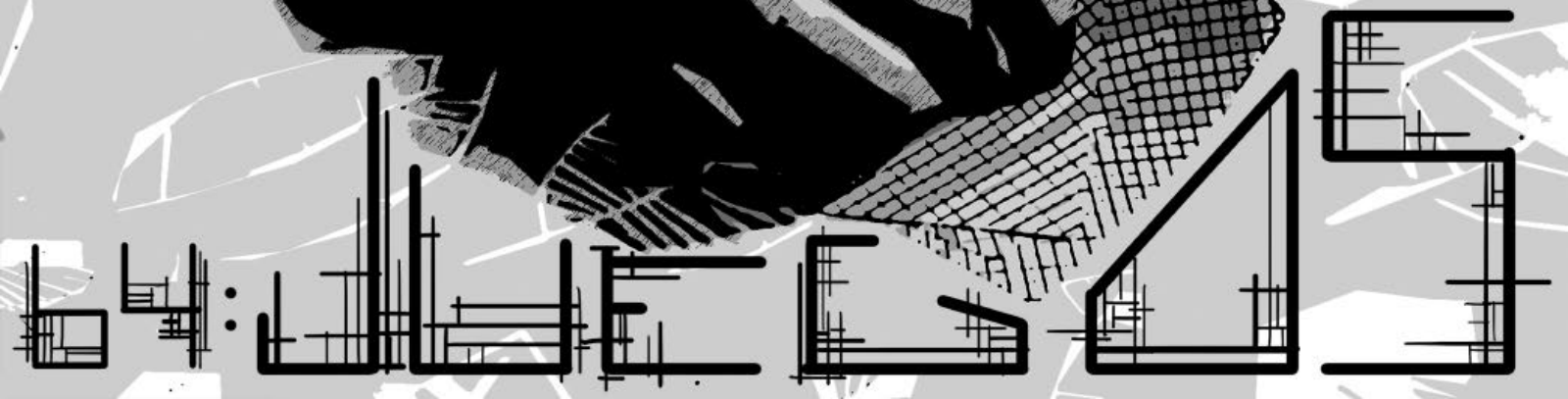




UP SURGE



SIMON M. ATANA S.

SCRIPT  
PANEL LAYOUT  
COVER

PENCILS  
INK

TRANSLATION  
(SORRY, ENGLISH SPEAKERS)

EMAIL: UPSURGECOMICS@GMAIL.COM

WEBPAGE: WWW.UPSURGE.ES/ENGLISH

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

"YOU'VE COME  
LOOKING FOR INFOR-  
MATION..."

