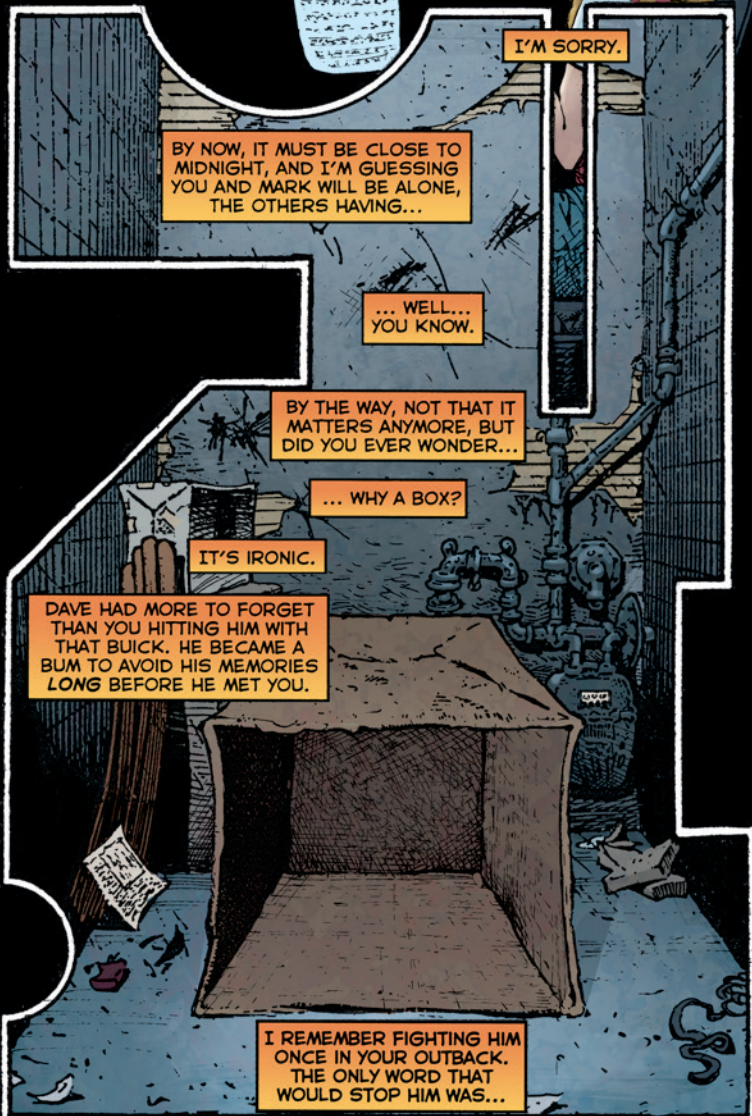


JULIE: IF YOU'RE READING THIS FAR, THEN THE PASSWORD, "FLOATING", THAT I GAVE YOU TO OPEN MY DIARY, WORKED. LIKE SARA, I HAD YOU READ IT, NOT TO ELICIT PITY, BUT IN HOPES OF SEEING ME CLEARLY.

DESPITE EVERYTHING, I RESPECT YOU THE MOST. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE STRONG ENOUGH TO GET US THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE. THAT'S WHY YOU MUST BE THE LAST TO GO.

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I'M SORRY.

BY NOW, IT MUST BE CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT, AND I'M GUESSING YOU AND MARK WILL BE ALONE, THE OTHERS HAVING...

... WELL... YOU KNOW.

BY THE WAY, NOT THAT IT MATTERS ANYMORE, BUT DID YOU EVER WONDER...

... WHY A BOX?

IT'S IRONIC.

