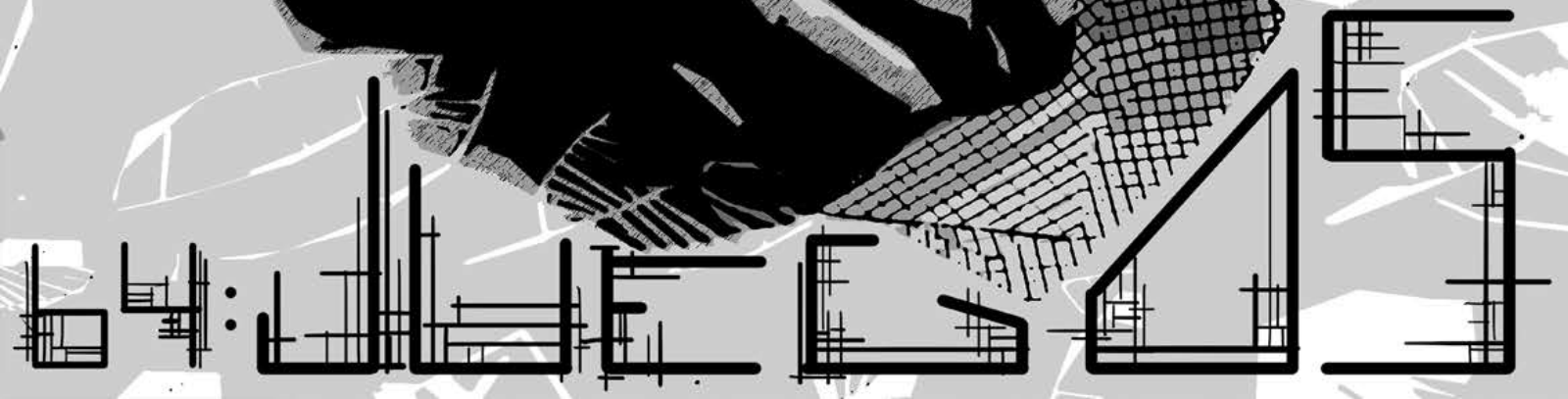




UPPERGE



SIMON M.

ATANA S.

SCRIPT

PENCILS

PANEL LAYOUT

INK

COVER

TRANSLATION

(SORRY, ENGLISH SPEAKERS)

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"WELCOME TO THE MAGIC CASTLE, THE BEST CASINO IN NAPLES".

"YOU'VE COME LOOKING FOR INFORMATION..."

"WHAT BETTER WAY THAN A GAME TO SEE IF YOU DESERVE IT? WIN, AND IT WILL BE YOURS".

"IN THIS CASINO, NO ONE GETS UP FROM THE TABLE THE MOMENT THE GAME STARTS, UNDERSTOOD? THEREFORE, I HOPE YOU'VE USED OUR LUXURIOUS BATHROOMS, BECAUSE YOU CAN'T GET UP ANYMORE".

SO WE WILL PLAY A SEVERELY MODIFIED TEXAS HOLD'EM.

TWO CARDS IN THE MIDDLE, TWO IN THE HAND, WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF BUYING TWO MORE.

THE EXTRA CARDS ARE BOUGHT BY ADDING ONE POINT TO THE POT, WHICH THE WINNER OF THE ROUND WILL TAKE. WE MUST REWARD THE ONE WHO KNOWS HOW TO READ WHAT PLAY IS BEING PLAYED, RIGHT?

SO IF I BUY TWO CARDS, YOU BUY TWO, HE BUYS ONE, AND I WIN, I GET FIVE POINTS?

SIX. WINNING THE ROUND GIVES YOU ONE POINT.

EVERYONE ELSE WHO REVEALS CARDS AT THE END OF THE ROUND LOSES THREE POINTS.

CHEATING, INCLUDING WITH MAGICAL ABILITIES, IS... *FORBIDDEN*. IN ITALICS.

YOU CAN TRY IT, WHETHER IT'S WITH MAGIC OR NOT, BUT IF SOMEONE DETECTS IT AND IS ABLE TO FULLY EXPLAIN THE TRICK...

...YOU ARE *ELIMINATED*. FIRST TO GET 100 POINTS WINS.

I WILL GIVE YOU A TIP: CHEATING IS ILLEGAL, BUT PERHAPS YOU COULD SEE IT AS AN ASPECT THAT REVEALS THE TRUE NATURE OF THE GAME.

EVERYTHING IS THERE TO BE SEEN.

AND IF WE WIN, YOU GIVE US THE INFORMATION, RIGHT? WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU WIN... IF YOU'RE VICTORIOUS?

YES. IF YOU WIN, I WILL EXPLAIN WHO AND HOW YOU WERE CONDITIONED NOT TO ATTACK THE HEAD OF THE PARANORMAL EBI.

IF I WIN...

...AH, THEN COMES THE GOOD STUFF, RIGHT? THEN YOU'RE IN DEBT.

REMEMBER MY *ETHEREAL GUN*? THE ONE WITH THE RED BULLETS.

I HAVE DISCOVERED OTHER COLORS.

HEH. I-I REMEMBER WHEN YOU GAVE ME THE RED ONE. FOR ABOUT AN HOUR, I H-HAD SO MUCH ANGER...

SO? WHAT DOES THE GUN HAVE TO DO...?

THE DEBT FOR PUTTING MY CASINO AT RISK... SEE THE BLACK BULLETS? THIS WOULD PAY IT OFF.

STRAIGHT TO THE HEAD. *BANG*.

BANG.

OBSOLETELY, IT WON'T KILL YOU. BUT ITS EFFECTS...

...CONSIDER MY LACK OF EXPLANATION AS PART OF MY STRATEGY.

"YOU HAVE TO ADD SOME EXCITEMENT TO THE GAME, RIGHT?"



...ALL THESE NOISES AND FLASHES...

...BUT YOU ARE THE ONE ATTRACTING ALL THE ATTENTION IN THE ROOM.

I HOPE SO.

YOU KNOW HOW MANY HOURS IT TOOK TO SCULPT THE HAIR?



AGAIN. I DIDN'T COME HERE TO WORK. BESIDES, WASN'T HE ANOTHER STUDENT FROM FRANKFURT?



DIDN'T HE SPEND MORE YEARS THERE THAN USUAL? WHO KNOWS HOW MANY MAGICAL SKILLS HE'S LEARNED.

I HOPE YOU'VE REINFORCED IT WITH THREE COATS OF LACQUER. WE'RE ON STANDBY, AND IF ESSEX AND JACOB ASK FOR HELP, IT'LL TURN INTO A MOUSSE...