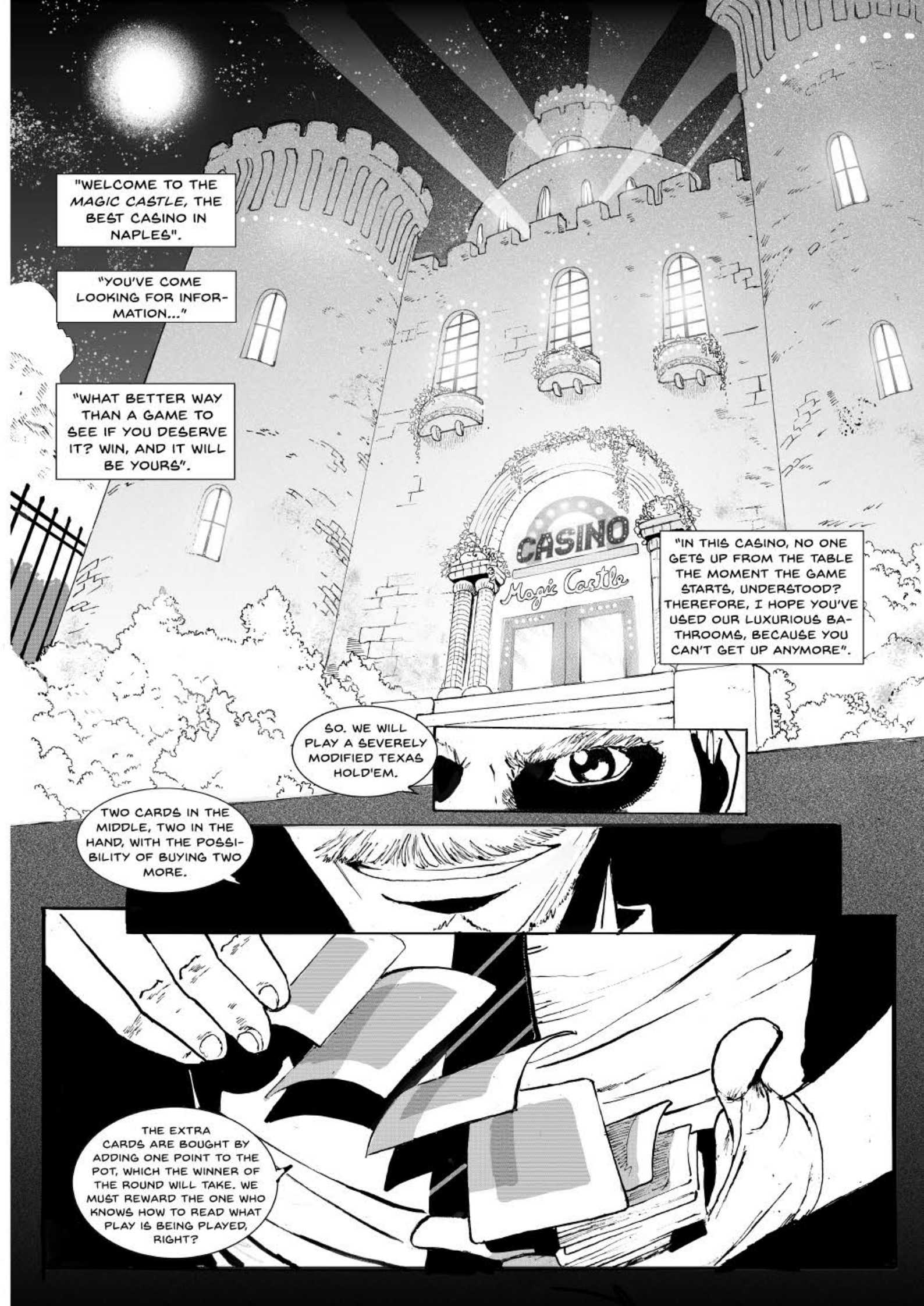
"WHAT BETTER WAY  
THAN A GAME TO  
SEE IF YOU DESERVE  
IT? WIN, AND IT WILL  
BE YOURS".

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

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

TWO CARDS IN THE  
MIDDLE, TWO IN THE  
HAND, WITH THE POSSI-  
BILITY OF BUYING TWO  
MORE.

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







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

SIX. WINNING THE ROUND GIVES YOU ONE POINT.

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

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

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

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



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

EVERYTHING IS THERE TO BE SEEN.

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



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

IF I WIN...

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



REMEMBER MY **ETHE-REAL GUN?** THE ONE WITH THE RED BULLETS.

