

ENKI BILAL

THE NIKOPOL TRILOGY

the carnival of immortals - the woman trap - equator cold





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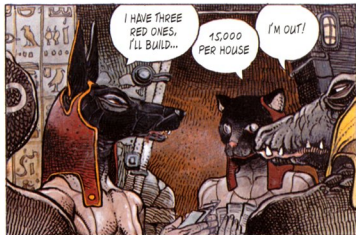
“ Immortality is a form of dictatorship of life over death. Since I am a dictator and alive, all that remains for me is to become immortal. And this I will become ! Even if it kills me !”

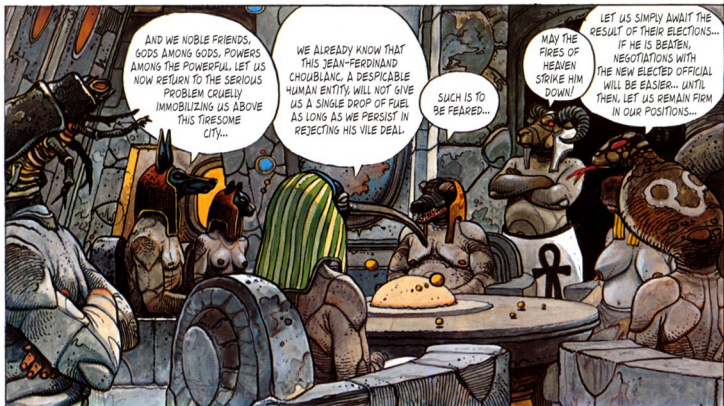
J. F. Choublanc (Miscellaneous writings, Paris 2023)

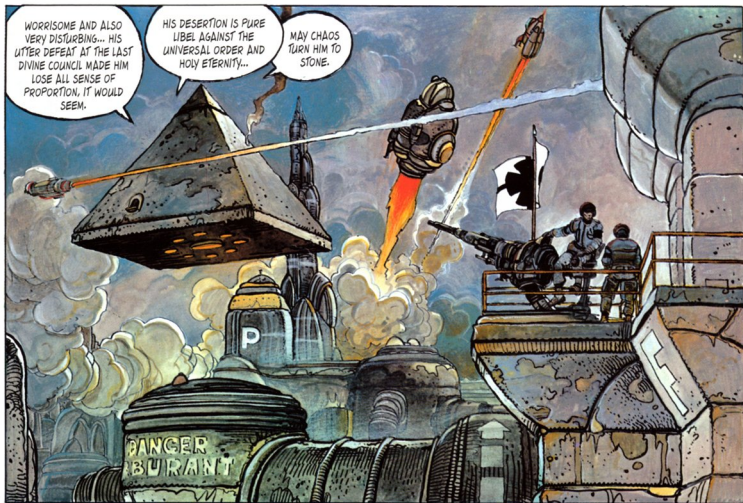


PARIS – EARLY MARCH 2023 – ON THE EVE OF A NEW BUT MEANINGLESS ELECTORAL MASQUERADE . . . NOTHING IS LIKELY TO CHANGE IN THE POLITICALLY AUTONOMOUS AND HOPELESSLY FASCIST GREATER PARIS. THE CITY IS DIVIDED INTO TWO COMPLETELY UNEQUAL SECTORS... THE FIRST, THE CENTRAL CITY, IS INHABITED BY A SOCIAL ELITE, A MASSIVE STANDING ARMY AND THE RULING CLASS. THE SECOND SECTOR, SURROUNDING THE FIRST AND EXTENDING AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE, HAS BECOME THE CROSSROADS FOR ALL KINDS OF ADVENTURERS AND EXTRATERRESTRIALS EVER SINCE A LARGE ASTROPORT WENT INTO SERVICE. THE GOVERNMENT MILITIA PATROLS, BUT ONLY SECONDARILY ENSURES THE SECURITY OF THIS WORLD OF DEGENERACY, POVERTY AND FILTH. IN ADDITION TO THE FAKE HUBBUB OF THE IMPENDING ELECTIONS THERE IS A STRANGE MALAISE BECAUSE OF THE APPEARANCE OF A HUGE, ODDLY PYRAMID-SHAPED SPACESHIP HOVERING OVER THE ASTROPORT. PUBLIC UNREST IS ON THE UPSWING. RUMOR IS THAT THE OCCUPANTS OF THE FLYING PYRAMID ARE DEMANDING ASTRONOMICAL QUANTITIES OF FUEL FROM THE CITY OF PARIS. THE CAUTIOUS (AND SUSPICIOUS) SILENCE OF JEAN-FERDINAND CHOUBLANC, THE PRESENT GOVERNOR, IS NOT REASSURING.









WORRISOME AND ALSO VERY DISTURBING... HIS UTTER DEFEAT AT THE LAST DIVINE COUNCIL MADE HIM LOSE ALL SENSE OF PROPORTION, IT WOULD SEEM.

HIS DESERTION IS PURE LIBEL AGAINST THE UNIVERSAL ORDER AND HOLY ETERNITY...

MAY CHAOS TURN HIM TO STONE.

... UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT IN THE FORBIDDEN ZONE, COMMANDER... IT SEEMS TO BE HEADING TOWARD THE CITY CENTER... RADIO APPARENTLY DEAD...

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF IT AND GET ME GENERAL VERTEGOUTE FAST!

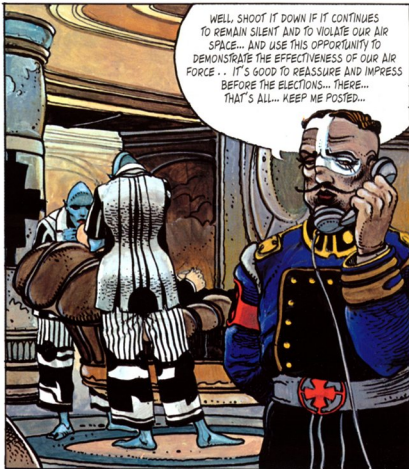


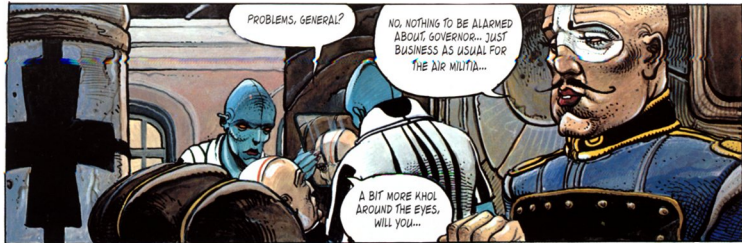
UH... THE GENERAL IS AT THE ELYSEE PALACE WITH THE GOVERNOR...

GET THROUGH TO HIM ANYWAY.



WE'LL SHOOT IT DOWN IF IT CONTINUES TO REMAIN SILENT AND TO VIOLATE OUR AIR SPACE... AND USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR AIR FORCE... IT'S GOOD TO REASSURE AND IMPRESS BEFORE THE ELECTIONS... THERE... THAT'S ALL... KEEP ME POSTED...





PROBLEMS, GENERAL?

NO, NOTHING TO BE ALARMED ABOUT, GOVERNOR... JUST BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR THE AIR MILITIA...

A BIT MORE KHOL AROUND THE EYES, WILL YOU...



LIKE THIS?

HMM... PERFECT, PERFECT... NOW LEAVE US, GIRLS...



WELL, I AM WAITING FOR YOUR CONCLUSIONS, MY FRIEND!



THE MINISTER FOR FINANCIAL COORDINATION HAS ARRIVED... HE WAS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH YOU, I BELIEVE...

QUITE SO, MY DEAR, HAVE HIM COME IN... AND YOU, GENERAL, TAKE CARE OF MY DEAR BROTHER, HIS HOLINESS THEODDULE!... I WON'T BE LONG...

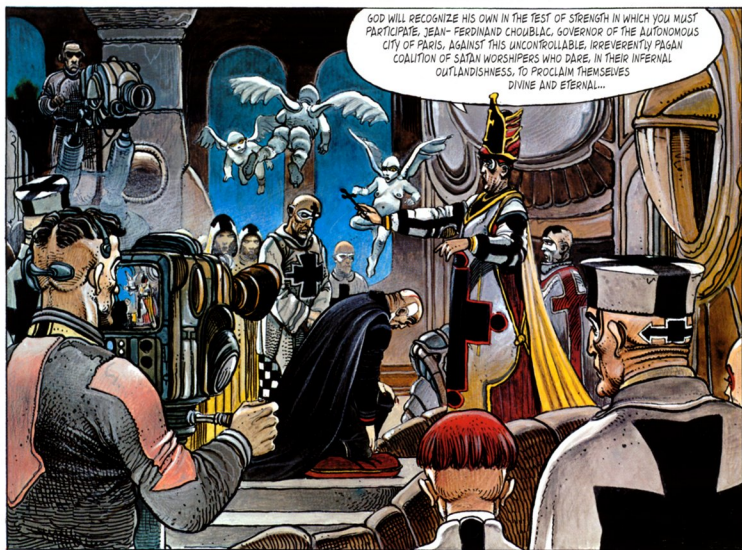
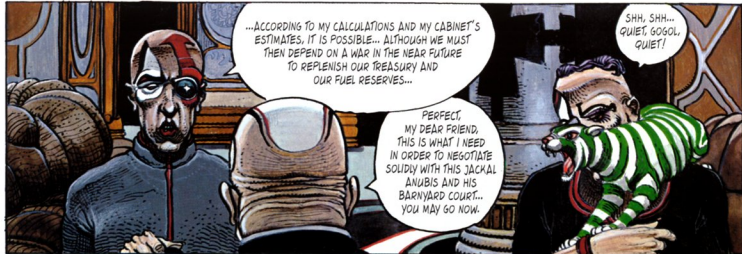


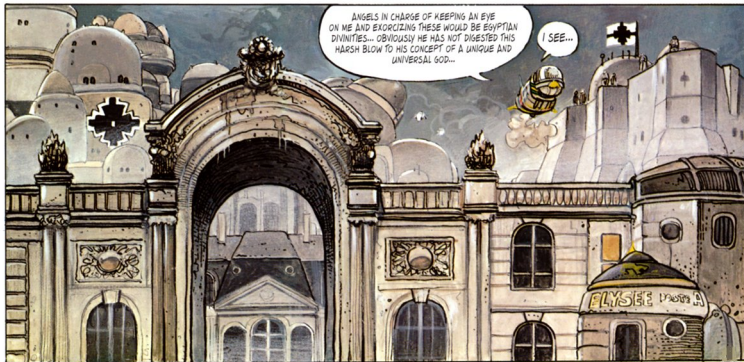
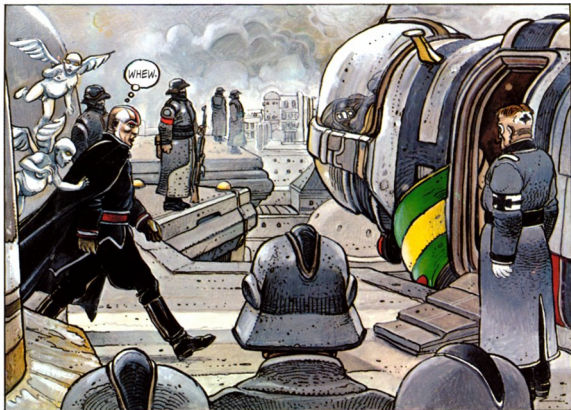
I AM NOT GOING TO HIDE FROM YOU, GOVERNOR, THE FACT THAT THIS BUSINESS LOOKS RATHER UNFAVORABLE... THE FUEL NEEDS OF THESE...UH... OF THESE BEINGS ARE MUCH TOO VAST AND THE LACK OF ANY COMPENSATION, FINANCIAL OR OTHERWISE, MAKES THIS DEAL BIZARRE AND DANGEROUS AT BEST...

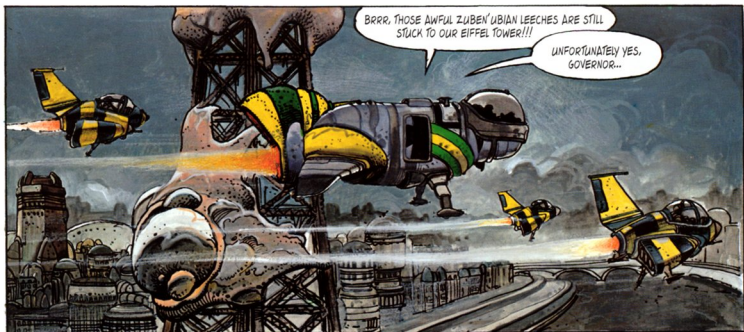
LISTEN TO ME, THE NATURE OF THIS DEAL, AND WHAT I INTEND TO GET IN EXCHANGE ARE MY BUSINESS! AS FOR THE FINANCIAL LOSS YOU SEEM TO BE AFRAID OF THERE ARE DOZENS OF WAYS OF MAKING IT UP... NEW TAXES ON THE ZONES ADJACENT TO THE SECOND SECTOR, DECLARING WAR ON THE WEALTHY BUT MILITARILY VULNERABLE CITIES IN THE EAST, AND THAT'S ONLY FOR STARTERS...



NO, WHAT I WANT TO KNOW RIGHT NOW IS WHETHER OR NOT SUCH A DRAIN ON OUR PRESENT FUEL SUPPLIES IS POSSIBLE.







MEANWHILE, 9,000
TO 12,000 FEET
ABOVE...

OBJECT
SKIPPED AIR
12,000 ...

LOOK AT THE THING...
A KIND OF TENSORPOD
...SPEAK CLASSIE.

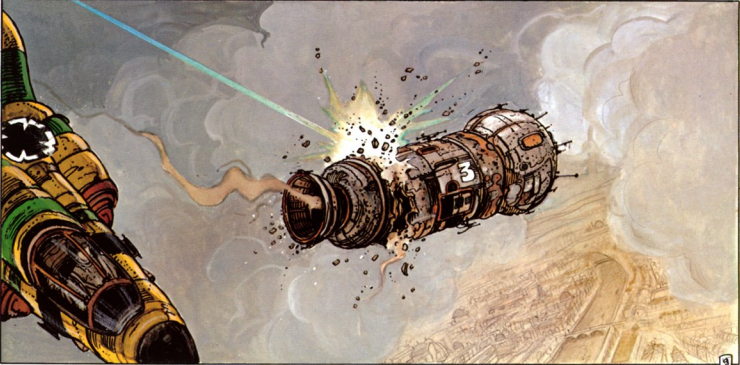


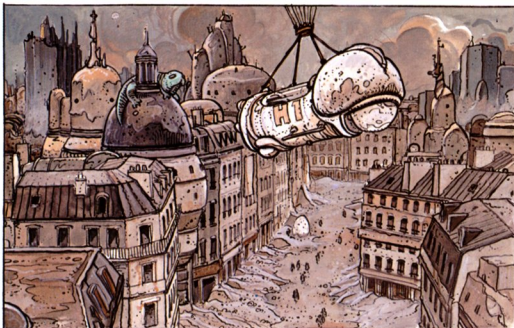
YEAH... AND STILL
NOT A SOUND OUT
OF IT.



WATCH OUT.
I'M GOING TO
FIRE!

GO
HEAD!









IT SASSAC PRODUCT! SHITTING FROM DEVIL!!! VADE RET...



HEBREW WHOLA???? SA FINE BAW! WHOLA??! S'NOT!!! ME SPILT...





LET'S BE REASONABLE. I'M NOT GOING TO BLEED THE ECONOMY OF MY CITY DRY WITHOUT BEING PAID FOR IT! I'M READY TO LET YOU HAVE ALL THE FUEL YOU NEED (AND THAT'S EXPENSIVE) BUT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT YOU GRANT ME IMMORTALITY. FUEL IS GETTING RARER AND RARER, YOU KNOW THAT BETTER THAN I DO! YOU CAN'T LOSE IN THE DEAL. BELIEVE ME...



ENOUGH, JEAN-FERDINAND CHOUBLANC! IT IS OUT OF THE QUESTION TO GO AGAINST THE UNIVERSAL ORDER.

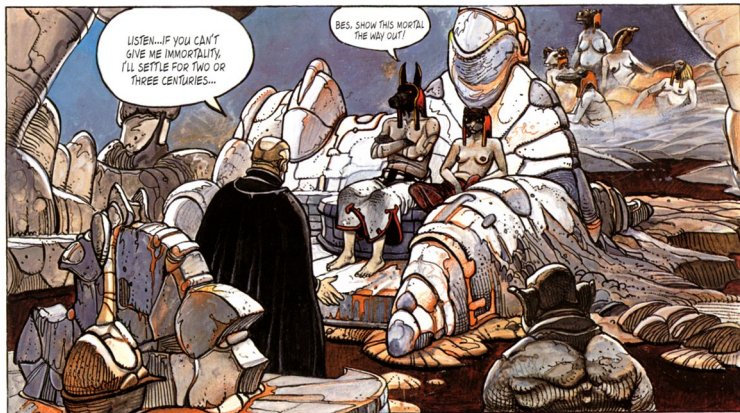
IT IS EQUALLY OUT OF THE QUESTION TO GRANT A HUMAN, ONE MISERABLE ENTITY AMONG MANY, THE ULTIMATE AND SUPREME STATE OF IMMORTALITY OF THE POWERFUL!

YOU MAY GO! AND DON'T FORGET THAT IT IS WE WHO HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD!



LISTEN...IF YOU CAN'T GIVE ME IMMORTALITY, I'LL SETTLE FOR TWO OR THREE CENTURIES...

BES, SHOW THIS MORTAL THE WAY OUT!



WELL, GOVERNOR?

BACK TO THE EYSEE PALACE, GENERAL! QUICKLY AND QUIETLY...



"LA VOIX ÉGALE"
DIFFUSION OFFICIELLE
TIRAGE 75 000 EX.

AN ENEMY SHIP SHOT DOWN

Yesterday, March 2, late afternoon, a foreign and apparently hostile ship was masterfully destroyed by two stridents of the Air Militia, flown by pilot commanders Jules Bourdonner and Arthur Deslors. The occupant of the machine managed to parachute out at the last minute, but was welcomed by the ground militia forces, and quickly put out of commission.

It should be noted that this hateful character, most likely a spy from the cities of the East, lost a leg in the fall. The militia, in a spirit of generosity, left this leg out for food for the miserable creatures of the second sector South, who had swarmed like so many hungry flies around the scene of action.

Militia General Vertegoutte, on his return from the pyramid, where he had accompanied Governor Choublanc, expressed his deep satisfaction with "this remarkable joint action taken by the air and ground militia forces".

"L'ORDRE"
DIFF. OFFICIELLE
TIRAGE 60 000 EX.

PYRAMID: NEGOTIATIONS RESUME

After receiving a special papal blessing in the holy chapel of the Elysee palace, the governor of the city of Paris, Jean-Ferdinand Choublanc, accompanied by Militia General Vertegoutte, went to the flying pyramid which has been parked for nearly two weeks now over the Paris-South astropost. This resumption of negotiations (the 3rd) is once again due to the efforts of our beloved governor whose will to safeguard the interests of our city and whose diplomatic finesse grows more forceful as problems continue... problems which in this instance are shown to be especially thorny. After three hours of heated discussions with the mysterious occupants of the pyramid whose nature and identity have been kept secret for obvious reasons of national security, Jean-Ferdinand Choublanc returned to the governmental Elysee palace, where he made the statement: "I have no statement to make just have confidence in me!" We do, dear Governor.

EFFICIENCY OF AIR MILITIA

A mysterious flying object which violated our air space was brilliantly intercepted by two Air Militia fighters yesterday, March 2, late in the afternoon. The Air Militia is constantly on the alert for our security.

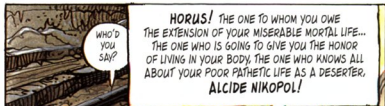
"L'ORDRE"

DA MYSTERIOUS FALLING

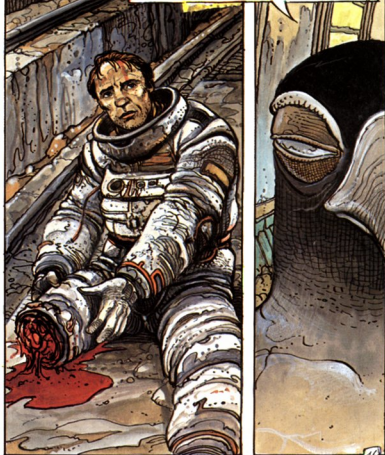
DA MYSTERIOUS FALLING HAS HAPPEN IN OUR TOWN ON EVENING MARCH 2 DA MAN PARACHUTED FREEZED SOLID HE WAS SO MUCH SO HE LEG BROKEN CLEAN WHEN HE HIT. THEY FILTHY CHOUBLANC MILITIA (LATE LIKE USUAL) GOT FUCKED CAUSE DA FREEZED MYSTERY MAN FLAPPED OFF BEFORE ARRIVAL OF THEM.

HA HA HA

"A RESISTANCE POPULIERE"
DIFE MARGINAIRE
ET HIRRECHALIER
TIRAGE ARTISANAL
10 A 50 EX.



HORUS! THE ONE TO WHOM YOU OWE THE EXTENSION OF YOUR MISERABLE MORTAL LIFE... THE ONE WHO IS GOING TO GIVE YOU THE HONOR OF LIVING IN YOUR BODY, THE ONE WHO KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOUR POOR PATHETIC LIFE AS A DESERTER, **ALCIDE NIKOPOL!**

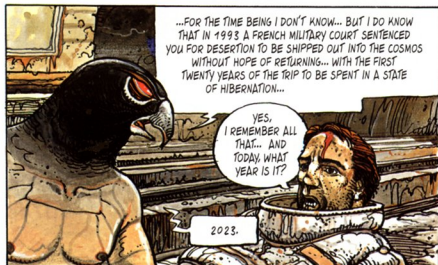




NIKOPOL...
ALCIDE NIKOPOL?
HEY, THAT'S MY
NAME!!! WHO ARE
YOU FOR GOD'S
SAKE, AND HOW
DID I GET
HERE?!!!



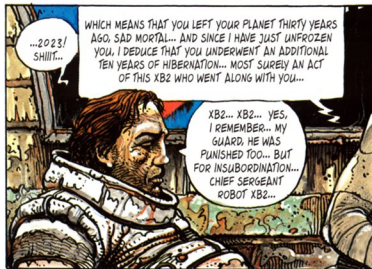
...HERE, IN PARIS! I RECOGNIZE IT!
THE METRO, ALESIA STATION, IN
THE FOURTEENTH! IN FRANCE! ON EARTH!
GOD, HOW DID I GET BACK
TO EARTH?!!



...FOR THE TIME BEING I DON'T KNOW... BUT I DO KNOW
THAT IN 1993 A FRENCH MILITARY COURT SENTENCED
YOU FOR DESERTION TO BE SHIPPED OUT INTO THE COSMOS
WITHOUT HOPE OF RETURNING... WITH THE FIRST
TWENTY YEARS OF THE TRIP TO BE SPENT IN A STATE
OF HIBERNATION...

YES,
I REMEMBER ALL
THAT... AND
TODAY, WHAT
YEAR IS IT?

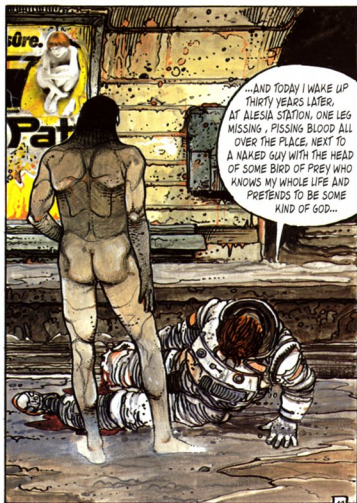
2023.



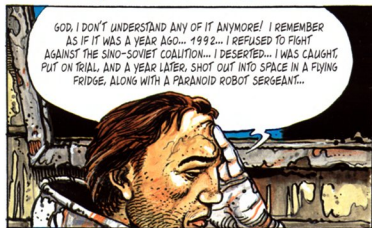
...2023!
SHIT!

WHICH MEANS THAT YOU LEFT YOUR PLANET THIRTY YEARS
AGO, SAD MORTAL... AND SINCE I HAVE JUST UNFROZEN
YOU, I DEDUCE THAT YOU UNDERWENT AN ADDITIONAL
TEN YEARS OF HIBERNATION... MOST SURELY AN ACT
OF THIS XB2 WHO WENT ALONG WITH YOU...

XB2... XB2... YES,
I REMEMBER... MY
GUARD, HE WAS
PUNISHED TOO... BUT
FOR INSUBORDINATION...
CHIEF SERGEANT
ROBOT XB2...



...AND TODAY I WAKE UP
THIRTY YEARS LATER,
AT ALESIA STATION, ONE LEG
MISSING, PISSING BLOOD ALL
OVER THE PLACE, NEXT TO
A NAKED GUY WITH THE HEAD
OF SOME BIRD OF PREY WHO
KNOWS MY WHOLE LIFE AND
PRETENDS TO BE SOME
KIND OF GOD...



GOD, I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF IT ANYMORE! I REMEMBER
AS IF IT WAS A YEAR AGO... 1992... I REFUSED TO FIGHT
AGAINST THE SINO-SOVIET COALITION... I DESERTED... I WAS CAUGHT,
PUT ON TRIAL, AND A YEAR LATER, SHOT OUT INTO SPACE IN A FLYING
FRIDGE, ALONG WITH A PARANOID ROBOT SERGEANT...

I CAN IMAGINE YOUR CONFUSION AND TAKE INTO ACCOUNT YOUR INTELLECTUAL LIMITS UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, POOR NIKOPOL... I THINK YOU CAN THANK ME, HORUS, GOD OF HIERKOANOPOLIS, SON OF ISIS AND OSIRIS, MIGHTY AND UNIVERSAL CREATOR, FOR TAKING CHARGE OF YOU...

UNDERSTAND NOTHING...



I MUST SAY, HOWEVER...

DOH!

HEY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



...THAT DURING THE SHORT EXCURSION TAKEN IN YOUR BODY BETWEEN THE PLACE WHERE YOU FELL AND HERE, I WAS ABLE TO MAKE A QUICK PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF YOUR PERSON... APART FROM THE USUAL DEFECTS OF THE HUMAN RACE, THE RESULTS SEEMED TO ME QUITE SATISFACTORY...

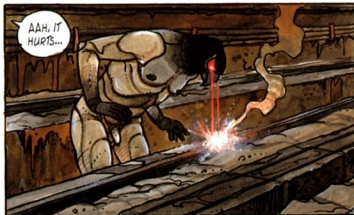
SATISFACTORY!!! ARE YOU SHITTING ME!!! MAIMED, ONE-LEGGED FOR LIFE, AND YOU FIND THAT SATISFACTORY!!!?



COMPLETELY SATISFACTORY... YOUR BODY IS IN PERFECT CONDITION COMPARED TO THE BODIES OF THE WRETCHES I HAVE HAD TO INHABIT THESE PAST FEW DAYS... SICKNESS AND MUTATIONS ARE EATING AWAY THE QUARTERS ADJACENT TO THIS CITY... HEALTHY BODIES ARE RARE... THE ONE I LEFT FOR YOURS BELONGED TO A FANATIC WHO BELIEVED IN ONE GOD... HIS BRAIN BECAME UNCONTROLLABLE... YOUR ARRIVAL WAS PROVIDENTIAL, BELIEVE ME...



AAH, IT HURTS...

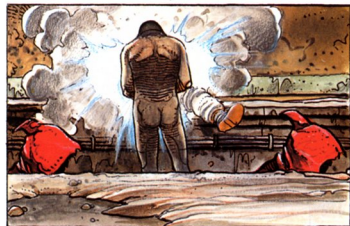
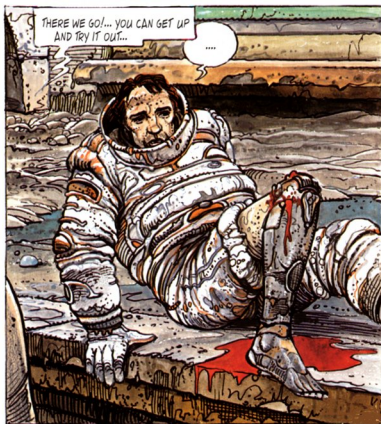
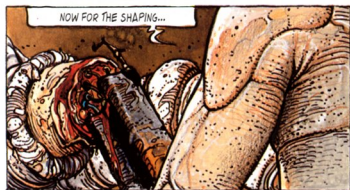
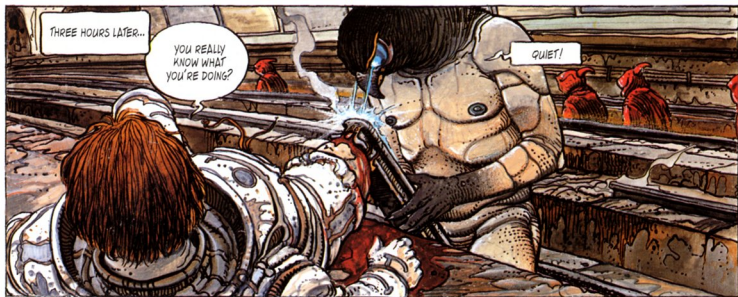


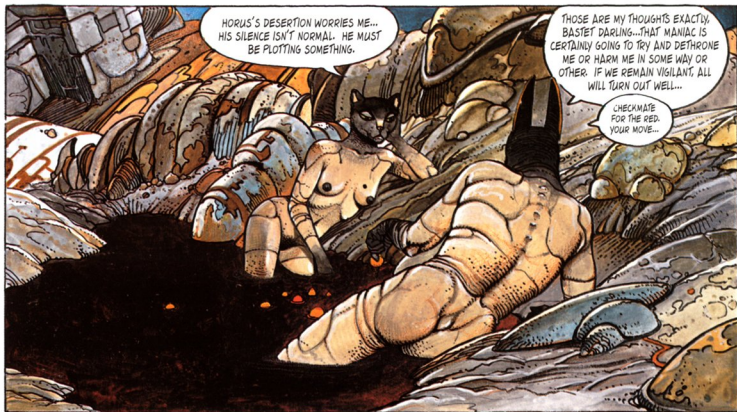
AS FOR THE PROBLEM OF YOUR LEG, I AM GOING TO FIX THAT RIGHT NOW...

