

TRAVIS HORSEMAN GIANCARLO CARACUZZO

# AMICVLVS

— A SECRET HISTORY —



VOL. I: ROMA AETERNA

(CHAPTER PAGE 1: WHITE LETTERING ON BLACK FIELD: INSERT BEFORE PAGE 1)

# PROLOGUE

“ORBIS RESTITUTUS”

**PAGE ONE (TWO PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – The face of the sun against a clear blue sky. A thick black billow of smoke is crossing it, indicating something, or many things, are burning below.

CAP1:

March, A.D. 538

CAP2:

It is a new day.

**Panel 2** – Wide shot: The Italian countryside north of Rome. Fields and farmhouses give way to one another with the Via Flaminia slicing through the center of the picture toward the city of Rome in the background. It would be a perfect picture of pastoral bliss if not for the fact that parts of it are burning, other parts already burnt to ash and blackened remnants, and the bodies of dead warriors and horses, both Roman and barbarian, are everywhere, lining the road all the way to the city.

CAP1:

(From the private journals of the historian Procopius of Caesarea, A.D. 500-562):

CAP2:

It is a day given to us by God.

CAP3:

Mother Italy, long enslaved to Gothic tyranny, smiles in His restored light.

**PAGE TWO (FIVE PANELS)**

**Panel 1** –The Ponte Milvio, viewed from the bank of the Tiber. The bridge, the water and the riverbanks are covered with the mangled corpses of Gothic soldiers. In the foreground, sprawled on his back on the bank, a dead Goth stares up at the sky, an arrow through his eye. A wide slick of blood, leads away from the bridge off- panel right, as if something has been dragged away through the grass. (See Picture Model 2.11).

CAP:

The armies of His adversary lie helpless before His might and mercy.

**Panel 2** – Outside the walls of Rome. Hadrian’s Mausoleum looms in the background. In the foreground, we see a colossal marble statue head, half-embedded in the ground. A dead Goth lies crushed beneath it. He has been dead for much longer than the Goths on the Ponte Milvio. The trail of blood leads past him through the grass. (See Picture Models 2.21-2.23.)

CAP:

The jewel of His kingdom is in our hands, newly burnished in barbarian blood.

**Panel 3** – The Porta Flaminia, Rome. It is burnt, battered but intact, having just withstood a massive siege. Dead men and horses lay strewn across the blood-spattered ground. A number of Gothic corpses dangle by the neck from ropes on the battlements. Tendrils of smoke drift up from behind the wall. The slick of blood from Panel 1 continues through the partly-opened gate. (See Picture Model 2.31).

CAP1:

O, praise to God and His holy Instrument, the army of Justinian, Belisarius and the East!

CAP2:

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!

**Panel 4** – Wide Shot: a massive mound of bodies, piled in the center of the forum. It is charred and smoldering, a bonfire prematurely guttered out. The blood slick ends at the base of the pile, and the black oily smoke crossing the sun emanates from this. The once great monuments surrounding it are ruined and fire-blackened as well. Smoke and ash billow everywhere. Beside the pile of bodies a **DYING GOTH** lies on his back, half raised on his elbow, his hand stretched out, pleading, as a man standing over him runs his sword through him. Both are in shadow. (See Picture Models 2.41 – 2.44.)

CAP:

This day will resound in hymn and heart from East to West, from The Pillars of Hercules to the Golden Horn, from every corner of our reformed realm, with these words: “Rome is redeemed...”

**DYING GOTH (BURST):**

AAAAAGGGHH!

**PAGE TWO (CONT'D)**

**Panel 5** – Wide Shot: POV facing BELISARIUS/Soldiers. A group of dirty, bloodstained, unsavory-looking Byzantine soldiers stare out from amid the smoke. In the forefront stands a Byzantine general, **COUNT BELISARIUS**. He is in his mid-30s. The look on his face is dead and blank, a thousand-yard stare or a serial-killer face. He is casually wiping the blood from his sword with the hem of his cloak. The DYING GOTH's hands still claws up from the bottom of the panel. The panel is overlaid with a gray pall. A statue of a Roman emperor on his horse (Marcus Aurelius) rises behind them out of the smoke, cracked, blackened and befouled, symbolizing a glory of centuries past that has withered and rotted, never to come again. (See Models 2.51-2.54.)

CAP:

“Rome is reborn.”

**PAGE THREE (TWO PANELS)**

**Panel 1(Inset)** – Close-up, POV PROCOPIUS: a pair of hands writing in a book in the foreground of the panel. The hands are well-kept and pristine, the pages of the book white and clean beyond anyone or anything we've seen in this world so far. In fact, the hands and the book are so clean they should seem to *glow* slightly. Over the book, in the background, we see the forms of the soldiers heaving the GOTH onto the pile of corpses. They should appear like shadows in the smoke.