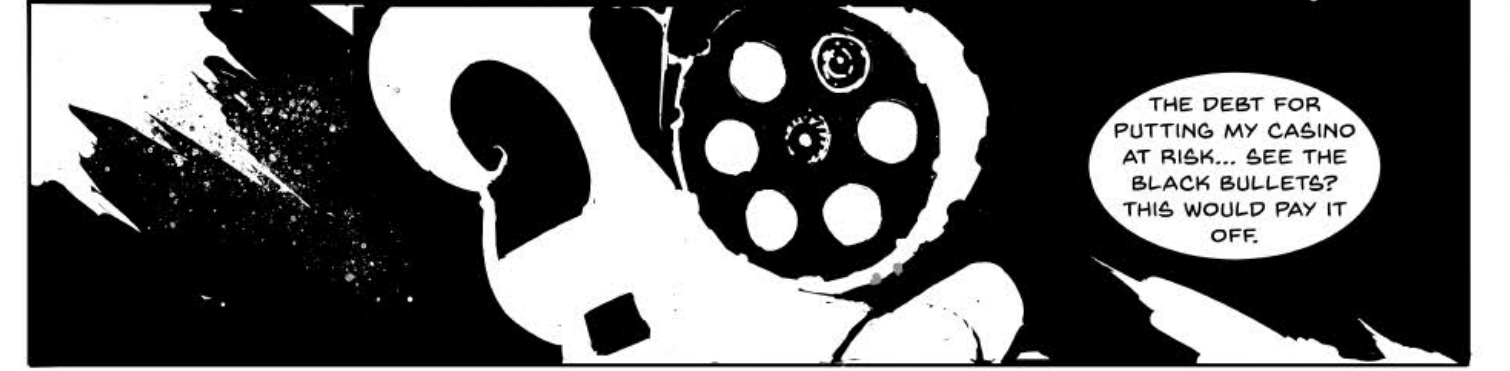


I HAVE DISCOVERED OTHER COLORS.

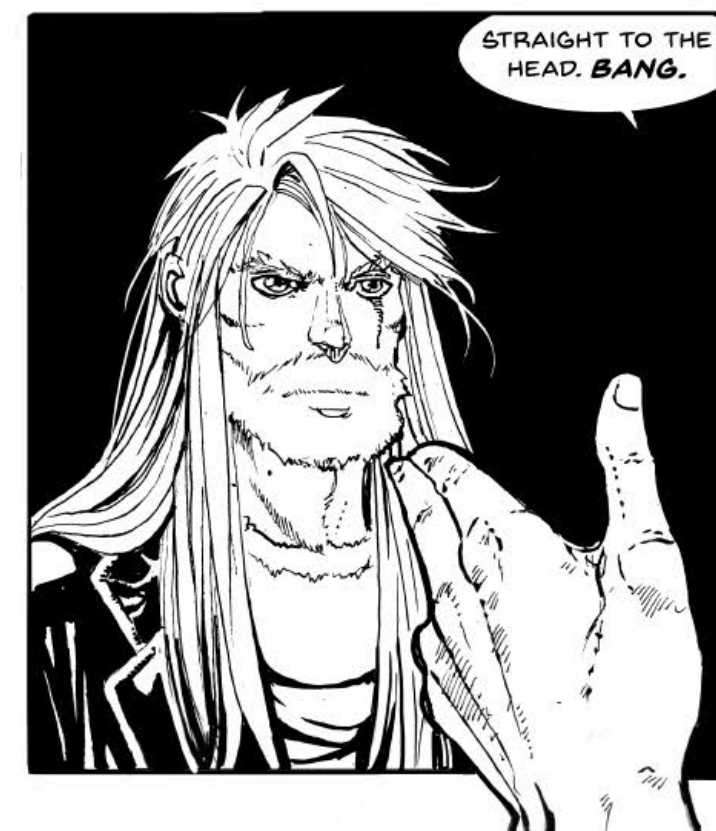


HEH. I-I REMEMBER WHEN YOU GAVE ME THE RED ONE. FOR ABOUT AN HOUR, I HAD SO MUCH ANGER...

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



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



STRAIGHT TO THE HEAD. **BANG.**



**BANG.**

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

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



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



...ALL THESE NOISES AND FLASHES...

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

I HOPE SO.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AH, YES. PAMELA ANDERSON, ZEN MASTER.

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

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

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

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



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

OH, HOW MANLY. ALL READY TO ACT.

...HRM. OKAY. OKAY. SORRY, BLONDIE. DROPPING THE WORK TALK RIGHT ABOUT NOW.



