

TRAVIS HORSEMAN GIANCARLO CARACUZZO

AMICVLVS

— A SECRET HISTORY —



PREVIEW: EX LIBRIS AMICULI

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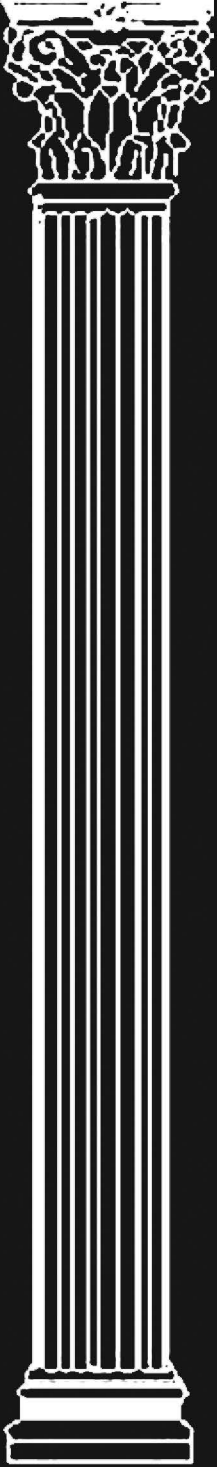
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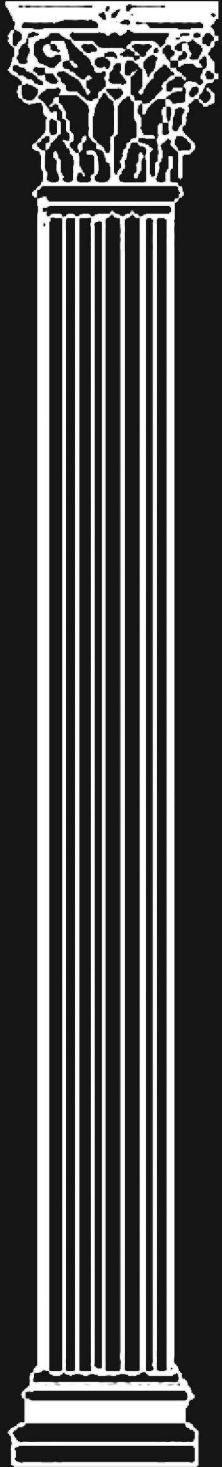




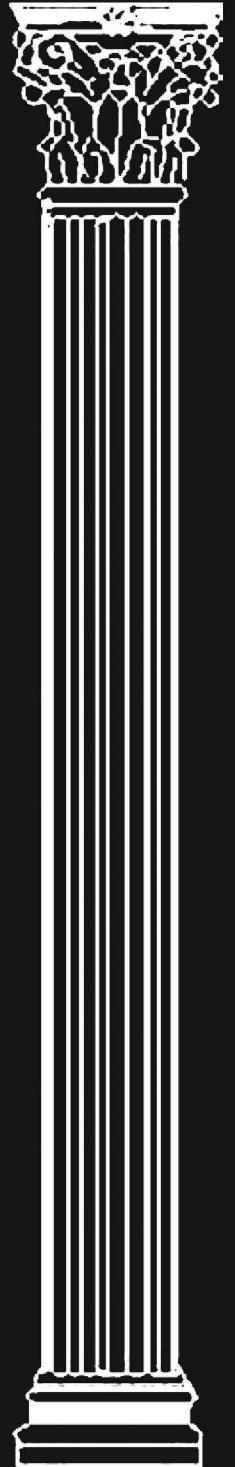
IN THE LATE 5TH CENTURY,
THE ROMAN EMPIRE WAS
DIVIDED IN HALF, BETWEEN
EAST AND WEST.

IN A.D. 476, BARBARIAN
CONQUERORS FORCED
THE LAST EMPEROR OF
ROME FROM HIS THRONE
AND SENT HIM INTO EXILE,
ENDING THE ROMAN
EMPIRE IN THE WEST.

BUT THE EASTERN EMPIRE,
RULED FROM
CONSTANTINOPLE,
SURVIVED.



SIXTY
YEARS LATER..



MARCH, A.D. 538

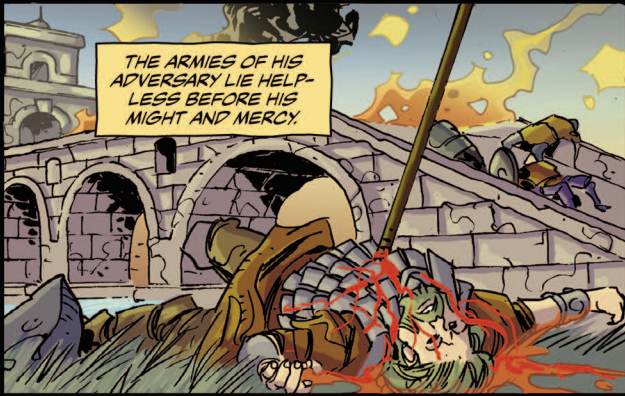
IT IS A NEW DAY.

(FROM THE PRIVATE JOURNALS OF THE HISTORIAN PROCOPIUS OF CAESAREA, A.D. 500-562):

IT IS A DAY GIVEN TO US BY GOD.

MOTHER ITALY, LONG ENSLAVED TO GOTHIC TYRANNY, SMILES IN HIS RESTORED LIGHT.





THE ARMIES OF HIS ADVERSARY LIE HELPLESS BEFORE HIS MIGHT AND MERCY.



THE JEWEL OF HIS KINGDOM IS IN OUR HANDS, NEWLY BURNISHED IN BARBARIAN BLOOD.



O, PRAISE TO GOD AND HIS HOLY INSTRUMENT, THE ARMY OF JUSTINIAN, BELISARIUS AND THE EAST!

HIS LONG-LOST WESTERN CHILDREN WEEP FOR JOY AT THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER'S BOSOM! HIS FORLORN EASTERN CHILDREN REJOICE AT THEIR ETERNAL MOTHER'S RESCUE!



EVERY CORNER OF OUR REFORGED REALM, FROM THE PILLARS OF HERCULES TO THE GOLDEN HORN, WILL RESOUND WITH THE NEWS:

"ROME IS REDEEMED..."



"ROME IS REBORN."





HERE, AT THE PINNACLE OF OUR TRIUMPH, I GAZE BACK IN AWE ACROSS FIVE YEARS OF CONQUEST.

