

MATT WAGNER • MICHAEL Wm. KALUTA

VERTIGO

# MADAME XANADU

EXODUS  
NOIR  
PART 1 OF 5



#11 Jul 09

suggested for  
mature readers  
vertigocomics.com



LIKE HER ANCIENT SISTER,  
ROME, NEW YORK IN 1940  
IS THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.

ALL ROADS LEAD  
TO MANHATTAN.

PATHWAYS OF HOPE.

HERE  
Y'GO, MISS...  
D' ESSEX  
HOUSE.  
THAT'LL BE  
35¢.

THANK  
YOU,  
DRIVER.

AND DESPAIR.

EVENIN',  
MISS  
SHEPHERD.

HELLO,  
TOMMY. HAS  
MY FATHER BEEN  
OUT TODAY? I  
WASN'T ABLE TO  
REACH HIM BY  
PHONE...

NOW  
THAT YOU  
MENTION IT...  
I AIN'T SEEN  
HIM FOR  
SEVERAL  
DAYS.

'COURSE,  
MY SHIFT  
ONLY  
STARTS  
AT FIVE...

THAT'S  
STRANGE...  
THANK YOU,  
TOMMY.

DADDY?  
DADDY?  
ARE YOU  
HERE?

DEAR LORD,  
WHAT IS THAT  
AWFUL ODOR?!  
SMELLS LIKE...  
LIKE SOMEONE'S  
BURNED THEIR  
DINNER...





IF FOR SOME, THE AMERICAN SHORES  
HOLD THE PROMISE OF RENEWAL.

AND REDEMPTION.

FOR OTHERS, THE STIGMAS OF THE  
PAST...ARE ALL TOO INESCAPABLE.



"IT'S BEEN THREE MONTHS  
SINCE MY FATHER'S DEATH.

"I-I'M AFRAID I JUST...I DON'T  
KNOW WHERE ELSE TO TURN!"

HIS  
WAS A MOST  
UNNATURAL  
PASSING. HE'D BEEN  
ACTING STRANGE  
OF LATE...  
NERVOUS AND  
RECLUSIVE.

THE  
POLICE  
HAVE BEEN  
USELESS, CLAIMING  
THERE'S SIMPLY  
NO EVIDENCE  
OF WRONG-  
DOING.

HOW  
PREPOSTEROUS!

MY  
FATHER  
WAS BURNED  
ALIVE! IN HIS  
OWN HOME!

AND I'M  
SUPPOSED  
TO BELIEVE  
THAT IT WAS  
"SPONTANEOUS  
HUMAN  
COMBUSTION."

HA!

THE SMALL  
FORTUNE I  
INHERITED HAS  
BROUGHT  
ME LITTLE  
SOLACE.

I'VE HIRED  
PRIVATE  
INVESTIGATORS...

...BUT EVEN  
THEY HAVE  
TURNED UP  
LITTLE  
EXPLANATION.

FINALLY,  
A FRIEND  
RECOMMENDED  
THAT I ATTEMPT  
A MORE...  
EXTRAORDINARY  
INQUIRY.



A woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a long, flowing red dress, is seated in a room with a purple and gold color scheme. She is holding a glowing orb in her right hand and has her left hand near her face. The room is filled with various mystical objects, including a large, ornate lamp, a snake, and a large, ornate vase. The background features a large, ornate lamp with a green and gold patterned shade. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and magical.

I UNDERSTAND.  
I'LL HELP  
YOU IN ANY  
WAY THAT  
I CAN.

IT'S BEEN NEARLY FOUR  
MONTHS SINCE I OPENED  
MY DOORS TO THE PUBLIC.

MY SERVICES BEAR NO  
OPEN ADVERTISEMENT.

WORD OF MOUTH, WHISPERED  
RUMORS...ALL ECHO THE  
SAME WORDS FOR THOSE  
WHO SEEK A SENSE OF HOPE.

"GO DOWNTOWN...  
TO THE VILLAGE."

"ENTER FREELY  
AND BE UNAFRAID."

# EXODUS NOIR

• PART ONE •

# MY FATHER'S KEEPER

MATT WAGNER	MICHAEL W.M. KALUTA	DAVE STEWART	JARED K. FLETCHER	BRANDON MONTCLARE	BOB SCHRECK	KALUTA & STEWART
WRITER	ARTIST	COLORS	LETTERS	ASST. EDITOR	EDITOR	COVER









FROM THE BEGINNING, I SENSE  
SOMETHING HORRIBLY AMISS.



EACH ORBITING CARD TURNS UP  
INVERTED--A TERRIBLE SIGN.

AT THE CENTER, ONLY THE  
WHEEL STANDS TRUE, A STRONG  
INDICATOR OF RESOLUTION...

...AND RETRIBUTION.



WH-WHAT  
IS IT?  
WHAT DO  
YOU SEE?



I'M AFRAID... THE  
CARDS REVEAL THAT  
THERE WAS, INDEED,  
MORE TO YOUR  
FATHER'S DEATH THAN  
MEETS THE EYE.  
IS IT POSSIBLE  
TO VISIT HIS  
HOME?

YES, I'VE...  
RETAINED  
HIS SUITE.



THE HOTEL CLAIMED  
THEY WOULDN'T BE  
ABLE TO RE-LET  
THE ROOMS AND  
INSISTED THAT I  
MEET THE REMAINING  
TERMS OF HIS  
LEASE.

EXCELLENT.  
TOMORROW  
AT, SAY...  
2:00?

VERY  
WELL.





ALTHOUGH SHE WAS VERY FORTHCOMING DURING OUR CONSULTATION...

...I SPARED CATHERINE THE TRUE DEPTHS OF MY SUSPICIONS. SHE'S FAR TOO FRAGILE TO ACCEPT THE DARK FORCES I SENSE IN HER FATHER'S MURDER.

MURDER IT WAS.

BESIDES...NO CHILD CAN EVER KNOW THEIR PARENT TOO INTIMATELY.

