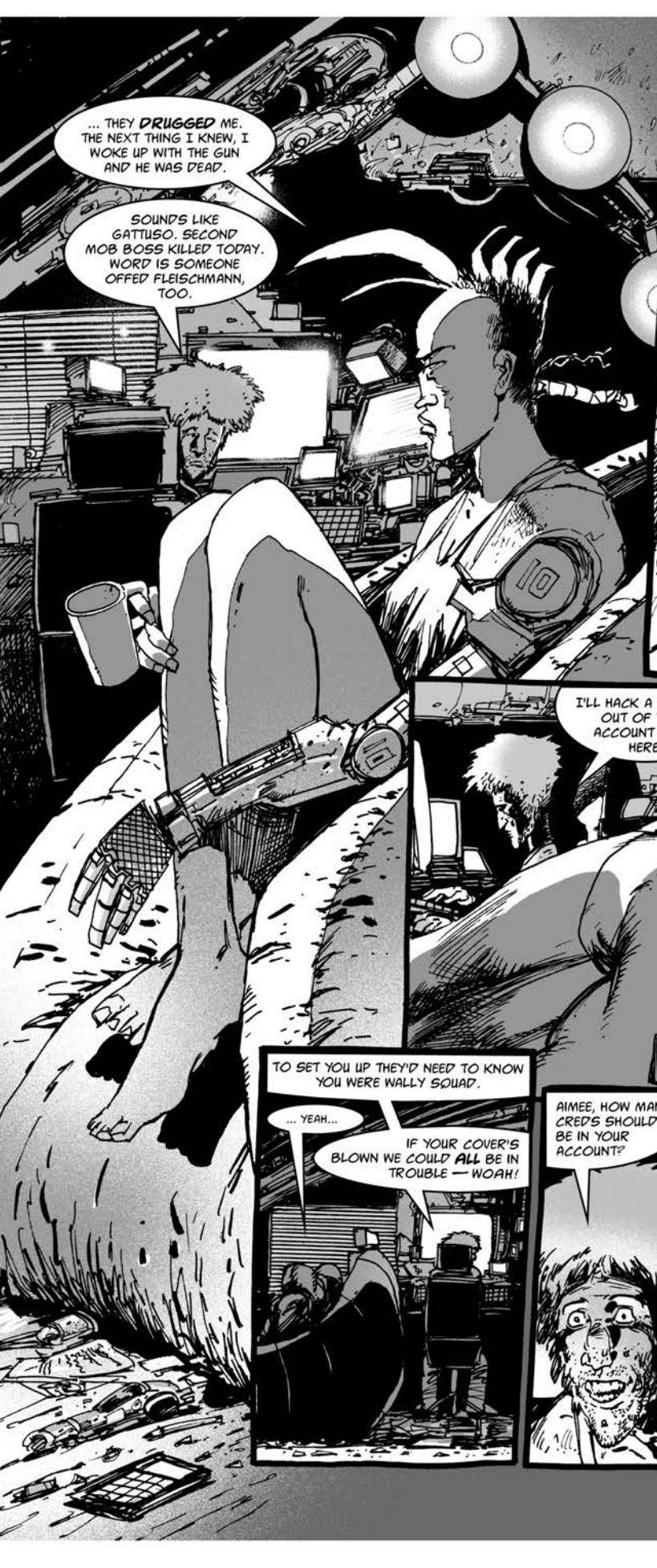


J-JOVIS
DROKK...

UHHH...







... THEY **DRUGGED** ME. THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I WOKE UP WITH THE GUN AND HE WAS DEAD.

SOUNDS LIKE GATTUSO. SECOND MOB BOSS KILLED TODAY. WORD IS SOMEONE OFFED FLEISCHMANN, TOO.

SOMEONE'S MAKING A MOVE TO TAKE OVER THE LOW LIFE.

I DIDN'T KILL HIM, LINK.

NEVER THOUGHT YOU DID. YOU WANT THE COUCH TONIGHT?

YEAH. I'LL ALSO NEED CRED'S TO GET ACROSS TOWN TOMORROW.

I'LL HACK A HUNDRED OUT OF YOUR ACCOUNT FROM HERE.

THANKS.

SOMEONE'S **SETTING ME UP**, LINK. MADE ME DRESS LIKE A BRIT-CIT HOOKER, TOO...

TO SET YOU UP THEY'D NEED TO KNOW YOU WERE WALLY SQUAD.

... YEAH...

IF YOUR COVER'S BLOWN WE COULD **ALL** BE IN TROUBLE — WOAH!

AIMEE, HOW MANY CRED'S SHOULD BE IN YOUR ACCOUNT?

AROUND SEVEN HUNDRED. WHY?

LOOKS LIKE YOU CAN **RETIRE, BABY DOLL!**

Aimee Nixon
Current balance 2,356,000
Millionaire!



ALL ACROSS
THE LOW LIFE...

'BYE,
HON. SEE YOU
TONIGHT.



... SOMEONE'S
MAKING A PLAY.

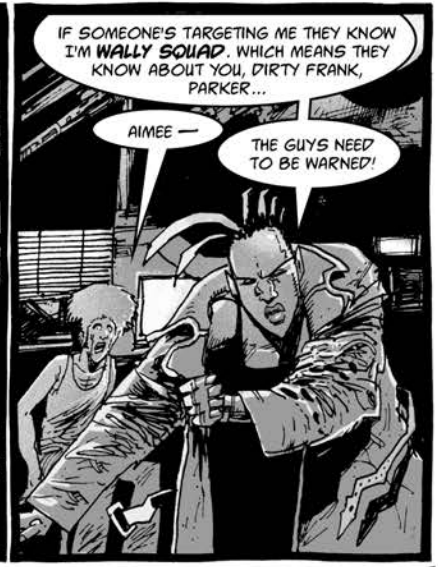
HEY, CALZONE.
PRESENT FOR YOU.



WIPING OUT THE
MOB GUYS...



CREATING A
VACUUM...





PARKER!



GET UP HERE, ALREADY!

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, MR TIERNAN?

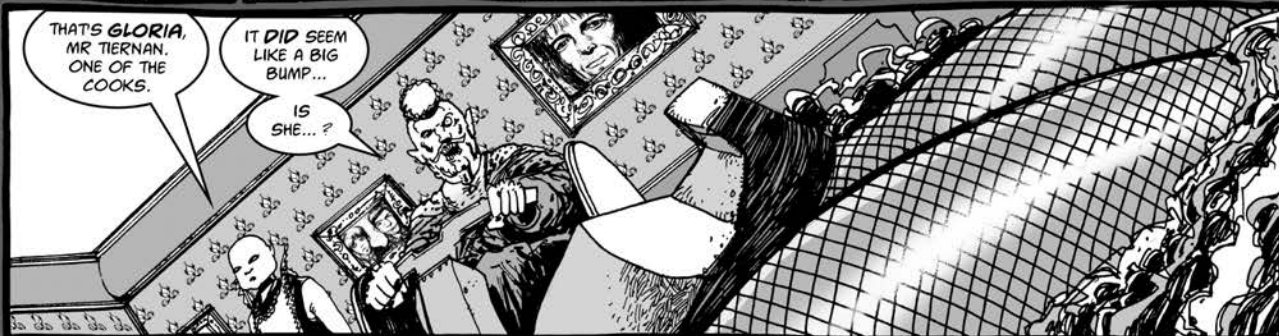
I THINK I RAN OVER ONE OF THE DOGS.



JEEZ, NOT AGAIN...

WHAT HAPPENED?

I HIT SOMETHING. THERE WAS A BUMP.



THAT'S GLORIA, MR TIERNAN. ONE OF THE COOKS.

IT DID SEEM LIKE A BIG BUMP...

IS SHE...



SHE'S JUST STUNNED. I'LL WAKE HER UP.

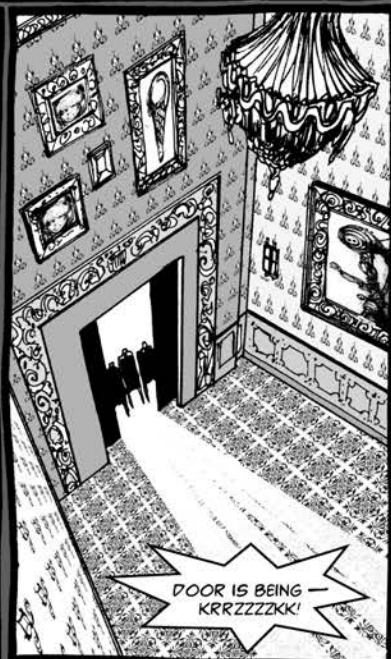
GOOD. I'M GOING FOR A LIE-DOWN.



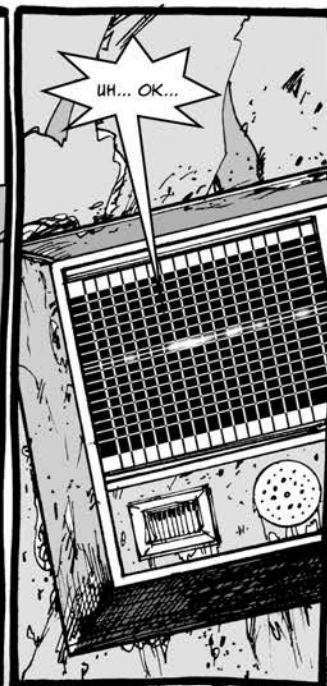
IT'S A GOOD JOB JUSTICE DEPARTMENT NEEDS THE INFO YOU PROVIDE, OR I'D PLUG 50,000 VOLTS INTO THAT CHAIR, YOU STUPID MOB —

ATTENTION! DOOR IS BEING FORCED!

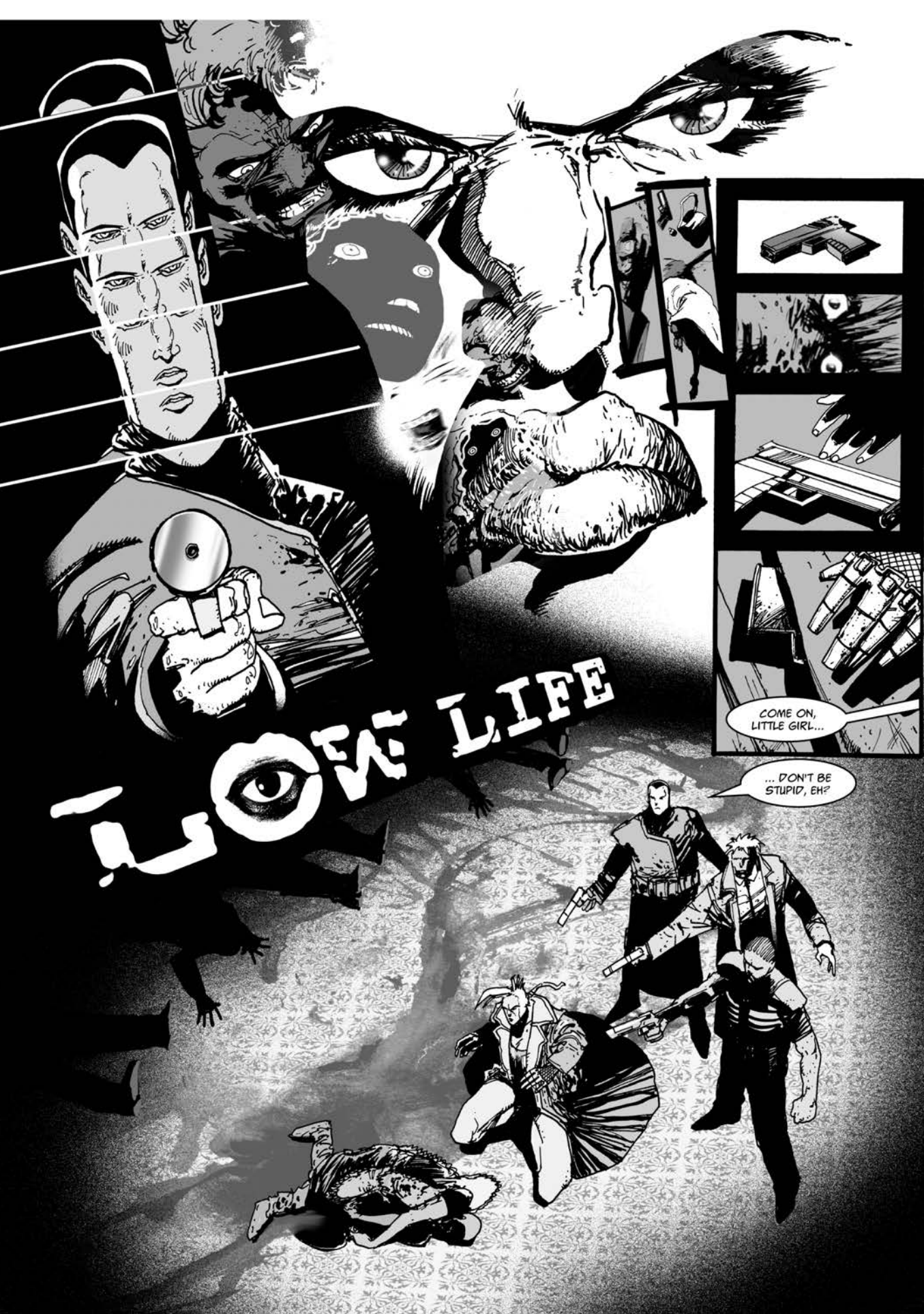
HUH?



DOOR IS BEING KRRZZZKK!







LOVE LIFE



COME ON,
LITTLE GIRL...

... DON'T BE
STUPID, EH?



SO THEN, AIMEE, HERE WE ARE AGAIN. WHAT A COINCIDENCE.

YOU KNOW MY NAME. YOU KNOW I'M WALLY SQUAD.



YOU'RE TRYING TO PIN GATTUSO'S MURDER ON ME. THE OTHER MOB HITS TOO, PROBABLY.

MY, AREN'T YOU BRIGHT?

I'M A MAJOR PART OF WHATEVER PLAN YOU'RE RUNNING...



SO?

SO... IF YOU WANTED ME DEAD YOU'D HAVE DONE IT AT THE CLUB. I'M GUESSING YOU'VE GOT STRICT ORDERS **NOT** TO KILL ME —

UH, CRACKER? SHE'S —



BDAM

BDAM

DAMMIT!



AHHH!

STUPID BITCH!



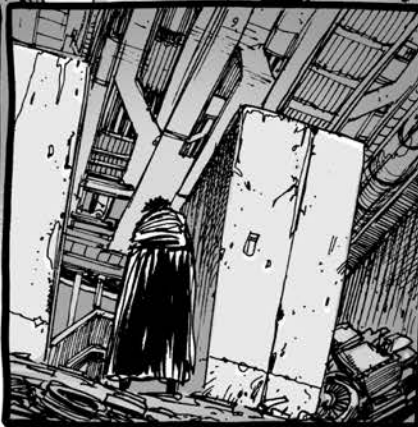
THE BOSS SAID KEEP YOU ALIVE, YEAH, BUT THAT DON'T MEAN I CAN'T HURT YOU... BAD.

BACK-UPS COMING... CRACKER...



NO. IT AIN'T.

THE REST OF YOUR WALLY SQUAD'S BEING KILLED RIGHT NOW...





WHY THEM?
WHY ME?

AH, POOR BABY...

WHY YOU?
BECAUSE YOU'RE
PERFECT FOR TAKING
THIS FALL.



WHAT KINDA PERSON
ARE YOU, ANYWAY? YOU
VOLUNTEER TO HAVE YOUR
OWN ARM REMOVED?



YOU ENJOY BEATING
ON PERPS — THE SAME
PERPS YOU LIVE WITH.
YOU LOVE IT DOWN
HERE, SURROUNDED
BY THE SCUM. YOU
KNOW WHY?



BECAUSE, DEEP DOWN,
YOU KNOW YOU'RE ONE
OF THEM.

YOU'RE WRONG...

YOU'VE KNOWN IT
SINCE THE DAY YOUR MOTHER
WAS MURDERED.



YOU COULDN'T SAVE HER
THEN. YOU WEREN'T
GOOD ENOUGH.

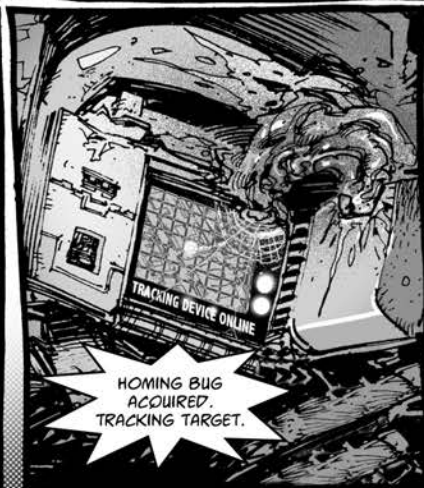
YOU'RE A VICTIM.
YOU'RE A FAILURE.
YOU'RE A —



LIAR!



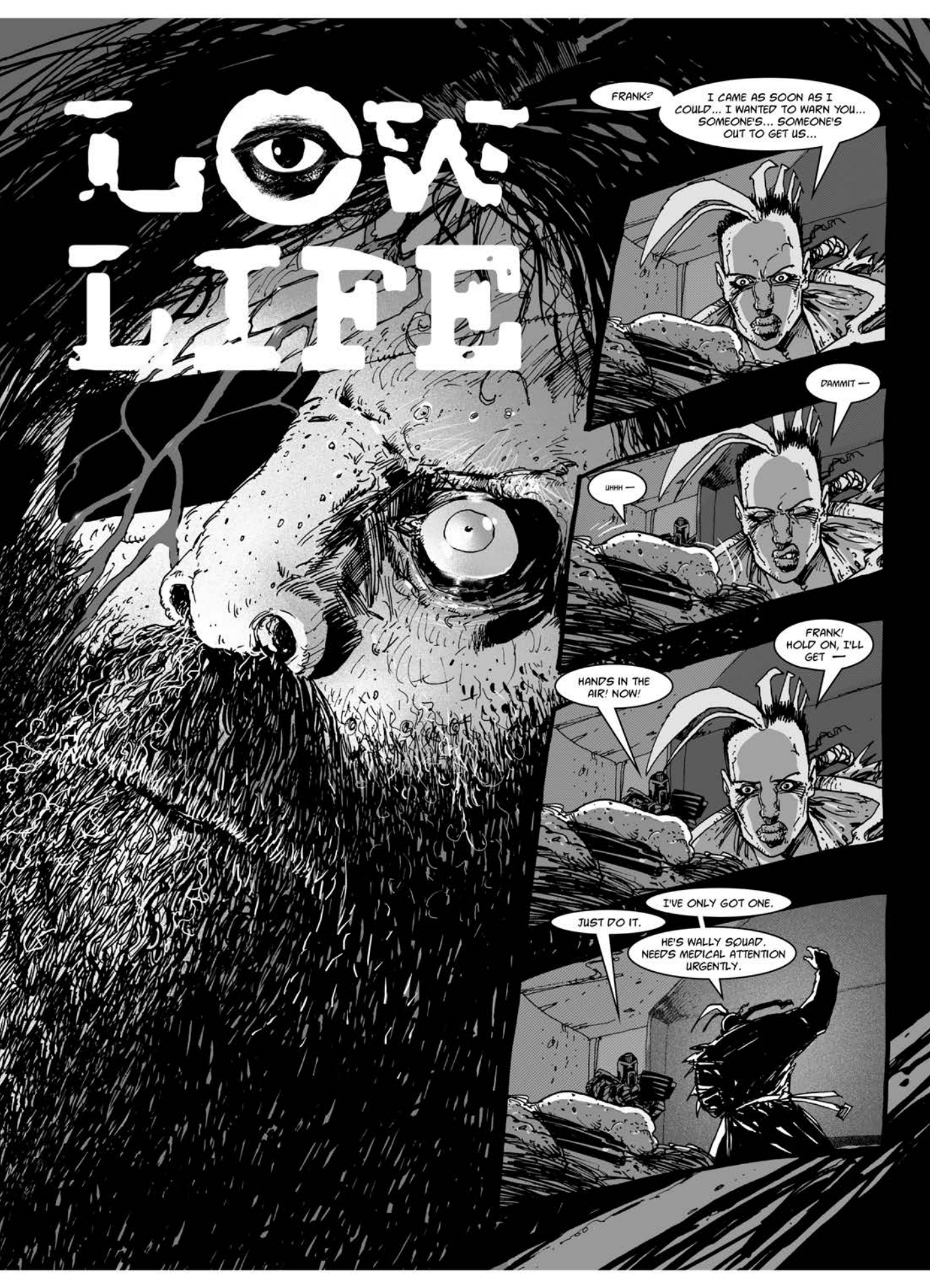
BINGO.



YOU FORGOT TO MENTION
ONE OTHER THING
ABOUT ME, CRACKER...

I'M ALSO A JUDGE...

LOVE LIFE



FRANK?

I CAME AS SOON AS I
COULD... I WANTED TO WARN YOU...
SOMEONE'S... SOMEONE'S
OUT TO GET US...

DAMMIT —

UHHH —

HANDS IN THE
AIR! NOW!

FRANK!
HOLD ON, I'LL
GET —

JUST DO IT.

I'VE ONLY GOT ONE.

HE'S WALLY SQUAD.
NEEDS MEDICAL ATTENTION
URGENTLY.





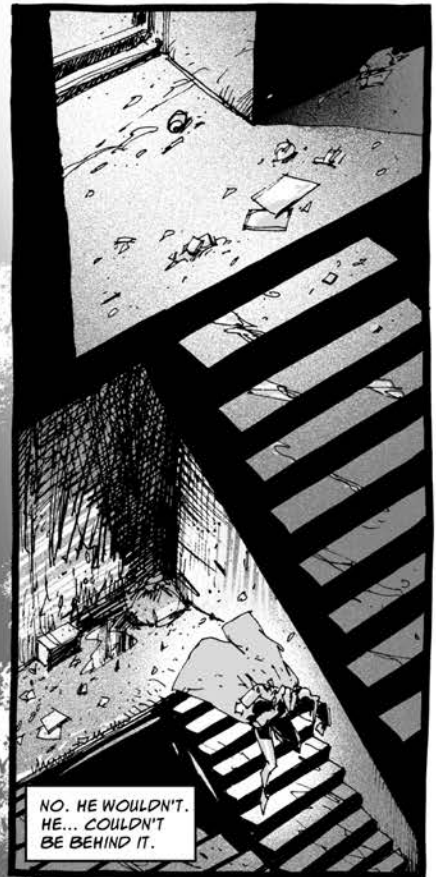
JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HAS THE FOOTAGE OF NIXON WITH GATTUSO. THEY'RE LOOKING FOR HER NOW.

