



"Witchblade not only has a lot of substance but sustenance too."

- Player Affinity

"I make no attempt to hide my fascination with this title. I adore everything about the Top Cow universe, and *Witchblade* was my first experience."

- Guerrilla Geek

TOP COW REBIRTH

# WITCHBLADE



## UNBALANCED PIECES PART 2

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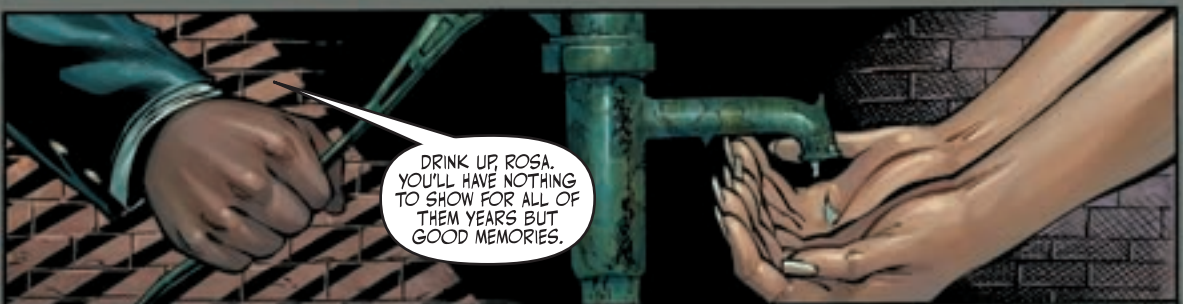
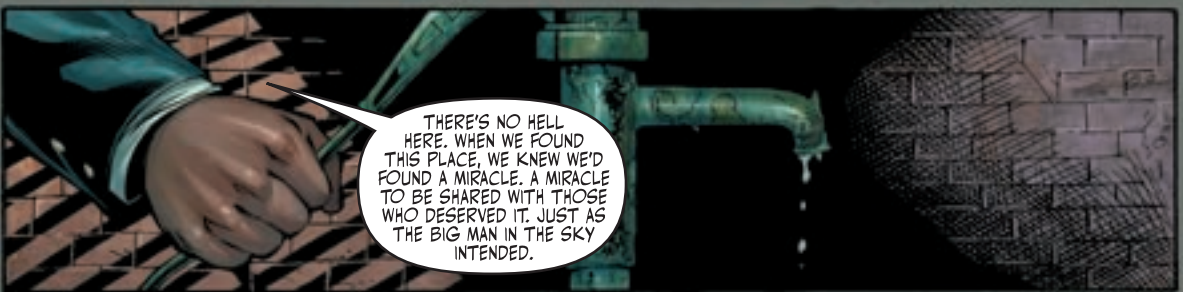
# W

Sara Pezzini wields the powerful gauntlet known as the Witchblade. Her life forever altered by the events of *Artifacts*, Sara now finds herself in a new city and in a completely foreign situation. After all, tracking supernatural killers was much easier when she was a police detective in her hometown of New York.



TIM SEELEY • DIEGO BERNARD  
FRED BENES • ARIF PRIANTO OF IFS





DRINK YOUR  
FILL, AND BECOME  
ONE WITH THE  
FLESH.



Uptown Police Station.

Chicago, Illinois.

4 AM.

*I'd just spent my first few hours on the other side of the cell door for the first time in my life. But, then things unexpectedly improved...*

GET A GOOD LOOK, JANE.

BECAUSE THIS "SKINNY LITTLE ASS" IS GOING RIGHT OUT THE FRONT DOOR.

YOU GOT BAILED, PEZZINI. WHOOPEE-FRICKIN' DOO.

TRUTH IS, ONE OF THE REAL DETECTIVES HERE THINKS ALDERMAN SPIEGEL WAS STILL ALIVE YESTERDAY, WHICH WOULD PLACE YOU PRETTY DAMN CLOSE TO THE SCENE FOR HIS MURDER.

SO DON'T PLAN ANY SHOPPING EXCURSIONS TO THE 'BURBS JUST YET.

