



w y t c h e s

snyder · jock · nollingsworth

issue one





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witch (wich) *n.* [ME *wicche* < OE *wicce*, fem. of *wicca*, sorcerer, akin to MDu *wicken*, to use magic < IE base **weik-*, to separate (hence set aside for religious worship) > Goth *weihis*, holy, OB *wig*, idol] 1 a person, esp. a woman, having supernatural power as by a compact with the devil or evil spirits; sorceress 2 an ugly and ill-tempered old woman; hag; crone 3 a practitioner or follower of white magic or of WICCA 4 Unformal a bewitching or fascinating woman or girl 5 short for WATER WITCH (sense 1) —*vt.* 1 to put a magic spell on; bewitch 2 [Archaic] to charm; fascinate —*vi.* DOWSE —*witch'-like' adj.* —*witch'y adj.* *witch'-l-er.* *witch'-i-est*

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...PLEASE...
PLEASE HELP
ME!

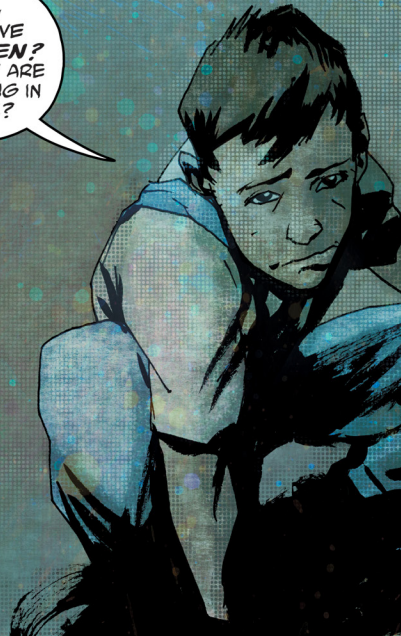


THEY'RE
COMIN'---

PLEASE!!
GET ME
OUT OF HERE!
ANYONE!



MOM,
WHERE'VE
YOU **BEEEN**?
AND WHAT ARE
YOU DOING IN
THERE?

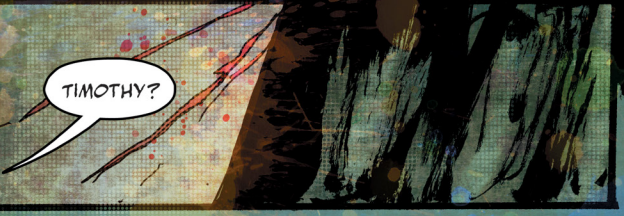
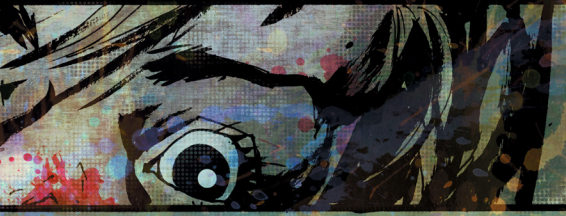




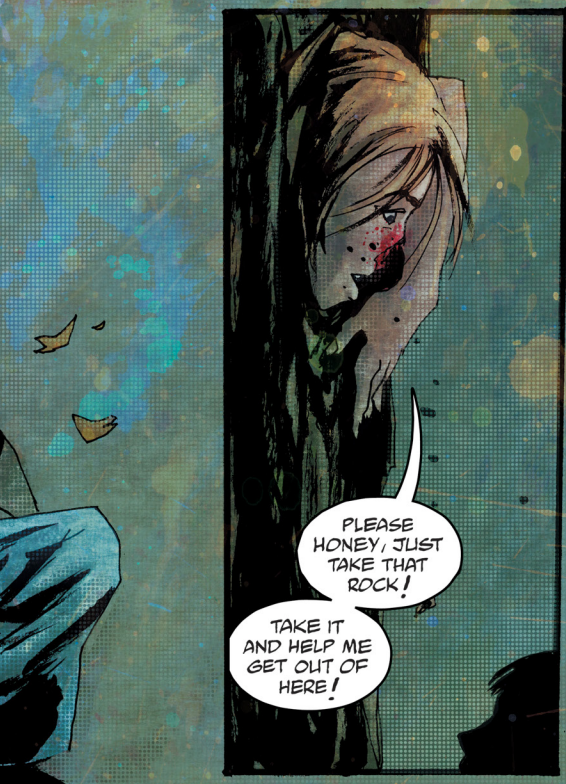
NONONO
NONONO

COME...
WHN...COME
ON!!

...MOM?



TIMOTHY?



PLEASE
HONEY, JUST
TAKE THAT
ROCK!

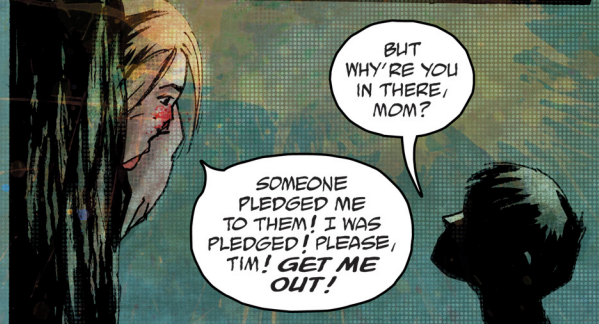
TAKE IT
AND HELP ME
GET OUT OF
HERE!



HURRY,
TIM!



HURRY!




BUT
WHY'RE YOU
IN THERE,
MOM?

SOMEONE
PLEGGED ME
TO THEM! I WAS
PLEGGED! PLEASE,
TIM! GET ME
OUT!



THUNK



TIM...T...T...



PLEDGED IS PLEDGED.



CRAY FAMILY.
AUGUST, 1919.

w y t e h e s

ROOKS FAMILY.
SEPT. 6TH, 2014.

ALL RIGHT,
I'M SEEING...
HIPPOGRIFFS. A
WHOLE FLOCK OF
HIPPOGRIFFS, LIKE
FLYING EVERY-
WHERE.

WHAT'S A
HIPPOGRIFF?

REALLY,
SAIL? HAVE I
TAUGHT YOU
NOTHING. IT'S LIKE A
GRIFFIN, BUT THE BACK
HALF IS A HORSE, THE
FRONT HALF IS A
VULTURE.

UM, THAT
SOUNDS NOTHING
LIKE A GRIFFIN,
DAD.

AN EAGLE.
I MEANT THE
FRONT HALF IS AN
EAGLE. BUT THAT'S
NOT THE POINT, AND
YOU KNOW IT. THE
POINT IS...

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SNYDER**

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JOCK

color
**MATT
HOLLINGSWORTH**

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editor
DAVID BROTHERS



THE HIPPOGRIFFS... MUST DIE, SO. HOW?



MMMM. DEATH BY EXPLOSION.



OKAY, OKAY. LIKE, SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION?



NAH. DYNAMITE. LET'S GO OLD SCHOOL, TOO. LIKE **CHUCK JONES**, WILE E. COYOTE HOT DOG DYNAMITE.



NIICCCCE. IN THEIR BUTTS?



EW! DAAAD...



YOU MADE IT UP, SICKO.

I DID NOT! I WAS GOING TO SAY MOUTHS.

ALL RIGHT, THEN. BUTTS AND MOUTHS.

WHAT ARE YOU, LIKE FIVE YEARS OLD?



