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OCT 08

JONAH HEX

**GRAY
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*Andy
Huber
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THE HARDEST THING A MAN CAN DO IN THIS LIFE IS CHANGE HIS WAYS. IN THE DAYS GONE PAST, A MAN COULD REINVENT HIMSELF THROUGH NEW SURROUNDINGS AND FOLK THAT NEITHER KNOW NOR CARE ABOUT HIS PAST.



ON FIRST ENTERING OREGON, A STRANGER IS OVERCOME WITH THE NEWNESS AND WILDNESS THAT SURROUNDS HIM. INDEED, THE CHANGE IS SO GREAT THAT IT SEEMS AS IF ONE HAS ENTERED A DIFFERENT WORLD.



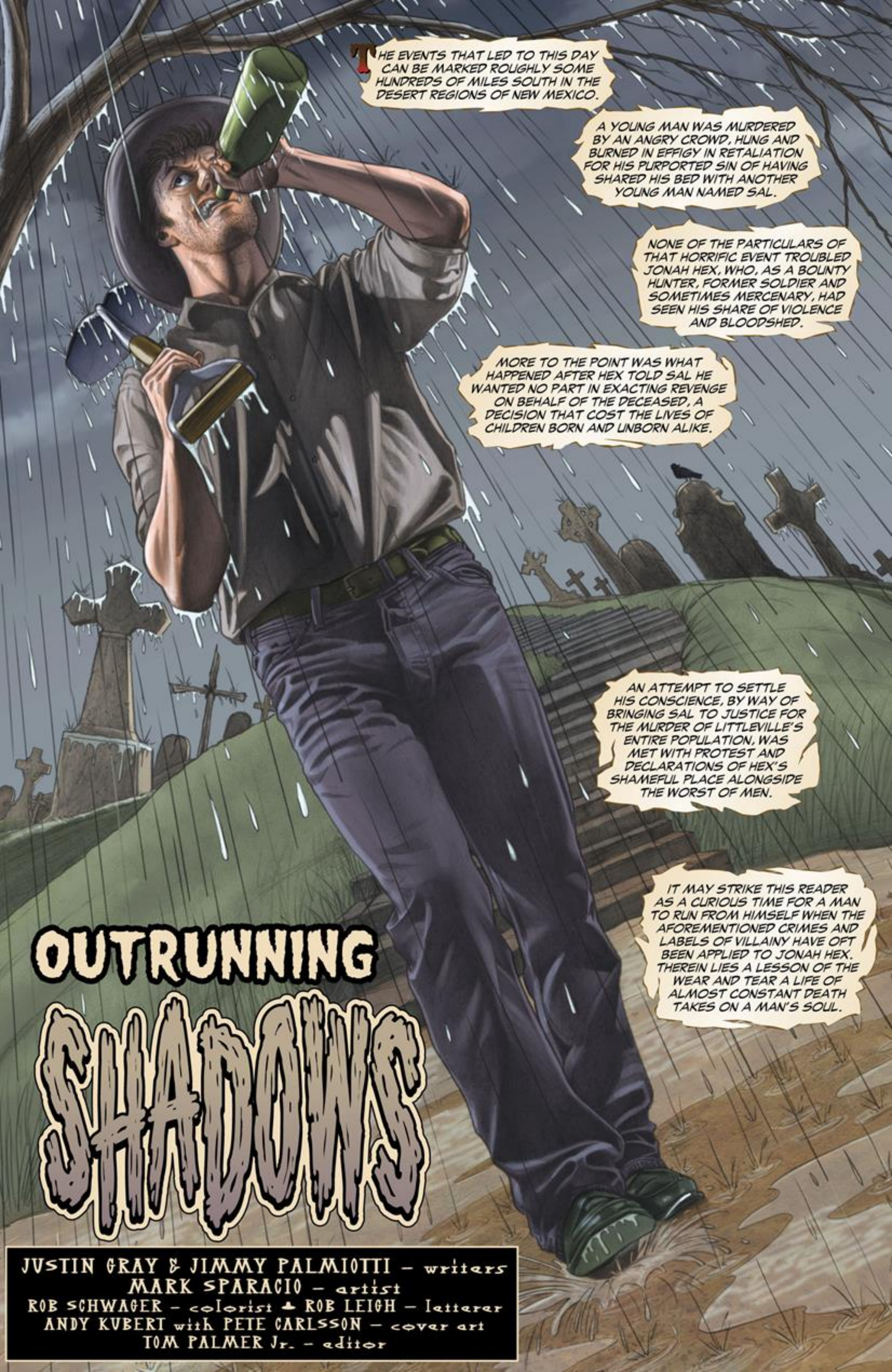
EVERYTHING THAT HE SEES IS DISSIMILAR FROM THE OBJECTS OF HIS HOME, AND FOR SOME THAT'S THE FIRST STEP TO BECOMING A NEW MAN.



TRUTH IS, MOST MEN RUN AWAY FROM THEIR PAST IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.



SOME TRY TO BURY IT.

A man in a cowboy hat and a dark shirt is drinking from a green bottle in the rain. He is holding a hammer in his other hand. In the background, there are tombstones in a cemetery.

THE EVENTS THAT LED TO THIS DAY CAN BE MARKED ROUGHLY SOME HUNDREDS OF MILES SOUTH IN THE DESERT REGIONS OF NEW MEXICO.

