

YOU HAVE KILLED ME



by
JAMIE S. RICH
&
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An Oni Press Production





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CHAPTER 1



I REMEMBER THE SMELL OF ALMONDS.

IT WAS NATURAL
OILS, SHE SAID.



I'VE BLOCKED THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT
SMELL FROM MY
MEMORY FOR YEARS.



OH,
KITTY, DID
YOU HURT
YOURSELF?

YOU'D THINK I'D
HAVE NOTICED IT.





THE SMELL, IT USED TO JUST STING.

YOU CUT YOURSELF GOOD. THERE'S BLOOD ON YOUR CHIN.

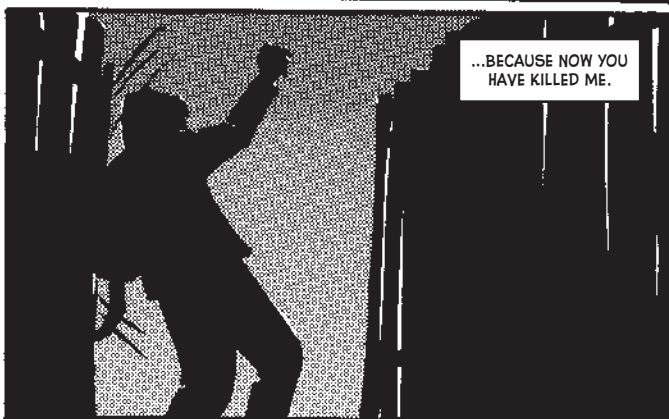
NOW IT'S GOING TO HURT MUCH WORSE...



WE'RE QUITE A PAIR, A COUPLE OF STRAYS...



...A COUPLE OF SUCKERS WHO CAN'T RESIST STICKING THEIR NOSES IN DANGEROUS PLACES.



...BECAUSE NOW YOU HAVE KILLED ME.



I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF.

THIS STORY STARTS JUST LIKE ANY OTHER...

...WITH A GIRL.





HELLO,
MERCER. DO
YOU REMEMBER
ME?

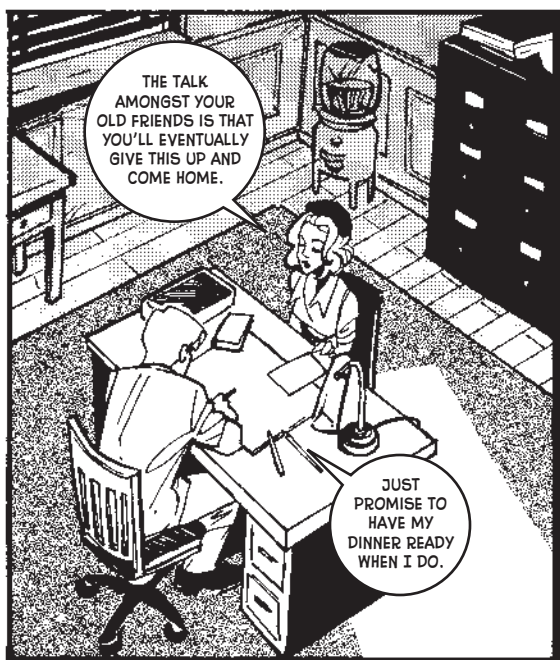
NO.
SHOULD
I?

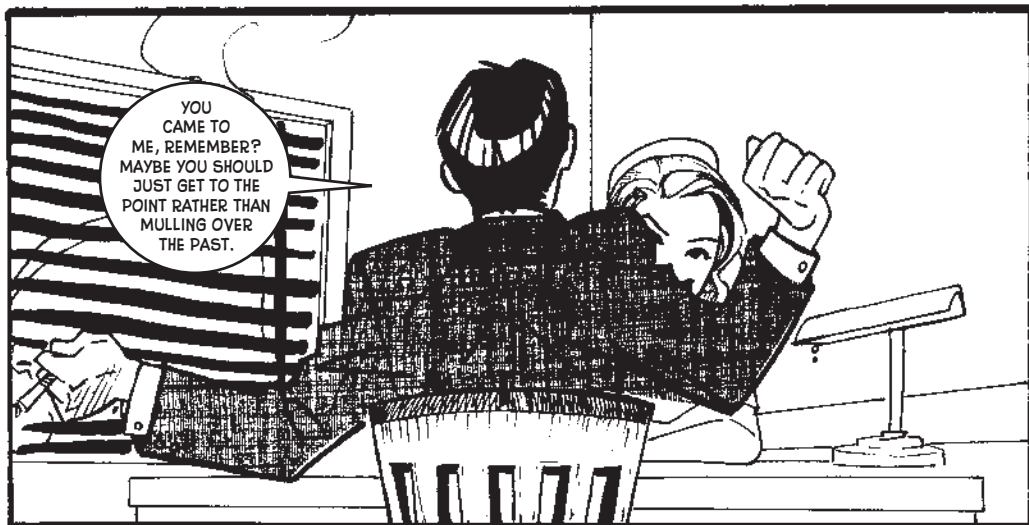
TSK.
I'D HOPED
I LEFT A BETTER
IMPRESSION ON
YOU THAN
THAT.

IMPRESSION?
YOU MEAN LIKE
A BOOTHEEL
IN THE
MUD?

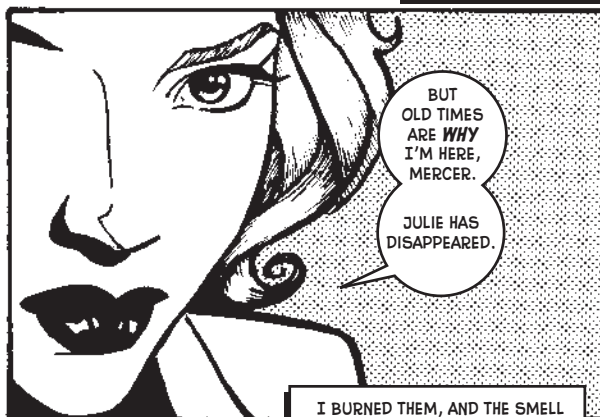
WHAT?
OH, NOW I
GET IT. YOU'RE
HAVING FUN
WITH ME.

I MAKE
IT A HABIT NOT
TO REMEMBER
ANYTHING WHEN
FIRST ASKED, *RED*.
IT'S WHAT MAKES
ME A GOOD
DETECTIVE.

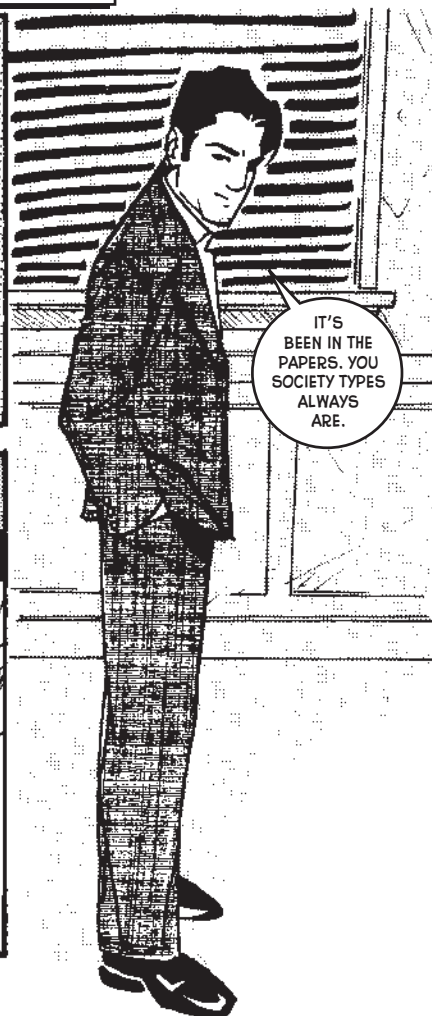




MY GRANDFATHER ONCE TRIED TO
TEACH ME HOW TO ROAST ALMONDS.



I BURNED THEM, AND THE SMELL
WAS AWFUL. LIKE SOMEONE WAS
BURNING DOWN A SYRUP FACTORY.





YOU SAY THAT LIKE WE'RE SO DIFFERENT, YOU AND I.

BUT WE'RE NOT.



THAT'S WHY I CAME TO YOU DESPITE YOUR REPUTATION. YOU KNEW US. YOU KNEW HER.

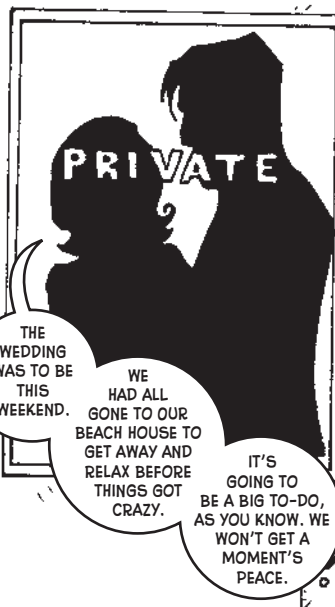
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT GIVE YOU SOME INSIGHT.



SHE PROBABLY GOT COLD FEET. SHE'LL BE BACK.



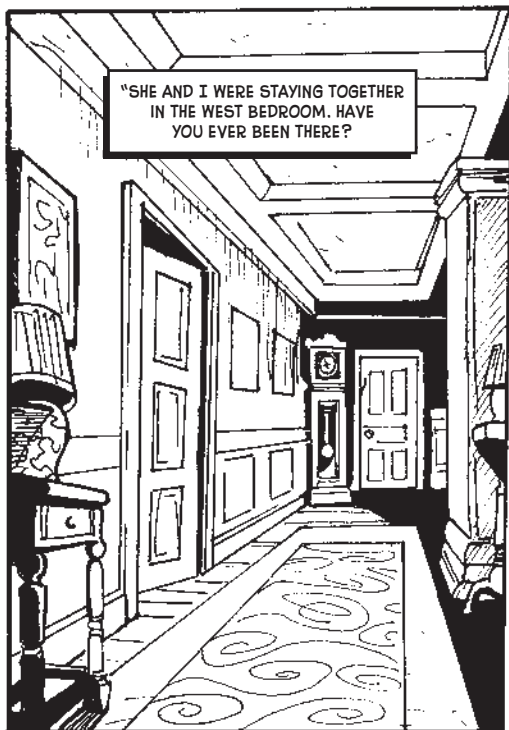
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS THAT.



THE WEDDING WAS TO BE THIS WEEKEND.

WE HAD ALL GONE TO OUR BEACH HOUSE TO GET AWAY AND RELAX BEFORE THINGS GOT CRAZY.

IT'S GOING TO BE A BIG TO-DO, AS YOU KNOW. WE WON'T GET A MOMENT'S PEACE.



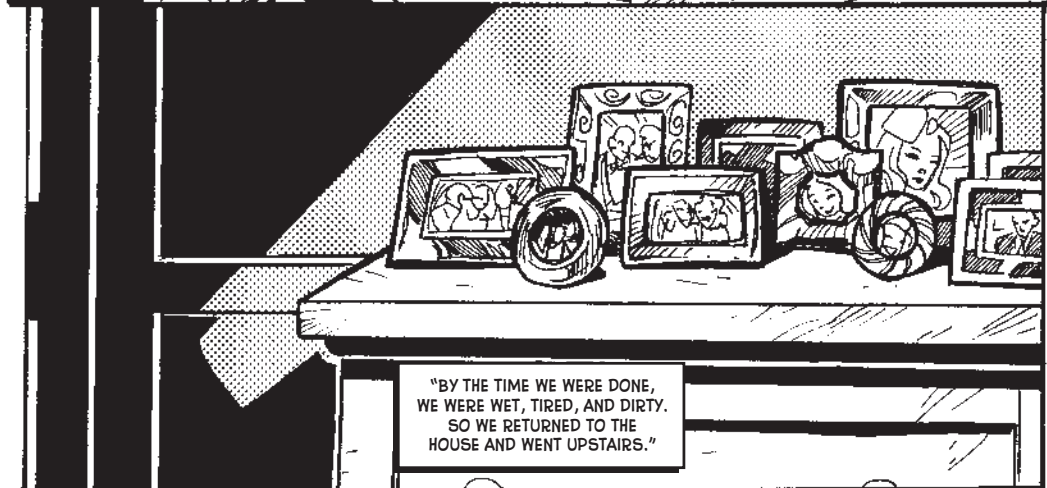
"SHE AND I WERE STAYING TOGETHER
IN THE WEST BEDROOM. HAVE
YOU EVER BEEN THERE?"



"IT'S THE ONE THAT LOOKS OUT
OVER THE WATER, THE CLIFF SIDE."



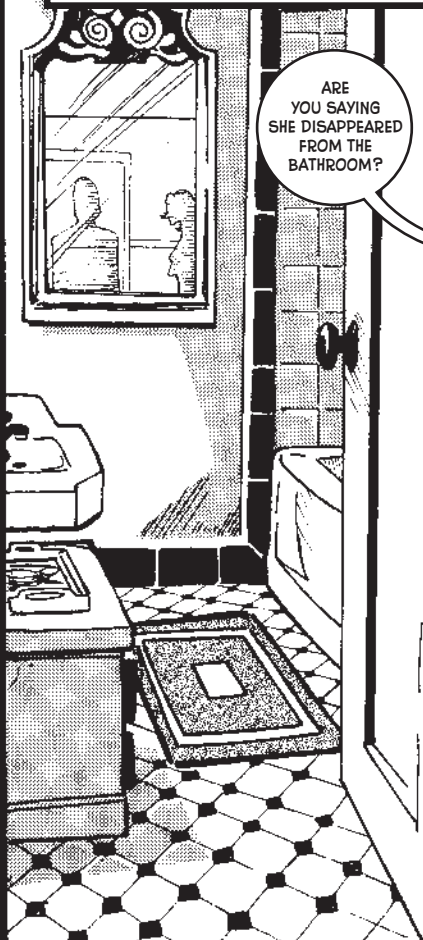
"WE HAD SPENT THE DAY DOWN BY THE ROCKS,
GOING THROUGH THE TIDE POOLS AND COLLECTING
SHELLS. JULIE WANTED TO GIVE THEM TO THE
CHILDREN OF THE WEDDING GUESTS."



"BY THE TIME WE WERE DONE,
WE WERE WET, TIRED, AND DIRTY.
SO WE RETURNED TO THE
HOUSE AND WENT UPSTAIRS."

"I TOLD HER SHE COULD USE THE BATH FIRST. I WAITED FOR HER ON THE BED AND READ MY MAGAZINE. TO LEAVE, SHE WOULD HAVE HAD TO GO PAST ME. BUT SHE NEVER DID."

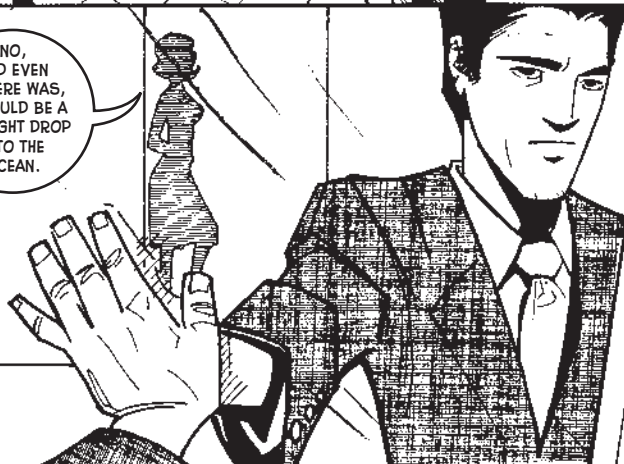
ARE
YOU SAYING
SHE DISAPPEARED
FROM THE
BATHROOM?

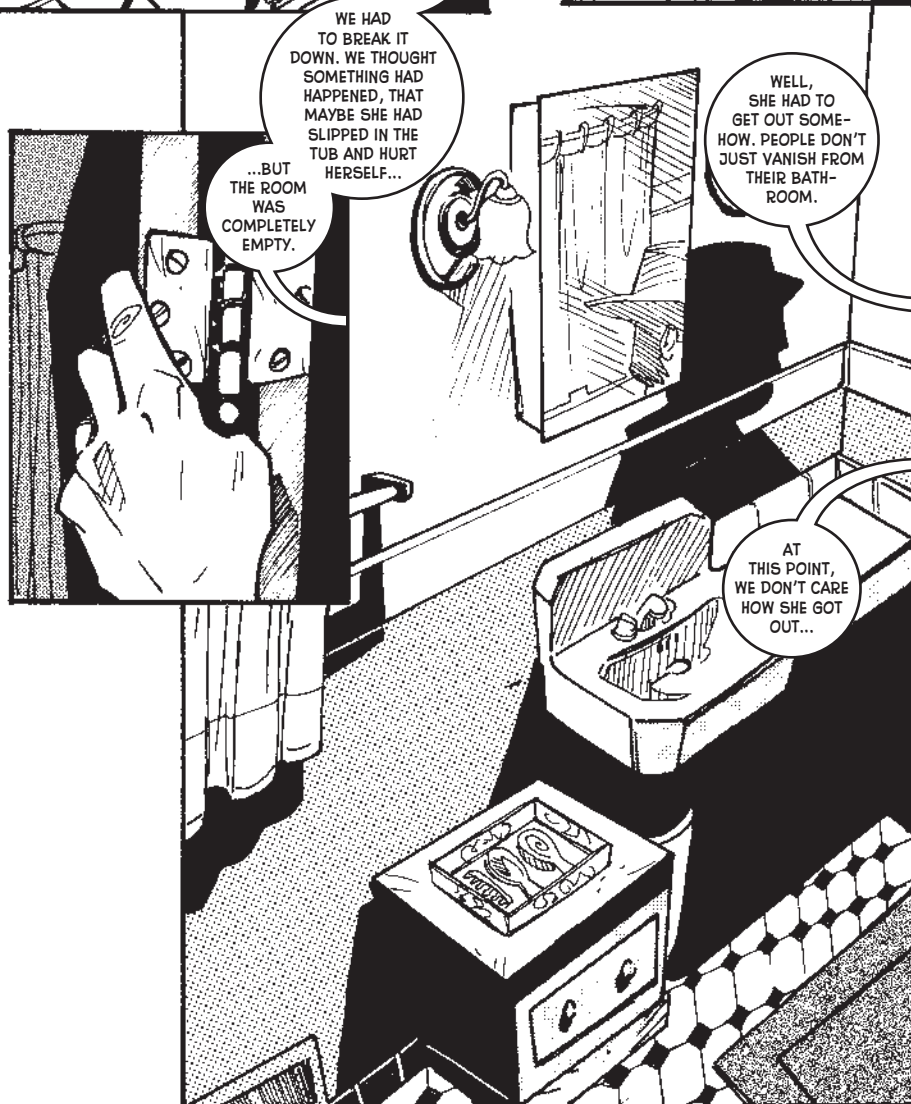
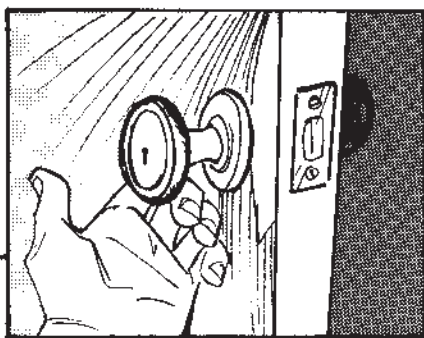
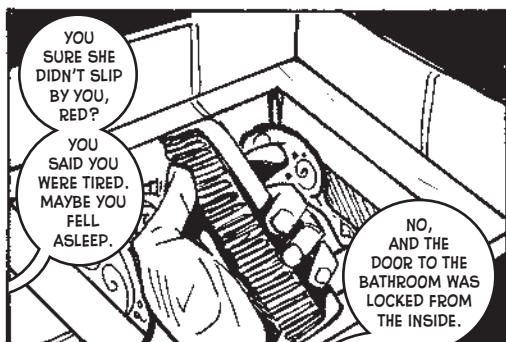


YES.

THAT'S
RIDICULOUS.
THERE'S NO
WINDOW.

NO,
AND EVEN
IF THERE WAS,
IT WOULD BE A
STRAIGHT DROP
INTO THE
OCEAN.







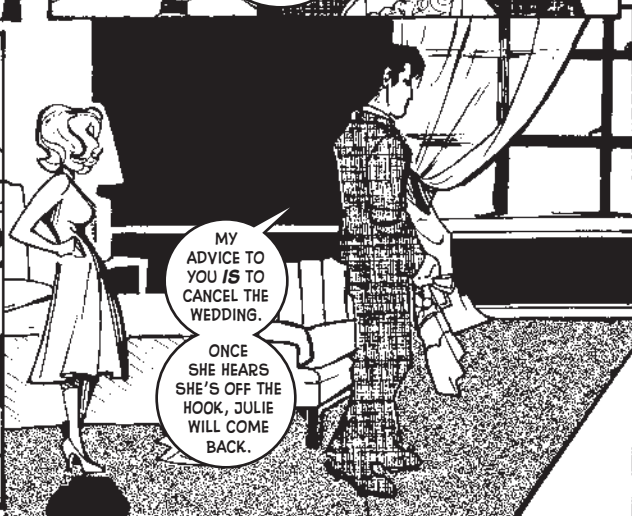
...WE
JUST WANT
TO KNOW
WHERE SHE
WENT.



IF
WE HAVE
TO CALL OFF
THIS WEDDING,
IT'S GOING TO
BE A
DISASTER.



IT WAS
MY IDEA TO
COME TO YOU.
I THOUGHT YOU
MIGHT KNOW SOME
OF HER SECRET
PLACES, WHERE
SHE MIGHT GO
TO HIDE.



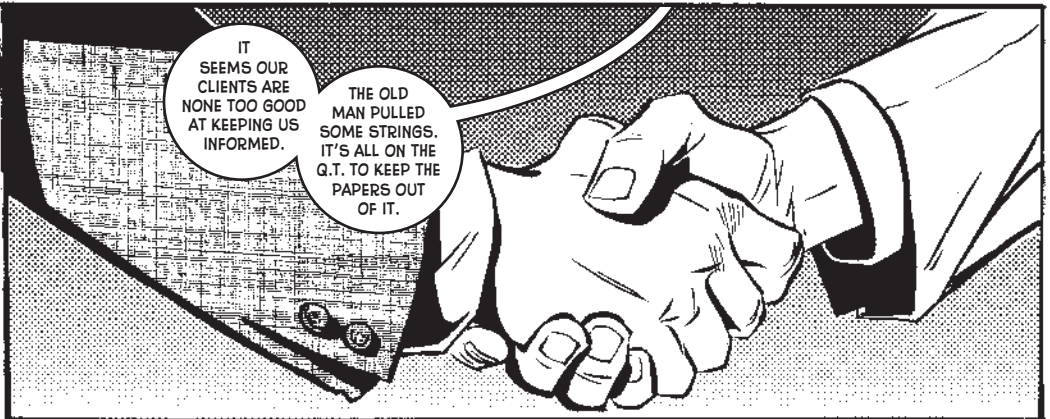
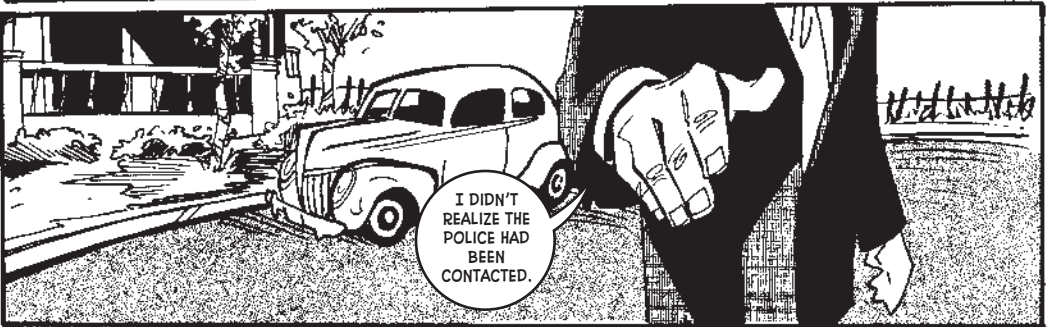
MY
ADVICE TO
YOU *IS* TO
CANCEL THE
WEDDING.

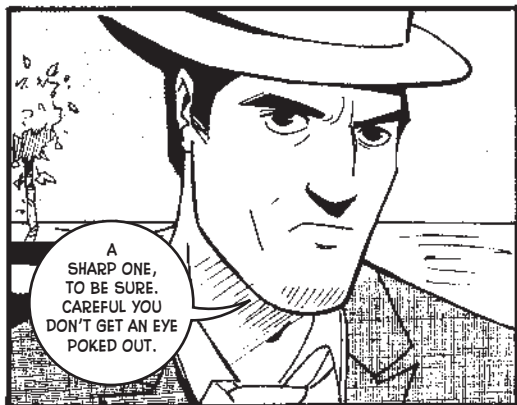
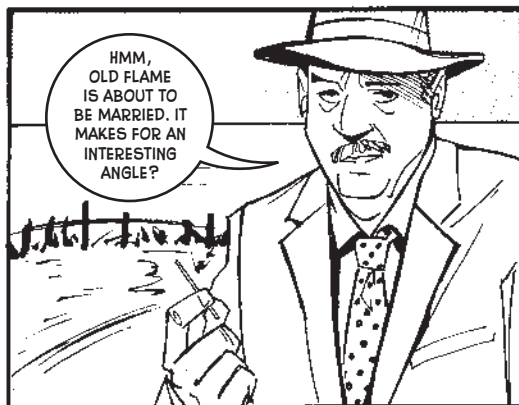
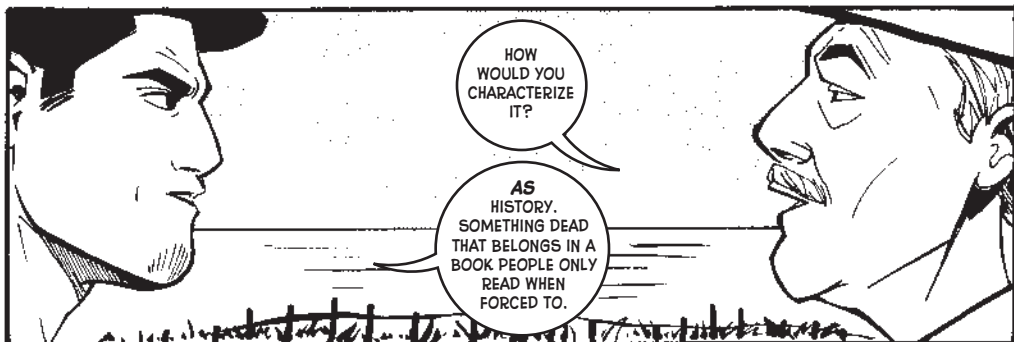
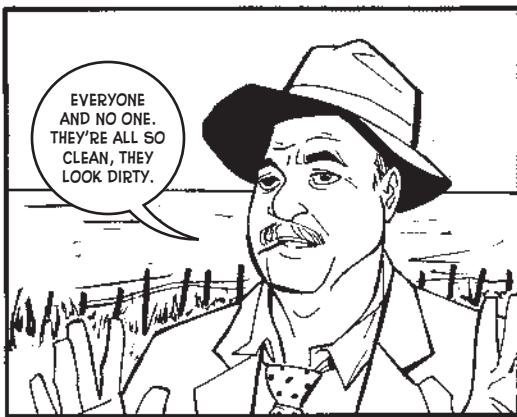
ONCE
SHE HEARS
SHE'S OFF THE
HOOK, JULIE
WILL COME
BACK.



DO YOU
WANT THE
JOB OR NOT?
WE'LL PAY DOUBLE
YOUR FEE AND A
CASH BONUS IF
YOU GET HER TO
THE ALTAR.











CHAPTER 2

WHERE
IS THE
FIANCÉ
NOW?

I READ A STORY ABOUT A MAN
WHO ONE DAY WALKED OUT INTO
THE SNOW, LAY DOWN, AND DIED.

NO
ONE IS
SURE. TO BE
HONEST, WE
HAVEN'T SEEN
RANCE IN
DAYS.

SOME-
THING TELLS
ME YOU KNOW
WHERE HE
PROBABLY IS,
THOUGH.

THE
JAZZ CLUB.
TOURNEUR'S.



HE WAS A PROFESSOR OR SOMETHING SOMEWHERE,
AND HE KNEW THAT IT WAS HIS TIME TO GO.



HE
LIKES
JAZZ THAT
MUCH?

DON'T
BE COY WITH
ME, MERCER.
YOU KNOW THAT
THERE'S
GAMBLING
THERE.



I GUESS HE'D HAD ENOUGH OF LIFE,
AND LIFE HAD ENOUGH OF HIM.

YEAH,
RED, I KNOW.
BUT I NEEDED
TO HEAR YOU
SAY IT.



I
EXPECT
YOU TO TELL
ME THINGS, YOU
UNDERSTAND?

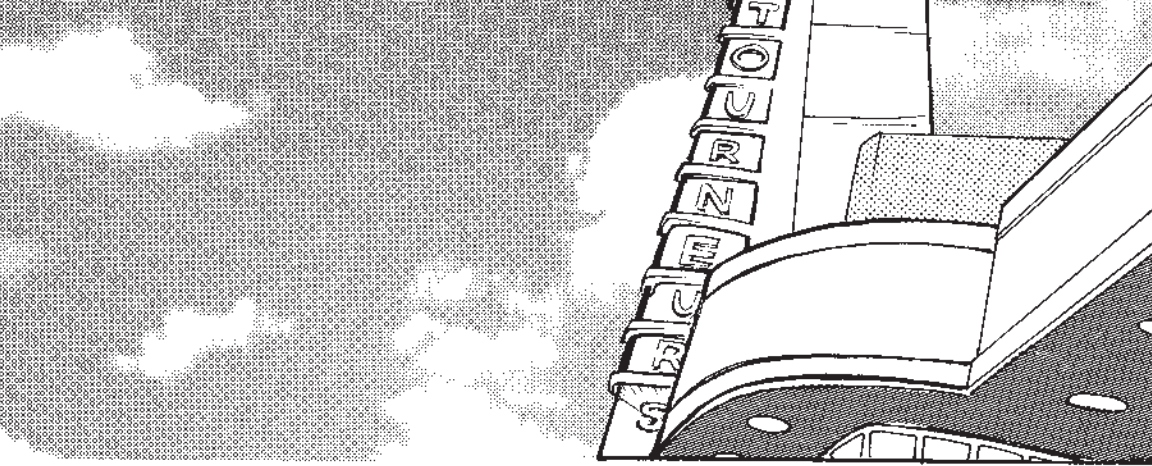
UNDER-
STOOD.

