

W. VANCE

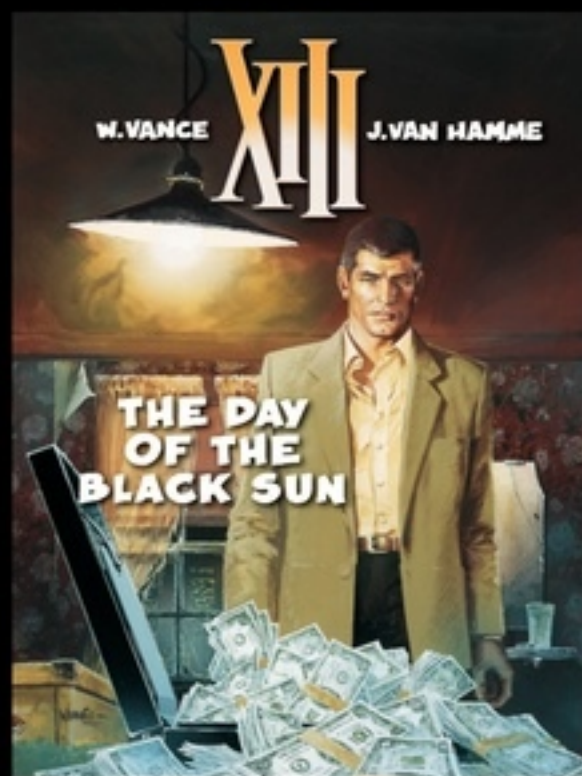
XIII

J. VAN HAMME

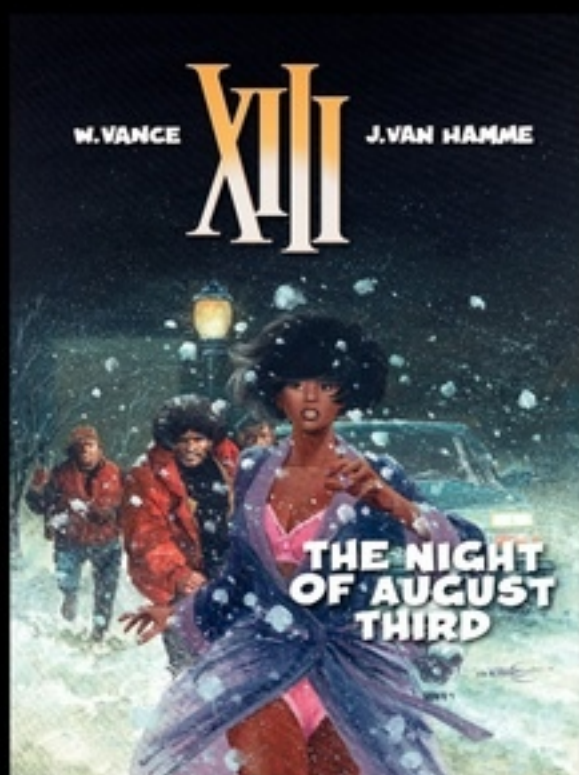
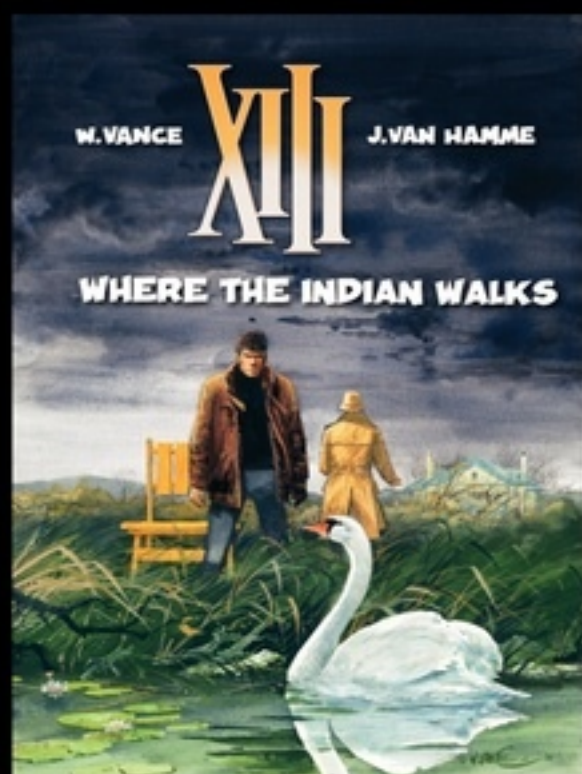


SPADS

9th CINEBOOK
The 9th Art Publisher



XIII. A man's quest for his past and his identity.





W. VANCE - J. VAN HAMME

SPADS

XIII

Colour work: PETRA

9th CINEBOOK
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PRESIDENT WILLIAM B. SHERIDAN HAS BEEN ASSASSINATED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT DURING AN OFFICIAL VISIT IN THE SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY. A DAY OF GRIEF FOR THE NATION AND ONE THAT A JOURNALIST WITH ROMANTIC SENSIBILITIES HAS DUBBED THE DAY OF THE BLACK SUN.



