

Chapter 16: I Can't Get No Bas Relief

**16.1:**

AUTHOR

On a roof top high above the city a mad man cackles. Clad in a bespoke suit and a golden mask that covers his whole head.

GILDED RAGE

Quake with fear fools! For you face the greatest menace of your life - THE GILDED RAGE! I shall rob your barons! I'll tank your stocks! My portfolio screams for blood! So speaks -- THE GILDED RAGE!

*Sound of a big awkward landing.*

BIG STICK

Oh hey stop that. Whoa oops.

*BIG STICK falls to the ground.*

GILDED RAGE

Big Stick?

BIG STICK

Sorry I slipped. These pants are chaffing. Hold on.

AUTHOR

New York's premiere super hero and current governor, but shhh that's a secret, The Big Stick pulled himself up. But he was out of shape. His stomach bulged out of his costume.

GILDED RAGE

You look ... um

BIG STICK

What?

GILDED RAGE

Fat.

BIG STICK

What? Rude!

GILDED RAGE

I'm a super villain.

BIG STICK

Still. I might have had a few too many bon-bons but ... I've been behind a desk more, but ...

GILDED RAGE

I was hoping ... I heard all these stories and ... it's a bit disappointing.

BIG STICK

Hey I got my stick and I'll -- just a sec, sit on this bit of tile.

GILDED RAGE

I put a lot of effort into this.

BIG STICK

You what, bought a suit? Wow.

GILDED RAGE

And this mask helmet is solid gold!

BIG STICK

It is?

GILDED RAGE

Well ... no not solid. Gold leaf. Do you know how much a solid gold mask would cost?

BIG STICK

I was going to say ...

GILDED RAGE

I'm trying to represent the corrupt time we live in and --

BIG STICK

I get it. I do. A bit obvious.

GILDED RAGE

Obvious? Compared to whom? Murder Bob? Or Lady Crime? I mean come on. *That's* obvious.

BIG STICK

Lady Crime was quite the cunning trickstress.

GILDED RAGE

She shall be nothing compared to the thirsty fist of THE GILDED RAGE! As I curbstone you into broker!

BIG STICK

What?

GILDED RAGE

Broker. Like a stock broker but also broke, like broken.

BIG STICK

Hat on a hat.

GILDED RAGE

What?

BIG STICK

(wheezing as he gets up.)

Nothing. Let's do this. Whoo. Fisticuffs.

GILDED RAGE

No. I don't. This is just. What a disappointment. I'm just going to rob a bank or something. Bah!

BIG STICK

Hey come back! Or ... reform! Got him. I'm sure he's going to walk right to the jail. I should have my clerk get me more of those frenched fries. That would be good. But first a bit of a sit. Big Stick ... big sit. Oh, yeah. That's nice.

AUTHOR

While Big Stick takes a load off let's pick up where we left off last time; the valet of Duke Roch Von Vinderland has come to Eugene for help. His master is missing. He explained himself to Eugene and Anjus as well as Chicago detective Hawthorne P. Westwood

## **16.2:**

VALET

And he's been missing since!

HAWTHORNE

This sounds tied into our case. So I should get half of whatever you charge this fellow. You are lucky I -- Hawthone P. Westwood -- have put Eugene and Angus on the case. And with my blessing, I take my leave. I'm off to see one of these opium dens I've heard so much about!

EUGENE

What's there, a clue?

HAWTHORNE

Maybe. But more importantly ... opium. Delicious, delicious opium.

*HAWTHORNE exits.*

VALET

Please help me find the Duke. This is very unlike him. He's very sociable. One night missing, perhaps. But it's been four. He's missed meetings of the Explorer's Club, the Colonization Society, and the Waving Your Hand Dismissively Group. And he loves waving his hand dismissively.

ANJUS

Sounds like a basic kidnapping plot. Probably for ransom. Ransom is very in this season.

EUGENE

As are high waisted britches.

VALET

He's rented the top two floors of the Beaver Pelt Hotel. Without him I am nothing!