AARR... THE PAIN IS GETTING WORSE AS IT THAWS... DO SOMETHING...

QUICK!







HORUS'S DESERTION WORRIES ME... HIS SILENCE ISN'T NORMAL. HE MUST BE PLOTTING SOMETHING.

THOSE ARE MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY, BASTET DARLING... THAT MANIAC IS CERTAINLY GOING TO TRY AND DETHROME ME OR HARM ME IN SOME WAY OR OTHER. IF WE REMAIN VIGILANT, ALL WILL TURN OUT WELL...

CHEEKMATE FOR THE RED. YOUR MOVE...



SHIFT!



AAAAH!



I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO WALK WITH THIS GODDAMN LEG!... TOO HEAVY FOR HUMAN MUSCLES...



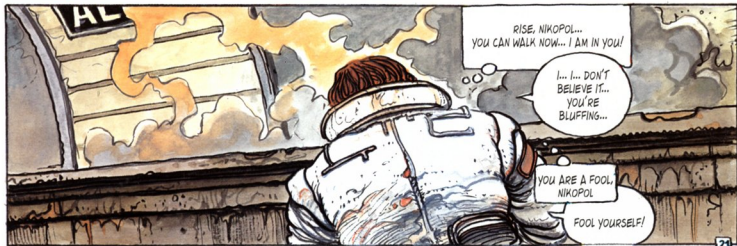
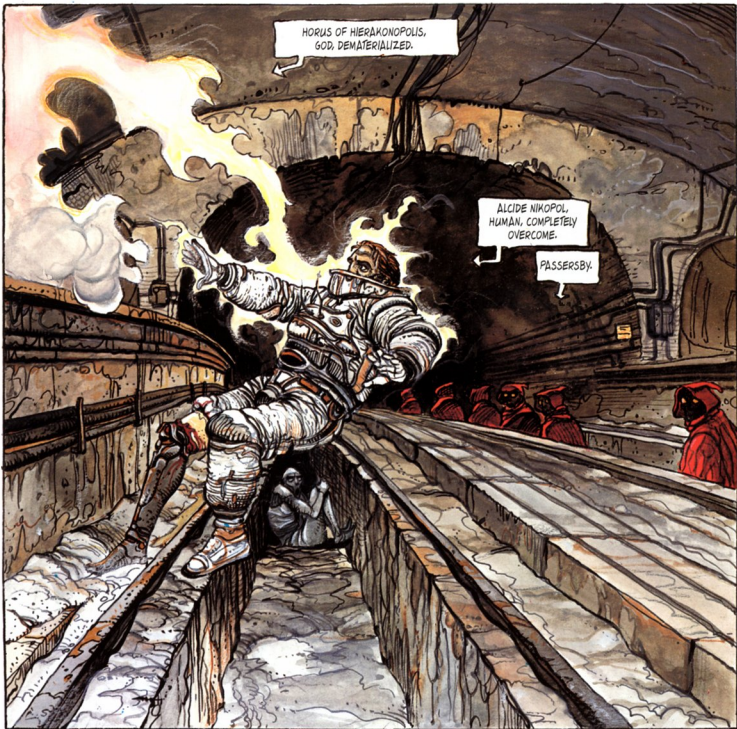
YOU WILL WALK, ALCIDÉ NIKOPOL, AND BETTER THAN BEFORE, AS SOON AS I'VE TAKEN POSSESSION OF YOUR BODY... YOUR BODY AND YOUR BRAIN SINCE I HAVE AN ACT OF VENGEANCE TO CARRY OUT... A REVENGE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE FOR WHICH YOU WILL BE MY PRIVILEGED INSTRUMENT... THE TIME HAS COME FOR ME TO DEMATERIALIZATE AND MELT INTO YOU...

MELT INTO ME? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? ARE YOU JOKING OR WHAT?



GOD!

THUS ON MARCH 3, 2023, AT METRO STATION ALESIA, TOOK PLACE THE POSSESSION OF THE BODY OF ALCIDE NIKOPOL BY HORUS OF HIERAKONOPOLIS.





EVERYTHING IS READY, GENERAL. THE GOVERNOR'S ARMCHAIR WILL EXPLODE THIS EVENING AT EXACTLY 9 PM., JUST BEFORE HALF TIME...

VERY GOOD, MY FRIEND... YOU HAVE OF COURSE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT MY PRESENCE BESIDE THE GOVERNOR AT THE MOMENT OF THE EXPLOSION!?



REST ASSURED, GENERAL. IT WILL NOT REALLY BE AN EXPLOSION... I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN FROM ONE OF THE ALPHERATZJEN HANDLERS AT THE ASTROPORT OF VARECH OF FOMALH-AUT... A SIMPLE ELECTRIC SPARK SUFFICIENT TO TURN THIS SUBSTANCE INTO A DEADLY HIGH-ENERGY ONE... THE GOVERNOR WILL BE SEATED THIS EVENING ON A KIND OF ELECTRIC CHAIR... YOU WILL BE IN NO DANGER, GENERAL...

GOOD.



MY OFFICERS AND THEIR MEN WILL BE READY AS WELL... AND FROM

THIS EVENING ON POWER WILL HAVE CHANGED HANDS... MY FRIEND, THIS CALLS FOR A CELEBRATION! A DROP OF OLD COGNAC?

HE IS TRULY PRECIOUS TO ME, BUT GOD, IS HE WORTHY...

NO THANK YOU, I NEVER TOUCH ALCOHOL.

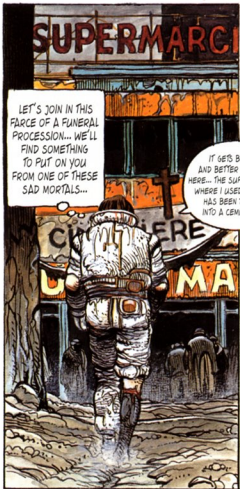
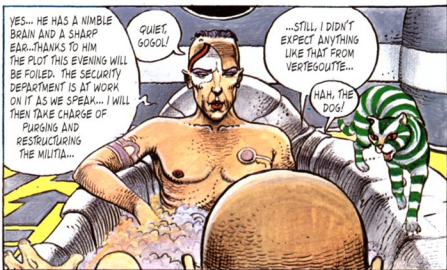


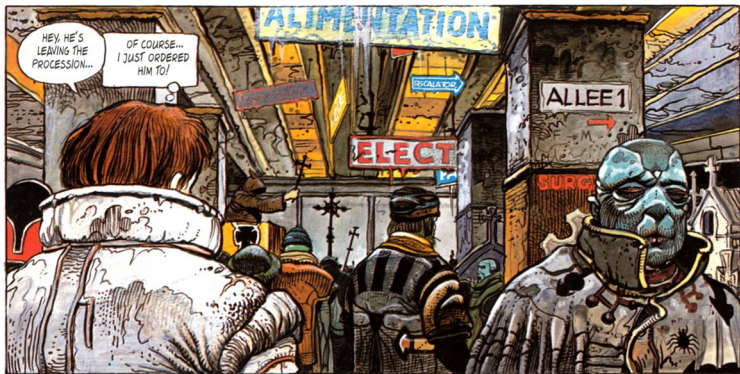
WE MUST QUICKLY FIND SOME NEW CLOTHES... YOU WILL BE SPOTTED AND PICKED UP WITH THIS SUIT ON...

GOOD LORD, HAS PARIS CHANGED...

NORMAL, AFTER 30 YEARS AND TWO NUCLEAR WARS...

STILL... WHAT A SHOCK...





HEY, HE'S LEAVING THE PROCESSION...

OF COURSE... I JUST ORDERED HIM TO!



AB05



GO AHEAD, IT'S OKAY.



I FEEL YOU'RE ON EDGE, NIKOPOL... YOU'RE AFRAID OF ME, AREN'T YOU?

I DON'T APPRECIATE YOUR POWERS OR YOUR WAYS... AND STILL LESS HAVING YOU INSIDE ME...

AND THEN THE GUY WHOSE CLOTHES I'M WEARING WAS COVERED WITH RED SORES... I'M NOT CRAZY ABOUT CATCHING SOME INCURABLE DISEASE.



THANKS, OLD BOY!

YOU SEE, NIKOPOL, ALL NICE AND FRIENDLY... NO VIOLENCE AND NOT A DROP OF BLOOD...

DID YOU HYPNOTIZE HIM?

SORT OF...



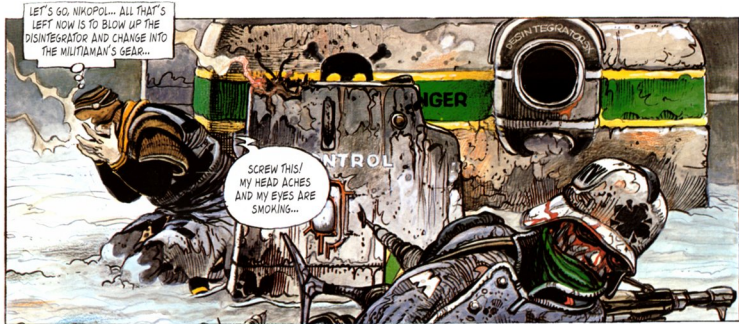
NIGHT FELL VERY FAST AS IT ALWAYS DID IN MARCH FOR SOME YEARS NOW... A SAD, PAINFUL NIGHT WITH A STRANGE, HEAVY DUMPING OF GREENISH SNOW... ALCIDE NIKOPOL'S CONFUSION WAS GREATER THAN EVER...

THIS IS THE BORDER POST... BEYOND IS THE FIRST SECTOR... THE SECTOR OF PRIVILEGE AND LAW...

DON'T GIVE A SHIT...

NOT ME NIKO-
POL! NOT ME!





LET'S GO, NIKOPOL... ALL THAT'S LEFT NOW IS TO BLOW UP THE DISINTEGRATOR AND CHANGE INTO THE MILITIAMAN'S GEAR...

SCREW THIS! MY HEAD ACHEs AND MY EYES ARE SMOKING...



BETTER?

HOW MANY TIMES A DAY AM I GOING TO HAVE TO CHANGE COSTUME, HUH?

AS MANY TIMES AS NECESSARY... NOW WE'LL FOLLOW THE CROWD HEADING TOWARD THE TEMPLE OF SPORTS AND CONVENTIONS...

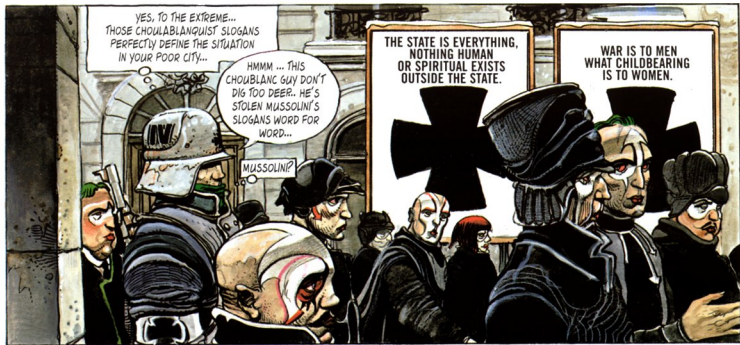
OHAY...

...SO THIS IS THE PRIVILEGED ELITE OF THE FIRST SECTOR?



YES... PARISIAN HIGH SOCIETY, SO TO SPEAK... YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED THE ABSENCE OF WOMEN IN THIS TEEMING CARNIVAL... MOST OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE ARE AUTOMATICALLY SENT TO THE HOLY SAVIOR MATERNITY CENTER, A GIGANTIC AND OMINOUSLY STERILE UNDERGROUND CLINIC OF SORTS, WHERE THE RATE OF BIRTHING IS SCIENTIFICALLY ACCELERATED... THE PROGRAMMING IS DESIGNED TO PRODUCE ABOUT 20% OF MALE CHILDREN... ALL DESTINED FOR THE GOVERNMENT ARMIES... YOUR RACE IS ONE OF RARE STUPIDITY AND CRIPPLING SEXISM, NIKOPOL...

NAW... OUR SOCIAL FLAWS HAVE JUST FINALLY GOTTEN MORE STRONGLY PRONOUNCED...



YES, TO THE EXTREME...
THOSE CHOUBLANQUIST SLOGANS
PERFECTLY DEFINE THE SITUATION
IN YOUR POOR CITY...

HMMM ... THIS
CHOUBLANC GUY DON'T
DIG TOO DEER. HE'S
STOLEN MUSSOLINI'S
SLOGANS WORD FOR
WORD...

MUSSOLINI?

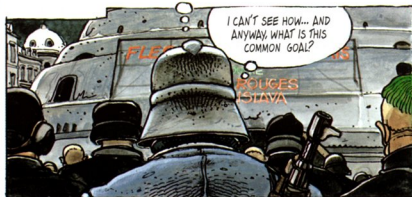
THE STATE IS EVERYTHING,
NOTHING HUMAN
OR SPIRITUAL EXISTS
OUTSIDE THE STATE.

WAR IS TO MEN
WHAT CHILDBEARING
IS TO WOMEN.

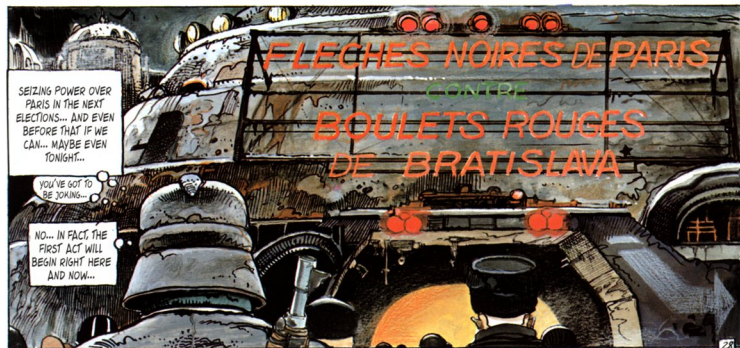


YES... A DICTATOR FROM
THE LAST CENTURY... I CAN
STILL REMEMBER
MY COLLEGE EXAM
ESSAY QUESTION FROM
1980... "THE RISE OF
FASCISM IN ITALY"...
A COMPLETE MESS...

YOU SEE, NIKOPOL, I THINK FINALLY WE ARE GOING TO COME UP WITH A COMMON GOAL...
YOURS, POLITICAL AND HUMANITARIAN, AND MINE, PERSONAL REVENGE OF A DIVINE AND
UNIVERSAL SCOPE... AT THE BEGINNING I THOUGHT I WOULD HAVE TO DISCONNECT YOUR BRAIN
FUNCTIONS IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO USE YOUR BODY WITHOUT ANY INTERFERENCE, BUT
NOW I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THAT A KIND OF... COOPERATIVE EFFORT MAY BE POSSIBLE...



I CAN'T SEE HOW... AND
ANYWAY, WHAT IS THIS
COMMON GOAL?

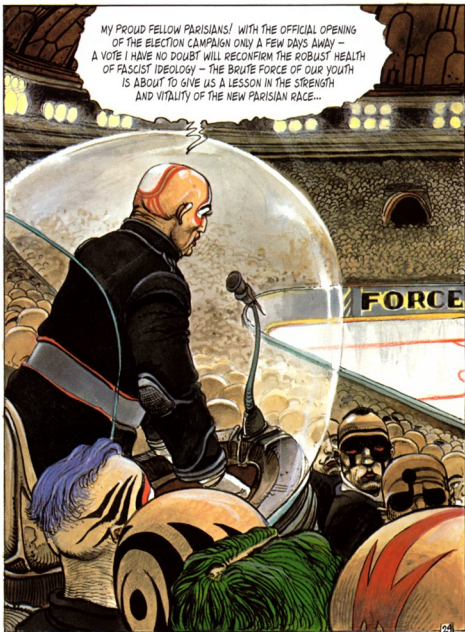
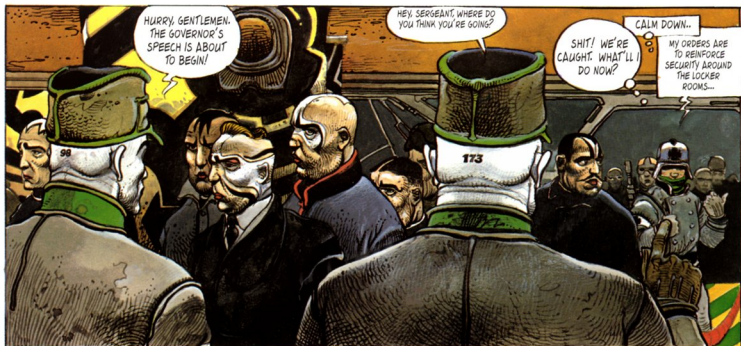


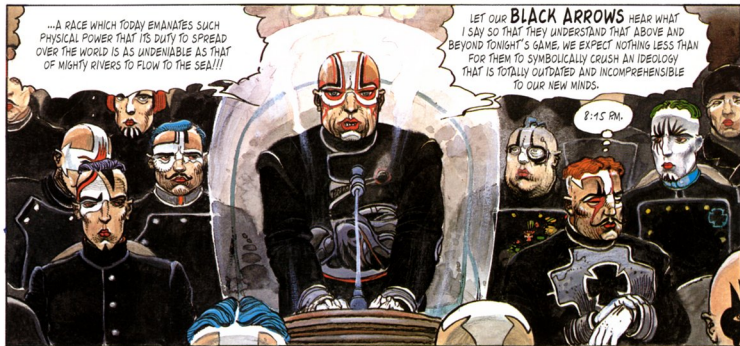
SEIZING POWER OVER
PARIS IN THE NEXT
ELECTIONS... AND EVEN
BEFORE THAT IF WE
CAN... MAYBE EVEN
TONIGHT...

YOU'VE GOT TO
BE JOKING...

NO... IN FACT, THE
FIRST ACT WILL
BEGIN RIGHT HERE
AND NOW...

FLECHES NOIRES DE PARIS
CONTRE
BOULETS ROUGES
DE BRATISLAVA





...A RACE WHICH TODAY EMANATES SUCH PHYSICAL POWER THAT ITS DUTY TO SPREAD OVER THE WORLD IS AS UNDENIABLE AS THAT OF MIGHTY RIVERS TO FLOW TO THE SEA!!!

LET OUR **BLACK ARROWS** HEAR WHAT I SAY SO THAT THEY UNDERSTAND THAT ABOVE AND BEYOND TONIGHT'S GAME, WE EXPECT NOTHING LESS THAN FOR THEM TO SYMBOLICALLY CRUSH AN IDEOLOGY THAT IS TOTALLY OUTDATED AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO OUR NEW MINDS.

8:15 PM.



...AND NOW LET THE GAMES BEGIN.

THIS BARGAIN BASEMENT DICTATOR HAS BORROWED IT ALL... WORD FOR WORD FROM IL DUCE...

WHO?

THE SAME ONE I MENTIONED BEFORE...



WATCH OUT, I THINK THEY'RE COMING...

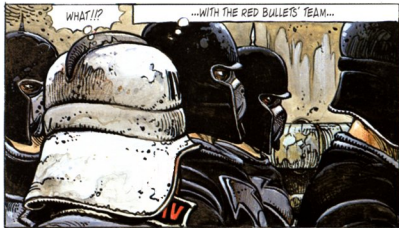
THEY WHO?

THE BLACK ARROWS...



GOD, IS THAT IT? HOCKEY PLAYERS? WE'RE GOING TO WATCH A HOCKEY GAME?

WE'RE EVEN GOING TO PLAY, NIKOPOD...



WHAT!?

...WITH THE RED BULLETS' TEAM...



BUT THAT'S CRAZY!!! I DON'T KNOW HOW TO PLAY OR EVEN SKATE... AND AFTER SPENDING THIRTY YEARS ON ICE I'M NOT EXACTLY CRAZY ABOUT...

QUIET, NIKOPOL! HERE THEY COME...



A STRAGGLER... PERFECT...

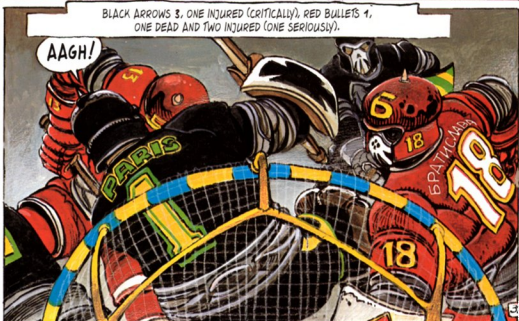
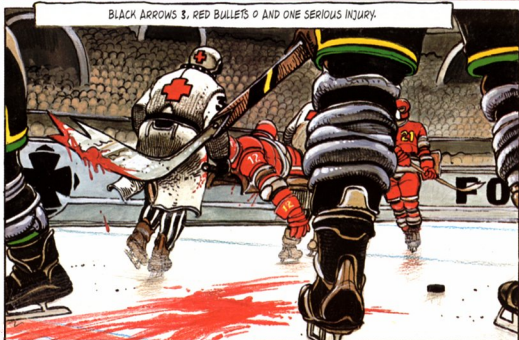
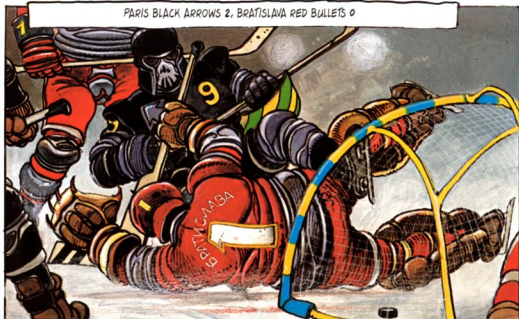


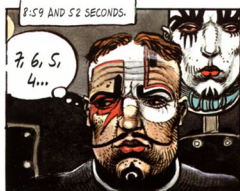
ЧТО ЭТ...



NOW YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO...

WHEW.





9:19 PM. A COMPLETE REVERSAL OF THE SITUATION AND THE SCORE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF STUPIFIED, ICY SILENCE.

THAT 23 FUCK!! HE'S GOT TO BE SHOT DOWN!!!

F.N. PARIS 3 --- B.R. BRATISL. 4

BUTURES: N° 12-9-9
BIBESSES: N° 17-11-8-4
PEREGRINES: N° 13-6-10-4

BUTURES: N° 11-23 2323
BIBESSES: N° 6 14-11-6-21
PEREGRINES: N° 15-15-15-15

DEAD!



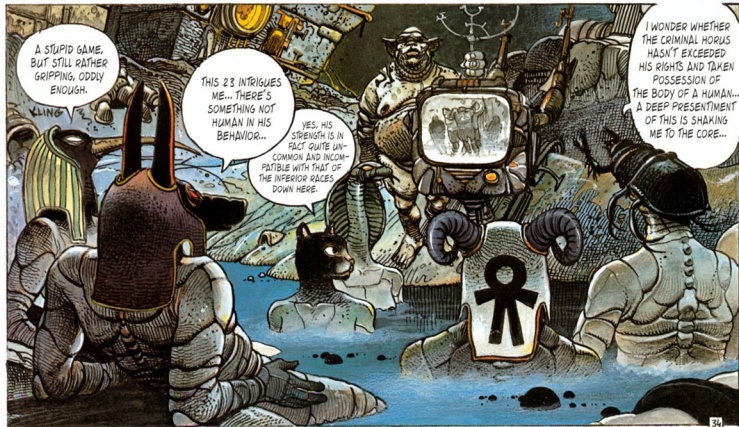
BUT HOW DO YOU SHOOT DOWN A GOD ENDOWED WITH SUPER POWERS, SPECIALLY ONE WITH A LEG OF HEAVY STEEL...

A STUPID GAME, BUT STILL RATHER GRIPPING, ODDLY ENOUGH.

THIS 23 INTRIGUES ME... THERE'S SOMETHING NOT HUMAN IN HIS BEHAVIOR...

YES, HIS STRENGTH IS IN FACT QUITE UNCOMMON AND INCOMPATIBLE WITH THAT OF THE INFERIOR RACES DOWN HERE.

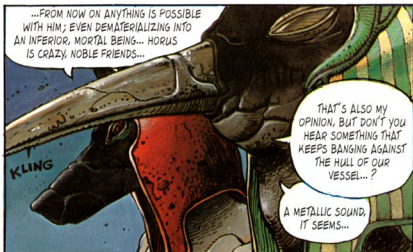
I WONDER WHETHER THE CRIMINAL HORUS HASN'T EXCEEDED HIS RIGHTS AND TAKEN POSSESSION OF THE BODY OF A HUMAN... A DEEP PRESENTATION OF THIS IS SHAKING ME TO THE CORE...





COME NOW, KHEPRI, UNLESS HIS REASON HAS TOTALLY MALFUNCTIONED, HE CAN NOT HAVE VIOLATED THE ETHICS OF THE MIGHTY TO THIS EXTENT.

IN ANY CASE, THIS WOULD BE AN EVENT WITHOUT PRECEDENT IN THE UNFATHOMABLE HISTORY OF ETERNITY...



...FROM NOW ON ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE WITH HIM; EVEN DEMATERIALIZING INTO AN INFERIOR, MORTAL BEING... HORUS IS CRAZY, NOBLE FRIENDS...

THAT'S ALSO MY OPINION, BUT DON'T YOU HEAR SOMETHING THAT KEEPS BANGING AGAINST THE HULL OF OUR VESSEL...?

A METALLIC SOUND, IT SEEMS...

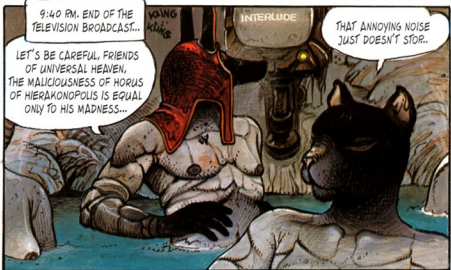


9:32 PM... TIME CALLED, GAME OVER... THE SCORE 7 TO 4 IN FAVOR OF THE CZECHOSLOVAKS...

NOW FOR THE SECOND PHASE.



9:39 PM. JEAN-FERDINAND CHOUBLANC, ANGRY AND BITTER, SUDDENLY LEAVES HIS OFFICIAL BOX...



9:40 PM. END OF THE TELEVISION BROADCAST...

LET'S BE CAREFUL FRIENDS OF UNIVERSAL HEAVEN, THE MALICIOUSNESS OF HORUS OF HIERAKONPOLIS IS EQUAL ONLY TO HIS MADNESS...

INTERLUDE

THAT ANNOYING NOISE JUST DOESN'T STOP.



BES! GO FIND OUT WHAT THAT NOISE IS!...

NIGHT CAME DOWN HEAVY AND IMPENETRABLE... SWEEPED HERE AND THERE BY SULFURIOUS WINDS...

10:01 PM.

FLASH
SPECIAL

PROUD PARISIANS, GOOD EVENING! A DRAMATIC TURN OF EVENTS OCCURRED AT THE END OF THE PARIS-BRATISLAVA HOCKEY MATCH... A POLITICALLY DRAMATIC TURN WHICH REFLECTS HONOR ON OUR FASCIST IDEOLOGY AND OUR GOVERNOR JEAN-FERDINAND CHOUBIANC.



KLING

MR. MINISTER, YOU WERE PRESENT AT THIS UNPRECEDENTED EVENT. CAN YOU GIVE US THE FACTS OF WHAT HAPPENED?

WELL, IT'S QUITE SIMPLE... BOTH TEAMS STARTED TO RETURN TO THEIR LOCKER ROOMS WHEN ONE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAKS MANAGED TO GET FREE OF HIS TEAM AND GRABBED HOLD OF A MICROPHONE FROM OUR SECURITY PERSONNEL... HE USED IT TO ASK FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF PARIS...

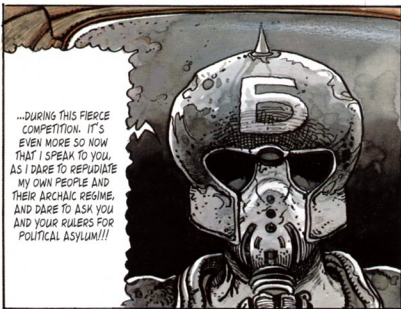
J. R. PHORMHOLTZ
MINISTRE A LA JEUNESSE
ET A LA PROPAGANDE

I SUGGEST, MR. MINISTER, THAT WE TAKE A LOOK NOW AT THE FIRST VIDEOTAPE OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY TURNAROUND...

PARISIANS FRIENDS, LISTEN TO ME!!!
I CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEFEAT OF YOUR TEAM
AND YOUR DISAPPOINTMENT MUST BE GREAT...
WELL, AS STRONG AS MY WILL TO WIN...



...DURING THIS FIERCE COMPETITION, IT'S EVEN MORE SO NOW THAT I SPEAK TO YOU, AS I DARE TO REPUDIATE MY OWN PEOPLE AND THEIR ARCHAIC REGIME, AND DARE TO ASK YOU AND YOUR RULERS FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM!!!

