

I KNOW,  
I KNOW.

I PROMISED.

SO I  
LIED.

BESIDES, DADDY  
POINTING OUT TO  
ME WHERE HE KEEPS  
HIS DIARY, THEN  
FORBIDDING ME TO  
READ IT...WELL...

C'MON! IT'S  
OBVIOUS HE  
WANTS ME TO  
KNOW ABOUT  
HIS LIFE.

OKAY,  
I JUST  
WANT TO  
KNOW.

BESIDES, AFTER THE  
DOO-DOO WEEK I'VE  
HAD--DISSECTING FAIRIES,  
TELLING NORBERT ABOUT  
HOW I LET JULIE DOWN  
SO LONG AGO, THEN  
FINALLY WORKING UP THE  
GUTS TO ADMIT IT TO  
HER, AND THEN FINDING  
OUT....

BUT PART OF ME  
JUST CAN'T SHAKE  
THE FEELING THAT I'M  
WRONG, THAT JULIE'S  
ALIVE OUT THERE,  
SOMEWHERE...

...LIKE I SAID,  
A HELL OF  
A WEEK.

I CAN'T SAY  
GOODBYE TO  
HER YET--

I WON'T.

OKAY, HERE WE  
ARE... "THE BOOK  
OF GONE, DIARY  
OF ARTEMUS  
PENDER GONE,  
PART ONE, THE  
ROAD DOWN".



# OUTBACK

Y'KNOW, SITTING HERE,  
I JUST FLASHED ON  
HOW MUCH READING  
THIS REMINDS ME OF  
THE STORIES GRAMPS  
WOULD READ ME AS A  
KID. MAYBE BECAUSE  
OF THOSE OLD  
FAMILIAR WORDS...

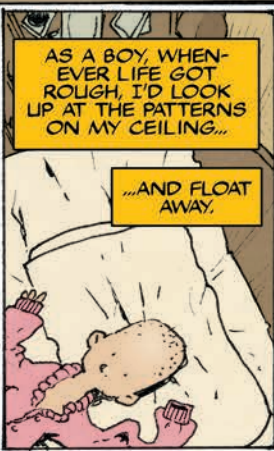
"ONCE  
UPON  
A...





PATTERNS.

MY ESCAPE.  
MY REFUGE.



AS A BOY, WHEN-  
EVER LIFE GOT  
ROUGH, I'D LOOK  
UP AT THE PATTERNS  
ON MY CEILING...

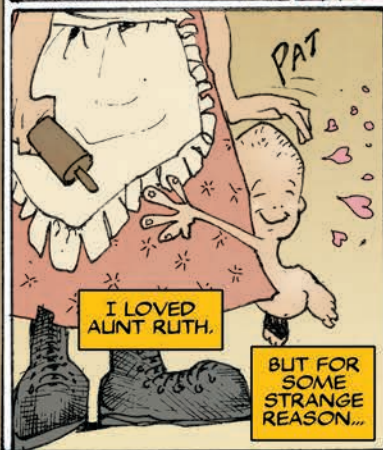
...AND FLOAT  
AWAY.



MY FOLKS  
DIED WHEN I  
WAS LITTLE.



I WAS SENT  
TO LIVE WITH  
MY AUNT RUTH.



I LOVED  
AUNT RUTH.

BUT FOR SOME  
STRANGE  
REASON...



...I GREW  
UP HATING  
AND FEARING  
WOMEN.  
THEY WERE  
EVIL. I WAS  
SURE OF IT.

EXCEPT  
AUNT RUTH,  
OF COURSE.



SOMETIMES I'D  
DO WRONG, AND  
BE PUNISHED.  
BUT I ALWAYS  
KNEW WHY...

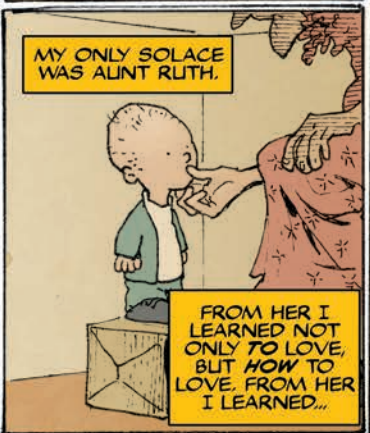


...I DESERVED  
IT. **INSIDE**  
I WAS AN  
UGLY, PERVERTED  
LITTLE WORM.



I DID NOT KNOW  
HOW I GOT TO BE  
THIS WAY. I ONLY  
KNEW I WAS.

