



J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI'S

RAISING

STARS

issue
#4

Digital
Edition

UNTOUCHABLE

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Fiona Avery • Brent Anderson


RISING STARS: UNTOUCHABLE ISSUE #4
"BINDINGS"




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AND SO I CAME TO THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN AND INSTEAD OF COMING AS A SPY, I WAS REVEALED TO HIM, AND FOUND MYSELF ACCEPTING HIS TERMS FOR THE MOMENT.



THIS MAKES ME A DOUBLE AGENT. THE OLD MAN SUPPOSEDLY HAS INFORMATION ON MY SUPERIOR, THE ONE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR MY CURRENT WOES, THE MAN WITH NO FACE WHO IS RUNNING THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ELIMINATION.



THERE'S ONLY ONE THING I DON'T UNDERSTAND. HE DECIDED NOT TO KILL ME BECAUSE HE WANTS TO PROVE SOMETHING TO ME. BUT WHY ME? WHY AM I OF IMPORTANCE TO HIM?



UNLESS HE'S LYING.

**KNOCK
KNOCK**

LAUREL,
IT'S OMAR.
ARE YOU
READY?



WE'RE GOING BACK INTO THE CITY TODAY. THE OLD MAN HAS SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.

OMAR, IS IT ALL RIGHT IF I ASK YOU ABOUT HIM?

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?



I'VE BEEN PREPARED FOR MANY THINGS. WAR, DEATH, BETRAYAL. I WASN'T PREPARED TO FIND A COURTEOUS AMERICAN ASSASSIN.

I ONLY *WORK* FOR BARBARIANS.

HOW CAN YOU KILL FOR A GOVERNMENT YOU DON'T RESPECT?



I DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE. BESIDES, I THOUGHT I WAS THE ONE ASKING QUESTIONS HERE.

FORGIVE ME. ASK AWAY, THOUGH I FEAR THERE'S NOT MUCH TO TELL YOU THAT ISN'T ALREADY KNOWN.

DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE HE'S BEEN AROUND SINCE THE CRUSADES?



HERE YOU DISAPPOINT ME. THIS IS THE FIRST QUESTION EVERYONE ASKS, ENEMY OR NEW RECRUIT. BUT THEN AGAIN, YOU ARE BOTH ENEMY AND RECRUIT.

I WILL KILL HIM IF HE CAN'T PROVIDE THIS ALLEGED INFORMATION ABOUT THE TRUE IDENTITY OF MY SUPERVISOR.



I WOULD EXPECT NOTHING LESS FROM AMERICA'S TOP ASSASSIN.



I SEE THE OLD MAN WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU, YOU DON'T LIKE KILLING.

YOU'RE BEING COY WITH YOUR ANSWERS HERE. DO YOU BELIEVE HE WAS TRULY THE MASTER OF THE FIRST ASSASSINS THAT EVER EXISTED--THE ONES WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THE CRUSADERS?



IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I BELIEVE. THOUSANDS ALREADY BELIEVE IT, TURNING LEGEND INTO REALITY. I'M GLAD FOR IT. IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE OUR WORLD HAD A LIVING MYTH.

WHAT'S MYTH HAVE TO DO WITH GAINING A TRUE POLITICAL ADVANTAGE?



