

The CASE of the MISSING ANGULAS

A BARCELONA MYSTERY

WORDS BY
TOM DOWNEY
PICTURES BY
NEIL GOWER

OUR INTREPID PROTAGONIST TOM DOWNEY REVEALS A REAL-LIFE SIDE OF BARCELONA SELDOM SEEN BY TOURISTS— WITH THE HELP OF FICTIONAL DETECTIVE...



RAFA CAPDEVILA

HE IS A BARROOM PHILOSOPHER, NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIAN, AND INCORRIGIBLE GOURMAND— THINK A.J. LIEBLING AND SAM SPADE WITH A LITTLE CHE GUEVARA THROWN IN.

THE CONCEIT IS CONCOCTED— BUT ALL THE TANTALIZING DETAILS ARE REAL

SATURDAY 7 A.M.
LA BOQUERIA



I'M TOM AND I NEED TO FIND RAFA TO HELP ME SOLVE A CASE. MY SEARCH BEGINS IN THE CITY'S BIGGEST AND BEST

FOOD MARKET, LA BOQUERIA. AT THIS HOUR ONLY WORKERS COMING OFF THE NIGHT SHIFT ARE EATING AT THE COUNTER OF BAR PINOTXO. JUANITO, THE FAMOUS OLD BARKEEP, SERVES THEM GARBANZOS CON BUTIFARRA (CHICK PEAS WITH CATALAN BLOOD SAUSAGE) AND FLUTES OF CAVA— SPARKLING WINE. I STEP UP AND JOIN THEM.

FOLLOW RAFA'S TRACKS, PLACES & PRICES PAGE 152



JUANITO! BREAKFAST AND A QUESTION: HAVE YOU SEEN RAFA CAPDEVILA?



ONE CORTADO, SEÑOR! RAFA? TRY CASA LEOPOLDO AT LUNCHTIME. HE'LL BE WASHING DOWN A HUGE PIECE OF RODABALLO (TURBOT) WITH A CRISP WHITE.

I FINISH UP WITH JUANITO'S SPECIALTY AND THE SIGNATURE COFFEE OF SPAIN— THE CORTADO, A RICH ESPRESSO WITH A THIN LAYER OF FOAMED MILK. THEN I'M OFF TO EL RAVAL.

THE ROUGH PART OF EL RAVAL CLOSEST TO THE SEA WAS ONCE KNOWN AS THE BARRIO CHINO.

THE SETTING FOR JEAN GENET'S "THE THIEF'S JOURNAL," IT'S NO LONGER JUST A HANGOUT FOR PIMPS, PROSTITUTES, AND PUSHERS.

IT'S NOW ALSO A PLACE FOR HIPSTERS AND NEW IMMIGRANTS.

CASA LEOPOLDO

RODABALLO, CRISP WHITE, AND THE SHARP EYES OF A P.I. - THAT MUST BE CAPDEVILA!

WHAT THE... HEY, WAIT!

LOST HIM...

HE'S SPOTTED ME.

AND THIS NEIGHBORHOOD IS FULL OF DIVES WHERE CAPDEVILA CAN HIDE BEHIND A COLD BEER...

AHA!

ACROSS LA RAMBLA INTO THE BARRIO GÒTIC AND THE TINY PLAÇA SANT FELIP NERI.

UGH! MI CORAZÓN.

TOO MANY BIG MEALS TO OUTFRUN ME.

YOU GOT ME. GO AHEAD THEN. SHOOT ME.

NO, CAPDEVILA, I NEED YOUR HELP TO SOLVE A CASE.

AH, CALL ME RAFA. I LISTEN BEST OVER A DECENT BOTTLE. AND YOU'RE PAYING. FOLLOW ME...

BEHOLD THE BEST WINE BAR IN TOWN: LA VINYA DEL SENYOR.