MAYBE...

YOU FEEL BETTER NOW, THOUGH?



...YEAH.

I'M ALL RIGHT. I JUST...

JUST WHAT, SAIL?



I DON'T KNOW. I MEAN, WHAT IF THEY ALL KNOW ABOUT ME?

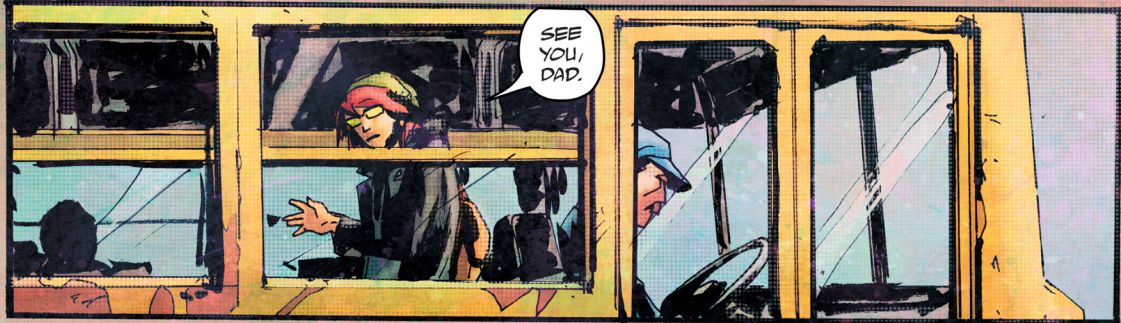
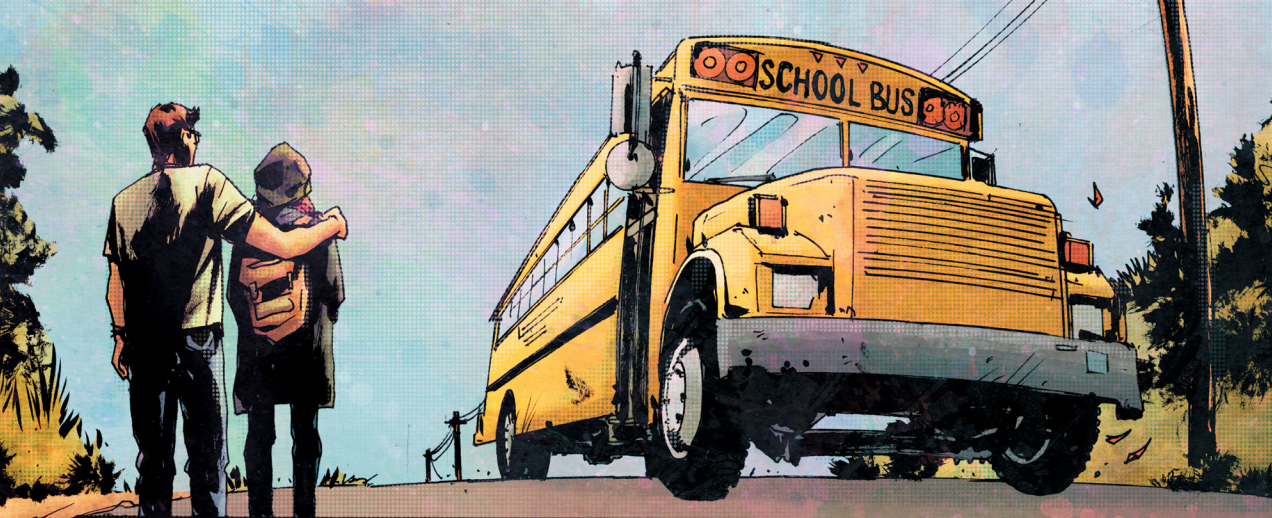
WELL, HOPEFULLY THEY WON'T.

BUT IF THEY DO...IF THEY DO, IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU'RE THE MOST FEARED SLAYER OF CUTE MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES IN THE LAND, OKAY? AND YOUR MOM AND I LOVE YOU, AND...

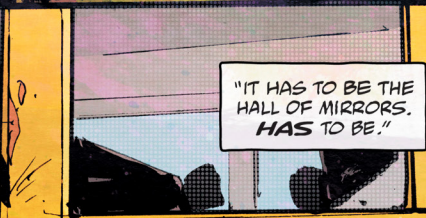
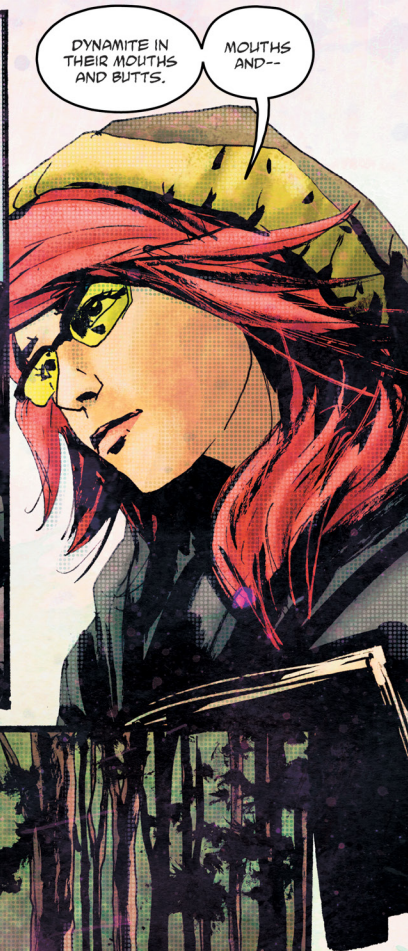
...IF THE ANXIETY COMES ON, YOU CAN CALL US. HELL, JUST CALL MY CELL AND I'LL COME GET YOU AND--

HONK









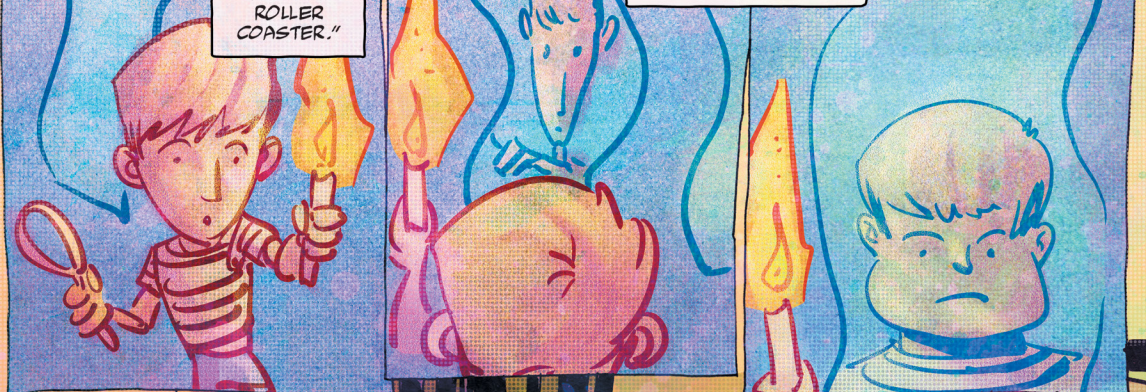
"I'M TELLING YOU, REG, IT'S GOING TO BE SPECIAL. I'M WORKING ON THE FIRST SKETCHES NOW."

