

OBRENOVIĆ • RADOVANOVIĆ • VITOROVIĆ • RUS • SLIPČEVIĆ

CARD BOARD CITY



ebook





P69

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CARBOARD CITY

Modesty
COMICS

2016.



**Željko Obrenović, Nemanja Radovanović,
Željko Vitorović, Gašper Rus, Miroslav Slipčević**
Cardboard City

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for artistic purposes.

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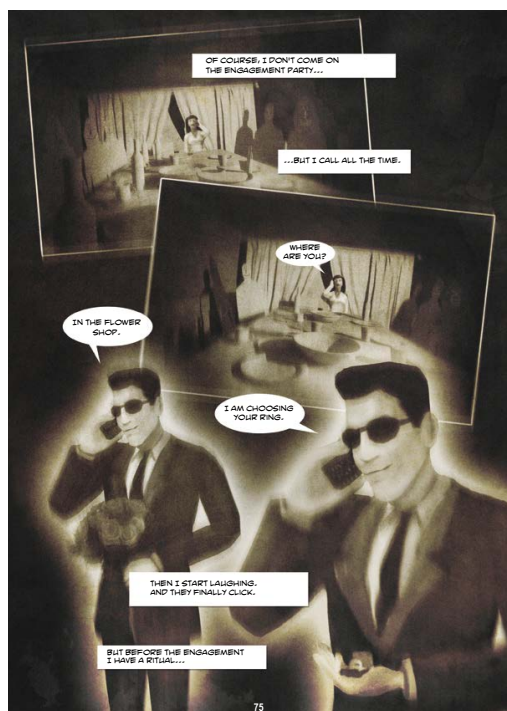
Željko Obrenović, Miroslav Slipčević - Mimi

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Relocated Reality

The skill of writing in short literary form is well known and recognized in literary theory and critique, but on the other hand short comics forms, with the exception of comics strips in the daily press, are very rare, which is why it is worth devoting time and attention to them, especially in the case of the collection of works from the writer and scrip writer Željko Obrenović. He is the mastermind behind this series of



The compact storytelling

very well illustrated narratives and builds an authentic and autonomous artistic universe, with a whole team of artists, in a truly unusual and commendable way, one apparently known, but essentially relocated from boring reality.

What connects the world of the near future in which the division of the world powers, with China and India at the forefront, as expected, but still radically refreshing, and where one cow

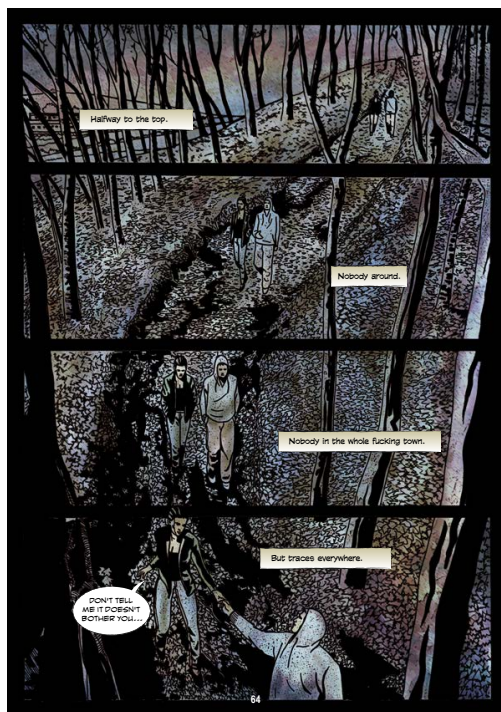
holds the fate of the nations and religions, with an intimate narrative that through just a single phone call destroys the entire inner worlds, or a playful fable about coincidences from which the love is born, or contemplations on the topic of the evolution of the planet through pollution, or finally, a gruesome story set a century back in the time of the First World War? It seems there is a very little connection, but Obrenović's poetics is essentially rounded in one incredibly extensive set whose lowest common denominator is an objective quality of storytelling and, in particular – making plot twists. At the end of almost every episode is "The Twilight Zone", where the final turn of the screw is something you begin to wait for as reading progresses, and never disappoints!

