

MURDER

Zach Hunchar

Writer

Andres Barrero , Ethan Wright & Bernat

Penciler

**Alexandre Starling , Miguel Angel ,
Shane Taylor**

Colorist

Benjamin Glibert , Gary Scott Beatty

Letterer

Darren G. Davis

**Created
By**

Darren G. Davis
Publisher

Maggie Jessup
Publicity

Susan Ferris
Entertainment Manager

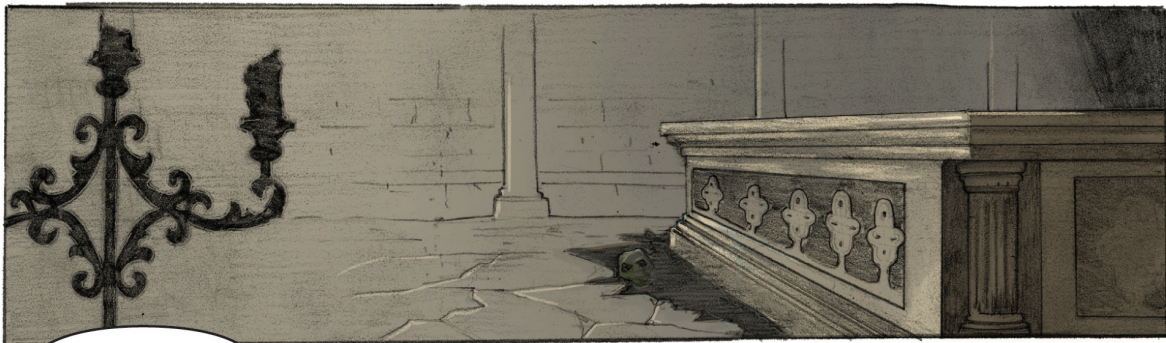
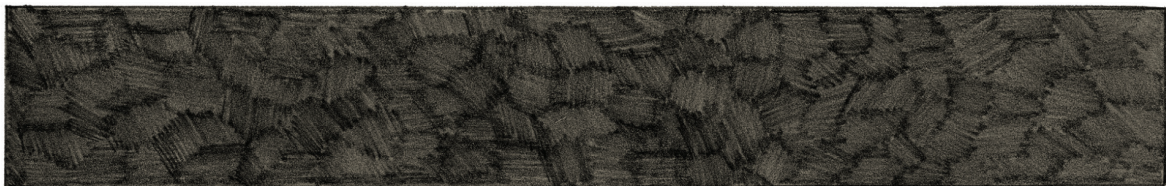
Cover A: Ethan Wright



