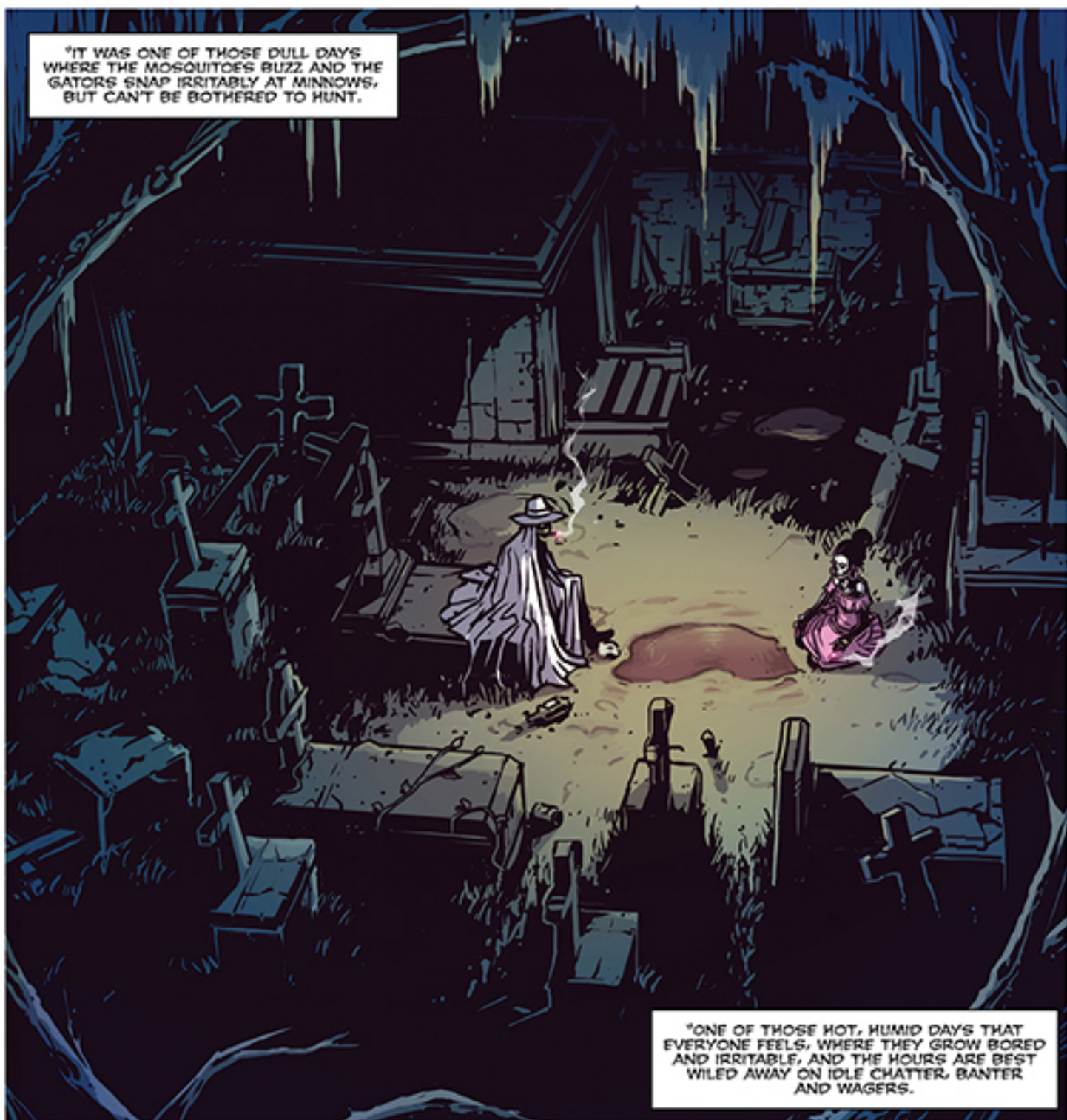


"IT WAS ONE OF THOSE DULL DAYS  
WHERE THE MOSQUITOES BUZZ AND THE  
GATORS SNAP IRRITABLY AT MINNOWS,  
BUT CAN'T BE BOTHERED TO HUNT.



"ONE OF THOSE HOT, HUMID DAYS THAT  
EVERYONE FEELS, WHERE THEY GROW BORED  
AND IRRITABLE, AND THE HOURS ARE BEST  
WILED AWAY ON IDLE CHATTER, BANTER  
AND WAGERS.

"ONE OF THOSE DAYS  
THAT EVERYONE HAS...  
EVEN GODS.



"EVEN DEITIES  
OF DEATH."



WHAT ARE YOU  
DOING, MAMAN  
BRIDGETTE?



STILL WATCHING THE LIVING?

THE DYING. THEY'RE THE INTERESTING ONES.

PAH! NOTHING INTERESTING ABOUT THE DYING. NOT TILL THEY'RE DEAD. TILL THEN, THEY'RE SO... PREDICTABLE.

ALWAYS PRAYING AND PLEADING AND SCREAMING AND CRYING.



SATURDAY--HUSBAND-- MUST YOU ALWAYS BE SO COLD? GO BACK TO YOUR RIM. YOU CLEARLY KNOW BEST.