The hand holding the stylus should be at the end of writing some words in Greek. These words are the only ones on the page. The words are: **και εγώ Προκόπιος ὁ Καισαρεύς**

CAP:

And I, Procopius of Caesarea --

**Panel 2** – Wide shot: **PROCOPIUS OF CAESAREA**, sitting on a column base amid a crowd of gaunt, emaciated and shell-shocked Roman civilians, who stand by watching the executions. He is BELISARIUS's secretary, dressed in a long white tunic with long sleeves and a cloak thrown back over his shoulders. He is Greek, in his late thirties, with mid-length hair and a short beard. He sits on the column base like a Socratic philosopher, chin in his hand, his book and stylus across his knees. He is so rapt with hero worship for BELISARIUS and lost in his visions of Roman glory that he is oblivious to the carnage all around him. The glow from **Panel 1** should surround him faintly. He should appear brighter, more vivid and cleaner than the wrecked world around him, to the point that it appears he can't even be touched by it. (See Models 3.21-3.22.)

CAP:

-- am blessed by God to have witnessed this day.

**PAGE FOUR (FIVE PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – Close-up: PROCOPIUS, facing us with his eyes closed, daydreaming. Behind him and all around him, in vivid color, is his daydream: The emperor **JUSTINIAN** and **BELISARIUS** in profile, in a resplendent, gleaming marble audience hall. The emperor, in his late forties, dressed in gold and purple silk, stands with **BELISARIUS** kneeling at his feet. **BELISARIUS** is wearing clean white patrician's robes here. **JUSTINIAN** is handing **BELISARIUS** a parchment with his marching orders. The emperor's costume is the template on which all other imperial dress, including **ROMULUS**'s will be based. (See Model 4.11 –4.12.)

CAP1: Here, at the pinnacle of our triumph, I gaze back in awe across five years of conquest.

CAP2: Five years since Justinian graced my lord the Count Belisarius with this holy endeavor.

**Panel 2** – Close-up: Same as Panel 1, except someone has intruded on PROCOPIUS's dream. PROCOPIUS has been jarred out of his dreaming by a man in grimy mail standing before him. We only see his hand and a glimpse of him at the waist in the edge of the foreground. PROCOPIUS looks up at him with slight confusion and concern.

CAP1: The history these wars will make -- that **I** will write...

CAP2: Is thrilling to imagine.

SFX:

Clnk (rattle of mail)

No dialogue.

**Panel 3** – PROCOPIUS's POV. looking up at **BELISARIUS**: The **COUNT**, glowering down wearily at us. The same grim, blank look is in his eyes as before. He holds a parchment in his filthy hands much like the one **JUSTINIAN** gave him.

No dialogue.

**Panel 4** – **BELISARIUS** and **PROCOPIUS**, in an imitation of the image in Panel 1. **PROCOPIUS** kneels at **BELISARIUS**'s feet as **BELISARIUS** bestows orders upon him. The soldiers and civilians encircling them look on blankly at the scene. Only **PROCOPIUS** maintains the pomp and gravity of the ceremony from five years earlier. His glow should stand out prominently against the gray, dull destruction.

CAP:

There is still much to work to be done.

**Panel 5** – **PROCOPIUS**, his back facing us, gripping the parchment and watching a column of Byzantine troops wending their way toward the distant mountains in the light of dusk. Torchlight dots the procession to the horizon. **PROCOPIUS** is slightly luminescent in the dark.

CAP:

Having broken the Gothic army at Rome, my lord must pursue their king Witigis north to his capital at Ravenna before their corruption can be expelled from our lands for good.

**PAGE FIVE (THREE PANELS)**

**Panel 1** –PROCOPIUS and his guard retinue, all on horseback, facing front, riding. All are very serious in their duty. PROCOPIUS's eyes are alight with a zealous excitement, and he wields his parchment like a baton as he rides. A stream of refugees, Italian and Gothic, passes him on the road on either side. They are dirty, wretched, their eyes cast down as they walk. As in previous panels, PROCOPIUS shines against this pre-Medieval world like a beacon, in a world of his own.

CAP1:

Yet the south remains in chaos.

CAP2:

I travel to Neapolis, where I must assist General Herodian in its restoration to Roman order.

**Panel 2** – Wide shot: Neapolis (Naples) and the bay of the same name, seen from a ridge above. PROCOPIUS stands there, arms crossed, holding his chin in thought. He is staring at an island in the bay containing a fortified monastery. Parts of the city have sustained considerable damage very recently. (See Models 5.21 -5.22.)

CAP1:

This land has been left fallow for too long. It yearns for Rome's civilizing seed.

CAP2: Yet a task remains before I begin sowing. I must find out how the crop first failed. I must find the one who let it die.

**Panel 3** – PROCOPIUS, facing us, waist-up. He clutches his orders even tighter, and his eyes have hardened into a scowl.

CAP:

I must find Romulus.

