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ABSALOM

GHOSTS OF LONDON



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ABSALOM

GHOSTS OF LONDON



ABSALOM CREATED BY GORDON RENNIE AND TIERNEN TREVALLION

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

Script: Gordon Rennie
Art: Tiernen Trevallion
Letters: Simon Bowland

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1732-1739



SOMEWHERE IN CUMBRIA:

NUMBER SIX!
GET THE DOOR
LOCKED ON
NUMBER SIX!



OH GOD--!
TOO LATE!



SKASSH



LONDON, SIX HOURS LATER:

NAUGHTY
NAUGHTY
NAUGHTY.



RIGHT. SO WHO ELSE WANTS TO PLAY SILLY BUGGERS?

CRAZY OLD MAN, YOU THINK YOU ARE *PROTECTED* BECAUSE YOU ARE SOME KIND OF POLICEMAN?

I HAVE KILLED MANY POLICEMEN. IN MY OWN COUNTRY, IN OTHER COUNTRIES. MAYBE I ADD YOU TO MY COLLECTION.

"PROTECTED"? OH SUNSHINE, YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT...

INSPECTOR HARRY ABSALOM, IF YOU HAVEN'T HEARD OF ME, MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD OF THE NOT-VERY-NICE PEOPLE I WORK FOR. THAT'S THEIR *SIGIL* RIGHT THERE ON MY WARRANT CARD.

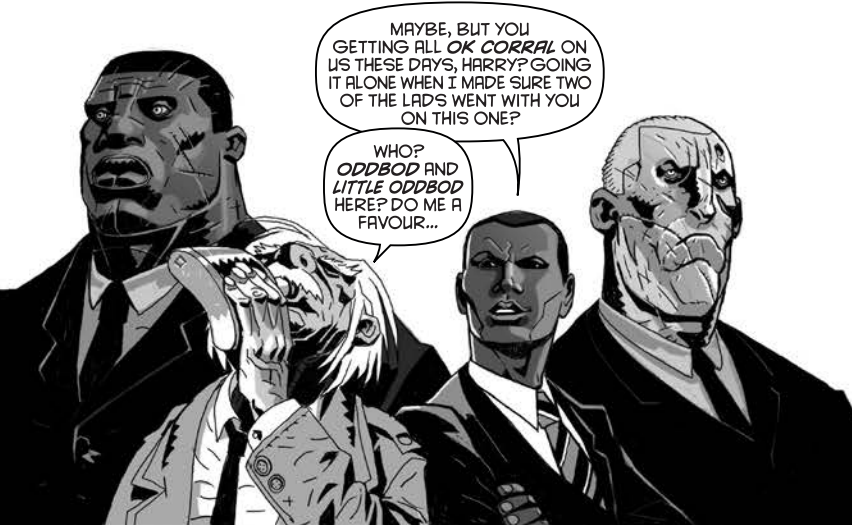
HAD A GOOD LOOK AT IT? KNOW WHAT IT MEANS? GOOD...



"...THEN LET'S BE HAVING YOU ALL, THEN."

...BLOODY PATHETIC. BUNCH OF PAPRIKA-EATERS USING REMOTE VIEWING AND GYPO-MAGIC TO SCAM CREDIT-CARD NUMBERS OUT OF PEOPLE'S HEADS.

THIS IS WHAT WE'VE BEEN BLOODY REDUCED TO NOW, IS IT?



MAYBE, BUT YOU GETTING ALL *OK CORRAL* ON US THESE DAYS, HARRY? GOING IT ALONE WHEN I MADE SURE TWO OF THE LADS WENT WITH YOU ON THIS ONE?

WHOP *ODDBOD* AND *LITTLE ODDBOD* HERE? DO ME A FAVOUR...



BE A SAD OLD AFFAIR WHEN HARRY ABSALOM NEEDS A PAIR OF *NACKERLESS HOMUNCULI* TO SAVE HIM FROM A GANG OF PEG-SELLERS.



NOT TO SPOIL YOUR DAY, HARRY, BUT I DO BELIEVE I HEAR THE CALL OF *HIS MASTER'S VOICE*.



OH BLOODY HELL, THAT'S ALL I NEED...



ALL RIGHT, KLOVE. TO *CASTLE DRACULA*, AND DON'T SPARE THE HORSES.

THE STYLITE CLUB, SOMEWHERE OFF PALL MALL:



"THANK YOU FOR COMING SO SPEEDILY, INSPECTOR. I'M AFRAID THERE'S BEEN SOMETHING OF AN INCIDENT THAT REQUIRES YOUR ATTENTION."



WITH ALL DISRESPECT, SIR, YOU DON'T SEND FOR ME WHEN THERE'S BEEN "AN INCIDENT".

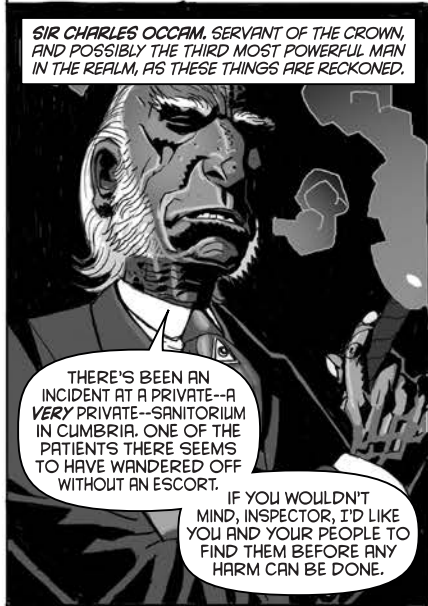
YOU ONLY BRING ME IN WHEN SOMETHING **BLOODY FOUL AND AWFUL** HAS HAPPENED, AND YOU NEED IT FLUSHED AWAY OUT OF HARM'S WAY SHARPISH.

HMM, I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN WHAT AN **UNMITIGATED PLEASURE** YOUR COMPANY IS, INSPECTOR.



HURRY IT UP, WILL YOU? I'M A **DYING MAN**, REMEMBER?

YES, CANCER, ISN'T IT? MUST BE TERRIBLY PAINFUL. MY SYMPATHIES.



SIR CHARLES OCCAM, SERVANT OF THE CROWN, AND POSSIBLY THE THIRD MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE REALM, AS THESE THINGS ARE RECKONED.

THERE'S BEEN AN INCIDENT AT A PRIVATE--A **VERY PRIVATE--SANATORIUM** IN CUMBRIA. ONE OF THE PATIENTS THERE SEEMS TO HAVE WANDERED OFF WITHOUT AN ESCORT.

IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND, INSPECTOR, I'D LIKE YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE TO FIND THEM BEFORE ANY HARM CAN BE DONE.



CUMBRIA...YOU MEAN THAT **PRIVATE CONCENTRATION CAMP** FOR MEMBERS OF THE **RATHBORNE FAMILY**.

I DO.

THEN I WAS RIGHT...



...BECAUSE IF JUST ONE OF THE THINGS THEY KEEP THERE HAS GOT OUT, THEN "**BLOODY FOUL AND AWFUL**" DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO COVER WHAT'S PROBABLY GOING TO HAPPEN.



WE HAVE EVERY FAITH THAT YOU AND YOUR **STERLING TEAM** WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN, INSPECTOR. ANY QUESTIONS?

JUST ONE...



"WHO'S THE **FANCY PIECE OF SKIRT** OUTSIDE?"



...JEMIMA HOPKINS, INSPECTOR. JUST TRANSFERRED OVER FROM THE MET. I WAS TOLD YOU'D REQUESTED ME AS--

DID I DON'T REMEMBER THAT AT ALL, BUT MAYBE I WAS TAKING ONE OF MY OCCASIONAL LITTLE WANDERS UP LAUDANUM LANE, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.



AS I WAS SAYING--

--AS A REPLACEMENT FOR ONE OF YOUR SQUAD, ALTHOUGH YOU DIDN'T SAY WHO.

AAH, NOW THAT DOES SOUND MORE LIKELY, LOVE. AND QUITE PRESCIENT OF ME TOO...



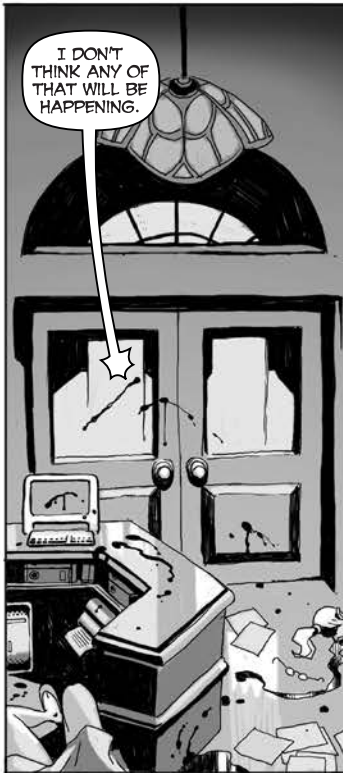
...'COS SURE AS SOUTHEND SMELLS OF PISS NOT ALL MY MERRY LITTLE BAND HERE ARE GOING TO BE COMING BACK IF WE'RE GOING UP AGAINST THE RATHBORNE BROOD.



HARLEY STREET, LONDON:

I'M SORRY BUT IF YOU DON'T HAVE AN APPOINTMENT, YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAVE. AND, IF YOU DON'T LEAVE, I'LL HAVE MY RECEPTIONIST CALL THE POLICE.

YOUR RECEPTIONIST. YES.



I DON'T THINK ANY OF THAT WILL BE HAPPENING.



YOU USED TO BE A REAL DOCTOR. YOU DELIVERED BABIES. YOU DELIVERED ME.

YOU'RE MISTAKEN. I'VE NEVER WORKED IN OBSTETRICS--

YES. YOU HAVE.



IN CUMBRIA. IN THE PLACE I WAS BORN. THE PLACE THEY KEPT ME CONFINED.

WHAT? OH DEAR GOD... OH NO...

YOU'RE ONE OF THEM, AREN'T YOU?



THEY...THEY TOLD ME I'D BE SAFE AFTER I FINISHED WORKING FOR THEM--

THEY LIED. THAT'S WHAT THEY DO BEST.



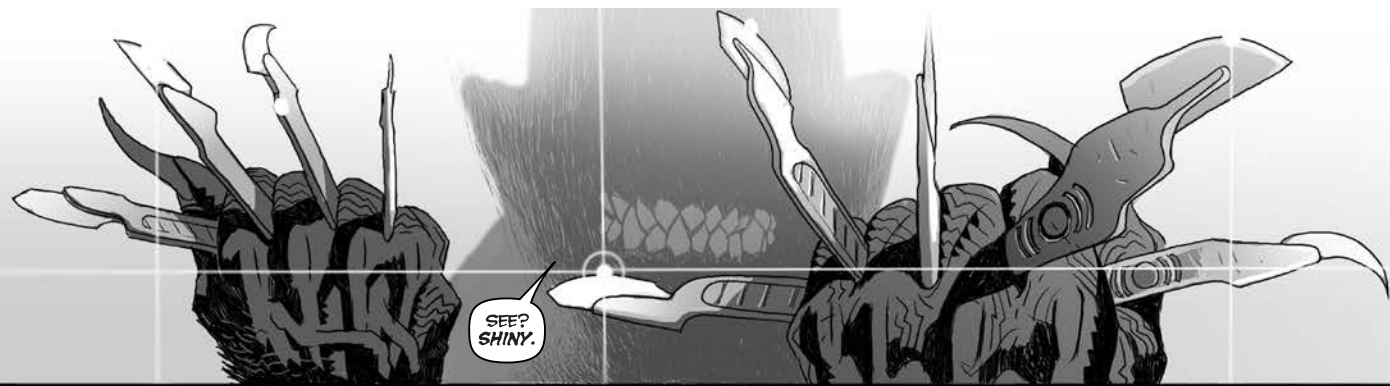
YOUR WORK. WHAT DO YOU DO HERE?

EXCISIONAL SKIN SURGERY.

THE REMOVAL OF CYSTS, MOLES AND SKIN CANCERS. WHY DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?



OH.



SEE?
SHINY.



um, INSPECTOR?
ARE YOU SURE YOU
SHOULD BE DRIVING
THIS FAST WHILE
DRINKING?

DRINKING,
DETECTIVE SERGEANT?
YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG
IDEA...



...IT'S LAUDANUM.
STRICTLY MEDICINAL.
WHISKY IN IT'S JUST TO
TAKE THE EDGE OFF.

THAT MY PHONE?
BE A LOVE AND REACH
INTO MY POCKET,
WILL YOU?



WHO'S THAT,
THEN? THE FORCE'S
VERY OWN DARK
AVENGER?

ALL THESE
YEARS, HARRY, AND
THAT ONE'S STILL
FRESH AS EVER.

REMEMBER
YOU TOLD US TO WATCH
OUT FOR SHOUTS ON
ANYTHING BLOODY FOUL
AND AWFUL? WELL, I'VE
GOT SOMETHING...



...HARLEY STREET
CONSULTANT, MURDERED
IN HIS SURGERY, ALONG
WITH SOME POOR SOD OF
A RECEPTIONIST.

ALWAYS
BEEN AN NHS MAN,
MYSELF. WHY'S THIS
LANDING IN OUR
PATCH?



BECAUSE THE
KILLER PEELED THE
BLOKE'S FACE OFF AND
LEFT IT PINNED TO THE
CEILING WITH SURGICAL
SCALPELS.

THAT BLOODY
FOUL AND AWFUL
ENOUGH, YOU
RECKON?



AND GUESS
WHERE THE VICTIM USED
TO PUT IN AN HONEST
SHIFT BEFORE HE WENT
PRIVATE?

A CERTAIN
EXCLUSIVE CLINIC
IN CUMBRIA? GOOD
WORK, SON. STAY
ON IT.

WHAT'RE YOU
DOING, HARRY, IF
I MAY BE SO BOLD
TO ASK?





LOOK OUT!

RAAARR!



BLOODY HELL, YOU'RE TOOLED UP?

TWO YEARS WITH SO14, TWO MORE WORKING COUNTER-TERRORISM AT SO13.

STAY DOWN. I'LL HANDLE THIS.



LEAVE THE ROUGH STUFF TO THE LADS, LOVE. THAT'S WHAT WE BRING 'EM ALONG FOR.



SMACK!



NO SHOOT-TO-KILL POLICY ON MY PATCH. BESIDES--

--THIS ONE'S A BIT MORE IMPORTANT THAN SOME NO-MARK BRAZILIAN SPARKY.



D'S HOPKINS, MEET EMILE RANDOLPH RATHBORNE, ONE OF THE MORE HARMLESS BLACK SHEEP MEMBERS OF THE RATHBORNE FAMILY--



"--AND A BIGGER SHOWER OF HORRIBLE EVIL BASTARD'S YOU'LL NEVER HOPE TO MEET."

PULL.



SOMEWHERE IN WILTSHIRE:

COUSIN SEBASTIAN, YOU'VE HEARD THE NEWS?

THAT YOUR HALF-BROTHER JASPER GNAWED HIS WAY OUT OF HIS CAGE AND IS NOW LOOSE AMONG THE SHEEP? YES, I HEARD.



I TAKE IT THE FAMILY HAVE ASKED YOU TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION, AND YOU WANT ME TO HELP, EVEN THOUGH I COULDN'T CARE LESS?

PULL.

OF COURSE. BUT NOW THERE'S AN **ADDED COMPLICATION.**



ANOTHER HUNTER IN THE CHASE? NO, DON'T TELL ME. LET ME GUESS.

AAHH, YES. OF COURSE...



WELL PLAYED, COUSIN. IT'S **ABSALOM**, ISN'T IT?

DEAR OLD HARRY, IT'LL BE GOOD TO SETTLE **OLD SCORES** WITH THAT VILE LITTLE MAN...

THE TOWER OF LONDON, 1578:

I WILL SCRAPE THE MEAT FROM YOUR BONES AND MAKE YOU EAT IT! I WILL DO THIS, AND WORSE, TO YOU UNTIL YOU BEG FOR DEATH!

THEN I WILL KILL YOU, AND DAMN YOUR SOUL TO HELL, WHERE I WILL WAIT TO TORTURE YOU FOR ALL ETERNITY IN WAYS YOU CAN'T EVEN YET IMAGINE!

AND IT'S BEEN DOING THIS FOR HOW LONG?

THREE WEEKS, MY LORD. WE'VE CUT OUT ITS TONGUE FOUR TIMES NOW, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE.

YOU DID WELL TO GET WORD TO ME. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

ABSALOM, SIR.

ABSALOM. I'LL REMEMBER THAT NAME. YOU'LL FIND **LORD RATHBORNE** OF THE STAR CHAMBER A POWERFUL ALLY TO HAVE ON YOUR SIDE.

NOW CLEAR THE ROOM AND LEAVE ME ALONE WITH THIS THING.