EUGENE

Hey you're great! You don't need to be defined by a man. You are your own person.

VALET

I am?

EUGENE

Sure.

VALET

Then why do I hate myself so much?

ANJUS

Let's stick to the case at hand. We should investigate this Beaver Pelt Hotel.

AUTHOR

And off they went. But Shaindel meanwhile was going nowhere. In fact a local Tammany Democrat and a Republican congressman were currently at her campaign headquarters. And they were not happy.

**16.3:**

DEMOCRAT

You think it's a joke? By Grover's Cleveland this is a Democratic district!

REPUBLICAN

Yeah and By Lincoln's ugly mug this is a Republican country!

DEMOCRAT

And here comes you ... the Jew.

REPUBLICAN

The woman!

DEMOCRAT

The independent!

*They both spit.*

SHAINDEL

What? It's a free country.

REPUBLICAN

No it ain't! Elections aren't free. They cost a lot. The ballot boxes --

DEMOCRAT

Money.

REPUBLICAN

The ballots -

DEMOCRAT

Money.

REPUBLICANS

The poll workers --

DEMOCRAT

Money!

REPUBLICAN

The buy offs --

DEMOCRAT

Money!

REPUBLICAN

The money!

DEMOCRAT

Money! And you're making a mockery of it! We have two parties! And that's it! Why? Cause if you have too many parties you get pooped. Ever try to attend three parties in a day? You'd dance your feet raw and burst your stomach on cake and punch! Two parties you can do. You might be sore, but you can party hardy, twice.

REPUBLICAN

But that's it! Besides you're not even on the ballot.

SHAINDEL

I filled out those papers I found on the floor.

DEMOCRAT

Oh those are just the forms to let you fill out the form to get the form. But the actual factual form that gets you on the ballot? That form is kept in the desk of Old Man Comptroller and he don't open it for third party smarties. So we beat you! Yay!

REPUBLICAN

Yay! Let's celebrate by holding hands and jumping up and down.

DEMOCRAT & REPUBLICAN

Yay! Yay! Yay!

*DORA enters.*

DORA

Nice jumping, but not as nice as this completed ballot form, stamped and notarized putting Miss Blum on the ballot.

DEMOCRAT

What!

REPUBLICAN

How dare you! And who dare you?

DORA

I am Dora Lopez and I get things done. And I'm getting this woman elected.

AUTHOR

Dora seemed to strike a noble pose. She always had the air of an heir to royalty. She was lithe with strong cheekbones and a mess of hair perfectly pinned and styled. Every move she made, whether it was a finger wag or the purchase of a house, was precise and deliberate.

DEMOCRAT

I don't care who you are! Because we pick the election day! And we can put it anytime in the next eight weeks! And we don't have to tell you! Or anyone!

REPUBLICAN

Yeah a secret public election to preserve true democracy! So good luck running, cause you'll keep running, cause you'll never know when and where the finish line will be!

DEMOCRAT

That's politics, kid!

REPUBLICAN

Ka-boom!

*They leave.*

DORA

They're scared. That's good. I can use scared.

SHAINDEL

Um, thanks for getting me on the ballot, that's a real mitzvah, but who are you and why are you helping me?

DORA

As I said Miss Blum -

SHAINDEL

Call me Shaindel.

DORA

And call me Dora. I come from a wealthy Sephardic family with roots dating back to to the 1500's in this continent. Argentine silver, piracy. The usual. We made a nice life, but I'm sick of Jews not getting our due. Even dumb Ashkenazi's like you, no offense but you know that the Ashki's are the trash Jews.

SHAINDEL

What about Caucus mountain Jews?

DORA

True. They are ... but. Let's not quibble. I'm here, I'm kosher, and ready to go ... sher.

SHAINDEL

So what are you some kind of fairy godmother?

DORA

Your campaign manager. If you'll have me.

SHAINDEL

Do I have a choice?

DORA

Can you eat rice during passover?

SHAINDEL

No.