On the other hand, in the course of some of the stories, and often in their entirety, there are a



Unexpected twists

lot of dialogue sequences, which as every comics author will tell you, are the death of dynamics. Nevertheless, Obrenović and a drawing collective of Vitorović, Radovanović, Rus



Skillful directing

and Mimi, have managed by skilful directing, constant changes of perspective, expressions, and with many, many gestures to render every of these conversations exciting in the way of comics art. However, none of this would be of worth if the replicas of characters are not

sophistically multi-layered, without losing any of vitality that makes them real and credible.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but it is not true, not really, and the terribly limited expressive capacity in which Obrenović builds narratives worthy of entire novels, such as the fantasy-horror "Viper", and perhaps the best story "Death is a Cliché", shows that he is able to cope and with only a few sentences to say more than others in hundreds. A blow to the stomach which is so common in his small masterpieces is an indication that with limited narrative tools, and on only a few pages, it is possible to create an emotional response equal to that of which readers of other works get to after hours and hours of reading.

Perhaps the greatest value of everything contained in this release is its re-readability. Many things will not even be recognised after the first reading, which goes through the slalom of drama and excitement and you do not have time to stop and admire the carefully nuanced expressions of the protagonist, through different but complementary drawing styles or colour (by Stanković, Radovanović and Sedlan) that build the atmosphere. The efforts of all involved, although obvious from the first reading, can be identified in their full extent only by deeper analysis, and "Cardboard City" deserves that and multiple awards for trust and commitment.

Pavle Zelić, writer, comics script
writer and critic (Sandy Chronicle,
Team Dardanelles)

Paper Bullets

I first encountered the work of Zeljko Obrenovic through Facebook, that most quintessentially modern medium of communication. The comic he sent me was a murder story where the victim was love and the bogus evidence for betrayal was a tube of toothpaste. The story was about misdirection, a literary sleight-of-hand. But it was more than a conjuring trick. When the illusion has been dispelled you realize that something profound has been revealed.

This collection of stories live up to the expectations of that early story and once again the narratives turn out to be enigmatic and complex. The title story, *Cardboard City* portrays an alternative future where the creation of a purple Super Cow by a Swiss chocolate company causes all other cows on Earth to die and leads to global warfare. It's an absurdist sci-fi espionage story, surreal, implausible and yet totally believable. It successfully exposes the corruption and self-destructive nature of national politics, genetic manipulation and capitalist economics. The *Cardboard City* of the title is a flimsy structure that houses the rootless transients who are "outside the system" but it is also a metaphorical construct that reflects the fragility

of the global community we all live in.

Obrenovic refers to cinema repeatedly. *Chinatown* is neatly referenced in *Cardboard City* and in *A Dog Is a Man's Best Friend* two characters, who could be twin brothers, or perhaps two versions of the same person, conduct a confused exchange where they struggle to identify actors and plots as memory and identity blur into an ambiguous haze. The ambiguity extends to gender identity and morality too. Are these characters lying to one another or deceiving themselves?

In *The Museum of Trash* a couple wanders through a landscape devastated by a nuclear accident. This time the confusion is over a quotation from Proust, misidentified as Flaubert. In *À La Recherche Des Temps Perdus* Proust experiences a wave of pleasant nostalgia, triggered by the taste of a Madeleine cake. Here the memories are triggered by a beer bottle or a cigarette packet, and the couple contemplate a future where, instead of seeing pieces of trash scattered among nature, "Our child will walk through trash and observe pieces of nature."

A depressing thought...

Viper is a revenge story with a twist in its serpentine tail and perhaps the most conventional of the stories, but *For You* once more delves into identity confusion as the protagonist appears to be following a plotline written in a letter to himself. His name is Marko Ven, one of three characters in this collection called Marko, perhaps an alias of Obrenovic himself? 'Ven' is a digital currency, originally used by the social network service, Hub Culture. The character Ana Pavlova is searching for Alt Cult and by this time I'm feeling as if the author is seriously messing with my head.

In *Death Is a Cliché* another Marko drives towards a destiny that seems to be shaped by



According to Chekhov, when a gun is introduced in the first act, it must be fired...



...whether the gun is fired off stage...

the lyrics of Kurt Cobain. The story is exquisitely composed and executed and the characters' fate as inescapable as a shotgun to the head.

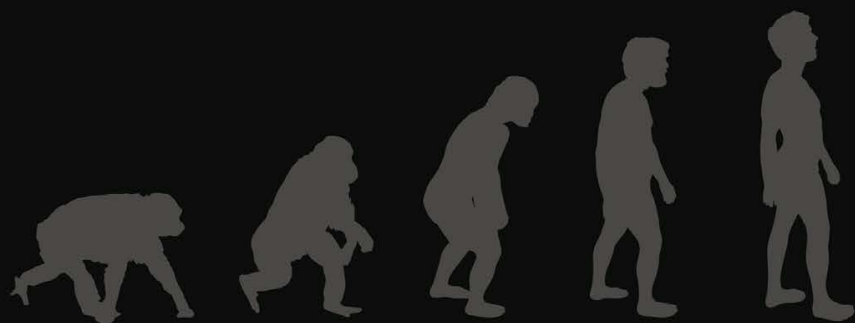
The book is rounded out with *In The Name of The Father*, another revenge story, and this time the bullet travels through many years before it finds its target.