"CHARLIE, EVERY VOLUME IS SPECIAL. BUT YOU TOLD ME IT WAS ROLLER COASTER. I SOLD THEM ON ROLLER COASTER."

"I KNOW, I KNOW. BUT THIS IS BETTER. I SWEAR, LIKE **EXPONENTIALLY** BETTER. HEAR ME OUT."

"I'LL HEAR YOU OUT, BUT THEIR LOGIC IS: YOU WRITE AND DRAW A SERIES ABOUT A KID WHOSE GRAND-FATHER OWNS A MAGIC AMUSEMENT PARK. YOUR MAIN CHARACTER IS A TEN YEAR OLD BOY."

"IN YOUR FIRST BOOK HE ENTERS THE WORLD OF THE FUN HOUSE. FINE. I CAN SEE THAT, MAYBE. BUT WHAT RED BLOODED TEN YEAR OLD BOY ISN'T GOING TO MAKE A BEELINE FOR THE **ROLLER COASTER** NEXT, AT LEAST?"



MAYBE TAYLOR GETS MOTION SICKNESS, HOW ABOUT THAT? THERE, DONE. SO, THE HALL OF MIRRORS. A REVERSE WORLD.

HOW ABOUT THE TUNNEL OF LOVE?

HE'S THIRTEEN.

YOU REMEMBER ME AT THIRTEEN? BETH HERSHEY.

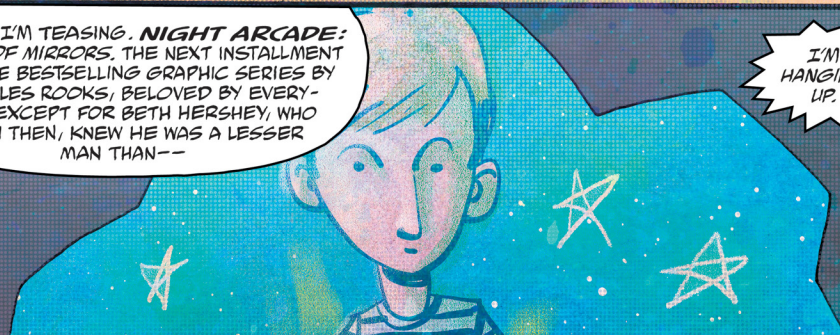
I REMEMBER BETH HERSHEY.

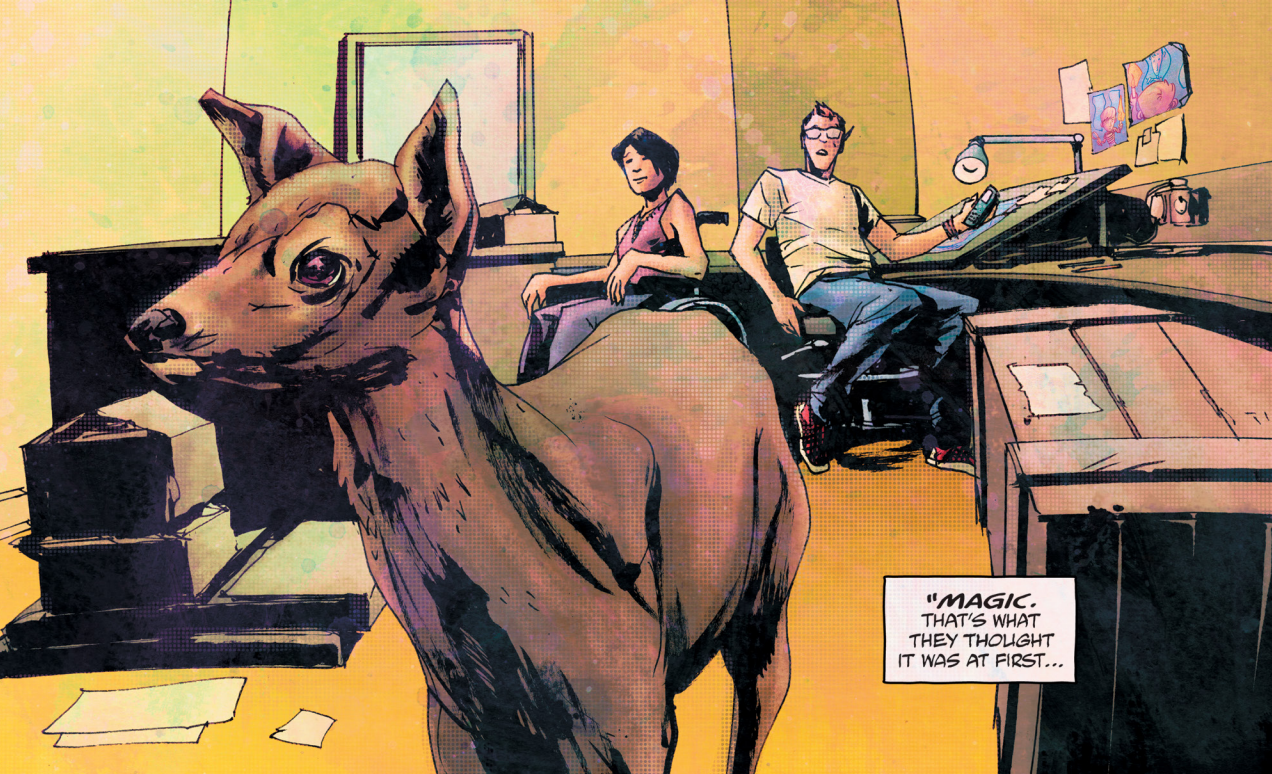
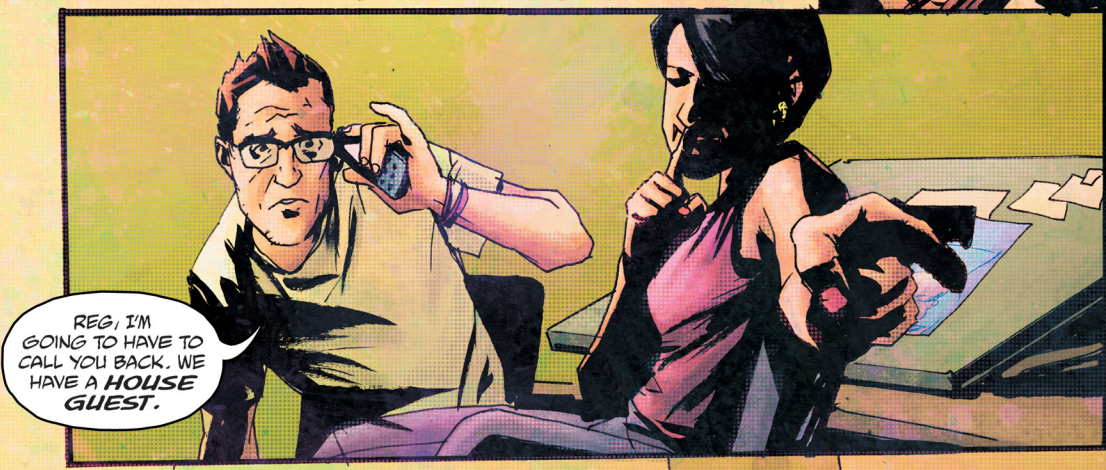
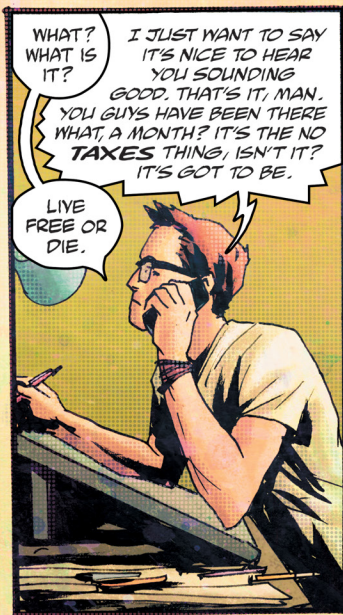


HA. I'M TEASING. NIGHT ARCADE: HALL OF MIRRORS. THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF THE BESTSELLING GRAPHIC SERIES BY CHARLES ROOKS, BELOVED BY EVERYONE EXCEPT FOR BETH HERSHEY, WHO EVEN THEN, KNEW HE WAS A LESSER MAN THAN--

I'M HANGING UP.