FIVE YEARS SINCE JUSTINIAN GRACED MY LORD THE COUNT BELISARIUS WITH THIS HOLY ENDEAVOR.



THE HISTORY THESE WARS WILL MAKE--THAT I WILL WRITE...

--IS THRILLING TO IMAGINE.

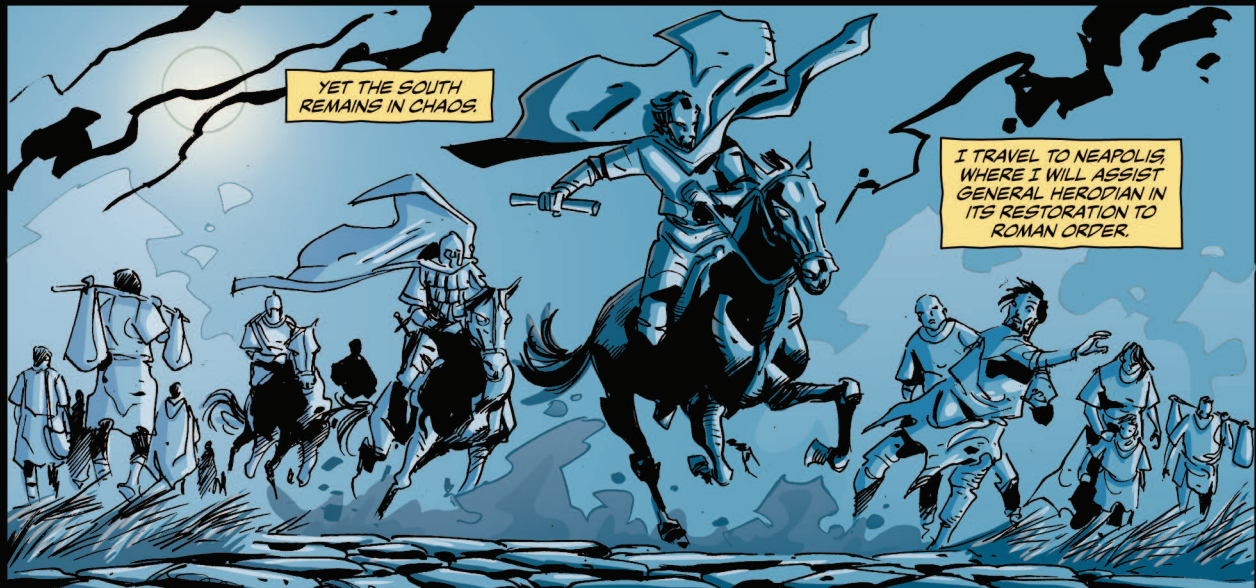
CLNK



THERE IS STILL MUCH WORK TO BE DONE.



WITH THE GOTHIC ARMY BROKEN AT ROME, MY LORD MUST PURSUE THEIR KING, WITIGIS, NORTH TO HIS CAPITAL AT RAVENNA BEFORE THEIR CORRUPTION IS EXPELLED FOR GOOD.



YET THE SOUTH
REMAINS IN CHAOS.

I TRAVEL TO NEAPOLIS,
WHERE I WILL ASSIST
GENERAL HERODIAN IN
ITS RESTORATION TO
ROMAN ORDER.

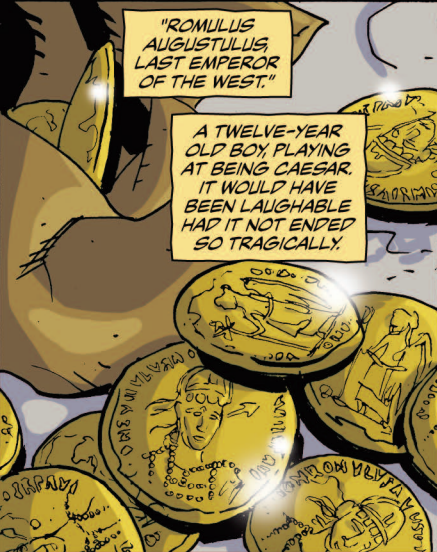


THIS LAND HAS
BEEN LEFT FALLOW
FOR TOO LONG. IT
YEARNs FOR ROME'S
CIVILIZING SEED.

YET A TASK REMAINS
BEFORE I BEGIN SOWING. I
MUST LEARN HOW THE CROP
FIRST FAILED. I MUST FIND
THE ONE WHO LET IT DIE.




I MUST FIND
ROMULUS.




"ROMULUS AUGUSTULUS, LAST EMPEROR OF THE WEST."

A TWELVE-YEAR OLD BOY, PLAYING AT BEING CAESAR, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LAUGHABLE HAD IT NOT ENDED SO TRAGICALLY.



HIS FATHER, THE GENERAL FLAVIUS ORESTES, SET HIM ON THE THRONE AFTER DRIVING THE RIGHTFUL EMPEROR, JULIUS NEPOS, INTO EXILE.

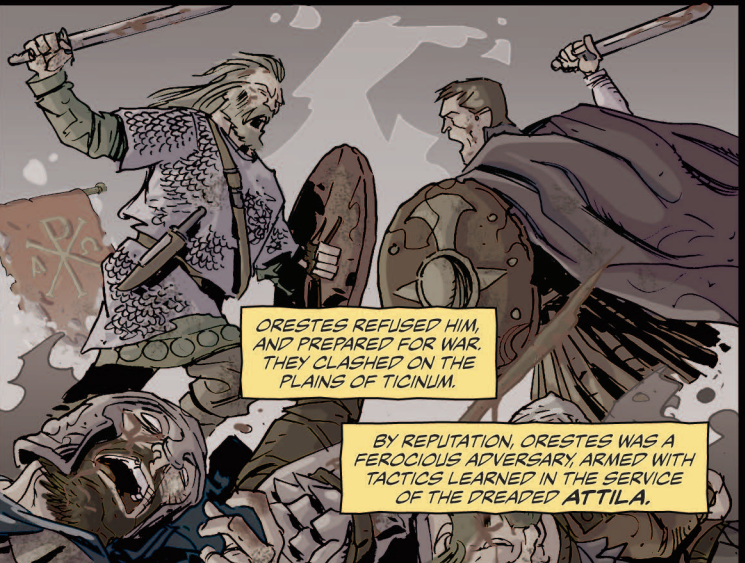
THAT THEY WERE UNPREPARED TO RULE THEIR STOLEN NATION IS A GROSS UNDERSTATEMENT.



