

SHUTTERBOX



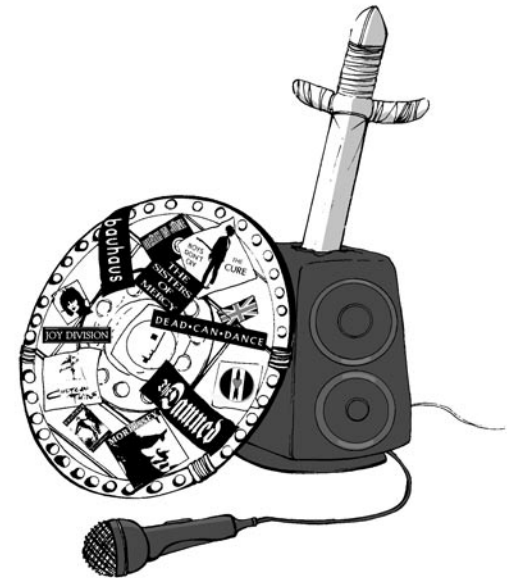
Rikki Simons & Tavisha

3

CHAPTER ONE:

WHAT IS

MISERABLISM



THOMAS!

WHERE IS
AJ?

OH.

HELLO,
CAROLINE.

HE'S DOWN IN
THE WELL...

...MUSING
SOME
CHILDREN.

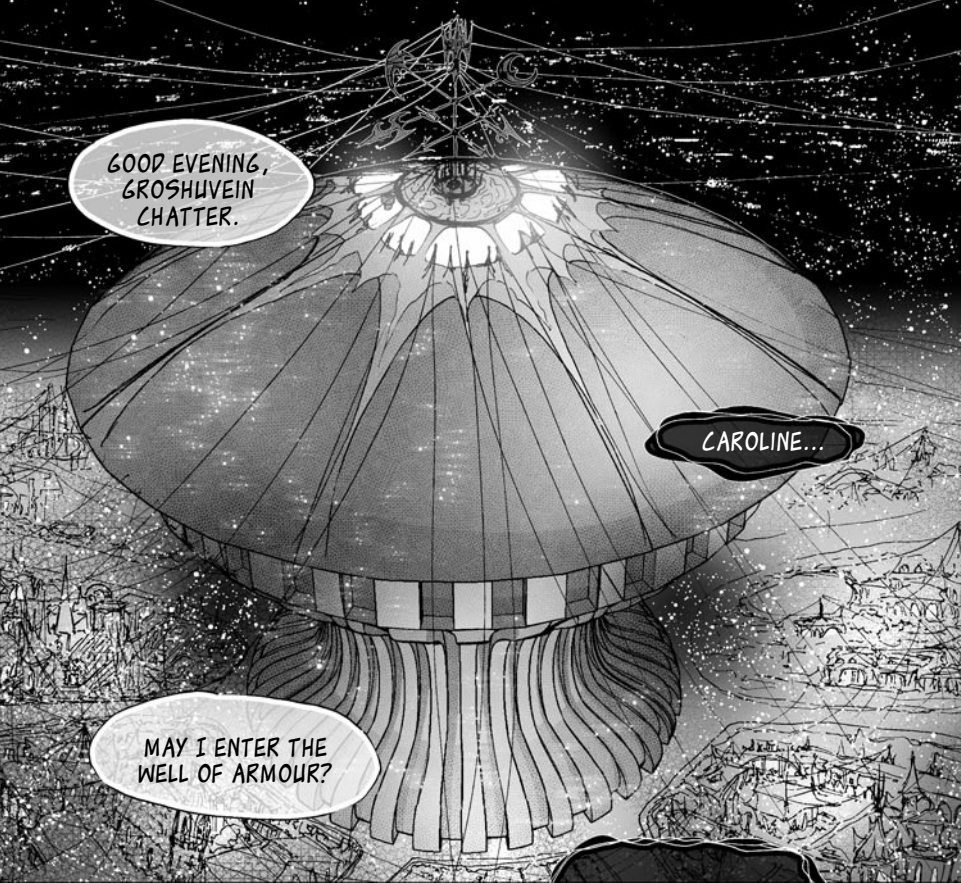
I DIDN'T ASK
YOU WHAT HE
WAS DOING!

SHUT
UP!

YES,
WELL...

I HATE YOU.

I'LL BE GOING
NOW.



