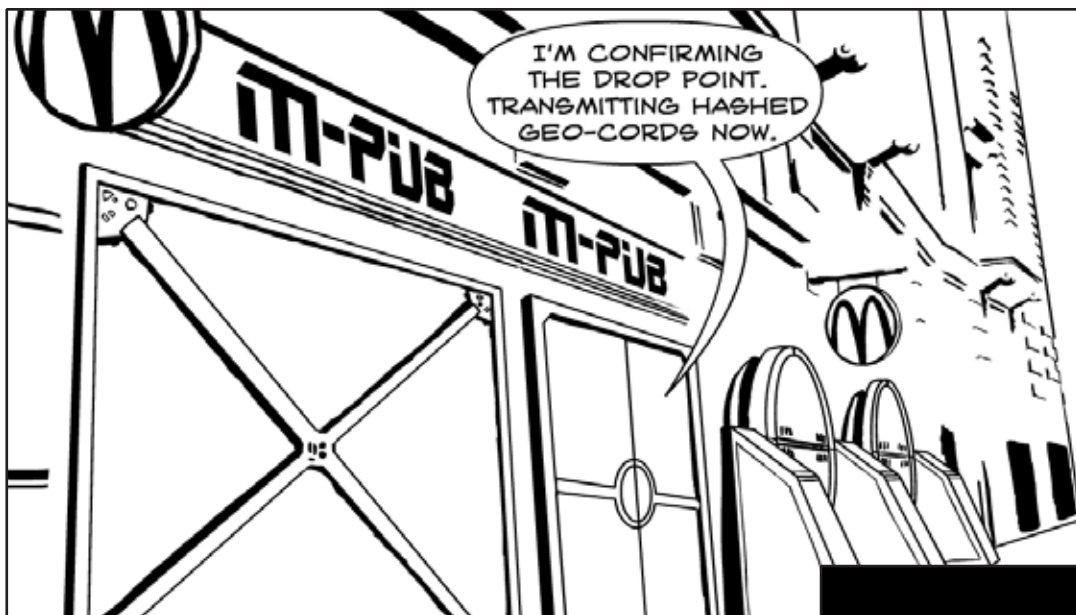
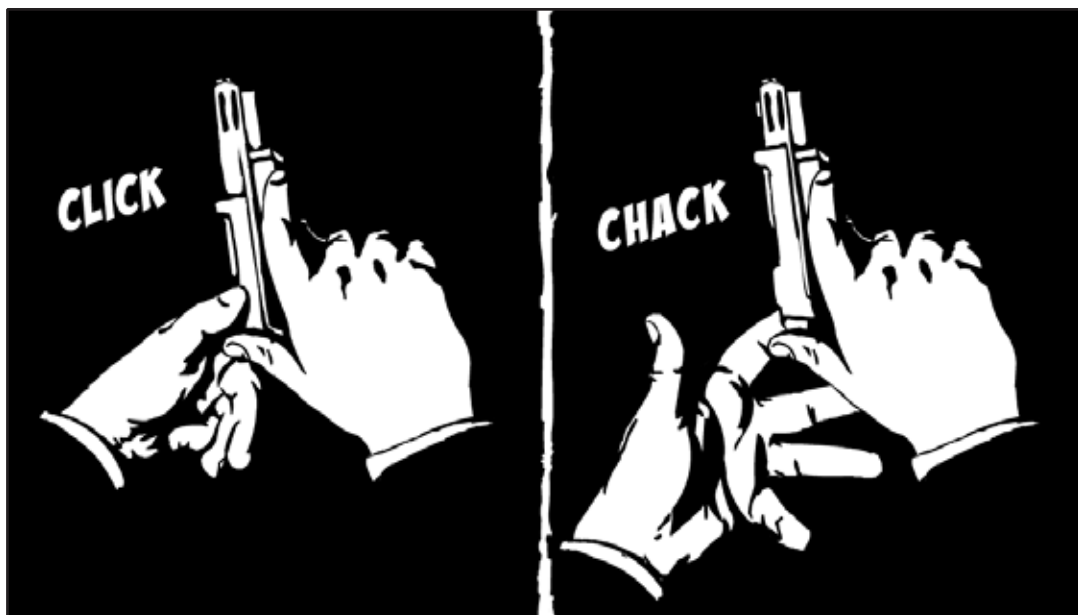


