

HELLBOY™



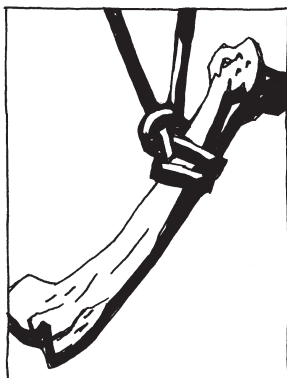
THE CROOKED MAN *and* OTHERS

MIKE MIGNOLA ✕ RICHARD CORBEN

FEGREDO ✕ DYSART ✕ ALEXANDER

HELLBOY™

THE CROOKED MAN
and OTHERS





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THE CROOKED MAN *and* OTHERS

by

MIKE MIGNOLA
RICHARD CORBEN
DUNCAN FEGREDO
JOSHUA DYSART
JASON SHAWN ALEXANDER

Colored by

DAVE STEWART

Lettered by

CLEM ROBINS



Introduction by

GAHAN WILSON

Edited by

SCOTT ALLIE

Hellboy logo designed by

KEVIN NOWLAN

Collection designed by

MIKE MIGNOLA & CARY GRAZZINI

Publisher

MIKE RICHARDSON



DARK HORSE BOOKS®

“The Crooked Man” written by MIKE MIGNOLA, drawn by RICHARD CORBEN.

*“They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships” written by MIKE MIGNOLA
and JOSHUA DYSART, drawn by JASON SHAWN ALEXANDER.*

“In the Chapel of Moloch” written and drawn by MIKE MIGNOLA.

“The Mole” written by MIKE MIGNOLA, drawn by DUNCAN FEGREDO.

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This volume collects *Hellboy: The Crooked Man* #1–#3, the one-shot comics *Hellboy: In the Chapel of Moloch* and *Hellboy: They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships*, and the story “The Mole” from *Free Comic Book Day 2008: Hellboy*, published by Dark Horse Comics.

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

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INTRODUCTION

by GAHAN WILSON

I freely and willingly admit to admiring a number of graphic artists and novelists working in the field today, but with Mike Mignola and his *Hellboy*, I confess it's a matter of awe.

The grand old heroes such as Superman and Batman and Captain Marvel, who shoved aside the collections of reprinted newspaper cartoon strips called comic books, were and are excellent fellows and no doubt of it. They boldly opened up a whole new realm of adventurous possibilities with enthusiasm and repeatedly defeated reliable villains to everyone's great satisfaction, but they were seriously lacking in depth.

News reporters such as Clark Kent and Billy Batson could, indeed, transform themselves into spectacular superpeople, but I remember as a kid increasingly suspecting that both their ordinary human and extraordinary superselves were—face it—kind of dull guys. I tried to hope Kent or Batson would or could plow deeper or soar higher into more interesting personalities but finally decided that neither they nor their caped alternates had the imagination or the daring to pull it off. I don't hold it against them and still am sentimental about them (who could possibly hate Superman or Captain Marvel?) but I have to admit the realization was a definite letdown.

In my opinion, Mignola's *Hellboy* is far and away beyond either of those two early superpredecessors and all the others that followed. The vast bulk of them differ only in costumes or superpower oddities, most have all the personality of a department-store-window dummy, and almost none of them show any signs of the trauma,

which is very evident in *Hellboy*, of being so bizarrely different from their fellow humans.

The basic image Mignola chose for his superbeing is absolutely brilliant and totally different from any preceding superhero—a devil as the good guy, and one who has cloven feet to boot. It makes clear *Hellboy*'s ambiguity at first glimpse and underlines his conflict throughout the series.

Hellboy is a modern version of the kind of super-heroes found in Norse mythology such as Wotan or Thor, and one of the subtlest aspects of Mignola's creation is that the powers such beings have are two edged and very sharply honed.

If you are given supervision, just to give one example, it not only allows you to see things ordinary humans can never be aware of, it allows the things seen to see you seeing them, and that can be very dangerous.

Part of the magic of what Mignola has done is to allow us to see and understand something of what his hero sees and understands. Reading a *Hellboy* adventure is to share it and learn a little from it; seeing the strange nighttime colors will enrich your twilights henceforth, and observing the tenderness of a hero who can be extraordinarily brutal may very well make you just a little kinder.

Mike Mignola and *Hellboy* and the small army of brilliant people at Dark Horse Comics whom he has guided and worked with are a grand and wonderful example—and I do not use the word “wonderful” lightly—of how an art or a craft can be magically transformed by really good artists and craftsmen.

For Manly Wade Wellman, who made
me realize just how many horrible things are
hiding back there in the woods.

The Crooked Man

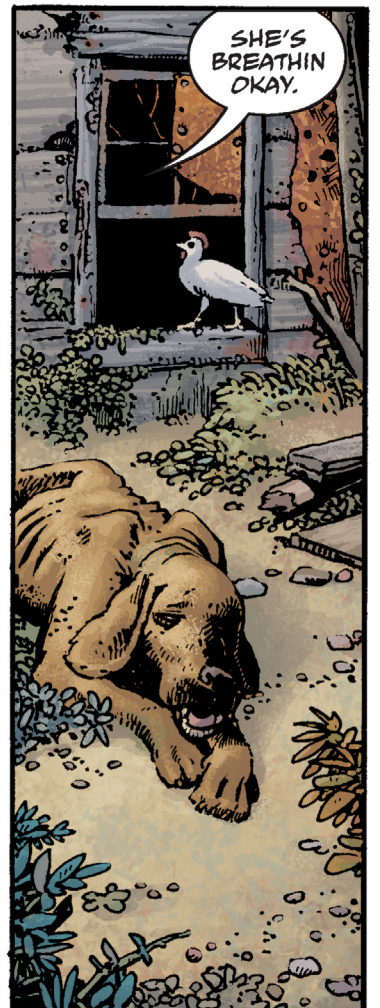
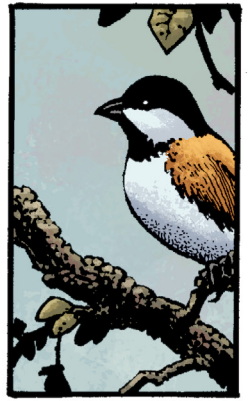
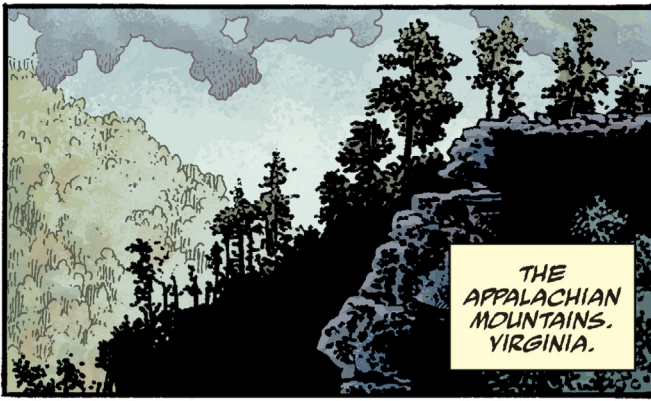


MANLY WADE WELLMAN'S CHARACTER JOHN, who wandered around the Appalachian Mountains playing his guitar and fighting monsters (see the essay at the back of this book for more info), was a major influence on me when I created Hellboy. Some of the better Hellboy stories ("The Corpse," "Heads," "The Troll Witch") have that aimless-wanderer feel, but until *The Crooked Man* I'd never set a story in John's neck of the woods. In fact, I'd done very few stories set in America and *none* drawing on American folklore. Oops.

Usually I have some vague plot idea before I start doing research for a story—not this time. Other than locations I had no idea what I was going to do. Fortunately, over the years, I'd picked up a couple collections of Appalachian folktales (knowing this day would eventually come). I sat down and started reading, circling cool bits I wanted to use (witchballs, cat bones, etc.), and before I was halfway through the first book all those bits sort of cobbled themselves into a story. It all came together much faster than I expected. I love when that happens. It doesn't happen very often and it *never* happens on a story this long. My goal here was to do something that had the feel, the authenticity, of those folktales without being an adaptation of any one of them—which is what Wellman's stories always felt like to me—and I think I managed to pull that off. Of course I could *not* have pulled it off without the great Richard Corben. For my money nobody draws better scruffy trees, twigs, and falling-down churches than Richard. I wrote this story specifically for him, and he really delivered the goods.

Curiously, while I was writing this story, my daughter discovered a cat leg bone in our backyard—no other bones, just that one leg bone. Funny. I used it for reference when drawing the title page for this story.

The Crooked Man was originally published as a three-issue miniseries in 2008 and won the 2009 Eisner Award for best limited series.







I KNEW
HER YEARS
BACK.



SHE
WEREN'T
A WITCH
THEN.



LORD
HAVE
MERCY.

CAN'T
BE--

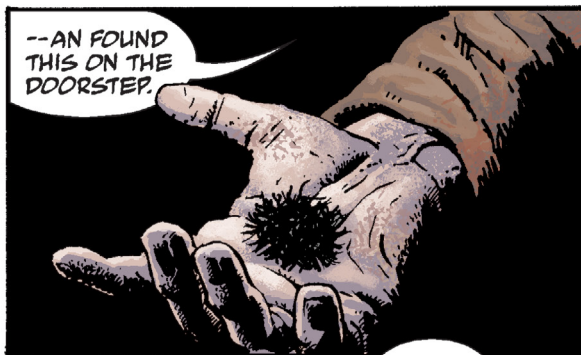
TOM
FERRELL?



YEAH.
I AIN'T
DEAD
YET.

YOU
KNOW
SOMETHING
ABOUT
THIS?

I
WAS JUST
PASSIN BY.
HEARD VOICES.
THOUGHT I'D
DUCK IN AN SAY
HELLO--



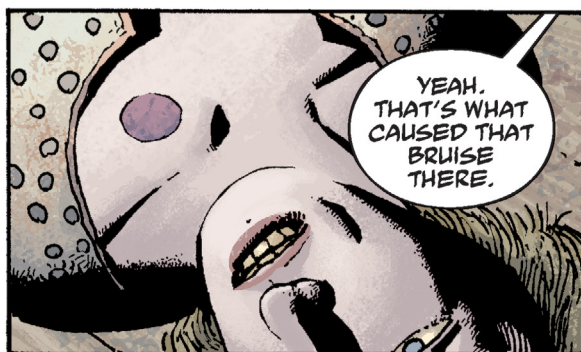
--AN FOUND
THIS ON THE
DOORSTEP.



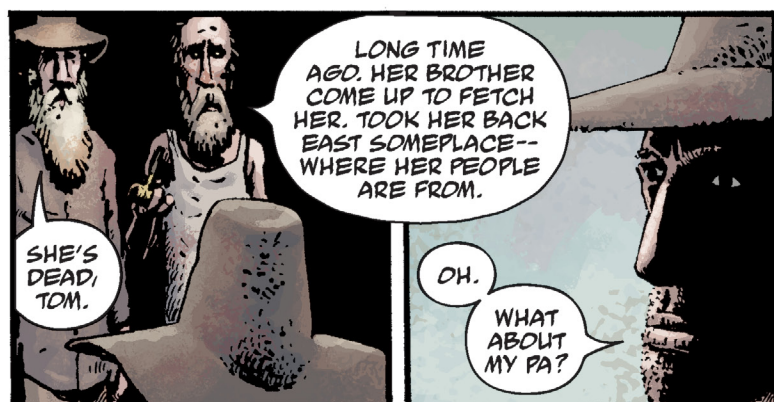
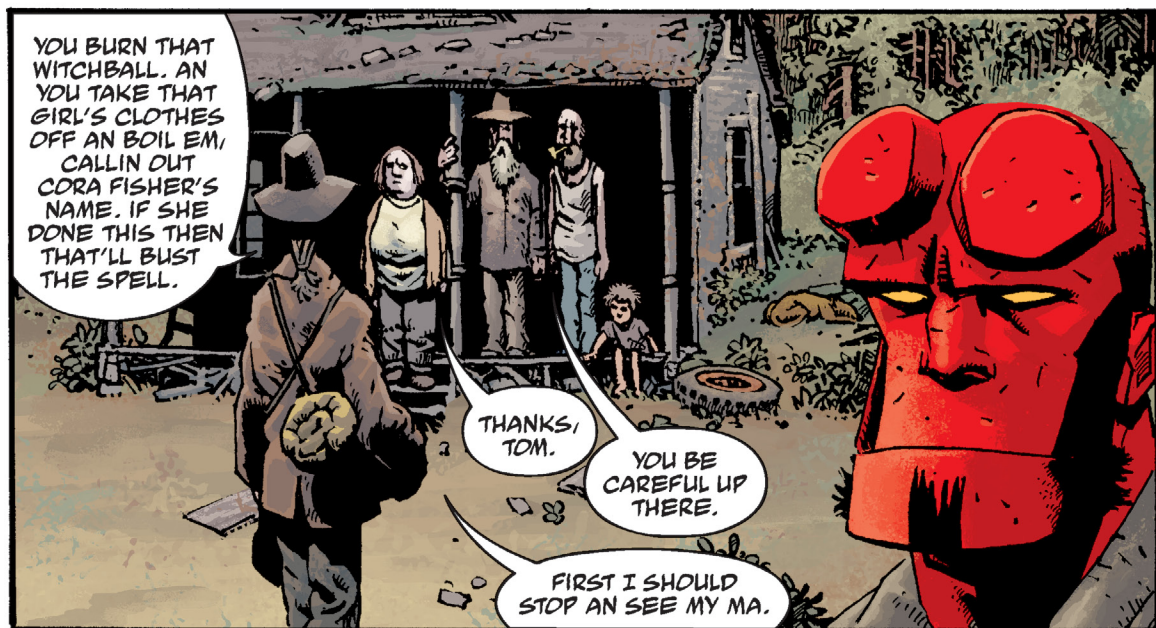
WITCH-
BALL?

UGH.

I'VE
HEARD OF
THESE.



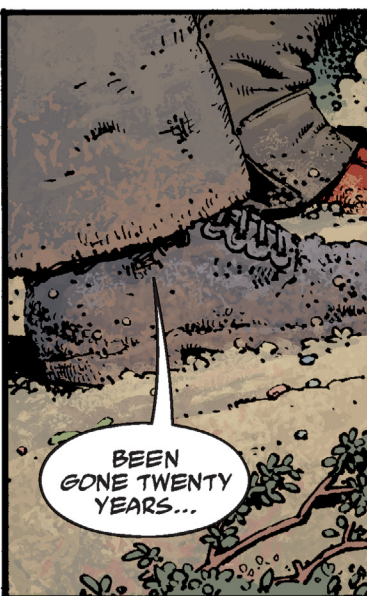
YEAH.
THAT'S WHAT
CAUSED THAT
BRUISE
THERE.



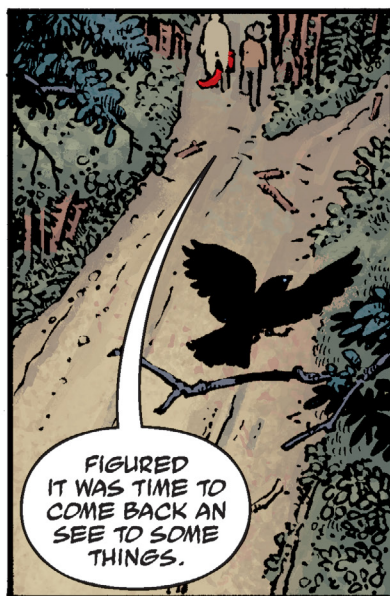


SO...I
GUESS YOU'RE
FROM AROUND
HERE.

YEAH.



BEEN
GONE TWENTY
YEARS...



FIGURED
IT WAS TIME TO
COME BACK AN
SEE TO SOME
THINGS.



WHAT
BRINGS
YOU THIS
WAY?

NOTHING
REALLY.

I FINISHED
UP SOME STUFF
DOWN SOUTH AND
THOUGHT I'D JUST
WANDER AROUND
FOR A WHILE.



YOU LOOKIN FOR
TROUBLE?

NOT
REALLY.

I HEARD OF
YOU, YOU KNOW.
RECOGNIZED
YOU RIGHT
OFF.

OH
YEAH?



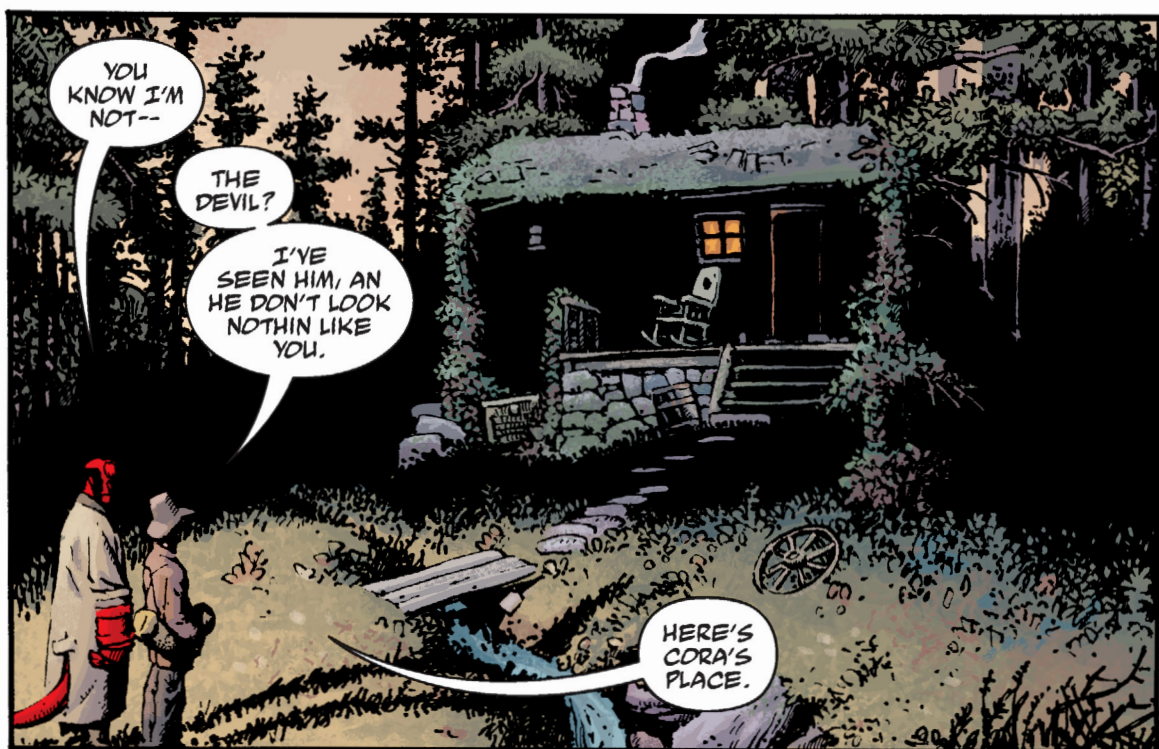
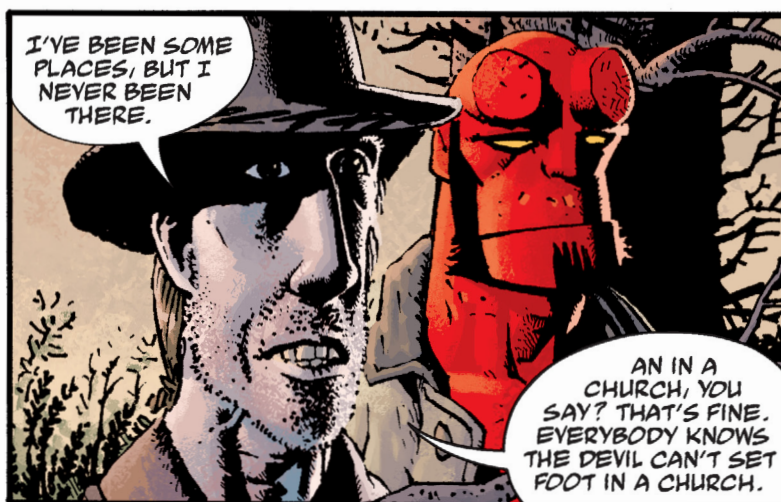
SAW A PICTURE OF YOU IN
LIFE MAGAZINE SOME YEARS
BACK.* YOU WERE A CUTE
LITTLE FELLA. LIKE A
LITTLE MONKEY.

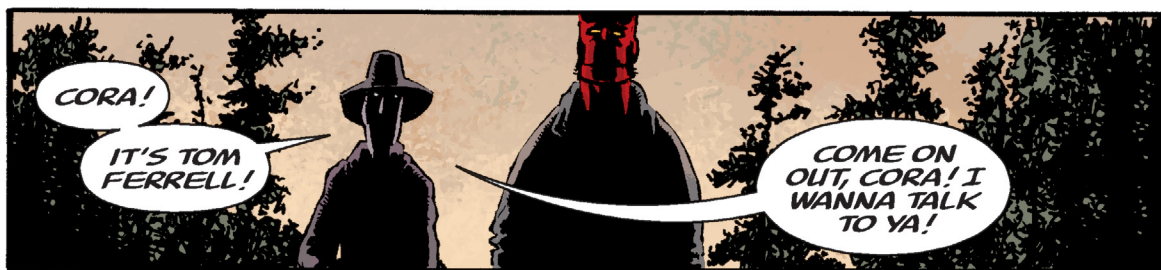


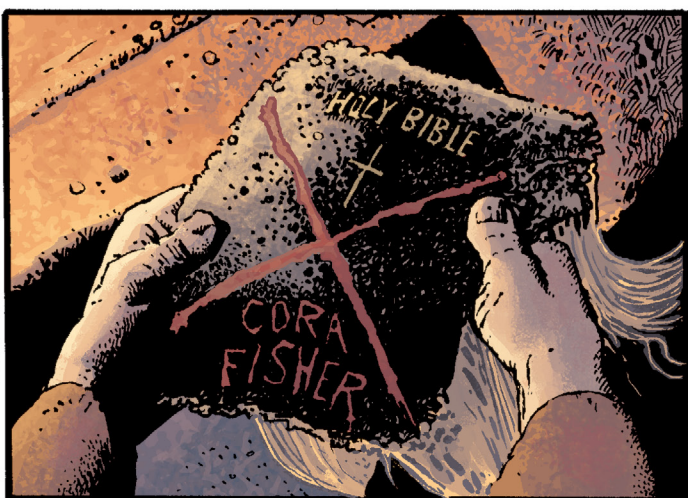
GUESS YOU'RE
ALL GROWN UP
NOW, THOUGH. HEARD
YOU'VE SCRAPPED
WITH VAMPIRES AN
SUCH?

A
COUPLE
TIMES.

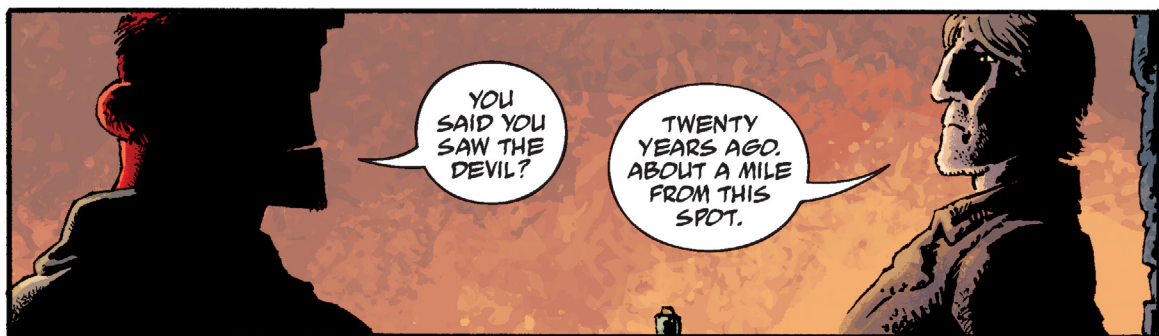
ALL
RIGHT.

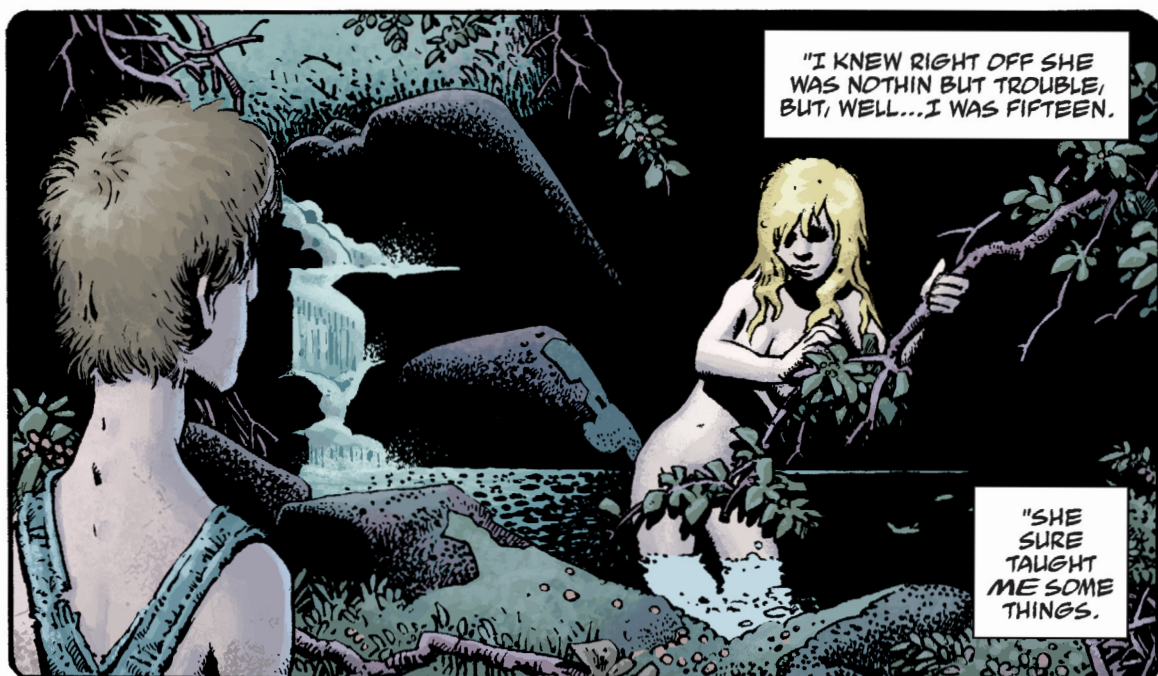






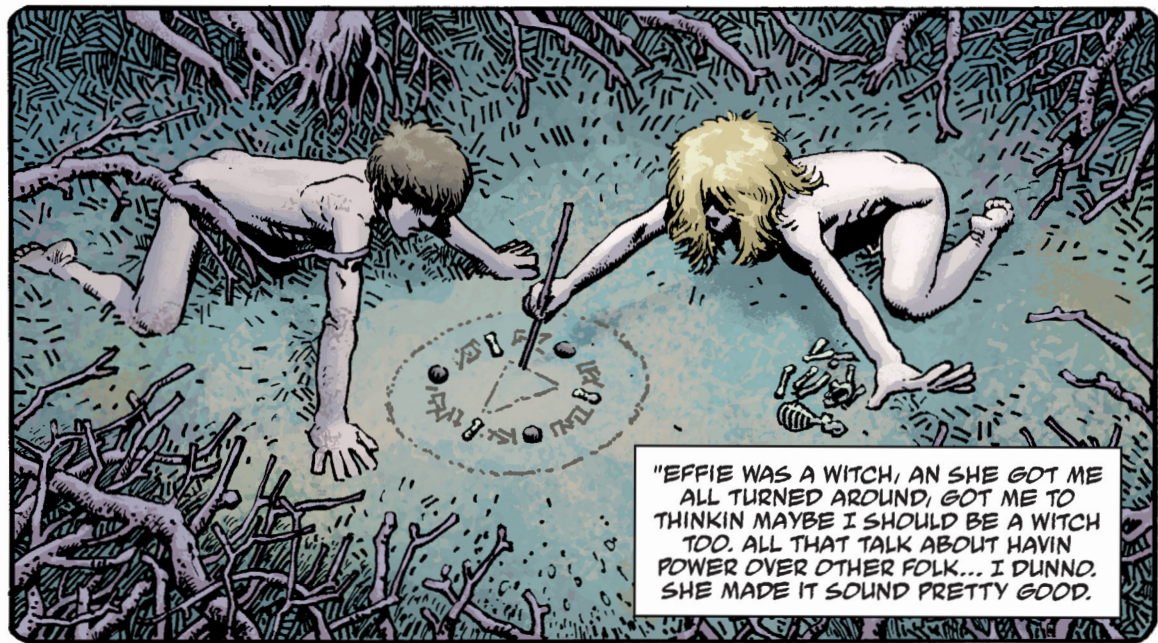






"I KNEW RIGHT OFF SHE WAS NOTHIN BUT TROUBLE, BUT, WELL...I WAS FIFTEEN.

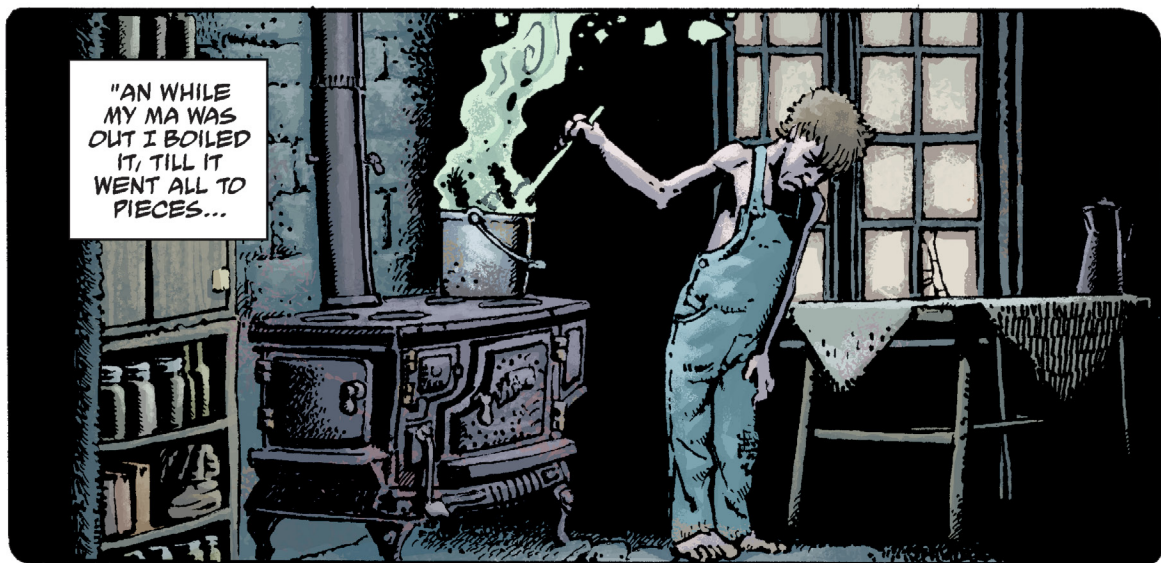
"SHE SURE TAUGHT ME SOME THINGS.