AFTER SHE LEAVES, I LOOK DEEPER INTO HER FATHER'S PRIVATE AFFAIRS.

AS MY CRYSTAL REVEALS THE FINAL DAYS OF COLIN SHEPHERD.



PAIN.

AND FEAR.

OPPRESSIVE,  
BLISTERING HEAT.

AND THE RAUCOUS  
BARKING OF DOGS.

COLIN SHEPHERD SPENT  
HIS LAST HOURS BLINDED  
BY PANIC AND CHOKED BY  
A LONG-STANDING DREAD.

HIS END, WHEN IT CAME,  
WAS NOT...UNEXPECTED.

HIS LAST WILL, FRANTICALLY  
PENNING MERE HOURS  
BEFORE HIS DEATH.

HIS WATCH, A FAMILY  
HEIRLOOM, CRACKED FROM  
THE HEAT THAT CONSUMED  
HIS TINDER FLESH.

SILENT TESTIMONY TO  
THE SPECIFIC MOMENT  
OF HIS DEMISE.

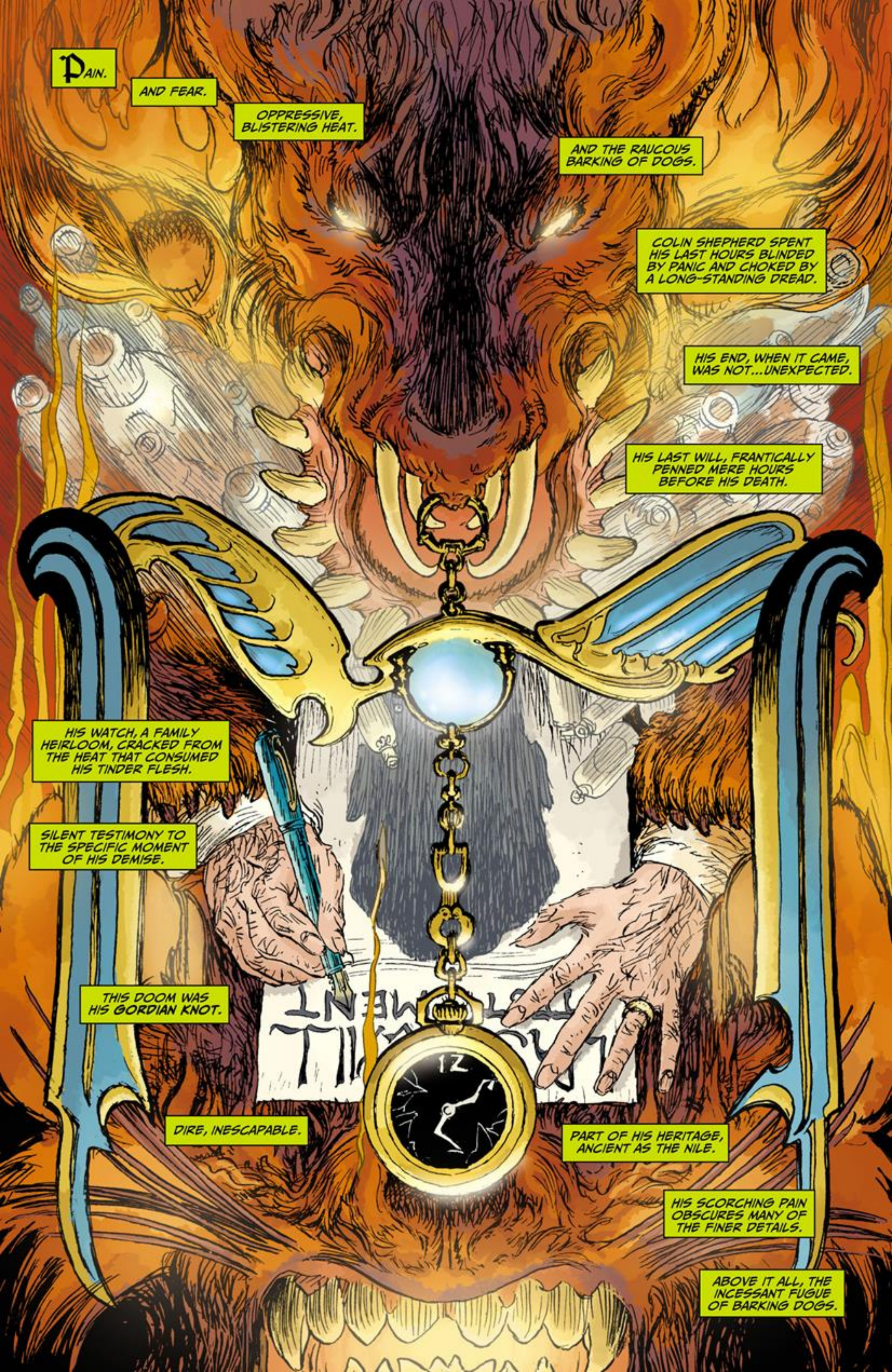
THIS DOOM WAS  
HIS GORDIAN KNOT.

DIRE, INESCAPABLE.

PART OF HIS HERITAGE,  
ANCIENT AS THE NILE.

HIS SCORCHING PAIN  
OBSCURES MANY OF  
THE FINER DETAILS.

ABOVE IT ALL, THE  
INCESSANT FUGUE  
OF BARKING DOGS.







PLEASE, COME IN.

IS EVERYTHING... AS YOUR FATHER LEFT IT?

YES. ASIDE FROM A FEW MEMENTOS AND... THE MESS.

PLEASE, FEEL FREE TO EXAMINE ANYTHING YOU LIKE. YOU'LL PARDON ME IF I DON'T... WELL, THIS SUITE IS STILL FULL OF PAINFUL MEMORIES.

OF COURSE. THANK YOU, CATHERINE. I WON'T BE LONG.

GROUGE MARKS ON THE BEDROOM DOOR.

SOMETHING THE POLICE WOULD HAVE ASCRIBED TO A FRANTIC PET.



HIS ROOM IS LITTERED WITH EMPTY BOTTLES OF EVERY KIND.