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CHAPTER ONE



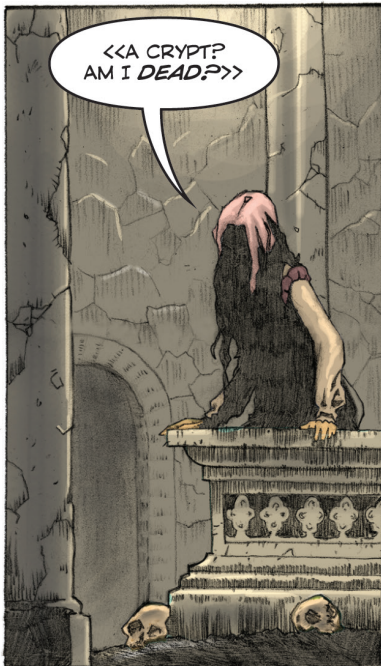


«WHAT?
WHERE AM I?»*

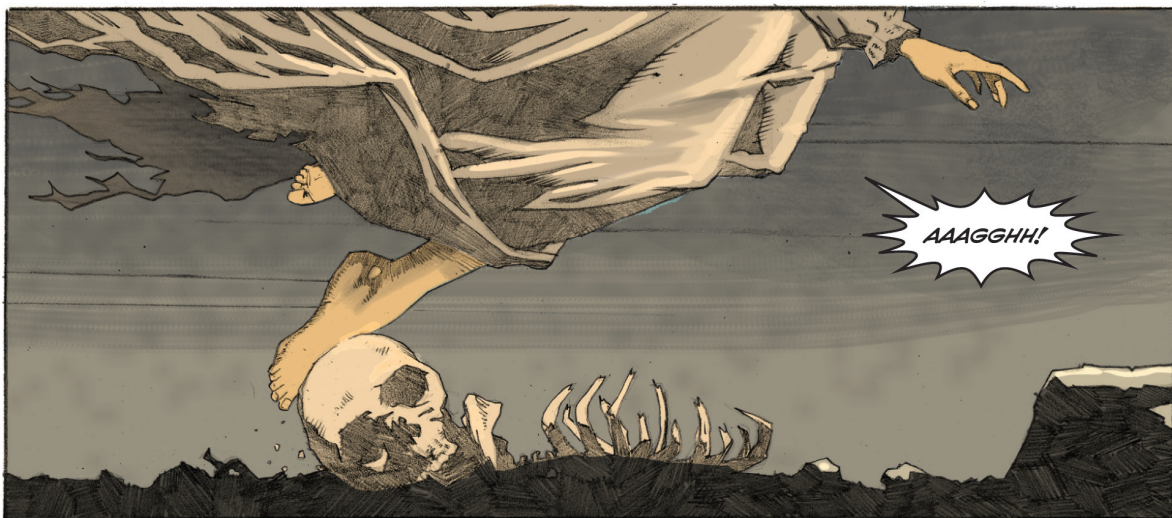


*RENAISSANCE ERA ITALIAN

«A CRYPT?
AM I DEAD?»



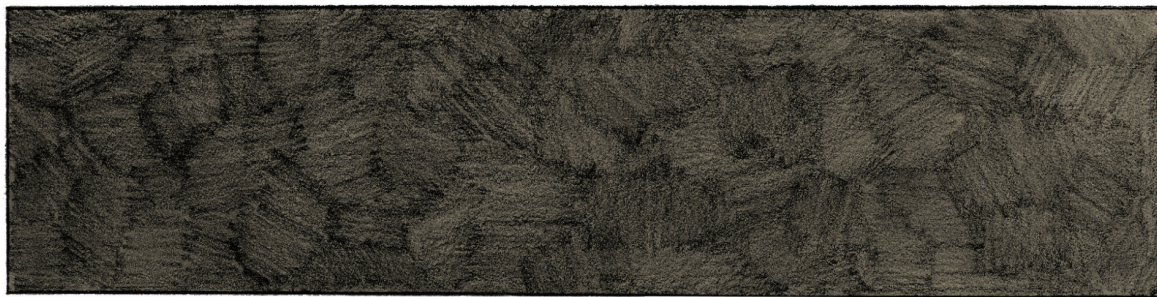
«WHAT HELL
AM I IN?»