BUT THE OLD LADY YOU BEAT UP ISN'T PRESSING CHARGES. AND WHETHER SPIEGEL WAS ALIVE OR NOT YESTERDAY, IT'S TAKING A BACK SEAT TO NEWS THAT MAKES FAR BETTER HEADLINES...

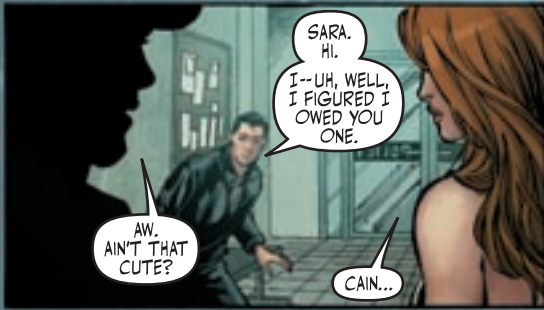
...THE ALDERMAN'S DEATH HAS PROMPTED THE PAPER TO RELEASE ITS INVESTIGATION...

WHICH TIES SPIEGEL TO A SEX-TRAFFICKING RING. SPIEGEL IS ALLEGED TO HAVE ALLOWED THE TRAFFICKERS TO OPERATE IN HIS DISTRICT, IN EXCHANGE FOR ILLICIT SERVICES FROM UNDERAGE GIRLS...



MUST BE NICE. WEAR A LITTLE SLUTTY DRESS, AND BOYS FOLLOW YOU TO THE CLINK AND PAY YOUR BAIL.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT--



AW. AIN'T THAT CUTE?

SARA. HI. I--UH, WELL, I FIGURED I OWED YOU ONE.

CAIN...



ABOUT LAST NIGHT--

HAVE FUN WITH 'DOUCHE-ULA,' PEZZINI.

LATER. JUST GET ME OUT OF HERE.



THIS IS MY RIDE. NICE. '57 STUDEBAKER. MY DAD USED TO BUILD MODELS OF CARS LIKE THIS.



LOOK...I DIDN'T BEAT UP AN OLD WOMAN.

I KNOW. AND I DIDN'T DITCH YOU BECAUSE I FOUND SOMEONE BETTER.

SURE.



SEE YA LATER, TRIXIE. I'LL KEEP THE CELL WARM FOR YA.



THAT GIRL, MIRANDA SMALLS, THE ONE WHO ATTACKED YOU. SHE CAME TO A FEW OF MY SHOWS. I KNEW SHE WAS INTO SOMETHING WEIRD. JUST DIDN'T KNOW SHE ACTUALLY QUALIFIED FOR AARP DISCOUNTS.

YEAH, I PLAN ON DROPPING IN ON GRANDMA TOMORROW FOR TEA AND EXPLANATIONS.



YOU DON'T SEEM ALL THAT FREAKED OUT FOR A GIRL THAT JUST GOT HASSLED BY A WOMAN WHO WENT FROM G-STRINGS TO ADULT DIAPERS IN SECONDS.

I WORKED A FEW "SPECIAL CASES" WHEN I WAS ON THE NYPD. I KNOW SOME STUFF GETS LEFT OUT OF POLICE REPORTS BECAUSE IT'S A LITTLE TOO GRIMM'S FAIRYTALES.



ANYWAY, I'M PRETTY SURE I CAN HANDLE WHATEVER "THE SECOND CITY" CAN THROW AT ME.

CAREFUL. CHICAGO ISN'T NEW YORK. NEW YORK HAS LONG SHADOWS, BUT CHICAGO'S ARE DARKER.



