

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Courtney Crumrin

VOLUME SEVEN

Tales of a Warlock

— ❖ — TED NAIFEH — ❖ —

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Crumrin

Tales of a Warlock





Courtney VOLUME SEVEN Crumrin

Tales of a Warlock

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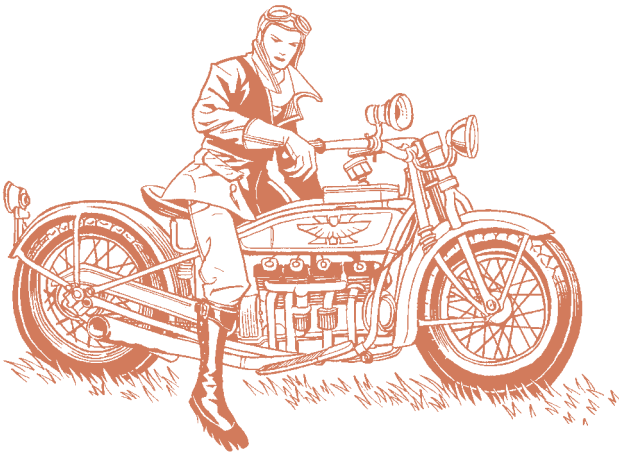
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For Jill



Chapter One





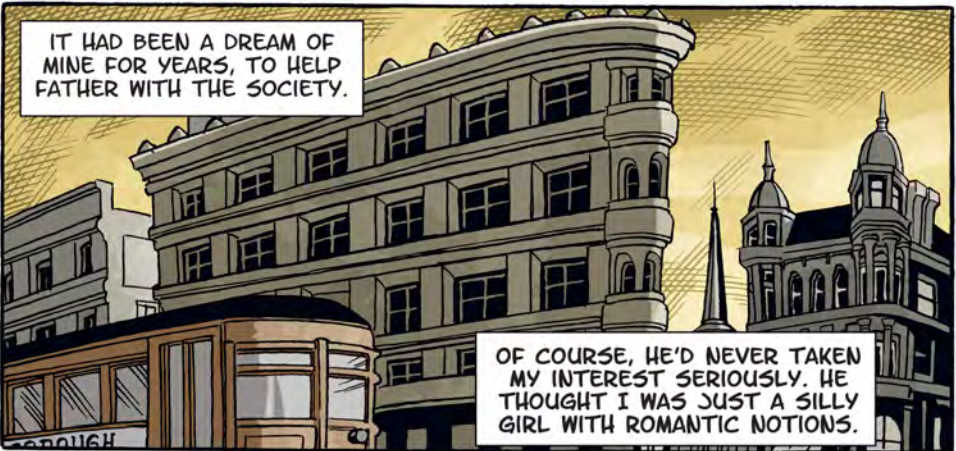




I RECALL
YOU EXPRESSING
AN INTEREST
IN MY...



...OTHER
WORK.

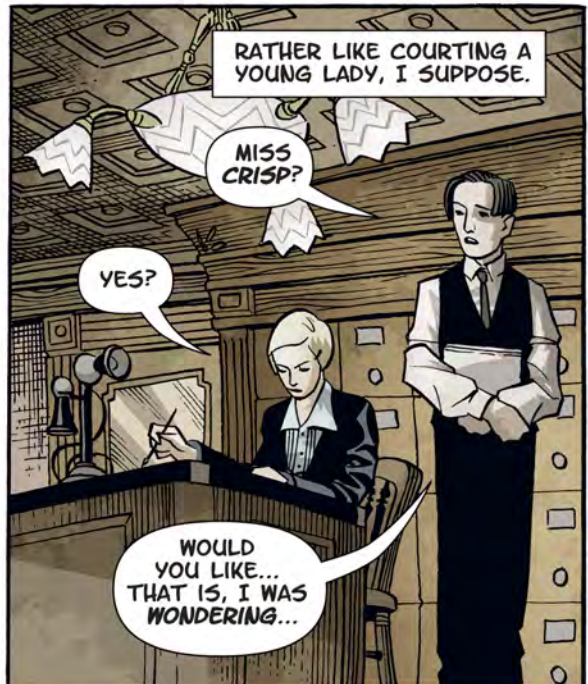


IT HAD BEEN A DREAM OF
MINE FOR YEARS, TO HELP
FATHER WITH THE SOCIETY.

OF COURSE, HE'D NEVER TAKEN
MY INTEREST SERIOUSLY. HE
THOUGHT I WAS JUST A SILLY
GIRL WITH ROMANTIC NOTIONS.



BUT I KNEW
HOW TO GET
PAST SUCH
PREJUDICES.
THE SECRET
IS TO NEVER
BACK DOWN,
AND NEVER
GIVE UP.



RATHER LIKE COURTING A
YOUNG LADY, I SUPPOSE.

MISS
CRISP?

YES?

WOULD
YOU LIKE...
THAT IS, I WAS
WONDERING...




I
THOUGHT
IT MIGHT
BE BEST IF I
WALKED YOU
HOME.

DID
YOU?

TO BE QUITE
HONEST, I'D
LIKED ALOYSIUS
FROM THE FIRST.

HE WAS POLITE
WITHOUT BEING
OVERLY FRIENDLY
AND DIDN'T ASSUME
HE WAS SMARTER
THAN I WAS—A RARE
COURTESY AMONG
MEN HIS AGE.



THOUGH THIS WAS
A BIT OF A SHOCK.

I'M QUITE
CAPABLE OF
WALKING MYSELF
HOME, THANK
YOU.




I DO
IT EVERY DAY,
YOU SEE.



I BEG
YOUR PARDON.
WHAT I MEANT
WAS—

WHAT'S
THAT?



OH, THIS?
I'M NOT SURE.
I WAS GOING TO
ASK YOU.



NEEDLESS TO SAY, I WAS RATHER TAKEN ABACK BY IT.



UNTIL RECENTLY, I'D SEEN ONLY GLIMPSSES OF FATHER'S REAL WORK. I COULDN'T HELP BUT LINGER OVER THEM A MOMENT.

IS THIS SOME SORT OF HOBBY OF MR. CRISP'S? COLLECTING HUMBUG STORIES?



IT'S NONE OF YOUR CONCERN.

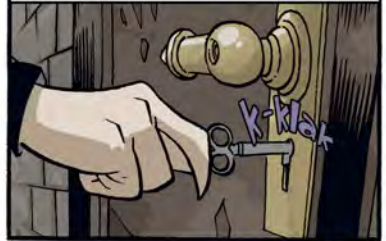
I MEANT NO OFFENSE.





I KNEW I WAS ACTING FOOLISH.

BUT I COULDN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF ALOYSIUS, DAY AFTER DAY, LOOKING AT ME WITH THAT CONDESCENDING SMILE.



IF THERE'S ONE THING I CAN'T BEAR, IT'S BEING THOUGHT A FOOLISH FEMALE.

GOOD LORD! WHAT IS ALL THIS?

THE IRONY IS THAT THIS VERY PHOBIA DRIVES ME TO FOOLISH ACTS.



THE ANTI-SORCERY... THAT'S AN UNFORTUNATE TITLE.



I WOULDN'T SUGGEST ABBREVIATING IT.

I KNOW. THEY WERE CONSIDERING "THE LEAGUE OF ST. GEORGE," OR SOME SUCH THING, BUT FATHER WAS AGAINST ANYTHING SO MYSTICAL.

THEY'VE BEEN DEBATING A NEW NAME FOR MONTHS.



REALLY, MISS CRISP. I HAVE EVERY RESPECT FOR YOUR FATHER...

BUT THIS OFFENDS REASON.



OH? I WONDER WHAT LON CHANEY HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT.



WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT?



AIN'T IT
OBVIOUS? I'M
A SCORT-ISH
TERRIER.

YEH DAFT
BUGGER.



PRETTY
GOOD MAKE-UP,
EH?



WHO
THE DEVIL
LEFT THIS
DOOR WIDE
OPEN?



ALICE?
WHAT IN HEAVEN'S
NAME IS GOING
ON?

THIS IS
MY REWARD
FOR TAKING
YOU INTO MY
CONFIDENCE?







PERHAPS,
BUT HE HARDLY
HAD A CHOICE
WITH ME.



DON'T
TRY NOTHIN'
HEROIC,
MATE.

NOW
KEEP CALM,
ALICE-

GENTLEMEN,
YOU MUST BELIEVE
ME WHEN I TELL YOU
THAT I UNDERSTAND
YOUR PLIGHT.









DAMNED KEY! C'MON, OPEN UP!



DON'T WORRY. I DON'T THINK THEY'RE IN ANY POSITION TO FOLLOW US.

I'M NOT RUNNING FROM THEM!



CALM YOURSELF, MADAM.



YOU'VE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM ME.



YOU STAY AWAY FROM ME!



AS YOU WISH. GOODNIGHT, MISS CRISP.



I COULDN'T BELIEVE HE'D HAVE THE
AUDACITY TO SIMPLY WALK INTO WORK
AS THOUGH NOTHING WAS WRONG.

BUT HE WAS A BOLD
ONE, ALRIGHT. AND
SLIPPERY AS AN EEL.



GOOD MORNING. I HOPE YOU SLEPT WELL AFTER YOUR FRIGHT.



YOU REALIZE THAT THE MOMENT MY FATHER WALKS THROUGH THAT DOOR, I'LL TELL HIM EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE.

SURELY NOT. AFTER ALL, IT WAS YOU WHO REVEALED HIS SECRET TO ME.



IMAGINE HOW HE'LL REACT IF HE REALIZES YOU LED A WARLOCK INTO HIS SECRET HEADQUARTERS.

BESIDES, YOU WOULDN'T BREAK YOUR WORD, WOULD YOU?





ALICE. ALOYSIUS. DOWNSTAIRS, PLEASE.

NO LAW TODAY. WE HAVE MORE IMPORTANT BUSINESS.



ALICE, THIS IS GODFREY DANIELS.

HE'S AGREED TO BE OUR FIELD AGENT FOR THIS MISSION.

CALL ME GOOSE.



IT'S AN HONOR, SIR. I'VE READ ABOUT YOUR EXPLOITS IN THE GREAT WAR-

AH, ALOYSIUS. WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO CLEAR UP THESE PAPERS?

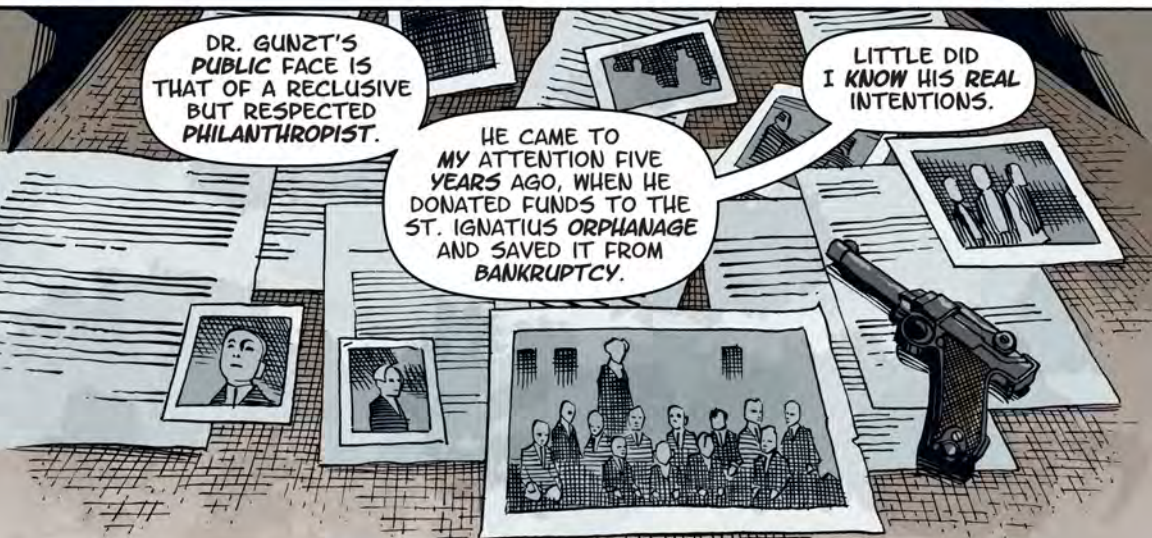
GENTLEMEN!

