



IQBAL ALI • PRISCILLA GRIPPA

mr. Jones's

chapter one

Smoking Bones

EXCERPT



MR. JONES'S & SMOKING BONES

CHAPTER ONE

WRITER ARTIST
IQBAL ALI **PRISCILLA GRIPPA**

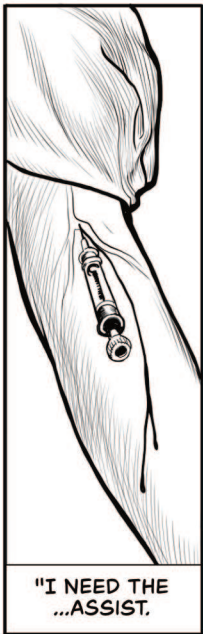
LETTERING & DESIGN BY IQBAL ALI



Copyright 2022 Iqbal Hussain Ali.
All rights reserved.

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious
and any resemblance to real persons, living or
dead, is purely coincidental.

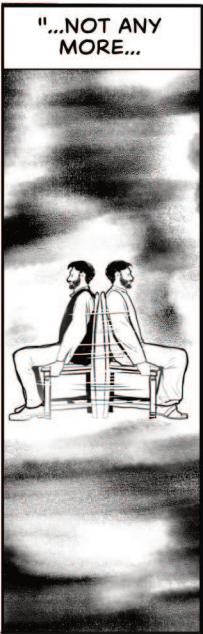
Published by Mild Frenzy
iqbala.com



"I NEED THE
...ASSIST.



"I CAN'T
DO IT WITHOUT
THEM..."



"...NOT ANY
MORE..."



"...MY **FOCUS** ISN'T
WHAT IT USED TO BE,
AND-AND I HAVE TO DO
WHATEVER IT TAKES..."

"...TO
GET
TO THE
**OTHER
SIDE.**"



BARZAKH,
YOU'VE
BECOME
RELIANT ON
THE DRUGS.

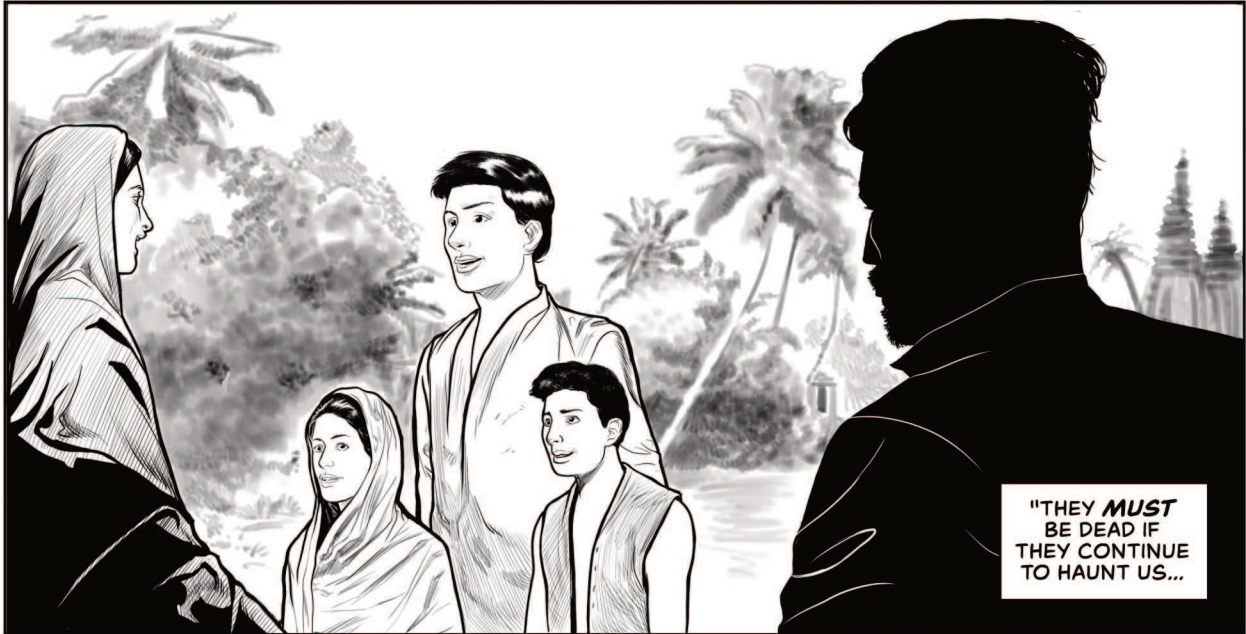
YOU ONLY NEED
THEM BECAUSE
YOU'RE DOING SO
MANY TRIPS.
YOU NEED SOME
REST. LET ME
HELP YOU WITH THAT.