DORA

Yes, you can.

SHAINDEL

No. You can't.

DORA

Ah sweet Ashkenazi, you have so much to learn. *Bavajadas de benadam*. But first let's get you some campaign ribbons.

AUTHOR

And as Shaindel found an ally in her election battle, At the Beaverpelt Hotel Eugene and Anjus found something strange at the door to the Duke's suite of rooms.

**16.4:**

EUGENE

It's stuck.

ANJUS

Have you been inside?

VALET

Without the Duke? That'd break protocol. I wait outside his rooms and he calls for me. And then we follow the traditional 32-step master-servant Duchy procedure. But he hasn't called for me.



*There's a shout from inside.*

ANJUS

Someone is in there!

VALET

We can't just burst in!

EUGENE

We're bursting in!

AUTHOR

And with that Eugene flung the doors open and found --

ANJUS

Oh my Duke!

AUTHOR

We'll get back to that in a second. Build the tension. I can be a tease, just ask Ellie at the Englewood Library. But this is not about her. Rather let us return to the sewer lair of Piecemeal. He has captured an Art Critic.

**16.5:**

ART CRITIC

I give this kidnapping three stars! Now let me go. I have no money! You want my children? Take them! They are the worst!

PIECEMEAL

Hush! I've BROUGHT you here for one SIMPLE reason.

ART CRITIC

To twist me with your probing dark perversions!

PIECEMEAL

No.

ART CRITIC

Oh ...

PIECEMEAL

Oh DID you want --

ART CRITIC

... maybe.

PIECEMEAL

I want you to ... CRITIQUE these sketches!

ART CRITIC

Can't you just cut off my fingers or something?

PIECEMEAL

Please. They think I'm a monster because of the whole --

ART CRITIC

Reanimated corpse. Classic --

PIECEMEAL

Don't say Frankenstein!

ART CRITIC

I was going to say Aristeas of Proconnesus. Frankenstein is but a rehashed work.

PIECEMEAL

I'm a copy of a copy?

ART CRITIC

A copy or a simulacra. Depends on the details.

PIECEMEAL

I was CREATED by mad scientists who were ... unoriginal in their thinking and I LIVED a life that ... but I am HERE to make a mark! I'll do something CRAZY! Like, um, like STEAL from the RICH and give to the poor!

ART CRITIC

Robin Hood.

PIECEMEAL

I'll make a deal with the devil!

ART CRITIC

Faust.

PIECEMEAL

Fine! Something really just out there! I'll use a rattlesnake as a lasso, ride a cougar, and eat dynamite.

ART CRITIC

Pecos Bill. Are we going to do this all day?

PIECEMEAL

Come on! NO! No! I'll TEAR this city apart!

ART CRITIC

There's nothing wrong with a copy. Copies have meanings unto themselves. The veritable reproduction of a classical masterwork creates an intrinsic value to itself via the reflected symbology of the facsimile.

PIECEMEAL

I HAVE value?

ART CRITIC

It's not a one to one ratio or simple construct of immediate tropes of genre assimilation.

PIECEMEAL

Great! I have VALUE! I HAVE worth!

ART CRITIC

Indeed!

PIECEMEAL

And MY sketches ... thoughts?

ART CRITIC

Oh no these are hackneyed garbage, five hundred negative stars.

PIECEMEAL

NO! I AM A SINGULAR TALENT! NOTHING LIKE ME HAS EVER BEEN SEEN!

ART CRITIC

I'm bored. This is dumb and you're dumb. May I go now?

PIECEMEAL

You can. Go. TO HELL!

AUTHOR

And with that the patchwork monster tossed the critic into the fast flowing sewer channel that ran through his lair. The critic judged the water both polluted and not worth one's time and gave it two stars before being swept out to parts unknown.

PIECEMEAL

I AM NO COPY! COPIES ARE DUMB! I AM PIECEMEAL THE MOST ORIGINAL THING EVER! So I say: "In high vengeance there is noble scorn!" That's good. I need to write that down. I am so SMART!

