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SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

"...his terrible wet eyes
stared out of the mask,
reflecting the spatters
of blood..."

by Matt Wagner
& Guy Davis

THE TARANTULA • ACT II

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TARANTULA

A C T . T W O

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I STILL DON'T APPROVE OF THIS IRREGULAR--

LIEUTENANT BURKE, PLEASE FOR THE PARENTS' SAKE.



DIAN, ARE YOU SCARE ABOUT THIS?

DADDY...LET'S JUST GET ON WITH THIS.



YOU SAID JUST THE BACK...UHH, FACE DOWN, RIGHT?

YES.

WHEW, WELL, THAT'S GOOD, AIN'T MUCH LEFT AROUND THE EYES.



AND CHRIST, THE HAND IS JUST



SHUT UP, YOU.



SHE-- SHE HAD THREE VERY DISTINCT BEAUTY MARKS ALONG HER LEFT SHOULDER BLADE.



THAT ISN'T...IT'S NOT HER...NOT CATHERINE.

THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN. COME, DIAN.



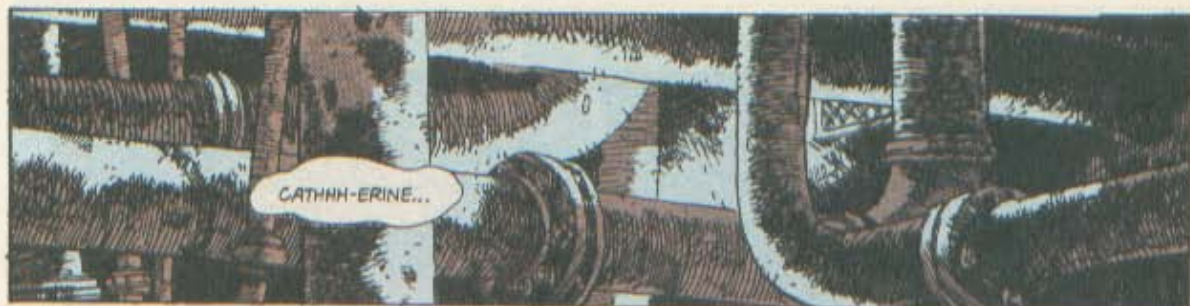
THOMAS, I NEED TO STAY HERE. COULD YOU ESCORT DIAN BACK TO OUR BROWNSTONE?

NOT HER...

CERTAINLY, BELMONT.



NOT HER...NOT... CATHERINE...



CATHHH-ERINE...



C-C-C-CATH-ERINE...



TIME TO TALK AGAIN, CATHERINE...



THAT'S A GOOD LITTLE GIRRRRL...



WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT?



OHNNH, HEH HEH HEH...

YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT MY... DEAR. YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHAT I WANT.

DON'T YOU?!



NO.

I'VE TOLD YOU.

HE-HE DOESN'T TELL ME THOSE SORTS OF THINGS!



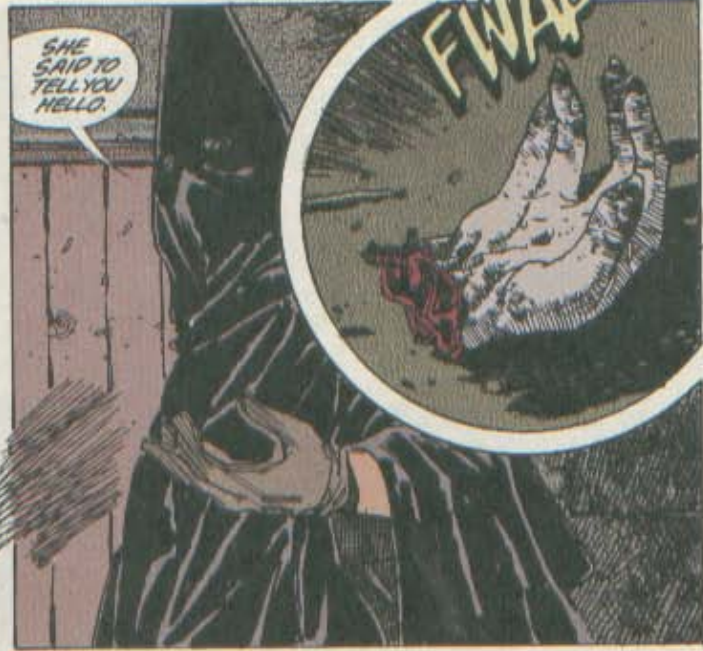
NOW, WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE A LITTLE TRAMP LIKE YOU?