"EFFIE WAS A WITCH, AN SHE GOT ME ALL TURNED AROUND, GOT ME TO THINKIN MAYBE I SHOULD BE A WITCH TOO. ALL THAT TALK ABOUT HAVIN POWER OVER OTHER FOLK... I DUNNO. SHE MADE IT SOUND PRETTY GOOD.



"SO ONE DAY I FOUND ME A SQUASHED BLACK CAT...



"AN WHILE
MY MA WAS
OUT I BOILED
IT, TILL IT
WENT ALL TO
PIECES..."



"THEN I
TOOK THAT
MESS DOWN
TO THE
CREEK TO
WASH OUT
THE BONES."

IN THE NAME OF BEELZEBUB,
SUCCUBUS, AN THE ARCHANGEL
A HELL, I PLEDGE TO BE LOYAL
TO THE DEVIL THE REST A MY
BORN DAYS, TO NEVER PRAY
TO GOD AGAIN, AN
NEVER TO--

"EFFIE'D TOLD
ME WHATEVER
BONE I WAS
HOLDIN WHEN
THE DEVIL
SHOWED UP--"



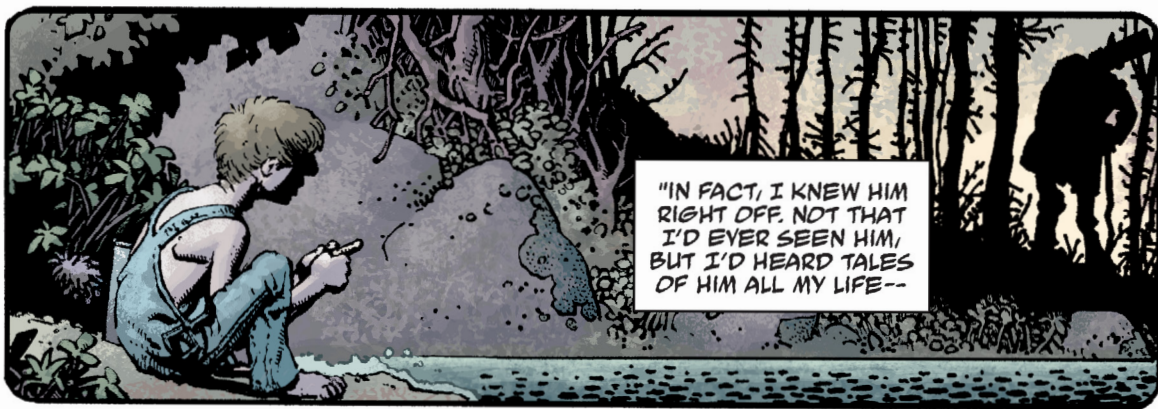
THAT'D
BE MY LUCKY
BONE.



NOW I WAS EXPECTIN
THAT OL DEVIL TO LOOK
SOMETHING LIKE YOU.
NO OFFENSE.

NONE
TAKEN.

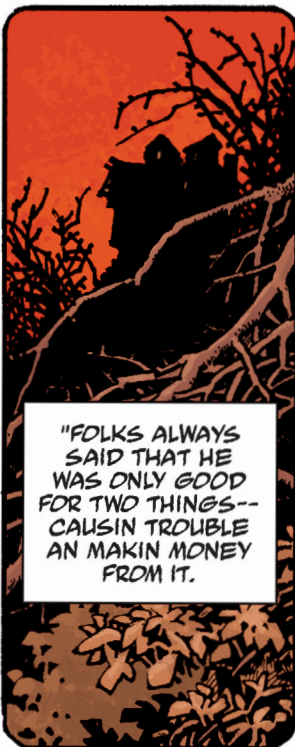
BUT HE
DIDN'T LOOK
NOTHIN
LIKE YOU...



"IN FACT, I KNEW HIM
RIGHT OFF. NOT THAT
I'D EVER SEEN HIM,
BUT I'D HEARD TALES
OF HIM ALL MY LIFE--

"MISER WITKINS.
THAT'S WHAT
SOME OF THE OLD
FOLKS CALLED
HIM. MOST JUST
CALLED HIM *THE*
CROOKED MAN.

"THEY SAY HE'S GOT A BIG HOUSE
BACK UP THERE IN THE HURRICANE,
THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST
WHITE MEN TO COME UP INTO THESE
MOUNTAINS HUNDREDS A YEARS
AGO. THAT HE WAS BEHIND HALF THE
TROUBLE BETWEEN THE WHITES AN
THE INDIANS, AN THAT HE WAS FOR
THE BRITISH IN THE REVOLUTION AN
PLAYED BOTH SIDES IN THE WAR
BETWEEN THE STATES.



"FOLKS ALWAYS
SAID THAT HE
WAS ONLY GOOD
FOR TWO THINGS--
CAUSIN TROUBLE
AN MAKIN MONEY
FROM IT.



"AN THAT'S
WHAT GOT
HIM HANGED
IN THE END.



"BUT THAT
CHIEF DEVIL
IN HELL SENT
HIM BACK--TO
HOARD SOULS
NOW, STEAD
OF GOLD.



"LET ME TELL YA,
ONE LOOK AT HIM
SCARED ALL THE BAD
THOUGHTS RIGHT OUT
A ME. I LIT OUT FOR
HOME, SWEARIN ALL
THE WAY TO BE GOOD
AGAIN. BUT FOR
SOME REASON I
NEVER LET GO A
THAT LUCKY BONE.



"AN WHAT DO
YOU THINK I
FOUND WAITIN
ON MY FRONT
STEP?



"SOME'D SAY IT WAS JUST A
TOAD, BUT I KNEW *HE'D* SENT
IT. IT WAS MY DEMON--

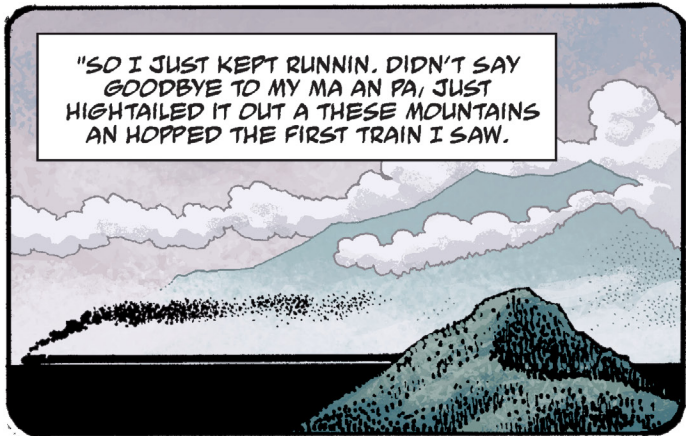
RURP



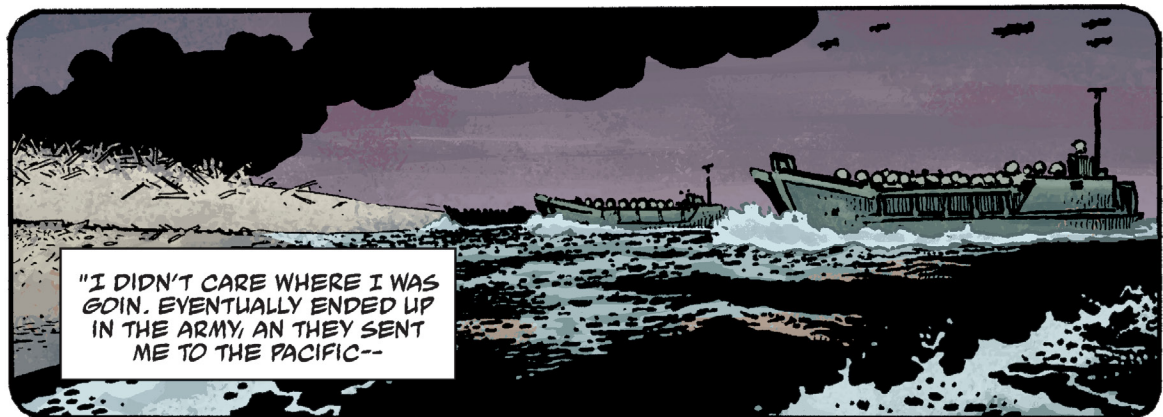
"HE'D SENT
IT TO ME TO
HELP ME
DO EVIL--



"SO I JUST KEPT RUNNIN. DIDN'T SAY
GOODBYE TO MY MA AN PA, JUST
HIGHTAILED IT OUT A THESE MOUNTAINS
AN HOPPED THE FIRST TRAIN I SAW.



"I DIDN'T CARE WHERE I WAS
GOIN. EVENTUALLY ENDED UP
IN THE ARMY, AN THEY SENT
ME TO THE PACIFIC--





"GOT THROUGH THAT
WITHOUT A SCRAPE--"



--CAUSE A
THIS DAMN
THING.

IT'S GOT
POWER IN IT,
BUT I NEVER
USED IT. NEVER
WISHED HARM ON
ANYBODY--NOT EVEN
THOSE JAPANESE
FELLAS.

THINK
MAYBE THAT
MEANS I AIN'T
REALLY A
WITCH?

I DON'T
KNOW.

AFTER
THE WAR I JUST
BUMMED AROUND...



HELL, I GUESS
I AIN'T NEVER BEEN
ANYTHING BUT A
BUM.

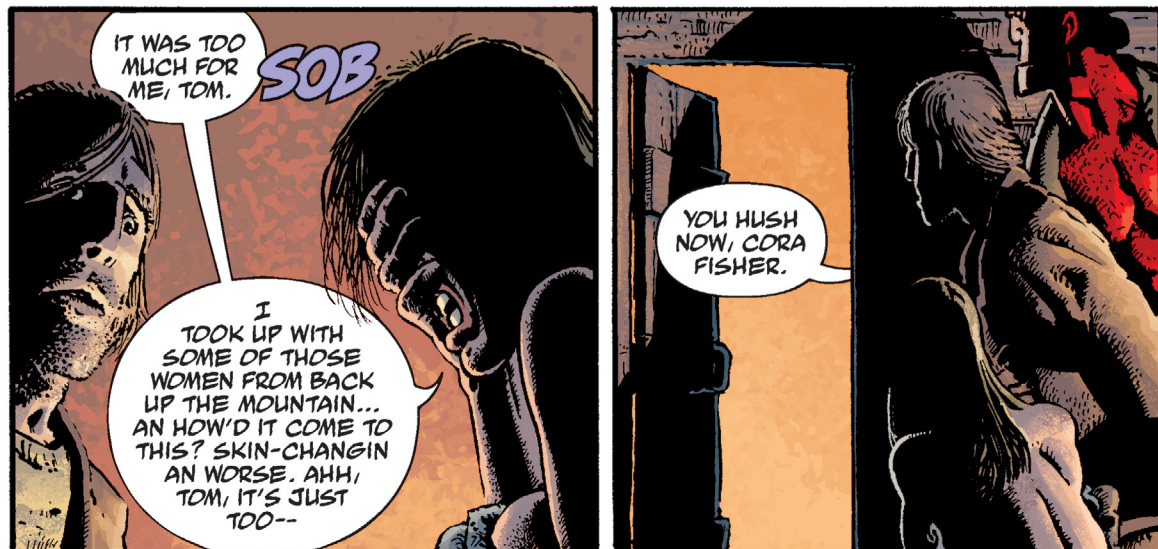
SHHH.

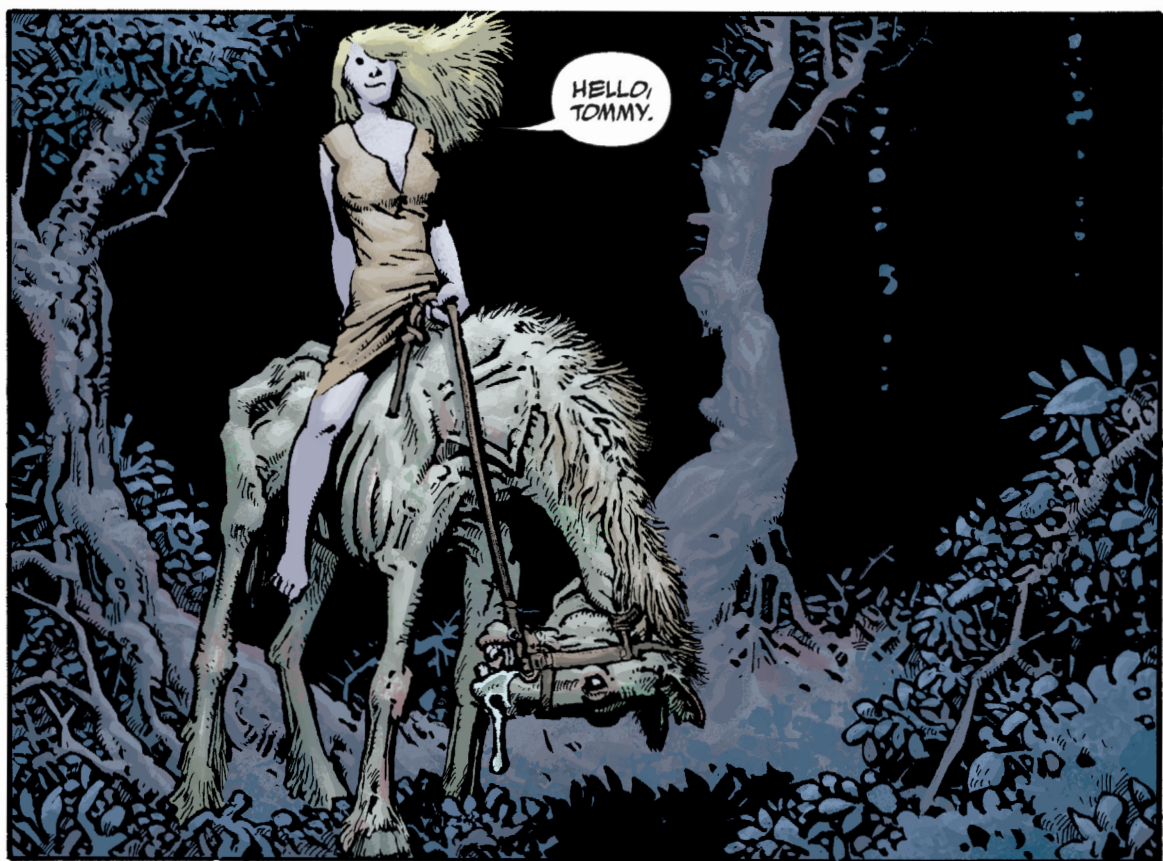
YOU HEAR
SOMETHING?

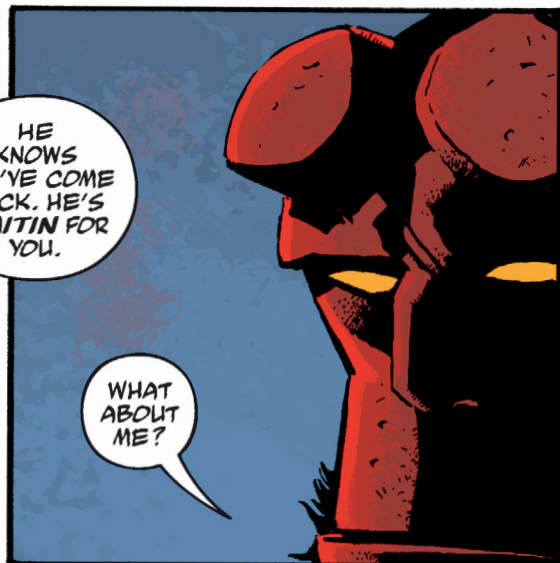
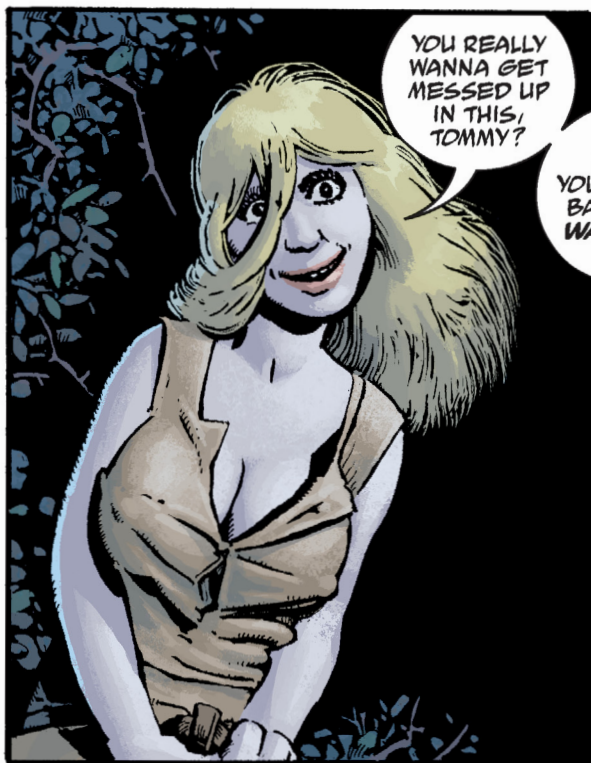
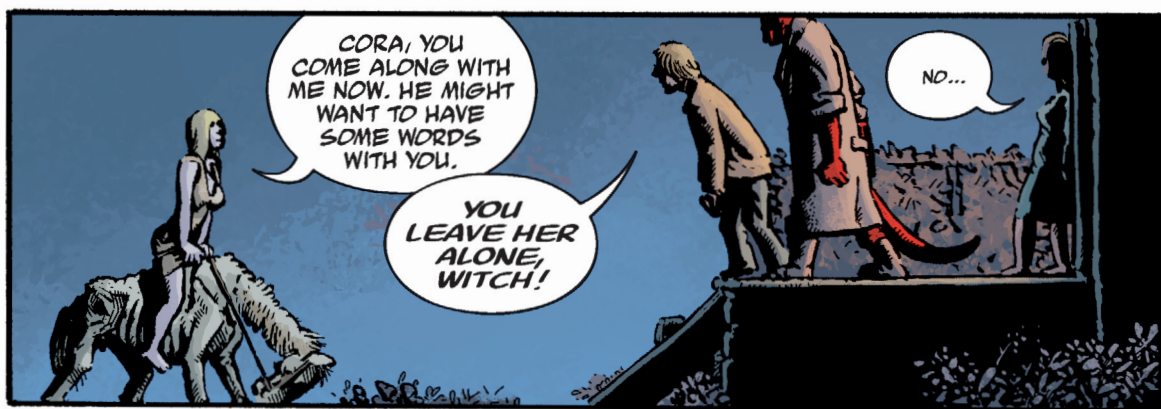


FLUP







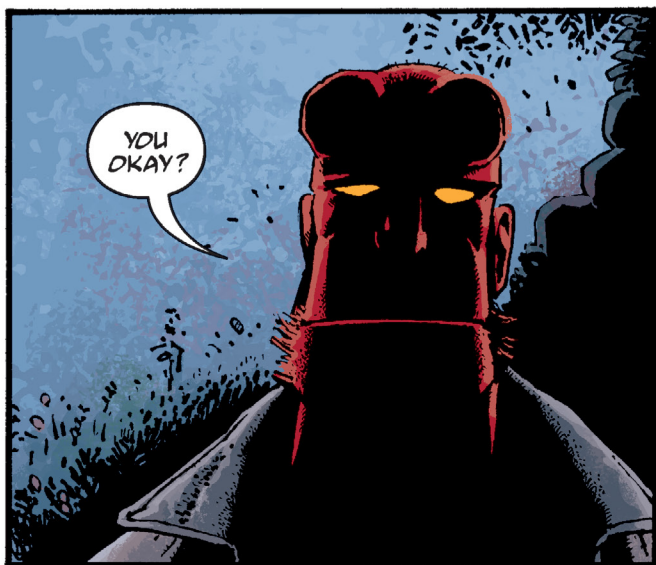


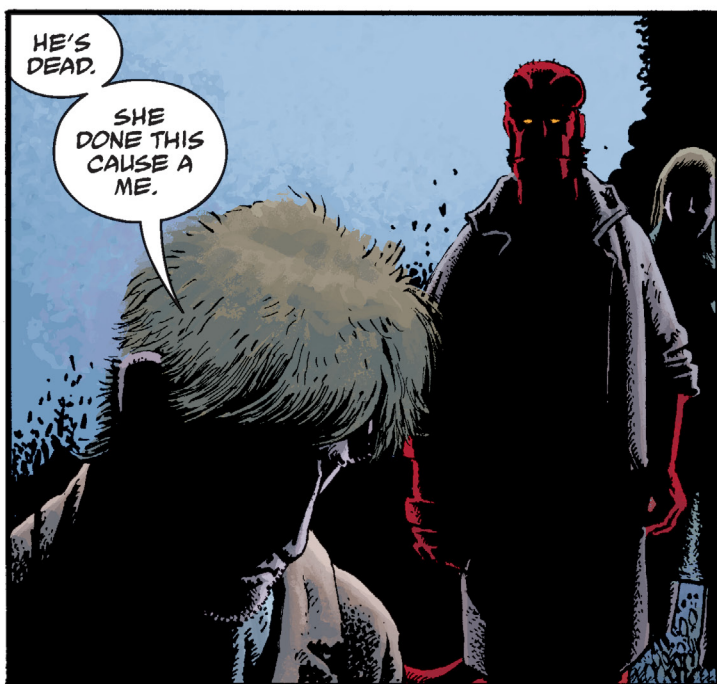
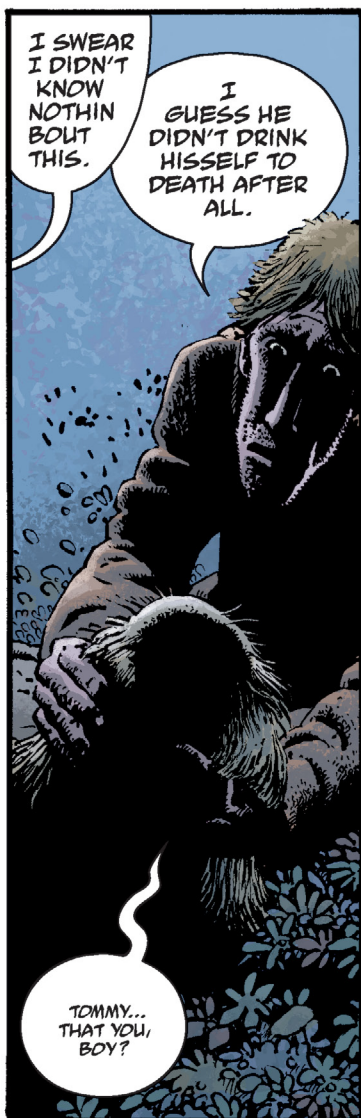
FRAID
HE DON'T
LOOK LIKE
MUCH.

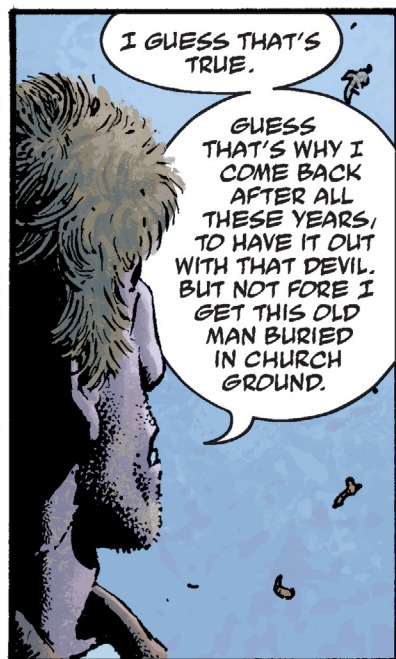
I
BEEN
RIDIN HIM
PRETTY HARD,
EVERY NIGHT
SINCE YOU
LEFT.

CRAP.



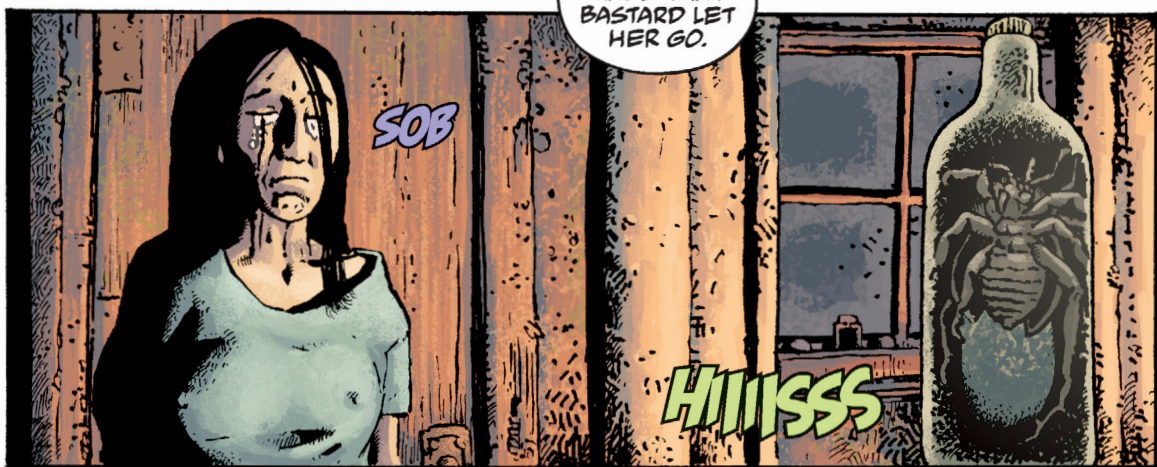


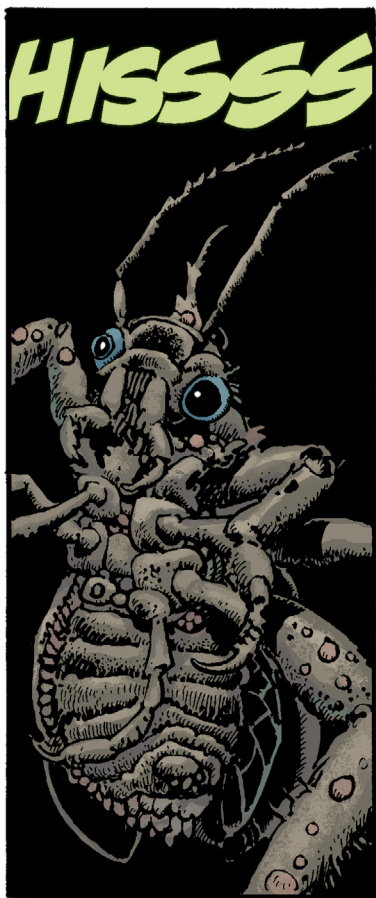






SO WE'LL
MAKE THAT
BASTARD LET
HER GO.



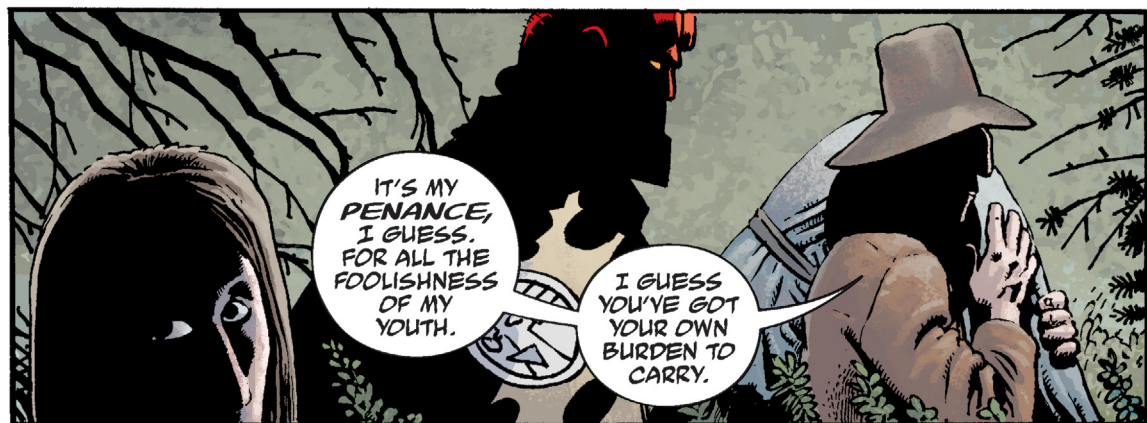




YOU SURE?

YEAH.

I FIGURE
THIS HERE IS MY
BURDEN TO CARRY.
IT'S LIKE THE FELLA
IN THAT OLD STORY...
THE ONE THAT HAD ALL
HIS SINS TIED UP IN A
SACK ON HIS BACK
AND HE HAD TO
CARRY EM.



IT'S MY
PENANCE,
I GUESS.
FOR ALL THE
FOOLISHNESS
OF MY
YOUTH.

I GUESS
YOU'VE GOT
YOUR OWN
BURDEN TO
CARRY.



I GUESS.

YOU
DON'T
FEEL IT
YET.



GUESS
NOT.



YOU
WILL.





THE MINES.

COAL MINES.

THE MOUNTAINS
ROUND HERE
ARE SNAKED
FULLA
TUNNELS.



AND
THEY'RE
DOWN IN
THERE. I
HEAR
EM.



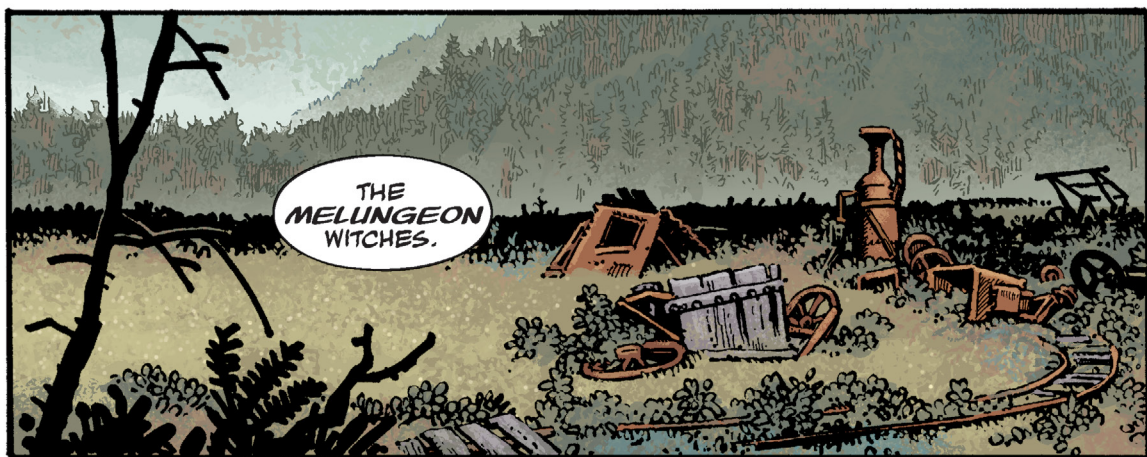
"THEY"?