**PAGE SIX (SIX PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – Close-up of a worn, badly-stamped bronze coin depicting **ROMULUS AUGUSTULUS**, last emperor of the Western Roman Empire. Most of the images on this page are archaeological reproductions or mythologized paintings, cast in shadow, indicating how very, very little we know about these events, and how little his contemporaries knew, or cared. The coin lies amid a pile of other coins, scattered in the dirt from a split purse. (See Model 6.11.)

CAP1:

“Romulus Augustulus, last emperor of the West.”

Caption 2:

A twelve-year old boy, playing at being Caesar. It would have been laughable had it not ended so tragically.

**Panel 2** – Close-up; official portrait of three figures: **ROMULUS**, his father, **FLAVIUS ORESTES**, and **ROMULUS’S MOTHER**, based on the Diptych of Stilicho (See Model 7.21.)

CAP1:

His father, the general Flavius Orestes, set him on the throne after driving the rightful emperor, Julius Nepos, into exile.

CAP2:

That they were unprepared to rule their stolen nation is a gross understatement.

**Panel 3** – Depiction of the Scirian German general **ODOACER**. (See Model 6.31.)

CAP1:

Romulus reigned for nearly a year before his father’s treachery came back to haunt them.

CAP2:

Odoacer, leader of the German Scirii, demanded his payment for helping them overthrow Nepos.

CAP3:

One-third of Italy for his own kingdom.

**Panel 4** – Depiction of the Battle of Ticinum: a mass of bodies, swords, spears and shields grappling in red-tinged shadow. **ODOACER** and **ORESTES** stand out, mouths open, bellowing their rage at each other, as they fight through the human tide toward each other. (See Model 6.41-6.42.)

CAP1:

Orestes threw his promise in the barbarian’s face, and prepared for war. Their armies met on the plains of Ticinum.

CAP2: By reputation, Orestes was a ferocious adversary, armed with tactics he learned in the service of the dreaded Attila.

**PAGE SIX (CONT'D)**

**Panel 5** – A highly-idealized scene of ROMULUS on his knees, surrendering his crown to ODOACER, based on a public-domain image from **THE YOUNG FOLKS' HISTORY OF ROME** BY CHARLOTTE MARIE YONGE (SEE Model 6.51.)

CAP1:

It is something of a mystery why he fared so poorly.

CAP2:

When it was over, Orestes was dead, his army shattered. Romulus surrendered his crown to Odoacer on his knees.

**Panel 6** – Close-up: depiction of a shredded Roman banner lying in the mud and rain. It is a dull red with the Chi-Rho symbol on it. (See Model 6.61.)

CAP1:

Either from pity or contempt, the barbarian allowed Romulus to live, banishing him for life to the south of Italy.

CAP2:

No one knows what became of him after that.

**PAGE SEVEN (SIX PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – Close-up: PROCOPPIUS’s hand holding the ROMULUS coin. The copper coin shines dully as if reflecting the brightness of the historian’s hand. Beyond this, we see a table covered with documents. In the background, GENERAL HERODIAN stands by the table holding PROCOPPIUS’s orders in his hand, as if reading them. (See Model 7.11 – 7.12.) In reality, he is looking at PROCOPPIUS, somewhat resentfully. The light is dim, with daylight bleeding in from a source off-panel left. The background is in a hazy gray soft focus.

CAP1:

This spare account is almost all that is known of Rome’s fall. Sixty years of darkness has obscured it even more.

CAP2:

As a history, it is poor. As an epitaph to an empire, it is unacceptable.

**Panel 2** –PROCOPPIUS and HERODIAN in profile at the table from Panel 1. PROCOPPIUS still sits, holding the coin before his face. HERODIAN still glares at him, no longer pretending to read. The coin glows a bit more brightly, as if it has taken some of the historian’s light. A pair of open double doors is in the background of the panel, opening onto late afternoon sunlight. Absently, PROCOPPIUS holds out a wine glass for a slave standing at panel left to refill. The slave is a wretched figure, wearing a tunic that is little more than a stained sack. As before, PROCOPPIUS stands out against the faded grayness of the rest of the room.

CAP1:

Fortunately, there is a bit more to the story.

CAP2:

We know that Romulus was sent to Neapolis, to live out his days in the villa of the ancient general Lucullus.

**Panel 3** – PROCOPPIUS faces us, emerging from the shadows of the villa as he passes through the double doors into fading sunlight. HERODIAN and the slave hover in the doorway, gray and ghostlike, staring after him. PROCOPPIUS’s glow has dimmed a bit.

CAP:

The villa sits on the tiny island of Megaris, in the middle of the bay. Since the time of Lucullus, it was converted to a fortress, and then to a monastery.

**Panel 4** – Wide shot: the Bay of Naples. We are viewing it from behind PROCOPPIUS, looking out at the island monastery as the sun descends behind it. PROCOPPIUS’s glow has faded even more. (See Models 7.41 – 7.46.)

CAP1:

It is home to the brotherhood of Saint Severinus. They are famous in this region as scholars and keepers of knowledge otherwise lost.