A FETID ODOR STILL LINGERS...INDELIBLE.

UNFORGETTABLE.



A MEMORY FROM CENTURIES PAST...



...THE ACRID STENCH OF BURNING HUMAN FLESH.



1493

EN  
NOMENI  
PADRE,  
ET FILI, ET  
SPIRITUS  
SANCTI!

AS  
PRESCRIBED  
BY THIS MOST  
HOLY AUTO DE FÉ,  
THE FOUL SIN OF  
HERESY STANDS  
EXPOSED BEFORE  
THE UNBENDING  
WRATH OF  
GOD!

AS GRAND  
INQUISITOR,  
I--TOMAS DE  
TORQUEMADA--  
AM CHARGED WITH  
DEFENSE OF THE  
SPANISH REALM,  
OF BOTH ITS  
FAITH AND ITS  
PURITY!

THESE  
APOSTATES  
STAND ACCUSED,  
TRIED AND  
CONVICTED OF  
CRIMES AGAINST  
THE HOLY  
CHURCH!

IN  
DEFIANCE  
OF THE ALHAMBRA  
DECREE, THEY  
HAVE DEFILED  
THEIR CONVERSION  
TO THE TRUE  
FAITH!

AND  
SECRETLY  
CLUNG TO THE  
GODFORSKEN  
RITUALS OF THEIR  
HEBREW  
HERITAGE!







ACKNOWLEDGE  
YOUR CRIMES  
BEFORE GOD AND  
THIS COUNCIL! ARE  
YOU *CONVERSOS*---  
BETRAYERS OF THE  
ALMIGHTY CHRIST,  
DENIERS OF  
HIS SWEET  
SALVATION?!

S-SÍ...YO  
CONFESO...



THE LAWS OF  
OUR ROYAL CHARGE  
DEMAND THAT ALL  
OF THE ACCUSED  
ADMIT THEIR SINS!  
YOU THERE...GOD  
AWAITS YOUR  
CONFESSION.

GUARDSMAN...  
REVIVE THE  
OTHER  
PRISONER'S  
ATTENTION.



SPEAK UP  
WRETCH!



ANH---  
NNPH...  
TCHP...  
PPHF---



¿F-TOOO?



MAY GOD  
HAVE MERCY  
ON YOUR  
UNCLEANS  
SOUL.



MARISOL?  
WHO ARE  
THOSE  
MEN?

THEY  
ARE HERETICS,  
PRISONERS OF LA  
INQUISICION. MOST  
LIKELY JEWS WHO  
HAD CONVERTED BUT  
WERE FOUND TO  
RETAIN THEIR OLD  
BELIEFS.

FOR A TIME, I FOUND  
REFUGE IN SPAIN.

GLORIOUS, SUN-  
DRENCHED SPAIN.







AND THE SPANISH CROWN ACTUALLY SANCTIONS THIS SAVAGERY! I WOULD--

WE WOULD DO WELL NOT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO OURSELVES, NOVIA. LOOK, I'VE GOT TO TAKE THESE VESTMENTS TO THE RECTORY...



YES... Y-YOU'RE RIGHT.

YOU GATHER THE REST OF YOUR SPECIAL INGREDIENTS AND I'LL MEET YOU LATER...



...AT HOME.

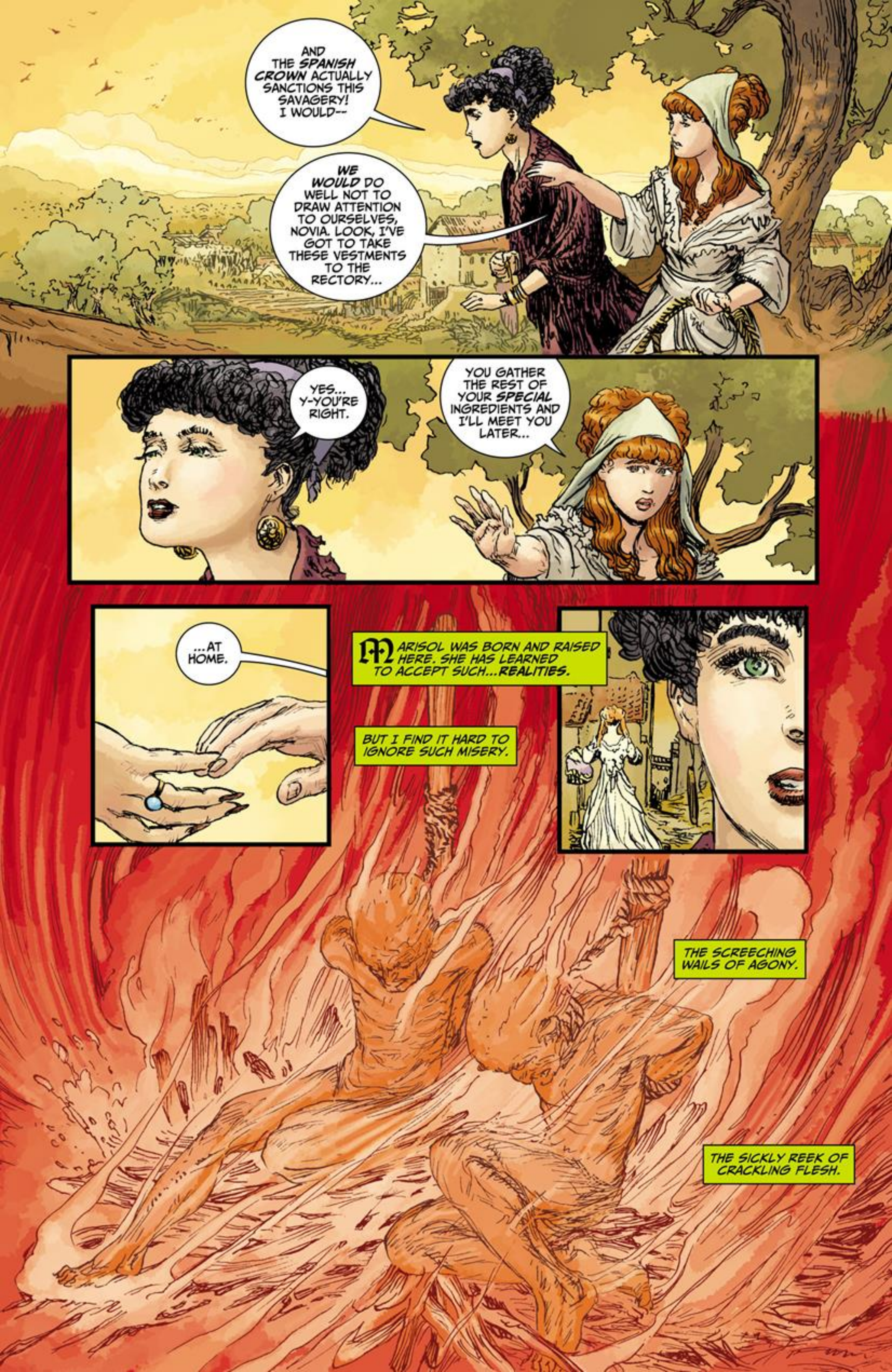
MARISOL WAS BORN AND RAISED HERE. SHE HAS LEARNED TO ACCEPT SUCH... REALITIES.

