

GORDON RENNIE ◊ TIERNEN TREVALLION

ABSALOM

UNDER A FALSE FLAG



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ABSALOM

UNDER A FALSE FLAG



ABSALOM CREATED BY GORDON RENNIE AND DOM REARDON

INTRODUCTION

It's difficult to remember quite how Harry Absalom wandered into being.

He was definitely partly based on my father - first name Harry, and diagnosed with terminal cancer not long before our Harry first shuffled and wheezed his way into in the pages of *Caballistics Inc* - but dear old dad, miserable git that he was (it's a family trait, apparently) lacked Harry's trademark wit. No, for that heady blend of dated 1970s British telly references and dodgy non-PC jokes designed to test The Mighty One's tolerance and the author's luck to the limit, I suspect we probably have to look much closer to home.

And now here we are at the middle chapter of Harry's story, wherein the crafty old bugger's plan is revealed. He's putting together a squad of misfits, psychos and brainwashed demon killers to go into the very worst place in the world and rescue his grandchildren in defiance of the powers-that-be that he serves. Just as it sounds, this isn't a plan that many people are going to be coming back from, but when you're old, tired, cancer-riddled and have

spent your life serving the people mostly on the wrong side of the Good-Evil manichean divide then you've got little to lose and everything to redeem yourself for.

I'm a great believer these days in characters having finite story arcs. When their arc's complete, their story is done. (Comic publishers, depending on the bread and butter of never-ending adventures of rarely-evolving popular characters, may have differing opinions here...)

As I write this, the esteemed Tiernen Trevallion and I are working on the third and final chapter of Harry's story. I'll miss the shambling old wreck when he's gone (Harry, that is... not Tiernen, who hopefully is going nowhere anytime soon) but if I ever need to revisit some knackered old misanthrope who habitually replaces empathy with perennial sarcasm... well, there's always the bathroom mirror.

Gordon Rennie
March 2017



DIRTY POSTCARDS

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

Originally published in *2000 AD* 2013 Christmas prog





...NO MORE ICE CREAM, NOT WHEN WE'VE ALREADY PAID GOOD MONEY FOR A WEEK'S BED AND BOARD.

AND I'LL HEAR NO MORE OF ANYONE'S NONSENSE ABOUT THOSE GUEST-HOUSE TEARS.



EVERYONE HERE? NO... WHERE'S OUR SIMON?

I SWEAR I'LL SWING FOR HIM IF HE'S GONE OFF AGAIN.



KATIE, BE A PET AND GO SEE IF HE'S BACK HANGING ABOUT THAT BLOMIN' TOY SHOP AGAIN--



SIMON, THERE YOU ARE! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE PLAYING AT?

SIMON? WHAT'S--



SIMON?

NOW:



SUNNY EASTBY, BOYS AND GIRLS. I HOPE YOU BROUGHT YOUR BUCKETS AND SPADES.

GOT 1976 ON THE BLOWER, HARRY. IT WANTS TO KNOW IF YOU FANCY SOME FONDUE AND A NIGHT IN WATCHING *SOME MOTHERS DO 'AVE 'EM* AND A QUICK GAME OF KERPLUNK.

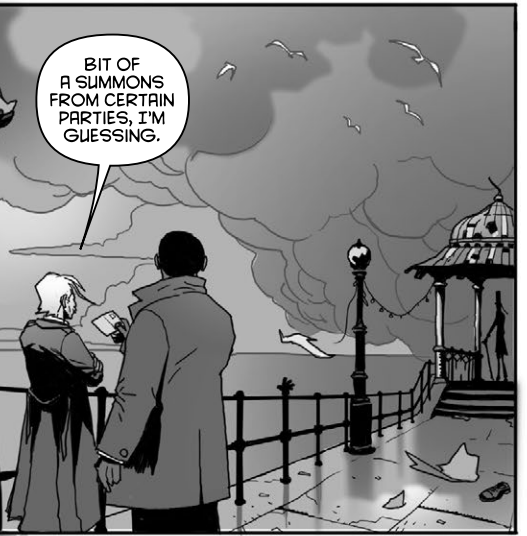


SHOW SOME RESPECT, SON. PLACES LIKE THIS ARE WHERE ALL THINGS *ENGLISH* AND *EVIL* EVENTUALLY COME TO REST. OLD CROWLEY SPENT HIS LAST YEARS IN A HASTING'S GUEST HOUSE, AND HIS NIBS SIR CLUNK-CLICK HAD HIMSELF BURIED UP SCARBOROUGH WAY.

SO WHY ARE WE HERE, GUVV?



THIS. CAME IN THE POST THIS MORNING.



BIT OF A SUMMONS FROM CERTAIN PARTIES, I'M GUESSING.



THE LADS WILL WATCH MY BACK. YOU TWO HAVE A SHUFFY AROUND, BUY YOURSELF SOME KISS-ME-QUICK HATS. AND MIND HOW YOU GO--

THIS PLACE WAS A REGULAR SODOM AND GOMORRAH IN ITS DAY. ALL THEM MR & MRS SMITHS SNEAKING AWAY FOR A DIRTY WEEKEND, WITH THEIR OTHER HALVES NONE THE WISER...



...NOT THAT YOU TWO WOULD KNOW MUCH ABOUT ANY OF THAT KIND OF THING, EHP?



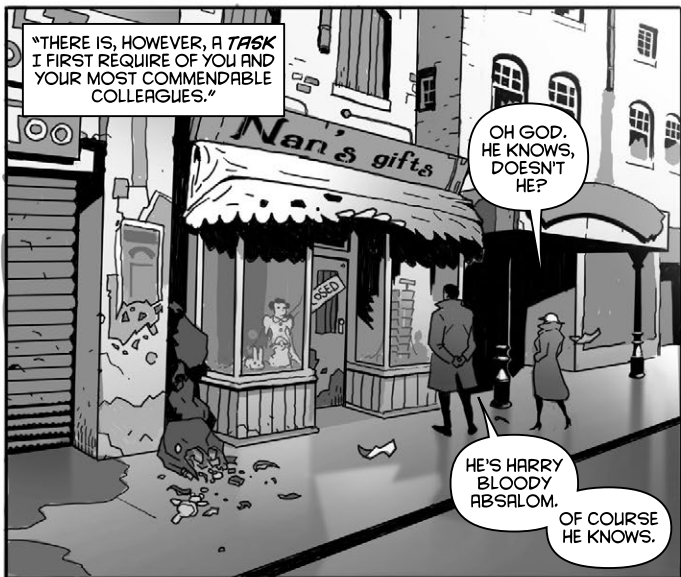
INSPECTOR. SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.



TOOK YOUR SWEET TIME GETTING BACK TO ME, DIDN'T YOU?

WELL, YOU'D BETTER HAVE SOMETHING DECENT FOR ME.

INDEED I DO. A BARGAIN MUST BE HONOURED.



"THERE IS, HOWEVER, A *TASK* I FIRST REQUIRE OF YOU AND YOUR MOST COMMENDABLE COLLEAGUES."

OH GOD. HE KNOWS, DOESN'T HE?

HE'S HARRY BLOODY ABSALOM. OF COURSE HE KNOWS.



HANG ABOUT. THERE'S SOMETHING HERE...

MAYBE. I'VE GOT A MATE WHO COLLECTS THESE THINGS. BUT THESE ONES LOOK DIFFERENT. THEY'RE--

MORE DIRTY POSTCARDS?



JESUS--!



TERENCE!
WHAT THE
HELL...?

JUST...
JUST DO YOURSELF
A FAVOUR AND DON'T
LOOK AT WHAT'S IN
THAT WINDOW, EHP?



I DID
A STINT WITH THE
DIRTY SQUAD--YOU
KNOW, THE OBSCENE
PUBLICATIONS
BOYS?

YOU KNOW
ABOUT THE STUFF
THEY SHOW YOU IN
TRAINING, TO SEE
IF YOU'VE GOT THE
STOMACH FOR
THE WORK?



I'VE HEARD
ABOUT IT. THAT
IT'S PRETTY
GRIM.

YOU CAN'T
IMAGINE, NOT
UNTIL YOU'VE
SEEN SOME
OF IT.

FILMS
AND PHOTOS,
AND ALL THOSE
KIDS IN 'EM...



WHAT I
SAW IN THERE,
THAT WAS
WORSE.

AFTERNOON,
FOLKS...



LOVELY DAY FOR IT. SO HOW'S ABOUT A PICTURE FOR YOUR OLD UNCLE CHARLEY?

STAND STILL FOR THE BIRDIE, EHP?



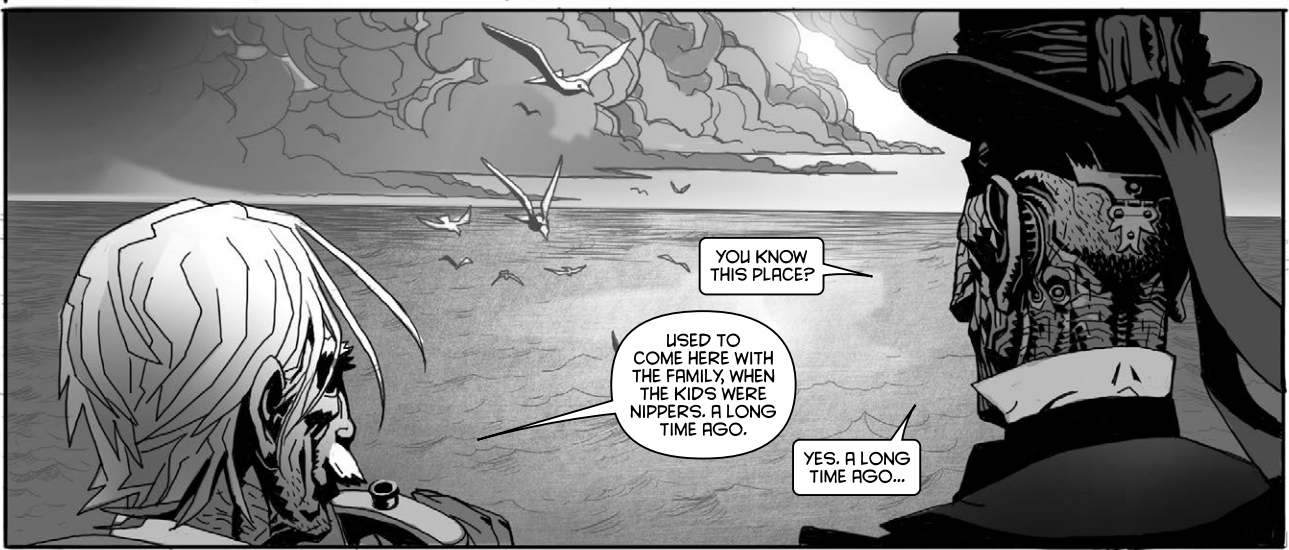
TERENCE--!

I KNOW...



KLAK!

DON'T HAVE TO BE HARRY ABSALOM TO KNOW WE REALLY DON'T WANT TO END UP IN THIS THING'S SCRAPBOOK!



YOU KNOW THIS PLACE?

USED TO COME HERE WITH THE FAMILY, WHEN THE KIDS WERE NIPPERS. A LONG TIME AGO.

YES. A LONG TIME AGO...



"...BEFORE THIS BECAME A PLACE WHERE BAD THINGS HAPPENED TO CHILDREN."

HANG ABOUT, HANG ABOUT! OOOOW, WHAT A PALAVER, AND NO MISTAKE!



ANOTHER OF YOUR MOB THAT GOT LET OFF ITS LEASH TO HAVE ITS FUN?

NOT QUITE, BUT CERTAINLY SOMETHING THAT WAS PERMITTED MORE LEEWAY THAN WAS WISE.



OOPS- A-DAISY! MIND HOW YOU GO!



AND YOU WANT US TO DO THE NECESSARIES, SO YOU CAN KEEP YOUR LILLY-WHITES OUT OF IT.

CALL IT A *PUBLIC SERVICE*, INSPECTOR. SUCH REMNANTS OF OLD MISTAKES ARE AN ANATHEMA TO BOTH OF US, SURELY?



YOUR BOYFRIEND, WAS HE? HOW VERY MODERN, IF YOU DON'T MIND ME SAYING SO.



I TRUST YOUR PEOPLE ARE UP TO THE TASK?



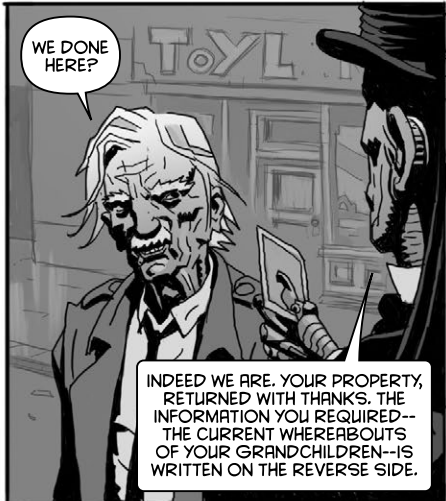






PROBLEMS?

JUST YOUR AVERAGE CREEPY OLD MUSIC-HALL PAEDO-DEMON. EVERY DAY WORKING WITH YOU IS AN ADVENTURE, GUV.



WE DONE HERE?

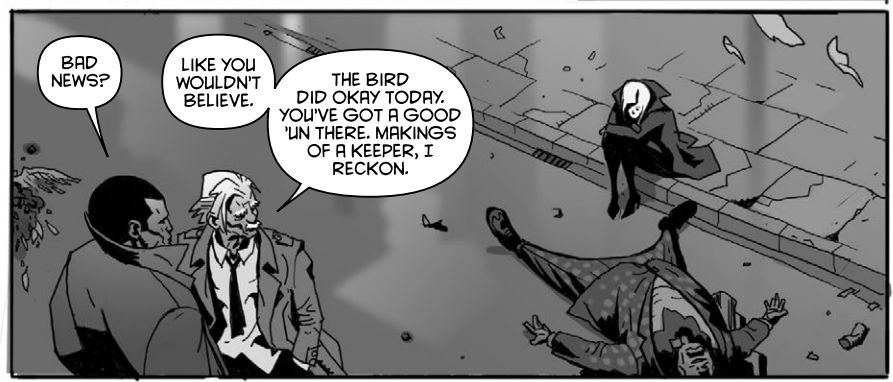
INDEED WE ARE. YOUR PROPERTY, RETURNED WITH THANKS. THE INFORMATION YOU REQUIRED-- THE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS OF YOUR GRANDCHILDREN--IS WRITTEN ON THE REVERSE SIDE.



YOU HAVE MY THANKS, INSPECTOR. AND MY SYMPATHIES.



CHRIST...



BAD NEWS?

LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE.

THE BIRD DID OKAY TODAY. YOU'VE GOT A GOOD 'UN THERE. MAKING'S OF A KEEPER, I RECKON.



"BETTER TAKE GOOD CARE OF HER..."

"... 'COS WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT MAKES THIS LITTLE SHINDIG LOOK LIKE A DAY OUT AT THE SEASIDE."



OLD PALS' ACT

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

Originally published in *2000 AD* 2014 Christmas prog



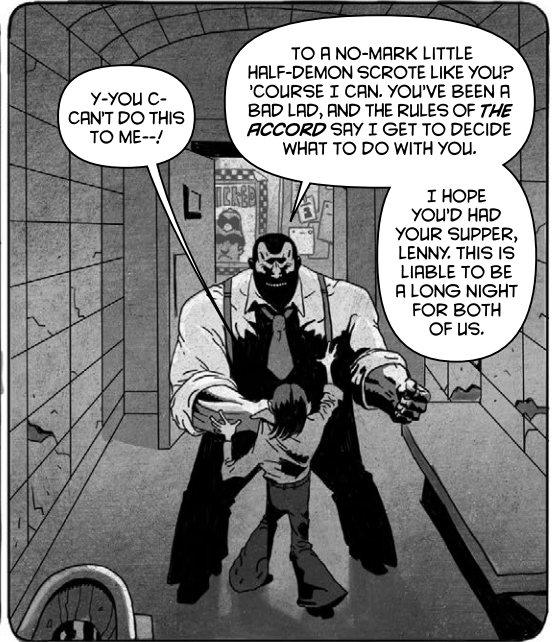


NOW I DO HEAR TELL THAT SOME OF MY COLLEAGUES PREFER THE TELEPHONE DIRECTORY METHOD OF GIVING HORRIBLE LITTLE SLAGS LIKE YOU A WELL-DESERVED THUMPING, ON ACCOUNT OF HOW IT DOESN'T LEAVE ANY BRUISES...

ME, I LIKE THE OLD-FASHIONED TOUCH. KEEPS THINGS MORE PERSONAL, YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

WAK!

SOMETIME IN THE ERA OF THE THREE-DAY WEEK AND SPANGLES SWEETS:



Y-YOU C-CAN'T DO THIS TO ME--!

TO A NO-MARK LITTLE HALF-DEMON SCROTE LIKE YOU? 'COURSE I CAN. YOU'VE BEEN A BAD LAD, AND THE RULES OF *THE ACCORD* SAY I GET TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH YOU.

I HOPE YOU'D HAD YOUR SUPPER, LENNY. THIS IS LIABLE TO BE A LONG NIGHT FOR BOTH OF US.



GU'V? THE NEW LAD'S HERE.

NEW LAD? WHERE'S CHRIS?



CHRIS GOT HIMSELF NICKED, GU'V. FIVE TO EIGHT YEARS FOR STICKY FINGERS ACTIVITIES.

BOLLOCKS. SO HE DID. WELL, BRING IN THE NEW LAD.

WELCOME TO THE SQUAD, SON. MY NAME'S *THE GUV'NOR*, BUT YOU CAN CALL ME GU'V.



HARRY, GU'V. HARRY ABSALOM.



NOW:

AFTERNOON, GUV. THOUGHT I'D DROP BY FOR A BIT OF A NATTER, IF THAT'S ALL RIGHT WITH YOU?



BLOODY BIRDS, ALWAYS AT MY GREEN BEANS...