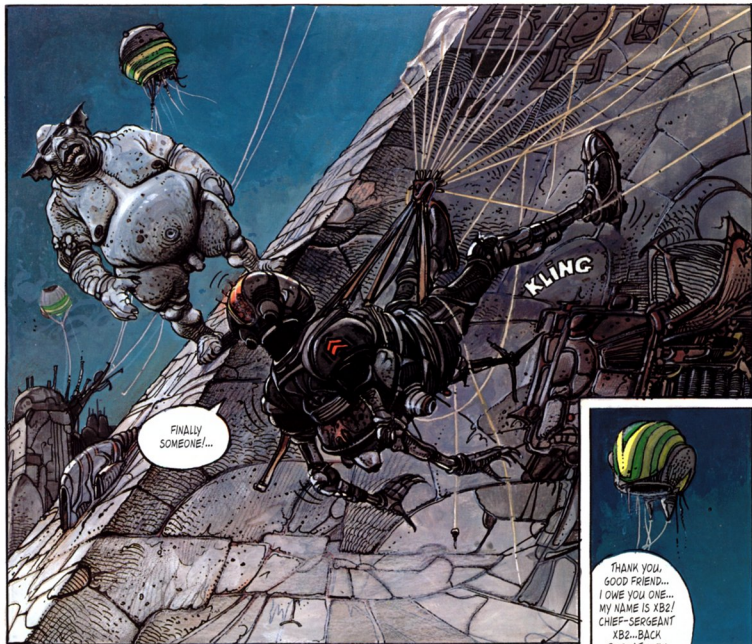


DID YOU HEAR THAT?

YES...
THIS BEHAVIOR
ONLY CONFIRMS
OUR SUSPICIONS...

AND BES WHO
HASN'T COME
BACK YET...





FINALLY
SOMEONE!...



THANK YOU,
GOOD FRIEND...
I OWE YOU ONE...
MY NAME IS XB2!
CHIEF-SERGEANT
XB2...BACK
PREMATURELY
FROM A MISSION...



I WAS BEGINNING
TO GIVE UP
HOPE...

L'ORDRE
RESOUNDING POLITICAL K.O.
TWO MAJOR VICTIMS/ THE TRAITOR
VERGOUTTE AND CSECHOSVIETISM!!!

CHOUBLANQUISM TRIUMPHANT

**"LA VOIX
LÉGALE"**

Extraordinary night at the sports and convention center, where, despite a relative athletic defeat for our team, Choublanquism came up politically stronger and ideologically greater due to two astounding events:

- the death of the dirty traitor Vergoutte in his attempt on the governor's life
- the demand for political asylum and rejection of the "archaic" regime by a czechosoviet hockey player.

story and photos
on pages 2 and 3

SENSE OF HONOR

Pierre-Hubert Burburtz, head coach of the Paris Black Arrows, committed suicide yesterday evening in the locker room lavatory of the sports and convention center... before impaling himself on a crucifix, he declared: "better death than defeat." Pierre-Hubert Burburtz was 33 years old.

NEWS ITEM

MILITAMAN EATEN BY RAW MENKAR EGG

An accident which was both stupid and dramatic took place in a Menkar hard-boiled egg warehouse, rue de Thérèse, in the second sector.
Either on purpose or accidentally, one of the eggs (6 feet high) had not been hard-boiled, one of the eggs (6 feet wide) 27 worker creatures were having the work done. Quickly alerted, a detachment of Militamen engaged the hideous beast, now freed from its shell, in a fierce order was given alive.
In record time, the horrible monster claimed 26 victims, one of whom was the brave corporal Escroc Robardes. An inquiry has been opened to determine clearly who are responsible for this infortunate affair.

Photos of the scenes on page 10.



GOOD NEWS, NIKOPOL... DON'T YOU THINK?



LOOK WE'VE MADE FRONT PAGE HEADLINES IN EVERY PAPER... A PERFECT SPOT FOR CARRYING OUT THE REMAINDER OF OUR PLANS... SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE, HUH?

THAT'S RIGHT, LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL...



YOU TURN ME OFF AND ON LIKE SOME DAMN LIGHT BULB, YOU USE AND ABUSE MY BODY LIKE SOME ROBOT TOY AND, WORSE STILL, YOU MAKE ME ACT POLITICALLY IN TOTAL CONTRADICTION TO MY BELIEFS... SO WHAT'S TO CELEBRATE...



I'M TELLING YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL... YOU'RE WORSE THAN ALL THE MUSSOLINIS, HITLERS, STALINS AND CHOUBLANCS PUT TOGETHER... YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A TOTALITARIAN, AMBITIOUS, PARANOID, BLOODTHIRSTY, INHUMAN EGOMANIAC.



OF COURSE I AM!!!! I AM INHUMAN, BY DEFINITION AND IN ESSENCE... I AM AN ALL-POWERFUL BEING RULED BY UNIVERSAL LAWS WHICH ARE BEYOND MORTAL UNDERSTANDING... AND YOU'RE LUCKY, NIKOPOL, THAT YOU INSPIRE IN ME MORE SYMPATHY THAN REVULSION...



LISTEN CLOSELY, NIKOPOL... WE ARE GOING TO SEIZE TOTAL POWER IN THIS CITY... AND WE WILL SHARE THIS POWER... YOU WILL GOVERN YOUR FELLOW HUMANS AS YOU SEE FIT... IN ADDITION, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO COUNT ON AND USE SOME OF MY POWERS... AND I WILL TAKE CARE OF THE PROBLEM OF THE PYRAMID, SOMETHING WHICH IS IN THE EXCLUSIVE DOMAIN OF THE DIVINE AND CONCERNS ME PERSONALLY...

IS THAT CLEAR?



...NOT REALLY... MAYBE I'M BEING NOSEY, BUT JUST WHAT IS THIS PYRAMID PROBLEM ALL ABOUT ANYWAY?

WHAT YOU ARE ASKING OF ME, NIKOPOL, TOUCHES ON UNIVERSAL VALUES WHICH EARTHLY WORDS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO EXPRESS...

IN ANY CASE, I CAN TELL YOU THAT DEEP DIFFERENCES, A SAVAGE HATRED OF MY RACE, AND UNBRIDLED AMBITION, WITH WHICH I AM BLESSED, LEAD ME TO BREAK WITH MY PAST... FROM NOW ON I AM WORKING FOR MYSELF AGAINST THE UNIVERSAL ORDER AND HOLY ETERNITY...



SEIZING POWER IN PARIS WILL ABOVE ALL, MEAN CONTROLLING THE FUEL SUPPLY... WITH THAT POWER, I WILL HAVE WHAT I NEED TO BRING ANUBIS AND HIS CLIQUE OF SLUGGISH HOMEBODIES TO THEIR KNEES...



PRETTY GROTESQUE FOR GODS TO BE DEPENDENT ON AN OIL PIPELINE, ISN'T IT?

THE TECHNOLOGY OF OUR VESSEL (OF THEIRS I SHOULD SAY) IS VERY ARCHAIC... I ALWAYS WAS IN FAVOR OF ATOMNIONIC EFFICIENCY WHEN IT COMES TO PROPULSION... LET THEM BITE THEIR NAILS NOW...



BUT I'M AFRAID THAT AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR AND ANUBIS WILL OCCUR BEFORE WE ARE MASTERS OF THE CITY...



SHIT!!!! SOMEONE'S KNOCKING!...

QUIET... I AM GOING BACK INTO YOUR BODY...





MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE PYRAMID...

...AND WHY RETURN TO EARTH AGAINST THE ORDERS OF YOUR SUPERIORS, XB2?

RADIO CONTACT HAD BEEN CUT FOR OVER 18 YEARS... THE "NIKOPOL-HIBERNATION" EXPERIMENT HAD FALLEN TO PIECES AGES AGO ...

THEN TOO, 30 YEARS OF SOLITUDE IN THE EMPTINESS OF SPACE MAKES ANY NORMALLY CONSTRUCTED BEING ASK HIMSELF FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS CONDITION AND HIS EXISTENCE...



THAT'S HOW I DISCOVERED THE UNIQUE AND INTOXICATING FEELING OF PERSONAL AMBITION... THIS RETURN TO EARTH IS A NEW START FOR ME AND A NEAR DEFINITIVE BREAK WITH MY FORMER MILITARY VALUES OF THE DUTY-COUNTRY KIND...

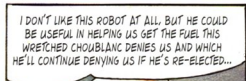


WHAT ABOUT THIS NIKOPOL?

... A HARMLESS BEING WITHOUT MUCH SCOPE... HE SHOULD BE DEAD BY NOW...



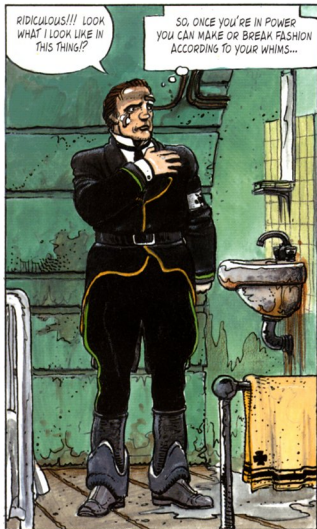
THAT WILL BE ALL FOR NOW... BES, TAKE CARE OF XB2, WILL YOU?



I DON'T LIKE THIS ROBOT AT ALL, BUT HE COULD BE USEFUL IN HELPING US GET THE FUEL THIS WRETCHED CHOUBLANC DENIES US AND WHICH HE'LL CONTINUE DENYING US IF HE'S RE-ELECTED...

HOW'S THAT BASTARD, DARLING?

BY HAVING XB2 ELECTED GOVERNOR!



“RIDICULOUS!!! LOOK WHAT I LOOK LIKE IN THIS THING!?”

“SO, ONCE YOU’RE IN POWER YOU CAN MAKE OR BREAK FASHION ACCORDING TO YOUR WHIMS...”



“FASTER! THE GOVERNOR DOES NOT LIKE TO BE KEPT WAITING!”



“LEGS IN THE AIR, LIKE A WHORE, BURNING AND SWEATING POISONS, STRETCHING OUT CASUALLY, CYNICALLY, HER BELLY SWOLLEN WITH FOUL GAS...”



“...YET YOU WILL COME TO THIS OFFENSE, LIKE THIS FILTHY DECAY, STAR OF MY EYES, SUN OF MY SOUL, YOU, MY ANGEL, MY PASSION...”



NOW COMES THE SERIOUS PART,
NIKOPOI...

I'VE GOT A
HEADACHE...



A STROKE OF FATE,
THIS DISSIDENT...
I MUST GET THE MOST OUT
OF THIS AFFAIR, CREATE AN EVENT
AROUND THIS ACT OF HIS
AND THE POLITICS WHICH
ACCOMPANY IT... WE COULDN'T
HAVE DREAMED UP A BETTER
THEME FOR MY CAMPAIGN...

EVERYTHING
HAS BEEN PLANNED
WITH THIS IN MIND...
ALSO, YOUR BROTHER,
HIS HONNOR
THEODALE I, WILL BE
BACKING YOU...
IN A SPECTACULAR
WAY, HE'S TOLD ME...
THE WAY THINGS ARE
GOING NO ONE WILL
DARE ENTER
THE RACE AGAINST
YOU...



HMMM... THAT WOULD MAKE
THINGS A LOT SIMPLER...
I'VE GOT OTHER IRONS IN
THE FIRE, YOU KNOW...

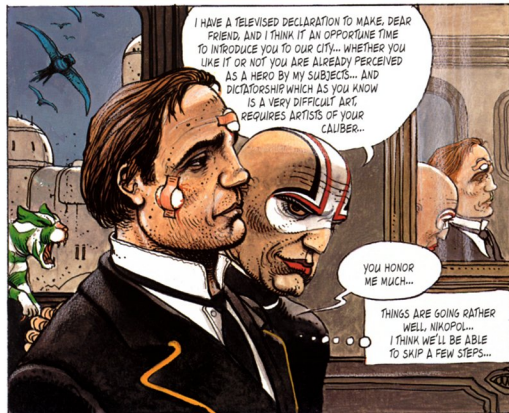
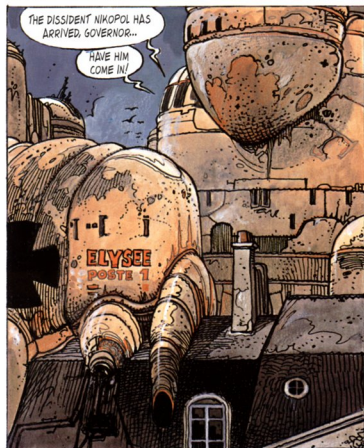
QUIET, GOGOL,
QUIET...



THAT ANUBIS AND HIS ADVISORS ARE THE ONES WHO'LL BE DISAPPOINTED WHEN
I'M RE-ELECTED... I'VE GOT A HUNCH THAT THEIR SITUATION IS NOT QUITE AS
COMFORTABLE AS THEY WOULD HAVE ME BELIEVE... THEY'LL BE THE FIRST TO GIVE IN...

...AND WILL MAKE
ME IMMORTAL
(IF GOD WILLS)

I SO HOPE
FOR YOU...



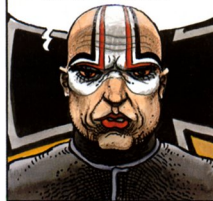


(BE VERY CAREFUL... GOGOL SEEMS ABNORMALLY DISTURBED BY THIS NIKOPOL... HE FINDS HIM TO BE AN ODDY AMBIGUOUS DUAL PERSONALITY, SEETHING WITH UNBRIDLED AMBITION...)

(I DON'T LIKE HIM EITHER... BUT DON'T BE AFRAID, HE WON'T GET A WORD IN...)

THEY'RE ON THEIR GUARD... THE TELEPATHIC CAT HAS ALERTED THEM... BUT TOO LATE, I FEAR, FOR THEM...

PROUD PARISIAN FRIENDS, AS YOU KNOW, THE ELECTION IS CLOSE AT HAND. YOU ALSO KNOW HOW GREAT MY EXPANSIONIST AMBITION IS, AND HOW THIS IS A FACTOR IN THE WELL-BEING OF OUR ENTIRE RACE IN THE CHAOTIC ANARCHY OF THIS SAD WORLD...



IT IS FROM THIS TROUBLED POLITICAL CONTEXT THAT POIGNANT FLASHES OF TRUTH MAY ARISE, FROM NOBLE CONSCIENTIOUS INDIVIDUALS... THIS IS WHY I WISH TO INTRODUCE YOU TODAY TO ONE OF THESE... HIS NAME IS ALCIDÉ NIKOPOL AND HE...



HA HA

...HE REPRESENTS THE FUTURE OF OUR DEEPEST HOPES... SO IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF ALL OF US THAT I SOLEMNLY ANNOUNCE TO YOU, PARISIAN CITIZENS, MY ABDICATION IN HIS FAVOR AND MY UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR HIS CANDIDACY!



SHIT! HE'S GONE OUT OF HIS MIND! CUT!!!





LET HIM COME IN

SHOCK! J.F. CHOUBLANC ABDICATES!!!

Political event without precedent. The sitting governor, the much respected Jean-Ferdinand Choublanc, abdicated in favor of a foreigner of doubtful background and highly suspect behavior.

During the course of a brief televised speech, intended to inaugurate the opening of the electoral campaign, Jean-Ferdinand Choublanc announced his resignation in favor of an undesirable, disturbing individual. 24 hours before the solemn presentation of the candidates (by his Holiness Pope Theodule I in the Church of Notre Dame of Paris) and 8 days before the governmental election, this irrational act throws into certain mayhem

AURELIEN BURNOLDZ-MORTIER SPEAKS OUT FORCEFULLY

Ex-governor Choublanc's right-hand man, Aurelien Burnoldz-Mortier, has heatedly denounced "the teleguided intrusion by the cities of the East" of a slimy, evil Czechosoviet into the command post of our city. The young, brilliant Saint Polycyrian also declared that he was convinced that Governor Choublanc had been "mentally coerced" and that his abdication occurred... under "hypnosis". These facts were corroborated by Gogol d'Algol, telepathic advisor to Burnoldz-Mortier.

NO TO THE "FAKE" GOVERNOR

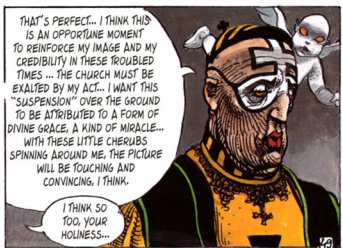
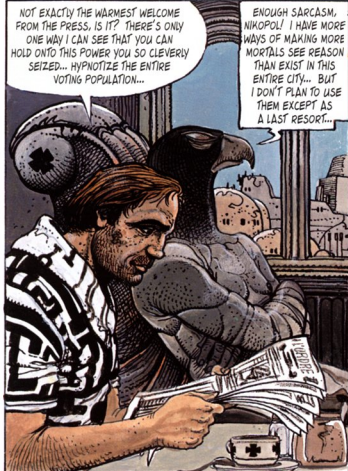
The Choublanquist government has refused outright to serve the "fake governor Alcide Nikopol" and resigned en masse yesterday evening. In an official statement the members of the government have made known their intention of "rallying around one sole candidate so as to forge a new, inflexible spirit and to counter the ideological manipulations from outside, aimed at the very basis of fascism." It is believed that the sole candidate might well be Aurelien Burnoldz-Mortier,

ex-governor Choublanc's confidant. During the course of the afternoon, the supreme selection will validate or reject the We should be reminded that this committee, presided over by Pope Theodule I, will announce the chosen candidates at 1 p.m. in the holy church of Notre-Dame in Paris... Besides the sitting governor and most likely Aurelien Burnoldz-Mortier, a limited number, 2 or 3 at most, are expected to be selected as a result of the Choublanc affair and the current wave of solidarity.

«LA VOIX
LEGALE»

POSTE 1

«L'ORDRE»



BUT UH... IN FACT AS FAR AS THESE LITTLE...
CHERUBS ARE CONCERNED, I MUST DRAW
YOUR HOLINESS'S ATTENTION TO
THE WORRISOME RATE AT WHICH THEY ARE
REPRODUCING AND...

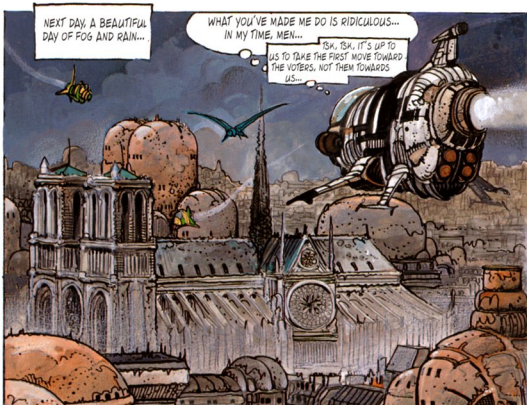
NOW, NOW, LET THESE HOLY
CREATURES LEAD
THEIR OWN LIVES...



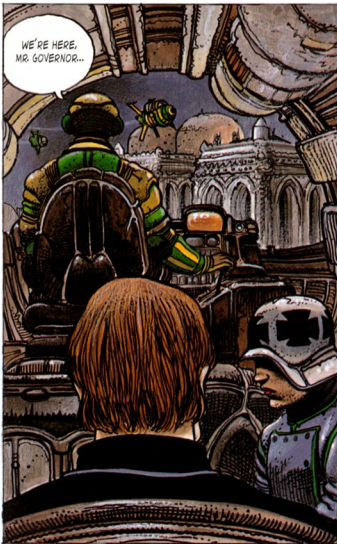
NEXT DAY, A BEAUTIFUL
DAY OF FOG AND RAIN...

WHAT YOU'VE MADE ME DO IS RIDICULOUS...
IN MY TIME, MEN...

ISH, ISH, IT'S UP TO
US TO TAKE THE FIRST MOVE TOWARD
THE VOTERS, NOT THEM TOWARDS
US...



WE'RE HERE,
MR. GOVERNOR...



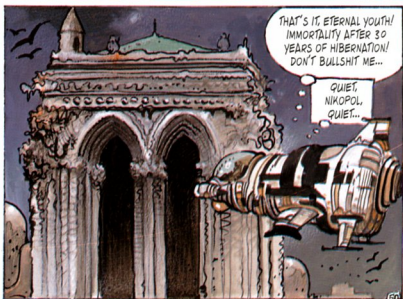
THE VOTERS DON'T GIVE
A DAMN ABOUT OUR
MOVES, JUST LIKE IN 1940...
AND THE POWERS THAT
BE, THE REAL ONES,
WILL USE OUR LITTLE
DIVERSION TO MAKE THEIR
DICTATORSHIP EVEN MORE
BRUTAL AND PUT NEW
MEN FORWARD WHO WILL
PUSH US ASIDE, THEN
WIPE US OUT...

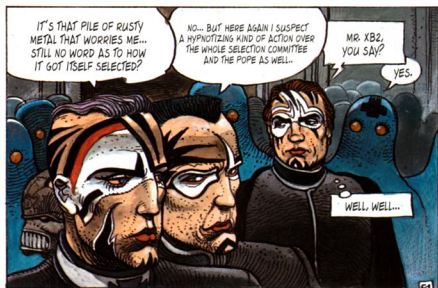


YOU'RE FORGETTING TWO
THINGS, NIKOPOL! FIRST,
THAT I HAVE THE POWERS
NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN
POWER AND, SECOND, THAT
I AM IMMORTAL... AND YOU
ARE AS WELL, AS LONG AS
I LIVE IN YOUR BODY...

THAT'S IT, ETERNAL YOUTH/
IMMORTALITY AFTER 30
YEARS OF HIBERNATION!
DON'T BULLSHIT ME...

QUIET,
NIKOPOL,
QUIET...







THAT'S ODD... I SENSE
A MENTAL BARRIER ON
EACH SIDE OF ME... THE
TELEPATHIC CAT'S WAS
TO BE EXPECTED...

...BUT I DON'T LIKE
THE ROBOT'S
AT ALL...

HEY NIMOPOL
WAKE UR...

AAA AAH



...MY HEAD...

TAKE A DISCREET
LOOK TO YOUR
LEFT AND TRY
TO STAY CALM...



SHIT!!!

STAY CALM
I SAID...

XB2! CHIEF-
SERGEANT
XB2! WHAT
THE HELL'S
HE DOING
HERE???

THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE
TO KNOW...



BUT NOW LET US RAISE
OURSELVES UP TOGETHER
IN FERVENT PRAYER
FOR OUR GLORIOUS CITY
AND THE ALMIGHTY,
ITS PROTECTOR...

OOOOH!!!?

HURRY!!!

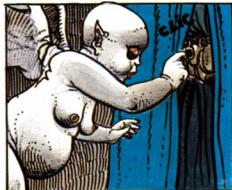
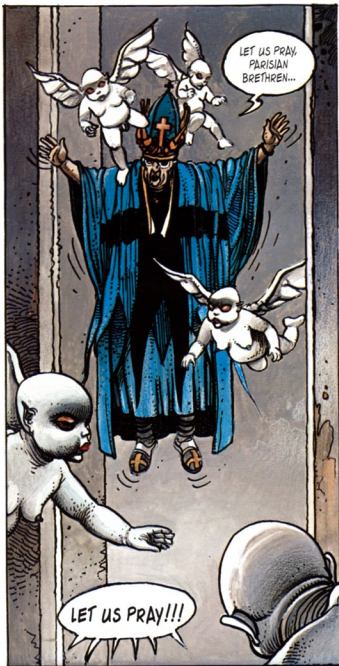
HE'S RISING!!!

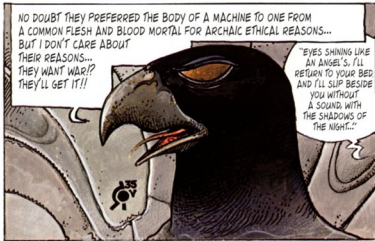
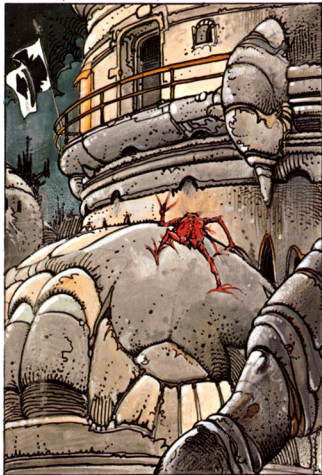
IT'S A MIRACLE!!

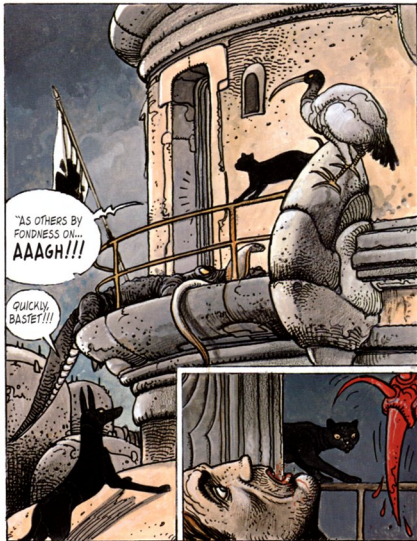
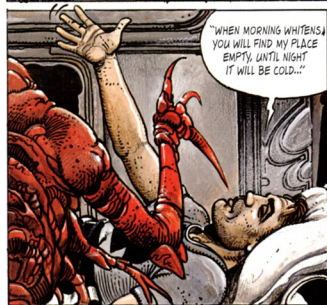
ANOTHER ONE!!!

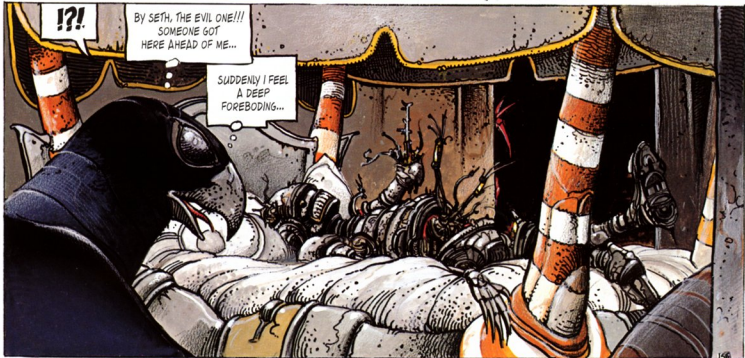


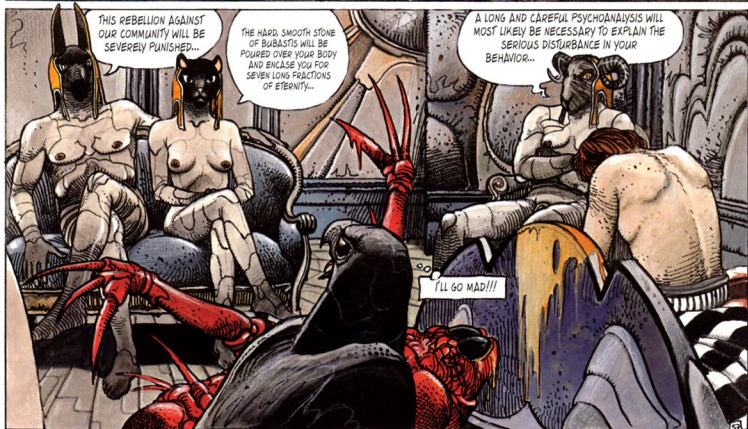
...SO IT IS IN THE NAME
OF THE ALMIGHTY WHO GUIDES
OUR HEALTHY AND HOLY CITY WITH
HIS LIGHT THAT TODAY I AM CALLED
UPON TO INTRODUCE TO YOU
THE THREE CANDIDATES SELECTED
TO RUN AGAINST EACH OTHER
DURING THE UPCOMING
ELECTORAL RACE...











MOREOVER, WITH MY NIKOPOL PRESENT HERE, BEING OBLIGATED GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO BRING HIM BACK TO THIS EARTHLY LIFE, WE HAVE JUST CONCLUDED AN ESPECIALLY EQUITABLE ARRANGEMENT... IN EXCHANGE FOR OUR BENEVOLENT AND DISCREET PROTECTION AND FOR A FEW OTHER APPROPRIATE MEASURES TAKEN TO PERMIT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW POLITICAL REGIME THE NATURE OF WHICH HE WILL DETERMINE HIMSELF MR. NIKOPOL AGREES TO GIVE US THOSE QUANTITIES OF FUEL WE DEEM NECESSARY WITHOUT ANY RESTRICTION... IS THAT NOT SO, MR. NIKOPOL?

"SOMETIMES I FEEL
MY BLOOD SPILL OUT,

!?

IN SOBS, THE WAY
A FOUNTAIN FLOWS,
I KNOW I HEAR IT GUSHING
A LONG GURGLE,
BUT IN VAIN I SEARCH
TO FIND THE WOUNDS"

PARIS, MARCH 23, 2023. PRESS CLIPPINGS.

"L'AIR RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE"

DIFFUSION LÉGALE - TIRAGE 160 000 ex.

LEGALLY DISTRIBUTED - 160,000 COPIES PRINTED

**FASCISM IS DEAD
LONG LIFE NIKOPOL!**

TODAY, MARCH 23, 2023, A HISTORIC DATE, A NEW ERA OF EQUALITY AND REVOLUTIONARY HOPE BEGINS FOR ALL PARISIANS, UNITED AT LAST AS ONE. LET US THANK NIKOPOL, THE LIBERATOR OF PARIS, AND HOPE THAT THE STILL SMOLDERING ASHES OF THE CURSE OF FASCISM WILL BE SCATTERED IN THE WINDS OF HISTORY AND BE BLOTTED OUT FROM OUR TORTURED MEMORIES.

"L'AIR RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE"

WOMEN LIBERATED AT LAST

One of the first acts of the new revolutionary regime was to free some 25,000 unfortunate women called "reproducers" from the sinister Holy Savior Maternity Center. Women by right will now take a leading role in the construction of the new society, a right long denied by years under the yoke of phallocratic fascism. For now we can announce that three women will have permanent seats on the coalition committee established by Alcide Nikopol. The coalition, including the handful of intellectuals who managed to survive the horrors of the fascist political prisons, will have as its task in the upcoming days, the job of broadly defining the future direction the new Parisian society will take.

NEWS ITEM

THE POPE IS DEAD!

Pope Theodule I (and last) is dead, not as a result of his grotesque fall, but, it seems, from a heart attack caused by the announcement of the change in regime.

THE PYRAMID LEAVES US

The mysterious flying pyramid along with its still unknown inhabitants will be leaving the Paris-South Astroport today for an unknown celestial destination, according to reliable sources.