WHAT? I'M OFFENDED. I CAME HERE AS ARM CANDY, MR. BOND. THE MISSION IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

WHAT? THIS IS THE 21ST CENTURY. IT'S ALL ABOUT STRONG, INDEPENDENT WOMEN THESE DAYS.

OH, SHUT UP. LET ME LIVE LIKE A BEAUTY FOR A DAY. LET ME IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE I DON'T HAVE TO THINK.

HOLD ON, HOLD ON. YOU RUN AN ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT BASE ONLY TO ULTIMATELY WANT TO BE A BLONDE?

I MEAN, LOOK. LOOK, NOT REALLY, BUT ISN'T THAT THE ULTIMATE STATE OF TRANSCENDENCE? LIVING IN THE MOMENT, WITHOUT THINKING, 'CAUSE YOU HAVE FABULOUS HAIR.

AH, YES. PAMELA ANDERSON, ZEN MASTER.

PRECISELY. WHAT WOULD YOU WANT PAMELA FOR, TO SOLVE ALGEBRAIC PROBLEMS? COME ON.

ACTUALLY, WE COULD'VE USED HER AS A DISTRACTION. FRANCIS, THE CASINO BOSS, IS ESSEX AND JACOB'S PRIME SUSPECT. YOU COULD'VE MET HIM BEFORE THE GAME, GET HIM TALKING OR DISTRACT HIM...



YES, HE APPEARS INCONSISTENTLY IN THE RECORDS FOR SEVEN YEARS. JACOB BELIEVES HE WAS ACTING AS A SPY FOR THE FBI*...

SO EXCITING. YOU THINK THEY'LL BE ABLE TO GET THE INFORMATION OUT OF HIM?

WELL, IF THEY WIN, I GUESS SO. IF THEY DON'T, WE'LL HAVE TO ATTACK.

OH, HOW MANLY. ALL READY TO ACT.



...HRM. OKAY, OKAY. SORRY, BLON-DIE. DROPPING THE WORK TALK RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

LET'S GO PLAY, GORGEOUS.



*FBI: EUROPEAN BUREAU OF INFORMATION



PASS.

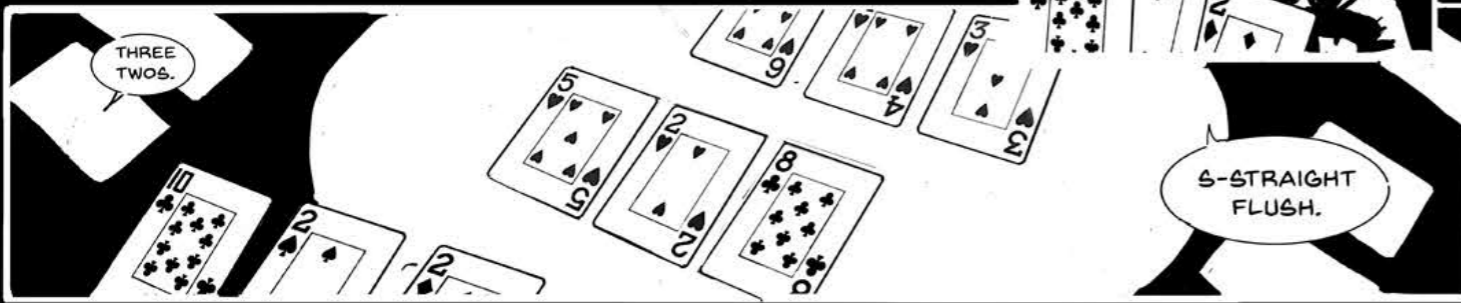
ME TOO.

YEAH, TAPPING OUT TOO.



CRAIG? IT'S JUST YOU AND ME. I'M NOT BACKING OUT.

LET'S... DO IT.



THREE TWOS.

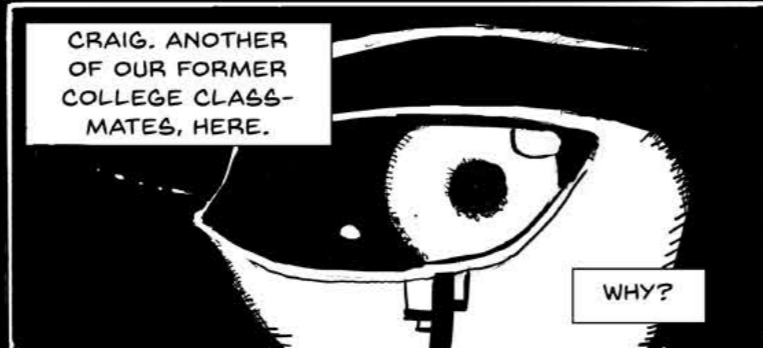
S-STRAIGHT FLUSH.



STRAIG... STRAIGHT FLUSH?

YOU'RE KIDDING ME, RIGHT?

CONVENIENT!



CRAIG. ANOTHER OF OUR FORMER COLLEGE CLASSMATES, HERE.

WHY?

WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVE FOR INVITING CRAIG?



CRAIG ASKED ME RECENTLY TO USE MY CONNECTIONS TO GIVE HIM A POSITION IN THE EBI. THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO INCLUDE HIM. HE WINS, THAT'S HIS REWARD.

COLE... LET'S SAY HE'S SETTLING A DEBT.



CRAIG, YOU FUCKER.

DID YOU KNOW THAT THIS ASSHOLE WAS NOT A NORMAL STUDENT?

HE WAS A SPY FOR THE EBI, AND HE PROBABLY MANIPULATED OUR MINDS!



HOW'S THE AFTERTASTE OF HIS RECTUM ON YOUR PALATE?

YES, OKAY...

