

LONDON CALLING
issue 1 of 4

By

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PAGE 1

EXT. ON TOP OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, DAY.

The sky is the color of a bruise, a storm hanging heavy over the capital. Weird lightning flickers from cloud to cloud, like it was the end of the world.

PANEL 1:

CLOSE UP: EMILY PARFETT.

Dark, chin-length straight hair frames a pleasant, heart-shaped face. Her makeup is ruined by the tears rolling down her cheeks. She looks EXTREMELY pissed off.

PARFETT

You... you.. complete and utter
CUNT

(We might have to censor "cunt" but that's the word she's using even under a black bar)

PANEL 2:

WIDE, BUT NOT QUITE WIDE ENOUGH TO SHOW HOW CRAZY IT REALLY IS FOR TWO PEOPLE TO BE STANDING ON ST PAULS (SAVE THE FULL PANORAMA FOR THE SPLASH)

We can see the low London skyline and the weird clouds and lightning. EMILY PARFETT is confronting a younger MICHAEL DARROW.

DARROW is wearing a smart dark suit in a 80's style, no ridiculous pastels or rolled up sleeves but it is slightly dated. His hair is a light brown, medium length and wavy. Darrow's hands are covered in blood up to the elbows. A long, straight sword is held in his right hand, in the other he holds the lapels of TIM, a young man who he's obviously just stabbed, his body half-slumped onto the rooftop. His tie and hair is whipped around by the high winds.

PARFETT is wearing similar styled clothing, expensive and well cut business attire. Business jacket, skirt, stockings. Attractive but not particularly revealing. She's also wearing a long beige coat that's flapping around like a cape behind her. No shoes as she took off her heels for purchase on top of the dome.

CAPTION:1984

DARROW

Don't be so Don't be so NAIVE,
Emily...

PANEL 2:

Darrow lets go of the deceased Tim, who falls to the roof with a THUMP.

DARROW
...I've just saved the WORLD.

PAGE 2

PANEL 1:

Parfett cradles Tim's body.

PARFETT
You've MURDERED our FRIENDS,
Michael. Oh God, TIM.. you
bastard. You've stabbed TIM.

PANEL 2:

Darrow wipes the blood off the sword with the edge of his jacket.

DARROW
Tim was a worthless streak of
PISS who couldn't find his ass
with both HANDS. Dying is the
most useful thing he's ever DONE.

PANEL 3:

Parfett is standing again, shaking with rage as she confronts Darrow.

PARFETT
That's IT. I don't give a shit
that you just saved the
world. I'm DONE with this,
Michael. I'm done with ALL of
it. I'm LEAVING.

PANEL 4:

Similar to Panel 3, but Parfett is teleporting away, a woman-shaped hole in the world like a weird fractal reflection.

PANEL 5:

CU on Darrow. He's surprised and rattled, he had no idea that Y could do that. A small uncertainty after his smug victory.

DARROW

Hm.

PAGE 3

SPLASH PAGE

Titles, credits, etc.

Full page landscape of St Paul's and surrounds, Darrow a small figure standing on the top. The storm is breaking up, huge shafts of light now coming through the angry clouds.

DARROW

...To hell with it.

PAGE 4

EXT. WOOLWICH ARSENAL. DAY

The top 2/3 of the page is taken up with one image broken into 2 panels, the second taller than the first.

We're inside Woolwich Arsenal looking towards one of the gated communities. The area has been cordoned off, emergency services are everywhere. There are a lot of people receiving medical attention - some are huddled under blankets, others strapped into stretchers and loaded into ambulances. All look either shell shocked or just plain crazy. No actual injuries, it's all mental.

In the foreground is THOMAS WACE, looking down at an iPhone-like cellphone (he's on a video call with Darrow). All his speech-bubbles are linked across both panels.

PANEL 1:

This is framed on the skyline, on a slightly hazy winter day, the sky a very bright pale blue, almost grey. Flat and dull compared to the dramatic stormclouds of the previous page.