WAIT, WAIT, WAIT. I JUST WANT...



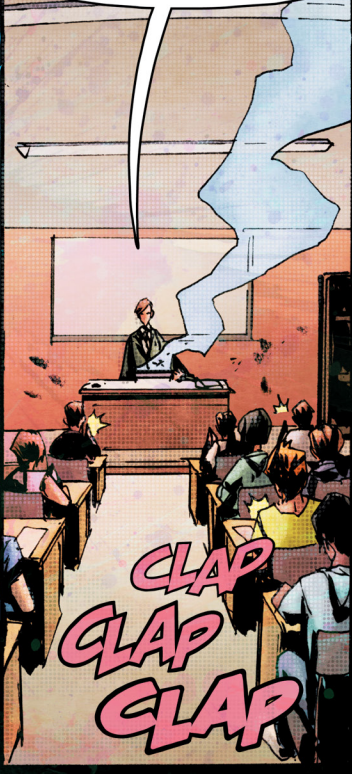
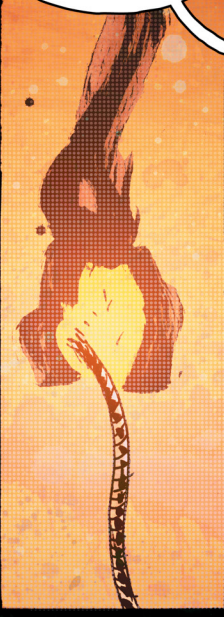
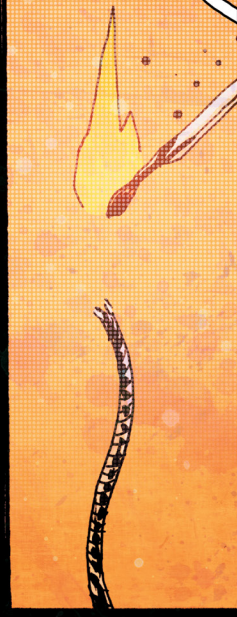


...BLACK MAGIC, I SHOULD SAY, BECAUSE THE KEY WAS A MYSTERIOUS BLACK POWDER. A MIXTURE OF SULFUR, CHARCOAL AND POTASSIUM NITRATE...

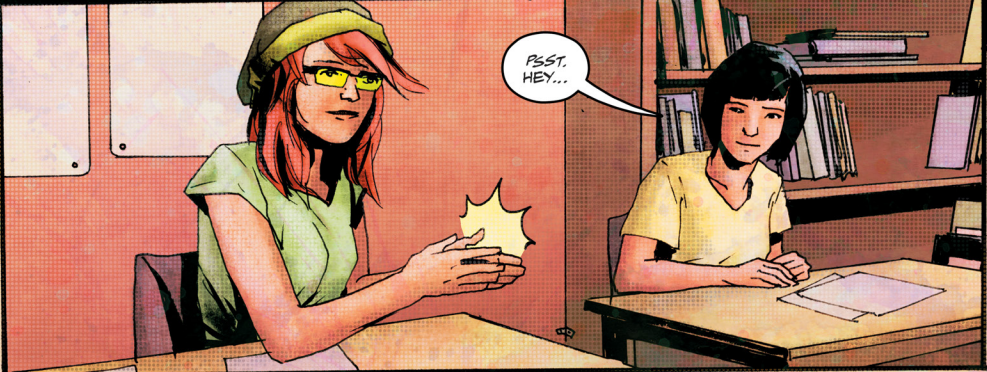
GUNPOWDER. BUT... AS THEY DISCOVERED NOT LONG AFTER, IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY, THE REAL MAGIC HAPPENS WHEN YOU REPLACE POTASSIUM NITRATE WITH POTASSIUM CHLORATE...

FIREWORKS!

AND...I THINK I JUST LOST MY EYEBROWS. BUT HEY, ALL FOR SCIENCE, RIGHT?



CLAP
CLAP
CLAP



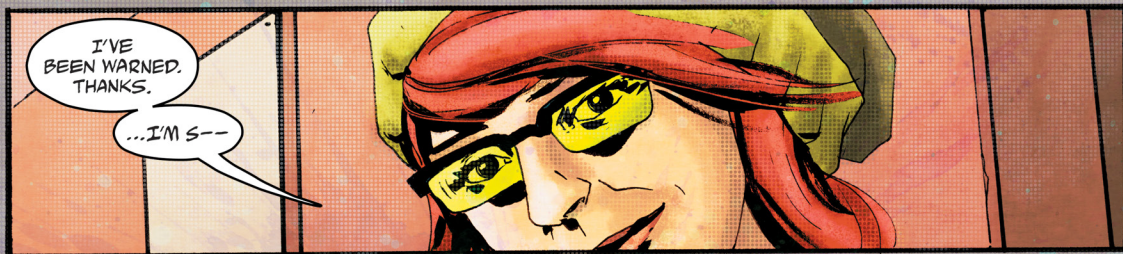
PSST. HEY...

...JUST TO LET YOU KNOW? HE'S A DICK BRUSHER.

HIM. PROF. LOUGHLIN. HE'S COOL, BUT IF YOU GET CLOSE, HE'LL BRUSH YOU WITH HIS DICK. IN HIS PANTS, OF COURSE, BUT STILL. BEWARE THE ERRANT DICK BRUSH.

A WHAT?





ANNIE,
LOOK.
I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
THE HELL
YOU THINK
I--

"BULLIES
SUCK."

YEAH,
YOU TOOK
IT DOWN, LIKE,
A SECOND
LATER.

BUT YOU
POSTED
IT.



...



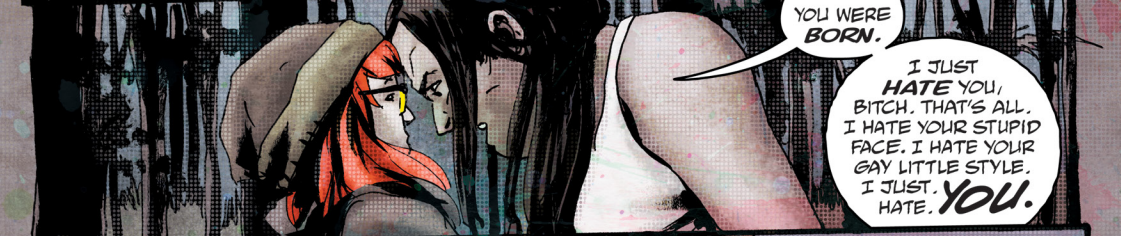
I'M GOING
TO **HURT** YOU
BAD TODAY,
SAIL-WHORE.