A YOUNG MAN WAS MURDERED BY AN ANGRY CROWD, HUNG AND BURNED IN EFFIGY IN RETALIATION FOR HIS PURPORTED SIN OF HAVING SHARED HIS BED WITH ANOTHER YOUNG MAN NAMED SAL.

NONE OF THE PARTICULARS OF THAT HORRIFIC EVENT TROUBLED JONAH HEX, WHO, AS A BOUNTY HUNTER, FORMER SOLDIER AND SOMETIMES MERCENARY, HAD SEEN HIS SHARE OF VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED.

MORE TO THE POINT WAS WHAT HAPPENED AFTER HEX TOLD SAL HE WANTED NO PART IN EXACTING REVENGE ON BEHALF OF THE DECEASED, A DECISION THAT COST THE LIVES OF CHILDREN BORN AND UNBORN ALIKE.

AN ATTEMPT TO SETTLE HIS CONSCIENCE, BY WAY OF BRINGING SAL TO JUSTICE FOR THE MURDER OF LITTLEVILLE'S ENTIRE POPULATION, WAS MET WITH PROTEST AND DECLARATIONS OF HEX'S SHAMEFUL PLACE ALONGSIDE THE WORST OF MEN.

IT MAY STRIKE THIS READER AS A CURIOUS TIME FOR A MAN TO RUN FROM HIMSELF WHEN THE AFOREMENTIONED CRIMES AND LABELS OF VILLAINY HAVE OFT BEEN APPLIED TO JONAH HEX. THEREIN LIES A LESSON OF THE WEAR AND TEAR A LIFE OF ALMOST CONSTANT DEATH TAKES ON A MAN'S SOUL.

OUTRUNNING

SHADOWS

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THE EFFORTS OF BUILDING A CHANGED MAN SO OFTEN RESULT IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW HOME, BOTH IN TERMS OF A STRUCTURE TO KEEP THE RAIN FROM ONE'S HEAD AND THE COMPANY HE KEEPS.

KILLING OLD HABITS.



IN THE CASE OF JONAH HEX, COMPANY WAS BEST KEPT WITH HORSES AND THE OCCASIONAL DOG, AS MOST TIMES THE INCLUSION OF OTHERS IN HIS LIFE LED TO COMPLICATIONS AND ULTIMATELY DEATH IN SOME FORM OR ANOTHER.



HAVING PROCURED AN UNTOLD FORTUNE IN BOUNTIES OVER THE YEARS, IT WAS POSSIBLE TO SUSTAIN HIMSELF WITHOUT THE NEED OR WANT OF A JOB. NOT THAT OLD HEX HAD MORE THAN BUT ONE PROFESSION HE EXCELLED AT.

ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY, A CHANGE CAME OVER HEX, AS IT DOES WITH MOST MEN WHO TAKE THE TIME TO WORK WITH THEIR HANDS ON SOMETHING AS FINE AS A NEW HOME. THIS WAS A TRADE TAUGHT TO HIM BY HIS FATHER, WOODSON, A DRUNKARD AND A LOU ON ALL COUNTS.



IF HEX WERE THE SORT OF MAN TO SPEND LONG HOURS PONDERING A LIFETIME OF EXPERIENCE, HE MIGHT AGREE THAT THIS BIT OF CARPENTRY SKILL WAS THE ONLY REDEEMABLE QUALITY HIS FATHER POSSESSED.



IN MY OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, WHICH CAN BE APPLIED HERE IN THE ABSTRACT, KEEPING ONE'S MIND BUSY THROUGH GOOD WORK OF ANY KIND CREATES A SENSE OF PEACE.



BY EXAMPLE, YOU'LL NOTE THAT A NEWLYWED COUPLE SET TO THE TASK OF BUILDING A NEW HOME MIGHT RARELY SQUABBLE, AS TOGETHER THEIR VISION IS SQUARELY FOCUSED ON THE TASK AT HAND.



IT IS ONLY WHEN THE EXCITEMENT OF HOMEMAKING AND THE BIRTHING OF CHILDREN HAS BEEN PUT BEHIND THEM THAT THEY SUDDENLY REALIZE THEY DON'T KNOW MUCH OF EACH OTHER.