LET'S GO PLAY, GORGEOUS.





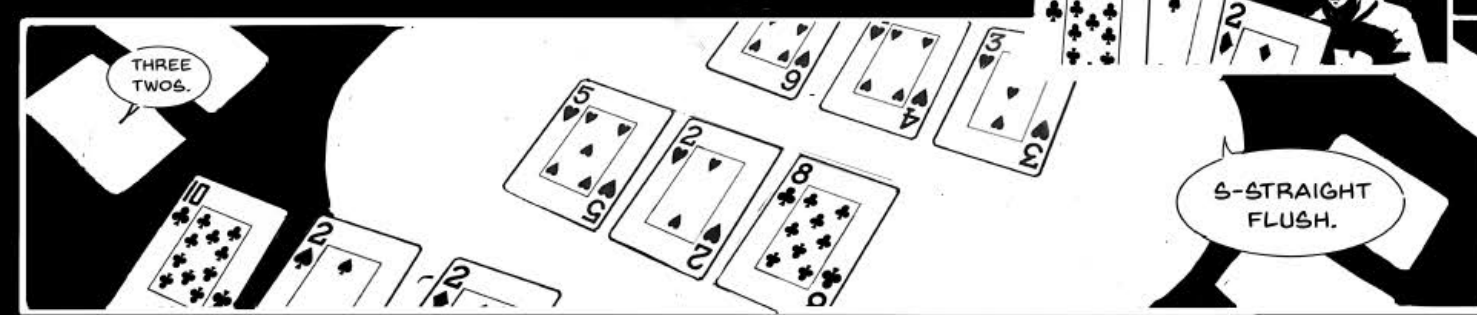
PASS.

ME TOO.

YEAH, TAPPING OUT TOO.

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

LET'S... DO IT.



THREE TWOS.

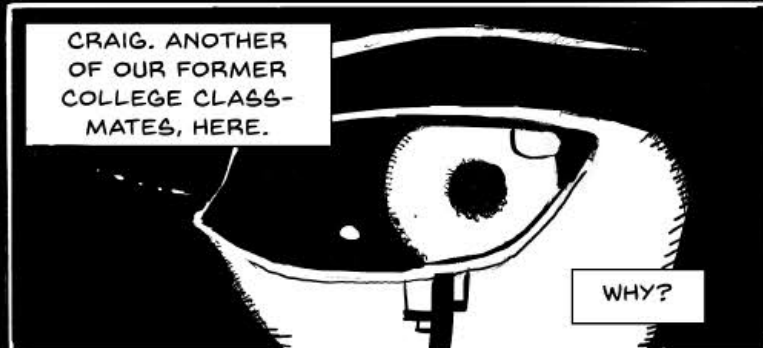
S-STRAIGHT FLUSH.



STRAIG... STRAIGHT FLUSH?

YOU'RE KID-DING ME, RIGHT?

CONVE-NIENT!



CRAIG. ANOTHER OF OUR FORMER COLLEGE CLASS-MATES, HERE.

WHY?

WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVE FOR INVITING CRAIG?



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

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



CRAIG, YOU FUCKER.

DID YOU KNOW THAT THIS ASS-HOLE WAS NOT A NORMAL STUDENT?

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



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



YES, OKAY...

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



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



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

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



LET'S RETURN TO THE GAME, KIDS.



HM.

CRAIG IS BEING CAUTIOUS. I DON'T DETECT THE USE OF MAGIC.

I SEE SOME EMANATING FROM COLE, BUT I DON'T SEE HOW IT INTERACTS WITH THE GAME.

DON'T DETECT ANYTHING FROM FRANCIS EITHER. IT'S NOT LIKE HIS GUN CAN DO ANYTHING HERE... HIS RED BULLETS ALTER PEOPLE'S MOODS, NOTHING ELSE.

AND YET HE IS WINNING.



THIS GAME FORMAT MINIMIZES PUBLIC INFORMATION...