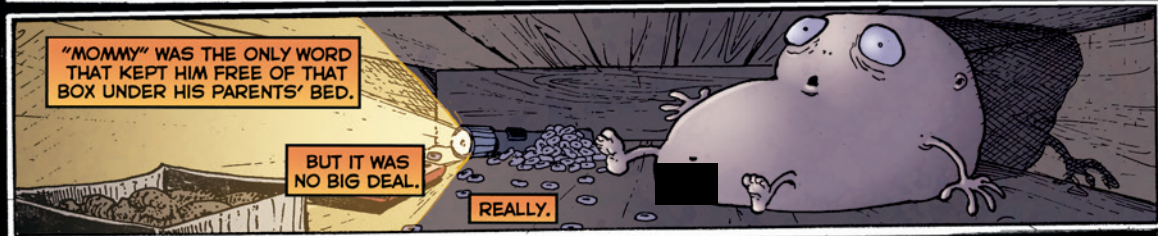
DAVE HAD MORE TO FORGET THAN YOU HITTING HIM WITH THAT BUICK. HE BECAME A BUM TO AVOID HIS MEMORIES LONG BEFORE HE MET YOU.

I REMEMBER FIGHTING HIM ONCE IN YOUR OUTBACK. THE ONLY WORD THAT WOULD STOP HIM WAS...



"MOMMY."

DAVE HAS NOTHING TO LOSE BY FORGETTING THIS WORLD.



"MOMMY" WAS THE ONLY WORD THAT KEPT HIM FREE OF THAT BOX UNDER HIS PARENTS' BED.

BUT IT WAS NO BIG DEAL.

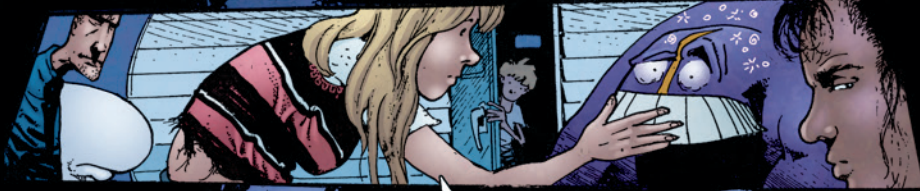
REALLY.

6 HOURS EARLIER

RIGHT, "DAVE"?

HEY MAXX,
WAKE UP. YOU HAVE
A NIGHTMARE OR
SOMETHIN'?

YEAH...
I WAS A KID
AGAIN...



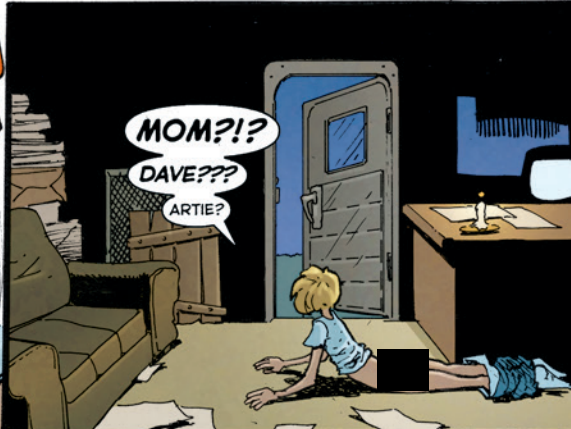
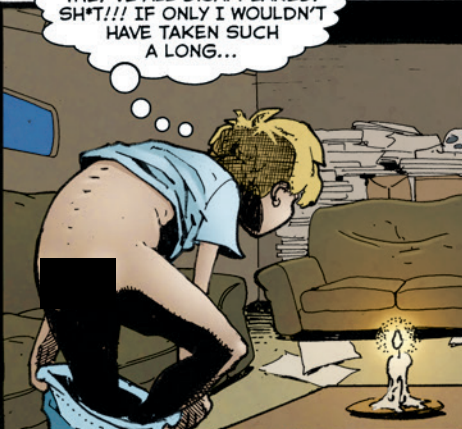
WHAT
HAPPENED?