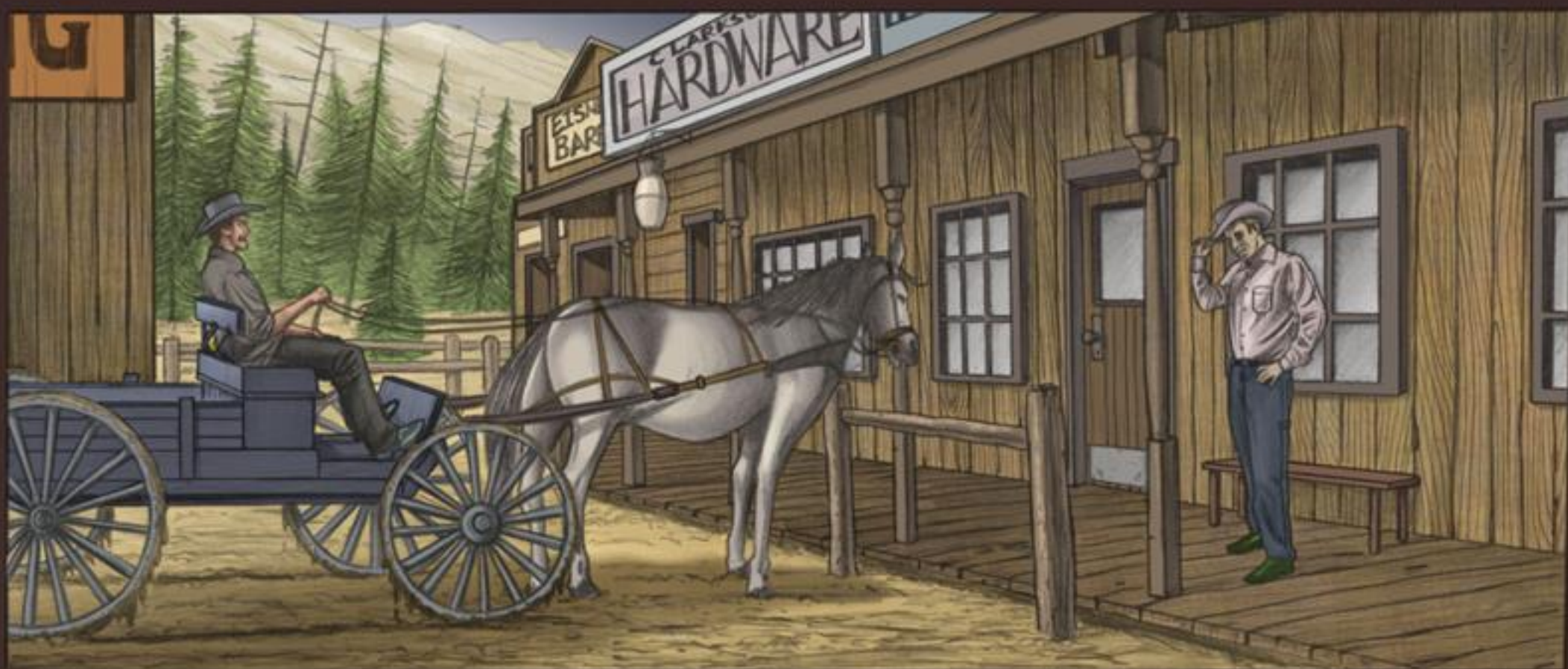
LEFT ALONE, THEY SOMETIMES BECOME STRANGERS.



THE TRUE TEST OF A PEACEFUL LIFE FOR ANY MAN OR WOMAN IS MARKED IN THE PASSING OF QUIET MOMENTS WHEN THE WORK IS DONE AND THE MIND GETS TO WORKING ON ITSELF.



THIS WAS A BAD IDEA.





YOU LIVING OUT THERE ALL BY YOUR LONESOME, MR. HILLWIG?

YEAH.

I DON'T WANT TO MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE, FAR FROM IT, ACTUALLY, BUT SOME FOLKS HERE IN TOWN BEEN MIGHTY CURIOUS ABOUT OUR NEW NEIGHBOR. YOU MIGHT WANT TO ATTEND CHURCH SOME SUNDAY...

...GET TO MEET SOME OF-- OH HELL.

THEY DON'T LOOK THE LEAST BIT FRIENDLY.



GOOD AFTERNOON, GENTLEMEN.

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT, MISTER?

KNOCK IT OFF, BLACKIE. THE MAN'S JUST BEIN' FRIENDLY.



THAT ONE THERE, SHE LOOKS MORE LIKE A FRIEND I'M INTERESTED IN MEETIN'.



AFTERNOON, MA'AM.

GOOD AFTERNOON, SIR.

THAT'S MY DAUGHTER.



WHAT'S YORE DEAL, MISTER?

YA SHY OR SUMPIN'? AFRAID TA LOOK A MAN IN THE EYE?



EVERYBODY HERE DUN SAID GOOD AFTERNOON TA EACH OTHER. WHUT MAKES YA'LL SO SPECIAL YA CAN'T GIVE A PROPER GREETIN'?

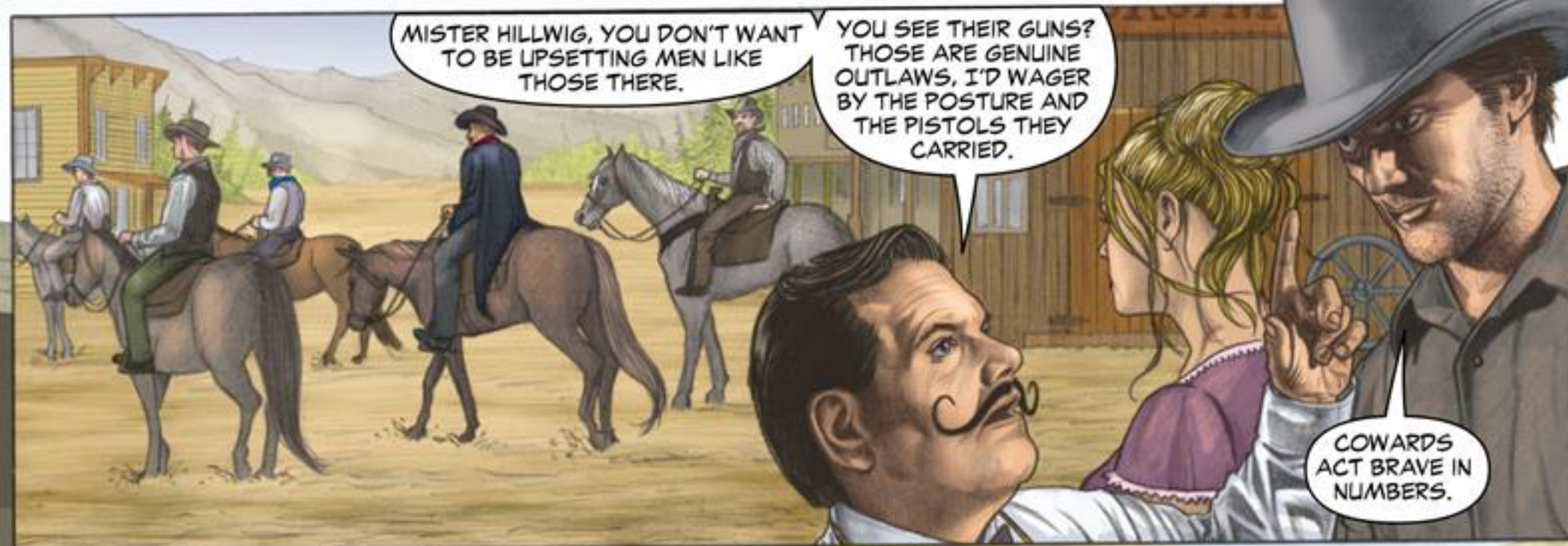
WE'RE LOOKIN' TO SET OUR FEET UP A BIT AND DO SOME HARD DRINKIN'. THIS TOWN GOT SOMETHIN' THAT'LL SUIT US?