THE SKIRT NOT WITH YOU TODAY? SHE GET FED UP WITH YOUR HORRIBLE OLD HABITS AND JACK IT IN?

D.S. HOPKINS IS CURRENTLY ON AN ASSIGNMENT WITH D.S. SANGSTER. THEY BOTH SEND THEIR REGARDS, THOUGH...



"...SOMETHING ABOUT HOPING YOU GET BUMMED BY A GANG OF GAY IMMIGRANT MUSLIM TREE-HUGGERS, I DO BELIEVE."

HE'S HEADING EAST... NO, WEST... NOW! THAT'S STRAIGHT AT YOU.

...I THINK...




BLOODY BLUR BANDITS. ALWAYS HARD TO KEEP A FIX ON 'EM.

BLUR BANDITS? WHAT ARE--




Oh.





FAMILY'S IMPORTANT, SON. REMEMBER THAT.


CHEERS, GUV. APPRECIATE IT.



JUST GLAD TO BE PART OF THE TEAM, YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?




BLUR BANDITS. REALLY GET ON MY WICK, SO THEY DO.



GET THEMSELVES TATTOOED WITH CERTAIN MAGICAL SIGILS. MAKES 'EM...WELL, NOT QUITE *INVISIBLE*, BUT DIFFICULT TO KEEP AN EYE ON.

USEFUL FOR B&E STUFF, SHOPLIFTING, PURSE-SNATCHING AND OTHER SUCH PETTY ANNOYANCES.



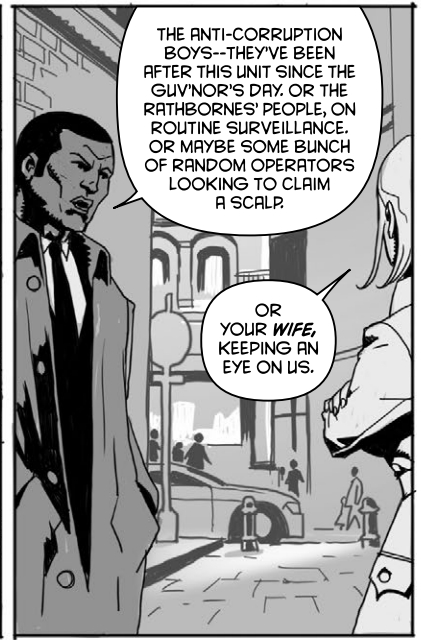
AH, THERE WE GO. WE'LL RUN IT PAST BARNEY, SEE IF HE CAN IDENTIFY THE WORKMANSHIP AND THEN GO GIVE SOME MANKY NEEDLE-POKER AN UNFRIENDLY WARNING.



BY THE WAY, YOU KNOW WE'RE BEING WATCHED?

SILVER-GREY BMW, PARKED AT THE END OF THE STREET. WHO DO YOU THINK IT MIGHT BE?

TAKE YOUR PICK...



THE ANTI-CORRUPTION BOYS--THEY'VE BEEN AFTER THIS UNIT SINCE THE GUV'NOR'S DAY. OR THE RATHBORNES' PEOPLE, ON ROUTINE SURVEILLANCE. OR MAYBE SOME BUNCH OF RANDOM OPERATORS LOOKING TO CLAIM A SCALP.

OR YOUR WIFE, KEEPING AN EYE ON US.



STAY HERE. I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.



HERE. Y WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.

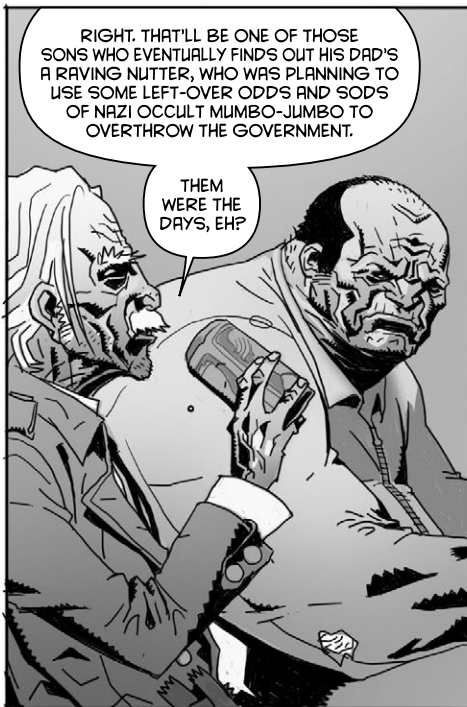


JEMIMA, DARLING. GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU AT LAST. YOU DON'T WRITE, YOU DON'T CALL...



...WHICH IS A BIT OF A BLOODY CHEEK, FRANKLY, CONSIDERING HOW MUCH WE'RE PAYING YOU TO SPY ON THAT ARSEHOLE OF A BOSS OF YOURS.

LIKE A SON TO ME, YOU WERE. YOU KNOW THAT?



RIGHT, THAT'LL BE ONE OF THOSE SONS WHO EVENTUALLY FINDS OUT HIS DAD'S A RAVING NUTTER, WHO WAS PLANNING TO USE SOME LEFT-OVER ODDS AND SODS OF NAZI OCCULT MUMBO-JUMBO TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT.

THEM WERE THE DAYS, EH?



WE HAD SOME TIMES, THOUGH. REMEMBER THAT PRIVATE MEMBERS' CLUB UP WEST, AND THE CARRY-ON THAT MAD BASTARD D.S. BURDELL USED TO GET UP TO WITH THAT STRIPPER BIRD?

YEAH, GOOD OLD CHARLEY BURDELL. YOU REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?



"THAT *BANSHEE* THEY SET ON US, ON THAT PADDY TERRORIST CASE? YOU REMEMBER THAT BLOODY HORRIBLE *SCREAM* OF ITS?"

MESSED UP OLD CHARLEY GOOD AND PROPER, IT DID, AND HE WENT HOME THAT NIGHT, SHOT HIS WIFE AND KIDS, THEN TOPPED HIMSELF.

YEAH, WE HAD SOME TIMES, ALL RIGHT.

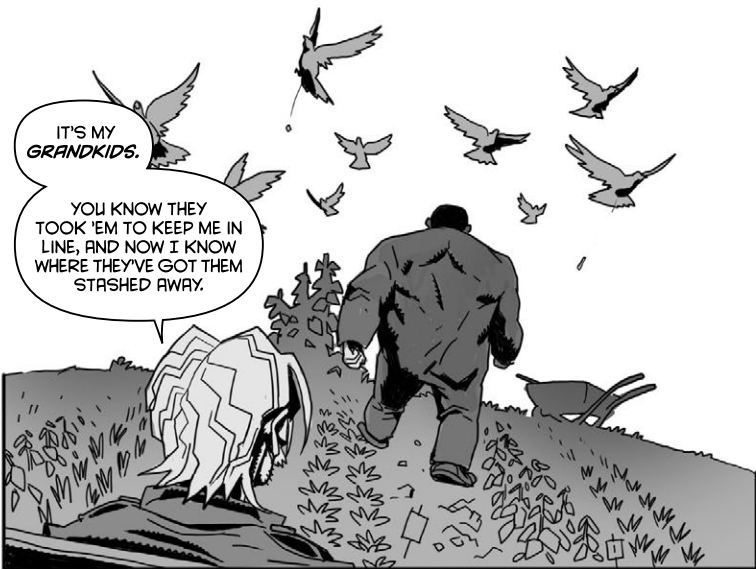




WELL, THIS HAS BEEN A NICE OLD TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE, BUT I'VE GOT THE GARDENING TO GET ON WITH, AND I DO 'EAR TELL THERE'S SOME NEWLY ARRIVED NONCES WHO NEED THE GUV'NOR TO CONFESS THEIR SINS TO--

GUV...

CRINKLE



IT'S MY GRANDKIDS.

YOU KNOW THEY TOOK 'EM TO KEEP ME IN LINE, AND NOW I KNOW WHERE THEY'VE GOT THEM STASHED AWAY.

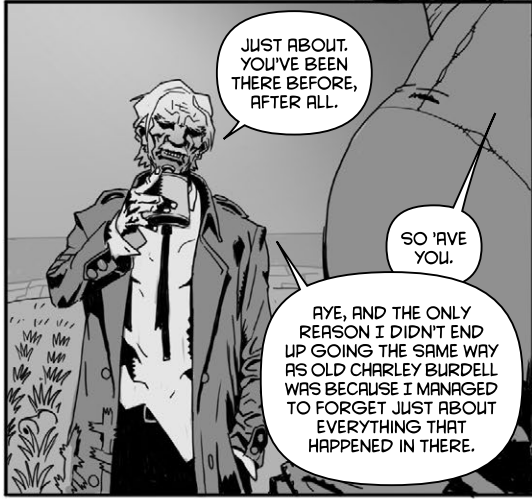


THINK I'VE GONE SOFT IN THE HEAD? THINK I DIDN'T KNOW THERE HAD TO BE A BLOODY GOOD REASON WHY YOU CAME 'ERE TODAY, LAYING IT ON THICK WITH THE OLD PALS' ACT?



THE MILLS, THEY'VE GOT 'EM HIDDEN AWAY AT THE MILLS, AND NOW YOU NEED YOUR OLD GUV'NOR'S HELP TO GET 'EM BACK OUT.

THAT ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT, HARRY SON?



JUST ABOUT. YOU'VE BEEN THERE BEFORE, AFTER ALL.

SO 'AVE YOU.

AYE, AND THE ONLY REASON I DIDN'T END UP GOING THE SAME WAY AS OLD CHARLEY BURDELL WAS BECAUSE I MANAGED TO FORGET JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED IN THERE.



YOU REMEMBER THE MILLS JOB, GUV? YOU FIXING US UP WITH WHAT SOUNDED LIKE A NICE LITTLE EXTRA-CURRICULAR EARNER--



"--A QUICK IN-AND-OUT: RESCUE SOME POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL WHO'D GOT BURNED PLAYING DOCTORS AND NURSES WITH THE DEMON FOLKS, AND THEN A MONTH OF SANGRIA AND FULL ENGLISH BREAKFASTS WITH THE WIFE AND KIDS IN MAJORCA.



"BUT IT WASN'T LIKE THAT, WAS IT, GUV?"

"NO, IT WASN'T BLOODY LIKE THAT AT ALL."





BUT YOU GOT US IN THERE, AND WHAT WAS LEFT OF US BACK OUT AGAIN--

AND NOW YOU WANT ME TO DO IT AGAIN.

I'M LISTENING, 'ARRY SON, BUT IT'LL COST YOU.

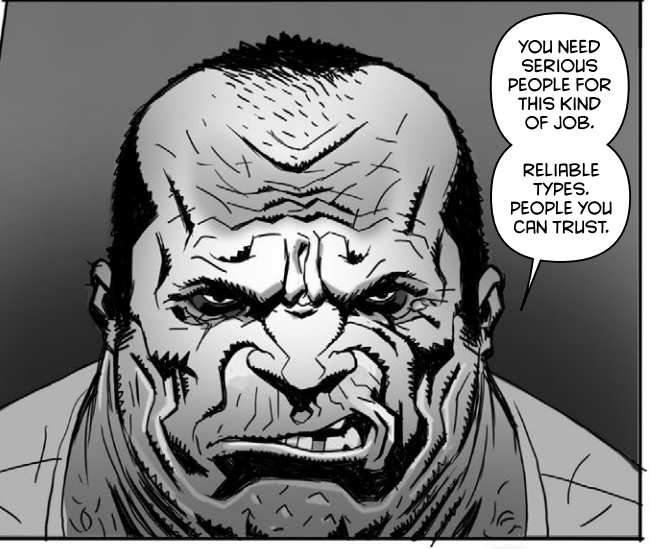
STARTING WITH A TICKET OUT OF HERE, I'M GUESSING.



AND A GOOD TEAM AROUND YOU. NO PONCES OR SOFT TOUCHES. NO PASSENGERS.

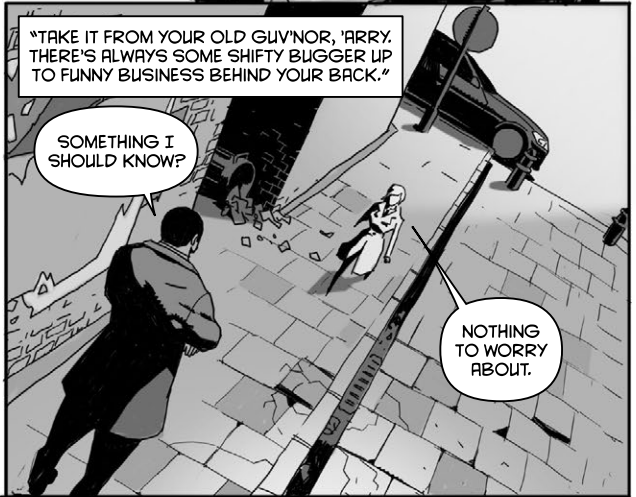
DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT MY MOB. I KNOW MY SQUAD.

AND I REMEMBER THINKING THE SAME THING, BACK IN THE DAY WHEN IT WAS *MY SQUAD*--



YOU NEED SERIOUS PEOPLE FOR THIS KIND OF JOB.

RELIABLE TYPES. PEOPLE YOU CAN TRUST.



"TAKE IT FROM YOUR OLD GLIV'NOR, 'ARRY. THERE'S ALWAYS SOME SHIFTY BUGGER UP TO FUNNY BUSINESS BEHIND YOUR BACK."

SOMETHING I SHOULD KNOW?

NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

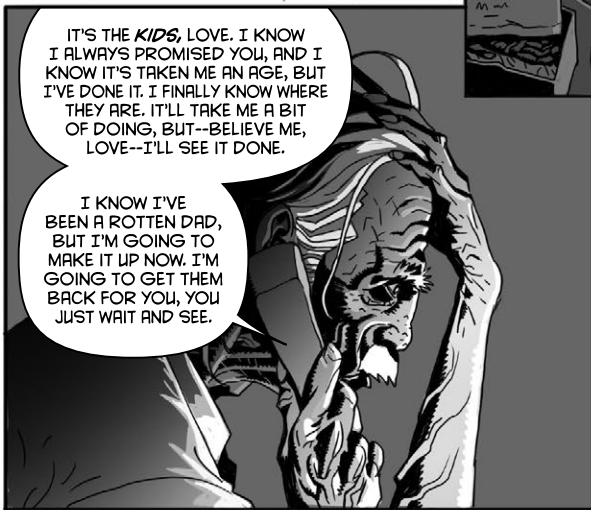


JUST...JUST CATCHING UP WITH AN OLD PAL.



HELLOP
DEIRDRE, LOVE?
IT'S YOUR DAD.
NO, WAIT...DON'T
HANG UP, PET...

YOU STILL
THERE? CHAMPION.
LISTEN, NOW, I'VE
GOT SOMETHING
IMPORTANT TO
TELL YOU...



IT'S THE *KIDS*, LOVE. I KNOW
I ALWAYS PROMISED YOU, AND I
KNOW IT'S TAKEN ME AN AGE, BUT
I'VE DONE IT. I FINALLY KNOW WHERE
THEY ARE. IT'LL TAKE ME A BIT
OF DOING, BUT--BELIEVE ME,
LOVE--I'LL SEE IT DONE.

I KNOW I'VE
BEEN A ROTTEN DAD,
BUT I'M GOING TO
MAKE IT UP NOW. I'M
GOING TO GET THEM
BACK FOR YOU, YOU
JUST WAIT AND SEE.



SO I'LL BE OFF NOW,
BUT I'LL LET YOU KNOW
WHEN IT'S ALL DONE,
SO--WHAT'S THAT, PET?
YEAH, THAT'D BE NICE.
I'D LIKE THAT.

ALL THE
BEST THEN,
LOVE. TALK
SOON. 'BYE.



...AT THE THIRD
STROKE, THE TIME
FROM B.T. WILL BE NINE
THIRTY-EIGHT AND
FORTY SECONDS

++beep-beep-
beeeep++

AT THE THIRD
STROKE, THE TIME
FROM B.T. WILL BE NINE
THIRTY-EIGHT AND
FIFTY SECONDS...

UNDER A FALSE FLAG

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

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1934-1942



A YEAR AGO:



"SO HOW'S HE DOING?"

"VERY WELL, ACTUALLY, HE MADE IT THROUGH THE SHOPPING PRECINCT. THAT'S FURTHER THAN MOST OF THEM GET. AND BY MY COUNT HE'S *KILLED* FIVE OF THEM SO FAR."



"*FIVE?* NOW THAT'S IMPRESSIVE. I'M DEFINITELY LIKING THE LOOK OF THIS ONE."



"OOPS. DON'T SPEAK TOO SOON. HE SHOULD HAVE TURNED LEFT BACK THERE. NOW HE'S HEADING TOWARD THE *PARK*."



THE *PARK*? THAT'S *BAD*, I TAKE IT?

IT'S OPEN GROUND, WITH A GLYPH-GUARDED EXIT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF IT...

...BUT I'VE NEVER YET SEEN ANY OF THEM MAKE IT THE FULL DISTANCE ACROSS.



"SEE? THEY'VE GOT HIM NOW..."



"POOR KID. HE WAS DOING SO WELL, TOO."



WAIT A MINUTE! HOW DID HE--

GOOD LORD. OKAY, NOW THAT IS IMPRESSIVE.



ANOTHER ONE FOR THE FOLD. LET'S CALL HIM *DANIEL*, AND MOVE HIM UP INTO *FINAL-PHASE TRAINING*.



"SO DANIEL WAS TAKEN UP OUT OF THE LIONS' DEN, AND NO MANNER OF HURT WAS FOUND UPON HIM, BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN HIS GOD."

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NOW:

HERE, YOU EVER HEAR ABOUT WHERE *GEORDIES* COME FROM?

THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE THE ONE ABOUT THE *PIG*, IS IT, HARRY?

SO, BACK IN THE STONE AGE, SOME FILTHY SCOTS CAVEMAN SHAGGED A PIG...

