

PUNISHER

THE PLATOON



2

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THE PLATOON



PREVIOUSLY

Michael Goodwin is the author of *Valley Forge, Valley Forge*, a nonfiction book on the Vietnam War relating the story of the death of Goodwin's brother and how Frank Castle became the Punisher. Now, Goodwin wants to go back to the start, so he found the surviving members of the first platoon assigned to Lt. Castle.

He had no combat experience when he took command, and his troop was neglected, tired, and disillusioned. But Castle started winning them over when he requested an airstrike, lying about the reason for it, to protect his men.

What the members of Castle's platoon didn't know was the other side of the story, which Goodwin found from other sources. Ly was a sniper, highly valued by Senior Colonel Letrong Giap for her intelligence and skill, but she took her work personally. When a broad-shouldered Marine in her sight called in an airstrike, killing her comrades, she vowed to remember him.

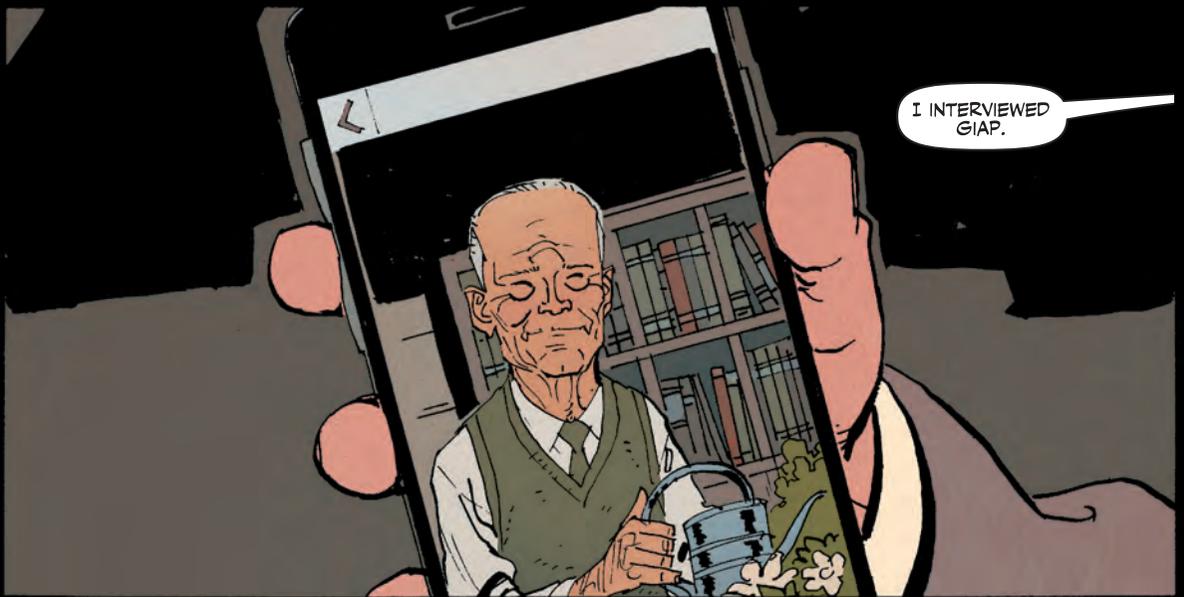
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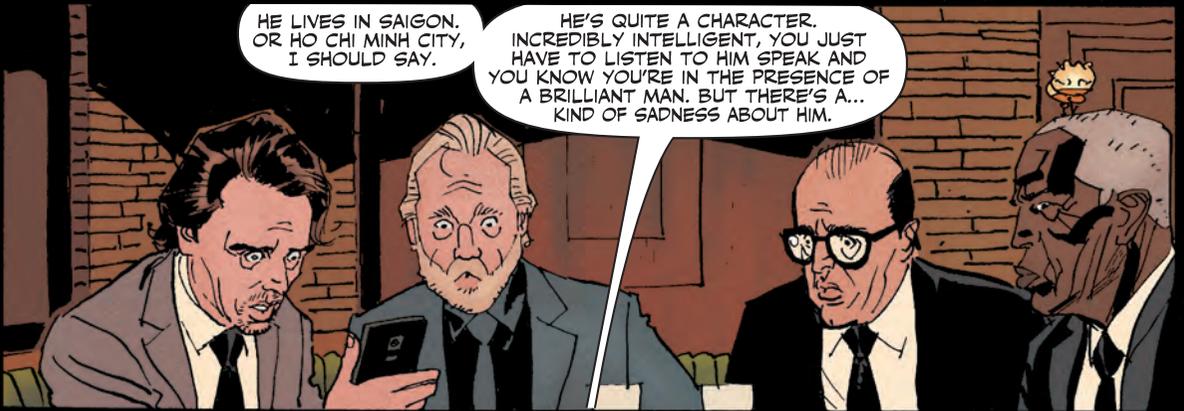
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I INTERVIEWED GIAP.