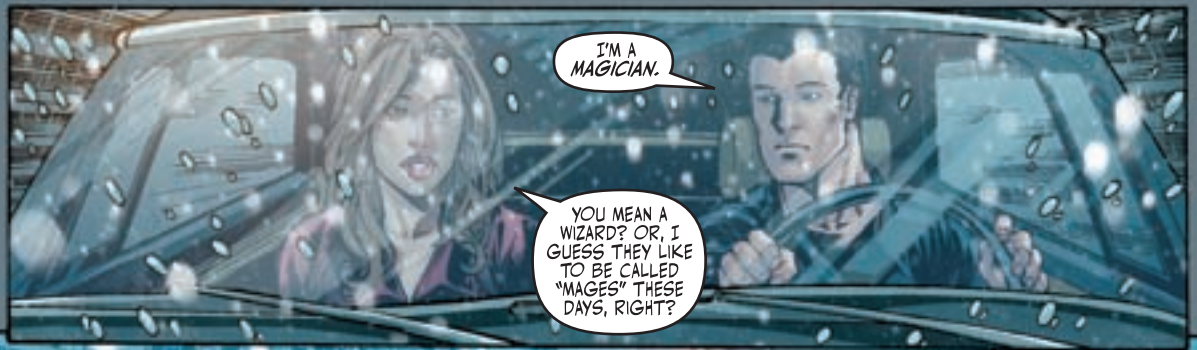
HERE, CORRUPTION DOESN'T JUST GREASE THE WHEELS...

IT KEEPS THE LIGHTS ON.



SO I GUESS YOU'RE NOT JUST A CLUB HOPPING SMOOTH TALKER, CAIN JORGENSEN.

WHAT IS IT YOU DO, EXACTLY, BESIDES PAYING THE BAILS OF GIRLS YOU JUST MET?



I'M A  
MAGICIAN.

YOU MEAN A  
WIZARD? OR, I  
GUESS THEY LIKE  
TO BE CALLED  
"MAGES" THESE  
DAYS, RIGHT?



NOT LIKE THAT.  
I'M A MAGICIAN. LIKE  
ON A STAGE. I'M THE  
AMAZING CAIN. OF  
THE RAISING CAIN  
SHOW.

HA. HAHAH. OH  
GOD. SORRY. SNRRK. YOU,  
AH, YOU JUST DON'T SEEM  
THE TYPE.



WELL, I  
LEFT MY TOP  
HAT AND CHEESY  
MUSTACHE AT  
HOME.

ACTUALLY, I  
JUST FIND THAT  
NOT LOOKING THE  
PART MEANS IT'S  
EASIER TO DEFY  
EXPECTATIONS.



FEMALE NYPD  
DETECTIVE LIKE YOU, I  
BET YOU KNOW WHAT  
THAT'S LIKE.



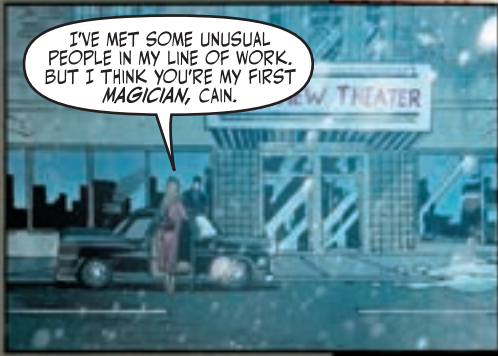
YEAH. I  
GUESS I DO.  
SO WHAT KIND  
OF TRICKS  
DO YOU  
DO?



I CAN'T DESCRIBE  
THEM. THAT WOULD RUIN  
THE MYSTERY. MY THEATRE  
IS RIGHT BELOW MY  
APARTMENT. ON THE WAY TO  
YOUR PLACE, ACTUALLY.  
WHY DON'T WE STOP  
BY?

SOME COFFEE  
AND MAGICAL  
DELIGHTS, ON  
ME.

SURE.  
I THINK I'D  
LIKE THAT.