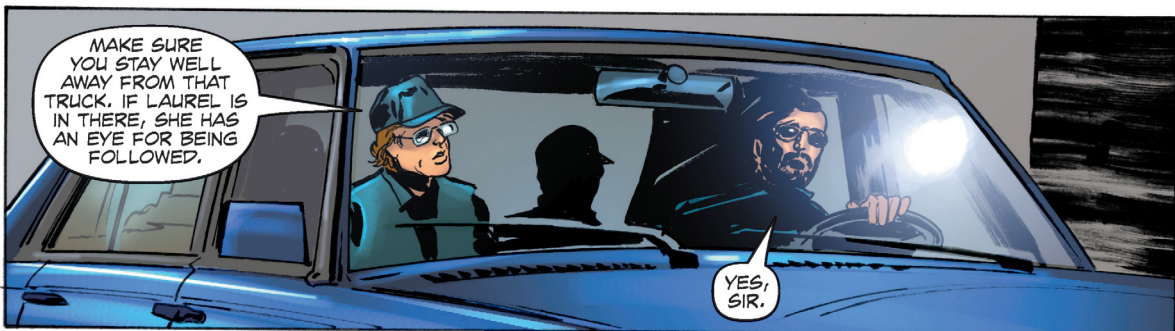
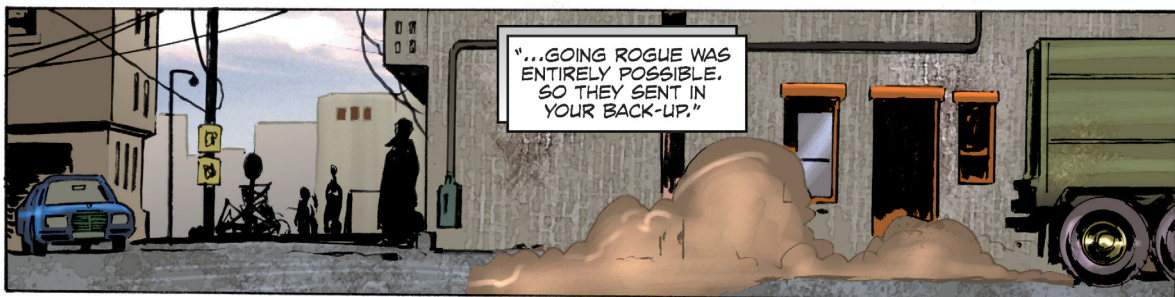
YOU'RE SUCH A MYTH YOURSELF. YOU TELL ME.

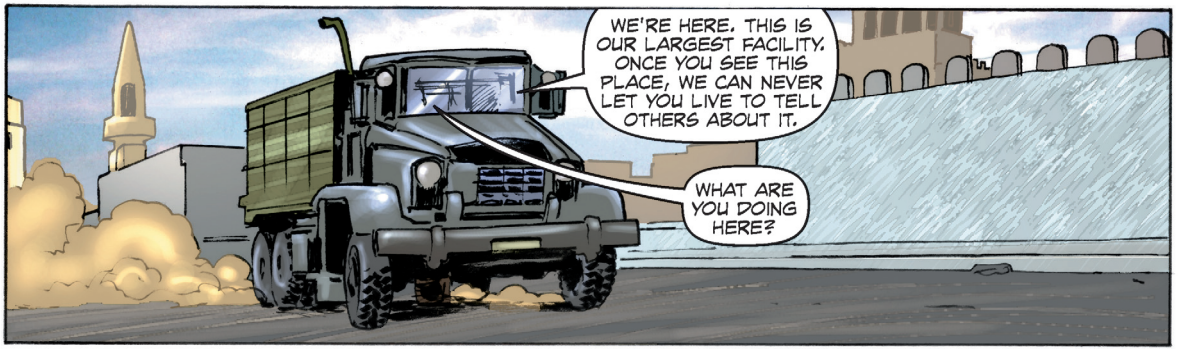


I WOULDN'T LEARN ANYTHING USEFUL FROM OMAR. HE WAS TOO CLOSE TO THE OLD MAN.

BUT THIS TRIP TO THE CITY WOULD PROVIDE INFORMATION ON WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON. SINCE THE CIA BRIEFS WERE SKETCHY AT BEST IT WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING HERE.

AND WITH MY NEW SKILLS, I COULD TAKE OUT UP TO 100 PEOPLE AT A TIME IF NECESSARY. I COULD EASILY ELIMINATE THOSE WHO KNOW MY REAL IDENTITY HERE AND STILL GET AWAY.





WE'RE HERE. THIS IS OUR LARGEST FACILITY. ONCE YOU SEE THIS PLACE, WE CAN NEVER LET YOU LIVE TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT IT.