OUR TARGET IS DR. ELKAN GUNZT.





I KNOW SOME OF YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH HIS HISTORY. BUT FOR THOSE WHO AREN'T...



DR. GUNZT'S PUBLIC FACE IS THAT OF A RECLUSIVE BUT RESPECTED PHILANTHROPIST.

HE CAME TO MY ATTENTION FIVE YEARS AGO, WHEN HE DONATED FUNDS TO THE ST. IGNATIUS ORPHANAGE AND SAVED IT FROM BANKRUPTCY.

LITTLE DID I KNOW HIS REAL INTENTIONS.



WE LATER DISCOVERED THAT THIRTEEN CHILDREN HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM THE ORPHANAGE TO HIS HOUSE...



NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.



OUR INTELLIGENCE SUGGESTS HE'S BEEN USING THEM AS SACRIFICES IN COMPLEX MAGICAL RITUALS.

RECENTLY, DR. GUNZT HAS TAKEN AN INTEREST IN POLITICS.



WE BELIEVE THAT HIS BLACK MAGIC HAS INFLUENCED SEVERAL LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

HE'S BUILDING POWER, GENTLEMEN. TO WHAT DARK PURPOSE, WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE.



Alexander DuMonte - 1909



Ralph Webster - after civil trial



Emerson Rande

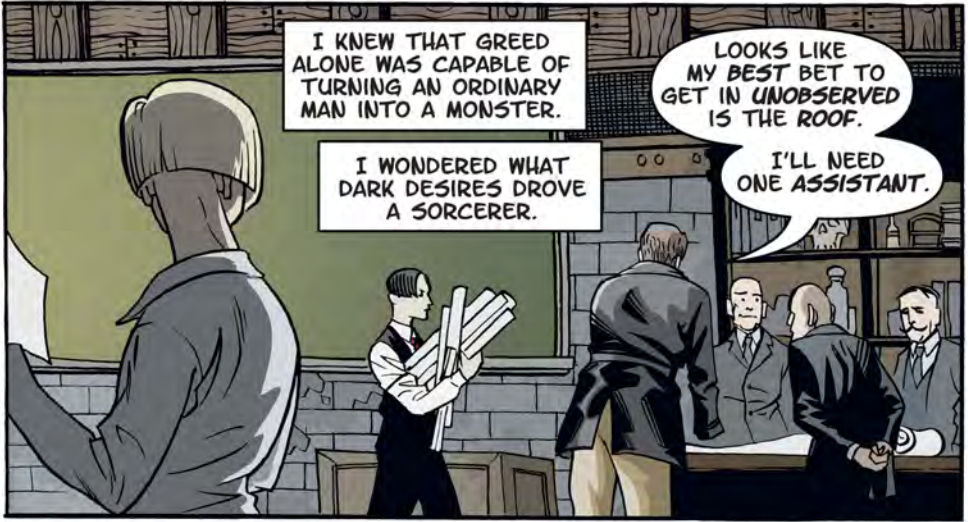
BUT JUDGING BY THE MEN HE'S PUT IN OFFICE, A PATTERN BEGINS TO FORM.

I'D ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT, AT LEAST IN THIS TOWN, YOU COULDN'T SIMPLY BUY YOUR WAY INTO ELECTED OFFICE.

AND EVEN THAT WASN'T ENOUGH. THEY WERE CHANGING THE LAWS SO THAT THEY COULD GRAB UP EVEN MORE.

NOT ANYMORE. THESE MEN TOGETHER OWN OVER HALF THE CITY.







WAIT!
WHAT ABOUT
ME?

I HAVE FAR
MORE EXPERIENCE
IN THIS BUSINESS,
AND I DARE SAY I'M
PROBABLY IN BETTER
SHAPE AS WELL.

YOU'VE
GOT A POINT
THERE.

NOT ON
YOUR LIFE,
YOUNG
LADY.

I CAN'T
TELL YOU WHAT
AN HONOR IT IS
TO BE WORKING
WITH YOU, SIR.

GREAT.

HOPE
YOU'RE UP TO
IT, KID.

oomph

I KNEW MY FATHER. THERE WAS NO POINT IN ARGUING WITH HIM.



SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO SMILE AND NOD, AND THEN DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.



I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ALOYSIUS WAS PLANNING, BUT I WASN'T GOING TO LET HIM SABOTAGE MY FATHER'S ORGANIZATION.





JUST DROP THE BAG, KID. IT'S EASIER.



GOOD JOB.



YOU'D THINK BALANCING THOSE HEAVY BOOKS WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU MUSCLES.

LOOK OUT!

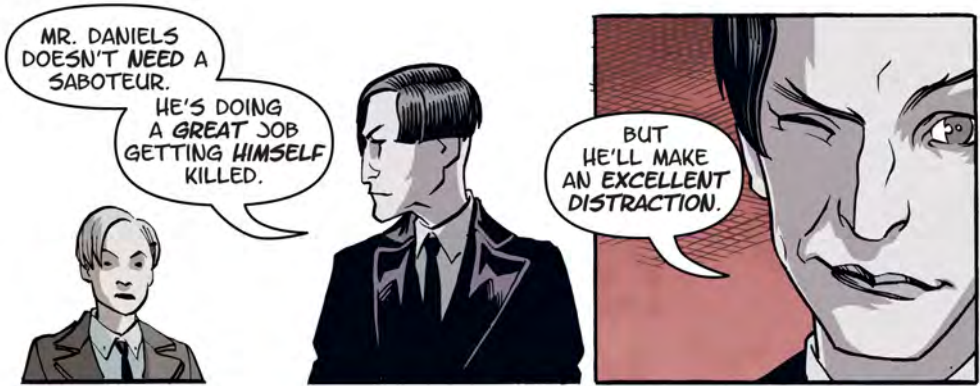




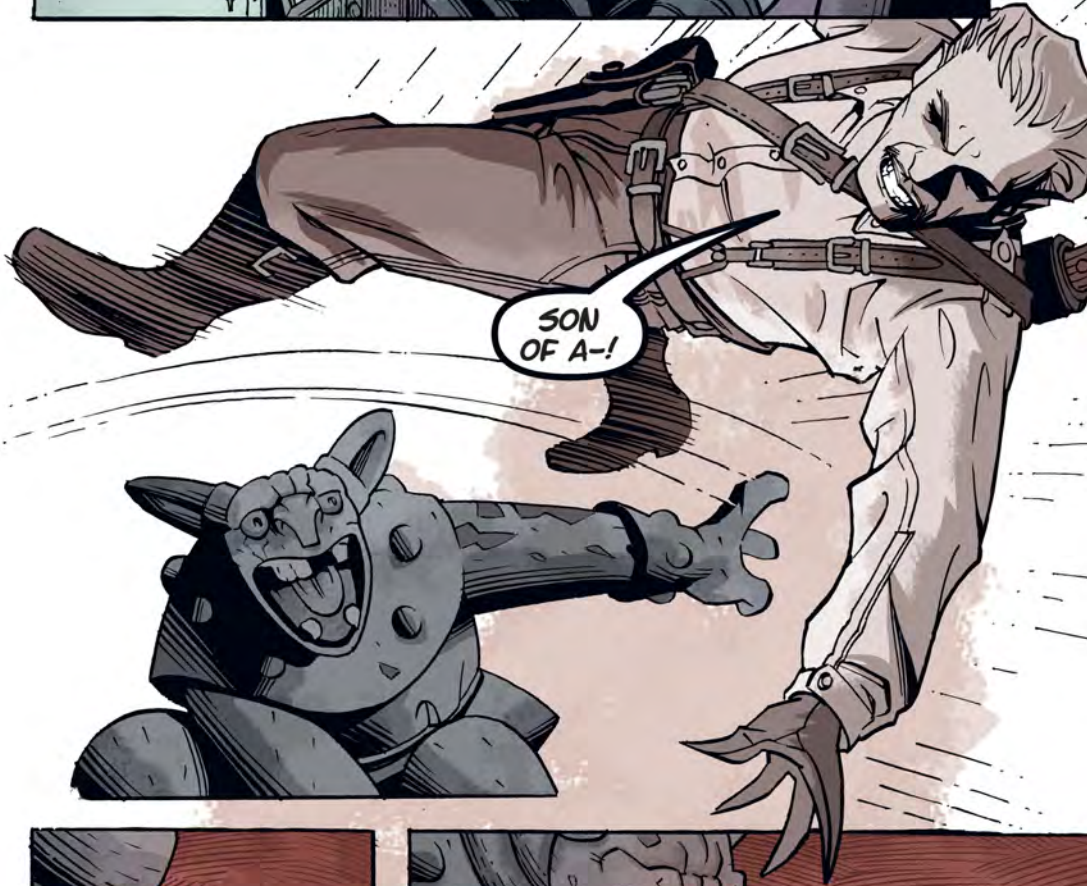














EAT THIS, PAL!



KRASH



VULGAR, ISN'T IT? EXCESS IS SO UNBECOMING IN A WARLOCK.

RATHER LIKE A MONK WITH A ROLLS-ROYCE. STAY OFF THE CARPET, BY THE WAY.



ANOTHER POINTLESSLY ELABORATE PROTECTION SPELL.



MR. GUNTZ SEEMS EAGER TO IMPRESS. I SUPPOSE SOME PEOPLE JUST PREFER THE HARD WAY.





NO DOUBT GUNZT HAS CAST A LABYRINTH SPELL ON ALL THE DOORS AND STAIRCASES.



THEY'RE QUITE DIFFICULT TO PENETRATE.


WE'D BEST TAKE A ROUTE HE DOESN'T EXPECT.



OTHERWISE, WHO KNOWS WHERE WE MIGHT END UP.




WILL SOMEBODY TELL ME WHAT I'M DOING IN THE BASEMENT, WHEN ALL THE DAMNED STAIRCASES LED UP?




YOUR FATHER IS QUITE CORRECT TO BELIEVE THAT SORCERERS EXIST THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.




AND IT'S TRUE THAT SOME OF THEM USE THEIR ARTS TO GAIN POWER OVER COMMON FOLK.