NOT A
GUT PUNCH.
NOT YOUR **CHEST**
AGAIN. I'M GOING
TO LEAVE A
MARK.



WHY,
ANNIE?

WHY DO YOU **HATE**
ME?! FOR A YEAR, YOU'VE
MADE MY LIFE **SHIT**, AND
I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT
I EVER **DID** TO Y--



YOU WERE
BORN.

I JUST
HATE YOU,
BITCH. THAT'S ALL.
I HATE YOUR STUPID
FACE. I HATE YOUR
GAY LITTLE STYLE.
I JUST **HATE. YOU.**



FUCK
YOU, ANNIE.

WHAT'D
YOU SAY?



I SAID
FUCK
YOU!

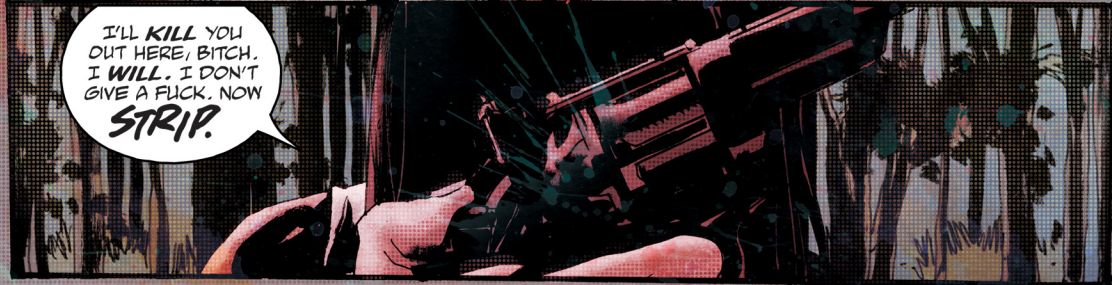
I'M NOT
TAKING IT
ANYMORE! THIS IS
FLUCKING OVER,
YOU HEAR
ME?!!



NOW HERE'S WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO. YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE YOUR CLOTHES OFF. **ALL** OF THEM.

AND THEN YOU'RE GOING TO **FUCK** YOURSELF WITH THE HANDLE OF THAT KNIFE, AND YOU'RE GOING TO ACT LIKE IT'S THE **BEST** THING IN THE **WORLD**.

AND ME, I'M GOING TO **FILM** IT. AND I'M GOING TO **POST** IT. AND **EVERY-ONE** WILL SEE YOU'RE JUST A DUMB **LITTLE SAIL-WHORE**.



CHHIT
CHHIT

WHAT THE
FUCK WAS
THAT?

IF YOU TOLD ANYONE,
YOUR PARENTS, ANY-
ONE, I'LL KILL THEM,
TOO! I DON'T CARE
ANYMORE, YOU GET IT?

**I! DON'T!
CARE!!**

**I DIDN'T!
I DIDN'T TELL
ANYONE!**



**CHITTT-
CHITTTT...**





AAAAHHHHH!

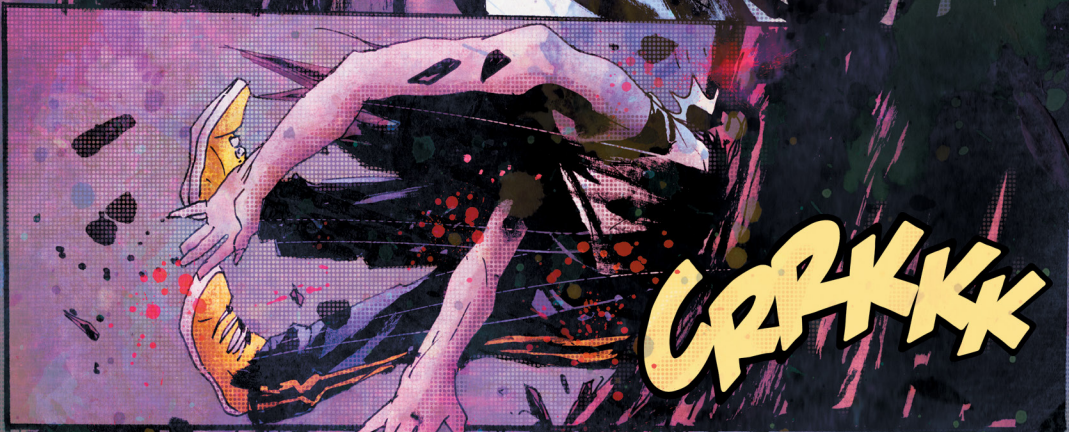
UNNNHH!!



AANNNNNIEEE!!



**HELP!
HELP!
HEL--**



CRACKK



EEEEEEEEEEEE



EEEEEE



EEEE



EEEEEESSSSHHH



CHITTY-
CHITTT

"IT FEELS
UNNATURAL..."



...I MEAN,
YOU GUYS NOT
BEING ON THE
SAME FLOOR AS
ME. IT'S JUST...
OFF.

WE
SHOULD HAVE
THE BANNISTER
CHAIR WORKING IN
THE NEXT COUPLE
DAYS, AND YOUR MOM
WILL HAVE AN EASY
TIME COMING UP,
TOO.



WE CAN
DO FAMILY
BOOKS.

DAD,
WE HAVEN'T
DONE FAMILY
BOOKS SINCE
I WAS LIKE,
EIGHT.

I KNOW, BUT
I'M THINKING OF
REINSTATING THE
PRACTICE.

WE SHOULD VOTE.
A FAMILY IS A
DEMOCRACY.

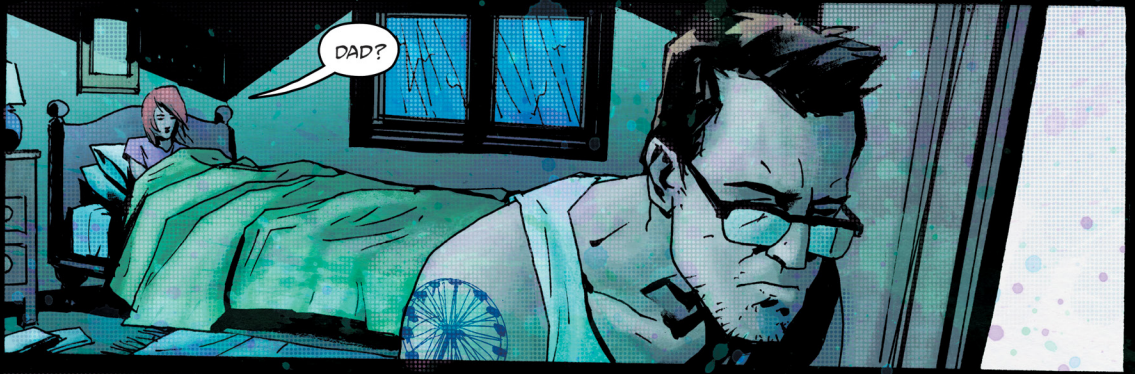


YEAH,
DAD, I
TOLD YOU.
THEY WERE
FINE.