SOB!! SOB!!

OH, ONE MORE THING ABOUT YOUR "FRIEND," BEFORE SHE FINALLY DIED...



SHE SAID TO TELL YOU HELLO.

FWAP



AAAAHHHHH



AAAAHHHHH



IT'S NOT WORKING.



TH-THIS IS MADNESS!!

SHE DOESN'T KNOW, I BELIEVE HER, LET'S JUST GET RID OF H-

BE QUIET.

I KNOW WHAT HE'S LIKE AFTER LOVE-- CHILD-LIKE, OPEN. HE'S TOLD HER, I'M SURE.

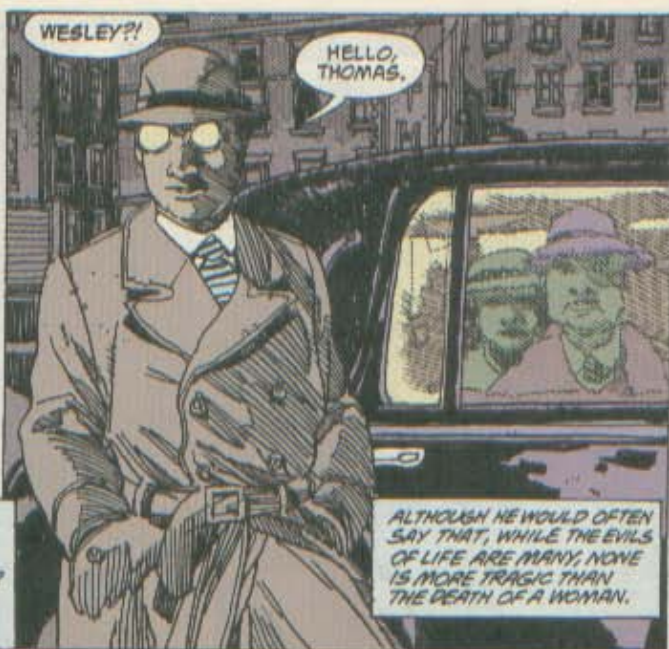


AND STOP BEHAVING LIKE SUCH THE INNOCENT.

I KNOW YOU'RE QUITE ENJOYING ALL THIS.



COME ALONG, MY DEAR. WE'LL HAIL A CAB AND--WHY, IT'S...



WESLEY?!

HELLO, THOMAS.

I ONLY VAGUELY REMEMBER MY MOTHER--BEFORE THE TUBERCULOSIS TOOK HER. MY FATHER WAS STILL AT WAR WHEN IT HAPPENED. I NEVER ONCE SAW HIM ACTUALLY CRY ABOUT IT LATER.

ALTHOUGH HE WOULD OFTEN SAY THAT, WHILE THE EVILS OF LIFE ARE MANY, NONE IS MORE TRAGIC THAN THE DEATH OF A WOMAN.



WHY, M'BOY, I THOUGHT YOU... OH! YOU, AH, REMEMBER MISS BELMONT, OF COURSE?

CERTAINLY, GOOD EVENING AGAIN, DIAN.

HELLO, WES.



I TRIED TO GET INSIDE EARLIER, BUT COULDN'T.

I FELT I JUST HAD TO COME AFTER ALL, TOM. I--I KNOW YOU'VE ALWAYS FELT DISAPPOINTED IN MY FATHER AND I...



WELL, I DIDN'T WANT TO INHERIT THAT FROM HIM AS WELL.

AHH, M'BOY... I DON'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE.



BUT NOW... I WAS JUST ABOUT TO ESCORT DIAN HOME.

PLEASE, ALLOW ME TO TAKE YOU BOTH. MY CAR IS RIGHT HERE.



SOOO, WHAT'S THE LATEST NEWS ON THIS... WHAT IS IT--THE SPIDER?



... BUTCHERED, THEY CLAIM!

HORRIBLE! SIMPLY TERRIBLE! I TELL YOU, WESLEY, IF I WAS STILL AN ACTIVE OFFICER OF THE COURT--

WHA-? OH! I GUESS MY STOP IS FIRST.

