

THE FACE OF DEATH™



Wraith



THE FACE OF DEATH

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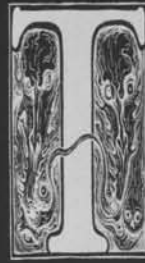
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Cover Mask: Henry Gordon Higgenbotham

*Rage, rage, against the dying of the light
Do not go gentle into that good night.*

— Dylan Thomas



H A N A

Death: What is
it?

What masks
does it wear?

What shall
we say of it?

What can be said
for certain?

Why does
death hold such
lasting
fascination?

There are
so many
questions, and so
few answers.

For what
could be more
mysterious? What
subject more
incomprehensible?

How to
speak of that
which cannot be
shared?



The living
are
as shallow as
they are witless.
They ask questions but don't
want the
answers.

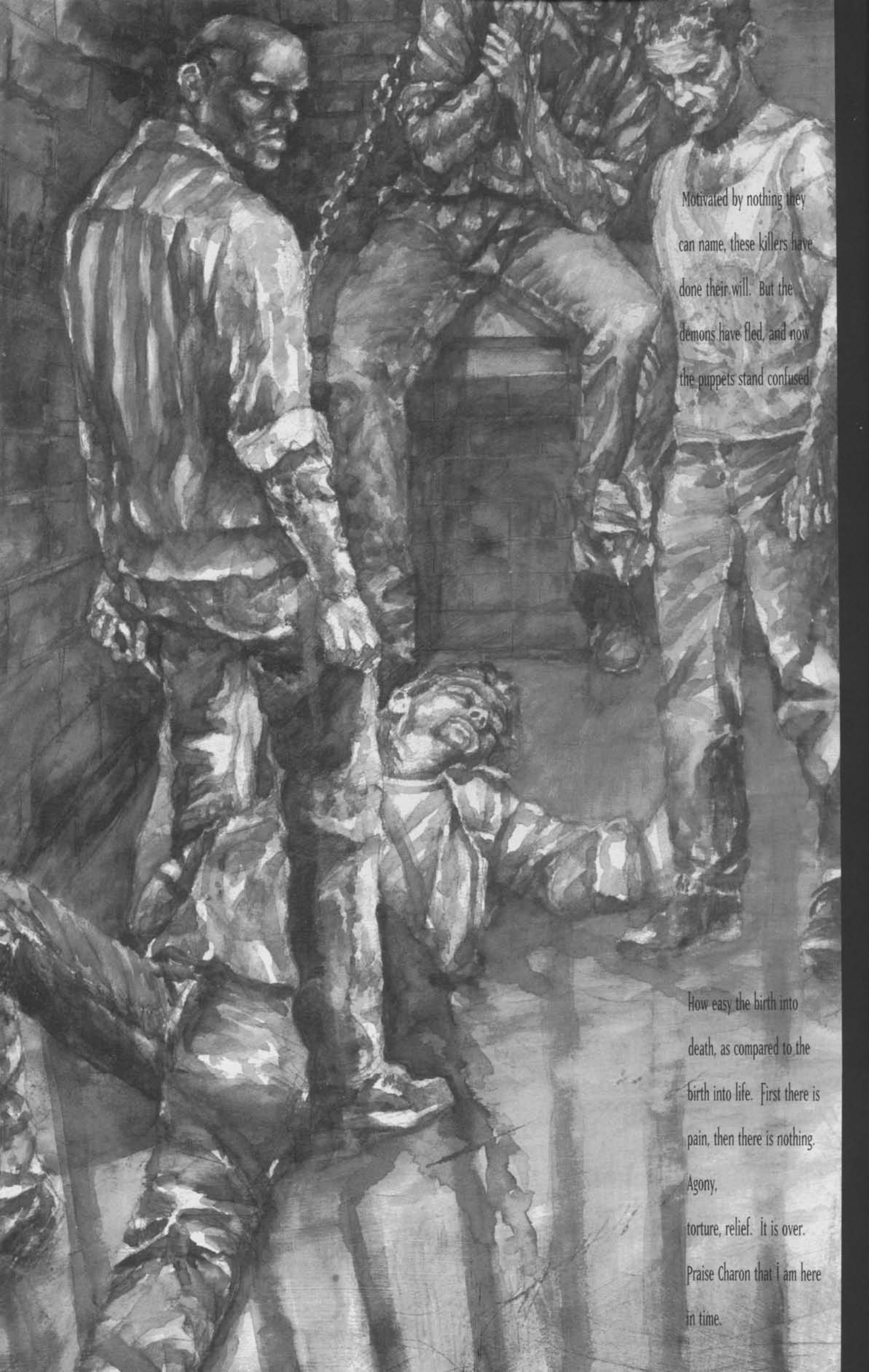


T O S I S

They are as bound by lies
as they are by truth.

But soon this
one will no longer
be bound by either.





Motivated by nothing they
can name, these killers have
done their will. But the
demons have fled, and now
the puppets stand confused

How easy the birth into
death, as compared to the
birth into life. First there is
pain, then there is nothing,
Agony,
torture, relief. It is over.
Praise Charon that I am here
in time.

Always am I struck by
how they fumble like
newborn babes — by the
look in their faces as they
first behold the shell in
which they so long
resided.

Well, you thirsted for the
knowledge, and now you
have the truth of it.

It's really not that
bewildering; you've just
got to bring
things...





...into
perspective.
Welcome to reality, Larva. It
just takes a little getting used to,
seeing the death in things. Seeing life's true form.



B Black Taint

Death surrounds us, constantly threatening and eventually overwhelming us. It cannot be ignored or forgotten.

The stench of death taints everything we say and do. The suffering of the human condition is described by the despair of purpose and the angst of spiritual malaise. Life is so often devoid of meaning or significance.

Life does not last long; it is but a spark in the dead, black night. Welcoming us at the terminus of life, death awaits us ever patient.

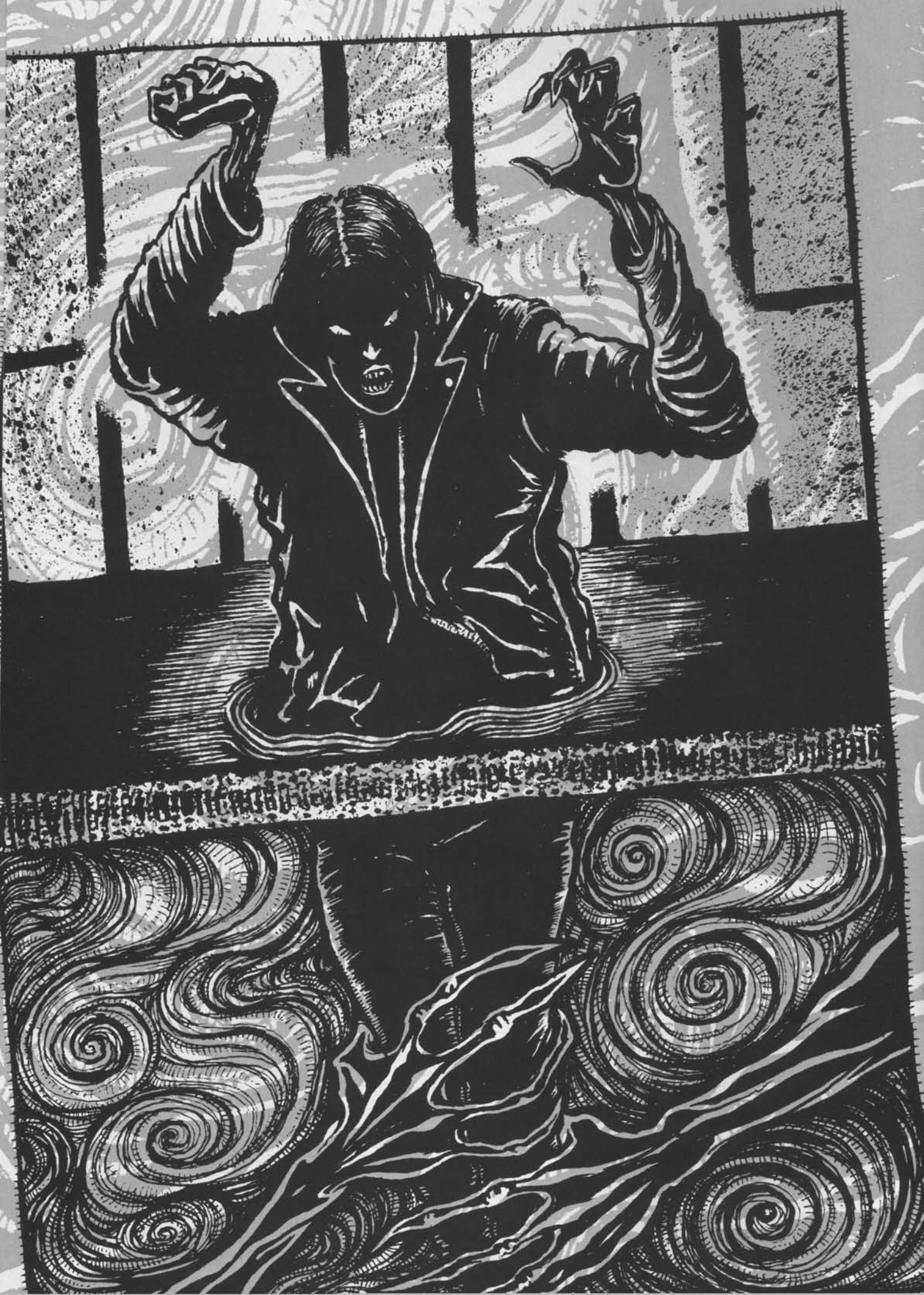
Death is a rebirth. It is a stepping over, a passage through the Shroud. It is not an ending, but a beginning. It is a rite of passage, the end of one journey and the beginning of another.

The fear, the loathing, the terror, the peace, the salvation, the ecstasy, the pain and the oblivion. That is death. Death is all, and it is nothing.



Don't let your terror rule you.
There's naught I can do if
you let your Shadow
rule you. If you
slip through the
cracks, I cannot
hoist you
back up.

Alas, much weighs upon you, dark child, and Oblivion cannot be delayed. The nightmares pull you down...





into the Tempest.

This is the

whirlpool at the rim

of reality, a roiling

sea of curses and

hatred.

This is the void,

and nothing is real

here.

Know that here

imagination creates

its own form.



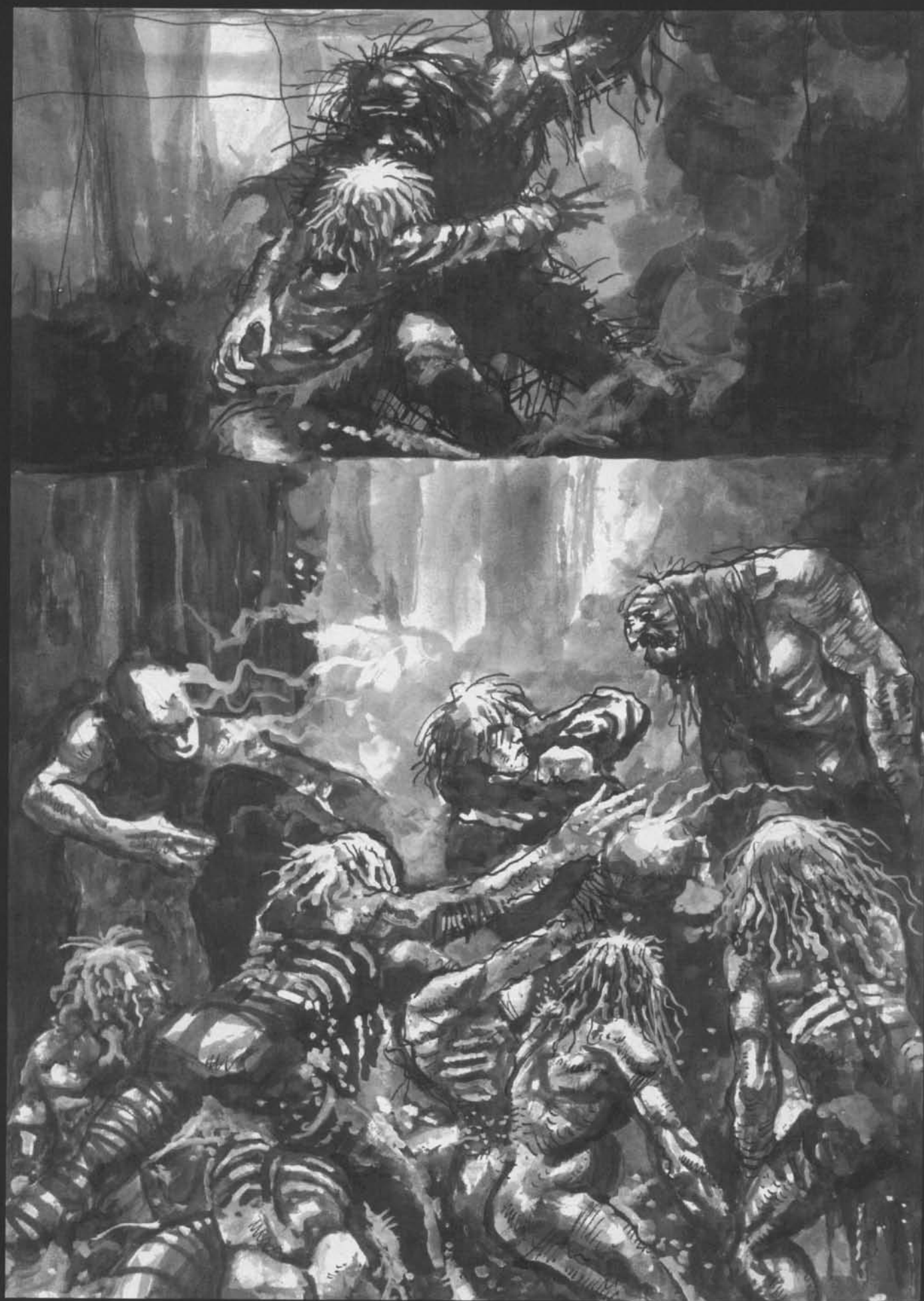
V. Cobb • 44

Where are you
now, boy? Will
you find your way?



J. Robt. 44

Will the path be barred?
You know of transcendence, but you are not ready for it.
The guardian blocks the way.
Its crimson torch has warned others.



Spectres. Blighted creatures.
They carry with them the stench of Oblivion.
They are the bottom crawlers and feed upon the hopeless.

They're getting to know you. They embrace your nightmares and fill them up.
They awaken the Shadow asleep within you.
They seek to conquer and consume you.






