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TAKING EDEDEN



The Story So Far:

For those that read such things, greetings and welcome to the first evaluation printing of 'Taking Eden'. In the future, this space will recap the story as told in previous issues. In this case, the story has just begun, so I'll give you a brief history of the project.

While working at a design agency around 2003, Malcolm Johnson and I began a writing exercise to keep the creative juices flowing. We would write around a page and a half, stopping mid-sentence, then email the story to the other. We would continue the narrative where the other left off. After a time, interest waned and work on the project stopped. When going back and rereading the collected work, I found a lot of really great material had been created. I approached Malcolm to continue work on the project, but life had moved on for both of us.

While he had no further interest in the project, I went back over the 110 pages that we'd written and stream-lined the narrative. From there, I wrote the remainder of the story and began to break it out into individual comic issues, laying out the cells, dialogue and narrative. I placed an ad on the Internet and auditioned artists for the book. Niño's work stood out, he was easy to collaborate with, and put more effort into each page than my small budget deserved. Not working with a traditional script, but with only the written story and my layouts, Niño has done an amazing job of bringing our characters to life.

I try to give him a lot of leeway to truly be an artist. There have been a few cases where I have rewritten a section to work with the drawing that he's submitted, rather than micro manage his creations. Gonzalo has rounded out our team after rising to the top of a number of colorists that auditioned for the work. Again, we worked to set up a color palette early, and then I've provided few changes to his work. The digital lettering and flattening has been performed by yours truly.

This comic is truly a collaborative effort, and I hope I speak for all involved when I tell you, dear reader, that we appreciate you taking the time to view our work and hope that we have created something that both moves and entertains you. This project has been undertaken after hours and on weekends around a taxing day job. I work in video production, and hope that my talent as a visual story teller translates well to this, my first comic endeavor.

As we currently lack a publisher or distributor, I humbly ask you to spread word about this title however you can. Like us on Facebook, tweet us forward, request our title at your local comic shop and drop us a line at TakingEden.com if you have enjoyed what we've created for you so far.


While my gratitude goes out to all involved, as well as you for reading this, special thanks must go to my awesome wife Nikki and my children Makaela and Oliver for allowing some of my 'daddy time' to be spent Taking Eden.

For anyone that read this whole type block, thank you, and note that the patchwork man appears several more times in this issue than you may be aware. Happy searching!



Created by:
Jason Beckwith
Malcolm Johnson
Pencils & Inks:
Niño Harn Cajayon
Color:
Gonzalo Duarte




AN UNEXPECTED LURCH AWOKED MARNIE VIOLENTLY. IT WAS NOT THE SLEEP OF A RESTFUL NIGHT, BUT RATHER, THE ABRUPT END TO A SLEEP THAT WASN'T CHOSEN. FATIGUE HAD FORCED THIS SLEEP. SHE TRIED TO SHAKE OFF THE SHOCK OF SUDDEN CONSCIOUSNESS.



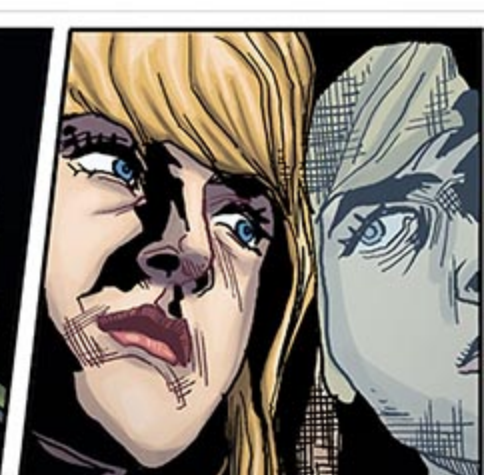
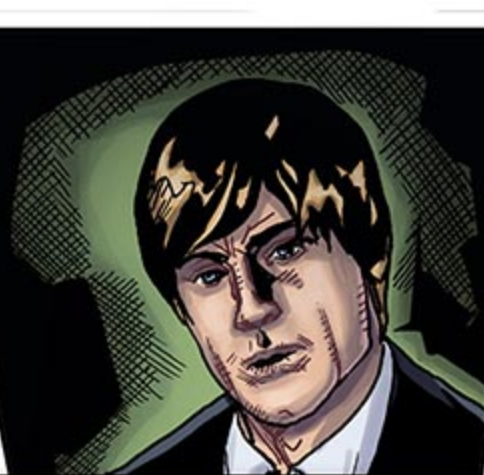
FOLKS, WE ARE HITTING A LITTLE TURBULENCE, I'M GOING TO TURN ON THE FASTEN SEAT-BELT LIGHT FOR A LITTLE WHILE, WHILE I TRY TO CLIMB ABOVE IT FOR A SMOOTHER RIDE.



SHE HAD MOVED TO THE BIG CITY TO FIND ADVENTURE. ALL OF HER LIFE, SHE'D READ MYTHOLOGY. MANY OF THE STORIES BEGIN WITH A YOUNG MAN COMING OF AGE, AND LEAVING HOME IN SEARCH OF FAME AND GLORY. SHE KNEW THAT SHE HAD TO DO THE SAME. UNFORTUNATELY, SHE WASN'T THE DAUGHTER OF A WATCHFUL GOD, AND LACKED THE PROTECTION THEY COULD PROVIDE. INSTEAD OF BEING GIFTED WITH AN ENCHANTED SWORD OR PARAFFIN WINGS, SHE WAS FORCED TO TAKE ON HER ADVENTURE WITH ONLY THE MONEY THAT SHE'D MADE WORKING AT THE 'FROSTY CREAM' LAST SUMMER.



HER FROWN TURNED INTO A SMILE AS SHE REMEMBERED HOW INCREDIBLY NAIVE SHE'D BEEN.



SKY WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR IT ALL. THE GOOD TIMES THEY SHARED, AND THE HELL-ON-EARTH THAT FOLLOWED. HER QUEST FOR EXPERIENCE DROVE HER TO HIM AGAIN AND AGAIN. HE BECAME AS MUCH OF AN ADDICTION AS THE DIVERSIONS THAT HE OFFERED.

SHE KNEW THAT SHE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCIDENT, BUT COULDN'T DECIDE IF SHE HAD ACTED OF HER OWN VOLITION, OR IF SKY HAD BEEN HER PUPPET MASTER. SHE HOPED IT WAS THE LATTER.



THE BIG CITY. ONE YEAR PREVIOUS.



NEITHER DID I.

DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE GOING TO MAKE IT.

WHATEVER.

NOT HERE PAMO... JESUS... LATER, I'LL MEET YOU AT YOUR PLACE.

I FOUND YOU A GIRL.

OH REEALLY? GHOSTLY?