All of these stories are intimate and personal and yet they express universal truths about the nature of humankind. They are full of apparent coincidences but I can state with some conviction that every instance of synchronicity is crafted with great purpose. I invite you, the reader, to explore the layers of meaning for yourself.



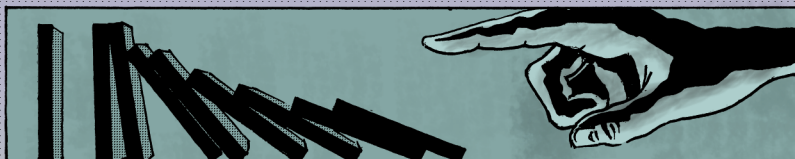
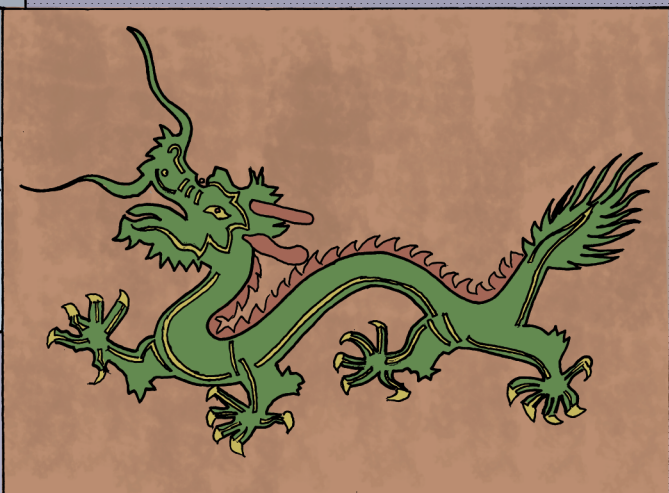
...or pointed right at your head...

Dejvid Hajn, writer and comics script writer
(*Strange Embrace*, *Silent War*,
The Bulletproof Coffin, *X-Men*, *Daredevil*)





THE CHINO-INDO WAR STARTED OVERNIGHT, AND IT TOOK A GOOD THREE YEARS FOR THE FALLING DOMINOS TO STOP.



...AND ALL OTHER NATIONS BECAME THEIR COLONIES.

WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT (ONE GOT MORE LAND AND ONE MORE SEA), THEY MOVED THE EQUATOR.

WHEN THEY FINALLY DID, THE CHINESE AND INDIANS DIVIDED THE EARTH IN HALF, ALONG THE EQUATOR...

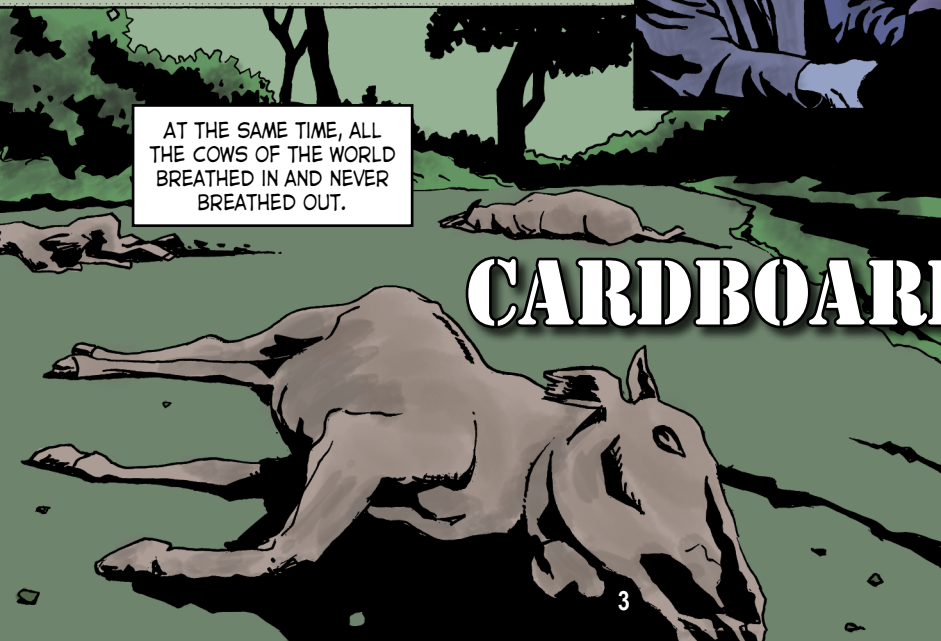
AND EVERYTHING BEGAN WITH DEAD COWS.