But I will not allow it.
I have need of you. And, if I must, I will pay the price

The hangman's fee.
This Doomshade can be bought; it owes me that.
Stand back, demon spawn, for i claim this soul as mine. Now come with me.



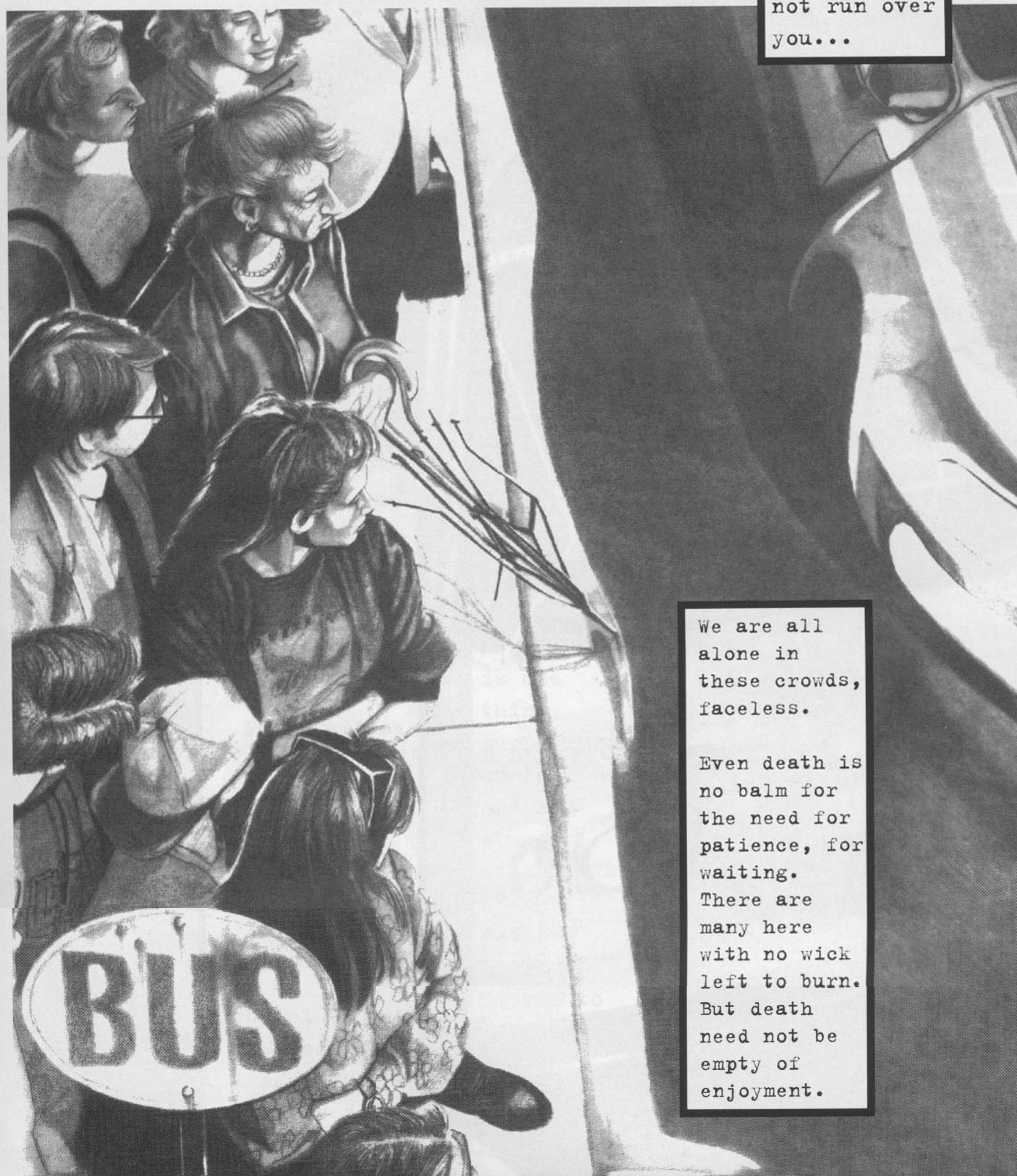


Welcome
to the
Shadowlands.
Look
around you
and know
that you
will dwell
in this
place, yet
forever be
apart from
it. We
exist only
as
whispers
here.

Still:



...you must watch your step. They do not see you, and you are too naive and weak to stand such discorporation. Stand where they will not run over you...




We are all alone in these crowds, faceless.

Even death is no balm for the need for patience, for waiting. There are many here with no wick left to burn. But death need not be empty of enjoyment.




We have our
little
pleasures.
The hellions
never tire of
sport.
Wastrel dead
spoiled of
life, no past
and no future,
what can we
give to them?
No more than
pity.

Let us follow
this one. My
Arcanos shall
cloak us.

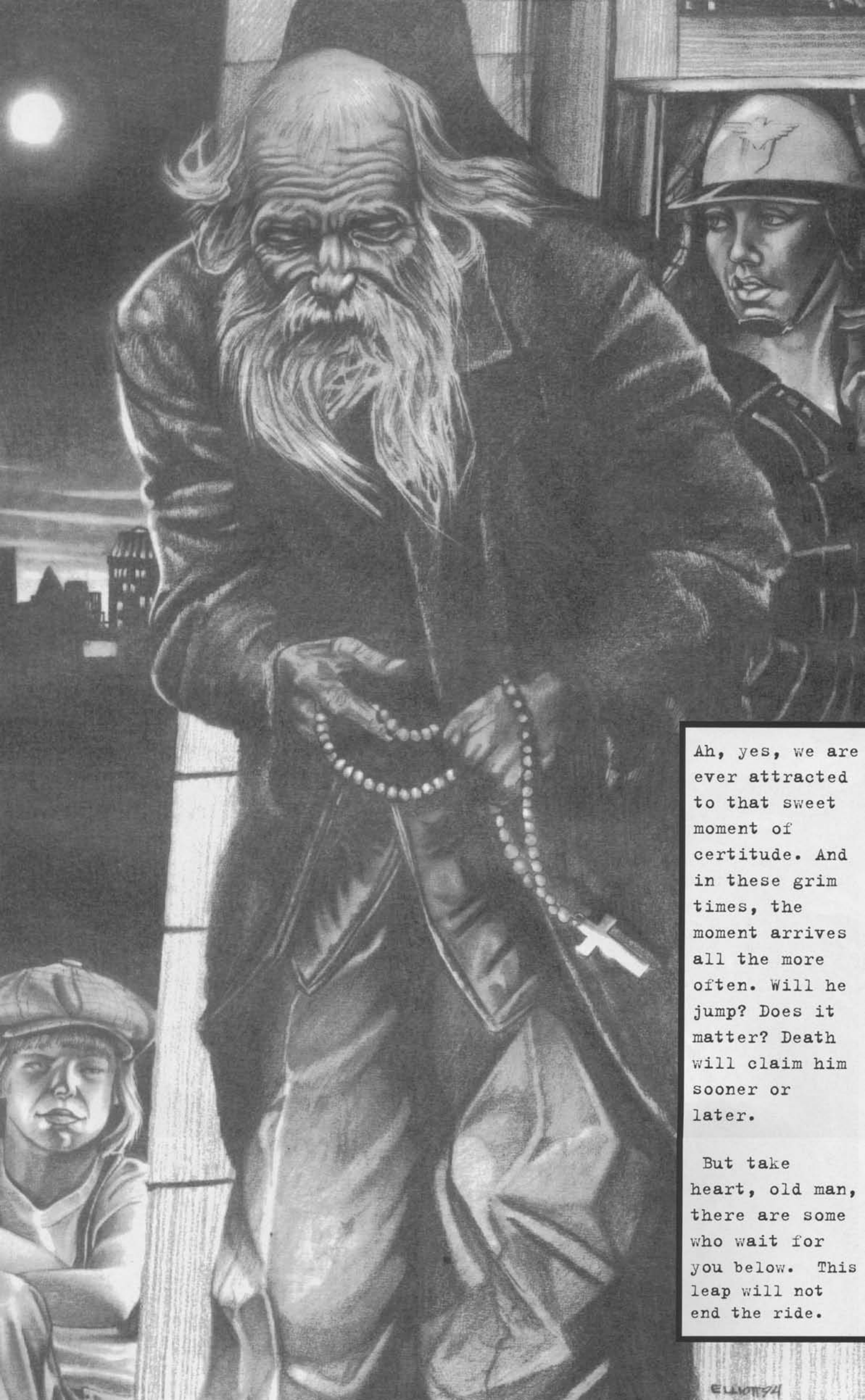


Dance,
writhe,
shout into
the
blackened
night. It
won't save
them, but
it will
bring
solace, or
so they
think.



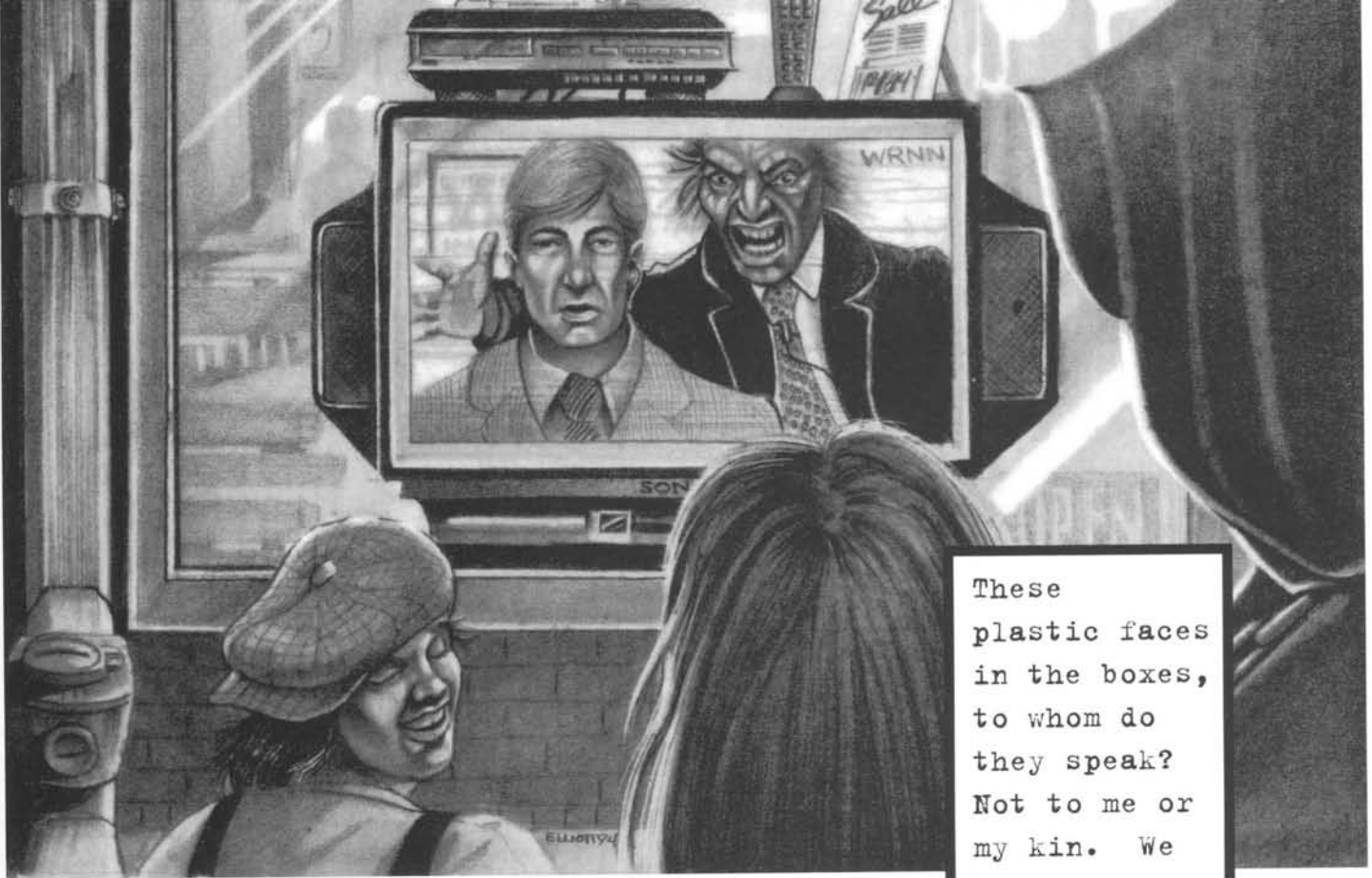
See the
little
wretch
stealing
from the
hapless
skin. The
living
possess
such vigor,
such
soothing
power.
Performance
is one
thing,
puppetry is
another —
use and
abuse
alike. The
Code of
Charon
means
little to
this
hellion
renegade.