LOOK AT THIS
FELLA HERE.
YOU THINK HE
CAN'T HANDLE
ANY TROUBLE
THEY COOK
UP?

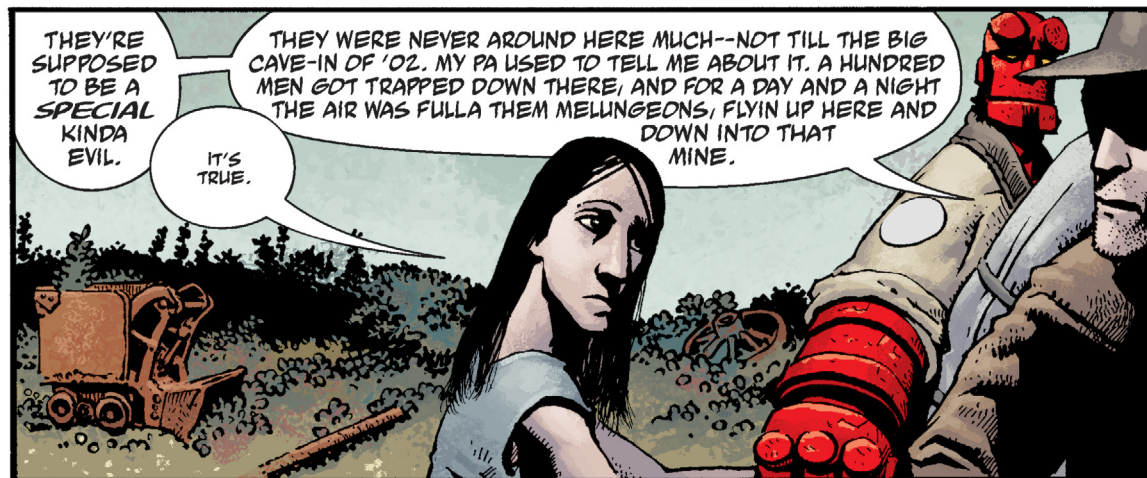
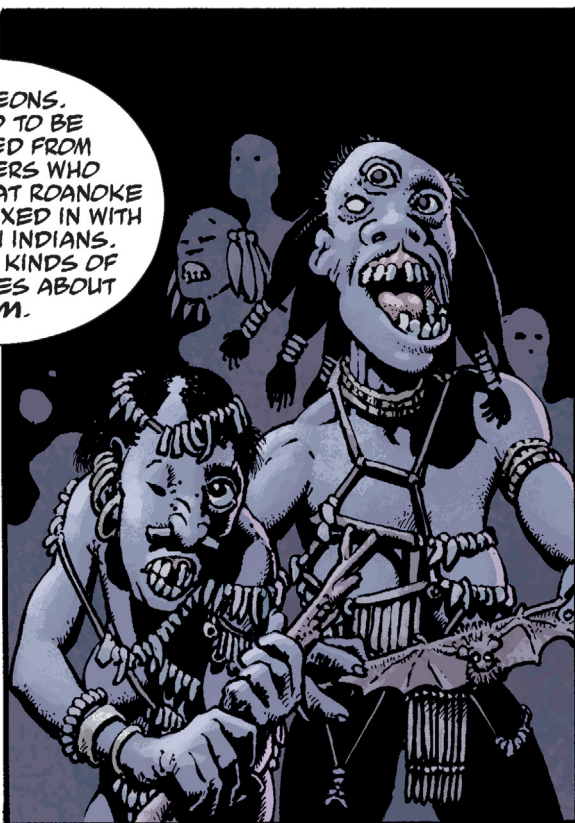
NO...



NOT
THE ONES
DOWN
THERE.



MELUNGEONS. SUPPOSED TO BE DESCENDED FROM THE SETTLERS WHO DISAPPEARED AT ROANOKE ISLAND, GOT MIXED IN WITH THE CROATAN INDIANS. THERE'S ALL KINDS OF CRAZY STORIES ABOUT THEM.



THEY WERE NEVER AROUND HERE MUCH--NOT TILL THE BIG CAVE-IN OF '02. MY PA USED TO TELL ME ABOUT IT. A HUNDRED MEN GOT TRAPPED DOWN THERE, AND FOR A DAY AND A NIGHT THE AIR WAS FULLA THEM MELUNGEONS, FLYIN UP HERE AND DOWN INTO THAT MINE.



PA SAYS
THERE WAS
SOME SCREAMIN
DOWN THERE FOR A
WHILE, THEN NOTHING.
HE FIGURED THOSE
WITCHES WENT
DOWN THERE TO
EAT THOSE
FELLAS.

I
HATE THAT
KIND OF
CRAP.

AND HE
NEVER HEARD
TELL OF ANY OF
THOSE WITCHES
COMIN BACK UP
OUT OF THERE
AGAIN.



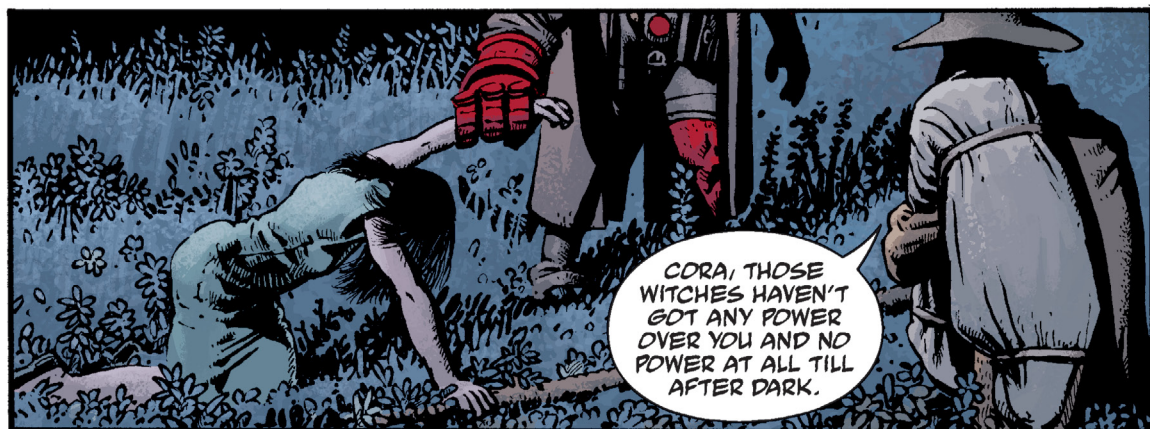


CORA FISHER.



AHH!

THEY
KNOW MY
NAME!



CORA, THOSE
WITCHES HAVEN'T
GOT ANY POWER
OVER YOU AND NO
POWER AT ALL TILL
AFTER DARK.



WHAT
THE
HELL?

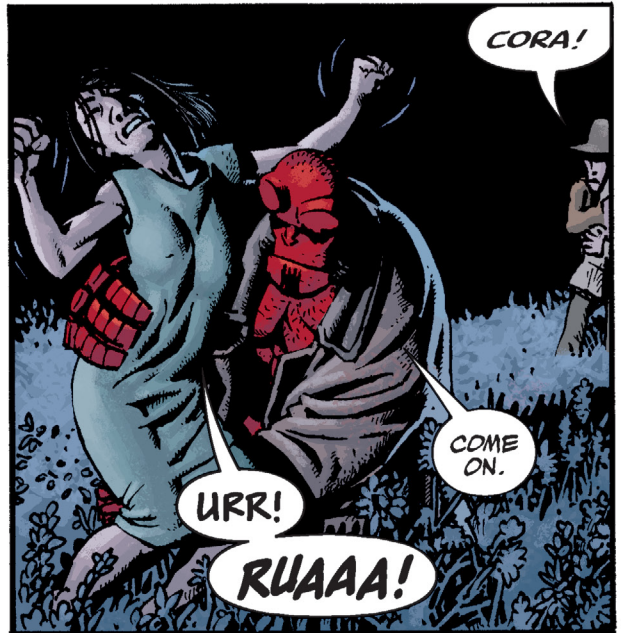


PLEASE...

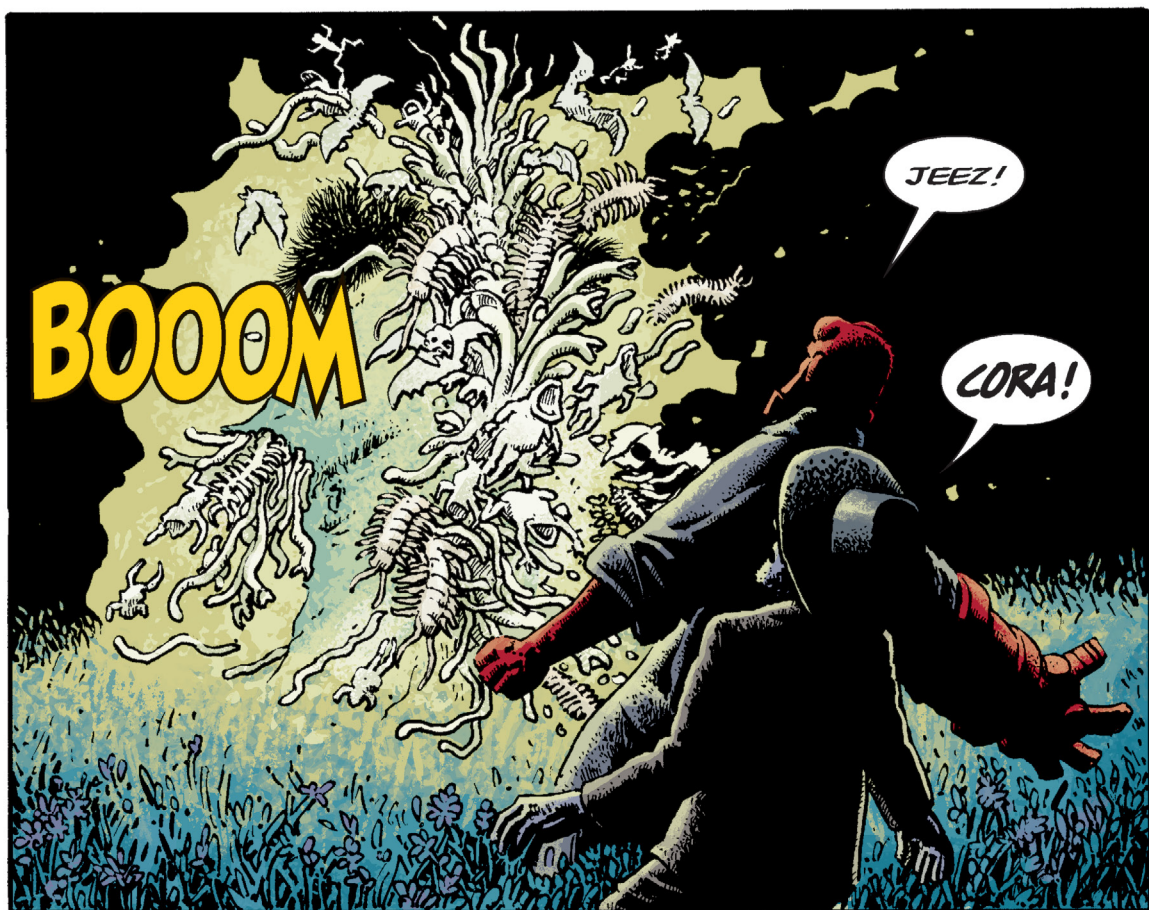
I DON'T
GET IT. IT
SHOULDN'T
BE PAST
NOON.

MAYBE
I MESSED
UP COMIN
THIS WAY.

WE'RE IN
THE HURRICANE
NOW. WE'RE ON
THE DEVIL'S
TIME.

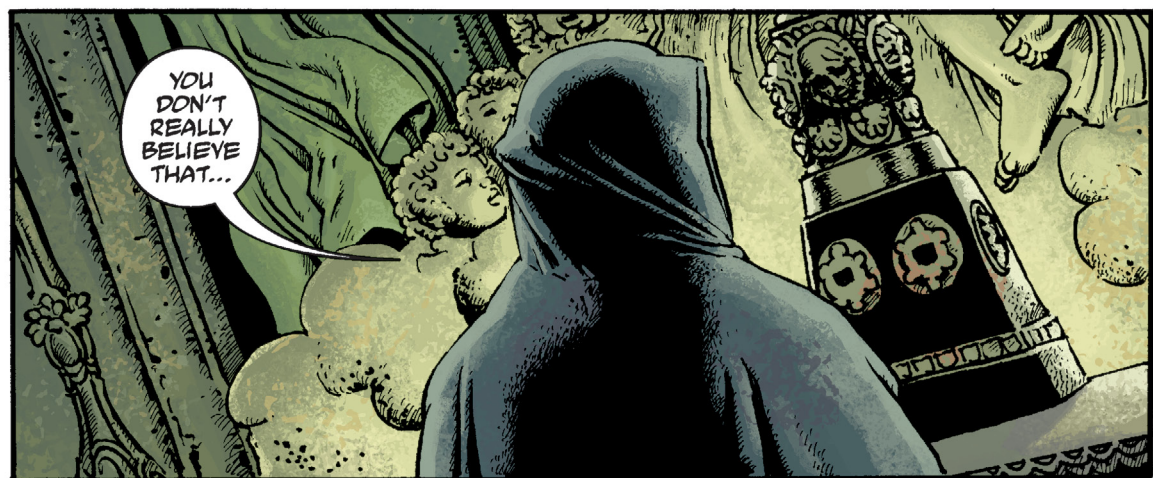


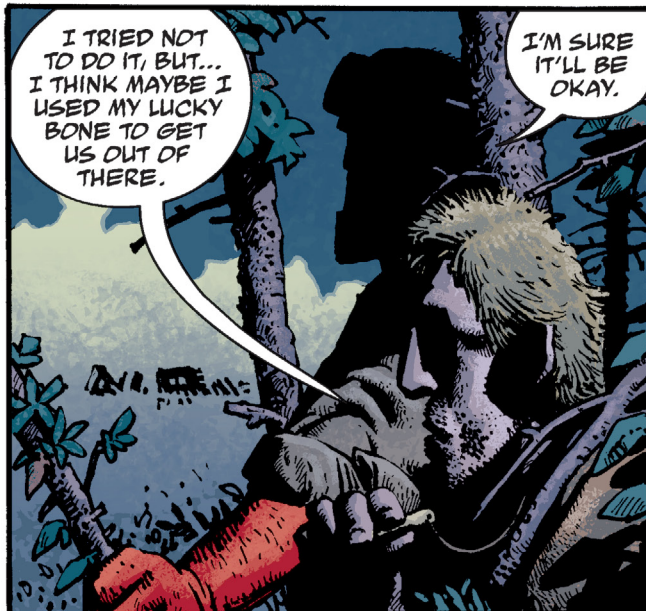
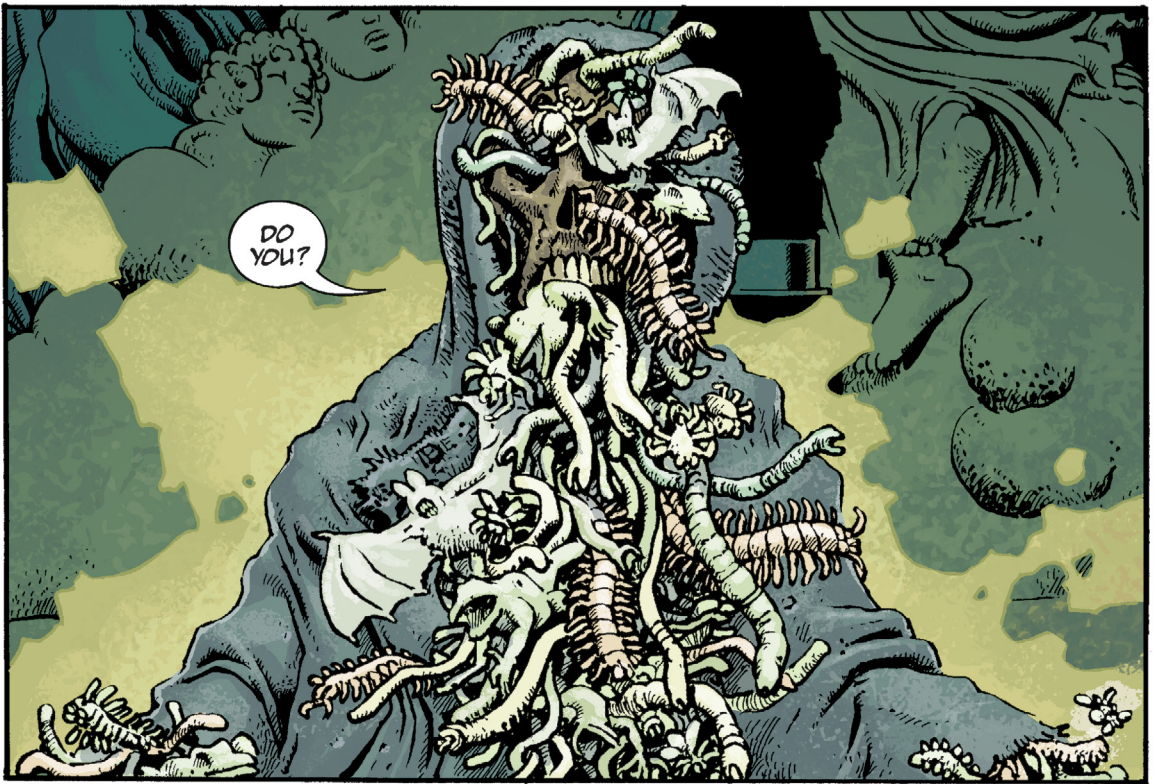


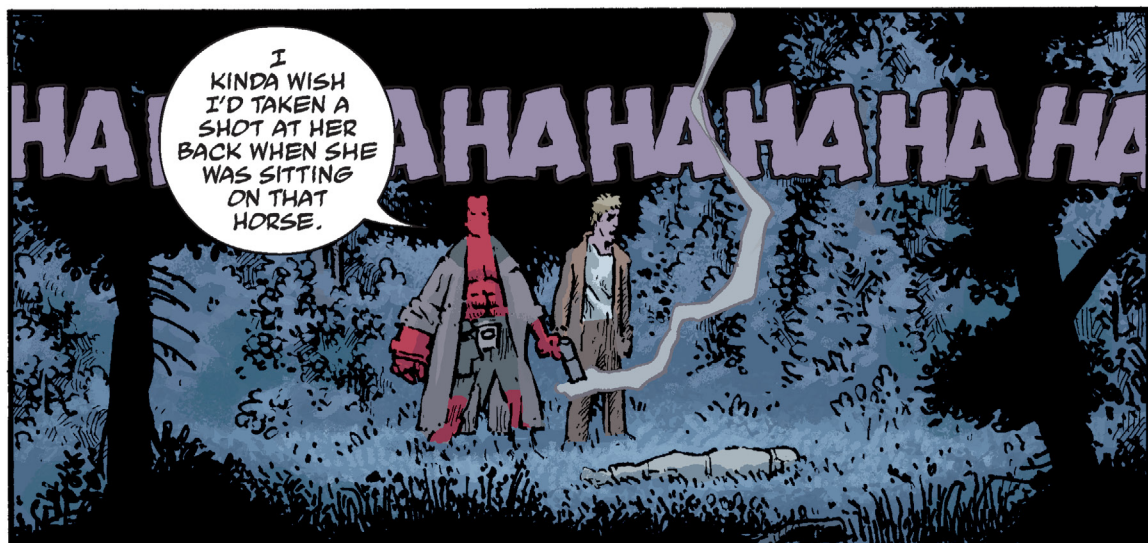
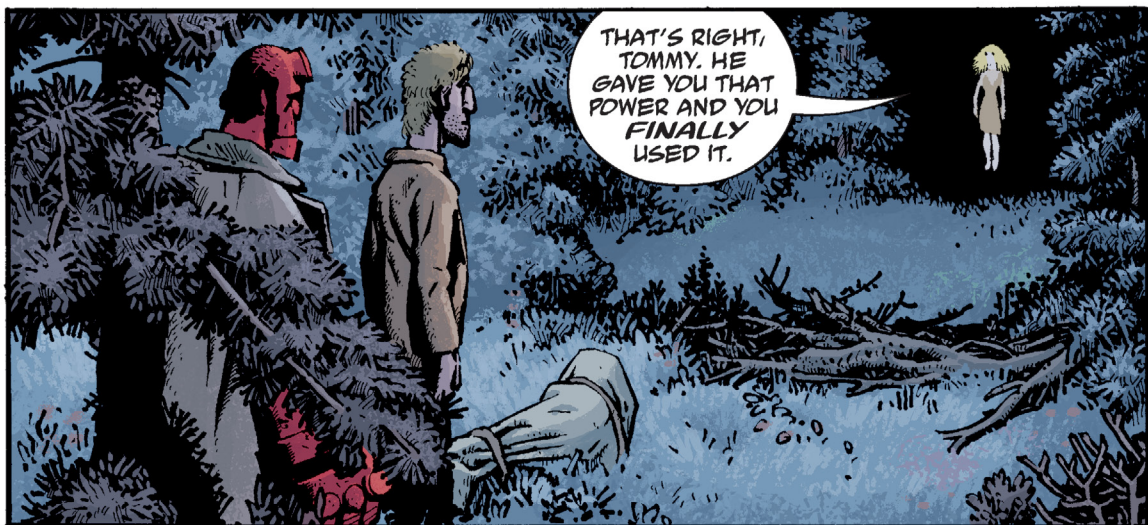


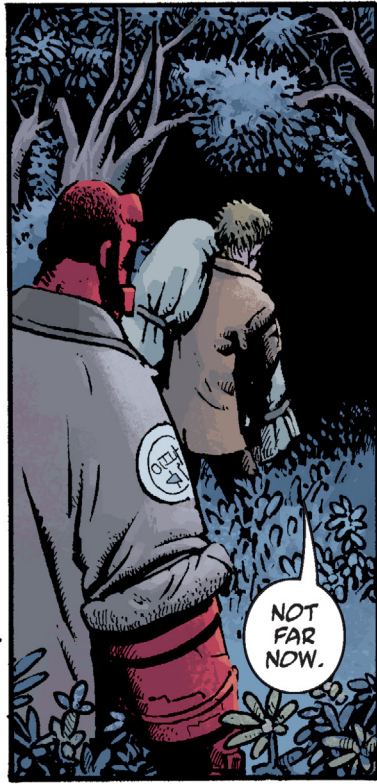


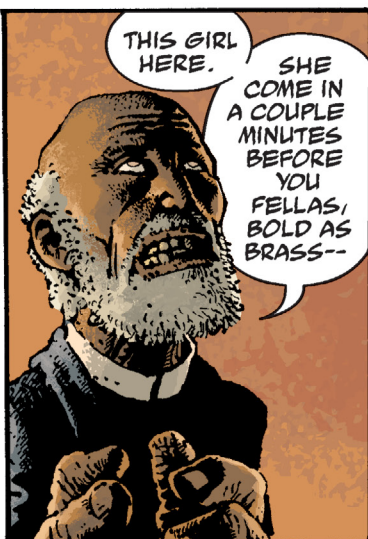














YOU
DON'T
SEE
HER?

WELL, GUESS
MAYBE SHE'S A
GHOST.



IS IT CORA
FISHER?

COURSE
IT IS.

THERE
YOU GO.

YOU
COULDN'T
SAVE HER LIFE
BACK THERE AT
THE MINES, BUT
YOU MUST HAVE DONE
SOMETHING.
SHE WOULDN'T
BE HERE
OTHERWISE.



YOU DON'T
THINK IT'S
THAT SHE
HATES
ME?

THE DEVIL
MIGHT'VE GOT
HER BODY, BUT
HE DIDN'T GET
HER SOUL. LORD
BE PRAISED
FOR HIS LITTLE
MERCIES.



AMEN.



I KNOW
WHAT YOU COME
FOR AND WE'LL GET
YOUR PA BURIED RIGHT
AND PROPER. DON'T
YOU WORRY ON THAT--
BUT WE'LL HOLD
OFF DOIN IT TILL
MORNING.

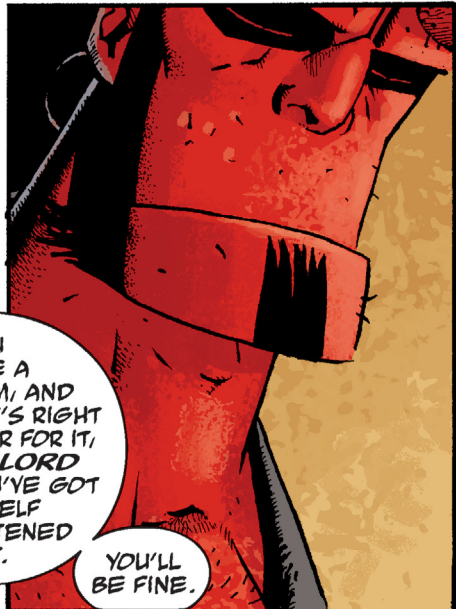
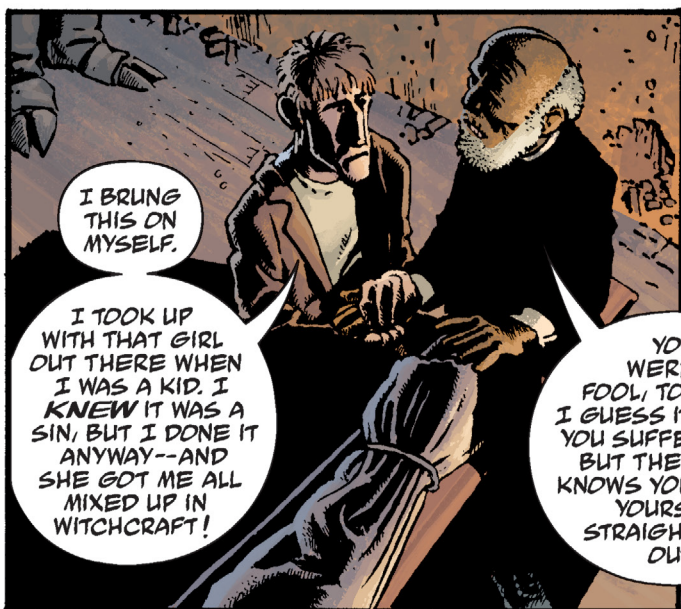


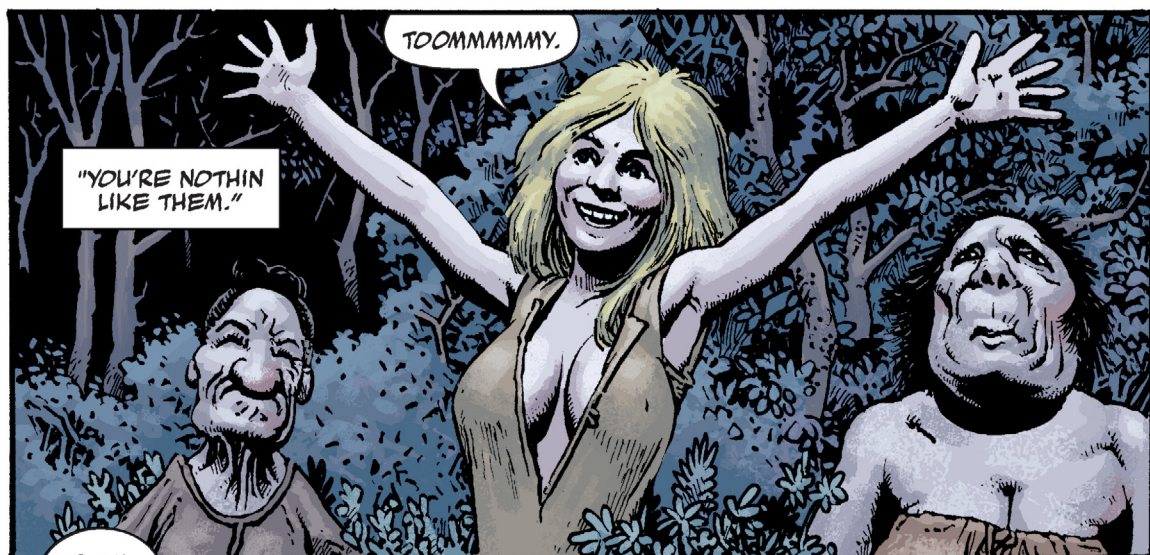
GOOD
IDEA.

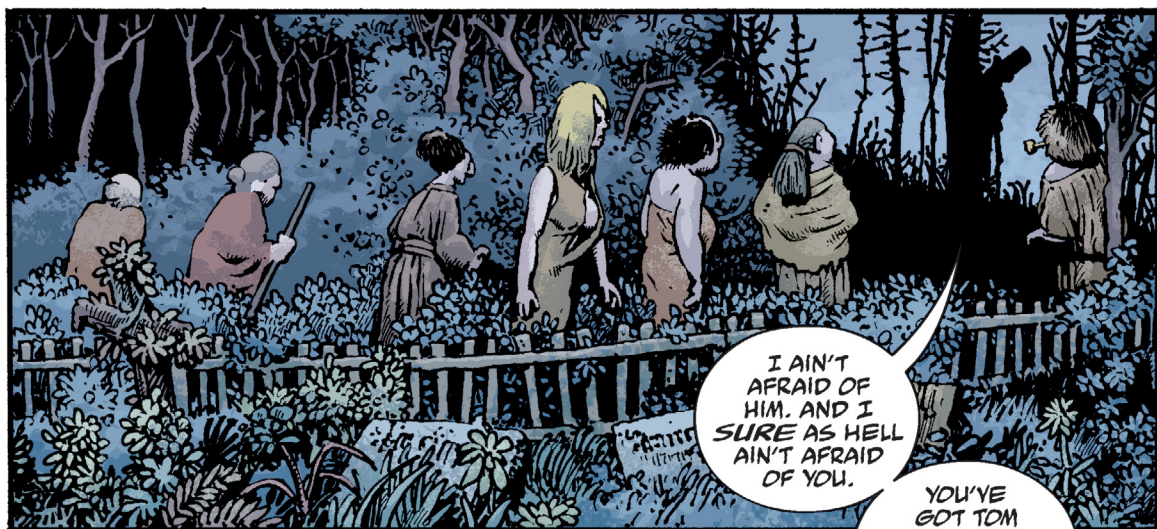
WHAT'S
OUT
THERE?











