

# IRON™

OR  
THE WAR AFTER



a graphic novel by  
S. M. VIDAURRI







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S. M. Vidaurri



ARCHAIA ENTERTAINMENT LLC  
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*for My Grandfather*

D E S I G N   b y

Howling Monkey Studios

M A N A G E M E N T   O F   P R O D U C T I O N

by Scott Newman

E D I T E D   b y

Rebecca Taylor

A R C H A I A   E N T E R T A I N M E N T , L L C

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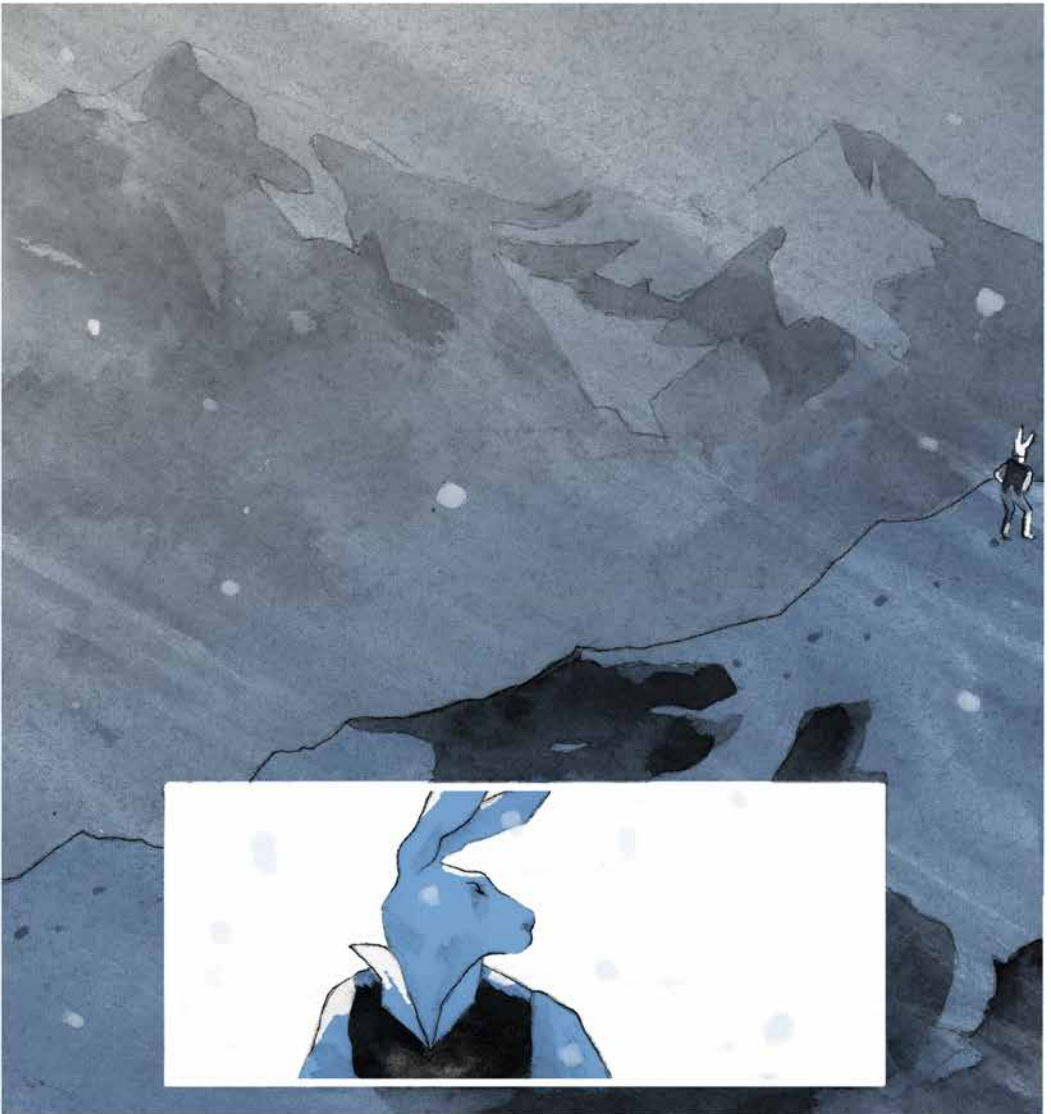
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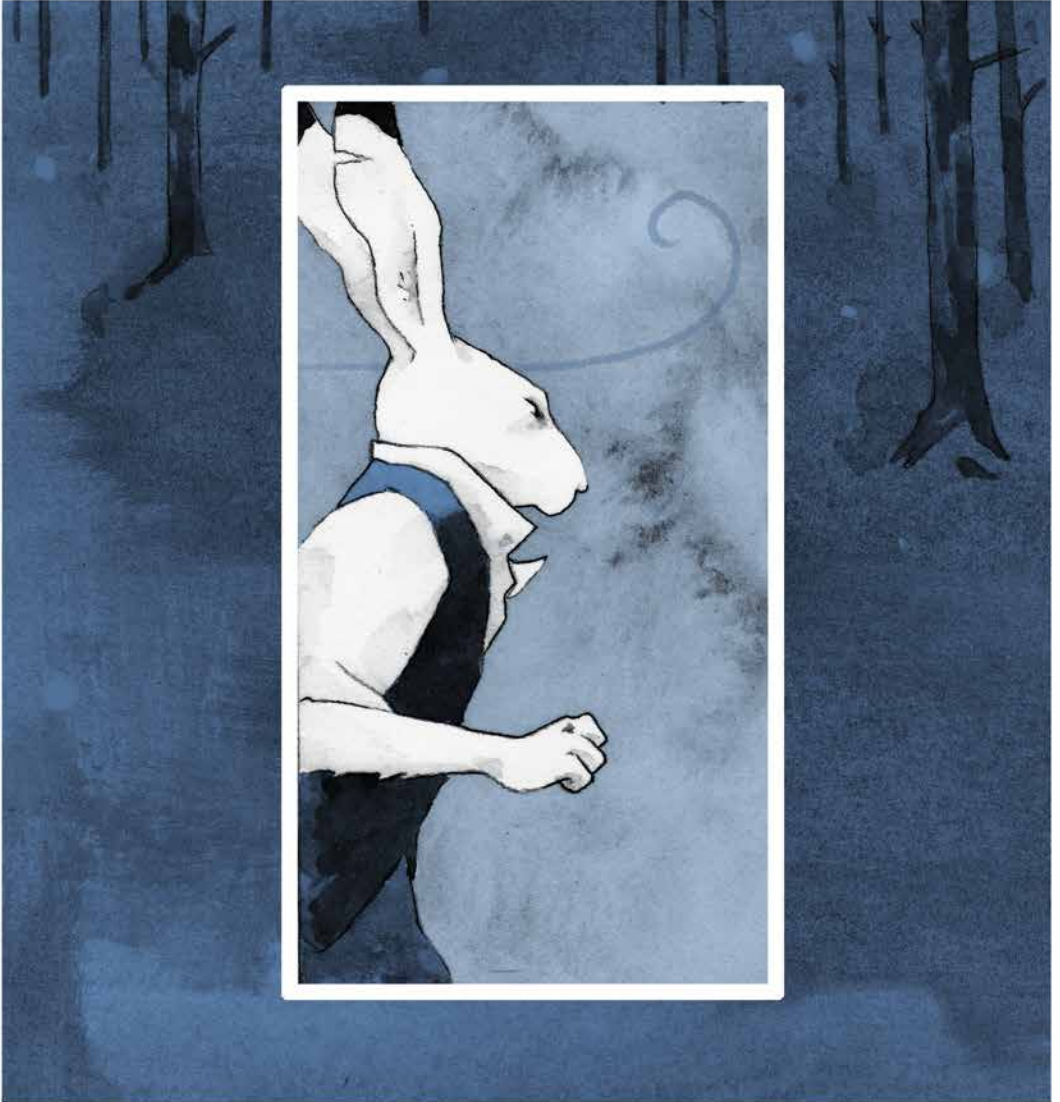
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CHAPTER ONE  
OR  
THE THIEF











GOD DAMN, HARDIN,  
I THOUGHT YOU  
WERE DEAD.



YOU LOOK DEAD.

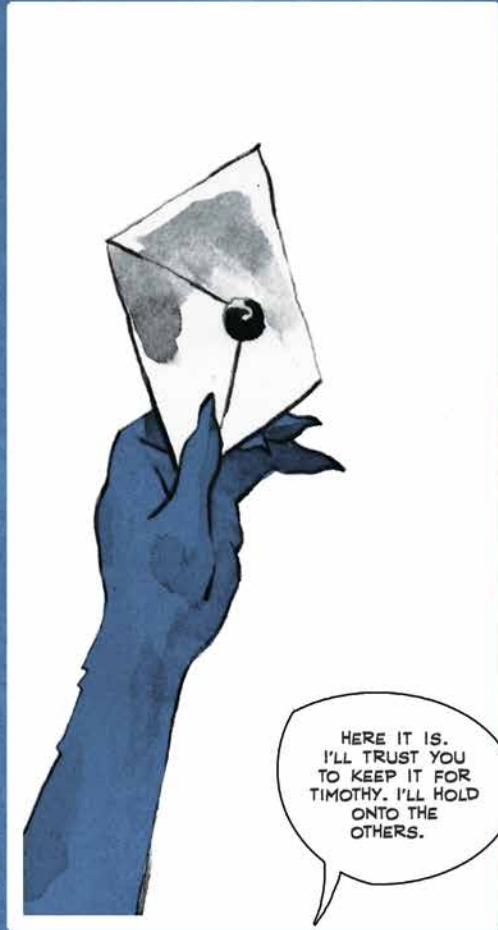


EVERYONE  
WAS SAYING  
THEY'D SHOT  
YOU.

JUST PLEASE TELL  
ME YOU'VE GOT THE  
PAPERS. WE CAN'T  
DO ANYTHING  
WITHOUT THEM.

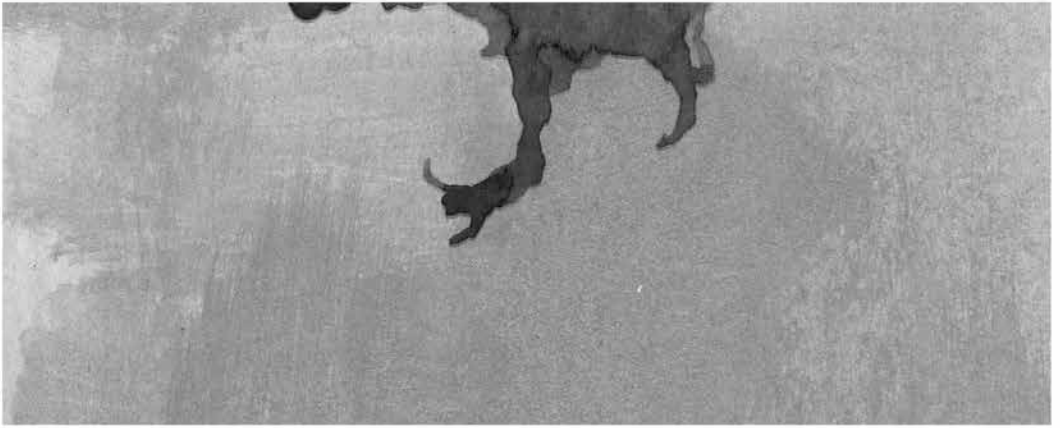


GOT THE PAPERS  
ALL RIGHT, BUT THEY  
ALMOST GOT ME.

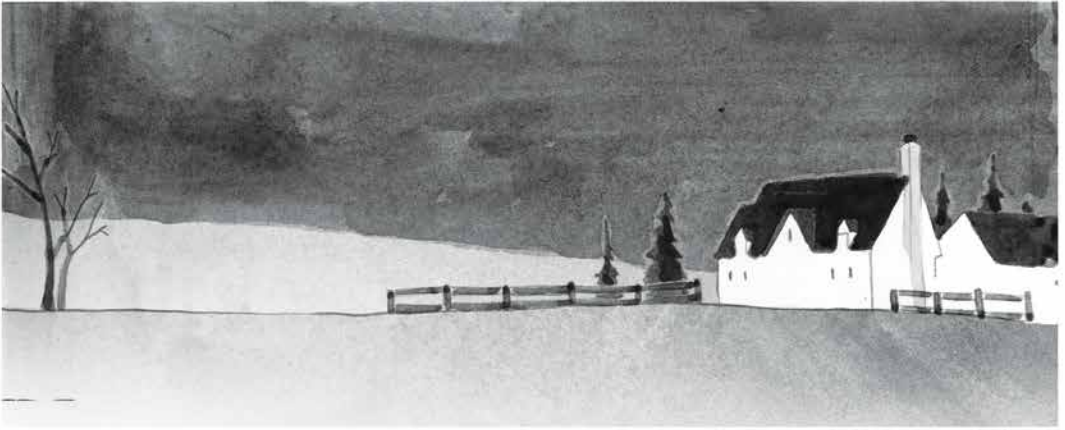


EVERYTHING IS  
READY NOW.  
BUT FIRST, I'D  
BETTER TELL YOU  
WHAT HAPPENED.











OH. I'VE BEEN  
EXPECTING THIS.  
YOU'RE RIGHT,  
AUGUSTUS.  
WE'D BETTER  
BE GOING.





THEY'VE BEEN SAYING IT'S GOING TO COME DOWN ANY DAY NOW.



OFFICER PAVEL, I WOULD LIKE TO AGREE WITH YOU. CONSIDERING ITS RANDOM EXECUTION, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THE THEFT WAS PLANNED.



WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS, CAPTAIN ENGEL?



SIR, I DON'T BELIEVE THE THEFT WAS RANDOM. THEY STOLE A TOP-SECRET DOCUMENT! THE OTHERS WERE ONLY MILDLY SENSITIVE, BUT WE CAN'T IGNORE THAT EITHER. THIS WAS A VERY REAL ATTACK AND I THINK-



WELL...



I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD OVERREACT. PERHAPS THIS WHOLE THING IS A RUSE. I DON'T THINK NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO DEVIATE FROM PROTOCOL.

DON'T YOU DARE  
INTERRUPT ME!  
A RUSE! YOU'D LIKE  
US TO BELIEVE THAT,  
WOULDN'T YOU?



I, FOR ONE,  
DON'T THINK IT WAS  
A COINCIDENCE THAT  
THE RABBIT RAN PAST  
THE ONLY COWARD  
IN THE BUILDING!

YOU DIDN'T TAKE  
YOUR SHOT AND -  
DON'T YOU GOD DAMN  
START TALKING LIKE  
YOU CAN FIX THIS  
SITUATION!





LET'S CALM DOWN.



PAVEL, CAPTAIN ENGEL TELLS ME THAT YOU WERE CLOSE TO THE RABBIT DURING THE INCIDENT. WHAT HAPPENED, EXACTLY?



IT'S LIKE I SAID BEFORE, SIR, I WAS IN THE HALLWAY WHEN THE ALARM WENT OFF. I SAW THE THIEF, BUT HE GOT AWAY BEFORE I COULD DISCHARGE MY WEAPON.



THAT'S NOT TRUE!  
YOU HAD HIM,  
AND YOU FROZE!  
YOU LET HIM GO!



I WON'T TELL YOU  
TO CALM DOWN  
AGAIN, ENGEL.



ENGEL, I WANT YOU  
TO TRACK DOWN THIS  
THIEF. I WANT TO KNOW  
WHERE HE IS. USE  
YOUR CONNECTIONS.

PAYEL, I WANT  
A COMPREHENSIVE  
LIST OF ALL THE  
DOCUMENTS STOLEN.



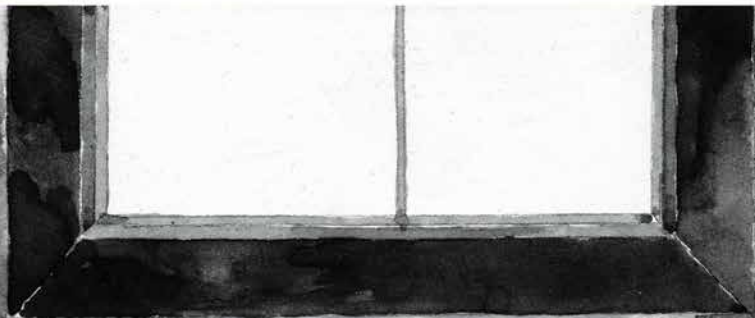
THE TOP-SECRET DOCUMENT  
CONTAINED PRIVILEGED  
INFORMATION PERTAINING TO  
OUR BASE IN THE WEST,  
SPECIFICALLY THE  
PRISON THERE.