FASHION NEWS

MAKE-UP: NEW TRENDS

New trends in revolutionary make-up are necessary to sweep away the decadent painted clowns of fascism. Two vibrant colors: green for lips and red for hair, beards, mustaches and all other hair will adorn faces and bodies. Other shades themselves will be on the pale side.

Details and photo p. 9.

NEWS FLASH

Alcide Nikopol, our savior, exhausted by his ruthless struggle against fascism, has decided to take a few days of well-deserved rest and so will not be appearing in public.

NO, FASCISM ISN'T DEAD!!!
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY OUT
AGAINST THE RED NIKOPOL
VERMIN: TERRORISM!!!

Gogol d'Algol

THE SAME DAY, ABOVE THE CITY...

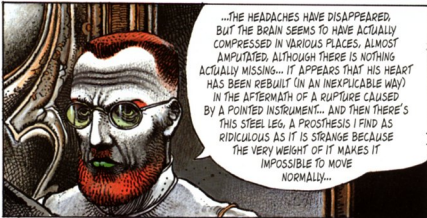
RUE DE
LA PAIX!
I'LL BUY!!!



...IN THE CHAMBERS OF THE ELYSEE
PALACE WHERE THE NEWREVO-L
UTIONARY POWER IS INSTALLED...

SO, WHAT ARE
YOUR CONCLU-
SIONS, COMRADE
DOCTOR?

IN MY EXPERIENCE,
THIS CASE IS WITHOUT
PRECEDENT...



...THE HEADACHES HAVE DISAPPEARED,
BUT THE BRAIN SEEMS TO HAVE ACTUALLY
COMPRESSED IN VARIOUS PLACES, ALMOST
AMPUTATED, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOTHING
ACTUALLY MISSING... IT APPEARS THAT HIS HEART
HAS BEEN REBUILT (IN AN INEXPLICABLE WAY)
IN THE AFTERMATH OF A RUPTURE CAUSED BY
A POINTED INSTRUMENT... AND THEN THERE'S
THIS STEEL LEG, A PROSTHESIS I FIND AS
RIDICULOUS AS IT IS STRANGE BECAUSE
THE VERY WEIGHT OF IT MAKES IT
IMPOSSIBLE TO MOVE
NORMALLY...

BUT THE MOST SERIOUS THING IS THE LOSS OF REASON BECAUSE I DON'T SEE
ANY WAY OF RECOVERING THAT... THE POOR PATIENT SPENDS ALL DAY RECITING
POETRY BY BAUDELAIRE, FLAT ON HIS BACK, STARING INTO SPACE, OR HE JUST
BURSTS INTO LAUGHTER FOR NO REASON...

YEAH... HARD TO CREATE
AN IDEOLOGICAL MODEL
FOR THE PEOPLE...

HA HA
HAHAHA
HA

THERE HE GOES
AGAIN...

ELYSEE



WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? ALL PARIS
LOOKS TO HIM AS A HERO,
A SAVIOR, AND THAT
CAN'T BE DENIED. HE WAS
THE ONE WHO
STARTED IT ALL,
EVEN IF HIS
BEHAVIOR MADE
HIS DEEPER
POLITICAL
ASPIRATIONS
QUESTIONABLE...



QUITE A MESS...

OUR POWER IS STILL TOO
UNSTABLE TO...

LET ME THROUGH! I'M HIS SON, FOR
GOD'S SAKE!

WHAT'S
GOING ON?





A MADMAN WHO...

I AM NIKOPOL, ALCIDE NIKOPOL. ALCIDE NIKOPOL'S SON!

?!!



LISTEN, I KNOW IT MUST SOUND CRAZY THAT HE'S MY FATHER SINCE WE LOOK THE SAME AGE, BUT I CAN EXPLAIN EVERYTHING!

GO AHEAD, THEN...



IN 1993, BEFORE I WAS BORN, HE WAS SENTENCED BY A MILITARY COURT TO 20 YEARS OF HIBERNATION IN SPACE... LIKE MANY REBELS IN HIS DAY HE SERVED AS A GUINEA PIG FOR A REVOLUTIONARY FLYING HIBERNATION VESSEL... SINCE THE WARS THAT FOLLOWED PRETTY MUCH BROUGHT AN END TO SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMS, HE WAS EITHER FORGOTTEN OR GIVEN UP... ALL THIS TIME, OF COURSE, I WAS GROWING UP NORMALLY AND...

INTERESTING... ACCORDING TO SOME SOURCES IN THE MILITIA, THE MYSTERIOUS VEHICLE SHOT DOWN THREE WEEKS AGO OVER THE 2ND SECTOR WAS IN FACT A TURN OF THE CENTURY HIBERNATION MACHINE...

I THINK HE'S COME JUST IN TIME, COMRADES... WHAT DO YOU THINK?

HMMM... THE RESEMBLANCE IS STRIKING...



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

DAD?!

COMRADE NIKOPOL, HERE'S... UH, YOUR SON ALCIDE WHO'S AGREED TO TAKE YOUR PLACE WHILE YOU RECOVER SO THAT UH... YOUR PRESENCE BEFORE THE NEW PARISIAN PEOPLE WILL CONTINUE, IN A WAY...



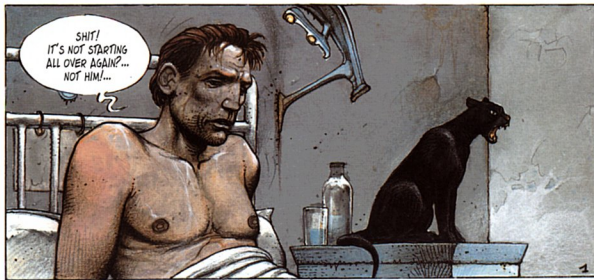
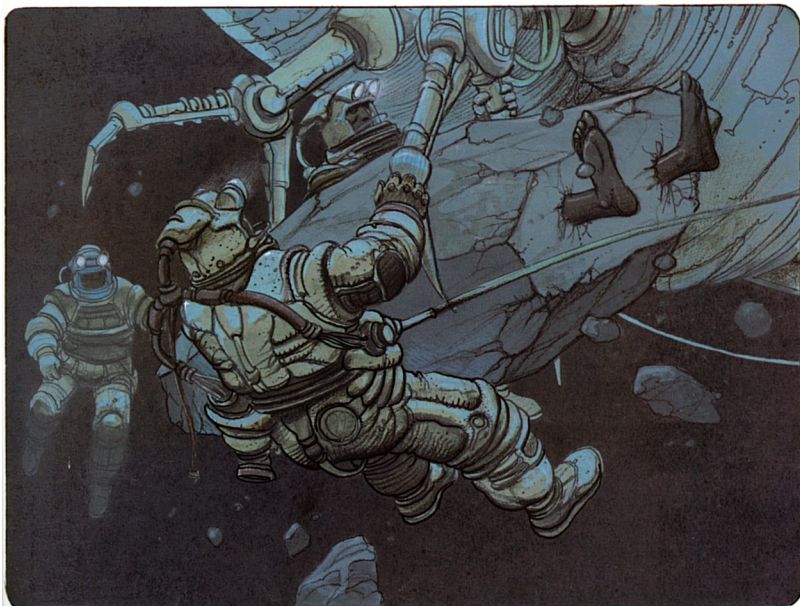
... YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I EXISTED... BUT I REALLY AM YOUR SON... YOURS AND CLEMENTINE MORANIDON'S...
...

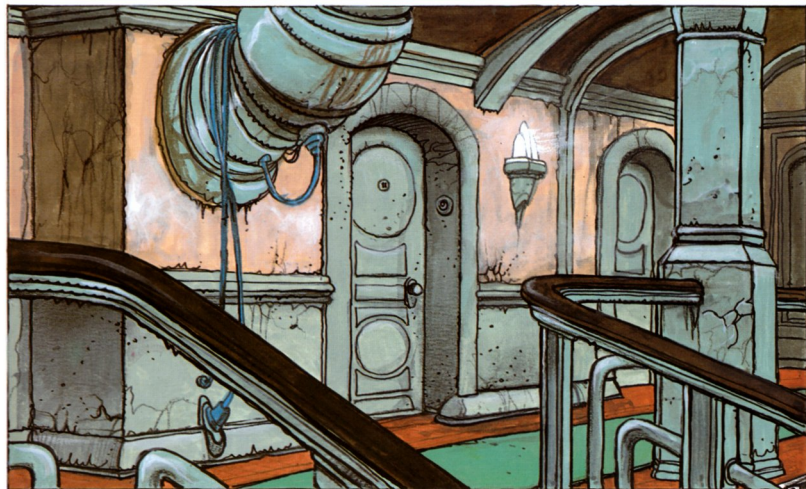
"OH YOU..."


THE NIKOPOL TRILOGY

the woman trap

TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED. ALCIDE NIKOPOL IS STILL IN THE CARE OF THE HOLY SAVIOR PSYCHIATRIC CENTER IN PARIS... THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE CITY IS OF NO INTEREST, AND TODAY'S DATE IS FEBRUARY 22, 2025







LONDON, FEBRUARY 22,
2025...
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JILL BIOSKOP...
TRANSMISSION
SCRIPTWALKER
...




...FOLLOWING UP ON THE STORY...
"FIGHTING BETWEEN AFRO-PAKISTANI
AND ZUBEN UBIAN MINORITIES
IN PARTS OF CHELSEA..."



...OF
CHEL-SEA...



CHAPTER 3...



REPRISAL BY
THE BENINO-TOGOLLO-
GHANIAN COALITION...
KING'S ROAD
SEIZED. NERVE CENTER
OF ZUBEN-

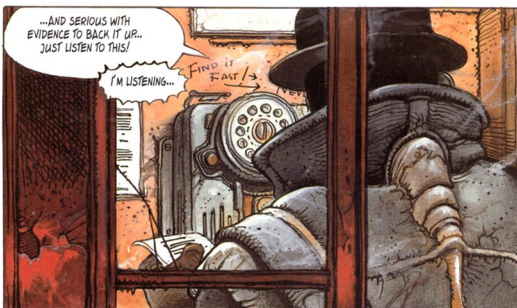
-UBIAN...

RILLING...



YES?

HELLO, JILL!
IT'S ME... I'VE GOT
SOMETHING
NEW...



...AND SERIOUS WITH
EVIDENCE TO BACK IT UP...
JUST LISTEN TO THIS!

I'M LISTENING...

FIND IT
FAST / 3



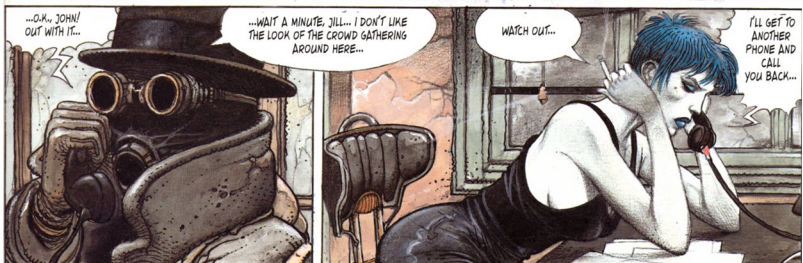
... "THE GUARDIAN", DATED OCTOBER 7, 1993,
PAGE 16... IT'S IN SMALL PRINT AT THE BOTTOM,
BUT GET A LOAD OF IT...

FUCK
JERRY
NKJ



NEWSPAPER ITEM... "FRENCH-STYLE
HOAX OR SCIENCE FICTION?"...
THE FRENCH NEWSPAPER LIBERATION
HAS ANNOUNCED THE UPCOMING
PUBLICATION OF A SERIES
OF STORIES...

DRY



JOHN DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO GET TO ANOTHER PHONE..... DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO HANG UP..... I HEARD THE EXPLOSION... AND HIS SCREAM.... THAT ALPHERAZIAN SCREAM HE LET OUT SOMETIMES WHEN LIGHT HIT HIM, OR THE FIRST TIMES WE MADE LOVE.....



....JOHN DIED ON FEBRUARY 23, 2025....

JOHN...

HE'S DEAD, MISS...
DONT STAY HERE...

...KILLED IN A ZUREM-UBIAN ATTACK, WITH FOUR AFRO-PAKISTANIS, ONE OF WHOM WAS A KEY PLAYER IN THE CONFLICT... I DECIDE HERE AND NOW NOT TO WRITE ANY MORE ABOUT THIS SYSTEMATIC SLAUGHTER... I'D MUCH RATHER TALK ABOUT JOHN... AND I'LL DO JUST THAT... THE SCRIPT-WALKER IS STILL WORKING. JOHN STILL HAS THE PROOF IN HIS HAND.....

I PICK IT UP....

....A STRANGE INDELIBLE
WHITE LIQUID SEEPS FROM
JOHN'S SHREDDED HOOD...
COULD THAT BE HIS BLOOD?...

I HEAD HOME.



BACK AT THE SAVOY I COLLAPSE IN GRIEF. HOW CAN I EXPLAIN WHAT JOHN MEANT TO ME? ...YET I FEEL A REAL NEED TO WRITE... IMMEDIATELY... WITH THE SCRIPT-WALKER, SPREAD OUT OUR CRAZY STORY DEEP INTO THE PAST. EMPTY IT ALL OUT... HEAD AND HEART... AND TO FALL ASLEEP, TAKE H.L.V., JOHN'S DRUG, WHICH WILL MAKE ME FORGET HIM, ERASE HIM ONCE AND FOR ALL.....

IN THE BATHROOM, I FIND THE BOX... H.L.V.... I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT STANDS FOR. NOW I'LL NEVER KNOW. AND I DON'T GIVE A DAMN...



INSIDE ARE RED PILLS AND YELLOW PILLS....

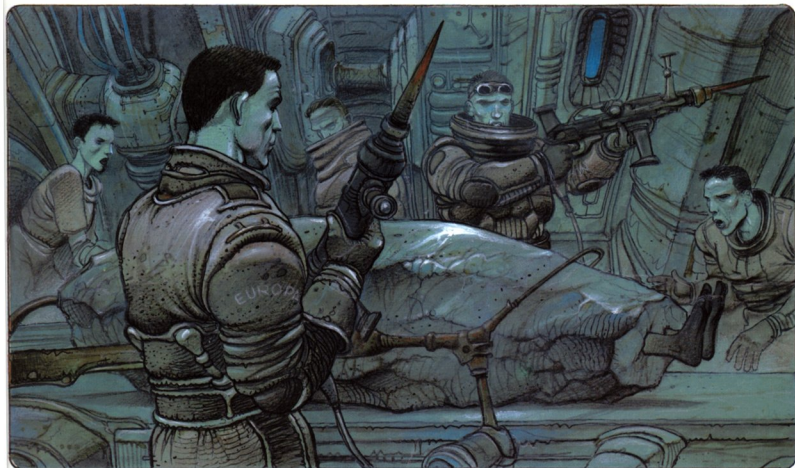
I HESITATE.



...FINALLY I SWALLOW ONE, THEN ANOTHER... BOTH RED... A SPLASH OF WATER AROUND MY EYES TO WIPE AWAY MY BLUE TEARS...



...THEN, NAKED, I SHUT MYSELF UP WITH THE SCRIPT-WALKER IN JOHN'S ROOM... THE DARK ROOM, NOT A TRACE OF LIGHT... I START TO WRITE... ONCE UPON A TIME, JOHN AND I...





LONDON, FEBRUARY 24
CAMDEN TOWN...

SOMETHING
WRONG, JEFF?

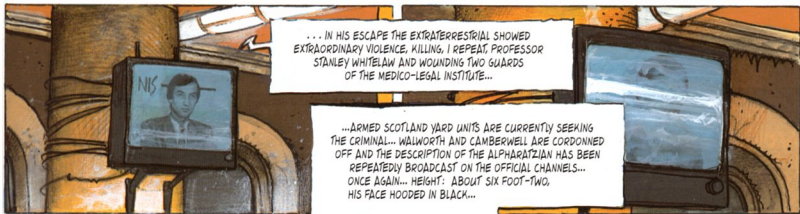
COULD
WELL
BE...

... IT HAPPENED JUST AS PROFESSOR STANLEY WHITELAW
WAS PREPARING TO PERFORM AN AUTOPSY
ON THE ALPHARATZIAN WHO HAD BEEN DECLARED
CLINICALLY DEAD...



... IN HIS ESCAPE THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL SHOWED
EXTRAORDINARY VIOLENCE, KILLING, I REPEAT, PROFESSOR
STANLEY WHITELAW AND WOUNDING TWO GUARDS
OF THE MEDICO-LEGAL INSTITUTE...

...ARMED SCOTLAND YARD UNITS ARE CURRENTLY SEEKING
THE CRIMINAL... WALWORTH AND CAMBERWELL ARE CORDONNED
OFF AND THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ALPHARATZIAN HAS BEEN
REPEATEDLY BROADCAST ON THE OFFICIAL CHANNELS...
ONCE AGAIN... HEIGHT: ABOUT SIX FOOT-TWO,
HIS FACE HOODED IN BLACK...



NO DOUBT ABOUT
IT, IT'S HIM...

WHO?
THE ALPHARATZIAN?
YOU KNOW HIM?

... LISTEN, I'M SORRY ABOUT
OUR DATE TONIGHT...
I'VE GOT TO LEAVE...
IT'S IMPORTANT...

I'LL CALL YOU
TOMORROW...





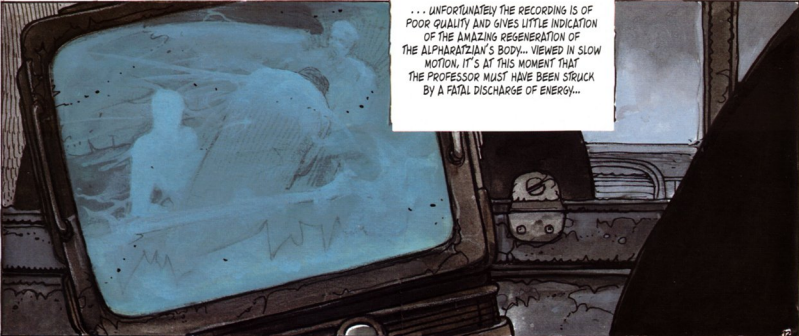
TAXI!



SAVOY HOTEL,
FAST!



... PICTURES OF THE EVENT
FROM ONE OF
THE CAMERAS IN
THE OPERATING ROOM...



... UNFORTUNATELY THE RECORDING IS OF
POOR QUALITY AND GIVES LITTLE INDICATION
OF THE AMAZING REGENERATION OF
THE ALPHARATZIAN'S BODY... VIEWED IN SLOW
MOTION, IT'S AT THIS MOMENT THAT
THE PROFESSOR MUST HAVE BEEN STRUCK
BY A FATAL DISCHARGE OF ENERGY...



...IT'S JEFF, JEFF WYNYATT, WHO WAKES ME 48 HOURS LATER, OUT OF WHAT HE INSULTINGLY CALLS A "DEEP COMA"... . . . JEFF IS A FRIEND, A BLACK-LISTED JOURNALIST, A LONELY, DESTITUTE MAN I ONCE HAD A BRIEF PLING WITH A FEW YEARS AGO (THREE TO BE EXACT), JUST BEFORE I MET JOHN...



...TO BRING ME AROUND, JEFF SPRAYS MY BREASTS WITH ICE COLD WATER...

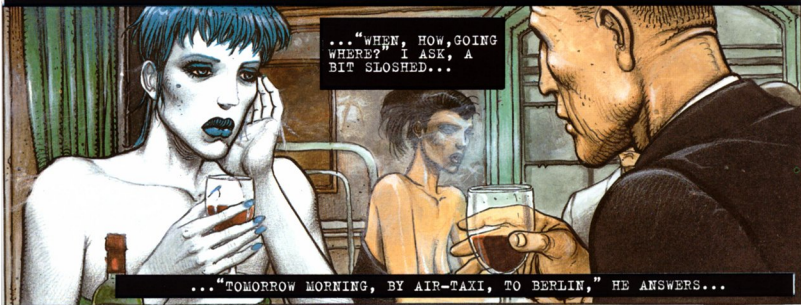


...THEN HE DRAGS ME, STILL STONED, TO THE SAVOY RESTAURANT...OUTRAGEOUSLY EXPENSIVE AND VERY BAD, YET I MANAGE TO STUFF MYSELF...

...DURING DESSERT I ASK HIM:



...WHAT JEFF SUGGESTS IS THAT I LEAVE LONDON... A PRETTY RARE THING THESE DAYS, RESERVED FOR THE KING'S CHOSEN FEW OF WHOM JEFF IS NOT ONE AND ME EVEN LESS...



... "WHEN, HOW, GOING WHERE?" I ASK, A BIT SLOSHED...

... "TOMORROW MORNING, BY AIR-TAXI, TO BERLIN," HE ANSWERS...



... A FRIEND OF MINE, NICK, WILL TAKE YOU THERE... I'VE GOT MONEY FOR YOU AND AN ORDER FOR PERMANENT ASSIGNMENT FROM THE N.I.S. ... IT'S PHONY, BUT IT'LL GET YOU OUT OF LONDON... ONCE YOU'RE IN BERLIN, YOU'LL STAY AT THE MAUER PALAST... IT'S THE ONLY PRIVATE HOTEL IN TOWN... VERY BEAUTIFUL AND VERY EXPENSIVE... YOU'LL LOVE IT...

... I'M COUNTING ON YOU TO COVER THE BERLIN NEWS IN GENERAL BUT ESPECIALLY THE EUROPA 1'S RETURN TO EARTH...

... "EUROPA 1", THE FIRST EUROPEAN INTERPLANETARY SPACE MISSION, LAUNCHED IN 1999 (THE YEAR I WAS BORN)... IT SEEMS THEY'RE EXPECTING IT BACK IN A FEW DAYS AT THE BERLIN-TEGEL/TREPTOW ASTROPORT...



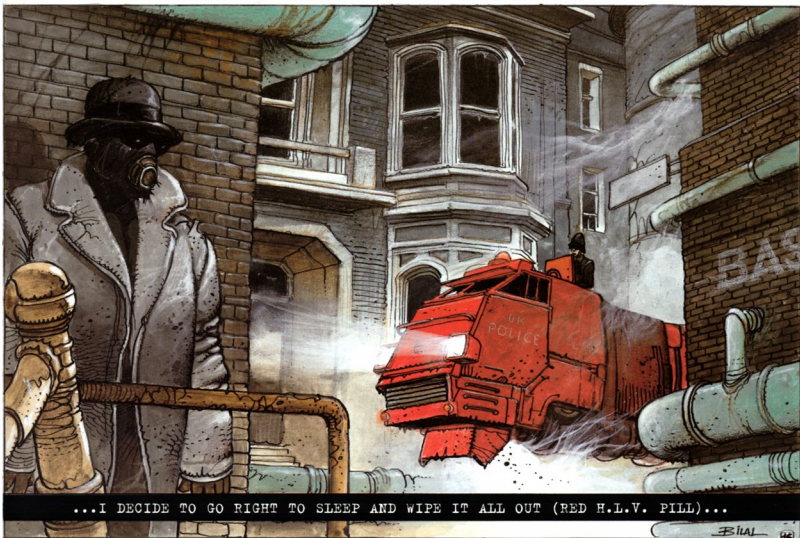
...AS FOR ME, I'LL BE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO SELL YOUR STORIES HERE... AND IN A WHILE, WHO KNOWS, MAYBE I'LL BE ABLE TO JOIN YOU IN BERLIN...

...JEFF NEVER SHOULD HAVE UTTERED THAT LAST SENTENCE...

...JUST AS HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME TO MY ROOM THAT NIGHT...



IT'S CRAZY HOW MUCH BLOOD HE LOSES ONCE I'VE STABBED HIM THROUGH THE HEART WITH THE SCRIPT-WALKER'S DETACHABLE ANTENNA... . FUNNY THING IS IT'S HARDER TO GET ALL THE BLOOD OFF MY HANDS AND BODY THAN IT IS GETTING RID OF HIS BODY...



...I DECIDE TO GO RIGHT TO SLEEP AND WIPE IT ALL OUT (RED H.L.V. PILL)...

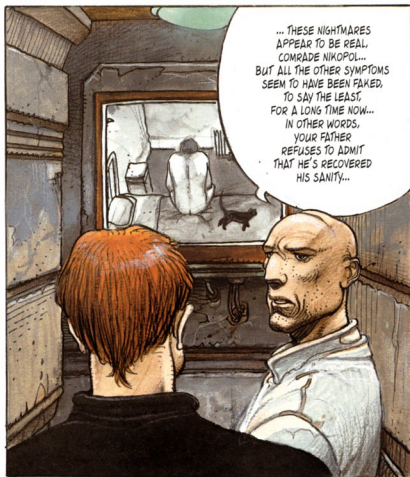


THAT NIGHT
IN PARIS...

FUCKING
FLYING SHIT...



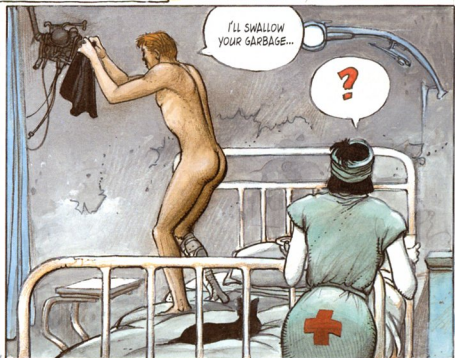
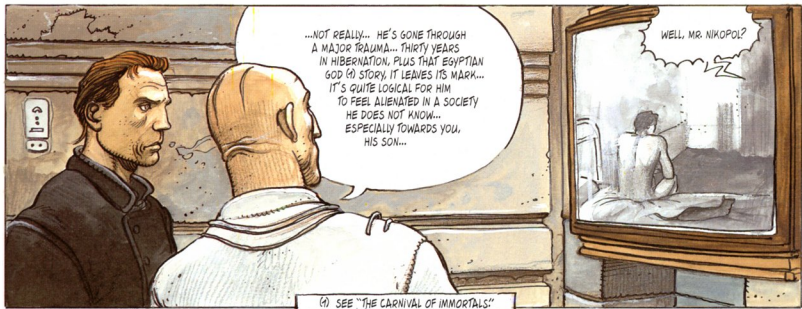
HE'S COMING.
I CAN FEEL
IT...



... THESE NIGHTMARES
APPEAR TO BE REAL,
COMRADE NIKOPOL...
BUT ALL THE OTHER SYMPTOMS
SEEM TO HAVE BEEN FAMED,
TO SAY THE LEAST,
FOR A LONG TIME NOW...
IN OTHER WORDS,
YOUR FATHER
REFUSES TO ADMIT
THAT HE'S RECOVERED
HIS SANITY...



THAT'S
RIDICULOUS...



THE NEXT DAY, NICK, THE FRIEND JEFF TOLD ME ABOUT, IS WAITING FOR ME IN THE LOBBY.



...HE'S VERY NERVOUS... BECAUSE OF THE COPS...





...THE GUY ISN'T VERY TALKATIVE... WHICH IS JUST AS WELL... THE EFFECTS OF H.L.V. ON ME AREN'T EXACTLY FLATTERING... ESPECIALLY PHYSICALLY... I HOPE I WON'T THROW UP DURING THE TRIP...



...BUT FROM A MEMORY STANDPOINT, IT'S BLOODY EFFECTIVE ...THE CRIME COMMITTED THAT NIGHT FADES QUICKLY, COLDLY, IN MY HEAD... JEFF GETS PUT THROUGH THE BUFFING PROCESS AND COMES OUT ERASED... JUST LIKE JOHN...



...FUNNY, THE FACT THAT AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY LIFE (JOHN IN PARTICULAR) HAS BEEN CUT OUT LEAVES ME TOTALLY NUMB... MAYBE THIS STRANGE FEELING THAT I'M BEING SUCKED FORWARD HAS FILLED UP THE VOID... SUCKED INTO THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE... BERLIN...



HAPPY TO LEAVE?

HEY, NICK CAN SPEAK...

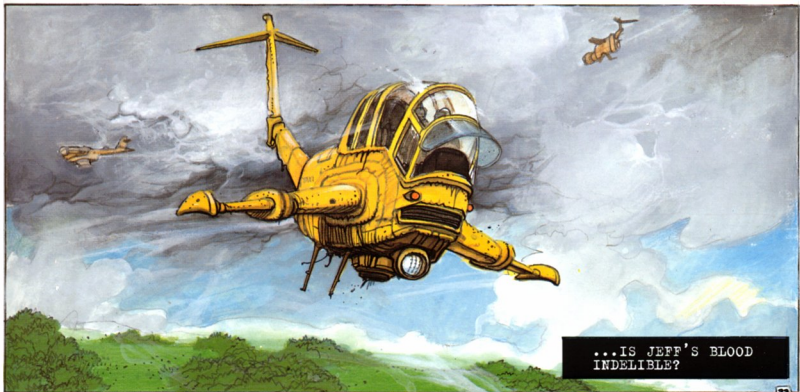
I DON'T ANSWER OR HARDLY... THE FACT THAT I'M LEAVING LONDON KNOWING I'LL NEVER BE BACK DOESN'T AFFECT ME ONE LITTLE BIT... THE CITY'S ALREADY FAR BEHIND... IN RETROSPECT IT SEEMS THAT I HARDLY NOTICED THE COLOR OF THE THAMES AS WE FLEW OVER THE RIVER AT TOWER BRIDGE...



...IT WAS RED...

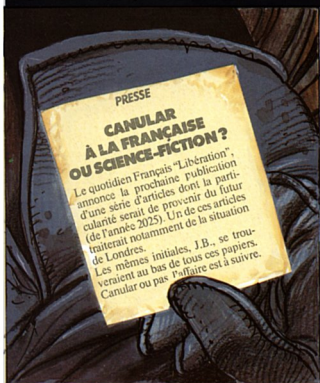


...RED LIKE THE SPOT WHICH HAS JUST APPEARED IN THE PALM OF MY RIGHT HAND...