I'M SO
CLOSE.

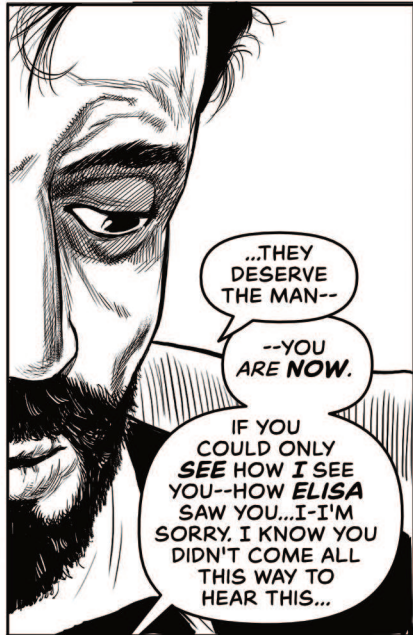
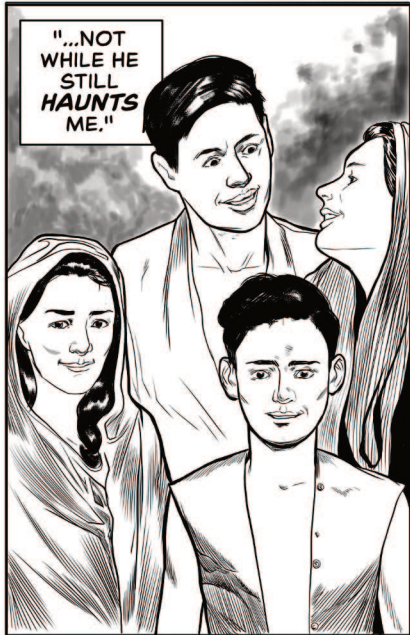


I DON'T
UNDERSTAND
WHAT ARE
YOU LOOKING
FOR OVER
THERE?

WHAT
HAPPENS TO
THE PEOPLE
WE ONCE
WERE?



"THEY **MUST**
BE DEAD IF
THEY CONTINUE
TO HAUNT US..."





NEXT TIME, PERHAPS.

OH, THE FAMINE, I-I FORGOT.

IT'S OKAY.



B, WAIT.

WE NEVER GOT TO TALK AFTER ELISA PASSED.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

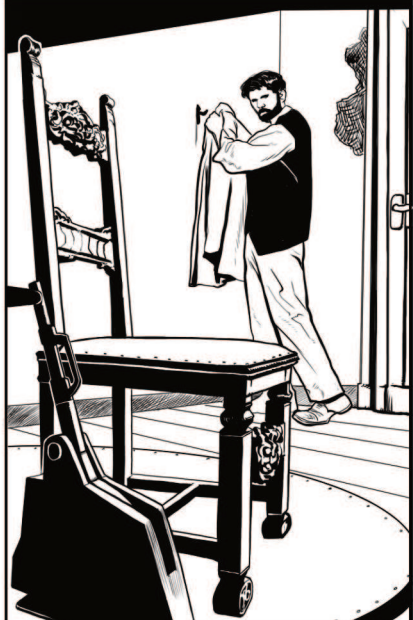


I MISS HER TOO, YOU KNOW.