GENERAL GETTLEMAN  
AND I ARE OF ONE MIND,  
THE THIEF MUST BE  
PLANNING A BREAKOUT.  
PERHAPS THE RABBIT THOUGHT  
WE WOULD NOT NOTICE  
ONE MISSING DOCUMENT  
AMONG SO MANY.

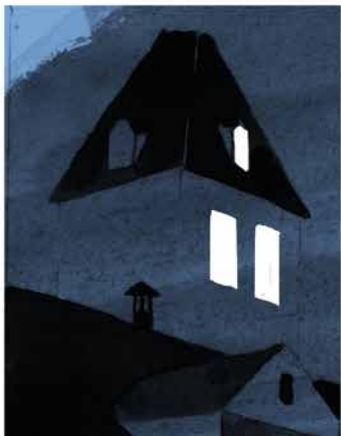


BUT WE DID.  
I AM ORGANIZING EXTRA  
PROTECTION FOR ALL OF OUR  
WESTERN BASES. ALL NONESSENTIAL  
SECURITY PERSONNEL ARE HEREBY  
ASSIGNED TO THE WESTERN  
DIVISION.

WE MUST AVOID A BREAKOUT  
AT ALL COSTS. I AM RELYING  
ON YOU TWO TO BRING ME  
ANSWERS, AND SOON, SO THAT  
WE CAN CATCH THIS THIEF  
AND PREVENT CATASTROPHE.  
YOU HAVE YOUR  
ORDERS.









GOD, CALVIN - DON'T SHOOT!  
I ONLY WANTED TO HELP!  
THE RABBIT'S NAME IS HARDIN.  
HE'S LIVING IN THE MOUNTAINS,  
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE!  
THAT'S EVERYTHING I KNOW!  
THEY DON'T TELL ME MUCH  
ANYMORE. I TOLD YOU,  
I'M ONLY ON NANNY  
DUTY NOW.

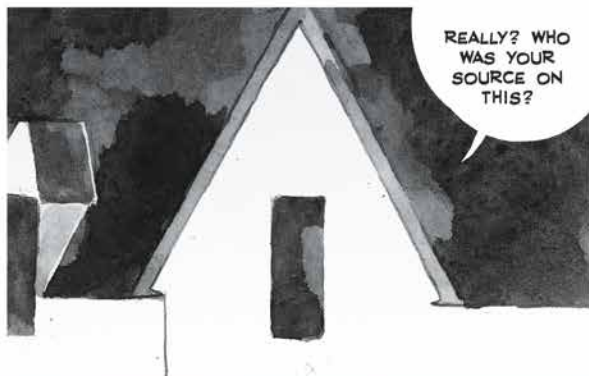


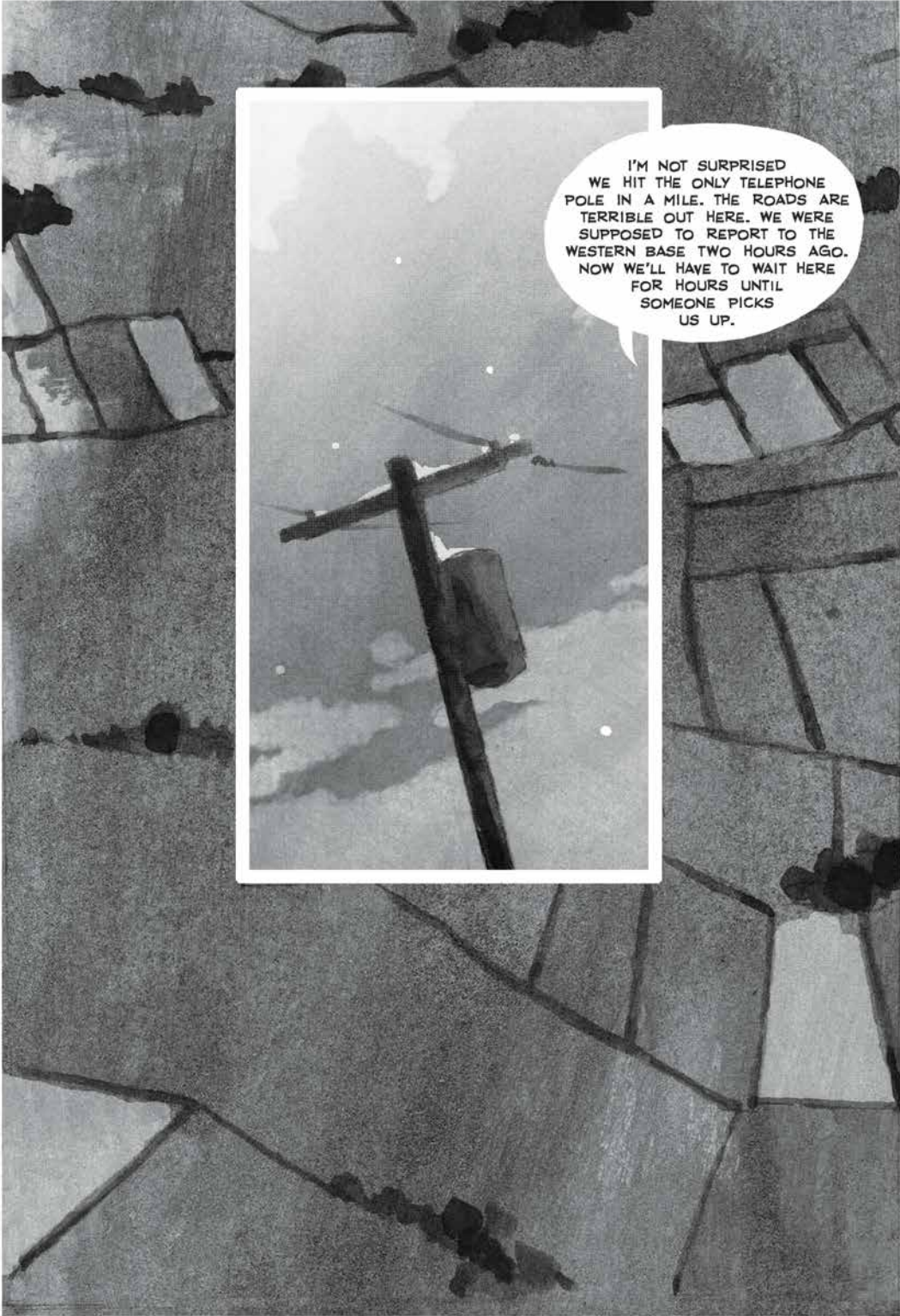
YOU'RE LOOKING  
AFTER HIS KIDS, THEN?  
THIS HARDIN? IS THAT  
HOW YOU KNOW THIS?  
TELL ME!



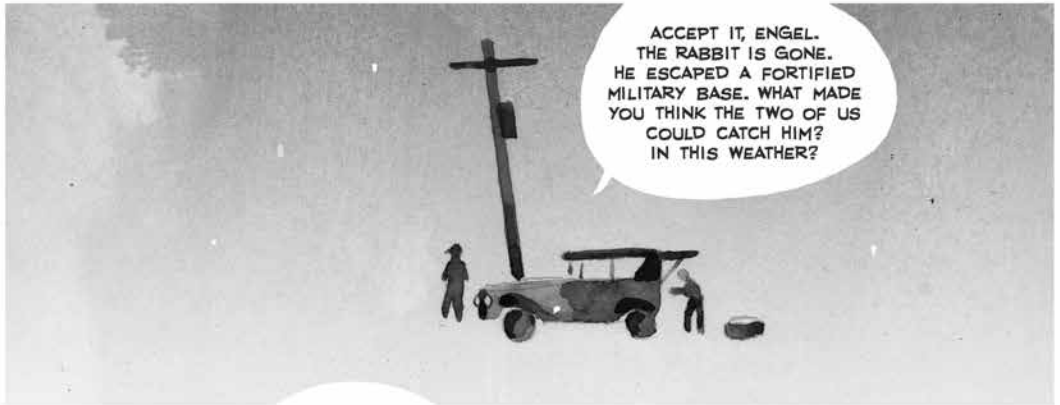




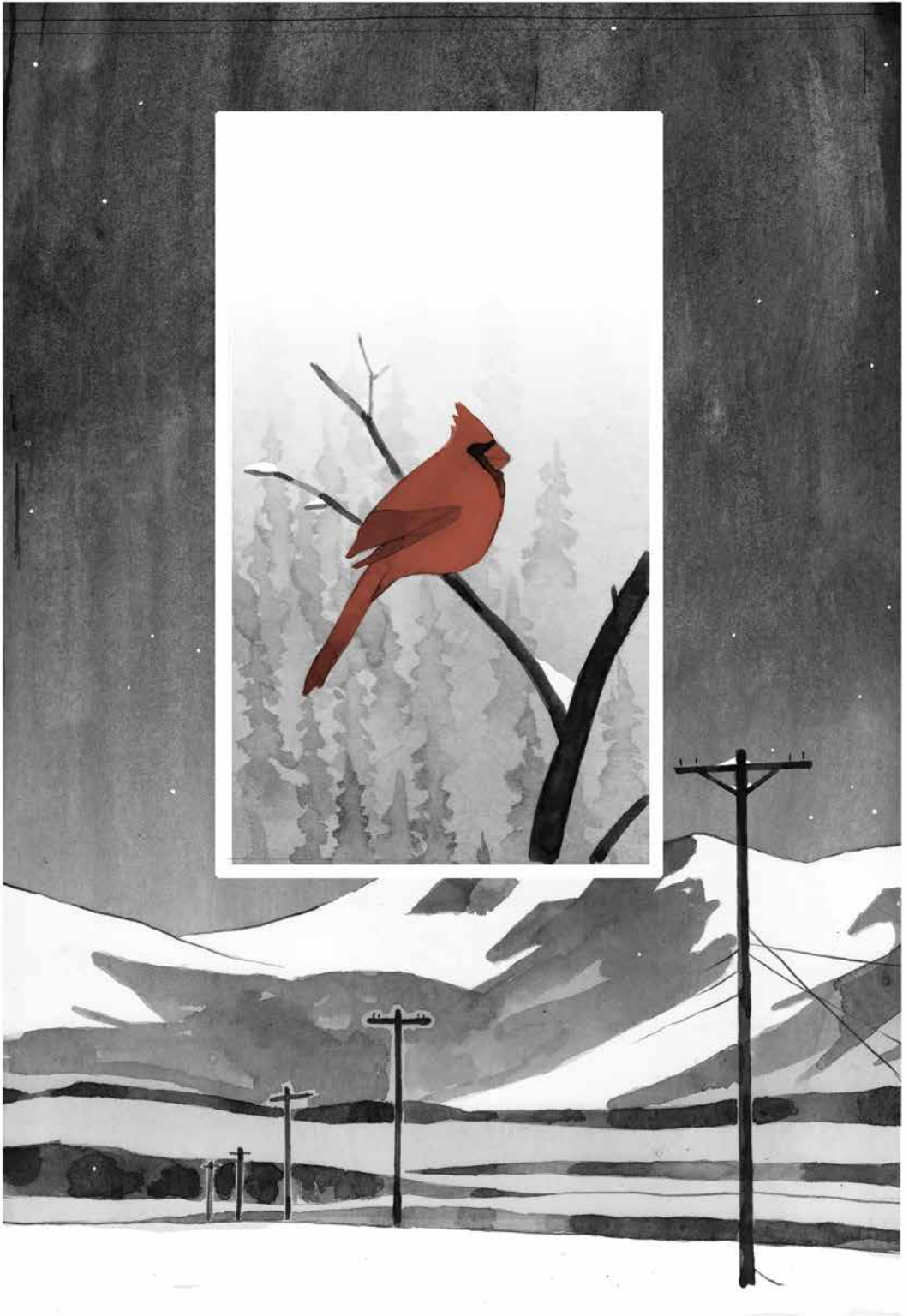


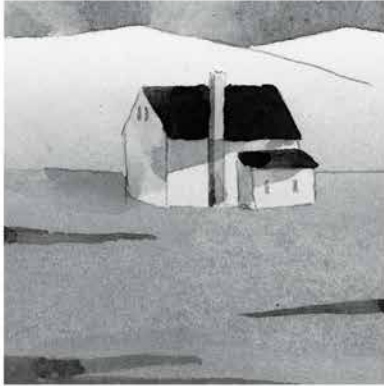


I'M NOT SURPRISED  
WE HIT THE ONLY TELEPHONE  
POLE IN A MILE. THE ROADS ARE  
TERRIBLE OUT HERE. WE WERE  
SUPPOSED TO REPORT TO THE  
WESTERN BASE TWO HOURS AGO.  
NOW WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT HERE  
FOR HOURS UNTIL  
SOMEONE PICKS  
US UP.









HELLO?



CHARLOTTE?  
IT'S FORD.



I TOLD HIM  
ABOUT HARDIN.

HE HAD A GUN  
ON ME, I HAD TO TELL HIM  
SOMETHING! AND THEN HE  
ASKED ABOUT THE CHILDREN.  
I LIED AND SAID THEY  
WERE WITH YOU.

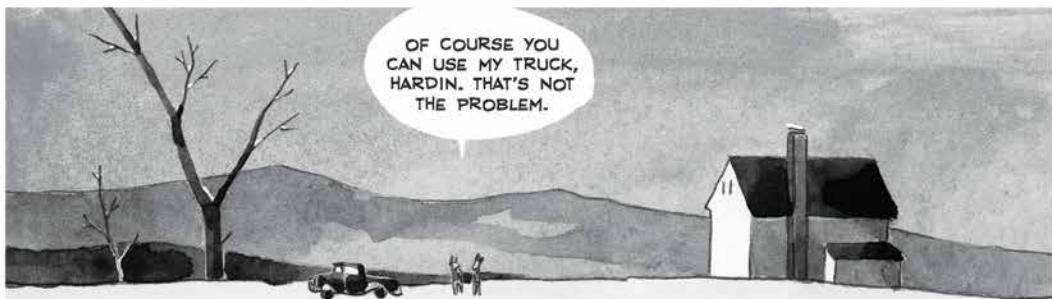
I WOULD HAVE  
CALLED EARLIER, BUT,  
YOU DIDN'T SEE WHAT HE  
WAS LIKE, CHARLOTTE.  
I'M SCARED. I DON'T  
WANT TO DO THIS  
ANYMORE.



I'M  
SORRY.

THIS WAS NOT PART OF  
OUR AGREEMENT, FORD.  
YOU LISTEN TO ME, NOW.  
YOU DO NOT LEAVE THOSE  
CHILDREN, YOU UNDERSTAND?  
YOU'RE MINE NOW, AND IF  
YOU STEP ONE MORE TOE  
OUT OF LINE, YOU'RE  
FINISHED.

GOODBYE.



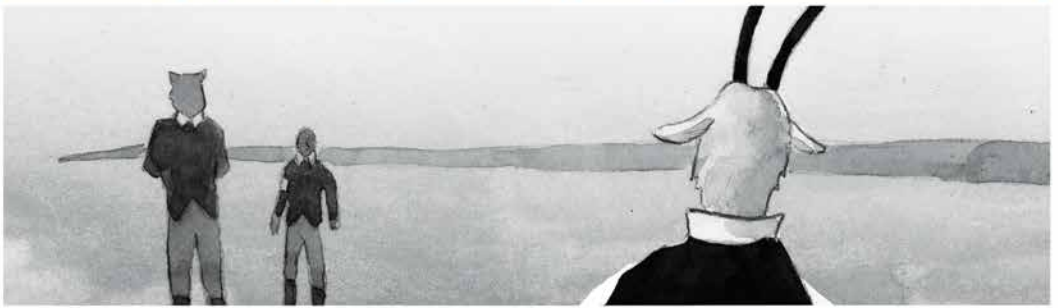




IT'S JUST THAT THERE ARE SO FEW OF US LEFT. WE'VE LOST SO MANY TO THE PROMISE OF PEACE, OR TO DREAMS OF MONEY. AND THE LONGER THIS ALL GOES ON, THE LESS REASON THE YOUNG WILL HAVE TO FIGHT. THEY WON'T REMEMBER THINGS BEING ANY DIFFERENT, JAMES. AND THEY HAVE THE YEARS ON THEIR SIDE. THAT'S THE HARDEST PART.