AND I TIED UP THE OTHER LOOSE END. HE WON'T TALK.

GOOD.

THIS PLACE REALLY IS A HELLHOLE, ISN'T IT?

NOT FOR LONG.



HE'S A JUDGE. HE'S ALWAYS
BEEN ONE OF US. BUT...

HE HAS THE COMPUTER KNOW-
HOW. HE COULD HACK A FEW
MILLION INTO MY BANK ACCOUNT...

HE COULD DOCTOR VIDEO
FOOTAGE TO SHOW ME
KILLING GATTUSO.

BUT HE WOULDN'T...
HE WOULDN'T DO
THAT... YOU SEE...



LINK'S MY FRIEND...

LOVE LIFE

DAYS GO BY...

WHEN IT'S LIGHT I FOLLOW CRACKER'S
HOMING SIGNAL. I WATCH HIM COME
AND GO, VISITING THE SAME BUILDING
SITE EVERY DAY.

WHEN IT'S DARK, I TRY TO
GET WHAT REST I CAN.

I WAIT.

AND THEN, AFTER ALMOST A
WEEK OF LIVING IN FILTH...

... AFTER SEEING MY FRIENDS
KILLED, AFTER BEING FRAMED
FOR MURDER AND HAVING
MY LIFE TORN APART...

I GET TIRED
OF WAITING.





HELLO, CRACKER.
REMEMBER ME? THE
VICTIM?

DID YOU KILL
LINK, CRACKER? LEAVE
HIM LIKE THAT ON HIS
COMPUTER BANK? YOU
THOUGHT THAT WAS
FUNNY?

COME
HERE.

WHO'S YOUR
BOSS, CRACKER? WHO
DID ALL THIS?

TELL ME!

I DID.

FARNSWORTH!

I'M IMPRESSED
YOU FOUND US, NIXON.
YOU'RE A BETTER JUDGE
THAN I —

I'LL KILL YOU —!

NO, YOU WON'T.

... WHAT? YOU GOT SICK
OF A JUDGE'S LIFE? YOU WANTED
MONEY? IS THAT IT?

NOT A...?
YOU'VE COMMITTED MULTIPLE
MURDERS!

DON'T BE
RIDICULOUS. I'M NOT
A CRIMINAL.

THEY WERE ALL PERPS,
NIXON. MONSTERS. NO ONE
WILL MISS THEM.

WHAT ABOUT
PARKER? LINK? THEY WERE
JUDGES!

PARKER WAS...
UNFORTUNATE. HE WAS THERE WHEN
WE TOOK OUT TIERNAN.

YOU SHOULDN'T FEEL
BAD FOR LINK. HE WAS
PART OF THIS.

'HE DOCTORED THE VIDEO FOOTAGE FROM RAGNAROCK TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE YOU KILLED GATTUSO. THEN HE HACKED THE TWO MILLION INTO YOUR ACCOUNT, AS IF IT WERE PAYMENT FOR THE HIT.



THEN HE WENT AND GOT A BAD CASE OF GUILT, UNFORTUNATELY. I THINK HE MAY HAVE BEEN IN LOVE WITH YOU.



'THE IDIOT SPILLED HIS GUTS TO DIRTY FRANK, TO TRY TO GET HIS HELP. FRANK WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A TARGET.



'FRANK WANTED TO TURN LINK AND OUR ENTIRE OPERATION OVER TO JUSTICE DEPARTMENT. BUT LINK WOULDN'T LET HIM DO THAT.



'LINK THOUGHT HE'D KILLED FRANK. IT SENT HIM OVER THE EDGE. HE WAS GOING TO TALK. HE SAID WE'D ALL GO TO TITAN.



'I COULDN'T LET HIM RUIN MY PLAN, NIXON. TOO MANY CITIZENS WOULD SUFFER.'



WHAT PLAN? FOR YOU TO GET RICH OFF MOB MONEY?





NIXON, I'VE WORKED
THE LOW LIFE FOR TWENTY-FOUR
YEARS. THE LAW DOESN'T
WORK HERE.

CRIME CAN'T BE STOPPED,
NO ONE INVESTS IN THE AREA. THE
PEOPLE DON'T STAND A CHANCE.
I COULDN'T TAKE THAT
ANY MORE.

SO I'M WIPING OUT ALL
ORGANISED CRIME. I'M TAKING
THEIR PROFITS, THE INCALCULABLE
MILLIONS THEY'VE MADE SUCKING
THE LIFE FROM THESE
STREETS...



AND I'M GIVING
IT BACK TO THE
CITIZENS...



'WE ARE ALL THE
PRODUCT OF OUR
ENVIRONMENT.'

... I DON'T...
MOM...

HELP ME...

... I DON'T KNOW
WHAT I SHOULD DO...

'WE ARE THE SUM OF
OUR EXPERIENCES.'

... I THINK
HE'S RIGHT.

ALL
LIFE

TWENTY MINUTES AGO:

THE RICH, THE POWERFUL
OF THIS CITY, THEY DON'T
CARE ABOUT THE LOW LIFE.

YOU KNOW THAT,
NIXON. YOU GREW
UP HERE.

'CRIME IS ENDEMIC, THERE'S
FEW JOBS. BUILDINGS ARE
LARGELY FILTHY SHELLS, UNFIT
FOR HUMAN INHABITANCY.

'I'M GIVING THESE PEOPLE A
CHANCE, NIXON. INVESTING IN THE
AREA, THEIR HOMES, THEIR LIVES.'

WE ARE ALL THE PRODUCT OF
OUR ENVIRONMENT. WE ARE THE
SUM OF OUR EXPERIENCES.

I'M GIVING THE
CITIZENS AN IMPROVED
ENVIRONMENT, **BETTER**
EXPERIENCES.

WITH DIRTY
MONEY...

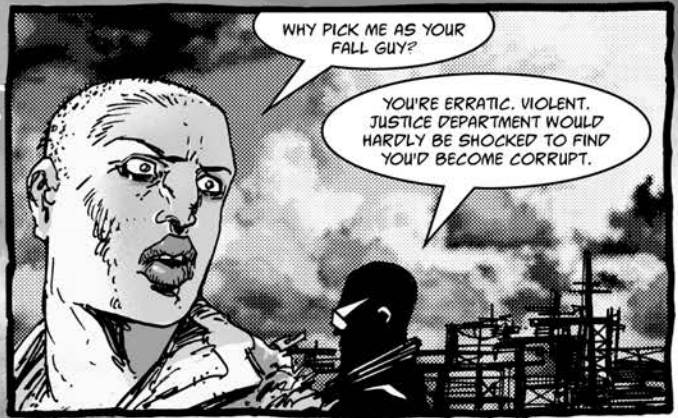
I OFFERED STREET PERPS A
CHANCE TO INVEST IN A BIG
PAYDAY. TOOK 75K OFF
TWENTY-EIGHT OF THE
EAGER SOULS. THEN I
TOOK THE MILLIONS OF
THE LOCAL CRIME
FAMILIES.

BUT ISN'T IT WORTH IT? SO
MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE WILL
HAVE A BETTER LIFE BECAUSE
OF WHAT I'VE DONE.

BUT THE
LAW —

THE COMPROMISE
IS WORTH IT. YOU KNOW
THAT, DON'T YOU?

AND YOU **KILLED**
ALL OF THEM. HOW MANY
HAVE YOU MURDERED,
FARNSWORTH?



'YOUR PSYCH PROFILE WAS PERFECT. YOU DIRECTLY SUFFERED IN THE LOW LIFE. YOUR MOTHER'S MURDER.'



'BUT MOSTLY, IT WAS YOUR APITUDE FOR LIES. I REMEMBERED YOUR ABILITY FROM THE ACADEMY. AND IF YOU COULDN'T PROVE YOUR INNOCENCE THROUGH A LIE DETECTOR...'



... YOU COULD GET ME WITH LINK'S DOCTORED EVIDENCE. IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH.



IT IS. YOU KNOW HOW SKILLED HE WAS.

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME? YOU COULD KILL ME HERE...



YES, I COULD.

I DON'T MURDER THE INNOCENT, NIXON. HERE'S 50,000 CREDS.

YOU THINK I WANT YOUR MONEY?

TAKE IT. THIS COMPUTER HAS THE DESTINATION OF A VEHICLE THAT WILL SMUGGLE YOU OUT OF THE CITY. IT'S ALL SET UP.

THE CURSED EARTH?

STAY HERE AND THE JUDGES WILL FIND YOU. YOU'LL BE SENT TO TITAN.

IF YOU LEAVE MEGA-CITY ONE, THIS ENDS. NO ONE ELSE DIES, NO ONE DISCOVERS THE TRUTH AND THE PEOPLE HERE HAVE A BETTER LIFE.

I...
FARNSWORTH...

DO YOU WANT TO CONDEMN THESE PEOPLE?

DO THE RIGHT THING, AIMEE.

... THE RIGHT THING...





YOU NIXON, RIGHT?
YOU WANT CURSED
EARTH?

YES...

JUDGES NOT FIND YOU IN
HERE. I USE THIS MANY
TIMES. NEVER CAUGHT.

LOOKS
BEAUTIFUL.

GRUD...

GET IN, GET IN.
YOU WANT THE SAME AS
THE OTHERS, YES?

SAME AS
THE... ?

HEY! WHAT YOU
DOING?

YOU'RE UNDER
ARREST.

YOU A JUDGE?
YOU DON'T LOOK
LIKE A JUDGE,
LADY!

MAYBE NOT.
GIMME YOUR
PHONE.

FARNSWORTH,
IT'S ME.

LINK RECORDED EVERY-
THING YOU DID. ALL YOUR
PLANS. MEET ME AT HIS
PLACE IN THREE HOURS
OR I TURN YOU IN.

I HAVE A **PROPOSITION**
FOR YOU...

LOVE LIFE



GRUD...



YOU SHOULD'VE
RUN, AIMEE. I GAVE
YOU A CHANCE.



I THINK YOU'RE
RIGHT.



I'M GLAD.

YOU CAN'T
CHANGE YOUR
EXPERIENCES... CAN'T
ALTER WHO YOU
ARE.

AIMEE, YOU
SAID LINK HAD
STORED EVIDENCE
AGAINST ME?



WHAT AM I,
FARNSWORTH?

WHERE'S
THE EVIDENCE,
AIMEE?

WHAT - AM -
I?



WHAT? A JUDGE?
A VICTIM? A
SCREW-UP?

I DON'T CARE.
WHERE'S THE
EVIDENCE?



I'M A LIAR.

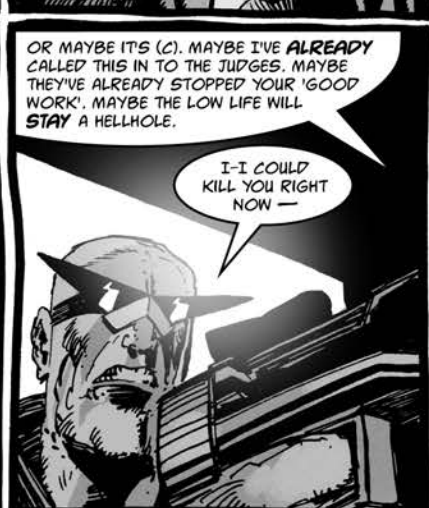


WHICH ONE
OF THESE
IS TRUE?

(A) LINK **RECORDED**
YOUR TRANSACTIONS. A
COURIER'S ON HIS WAY TO
JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WITH
THE DISCS RIGHT NOW.
ONLY I CAN MAKE THE
CALL TO STOP
THEM.



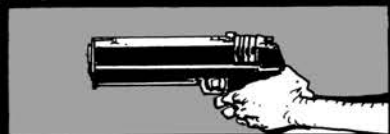
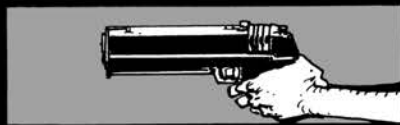
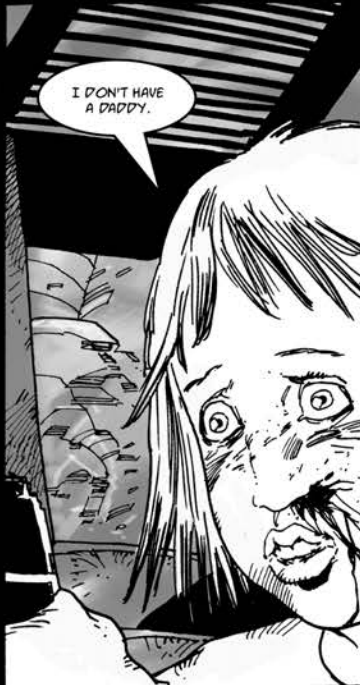
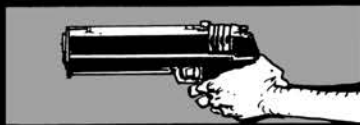
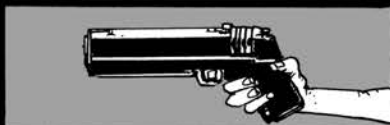
(B) I'M GOING TO KILL
YOU HERE, TAKE ALL THE
MOB MONEY, HEAD OFF-
WORLD AND LIVE A LIFE
OF LUXURY.



OR MAYBE IT'S (C). MAYBE I'VE **ALREADY**
CALLED THIS IN TO THE JUDGES. MAYBE
THEY'VE ALREADY STOPPED YOUR 'GOOD
WORK'. MAYBE THE LOW LIFE WILL
STAY A HELLHOLE.

I-I COULD
KILL YOU RIGHT
NOW -







I WANT TO THANK YOU, FARNSWORTH, FOR MAKING ME **REMEMBER**. FOR MAKING ME REALISE WHAT I REALLY AM.



I AM NOT PRETTY. I HURT PEOPLE... AND I **ENJOY** IT. I LIE. I MURDERED MY OWN FATHER AND TOLD THE JUDGES IT WAS SELF-DEFENCE.

I'M UGLY, FARNSWORTH.



I **DESERVE** THE LOW LIFE. I **WANT** THE LOW LIFE. IT NEEDS TO EXIST... SO PEOPLE LIKE ME HAVE A HOME.

AIMEE... I JUST WANT TO HELP PEOPLE...

YOU'RE NOT TAKING IT AWAY FROM ME.



'SELF DEFENCE?'

'YES. HE ATTACKED ME.'



LIE DETECTOR
CHECKS OUT.

IT
WOULD...

AND
FARNSWORTH
WAS REDEVELOPING
THE LOW LIFE WITH
THE MONEY?



YES, SIR.

AND WHAT'S YOUR
OPINION OF THAT?

HIS INTENTIONS WERE
GOOD, BUT HIS ACTIONS
WERE UNLAWFUL.

WHY DO YOU THINK
HE FRAMED YOU FOR
THE MURDERS?



PERSONAL
DISLIKE.



AND
CRACKER?



DISAPPEARED.
PROBABLY INTO
THE CURSED
EARTH.



'THE GATTUSO MURDER FOOTAGE
WAS DOCTORED TO FRAME YOU,
AND THE PAPER TRAIL BACKS UP
YOUR STORY. IT APPEARS YOU ARE
BLAMELESS IN THIS AFFAIR.'

'THANK
YOU, SIR.'



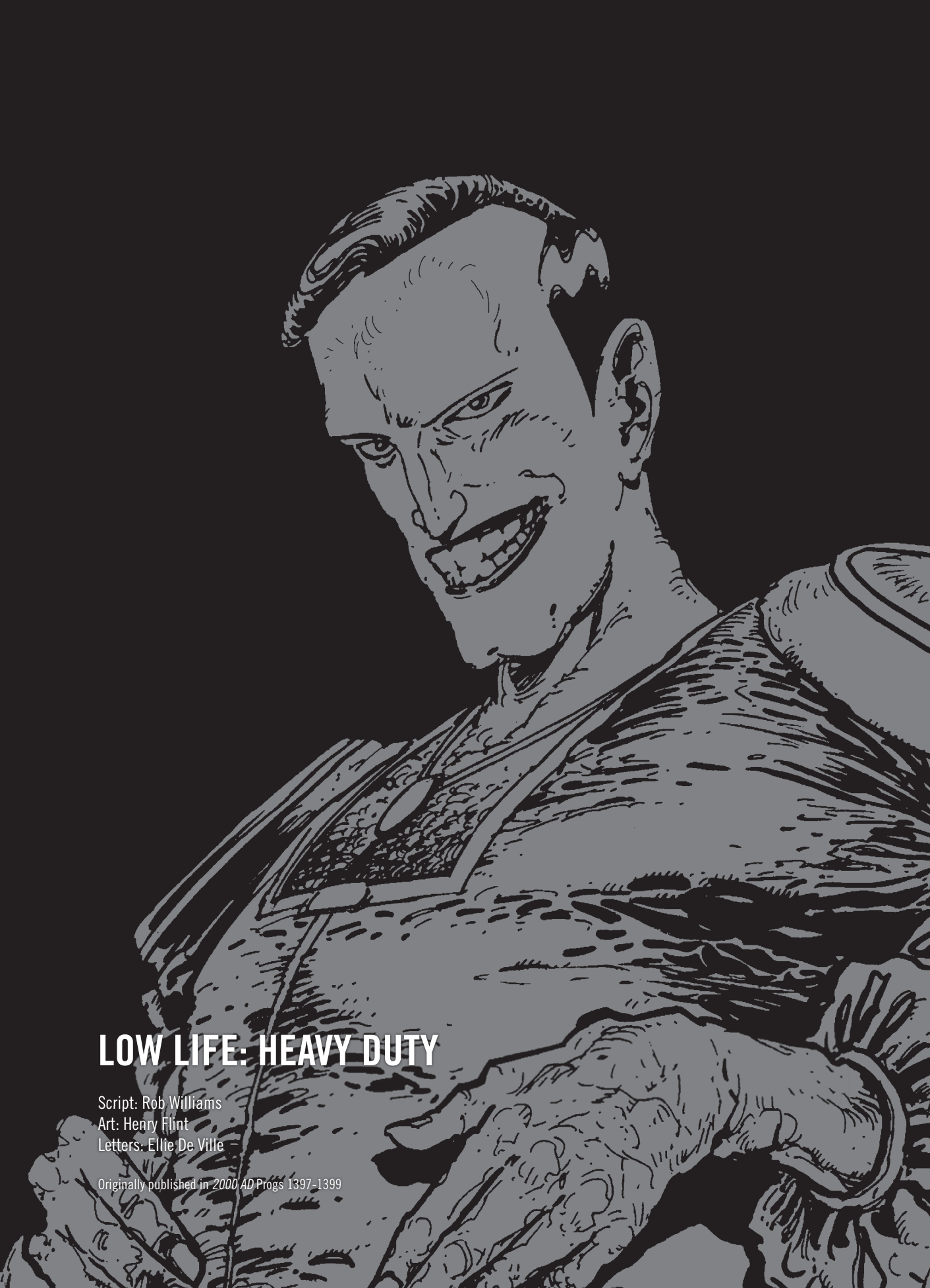
'YOU WISH TO RETURN
TO THE STREET?'

'I DO.'

'NIXON, WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO
GO BACK TO THE LOW LIFE AFTER
ALL YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH?'



'IT'S WHERE I
BELONG...'



LOW LIFE: HEAVY DUTY

Script: Rob Williams

Art: Henry Flint

Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in 2000 AD Progs 1397-1399

'LOW-CAL TOWERS. IT'S THE TALLEST BUILDING IN THE LOW LIFE. HOME OF A SLIMMING TABLET CORPORATION.

'AT AROUND 2.45 AM LAST NIGHT A MAN WEIGHING SOMEWHERE IN THE REGION OF 400 POUNDS FELL, OR WAS PUSHED, FROM SOME FORM OF ANTI-GRAV VEHICLE.

'HE WAS DIRECTLY ABOVE THE SPIRE OF LOW-CAL TOWER. THIS COULD HAVE BEEN AN ACCIDENT BUT, GIVEN HIS EXCESS WEIGHT AND THE SLIMMING TABLET ANGLE, I DOUBT IT.'

'HES DEAD, I TAKE IT?'

'YOU COULD SAY THAT. RECOVERY CREW HAVE SPENT TWO HOURS JUST TRYING TO WORK OUT HOW TO GET HIM DOWN OFF THERE.'

'DEAD WEIGHT, EH? HEH. SO, ANYWAY, WHY AM I HERE?'

'BECAUSE HE'S WALLY SQUAD.'



LOW LIFE



NAME IS ORWELL GREEN. JUDGE ORWELL GREEN.

YOU KNEW HIM, RIGHT, NIXON?



GREEN? REALLY?

...DROKK.



HIS WALLY SQUAD C.O. IS SUPPOSED TO MEET US HERE. GUESS SHE HASN'T SHOWED —

I BEEN HERE TEN MINUTES ALREADY, DEARIE, AND YOU'VE NOT SAID A WORD TO ME.



HONESTLY, YOUNG JUDGES TODAY...

YOU'RE WALLY SQUAD?

HEY THORA. HOW ARE THE CATARACTS?



BITE ME, AIMEE. NO ONE EVER TELL YOU IT'S BAD MANNERS TO MOCK YOUR ELDERS?

I'M FOUR MONTHS OLDER THAN YOU, AND YOU KNOW IT.

NICE NOSE. RUN INTO ANY WALLS LATELY?



HOW CAN YOU BE FOUR MONTHS...?

BODY-CHANGE TECHNOLOGY. SAME THING BUT TAKEN TO A NEW LEVEL.