Chicken-ish

OFFICE

...AS YOUR AVERAGE SCOTSMAN WAS WONT TO DO BACK THEN, AND SOMETIMES STILL IS TODAY, GIVEN THE GENERAL STATE OF CALEDONIAN WOMANHOOD...

...AND, NINE MONTHS LATER, THE FIRST GEORDIE WAS BORN!

ALL RIGHT, CANNY LADS. THERE'RE REAL COPPERS HERE NOW TO HANDLE THE REAL COPPER WORK. TIME TO GO BACK TO SEARCHING FOR A CURE OF RICKETS AND GIVING A SWIFT KICKING TO WHOEVER TOLD JIMMY NAIL HE COULD SING.

YOU'LL BE ABSALOM, I'M GUESSING.

THAT I AM, AND YOU BETTER NOT HAVE WASTED MY TIME FETCHING ME UP HERE.

THREE POUND SEVENTY FOR A BACON SARNIE ON THE TRAIN, AND YOU KNOW HOW MANY OF 'EM MY LADS HERE CAN GET THROUGH IN THREE HOURS?

YOU WANT THIS ONE, IT'S ALL YOURS...



WHAT DO YOU THINK, INSPECTOR-- THIS ONE FALL INTO YOUR MANOR?



DEFINITELY HUMAN. OR NEAR ENOUGH.

BEEN IN THIS GAME LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT *POWDERED HUMAN ASH* FEELS LIKE.

WHAT WE LOOKING AT, BOSS? SOME KIND OF PYRO-MAGIC OR SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION?



NORTHERN AIR GOT YOU THINKING DAFT? YOU'LL BE WANTING TO BREED WHIPPETS AND TAKE UP CLOG-WEARING NEXT.

RASP!



FUNNY OLD KIND OF FIRE--MAGIC OR OTHERWISE-- THAT DOESN'T LEAVE ANY MARKS ON THE CLOTHES THAT DUSTY SPRINGFIELD HERE WAS WEARING.



SEE THESE MARKINGS? OLD-SCHOOL CRAFTSMANSHIP. DON'T SEE ARTISTRY LIKE THAT THESE DAYS.

REMINDE YOU OF ANYTHING?

THAT *HOUSING ESTATE* THAT WAS SOMEONE'S PRIVATE DEMON-HUNTING RESERVATION.

BINGO, SON...

"...I THINK SOMEONE'S JUST GONE *FREE RANGE* WITH THEIR *DEMON-HUNTING HOBBY*."



EXCUSE ME, EMILY PARKS?



YES? CAN I HELP YOU?

SORRY, I JUST NEEDED TO BE SURE I HAD THE RIGHT PERSON.



MY NAME'S *DANIEL*. I WAS SENT HERE TO SAVE YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL.





SAME AS
THE ONE UP
NORTH.

LOOKS LIKE
SOMEONE'S HAVING
THEMSELVES A BIT OF
A NATIONAL TOUR.



SAME KIND
OF FANCY PIG-
STICKER TOO.

YOU KNOW,
DETECTIVE SERGEANT
SANGSTER, I DO
BELIEVE SOMETHING
OF A *PATTERN* IS
DEVELOPING HERE.



I'M OFF BACK TO THE
SMOKE BEFORE I FORGET
WHAT JELLIED EELS MIXED
WITH THE ZESTY TANG OF
EUROPE'S HIGHEST LEVELS
OF NO₂ AIR POLLUTION
TASTES LIKE.

FIND OUT
EVERYTHING THERE IS
ABOUT THE VICTIM, AND
ANY CONNECTION
BETWEEN HER AND THE
NEWCASTLE ONE...



...I'M OFF TO SEE A MAN
ABOUT ANOTHER FACE."

BOIL-IN-THE-
BAG CURRY FOR
DINNER THE OTHER
NIGHT, HARRY? MAN
YOUR AGE NEEDS TO
TAKE BETTER CARE
OF HIMSELF.

EVER
THOUGHT
ABOUT
TURNING
VEGAN?



KNOW WHAT A VEGAN'S WORST NIGHTMARE IS? A NUTRITIONIST ARMED WITH FACTS.

NEED YOU TO FIND A FACE FOR ME, WOODROW, MATE. HE'S DONE THE DIRTY WITH THIS, SO YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET A GOOD READING FROM IT. USUAL CONSIDERATIONS IN IT FOR YOU.



GIVE ME A BELL WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED.

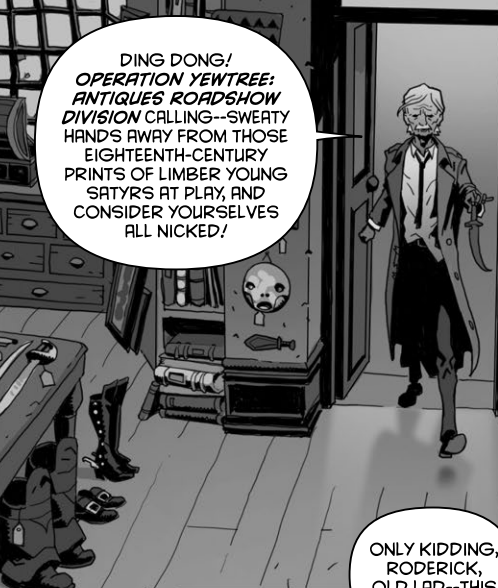
NICE LIKENESS, BY THE WAY...



...THAT HER BEFORE THE BINGE-DRINKING ORGAN FAILURE, RIGHT?



DING DONG! OPERATION YEW TREE: ANTIQUES ROADSHOW DIVISION CALLING--SWEATY HANDS AWAY FROM THOSE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PRINTS OF LIMBER YOUNG SATYRS AT PLAY, AND CONSIDER YOURSELVES ALL NICKED!



ONLY KIDDING, RODERICK, OLD LAD--THIS TIME, AT LEAST.



SOMETHING FOR YOU TO TAKE A SHUFTI AT. HAVE A GANDER AND TELL ME WHERE IT COMES FROM.



...WHERE AM I?
IN THE BOOZER, OF
COURSE, CONVERSING
WITH SOME VISITORS
TO OUR GREEN AND
PLEASANT LAND.

AND DON'T GIVE ME ANY GRIEF
ABOUT IT. I'VE BEEN TO THE NORTH
AND BACK THIS WEEK, WITHOUT
ANY HAZARDOUS DUTY COMPO, AND
I'VE PUT IN A BETTER DAY'S SHIFT
OF HONEST COPPER WORK TODAY
THAN YOU'VE KNOWN SINCE YOU
WERE AVOIDING NICKING RONNIE
KRAY FOR COTTAGING.



BOSSSES,
EHP? NOW
WHERE
WAS I?

AH, RIGHT. *SANDS OF IWO JIMA*--
THAT WAS ANOTHER GOOD ONE. JOHN
WAYNE MOWING DOWN DOZENS OF YOUR
HONOURED ANCESTORS WITH ONE OF THEM
MAGIC AMERICAN SHOOTERS THAT
NEVER RUN OUT OF BULLETS.



OOPS,
DUTY CALLS...
DO EXCUSE...

HELLO? D.S.
SANGSTER? GOT
SOMETHING FOR
ME, I HOPE?



OUR TWO
VICTIMS, GUV. TOTALLY
DIFFERENT LOCATIONS,
TOTALLY DIFFERENT
LIVES. ONE CONNECTION,
THOUGH.

THEY WERE
BOTH IN CARE
AS CHILDREN, AND
BOTH AT THE SAME
CHILDREN'S HOME.
SOME PLACE IN
SUSSEX.



DEARY DEARY
ME. NOW *THAT* IS A
GOOD FIND, SON.
NOW HERE'S WHAT
YOUR UNCLE HARRY
HAS BEEN UP TO...



...A TRULY LOVELY PIECE, INSPECTOR. THESE GLYPH INSCRIPTIONS HAVE A RARE POTENCY THAT INFUSES DEEP INTO THE METAL.

DEFINITELY OF HIGH CHURCH ORIGIN. AND RECENTLY MADE, TOO.



...IDENTICAL TO THE SAMPLE YOU SENT ME FROM NEWCASTLE, HARRY. IT'S MATERIALLY HUMAN...

...BUT ALSO WITH A NON-MATERIAL WHIFF OF THE SULPHUROUS AND INFERNAL ABOUT IT. SORRY THE CHYMICAL PROCESSES CAN'T BE ANY MORE SPECIFIC.



HARRY? I GOT A FACE FOR YOU. SENDING IT NOW. WORD OF WARNING, THOUGH, BOSS...



...SOMEONE FOUND AND FORGED THIS KID, AND NOW HE'S ONE FIERCE UNBREAKABLE WEAPON.





NEED YOU BACK HERE PRONTO, YOU AND THAT PARTNER OF YOURS. AND MAKE SURE YOU WEAR YOUR SUNDAY BEST, SON...



"...WE'RE OFF TO PESTER THE GOD BOTHERERS, I'M AFRAID."

DANIEL? IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. HOW ARE YOU FEELING?



FINE, YOUR HONOUR. ALMOST LEVELLED UP HERE!

YOU GOT MORE HOLY TASKS FOR ME?



WE DO, DANIEL. THERE ARE MORE OF THE SPECIAL ONES THAT HAVE TO BE FOUND AND FREED, BUT I CAN SEE YOU'RE BUSY, SO I DON'T WANT TO INTERRUPT YOU.



I'LL JUST LEAVE THESE HERE, AND WE CAN TALK ABOUT THEM LATER, OKAY?



OH, AND IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE PLAYING YOUR GAMES LATE TONIGHT, TRY TO KEEP THE NOISE DOWN.

THE OTHER YOUNGER CHILDREN DO NEED THEIR SLEEP...

SUSSEX, 1983:

Mel spoke to me again yesterday. She said it might be my turn soon. To go away and be adopted by a new family.

At least now I know why I was allowed to go to that Bananarama concert in Brighton last month.

I don't know how to feel about this. Really I don't. I remember Michelle and think it might all be OK. She came back and visited us and sent us postcards from all the holidays she went on with her new family and it looked great.

Robin was nice. We used to watch Saturday Superstore in the TV room together and he'd say funny stuff about the people they had on.

They took him to the stables just like all the others that went to new families but when he came back he wasn't Robin anymore.

Then one day the people from London came to test him, and we all thought he'd be going to one of the families.

But then I remember what happened to Robin and then I'm not so sure.

He bit people and stabbed one of the social workers with scissors. There was blood everywhere.

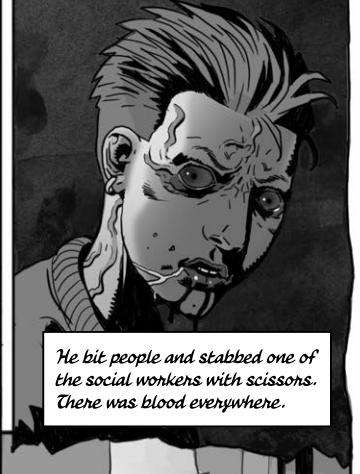
They took him to the stables again and then we didn't see him anymore.

I heard Mel saying to the others that he didn't take like the others did, but I don't know what that

ERIN?
ERIN,
LOVE?

FINISH UP WHAT YOU'RE DOING AND COME WITH ME TO THE STABLES.

IT'S TIME, SWEETHEART. THE PEOPLE FROM LONDON WANT TO MEET YOU.



LAMBETH, NOW:

THIS IS RIDICULOUS, HARRY. YOU KNOW IN WHOSE INTERESTS I ACT AND WHO I ANSWER TO...

...AND WE BOTH KNOW THAT, ULTIMATELY, YOU ANSWER TO THAT SAME AUTHORITY.

WE'RE BOTH ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS--ALBEIT ONE OF US ON THE SLIGHTLY GRUBBIER FRINGES OF THE AFFRAY--SO WHY LOOK FOR ENEMIES AMONG THE RANKS OF YOUR FEW ALLIES?

"ALLIES", HE SAYS.

SHOW HIM, SON. SHOW OUR PAL HERE WHAT WE FOUND AT THOSE MURDER SCENES WE'VE BEEN VISITING UP AND DOWN THE COUNTRY ALL THIS WEEK.

RECOGNISE IT, YOUR REVERENCE?

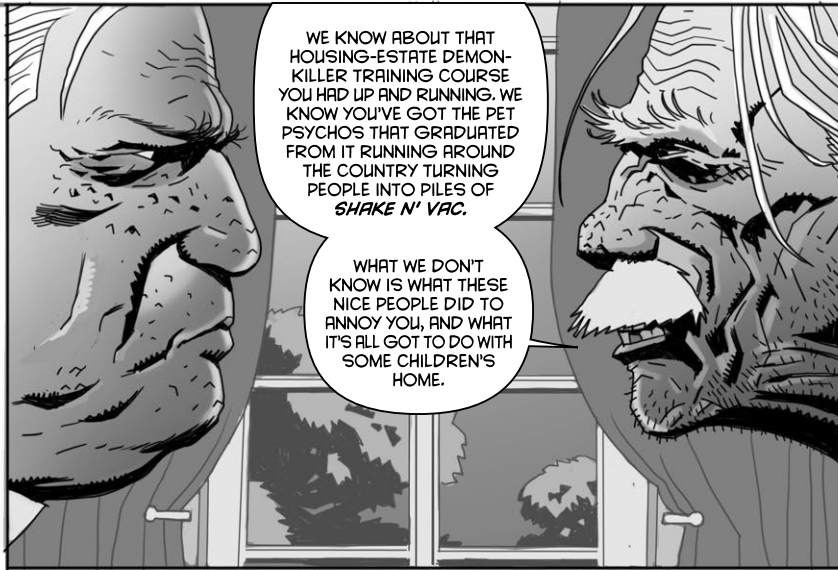
FOR GOD'S SAKE, HARRY!

YOU SHOULD DO. IT'S GOT THE FINGERPRINTS OF YOUR MOB'S LILLY-WHITES ALL OVER IT.

THIS DESK BELONGED TO JOHN MOORE, EIGHTY-EIGHTH ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY! IT'S A NATIONAL BLOODY HEIRLOOM.

THUNK!

AND NOW THERE'S A NATIONAL BLOODY DISGRACE SITTING BEHIND IT. FUNNY HOW THINGS TURN OUT, EH?



WE KNOW ABOUT THAT HOUSING-ESTATE DEMON-KILLER TRAINING COURSE YOU HAD UP AND RUNNING. WE KNOW YOU'VE GOT THE PET PSYCHOS THAT GRADUATED FROM IT RUNNING AROUND THE COUNTRY TURNING PEOPLE INTO PILES OF *SHAKE N' VAC*.

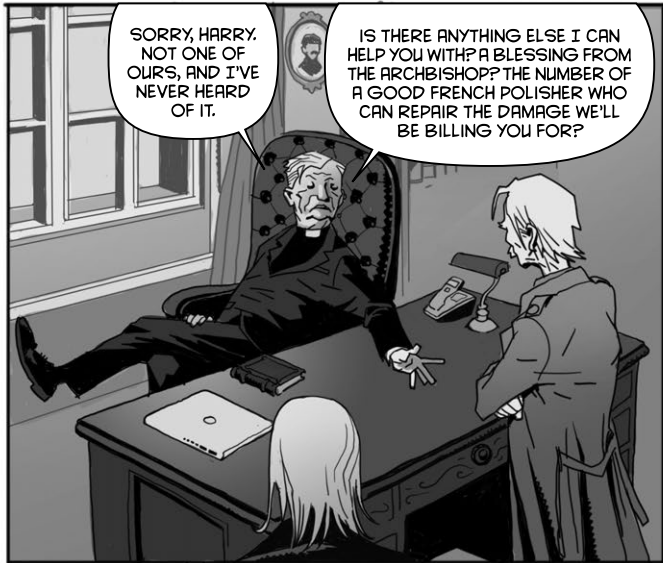
WHAT WE DON'T KNOW IS WHAT THESE NICE PEOPLE DID TO ANNOY YOU, AND WHAT IT'S ALL GOT TO DO WITH SOME CHILDREN'S HOME.



CHILDREN'S HOME?

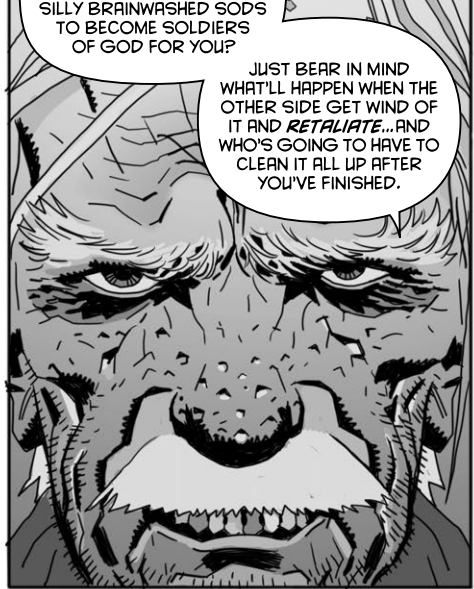


CHASSE DES LAPINS, IN DEEPEST SUSSEX. CLOSED DOWN IN 1987. DEMOLISHED FOUR YEARS LATER. BOTH KNOWN VICTIMS WERE IN CARE THERE AS CHILDREN.