EVERYONE KNEW.  
AT SCHOOL, HOME,  
EVERYWHERE, I  
WAS A STUPID AND  
CLUMSY FOOL.



MY ONLY SOLACE  
WAS AUNT RUTH.

FROM HER I  
LEARNED NOT  
ONLY TO LOVE,  
BUT HOW TO  
LOVE. FROM HER  
I LEARNED...



...PATTERNS.

THEY  
TAKE YOU  
AWAY...



...HELP YOU  
FORGET...



...NOT BE  
THERE.

BY THE TIME I WAS 11, I WAS DETERMINED TO FIND OUT WHY I WAS SUCH A **DISAPPOINTMENT** TO AUNT RUTH, AND EVERYONE ELSE.

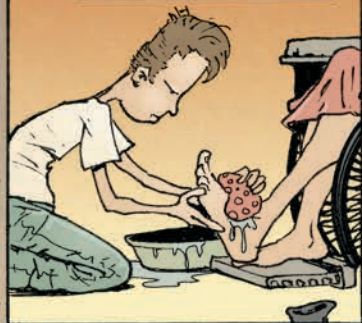


I READ EVERYTHING I COULD UNDERSTAND, PHYSICS, METAPHYSICS, PHILOSOPHY. BUT NOTHING HELPED. I LONGED FOR MAGIC POWERS TO HELP ME ESCAPE MY MISERABLE LIFE. BUT MOSTLY I JUST READ, FOR THE SAME REASON I LOOKED AT WALLPAPER...

...TO ESCAPE.



BY THAT TIME, AUNT RUTH NEEDED MORE AND MORE CARE, WHICH I RESENTED.



SHE HIRED A "BABY SITTER". **DEXTER**. HE'D LAUGH AND BEAT ME UP WHEN WE WERE ALONE...



...AND FORCED ME TO DO...

...OTHER STUFF...



HE SAID HE'D BURN DOWN OUR HOUSE IF I DIDN'T. I KNOW HE WOULD'VE DONE IT.

I REMEMBER THINKING THAT THIS MUST BE WHAT BABY SITTERS DO.

I HATED HIM.



AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS HE QUIT. I DON'T KNOW WHY.



NEXT AUNT RUTH GOT SOME GIRL TO TAKE OVER. LUCKY ME.



AT LEAST **THIS** ONE DIDN'T BEAT ME UP.

BUT I KNEW WHAT WAS EXPECTED...



HEY, YOU LITTLE PERVERT! STOP THAT!

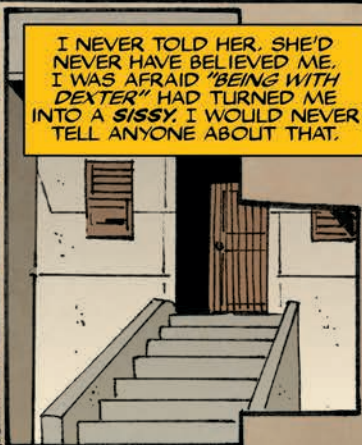
...OR THOUGHT I DID.



AUNT RUTH BEAT ME HARDER THAN SHE EVER HAD BEFORE. SHE WANTED TO KNOW WHERE I HAD LEARNED STUFF LIKE THAT.



I NEVER TOLD HER. SHE'D NEVER HAVE BELIEVED ME. I WAS AFRAID "BEING WITH **DEXTER**" HAD TURNED ME INTO A **SISSY**. I WOULD NEVER TELL ANYONE ABOUT THAT.



THAT NIGHT I RAN AWAY. IT WAS NO GREAT LOSS, BECAUSE BEING IN THAT HOUSE WITH AUNT RUTH ONLY REMINDED ME WHAT A WORTHLESS AND ROTTEN KID I WAS.

SCREW WALLPAPER. I'D LITERALLY ESCAPE!

OR SO I THOUGHT.

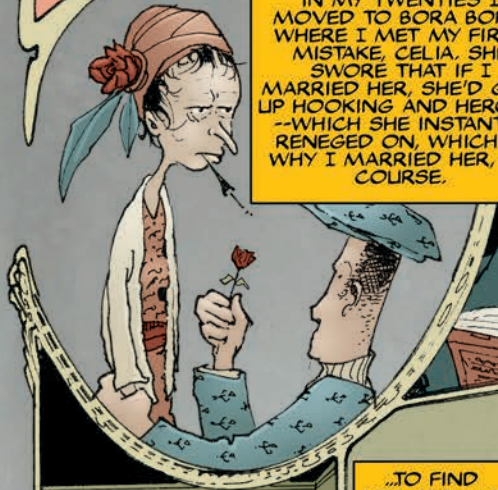


# 1st WIFE

IN MY TWENTIES I MOVED TO BORA BORA, WHERE I MET MY FIRST MISTAKE, CELIA. SHE SWORE THAT IF I MARRIED HER, SHE'D GIVE UP HOOKING AND HEROIN --WHICH SHE INSTANTLY RENEGED ON, WHICH IS WHY I MARRIED HER, OF COURSE.

IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME THAT I SET OUT TO LEARN WHY WOMEN SCARED AND ANGERED ME SO. IT WAS PUZZLING, ASIDE FROM THE OCCASIONAL PUNISHMENT, MY AUNT HAD SHOWN ME NOTHING BUT LOVE.

I DIDN'T GET IT. WHERE DID IT COME FROM, THIS FEAR OF THE FEMININE? AND WHY WERE CELIA'S WORST QUALITIES THOSE THAT KEPT ME WITH HER?



I OFTEN CAME HOME...

...TO FIND HER STRUNG OUT. WHEN SHE AWOKE...



...I'D BE BLAMED.



SHE'D YELL AND SCREAM, THEN APOLOGIZE AFTERWARDS.

\*\*\*



THEN I'D FEEL SECRETLY SUPERIOR.



AND THEN, EVENTUALLY, I'D FEEL SORRY FOR HER...

...AND THEN I'D "HELP" HER.



A JUNKIE'S RARELY IN THE MOOD, AND I GOT PHYSICALLY ILL AT THE THOUGHT OF NORMAL RELATIONS. I DON'T KNOW WHY.



I'D DEVELOPED A FETISH OF WEARING A PARKA AND BAG OVER MY HEAD. I SHARED IT WITH CELIA ONCE...



WHAT'RE YOU, JOKING?! WHAT AN IDIOT YOU LOOK LIKE! TAKE IT OFF!



AFTER THAT WE DID IT "NORMALLY", BUT I WASN'T THERE.

I FELT NAUSEA.

SO MANY TIMES I'D AWAKE TO CELIA ACCUSING ME OF HIDING MONEY SO THAT SHE COULDN'T SHOOT UP.



I'D USE ANY EXCUSE TO INDULGE MY FEAR OF THE FEMININE, AND CELIA GAVE ME EVERY OPPORTUNITY.



THE COMING OF OUR FIRST BABY GAVE ME HOPE!



BUT EVEN WITH CHILD, CELIA CONTINUED HOOKING FOR DRUG MONEY.



I'D OFTEN THROW STRANGERS OUT OF OUR BEDROOM.



I NAMED OUR SON PHRED, HE WAS AMAZING. I LOVED THE LITTLE GUY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I WAS HAPPY.



I SUSPECTED CELIA OF BEATING PHRED, AND SHE ADMITTED IT.



SHE BEGGED ME NOT TO LEAVE HER. SHE SAID SHE'D NEVER TOUCH PHRED AGAIN.



SHORTLY AFTER, I HAD TO LEAVE TOWN FOR A WEEK ON BUSINESS.



CELIA WAS PISSED! BUT I HAD TO GO.

FINDING CELIA HIGH WHEN I RETURNED WAS NO SURPRISE, BUT TO MY HORROR...



...PHRED'S EYES HAD BEEN REMOVED, WITH THE SKIN SEWN OVER THE SOCKETS.



CELIA SAID A DOCTOR IN TOWN HAD NEEDED AN EYE TRANSPLANT, AND SHE'D SOLD HIM PHRED'S EYES FOR A BIG BOX OF MORPHINE.



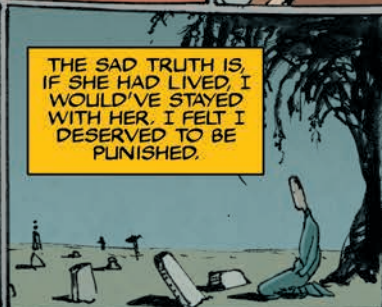
MY FEARS OF WOMEN AND THE FEMININE WERE WELL PLACED. CELIA TOOK THE ONLY THING I EVER LOVED, AS PHRED DIED SOON AFTERWARDS.



I WANTED TO KILL CELIA, BUT SHE BEAT ME TO IT, ODING A MONTH LATER.



THE SAD TRUTH IS, IF SHE HAD LIVED, I WOULD'VE STAYED WITH HER. I FELT I DESERVED TO BE PUNISHED.



AND THAT'S THE ONE THING ME AND CELIA BOTH AGREED ON.