A CHANCE SIGHTING ON AN AMATEUR FILM ALLOWED IDENTIFICATION OF THE MURDERER: CAPTAIN STEVE ROWLAND, EX-OFFICER OF THE SPADS*, OFFICIALLY KILLED IN ACTION SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER.



*SPECIAL ASSAULT AND DESTRUCTION SQUADS-A SPECIAL COMMANDO UNIT

COLONEL AMOS, IN CHARGE OF THE INVESTIGATION UNDER JUDGE ALLENBY, MANAGES TO CATCH ROWLAND. BUT THE MAN HAS LOST HIS MEMORY AFTER SUSTAINING A HEAD WOUND. HIS ONLY DISTINCTIVE FEATURE: THE NUMBER XIII TATTOOED BELOW HIS LEFT CLAVICLE.



TURNING OUT TO BE QUITE THE MAN OF ACTION, THE AMNESIAC ESCAPES AMOS AND TAKES REFUGE WITH THOSE HE BELIEVES TO BE HIS OWN FAMILY. THERE, HE FALLS VICTIM TO A PLOT HATCHED BY HIS YOUNG AND TOO ATTRACTIVE STEPMOTHER; AND SHE HAS HIM ACCUSED OF THE MURDERS OF HIS "FATHER" AND "UNCLE."



ESCAPING ONCE MORE, XIII SUCCEEDS IN FINDING THE ONE WHO OUGHT TO HOLD THE KEY TO HIS TRUE IDENTITY: KIM ROWLAND, WIFE OF THE FORMER CAPTAIN. THE YOUNG WOMAN TELLS HIM THAT THE REAL ROWLAND IS, INDEED, DEAD...



BUT KIM ALSO SPORTS A ROMAN NUMERAL TATTOOED BELOW HER LEFT CLAVICLE. IS IT A DISTINCTIVE SIGN OF THE ORGANISATION THAT HAD SHERIDAN ASSASSINATED? WHAT ROLE DOES THE YOUNG WOMAN TRULY PLAY? XIII DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO LEARN MORE...



HE IS ARRESTED, TRIED FOR THE MURDER OF HIS "RELATIVES" AND SENTENCED TO LIFE IN THE SINISTER PLAIN ROCK PRISON FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE.



THUS ASSURED THAT HIS QUARRY HAS BEEN SAFELY SECRETED AWAY, COLONEL AMOS IS STILL TRYING TO IDENTIFY THE MYSTERIOUS AMNESIAC—HIS ONLY LEAD TO THE HEAD OF THE CONSPIRACY. HE IS ALSO CONVINCED THAT THE PRISONER IN PLAIN ROCK ISN'T THE REAL ROWLAND, FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY OF TRACES OF PLASTIC SURGERY ON XIII. SURGERY, NO DOUBT, INTENDED TO MAKE HIM A LOOKALIKE OF THE DECEASED CAPTAIN. HOWEVER, HIS PRINTS ARE, IN FACT, THE ONES FOUND ON THE WEAPON THAT KILLED PRESIDENT SHERIDAN. THEREFORE, IN THE COLONEL'S MIND, XIII IS INDEED THE SHOOTER.



WITH THE HELP OF GENERAL BEN CARRINGTON, FORMER SPADS COMMANDER AND NOW CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, AMOS AND JUDGE ALLENBY COMPILE A LIST OF EVERY MAN WITH SPECIAL COMMANDO TRAINING WHOSE BODY TYPE IS CLOSE TO THAT OF XIII...



THEY COME UP WITH 26 NAMES, INCLUDING THREE DEAD AND ONE MISSING. THEY WILL ALL HAVE TO BE CHECKED. BUT IT'S THE MISSING MAN—A ROSS TANNER—WHO SEEMS TO BE THE MOST PROMISING LEAD.