ON BEHALF OF HER ROYAL MAJESTY, **HELL'S EMISSARY** AND I HAVE BUSINESS TO NEGOTIATE...

LONDON, NOW:



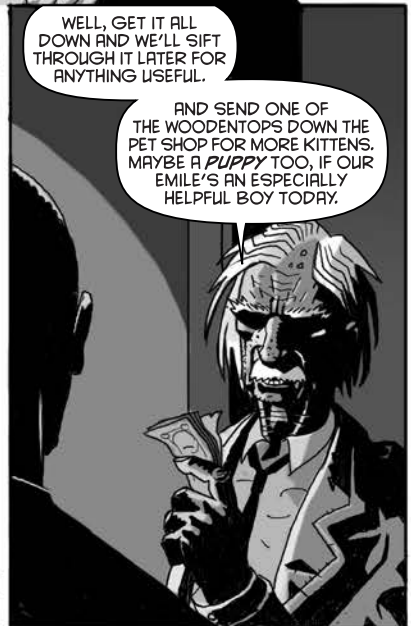
...IT'S COUSIN JASPER. THEY SAID HE HAD DIED IN INFANCY, BUT I KNEW HE HADN'T. THE STATUES IN THE STONE GARDEN TOLD ME. THEY TELL ME LOTS OF THINGS.

CAN I GET ANOTHER KITTEN NOW, PLEASE?



HOW LONG'S HE BEEN GOING ON LIKE THIS?

YOU KNOW EMILE. GIVE HIM HALF A CHANCE AND HE'D JABBER ON TILL HIS BLOODY TONGUE FELL OUT.



WELL, GET IT ALL DOWN AND WE'LL SIFT THROUGH IT LATER FOR ANYTHING USEFUL.

AND SEND ONE OF THE WOODENTOPS DOWN THE PET SHOP FOR MORE KITTENS. MAYBE A PUPPY TOO, IF OUR EMILE'S AN ESPECIALLY HELPFUL BOY TODAY.



DOES... DOES HE HAVE TO DO THAT THING...

...THAT THING, WITH THE ANIMALS?

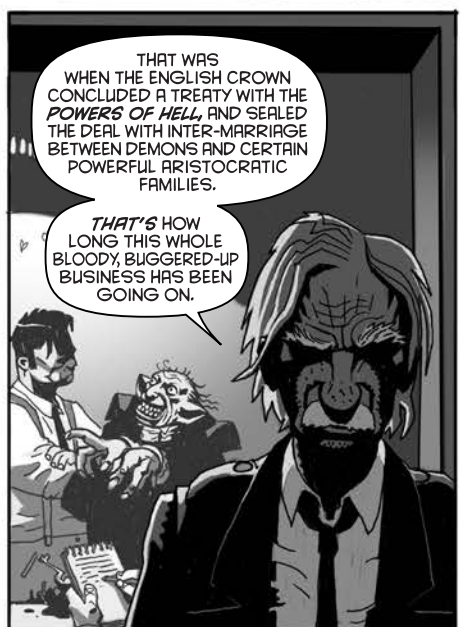
NOT REALLY HIS FAULT, LOVE. IT'S THE WAY HE WAS BORN. IT'S THE WAY THEY WERE ALL BORN.



1578.

WHAT?

THE ANSWER TO WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, IT'S "1578".



THAT WAS WHEN THE ENGLISH CROWN CONCLUDED A TREATY WITH THE POWERS OF HELL, AND SEALED THE DEAL WITH INTER-MARRIAGE BETWEEN DEMONS AND CERTAIN POWERFUL ARISTOCRATIC FAMILIES.

THAT'S HOW LONG THIS WHOLE BLOODY, BUGGERED-UP BUSINESS HAS BEEN GOING ON.



"NOW LET'S GO SEE A MAN ABOUT A FACE."



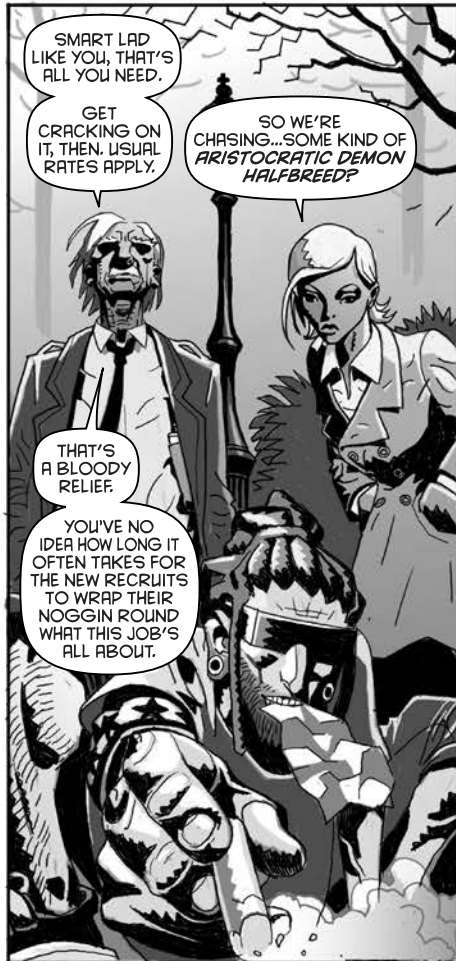
SMELL OF POLICE CANTEN FOOD, SUPERMARKET BRAND WHISKY, LAST NIGHT'S INDIAN TAKEAWAY AND WHAT MUST BE THE LAST SUPPLY OF HAI KARATE AFTERSHAVE THIS SIDE OF 1983.

MIND WHERE YOU'RE PUTTING YOUR FEET, HARRY--I'VE JUST FINISHED THAT PRINCESS DI YOU'RE STANDING ALL OVER.

THEN YOU CAN ALWAYS TELL THE TOURISTS THAT'S HER AFTER THE CRASH, CAN'T YOU?



THAT'S ALL I GET--"COUSIN JASPER"?



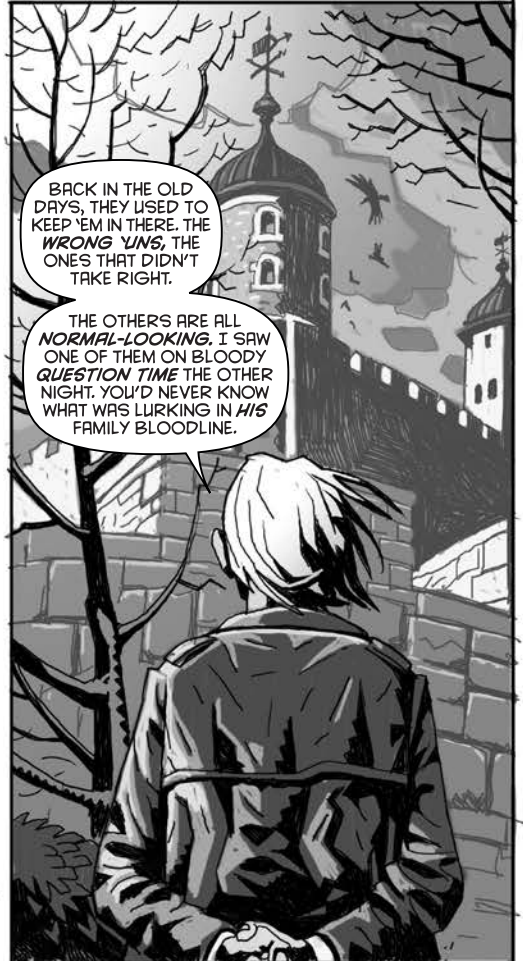
SMART LAD LIKE YOU, THAT'S ALL YOU NEED.

GET CRACKING ON IT, THEN. USUAL RATES APPLY.

SO WE'RE CHASING...SOME KIND OF ARISTOCRATIC DEMON HALFBREED?

THAT'S A BLOODY RELIEF.

YOU'VE NO IDEA HOW LONG IT OFTEN TAKES FOR THE NEW RECRUITS TO WRAP THEIR NOGGIN ROUND WHAT THIS JOB'S ALL ABOUT.



BACK IN THE OLD DAYS, THEY USED TO KEEP 'EM THERE. THE WRONG Y'NS, THE ONES THAT DIDN'T TAKE RIGHT.

THE OTHERS ARE ALL NORMAL-LOOKING. I SAW ONE OF THEM ON BLOODY QUESTION TIME THE OTHER NIGHT. YOU'D NEVER KNOW WHAT WAS LURKING IN HIS FAMILY BLOODLINE.

THEY'RE EVERYWHERE, THE NORMAL-LOOKING ONES.

POLITICS. BUSINESS. THE CHURCH. THEY PRETTY MUCH RUN THE SHOW.

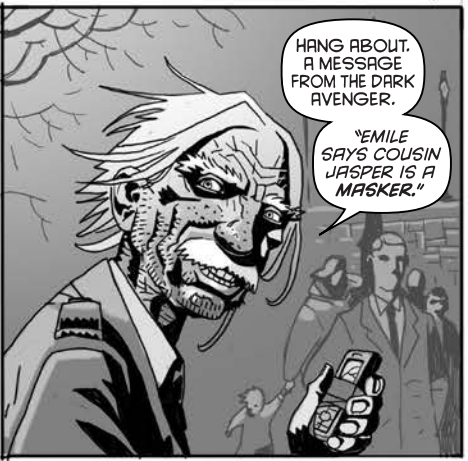
THE OTHER KIND, THEY SHOULD BE **KILLED**, OF COURSE. SMOTHERED AT BLOODY BIRTH. BUT THEY CAN'T DO THAT. NOT TO THEIR OWN KIND.

SO THEY LOCK THEM UP, IN SPECIAL PLACES FAR AWAY FROM THE REST OF US. SO THAT WE'LL NEVER SEE THE WHOLE SHOWER OF 'EM FOR WHAT THEY REALLY ARE--

ABOMINATIONS, HERE TO MAKE SURE US SHEEP ARE KEPT IN OUR PLACE.

AND, OCCASIONALLY, ONE THEM GETS OUT AND WE'RE THE STUPID BASTARDS WHO HAVE TO CLEAN UP THEIR MESS FOR 'EM.

WELL, NOT THIS TIME...



HANG ABOUT. A MESSAGE FROM THE DARK AVENGER.

"EMILE SAYS COUSIN JASPER IS A MASKER."



MASKER?

IT MEANS HIS OWN KIND CAN'T SENSE HIM. IT MEANS THEY'RE PROBABLY GOING TO USE US TO LEAD THEM TO HIM INSTEAD.



YOU KNOW, COUSIN, I THINK WE MIGHT JUST HAVE BEEN RUMBLER.

REALLY? WELL, TALLY-HO. THE CHASE IS ON NOW.





NOTTING HILL:

THIS GUY WE'RE GOING TO SEE. I CHECKED UP ON HIS RECORD, AND--

OH AYE. BLOODY HORRIBLE, ISN'T IT?



IN A PERFECT WORLD, OLD DUDLEY WOULD BE LOCKED AWAY WITH THE REST OF HIS RILEY 45 CHUMS, WONDERING WHAT EXTRA INGREDIENTS HE'S SLURPING DOWN WITH HIS MORNING CORNFLAKES.

BUT, LIKE I SAID, THAT WOULD BE IN A PERFECT WORLD.

THEY STILL FOLLOWING US, BY THE WAY?



NO CHANGE THERE.

MAYBE GET ON THE BLOWER, GET SOME OF THE LAD'S ROUND TO--

AYE AYE. WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?



EVENING, FOLKS. LOVELY NIGHT FOR A STROLL. REGARDS TO THE NIPPER.



WHO WAS THAT? ANYTHING I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

THAT?



"FUTURE CASEWORK, THAT'S WHAT THAT IS, LOVE. A BLOODY DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN."



HERE WE ARE. NUMBER 49-- "DUNFIDDLIN'". LET'S SEE IF HE'S HOME...



INSPECTOR!
PLEASE, COME IN!
I RECEIVED YOUR
MESSAGE--

A *SHIFTER*,
YOU SAY? MOST
INTERESTING!

THAT'S
WHAT WOODROW'S I.D.
PICTURE SHOWED, AND
THIS ONE'S A *MASKER*
TOO, MIND.



NOW THAT
DOES NARROW
THINGS DOWN.

PLEASE, PLEASE.
COME THROUGH INTO MY
OFFICE AND WE'LL SEE IF
WE CAN'T GET A BETTER
IDEA OF WHAT PART OF THE
BLOODLINE THIS ONE
COMES FROM!



YOU STILL
CARRYING THAT
SHOOTER OF
YOURS?

ONCE SO13,
ALWAYS SO13.

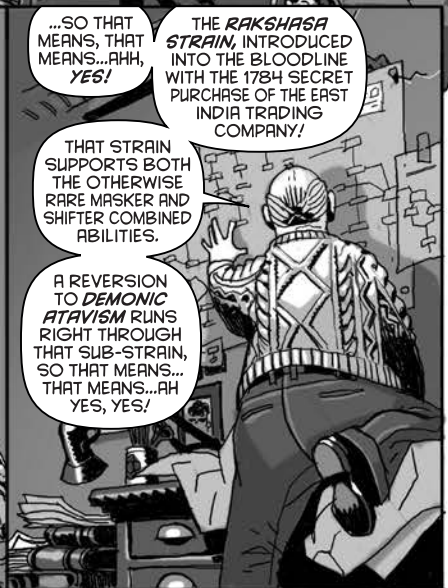
GRAND.
KEEP IT HANDY,
LOVE...



"...GOT A FEELING WE MIGHT BE NEEDING IT SOON."

NOW, LET
ME SEE...

BEING A *MASKER* MEANS
HE'S MOST LIKELY A *PUREBLOOD*,
A DIRECT DESCENDANT OF *LORD
THOMAS RATHBORNE* HIMSELF, BUT THE
SHAPESHIFTER ASPECT ENTERS THAT
STRAIN DURING THE LATE SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY INTERMINGLING WITH THE
FRENCH *LAVOISIN* STRAIN...

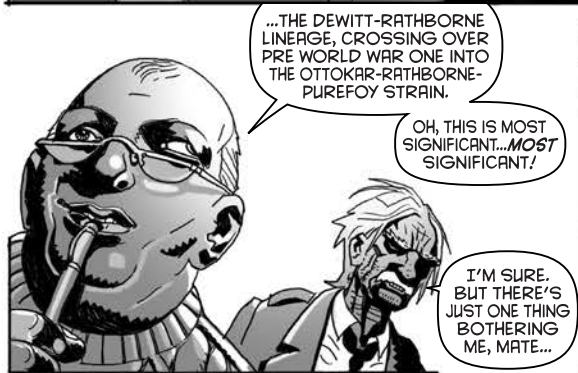


...SO THAT
MEANS, THAT
MEANS...AHH,
YES!

THE *RAKSHASA
STRAIN*, INTRODUCED
INTO THE *BLOODLINE*
WITH THE 1784 SECRET
PURCHASE OF THE EAST
INDIA TRADING
COMPANY!

THAT STRAIN
SUPPORTS BOTH
THE OTHERWISE
RARE *MASKER* AND
SHIFTER COMBINED
ABILITIES.

A REVERSION TO
*DEMONIC
ATAVISM* RUNS
RIGHT THROUGH
THAT SUB-STRAIN,
SO THAT MEANS...
THAT MEANS...AH
YES, YES!



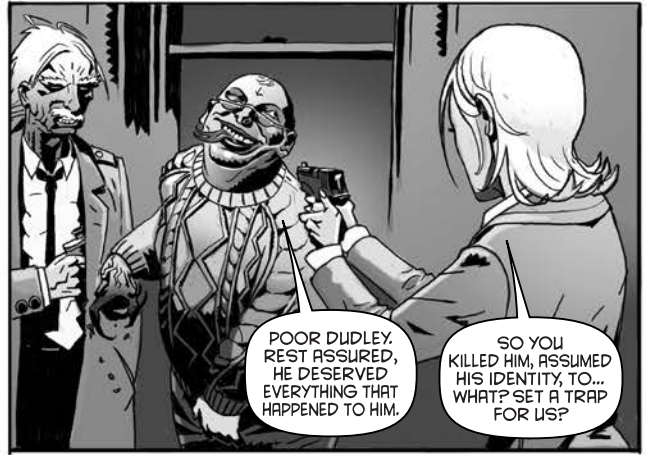
...THE *DEWITT-RATHBORNE*
LINEAGE, CROSSING OVER
PRE WORLD WAR ONE INTO
THE *OTTOKAR-RATHBORNE-
PUREFOY* STRAIN.

OH, THIS IS MOST
SIGNIFICANT...*MOST*
SIGNIFICANT!

I'M SURE.
BUT THERE'S
JUST ONE THING
BOTHERING
ME, MATE...



THE *REAL* *DUDLEY* WOULD NEVER
HAVE LET ME IN HERE TO SEE HIS PRECIOUS
BLOODLINE CHARTS, SO WHAT HAVE
YOU DONE WITH HIM?