GOOD EVENING,
GROSHUVEIN
CHATTER.

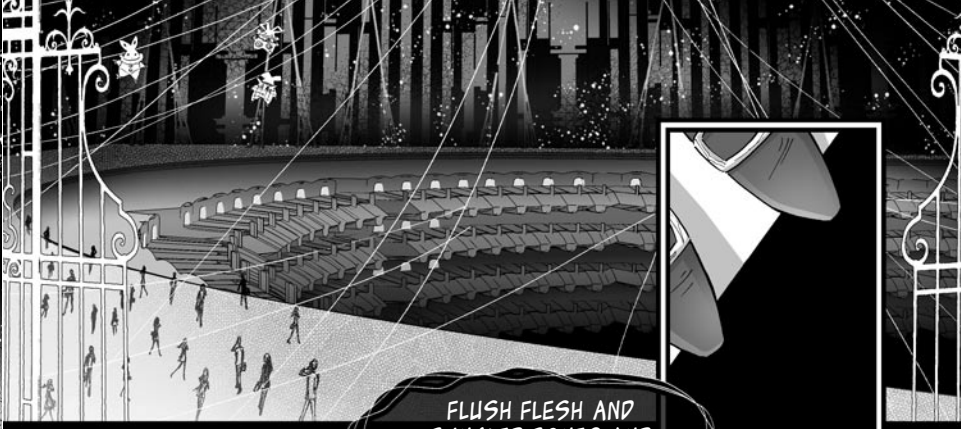
CAROLINE...

MAY I ENTER THE
WELL OF ARMOUR?

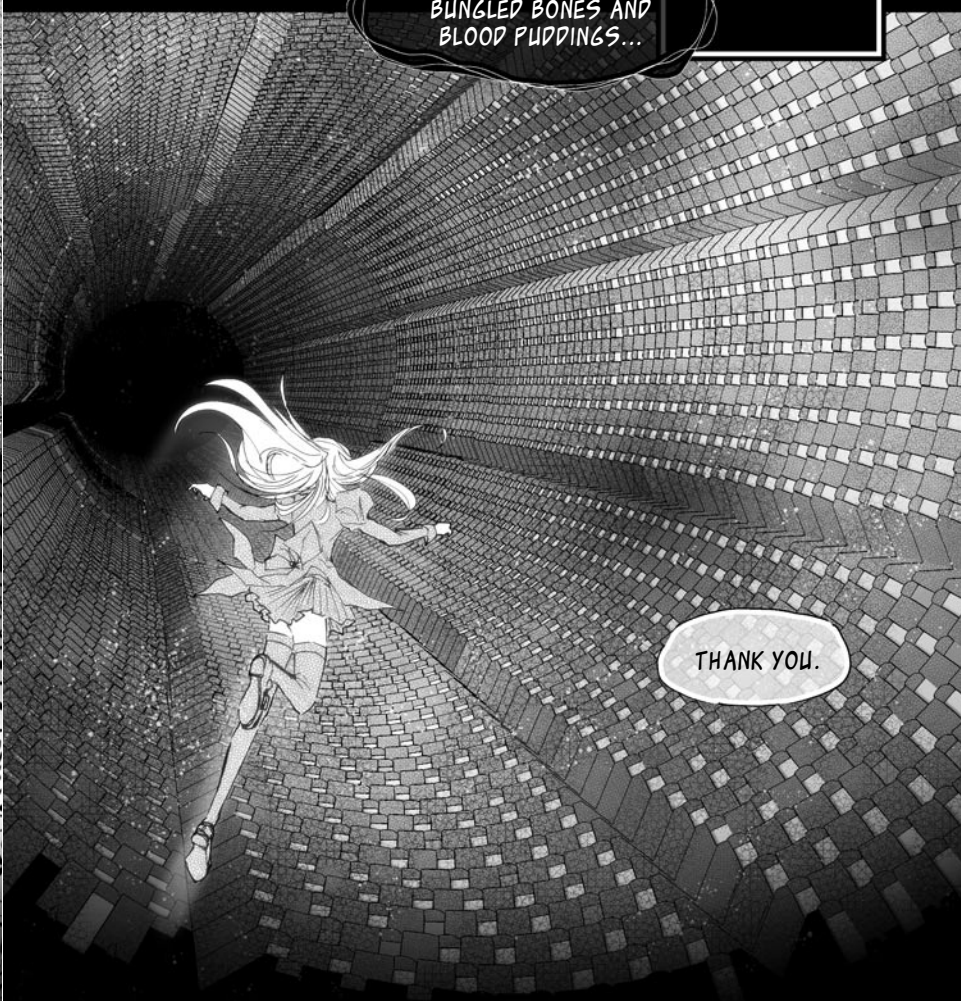
YOUR... BLESSED
BUSINESS HERE...?