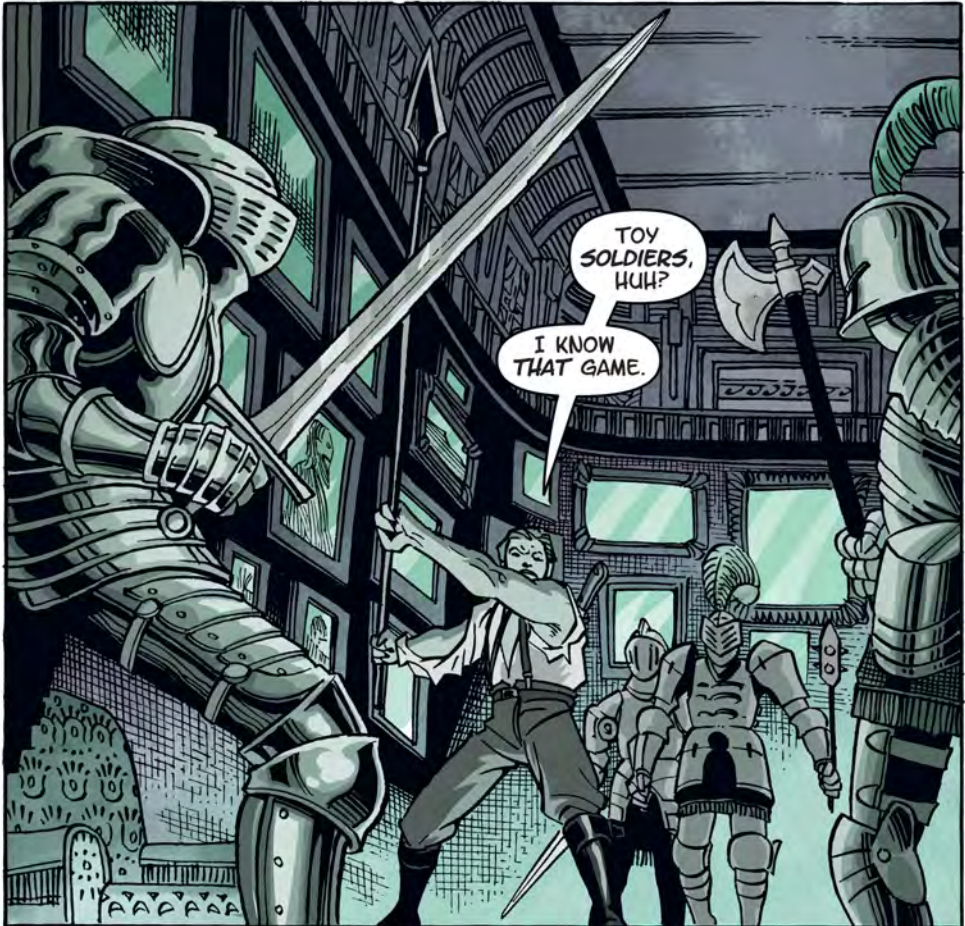
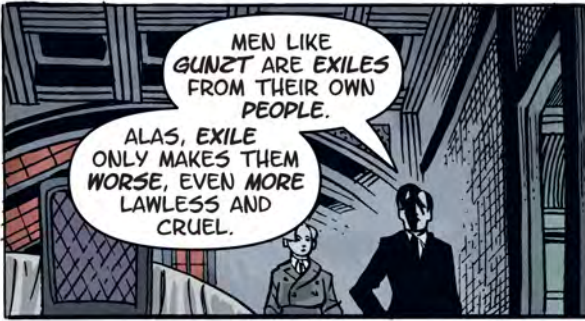
AND THOUGH HE MAY THINK THEM WICKED, HE'S NOT HALF SO OFFENDED AS THE MYSTICAL COMMUNITY.



TO INTERFERE IN ORDINARY SOCIETY IS FORBIDDEN BY ALL OF OUR LAWS.



YET, MOST MAGICAL FOLK DO LITTLE TO PREVENT IT, BEYOND SHUNNING THE OFFENDERS.







YOU CAN
PUT THOSE
HANDS UP.
YOU'RE COMING
WITH ME.

AND
YOU
ARE?

GOOSE
DANIELS.

NEVER
HEARD OF
HIM.

I'M JUST
AN ORDINARY
MAN, LIKE THE
MEN YOU'VE USED
YOUR UNGODLY
POWERS TO
CONTROL.



AND NOW
YOU'RE GOING TO
MEET THE JUSTICE
OF ORDINARY
MEN.

>YAWN<



FORGIVE ME,
I'VE BEEN NAPPING.
I DID WHAT NOW?



YOU'D...
YOU WERE
NAPPING? THEN
HOW...



OH, DEAR.
HOW TIREDSOME.

slap





I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND ALL THIS POPULIST NONSENSE.

WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE ORDINARY PEOPLE ARE FOR?



ARIEL!

OH, THERE YOU ARE.

CLEAN UP THIS MESS.



AND INFORM THE CHEF THAT DINNER TONIGHT WILL BE...

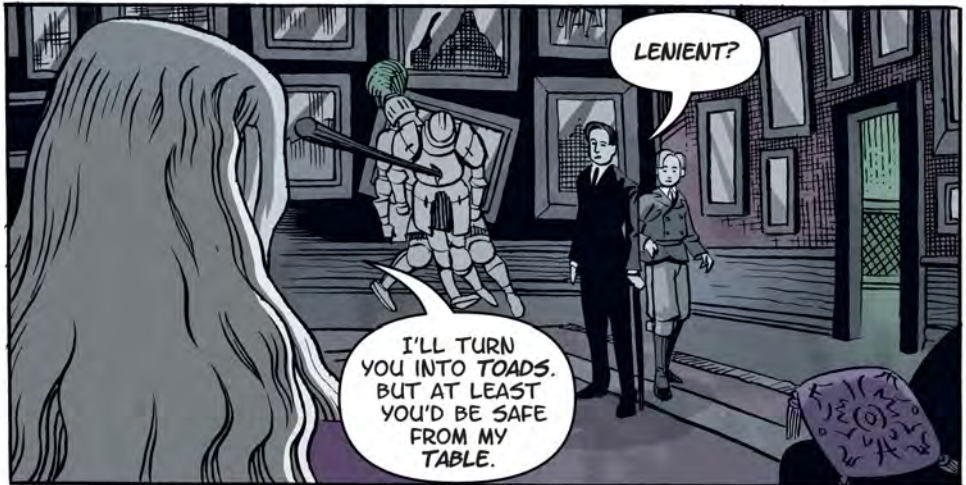
AHEM, GOOSE.



GULP.



IF YOU TWO MAKE YOURSELVES USEFUL AND HELP TIDY UP, I MAY BE LENIENT WITH YOU.

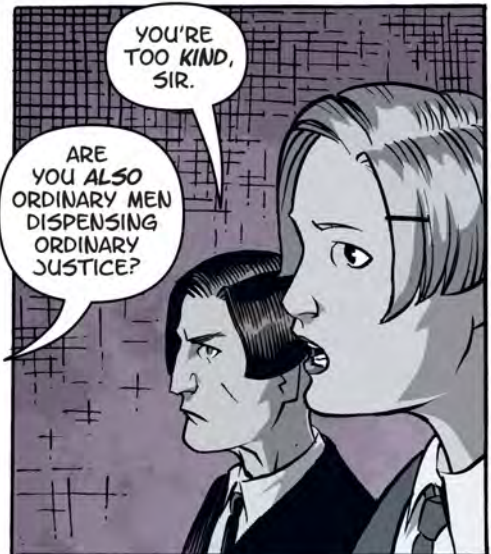


LENIENT?

I'LL TURN YOU INTO TOADS. BUT AT LEAST YOU'D BE SAFE FROM MY TABLE.



UNLESS I DECIDE TO HAVE A FRENCHMAN TO DINNER.



YOU'RE TOO KIND, SIR.

ARE YOU ALSO ORDINARY MEN DISPENSING ORDINARY JUSTICE?

FORGIVE MY
RUDENESS.

THIS IS
MISS ALICE CRISP,
DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM
CRISP, THE FOUNDER
OF THE... LEAGUE OF
ORDINARY GENTLEMEN,
OR WHATEVER THEY
WISH TO CALL IT.



HOW
ENCHANTING.



IT'S A
PLEASURE,
MY DEAR.



MY NAME'S
CRUMRIN.



ALOYSIUS
CRUMRIN.









AS I TOOK MY LEAVE IN THE COMPANY OF THE SORCERER AND THE TALKING GOOSE, I FOUND MYSELF MUSING ON HOW ORDINARY IT ALL SEEMED. I WAS BEYOND TERROR OR WONDER, AND SIMPLY ACCEPTED IT, AS ONE ACCEPTS A DREAM.



HE'S DEAD.



THE MASTER IS DEAD.





WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

BACK TO HEADQUARTERS, OF COURSE, TO MAKE MY REPORT.



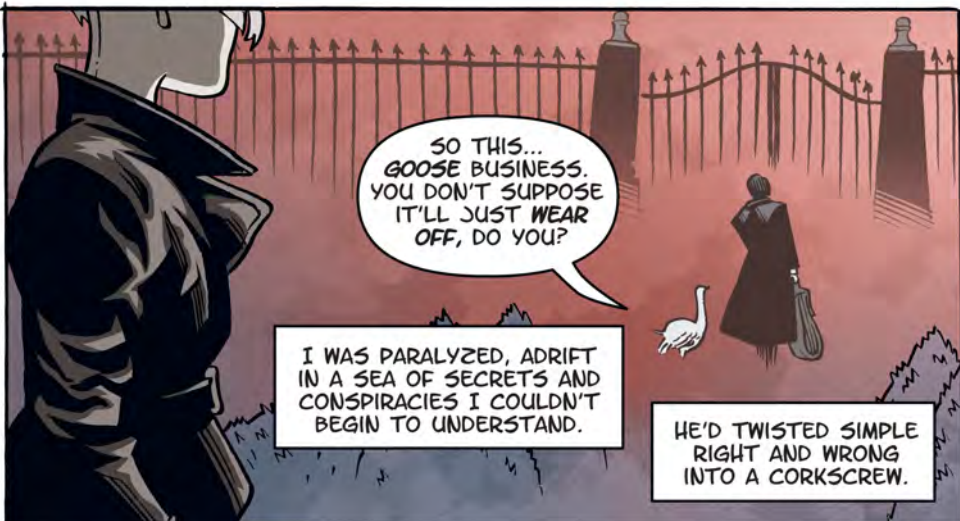
AND YOU'D BETTER START THINKING OF EXCUSES FOR YOUR ABSENCE THIS AFTERNOON.



I THOUGHT YOU WERE DONE WITH US.



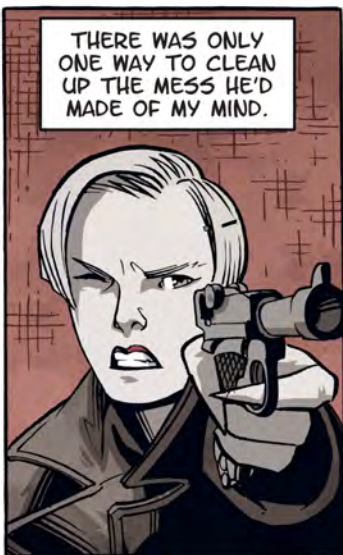
OH, NO. I HAVE A FEW MORE LITTLE ERRANDS I'LL NEED YOUR HELP WITH. SEE YOU TOMORROW.



SO THIS... GOOSE BUSINESS. YOU DON'T SUPPOSE IT'LL JUST WEAR OFF, DO YOU?