COUSINS
SEBASTIAN
AND VERITY.
HOW LOVELY
TO SEE YOU.



YOU KNOW, WHEN I
WAS YOUNGER MAN, I'D BE
RIGHT OUT THIS WINDOW
AFTER HIM. THESE DAYS,
THOUGH...



...STAIRS
IT IS.

GET ON
THE BLOWER AND GET
THE HEAVY SQUAD ROUND
HERE, PRONTO. WE'VE GOT
TO CONTAIN THIS THING
BEFORE IT ALL ENDS UP ON
YOU'VE BEEN BLOODY
FRAMED!



HALT. YOU ARE
NOT PERMITTED
TO INTERFERE IN
RATHBORNE FAMILY
BUSINESS.

OH, JUST
BLOODY SHOOT
THEM, WILL YOU,
LOVE?

I CAN'T!
THEY'RE--



UNARMED
CIVILIANS? ARE
THEY BUGGERY.



WE'RE JUST
SHEEP TO THEIR OWNERS,
REMEMBER? AND YOU DON'T
HIRE SHEEP TO SERVE YOU
TEA AND CRUMPLETS ON THE
CROQUET LAWN.

BLAM BLAM BLAM





DEBRIEFING, THREE HOURS AFTER HELL CAME TO NOTTING HILL:

THOUGHT I'D BRING YOU SOME-- OH, YOU'VE GOT SOME ALREADY.

I KNOW THAT LOOK. BAD DAY AT THE OFFICE, RIGHT? I WENT THROUGH THE SAME THING, THE FIRST TIME HARRY--



YOU ALL RIGHT? OH BLOODY HELL...



"...THAT BAD, WAS IT?"



COME ON, LET'S GET OUT OF THIS DUMP AND GET YOU A *PROPER* DRINK. YOU LOOK LIKE YOU NEED IT.

GOOD OLD HARRY. HALF THE WORK WE DO FOR HIM GETS DONE IN THE PUB, ANYWAY.



OH BOLLOCKS. I TOLD THEM TO BRING THIS STUFF IN THE *BACK* WAY. SORRY ABOUT THIS, I REALLY AM...





"...IF THERE'S ONE MAN YOU WANT BESIDE YOU WHEN IT ALL KICKS OFF, IT'S HARRY BLOODY ABSALOM."

JUST TRY IT! YOU KNOW THE PAPERWORK I'LL HAVE TO DO IF THIS ONE COPS IT ON HER FIRST DAY ON THE JOB?





THOSE THINGS...THE
DETECTIVE CONSTABLES...
THEY'RE NOT HUMAN,
ARE THEY?

THE LADS? NO.
THEY'RE *HOMUNCULI*.
HARRY HAS THEM
GROWN SPECIAL, AT
SOME PLACE OUT IN
THE WEST COUNTRY.

"THEY'RE NONE TOO
BRIGHT... HEH, A BIT
LIKE YOUR AVERAGE
REAL D.C...."



KLUNK!



"...BUT THEY GET THE JOB DONE."



LISTEN, I KNOW
IT'S LATE, AND I KNOW WE
DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS NOW--
NOT *OFFICIALLY*, I MEAN,
ALTHOUGH THEY'LL HAVE TO
BE SOME KIND OF LOAD OF
OLD BOLLOCKS REPORT
SUBMITTED EVENTUALLY--
BUT--

--BUT YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH I REMEMBER,
IN CASE IT'S TOTALLY SPAZZED ME OUT, AND I HAVE
TO SPEND THE REST OF MY CAREER HANDING
OUT CRIME-PREVENTION LEAFLETS AND GIVING
KIDDYFIDDLER WARNING TALKS TO GROUPS
OF BORED LITTLE SCHOOL LIRCHINS?

WELL...
YEAH.



I REMEMBER ALL OF IT,
DETECTIVE SERGEANT
SANGSTER.
EVERYTHING.



"WHAT THE THING WE HAD BEEN CHASING DID TO THAT RATHBORNE WOMAN..."



"IT GETTING AWAY..."



"AND WHAT WE DID TO THE LAST OF THEM..."

WELL, LOOK AT YOU. AT LEAST THE TWO HALVES MATCH NOW.
YOU WOULDN'T DARE...



OH YES I BLOODY WOULD.

YOU'RE OFF THE RESERVATION, MATE. YOU'VE VIOLATED THE TERMS OF THE ACCORD, AND THAT MEANS I GET TO DO WITH YOU WHATEVER I WANT.



SO HERE WE GO, THEN: "OF YE POWRES OF EARTH AND AIR. BEAR WITNESS TO THE WORDS I SPEAKE--"

OH SOD IT WITH THE HEY NONNY NONNY STUFF--



JUST SHOOT HIM FOR ME, WILL YOU, LOVE?



I'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT, LOVE. NOT TO WORRY-- THE SEVENTH CAVALRY WILL BE HERE SOON ENOUGH.



AND I DID. I SHOT HIM, AND BLEW HIS BRAINS ALL OVER HALF OF WWII.

I WANT TO BE IN THIS UNIT. IF D.I. ABSALOM WAS TESTING ME, I'M GUESSING THAT COUNTS AS A PASS.

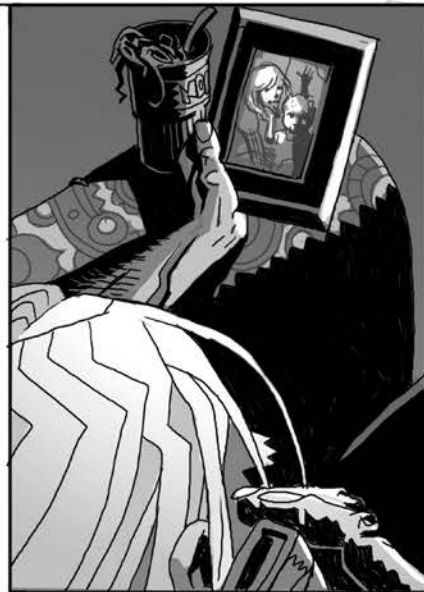


SO WHERE IS HE, ANYWAY? HAD AN URGENT BRITISH LEGION MEETING OR PIGEON-FANCIER CLUB TO ATTEND?

I WISH I KNEW. REALLY I DO...



"... BUT HE'S A DARK ONE, OUR HARRY. YOU NEVER REALLY KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE HIS HEAD."




ALL RIGHT, SQUIRE? OH, DON'T PLAY SILLY BEGGARS, YOU KNOW WHO THIS IS.

I WANT YOU TO GET A MESSAGE TO HIS NIBS, LORD RATHBORNE--




TELL HIM HARRY ABSALOM HAS A LITTLE PROPOSITION FOR HIM. HE WON'T LIKE IT, BUT WE BOTH KNOW HE'LL BLOODY WELL HAVE TO AGREE TO IT...

SOMEWHERE IN KENT, EARLY MORNING:




ALL RIGHT, THEN. LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH. CAN'T KEEP ARISTOCRACY WAITING, CAN WE?




IF I DON'T MAKE IT BACK, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO. JUST MAKE SURE YOU GET AT LEAST HALF THE BASTARDS ON THIS, AND THAT THEY KNOW *WHY* THEY'RE GETTING IT.

NO WORRIES, HARRY. I'LL SEE IT GETS DONE.




A LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT HITLIST? SERIOUSLY?

THAT'S THE GAFFER. IF HE'S GOING DOWN, HE'S TAKING A FEW OF THEM WITH HIM...



"BLOODY HARRY ABSALOM. IF HE EVER DOES CROAK IT, THEY SHOULD TICK HIM IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, WITH ALL THE OTHER NATIONAL HEROES."



...AND APPARENTLY THAT INCLUDES A COUPLE OF CELEBRITY CHEFS AND A FEW OF THE SMUG-LOOKING GITS ON THOSE TV COMEDY QUIZ SHOWS.





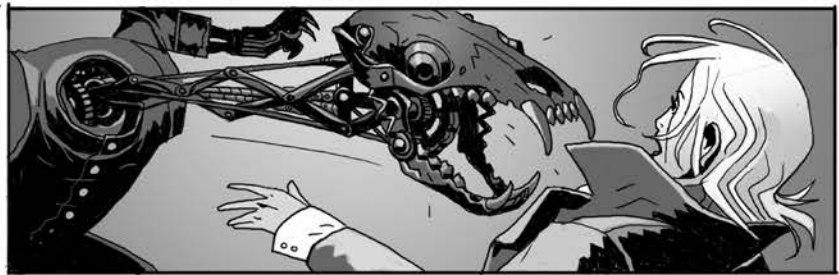
BOTH OF THEM?

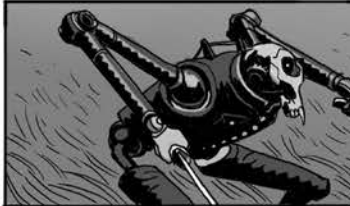
THAT DEPENDS HOW REASONABLE YOU CAN BE, INSPECTOR. PERHAPS THE LOSS OF ONE SUBORDINATE WILL BE SUFFICIENT.

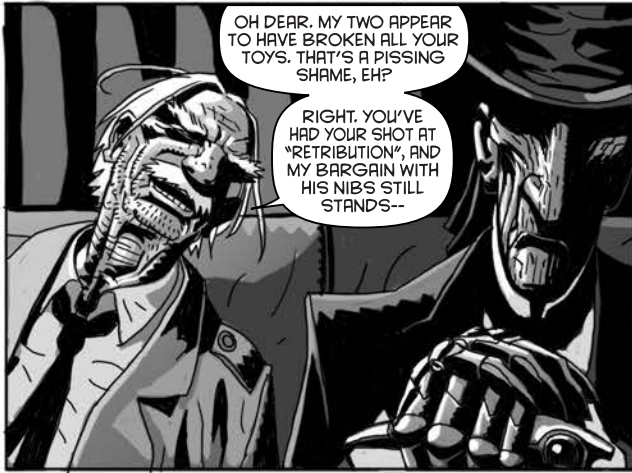
THE CHOICE, IN THAT CASE, I LEAVE TO YOU...



"...BUT HURRY, IF YOU WANT TO SAVE EVEN ONE OF THEM."







OH DEAR. MY TWO APPEAR TO HAVE BROKEN ALL YOUR TOYS. THAT'S A PISSING SHAME, EH?

RIGHT. YOU'VE HAD YOUR SHOT AT "RETRIBUTION", AND MY BARGAIN WITH HIS NIBS STILL STANDS--



I HELP YOU DEAL WITH THE CURRENT LITTLE FAMILY EMBARRASSMENT RUNNING ROUND LONDON STAPLING PEOPLE'S FACES TO CEILINGS, AND YOU HELP ME WITH WHAT I WANT.



BACK AGAIN. THIS IS **MISTER CRITCH**. HE'LL BE ASSISTING US WITH OUR INQUIRIES FROM HERE ON IN...







YOU GETTING ALL THIS, HARRY?

LOUD AND CLEAR. HOW'S THE HAND, BY THE WAY?



HOW DO YOU THINK? HURTS LIKE HELL.

I'VE SENT WORD TO EXETER. YOU'LL BE RIGHT AS RAIN AGAIN ONCE THEY SEND UP THOSE NEW NOSEPICKERS THEY'RE GROWING FOR YOU.

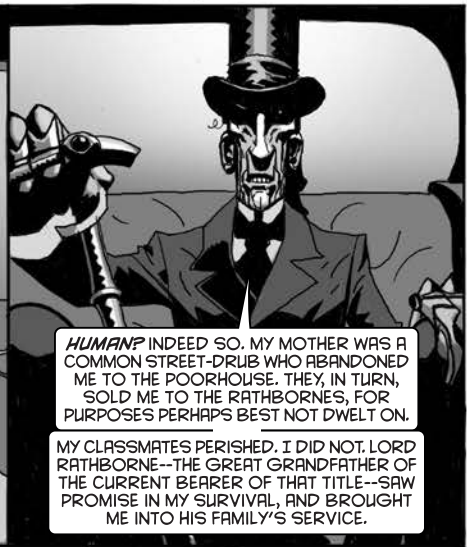


UH, SO HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED FOR THE RATHBORNE FAMILY?

IN MY PRESENT CAPACITY? SINCE EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY, OR THEREABOUTS.



OH. AND, UH, YOU'RE... I MEAN...



HUMAN? INDEED SO. MY MOTHER WAS A COMMON STREET-DRUG WHO ABANDONED ME TO THE POORHOUSE. THEY, IN TURN, SOLD ME TO THE RATHBORNES, FOR PURPOSES PERHAPS BEST NOT DWELT ON.

MY CLASSMATES PERISHED. I DID NOT. LORD RATHBORNE--THE GREAT GRANDFATHER OF THE CURRENT BEARER OF THAT TITLE--SAW PROMISE IN MY SURVIVAL, AND BROUGHT ME INTO HIS FAMILY'S SERVICE.



MY SERVICES ARE VALUED, SERGEANT HOPKINS. MY EMPLOYER'S WISH FOR ME TO CONTINUE LIVING AND SERVING.

GOOD SERVANTS ARE HARD TO COME BY. ONCE ACQUIRED, AN EMPLOYER IS OFTEN LOATH TO LET THEM GO...

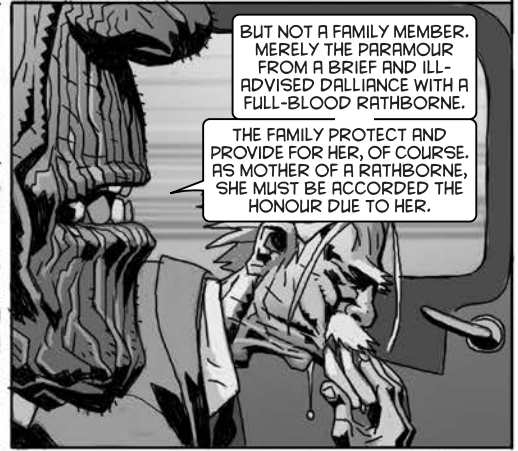


...A SITUATION I BELIEVE THE GOOD INSPECTOR COULD ALSO WELL ATTEST TO.



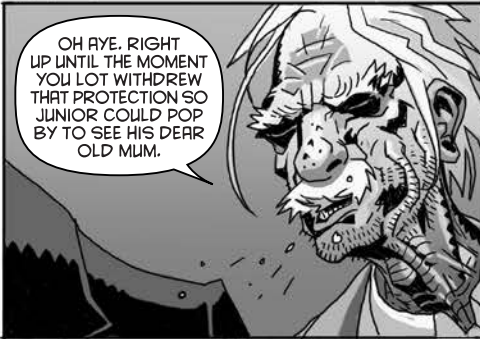
WE'RE HEADING SOUTH OF THE RIVER. I'LL KNOW MORE SOON ENOUGH.

AND FORGET TO MENTION THE STIFF IN BELGRAVIA WAS THE BLOODY THING'S MOTHER, DID YOU?



BUT NOT A FAMILY MEMBER. MERELY THE PARAMOUR FROM A BRIEF AND ILL-ADVISED DALLIANCE WITH A FULL-BLOOD RATHBORNE.

THE FAMILY PROTECT AND PROVIDE FOR HER, OF COURSE. AS MOTHER OF A RATHBORNE, SHE MUST BE ACCORDED THE HONOUR DUE TO HER.



OH AYE. RIGHT UP UNTIL THE MOMENT YOU LOT WITHDREW THAT PROTECTION SO JUNIOR COULD POP BY TO SEE HIS DEAR OLD MUM.



A SHOW OF SUPPOSED REPROVAL FOR THE SAKE OF APPEARANCES IN FRONT OF YOUR COMPANION? COME NOW, INSPECTOR, WE BOTH KNOW BETTER--

NEEDS MUST, AND NOW I HAVE PROVIDED THE MEANS FOR YOUR PEOPLE TO FINALLY TRACK DOWN OUR MUTUAL QUARRY.



SPEAKING OF WHICH...

...SO MUCH HATE. IT **BURNS** THROUGH HIS BLOOD. HE'S A MONSTER, AND HE KNOWS IT.

HE WISHES HE'D NEVER BEEN BORN. HIS MOTHER, THE DOCTOR WHO DELIVERED HIM-- BY KILLING THEM, HE'S TRYING TO ERASE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS OWN CREATION...



HOPE YOU'RE ENJOYING THIS AS MUCH AS I AM, HARRY.

TELL MARJORIE PROOPS THERE TO SAVE THE SOB STORIES FOR THE SOCIAL WORK REPORTS, AND TO CONCENTRATE ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT...

"... STARTING WITH A *POSTCODE* SO WE CAN GO ROUND THERE AND GIVE THIS MAD BASTARD A RIGHT PROPER KICKING."

IT'S ALWAYS THE BLOODY TOP ONE, ISN'T IT?

WHERE'D YOU WANT US, BOSS?