CAP2:

Perhaps Romulus’s secret is among them.

**PAGE SEVEN (CONT'D)**

**Panel 5** –PROCOPIUS in silhouetted profile against the darkening sky, his eyes fixed in an unblinking glare as he gazes into the setting sun. The glow about him has almost disappeared. However, the coin he still holds in his right hand glows with an orange-red fire.

CAP:

Tomorrow I will visit the monastery, and speak to their abbot.

**Panel 6** – Close-up: PROCOPIUS's hand holding the coin. The glow about the historian has completely vanished. The historian's hand has clenched into a tight fist. The glow from the coin has deepened from orange to a baleful red, and the light from it bleeds through his fingers.

CAP:

I have no doubt he will give me what I want.

**(CHAPTER PAGE 2: WHITE LETTERING ON BLACK FIELD: INSERT BEFORE PAGE 8)**

I

“EX LIBRIS ROMULI”

**PAGE EIGHT (SIX PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – Close-up: a large fist pounding on a wooden door.

SFX:

**BOOM BOOM**

No dialogue.

**Panel 2** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS’S eye, profile. It is half closed, the sign of a mind emerging from deep thought. The glimpse of his face surrounding it is covered in wrinkles and creases. The eye itself is a haunting pale blue, almost gray.

CLEMENS (OP):

Abbot...

ANASTASIUS:

Hm?

**Panel 3** – A largely bare room. We are facing ANASTASIUS. He is in his early seventies, tall, serene, with a fringe of gray hair ringing his otherwise bald head. His hands are folded in prayer, and his head is half-turned to address the young monk, CLEMENS, behind him. CLEMENS is in his late teens, a shy, unworldly naïf who has spent most of his life in the monastery. He wears a worried expression on his face. Both are dressed in simple brown robes with lowered hoods. Morning sunlight floods in through a small window panel right. (See models 8.31-8.34.)

CLEMENS:

Forgive me for interrupting your meditations, Abbot, but ...  
They are here. And they are most insistent to see you.

ANASTASIUS:

Ah. Thank you, Brother Clemens.  
Please go ahead of me and invite them in. I will follow shortly.

**Panel 4** – Similar to Panel 3, except CLEMENS has gone, and ANASTASIUS is now looking upwards at something, smiling ruefully.

ANASTASIUS:

\*sigh\*

That they should come today, of all days...  
Is it a sign, Pater Meus? Do you work though them?

**Panel 5** – Close-up of ANASTASIUS’S hands closing the doors of a small, box-like silver shrine. A Chi-Rho symbol forms when the doors come together. (See Models 6.61, 8.51.) We do not see what is inside.

ANASTASIUS:

I’m sorry, but our communion must wait for now.  
Perhaps, when I return, you will at last speak to me?

**PAGE EIGHT (CONT'D)**

**Panel 6** – Wide shot: ANASTASIUS with his back to us, looking up at the wall. The shrine is a worked silver cabinet sitting on a pedestal before the wall. Behind it, taking up almost the entire wall, is a large mural or mosaic that dominates the panel. It depicts a bearded father deity that could be Jehovah, Jesus or Jupiter from the late classical portrayal. Whoever he is, the Father God looms with a disapproving, almost disdainful expression. (See Models 8.61-8.62.)

No dialogue.

**PAGE NINE (FOUR PANELS)**

**Panel 1** –The gates of the monastery. CLEMENS is peeping nervously through a crack in the oaken doors. We see no more than half his frightened, sweating face and a hand clutching the edge of the door as he stress out at the visitors. Three shadows loom menacingly across the door.

PROCOPIUS (O/P):

You told us he was expecting us.

CLEMENS:

M-many pardons, domine. The abbot is finishing his morning prayers, and will greet you momentarily --

PROCOPIUS (O/P):

You will bring him here. Now.

CLEMENS:

Uh...

**Panel 2** – Same as Panel 1, except the door has opened wider, and ANASTASIUS's hand has fallen on CLEMENS's shoulder. CLEMENS, still jittery, seems relieved to have the abbot there.

ANASTASIUS (O/P):

I told you to invite them in, Clemens.

CLEMENS:

Oh. Oh! I-I'm so sorry, Abbot --

ANASTASIUS (O/P):

It's all right.

Go join the brothers in the chapel.

**Panel 3** – Close-up, ANASTASIUS through the partially-opened door. He stands facing us with a kind, welcoming smile, a host quietly pleased to see his guests.

ANASTASIUS:

Salve, Domine et Comes Augusti.

I am Brother Anastasius.

**Panel 4** – Medium-wide shot: PROCOPIUS flanked by several armed men, dressed like off-duty soldiers in cloaks and long-sleeved tunics, no armor. More armed men stand in the background further down the rocky beach. (See Model 11.41.) PROCOPIUS stands with his arms folded and scowling. Naples and Vesuvius are the backdrop to this picture, with seagulls floating about on the wind.