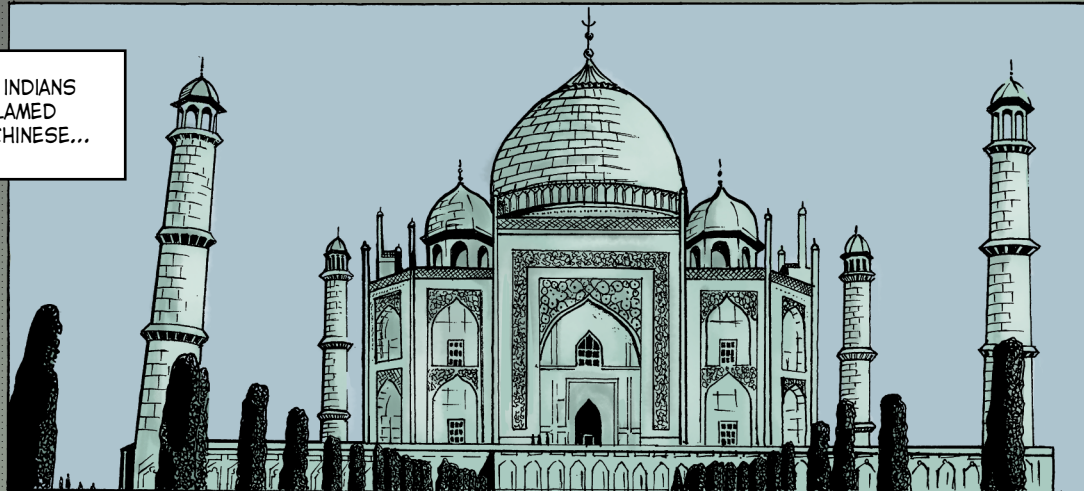
AT THE SAME TIME, ALL THE COWS OF THE WORLD BREATHED IN AND NEVER BREATHED OUT.

CARDBOARD CITY

SCRIPT:
ŽELJKO OBRENOVIĆ
ART:
ŽELJKO VITOROVIĆ
COLOR:
FILIP STANKOVIĆ



THE INDIANS
BLAMED
THE CHINESE...



... AND AS THEY HAD OVER
A MILLION PEOPLE AND THE
ATOMIC BOMB SINCE 1947,
IT WASN'T HARD FOR THEM
TO START A WAR.

AND CHINA, THE NATION WITH
THE SECOND HIGHEST LEVEL
OF GDP, A MILLION PEOPLE AND
THE ATOMIC BOMB, DIDN'T
THINK TWICE TO RETALIATE.



NO ONE HAD THE TIME TO FIND OUT THE
REAL CULPRIT, MOTIVATION WAS ENOUGH...



...AND WHILE THE WAR WAS ON, IT WAS
DISCOVERED THAT THE CULPRITS WERE
NOT THE CHINESE, BUT IN FACT THE SWISS.





BEFORE THE WAR, THE SWISS WERE WORKING TO IMPROVE SELLING OF MILKA CHOCOLATE TO THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES.



THEY DID GENETIC EXPERIMENTS TO FIND OUT HOW TO MAKE A PURPLE COW.

THE EXPERIMENT FINALLY WORKED, BUT WHETHER IT WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS WE DON'T KNOW...

...BECAUSE WITH THE BIRTH OF THE PURPLE COW...

...ALL THE COWS IN THE WORLD DIED.

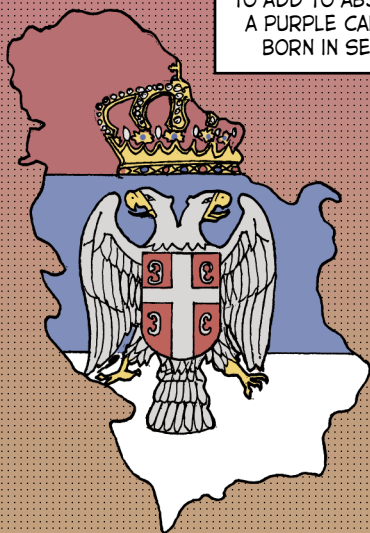


AND THEN THE WAR BEGAN, AND
NO ONE CARED ABOUT CHOCO-
LATE, NOT EVEN SWISS ONES.

