

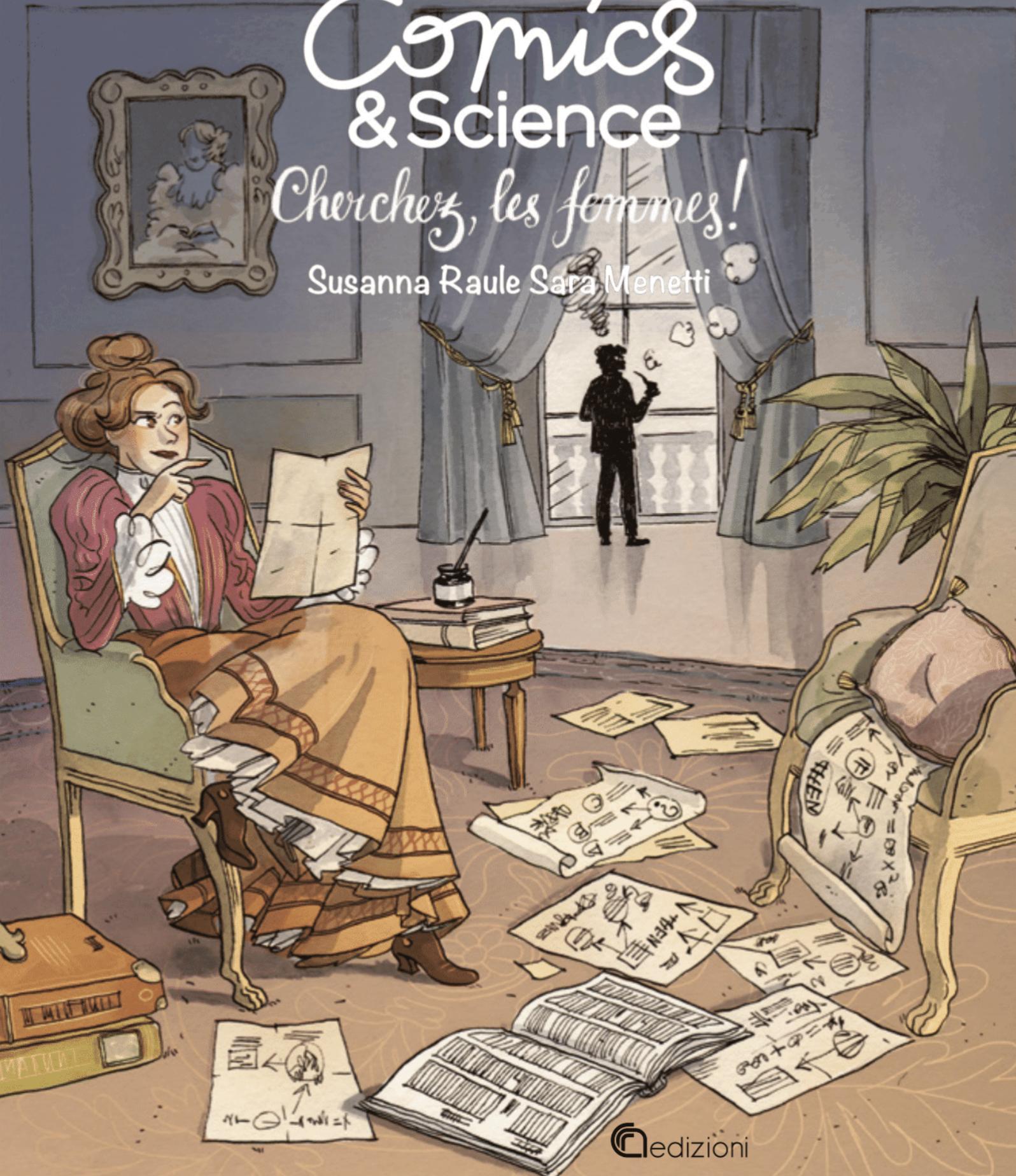
WHERE
ENTERTAINMENT
AND SCIENCE
MEET



Comics & Science

Cherchez, les femmes!

Susanna Raule Sara Menetti

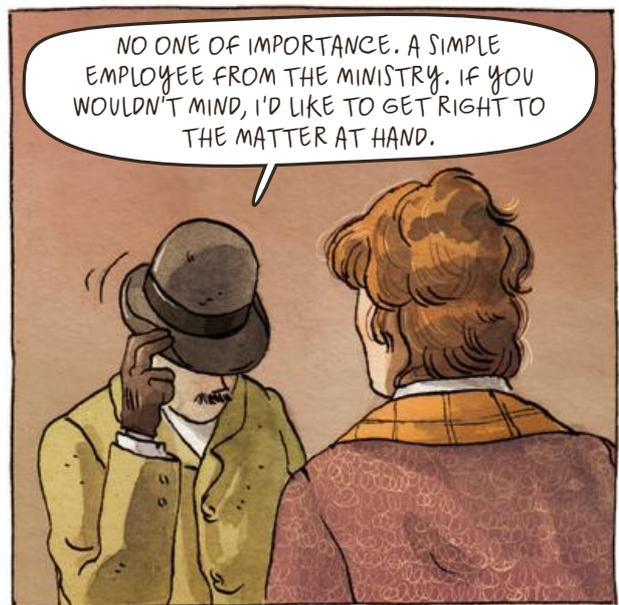


Cherchez, les femmes!