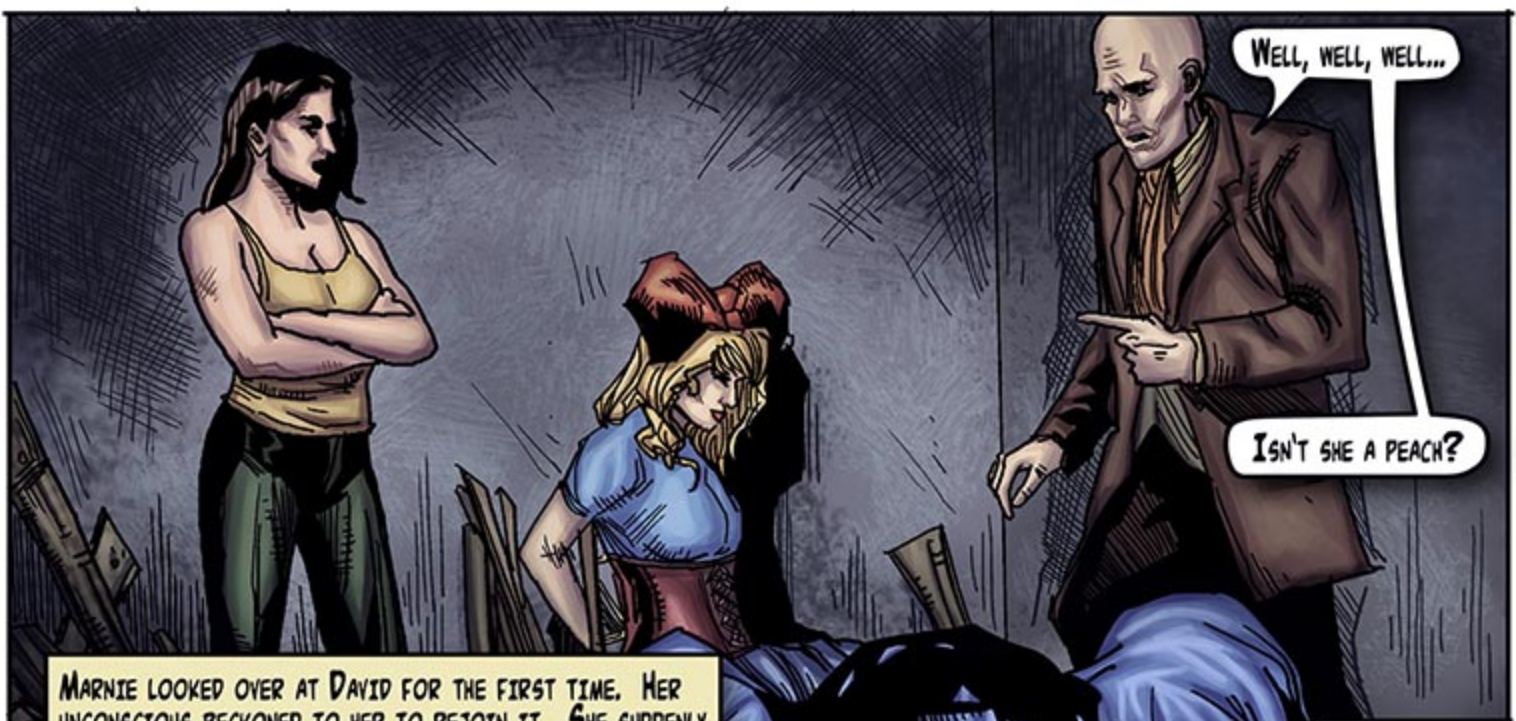




C'MON LITTLE ONE...
WAKEY, WAKEY!!!



CRYS? I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE BACK! I WAS LONELY.



WELL, WELL, WELL...

ISN'T SHE A PEACH?

MARNIE LOOKED OVER AT DAVID FOR THE FIRST TIME. HER UNCONSCIOUS BECKONED TO HER TO REJOIN IT. SHE SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT SLEEP WAS A BETTER ALTERNATIVE TO WHATEVER WAS GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT.



MARNIE!!! GOD DAMN IT! I DON'T NEED THIS SHIT!



GRETCHEN?



HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU?

MY NAME IS JASMINE NOW. YOU SCARED THE SHIT OUT OF ME. IT'S YOUR FIRST NIGHT IN THE CITY, AND I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO CALL YOUR PARENTS WITH SOME REALLY BAD NEWS. WHAT WERE YOU THINKING!?!



WHAT HAPPENED?

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?



DRESSING UP. YOU TELLING ME THAT I COULDN'T GO TO THE CLUB LOOKING LIKE ONE OF THE GIRLS FROM 'PETTICOAT JUNCTION'.



I REMEMBER SITTING IN YOUR APARTMENT. YOU DID MY MAKE-UP, AND EMBARRASSED ME A LOT.



THEN WE WENT TO THAT CLUB. THERE WAS A HUGE LINE AND I THOUGHT IT WAS SO COOL THAT THEY LET US RIGHT IN.



YOU BOUGHT ME A DRINK, AND WENT UP TO START YOUR DJ-ING SESSION.



I GOT TIPSY AND DANCED BY MYSELF.



OH, AND THEN I MET THIS GIRL AND SHE BOUGHT ME A DRINK TOO.

CRYS, WAS IT?



YEAH. CRYSTAL PAMO.



DID I RIDE ON THE BACK OF A MOTORCYCLE?

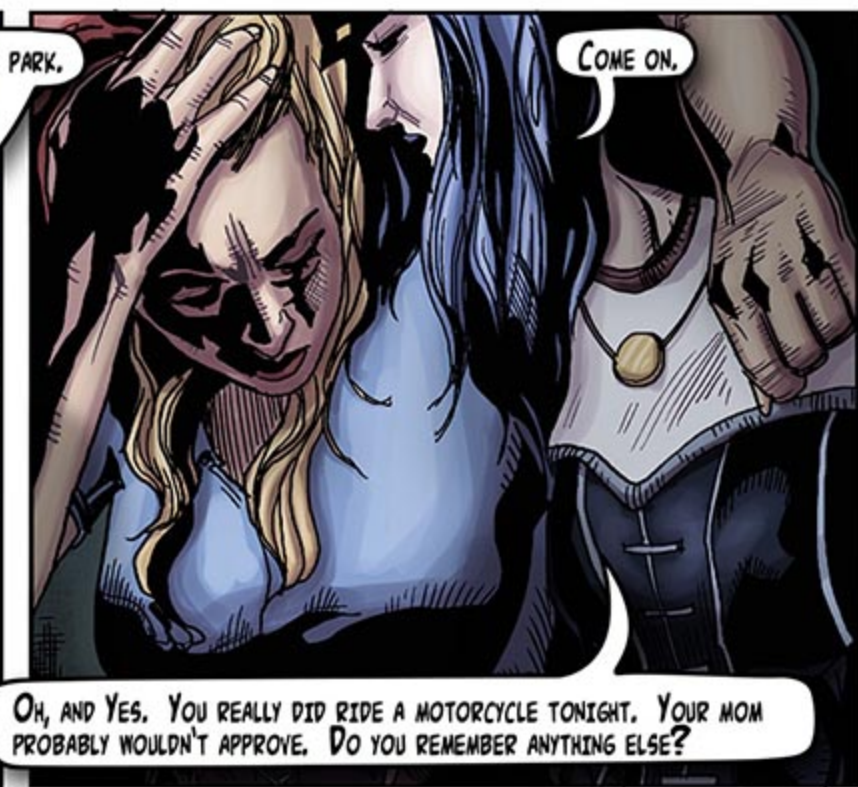


AM I STILL IN THE CITY?