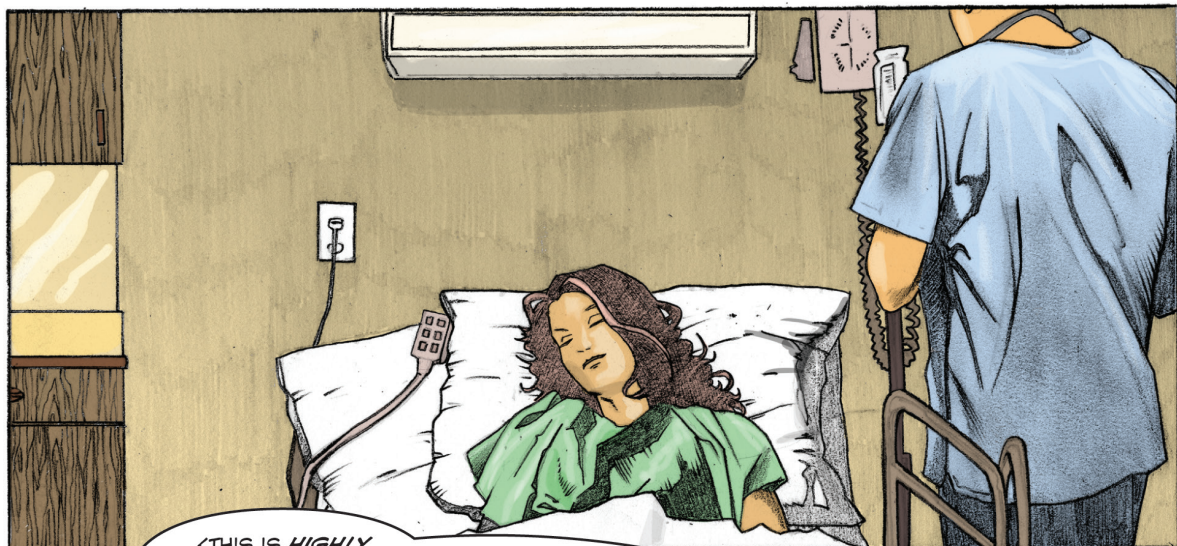


AAAGGHH!

