

THE ARTIST

by
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OVERVIEW: Characters, Setting, Background, and an Opportunity

ALEELA: A vivacious septuagenarian whose decades-long career as a celebrated muralist allows her to mingle comfortably in elite circles, Aleela retains a sharp crudeness from her youthful adventures among pirates and outlaw graffiti artists. Aleela is wearing a casual paint-stained smock when Yago visits.

SANAN YAGO: As the King's Kuratoro (a curator for the Fayrii court's extensive art treasures and commissions), Yago is an aficionado serving masters who value art only for its financial and political utility. A formal, well-attired courtier in his 30s, Yago is a privileged (yet insecure) official who struggles to understand Aleela's motivation for artistic subversion.

THE GALLERY: Aleela's gallery showcases reproductions of her murals; the gallery is meant to impress clients – the art pieces are huge (mural-sized). Per the comic's artist(s), the gallery may be presented as a classic "art on walls" room, or perhaps as a more labyrinthine chamber utilizing technological projections (as [inspired by real-world exhibits at the Carrières de Lumière](#)).

ALEELA'S ART: Aleela has utilized a variety of art styles over the years: classical, abstract, surrealist, etc. The comic's artist(s) may render the gallery's art pieces in the style of their choice; the script proposes a particular style and image, but the artist(s) is welcome to suggest alternative imagery that maintains the narrative. **NOTE:** Aleela favors red and blue colors in her murals, as explored in the script.

BACKGROUND: Visiting Aleela in her studio, Yago reveals that he has found troubling hidden imagery in her murals. The coy Aleela invites Yago to the adjoining gallery, asking Yago to point out his concerns. They discuss several pieces; notably, Yago states his belief that an arrangement of the semka logographs on several book titles depicted in the painting *Farzo's Biblioteka* spells out the last name of the assassinated political graffiti artist Tarym Mord. This script excerpt explores Aleela's response to these allegations.

AN OPPORTUNITY: As the narrative highlights surreptitious art, there is an opportunity for the creative team to engage in this practice. Just as the text offers palindromes, puns, anagrams, and acrostics for discerning readers, the artist(s) is welcome to include their own furtive imagery, if desired.

PAGE 11 – 6 panels [For context, in these panels, Yago and Aleela are standing before an abstract gallery piece depicting the 3W/3M logo as thick red lines on a blue background.]

PANEL 1: Close-up of Aleela's face; she is smiling.

ALEELA

Some might say your imagination runs faster than my paint.

PANEL 2: Close-up of Yago's face; he is annoyed.

YAGO

You have a deft hand. The subtle images are hard to discern, but I have found them in several murals.

PANEL 3: Close-up of Aleela's left hand lightly touching the artwork graphics representing Fayrii and Heir.

ALEELA (voice-over word balloon)

Belaboring every nuanced detail, I'm sure.

PANEL 4: Mid-distance side view of Yago standing at the panel's left, Aleela to the right, her back to the reader; Yago is looking at Aleela while she touches the painting.

YAGO

So you deny it?

PANEL 5: Mid-distance side view of Aleela from Yago's perspective, her left arm out-stretched, her hand on the painting, her head turned to the reader, a smile on her face.

PANEL 6: Mid-distance side view from Panel 4; Aleela has turned to face Yago, her hands clapped together.

ALEELA

Take a bow, Yago. A King's Kuratoro is less esteemed than a fart in a biblioteka, yet you're apparently the first to discover my hidden treasures.

PAGE 12 – 6 panels [For context, this page features three primary panels (wide, horizontal) that focus on a specific gallery piece, and three corresponding inset panels that magnify Aleela's hidden imagery in those pieces.]

PANEL 1: A wide, horizontal panel – a long-distance view of a gallery piece depicting a man and woman kissing in a rose garden. The lovers wear bright-blue clothing; they are surrounded by bright-red roses.

ALEELA (two voice-over captions)

[1]: My gorgeous murals render ugly truths.

[2]: Perhaps a sly reminder of how a lord really won his lady.

PANEL 2: An inset panel that magnifies a single rose from Panel 1; three of the rose's petals feature separate respective depictions of the dagger, flame, and fist icons of the Apiddo, Ankvila, and Isfunda assassin schools.

PANEL 3: A wide, horizontal panel – a long-distance view of a gallery piece depicting the face of a beautiful woman (with bright, curly red hair and luscious red lips) on a bright-blue background.

ALEELA (voice-over caption)

Or a discreet spotlight on cruel exploitation.

PANEL 4: An inset panel that magnifies a section of the depicted lady's hair from Panel 3; there is an outline of a Vero Rampas.

PANEL 5: A wide, horizontal panel – a long-distance view of a gallery piece depicting a Gold Priest (wearing mostly bright-blue clothing decorated with gold ornaments and small red jewels) on a bright-red background.

ALEELA (two voice-over captions)

[1]: Or a stealthy comment on the chaos caused by the righteous.

[2]: My art secretly rebukes society, while seemingly glorifying the monsters that run it.

PANEL 6: An inset panel that magnifies a small red jewel among the priest's ornate vestments from Panel 5. The image of a black skull is depicted on the jewel.

PAGE 13 – 5 panels [For context, in these panels, Yago and Aleela are standing before an abstract gallery piece depicting bright-red circles, squares, and triangles of various sizes, on a bright-blue background.]