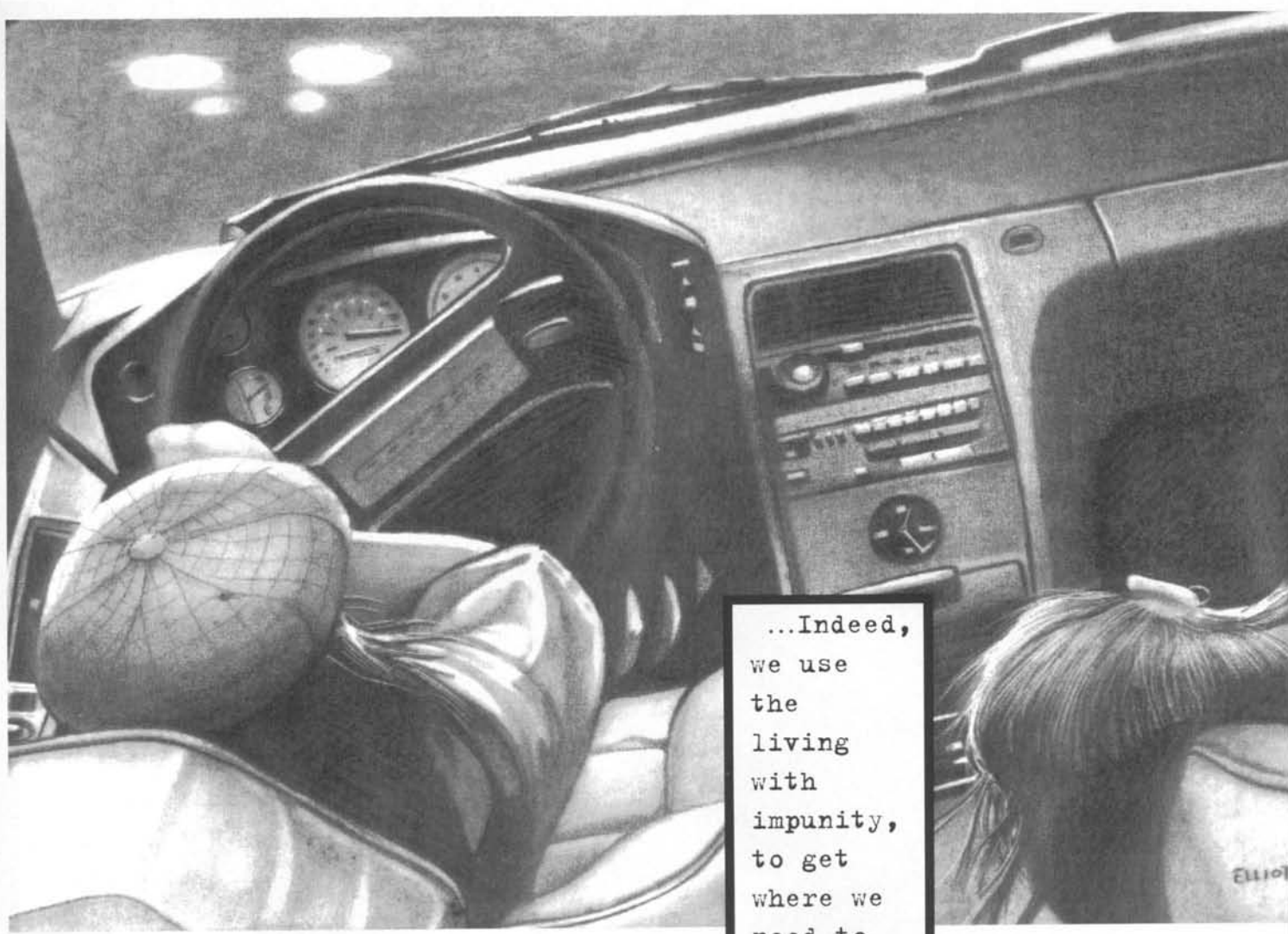


Ah, yes, we are ever attracted to that sweet moment of certitude. And in these grim times, the moment arrives all the more often. Will he jump? Does it matter? Death will claim him sooner or later.

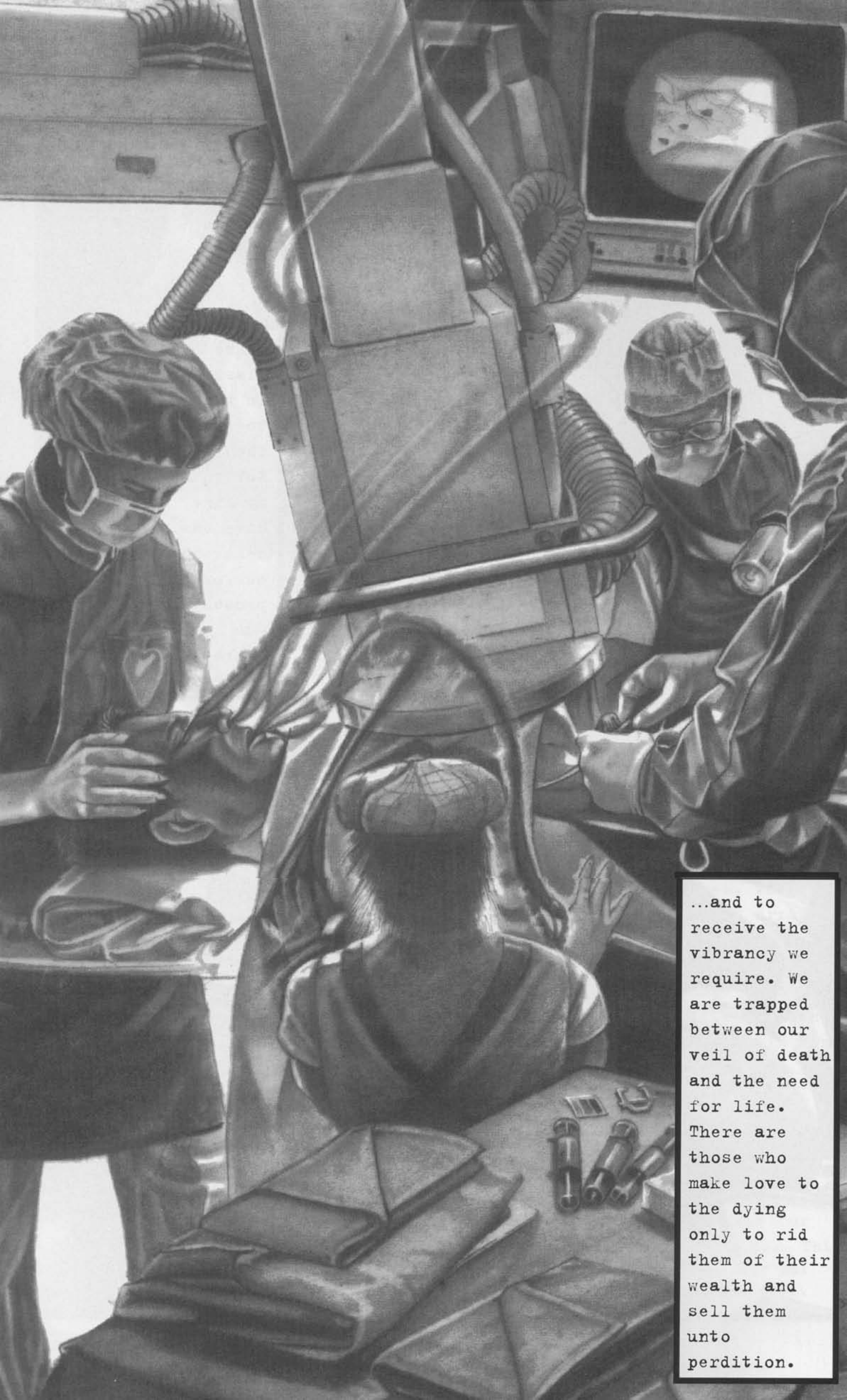
But take heart, old man, there are some who wait for you below. This leap will not end the ride.



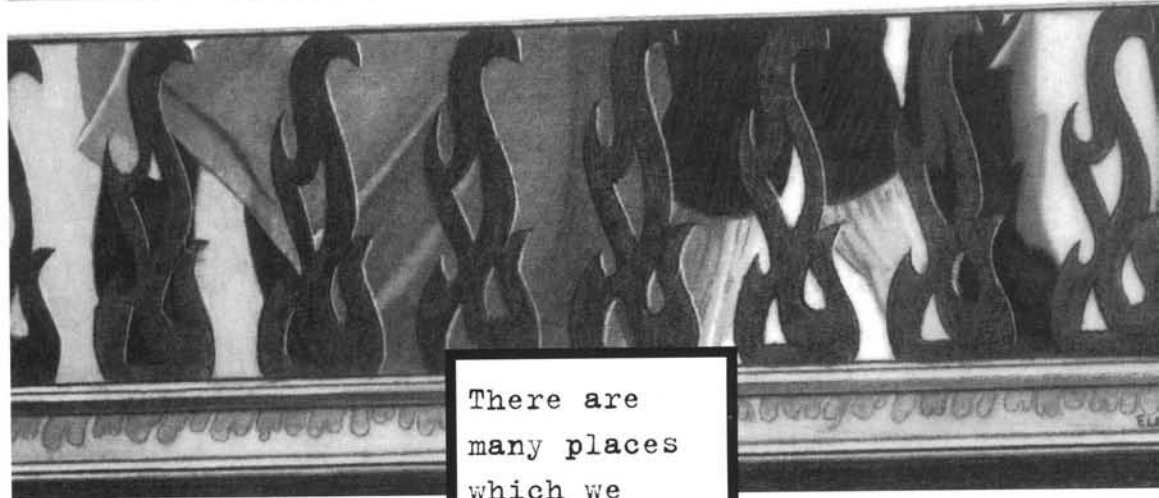
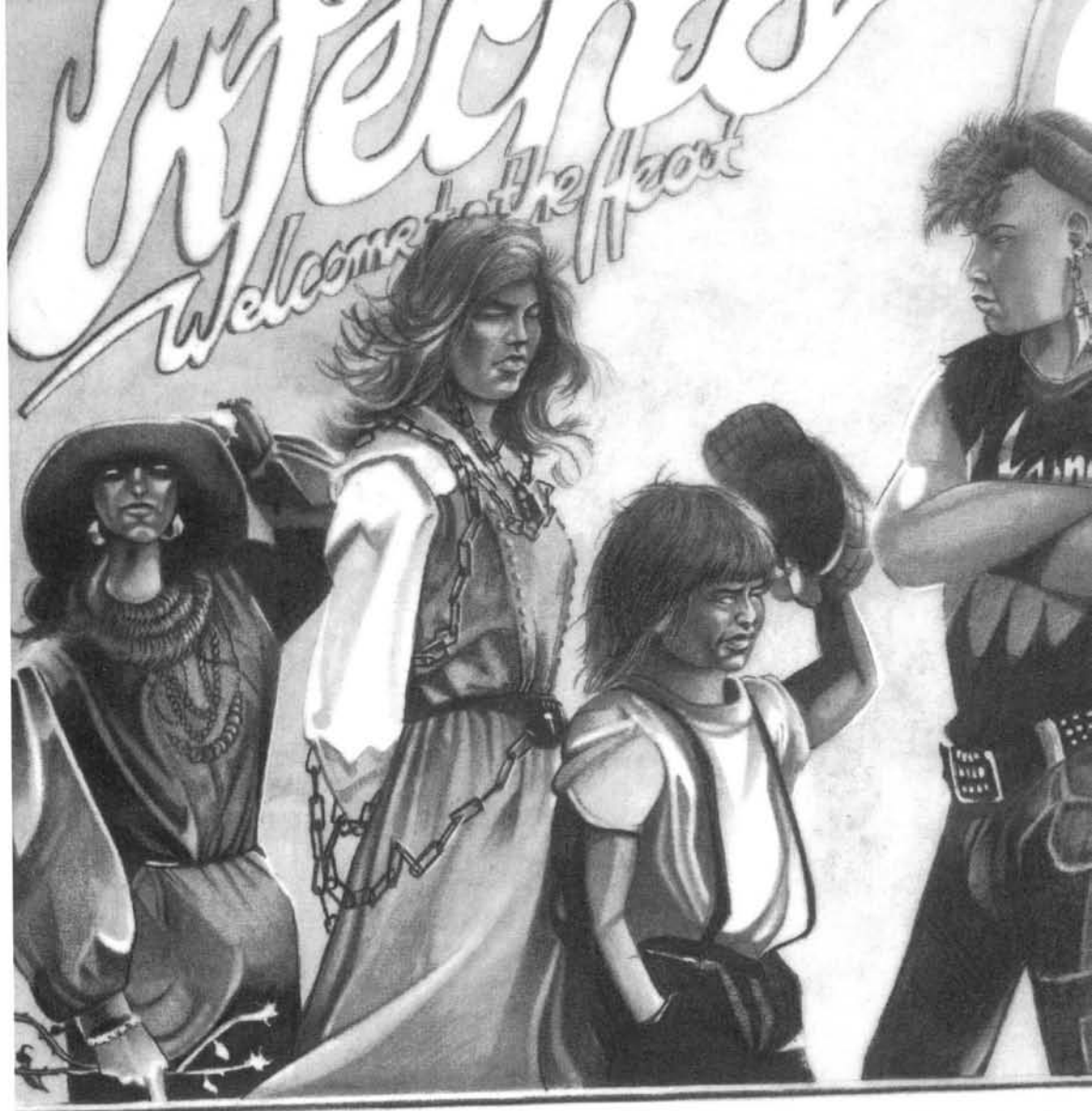
These plastic faces in the boxes, to whom do they speak? Not to me or my kin. We have our own demagogues, our own proselytizers —we just share channels.



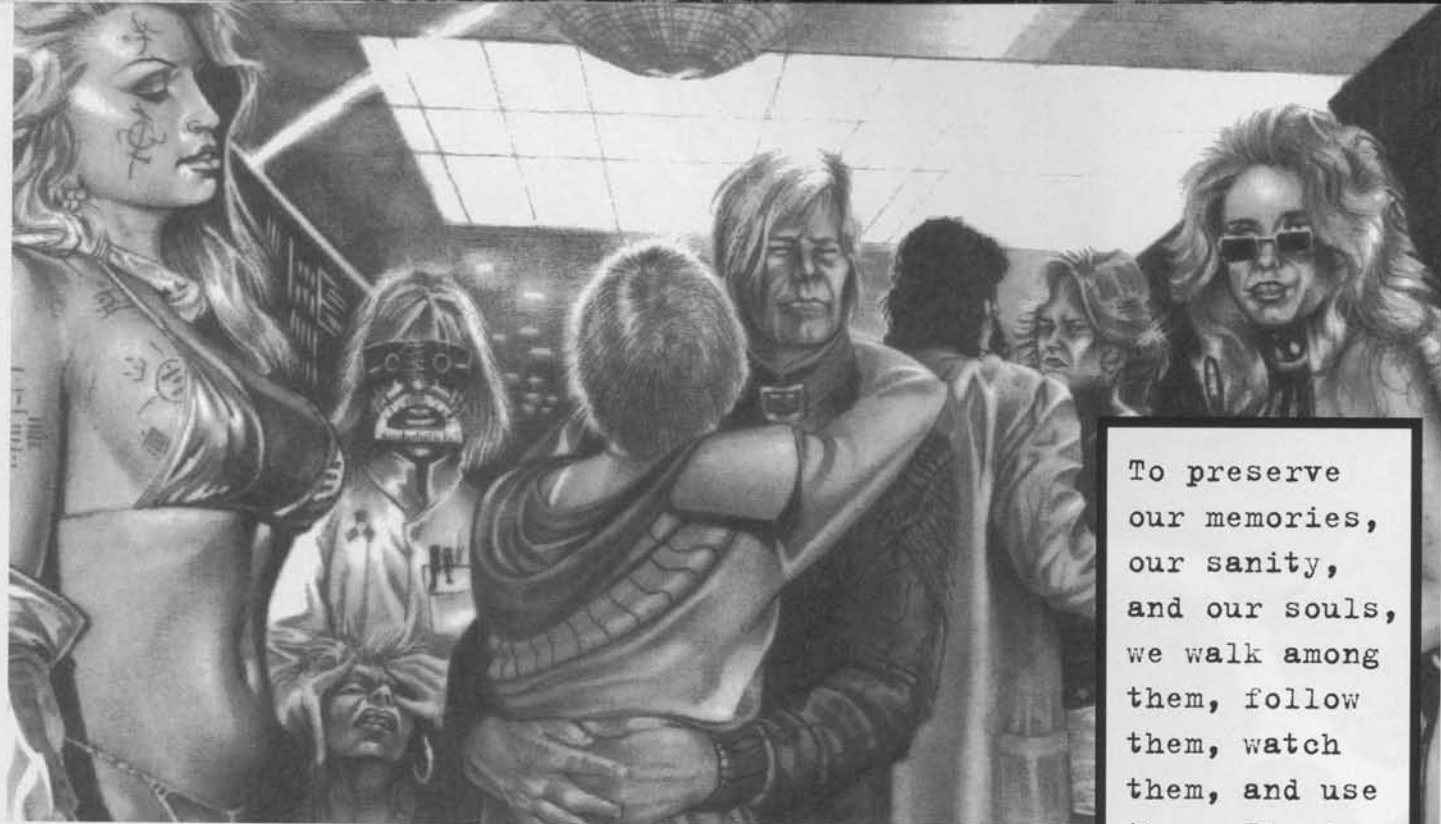
...Indeed, we use the living with impunity, to get where we need to go...