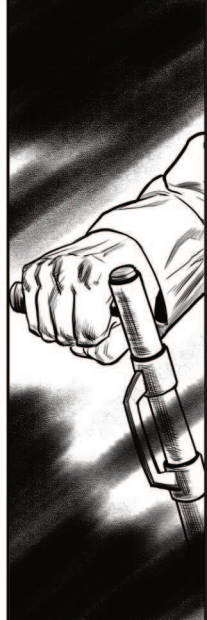
I KNOW.



LONDON, 1867.



LAST DOSE. MAKE IT WORTH-WHILE.

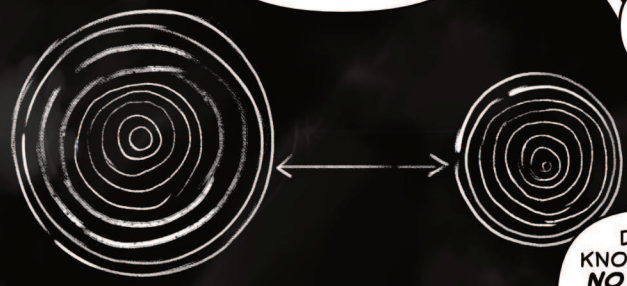




CLOSE YOUR LEFT EYE, MR. BARZAKH, HOLD OUT A THUMB, AND LOOK AT ME.

NOW, CLOSE THE OTHER EYE INSTEAD. YOU'LL SEE ME ON THE **OTHER** SIDE OF YOUR THUMB.

WE CALL THIS THE **PARALLAX EFFECT**, AND USING THIS WE CAN CALCULATE THE MOON TO BE PRECISELY **234,347 MILES** FROM THE EARTH.



I FAIL TO SEE HOW--

DID YOU KNOW THERE'S **NO** PARALLAX IF YOU DO THE SAME THING WITH AN APPARITION?



GHOSTS, MR. BARZAKH. MY POINT IS THEY EXIST IN A DIFFERENT REALM.

LIKE AN ONION, THERE ARE MULTIPLE REALMS, **LAYERED** ON TOP OF EACH OTHER, AND IN THE SPACE BETWEEN THEM IS THE **AETHER**.

THE **PARALLAX EFFECT** DOESN'T WORK ON **GHOSTS** BECAUSE THEY EXIST IN THAT **AETHER**.

I'M WELL AWARE OF ALL OF THIS.



I KNOW YOU ARE. I-I'M SORRY, I'M NOT USED TO SPEAKING TO SOMEONE WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE. I HEARD YOU'VE **BEEN** THERE. **FLEETINGLY**.



BUT MADAME, IF YOU WERE LOOKING FOR PROOF OF OTHER WORLDS, YOU ONLY NEED LOOK INSIDE **THIS** ROOM. YOU COME TO MEET ME ACCOMPANIED BY **SOLDIERS**--

NOT MY CHOICE.

WHY AM I HERE, MISS?

THERE'S A **SICKNESS KILLING** THE PEOPLE OF YOUR VILLAGE.

WHAT DO YOU CARE OF SUCH THINGS?

I CAN HELP.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD IS LIMITED TO A SINGLE REALM.

THIS LIMITS OUR ABILITY CREATING MEDICINE.

I WANT TO BUILD A MACHINE THAT CAN BREAK THROUGH THE BARRIERS BETWEEN WORLDS. THE **PARALLAX EFFECT** IS KEY TO THIS. AT THE CORRECT OSCILLATION, WE CAN FREE OUR CONSCIOUSNESS AND EXPLORE THE **AETHER** AND THE KNOWLEDGE THAT EXISTS OUT THERE.

I CAN ALREADY TRAVERSE OTHER AETHERS. THROUGH PRAYER, MEDITATION--

--AND PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES, I KNOW.

BUT AS YOU'VE ALREADY SAID, YOUR VISITS ARE FLEETING. **CONTROL** MUST ALSO HAVE BEEN A CHALLENGE. THIS MACHINE WILL HAVE NONE OF THOSE RESTRICTIONS.

THIS MACHINE EXISTS?

NOT YET. BUT I HAVE THE PLANS. I'M USING A **CHAIR** TO--

MA'AM.