ROMULUS REIGNED FOR NEARLY A YEAR BEFORE HIS FATHER'S TREACHERY RETURNED TO HAUNT THEM.


ODOACER, LEADER OF THE GERMAN SCIRII, DEMANDED HIS PAYMENT FOR HELPING ORESTES TO OVERTHROW NEPOS.

ONE-THIRD OF ITALY FOR HIS OWN KINGDOM.



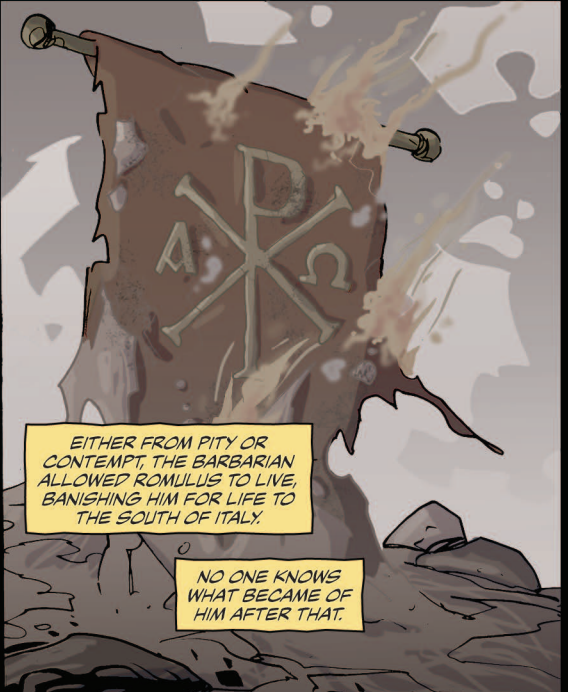
ORESTES REFUSED HIM, AND PREPARED FOR WAR. THEY CLASHED ON THE PLAINS OF TICINUM.

BY REPUTATION, ORESTES WAS A FEROCIOUS ADVERSARY, ARMED WITH TACTICS LEARNED IN THE SERVICE OF THE DREADED ATTILA.



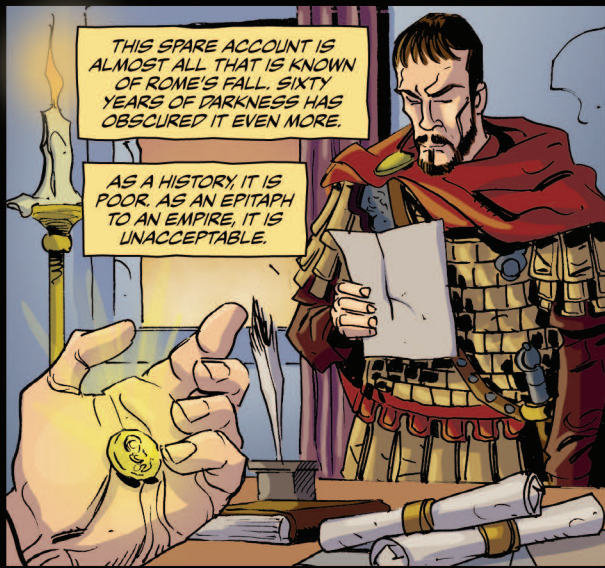
IT IS SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY WHY HE FARED SO POORLY.

WHEN IT WAS OVER, ORESTES WAS DEAD, HIS ARMY SHATTERED. ROMULUS SURRENDERED HIS CROWN TO ODOACER ON HIS KNEES.



EITHER FROM PITY OR CONTEMPT, THE BARBARIAN ALLOWED ROMULUS TO LIVE, BANISHING HIM FOR LIFE TO THE SOUTH OF ITALY.

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT BECAME OF HIM AFTER THAT.



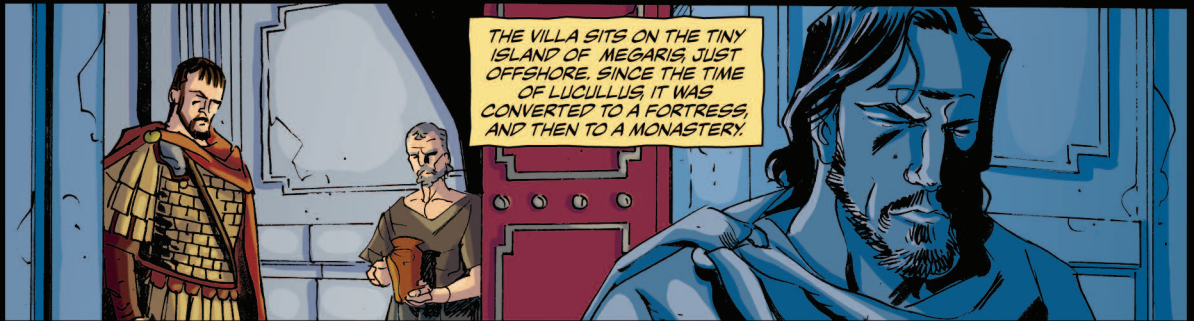
THIS SPARE ACCOUNT IS ALMOST ALL THAT IS KNOWN OF ROME'S FALL. SIXTY YEARS OF DARKNESS HAS OBSCURED IT EVEN MORE.

AS A HISTORY, IT IS POOR. AS AN EPITAPH TO AN EMPIRE, IT IS UNACCEPTABLE.