Story Susanna Raule
Art Sara Menetti

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LONDON,
EARLY 20TH CENTURY.





THE MATTER IS THIS, MR. NONES. THERE HAS BEEN AN ALARMING BREACH OF NATIONAL SECURITY.

MILITARY PLANS?



OUR COUNTERMEASURES IN CASE OF A NAVAL ATTACK FROM A FOREIGN POWER. THERE IS NO NEED TO GO INTO DETAIL ABOUT THE PLANS.

CERTAINLY NOT.



SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT, IF THEY WERE TO REACH OUR ENEMIES, WE WOULD BE LEFT DEFENSELESS.

AND IT NEARLY HAPPENED. IN FACT, IT DID, BUT THEN WE HAD A STROKE OF LUCK.



EXPLAIN.

YOU'RE SURELY AWARE OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE PROBLEM. BUT YOU'RE NOT ONLY OUR GREATEST DETECTIVE, YOU'RE ALSO A PATRIOT, AS WE KNOW.



WELL, SURE. I DISCOVERED THE CRUCIAL CLUE IN THE CASE OF THE SUBMARINE LOST IN LOCH NESS AND FOILED A PLOT TO REPLACE THE QUEEN WITH AN AUTOMATON. AND THERE WAS THAT TIME WHEN I, DRESSED AS A SUMO WRESTLER—

THAT'S WHAT I MEANT.

APPARENTLY, THE INFORMATION LEAK CAME FROM THE OFFICE OF SIR MAGNUS LIPP, AN IRREPROACHABLE, UNIVER-SALLY RESPECTED EMPLOYEE OF THE MINISTRY.



SIR LIPP RETURNS HOME EVERY EVENING WITH A LOCKED VALISE CONTAINING THE CURRENT PROJECTS FROM HIS OFFICE. NOT ONLY ARE THE DOCUMENTS UNDER LOCK AND KEY, BUT THEY'RE ALSO ENCRYPTED WITH A VERY COMPLEX CODE THAT CAN ONLY BE READ WITH A DECODING DEVICE CALLED "CONUNDRUM."



AND THIS DEVICE WAS STOLEN?



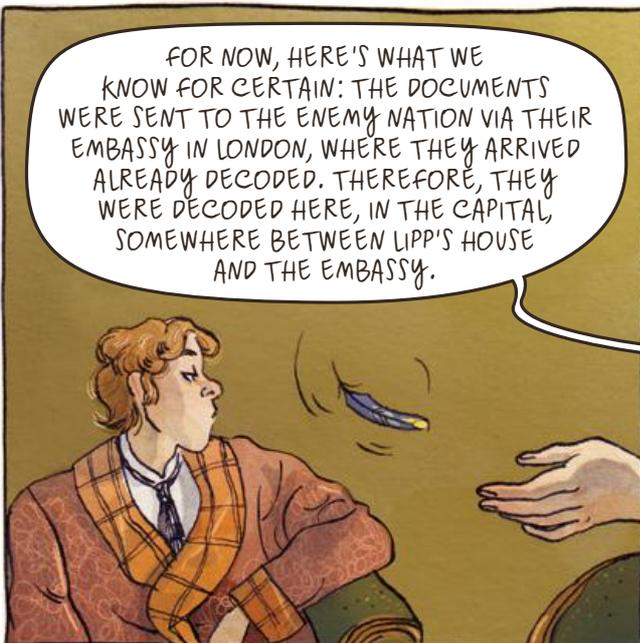
NO, IT NEVER LEFT THE MINISTRY. THE PLANS WERE ALREADY DECODED WHEN THEY WERE STOLEN, WHICH BRINGS US TO THE STROKE OF LUCK I MENTIONED.

SOMEONE MUST HAVE MADE ERRORS IN THE TRANSCRIPTION, SO OUR ENEMIES RECEIVED INACCURATE INTELLIGENCE. BUT, AS YOU SEE, THIS SETS AN ALARMING PRECEDENT.



INDEED.

FOR NOW, HERE'S WHAT WE KNOW FOR CERTAIN: THE DOCUMENTS WERE SENT TO THE ENEMY NATION VIA THEIR EMBASSY IN LONDON, WHERE THEY ARRIVED ALREADY DECODED. THEREFORE, THEY WERE DECODED HERE, IN THE CAPITAL, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN LIPP'S HOUSE AND THE EMBASSY.



AND TO BE HONEST, OUR OPINION IS THAT LIPP IS ABOVE SUSPICION. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LOYAL SUBJECT, HIS INTEGRITY HAS NEVER BEEN CALLED INTO QUESTION.