YES INDEED! THE RUSTY NAIL JUST OVER THERE IS BOTH A HOTEL AND A SALOON. THEY GOT A GOOD PIANO PLAYER AND SOME REAL PRETTY ENTERTAINMENT.

BY COMPARISON TA YER DAUGHTER, HOW'D YA SAY THEM SALOON GIRLS RATE?

I WOULDN'T SAY, NOR WOULD I MAKE COMPARISONS.



MISTER HILLWIG, YOU DON'T WANT TO BE UPSETTING MEN LIKE THOSE THERE.

YOU SEE THEIR GUNS? THOSE ARE GENUINE OUTLAWS, I'D WAGER BY THE POSTURE AND THE PISTOLS THEY CARRIED.

COWARDS ACT BRAVE IN NUMBERS.



WHAT A STRANGE MAN.

DON'T GO GETTING ANY IDEAS, SANDY.

WHAT?

THAT MAN IS TROUBLE, AND YOU LOVE TROUBLED MEN. THAT'S ALL I'M SAYING ON THE MATTER.



NICE PLACE
YOU GOT
HERE.

I'M JACKSON,
THE PROPRIETOR. CAN
I GET YOU BOYS
SITUATED?

I THINK WE'LL MAKE
OURSELVES COMFORTABLE
WITH FIFTY PERCENT OF THE
HOUSE TAKE FROM HERE
ON OUT, INCLUDIN' FARO
AND WHORES.

YOUR SENSE
OF HUMOR FALLS
A LITTLE FLAT HERE,
MISTER. MIGHT BE BEST
YOU TOOK YOUR ACT
ELSEWHERE.



NAME'S ELMSFORD
AND I AIN'T MAKIN'
A JOKE. WE'RE HERE
TO INSURE THAT
NOTHIN' BAD HAPPENS
TO SUCH A QUALITY
JOINT.

AIN'T
THAT RIGHT,
BLACKIE?



WHEN YOU
SAY BAD, DO YA
MEAN SOMETHIN'
LIKE THIS?

BLAM BLAM BLAM



LOOKS LIKE WE
ARRIVED JUST IN TIME,
MR. JACKSON. YOU
GOT A REAL PROBLEM
WITH THEM WHISKEY
BOTTLES. COULD
BE THE PLACE IS
HAUNTED.

ALL RIGHT!
PUT THEM
GUNS AWAY,
DAMMIT!



I GOT A REAL HUNGER
FER THE SHOP OWNER'S
DAUGHTER.

YA'LL KEEP THAT
PISTOL HOLSTERED,
BLACKIE. WE'RE IN THE
BUSINESS OF EXTORTIN'
MONEY, NOT BEIN' RUN
OUTTA TOWN ON RAPE
CHARGES... AGAIN.



MISTER
HILLWIG?

I REALIZED
NO ONE IN TOWN HAS
GIVEN YOU A PROPER
WELCOME. I HOPE
YOU LIKE BLUEBERRY
PIE.