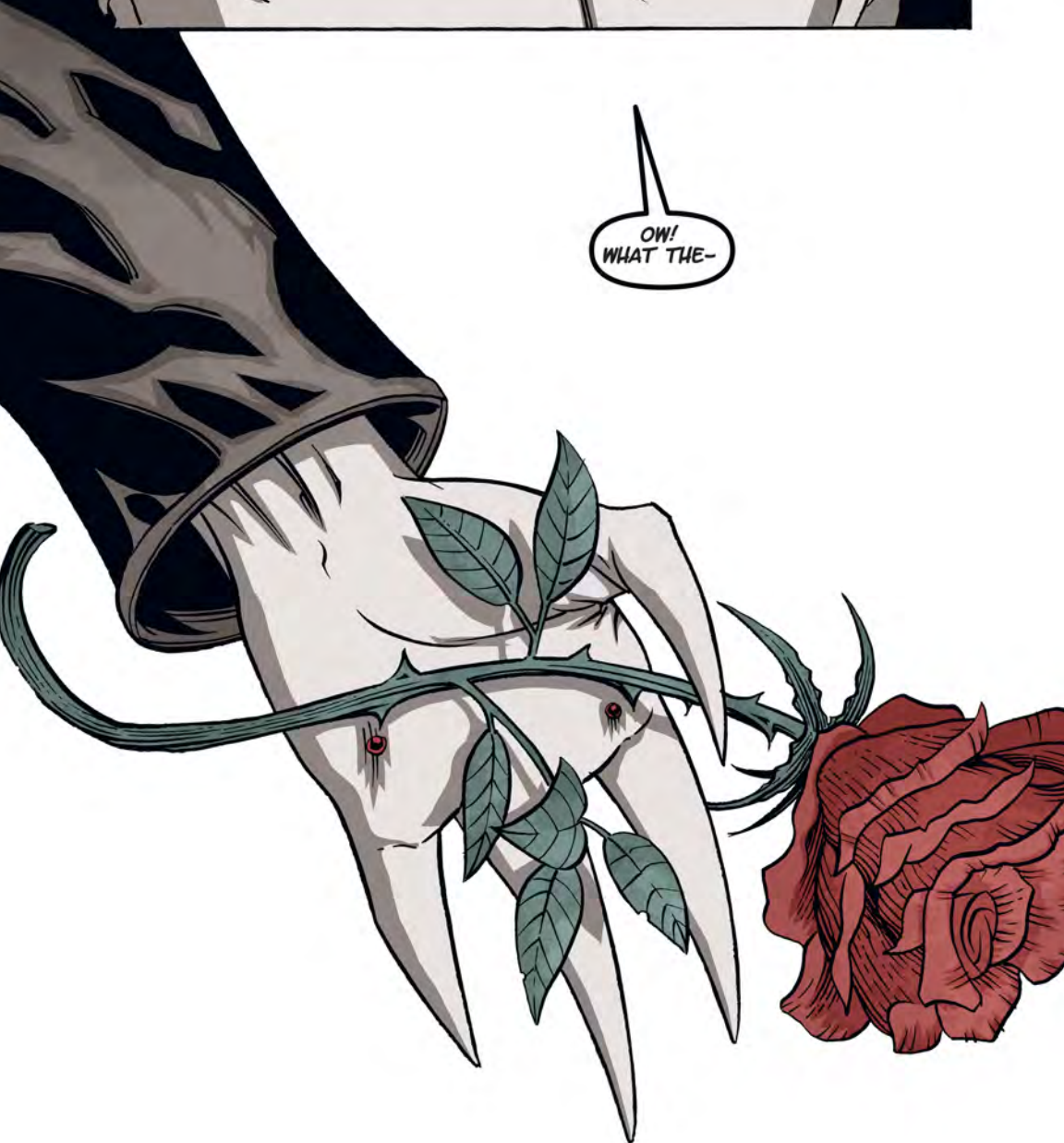
I WAS PARALYZED, ADRIFT IN A SEA OF SECRETS AND CONSPIRACIES I COULDN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.

HE'D TWISTED SIMPLE RIGHT AND WRONG INTO A CORKSCREW.



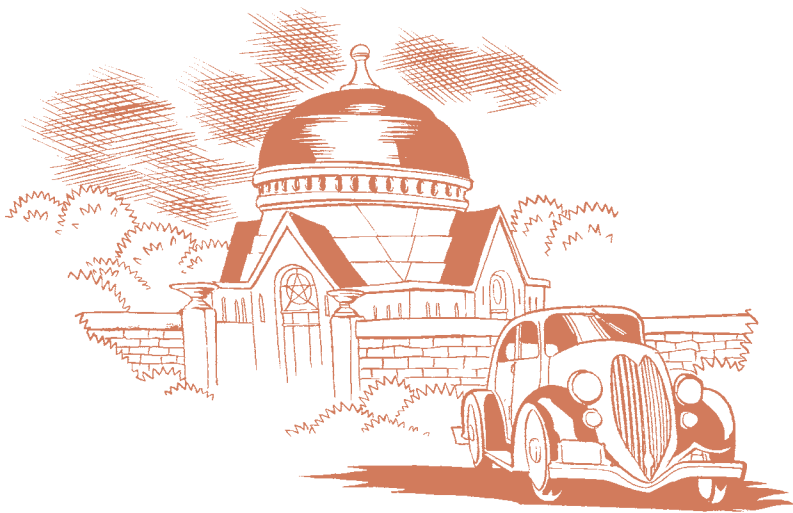


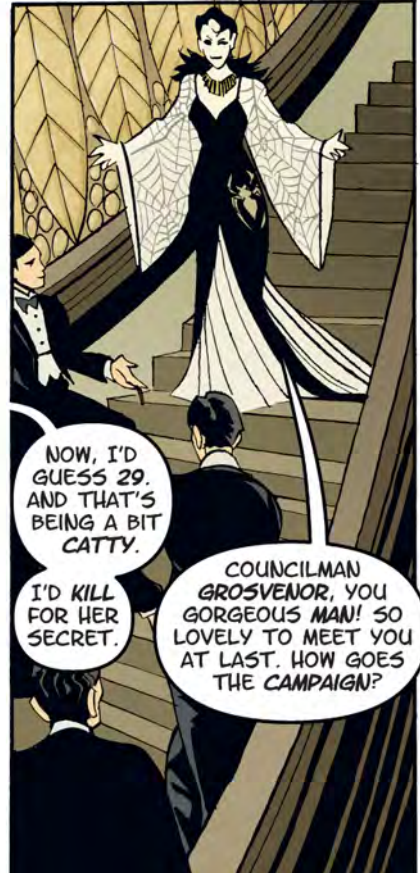
OW!
WHAT THE-



Chapter Two









OVER. IT'S JUST MISTER GROSVENOR NOW, I'M AFRAID.

POOR DEAR. THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR CHAMPIONING THE COMMON MAN. THEY WON'T THANK YOU.



CHEER UP, OLD BOY. THERE ARE OTHER PATHS TO POWER THAN POLITICS.

AND WHO ARE THESE HANDSOME CREATURES?



LADY EMMA, MAY I PRESENT MY NIECE, ALICE CRISP, AND HER FIANCÉ—

WHAT SAY US GIRLS LEAVE THESE FUSTY MEN TO THEIR CIGARS AND GO POWDER OUR NOSES, EH?

ER, UH...







...AUNT
EMMA.



ALOYSIUS?
MY GOODNESS,
YOU'VE GROWN.



IN TEN
YEARS, I
HOPE SO.

BUT WHAT
ARE YOU DOING
HERE?

LOOKING
UP MY FAVORITE
AUNTY. IT'S SO
STIFLING BACK
HOME.



AND YOU
WANT ME TO
TAKE YOU IN,
NO DOUBT?

AT LEAST
I DIDN'T COME
EMPTY-HANDED.



STAY
AWAY FROM ME,
BOTH OF YOU!

HOW
THOUGHTFUL.
SHE IS RATHER
YOUNG
AND FRESH.

SHE'S
EXACTLY WHAT
YOU NEED, AUNTY.
TRUST ME.





I THINK NOT.



REMEMBER THE GAMES WE PLAYED WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD? MY ROCK BLUNTS YOUR SCISSORS.



SHAME TO DESTROY SUCH A RARE MAGICAL HEIRLOOM. WHAT WOULD YOUR GRAND-MOTHER THINK?

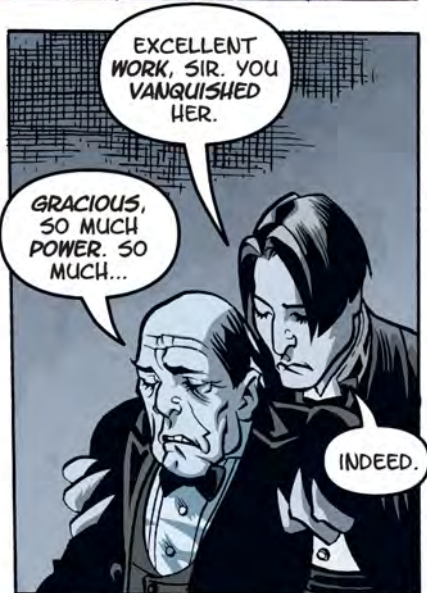


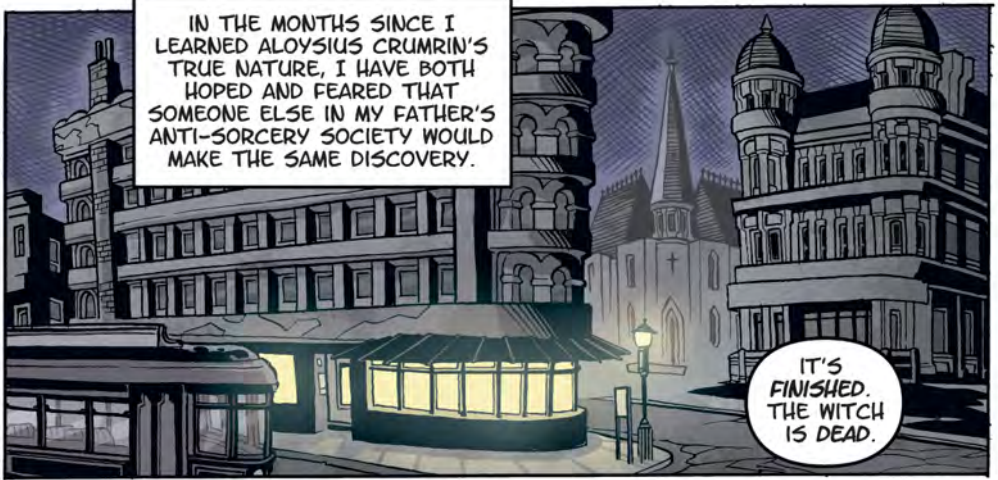
YOU SUPPOSE I HADN'T HEARD ABOUT OLD ELKAN? OR THE OTHERS? ALWAYS ABOUT HER WORK, EH BOY?

WELL, YOUR LABORS ARE AT-



BET YOU WISH YOU HAD AN EXTRA HAND ABOUT NOW.





IN THE MONTHS SINCE I LEARNED ALOYSIUS CRUMRIN'S TRUE NATURE, I HAVE BOTH HOPED AND FEARED THAT SOMEONE ELSE IN MY FATHER'S ANTI-SORCERY SOCIETY WOULD MAKE THE SAME DISCOVERY.

IT'S FINISHED. THE WITCH IS DEAD.



WELL DONE, FRED.

BUT FOR SUCH INTELLIGENT MEN, THEY'RE SURPRISINGLY UNOBSERVANT.



THESE TWO GAVE CONSIDERABLE AID.

I WOULDN'T HAVE TRUSTED MY DAUGHTER'S SAFETY TO ANYONE ELSE.

I SUPPOSE IT'S IN THE NATURE OF THE INCOMPETENT THAT THEY HAVE NOT THE WIT TO DETECT THEIR OWN FAILINGS.



YOU TWO GO DOWNSTAIRS AND SPRUCE THE PLACE UP. WE'LL BE DOWN DIRECTLY.



I SUPPOSE TONIGHT WENT EXACTLY ACCORDING TO PLAN, LIKE ALL THE OTHERS.

ON THE CONTRARY, IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU, MY GOOSE WOULD BE COOKED.



IS THIS ALL A GAME TO YOU? ARE WE JUST YOUR PAWNS, TO BE SACRIFICED WHEN IT'S CONVENIENT?

I ASSURE YOU, I'VE NEVER CONSIDERED ANYTHING MORE SERIOUS.



AND I'D SOONER DIE THAN SEE YOU COME TO HARM.



I WISH I COULD BELIEVE A WORD YOU SAID.





ONCE GOOSE EXPLAINED, FATHER LOST NO TIME RECRUITING OUR GUEST AS GOOSE'S REPLACEMENT.



IT'S ONLY UNTIL WE FIGURE OUT A WAY TO CURE CAPTAIN DANIELS.

AND WHEN'LL THAT HAPPEN?



WE'VE RUN INTO A BIT OF A PROBLEM.

I THINK I'VE FOUND THE RIGHT METHOD, BUT IT INVOLVES THE USE OF SORCERY.

I THOUGHT SORCERERS WERE BORN WITH THE ABILITY IN THEIR BLOOD.

IT SEEMS NOT. MY RESEARCH INDICATES THAT ANYONE CAN USE WITCHCRAFT, JUST AS ANYONE CAN SIN.



IF ANYONE WANTS MY OPINION, LEAVING ME LIKE THIS WOULD BE A MUCH BIGGER SIN.



STILL, I DON'T LIKE IT.