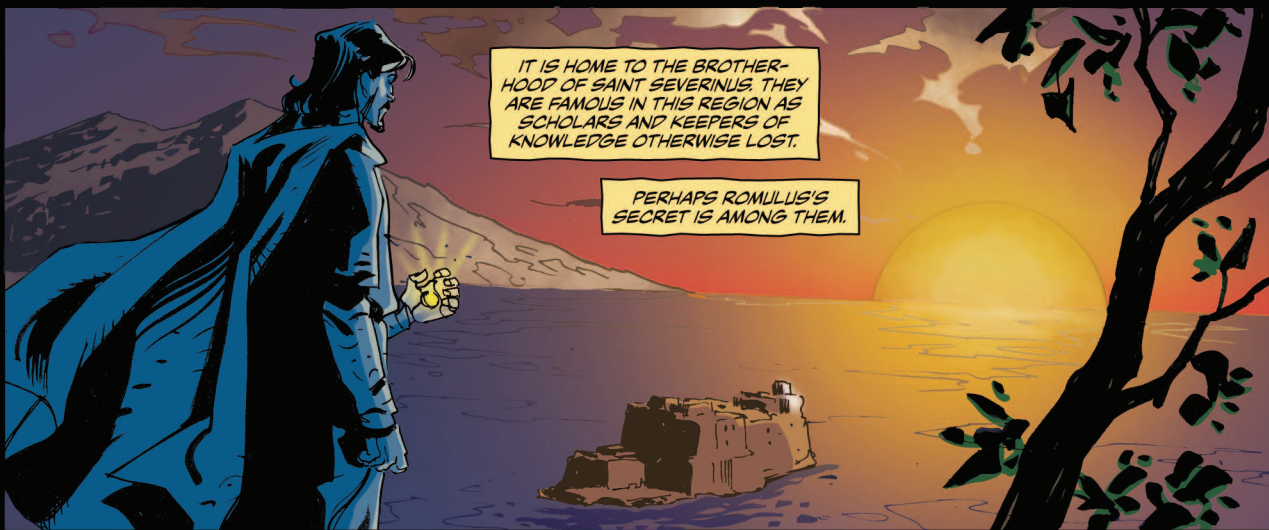


FORTUNATELY, THERE IS MORE TO THE STORY.

ROMULUS CAME TO NEAPOLIS, TO LIVE OUT HIS DAYS IN THE VILLA OF THE ANCIENT GENERAL LUCULLUS.



THE VILLA SITS ON THE TINY ISLAND OF MEGARIS, JUST OFFSHORE. SINCE THE TIME OF LUCULLUS, IT WAS CONVERTED TO A FORTRESS, AND THEN TO A MONASTERY.



IT IS HOME TO THE BROTHERHOOD OF SAINT SEVERINUS. THEY ARE FAMOUS IN THIS REGION AS SCHOLARS AND KEEPERS OF KNOWLEDGE OTHERWISE LOST.

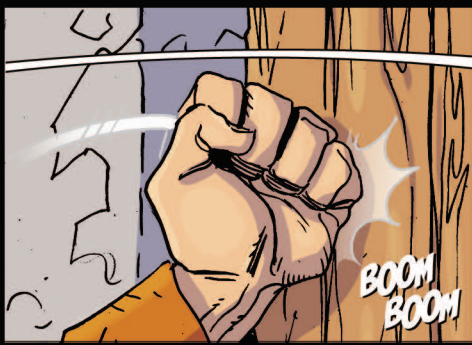
PERHAPS ROMULUS'S SECRET IS AMONG THEM.



TOMORROW I WILL VISIT THE MONASTERY, AND SPEAK TO THEIR ABBOT.



I HAVE NO DOUBT HE WILL GIVE ME WHAT I WANT.



ABBOT...

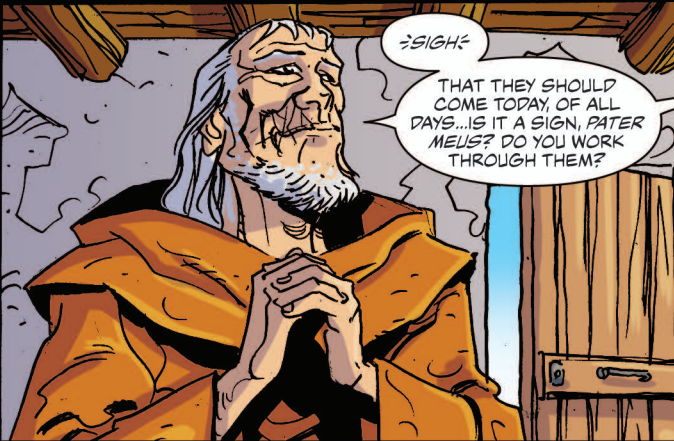


HM?



AH. THANK YOU, BROTHER CLEMENS, PLEASE INVITE THEM IN. I WILL FOLLOW SHORTLY.

FORGIVE ME ABBOT, BUT...THEY ARE HERE.

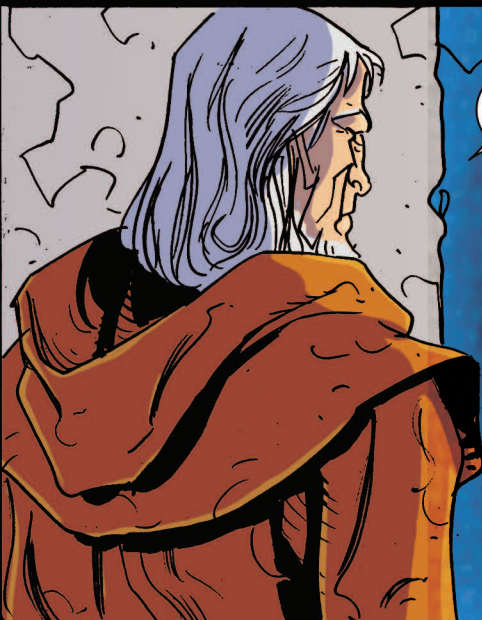


~SIGH~

THAT THEY SHOULD COME TODAY, OF ALL DAYS...IS IT A SIGN, PATER MEUS? DO YOU WORK THROUGH THEM?

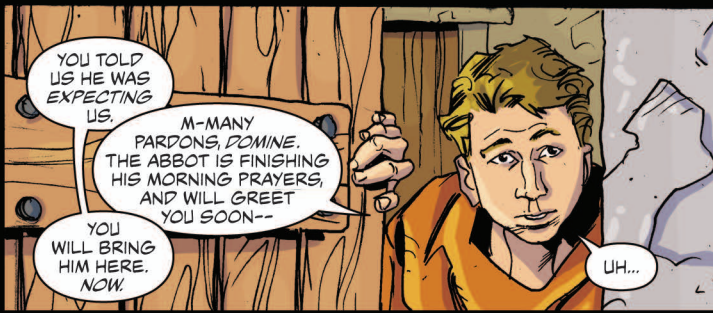


I'M SORRY, BUT OUR COMMUNION MUST WAIT FOR NOW. PERHAPS, WHEN I RETURN--



--YOU WILL AT LAST SPEAK TO ME?