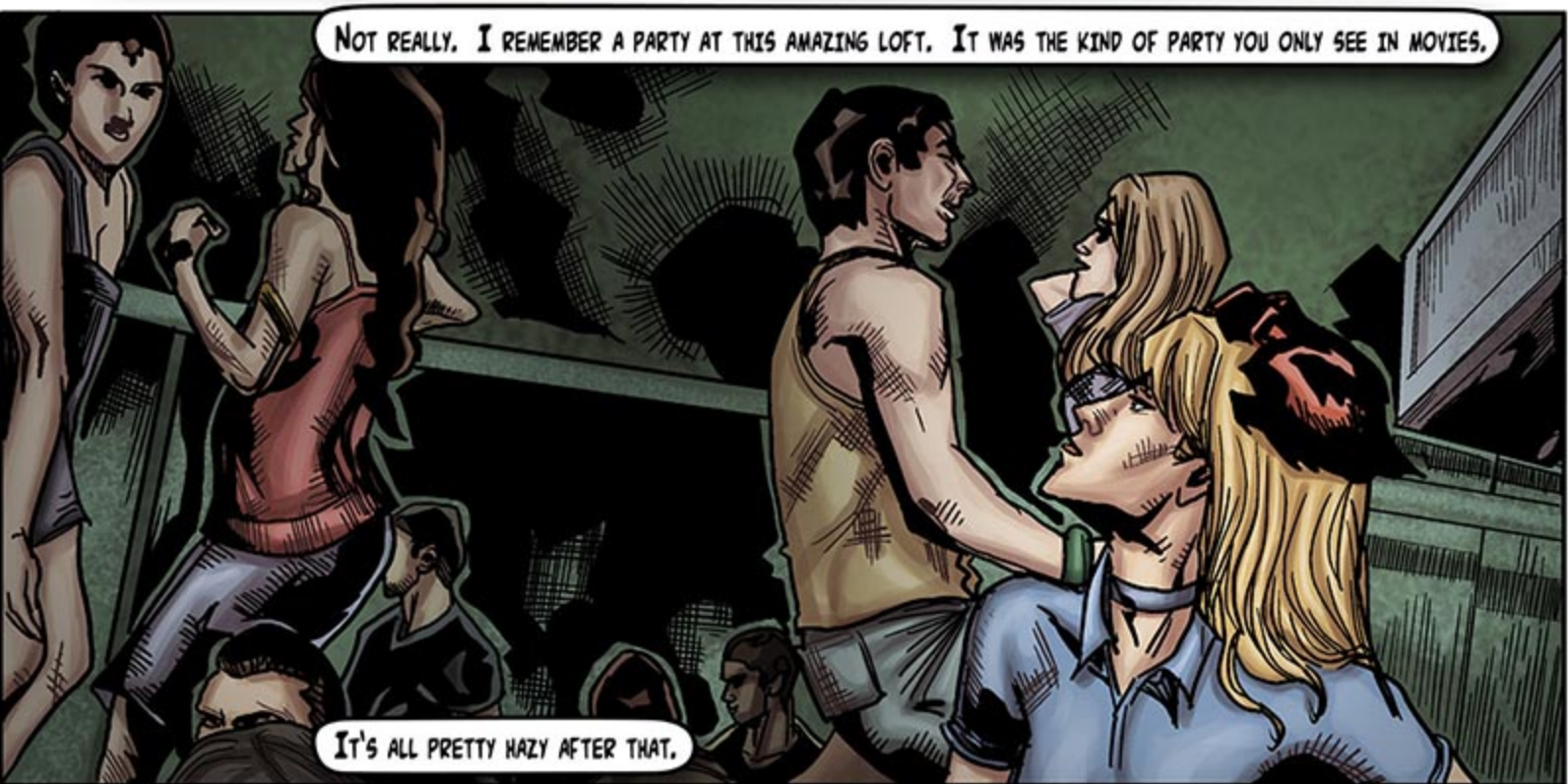
YEAH. WE'RE SMACK DAB IN THE MIDDLE OF IT. WE'RE IN THE PARK.

AND TWO YOUNG WOMEN REALLY SHOULDN'T BE IN THE PARK PAST MIDNIGHT...



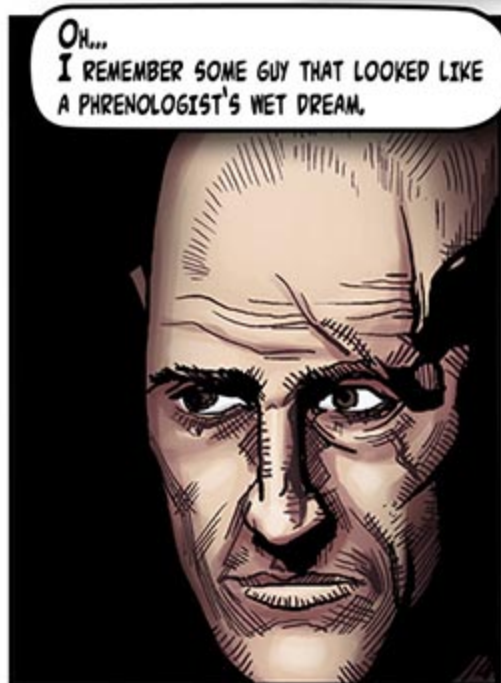
COME ON.

OH, AND YES. YOU REALLY DID RIDE A MOTORCYCLE TONIGHT. YOUR MOM PROBABLY WOULDN'T APPROVE. DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ELSE?



NOT REALLY. I REMEMBER A PARTY AT THIS AMAZING LOFT. IT WAS THE KIND OF PARTY YOU ONLY SEE IN MOVIES.

IT'S ALL PRETTY HAZY AFTER THAT.



Oh... I REMEMBER SOME GUY THAT LOOKED LIKE A PHRENOLOGIST'S WET DREAM.



WHAT'S A PHRENOLOGIST?

NEVER-MIND. GRETCH... ER... JASMINE? WHAT HAPPENED? HOW DID I GET HERE?



YOU MADE SOME REALLY SWEET NEW FRIENDS THAT SAW FIT TO DROP YOU OFF IN THE MIDDLE OF CENTRAL PARK...

TOTAL FUCK-WADS.

LET'S GET GOING.



KITTEN, YOU'RE OFF TO A SHITTY START.



LIKE WHAT?



LIKE STUFF THAT YOU HAVE NO BUSINESS BEING A PART OF. DRUGS AND WEIRD SHIT. SHIT THAT WILL COME BACK TO HAUNT YOU.

CRYS AND THAT GROUP SHE HANGS WITH ARE INTO SOME PRETTY FUCKED UP SHIT.

MARNIE STILL FELT DRUNK... DRUNK OR DRUGGED. OH GOD, HAD THEY DRUGGED HER? SHE HAD HEARD ABOUT DATE RAPE DRUGS ON TV, AND THE THOUGHT THAT SHE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SLIPPED SOME MADE HER SICK TO HER STOMACH.



SHRIEK!!!



GROUND
COFFEE SHOP

LOOK, I TOLD YOU THIS ALREADY...



YOU CAN'T GO AROUND JUST... MAKING FRIENDS WITH EVERY IDIOT ON THE STREET. THERE ARE SICKOS AND WACKOS ALL AROUND.



AND STAY THE HELL AWAY FROM CRYSTAL. SHE'S TROUBLE IN SPADES. ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD, AND FUCKIN' CRAZY.

SO... HOW DID YOU FIND ME AGAIN?