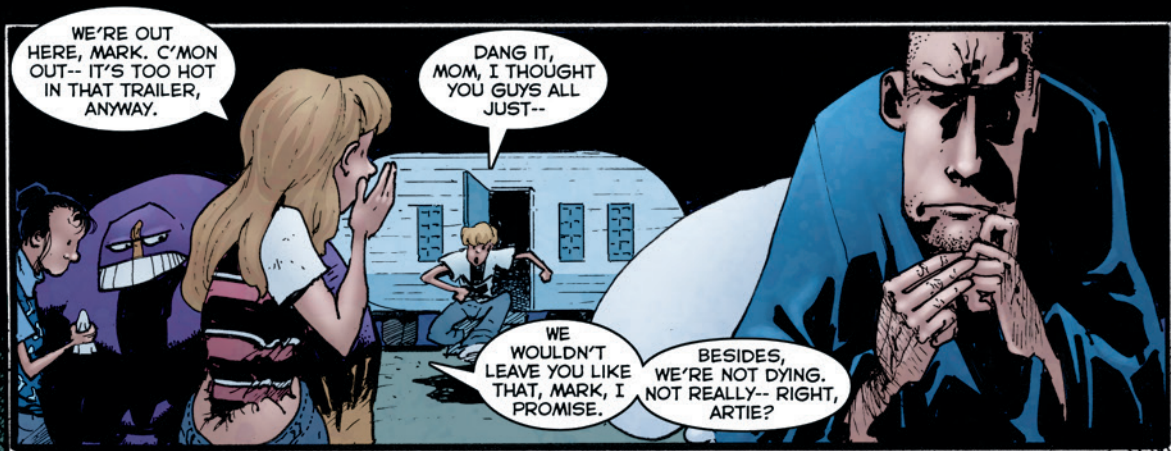
NOTHING.
IT WAS NO
BIG DEAL.
REALLY.

CAN
WE JUST
FORGET
IT?



I'M TOO
LATE! OH GOD!!!
THEY'VE ALL DISAPPEARED!
SH*T!!! IF ONLY I WOULDN'T
HAVE TAKEN SUCH
A LONG...





WE'RE OUT HERE, MARK. C'MON OUT-- IT'S TOO HOT IN THAT TRAILER, ANYWAY.

DANG IT, MOM, I THOUGHT YOU GUYS ALL JUST--

WE WOULDN'T LEAVE YOU LIKE THAT, MARK, I PROMISE.

BESIDES, WE'RE NOT DYING. NOT REALLY-- RIGHT, ARTIE?



IT'S JUST SEMANTICS, ANYWAY. LIFE, DEATH... METAMORPHOSIS. BUBBLES OF REALITY.

OK, KIDDIES. SINCE NONE OF US WILL REMEMBER ANY OF THIS, IS THERE ANYTHING ANYBODY'S ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW?

YEAH!

MARK!

YEAH-- LIKE, WHAT'S UP WITH THE SLUG?

WHERE'S SARA'S BODY?

WHEN DID SARA TELL MY MOM THAT SHE HAS TO BE SOAKED IN WATER?

IS SARA AN IS, A FAIRY, OR A FOOTBALL?

AND WHY ARE YOU KILLING EVERYBODY I CARE ABOUT?

WAS EVERYTHING YOU TOLD SARA 10 YEARS AGO A LIE?

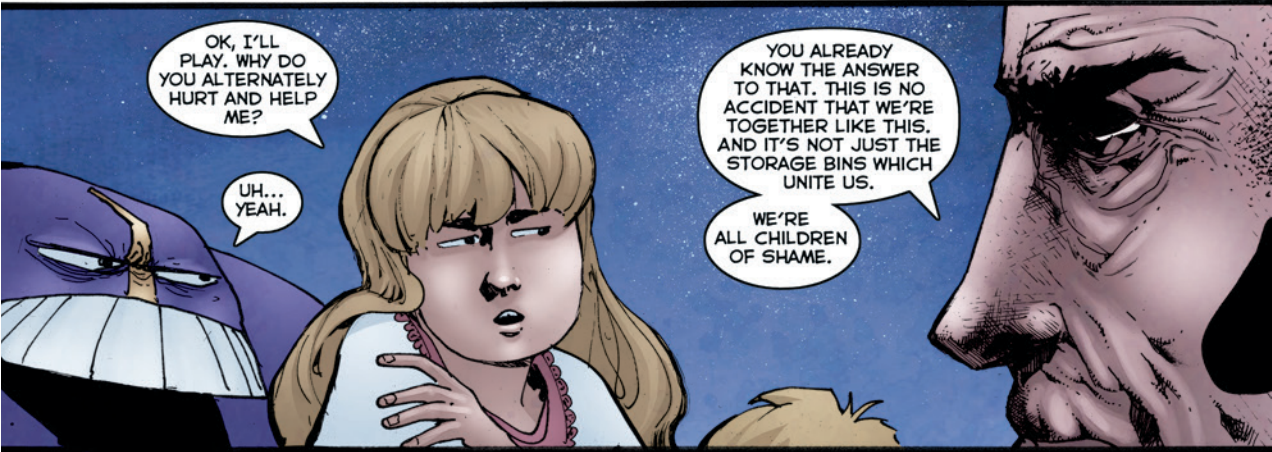
WHAT'S "DIVERT EXECUTIONER (4,3)" MEAN?...