WELL I, FOR ONE, WON'T STAND IDLY BY, WILLIAM. IT'D BE UNGENTLEMANLY.



YOU'RE RIGHT, FRED. EVEN IF I DON'T TRUST MYSELF, I KNOW I CAN TRUST YOU.



I SAY,
ENOUGH OF ALL
THIS JAW. LET'S
GET DOWN TO
BUSINESS.

INDEED.
DODSON AND I
HAVE MADE A
SIGNIFICANT
DISCOVERY.



REALLY,
PROFESSOR.
IS THIS THE
TIME?

YOU
FORGET WHO
TAUGHT YOU
EVERYTHING YOU
KNOW ABOUT
THE OCCULT,
MY LAD.



GENTLEMEN,
I GIVE YOU...
HILLSBOROUGH.

A
SEEMINGLY
ORDINARY
TOWN...

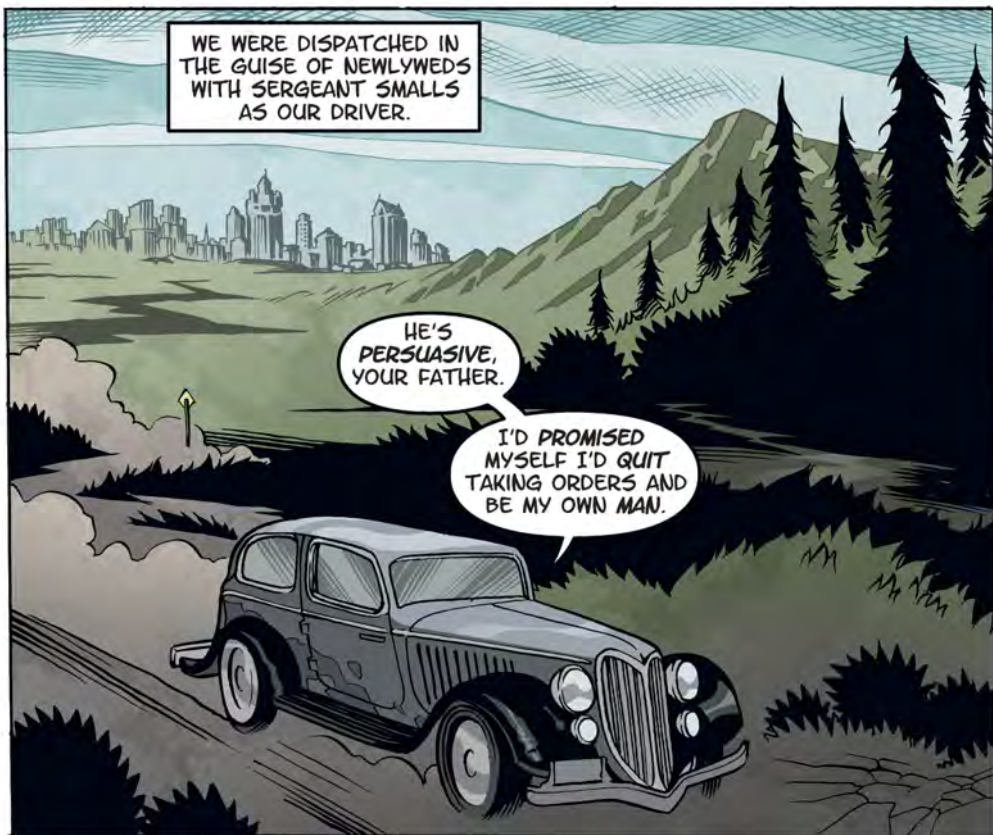


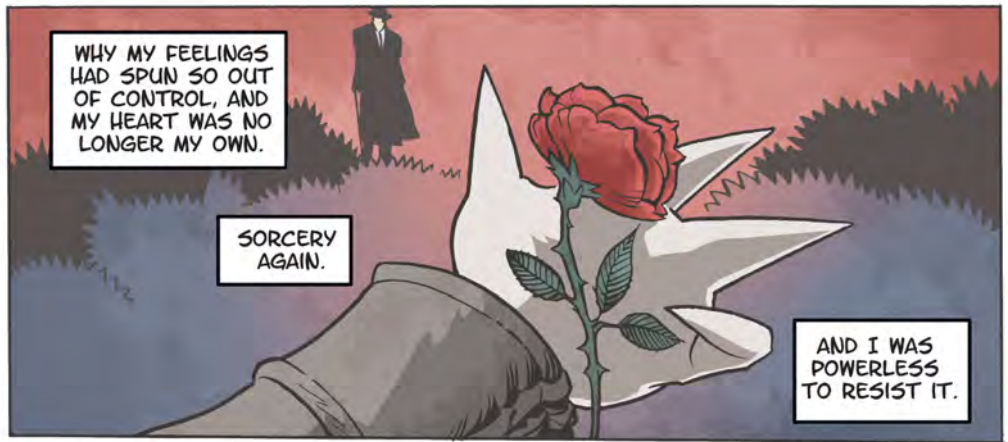
BUT WITH
MORE WEALTH
PER CAPITA THAN
MADISON AVENUE.
PROFESSOR
PEABODY?

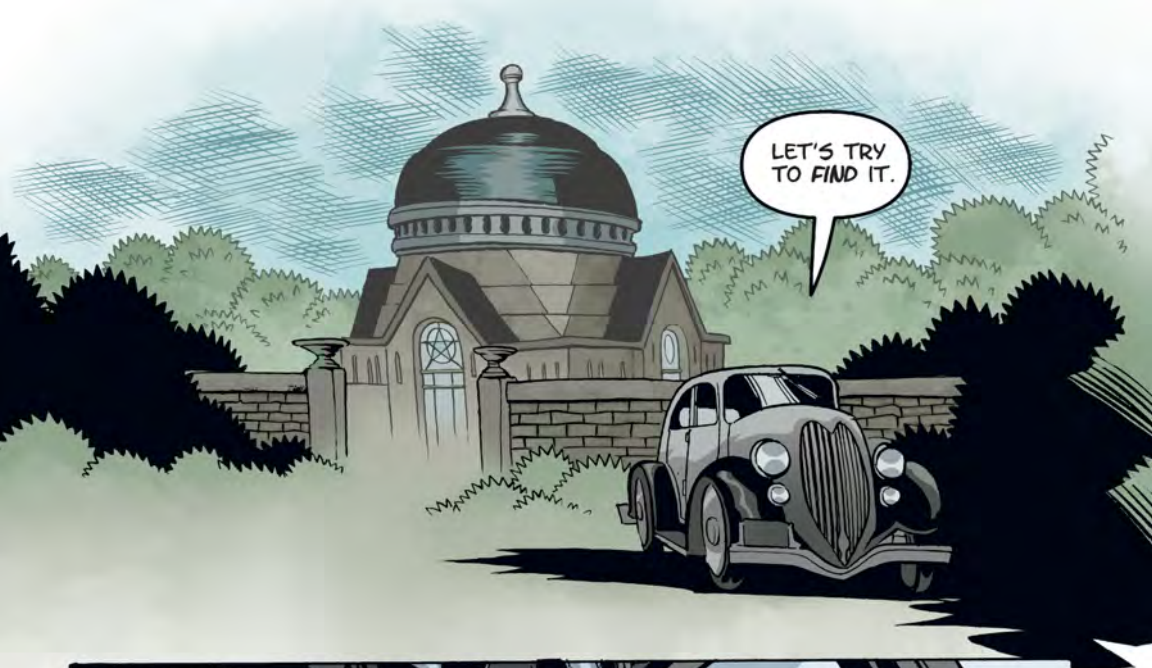


THIS IS THE
MOTHERLODE OF EVIL,
GENTLEMEN.

SURELY YOU
EXAGGERATE,
PEABODY.







LET'S TRY
TO FIND IT.



I'D SAY
THAT PLACE FITS
THE BILL.

LOOKS LIKE
MAGIC IS ALL
THAT'S KEEPING
IT FROM FALLING
DOWN.



I'D PENETRATED MANY A DARK
ABODE WITH ALOYSIUS. BUT
THOUGH I COULDN'T SAY WHY,
THIS ONE DISTURBED ME FAR
MORE THAN ANY OTHER.



YOU TWO BETTER STAY NEAR THE DOOR WHILE I SWEEP FOR MAGICAL TRAPS.

WE OUGHT TO STICK TOGETHER.



LOOK, UNLIKELY AS IT SEEMS, YOUR FATHER PUT ME IN CHARGE. HE'S A DECENT MAN, BUT I DON'T WANT TO FIND OUT HOW FAR HIS DECENTY GOES IF YOU GET KILLED ON MY WATCH.

PLEASE?



SOMEHOW, I THINK DEATH TRAPS WOULD BE SAFER THAN YOU.

THERE ARE NO DEATH TRAPS HERE.

WHAT? HOW DO YOU KNOW?



BECAUSE IT'S MY HOME.



CAN I MAKE YOU SOME COCOA?



HMMM.
HOPE I DON'T
HAVE TO MEET
YOU IN HERE,
LADY.



SON
OF A GUN.

DON'T
YOU LOOK
FAMILIAR...



YOU ENJOY
MANIPULATING ME,
DON'T YOU?

NOT AT
ALL, BUT YOU'VE
GIVEN ME LITTLE
CHOICE.

BUT WHY
A LOVE SPELL?
THERE MUST HAVE
BEEN OTHER
METHODS.

NONE
AS PLEASANT,
TRUST ME.



HAH!
TRUST
YOU?

WHY NOT?
I'VE BEEN DOING
EXACTLY WHAT YOUR
FATHER WANTS.

RIDDING THE WORLD OF
DANGEROUS SORCERERS.

ISN'T THAT WHAT
YOU ALL WANTED?

ARE YOU
SURE THIS
ISN'T GOING
TO HURT?

I
HONESTLY
HAVE NO
IDEA.

WAIT,
WHAT?



WHEW, THAT
WAS EASIER THAN
I THOUGHT.

INDEED.



LET'S SEE
WHAT THIS NEXT
ONE DOES.



















ALICE, RUN!
GET HELP!



HONESTLY,
YOU WAR HEROES
AND YOUR
THEATRICALS.



AS IF
THERE'S
ANY HELP
TO FIND.

I KNOW NOW WHAT EVE
HAD FELT WHEN SHE
TASTED THE APPLE.



WHATEVER I OR MY FATHER
HAD TOLD OURSELVES, THAT
WE WERE DECENT FOLK
FIGHTING FOR THE
GREATER GOOD...



WE REALLY
JUST WANTED
TO SEE MAGIC.

IT SEDUCED US ALL.
THE MORE WE FOUGHT
IT, THE MORE IT
WRAPPED ITS TERRIBLE
INFLUENCE AROUND
US, EATING AWAY OUR
BETTER NATURES...

UNTIL WE
COULDN'T SEE
ANYTHING ELSE.

HELLO?
ALOYSIUS?



UNTIL IT BECAME
MY ONLY HOPE.

OH, LORD.

AYE, IT'S
A SHAME, REALLY.
I LOVED THAT
RUG.



WHO'S
THERE!?!

ARE
YOU A
WITCH?

MOST
CERTAINLY.

BUT I
ASSURE YOU,
I SHALL NEITHER
TURN YOU INTO
A TOAD NOR
BATHE IN YOUR
BLOOD.

WHY
NOT?



JUST
A TIRED
OLD WOMAN,
DEAR. DO
SIT DOWN.



JUST
BECAUSE
I'M A WITCH
DON'T MEAN I
AIN'T A GOOD
CHRISTIAN.



BESIDES, ME GRANDSON THINKS THE WORLD OF YOU. I WOULDN'T WANT TO UPSET HIM.

YOUR GRANDSON?

ALOYSIUS, ACTUALLY, HE'S ME GREAT, GREAT GRANDSON.



I WERE THE FIRST WITCH IN HILLSBOROUGH, YOU SEE.