PROCOPIUS:

Khaire, Anastasie. I am pleased you possess proper form, if not punctuality.

You do understand that I am too busy to be kept waiting by one of your neophytes?

**PAGE TEN (FOUR PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – ANASTASIUS inviting PROCOPIUS and guards in. ANASTASIUS stands to the side, facing us, as PROCOPIUS and two of the guards pass in profile.

ANASTASIUS:

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.

PROCOPIUS:

Hmph.

**Panel 2** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS's face through the door as it closes. He is looking out at the guards at the dock. There is a vaguely worried expression on his face.

No dialogue.

**Panel 3** – Several guards taking up position outside the door, as if cordoning off any potential escape. The door swings shut.

SFX:

THUMP (door shutting)

No dialogue.

**Panel 4** – Wide shot, from above: PROCOPIUS and entourage moving across the entrance chamber. (See Models 10.41-10.44 for examples of the monastery interior for the next several panels on Page Twelve and Thirteen.) The two guards walk before him. ANASTASIUS walks beside PROCOPIUS. Here and there, other monks pass in different directions.

ANASTASIUS:

So you are our new gubernator, sir? Or do you prefer the Greek, Kybernetes?

PROCOPIUS:

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.

ANASTASIUS:

I must honor you somehow, sir.

PROCOPIUS:

Procopius will do. Or you may call me Historian. I fear I am guilty of some pride in that title.

**PAGE ELEVEN (SIX PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – ANASTASIUS has turned and clasped PROCOPIUS’s hands, smiling broadly. The historian is surprised by this, and a little melted by the monk’s warmth.

ANASTASIUS:

Don’t be ashamed. It is a rare title in these days, and I see no sin in knowing the worth of your profession.

PROCOPIUS:

Uh...indeed. Thank you, Abbot.

**Panel 2** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS correcting PROCOPIUS (off-panel). He is still smiling, but less so than in Panel 1.

ANASTASIUS:

Ah. I must correct you now, Historian.

Despite Brother Clemens’s words, I am not “Father” here. That is Eugippius, founder of our order.

**Panel 3** – PROCOPIUS and ANASTASIUS walking side-side down a flight of stairs toward a large open area below. They are in an inner courtyard, in the open air again. Several monks are crossing back and forth across the open area. The mood between the two men has become more solemn at ANASTASIUS’s words. (See Model 13.31.)

PROCOPIUS:

And where is he?

ANASTASIUS:

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.

PROCOPIUS:

Five years? Why so long?

**Panel 4** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS’s head and shoulders. He looks over at us (PROCOPIUS). His face is worried now, entreating the historian for help.

ANASTASIUS:

The war.

The clergy fled the city just before your army laid siege.

**Panel 5** – ANASTASIUS and PROCOPIUS facing each other on the stairs. ANASTASIUS is removing a rolled scroll from the folds of his robe. PROCOPIUS is warding him off with a slight gesture, looking in another direction, exasperated.

ANASTASIUS:

Neapolis suffers greatly, Historian. Yet General Herodian will not hear our pleas.

I have the most pressing issues here: food shortages, water restoration, outbreaks of --

PROCOPIUS:

I’m sure it will all be dealt with in time.

**PAGE ELEVEN (CONT'D)**

**Panel 6** – Zoom-in on PROCOPIUS from Panel 5. He is snapping at ANASTASIUS (off-panel) a little more viciously than he should be.

ANASTASIUS (OP):

But there are people starving now, Historian. People without homes --

PROCOPIUS:

I said in time, Brother Anastasius!

You understand the importance of what I seek, don't you? Until I find it, nothing else takes precedence, is that clear?

**PAGE TWELVE (FIVE PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – Wide shot: The stairway and surrounding environment. Everyone has turned to stare at PROCOPIUS and ANASTASIUS on the stairs: the monks passing by, the guards escorting them, spears at the ready. ANASTASIUS is shocked into speechlessness.

Of note in the foreground of the panel is **PRIMUS**. He is a decrepit monk in his eighties, and wears his hood up, slightly shading his face; his features are otherwise clearly seen. He is unique in that he alone faces away from the scene behind him, and has a slight smile on his face, which could be from recognition, senility, or something else. (See Model 12.11.)

No dialogue.

**Panel 2** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS with his eyes cast down, disappointed. He rolls up the scroll as he speaks.

ANASTASIUS:  
Of course, domine.  
In time...

**Panel 3** – PROCOPIUS and ANASTASIUS in silhouette, POV from behind. They are framed all around by an archway. ANASTASIUS's silhouette is a bit more stooped than he has been so far. In the background through the arch is the suggestion of another open space, resembling a park with small Italian pines. In the foreground, at panel right and left, two hooded monks peer in, staring after the two men.

ANASTASIUS:  
Come, then. I will show you the library.

**Panel 4** – A group of 4-5 **MONKS**, hoods drawn over their heads, stare out from the panel, ostensibly after the historian and ANASTASIUS. Anxious young faces with worried eyes peer out from the hoods, with one exception: PRIMUS, who gazes out with an eerie serenity.