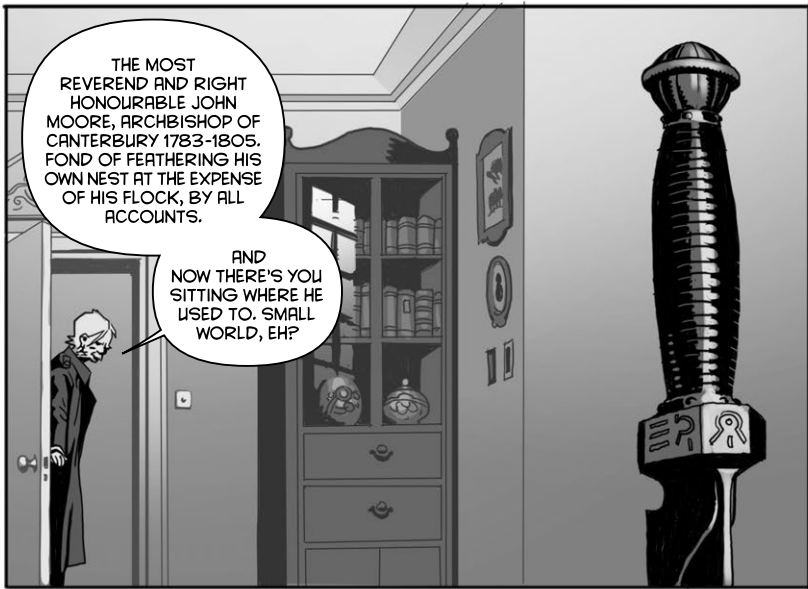
SORRY, HARRY. NOT ONE OF OURS, AND I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I CAN HELP YOU WITH? A BLESSING FROM THE ARCHBISHOP? THE NUMBER OF A GOOD FRENCH POLISHER WHO CAN REPAIR THE DAMAGE WE'LL BE BILLING YOU FOR?



YOU WANT TO START A *HOLY WAR*, YOUR REVERENCE? GET SOME SILLY BRAINWASHED SODS TO BECOME SOLDIERS OF GOD FOR YOU?

JUST BEAR IN MIND WHAT'LL HAPPEN WHEN THE OTHER SIDE GET WIND OF IT AND *RETALIATE*...AND WHO'S GOING TO HAVE TO CLEAN IT ALL UP AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED.



THE MOST REVEREND AND RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN MOORE, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY 1783-1805. FOND OF FEATHERING HIS OWN NEST AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS FLOCK, BY ALL ACCOUNTS.

AND NOW THERE'S YOU SITTING WHERE HE USED TO. SMALL WORLD, EH?



STEPHANIE, BE A LOVE AND CANCEL THAT RADIO FOUR THING AND MY DINNER WITH PROFESSOR DAWKINS TONIGHT.

TELL THE BBC WE'LL RESCHEDULE FOR ANOTHER DAY, AND SINCEREST APOLOGIES TO THE PROFESSOR. SEND HIM A PARCEL OF THAT HONEY HE'S SO FOND OF.



"ANYONE ASKS, I'M SPENDING THE DAY AT THE *FOUNDLINGS HOME*."

THE CHILDREN'S HOME. YOU PICK UP ON IT?

HE SHUT UP AS SOON AS YOU MENTIONED IT.



AND THEN LOOKED LIKE HE WANTED TO SING HIS SPECIAL HAPPY SONG WHEN HE HEARD ABOUT THE PLACE IN SUSSEX.

RIGHT, SO THERE'S *ANOTHER* ONE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. ONE HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT, AND WE'VE GOT GOD-ALL ON.



THERE'S A *MONSTER FACTORY* HAPPENING SOMEWHERE--SOMEONE MAKING MONSTERS TO HUNT DOWN SOMEONE ELSE'S MONSTERS. MAYBE *KIDS* INVOLVED, TOO.

START CHASING DOWN ANYONE WHO WAS A KID AT THIS CHASSE DES LAPINS PLACE. AND MIND HOW YOU GO...

"...MARK MY WORDS, THIS IS SOME *RIGHT PROPER NASTINESS* WE'RE ABOUT TO STEP INTO."

SUSSEX, 1983:

IT'S DARK DOWN HERE.

IT'S THE WAY THE PEOPLE FROM LONDON LIKE IT.

HUSH NOW, YOU'LL HAVE A NEW LIFE SOON.

NO! I DON'T LIKE IT! I WANT TO GO BACK! I WANT--

I SAID *HUSH NOW*, AND GO TO SLEEP.

"WHEN YOU WAKE UP, IT'LL BE LIKE YOU'RE A *WHOLE NEW PERSON*..."



1983:

SHARON? OH GOOD GOD!

SOMEONE FETCH THE FIRST-AID BOX FROM THE OFFICE!

DON'T WORRY, LOVE. WE'LL GET YOU TO THE HOSPITAL IN LEWES. I'LL DRIVE YOU THERE MYSELF, AS SOON AS WE GET THAT BLEEDING STOPPED.

IT'S ERIN--ONE OF THE NEW ONES. SHARON WENT IN TO SEE HOW SHE WAS, AND THE LITTLE COW JUST ABOUT TOOK HER FACE OFF!

ANYONE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?

SHE HASN'T TAKEN RIGHT, LIKE THAT OTHER ONE... THAT ROBIN KID. THINK WE'LL HAVE TO PUT THIS ONE DOWN TOO?

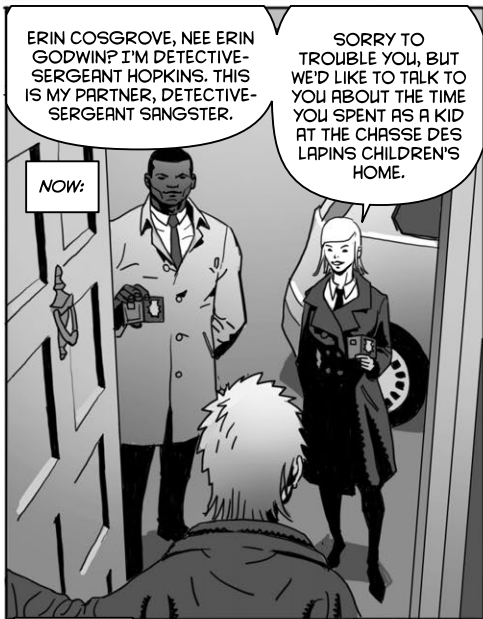
LET'S HOPE IT WON'T COME TO THAT.

SOME JUST TAKE MORE TIME TO SETTLE THAN OTHERS.

BE A LOVE AND FETCH THE LAMB'S BLOOD AND THE OTHER STUFF FROM THE OFFICE.

WE'LL SEE IF WE CAN'T CALM HER DOWN WITH A LITTLE RITUAL OR TWO...





ERIN COSGROVE, NEE ERIN GODWIN? I'M DETECTIVE-SERGEANT HOPKINS. THIS IS MY PARTNER, DETECTIVE-SERGEANT SANGSTER.

SORRY TO TROUBLE YOU, BUT WE'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE TIME YOU SPENT AS A KID AT THE CHASSE DES LAPINS CHILDREN'S HOME.

NOW:

CHASSE DES LAPINS?

THIS ISN'T SOME ABUSE THING, IS IT?



IT WASN'T LIKE THAT THERE. THEY WERE STRICT SOMETIMES, BUT THEY ALWAYS TREATED US DECENTLY.

NOT AT ALL. JUST ROUTINE STUFF.

SOME SILLY COMPLAINT WE'RE OBLIGED TO LOOK INTO. IF WE COULD COME IN AND TALK TO YOU A BIT, WE'LL BE DONE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.



WELL, I SUPPOSE SO. ONLY I'VE GOT THE SCHOOL RIN TO MAKE...

TEN MINUTES, LOVE. YOU WON'T EVEN KNOW WE'VE BEEN HERE.



TERENCE...



TERENCE...?



TERENCE--!



THE WOMAN!
PROTECT THE
WOMAN!



NOT SO FAST,
YOU LITTLE
SCROTE. HOW
ABOUT WE--



WAK!



GET INSIDE/
LOCK THE
DOOR AND
CALL 999!



OH
BLAST...

SEE, COP LADY? THIS ISN'T A PLACE YOU SHOULD BE.



STOP!
I MEAN
IT! STOP
OR I'LL--

--SHOOT A
FOURTEEN-YEAR-
OLD KID IN THE
BACK? WHO ARE
YOU KIDDING,
HOPKINS?



NO SCHOOL
RUNS HAPPENING
HERE TODAY.
THE BOSS IS
GOING TO LOVE
THIS ONE...



...GOOD WORK, LOVE--SOUNDS LIKE THE BEST OF A BAD JOB.

GET THE BIG LAD TO HOSPITAL, SQUARE THINGS WITH THE LOCALS, AND SEE ME WITH YOUR REPORT TOMORROW.

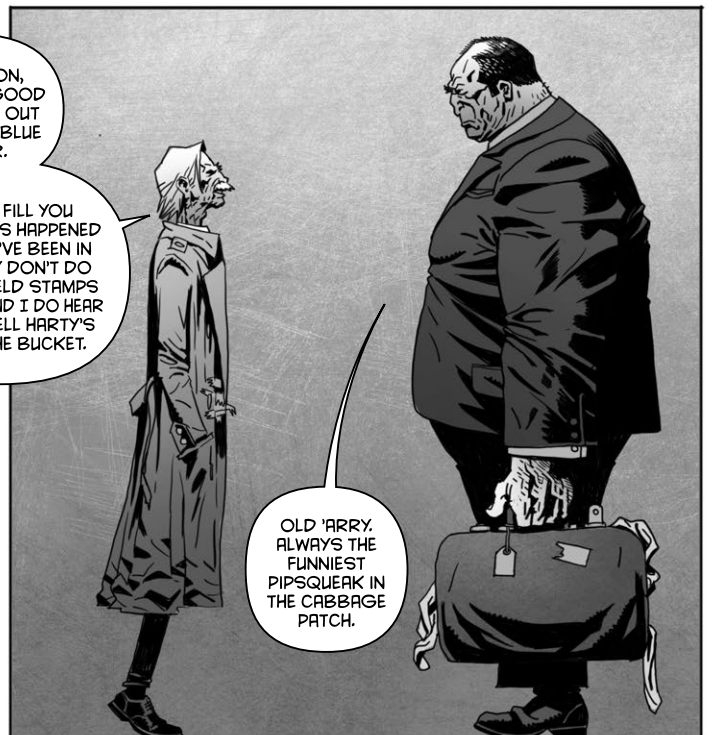


ME? ON WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL A BIT OF A *RECRUITMENT DRIVE*. TRYING OUT A NEW LAD WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO POINT US IN SOME HANDY NEW DIRECTIONS ON THIS RABBIT-CHASE MESS.

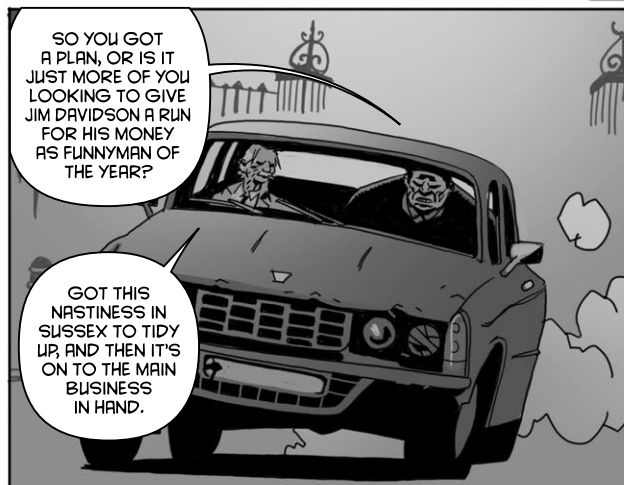
MATTER OF FACT, HERE HE COMES NOW.

AFTERNOON, *GU'VNOR*. GOOD TO SEE YOU OUT IN THE WILD BLUE YONDER.

JUST TO FILL YOU IN ON WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE YOU'VE BEEN IN STIR--THEY DON'T DO GREEN SHIELD STAMPS ANYMORE, AND I DO HEAR TELL RUSSELL HARTY'S KICKED THE BUCKET.



OLD 'ARRY ALWAYS THE FUNNIEST PIPSQUEAK IN THE CABBAGE PATCH.



SO YOU GOT A PLAN, OR IS IT JUST MORE OF YOU LOOKING TO GIVE JIM DAVIDSON A RUN FOR HIS MONEY AS FUNNYMAN OF THE YEAR?

GOT THIS NASTINESS IN SUSSEX TO TIDY UP, AND THEN IT'S ON TO THE MAIN BUSINESS IN HAND.



"AND, AS CHANCE WOULD HAVE IT, I RECKON YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY NEW RECRUIT I'M CURRENTLY ANGLING FOR..."



OH, 'ARRY. WHAT 'ORRIBLE THINGS 'AVE YOU GONE AND DRAGGED ME INTO?

DEFINITELY *HUMAN*, THOUGH. BUT WITH A HINT OF SOMETHING ELSE MIXED IN.



Mmm... THAT TANGY 'INT OF SULPHUR AND BRIMSTONE TO GIVE IT A LITTLE EXTRA KICK. LOVELY.



AND I DO BELIEVE YOU 'AVE A *BLOOD TRAIL* BELONGING TO THE SUSPECT?

WE'VE ALREADY SENT A SAMPLE OF IT IN FOR DNA ANALYSIS.



DNA? YOU DON'T WANT TO GO MESSING ABOUT WITH THAT EGGHEAD MUMBO-JUMBO, LUV...



BLOOD-TRACKING MAGIC, GUV?

TRIED AND TESTED, 'HARRY. ALWAYS THE BEST WAY.

"I'LL NEED QUICKSILVER AND SULPHUR--BOX OF MATCHES AND MERCURY FROM ANY THERMOMETER WILL DO--A PEN-KNIFE AND THE UNIFORMS TO GO CATCH SOMEONE'S PET CAT."



...DANIEL? YES, SORRY--REVEREND GRIMALKIN IS STILL ON ANOTHER VERY IMPORTANT CALL...

YES, HE KNOWS HOW IMPORTANT *YOUR* CALL IS.

I'LL MAKE SURE HE CALLS YOU BACK AS SOON AS HE'S FREE.

...YES, YOUR GRACE. I'M AWARE OF THE PROBLEM... I'M AFRAID SO...

YES, IT IS EXTREMELY REGRETTABLE...

YES, I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT...ABSOLUTE DISCRETION? THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING...YES, I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT NO INNOCENT'S BLOOD WILL BE LEFT ON THE CHURCH'S HANDS...

THANK YOU, YOUR GRACE. GOODBYE.



BLOODY HARRY ABSALOM.



STEPHANIE? PUT A CALL THROUGH TO *THE OPPOSITION*.

AND THEN CONNECT ME TO DANIEL AS SOON AS I'VE FINISHED SPEAKING TO WHATEVER THING PICKS UP THE PHONE THERE.

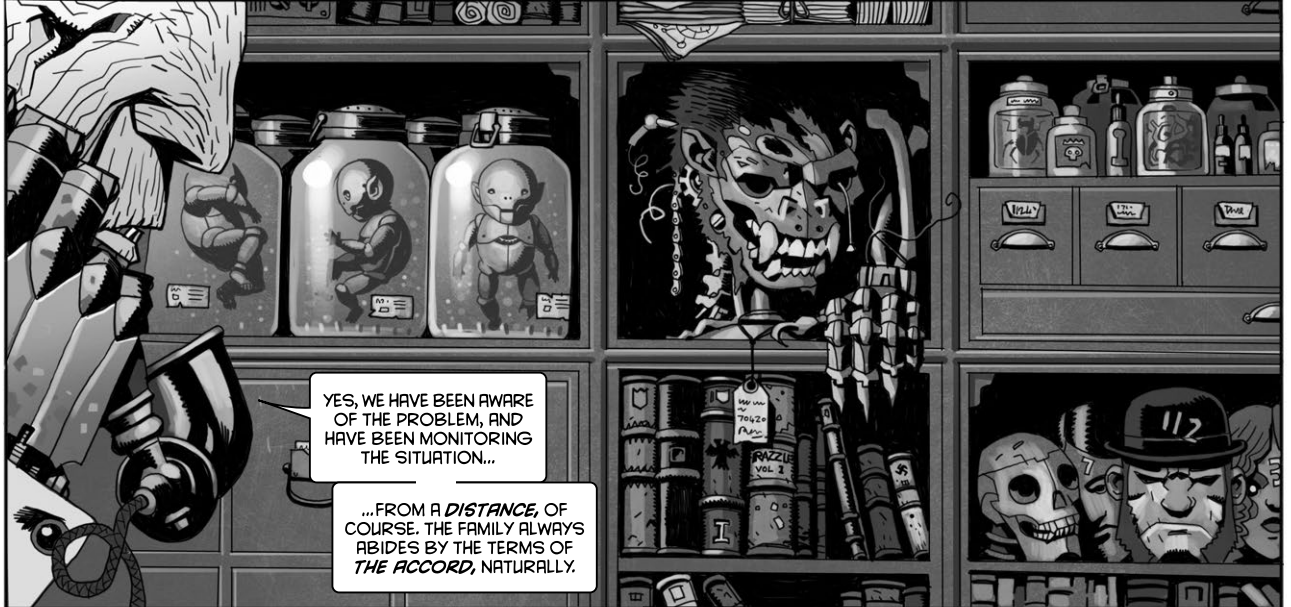


SPEAKING. PUT HIM THROUGH, PLEASE.



REVEREND GRIMALKIN. I AM MISTER CRITCH.

A STRANGE PLEASURE FOR US TO TALK AT LAST.



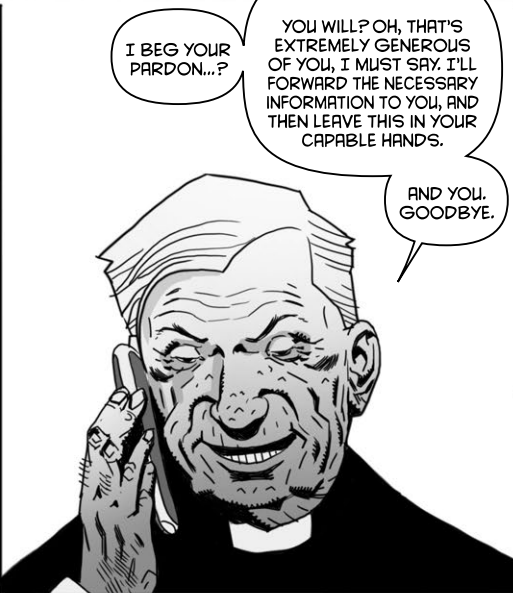
YES, WE HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE PROBLEM, AND HAVE BEEN MONITORING THE SITUATION...