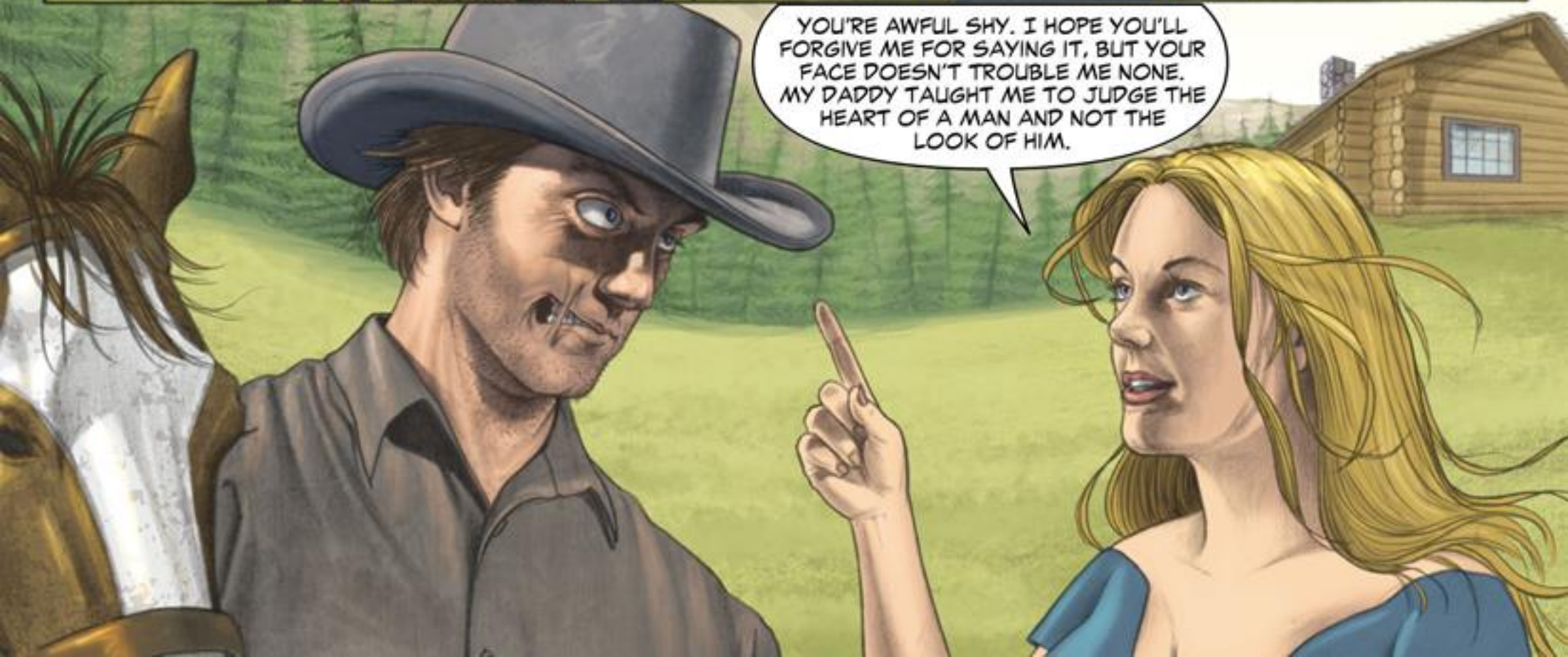


THANKS.



LOOKS LIKE A
PROPER AND STURDY
BUILT.

SHOULD DO WELL
IN THE WINTER, BUT
YOU'LL WANT TO MAKE
SURE YOU SEALED THE
ROOF REAL GOOD AS WE
GET RAIN BY THE
BUCKET HERE.



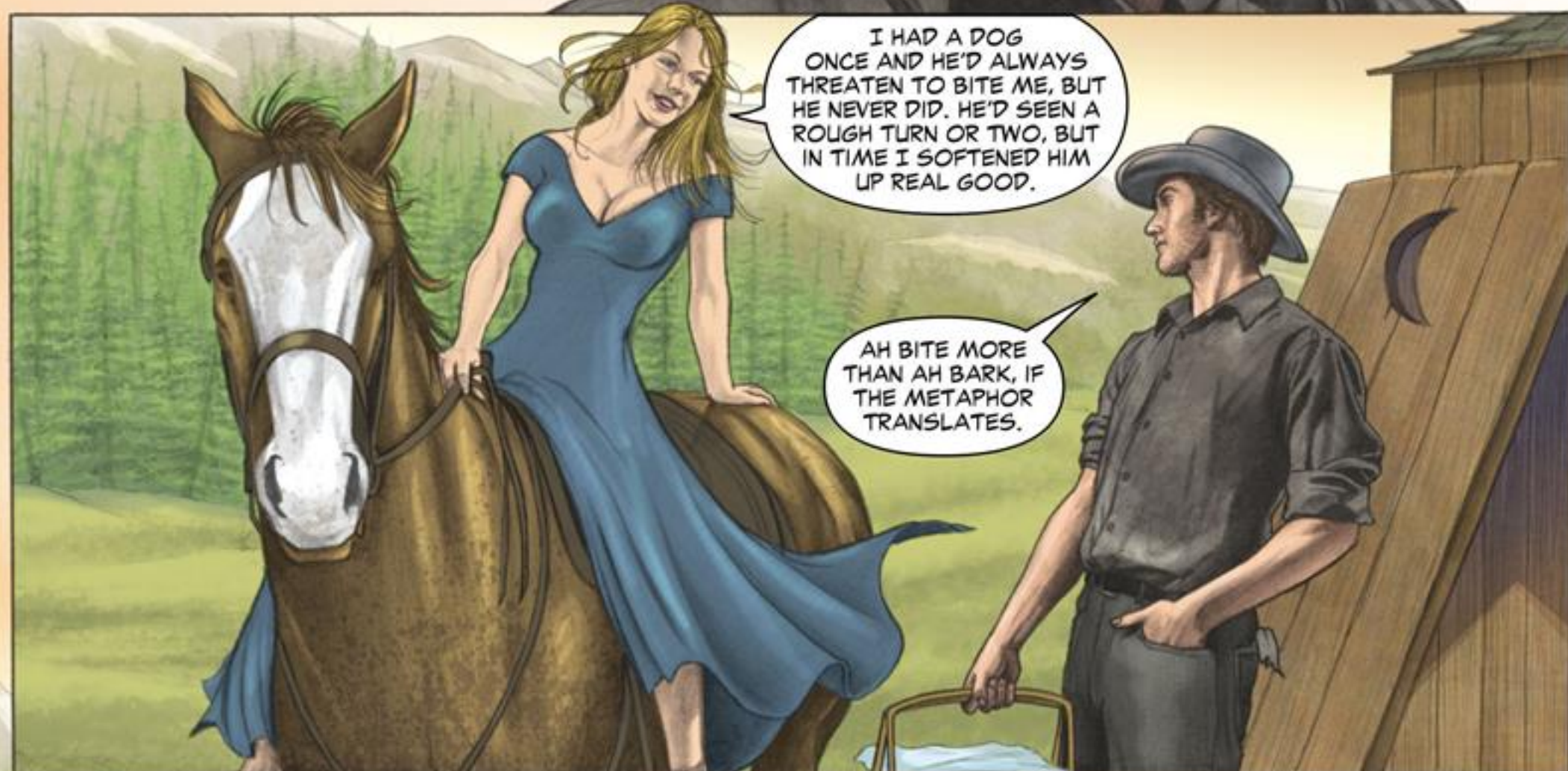
YOU'RE AWFUL SHY. I HOPE YOU'LL
FORGIVE ME FOR SAYING IT, BUT YOUR
FACE DOESN'T TROUBLE ME NONE.
MY DADDY TAUGHT ME TO JUDGE THE
HEART OF A MAN AND NOT THE
LOOK OF HIM.