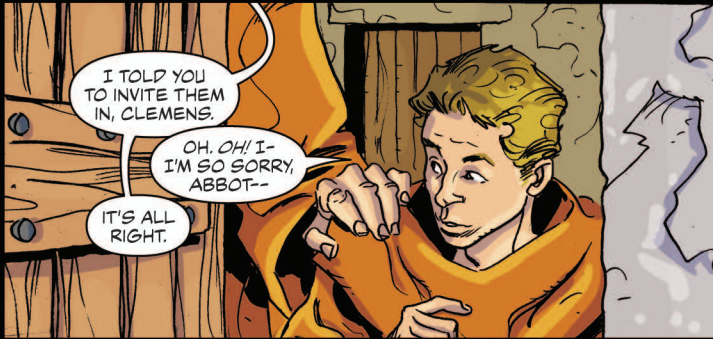


YOU TOLD US HE WAS EXPECTING US.

M-MANY PARDONS, DOMINE. THE ABBOT IS FINISHING HIS MORNING PRAYERS, AND WILL GREET YOU SOON--

YOU WILL BRING HIM HERE. NOW.

UH...



I TOLD YOU TO INVITE THEM IN, CLEMENS.

OH, OH! I-I'M SO SORRY, ABBOT--

IT'S ALL RIGHT.



SALVE, DOMINE ET COMES AUGUSTI. I AM BROTHER ANASTASIUS.



KHAIRE, ANASTASIE.

I AM PLEASSED YOU POSSESS PROPER FORM, IF NOT PUNCTUALITY. YOU DO UNDERSTAND THAT I AM TOO BUSY TO BE KEPT WAITING BY ONE OF YOUR NEOPHYTES?



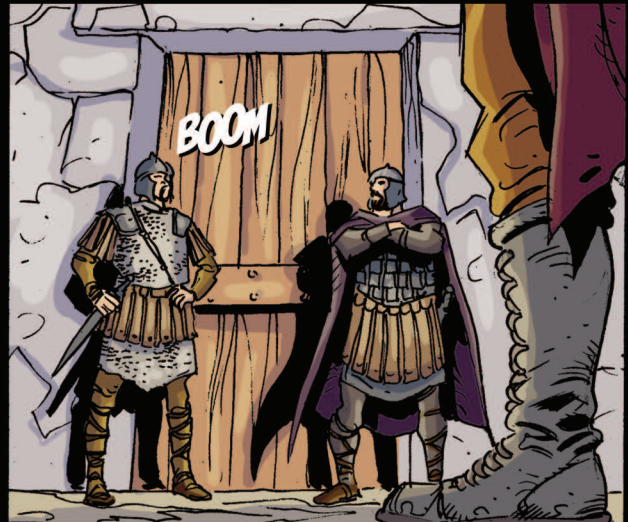
I APOLOGIZE, BOTH FOR MYSELF AND BROTHER CLEMENS.

EVEN BEFORE FORSAKING THE WORLD, THE BOY WAS AN AWKWARD SOUL. HE IS NO LESS OF A GOOD ONE, I ASSURE YOU.

PLEASE, COME INSIDE, DOMINE.



HMPH.



BOOM



SO YOU ARE OUR NEW GUBERNATOR, SIR?

OR DO YOU PREFER THE GREEK, HEGEMON?

I DO NOT MIND THE LATIN.

BUT I AM NOT REPLACING HERODIAN. I AM MERELY SECRETARY TO HIS EXCELLENCY, COUNT BELISARIUS. MY COMMISSION IN NEAPOLIS IS A TEMPORARY NECESSITY.

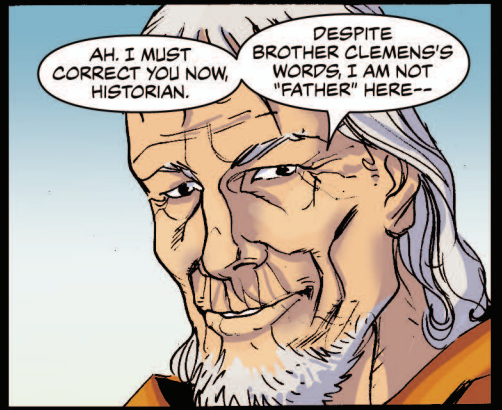
I MUST HONOR YOU SOMEHOW, SIR.

PROCOPIUS WILL DO. OR YOU MAY CALL ME HISTORIAN. I FEAR I AM GUILTY OF SOME PRIDE IN THAT TITLE.



DON'T BE ASHAMED. IT'S A RARE TITLE IN THESE TIMES, AND I SEE NO SIN IN KNOWING THE WORTH OF YOUR PROFESSION.

UH...INDEED, THANK YOU, ABBOT.



AH, I MUST CORRECT YOU NOW, HISTORIAN. DESPITE BROTHER CLEMENS'S WORDS, I AM NOT "FATHER" HERE--



--THAT IS EUGIPIUS, FOUNDER OF OUR ORDER.

AND WHERE IS HE?

PASSED FROM THIS LIFE, FIVE YEARS AGO. UNTIL THE BISHOP OF NEAPOLIS APPOINTS HIS REPLACEMENT, I LEAD, IN MY POOR WAY, AS BEST I CAN.

FIVE YEARS? WHY SO LONG?



THE WAR. IT HAS DISRUPTED MUCH, AND NEAPOLIS SUFFERS GREATLY FOR IT.



I HAVE THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES HERE: FOOD AND WATER SHORTAGES, OUTBREAKS OF--

IT WILL BE DEALT WITH IN TIME.



BUT THERE ARE PEOPLE STARVING NOW, HISTORIAN. PEOPLE WITHOUT HOMES--

I SAID IN TIME, BROTHER ANASTASIUS!

UNTIL I FIND WHAT I CAME FOR NOTHING ELSE MATTERS, IS THAT CLEAR?



OF COURSE,
DOMINE.
IN TIME...



COME,
THEN. I WILL
SHOW YOU THE
LIBRARY.