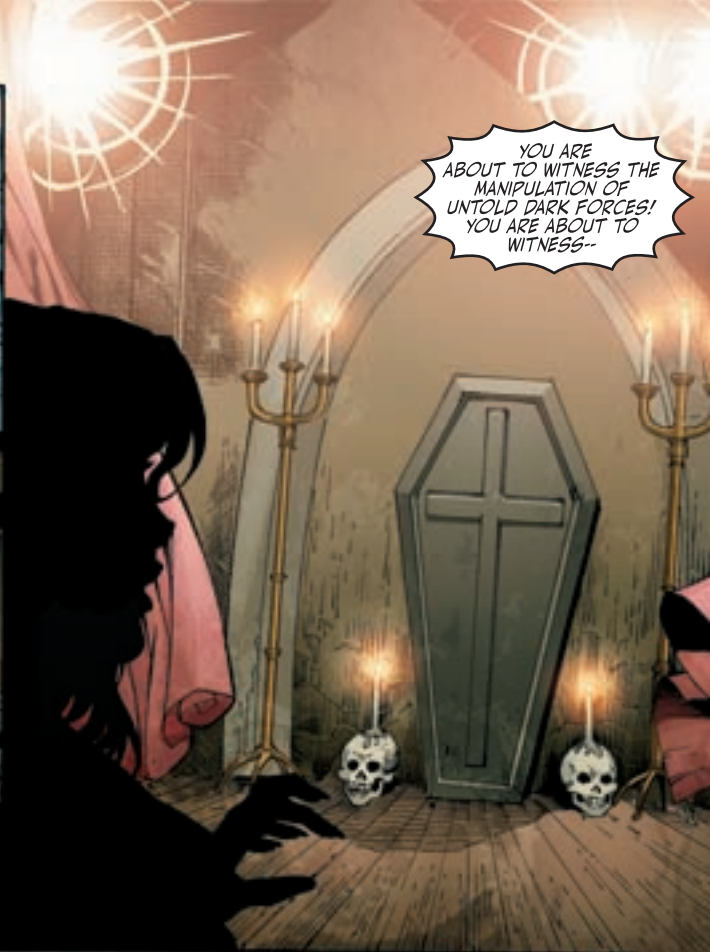


I'VE MET SOME UNUSUAL PEOPLE IN MY LINE OF WORK. BUT I THINK YOU'RE MY FIRST MAGICIAN, CAIN.



CAIN?

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! PREPARE YOURSELF!



YOU ARE ABOUT TO WITNESS THE MANIPULATION OF UNTOLD DARK FORCES! YOU ARE ABOUT TO WITNESS--



THE AMAAAAAAZING CAAAAAAAAIN!

POOOOF



BLACK, NO SUGAR NO CREAM, JUST THE WAY YOU LIKE IT.

GHA!





NICE.

MAGIC IS ALL ABOUT MISDIRECTION.



THE KIND YOU DO, MAYBE. THE KIND I'VE SEEN USUALLY INVOLVES PENTAGRAMS AND TIED UP VIRGINS.



WHEN I STARTED DOING STAGE MAGIC, I HAD NO IDEA THERE WAS... *THAT* KIND OF MAGIC. BUT, EVERY TIME I SEE IT NOW, I'M DRAWN TO IT. LIKE A MAGNET.

MAYBE FAKING IT FOR SO LONG MAKES ME ATTRACTED TO THE REAL STUFF.



PULLED ME TO MS. SMALLS, FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS. I THINK YOU'VE GOT SOME KIND OF PERSONAL MAGIC TOO, SARA.

AND FOR YOUR NEXT TRICK YOU'LL PULL A CHEESY LINE OUT OF YOUR HAT?