WHICH MEANS THE TRAITOR MUST BE SOMEONE IN HIS CIRCLE OF INTIMATES.



I PREFER TO START WITHOUT PRECONCEPTIONS. COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT SIR LIPP'S FAMILY?



CERTAINLY.

REALLY, THERE'S LITTLE TO TELL.

LIPP IS A WIDOWER. HE LIVES WITH HIS DAUGHTER AUGUSTA, A LOVELY GIRL OF TWENTY; AN OLD BUTLER, AMOS; A COOK; A VALET OF AFRICAN PROVENANCE, BIJI; AND RUFUS THE DOG.



HM. AND HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHANGES TO THEIR ROUTINE RECENTLY?

NOT THAT I KNOW OF.

HAS THE DOG TAKEN ILL, THE COOK CHANGED MENUS, THE DAUGHTER TURNED DOWN A FASHIONABLE HAT?

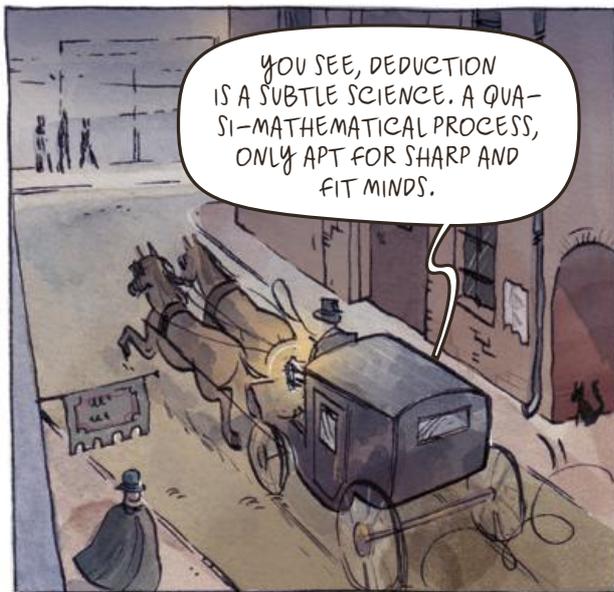
I THINK NOT.



I'D BETTER GO AND HAVE A LOOK.



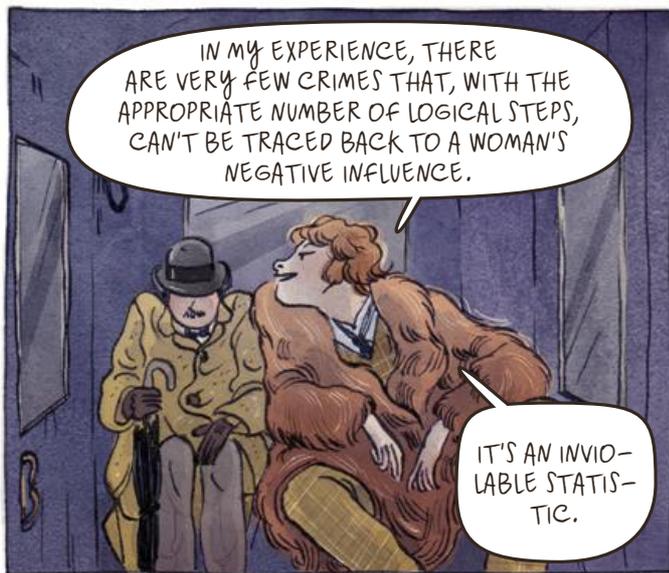
I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT, MR. NONES.



YOU SEE, DEDUCTION IS A SUBTLE SCIENCE. A QUASI-MATHEMATICAL PROCESS, ONLY APT FOR SHARP AND FIT MINDS.



ONCE YOU EXCLUDE RELATIVES, YOU CAN ONLY INVESTIGATE FRIENDS, OR RATHER, LADY FRIENDS!



IN MY EXPERIENCE, THERE ARE VERY FEW CRIMES THAT, WITH THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER OF LOGICAL STEPS, CAN'T BE TRACED BACK TO A WOMAN'S NEGATIVE INFLUENCE.

IT'S AN INVIO-LABLE STATIS-TIC.



AND ONCE YOU'VE FOUND THE LOOSE END, ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS FOLLOW IT.



CHERCHEZ LA FEMME!



SIR LIPP, ALLOW ME TO PRESENT MR. SHINING NONES, THE FAMED CONSULTING DETECTIVE.



OH, THANK HEAVENS YOU'RE HERE, MR. NONES.

WHAT A TERRIBLE SITUATION, FOR TWO DAYS I'VE THOUGHT OF NOTHING ELSE.



MY DAUGHTER, AUGUSTA.