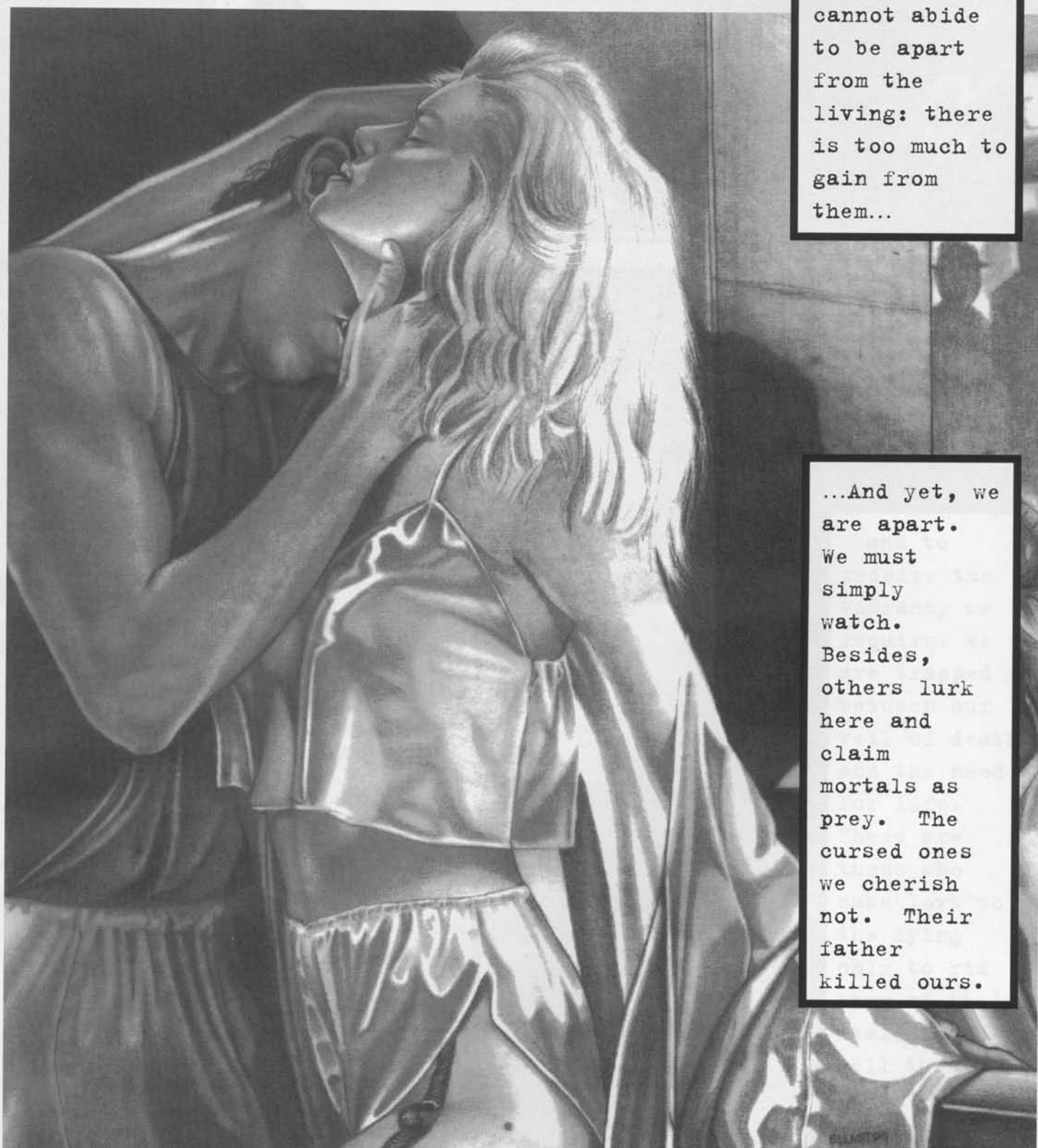
...and to receive the vibrancy we require. We are trapped between our veil of death and the need for life. There are those who make love to the dying only to rid them of their wealth and sell them unto perdition.



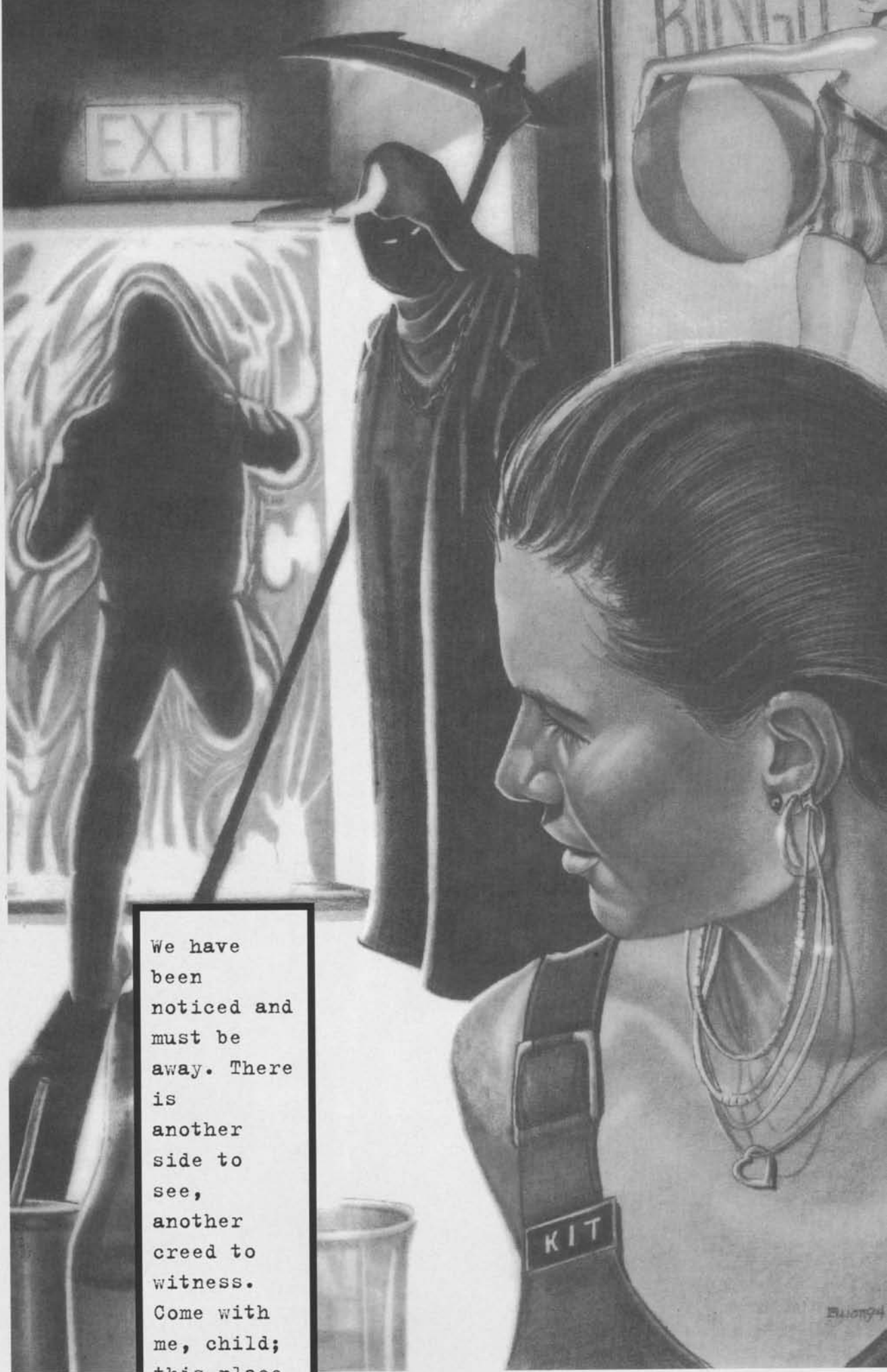
There are many places which we christen, but some haunts throb more than others. Some bless the night storm with their raging might. They are homes to us.



To preserve our memories, our sanity, and our souls, we walk among them, follow them, watch them, and use them. The dead cannot abide to be apart from the living: there is too much to gain from them...



...And yet, we are apart. We must simply watch. Besides, others lurk here and claim mortals as prey. The cursed ones we cherish not. Their father killed ours.



We have
been
noticed and
must be
away. There
is
another
side to
see,
another
creed to
witness.
Come with
me, child;
this place
has grown
cold. Let
us depart.

...rituals of hazing and punishment. Some buy drones to savage, to
relieve themselves of misery by inflicting it upon others. Be glad that
you are not one of them...





RIGID

EMBRACE

When it comes to death, we all possess a ramshackle of hope, faith, fear, desire and denial.

Our minds conjure up a unique vision, images drawn from dusty folklore, kinetic pop culture, and the annals of personal experience. The mask of Death is whatever we make it to be.

Like beauty, death rests in the eye of the beholder.

But call it what you will, the truth of it cannot be denied, just as it cannot be thwarted.

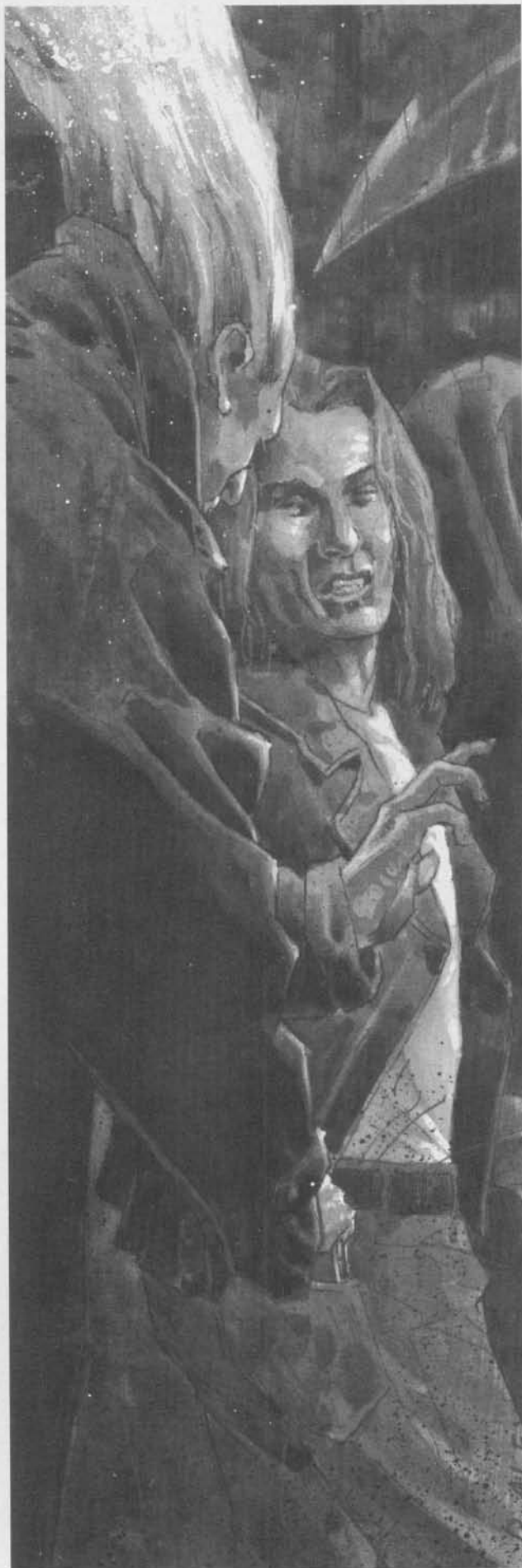
For some, death is as horrible as it is undeniable — a scourge and a devil. For others it is less terrifying and more palatable — annoying but irrelevant. To a few it is a benevolent god — an entity to be understood and respected. For many, death has become anthropomorphized, no more than concept and tool. Some of us pretend it doesn't matter, but in the end it's the only relationship we possess that doesn't die.

Death is always with us.



These wretches will take what they can from you. They'll steal all the

relics you've brought with you and the last Lucan in your purse. They have their own cruel code here...



They war down here — legion and host, gang and cohort, cult and clique.

Grim battles fought by both maneuver and bluff. Machines stolen from
junk heaps, cobbled together with twine and prayer. Fearful nevertheless.



They fight over haunts and relics, insults and honor. And most especially
over the newly dead. Larvae such as you are at the heart of this grim
commerce.