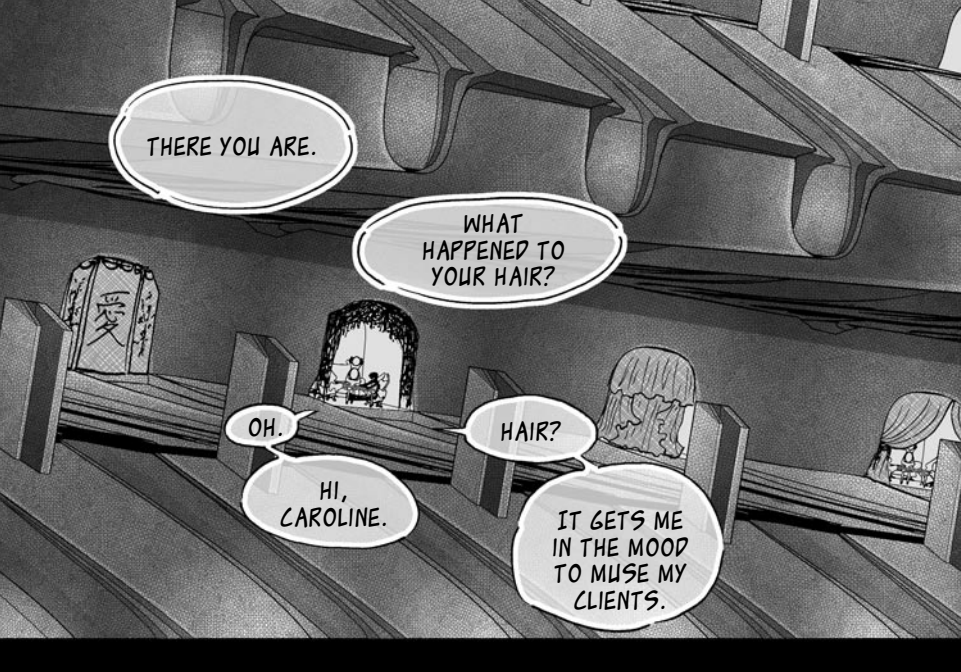
ONE ADRIEN
GRANDALL.



FLUSH FLESH AND
BUNGLED BONES AND
BLOOD PUDDINGS...



THANK YOU.



THERE YOU ARE.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HAIR?

OH.

HI, CAROLINE.

HAIR?

IT GETS ME IN THE MOOD TO MUSE MY CLIENTS.



WELL...

...AS YOU CAN SEE...

I'M MUSING CHILDREN LIKE I'M SUPPOSED TO.



YOU CAN TELL DANE I'M NOT BEING DISTRACTED BY SCIENTISTS, OKAY?



WHAT'S ... WRONG WITH THESE KIDS?



CHILDREN.

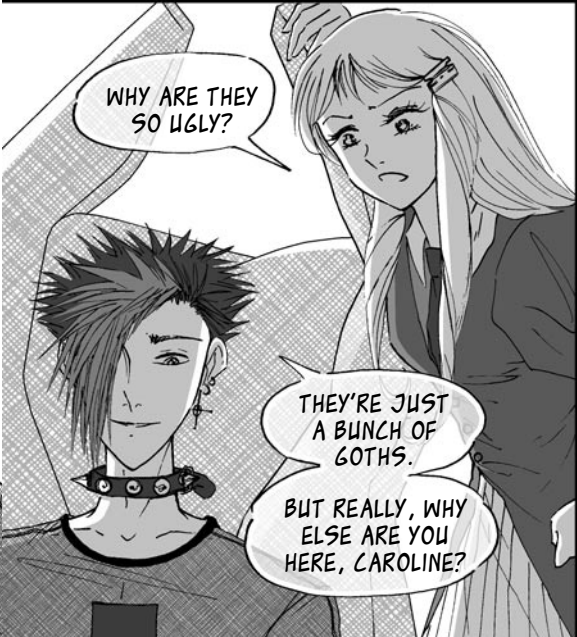
YOU'RE MUSING CHILDREN AREN'T YOU?