AUTHOR

Too bad that's a George Eliot quote. But back to the suite of rooms at the Beaver Pelt Hotel. The door swung open to reveal --

**16.6:**

ANJUS

The Duke?

DUKE

What! Go away!

VALET

Your grace! But why are you holed up here alone?

DUKE

What is it evening already? Have I missed the explorer's club?

VALET

That was two days past!

DUKE

Two days? Oh I have been ...

EUGENE

Are you all right?

DUKE

I was gifted this board game. It is so complex --

VALET

I would play with you, sir.

DUKE

No! It's a solo adventure and it's best to block out any interaction. You must be constantly focused on it. And I am close. You all should leave. I need to finish this.

VALET

But your appointments --

DUKE

Please I have to get the 31 dice to align and then get the right card combination and bring all my red pieces to the intra zone before the yellow time tiles all flip or it inverses the gammon

house. And these cards will not dis-shuffle themselves. A solid few months of complete isolation and I --

VALET

But the Fair! You have to present the *Sacre Blu!*

EUGENE

*Sacre Blu?*

DUKE

*Sacre Blu!* The holy pigment of Wallobavonia. I have it here in this vial. Our greatest treasure.

EUGENE

It's very blue.

DUKE

It's no mere azure or lapis. This was created by the Blind nuns of the order of St. Catherine De' Vigri. It is our silver bullet in the Color War.

ANJUS

Please don't ask about--

EUGENE

Color War? What's that?

ANJUS

Ugh.

DUKE

Oh it's quite the tale --

ANJUS

I'll investigate this board game while you tell what is I am sure a very interesting story --

DUKE

No! The game is set up just --

*Sound of pieces getting toppled*

ANJUS

Oops. Sorry.

DUKE

So much ... game play. Ruined. Alas. Anyway ... the color war! It all began with Mauve. Mauve was the first synthetic dye that created a color panic across Europe. No country or principality wanted to fall behind the color gap. First Prussian Blue was brought to the forefront and mass produced on canvases across their Empire. But the Serbs paid off an Eastern mystic to re-create Egyptian Yellow via alchemical magic. But the Lombards struck next with Transubstantiation Red, a deep crimson said to be mixed with the Blood of Christ from a reliquary in St Peter's. They painted three churches with it and it was said to inspire the peasants to double their tithes. But Venice invited six foreign diplomats to the Doge's Palace where they revealed - the white Canvas of St Marks. A ten by ten foot canvas painted with a white so vivid that it drove them all mad and the diplomats drowned themselves in the Grand Canal. From there colors were popping up across Europe. The Green Revolt of Munster; the Russian Black fleet.

EUGENE

That's terrible.

DUKE

Oh it got worse. In the Germanic states General Linseed Crayola started the Crayonic Wars. It was during this time we developed our Sacre Blu. Purly for defensive purposes. It had never been put on a canvas, but preliminary tests on paper scraps caused all the rats of Morevia to spontaneously turn themselves inside out. On a large mural --- who knows. Perhaps an extinction level event. And while we created this, Paris was working on the Vermillion bomb. Belligerent words increased. the Art Show of 1877 resulted in riots and death as the Red Right Handers clashed with the Yellow Kids. The Pope tried to step in to broker peace, but he was dipped into a vat of titanium white and went into self imposed isolation.

EUGENE

So what happened? Everyone died? Including you? Are you a ghost?

DUKE

Luckily no. I'd make a terrible ghost. It all came to a head in Ghent. France came with the vermilion bomb. We brought the Sacre Blu. The Russians showed up with Yellow Peril; The Unified Italians with Orange You Glad We Didn't Use This Orange; The mad Spanish King even sent Indigo-go the Pigment that caused the Dancing Plague --

EUGENE

We get it, there were a lot of colors! What happened!

DUKE

It was a dark stormy day in Ghent each of the Color Armies advanced, their pigments and dyes at the ready when all of sudden the skies cleared and in the sky was --

EUGENE

A bird!