OH, I GET IT. FACE-CHANGE TECHNOLOGY.

WHICH IS HOW GREEN ENDED UP WEIGHING HALF AS MUCH AS YOUR ASS, RIGHT, THORA?

SO WHY AM I HERE?



NIXON, IT FILLS MY TIRED OLD HEART WITH JOY TO CONSIDER WHAT YOU'VE GOT IN STORE...



YOU'VE GOT
TO BE KIDDING
ME!

IT'S QUITE SAFE,
NIXON. GREEN WENT
THROUGH THE SAME
PROCEDURE. WE USE A
VARIANT ON THE FACE-
CHANGE TECH TO
ALTER THE
BODY...

... THEN WE PUMP
IN A MASS OF
VARIOUS MEATS
GAINED FROM **RESYK**,
ACCENTUATING THE
BODY'S MASS.

LOVELY.



ONCE THE CASE IS
OVER, WE **REVERSE** THE
PROCEDURE, SUCK OUT
THE EXCESS FAT. YOU'LL
LOOK JUST AS YOU
DO KNOW.

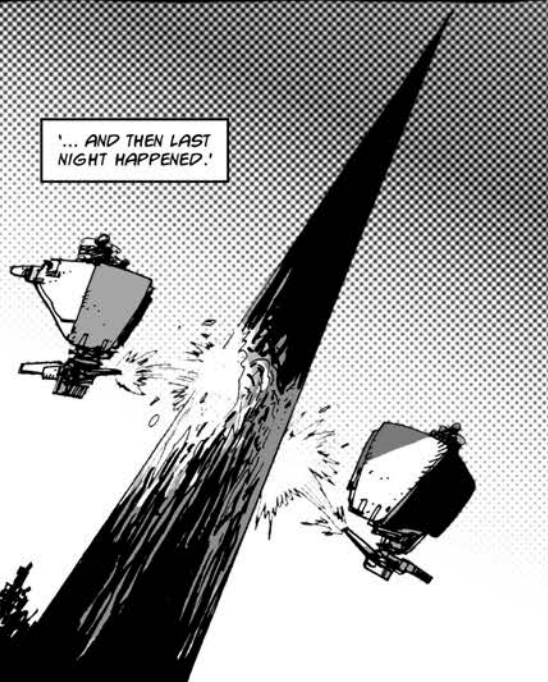
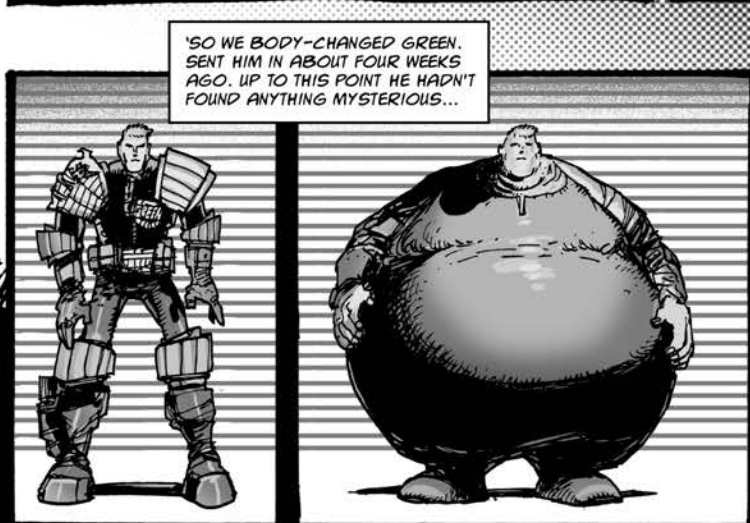
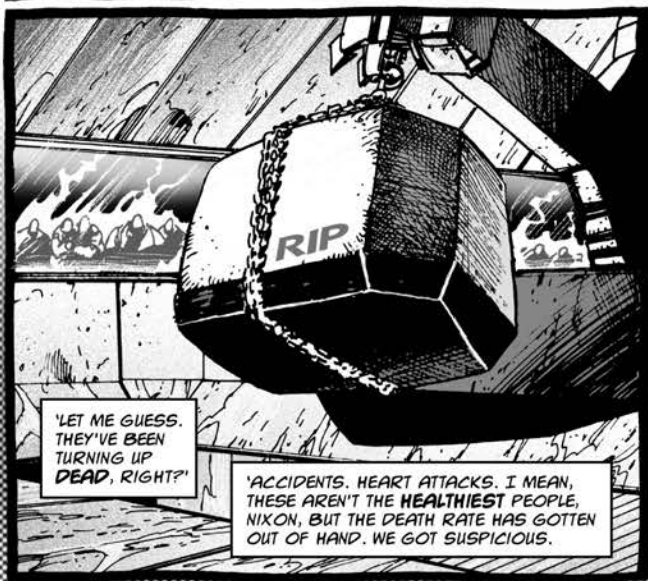
YOU COULD ASK THEM
TO FIX THE NOSE WHILE
YOU'RE HERE...

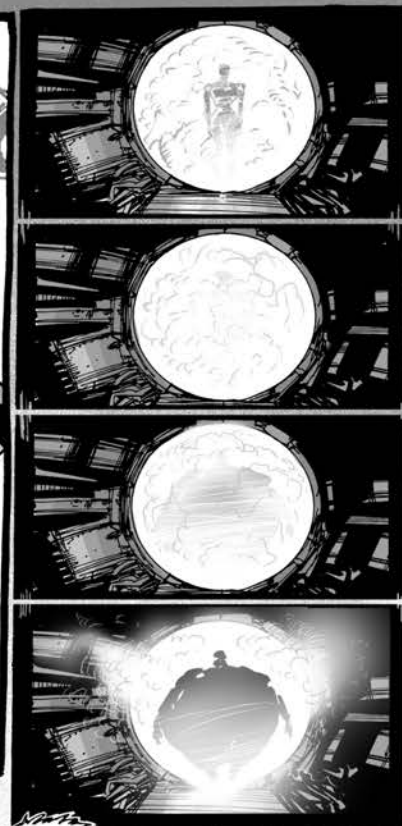
WATCH OUT FOR THOSE
COLD WINTERS, THORA.
THEY CAN BE KILLERS.

LOOK, NIXON, A
JUDGE HAS BEEN **MURDERED**.
WE NEED SOMEONE TO GO IN
THERE AND FIND OUT WHAT
HAPPENED.

... OK.

WHY WAS GREEN
SENT THERE IN THE
FIRST PLACE?







LET ME ASK YOU
SOMETHING, FRIEND. WHEN YOU LOOK
AT ME, WHAT DO YOU SEE?

YOU SEE TYRONE APPLEBY.
A MAN WHO IS RICH. A MAN WHO
EXUDES SELF-BELIEF.



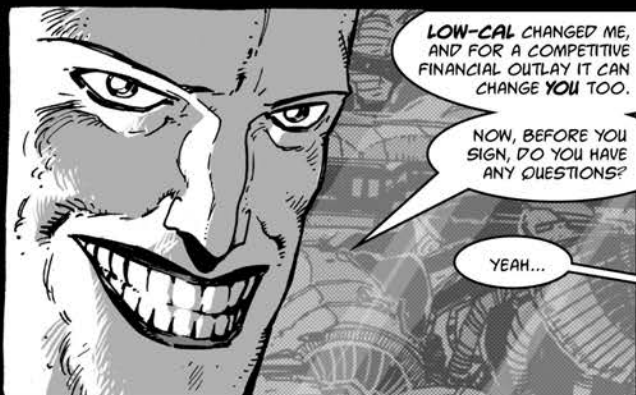
YOU SAY, 'YES, I WANT TO BE THAT
PERSON. IF ONLY I COULD SCALE
THE UNFORGIVING PEAK OF PIES
AND SNACKS THAT IS THE
MOUNTAIN OF MY
UNHAPPINESS.'

HOW CAN I
KNOW SUCH THINGS,
YOU ASK?



BECAUSE I
WAS YOU, FRIEND.
I WAS FAT. REPULSIVE.
I LIVED THROUGH
YOUR SHAME.

AND I CHANGED.
I CONQUERED MY
OWN FRAILTIES.



LOW-CAL CHANGED ME,
AND FOR A COMPETITIVE
FINANCIAL OUTLAY IT CAN
CHANGE YOU TOO.

NOW, BEFORE YOU
SIGN, DO YOU HAVE
ANY QUESTIONS?

YEAH...



YOU GOT ANY
STRONGER CHAIRS?



TELL ME, MISS NIXON...

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN REPUGNANT?

YOU'RE A REAL SWEET-TALKER, AREN'T YOU?

IT'S PART OF THE LOW-CAL PROCESS. TO MAKE YOU REALISE HOW UNPLEASANT YOU REALLY ARE, MAKING YOU WANT TO CHANGE.

MISS NIXON, THIS WILL BE YOUR HOME FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS. THIS IS WHERE YOU WILL SHED THE **CORPULENT CHRYSALIS** AND BECOME THE **BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLY**.

OH SWEET GRUD...



ENJOY, MISS NIXON. I MUST GO WELCOME MORE REPELLENT MEMBERS INTO OUR HAPPY LOW-CAL FAMILY.

... IT'D BE WORTH LIFE ON TITAN TO OFF THAT SONOFABITCH...

HEY! TIME TO WORK, YOU UGLY OBESE PIECE OF CRAP!



AW, WHAT'S THE MATTER, GIRLIE? YOU GONNA CRY?



PUNCHING A PERSONAL TRAINER WAS PROBABLY NOT THE BEST START TO MY STAY AT LOW-CAL TOWERS, BUT IT WAS GOOD FOR MY COVER...

... AND I ENJOYED IT.



THE TRAINER WANTED ME THROWN OUT. APPLEBY REFUSED. HE DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE MY MONEY. SO THEY PUT ME TO WORK. **HARD WORK.**



THE EXERCISE ONLY STOPS FOR THE PSYCHIATRIC SESSIONS. AND, BOY, DO THE SHRINKS EARN THEIR MONEY HERE...

THIS IS A JOKE, RIGHT?



THEY GIVE OUT THE PILLS THREE TIMES A DAY.



I KEEP MINE UNDER MY TONGUE AND THEN POCKET THEM WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING.

THE FATTIES LOOK... **SEDATED** AFTER THEY TAKE THEM.



OR MAYBE THEY'RE JUST TIRED. CARRYING ALL THIS WEIGHT AROUND ALL DAY...

GRUD... I DIDN'T KNOW THIS WOULD BE SO DIFFICULT.



SERIAL KILLERS IN ISO-CUBES
GET A CUSHIER RIDE THAN THIS...

COOL ARM.
HOW'D YOU LOSE
THE ORIGINAL?

OLD BLOCK
WAR INJURY.



YOU'RE THE ONE WHO PUNCHED THE
TRAINER, RIGHT? NICE WORK.

I'M HOLLY.

NIXON. HOW LONG
YOU BEEN HERE?

A MONTH.
FIGURED I GOTTA
LOSE WEIGHT OR
I'LL BE DEAD IN
TEN YEARS.
YOU?



THIS PLACE WAS RECOMMENDED TO ME
BY A FRIEND. YOU MIGHT'VE KNOWN
HIM... ORWELL GREEN?

THE DUDE WHO
WENT FREEFALL? NASTY. YOU
WANNA TALK TO **CHICO** OVER
THERE, SHE AND GREEN WERE
BEST PALS IN HERE...



HEY, **CHICO**! THIS
IS A FRIEND OF
GREEN'S.

YOU... YOU **KNEW**
ORWELL?

YEAH, I DID,
ON THE OUTSIDE.
HE SAID —



WHAT'S HER
PROBLEM?

PROBABLY
STILL UPSET ABOUT
HIS DEATH.



HE'S NOT THE FIRST, YOU
KNOW. TO DIE.

HUH?

LOT OF THE FOLK
IN HERE GET LIKE **RELIGIOUS**
FREAKS. SIGN THEIR MONEY
OVER TO LOW-CAL THEN END
UP IN OVERSIZED
COFFINS.



HAH! JUST
FREAKING YOU
OUT, NIXON.

BUT WHAT IF
IT'S TRUE?

WELL, IT'S
RUMOURED APPLEBY'S
GOT A **CLIENT HITLIST** UP
IN HIS OFFICE. WHY NOT GO
UP THERE AND SEE IF
YOU'RE ON IT?



'YEAH, I MIGHT
JUST DO THAT...'



I AM THE WORLD'S
LARGEST CAT
BURGLAR. AND MY
HEAVY BREATHING
COULD WAKE A
DEAD MAN.



TWENTY MINUTES OF SEARCHING
AND NOTHING. EITHER APPLEBY'S
HIDDEN THEM OR HE'S CLEAN.



HEY! WHO'S
IN HERE — ?

DROKK! DIDN'T
HEAR HIM
COMING — !

GREAT... JUST
GREAT...



HOW THE HELL AM I
SUPPOSED TO OUTRUN
HIM IN THIS BODY?

STOP OR I
FIRE!

UH... NOT
GOOD...

ELEVATOR...
UH... DOORS...
BREATHE IN...

DOORS
CLOSING.

AHHH!

FORCE THEM
OPEN! COME
ON, COME —

NNNN...

— ON!

WHICH FLOOR,
PLEASE?

UH... A-ANY
FLOOR WITH AN
EXIT...

LOW
LIFE

'ANY FLOOR
THAT GETS ME
OUT OF HERE!'

GRUD! WHAT'S
THAT **SMELL?**

IT'S ME, THORA.
I **STINK**. I'VE JUST DONE THREE
HOURS OF EXERCISE AND THEY
DON'T LET US SHOWER.

THE STENCH IS
SUPPOSED TO
MAKE US WANT
TO **IMPROVE**
OURSELVES...

NIXON, THERE'S
THINGS IN THE
CURSED EARTH THAT
DON'T SMELL LIKE
THAT...

I CAN'T
TAKE MUCH
MORE OF
THIS...

THE TEK BOYS FINALLY
CAME BACK WITH THE
RESULTS ON THE SLIMMING
PILLS. ALL NEGATIVE.

THEY **SLIM**.
THAT'S IT.

YOU COME UP
WITH SOMETHING?

... UH... NO. I BROKE
INTO APPLEBY'S
RECORDS LAST NIGHT.
NOTHING.

I'VE TALKED TO A
LOT OF PEOPLE IN HERE...
LOW-CAL ARE **SADISTS**,
BUT I DON'T THINK
THEY'RE CRIMINALS.

... GREEN MUST
HAVE FELT LIKE
THIS...

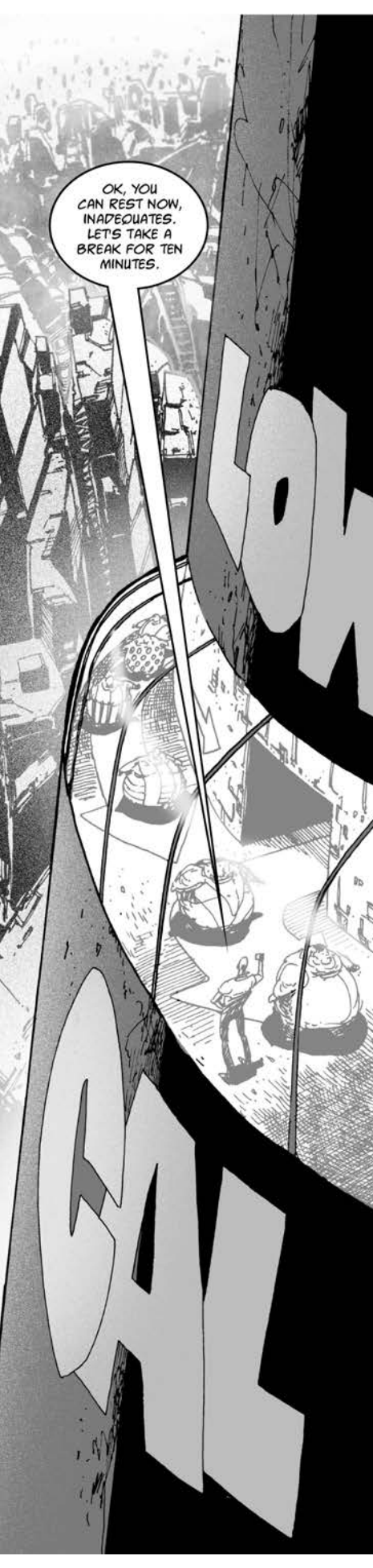
NIXON?

THORA, I'M **EXHAUSTED**.
IT'S AN EFFORT JUST TO
BREATHE. I WALK TEN FEET I
FEEL LIKE I'VE RUN A MARATHON.
MY CHEST ACHES.

I FEEL SICK. I FEEL
HUNGRY. I DON'T THINK
I'VE EVER BEEN THIS
MISERABLE.

AIMEE —

GET ME **OUT** OF
HERE, THORA, OR I
SWEAR I DON'T KNOW
WHAT I'LL DO...



OK, YOU
CAN REST NOW,
INADEQUATES.
LET'S TAKE A
BREAK FOR TEN
MINUTES.

CHICO!

CHICO, I'M —

YOU'VE COME
TO ARREST ME,
HAVEN'T YOU?

WHAT?

YOU WERE FRIENDS WITH
ORWELL, ON THE OUTSIDE,
WEREN'T YOU?

YES...

ORWELL
WAS A JUDGE. HE
TOLD ME.

I'M NOT A
JUDGE —

HE WAS SO **UNHAPPY**
WHEN HE CAME IN HERE.
SO SICK OF PRETENDING
TO BE SOMEONE HE
WASN'T. WE WERE
GOING TO DO IT
TOGETHER.

THE **SPIKE**... WE
WANTED TO SHOW
LOW-CAL HOW
MISERABLE THEY
WERE MAKING
PEOPLE...

AW NO... YOU MEAN
GREEN...? HE
WOULDN'T...

HE WENT FIRST,
TO REASSURE ME. I
WAS TO PUT IT ON
AUTOPILOT AND
FOLLOW... BUT I...
I COULDN'T.

NIXON! CHICO! YOU
STUPID, NAUSEATING
EXCESS OF MUTIE
FAECES!

STOP TALKING
AND —



FIVE WEEKS LATER:

YOU LOOKIN' TO PARTY, HON?

OH YES. YES, INDEED, I AM. HOW MUCH?

MAN WITH A CAR LIKE THIS CAN AFFORD THE BEST. TWO HUNDRED CREDS?

AND IF I PAID A LITTLE MORE WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO UNDERTAKE CERTAIN EXTRAS?

LIKE?

WELL, HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT EATING ALL THESE CANDY BARS AND SHOUTING 'I'M TYRONE APPLEBY' PERIODICALLY?

WHAT ABOUT 'I'M TYRONE APPLEBY, PREVIOUSLY OWNER OF LOW-CAL TOWERS, NOW ENJOYING A FIVE-STRETCH IN AN ISO-CUBE'?

W-WHAT?

I'M WALLY SQUAD, CREEP. AND YOU ARE UNDER ARREST FOR SOLICITING.

YOU KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED BECAUSE OF YOUR ABUSIVE LITTLE BUSINESS? A 30% DEATH RATE, 45% OF WHICH ARE SUICIDES.

I... I JUST WANTED TO HELP FATTIES...

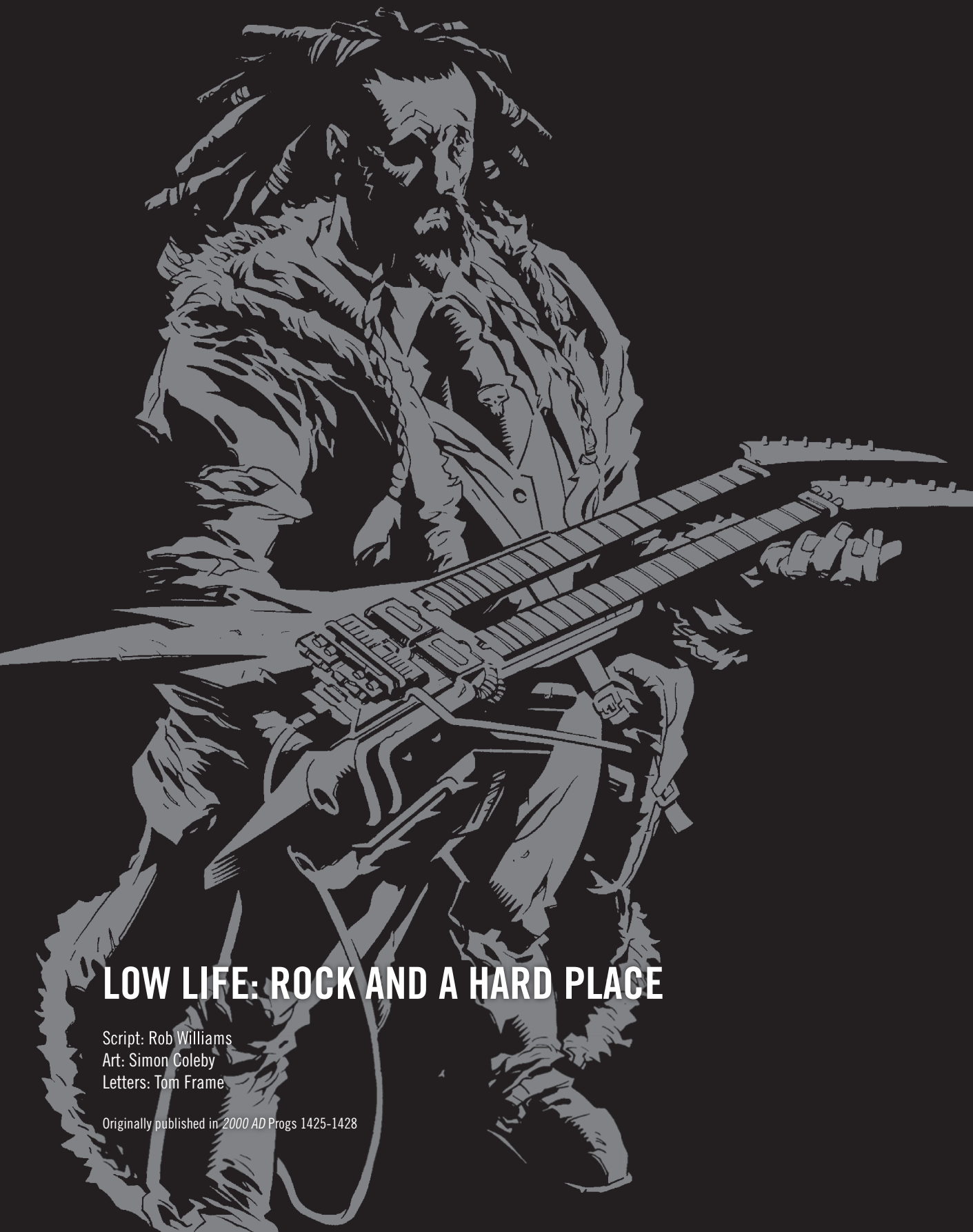
GRUD, APPLEBY, YOU MADE THOSE PEOPLE SO UNHAPPY EVEN AN UNDERCOVER JUDGE KILLED HIMSELF.