CHAPTER FIVE: GOD AND MONEY







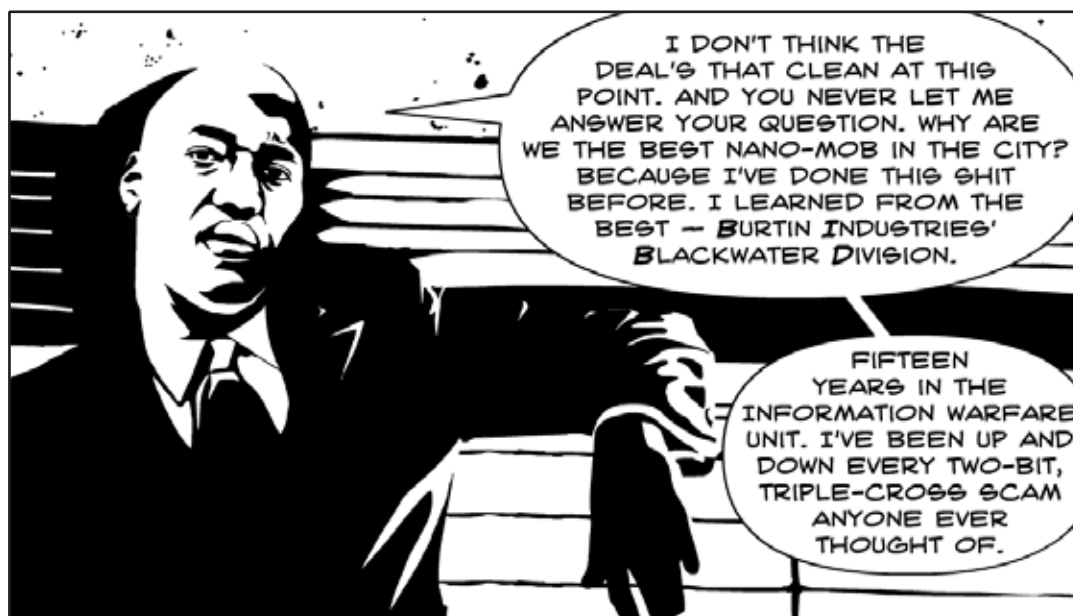


NO, YOU SEE, THAT'S THE PROBLEM. I DIDN'T BRING THE GOODS. SOME BAD-ASS MOTHER-FUCKERS TRIED TO CUT ME OUT OF THE DEAL, AND SO THE GOODS ARE IN A SAFE PLACE WHERE YOU'RE NOT GONNA FIND THEM.

LANEY AND JULIUS WERE AT ASHER'S — THAT MUCH HE KNEW BECAUSE HE COULD PING THEIR ENCRYPTED GEO-TAGS. BUT WITHOUT ACCESS TO A SECURE COMM CHANNEL, HE WAS TOTALLY IN THE DARK. IF THEIR PICK-UPS WERE ANYTHING LIKE HIS, THE TARGET PACKAGES DIDN'T MATCH THE ORIGINAL PURCHASE ORDER. NOW HE JUST HAD TO HOPE THE WHOLE PAYLOAD — WHATEVER THE HELL IT WAS — WAS SITTING IN ASHER'S LAB. IF NOT, THEN HIS BLUFF WAS ABOUT TO GET CALLED IN A VERY BAD WAY.



FUCK YOURSELF. THIS WAS A CLEAN DEAL FROM THE START. YOU PLAY, MY CLIENT PAYS.



I DON'T THINK THE DEAL'S THAT CLEAN AT THIS POINT. AND YOU NEVER LET ME ANSWER YOUR QUESTION. WHY ARE WE THE BEST NANO-MOB IN THE CITY? BECAUSE I'VE DONE THIS SHIT BEFORE. I LEARNED FROM THE BEST — BURTIN INDUSTRIES' BLACKWATER DIVISION.

FIFTEEN YEARS IN THE INFORMATION WARFARE UNIT. I'VE BEEN UP AND DOWN EVERY TWO-BIT, TRIPLE-CROSS SCAM ANYONE EVER THOUGHT OF.





WAGNER TOOK NO JOY IN KILLING PEOPLE. THREE TOURS IN CHINA WAR II HAD TAKEN CARE OF THAT. BUT SELF-PRESERVATION IS A POWERFUL FORCE, ESPECIALLY IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY BRAIN MODS SCREWING WITH YOUR BASELINE INSTINCTS.

AND ANYWAY, BRAIN MODS WEREN'T ALL THAT USEFUL IN HIS LINE OF WORK. WHAT HE DID HAVE WERE ADAPTIVE BIOMETRIC COUNTERMEASURES. FINGERPRINTS. RETINAL PATTERNS. VOCAL PITCH AND TONE. ALL OF THESE COULD BE RECORDED, DOWNLOADED, HIS OWN BIO-SIGNATURES RECONFIGURED. IN A WORLD WHERE NOBODY EVER LOOKED AT YOUR FACE, THESE THINGS CONSTITUTED YOUR ENTIRE IDENTITY.



NATHAN SAMUEL. WHEREVER THIS ASSHOLE COULD HAVE GONE IF HE WERE STILL ALIVE, WAGNER COULD NOW GO. MOST IMPORTANTLY, HE COULD FLIP HIS WAY PAST THE FIRST FEW LAYERS OF PHYSICAL SECURITY AT BURTIN INDUSTRIES HEADQUARTERS IN MIDTOWN.