I SAW YOU EARLIER WITH CRYSTAL...



I FOLLOWED HER AND DAVID.

FOLLOWED HER FROM WHERE?



IS THAT CLOCK RIGHT? I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER BEEN UP THIS LATE.

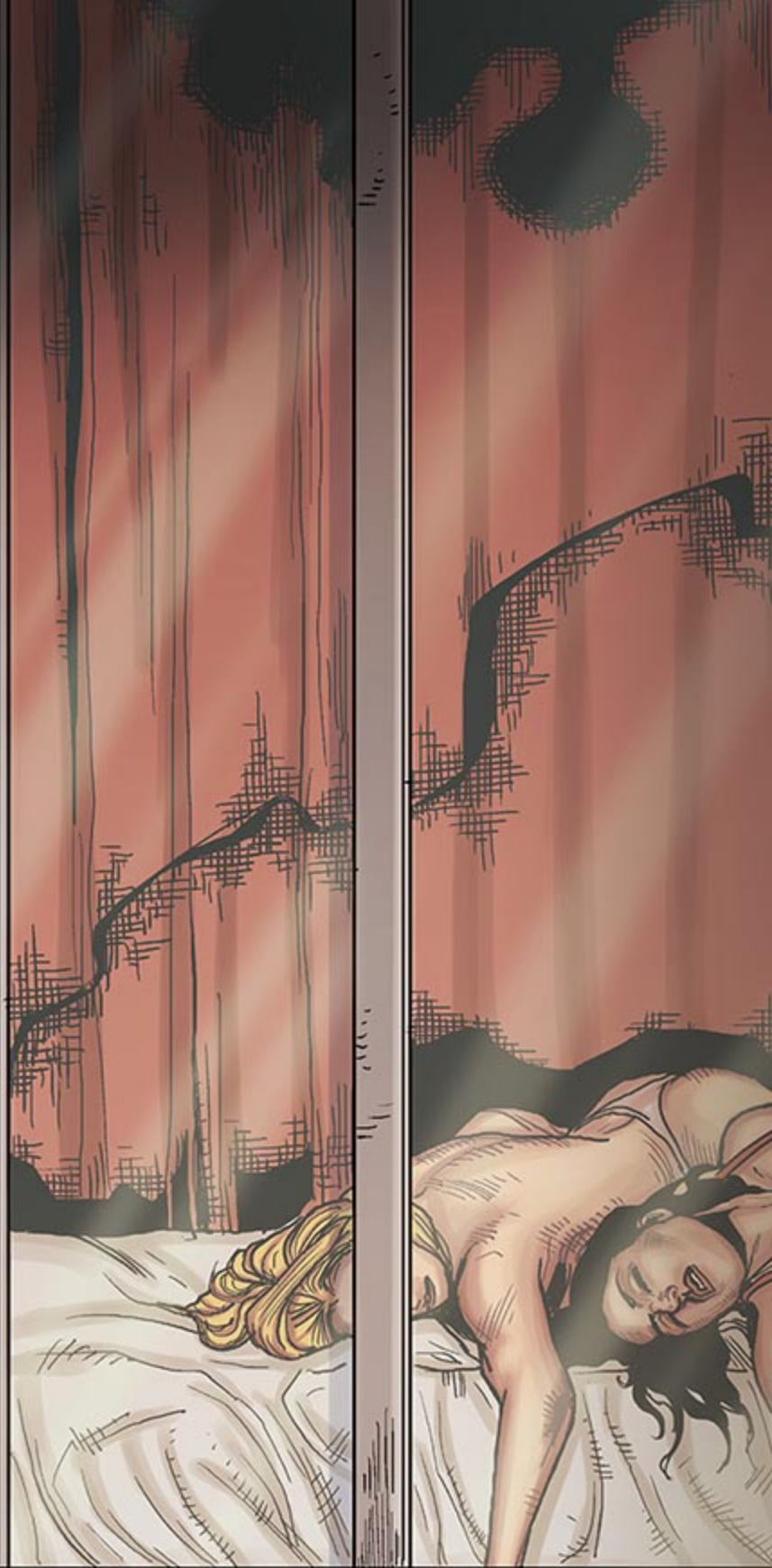
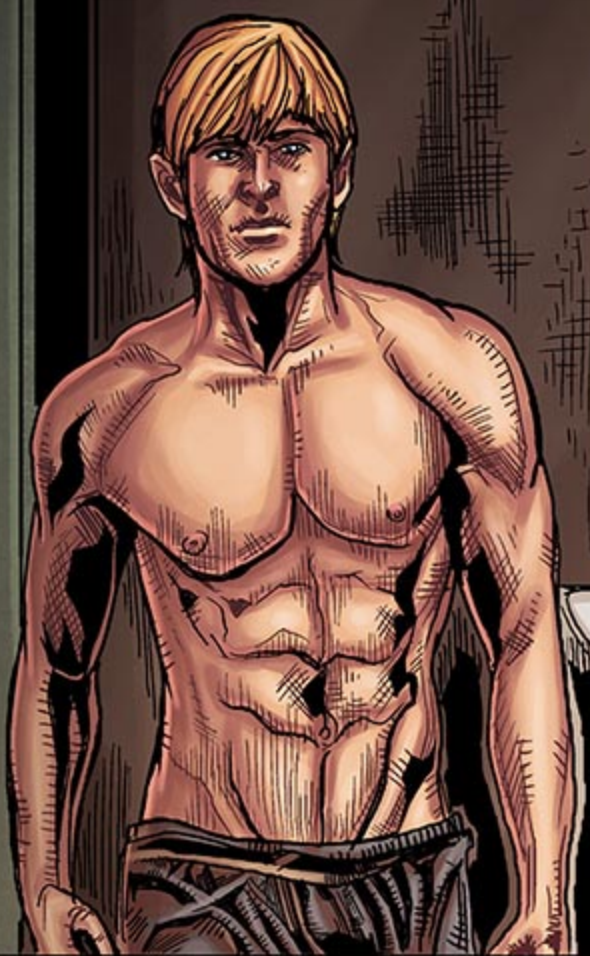
THE CLUB. WHEN SHE CAME BACK WITHOUT YOU.



SEE IF ALL THE PARTS ARE STILL IN THE RIGHT PLACES.



IT'S ALWAYS COLDEST BEFORE THE DAWN.



SKY LEANED FORWARD AND PEERED OUT OVER THE CITY, HIS CITY. HE THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT ABOUT HOW FAR HE'D COME SINCE HE'D FIRST HITCHHIKED HERE THOSE MANY YEARS AGO. HE WASN'T YET A MAN THEN. HE WAS JUST ANOTHER WIDE-EYED CHILD WITH SO MANY OPTIONS THAT HE'D HAD TROUBLE DECIDING WHICH TO FOLLOW. HE SHOOK AS A SHIVER WENT UP HIS SPINE. IT HAD ALL HAPPENED SO EFFORTLESSLY.

SKY HAD ALWAYS BEEN BOOK SMART. HE'D SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME IN THE ORPHANAGE HE'D GROWN UP IN LOST IN THE PAGES OF BOOKS. HE'D PREFERRED THAT TO THE MINDLESS DRIVEL OF CONVERSATIONS WITH EITHER HIS PEERS, OR THE PRIESTS AND NUNS OF THE HOME.