YES.



DID MY BROTHER SEND YOU?

MMHMMM.



WHY ARE THEY SO UGLY?

THEY'RE JUST A BUNCH OF GOTHS.

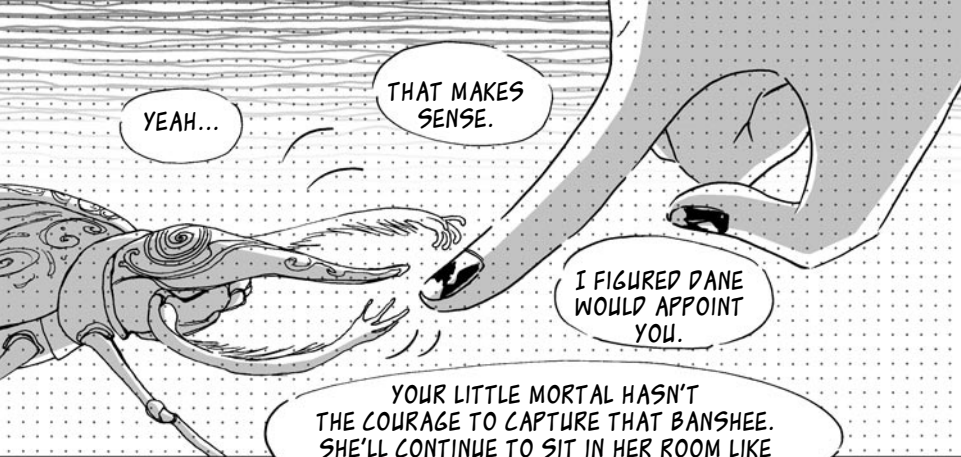
BUT REALLY, WHY ELSE ARE YOU HERE, CAROLINE?



HEH.

TO THE POINT THEN.

I'M GOING TO DROWN YOUR LITTLE GIRLFRIEND AT DAWN.

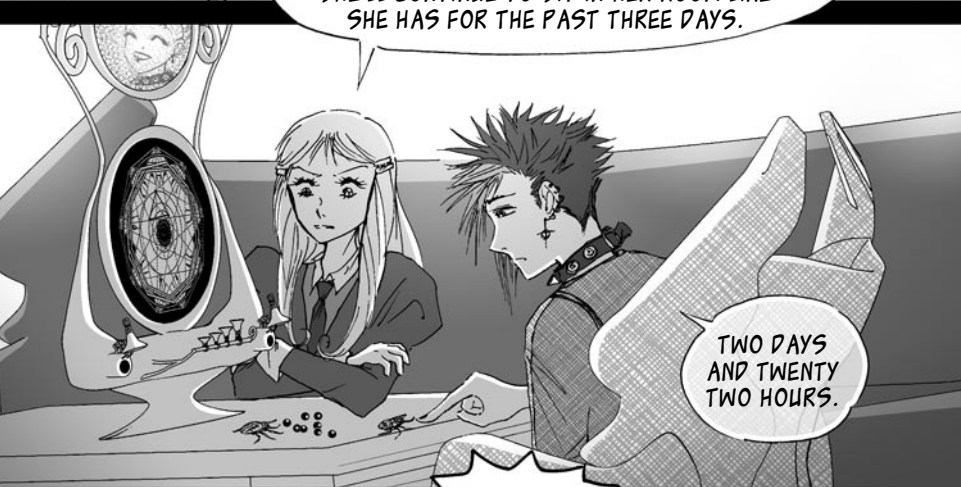


YEAH...

THAT MAKES SENSE.