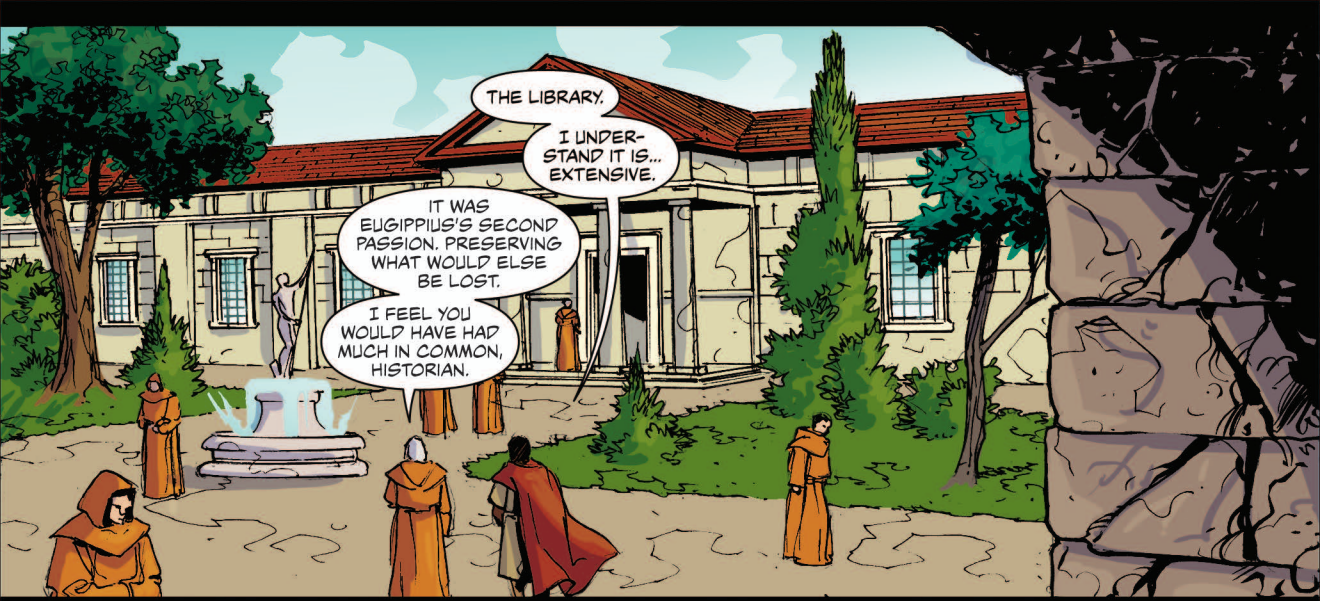
FRIEND?

SSSSSHH...

NOT SO
LOUD, BROTHER
PRIMUS!



MY FRIEND?
IS THAT
YOU?



THE LIBRARY.

I UNDERSTAND IT IS... EXTENSIVE.

IT WAS EUGIPIIUS'S SECOND PASSION, PRESERVING WHAT WOULD ELSE BE LOST.

I FEEL YOU WOULD HAVE HAD MUCH IN COMMON, HISTORIAN.



A SHAME, THEN, THAT I NEVER MET HIM.

WHERE--?

THIS WAY, SIR.

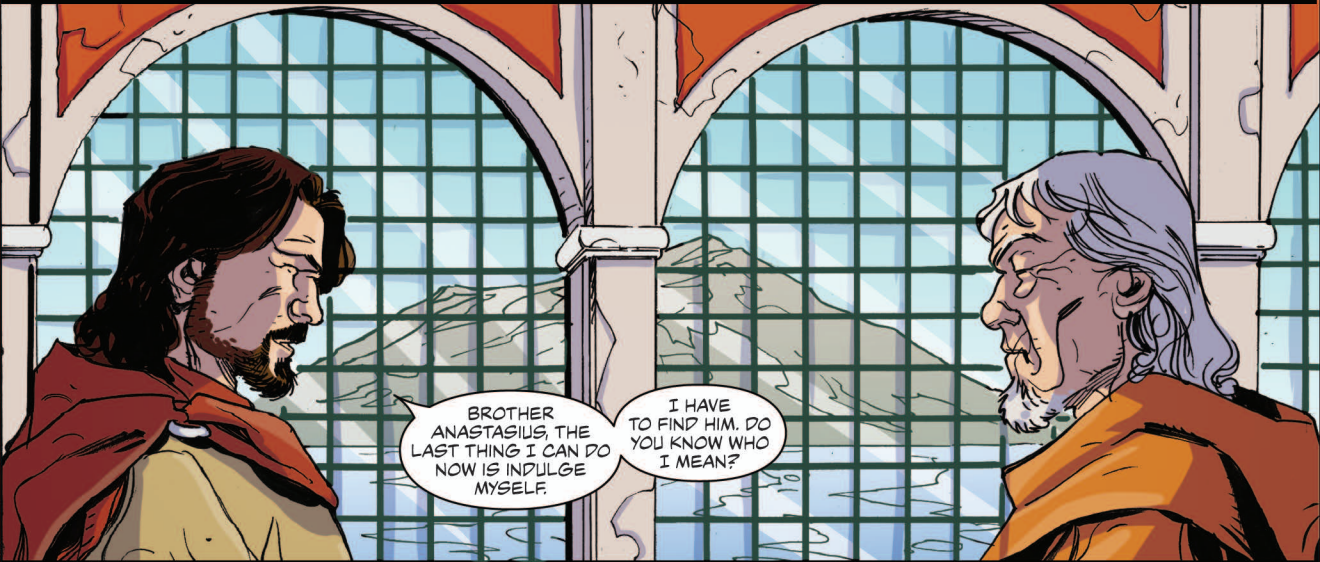


HERE.



THESE MOUN--!

THE RICHES THIS PLACE MUST CONTAIN... I NEVER IMAGINED!





DEAD?

YES, I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED THAT. AFTER SIXTY YEARS...

DO YOU HAVE HIS BODY?

HE IS BURIED IN A SECRET GRAVE FAR TO THE NORTH. I CANNOT SAY WHERE.



YOU MEAN YOU DON'T KNOW?

I MEAN I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO DISTURB HIS RESTING PLACE.

BUT WHAT YOU WANT DOES NOT LIE WITH HIS REMAINS.



YOU PRESUME TO KNOW WHAT I WANT?

I WOULD NEVER PRESUME THAT, SIR. I ONLY WISH TO GIVE IT TO YOU, IF IT IS MINE TO GIVE.

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ROMULUS?



I WANT THE TRUTH!

SIXTY YEARS HAVE GONE SINCE ROME FELL. IT MAY AS WELL BE SIXTY CENTURIES.

IN CONSTANTINOPLE WE KNOW ALMOST NOTHING. JUST RUMORS AND SHADOWS.



I WANT TO KNOW WHAT HE KNEW. WHAT HE SAW.