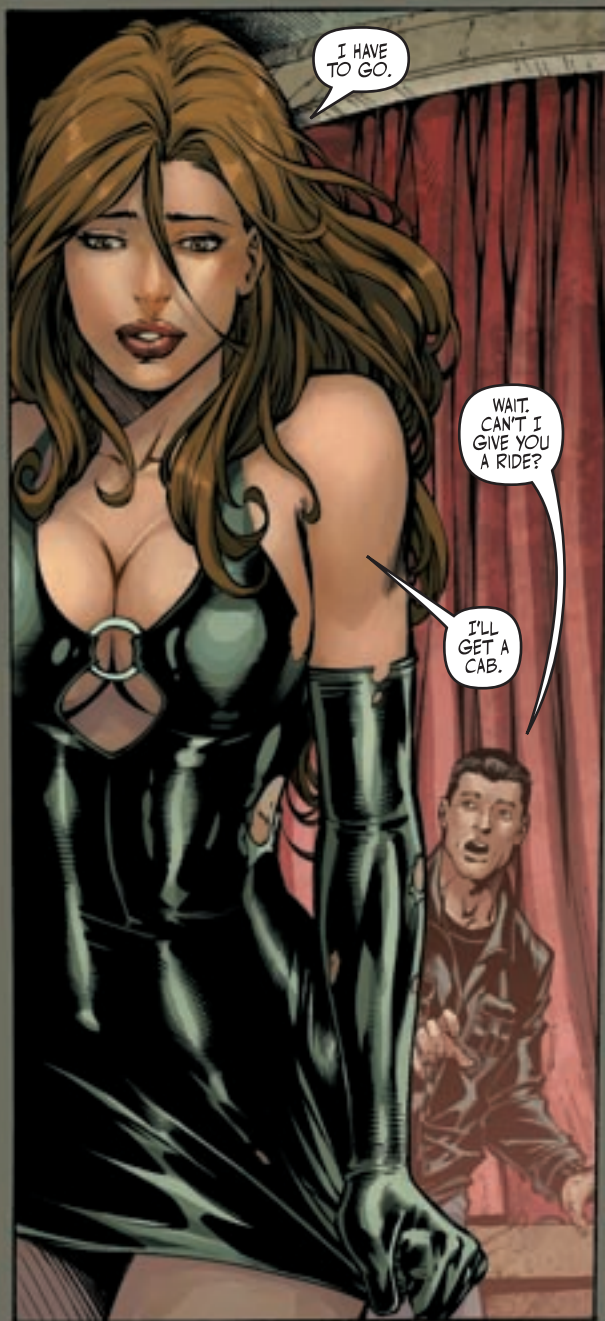
BESIDES, YOU'VE GOT ME WRONG, CAIN. I'M JUST A BAD P.I. WITH EVEN WORSE LUCK.

EITHER WAY, I'M DRAWN TO YOU.



MAYBE FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS.







YOU KNOW YOU HAD A GOOD NIGHT WHEN YOU HAVE TO SEE A SEAMSTRESS IN THE MORNIN'.

I can't even quip back to the cabbie, my mind is so occupied.



This is where I am in my life? Getting picked up by the cops for beating on an old lady? An old lady who may have killed a man who just so happened to be the worst kind of scum.



Except she wasn't an old lady, and I really have to figure out why she was wearing some kind of butcher shop version of the Witchblade armor.