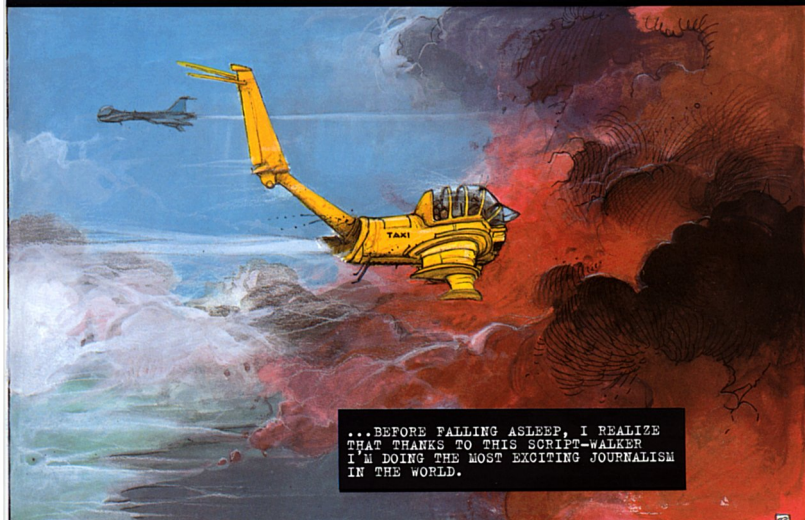
...IS JEFF'S BLOOD INDELIBLE?

...I QUICKLY SLIP ON A GLOVE TO MAKE IT GO AWAY ...IN MY POCKET I STUMBLE ACROSS THE PRESS CLIPPING JOHN HAD BEEN READING TO ME BEFORE HE DIED... WHAT I DISCOVERED IS THE CRUX OF EVERYTHING...



...I CLOSE MY EYES,
NOTHING BOTHERS ME...

...THE PLANE IS ALREADY SOMEWHERE OVER THE CHANNEL... ABOUT TO FLY INTO A HUGE CLOUD MASS (RED)...I THINK OF WHAT MY READERS FROM 1993 MIGHT LOOK LIKE... HEY, WHY 1993 ANYWAY?... AND WHY A FRENCH NEWSPAPER? ...THE PROGRAMMING CHIP MUST HAVE GONE OFF ITS ROCKER... ANYWAY I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE DATE... THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT IT WORKS...



...BEFORE FALLING ASLEEP, I REALIZE
THAT THANKS TO THIS SCRIPT-WALKER
I'M DOING THE MOST EXCITING JOURNALISM
IN THE WORLD.

... MEANWHILE... FAR AWAY...
NEAR MARS...



YOU'RE SURE
HE WAS THERE?

ABSOLUTELY
SURE!

BAD NEWS... HORUS HAS DISAPPEARED... FOR AT LEAST A FRACTION OF ETERNITY...
PROBABLY DURING A COLLISION WITH A FIELD OF METEORITES...



SO, ARE WE
GOING BACK?

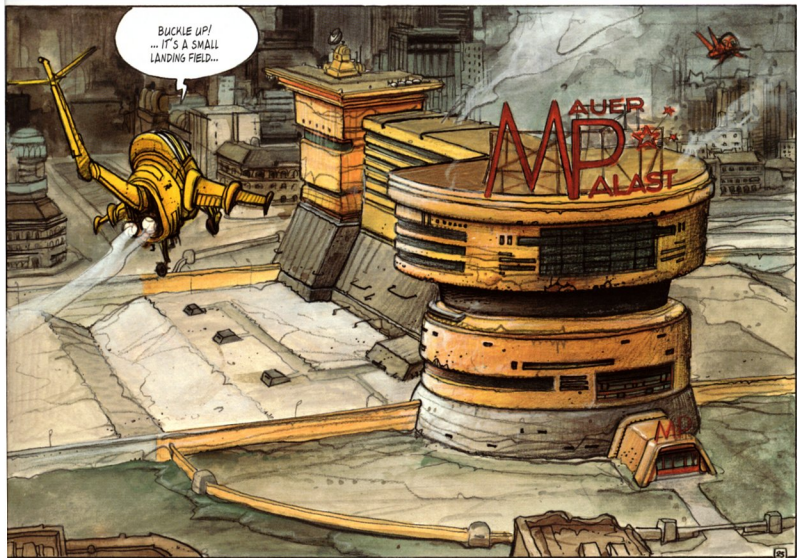
YES,
ANUBAST,
WE'RE TURNING
BACK TO
EARTH!



NEAT!



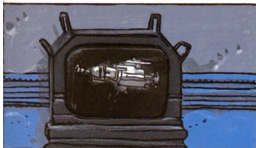
...AT THE END OF THE GREAT RED CLOUD TUNNEL AND AFTER SEVEN HOURS IN FLIGHT, THE CITY OF BERLIN FINALLY APPEARS BELOW, THE ONLY AUTONOMOUS ENCLAVE IN THE HEART OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMPIRE...





...SAYING GOODBYE TO NICK, I FEEL REALLY UNEASY... THE WAY HE SHAKES MY HAND... AND HIS ICY STARE FOLLOWS ME OUT OF SIGHT... A PERVERSE, HORRIBLY PENETRATING STARE... AIMED STRAIGHT AT THE SMALL OF MY BACK...

I SHUT MYSELF IN MY ROOM... I TAKE A SHOWER AND ORDER SOME FOOD...



IT WOULD APPEAR THAT SOMETHING VERY SERIOUS IS ABOUT TO TARNISH THE RETURN OF EUROPA 1 TO EARTH... THE BERLIN ASTROPORT AUTHORITIES REFUSE FOR THE MOMENT TO MAKE ANY STATEMENT BUT DRACONIAN SECURITY MEASURES ARE NOW IN PLACE... THE LANDING, I REPEAT IS SCHEDULED IN LESS THAN 47 HOURS...



...IT'S NIGHT IN BERLIN... I'M READING BACK EVERYTHING I TYPED INTO THE SCRIPT-WALKER IN THE ORDER I WROTE IT... "FIGHTING AMONG THE MINORITIES IN LONDON" FIRST... KIND OF A DRAG... THEN THE STUFF ON JOHN... PRETTY WEIRD... ESPECIALLY IN HINDSIGHT... THE SEX MAKES ME SMILE... AS FOR THE REST, MY FEELINGS AND CONFESSING MY CRIME, I DON'T GIVE THIS A THOUGHT... TOMORROW, I'LL START WITH A SERIOUS REPORT ON THE MAUER PALAST AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD...



... I CAN'T GET TO SLEEP...

...AND IT'S JUST AS WELL... THAT BASTARD NICK, SLIMY, DIRTY SNAKE THAT HE IS, MANAGES TO CRAWL UNDER MY SHEETS IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT...



...UP AGAINST MY SKIN...



THE CREEP!

...I WIPE OFF HIS BLOOD (THE COLOR OF THE THAMES) AND DRAG HIS BODY OVER TO THE WINDOW...



...I SHOVE IT OUT...

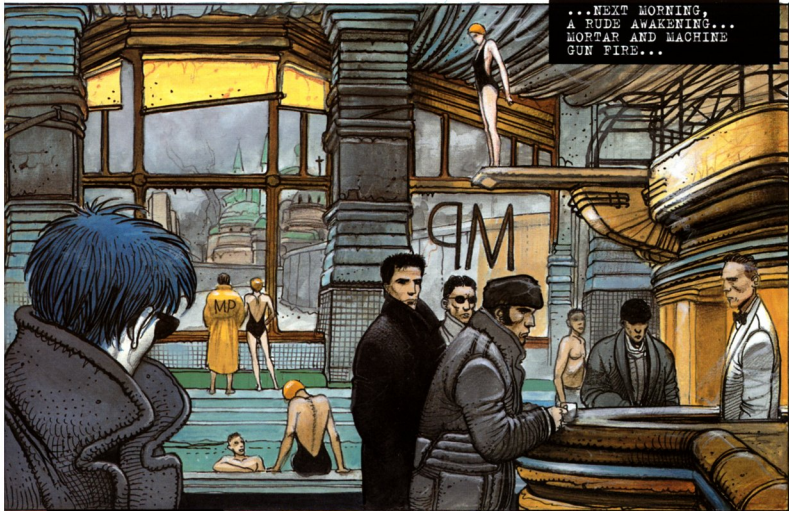


...NOT A TRACE ANYWHERE...

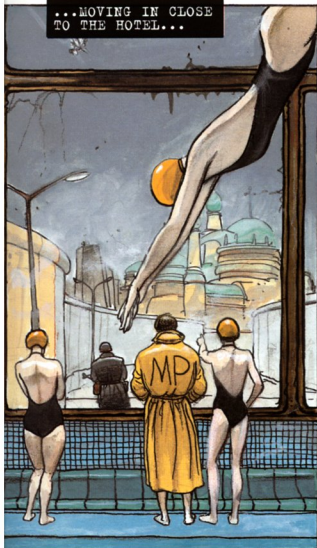


...NOT EVEN IN MY HEAD...

...NEXT MORNING,
A RUDE AWAKENING...
MORTAR AND MACHINE
GUN FIRE...



...MOVING IN CLOSE
TO THE HOTEL...



CAN I BUY YOU A COFFEE?



...THE ONE TRYING TO PICK ME UP SAYS HIS NAME
IS IVAN VABEK, A YUGOSLOVAKIAN REPORTER...

... JILL BIOSKOP?
BIOSKOP MEANS "MOVIE"
IN MY LANGUAGE...
I DON'T KNOW WHY,
BUT IT FITS YOU LIKE
A GLOVE...

"OH?!"
I LET OUT
...



...SPEAKING OF GLOVES,
IT WAS GOOD I CHANGED
MINE... RED ONES SEEM
TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM...



...WHILE THE COFFEE BURNS DOWN MY THROAT, I CAN'T HELP
TOILING WITH THE IDEA... WOULD I BE UP TO KILLING
THIS GUY LIKE I DID THE OTHER TWO...

...MY INDECISION EXCITES ME
MORE AS I FIND MYSELF
PHYSICALLY ATTRACTED TO HIM...



...ALL I CAN REMEMBER ABOUT THE LINE HE FEEDS ME ABOUT EUROPA I'S LANDING IS HIS PLAN
TO GET INTO THE CONTROL TOWER OF THE ASTROPORT THAT NIGHT... AND THAT HE ASKS ME
OUT TO DINNER THE FOLLOWING NIGHT...



...I ACCEPT... AS A ROCKET
EXPLODES UP AGAINST THE HOTEL...

WHAT'S ALL THAT
SHOOTING OUT
THERE?

THAT'S THE CRAZIEST KIND OF
FIGHTING I'VE EVER SEEN...
EVERY REPORTER SHOULD COVER IT
AT LEAST ONCE... THE BERLINERS CALL IT
"BIERKRIEG"... EGG WAR... IF YOU'RE
INTERESTED, I CAN GET YOU
A FRONT ROW SEAT...

...OF COURSE I'M INTERESTED... I LEAVE THE YUGO AND HOTEL AT ONCE...

WATCH OUT... THE ISLAMO-CHRISTIANS ARE GOING HAYWIRE...

...DO YOU HAVE A PASS?

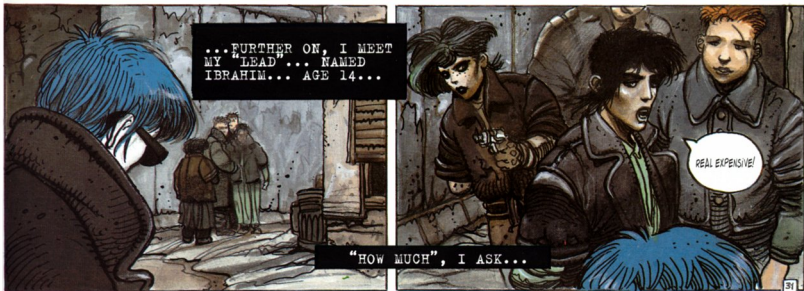
...PRESS CARD...



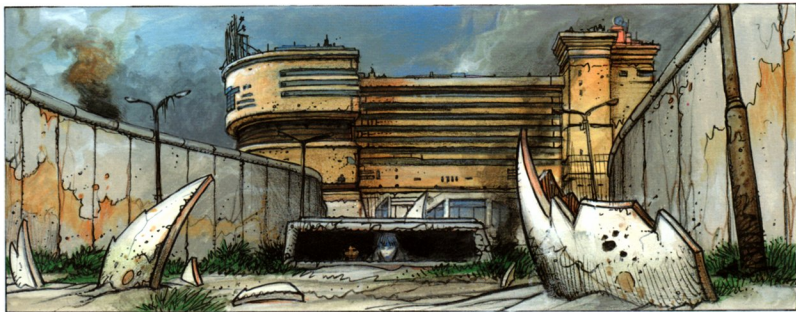
...FURTHER ON, I MEET MY "LEAD"... NAMED IBRAHIM... AGE 14...

REAL EXPENSIVE!

"HOW MUCH", I ASK...



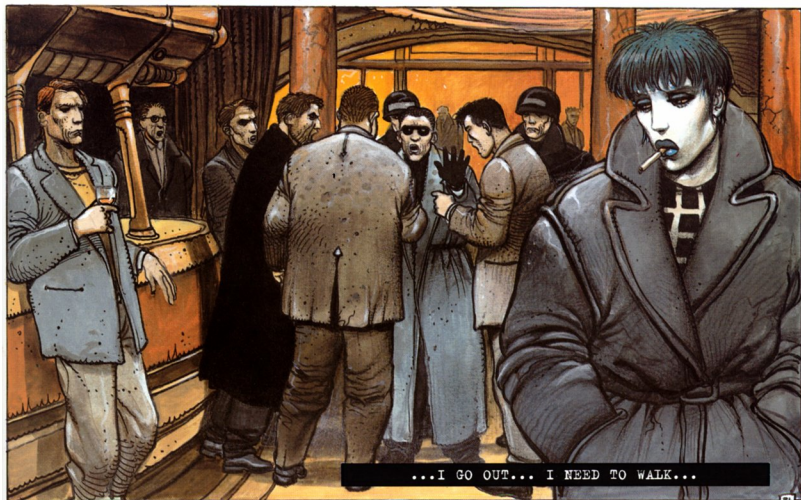




...THAT EVENING, BACK IN MY ROOM I DO A PIECE ON THE "BIERKRIEG". IT IS IN FACT THE CRAZIEST, MOST GROTESQUE KIND OF FIGHTING I'VE EVER SEEN... I THINK OF IBRAHIM... HE'S SCARY, BUT I WON'T FORGET HIM...

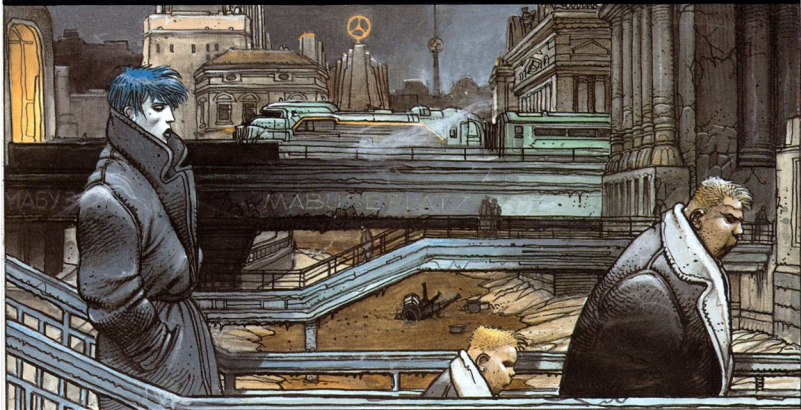


...THE INDELIBLE RED OF NICK'S BLOOD (MIXED WITH JEFF'S?) IS SPREADING OVER MY HAND... IT'S A DRAG... HAVE TO GET ANOTHER GLOVE... A LONGER ONE... AT THE BAR I LEARN THAT THE ASTROPORT IS SEALED AND OFF-LIMITS TO THE PRESS... "SECURITY MEASURE" SAYS A SPOKESMAN. THE REPORTERS RAISE HELL...



...I GO OUT... I NEED TO WALK...

...ANYHOW, STORIES ABOUT ROCKETS HAVE ALWAYS BORED ME STIFF... AND AS FAR AS EUROPA I GOES, I COULD GIVE A SHIT...



LATER THAT NIGHT, AN EAR SPLITTING ROAR, ALMOST UNBEARABLE, RIPS THROUGH BERLIN'S NIGHT SKY AND GIVES ME A CHANCE TO SCREAM MY LUNGS OUT FOR A FEW SECONDS... FROM DEEP INSIDE ME AND LEAVING ME FEELING REALLY GOOD AFTERWARDS...



...THE ROAR DIES DOWN, THEN SILENCE... EUROPA I HAS JUST LANDED AT TEGEL/TREPTOW... I THINK OF IVAN VABEK WHO MUST HAVE MADE IT INSIDE... I TELL MYSELF IF HE COMES OUT WITH A SCOOP, I'LL KNOW HOW TO MAKE HIM TALK...



WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?

...ALL DEAD... SHE'S THE ONLY SURVIVOR...

CAN YOU HEAR ME?



ET LES AUTRES ?

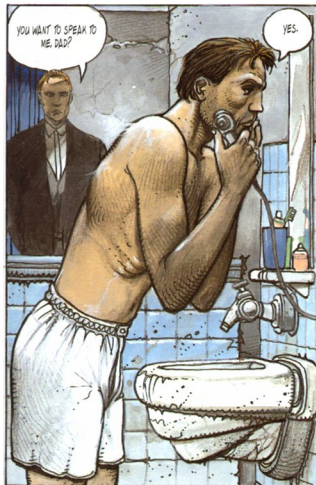
...TOUS MORTS... C'EST LA SEULE SURVIVANTE...

EST-CE QUE VOUS M'ENTENDEZ ?



... WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS? ...ALL DEAD... SHE'S THE ONLY SURVIVOR... CAN YOU HEAR ME?





...I HARDLY EVER DO MY HAIR OR PUT ON REAL LIPSTICK... BUT TONIGHT I WANT TO...
I'M ALSO STARVING...



...FORTUNATELY IVAN VABEK IS
A PUNCTUAL GUY...

...BE THERE
IN A MINUTE,
IVAN...

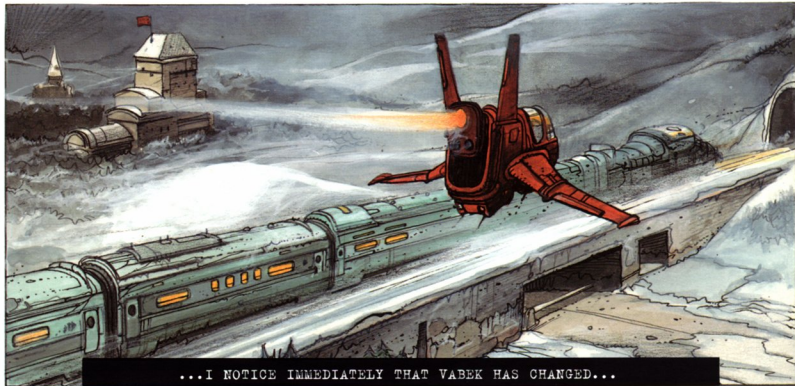
...PUNCTUAL
BUT WEIRD...



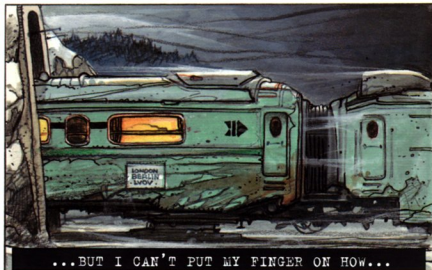
THERE...

...IT'S TIME TO PUT YOU TO THE TEST, VABEK.
ALTHOUGH YOU SEEM ESPECIALLY NERVOUS TO ME...
I HOPE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO BEAR MY PRESENCE INSIDE
YOUR BODY AND THE INEVITABLE CEREBRAL PRESSURE
THAT COMES WITH IT...





...I NOTICE IMMEDIATELY THAT VABEK HAS CHANGED...



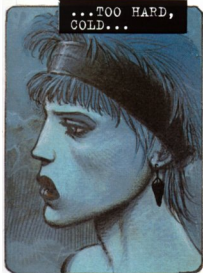
...BUT I CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON HOW...





...IF THE GENTLEMAN WOULD CARE TO TASTE...

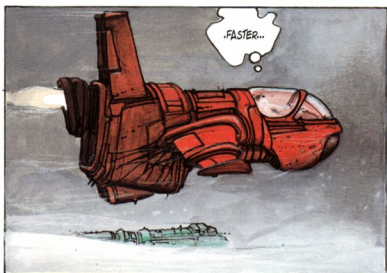
...HIS EYES MAYBE...



...TOO HARD, GOLD...



FASTER...



FASTER...



...CE VIN EST BOUCHONNE!
...

...HIS VOICE TOO...

...HOARSER...
MORE DISTANT...

...THIS WINE IS
CORKED...

...THE FOOD IS AWFUL THAT NIGHT. AND WE HARDLY SPEAK... HE SAYS NOTHING ABOUT EUROPA I. DEAD END... AFTER THE FIRST COURSE HE STARTS TO SHAKE... HE LEAVES THE TABLE THREE TIMES, KNOCKS OVER HIS GLASS TWICE, AND SMASHES HIS PLATE ONCE WHEN HE CUT HIS MEAT TOO HARD...



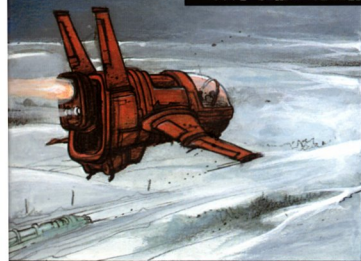
...LATER, HIS NOSE EVEN STARTS TO BLEED...

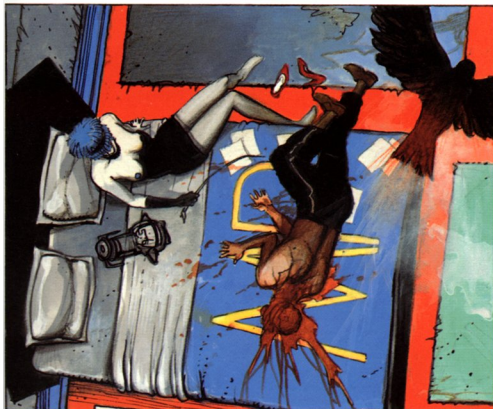
...HE LOSES HIS BALANCE IN MY ROOM WHILE OPENING THE CHAMPAGNE...



...AND THEN, I REALIZE, HIS MIND...

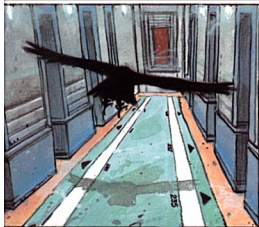
...I START GETTING SCARED...





...WHAT HAPPENS THAT NIGHT IS COMPLETELY HORRIFYING... I NEED TO WRITE ABOUT IT... FOR MY READERS IN 1993... I RUN TO LOCK MYSELF INTO THE BATHROOM WITH THE SCRIPT-WALKER, TO GET AWAY FROM THE WAVES OF THE THAMES STAINING MY BED... I START TO WRITE... FIRST THE HEADLINE: "HORROR AT THE MAUER PALAST"...

...THE THREE MEN I HAVE KILLED ARE NAMED JEFF, NICK AND IVAN. THESE THREE MEN...



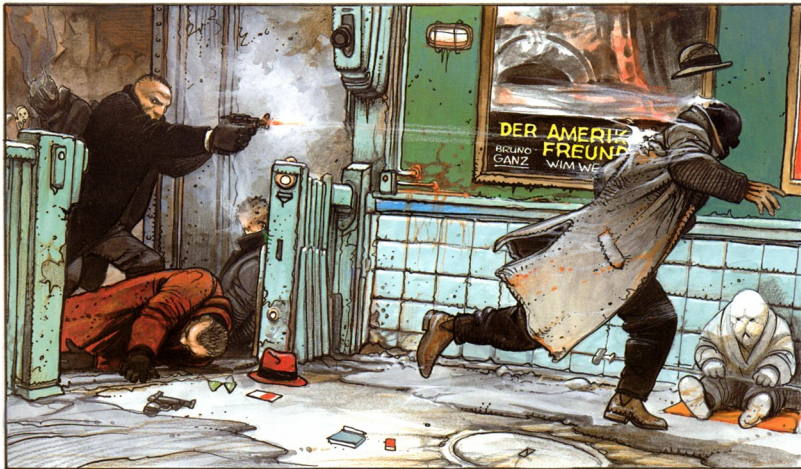
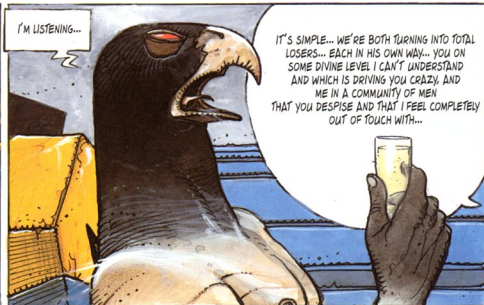
THESE THREE MEN ARE NAMED JEFF NICK AND IVAN AND THEIR NAMES ARE JEFF NICK AND IVAN THE FIR ST JEFF THE SECON NICK THE LAST IVAN THEY RE NICK JEFF AND IVAN JECK NIFF AND IVAN... JEN NIVE AND IVAF JIVE NECK AN IFFAN JEFF NICK N IV

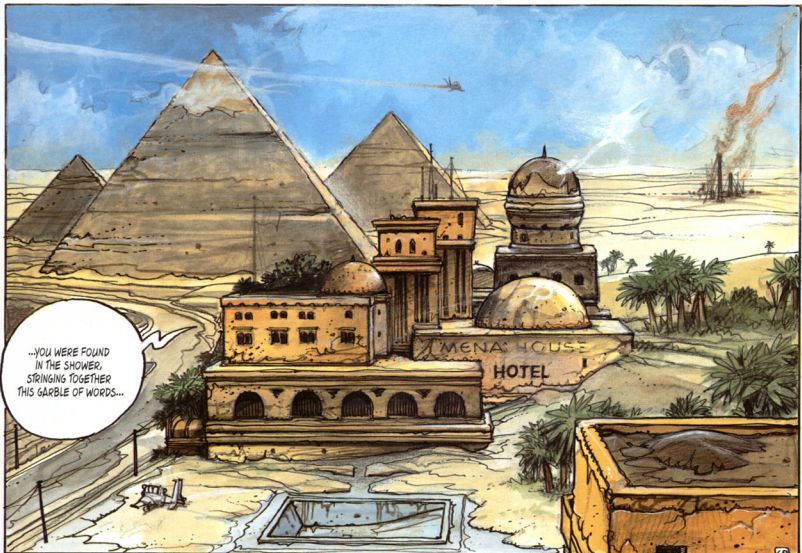
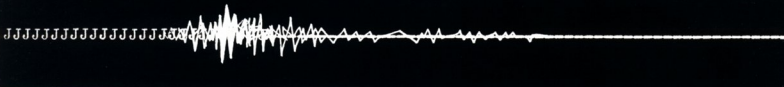
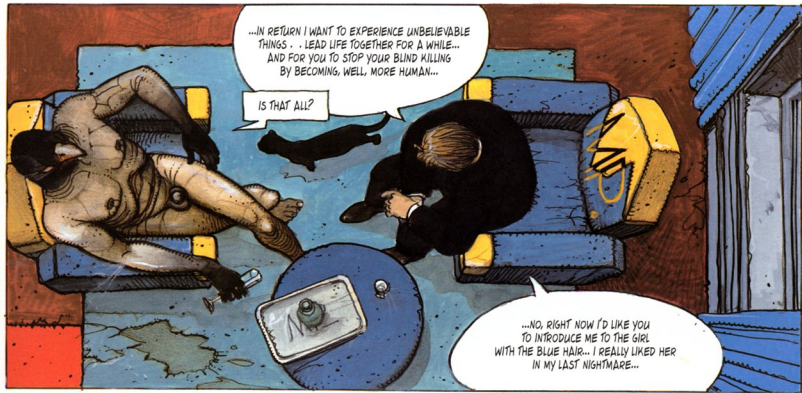


... JEFF NICK AND IVAN... JEFF NICK AND IVAN...
JEFFNICKANDIVANJEFFCNIIANDIVANJIFFNECKANDIVA-
JENKFNLUCKTANJEFFNICKEFF











...YOUR HANDS WERE SCRUBBING THAT FABULOUS WHITE BODY OF YOURS OVER AND OVER... YOUR TYPEWRITER WAS ALL JAMMED UP AND STILL SMOKING... I THINK THAT IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT THAT I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU... HORUS WAS STUMPED AND I WAS BEWILDERED...



...THAT'S WHEN THIS GUY CAME IN...
OR RATHER, APPEARED, WHO KNOWS HOW...
HIS FACE WAS ALL COVERED WITH BLACK GAUZE...
THERE WAS SOMETHING TREMENDOUSLY POWERFUL
ABOUT HIM... POWERFUL BUT PEACEFUL...
HE SAID NOTHING... NO ONE SAID ANYTHING...
NOT EVEN HORUS...


...HE WENT RIGHT TO THE PILLS AND BEGAN COUNTING THEM... NINE YELLOW ONES AND TWO REDS... HE TOOK FOUR OF THEM (INCLUDING TWO RED ONES)... JUST MUTTERING IN A HOLLOW, ECHOING VOICE:





WRONG DOSAGE,
YOU LITTLE FOOL...




...THEN HE TOOK
YOU OUT OF
SHOWER AND
MADE YOU SWALLOW
THE SEVEN YELLOW
ONES THAT REMAINED...