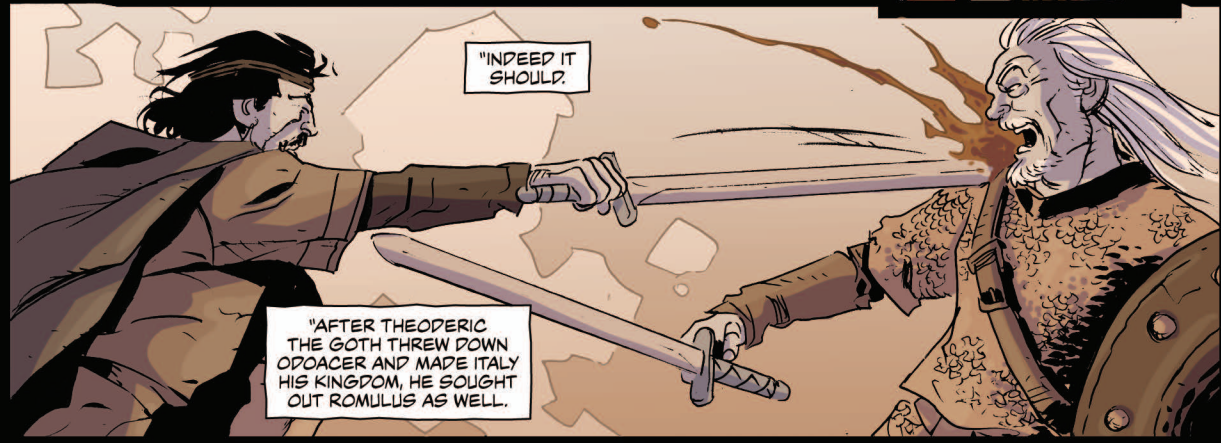
I WANT HIM TO TELL ME HOW IT HAPPENED, SO WE CAN ENSURE IT NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN.



HISTORIAN... DOES THE NAME AMICULLUS MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

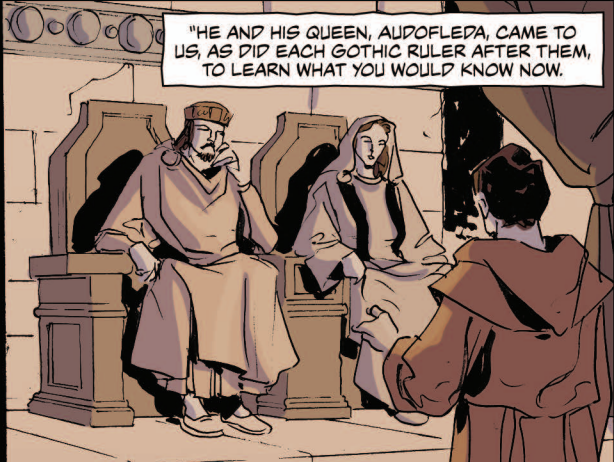


...NO. SHOULD IT?



"INDEED IT SHOULD."

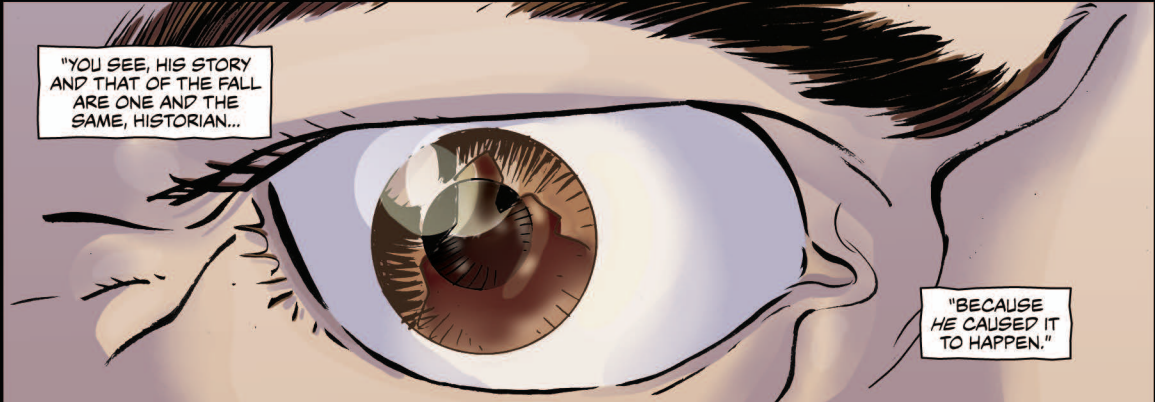
"AFTER THEODERIC THE GOTH THREW DOWN ODOACER AND MADE ITALY HIS KINGDOM, HE SOUGHT OUT ROMULUS AS WELL."



"HE AND HIS QUEEN, AUDOFLEDA, CAME TO US, AS DID EACH GOTHIC RULER AFTER THEM, TO LEARN WHAT YOU WOULD KNOW NOW."



"IN DOING SO, THEY DISCOVERED AMICULLUS."



"YOU SEE, HIS STORY AND THAT OF THE FALL ARE ONE AND THE SAME, HISTORIAN..."

"BECAUSE HE CAUSED IT TO HAPPEN."



HERE, THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT YOU SEEK.



AHH, I UNDERSTAND YOU NOW. ANEKDOTA, APOCRYPHA.

SECRET HISTORY.



VERY MUCH SO.

DEVIL PRIDE, I AM AFRAID, DREW ME TO THIS ONE.

I DID WRITE IT, AFTER ALL.



OH... ...YOU... WROTE IT?

WELL, TOOK IT DOWN, REALLY.



THIS IS THE STORY OF AMICULUS, AND THE FALL...

...TOLD TO ME BY THE EMPEROR ROMULUS, IN THE LAST HOURS OF HIS LIFE.