CAPTION

PRESENT DAY

DARROW

(electric bubble, he's on the other end of the phone) Well?

WACE

It's a MESS.

DARROW
SPECIFICS, Wace.

PANEL 2:

This is framed on Wace, and contains all the bustle of the scene.

CAPTION:
WOOLWICH ARSENAL, LONDON

WACE
As far as I can tell, anyone that comes within 500 meters of one of the blocks loses their MIND.

WACE
No-one can get in there to see what's causing it without going MENTAL, they've lost a couple of cops and medics already. Helicopters can't even fly over it.

WACE
I've tried getting more info from people but a policeman wouldn't let me past the caution tape.

DARROW
Wace, you're as much use as a chocolate hammer. Put the officer on the phone, would you?

PANEL 3:

Wace hands his phone to a cop who's standing on the other side of some "POLICE LINE: Do Not Cross" tape. He's a typical london bobby, stab proof vest, stupid helmet and all.

WACE
It's for you.

PANEL 4:

CU on cop. he's raised the phone to his ear, unaware that it's a vid phone.

COP
Hello?

PANEL 5:

Similar to panel 4, but the cop's eyes have widened and he's got a startled expression on his face. Darrow has just introduced himself and threatened to completely ruin his career, finances and home life.

PAGE 5

PANEL 1:

Wace is suppressing a smile as he ducks under the tape, the cop helpfully lifting it for him. The police officer looks pissed off, but there's nothing he can do about it.

PANEL 2:

Looking over Wace's shoulder at Darrow on his camera phone. Darrow looks similar to how we saw him in the 80s, except his hair is now a pure silver grey, and his face is much more lined and wrinkled. In the background we can just see his richly furnished office.

WACE

What now?

DARROW

Talk to everyone you CAN, and for God's sake, hold up the PHONE so I can SEE them. I need to know what's happening there.

PANEL 3/REST OF PAGE:

A series of snapshots of the human aftermath of whatever horrible event is happening in Woolwich Arsenal. People sitting blank eyed in blankets. A man frothing at the mouth as he's held down by paramedics. A policewoman throwing up. A medic telling Wace to get out of his face, pushing the camera away angrily. Things like that, feel free to be creative. Small regular panels, giving the impression that Wace is doing what he's told and we're seeing what Darrow is seeing. I'll drop in dialogue later for panels that need it.

PAGE 6

PANEL 1:

Wace was in the process of talking to a crazy looking woman but has been interrupted by his boss (she's still raving in the background)

DARROW

That's ENOUGH. I want you to get in there and STOP whoever's doing this.

WACE

WHOEVER? But...

PANEL 2:

CU on Wace's phone, Darrow's face now fills the screen as if he's leaned forward. He's irritated, so he's going to swear a lot.

DARROW

Don't FUCK around here Wace.
You're the ONLY one who can do this, so when I say jump, you bloody well JUMP. I've got some very important people to call, so you get in there, put a stop to this situation, do as you're fucking told, and DON'T screw this UP.

PANEL 3:

Same as Panel 2, but the screen has blipped out and gone dark as Darrow hangs up, a white line/dot showing where it's shutting off. Wace's face is reflected in the dark screen, his eyes shadowed.

SFX: BOOP

PANEL 4:

Same as Panels 2 and 3. More focus on the reflected face now that it's not obscured with a white dot/line.

WACE

Shit.

PAGE 7

INT, BUSY OFFICE. DAY.

PANEL 1:

Exact same framing as last panel on page 4, except instead of a reflection in a cellphone screen we are now looking at Wace in the flesh. Dressed in a white shirt and tie.

WACE

Shit.

PANEL 2:

A computer screen, a boring set of spreadsheets half obscured by a game of Minesweeper, which Wace has just lost. Badly.

PANEL 3:

We see that Wace is sitting at a desk in a busy, open-plan office. Despite the bustle around him, Wace looks bored and discontent. Still, at least he's got a window to look out of, which he's doing in a sort of sidelong, bored way.

