

Witchblade #14.2

For Marc Silvestri

For Ryan Cady, Matt Hawkins, Phil Smith, and Giuseppe Cafaro

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ISSUE #14
“Ghost of Tom Joad”

PAGE ONE

(Nine Panels)

A montage of New York City daily life, beneath a mural of the Virgin Mary.

Please note: This will have an opening monologue once I have written the other issues.

1.1

School kids,

1.2

taxis in traffic,

1.3

a hot dog stand,

1.4

feeding the pigeons,

1.5

a drug deal,

1.6

drunk bar crawlers,

1.7

a homeless man sleeping.

1.8

A shadowy figure descends on the sleeping homeless man.

1.9

A black panel.

PAGE TWO

(One Panel)

Splash page.

The mural of the Virgin Mary has been defaced – it now resembles with the horrible face on the cover of Issue #14.

The homeless man beneath it has been murdered.

PAGE THREE

(Four Panels)

3.1

LISA, a girl of about **fifteen**, is watching the POLICE who have come to investigate the scene. DO NOT CROSS tape, cop cars, etc. The BODY is being removed in a BODY BAG.

LISA'S LETTERING should look like it's from a podcast–radio signal effects.

1 LISA CAPTION: **So, like, y'all can't trust cops.**

2 LISA CAPTION: I don't care what all those movies **an' books an' TV shows** say.

3.2

Other teenagers have their phones out, recording. LISA does not.

3 LISA CAPTION: I had to make an anonymous call to 911 to tell **'em** this guy had been **murdered**.

4 LISA CAPTION: **Cops** really grill the **poor S.O.B.** who discovers the body—lot of times, the person who calls it in is **the killer**, tryin' to look innocent.

3.3

SARA arrives on the scene. LISA notices her.

5 LISA CAPTION: But the cops don't care about **this one**.

6 LISA CAPTION: Just a bum. Crazy. Drug addict. **Whatever**.

3.4

The other cops depart. SARA is lingering, though.

7 LISA CAPTION: ***Not this cop***, though.

PAGE FOUR

(Four Panels)

4.1

LISA watches (in the background) as SARA investigates (in the foreground). While Michael is recovering elsewhere, Sara's partner is FONTAINE, the asshole from Issue #2.

1 FONTAINE: Mural underneath the graffiti was ***the Virgin of Guadalupe***.

2 SARA: Paint's still wet.

4.2

SARA gets close to the mural and sniffs heavily. FONTAINE leers.

3 SARA: Cheap spray paint. Common. Nothing professional grade we could track to a contractor or construction company.

4 FONTAINE: You got that off a sniff?

5 FONTAINE: What, you ***pregnant?*** Or just used to ***huff glue***—?

4.3

FONTAINE has turned away, scrolling on his phone, looking bored. SARA is still focused, squatting down, so her body blocks LISA'S VIEW.

6 LISA CAPTION: This cop isn't like the others.

4.4

SARA is close to the wall. Her body has blocked anyone else's view. She is holding up her gauntleted hand—WITCHBLADE tendrils are caressing the mural. The tips of each of the Witchblade tendrils are glowing red.

7 LISA CAPTION: I don't know if that's ***a good thing***.

PAGE FIVE

(Four Panels)

5.1

SARA is on the RADIO of her car with dispatch.

1 SARA: Any other homicides in a 12-block radius?

2 SFX: (lightning bolts from radio)

3 LISA CAPTION: You **gotta** be **smart** around here.

5.2

SARA is going door-to-door in the apartment building. (No dialogue—just a classic “detective holding up their badge, person peeking through a barely-open door.”) FONTAINE is yelling at the person, while SARA is calm. LISA is peeking around the end of the hallway.

4 LISA CAPTION: Cop isn’t going to pay your rent after you’re injured on the job, but the dealer on the fourth floor might, since you go to church with his mama.