BUT I FIND IT HARD TO IGNORE SUCH MISERY.



THE SCREECHING WAILS OF AGONY.

THE SICKLY REEK OF CRACKLING FLESH.







MADAME?  
MADAME...  
ARE YOU...UM,  
THROUGH IN  
HERE?

Y-YES...  
I'M SORRY,  
CATHERINE.  
I WAS JUST...  
REMINISCING  
ABOUT A...  
SIMILAR  
SITUATION.



HEY, MISS  
SHEPHERD,  
I... WELL, THE  
MANAGEMENT TOLD  
ME NOT TO MENTION  
THIS TO NO ONE,  
BUT... WELL, I THINK  
YOU OUGHTTA  
KNOW.

WHAT  
IS IT,  
TOMMY?



WELL, LAST  
NIGHT ONE OF  
D'NEIGHBORS  
HEARD NOISES  
FROM INSIDE  
YOUR...YOUR  
LATE FATHER'S  
PLACE.



"I GOT HERE JUST IN TIME TO  
SEE THIS GUY SNEAKIN' OUT  
OF THE SUITE. HE RAN DOWN  
THE SERVICE STAIRS BUT I DID  
GET A QUICK LOOK AT HIM.

"AND HERE'S THE WEIRD  
PART... HE HAD ON SOME  
CRAZY KINDA MASK!

"I MEAN... DID YOU  
NOTICE ANYTHING  
MISSING?"



WHY NO,  
TOMMY...  
EVERYTHING  
SEEMED MUCH  
THE SAME AS  
NORMAL.

JEEZ...  
MUSTA BEEN  
ONE THEM  
DIRT-RAG  
REPORTERS,  
LOOKIN' FOR A  
SCANDAL!






CATHERINE, YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR FATHER HAD RECENTLY BECOME WITHDRAWN. WHEN DID YOU FIRST NOTICE THIS CONDITION?

PERHAPS A MONTH AGO.

HE SEEMED EDGY AND WANTED TO AVOID PEOPLE... NOT A GOOD PATTERN IN THE HEART OF MANHATTAN!

HIS SECRETARY CONFIRMED MY OBSERVATIONS. BEFORE LONG, HE STOPPED GOING INTO HIS OFFICE ALTOGETHER. AND EVENTUALLY, WELL... HE WOULDN'T ANSWER MY PHONE CALLS.



I'VE NOTICED THAT YOU MAKE NO MENTION OF YOUR MOTHER. I ASSUME SHE'S PASSED AWAY?

MOVED AWAY. SHE AND MY FATHER WERE DIVORCED WHEN I WAS QUITE YOUNG. I HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN YEARS ALTHOUGH SHE DOES OCCASIONALLY WRITE. SHE'S... ON THE WEST COAST.



I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO BRING UP PAINFUL MEMORIES.

NO, THAT'S FINE. I'VE REALLY NEVER MISSED HER. MY FATHER WAS A VERY LOVING PARENT.

HER ABSENCE IS NOTHING... COMPARED TO HIS LOSS.

VERY WELL, THEN.



TELL ME, CATHERINE, DID YOUR FATHER HAVE AN UNNATURAL FEAR OF DOGS?





HOW DID YOU--?!

I MEAN, THAT IS... HE NEVER DID... BEFORE.

"MY FATHER WAS AN IMPORTER OF FINE GOODS FROM THE OLD WORLD. ANTIQUITIES, *OBJETS D'ART*, EVEN RELIGIOUS RELICS...