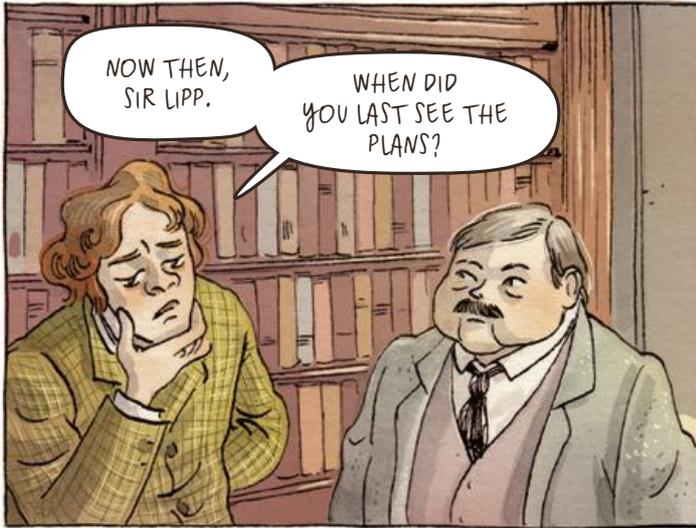
PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, MR. NONES. REGARDING THE PURLOINED DOCUMENTS, IF I MAY-

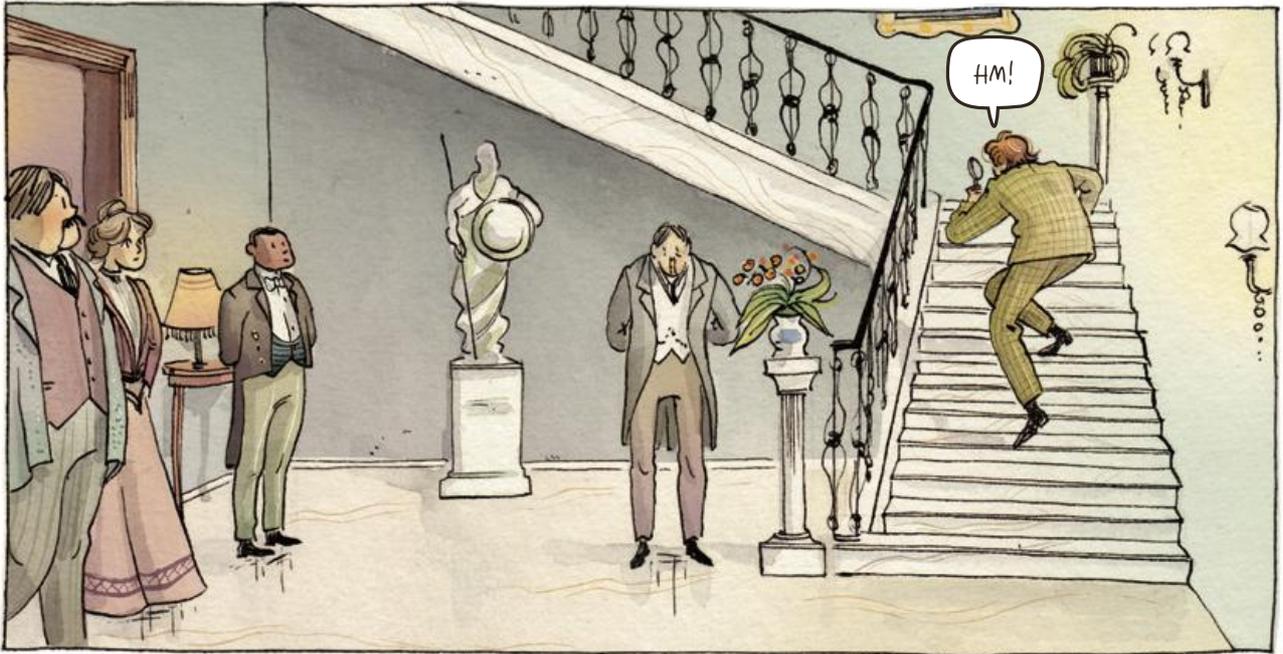
THANK YOU DEAR, I COULD REALLY USE A HOT CUP OF TEA.



THE VALET, MR. AMOS, OUR COOK...

HERE. GOOD BOY.

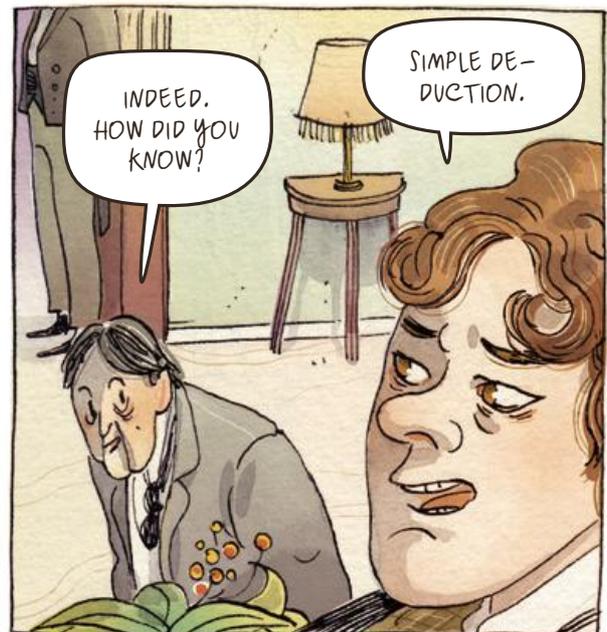






AT YOUR SERVICE, SIR.