THE SOLUTION IS "HEAD OFF". "HEAD OFF" IS A SYNONYM FOR "DIVERT", AND MY EXECUTIONERS... WELL, YOU'LL MEET THEM SOON ENOUGH.

THERE'S A LOT OF INFORMATION I COULD GIVE YOU, BUT WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR ENDLESS DETAILS, AND I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT YOU REALLY NEED

I THINK YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE ARE ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED THAT OUR TIME IS ENDING SO ABRUPTLY. BUT WE NEED EMOTIONAL RESOLUTION, NOT INFORMATION.

IF YOU NEED SOMEONE TO BLAME, BLAME ME.



OK, I'LL PLAY. WHY DO YOU ALTERNATELY HURT AND HELP ME?

UH... YEAH.

YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT. THIS IS NO ACCIDENT THAT WE'RE TOGETHER LIKE THIS. AND IT'S NOT JUST THE STORAGE BINS WHICH UNITE US.

WE'RE ALL CHILDREN OF SHAME.

BEFORE I WENT TO STUDY WITH THE ABORIGINES, I BEFRIENDED JULIE'S PARENTS. WHEN JULIE WAS BORN, SHE SOON CREATED AN OUTBACK BASED ON MY STORIES OF AUSTRALIA. INEVITABLY, SHE LOST HER INNOCENCE ONE NIGHT TO A RABBIT, AND BLAMED HER MOM.

I FELT A KINSHIP WITH HER, AND PUT HER CHILDHOOD TOYS IN THE STORAGE BINS, HOPING TO HEAL HER.

HER SHAME, WHICH KEPT GROWING, FESTERED INTO BITTERNESS WHICH SHE TURNED OUTWARD ONTO THE WORLD.



WHEN SARA WAS BORN, WE TOLD HER I KILLED MYSELF, TO PROTECT HER. BUT SARA FORMED A QUILT OUTBACK BECAUSE THE PAIN OF LOSING HER FATHER WAS APPARENTLY WORSE THAN WHAT WE TRIED TO SPARE HER FROM.

... A SLUG OF SELF-DESTRUCTION. THAT'S WHY SARA'S NAME WAS ON HER OWN LIST.

THIS WAS BORN SARA'S SHAME, WHICH TURNED INWARD ON HERSELF, CREATING A SLUG...



WHEN A LONE IS ESCAPED JULIE'S OUTBACK, IT WAS ORPHANED INTO OUR WORLD. OVER 10 YEARS, IT GREW TO THIS SIZE. WHEN SARA LOST HER BODY.