SATURDAY 3 P.M. - LA VINYA

MOST PRIVATE DICKS START WITH QUERIES ABOUT THE INVESTIGATION. BUT I REGARD FOOD AND WINE AS THE FOUNDATION OF GOOD DETECTIVE WORK. I SENSE ALREADY THAT THIS CASE REQUIRES A WHITE. GALICIA'S ALBARIÑO IS KING OF SPANISH BLANCOS—CRISP AND ACIDIC LIKE THE ATLANTIC, REFRESHING AS A SANCERRE.

SOUNDS GOOD. BUT WHY WERE YOU RUNNING AWAY FROM ME?

OH, SOMEONE'S AFTER ME... BUT LET'S NOT WORRY ABOUT THAT. WAITER! AN ALBARIÑO.

OK, HERE'S THE DEAL. A FISHERMAN FRIEND OF MINE IN GALICIA WAS ROBBED OF TEN CRATES OF

THE POLICE CAN'T FIND THEM, SO HE ASKED ME TO GET THEM BACK. I'VE TRACED THEM THIS FAR BUT LOST THE TRAIL. YOU HAVE TWO DAYS TO FIND THEM. I HAVE TO BE ON A PLANE FIRST THING ON MONDAY...

I SHOULD KEEP LYING LOW IN THE BARRIO CHIND. BUT ANGULAS? THAT IS A CRIME! I'LL WORK IN DISGUISE. WE'LL NEED TO LOOSEN TONGUES IN THE BEST RESTAURANTS, SO THE EXPENSES WILL RUN HIGH. TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW.

THEY'RE IN CRATES LIKE THESE.

OK, WE'LL START WITH DINNER AT COLIBRÍ—A PLACE THAT SERVES ONLY THE BEST. LET'S SAY 10 P.M. RIGHT NOW, I'M OFF TO MEET AN INFORMANT IN PARC GÜELL—COMING?

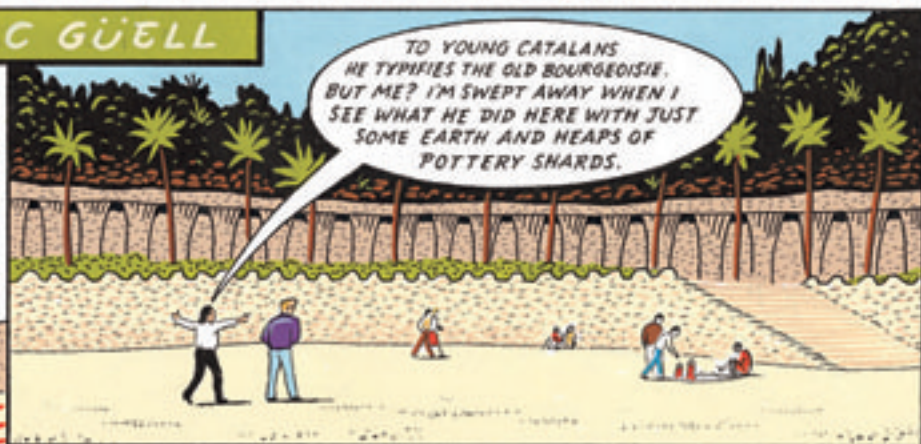
ANGULAS ARE BABY GLASS EELS, PRIZED FOR THEIR DELICATE FLAVOR. ORIGINALLY A BASQUE SPECIALTY, SAUTÉED IN OLIVE OIL AND GARLIC THEY ARE NOW EATEN ALL OVER SPAIN BY THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD THEM—