GRAMMY, I DON'T WANNA THINK ABOUT THAT CROOKED MAN!

TELL US HOW TO MAKE A

WITCHBALL!

IT'S THE EASIEST THING, BUT THERE'S A PRICE TO PAY, AND I GUESS YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS.

FIRST, IT'S GOTTA BE FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH TO MAKE WITCHBALLS, AND THERE'S GOTTA

BE THIRTEEN OF YOU TO DO IT. YOU'LL MEET AT A CROSSROADS NEAR A GRAVEYARD AND YOU'LL BRING CERTAIN THINGS THE DEVIL'S GONNA WANT--AND YOU BETTER BRING UM, OR HE'LL GIVE YOU A WHIPPIN! THEN YOU BUILD UP A FIRE, AND HE'LL GET IT TO BURN BLUE. THEN YOU'LL PUT A POT ON TO BOIL. THROW IN THAT STUFF YOU BROUGHT, AND HE'LL PUT IN SOME STUFF, AND YOU'LL DANCE AROUND IT A WHILE WITH HIM CHANTIN--

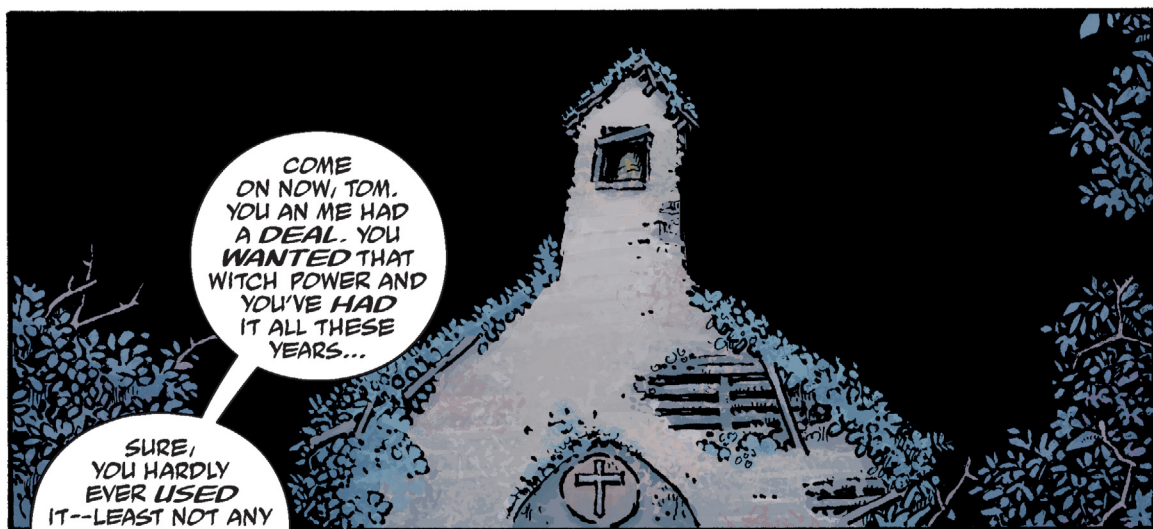
"BLUD OF WEASEL, TAIL OF RAT, GUTS AND BLADDER OF A BLACK CAT, BUZZARD EGGS, BABY NAILS, FOOT OF TOADFROG, BRAIN OF BAT. TO THIS MYSTIC MYRRH, TO MAKE A WITCHBALL, I, THE DEVIL, DOTH STIR, TO PLACE CURSES ON ONE AND ALL."

RURP

LET THAT MESS BOIL SEVEN MINUTES, THEN THE DEVIL'S GONNA GIVE YOU GREASE CANDLES. YOU ALL MARCH ROUND TILL THEY'RE BURNT OUT. THEN CUT SOME HAIRS FROM YOUR HEAD AND WRAP EM ROUND A GLOB OF STUFF FROM THE POT. MAKE UM ROUND AND A GOOD SIZE FOR THROWIN, AND THAT'S THAT.

YOU FOLKS WANNA TRADE YOUR SOULS FOR SOME BALLS A POISON? GRAMMY OAKUM SAYS YOU GO RIGHT AT IT, AND SHE'LL SEE YOU ALL IN HELL.

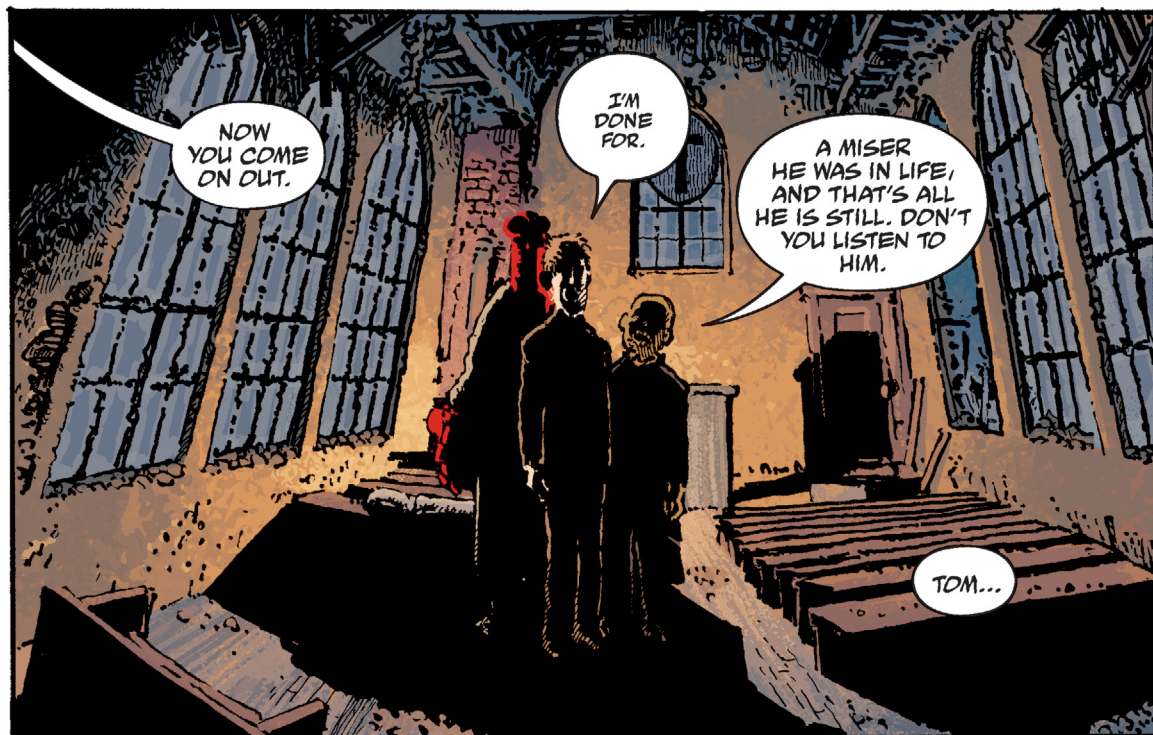
HISSES



COME
ON NOW, TOM.
YOU AN ME HAD
A DEAL. YOU
WANTED THAT
WITCH POWER AND
YOU'VE HAD
IT ALL THESE
YEARS...

SURE,
YOU HARDLY
EVER USED
IT--LEAST NOT ANY
WAY I'D LIKE--
BUT YOU STILL
GOTTA PAY
FOR IT.

FAIR'S
FAIR, TOM.



NOW
YOU COME
ON OUT.

I'M
DONE
FOR.

A MISER
HE WAS IN LIFE,
AND THAT'S ALL
HE IS STILL. DON'T
YOU LISTEN TO
HIM.

TOM...



I'M WAITIN...



YOU GET
OUTTA HERE,
DEVIL!

WHATEVER
MISTAKES THIS
BOY'S MADE,
HE'S COME HOME
TO THE LORD
NOW!



HAA!

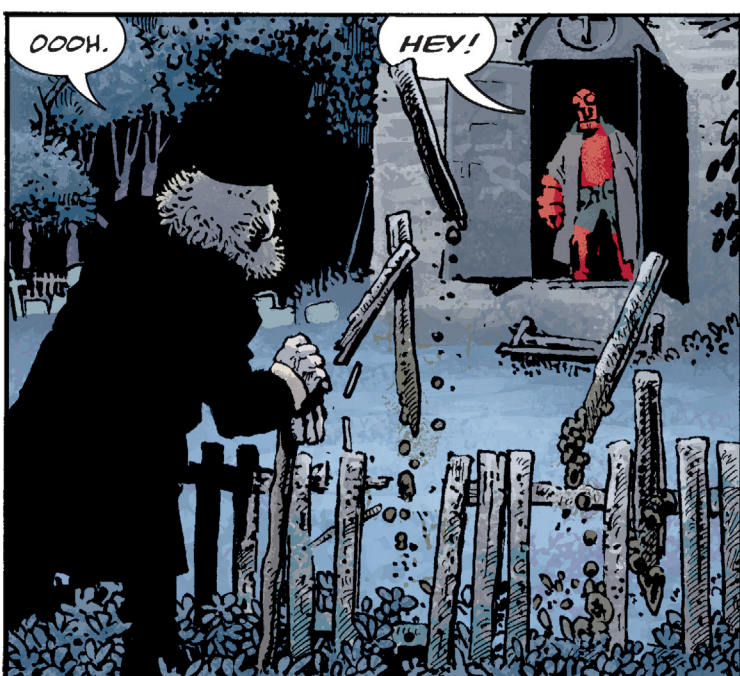
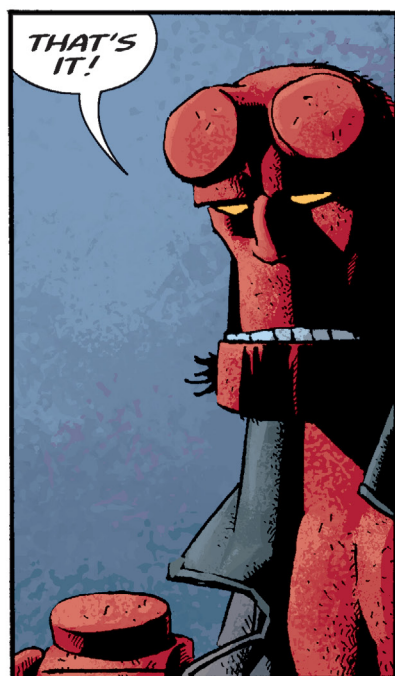
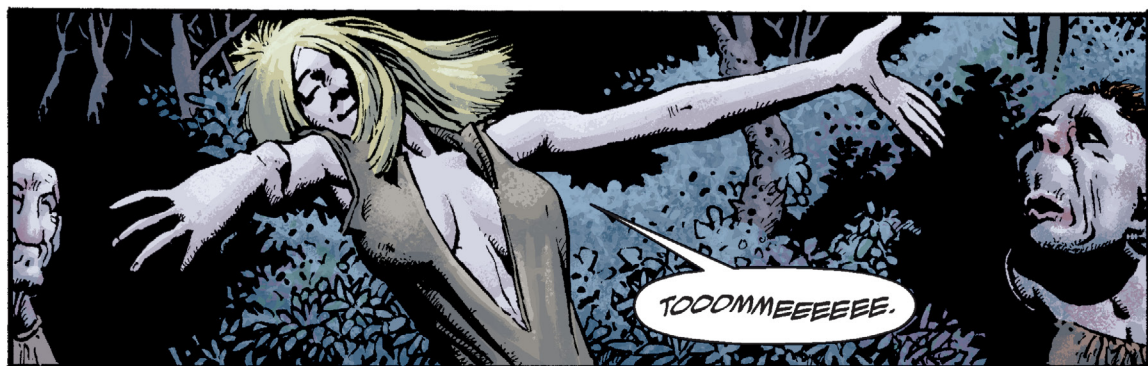
HOW LONG
YOU GONNA
HIDE IN THERE,
TOM? YOU'RE
MINE.

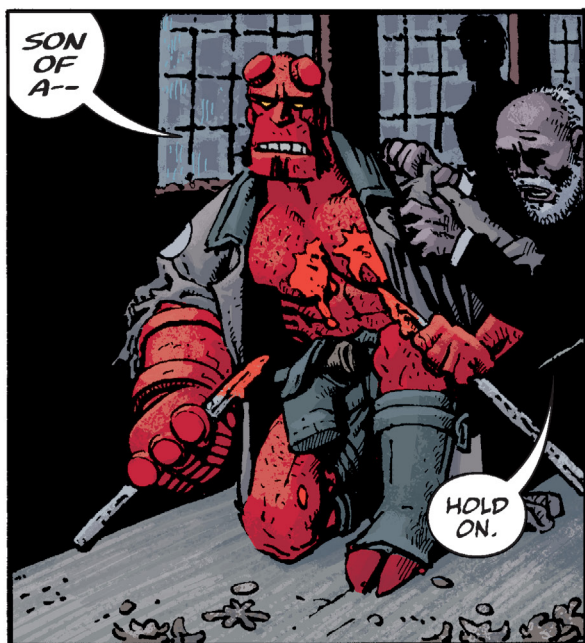


I WILL
WEAR YOU
OUT!

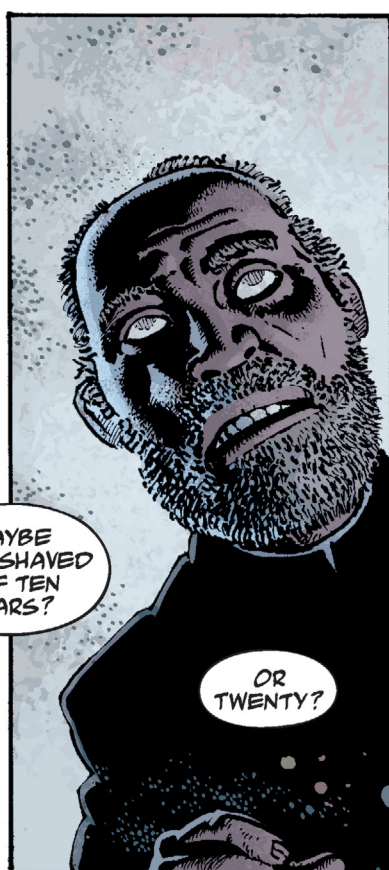
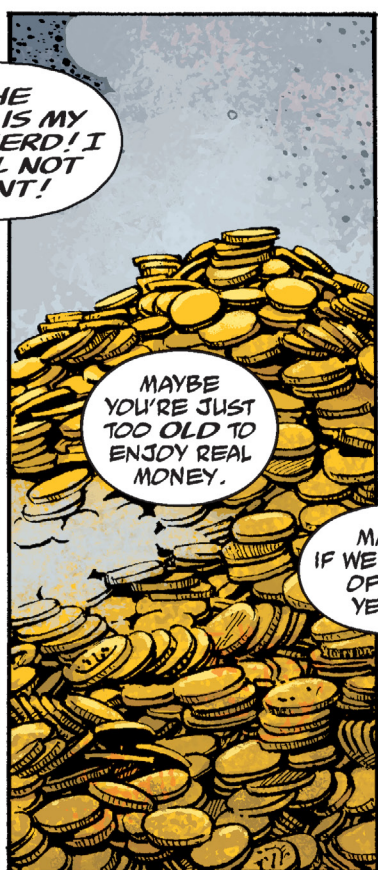
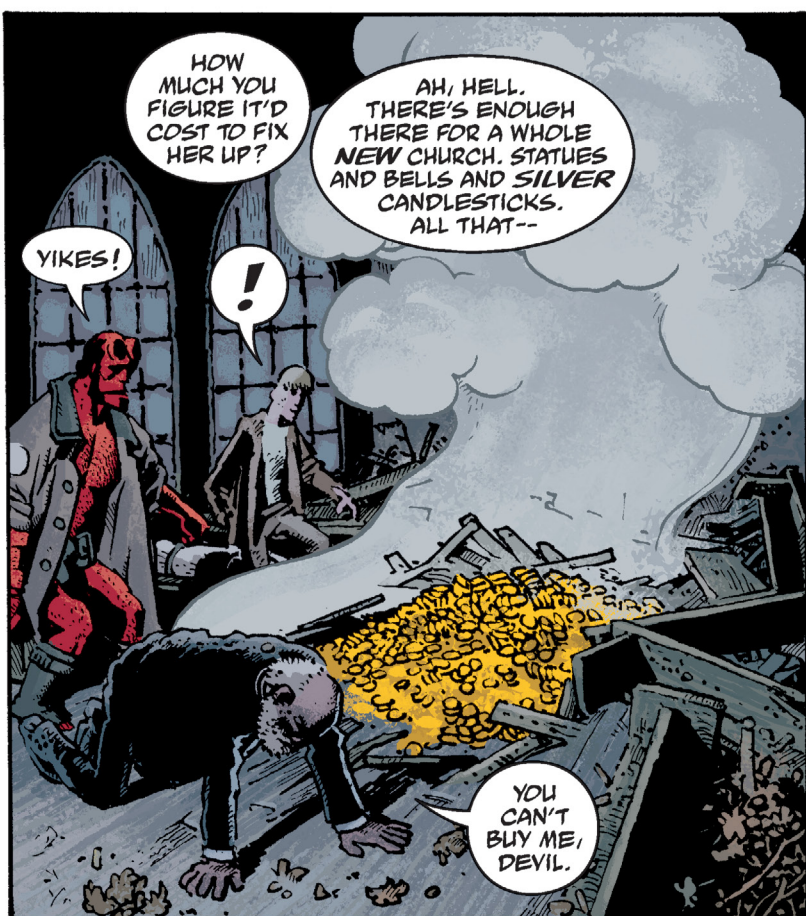


I WILL
HEAP IT ON
YOU, SON, A
HUNDRED
TIMES WORSE
THAN WHAT
YOUR DADDY
GOT.

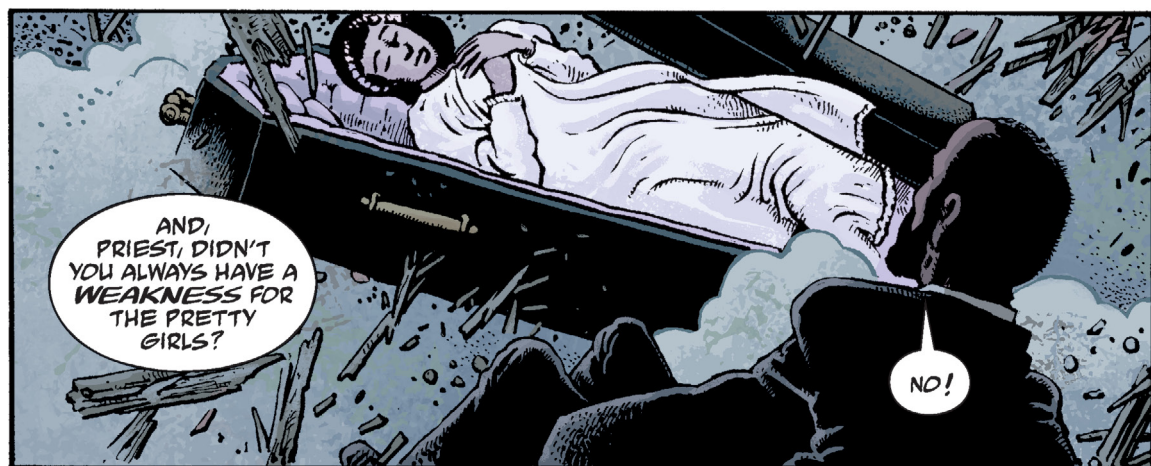
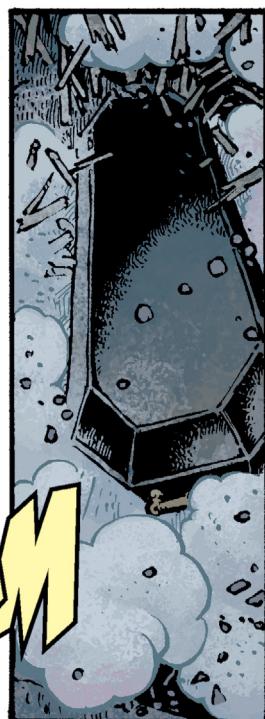


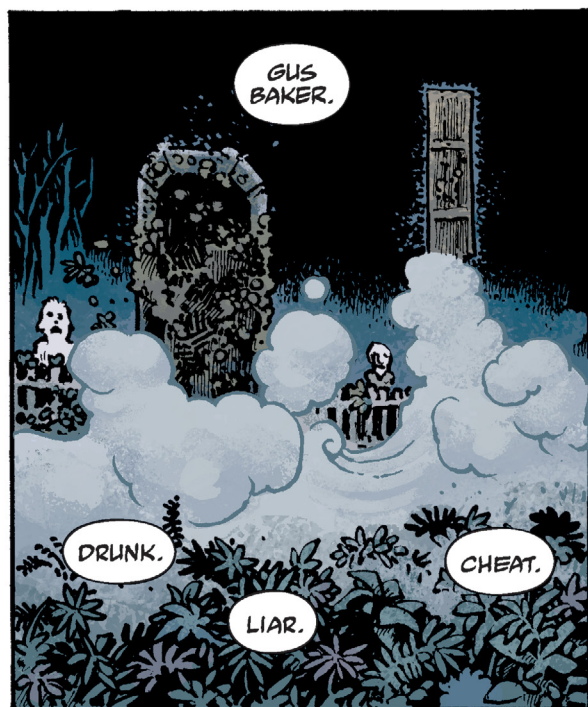


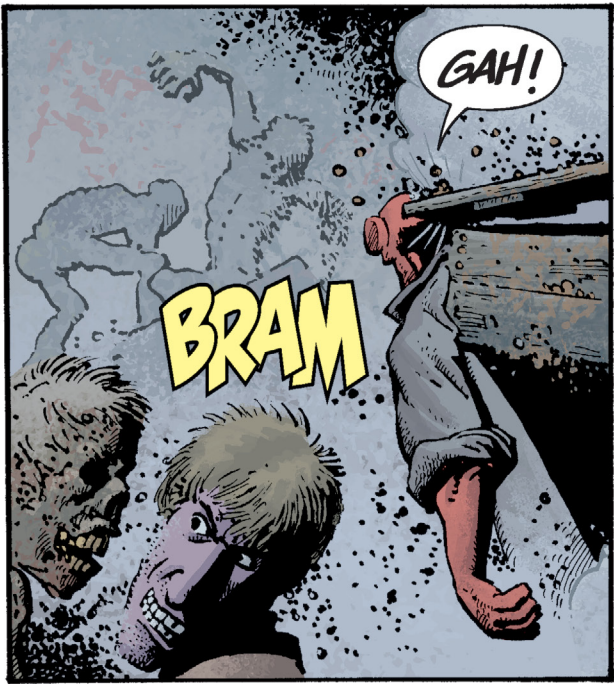
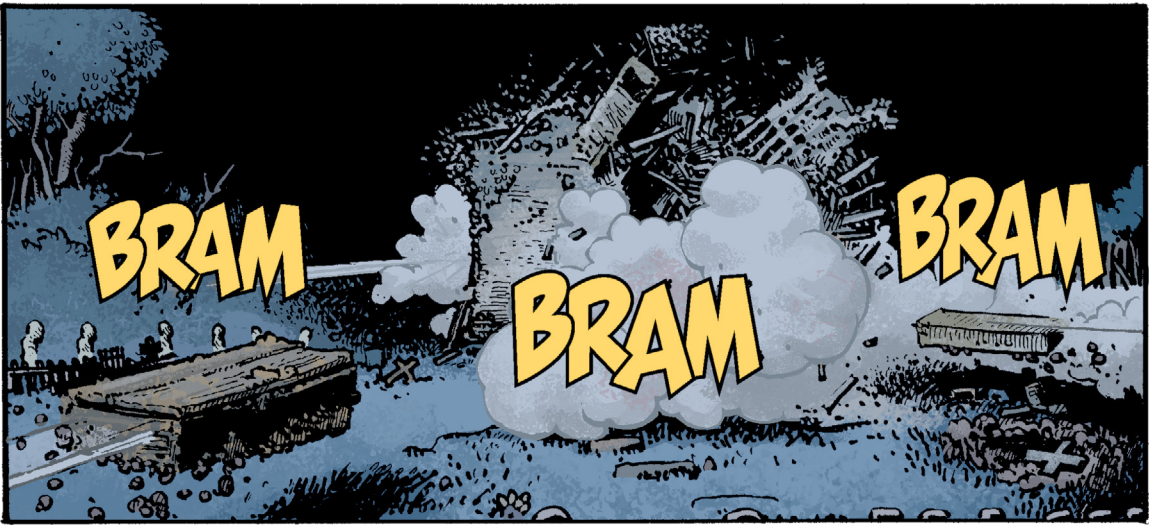


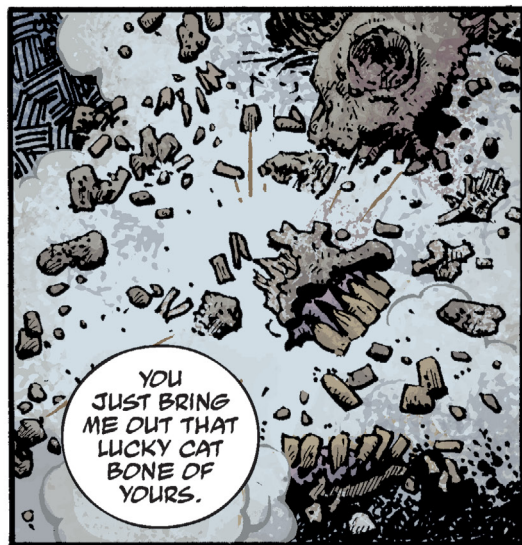


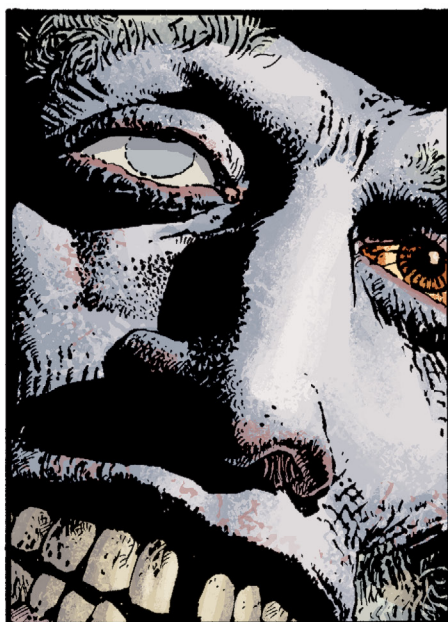
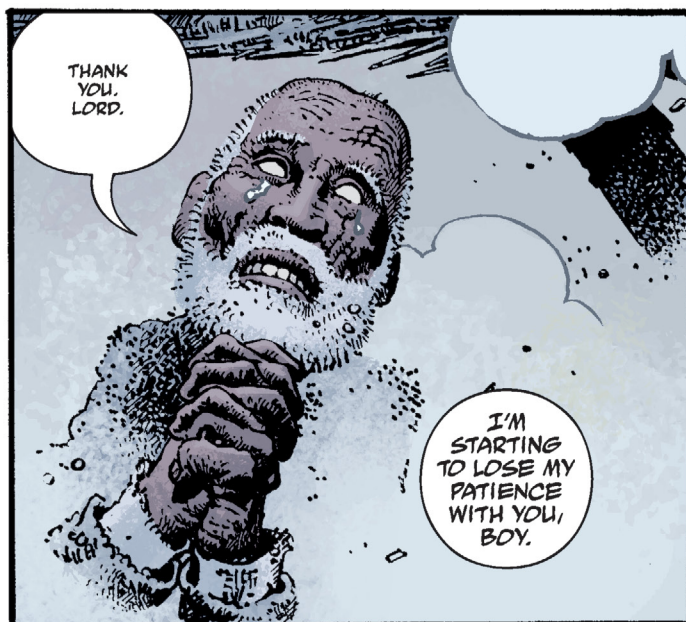


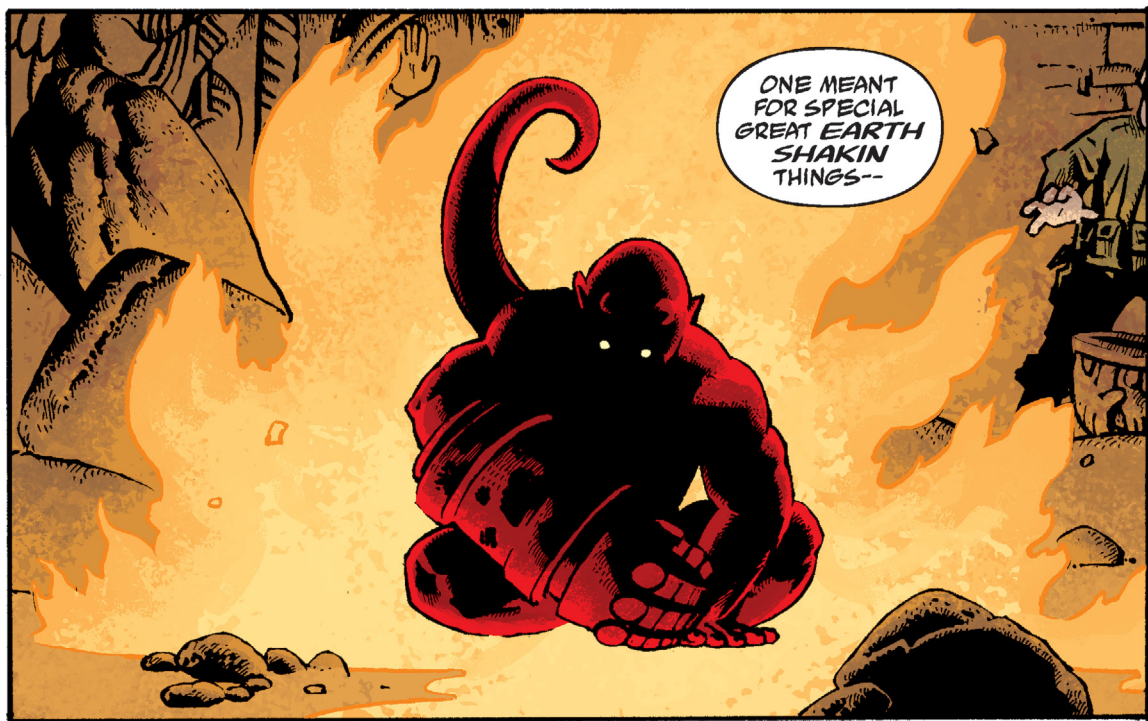
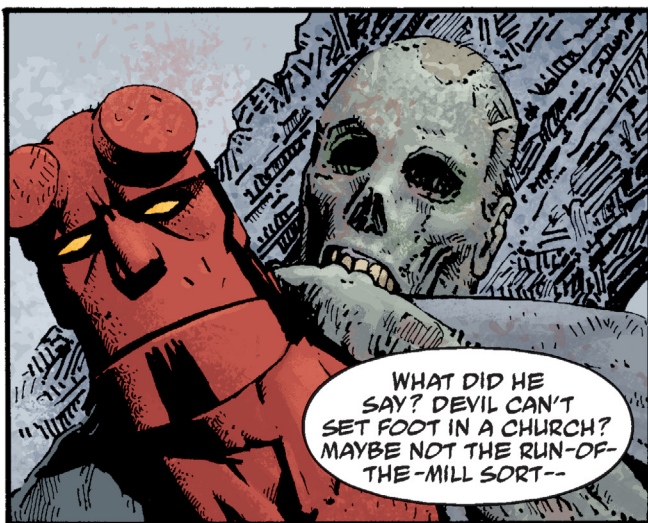