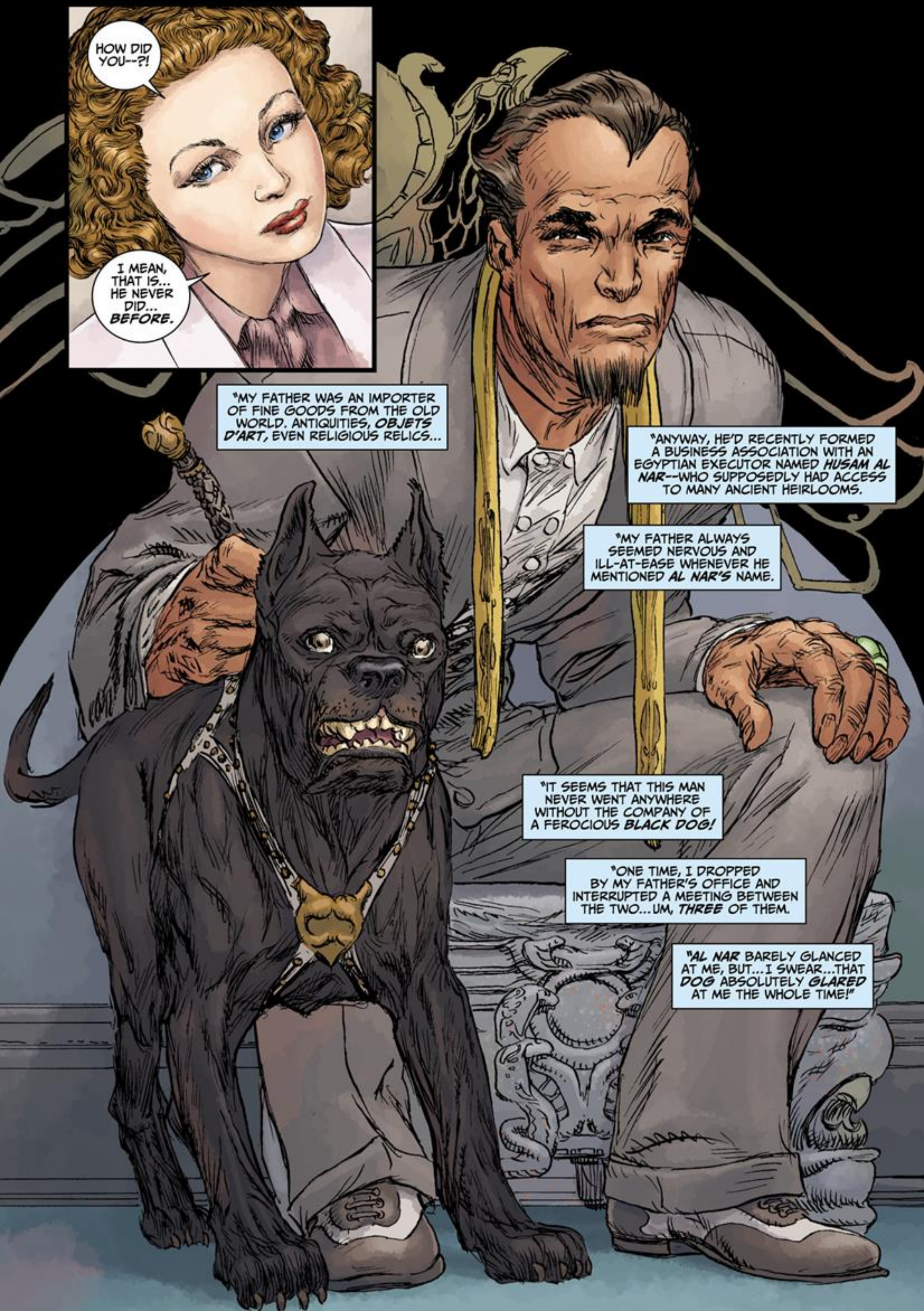
"ANYWAY, HE'D RECENTLY FORMED A BUSINESS ASSOCIATION WITH AN EGYPTIAN EXECUTOR NAMED *HUSAM AL NAR*--WHO SUPPOSEDLY HAD ACCESS TO MANY ANCIENT HEIRLOOMS.

"MY FATHER ALWAYS SEEMED NERVOUS AND ILL-AT-EASE WHENEVER HE MENTIONED *AL NAR*'S NAME.

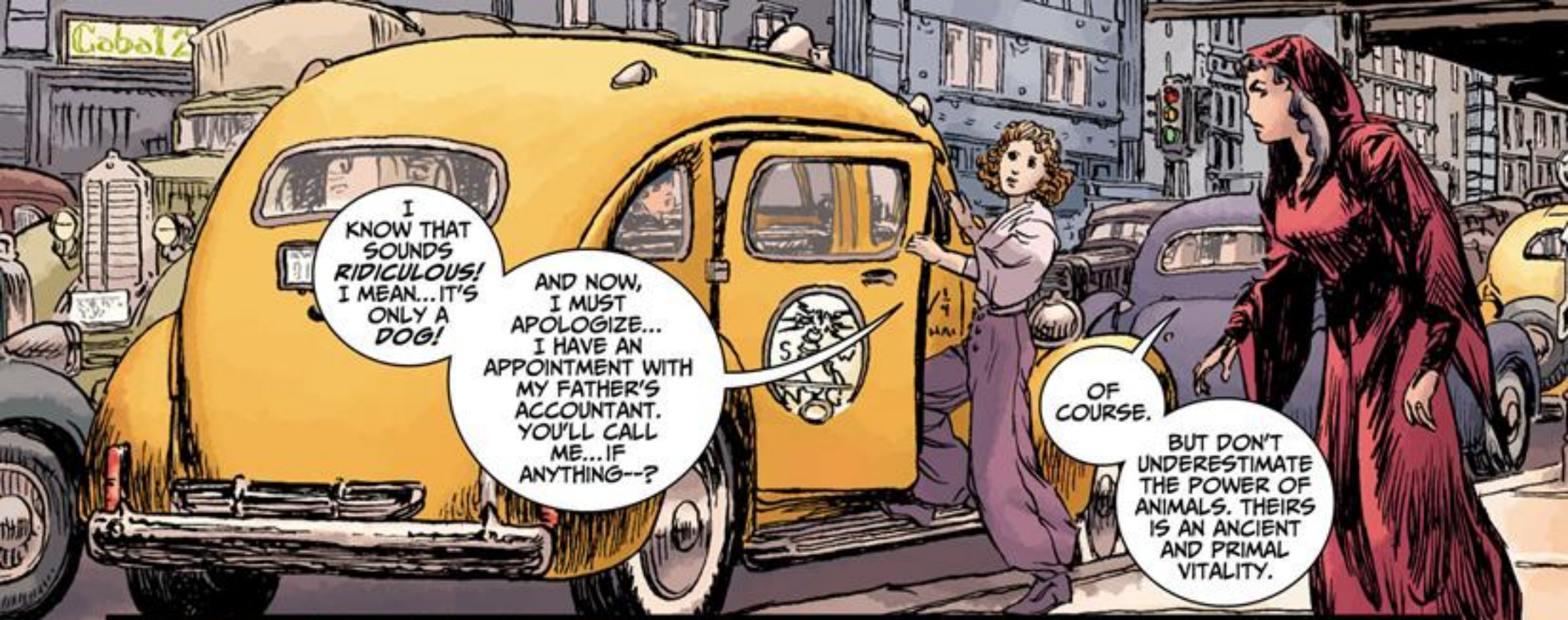
"IT SEEMS THAT THIS MAN NEVER WENT ANYWHERE WITHOUT THE COMPANY OF A FEROCIOUS *BLACK DOG*!