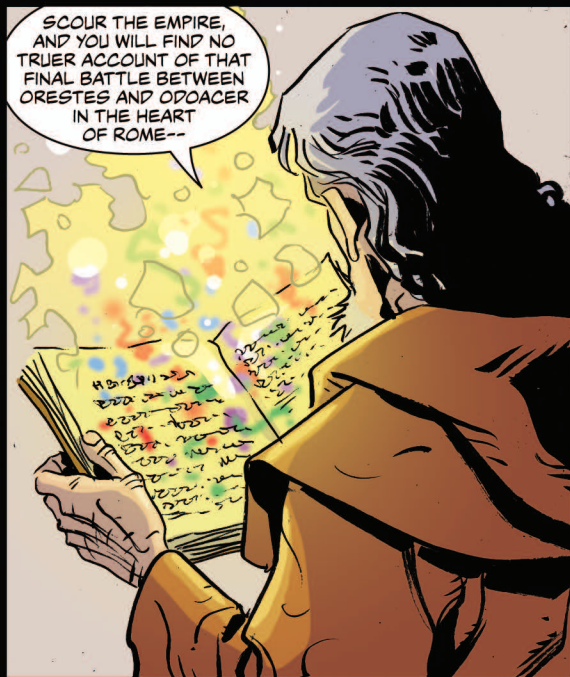
WHAT?



KYRIE...
ROMULUS'S OWN
HISTORY...

IF IT IS
TRUE--

IT IS, HISTORIAN
PROCOPIUS.



SCOUR THE EMPIRE,
AND YOU WILL FIND NO
TRUER ACCOUNT OF THAT
FINAL BATTLE BETWEEN
ORESTES AND ODOACER
IN THE HEART
OF ROME--



ROME?

EVERYTHING
I'VE EVER READ
SAID THAT BATTLE
WAS AT TICIUM, IN
THE NORTH. ROMULUS
HIMSELF WAS AT
RAVENNA.

THEY WERE
NOWHERE NEAR
THE ETERNAL
CITY ON THE
LAST DAY.



AS I SAID,
HISTORIAN, YOU WILL
FIND NO TRUER
ACCOUNT.

AMICULUS IS IN
NO OTHER ACCOUNT, I
AM SURE. YET WITHOUT
HIM, YOU WILL NEVER
UNDERSTAND THE
FALL.

WELL...?



...YES.
YES, OF
COURSE.



I MUST RETURN TO MY PRAYERS.

SIT ANYWHERE YOU LIKE, AND TAKE AS LONG AS YOU LIKE. WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED, CALL FOR ME.



I WILL NOT BE FAR.



PATER NUNUS... AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...

ON THIS DAY OF ALL DAYS...

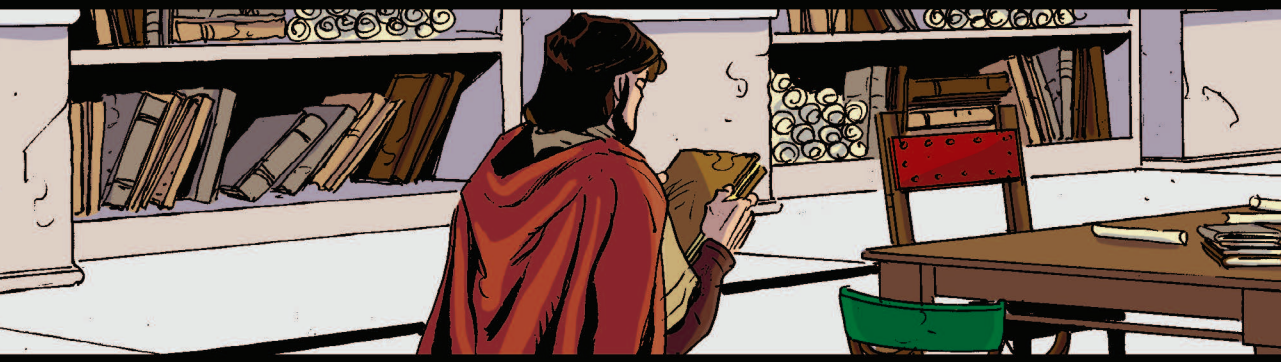
THE DAY I GAVE TO YOU, FOR THAT POOR BOY'S SAKE...

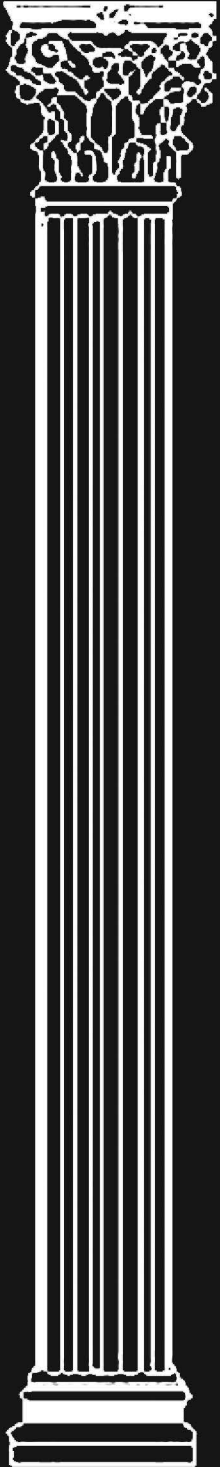


"ANOTHER STUDENT COMES TO LEARN AT YOUR ALTAR."

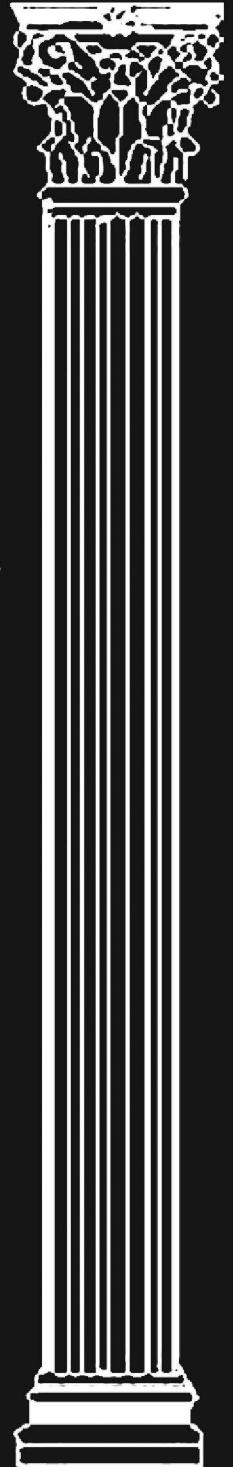
BOOM!

"PLEASE HELP HIM TO UNDERSTAND."





POSTEA
CONTINUENDUM...



DID ROME FALL... OR WAS IT PUSHED?

TRAVIS HORSEMAN GIANCARLO CARACUZZO

AMICULUS

— A SECRET HISTORY —



VOL. I: ROMA AETERNA

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