

# REAL SCIENCE ADVENTURES



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CLEVINGER • MCCLAREN • MURPHY

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## THE NICODEMUS JOB PART 3

1095CE. Princes of Europe gather their armies to help the Byzantine Empire reclaim Anatolia from the Seljuk Turks. It is the eve of the First Crusade. Our heroes — a disgraced officer of the law, an ex-assassin, an orphan, a thief, and a scribe — don't know about any of that.

And they have no idea the fate of Constantinople itself rests in their hands.

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THE IMPERIAL LIBRARY OF  
CONSTANTINOPLE, 1095 CE

HALT! WHAT'S  
ALL THIS THEN?

A DELIVERY,  
GOOD SIR.

I'LL SEE  
ABOUT THAT. WHERE'S  
YOUR PAPERS?

SEE HERE,  
WE MARCHED THROUGH  
THE NIGHT ON ORDERS  
FROM THE EMPEROR  
HIMSELF.

WE SHAN'T DELAY  
DELIVERY OF HIS NICODEMUS  
WHILE IN SIGHT OF OUR  
JOURNEY'S END.

NICOLAS,  
THE "AGENT  
OF SILENCE."

SOFANA,  
THE "RELIC  
SISTER."

YES,  
SIR.

I MEAN, THIS WAY,  
SIR.

ER,  
NO, SIR.

WE WEREN'T EXPECTING  
THE NICODEMUS QUITE SO  
EARLY IS ALL.

NOR WAS WE  
EXPECTING SUCH A, UH,  
MODEST ENTOURAGE  
TO DELIVER IT.

IT WAS THE  
EMPEROR'S FEELING THAT  
A SMALL PARTY WOULD  
MAKE FOR THE SAFEST AND  
SWIFTEST DELIVERY.

I'M SURE HIS  
LORDSHIP IS RIGHT,  
OF COURSE.

WE CAN'T  
LET NO DONKEY  
IN THERE.

THEN YOU TELL 'IM  
THAT AND I'LL MAKE A  
RIGHT NICE SPEECH AT  
YOUR FUNERAL.



AT THE FRONT DESK







IT SPEAKS **VOLUMES** OF YOUR —AH— HMM, **ABILITY** THAT HIS MAJESTY SAW FIT TO REPLACE THEM **ALL** WITH YOURSELF.

**VOLUMES.**



WE FIGURED ON **THREE GUARDS.**

EMIR WILL HAVE TO **IMPROVISE.**



FORGIVE ME-- THE **PAPERWORK,** YOU UNDERSTAND--SO MUCH TO BE DONE.

**PROOF OF PROVENANCE.**

**CONFIRMATION OF PROVENANCE.**

**DAMNABLE SCRIBES,** UNDERFOOT ALL HOURS OF THE DAY UNTIL YOU **NEED ONE.**



SCRIBE? **SCRIBE!**

MY TURN.

**PALATINA,** THE "IMPERIAL LIBRARY STAFF."



SOMEBODY CALL FOR A SCRIBE?

**YOU THERE!** SCRIBES WERE **FAR** MORE PROMPT WHEN I WAS A LAD, I CAN--



—HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A SCRIBE?





HOW LONG?

A SCRIBE?  
UH.



LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW **BETTER**, I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT. SHOW SOME RESPECT.

IT'S NOT **EVERY** DAY WE ARE VISITED BY THE SYRIAC ORTHODOXY OR ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S **AGENTS OF SILENCE**.

THANK THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY.



**YESSIR!** YOU GOT ME THERE, SIR.

PUT ME **RIGHT** INTO MY PLACE WITH **THAT** ONE, SIR.



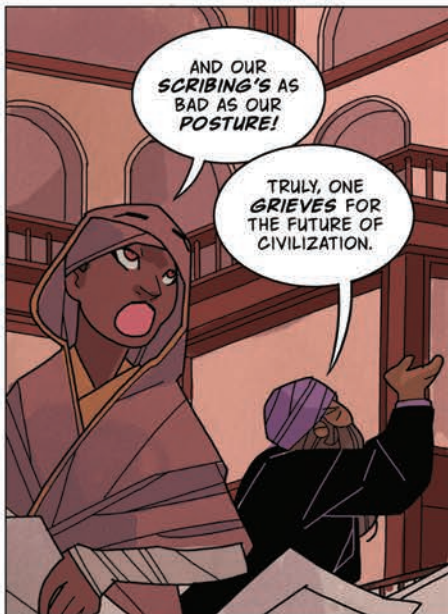
PAPERS, PLEASE.

THE YOUTH OF TODAY ARE A **CODDLED** AND **LAZY** BREED, DO YOU NOT FIND?