SIR LIPP IS A FAN OF THE OPERA, CORRECT?

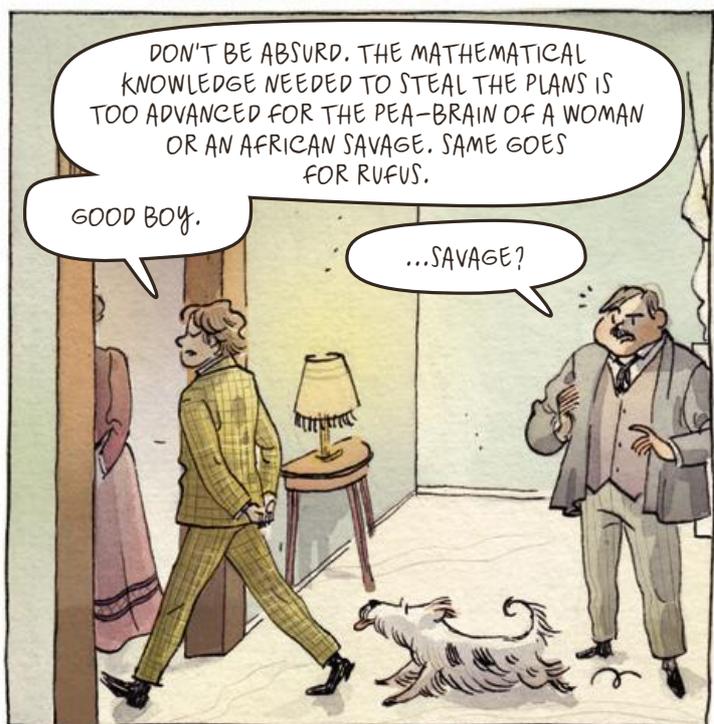


INDEED. HOW DID YOU KNOW?

SIMPLE DEDUCTION.



I COULD'VE TOLD YOU MYSELF, BUT I REALIZE YOU HAVE YOUR METHODS. IF YOU'D LIKE TO TALK TO THE STAFF...



DON'T BE ABSURD. THE MATHEMATICAL KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO STEAL THE PLANS IS TOO ADVANCED FOR THE PEA-BRAIN OF A WOMAN OR AN AFRICAN SAVAGE. SAME GOES FOR RUFUS.

GOOD BOY.

...SAVAGE?



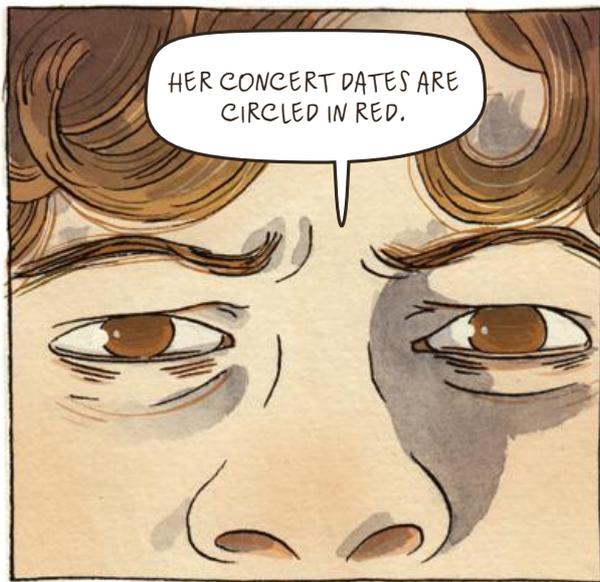
NO, YOUR LOVE OF THE OPERA WAS THE LAST PIECE OF THE PUZZLE, SIR LIPP.

I'M READY TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED.



THE TRAITOR IS NONE OTHER THAN FRAULEIN NACHTINGALL, THE NOTED OPERA SINGER.

I DEDUCED THAT YOU'RE A FAN OF HERS FROM THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE PROGRAM ON YOUR ESCRITOIRE, SIR LIPP.



HER CONCERT DATES ARE CIRCLED IN RED.

USING THE FEMININE WILES THAT NATURE HAS GRANTED HER IN ABUNDANCE, FRAULEIN NACHTINGALL OBTAINED THE SECRET DOCUMENTS WITH RELATIVE EASE...



THERE'S NO NEED TO GO INTO SORDID DETAIL, SIR LIPP. YOU'RE A WIDOWER, WE UNDERSTAND. WE'RE ALL GENTLEMEN HERE...