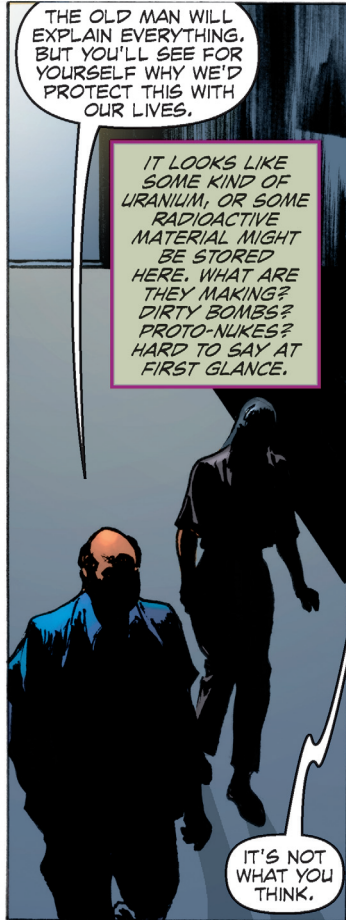
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



WE'RE BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR PEOPLE.

IN THE DARK? UNDER PAIN OF DEATH WITH THE SECRECY?

WHAT KIND OF FUTURE COULD THAT POSSIBLY BE AND WHO THE HELL WOULD WANT IT?



THE OLD MAN WILL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING. BUT YOU'LL SEE FOR YOURSELF WHY WE'D PROTECT THIS WITH OUR LIVES.

IT LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF URANIUM, OR SOME RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL MIGHT BE STORED HERE. WHAT ARE THEY MAKING? DIRTY BOMBS? PROTO-NUKES? HARD TO SAY AT FIRST GLANCE.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK.

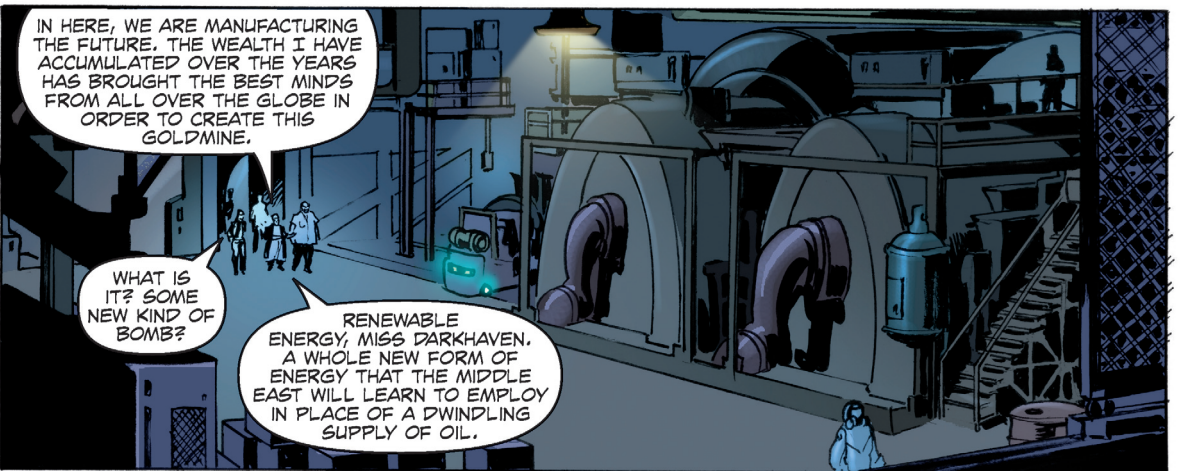


HELLO, AGAIN.

YOU MUST HAVE MANY QUESTIONS.

A WHOLE RUNNING TALLY.

