

AGENTS EXTRAORDINARY: EMPIRE
1: THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW
By Nathan Alderman

PAGE ONE

1.1

The space is huge – a vast pyramid of glass and steel, with a large open area running through the center and rows of frosted-glass rooms along the left and right walls. A central spiral staircase-slash-support column rises into a smaller, rounded second level slung by steel beams just beneath the apex of the pyramid; it's enclosed, but dotted with differently sized circular windows. In BG, through the glass and past a broad balcony, we see the skyline of Central London across the River Thames. We're roughly sited on the Isle of Man, in one of the (in our world) empty, undeveloped spaces near the O2 Dome.

Right at the center of the panel, in front of the spiral staircase, a facade has been erected, bearing only the familiar logo of The Branch: A tree with spreading roots belowground. In front of this facade there sits a desk, with a computer, and a couple of plush, future-y chairs before it; at the desk sits PORTIA LONGLEY, age 17. She's smiling and waving to us. For most of this issue, in scenes like these PORTIA and everyone else will be speaking directly to us, the reader.

PORTIA: Hello! Yes, over here!

PORTIA: I'm **Portia Longley**. Welcome to The Branch.

1.2

Closer to PORTIA now, as if we're standing opposite her desk. She looks a little sheepish, almost apologetic, and she's waving one arm as if to indicate the swanky new offices. Aside from the computer, PORTIA's desk has very few adornments – just a pencilholder; a small framed picture with its back turned to us; a package about the size of a hatbox, wrapped elegantly but discreetly in shiny wrapping paper; and a plastic model robot. Alert readers will recognize the latter as one of Danny and Donny MacDougal's, the one Portia took from their shelves in remembrance in issue 1.13. The package is important,
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too; we'll be seeing more of it later.

PORTIA seems a little older, a little savvier, than when we first met her; she dresses a little more smartly. A black leather jacket, the one Mal bulletproofed for her, is draped over the back of her chair, if we can see it.

PORTIA: Sorry about the trouble with the **elevator**. We're still calibrating the **metal detectors**.

PORTIA: Pretty **flash** space, yeah? We **used** to work out of this little old **bunker**...

1.3

PORTIA has a hand to the Bluetooth handsfree headset clipped around her ear, and she's peering at the screen of her computer with interest.

PORTIA: One sec... **Mrs. King? Mr. Queen?** She's here.

PORTIA: Mmm hmm. Yes. Will do. ... They're just in with the other **new arrival**.

PORTIA: Looks like you've a **busy first day** already.

1.4

PORTIA is leaning across the desk, excited by whatever new development she's seen on the computer monitor.

PORTIA: There might be a lead on **Colin**, and..

PORTIA: Oh, sorry, sorry! A whole lot happened before **you** arrived. Have a seat, I'll **fill you in**.

1.5

Our perspective is a little lower now, as if we've taken a seat. PORTIA's now leaning back in her chair, gesturing with her hands, really getting into the story.

PORTIA: I'm sure **Mr. Queen** and **Mrs. King** will tell you all this, but **honestly**, their version's probably **loads** more boring.

PORTIA: See, we're a small shop here, so we've only got **two field agents**...

PAGE 2

2.1

PARRY LORD and DR. CELIA CHANCE as we knew them in Season 1, posed dramatically – almost cartoonishly – against a black backdrop. LORD's got the Indian-inspired suit and the bowler hat; CHANCE has a punk rock T-shirt and Army jacket. These little flashes are things as PORTIA envisions them.

LORD: I'm **Parry Lord!**

LORD: I'm **filthy rich**, incredibly **handsome**, and **completely mental!**

LORD (small): I have scars! Emo scars!

CHANCE: I'm **Dr. Celia Chance!**

CHANCE (small): But just a doctor of **maths. Shut up.**

CHANCE: I like to **fight** and get **sozzled** and **shag boys!**
Rar!

2.2

LORD and CHANCE, in Portiavision, are having a heated argument with one another.

LORD: You **annoy** me!

CHANCE: **You annoy me!**

LORD AND CHANCE: **Let's snog for a solid week!**

2.3

PORTIA, again looking a bit sheepish, as if she's been questioned about some factual detail here.

PORTIA: ... Okay, they don't **actually** say that.

PORTIA (small): But they **totally should.**

PORTIA: Now, before it was **Parry** and **Dr. Chance**, it was actually Parry and **Colin...**

2.4

Like 2.1, except that PARRY's saying nothing, and COLIN MULWRAY has appeared, in his dashing, pre-insanity days. He appears to be hastily shoving an indignant DR. CHANCE off the edge of the panel – we see her flailing arm – while grinning rakishly at us.

COLIN: I'm **Colin Mulwray!** I'm Irish! And **also** handsome!

COLIN: If you need me, I'll be **down the pub.**

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CHANCE (o/p): **Oi!**

2.5

PORTIA at her desk, continuing the story – maybe a bit less happy.

PORTIA: A little more than a year back, Colin went missing..

PORTIA: And when he **turned up** again..

2.6

And all of a sudden, this isn't funny anymore. We see a single panel of COLIN as PORTIA would have seen him the day she got shot, back in issue 1.2 – coming out of the elevator at the old Branch HQ, pistol raised and firing at her, face impassive beneath his knit watch cap, and that terrible sadness in his eyes.

NO DIALOGUE

2.7

PORTIA is sitting at her desk, eyes turned inward for a moment, her right hand reflexively resting on her right side where the bullet hit her.

PORTIA: ... He... he came back a bit **wrong**. And Dr. Chance had to **zap** him into a **coma**.