ONE KILO RETAILS FOR \$1,200

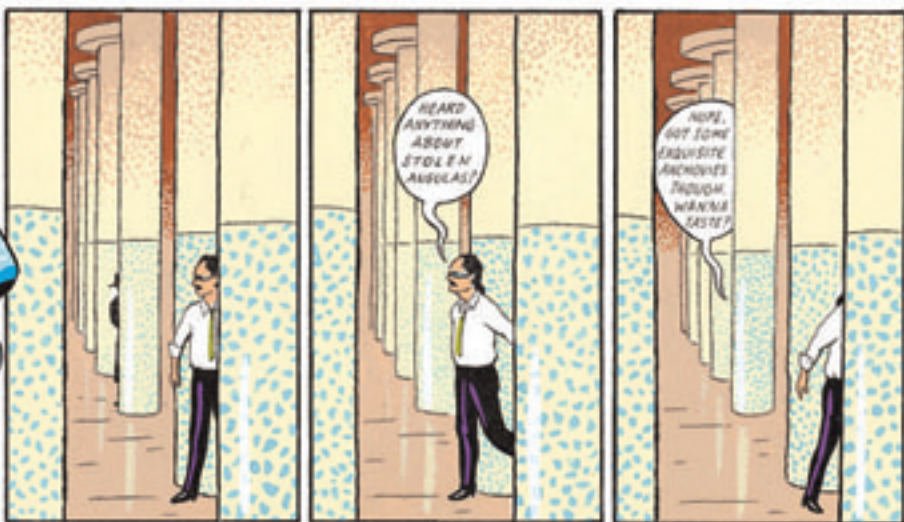
ANGULAS

SATURDAY 6 P.M. - PARC GÜELL

SEE, TOM— YOU AMERICANS COME HERE EXPECTING TO DINE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, BUT THAT'S MADRID. HERE IN CATALONIA WE EAT AT 10. CATALANS ARE ACTUALLY GREAT CONFORMISTS. EVEN OUR BEST-KNOWN CREATIVE RADICAL, GAUDÍ, THE ARCHITECT OF THIS PARK, WENT TO THE SAME MASS EVERY DAY.



TO YOUNG CATALANS HE TYPIFIES THE OLD BOURGEOISIE. BUT ME? I'M SWEEP AWAY WHEN I SEE WHAT HE DID HERE WITH JUST SOME EARTH AND HEAPS OF POTTERY SHARDS.



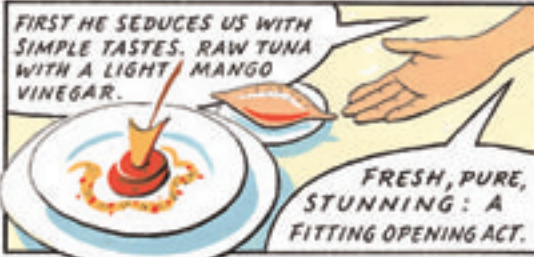
HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT STOLEN ANGULAS?

NOPE, BUT SOME EXQUISITE ARCHIVES THROUGH WARRING TASTE?

SATURDAY 10 P.M. - COLIBRÍ

WHEN I LIVED HERE IN EL RAVAL, THE ONLY GREAT RESTAURANT WAS A PLACE WHERE THEY HUNG A FRAMED PHOTO OF KING JUAN CARLOS MUNCHING ON THEIR GRUB...

... COLIBRÍ'S CHEF WORKED THERE FOR YEARS. BUT HIS PLACE IS DIFFERENT: SIMPLE MARKET FOOD WITH A FEW MODERN FLOURISHES. IN BARCELONA IT'S EASY TO FIND THE OLD-FASHIONED AND THE SHOCKINGLY NEW. WHAT'S HARD TO DISCOVER IS FOOD THAT DOESN'T FALL INTO EITHER CAMP.



FIRST HE SEDUCES US WITH SIMPLE TASTES. RAW TUNA WITH A LIGHT MANGO VINEGAR.

FRESH, PURE, STUNNING: A FITTING OPENING ACT.



HOW WAS THE MEAL, SEÑORES?

TRULY EXCEPTIONAL! ESPECIALLY THE TUNA CARPACCIO AND THIS QUESO FRESCO DESSERT. TELL ME, HAS ANYONE OFFERED YOU LOW-PRICED ANGULAS LATELY?

LAST WEEK. AN OLDER GUY, WELL-DRESSED, NAME OF NACHO. I SAID NO. HIS PRICE WAS TOO LOW TO BE LEGIT.



AND TO DRINK?