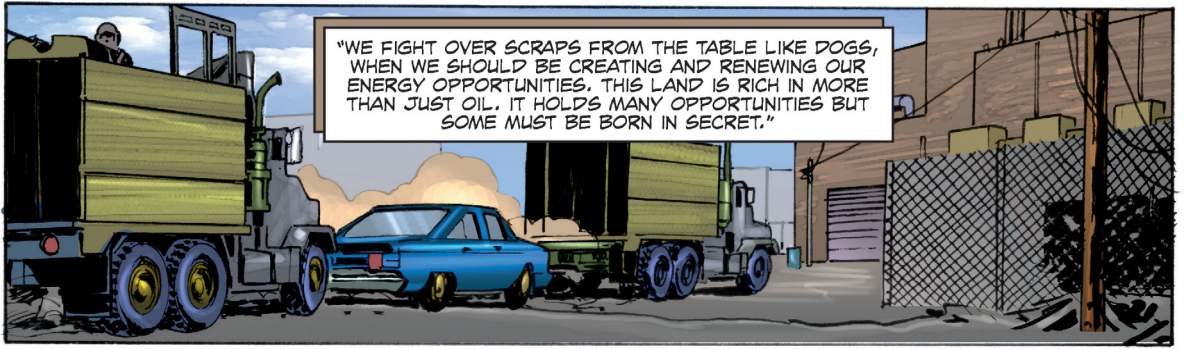
THEN LET'S NOT WASTE ANY TIME. THIS IS OUR PRODUCTION ROOM.



IN HERE, WE ARE MANUFACTURING THE FUTURE. THE WEALTH I HAVE ACCUMULATED OVER THE YEARS HAS BROUGHT THE BEST MINDS FROM ALL OVER THE GLOBE IN ORDER TO CREATE THIS GOLDMINE.

WHAT IS IT? SOME NEW KIND OF BOMB?

RENEWABLE ENERGY, MISS DARKHAVEN. A WHOLE NEW FORM OF ENERGY THAT THE MIDDLE EAST WILL LEARN TO EMPLOY IN PLACE OF A DWINDLING SUPPLY OF OIL.



"WE FIGHT OVER SCRAPS FROM THE TABLE LIKE DOGS, WHEN WE SHOULD BE CREATING AND RENEWING OUR ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES. THIS LAND IS RICH IN MORE THAN JUST OIL. IT HOLDS MANY OPPORTUNITIES BUT SOME MUST BE BORN IN SECRET."

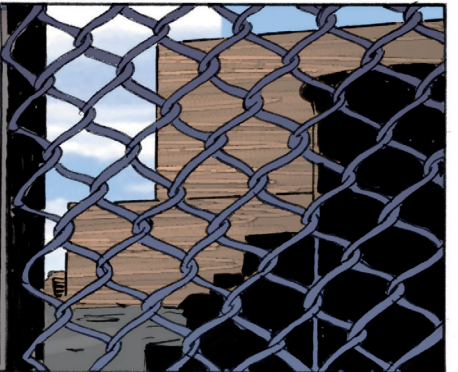


"THIS IS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS? I... I DON'T BELIEVE IT."

"THE BEST WAY TO MOVE FORWARD IS TO FIND ONE THING THAT EVERYONE HERE CAN BELIEVE IN. SURELY YOU DIDN'T THINK THAT WAS *ME*, DID YOU? I'M NOT A FAN OF CULT WORSHIP!"



"I'M NOT SAYING IT'S A BAD IDEA. JUST THAT YOU COULD BE USING IT AS A CONVENIENT COVER FOR WORSE THINGS."



WE HAVE COMPANY! THE WHOLE CIA PRACTICALLY-- IT LOOKS BAD!



WHAT THE--? OH, HELL!



BRATTA BRATTA BRATTA BRATTA

BRATTA BRATTA BRATTA BRATTA

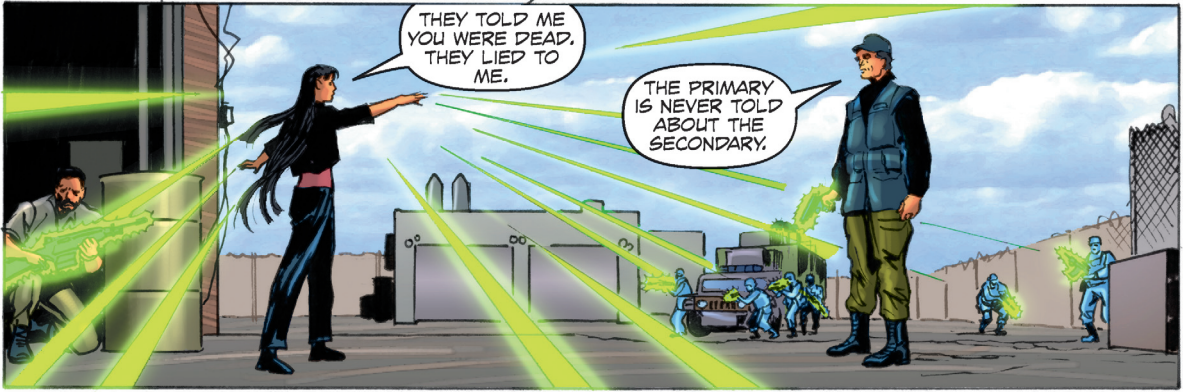
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT THE FIRST THING I DO IS STOP THE GUNS.