PRIMUS (WEAK):  
Friend?

YOUNG MONK 1:  
Sssshhhh...

YOUNG MONK 2 (WHISPER):  
Not so loud, Brother Primus!

**Panel 5** – Close-up: PRIMUS, his face largely shaded in his hood. The smallest of smiles should be on his face, and something should shine in his watery eyes: the nostalgia of great times long gone, soon to come again.

PRIMUS (WEAK):  
My friend?  
Is that you?

**PAGE THIRTEEN (FOUR PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – Wide shot: the façade of the Library. It is in fact part of an ancient Roman villa, sitting in a small park enclosed by the fortress walls. We see the edges of the fortress and walls around the periphery, but this is mainly about the Library. Shrines and a fountain may also line the path to its double doors, along with the trees and shrubbery. Other monks may stroll about, or kneel by the path, tending the lawn and shrubbery. (See Models 13.11-13.13.)

CAP1/PROCOPIUS:  
“The library.”

CAP2/PROCOPIUS:  
“I understand it is most...extensive.”

CAP1/ANASTASIUS:  
“It was the abbot’s second passion. Preserving what would else be lost.”

CAP2/ANASTASIUS:  
“I feel you would have had much in common, Historian.”

**Panel 2** – The atrium of the villa, still retaining its opulent 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C. style. This is a view from inside the villa through the Ionic columns of the atrium to the wide double-doored entrance in the background. The guards have taken up a stance on either side of it. PROCOPIUS stands in the center, eagerly taking in his surroundings, gazing up at the ceiling. Bright morning light shines down from the skylight above. ANASTASIUS is a short distance away, his usual serene self, gesturing off panel toward their destination. (See Models 13.21-13.22.)

PROCOPIUS:  
A shame, then, that I never met him.  
Where --?

ANASTASIUS:  
This way, sir.

**Panel 3** – POV behind ANASTASIUS: the monk parting two bronze doors. The sunlight floods through the widening aperture, bathing him and casting a long shadow behind him.

ANASTASIUS:  
Here.

**Panel 4** – Wide shot: the interior of the Library. This is a kind-of busy panel. In the far background, a series of arches runs left-to-right across the panel. The center arch frames the door, and the other arches frame vast shelves of books and scrolls lining the walls on both sides of the door. Set in a semicircle within the arch above the door is an enormous late Roman icon of Jesus. The arches on either side of this hint at other icons, running the entire circuit of the room. In the foreground are the edges of two worktables, stacked high with neat piles of scrolls and books. A bust of the Roman general Lucullus sits amid the piles on one of the tables. The floor is marble. PROCOPIUS stands in the doorway, dwarfed. Everything has a golden cast from the sunlight. Ideally, the whole scene will evoke the image of a discovered treasure vault. (See Models 13.41-13.49.)

PROCOPIUS:  
Thee mou --!  
The riches this place must contain...I never imagined!

**PAGE FOURTEEN (SIX PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – Profile: ANASTASIUS casually crossing the Library behind PROCOPIUS. The historian rushes ahead of him excitedly toward the worktable, reaching out to grab the nearest scroll. ANASTASIUS’s face shows mild amusement. In the background, several more tables in rows file toward the wall. The wall here is similar to the wall on **Page 13-4**: series of arches framing bookshelves, topped by enormous murals of a religious nature. Light flows across the room from right to left, coming from unseen windows on the far wall.

ANASTASIUS:

We’re not Alexandria, but we try.

Please indulge yourself. I am ever at your service, and Count Belisarius’s.

**Panel 2** – PROCOPIUS standing over the worktable, clutching a book in one hand and a scroll in the other. A mixed pile of each lies before him on the table, again resembling a pile of treasure in a way. He wears a far-away expression, as if he has briefly forgotten why he was there. Light and shadow from the window falls across him in cross-hatched diamonds, from the shape of the window panes.

PROCOPIUS:

Belisarius...

Yes, of course.

**Panel 3** – PROCOPIUS facing ANASTASIUS (us), against the backdrop of the windows. Same arch structure as the other walls, with large windows with diamond-shaped panes framed in each arch. Through them, we can see Vesuvius and the Neapolitan shoreline. PROCOPIUS is more serious now, remembering why he came.

PROCOPIUS:

Brother Anastasius, the last thing I can do at this time is indulge myself.

I have to find him.

**Panel 4** – ANASTASIUS, standing with his hands behind his back. His face is serious, and partly obscured by shadow. The part that is lighted is cross-hatched with the pattern of the window.

ANASTASIUS:

You want Romulus.

PROCOPIUS (O/P):

Yes. How do I find him?

ANASTASIUS:

Why do you want him?

**PAGE FOURTEEN (CONT'D)**

**Panel 5** – Wide shot, above: PROCOPIUS and ANASTASIUS facing each other. Sunlight floods the floor as before, with the same light pattern spilling across everything.