WELL, IF YOU LIKE, I CAN STOP BY SOME TIME JUST TO TALK. YOU HAVE TO GET LONELY OUT HERE BY YOURSELF.



AH WANT YA TA LEAVE ME BE, WOMAN. RIDE ON BACK TA TOWN. AH AIN'T IN NEED A' CHARITY, OR COMPANY FER THAT MATTER.



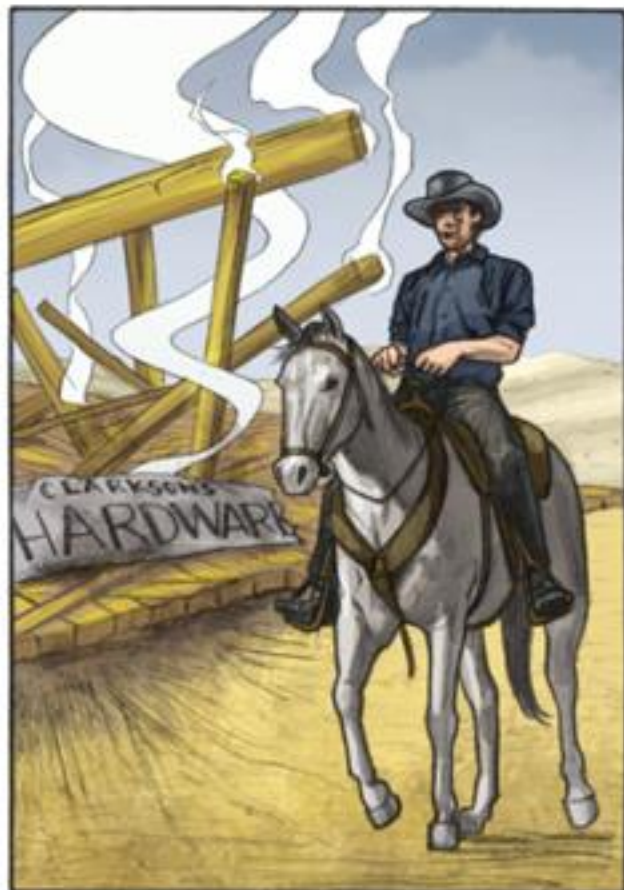
I HAD A DOG ONCE AND HE'D ALWAYS THREATEN TO BITE ME, BUT HE NEVER DID. HE'D SEEN A ROUGH TURN OR TWO, BUT IN TIME I SOFTENED HIM UP REAL GOOD.

AH BITE MORE THAN AH BARK, IF THE METAPHOR TRANSLATES.



I'LL SEE YOU 'ROUND THE HARDWARE STORE.









SANDY...

MY MIND'S
MADE UP. I HAVE
NO WAY OF LIVING LEFT
TO ME AND I'M NOT
WILLING TO STARVE
IN THE STREET.



I AIN'T SEEN YOU HERE 'AFORE,
LITTLE LADY. WHAT SAY WE
GET ACQUAINTED?