COME ON, SECTOR HOUSE IS A KILOMETRE AND A HALF AWAY.

WHAT ABOUT MY ROADSTER? THE KEYS ARE STILL IN IT! IT'LL GET STOLEN HERE! IT'S BRAND NEW! YOU CAN DRIVE ME THERE —

SHUT UP. WE'RE WALKING.

WE COULD BOTH DO WITH THE EXERCISE...



LOW LIFE: ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Script: Rob Williams

Art: Simon Coleby

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in 2000 AD Progs 1425-1428





THEY'RE PLAYING
'GENGHIS'. I DON'T
BELIEVE IT...

A-ONE-A-TWO-A-ONE-
TWO-THREE--

HIT IT!

...I COULDN'T SAY WITH
ONE HUNDRED PERCENT
CERTAINTY, BUT IT LOOKS
AS IF SOMEONE TAMPERED
WITH THE PYROTECHNICS.
LINKED THEM UP TO
EXPLOSIVE DEVICES HIDDEN
THROUGHOUT THE
ESTABLISHMENT.

WHEN THE
BAND HIT THE
FIREWORKS...

...CLUB GO BOOM.

SERVES THEM RIGHT, ALL
THAT LOUD MUSIC. JUST
NOISE. NOW, BACK IN MY
DAY, WE HAD TUNES.

STILL, THERE WERE 256
PEOPLE IN THAT CLUB...

AND EIGHT
MONKEYS.

AND EIGHT MONKEYS. THAT'S A
HELL OF A SPOT OF MASS MURDER.
AND THIS ISN'T THE FIRST LOW LIFE
CLUB TO GO FIREBALL RECENTLY.

SO, GORGEOUS,
YOU READY TO
ROCK?



DIRTY FRANK ISN'T
LOOKING FORWARD
TO THIS.



OK, LET'S
GET THIS WALLY
SQUAD BRIEFING
STARTED...



RECORD COMPANIES ARE
TOO SCARED TO COME TO
THE LOW LIFE TO FIND NEW
TALENT, SO THEY SET UP A
BATTLE OF THE BANDS.

THE AREA'S EIGHT
BEST GROUPS PLAYING
AGAINST EACH OTHER IN A
HUGE GIG AT THE GEDDY
LEE AMPHITHEATRE, THE
ONE THAT GOES DOWN
BEST ON THE NIGHT GETS
A RECORD DEAL.



SIX OF THE
BANDS HAVE BEEN
BLOWN UP IN THE
LAST MONTH. ALL
DURING GIGS.

THE TWO REMAINING
BANDS ARE THE CURSED
TURF, THE BEST IN THE
AREA, WHO HAVE LITTLE
MOTIVE TO OFF THE
COMPETITION...



...AND KILL KILL KILL KILL,
A NOTORIOUSLY AWFUL GROUP,
WHO SUDDENLY FIND THEMSELVES
SECOND IN THE PECKING ORDER.
OUR MAIN SUSPECTS.

YOU'RE A VERY
GOOD-LOOKING MAN,
FRANK, YOU KNOW
THAT?

DIRTY FRANK
IS GAY.



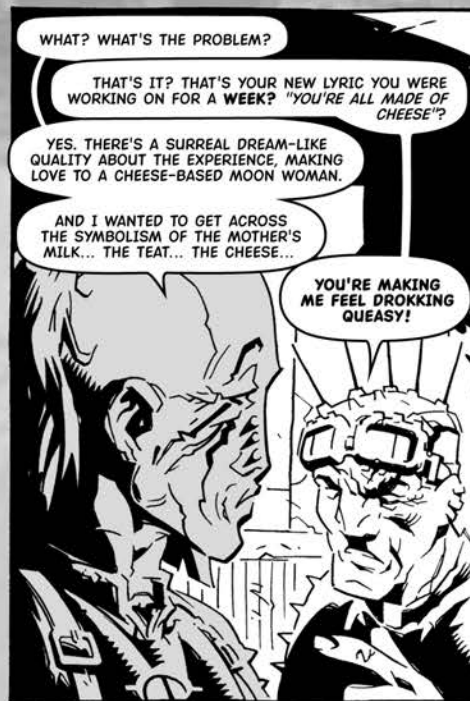
NOW KILL KILL KILL KILL'S MANAGER, HONEST
JACKSON, WAS RECENTLY ARRESTED FOR TAX
EVASION. YOU'RE GOING TO BE HIS REPLACEMENT,
SEE IF YOU CAN PROVE THEY DID IT.

YOU WILL BE USING THE ALIAS OF LEGENDARY
AND LONG-BELIEVED-DEAD ROCK GREAT NICK
'TWO GERBILS' RASPUTIN.



YES?

DIRTY FRANK
WANTS TO TAKE
THE LONG WALK.









HEY, HONEY.
YOU LOOKING FOR
BUSINESS?

YES. DIRTY FRANK IS
LOOKING FOR THORA.
DO YOU KNOW HER?

OHOO, YOU BETCHA.



HELLO, FRANK.
LIKE THE
OUTFIT?



THORA, THAT
IS PART OF AN
UNDERCOVER
OPERATION,
RIGHT?

ACTUALLY,
IT'S NOT. MY
CHIROPRACTOR
SAID IT'D BE
GOOD FOR MY
BACK.



AND THIS IS
GREAT FOR MY
SCIATICA, TOO.

NOW, BACK IN THE
REAL WORLD, WHERE
YOUR MENTAL ILLNESS
DOESN'T EXIST, HOW
GOES THINGS WITH
THE BAND?

DIRTY FRANK
IS THEIR NEW
MANAGER.

EXCELLENT. THEY
ASK YOU TO PLAY
A FEW TUNES?



"INDEED. THE PRE-OPERATION PROGRAMMING WORKED PERFECTLY."

"YOU HAD NICK RASPUTIN'S MOVES?"

"DIRTY FRANK THREW RIGHTEOUS ROCK SHAPES, YES."



"AND THE VOICECHIP?"

"PROJECTED RASPUTIN'S VOICE WITH GREAT APLOMB. THE BAND WAS COMPLETELY CONVINCED."

"SO, THEY OUR BOMB-HAPPY BOYS OR NOT?"



"UNSURE. LEAD SINGER IS CALLED AARGHHH."

"HE CLAIMS HIS NAME BEST PORTRAYS HIS INNER TORMENT, HIS BLEEDING HEART, HIS VULNERABLE POET'S SOUL..."

DOES 'STILTON' RHYME WITH 'STRAP-ON'?



"GUITARIST IS CALLED BLOODAXE."

"SEEMS TO LOATHE AARGHHH. CREATIVE DIFFERENCES, LARGELY RELATED TO CHEESE DISAGREEMENTS..."



"THE BIG FINALE OF HIS TWENTY-THREE-MINUTE GUITAR SOLO IS TO SET HIS STRINGS ON FIRE WITH ROCKET FUEL AND PLAY USING ONLY HIS TEETH."

"AS DIRTY FRANK DISCOVERED THIS MORNING."

"THE BASSIST AND DRUMMER ARE BOTH DROIDS OWNED BY THE BAND."

"BOTH ARE BLAND, BORING AND UTTERLY DEVOID OF IDEAS OR PERSONALITY."

"SATIRE."



TO BE FRANK...

...HEH...

...NONE OF THEM
SEEM COMPETENT OR
INTELLIGENT ENOUGH
TO BE MASS
MURDERERS.



HMMM...KEEP ON IT.
THE BATTLE OF THE
BANDS IS ONLY A
FEW DAYS AWAY.

IN THE MEANTIME, I
COULD ALWAYS GIVE YOU
A REDUCED RATE, YOU
DIRTY POODLE...

UH... THAT'S VERY
KIND OF YOU, THORA,
BUT DIRTY FRANK HAS
SOMEWHERE TO BE.

WHERE?

"ANYWHERE."



AH...YES. THE SMELL OF
STUDENTS' B.O., THE
STICKINESS OF SPILT
DISTASTEFUL DRINKS
UNDERFOOT...

THE THREE HUNDRED-POUND
ROADIE CHANTING THE "TWO,
TWO" MANTRA INTO A MICRO-
PHONE LIKE SOME IMBECILIC
ELECTROSHOCK-THERAPY
PATIENT...

TRULY, I AM A COSMONAUT
ADRIPT IN THE ROCKVERSE.



PUT YOUR MATTER
AND ANTIMATTER
TOGETHER AND
WELCOME...

THE
CURSED
TURF!

THIS IS AARGHHH, LEAD SINGER IN THE BAND KILL KILL KILL KILL.



...mummy...

HE IS AN ASPIRING ROCK GOD, A DEMON DANCER, A LIZARD LOVER, A MASTER OF THE NECROMANTIC NETHER ARTS OF MUTANT METAL.

HE HAS JUST SOILED HIMSELF.

THIS IS A BOUNCER DROID. VERY MUCH LIKE A TRADITIONAL CLUB BOUNCER, BUT WITH ALL THE WIT, ALTRUISM, HUMANITY, ERUDITION AND PACIFIST INTENT REMOVED.



STAY BACK OR I'LL RIP YOUR LUNGS OUT, TURN THEM UPSIDE DOWN AND STICK THEM TO YOUR HEAD LIKE ANTLERS.

THIS IS DIRTY FRANK.



YAY DIRTY FRANK.

DIRTY FRANK IS AN UNDERCOVER WALLY SQUAD JUDGE, PRETENDING TO BE KILL KILL KILL KILL'S MANAGER.

THEREFORE, DIRTY FRANK'S PATH IS CLEAR -- IT IS THE PATH OF ROCK... OF THE HEAVIEST METAL...



PROTECT BAND MEMBERS AT ALL COSTS AND IF POSSIBLE ALONG THE WAY—

DESTROY!

THEN RUN LIKE HELL BEFORE ANYONE ASKS YOU TO PAY FOR THE DAMAGES.





WHAT WERE YOU DOING SNEAKING BACKSTAGE, AARGHHH?

T-THAT WAS EXTREMELY TRAUMATIC. I SHOULD WRITE A B-BALLAD ABOUT IT...

YEAH, CHRISTIAN, WHAT WERE YOU DOING AT A CURSED TURF GIG?



...CHRISTIAN?

I-I WAS GOING TO STEAL SOME OF THEIR GEAR, THAT'S ALL. I JUST WANTED TO G-GIVE US AN ADVANTAGE IN THE BATTLE OF THE BANDS...



ADMIT IT! YOU WERE TRYING TO KILL THEM! ALL OF THEM!

N-NO... I ABHOR VIOLENCE...

HE DOES, YOU KNOW. ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S DIRECTED AT HIM.



I REMIND YOU OF THE SECOND VERSE OF OUR SUBTLE ANTI-WAR NUMBER 'IT'S NO FUN TO PICK UP A GUN...' WHERE I SANG THE POIGNANT LINE...



...AKKK... AHHH... EEEEEKKK...



TRULY, WISE WORDS THAT ACCURATELY CAPTURE THE NONSENSICAL INSANITY OF WAR.

M-MY THROAT... THE DROID'S CRUSHED IT...

I CAN'T SING!

"BUT... BUT WHAT ABOUT THE..."

...BATTLE OF THE BANDS! YES, MEGA-CITY ONE, THIS IS THE LOW LIFE, THE PART OF THE CITY YOU NEVER VISIT!

AND I, AWARD-WINNING TRI-D ANCHOR DAVID LARRY, AM IMMERSING MYSELF IN THIS REVOLTING CULTURAL BILE DUCT SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!

TONIGHT, AT THE GEDDY LEE AMPHITHEATRE, THE MOST VITAL, VISCERAL BANDS OF MEGA-CITY ONE'S UNDERGROUND WILL PLAY FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF PEOPLE TOO STUPID TO TURN ON A TOASTER.

AND THE WINNER WILL RECEIVE A RECORD DEAL, A MILLION CREDDS AND A WAY OUT OF THIS RANCID HELLHOLE.

OUR JUDGES TONIGHT ARE REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE CITY'S BIGGEST, RICHEST RECORD COMPANIES...

...ALL OF WHOM HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO BE HERE BY THEIR BOSSES IN SPITE OF THE RECENT PLETHORA OF GIG BOMBINGS ACROSS THE LOW LIFE. PLEASE APPLAUD THEIR BRAVE AND HEARTFELT COMMITMENT TO NEW MUSIC.

SO NOW, MENTAL METAL MOSHERS...

...GRUD, WHO WRITES THIS DRIVEL...?

GET READY FOR THE FIRST OF OUR TWO ACTS...





WE APOLOGISE FOR THE FACT THAT THE OTHER SIX BANDS SCHEDULED TO COMPETE ALL RECENTLY EXPLODED...

DIRTY FRANK ISN'T AT ALL SURE ABOUT THIS.

NOW, COME ON, NICK. WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE.

WITH AARGHHH OUT OF ACTION, THE ONLY WAY WE CAN HOPE TO WIN THIS COMPETITION IS WITH YOU SINGING.

JUST IMAGINE...THE COMEBACK OF THE LEGENDARY NICK RASPUTIN! IT'LL BE A HUGE STORY! WE'LL BE MASSIVE!

HOW...HOW MANY ARE IN THE AUDIENCE?

FORTY THOUSAND, BUT THAT'S SMALL FRY TO YOU, THOUGH, RIGHT? REMEMBER WHEN YOU PLAYED EURO-CIT?

C'MON, YOU'VE STILL GOT IT. I MEAN, I'D SUGGEST USING A VOICECHIP IMPLANT OF ONE OF YOUR OLD RECORDINGS, BUT THEY JAM THEM HERE, JUST IN CASE SOMEONE CHEATS.

THEY DO? OH... GOOD.

IT'LL BE GREAT, AND WATCH OUT FOR THE PYROS. THEY SHOULD BE KILLER.

YOU SET UP THE PYROTECHNICS?

SURE. I TOOK AN EVENING COURSE IN ADVANCED HEAVY METAL EXPLOSIVES A FEW YEARS BACK. WHY?



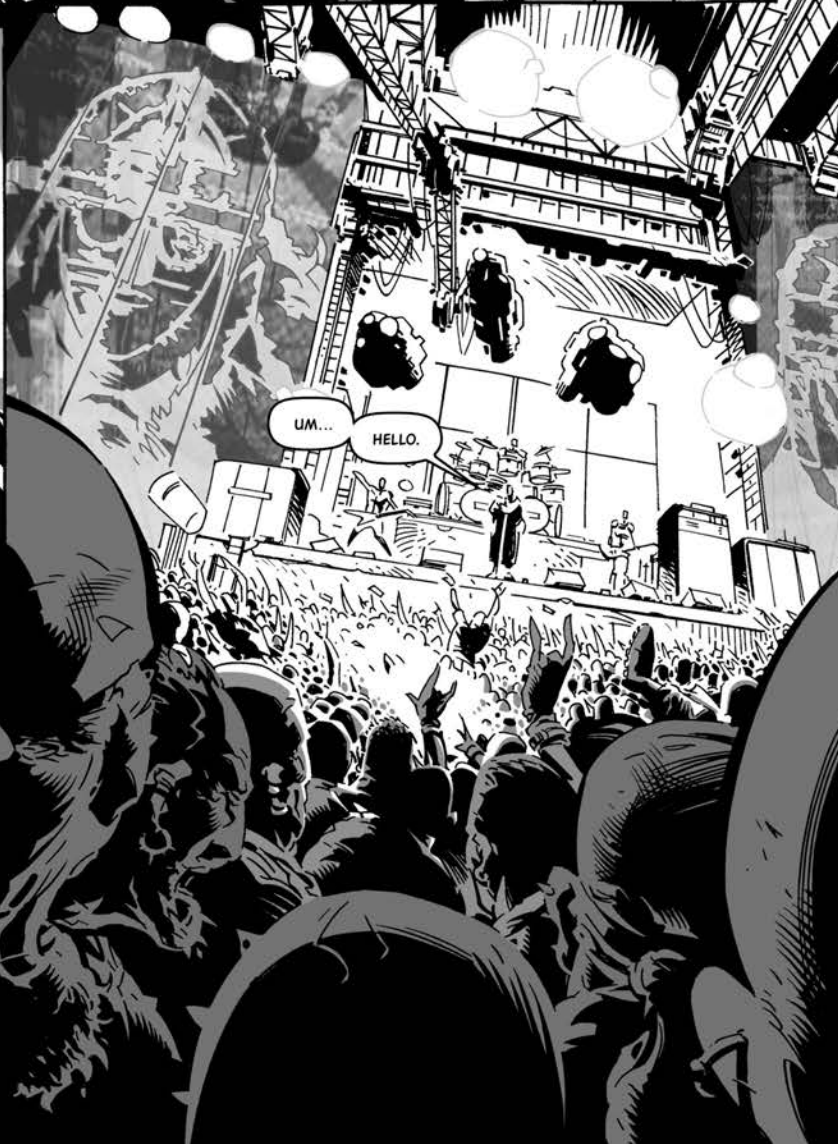
NO REASON.

HERE, I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT GET YOU IN THE MOOD. REMIND YOU OF THE GLORY DAYS. IT'S ONE OF YOUR OLD MASKS.

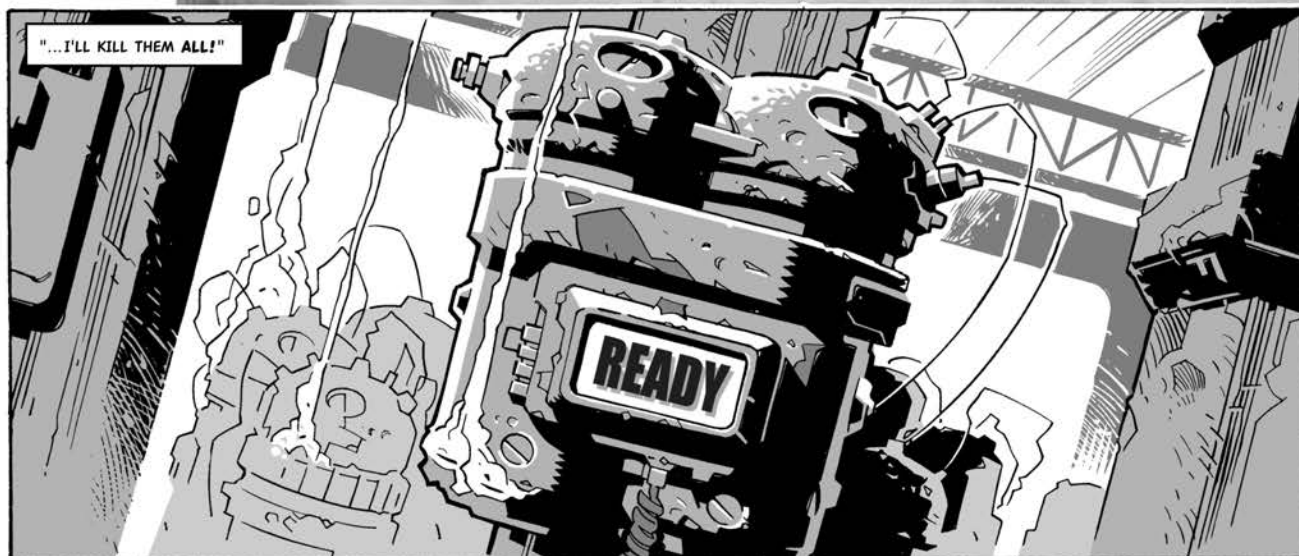
NOW, LET'S ROCK!



PLEASE WELCOME... KILL KILL KILL KILL!









SMUGGLE
IN?

YEAH, I KNOW A GUY.
HE GOT ME THESE ONES.
OLD, DECOMMISSIONED
BRIT-CIT MILITARY ISSUE
WITH FAKE I.D.s.

I REPROGRAMMED THEM
TO LEARN ROCK'N'ROLL,
SO THEY'RE HARDLY
TOP OF THE RANGE—



WHAT MODELS
WERE THEY
ORIGINALLY?

UH...
HARRIS-23s.
WHY?



THORA, YOU
HEAR ALL THAT?

YES, DEARIE, I DID.

DOES THE HARRIS-23
DROID HAVE A
SPECIALIST SKILL?

WAITING FOR
CONFIRMATION...

"GOT IT.

"IT'S A BOMB-DISPOSAL DROID."

ACTIVATED
00:01:59



THERE'S A BOMB, ISN'T THERE?
WHERE IS IT? UNDER THE STAGE
TO BLOW UP THE OPPOSITION?

TELL DIRTY FRANK!



USURPER!

AAHHH!

NO, AARGHHH!





GOOD WORK FRANK. ANY IDEA WHY THEY DID IT?

BLOODAXE REPROGRAMMED THEM WITH THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF ROCK'N'ROLL. A WORLD OF SEX, FAME, DRUGS, MENTAL ILLNESS, VIOLENCE, SUICIDE, MURDER, PLANE CRASHES AND THE MOST RUTHLESS AMBITION IMAGINABLE.

THEY GOT STUCK ON THE RUTHLESS AMBITION PART AND DECIDED TO OFF ALL COMPETITORS.