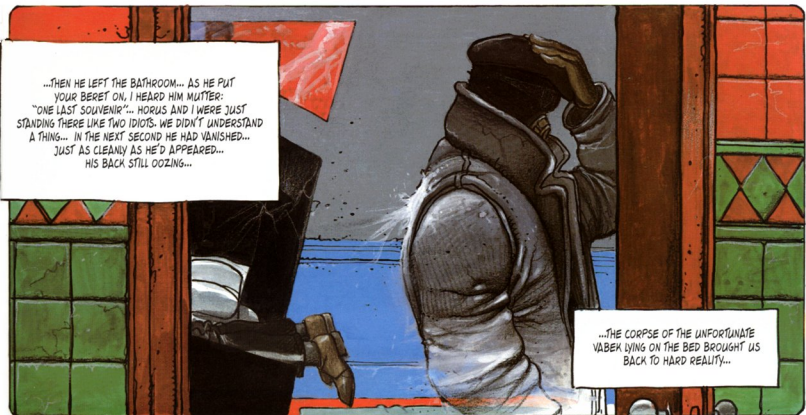


... THEN HE PUT YOU CAREFULLY INTO
THE BATHTUB... I NOTICED THE BULLET
HOLES RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS BACK...
IT WAS BLEEDING... ALL WHITE...



...AFTER KISSING YOU THROUGH THAT WEIRD MASK OF HIS, HE TOOK TWO OF THOSE
PILLS HIMSELF (ONE OF EACH COLOR), AND SAID: "THE TWO LEFT OVER ARE MINE...
SHE MIGHT NEED THEM SOME DAY... FOR ANOTHER STORY"





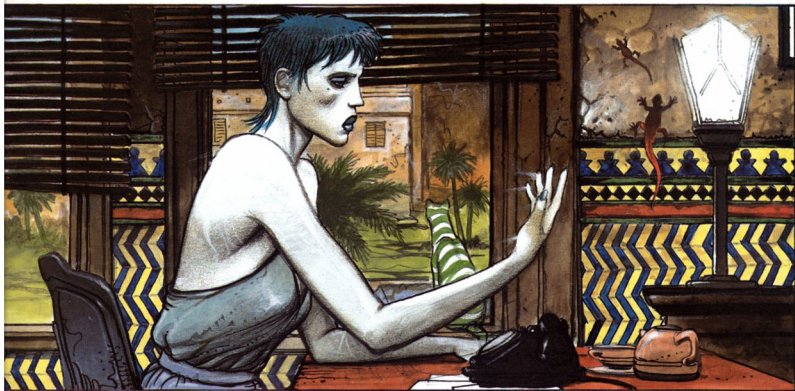
...THEN HE LEFT THE BATHROOM... AS HE PUT YOUR BERET ON, I HEARD HIM MUTTER: "ONE LAST SOUVENIR"... HORUS AND I WERE JUST STANDING THERE LIKE TWO IDIOTS. WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND A THING... IN THE NEXT SECOND HE HAD VANISHED... JUST AS CLEANLY AS HE'D APPEARED... HIS BACK STILL OZZING...

...THE CORPSE OF THE UNFORTUNATE VABEK LYING ON THE BED BROUGHT US BACK TO HARD REALITY...

THEN THINGS STARTED HAPPENING AT A HELLISH PACE, BECAUSE WE HAD TO GET AWAY SOONER THAN WE'D PLANNED DUE TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE PYRAMID OVER BERLIN... YOU WERE IN A DEEP SLEEP WHEN WE LOADED YOUR BODY INTO AN AIRTAXI WE'D HAD A HARD TIME GETTING AND THEN SPLIT... DUE SOUTH... HORUS WASN'T REALLY SURPRISED TO SEE HIS OWN PEOPLE HOT ON HIS TRAIL AND PILOTED LIKE A GOD... GOGOL HAD GOTTEN BACK HIS GREEN AND WHITE STRIPES AND WAS OVERJOYED TO LEAVE EUROPE WHERE THAT EX-TERRORIST HEAD OF HIS STILL HAD A PRICE ON IT... AND ME, ALDICE NIKOPOL SENIOR (I'LL EXPLAIN THAT SOMEDAY...), I FOUND THE ADVENTURE QUITE THRILLING, AS I PATIENTLY WAITED FOR YOU TO WAKE...



YOU WANTED TO EXPERIENCE THE UNBELIEVABLE, NIKOPOL! AND YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT!!!



The day after I woke up -
March 6, 2025-

CAIRO - I'm starting a diary...

...Because I need to write even more now...

Nikopol and Henu are beside a swimming pool
with no water... It's hot... I just read a copy of what
I wrote on the Script-Walker and felt totally detached...

Dead people, "Thames colored" blood (!!!!)...

Was I out of my mind? Anyway, there isn't
a trace of anything on my hands or body, nothing...
I pick up the phone...





HELLO? JEFF WYNATT?...



SPEAKING... WHO IS THIS?... HELLO!...

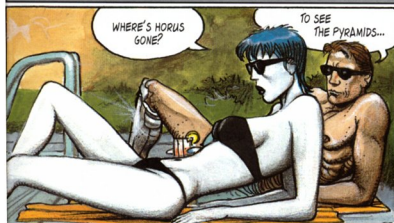


HELLO?



On that same March 6, 2025, I burn those sad words, proof of twelve days of what seemed like a never-ending, bloody nightmare... Except for Ivan Vabek, killed by Horus (to save me, says he), the others (Jeff and Nick) were dead only in my own mind... And then there's John, much more painful... As I burn the story of our affair, I can feel my stomach sinking, contracting into an open pit, like a gaping wound... But the H.L.V. has cut most of this out of my memory, so I'll probably never realize the full extent of the disastrous misunderstanding over his death... May he live happily ever after without me (he must be immortal), just as I hope to without him...

March 7, 2025 - I've got the feeling I'm starting everything at square one... it's very hot and there's still no water in the pool...



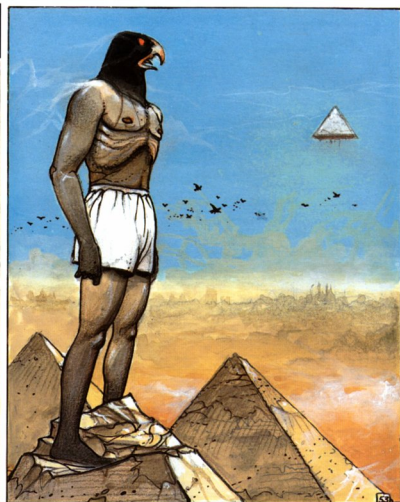
WHERE'S HORUS GONE?

TO SEE THE PYRAMIDS...

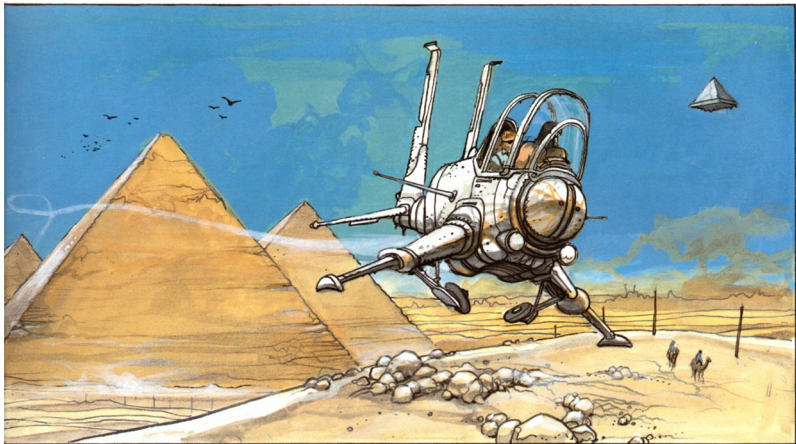


I'M GETTING INTO THE SHADE... MY STEEL LEG IS HEATING UP...

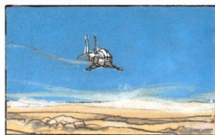
MY SKIN TOO... I'M COMING WITH YOU...



Our sudden departure, due to the arrival of the flying pyramid over Cairo, was like a game I didn't mind playing at all... That way I didn't have time to ask myself too many questions about how my strange relationship with the Nikopol/Horus pair came about, and even now I don't really know much about it.



As far as my interest in a new love affair is concerned, it would almost scare me, if somewhere in the bottom of one of my pockets there weren't those two little pills, especially the yellow one with its spectacular mind-scouring effect... Already I'm almost happy, it's high noon and we're heading due south, the sun's high, the sand wide open... Farther away still from the cold cities with their wounds and blue tears...



THE NIKOPOL TRILOGY

equator cold

"Qbpeb ? I pqn't give a cbad arqut qbpeb. I'm gqing tq jive,
jqve, anp pie in cqmdjete anp utteb chaqz !"

A. Nikopol (Equator City 2034)

-YOU DON'T SERIOUSLY EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT YOU'RE HIS SON?! HIS TWIN BROTHER MAYBE, BUT NOT HIS SON!...
-OKAY, I WON'T PUSH IT. YOU'RE RIGHT, WE'RE THE SAME AGE, WE'RE TWINS...



-THAT I CAN SWALLOW!



...ANYWAY, HERE IT IS... THE LAST SCENE I SHOT WITH HIM...

...I LIKE THIS SHOT. NICE AND TIGHT.

—COULD HE ACT, AT LEAST?



—NOT REALLY... HE COMES OFF A BIT FALSE HERE. IT WASN'T HIS THING, ACTING. ON THE OTHER HAND HE HAD A TERRIFIC EYE FOR IMAGE, AND FOR FRAMING. EVEN DIRECTING, SOMETIMES.
—AND THE GIRL... IS THAT...?
—YEAH, THAT'S HER. JILL BIOSKOP ANYTHING ON A FILM SET, SHE WAS INTO IT. AND SHE WASN'T A BAD ACTRESS EITHER. NOT BAD AT ALL... I REALLY LIKED HER.

MY PROBLEM IS, THIS FILM IS GOING TO END UP LIKE ALL THE REST:
STILL IN DAILIES, TWO-THIRDS SHOT... I'VE GIVEN UP ON EVER GETTING ONE IN THE CAN.



DO YOU REALIZE THAT IN OVER 40 YEARS OF PRODUCING AND DIRECTING, I HAVE NEVER ACTUALLY FINISHED A SINGLE FILM?
THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN A WAR, A FAMINE, AN ECONOMIC CRISIS, THE SUICIDE OF AN ACTRESS, OR A SHORTAGE OF FILMSTOCK TO MESS EVERYTHING UP.
THERE! LOOK! RAN OUT OF COLOR FILM ON THIS ONE, SO I HAD TO FINISH THE SCENE IN BLACK AND WHITE... AND SHORTLY AFTER THAT, NIKOPOL
DITCHED US. INTO THIN AIR WITH THAT GREEN-STRIPED CAT OF HIS. NEVER HEARD FROM HIM SINCE. THE FILM WAS OF COURSE ABORTED...



-AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHERE HE COULD HAVE GONE?
-NONE AT ALL. HE WAS A STRANGE MAN, YOUR...UH, TWIN BROTHER. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE HE WAS DANGEROUSLY UNPREDICTABLE.
FOR TWO YEARS HE WAS HERE, LIVING AND WORKING WITH JILL, BUT I NEVER GOT EVEN A GLIMPSE OF WHAT HE KEPT INSIDE THAT HEAD
OF HIS... TERRIBLE THINGS, I EXPECT. WILD STORMS... HE COULD GET VERY VIOLENT, BUT HE WAS ALSO VERY SCARED...
SCARED OF ANYTHING... OF SHADOWS, OF A DARK ROOM, OF A FLYING PYRAMID...
-A WHAT?
-YOU HEARD ME RIGHT. A FLYING PYRAMID.





I'M CONVINCED THAT'S WHAT FINALLY MADE HIM SNAP A CRAFT STRAIGHT OUT OF ANCIENT EGYPT... IT HOVERED ABOVE THE STUDIO FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS...



I TOOK SOME PHOTOS...



WEIRD, ISN'T IT?

YEAH...



NATURALLY, JILL WAS DEEPLY AFFECTED BY THE WHOLE AFFAIR...

SHE WAS VERY MUCH IN LOVE AND ALREADY THREE MONTHS PREGNANT WHEN HE LEFT...

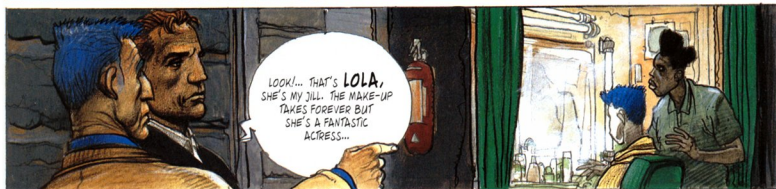
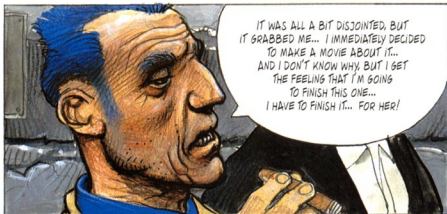
PREGNANT?

YEAH... IT WENT PRETTY BADLY FOR HER, TOO... SHE WAS ALWAYS VOMITING UP THE STRANGEST THINGS...

?



IN THE END, SHE LEFT ME TOO... JUST A COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER. HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER EITHER... IT'S BEEN ALMOST EIGHT YEARS NOW. THE DAY SHE COMES BACK, I'LL STOP DYING MY HAIR BLUE.





IT'S A PERSONAL INTERPRETATION,
OBSOLETE. BUT I THINK
IT WILL BE GOOD...

OF COURSE
IT WILL...



CAN I ASK YOU A FAVOR,
BEFORE YOU
DISAPPEAR TOO?

GO AHEAD!



YOUR JACKET... YOU DON'T FIND
THEM LIKE THAT AROUND HERE...
AND IT'S EXACTLY WHAT MY NIKOPOL
NEEDS. WILL YOU GIVE IT TO ME?
IT CAN BE YOUR CONTRIBUTION
TO THE FILM... AN EXTENSION
OF YOUR BROTHER,
IF YOU LIKE...



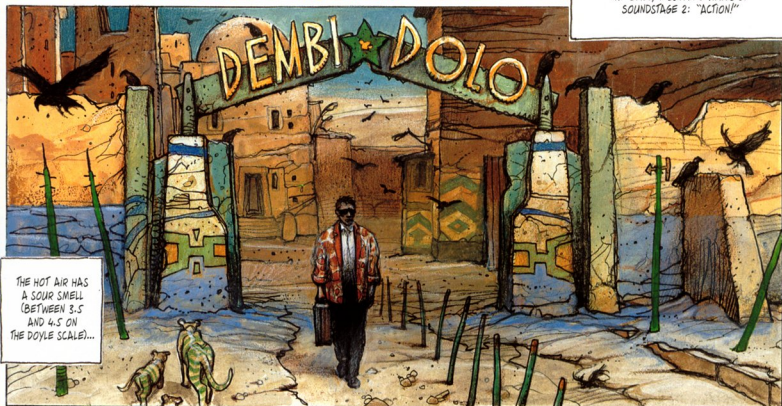
BO WILL GIVE YOU
HIS IN EXCHANGE.
I'M SURE IT WILL
SUIT YOU VERY WELL...

THAT'S FUNNY.
I WAS THINKING JUST
THE OPPOSITE...



OCTOBER, 2034.
NIKO, SON OF NIKOPOL,
LEAVES GIANCARLO
DONADONI AND DEMBI
DOLO STUDIOS WITH
SCANTY INFORMATION
ON HIS FATHER AND
AN ILL-FITTING JACKET
ON HIS SHOULDERS...

BEHIND HIM, DRY AS THE DESERT AIR,
DONADONI'S FIRST CALL OF THE DAY PIERCES
THE BADLY INSULATED WALLS OF
SOUNDSTAGE 2: "ACTION!"



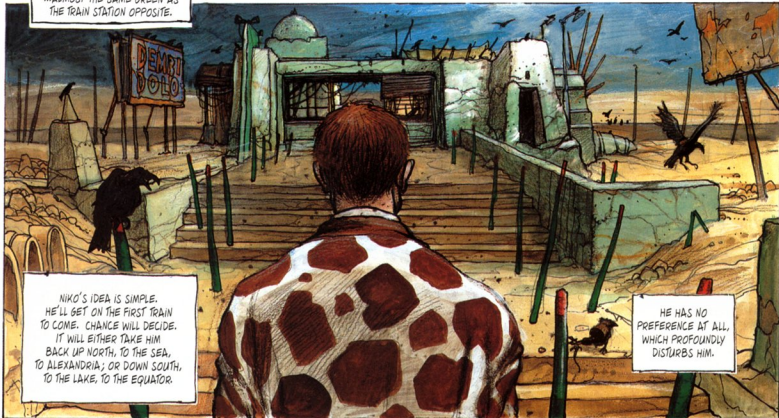
THE HOT AIR HAS
A SOUR SMELL
(BETWEEN 3.5
AND 4.5 ON
THE DOYLE SCALE)...



...AND THE WILDLIFE HAS GREEN
STRIPES...

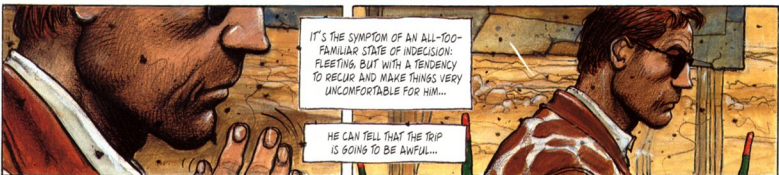
GREEN?

...ALMOST THE SAME GREEN AS
THE TRAIN STATION OPPOSITE.



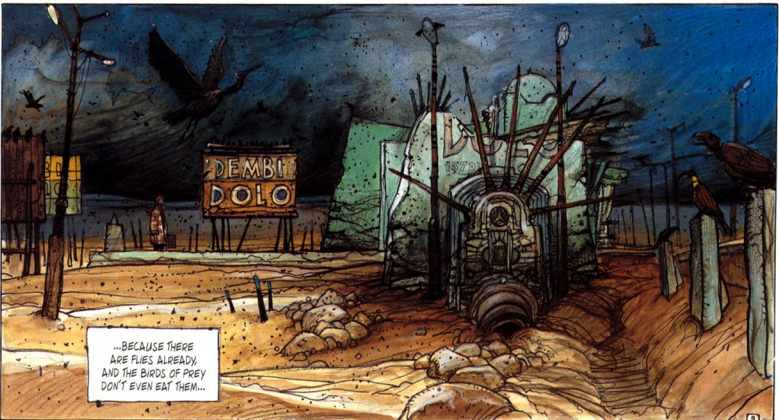
NIKO'S IDEA IS SIMPLE.
HE'LL GET ON THE FIRST TRAIN
TO COME. CHANCE WILL DECIDE.
IT WILL EITHER TAKE HIM
BACK UP NORTH, TO THE SEA,
TO ALEXANDRIA; OR DOWN SOUTH,
TO THE LAKE, TO THE EQUATOR.

HE HAS NO
PREFERENCE AT ALL,
WHICH PROFOUNDLY
DISTURBS HIM.



IT'S THE SYMPTOM OF AN ALL-TOO-
FAMILIAR STATE OF INDECISION:
FLEETING, BUT WITH A TENDENCY
TO RECUR AND MAKE THINGS VERY
UNCOMFORTABLE FOR HIM...

HE CAN TELL THAT THE TRIP
IS GOING TO BE AWFUL...



...BECAUSE THERE
ARE FLIES ALREADY,
AND THE BIRDS OF PREY
DON'T EVEN EAT THEM...



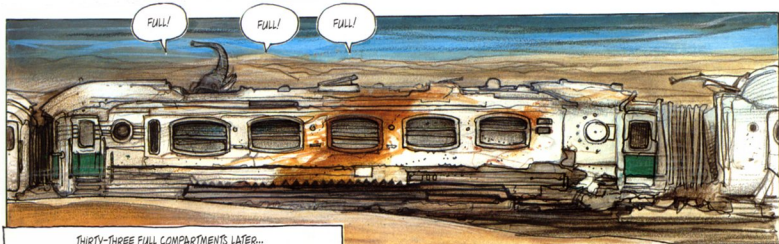
AFTER AN INEVITABLE PERIOD OF WAITING, THERE IS NOTHING TO REPORT... EXCEPT PERHAPS THE PASSAGE OF A TAXI-PLANE AT LOW ALTITUDE, TRAILED AT A SEVEN-MINUTE INTERVAL BY TWO OTHER PLANES.... "DEFINITELY NOT TAXIS, THOSE ONES" JUDGES NIKO. "MORE LIKE ETHIOPIAN PIRATES."



ANOTHER JUST AS INEVITABLE PERIOD LATER, AS THE SKY OMINOUSLY DARKENS (WELL ABOVE 7 ON THE RANDALL SCALE!), THE TRAIN ARRIVES... OR RATHER, THE TRAINS ARRIVE... BECAUSE IT'S DOWN TO THE WIRE, A PHOTO-FINISH WORTHY OF AN OLYMPIC 100-METER DASH...

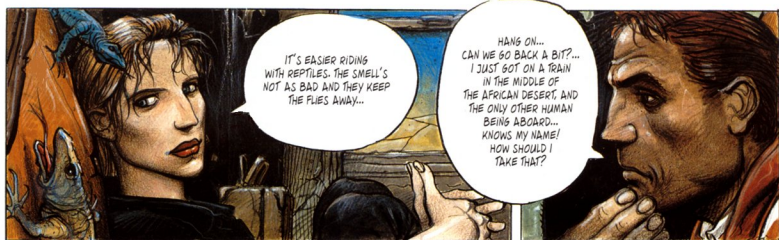


THE SOUTH-BOUND WINS... SOUTH!
THE EQUATOR IT IS!



THIRTY-THREE FULL COMPARTMENTS LATER...





IT'S EASIER RIDING
WITH REPTILES. THE SMELL'S
NOT AS BAD AND THEY KEEP
THE FLIES AWAY...

HANG ON...
CAN WE GO BACK A BIT?...
I JUST GOT ON A TRAIN
IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE AFRICAN DESERT, AND
THE ONLY OTHER HUMAN
BEINGS ABOARD...
KNOWS MY NAME!
HOW SHOULD I
TAKE THAT?



AS JUST A SIMPLE COINCIDENCE.
A BIT ODD, MAYBE, BUT COINCIDENCE
ALL THE SAME. IT HAPPENS THAT I JUST
SPENT A FEW DAYS IN PARIS AND
YOU'RE ALL OVER
THE AIRWAYS THERE!

WHO, ME?
I LEFT PARIS MORE
THAN SIX MONTHS AGO!
I'M FINISHED WITH
ALL THAT...
I'M OUT OF POLITICS!



THEN THERE'S TWO
THINGS ABOUT YOU THAT
YOU DON'T KNOW YET.
FIRST YOUR OLD
GOVERNMENT HAS JUST
BEEN OVERTHROWN
BY THE FASCIST
OPPOSITION...

NO
SURPRISE
THERE!

AND SECOND, YOU YOURSELF
HAVE JUST BEEN CONDEMNED TO DEATH
FOR MURDERING AN OLD MAN IN HIS HOSPITAL BED
A FEW MONTHS AGO... JEAN-FERDINAND CHOUBLAINC...



THAT'S HOW
I SAW YOUR FACE
EVERYWHERE. TELEVISION,
NEWSPAPERS, POSTERS...
AT THE MOMENT
YOU'RE A VERY
WANTED MAN...

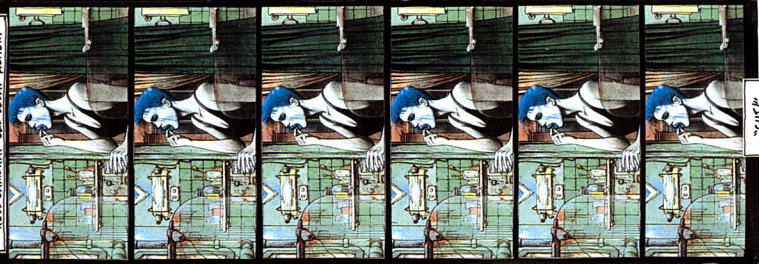


YOU'RE RIGHT...



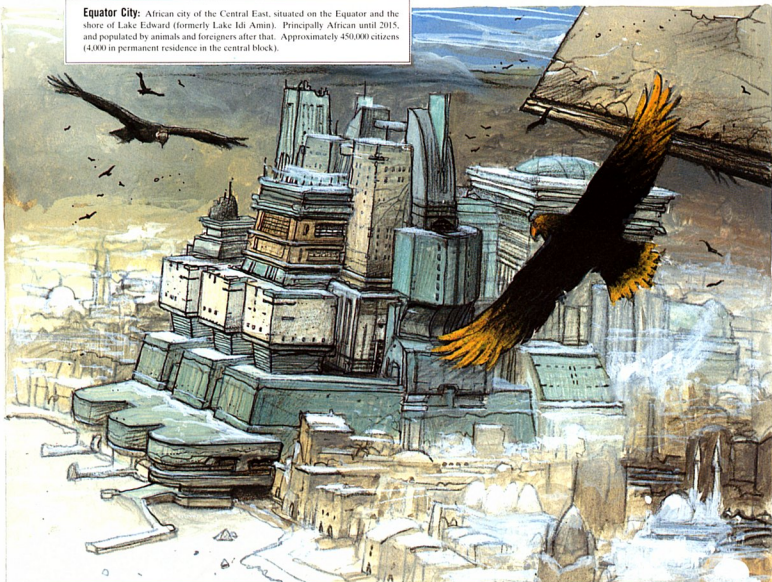
...REPTILES
ARE GREAT
FOR THE FLIES!

"ROLL CAMERA! CUE LOLA! ACTION!"



"CUT!"

Equator City: African city of the Central East, situated on the Equator and the shore of Lake Edward (formerly Lake Idi Amin). Principally African until 2015, and populated by animals and foreigners after that. Approximately 450,000 citizens (4,000 in permanent residence in the central block).



Climate: Unique case in the history of climatology. Since the year 2021, the temperature of the city and its immediate surroundings stays permanently at -6 degrees, the port's waters frozen for almost half a square mile. Snow blizzards frequently occur in the micro-climatic zone (due to vertical displacement, also known as "cork-popping" or "the chimney effect"). Outside the zone is a desert climate, hot to very hot (61 degrees minimum, 117 degrees maximum).

History: The French-German consortium of medicine and technology, DELISLE-ZULKAË, platform of humanitarian aid in Africa since the year 2002, undergoes rapid and thorough expansions until the year 2015. Vast financial contributions from new partnerships gradually enable the consortium to operate independently of international organizations, and it distances itself little by little from its original

humanitarian goals. The heart of Equator City (a central block designed by Prance Lee), was built in 2021 thanks largely to rather dubious capital from the Russo-Japanese communications group, OSSIPOV-KOGUSHI. Two years later, the addition of Ronald KAHEMBA, native of the lake region and charismatic agent of the irrational, finally convinces the last sceptical elements of African society, and K.K.D.Z.O. (Kahemba-Kogushi-Delisle-Zulkar-Ossipov) is born. Despite a few activities sanctioned by the U.N. and the Human Rights Corporation (most notably two dams in the Himalayas, programs to eliminate disease in Africa, and a remarkably effective literacy campaign, for a total of almost 8 on the Coonstac scale), this ruthless and bloodthirsty consortium, already omnipotent at the dawn of the 30's, very quickly rises to become the farthest-reaching crime syndicate of the Southern Hemisphere.

(to be continued)



I DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL!

BIT OF A SURPRISE, THOUGH...

YES, RATHER...

HMM...

THE SAME PHENOMENON OCCURRED A FEW YEARS AGO IN EUROPE. THERE'S NO DANGER. IT WILL SOON PASS.

KAHEMBA, Ronald

Theologian by education, specialist in mathematics as well as in individual thought and behavior, Ronald Kahemba is the undisputed media chief of K.K.D.Z.O. However, his involvement in the irrational world (Ndembus transience) does not grant him universal acceptance.

KOGUSHI, Tina

Founder of Tokyev's Global Center for Industrial Invention, Tina Kogushi is renowned for her abilities both as C.E.O. and ophthalmic electrician. A dark mystery shrouds her life between the years 2013 and 2021, after which she reappears, bringing a colossal fortune to K.K.D.Z.O. Despite strong suspicions, her connections to the Sino-Japanese mafia have never been proved.

DELISLE, Jean-Loïc

Doctor of surgery and microsurgery, Jean-Loïc Delisle dedicated the first half of his life to humankind, all the while developing a highly advanced network of clinics. His capacities in the field of medical research have always been of a questionable nature. He has not practiced surgery for many years, except upon himself, for cosmetic reasons. He conceals his age, but is said to be over a hundred years old.

ZULKAR, Haris

AwarDED the Nobel Prize for astrotechnology in 2010, Haris Zulkar engineered an ambitious program of communications satellites for K.K.D.Z.O.'s benefit. However, immediately after the launch the consortium is expelled by the international authorities of the World Space Company, on the grounds of "gross negligence of the rudimentary laws of proper space conduct". K.K.D.Z.O.'s space program continues in flagrant violation of the law. All of Haris Zulkar's diplomas and his Nobel Prize have been retracted.

OSSIPOV, Igor

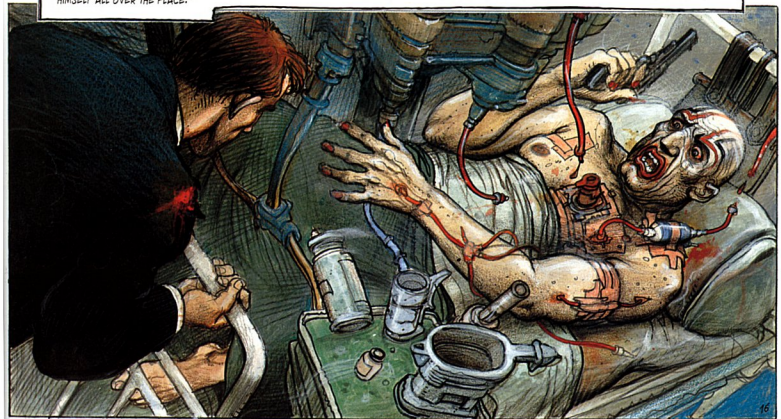
Son of a famous integrationist Slavophile at the turn of the century, Igor Ossipov's education is varied and murky, but his intellectual capacities are exceptional. He plays a crucial role in K.K.D.Z.O.'s criminal organization.