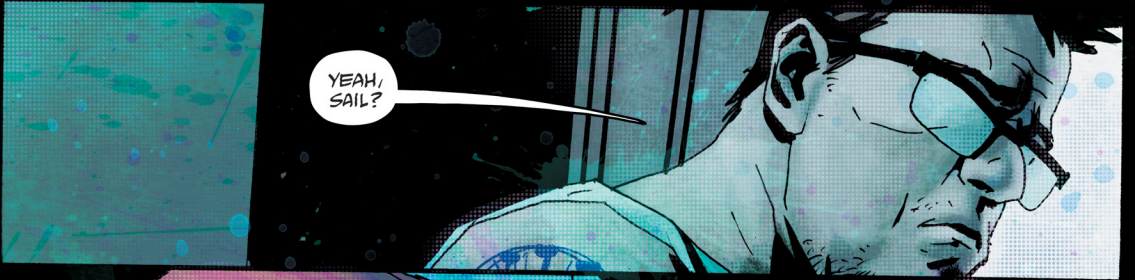
ALL
RIGHT, ALL
RIGHT, SO...
LAST TIME,
THINGS WERE
OKAY AT
SCHOOL?



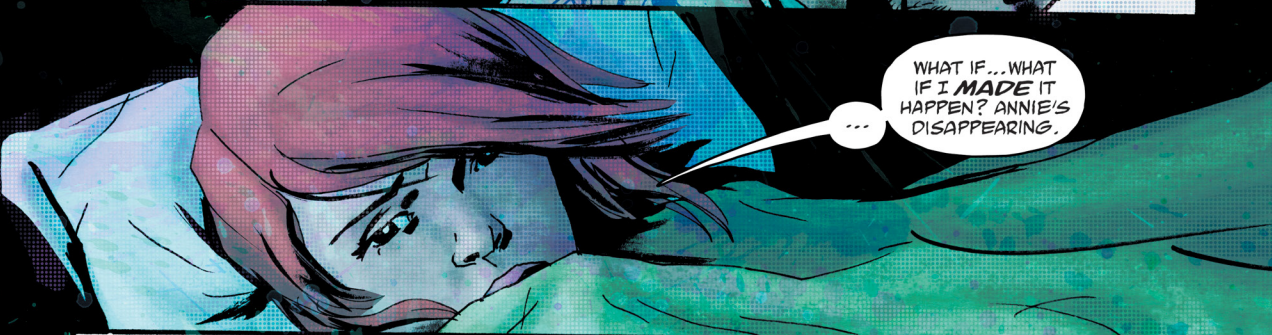
RIGHT, YOU
DID. OKAY, EARLY DAY
TOMORROW.



DAD?



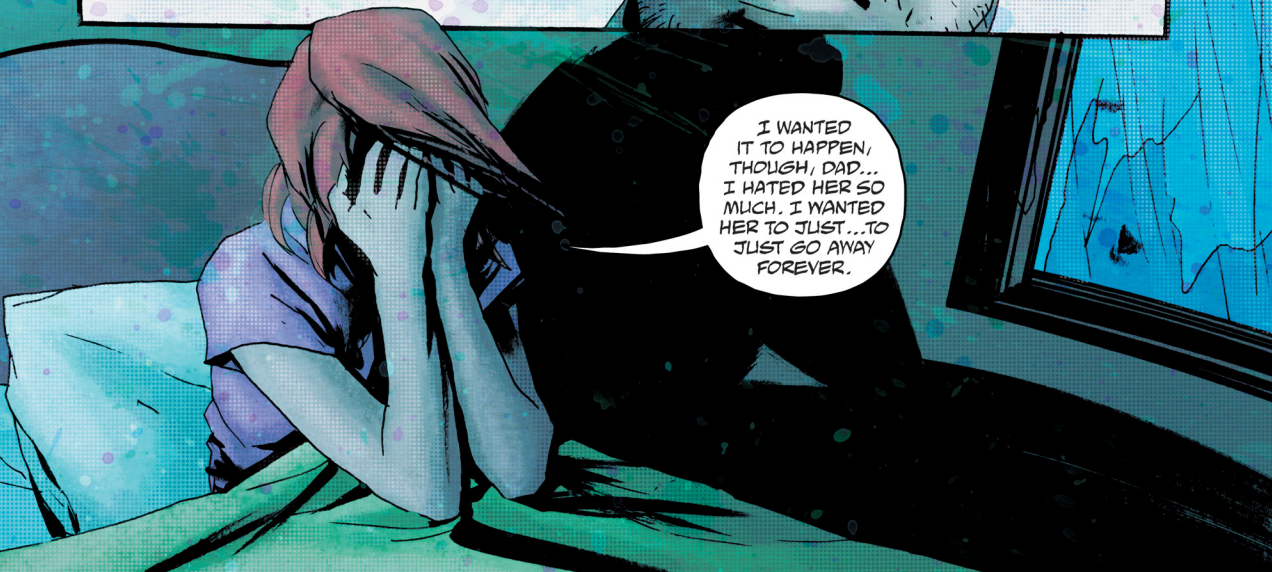
YEAH,
SAIL?



WHAT IF...WHAT
IF I **MADE** IT
HAPPEN? ANNIE'S
DISAPPEARING.



...
YOU DIDN'T
MAKE **ANY-
THING** HAPPEN
TO THAT GIRL,
HONEY.



I WANTED
IT TO HAPPEN,
THOUGH, DAD...
I HATED HER SO
MUCH. I WANTED
HER TO JUST...TO
JUST GO AWAY
FOREVER.



SHE WAS **CRAZY**, SAIL. YOU SAW EVERYTHING THAT CAME OUT ABOUT HER AFTERWARDS. ALL THOSE GUNS? THE TWISTED STUFF SHE WAS INTO. SHE COULD HAVE BEEN--

I **WANTED** HER TO DIE!



I **DID**, AND THEN SOMETHING... THESE **THINGS**... THEY TOOK HER, I **SAW** IT! I SAW IT FIVE FEET FROM MY FACE!

HEY, HEY, HEY. CALM DOWN. YOU **TOLD** EVERYONE WHAT YOU SAW. BUT THE TRUTH IS, SHE HIT YOU ON THE HEAD WITH A GUN, SAIL. SHE CRACKED YOUR SKULL. YOU WERE OUT COLD WHEN THEY FOUND YOU.

BUT I WAS **THINKING** IT, DAD, I WAS--

SAIL--

I WAS **WISHING** IT! I WAS WISHING IT WITH ALL MY--



DAMMIT, SAIL! THINKING ABOUT DOING SOMETHING AND DOING IT AREN'T THE SAME THING, ALL RIGHT?! JUST **STOP** IT!!