WE'RE FINE, BEN. YOU DON'T NEED TO KEEP CHECKING UP ON US!

THE CAPTAIN IS HERE, MA'AM. HE WISHES TO SPEAK TO YOU.

~SIGH~

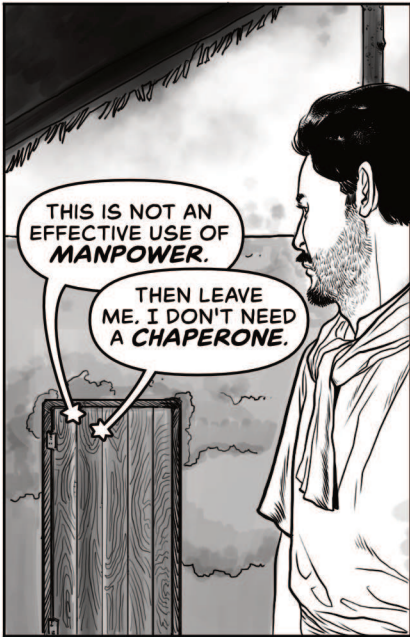
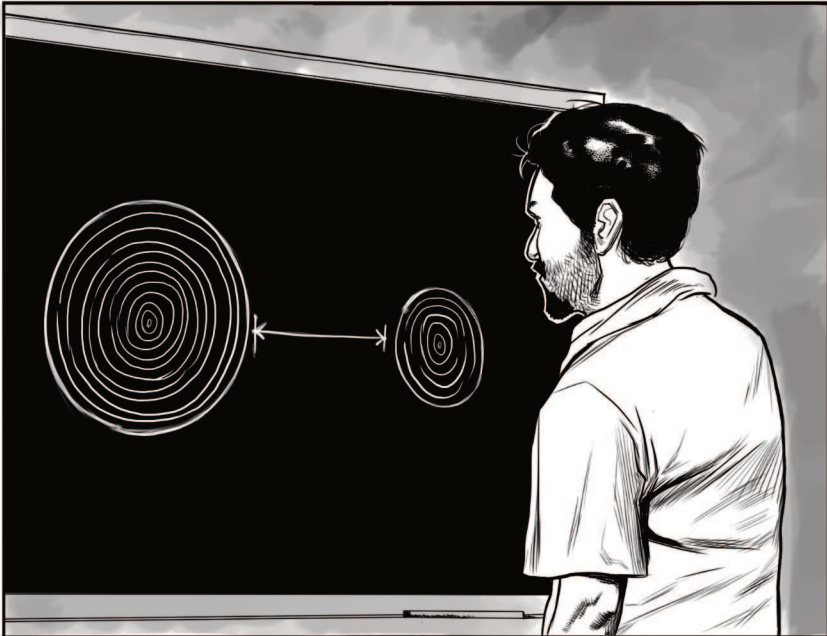
WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS A **SWAMI**.

LOOK, THERE ARE MANY IN MY VILLAGE WHO WOULD LOVE TO WORK FOR THE **RAJ**.

I NEED YOUR EXPERIENCE, MR **BARZAKH**. YOU WOULDN'T BE WORKING FOR THE **EMPIRE**.



JUST... PLEASE THINK ABOUT IT WHILE I DEAL WITH THIS.



THIS IS NOT AN EFFECTIVE USE OF **MANPOWER.**

THEN LEAVE ME. I DON'T NEED A **CHAPERONE.**



YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO THAT.

THIS IS NO PLACE FOR A-A...

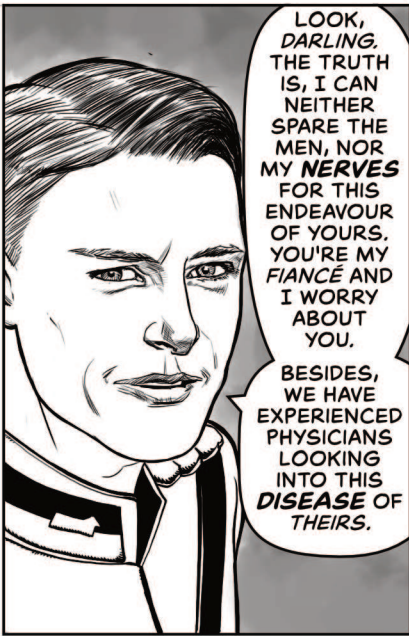


...A **WOMAN?**



WELL, YES, THESE ARE **TURBULENT TIMES.** AND HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY KNOW OF THIS MAN ANYWAY? HE COULD BE **DANGEROUS.**