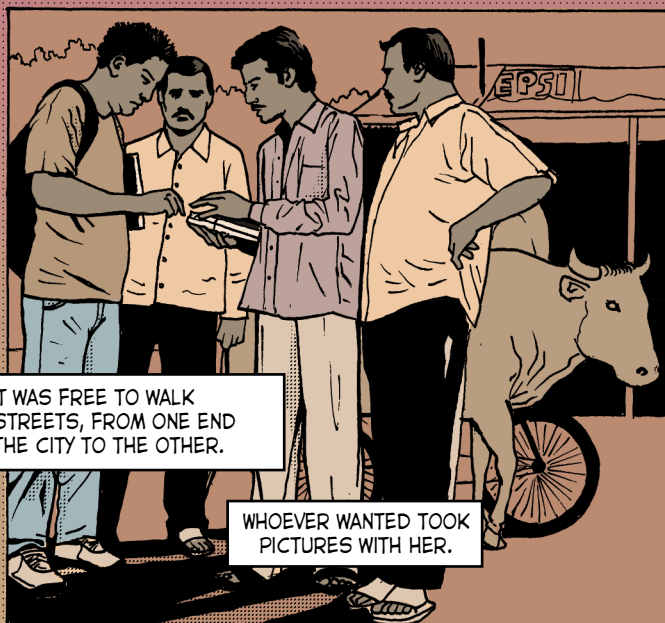


WHEN IT WAS
DISCOVERED WHO
WAS AT FAULT,
NO ONE CARED.

TO ADD TO ABSURDITY,
A PURPLE CALF WAS
BORN IN SERBIA.



IT WAS FREE TO WALK
THE STREETS, FROM ONE END
OF THE CITY TO THE OTHER.



WHOEVER WANTED TOOK
PICTURES WITH HER.

WHOEVER WANTED
FED HER.

BUT NO ONE HURT HER,
NO ONE DARED. ONE WAR
CAUSED BY COWS' DEATH
WAS ENOUGH.



THE MORNING STARTED TOO EARLY, WITH A MAN WHO WAS STANDING OVER MY BED TAPPING HIS PISTOL INTO A BOTTLE OF SCHNAPPS.



BECAUSE THAT DIDN'T WORK, HE KNOCKED THE BOTTLE OVER WITH HIS PISTOL AND ONTO THE FLOOR...

...WHICH GREETED IT.



THE SOUND WAS ENOUGH FOR ME TO OPEN ONE EYE...



...WHICH IS WHAT THE INTRUDER WANTED.

I WOULD TRY TO SHAKE YOU BUT I WAS AFRAID OF INFECTION.

THOSE CLOTHES...





CHIEF OF THE INDIAN
STATE POLICE RESPON-
SIBLE FOR THIS PART
OF THE WORLD.

2012.

HE WAS RIGHT. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
THAT SOMEONE HADN'T HEARD
OF HIM, BUT FEW HAVE SEEN HIM.

LET ALONE OUT-LIVED HIM.

WHEN YOU MEET SOME
ONE LIKE HIM, EVEN IF YOU
DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS...

2017.


...SOMETHING TELLS
YOU THAT YOU SHOULD
LOWER YOUR GLANCE...

2020.

...AND PUT THAT
MEMORY SOMEWHERE
WHERE NOT EVEN YOU
WILL FIND IT.

2026.





I ACCEPTED THE FILE, BUT I DIDN'T OPEN IT. IT WASN'T NECESSARY - I WASN'T INTERESTED. I WASN'T EVEN A DETECTIVE.

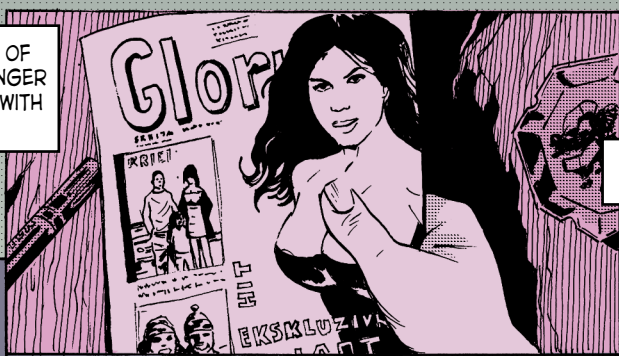
THE JOURNALIST OF A TRASHY TABLOID WHO JUST HAPPENED TO SOLVE THE CASE OF A KIDNAPPED CHILD OF A NOT-TO-BE-NAMED FOLK SINGER.



I WAS SLEEPING IN FRONT OF HER HOUSE WAITING TO TAKE A PICTURE OF HER WITH HER NEW GUY...