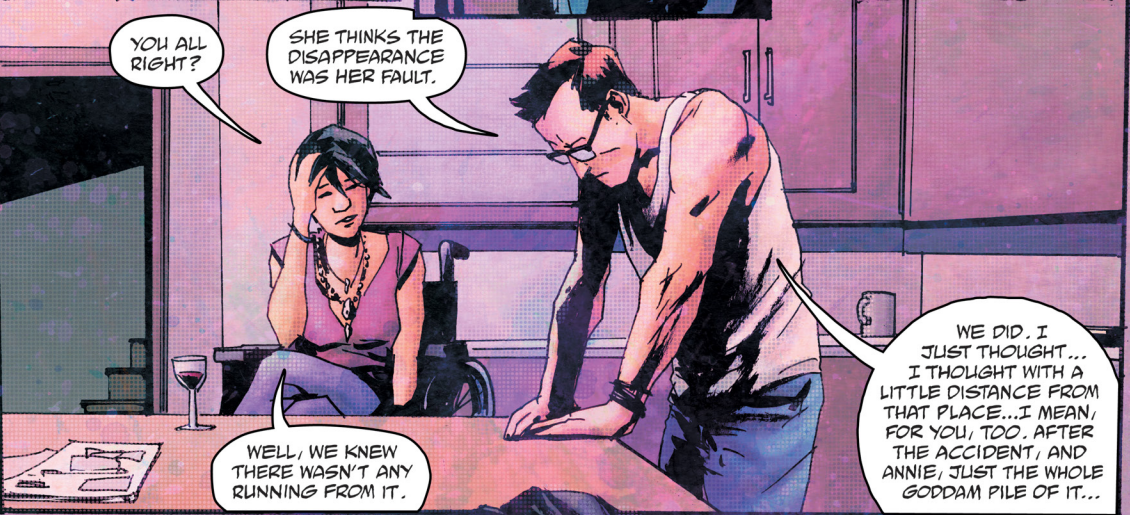
LOOK, I'M SORRY. IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY. THE MOVE... IT'S BEEN HARD ON ALL OF US. LET'S JUST GET SOME SLEEP, OKAY?

OKAY.



YOU ALL RIGHT?

SHE THINKS THE DISAPPEARANCE WAS HER FAULT.



WELL, WE KNEW THERE WASN'T ANY RUNNING FROM IT.

WE DID. I JUST THOUGHT ... I THOUGHT WITH A LITTLE DISTANCE FROM THAT PLACE...I MEAN, FOR YOU, TOO. AFTER THE ACCIDENT, AND ANNIE, JUST THE WHOLE GODDAM PILE OF IT...



HEY.

STOP. WE'RE HERE.


THIS IS WHAT WE CHOSE TO DO.

NOW WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO ABOUT THE STUDIO?

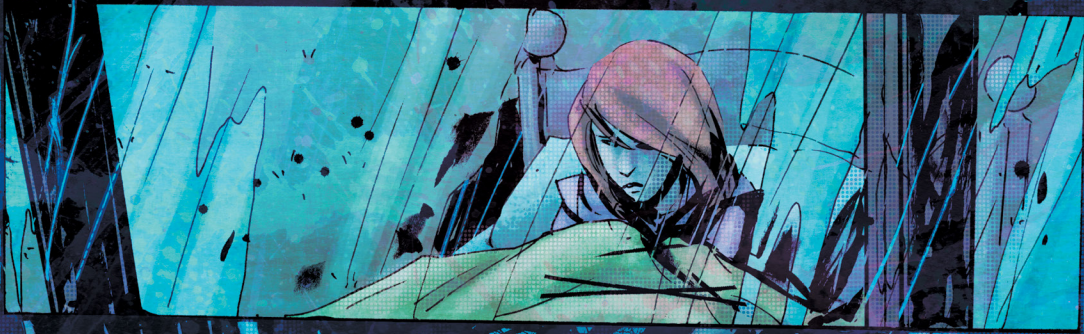


"MOVE?"

"UGH. WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK WAS **WRONG** WITH THAT POOR BASTARD ANYWAY, LUCE?"



"I DON'T KNOW. THERE ARE A LOT OF DISEASES DEER CAN CATCH AROUND HERE. THE WOODS ARE FULL OF HORRORS."



sssss



IS...IS SOMEONE THERE?



SSSSAAAAILLORRR



CCHIT
CCHITTTT
CHITTT



...ANNIE?



AAAAGH!!



CRASH

SAIL!



SAIL, I'M COMING!!!



MY GOD...

TO BE CONTINUED.

WHO WOULD YOU PLEDGE?

When I was a boy, I used to go witch hunting in the woods across the road from my house. It was one of my favorite activities, witch hunting. I would go with my neighbor, Ryan. Together we'd head out into the woods with a Polaroid camera (mine), and two bats with nails in them (his), in search of witches hiding out there.

This all happened in rural Pennsylvania. I was a city kid, but when I was about six, my parents — worried about raising kids in the city — managed to buy a small weekend house in southern Pennsylvania. The house was rustic, built in the 1940s — more like an expanded cabin, tucked deep in the woods, on a small lake. We'd go there every weekend possible, and spend long weeks there in the summer.

Our neighbors had a boy my age, Ryan, and we became fast friends. I'd cross the woods to his house and we'd play Nintendo, D&D, we'd trade comics... we were both geeks, imaginative kids. It was around age eleven that we started going monster hunting in the woods.

The woods were thick and deep and we concocted all sorts of stories for ourselves about the creatures that lived out there.

But, having both recently read Roald Dahl's *The Witches*, we were both particularly interested in the notion of witches living in the woods. Men and women who worshipped Satan! Sacrificing animals and worse, deep in the trees across the road! Other monsters fell away and we became all about witches and warlocks. They were out there and we would find them.

To be fair, these woods were pretty rich with things we could cite as witch "evidence." Once we found an old graveyard — seriously, a graveyard. We found a box of false teeth another time. And on one trip, deeper in the woods, we found an old car, a meat truck from the 1940s. From then on, the truck became our base, and we would walk out to it with lunch, and then explore the woods in various directions. We marked areas we'd explored with tape. We put pieces of string across paths, to detect witch crossings. Any old bone was a sign of witchcraft.

One windy day, we were hanging out by the car, eating and joking around and all of a sudden, Ryan jumped to his feet. "Who the hell are you?" I remember him saying, literally reaching for his bat. Terrified, I turned and looked and didn't see anything. I asked him what was the matter and he said



he saw someone, or something, peeking out from behind a tree. But the person was big, he said, like taller than a normal man or woman. Way taller than we'd thought a witch would be. "It was huge," he said, "just watching us."

Nervously, we explored the area but of course found nothing. The witch must have been a tree, swaying in the wind, and we laughed about it afterwards, on the way out of the woods, how he'd nearly shit himself over nothing, what a pussy, and so on, but I think both of us walked a little faster than normal that day.

Ryan and I didn't make many trips in to the woods after that. For one, his mother found his nail-riddled bat. And soon after that, the district built a school across the road, which blocked the old path we took into the woods. We're still friends though, Ryan and me. He's married now with kids, and lives in Ohio, but still. We actually joke about going back there, witch hunting in the woods. My folks kept the house all this time. We came here through my teenage years. I brought friends during college. I got engaged here, down by the lake. Now my wife and I bring our kids up here.

Anyway, about a year ago, I went for a run along the road by our house, and I decided to take a peek into the woods. I hadn't been back there in fifteen, maybe twenty years, but for some reason, I figured I'd just take a look to see if our old trail was still there.

I stepped off the main road, started walking through the ferns and brush towards the



taller trees and that's when I saw the witch. I kid you not, something leaned out from behind the trees – something tall and skeletal and dark and I froze. I froze and that strange hot chill of terror shot through me and I was a kid again, deep in the woods, and that thing was looking at me through the trees. It had been waiting here all along, hadn't it? It had known I'd come back and it had been patient...