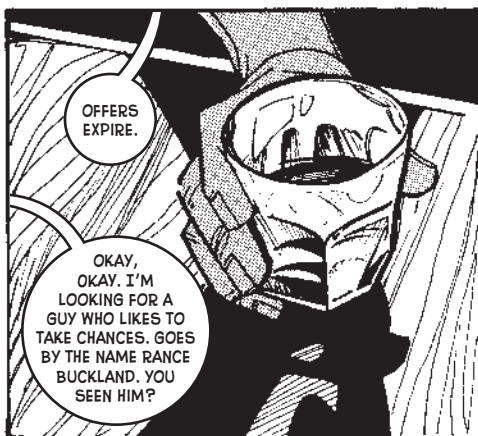
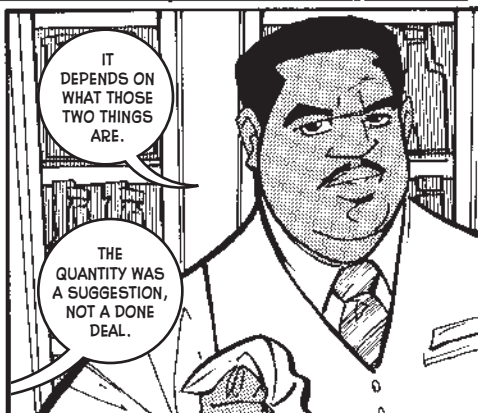


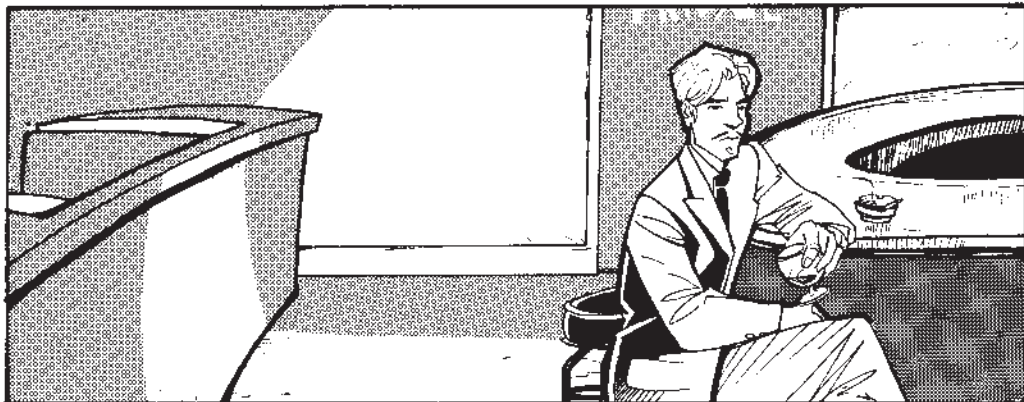
GOOD.

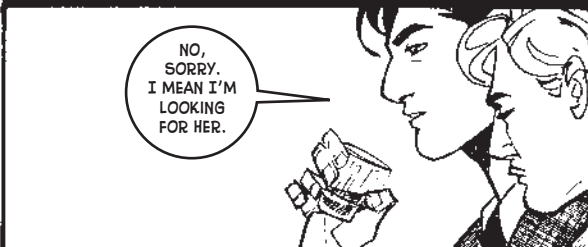
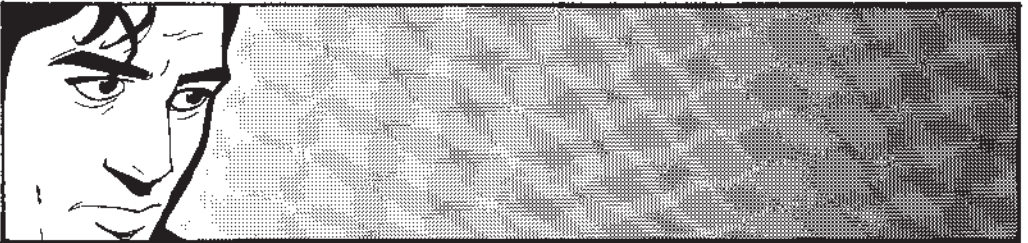
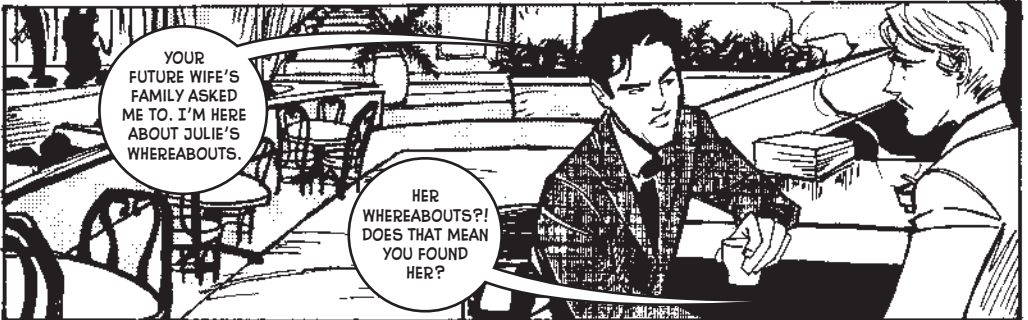


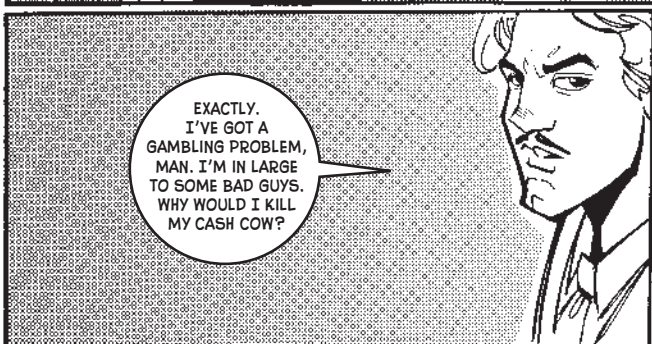
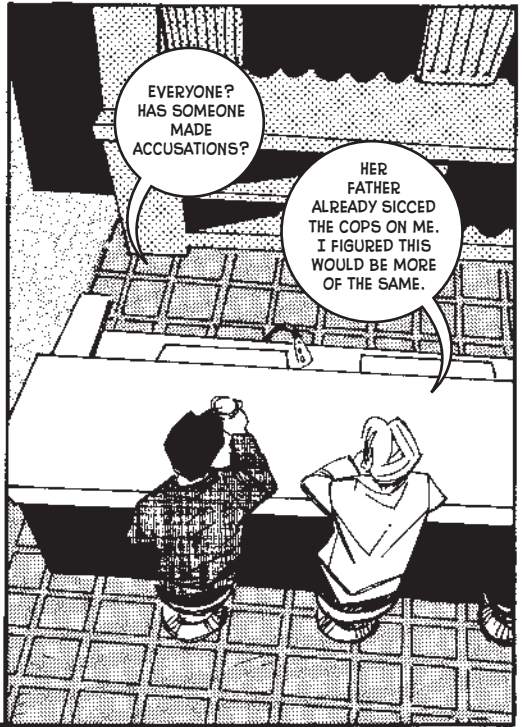
SO, HE WENT TO SLEEP, AND
HE WAS GONE, JUST LIKE THAT.

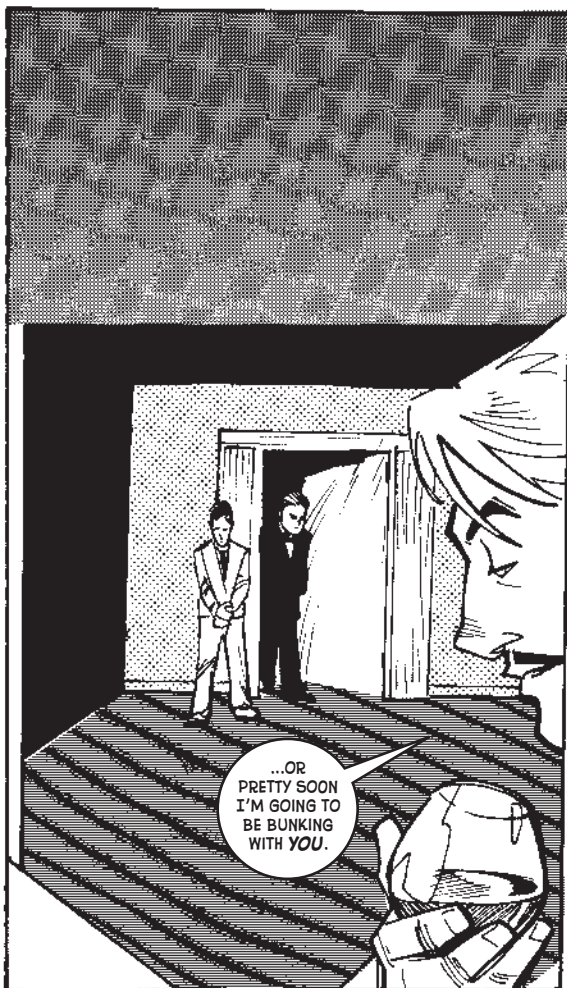
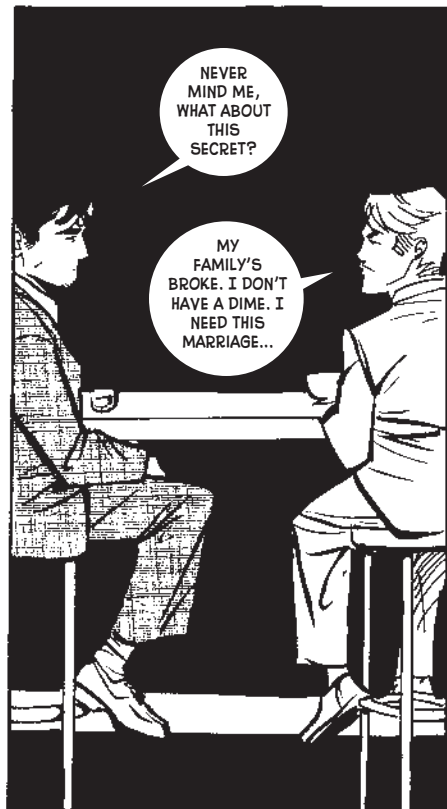




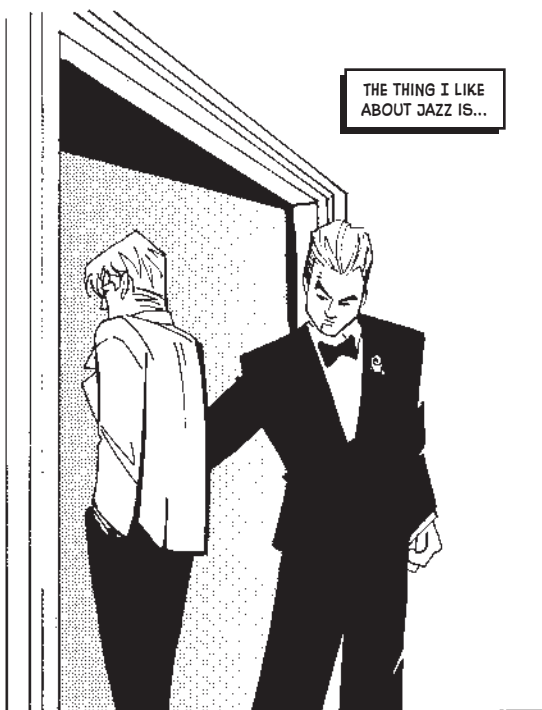












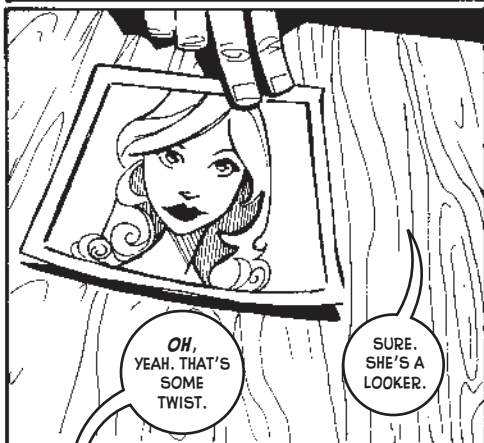
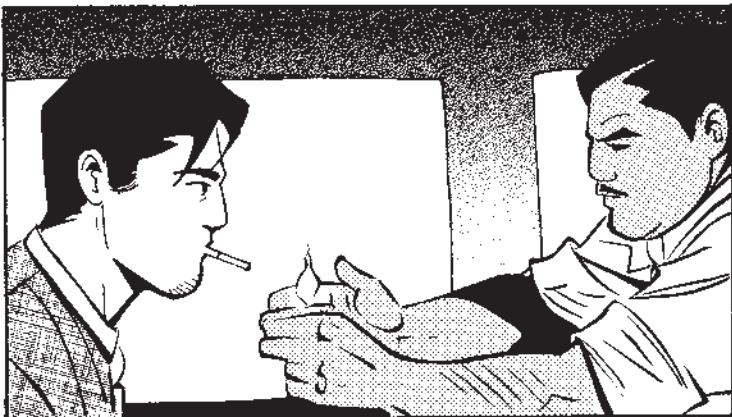
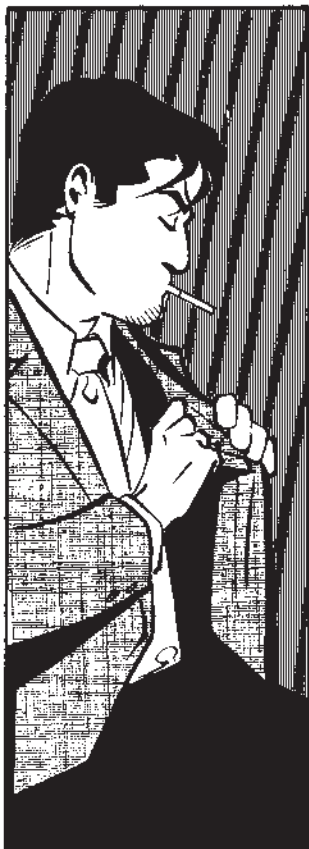
THE THING I LIKE
ABOUT JAZZ IS...



...YOU NEVER KNOW
WHERE IT'S GOING.



YOU JUST HAVE TO FOLLOW.

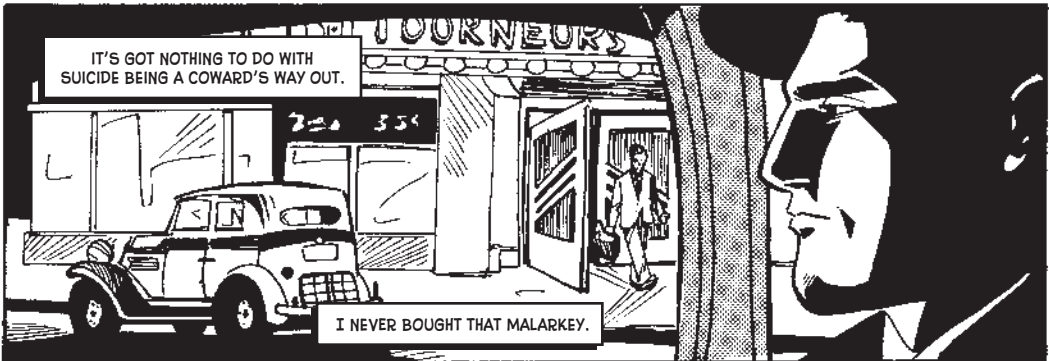




CHAPTER 3

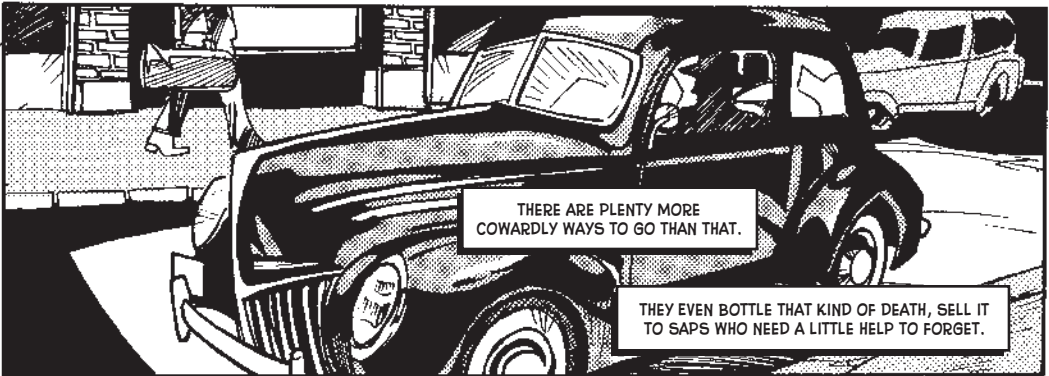


I DON'T THINK I'D EVER SEE GOING OUT LIKE THAT PROFESSOR DID.



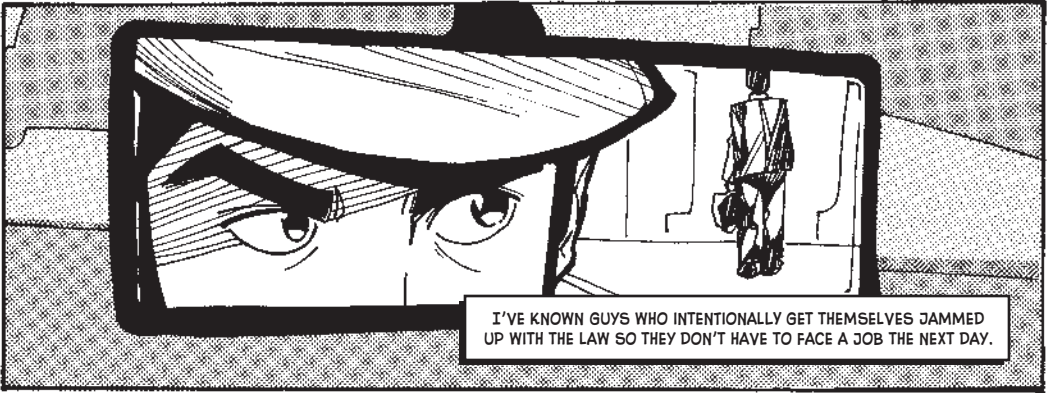
IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH SUICIDE BEING A COWARD'S WAY OUT.

I NEVER BOUGHT THAT MALARKEY.



THERE ARE PLENTY MORE COWARDLY WAYS TO GO THAN THAT.

THEY EVEN BOTTLE THAT KIND OF DEATH, SELL IT TO SAPS WHO NEED A LITTLE HELP TO FORGET.



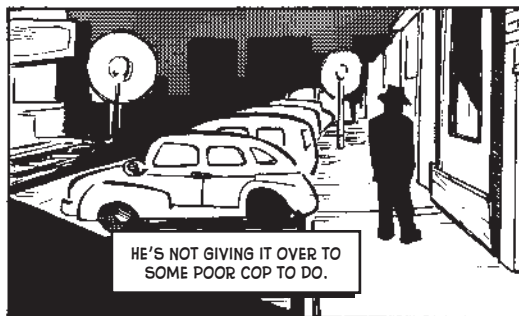
I'VE KNOWN GUYS WHO INTENTIONALLY GET THEMSELVES JAMMED UP WITH THE LAW SO THEY DON'T HAVE TO FACE A JOB THE NEXT DAY.



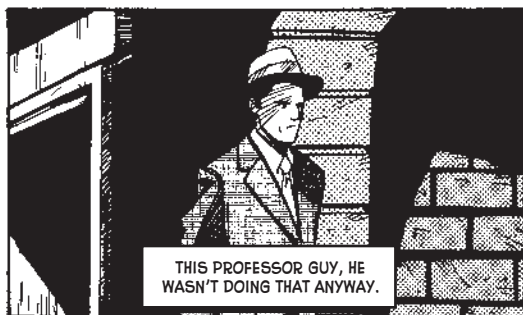
A GUY WHO KNOWS WHEN TO
GET OUT AND DOES IT HIMSELF...



...AT LEAST HE'S TAKING
MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS.



HE'S NOT GIVING IT OVER TO
SOME POOR COP TO DO.

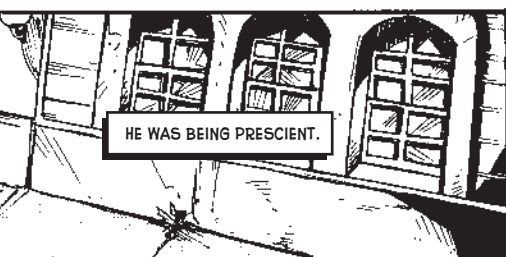
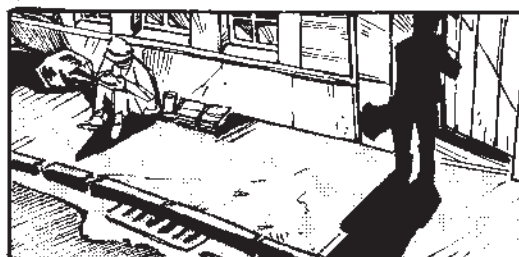


THIS PROFESSOR GUY, HE
WASN'T DOING THAT ANYWAY.



HE WASN'T
LOOKING TO ESCAPE.

HE WAS DOING
SOMETHING ELSE.



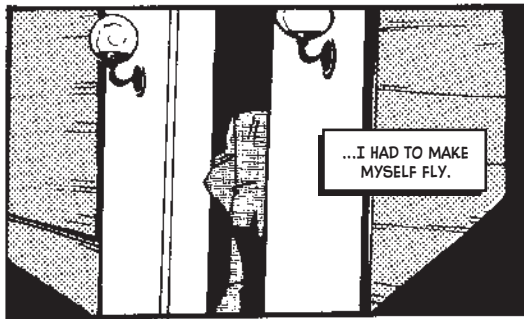
HE WAS BEING PRESCIENT.

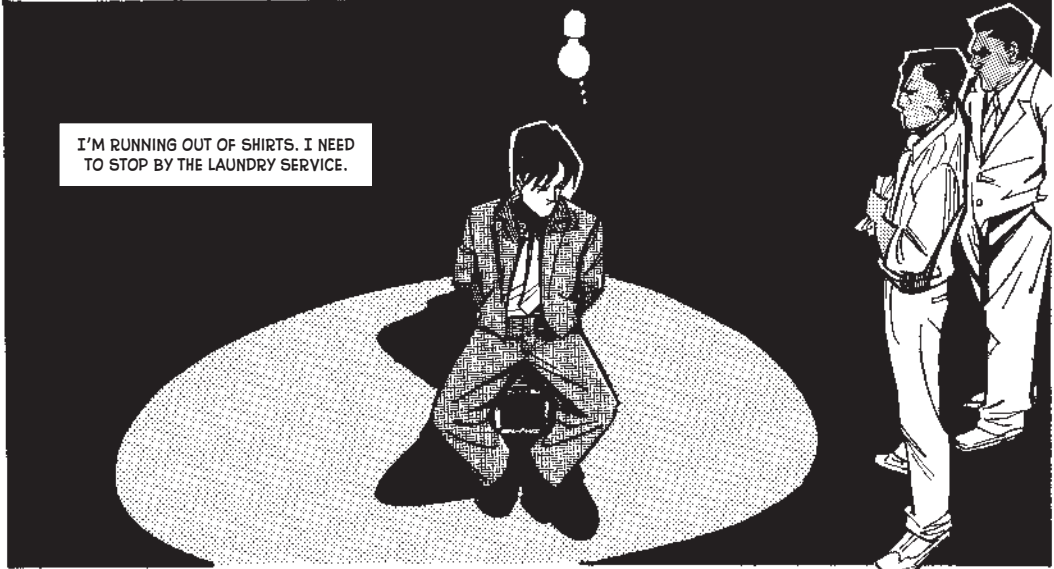


I DON'T THINK I'D EVER
BE SO SELF-AWARE...



...AS TO KNOW IT'S
TIME TO GO.











SORRY.
I'M NOT TRYING
TO CAUSE
TROUBLE, I'M
JUST DOING
A JOB.

THEN
WHY ARE
YOU ON MY
TAIL, NOT
RANCE'S?



YOU
WERE THE
FIRST ONE TO
LEAVE, SO IT
WAS YOU I
FOLLOWED.

I FELT
LIKE THE OTHER
GUYS IN YOUR
BAND. YOU'RE HARD
TO KEEP UP WITH.
YOU SURE KNOW
HOW TO
BLOW.



THAT'S
WHY THEY
CALL ME
"KILLER."

BUT,
KANE, I
THOUGHT THAT
WAS COZ--



SHUT
UP!

TAKE IT
EASY, BUGLER.
I HEARD THE GIRL
AND YOU HAD A
THING. DON'T
YOU WANT TO
FIND HER?



OF
COURSE I
DO! WHO SAID
I DIDN'T?

NO
ONE. DON'T
GET
EXCITED.



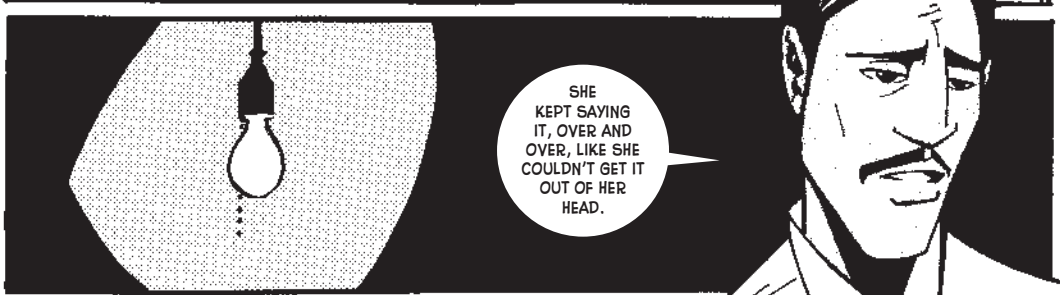
IF SHE
HAD COME
SEE ME LIKE SHE
WAS SUPPOSED TO,
NO ONE WOULD'VE
GOTTEN THEIR
HANDS ON
HER.



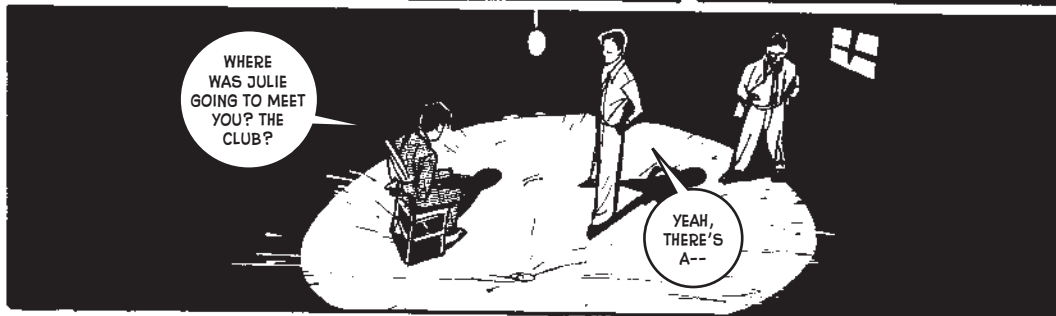
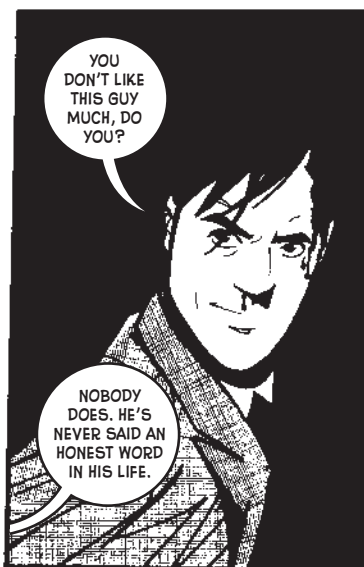
WHEN
DID YOU
TALK TO HER
LAST?

THE
AFTERNOON,
BEFORE SHE
VANISHED. SHE
CALLED ME. SHE
WAS BEING REALLY
WEIRD.

SHE
KEPT SAYING,
"THE MARRIAGE,
THE MARRIAGE, IT
SHOULDN'T BE."

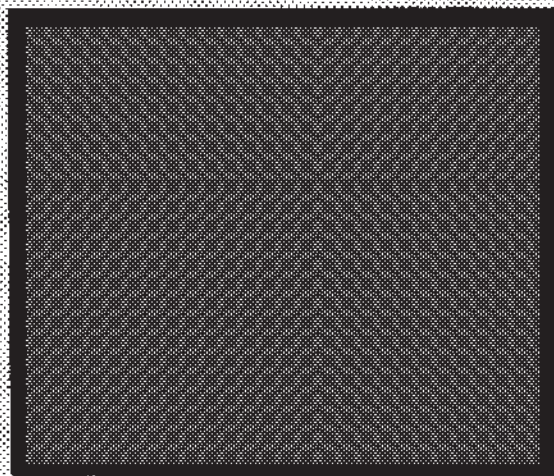


SHE
KEPT SAYING
IT, OVER AND
OVER, LIKE SHE
COULDN'T GET IT
OUT OF HER
HEAD.



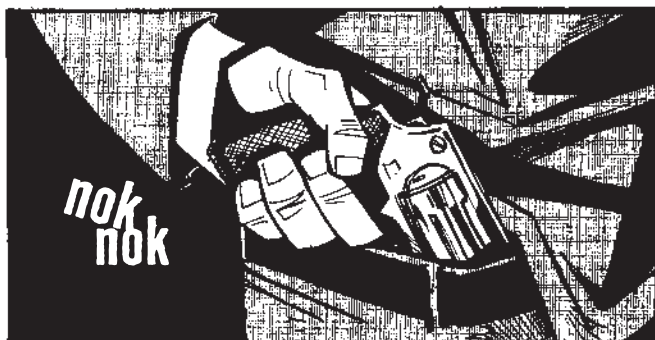
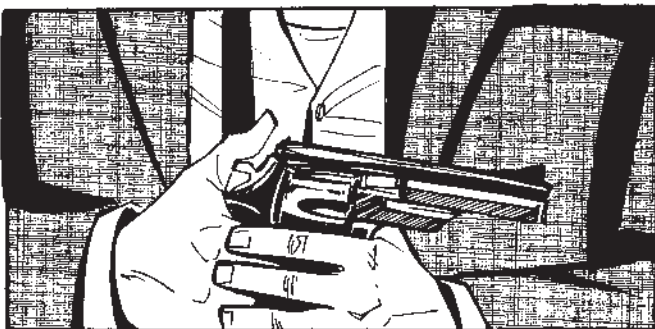
ISN'T
THAT WHAT
YOU
WANT?

SURE.