5.3

SARA is interviewing someone in their apartment—a different person than in 5.2. LISA is eavesdropping on the fire escape. There is a blown-glass colorful BONG on the shelf, like an art piece, in the background (which we should highlight). FONTAINE is reaching for it.

5 LISA CAPTION: Cop asks to come into your apartment on an “**unrelated matter**,” doesn’t like your answers, an’ suddenly you’re busted for somethin’ you ain’t touched since college.

5.4

SARA is reviewing the security footage in the security guard’s tiny room. FONTAINE is taking a smoke break. LISA, boldest yet, is peering around the door.

6 LISA CAPTION: **Never** talk to the **cops** without a lawyer.

7 LISA CAPTION: My granddad **loves** Ancient Rome, an’ he always says, “**Who watches the watchmen?**”

PAGE SIX

(Six Panels)

6.1

SARA has returned to the crime scene. She talks aloud to FONTAINE.

1 SARA: Could you act like you were worth the metal to make your badge for five @#\$%#@ minutes, Fontaine?

2 FONTAINE: The minute Michael Yee is **cleared from desk duty**, you can get back to bossing him around.

3 FONTAINE: But as long as I’m your partner, you don’t tell me SHIT.

6.2

SARA frowns at the ghoulish mural, pulling on a rubber glove. We can see the WITCHBLADE BRACELET on her wrist–black metal, red jewel.

4 SARA: Slitting a man's throat and making a break for it...that's a thirty-second job.

5 SARA: But why stick around to paint a mural over a dead man?

6 SARA: That would take **hours**, and no one saw a thing.

6.3

SARA touches the MURAL. We can see the WITCHBLADE BRACELET on her wrist. The jewel is starting to glow.

7 SARA: Something's wrong here... The edges don't line up–there should be old paint under the new.

8 SARA: But there *isn't*. The old paint is completely gone.

9 SARA: The killer didn't paint over the mural...

6.4

Small panel.

SARA stares at the red paint on her RUBBER GLOVE hand. The JEWEL is glowing brightly.

10 SARA (small font): The mural...**rearranged itself.**

11 SARA (small font): What the @#\$.%

6.5

FONTAINE suddenly SEIZES LISA, dragging her from her hiding place behind a dumpster. LISA'S books from her backpack all go sprawling in the dirt–they're all about the OCCULT. SARA shouts at FONTAINE.

12 FONTAINE: You've been sneaking around here since dawn.

13 LISA: I didn't see anythin'!

14 FONTAINE: Naw, but you're supposed to be in school, aren't you?

15 SARA: **FONTAINE!**

PAGE SEVEN

(Five Panels)

7.1

Establishing shot of the police station.

1 LOCATOR CAPTION: The Precinct.

2 SARA (VO): Let her go, Fontaine—!

3 FONTAINE (VO): Whose side are you on, Pezzini? This is *truancy*, and—hey, **what do we have here?**

7.2

In the interrogation room, FONTAINE is questioning LISA. Her open backpack has spilled the occult books all over the table.

4 FONTAINE: Plain sight, lawful access, immediately incriminating.

5 LISA: My backpack wasn't unzipped!

6 FONTAINE: Can you prove that?

7 SARA: **FONTAINE.**

7.3

LISA glares at us.

8 LISA CAPTION: Don't talk to the cops without a lawyer.

9 LISA CAPTION: But if my grandparents find out I've been picked up again...

10 FONTAINE (VO): "**Maralisa Búzio.**"

11 LISA (VO): Just **Lisa.**

7.4

FONTAINE sneers. LISA has crossed her arms over her chest, looking sullen and insolent.

12 FONTAINE: **Still a minor** and already got a rap sheet!

13 FONTAINE: Shoplifting—

14 LISA: We were hungry.

15 FONTAINE: —fighting at school—

16 LISA: They jumped my cousin.

17 FONTAINE: —and **spitting on a pastor.**

7.5

FONTAINE has laid out her books, and holds up her open notebook, in which she's drawn doodles of witch burnings and UFO abductions. Nothing gory, but the normal morbid teenage interest in something alarming and unusual.