PORTIA: But it wasn't his **fault**, you see.

PAGE THREE

3.1

In Portiavision, the WHITE RABBIT, in his mask and wheelchair, shakes a fist crankily, while the RED QUEEN hovers behind him with a big sword.

PORTIA/CAPTION: He was being **mind-controlled** by this **horrible old bigot** called **The White Rabbit**.

RABBIT: Bloody **kids** and your **miscegenation!**

PORTIA/CAPTION: (That's his **henchwoman**, the **Red Queen**.)

RED (creepy and hoarse): Off with their heads.

3.2

Portiavision. LORD and CHAAYA at the altar, with a minister officiating.

PORTIA/CAPTION: Now, Parry'd been a bit **loony** since his wife **Chaaya** got, well, kind of **blown up** on their **wedding day**.

MINISTER: You may kiss the bride.

PORTIA/CAPTION: (I know, it's a bit **Godfather**, isn't it?)

3.3

Portiavision. Same panel, except that LORD looks shocked; instead of a bride in a white dress and veil, he stands opposite the RED QUEEN in her burqa, and the WHITE RABBIT is the minister.

PORTIA/CAPTION: And **then** it turned out that Parry's wife was only **slightly** blown up, and was actually the **Red Queen**.

RABBIT: You may **kill** the **groom**.

PORTIA/CAPTION: You can imagine how well he took **that**.

3.4

PORTIA at the desk again, once more enthusiastically telling the story. She's turned her computer screen around momentarily to show an image of the bloodied message left above Colin's hospital bed: HIS KINGDOM COME, HIS WILL BE DONE.

PORTIA: Anyway, we **stopped** the Rabbit's plan to **nuke England Caucasian**, but the **Red Queen** got away.

PORTIA: Then at **Christmas**, Colin **vanished** from hospital,

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and someone left this **weird message** over his bed.

3.5

PORTIA, still talking. She's turning her screen back into place.

PORTIA: So **Parry and Dr. Chance** have been looking for him ever **since**.

PORTIA: But Parry's **also** looking for his **wife**, and Dr. Chance says **she** wants to **quit** and go back to **teaching** and such...

3.6

PORTIA, leaning forward again, conspiratorially.

PORTIA: I think something **weird** happened between them.

PORTIA (small): **Snogging-related**, mark my words.

PORTIA: Needless to say, everything's a bit **different** now...

PAGE FOUR

4.1

Not quite Portiavision – more of a flashback, really. DR. CELIA CHANCE, dressed a bit more conservatively than usual – long-sleeved button-down shirt rolled up at the elbows (over a dark T-shirt), smart-looking jeans, and of course, her combat boots – stands before a blackboard, where she's just finished writing out an incredibly complex-looking mathematical equation. She's smiling at what is presumably her audience.

CHANCE: ... so, as you can see, it's all **quite simple**.

CHANCE: Questions? Yes, Rupert.

4.2

CHANCE's audience: A class of thoroughly bewildered FOURTH GRADERS, boys and girls, in a neat, brightly lit elementary school classroom. The clock on the back wall roughly reads 2:30 p.m. The kids sit in rows at their desks, all wearing conservative school uniforms; a tall, lanky, graying man with spectacles – CONNELLY – sits at the back of the room, taking notes on a clipboard. Clearly, he's some school official observing this class. Poor, brave RUPERT, in the middle of the class, has his hand raised awkwardly as he speaks.

RUPERT: Um, **Miss Spelling**, ma'am?

RUPERT: That doesn't **look** like the **times tables**.

4.3

We can now see a bit more of the blackboard, and there, in CHANCE's messy handwriting, are the words MISS SPELLING, with "SUBSTITUTE TEACHER" written below them. Clearly, she's undercover here. But not for much longer. CHANCE addresses the class with a slightly mischievous grin.

CHANCE: You're **absolutely right**, Rupert. Silly me.

CHANCE: Let's try some **history**, then. Now class, who can tell me...

4.4

All the children's heads swivel to look back at CONNELLY as he looks up from his clipboard with a start, alarmed.

CHANCE (o/p): ... who in this **very room** did **ten years in prison** for making **bombs** for the **IRA**?

4.5

Close on CHANCE, relishing the moment.

CHANCE: **Assistant Headmaster Smythe** – or should I say **Connelly**?

CHANCE: Would **you** care to answer?

4.6

CONNELLY's up and running out the classroom door as CHANCE rounds her desk to give chase. The children are absolutely thrilled by this.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE FIVE

5.1

CONNELLY in foreground, barrelling down a school corridor, with CHANCE thumping out of the classroom behind him in hot pursuit. CONNELLY is wheezing, digging into his jacket pocket.

CONNELLY (strained): Hhhuh! Hhhuh!

5.2

CONNELLY, looking back over his shoulder as he takes a hit off an inhaler – he's asthmatic. Ahead of him, a JANITOR is mopping the floor at the end of the corridor, with a bucket and "wet floor" signs posted.

SFX/INHALER: hwee.

5.3

Alas, CONNELLY doesn't see those signs – although we do again in this panel, more closely. CONNELLY blurs past the JANITOR, hits the wet floor, and takes a spectacular pratfall.

CONNELLY: Whoulf!

5.4

Dazed, lying on the floor, CONNELLY finds the rounded end of the JANITOR's mop handle pressed against his adam's apple.

CONNELLY: Wha—?

JANITOR (o/p): Careful, now.

JANITOR (o/p): You're on **slippery ground**, Mr. Connelly.