WE LIVED IN A LITTLE VALLEY ON THE GREEN ISLE, USING OUR CRAFT TO LOOK AFTER THE LOCAL VILLAGERS.

ONE DAY, THE MEN IN BLACK CAME TO BURN US.



THEY CLAIMED TO BE CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS. BUT LITTLE DID THEY RESEMBLE THE CHRISTIANS WE KNEW.

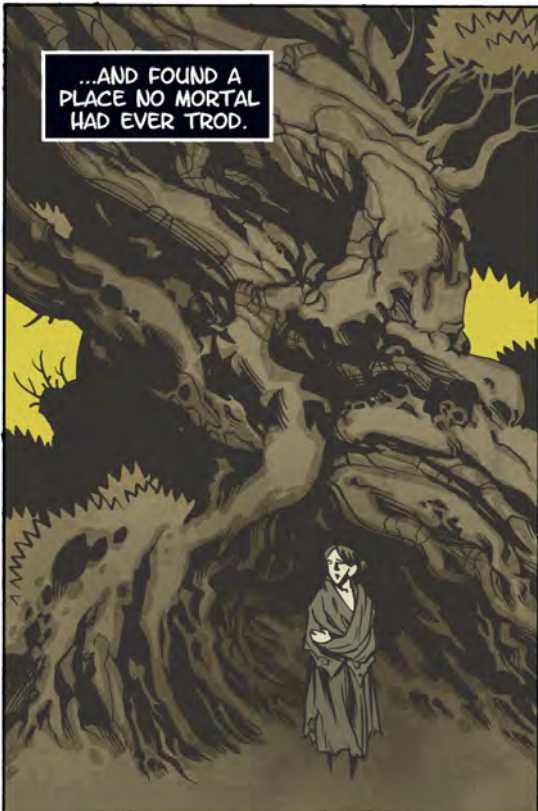
THEIRS WAS A HATEFUL GOD.



THEY CAUGHT ME
GRANDMOTHER
HELPING A
RUNAWAY GIRL
GIVE BIRTH.



I ESCAPED BY
PATHS UNKNOWN
TO MOST MORTALS...



...AND FOUND A
PLACE NO MORTAL
HAD EVER TROD.



I FOUND
PEACE THERE.

BUT IT
WEREN'T
TO LAST.



YET, THEY ONLY WANTED WHAT I'D WANTED, TO BE LEFT IN PEACE. I PITIED THEM.



AND I NEEDED COMPANY. FOR ALL MY FEAR AND DISTRUST OF HUMANITY...



...I WAS HUMAN TOO.



THEY WERE DECENT ENOUGH. I HELPED THEM THROUGH THAT FIRST WINTER, AND THEN THE NEXT. I BECAME THEIR WITCH.



EVENTUALLY, A FEW WIVES AND DAUGHTERS CAME TO ME TO LEARN THE CRAFT.

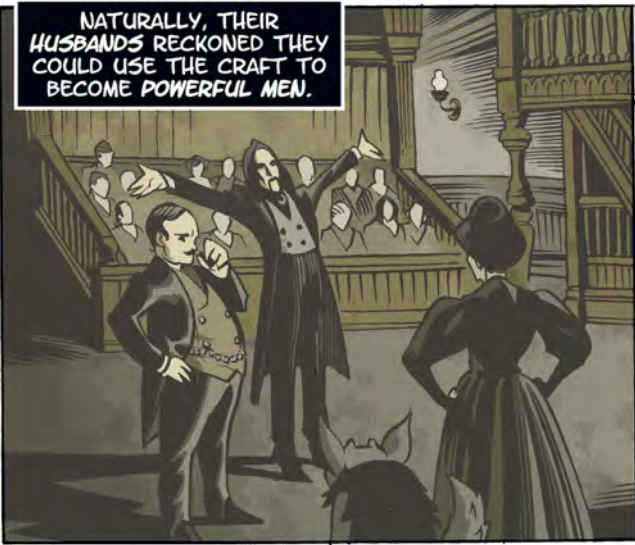
I TAUGHT THEM TO CALM THE WINDS, TO SUMMON RAIN, TO ENTICE THE SUN...



...AND OTHER SECRETS ONLY WITCHES KNOW. THE LITTLE TOWN PROSPERED.



NATURALLY, THEIR HUSBANDS RECKONED THEY COULD USE THE CRAFT TO BECOME POWERFUL MEN.



SOMETHING I STRICTLY FORBADE.



I KNEW ALL TOO WELL THE TEMPTATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT, AND HOW THEY COULD BRING DOWN THE STORM OF HATRED UPON US.

THE MEN IN BLACK WERE STILL OUT THERE.







I JUST FOLLOWED THE GHOST WOMAN UPSTAIRS.

NOTHING SURPRISED ME NOW. HORRORS WERE COMMONPLACE. MY WORLD HAD SHIFTED.

OF THE LIVING DESCENDANTS OF ME LITTLE TOWN, ONLY ME POOR GRANDSON SEES THE NEED TO PUT A STOP TO THESE WICKED WITCHES AND WARLOCKS.

I GAVE THEM EVERYTHING, THINKING IT WOULD APPEASE THEIR WANTING.

I SUPPOSE MAGIC HAS A WAY OF TURNING PEOPLE BAD.

EVEN ALOYSIUS.


WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THE WAY HE USED MY FATHER AND GOOSE DANIELS. AND WHEN I LEARNED HIS SECRET, HE CAST A LOVE SPELL ON ME...

HE WHAT?

DON'T BE ABSURD, YOUNG LADY. LOVE SPELL INDEED!





WE DON'T USE
IT, IT USES US.

IS THAT
THE NEW
CAMPAIGN
POSTER?



PERFECT.
I WANT TEN
THOUSAND PRINTED
BY MORNING.



AND SEND
SOMEONE 'ROUND
TO THE TIMES. I WANT
A REPORTER HERE
BY 8:00 AM.



I'M GOING
TO MAKE ALL YOUR
DREAMS COME TRUE, WILLIAM.
THE COMMON FOLK UNITED
UNDER YOUR BENEVOLENT
LEADERSHIP. AREN'T
YOU PLEASED?



ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE STRONG ENOUGH? YOU LOOKED PRETTY BAD AN HOUR AGO.



DOES IT MATTER? EVEN IF I WERE DYING ON MY FEET, I'D STILL HAVE A JOB TO DO.

WHY DO YOU CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO MY FATHER AND THE REST OF THEM?



I CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU.



WHY?

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?

NOT REALLY.



BECAUSE YOU'RE THE MOST HARDHEADED, STUBBORN, MADDENING, EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN I'VE EVER MET.



EXCEPTING MY GRANDMOTHER, OF COURSE.



IS THAT WHY YOU MADE UP THAT LOVE SPELL STORY?

YOU DID THAT, AS I RECALL.

BUT I WASN'T ABOUT TO CONTRADICT A LADY.



AND I SUPPOSE IT MADE IT EASIER TO CONTROL ME.

I NEVER NEEDED TO.



WE BOTH WANTED THE SAME THINGS.

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, ALOYSIUS!

I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE WE STILL DO.



IS THIS REALLY THE APPROPRIATE MOMENT?



QUITE RIGHT. MY APOLOGIES.







WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?

YOUCH!
SOMEONE GET THE NUMBER O' THAT TRUCK.

A WISE YOUNG WOMAN ONCE TOLD ME...



...THAT THE TRAGEDY OF A FOOL IS THAT HIS FOOLISHNESS RENDERS HIM INCAPABLE OF SEEING WHAT A FOOL HE IS.

OR SOMETHING TO THAT-



YOU! WHY, I OUGHTTA-

JACKSON, STOP!



HE'S NOT THE ONE YOU NEED TO PUMMEL.

SHE'S RIGHT. IT'S GROSVENOR.



SO ALOYSIUS IS A SORCERER, BUT GROSVENOR IS THE BAD GUY?

WAIT, WHAT? THE KID'S A SORCERER?



JEEZ, GOOSE. TRY TO KEEP UP.

HEY, I SPENT THE LAST SIX MONTHS LAYING EGGS AND HOPING NO ONE WOULD GET HUNGRY ENOUGH TO EAT ME-



THE THORT NEVER LEFT ME MIND THAT 'OLE TIME, LADDIE.

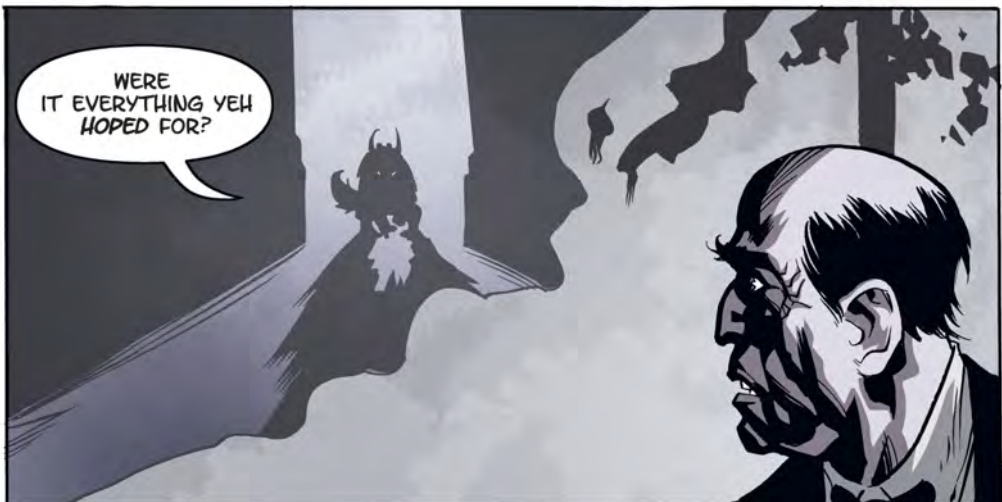


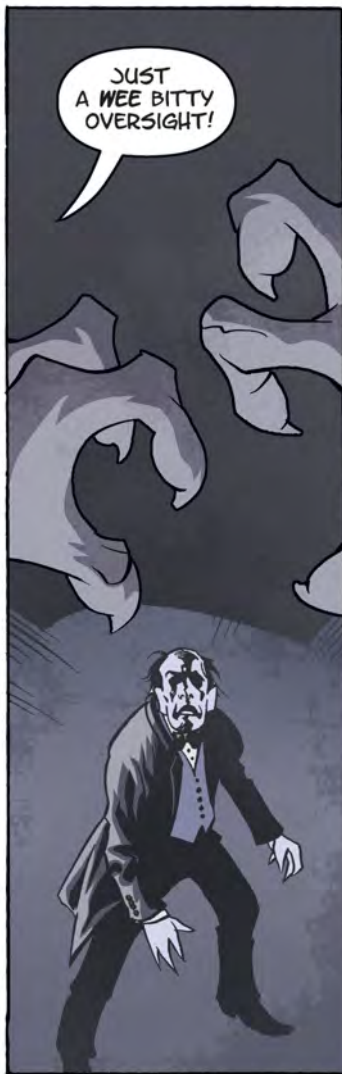

















I THOUGHT I'D SEEN THE LAST OF ALOYSIUS CRUMRIN, BUT HE WAS NOTHING IF NOT PERSISTANT.




I SUPPOSE YOU'VE COME TO TAKE ME AWAY.




IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?

DOES IT MATTER?



I DON'T KNOW IF WHAT I FEEL IN MY HEART IS TRUE...

BUT I NO LONGER HAVE THE STRENGTH TO RESIST.




DO WITH ME WHAT YOU LIKE.



YOU'VE WON.

VERY WELL.



GOODBYE, ALICE CRISP.