18 FONTAINE: Some nasty reading for a **teenage** girl.

19 FONTAINE: Devils, demons, human sacrifice, witch burnings... And UFOS, Bigfoot, and every conspiracy theory since JFK.

PAGE EIGHT

(Six Panels)

8.1

SARA frowns, watching LISA. SARA has covered the Witchblade bracelet with her hand, but it's glowing faintly under her fingers (no more than an Apple Watch).

1 LISA: I like mythology.

2 LISA: Old and new.

8.2

FONTAINE opens a folder with LISA'S fingerprints in it.

3 FONTAINE: Girl with an interest in ***art and the occult***, just so happens to be at the scene of a murder where the killer signed their work in ***a giant desecration of a holy icon...***

4 FONTAINE: We've got your fingerprints on file, Lisa.

5 FONTAINE: ***And we've got your fingerprints in the spray paint above our murder vic.***

8.3

LISA stares back at him, arms crossed, not intimidated.

6 LISA: No, you don't.

8.4

SARA watches LISA.

7 LISA CAPTION: Another thing – ***the cops are allowed to lie to you.***

8 LISA CAPTION: They can say they got your hair, DNA, video footage, whatever.

9 LISA CAPTION: They're **tryin'** to scare you into **thinkin'** a jury will give you the **needle**, so you confess to **somethin'** smaller, whether you did it or **not**.

8.5

LISA begins to pack up her books into her backpack.

10 LISA CAPTION: My grandma **loves** Cold War spy thrillers, **an'** always says, "**Show me a man, and I'll show you his crime.**"

11 LISA: Go ahead **an'** crawl on down to the DA's office **an'** try to get a warrant on evidence that doesn't exist.

12 LISA: **I'll wait.**

8.6

FONTAINE opens the door to LISA.

13 FONTAINE: I'm disappointed in you, Lisa.

14 LISA: **@#\$% my %\$#@.**

PAGE NINE

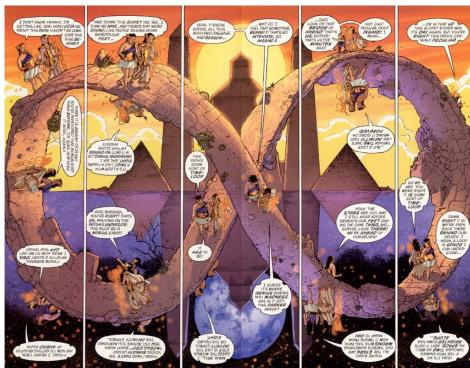
(Five Panels)

This is a giant chaotic **two page scene** with Sara and Lisa occasionally depicted as they talk.

They're walking and talking over ZINE SPREADS – photocopied, defaced, black and white pop culture images. I want to emphasize Lisa's "outsider thinking" and love of conspiracy theories.

On the first page, it's more normal/punk poster. On the second page, it's a lot darker and more violent (and images can be inverted – upside down – and inverted color-wise, if you like.)





The other SUPER IMPORTANT thing is that this conversation is going to establish the underlying message that the serial killer shares. That people need a home, a protector. We can even reveal that Lisa might've been following the killer on TikTok, hearing their sermons without even knowing what they are. I know this is a weird spread but it's vital.

9.1

On the street, SARA follows LISA casually. Not even trying to be sneaky. LISA has a scribbly stormcloud of anger above her head.