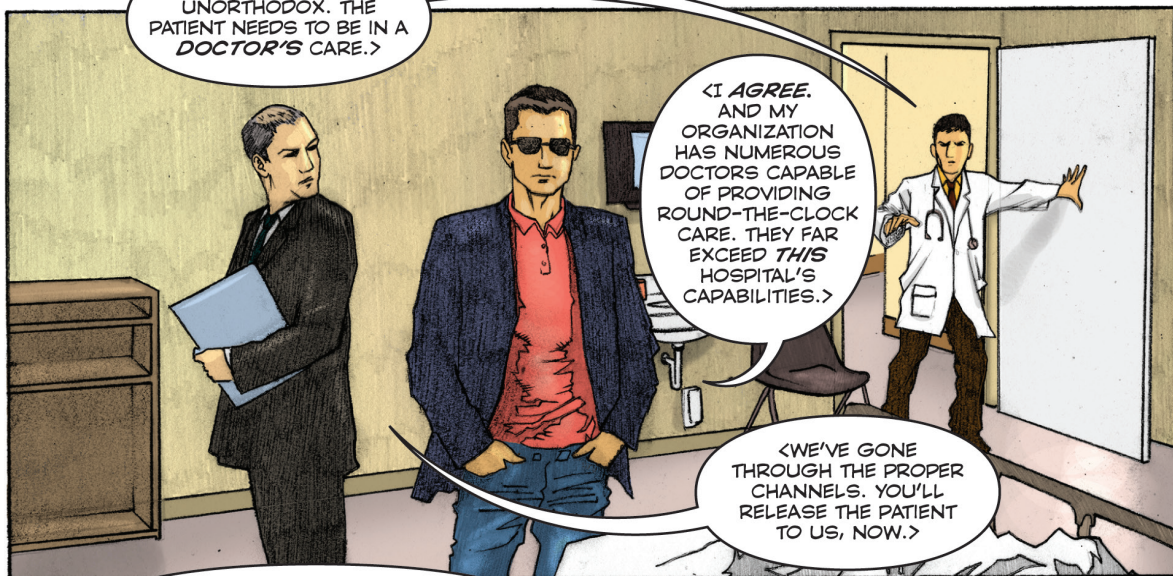


<<PLEASE!
RELEASE ME!>>



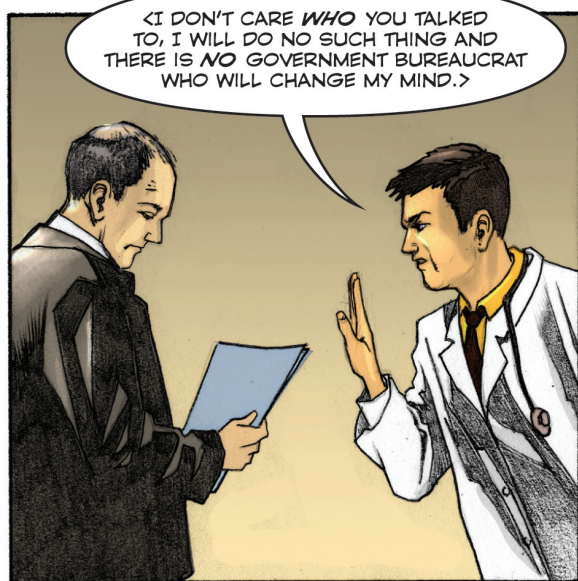


<THIS IS *HIGHLY* UNORTHODOX. THE PATIENT NEEDS TO BE IN A DOCTOR'S CARE.>

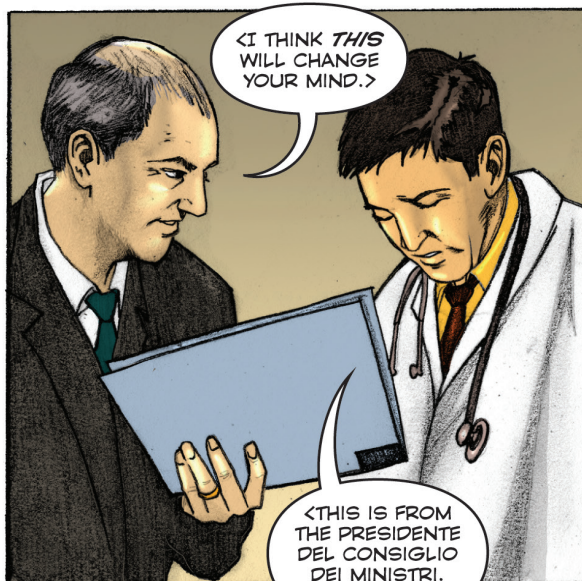


<I AGREE. AND MY ORGANIZATION HAS NUMEROUS DOCTORS CAPABLE OF PROVIDING ROUND-THE-CLOCK CARE. THEY FAR EXCEED *THIS* HOSPITAL'S CAPABILITIES.>

<WE'VE GONE THROUGH THE PROPER CHANNELS. YOU'LL RELEASE THE PATIENT TO US, NOW.>



<I DON'T CARE *WHO* YOU TALKED TO, I WILL DO NO SUCH THING AND THERE IS *NO* GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRAT WHO WILL CHANGE MY MIND.>