BUT, DIAN, I PROMISED YOUR FATHER.



NONSENSE, YOU DEAR MAN. I CAN MANAGE ON MY OWN. THANK YOU.

MMPH. YES, WELL... THANKS FOR THE LIFT, WESLEY.



GOOD NIGHT TO YOU BOTH. DIAN, TELL YOUR FATHER I'LL RING HIM TOMORROW.

I WILL. GOOD NIGHT, JUDGE.



WES? ARE YOU... ALL RIGHT?



YES, I'M...

...IT'S JUST THAT-- GIRL...

SHE... IT'S ALL JUST SO...

...PAINFUL. I...



I... I'M SORRY, DIAN, I DON'T MEAN TO MAKE SUCH A SCENE. I KNOW BIG BOYS AREN'T SUPPOSED TO CRY.



NO, WELL...

THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY, ISN'T IT?





CARLO,
DARLING...

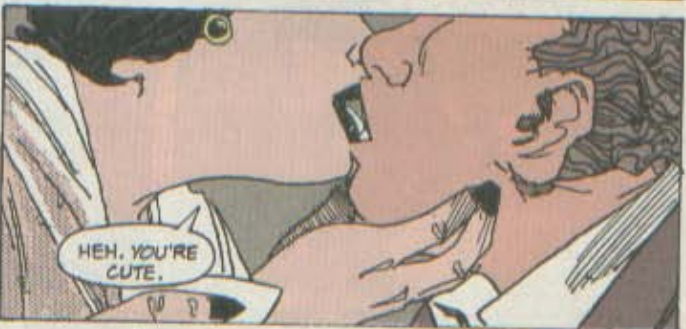
... WE SIMPLY
MUST GET YOU
SOME NEW SHOES
NEXT TIME I'M
IN TOWN.



I DON'T WANT PEOPLE
SAYING CELIA GOLDMAN
IS SATISFIED WITH ANY
LESS THAN THE BEST.

NO WAY, BABY. YOU GOT
ALL THE GROCERIES,
I TELL YOU.

CLASS A
AND THEN
SOME!



HEH. YOU'RE
CUTE.



BUT NOW,
COME ON.

TIME FOR
YOU TO
LEAVE.

SURE, BABY.
WHEN 'LL I
SEE YOU
AGAIN?

I MEAN,
MY RENT IS
COMING
DUE AND
ALL...



WHEN I'M
READY, I'LL CALL
YOU. UNTIL THEN,
DARLING...

HA. YOU ARE
COOL AS A COCKTAIL
SHAKER, DOLL.

OKAY,
YOU WIN, AS
ALWAYS.



CIAO,
BABY.

CELIA...



HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I ASKED YOU NOT TO BRING YOUR... *GYGLOS* AROUND THE HOUSE?

OH, PUN-LEASE, DADDY... CARLO'S JUST A BOY FRIEND. IT'S NOTHING.



AND WHAT ABOUT THOSE VISITORS YOU HAD JUST A FEW NIGHTS AGO?



WHAT ABOUT THEM?

I HAVEN'T SEEN SO MANY BULGING ARMPITS IN YEARS.



THEY WERE JUST... THAT IS... I-I JUST DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU GET HURT, IS ALL. THAT TYPE IS ALWAYS AFTER SOMETHING. HE'S A GOLD-DIGGER.

TSK. YOU'RE SUCH A DEAR.



I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE CARLO. LIKE I SAID, HE'S NOTHING--LESS THAN NOTHING.

AND BESIDES...



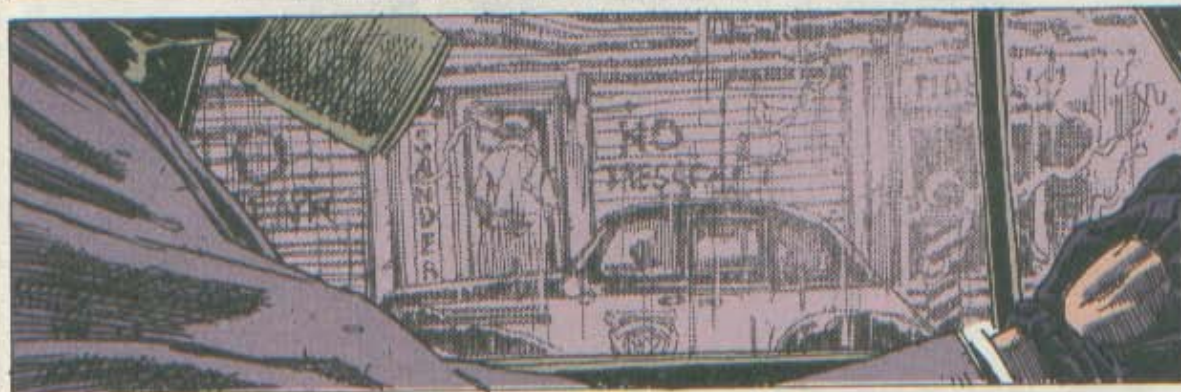
YOU KNOW I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU.