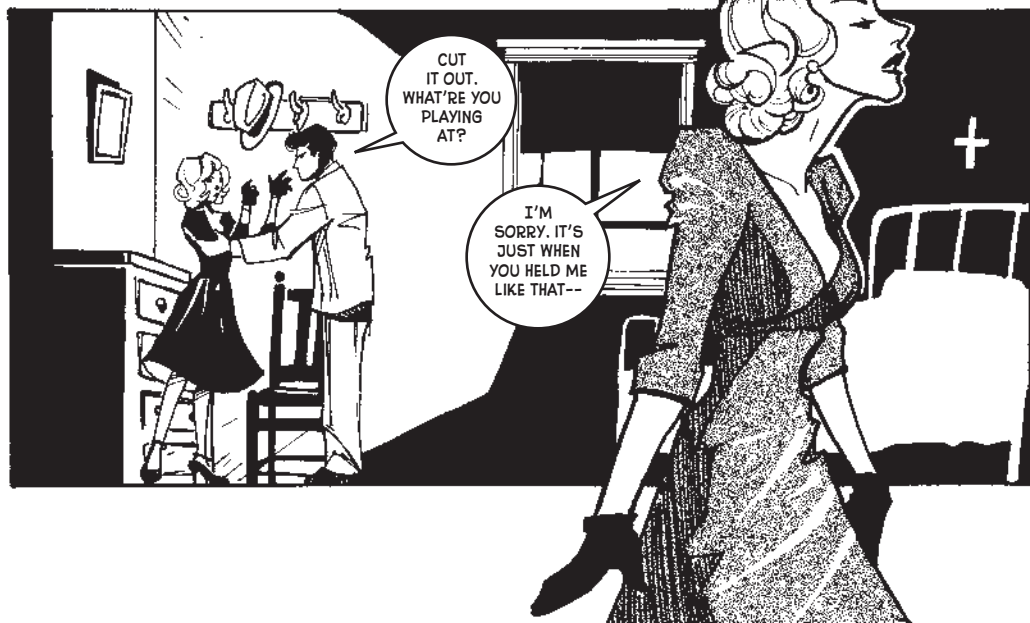


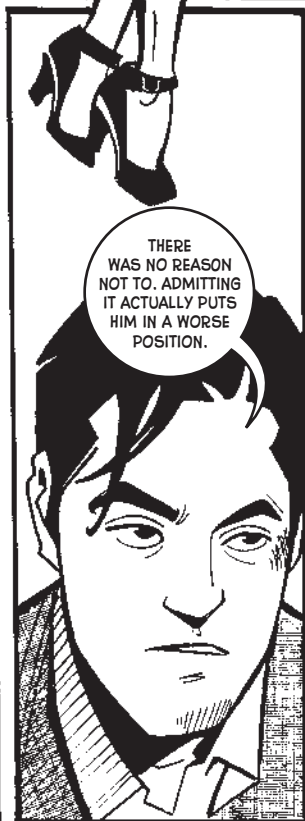
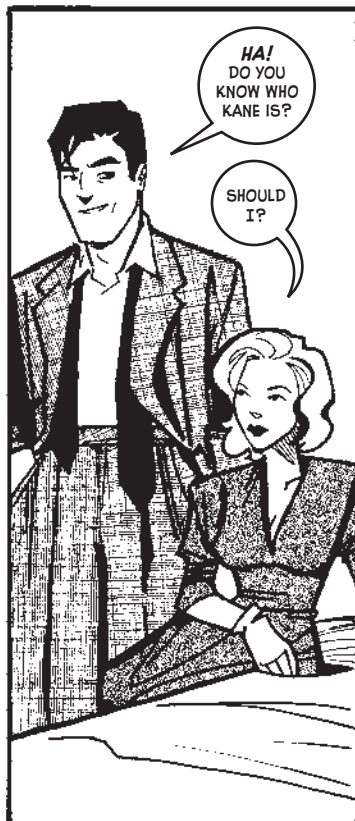
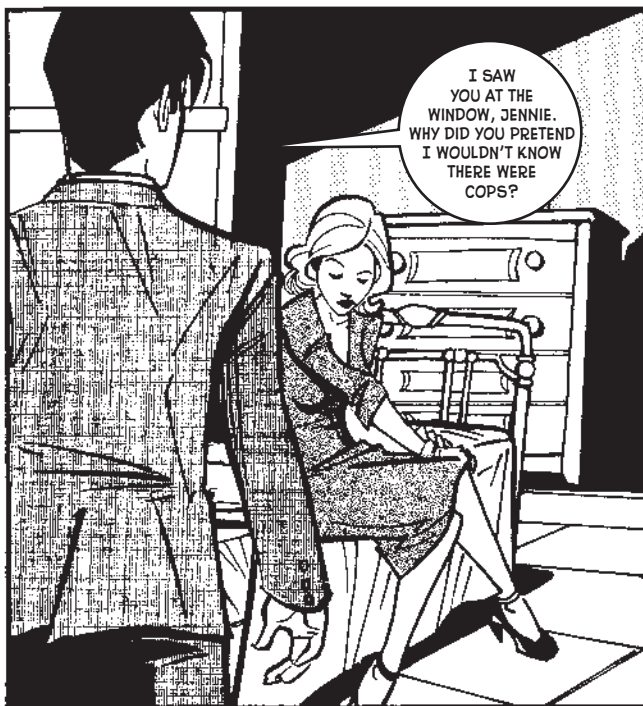
CHAPTER 4

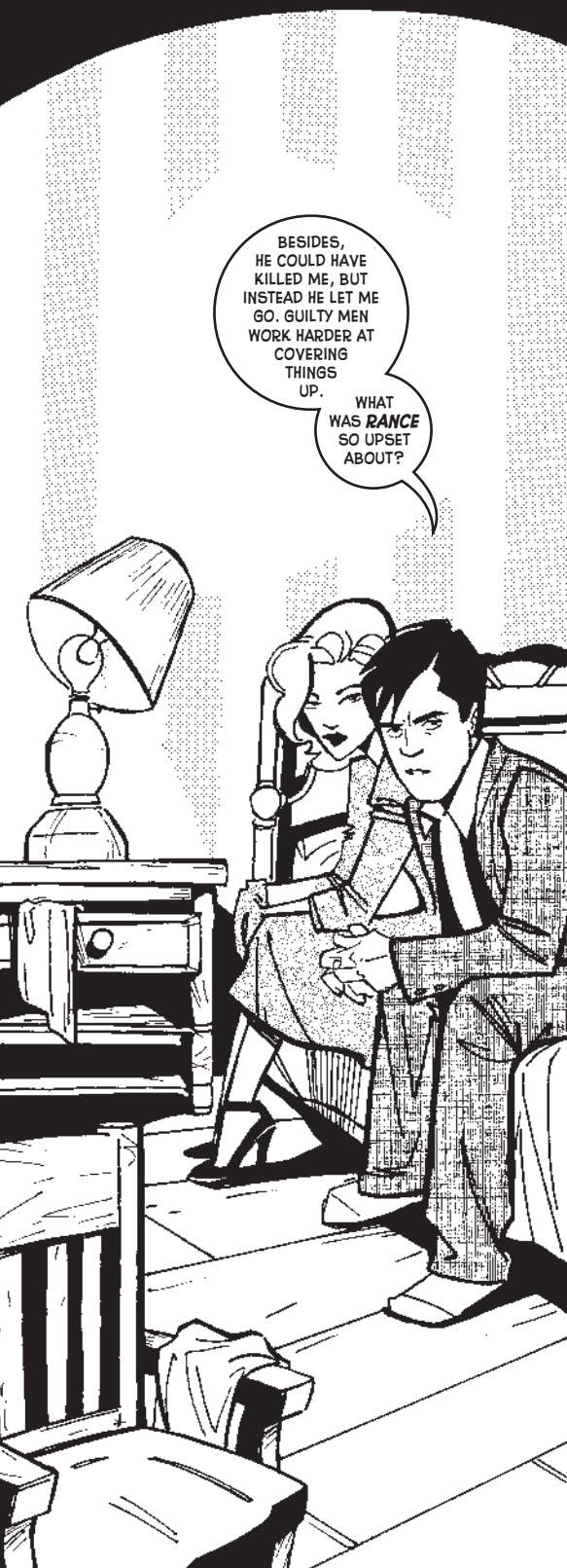










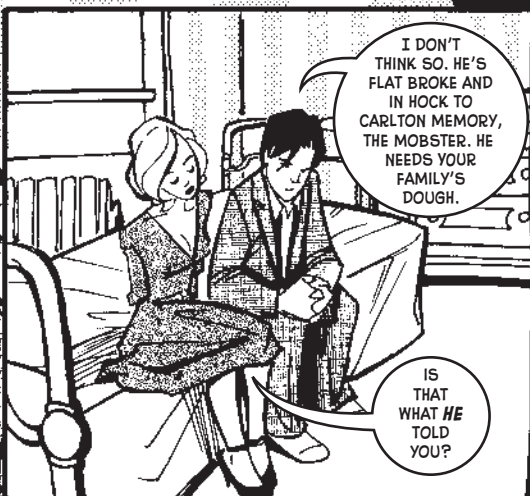


BESIDES,
HE COULD HAVE
KILLED ME, BUT
INSTEAD HE LET ME
GO. GUILTY MEN
WORK HARDER AT
COVERING
THINGS
UP.

WHAT
WAS **RANCE**
SO UPSET
ABOUT?



HE
THINKS
EVERYONE IS
GOING TO TRY
TO PIN IT
ON HIM.



I DON'T
THINK SO. HE'S
FLAT BROKE AND
IN HOCK TO
CARLTON MEMORY,
THE MOBSTER. HE
NEEDS YOUR
FAMILY'S
DOUGH.

IS
THAT
WHAT **HE**
TOLD
YOU?



YEAH.
WHY?
WAS HE
LYING?

IF
HE HAS
NO MONEY,
MERCER...

"...THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD
ASK HIM HOW HE MANAGES
TO KEEP GAMBLING.

"TODAY IS HIS REGULAR
DAY AT THE TRACK. GO SEE IF HE
DOESN'T MAKE A BET OR TWO."





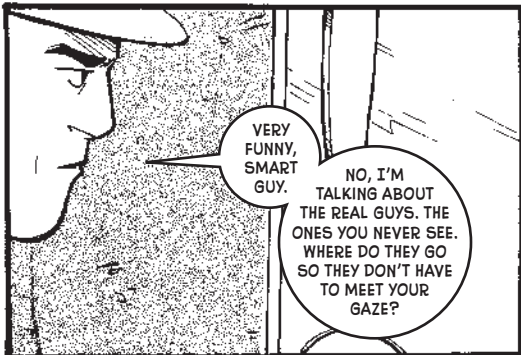
"OUR FAMILY HAS A BOX.
I'LL BE THERE, TOO."



TELL
ME SOMETHING.
IS THERE
A PLACE WHERE
THE TOP BETTERS
HANG OUT?

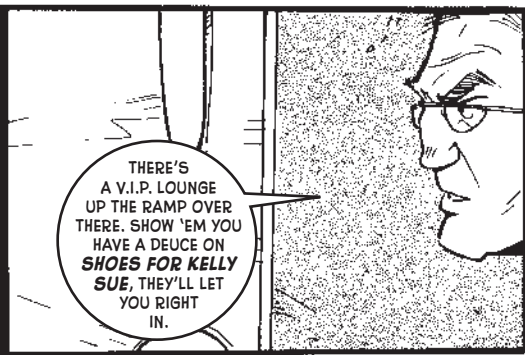


YOU
MEAN BIG
SPENDERS
LIKE YOU?



VERY
FUNNY,
SMART
GUY.

NO, I'M
TALKING ABOUT
THE REAL GUYS. THE
ONES YOU NEVER SEE.
WHERE DO THEY GO
SO THEY DON'T HAVE
TO MEET YOUR
GAZE?



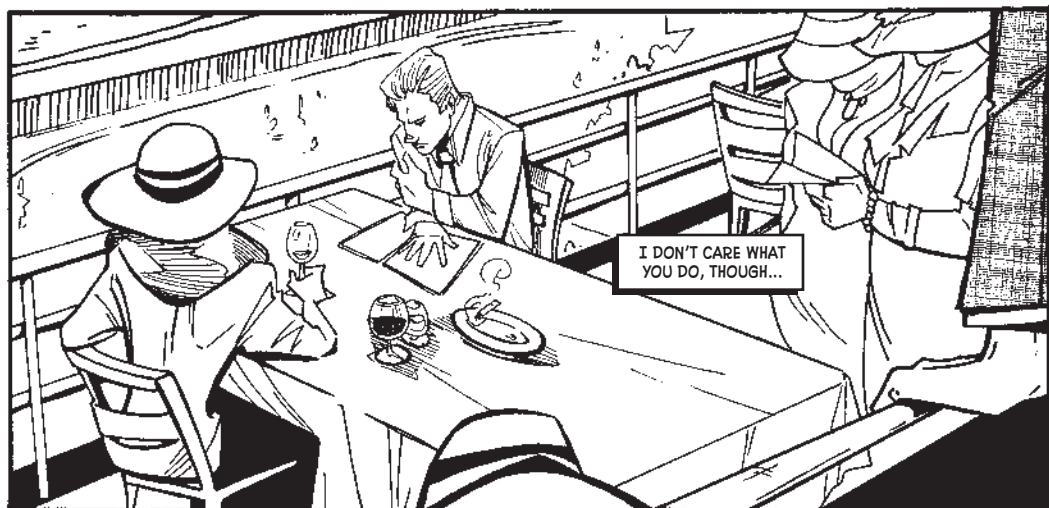
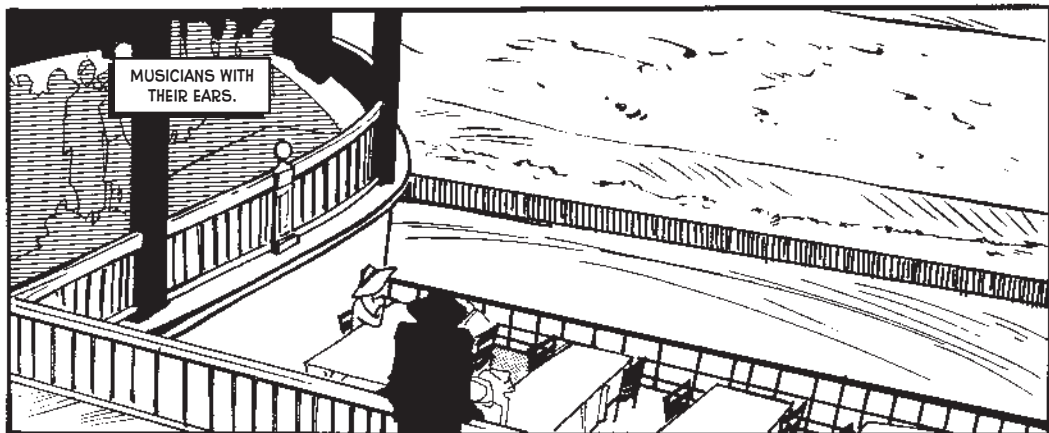
THERE'S
A V.I.P. LOUNGE
UP THE RAMP OVER
THERE. SHOW 'EM YOU
HAVE A DEUCE ON
**SHOES FOR KELLY
SUE**, THEY'LL LET
YOU RIGHT
IN.



MAYBE
I'LL DROP
YOUR NAME
INSTEAD AND SEE
IF IT GETS ME
BANNED FROM
THE PARK.

CLUB
L'AVENTURA
→

COOKS WORK
WITH THEIR NOSE.





FROM THE LOOK ON HIS FACE, I DON'T THINK YOU WERE TALKING NICE.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA TELLING PEOPLE I DID SOMETHING TO JULIE?



I DIDN'T TELL PEOPLE ANYTHING. IT'S THEM THAT'S TELLING ME.



IT'S A FRAME-UP. YOU'RE BEING CONNED.

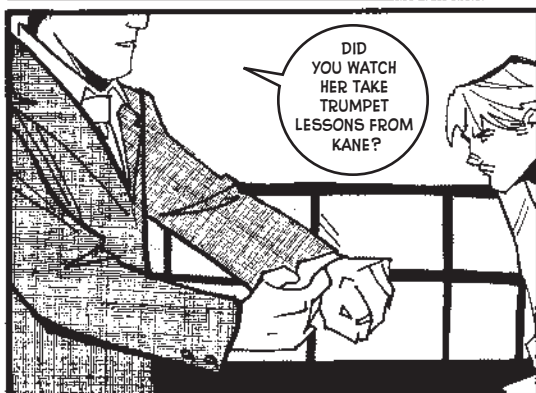
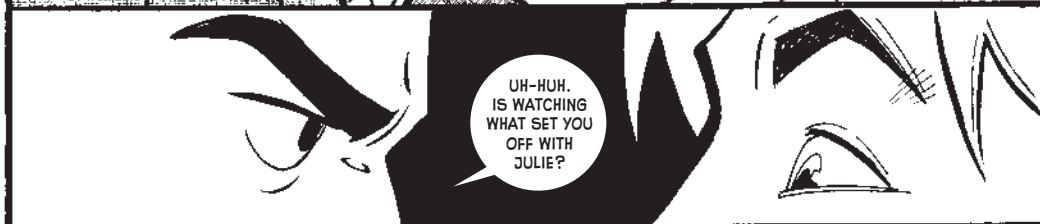
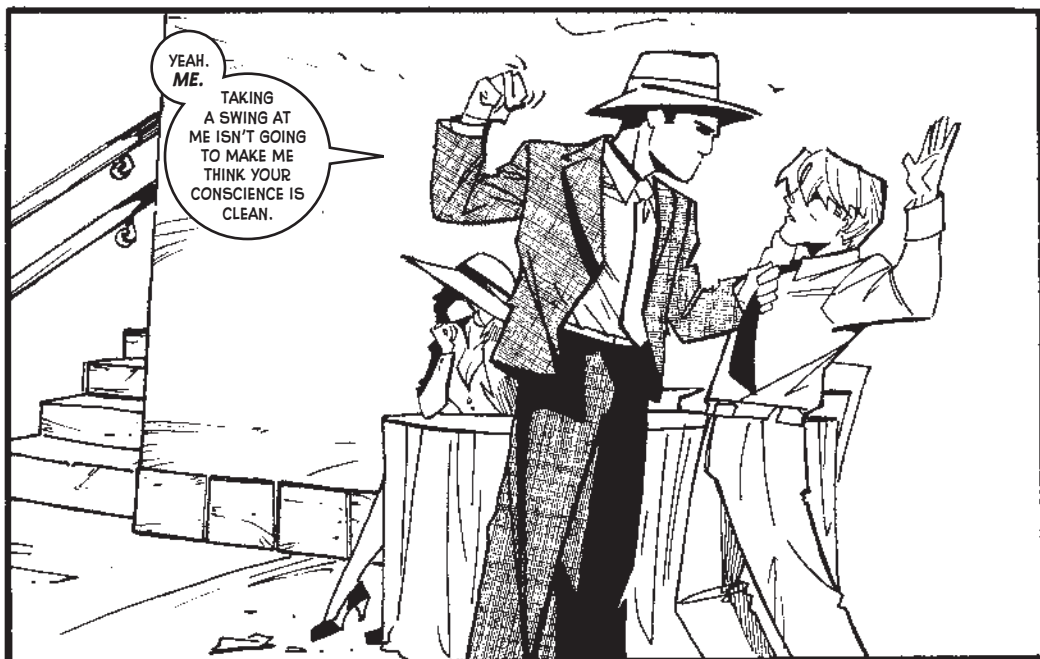
MAYBE. BUT HOW DO I KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT THE ONE PULLING THE SCAM? KANE TOLD ME YOU'RE A HUSTLER.



KANE!



YOU---!





AND
YOU'LL
MISS
AGAIN.



BOYS,
YOU
ARE BEING
EMBARR-
ASSING.



I'M
SORRY,
JENNIE, BUT IF
A LADY GOES TO
A PLACE WHERE A
LADY DOESN'T
BELONG...

...SHE'S
GOING TO SEE
THINGS A LADY
SHOULDN'T
SEE.

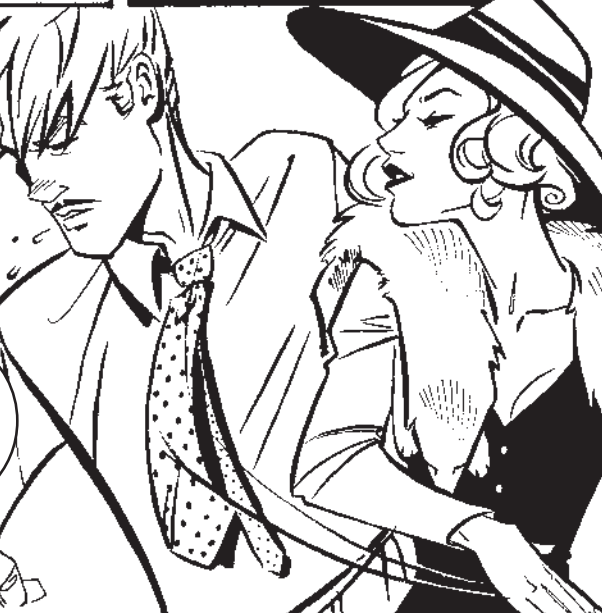


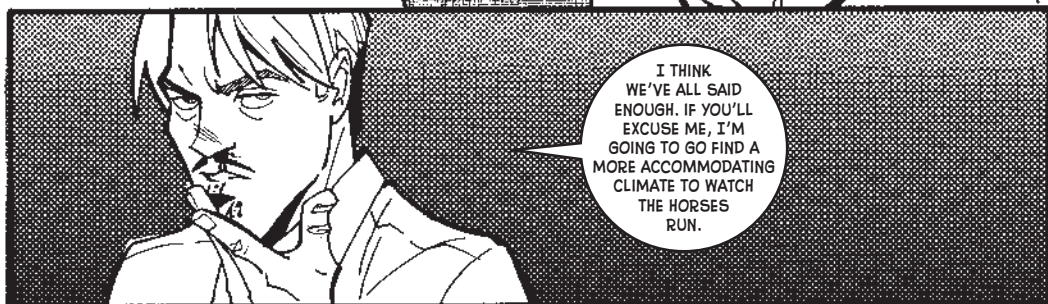
GIVEN
HOW OFTEN
JENNIE IS IN
THESE KINDS OF
PLACES, I GUESS
YOU CAN SAY SHE'S
NO LADY, JULIE,
TOO.



DON'T
TALK THAT
WAY ABOUT
MY
SISTER!

OH, H,
SHE'S GONE,
AND YOU SUDDENLY
CARE. IMAGINE HOW
MUCH YOU'LL LOVE
HER IF WE FIND OUT
SHE'S DEAD!







I
DON'T
UNDER-
STAND...

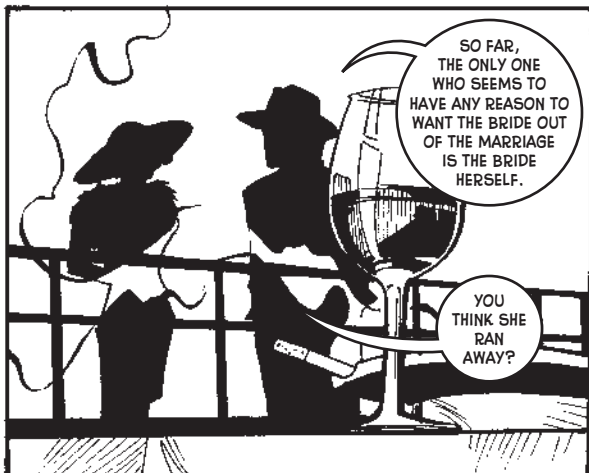
FORGET
IT. HE'S
BACKED INTO A
CORNER, AND HE
KNOWS IT.



DO YOU
REALLY THINK
HE'S THE ONE
BEHIND JULIE'S
DISAPPEARANCE?

PROBABLY
NOT. IT STILL
DOESN'T FIGURE
THAT HE BENEFITED
ANYTHING FROM
NOT MARRYING
HER.

THAT'S
STILL THE
BIG QUESTION
MARK OVER
EVERYTHING.

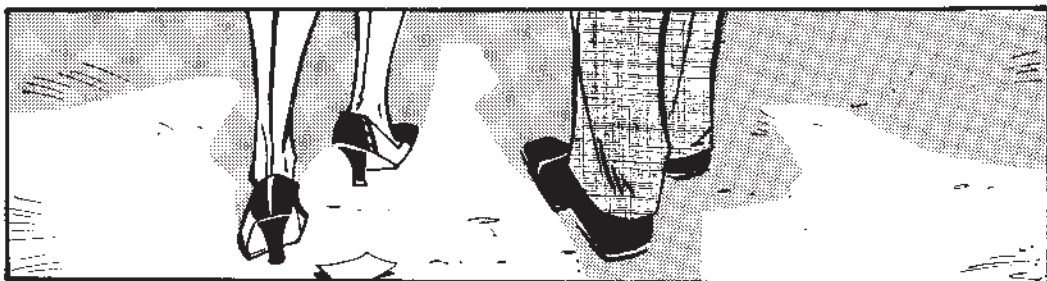


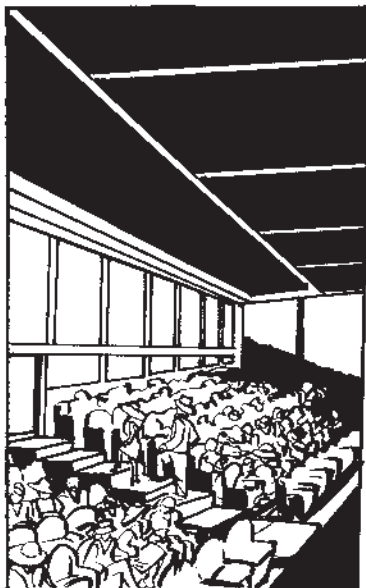
SO FAR,
THE ONLY ONE
WHO SEEMS TO
HAVE ANY REASON TO
WANT THE BRIDE OUT
OF THE MARRIAGE
IS THE BRIDE
HERSELF.

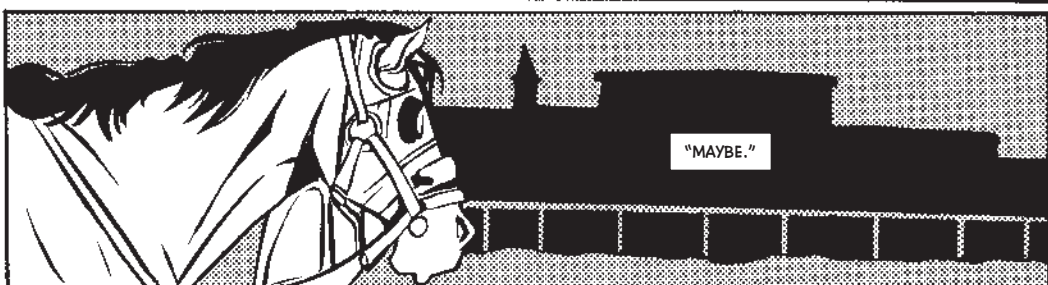
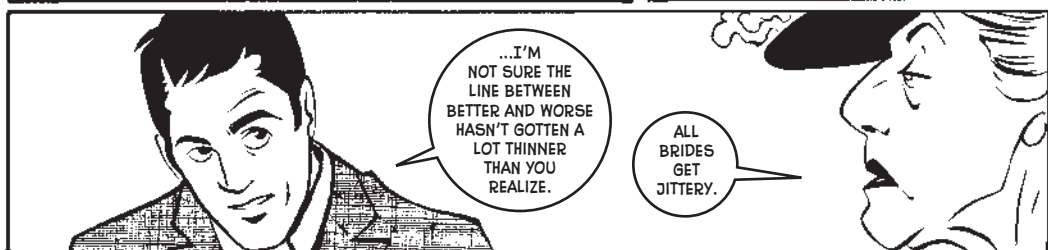
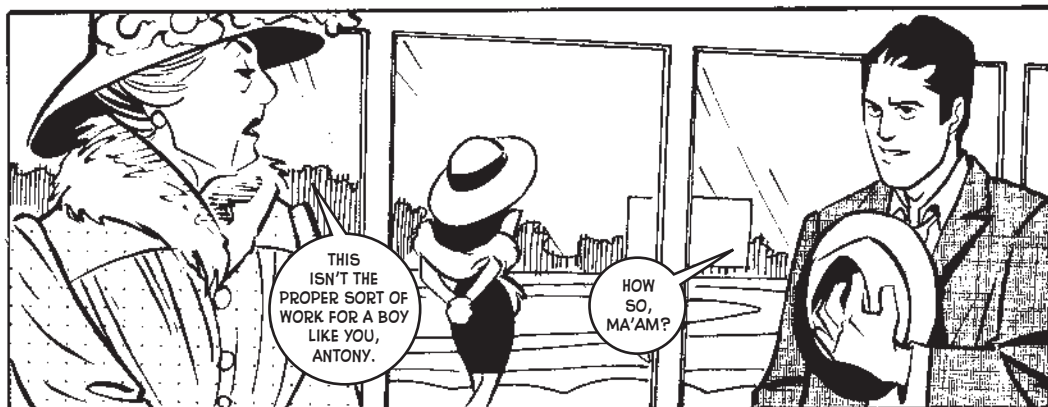
YOU
THINK SHE
RAN
AWAY?

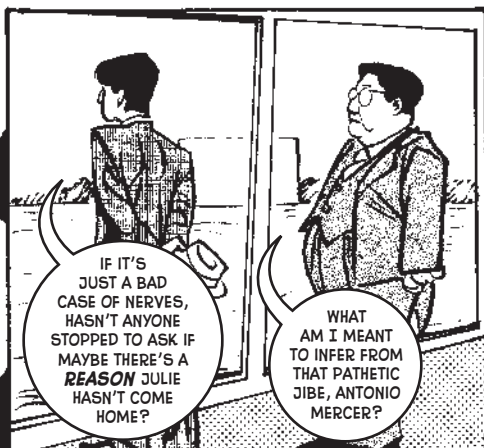


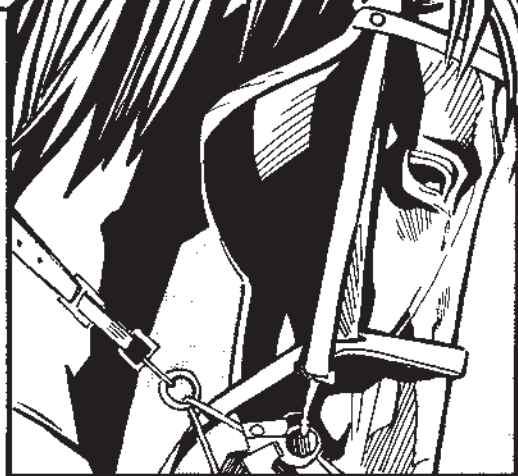
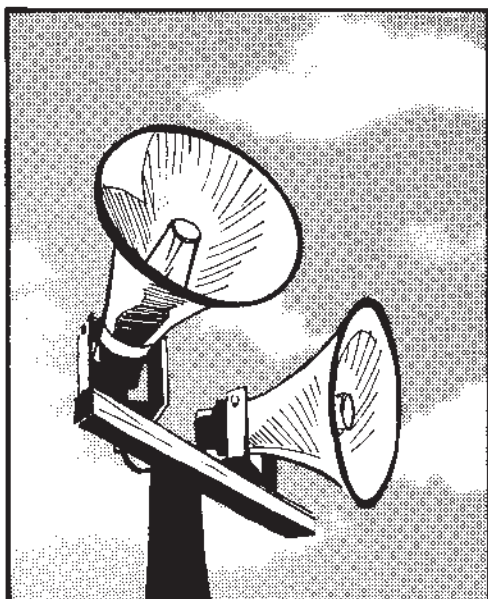
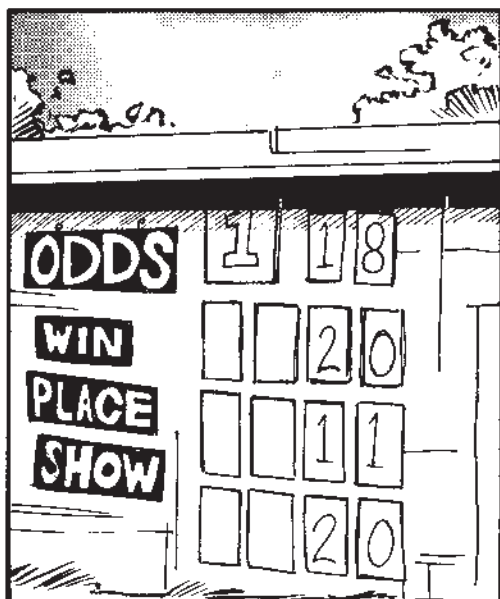
IF
YOU HAD
BEEN LATCHED
TO THAT GUY,
WOULDN'T
YOU?