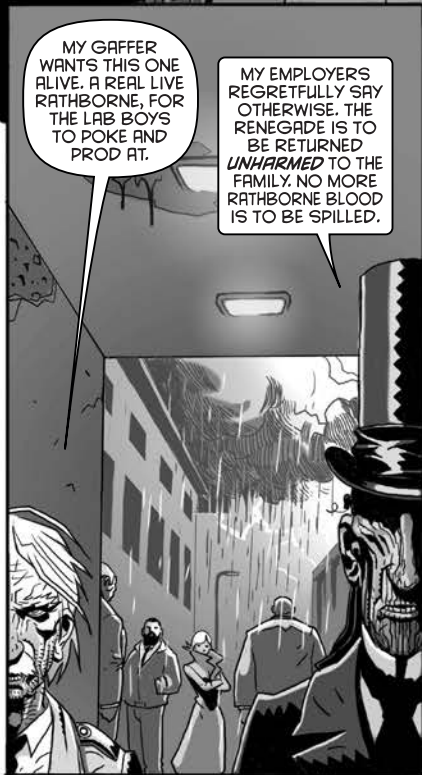
SPREAD THE LADS OUT--STANDARD PENTAGRAM PATTERN ROUND THE PLACE. NO ONE'S GETTING IN, AND I WANT IT MADE BLOODY SURE THAT THING'S NOT GETTING OUT.

YOU STAY HERE TOO, LOVE. I NEED YOU TO KEEP THE NATIVES HAPPY. ANYONE FROM THE LOCAL COPSHOP TURNS UP, JUST GIVE 'EM SOME BOLLOCKS ABOUT ANTI-TERRORIST OPERATIONS.

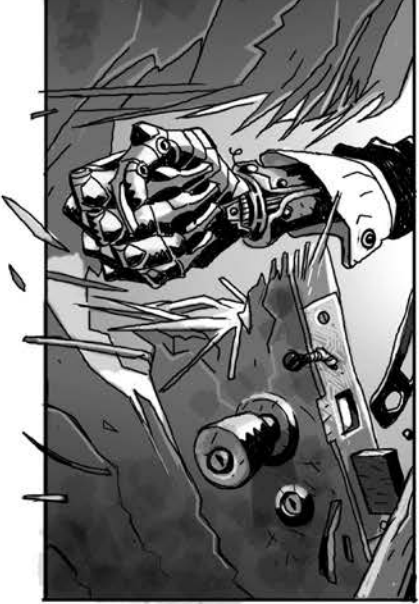
MY GAFFER WANTS THIS ONE ALIVE. A REAL LIVE RATHBORNE, FOR THE LAB BOYS TO POKE AND PROD AT.

MY EMPLOYERS REGRETFULLY SAY OTHERWISE. THE RENEGADE IS TO BE RETURNED *UNHARMED* TO THE FAMILY. NO MORE RATHBORNE BLOOD IS TO BE SPILLED.

WELL NOW. WE'VE GOT A BIT OF A *PROBLEM*, THEN. SO WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?



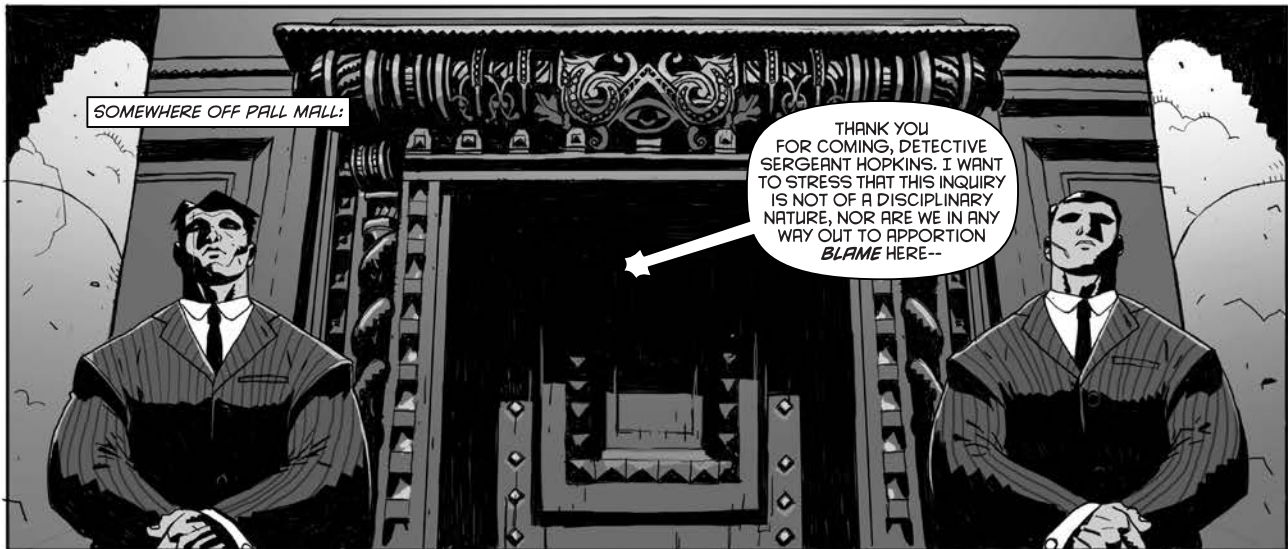
CRUNCH



SMASH



*JEHOVAH'S
WITNESSES
CALLING, MATE.
ARE YOU READY
TO BE SAVED?*



SOMEWHERE OFF PALL MALL:

THANK YOU FOR COMING, DETECTIVE SERGEANT HOPKINS. I WANT TO STRESS THAT THIS INQUIRY IS NOT OF A DISCIPLINARY NATURE, NOR ARE WE IN ANY WAY OUT TO APPORTION *BLAME* HERE--



--WE MERELY WISH TO ASCERTAIN WHAT EXACTLY WENT WRONG WITH INSPECTOR ABSALOM'S ATTEMPTED CAPTURE OF THE RATHBORNE CREATURE.

I'VE ALREADY FILED MY REPORT ON THE MATTER, CORROBORATING EVERYTHING THE INSPECTOR SAID.



INDEED, AND SUCH LOYALTY IS TO BE COMMENDED. BUT *INDULGE* US, DETECTIVE SERGEANT. TELL US AGAIN, FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.



AS I SAID, WE SECURED THE AREA WHILE THE INSPECTOR AND THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE RATHBORNE FAMILY ENTERED THE PREMISES.

"AND YOU DIDN'T CONSIDER THE INSPECTOR'S ACTIONS TO BE SOMEWHAT *RECKLESS*?"

"NO, SIR. NOT IN THE LEAST--"



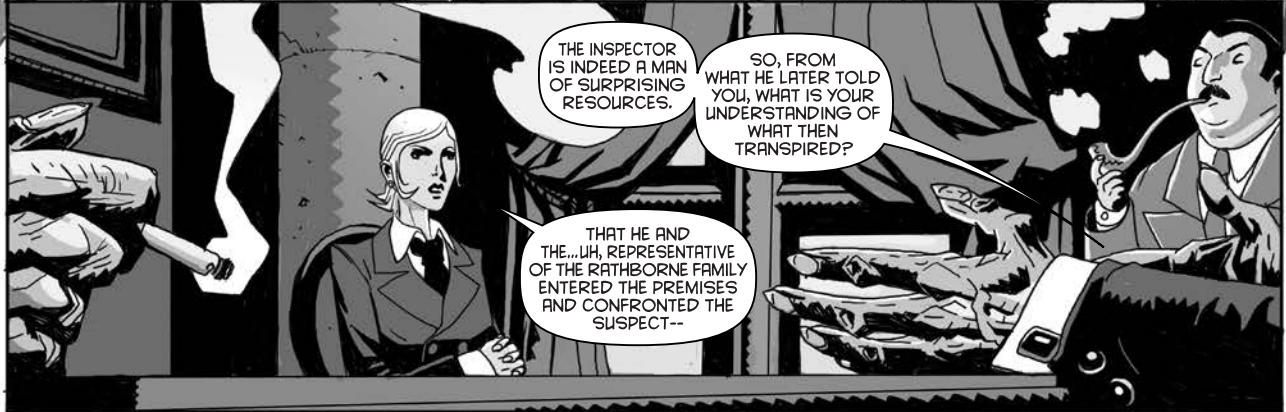
"--FROM THE BRIEF TIME I HAD SPENT WITH THE INSPECTOR, I HAD FULL CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY TO DEAL WITH THE PERCEIVED THREAT LEVEL."



THE INSPECTOR IS INDEED A MAN OF SURPRISING RESOURCES.

SO, FROM WHAT HE LATER TOLD YOU, WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THEN TRANSPIRED?

THAT HE AND THE...UH, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RATHBORNE FAMILY ENTERED THE PREMISES AND CONFRONTED THE SUSPECT--



"--THAT THE SUSPECT RESISTED ARREST, VIGOROUSLY SO, APPARENTLY--"

"--MAKING NECESSARY THE USE OF FORCE IN ORDER TO SUBDUDE HIM."





A PLAN THAT SEEMED TO HAVE **FAILED**, HOWEVER.

REGRETTABLY SO. THE SUSPECT HAD BEEN IN A VOLATILE MENTAL STATE FOR QUITE SOME TIME--

--MAKING HIM UNCONTROLLABLE, AND PROBABLY **IMPOSSIBLE** TO SUBDUDE."



GET THAT STITCHED, SUNSHINE!



BASTARD. TWENTY NICKER THIS COAT COST ME FROM THE ARMY & NAVY STORE.

WHAT NOW? CAN'T HAND HIM OVER TO MY MOB--

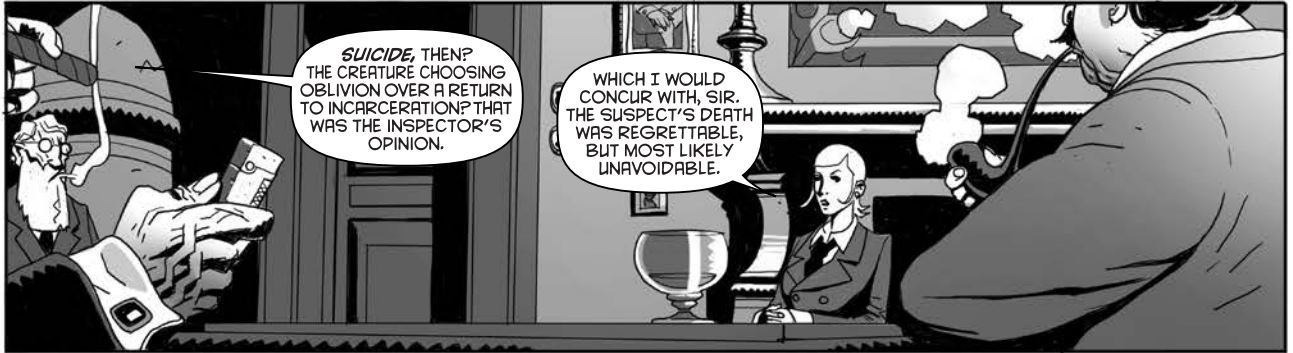
--WHILE MY EMPLOYERS SHOW AN UNCHARACTERISTIC DEGREE OF **MISGUIDED COMPASSION** WHEN IT COMES TO DEALING WITH THE FAMILY BLACK SHEEP



HERE, YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?



WELL, AT LEAST HE DIDN'T LAND IN THE KIDDIES' PLAYGROUND. THAT'S A RELIEF, EH?



SUICIDE, THEN? THE CREATURE CHOOSING OBLIVION OVER A RETURN TO INCARCERATION? THAT WAS THE INSPECTOR'S OPINION.

WHICH I WOULD CONCUR WITH, SIR. THE SUSPECT'S DEATH WAS REGRETTABLE, BUT MOST LIKELY UNAVOIDABLE.



INDEED. NOW, REGARDING THE "PERSONAGE" REPRESENTING THE RATHBORNES' INTERESTS...

YOU MEAN MISTER CRITCH, SIR?

IF THAT'S WHAT THE CREATURE CALLS ITSELF THESE DAYS, THEN--YES, I DO.

DO YOU HAVE ANY REASON TO THINK THAT HE AND THE INSPECTOR MAY HAVE HAD ANY KIND OF PRIVATE ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THEMSELVES REGARDING THIS AFFAIR?



A MOST SATISFACTORY OUTCOME, INSPECTOR.

AND YOU REQUIRE A SERVICE OF ME, SO THAT I MAY HONOUR MY HALF OF OUR BARGAIN?

THESE TWO. I WANT YOU TO FIND THEM FOR ME.



CHILDREN?

MY GRANDKIDS.

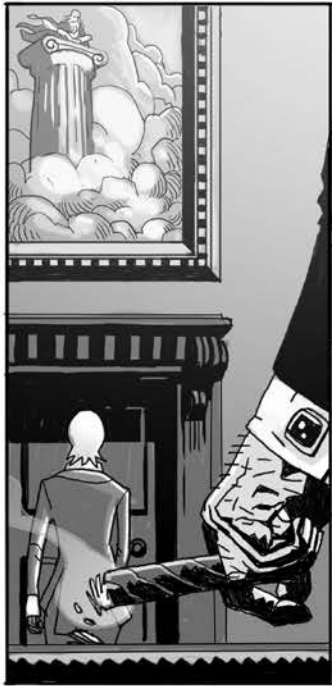


THEY TOOK THEM TWELVE YEARS AGO--OCCAM AND HIS MOB. AS INSURANCE, SEE?

LIKE THE CANCER WASN'T ENOUGH TO MAKE ME KEEP ON DOING WHAT I DO FOR THEM.



MY SYMPATHIES, INSPECTOR. THEN WE BOTH SERVE LINWORTHY TASKMASTERS, IT WOULD SEEM.



SICK LEAVE

Script: Gordon Rennie

Art: Tiernen Trevallion

Letters: Simon Bowland

Originally published in *2000 AD* Prog 2012



EAST LONDON:

YOU TWO TOOK YOUR TIME.

SORRY, MATE. THERE I WAS, LOOKING FORWARD TO A LIE-IN WITH THE MISSUS AND A DAY OUT WITH THE KIDS, AND THEN I THOUGHT--

--WAH, I'D BETTER GET MY SKATES ON, AND GO HELP OLD BARNEY CRAWL AROUND AMONG BROKEN GLASS AND DOG CRAP IN SOME CHAV-HOLE SOMEWHERE."

NOT DOG CRAP GRAFFITI. EXCEPT IT'S CAMOUFLAGE. THERE'S SOMETHING UNDERNEATH IT.

THIS PLACE IS A GHOST TOWN, BUT THE WHISPERING GALLERY SAYS THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON HERE. I THINK IT'S IN THE GRAFFITI. OR UNDER IT.

TAKE A LOOK AROUND. LOOK FOR MORE SITES LIKE THIS. LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU FIND.

GET YOUR NOTEBOOK OUT, DS HOPKINS. I THINK WE'RE ABOUT TO CRACK THE INFAMOUS DUAL CASES OF "MIKEY-T IS AN FING GRASS" AND "KRAZY-REE SELL GOOD WEEDZ".

YOU SOUND JUST LIKE HIM, YOU KNOW.

WELL, YOU TRY TO, AT LEAST.

THE GAFFER? I'M HIS UNDERSTUDY, REMEMBER, AND I'M STILL LEARNING THE PART.

SO WHERE IS HE, ANYWAY?

ABSALOMP?



"ON A SICKIE, APPARENTLY."

NO, LOVE. IT'S *ABSALOM*. A-B-S-A-L-O-M.

AND THERE'S A *DETECTIVE INSPECTOR* IN FRONT OF THAT TOO, MIND.



HERE ON POLICE BUSINESS, ARE WE, INSPECTOR?

NOT AS SUCH, NO.

RIGHT. SO WE'LL JUST KEEP IT AT *'SIR'*, THEN?



CONSULTING ROOM THREE. FOURTH DOOR ON THE RIGHT. DOCTOR'LL BE ALONG IN A FEW MINUTES, INSPECTOR--

--OOPS, I MEAN... SIR.



AND THERE'S *NO DRINKING* IN HERE!

STRICTLY MEDICINAL, LOVE. GAWD BLESS THE NHS. ANGELS IN NURSING WHITES, THAT'S WHAT YOU ALL ARE.