WELL, WE CAN RULE OUT THE PRIORAT. YOU AMERICANS HAVE DRIVEN THE PRICE WAY UP!

BUT SURROUNDING PRIORAT IS A LESSER-KNOWN REGION—MONTSAINT— WHERE THEY'RE PRODUCING SURPRISING REDS THAT ARE A MUCH BETTER VALUE. WE'LL DRINK THE MONTSAINT.



HE HAD A WHIFF OF THE SEA ABOUT HIM—SOMETHING OF OLD BARCELONETA.

SUNDAY 9 A.M. - LA COVA FUMADA

FOR CENTURIES, THE NARROW ALLEYWAYS OF **BARCELONETA** WERE HOME TO SAILORS AND DOCKWORKERS. BEFORE THEY GAVE THIS BARRIO A FACE-LIFT FOR THE 1992 OLYMPICS, ONLY THE STENCH TOLD YOU THE MEDITERRANEAN WAS NEARBY. NOW IT'S SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE, OPEN TO THE OCEAN. BUT BEHIND THIS DOOR NOTHING HAS CHANGED. OLD MEN WHILE AWAY LONELY DAYS. PATRIARCHS TREAT THEIR GRANDCHILDREN TO PEASANT FEASTS AND TELL TALES OF THEIR YOUTH. I CAN JUST SEE OUR NACHO IN HERE.



DIGA ME! ("TELL ME!")
DOS ALCACHOFAS (ARTICHOKE) UNAS BOMBAS (POTATO BALLS) DOS CERVECITAS.
SIMPLE AS THAT- NONE OF YOUR ENGLISH PUSSYFOOTING AROUND. JUST "DIGA ME!" THEN SAY WHAT YOU WANT. BEING TOO POLITE CAN SEEM PATRONIZING.

OLD BARMEN LIKE THESE ARE THE BEDROCK OF SPAIN. I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST YOUNG BARTENDERS AS LONG AS THEY TRULY COMMIT. THEIR JOB IS A CALLING, AND IT DESERVES DEVOTION.

EVERY GOOD PLACE HAS A PROPER DRINK. HERE IT'S THESE TINY BEERS- CERVECITAS. THEY STAY COLD AND CARBONATED WHILE YOU WASH DOWN YOUR BOMBAS. AHA! HERE THEY ARE!

THIS ALIOLI (OIL AND GARLIC SAUCE) HAS BEEN CLOGGING CATALAN ARTERIES FOR GENERATIONS.