1 LISA: I don't know why you're **followin'** me.
 2 LISA: I ain't got @#\$% to say to you.

3 SARA: I'm sorry that happened.

4 LISA: Yeah, I bet you are. **Really** tried to protect me in there, didn't you?

9.2

5 SARA: I have a role to play.
 6 SARA: Gotta pretend to be a bad apple right now.

7 LISA: You know the **sayin'** about **a few bad apples**, don't you?
8 LISA (red circle): "A few bad apples **spoil the bunch.**"

9.3

9 SARA: Can I ask you a question?

10 LISA: Tch.

11 SARA: Why'd you call in the body?

12 LISA: What kind of question is that?

9.4

13 SARA: Half a hundred people walked by his body. You were the only one to call it.

14 LISA: They...they might not've realized he was dead.

15 SARA: But why **you?**

16 LISA: I don't know! **Who else if not me?!**

9.5

17 SARA: Why do you care?

18 LISA: **Why do YOU care?** Your POS partner sure as @#\$% doesn't! Neither did any of the EMTs! Not one damn reporter on the scene!

PAGE TEN

(Five Panels)

On THIS page, the background conspiracy theory wallpaper is a lot darker and more violent (and images can be inverted – upside down – and inverted color-wise, if you like.)

10.1

1 SARA: Because the city doesn't care about the unhoused.

2 LISA: Tch! Don't say "**unhoused**"! That shit's **a psyop**.

3 SARA: ...What?

4 LISA: "Shifting language to remove compassion is a psyop by the wealthy to turn us against the vulnerable instead of focusing on class inequality."

10.2

5 SARA (VO): ...Care to elaborate, kid?

6 LISA (VO): "**Unhoused.**" Like his problem was he can't afford a house! When the problem is he didn't have **a home!**

7 LISA (VO): Didn't have friends or family or the support system that "**home,**" like—**represents!** Having people to count on, help, medicine, a safe place to sleep!

10.3

The WITCHBLADE is glowing. SARA, distracted, seizes her wrist. She's being alerted to something.

8 LISA (VO): "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free—"

9 LISA (VO, red circle): **Every living thing needs a home.**

10 LISA (VO): A place to be **safe.** **Somethin'** to **protect them.**

10.4

SARA, distracted, begins peering around the corner ahead of them. LISA, lecturing her, follows her blindly.

11 SARA: People who have experienced home—er—**unhousedness** prefer the term.

12 LISA: Tch!

13 LISA: By following that PC bullshit **an'** distancing yourself from the fact that they're human beings just like you, you're playing right into their hands!

10.5

SARA is reaching for her BADGE as she peers around another corner.

14 SARA: Who is "they"?

15 LISA: Rich people! Powerful people! People who think other people **ain't** people, but things.

16 LISA: People who kill homeless people '**cause** they know the cops won't care—

(Three Panels)

11.1

SARA and LISA have come upon a BODY just inside the door of a DERELICT HOUSE. (They are sort of sprawled half-in, half-out, like they were running away.)

The person had died of an OVERDOSE, but their veins have been torn open. It looks like something has exploded its way out of every vein.



1 LISA (large font): **JESUS.**

2 SARA: Go for help!

3 LISA: You don't gotta tell me twice—

11.2

With LISA out of the way, SARA deploys the Witchblade. It begins to coil over her body.

4 SARA: Scent like...vinegar...?

11.3

SARA draws her gun as the Witchblade engulfs her body. She is creeping up the stairs inside the house.

4 SARA: What the @#\$%...

PAGE TWELVE - PAGE THIRTEEN

(Seven Panels over Two Pages)