...WHEN HER SISTER SHOWED UP, THE SPINSTER WHO WAS TOO ATTACHED TO HER NEPHEW AND DECIDED TO TAKE THE BOY FOR A LONG WALK.

NEVERTHELESS, INSTEAD OF WITH THE NEW GUY, THE SINGER ENDED UP ON THE COVER WITH ME AND HER SON.



WORDS OF THANKS AND THE REST OF IT.

WHEN MY SALARY WAS LATE, AND THE REQUEST FROM PEOPLE GREW, I ACCEPTED ONE OR TWO, ACTUALLY ELEVEN OR TWELVE, CASES.



I DEFINITELY WASN'T AN EXPERT THAT COULD HELP A MAN LIKE ALFA. WHATEVER IT WAS, IT STANK. AND IT WASN'T MY CLOTHES.



BEFORE YOU
SAY ANYTHING, TWO
THINGS.

ONE, YOU
ARE NECESSARY TO US
BECAUSE THIS IS DELICATE
AND I DON'T WANT THEM
KNOWING WE ARE
INVESTIGATING.

TWO, YOU WON'T
NEED A JOB FOR
THE NEXT YEAR.
OK?

HE HAD ME
AT ONCE.

AS I SAID, ALL
THE INFORMATION IS
THERE ALONG WITH
MY NUMBER.

BEFORE I
AGREE...



MILKA. MILKA
IS THE CASE.

ACCORDING TO THE SPILLED BLOOD
AND THE DNA ANALYSIS FOUND IN ALFA'S
FILE, MILKA WOULDN'T SURVIVE THIS.

NOT FOR A MOMENT DID I WONDER HOW
I WOULD HANDLE THE RESPONSIBILITY
IF THIS STARTED A NEW WAR.

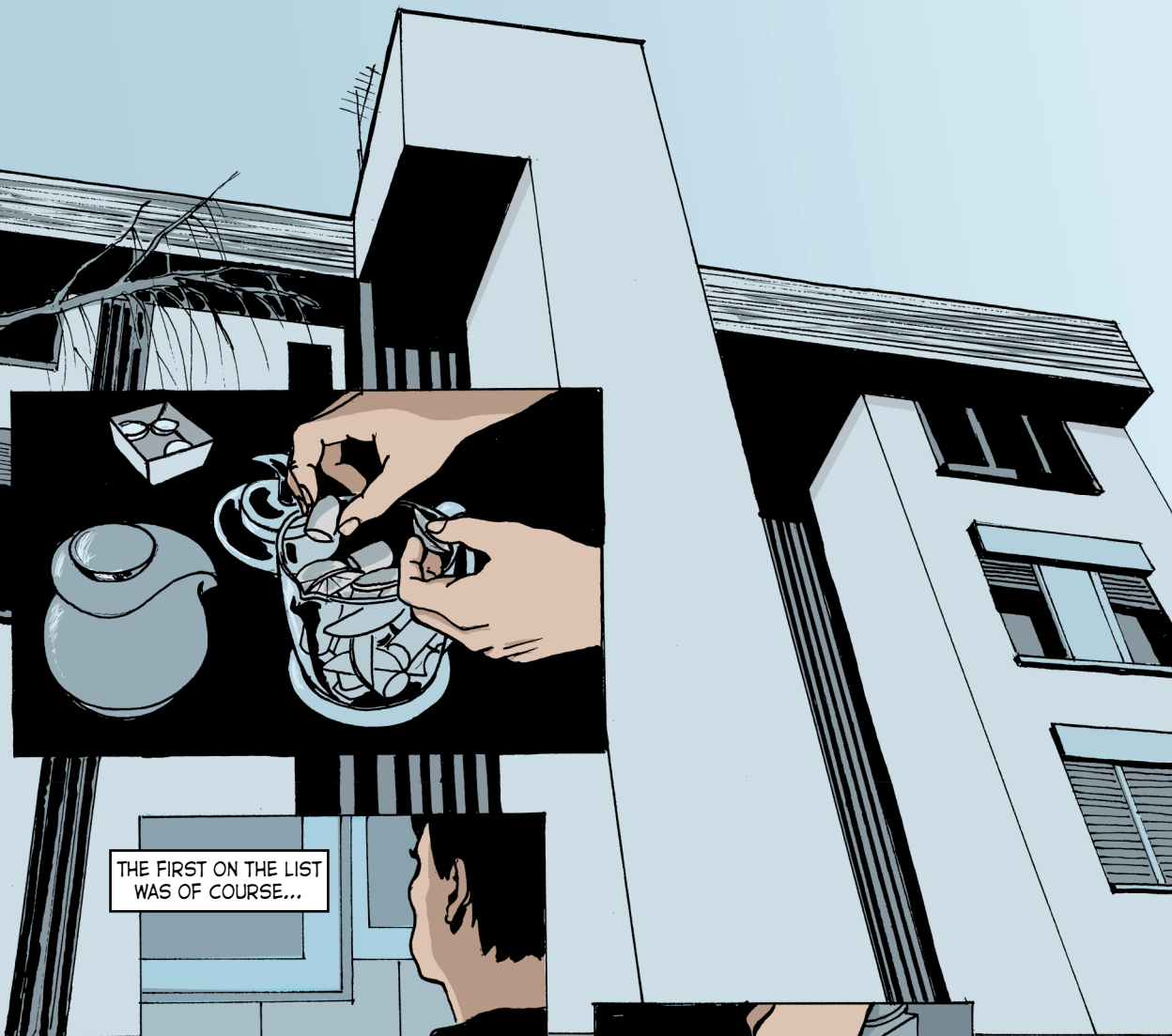
THE BLOOD WAS
HERS. THE BODY
WASN'T FOUND.