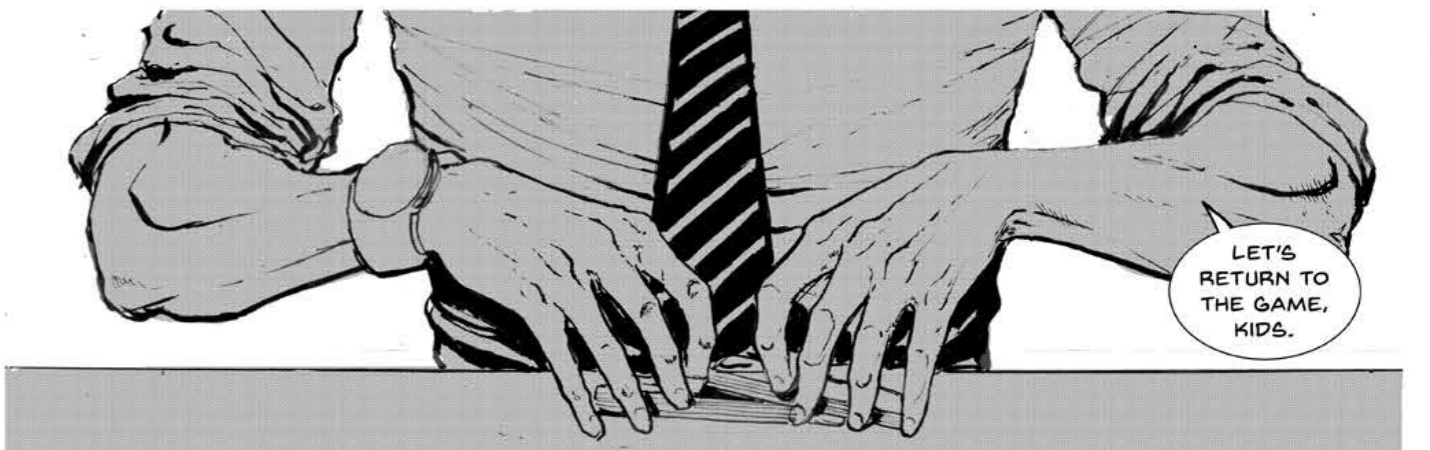
HE... UH... HE TOLD ME WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING... I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S BETTER...



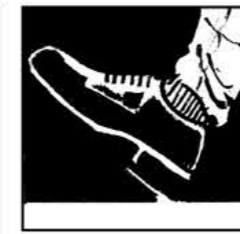
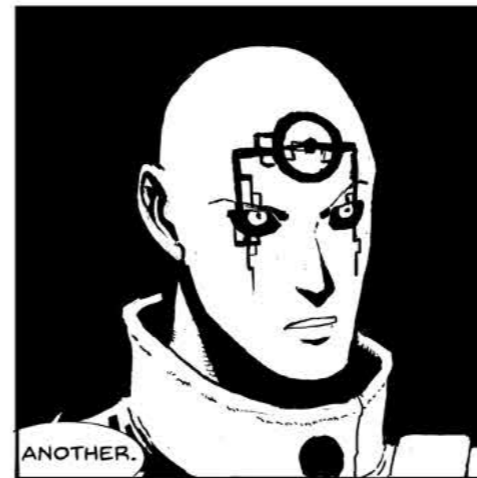
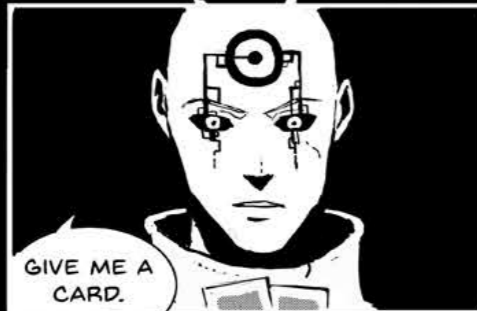
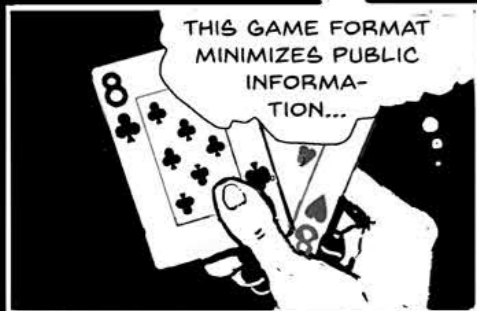
WHAT HAPPENED? I THOUGHT YOU GOT A JOB AS A STOCK MARKET CONSULTANT. USING TAROT, RIGHT?

I WAS FIRED. NOBODY BELIEVES IN THAT AND I FAILED IN... THE CRISIS, PEOPLE WANTED TO BLAME SOMEBODY. I TRIED TO GET INTO THE EBI, BUT THEY DIDN'T CONSIDER ME FIT AND-AND...

MY DOG HAS CANCER AND... I CAN'T...



LET'S RETURN TO THE GAME, KIDS.



"LET'S SEE WHO HAS THE STRONGEST HAND".





"I'LL BE RIGHT BACK."

GREAT.

ANY NEWS? YOU SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE NOW THAT THE THREE ARE OUT OF THE BASE.

I'M READY. DO YOU RECEIVE ME WELL?



NO.

NO?

THERE ISN'T MUCH TO SAY, EMPRESS.

I KNOW THE SHADOWGENES MAKE YOU NERVOUS, BUT...

LOOK, RIGHT NOW, TWO OF THEM ARE IN THE GAME ROOM.

ADAM AND JACOB TAUGHT THEM HOW TO PLAY DOMINION, A VERY POPULAR GAME IN THE ROOM...

THEY'RE PARTICIPATING IN A "REGIONAL" TOURNAMENT, WHERE MEMBERS OF...

CHARIOT, YOU KNOW THAT DOESN'T REASSURE ME.



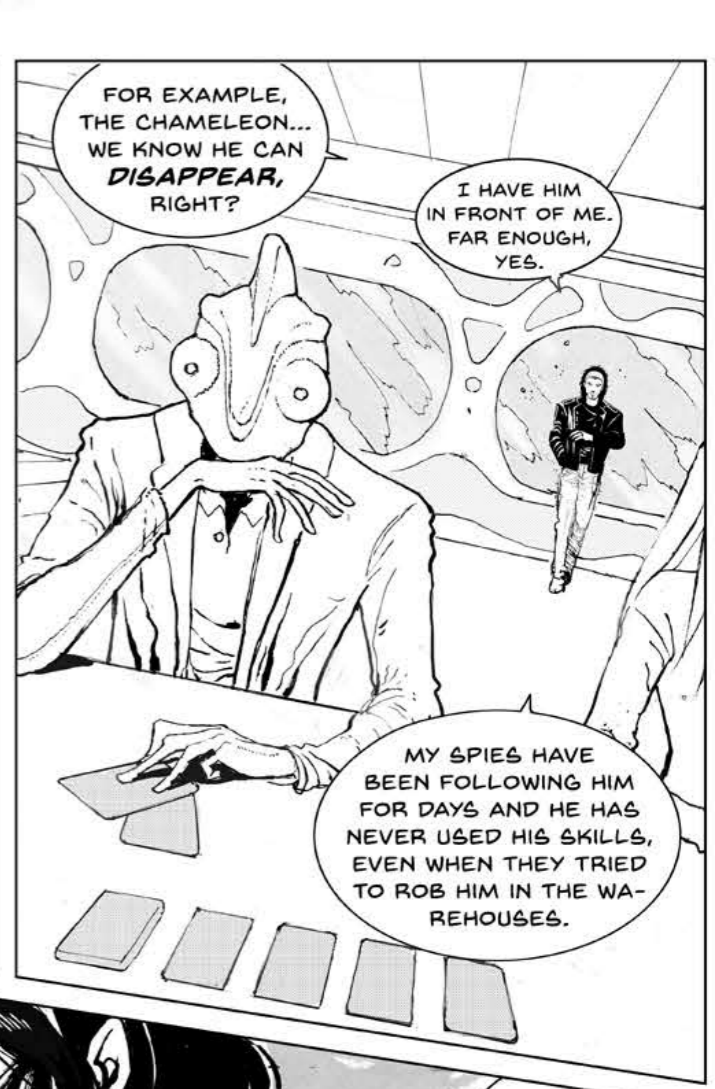
YEAH, YEAH.