POLICE. OPEN UP!

WUDDU-YA-WAN?



CRAC

HUC--



I KNOW YOU CAN STILL HEAR ME. OPEN YOUR EYES.

YUH--YESSS...



IS YOUR NAME CHARLIE MALLOY?

Y-YESSS...



I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU, CHARLIE, AND I KNOW YOU'LL ANSWER... TRUTHFULLY.



UNNNH...

WHO TH' HELL WAS...? SOME SORT O'... GAS--



ALL RIGHT, HOLD 'EM HIGH--

HUH?



WHAT THE HELL IS THIS SHIT?



DIAN BELMONT DESCRIBES HERSELF AS IDLE-- RATHER LIKE A HIGH-POWERED MOTOR IN NEUTRAL. FOR SHE WAS SOON TO DEVELOP THE MOST TENACIOUS HABIT OF INVADING MY LIFE.

THIS IS IT, MISS. THE ALGONQUIN.

THANK YOU, DRIVER.

THIS WAY, MADAM.



MR. WESLEY DOODS?



WESLEY, I-I HOPE I'M NOT INTRUDING?

DIAN?!



I STOPPED BY YOUR HOUSE FIRST AND YOUR BUTLER TOLD ME I COULD PROBABLY FIND YOU HERE.

AHHH-- IN SOME WAYS, HE KNOWS ME TOO WELL.



BUT, THIS IS QUITE A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANKS FOR YOUR LOVELY LETTER. YOU NEEDN'T HAVE GONE TO SUCH EFFORT.



NONSENSE. I WAS AN INSENSITIVE BOOB THE OTHER NIGHT, AND... WELL, WRITING'S ALWAYS BEEN A JOY FOR ME.



YES, THIS IS QUITE THE LITERARY HANG-OUT, SUPPOSEDLY. I FEEL A BIT INTIMIDATED, I MUST SAY.

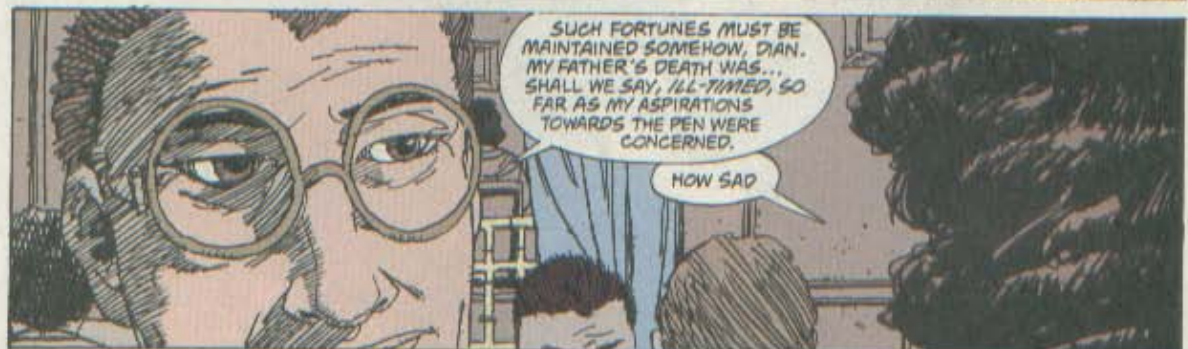
YOU'VE NEVER BEEN HERE BEFORE?



I COME HERE QUITE OFTEN MYSELF. DOROTHY PARKER, E.B. WHITE, JAMES THURBER-- I FIND GREAT COMFORT AND INSPIRATION SIMPLY BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF SUCH BRILLIANCE.