"ONE TIME, I DROPPED BY MY FATHER'S OFFICE AND INTERRUPTED A MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO...UM, *THREE* OF THEM.

"*AL NAR* BARELY GLANCED AT ME, BUT...I SWEAR...THAT *DOG* ABSOLUTELY *GLARED* AT ME THE WHOLE TIME!"











BROTHER SACRIST?  
I HAVE THE--

AH,  
MARISOL...LA  
COSTURERA.

THE  
HEAD PRIEST  
HAS ASKED THAT  
YOU DELIVER THIS  
BATCH OF VESTMENTS  
DIRECTLY FOR  
HIS PERSONAL  
APPROVAL.

THIS  
WAY,  
PLEASE.



MILORD  
TORQUEMADA?  
I WAS TOLD  
TO PRESENT MY  
NEEDLEWORK  
FOR YOUR  
INSPECTION.

INDEED,  
BRING  
THEM  
HERE.

I'M  
TOLD YOU  
ARE VERY  
SKILLED IN THE  
SARTORIAL  
ARTS, MY  
CHILD.



AND NO  
WONDER. YOU  
ARE...PLEASING  
TO THE EYE AS  
WELL. LET ME  
SEE THESE HANDS  
THAT ARE SO  
SUPPLE AND  
DEFT.

YOUR  
GRACE,  
I--



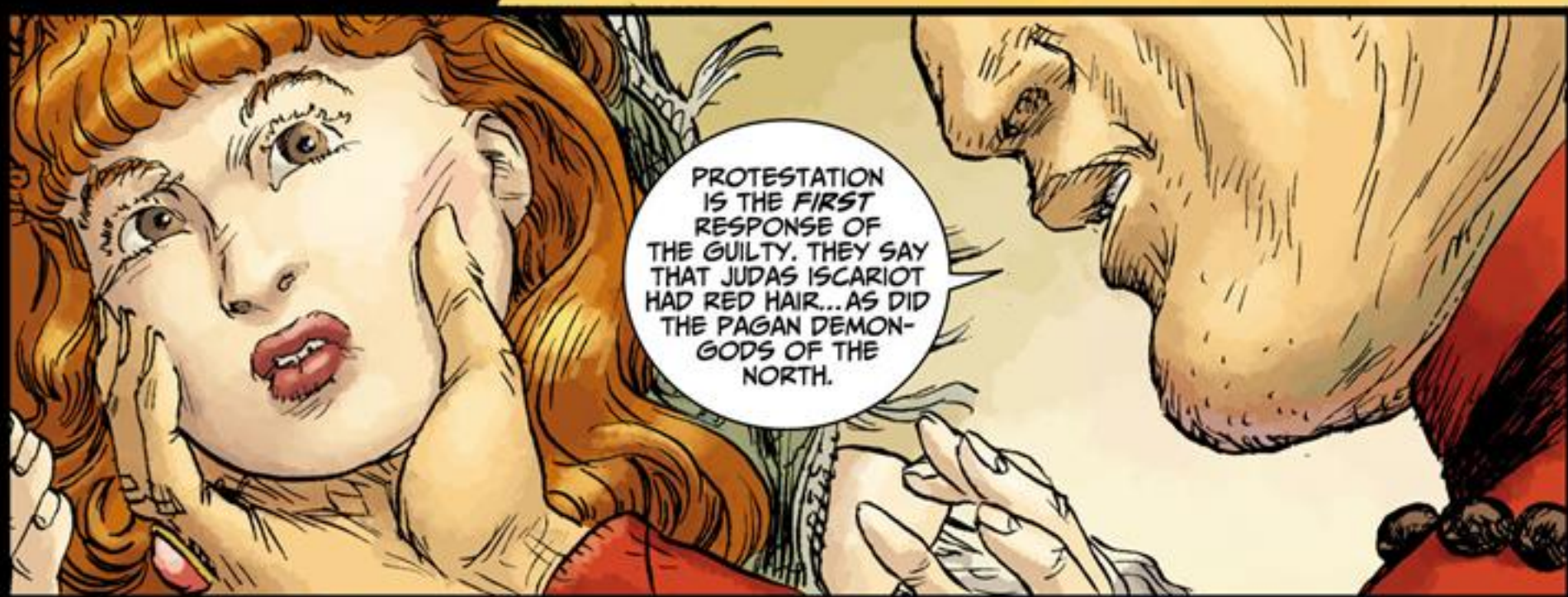
YOUR  
SKIN IS FAIR  
FOR ONE WHO  
WORKS WITH  
CLOTH. BUT YOUR  
THUMBS... THEY  
BEAR MANY  
SCARS.



THE  
PRICKING  
OF THUMBS IS  
A KNOWN RITUAL  
FOR WITCHCRAFT.  
THE ACT ALLOWS  
THE DEVIL TO LAY  
HOLD OF YOUR  
THOUGHTS...

N-NO, YOUR  
GRACE! IT IS  
A...A...PITFALL  
OF MY TRADE!  
EVEN THIMBLES  
DO NOT  
GUARANTEE...





PROTESTATION  
IS THE *FIRST*  
RESPONSE OF  
THE GUILTY. THEY SAY  
THAT JUDAS ISCARIOT  
HAD RED HAIR... AS DID  
THE PAGAN DEMON-  
GODS OF THE  
NORTH.



I... I AM  
COLORED  
THE SAME AS  
MY MOTHER,  
YOUR GRACE.  
SHE DIED WHEN  
I WAS QUITE  
YOUNG.