THAT'S WHEN XIII ONCE AGAIN FOILS THE COLONEL'S PLANS BY ESCAPING FROM PLAIN ROCK. AIDED BY LIEUTENANT JONES, GENERAL CARRINGTON'S EXPLOSIVE PERSONAL ASSISTANT.



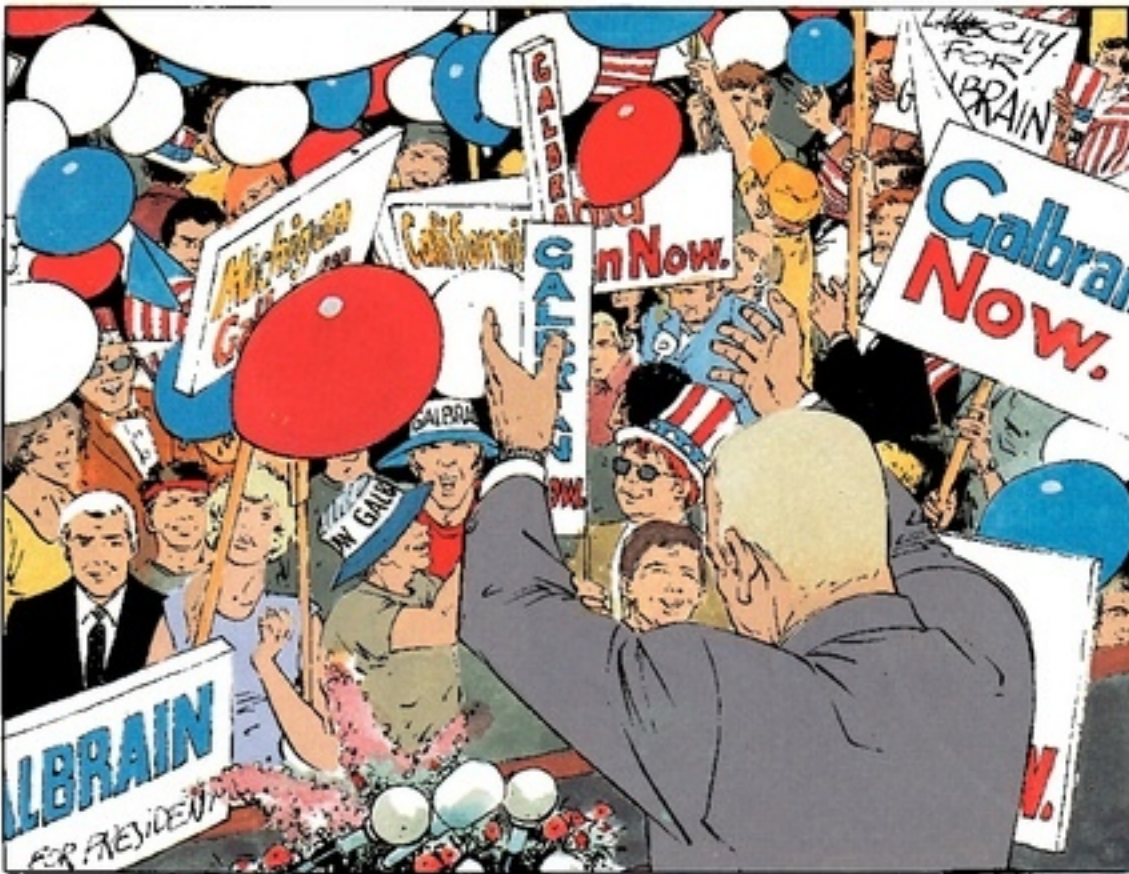
INCENSED, AND FULLY AWARE OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE GENERAL IN THE ESCAPE, AMOS IS NONETHELESS UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING FOR LACK OF PROOF. WHAT IS CARRINGTON'S GOAL? COULD HE ALSO BE PART OF THE PLOT? SO MANY ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO WHICH THE COLONEL HAS SWORN TO FIND ANSWERS.