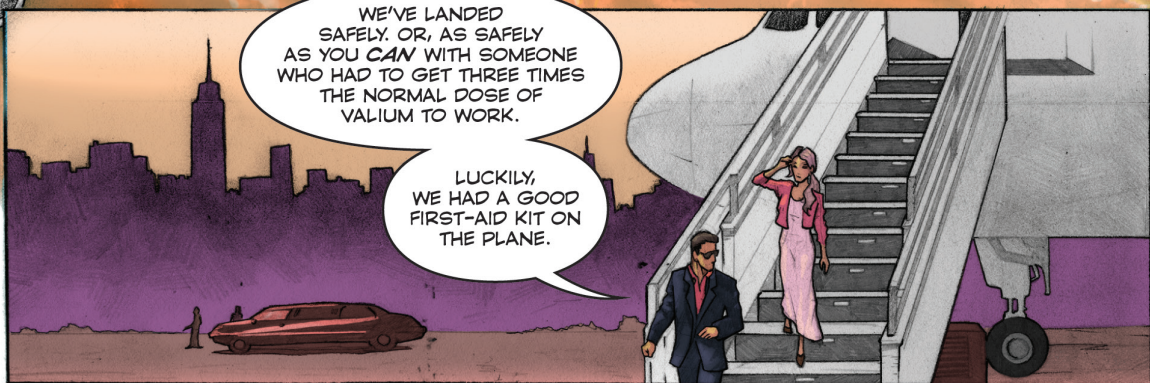
<I THINK *THIS* WILL CHANGE YOUR MIND.>

<THIS IS FROM THE PRESIDENTE DEL CONSIGLIO DEI MINISTRI. HOW...?>



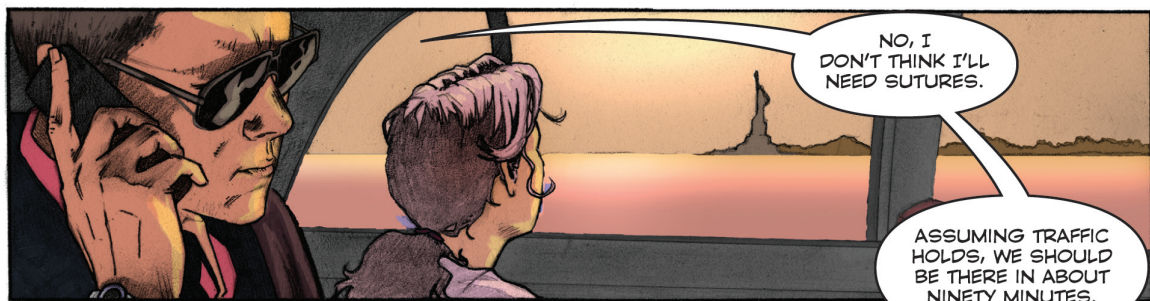
WE'VE LANDED SAFELY. OR, AS SAFELY AS YOU *CAN* WITH SOMEONE WHO HAD TO GET THREE TIMES THE NORMAL DOSE OF VALIUM TO WORK.

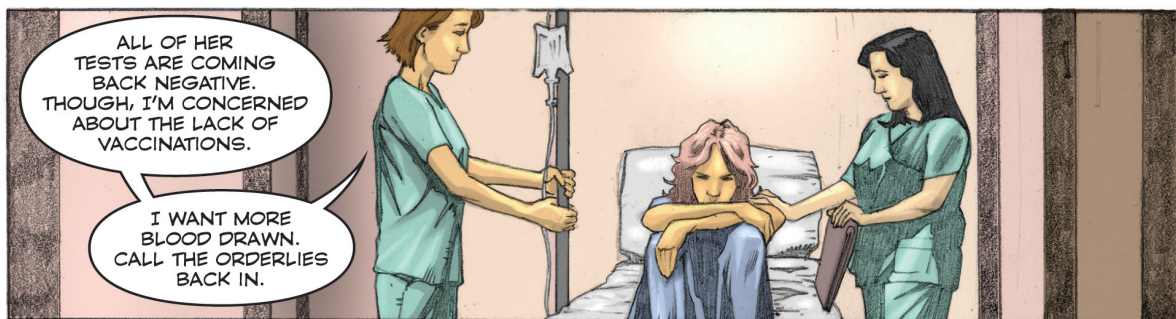
LUCKILY, WE HAD A GOOD FIRST-AID KIT ON THE PLANE.



NO, I DON'T THINK I'LL NEED SUTURES.

ASSUMING TRAFFIC HOLDS, WE SHOULD BE THERE IN ABOUT NINETY MINUTES.





ALL OF HER TESTS ARE COMING BACK NEGATIVE. THOUGH, I'M CONCERNED ABOUT THE LACK OF VACCINATIONS.