AND THEN EVERYTHING WENT-



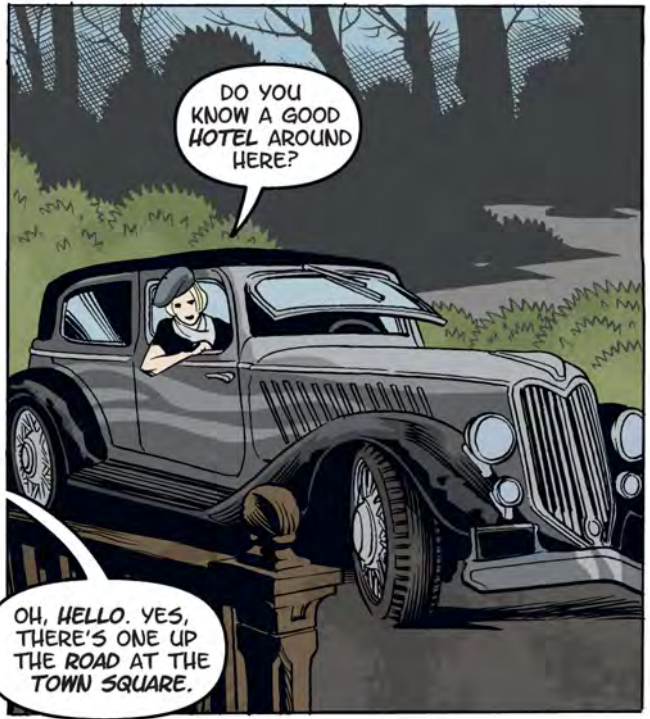
HELLO, GRANDMOTHER. I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT THESE BACK.



YOU MAY NOT NEED THEM WHERE YOU ARE...



BUT THEY DON'T BELONG IN THIS WORLD ANYMORE.





YOU SEEM
STRANGELY FAMILIAR.
HAVE WE MET?



I THINK
I WOULD HAVE
REMEMBERED.

THE
END

A FEW MORE WORDS ABOUT CHILDREN, NIGHTMARES, AND OUTCASTS



Every story has a beginning, and that's always exciting. It is a wonderful and special thing to be there for the beginning of someone's story, to watch them go out into the world and into other people's lives. You have no idea what the middle will be like, or how it will end. That's the definition of adventure.

But every story has an end, and that's always at least a little bit sad. When you love the people in the story, you don't want to turn that last page. It takes some courage to face the prospect of saying goodbye. The more you love them, the braver you have to be.

When Max entered my life, so did fear. They don't tell you that in stories. In books, if people have a baby, it's part of the happy ending, never at the beginning of the adventure.

Up until that point, I had mostly stridden through life in big stompy boots, up to my knees in adventure. I moved to the big city; made all sorts — and I do mean all sorts — of friends, mostly through Craigslist; dressed up in crazy costumes and went dancing and walked home just before dawn through sketchy neighborhoods. I shaved my head and rode motorcycles and went to Burning Man. I traveled to several interesting countries, although not as many as I wanted, and never for long enough. I practiced martial arts and fantasized about someone trying to attack me just so I could prove what a big, bad person I was.

Seldom did I ask myself, "Is this safe?" And if I did, "Oh, probably," was good enough. I made it through healthy and whole due more to luck and being a good judge of character than anything else. I learned a lot about the world and myself. Adventure is good for that. I had many chances to decide who I wanted to be, just like a choose-your-own-way book, except you can't turn the page back and try again. Each decision you make shapes who you are and what happens years later in ways you can't possibly predict.

Eventually, I wondered if there might be another kind of adventure that was worth having, and I had Max.

Then, suddenly, I was afraid.

First I was afraid he would stop breathing in the middle of the night, that the little spark that animates him would just quietly go out without warning, and I'd never see his sweet smile again. I had only known him for a few hours, but I knew that I couldn't live in a world without him in it, and that I would love him for the rest of my life. I knew that I would die to protect him without a second thought, with a smile, if I could just know he'd be safe.

When he began crawling and hitting his head, I felt like I should make him wear a helmet at all times until age 10 just to stop worrying. I became incapable of hearing or reading stories about any kind of child abuse. Maybe more than anything, I fear knowing that there will be a last time I see his face, a last time I'll hold him, a last time I'll hear him laugh. Every story has an end.

Both fortunately and unfortunately, Max is a lot like me so far. He's an adventurer. A baby of action, intent on finding out what's behind the locked cabinet door and whether he can climb over the back of the sofa. Answer: Yes. He goes over and through obstacles rather than around them. And he trusts people. Strangers. Everybody. No fear whatsoever. Adventure is his destiny.

In life, love is the true key to adventure, and the real test of courage. Max taught me that. Until you have someone you love, whom you can't imagine living in a world without, you can't really know whether you're brave. Adventures can do worse than make you late for dinner.

When you're responsible for someone, that's when you find out who you are and what you're capable of. When you love someone — that's when the real adventure begins.

—KELLY CRUMRIN, FALL 2014

As a child in Illinois, Kelly Crumrin enjoyed picking up snakes, but was terrified of tent caterpillars, which she tried to set on fire. Somehow she survived long enough to move to the San Francisco Bay Area and become a writer.

Courtney VOLUME SEVEN Crumrin

Tales of a Warlock

Cover Gallery

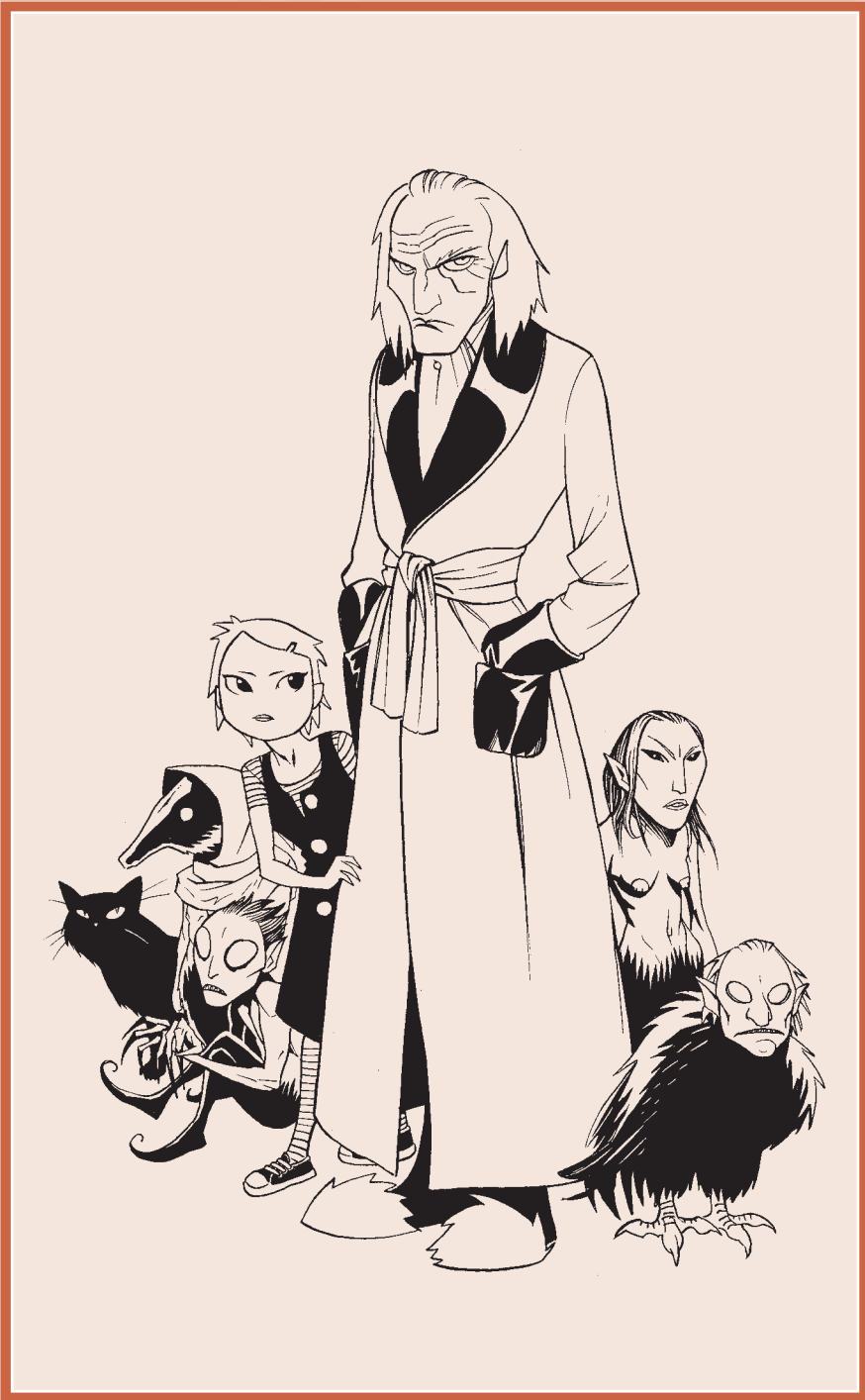




Cover artwork for *Courtney Crumrin Tales: A Portrait of a Young Warlock*.



Cover artwork for *Courtney Crumrin Tales: The League of Ordinary Gentlemen*.



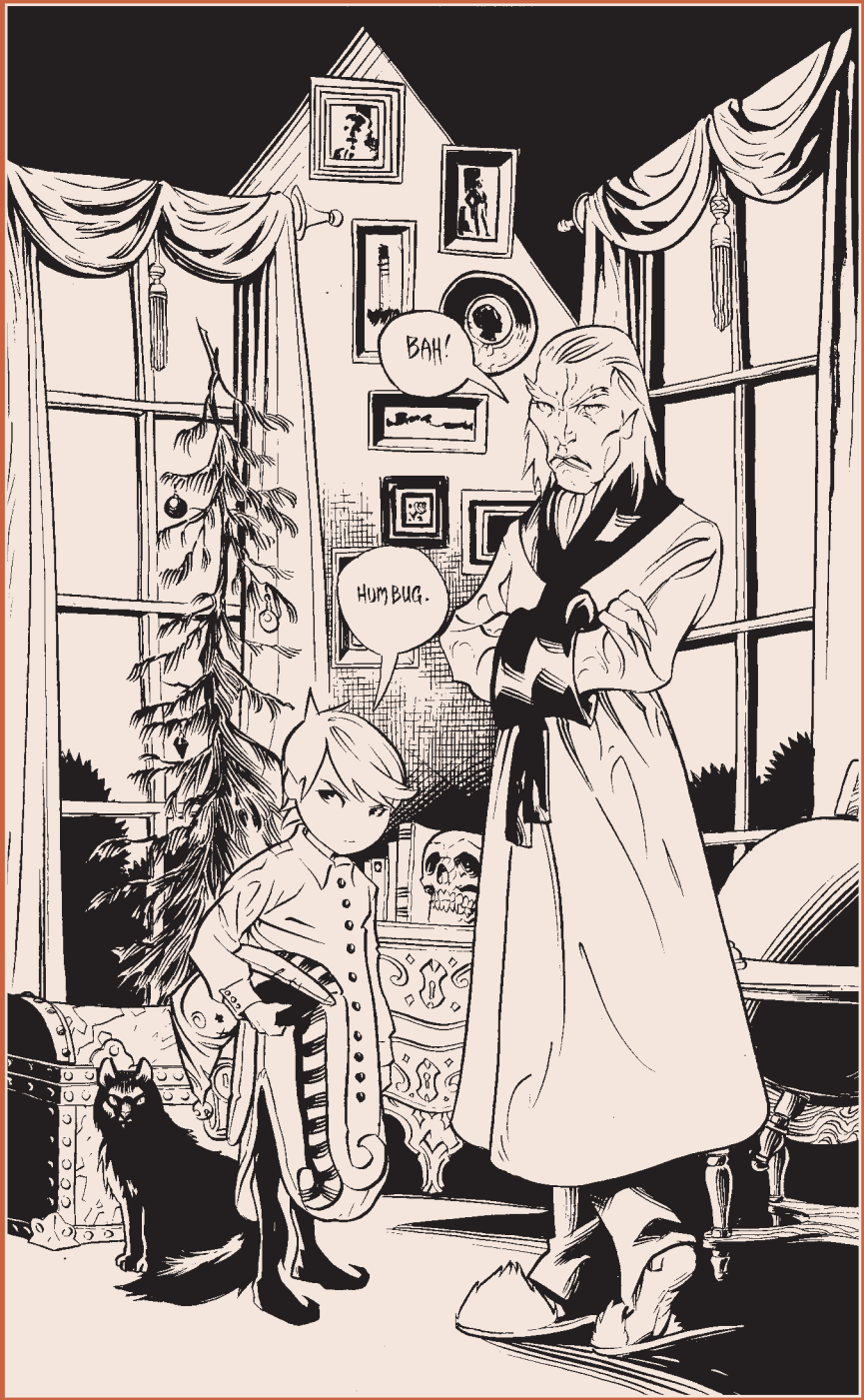
Art from an unused flyer for the original series.