DUKE

No.

EUGENE

Oh too bad. I like birds.

DUKE

It was a rainbow. And the armies saw the rainbow. The great unity of colors and they fell to their knees and wept. And they knew colors should be used for art and commerce, not war. And so they capped their markers, boxed their craypas, and decided to fight with colors no more. And instead they invested in gun powder and bombs. So it all worked out. Especially because I own several steel plants and we make all sorts of guns. And so, I brought our great pigment the *Sacre Blu* to the Fair to show off how close Europe came to colorful destruction. And because of colors like this, Europe will never fall into a world war. Or a world war 2.

ANJUS

Great. Eugene, look at this. The game. The company that makes it: Latrones Games.

EUGENE

Latrones. Yeah.

ANJUS

Strange right.

EUGENE

Strange. Yeah.

ANJUS

You have no idea what it means.

EUGENE

No...

ANJUS

Latrones was one of Onesimus Sweet's sub-companies listed in their paperwork. What would a chocolate company want with board games?

VALET

I don't know but you can leave now, the Duke must get ready for his meetings.

ANJUS

Oh. Sure ... Eugene, we should pay this Flavius Flavors a visit.

EUGENE

Exactly.

VALET

You do that ... leave.

ANJUS

All the pieces are leading us there.

VALET

I'm pushing you toward the door!

EUGENE

Because really it's all --

VALET

Good day!

*Slams the door.*

ANJUS

Wait! Our payment!

EUGENE

Oh well, maybe the true payment was the lessons we learned.

ANJUS

No, the real payment is our payment!

AUTHOR

Later the Valet did pay them, but the fee was not discussed up front and the Duke paid in his local currency, Dukie Dollars which were not accepted or exchangeable in any American banks.



But banks are strange places much like the new New York offices of Onesimus Sweets Corporation. The offices were simple and unadorned, and in one of these plain offices was Cato Beech, the personal assistant to Flavius Flavors.

**16.7:**

CATO

Send the gift baskets to the State Senators. And double the bon-bon orders.

AIDE

Right. Sure.

CATO

And step up processing at the molasses factory.

AIDE

For the Rhombus of Prhogress?

CATO

(Sighs.)

Yes ... that fool architect and his lack of spelling. But it's too late now. There are flyers. You can't contradict a flier. That's what lost Winfield Scott the presidency.

AIDE

If you say so.

CATO

I do, but let us not dwell on old Fuss and Feathers. Rather see that this is --

*EUGENE and ANJUS burst in.*

EUGENE

We got your number Flavors! And it's 31! 31 Flavors ... of crime! Flavor 1 - the chocolates! Flavor 2 - the board games. Flavor 3 - those fries. Flavor 4 -

CATO

Can I help you?

AIDE

Want me to rough them up, Cato? I used to be a goon.

CATO

No, I can handle this. Hello, there I'm Cato Beech, how may I assist you?

AIDE

Well if I can't rough them up then I'm going to roust some hobos!

*AIDE storms off.*

CATO

Don't mind him.

EUGENE

Mind? Oh I don't *mind* him! I'm Eugene Neddly and I've lost my "mind."

ANJUS

I'm Anjus Troop. Botanist, adventurer and investigator. We'd like to talk to your boss, Flavius Flavors.

CATO

My boss? Oh yes. He's not here.

EUGENE

Don't lie to us, fella, I know he's around here. I can smell the sweet stink of a snack felon! Where is he under the desk like some sort of desk bat? I had one of those I would sit at the desk and it would fly up and bite my face! A lot!

CATO

How did you get in here?

ANJUS

Eugene has that sort of dumb confidence that causes people to just assume he belongs there.

EUGENE

I have seen all sorts of things I shouldn't have.

CATO

This is but a mere candy consortium. We want nothing more than to bring sweet treats to the masses. A smile and a penny earned. I do not know what felonius deed you think we are capable of but I can assuage your fears. Have some peanut brittle.