REALLY?

WELL, THEN WHY DID YOU NEVER PURSUE WRITING AS A CAREER? SURELY YOUR INHERITANCE HAS LEFT YOU THE LUXURY TO DO SO. I MEAN, I SAW THAT HOUSE OF YOURS...



SUCH FORTUNES MUST BE MAINTAINED SOMEHOW, DIAN. MY FATHER'S DEATH WAS... SHALL WE SAY, ILL-TIMED, SO FAR AS MY ASPIRATIONS TOWARDS THE PEN WERE CONCERNED.

HOW SAD



BUT THEN I PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE THE LUCKY RECIPIENT OF YOUR TALENTS.



TRUE.



AND I PROBABLY WOULD'VE ENDED UP AS A POMPUS BOOR FOR WHOM WRITING WAS MORE OF A TASK.

NO FUN AT THE DODDS HOUSE.



AS AFTERNOON STRETCHED INTO EARLY EVENING, I WAS MORE AND MORE SADDENED BY THE FATE OF WOMEN IN THIS WORLD. HERE WAS A VIBRANT, INTELLIGENT PERSON FOR WHOM NO IMMEDIATE AVENUES HAD OPENED. HOW UNLIKE MEN, WHO ARE USUALLY NURTURED TOWARDS A LIFELONG AMBITION FROM THEIR EARLIEST CHILDHOOD.

OH, I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT EVER BEING TRUE.

IF ONLY I COULD HAVE TOLD HER
THE TRUTH-- THAT IT WASN'T
THE HOLLOW NEED FOR WEALTH
THAT HAD DERAILED MY LIFE IN
THE ARTS...



BUT RATHER MY HYPER-
SENSITIVE VIEW OF A
WORLD FILLED WITH
GREED, ANGER, BRUTALITY
AND HATE.



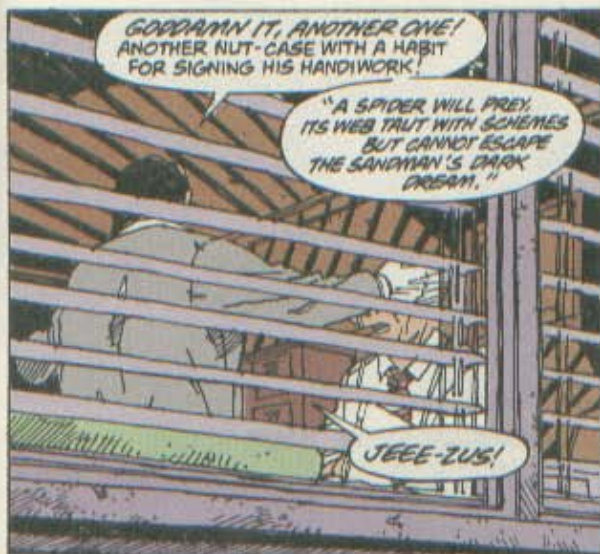
THE LOWEST, UGLIEST
FACETS OF LIFE.



ASPECTS I JUST
CAN'T IGNORE.



ASPECTS I CAN
NEVER ESCAPE.
EVEN IN MY DREAMS.





MUCH LATER,
I SLEEP.

AND, AS ALWAYS,
I DREAM.



AGAIN, THERE
IS THE WOMAN.

SHE IS STRONG
BUT ALONE.
DETERMINED...



...BUT FRIGHTENED.
YET SHE KNOWS
SHE MUST CON-
FRONT THIS FEAR.



RESOLUTE, SHE TURNS
STARING INTO THE
FACE OF OBLIVION.



DEFIANT SHE STANDS,
BUT SHE CAN NO LONGER
MAINTAIN HER FORM
OR HER SELF. SOON
SHE IS SHATTERED LIKE
THE CRYSTAL SPIRES
OF A SNOWFLAKE.



THE PARTICLES
SETTLE ON A RIVER
OF BROKEN DREAMS.



REVELERS DROWN
IN THE ILLUSION OF
A HAPPY WORLD.



THEIR BLOATED BODIES
FINALLY BURST, LIKE
THE GUTS OF AN
OVERFED LEECH.



INNOCENCE IS DYING
IN THIS SICK AND
LONELY WORLD.
INNOCENCE IS ALL
THAT'S PROMISED
IN THE NEXT.



TO • BE • CONTINUED