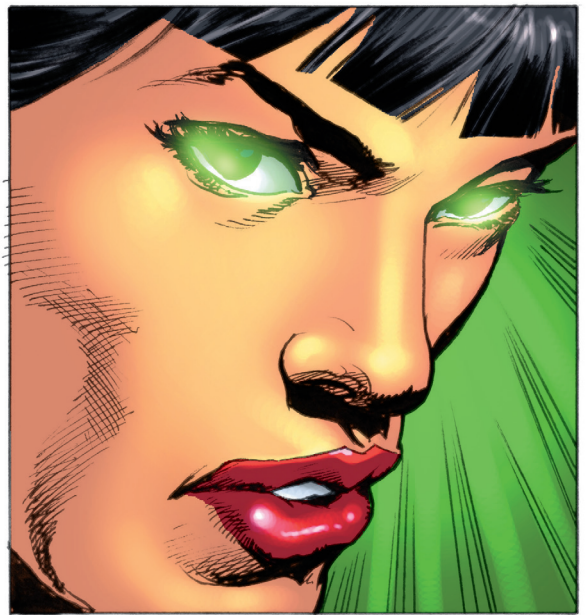
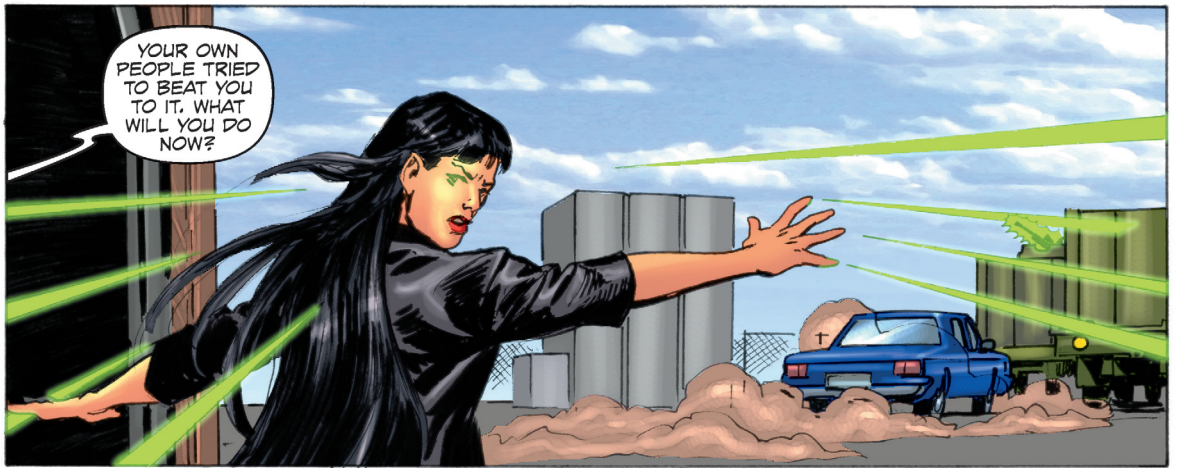
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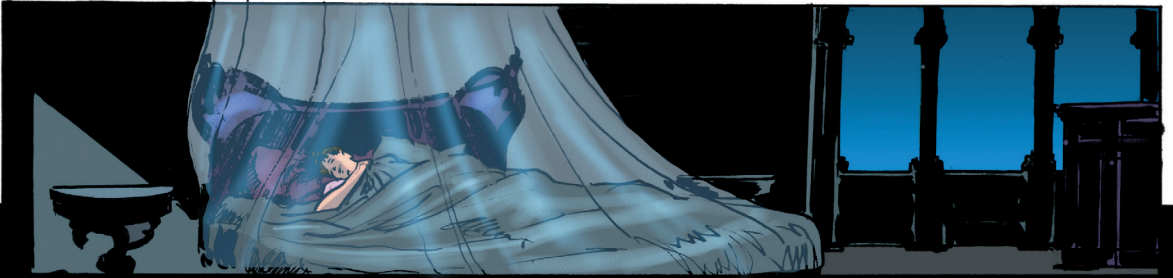
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM

CHING

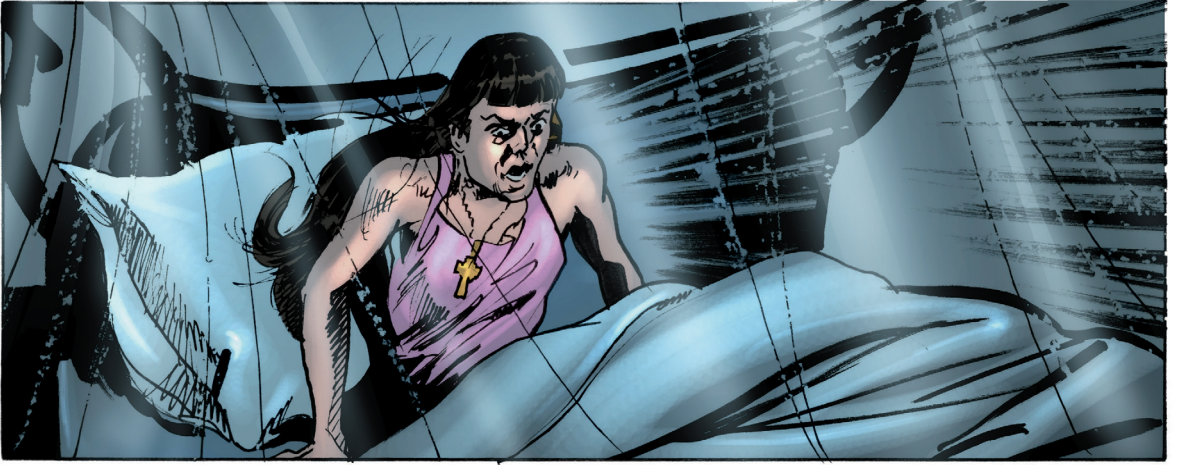












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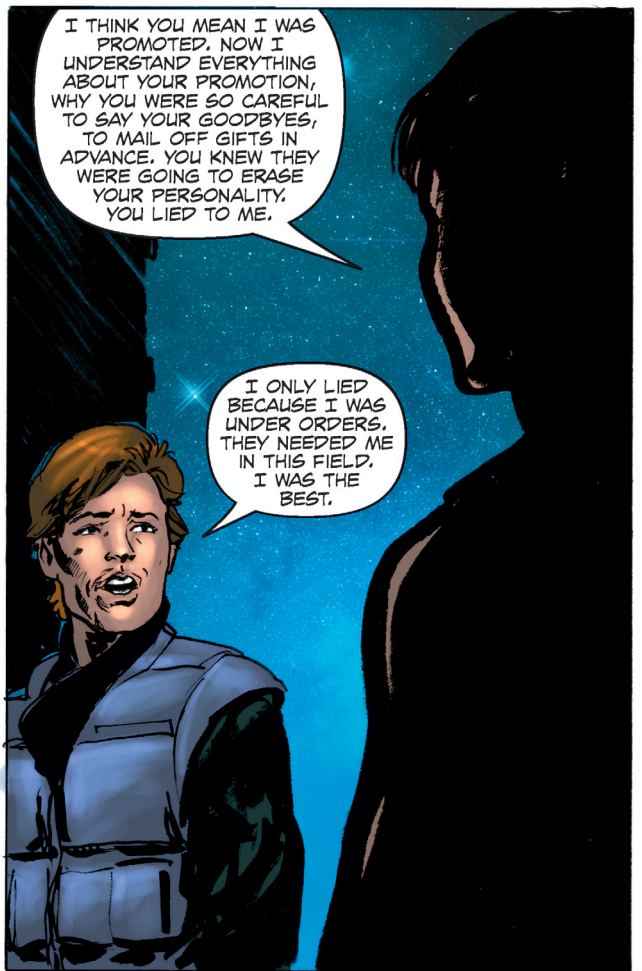
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I ALMOST THOUGHT YOU WERE A GHOST.