PANEL 1: Mid-distance side views of Yago (left) and Aleela (right) looking at one another, with the nearby mural's red geometric shapes seen on a blue background.

YAGO

You are the most acclaimed artist in the Solsistemo. Why do this, given the consequences of discovery?

PANEL 2: Mid-distance side view of Aleela; she is facing the off-panel Yago. She holds up her right hand to indicate the painting in the panel's background.

ALEELA

Blue and red. Do you know why I always use those colors?

PANEL 3: Wide, horizontal panel – a full view of the art piece, with Yago (left) and Aleela (right) standing in front of it. Yago's back is to the reader as he admires the painting; Aleela looks at him, observing his reaction to the piece.

YAGO

I assume because they are complementary.

ALEELA

Yes. Especially on Akva, where red blood often complements the beautiful blue water.

PANEL 4: Close-up of Yago's face; his mouth open, his eyes wide. He is having a poignant artistic epiphany.

PANEL 5: Mid-distance side views of Yago (left) and Aleela (right) looking at one another; the nearby mural's red geometric shapes are seen on a blue background.

YAGO

I am sorry. I know of your background.

PAGE 14 – 4 panels [For context, this page features four primary panels (wide, horizontal) that focus on a specific gallery piece; each piece thematically reflects Aleela’s tale.]

PANEL 1: A wide, horizontal panel – a long-distance view of an abstract gallery piece depicting the Akvan coral murals as a mosaic of bright-blue geometric shapes covered by patterns of smaller bright-red geometric shapes; these patterned red shapes suggest an outline of the mythic Voda and Vatra figures.

ALEELA (voice-over caption)

As a child, I saw Akva’s coral murals. People believe the gods crafted them, and I don’t doubt it. I was inspired.

PANEL 2: A wide, horizontal panel – a long-distance view of a gallery piece depicting side views of an adult man standing in the panel’s left section; a little girl stands in the right. The man wears bright-blue clothing; the girl wears a red dress. The man is looking down with a stern expression at the girl; the girl is laughing. Toys and crayons are at the girl’s feet. Stick-figure crayon drawings of red ships on blue water (with renderings of red and blue stick-figures combatting one another with swords and guns) have been drawn on the off-white wall of the room; this childish imagery is centered between the man and girl in the piece.

ALEELA (voice-over caption)

My first paint smock was sewn together from some old tattered sails I found on my father’s pirate ship.

PANEL 3: A wide, horizontal panel – a long-distance view of an abstract gallery piece depicting an outline of a Vojogonto (presented as a mosaic of small bright-blue circles on a black background); tiny bright-red circles dot the background to represent stars.

ALEELA (voice-over caption)

So much blue and red on Akva. My father was murdered when I was a teenager. I spent his stolen hoard buying passage to Heir.

PANEL 4: A wide, horizontal panel – a long-distance view of a gallery piece depicting a teenage girl (wearing a bright-blue dress) painting a giant black-and-white outline of Jonathan Hickman’s

face on a bright-red wall, her work stylistically similar to real-world Che Guevara political graffiti. Kids are kicking a ball in the street while the teen paints her mural.

ALEELA (voice-over caption)

I begged for food and paint. But Mord and other artists praised my talent. Royals like Farzo soon came round with fat commissions.

YAGO (voice-over caption)

But why, Aleela? Why risk everything?

PAGE 15 – 5 panels [For context, these panels examine the painting *Farzo's Biblioteka*, referenced earlier in the comic's narrative.]

PANEL 1: A long-distance view of a gallery piece depicting a bearded man wearing bright-blue clothing. He stands (facing the reader) in the painting's left, before a tall bookshelf (six rows of books) that runs from the painting's left to right side. One row of books is above Farzo's head. The bookshelf contains many volumes.

ALEELA (voice-over caption)

This is an unjust universe, but artists aren't allowed to paint the ugly. The powerful won't tolerate a palette that isn't palatable.

PANEL 2: A mid-distance view of the gallery piece in Panel 1; Farzo is depicted from the waist up, with four rows of books seen.

ALEELA (voice-over caption)

While I sketched Farzo in front of his books, he was bragging to some visiting crony that he had ordered Mord's death.

PANEL 3: A close-up view of Farzo's face; his expression is stoic, unemotional.

YAGO (voice-over caption)

Farzo was behind Mord's murder?

PANEL 4: A close-up view of the top of Farzo's head, and six books on the row above his head. These books have brown binding, with the following respective red semka logographs (arranged vertically) spelling out the following titles, in sequence, from left to right: HISTORY; MATHEMATICS; OROTORY; REASON; DIPLOMACY; PHILOSOPHY.

ALEELA (voice-over caption)

"Farzo the Scholar" was a pretentious monster. He thought so little of me he didn't bother to whisper. What could this nothing girl do?

PANEL 5: A close-up view of four of the six books seen in Panel 4, focused on the first logographs of each title; these logographs are arranged to spell out the artist Mord's name: MATHEMATICS; QROTORY; REASON; DIPLOMACY.

ALEELA (voice over caption)

I could paint. So I painted Farzo among his books, like he wanted. And I left a little clue of the truth, if only to satisfy myself.