WHEN WAS  
YOUR LAST  
CONFESSION,  
GIRL? I DON'T  
RECALL SEEING  
YOU KNEELING  
IN PENANCE  
AMONG THE  
FAITHFUL...

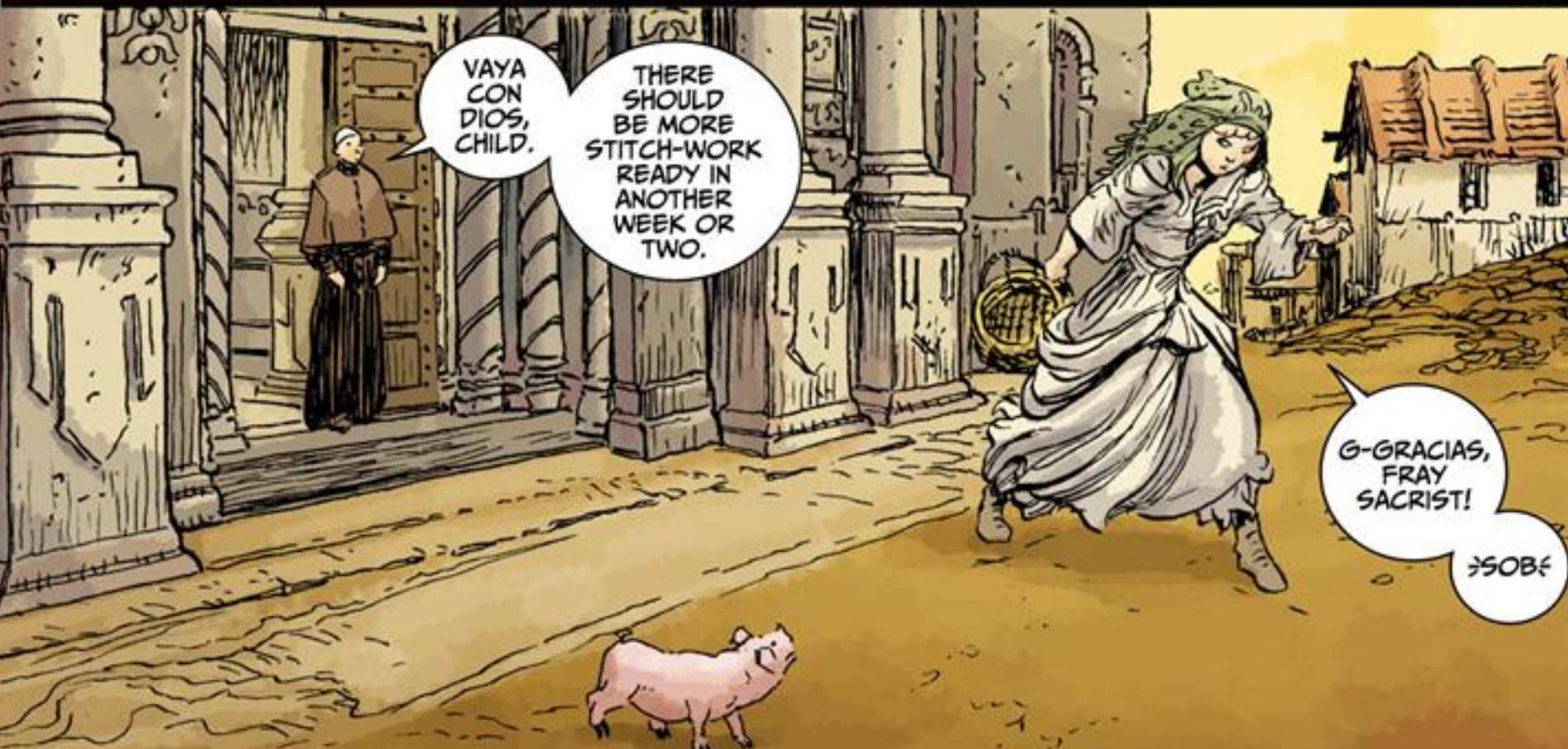


I-I LIVE OUTSIDE  
THE CITY... ACROSS  
THE RIVER... IN  
*TOMARES*. MY  
LOCAL PRIEST,  
FRAY FELIPE,  
HEARS MY  
CONFESSION.

I-I  
REALLY  
SHOULD BE  
GOING, YOUR  
GRACE.  
BY YOUR  
LEAVE...?



MMM...?  
VERY  
WELL.



VAYA  
CON  
DIOS,  
CHILD.

THERE  
SHOULD  
BE MORE  
STITCH-WORK  
READY IN  
ANOTHER  
WEEK OR  
TWO.

G-GRACIAS,  
FRAY  
SACRIST!

SOB



FOR YEARS, I WANDERED  
THROUGH CENTRAL  
ASIA, EASTERN EUROPE  
AND EVEN AFRICA.

EVENTUALLY  
SETTLING IN SPAIN.

HERE, I VOWED, I WOULD  
AVOID ANY PRETENSE  
OF FORESIGHT.

GET  
DOWN,  
TERESA!  
THAT'S THE  
NEIGHBOR'S  
TREE!

SO?  
CAN'T  
GET  
ME!

I WOULD LEAD A  
"NORMAL" LIFE.

ALMOST.

AFTER CENTURIES, I'VE  
FINALLY GOTTEN USED TO  
THE ENHANCED TASTE.

IF NOT THE  
DIZZYING RUSH.

SANTA  
MARIA!

AND, FOR THE VERY  
FIRST TIME, AFTER  
CENTURIES...

...I'VE FINALLY FOUND  
SOMEONE WITH  
WHOM I CAN SHARE.

SAVE ME  
FROM THE  
ATTENTIONS OF  
PRIESTS AND  
ALL THE UGLY  
LECHERIES  
OF MEN!





WELLLL...  
I'D HAVE TO  
AGREE WITH  
THE *FIRST*  
PART OF THAT  
PLEA! WHAT'S  
WRONG?

OOOH...  
IT'S  
NOTHING.