IT'S SNOWING, AND THERE ARE SUSPICIOUS FOLDS IN THE SKY...



"I BELIEVE CHOUBLANC SUMMONED ME BECAUSE HE KNEW HE WAS FINISHED... HE HAD FINALLY ACCEPTED DEATH... BUT NIKOPOL SURVIVING HIM AS THE HEAD OF ALL PARIS? THAT HE COULD NOT ACCEPT. SO AS SOON AS I ARRIVED, HE TOOK A PISTOL FROM UNDER HIS BEDCLOTHES... HE WAS WEARING THE SAME MAKE-UP AS HE HAD IN HIS DAYS OF GLORY... HE STARTED CRYING, AND INSULTING ME... THEN SHOOTING... FIRST INTO THE AIR, THEN AT ME. HE HIT MY RIGHT SHOULDER, SO I TIPPED HIM OUT OF HIS BED. HE DIED AFTER A FEW SECONDS ON THE FLOOR, DISCONNECTED FROM HIS TUBES, SPILLING HIMSELF ALL OVER THE PLACE!"



"IT'S WEIRD. THAT GUY COULD
MAKE ME LAUGH RIGHT
TO THE VERY END!"



—WHAT ABOUT THIS PHOTO
THEY'RE SHOWING
EVERYWHERE? DOES IT
MAKE YOU LAUGH TOO?

—THAT "PHOTO" IS A CLUMSYLY
RETOUCHED VIDEO STILL—
LOOK AT CHOUBLANC'S
RIGHT HAND. HE WAS
HOLDING A PISTOL IN IT, AND
NOW HE ISN'T... THOSE IDIOTS
DON'T EMBARRASS ANYONE
BUT THEMSELVES...

SHOCKING!



NIKOPOL ASSASSINATES CHOUBLANC

The evidence in black and white.

...AND THERE'S NO SHORTAGE
OF IDIOTS, IN PARIS
OR ANYWHERE ELSE.



HOW SHOULD
I TAKE THAT?

AS JUST A SIMPLE
STATEMENT. YOU DON'T
LOOK LIKE THE TYPE WHO
USUALLY GETS TAKEN
ADVANTAGE OF



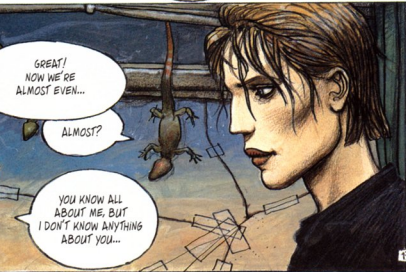
IN THAT CASE
I'LL REASSURE YOU TOO:
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE
THE TYPE WHO USUALLY
ASSASSINATES
PEOPLE.



GREAT!
NOW WE'RE
ALMOST EVEN...

ALMOST?

YOU KNOW ALL
ABOUT ME, BUT
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING
ABOUT YOU...



AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT THE BLUE NILE EXPRESS PASSES MBARARA, THE OLDEST ELEPHANT IN THE WORLD.



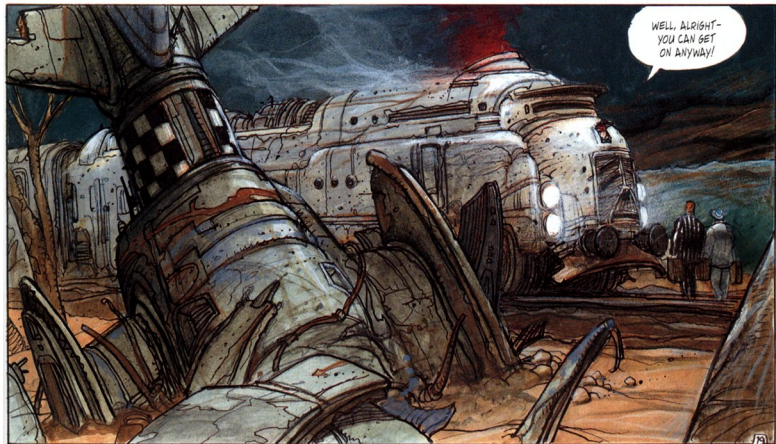
YELENA PROKOSH-YOTOBI WAS BORN IN TRIESTE, IN 2007 OF PARENTS SHE SAYS NOTHING ABOUT. SHE STUDIES GENETICS IN LYON, MARRIES, GETS A DIVORCE, HAS BEAUTIFUL CINDER-BLUE EYES, THINKS NIKO, RESUMES HER STUDIES IN VANCOUVER, AND EARNS TWO DEGREES WITH FAIR TO GOOD GRADES. HER LITTLE SMILE THAT MELTS INTO A BIG GRIN IS ALSO DEVASTATING, AND SHE TRAINS AT PRIVATE CENTERS IN BOSTON AND LAS VEGAS FOR TWO YEARS BEFORE RETURNING TO EUROPE. WITH HER NOSE SLIGHTLY BENT FROM A BRAWL IN MARSEILLES, WHICH IN NIKO'S VIEW JUST ADDS TO HER CHARM, SHE SPECIALIZES IN ABNORMAL GENETICS AND HEREDITARY ANOMALIES OF WHICH THERE IS NO SHORTAGE THESE DAYS. SHE IS EN ROUTE TO EQUATOR CITY, WHERE AN INTERESTING CASE AWAITS HER AS FOR NIKO, HE IS ALREADY IN LOVE.



THE SUDDEN DECELERATION IS IN THE ORDER OF R3 ON THE STEINER SCALE...



AND YELENA FALLS RIGHT INTO NIKO'S ARMS.





ALLOW ME
TO INTRODUCE MYSELF
I AM JOHN-EL...

I KNOW, JOHN-ELVIS
JOHNELVISSON.
I RECOGNIZED YOU.

NIKO ALREADY DISLIKES THIS MAN.



HE DOESN'T LIKE
IVO KOHL MUCH
EITHER: HENCHMAN
WITH THE FACE
OF CEMENT.

INTELLIGENT, BRILLIANT, BUT A LITTLE TOO TALKATIVE, JOHNELVISSON IS THE CHAMPION OF THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE IN ALL CATEGORIES OF CHESS-BOXING ENDORSED BY THE C.B.A. (CHESS-BOXING ASSOCIATION). HE IS NEAR THE TOP OF BOTH THE OLD KASPAROV-TYSON SCALE AND THE NEWER BIGGS-TSAO. HE'S DEFENDING HIS TITLE AT A MATCH IN EQUATOR CITY. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT HE'S A MILLIONAIRE; HIS THOUGHTS ARE QUICK AND BRUTAL, HIS BLOWS EQUALLY SO.

YELENA LISTENS, CAPTIVATED...
"WHAT A WASTE," THINKS NIKO.

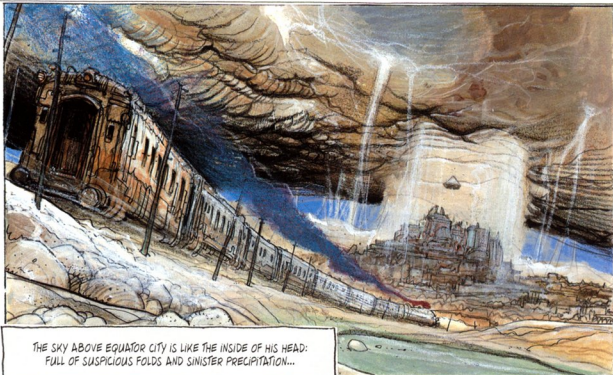


CHEERS!

AND USES THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SOME NEW FRIENDS AT THE BAR.



...AND NIKO HATES HIM-
SELF ONCE MORE.



THE SKY ABOVE EQUATOR CITY IS LIKE THE INSIDE OF HIS HEAD:
FULL OF SUSPICIOUS FOLDS AND SINISTER PRECIPITATION...



HE TAKES A DEEP
BREATH...



AND WHEN YELENA SPEAKS HE SAYS THE
FIRST THING THAT COMES TO HIS HEAD.

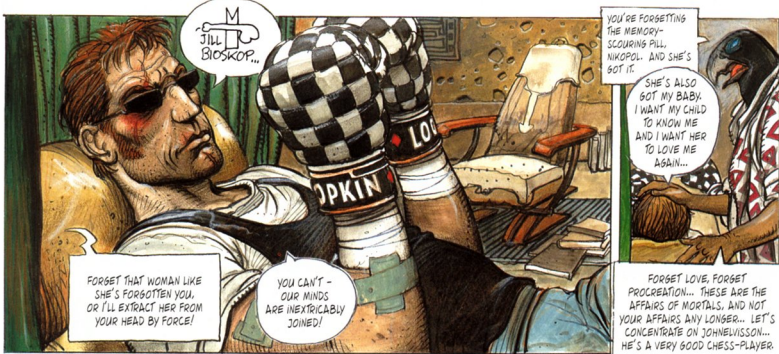
HAD A BIT
TOO MUCH?

IT'S
THE PYRAMID...



WHY -
WHAT DOES
THE PYRAMID
DO TO YOU?





M
JILL
BIOSKOP...

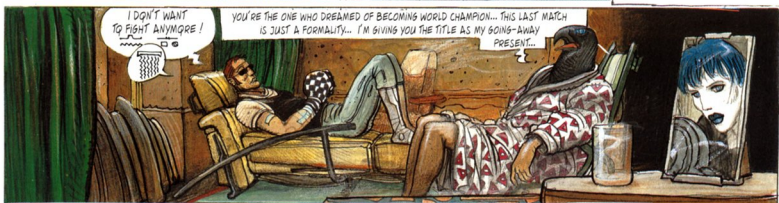
YOU'RE FORGETTING
THE MEMORY-
SCOURING PILL,
NIKOPOLO. AND SHE'S
GOT IT.

SHE'S ALSO
GOT MY BABY.
I WANT MY CHILD
TO KNOW ME
AND I WANT HER
TO LOVE ME
AGAIN...

FORGET THAT WOMAN LIKE
SHE'S FORGOTTEN YOU,
OR I'LL EXTRACT HER FROM
YOUR HEAD BY FORCE!

YOU CAN'T -
OUR MINDS
ARE INEXTRICABLY
JOINED!

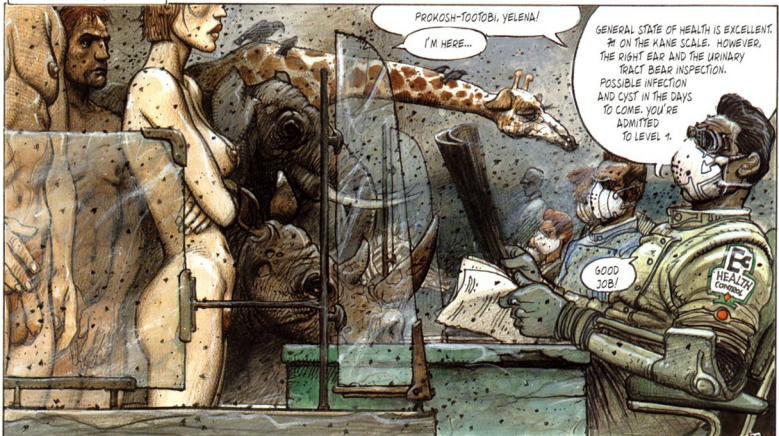
FORGET LOVE, FORGET
PROCREATION... THESE ARE THE
AFFAIRS OF MORTALS, AND NOT
YOUR AFFAIRS ANY LONGER... LET'S
CONCENTRATE ON JOHNELVISSON...
HE'S A VERY GOOD CHESS-PLAYER.



I DON'T WANT
TO FIGHT ANYMORE!

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DREAMED OF BECOMING WORLD CHAMPION... THIS LAST MATCH
IS JUST A FORMALITY... I'M GIVING YOU THE TITLE AS MY GOING-AWAY
PRESENT...

AT THAT MOMENT NIKO FINDS YELENA BEAUTIFUL, NAKED IN THE DAMPNESS, SURROUNDED BY FLIES... HE DOESN'T DARE LOOK
AT HER ANYMORE...



PROKOSH-TOOTOBI, YELENA!
I'M HERE...

GENERAL STATE OF HEALTH IS EXCELLENT.
#1 ON THE MANE SCALE. HOWEVER,
THE RIGHT EAR AND THE URINARY
TRACT BEAR INSPECTION.
POSSIBLE INFECTION
AND CYST IN THE DAYS
TO COME. YOU'RE
ADMITTED
TO LEVEL 1.

GOOD
JOB!

HEALTH
CONCEPTS



JOHN-ELVIS
JOHN
ELVISSON?

I'M IN A HURRY.

PERFECT HEALTH! 2.7!
WONDERFUL. RIGHT NOW
LOOPKIN'S HARDLY A 7... YOU'RE
GOING TO DESTROY HIM...

I KNOW...

NO MOHL? BAD STATE. CRITICAL
EVEN. YOU'RE
OVERWEIGHT AND
IN THE TERMINAL STAGE
OF THE "CEMENT
SICKNESS". YOU
DON'T HAVE MUCH
LONGER TO LIVE...

I KNOW!

YOU'RE WITH
MR. JOHNELVISSON?

I'M HIS
ADVISOR. SO
I'M IN A
HURRY TOO.

IN THAT CASE,
MAY GOD HAVE
MERCY ON YOU.

THANKS...

NIKOPOL JR!
ALSO IN A
HURRY!

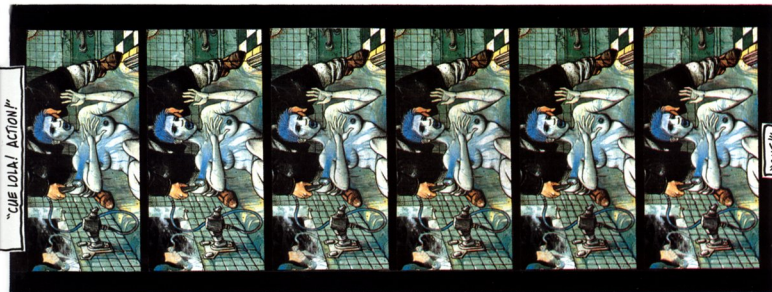
MAYBE SO.
BUT YOU WE
HAVE TO DETAIN.
YOU'RE AT 5.2.
VERY AVERAGE
STATE. PRONE TO
INFECTION AND
YOU HAVE A VERY
HIGH BLOOD-
ALCOHOL
COUNT...

LEVEL MINUS 1!



AND SO... NIKO, DISQUALIFIED, IS MADE
TO DESCEND ALONG WITH HIS FRIENDS
FROM THE BAR, AMONG THE FLIES...
AS FOR YELENA, SHE PASSES UPWARDS,
WITH HER CROOKED SMILE
AND A PREDATOR'S HAND AROUND HER
BARE SHOULDER. NIKO IS DEVASTATED!

TONIGHT I'M TAKING
YOU TO THE BEST
RESTAURANT
IN EQUATOR CITY...
THEY SERVE
EVERYTHING
COLD...



"CUE LOLA!
ACTION!"

"CUT!"

STATUS REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2034

K.K.D.Z.O.'s
Accomplishments in
the Southern Hemisphere

RANGOON

Anti-viral microsurgery center
(so-called "microscopic killer
robot" techniques).

CALCUTTA

"Abortive microchips" into
public domain (Indopakistani
government order).

DAR ES SALAAM

Inauguration of information
centers on "automedication".

MOMBASA

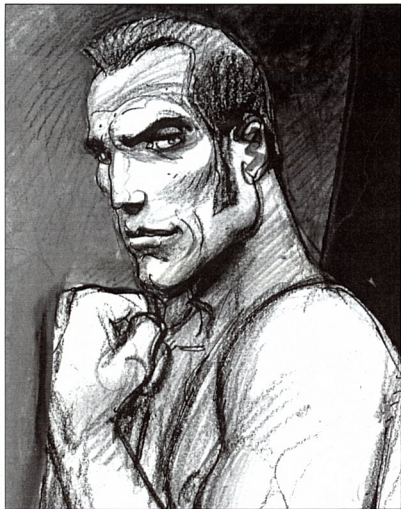
Large-scale decontamination
operations.



K.K.D.Z.O.'S REPLY TO THE U.N.

Harshly graded on the U.N.'s humanitarian scale, primarily for alleged deviations from the international standard, the K.K.D.Z.O. consortium has now created its own grading scale which will send the obsolete pretender of world unification back to its precious research committees! A new way of judging the world is born!

The new K.K.D.Z.O. judgment on any noteworthy global event. As an example, K.K.D.Z.O. rated the worldwide efforts of the U.N. over the last ten years as an abysmal 4.2 on a scale of 1 to 10. This new scale represents, without a doubt, an important step towards the creation of a new world order. K.K.D.Z.O. could be the driving force behind it.



John-Elvis Johnelvisson: 10 out of 10?

JOHN-ELVIS JOHNELVISSON IN EQUATOR CITY

John-Elvis Johnelvisson, one of the most fully-rounded men in the Northern Hemisphere (superlative levels on all scales) was received by Ronald KAHEMBA and Igor OSSIPOV upon his arrival at K.K.D.Z.O. Palace. After performing an a capella rendition of a rock song (his own lyrics), he announced during a brief press conference: "I'm in top shape! An 8 or a 9 at least!" and that "with this Chess-Boxing World Title, I should be approaching a 10 on the scale of all scales of the mind and body!" His opponent, the very withdrawn and mysterious Loopkin, was once again conspicuous in his absence.

K.K.D.Z.O. NOAH'S ARK SOON IN ORBIT!

This young giraffe and baby hippopotamus will be the stars of the satellite "K.K.-D.Z.O. NOAH'S ARK", to be launched within the next few days. This satellite, entirely conceived by Haris ZULKAR and Ronald KAHEMBA, will test new hibernation techniques.



康
威
崑
瀚
涸
木

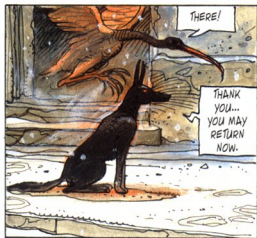
THAT NIGHT ANUBIS AND THOTH DRIFT DOWN TOWARDS EQUATOR CITY, LIKE THE SNOWFLAKES AROUND THEM.



LET ME DOWN HERE...



VOUFFE



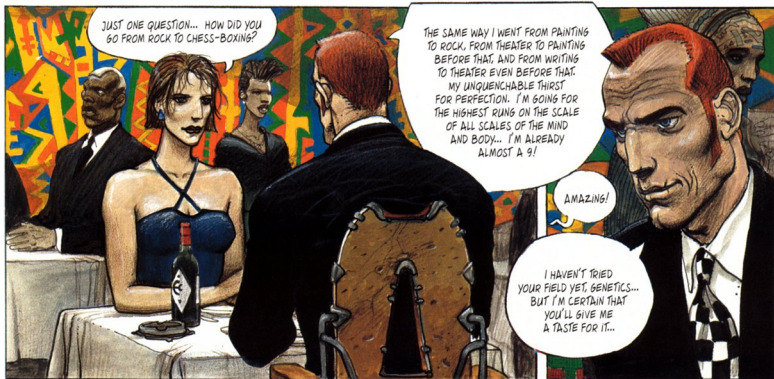
AT THE SAME TIME, NOT FAR AWAY, NIKO ISN'T FEELING HUNGRY. NIKO IS REFUSING THE PRESCRIBED TREATMENT, NIKO IS THINKING OF YELENA, NIKO IS FEELING WORRIED... HE FEELS CONFUSED AND TRAPPED AND SPIED UPON...

IN HIS ROOM, ON THE WALL BEHIND HIM, A PIECE OF GRAFFITI WATCHES HIM...

A PIECE OF GRAFFITI WITH BLUE HAIR, BLUE NIPPLES, BLUE PUBLIC HAIR... AND WHITE SKIN...

IS HE ON THE RIGHT TRACK? JILL BIOSKOR... HIS FATHER... THE WHOLE THING...

BUT WHAT DOES ANY OF THAT MATTER NOW? IT'S YELENA HE'S THINKING ABOUT... YELENA!



JUST ONE QUESTION... HOW DID YOU GO FROM ROCK TO CHESS-BOXING?

THE SAME WAY I WENT FROM PAINTING TO ROCK, FROM THEATER TO PAINTING BEFORE THAT, AND FROM WRITING TO THEATER EVEN BEFORE THAT. MY UNQUENCHABLE THIRST FOR PERFECTION. I'M GOING FOR THE HIGHEST RUNG ON THE SCALE OF ALL SCALES OF THE MIND AND BODY... I'M ALREADY ALMOST A 9!

AMAZING!

I HAVEN'T TRIED YOUR FIELD YET, GENETICS... BUT I'M CERTAIN THAT YOU'LL GIVE ME A TASTE FOR IT...



I DON'T KNOW... YOU HAVE TO BE PATIENT, AND HUMBLE... FOR EXAMPLE, I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I'M GOING TO FIND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR HERE...



AND WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

THAT'S JUST IT, I DON'T KNOW... THEY TOLD ME ABOUT AN INCIDENT THAT WAS HUSHED UP A FEW YEARS AGO... AN EXTREMELY ABNORMAL BIRTH, BUT IT'S ALL VERY MURKY... NOT MUCH MATERIAL TO CLUMB SCALES WITH, I'M AFRAID.



THELMA BRIDGES, HEAD NURSE, SURROGATE MOTHER TO MANY. SHE CAN REMEMBER ANYTHING, EXCEPT WHAT SHE HASN'T SEEN, AND EVEN THAT SHE CAN EASILY IMAGINE WITH THE HELP OF HER 'PROFOUND ARTISTIC SENSE'.

HER STORY, MORE OR LESS:
"IT HAPPENED SEVEN YEARS AGO... JILL BIOSKOP WAS GIVING BIRTH TO SOMETHING... 'NOT QUITE NATURAL'. ALL THE SPECIALISTS CAME RUNNING, CROWDING BETWEEN HER THIGHS TO REMOVE 'THE SPECIMEN'. AND THEY DID!"
"THAT'S WHEN YOU WENT CRAZY. YOU BROKE DOWN THE DOORS AND KILLED EVERYONE IN THE WING. NO WITNESSES! YOUR EYES WERE BRIMMING FIRE... YOU SEIZED JILL BIOSKOP AND HER BLOOD-SOAKED CREATURE WRAPPED UP IN A SHEET, AND DISAPPEARED..."



"BUT OF COURSE," IS THELMA BRIDGES' REPLY.







MANY CRIES AND THEIR DISTURBING ECHOES SOUNDED THAT NIGHT OVER EQUATOR CITY. THE SNOW FELL THICKER, AND THE TEMPERATURE DROPPED LOWER (-56 ON THE DANIEL FAHRENHEIT SCALE). THERE WERE ALSO MORE CRACKS IN THE SKY THAN USUAL (FROM 6.6 UP TO 70) AND SOME NEW THREATENING FOLDS (FROM SUSPICIOUS TO VERY SUSPICIOUS)... RONALD MAHEMBA, AGENT OF THE IRRATIONAL, WAS FORCED TO CALL UPON VIDYE MUKULU, SUPREME SKY-BEING, IN HOPES OF CALMING THE TEMPEST... ALL IN VAIN. HE SPENT THE NIGHT UNCOMFORTABLY, TOSSED BETWEEN FOLDS AND CREVASSES...

IT IS SAID THAT THE INVISIBLE DIALOGUE BETWEEN HORUS AND ANUBIS TOOK PLACE IN DIVINE VIOLENCE. MORE THAN ONCE, THE UNFORTUNATE NIKOPOL'S SKULL CAME CLOSE TO SPLITTING...

AS FOR THE REST, WE FIND THAT YELENA PROKOSH-TOOTBI WAS COLD, ALONE IN HER BED, AND THAT NIKO SUFFERED TERRIBLE NIGHTMARES IN HIS... OBSCENE NIGHTMARES, PAINTED BY THE HAND OF THELMA BRIDGES... EVEN GIANCARLO DONADONI, IN DEMBI DOLO, DIDN'T SHUT HIS EYES ALL NIGHT.



THE NEXT DAY, HOWEVER, SUNRISE COMES RIGHT ON TIME. TO MARK THE END OF A LONG CONVERSATION, A SINGLE PROWLFLAKE ALIGHTS ON THE BEAK OF HORUS OF HIERAKONPOLIS, WHO CONCLUDES:



"YOU SEE, NIKOPOL... THANKS TO YOU I HAVE KNOWN MANY THINGS OF EARTH AND THE PEOPLE UPON IT... FOR ME ELEVEN YEARS IS LIKE THE BLINK OF AN EYE, BUT I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER THE SMELLS, SOUNDS, AND SENSATIONS I SHARED WITH YOU... EVEN IF I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND LOVE ALL TOO WELL... BELIEVE ME, YOU'VE BEEN A GOOD HOST... WE ROAMED THIS PLANET FAR AND WIDE, LONG AND HARD... FAR TOO HARD... AND YOU KNOW THAT I'VE SEEN ENOUGH TO MAKE ANY NORMAL GOD PISS HIS PANTS. YOU HUMANS ARE UTTERLY INEPPURED TO RUN THIS WORLD. EVERYTHING YOU TOUCH ROTTS AWAY... I WANTED TO MAKE PEACE WITH HUMANS, BUT THEY'RE TOO SMALL-MINDED... THEY WILL NEVER BE RID OF THEIR UNCHECKED PATRIOTISM, THEIR STUBBORN FAITH, THEIR INEPTITUDE FOR POWER AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS... FOR YOUR LIFESPAN IS YOUR WEAKEST POINT... YOU DON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO RETAIN OR

EVEN REALIZE THE VALUE OF WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT... AH, WELL! WE, THE GODS, HAVE MADE YOU BADLY. A TERRIBLE THING TO ADMIT, BUT ADMIT IT I MUST. NOW, LISTEN CAREFULLY, NIKOPOL. I'M GOING TO LEAVE YOU WITH THE POWERS YOU NEED... YOU WILL BREATHE AT HALF YOUR RATE; LITTLE BY LITTLE, YOU WILL DO EVERYTHING AT HALF YOUR RATE. AND THEN EVEN SLOWER THAN THAT. YOUR HEART WILL MARK ONE BEAT EVERY TWO MINUTES. I DON'T KNOW WHAT SORT OF MAN THIS SLOWED EXISTENCE WILL MAKE YOU, BUT IT IS TIME THAT WE GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS. MY REBELLION COMES TO ITS END, AND I PREPARE MYSELF TO FACE THE JUDGMENT OF MY OWN KIND. AT BEST I WILL BE SENTENCED TO A FEW FRACTIONS OF ETERNITY, BUT ABOVE ALL: HARMONY MUST BE RESTORED FROM CHAOS. WE MUST REENTER THE 'NUN', IN SHORT REPLACE HUMANKIND WITH SOMETHING BETTER. ORDER, NIKOPOL! DO YOU UNDERSTAND? A PERFECT AND BALANCED ORDER FOR WHICH I WILL PROVIDE THE INSPIRATION!"

"QBQBE? I PONT GIVE A CBAD ARGUT QBQBE! I'M GOING TO JIVE, JQVE, ANP PIE IN COMDJETE ANP UTTEB CHAQZ!" *

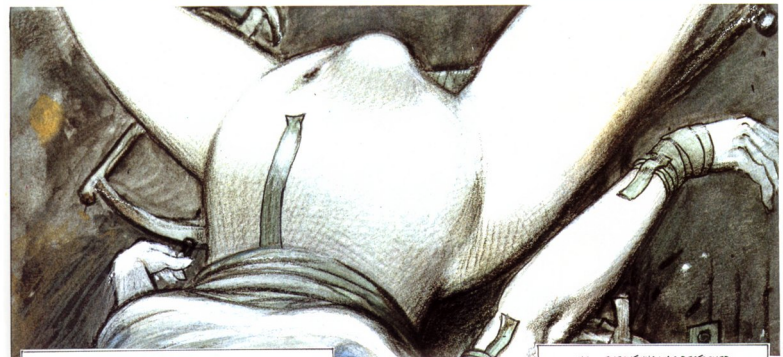
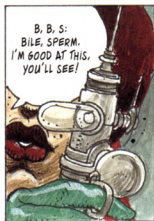
* IN ADDITION TO MIXING HIS O'S AND Q'S, S'S AND Z'S, J'S AND I'S, NIKOPOL IS ALSO CONFUSING HIS B'S AND R'S, AND HIS P'S AND D'S.



"IT'S DECIDED! TOMORROW NIGHT I GIVE YOU THE TITLE, AND THEN I TAKE MY LEAVE... YOU WILL BE MASTER OF YOUR FATE AGAIN, AND IMMORTAL AS WELL. I'LL MAKE YOU FORGET ME, FORGET YOUR PAST, AND FORGET JILL BIOSKOR."

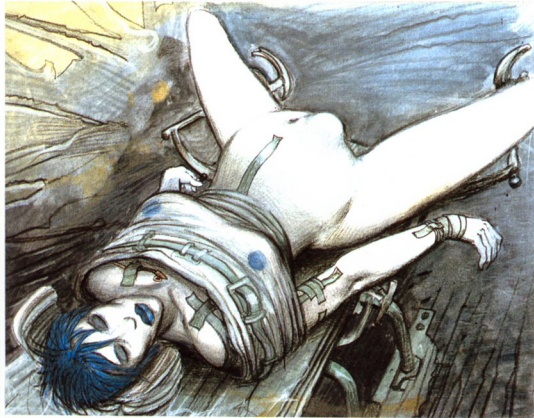
"TO FORGET LUD, I'P HAVE TO FORGET MYZEJ!"