HE LIVES IN SAIGON, OR HO CHI MINH CITY, I SHOULD SAY.

HE'S QUITE A CHARACTER. INCREDIBLY INTELLIGENT, YOU JUST HAVE TO LISTEN TO HIM SPEAK AND YOU KNOW YOU'RE IN THE PRESENCE OF A BRILLIANT MAN. BUT THERE'S A... KIND OF SADNESS ABOUT HIM.



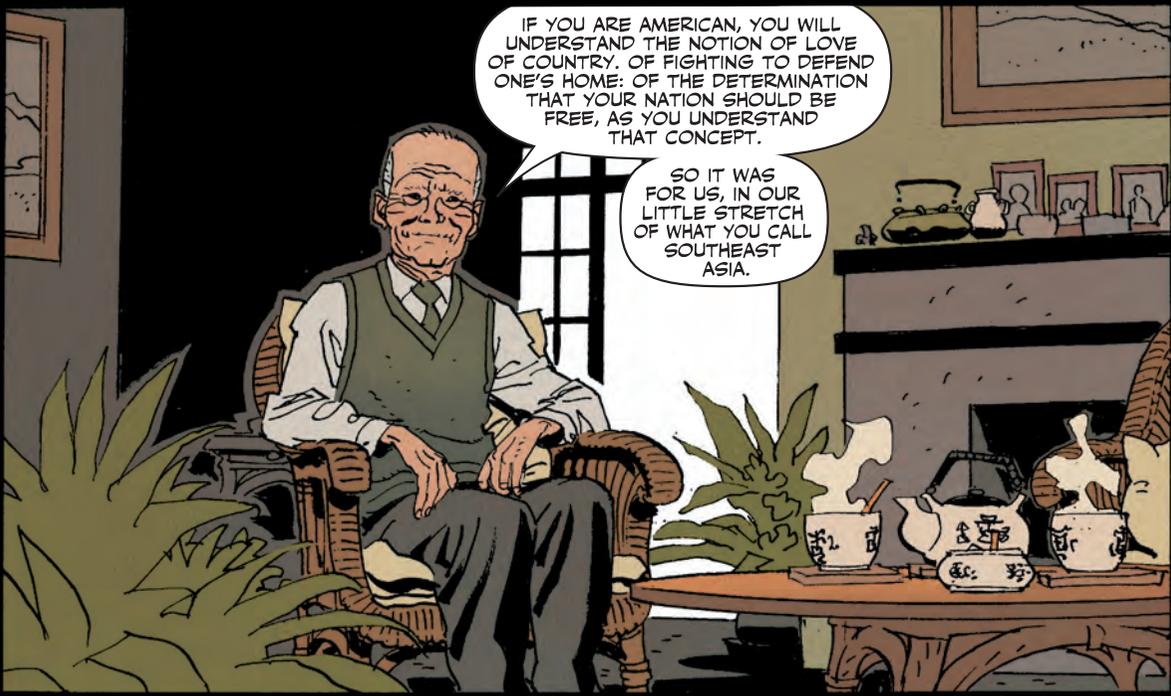
I ACTUALLY MET HIM SOME TIME AGO, AT A CONFERENCE AT THE SMITHSONIAN. HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT, ABOUT OLD WOUNDS AND HEALING, IT'S REALLY WHAT GOT ME THINKING ABOUT MY FIRST BOOK.

HE WAS OKAY ABOUT TALKING TO YOU?



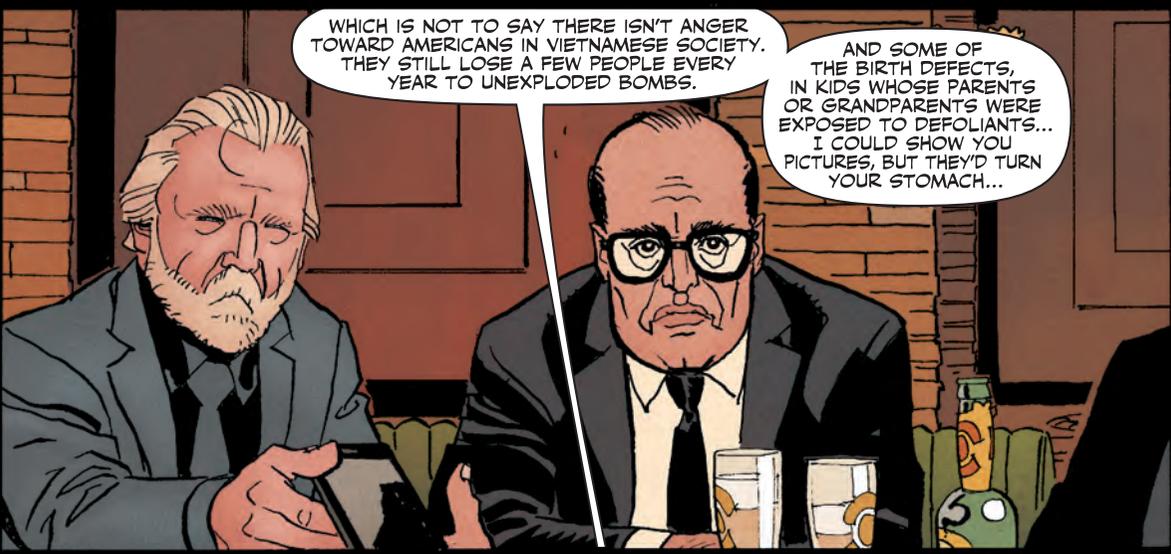
AH, YES, ACTUALLY. HE LIKES AMERICA, LIKES AMERICANS. HE'S BEEN HERE QUITE A BIT.