5.5

CHANCE, grumpy, is catching up to the JANITOR and CONNELLY now. And the JANITOR is, of course, LORD, wearing a beige jumpsuit with "MR. EKSHUN" on the nametag. (Sound it out. There you go.) LORD, his head still nearly shaven as it was in the Christmas special, is replying to her coolly.

CHANCE: I could've got him **myself**.

LORD: You're **welcome**.

PAGE SIX

6.1

Close on CONNELLY, nervous, sweating. He's having trouble breathing... and there seems to be white dust all over his face.

CHANCE (o/p): **Colin Mulwray**. Where's he been **taken**?

CONNELLY: I – hhuh – I don't know, I swear!

CHANCE (o/p): Not good enough.

6.2

CHANCE's hands reach into panel, clapping together a pair of chalkboard erasers in CONNELLY's face, sending a cloud of dust swirling around his head. CONNELLY is coughing violently, shying away from the dust.

SFX/ERASERS: CLAP CLAP CLAP

CONNELLY: *koff koff koff koff*

6.3

We now see that CHANCE and LORD are in an empty classroom, with CONNELLY thoroughly duct-taped to a small, child-sized chair. CHANCE is holding the erasers over him menacingly; CONNELLY's coughing as the cloud of chalk dust dissipates.

Behind CHANCE, LORD has just finished changing out of his jumpsuit. He's in his new "uniform" for the season: close-cropped hair, a simple necklace of wooden beads, a Western-cut, intensely colored dress shirt with an open collar (dark red here), dark Western-cut suit jacket with a carnation in the lapel (color matching the shirt), trousers to match the jacket, and athletic shoes (whose color also matches his shirt). The black gloves that hide his scarred hands, of course, haven't gone anywhere.

CHANCE: At your **sentencing**, you said you'd see him **burn in hell**.

CONNELLY: That was – koff – a **lifetime** ago. *hhhuh* I've **changed**.

6.4

CHANCE resumes clapping the erasers in CONNELLY's face again, angrily. CONNELLY's looking increasingly worse for
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wear. LORD, behind CHANCE, is looking a little concerned.

CHANCE: **Where is he?**

SFX: CLAP CLAP CLAP

CONNELLY (weak): I swear *huhuh* I don't — *huhuh huhuh*

LORD: That's **enough**, Doctor.

6.5

LORD is all but shoving a furious CHANCE out of the way to put CONNELLY's inhaler in his mouth.

LORD: I said **enough!**

CHANCE: **Oi!**

LORD: He doesn't **know** anything.

SFX/INHALER: Hwee.

6.6

As CONNELLY lolls in the background, fighting to catch his breath, CHANCE and LORD square off, tempers flaring.

They're about to be interrupted by the ringing of LORD's mobile.

LORD: You might have **killed** him!

CHANCE: Oh, **I'm** sorry! Should I have fetched the **comfy chair**, then?

LORD: Why's it **matter** so to **you?** Colin wasn't even **your-**

SFX/MOBILE: Deedeedeedeedet!

6.7

LORD has the mobile up to his ear. He and CHANCE aren't looking at each other, taking a breather, tensions between them still simmering.

LORD (on the phone): **Yes**, Portia.

PHONE (elec.): The **nurse**. It was the bloody **nurse**.

PAGE SEVEN

7.1

PORTIA is turning with a slightly confused smile to see that DAISY, age 6, has arrived at the side of her desk. Her ginger hair is still frizzing all about, and she wears a t-shirt and a pair of comfy-looking overalls. DAISY looks slightly cross with PORTIA.

DAISY: You're **telling it wrong!**

DAISY: What about the **green-eyed monster**, and the **sleepwalkers**, and –

PORTIA: Sweetie, you're not making sense.

7.2

DAISY has quite adorably clapped her hands over her mouth. PORTIA is grinning at her and mussing her hair affectionately.

DAISY: Oop! Sorry. **No spoilers.**

PORTIA (small): Should never have let you **near** the **Internet.**

PORTIA: This is **Daisy**. She's very **special**. Say hello, Daisy.

7.3

DAISY looks right at us, suddenly very serious as only small children can be. PORTIA, we see, is a little unnerved by what she's saying.

DAISY: The boy who **made it** lost his **sister** in the **bombs**.

DAISY: He saw it go off. Now he **can't sleep**. He **cries** about it.

DAISY: So don't be **too mad** at him, OK?

7.4

MALCOLM AMEBE appears, wearing – wonder of wonders – cargo pants and a button-down shirt with the sleeves rolled up. It seems PORTIA's managed to loosen him up a bit. He's scooping a delighted DAISY into a hug. PORTIA seems glad to see him after DAISY's recent oddness.

MAL: **There** you are! It's time to adjust your **thinking cap**.

MAL: Would you like to **help me?**

DAISY: Hullo, **Mal!** Meet the **new lady!**

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7.5

MAL, PORTIA, and DAISY are all looking at us. DAISY is blurting something out delightedly.

MAL (shyly): Hello. It is nice to meet you.

PORTIA: This is **Mal**. He's our **tech wizard**—

DAISY: And **her boyyy-friennnd!**

7.6

PORTIA and MAL are both blushing and looking in opposite directions as DAISY continues to grin mischevously at us.

PORTIA: Yes, well...

MAL: That is...

PORTIA: Actually, I was **just** going to tell her what you found on the **CCTV** footage from the **hospital**, Mal...

PAGE EIGHT

8.1

A rounded panel, like a TV screen. We're seeing the Christmas Special, panel 30.4, from the perspective of a grainy hospital security camera. LORD and CHANCE, as they were dressed at the end of the Christmas Special, walk away from us. A NURSE passes them in the opposite direction, headed toward us, wheeling a sheet-draped body on a gurney. A big sign is pointing to her, courtesy of Portiavision, reading "EVIL."