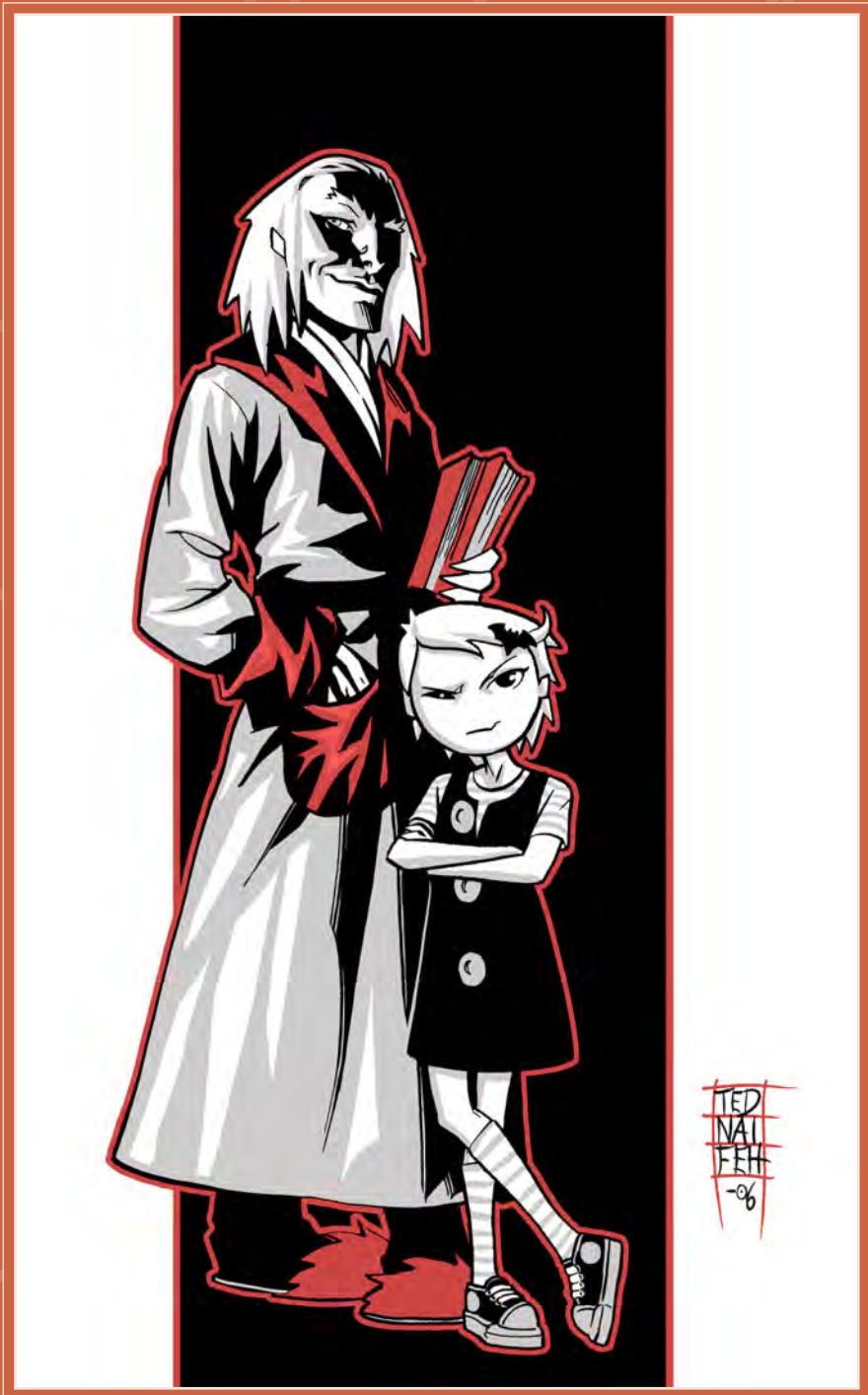
Uncle
Aloysius



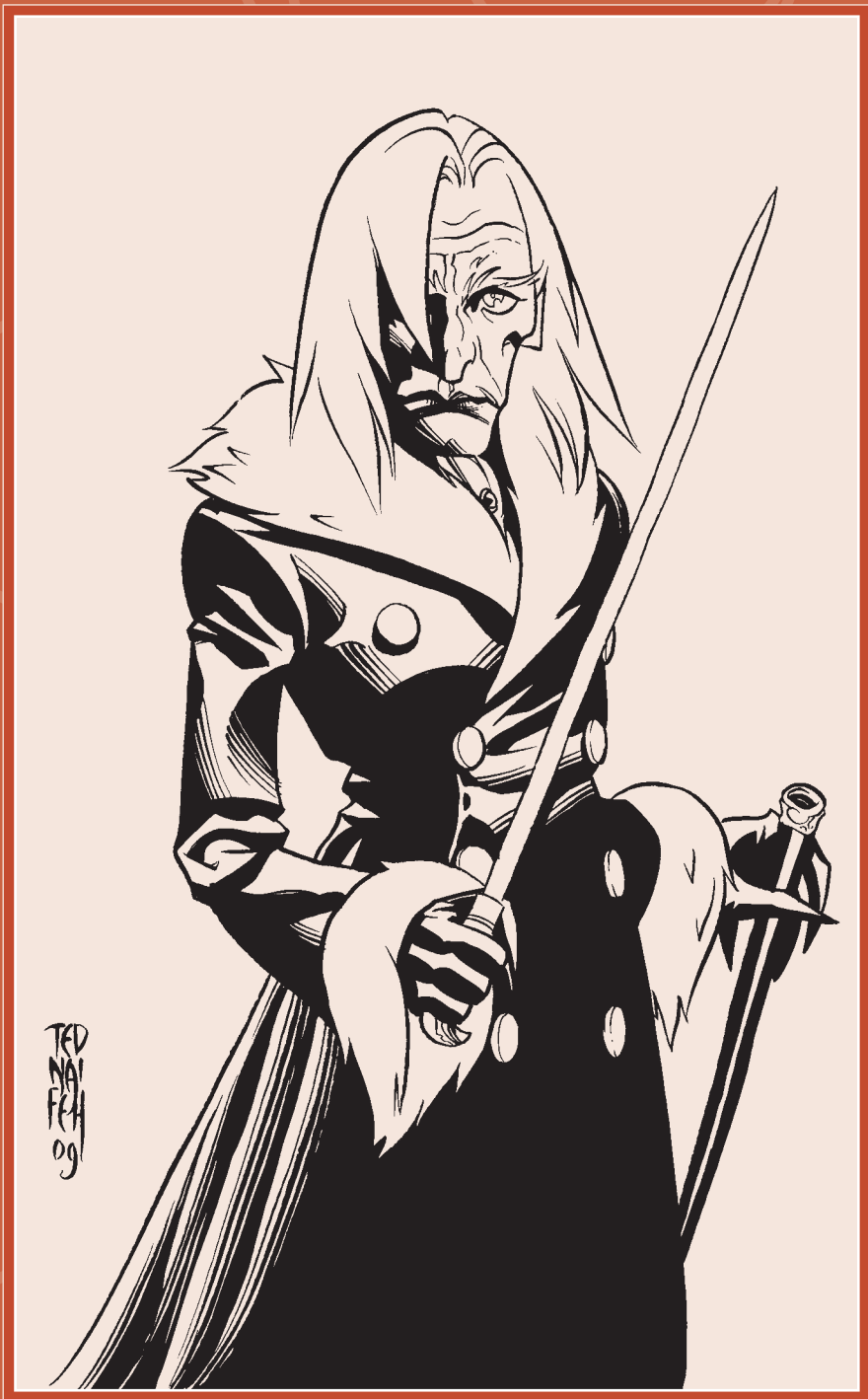
Early sketches of Aloysius Crumrin in his later years.



A Christmas pinup of Aloysius and Courtney.



A t-shirt design which was also used as a wine label.



A commission of Aloysius Crumrin.

— ✦ • TED NAIFEH ✦ • —

Ted Naifeh first appeared in the independent comics scene in 1999 as the artist for *Gloomcookie*, co-created with Serena Valentino. After a successful run, Ted decided to strike out on his own, writing and drawing *Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things*, a spooky middle-grade series about a grumpy little girl and her adventures with her warlock uncle.

Nominated for an Eisner Award for best limited series, *Courtney Crumrin's* success paved the way for *Polly and the Pirates*, about a prim and proper girl kidnapped by pirates convinced she was the daughter of their long-lost queen.

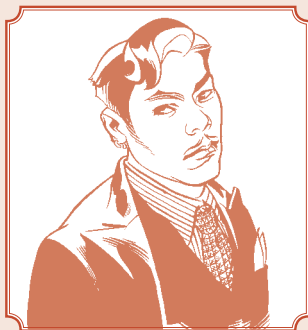
Over the next few years, Ted wrote four volumes of *Courtney Crumrin*, plus a spin-off book about her uncle. He also co-created *How Loathsome* with Tristan Crane, and illustrated two volumes of *Death Junior* with screenwriter Gary Whitta. For bestselling author Holly Black, he illustrated *The Good Neighbors*, a three-volume graphic novel series published by Scholastic.

Over the last decade, Ted wrote the sequel to *Polly and the Pirates*, illustrated by *Spider-Gwen* artist Robbi Rodriguez. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Courtney Crumrin*, he wrote and illustrated the final two volumes of the series. He followed that up with a new teen heroine, *Princess Ugg*, a barbarian girl going to Princess Finishing School.

Branching out into more experimental projects, Ted wrote and illustrated *Night's Dominion*, a genre-mash-up of superheroes and fantasy. He also wrote *Kriss*, a dark hero's journey illustrated by Warren Wucinich, about a young heir to a fallen kingdom, whose destiny to restore his birthright may be a fate worse than death.

Ted is currently writing Volume 2 of *Kriss*, and a new book for Abrams called *Witch For Hire*, about a problem solving teen who's never seen without her pointy hat.

Ted lives in San Francisco, because he likes dreary weather.



Courtney BY TED NAIFEH Crumrin

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"By turns smart, cynical, sentimental, creepy, funny and always delightful, Courtney Crumrin is Ted Naifeh at his macabre best. And in his tales of Uncle Aloysius, readers get to learn more about Courtney's world, and where she gets her indomitable spirit from. Not to be missed." –Kurt Busiek, writer of *Astro City* and *Tooth & Claw*

Courtney BY TED NAIFEH Crumrin

Tales of a Warlock



Aloysius Crumrin may be a warlock, but that doesn't mean he's sympathetic to others of his kind—especially when they step outside the bounds of Ravenna's Law and take their magic to dangerous heights. Working for lawyer and magic connoisseur Horace Crisp gives Aloysius the chance to track down these rogue witches and warlocks and strip them of their power. He just needs to keep his own magical ancestry—and powers—to himself.

But he doesn't count on Alice Crisp, Horace's tenacious daughter, accompanying him on missions, or on trusting her with his secret. And he doesn't count on falling in love... which proves more dangerous than anything when Horace gets his own taste of the power magic wields.