D. ALEXANDER



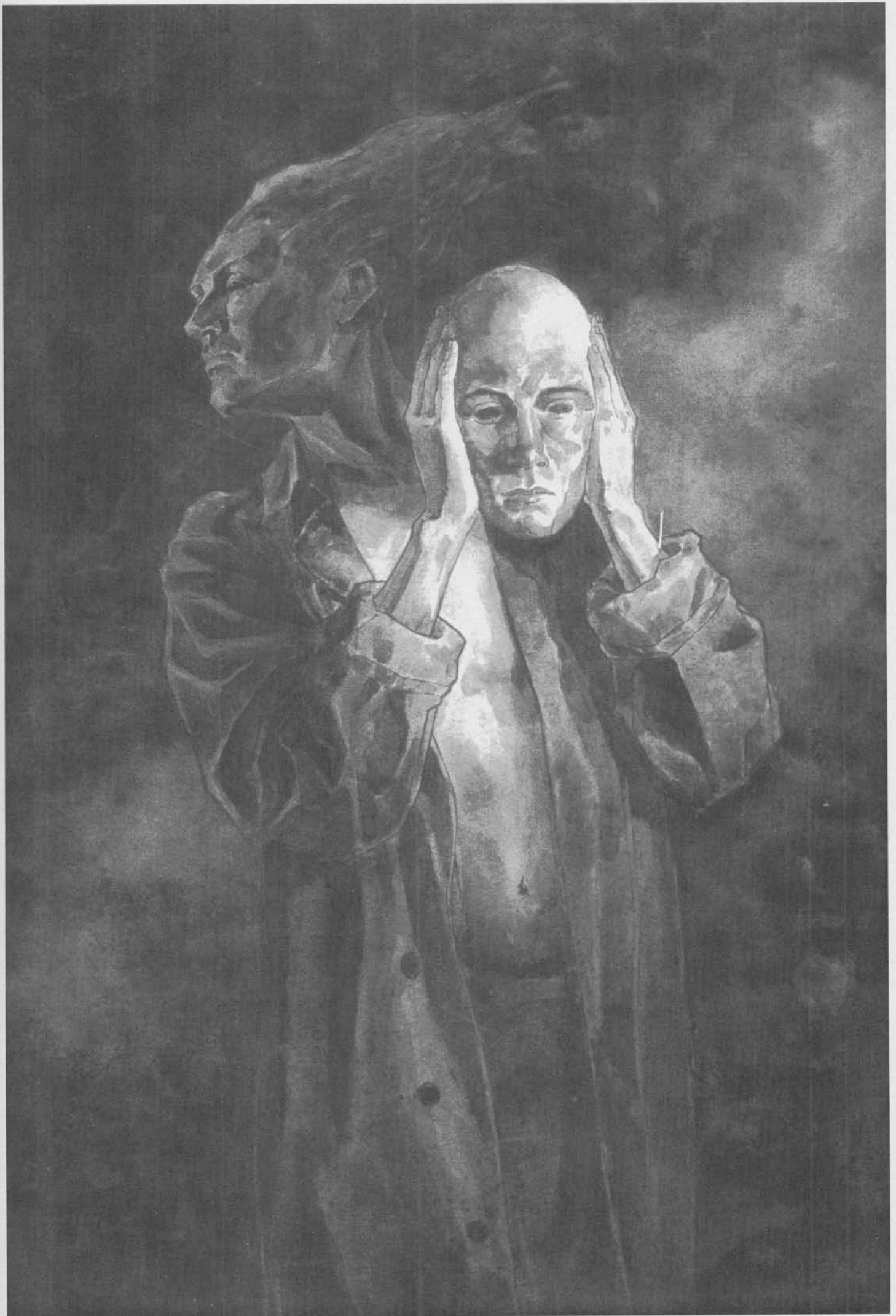
Masks that protect. Masks that
conceal. Masks that hide.

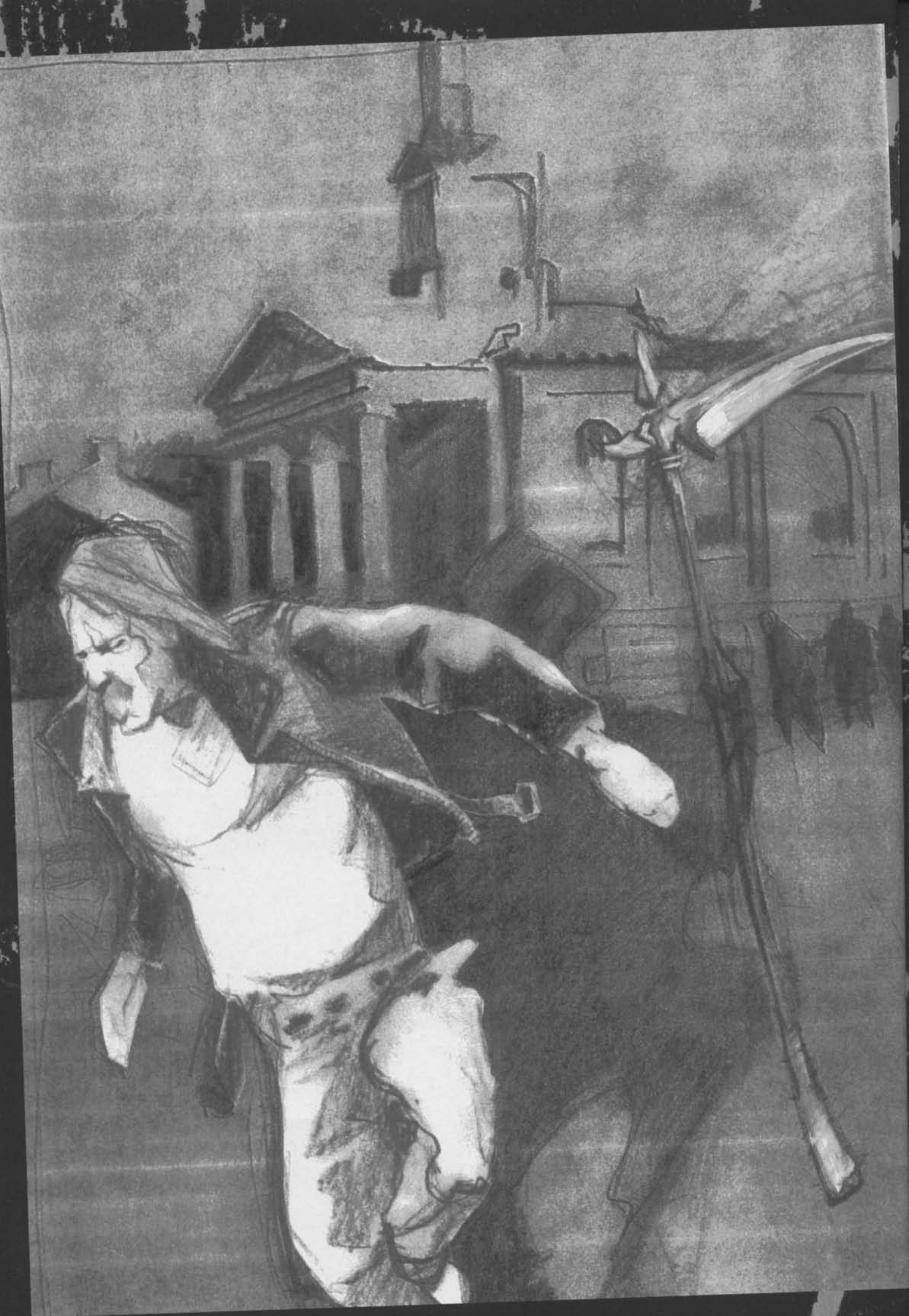
I wonder...who is being duped
more?

But enough illusions. How about a
dose of truth?

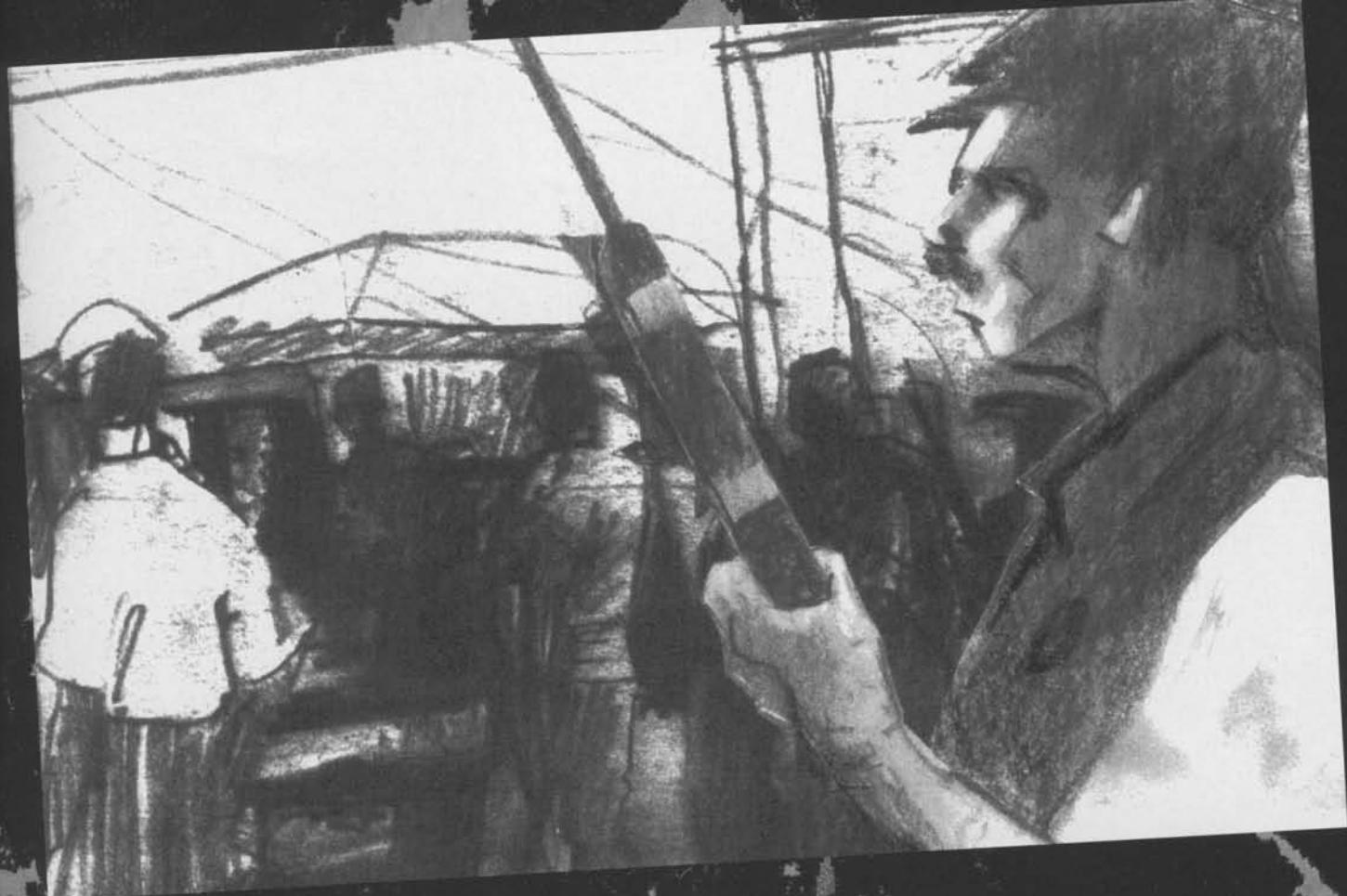
...for even their leaders are hardly what they seem. They,

too, wear masks...





This is the heart of the
Hierarchy's nest, the place
where the condemned must stand.



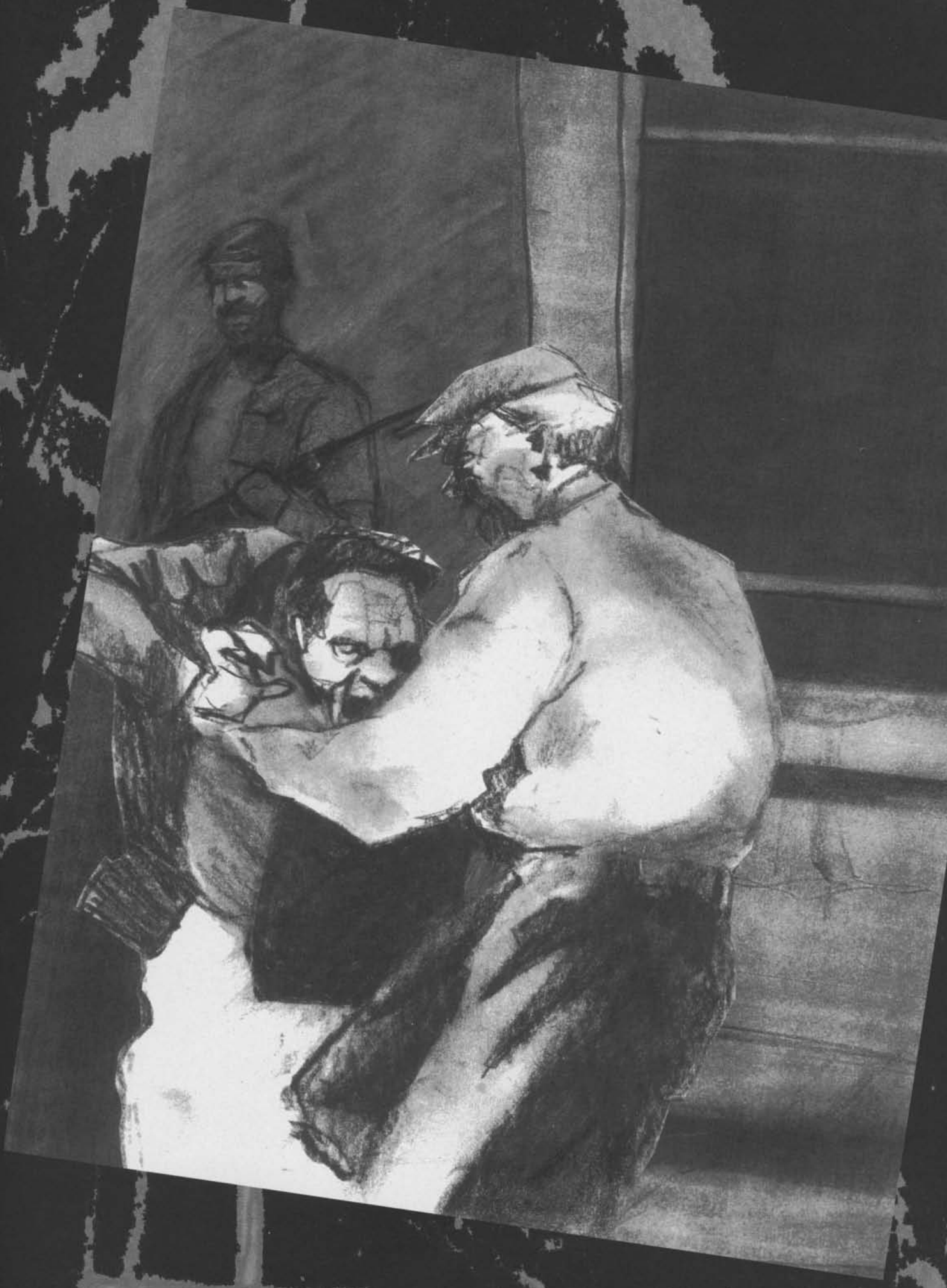
Unload them roughly or gently;
it does not matter. Most
shall be hauled off
to the pits of Stygia.