HOW DID THEY FIND ME?

DON'T BE A FOOL, HARDIN. IF THEY KNEW YOU WERE HERE, THEY WOULD HAVE BROUGHT MORE SOLDIERS.



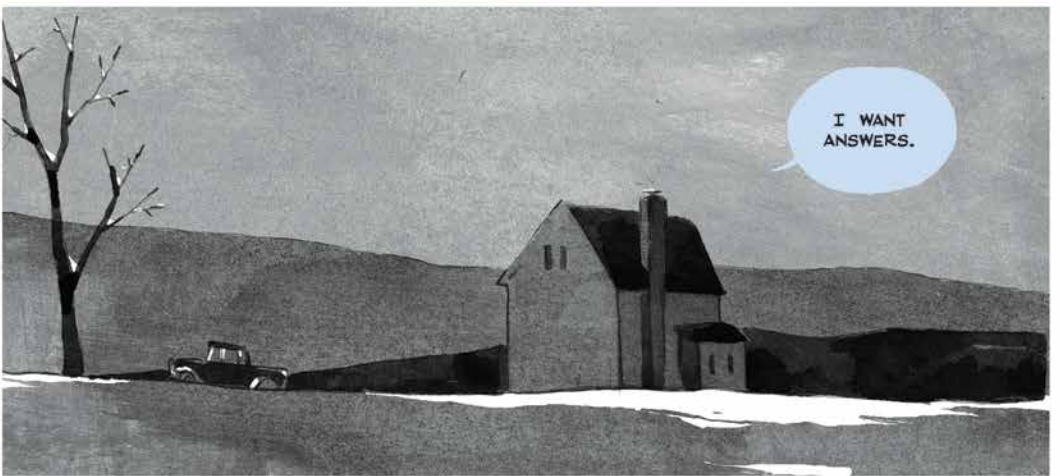
I WANT YOU TO GO UPSTAIRS, THE SMALL ROOM IN THE FRONT. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HEAR EVERYTHING THROUGH THE FLOORBOARDS.

IF THEY GO UPSTAIRS, USE THE WINDOW ABOVE THE DRAWING ROOM. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO JUMP DOWN. TAKE THE LETTER AND THE SUITCASE WITH YOU.

YOU'D BETTER BURN ALL THE OTHER DOCUMENTS. WE CAN'T LEAVE ANY EVIDENCE BEHIND. IF GILES AND I ARE TAKEN, YOU ARE TO CONTINUE WITH THE PLAN.











NO, ENGEL. I AM FINISHED. THE RABBIT GOT AWAY FROM ME, SO YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THAT. BUT YOU'RE LETTING HIM GET AWAY FROM YOU NOW. YOU HAVE US IN THE COUNTRY CHASING GHOSTS-

WE CAN'T KEEP ACTING LIKE WE'RE STILL FIGHTING IN THE WAR. THE WAR IS OVER, ENGEL, AND WE NEED TO START ACTING LIKE IT.



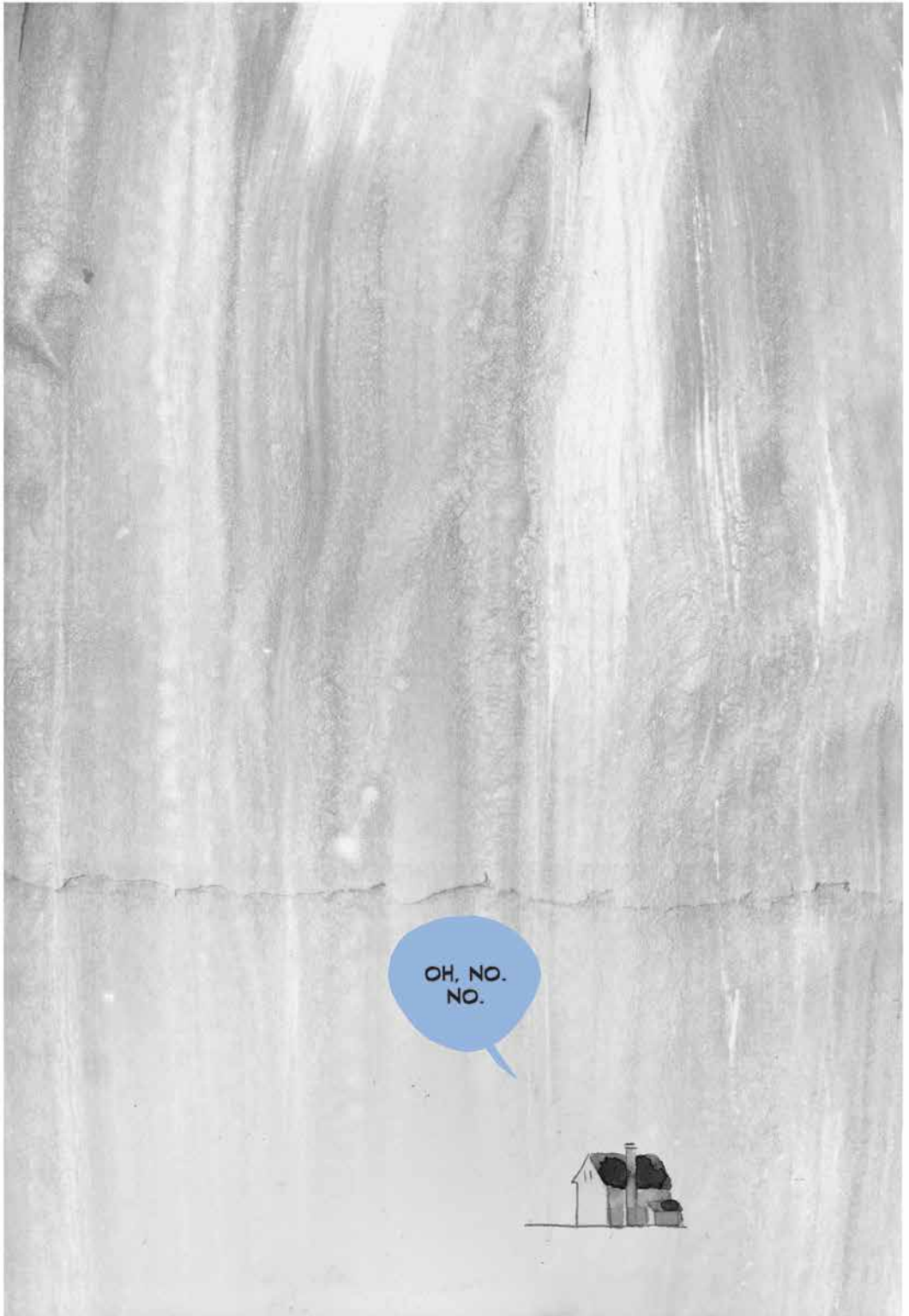
SO YOU'VE FINALLY SHOWN YOUR TRUE COLORS. YOU JUST ADMITTED TO SABOTAGING TWO MISSIONS, GOD DAMN IT! I WILL NOT- I WILL SEE YOU IN THE STOCKADES! I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR THIS!



WHAT WOULD YOU EVER FORGIVE ME FOR, CALVIN?







Dear Tabitha,

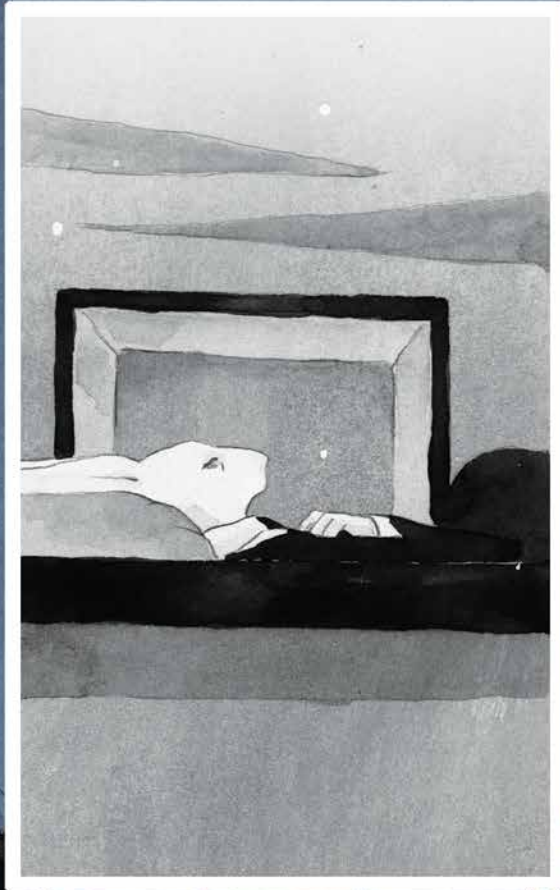
I don't know if you got my last letter, or if you will get this one, but it is comforting to think that you will. This snow has been a godsend. It has hidden us, and it has almost halted the North's progress. Sometimes when I'm out on patrol, I put my hand in the snow, and if I lift up my sleeve it's almost as if I am disappearing.

I got your last letter, although it was so wet I could barely make out a word. Still, it was enough. I do wish I were home. Every day. But we have to finish what we set out to do. Giles has been invaluable to me here, and you were right in advising me to put my trust in him. With every rail line we disrupt I can buy us two more weeks. Two more weeks costs them money, and when the money runs out, the people in the North will rise up to join us. They are calling us now, so I must go.

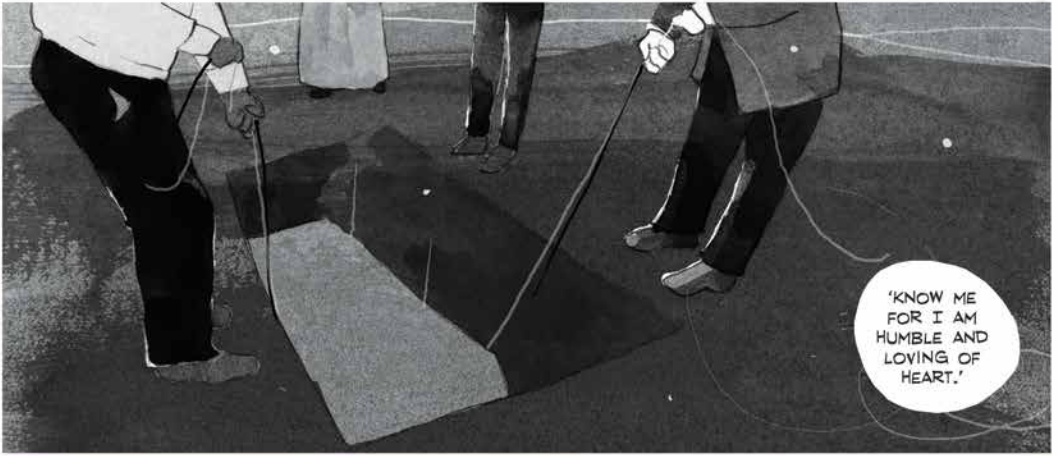
Please give my love to the children. It has been ten months now since I have seen them. I have done things that I am not proud of, and other things that I hope will some day make them proud. Sometimes, after being out here so long, it gets hard to tell the difference. But all I need is the thought of you, and the children, to remember what needs to be done and how I will stop at nothing to see it through.