BURTIN TOWER



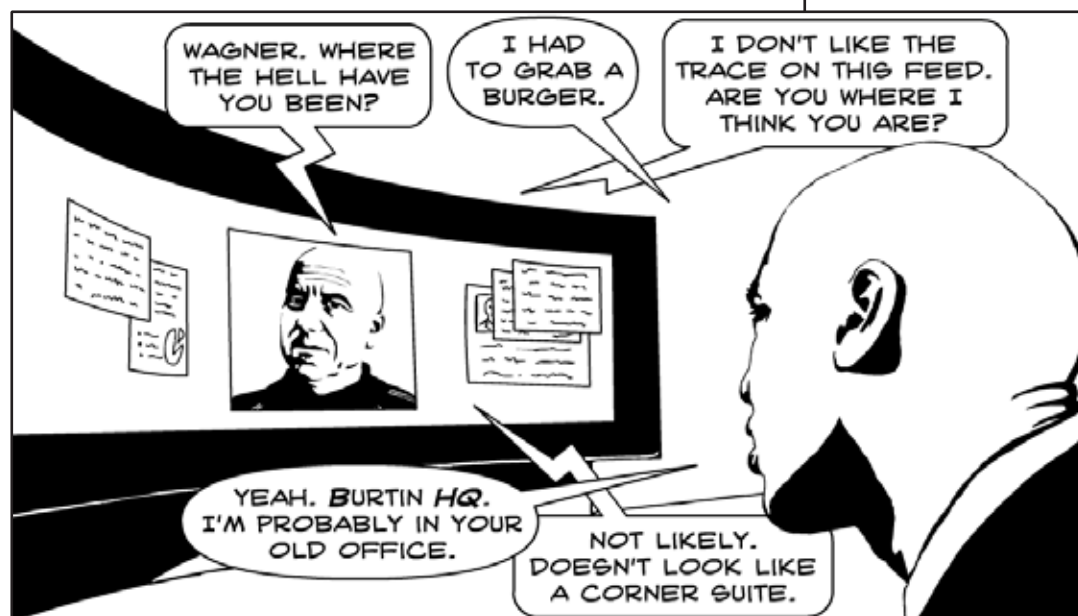
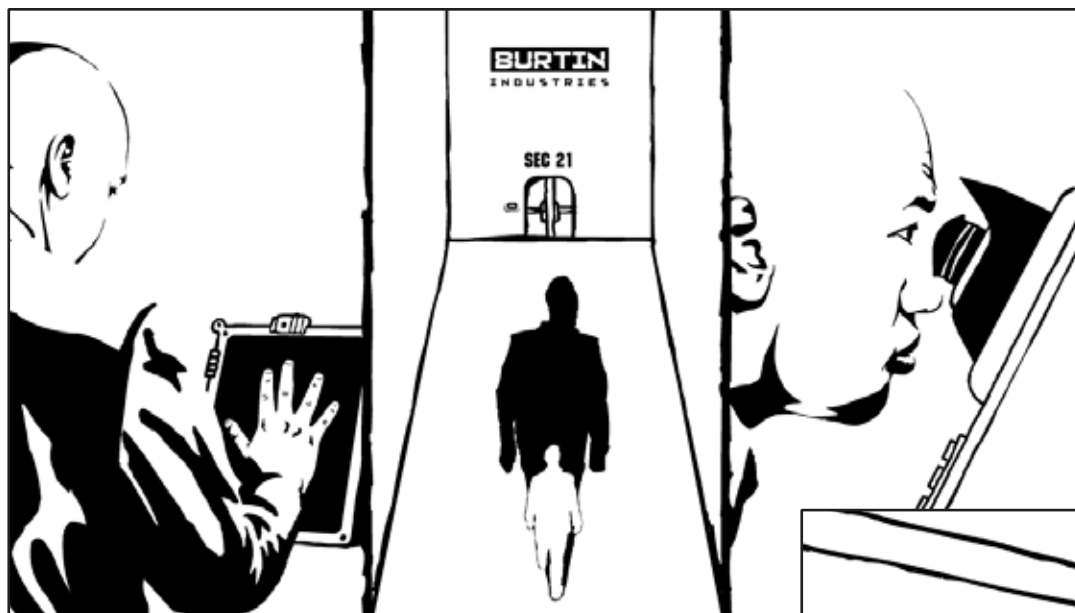
A.K.A.: *FORTRESS BURTIN*