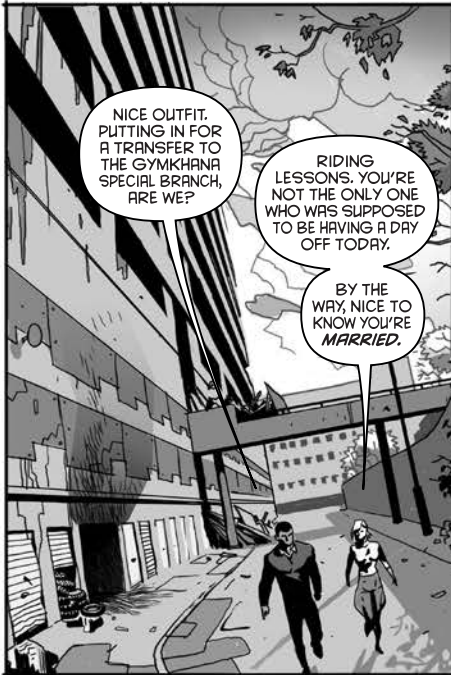
AHH, HARRY. COME IN AND PULL UP A PEW, WILL YOU?

OH BOLLOCKS...



...NOT YOU AGAIN.

NOW IS THAT ANY WAY TO GREET AN *OLD FRIEND*?



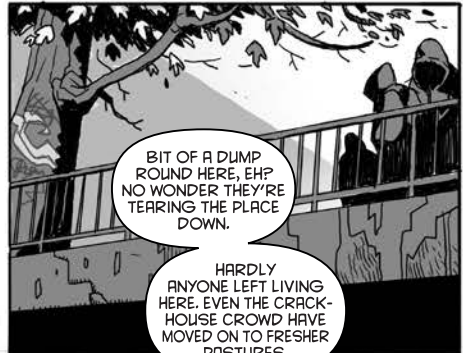
NICE OUTFIT. PUTTING IN FOR A TRANSFER TO THE GYMKHANA SPECIAL BRANCH, ARE WE?

RIDING LESSONS. YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HAVING A DAY OFF TODAY.

BY THE WAY, NICE TO KNOW YOU'RE MARRIED.



Hmmm. DIDN'T I MENTION THAT BEFORE? I'M SURE I DID.



BIT OF A DUMP ROUND HERE, EHP? NO WONDER THEY'RE TEARING THE PLACE DOWN.

HARDLY ANYONE LEFT LIVING HERE. EVEN THE CRACK-HOUSE CROWD HAVE MOVED ON TO FRESHER PASTURES.



OI, OI. LOOKS LIKE SOME OF THE LOCAL WILDLIFE'S STILL AROUND. LET'S HAVE SOME FUN...



ALL RIGHT, LADS. EARLY DOORS FOR A MUGGING, ISN'T IT?

SEE THIS? THAT'S THE BAD NEWS. NOW UP AGAINST THE WALL AND LET'S SEE WHAT'S IN THOSE POCKETS.

TERENCE...

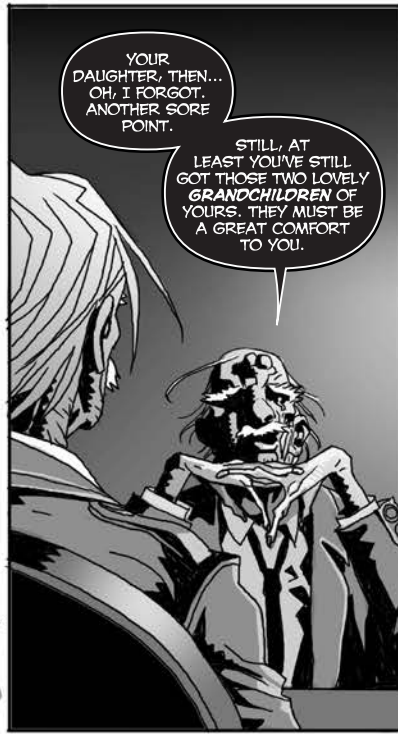


TERENCE--!



IT'S GOOD TO CATCH UP AGAIN, ISN'T IT? SO HOW'S THE WIFE?

OOPS, SORRY, TOUCHY SUBJECT.



YOUR DAUGHTER, THEN... OH, I FORGOT. ANOTHER SORE POINT.

STILL, AT LEAST YOU'VE STILL GOT THOSE TWO LOVELY GRANDCHILDREN OF YOURS. THEY MUST BE A GREAT COMFORT TO YOU.



RIGHT BLEEDIN' COMEDY TURN, AREN'T YOU?

POOR HARRY. ALL ALONE. YOUR SQUAD'S THE NEAREST THING YOU'VE GOT TO FAMILY, RIGHT?

THIS BUNCH YOU'VE GOT NOW, THEY'VE BEEN WITH YOU QUITE A WHILE, MOST OF THEM. SO TELL ME...



"...HOW LONG YOU THINK IT'LL BE BEFORE YOU GET ANOTHER ONE OF THEM KILLED?"



OFF!

*ZZAP!



LEAVE THE SHOOTER AT HOME TODAY, DID YOU?

I WAS AT RIDING LESSONS, NOT TRY-OUTS FOR BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST RODEO.

*CRASH



NEVER MIND. I LIKE A WOMAN WITH A FULLY CHARGED ELECTRICAL DEVICE--

LOOK OUT!



GET IN.



THEY CAN DRIVE...?



NEWS TO ME. UP UNTIL NOW, I WASN'T EVEN SURE THEY COULD TALK.



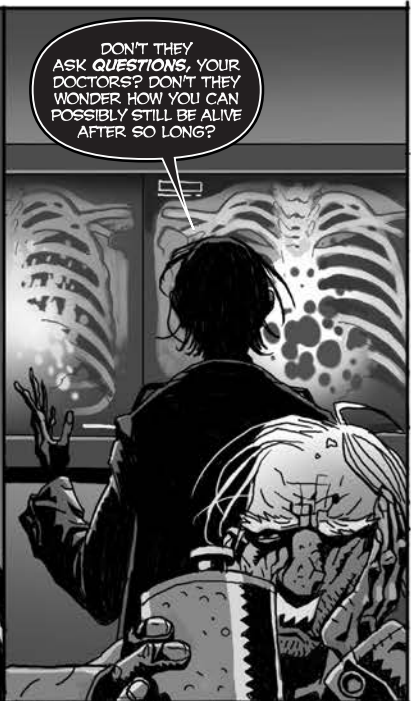


OH NASTY, PANCREATIC. THESE AREN'T YOURS, I HOPE?



NO, THEY PUT SOME OTHER MORE UNLUCKY BUGGER'S X-RAYS UP THERE, JUST TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.

OF COURSE THEY'RE BLOODY MINE. LIKE YOU WOULDN'T KNOW.



DON'T THEY ASK *QUESTIONS*, YOUR DOCTORS? DON'T THEY WONDER HOW YOU CAN POSSIBLY STILL BE ALIVE AFTER SO LONG?



OH, I'M A BLOODY *MEDICAL CURIOSITY*, ME. I'VE HAD MORE THINGS POKED INTO ME THAN HALF THE REGULAR'S UP HAMPSTEAD HEATH.

YOU THINK I WOULDN'T HAVE CASHED MY CHIPS IN BY NOW, IF I COULD? BUT THEY WON'T LET ME, WILL THEY?



THAT LOT. THE GAFFERS. THE BLOODY HIGH-AND-MIGHTY OF THE STYLITE CLUB.

WON'T LET ME QUIT. WON'T LET ME DIE IN PEACE, NOT EVEN WITH THE CANCER. *THE JOB*, THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY IS IMPORTANT--



MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT. AFTER ALL, IF I'M NOT AROUND TO DO IT, THEN WHO ELSE WILL?



HERE. ALLOW ME.

AH YES, THE JOB. HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN NOW? FORTY YEARS?



AND THE REST. GOT IN THE DOOR BY WORKING THE PHIBES CASE--CHRIST, AND THAT WAS A WEIRD ONE--WITH OLD TROUTY. THEN ON TO THAT CANNIBALS IN THE UNDERGROUND BUSINESS WITH CALHOUN.

INSPECTOR CALHOUN. BY GOD, COULD THAT OLD DEVIL DRINK. SPEAKING OF WHICH--



YOUR GOOD HEALTH.

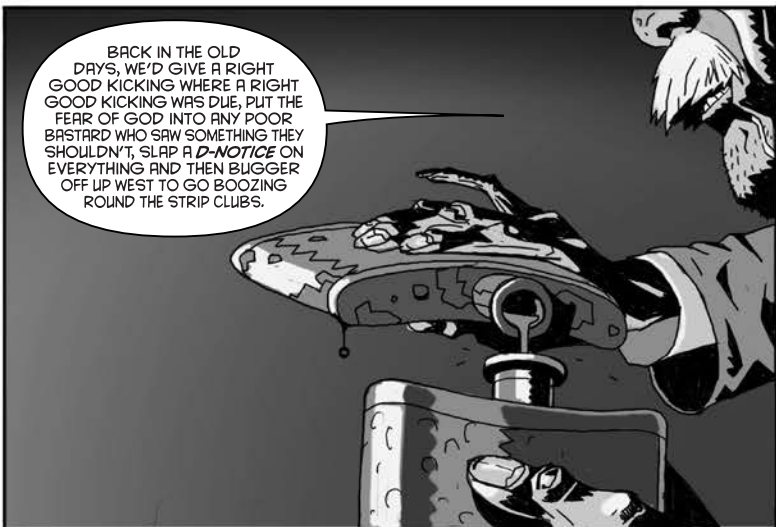
AND YOURS, HARRY.



I KNEW 'EM ALL. TROUTY AND CALHOUN. JACK REGAN. CHARLIE BARLOW, EVEN THAT IRISH GIT WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THAT ZOMBIE MESS UP MANCHESTER WAY. ALL GONE NOW. SNUFFED IT, OR ROTTING ON A POLICE PENSION IN MARBELLA.

HARRY ABSALOM. THE LAST OF THE OLD GUARD, AND WHO'S GOING TO HOLD THE FORT AFTER HE'S GONE?

YOU DON'T THINK ANY OF YOUR CURRENT LOT CAN FILL A DEAD MAN'S SHOES?



BACK IN THE OLD DAYS, WE'D GIVE A RIGHT GOOD KICKING WHERE A RIGHT GOOD KICKING WAS DUE, PUT THE FEAR OF GOD INTO ANY POOR BASTARD WHO SAW SOMETHING THEY SHOULDN'T, SLAP A D-NOTICE ON EVERYTHING AND THEN BUGGER OFF UP WEST TO GO BOOZING ROUND THE STRIP CLUBS.



THESE DAYS, WELL...IT'S DIFFERENT, ISN'T IT? I'VE GOT A D'S WHO GETS MANICURES AND USES SKIN CREAM--AND I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE NEW BIT OF SKIRT...

THIS LOT TODAY? THEY'VE GOT IT EASY...

"...JUST AS WELL THINGS ARE
A LOT *TAMER* NOW THAN THEY
WERE BACK IN THE OLD DAYS."



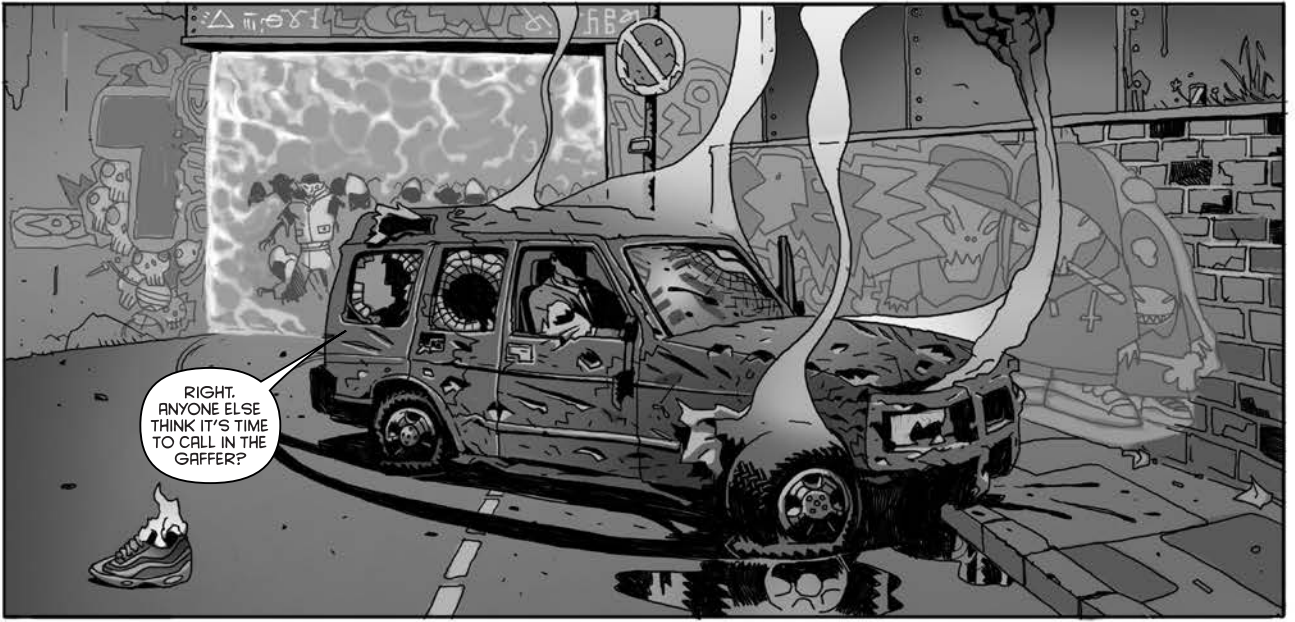
FASTER!
SEE THAT GRAFFITI
AHEAD? THAT'S THE
FINISH LINE! JUST
GET US THERE!



FINISH
LINE? I DON'T
UNDERSTAND--

KRUNCH





RIGHT. ANYONE ELSE THINK IT'S TIME TO CALL IN THE GAFFER?



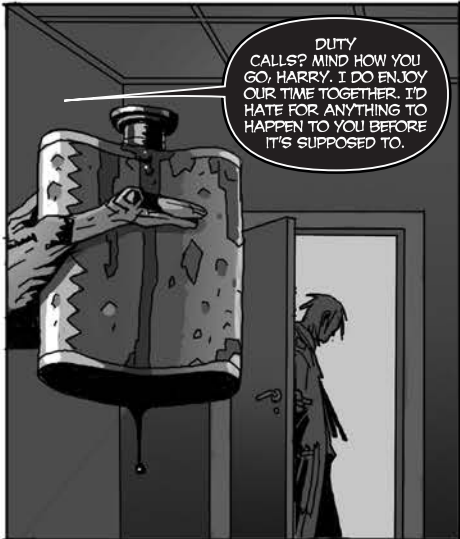
I LIKE YOU, HARRY. I'M GLAD I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO KILL YOU YET. YOU'RE NOTHING LIKE THE USUAL KIND I GET--

THE FATALISTS WHO JUST LET ME HAPPEN TO THEM. THE FIGHTERS WHO DRONE ON ABOUT BEING "SURVIVORS" RATHER THAN VICTIMS. THE HAPPY-CLAPPERS, WITH THEIR RIDICULOUS BUCKET LISTS.



OH, AND THE EUTHANASIA COWARDS-- TELLING THEMSELVES HOW BRAVE THEY ARE, WHILE MAKING AN EARLY BOLT FOR THE EXIT DOOR.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, TIME FOR ME TO GO.



DUTY CALLS? MIND HOW YOU GO, HARRY. I DO ENJOY OUR TIME TOGETHER. I'D HATE FOR ANYTHING TO HAPPEN TO YOU BEFORE IT'S SUPPOSED TO.



MISTER ABSALOM? THE CONSULTANT IS ON HIS WAY, YOU CAN'T LEAVE NOW!

I'M CURED, LOVE. IT'S A BLOODY MIRACLE, AND NO MISTAKE.

OH, AND THAT'S INSPECTOR ABSALOM TO YOU...



"...AS OF NOW, I'M BACK ON THE MANOR."

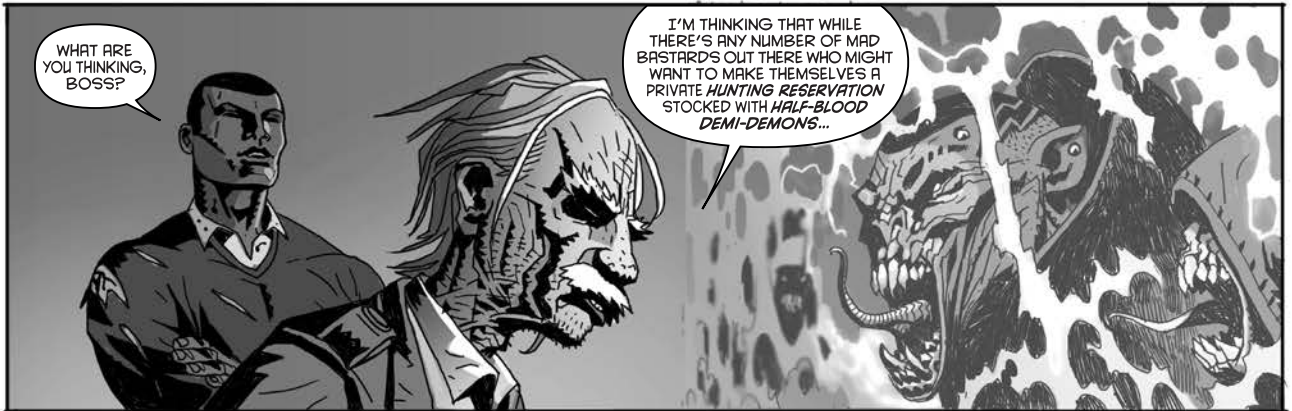
THE THINGS YOU LITTLE BLIGHTERS GET UP TO WHEN I TRY TO PUT MY FEET UP FOR A DAY, EHP?