HE TOLD ME--



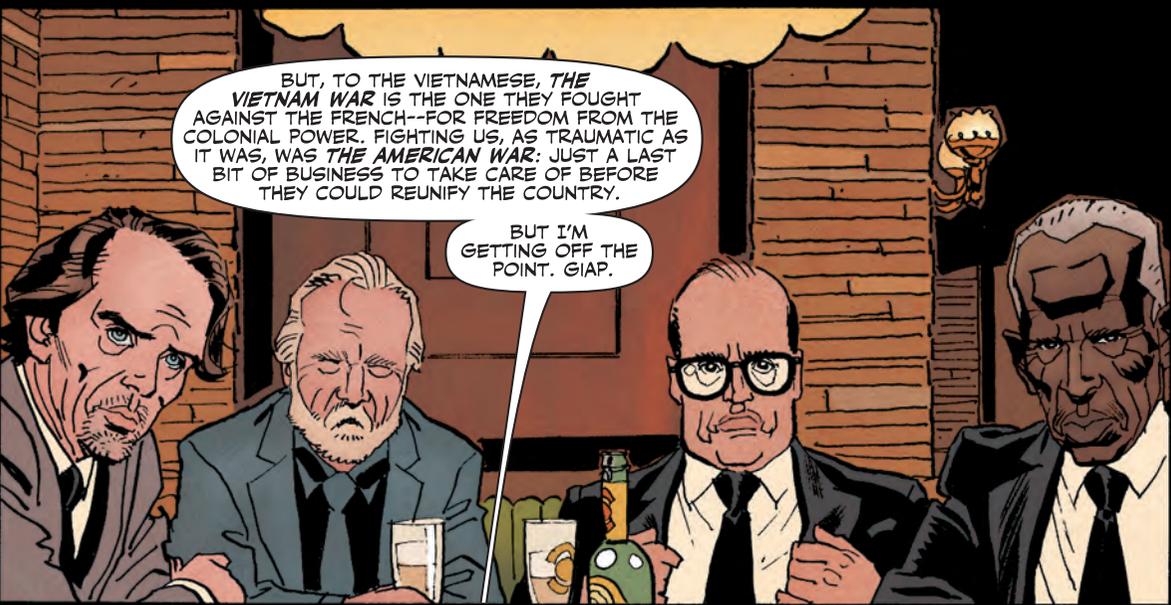
IF YOU ARE AMERICAN, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THE NOTION OF LOVE OF COUNTRY. OF FIGHTING TO DEFEND ONE'S HOME: OF THE DETERMINATION THAT YOUR NATION SHOULD BE FREE, AS YOU UNDERSTAND THAT CONCEPT.

SO IT WAS FOR US, IN OUR LITTLE STRETCH OF WHAT YOU CALL SOUTHEAST ASIA.