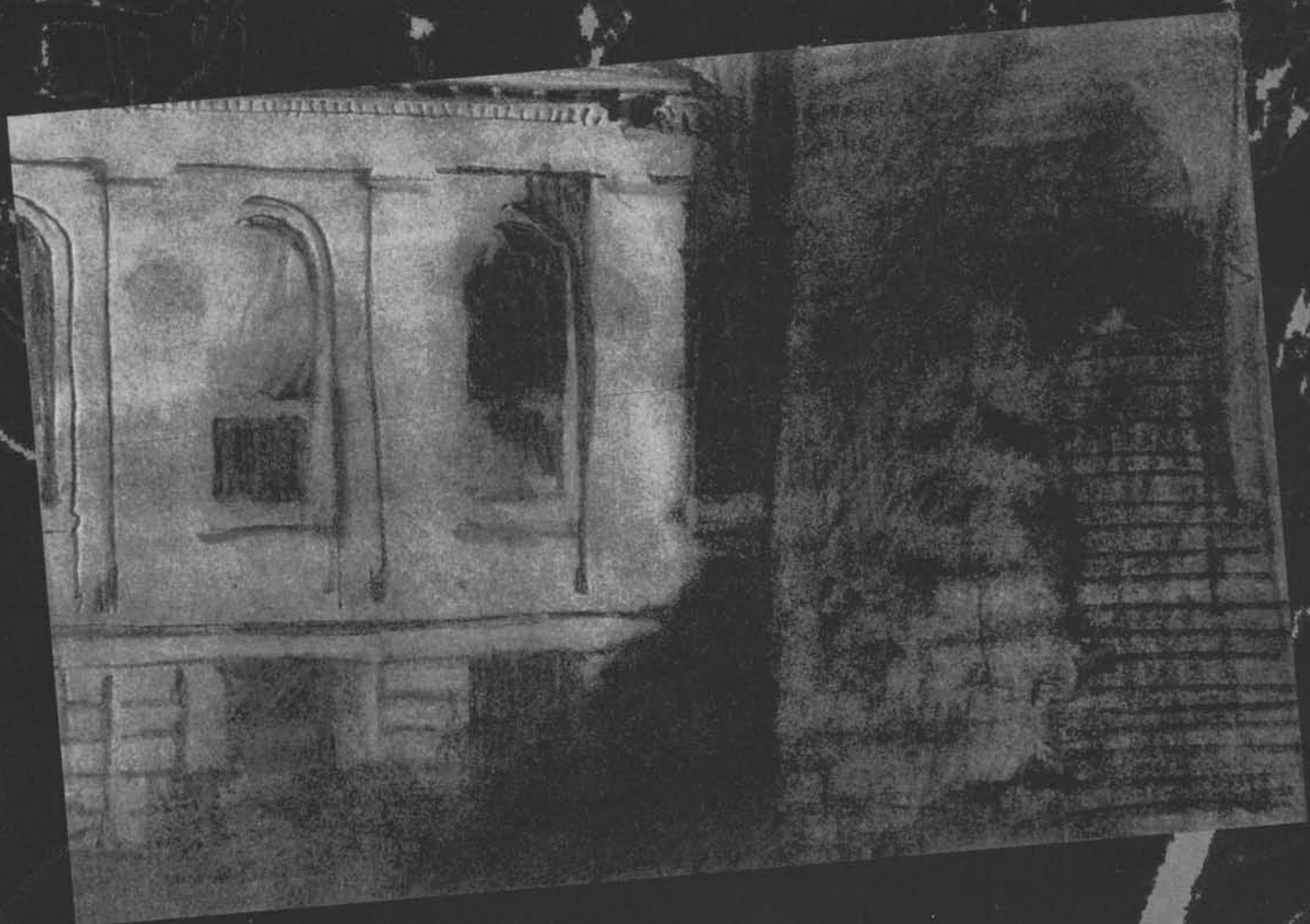
Their warriors are the dead of
many wars. They fear nothing

Struggle they might, but these
thralls cannot insist. They
will be judged this day.





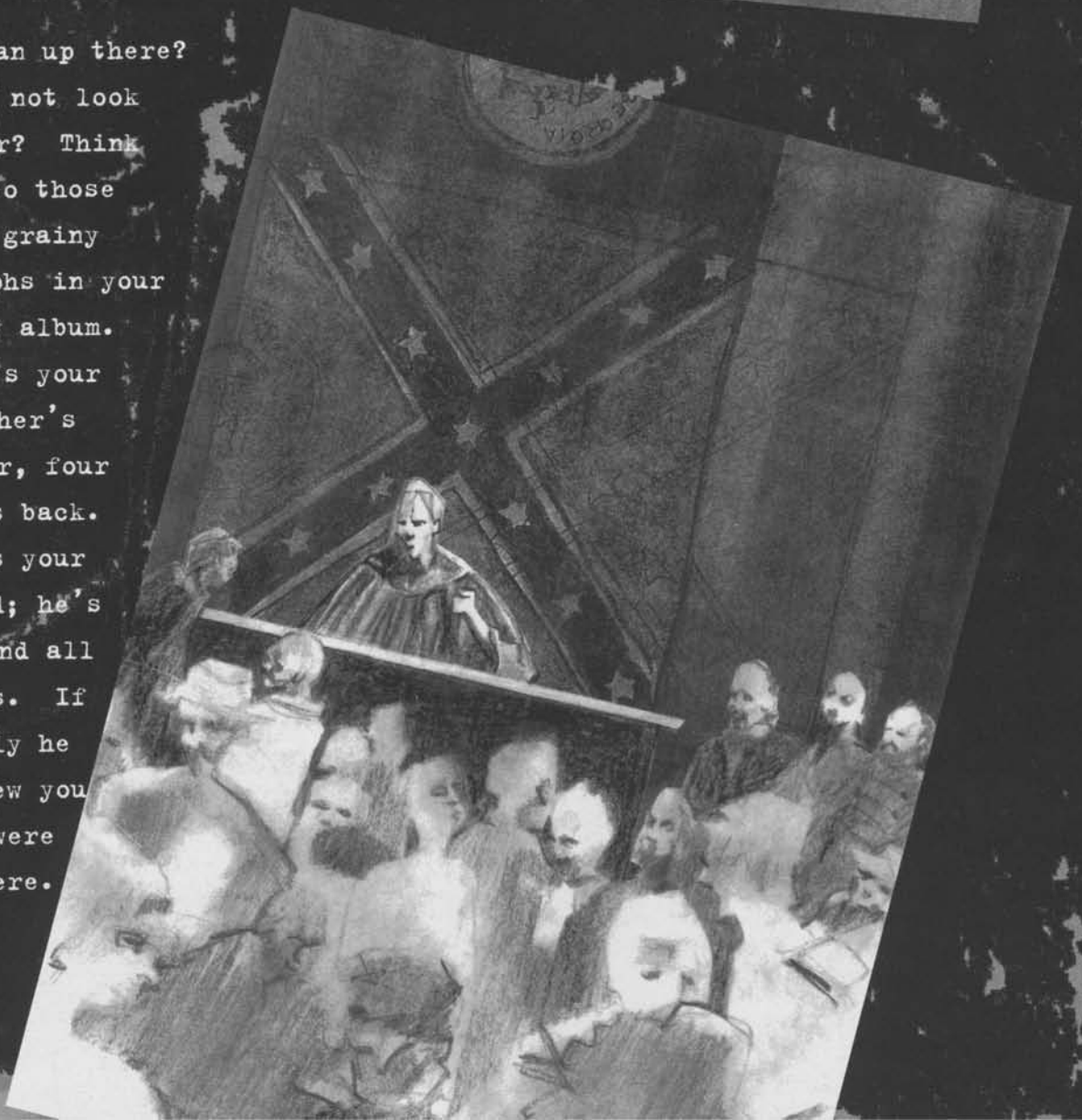
To the Living this old courthouse is
a museum, but the dead still put it
to its original purpose.

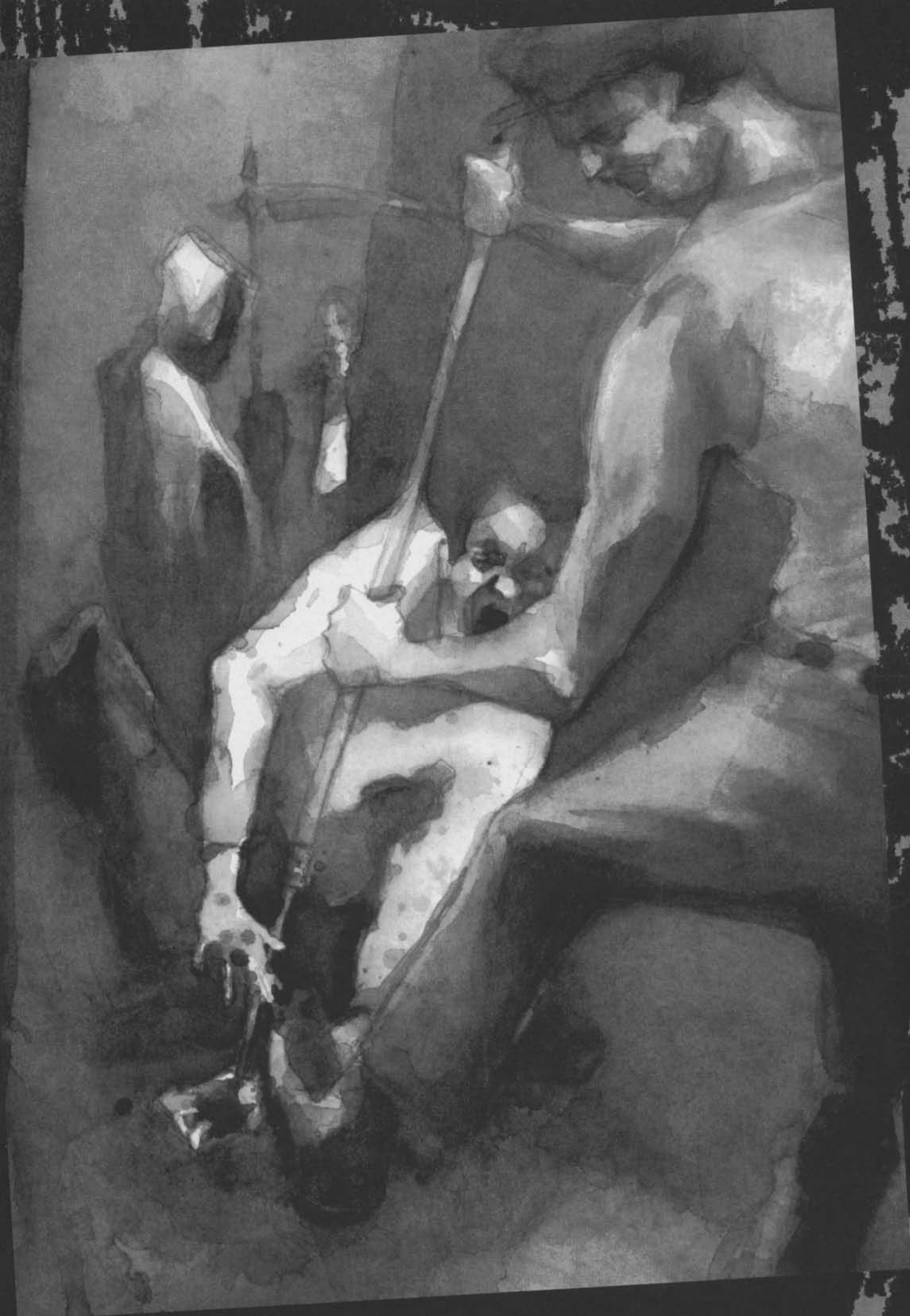


Some are already
judged — the
failed refuse,
the beggar
thralls.



See that man up there?
Does he not look
familiar? Think
back to those
old, grainy
photographs in your
family album.
That's your
father's
father, four
times back.
He's your
blood; he's
behind all
this. If
only he
knew you
were
here.





You can see his
tender mercies.

Denial of Death

The thousands of things undone, the millions of roads less traveled, the longings and regrets: they do not die with the body. Instead they linger on and take on lives of their own. They become ghosts. Sometimes the longings are so profound that their essence remains trapped between this world and the next, held back by misery and pain.

This is the denial of death.

The only thing holding us back is fear — fear that we aren't ready, that we won't survive the trip, fear of the unknown.

We all pray that the anguish of life does not exist beyond death, but at the same time we fear the unknown Oblivion. Our fear of death can turn life into a nightmare. We fail to enjoy life because of our fear of death.

We watch our dreams slip away from us, and our cowardice haunts us to the end of our days and beyond. The icy touch of fear sits on our shoulders, but seldom do we realize what it is we fear. For death hides itself well.

The cycle of fear isn't over when we die; it just begins all over again. The pain doesn't stop, and no answers are given. Mortal anguish is replaced by the immortal. The wheels turn ever on.

The meat of the body is gone, worm meal in an empty grave, but the essence remains. The spirit clings to its past, never quite trusting and strong enough to let go. It's the path to Transcendence. Once unfinished tasks are completed and fetters to reality loosened, it can pass on.

The irony is that death, even in death, can't be escaped. And neither can the fear.

So deal with it.



And you can see
his judgment,
how it is
swift.

This is the great escape.





Where is the Wailing Wall? They wail toward an unfeeling heaven. But the sky offers no reward here.

They are the Born Again - Do you recognize him? From TV?





These Heretics are in ecstasy. They believe his promises.

Repent, ye Sinners - A Necropolis of the dead, still afraid of dying



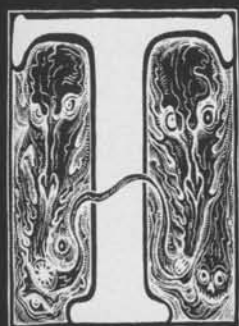


Can you stand to look at what
you once were? To look into
the eyes of those you left
behind? Can you stand to
return
home?