BUT THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.

THEY DON'T DO NOTHING.

THE SMUGGLERS IN THE TOWER, PAVILION C... YOU HAVE A LOT OF PROBLEMATIC ACTIVITY THERE, BUT THESE GUYS?

IS MELODIES' THERE TOO?



FOR EXAMPLE, THE CHAMELEON... WE KNOW HE CAN DISAPPEAR, RIGHT?

I HAVE HIM IN FRONT OF ME. FAR ENOUGH, YES.

MY SPIES HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING HIM FOR DAYS AND HE HAS NEVER USED HIS SKILLS, EVEN WHEN THEY TRIED TO ROB HIM IN THE WAREHOUSES.

THAT ONE GIVES ME A BAD VIBE. HER POWER IS SO USELESS, SHE MUST BE LYING.



YES, SHE'S HERE TOO. I DON'T KNOW, SHE'S A QUIET WOMAN, BUT...

SHE REMINDS ME OF NAKIA. I DON'T KNOW.



EMPRESS, THEY WERE BROUGHT IN THREE WEEKS AGO.

TWO.

WHAT I MEAN IS...



I MEAN, WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT HERE? LIKE, I'M SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW THEM AND THEN... WHAT?

IT'S JUST... YOU'RE THE HEAD OF THE BASE, BUT IN THE CABALISTS, WE HAVE THE SAME RANK. IT'S ONE THING TO HELP YOU, BUT...



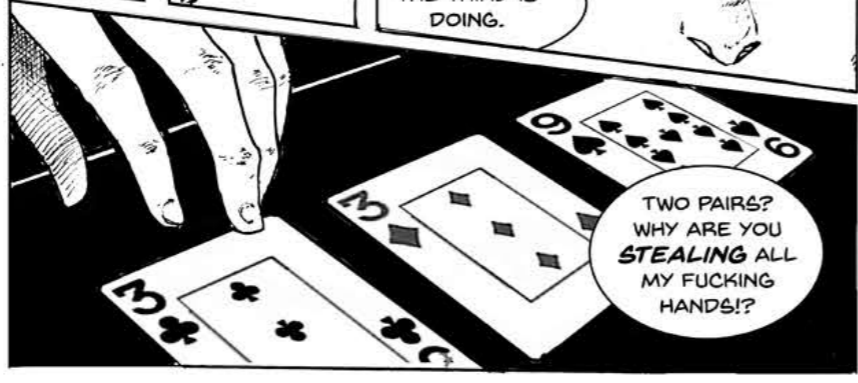
I WANT A DECISION BY THE END OF THE DAY.



GO SEE WHAT THE THIRD IS DOING.



CRAIG, GOD-DAMMIT.

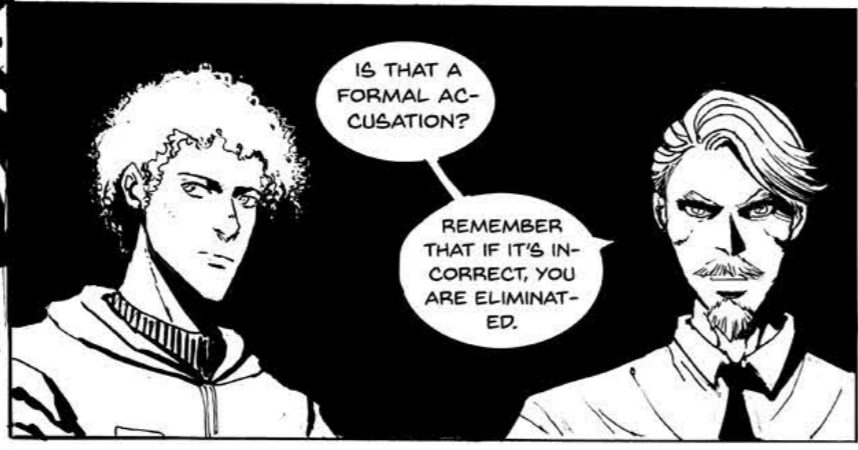


TWO PAIRS? WHY ARE YOU STEALING ALL MY FUCKING HANDS!?



YOU HAD THAT "SEWING" POWER, DIDN'T YOU?

ARE YOU USING IT RIGHT NOW?



IS THAT A FORMAL ACCUSATION?

REMEMBER THAT IF IT'S INCORRECT, YOU ARE ELIMINATED.



NAH, JUST BUSTING BALLS.

AH.

VERY WELL.



ON TO THE NEXT ROUND, THEN.

HEH. CRAIG, REMEMBER WHEN YOU TRIED TO ASK JAINA OUT ON A DATE?



YES. IT WAS A... DIS-SAS-TER.

YOU WENT AT HER LIKE SOME KIND OF ZOMBIE, MUMBLING.

HAH. YES. SHE GOT A LITTLE SCARED, AND SINCE SHE WASN'T QUITE IN CONTROL OF HER POWERS, SHE GAVE ME DIARRHEA.



HAHA! REALLY? I DON'T REMEMBER...

Y-YES, YOU WEREN'T THERE...

SHE HAD THIS VAGUE POWER OF TRIGGERING A RELEASE, DIDN'T SHE? YOU WERE LUCKY IT WENT OFF IN YOUR RECTUM AND NOT YOUR BRAIN.



ESSEX.

JACOB.

CRAIG.

COLE.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THIS CASINO, FRANCIS?