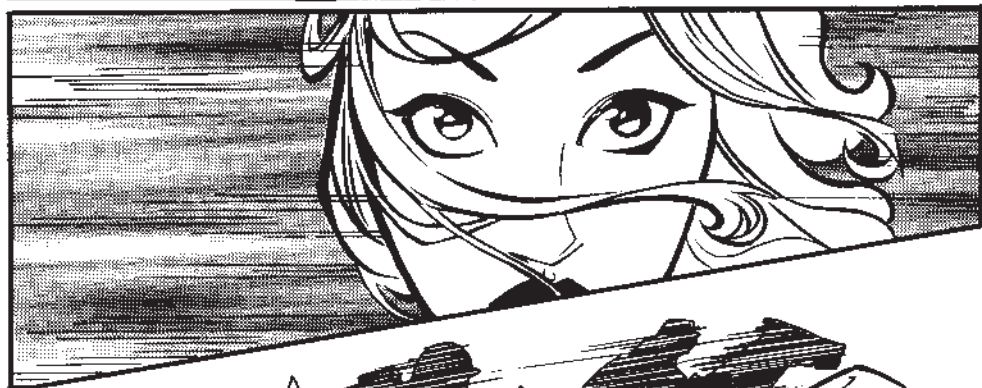
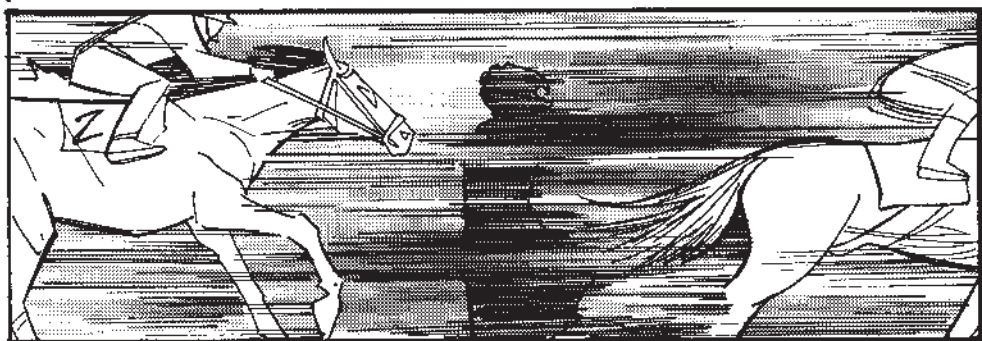
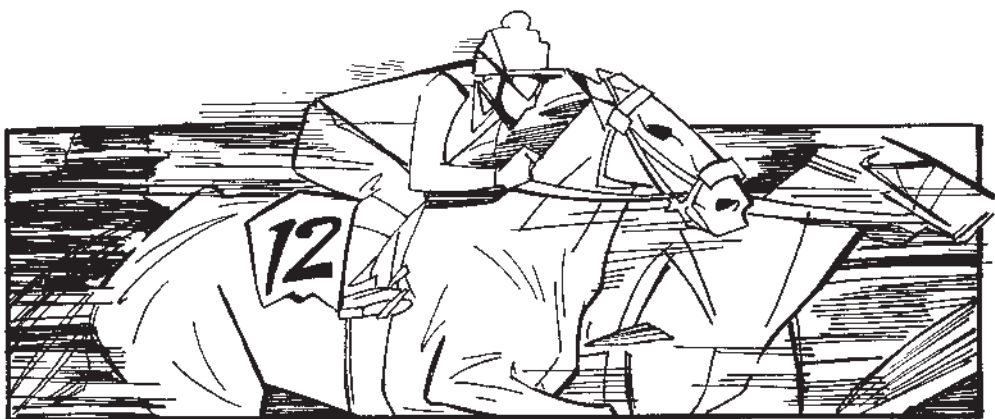








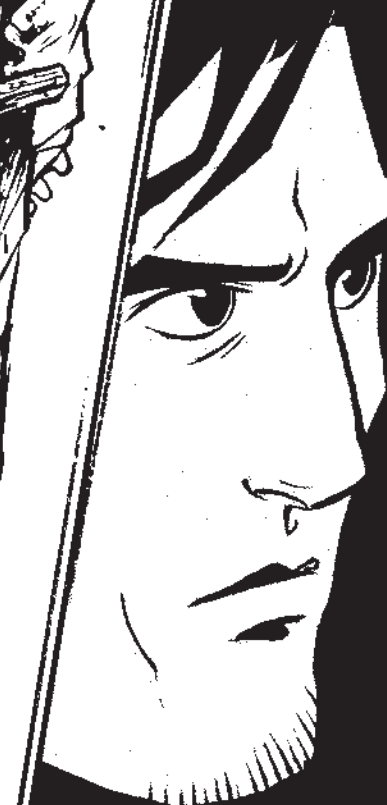


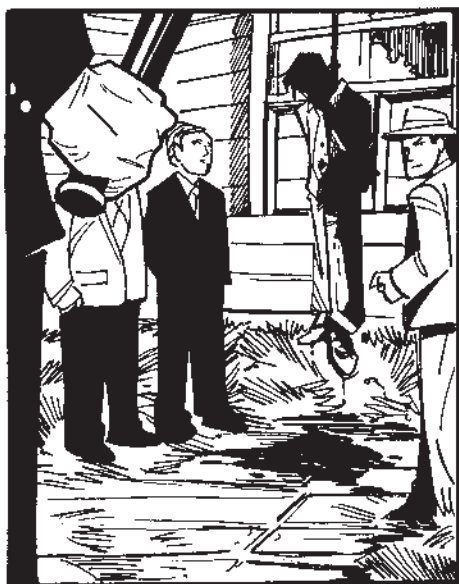






I
KNOW
HIM...







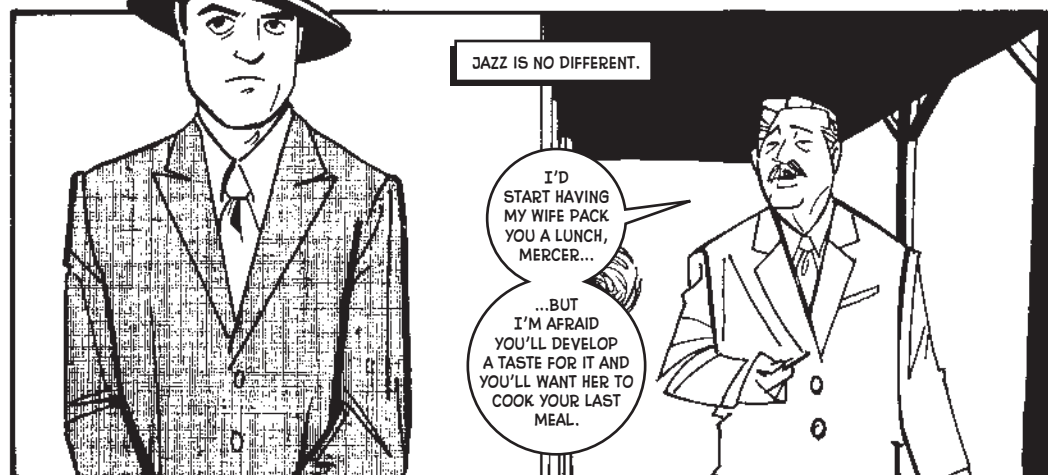
...BUT YOU ALSO
WATCH THEIR COLOR.



IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU COOK.



YOU HAVE TO WATCH.

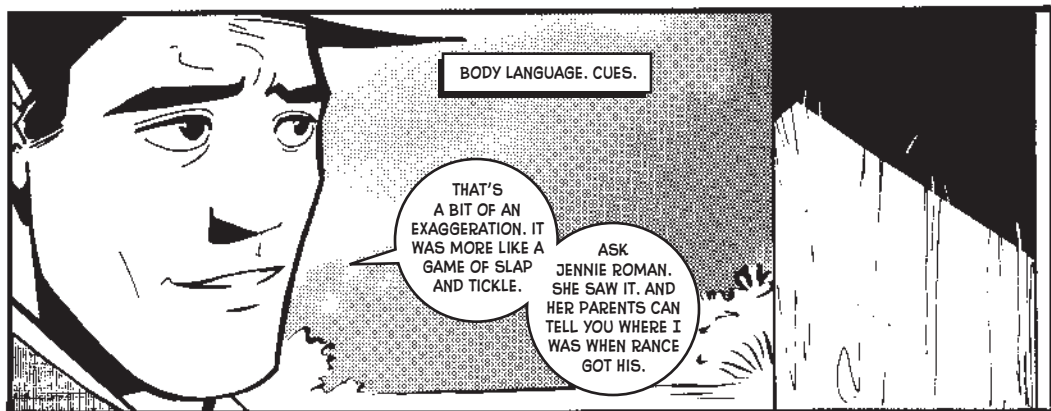
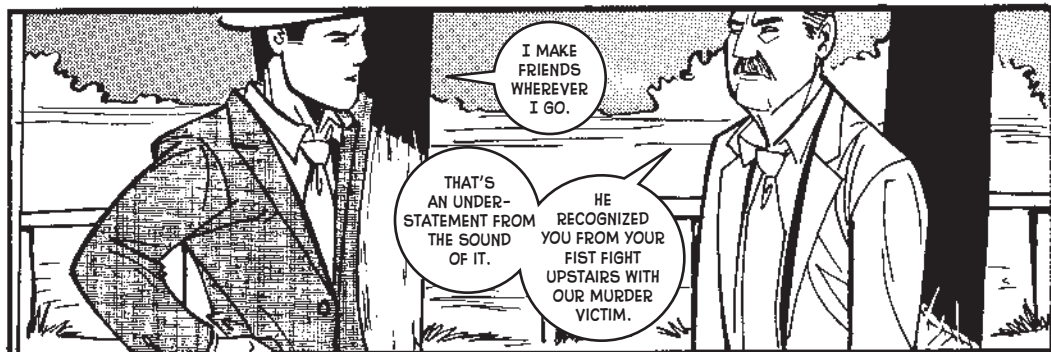


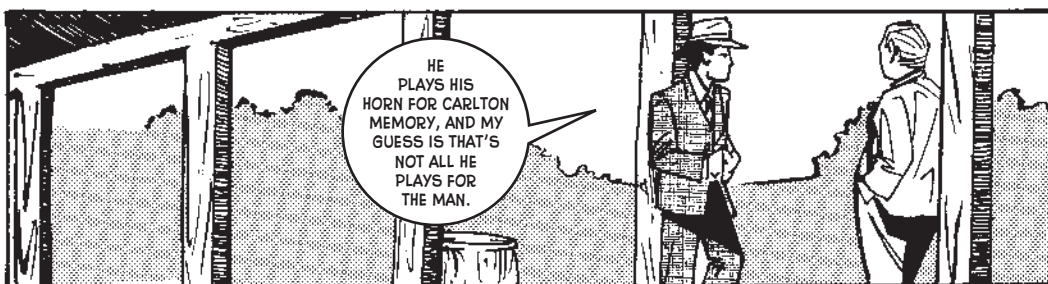
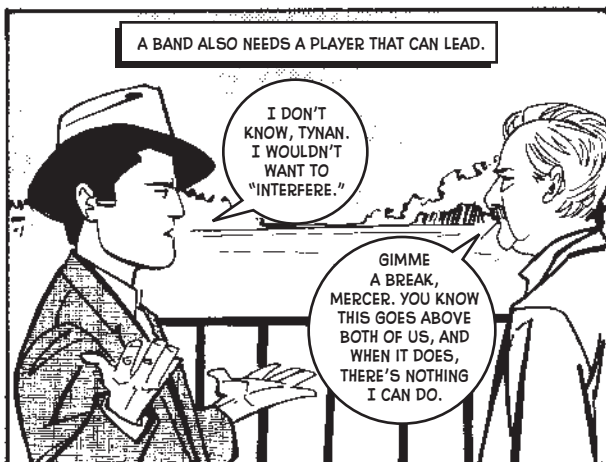
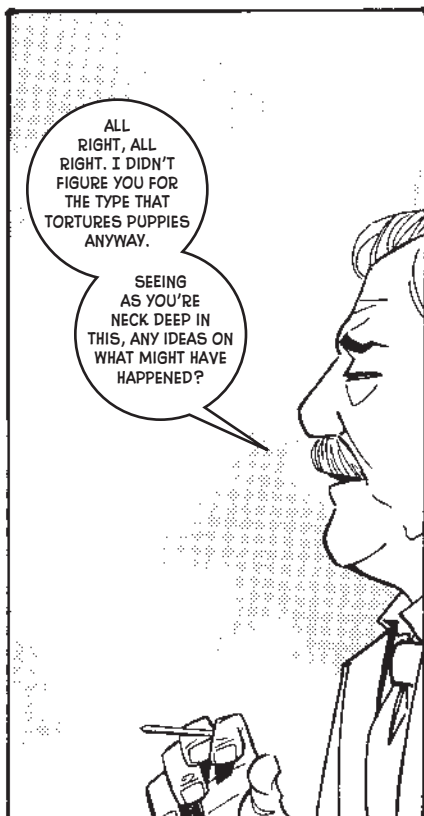
JAZZ IS NO DIFFERENT.

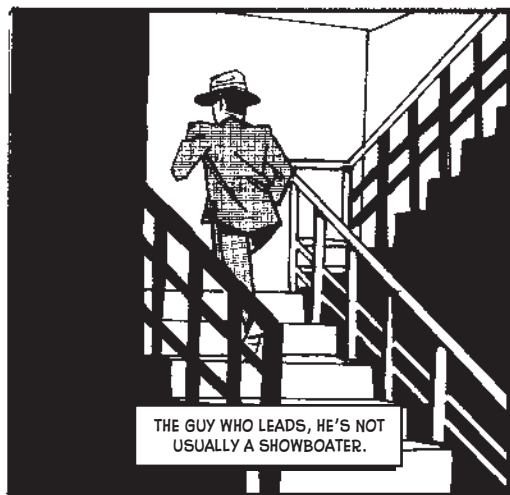
I'D
START HAVING
MY WIFE PACK
YOU A LUNCH,
MERCER...

...BUT
I'M AFRAID
YOU'LL DEVELOP
A TASTE FOR IT AND
YOU'LL WANT HER TO
COOK YOUR LAST
MEAL..

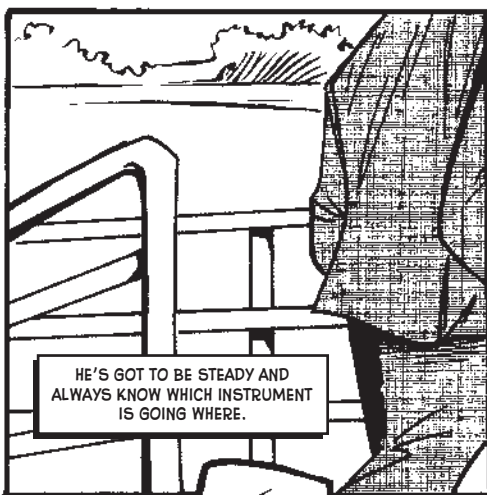








THE GUY WHO LEADS, HE'S NOT
USUALLY A SHOWBOATER.



HE'S GOT TO BE STEADY AND
ALWAYS KNOW WHICH INSTRUMENT
IS GOING WHERE.



IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO
AVOID A COLLISION.

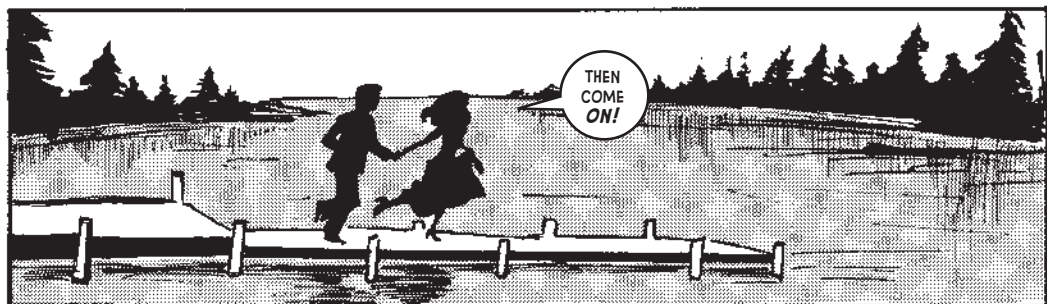
IF HE LETS HIMSELF GET DISTRACTED,
THE SONG GETS DIZZY...

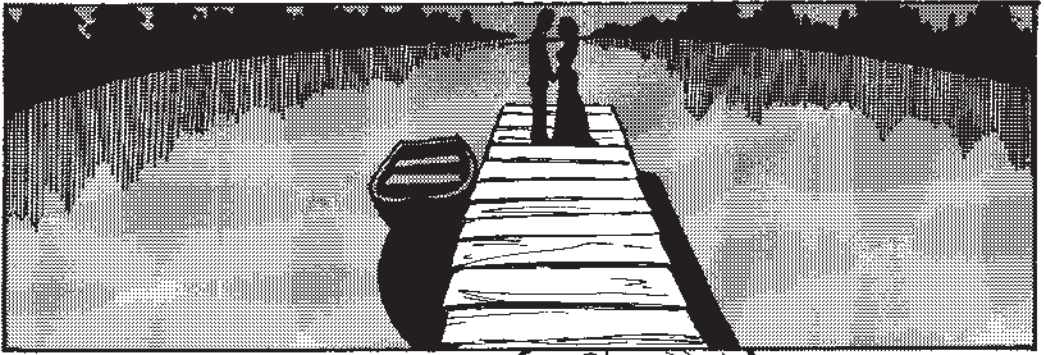
...AND THE ALMONDS BURN.

CHAPTER 5



ALL MEN HAVE SECRETS.



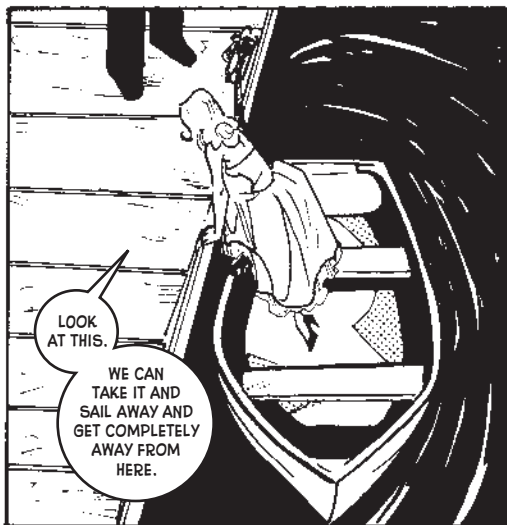


SEE?
IT'S NOT
SO BAD, IS
IT?

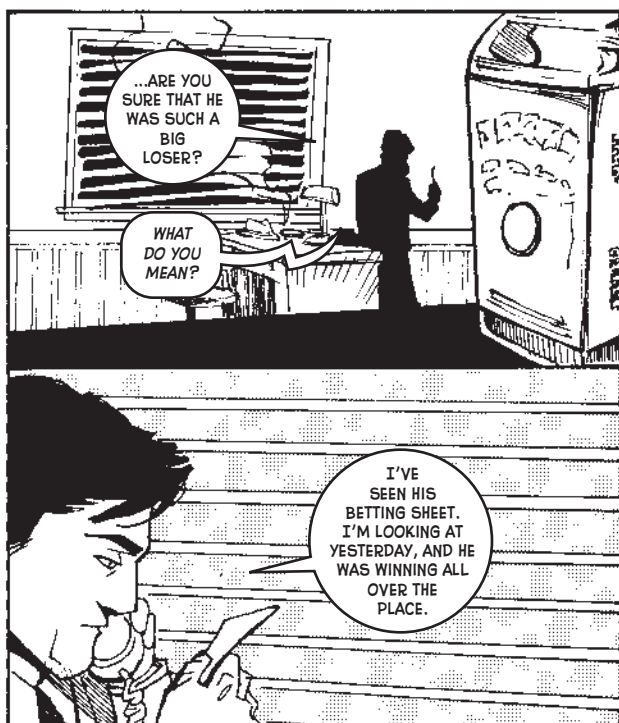
I
GUESS
NOT.



WHAT
CAN I DO
TO ALLEVIATE
YOUR
DOUBTS?







"WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT, MERCER?"

"THAT MAYBE HE WASN'T IN
DEBT TO MEMORY, MAYBE MEMORY
WAS IN DEBT TO HIM."

"I NEED TO CHECK OUT
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY.
IS THERE SOMEPLACE HE LIKED
TO GO BESIDES TOURNEUR'S?"

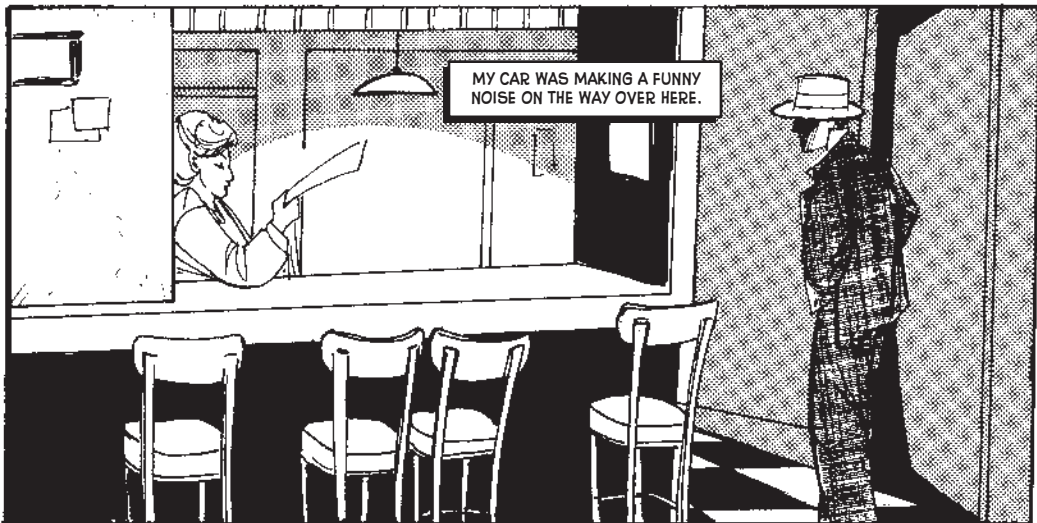
"SOMEPLACE I MIGHT
NOT BE RECOGNIZED."

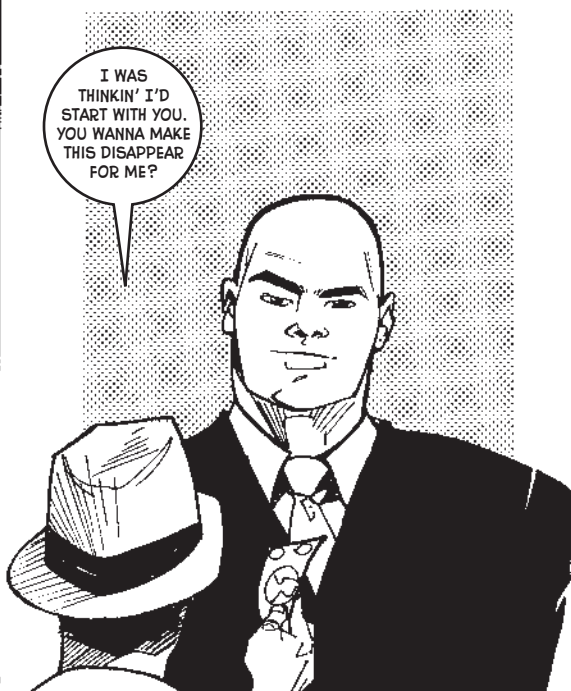
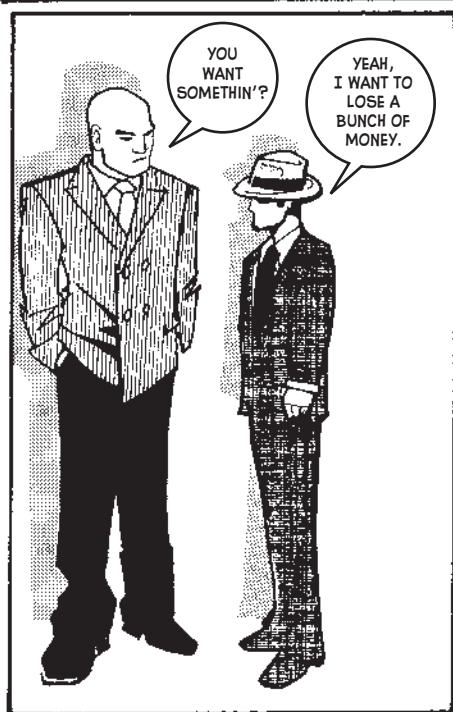
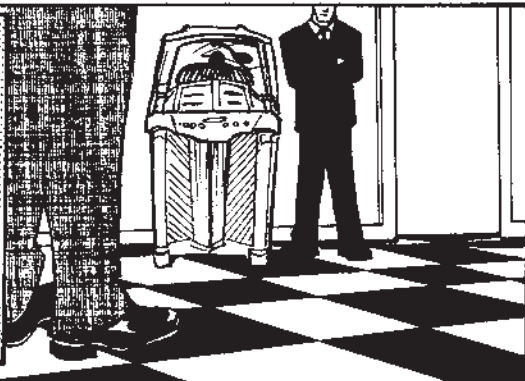
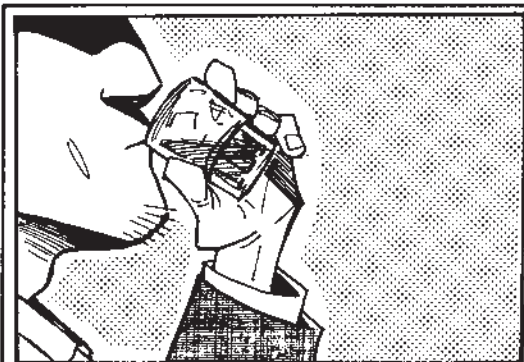
"THERE'S A ROAD HOUSE
OUTSIDE OF TOWN, OFF
THE OLD HIGHWAY."

"JULIE LIKED TO GO
THERE WITH HIM, TOO."

"ARE YOU TELLING ME YOUR SISTER
LIKED TO GAMBLE, AS WELL?"

"SOMETIMES. I MEAN,
DON'T WE ALL?"





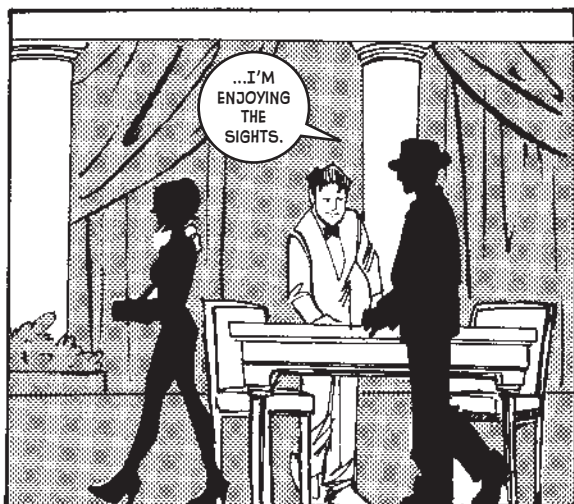


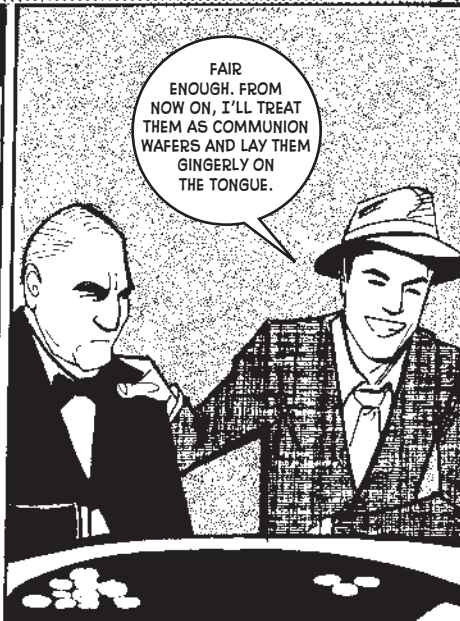
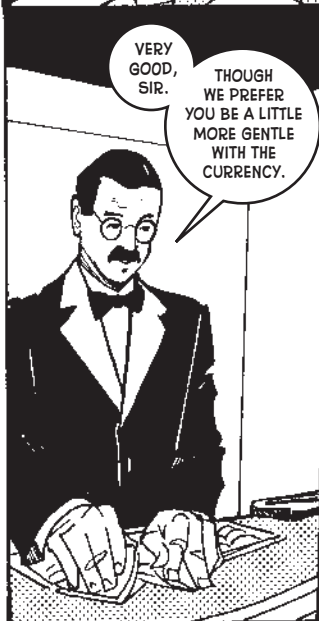
ANY-
THING I CAN
DO YOU FOR,
FELLA?

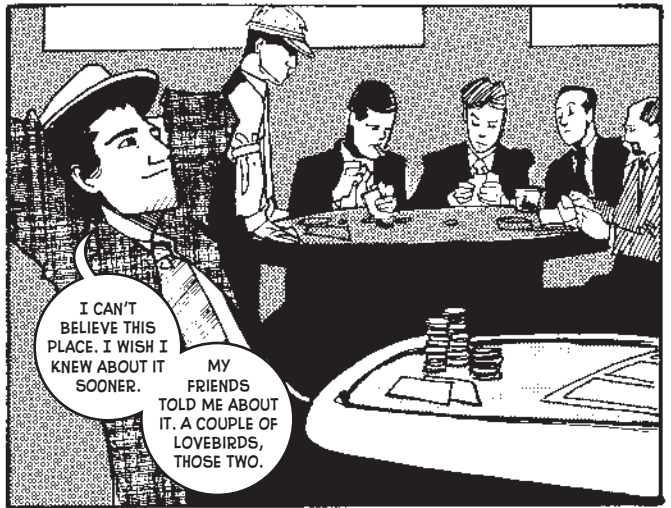
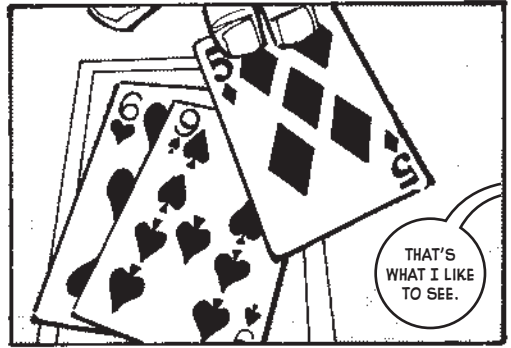
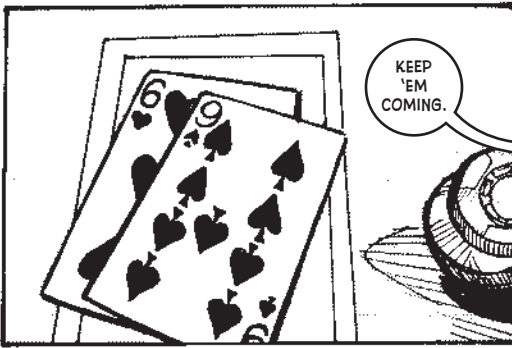


TAKE
A PACK OF
LUCKIES OUT
OF THIS AND THEN
LOAD ME UP
WITH CHIPS.