Your Husband,

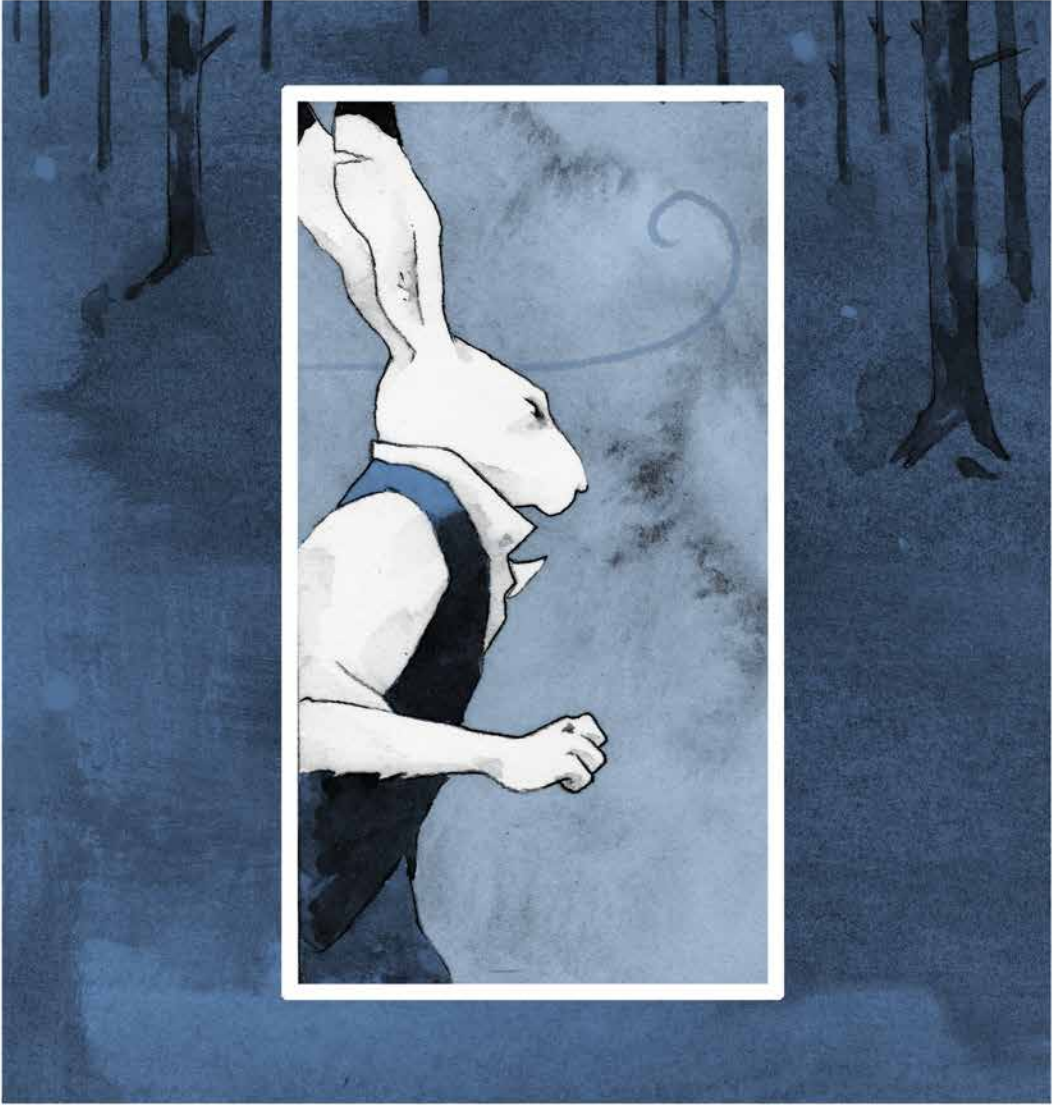
James



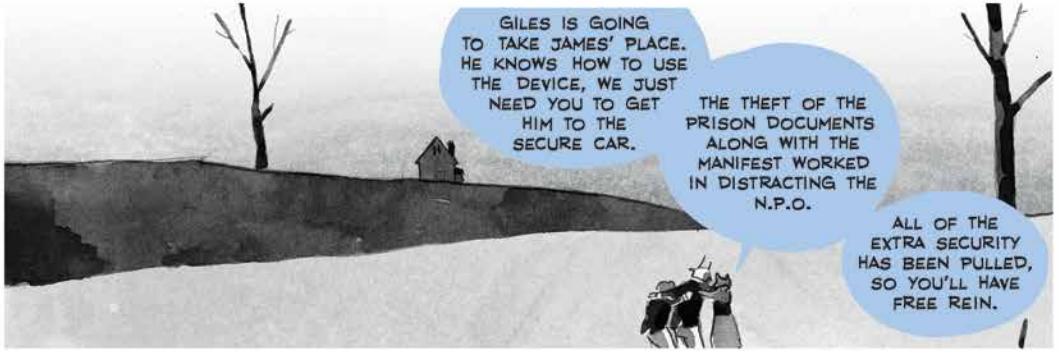
CHAPTER TWO  
OR  
THE COWARD



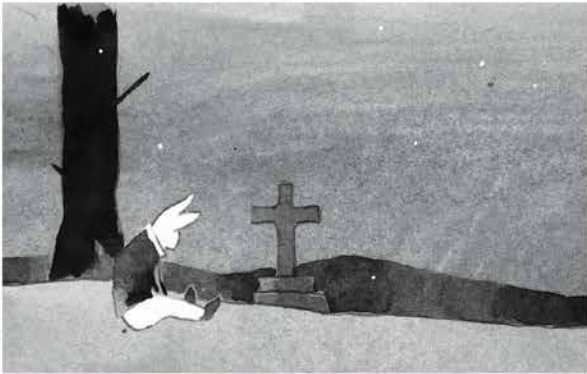


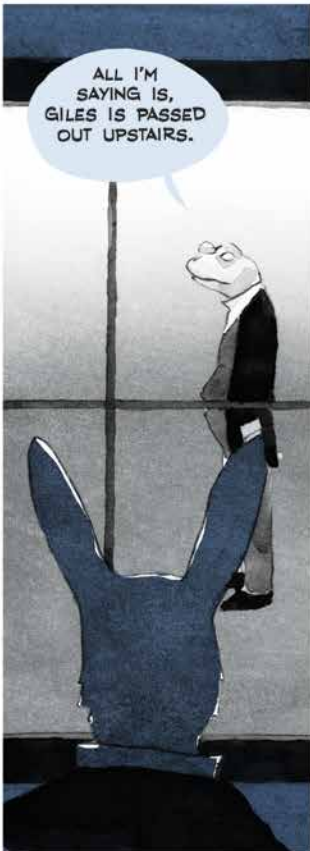
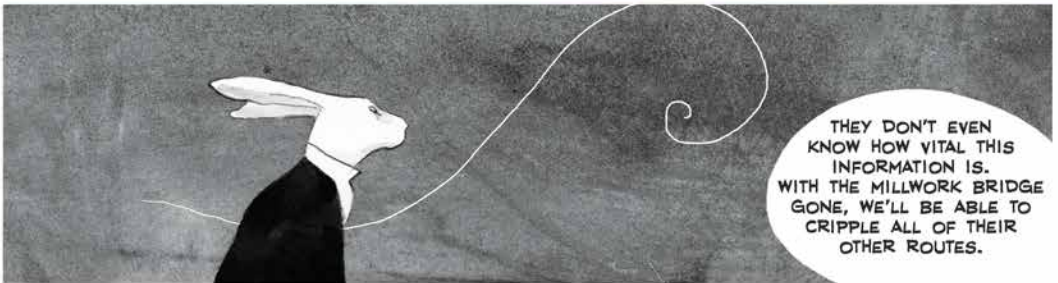




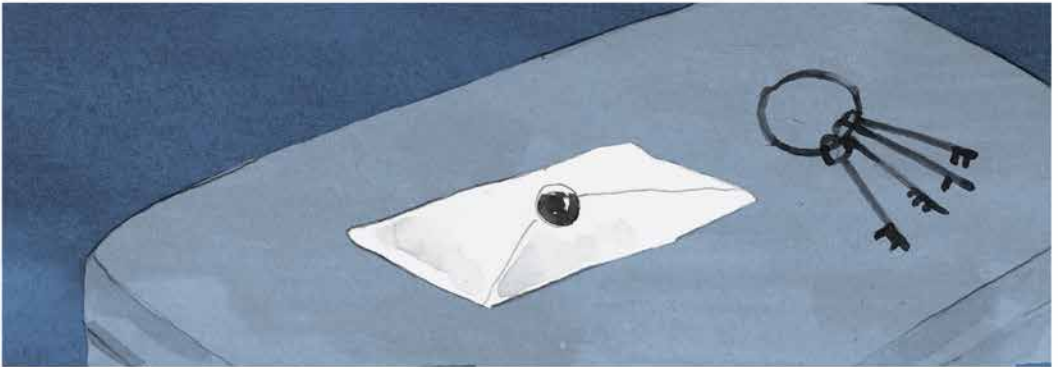
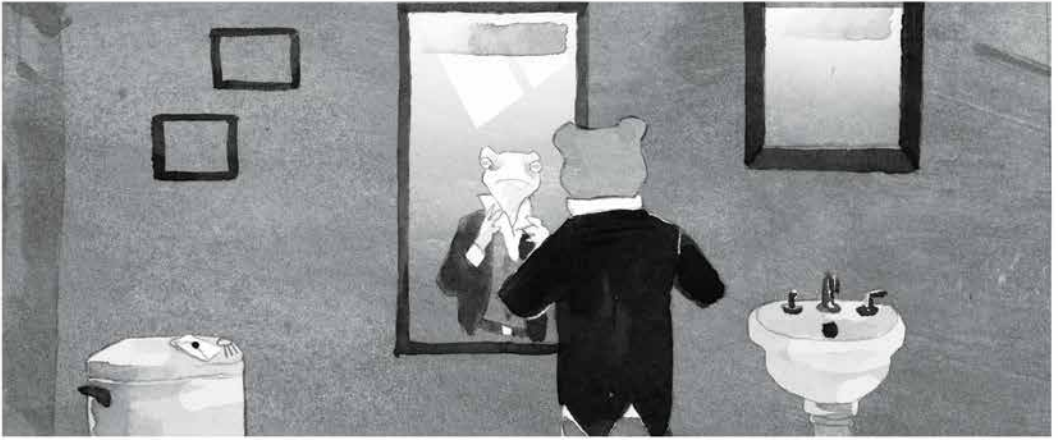


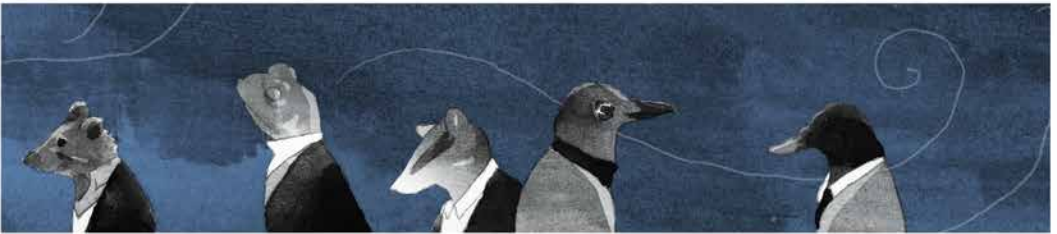












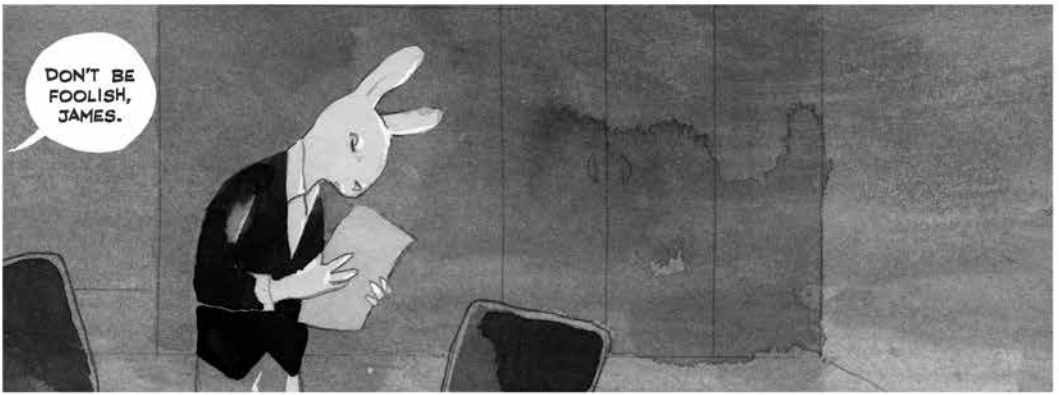
GOOD MORNING.

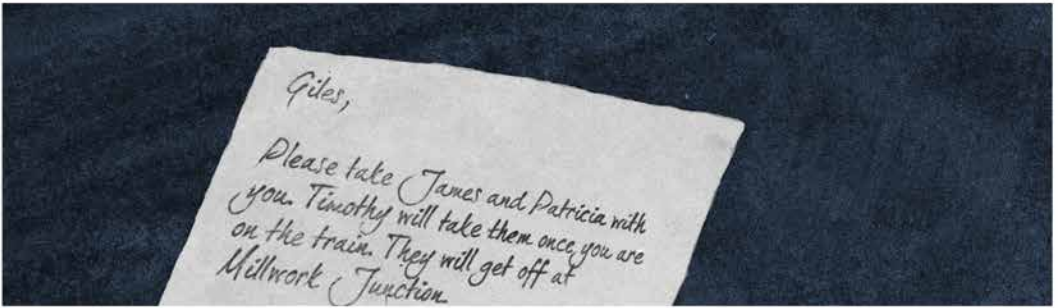
HEY, TIMOTHY. SECURITY IS PRETTY BARE BONES TODAY.

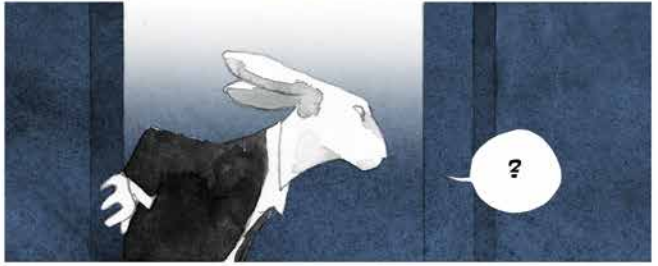


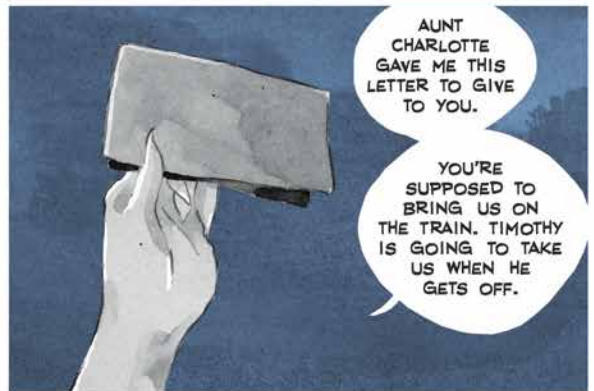
I KNOW. I'LL BE INSPECTING THE TEN-TWENTY RIVER EAGLE. I THINK I'M THE ONLY ONE.

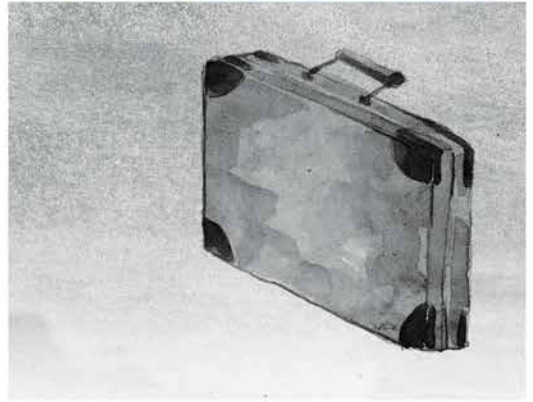


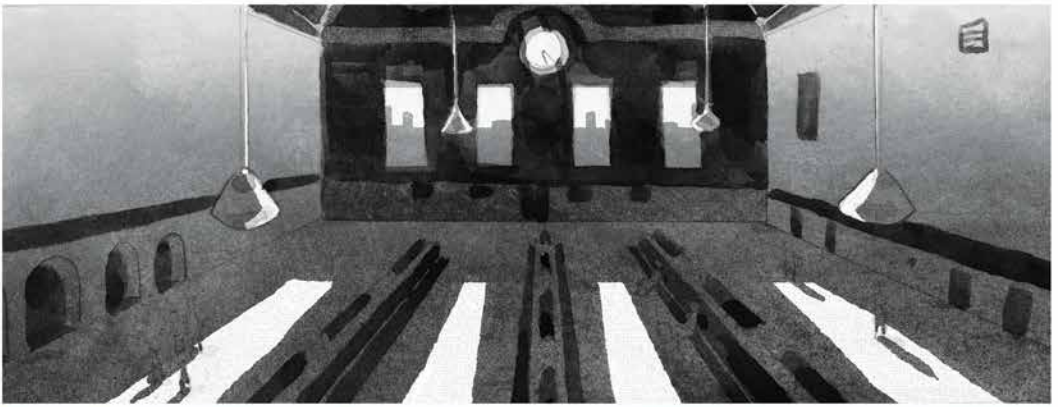












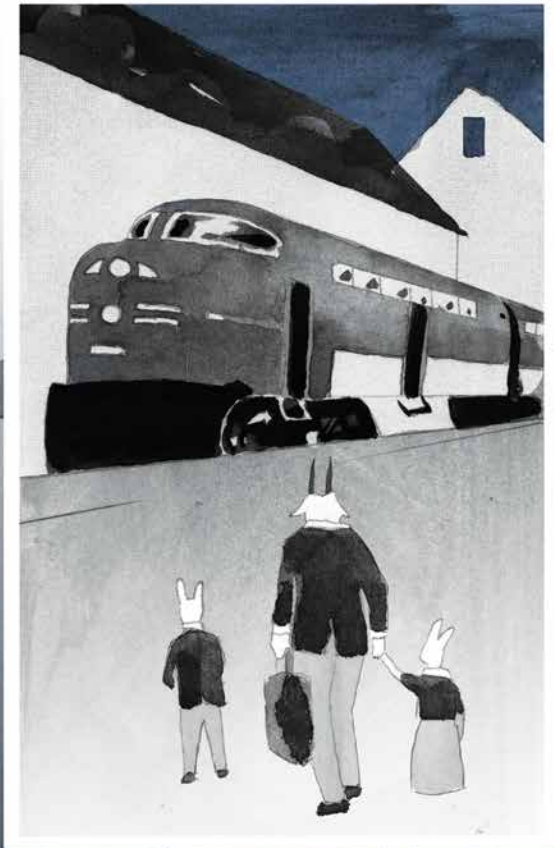


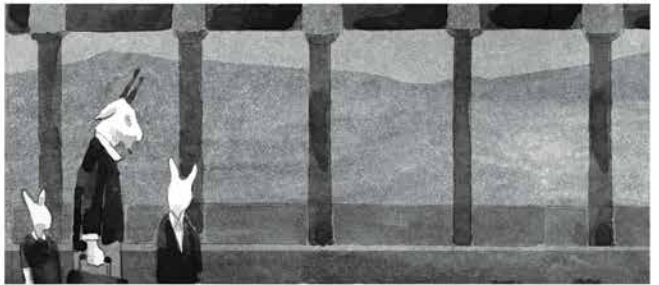
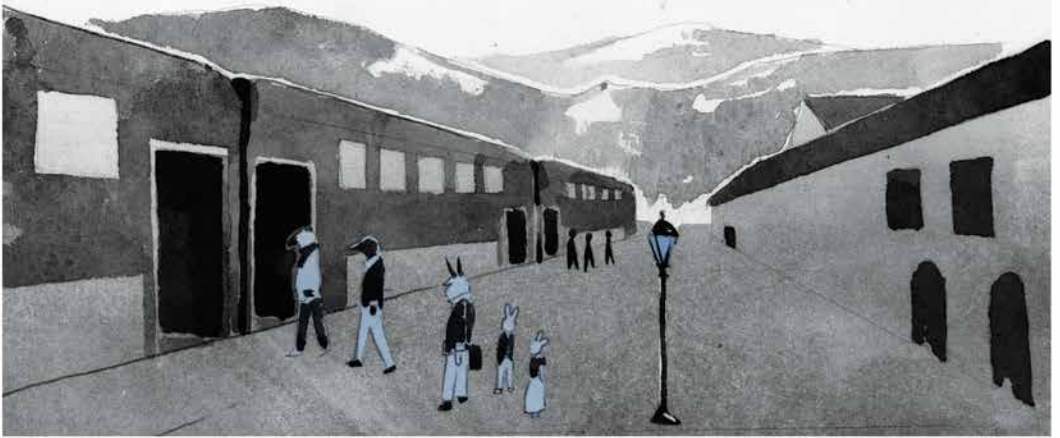
HELLO, I'M HERE  
TO PICK UP MY TICKET.  
IT SHOULD BE UNDER  
THE NAME PAUL BAUMER.  
IT'S FOR THE TEN-TWENTY  
RIVER EAGLE.

AND I ALSO NEED  
TO PURCHASE  
TWO CHILDREN'S,  
PLEASE.