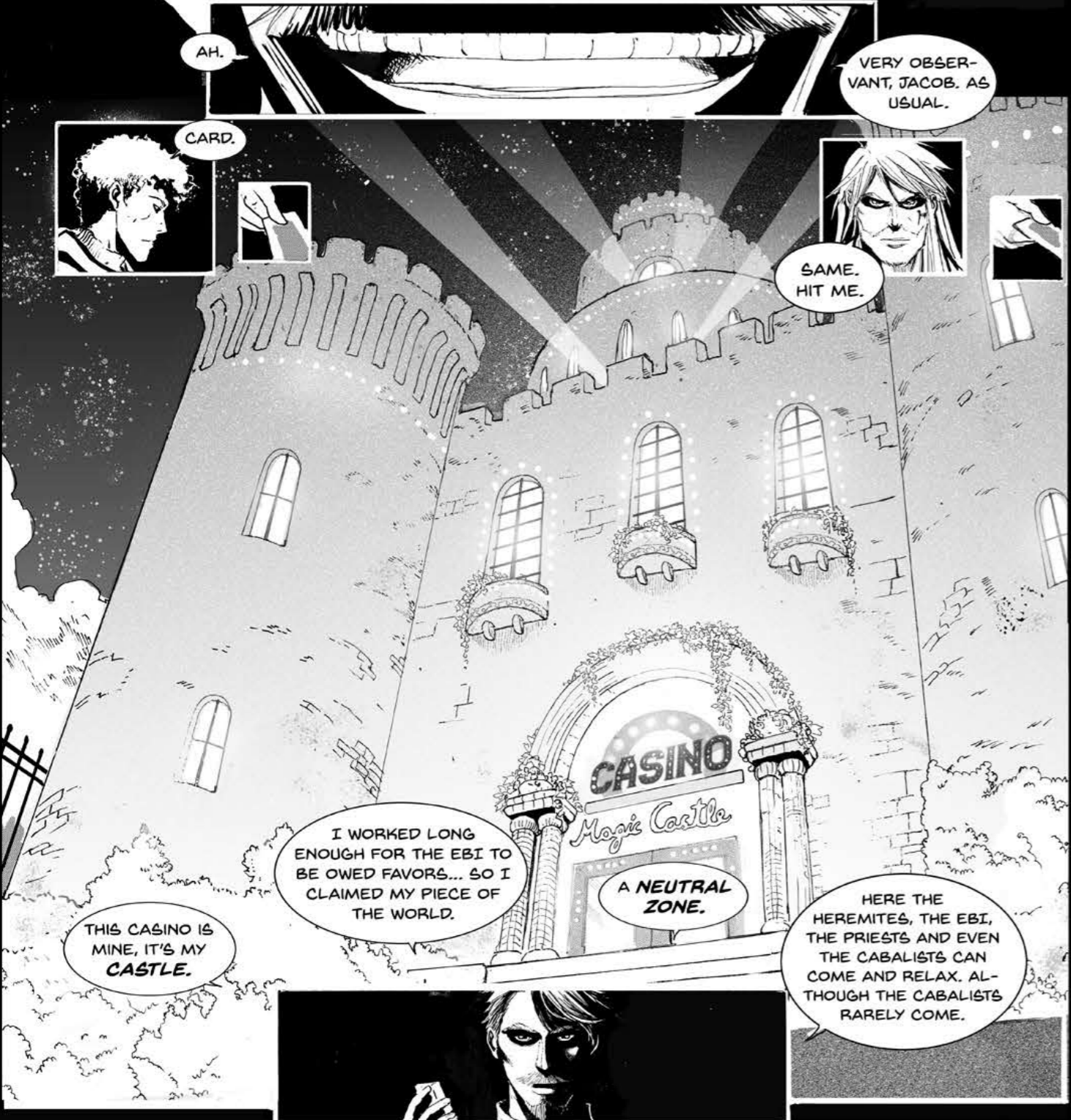
TWO OUT OF THREE PEOPLE HERE GIVE OFF MAGIC PATTERNS, I'VE ONLY SEEN THAT DISTRIBUTION HERE, NOT EVEN IN OUR BASE...

AH.

VERY OBSERVANT, JACOB. AS USUAL.

CARD.

SAME. HIT ME.



THIS CASINO IS MINE, IT'S MY CASTLE.

I WORKED LONG ENOUGH FOR THE EBI TO BE OWED FAVORS... SO I CLAIMED MY PIECE OF THE WORLD.

A NEUTRAL ZONE.

HERE THE HEREMITES, THE EBI, THE PRIESTS AND EVEN THE CABALISTS CAN COME AND RELAX. ALTHOUGH THE CABALISTS RARELY COME.

DO YOU KNOW HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS TO GET UP IN THE MORNING? COST ME MY MARRIAGE, WORKING FOR THE PARANORMAL EBI.

I PAID THE PRICE, I DID MY DUTY, NOW I GET MY REWARD.

AND NOW, NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, I OFFER A HAVEN OF PEACE WITH THE EBI'S BLESSING. I EVEN HAVE SECRET ROOMS WHERE YOU CAN ONLY ENTER IF YOU HAVE MAGICAL ABILITIES.

A PLACE WHERE YOUR POWER IS RESPECTED, YET FIGHTING IS NOT NECESSARY.

THIS IS WHAT THE GAME OFFERS.



THAT'S NICE.

GOOD MULTI-SYLLABIC CRAP FOR WHEN YOU FEEL REMORSE FOR BEING A FUCKING TRAITOR.

AH, ESSEX. THE RICH BEGGAR.

DO YOU THINK THERE WILL EVER BE AN AUTHORITY FIGURE YOU DON'T ANTAGONIZE? I'D SAY YOURSELF, BUT, WITH YOUR SELF-LOATHING...



BUT LET ME GUESS, WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE? YOUR WAY? LIVE PERSECUTED, SUFFERING HARDSHIP AND ADVERSITY THAT YOU DEEM NECESSARY TO "CREATE A BETTER WORLD"?

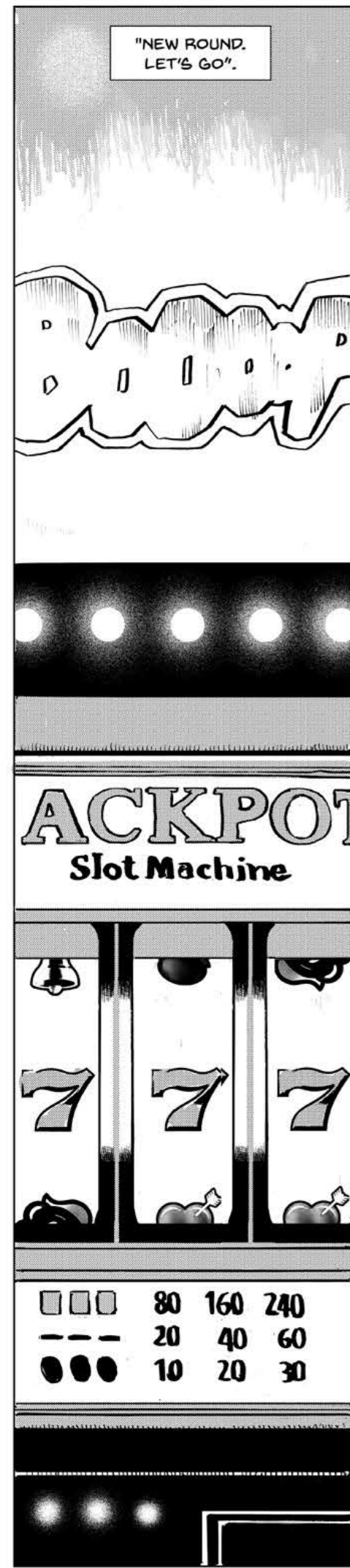
SO?