EUGENE

Yeah right! I'm going to pop this top and a bunch of snakes will jump out! I've seen the gag.

CATO

It's just brittle. Well not *just*, there's a hint of ginger. Spice that makes everything nice.

ANJUS

We know Onesimus Sweets is up to dark deeds!

CATO

Dark, huh?

ANJUS

I didn't mean ... because ... you're; I meant like black. Cause black is bad.

CATO

Oh ... black is bad, I see.

ANJUS

No! I mean in the literary ... black magic; white magic. And the whole ... not. Black is ... I was an abolitionist. I am a big. It was after the war, but I wrote ... Eugene?

EUGENE

We are both strong progressives and we ... we want to help. Help you! You probably don't even know about the whole ... crime part.

ANJUS

Right! You're just a loyal employee and don't realize your boss is bad. Join us and bring him down! You are a good man and caught up in bad things.

CATO

I was born three days before the Emancipation Proclamation. Freed but then turned into a cruel and vicious post war world. I was young, angry. Then I came to find a place here. It's a hard burden.

EUGENE

I'm sure. I know what that's like, one time I had to sit in a tree for a whole afternoon trying to catch sight of a nuthatch.

CATO

Indeed. Do you follow the notions of Booker T. Washington or the more radical notions of this new upstart Du Bois. I assume you

both, as good progressives, read and support *The Colored American Magazine*? What did you think of the feature on "Pap" Singleton?

EUGENE

Oh. Well I've heard of ... I think there was a good article in *Vanity Fair* about it. I didn't read it, but I saw it.

ANJUS

I've been meaning to pick it up. We've been busy.

EUGENE

With our cases and there's so much to read.

ANJUS

So much. Reading ... and ... I mean, I've had that Fredrick Douglass book on my nightstand for ... time is just ...

CATO

Oh I know. *Tempus fugit*. I agree. You both are great, doing great work. I'm inspired by you both. Truly.

EUGENE

Thanks, it's nice to be given the recognition we deserve.

CATO

Of course.

EUGENE

Oh! The other week I talked to -- what's his name -- Reggie at the Republican club -- the bartender. He's great! So funny. He's also a ... Um. Nice guy. Do you know him? I always talk with him.

CATO

Great. You know, it's so hard for me to imagine Mr. Flavors is up to something, but ... you both have shown me a lot with your gumption and drive. And I think I saw that play they wrote about you --

ANJUS

Most of that was -- playwrights take a lot of creative license.

CATO

Of course. Did you see Howardton's interpretation of Ovid? *Res est solliciti plena timoris amor*. Not in scene seven! Right?

EUGENE

So this chocolates in the bowl here, are they ... can I have some?

CATO

Fill your pockets, friend.

ANJUS

Eugene!

EUGENE

It's for the case. It's evidence.

ANJUS

You're eating it.

EUGENE

For the case! Just a couple more.

CATO

As I was saying. You've moved me to aid you. But I cannot do it openly. What if I stayed at my post but, via the mostly wiley chicanery I acted as Benedict Arnold to Flavor's Washington?

EUGENE

Yes, a colonial costume party! I'll be Betsy Ross, I already have the perfect outfit.

CATO

I meant it metaphorically. I, in moments of respite, could find you in your abodes and give you what tidbits of intel I acquire. You both run the investigation in parallel, find the bitter root that grows the tree of Onesimus.

ANJUS

That would be most helpful. And I'm good at finding roots.

CATO

Yet. Oh. But Mr. Flavors has given me so much. I'm torn. I'm betwixt scylla and charybdis. Please I must think this over. Wrestle my conscience - like Jacob and the Angel, and hope I become Israel in the end.

EUGENE

Whenever I wrestle I become bruised in my end.

CATO

I will find you, let you know my decision.

ANJUS

We hope you make the right choice.

CATO

*Exitus acta probat.*

EUGENE

I always do exit to the left. Right?