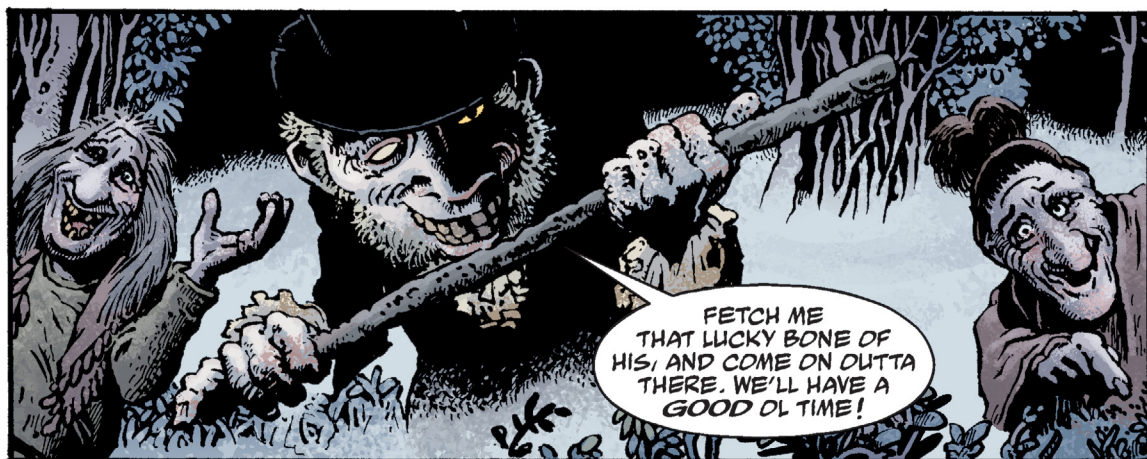




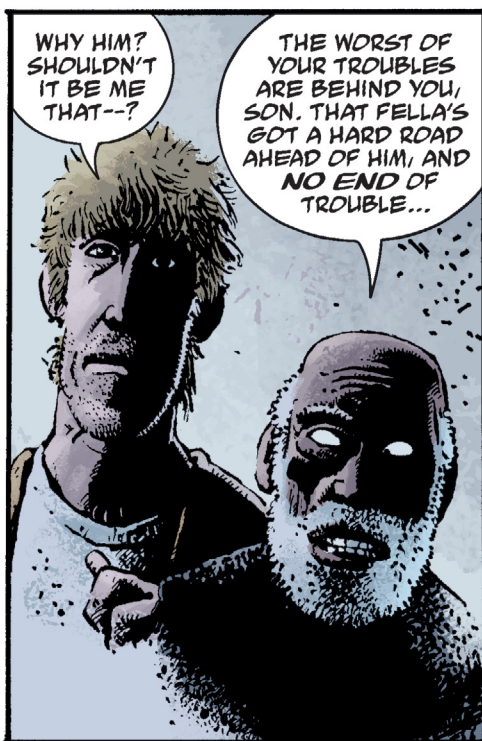
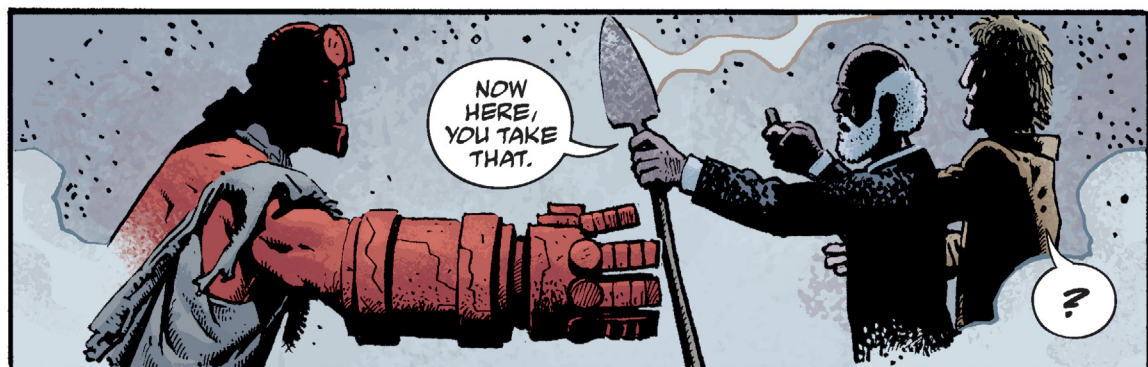
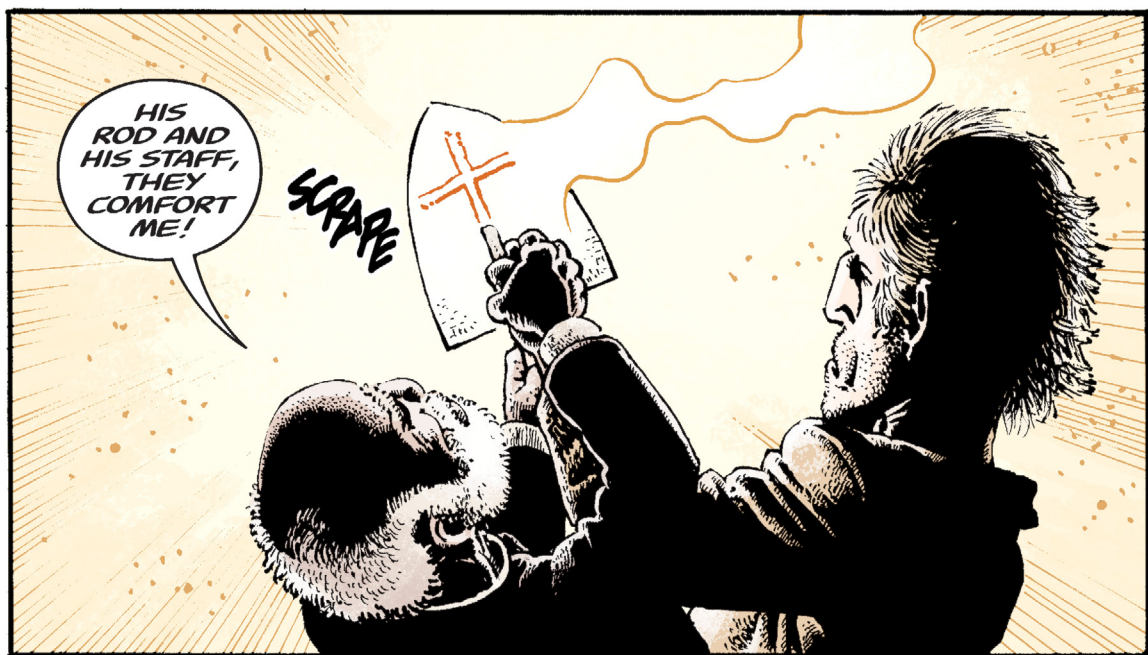


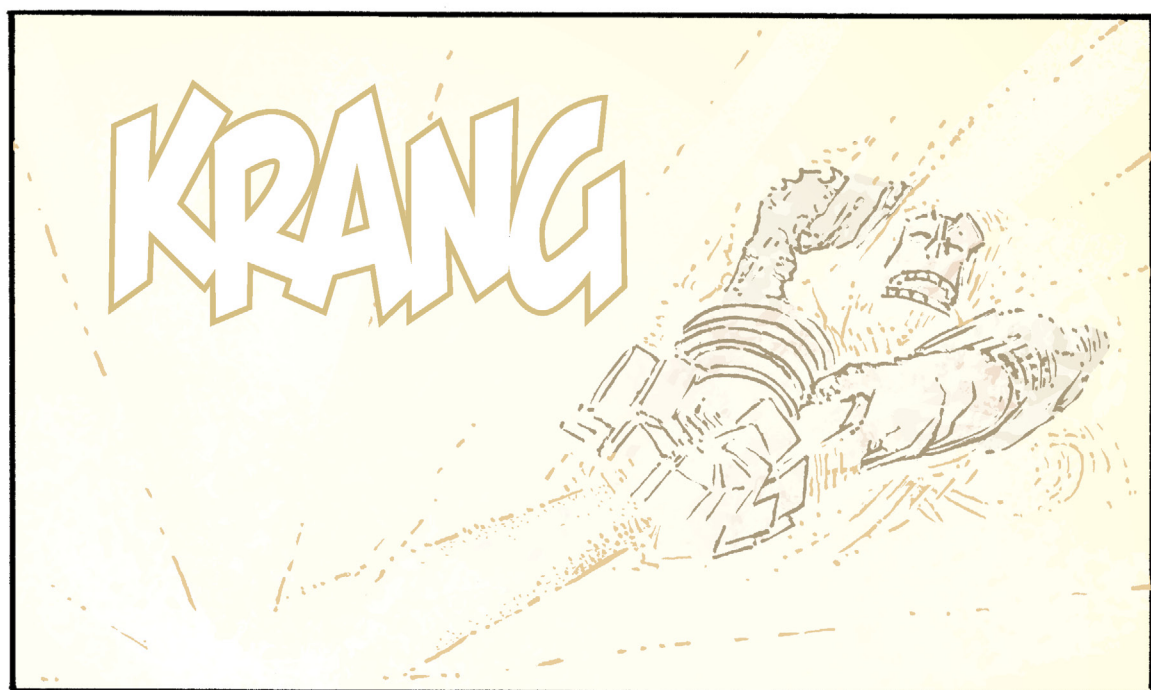


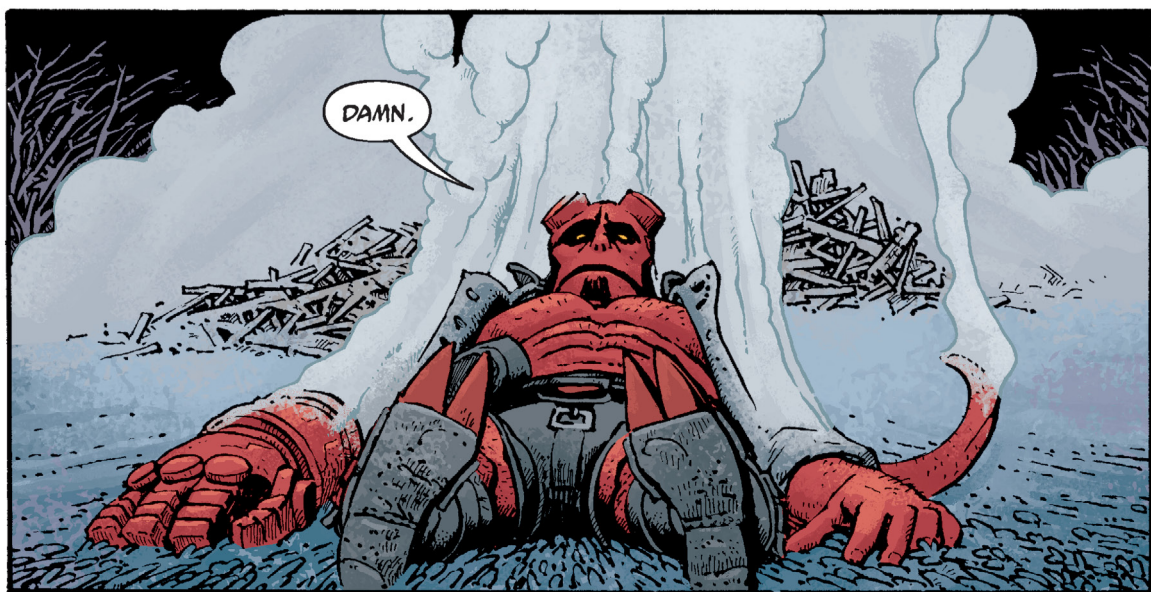




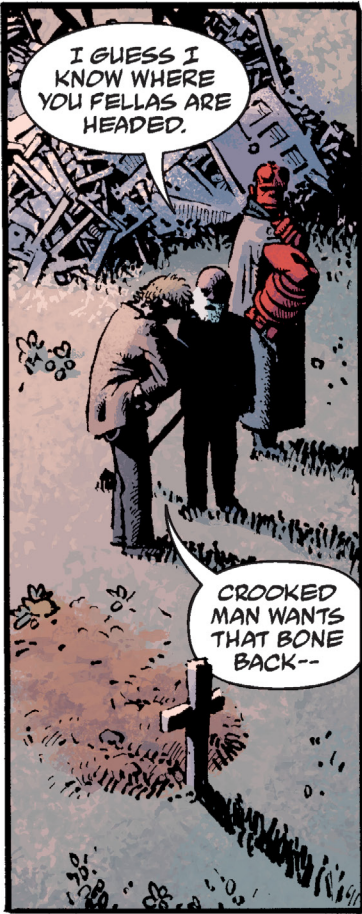


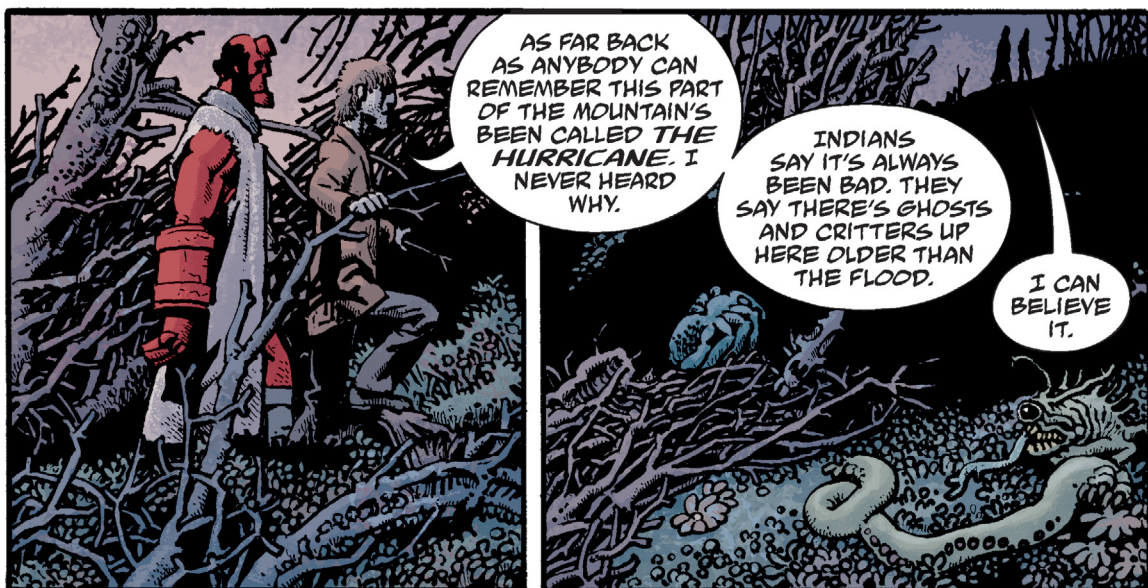












AS FAR BACK
AS ANYBODY CAN
REMEMBER THIS PART
OF THE MOUNTAIN'S
BEEN CALLED **THE
HURRICANE**. I
NEVER HEARD
WHY.

INDIANS
SAY IT'S ALWAYS
BEEN BAD. THEY
SAY THERE'S GHOSTS
AND CRITTERS UP
HERE OLDER THAN
THE FLOOD.

I CAN
BELIEVE
IT.



WOW.

I
GUESS
THIS IS THE
PLACE.

THERE'S
NOTHIN NATURAL
BOUT A PLACE
LIKE THAT BEIN
WAY BACK IN
HERE.



I KNOW
WHAT YOU
WANT.

YOU'VE
COME FOR
MY GOLD, BUT
YOU CAN'T
HAVE IT.



JEEZ.
THAT'S KIND OF
PATHETIC.

I ALMOST
FEEL SORRY
FOR HIM.

IT'S
MINE.

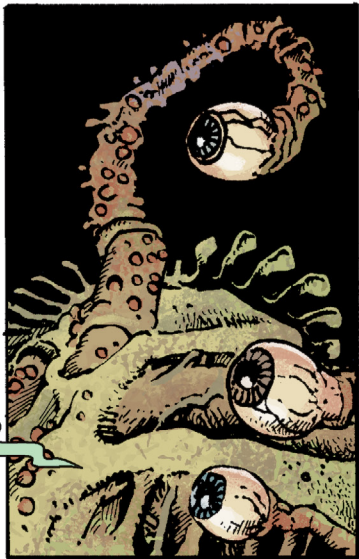
I DON'T.



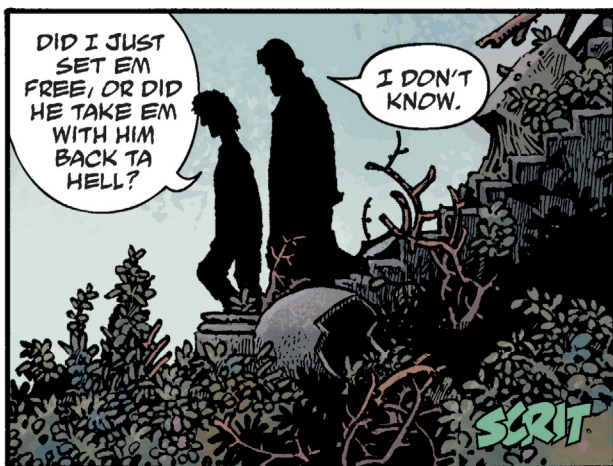
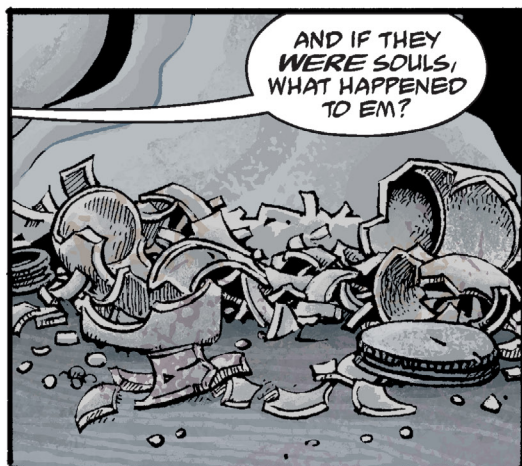
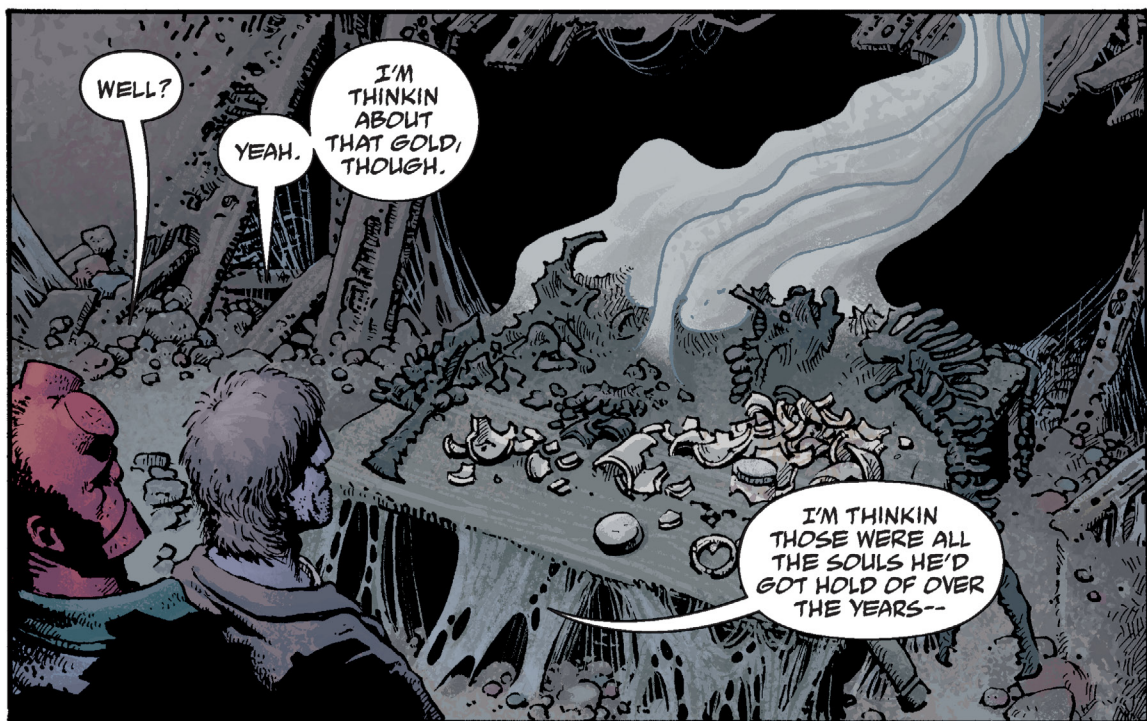
YOU WANT
THIS, YA OLD
BASTARD?

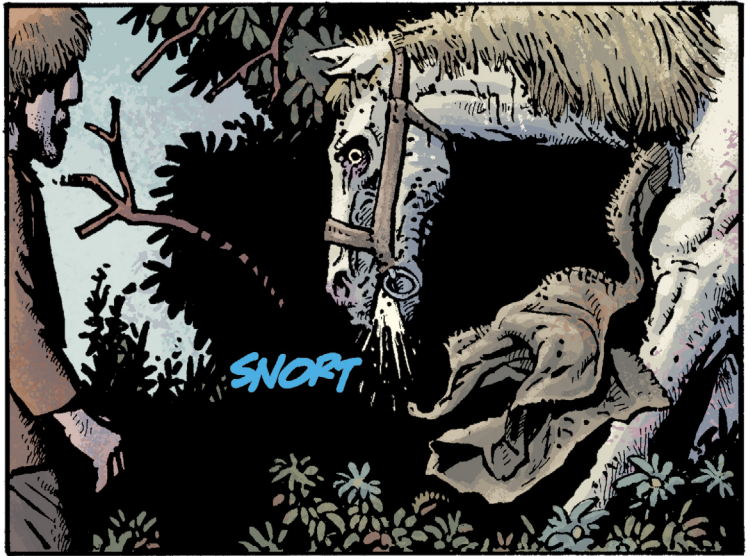


NODD.



PLINK **FWOOOOSH**





They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships



I MADE UP THIS STORY A LONG TIME AGO BECAUSE, well, who doesn't love a headless pirate? I'd heard how Blackbeard was killed (he was one tough monkey), but I'd never heard what happened to his head. Somewhere along the way I'd read a couple paragraphs about his headless ghost haunting a stretch of coastline looking for his head, so apparently he didn't know what happened to it either. I love stuff like that. I plotted a shorter, simpler version of this story and never got around to doing anything with it. Years later I was approached about doing a Hellboy comic for the computer-game company Konami, to be given away with their Hellboy game. Sure. Why not? Enter Josh Dysart. Somehow I convinced Josh to expand my short story to the not-quite-so-short story you have here. He added a lot of nice character stuff, all the Abe Sapien stuff, and the history (mostly based on research I never would have gotten around to doing) of Blackbeard's skull. Jason Shawn Alexander drew this as a warm-up for the Abe Sapien series he and I did in 2008.

They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships was originally published by Dark Horse in 2007, but never offered for sale. It was, theoretically, given away to promote the game, but how that was done I'm not sure. It does seem to be the one Hellboy story most people have never seen.



NEWBURYPORT,
MASSACHUSETTS.
1986.



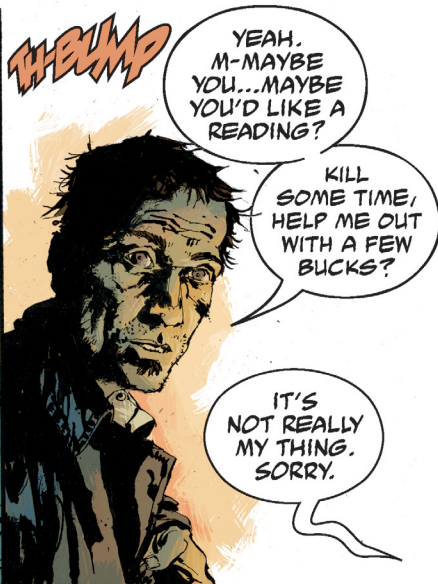
CAN
I HELP
YOU?

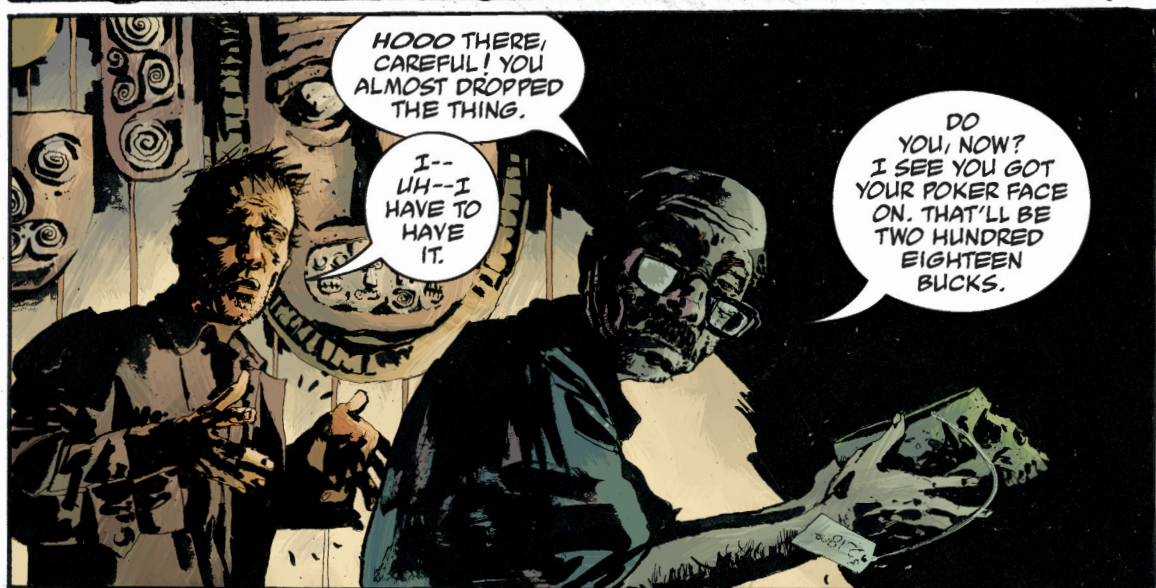
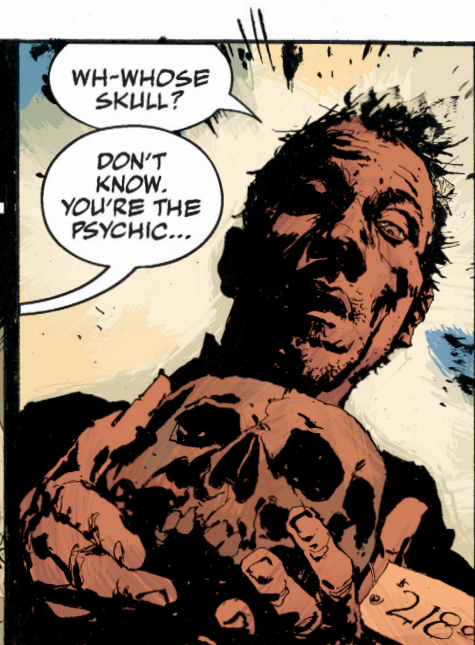
Those that go down
to the sea in ships,
These see the wonders of the lord, and his
wonders in the deep.
- Psalms 137



OH...
SORRY. NO.
JUST DUCKING
IN OUT OF THE
RAIN.

AH.







I DON'T...I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY. IT'S RAINING OUTSIDE. I MAKE MY LIVING OUTSIDE.

WELL, COME BACK WHEN IT'S NOT RAINING. I'LL KEEP IT BEHIND THE COUNTER FOR YOU.



ISN'T IT FUNNY HOW, IN THE END, YOU CAN HOLD THE SUM OF A MAN IN YOUR HANDS? WE MAKE SUCH A RUCKUS OVER ALL SORTS A USELESS THINGS IN THIS LIFE.



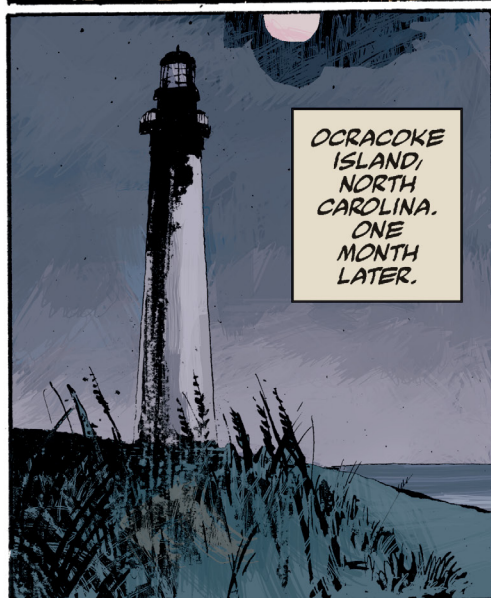
WHEN REALLY IT ALL JUST COMES DOWN TO THI--



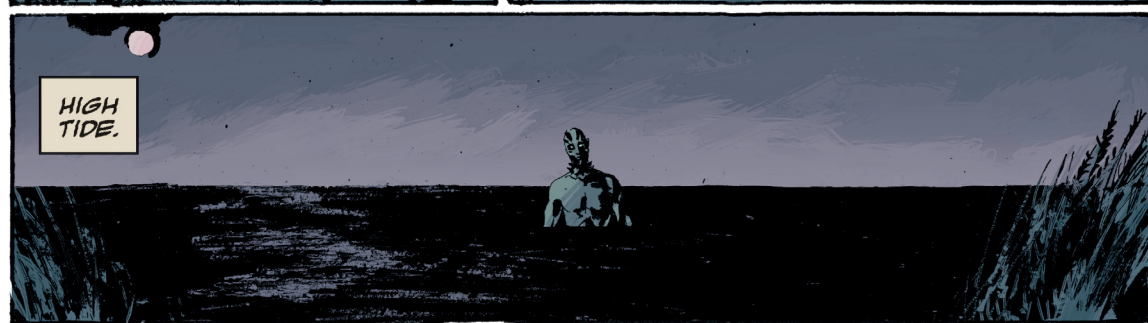
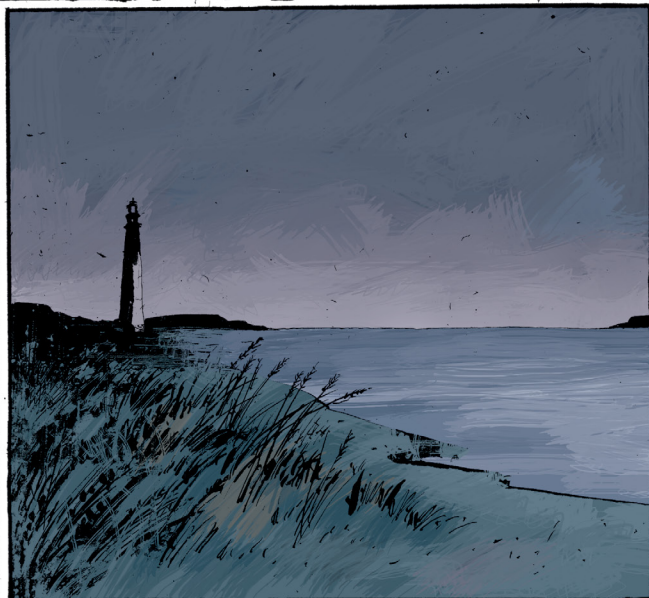
NA!