Alan Smithee

our sister's eyes reveal much...she knows more than
any child should know...and she is beyond your help
now. Her sister keeps her awake...



h e R e s t l e s s

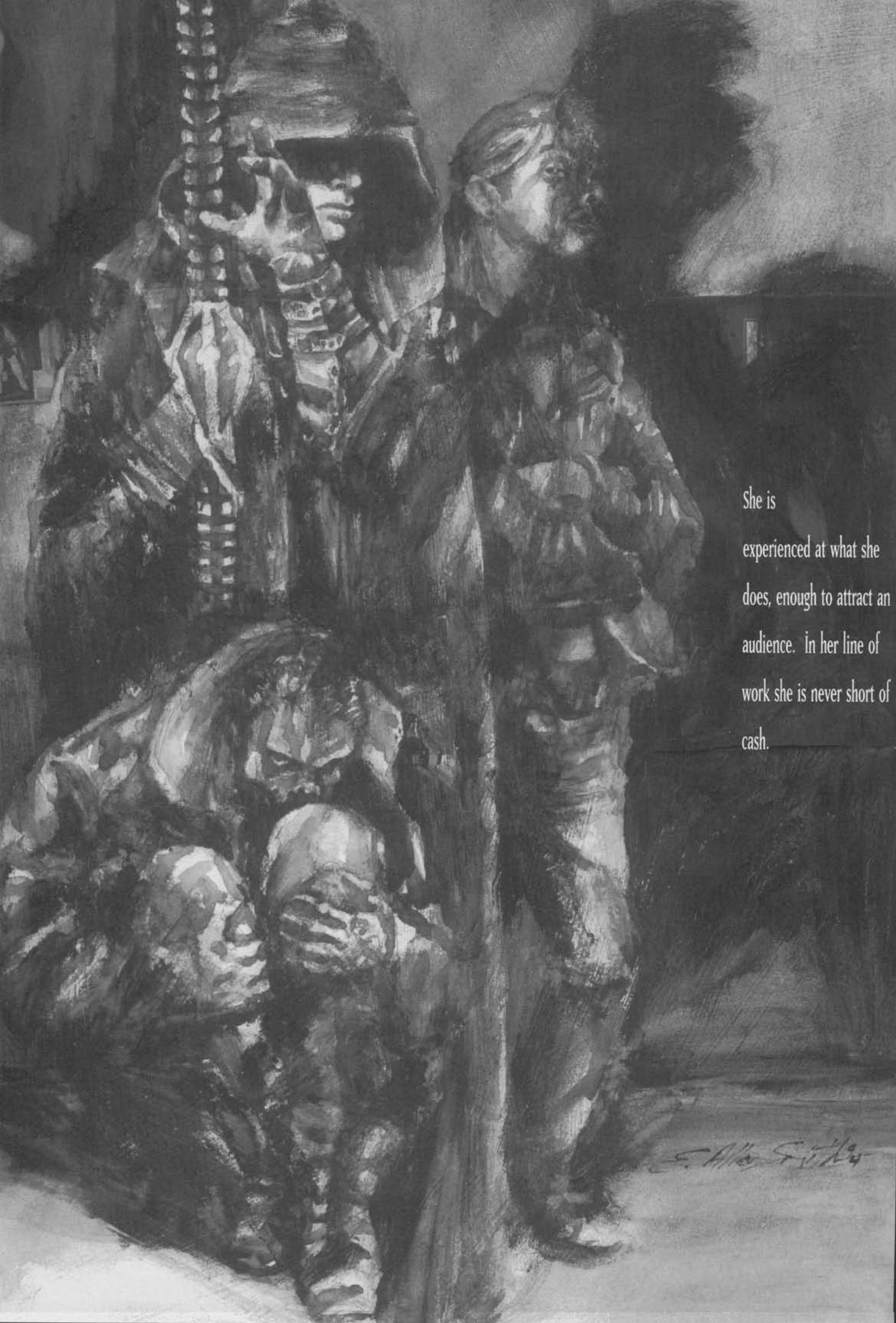
Wraiths are the screamers, trapped by their own pasts, by their own memories, by their very consciousness. They are, therefore they feel.

They remain because they must, because they cannot let go. They have some grating seed of meaning left to perform, express, excise. They still have something to say. There are as many reasons for why they remain as there are places for them to go. All existence is expression, and the dead are all poets, starving for enough meaning to survive.

They are bound by a tragic sense of a life unfulfilled, by unsaid words breaking in their hearts — by a life cut short by Fate. Some are driven by bitterness and rage; others, by ideals they champion beyond the grave. Some still long for meaning and fulfillment ever denied them in life.

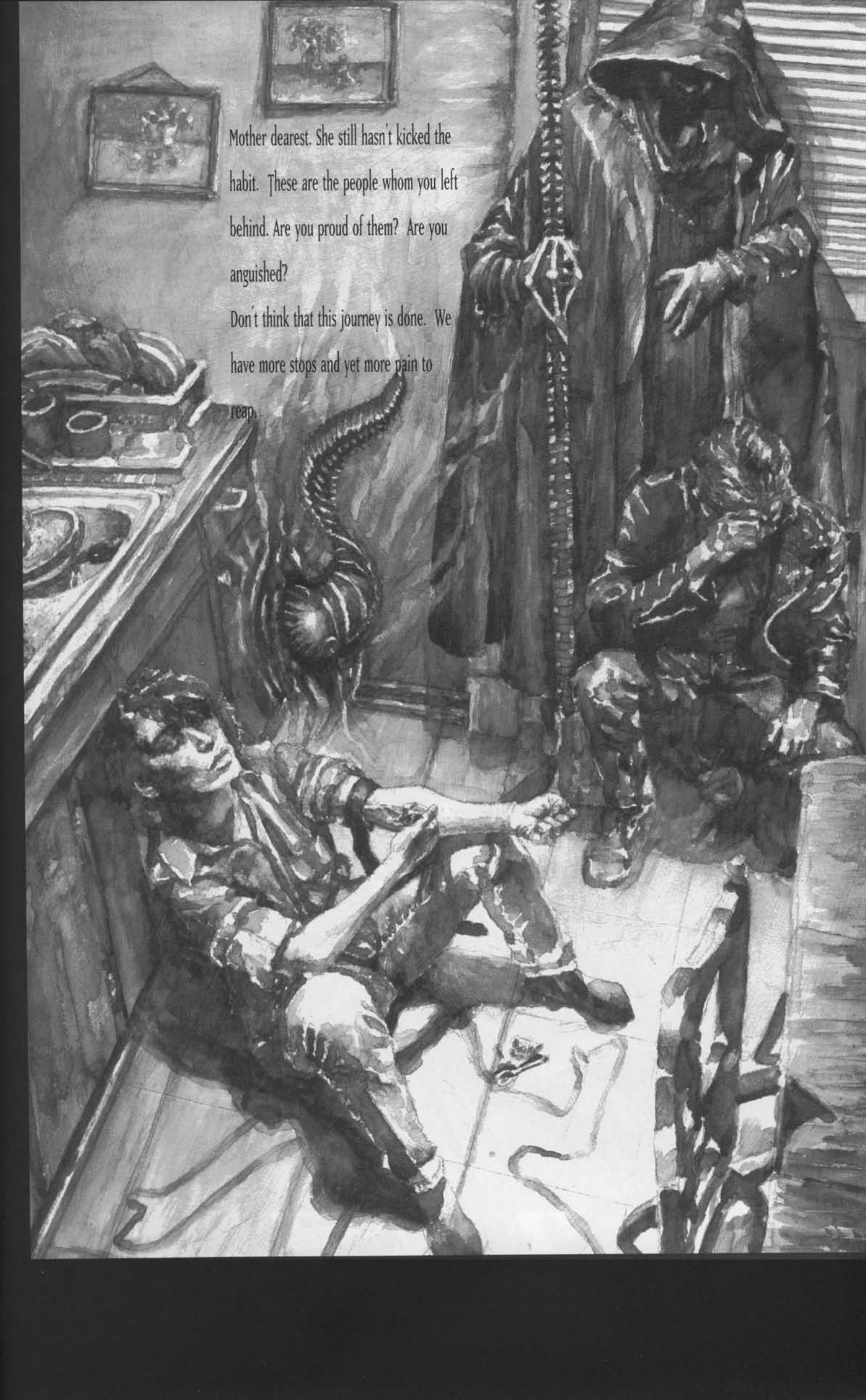
Many are the products of violent, cruel and sudden deaths. The end comes by surprise, leaving no chance to resolve a lifetime of half-told stories. They are bound to their lost lives, and are likely to remain in the shadows for long.

They shall not rest.



She is
experienced at what she
does, enough to attract an
audience. In her line of
work she is never short of
cash.

E. Allen Smith

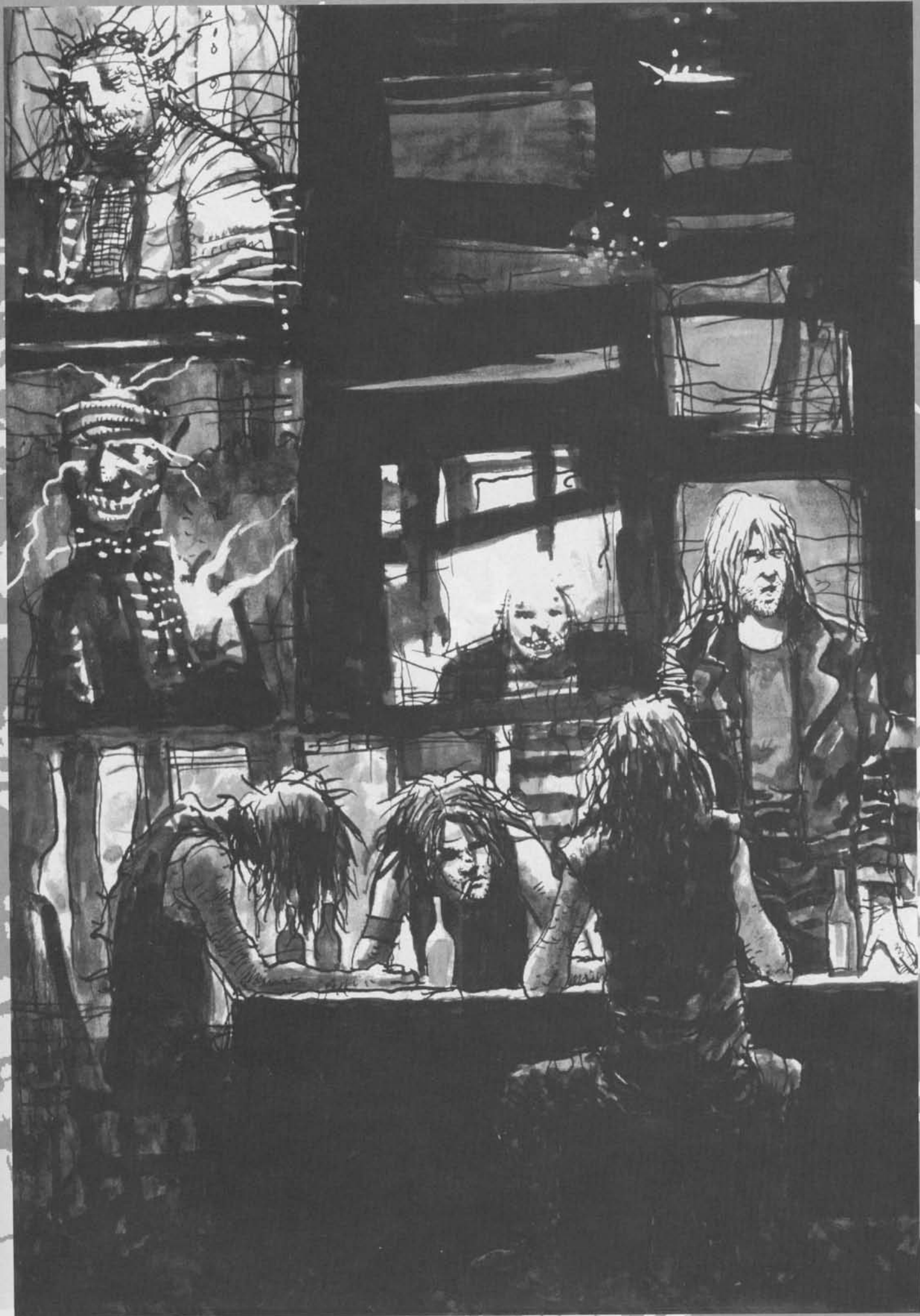


Mother dearest. She still hasn't kicked the habit. These are the people whom you left behind. Are you proud of them? Are you anguished?

Don't think that this journey is done. We have more stops and yet more pain to reap.



...for the City of the Dead. The penitent has made the leap and received his prayer.
Only he's gotten more than he asked. The scavengers always find the dead; that is their purpose.



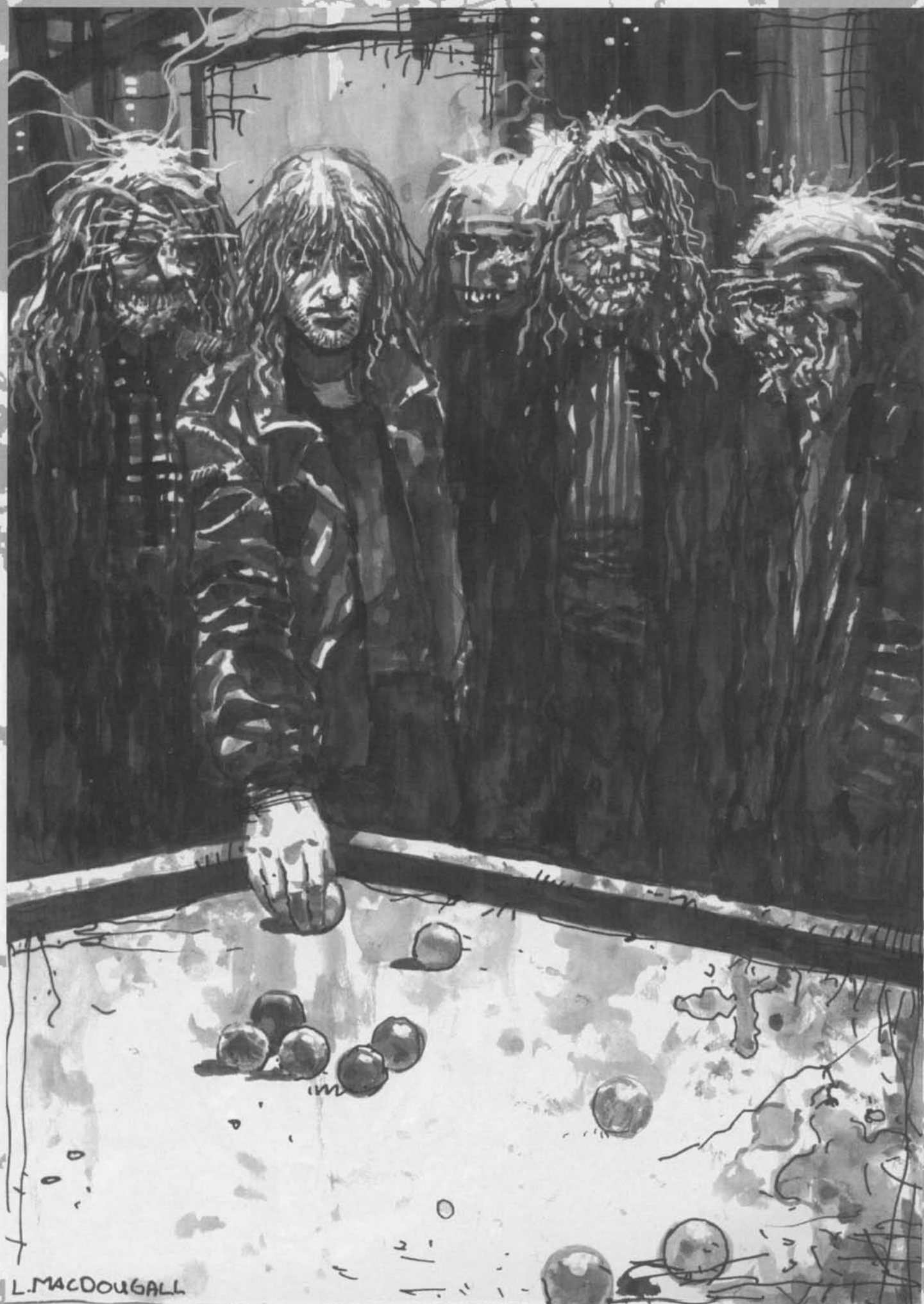
This shall be your cohort, and this place your haunt.
We are more at home in such forgotten places; here we do not bump into them.