...FROM A *DISTANCE*, OF COURSE. THE FAMILY ALWAYS ABIDES BY THE TERMS OF *THE ACCORD*, NATURALLY.



AS DO WE IN THE CHURCH, I ASSURE YOU.

NEVERTHELESS, THIS CURRENT SITUATION THREATENS TO SPILL OVER INTO THE PUBLIC ARENA, AND I UNDERSTAND THE GOOD INSPECTOR ABSALOM AND HIS PEOPLE ARE ALREADY ON THE TRAIL.



I BEG YOUR PARDON...?

YOU WILL? OH, THAT'S EXTREMELY GENEROUS OF YOU, I MUST SAY. I'LL FORWARD THE NECESSARY INFORMATION TO YOU, AND THEN LEAVE THIS IN YOUR CAPABLE HANDS.

AND YOU. GOODBYE.



SORRY, HARRY. NEEDS MUST.



THERE'S BUTCHERY WORK TO BE DONE. A DEMON KILLER WHOSE GOD IS CALLING TO THEM.

MAKE THE APPROPRIATE ARRANGEMENTS.



REVEREND...?

YES, IT'S ME. I'M SO SORRY WE COULDN'T TALK EARLIER, DANIEL BUT I HAD TO MAKE SOME CALLS TO ENSURE YOUR CONTINUED SAFETY.



I'M HERE NOW, THOUGH...

...NOW, TELL ME WHERE YOU ARE, AND WE'LL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO GET YOU SAFELY HOME.



"HE'S STILL BLEEDIN'. THAT ALWAYS MAKES IT EASIER..."



AND NOT TOO FAR AWAY. THAT 'ELPS TOO...



GET THE LADS LOADED UP INTO THE VAN, 'ARRY, AND LET'S GO GIVE THIS LITTLE TWERP A RIGHT PROPER KICKING.



I'M COLD, REVEREND. AND IT HURTS...

YOU... YOU THINK THIS IS ONE OF THEM TRIALS THE LORD SENDS TO TEST THE FAITH OF HIS SERVANTS?

WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER, DANIEL. FOR NOW, THOUGH, JUST STAY WHERE YOU ARE...



"...HELP IS ON ITS WAY TO YOU."





GETTING CLOSE NOW, ARE WE, GUV?

THAT WE ARE, 'ARRY. JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES.

FEELS GOOD TO BE OUT OF THE NICK, AND ON THE WAY TO GETTING OUR KNUCKLES DIRTY.

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES, EH, 'ARRY? YOU AND ME, TERRORISING THE LOCAL VILLAINY IN THE NAME OF KEEPING THE QUEEN'S PEACE, AND HAVING A BLOODY GOOD LAUGH INTO THE--



WHU...?



NO, GUV. NOT REALLY MUCH LIKE THE OLD TIMES AT ALL.

D.S. HOPKINS, WHAT'S YOUR REPORT GOING TO READ ABOUT THIS UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT?



RELEASED FROM LONG-TERM INCARCERATION INTO YOUR CUSTODY, THE FORMER CHIEF INSPECTOR WAS HOSTILE AND UNCOOPERATIVE.

WHILE BEING TRANSPORTED BY CAR, HE INCAPACITATED YOU AND ATTEMPTED TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE WHEEL.



THE VERBALS.
THAT THE WAY
IT'S GOING TO
BE, 'ARRY?

FEARING FOR THE LIVES
OF MY FELLOW OFFICERS
IN THE CAR, AND CIVILIANS
ON THE ROAD AROUND US,
I WAS FORCED TO USE
MY FIREARM TO LETHALLY
SUBDUED THE PRISONER.



CHIP
OFF THE OLD
BLOCK, GUV.

WHEN IT
COMES TO FITTING UP
WRONG 'UNS AND STILL
COMING UP SMELLING
OF ROSES, I LEARNED
FROM THE BEST.



EXEMPLARY REPORT,
LOVE. I'LL BE RECOMMENDING
TWO WEEKS COMPASSIONATE
LEAVE, TO HELP YOU GET OVER
THE EMOTIONAL TURMOIL OF
BLOWING THE HEAD OFF A ONE-
TIME FELLOW OFFICER.

TORREMOLINOS IS NICE
THIS TIME OF YEAR, ALTHOUGH
I DARE SAY A *GUARDIAN*-
READING TYPE LIKE YOU MIGHT
PREFER OFF-SEASON BUDDHIST
SNOWBOARDING IN GRENOBLE,
OR THE LIKE.

SOUNDS
GOOD TO
ME, BOSS.



SO WHAT
DO YOU
SAY, GUV?

YOU TELL US WHAT
YOU *REALLY* KNOW ABOUT
THIS *CHASSE DES LAPINS*
PALAVER, OR D.S. HOPKINS
HERE GETS TO TRY TO FIND
A NEW BOYFRIEND AT SOME
CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING
TOFU-TASTING SINGLES'
NIGHT IN GORP?

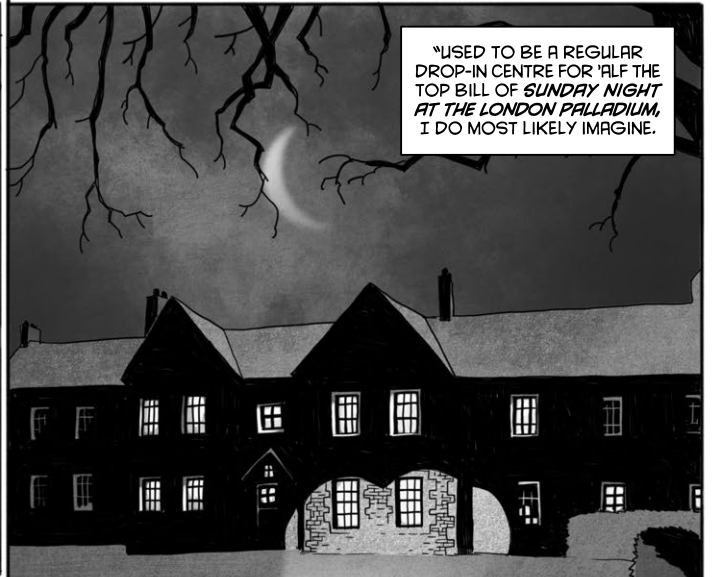


THE KIDS' HOME
IN SUSSEX? THEY
PAID ME ENOUGH
TO LOOK THE
OTHER WAY.

SO NATURALLY
I MADE IT MY
BUSINESS TO
KNOW ALL ABOUT
THE GRUBBY LITTLE
THINGS THEY WERE
GETTING UP
TO THERE...



"GRIM PLACE--RUN BY A LOCAL COUNCIL WITH SOCIAL-WORK INSPECTORS WHO COULD BE PERSUADED TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY FOR THE PRICE OF A WEEK'S CARAVAN PARK 'OLIDAY IN MORECOMBE WITH THE WIFE AND KIDDIES.



"USED TO BE A REGULAR DROP-IN CENTRE FOR 'ALF THE TOP BILL OF *SUNDAY NIGHT AT THE LONDON PALLADIUM*, I DO MOST LIKELY IMAGINE.



"I RECKON THAT'S HOW *THEY* FIRST HEARD ABOUT IT...



"THEM..."



"...OUR SATANIC SOCIAL BETTERS, FOLLOWING WHAT THEY'D 'EARD ABOUT ON THE KIDDY-FIDDLER TELEGRAPH.



"FIRST THEY CLEARED THE *NONCE BRIGADE* OUT OF THERE, THEN THEY WENT TO WORK WITH WHAT THEY HAD IN MIND FOR THE PLACE..."



AN UNDERGROUND DEVIL'S RAILWAY? THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE UP TO?

WE ALWAYS KNEW THEY WERE 'APPENING. THESE SNEAKY BUGGERS ACTUALLY HAD ONE UP AND RUNNING FOR YEARS...



DEVIL'S RAILWAY?

THE ACCORD'S GOT A QUOTA, LOVE--ONLY SO MANY DENIZENS OF HELL ALLOWED UP-TOP TO WALK THIS GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND AT ANY ONE TIME...

...SO, NATURALLY, LIKE ANY OTHER BUNCH OF CRAFTY FOREIGN TYPES, THEY TRY TO SNEAK IN AS MANY EXTRA ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AS POSSIBLE...



...ONLY THEY WERE USING KIDS. KIDS NO ONE MUCH CARED ABOUT OR WOULD MISS, IF THINGS WENT WRONG IN THE SUMMONING RITUALS.

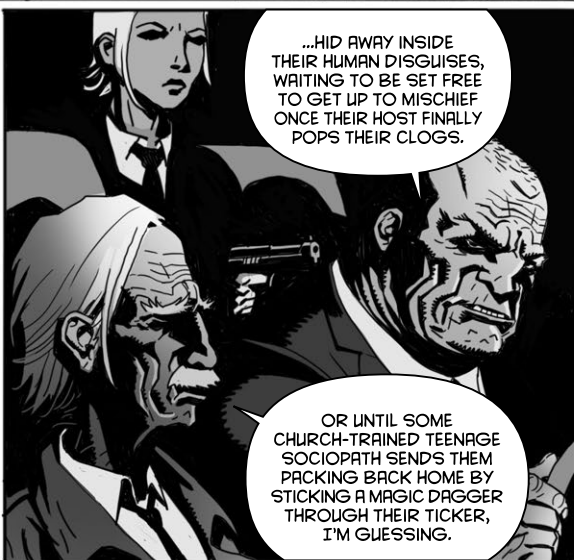


"THE ONES THAT DIDN'T TAKE PROPER...WELL, I DO BELIEVE THEY HAD A HANDY FURNACE IN THE CELLAR OF THE PLACE..."



"THE OTHER ONES, THE ONES THAT TOOK PROPER, WERE SET UP WITH NICE HELL-FRIENDLY ADOPTION COUPLES.

"THEY'D BE ALL GROWN-UP NOW..."



...HID AWAY INSIDE THEIR HUMAN DISGUISES, WAITING TO BE SET FREE TO GET UP TO MISCHIEF ONCE THEIR HOST FINALLY POPS THEIR CLOGS.

OR UNTIL SOME CHURCH-TRAINED TEENAGE SOCIOPATH SENDS THEM PACKING BACK HOME BY STICKING A MAGIC DAGGER THROUGH THEIR TICKER, I'M GUESSING.



YOU KNOW, ARRY, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU ALL THIS EVENTUALLY, ON ACCOUNT OF US BEING OLD MATES.

NO NEED FOR CAGNEY & LACEY TO BE STICKING A SHOOTER INTO THE BACK OF MY NAPPER. THAT'S JUST *DISRESPECTFUL*, THAT IS.

...SAYS THE NUTTER WHO WAS DOING BIRD FOR TRYING TO ORGANISE AN OCCULT COUP AGAINST THE--



FLAMING NORRA! WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT--!

SKREEEE!



RECKON THIS IS THE PLACE, THEN.

RIGHT, BOYS AND GIRLS, EVERYONE OUT.



GET STUCK INTO THEM *CLOCKWORK SLAGS!*



JUST LIKE OLD TIMES, EH, GUV?

THAT IT IS, 'ARRY LAD...



THERE'S YOU ON THE SIDELINES WITH YER SARKY COMMENTS, AND 'ERE'S ME IN THE THICK OF IT, NOT AFRAID OF GETTING ME MITTS WET.

KLOK!



THIS ONE'S LOOKING A BIT LIVELY, AIN'T 'E?



CALL THAT TOOLED-UP? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH, SON...





...YOU WOULDN'T LAST FIVE MINUTES IN THE SCRUBS' SHOWERS WITH THEM NOSE-PICKERS.



YOU BE ABOUT YER BUSINESS NOW, 'ARRY SON, AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT YER OLD GUV'NOR...



LIKE GIVING SOMEONE A DECENT BEATING DOWN THE CELLS OR FIXING UP A NICE LETTERBOX SURPRISE FOR THOSE THAT HAVE FALLEN BEHIND IN THEIR PROTECTION PAYMENTS...

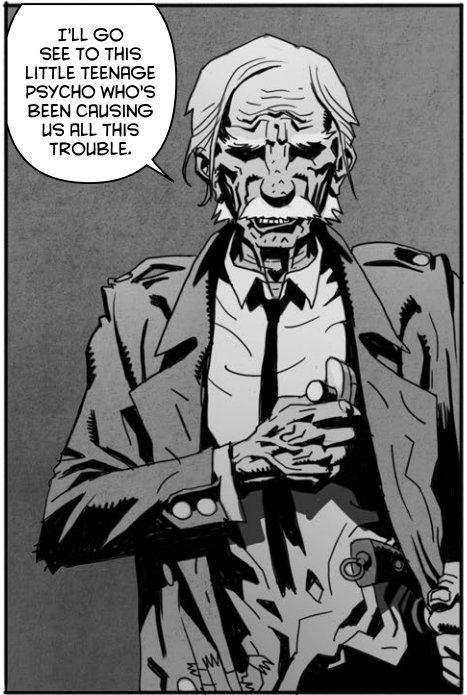
...JUST ONE OF THEM THINGS YOU NEVER QUITE FORGET 'OW TO DO, THIS IS.



BOSS?

STAY HERE AND WATCH THE BACK OF GUY THE GORILLA JOINS THE ENGLISH DEFENCE LEAGUE OVER THERE.

TRULY HORRIBLE CUSTOMER THAT HE IS, WE STILL NEED HIM FOR NOW.





SWEET.



BE A LOT EASIER IF YOU STAYED STILL, SON. LAST TIME I FIRED ONE OF THESE, FRANK BOUGH WAS ON THE TELLY.



DON'T SUPPOSE YOU EVEN KNOW WHO THAT IS, MIND.



HELLO, SON. I'M YOUR UNCLE HARRY.

I'VE GOT A SPECIAL LITTLE JOB I NEED YOU FOR...



...I SUPPOSE IT'S TOO MUCH TO HOPE THAT HE DIED UNDER THE KNIFE AND SAVED US A LOT OF PROBLEMS?

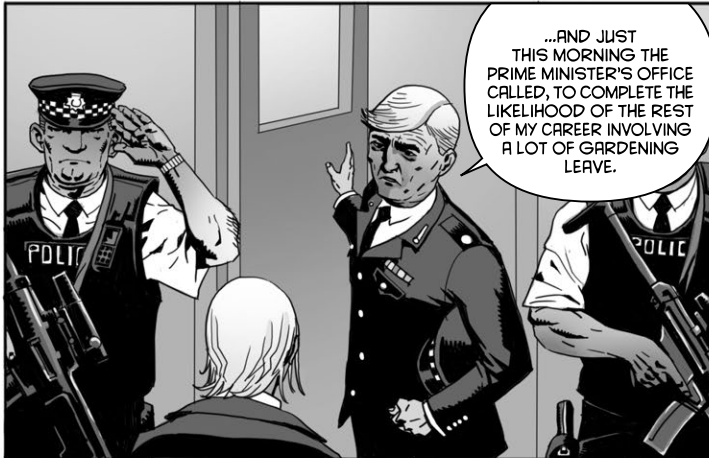
CAME OUT OF SURGERY LAST NIGHT, AND EXPECTED TO MAKE A FULL RECOVERY.

ANY IDEA WHO HE IS YET, SIR?



IT'S *WHOSE* HE IS, I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT, D.S. HOPKINS.

I'VE HAD BOTH THE STAR CHAMBER AND THOSE OLD RELICS AT THE STYLITE CLUB ASKING TO BE KEPT ABREAST OF EVENTS....



...AND JUST THIS MORNING THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE CALLED, TO COMPLETE THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE REST OF MY CAREER INVOLVING A LOT OF GARDENING LEAVE.



"WHY ARE WE HOLDING AN UNDERAGE WARD OF THE CHURCH UNDER ARMED GUARD", THEY WANT TO KNOW.



WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO TELL THEM? THAT WE'RE HOLDING A CHILD AS CHIEF SUSPECT IN A SERIES OF RITUAL KILLINGS--

OH BOLLOCKS. IT HAD TO BE *HIM*, DIDN'T IT?



"BLOODY HARRY ABSALOM."

YOU GOT A NAME, SON?

DANIEL.

NAMED FOR HE WHO WALKED UNAFRAID THROUGH THE LIONS' DEN.

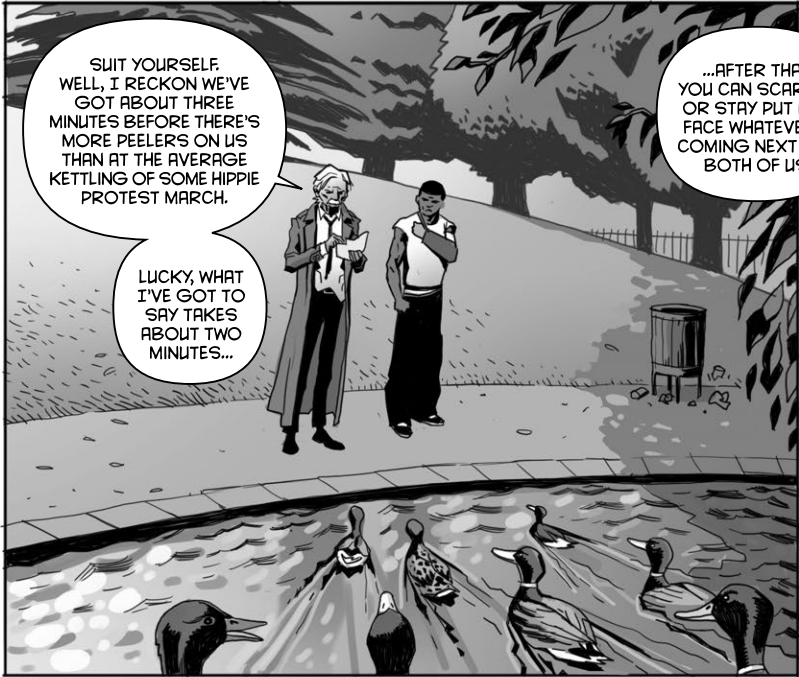


AND I'M HARRY.