CAPTION: ONE YEAR AGO

PANEL 4:

Wace's POV. Looking out over the London skyline, which is low and covered in chimneys and clutter, with a few buildings standing out. And there's two figures off in the distance, surrounded by weird energy, fighting in mid air. They're too far away to make out any real detail, just silhouettes. This is VICTORY ACE and an unnamed supervillan who we're never going to see again.

PANEL 5:

Small panel. CU of Wace, shading his eyes and peering out the window, not quite beleiving what he's seeing.

PANEL 6:

Another small panel. Closer on midair fight. Figures are still indistinct, but energy is more intense. Green spherical explosions common.

PANEL 7:

Wace stands up from his desk, pointing towards the window and looking around at the other people in the office, who are looking non-plussed in that very special way that English people do when someone is making a scene.

WACE

Has anyone else seen...

PANEL 8:

As Panel 7, but flooded with an intense white light, like the flash from an atomic weapon. Wace is just a sketchy dark outline.

PAGE 8

EXTERIOR, OFFICE BUILDING, DAY.

PANEL 1:

Tall panel.

Wace is standing bug-eyed in mid air, almost like Wile-E-Coyote, in the center of a perfectly spherical hole

in his office building. Everything around him is just GONE, like it was disintegrated at the atomic level. The radius of the blast extends up and down a couple of stories. Floors, ceilings, desks have been cut cleanly by the sphere of destruction. And yet Wace is completely untouched.

WACE

Whuh...

PANEL 2:

Same as Panel 1, but Wace is now falling, half off the bottom of the panel.

WACE

AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!

PANEL 3:

INT. HOSPITAL, DAY

Wide panel (page width, underneath 1 and 2) Wace is in hospital, both legs in a cast, various other bandages from falling a couple of stories. It's remarkable he's alive at all. He doesn't look happy.

PAGE 9

PANELS 1-4:

...are repeats of the last panel from Page 6, alternating day and night but with slightly changes to suggest the passing of time. Start with night shot. Wace's bandages change, there's various clutter... but there's never any flowers or get well cards or visitors.

PANEL 5:

Again, the same framing as 1-4, but now Darrow is sitting in a chair beside the bed, looking relaxed. Wace is asleep. It's night, the room rendered in blues and greys.

DARROW

Hello Mr Wace.

PAGE 10

PANEL 1:

Closer on Wace and Darrow. Wace is waking up but still groggy, rubbing his eyes, not sure what's going on or who this guy is.

WACE

Hzzat?

DARROW

Do you know how perfectly ridiculous it is for you to survive a direct strike from one of the most powerful men on the planet?

WACE

My legs...

PANEL 2:

Darrow leans forward, switching on the bedside lamp. His face is heavily shadowed on one side from the strong light source. We'll see that kind of shadowing often when dealing with Darrow as he's on the borderline of light and dark.

DARROW

You broke both your LEGS when you fell a few stories and landed on a CAR. Frankly, I'm surprised you didn't break anything ELSE. But not QUITE as surprised as I am to find you're not a rapidly expanding cloud of superheated MOLECULES.

DARROW

Tell me Mr Wace... or Thomas, if you prefer; Do you know who VICTORY ACE is?

PANEL 3:

CU on Wace. The penny has just dropped.

WACE

Oh.

PANEL 4/REST OF PAGE:

A couple of photographs, like they've been strewn across the panel. The main/largest is Victory Ace flying straight through a German bomber (a Heinkel He 111) which is exploding behind him. He's a dark haired, squared jawed military type, more Captain America than Superman. He's wearing a pilot's flight uniform with no parachute, webbing, goggles or headgear. A wide "V" is stitched across his chest, in red-on-white material like the bars of the Union Flag, the two stripes of the V meeting in the middle of his jacket.

Smaller photos are Victory Ace shaking hands with Churchill, a dramatic shot of him shooting beams from his hands, etc. Don't need many of these, one or two will do.