AND I, LIKE A REAL IDIOT,
AGREED BECAUSE OF THE MONEY.

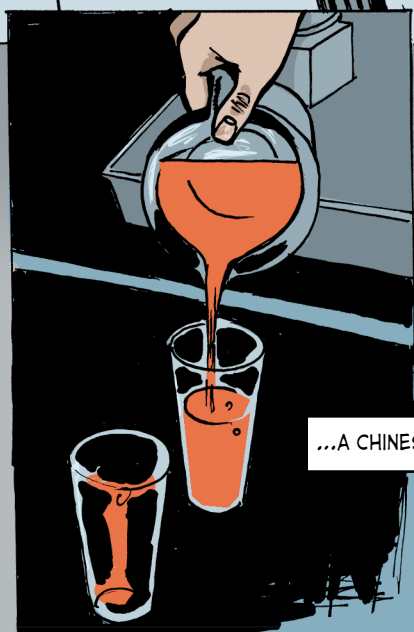


NO GOING BACK NOW.

THE ONLY THING I
CAN GET IS A BULLET
IN THE HEAD.



THE FIRST ON THE LIST
WAS OF COURSE...



...A CHINESE MAN.

DONG.

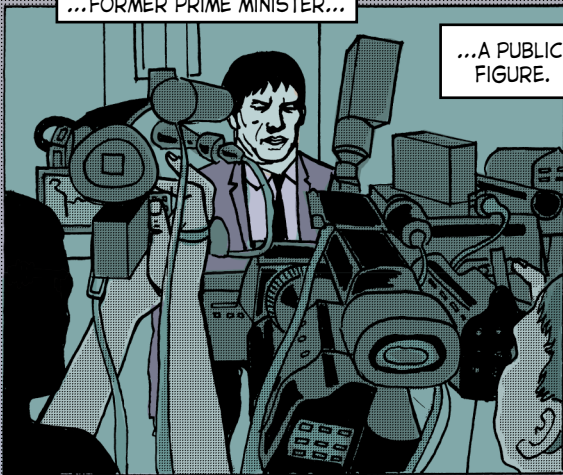
THE RUMOURS ARE THAT BECAUSE OF MILKA HE MOVED TO SERBIA.