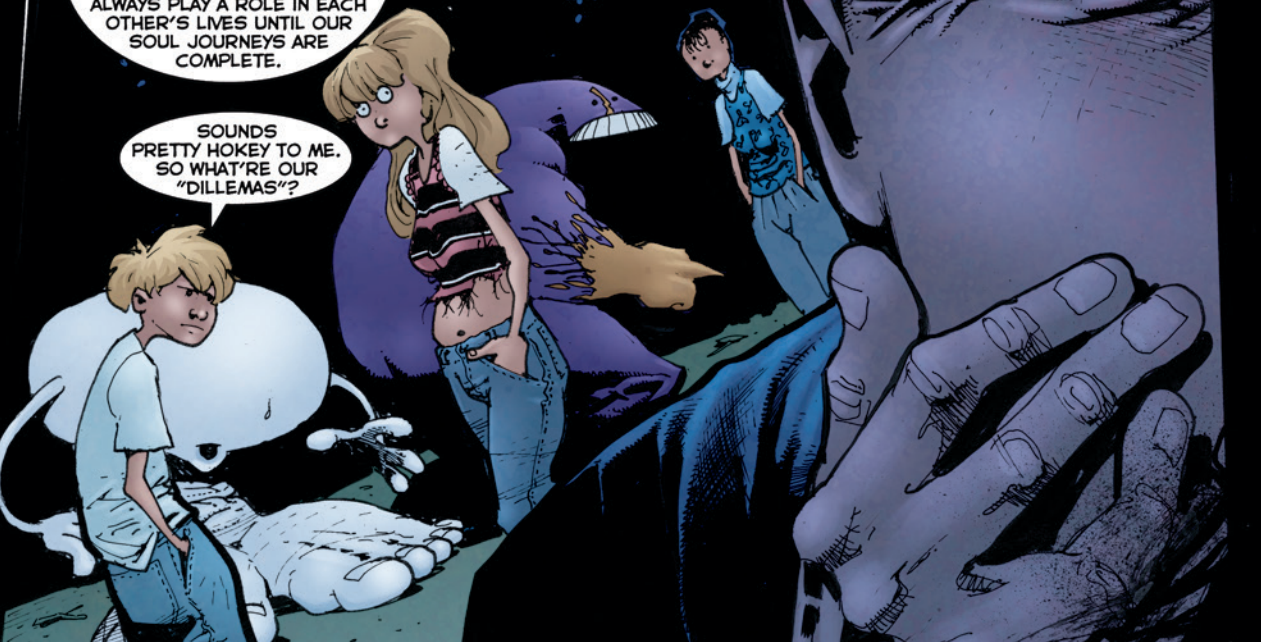
I KNEW IT WAS MY FAULT. BUT IT WAS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY, AS I SAW THE END OF THIS BUBBLE DRAWING TO A CLOSE. PERHAPS TOGETHER, WE COULD FIND THE TIME WE'D BOTH LOST IN HER CHILDHOOD.



THOUGH THE DETAILS OF OUR LIVES WILL CHANGE, OUR CORE WILL REMAIN.

THUS OUR PERSONAL DILEMMAS WILL FOLLOW US, NO MATTER WHAT BUBBLE OR DIMENSION WE INHABIT. IN OUR NEXT BUBBLE, I MAY BE A PRIEST, JULIE A NURSE, OR MARK A GRANDPA. BUT WE SIX WILL ALWAYS PLAY A ROLE IN EACH OTHER'S LIVES UNTIL OUR SOUL JOURNEYS ARE COMPLETE.

SOUNDS PRETTY HOKEY TO ME. SO WHAT'RE OUR "DILEMMAS"?



AFTER SARA WAS BORN, AND BEFORE JULIE'S "GUSAK", I MET A MAN NAMED DAVE O. HE NEVER TOLD ME WHAT THE "O" STOOD FOR. HE WORKED AS A REPAIRMAN AT A NURSERY, FIXING THE WATER SYSTEM.

HIS HEART WAS FILLED WITH SHAME OVER CHILDHOOD EVENTS I WON'T EVEN TRY TO DESCRIBE.

DAVE WILL TAKE HIS PROBLEM WITH HIM, WHICH IS HIS BEING CUT OFF FROM THE FEMINE.

HE LOOKS FOR IT IN JULIE, AND PROJECTS IN ONTO EVERY REAL WOMAN HE CLUMSILY TRIES TO PROTECT...

...ALL THE WHILE IGNORING THE FEMALE SPIRIT ANIMAL WHICH LIES IN WAIT INSIDE OF HIM.

OH GOD. IT'S ALWAYS THE MOM'S FAULT. I'M SORRY, MARK. I'M PROBABLY SMOTHERING SOME FEMINE PART OF YOU RIGHT NOW.

UH HUH. I'M FINE. I'M FINE. LEGGO.

AND GLORIE...

DON'T START. I KNOW MY PROBLEMS, AND I DON'T NEED THEM BROADCAST TO EVERYBODY ELSE.

NO ONE'S JUDGING YOU, GLORIE. IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO SAY--

WAGGON!