PAGE 11

PANEL 1/MOST OF PAGE:

We're continuing the photomontage from Page 8, moving forward in time. There's photos of Victory Ace in the 60s fighting a weird plasmatic black figure (the same figure he was fighting when Wace was injured), containing a garbage can in a forcefield outside Earls Court Exhibition Center (this is a reference to the 1974 IRA bombing), and flying out of an Underground entrance carrying a frightened looking middle-eastern man who's holding a large black sports bag (obviously a reference to the 2005 bombings). Can toss in smaller promotional images if needed/wanted.

All are positive, powerful images. His costume changes slightly through the eras, but still maintains the same elements - british army green with the red V across the chest. His costume is never spandex, always looking like real clothing.

PANEL 2:

Back to Wace and Darrow again.

DARROW

Yes, "Oh" about sums it up. Your office was collateral damage in a fight between Victory Ace and some absurd American creation, two people best described as walking nuclear WEAPONS, and you - YOU, Mr Wace, emerge without a SCRATCH.

PANEL 3:

Wace has finally woken up enough to be annoyed and ask the obvious question.

WACE

Look, who the hell ARE you?
What's going on here?

PANEL 4:

Darrow is standing up now, his face retreating into shadow as he tosses a newspaper onto Wace's lap.

DARROW

My name is Michael Darrow, Mr
Wace. Here, read this.

PAGE 12

PANEL 1:

We're looking over Wace's shoulder as he picks up the paper. It's a typical trashy English tabloid like the Sun. The headline reads "MIRACULOUS SURVIVOR" Underneath is a full color picture of a handsome blonde man with both his legs in casts, grinning cheerfully and giving a thumbs up for the camera. A smaller headline reads "FIRST EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW"

WACE

Waht's this?

PANEL 2:

Darrow is still standing, hands in his pockets, face still in shadow (though his features are visible). Wace is looking up, shocked and annoyed.

DARROW

That's tomorrow's paper.

WACE

WHAT? But I never... this isn't
ME!

PANEL 3:

Darrow suddenly leans forward back into the light towards Wace (and the reader), his palms on the bed, an intense look on his face. Large panel because this is going to be a lot of words.

DARROW

No, but it COULD be. You could be the idiot on that front page, grinning like a MONKEY and telling a massive audience of slack jawed tracksuit wearing INBREDS how brave you've been and how you thank GOD for this second chance. Give a few interviews, get asked what you think of the latest braindead pop AUTOMATON, dance like a bear on a string until they get sick of you. Then during the last GASP of your fifteen minutes you could go on some horrible reality show like "I'm a washed up manufactured

(MORE)

DARROW (cont'd)
 celebrity - Pay attention to me".
 Eventually the money and fame
 will run OUT and you'll be back
 at some worthless office,
 listening to your colleagues
 SNIGGER behind your back at "that
 guy did that thing on that show".

PAGE 13

PANEL 1:

Darrow is standing back up again, his face calm.

DARROW
 Or that dim young man could
 become the media's plaything, I
 could pay you twice what you're
 earning now, and YOU could have
 the chance to do something
 worthwhile with your so far
 UNREMARKABLE life. Well?

PANEL 2:

EXT. WOOLWICH ARSENAL, DAY.

We're back to the present day, a shot of Wace looking glum
 as always as he stops reminiscing.

DARROW (CAPTION)
 ...What do you say?

PANEL 3:

Wace is walking resolutely towards the source of the
 chaos. In the background the cop that stopped him earlier
 is running to catch up, one arm upraised as he calls out.

WACE
 I should have taken the paper
 deal.

COP
 Oy!

PANEL 4:

Wace has turned to face the policeman who has caught up
 with him.

COP
 You're actually going in
 there? You're MAD, mate.

PANEL 5:

Wace shrugs.

WACE
PROBABLY, yeah. I'll be fine.

PANEL 6:

The cop looks skeptical.

COP
WILL you now? In that case
sir, I'm coming WITH you.