OKAY, TOUCHÉ.

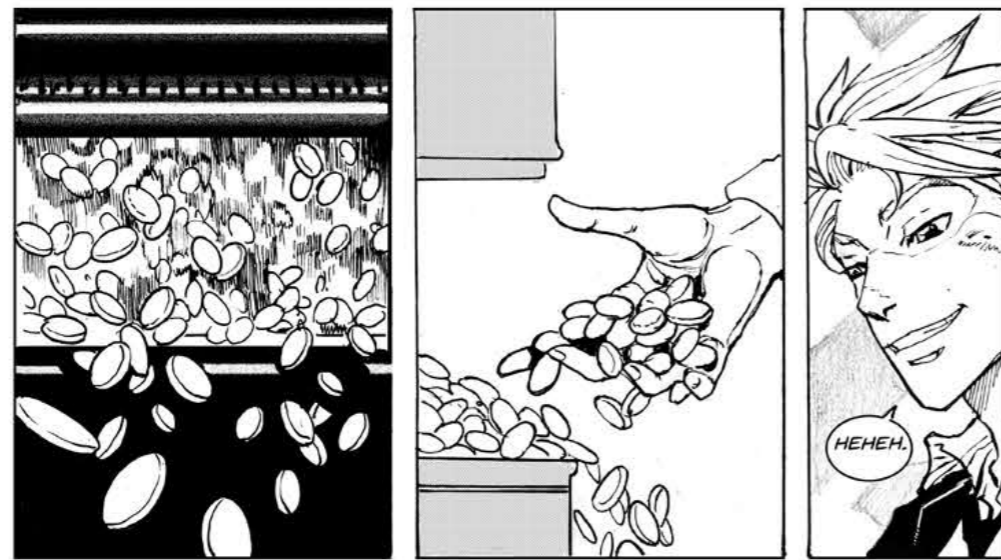
BUT FUCK YOU ANYWAY.

HOW'S THAT WORLD GOING? ANY BETTER?

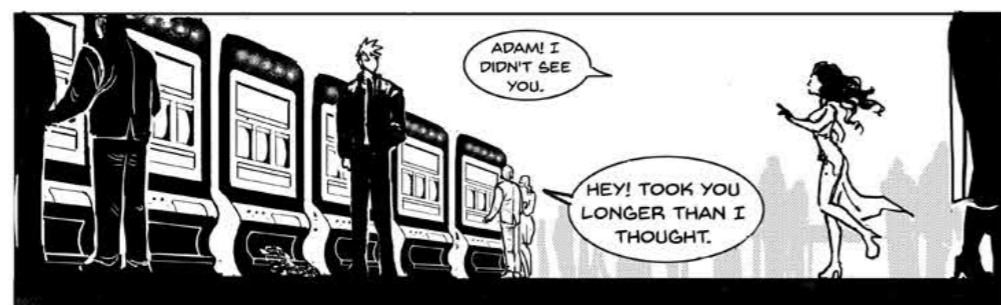




"NEW ROUND.
LET'S GO".



HEHEH.



ADAM! I DIDN'T SEE YOU.

HEY! TOOK YOU LONGER THAN I THOUGHT.



WAS THERE SOME CLOGGING IN YOUR PIPES?

YOU PIG!

HEY, I CARE ABOUT YOUR WELL-BEING, BABE.



WHAT?

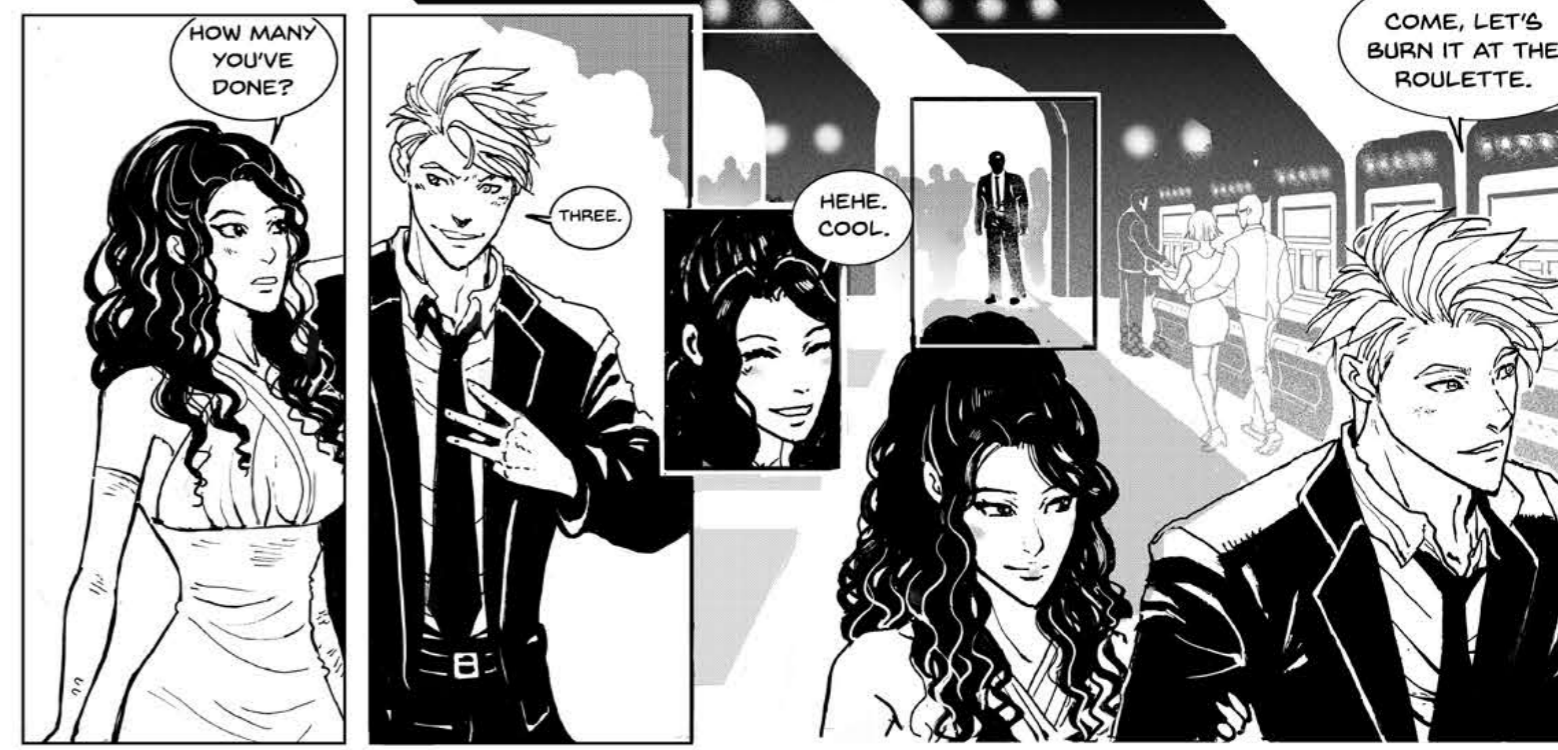
WHAT'S UP?