PORTIA/CAPTION: We pulled the **security footage**, and while none of the cameras showed Colin going missing..

CHANCE (on camera, elec.): Exactly.

PORTIA/CAPTION: ... **this** woman was seen wheeling a **body** away from the room just **minutes** after Colin's **machines** got disconnected.

8.2

Back to PORTIA, with MAL and DAISY beside the desk. PORTIA is telling us something with smug confidence, while MAL seeks to add a caveat, and DAISY adds a sympathetic note.

PORTIA: When in doubt, it's **always** the evil nurse.

MAL: In fairness, the last one was only **misguided**.

DAISY: And then her **head** went **boom!**

8.3

More CCTV footage, from the parking lot of the hospital; the NURSE is loading her gurney into the back of a long white station wagon.

PORTIA: Poor **Mal** wasted **loads** of time trying to get a match on her **face**.

PORTIA: And then we discovered we had a **perfectly good** shot of her **license plate**..

8.4

Cut to Portia's story: LORD and CHANCE speeding through the afternoon streets of London on a late winter day, wearing the same clothes we saw them in at the school. They're driving in LORD's new-ish, all-electric Tesla Roadster. (In red, of course.) LORD and CHANCE are still somewhat grim and uncomfortable with each other. PORTIA'S

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voice is coming from the mobile phone charging in the dash.

PORTIA (elec., on phone): ... which belongs to a **rental**. Credit card traces to a **dentist's office** in East Finchley. I'm texting you the address.

LORD: Thanks, **Portia**. We'll have a look.

8.5

CHANCE looks out the window, sullen and thoughtful, as the scenery flashes past. She's saying something that's attracted LORD's attention.

CHANCE (small): No man left behind.

LORD: Beg pardon?

CHANCE: You asked why I **cared**. About **Colin**.

8.6

CHANCE is turning to LORD, serious; he's listening to her with new understanding.

CHANCE: **I'm** the one in **his spot** now. And if it were **me...**

CHANCE: I'd want someone **looking** 'till I was **found**.

PAGE NINE

Three wide panels spanning the width of the page.

9.1

LORD has pulled the Roadster into a small carpark just off the main street, in front of a row of jammed-together shopfronts. LORD, hefting his umbrella, is reading a sign off the front of the nearest building; CHANCE is pulling on a pair of fingerless gloves with suspiciously padded knuckles.

LORD: Looks placid enough.

LORD: "Dr. **A.W. Elba**, D.D.S. Painless Dentistry."

CHANCE: We'll see about **that**.

9.2

We're now inside the dentist's waiting room. Just past a narrow hallway from the front door, with a row of coatracks, there's the standard waiting area with clusters of chairs (liberally piled with old magazines). A fairly large fishtank with swimming fish sits on a table against one wall, and the walls are covered with cheery dental hygiene posters. Beyond the waiting area, a long desk spans nearly the entire width of the room, leaving just a door leading back to the stairs that go up to the various offices. We're looking out at the empty waiting room from behind this desk – behind its facade, we see a CCTV screen showing LORD and CHANCE crossing the carpark toward the front door, and a woman, NORMA's, hand reaching out to hit a switch on an intercom box.

NORMA (o/p): **Dr. Elba?**

INTERCOM (elec., loud, terrible): Nuh! **Nuh!** EEEAAAAAAGGGH!

INTERCOM (elec., overlapping previous): Can it wait? I'm with my **five o'clock**.

NORMA (o/p): Those two **guests** you mentioned are **here**.

9.3

Shift perspective so that we see NORMA sitting at her desk. She's a broad, solidly built woman – we're about to see just how solid in a moment – no older than her early 30s, with a practical bob hairdo. She's wearing a cheery mauve cardigan with a nametag reading "NORMA" and (if we could see them beneath the desk) blue jeans. We only see

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the lower third or so of her face; her mouth is set in a calm, composed line.

The elevated facade of the desk in front of her has a cup full of pens, a clipboard for filling out forms, and some cheesy dental-health pamphlets about the merits of brushing. Behind her on a low desk cluttered with papers, we can see a framed photo of DR. ELBA, a kindly looking man of late middle years, genially balding, with keen blue eyes behind a pair of owlish spectacles. We also see one of those paper cutters with the long, sharp arms on a hinge..

INTERCOM (elec.): So soon?

NORMA: I'm afraid so, Doctor.

INTERCOM (elec., another scream): NNNAAAAIIGGGH!

INTERCOM (elec., overlapping): Oh, shush. **Norma**, did you perchance use the **office** credit card to **rent that lorry**?

NORMA: ... I may have done, Doctor.

INTERCOM (elec.): *sigh* Remind me to **murder** you later. For now, **see** to them.

NORMA: Very good, Doctor.

PAGE TEN

10.1

LORD and CHANCE bustle into the waiting room, CHANCE pretending to cup her jaw gingerly, as if beset by dental pain, LORD the soul of concern.

LORD: ... I **told** you not to go for that **toffee apple**, but no, you **had** to indulge.

CHANCE: Uh fink ish bweeding..

10.2

LORD and CHANCE converge on the desk, where NORMA has swiveled around in her chair, and is lining up a few sheaves of paper under the cutter. Her hair's in her face, so we can't quite see her.

LORD: My **friend** here's just **cracked a tooth**, and the man at the **shop** said you were the closest by..

CHANCE: Iff ffodding **hurffs!**

NORMA: I'm sorry, we're just now closing.