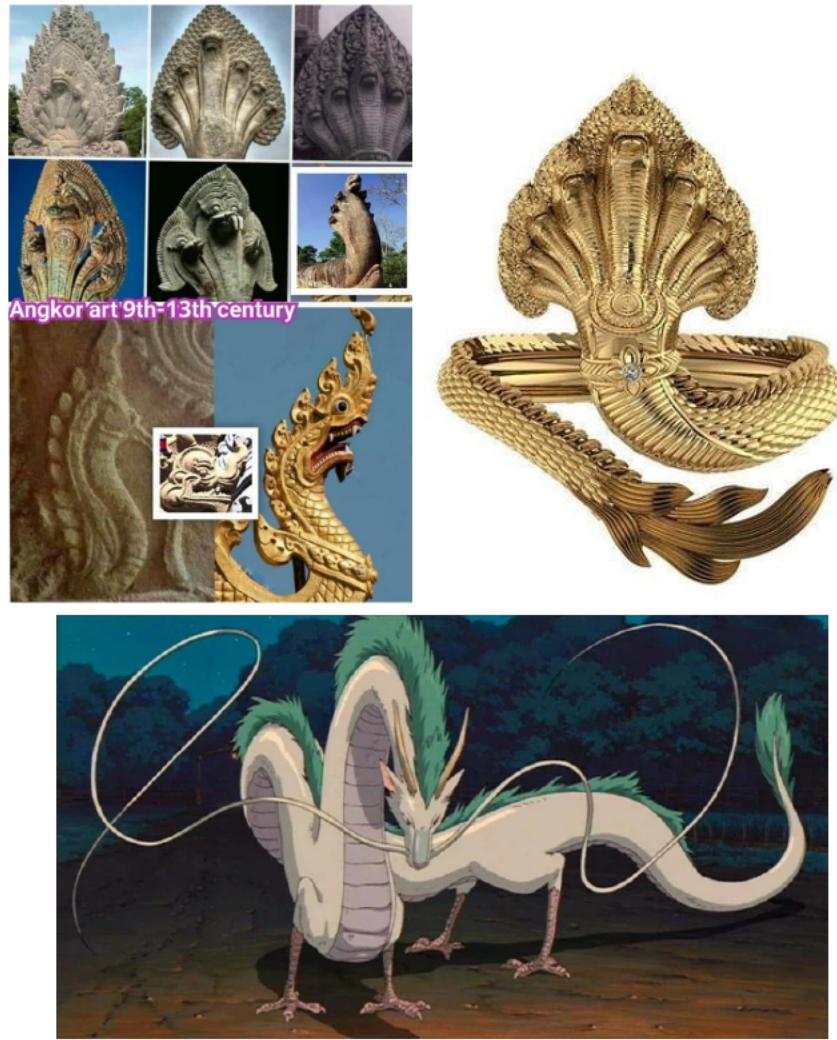
Note: The next 4 pages are a dragon fight.
I have sketched out beats, but please add anything COOL.

12-13.1

Large panel.

SARA surprises a huge white DRAGON feasting on a dead addict. This place is an opium den, and dead bodies (some eaten) are scattered around.

The dragon has 5-7 heads. It should look diseased, with the GHOULISH FACE we saw on the mural.



12-13.2

The DRAGON launches itself at SARA.

12-13.3

The DRAGON sinks its fangs into SARA'S SHOULDER.

12-13.4

CLOSE on SARA. There's a corona of pleasure around her head. Her pupils are suddenly huge.

12-13.5

SARA slices through the DRAGON'S NECK, but her blade passes right through! Like the Dragon is made of mist or dust. She is woozy and bewildered.

12-13.6

SARA slices through the DRAGON'S ABDOMEN, but her blade passes right through! Like the Dragon is made of mist or dust.

12-13.7

Sara can see the Dragon's heart—a crusty, sticky lump of opium. (We don't know that's what it is yet, but it's visible through the semi-transparent flesh.)

PAGE FOURTEEN

(X Panels)

14.1

Sara fights like a dragonslayer. Big JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS vs. the Hydra energy.

14.2+

The DRAGON'S several heads all seize SARA at once. Too many to fight!

(Please make this several panels! Please do ANYTHING YOU WANT.)

PAGE FIFTEEN

(Four Panels)

15.1

The DRAGON slams SARA through the wall of the derelict building!

15.2

The DRAGON has SARA pinned!

15.3

SARA slams her gauntleted hand up through the chest of the dragon, so that her fist comes out the other side, holding the Dragon's heart.

15.4

The DRAGON explodes into white powder. It covers SARA in white powder.