I CAN USE MY POWERS WITH THE MACHINES AND DETECT WHICH ONE IS GOING TO BLOW UP. NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE.

IT'S GREAT. DOESN'T WORK ALL THE TIME, BUT...

HA! REALLY!



HOW MANY YOU'VE DONE?

THREE.

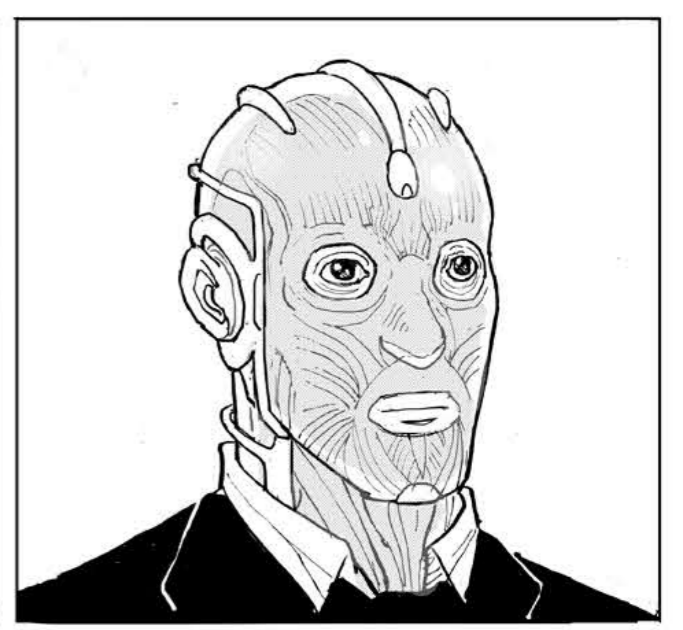
HEHE. COOL.

COME, LET'S BURN IT AT THE ROULETTE.



WHY NOT POKER? WITH YOUR ABILITY...

I THINK THERE ARE GUYS WHO ARE SENSORS... I'VE SEEN A COUPLE OF GUYS LOOKING AT ME FUNNY IN THE MACHINES... DON'T WANT TO PUSH IT.



ANOTHER ONE FOR ME.

47 POINTS. HMM.



JACOB. I HAVE THIRTEEN POINTS. THIS ASSHOLE IS FUCKING WITH US WHILE HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT THEY DID TO OUR FUCKING HEADS.



WELL, LET'S BE HONEST... THE RED BULLET EFFECTS LASTED AN HOUR.

THE BLACK BULLET LETS SHOULDN'T BE MUCH WORSE. THIS IS A GAME, AFTER ALL.

WE'LL FIND ANOTHER WAY TO INVESTIGATE WHO...

OH?

I THINK YOU HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION.



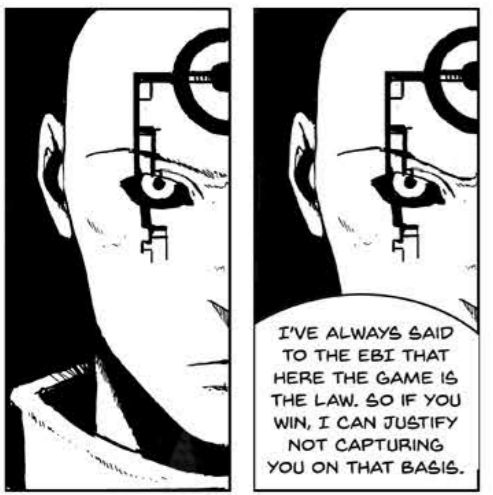
I THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD IDEA TO SETTLE OUR DIFFERENCES WITH A GAME, BECAUSE THE ALTERNATIVE WAS TO OUTRIGHT CAPTURE YOU.

CONSIDER IT A GIFT MOTIVATED BY NOSTALGIA. THIS STATUS OF NEUTRALITY IS GUARANTEED TO ME BY THE EBI...

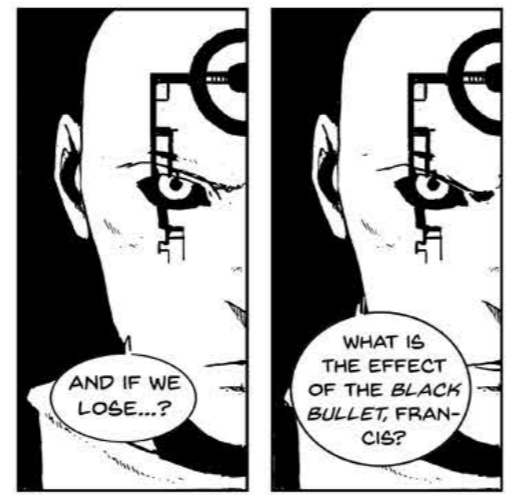


...AND YOU HAVE ACQUIRED A VERY DANGEROUS REPUTATION. EVEN THE CABALISTS ARE NOT SEEN THAT WAY.

A GAME IS THE BEST I COULD OFFER YOU.



I'VE ALWAYS SAID TO THE EBI THAT HERE THE GAME IS THE LAW. SO IF YOU WIN, I CAN JUSTIFY NOT CAPTURING YOU ON THAT BASIS.



AND IF WE LOSE...?

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF THE BLACK BULLET, FRANCIS?



-TT-. YOU'D WANT TO KNOW, WOULDN'T YOU?