THE ORPHANAGE WAS PART OF A MONASTERY DEEP IN THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS.



ON FIELD TRIPS TO TOWN, HE WAS FASCINATED BY THE MUCH WIDER RANGE OF CONTEMPORARY MATERIAL AVAILABLE AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY.



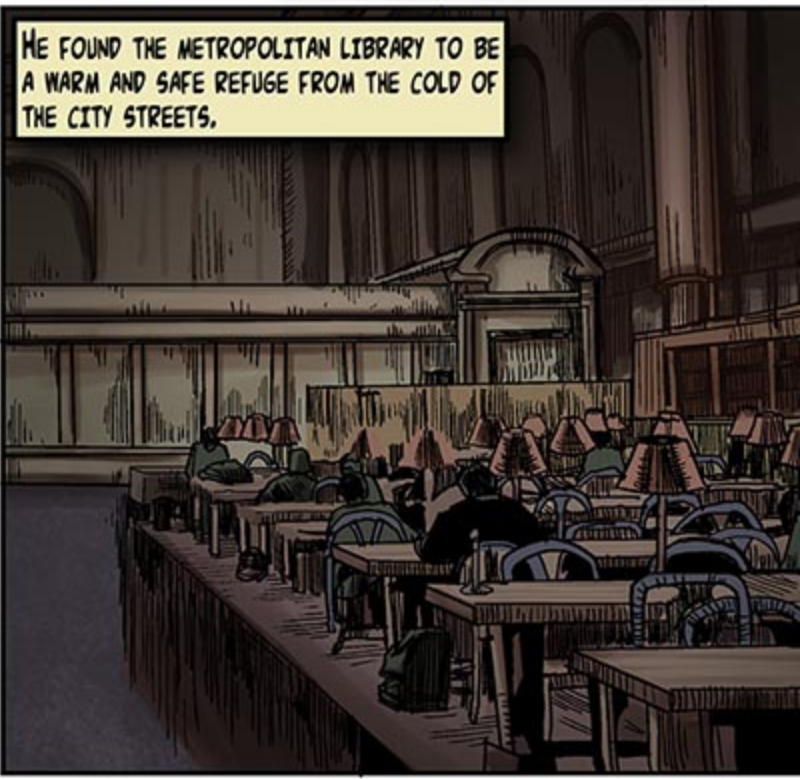
HIDDEN BETWEEN THE ENDLESS THEOLOGY TOMES, IT'S LIBRARY HELD THE CLASSICS. HE'D ENJOYED GETTING LOST IN THE WORLDS OF H.G. WELLS, JULES VERNE AND LOUIS CARROLL.



AT THE AGE OF FIFTEEN, HIS QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE LED HIM TO RUN AWAY FROM THE HOME, AND TO THE BIG CITY.



FOR MONEY, HE SOLD NEWSPAPERS ON A STREET CORNER, BUT DIDN'T ALWAYS MAKE ENOUGH TO STAY INDOORS AT NIGHT.



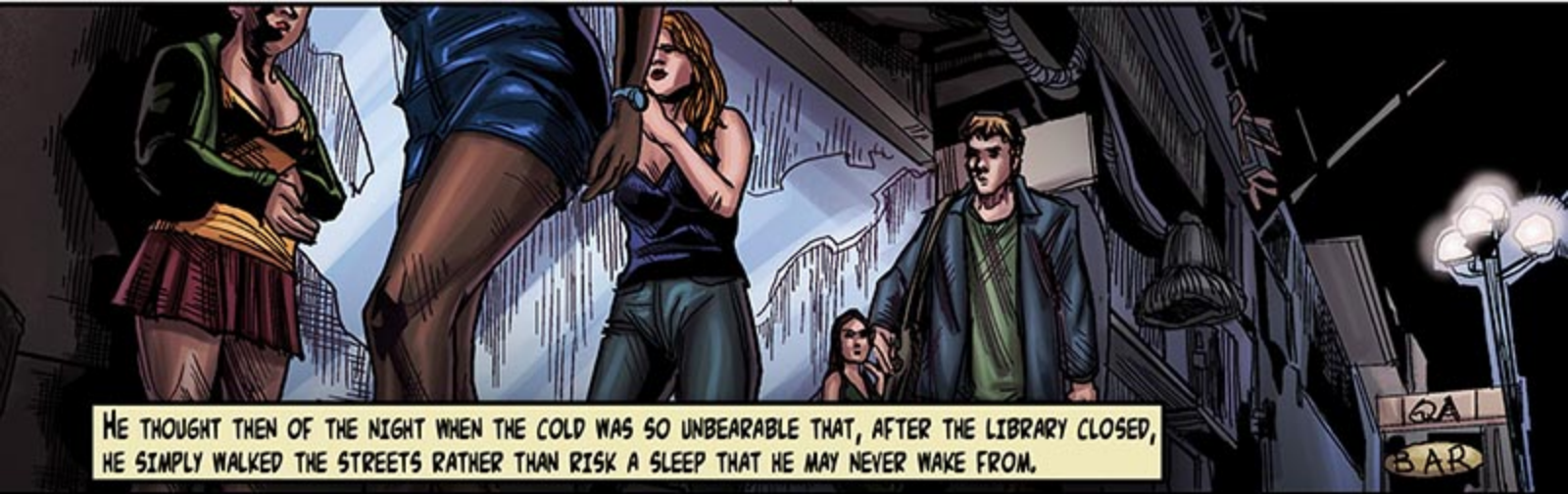
HE FOUND THE METROPOLITAN LIBRARY TO BE A WARM AND SAFE REFUGE FROM THE COLD OF THE CITY STREETS.

ONE LIFE CHANGING NIGHT, HE STUMBLED UPON THE METAPHYSICAL AND OCCULT SECTION.