THESE DAMNED  
PRIESTS... THEY THINK  
THEY KNOW AND OWN  
EVERYTHING ABOUT THE  
NEXT WORLD AND SO  
THEY ASSUME THE  
SAME IS TRUE OF  
*THIS* ONE!



I ASSURE  
YOU, NO ONE OF  
THIS EARTH TRULY  
KNOWS THE PRIORITIES  
OF THE AFTERLIFE...  
ANY MORE THAN THEY  
CAN TRAVEL AMONG  
THE STARS. WE CAN  
*ONLY* CONCERN  
OURSELVES WITH  
THE HERE AND  
NOW.

SPEAKING  
OF WHICH...  
I'VE BREWED  
ANOTHER  
DRAFT OF  
MY *SPECIAL*  
TONIC.

HERE...  
IT'S  
*GOOD*  
FOR YOU!

**M**ARISOL HAS NO IDEA OF  
THE BOON I GRANT TO HER.  
WE HAVE SHARED THIS COTTAGE  
FOR NEARLY SIX YEARS NOW.

AND SHE HASN'T  
AGED A DAY.



NOT  
TOO  
MUCH...!



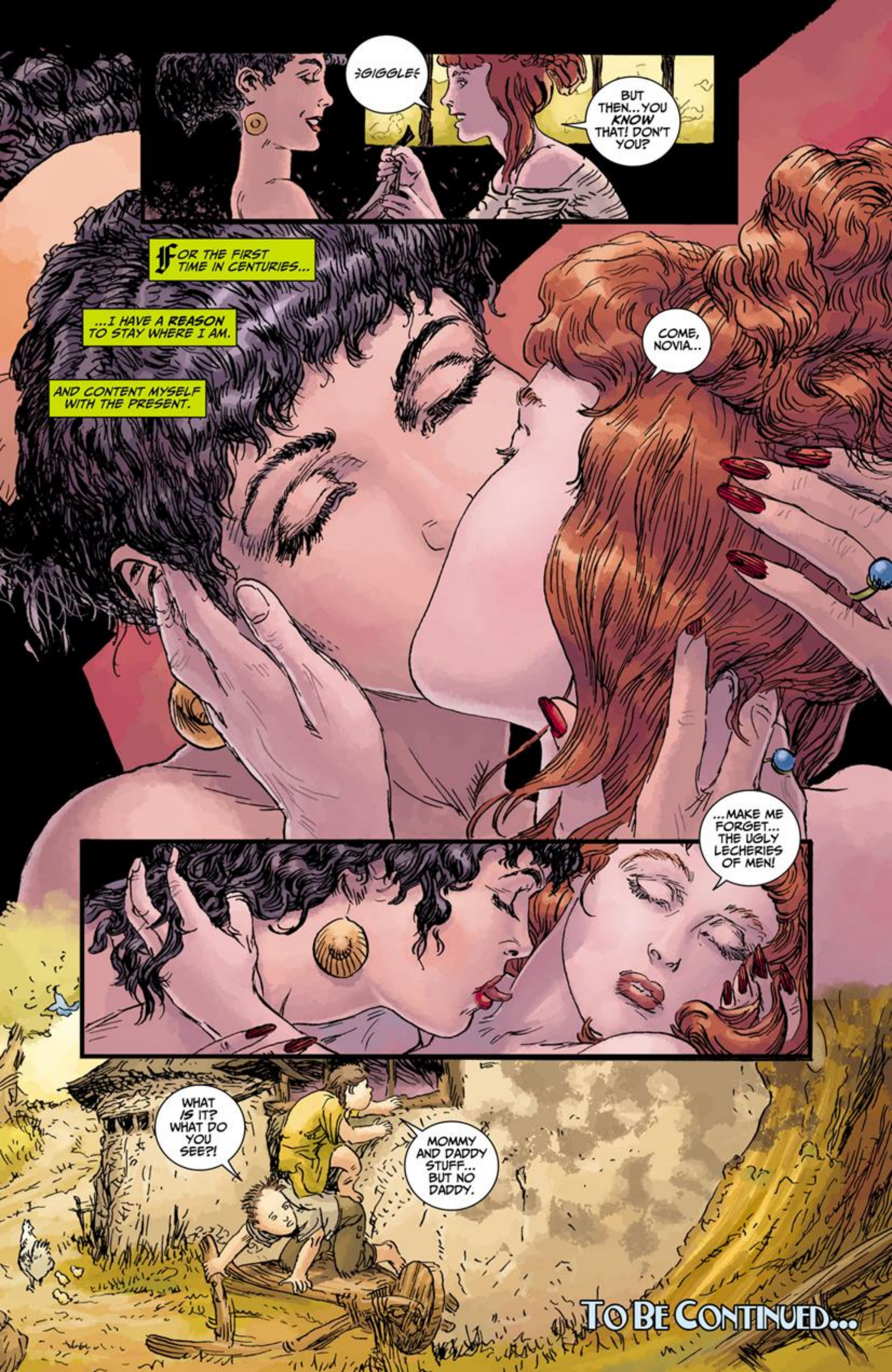
SURKE

THAT STUFF  
TASTES LIKE  
*BILGEWATER*  
BUT IT SURE  
*DOES* HAVE  
AN EFFECT!



MAKES  
ME ALL  
SKITTISH...  
SO TINGLING  
AND WARM...  
DOWNRIGHT  
WANTON!





GIGGLE!

BUT  
THEN... YOU  
KNOW  
THAT! DON'T  
YOU?

FOR THE FIRST  
TIME IN CENTURIES...

...I HAVE A REASON  
TO STAY WHERE I AM.

AND CONTENT MYSELF  
WITH THE PRESENT.

COME,  
NOVIA...

...MAKE ME  
FORGET...  
THE UGLY  
LECHERIES  
OF MEN!

WHAT  
IS IT?  
WHAT DO  
YOU  
SEE?!

MOMMY  
AND DADDY  
STUFF...  
BUT NO  
DADDY.

TO BE CONTINUED...