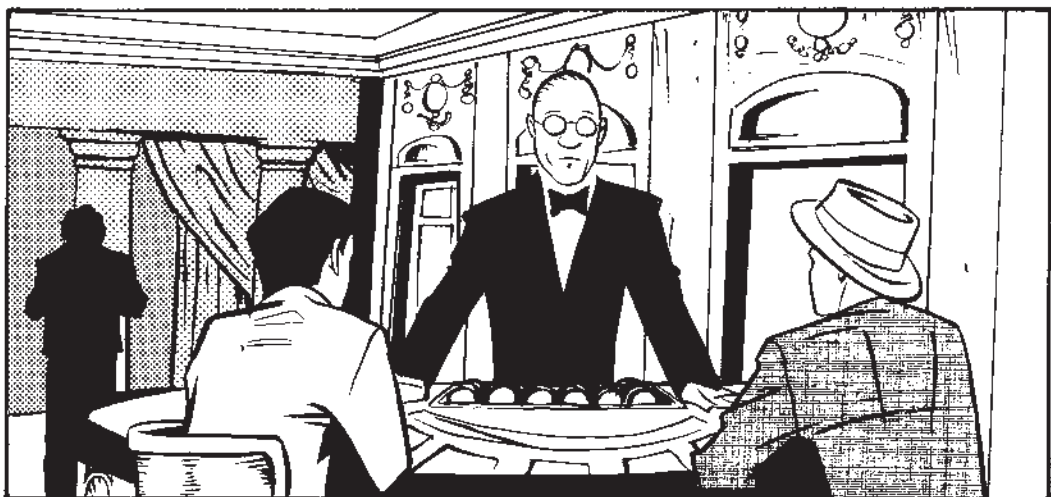




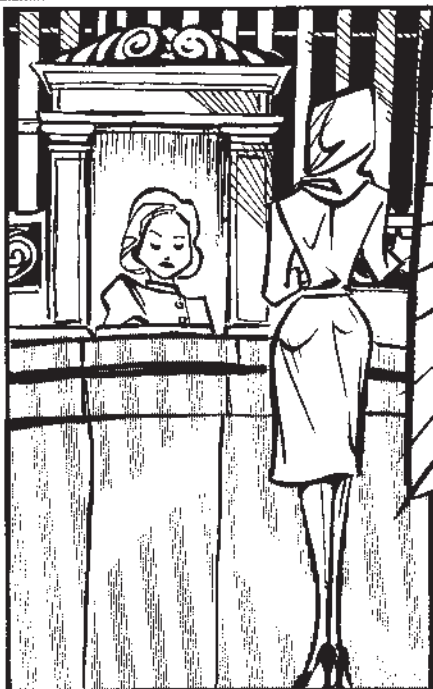


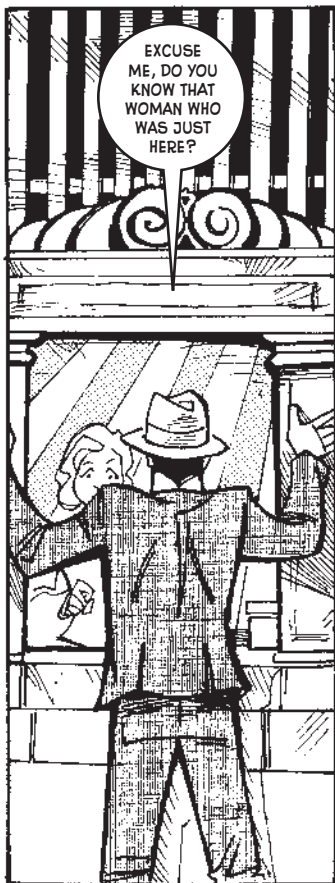
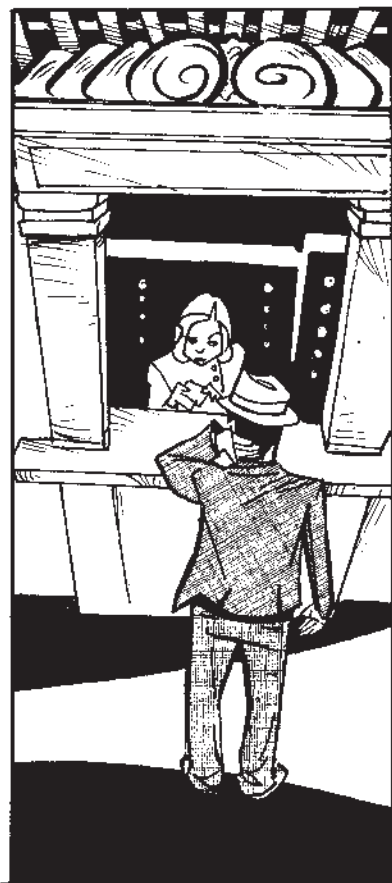


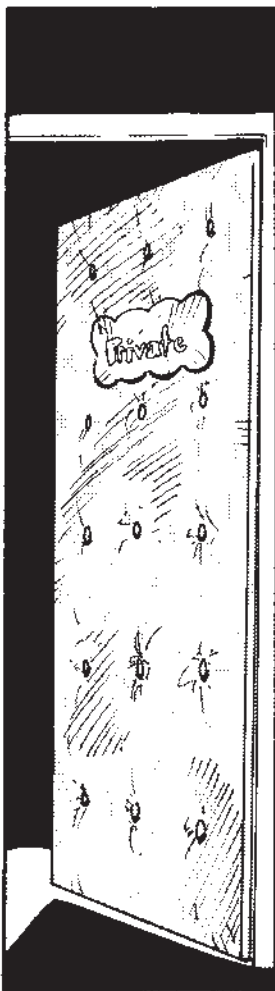
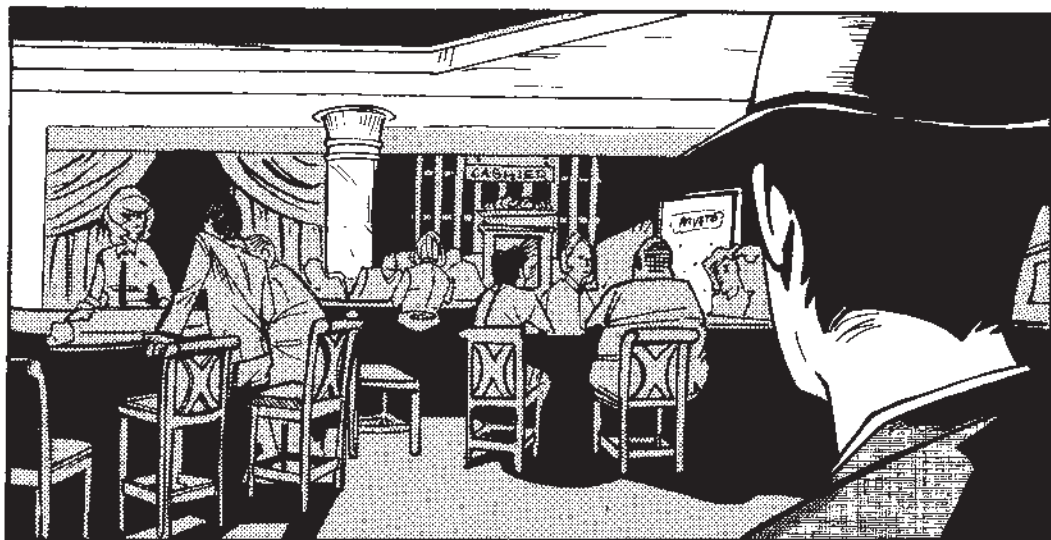


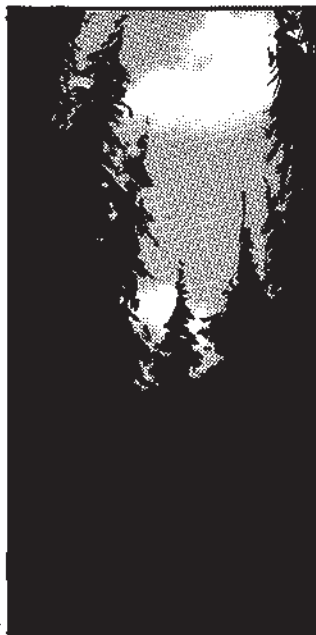












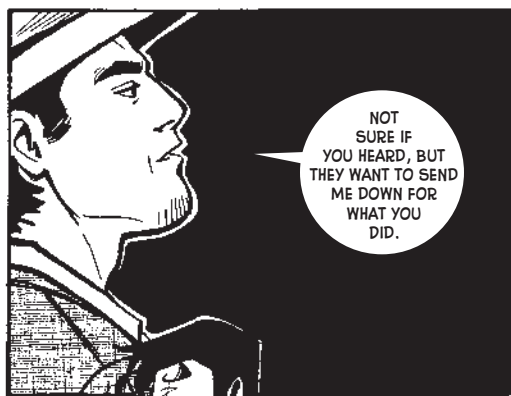
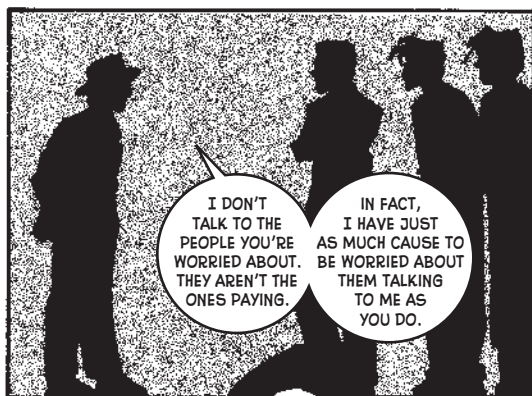


HELLO,
DETECTIVE.

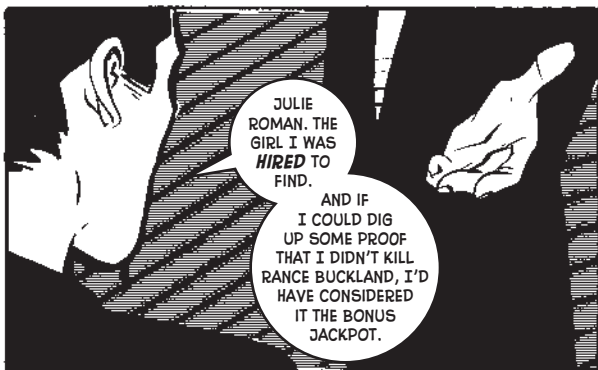


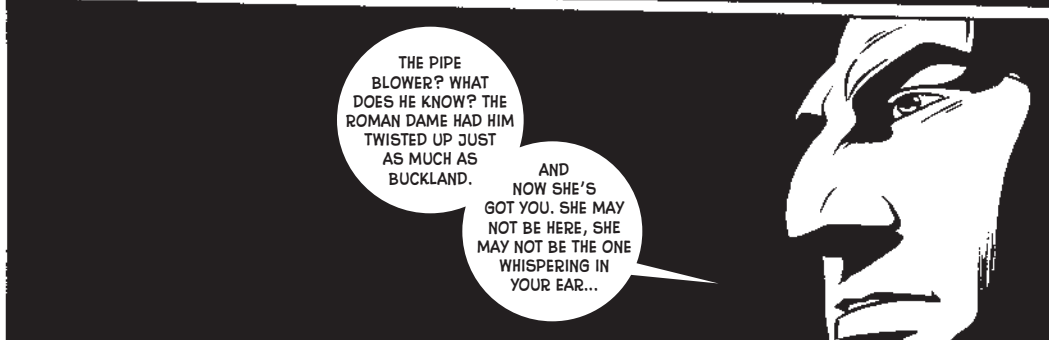
IT
WORRIES ME
WHEN SOMEONE
SPOTS A RAT IN
ONE OF MY
ESTABLISH-
MENTS.

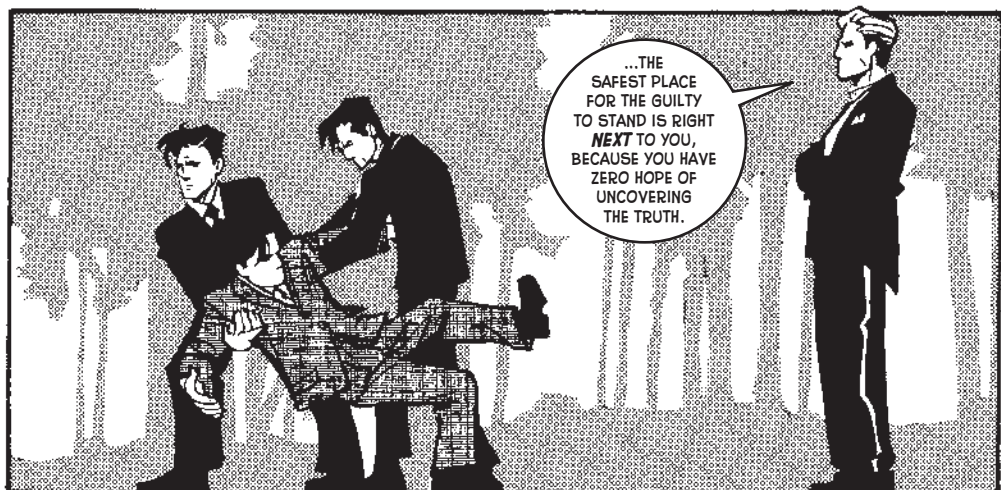
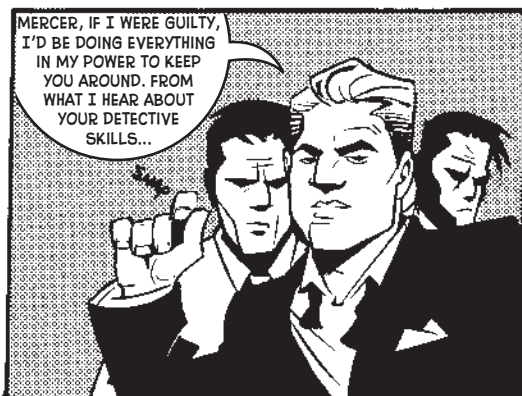
IT
FORCES ME
TO CALL FOR PEST
CONTROL BEFORE THEY
SEND BOYS IN PRETTY
BLUE UNIFORMS TO
SHUT ME
DOWN.

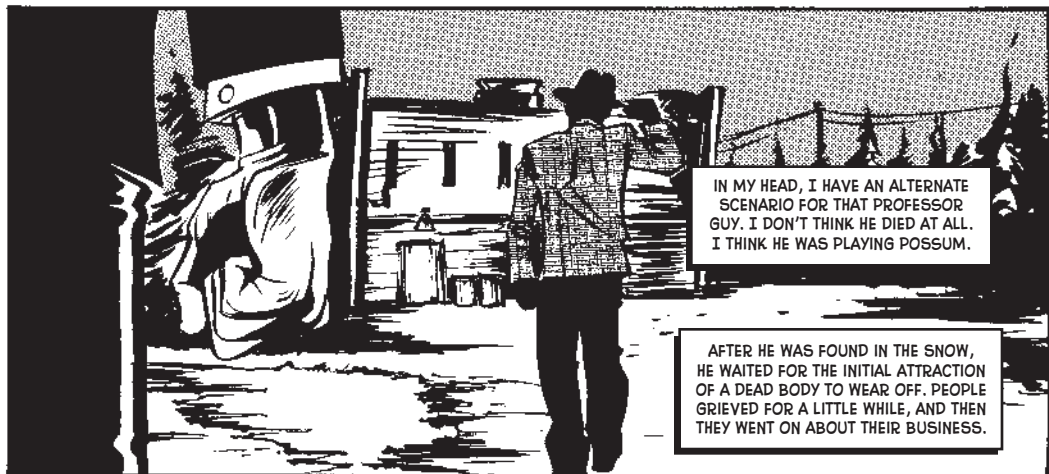












IN MY HEAD, I HAVE AN ALTERNATE SCENARIO FOR THAT PROFESSOR GUY. I DON'T THINK HE DIED AT ALL. I THINK HE WAS PLAYING POSSUM.

AFTER HE WAS FOUND IN THE SNOW, HE WAITED FOR THE INITIAL ATTRACTION OF A DEAD BODY TO WEAR OFF. PEOPLE GRIEVED FOR A LITTLE WHILE, AND THEN THEY WENT ON ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS.



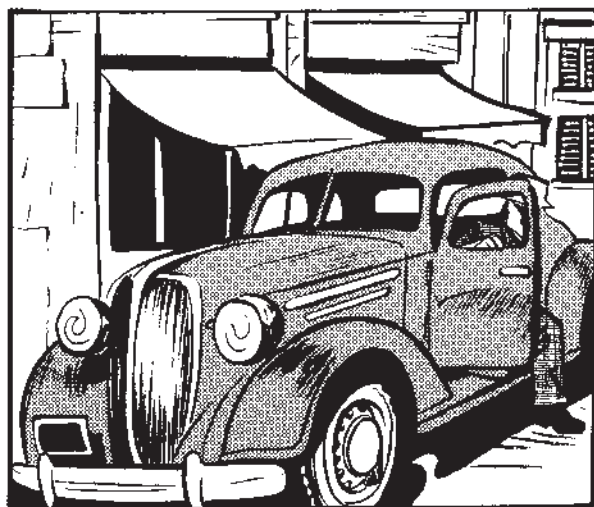
AS SOON AS THEY WEREN'T LOOKING, THE PROFESSOR STOOD UP, BRUSHED OFF THE COLD, AND WALKED AWAY.

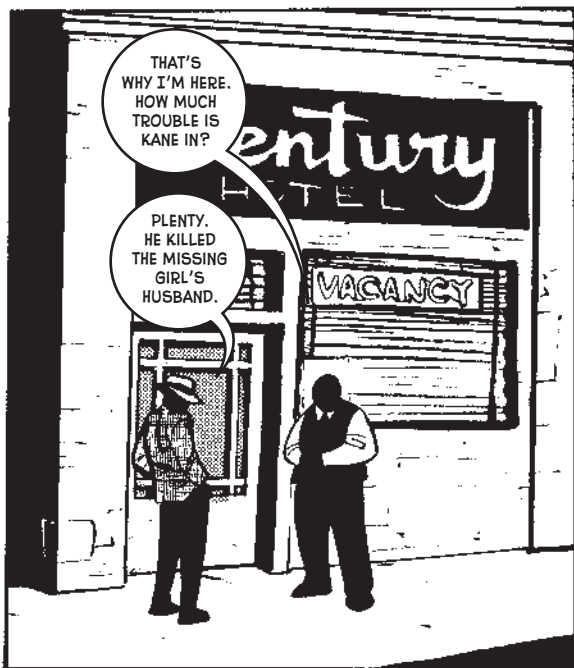
I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE WENT. THAT'S HIS BUSINESS.



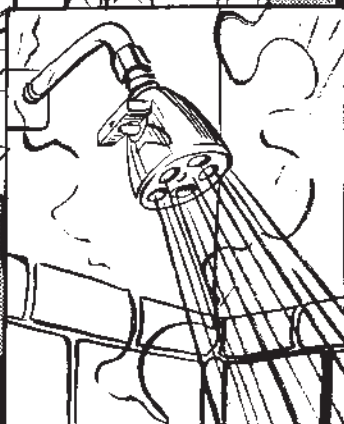
BUT HE WAS SMARTER THAN THEY ALL THOUGHT, HE GOT AWAY CLEAN.

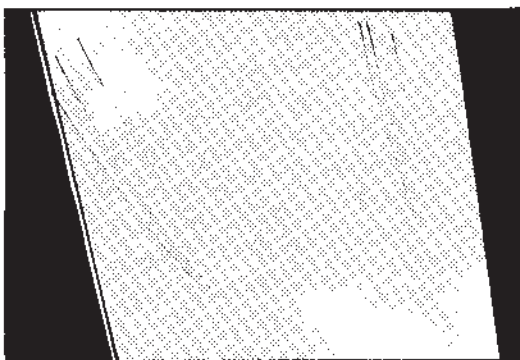
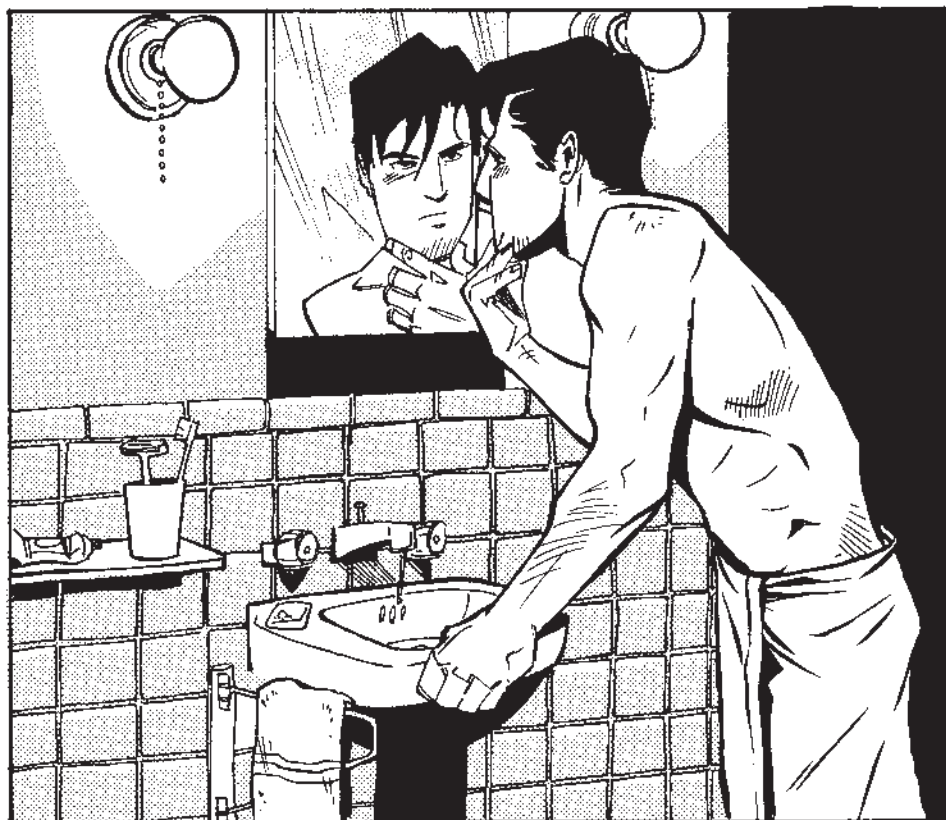
CHAPTER 6



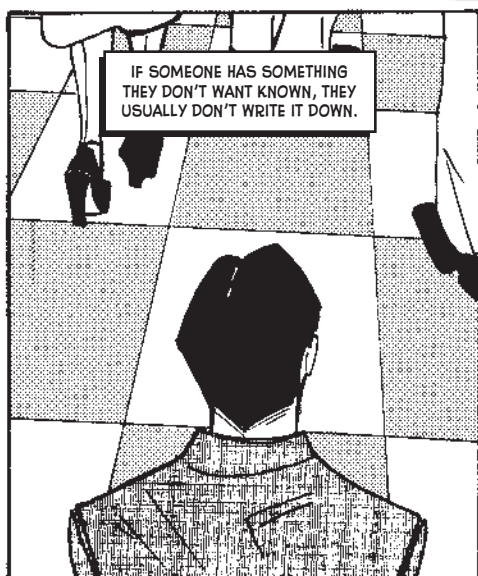


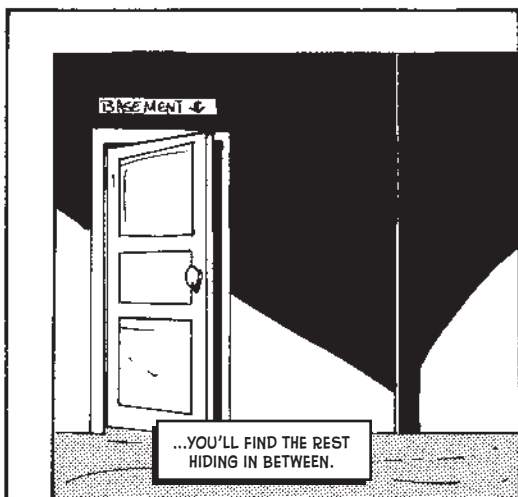
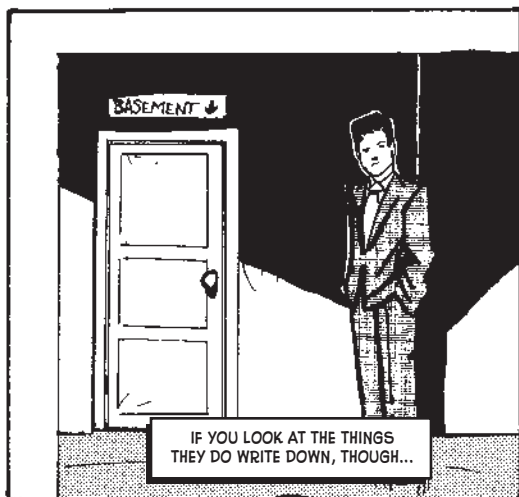


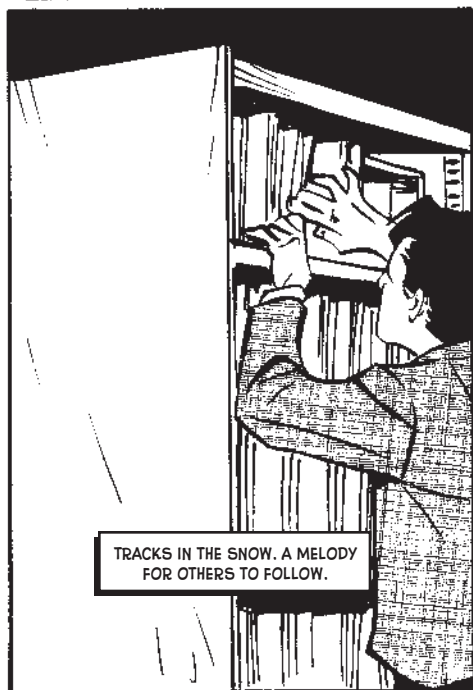


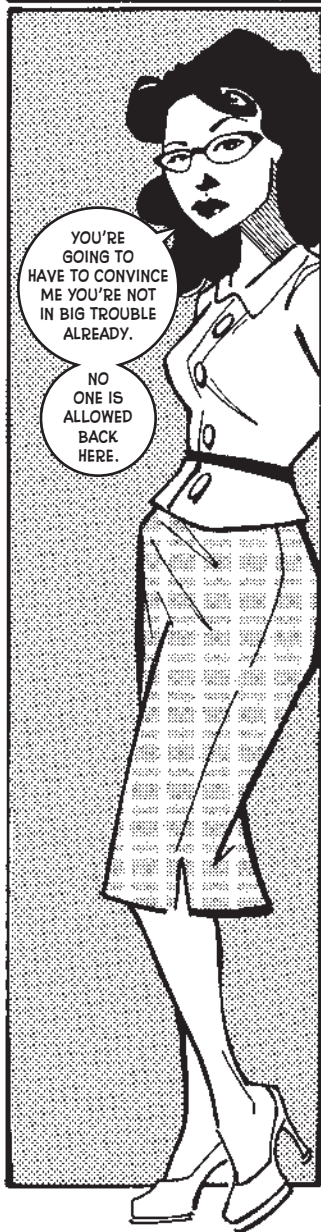
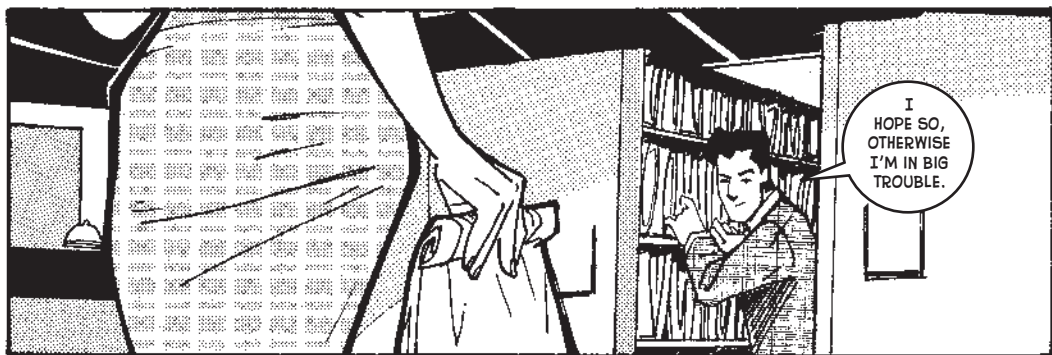














YEAH,
BUT I'M SURE
YOU CAN IMAGINE
WHO I THOUGHT
I WAS WAITING
FOR.

YOU KNOW
THE AVERAGE
CITY HALL TYPE---
FAT GUY, BEEN HERE
TOO LONG AND
HE SMELLS LIKE
IT.



CAN
YOU BLAME
ME FOR WANTING
TO GET A HEAD
START?

THANK-
FULLY YOU
STOPPED ME
WHEN YOU DID,
OR I'D HAVE
COMPLETELY
MISSED
OUT.



WHAT
WERE YOU
HOPING TO
FIND BACK
HERE?



I'M
SORRY. IT CAN
WAIT. I DON'T WANT
TO INTERRUPT YOUR
LUNCH. US WORKING
STIFFS, WE DON'T GET
TOO MANY BREAKS,
IF YOU KNOW
WHAT I
MEAN.



I
DON'T.

BUT
MAYBE YOU
CAN EXPLAIN
IT TO
SECURITY.



LISTEN,
I'LL BE
STRAIGHT
WITH
YOU.

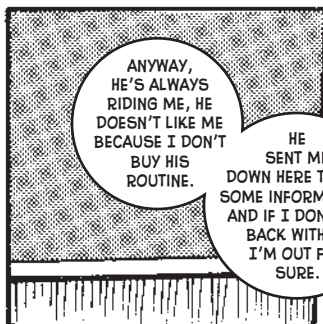


MY
BOSS SENT
ME DOWN HERE.
HE'S BEEN RIDING
MY HUMP TO GET
SOME INFOR-
MATION.