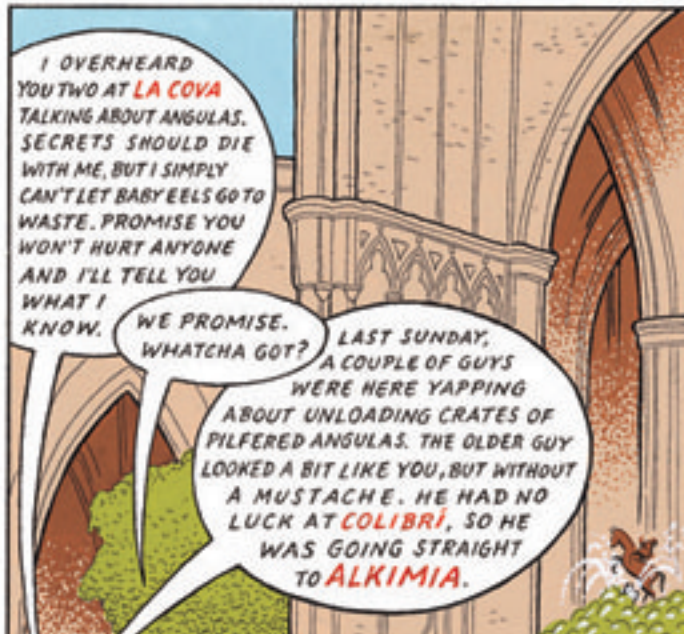


YOUR BOMBAS, SEÑORES.
Cloisters 11am

SUNDAY 11 A.M. - CLOISTERS



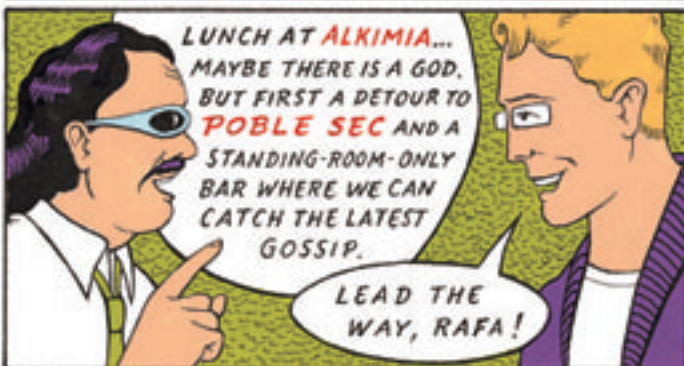
PSST!
AH, THIS GARDEN LETS YOU BREATHE IN THE MIDDLE OF GOTHIC CLAUSTROPHOBIA, AND LOOK! THE FAMOUS CATHEDRAL GEESE.



I OVERHEARD YOU TWO AT **LA COVA** TALKING ABOUT ANGULAS. SECRETS SHOULD DIE WITH ME, BUT I SIMPLY CAN'T LET BABY'EELS GO TO WASTE. PROMISE YOU WON'T HURT ANYONE AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW.
WE PROMISE. WHATCHA GOT?
LAST SUNDAY, A COUPLE OF GUYS WERE HERE YAPPING ABOUT UNLOADING CRATES OF PILFERED ANGULAS. THE OLDER GUY LOOKED A BIT LIKE YOU, BUT WITHOUT A MUSTACHE. HE HAD NO LUCK AT **COLIBRI**, SO HE WAS GOING STRAIGHT TO **ALKIMIA**.



OH, BLESS YOU, FATHER.



LUNCH AT **ALKIMIA**... MAYBE THERE IS A GOD, BUT FIRST A DETOUR TO **POBLE SEC** AND A STANDING-ROOM-ONLY BAR WHERE WE CAN CATCH THE LATEST GOSSIP.
LEAD THE WAY, RAFA!

SUNDAY NOON - QUIMET & QUIMET



TILL JUST 30 YEARS AGO, GITANOS (GYPSIES) LIVED IN SHACKS ON THOSE HILLS. MY FATHER WARNED ME THAT IF I CAME TO LIVE HERE, I'D BE ROBBED EVERY NIGHT. HA!



QUIMET & QUIMET IS LIKE A BET AGAINST GOOD FOOD. THEY USE ONLY CANNED GOODS, BOXED CRACKERS—NOTHING FRESH. BUT LOOK WHAT THEY COME UP WITH!

TAKE THIS MONTADITO—A SLICE OF CRISP BREAD PILED HIGH WITH GREEK YOGURT, SMOKED SALMON, TRUFFLE HONEY, AND A DASH OF WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE.

HERE—VERMUT CON SIFON (VERMOUTH WITH SELTZER). YOU CAN STON THE SELTZER BOTTLE RIGHT UNDER THE TABLE.

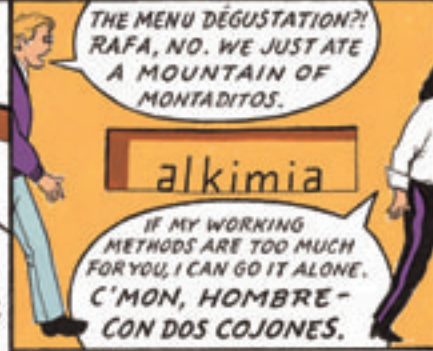
BUT IT SUMS UP QUIMET, A TRUE COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE—REACHING ROUND AND LEANING OVER YOUR FELLOW MAN.

MMM... IN THIS GAME YOU LEARN TO LISTEN WITH YOUR TONGUE. EAT UP, TOM. ALKIMIA AWAITS, AND THEIR PORTIONS ARE TINY.

AREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO BE LISTENING FOR RUMORS?

HAVING TO STAND IS A TEST OF THE WILL.

SUNDAY 1:30 P.M. - ALKIMIA



THE MENU DÉGUSTATION?! RAFA, NO. WE JUST ATE A MOUNTAIN OF MONTADITOS.

IF MY WORKING METHODS ARE TOO MUCH FOR YOU, I CAN GO IT ALONE. C'MON, HOMBRE—CON DOS COJONES.

THE SHEER GENIUS OF SPAIN'S MOST INFLUENTIAL CHEF, FERRAN ADRIÀ OF EL BULLI, INSPIRED A GLUT OF COPYCATS BUT VERY FEW WORTHY OF HIS IDEALS. ALKIMIA IS ONE OF THOSE—A PLACE FOR DAYDREAMING OVER IMAGINATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL TASTES. BUT NOT ALL EXPERIMENTS PAY OFF. I MEAN, A SHOT OF PAN CON TOMATE? WHO NEEDS IT LIQUEFIED WHEN THE ORIGINAL IS ALREADY PERFECT?



BUT THIS PARMESAN FLAN! MACADAMIA NUTS FOR TEXTURE, PARMESAN FOR SHARPNESS, AND FRESH EGGS TO CREATE A LUSCIOUS CREAMINESS.



A SIMPLE ANCHOVY ON TOAST WITH TRUFFLE OIL, BUT TOPPED WITH QUESO FRESCO FROZEN INTO A SAVORY GELATO.



A DESSERT OF PEACHES, YOGURT GELATO, AND OLIVE OIL WITH JUST A WHIFF OF CUCUMBER TO REMIND YOU IT'S A GAZPACHO.

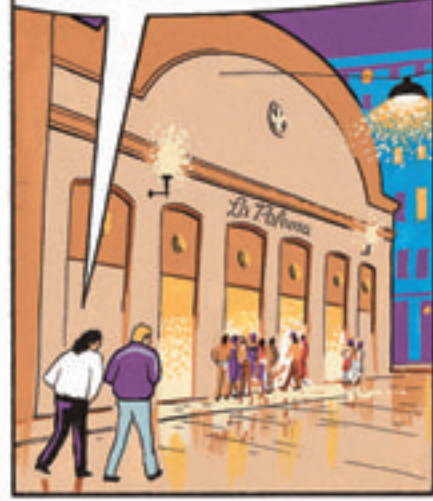


DO YOU RECALL A MAN TRYING TO SELL ANGULAS HERE LAST SUNDAY?

YES, OH YES! I REMEMBER HIS SHOES: BRIGHT RED AND YELLOW. HE MUST HAVE BEEN GOING DANCING AFTER DINNER.

SUNDAY 8:30 P.M. - LA PALOMA

OLDER MAN? SHAPPY SHOES? SUNDAY DANCE? THAT CAN ONLY MEAN LA PALOMA—ALL THE SENIOR CITIZENS COME HERE EVERY SUNDAY TO SLOW DANCE AND MAKE OUT LIKE TEENAGERS.





WITH CAPDEVILA WENT ALL HOPE OF SOLVING THE CRIME...

MONDAY 7 A.M.
PINOTXO BAR

ONE LAST CORTADO
BEFORE I LEAVE TOWN

JUANITO! I WAS WITH CAPDEVILA ALL WEEKEND, BUT WE LOST EACH OTHER LAST NIGHT. HAS HE BEEN BY?



WITH HIM ALL WEEKEND, SEÑOR? IMPOSSIBLE. AFTER YOU LEFT ON SATURDAY, HIS ASSISTANT, GONZALO, CAME BY AND SAID THAT RAFA WAS ON A CASE IN MINORCA. HE LEFT TOWN ON THURSDAY AND WON'T BE BACK UNTIL NEXT WEEK.



BACK TO THE BUSTLE OF LA RAMBLA FOR A CAB.