OKAY, DORIS STOKES, SHOW ME WHAT'S GOT YOU ALL EXCITED THIS TIME.



BOUNDARY SIGLS, HARRY, ALL ROUND THE ESTATE. REAL TOP-DRAWER STUFF. SOME LOVELY WORK'S GONE INTO THE BINDING GLYPHS. DON'T SEE ARTISTRY LIKE THAT THESE DAYS.

NOW THERE'S A THING...



WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, BOSS?

I'M THINKING THAT WHILE THERE'S ANY NUMBER OF MAD BASTARDS OUT THERE WHO MIGHT WANT TO MAKE THEMSELVES A PRIVATE HUNTING RESERVATION STOCKED WITH HALF-BLOOD DEMI-DEMONS...



"...THERE'S FAR FEWER OUT THERE CAPABLE OF THIS KIND OF OLD-SCHOOL CRAFTSMANSHIP?"

HELLO? YES, SPEAKING...



ABSALOM? I SEE...WELL, IT'S UNFORTUNATE, BUT NOT TO WORRY.

THE INSPECTOR AND I HAVE SOMETHING OF AN UNDERSTANDING...

GHOSTS OF LONDON

Script: Gordon Rennie

Art: Tiernen Trevallion

Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1765-1771





THE EAST END OF LONDON, 1936.



BLOODY COWARDS! TRAITORS, THE LOT OF THEM — IN LEAGUE WITH THE BLOODY KIKES AND BOLSHEVIKS!

ERLAND, PLEASE! THEY'LL FIND US! WE HAVE TO GO!



HE'S RIGHT, ERLAND. THE BALLOON'S GONE UP. MOSLEY'S NEVER GOING TO COME BACK FROM THIS MESS. IT'S OVER!

OVER? FOR MOSLEY, MAYBE. FOR THE UNION, TOO.



THEY'LL LOOK BACK AT THIS MOMENT, THIS COUNTRY'S ENEMIES, AND SAY THAT THIS IS WHERE THEY BEAT US, BUT THEY'LL BE WRONG —



IT'S NEVER OVER. NEVER.

HAMMERSMITH, NOW:

HEADING SOUTH, TOWARD THE JUNCTION WITH DALLING ROAD... ANYONE SPOTTED IT?

SMASH!

DAMN.

IT'S HEADING WEST NOW, BOSS, YOU GOING TO GET THERE IN TIME?

I MIGHT, IF YOU DON'T KEEP ON YAPPING AT ME.

BLOODY HELL...

DS HOPKINS HERE. I'M CLOSER, NO SIGN OF IT, THOUGH. ANYONE GIVE ME A BETTER FIX ON —

KOOOOO



MISSED HIM, GUV — HE'S HEADING YOUR WAY!

HFF! HANG ON A MO...

ARSE.



RIGHT. YOU'RE OFF THE RESERVATION WITHOUT PERMISSION, LAD, SO LET'S BE HAVING YOU.



HANG ABOUT!



BOSS, YOU OKAY?

OH AYE. JUST FINE AND DANDY. YOU KNOW ME, SON — NEVER ONE TO GRUMBLE.



THAT WAS REALLY HIM? **SPRING-HEELED JACK?**

WELL, IT WASN'T DICK VAN DYKE SINGING CHIM CHIMINEY CHIM CHIM BLOODY CHER-EE, WAS IT?

THAT WAS HIM, ALL RIGHT. NIPPY LITTLE BUGGER, ISN'T HE? ESPECIALLY FOR SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN A LONDON URBAN MYTH SINCE THE 1830S.

MY NOSE IS TWITCHING. THAT'S NOT A GOOD SIGN.



KEBAB SHOP DOWN BELOW. DON'T THINK THE BINS HAVE BEEN COLLECTED IN A WHILE.

NO, SOMETHING'S HAPPENING OUT THERE.



IF ANYONE'S GOT ANY HOLIDAYS BOOKED, YOU CAN PUT THE SUNTAN LOTION BACK IN THE CUPBOARD.

THERE'S SOME NASTY BUSINESS BREWING OUT THERE, AND THIS LITTLE SIDE-SHOW IS JUST THE **START** OF IT...





AYE AYE. NOTHING LIKE A SURPRISE BIT OF HEAD TO START THE DAY OFF WITH A BANG.



LEAVE IT OUT, HARRY. IT'S NOT EVEN LUNCHTIME YET. AND WE'VE GOT AN AUDIENCE.

SOD OFF. NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE HAD TO GET ON THE WELLIES TO FISH SOME POOR SOD'S NAPPER OUT THE RIVER.

MIND YOU, USUALLY IT'S ONLY BEEN ONE AT A TIME.



GETTING REPORTS OF MORE OF THEM BEING FOUND AT WOOLWICH, GREENWICH AND ROUND THE ISLE OF DOGS.

WELL, THERE WOULD BE, WOULDN'T THERE? BLOODY THOUSANDS OF THE THINGS WENT INTO THE RIVER ONCE UPON A TIME.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, BOSS?

I'M TALKING ABOUT 61 AD, WHEN **BOUDICEA** HERE AND HER ARMY OF PREHISTORIC FOOTBALLERS SACKED OLD LONDON TOWN, CUT THE NAPPER OFF EVERY ROMAN LIVING IN THE PLACE AND CHUCKED 'EM ALL INTO THE THAMES.

IT'S A HARDLINE APPROACH TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, I'LL GRANT YOU, BUT THEY DIDN'T MESS ABOUT MUCH IN THOSE DAYS.



BLOODY HELL — DON'T THEY TEACH **PROPER** HISTORY ANYMORE? SO MUCH FOR ALL YOU FINE PRODUCTS OF THE MET'S PONCY NEW GRADUATE RECRUITMENT SCHEME.

SCHLUCK!



TROUBLE IS, BIGGUS DICKUS HERE LOOKS LIKE HE WAS SCARFING DOWN HALF-TIME SNAILS AND OYSTERS AT THE CHARIOT RACES ONLY YESTERDAY, INSTEAD OF BEING BURIED IN THE RIVERBED SINCE EVEN BEFORE THE LAST TIME SCOTLAND WENT TO THE WORLD CUP.

POLICE



FIRST SPRING-HEELED JACK DROPS IN FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, AND NOW THIS. SOMEONE'S MESSING WITH THE CITY'S PARANORMAL PSYCHO-GEOGRAPHY?

CLEVER LAD, YOU WIN THE PRIZE — CATCH.



ALL RIGHT, ARTHUR TOYNBEE. YOU AND DAVID STARKEY SORT THINGS OUT HERE. ME AND A.J.P. TAYLOR HERE ARE OFF TO SHAKE THE BUSHES AND SEE WHAT FALLS OUT.

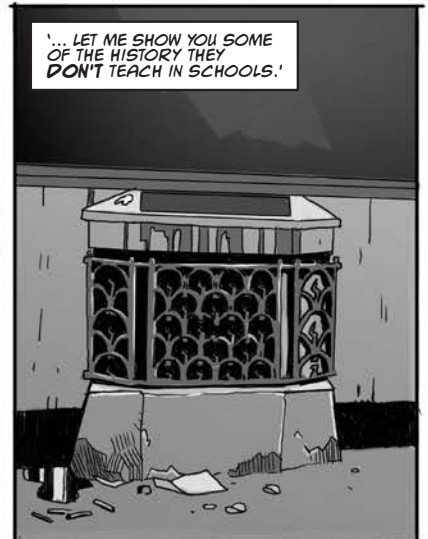
AND IT'S **BOUDICCA**, BY THE WAY.



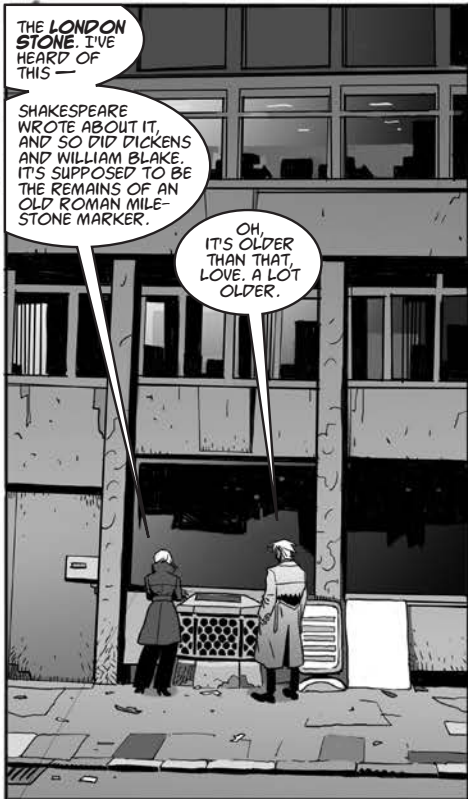
WHAT'S THAT, LOVE?

SHE'S CALLED **BOUDICCA** THESE DAYS. NOT 'BOUDICEA', WHICH IS PROBABLY BASED ON A TWELFTH-CENTURY ERROR IN LATIN TRANSCRIPTION, AND FURTHER POPULARISED BY AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POEM ABOUT HER.

IS THAT A FACT? COME ON, THEN...



'... LET ME SHOW YOU SOME OF THE HISTORY THEY DON'T TEACH IN SCHOOLS.'



THE LONDON STONE. I'VE HEARD OF THIS —

SHAKESPEARE WROTE ABOUT IT, AND SO DID DICKENS AND WILLIAM BLAKE. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE THE REMAINS OF AN OLD ROMAN MILESTONE MARKER.

OH, IT'S OLDER THAN THAT, LOVE. A LOT OLDER.



SEE THAT UP THERE? ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL ON LUDGATE HILL. BEFORE THE CATHEDRAL, THOUGH, THERE WAS A ROMAN TEMPLE THERE. AND BEFORE THAT, THERE WAS A DRUIDIC STONE CIRCLE THERE, AT THE CENTRE OF A NETWORK OF LEY LINES.

LONDON STANDS ON ANCIENT AND MYSTICAL GROUND, AND JUST BECAUSE THAT SOUNDS LIKE A LOAD OF NEW-AGE BOLLOCKS DOESN'T MEAN IT'S ANY LESS TRUE.



THE STONE'S BEEN PLUGGED INTO THE HEART OF EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED HERE FOR THE LAST THREE THOUSAND YEARS. ALL THAT POWER, ALL THAT HISTORY, AND LOOK AT IT NOW...

JUST SOMEWHERE TO DUMP THE KEBAB AND CHIP WRAPPERS ON THE WAY HOME ON A SATURDAY NIGHT.



JUST AS WELL THAT'S NOT THE REAL STONE IN THERE, EH?

BY THE WAY, YOU KNOW WE'VE PICKED UP A COUPLE OF SHADOWS?

THREE OF THEM. THEY'VE BEEN WITH US SINCE THE EMBANKMENT.



WANT ME TO CALL FOR BACK-UP?



'DON'T BE DAFT, LOVE...





RUNNING OFF AND LEAVING HIS MATES TO GET A KICKING? THIS ONE MUST BE THE BRAINS OF THE OUTFIT.

THAT'S THE LAD WE WANT TO SPEAK TO!



HANG ABOUT. YOU SMELL THAT? SMELLS LIKE...



SOMETHING BURNING...?

LONDON, NOW...

GET ON THE BLOWER PRONTO, LOVE! TELL 'EM WE'RE IN PURSUIT OF A SUSPECT AND SEE IF YOU CAN'T RUSTLE UP SOME BACK-UP!



... AND ALSO LONDON, 1666:

TELL 'EM WE'RE PROCEEDING ALONG EASTCHEAP IN THE DIRECTION OF PUDDING BLEEDIN' LANE!





THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON?

AYE, AND IF THIS TOE-RAG THINKS THAT'S GOING TO SCARE OFF HARRY ABSALOM, HE'S GOT ANOTHER THINK COMING.



RIGHT, HERE'S THE PLAN — WE CATCH HIM, GIVE HIM A GOOD PROPER KICKING, AND FIND OUT WHO HE'S WORKING FOR, GOT IT?



BLOODY HELL, THIS IS GOING TO BE EASIER THAN I —



OI—!



LITTLE SCROTE! THAT'S QUALITY HABERDASHERY, THAT IS.

INSPECTOR, LOOK OUT!



WHAT'S THAT, LOVE?

AW BOLLOCKS.





WE WERE IN A MEMORY OF A PAST LONDON. THAT'S WHAT THE STONE IS — A STORAGE BOX FOR ALL THOSE PAST LONDONS, ALL THOSE MEMORIES OF ALL THE GOOD THINGS AND THE BLOODY HORRIBLE THINGS THAT THIS CITY'S ALL ABOUT.

YOU KNOW WHO CHARLIE PEACE WAS?

A NOTORIOUS VICTORIAN CRIMINAL.



RIGHT. A PROPER VILLAIN, FROM A PROPER VILLAINOUS AGE.

HE WAS SUPPOSED TO KNOW HOW TO USE THE STONE, GETTING CHASED BY THE ROZZERS, THEN JUST TAKE A SHORTCUT THROUGH THE PLAGUE YEARS, OR LOSE 'EM IN THE CROWD AT THE HANGING OF DICK TURPIN.

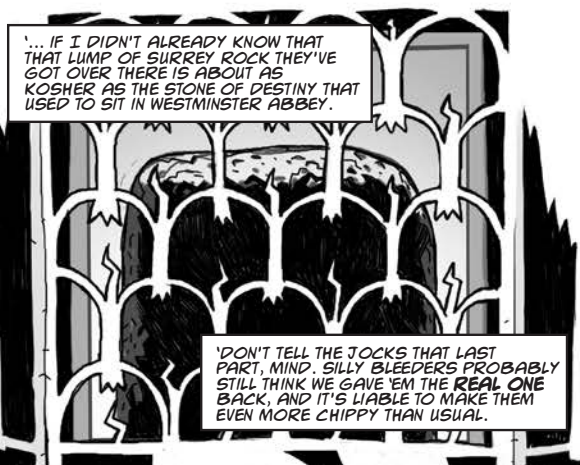
PRETTY MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT LITTLE SCROTE LOST US BACK THERE.



I DON'T GET IT. IF THE STONE'S SO POWERFUL —

— THEN WHY IS IT LEFT TO SIT THERE AT THE SIDE OF A LONDON STREET, WHERE EVERY TOM, DICK AND CHARLIE PEACE CAN GET TO IT?

GOOD QUESTION, AND ONE I'D WONDER MYSELF...



'... IF I DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW THAT THAT LUMP OF SURREY ROCK THEY'VE GOT OVER THERE IS ABOUT AS KOSHER AS THE STONE OF DESTINY THAT USED TO SIT IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

'DON'T TELL THE JOCKS THAT LAST PART, MIND. SILLY BLEEDERS PROBABLY STILL THINK WE GAVE 'EM THE REAL ONE BACK, AND IT'S LIABLE TO MAKE THEM EVEN MORE CHIPPY THAN USUAL.



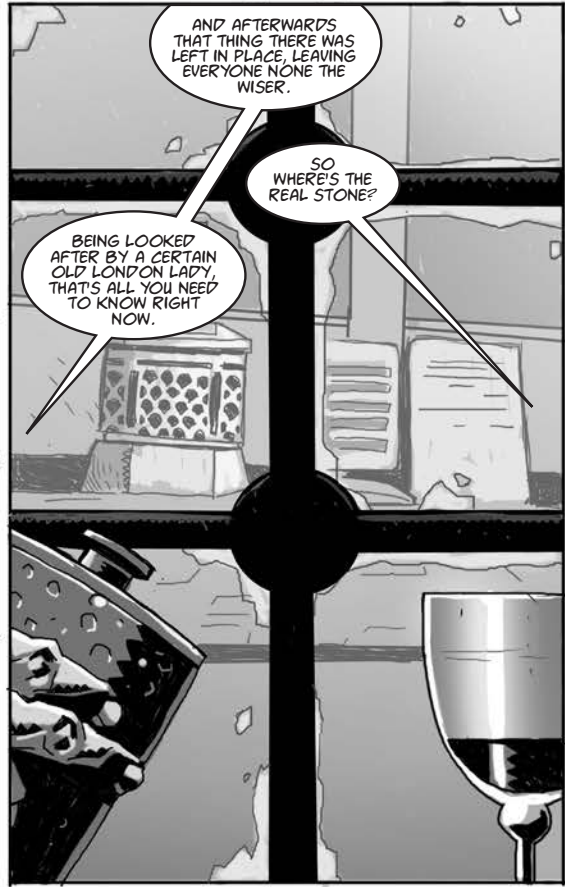
'T USED TO BE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET — THE REAL STONE, THE ONE SHAKESPEARE WROTE ABOUT — BEFORE THEY MOVED IT TO BECOME PART OF A NEARBY CHURCH.