I'VE DONE MY **RESEARCH, EDWARD.**



LOOK, **DARLING.** THE TRUTH IS, I CAN NEITHER SPARE THE MEN, NOR MY **NERVES** FOR THIS ENDEAVOUR OF YOURS. YOU'RE MY **FIANCEE** AND I WORRY ABOUT YOU.

BESIDES, WE HAVE EXPERIENCED PHYSICIANS LOOKING INTO THIS **DISEASE OF THEIRS.**



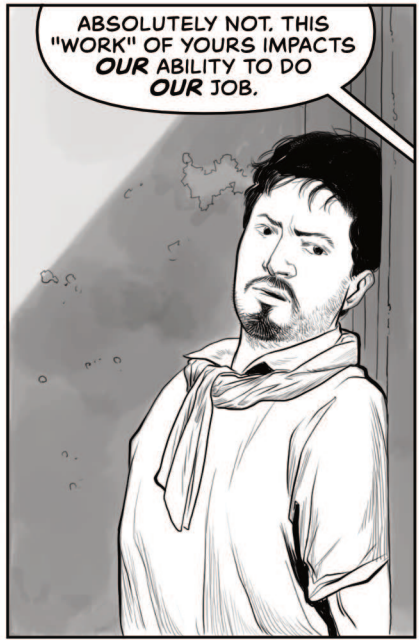
CHARLES AND MONTAGUE? THEIR OUTDATED IMMUNISATION PROGRAM IS AS ANTIQUATED AS IT IS BARBARIC!

BARBARIC?



YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT "BARBARIC?" IN THIS PLACE WITH THESE PEOPLE? THE WAY THEY BEHAVE AFTER EVERYTHING WE DO FOR THEM--?

THIS ARGUMENT AGAIN... EDWARD, ALL I ASK IS FOR A FEW MORE DAYS. ONCE I HAVE MY TEAM TOGETHER, I CAN--



ABSOLUTELY NOT. THIS "WORK" OF YOURS IMPACTS OUR ABILITY TO DO OUR JOB.



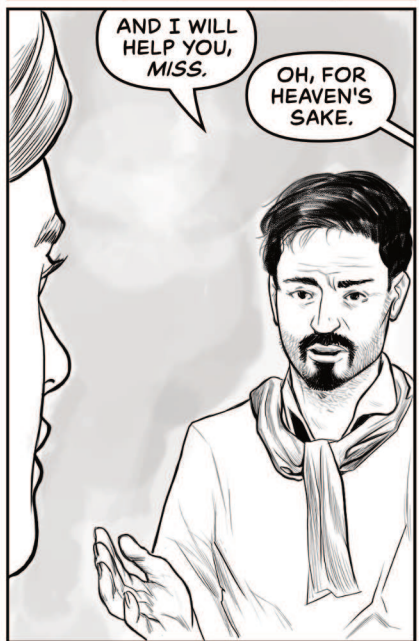
I'M SORRY, I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTY TO SERVE. AND I CANNOT LET MY PERSONAL FEELINGS INTERFERE...



...SO, THIS ENDS NOW, WITH--

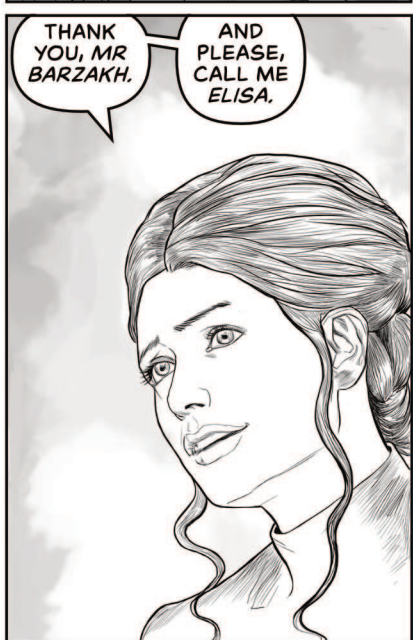
EXCUSE ME, I HAVE GIVEN YOUR OFFER SOME THOUGHT...