PAGE SIXTEEN

(Five Panels)

16.1

SARA staggers up and slams the fire alarm. She is covered in white powder. **She shakes her hand, like she's just handled filth—the heart is decomposing into tar.**

1 SARA: >koff< Gotta—get this shit off me—

16.2

WATER pours down from above. It washes the white powder off of her.

2 SARA: Christ, my skin is tingling... What **was** that?

16.3

SARA checks the other BODIES for signs of life. No luck. The WITCHBLADE begins to recede.

3 SARA: No other survivors... **@#\$%.** I'm sorry.

4 SARA (small font): I'm so sorry.

16.4

SARA stares at the floor; the WITCHBLADE is becoming a bracelet. The face of the GHOUL is visible in white powder—a vague sketch, an outline on the floor.

5 SARA: ...What is causing this?

16.5

SARA, soaking wet, rushes outside. It's begun to rain. LISA, scared, is waiting for her.

6 LISA: The EMTs are on the way, they—

7 SARA: I gotta get you out of here, kid.

8 LISA: My—my granddad's three blocks away—

PAGE SEVENTEEN

(Six Panels)

17.1

It's starting to rain. A piece-of-shit LAWYER is getting out of his limo and heading towards the courthouse; he is having a cell phone conversation. There is a big STATUE of JUSTICE by the stairs—blindfolded, sword in one hand, scales in the other.

1 LISA (VO): —at ***the courthouse.***

LAWYER: —file right before the end of day and they won't have time to mount a defense—

17.2

The LAWYER leers at the STATUE.

LAWYER: These lying bitches are all the same.

17.3

The LAWYER returns to his conversation.

LAWYER: Heh, well, if it's an under-the-table gift—

17.4

The LAWYER looks up.

LAWYER: !

17.5

The STATUE is gone. The LAWYER is so shocked his arm (and phone) drop to his side.

17.6

The LAWYER turns, abandoning his phone—

PAGE EIGHTEEN

(Two Panels)

18.1

The STATUE OF JUSTICE has her sword upraised. Her face is the face of the ghoul on the cover—no blindfold (no color—just bronze).

18.2

THE STATUE OF JUSTICE slices THE LAWYER in half with her sword.

PAGE NINETEEN

(Five Panels)

19.1

LISA looks really freaked out, babbling as SARA ushers her through the rain. SARA has given LISA her jacket, which she is using as an umbrella.

1 LISA: –D&D group on Thursdays, horror movies on Fridays, and writing club every other Sunday, but *this*—

2 SARA: We're almost there, kid—

3 LISA CAPTION: I've never known a cop who cared if I got home safe.

19.2

There's a crowd gathered on the steps of the courthouse. LISA babbles as SARA pushes through, leading the way.

4 LISA: My grandad—he works as a clerk in the old records department, they know me at the desk—

5 LISA CAPTION: Never known a cop who stuck around to care.

19.3

The crowd is gossiping as SARA pushes through, LISA behind her.

6 CROWD: –William Barron, defense attorney—repped that dog-fighting ring—that firefighter accused of arson—that killer nurse—

19.4

SARA flashes her badge.

7 LISA CAPTION: And since meeting ***Detective Sara Pezzini***, I've seen more ***weird shit*** in a single day...

19.5

SARA stares down. Her pupils are very tiny.

8 LISA CAPTION: ...than I'd seen in a ***lifetime***.

PAGE TWENTY

(Two Panels)

20.1

Large panel.

SARA is keeping LISA safe behind her.

The LAWYER is in two pieces, with one half on each half of the scales of the STATUE OF JUSTICE. The statue (bronze, no color) has been re-molded into the leering face of the ghoul.

The rain pours down. The lawyer's blood runs down the steps of the courthouse.

1 LISA CAPTION: This cop really isn't like the others.

20.2

CLOSE on Lisa's face. Lisa looks FUCKING TERRIFIED.

2 LISA CAPTION: And I truly don't know if that's *a good thing*.