WE WON!
WE'VE GOT THE
RECORD DEAL!

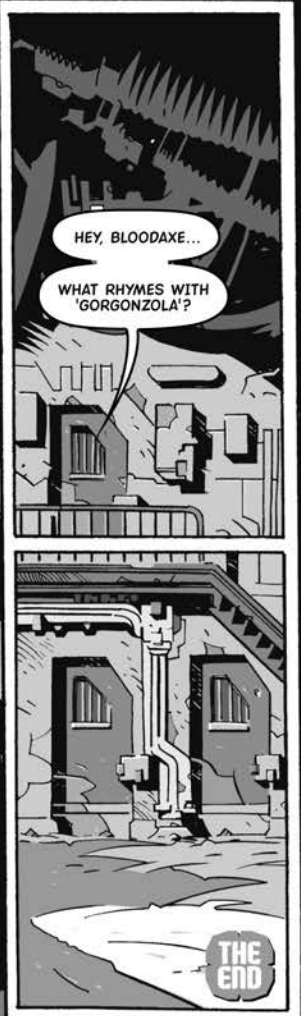
WE'RE GOING
TO BE STARS!



I THINK NOT. DIRTY FRANK HAS OTHER PLANS FOR YOU. AS YOUR MANAGER, I SEE A BIG FUTURE FOR YOU, BOYS, A VERY BIG FUTURE -- IN THE CUBES.

ONE COUNT OF SMUGGLING IN ILLEGAL DROIDS -- ONE COUNT OF ASSAULTING A JUDGE -- AND, BOYS, IF CRIMES AGAINST MUSIC WERE PUNISHABLE BY LAW...

...YOU'D BE DOING A LIFE STRETCH.



HEY, BLOODAXE...

WHAT RHYMES WITH 'GORGONZOLA'?

THE
END



LOW LIFE: HE'S MAKING A LIST

Script: Rob Williams

Art: Simon Coleby

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *2000 AD* Prog 2006



T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND ALL ACROSS THE LOW LIFE, ON TEMPORARILY SNOW-PURE STREETS AND INSIDE BROKEN HOMES, LITTLE WAS STIRRING...

...ESPECIALLY NOT IN ROBERT HELPMANN BLOCK, THE LOW LIFE'S CENTRAL ORPHANAGE.

HOME TO OVER 5,000 CHILDREN AT THE LAST COUNT (NO ONE COULD EVER ACTUALLY REMEMBER WHEN THAT LAST COUNT HAD TAKEN PLACE, MIND YOU).

THE LOW LIFE IS A VIOLENT PLACE, YOU SEE. MANY MURDERS CREATE UNLIMITED UNWANTED. ORPHANS ARE NOT IN SHORT SUPPLY.

BUT FOR TONIGHT, AT LEAST, THEY ARE IN DEMAND...

IT'S A DEAD END, RUFUS! I TOLD YOU! WE'RE TRAPPED!



HE'S GOING TO GET US, I KNOW IT!

SHHH! BE QUIET, SALLY!

I THINK WE LOST HIM. I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING...



MAYBE... MAYBE HE WENT DOWN ONE OF THE OTHER CORRIDORS... OR MAYBE HE GAVE UP AND WENT HOME...

YEAH... MAYBE...



MR CLAWS!

HE'S REAL! I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S REAL!



SALLY, YOU HAVE TO FIND SOMEWHERE TO HIDE AND NOT MAKE A SOUND FOR A LONG TIME. UNDERSTAND?





YOU HAVE BEEN NAUGHTY, CHILD.

VERY, VERY NAUGHTY...

36+ DAYS LATER:



I'M NOT GOING OUT DRESSED LIKE THIS. I MEAN IT. I LOOK RIDICULOUS.

DIRTY FRANK THINKS IT SUITS YOU, AIMEE. VERY FETCHING.

STOP STARING, FRANK, OR I SWEAR TO GRUD YOU'LL BE WEARING TWO EYE PATCHES FROM NOW ON.



BUT...THEN DIRTY FRANK WOULD BE UNABLE TO SEE...

THAT'S THE POINT YOU SELF-AGGRANDISING MENTALIST!

WHAT DIRTY FRANK DOES WITH HIS OWN BODY BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IS HIS OWN BUSINESS...

FRANK, AIMEE, PLEASE. I COULD LITERALLY LISTEN TO THIS WITTY BANTER FOR EIGHT, MAYBE NINE MORE SECONDS.

BUT, IF YOU COULD CONCENTRATE AND LOOK AT THIS SCREEN, WE HAVE A JOB TO DO.



YOU SHOULDN'T GET SO ANGRY, AIMEE NIXON. IT IS BAD FOR YOUR ELF.

HO HO DROKKING HO.

HILARIOUS. NOW, YOU BOTH RECOGNISE ROBERT HELPMANN BLOCK, THE LOW LIFE'S PRIMARY ORPHANAGE. NO ONE KNOWS JUST HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE ACTUALLY KEPT THERE.

RUMOURS HAVE STARTED THAT, EVERY CHRISTMAS EVE, SOMEONE COMES IN AND 'TAKES' SOME KIDS. BUT BECAUSE THERE'S NO RECORDS OR SECURITY CAMS NO ONE CAN PROVE IT.

SO IS SOMEONE REALLY SNATCHING JUVES?

NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE. THE KIDS TELL STORIES BUT THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN DISMISSED OUT OF HAND.

WHY, FOR GRUD'S SAKE?

BECAUSE OF WHO THEY SAY IS DOING IT.

WHO?

MR CLAWS. YOU KNOW THE STORY, RIGHT?

YEAH, BUT C'MON, THAT'S A KIDS' MYTH. EVERYONE KNOWS IT'S A LOAD OF OLD—

HE'S MAKING A LIST. HE'S CHECKING IT TWICE. THOSE WHO ARE NAUGHTY HE'LL SLICE AND DICE. THOSE WHO ARE GOOD WILL SEE THE NEXT MORN, MAJOR ARTERIES INTACT AND UNTORN.

DIRTY FRANK SUGGESTS WE NUKE THE PLACE, JUST IN CASE. SUCH A TERRIFYING SUPERNATURAL CREATURE MUST BE STOPPED AT ALL COSTS.

A man with curly hair is shown in a small inset, looking up at a larger man's face.

OK. GOOD. NOW, BACK IN THE REAL WORLD WHERE WE, AS JUDGES, INVESTIGATE CASES AND DON'T INCINERATE 5,000 CHILDREN ON THE OFF-CHANCE THAT A FANTASY MONSTER MAY, IN FACT, EXIST, HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING.

IT'S PROBABLY NOTHING BUT THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HAVE PRESSURED JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INTO LOOKING INTO IT, SO YOU'LL GO IN UNDER THE COVER OF CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINERS.

FRANK, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES TALK TO THE CHILDREN

UNDERSTOOD.



...SUFFERING? GRIEF? YOU KNOW NOTHING OF SUFFERING AND GRIEF UNTIL YOU HAVE WATCHED YOUR COMRADES BLEED OUT FACE DOWN IN THE SNOW, AS DIRTY FRANK HAS...

WAAAAHHHH!

I LIKE YOUR ARM.

WHAT?

YOUR ROBOT ARM. IT'S COOL. DO ALL ELVES HAVE THOSE?

ONLY THE REALLY TOUGH ONES. THE ONES WHO KNOW KUNG-FU.

YOU KNOW KUNG-FU? REALLY? WILL YOU STAY HERE, TONIGHT? PROTECT US FROM MR CLAWS?



WE'RE STAYING. AND IF THAT PANSY-ASS BITCH SHOWS HIS FACE ROUND HERE, I'LL RIP OFF HIS NOSE AND YOU CAN USE IT AS A BACK-SCRATCHER. DEAL?

DEAL.



MIDNIGHT:

WHAT DO YOU RECKON, THEN? THIS A CASE OF **OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION** OR IS SOME CREEP ACTUALLY STEALING KIDS?

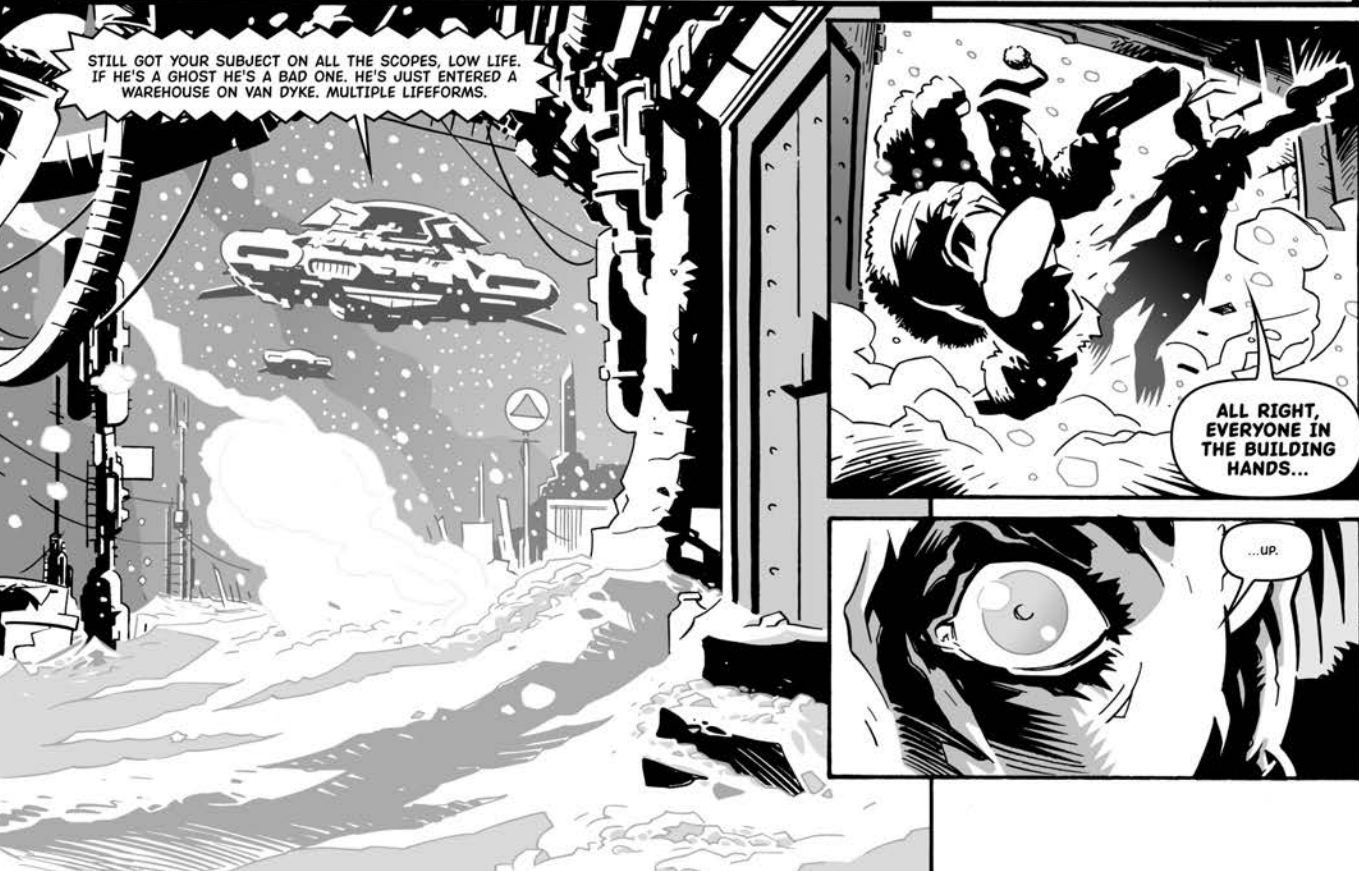
WE SHALL FIND OUT.

EITHER WAY, I REALLY WANT TO HURT SOMETHING. MAYBE WE COULD—



DIRTY FRANK HAS, QUITE LITERALLY, SOILED HIMSELF WITH FEAR.

YEAH? WELL, AIMEE NIXON HAS A HIGH-EXPLOSIVE BULLET WITH MR CLAWS' NAME ON IT. LET'S SEE HOW THE SUPERNATURAL LIKE THEM APPLES...





ALL THESE KIDS...
YOU SICK FREAK!

DESIST FROM SUPERNATURAL
ACTIVITY AND PUT YOUR CLAWS
OR ELONGATED DIGITS IN THE
AIR WHERE DIRTY FRANK CAN
SEE THEM...

...WHICH IS NOT A
SENTENCE DIRTY FRANK
EVER EXPECTED TO SAY.



DROKK, HE'S
MAKING A BREAK
FOR IT!

THE KIDS-!

GO! YOU'RE FASTER!
DIRTY FRANK WILL
RELEASE THEM!



GOOD NEWS, CHILDREN.
MR CLAWS' REIGN OF
TERROR IS OVER! PANIC
NO MORE, FOR NOW YOU
ARE IN THE CARE...

...OF DIRTY
FRANK!





YOU KEEP TERRIFIED,
INNOCENT KIDS PRISONER
IN CAGES? ORPHANS?
WHAT TYPE OF TWISTED—



INNOCENT? THEY ARE
NOT INNOCENT! THEY'RE
EVIL, NAUGHTY, NASTY
LITTLE CREATURES!



AND I'M THE ONE MAKING
THEM BEHAVE! THE ONLY
ONE! EVERY CHRISTMAS!



OH YEAH,
IT'S OFFICIALLY
CHRISTMAS DAY
NOW, AIN'T IT? I
FORGOT, WELL....



...HERE'S MY
GIFT TO YOU.

BB
DD
AA
MM



YOU PATHETIC,
STUPID SCUMBAG. DO
YOU... DO YOU HAVE ANY
IDEA THE HURT...

AIMEE, DON'T.

YOU'VE GOT HIM.



IT'S OK.

...GOOD WORK, FRANK. NOW, SHALL WE SEE WHO THIS GUY REALLY IS?

IF HE RUNS A FAIRGROUND PARK AND LAMENTS THE INTERVENTION OF MEDDLING KIDS, DIRTY FRANK IS QUITTING.



THAT'S RIGHT! IT IS I, RODNEY WAX!

UH...WHO?

THE MAN WHO WOULD HAVE SAVED YOU ALL FROM THE UNRESTRAINED YOB CULTURE OF TODAY'S YOUTH! BUT, NO, MY GRAND PLANS, MY MAGNIFICENT MACHINATIONS—

JUST GET ON WITH THE EXPLANATION, EH? HOGMANAY'S LOOMING.



"I ALWAYS THOUGHT THE KIDS IN THE LOW LIFE HAD A HORRIBLE LIFE, ALL THAT SQUALOR, SO I DECIDED TO HELP THEM. I USED MY LIFE SAVINGS, EVERY CREDIT, AND SET UP MY OWN TOY STORE.

"I WANTED TO MAKE THEM HAPPY, YOU SEE. AND HOW DID THEY REPAY ME?

"THEY PILFERED AND THEY VANDALISED. EIGHTEEN BREAK-INS, COUNTLESS SMASHED WINDOWS... THE FINAL STRAW WAS WHEN THEY STOLE EVERYTHING ON CHRISTMAS EVE. I COULDN'T TAKE ANY MORE.

"AND THEN IT STRUCK ME... CHRISTMAS. FATHER CHRISTMAS.

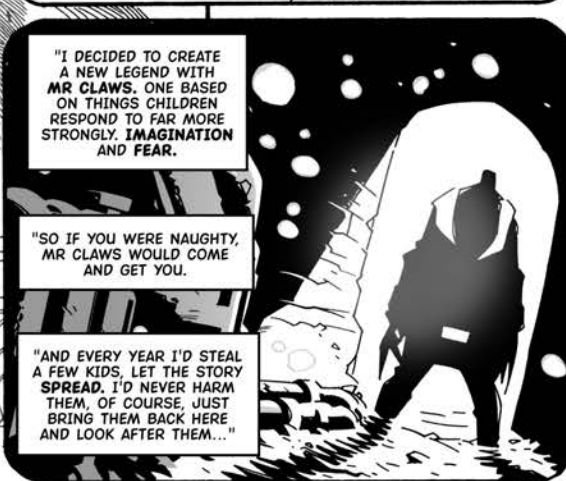
"THE LEGEND SAID THAT IF YOU WERE GOOD ALL YEAR LONG, YOU'D GET GIFTS AT CHRISTMAS. IT WAS OBVIOUSLY INVENTED TO MAKE CHILDREN BEHAVE, BUT IT WASN'T WORKING.

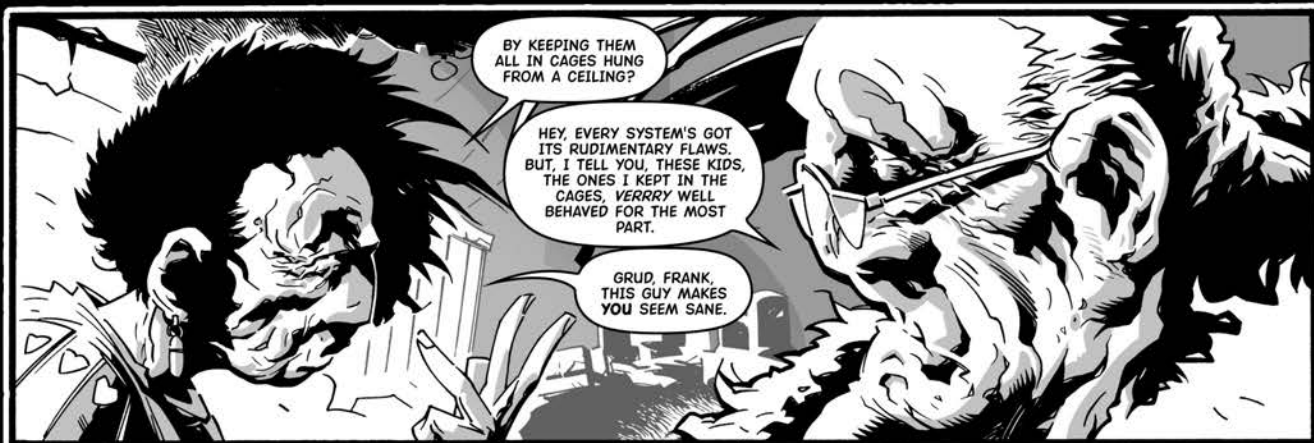


"I DECIDED TO CREATE A NEW LEGEND WITH MR CLAWS. ONE BASED ON THINGS CHILDREN RESPOND TO FAR MORE STRONGLY. IMAGINATION AND FEAR.

"SO IF YOU WERE NAUGHTY, MR CLAWS WOULD COME AND GET YOU.

"AND EVERY YEAR I'D STEAL A FEW KIDS, LET THE STORY SPREAD. I'D NEVER HARM THEM, OF COURSE, JUST BRING THEM BACK HERE AND LOOK AFTER THEM..."





BY KEEPING THEM
ALL IN CAGES HUNG
FROM A CEILING?

HEY, EVERY SYSTEM'S GOT
ITS RUDIMENTARY FLAWS.
BUT, I TELL YOU, THESE KIDS,
THE ONES I KEPT IN THE
CAGES, VERRRY WELL
BEHAVED FOR THE MOST
PART.

GRUD, FRANK,
THIS GUY MAKES
YOU SEEM SANE.



"FRANK?"

AIMEE,
WE HAVE
TO GO.

HER NAME'S
SALLY. HIS IS
RUFUS. THEY'VE
BEEN HERE A
YEAR.

SHE WAS REALLY SCARED,
BUT SHE'S FINALLY GONE
TO SLEEP. I DON'T WANT
TO MOVE AND WAKE HER
UP, Y'KNOW? COULD
YOU...?

DIRTY FRANK
NEVER SAW YOU.





LOW LIFE: CON ARTIST

Script: Rob Williams

Art: Simon Coleby

Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in 2000 AD Progs 1484-1490



MAKE LIKE A POPSICLE, JOSE,
AND PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR LIKE YOU
JUST DON'T CARE. YOUR LITTLE PEOPLE-
SMUGGLING RING IS FINISHED.

MISS AIMEE, NO, I
BEG YOU! WE ARE FRIENDS,
YOU AND I! THESE PAST
WEEKS—

THAT'S SWEET,
JOSE. BUT I THOUGHT
YOU'D HAVE CAUGHT ON
BY NOW...



... I'M AN UNDER-
COVER JUDGE.
AND YOU'RE GOING
TO LIVE IN AN
ISO-CUBE.

NO! I CANNOT!
I BEG YOU! MY
SICK MOTHER IN
PAN ANDES
CONURB, SHE
NEED ME!

YOU'RE BREAKING
MY BIG HAIRY SIMIAN HEART,
JOSE. REALLY.



THE PEOPLE...
MY PEOPLE... YOU
DON'T KNOW HOW
THEY SUFFER!
THE POVERTY!

I HELP THEM FIND
A BETTER LIFE IN
MEGA-CITY ONE!
THEY NEED ME TO
HELP THEM!

JOSE, WHAT
ARE YOU DOING?
GET YOUR HANDS IN
THE AIR!



JOSE! GET YOUR
HANDS IN THE
AIR!



DON'T SHOOT, MISS
AIMEE! PLEASE! I ONLY
WANT TO... TO OFFER
YOU SOMETHING—

JOSE!
GRUDDAMMIT! DO
AS I SAY!





... CREDS...

... LOTS OF
CREDS...

THANKS,
JOSE.

WELL, I'VE GOT
TO SAY...

... YOU LOOK
TERRIBLE.

THIS FROM THE WORLD'S WRINKLIEST
CAPED CRUSADER. TELL ME, THORA,
WHAT'S YOUR SUPERPOWER?
INCONTINENCE?

AH, AIMEE, YOU'RE
ABOUT AS FUNNY AS **FAMINE**.
YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT? AND
HALF AS ATTRACTIVE TO
LOOK AT.

THAT'S IT! TIME YOU
TOOK A DIP IN THE
FOUNTAIN OF
EUTHANASIA!

LET'S SEE HOW WELL YOU
FLY WITH THOSE WINGS
SHOVED THREE FEET UP
YOUR—

HELLO, JUDGE NIXON. NICE TO MEET YOU.