10.3

NORMA looks up – it's a face as thick and solid as the rest of her, unnervingly predatory in its sharpness – smiling in a creepy, knowing way, as LORD and CHANCE carry on behind her.

LORD: But it's an **emergency!** Look, she's in **terrible** pain.

CHANCE: **Tuwwibuw.**

NORMA: **Well.** I can certainly **help** with that.

10.4

As LORD and CHANCE look on startled in BG, NORMA's hand yanks the blade arm off the paper cutter with one swift jerk in FG.

SFX: SPANG!

10.5

And NORMA turns, standing up to her full height, six foot four with an Amazon's build, towering over LORD and CHANCE as she rears back to swing the paper cutter blade backhanded at their necks. Oh dear.

NORMA: Let me put you **both** out of your misery.

PAGE ELEVEN

11.1

LORD and CHANCE lurch backwards as NORMA swings the blade where their throats had just been.

SFX: FWISH!

11.2

Our heroes scramble back even further as NORMA effortlessly vaults the desk one-handed, landing with a Herculean thud, wielding the blade barbarian-like.

SFX: THUD.

11.3

CHANCE and LORD look mildly amazed. LORD's got his umbrella braced against the outside of his forearm, curved handle clenched in his hand, like a nightstick.

CHANCE (to NORMA): Christ, **what** have they been **feeding** you?

LORD: Or **whom**?

11.4

NORMA swings the blade down, and LORD steps up to block it with the umbrella braced across the outside of his forearm. It's cutting into the fabric and striking sparks against the titanium shaft.

SFX: KANG!

11.5

LORD uses the umbrella to push NORMA's blade to one side, and grabs her swinging arm with his other hand, trying to twist, make her drop the blade.

LORD: Hah!

11.6

Except... it's... kind of not working. At all. LORD's pushing with all his might, and it's just not doing anything, except making NORMA smirk. She's clamped one massive hand around his arm. CHANCE is charging forward from behind, trying to get a shot in while NORMA's distracted.

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LORD: Oh, dear.

PAGE TWELVE

12.1

NORMA picks LORD up bodily and uses him to swat CHANCE around into the edge of the front counter!

SFX: SWAK!

CHANCE: Hnnf!

12.2

NORMA then flings LORD in the opposite direction, sending him crashing into one of the walls of the waiting area!

SFX: SMAK!

12.3

CHANCE, sprawled against the counter, grabs for one of the pens in the cup, spilling it, as NORMA's massive hand reaches over to yank her backward by the collar.

NO DIALOGUE

12.4

NORMA has CHANCE dangling in one hand (a pen clenched in her fist), and is raising the blade in the other, preparing to bring it down into CHANCE's skull!

NORMA: His kingdom come..

12.5

CHANCE jams the pen into the meat of NORMA's blade arm, just below the wrist. She's bellowing in pain and dropping the blade.

NORMA: His will be daaAAAAAGH!

CHANCE: Oh, **shut it.**

PAGE THIRTEEN

13.1

With her uninjured arm, NORMA flings CHANCE away into the waiting area; she's knocking over a table full of old magazines as she lands, hard, near the base of the fishtank. If we can see LORD here, he's on the opposite side of the waiting area, getting to his feet.

SFX: KRASH!

CHANCE: Houlph!

13.2

NORMA has just yanked the pen from her arm, spurting blood, when LORD drives the point of his umbrella, like a spear, right up into the very sensitive spot in her armpit. NORMA's contorting in pain.

SFX: THAP!

NORMA: NAAAGH!

13.3

NORMA swings a fist, but LORD blocks, ready for it this time..

SFX: THWUD!

13.4

... and LORD smashes a foot into NORMA's solar plexus, doubling her over!

NORMA: Huff!

13.5

From her low crouch, NORMA charges like a bull, smashing LORD square in the chest, lifting him up off the ground..

NORMA: HRAAAAAAAAAA—

PAGE FOURTEEN

14.1

... and NORMA rams LORD bodily into the wall of the waiting area (the one opposite the fishtank), so hard the sheetrock collapses inward! LORD's eyes are bugging out as the blow drives the breath from his body.

NORMA: -AAAAAH!

SFX: KRAK!

14.2

NORMA backs away, and LORD slides dazed down the wall, still clutching his umbrella, to sprawl on the ground at her feet.

SFX: THUD.

14.3

NORMA, smiling cruelly, lifts one enormous foot to stomp LORD flat...

NO DIALOGUE

14.4

But NORMA turns, livid, as CHANCE's voice interupts.

CHANCE (o/p): Oi! **Plus-size!**

CHANCE (o/p): I'm talking to **you**, you great big bloody **cow!**

14.5

CHANCE, battered and thoroughly pissed, is standing up shakily on the opposite side of the room, in front of the fishtank, talking serious smack. There's a row of chairs and the upturned table of magazines between her and NORMA.

CHANCE: What, did an **East German swimmer** go missing?

CHANCE: Is it 'cos you **ate her?**

PAGE FIFTEEN

15.1

Angle on NORMA, seething, as CHANCE, off-panel, keeps up her merciless taunting. At NORMA's feet, LORD is shaking off his daze, looking up at her, and grabbing hold of his umbrella by the pointed end. The back of his suit jacket is covered in white plaster dust.

CHANCE (o/p): Oh, **I'm** sorry. Did I hurt your feelings, **tiny?**

CHANCE (o/p): Why don't you go help yourself to an **ice cream truck?**

15.2

NORMA leaps through the air, vaulting off the upturned table between her and CHANCE, ready to mash CHANCE to a bloody pulp with her bare hands.