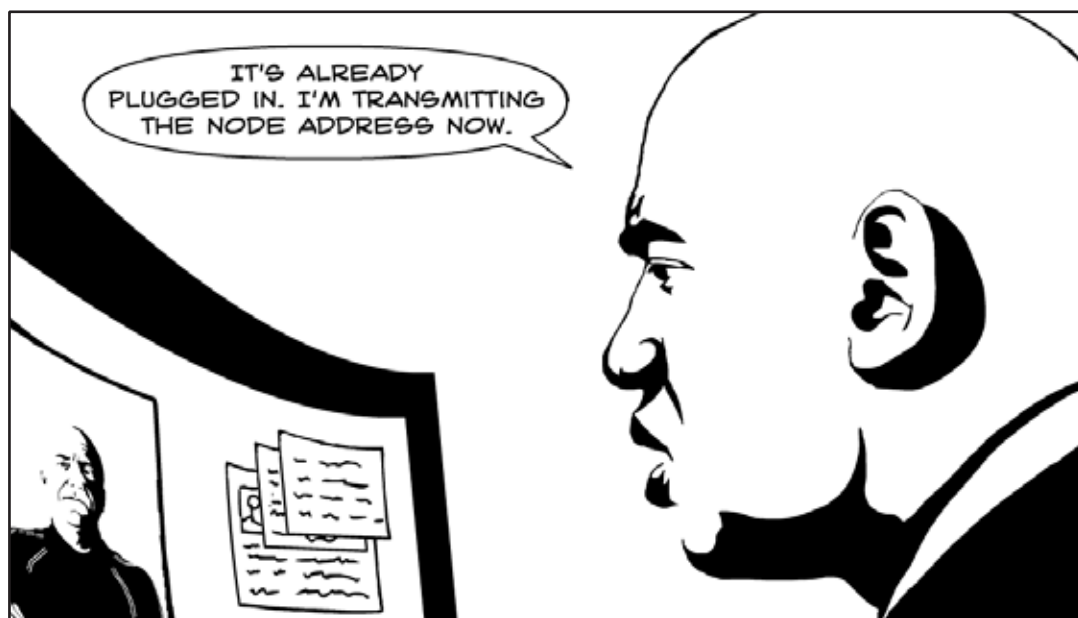
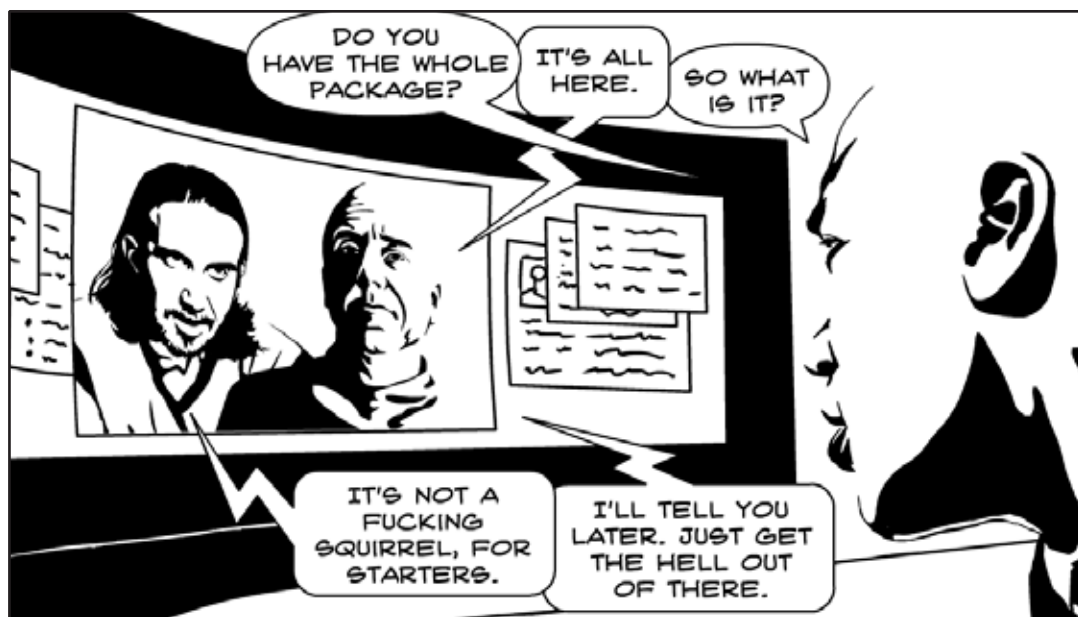


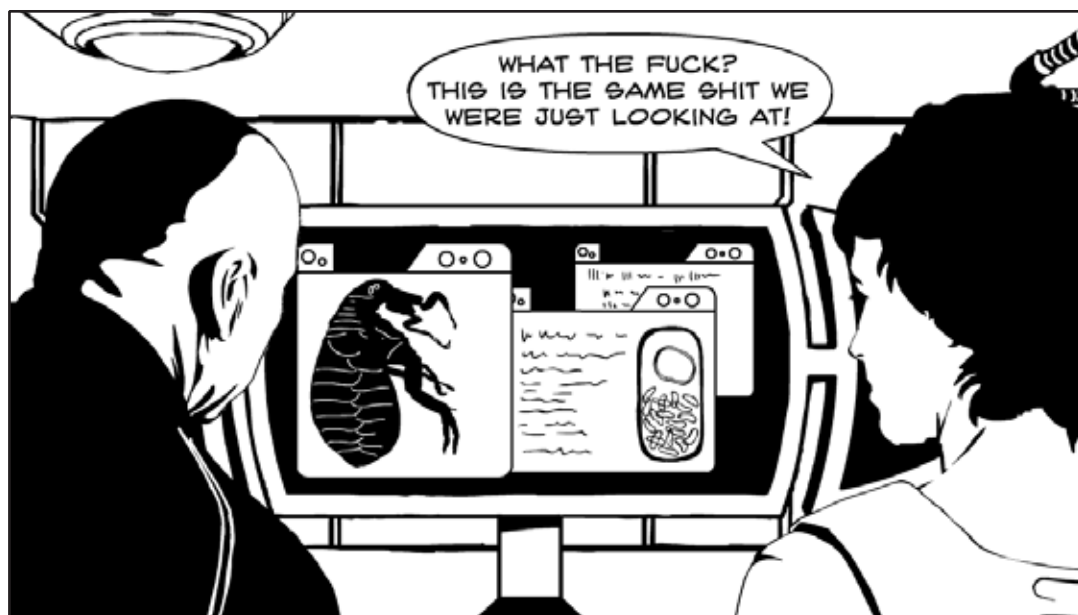
WORLD HEADQUARTERS FOR BURTIN INDUSTRIES. THE PLANET'S LARGEST PROVIDER OF PRIVATE ARMIES, NATION-SCALE LOGISTICS AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY SUPPORT.