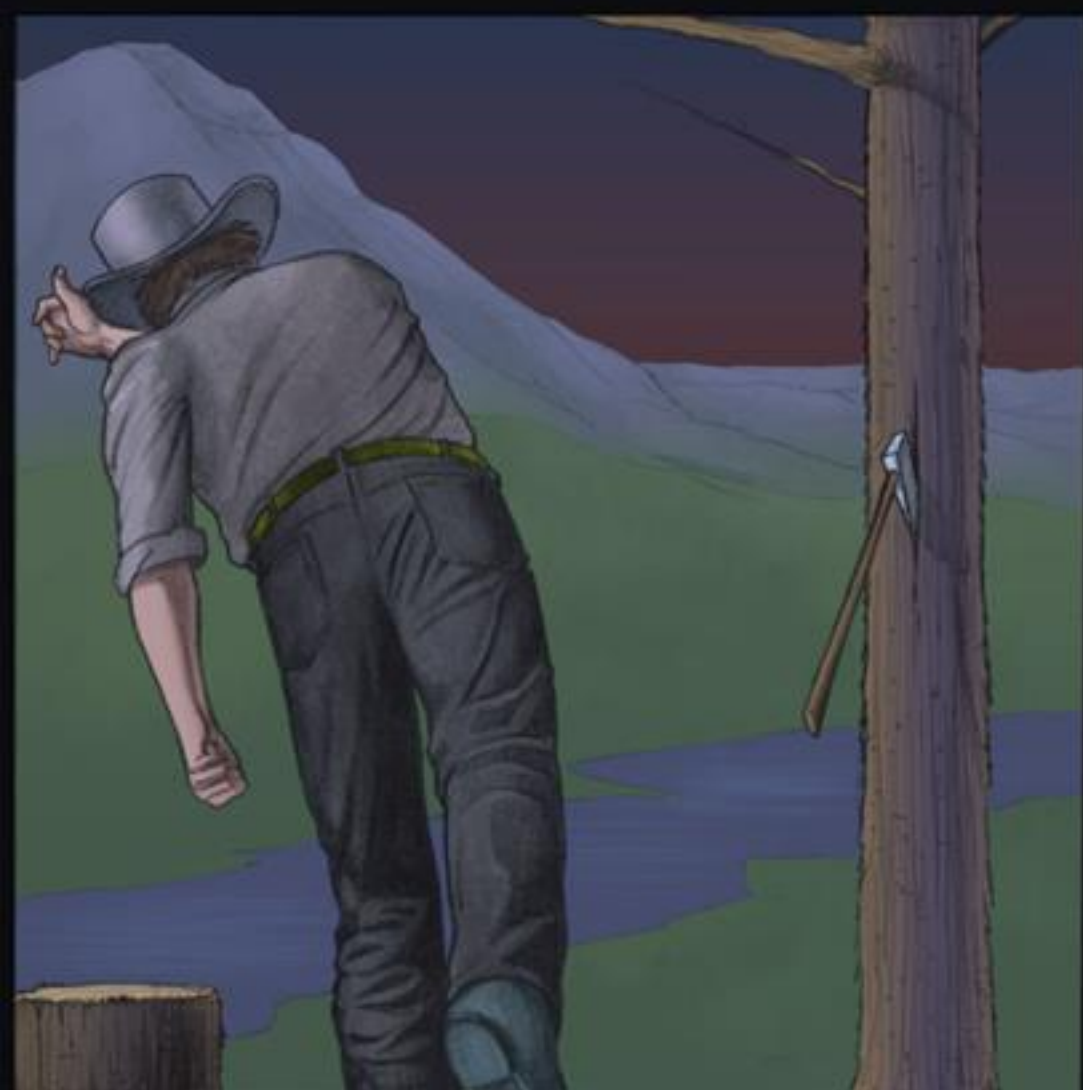
LEAVE OFF THE
NEW GIRL, CLEM, SHE
AIN'T READY FOR
YOUR LIKE.

NO TIME LIKE
THE PRESENT FER NEW
EXPERIENCES.



COME ON,
DARLIN'... THE FIRST
TIME'S ALWAYS THE
BEST!

GET AWAY FROM
ME! YOU NEED A
DOCTOR TO LOOK
AT THAT MISERABLE
BIT OF BACON YOU
CALL A--





BANG
BANG
BANGBANG

MISTER
HILLWIG!



OPEN UP,
MISTER HILLWIG!
IT'S ME, SANDY
CLARKSON!

I'M SORRY
TO COME BY SO
LATE, I JUST DIDN'T
KNOW WHERE ELSE
TO GO.