ONLY MORE SO **EACH** DAY OF MY LIFE, I'M SORRY TO SAY.

shuff shuff



AND OUR **SCRIBING'S** AS BAD AS OUR **POSTURE!**

TRULY, ONE **GRIEVES** FOR THE FUTURE OF CIVILIZATION.



JUST A MOMENT WHILE I CONFIRM THEIR **TRAVEL PERMITS**.

QUI DOLOREM IPSUM QUIA  
DOLOR SIT AMET  
CONSECTEUR, ADIPISCI  
VELIT, SED  
QUIA NON NUMquam ELLIS  
MODI TEMPORA INCIDUNT  
UT LABORE ET DOLORE  
MAGNAM ALIQUAM  
FRAT VOLUPTATEM, UT  
AD MINIMA VENIAM,  
NIS NOSTRUM  
TIONEM  
NIS SUS... AM  
...M, NA





WHY, *JUST* LAST WEEK I DELIVERED A LECTURE LINKING THE DECLINE OF THE NEW GENERATION'S *POSTURE* WITH THE DECLINE OF *CIVILIZATION*.

IT REQUIRED SIGNIFICANT EFFORT *NOT* TO INCLUDE THE *IRREFUTABLE* EVIDENCE THAT THEIR MUSICAL PREFERENCES ONLY *ACCELERATE* THIS PROCESS.

WHOOPS, I DROPPED IT.



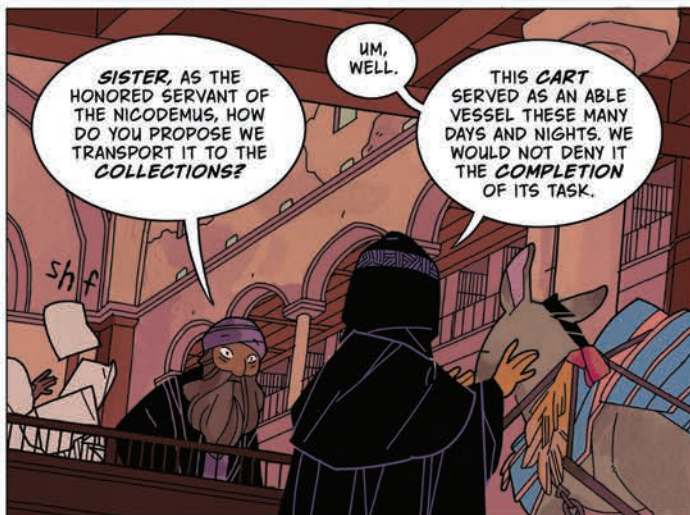
JUDGING BY THE RESPONSE, I SUSPECT MY *NEXT* LECTURE SERIES SHALL CENTER UPON PUBLIC *YAWNING* AS THE PRIMARY INDICATOR OF *MORAL DECAY*.

THERE IT IS.



PERMITS *CONFIRMED*. THEIR SEAL IS *GENUINE*.

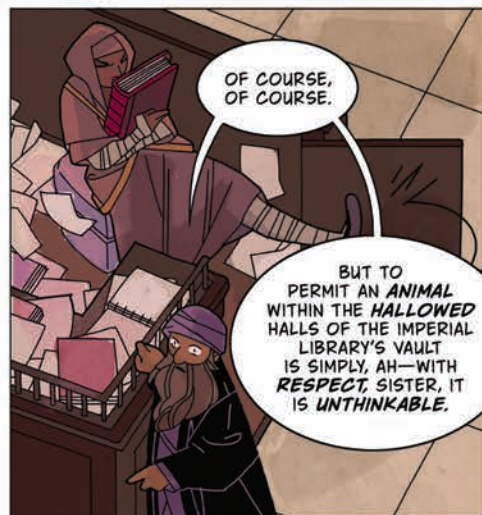
THE IMPERIAL LIBRARY OF CONSTANTINOPEL *WELCOMES* THE SYRIAC DELEGATION!



*SISTER*, AS THE HONORED SERVANT OF THE NICODEMUS, HOW DO YOU PROPOSE WE TRANSPORT IT TO THE *COLLECTIONS*?

UM, WELL.

THIS *CART* SERVED AS AN ABLE VESSEL THESE MANY DAYS AND NIGHTS. WE WOULD NOT DENY IT THE *COMPLETION* OF ITS TASK.



OF COURSE, OF COURSE.

BUT TO PERMIT AN *ANIMAL* WITHIN THE *HALLOWED* HALLS OF THE IMPERIAL LIBRARY'S VAULT IS SIMPLY, AH—WITH *RESPECT*, IT IS *UNTHINKABLE*.



THIS WILL NOT DO.

THE *CART* *MUST* BE TAKEN. IT CONTAINS, UH...

...THE *ALTAR*, YES, FROM WHICH I *MUST* INTONE THE RITES TO *COMPLETE* MY MISSION!

MY HANDS ARE *TIED*, *SISTER*.