'THEN WORLD WAR TWO CAME ALONG, AND THE JERRIES BOMBED HALF OF LONDON TRYING TO DESTROY THE THING — "SO LONG AS THE STONE OF BRUTUS IS SAFE, SO LONG SHALL LONDON FLOURISH."



'THEY BELIEVED IT, AND SO DID OUR MOB — THE STONE SURVIVED, AND WAS MOVED TO SOMEWHERE MORE SECURE.'



AND AFTERWARDS THAT THING THERE WAS LEFT IN PLACE, LEAVING EVERYONE NONE THE WISER.

SO WHERE'S THE REAL STONE?

BEING LOOKED AFTER BY A CERTAIN OLD LONDON LADY THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW.



THE IMPORTANT THING IS, AT LEAST NOW WE'VE GOT AN ANGLE ON WHO'S TRYING TO MESS ABOUT WITH THE FORCES INSIDE THE STONE.

THAT TOE-RAG THAT GAVE US THE SLIP. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT HIM?

THAT HE WAS WEARING A RING, WITH AN ODD SYMBOL ON IT.



THIS SYMBOL, THE **ORDO DEFENCIO ALBIONIS** — THE ORDER FOR THE DEFENCE OF ALBION — AND THEIR LATIN'S ABOUT AS FLAKY AS THEIR POLITICS. DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEM, BUT I KNOW A MAN WHO DOES —

— TROUBLE IS, HE'S NOT A VERY NICE MAN AT ALL, EVEN IF HE IS MY OLD BOSS.

FINISH YOUR DRINK, LOVE, WE'RE GOING TO SEE THE **GU'NVOR**...



SO WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

WILLIAM WALLACE TURNED UP IN SMITHFIELD THIS MORNING, HUNG, DRAWN, QUARTERED, INTESTINES BURNT IN FRONT OF HIM WHILE HE WAS STILL ALIVE, THE WHOLE KABOODLE.

SMITHFIELD WAS A PUBLIC EXECUTION SITE BEFORE IT WAS A MEAT MARKET. WHAT ELSE?

SCREAMS, POLICE WHISTLES AND MUSIC-HALL SONGS HEARD ROUND WHITECHAPEL LAST NIGHT.

BLOODY RIPPER, ALWAYS KNEW THAT ONE WAS GOING TO TURN UP, DIDN'T WE?

WHAT ELSE?

TEDDY-BOY GHOSTS RIOTING UP NOTTING HILL WAY, GOG AND MAGOG SCARING THE TOURISTS IN REGENTS PARK, AND — MY FAVOURITE SO FAR — A PLANE COMING IN TO STANSTED ALMOST COLLIDING WITH A FLIGHT OF HEINKEL BOMBERS.

GET YOUR TIN HAT OUT, HARRY. THE BLITZ YEARS ARE BACK.

IT'S GETTING WORSE, THAT'S FOR SURE. HOW'D YOU THINK THINGS AT YOUR END?



YOU KNOW ME, GUV. I JUST LOVE A SPOT OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH POLICE WORK.

LOOKING FOR SOME GOOD CITIZENS TO STEP UP AND ASSIST US WITH OUR INQUIRIES.

ANY VOLUNTEERS, LADS?



WORMWOOD SCRUBS PRISON:

YOU SENT HIM WHERE?

HE'LL BE FINE, LOVE. LEARNED EVERYTHING HE KNOWS FROM ME, AND I LEARNED EVERYTHING I KNOW FROM THE BLOKE WE'RE ABOUT TO SEE.



YOUR OLD BOSS, WHAT DID HE DO TO END UP HERE? ON THE TAKE? GOT CAUGHT DOING THE VERBALS, OR BEATING CONFESSIONS OUT OF SUSPECTS?

OH, NOTHING SO MUNDANE FOR THE GUV'NOR...



NO, HE ONLY TRIED TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT BY OCCULT MEANS. SAID IT WAS TOO DANGEROUSLY LEFT-WING...

... AND THAT WAS BACK IN THE DAYS WHEN GOOD OLD MAGGIE WAS STILL AT NUMBER TEN, MIND.

HE'S KEPT SEGREGATED FROM THE OTHER PRISONERS FOR HIS OWN PROTECTION BECAUSE HE'S AN EX-COP?



NO, BECAUSE HE'S A BLOODY MANIAC PSYCHO.

RIGHT. ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?

JUST THAT IT WAS ME THAT PUT HIM AWAY...

'... BEST NOT TO MENTION IT, THOUGH. HE'S NOT THE KIND OF BLOKE YOU WANT TO PUT OUT OF SORTS.'

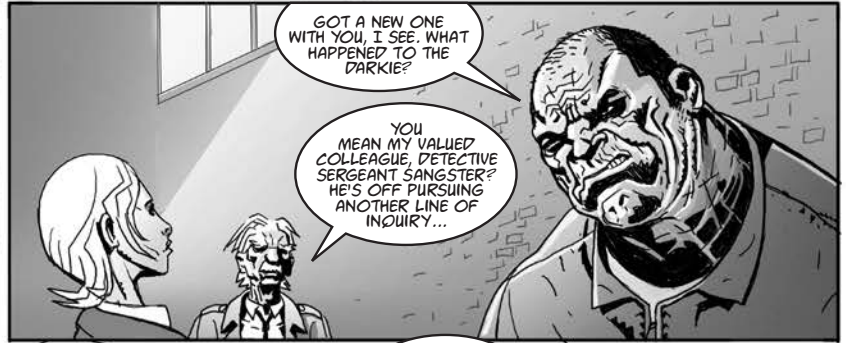


EVENING, GUV'NOR. BEEN A GOOD BOY, I HOPE? NOT TRIED TO SUBSTITUTE THE HEIR TO THE THRONE WITH A HOMUNCULUS GROWN BY YOUR OLD PALS AMONG THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL BRIGADE AGAIN, HAVE YOU?



'ELLO, 'ARRY, NO HANDSHAKE, THEN?

I PREFER TO KEEP MY DISTANCE FROM MAD BASTARDS ARMED WITH GARDENING TOOLS, IF IT'S ALL THE SAME.



GOT A NEW ONE WITH YOU, I SEE. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DARKIE?

YOU MEAN MY VALUED COLLEAGUE, DETECTIVE SERGEANT SANGSTER? HE'S OFF PURSUING ANOTHER LINE OF INQUIRY...



YOU LOT WANT TO GO BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM!



WHAT — CHISWICK?



HE'S A BIG FAN OF YOURS. SENDS A NICE FOOD PARCEL EVERY CHRISTMAS, I UNDERSTAND.

THAT'S HIM, IS IT?

'COURSE, HE PISSES IN IT FIRST, I'M ALSO GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND.



DONE WINDING ME UP NOW, ARE YOU?

NOT REALLY, BUT I'VE GOT THE DARTS ON TONIGHT.

RECOGNISE THIS?



ORDER FOR THE DEFENCE OF ALBION. BUNCH OF TOFFEE-NOSED POOFS WISHING IT WAS STILL THE DAYS WHEN THE PEASANTS KNEW THEIR PLACE.

BACK, ARE THEY?

THAT'S WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO FIND OUT.



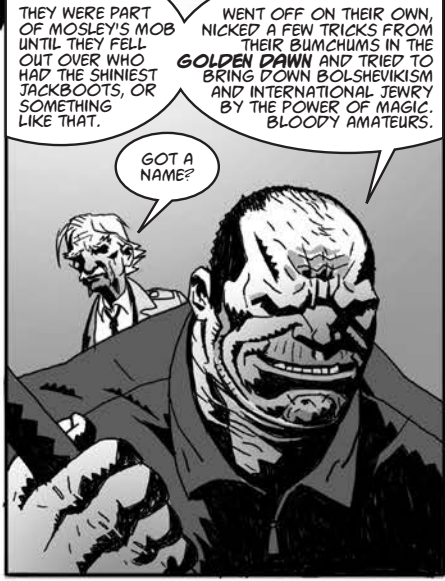
AYE AYE, RECKON YOU MIGHT BE JUST THE CHAP WE'RE LOOKING FOR...

THE OLD FILES ON THEM ARE A LITTLE ON THE LIGHT SIDE, YOUR DOING, I'M GUESSING.

ALWAYS PAYS TO HAVE A LITTLE **INSURANCE** FOR A RAINY DAY. DIDN'T I TRY TO TEACH YOU THAT?

THEY WERE PART OF MOSLEY'S MOB UNTIL THEY FELL OUT OVER WHO HAD THE SHINIEST JACKBOOTS, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

WENT OFF ON THEIR OWN, NICKED A FEW TRICKS FROM THEIR BUMCHUMS IN THE **GOLDEN DAWN** AND TRIED TO BRING DOWN BOLSHEVIKISM AND INTERNATIONAL JEWRY BY THE POWER OF MAGIC. BLOODY AMATEURS.



GOT A NAME?

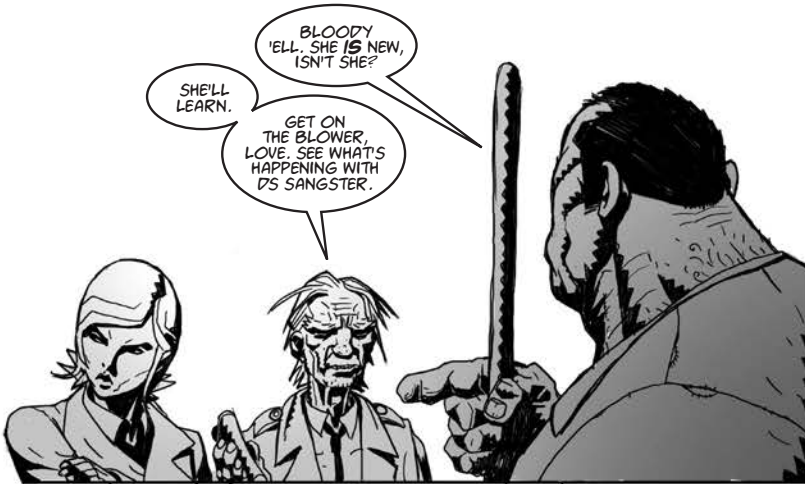


ERLAND LYTTON. SLIMY LITTLE BUGGER, WORKED FOR US WHEN THE WAR BROKE OUT, AND SO MANAGED NOT TO GET LOCKED UP FOR TREASON, LIKE HIS EX-MATE MOSLEY.

RAN INTO HIM IN THE SEVENTIES, WHEN HE TRIED TO HYPNOTISE ME INTO JOINING THE CAUSE. I BROKE HIS ARM FOR HIS TROUBLES, BUT HE'D CLEARLY LEARNED A FEW TRICKS SINCE THE MOSLEY DAYS.



IF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS TRUE, HE MUST BE OVER A **HUNDRED**. SURELY HE PROBABLY DIED DECADES AGO?



SHE'LL LEARN.

BLOODY 'ELL SHE IS NEW, ISN'T SHE?

GET ON THE BLOWER, LOVE. SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH D'S SANGSTER.

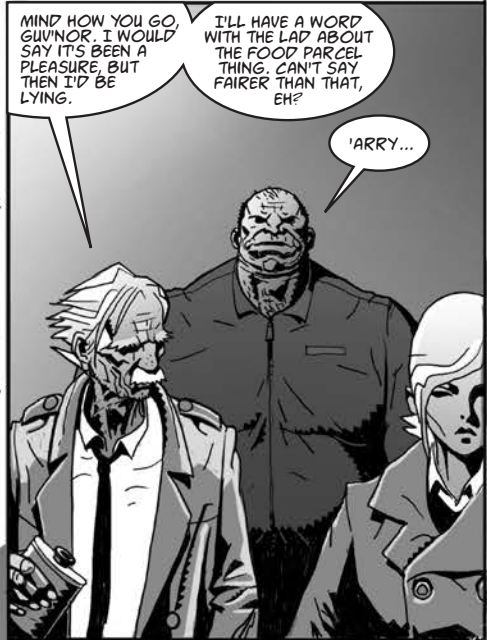


TERENCE? WE'VE GOT SOMETHING. A NAME —

SOME OLD BLOKE CALLED LYTON, BY ANY CHANCE?



GOT A PUBLIC-SPIRITED SOUL HELPING US WITH OUR INQUIRIES. THE NEXT CIRCLE LINE TRAIN'S DUE IN A FEW MINUTES, SO I'M EXPECTING WE'LL HAVE MORE TO GO ON THEN.



MIND HOW YOU GO, GUVNOR. I WOULD SAY IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE, BUT THEN I'D BE LYING.

I'LL HAVE A WORD WITH THE LAD ABOUT THE FOOD PARCEL THING. CAN'T SAY FAIRER THAN THAT, EH?

'ARRY...



I WASN'T KIDDING ABOUT THEM WISHING IT WAS THE GOOD OLD DAYS, WHEN WE ALL STILL TUGGED OUR FORELOCKS TO OUR SOCIAL BETTERS.

THEY WANT TO TURN THE CLOCK BACK, TO SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST. SOMETHING RIGHT NASTY, I'M GUESSING...



SOMEWHERE IN OXFORDSHIRE.

ERLAND LYTON — YOU'RE BLOODY NICKED, MATE!



AYE AYE. CATCH YOU ON THE WAY OUT TO A FANCY DRESS PARTY, LADS?



'AVE 'EM!



LYTON? WHERE ARE YOU HIDING, YOU MAD OLD COFFIN DODGER?



IN HERE, INSPECTOR, BUT SORRY TO DISAPPOINT —



— THERE'S LITTLE YOU CAN DO THAT OLD AGE AND ITS ATTENDANT INFIRMITIES HAVEN'T ALREADY VISITED UPON ME.



OH, I BEG TO DIFFER, CHUM. I CAN HIDE YOUR WERTHER'S ORIGINALS AND STOP YOU FROM WATCHING **COUNT-DOWN**, AND THAT'S JUST FOR STARTERS.

SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, YOU WITHERED OLD GIT?



CORONARY HEART DISEASE, EMPHYSEMA AND VARIOUS FORMS OF LATE-STAGE CANCER. DO WHAT YOU WANT, INSPECTOR. I DOUBT HE'D FEEL A THING.

COULD YOU USE SOMETHING ELSE, THOUGH? OUR ANCESTOR USED THAT AT THE BATTLE OF **BOSWORTH FIELD**, AND IT REALLY IS QUITE VALUABLE.



MY GRANDDAUGHTER, AND ALSO MY DOCTOR. FAMILY'S IMPORTANT, DON'T YOU THINK?

SO I IMAGINE YOU'RE HERE ABOUT THE **STONE**?

WHAT DO YOU BLOODY THINK?



'BEING LOOKED AFTER BY A CERTAIN OLD LONDON LADY...' NOW I GET IT...

THE **OLD LADY OF THREADNEEDLE STREET**.

IT'S BEEN HERE SINCE THE WAR. KEPT SAFE AS THE **BANK OF ENGLAND**, YOU MIGHT SAY.



NOW I'M NO EXPERT, BUT I'M GUESSING IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE DOING THAT, RIGHT?



HOW DID YOU DO IT?

ACCESS THE STONE'S POWERS REMOTELY? YEARS OF PATIENCE AND THE ACCUMULATION OF CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES.



IN THE END, A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PERSONAL SACRIFICE WAS ALSO REQUIRED. BUT IT'LL ALL BE WORTH IT. A RETURN TO THE GOLDEN AGE. A NEW AND BETTER BRITAIN.

LOVE A BIT OF PATRIOTISM, ME. COUNT ME IN...

... EXCEPT I GET THE FEELING YOUR BRITAIN AND MINE JUST ISN'T THE SAME ONE AT ALL.



I'M THINKING PIGEON FANCYING AND WHIPPET RACING, BUT YOU'RE THINKING FOX HUNTING AND PEASANT BAITING. I WANT A WORLD WHERE I CAN SIT IN THE PUB AND WATCH THE RACING WITHOUT SOME NUTTER SOUNDING OFF.

YOU WANT ONE WHERE THE IMPORTANT THING IS THE OIKS REMEMBERING HOW TO BOW LOW ENOUGH TO YOU AND YOUR POSH MATES...



SO NOW YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME HOW TO TURN THE BLOODY THING OFF WITHOUT BLOWING UP HALF THE SQUARE MILE OF LONDON.

OI, EVA BRAUN M.D. — WHAT'S THE HISTORY OF THIS ONE HERE? SOME ANCESTOR PONCE WAVE IT AROUND A BIT AT THE BATTLE OF THE BILLINGTON CLUB?