WHO ARE YOU? AND TELL ME NOW WHY I SHOULDN'T HURT YOU.

AIMEE, MEET **RONSON MORSE** — A JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INFORMER. HE'S THE REASON I ASKED YOU TO COME HERE TODAY.

ALWAYS AN HONOUR TO MEET A BRAVE WALLY SQUAD OPERATIVE.

GRUD, HE SMELLS LIKE DIRTY FRANK'S USED HANDKERCHIEF PILE...

RONSON'S AN AMATEUR REPORTER. HE WRITES HIS OWN CONSPIRACY THEORY WEBSITE, **NEIGHBOURHOOD SASO WATCH**.

YOU EVER HEARD OF **HITCON**, JUDGE NIXON? IT'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN RESEARCHING FOR A DECADE NOW.

RUMOURS AROUND THAT EVERY YEAR THE PLANET'S TOP BUTTOMEN CONVEINE IN A HOTEL TO TALK SHOP, GET WASTED AND MAKE BITCHY COMMENTS ABOUT ONE ANOTHER.

EVERY TIME THE LOCATION IS SECRET. ONLY THE TRUE INNER CIRCLE, THE **HITMAN ELITE**, ARE PRIVY TO ITS WHEREABOUTS.

LEMME GUESS — YOU'VE FOUND OUT THAT THIS YEAR THE CONVENTION'S TAKING PLACE IN THE LOW LIFE.

AND HOW EXACTLY DID YOU COME BY THIS OH-SO-RARE- INFORMATION?

YES.

SOMEONE TOLD ME ON A MESSAGE-BOARD.

DELIGHTED FOR HIM. WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH US?

OF COURSE. THORA, I'VE GOT BETTER PLACES TO BE. **RESYK**, FOR EXAMPLE —

YOU'RE DOING THIS, AIMEE. I'VE SEEN RONSON'S RESEARCH. IT'S WORTH TAKING A CHANCE ON.

IF HE'S RIGHT, WE GET THE CHANCE TO TAKE DOWN SOME OF THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST KILLERS, AND THERE'S A RUMOUR THAT **BLACKBIRD** WILL BE APPEARING...

REST ASSURED, I AM FULLY PREPARED FOR OUR MISSION, JUDGE NIXON.

BLACKBIRD? YOU'VE GOT TO BE—

'OUR MISSION?'





WELCOME TO
HITCON!

YES, WARMEST
WELCOMES!



NOW, HAVE YOU
ATTENDED HITCON
BEFORE?

UH, NO. FIRST
TIME.

I SEE. WELL, YOU HAD THE INITIAL PASSWORD.
CAN I SEE IF YOU'RE ON THE OFFICIAL
HITCON LIST? NAMES?



AIMEE
NIXON.

RONSON MORSE.

OR BLOODBEAST
DEATHBRINGER. LOOK UP
BLOODBEAST DEATHBRINGER.
I MAY HAVE REGISTERED AS
BLOODBEAST DEATH-
BRINGER.

I FORGET WHICH.



CONGRATULATIONS,
IT SEEMS YOU ARE
ON THE OFFICIAL
LIST.

SO, WE ARE
THE SIBLINGS, AND
EVERY YEAR IT IS OUR
PRIVILEGE TO
ORGANISE...



... THE ULTIMATE
AND ONLY OFFICIAL
GET-TOGETHER...

... OF THE
GLOBAL HITMAN
COMMUNITY!





YOU LIKE HOMICIDE? I'LL SHOW YOU SOME HOMICIDE!

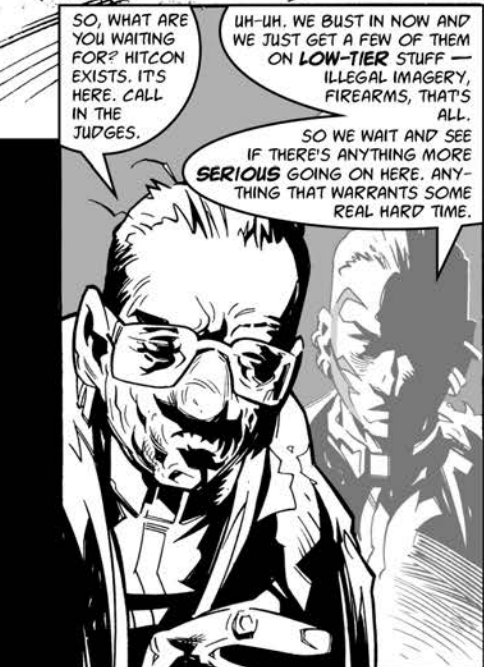
NOW, REMEMBER HITCON'S MOTTO — WE ARE PROFESSIONALS! ANY KILLING WILL SIMPLY BRING IN THE JUDGES. AND WE DON'T WANT THAT.



NIXON, THAT LIST...

YEAH, WE GET THAT AND WE'VE GOT THE DETAILS OF EVERY HITMAN IN THE PLACE. THEIR IDENTITIES, EVEN CONTACT DETAILS, MAYBE.

IT'S A GOLDMINE.



SO, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? HITCON EXISTS. IT'S HERE. CALL IN THE JUDGES.

UH-UH. WE BUST IN NOW AND WE JUST GET A FEW OF THEM ON LOW-TIER STUFF — ILLEGAL IMAGERY, FIREARMS, THAT'S ALL.

SO WE WAIT AND SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING MORE SERIOUS GOING ON HERE. ANYTHING THAT WARRANTS SOME REAL HARD TIME.



ALL THAT INFORMATION. JUST THINK OF THE STORIES I COULD WRITE.

I'M GOING TO GET THAT LIST.

DON'T BE SO STUPID, RONSON, YOU'LL—



DO NOT CALL ME STUPID! I AM NOT STUPID!

I FOUND THIS PLACE! I GOT US IN HERE! NOT YOU!

ME!



LOVERS' QUARREL?



WELL, WELL...

... IF IT ISN'T JUDGE
AIMEE NIXON.



WE'LL LEAVE YOU NOW TO ENJOY.
BUT MAKE SURE TO KEEP AN EYE
OUT FOR BLACKBIRD.

THAT'S THE
MYSTERIOUS BLACKBIRD,
LEGENDARY FOR TWENTY YEARS
NOW AND NEVER SEEN BEFORE,
MAKING HIS FIRST-EVER CON
APPEARANCE.

WE'RE VERY EXCITED.
WE DON'T KNOW WHEN HE'LL
ARRIVE EXACTLY, BUT WE'RE
ASSURED HE'S COMING.
SO—



OH...

THAT LOSER
HERE YET?

UH... NOT
YET, HOMICIDE,
NO.

FIGURES.
BLACKBIRD'S TOO SCARED
TO SHOW HIS FACE. KNOWS HE
AIN'T **TOP DOG** NO MORE.
KNOWS HOMICIDE'S THE
MAN THESE DAYS.



THE CHANCE TO FINALLY
OFF THE TIRED OLD BIRD IS
THE ONLY REASON I'M AT
THIS BITCH-FEST.



WELL,
HE SEEMED
NICE.

AIMEE,
SHALL
WE—

AIMEE?

SUDDENLY I'M **SWEATING** LIKE A
FIRST-TIME PERP BREAKING HIS
CHERRY. MY HEART'S GOING
NUCLEAR, MY HEAD'S ALL
PERCUSSION. I CAN'T BREATHE...



I'M AIMEE NIXON. I'M WALLY
SQUAD. UNDERCOVER IS MY
LIFE. I DO THIS ALL THE TIME...



... AND LOOKEE
HERE. IT SEEMS WE HAVE
SOME WILLING **VOLUNTEERS**
AFTER ALL.

SO TELL ME — WHICH ONE
OF YOU TWO IS GOING TO SHOW
OUR EAGER AUDIENCE THE BEST WAY
TO **KILL** THIS LITTLE CREEP?





OK, SO OUR WANDERING PRO HERE IS GOING TO DEMONSTRATE THE QUICKEST, **DEADLIEST** THROAT CUT.

THIS IS FOR WHEN YOU NEED TO GET IN AND OUT REAL QUICK, RIGHT, FRIEND?

UH, YES... DEFINITELY.



SLAUGHTER, THEN SPRINT. THAT'S ALWAYS MY MOTTO WHEN I ERADICATE MY... QUARRY.

GOOD GRUD.



PLEASE... I DON'T WANT TO DIE... PLEASE...

UH... I'M SUDDENLY NOT FEELING THAT WELL. MAYBE I SHOULD JUST GO SIT DOWN...

JUST CUT THE LITTLE WEASEL. I MEAN, IT'S NOT DIFFICULT FOR A PRO, IS IT?



NO... NO, IT ISN'T.



NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL...



... FOR A PRO.



DAMN IT, RONSON,
THAT AIN'T HIS **CAROTID**
ARTERY! YOU'RE A GOOD
INCH AWAY, AS USUAL!

BESIDES, YOU
PROMISED ME, BABY,
REMEMBER—



—THE NEXT TIME
WE KILL, WE KILL
TOGETHER. AIN'T
THAT RIGHT?

MY LUSCIOUS
LIFE-TAKER. MY
SILKY SEX
ASSASSIN.

PRESS
MY BUTTON,
BUTTONMAN.

AHEM... YOU
TWO WANT TO GET
A ROOM?



THE DUDE CUT ME!
I ONLY VOLUNTEERED
BECAUSE ALL
DEMONSTRATIONS ARE
MEANT TO BE **NON-**
CONTACT!

WE CAN'T
LEGISLATE FOR
PROS GETTING WASTED
AT HITCON, I'M AFRAID.



'YEAH, BUT I TELL YOU, IF
I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER,
I'D SAY THAT GUY WAS
TRYING TO KILL ME!

UH... I'M YOUR
SEX ASSASSIN?

DON'T GO THERE,
RONSON. I SAVED
YOU, THAT'S ALL.

BUT JUDGE
NIXON—



**SHUT UP, YOU
UGLY DROKING
MIDGET!**

DON'T YOU GET IT? YOU CAN'T
CALL ME THAT IN HERE! YOU CAN'T
LOOK AS SCARED AS YOU DID IN
THAT ROOM! YOU'LL GET US
BOTH KILLED!



I AM NOT
SCARED.



JEEZ, RONSON,
YOU DON'T LIKE
BEING TOLD YOU'RE
SCARED, YOU DON'T LIKE
BEING TOLD YOU'RE
STUPID... THIS IS LIKE
BABYSITTING A
KID.

AND I'M
UNDERCOVER IN A
HOTEL FULL OF THE
WORLD'S BEST
KILLERS.



CALM DOWN.

I CAN'T
DO THIS. I'M
SORRY,
RONSON.

CALM DOWN,
AIMEE...



YOU'RE ON
YOUR OWN.
GO HOME
BEFORE YOU END
UP DEAD.



WHAT? AIMEE,
YOU CAN'T...

I GOT YOU
IN HERE!

... I'LL SHOW
YOU...

I'M NOT...



I'M NOT SCARED.

DAMMIT, WHAT'S
WRONG WITH
ME? I CAN'T BE
SCARED.

I CAN'T!

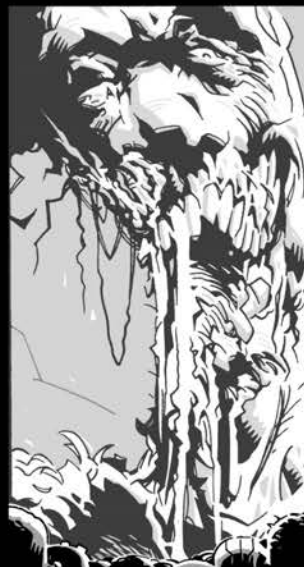
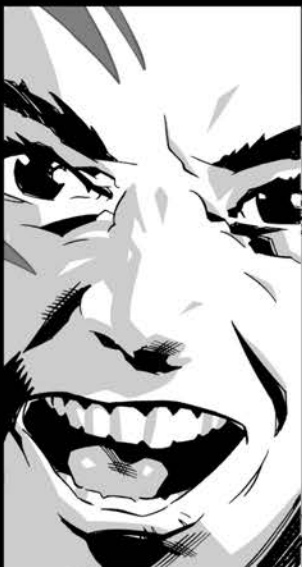


JUST NEED A SECOND. A
SECOND TO REMEMBER...

I'M AIMEE NIXON...



JUDGE AIMEE NIXON.





CRACKER?



KRAK!



AGAIN WITH THE JAW...



WHAT'S SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM?

THERE'S A GUY, DRUNK, HANGING OVER THE BALCONY. LOOKS LIKE HE'S PASSED OUT.

DUDE'S IN DANGER OF—

—FALLING!



HOMICIDE! SOMEONE'S ACTUALLY OFFED HOMICIDE!

WELL, LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE...

... IT LOOKS LIKE BLACKBIRD MADE IT AFTER ALL!

THE BEST?



SAW YOU
HEAD INTO THE
LIFT, MAKE FOR
THE ROOF.

DAMN
IT. WHAT
EXACTLY
DO YOU
WANT?

AIN'T IT OBVIOUS?
WE WANT YOU,
BABY DOLL.

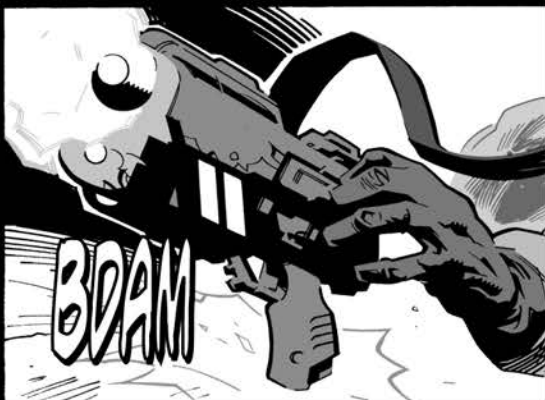
I MEAN, THERE'S
A SERIOUS LACK OF
QUALITY ASS IN THIS
CHICKENCOOP,
Y'KNOW?





LOOK AT YOU.
ALL TURNED ON. YOU GOT
THE **BLOODLUST**, GIRL,
I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.

BUT THIS
AIN'T **PLAYTIME**
NO MORE.





UNDERCOVER JUDGE AIMEE NIXON HAS INFILTRATED HITCON, THE WORLD'S BIGGEST HITMAN CONVENTION. NOW SHE FINDS HERSELF AT THE MERCY OF ONE OF THE ATTENDEES...

GOT ANY LAST REQUESTS, SKANK?

WE COULD'VE HAD US SOME FUN, YOU AND ME. BUT I GUESS THAT AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN NOW.

SEE, THE BLOOD'S GONNA FLOW, OH YEAH! THE BLOOD'S GONNA FLOW LONG AND—

THIS GUY'S REALLY ANNOYING ME NOW.

SPAK

YOU... YOU'RE HELPING ME?
DID I MISS A MEETING?

LAST TIME WE MET, CRACKER, YOU KILLED A WALLY SQUAD JUDGE. YOU FRAMED ME FOR MURDER.*

THAT WAS JUST A PAYING JOB. NOTHING PERSONAL.

AND I BROKE YOUR FACE.

YEAH, YOU DID. MY JAW CLICKS EVERY TIME I MOVE IT THESE DAYS. AND EVERY TIME THAT HAPPENS, GUESS WHAT I DO...

*THARGNOTE: SEE PROGS 1387-1396.

... I THINK OF YOU.



THAT'S HEARTWARMING, CRACKER. YOU'RE SWEET. I'LL ASK THEM TO PUT AN EXTRA PILLOW IN YOUR ISO-UBE WHEN JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TAKES THIS PLACE DOWN.

OH YEAH, YOU'RE A JUDGE, I FORGOT.

I GUESS YOU DID TOO WHEN YOU MURDERED FARNSWORTH.



I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU. I'VE SEEN YOU FREAKING OUT IN THE CON. AND I THINK I KNOW WHY.

I STUDIED YOU SO LONG FOR THE FARNSWORTH JOB, I KNOW YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNOW YOURSELF.



YOU REALISED SOMETHING THE MOMENT YOU WALKED IN HERE. SOMETHING YOU'VE ALWAYS KNOWN DEEP DOWN.

YOU'RE NOT A JUDGE. NOT REALLY.

YOU BELONG HERE, WITH THE KILLERS.



YOU BELONG WITH ME.



UH... WELL, I NEVER SAW THAT COMING...

MAYBE WE SHOULD GET BACK TO THE CONVENTION...

YEAH. I MUST'VE BEEN UP HERE TEN MINUTES, TOPS.

'NOT THAT MUCH CAN HAVE HAPPENED IN THAT TIME, SURELY?'

562

64

GROUND FLOOR

DING!

OY VEY.

WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT A HITMAN CONVENTION WOULD BE SO VIOLENT?

CONTROL, THIS IS NIXON! WE HAVE A GO! REPEAT, WE HAVE A GO! MOVE IN!

COPY THAT, NIXON.

AIMEE...











GET AWAY FROM HER!

HOW CHIVALROUS. YOU'VE FOUND A BOYFRIEND THEN, NIXON?

A TRUE LOVE TO WHISK YOU AWAY FROM THE UNFEELING, OH-SO-LONELY LIFE OF A JUDGE.

SOMEONE TO SAVE YOU.



HOW SWEET.

GRUD, RONSON... YOU'RE BLACKBIRD? THE HITMAN COMMUNITY'S JUST GONE WAY DOWN IN MY ESTIMATIONS.

WHY SHOW YOUR FACE NOW, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS? WHY PLAY GAMES AND COME TO US?



TOO MUCH **COMPETITION** OUT THERE THESE DAYS. TOO MANY AMATEURS CUTTING DOWN MY PROFITS.

I CAN'T KILL THEM ALL. I'M AN ASSASSIN, NOT AN ARMY. SO I FIGURED, THIS WAY, I'D GET THEM TO KILL EACH OTHER AND JUSTICE DEPARTMENT COULD MOP UP THE REST.



AND IF I COULD GET HOLD OF THE **CONVENTION LIST** I'D HAVE THE GOLDEN TICKET. THE WHEREABOUTS OF JUST ABOUT **EVERY** HITMAN ON THE PLANET.

I COULD PICK THEM OFF ANY TIME I PLEASED.

CREEP INTO THEIR HOMES. SLIT THEIR THROATS WHILE THEY SLEEP.

MAKE THEM **SCARED** OF ME AGAIN.





PLEASE? SCARED OF YOU? YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER SHORT GUY WITH A NAPOLEONIC COMPLEX.

TRYING TO MAKE A POINT TO THE WORLD JUST BECAUSE YOU COULD NEVER REACH THE CANDY ON YOUR MOMMA'S TOP SHELF.

YOU'RE SCARED. I'VE SEEN IT.



DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE I'VE **KILLED** OVER THE YEARS, NIXON?

I AM **NOT** SCARED! I AM THE THING THAT PEOPLE ARE SCARED OF!



NO, YOU'RE SCARED.

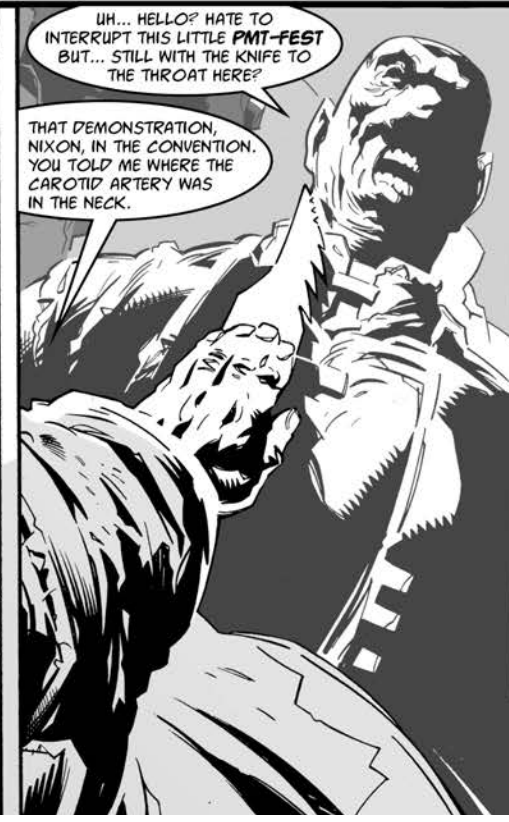
THE REASON YOU RISKED COMING HERE AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS OF HIDING? THE REASON YOU INVOLVED JUSTICE DEPARTMENT? PLAYED THIS LITTLE GAME?

IT'S BECAUSE THE OTHERS WERE BECOMING A **THREAT** TO YOU.



THE THING YOU WERE SCARED OF?

DEEP DOWN, YOU REALISED THAT YOU'RE **NOT** THE BEST ANYMORE.



UH... HELLO? HATE TO INTERRUPT THIS LITTLE **PMT-FEST** BUT... STILL WITH THE KNIFE TO THE THROAT HERE?

THAT DEMONSTRATION, NIXON, IN THE CONVENTION. YOU TOLD ME WHERE THE CAROTID ARTERY WAS IN THE NECK.



THANK YOU.

KEEP PRESSURE ON HIS NECK AND
MAYBE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO KEEP HIM
ALIVE UNTIL THE MEDS GET HERE.

BUT THEN YOU WON'T
BE ABLE TO FOLLOW ME,
WILL YOU? YOU'D BE LETTING ME
GO, AND THAT'S NOT WHAT A
JUDGE DOES.

SO I GUESS IT'S TIME FOR
YOU TO DECIDE WHAT'S
MORE IMPORTANT
TO YOU.

THE MAN WHO
CAME HERE TO SAVE
YOU... OR BEING A
JUDGE?