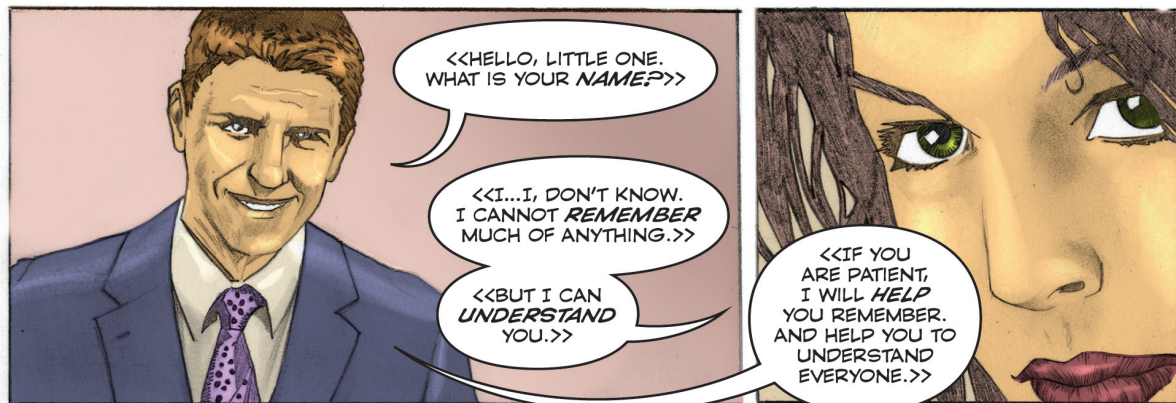
I WANT MORE BLOOD DRAWN. CALL THE ORDERLIES BACK IN.



I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY YOU'D NEED THE ORDERLIES, FOR SUCH A SMALL GIRL DR. CARLSON.

I'M SURE SHE'LL COOPERATE.

I'M SORRY MR. LAURENCE. THE STAFF, AND I, ARE NOT FLUENT IN *ITALIAN*.

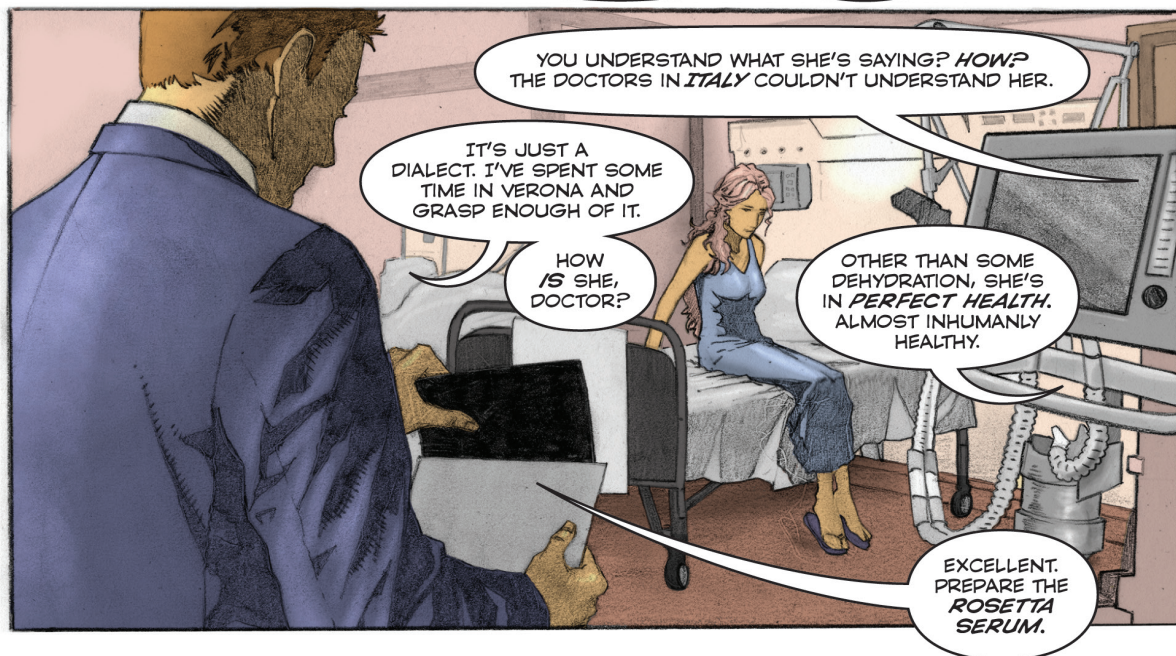


<<HELLO, LITTLE ONE. WHAT IS YOUR *NAME*?>>

<<I...I, DON'T KNOW. I CANNOT *REMEMBER* MUCH OF ANYTHING.>>

<<BUT I CAN *UNDERSTAND* YOU.>>

<<IF YOU ARE PATIENT, I WILL *HELP* YOU REMEMBER. AND HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND EVERYONE.>>