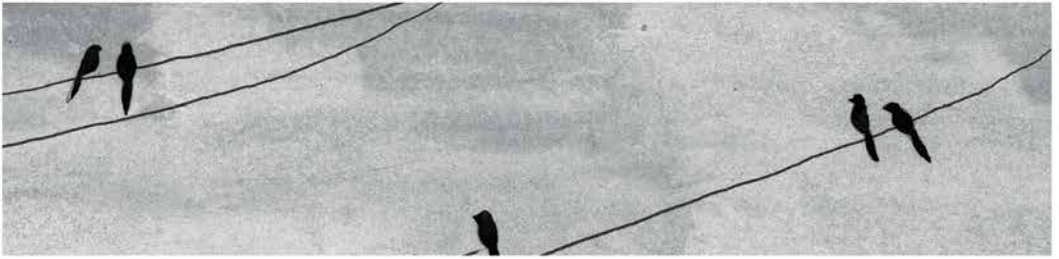


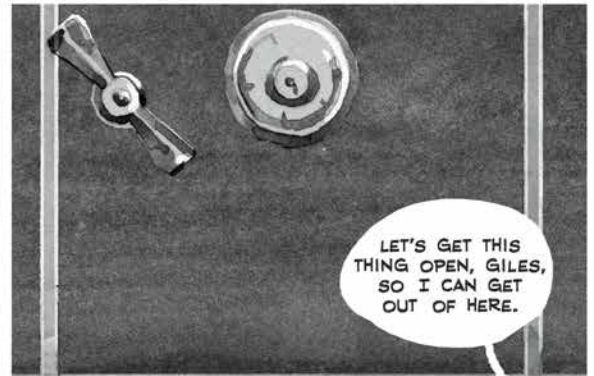


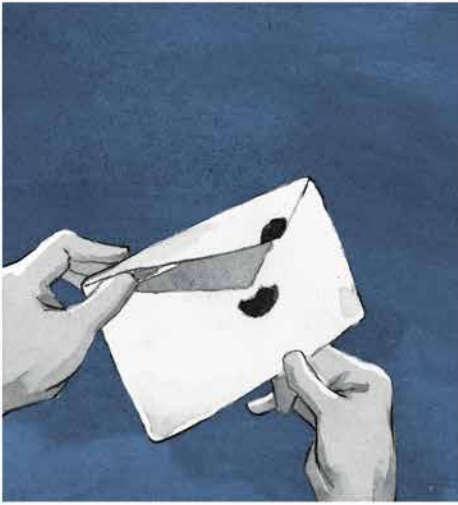


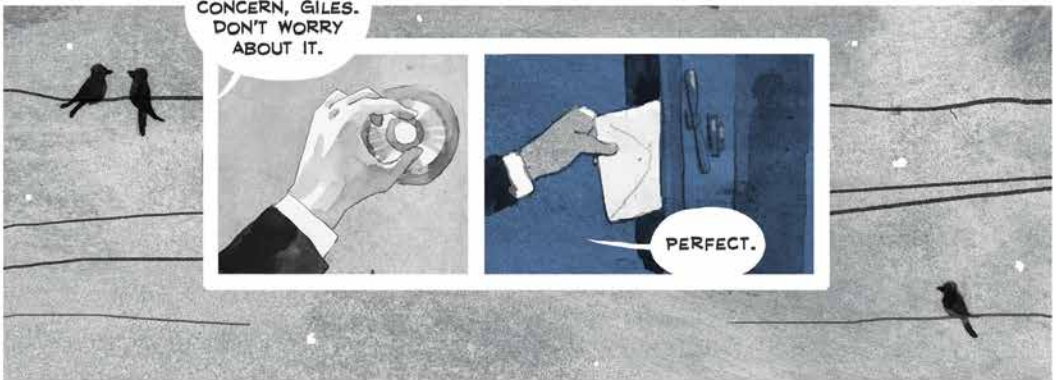
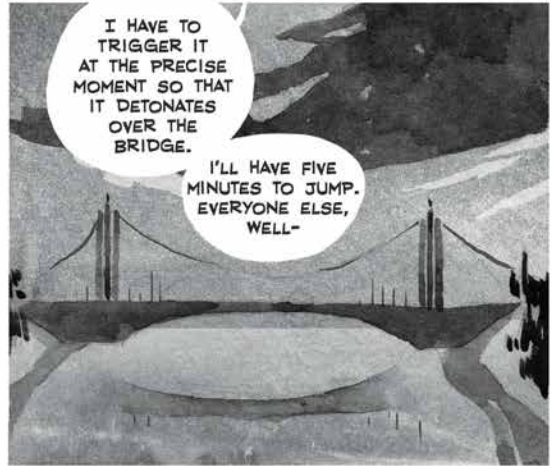


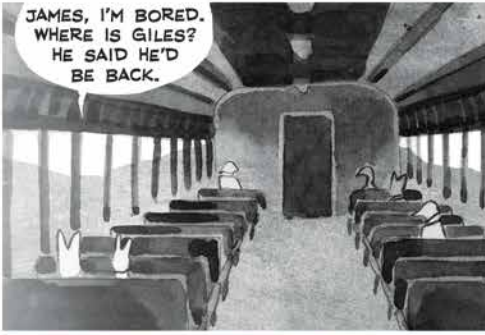






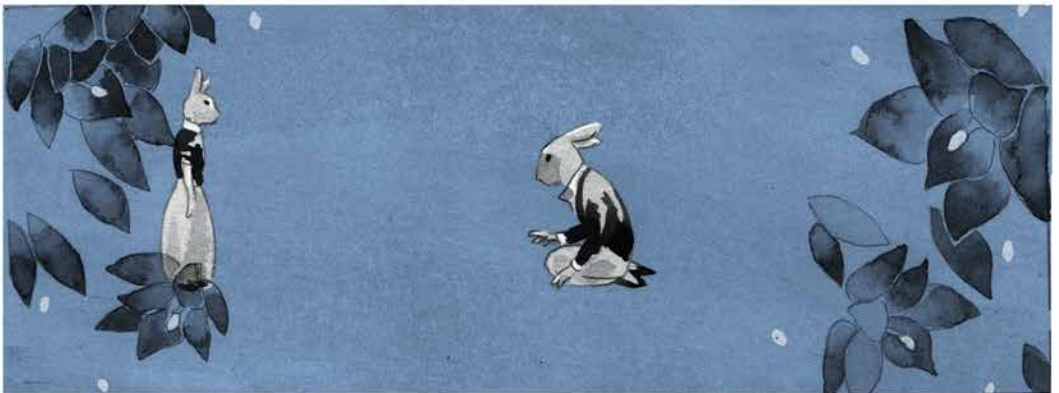
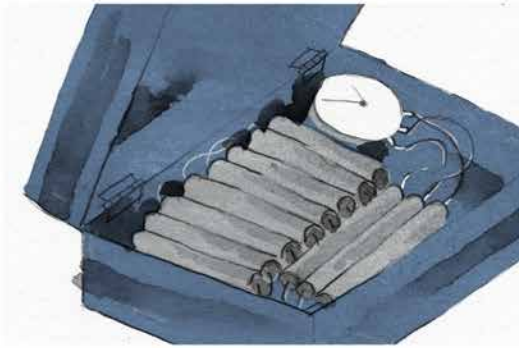




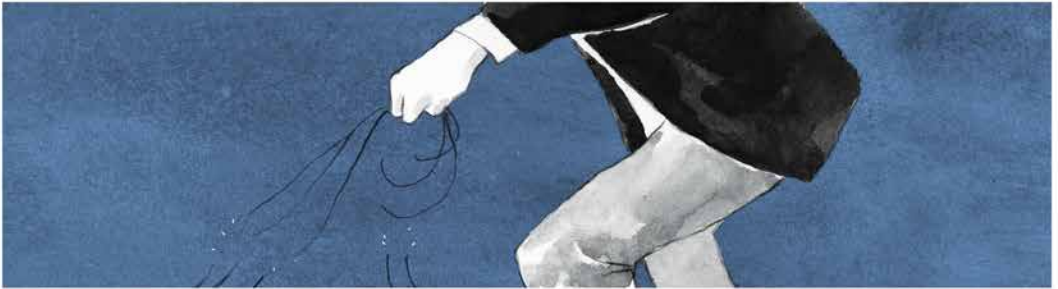
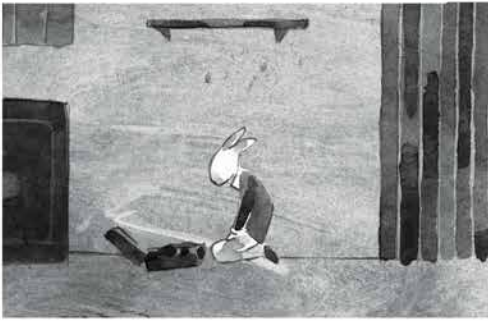
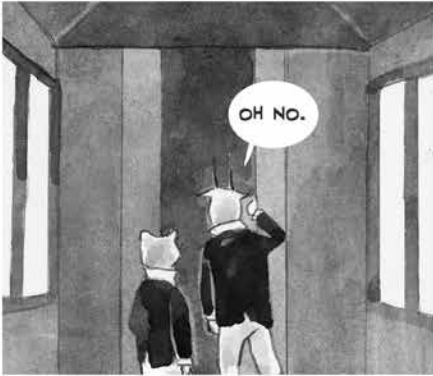


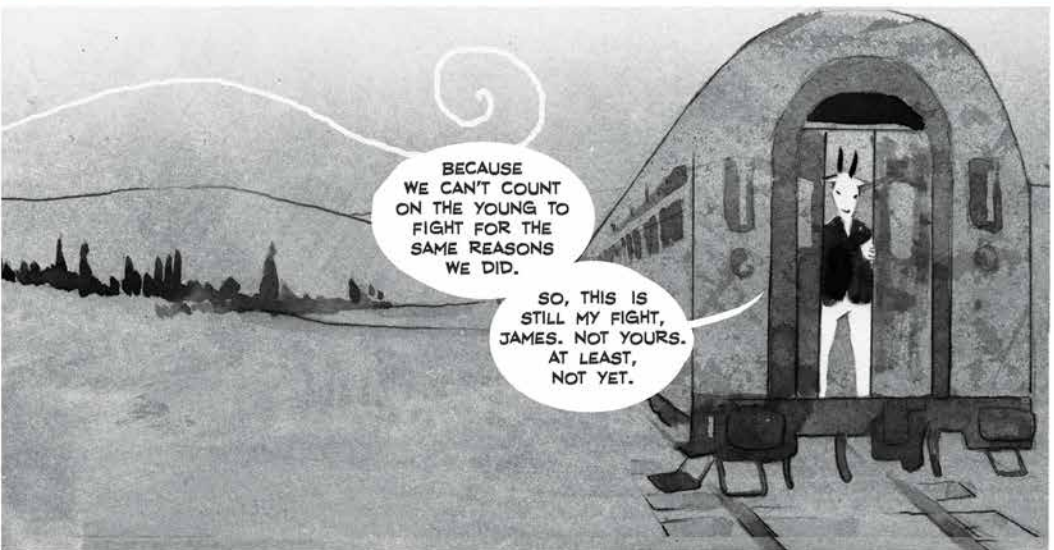


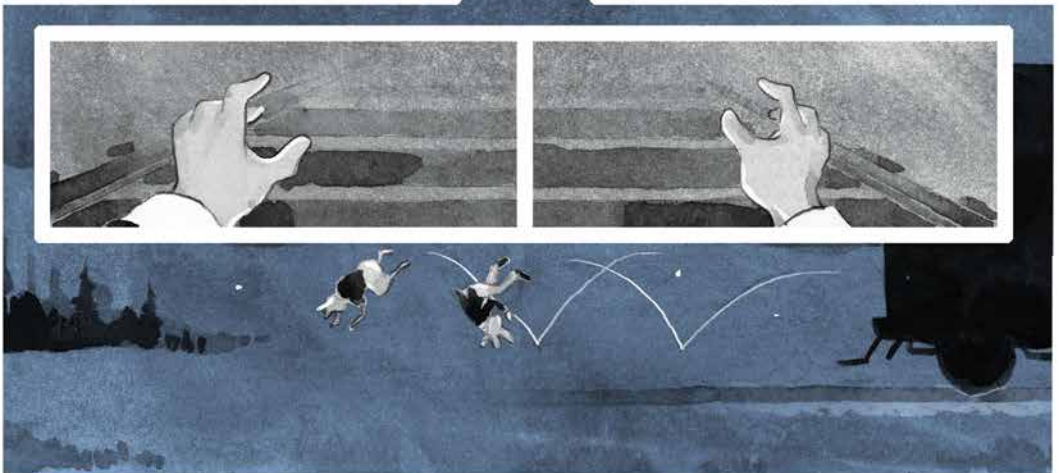
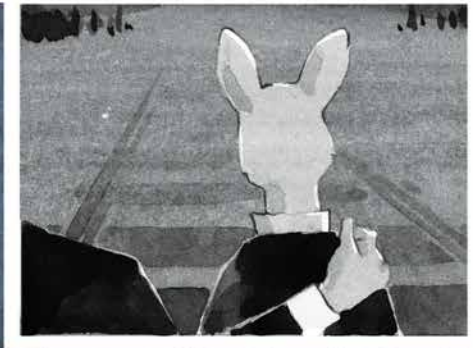




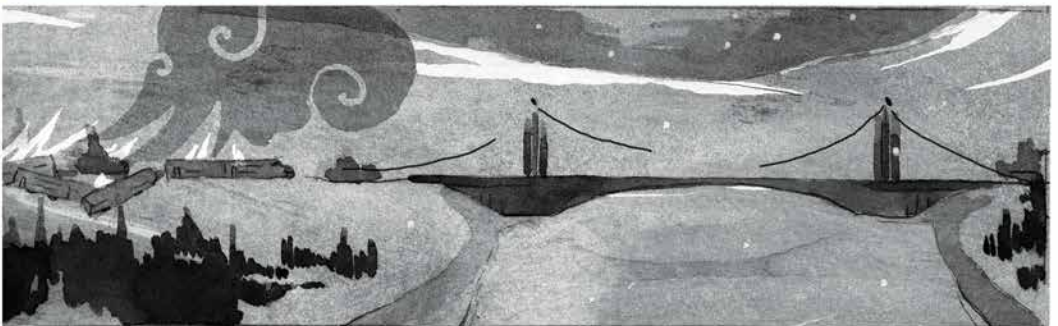
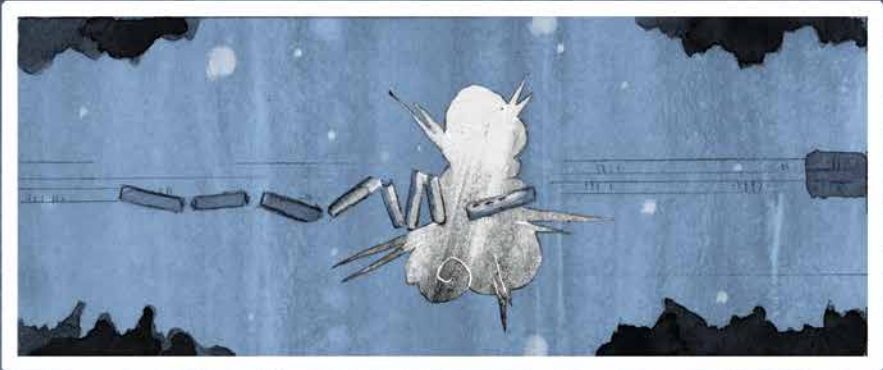
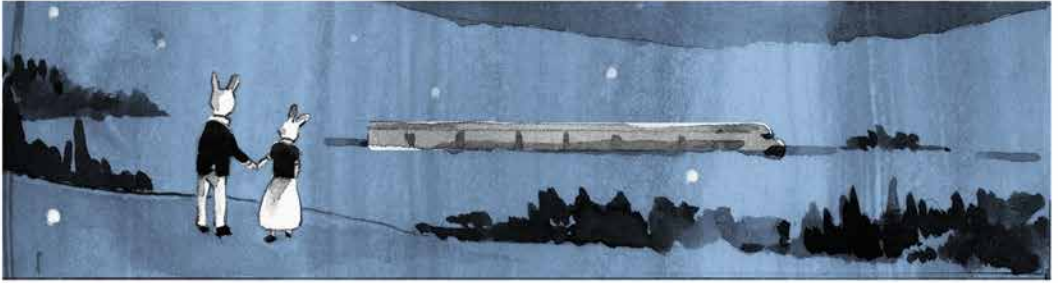
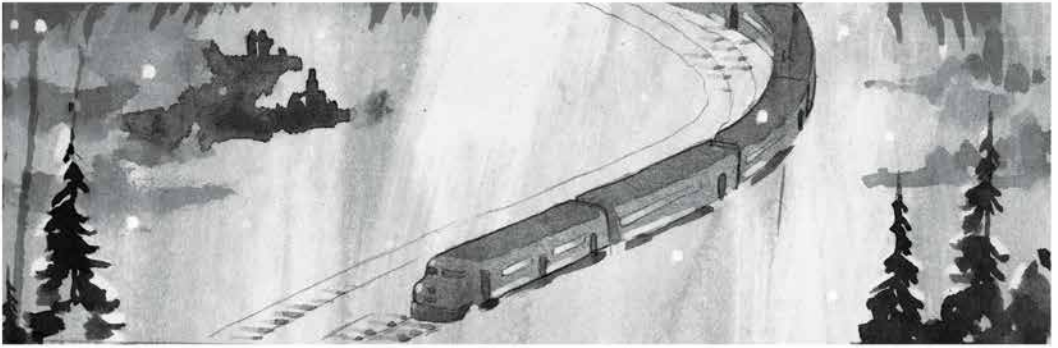














Tab,

Many years ago, when I was just a boy, I believed it was my duty to my country to fight. Everyone was so proud as all of us young boys left for the North during the Old War. We looked sharp. They even held a parade for us and called us 'The Iron Youth.' James was too young to fight then, but I think he would have done well. He and Charlotte are such a great team. She comes up with all of these wild ideas and somehow he gets them all done. It's like magic. But it leaves me feeling a bit out of place.