AUTHOR

And with that they left Cato Beech to make his choice. Would he help them take down Flavius Flavours? I know, but I'm not going to just say it, that would be terrible storytelling. Instead back at the office they find disgraced detective Hawthorne P. Westwood sprawled out on Anjus' desk, completely nude.

**16.8:**

ANJUS

By ternel! Have you no decency!

HAWTHORNE

In this life decency is dead. You know New York opium just doesn't have the kick of the Frisco stuff. What? I do my best thinking in the nude.

ANJUS

I have no interest in seeing your ... parts.

HAWTHORNE

We all have parts to play in this game. And my parts always point true north.

ANJUS

What is he doing?

EUGENE

Somehow he's getting it to point at my yarn wall.

HAWTHORNE

Picked that up from a traveling medicine show in Beloit. So. What did you learn?

ANJUS

At least put on something.

HAWTHORNE

Fine! I'll dress while you spill it.

AUTHOR

And so they filled Hawthorne in on Cato. And Hawthorne did put on clothes ... socks. Only socks.

HAWTHORNE

Yes! We are getting close!

ANJUS

No! We're not! We need to pursue other cases. We're going broke helping you. And you've done nothing!

HAWTHORNE

Not true! Just before you arrived I did a whole pile of cocaine. I am rarin to go!

ANJUS

I'm setting up interviews with potential clients. You can tell the Prune Consortium to get in line.

HAWTHORNE

You don't tell prune dealers anything! You talk that way to a pruner and you'll be missing your thumbs. Fine! I'll do the work! Lazy ingrates!

ANJUS

Um, your clothes.

HAWTHORNE

I'm a master of disguise, it's like I'm already gone.

EUGENE

Where did he go?

ANJUS

He's right there; he didn't even move yet.

EUGENE

Oh right, all that sugar, I think it's affecting my eyes.

HAWTHORNE

*Vaarwel!!*

*HAWTHORNE exits.*

EUGENE

Just something about that guy. Makes you love him.

ANJUS

Let me check the mail and see if we have any leads on clients.

EUGENE

Great, I can't wait for some new bugging!

AUTHOR

Remember that's his term for helping. So Anjus sorted and arranged some meetings. Elsewhere in the crime side of town Gilded Rage was still upset.

**16.9:**

GILDED RAGE

The audacity of that Big Stick. Big jerk is more like it. Jerking this way and that. I put so much work into this. The Gilded Rage demands satisfaction.

PIECEMEAL

Then PERHAPS I can help.

GILDED RAGE

Who speaks?

PIECEMEAL

Tis I! Piecemeal, the PATCHWORK man. Yes I AM a reanimated corpse, the shuffling ghoul, DON'T say the Franken-word. Unique. ORIGINAL. And I have an original plan. We team up! Two villains! Teaming UP! Never before in HISTORY has it happened.

GILDED RAGE

What? It happens all the time. It's a trope of the penny dreadfuls. Two rouges find each other, they join forces. They don't trust one another, but then they unite. The hero falls, but then one of the villains betrays the other, because they want the credit. Blah, blah, the hero ends up besting them both. It's the domain of desperate writers across history. There's even a play around this corner where the two dark characters of our age Dracula and Susan B. Anthony team up to suck men of their rights by giving vampires the vote!

PIECEMEAL

You're SAYING it's been DONE?

GILDED RAGE



To death!

PIECEMEAL

NO! YOU TO DEATH! I AM UNIQUE!

AUTHOR

And so in a blind fury Piecemeal pulled out a knife and stabbed the Gilded Rage in the heart. Fatally wounding him.

PIECEMEAL

HOW do you LIKE that!

AUTHOR

But just before the Gilded Rage drew his final breath he wheezed:

GILDED RAGE

It's been done ...

PIECEMEAL

Graaaaaah! I'll show THEM! I just need to complete my never BEFORE BEEN DONE masterwork! I have the CANVAS! Next is the PAINT!

AUTHOR

And with that Piecemeal ran off into the night.

END OF CHAPTER 16