AND SHE SLIPPED THEM ON TO THE PERSON I CALL THE BEETHOVEN OF CRIME, THE DEVIANT MACHIAVELLIAN GENIUS AT THE CENTER OF THE LONDON UNDERWORLD LIKE A BIG SAINT BERNHARD IN HIS KENNEL.



FOR A SKILLED MATHEMATICIAN SUCH AS HE, IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT TO DECIPHER THE PLANS AND SELL THEM TO THE FOREIGN EMBASSY, FROM WHICH THEY WERE THEN STOLEN.



LUCKILY, FRAULEIN NACHTINGALL MUST HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD THE CIPHER WHILE COPYING, AND SO THE ENEMY WOUND UP WITH THE WRONG INFORMATION.



IT'S
ELEMENTARY...
CHERCHEZ
LA FEMME!



EXCELLENT, MR.
NONES!

YOU SOLVED THE
CASE IN MINUTES!

BRILLIANT!



HA, HA, HA, HA!





PARDON ME, WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

I'M SORRY, MR. NONES, BUT YOU HAVEN'T SOLVED A THING. I CAN TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED.



THREE WEEKS AGO I WAS APPROACHED BY A HANDSOME, FRIENDLY YOUNG MAN WITH AN UNUSUAL ACCENT.



MR. REID INTRODUCED HIMSELF AS A SCOTTISH IMPORTER...



AND STARTED COURTING ME, POLITELY, YET STILL IMAGINATIVELY.

OUR ACQUAINTANCE CONTINUED, AND...



MISS AUGUSTA!



IF REID'S WAS A SINCERE COURTSHIP...



THEN



ELSE

WHY WOULD HE LIE ABOUT HIS NATIONALITY?



NO, GIVEN MY FATHER'S JOB, HE HAD TO BE A FOREIGN AGENT LOOKING FOR INTELLIGENCE.

SO, WHAT TO DO?



WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FIND OUT HIS MOTIVES OR FOR WHOM HE WAS WORKING: IT WAS A DEAD END.



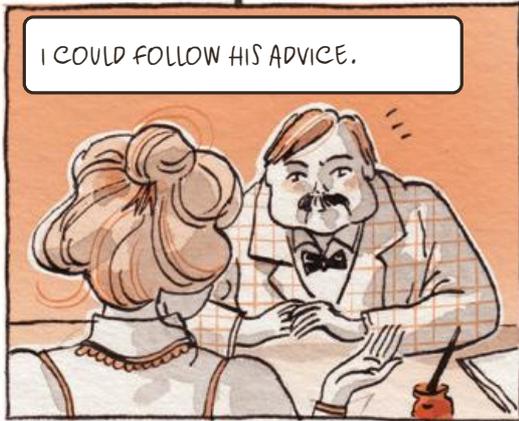
BACK TO



IF WE TALKED...