NORMA (to CHANCE): **DIE.**

15.3

And LORD, from the floor, reaches out and hooks NORMA's trailing leg with the umbrella handle!

NO DIALOGUE

15.4

LORD yanks backward, hard, as CHANCE dodges to one side, and NORMA, thrown off-balance, finds herself falling face-first toward the glass fishtank-

NO DIALOGUE

15.5

And with a tremendous crash and a gush of water, NORMA smashes face-first into the fishtank!

SFX: KRASH!

SFX: SPLOOSH!

PAGE SIXTEEN

16.1

LORD and CHANCE circle round, wary, as NORMA – face-first in the remains of the fishtank, begins to brace herself to rise.

NO DIALOGUE

16.2

NORA lurches up slowly from the shattered fishtank, her face and throat badly cut and bleeding, bits of glass still stuck in her face, sopping wet. She's spitting a fish sideways from her mouth. She looks wobbly, but still ready for a fight.

NORMA (spitting out the fish): phoo.

16.3

LORD and CHANCE look at each other, like, can you believe this?

NO DIALOGUE

16.4

From one side, one of LORD's sneakered feet is lashing out to smash into the side of NORMA's head; from the other, CHANCE's gloved fist, with weights sewn into the knuckles, is smashing into NORMA's jaw. NORMA's eyes are crossing.

SFX: SMAK!

SFX: THWAK!

NORMA: *

16.5

Finally, NORMA goes down for the count, pitching sideways as an exhausted, relieved LORD and CHANCE look on.

SFX: THUDD!

16.6

LORD seems concerned about CHANCE, but she's shrugging him off coolly.

LORD: Are you all—

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CHANCE: **Fine.** I'm fine.

LORD: Then let's go see a man about some **missing teeth.**

CHANCE: Long as they're entirely **his.**

PAGE SEVENTEEN

17.1

The AGENTS have climbed the stairs to the darkened second floor of DR. ELBA's offices. The narrow hallway, which branches off to various treatment suites (their entrances covered by thin plastic curtains), is strangely empty in the beams of LORD and CHANCE's pocket flashlights. A trail of papers is scattered on the floor, leading down the hallway. LORD is trying the lightswitch, in vain. He looks serious and intent; CHANCE seems a bit more sarcastic.

SFX/LIGHTSWITCH: flik flik

LORD (quiet): He's cut the lights.

CHANCE (quiet): Oh, **good** – this whole scenario wasn't **nearly** creepy enough.

17.2

LORD is crouching down, training his beam of light on one of the pieces of paper scattered on the floor. Through the paper, we see that it's covered in dense scribbles. CHANCE leans over his shoulder to have a look.

LORD (quiet): **Hello**. What's this?

LORD (quiet): Is that – ? It almost looks like some sort of **code**.

CHANCE (quiet): I know **medical** types have **crap handwriting**, but **really**..

17.3

As LORD, in BG, continues to muse over the scattered papers, CHANCE pushes aside a curtain in FG to peer into one of the treatment suites.

LORD (quiet): **This** almost looks like a **diagram**..

17.4

In the eerie glare of her flashlight beam, CHANCE plays the light around the suite. She's looking down, puzzled, at a sudden small sound underfoot.

SFX: kkrk.

CHANCE: ?

CHANCE (quiet): **Stepped** on something..

17.5

CHANCE is crouched down, picking something up – we can't see what. She's grimacing. Behind her, LORD is poking through the curtain to join her.

CHANCE (quiet): **Gah**. It's **wet**.

CHANCE (quiet): Looks like–

17.6

PORTIA is looking at DAISY, still in MAL's arms, with a this-is-for-your-own-good sort of look. DAISY is clapping her hands earnestly over her ears.

PORTIA: OK, this is the **scary** bit, Daisy.

DAISY: Earmuffs on!

PAGE EIGHTEEN

18.1

CHANCE is holding up a single human tooth, freshly bloodied, in the beam of her flashlight. She looks appalled and alarmed. LORD's voice floats in from behind her.

LORD (quiet, o/p): **Doctor?**

18.2

CHANCE plays her beam on the floor, letting the tooth drop hastily to the ground. The floor before her is scattered with other bloody teeth – thirty-two, to be exact.

LORD (quiet, o/p): What did you find?

18.3

CHANCE is rising, and both she and LORD are training their flashlight beams on something on the opposite side of the treatment suite: a dentist's chair, its back to us, the outline of a slumped figure in the chair. We can see that the figure's arms were secured to the armrests with plastic zipties, and the upholstery under the armrest has been torn out, as if by the frantic action of the victim's fingers. CHANCE and LORD both look horrified. The papers LORD was holding are falling from his hand.

LORD (quiet): ... Oh.

18.4

The figure in the chair, seen from the chin down. This is not COLIN, in case you were wondering. He wears ordinary, nondescript clothes. Blood has soaked down his chin and all down his shirtfront, completely sopping the little dental bib someone cruelly fixed around his neck. His fingernails are also bloody and raw, from clawing up the upholstery in the armrests of the chair.

NO DIALOGUE

18.5

LORD and CHANCE look at the figure, aghast, in the glow of their flashlight beams. CHANCE is pointing at something hesitantly.

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LORD (quiet): Is he **dead**?

CHANCE (quiet): **Please**, go, give him a **poke**. Be my guest.

CHANCE (quiet): Oh, God — is that— that bit in his...

LORD (quiet): Yes. Yes, I think that's his **tongue**.

PAGE NINETEEN

19.1

Back to PORTIA, DAISY, and MAL in the Branch. PORTIA is sweetly saying something to DAISY, who has her hands over her ears, and is shouting a reply (because she can't hear).