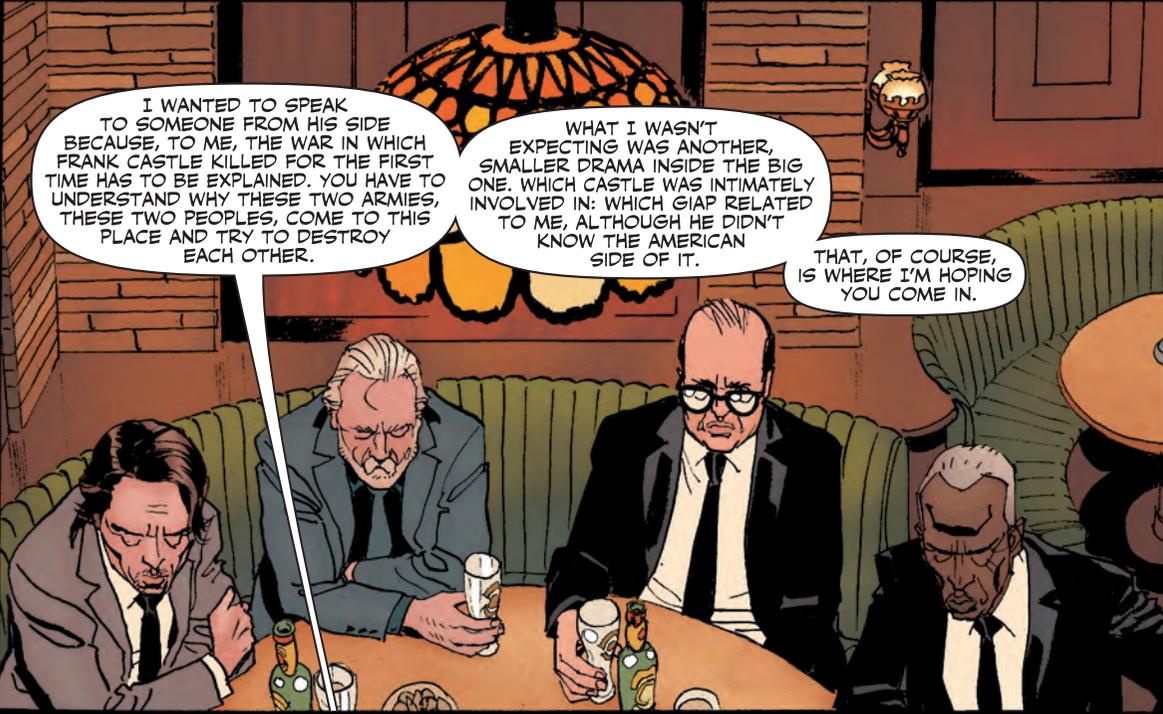
WHICH IS NOT TO SAY THERE ISN'T ANGER TOWARD AMERICANS IN VIETNAMESE SOCIETY. THEY STILL LOSE A FEW PEOPLE EVERY YEAR TO UNEXPLODED BOMBS.

AND SOME OF THE BIRTH DEFECTS, IN KIDS WHOSE PARENTS OR GRANDPARENTS WERE EXPOSED TO DEFOLIANTS... I COULD SHOW YOU PICTURES, BUT THEY'D TURN YOUR STOMACH...



BUT, TO THE VIETNAMESE, *THE VIETNAM WAR* IS THE ONE THEY FOUGHT AGAINST THE FRENCH--FOR FREEDOM FROM THE COLONIAL POWER. FIGHTING US, AS TRAUMATIC AS IT WAS, WAS *THE AMERICAN WAR*: JUST A LAST BIT OF BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF BEFORE THEY COULD REUNIFY THE COUNTRY.

BUT I'M GETTING OFF THE POINT. GIAP.



I WANTED TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE FROM HIS SIDE BECAUSE, TO ME, THE WAR IN WHICH FRANK CASTLE KILLED FOR THE FIRST TIME HAS TO BE EXPLAINED. YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHY THESE TWO ARMIES, THESE TWO PEOPLES, CAME TO THIS PLACE AND TRY TO DESTROY EACH OTHER.

WHAT I WASN'T EXPECTING WAS ANOTHER, SMALLER DRAMA INSIDE THE BIG ONE. WHICH CASTLE WAS INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN: WHICH GIAP RELATED TO ME, ALTHOUGH HE DIDN'T KNOW THE AMERICAN SIDE OF IT.

THAT, OF COURSE, IS WHERE I'M HOPING YOU COME IN.

"ANYHOW.

"LETRONG GIAP, AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, IS THE LAST SURVIVING SENIOR N.V.A. OFFICER WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE BATTLE OF KHE SANH.

"WHICH, FOR YOU GENTLEMEN, I THINK, BEGAN ON JANUARY TWENTY-FIRST, NINETEEN SIXTY-EIGHT--"

SOME TIME IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS...

ZERO-ZERO THIRTY.

EXACTLY.



OKAY, BE ADVISED:
AN N.V.A. OFFICER GAVE
HIMSELF UP AT THE MAIN
BASE THIS A.M.. SAID WE'RE
GOING TO BE HIT TONIGHT.
IN STRENGTH.

THAT'S US, EIGHT
EIGHTY-ONE AND KHE SANH
ITSELF. INTELLIGENCE HAS A
GOOD DIVISION OUT THERE WITH
TWO MORE STANDING BY TO
COME RUNNING—SO YOU CAN
BE SURE WE'RE TREATING
THIS ONE AS REAL.

GARTH
ENNIS
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2: Ma Deuce