THEN

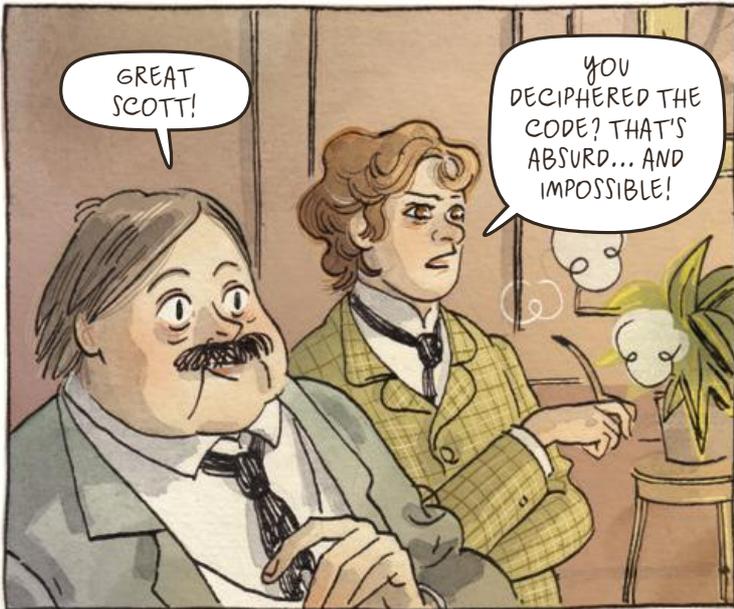
ELSE



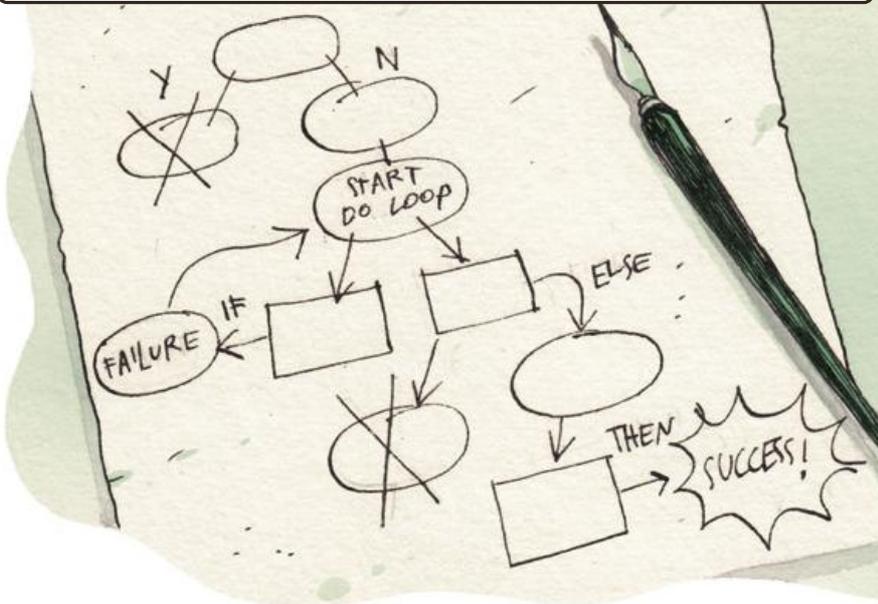
BACK TO







I STARTED BY MAKING A LIST OF THE ELEMENTS IN PLAY, ASSIGNING VARIABLES, THEN I FIGURED OUT A SOLUTION BY REPEATING COURSES OF ACTION, MAKING DECISIONS BASED ON THE OUTCOME.



RIGHT AWAY I SAW THAT IT WAS A POLYALPHABETIC CIPHER.

I DECIPHERED IT WITH SOME HELP FROM BIGI. HE WAS VERY QUICK AT EXAMINING DIFFERENT PERMUTATIONS FOR THE CODE.

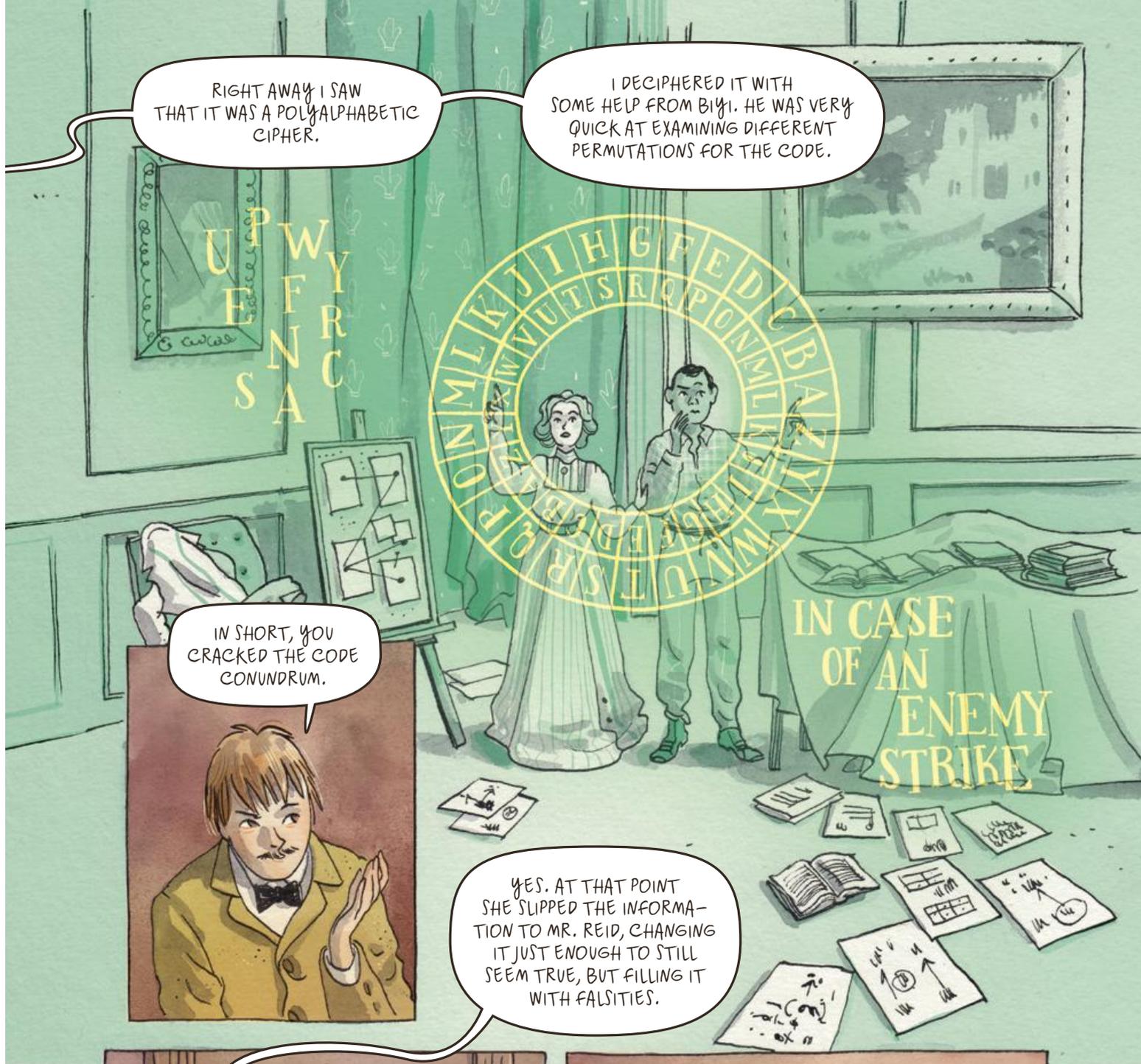
IN SHORT, YOU CRACKED THE CODE CONUNDRUM.