NAMED FOR ME GRANDAD--HE WHO WALKED UNAFRAID THROUGH THE WOOLWICH DOCKERS' CLUB, EVEN ON A SATURDAY NIGHT.



DANIEL. THAT YOUR REAL NAME, OR THE ONE THE BIBLE SQUAD GAVE YOU?



SUIT YOURSELF. WELL, I RECKON WE'VE GOT ABOUT THREE MINUTES BEFORE THERE'S MORE PEELERS ON US THAN AT THE AVERAGE KETTLING OF SOME HIPPIE PROTEST MARCH.

LUCKY, WHAT I'VE GOT TO SAY TAKES ABOUT TWO MINUTES...

...AFTER THAT, YOU CAN SCARPER OR STAY PUT AND FACE WHATEVER'S COMING NEXT FOR BOTH OF US.





SO WHAT ARE YOU? ONE OF THEM *ACCORD COPS* THEY TOLD US ABOUT, THAT HELPS THEM WITH HELLFIRE BURNING INSIDE THEIR HEADS?

NO, SON...



I'M A *SOLDIER*, JUST LIKE YOU.

ONLY YOU WERE LUCKIER THAN ME. YOU FOUND OUT A LOT SOONER THAT THE POWERS WE SERVE AREN'T MUCH WORTH THE SPIT IN YOUR GULLET.

THEY FIT YOU UP TOO?

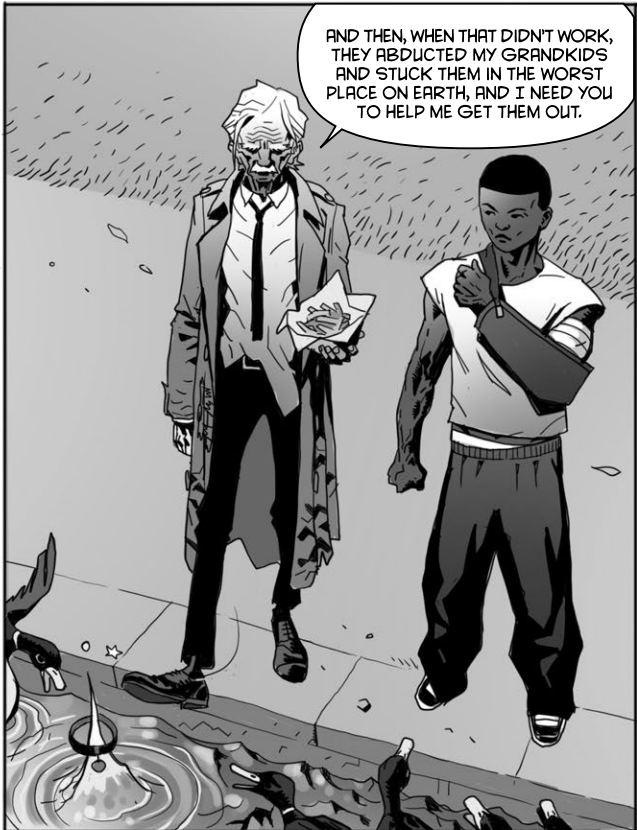


NOT AS SUCH. THEY GAVE ME *CANCER*. A SPECIAL KIND THAT ISN'T GOING TO DO FOR ME AS LONG AS THEY DON'T WANT IT TO.

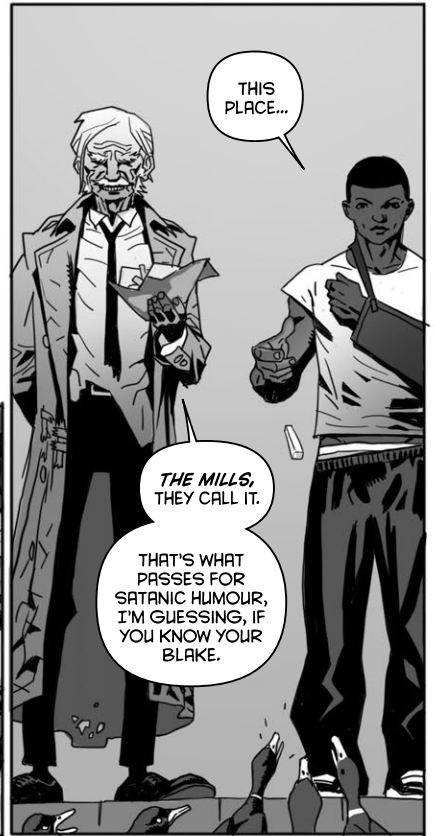


FOR REAL?

REALER THAN YOU'LL HOPEFULLY EVER KNOW, SON.



AND THEN, WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK, THEY ABDUCTED MY GRANDKIDS AND STUCK THEM IN THE WORST PLACE ON EARTH, AND I NEED YOU TO HELP ME GET THEM OUT.



THIS PLACE...

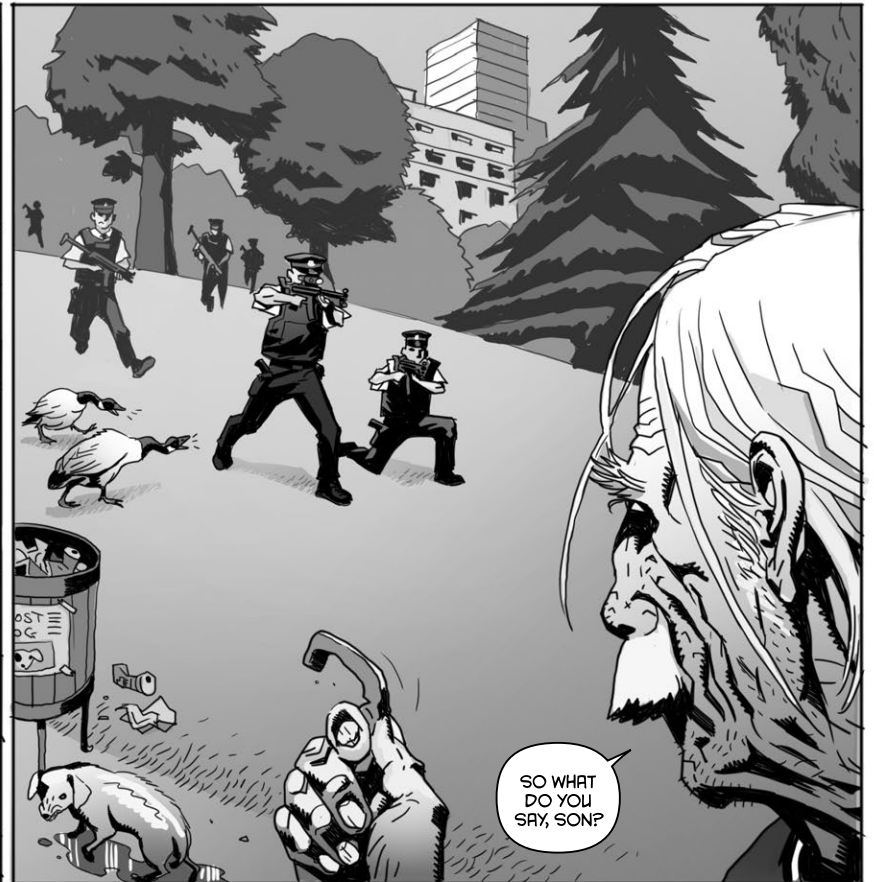
THE MILLS, THEY CALL IT.

THAT'S WHAT PASSES FOR SATANIC HUMOUR, I'M GUESSING, IF YOU KNOW YOUR BLAKE.



IT'S A REGULAR *BUTLIN'S* FOR THEM WITH HELLFIRE BURNING INSIDE THEIR HEADS. THE MOST TRULY HORRIBLE LIONS' DEN OF THEM ALL.

I BEEN THERE ONCE. BARELY MADE IT OUT THAT TIME, AND THAT WAS WHEN I WAS IN ME PRIME. DON'T RECKON I'LL BE THAT LUCKY TWICE, FORTY YEARS APART.



SO WHAT DO YOU SAY, SON?



WHAT'S BUTLIN'S?

LIKE CENTER PARCS, ONLY WITH GLAMOROUS GRANNY COMPETITIONS.

BLOODY HELL, DON'T TELL ME I'M GONG TO HAVE TO UPDATE ALL ME CULTURAL REFERENCES FOR YOUR BENEFIT?



"MY GOD HATH SENT AN ANGEL, AND HATH SHUT THE LIONS' MOUTHS, THAT THEY HAVE NOT HURT ME."

SEE, SON? FAITH AND YOUR UNCLE HARRY WILL DO MORE FOR YOU THAN THE BIBLE SQUAD EVER COULD.



COMMANDER, D.S. HOPKINS--

THIS IS DANIEL. HE'LL BE JOINING THE TEAM, SOON AS YOU CAN GET THE PAPERWORK SORTED OUT...





HELLO, HOWARD MATE. OFF ON OUR HOLIDAYS, ARE WE?

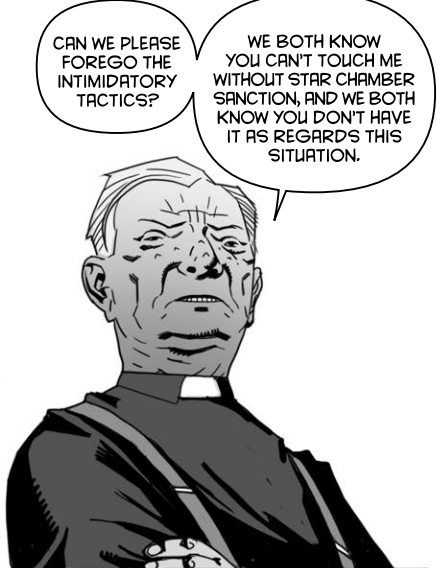
WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO HIDE? ONE OF THEM THIRD-WORLD POSTINGS WHERE THEY SEND THE CASSOCK-LIFTERS AND THEM CAUGHT HELPING THEMSELVES TO THE PARISH FUNDS, OR SOMEWHERE A LITTLE MORE BEFITTING A MAN OF YOUR STATION?



LOOK HERE, HARRY--

IT'S HARRY TO MY MATES ON THE PUB DARTS TEAM AND THEM UNDER ME THAT I RESPECT.

TO THE NASTY FILTH I GO CHASING AFTER, IT'S *INSPECTOR ABSALOM*, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.



CAN WE PLEASE FOREGO THE INTIMIDATORY TACTICS?

WE BOTH KNOW YOU CAN'T TOUCH ME WITHOUT STAR CHAMBER SANCTION, AND WE BOTH KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE IT AS REGARDS THIS SITUATION.



VERY TRUE, YOUR WORSHIPFULNESS. VERY TRUE INDEED.

BUT WE BOTH KNOW IT'S NOT ME AND THE *STAR CHAMBER* YOU'RE AFRAID OF. NOT BY A LONG SHOT.



YOU LIKE BEING ON TV. WHAT'S THIS FOR? "*CHANGING ROOMS MEETS MOST HAUNTED*"?

THINK THIS AND SOME HALF-ARSED PROTECTION RITE WILL KEEP *THE RATHBORNES* OUT WHEN THEY COME CALLING?



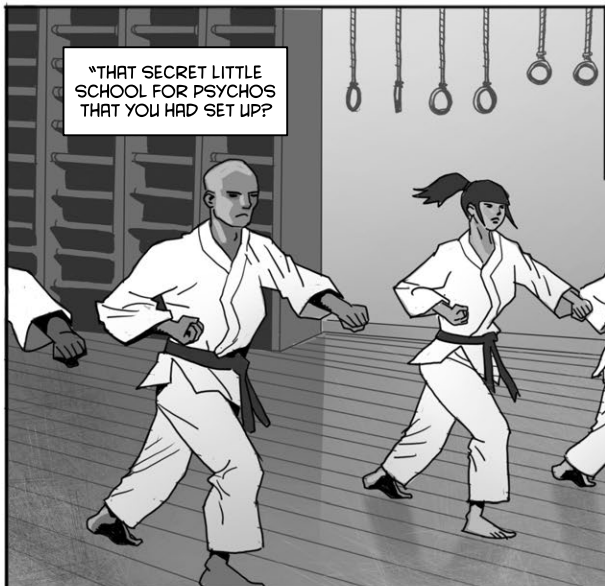
AND THEY *WILL* COME FOR YOU, NOW THAT THEY THINK YOU PROBABLY SET THEM UP FOR THAT LITTLE SET-TO I HAD WITH THEM OVER YOUR DEMON-KILLER LAD.

I EXPECT THAT'S WHY YOU'RE SCARPERRING OFF ABROAD SOON AS THE COAST'S CLEAR, EHP?



YOU THINK I'LL BE ANY SAFER UNDER *YOUR* PROTECTION?

OH, I THINK YOU'RE SHAFTED SIX WAYS TO SUNDAY NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO. NOT THAT I CARE MUCH, MIND.





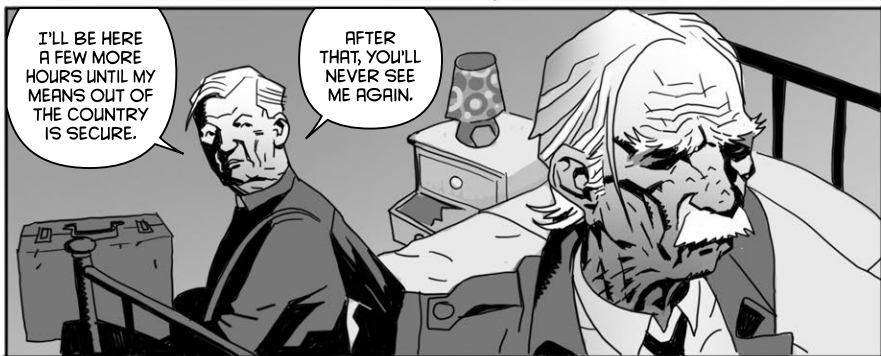


SO, YOUR HOLINESS, A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE LOOKING FOR YOU SOON.

IF YOU'VE GOT AN OVERSEAS BOLTHOLE ORGANISED, YOU'D BE WELL ADVISED TO HEAD OFF TO IT SHARPISH.

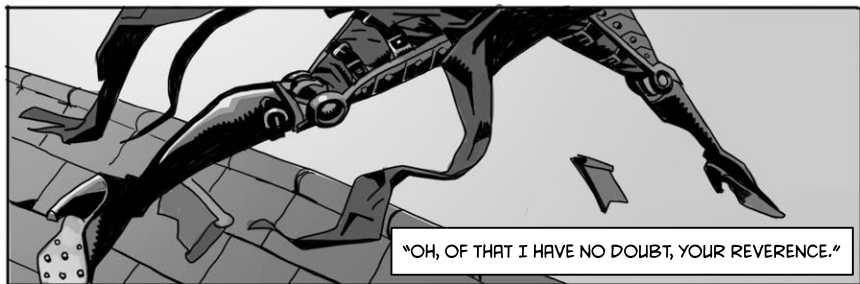


AND I DO MEAN SHARPISH.



I'LL BE HERE A FEW MORE HOURS UNTIL MY MEANS OUT OF THE COUNTRY IS SECURE.

AFTER THAT, YOU'LL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN.



"OH, OF THAT I HAVE NO DOUBT, YOUR REVERENCE."



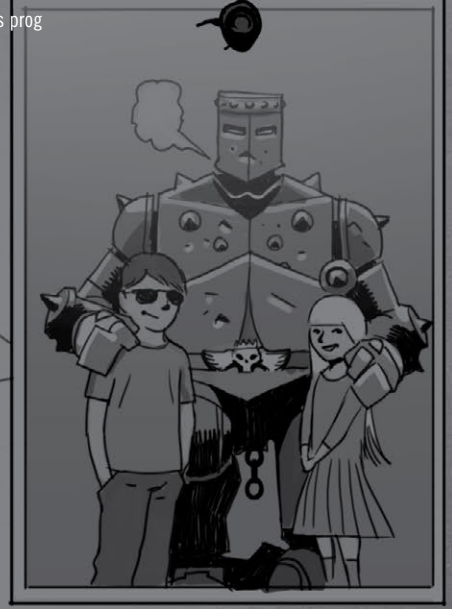
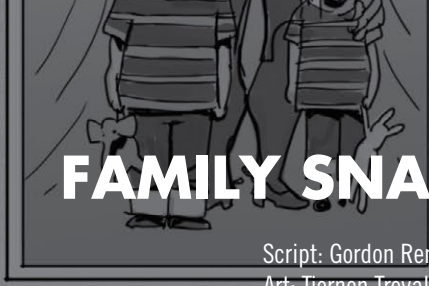
ANYWAY, WE'LL BE OFF NOW. MIND WHAT I SAID ABOUT THE RATHBORNES...

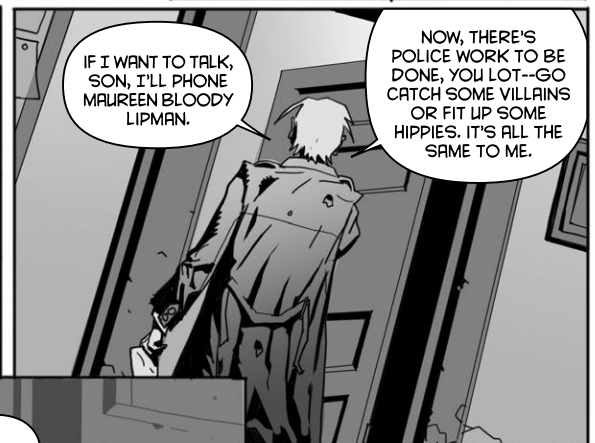
"I DOUBT THERE'S MANY PLACES ON THIS EARTH WHERE YOU CAN GIVE 'EM THE SLIP, ONCE THEY'VE DECIDED YOU OWE THEM THEIR POUND OF FLESH..."