GIVE ME A CARD.

SURE.



ANOTHER EIGHT.

TWO PAIRS. SOMEONE WOULD NEED A NINE IN ORDER TO BEAT ME.

IF I GOT A FIVE... A PAIR AND A TRIO.

THAT'S A FULL, I THINK.



ANOTHER.



M-ME...

...TOO.



HERE.



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



JACOB AND CRAIG ARE THE ONLY ONES STILL IN...

YOU CAN'T FOLD NOW.



HEY, LOOK...!

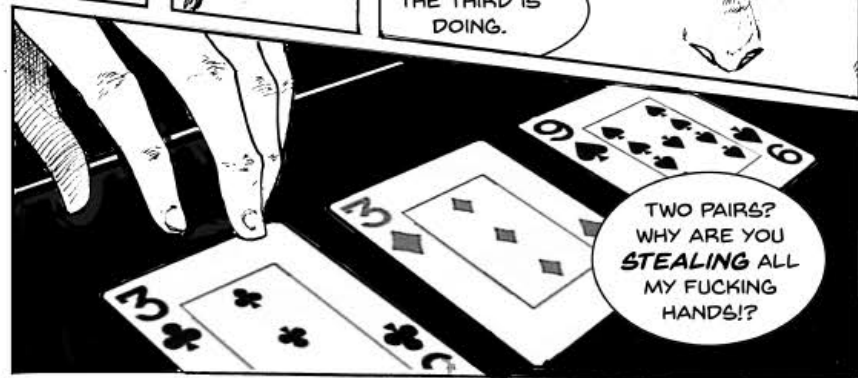
WAIT. LET ME GO TO THE RESTROOM FOR A SECOND.















ESSEX.

JACOB.

CRAIG.

COLE.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THIS CASINO, FRANCIS?

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

AH.

VERY OBSERVANT, JACOB. AS USUAL.

CARD.

SAME. HIT ME.

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

A NEUTRAL ZONE.

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

THIS CASINO IS MINE, IT'S MY CASTLE.

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

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

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

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

THIS IS WHAT THE GAME OFFERS.

THAT'S NICE.

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

AH, ESSEX. THE RICH BEGGAR.

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

SO?