YOUR
BOSS?

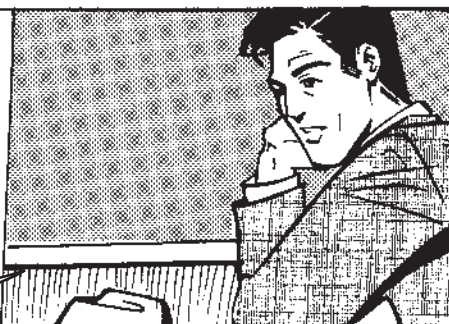
YEAH,
I'M FROM THE
EXAMINER. MY
EDITOR'S A REAL
PIG OF A
MAN.

OR
SHOULD I
SAY PIGLET.
HIS **DADDY**
IS TOP
BOAR.



ANYWAY,
HE'S ALWAYS
RIDING ME, HE
DOESN'T LIKE ME
BECAUSE I DON'T
BUY HIS
ROUTINE.

HE
SENT ME
DOWN HERE TO GET
SOME INFORMATION,
AND IF I DON'T GO
BACK WITH IT,
I'M OUT FOR
SURE.



LET
ME GUESS.
HE'S NEVER
PACKED A
LUNCH IN
HIS LIFE.

YOU'VE
MET
HIM?



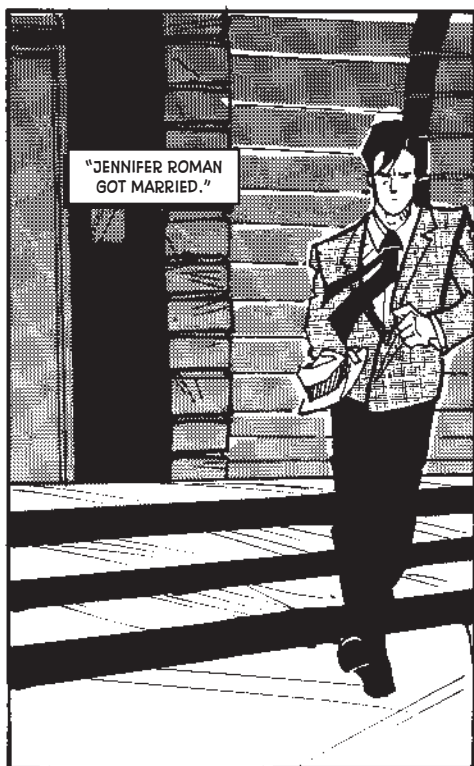
WHAT
EXACTLY
DO YOU
NEED?

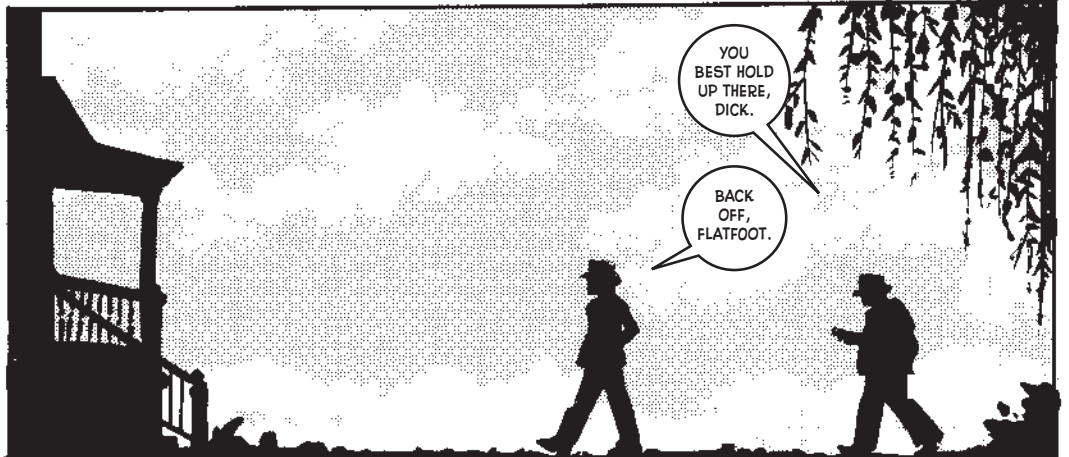
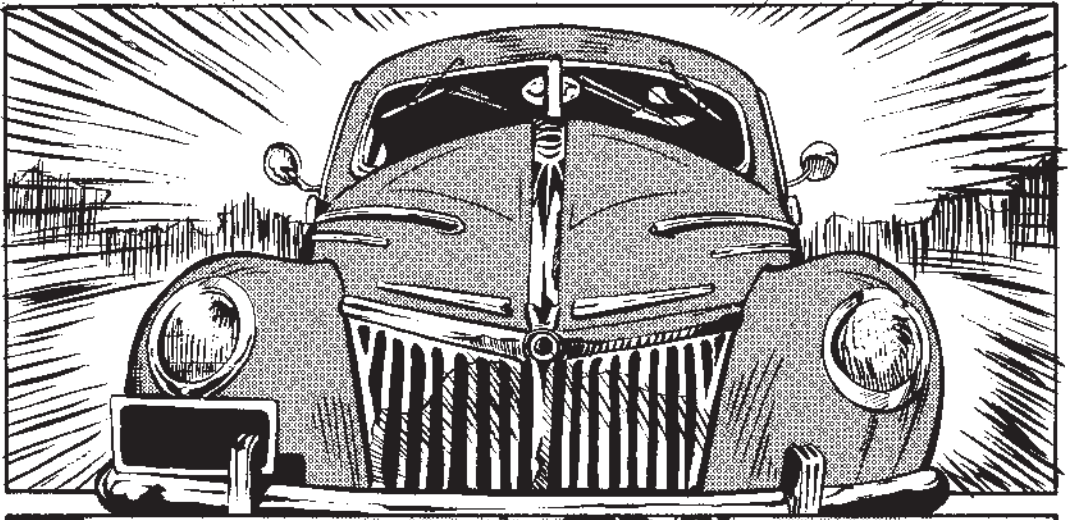
YOU'VE
HEARD ABOUT
THIS RICH CAT
THAT GOT OFFED?
THE ONE THAT WAS
ENGAGED TO THE
HEIRESS?

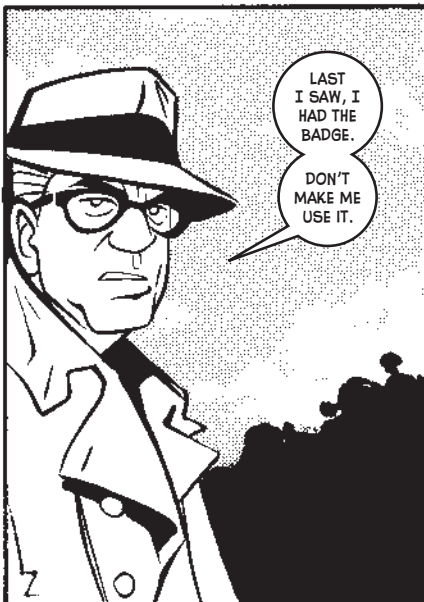
UH-HUH.



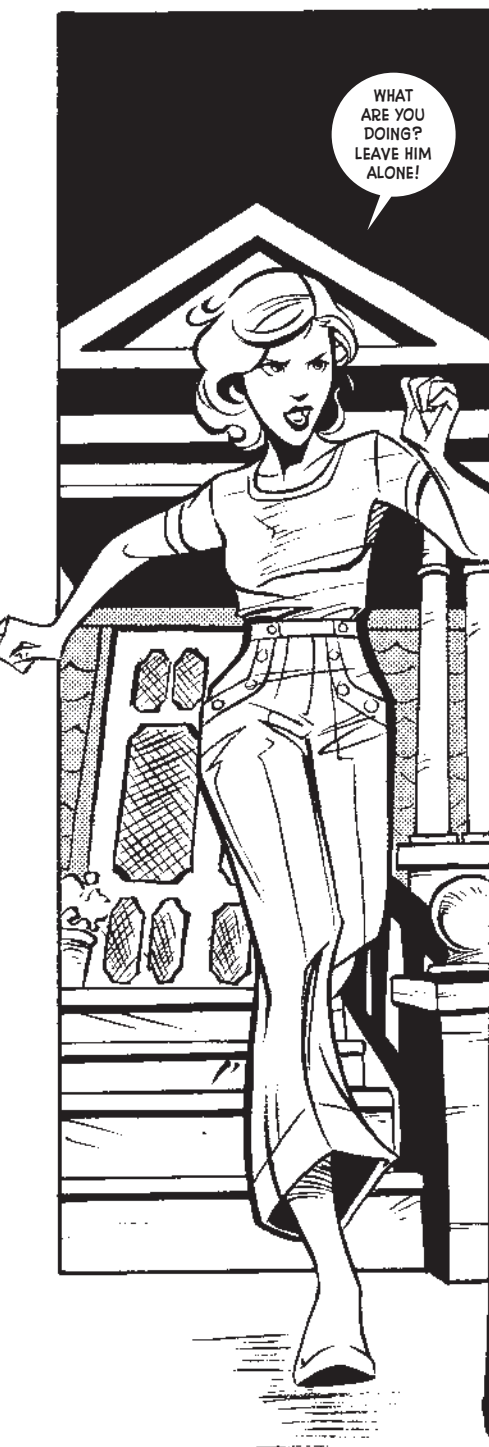












WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?
LEAVE HIM
ALONE!



YOU
KNOW I
HAVE MY
ORDERS,
MA'AM.

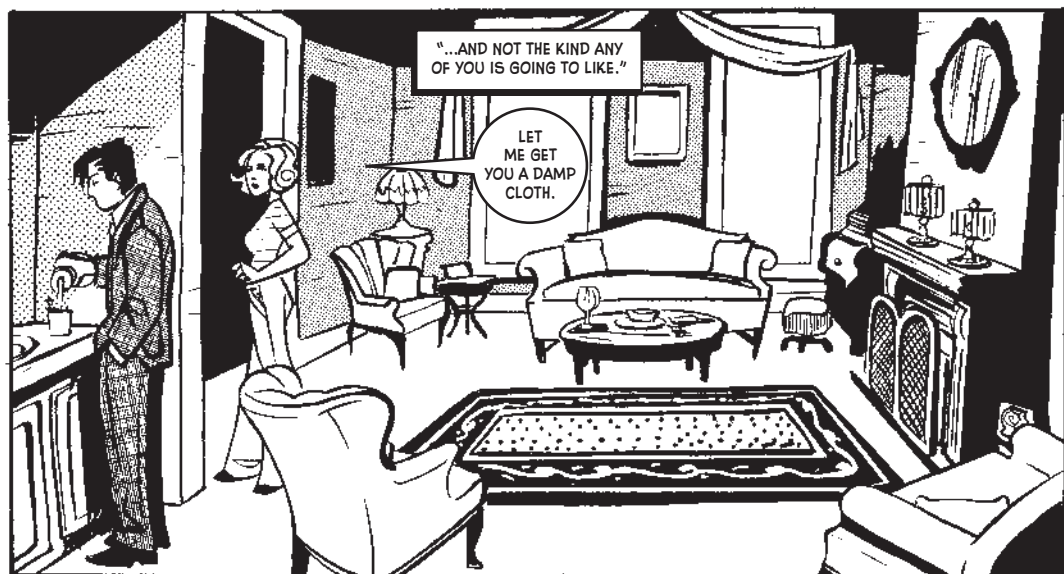
I DON'T
CARE. THIS
IS PRIVATE
PROPERTY.

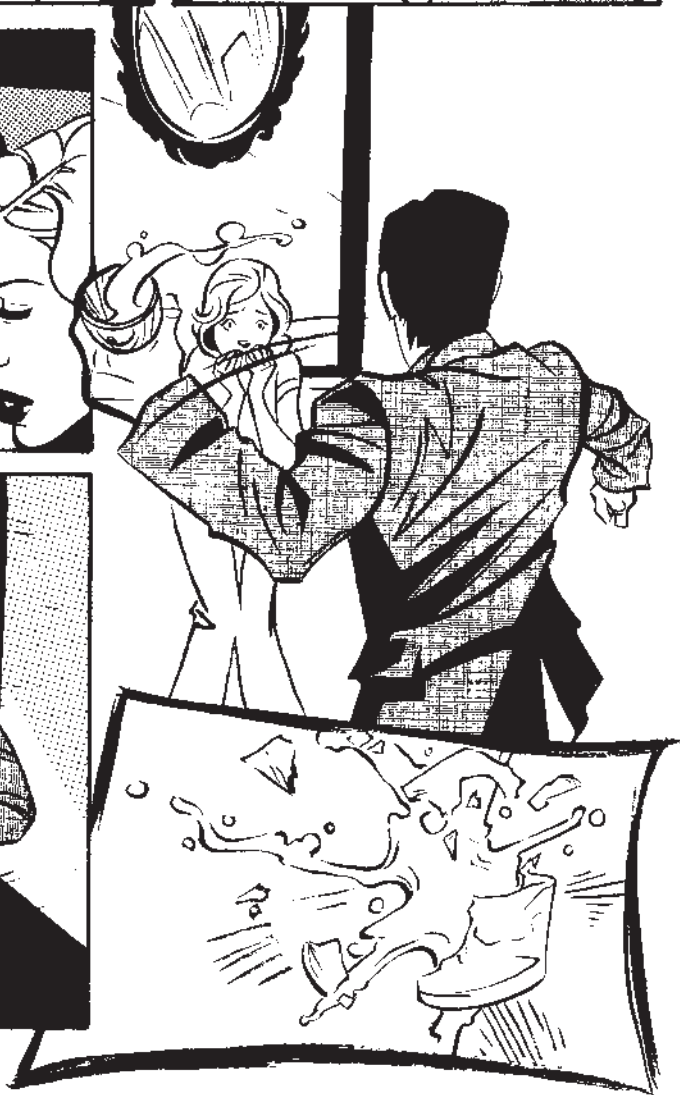


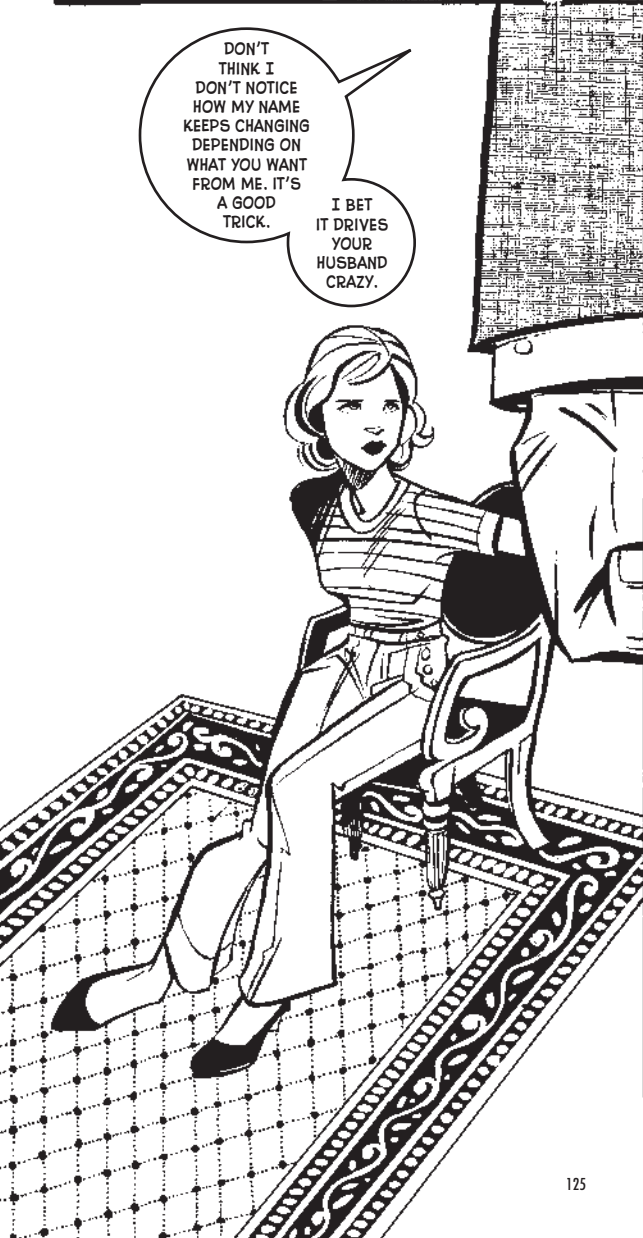
YOU
SHOULD
HAVE HEARD
HIM TALKING
LIKE A BIG MAN
ALL ON HIS OWN
BEFORE.

NOW
HE HAS
ORDERS. HE
TOUCHES ME AGAIN,
THEY'LL BE ONES
FROM A
DOCTOR.

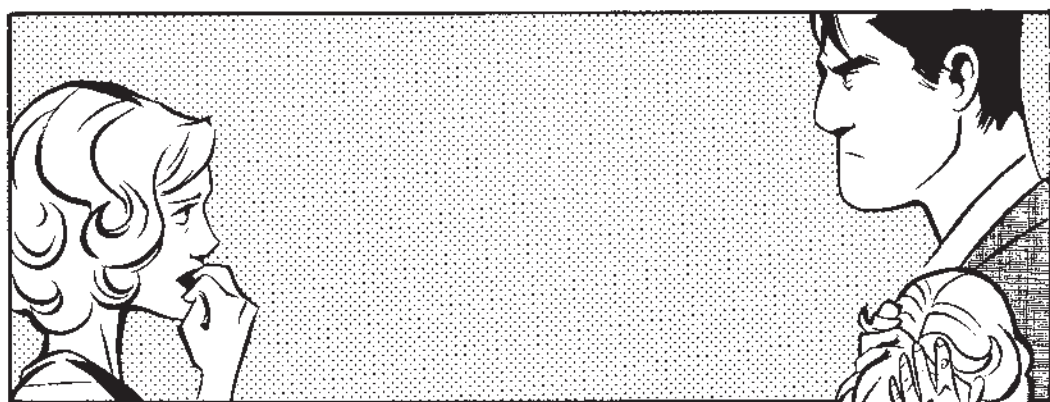
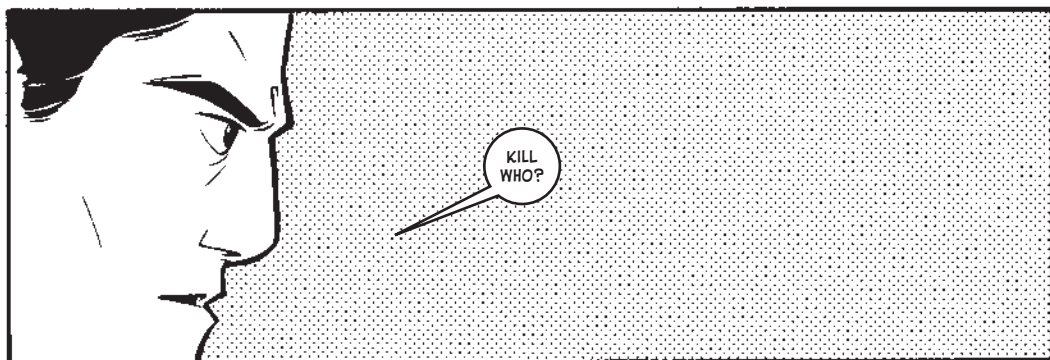






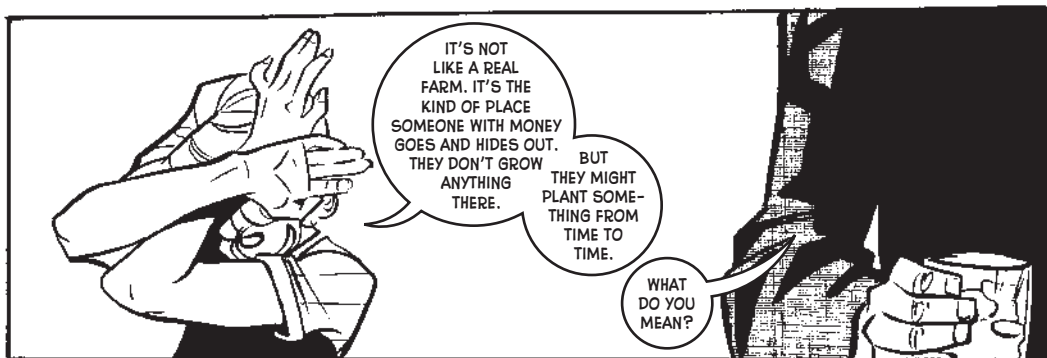








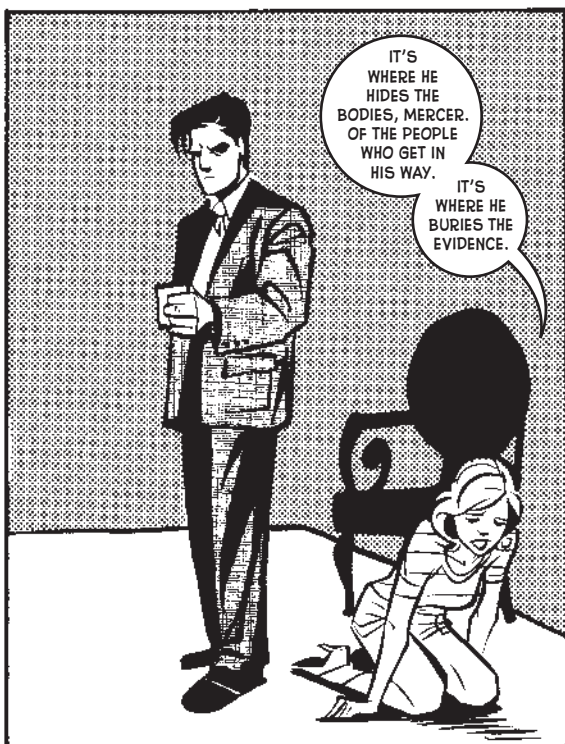
...AND
THE NEXT
THING I KNOW,
WE'RE ON SOME
ROAD OUT TO THE
MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.
OUT TO CARLTON'S
FARMHOUSE.



IT'S NOT
LIKE A REAL
FARM. IT'S THE
KIND OF PLACE
SOMEONE WITH MONEY
GOES AND HIDES OUT.
THEY DON'T GROW
ANYTHING
THERE.

BUT
THEY MIGHT
PLANT SOME-
THING FROM
TIME TO
TIME.

WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN?

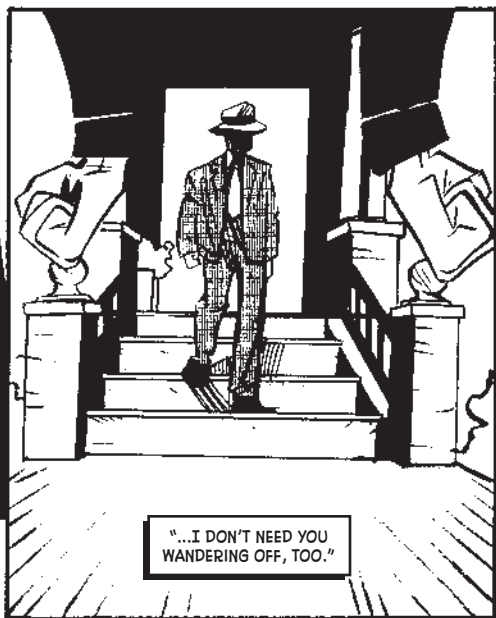
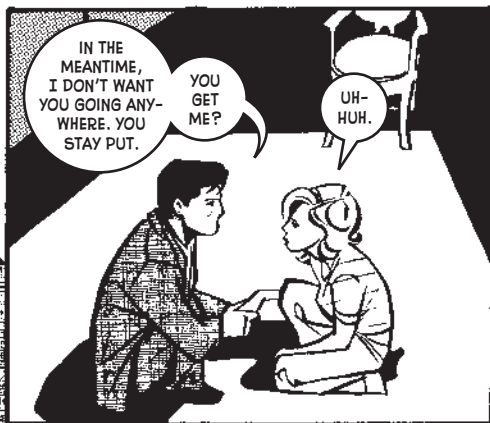


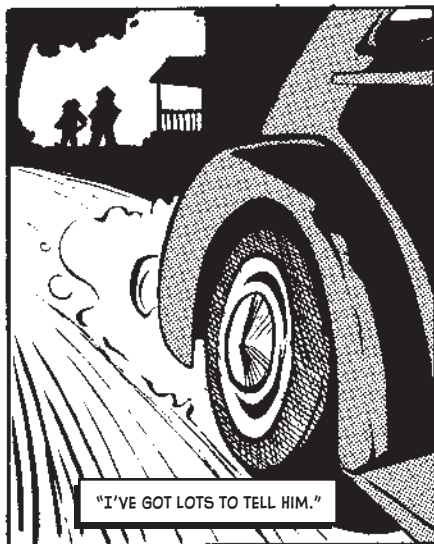
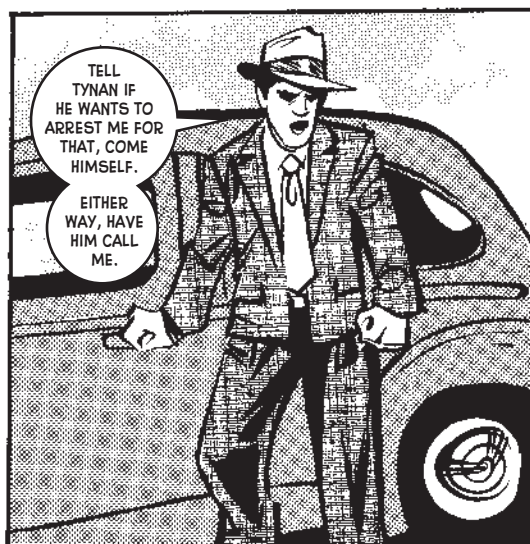
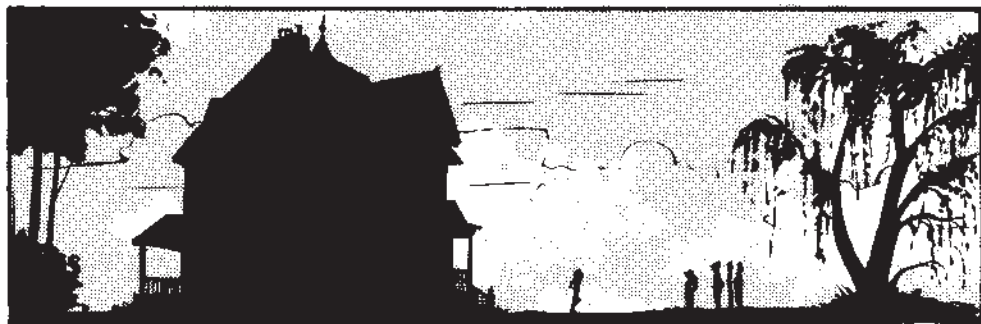
IT'S
WHERE HE
HIDES THE
BODIES, MERCER.
OF THE PEOPLE
WHO GET IN
HIS WAY.

IT'S
WHERE HE
BURIES THE
EVIDENCE.



I'M
SCARED,
MERCER.





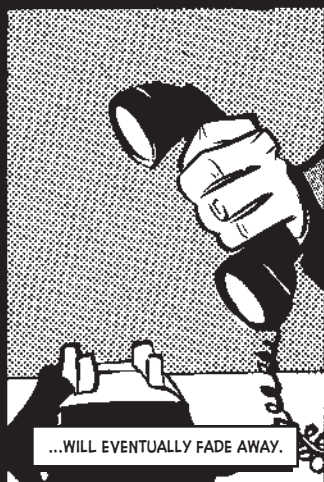
CHAPTER 7



I DON'T MIND THE
CUTS AND BRUISES.



ANYTHING YOU CAN PUT A
BANDAGE OVER WILL
EVENTUALLY CLOSE UP...



...WILL EVENTUALLY FADE AWAY.



EVEN IF IT LEAVES A MARK,
YOU'VE GOT A NEW ANECDOTE.

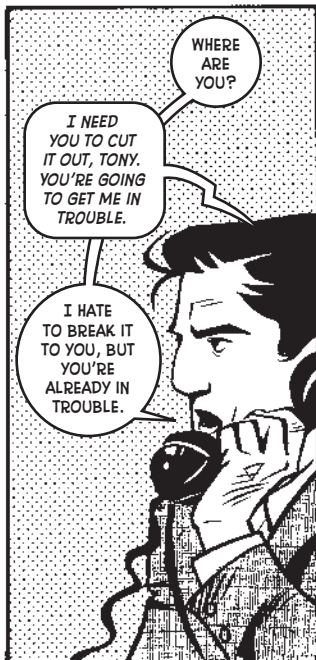
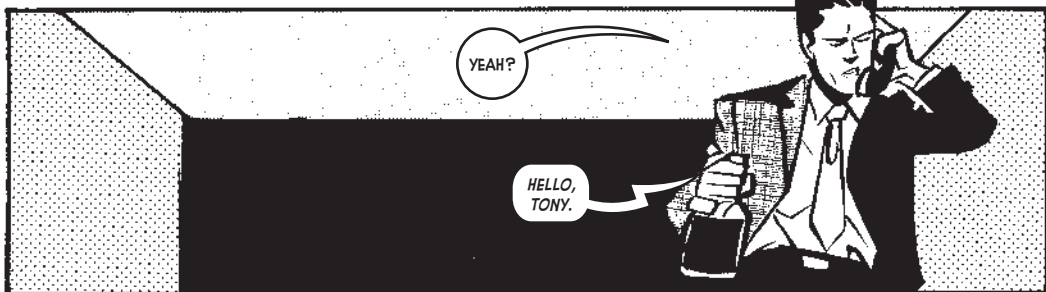


"SEE THIS HERE ON MY CHIN?
THAT'S WHEN I WALKED INTO
SOME GUY'S ELBOW.



"SEE THIS HERE ON MY ELBOW?
THAT'S WHEN SOME GUY
WALKED INTO MINE."



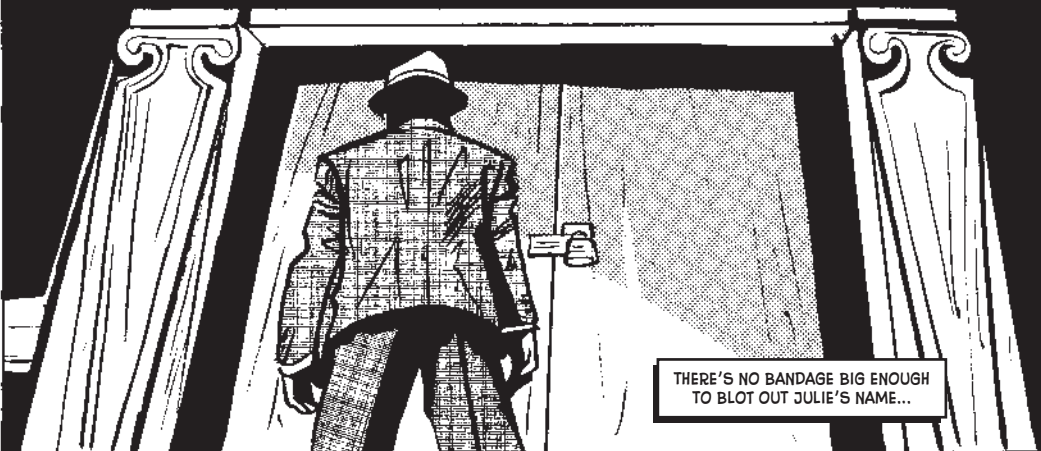




"...I'LL GIVE YOU THE ADDRESS."