THEY'D HAD THEIR FINGERS IN EVERY BLOODY CONFLICT WHERE SOMEONE COULD AFFORD TO HIRE THEM FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY. IT WAS JUST ABOUT THE LAST PLACE WAGNER WANTED TO BE. BUT IT'S NOT LIKE YOU EVER HAD A CHOICE ABOUT IT.

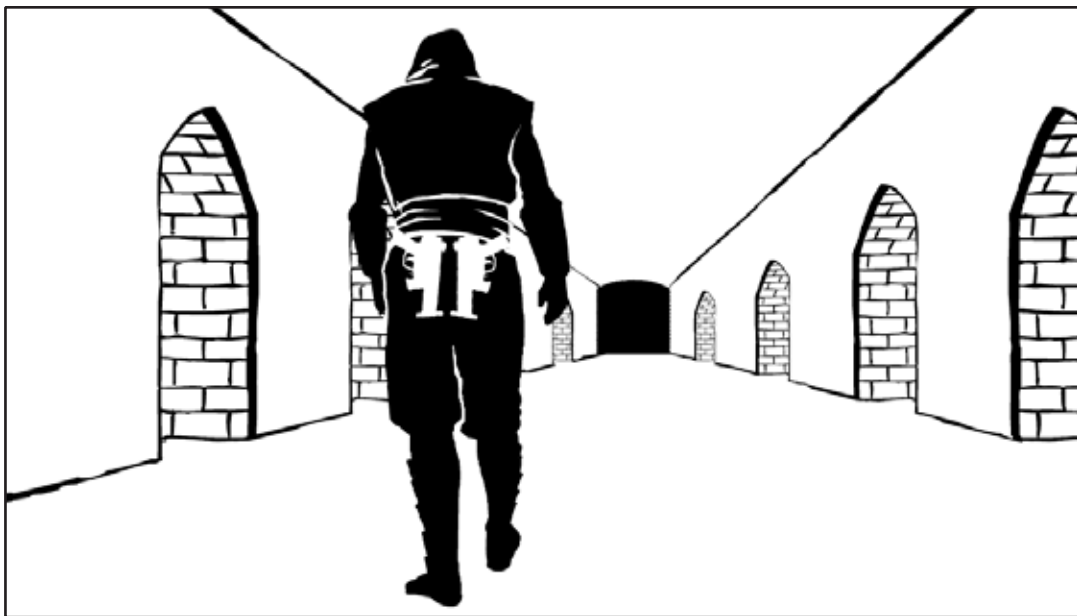




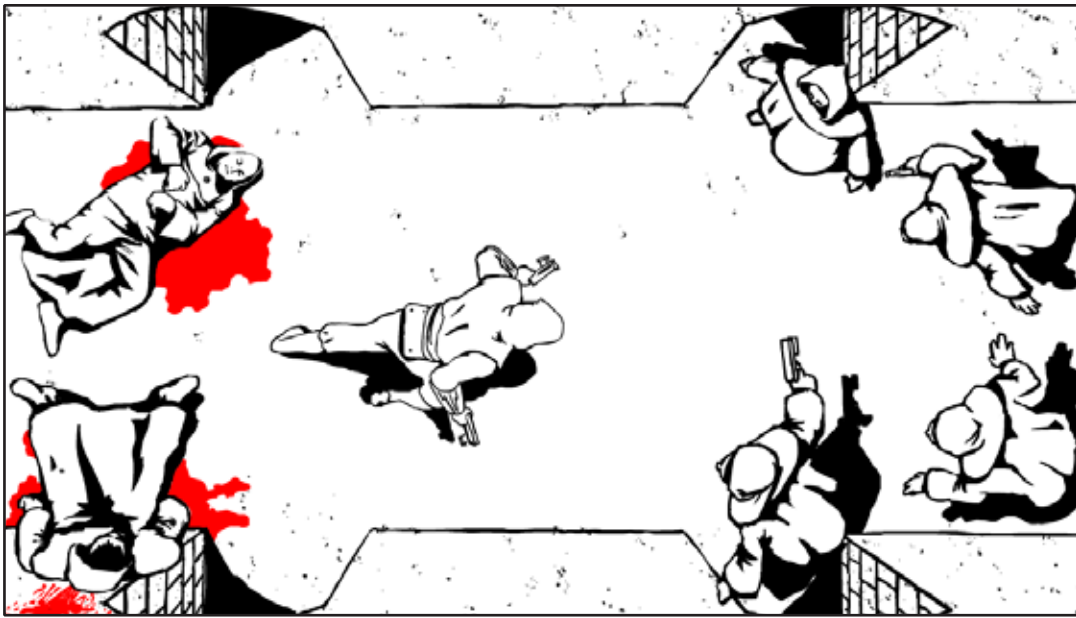