BUT THE PUBLIC AT LARGE KNOW NOTHING OF THIS SHADOW WAR. FOR THE MOMENT, THEIR PASSION IS RESERVED FOR ANOTHER WAR, ONE MORE OVERT AND ALMOST AS MURDEROUS: THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE NEXT **PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION!**



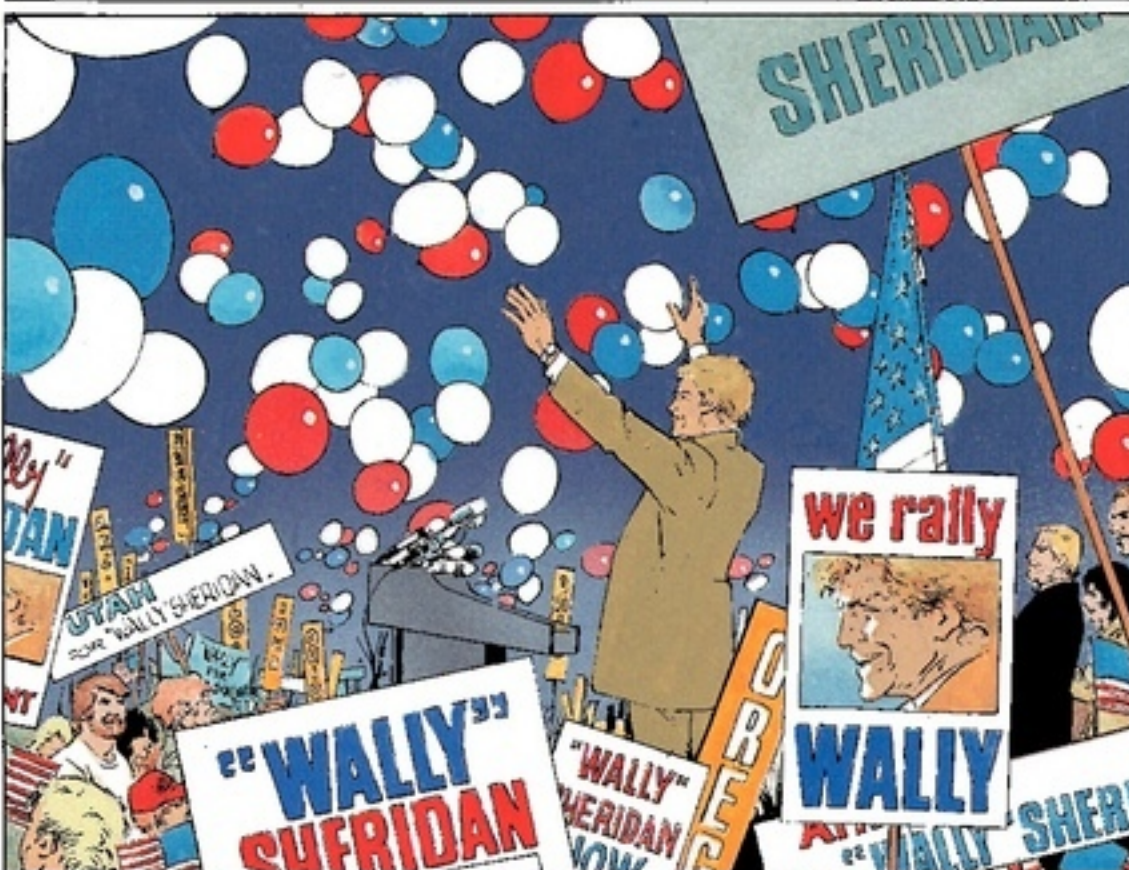
ON ONE SIDE, THE INCUMBENT: JOSEPH K. GALBRAIN, SHERIDAN'S FORMER VICE PRESIDENT. WHO, AFTER HAVING SUCCEEDED THE DECEASED, WANTS A SECOND TERM.



A COUNTRY LIKE OURS NO LONGER HAS THE RIGHT TO LET A COLLAPSING WORLD BRING IT DOWN WITH IT. WE **MUST** PROTECT OUR THREATENED ECONOMY. WE **MUST** INCREASE OUR MILITARY POWER TO DEFEND OUR SUPREMACY ALL THE BETTER. MY FRIENDS, THIS IS NO LONGER THE TIME FOR HALF-HEARTED CHOICES: LEST WE BE CRUSHED, WE **MUST** DOMINATE!



ON THE OTHER, THE CHALLENGER: YOUNG SENATOR WALTER "WALLY" SHERIDAN, YOUNGER BROTHER OF THE ASSASSINATED PRESIDENT.



PURSuing THE LEGACY OF HIS MOST ILLUSTRIOUS FOREBEARS, MY BROTHER HAD DECIDED TO EXTEND HIS HAND TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF EARTH: PEACE MEDIATIONS, LIBERALISATION OF TRADE, INCREASED HELP TO THE MOST DISADVANTAGED NATIONS. TOGETHER, WE **MUST** MAINTAIN THIS "EXTENDED HAND" POLICY! FOR IF IT IS POSSIBLE...