Occult

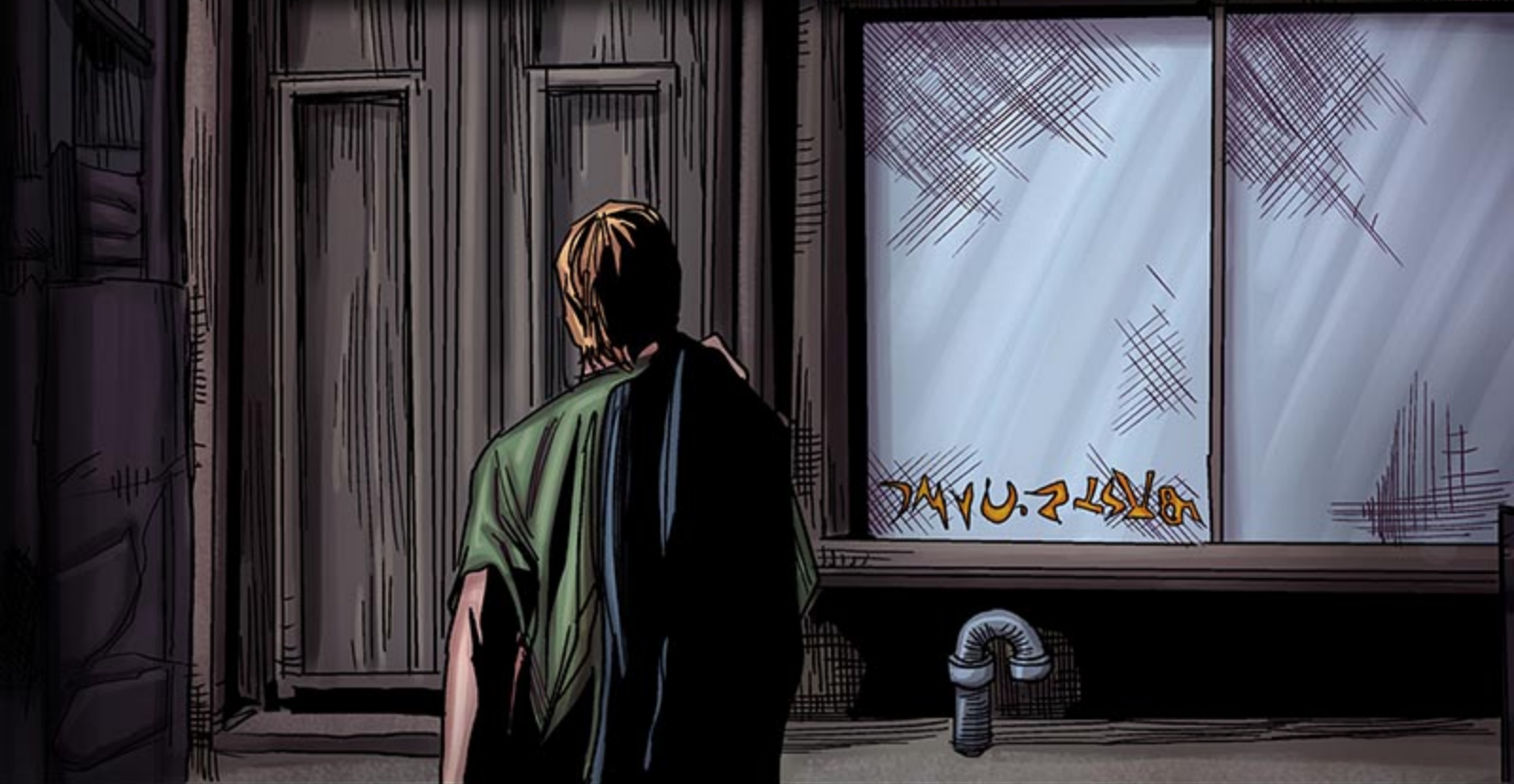
IT DIDN'T TAKE HIM LONG TO DEVOUR THE SECTION. WITHIN A MATTER OF WEEKS, HE'D READ ALL OF THE BOOKS ON ANY SIMILAR TOPIC THAT WERE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC. AS HIS FASCINATION WITH THE SUBJECT GREW, HE CAME TO REALIZE THAT MANY OF THE REFERENCES WERE DELIBERATELY VAGUE AND THAT MORE SPECIFIC LORE MUST EXIST ELSEWHERE.

THE BOOKS WOULD TOUCH UPON THE SUBJECTS OF SPELLS, TALISMANS, POTIONS AND THE LIKE. UNFORTUNATELY, NONE OF THEM WORKED. NEARLY ALL OF THEIR DESCRIPTIONS FELT SOMEHOW... INCOMPLETE.



HE THOUGHT THEN OF THE NIGHT WHEN THE COLD WAS SO UNBEARABLE THAT, AFTER THE LIBRARY CLOSED, HE SIMPLY WALKED THE STREETS RATHER THAN RISK A SLEEP THAT HE MAY NEVER WAKE FROM.

THAT WAS THE NIGHT THAT HE FOUND THE BOOKSTORE. IT CONSISTED OF A SMALL WINDOWLESS DOOR. THE ONLY CLUE THAT IT WAS A SHOP WAS THE GOLD LEAFED SYMBOLS THAT APPEARED ON THE OPAQUE, PAINTED WINDOW. HE INSTANTLY RECOGNIZED THE ANCIENT LANGUAGE FROM HIS METAPHYSICAL STUDIES.



THE OWNER TOOK A SHINE TO YOUNG SKY. HE BEGAN TO SPEND AS MUCH TIME THERE AS POSSIBLE.



HOURS, AND SOMETIMES DAYS WOULD GO BY BEFORE AN ACTUAL CUSTOMER WOULD NEED HELP. WITH ANY DOWN-TIME HE HAD, AND THERE WAS MUCH, HE READ ONE BOOK AFTER ANOTHER.



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE MR. HINTON GAVE HIM A JOB, GIVEN HIS FAMILIARITY WITH THE DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM.





IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE HE FOUND SUCCESS WITH A SPELL. WITH TEENAGE HORMONES RACING, AND A STOLEN HAIR CLIP, HE TRIED A LOVE SPELL ON CYNDI, A WAITRESS FROM A DINER THAT HE FREQUENTED.

IT WORKED.

IT WORKED TOO WELL. HE WAS NEITHER OLD ENOUGH, NOR MATURE ENOUGH TO HANDLE A RELATIONSHIP THAT LASTED BEYOND A WEEK.

HE SOON FOUND HIMSELF OBJECTIFYING HIS NEW AND WILLING TOY IN AN ENTIRELY UNHEALTHY MANNER.

WHEN HE TIRED OF PHYSICAL EXPERIMENTATION ON CYNDI, HE SWITCHED TO METAPHYSICAL EXPERIMENTATION. CYNDI HAD COUNTLESS SPELLS PERFORMED ON HER, AND SKY LEARNED FROM HIS SUCCESSES AND FAILURES.

AS IS THE CASE WITH MANY SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS, THE BREAK-THROUGH THAT HE MADE IN METAPHYSICS WAS ACCIDENTAL.



HAVING FAILED NUMEROUS TIMES IN BREAKING THE LOVE SPELL, SKY HAD DECIDED TO DISPOSE OF CYNDI BEFORE ANYONE, NAMELY MR. HINTON, CAUGHT ON TO HIS GROSS MISUSE OF POWER. NOT ONE TO WASTE A CHANCE AT A SPELL INVOLVING HUMAN SACRIFICE, HE CHOSE A SPELL TO EXTRACT HER LIFE FORCE. HE WASN'T SURE WHAT HE'D DO WITH IT, BUT THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD COME IN HANDY, FOR FUTURE SORCERY.



THE RITUAL, HOWEVER, HAD BEEN COMPLEX. HE DIDN'T PERFORM IT CORRECTLY AND ENDED UP DRAINING A PORTION OF HIS OWN LIFE FORCE. CYNDI LIVED THROUGH THE PROCESS AS WELL. HE DID BENEFIT THOUGH. THE BOTCHED ATTEMPT HAD BROKEN THE LOVE SPELL...