Maybe it's just because I've been here before, like some terrible case of Déjà vu. It seems like there are the same faces around me talking, laughing, and dying. And once again we're out-gunned. But I trust James, and as long as he keeps fighting, so will I. I will try my best to keep him safe, because he's the one who reminds me that there are still things worth fighting for. If it were up to me we'd all just drop our guns. But what good would that do in the end?

Yours

Giles



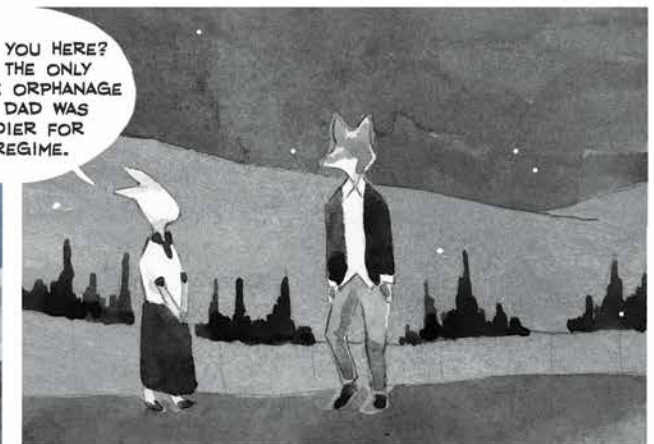
CHAPTER THREE  
OR  
THE CHILD





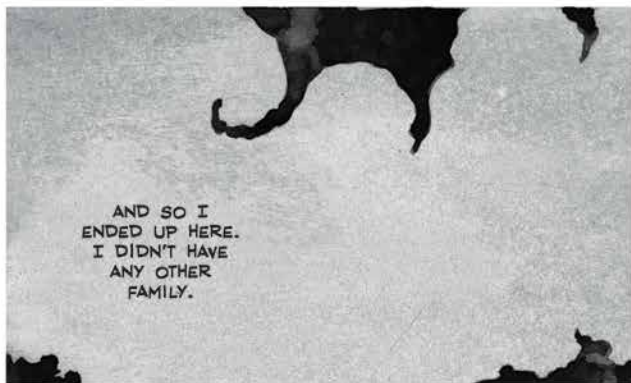
















WE DON'T  
HAVE A FAMILY  
ANYMORE,  
JAMES.



-AND THEN  
HE SAID HE  
WOULDN'T  
COME.

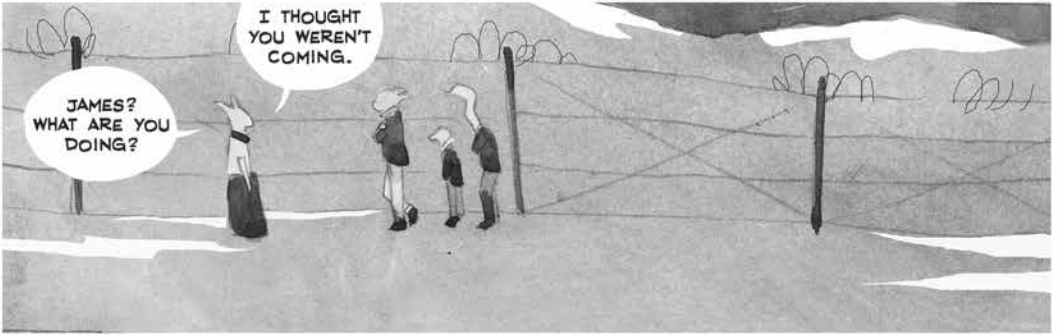
SO, DOES  
THAT MEAN YOU  
DON'T WANT TO  
GO ANYMORE?

NO, I STILL DO.  
I DON'T CARE  
WHAT HE DOES.

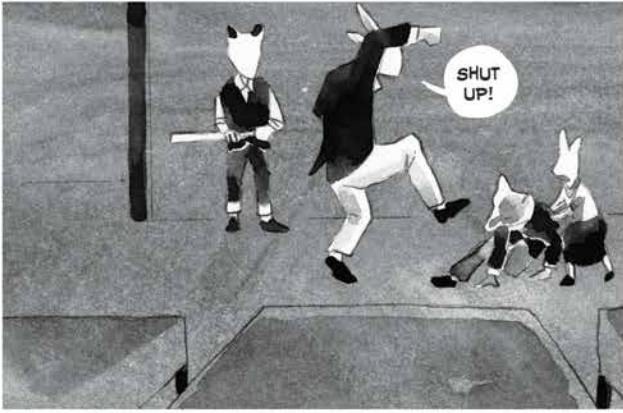


OKAY. BUT  
MAKE SURE  
YOU DRESS  
WARM.















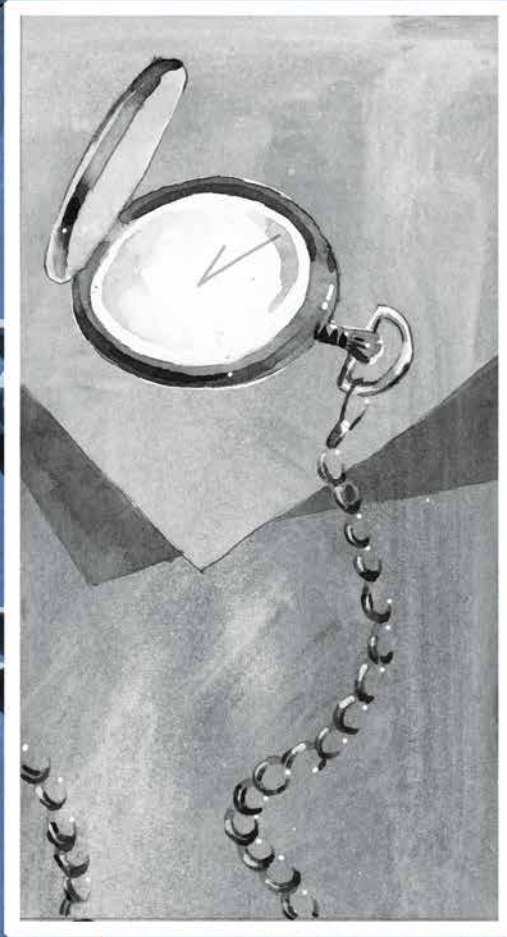


Daddy,

I hope you come home soon I miss you  
very much. Mom reads all of your letters  
and I am always so happy when you say my  
name. I say a prayer for you every night.  
Please come home soon!

xoxo

Patricia Hardin



CHAPTER FOUR  
OR  
THE PATRIOT



THEY ARE LOOKING AT US, ENGEL. THE TRAIN BOMBING HAS BEEN A HUGE EMBARRASSMENT.

GETTLEMAN WANTS HIS INVOLVEMENT MINIMIZED.



YOU WANT PAVEL ON TRIAL FOR THIS WHOLE MESS, BUT YOUR CASE IS TOO THIN. KORBIN PAVEL'S FATHER WAS A PROMINENT FIGURE.

YOUR WORD ALONE WON'T BE ENOUGH TO CONVINCE GETTLEMAN TO CHARGE HIM.



THIS WAS THE WORST ATTACK SINCE THE WAR ENDED. IT IS A SEVERE ACCUSATION.

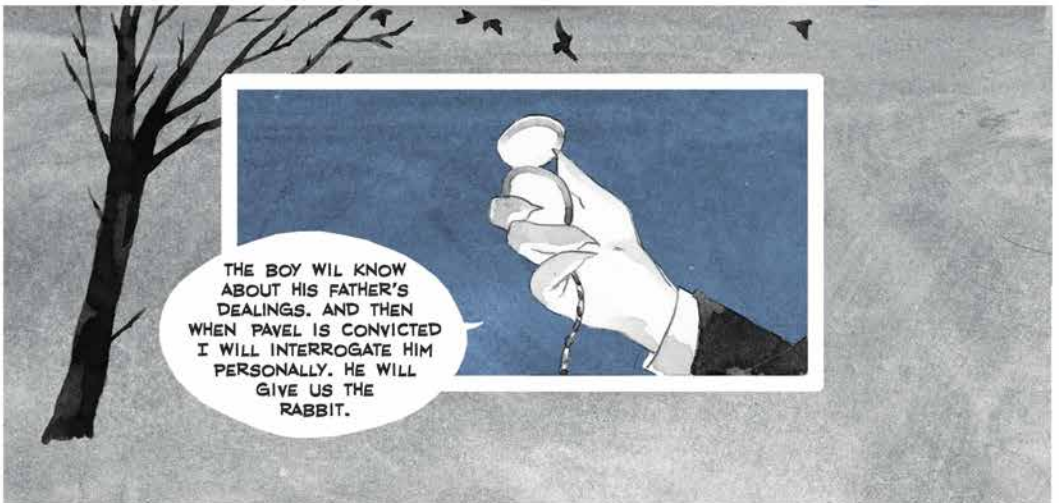
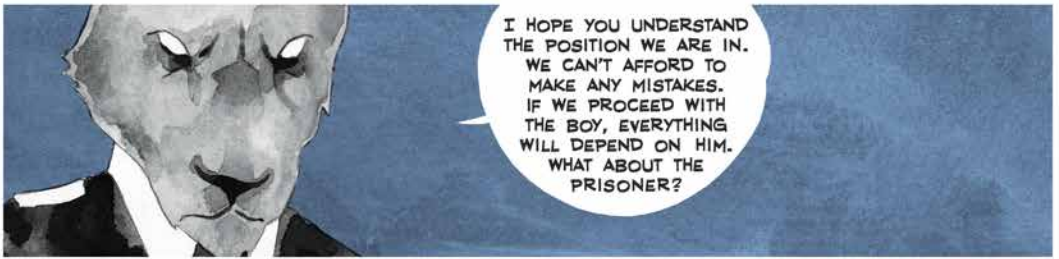
BUT I PROMISE YOU, I WILL NOT SUFFER FOR PAVEL'S INCOMPETENCE. OR YOURS.



I KNOW I CAN DO THIS, SIR. I JUST NEED TIME.



YOU WEREN'T THERE, YOU DIDN'T SEE HOW PAVEL REACTED AT THE HOUSE. HE IS HIDING SOMETHING.

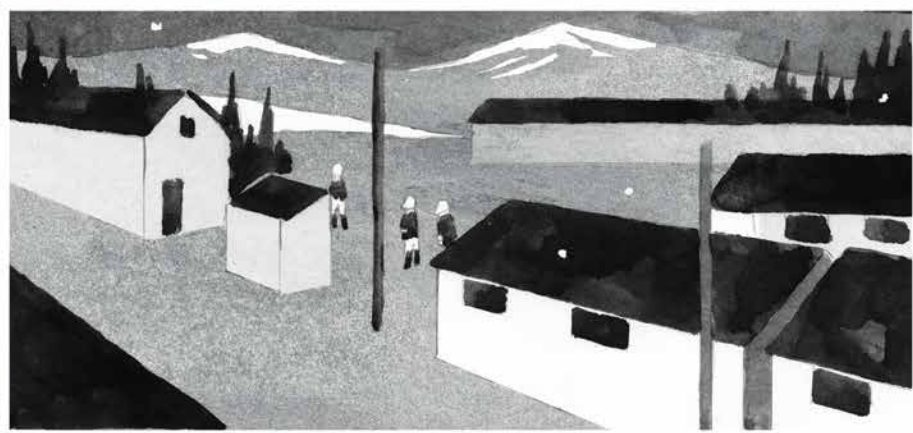


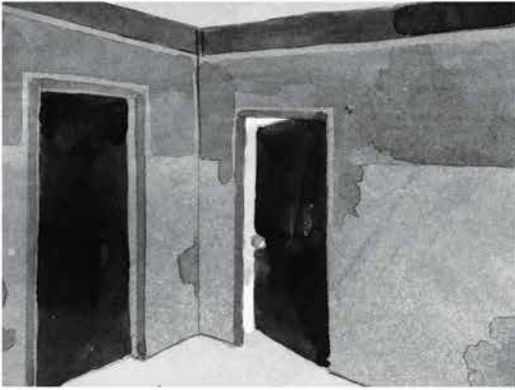
YOU MAY USE THE  
BOY, ENGEL. BUT  
GETTLEMAN MUST NOT  
FIND OUT ABOUT  
THE MISSING GIRL.  
WE'VE MADE TOO  
MANY MISTAKES  
ALREADY.



FIND HER, AND  
THE OTHER CHILD,  
THE TRAITOR'S SON.  
WE CAN'T AFFORD TO  
ADD TWO CHILDREN TO  
THE LIST OF THE DEAD,  
REBEL OR NOT.  
DISMISSED.









THE MEN TOLD ME  
YOU FOUGHT IN  
THE OLD WAR,  
MR. ENGEL.  
SO DID I.



DESPITE HOW FATE  
SEPARATED US, HOW  
OUR COUNTRY WAS  
SPLIT IN TWO-



IT'S FUNNY TO THINK  
WE WERE ONCE ON  
THE SAME SIDE.



NO, MR.  
RAEBURN.





THREATEN THE BOY,  
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU  
WANT. BUT IT WON'T  
WORK. HE'S TOO MUCH  
LIKE HIS FATHER.



I MISS JAMES.

HE WAS RIGHT  
WHEN HE SAID  
I WAS TIRED.





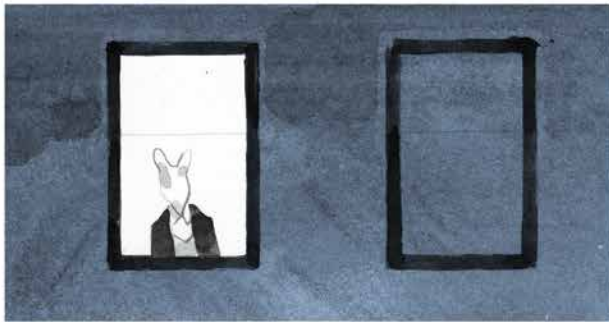
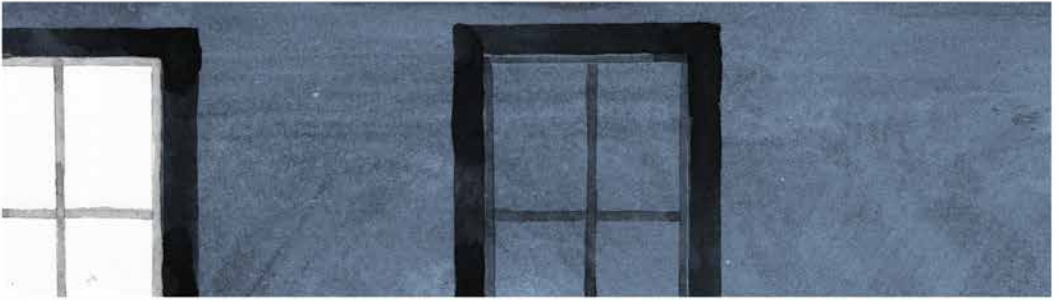
JAMES HARDIN  
IS A MURDERER  
WHO KILLED  
346 INNOCENT  
PEOPLE.