THAT'S MY LINE. AFTER ALL, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO "DIED" RECENTLY.



I THINK YOU MEAN I WAS PROMOTED. NOW I UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR PROMOTION, WHY YOU WERE SO CAREFUL TO SAY YOUR GOODBYES, TO MAIL OFF GIFTS IN ADVANCE. YOU KNEW THEY WERE GOING TO ERASE YOUR PERSONALITY. YOU LIED TO ME.

I ONLY LIED BECAUSE I WAS UNDER ORDERS. THEY NEEDED ME IN THIS FIELD. I WAS THE BEST.



I'M THE BEST NOW. BUT IT SEEMS MY OWN AGENCY DOESN'T TRUST ME. THERE'S ONLY ONE REASON THEY SENT YOU HERE AND THAT'S TO KILL ME IF I GO ROGUE OR TURN TO THE ENEMY'S SIDE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING THEN?



I WASN'T HAPPY WITH THE INFORMATION THE CIA HAD ON THESE PEOPLE. I WANTED MORE INFORMATION BEFORE I MADE THE KILL. THE OLD MAN IS WELL AWARE I'M AN ASSASSIN. HE HAD MY INFORMATION.

HOW'S THAT POSSIBLE?!

SOME LEAK, I SUPPOSE. BUT EVEN KNOWING I WAS HERE TO INFILTRATE HIS GROUP AND THEN ASSASSINATE HIM, HE DIDN'T KILL ME.

INSTEAD, HE ASKED IF I'D HEAR HIM OUT, SEE WHAT HE WAS BUILDING HERE IN THE DESERT OF IRAN. AND I'M GOING TO KEEP MY WORD.



SO THEN YOU ARE TURNING ON US.

NO, I TOLD HIM IF WHAT HE HAD TO SHOW ME DIDN'T SATISFY ME, I'D KILL HIM. IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY PEOPLE IN HIS ORGANIZATION KNOW WHO I AM, I CAN TAKE THEM ALL OUT EASILY.



YOUR POWER HAS GROWN IMMENSELY SINCE WE LAST TRAINED, THEN.

MY POWER'S GROWN, BUT MY PATIENCE HAS GOTTEN QUITE SHORT. ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO KILL ME IF I GO ROGUE? I NEED TO KNOW THE TRUTH.



THOSE ARE MY ORDERS. IF YOU GO ROGUE, I MAY NOT HAVE MUCH OF A CHANCE NOW, BUT I'M GOING TO GIVE IT MY BEST SHOT.



I SEE. THIS ONE FAILED.

WHAT...?



AND BESIDES, I HAVEN'T MADE UP MY MIND ABOUT KILLING THE OLD MAN YET. SO YOU WERE ACTING PREMATURELY.

STOP!



THAT ISN'T ONE OF MY GUYS!

IT ISN'T?

I CAME HERE ALONE, JUST AS I PROMISED!

OH, CRAP.



DO YOU KNOW HIM?

THIS IS SAM. OH, S#@!. THEY SENT IN A THIRD.

MEANING, IF I CAN TRUST YOU, THEN SAM HERE WAS MEANT TO TAKE US BOTH OUT. BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T TRUST US.



I FOUND THIS. IT'S DEFINITELY CIA.

I WANT TO TAKE A LOOK AT THAT.

I HAVE A MICROFICHE READER BACK AT BASE. C'MON--



LOOKS LIKE IT DOESN'T STOP AT JUST SAM.

BRATTA BRATTA

WHIZZ

CRING

C'MON-- THERE'S ANOTHER WAY OUT.