WAIT! PLEASE!



OCRACOE
ISLAND,
NORTH
CAROLINA.
ONE
MONTH
LATER.



HIGH
TIDE.

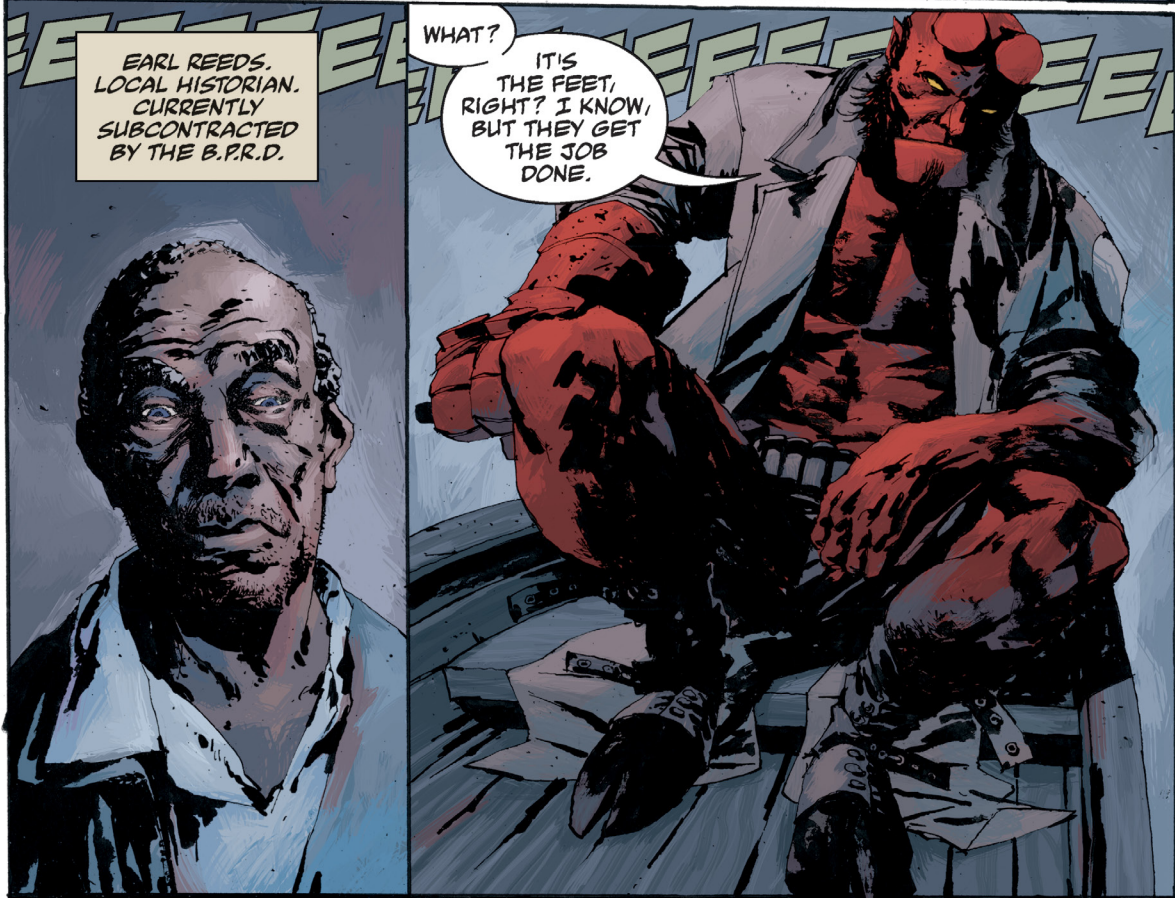


I'M
ON THE
SOUTHERN
BEACH.



GOT IT. I'M ON
THE INLET SIDE,
HEADED IN YOUR
DIRECTION.

I JUST
PICKED UP
OUR GUY AT
THE FERRY
LANDING.



EARL REEDS.
LOCAL HISTORIAN.
CURRENTLY
SUBCONTRACTED
BY THE B.P.R.D.

WHAT?

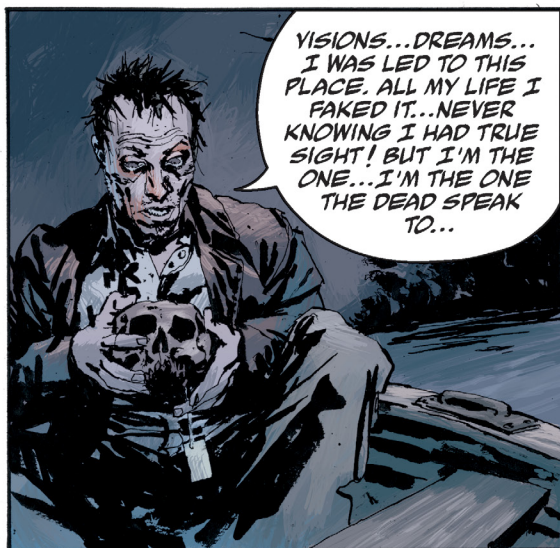
IT'S
THE FEET,
RIGHT? I KNOW,
BUT THEY GET
THE JOB
DONE.



N-NO. I JUST DIDN'T
EXPECT TO BE
MEETING WITH YOU
PERSONALLY.

LUCKY
YOU.

SO,
HOW MUCH
DO YOU KNOW
ABOUT THIS
HEAD?



VISIONS...DREAMS...
I WAS LED TO THIS
PLACE. ALL MY LIFE I
FAKED IT...NEVER
KNOWING I HAD TRUE
SIGHT! BUT I'M THE
ONE...I'M THE ONE
THE DEAD SPEAK
TO...



JESUS CHRIST,
ALL THE WAY FROM
BOSTON WITH THIS.
YOU EVER TAKE
A FREAKING
BREAK?



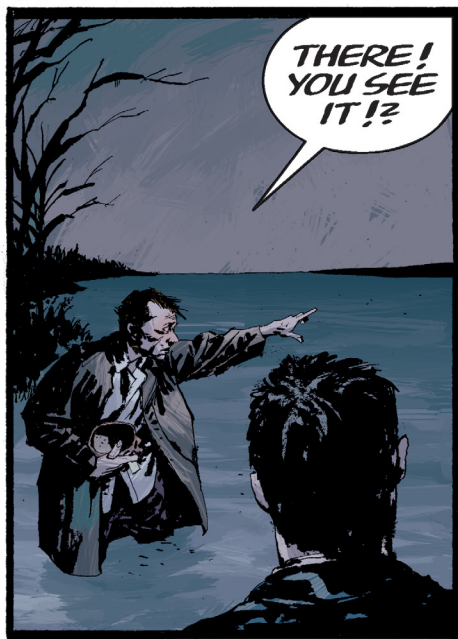
I SWEAR TO GOD,
IF THERE'S NO GOLD
AT THE END OF THIS
THING, I'M GONNA BE
AWFULLY PISSED
OFF, MARC!



HERE!
WE'RE
HERE!



...NO MORE
TABLE RAPPING...
NO MORE COLD
READING...THIS
IS IT...MY
DESTINY...MY
DESTINY...



THERE!
YOU SEE
IT!?

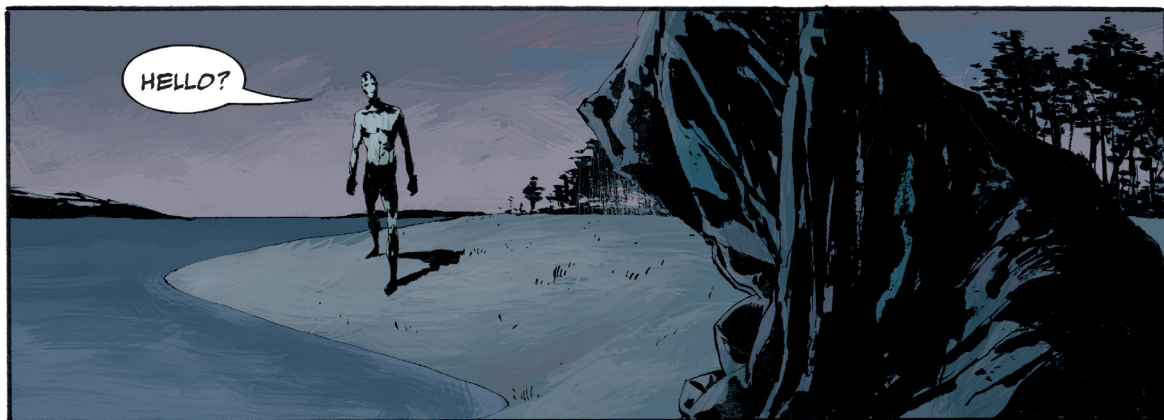


HOLY
MARY
MOTHER O'
GOD...

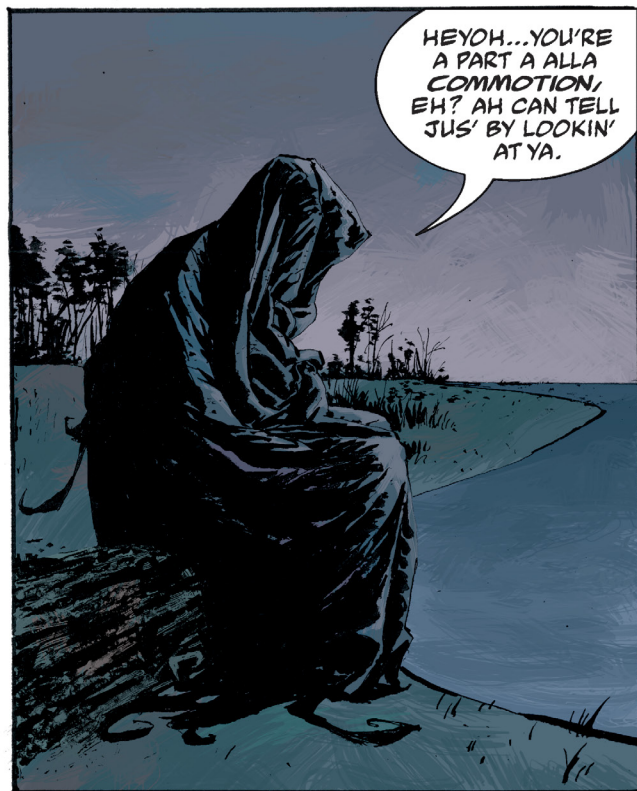


YES! YES! COME
TO ME! I HAVE WHAT
YOU'VE SOUGHT ALL THIS
TIME! I FOUND IT!
ME! MARC
THE ALL
KNOWING!!

I
HAVE YOUR HEAD,
BLACKBEARD!



HELLO?



HEYOH...YOU'RE
A PART A ALLA
COMMOTION,
EH? AH CAN TELL
JUS' BY LOOKIN'
AT YA.



COMMOTION?

THAT'S RIGHT,
THINGS ARE HOPPIN'
'ROUND THE OL'
COVE TONIGHT,
THEY ARE.

YOU MEAN,
WITH BLACK-
BEARD?

AYE,
BLACKBEARD...



HE WAS NOT
A KIND PERSON,
MR. MER-MAN.
NOT A KIND PERSON
TO HIS CREW, NOR
HIS WOMEN.

AND HE
WAS A DAMNABLE
MONSTER TO HIS
ENEMIES...

"AS EVIDENCED BY THE
MACABRE PARTICULARS
OF HIS DEATH.

"THAT LAST
BATTLE, IT
WAS NO SMALL
AFFAIR, I'LL
TELL YE THAT."

DIE
FRIGHTENED,
YA LILY'D
PONCE!!

"THEY MUSTA SHOT
THAT SCURVY-INFESTED
SEA DOG FIVE TIMES.

BLAM

GHAHA

"AN' WHO KNOWS HOW
MANY WHIPS OF THE
BLADE HE TOOK? MORE
'AN AH CAN COUNT."



WELL DONE,
LAD! WELL
DONE!



"ALL BEFORE
THAT UNNAMED
HIGHLANDER
UNDER THE
COMMAND OF
LIEUTENANT
MAYNARD..."

IF IT BE
NOT WELL
DONE...



I'LL DO IT
BETTER!

"...SEVERED
HIM FROM
THIS HERE
MORTAL COIL."



"AND WHEN
THEY TOSSED
THAT SINNER'S
HEADLESS
CORPSE
OVERBOARD..."



"...THE BASTARD
SPAWN WENT AND
SWAM LAPS
'ROUND MAYNARD'S
42-GUN BOAT."

BEEN A DECADE
NOW SINCE I SAW HIM
SWIMMING AROUND
DOWN IN TEACH'S
COVE.

HEADLESS,
LOOKING FOR
THAT NOGGIN,
JUST LIKE MAMA
ALWAYS SAID
HE DID.

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE

"LIEUTENANT MAYNARD
KEPT THE HEAD TO
EXCHANGE FOR
BLACKBEARD'S BOUNTY
BACK IN VIRGINIA..."

HAMPTON,
VIRGINIA.
1719.

"...WHERE IT WAS
REPORTEDLY STOLEN
BY FRIENDS OF
BLACKBEARD..."

AGH...REEKS
O' ROTTEN
BASS, HE
DOES!

"...WHO THEN LINED
IT WITH SILVER TO
MAKE IT INTO A
DRINKING CHALICE.

**DRINK!
DRINK!
DRINK!**

"AFTER THAT,
IT FOUND ITS
WAY FROM PUB
SHELVES..."

ALEXANDRIA,
VIRGINIA. 1840.



FALLS CHURCH,
VIRGINIA. 1890.

"...TO PRIVATE
COLLECTIONS."



YALE,
1915.



BOSTON
UNIVERSITY.
1947.

**DRINK!
DRINK!
DRINK!**

BUT I HIT A WALL
IN MY RESEARCH
AROUND '49. THE
HEAD JUST SEEMS
TO DISAPPEAR.

YOU'RE
GONNA TURN
HERE--UP
AHEAD IS THE
COVE.

SO,
HOW'D
YOU FIND
IT?



IT TURNED
UP IN AN
ANTIQUE STORE
UP NORTH. THIS
GUY, MARC ARROW,
KILLED THE OWNER
FOR IT. THE OWNER'S
GHOST RATTED HIM
OUT TO A MEDIUM
IN FLORIDA, AND
THE MEDIUM
CALLED THE
BUREAU.

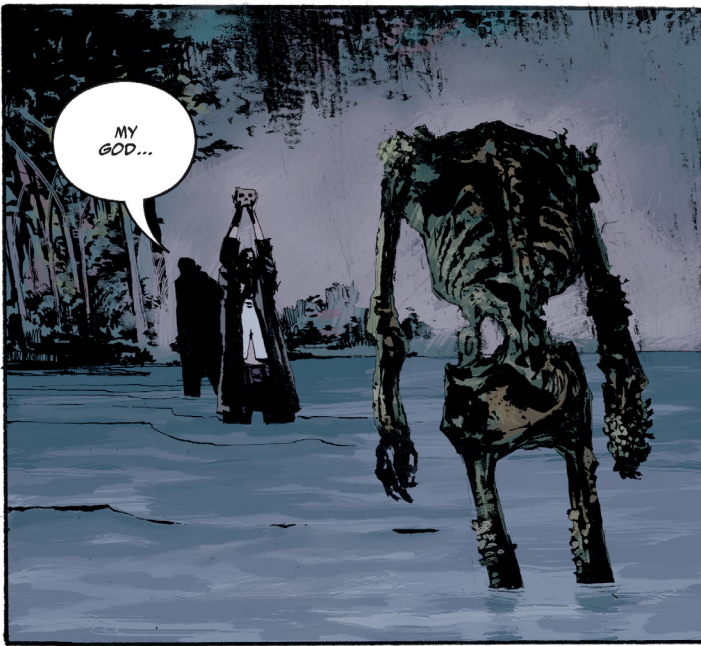
WE
WERE PRETTY
SURE ABOUT
IT BEING
BLACKBEARD'S
LONG-LOST HEAD,
SO THE BUREAU
MADE SOME
CALLS--

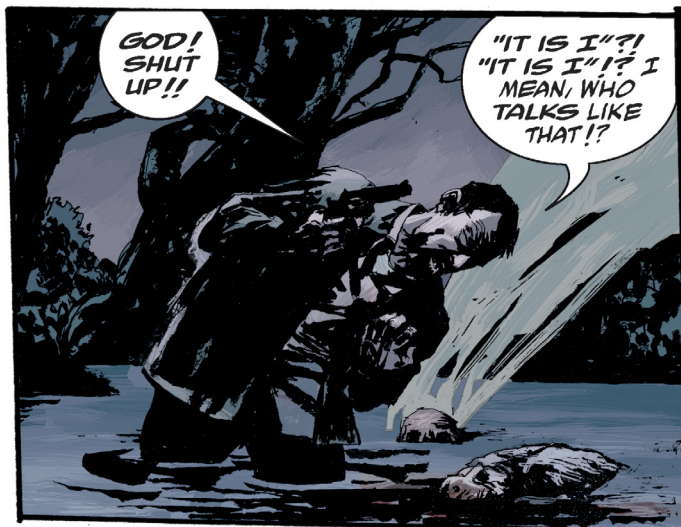


AND
HERE I
AM.

WELL, I
AIN'T ASHAMED
TO TELL YA, THIS
IS ALL VERY
EXCITING FOR
ME.

LET'S HOPE
IT DOESN'T
GET TOO
EXCITING.





GOD!
SHUT
UP!!

"IT IS I"?!
"IT IS I"?! I
MEAN, WHO
TALKS LIKE
THAT!?



AHHHH, A MAN AFTER
ME OWN HEART.

I'M AFTER
SOMETHING.
NOW, I DON'T MEAN
NO DISRESPECT--
YOU'RE A LEGEND
AND ALL...



...BUT YOU'RE ALSO
A BUSINESSMAN,
RIGHT? SO LET'S COME
TO AN AGREEMENT.
YOU TELL ME WHERE
I CAN FIND
YOUR BURIED
TREASURE...

...AND I
GIVE YOU
BACK WHAT
YOU BEEN
LOOKING
FOR ALL
THESE
YEARS.



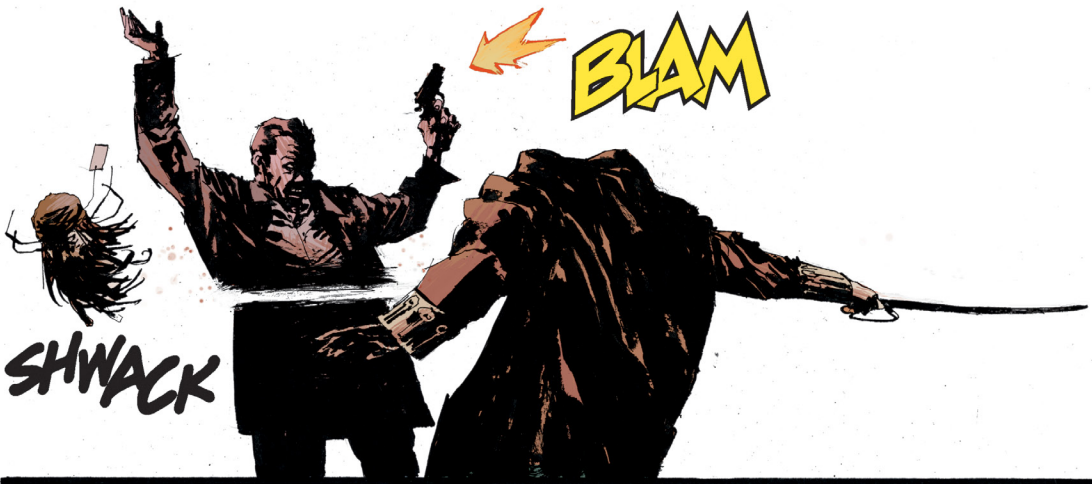
MY
GOD, IT'S
HIM!

CRAP.



Y-YOU'RE A SCARY
BASTARD, NO DOUBT
ABOUT IT. BUT I'M
WHITEY PACHELLI,
AND I'M THE ONE IN
CONTROL HERE, YOU
UNDERSTAND?

AYE, I DO
UNDERSTAND
CONTROL.



OHMYGOD!
OHMYGOD!

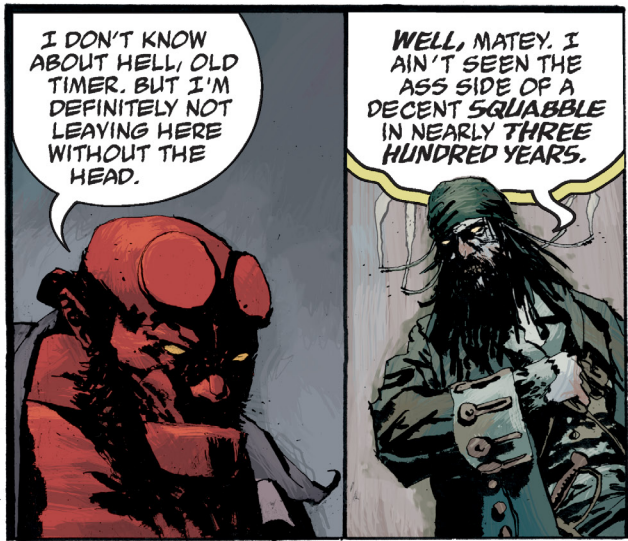
STAY
IN THE
BOAT!

AHHH!
WENCHES
AND LAWYERS
BEWARE! I
DONE COME BACK TO
EAT YOUR BOWELS
FOR BREAKFAST!
WAAHAA-
HAAHA!!

HEY, PAL!
WHO'RE
THE DEAD
GUYS?

GOT NO IDEA.
SOME FUNNY
LITTLE MEN WHO
SHOULD'VE KNOWN
BETTER, IT
SEEMS.

BUT YOU...
YOU LOOK LIKE
AN AGENT OF
OLD SCRATCH
HIMSELF, AND
I'LL BE DAMNED
IF I LET THE
DEVIL DRAG ME
DOWN TO HELL
ON THE TIP OF
HIS TAIL, NOW
THAT I'M
FINALLY
WHOLE
AGAIN.



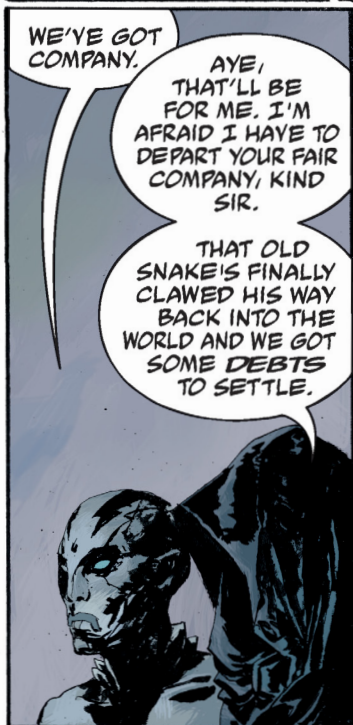


LOTSA PEOPLE LOST
THEIR LIVES IN THESE
WATERS TO THAT HORRID
MAN. THE SOLDIERS
HUNTIN' HIM, HIS
OWN CREW WHAT
HE BETRAYED.

THE
SEA...



...SHE BOILS
OVER WITH ANGRY
HEARTS 'ROUND
HERE.



WE'VE GOT
COMPANY.

AYE,
THAT'LL BE
FOR ME. I'M
AFRAID I HAVE TO
DEPART YOUR FAIR
COMPANY, KIND
SIR.

THAT OLD
SNAKE'S FINALLY
CLAWED HIS WAY
BACK INTO THE
WORLD AND WE GOT
SOME DEBTS
TO SETTLE.



UNLIKE
ME MATES, I
ALWAYS DID LOVE
THE LAND MORE
THAN THE
WATER.



WAIT!



HELLBOY!
YOU
THERE---?







TSK TSK
TSK.



MIND
YOUR
OWN, ME
BOY!

!



GHA!



ARRRGHH!!



YOU'RE A STOUT
LAD! LAY OFF AND
JOIN ME! TOGETHER
WE'LL **PLUNDER** THIS
ROCK UP ONE SIDE
AND DOWN THE
OTHER!

LET
ME THINK
ABOUT
IT.



WHOA!



YOU MUST PAAAAAY

SO IT'S TO BE BLACKBEARD AGAINST THE WORLD, IS IT?!

BLACK-BEARD MUST PAAY



WE'LL SEE WHO'S STILL SWIMMING WHEN ALL'S SAID AND DONE, YA SEA-ROTTED SONS A WHORES!



BLUP

SSSSSS





In the Chapel of Moloch



I HADN'T DRAWN A HELLBOY STORY IN A FEW YEARS. I was doing too much writing for other artists and I was beginning to worry that I'd forgotten how to do a whole story myself. I decided to ease myself back into it—a story mostly set in a dark room seemed like a good idea. Add to that an excuse to copy Goya drawings (all Jerry's paintings are based on prints from Goya's Los Caprichos series), and I was halfway there.

I invented the Knights of Saint Hagan. Everybody always uses the Knights Templar for this kind of thing, but I like to make up my own guys so nobody can tell me I got my facts wrong.

I've never read anything about Moloch being worshiped in Portugal, but that doesn't mean it never happened.

The stuff Jerry says at the end of the story was way too easy to write.

Like Jerry, I don't sculpt, but I did do a very primitive sculpture of Moloch (which can be seen in the sketchbook section in the back) so I'd be able to draw that giant statue from different angles. It was actually fun to do. In fact the whole story was a lot of fun to do. So why haven't I done a Hellboy story since? Ugh. Soon. I promise.

In the Chapel of Moloch was published in October 2008.





JERRY FELL IN LOVE WITH THE PLACE AS SOON AS HE SAW IT. I PAID SIX MONTHS' RENT UP FRONT. THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF TIME FOR HIM TO FINISH THE PIECES FOR THE SHOW.

IT'S A BIG DEAL?

THE CONNIE HOFFMANN GALLERY ON MADISON AVE. I'D BEEN TRYING TO GET HIM IN THERE FOR YEARS.



NO LIGHTS?

IT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE ANYBODY HAD BEEN IN HERE FOR A LONG TIME. JERRY LIKED THE ATMOSPHERE. YOU KNOW--HE'S AN ARTIST. HE WANTED TO SEE IF HE COULD PAINT BY CANDLELIGHT.





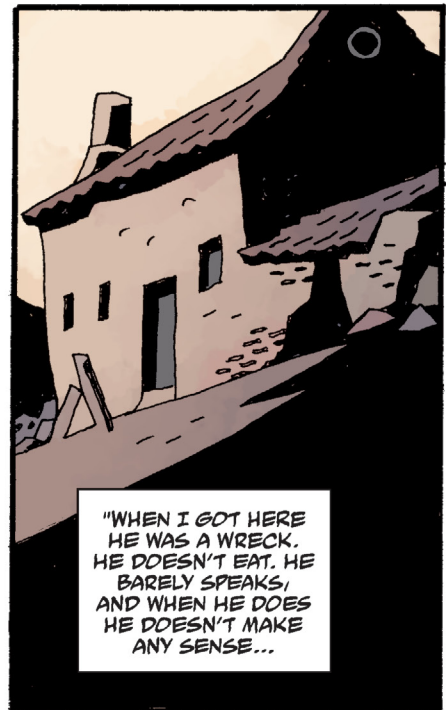
HOW'D THAT WORK OUT?

GOOD WHILE I WAS HERE. HE WAS REALLY GOING. BUT I HAD TO GET BACK TO NEW YORK.

THAT WAS THREE MONTHS AGO.

AND YOU CAME BACK...?

LAST WEEK. I HAD TO. HE WASN'T RETURNING MY PHONE CALLS.



"WHEN I GOT HERE HE WAS A WRECK. HE DOESN'T EAT. HE BARELY SPEAKS, AND WHEN HE DOES HE DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE..."



"MOSTLY HE SLEEPS ALL DAY. WHEN IT GETS DARK HE STUMBLES OUT HERE LIKE A ZOMBIE AND, I GUESS, HE WORKS ALL NIGHT. I DON'T KNOW."



I CAN GET IN HERE ANY TIME DURING THE DAY. NO PROBLEM. BUT AT NIGHT, WHEN HE'S IN HERE, I CAN'T GET THE DOORS OPEN.

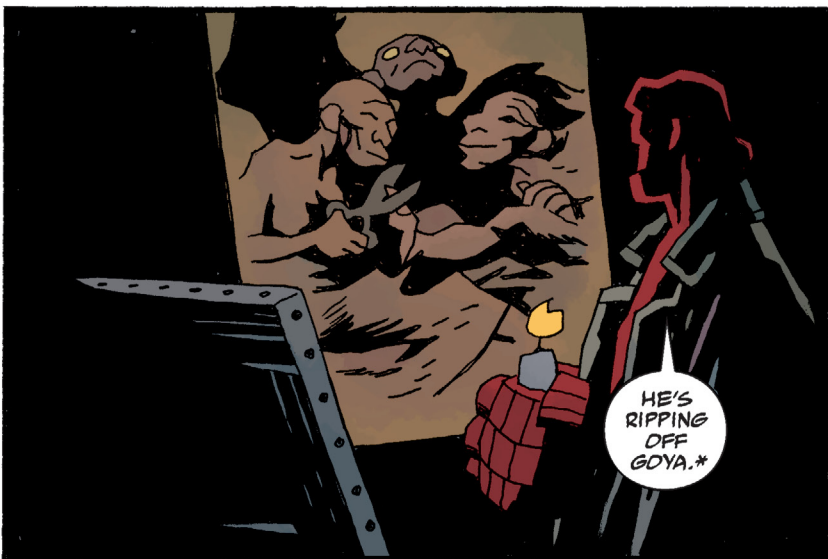
AND THERE ARE NO LOCKS ON THE DOORS.