PORTIA: All clear now, Daisy.

DAISY: **WHAT?**

19.2

Back to Elba's offices. LORD and CHANCE look up at the ceiling, as a thump and a crash can be heard from the floor above. CHANCE's eyes are narrowing.

SFX: tump tump KLUD.

LORD: Someone's still here.

CHANCE: **Lovely.** I'm feeling **punitive.**

19.3

LORD and CHANCE wind their way up another narrow flight of stairs. An eerie, flickering light is bleeding in from the level above.

NO DIALOGUE

19.4

They emerge into a somewhat cramped third-floor space demonically lit by flickering firelight from a single source (which we don't see yet). Large, heavy tanks have fallen onto the floor; they look fairly old, and bear illegible stencilled text, and peeling warning labels. Someone's speaking to LORD and CHANCE from the opposite side of the room.

VOICE (o/p): Oh, hello. Mind the **tanks**, would you?

VOICE (o/p): That's **cyclopropane anaesthetic**. Don't use it much anymore, of course.

VOICE (o/p): It tends to **explode**.

19.5

The kindly-looking dentist we saw in the framed photo downstairs, DR. ELBA, is here, standing under the third-floor eaves in a cardigan and sensible trousers, watching

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sheaves of paper burn in a small metal wastebin. His hands are covered in latex gloves, both of which are liberally soaked in blood. In one hand, he holds a 9mm pistol, which he's gesturing casually with in LORD and CHANCE's direction.

But we can't see his face! A word balloon is coming in from outside the frame and overlapping his entire head.

VOICE (o/p): **Really**, Portia...

PAGE TWENTY

20.1

Back to the BRANCH, where our view has swiveled to show DESMOND QUEEN, in a neat pinstriped suit, is striding up to PORTIA's desk with a knowing smile on his face. PORTIA, in the periphery of our view, looks so very, very busted.

QUEEN: – don't you have **actual work** to do?

QUEEN: Involving **high-level government secrets**?

QUEEN: For which we're **paying you**?

PORTIA (small): Yes, **Mr. Queen**.

20.2

QUEEN, smiling more warmly at us, extends his hand as if to shake ours. Behind him, PORTIA is surreptitiously sticking her tongue out at him, while MAL beats a judicious retreat, with DAISY in tow.

QUEEN: **Sergeant**. A pleasure to meet you at last.

QUEEN: Hope the **flight over** wasn't too rough on you.

20.3

We're walking with QUEEN across the open expanse of the Branch's shop floor, toward one of the clusters of offices on the side walls.

QUEEN: We've secured you a flat down in Brixton, and all the necessary **credentials**.

QUEEN: I can **assure** you, you've the **full protections** of Her Majesty's government.

20.4

We're looking ahead now, to MRS. KING's office, where the lady herself is sternly seeing a thirtysomething guy with spiky brown hair – CHARLES – out of her office. He's skinny and handsome-ish, more in spite of his crooked nose and big ears than because of it. He's wearing a white lab coat, a RAMONES T-shirt, blue jeans, and trainers. We can tell from the body language that these two are familiar with one another, but that MRS. KING harbors some disappointment in him.

KING: ... just wish you'd **change your mind** about that.

CHARLES: Wish I could. But it's my life, isn't it?

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KING: Just don't let it interfere with your **work**.

20.5

MRS. KING shifts smoothly to us, holding out her hand graciously. Beside her, CHARLES looks over at us with friendly interest, as if sizing us up.

KING: Ah, **Sergeant Price** – would you prefer **Sharon**?
Welcome aboard.

KING: This is your new **colleague**—

20.6

CHARLES KING – MRS. KING's nephew, her husband's brother's son – gives us a cheery little wave. He seems to be looking at something slightly over our shoulder.

CHARLES: **Charles King**, forensic pathology. I hear we'll be...

CHARLES: Oop. Hold that thought.

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

21.1

From across the office, we look back to the wall closest to and just opposite PORTIA's desk. It's a smooth wall of polished metal, mounted with a few items in glass cases – a dented suit of armor, a single shattered china teacup, the cracked helmet of a BUNNYMAN (recovered from the basement of Parliament after the events of issue 1.12). There's also a photograph, in a black frame, of the late DANNY and DONNY MACDOUGAL, making completely inappropriate faces.

The elevator's set into the middle of this wall, and its doors are swinging wide now to reveal an exhausted and somewhat rattled-looking LORD and CHANCE, walking through, looking straight ahead – not at each other, not at us, not at anything in particular. Behind them, a pair of military-garbed PARAMEDICS are wheeling out a sheet-covered stretcher.

NO DIALOGUE

21.2

And now, at last, we see the person through whose eyes we've been seeing events thus far. SHARON PRICE, African-American, mid-thirties. Aloof, with cool, perceptive eyes and high cheekbones. Her hair's done in cornrows that furrow back along her scalp to a short ponytail. She wears a leather jacket, v-neck cardigan, and blue jeans; seems from her posture to be leaning slightly on her right leg (we'll learn why next issue); and is taking in the sight before her with a calm, thoughtful, almost mysterious air. She carries herself with the upright posture of a military woman, which she is.

PRICE is the center of the image, but there's a lot going on around her. In FG, the paramedics have deposited the stretcher, which clearly carries a body under the sheet. There's quite a lot of red soaking through that sheet where the head ought to be. CHARLES is sort of craning his neck to get an avid look at the body. This sort of thing clearly doesn't faze him, either. He's saying something.