WE'RE TALKING HERE!



AND I WILL HELP YOU, MISS.

OH, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE.



THANK YOU, MR BARZAKH.

AND PLEASE, CALL ME ELISA.



I'M READY TO LEAVE NOW, EDWARD. I HAVE WHAT I CAME FOR.

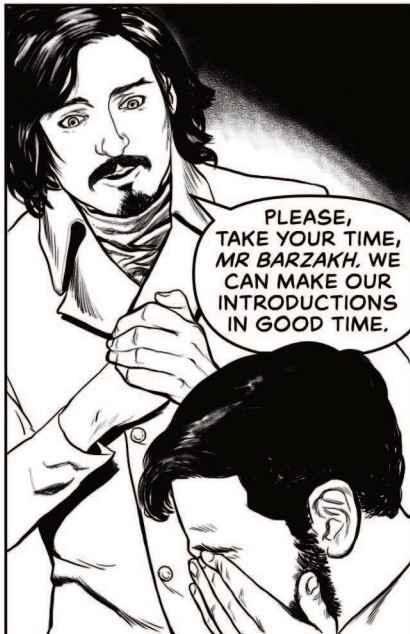


MR BARZAKH!



WHA--?

ALIVE. OH, THANK HEAVENS FOR THAT. I WAS QUITE CONCERNED.



PLEASE, TAKE YOUR TIME, MR BARZAKH. WE CAN MAKE OUR INTRODUCTIONS IN GOOD TIME.



I SEE YOU'VE BURN'T THE ONLY CHAIR IN THIS PLACE.

IT'S NOT-- WHAT TIME IS IT?



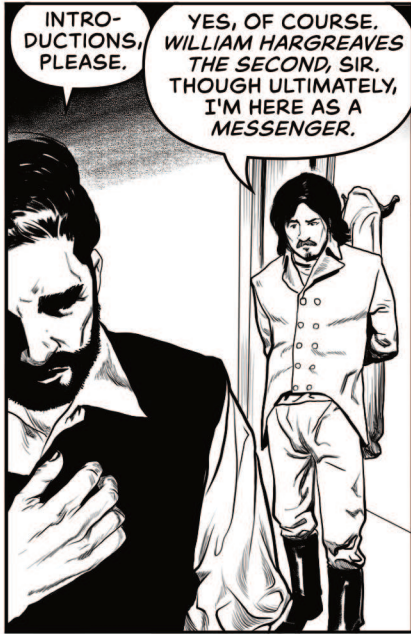
A LITTLE AFTER SEVEN IN THE A.M.



THEN THERE'S STILL TIME.