IT'S THE ONES THAT COME AND DO THEIR DAMAGE
AND DISAPPEAR WITHOUT LEAVING A VISIBLE TRACE...

...THOSE ARE THE ONES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE A MUG.



THERE'S NO BANDAGE BIG ENOUGH
TO BLOT OUT JULIE'S NAME...



...NO WORLD OLD ENOUGH TO GIVE ME THE TIME
TO LET THE WOUND SEAL OVER AND FADE.

I KNEW THIS LITTLE GIRL BACK IN SCHOOL WHO
GAVE ME COOKIES FROM HER LUNCHPAIL.

I'D EAT THEM AND SHE'D LOOK AT ME
AND I'D BE LOOKING ACROSS THE WAY...



"I'M IN ROOM 20."

...AT WHATEVER JULIE WAS DOING.



I ASKED THIS KID WHY SHE WAS BOTHERING
WITH ME WHEN IT WAS OBVIOUS I WAS
JUST USING HER FOR HER SWEETS.



SHE SAID BECAUSE IF SHE WALKED AWAY,
EVERYONE ELSE WOULD SEE HOW MUCH IT HURTS.





SOMEWHERE
THAT KID IS NOW
A WOMAN...

...AND SHE'S GOT A BIG SCAR
IN THE SHAPE OF MY NAME.

LIKE A BRAND ON HER HEART.



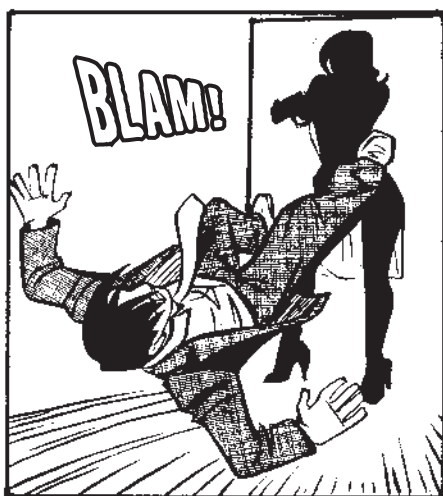
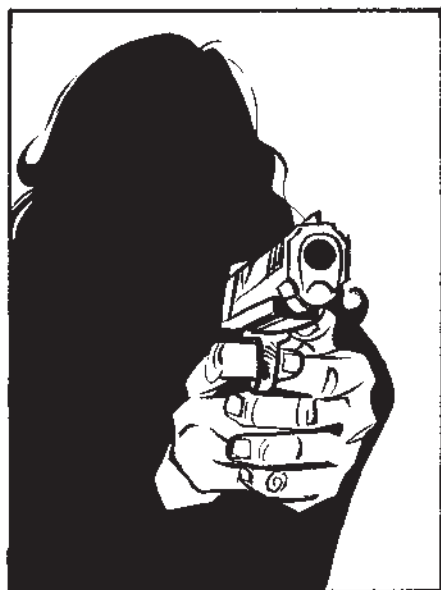
I KNEW I WAS DOING
IT TO HER, TOO, AND IT
DIDN'T STOP ME.



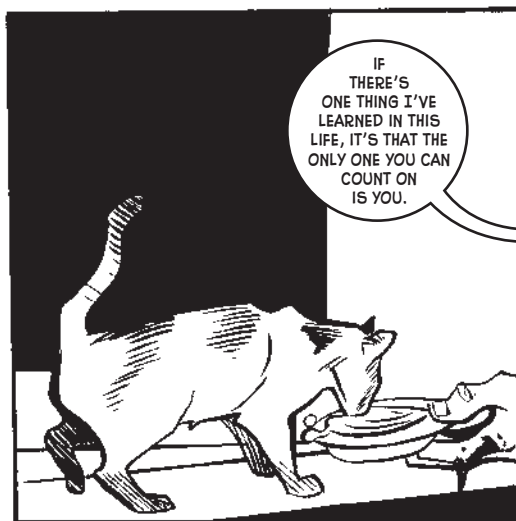
I GUESS I WAS JUST HUNGRY.



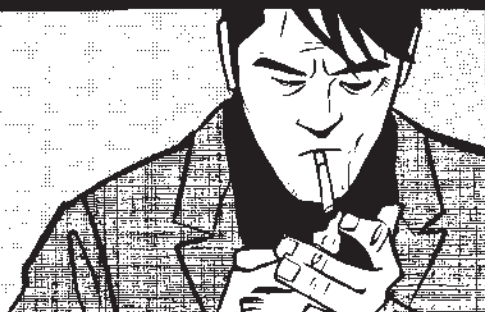




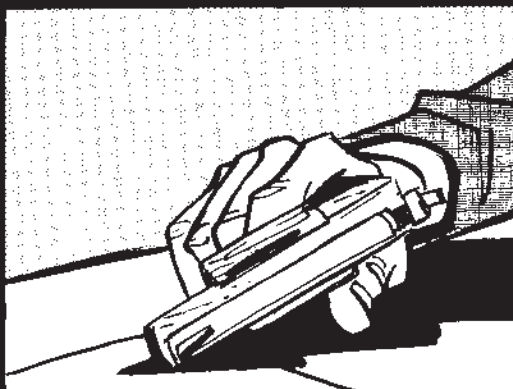
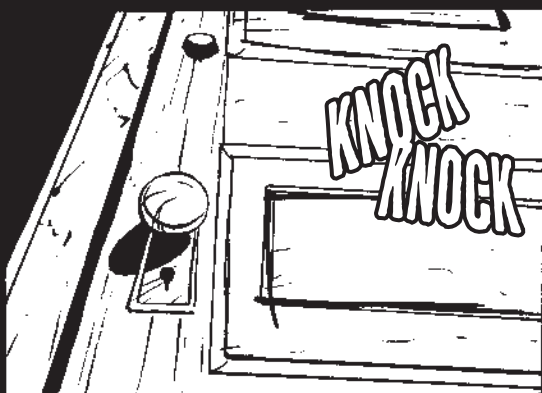
CHAPTER 8



KNOCK
KNOCK



KNOCK
KNOCK

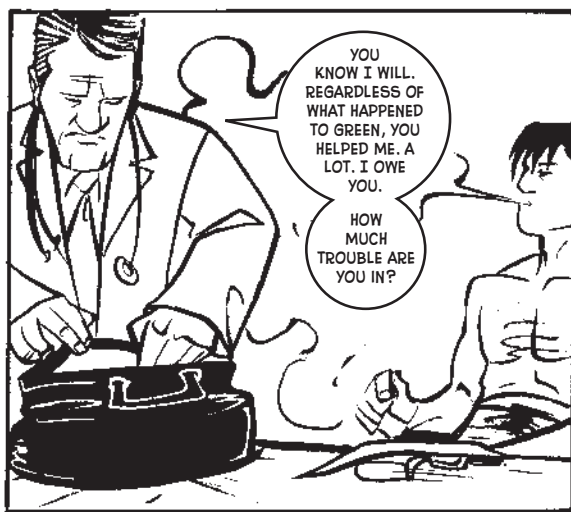
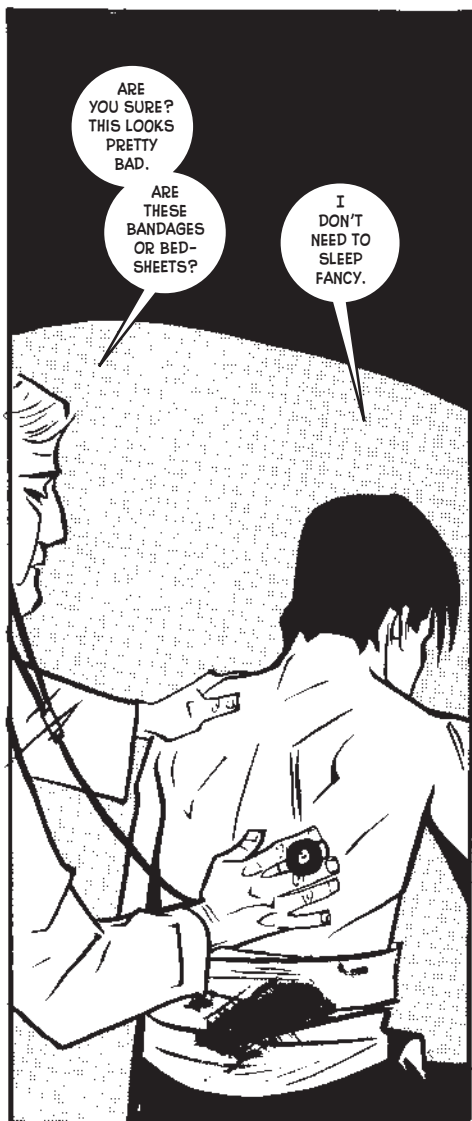
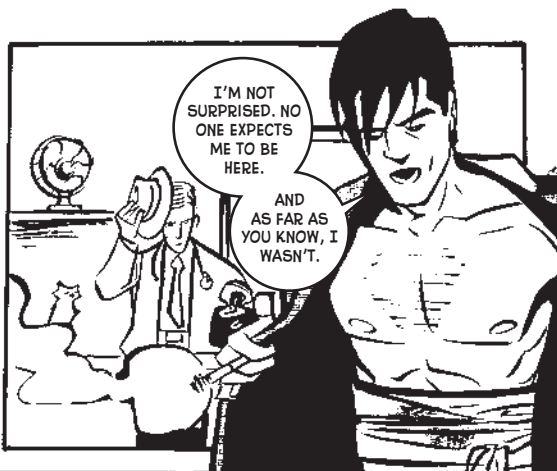
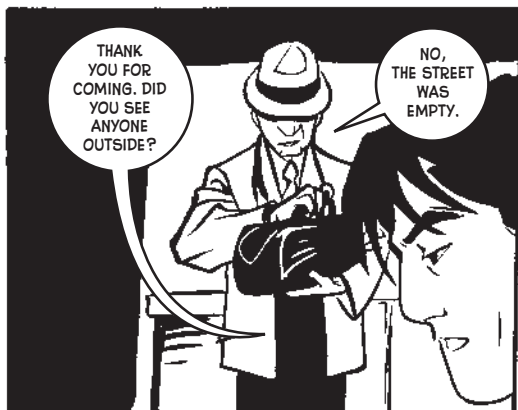


COME
IN.

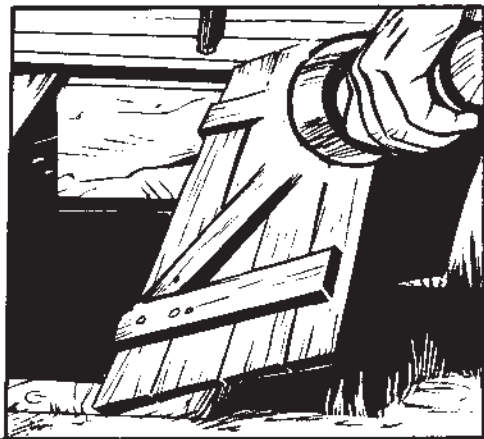


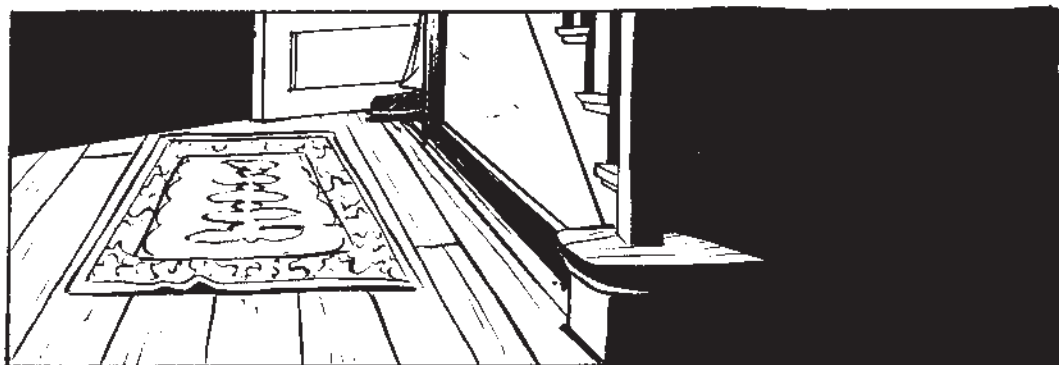
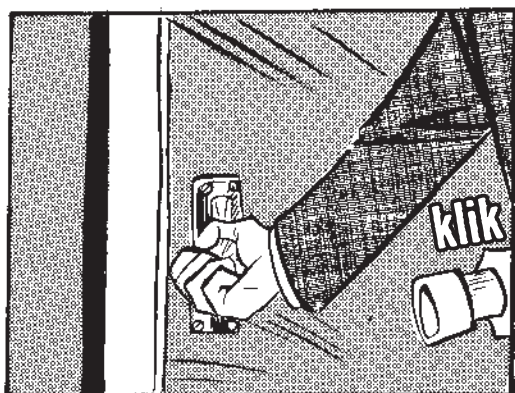
MERCER?
IT'S ME.

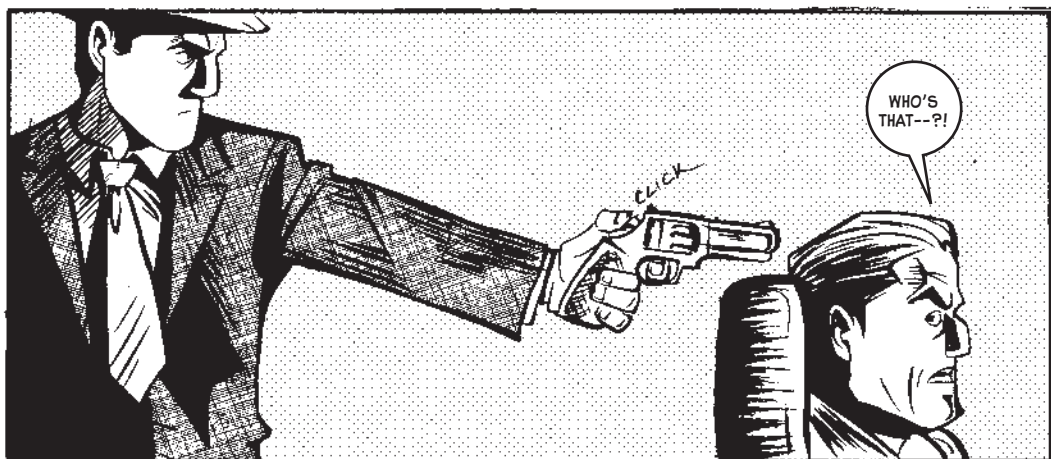










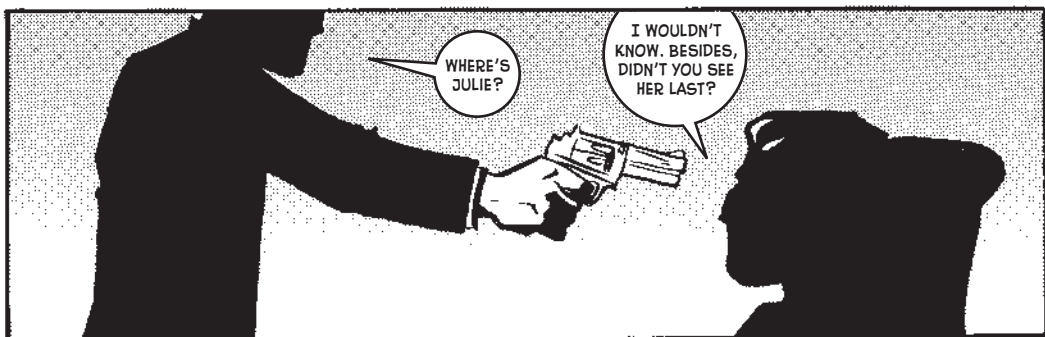






I
WONDER.

LET'S
TEST *YOUR*
POWER OF
RECALL, MR.
MEMORY.



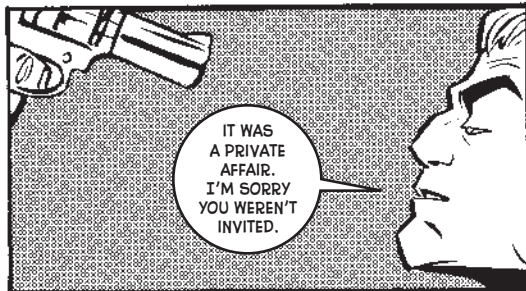
WHERE'S
JULIE?

I WOULDN'T
KNOW. BESIDES,
DIDN'T YOU SEE
HER LAST?

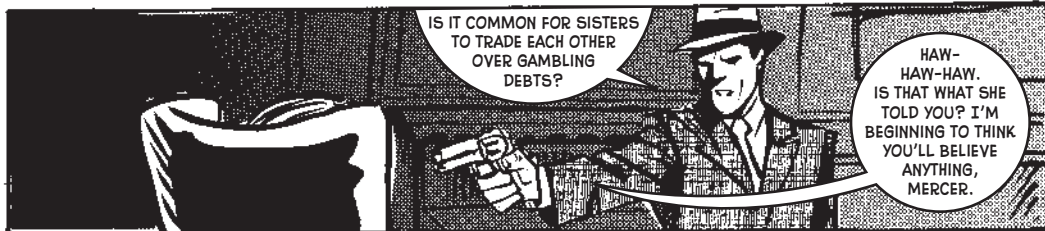


SEE?
SEE HOW IT'S
ALL COMING
BACK TO
YOU?

CAST
YOUR MIND
BACK, CARLTON,
SEE IF YOU CAN
REMEMBER A LITTLE
MARRIAGE CEREMONY.
IT TOOK PLACE ON
YOUR FRONT LAWN
OUT HERE.

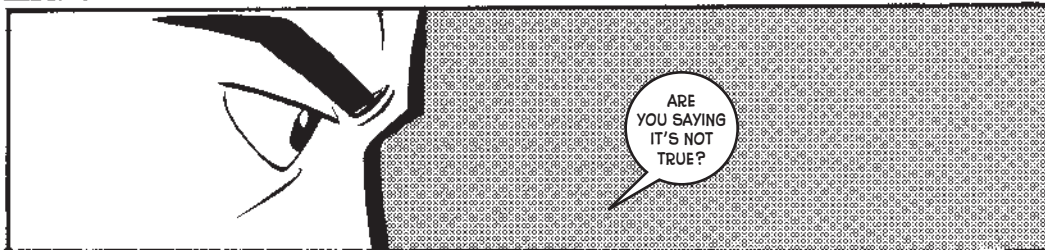


IT WAS
A PRIVATE
AFFAIR.
I'M SORRY
YOU WEREN'T
INVITED.



IS IT COMMON FOR SISTERS
TO TRADE EACH OTHER
OVER GAMBLING
DEBTS?

HAW-
HAW-HAW.
IS THAT WHAT SHE
TOLD YOU? I'M
BEGINNING TO THINK
YOU'LL BELIEVE
ANYTHING,
MERCER.

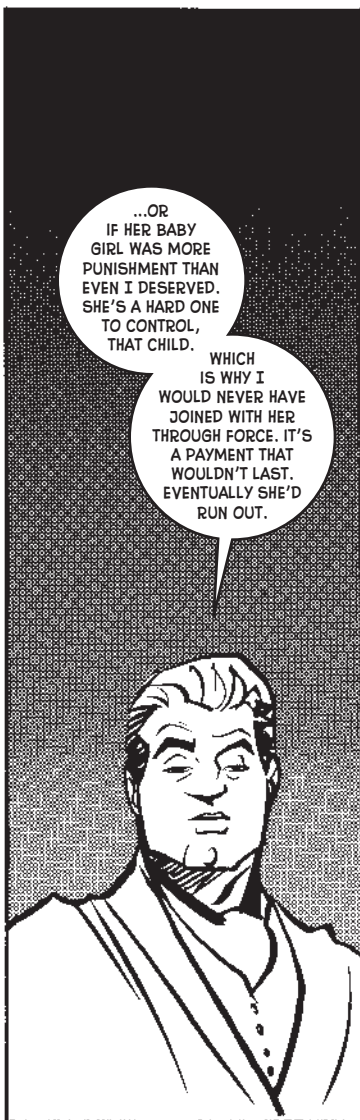


ARE
YOU SAYING
IT'S NOT
TRUE?



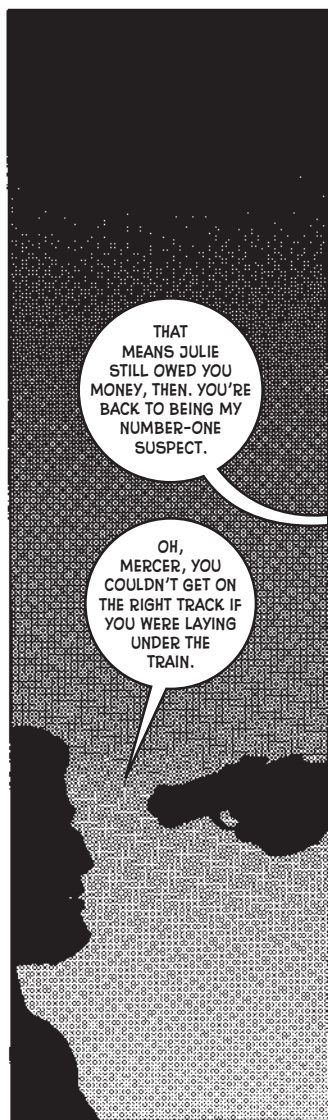
I'M SAYING THAT IF I'M GOING TO BARTER, I'M NOT GOING TO SETTLE FOR SOMETHING AS IMPERMANENT AS A WOMAN.

JENNIE AND I ARE MARRIED, YES, BUT I ASSURE YOU, IT'S WHAT THE GIRL WANTED. HER SISTER HATED THE IDEA. I'M NOT SURE IF SHE THOUGHT I WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH...



...OR IF HER BABY GIRL WAS MORE PUNISHMENT THAN EVEN I DESERVED. SHE'S A HARD ONE TO CONTROL, THAT CHILD.

WHICH IS WHY I WOULD NEVER HAVE JOINED WITH HER THROUGH FORCE. IT'S A PAYMENT THAT WOULDN'T LAST. EVENTUALLY SHE'D RUN OUT.

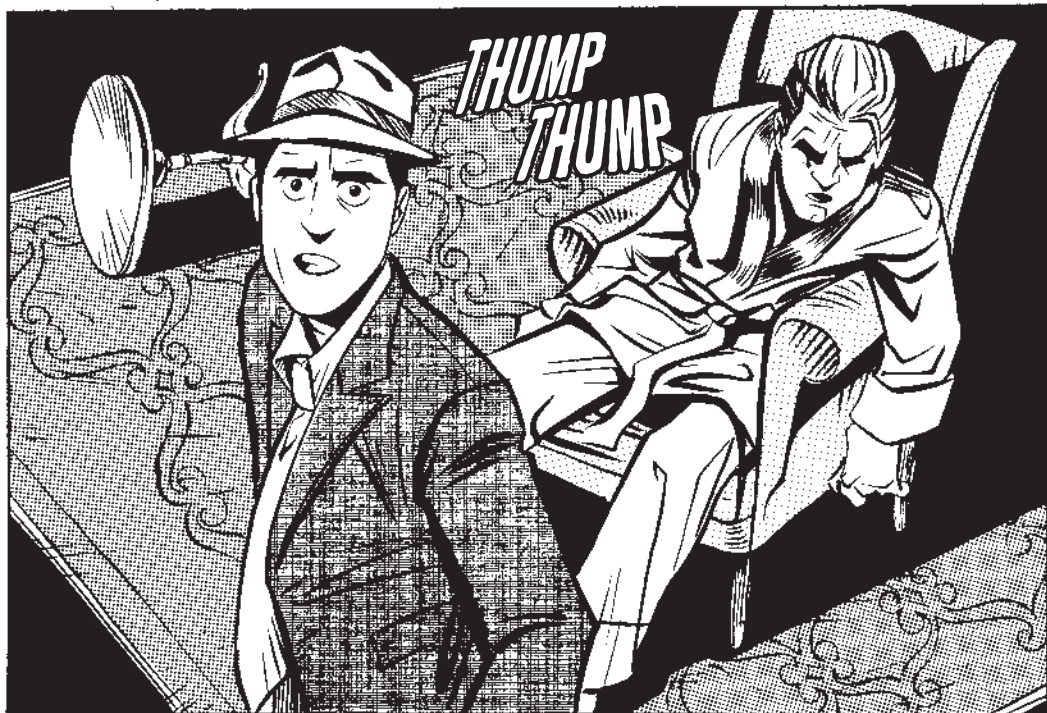


THAT MEANS JULIE STILL OWED YOU MONEY, THEN. YOU'RE BACK TO BEING MY NUMBER-ONE SUSPECT.

OH, MERCER, YOU COULDN'T GET ON THE RIGHT TRACK IF YOU WERE LAYING UNDER THE TRAIN.



QUIT LYING TO ME, DAMMIT! WHERE'S JULIE?!









I DIDN'T WANT TO COME HERE. DON'T YOU SEE? I HAD TO ACT LIKE NOTHING HAS CHANGED, BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO.

SURE. YOU NEVER WANT ANYTHING.

HE TOLD ME YOU WERE DEAD.



AND DID YOU HOPE HE WAS RIGHT?

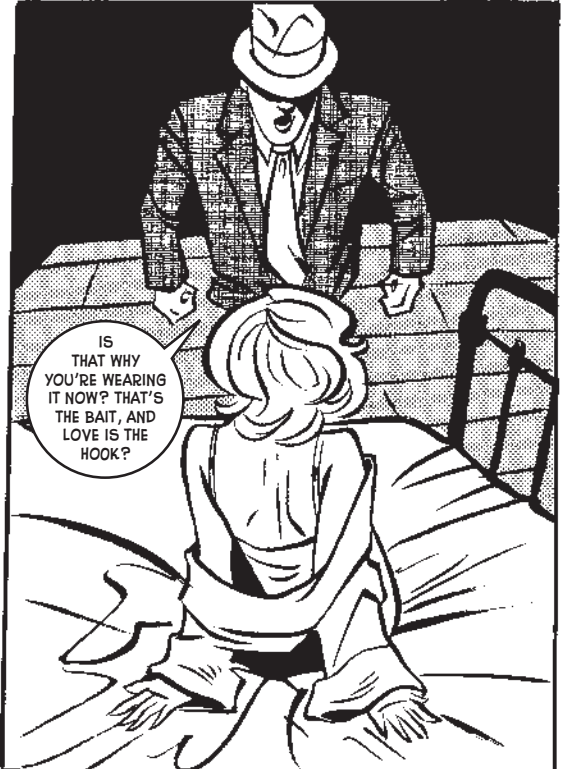


NO, MERCER, NO. I LOVE YOU. I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU.



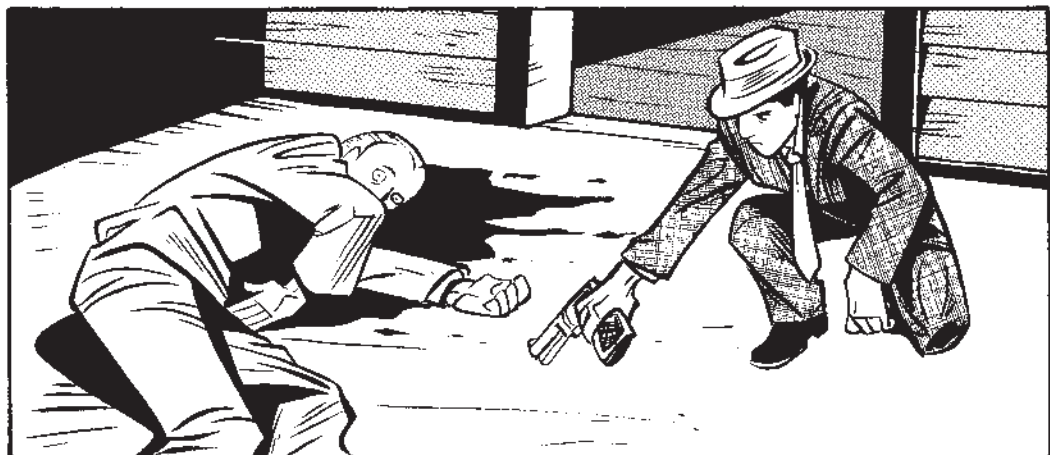
OH, YEAH?

IS THAT WHY YOU SHOWED UP AT MY OFFICE IN YOUR SISTER'S PERFUME?



IS THAT WHY YOU'RE WEARING IT NOW? THAT'S THE BAIT, AND LOVE IS THE HOOK?





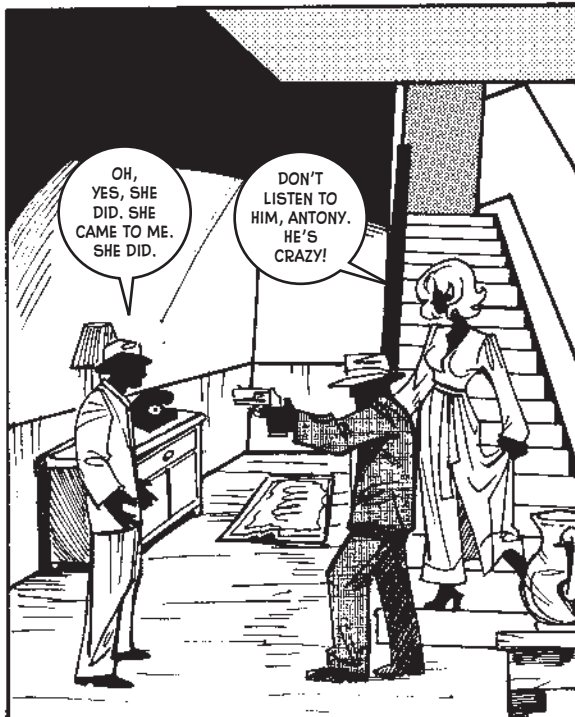
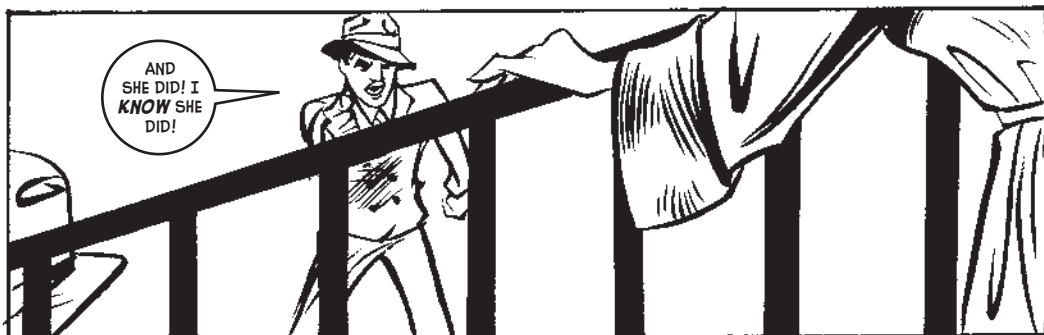


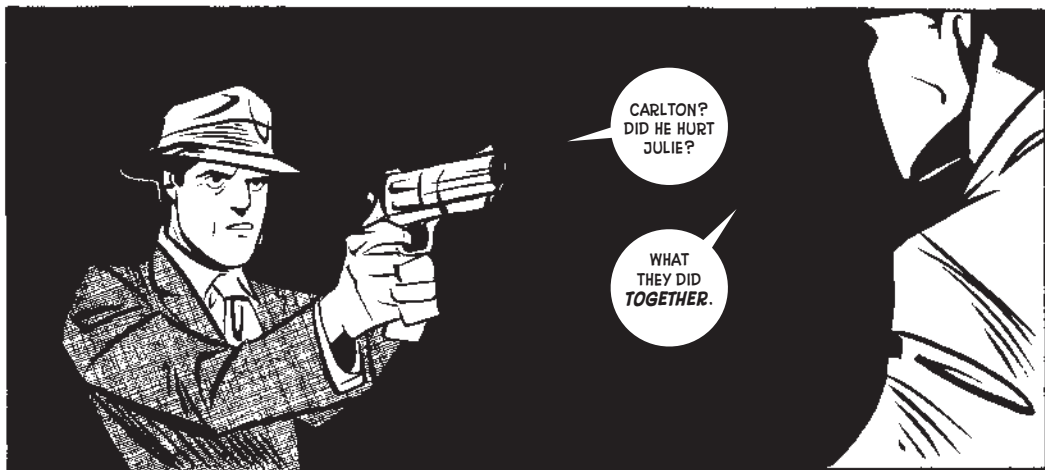
STAY
BACK, KANE.
I'VE GOT NO
SCORE TO
SETTLE WITH
YOU.