To the left of them in the panel, KING and QUEEN hang

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back, exchanging a significant glance, as if to say, here we go again. To the right of them, we see LORD hesitating, looking at CHANCE as she keeps walking directly toward the glass wall at the back of the office, beyond the central support column.

CHARLES: Seems we've a **customer** already.

21.3

The back of the office, behind the support column, is a sloping wall of glass looking out on the city. There's a lounge area here, with loose, modular chairs and sofas that can easily be moved around, and an open area in the middle with a long rectangular outline in the floor. This is the conference table, which rises from the floor and retracts as needed. There's a free-standing wall at the back, between the lounge and the center column, affording this section of the office a bit of privacy. The wall is liberally covered with DAISY's crayon drawings; when they're not working on other tasks, the Branch folks can come here to eat lunch, collaborate on projects with laptops, or try to puzzle out the portents in DAISY's latest artwork.

CHANCE sits wearily, wrong-way-round, in a padded, futuristic chair, just staring out the window. LORD is hesitantly approaching, looking like a man with something to say. He has the package that was sitting on PORTIA's desk tucked under one arm.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE TWENTY-TWO

22.1

LORD carefully slides into a chair next to CHANCE, who continues to stare ahead, her expression hardening.

LORD: Got something for you.

CHANCE: Not interested.

LORD: Oh, come on. Gift from a billionaire? It might be something **expensive**.

22.2

CHANCE is reluctantly agreeing, reaching out to take the package from LORD, as if she's just doing it so he'll go away.

CHANCE: As if **you've** got **anything** I want.

LORD: ... But you're curious.

CHANCE: ... Fine, whatever. Let's have it.

22.3

CHANCE has hastily torn open the paper and opened the box inside, and is looking mildly gypped to see that it's... LORD's black bowler hat. LORD is looking on, with that calm, sad little smile of his.

CHANCE: I just **sent** this **back to you** last month!

CHANCE: Cost me **fifteen quid** for the **postage**!

LORD: And now I'm giving it back.

22.4

In fiction, every good conversation's all about what the participants aren't saying. Here, given the sincerity in LORD's eyes, he's not saying a lot. He's lifted a hand to rub his close-cropped scalp demonstratively.

LORD: I wore that hat every day for five, six years, maybe.

LORD: I suppose it's like a **part of me**.

CHANCE (o/p, small): Eww.

LORD: But, well, I went and cut my **hair**, and ... it just wouldn't **work** for me right now.

22.5

CHANCE, despite her best attempts to resist and protest,

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is being won over by what LORD's saying. She's trying to be sarcastic as a last line of defense. He's being self-effacing, almost apologetic.

LORD: And you know me – **total mess**. I'm sure I'd **lose track of it**.

CHANCE: Among your **alphabetized ABBA albums**, no doubt.

LORD: I just ... I'm asking you to **look out for it**. Just for a while. Till my **head's** right for it again.

22.6

CHANCE has picked up the hat and is regarding it somewhat sulkily. But you can tell, underneath it all, she's touched. LORD's very serious and sincere in what he's saying here.

CHANCE: It's kind of a **stupid hat**.

CHANCE: I could get myself a **much** better one. **Dozens**. I could.

LORD: If you don't **want** it...

PAGE TWENTY-THREE

23.1

CHANCE is finally smiling – OK, more like smirking – at LORD, and LORD is wryly smiling back. They've reached, if not an understanding, at least some sort of detente.

CHANCE: **Mine**, rich boy. **Maybe** I'll let you have it back. **Someday**. If I **feel** like it.

LORD: I **knew** I should have asked **Mal**.

CHANCE: Oh, **shut up**.

23.2

LORD and CHANCE sit by the window, looking at each other, simultaneously hopeful and a bit worried, the both of them.

LORD: ... So you're not **leaving**, then?

CHANCE: No man left behind, like I said.

CHANCE: Besides...

23.3

Flashback to the two of them in the attic of DR. ELBA's office, confronted by the silhouette of the mysterious ELBA, the burning trash can between them. Though slightly creaped out, LORD and CHANCE are both on guard and ready for a fight.

CHANCE: **Dr. Elba**, I presume?

ELBA (o/p): Yes, you **do**.

LORD: What have you done with **Colin**?

23.4

And at last, we see ELBA, in a panel much like that concluding page 19 – but this time, we see the same kindly, unruffled face we saw in the photograph in his reception room. Except that his eyes are a pristine green. The firelight gives him an unearthly, even demonic appearance.

ELBA: Oh, you'll be seeing him **soon enough**.

ELBA: But your **persistence** does you credit, **Mr. Lord** – and **you, Dr. Chance**.

23.5

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LORD and CHANCE, taken aback, face off with ELBA, who's keeping his gun trained on one of the explosive tanks of anaesthetic gas.

ELBA: Oh, don't look so **shocked**. I've only done my **homework**.

CHANCE: So've I. It's how I know **five ways to break your arm**.

LORD: Whatever this sordid little **game** of yours is, Elba, it's **finished**.

23.6

And ELBA, still calm, still smiling, with a twinkle in those strange green eyes of his, is quite cheerily putting the barrel of the pistol beneath his own chin. His finger has begun to squeeze the trigger...

ELBA: Oh, **nonsense**. We've only **just begun**.

ELBA: **My kingdom come...**

PAGE TWENTY-FOUR

24.1

LORD and CHANCE charge forward, but we can see from the looks of horror on their faces that they're too late – and all we hear is a single deafening

SFX: BLAM!

24.2

And LORD and CHANCE, back to the “present” now, stare somewhat darkly out the window together, wondering what's to come.

CHANCE: ... I've an **awful feeling** you could **use the help**.

TITLE AND CREDITS