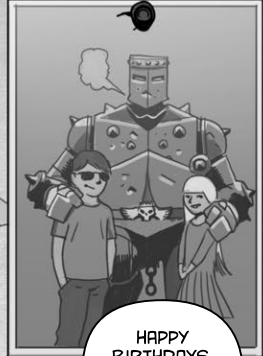
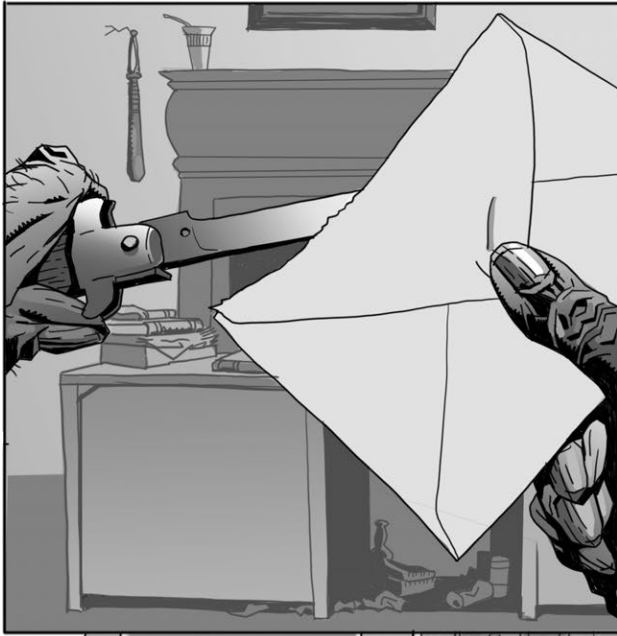
FAMILY SNAPSHOTS

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

Originally published in *2000 AD* 1961 Christmas prog

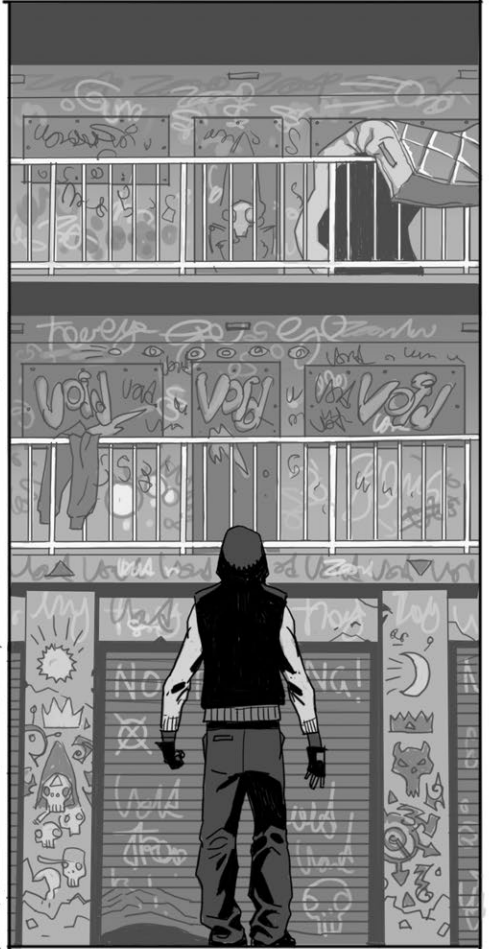






HAPPY BIRTHDAYS, LOVES. FROM YOUR DAFT OLD GRANDDAD.









"SO WHAT'S THE BIG PLAN, THEN, HARRY LAD?"



"STORM THE RAMPARTS, FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, SAVE THE INNOCENTS, AND BE EVERYONE'S BIG HERO?"



"BIT OF A STRETCH, HARRY, EVEN FOR A CHANCER LIKE YOU."



EMBITTERED OLD BATTLER, THAT'S YOU. NOT KNIGHT IN SHINING BLOODY ARMOUR.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS, MY SON.

SO SAYS YOU...



"BUT DON'T COUNT A MAN DOWN..."



"NOT BY A LONG SHOT..."

"...NOT WHEN HE'S FOUND SOMETHING WORTH FIGHTING FOR."



THIS PLACE? DANIEL'S LAST KNOWN ADDRESS?

HE LIVED HERE, BEFORE HIS MUM TOPPED HERSELF AND HIS BROTHER WERE PUT INTO CARE. MAYBE--

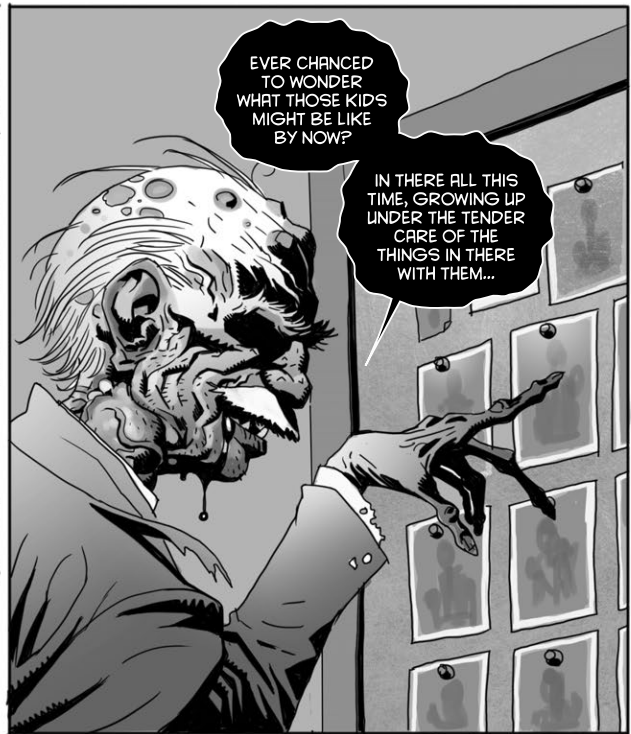


OKAY, MAKE THAT DEFINITELY.



GRANDKIDS GETTING BIGGER, I SEE.

CONSIDERATE OF THEM THAT'S GOT 'EM TO LET YOU KNOW THEY'RE SAFE AND WELL AND IN GOOD HANDS.

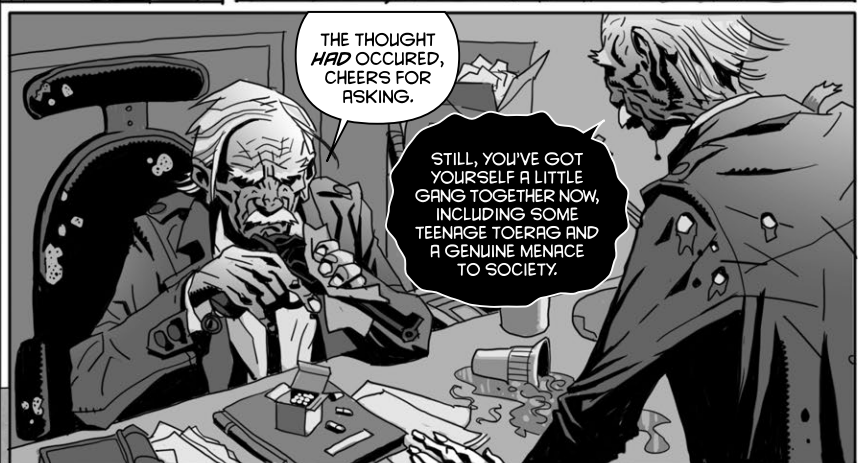


EVER CHANCED TO WONDER WHAT THOSE KIDS MIGHT BE LIKE BY NOW?

IN THERE ALL THIS TIME, GROWING UP UNDER THE TENDER CARE OF THE THINGS IN THERE WITH THEM...



...WHO KNOWS WHAT KIND OF HORRIBLENESS MIGHT HAVE CRAWLED INTO THOSE PRETTY LITTLE HEADS, EHP?



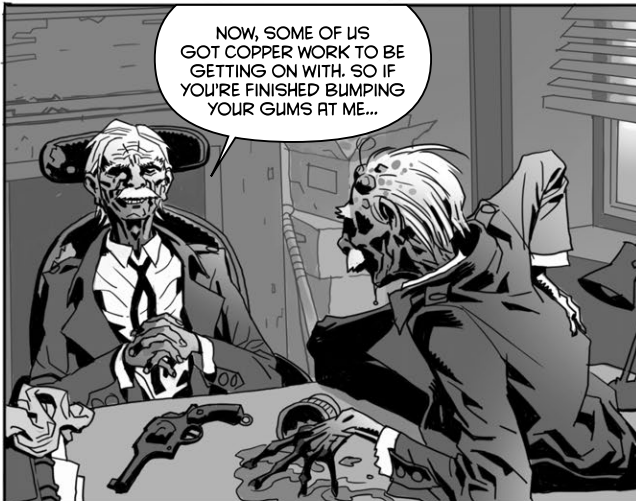
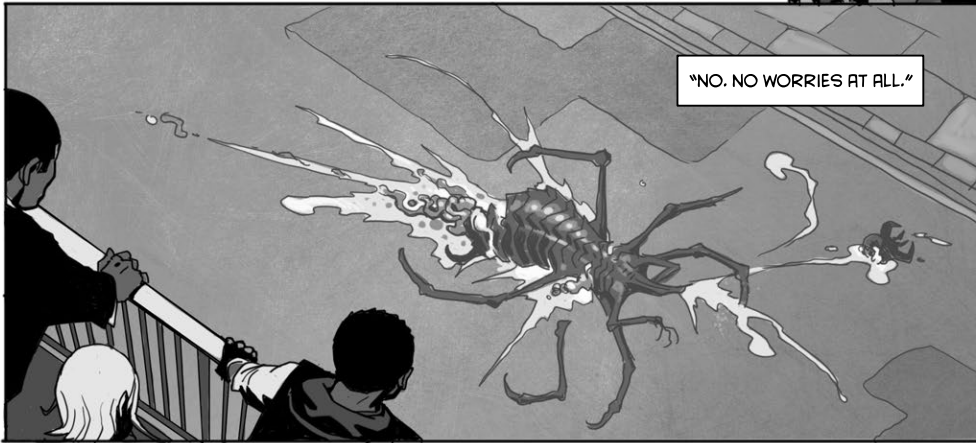
THE THOUGHT HAD OCCURED, CHEERS FOR ASKING.

STILL, YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A LITTLE GANG TOGETHER NOW, INCLUDING SOME TEENAGE TOERAG AND A GENUINE MENACE TO SOCIETY.



"RECKON THEY'LL BE UP TO THE JOB?"







...THEY MUST HAVE LEFT IT FOR YOU AS A *TRAP*, IN CASE YOU EVER CAME BACK.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT. YOU START HUNTING DEMONS, AND THEY START HUNTING--



HELLO? WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?



WHAT I CAME HERE FOR.



"FAMILY'S *IMPORTANT*. WORTH TAKING RISKS OVER."

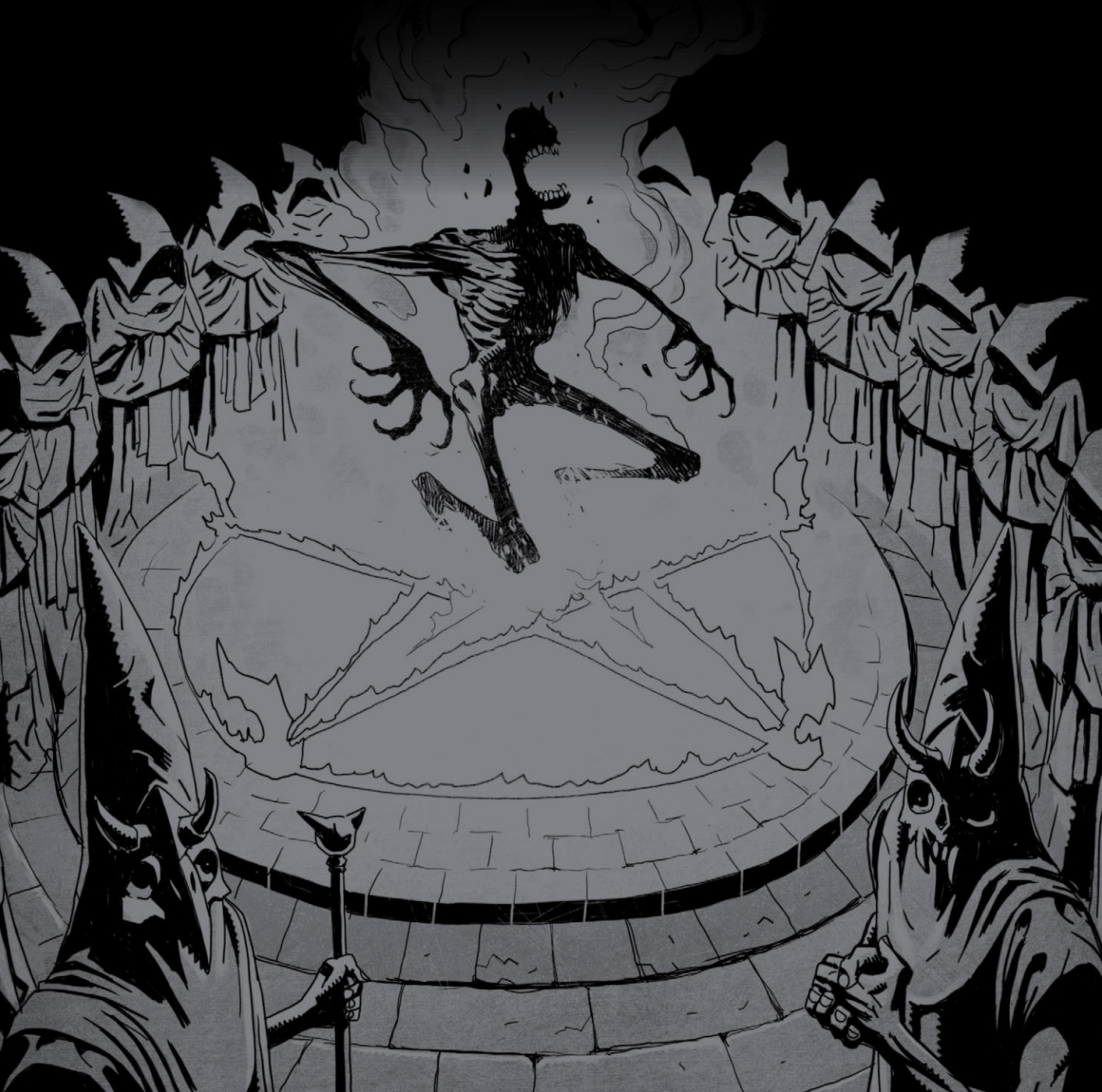
NO WORRIES. I'LL GET YOU OUT OF THERE.

AND IF YOU'RE LIKE HE SAID, WELL...



...YOUR OLD GRANDDAD WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT TOO.

COVER GALLERY







SCRIPT & SKETCHES



ABSALOM: UNDER A FALSE FLAG

PART ONE of 10 episodes

Script: GORDON RENNIE

Art: TIERNEN TREVALLION

PAGE ONE

Panel 1. EXT. A HORRIBLE HOUSING ESTATE - DAY, where we see a FIGURE being pursued by a howling mob. The figure is that of a teenage boy, but he's wearing a hooded top and has his face covered by a scarf wrapped round the lower half of it. No details of his identity forthcoming.

CAPTION:

A YEAR AGO:

CAPTION:

'SO HOW'S HE DOING?'

Panel 2. In closer on the running kid. Whoever he is, he can move, and has real parkour/free running-type moves, as he bypasses obstacles - steps, walls etc - of the housing estate landscape he's fleeing through.

CAPTION:

'VERY WELL, ACTUALLY. HE MADE IT THROUGH THE SHOPPING PRECINCT. THAT'S FURTHER THAN MOST OF THEM GET. AND BY MY COUNT HE'S KILLED FIVE OF THEM SO FAR.'

Panel 3. On his pursuers - a pack of hoodie demons, identical to the ones last seen in the Prog 2012 Sick Leave story. The penny drops - this is the abandoned housing estate from that story that was being used a training ground for demon killing. And now we're seeing those mysterious demon killers being trained.

CAPTION:

'FIVE? NOW THAT'S IMPRESSIVE. I'M DEFINITELY LIKING THE LOOK OF THIS ONE.'

Panel 4. On the running figure, leaping across some obstacle while delivering an expert flying kick to one of the demons coming at him from the side.

CAPTION:

'OOPS. DON'T SPEAK TOO SOON. HE SHOULD HAVE TURNED LEFT BACK THERE. NOW HE'S HEADING TOWARD THE PARK.'

Panel 5. The two speakers who've been watching him, studying his progress through binoculars from the safety of a fairly distant rooftop. No details of their identity, other than they're both male and wearing suits.