PAGE 14

PANEL 1:

Wace is startled by this obvious madman, haf raising his hands in defense as the cop points an accusing finger at him.

WACE
What? Listen, I...

COP
You're the ONLY one around here
who seems to have any idea of
what's going on, and you're
confident you can just STROLL
right into a seriously weird
situation that no-one else can
get NEAR.

PANEL 2:

Close on the cop, who is looking authoritative.

COP
So yes, sir. I will be coming
with YOU.

PANEL 3:

Wace has resumed walking, a very sour look on his face, the cop following behind trying his best to look resolute and heroic.

WACE (CAPTION)
I REALLY should have taken the
paper deal.

PANEL 4:

Wide on Wace and the COP as they pick their way through the blocks of flats towards the center of the event. They're more cautious now, spooked. There's an eerie calm.

Bodies lie in the street. As we get away from the more crowded section with the police etc, the world gets more washed out, becoming almost greyscale. The sky is a bright grey now rather than blue. The only bright spots of color are the comatose victims and our protagonists.

PANEL 5:

Wace and COP. Wace is looking down off-panel at one of the victims, the COP is wide eyed and sweating, looking ill. He's got a lot further than anyone else due to Wace's proximity, but it's starting to affect him now.

PANEL 6:

Shot of one of the victims, slumped like a rag-doll against a wall, eyes open, a similar expression on their face to the cop in panel 5, but with their mouth open in horror, drool staining their shirt.

PAGE 15

PANEL 1:

Similar framing to panel 5 on page 12, except Wace has a grim expression and looking straight ahead, and the Cop's eyes are rolling back in their sockets as he begins to collapse. Wace, of course, hasn't noticed yet.

WACE
We'd better...

PANEL 2:

Wace has turned and is gasping in shock at the COP, who is in mid-collapse, eyes rolled right back in his head, frothing at the mouth.

WACE
Oh CHRIST!

PANEL 3:

Wace has caught the cop, but he's not strong enough to hold him up

WACE
Hold on mate... shit... um.. just breathe...

WACE (CAPTION)
You idiot, that's for pregnant women.

PANEL 4:

Wace is crouching beside the COP, inexpertly making sure he's not dying.

WACE (CAPTION)

Jesus.. I wonder what he's
SEEING?

PANEL 5:

And now we see exactly what the cop is seeing, a full body shot of him, his body distorting, his surrounds a nightmarish world of weird geometry like every bad acid trip anyone has ever had, his mouth open in a silent scream.

PAGE 16

PANEL 1:

Back to Wace, who's standing looking down at the cop.. specifically at his gun. He's wondering if he should take it, nervous about going that far but worried that he'll run into something he can't deal with.

PANEL 2:

CU on the cop's holster and anti-stab vest. We can't see his face. It's obviously Wace's POV.

PANEL 3:

Wace is walking away from the COP, wearing his vest, his pistol in both hands, held down low. Actually looking reasonably badass for once.

PANEL 4:

Wace pushes open half of a large iron gate, big enough to cover a street. He's reached the source of all this madness.

PANEL 5:

Wace has stepped into the compound and is shocked at what he sees, hand still resting on the gate.

PAGE 17

SPLASH PAGE

We're looking down at a large open space, a carpark surrounded by three story blocks of the old arsenal buildings, now turned into apartments.

In the center lies Parfett, a slim figure in a long beige coat and face-covering gas mask. The concrete around her has shattered in crazy patterns like a mandala, like she's been dropped from a great height.

Around her lie the inhabitants of the apartments lying at weird angles like they're an extension of the pattern of the cracked concrete. At the bottom of the frame stands Wace, who's now fully inside the gated community.

PAGE 18

PANEL 1

Wace is picking his way through the prone people, grimacing as he looks down, making sure he doesn't step on anyone's hand. Or face.

PANEL 2

Wace has reached Parfett, leaning down to pull her gasmask up over her face.