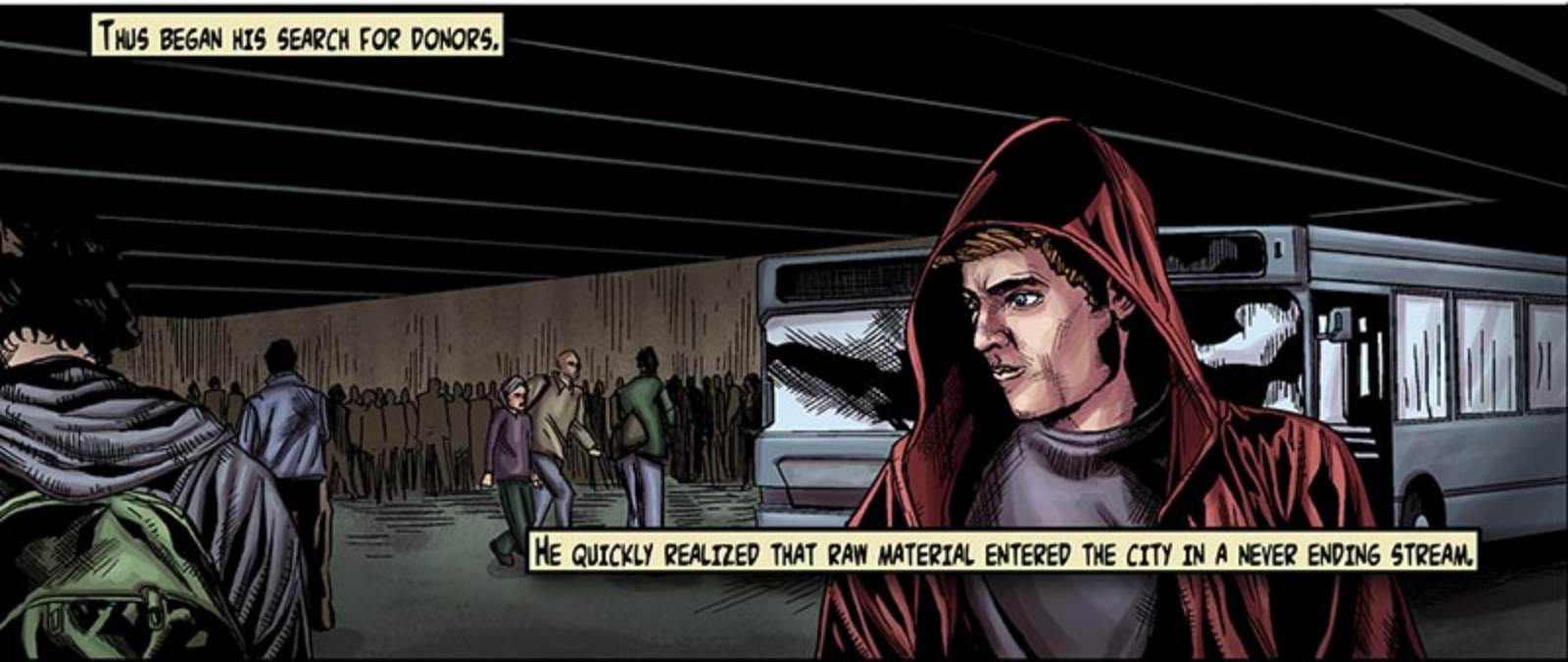
AND HAD THE UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECT OF FILLING THE CEREMONIAL CHALICE THAT WAS MEANT FOR HER LIFE ESSENCE WITH WHAT LITTLE INNOCENCE SHE HAD LEFT.

HAVING RECENTLY DISCOVERED DRUGS IN ADDITION TO THE FAIRER SEX, SKY WORKED OUT A PROCESS TO DISTILL THE GLOWING LIQUID OF CYNDI'S INNOCENCE INTO A VERY POTENT POWDER.



THE BLISS OF THE NEW DRUG HE'D DISCOVERED WAS UNMATCHED BY ANY CONVENTIONAL INTOXICANT. TO HIS SURPRISE, HE FOUND THE PROCESS WAS A SIMPLE ONE TO REPLICATE.

THIS BEGAN HIS SEARCH FOR DONORS.



HE QUICKLY REALIZED THAT RAW MATERIAL ENTERED THE CITY IN A NEVER ENDING STREAM.

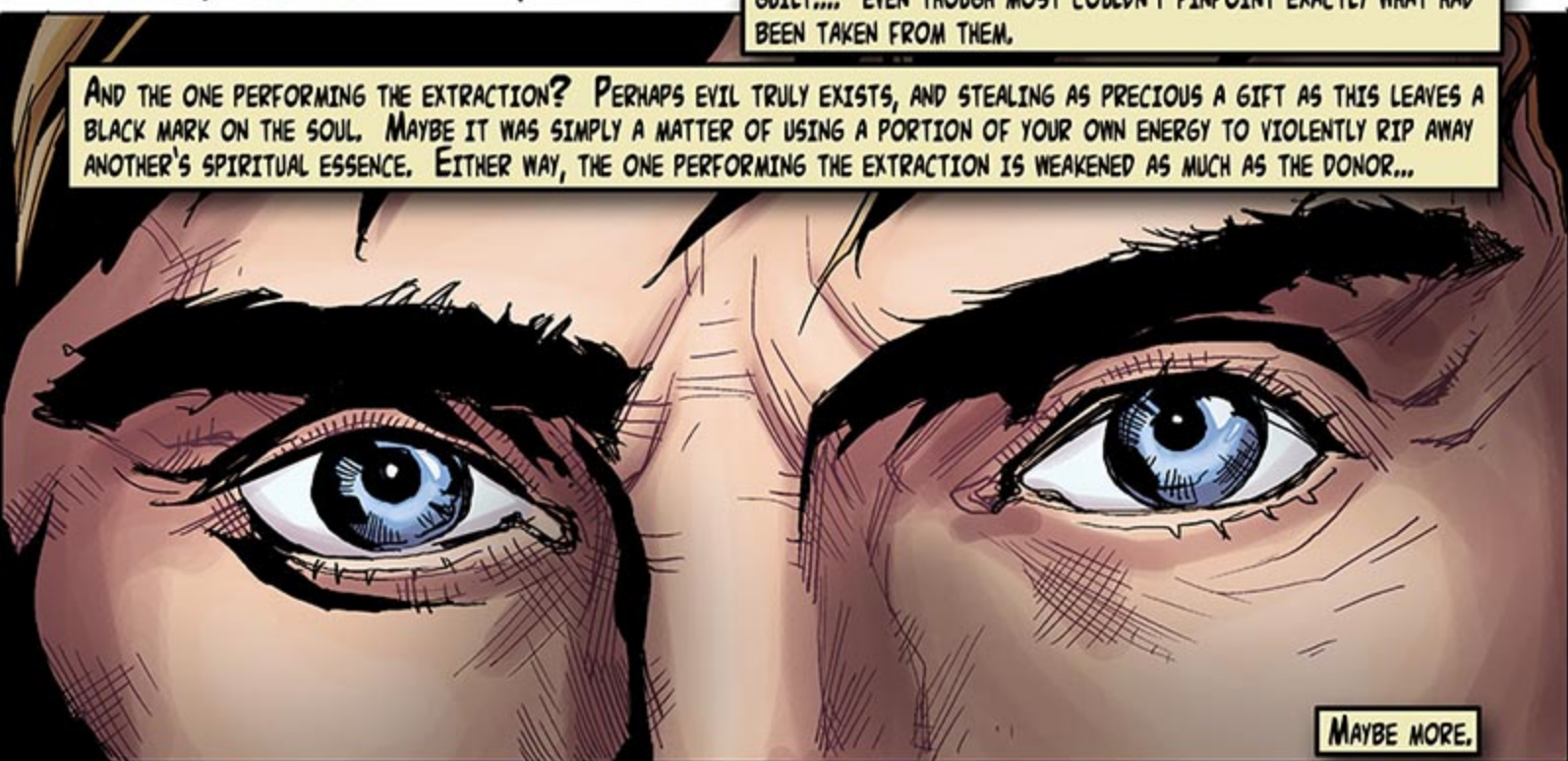


THE PROCESS WASN'T WITHOUT SIDE-EFFECTS FOR BOTH THE DONOR AND THE ONE PERFORMING 'THE EXTRACTION', AS HE LIKED TO CALL IT.