YOU WOULDN'T DARE...

SEE, I THINK YOU'VE GOT ME CONFUSED WITH ONE OF THOSE NICE COPPERS, THE ONES WITH BOARDS OF INQUIRY AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES.

GO BLEATING TO THE POLICE COMPLAINTS AUTHORITY — THEY'VE NEVER HEARD OF ME. TRY THE HOME OFFICE — THEY WET THEIR SKIVVIES AT THE MENTION OF THE PEOPLE I WORK FOR.



LIQUID MORPHINE. HAVE A SWIG — YOU'LL NEED IT.

SEE, WHEN IT COMES TO ILLNESS AND KNOWING WHAT CAN STILL HURT, NO MATTER HOW MUCH MEDICATION YOU'RE ON, I HAPPEN TO BE A BIT OF AN EXPERT...

... MORE'S THE PITY FOR YOU, SQUIRE.



THE STONE'S A REPOSITORY FOR LONDON'S HISTORY, CONTAINING THE MEMORIES OF ALL ITS MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.

YOU CAN ACCESS THOSE MEMORIES, BUT TRYING TO FIND AND REPLAY A SPECIFIC ONE IS LIKE TRYING TO FIND A STATION ON A FAULTY RADIO...

— YOU HAVE TO GO UP AND DOWN ALL THE POINTS ON THE DIAL UNTIL YOU HIT THE ONE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. AND THAT'S WHY ALL THESE PHENOMENA ARE HAPPENING —

— THEY'RE POINTS ON THE DIAL, BROUGHT TO LIFE AS THE STONE SEARCHES THROUGH THEM.

EXACTLY, AND IT'S GETTING CLOSE TO THE END OF THE SEARCH.

WHERE ARE YOU?



OH MY GOD... OH MY GOD! STOP THE CAR, TERENCE!





CALL ABSALOM!
TELL HIM I KNOW
WHAT LYTTON AND
HIS PEOPLE ARE
AFTER...

'IT'S THE BATTLE OF CABLE STREET!
THEY THINK THEY CAN CHANGE
HISTORY IN THEIR FAVOUR, IF THEY
MAKE SURE MOSLEY AND HIS BLACK-
SHIRTS WIN IT THIS TIME AROUND!'



SOMEWHERE IN OXFORDSHIRE, NOW...

HHFF... WELL, YOU WON'T BE NEEDING THAT BIT, ANYWAY. NOT AT YOUR AGE.

BLOODY HELL, BUT THIS IS THIRSTY-GOING, EH?

NOW, WHY DON'T YOU BE A NICE BARMY OLD NAZI GENT, AND TELL ME HOW TO STOP WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CABLE STREET, BEFORE I DO SOMETHING TO YOU THAT NO AMOUNT OF NHS WAITING LISTS ARE GOING TO FIX?



... AND THE EAST END OF LONDON, 1936:







HANG ON, LOVE, I'VE GOT A SQUAD OF LADS ON THEIR WAY TO YOU PRONTO.

HELLO? DS HOPKINS? YOU THERE, LOVE?

YES, IT'S **STARTING**, ISN'T IT? I WAS THERE, ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, AND IT COULD HAVE BEEN **GLORIOUS** —

— A MARCH THROUGH THE ENEMY'S HOME CITADEL. ALL THOSE KIKES AND BOLSHIEVICS COWERING IN THEIR HOLES, KNOWING OUR TIME WAS HERE.

INSTEAD, WE WERE **BETRAYED** — BY OUR OWN COWARDICE, BY THE AUTHORITIES — AND THIS COUNTRY WAS CONDEMNED TO A FUTURE OF **CRAVEN** MEDIOCRITY.

BUT THE TIME'S RIGHT AGAIN. SO MUCH **HATRED** OUT THERE. THIS COUNTRY'S A PYRE OF FEAR AND DISCONTENT, JUST NEEDING THE RIGHT SINGLE ELEMENT TO IGNITE IT.



RIGHT, YOU HORRIBLE OLD SPECIMEN, I'VE GOT SOME OF MY LOT STUCK IN THAT MESS, SO YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME RIGHT NOW HOW TO PUT A STOP TO THIS, BEFORE I —



NO. NOT THIS WAY.



RIGHT. NO OFFENCE, GUV, BUT HAVE YOU SUBSTANTIALLY UPPED THE MORPHINE INTAKE TODAY? 'COS THAT'S GOT TO BE THE MADDEST BLOODY IDEA I'VE —

HARRY? I TOLD YOU, I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO TRY TO SHUT THIS THING DOWN WITHOUT RISKING —

WAIT... WHAT?



WHAT HE SAYS. DO IT.



HARRY? SOMETHING GOING ON HERE I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

JUST DO WHAT YOU'RE TOLD, SON...



— SOMEONE'S PLAYING BLOODY PUNCH & JUDY LARKS WITH US HERE!

SMACK!



WE GO NOW.

I CAN'T! **DS SANGSTER** IS STILL HERE SOMEWHERE —



YOU GO. NOT SAFE HERE SOON.

OH HELL, HARRY, THIS IS **TOO MENTAL**, EVEN FOR US. THERE'S SO MUCH **BAD, BAD** STUFF IN HERE, AND THE THING YOU WANT ME TO FIND... IT'S BURIED SO DEEP... AND SO FAR BACK IN TIME...



'... YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES THERE'S A GOOD REASON WHY WE TELL OURSELVES THAT WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT WENT ON HERE IN **PREHISTORIC TIMES**.'



LONDON, NOW...

HARRY,
THIS IS **INSANE!**
WE'VE GONE RIGHT TO
THE BOTTOM OF THE
WELL, AND DREDGED
UP ALL THE MUCK
THAT WAS WAITING
DOWN THERE.

THIS ISN'T
SOME BLOODY
HISTORY PAGEANT
WE'VE BROUGHT BACK,
OR A BIT OF LEGENDS
OF OLDE LONDON
TOWN BOLLOCKS. I'M
TELLING YOU, THIS
IS **SERIOUS**
STUFF...

... AND ALSO
ELSEWHERE.

... **REAL PRIMAL NASTINESS,**
FROM THE DAYS WHEN THERE
WERE EVEN WORSE THINGS ON THE
LOOSE ROUND HERE THAN PEARLY
KINGS AND MILLWALL FANS!

SO HOW DO
WE TURN IT
OFF?

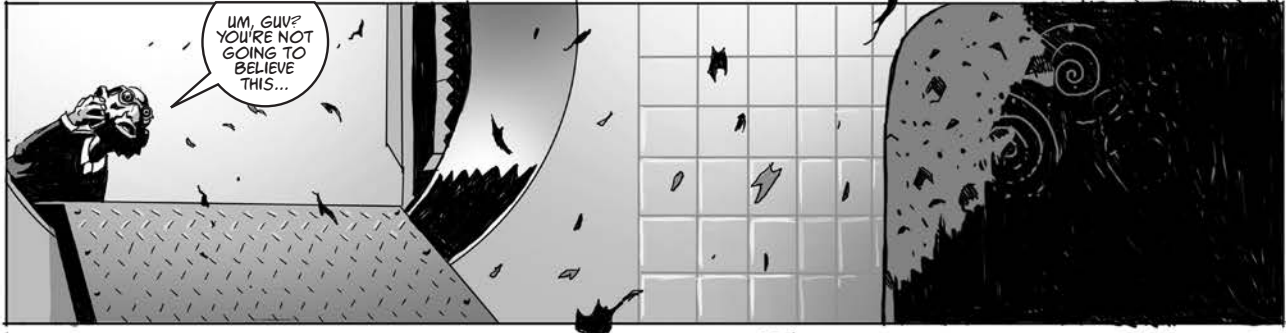
YOU **CAN'T**
GUV. WE'VE OPENED
THE DOOR, AND NOW THE
ORIGINAL LONDONERS
THE THINGS THAT WERE
HERE BEFORE EVERYONE
ELSE — ARE COMING
TO HAVE A SHUFFTY
AT US.







YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF THERE PRONTO, AS FAST AS YOUR HORRIBLE LITTLE SEXUAL DEVIANT LEGS CAN CARRY YOU!



UM, GUV? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS...



... IT'S GONE, VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE.



CUSHTY. SUMMON UP THE **FIRST EVENT** — THE **BIG BAD THING** AT THE BEGINNING OF LONDON HISTORY, THAT KICKED OFF ALL THE OTHERS — FOLD EVERYTHING INTO IT, THEN SEAL IT ALL BACK UP IN THE STONE. I'D TAKE MY HAT OFF TO YOU, MATE —

— IF I WAS THE KIND OF PONCE WHO WORE A HAT. AND IF I KNEW WHO YOU WERE.



HELLO? VACATED THE PREMISES, HAVE WE?

A SHY ONE, EH? DON'T WANT OLD HARRY TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE? WELL, WE'LL SOON SEE ABOUT THAT...



COME ON MY MANOR, MESS ABOUT WITH MY LADS AND SOLVE MY CASE FOR ME, AND YOU THINK I'M JUST GOING TO LET IT PASS?

NO, I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU SOON ENOUGH. DON'T YOU HAVE ANY WORRIES ON THAT SCORE. IN THE MEANTIME...



NOW, LYTTON, ME OLD CHUM, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH YOU?

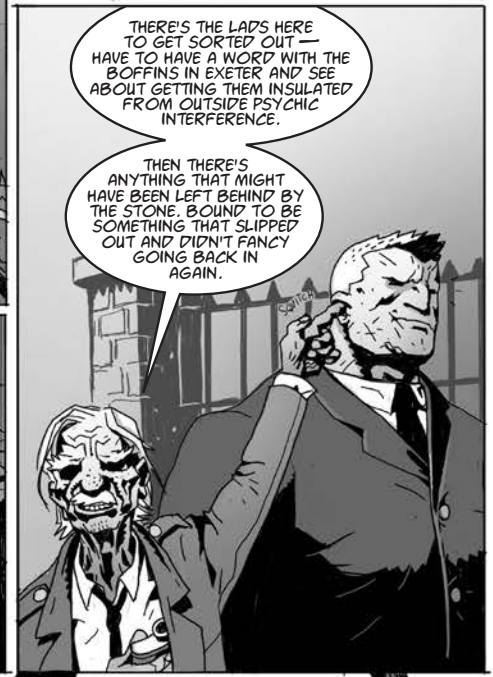
OH, HANG ABOUT. I'VE JUST HAD AN IDEA...





AFTERNOON THERE, GUV'NOR. NEW CELLMATE FOR YOU. NEED YOU TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM FOR ME.

OH, AND MAKE SURE HE GETS HIS FAIR SHARE OF THOSE SPECIAL FOOD PARCELS, WILL YOU?



THERE'S THE LADS HERE TO GET SORTED OUT — HAVE TO HAVE A WORD WITH THE BOFFINS IN EXETER AND SEE ABOUT GETTING THEM INSULATED FROM OUTSIDE PSYCHIC INTERFERENCE.

THEN THERE'S ANYTHING THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND BY THE STONE. BOUND TO BE SOMETHING THAT SLIPPED OUT AND DIDN'T FANCY GOING BACK IN AGAIN.



HEH HEH HEH!

THAT IT? WE DONE NOW?

LOOSE ENDS LOVE. ALWAYS SOME OF 'EM NEED TIDYING UP.



NOT TO WORRY, THOUGH. IF THEY'RE OUT THERE, WE'LL FIND 'EM SOON ENOUGH...



SKETCHES



Absolom
SKETCHES
FERRON!!



DC HURST



HARRY ABSOLOM



JEMIMA HOPKINS



D.S.
JEMIMA HOPKINS



D.S. TERENCE SANGSTER



BARMIBUS CREW



D.I. VINCENT WHEATLY



COMBAT SERVITORS —

GHURKA — VICTORIAN
UNIFORM



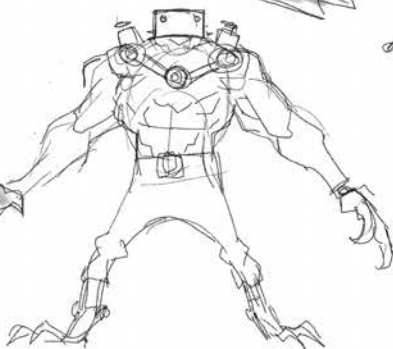
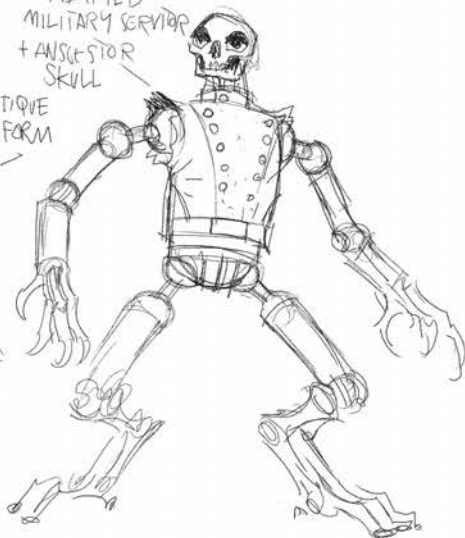
STUFFED
ANIMAL/PET
WITH CLOCK-
WORKS AND
SERVITOR BITS

MADE UP
ANIMALS



ADAPTED
MILITARY SERVITOR
+ ANCESTOR
SKULL

ANTIQUE
UNIFORM





From

SPRING-HEELED JACK!



"THE LADS"



'ACTION MAN



D.C. HURST

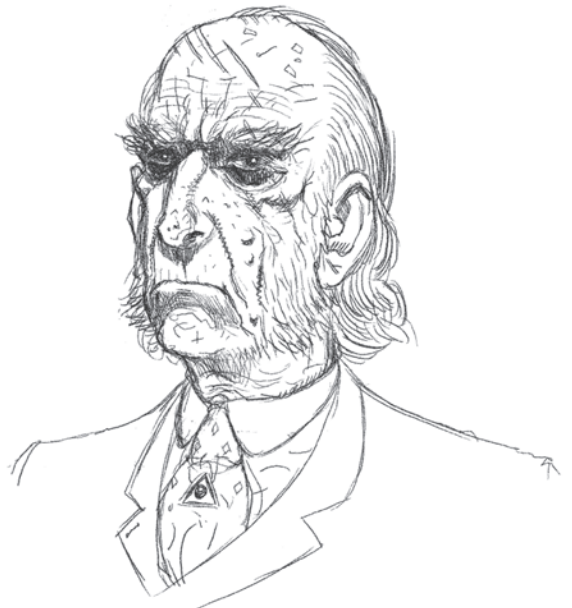
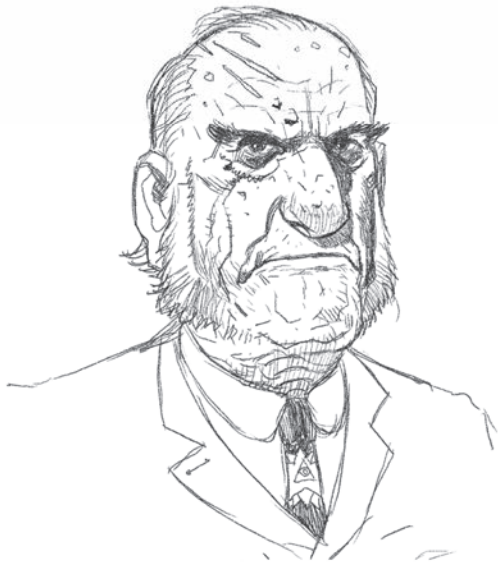


CRITCH

TEP 2011



WIERD
CLOCK WORK EYES



SIR CHARLES OCCAM #2

TEP

WRITER

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

ARTIST

Tiernen Trevallion has worked as an illustrator since he was convinced to leave school in the mid-eighties. His first comic commissions were for *Inferno Magazine* on the strip *Tales from the Ten-Tailed Cat* and *Daemonifuge 3* with Simon Spurrier for *Warhammer Monthly*. He then pestered Tharg, until 2007, where he was given an Al Ewing-scripted *Terror Tale*, followed by a couple of *Tales from the Black Museum* stories in the *Judge Dredd Magazine*. Now currently illustrating *Absalom*, Tiernen also works on his own projects, some of which involve angry puffins.



CLEANIN' UP THE MANOR ONE BLEEDIN' DEMON AT A TIME!

MODERN-DAY LONDON. Veteran copper, Detective Inspector Harry Absalom, heads a special squad that enforces The Accord - a diplomatic treaty made in the sixteenth century between the throne of England and Hell. If any demonic entities step out of line Harry and his team will track the infernal offenders down and sort them out for good. A miserable old bastard with a knack for finding trouble, Harry is the perfect man for the job!

Written by Gordon Rennie (*Necronauts*) with stunning artwork from new talent Tiernan Trevallion, *Absalom* is a thrill-packed mixture of cops and horrors!



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