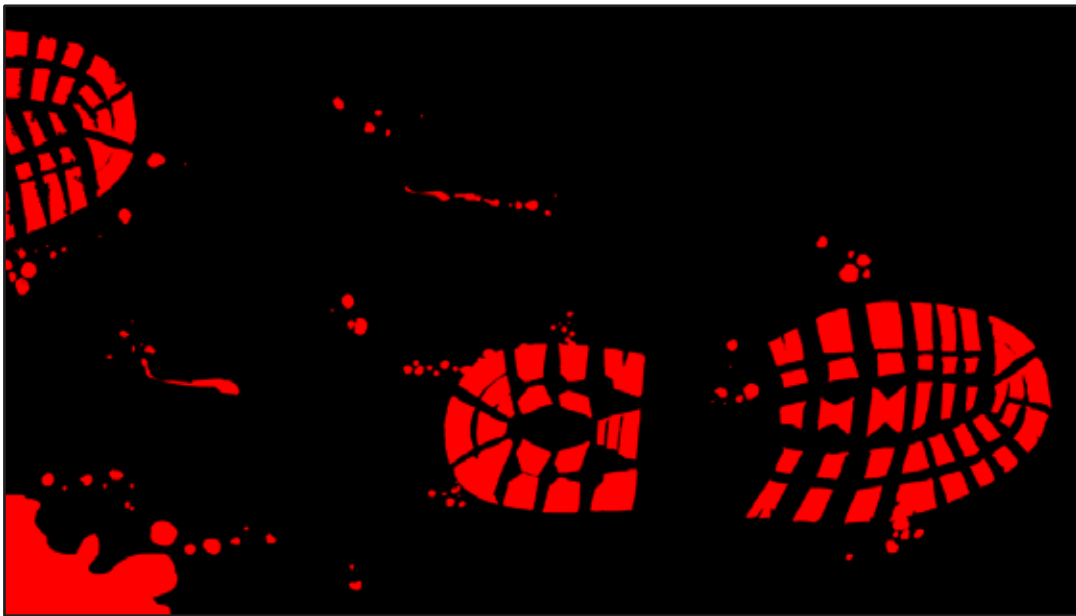


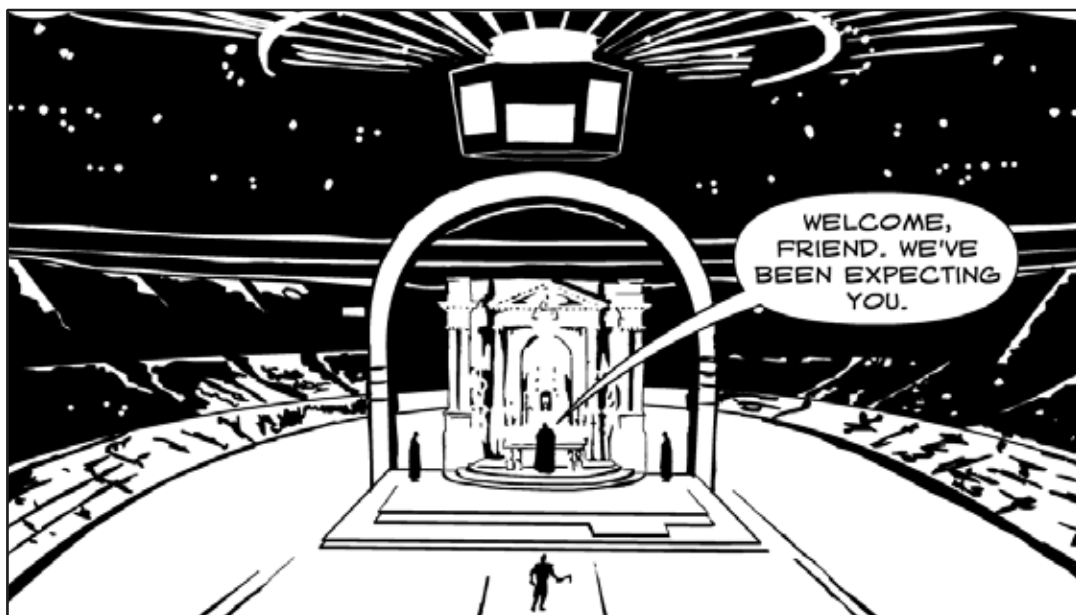


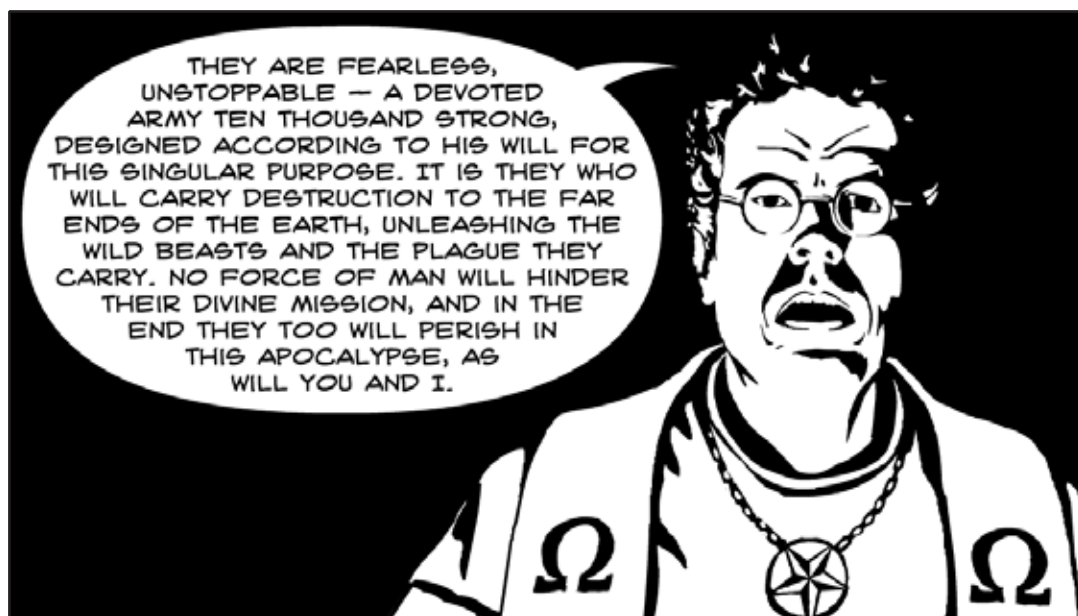


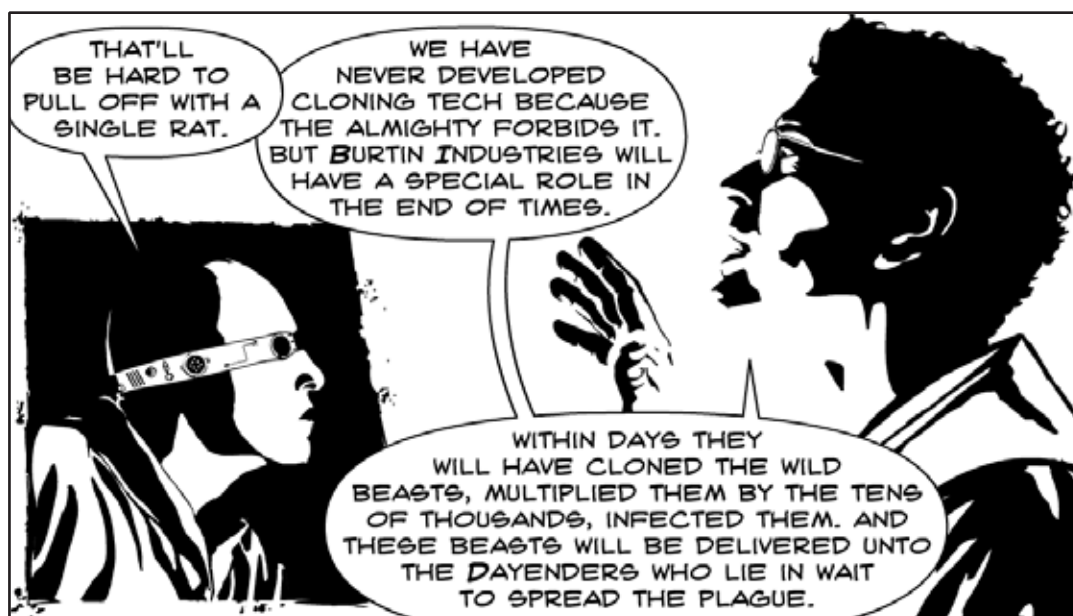