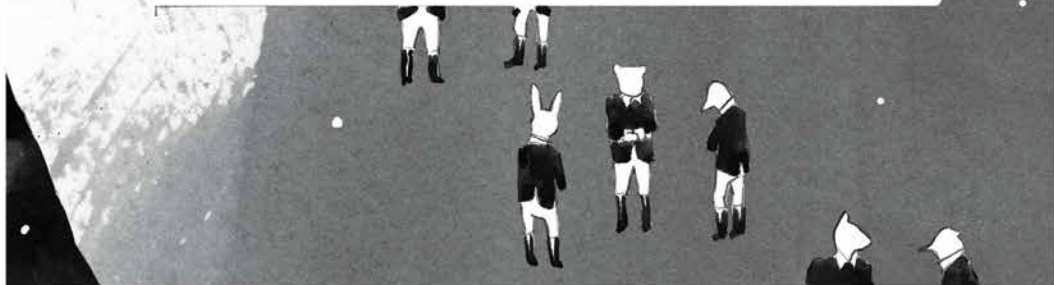


AND I WILL  
SEE THAT  
JUSTICE IS  
DONE.

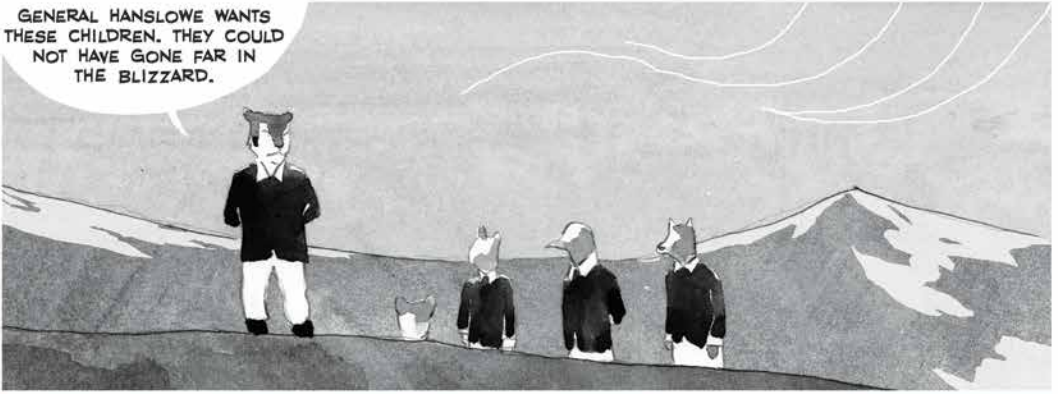








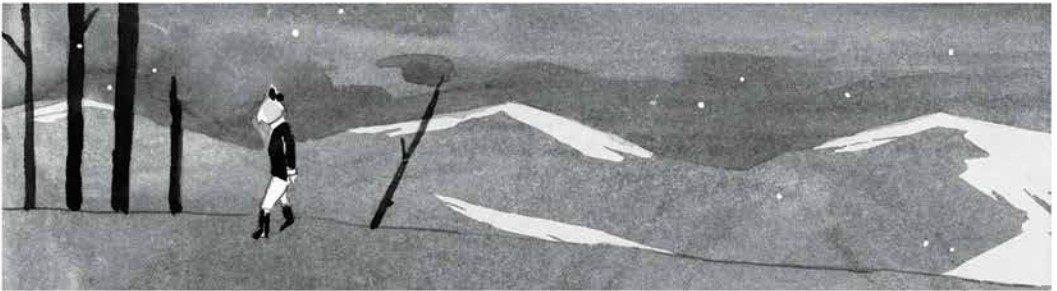
GENERAL HANSLOWE WANTS THESE CHILDREN. THEY COULD NOT HAVE GONE FAR IN THE BLIZZARD.

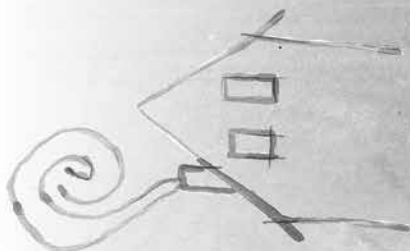


SEARCH EVERYWHERE. THIS IS OUR DUTY.

FARRELL, GO WITH FIERRO. TOWERS, TAKE SCHNARE AND DODENHOFF.

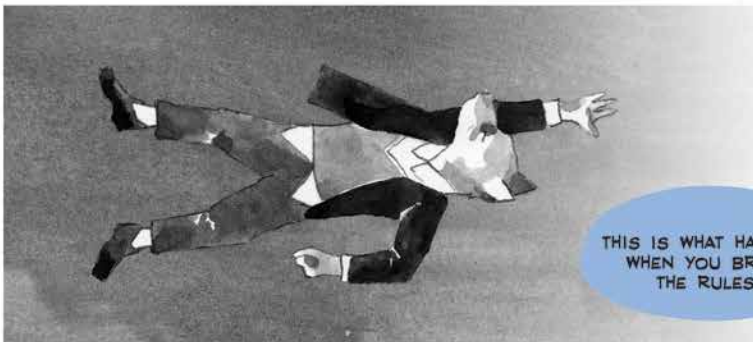
MCDONALD AND I WILL GO NORTH OF WHERE WE LAST SEARCHED. SPREAD OUT AND KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN.

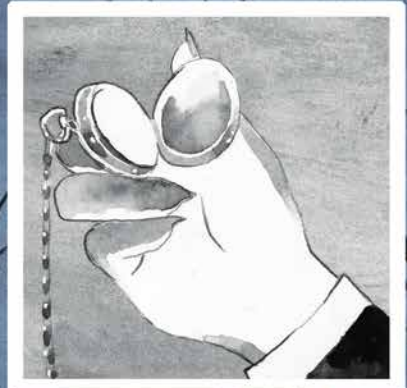




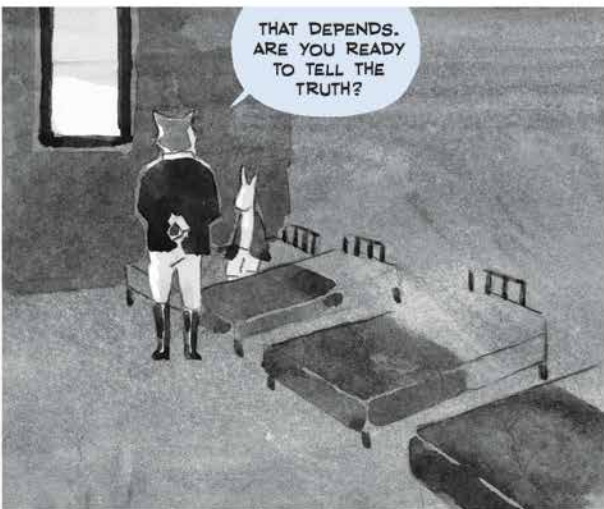
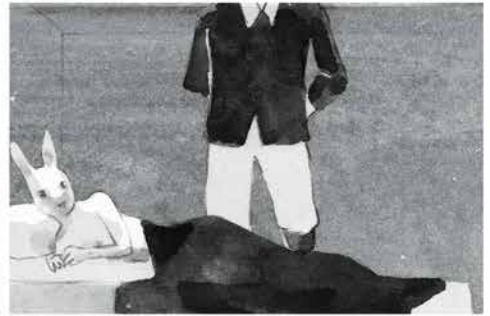
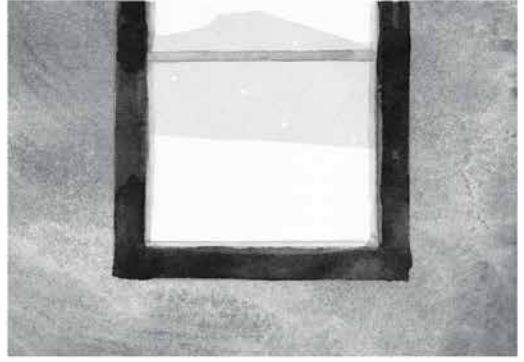
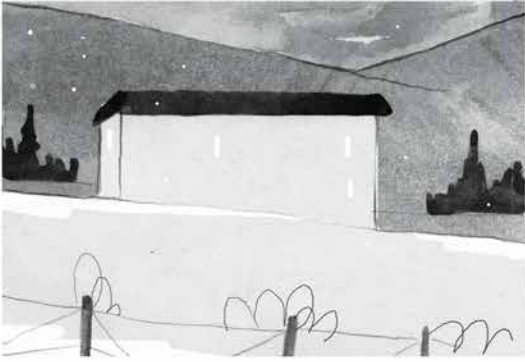


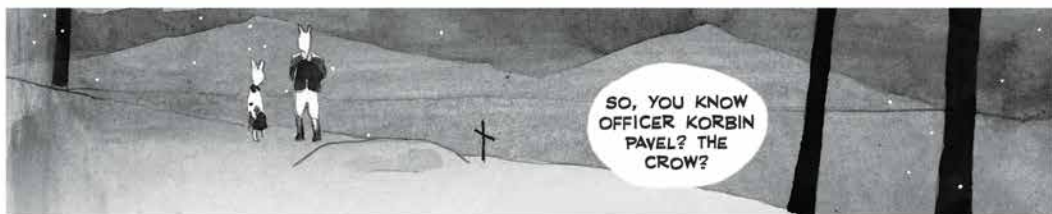














I HAVE THE GIRL,  
AND THE BOY WILL  
TALK.



WHAT BECAME  
OF THE TRAITOR'S  
CHILD?



THE GIRL TOLD ME  
SHE ESCAPED ALONE.  
THE ORPHANAGE MUST  
HAVE MADE A  
MISTAKE.

AND THE  
PRISONER?



HE WAS  
UNCOOPERATIVE.  
HE WILL NOT BE  
USEFUL AS A  
WITNESS.

VERY  
WELL.



GETLEMAN HAS  
AGREED TO TRY  
OFFICER PAVEL.

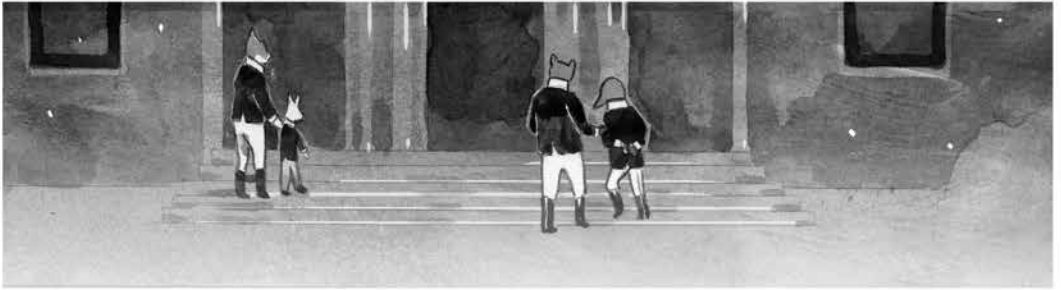
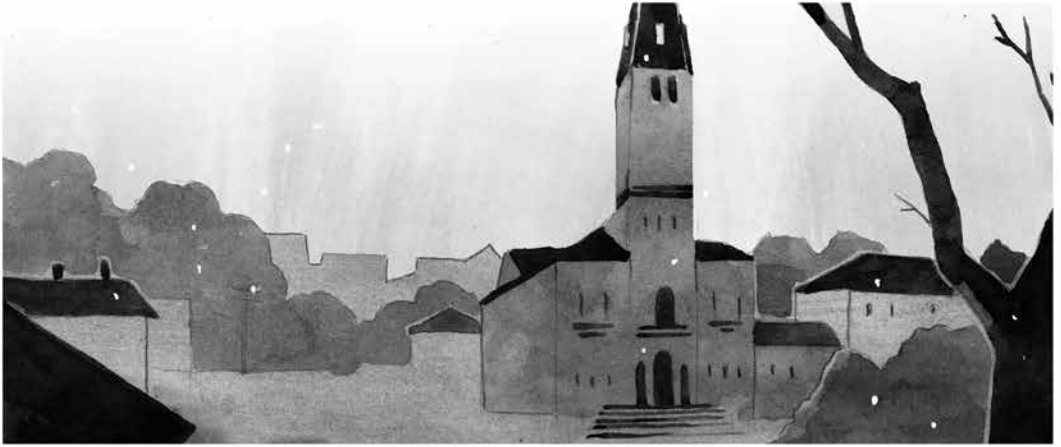
**WARRANT**  
KORBIN PAVEL

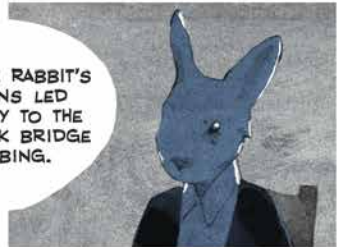
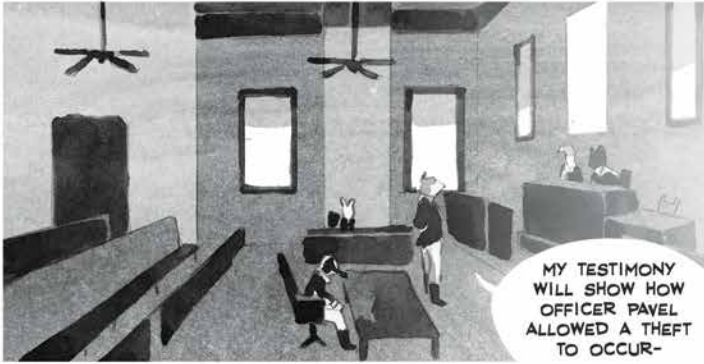


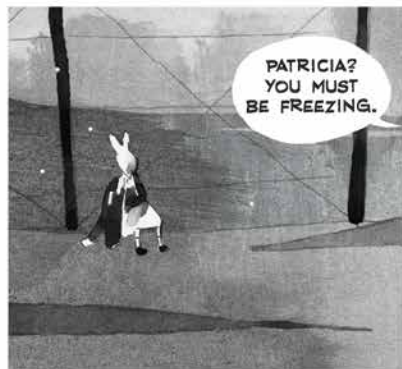
YOUR WITNESS  
BETTER HOLD  
UP.

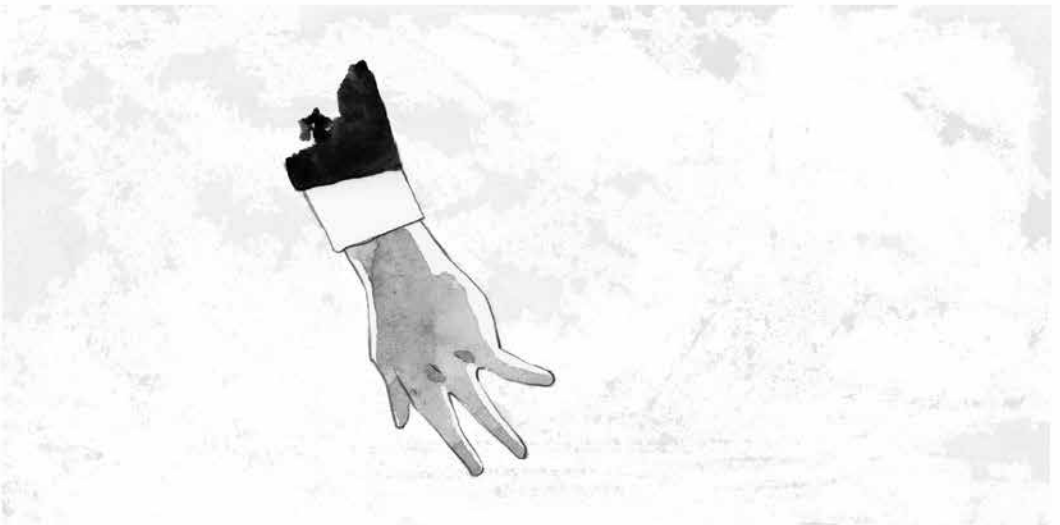






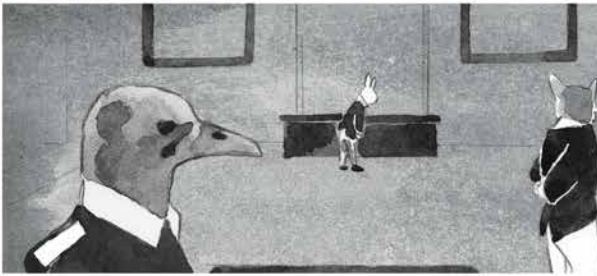








VERY WELL,  
ENGEL. NOW  
LET'S HEAR FROM  
YOUR WITNESS.