PROCOPIUS:

It's no concern of yours. A simple answer will suffice.

ANASTASIUS:

I'm sorry, but it's not so simple.

PROCOPIUS:

And why is that?

**Panel 6** – POV from below, panning up ANASTASIUS to the ceiling. He still stands with his hands behind his back, but his demeanor has darkened. He is stern, almost angry. Behind him, above his head, the icon of Jesus looms.

ANASTASIUS:

Because Romulus is dead, Historian.

Depending on why you want him, you may be disappointed.

**PAGE FIFTEEN (FIVE PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – PROCOPIUS with tables and windows behind him. Disappointment is clear on his face.

PROCOPIUS:

Dead?

Yes, I should have prepared myself for that. After sixty years...

Do you have his body?

ANASTASIUS (O/P):

He is buried in a secret grave many miles to the north. I cannot say where.

**Panel 2** – ANASTASIUS from the waist up, arms crossed. His eyes are closed as if exhausted by the historian's hounding. He is "being patient" with PROCOPIUS as one would with a child, yet is trying not to show it to a man who could have him killed.

PROCOPIUS (O/P):

You mean you don't know?

ANASTASIUS:

I mean I cannot allow you to disturb his resting place.

But what you want does not lie with his remains.

**Panel 3** – PROCOPIUS facing off against ANASTASIUS, brandishing a scroll at him. He is annoyed and a little confused that this plebeian is defying him. The monk is working hard to be contrite and deferential, pressing his hands together in a pleading gesture as he speaks.

PROCOPIUS:

You presume to know what I want?

ANASTASIUS:

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?

**Panel 4** – Looking into the library through the glass windows from outside the monastery. The windows have been carved right out of the sheer monastery wall. Waves from the Bay of Naples break not far below them. A gull flies across the scene in the right foreground. We see PROCOPIUS as an indistinct silhouette through the window, arms wide, gesturing dramatically. ANASTASIUS is another silhouette beyond him.

PROCOPIUS:

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.

**Panel 5** – POV facing PROCOPIUS, who is confronting , intense, but pleading as well.

PROCOPIUS:

I want to know what he knew.

I want to know what that boy was thinking when he sold the Mother City for his life.

I want him to tell me how Rome fell, so I can ensure it never happens again.

**PAGE SIXTEEN (FIVE PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – ANASTASIUS staring at the table off to his left, chin in his hand. He is staring hard at the pile of scrolls on the table, considering: should he?

ANASTASIUS:  
Hmm.

**Panel 2** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS’S face in profile, turned slightly in PROCOPIUS’S direction (panel left) His face is serious, even solemn. What he is about to say is very important. Heavy shadow.

ANASTASIUS:  
Historian...  
Does the name Amiculus mean anything to you?

**Panel 3** – The past: A Gothic throne room. **KING THEODORIC THE GREAT** and his queen, **AUDOFLEDA**, both in their forties, sit on their thrones listening attentively as a young monk in the foreground reads to them from the history. The monk’s back is to us; we do not see his face. THEODORIC leans in, fascinated but concerned. (See Models 16.31-16.34.) A sepia quality or other effect can indicate this and the following panels are in the past.

CAP1 (PROCOPIUS):  
“No. Should it?”

CAP2: (ANASTASIUS):  
“Indeed it should.”

CAP3: (ANASTASIUS):  
“You are not the first to ask about the fall.”

**Panel 4** – Close-up: THEODORIC’S face. The king’s eyes have widened, and his mouth hangs slightly open, as the History’s lessons strike home. There is a touch of fear in his eyes, a fear for the future.

CAP1 (ANASTASIUS):  
“Theodoric the Goth came to us after he threw down Odoacer, as did each Gothic king after him.”

CAP2 (ANASTASIUS):  
“For each of them, knowing who Amiculus was, and what he was, was crucial to understanding the fall.”

**Panel 5** – Extreme close-up: THEODORIC’S EYE. In the darkness of his pupil, a FIGURE in a dark-blue hooded cloak hovers, menacingly. We can see nothing of his body beneath the billowing cloak.

CAP (ANASTASIUS):  
“That understanding was vital to ruling Italy.”

**PAGE SEVENTEEN (FIVE PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS’S hand emerging from the pile of scrolls holding a codex, an early form of book, worn and leather-bound with yellowed parchment pages. Both his hand and the book seem, interestingly enough, to be about the same age for the shape they are in. (See Model 17.51.)

ANASTASIUS (O/P):

Here.

This is precisely what you seek.

**Panel 2** –ANASTASIUS, facing front, cradling the book in both hands. He looks at it fondly, even wistfully, as PROCOPIUS approaches him from behind to look over his shoulder at it, a gleam in his eye.

PROCOPIUS:

Ahh, I understand you now. Anekdotia. Apocrypha.

Secret history.

ANASTASIUS:

Very much so.

Devil Pride, I am afraid, drew me to this one. As we speak, I’m finding difficulty containing it.