"THEN I'LL MAKE YOU FORGET YOURSELF TOO!"



-DON'T YOU HAVE THE MEDICAL FILE, PROFESSOR?

-NO... EVERYTHING WAS DESTROYED.



...NOTHING REMAINS EXCEPT THESE FAIRLY COMMONPLACE PHOTOS... TAKEN JUST BEFORE THE DELIVERY... BEFORE THE EVENT...

-WHAT ABOUT WITNESSES? ALL DEAD?

-ALL OF THEM. EXCEPT A NURSE DOWN IN LEVEL MINUS 1... A CERTAIN THELMA BRIDGES... NOT VERY RELIABLE IF YOU ASK ME...

-I'LL TRY HER ANYWAY... THANKS FOR EVERYTHING.

-GOOD LUCK... BUT EVEN WITH THAT BULGE I DON'T THINK WE'RE DEALING WITH ONE OF THE MORE INTERESTING GENETIC ANOMALIES. I PUT IT AT LESS THAN 5' ON THE KHALED SCALE... NOWADAYS WE DON'T EVEN LOOK AT ANYTHING BELOW 8 OR 8 1/2!



...AND WHAT ABOUT ON THE BULLSHIT SCALE?



I'D LIKE TO SEE MISS THELMA BRIDGES...

ARE YOU WITH THE FAMILY?

NO, WHY?



MISS BRIDGES HAD A BIT OF AN ACCIDENT.

?



SHE WAS IMPALED ON A PATIENT... A RHINOCEROS... RIGHT AFTER A SCUFFLE WITH ANOTHER PATIENT...

...WHO JUST RAN OUT OF HERE DISGUISED AS A GIRAFFE.

A GIRAFFE?

A GIRAFFE.



DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING A LITTLE MORE SUBDUED?

CROCODILE, TIGER, PANTHER...

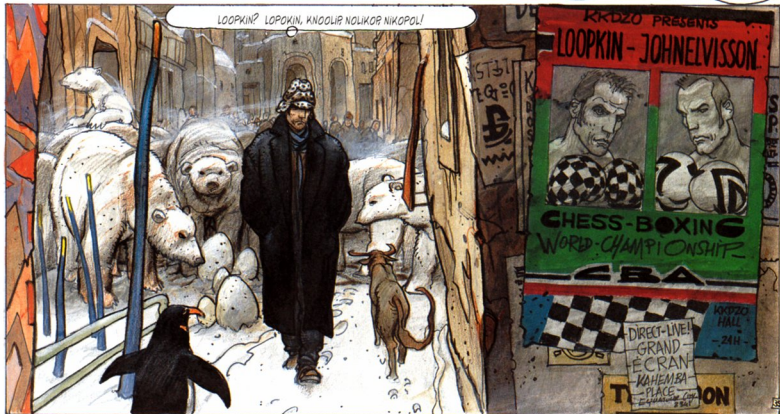
PANTHER, THEN, PLAIN BLACK. IMITATION.

NIKO TAKES A LONG LOOK IN THE MIRROR. HE DOESN'T SEE A KILLER'S FACE. BUT HE HAS TWO DEAD BODIES BEHIND HIM ALREADY. UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENTS... TRICKS OF FATE... THAT'S ALL!

IS IT TO KEEP YOUR EDGE THAT YOU AREN'T SHAVING?

MY EDGE?

FOR THE FIGHT TOMORROW NIGHT! YOU'RE LOOPKIN, RIGHT?



LOOPKIN? LOPOKIN, KNOOLIP, NOLIKOR, NIKOPOLI!

KR2ZO PRESENTS
LOOPKIN - JOHNELVISSON
 CHESS-BOXING
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
 CBA

DIRECT-LIVE!
 GRAND ÉCRAN
 KAHENBA
 PLACE

KR2ZO HALL - 2411

ON

"NIKO'S GONE CRAZY!" THINKS YELENA, WATCHING NIKOLOP'S ANAGRAM IN THE RING.



THE NUMBERS APPROACH THE TOPS OF THE SCALES: 9.7 ON THE BIGGS (VIOLENCE); 9.4 ON THE SERBO-CROAT (HATE); 8.8 ON THE PRELJOCAJ (LEGSWORK); 8.3 ON THE POPPI (TACTICS) AND 9.1 ON THE SISINGA-MANSARAJA (STYLE).



ARE YOU WELL, NIKOLOP?

NOT AT ALL!



GO JOHN-ELVIS!

GO NIKO!



I SMELL SOMETHING INHUMAN ON THIS LOOPKIN...

I SMELL BLOOD... IT STINKS!



GO, DAD!

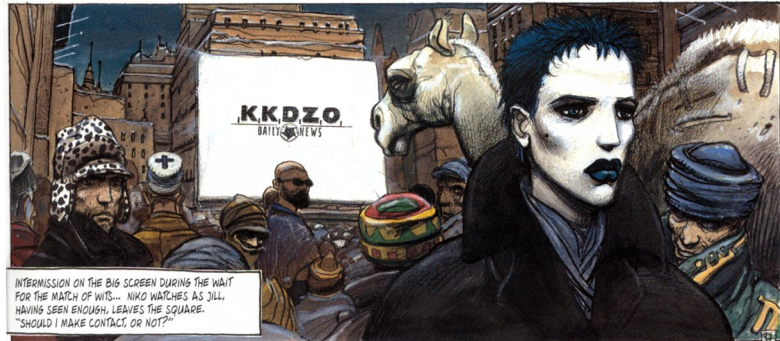
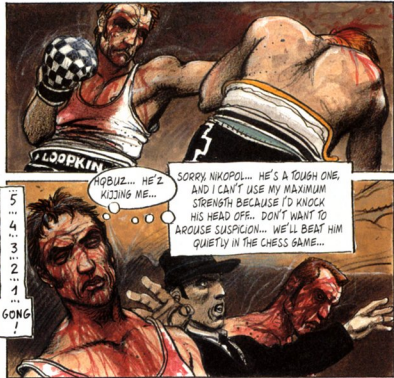


?

HEY!?



BLUE HAIR?

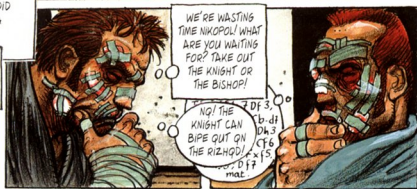






SO NIKO WILL NEVER FIND OUT ABOUT THE CHILD... HE'S CERTAIN HE WILL NEVER SEE JILL BIOSKOP AGAIN... THE IMAGE OF HER IN HIS HEAD HAS FADED JUST AS SHE DID INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE STAIRWELL... AND THE OBSSIVE PICTURE OF YELENA RISES ONCE AGAIN TO THE SURFACE... "YELENA!"

BUT THE IMAGE OF HIS FATHER ON THE SCREEN IS EVEN CLEARER (4250 LINES ON THE K.K.D.Z.O. FLAT-SCREEN TV!)





KAHEMBA SUSPICIOUS!

Ronald KAHEMBA came forward against the Chess-Boxing Association's decision to validate Loopkin's dubious victory over Johnnelvisson. Professor Jean-Loïc DELISLE himself will perform the autopsy on the talented but unfortunate champion.

IVO KOHL: DEATH BY CEMENT SICKNESS

Ivo Kohl, John-Elvis Johnnelvisson's chess advisor, succumbed to a deadly fit of "Cement Sickness" at the end of the match between his protégé and the very withdrawn and mysterious Loopkin.

The autopsy of the concrete remains of Ivo Kohl will be performed by Professor Jean-Loïc DELISLE himself, who has worked for many years on treating this exceedingly rare malady.

Face fragments of Ivo Kohl (upper lip, cheek, nose).
In the background, J. Johnnelvisson's corpse awaits autopsy.



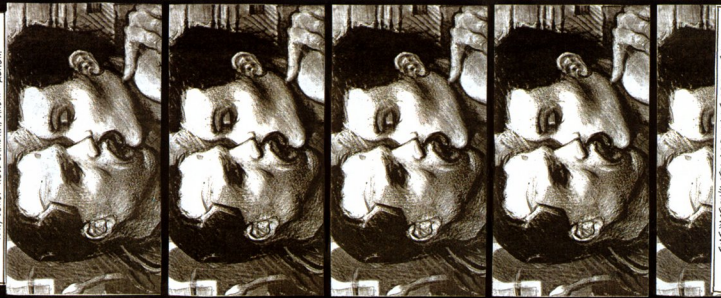
"I believe that Johnnelvisson died approximately one and thirty-two hundredths of a second before his left eye was impaled on the Black Queen," declares the Professor. "It's this first death, the more suspicious one, that interests me."

EQUATOR CITY AWAITS NKONO JR.



The Ndembusi irrationalist K. N. Nkono Jr. is expected today in Equator City, according to a reliable source. The precipitated arrival of this specialist of reincarnation, possession, and black magic, at Ronald KAHEMBA's request, is apparently linked to Johnnelvisson's death and certain "suspicious behavior" of Loopkin's.

"OH MY! ENOUGH! WE'LL ENOUGH IT IN BLACK AND WHITE!
LOAN. BO, READY FOR THE BIG KISS?... MAKE IT LONG -
VERY LONG! ROLL CAMERA, AND... ACTION!"



...STILL AS DRY AS THE DESERT AIR,
WILL BE GIANCARLO DONADONI'S LAST COMMAND.
THE CALL TO "CUT!" NEVER COMES.



YES. I GOT
YOUR NIGHTMARE,
GOSOL... ARE YOU
SURE OF WHAT
YOU SAW?

POSITIVE!
HE FELL IN THE MIDDLE
OF A TAKE... HEART
ATTACK. DEAD IN AN
INSTANT.



POOR
DONADONI...

WE MUST GO BACK
TO DEMBI DOLO... DID
HE FINISH HIS FILM,
AT LEAST?

NO!



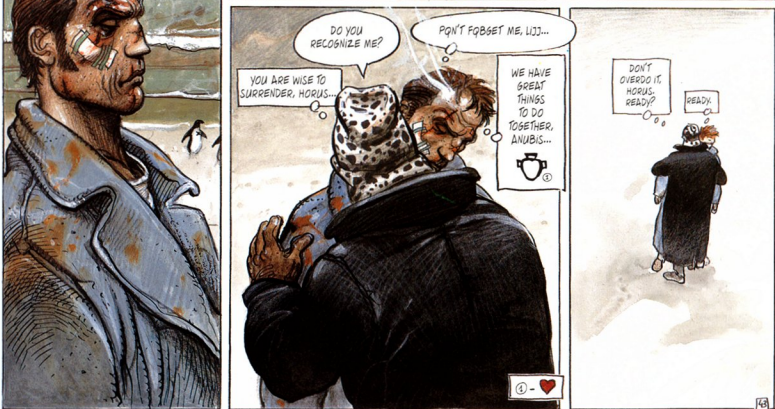
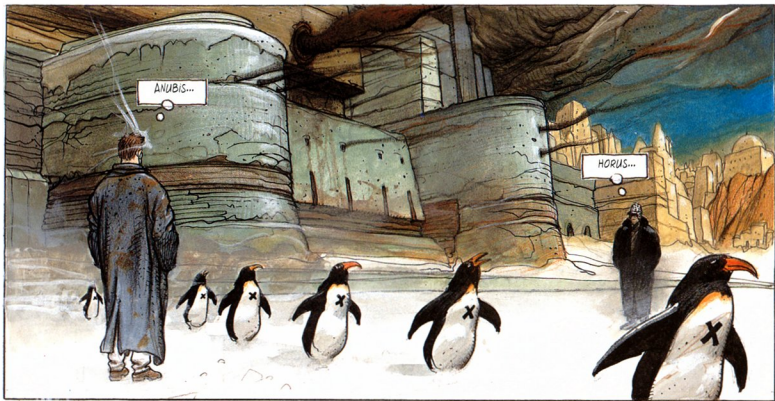
AND NIKOPOL?
WHAT DO I DO
ABOUT NIKOPOL?



ERASE?

ERASE!

YES,
ERASE!



WITHIN A COLORLESS LIGHTNING FLASH, THERE IS A SLOW AERIAL DANCE...

"INCREDIBLE!"



VERY SURPRISING INDEED, MASTER KAHENBA...
EGYPTIAN GODS... AND NOT MINOR ONES
EITHER.

THIS IS AT THE TOP
OF ALL THE SCALES
OF THE IRRATIONAL.
EVEN MINE...



WHAT DO YOU
ADVISE?

ABOVE ALL, DON'T CONFRONT THEM DIRECTLY...
WE ARE NOT POWERFUL
ENOUGH.



WHAT ABOUT
THE HUMAN DOWN
THERE, LOOPKIN?

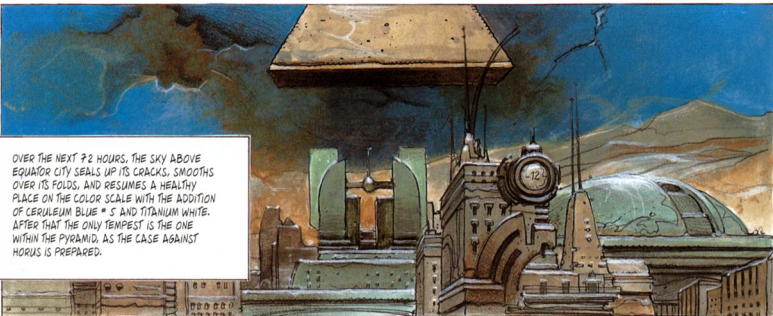
THAT'S A DIFFERENT STORY... AN IMMORTAL
IN THIS CITY WOULD BE LIKE A VIRUS IN
A HEALTHY ORGAN... YOU CAN'T ELIMINATE
HIM, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE HIM
AWAY, ISOLATE HIM... I SEE TWO
SOLUTIONS: EITHER BURY HIM
DEEP UNDERGROUND OR SHOOT
HIM HIGH INTO THE AIR... AND
AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!

DON'T YOU HAVE
A SATELLITE LAUNCH
COMING UP?

YES!



OVER THE NEXT 72 HOURS, THE SKY ABOVE EQUATOR CITY SEALS UP ITS CRACKS, SMOOTHS OVER ITS FOLDS, AND RESUMES A HEALTHY PLACE ON THE COLOR SCALE WITH THE ADDITION OF CERULEUM BLUE * 5 AND TITANIUM WHITE. AFTER THAT THE ONLY TEMPEST IS THE ONE WITHIN THE PYRAMID, AS THE CASE AGAINST HORUS IS PREPARED.



OKAY... YOU DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING, YOU DON'T TALK, YOU DON'T EAT OR SLEEP YOU HARDLY BREATHE, YOUR HEART BEATS WHEN IT FEELS LIKE IT, AND YOU HAVEN'T GROWN EVEN ONE SECOND OLDER! CAN YOU EVEN THINK?

I AM REBUILDING MYSELF!



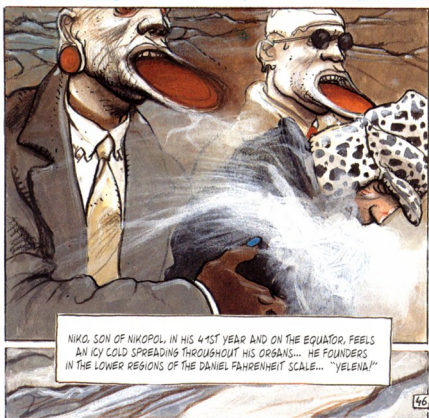
GOOD IDEA! WE'LL BOTH REBUILD OURSELVES, EACH IN HIS OWN WAY... AS FOR ME I'M GOING TO START WITH A WOMAN, AND LOVE... YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT IT TOO... IT WOULDN'T DO YOU ANY HARM...

SEE YOU!



NIKO GOES FROM HOTEL TO HOTEL SEEKING YELENA, FRESH AND CONFIDENT. THE LAST FEW DAYS' EVENTS, HIS FATHER, AND THE BRIEF TRANSIT OF ANUBIS THROUGH HIS BODY ALL BLUR INTO AN ABSTRACT SATISFACTION. EVEN THE SIGHT OF THE PYRAMID, UP IN THE BLUE SKY, MAKES HIM SMILE...







1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

FIRST: ACCUSED OF TREASON.
SECOND: ACCUSED OF MISMANAGEMENT.
THIRD: ACCUSED OF MISLEADING AUTHORITIES.
FOURTH: ACCUSED OF HERESY.
FIFTH: ACCUSED OF...





HELLO?

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT, NIKO?



I'M RE-BUILDING MYSELF...



??... THAT'S ORIGINAL... DID JOHNHEISSON DAMAGE YOU THAT MUCH?

JOHN-WHO?

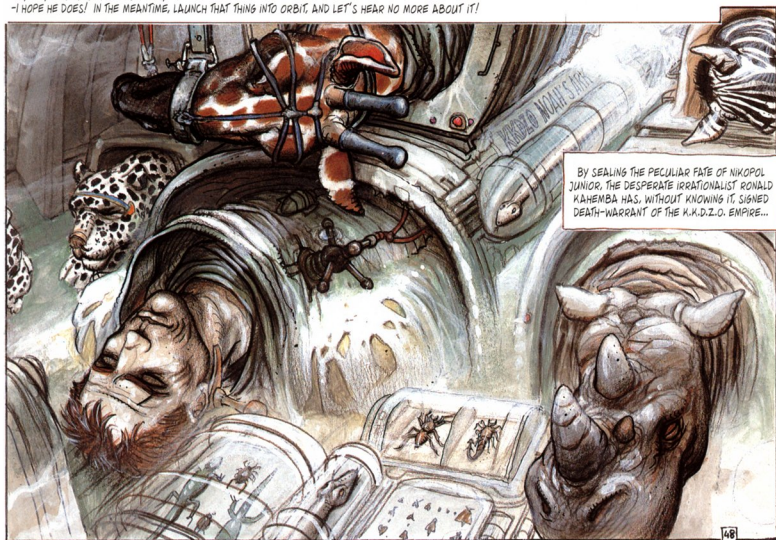


LISTEN... I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU... BUT I'M LEAVING TONIGHT. I GOT ANOTHER LEAD ON... ON THAT CASE I CAME FOR. I'M ON THE BLUE NILE EXPRESS TO DEMBI DOLO... I'VE RESERVED A COMPARTMENT FOR TWO, WITH A FLYNET... IT LEAVES AT MIDNIGHT.

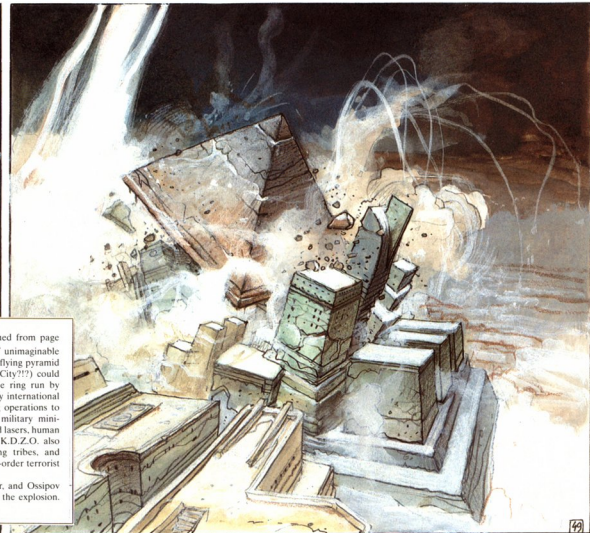
...AS AN ANGEL WITH A BEASTLY EYE I SLIDE TOWARD YOU NOISELESSLY AND RETURN AGAIN TO HOLD YOU TIGHT IN THE SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT!"

?

"WE'VE NEUTRALIZED THE LOOPKIN VIRUS, MASTER... WE PUT HIM IN THE CENTRAL HIBERNATOR, IN PLACE OF THE BABY HIPPO. HE'S ALREADY IN A PERMANENT CRYOGENIC SLEEP THERE'S NOTHING MORE TO FEAR... ACCORDING TO OUR PREDICTIONS, THE PYRAMID WILL NOT HANG MUCH LONGER ABOVE YOUR SKIES, NOW THAT HE'S GONE... MAY VIDYE MUKULU HEAR OUR PRAYER!
-I HOPE HE DOES! IN THE MEANTIME, LAUNCH THAT THING INTO ORBIT, AND LET'S HEAR NO MORE ABOUT IT!"



BY SEALING THE PECULIAR FATE OF NIKOPOL JUNIOR, THE DESPERATE IRRATIONALIST RONALD KAHEMBA HAS, WITHOUT KNOWING IT, SIGNED DEATH-WARRANT OF THE K.K.D.Z.O. EMPIRE...





FULL!
FULL!
FULL!



FULL!

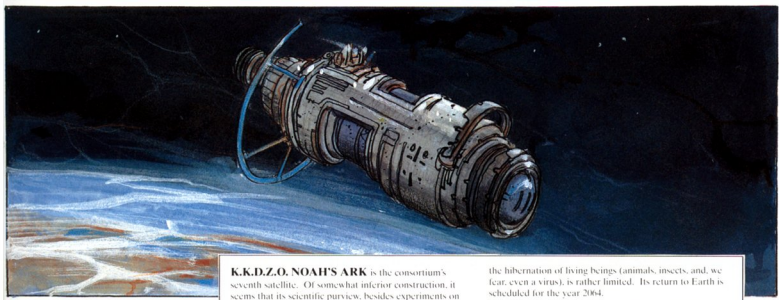


THIRTY-THREE FULL COMPARTMENTS LATER...

WELL, WELL, IF IT
ISN'T THE "ANGEL WITH
A BEASTLY EYE"...



GOOD
EVENING...



K.K.D.Z.O. NOAH'S ARK is the consortium's seventh satellite. Of somewhat inferior construction, it seems that its scientific purview, besides experiments on

the hibernation of living beings (animals, insects, and, we fear, even a virus), is rather limited. Its return to Earth is scheduled for the year 2064.



"YOUR EYES, IN WHICH IS SEEN NOTHING, NOR BITTER NOR SWEET— TWO COLD JEWELS WHERE GOLD AND FLAME ARE ONE AND THE SAME."

AGAIN?



"LIKE RUNOFF FROM GLACIERS MAKING A TIDE, A WAVE'S FLOW FULL OF SURPRISES, POURING INTO YOUR SMILE SO WIDE PAST YOUR LIPS THE WATER RISES."

DO YOU ALWAYS RECITE BAUDELAIRE WHILE MAKING LOVE?



IT'S MY FIRST TIME...

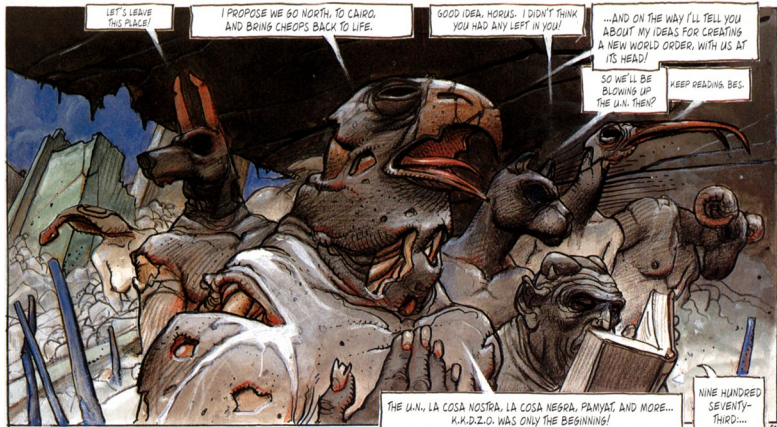
RECITING BAUDELAIRE OR MAKING LOVE?

BOTH!



YOU GOT HIT IN THE HEAD TOO HARD, NIKO... TEMPORARY AMNESIA... IT HAPPENS. I'LL HELP YOU "REBUILD YOURSELF"... TRUST ME.

WHO'S BAUDELAIRE?



LET'S LEAVE THIS PLACE!

I PROPOSE WE GO NORTH, TO CAIRO, AND BRING CHEOPS BACK TO LIFE.

GOOD IDEA, HORUS. I DIDN'T THINK YOU HAD ANY LEFT IN YOU!

...AND ON THE WAY I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT MY IDEAS FOR CREATING A NEW WORLD ORDER, WITH US AT ITS HEAD!

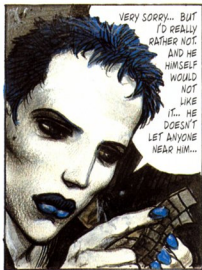
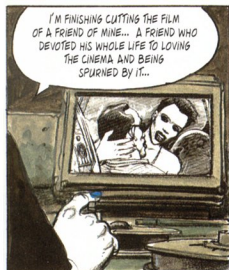
SO WE'LL BE BLOWING UP THE U.N. THEN?

KEEP READING, BES.

THE U.N., LA COSA NOSTRA, LA COSA NOSTRA, PAMYAT, AND MORE... K.K.D.Z.O. WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

NINE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THIRD!...

THE LAST MORNING OF OCTOBER 2034.
YELENA AND NIKOPOL, NOT FULLY AWAKE, ARRIVE EARLY AT DEMBI DOLO STUDIOS WITH THE SUN AT THEIR BACKS.





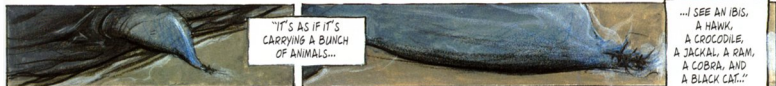
HE WOULDN'T REMEMBER... HE'S "REBUILDING" HIMSELF.

THAT'S LUCKY. ME TOO.



GO GET JILL AND THE PILOT. WE HAVE TO ROLL. THE STORM'S COMING.

THAT'S A STRANGE CLOUD...



"IT'S AS IF IT'S CARRYING A BUNCH OF ANIMALS..."

...I SEE AN IBIS, A HAWK, A CROCODILE, A JACKAL, A RAM, A COBRA, AND A BLACK CAT..."



ARE YOU PLANNING ON STAYING HERE?

NO. I'LL FINISH DONADON'S FILM, EVEN THOUGH THERE'S NO HOPE OF GETTING IT DISTRIBUTED, AND THEN GO BACK TO EUROPE. SOON AFTER, MY SON WILL LEARN TO LIVE ON HIS OWN. HE'LL LEAVE WITH GOSOL TO LEAD A LIFE I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT... MUCH THE BETTER FOR ME.

"RETURN WITH YOUR FANS AND YOUR CLAWS, HANDSOME KITTEN, TO MY EVER-LOVING HEART, WHILE I RETURN TO YOUR EYES, WHERE I SAW THOSE GEMS THAT WON ME FROM THE START"



I'LL KEEP WORKING IN THE MOVIE BUSINESS... HAVE ANOTHER CHILD, A MORE NORMAL ONE... TRAVEL EXTENSIVELY, DOING SPECIAL REPORTS, AND MEET MY DEATH ACCIDENTALLY IN ONE OF THOSE INTERMINABLE BALKAN CONFLICTS. I'LL BE SIXTY-SEVEN, WITH NO REGRETS.



AND NOW YOUR TURN, YE- LENA.

"I'LL LIVE SEVEN HAPPY AND STORMY YEARS WITH NIKO, BUT WON'T STAY WITH HIM AFTER THAT... I'LL START A FAMILY WITH ANOTHER MAN AND CONTINUE RESEARCHING RARE GENETIC CASES... I'LL DIE VERY OLD, SURROUNDED BY CHILDREN AND ANIMALS, BUT WITH ONE HAUNTING PROFESSIONAL REGRET: OF NEVER HAVING BEEN ABLE TO APPROACH YOUR CHILD..."



AND YOU, NIKO?

ME? WELL, SEVEN HAPPY AND STORMY YEARS WITH YOU SOUNDS LIKE ENOUGH FOR ME... AS FOR THE REST, IT'S ALL A NIGHTMARE... I LOOKED DEEP BUT MY LIFE IS A WELL WITH NO BOTTOM AND NO END... "I AM VAMPIRE, DOWN TO THE CORE ONE OF THOSE FORGOTTEN GREAT MEN WHO WILL SUFFER, AGAIN AND AGAIN ETERNAL LAUGHTER, BUT SMILE NO MORE!"

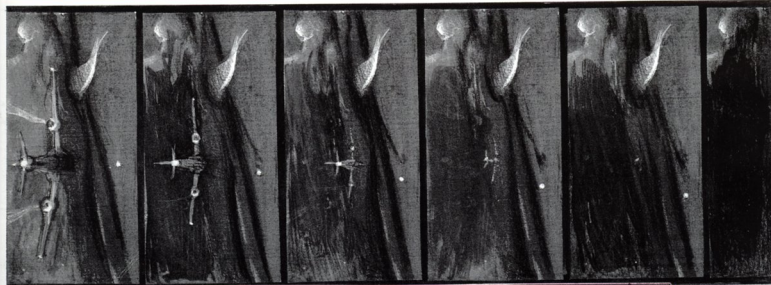
ARE THESE GREEN STRIPES NATURAL?



WAKING UP EARLY, AS IF HURRIED, THE DESERT WIND MARKS 3:7 ON THE OLD EOLE SCALE.



"...DONADONI WOULD HAVE LIKED THIS SHOT... I'M CERTAIN OF IT... HE WOULD HAVE LIKED THE CROWDED FRAME, WITH THE PEOPLE FLYING AWAY IN THE AIRPLANE, THE CLOUD WITH THE STRANGE TAIL, EVEN THAT BRIGHT SPOT IN THE BOTTOM THIRD OF THE SKY, WHICH MUST BE A SATELLITE... HE WOULD HAVE GONE CRAZY TRYING TO FIND THE SYMBOLISM!"
-TELL ME WHEN TO CUT!



-DON'T CUT! LET IT KEEP ROLLING UNTIL THE RUN-OUT, UNTIL THE EMPTY FRAME, UNTIL THE END.