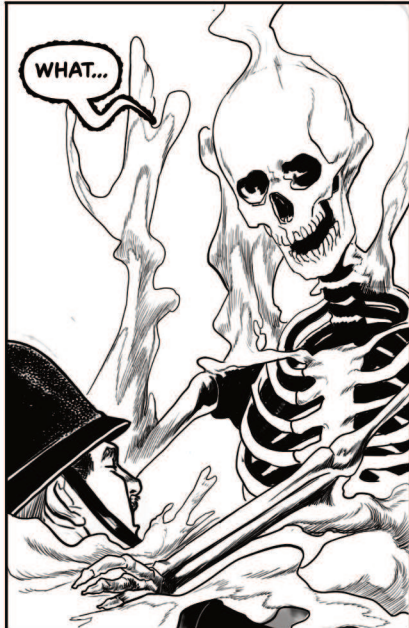


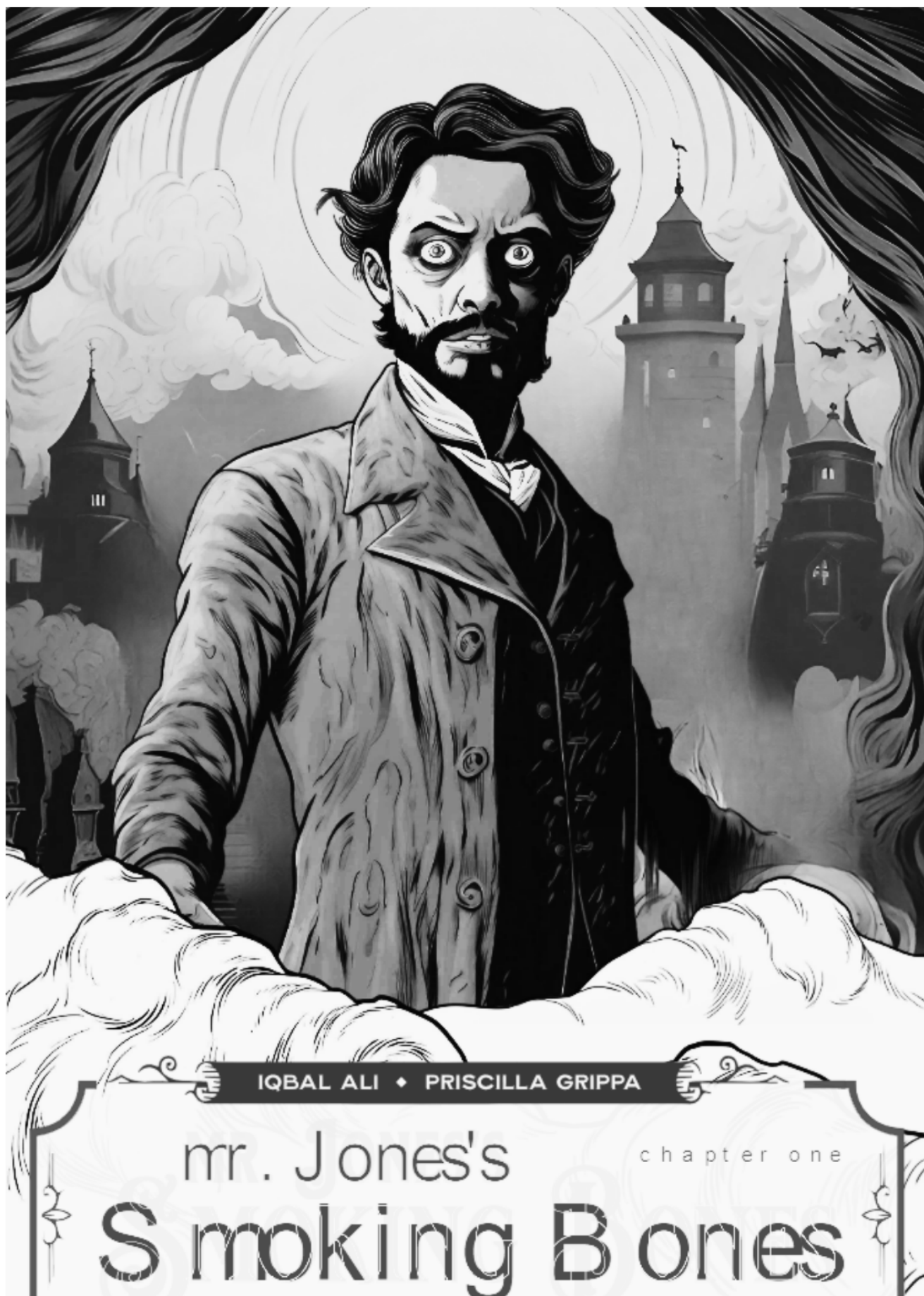
INTERESTING. FIVE TIMES A DAY, RIGHT?



INTRODUCTIONS, PLEASE.

YES, OF COURSE. WILLIAM HARGREAVES THE SECOND, SIR. THOUGH ULTIMATELY, I'M HERE AS A MESSENGER.





END OF EXCERPT

iqbala.com/smoking-bones