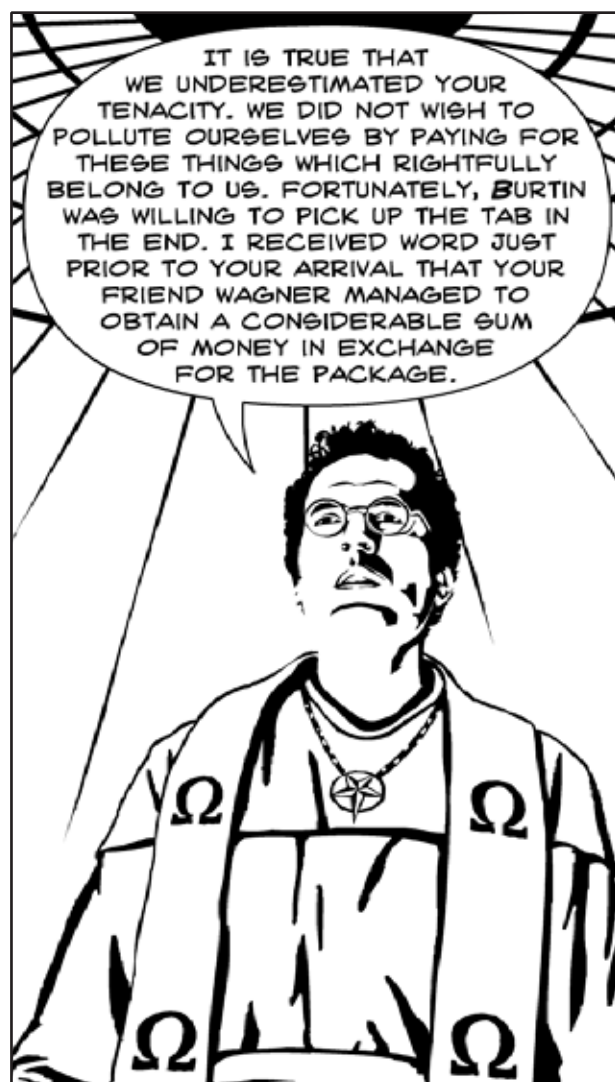


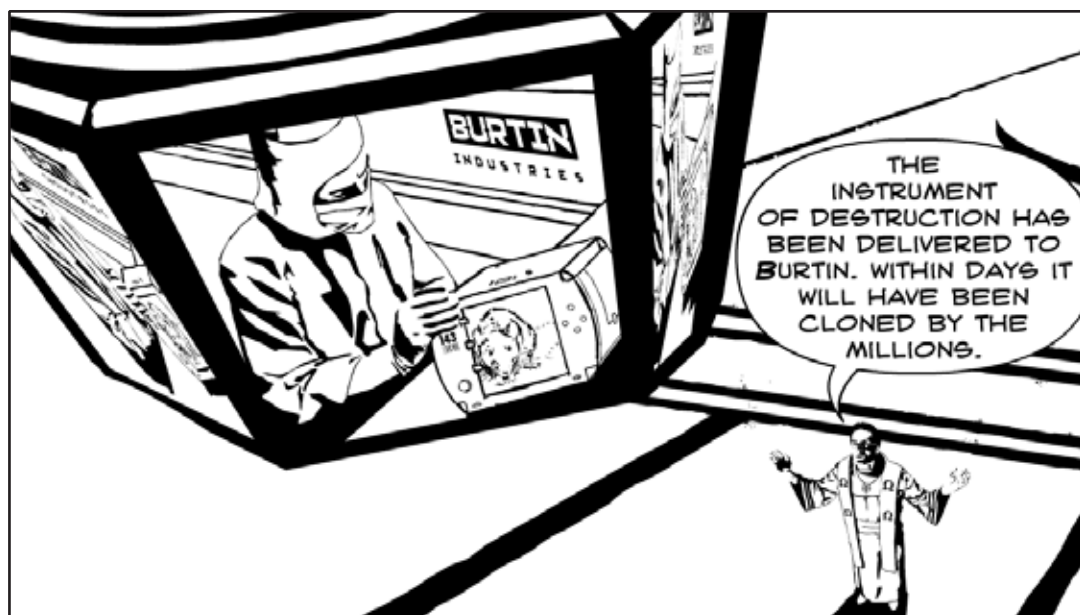




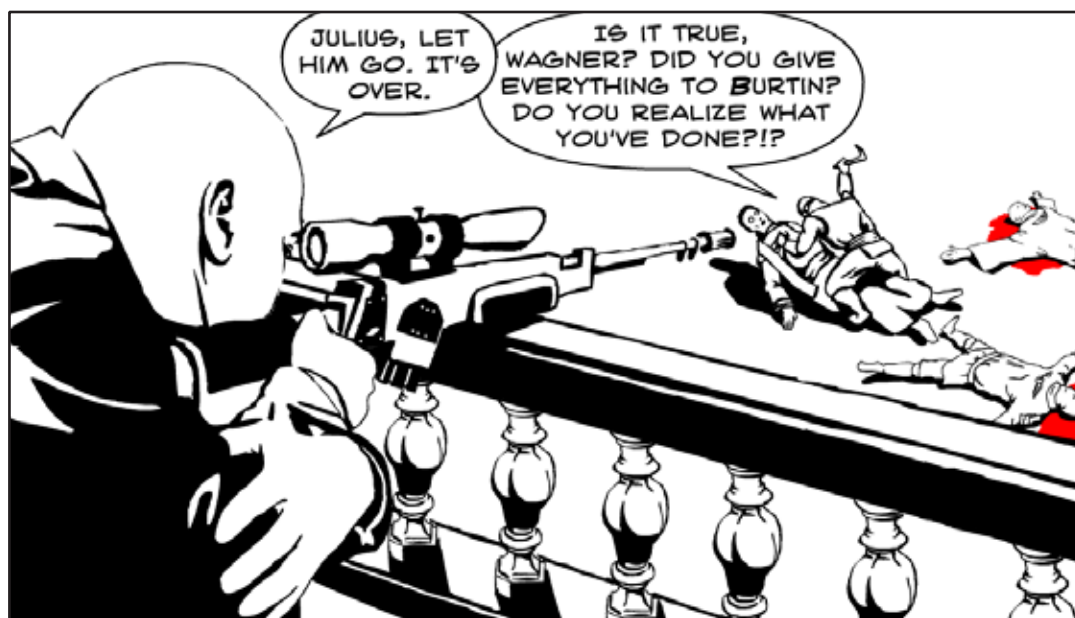












I SAID,
LET HIM
GO.