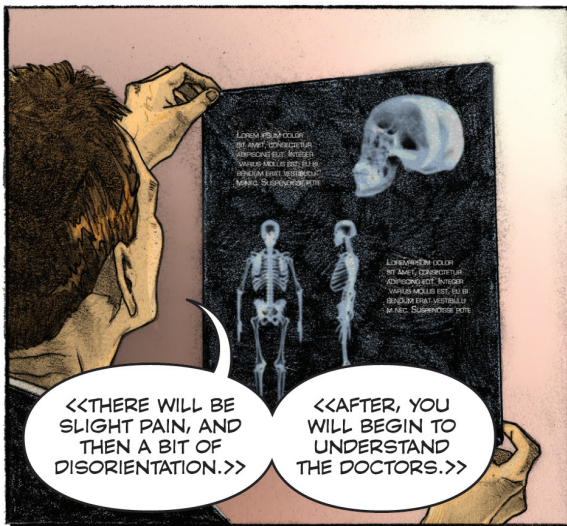
YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE'S SAYING? *HOW?* THE DOCTORS IN *ITALY* COULDN'T UNDERSTAND HER.

IT'S JUST A DIALECT. I'VE SPENT SOME TIME IN VERONA AND GRASP ENOUGH OF IT.

HOW *IS* SHE, DOCTOR?

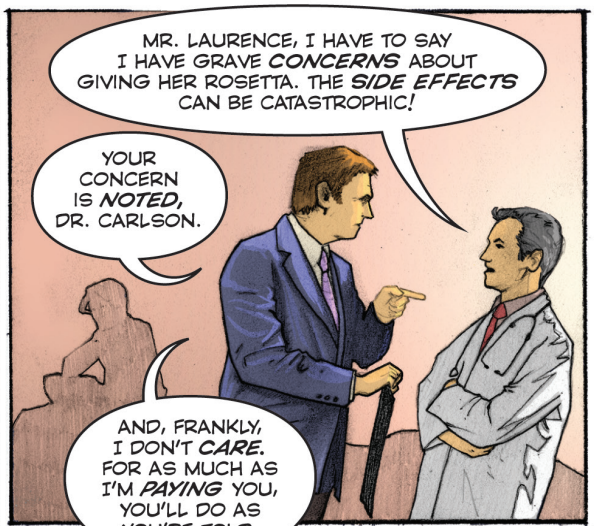
OTHER THAN SOME DEHYDRATION, SHE'S IN *PERFECT HEALTH*. ALMOST INHUMANLY HEALTHY.

EXCELLENT. PREPARE THE *ROSETTA SERUM*.



<<THERE WILL BE SLIGHT PAIN, AND THEN A BIT OF DISORIENTATION.>>

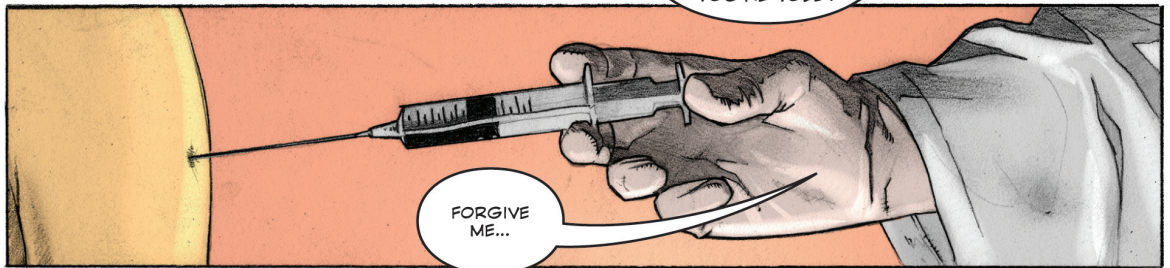
<<AFTER, YOU WILL BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THE DOCTORS.>>



MR. LAURENCE, I HAVE TO SAY I HAVE GRAVE **CONCERNS** ABOUT GIVING HER ROSETTA. THE **SIDE EFFECTS** CAN BE CATASTROPHIC!