THE PROCESS DID NOT STRIP ALL THE INNOCENCE FROM THE VICTIM, BUT IT CERTAINLY LEFT THEM WITH A FEELING OF LOSS, REGRET AND GUILT.... EVEN THOUGH MOST COULDN'T PINPOINT EXACTLY WHAT HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM THEM.

AND THE ONE PERFORMING THE EXTRACTION? PERHAPS EVIL TRULY EXISTS, AND STEALING AS PRECIOUS A GIFT AS THIS LEAVES A BLACK MARK ON THE SOUL. MAYBE IT WAS SIMPLY A MATTER OF USING A PORTION OF YOUR OWN ENERGY TO VIOLENTLY RIP AWAY ANOTHER'S SPIRITUAL ESSENCE. EITHER WAY, THE ONE PERFORMING THE EXTRACTION IS WEAKENED AS MUCH AS THE DONOR...



MAYBE MORE.

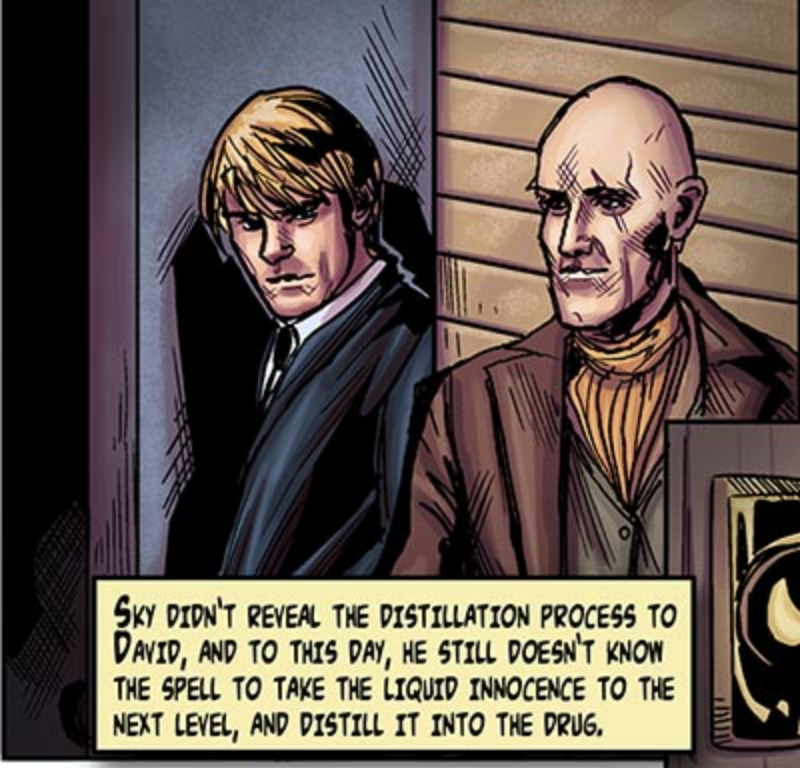
THAT'S WHERE DAVID CAME IN. HE'D COME INTO THE BOOK STORE AND HAD BEEN EASY TO HOOK ON THE NEW DRUG.



FIRST SKY GOT HIM ADDICTED TO IT.

THEN HE GOT HIM TO PERFORM THE EXTRACTIONS FOR HIM.





THE DRUG MADE DAVID HIS VIRTUAL SLAVE. HE WAS GIVEN A PERCENTAGE OF THE FINISHED PRODUCT IN RETURN FOR HIS SERVITUDE.

SKY DIDN'T REVEAL THE DISTILLATION PROCESS TO DAVID, AND TO THIS DAY, HE STILL DOESN'T KNOW THE SPELL TO TAKE THE LIQUID INNOCENCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL, AND DISTILL IT INTO THE DRUG.



OTHERS WERE EASY TO HOOK AS WELL. AT FIRST, SKY KEPT THE NEW DRUG A RELATIVE SECRET, BUT IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR WORD OF IT TO CIRCULATE AROUND THE PSEUDO-ARISTOCRACY OF THE CITY.



HE BOUGHT HIS FIRST NIGHT CLUB BEFORE HE COULD LEGALLY BUY A DRINK IN IT.

SKY FOUND HIMSELF COMMANDING HUGE SUMS OF MONEY IN NO TIME AT ALL.



DISTRIBUTING HIS PRODUCT SOLELY AT HIS CLUBS KEPT REPEAT BUSINESS HIGH.



HE ALSO FOUND THAT MANY OF THE CLUB'S FIRST TIME VISITORS COULD HELP FEED THE ADDICTIONS OF THE REGULARS.



SKY LOOKED DOWN AT THE CITY STREETS. THE STREET LAMPS WERE BEGINNING TO DIM AS THE CITY BEGAN TO AWAKEN WITH THE DAWN.



CRYS WAS ALWAYS ON TIME.

SHE WOULD BE DELIVERING THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S EXTRACTION...



THAT HE WOULD DISTILL INTO THE DRUG THAT HE CALLED, 'EDEN'.

TO BE CONTINUED...



PROJECT ARBITER

BURNING IDEAS PRESENTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH R&R STUDIOS AND NEVER STATIC PICTURES A FILM BY MICHAEL CHANCE LEX CASSAR "PROJECT ARBITER" TIM COYNE WILLIAM CHARLTON JAKE LYALL
ANDREW DILLON ARTEM MISHIN TERRA FLOWERS ZACH GOSSETT AND ZAK STUCCHI MUSIC BY RYAN LEACH EDITED BY NELSON NUNEZ PRODUCTION DESIGNER TRACI HAYS
VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR JESSE BOOTS 3D VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR JAMES MCCARTHY CHARACTER DESIGN BY ROBERT SIMONS COSTUME DESIGNER JENNIFER FILO SUIT FABRICATOR BLUE REALM STUDIOS CASTING BY SHARI GREICAR
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MICHAEL CHANCE VICKI DE MEY JASON BECKWITH KEVIN & BETTY CHANCE KIMBERLY LANE BARBARA CARBONE
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JASON BECKWITH PRODUCED BY VICKI DE MEY WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MICHAEL CHANCE



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PICTURES


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ALL OF THESE PEOPLE ARE:



TAKING
EDEN

<http://www.TakingEden.com>



Marnie is a naive small town girl lost in the big city club scene. She worked two summers at the local Frosty Cream to save enough money to move to the big city and follow her acting dreams. Staying with her cousin Jasmine, a gothic DJ, she becomes an unwitting part of a unique drug culture. Sky, the owner of multiple night clubs, along with his minions, David and Crystal, will stop at nothing to keep a steady stream of product moving to his high profile clientele. When Marnie crosses paths with Sky, will she be able to resist his charm and the excitement of a lifestyle she never imagined?



Will she even want to?