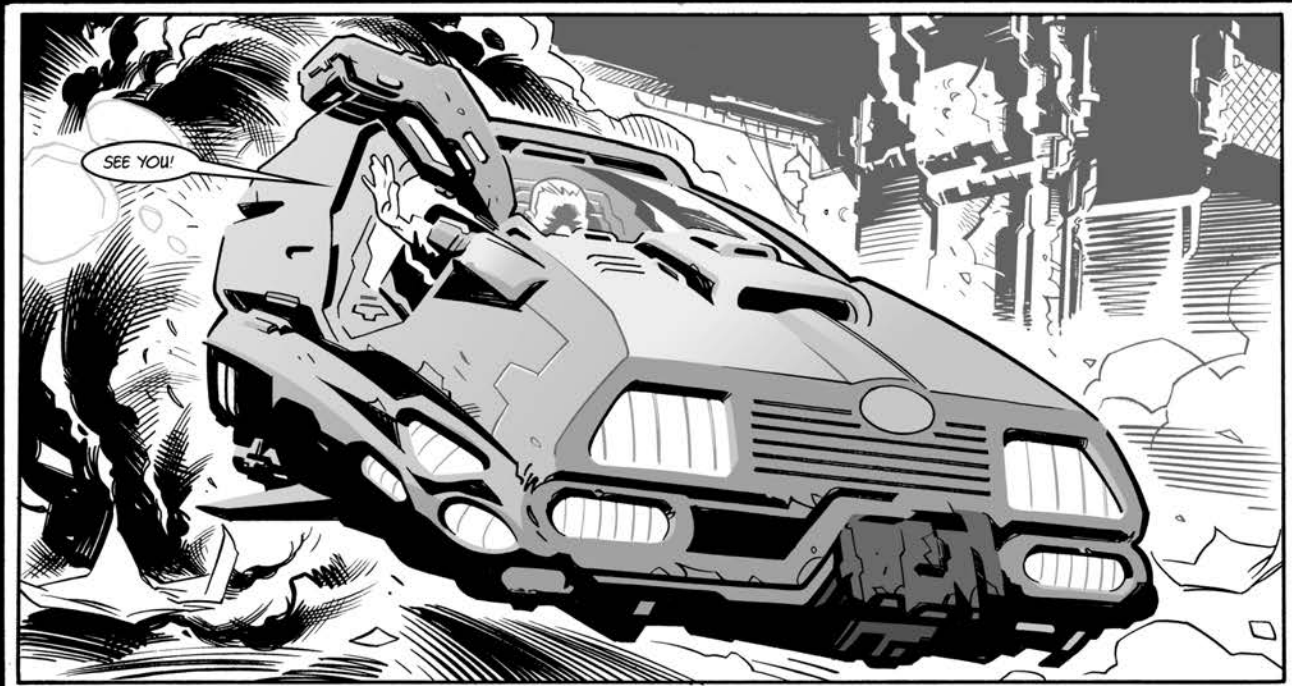
YOU KNOW, AIMEE, HE'S **RIGHT**.
PEOPLE **AREN'T** ALWAYS WHAT
THEY SEEM TO BE.

I MEAN, THE WAY YOU
RILED ME UP THERE. I KNOW
YOU WERE PLAYING FOR
TIME, BUT...

... IT'S ALMOST
LIKE YOU **WANTED** ME
TO KILL HIM.



SEE YOU!







CONTROL, THIS IS NIXON. TRAVELLING SOUTH ON LOU REED SKEDWAY IN PURSUIT OF BLACKBIRD'S STOLEN HOVER CAR, REGISTRATION PRLJMI991.

COPY THAT, NIXON. ROADBLOCKS ARE BEING SET UP AT ALL MAJOR PORTS.

NAH, HE'LL DISAPPEAR IN THE CITY SOON AS HE CLEARS THE LOW LIFE. HIDE OUT FOR A WHILE.

GOT TO GET HIM ON LOU REED OR WE'LL LOSE HIM FOR GOOD.

'LUCKY I KNOW A FEW SHORT CUTS...'

HEH. NICE JOB. OH YES, THE BLACKBIRD'S SINGING TONIGHT!

SINGING IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT!

TAKE THESE BROKEN WINGS AND LEARN TO...

... FLY.

RAMMING SPEED.



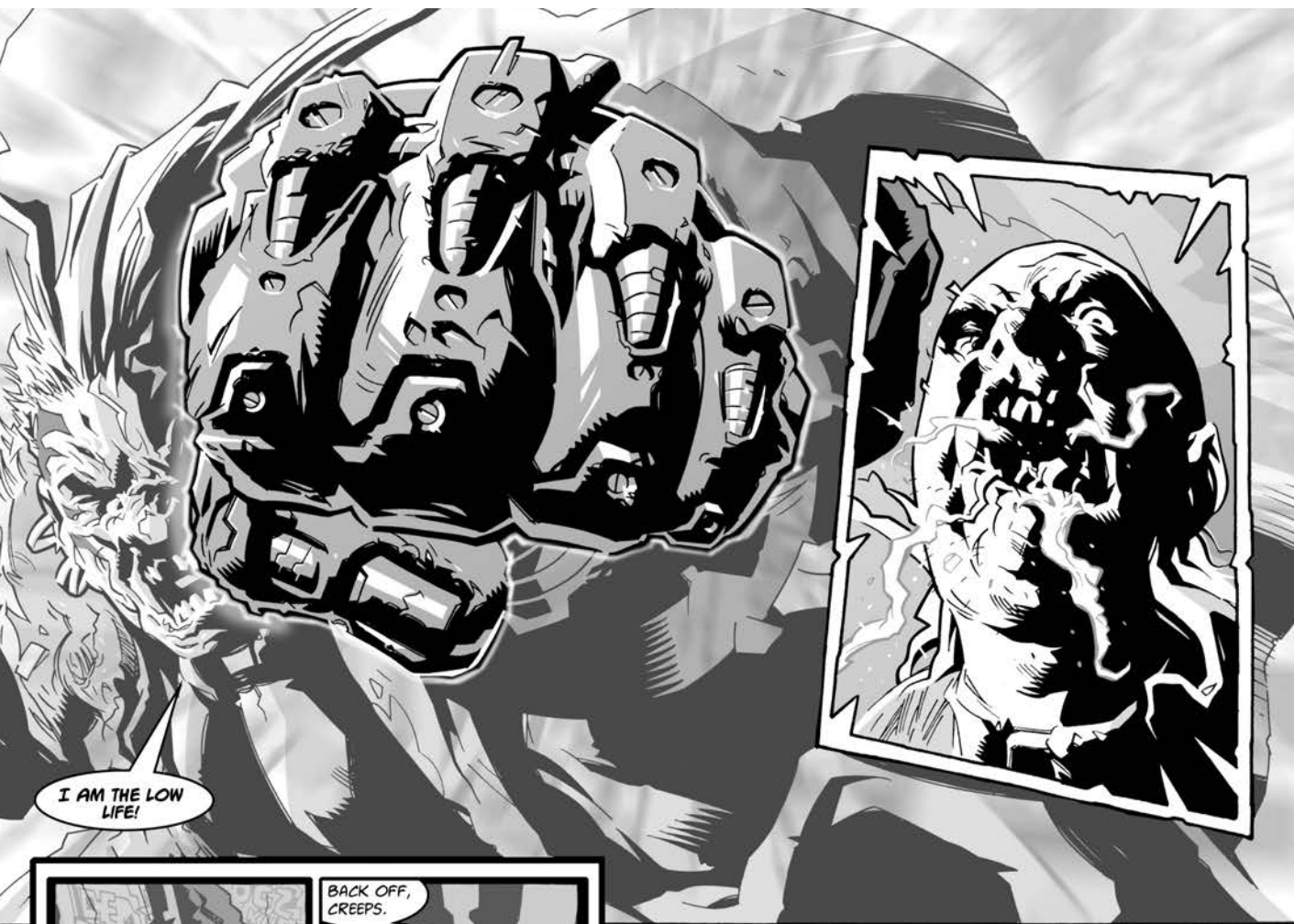


KOFF! KOFF!

I'LL... I'LL
K-KILL YOU FOR
THIS, NIXON!

YEAH, 'COS
THAT'S WHAT YOU
ARE, RONSON.







LOW LIFE: BABY TALK

Script: Rob Williams

Art: Simon Coleby

Letters: Annie Parkhouse

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1521-1524







DIRTY FRANK'S SON IS, FRANKLY, A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT. HE DOES VERY LITTLE EXCEPT UNDERTAKE BASIC LIQUID BODILY FUNCTIONS.

UH, MR. FRANK, HE'S ONLY, WHAT? FOUR WEEKS OLD?

THIS IS BESIDE THE POINT. STANDARDS MUST BE MAINTAINED.



I THINK HE NEEDS HIS DIAPER CHANGED. HE SMELLS A BIT POEY.

DIRTY FRANK'S PERSONAL HYGIENE IS NOT THE ISSUE HERE.

UH...NO... I MEANT...

YOUR ASSISTANT IS VERY RUDE, DOCTOR. CAN YOU HELP DIRTY FRANK OR NOT?



OF COURSE WE CAN. GREY MATTERS GUARANTEES A MASSIVE INCREASE IN YOUR BABY'S IQ.

WITH OUR PATENTED NON-HARMFUL GREY MATTERS TECHNOLOGY YOU'LL HAVE A MINI-MOZART ON YOUR HANDS IN A MATTER OF WEEKS.



NON-HARMFUL?

OR COURSE. AND WE HAVE A 100% SUCCESS RATE. YOU'LL SEE QUOTES FROM OUR SATISFIED CUSTOMERS IN THE FOYER.



HOW EXACTLY DOES IT WORK?

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T REVEAL THAT. TRADE SECRETS. TRUST US, THOUGH, YOUR BABY IS IN NO DANGER FROM THE TREATMENT.

AGOO?



A MINI-MOZART, YOU SAY?

WITHIN WEEKS.

VERY WELL. BEGIN. HE HAS FRUSTRATED ME FOR FAR TOO LONG.

EXCELLENT. NOW, WE APPRECIATE THAT SOME PARENTS DON'T LIKE TO LEAVE THEIR NEW CHILDREN OVERNIGHT...



...WE UNDERSTAND HOW PRECIOUS THEY ARE TO YOU.

SO YOU COULD BRING HIM BACK IN THE MORNING, IF YOU'D PREFER?



1.23am



1.23am



C'MERE,
YOU!

SHHH!
YOU'LL WAKE THE
BABIES!

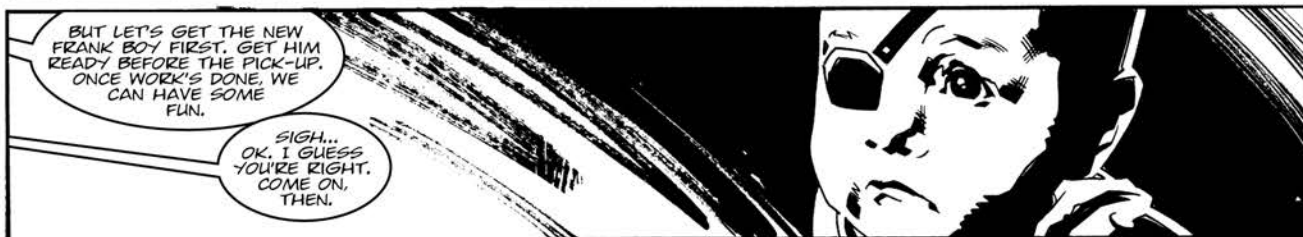
MMMM...
BABIES, LET'S
MAKE
SOME.



DE
SPRINGSTEIN!

COME ON,
CLAUDIA, WE'RE
ONLY YOUNG ONCE,
RIGHT?

HEE HEE!
YOU'RE
NAUGHTY!



BUT LET'S GET THE NEW
FRANK BOY FIRST. GET HIM
READY BEFORE THE PICK-UP.
ONCE WORK'S DONE, WE
CAN HAVE SOME
FUN.

SIGH...
OK, I GUESS
YOU'RE RIGHT.
COME ON,
THEN.

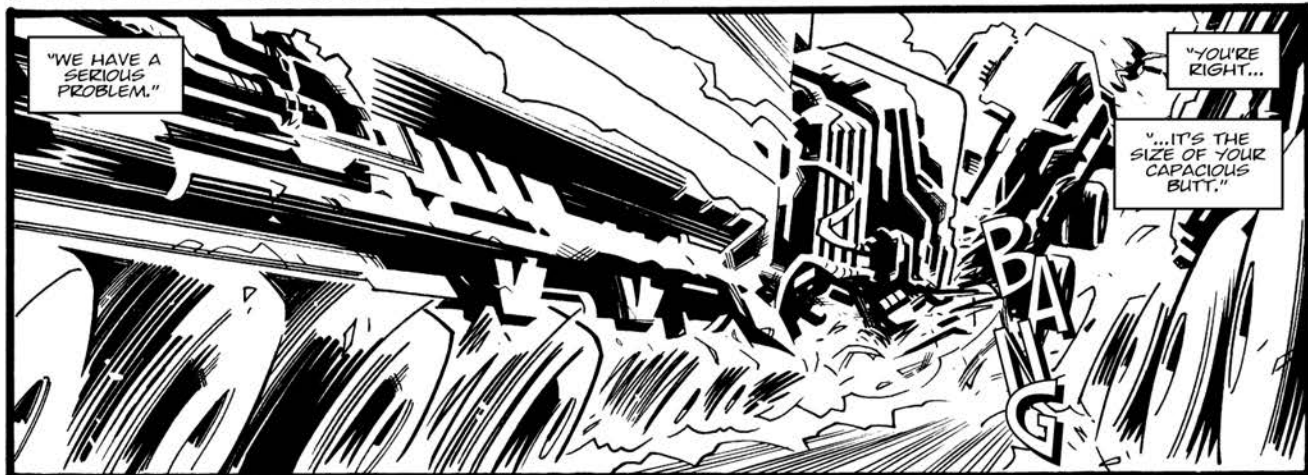


DON'T WANT
TO ANNOY THE
BIG GUY, DO
WE?

HUH?



NANCY PELOSI
SKEDWAY, SECOND
BUSIEST STRETCH
OF TRAFFIC IN THE
LOW LIFE.



"WE HAVE A
SERIOUS
PROBLEM."

"YOU'RE
RIGHT..."

"...IT'S THE
SIZE OF YOUR
CAPACIOUS
BUTT."

BAT
G



YOU MAY HAVE A POINT, MORTAL. DIRTY FRANK APPEARS TO BE WEDGED GOOD AND PROPER.

ALL THOSE CAKES AIN'T ON THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED DIET LIST, FRANKY-BOY.

IT'S NOT THE CAKES!



...DIRTY FRANK HAS TROUBLE WITH HIS GLANDS.

I SEEN THE WAY YOU EAT THOSE CAKES, FRANKY. IF THAT'S GLANDS, THEN YOU GOT A REGULAR GLANDULAR FEVER.



HOW DROLL, ANYWAY. DIRTY FRANK IS STUCK.

ACTUALLY, YOU'RE IN THE PERFECT POSITION.

WE'RE GONNA TRY OUT THE 'PATENTED NON-HARMFUL GREY MATTERS TECHNOLOGY'.



MORTAL, ARE YOU SURE THIS IS A GOOD IDEA?

WHAT IF IT DOES SOMETHING STRANGE TO DIRTY FRANK'S BRAIN?



I THINK WE BOTH KNOW THAT WERE A FEW YEARS TOO LATE FOR THAT, FRANKY.

OK THEN, CONSIDER THE FACT THAT DIRTY FRANK COULD STILL MAKE CHIEF JUDGE ONE DAY -



IF THAT'S TRUE, FRANKY-BOY...

...THEN JOE DREDD HIMSELF CAN COME DOWN HERE AND PLANT A MEDAL RIGHT ON MY DIAPER RASH-COVERED BUTT. I'M DOING THE CITY A FAVOUR.

Once Upon A Time ...

DIRTY FRANK'S CASE
NOTES REGARDING
WALLY SQUAD
JUDGE ERIC COIL,
CODENAMED
'MORTAL':

Graduated with
honours from the
Academy. Great
things were
predicted.

Was soon handpicked for a
top-secret elite mission to
venture into the Cursed Earth
to recover...something or
other. You know how these
Cursed Earth missions are.

Terrible bloodshed
occurred, of course.
Soon a badly wounded,
near-dead Coil found
himself the only
survivor of his team.

The way Dirty Frank
heard it, he spent
some months as a
patient in the house
of a mystic mutant
witch-woman...

...which is a
great title for
an album.

Anyway, the ancient
practitioner of
arcane arts offered
him something:

Three magic
beans.

They weren't
magic, of course,
just irradiated.
The woman was
demented.

She then tried to eat
Coil, who had by this
point been subjected
to a massive amount
of radiation over a
long period of time.

It turns out, unbeknownst
to him, he had been
recuperating in the
remains of a wartime
nuclear missile silo.

The radiation had an incredible effect upon him. It
permanently mutated Mortal back to infant form.

WHAT
ARE YOU TWO
YO-YOS GAWPIN' AT?
DON'T YOU RECOGNISE
A WOUNDED JUDGE
WHEN YOU SEE
ONE?

The moral of
this story?

Never accept heroic
missions to seek
out lost things in
the Cursed Earth.





OW.



OK, FIRST THINGS FIRST. WE SCOUR THE PLACE, FIND THE FRANK KID, OR ELSE THE BIG MAN'S GOING TO FREAK.

LITTLE BRAT HAS TO BE AROUND HERE SOMEWH -

HE'S HERE.



HOW THE HELL DID HE GET IN HERE?

MUST HAVE CRAWLED, I GUESS.



WHATEVER, GET HIM SECURED AND LOCK THE DOOR THIS TIME.

THEY'RE REACHING THE FINAL STAGES. WE NEED ALL THE BABIES WE CAN GET.



IT'S TIME FOR ALL LOOSE ENDS TO BE TAKEN CARE OF...

HMM, PERHAPS DIRTY FRANK HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT CAVALIER WITH THE CONFECTIONARIES OF LATE.



YOU SHOULD'VE KEPT YOUR NOSE OUT OF THAT WHICH IS NOT CONCERNING YOU, HAIRY MAN.

GOOD GRUD!



YES, HAIRY ONE-EYE, YOU RECOGNISE YOUR DOOM, DO YOU NOT? IT STANDS BEFORE YOU NOW.

DEATH STALKS YOU, HAIRY ONE-EYE.

NUBILE, ROSY-CHEEKED, BONNY-FACED DEATH...

...COURTESY OF THE BABY NINTAS!

DEATH!
DEATH TO THE
PUNGENT HAIRY
ONE-EYE!

DIRTY
FRANK THOUGHT
NINTAS WERE SUPPOSED
TO BE SILENT, AND LESS
INSULTING.

DIRTY FRANK'S CASE
NOTES UPDATE:

Dirty Frank is investigating a
scam regarding the enhanced
IQs of babies. Up to this point,
there was an outside chance
that there was nothing to it.

Up to this
point.

YOU
SHOULD HAVE
KEPT YOUR NOSE
OUT, SMELL-
MAN!

YEAH,
YOU REAL
STINK,
STINKY!

Someone wants
Dirty Frank silenced.

It is Dirty Frank's worst
nightmare come to life. As he always
suspected - baby assassins!

How can Dirty Frank fight them?
They are too frail, too cute,
untouched by sin. Their cherubic,
innocent loveliness overwhelms.

They are like angels...albeit
with nunchuks. It is useless
to resist. Dirty Frank could
never physically hurt a baby.

OOOF!

BLOOD?
DIRTY FRANK'S
BLOOD?

YOU WOULD
SPILL DIRTY FRANK'S
PRECIOUS LIFE
ESSENCE?

RIGHT,
YOU LITTLE
DROKKERS!



THERE YOU GO, BACK IN YOUR COT, SAFE AND SOUND.

MY, AREN'T YOU THE LITTLE SMILEY ONE?

YUM.



THERE'S LITTLE TO SMILE ABOUT, CLAUDIA. YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT. YOU'VE LIVED LONG ENOUGH.

NOWLAN! GRUD, YOU SCARED ME!

THIS THE ONLY ONE LEFT? THE FRANK KID?



NOWLAN? WHAT'S GOING ON?

SOMEONE'S ONTO US. PROBABLY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT. A GUY'S BEEN SNOOPING AROUND OUT BACK. WE'RE TAKING CARE OF HIM NOW.

MAYBE SOMEONE SQUEALED. MAYBE THE HITLER IDIOT DID FOR US. POINT IS, IT'S OVER. SO THE BIG GUY HAS ORDERED WE CUT AND RUN. SHUT THINGS DOWN.



A SHAME, IT WAS A GOOD LITTLE SCAM WHILE IT LASTED. PARENTS GOT WHAT THEY WANTED. SO DID WE.

WE DON'T KNOW IT'S JUSTICE DEPARTMENT. THIS PLACE WORKS, NOWLAN. THERE'S NO NEED TO CLOSE SHOP.

NAH, YOU'RE WRONG, SPRINGSTEIN. I KNOW YOU AND CLAUDIA ARE GETTING SOME YOUNG LOVE HERE, BUT YOU KNOW THE RULES...



...NO LOOSE ENDS.



HERE YOU GO, LITTLE FELLA. COME TO YER KIND UNCLE NOWLAN...





FER GRUD'S
SAKE, FRANK. WHERE
ARE YOU? I'M GETTING
FRICKIN' KIDNAPPED
HERE.

FOLLOW
MY DAMN
TRACKING
DEVICE.



OOP, THE OLD
CREEP'S COMING. BACK
TO DROOL MOOD
WE GO...



WE'RE HERE, LITTLE FELLA, NOW.
YOUR FEVER'S GONE AND YOU'RE A
HEALTHY, STRONG, SPECIAL LITTLE
BOY, AREN'T YOU? YES,
YOU ARE.

AGOO?

YOU WANNA
KNOW WHY THAT'S
IMPORTANT?



'COS YOU'RE
GOING TO BE THE
LAST OF OUR LITTLE
PROJECTS.



TIME
TO SHUT THE
OPERATION DOWN.
HEAD OUT INTO
THE CITY. BLEND
IN.

THAT WAS
ALWAYS THE PLAN, BUT
HITLER AND THE BOSCH BOYS
HAD TO GO DO THEIR THING.
IDIOTS COULDN'T HELP
THEMSELVES, RAISED
ATTENTION.



STILL, ONE MORE
TIME AND IT'LL ALL
BE OVER.