JACOB, AS I SAID, THIS IS PART OF THE GAME. I'M FAIR, BUT I'M NOT A MORON, AND I KNOW YOUR VISION IS VERY GOOD.



EVERYTHING IS THERE TO BE SEEN, KID.



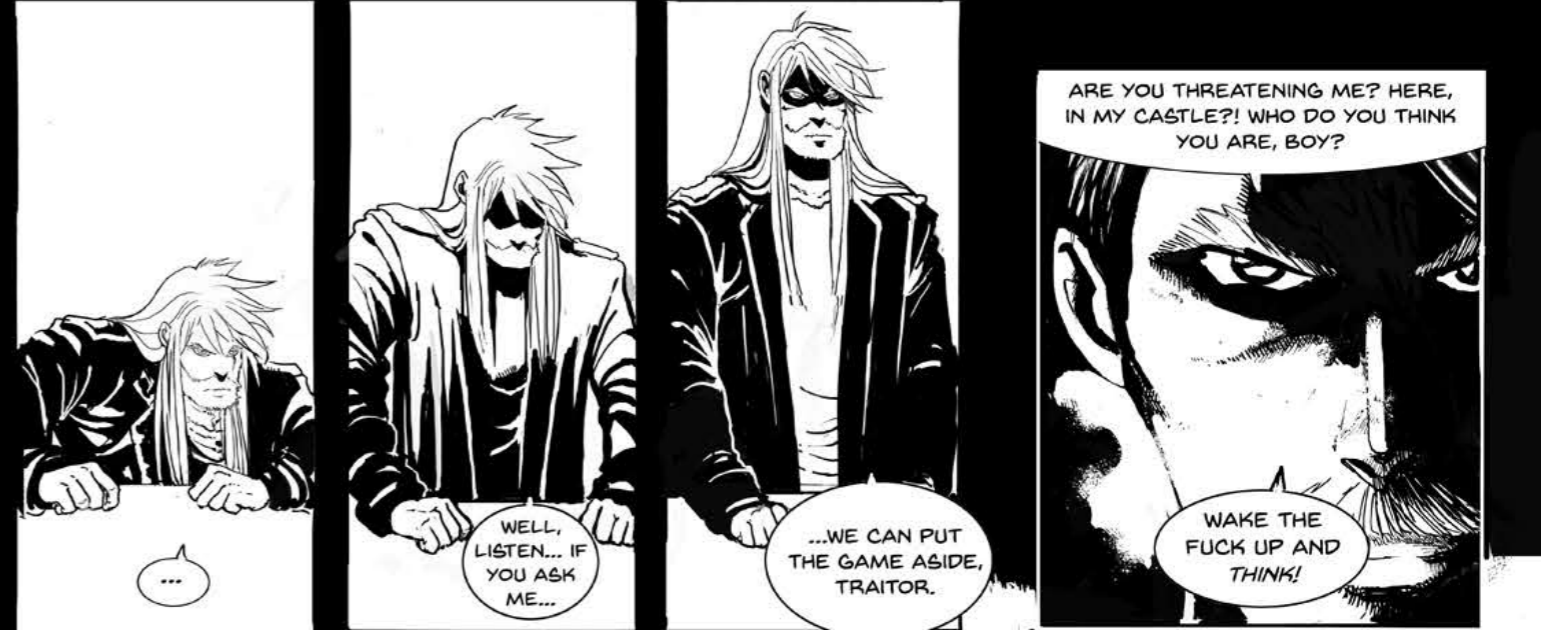
HAH. THIS DOUCHE-BAG IS THREATENING US.

HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR ALZHEIMER'S PILLS YET?



BECAUSE IF WE'RE NOT HERE ON FRIENDLY TERMS, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU'RE SUSPECT NUMBER ONE OF OUR INVESTIGATION AND I DON'T HAVE TO...

YOU COME HERE THINKING THAT I AM A SPY FOR THE EBI BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, YOU THINK I WILL BE "FRIENDLY"? WHICH ONE IS IT? ARE YOU SURE YOU HAVE THOUGHT YOUR STRATEGY THROUGH?



WELL, LISTEN... IF YOU ASK ME...

...WE CAN PUT THE GAME ASIDE, TRAITOR.

ARE YOU THREATENING ME? HERE, IN MY CASTLE?! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, BOY?

WAKE THE FUCK UP AND THINK!



"I HAVE DOZENS OF AGENTS HIDING IN THE CROWD!"

OH, AND DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THOSE TWO IDIOTS YOU BROUGHT AS REINFORCEMENTS. AND YET, I LET YOU IN. YOU'RE HERE. I LET YOU IN. YOU KNOW WHY? BECAUSE THE GAME IS YOUR ONLY OPTION, WHETHER IT'S JUST YOU TWO OR THE FOUR OF YOU.



ESSEX. DO THAT THING WHERE YOU FOCUS ON MY HEARTBEAT TO SEE IF I'M LYING. CHECK IT SO THAT YOU CAN TELL JACOB IF I'M LYING WHEN I TELL YOU THAT I'VE COMPLETED THE CYCLE, MORONS, AND THAT I ALONE AM ENOUGH TO GO AGAINST YOU.

WHAT...?

THE CYCL...? HAVE YOU OPENED THE THIRD DOOR?

SO?

ESSEX?

GOOD.

COLE, 35 POINTS, CRAIG, 37, JACOB 42, ESSEX 13, AND 47 FOR ME.

NEXT ROUND.

...TO BE CONTINUED

UPSURGE IS AN ALMOST MONTHLY (40 DAYS) SERIES THAT STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO TO REACH THE INTENDED ENDING. HOWEVER, WE CAN'T KEEP DOING IT FOR "FREE" INDEFINITELY. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN HELPING US WHILE ALSO GETTING **EARLY ACCESS** TO AN ISSUE, **PREVIEWS** OF FUTURE EPISODES, OR **VIDEOS** AND TEXTS ABOUT OUR CREATIVE PROCESS, PLEASE CONSIDER SUPPORTING US THROUGH PATREON AT THE 3\$ PLEDGE LEVEL (LINK BELOW). IF WE HAVE ENOUGH HELP, WE'LL TURN UPSURGE INTO A **MONTHLY** SERIES. THANK YOU!

LINKS:

OUR PATREON -> [PATREON.COM/UPSURGE](https://patreon.com/upsurge)

OUR FACEBOOK -> [FACEBOOK.COM/UPSURGECOMIC](https://facebook.com/upsurgecomic)

THROW SOME PEANUTS TO THE APE -> [TWITTER.COM/SIMONOGATARI](https://twitter.com/simonogatari)