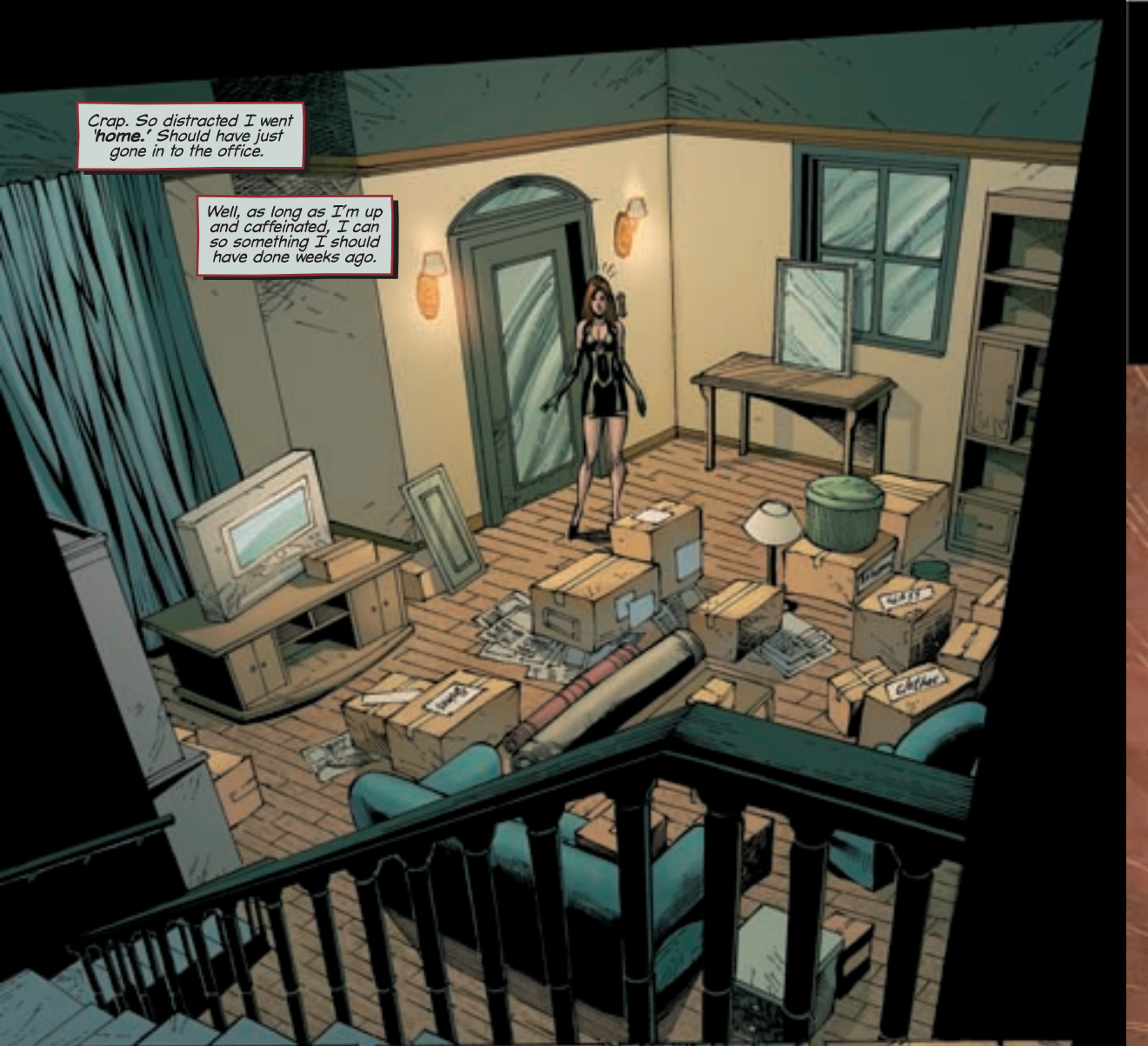
And as curious as I am about that, and Alderman Spiegel, it wasn't enough to keep me from letting a guy I just met tonight "take me to his magic show."



That doesn't seem like me. Maybe it was all that talk of "long" shadows...

Crap. So distracted I went 'home.' Should have just gone in to the office.

Well, as long as I'm up and caffeinated, I can do something I should have done weeks ago.



All this stuff, thrown into boxes and dragged half way across the country.



The sight of each item jogs a few memories, swishing them off the bottom of my mind like a shaken snow globe.



It feels like all the right pieces.



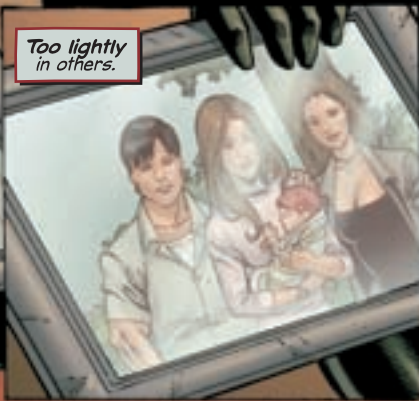
But something about the way it all comes together feels awkward.