ONE MORE
YOUNG BODY OF
POTENTIAL TO
FILL.

EH?

NOW,
LET'S PUT YOU
DOWN ON THE
TABLE, SHALL
WE?

THESE VERY
INTELLIGENT PEOPLE ARE
GOING TO MAKE YOU FEEL
COMFORTABLE. YOU CAN HAVE A
NICE SLEEP, AND WHEN YOU WAKE
UP...EVERYTHING WILL BE
DIFFERENT.

FRANK, IF BY ANY WILD
CHANCE YOU ACTUALLY
DO HAVE THE POWER
OF TELEPATHY, THEN
HEAR MY FRICKIN' CALL
RIGHT NOW!

THIS OLD CREEP'S
TALKING ABOUT
FILLING MY
YOUNG BODY OF
POTENTIAL!



FRANK?

HE IS
FINISHED.

NO MORE OF
THE SNOOPING DOG
FOR HIM. SEE HOW HIS
BLOOD SEEPS FORTH. YES,
BRETHREN, ADMIRE ITS
RUBY...

...WHITENESS?

MILK?

WHY
DOES THE
HAIRY ONE
BLEED...
MILK?

IT'S
SMELL!
IT'S LOOK!
SO ENTICING!
I MUST...I
MUST...

NO!
LOOK AWAY,
BROTHERS!
DO NOT ALLOW
YOURSELVES
TO BE
BEGUILED!

GAAAAH!
THE STOMACH
CRAMPS!

SO HUNGRY
SUDDENLY!

THE
COLD TURKEY!
FOR THE MILKY!
THE COLD
MILKY!

YES,
TINY ADVERSARIES,
YOU CANNOT IGNORE
THE CLARION CALL OF
THE CALCIUM-FILLED LIQUID.
IT SINGS TO YOUR NIBBLE
STOMACHS. IT GIVES LIFE,
JUST AS IT HAS SAVED
DIRTY FRANK'S
LIFE.

NOW,
WITNESS THE
POWER OF THIS
FULLY ARMED AND
OPERATIONAL
FEEDING
STATION!

DIRTY
FRANK STANDS
TRIUMPHANT, AND HE
MUST ANSWER THE
CALL OF HIS
COMRADE!

DO NOT
FEAR, MORTAL!
DIRTY FRANK IS
COMING!

DIRTY FRANK'S
CASE NOTES:

Someone has set fire to the Grey
Matters surgery, destroyed all
evidence. They know we're on to
them. soon they will disappear.

My comrade, Mortal, is
in danger. I must save
him. And time, much
like him, is short.

HEY!

WALLY
SQUAD! DIRTY
FRANK NEEDS
YOUR BIKE!

YES, YES!
DIRTY FRANK FEELS
THE NEED FOR SPEED! HE
IS THE AVENGING ANGEL,
THE DASHING
HERO!

FEAR NOT,
MORTAL! DIRTY FRANK
WILL BE WITH YOU IMMINENTLY!
YOUR SAFETY IS ASSURED! DIRTY
FRANK JUST HAS TO FOLLOW
YOUR TRACKING DEVI —



DIRTY FRANK KNEW HE
FORGOT SOMETHING.
MUST HAVE DROPPED IT
IN THE ALLEYWAY DURING
THE BATTLE WITH THE
BABY NINJAS.

HOLD
ON, MORTAL.
JUST A QUICK
DETOUR...

"...AND MAYBE A BRIEF
STOP IN A TOY SHOP
ON THE WAY."







WILL YOU JUST PRESS THE DROKKING BUTTON?

OK, BE WARNED, THIS MAY STING...



FRANK? IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAVE ME, NOW WOULD BE A **REALLY** GOOD TIME.



FRANK?



DROKK IT, YOU WANT SOMETHING DOING...

STOP! RELEASE ME IMMEDIATELY!

HUH?



HE'S ALREADY HAD THE PROCEDURE?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

YES, MY NAME IS... **BENNY MACABRE**. I'M AN AGENT OF THE BIG GUY AND HE SENT ME HERE TO SECRETLY REPORT ON YOUR OPERATION.



AND THE BIG GUY IS VERY PLEASED WITH WHAT YOU'VE ALL BEEN DOING HERE, I GOTTA TELL YA.

YOU'VE MET HIM?

I HAVE, LOVELY FELLA, LOTS OF FUN, VERY RUTHLESS, THOUGH.



NICE TRY, KID, BUT IF THERE'S ONE THING AN OLD CAREER CRIMINAL CAN SMELL...

...IT'S A JUDGE.



AH-HAH!
TREMBLE, EVILDOERS!
YOUR FATE IS SEALED!
DIRTY FRANK IS HERE
AND HE IS VERY WELL
ARMED...

...SO HE'S
FAIRLY CONFIDENT
HE CAN TAKE ON
A ROOM FULL OF
BABIES.



WHAT'S THAT?

SOME
HAIRY BUM'S
JUST BROKEN INTO
THE PEN HOLDING
THE BABIES DOWN
BELOW -



AGOO?

GOOD GRUD!
ZOMBIES!



BACK, VILE
UNDEAD! YOUR
DISEASE-RIDDEN TEETH
SHALL NOT PIERCE THE
FLESH OF DIRTY
FRANK!

YOU
WILL NOT
TURN
ME!



NOW
WHAT'S HE
DOING?

UH, HE'S
KICKING THE CRAP
OUT OF OUR OLD
BODIES, FOR SOME
REASON...

POOR
KIDS...



YEAH,
RIGHT.

BABY
BACKPACK
ATTACK!

GAH!
GET HIM OFF
ME!

FRANK!
I'M UP
HERE!



MORTAL!

SHUT YOUR EYES, MORTAL, AND DON'T LOOK AT IT, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.



IT'S TIME FOR SOME SHOCK AND AWE, DIRTY FRANK STYLE...

...USING MILK, AND VERY POWERFUL, RECENTLY PURCHASED WATER CANNONS.



IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

IT MAKES ME WANT TO CRY...

SIR! IT MAKES ME WANT TO WRITE A HAIKU!

With the zombies physically beaten and the babies hypnotised by the milk, the battle was over.

Mortal quickly despatched the aged Nowlan. After that it was...child's play.



Mind you, things did turn a little chaotic when the milk ran out.

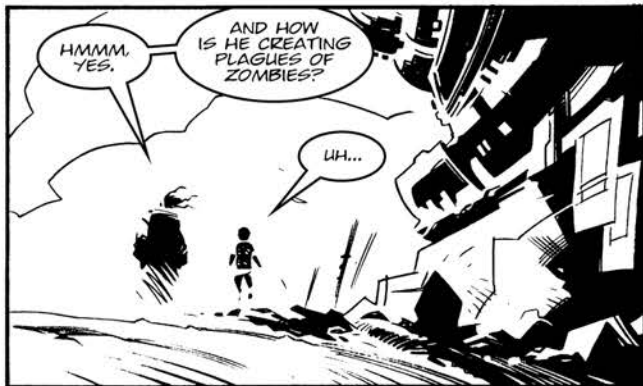
After escape attempts were curtailed, all that was left to do was get the Tek-boys to reverse the process and return the babies to their parents.



ANOTHER CASE CLOSED, MORTAL.

YEAH, APART FROM ONE THING: WHO THE DROKK IS THE BIG GUY?

A team of Psi-Judges would remove their harrowing memories. Dirty Frank was told. The mind swap, the terrible beating by a confused Judge [apparently]...



HMMM. YES.

AND HOW IS HE CREATING PLAGUES OF ZOMBIES?

UH...



2000 AD Prog 1390: Cover by **Henry Flint**





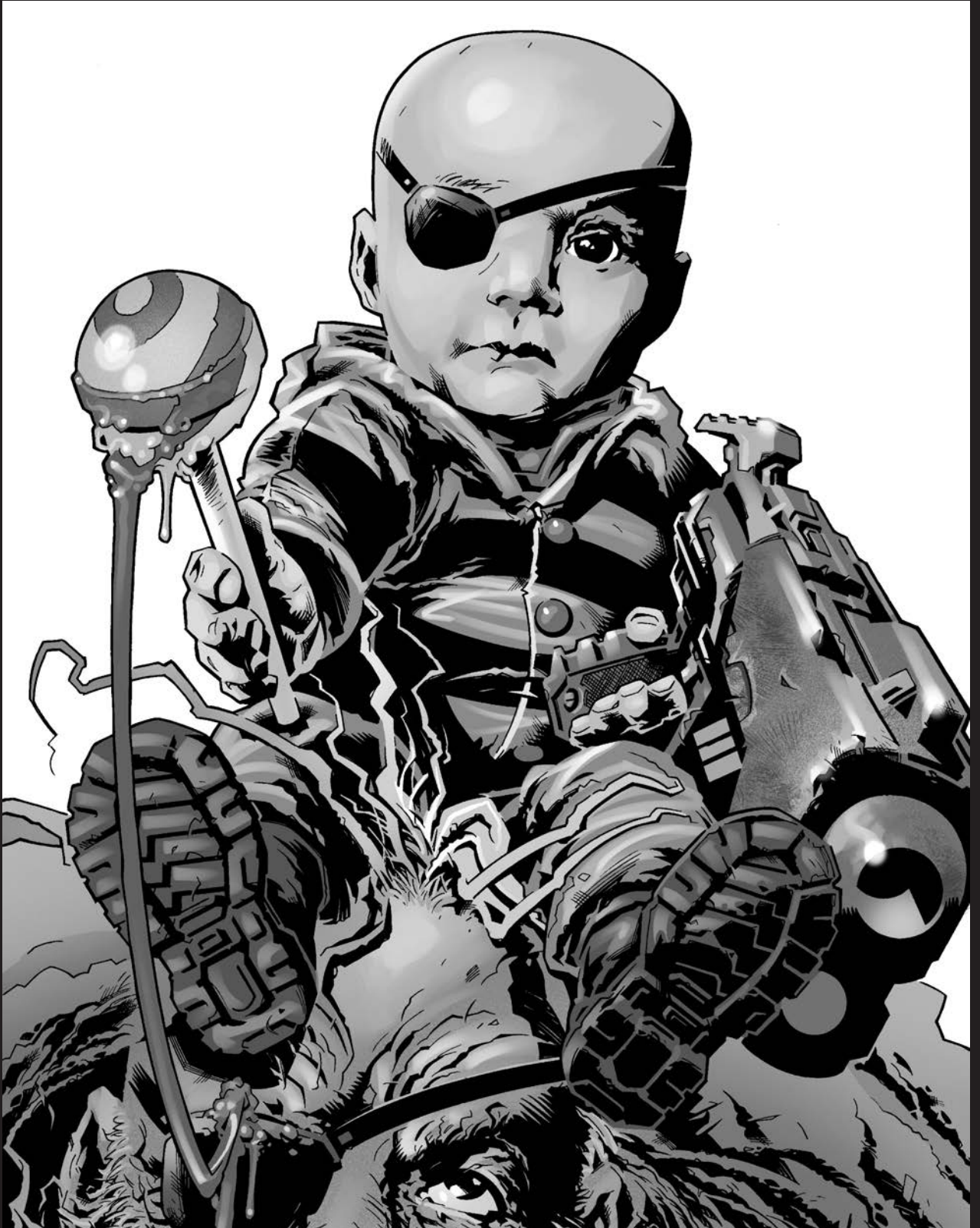
2000 AD Prog 1428: Cover by **Henry Flint**



2000 AD Prog 1484: Cover by **Steve Roberts**



2000 AD Prog 1489: Cover by **Dylan Teague**



JOCK SKETCHBOOK

JUDGE DREDD - MEGAZINE



MOVIE INTERVIEW -
LONGER SHOT OF LENNY ARE RATHER THAN THIS CLOSE -
STANDING OVER
CITY MULE

00400

BIKES

LENNY (MULE?)

SENTER
KUAN

SHIP

KIMBLE
+ O
HART

SCS



NOTE
ROOM HERE

LAUGHING

DEAD CHASING Lenny's BIKE



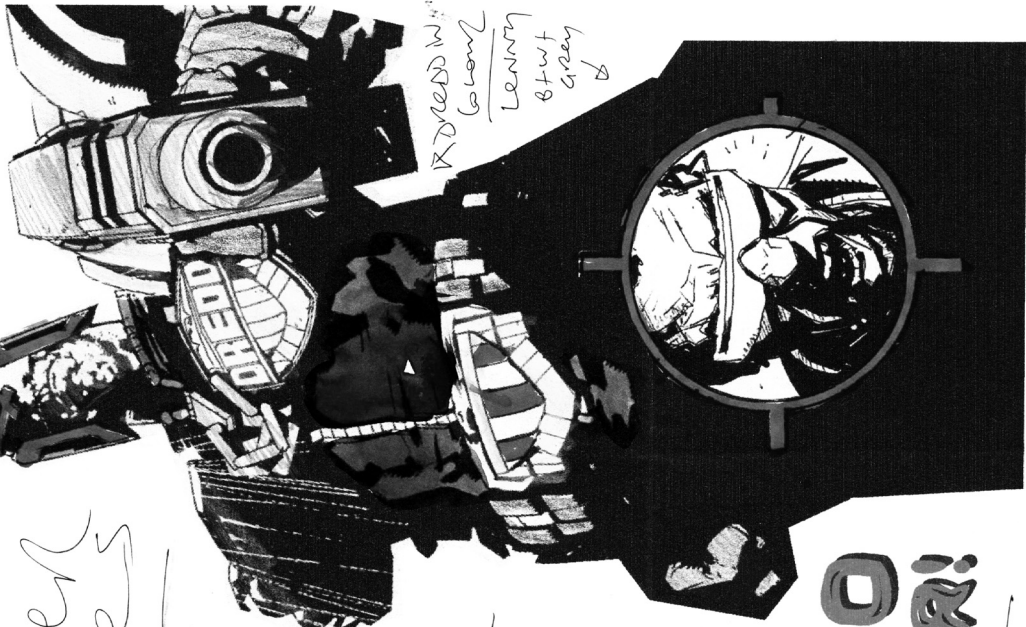
S/W LINE DRAWING

RED / ORANGE / BLACK ↑



B/g colour - call me to discuss! *Delp*

MEGAZINE



*RED W
GLOW
LENNY
BLUT
GRAY
D*

*cover
lines*

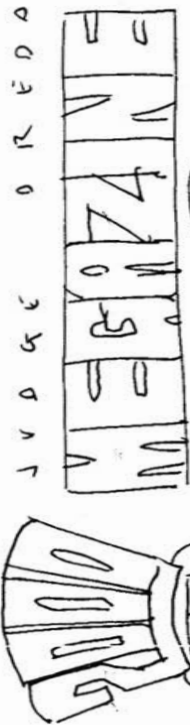
*more
cover
lines*

£3.95

SEPT. 2001



ZERO HOUR!



DAYSTICK (1 THOUGHT TYPE COULD SIT ABOVE THIS)



ANDY DIGGLE

Andy Diggle has bought, sold, studied, taught, edited and written comics – which probably explains why he's starting to get a little jaded with the whole comics thing.

He became the editor of *2000 AD* in the year 2000 before resigning to become a full-time writer, starting with *Lenny Zero*. He and artist friend and colleague Jock have since collaborated on *Green Arrow: Year One* and the award-winning action/thriller series *The Losers*, which is currently being developed for the big screen by Warner Bros. Andy's other writing credits include *Judge Dredd Vs. Aliens* (with John Wagner), *Snow/Tiger*, *Hellblazer*, *Swamp Thing*, *Batman*, *The Punisher*, *Adam Strange*, *Silent Dragon*, and *Guy Ritchie's Gamekeeper*, the latter of which is also in development at Warner Brothers. He is currently working on his first screenplay. In his spare time, he pines for sleep. *Pines*.

ROB WILLIAMS

Rob Williams debuted in *2000 AD* with *Asylum* and went on to pen the immensely popular *Low Life* series along with *Breathing Space*, *Family*, *Judge Dredd* and *The Ten-Seconds*. His work outside of the Galaxy's Greatest Comic includes *Cla\$\$war*, *Star Wars Tales*, *Star Wars: Rebellion* and *Wolverine*.

SIMON COLEBY

Simon Coleby's first work for *2000 AD* was a Future Shock – 'Rogan's Last Ride' – in 1987. Since then, Simon has illustrated *Judge Dredd*, *Rogue Trooper*, *Low Life*, *Universal Soldier* and *Venus Bluegenes*. He also co-created *Bato Loco*, with Gordon Rennie. Simon has also worked for Marvel Comics, collaborating with Pat Mills on the *Punisher 2099* series. Recently he has drawn *Midnighter Armageddon*, for Wildstorm Comics.

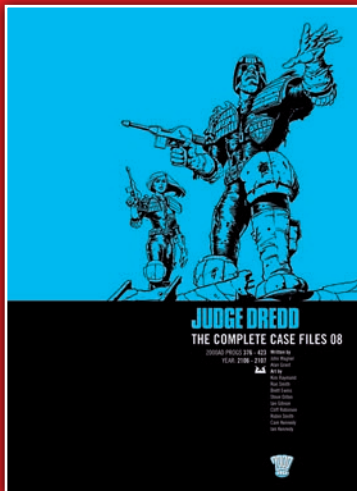
HENRY FLINT

Henry Flint, winner of the National Comics Awards for Best Comic Artist 2004 is one of the Galaxy's Greatest Comic's rising superstars. Co-creator of *Sancho Panzer* and *Shakara*, his incredibly versatile pencils have also graced *A.B.C. Warriors*, *Judge Dredd/Aliens*, *Deadlock*, *Judge Dredd*, *Rogue Trooper*, *Nemesis the Warlock*, *The V.C.'s* and *Venus Bluegenes*. He has even written a *Tharg's Alien Invasions* strip! He has also begun to establish himself in American comics.

JOCK

Jock is one of *2000 AD's* finest young creators. As well as illustrating *Judge Dredd*, *Pulp Sci-Fi*, *Tharg the Mighty* and *Tor Cyan*, Jock co-created *Lenny Zero* with ex-*2000 AD* editor Andy Diggle, and now produces work for the American market under exclusive contract to DC Comics. Among these projects are the Eisner award nominated *The Losers* and *Green Arrow: Year One*, also with Diggle, and numerous covers including *Batman*, *Catwoman*, *Scalped* and *Hellblazer*.

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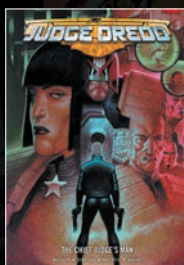
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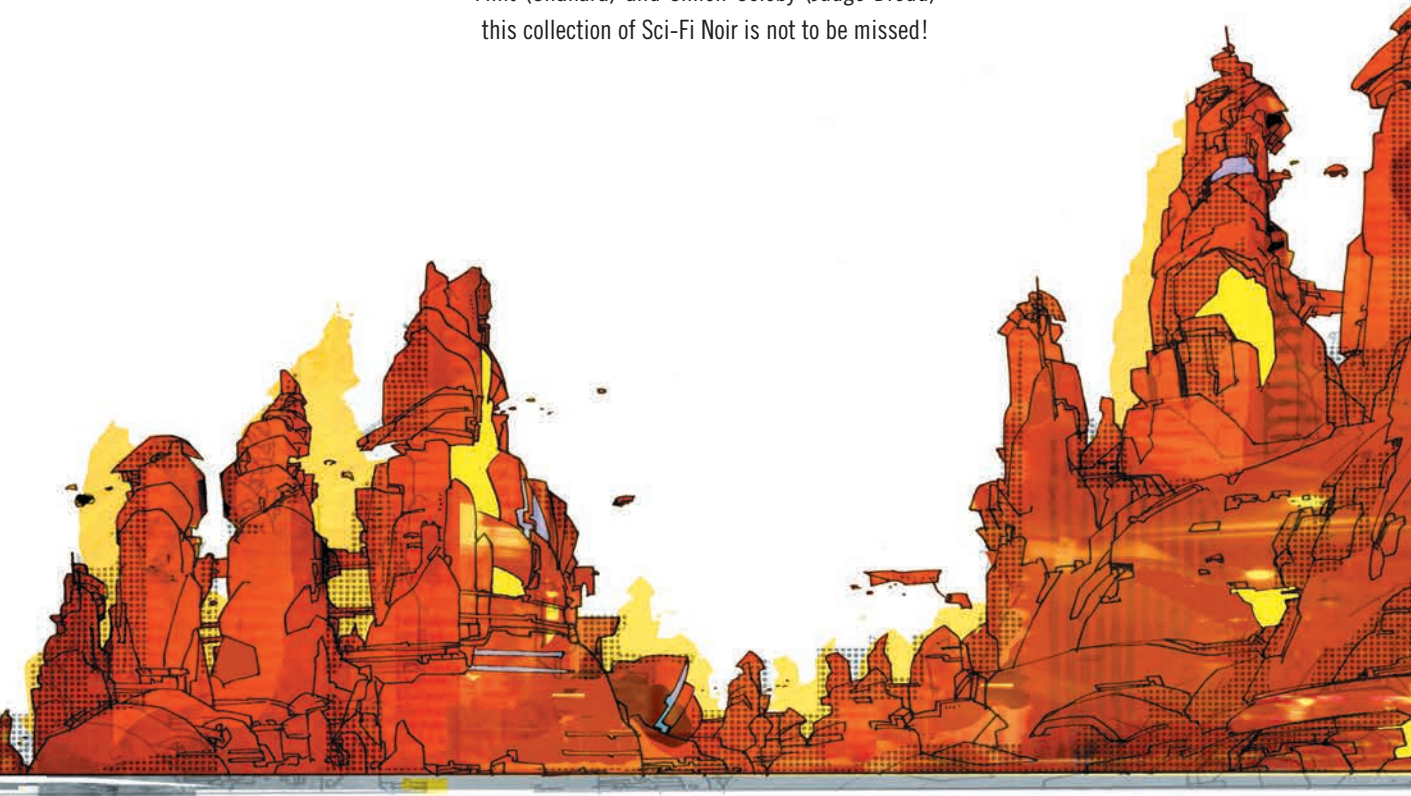
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