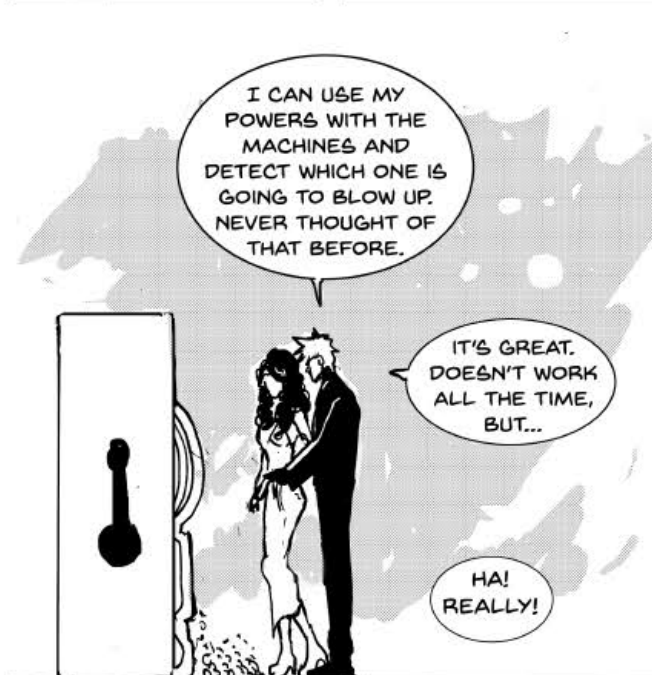
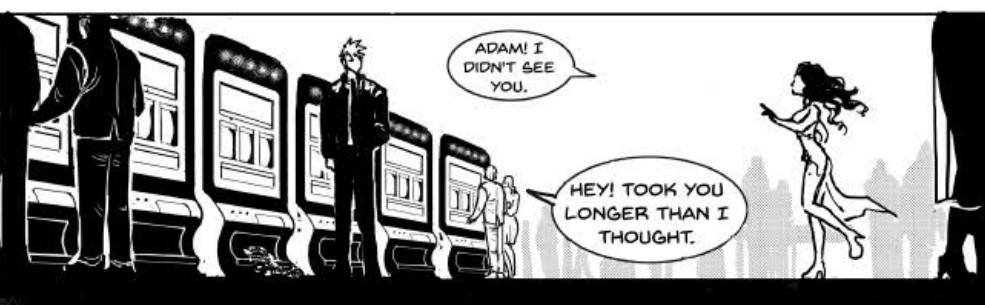
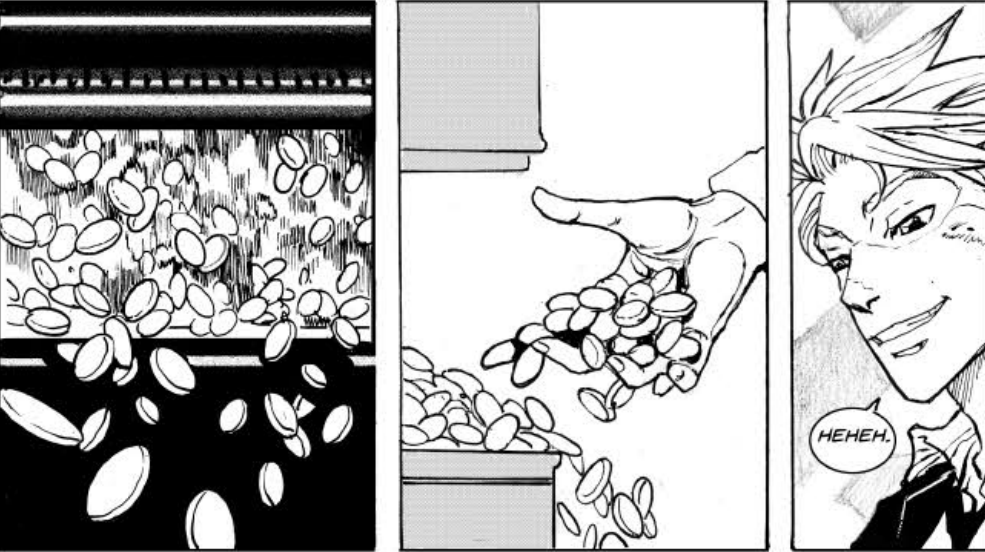
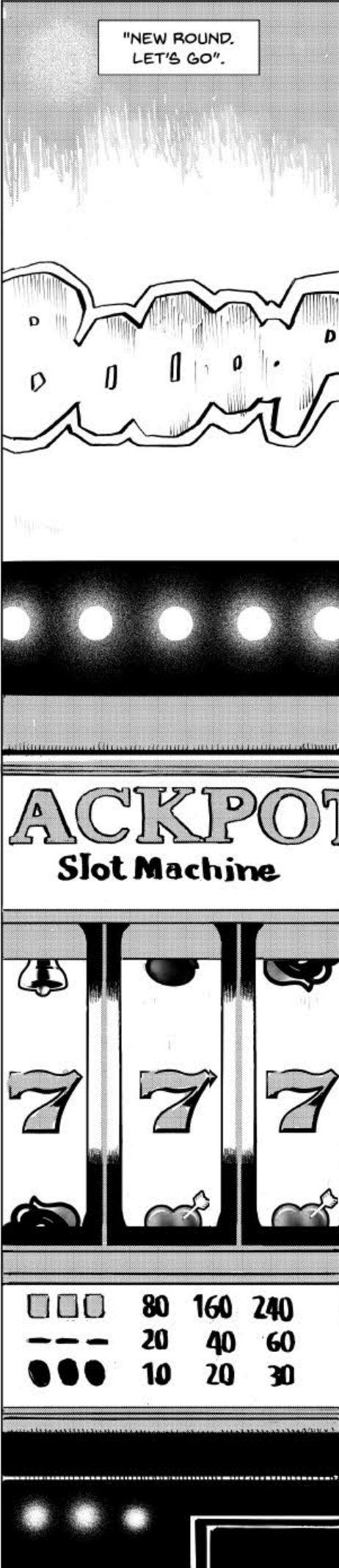
OKAY, TOUCHÉ.