Do you not see how death makes a mockery of our bodies? We become as twisted without as we are within. And yet we cling to these shadows,

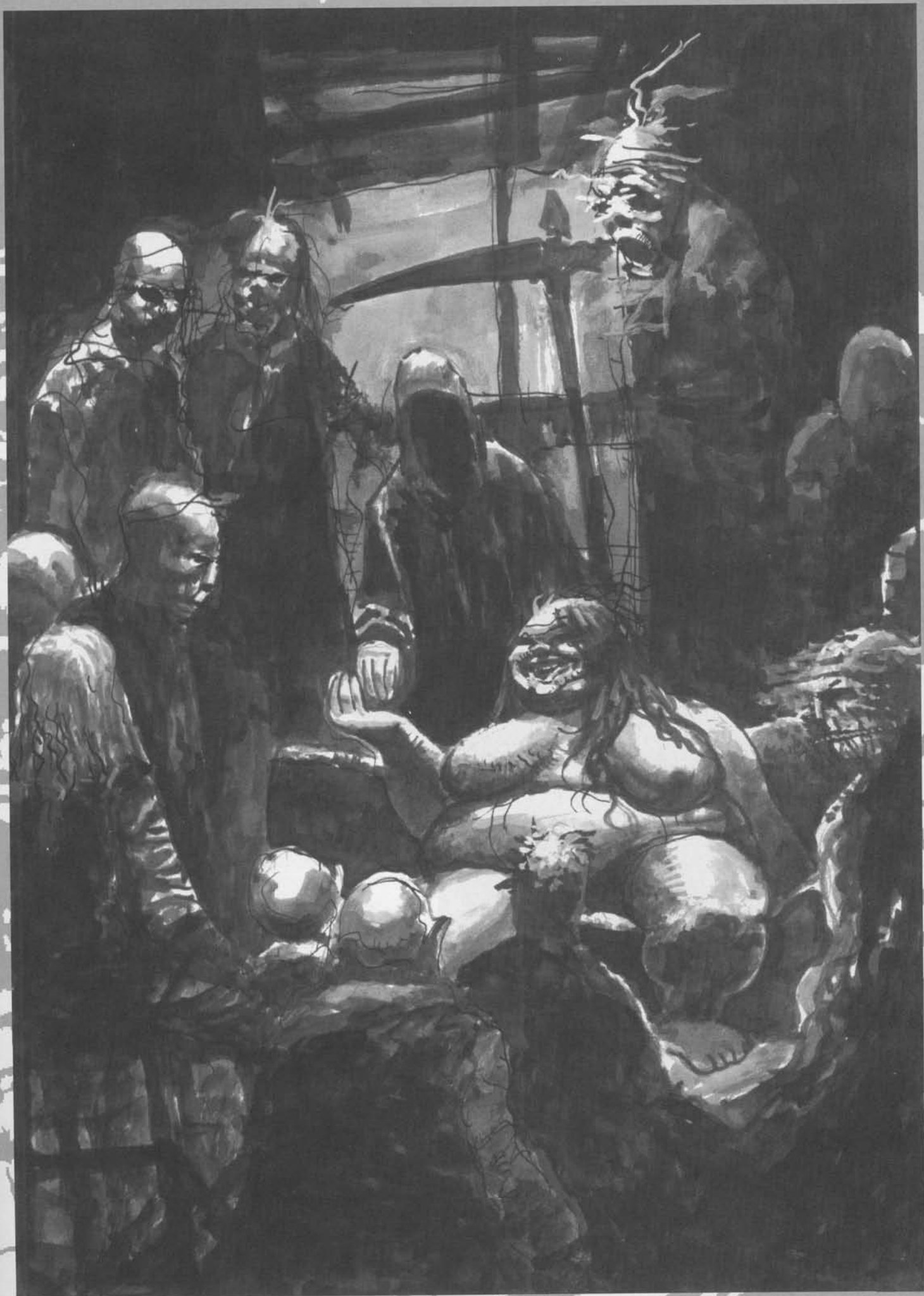


wherein it is easier for us to draw our unliving breath. We deny Oblivion her need, yet we fail to live with what is left to us.

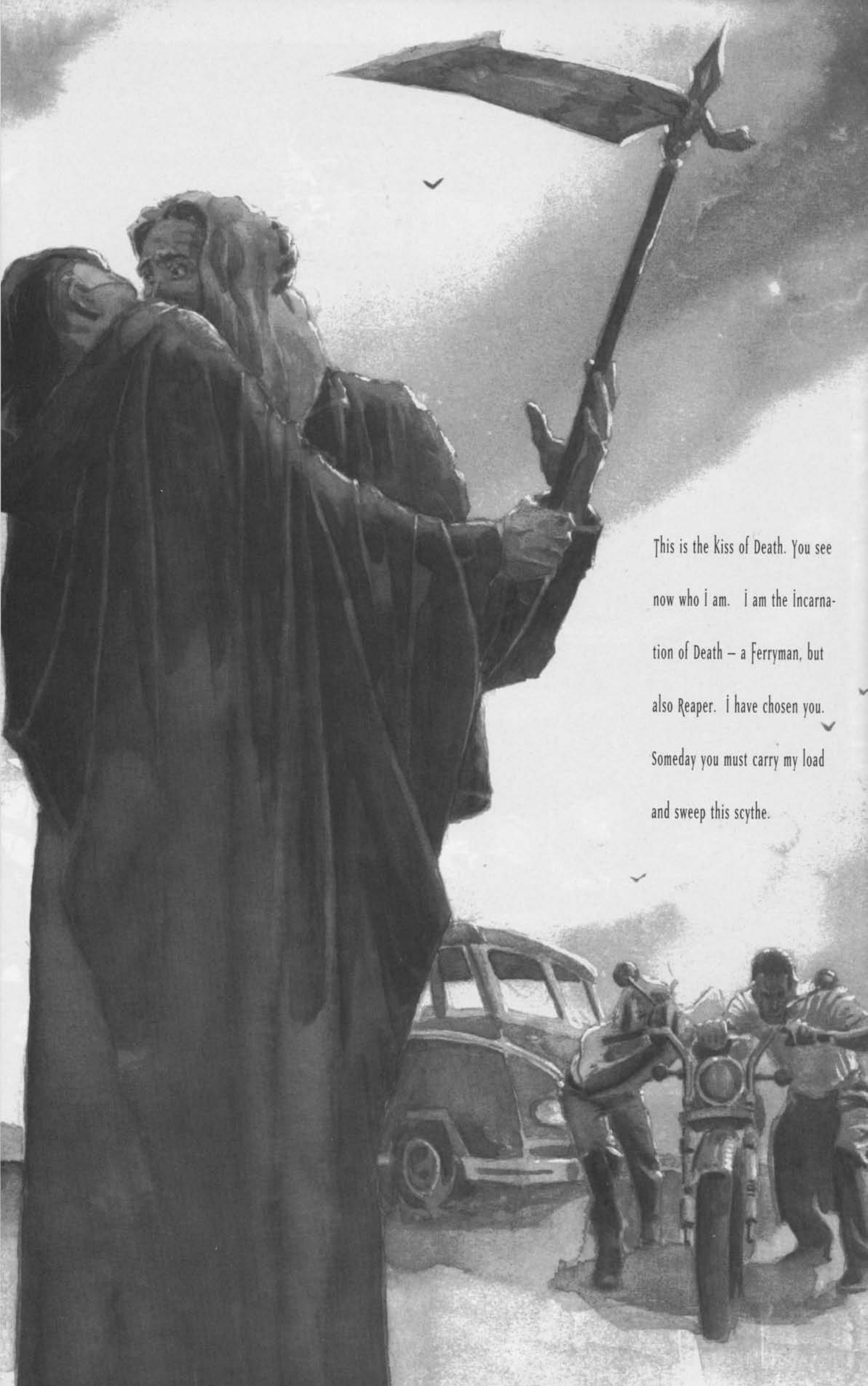


L. MACDOUGALL

You must learn to be one of them; embrace their ways.
Look past their faces, for their faces are only masks.



Some masks are more grotesque than others. Judge not the Restless by appearances.
They are circumstantial. These ones are not privileged, but they will protect you and provide you with a home.
Now come...let me show you a lower breed...



This is the Kiss of Death. You see now who I am. I am the incarnation of Death – a Ferryman, but also Reaper. I have chosen you. Someday you must carry my load and sweep this scythe.

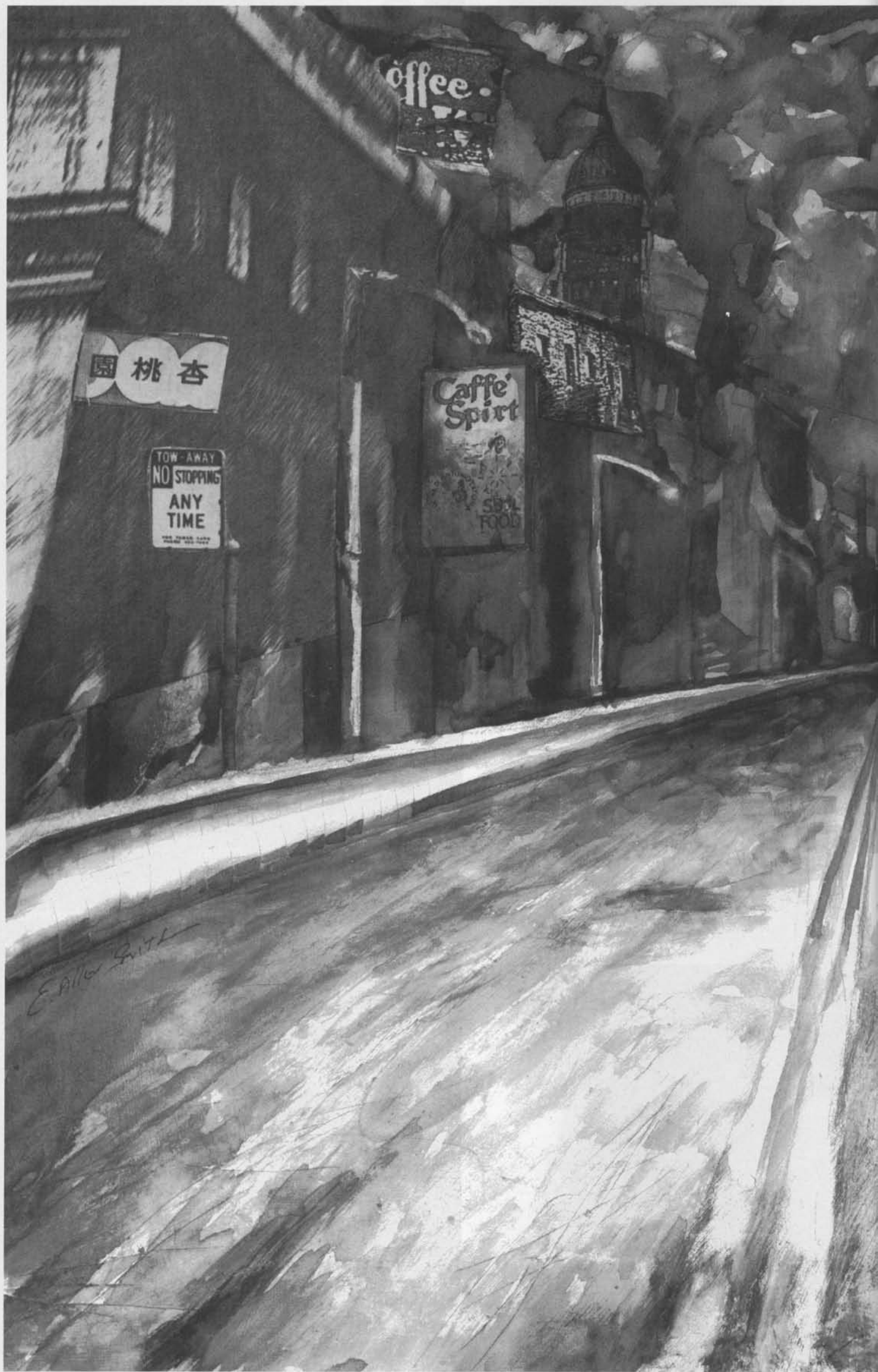


D. ALEXANDER '94



It is time to say farewell. Your
friends are here to send you off,
with a Viking funeral no less.
Better to be buried with your
ship than without it.

D. ALEXANDER '94



E. Allen Smith



Farewell, my lover, my child. You've much to see. Your journey into death has just begun.

THE FACE OF DEATH™

Face Death

Walk beside the Reaper

Glimpse life after life

Flickering beyond the shroud

Welcome to the theatre of one man's
mortality

The tableau of his lonely journey —
you, who have felt Night's cold razor.
You, whom fear has touched inside

Dare you stare into Oblivion's mirror?

Dare you stare into the eyes of the
Restless?

Dare you see

The Face of Death?

Wraith



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