PROCOPIUS:

That good, eh?

**Panel 3** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS, holding the book, with his head turned to look over his shoulder at PROCOPIUS (off-panel). He is grinning now, almost slyly, and a boyish glint has come into his eye.

ANASTASIUS:

But of course.

I did write it, after all.

**Panel 4** –ANASTASIUS’S hands in profile in the foreground, holding the open book. PROCOPIUS is in the background facing us, looking down at the book. The historian’s interest is cooling fast, and his eyes narrow cynically as he looks on. His hand is retreating as if it had touched something vaguely unpleasant.

PROCOPIUS:

Oh...

...You... wrote it?

ANASTASIUS (O/P):

Well, took it down, really.

**Panel 5** – same scene as Panel 3, except PROCOPIUS’S eyes have widened and his jaw has dropped in amazement. He is rushing forward to look at the book.

ANASTASIUS (O/P):

This is the story of Amiculus, and the Fall ...

...told to me by the Emperor Romulus, in the last hours of his life.

PROCOPIUS:

What?

**PAGE EIGHTEEN (FIVE PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – POV below, close-up: PROCOPIUS looking down into the open pages of the book. He is lit from underneath, as if the book's pages possess their own luminescence.

PROCOPIUS:  
Romulus's own history.  
That such a thing exists...  
If it is true--

**Panel 2** – ANASTASIUS from PROCOPIUS's POV, looking at him (us) while holding the book open for PROCOPIUS. The visible pages of the book display some scrawl and a burst of color giving the impression of an elaborately painted scene.

ANASTASIUS:  
It is, Historian Procopius.  
Scour the empire from one end to the other, and you will find no truer account of the final struggle between Orestes and Odoacer in the heart of Rome --

PROCOPIUS (O/P):  
Rome?

**Panel 3** – Same as Panel 1, except PROCOPIUS is looking out at ANASTASIUS (us) with a troubled expression on his face.

PROCOPIUS:  
Everything I've ever read said that battle was at Ticinum, in the north. Romulus himself was at Ravenna.  
They were nowhere near the Eternal City on the last day.

**Panel 4** – Same as Panel 2, except now ANASTASIUS is holding the book, now closed, out for PROCOPIUS to take.

ANASTASIUS:  
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...?

**Panel 5** – Close-up: ANASTASIUS's withered hands passing the book into PROCOPIUS's younger hands.

PROCOPIUS:  
... Yes.  
Yes, of course.

**PAGE NINETEEN (FOUR PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – ANASTASIUS in mid-turn, preparing to leave. His head is turned to glance vaguely over his shoulder. A clear outline of PROCOPIOUS'S shadow amid the window-pane shadows falls across his back.

ANASTASIUS:

I must leave you now, to attend to the brethren.

Sit anywhere you like, and take as long as you like. When you have finished, call for me.

**Panel 2** – Wide shot: The closing library doors frame the scene. In the far background, we see the small figure of PROCOPIOUS, holding the book and standing before the worktable, staring out at us (ANASTASIUS).

ANASTASIUS (O/P):

I will not be far.

**Panel 3** – ANASTASIUS in profile, closing the library doors behind him. His head is down, his eyes are closed, and he appears to be praying fervently.

ANASTASIUS (WHISPER):

Pater Meus...

After all these years...

On this day, of all days...

**Panel 4** – PROCOPIOUS from behind, staring at the doors as the Jesus icon stares down at him from above the doors. The window light cross-hatches his back.

CAP1/ANASTASIUS:

“The day I gave to you, for that poor boy’s sake...”

CAP2/ANASTASIUS:

“Another student comes to learn at your altar.”

SFX:

boom (sound of door closing)

CAP3/ANASTASIUS:

“Please help him to understand.”

**PAGE TWENTY (FOUR PANELS)**

**Panel 1** – PROCOPIUS in profile, hand on chin, studying the book as if he expects it to vanish when he blinks. In the middle background, under an archway, we see another worktable, not far from the wall/bookshelves on that side of the room.

No dialogue.

**Panel 2** – same as Panel 1, except PROCOPIUS is moving away from us, toward the table across the room, eyes still locked on the book in his hand.

No dialogue.

**Panel 3** – Same as Panel 1, except PROCOPIUS is at the table now, his back to us, in the process of sitting down.

No dialogue.

**Panel 4** – Wide shot, half-page: PROCOPIUS sitting at the table, facing us, leaned forward, head propped on an elbow, with the book open before him. Beams of light come from a source panel left, different from the large windows in the other room. As a result, it is a little dimmer than in the other room. Dominating the scene is the arch through which he just came. An enormous late Roman mosaic or painting of a boy in an emperor's crown and robe, presumably ROMULUS himself, looms in the dim space above the arch, seeming to watch the historian as he reads. PROCOPIUS is not aware of this. (See Model 20.41.)

No dialogue.

*TO BE CONTINUED....*