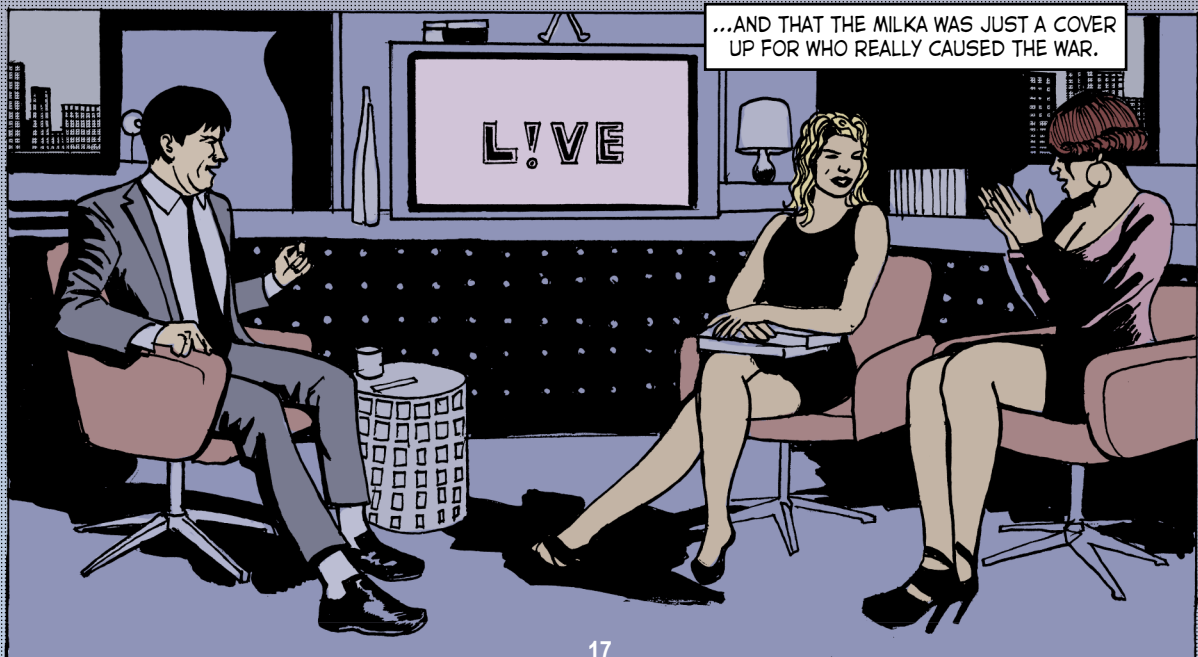
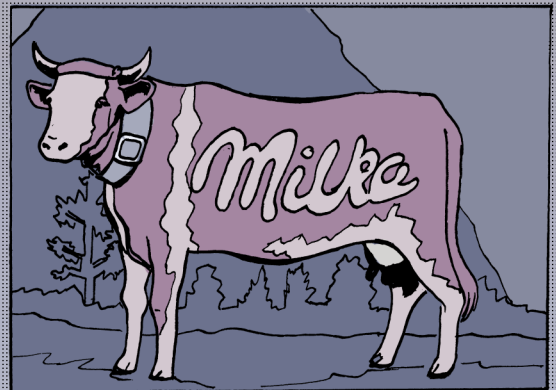
FORMER GAY RIGHTS ACTIVIST...

...FORMER PRIME MINISTER...

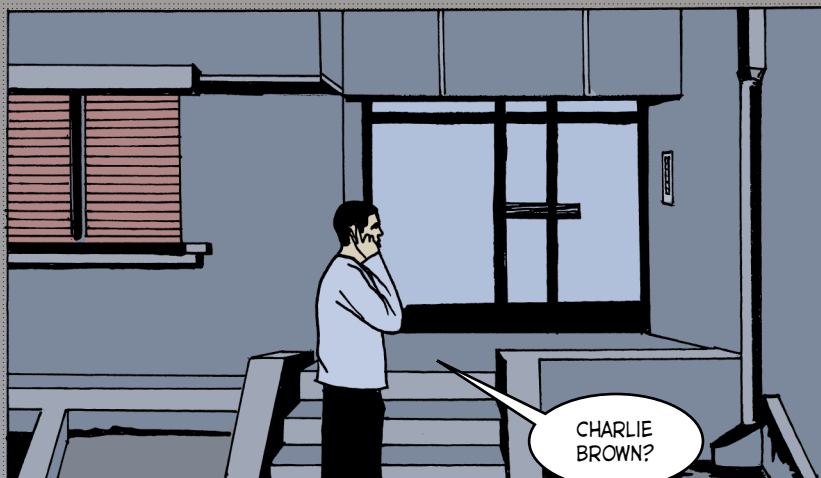


...A PUBLIC FIGURE.

HE DIDN'T MISS THE CHANCE TO SAY ON TELEVISION HOW THE INDIANS ARE TO BLAME FOR THE COWS' DEATH.



...AND THAT THE MILKA WAS JUST A COVER UP FOR WHO REALLY CAUSED THE WAR.



CHARLIE
BROWN?

I WAS WORRIED
HOW I WOULD REACH
SOMEONE LIKE DONG
AND HOW I WOULD
PERSUADE HIM TO
LISTEN TO ME.

WHEN I READ
ALFA'S FILE I HAD
TO CALL HIM.

THREATEN
HIM WITH IT AND
HE'LL SEE YOU.

WHY?
HE'LL THINK I'M
BRINGING HIM
A DVD?



IT CAME UP
IN HIS PHONE
TRANSCRIPTS,
IN A DUBIOUS
CONTEXT.

TRANSCRIPT?
LIKE A PHONE
CALL?



ALFA'S HUNG UP...