NO, NO. COME ON, WIFE, YOU CONVINCE ME. SHOW ME WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING AT; WHAT'S SO INTERESTING?



WELL... THERE'S A MAN HERE, LYING DYING IN HOSPITAL. THEY SAY HE'S BRAIN-DEAD, YOU SEE? THE DOCTORS, THEY'D HAVE SWITCHED HIM OFF ALREADY IF IT WEREN'T FOR HIS HAND...



TWITCHING AND TWITCHING AWAY, GOES THE HAND. THEY CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT. THEY GOT NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT THE MAN'S DONE EVIL, EVIL THINGS.



THINGS THAT HAUNT HIM, THAT HE CAN'T LET GO OF.



SO HE'S CLINGING TO LIFE BY THAT HAND, AND HE AIN'T LETTING GO ANY TIME SOON...

'COS HE KNOWS HIS TIME'S UP, BUT HE WANTS TO CHANGE. TO BE A BETTER MAN.



A WAGER, THEN. LET US MAKE A WAGER!



I WAGER THAT IT TAKES NO MORE THAN A WHISPER IN HIS EAR TO REVERT THIS MAN BACK TO HIS OLD WAYS.

THE LIVING, THEY AIN'T GOT CHANGE IN THEM. I TELL YOU, THEY'RE PREDICTABLE.



HUSBAND, I KNOW WHAT KIND OF NUDGE YOU'RE LIKELY TO MAKE.

FOR ME TO TAKE THAT BET WOULD BE TO CONDEMN THIS POOR MAN TO THE PIT.



THEN, WIFE, I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU...



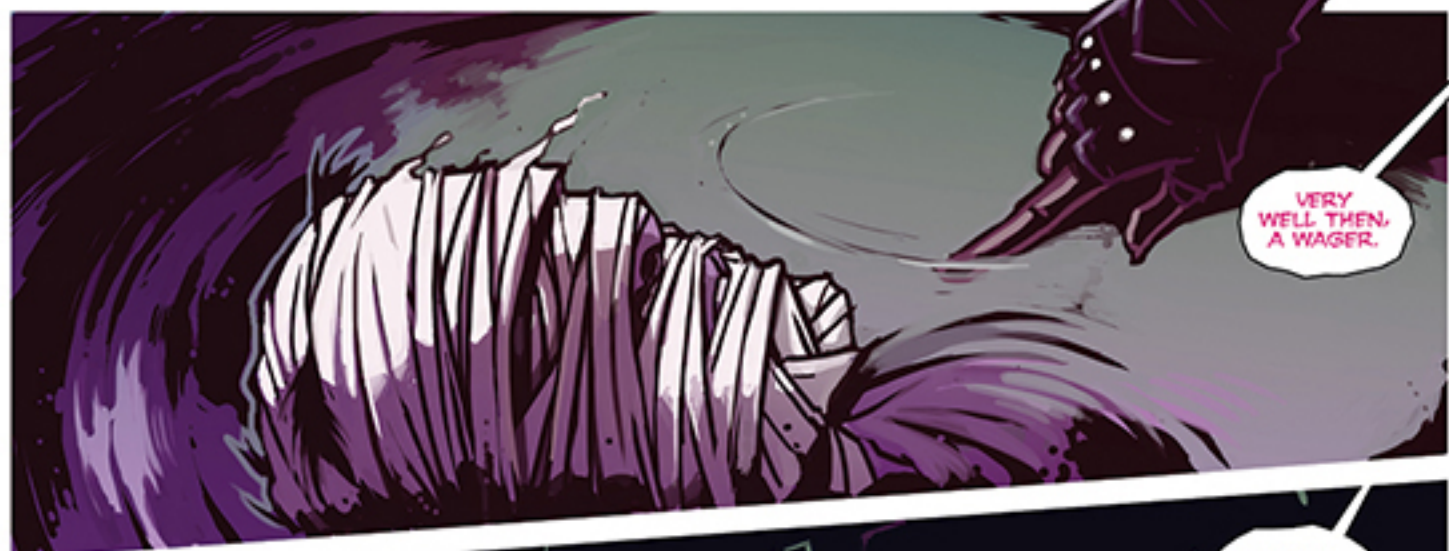
A GIFT, SO THAT YOU MAY GUIDE HIS STEP ON THE PATH OF GOODNESS.

SO THAT YOU MAY TRY, ANYWAY.



HUSBAND, IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

YOU MADE THIS FOR ME? THEN HOW CAN I REFUSE?



VERY WELL THEN,  
A WAGER.



VERY WELL, A  
GAME!

A GAME,  
A GAME,  
INDEED.



"SO THESE GODS OF DEATH DOVE  
INTO THE MIND OF THEIR WRETCHED  
MAN AND CREATED A WORLD FROM  
WHAT THEY FOUND AMONG IT, AND  
IN THAT WORLD, A CITY WHERE  
THEY--"

"WHAT? SERIOUSLY, PAPA,  
YOU CAN'T EXPECT ME  
TO BELIEVE THIS."

"AH, YOU THINK  
I'M TELLING TALL  
TALES?"

"I'D SAY  
SO."