YOUR CONCERN IS **NOTED**, DR. CARLSON.

AND, FRANKLY, I DON'T **CARE**. FOR AS MUCH AS I'M **PAYING** YOU, YOU'LL DO AS YOU'RE TOLD.



FORGIVE ME...

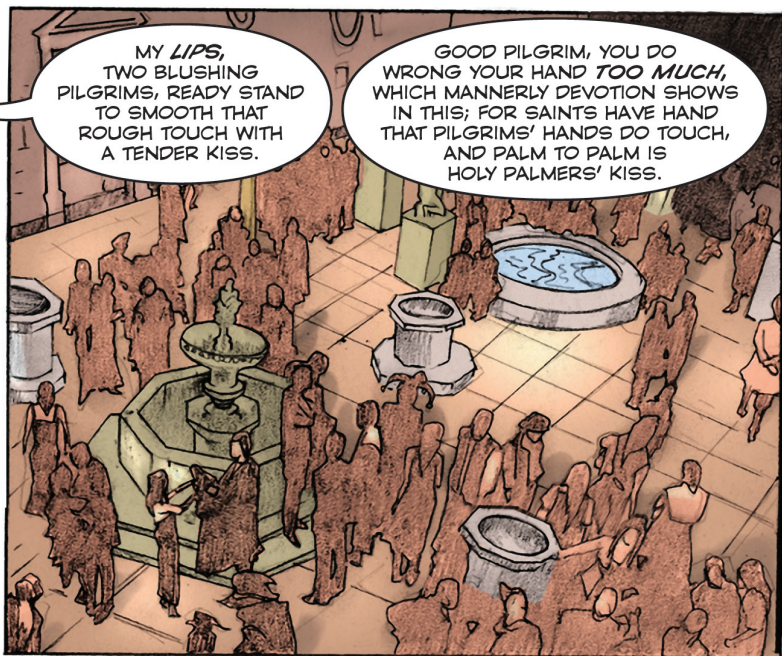


<<YOU SEE? THAT WASN'T SO BAD, WAS IT?>>





IF I PROFANE WITH
MY UNWORTHIER *HAND*
THIS HOLY SHRINE, THE
GENTLE FINE IS THIS:



MY *LIPS*,
TWO BLUSHING
PILGRIMS, READY STAND
TO SMOOTH THAT
ROUGH TOUCH WITH
A TENDER KISS.

GOOD PILGRIM, YOU DO
WRONG YOUR HAND *TOO MUCH*,
WHICH MANNERLY DEVOTION SHOWS
IN THIS; FOR SAINTS HAVE HAND
THAT PILGRIMS' HANDS DO TOUCH,
AND PALM TO PALM IS
HOLY PALMERS' KISS.



HAVE NOT
SAINTS LIPS,
AND HOLY
PALMERS
TOO?

AY, PILGRIM,
LIPS THAT THEY MUCH
USE IN PRAYER.

O, THEN,
DEAR SAINT,
LET LIPS DON
WHAT HANDS DO;
THEY PRAY,
GRANT THOU,
LEST *FAITH*
TURN TO
DESPAIR.



SAINTS DO
NOT MOVE, THOUGH
GRANT FOR
PRAYERS SAKE.

THEN MOVE NOT,
WHILE MY PRAYER'S
EFFECT I TAKE.
THUS FROM MY LIPS,
BY *YOURS*, MY SIN
IS PURGED.