THAT'S NOT GOOD.

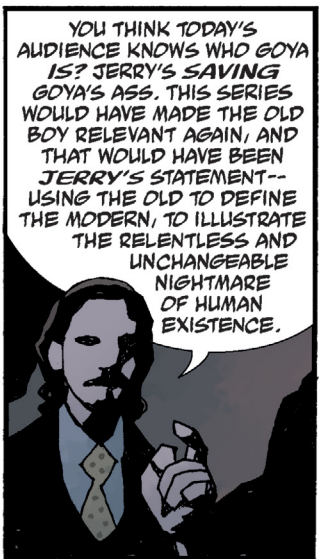


WHAT ABOUT THESE PAINTINGS?

MOST OF THESE WERE FINISHED BEFORE I LEFT.

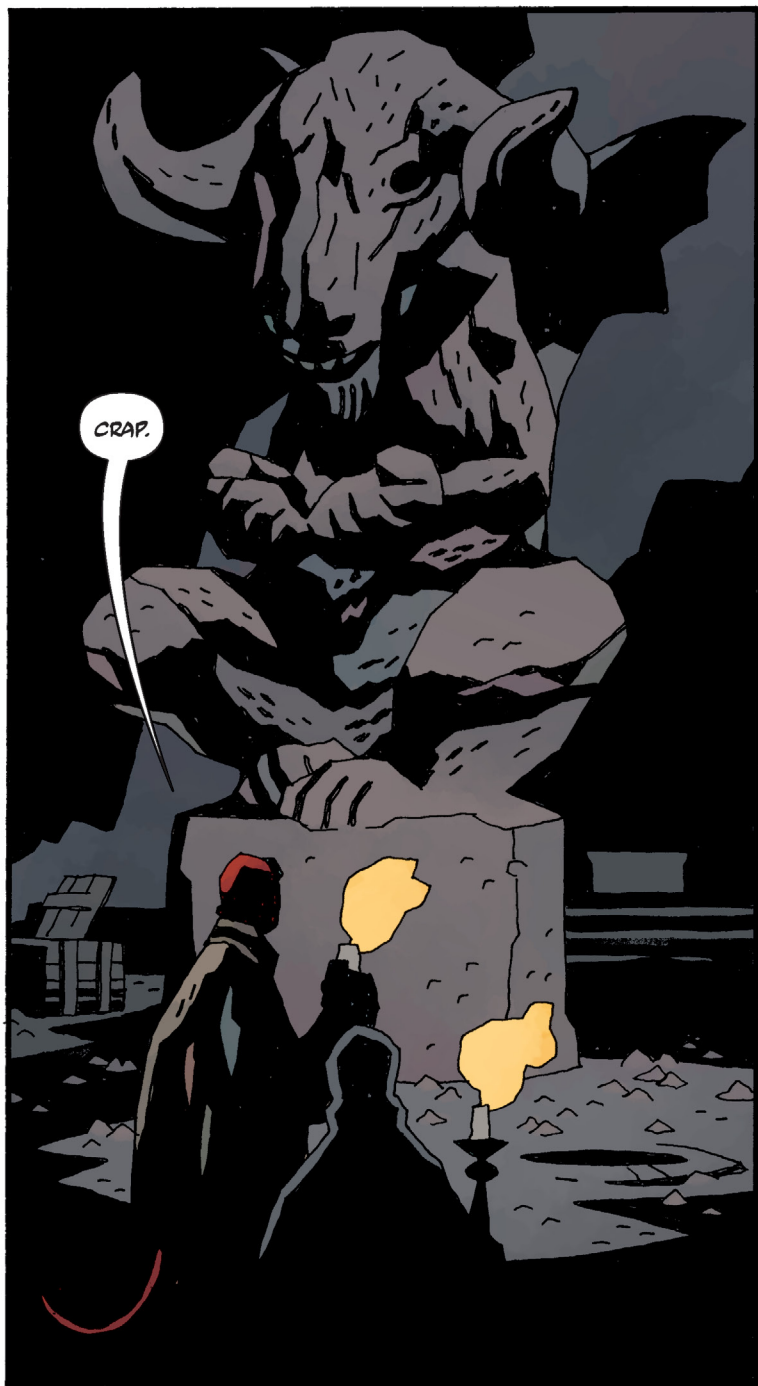


HE'S
RIPPING
OFF
GOYA.*



YOU THINK TODAY'S
AUDIENCE KNOWS WHO GOYA
IS? JERRY'S SAVING
GOYA'S ASS. THIS SERIES
WOULD HAVE MADE THE OLD
BOY RELEVANT AGAIN, AND
THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN
JERRY'S STATEMENT--
USING THE OLD TO DEFINE
THE MODERN, TO ILLUSTRATE
THE RELENTLESS AND
UNCHANGABLE
NIGHTMARE
OF HUMAN
EXISTENCE.





CRAP.

HE ORDERED
THE CLAY ABOUT
TWO MONTHS
AGO. A LOT OF IT.
I FOUND THE
RECEIPT.

AND YOU
SAY HE'D
NEVER
SCULPTED
BEFORE.

NOT
SINCE I'VE
KNOWN HIM,
AND I'VE
KNOWN HIM
A LONG
TIME.

HUH.



THAT'S
NOT
GOOD.







OH.



YOU
KNOW
WHAT IT
IS?

"THE
ABOMINATION OF
THE CHILDREN OF
AMMON."

THE
WHO?

MOLOCH WAS
ONE OF THE OLD
MIDDLE EASTERN
GOD-MONSTERS.
HE'S ACTUALLY
MENTIONED IN THE
BIBLE A COUPLE
TIMES--



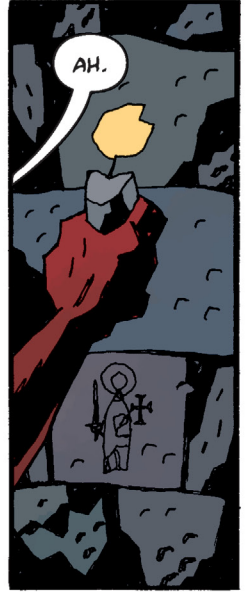
HIS
FOLLOWERS
USED TO
SACRIFICE
CHILDREN
TO HIM--

HORRIBLE.

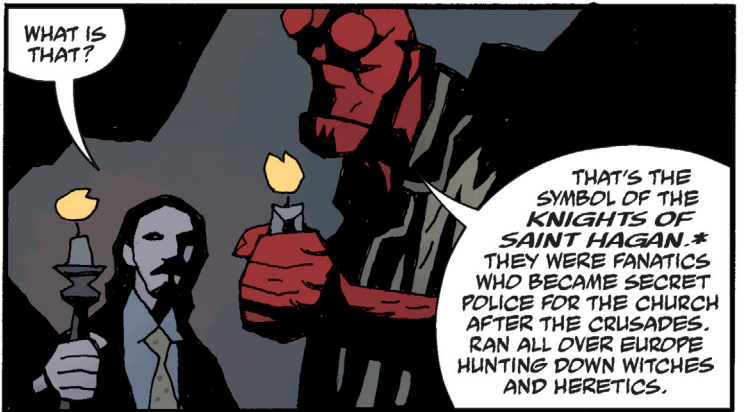
I
KNOW.



THEY USED
TO BUILD A FIRE
INSIDE A BIG
BRASS IDOL AND
ROAST THE KIDS
IN ITS HANDS.



AH.



WHAT IS
THAT?

THAT'S THE
SYMBOL OF THE
KNIGHTS OF
SAINT HAGAN.*
THEY WERE FANATICS
WHO BECAME SECRET
POLICE FOR THE CHURCH
AFTER THE CRUSADES.
RAN ALL OVER EUROPE
HUNTING DOWN WITCHES
AND HERETICS.

*NAMED FOR CRUSADER HAGAN DOUGLAS, WHO, THOUGH
DECAPITATED, FOUGHT AT THE FALL OF ACRE IN 1289.



THAT
DOESN'T
SOUND
TOO
BAD.

BY ALL ACCOUNTS THEY
WERE PRETTY OLD-SCHOOL
ABOUT IT. SORT OF A BURN-
EVERYTHING, KILL-'EM-ALL
APPROACH TO THINGS. A LITTLE
NARROW-MINDED, BUT
THOROUGH...



"IF THEY PUT THAT SYMBOL HERE, IT
MEANS THAT SOMETHING BAD WAS
GOING ON HERE, AND THEY STOPPED IT..."



DEPART
FROM HERE,
YOU ACCURSED,
INTO EVERLASTING
FIRE WHICH HAS BEEN
PREPARED FOR THE
DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS!
FOR YOU AND YOUR
FOLLOWERS, THERE
WILL BE WORMS
THAT NEVER
DIE!



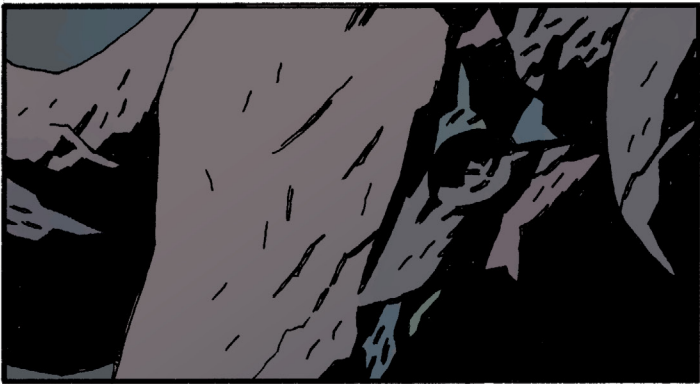
"BUT A LOT OF THE TIME
THE REALLY BAD STUFF..."



MOLOCH...

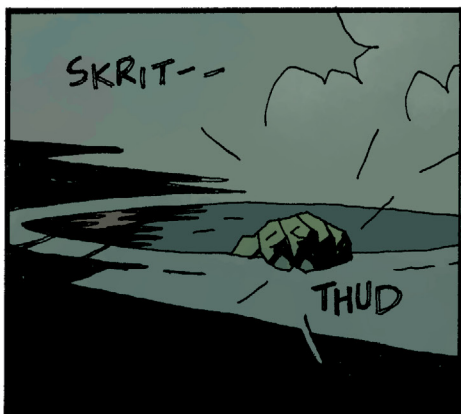


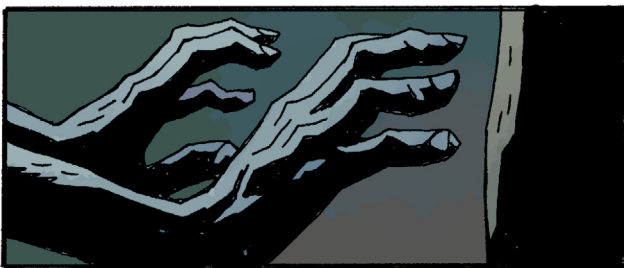
"IT DOESN'T
GO AWAY
COMPLETELY."













SEE
THIS?

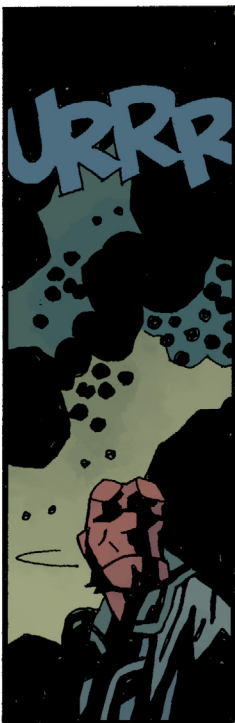
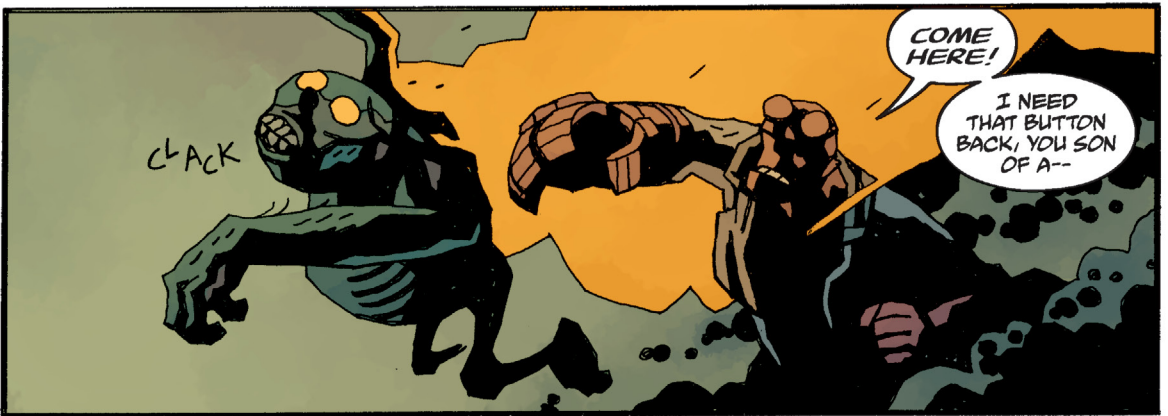
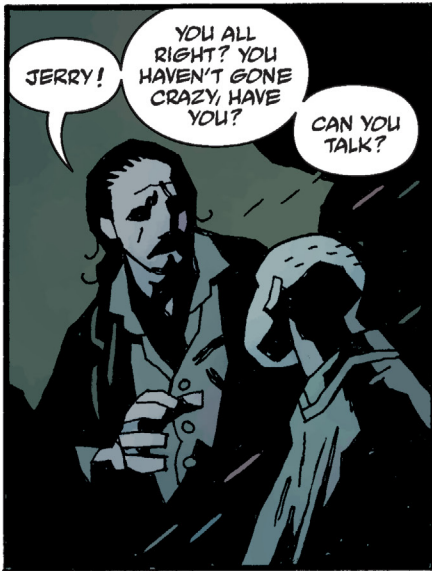
IT'S A
SILVER BUTTON
FROM THE COAT
BISHOP ZRINYI WAS
WEARING WHEN HE
FOUGHT THE
CARPATHIAN
GOAT.*



HE DID
WHAT?

HEY!
YOU!

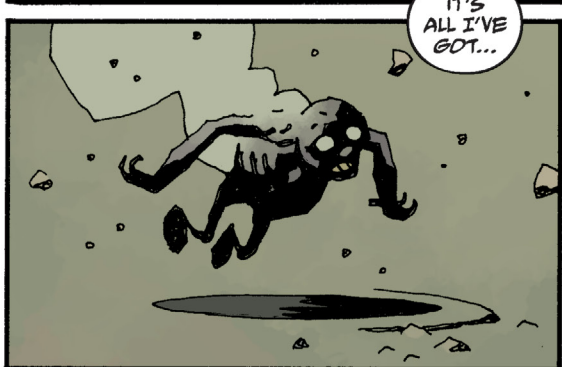


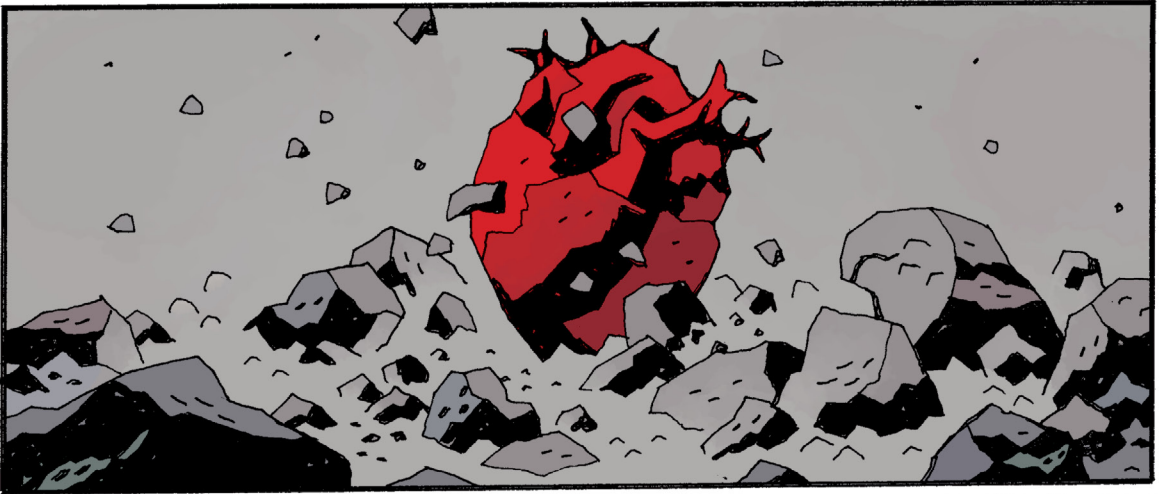
















THAT WAS SOMETHING.

...



SORRY ABOUT THAT, JERRY. YOU'VE GOT TO TRUST ME, THOUGH. THAT WAS THE ONLY GOOD WAY THAT WAS GOING TO END.

I'M RUINED. I'LL NEVER PAINT AGAIN.

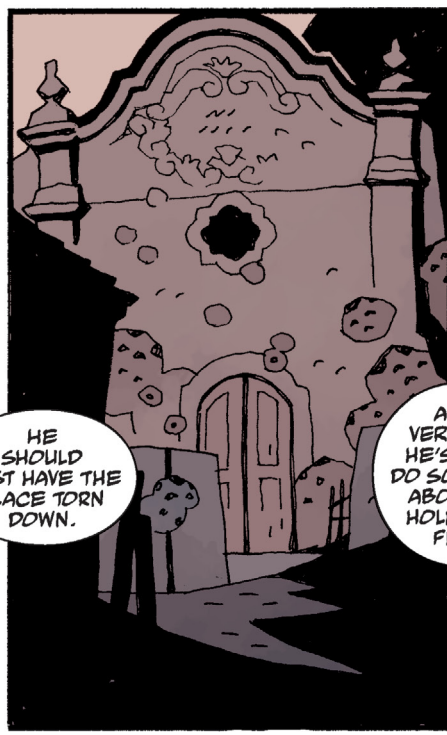
NOT THE WORST NEWS I'VE EVER HEARD. YOU SHOULD ALSO STAY AWAY FROM SCULPTURE.



AND YOU GUYS SHOULD GET YOUR RENT MONEY BACK.

BELIEVE ME, I'M CALLING THE LANDLORD FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.

HE SHOULD JUST HAVE THE PLACE TORN DOWN.



AT THE VERY LEAST, HE'S GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT HOLE IN THE FLOOR.

THE END ?

The Mole



SOME YEARS BACK, during a routine checkup, my doctor noticed a mole on my foot and said (in classic doctor fashion), “You should have that looked at.” I plotted this story on the subway ride home.

This takes place shortly before the beginning of *Darkness Calls*. At the start of that book Hellboy is staying at Harry Middleton’s place, but I originally wrote Harry as a living person—only the epilogue to that book, tacked on much later, reveals that Harry actually died years earlier and is a ghost. If I remember correctly, it was plotting this story that made me change Harry from a living person to a ghost. It’s just cooler to see Hellboy play cards with ghosts.

Thanks to Duncan Fegredo for not only doing a great job drawing the story, but for pointing out that the players (being English) would be using matchsticks instead of poker chips.

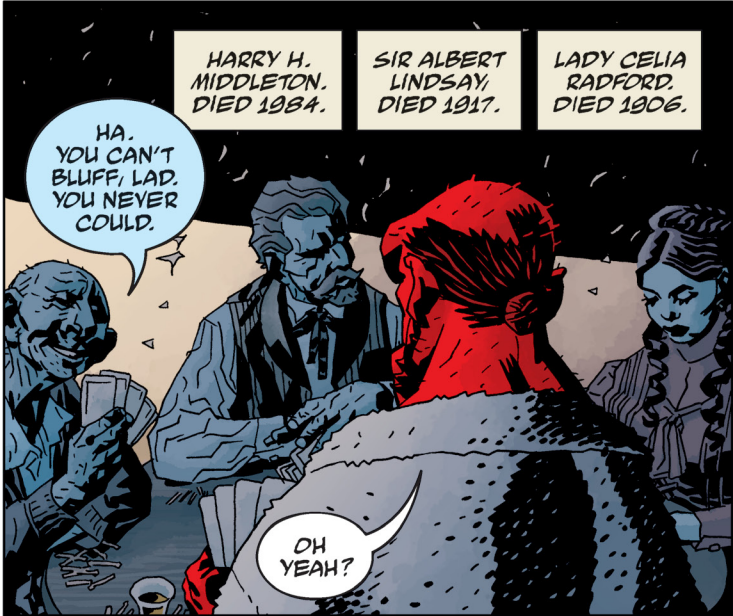
“The Mole” was published in 2008 as part of the Hellboy Free Comic Book Day comic.



ENGLAND.



I'll see you and raise you another... ten.



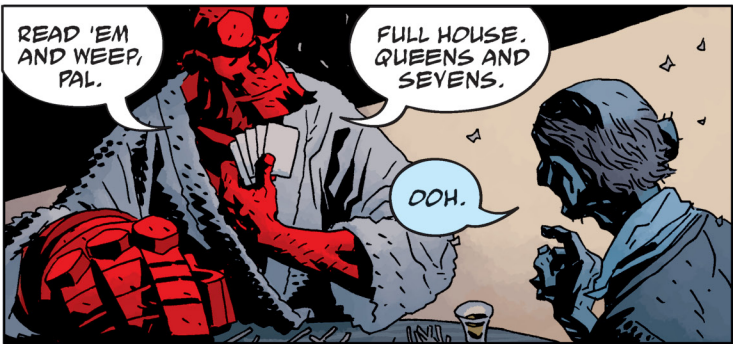
HARRY H. MIDDLETON.
DIED 1984.

SIR ALBERT LINDSAY.
DIED 1917.

LADY CELIA RADFORD.
DIED 1906.

HA. YOU CAN'T BLUFF, LAD. YOU NEVER COULD.

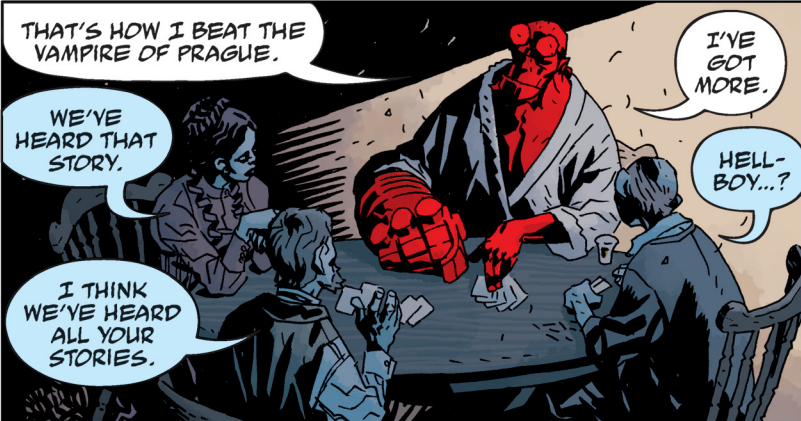
OH YEAH?



READ 'EM AND WEEP, PAL.

FULL HOUSE. QUEENS AND SEVENS.

OOH.



THAT'S HOW I BEAT THE VAMPIRE OF PRAGUE.

WE'VE HEARD THAT STORY.

I THINK WE'VE HEARD ALL YOUR STORIES.

I'VE GOT MORE.

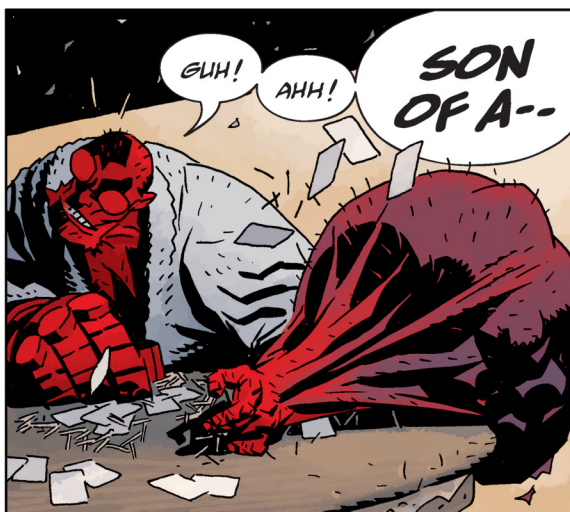
HELL-BOY...?

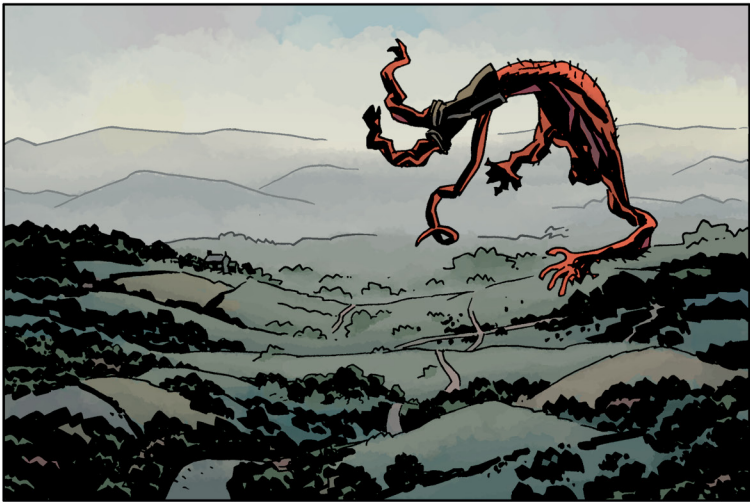
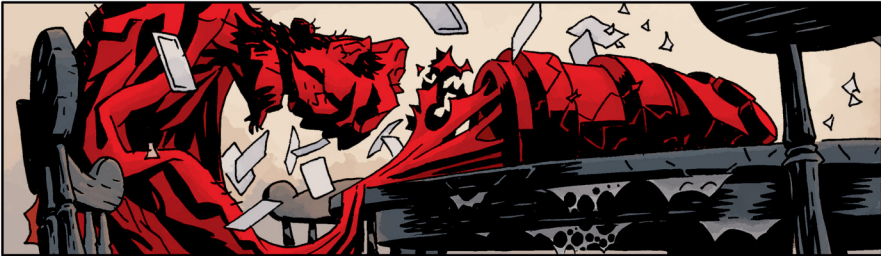


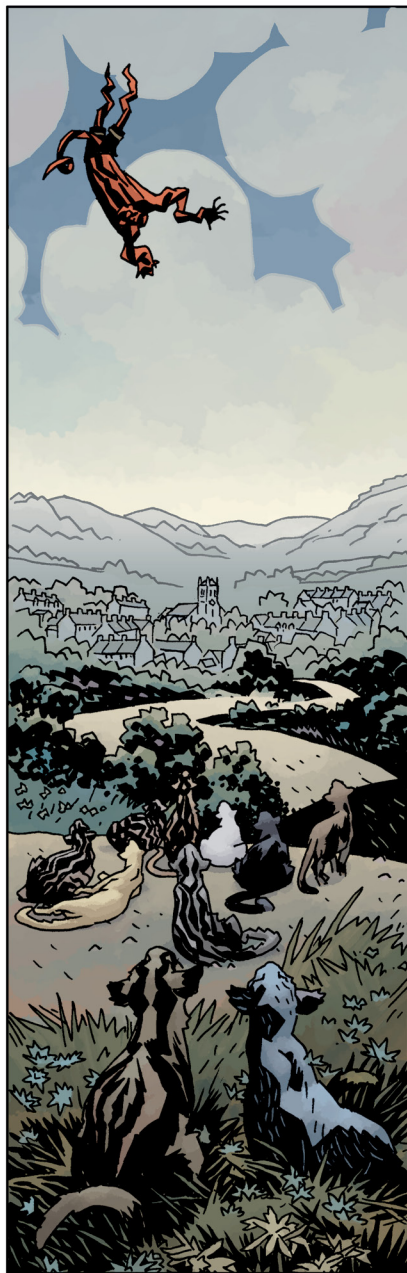
WHAT'S THAT?

NOTE: THIS STORY TAKES PLACE TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENTS IN HELLBOY: DARKNESS CALLS.