Of course, a moment later, the sun shifted and the witch vanished, somehow changed into a tree, a freakishly human looking tree, but still, and my body relaxed and I turned and walked away.

Later that night, I found myself haunted by the image of the witch, peeking out from behind the tree. I knew what had really frightened me wasn't the "witch" in the trees – sure, the sight had scared me – but what had really gotten me spooked was the idea that this witch had ALWAYS been there. That all the years in between were nothing to it. Because it knew... it knew one day I'd come





back and it would be waiting. And why had it waited? What did it want?

For hours that night, I kept on with these questions. I knew that there was a story there for me. Something more than scary, something personal, something terrifying in that special way that gets at the deeper fears, the fears below.

And so the next day, I started working on *Wytches*, a story about an ancient evil waiting out there in the woods. Now as you may have guessed, our witches aren't the kinds you've seen before. No brooms or pointy hats. In fact, forget everything you know about witches, because in our world, all the people assumed to be witches, the people burned and drowned for witchcraft, all of them were just the human worshippers of witches. The witches themselves — the wytches — are more like that thing Ryan and I saw in the woods. They're huge and ancient and primal and deeply evil. They have a knowledge of natural science that surpasses the limits of modern medicine. They have great power. They can give you almost anything you want. And they're out there, waiting for you to come ask. But first, you have to give them what they want... They have to eat, after all. So who would you give them to get what you want? To cure a sick loved one? To cure yourself? To get what you've always wanted? A neighbor? A loved one? Who would you pledge?

Now as a final note, just before starting this essay, I decided to head back into those woods once and for all and see if our old car was still

there. I had to cross the school property and make my way over a fence and hedge, but still, I managed to do it, and though it was less pronounced, I did find the old path Ryan and I always took in to the woods. I walked back there, a quarter mile, a half, the trees growing thicker and taller, and there it was: our old car. Still there, twenty years later. I've included some pictures here.

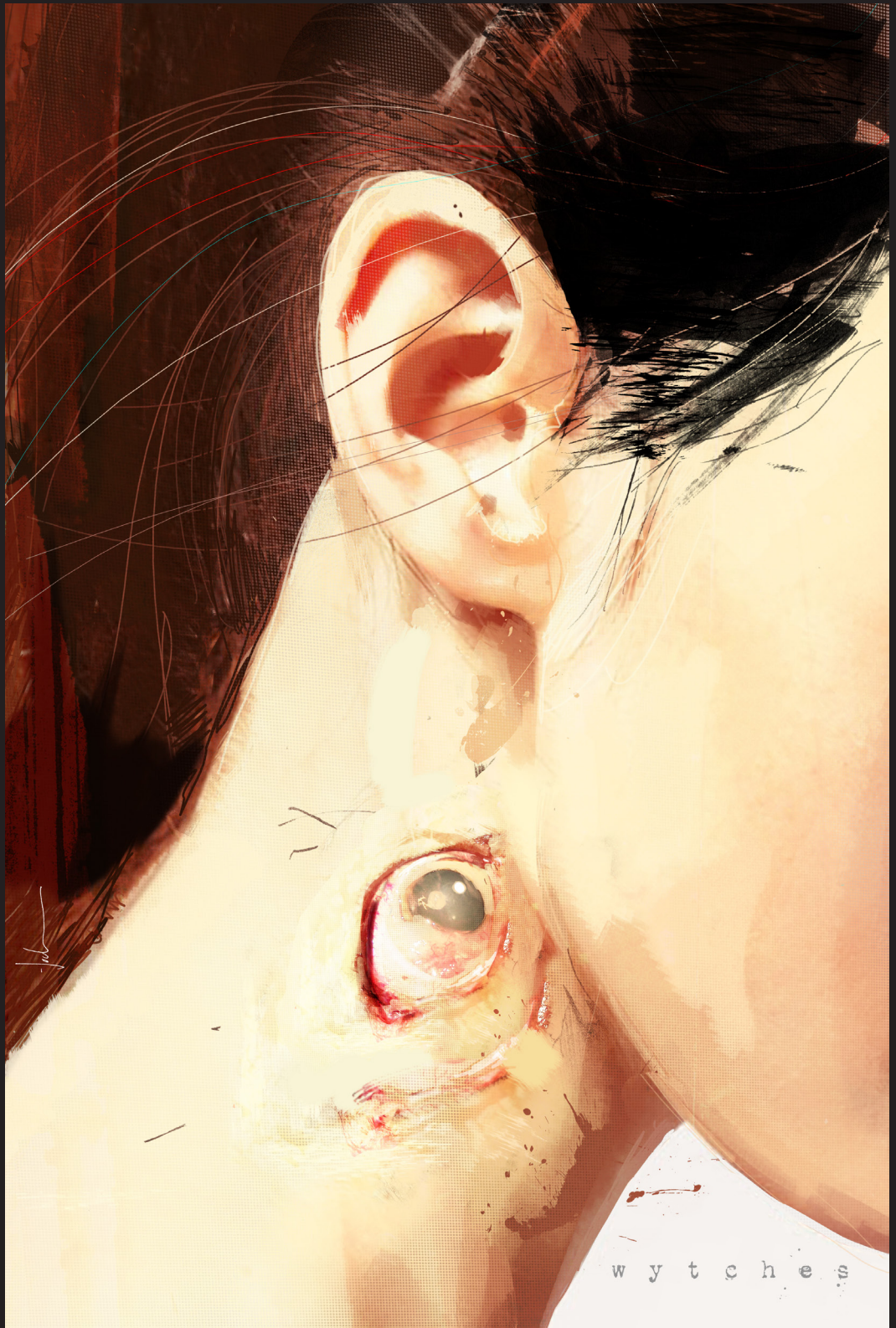
So, if you've read this far, just give me a chance to say thank you. Not just for following me down memory lane here, but for giving this book a chance. I hope you can see that *Wytches* is a deeply personal book for me, and I'm deeply grateful to Jock, Matt, Clem, David, Eric, and Image for giving it a home. More than this, I'm grateful to you for picking it up. In the end, for me, it's a book that's been in the making for a long time. A book that has waited for me to write it. And in the end, sitting here writing this — in the upstairs room of my parent's lakehouse, the woods right outside this window — I like to think that if this book waited, maybe the wytches are out there waiting, too.

So... who would you pledge?

Scott Snyder
August 2014

We want to hear from you! Send your scary stories and letters to askthewytches@gmail.com. Make sure to say that your letter is "OKAY TO PRINT!"

NEXT ISSUE



w y t c h e s

COMING NOVEMBER

BEHIND THE WYTCHEs

From Script

PAGE 6

1.

WHAM.

TIM bashes her in the head.

2.

She's dazed, bleeding from her head.

ELLEN: Tim... t...t...

3.

TIM, looking at her, innocent, unfazed.

TIM: I don't understand... you weren't supposed to get away.

4.

LONG, LONG PALE fingers wrap around ELLEN'S face as TIM watches.

5.

She's gone, dragged down into the darkness.

6.

TIM, staring at the hole. Or, him staring down at us through the hole and we're inside. Up to you, Jock!

CAP: 1919.

To Inks



To Colors



w y t c h e s

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