BRATTA BRATTA

BRATTA BRATTA

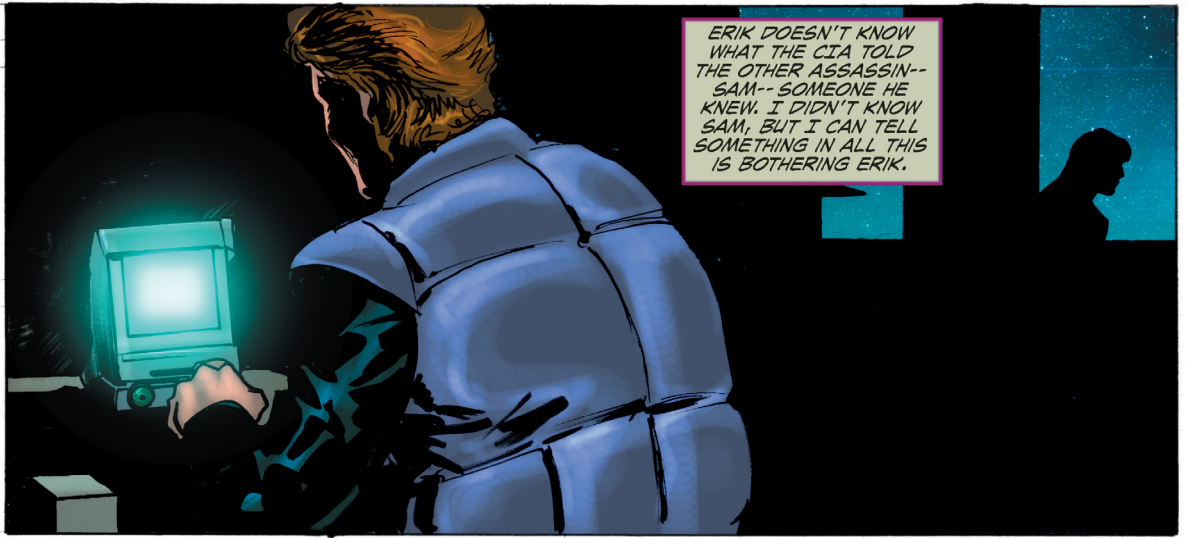
BLANG BLAM

BLAM

BLAM



IT WAS THREE HOURS LATER, BUT WE'D FINALLY LOST THE POSSE ON OUR BACKS.



ERIK DOESN'T KNOW WHAT THE CIA TOLD THE OTHER ASSASSIN-- SAM-- SOMEONE HE KNEW. I DIDN'T KNOW SAM, BUT I CAN TELL SOMETHING IN ALL THIS IS BOTHERING ERIK.



YOU FIND ANYTHING?

YEAH...



IT'S A DEAD DROP. SAM MUST HAVE BEEN ON HIS WAY THERE WHEN THE CIA OVERRODE THEIR ORDERS AND TOLD HIM TO COME FIND US.

WHICH MEANS WE'RE BEING WATCHED, EVEN AS WE'RE DOING OUR OWN WATCH.

GUESS THEY REALLY DON'T TRUST EITHER OF US.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?





"WHAT WILL YOU DO, LAUREL DARKHAVEN...WHEN YOU LEARN THE TRUTH?"



MS. DARKHAVEN?



LAUREL? PARDON ME, I'M COMING IN.



YOU WON'T FIND HER THERE. SHE'S LEFT TO MEET WITH SOMEONE SHE TRUSTS.

THE CIA! WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

NOTHING YET. WE WAIT FOR THE CHAOS TO REACH A BREAKING POINT AND THEN WE LOOT A BURNING HOUSE.



CAN YOU REALLY AFFORD TO TAKE THAT CHANCE? I CAN TAKE YOU TO ANOTHER SAFE HOUSE. THERE'S STILL TIME.

YES, THERE'S STILL TIME. TIME FOR MS. DARKHAVEN TO CHANGE HER MIND.

ABOUT US?

ABOUT EVERYTHING. GO TO HER NOW. PROTECT HER AS YOU WOULD YOUR OWN SISTER.



BUT-- I--

I KNOW WHERE SHE IS. PROTECT HER. THIS IS MY COMMAND.

YES, SIR.