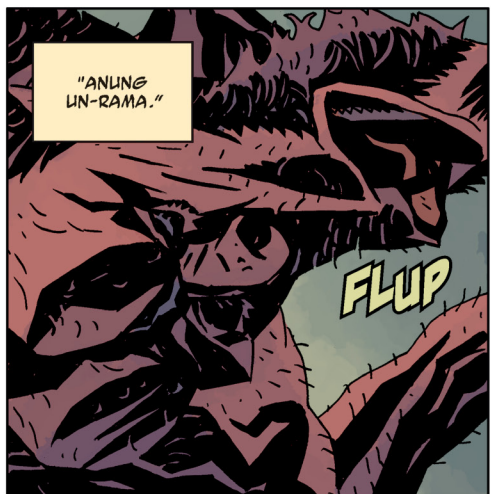
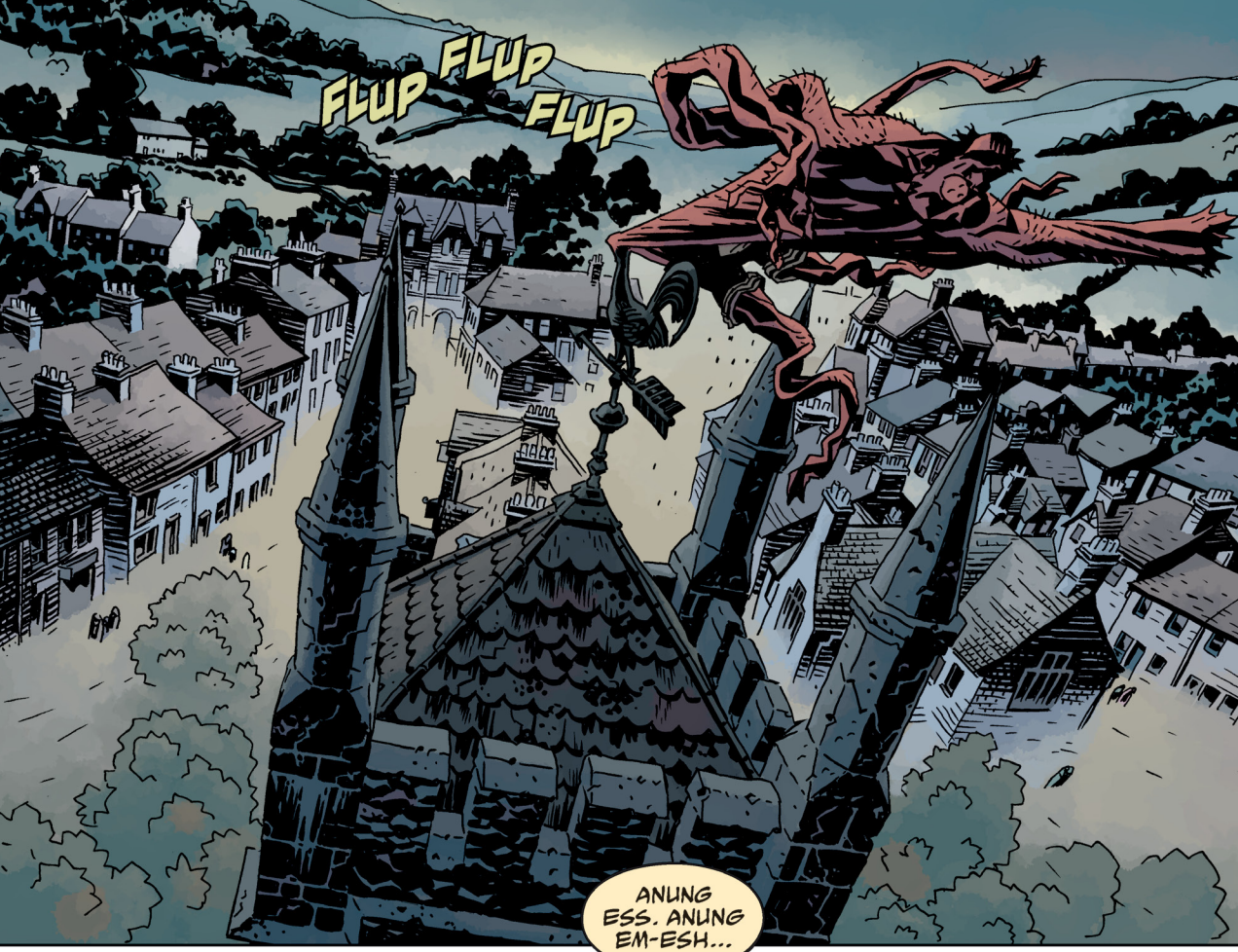


















HELLBOY™

SKETCHBOOK

With notes from the artists



JASON SHAWN ALEXANDER: As with Abe Sapien, I wanted to give Hellboy a more organic, realistic quality. With Abe, I tried for a swimmer's build and exaggerated it. For HB, I wanted to create this solid mass of a figure with the realism of a demon/man who's seen way too much and has lived to tell about it. I really wanted that dark, human quality to him. Trying to maintain the features of Mike's characters while placing them in a real world was one of the most fun challenges I've had in comics. It's a great universe to just go nuts in.

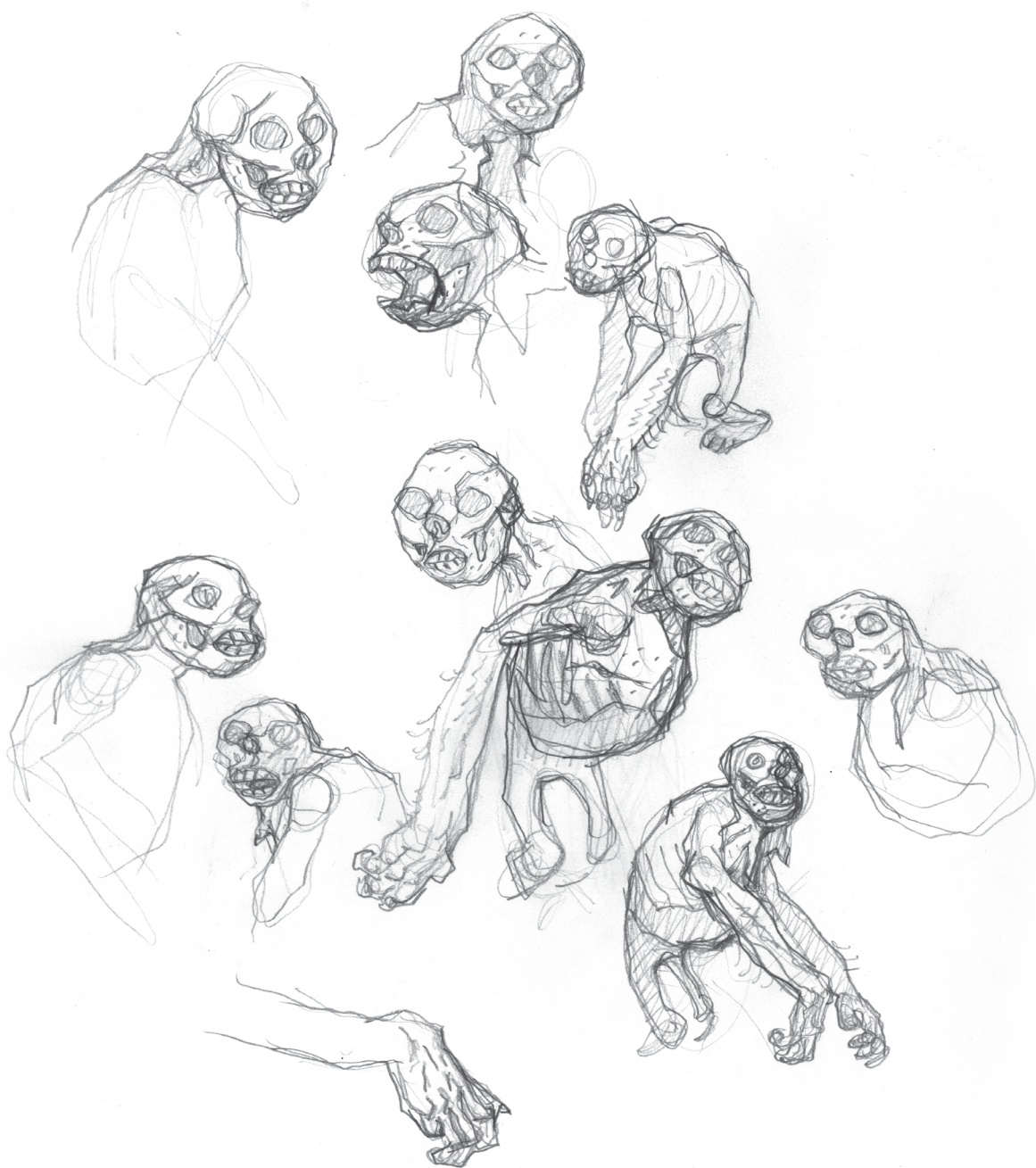
Facing: cover art for They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships.

Preceding: cover art for Free Comic Book Day 2008.



DUNCAN FEGREDO: Hellboy's fear of his destiny is perfectly summed up in "The Mole." There's nothing worse than an itch you can't scratch.

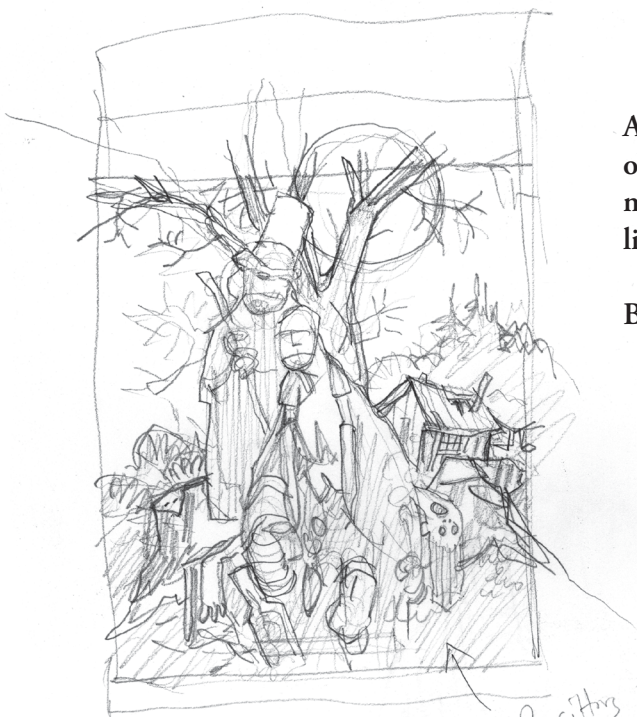
I'm never less than happy with Dave's coloring, but this time he took my suggestion of moving from a misty morning through midday sun till dusk and made it shine. Thanks, Dave!



Abbey Road --
May 22

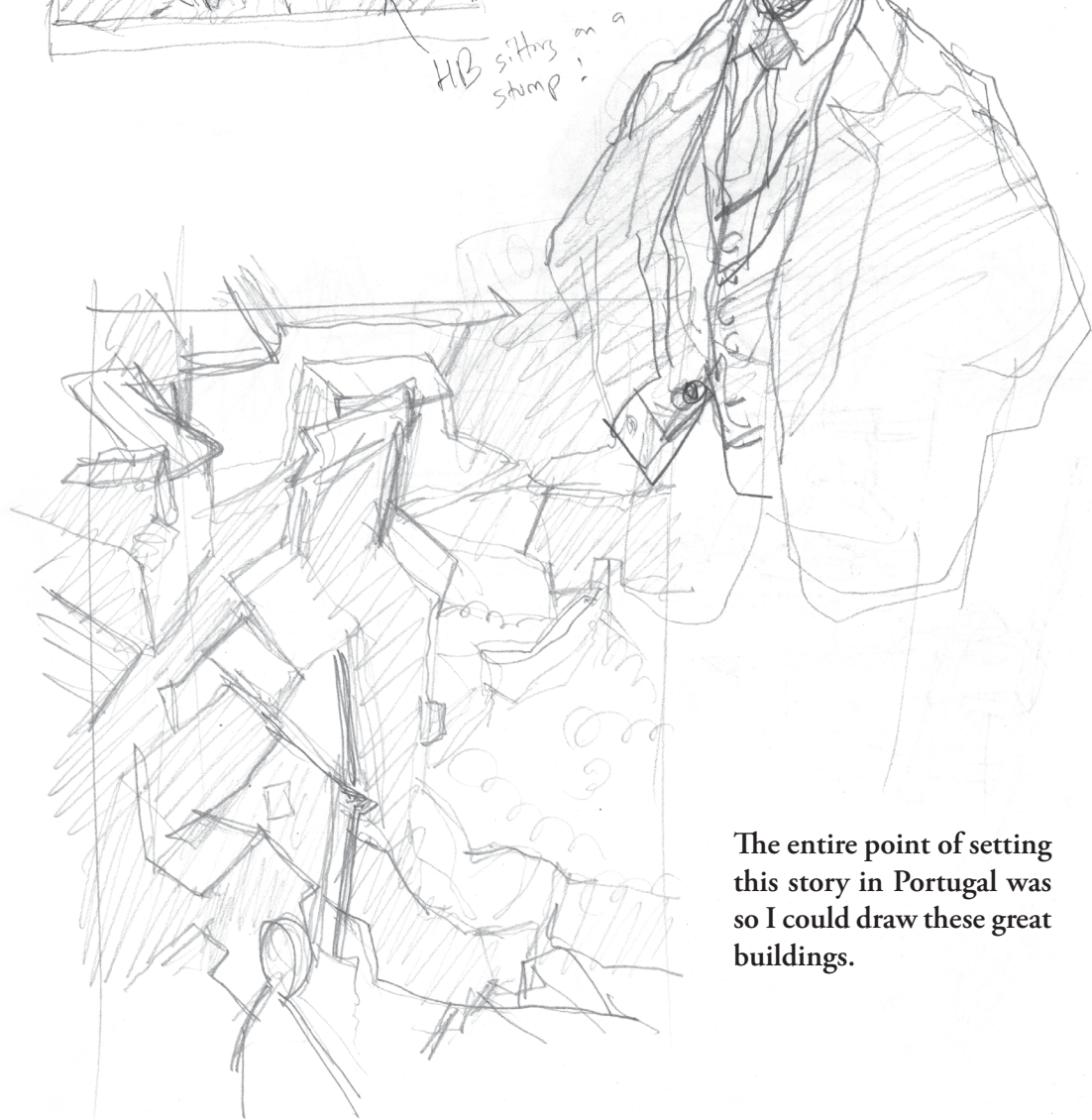
MIKE MIGNOLA: The creature from the hole in the floor.

No, I don't know who or what he is, but he's nasty—inspired by that horrible monkey in J. S. Le Fanu's classic short story "Green Tea." These sketches were actually done at the legendary Abbey Road studio while an orchestra in the next room (led by the great Danny Elfman) recorded the soundtrack to the second *Hellboy* movie.



At left: My original idea for the cover of this book. Unlike Richard Corben, my finished covers rarely look much like my sketches.

Below: The Art Dealer.



The entire point of setting this story in Portugal was so I could draw these great buildings.



My Moloch statue was inspired by the devil/goat figure in the background of Goya's print *Ensayos (Trials)*. Above is my first sketch of the statue. I then made a very primitive clay model (something I've never done before) so the thing would be more or less consistent when drawn from different angles. If I was going to do a sculpture for the first time, this seemed the right story to do it for.

Sketches and finished covers for The Crooked Man #1–#3.



RICHARD CORBEN: These days, I normally do cover sketches that are close to what the finished art will be, at least in structure. Such was not always the case. Back in ancient history, perhaps in the early eighties or late seventies, when I had great goals of being a paperback-cover artist, my preliminary sketches were very rough. This was done with the presumption that art editors had at least some artistic imagination, and could visualize what the finish might look like based on my previous work. There was one incident that changed that forever. I had done a very loose color sketch in ink and





markers for a Philip José Farmer book for a nameless big publisher. I think the editor/art editor/publisher was gunning for me. Basically, he was offended by my sketch and went on about it in many colorful, fiery words—that it was a painful thorn in his eyes and that I was wasting his valuable time. Obviously I was not going to do this cover, nor would I ever work for him. I was too astounded to reply and I seriously considered a different career. Since that time, my sketches have become more refined. In fact, the





sketches I now send for approval are really second-generation images that solve most of the compositional problems, images that any editor can make a decision about.

My main problem with the Hellboy drawings is getting Hellboy right. I think only Mike can do Hellboy the best, but I keep trying. I also have problems with the appearance of the other characters, because the cover must be done first, before any of the pages are done and before I “get to know” them.



MANLY WADE WELLMAN: AMERICAN MYTHMAKER

For those of you who have been reading the *Hellboy* mythos for some time, it's probably obvious that Mike Mignola has derived a good deal of inspiration from the pulp magazines of yesteryear. Some of these authors, such as Robert E. Howard (the creator of Conan) and H. P. Lovecraft (the inventor of the Cthulhu mythos), are perpetually in print, in editions ranging from elaborate illustrated volumes to much less expensive and serviceable paperback editions. However, one of the primary influences on the *Hellboy* mythos is a character not nearly as well known, created by an author that you may have missed out on.

Manly Wade Wellman had one of the longest careers of any of the pulp writers, from his initial appearance in *Thrilling Tales* in 1927 with "The Lion Roared" to his final tale authored at the age of eighty-two and published in 1987, the year after his death.

Wellman was an interesting person to have become so closely associated with the folklore of Appalachia. Born in Portuguese West Africa, his family moved to the United States while Wellman was still a boy, but his early experiences in Africa hearing native tales instilled a profound interest in folklore that remained with Wellman his entire life. He began his writing career doing reviews of silent films for the *Wichita Beacon* in the 1920s, before moving on to attend university in Wichita and, later, Columbia University in New York.

After his first sale, "The Lion Roared," which drew heavily on the stories he'd heard in Africa, Wellman tried his hand at the supernatural with "Back to the Beast," which appeared in the November 1927 issue of *Weird Tales*. Wellman was still finding his voice as an author, and his next work appeared

in *Wonder Stories*, the companion magazine to the first of the science-fiction pulps, *Amazing Stories*. Both magazines were considered bottom of the barrel at the time. Their founder, Hugo Gernsback, considered the father of magazine science fiction, was a miserly sort, of whom it was said his usual mode of operation was payment upon lawsuit.

Despite the disadvantages of submitting work to these markets, they were still a viable proving ground for a young writer experimenting with different genres. While the first few tales that Wellman sold to *Wonder Stories* are fairly uninspired space opera with

titles like "The Disc-Men of Jupiter" and "Rebels of the Moon," these early stories did provide Wellman with an interest in the genre of science fiction that he would explore to full advantage with his memorable tales of the 30th Century a decade later.

By the mid-1930s something odd had happened with Wellman's interests. Interspersed among the stories of space buccaneers and crashing planetoids, works like "The Kelpie" and "School for the Unspeakable," written in a far more subdued style and drawing on traditional folklore, were starting to show up

in *Weird Tales*. In 1937, Wellman added to the burgeoning Cthulhu mythos with a clever tale of the *Necronomicon* entitled "The Terrible Parchment." He had begun to incorporate a regional flavor to his stories that made his voice unique.

In 1938, Wellman attempted his first foray into the genre of the occult detective with the novelette of lycanthropy *The Hairy Ones Shall Dance*. Published under the pseudonym of Gans T. Field, this was the first of his Judge Pursuivant tales and has a good deal in common with the psychic detective stories of preceding decades. Pursuivant is an elderly and

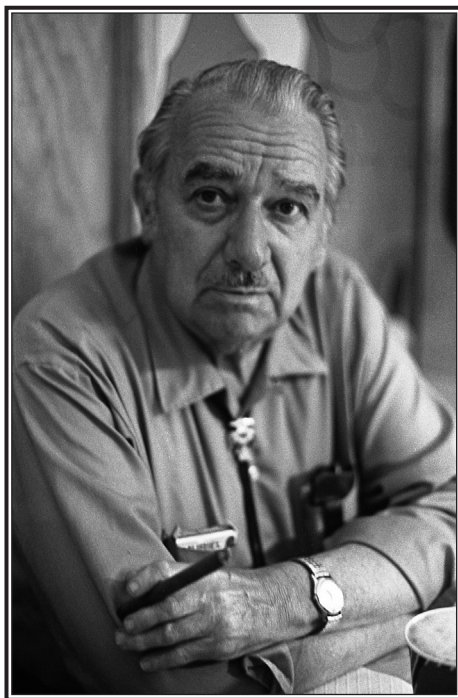


Photo by David Drake

wise figure, but like his predecessors, he's a cerebral problem solver rather than an adventurer.

There's a bit of contradiction in the judge's biography as supplied by Wellman. One story refers to him as being born in 1891, and others refer to his "advanced age" and physical feebleness, but all of Pursuivant's exploits would have occurred when the judge was in his late forties. Being fifty myself, I have to take issue with the description of "advanced age." I've often wondered if the date of 1891 was a typo and that 1871 was the intended date (this would have placed him in his late sixties, which would make a great deal more sense).

The judge was popular enough to warrant a handful of return appearances: three more pieces in *Weird Tales* (including my nomination for the most bizarre title ever: "The Dreadful Rabbits") and a cameo in the 1982 novel *The Hanging Stones*.

By the 1940s, *Weird Tales* was fighting sagging sales and wartime paper shortages. Lovecraft, Howard, and Henry S. Whitehead had all passed away. The war effort claimed another writer, Donald Wandrei, and effectively ended his writing career. Apparently the real-life horrors of war were sufficient to dampen Wandrei's interest in writing about supernatural horrors; he remained active as copublisher of Arkham House, editing Lovecraft's letters, but his fiction writing came to an end.

Clark Ashton Smith refocused his energies on art and poetry, leaving the world of pulp fiction behind. The onetime star of *Weird Tales*, Seabury Quinn, appeared only sporadically. Quinn had been the most prolific and popular of all the *Weird Tales* authors, with his stories of occult detective Jules de Grandin appearing in over sixty issues of the magazine from the mid-1920s through the 1930s.

Newer voices, like those of Ray Bradbury and Henry Kuttner, helped keep the magazine going, along with steady contributions from Robert Bloch and August Derleth. But what *Weird Tales* really needed was a writer who could seize the readers' imaginations and be prolific enough to fill the rather large shoes of the magazine's earlier mainstays.

That's what it got with Manly Wade Wellman. A regular contributor to the magazine since the late 1930s, Wellman exploded during the forties with a barrage of stories that have come to be considered classics today. The decade saw some of his best work, including the introductions of John Thunstone in 1943 and John the Balladeer, his most enduring creation, and biggest influence on Hellboy, three years later.

Both Johns fit the description of "occult detectives," though neither were cast in the conventional

mold established by earlier authors. After the initial two Balladeer tales, he reworked the character and brought him back in 1951 in the form by which he'd be known for the next thirty years. The tale, "O Ugly Bird!" featured a gigantic, buzzardlike creature no doubt drawn from Native American legends of the thunderbird.

We learn a little about John in this story. He's a wanderer equipped with a great knowledge of the occult and a silver-stringed guitar. Wellman described John the Balladeer as looking like "a young Johnny Cash" and suggested that he was not only a musician and knowledgeable on occult matters, but also a Korean War veteran who could be plenty handy with his fists if the situation warranted it.

The next story, "The Desrick on Yandro," saw Wellman incorporate more southern folklore into his work. The story features mentions of the behinder, a creature that no one can describe as it's always behind him or her. John relates that he saw one and survived to tell the tale: "*Then I knew why nobody's supposed to see one. To this day I can see it, as plain as a fence at noon, and forever I will be able to see it. But talking about it is another matter. Thank you, I won't try.*"

Other creatures referred to in the story include the flat ("*It lies level with the ground, and not much higher. It can wrap around you like a blanket.*"), the skim ("*And above the tree tops sailed a round, flat thing, like a big plate being pitched high.*"), the culverin (a bizarre creature that shoots pebbles from its mouth), and more. With the incorporation of these traditional myths, the tone for the John the Balladeer stories was set.

The occult detective is a tradition dating back to the early years of this century, with characters such as Blackwood's John Silence and Hodgson's Thomas Carnacki striving against the forces of darkness. Often the flaw in these tales was that the protagonist would relate them while comfortably seated by a cheery fire at his club. Knowing from the get-go that the protagonist survived the ordeal doesn't do much to create an atmosphere of suspense for the reader.

Wellman succeeded in taking the archetype of the occult detective and fusing it with the more raucous tone of adventurous pulp fiction. There's been a lot of similar work done since, but no one has ever done it quite as well as did Manly Wade Wellman.

Wellman's urbane occult detective John Thunstone was an immediate hit with readers. Thunstone is a man of action as well as an investigator. This is a man who strides boldly into encounters with the unknown brandishing a sword

or grimoire. A man as likely to utilize concentration techniques learned from “an old coon-hunter” as astral projection taught by a Tibetan lama. In short, Thunstone is just the sort we might expect to see as an operative for the B.P.R.D.

Thunstone needed a larger-than-life opponent. Mere dabblers in darkness and malign spectres were not sufficient to test his mettle; he needed an adversary of equal stature. Wellman gave him one in the person of Rowley Thorne. Characters of a completely evil nature are hard to construct convincingly. For the character of Thorne, Wellman used as a template Aleister Crowley, the famous occultist and self-proclaimed “wickedest man in the world.” Indeed, Wellman’s editor was concerned that the depiction was so close to the real-life Crowley that a lawsuit for libel might be a possibility. Wellman calmed him with the logical argument that such a notorious individual as Crowley would have a difficult time bringing a suit based on the actions of a fictitious character that were no worse than many of the things he’d claimed in print to have actually done!

The Thunstone stories appeared on a regular basis throughout the wartime years and beyond. The evil sorcerer Rowley Thorne returns in several tales, each time to be thwarted by Thunstone. Thunstone made his last appearance in *Weird Tales* in 1951, before disappearing for thirty years. In the last Thunstone piece, the 1985 novel *The School of Darkness*, his final opponent was Rowley Thorne, and their antipathy for each other was still palpable some forty years after their first appearance.

By the 1950s, with the pulp era drawing to a close and the profusion of comic books, television, and other brighter, flashier diversions, audiences were dwindling. *Weird Tales* folded in 1954, leaving only the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* as a possible home for “unusual stories.”

The 1950s saw Wellman focus his energies on the John the Balladeer stories and dozens of books and articles on a wide variety of subjects. A writer’s writer, Wellman produced articles, comic-book scripts, and books, both fiction and nonfiction. As a passionate student of southern history, Wellman wrote a number of books that are considered regional classics today, including an account of the great steamboat race between the *Robert E. Lee* and the *Natchez*.

While Wellman’s tales of the wandering minstrel went on to be his best-known work, he was an astute professional who could be counted on to pinch-hit for other authors, including Will Eisner (writing an entire book’s worth of the adventures of

the Spirit) and Earl and Otto Binder (scripting many issues of *Captain Marvel* and *Captain Marvel Jr.*).

Oddly, the most enduring of Wellman’s creations, one that is certainly in the tradition of the occult detective, is the one that he receives the least amount of credit for. At the same time that he was launching the prose tales of John the Balladeer, Wellman created the Phantom Stranger for DC Comics. The Phantom Stranger was more of a debunker of occult hoaxes than the supernatural character we know today. While his original run only lasted for six issues, this mysterious character is still an integral part of the DC universe nearly sixty years later!

While some of Wellman’s characters seem somewhat prosaic, his stories of John the Balladeer are rightfully considered classics today. What set the John stories apart was Wellman’s deft inclusion of Appalachian folklore. Where the traditional folklore leaves off and Wellman’s invention begins is a delightful challenge for any reader with a serious interest in the origins of American myth. Some of Wellman’s creations were invented out of whole cloth, such as the Shonokins, who bedeviled John Thunstone; others, like the gardinel, may indeed have had their roots in the tall tales related by the mountain people.

One thing is clear in all of Wellman’s work, and that is a deep and abiding love of and respect for both the people of Appalachia and Native Americans. These were his friends and neighbors, and Wellman always treated his subjects with respect. In Wellman’s stories, the hill people are not portrayed as ignorant or uneducated, but as folk who, through time-honored practice, are privy to knowledge that is denied the rest of us. This close attention to regionally specific details ultimately protected him from writers seeking an easy target for pastiche; while his writing style could be imitated, his wealth of obscure knowledge could not.

The John the Balladeer tales continued to appear sporadically in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* throughout the 1950s. In 1963, the venerable small press Arkham House announced the publication of *Who Fears the Devil?*—a collection that gathered all of his John stories together in one volume. It must not have been a tremendous success, as seven years later, the book was still available when I received my first Arkham House catalog and, recognizing the name of the author of “The Desrick on Yandro,” (published in one of those wonderful Alfred Hitchcock compilations edited by Robert Arthur), sent in a hard-earned four dollars for the book.

Having only read one of his stories previously, the impact on me of an entire collection of Wellman was profound. The author's remarkable sense of place lent an air of authenticity to the stories that was lacking in much of the material I was reading at the time. I've been a Wellman devotee ever since.

In the early 1970s, magazine fiction in the horror genre was limited to the occasional piece in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. But there were also the fan zines (now called "small-press magazines"). *Whispers* and *Weirdbook* debuted then, to be followed shortly by *Fantasy Tales*.

I was astounded to see a new Manly Wade Wellman story in the pages of *Whispers*. In my youthful naiveté, I'd assumed that Wellman, like Smith, Lovecraft, and Howard, was long since deceased or at least retired. Imagine the delight of a teenage aficionado of weird fiction upon discovering that not only was one of the legendary *Weird Tales* writers still alive, he was still writing top-notch weird fiction!

The years that followed saw a renaissance for Wellman. The publication of two huge omnibus volumes by Carcosa was enthusiastically received by collectors and libraries. The two books, *Worse Things Waiting* and *Lonely Vigils*, are exquisite examples of what the small press can and should be, profusely illustrated tomes that successfully capture the feel of the old pulps. These books are sought after today by collectors and command huge prices on the rare occasion that they are offered for sale. Doubleday soon launched a series of novels continuing the adventures of John the Balladeer and John Thunstone. The Wellman boom was in full swing, and the author continued to churn out quality tales to the delight of a new generation of readers.

Among the new stories were the chronicles of Lee Cobbett, a marked contrast to the larger-than-life Thunstone. Cobbett was pretty much an everyman with a knack for stumbling across supernatural occurrences and being compelled to heroic action.

As examples of the ordinary man confronted by the extraordinary, the Cobbett stories are excellent. It seems that Wellman was beginning to follow a thematic approach in the Cobbett stories reminiscent of the work of Algernon Blackwood, wherein manifestations of the force of nature rise up in defense against man's encroachments and humans survive by luck rather than guile or skill. It would have been most interesting to see where the cycle of Lee Cobbett stories ultimately wound up. Most of the tales were collected in the impossibly rare volume *The Valley So Low*. The stories are few in number,

but the everyman character of Cobbett makes an excellent counterpoint to Thunstone.

It's not often that a fictional character such as John the Balladeer so captures the imagination of readers (and the author) that his exploits are chronicled over a period of nearly forty years. I suspect that there would have been more John the Balladeer and John Thunstone stories, and certainly more Lee Cobbett stories, had Wellman not passed away at eighty-two, an age far too young for such an energetic storyteller.

The legacy of stories that he left is a rich one indeed. When I was first asked by Jason Williams of Night Shade Books to assemble a "best of" volume, I eagerly agreed and then almost immediately regretted the choice. After all, I'd have had to leave out so many fine stories to get the book anywhere near a manageable size . . . As I made and discarded list after list of stories that simply *must* be included, it became evident that a series of books would be called for. Fortunately, the folks at Night Shade Books shared my enthusiasm and quickly agreed that a series that would preserve all the weird fiction of this remarkable writer would be the way to go. As it developed, the single volume quickly became a five-volume series, which includes the majority of Wellman's supernatural fiction.

All in all, perhaps no other American author outside of the trinity of H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and Clark Ashton Smith painted such a wide canvas of myth to be drawn from by future creators. Certainly, no one besides Wellman grounded his work so firmly in established folklore. Mike Mignola has begun to incorporate what I can only call "the Wellman mythos" into the saga of Hellboy, and, considering the wealth of untapped material, I can only say that I will be eagerly awaiting the next developments!

John Pelan
Midnight House
Gallup, New Mexico

John Pelan is the author of several volumes of weird fiction and editor of over forty books of material culled from the pulps and earlier sources. His new collection, Darkness, My Old Friend, is forthcoming from Mythos Books. Recent projects include a collection of the work of Weird Tales great Frank Belknap Long for Centipede Press and an imprint of rare supernatural works under the Dancing Tuatara Press division of Ramble House. John can be reached through his website at darkmidhouse.com, where he's always happy to discuss weird fiction and occult detectives.



“Part of the magic of what Mignola has done is to allow us to see and understand something of what his hero sees and understands. Reading a Hellboy adventure is to share it and learn a little from it; seeing the strange nighttime colors will enrich your twilights henceforth, and observing the tenderness of a hero who can be extraordinarily brutal may very well make you just a little kinder.”

*from the introduction
by Gahan Wilson*