BUT FUCK YOU ANYWAY.

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

HOW'S THAT WORLD GOING? ANY BETTER?









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

THE BLACK BULLET SHOULD'NT BE MUCH WORSE. THIS IS A GAME, AFTER ALL.

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

OH?

I THINK YOU HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION.



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

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



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

A GAME IS THE BEST I COULD OFFER YOU.



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



AND IF WE LOSE...?

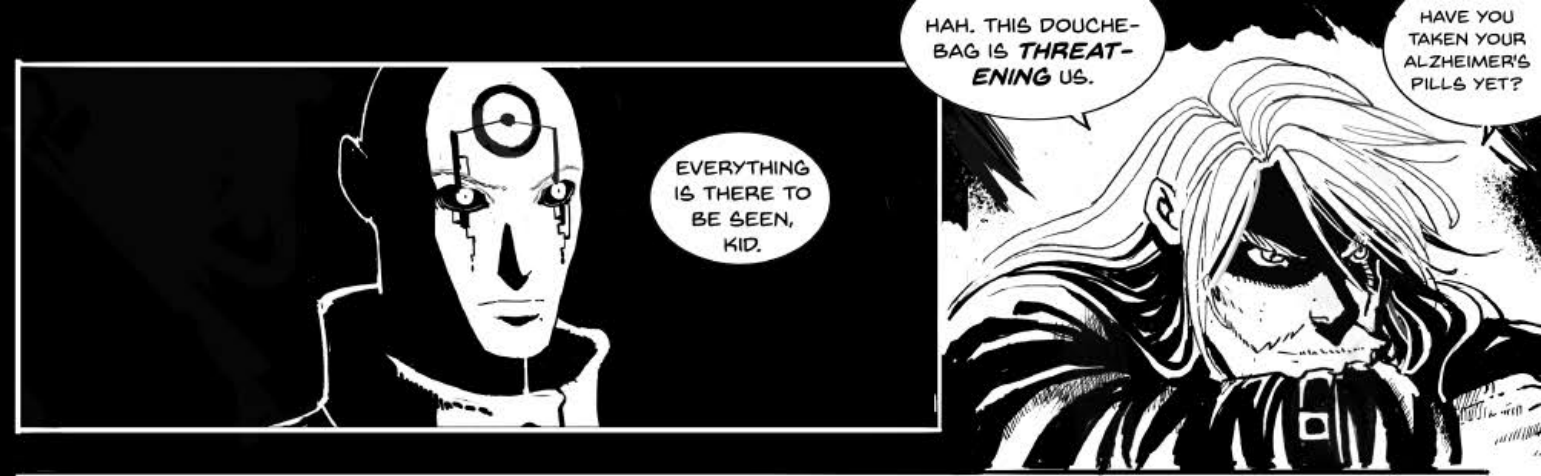


WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF THE BLACK BULLET, FRANCIS?



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

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



EVERYTHING IS THERE TO BE SEEN, KID.

HAH. THIS DOUCHE-BAG IS THREATENING US.

HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR ALZHEIMER'S PILLS YET?



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

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



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



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



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

WAKE THE FUCK UP AND THINK!



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



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



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

WHAT...?

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

SO?

ESSEX?

GOOD.

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

NEXT ROUND.



## ...TO BE CONTINUED

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

### LINKS:

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

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