SPEAKER 1:

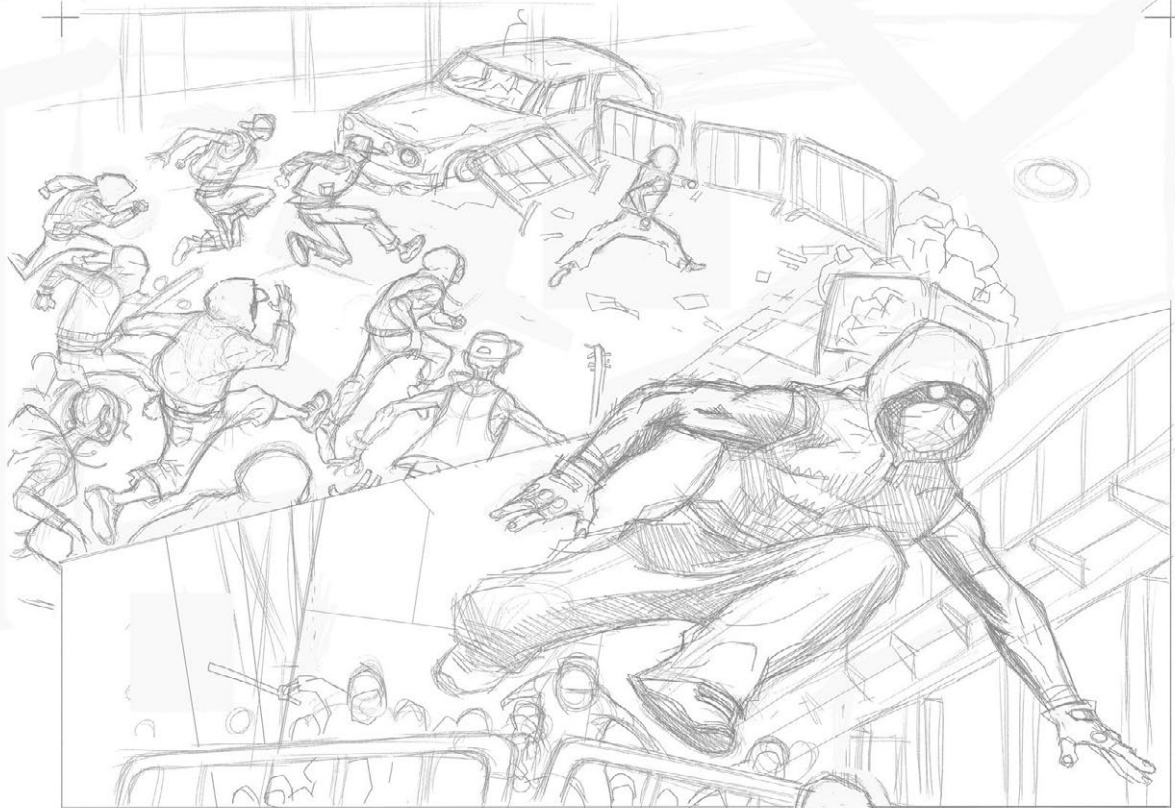
THE PARK? THAT'S BAD, I TAKE IT?

SPEAKER 2:

IT'S OPEN GROUND, WITH A GLYPH-GUARDED EXIT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF IT...

(link)

...BUT I'VE NEVER YET SEEN ANY OF THEM MAKE IT THE FULL DISTANCE ACROSS.



PAGE TWO

Panel 1. Back on the running figure, with more demon packs closing in on him from different directions.

CAPTION:

'SEE? THEY'VE GOT HIM NOW...

Panel 2. The figure leaps up onto a children's' high climbing frame. The demons go up after him.

CAPTION:

'POOR KID. HE WAS DOING SO WELL, TOO.'

Panel 3. The figure on top of the climbing frame, dramatically punching and kicking demons off it.

Panel 4. Back to the watchers on the roof, still watching through their binoculars.

SPEAKER 2:

WAIT A MINUTE! HOW DID HE--

(LINK)

GOOD LORD. OKAY, NOW THAT IS IMPRESSIVE.

Panel 5. Back on the figure, off the climbing frame and running again, with the demons far behind him.

CAPTION:

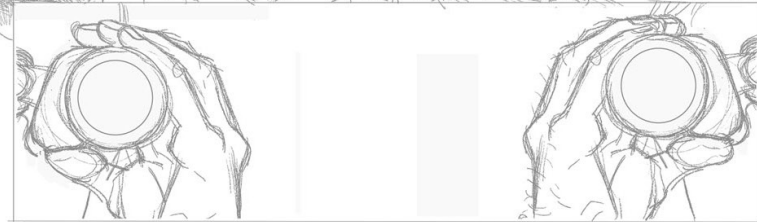
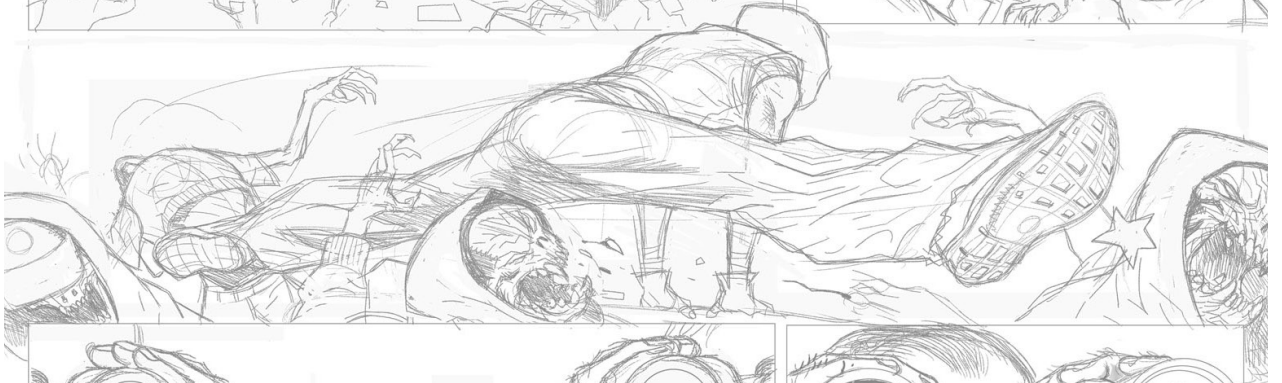
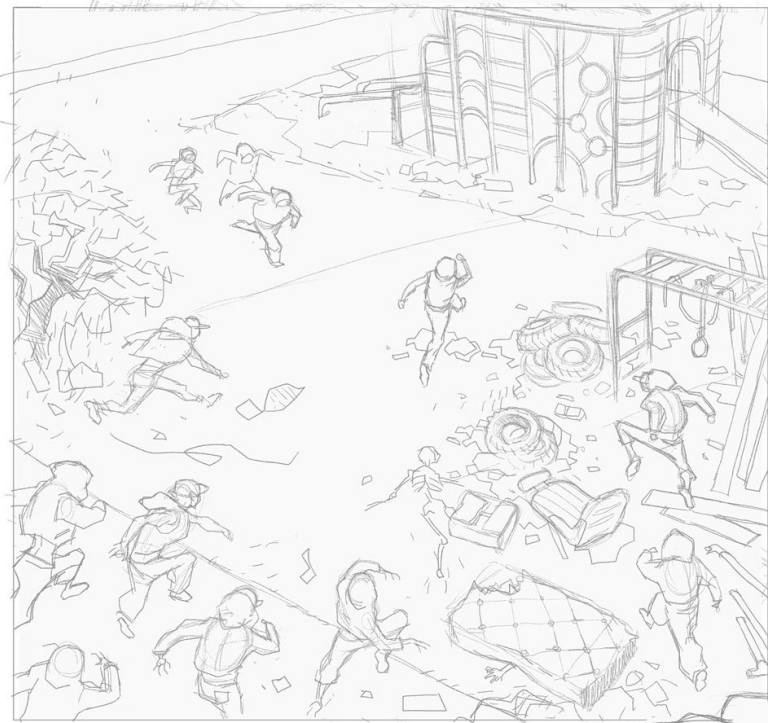
' "SO DANIEL WAS TAKEN UP OUT OF THE LIONS' DEN, AND NO MANNER OF HURT WAS FOUND UPON HIM, BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN HIS GOD." '

Panel 6.

Extreme close-up of the second speaker. We can't see much of his face - he's holding the binoculars over it - but we can see the clerical collar round his throat. This is the same mysterious church cleric we saw at the end of the Sick Leave story.

SPEAKER 2:

ANOTHER ONE FOR THE FOLD. LET'S CALL HIM DANIEL, AND MOVE HIM UP INTO FINAL-PHASE TRAINING.



PAGE THREE

Panel 1. STREETS OF NEWCASTLE - DAY. HARRY and some of his squad (TERENCE SANGSTER and a couple of LAD MINDERS) walking toward the entrance to a crime scene.

CAPTION:

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, NOW:

HARRY:

HERE, YOU EVER HEAR ABOUT WHERE GEORDIES COME FROM?

SANGSTER:

THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE THE ONE ABOUT THE PIG, IS IT, HARRY?

HARRY:

SO, BACK IN THE STONE AGE, SOME FILTHY SCOTS CAVEMAN SHAGGED A PIG...

Panel 2. Harry, flashing a badge at a uniformed cop, who indicates for them to enter one of those big police forensic tents erected over a sensitive crime scene.

HARRY:

...AS YOUR AVERAGE SCOTSMAN WAS WONT TO DO BACK THEN, AND SOMETIMES STILL IS TODAY, GIVEN THE GENERAL STATE OF CALEDONIAN WOMANHOOD...

Panel 3. Harry, entering the tent like a performer arriving on stage. His audience of Newcastle CID detectives and forensic technicians don't look so impressed.

HARRY:

...AND, NINE MONTHS LATER, THE FIRST GEORDIE WAS BORN!

(link)

ALL RIGHT, CANNY LADS. THERE'RE REAL COPPERS HERE NOW TO HANDLE THE REAL COPPER WORK. TIME TO GO BACK TO SEARCHING FOR A CURE OF RICKETS AND GIVING A SWIFT KICKING TO WHOEVER TOLD JIMMY NAIL HE COULD SING.

Panel 4. Harry, being confronted by his not-amused Newcastle cop opposite number. The other Newcastle cops are leaving, one of them making a wanker hand gesture at Harry as he does so.

NEWCASTLE DETECTIVE:

YOU'LL BE ABSALOM, I'M GUESSING.

Panel 5. Harry indicates toward the hulking figures of the Lads behind him. The Newcastle detective gestures toward the (unseen) centre of all this cop attention.

HARRY:

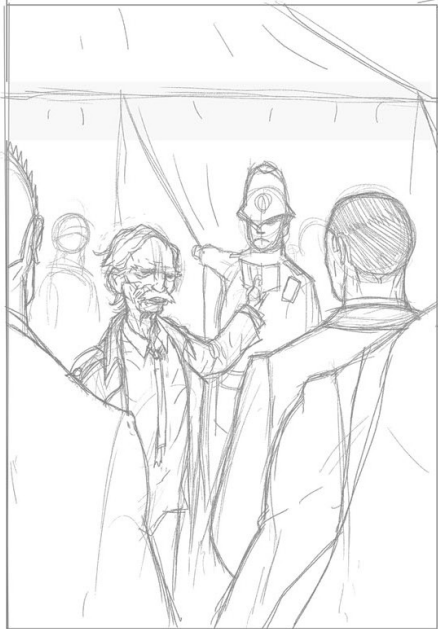
THAT I AM, AND YOU BETTER NOT HAVE WASTED MY TIME FETCHING ME UP HERE.

(link)

THREE POUND SEVENTY FOR A BACON SARNIE ON THE TRAIN, AND YOU KNOW HOW MANY OF 'EM MY LADS HERE CAN GET THROUGH IN THREE HOURS?

NEWCASTLE DETECTIVE:

YOU WANT THIS ONE, IT'S ALL YOURS...



PAGE FOUR

Panel 1. Big on what's lying at the cops' feet. It's clothes - a man's suit, shirt, tie, shoes - lying sprawled like a fallen human body. And there is a body in there, but it's burned to ash, spilling out of the clothes at the points where the head, hands and feet should be. The weird thing is, if the body was burned to ash like this, that the clothes remain completely untouched by the effects of any heat. There's also an ORNATE DAGGER lying nearby.

NEWCASTLE DETECTIVE (o.s.):

WHAT DO YOU THINK, INSPECTOR - THIS ONE FALL INTO YOUR MANOR?

Panel 2. Harry and Sangster, bending down to inspect it more closely. Harry's already lifting up a handful of the ash powder.

HARRY:

DEFINITELY HUMAN. OR NEAR ENOUGH. BEEN IN THIS GAME LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT POWDERED HUMAN ASH FEELS LIKE.

SANGSTER:

WHAT WE LOOKING AT, BOSS? SOME KIND OF PYRO-MAGIC OR SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION?

Panel 3. Harry, blowing his nose on a hanky...

HARRY:

NORTHERN AIR GOT YOU THINKING DAFT? YOU'LL BE WANTING TO BREED WHIPPETS AND TAKE UP CLOG-WEARING NEXT.

Panel 4. ...he reaches down with the stained hanky...

HARRY:

FUNNY OLD KIND OF FIRE - MAGIC OR OTHERWISE - THAT DOESN'T LEAVE ANY MARKS ON THE CLOTHES THAT DUSTY SPRINGFIELD HERE WAS WEARING.

Panel 5. and comes up holding the dagger, and we can see the intricate magical markings carved into the blade.

HARRY:

SEE THESE MARKINGS? OLD-SCHOOL CRAFTSMANSHIP. DON'T SEE ARTISTRY LIKE THAT THESE DAYS.

(link)

REMINDE YOU OF ANYTHING?

SANGSTER:

THAT HOUSING ESTATE THAT WAS SOMEONE'S PRIVATE DEMON-HUNTING RESERVATION.*

HARRY:

BINGO, SON...

CAP:

*THARGNOTE: SEE 'SICK LEAVE', PROG 2012.



PAGE FIVE

Panel 1. Cut to A POSH STREET OF SUBURBAN HOUSES - DAY. SHADOWY FIGURE in foreground, watching a car pull into a driveway.

CAPTION:

'...I THINK SOMEONE'S JUST GONE FREE RANGE WITH THEIR DEMON-HUNTING HOBBY.'

Panel 2. A WOMAN, well-dressed, in her mid-thirties, getting out her car. Figure in the driveway, approaching.

FIGURE:

EXCUSE ME. EMILY PARKS?

Panel 3. The figure, in the foreground. A teenage boy wearing a hoodie. We can see the woman in front of him, looking at him. Our main focus, though, is on the ornate dagger the teenage figure is holding behind their back, It is, of course, identical to the one Absalom has found.

WOMAN:

YES? CAN I HELP YOU?

FIGURE:

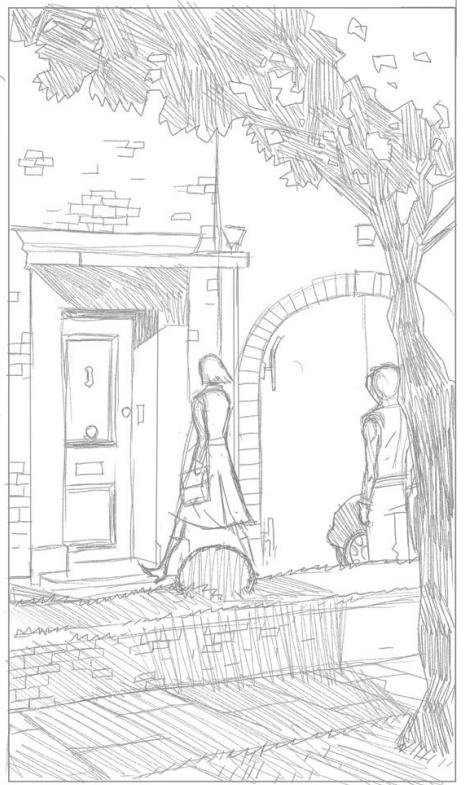
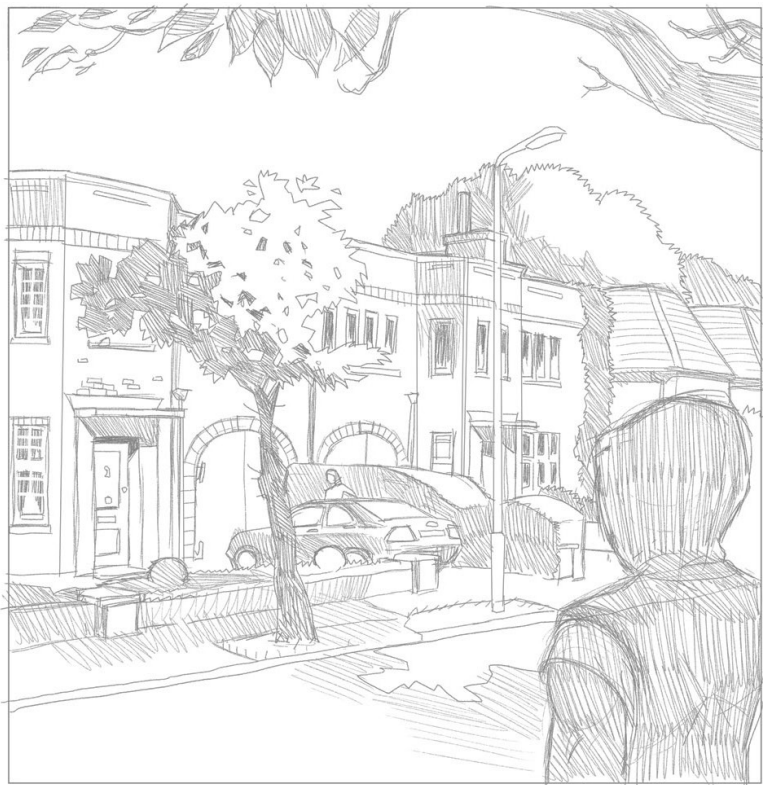
SORRY. I JUST NEEDED TO BE SURE I HAD THE RIGHT PERSON.

Panel 4. On the figure. DANIEL, a quite angelic-looking black kid, about 15-16. He is, of course, the demon-killing parkour artist we saw being put through his paces in the beginning of this episode.

DANIEL:

MY NAME'S DANIEL. I WAS SENT HERE TO SAVE YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL.

DTP: NEXT PROG: ASHES TO ASHES!



WRITER

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

ARTIST

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



A TOUCH OF HELLFIRE!

OLD, IRREVERENT AND DOOMED BY SUPERNATURAL FORCES, hard-nosed copper Detective Inspector Harry Absalom is tasked with upholding the Accord – the treaty between the British Royalty and the forces of Hell.

A religious fanatic is killing illegal demonic hosts, upsetting both sides of the Accord... to prevent all-out war, Absalom and his psychotic ex-boss the Guv'nor need to catch the perpetrator before it's too late!

With his grandchildren held hostage to keep him in line, Harry will need all the help he can get his hands on! Especially when he discovers the sort of place they're being kept...

This is the second collection in Gordon Rennie and Tiernen Trevallion's *Absalom* series.

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