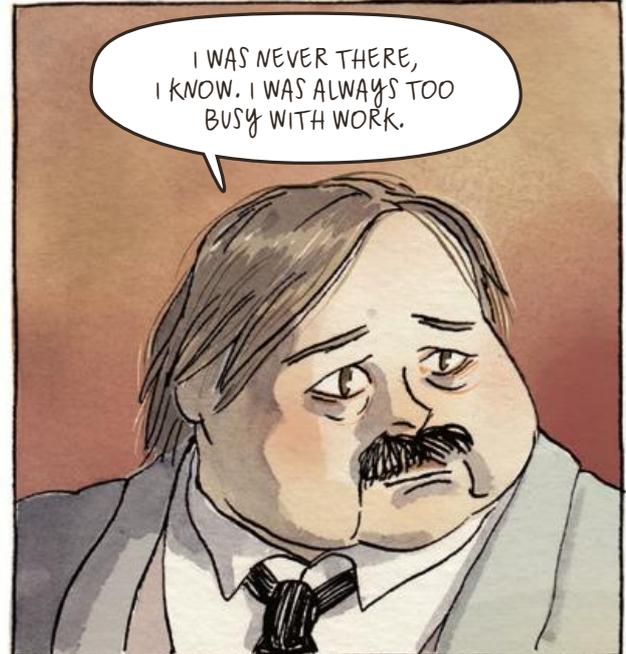
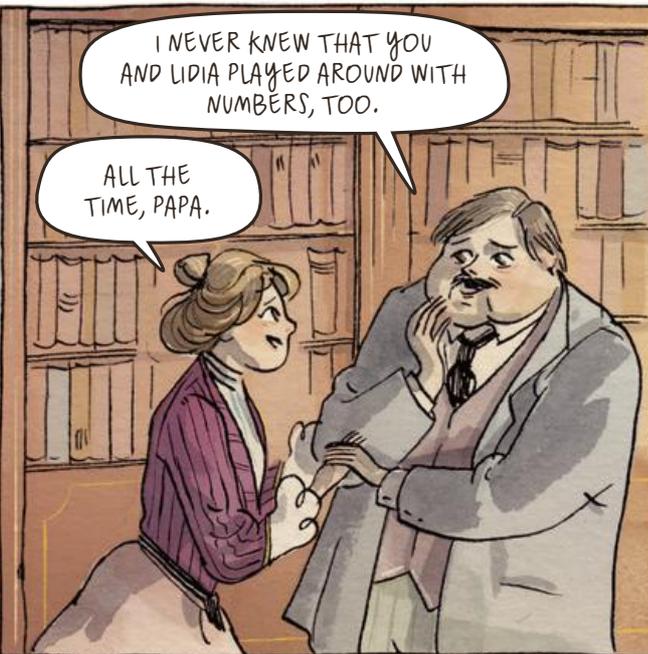
IN CASE OF AN ENEMY STRIKE

YES. AT THAT POINT SHE SLIPPED THE INFORMATION TO MR. REID, CHANGING IT JUST ENOUGH TO STILL SEEM TRUE, BUT FILLING IT WITH FALSITIES.

THAT WAY I WOULD HAVE MORE TIME TO FIGURE OUT HIS MOTIVE AND REPORT HIM!

MY LITTLE GIRL.









THREE MONTHS LATER.



CONGRATULATIONS, AUGUSTA.



AND BIGI.



MY LITTLE GIRL...

YOU'VE SAID THAT EIGHTEEN TIMES, MAGNUS.



I THINK YOU'LL FIT RIGHT IN HERE AT THE CODE OFFICE... WE'RE ALL DETECTIVES HERE!



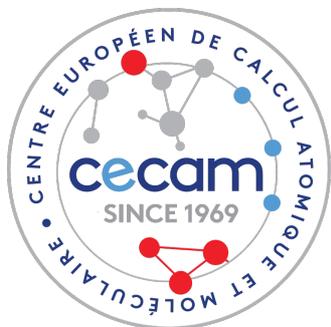
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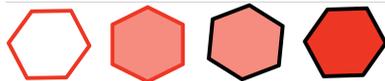
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