PANEL 3

CU on Parfett, her eyes wide, staring unblinking in an expression of horror. She's saying something but we can't hear what it is, her speech bubble is just tiny lines like text shrunk to nothing.

PANEL 4

Wace is standing up again, pointing the gun down at Parfett, an agonized look on his face.

PANEL 5

CU on the gun, Wace's hands trembling around it. Will he pull the trigger?

PANEL 6

A shot of the cop, still slumped and comatose, eyes open, against the steps

PAGE 19

PANEL 1

...no, Wace can't shoot. He's lowered the gun, his posture slumped. He's not a stone cold killer. Maybe there's another way.

PANEL 2

Wace is back on the periphery where all the police and emergency services are, looking a bit lost in all the chaos as he approaches an ambulance worker.

WACE

Uh... excuse me?

PANEL 3

Low angle on Wace as he makes his way back through the mandala of comatose people with an air-hypo in one hand, walking like a man with a mission. He's no longer wearing the police vest or carrying the gun.

PANEL 4:

Wace has pulled down Parfett's coat to expose her neck, injecting the hypo into her jugular.

PAGE 20

PANEL 1:

CU on Parfett, who's still got the same expression on her face, eyes still open - but her mumbled words slowly trail off into ellipses.

PANEL 2:

Same as Panel 1, but now Parfett's features have relaxed, her eyes closed as she slips into unconsciousness.

PANEL 3:

Large. Wace is carrying Parfett is a slightly awkward piggyback through the people that are now waking up from the madness that incapacitated them.

PANEL 4:

The cop has woken up and is patting himself down, looking startled. He's got no recollection of collapsing or where his gun or vest is.

COP

Whuh...

PANEL 5:

CU of the pistol lying on top of the vest on the footpath just beside the still-befuddled officer.

PAGE 21

PANEL 1:

Parfett is being loaded into an ambulance on a stretcher. Wace is in the background talking on his phone. He's holding it up to his ear, he can't face a video call at the moment.

PANEL 2:

Closer on Wace as if we've zoomed in on him from Panel 1.

WACE

It's sorted.

DARROW

(electric, from phone) Oh? Well done, Wace. And just as I was about to write you off.

PANEL 3:

INT DARROW'S OFFICE, DAY

CU on his phone, sitting on the edge of a polished dark wooden desk. He's got the same type of phone that Wace has.

WACE

(electric, from phone) I've sent you the last photos. Heading to the hospital now, will keep you informed.

DARROW

(from off panel) Yes yes, good job. Goodbye Wace.

PANEL 4:

Darrow is silhouetted against the large windows at the end of his office, some way behind his desk. The exterior is just a white bloom, too bright for any details. It's not one large plate of glass, the windows start at about knee height and are several rectangular sections, implying we're not in a modern office block but an older building.

PAGE 22

PANEL 1:

Profile of Darrow standing at his windows, looking out. His expression is unreadable.

VOICE FROM OFF PANEL
 (from off panel) It's happening
 AGAIN, isn't it?

PANEL 2:

Darrow half turns to face us/the person talking to him,
 his face once more half in shadow.

DARROW
 I think it may be, yes.

VOICE FROM OFF PANEL
 (from off panel) So...

PANEL 3:

It's Victory Ace! He's dressed in his contemporary uniform,
 a high-color racing-style jacket and trousers. Green, with
 the characteristic red and white V stripes across his
 chest. Arms folded, looking stern. He's almost glowing in
 the light, very little shadows on him at all.

VICTORY ACE
 ...what shall we do about it?

PAGE 23

PANEL 1:

Darrow has returned to pick up his phone.

DARROW
 I'm sure I'll think of something.

PANEL 2:

CU of Darrow, a tight smile on his face as he looks down
 at the screen.

PANEL 3:

Darrow's POV, holding his phone. On the screen is a CU of
 Parfett, unconscious in a stretcher, her brown hair
 tussled, but otherwise serene.

DARROW
 (off panel) Welcome back, Emily.

END