CA-THUNK

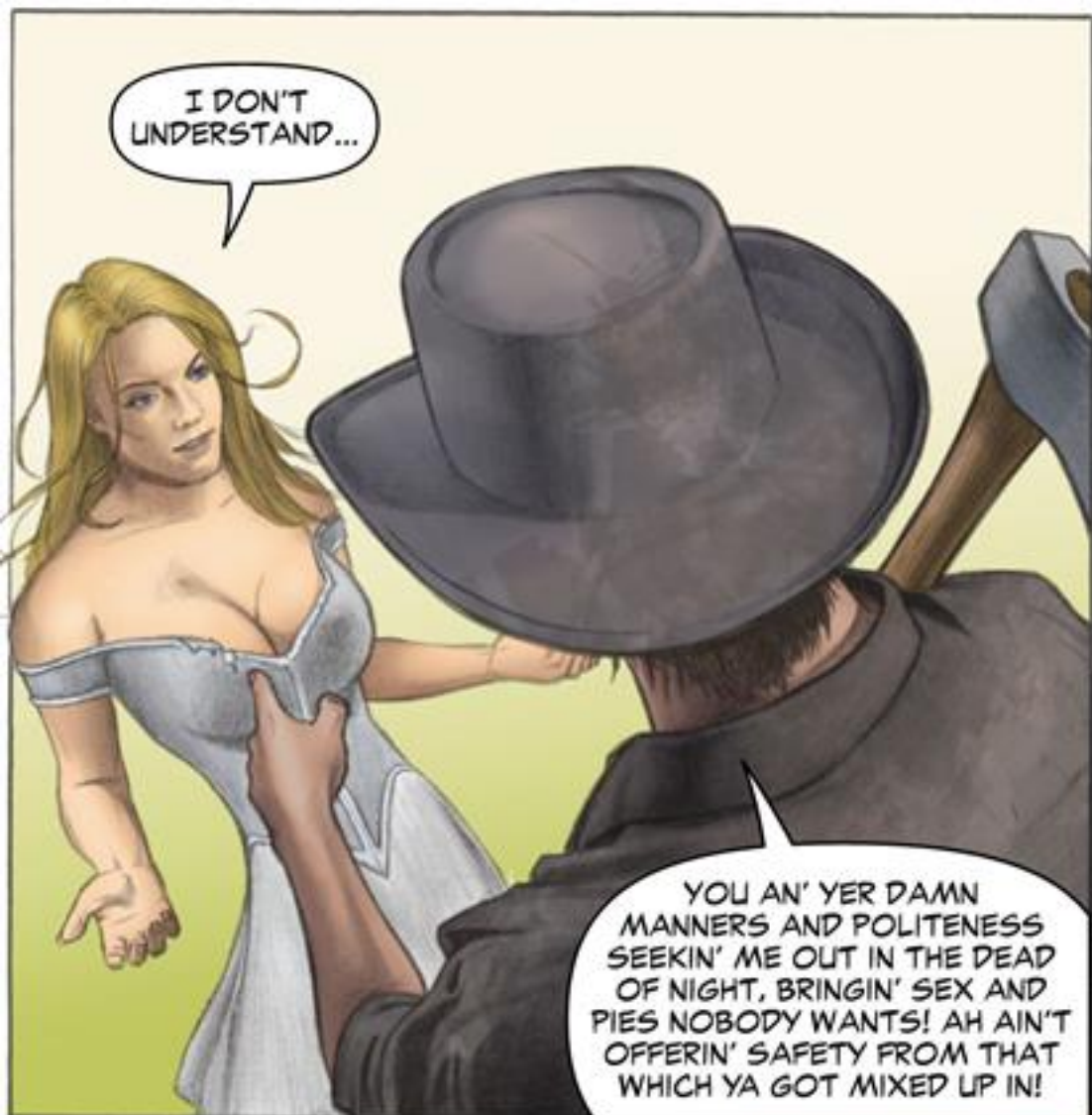


DAMMIT!
YOU CAN'T TURN
ME OUT!











YOU PRESS ME
TA ACTION AGAINST
MUH WILL. SET A
BUSH TA BURNIN',
WHY DON'T YA?



THROUGH MANNER
A' GUILT AND PERSISTENCE,
TA FLAUNTIN' THE HORRORS
A' SIMPLE FOLK JEST TRYIN'
TA LIVE PEACEFUL IN THE
COMPANY A' COWARDS
AN' KILLERS.

THIS IS YER
WORD SCRIBED BY
MEN TEACHIN' EYE
FER AN EYE AN'
THE LIKE!



LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AND THOU
SHALL NOT KILL STAND AT ODDS
WITH EACH OTHER AN' YA PREFER AH
TAKE UP THE WORK OF YER ANGELS
WHO AIN'T BUT ASSASSINS
WITH WINGS!

AND WHEN
JUDGMENT DAY COMES,
YA'LL PUT THESE DEEDS IN
SHADOW AN' CONDEMN ME
NONETHELESS AS A KILLER
AND A SINNER.





AFTERNOON,
MISTER HILLWIG.

DON'T GO
NOWHERE.



HEY BOY,
AH'M LOOKIN'
FER MISS--



UP ON YONDER HILL
SLEEPIN' PEACEFUL WITH
HER KIN. FREAK ACCIDENT
THEY CALLED IT, BUT
WE ALL SUSPECT
OTHERWISE.



YA COULDN'T
LEAVE IT BE,
COULD YA?

COMIN' TA ME
WITH PIE AN' SINS A' THE
FLESH. COMIN' TA ME WITH
THE PROMISE OF COMFORT
WHEN AH ALREADY BURIED
MORE LOVERS THAN AH
CARE TA REFLECT ON.



MARK THAT AS
MUH MISTAKE AS NOT TA
RECOGNIZE THE TRAP YER GOD
LAY BEFORE ME. YA KNOW
AH TRIED, AN' REPENTANT AS
AH MAY BE, HE **STILL** FELT
MOVED TA TAKE YA BY
VIOLENCE.



GENTLE AN'
REASONABLE, THEY
CALL THE LORD. THAT'S
JEST BECAUSE THEY
DON'T KNOW HIM
LIKE AH DO.

WRATH AN'
VENGEANCE. FLOODS
AN' SALT. LAMB'S
BLOOD AN' SACRIFICIN'
FIRST BORN SONS...
THAT'S HIS STOCK
AN' TRADE.



ELMSFORD!



YA GOT THE BLOOD A' TWO INNOCENT PEOPLE ON YER HANDS AN' AH'M HERE TA EVEN THE SCORE ON BEHALF A' SALLY AN' JAMES.



MISTER HILLWIG, ARE YOU DRUNK? WHAT ARE YA DOIN' WITH THEM IRONS?

SEEMS OBVIOUS HE INTENDS TA--

MUH NAME AIN'T HILLWIG.

IT'S JONAH WOODSON HEX, THE MAN WHAT DANGLES FROM STRINGS THAT REACH TA THE HEAVENS GRASPED IN HANDS AS CRUEL AS ANY CAN IMAGINE.



BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM



THE HARDEST THING A MAN CAN DO IN THIS LIFE IS CHANGE HIS WAYS. IN THE DAYS GONE BY, A MAN COULD REINVENT HIMSELF THROUGH NEW SURROUNDINGS AND FOLK THAT NEITHER KNOW NOR CARE ABOUT HIS PAST.

FOR JONAH HEX, ESCAPING THE PAST IS AS USELESS AS TRYING TO OUTFRAN HIS OWN SHADOW.