SCORE?

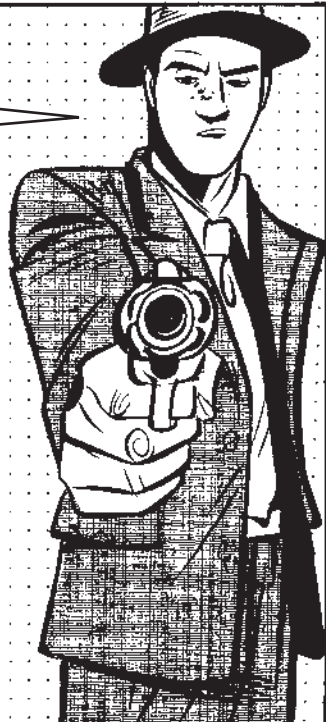
YOU
WALK OUT
OF HERE, LEAVE
ME AND THE
GIRL BE...







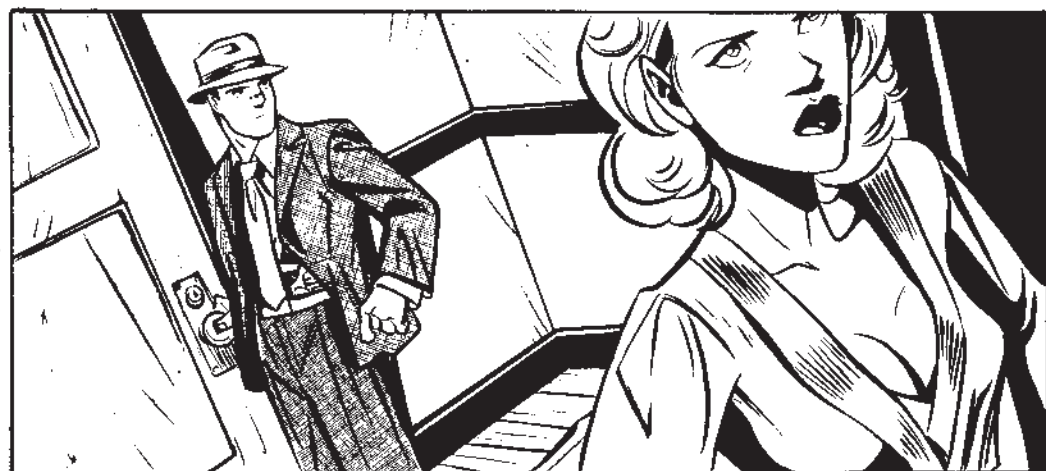
DON'T
MAKE ME
SHOOT YOU AGAIN,
KANE. AS FAR AS I'M
CONCERNED, CARLTON
MEMORY GOT WHAT
WAS COMING
TO HIM...

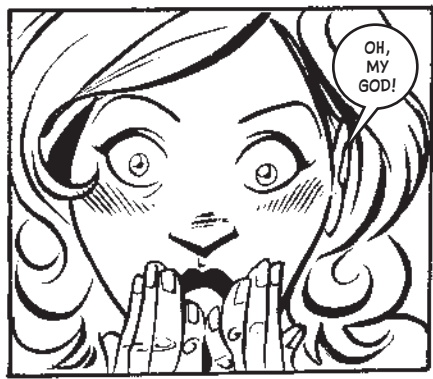
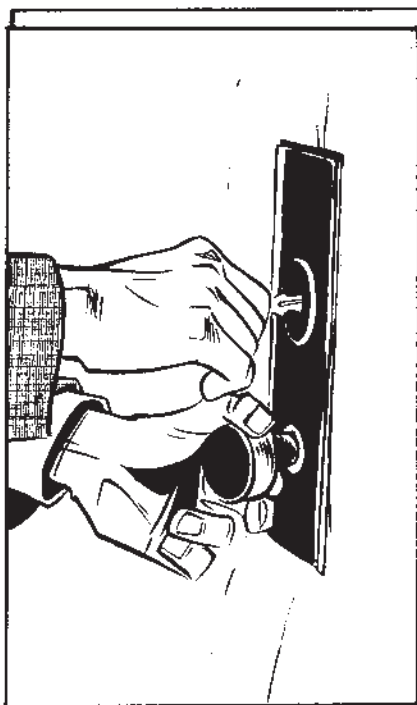


...BUT
IF YOU MOVE
ON US, I'LL
KILL YOU.

BUT
SHE--

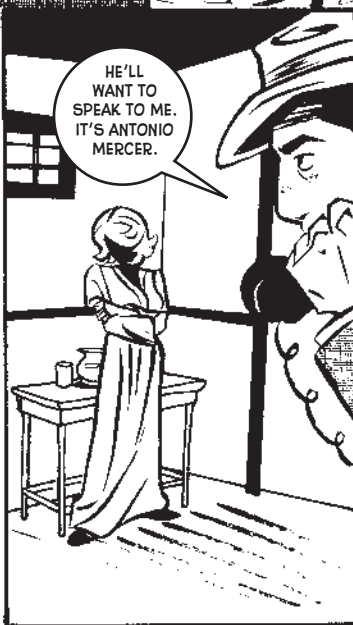
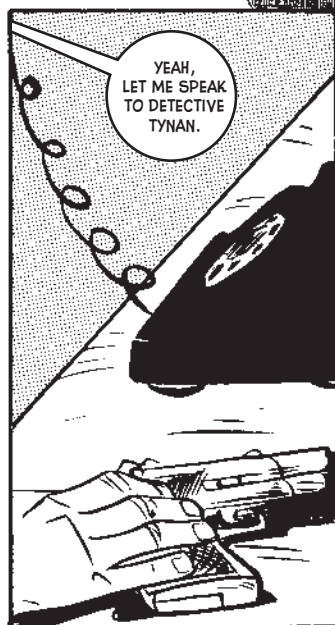
I'LL
KILL
YOU.

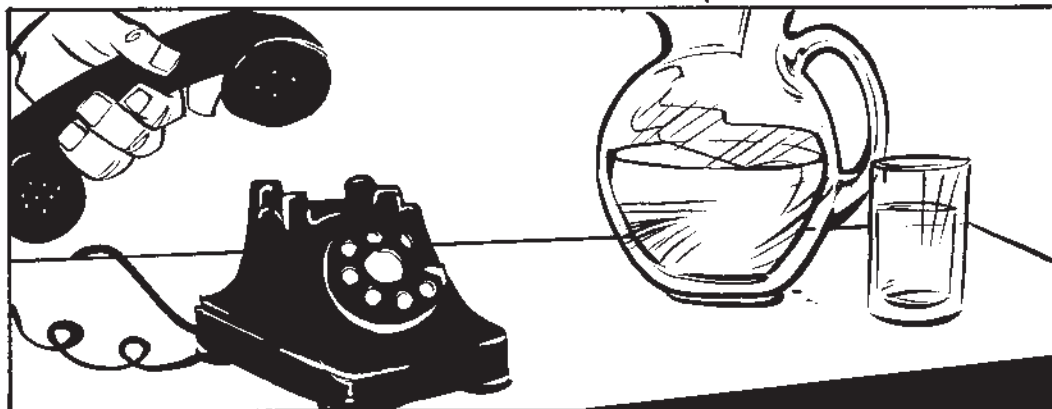
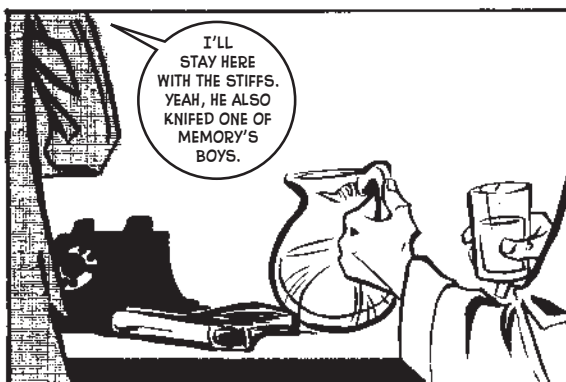






OKAY.









ONCE
YOU'D SOLD
ME ON THAT, IT MUST
HAVE BEEN PRETTY
FUN WATCHING ME RUN
AROUND, MUDDYING
UP THE WATERS WITH
ALL THE DIRT I WAS
FINDING.

THE
GAMBLING,
THAT WAS ALL
SETTLED. MEMORY
HAD IT SET UP JUST FINE
FOR HIMSELF. AND RANCE
WAS SO TWITCHY, HE
JUST LOOKED
GUILTY.



YOU
DON'T
KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE
SAYING.

IT'S
MARRYING
THE GANGSTER
THAT SET EVERYTHING
OFF. THAT'S WHAT
JULIE MEANT WHEN
SHE CALLED KANE
AND SAID IT WAS
THE MARRIAGE.

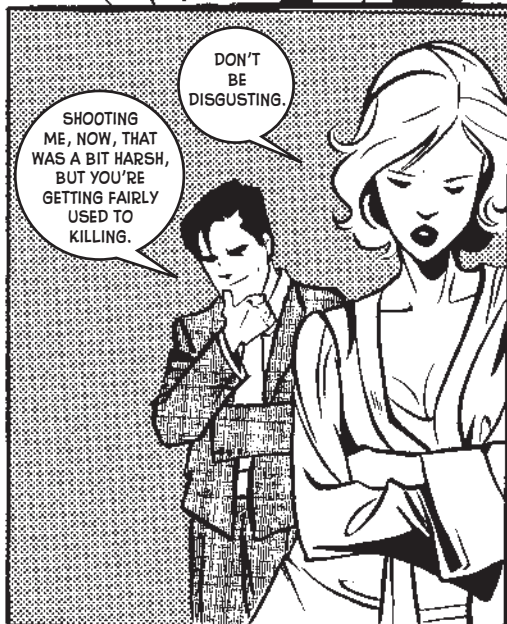
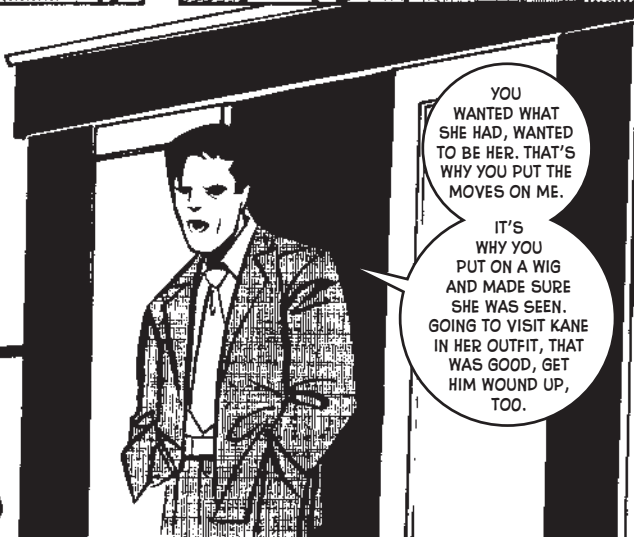


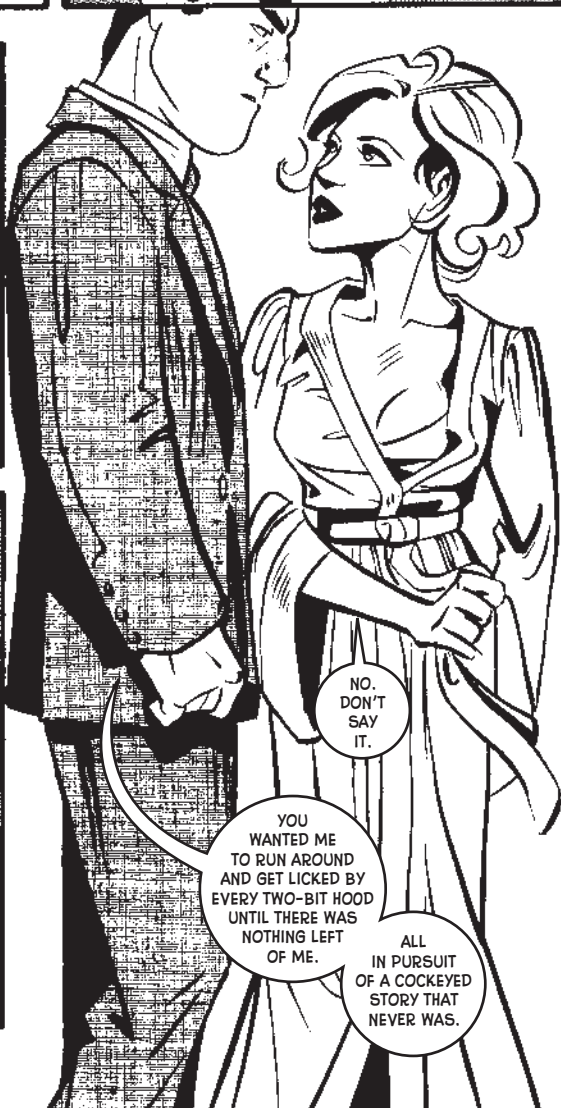
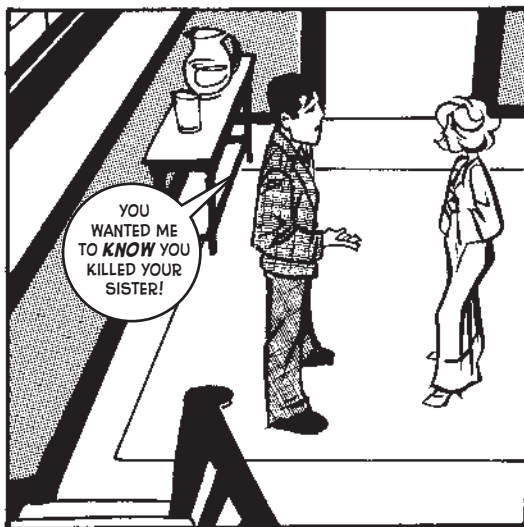
SHE
DIDN'T MEAN
HER OWN, SHE
MEANT YOURS.
ANOTHER HANDY
OBFUSCATION
FOR YOU.

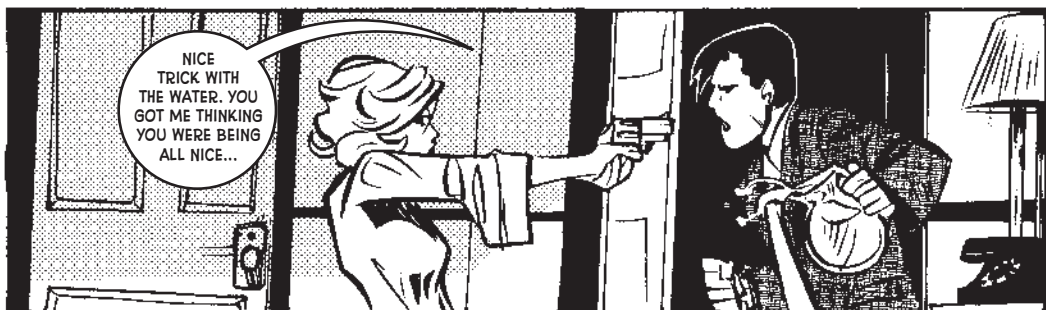
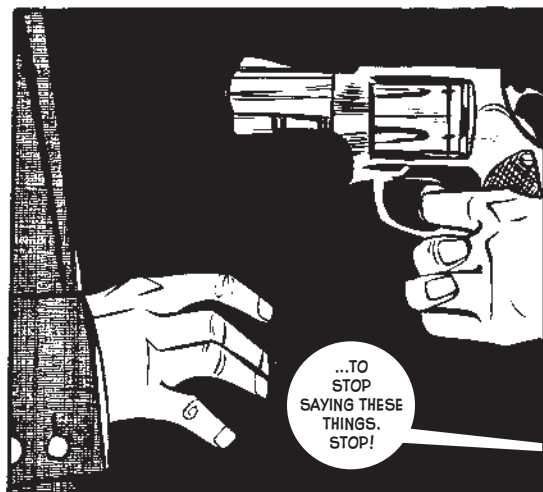


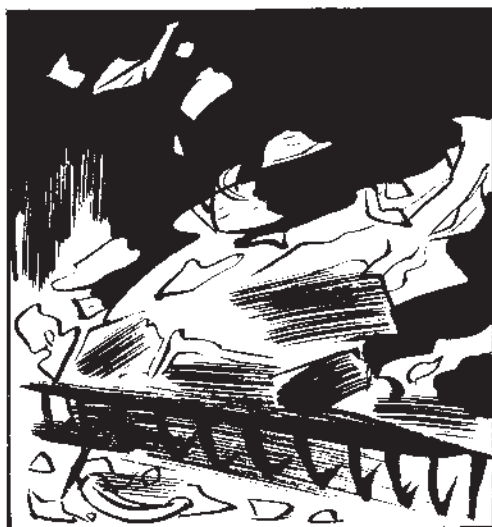
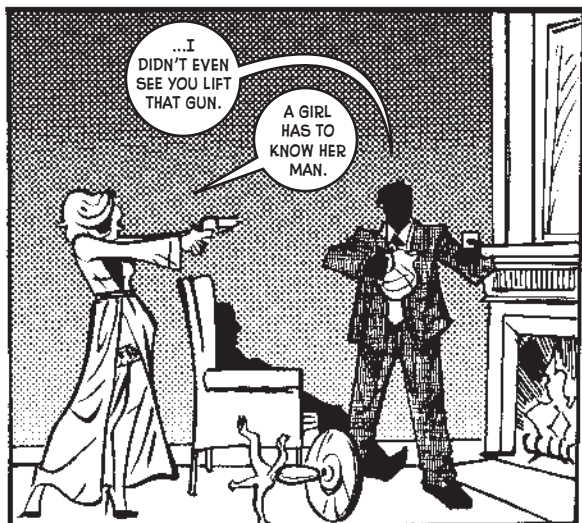
THE ONLY
PART I CAN'T
FIGURE IS WHY YOU
GOT HITCHED TO MEMORY.
I KNOW WHY YOU KEPT IT
A SECRET, BECAUSE DADDY
AND MOMMY WOULDN'T
APPROVE, AND JULIE
COULDN'T STOP IT
BECAUSE YOU'D TELL
THEM WHAT SHE
WAS UP TO.

WERE
YOU JUST
ANXIOUS TO TIE A
KNOT BEFORE SHE
COULD? OR IS THERE
A PIECE I'M MISSING,
THAT SHE WAS HAVING AN
AFFAIR WITH HIM, TOO,
AND YOU WANTED
A SLICE?









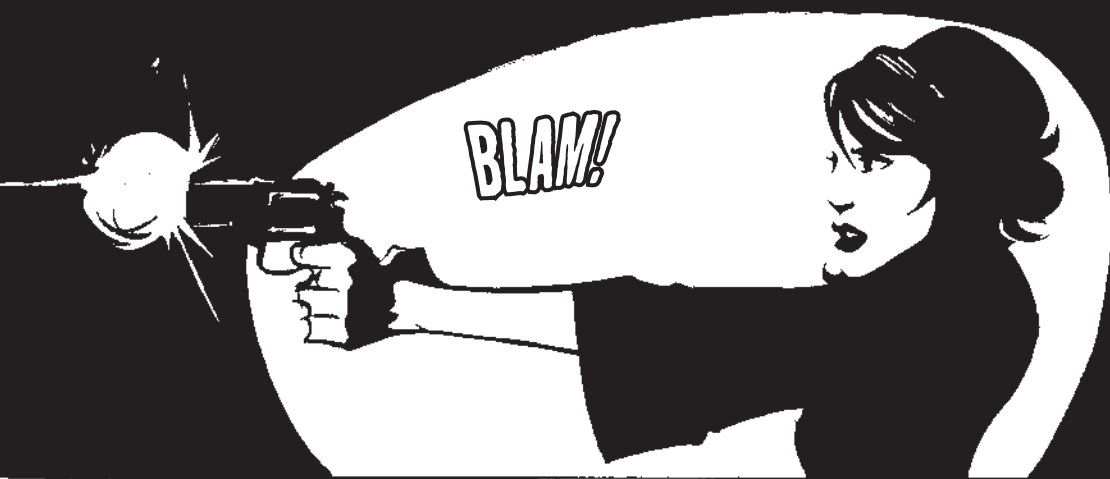
thump

MERCER?

STILL
HERE, RED.
YOU ALREADY
SHOT ME ONCE, I
WON'T LET YOU
DO IT AGAIN.

ggg!
ggg!





BLAM!

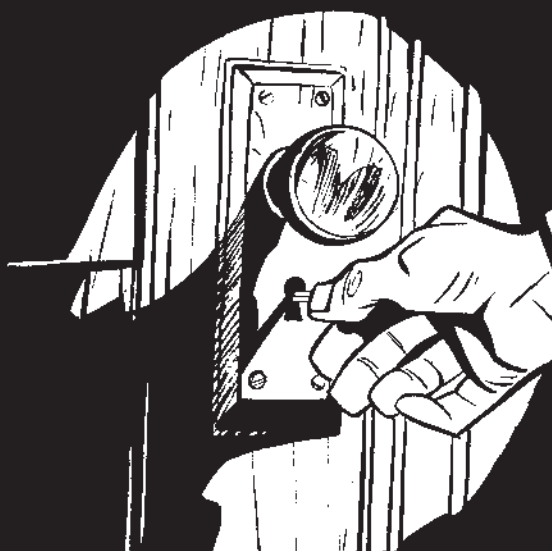


BLAM!

BLAM!

thmp

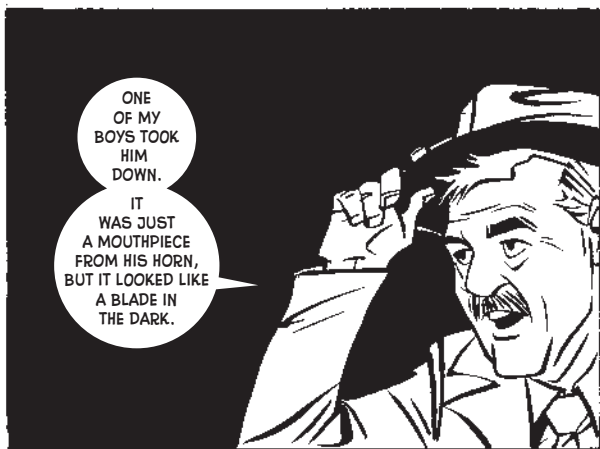


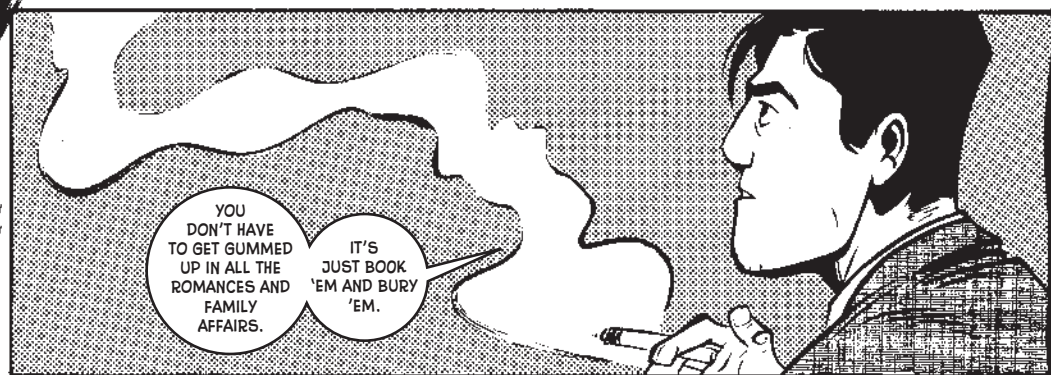








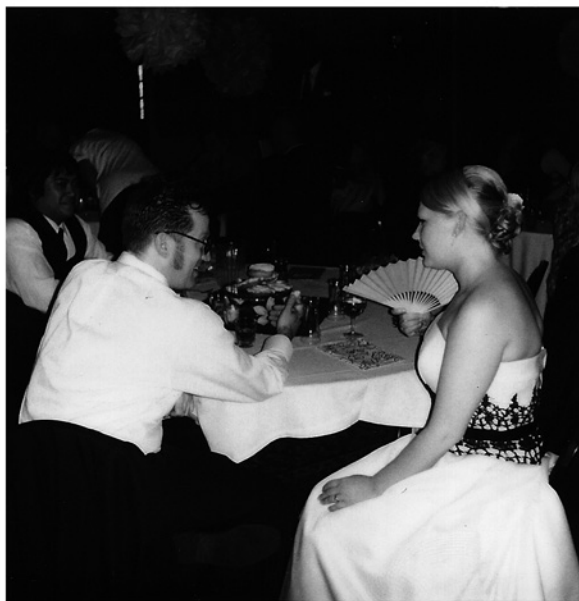




THE END

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JOËLLE JONES & JAMIE S. RICH first collaborated on the acclaimed comic book *12 Reasons Why I Love Her*, and have since shown up as a team in the pages of *Poppun*, *Portland Noir*, and *Madman Atomic Comics*. Joëlle also did the cover and interior illustrations for Jamie's novel *Have You Seen the Horizon Lately?*

Separately, they have multiple creative works between them. Joëlle has contributed to the long-running comics series *Fables* at DC/Vertigo, and she drew the Minx young adult graphic novel *Token*, written by Alisa Kwitney. Her next long-form project is called *The Starving Artist*, also from Vertigo.

Jamie has published four prose novels, including *Cut My Hair, I Was Someone Dead*, and *The Everlasting*. He wrote the comics series *Love the Way You Love*, which was illustrated by Marc Ellerby. Additionally, he has had short stories in *Four-Letter Worlds*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Food Chain*, *Put the Book Back on the Shelf*, *The Dark Horse Book of the Dead*, and *This is a Souvenir*, teaming him with artists as diverse as Andi Watson, Chynna Clugston, Guy Davis, Natalie Nourigat, and Kelley Seda.

Both Rich and Jones currently reside in separate locations in Portland, OR, U.S.A. They will next be seen on the printed page as a team working with Nicolas Hitori de on the Oni Press series *Spell Checkers*.

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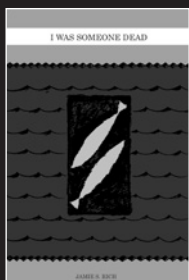
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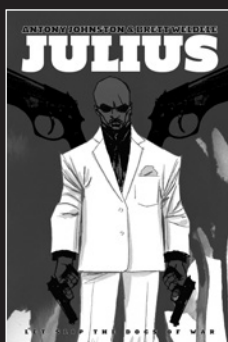
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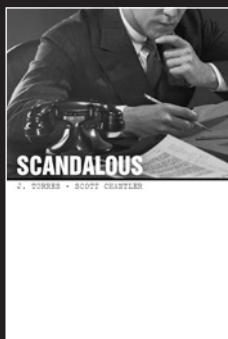
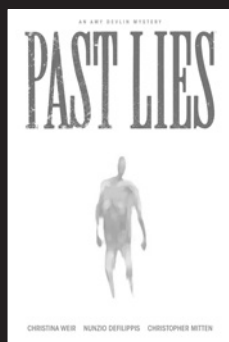
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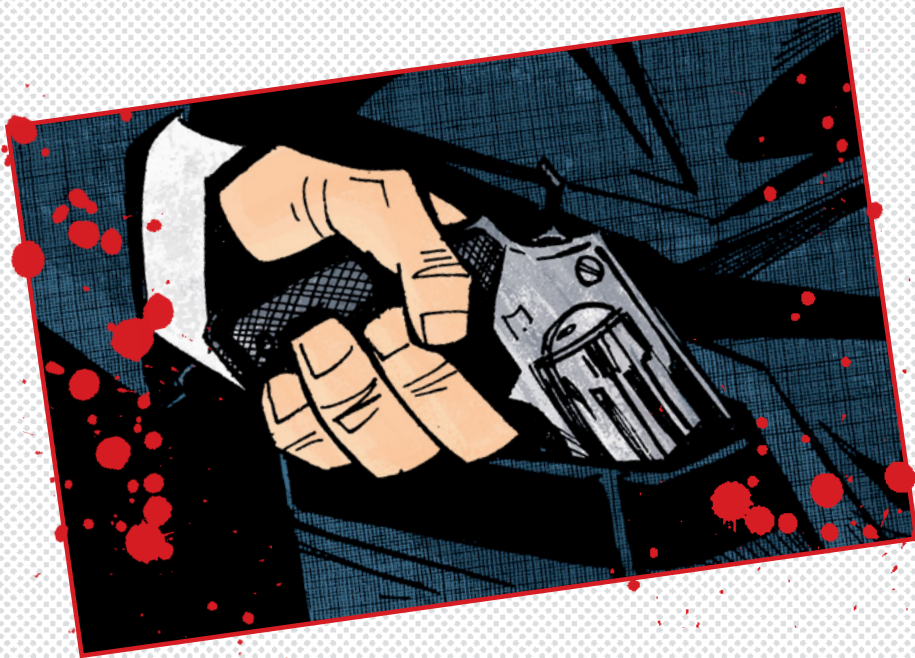


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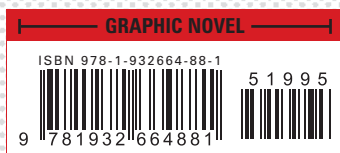
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