*Weighted too heavily  
in some parts...*



*Too lightly  
in others.*



**OH  
GOD!**



*So that's it, then. The  
bearer of "The Balance"  
feels unbalanced.*

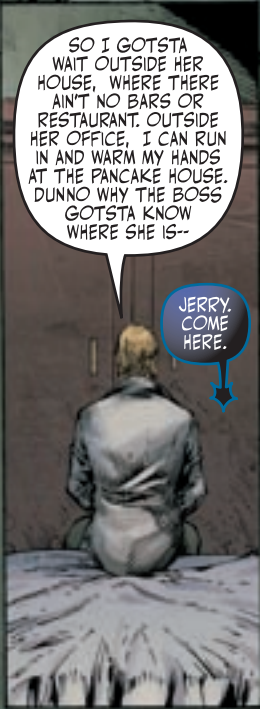


*God, I hate  
irony.*

JEEZ. JEEZ.  
IT'S SO GODDAMN  
COLD. IF I'DDA  
KNOWN.



I TELL YA, I'D  
HAVE NEVER TAKEN  
THIS JOB. SOMETIMES,  
THAT WOMAN?  
SOMETIMES, SHE  
DON'T COME TO  
THE OFFICE.



SO I GOTSTA  
WAIT OUTSIDE HER  
HOUSE, WHERE THERE  
AIN'T NO BARS OR  
RESTAURANT. OUTSIDE  
HER OFFICE, I CAN RUN  
IN AND WARM MY HANDS  
AT THE PANCAKE HOUSE.  
DUNNO WHY THE BOSS  
GOTSTA KNOW  
WHERE SHE IS--

JERRY.  
COME  
HERE.



UH,  
WHYSGAT?

JUST COME  
HERE. I WANNA  
SHOW YOU  
SOMETHIN'.

AHHHH!  
AGH!



YOU DON'T ASK  
QUESTIONS JERRY.  
AND YOU DON'T  
EVER COMPLAIN.



YOU JUST  
DO WHAT WE  
TELL YA TO  
DO.

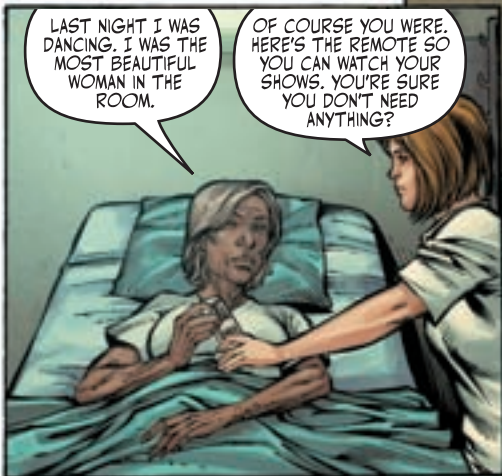
Swedish Covenant Hospital.

THERE YOU GO. DO YOU NEED ANYTHING, MS. SMALLS?



LAST NIGHT I WAS DANCING. I WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE ROOM.

OF COURSE YOU WERE. HERE'S THE REMOTE SO YOU CAN WATCH YOUR SHOWS. YOU'RE SURE YOU DON'T NEED ANYTHING?



ALL THE MEN WANTED ME. HELL, ONE OF THOSE FELLAS BEEN FOLLOWING ME AROUND FOR THREE WEEKS.



I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, BUT...

OH, I BELIEVE YOU...



AND IF YOU DON'T TELL ME WHERE THE FOUNTAIN IS...







YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A WHOLE LOT OF PAINKILLERS.

I heard someone say the other day that there were really only two seasons in Chicago. Winter and construction.

I guess sometimes, it's both.

When I was a cop, I could have just walked in, flashed my badge, and I'd have been on my way to interrogate one little old lady with a mean right hook and an appetite for the life juices of sicko politicians.

Not going to be that easy anymore. So, do I try the sneaky, deceptive way that utilizes my brain?

Or do I rely on the Witchblade--

CRASH

Well, that solves that dilemma.





Someone beat me to a visitation.



And whomever it was can take a 30-foot fall as well as Smalls can in her bacon armor.



I try not to smile too much...



But the truth is I'm one happy little P.I.



I love it when I have no choice but to use the Witchblade to solve a problem...



And the Witchblade loves it, too.

**TO BE CONTINUED!**