MR. HARDIN,  
PLEASE STEP  
FORWARD.



YOU'D BETTER  
NOT DISAPPOINT  
ME.



STATE YOUR  
NAME FOR  
THE COURT.



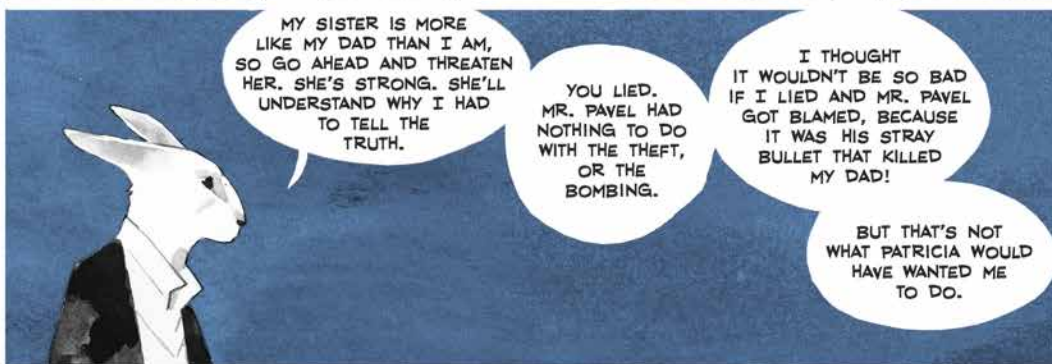
JAMES  
HARDIN  
JR.



NOW, TELL  
US WHAT  
HAPPENED.













YOU TOLD ME I NEVER FIRED, ENGEL. BUT I DID THIS TIME.



LOOK WHAT HAPPENED.



PUT THAT CHILD DOWN! HE WILL GET BACK UP ON THE STAND AND TESTIFY TO THE TRUTH! YOU ARE A TRAITOR, PAVEL! AND I WILL PROVE IT!



THIS IS A CIRCUS, HANSLOWE! I'VE SEEN ENOUGH. COURT DISMISSED.



CAPTAIN, SIR,  
YOU HAVE A  
VISITOR.

SEND  
THEM IN.



GENERAL  
HANSLOWE?

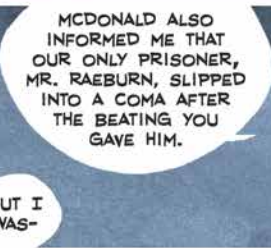
I WOULD LIKE TO  
KNOW WHY I SPENT  
ALL MORNING ON  
THE PHONE-

EXPLAINING TO  
GENERAL GETTLEMAN  
WHY THERE ARE NOW  
TWO CHILDREN IN THE  
HOSPITAL WARD AT  
THE ORPHANAGE.

AND WHY ONE  
OF THEM IS  
DEAD.

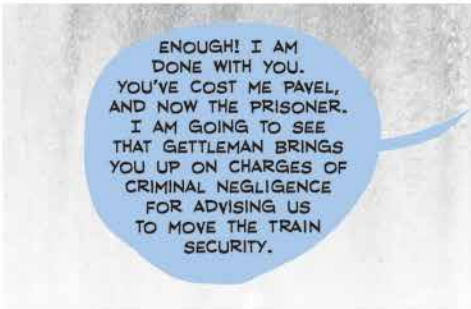
YOU'VE RUINED EVERYTHING,  
ENGEL. NOW THE ONLY THING  
ANYONE IS GOING TO CARE  
ABOUT IS THE SHALLOW  
GRAVE OF SOME TRAITOR'S  
ORPHAN.

CHARLOTTE WOOLF  
WILL USE THIS AS  
A RALLYING POINT.  
WHO KNOWS THE  
DAMAGE SHE WILL  
CAUSE.



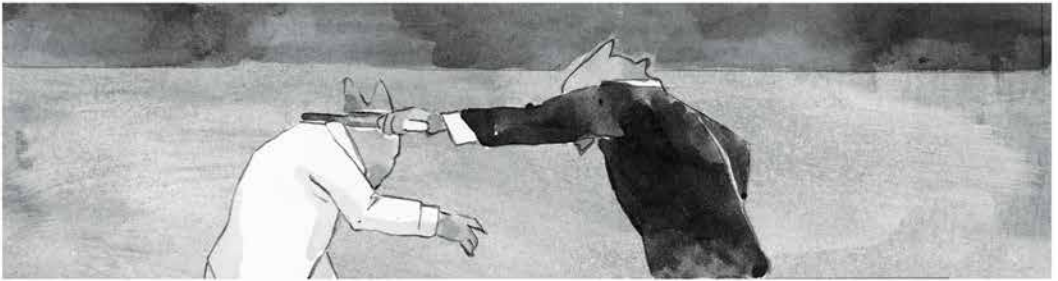
MCDONALD ALSO  
INFORMED ME THAT  
OUR ONLY PRISONER,  
MR. RAEBURN, SLIPPED  
INTO A COMA AFTER  
THE BEATING YOU  
GAVE HIM.

BUT I  
WAS-



ENOUGH! I AM  
DONE WITH YOU.  
YOU'VE COST ME PAVEL,  
AND NOW THE PRISONER.  
I AM GOING TO SEE  
THAT GETTLEMAN BRINGS  
YOU UP ON CHARGES OF  
CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE  
FOR ADVISING US  
TO MOVE THE TRAIN  
SECURITY.

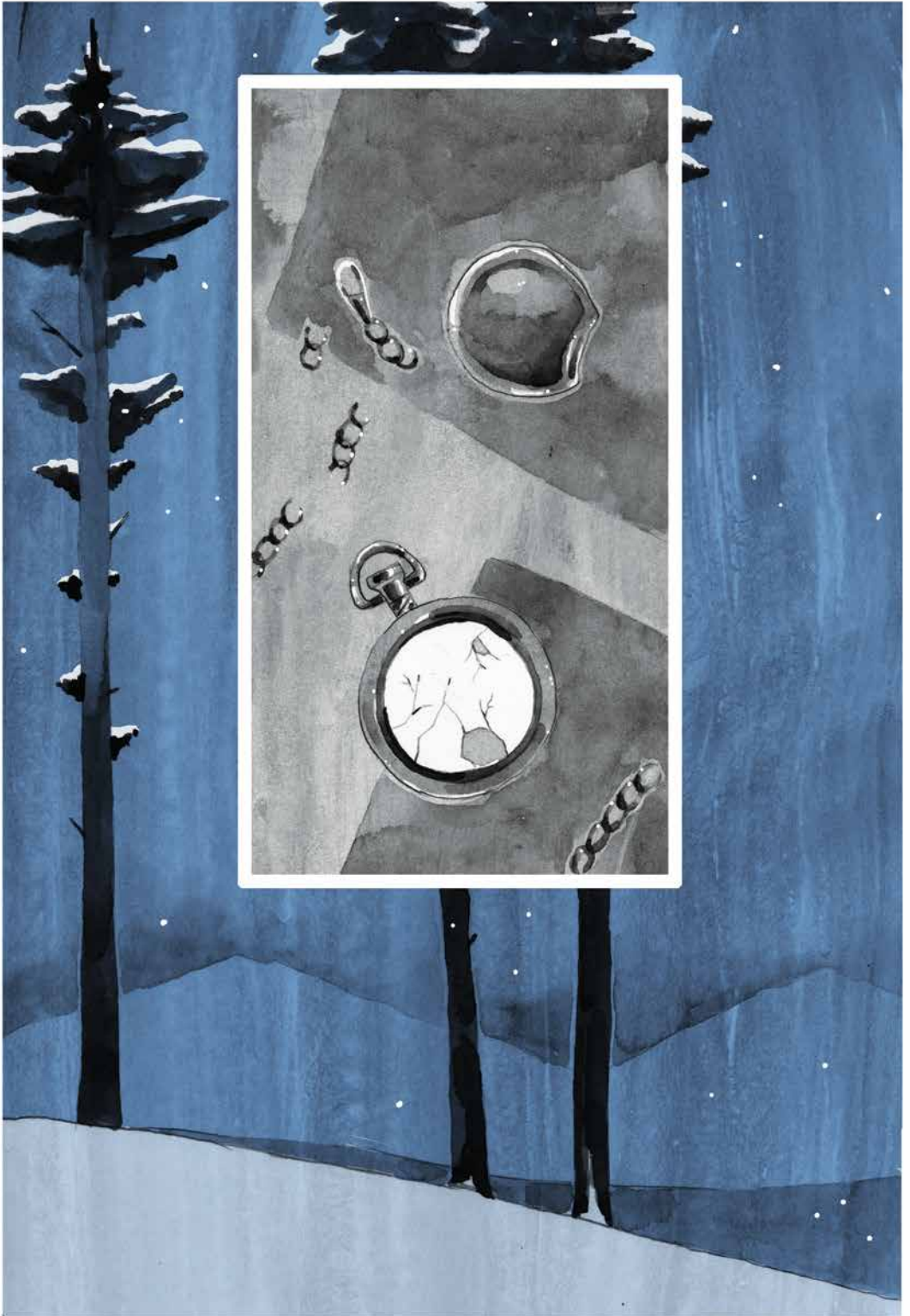




MCDONALD,  
CLEAN UP  
THIS MESS.

YES,  
GENERAL  
HANSLOWE,  
SIR.







DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE  
EPPWOOD

Gen. Tasker H. Engel  
Office of the Quartermaster General  
The National People's Organization  
Eppwood

Father,

I have news that I hope will please you. I have been promoted and I have been awarded a bronze star for valor. I was given this commendation because of my involvement in an exceptionally successful mission. Acting on information I had obtained, Officer Pavel and I located a particularly well-hidden enemy base. Once we returned with the coordinates, we were able to utilize our formidable artillery. The artillery Captain thanked me personally for my initiative.

I understand you knew Officer Pavel's father. I do not dislike Officer Pavel, and he was very helpful in this situation, but I think he lacks the iron will one needs to be successful in this conflict. It is like you taught me. We must never sacrifice our ideals, for they are what give us strength. Our bodies are weak and easily broken. I am reminded of this every day. But we stand on the precipice of victory, not because we are mightier, but because our ideals have not been compromised.

We will finally obtain the dream of peace we have fought our entire lives to realize. They have lost, Father. There will be no other war after this.

Your son,

Calvin

Cpt. Calvin H. Engel  
301st Military Intelligence Division, NPO  
Southmark







T H E   E N D





DAVID PETERSEN, Author of *Mouse Guard*



TIM DURNING



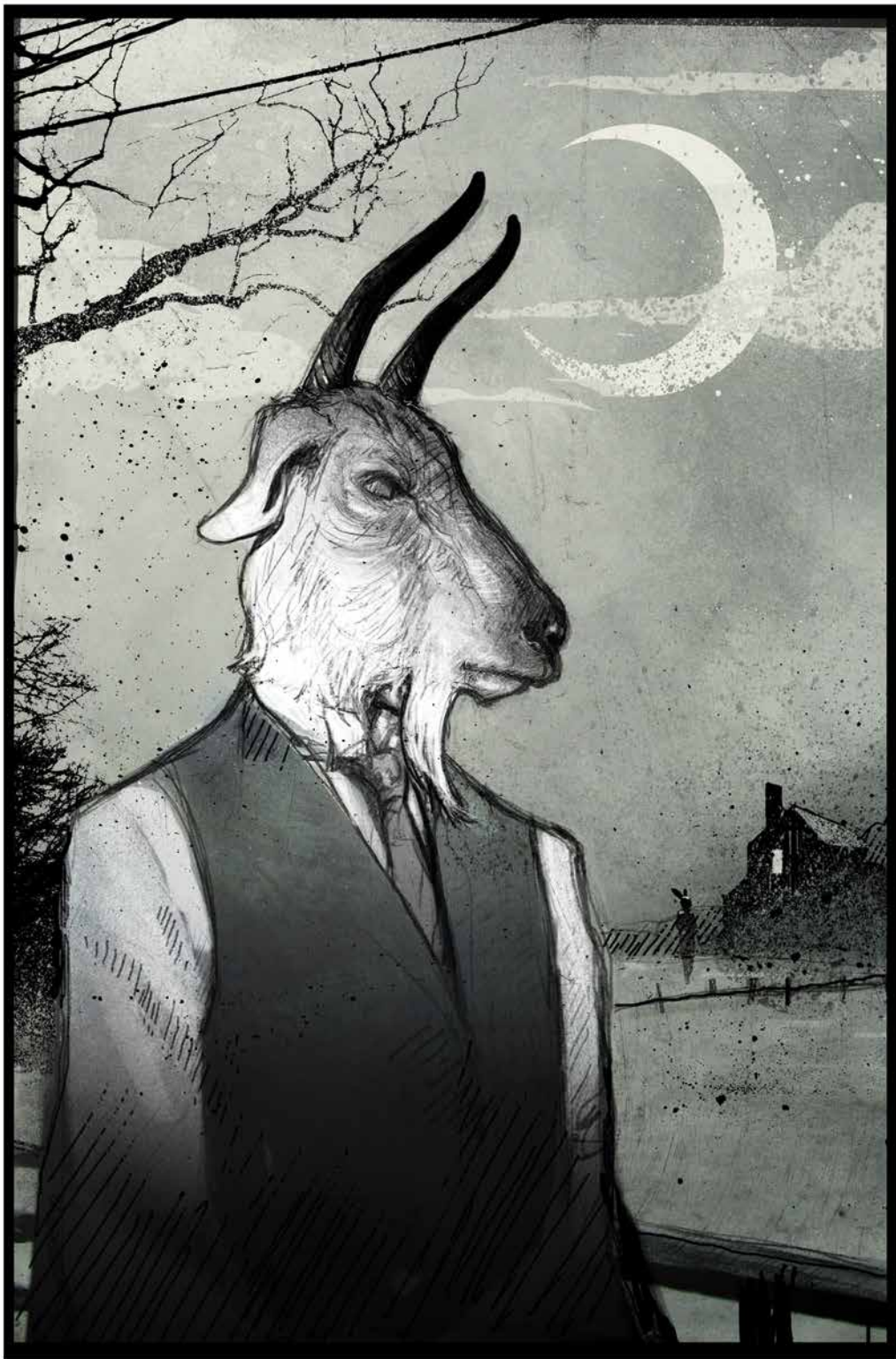
Patch

CHRISTIAN 'PATCH' PATCHELL



ERIC ORCHARD





ALEX ECKMAN-LAWN, Illustrator of *Awakening*

## A B O U T T H E A U T H O R

S.M. Vidaurri was born and raised in northern New Jersey. He received a BEA in Illustration from the University of the Arts, in Philadelphia.

[www.SMVidaurri.com](http://www.SMVidaurri.com)

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## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

I had a lot of help finishing IRON and I would like to thank the following:

Without the support and dedication of my Mother I would not have been able to complete this project. I am grateful for the support of my Father, and my Grandparents, who both encouraged and helped me. And I am grateful for my sisters, Tabitha and Chelsea, for their understanding.

A very special thank you to Archaia founder Mark Smylic for taking a chance on IRON. And my editor, Rebecca Taylor, who helped me keep my focus. I have to thank Tim Durning for his help with textures and all other aspects technical. Lastly—Kevin, Brian, Alec and Thomas must be mentioned for their unwavering admiration.

Also, for their inspiration: Andrew Wyeth, Erich Maria Remarque, Kenneth Grahame and E.H. Shephard.

And a special thank you to you, dear reader.







## IN A WORLD OF CONSTANT WINTER...

When an intelligence spy from the Resistance—the rabbit, Hardin—steals secret information from a military base of the Regime, his actions set off a chain of events that reverberates through the ranks of both sides, touching everyone from the highest-ranking officials to the smallest orphaned child. When the snow finally settles, who will be the true patriot and who the true traitor?



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