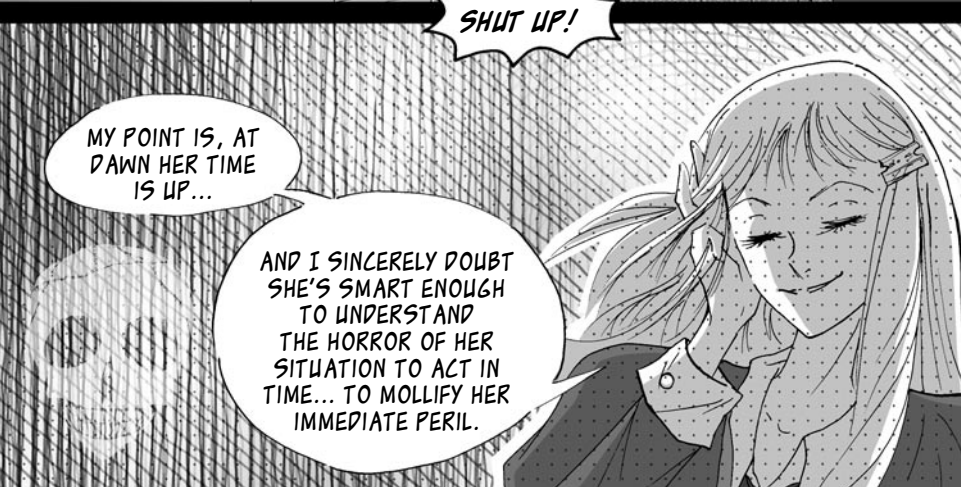
I FIGURED DANE WOULD APPOINT YOU.

YOUR LITTLE MORTAL HASN'T THE COURAGE TO CAPTURE THAT BANSHEE. SHE'LL CONTINUE TO SIT IN HER ROOM LIKE SHE HAS FOR THE PAST THREE DAYS.



TWO DAYS AND TWENTY TWO HOURS.

SHUT UP!



MY POINT IS, AT DAWN HER TIME IS UP...

AND I SINCERELY DOUBT SHE'S SMART ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THE HORROR OF HER SITUATION TO ACT IN TIME... TO MOLLIFY HER IMMEDIATE PERIL.



WOW!

THAT'S SOME STATEMENT!

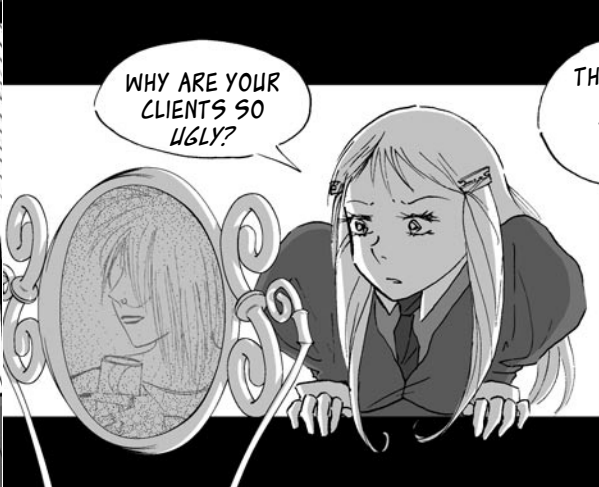
WHY THE ANGER, CAROLINE?

TOO MANY OF YOUR CLIENTS TOO DUMB TO STAY OUT OF JAIL?



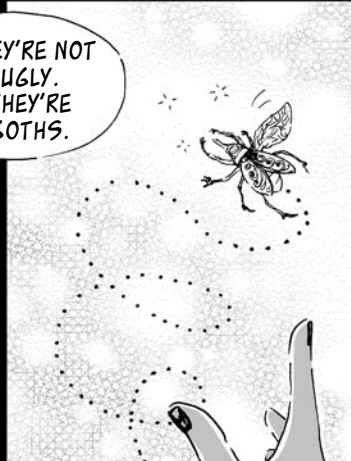
HA!

YOU WOULD BE DOING THEM A FAVOR BY MUSING THEM TO FIND ANOTHER MUSE, YOU KNOW.



WHY ARE YOUR CLIENTS SO UGLY?

THEY'RE NOT UGLY. THEY'RE GOTHS.





IT'S FUNNY,
THAT WORD...

...OUT OF THE
FIVE HUNDRED
AND FOUR LIVES
THAT I'VE
LIVED...



AN
EXAMPLE,
PLEASE?

THE ONE MEMORY
THAT I ALWAYS
SEEM ABLE TO
RETAIN IS THAT
WORD: GOTH.

SURE!



MY
ORIGINAL FAMILY
NAME, TEN THOUSAND
YEARS AGO WAS
CR'NADIAHL...

A WEALTHY
HENDECADIAH
FAMILY BELONGING
TO THE ETHEREAL
GOTHENMELLO
PEOPLE.



ALMOST ALL OF MY
REINCARNATIONS
MANIFESTED WITHIN
THE GOTHENMELLO...

...FOR ALMOST
SIX THOUSAND
YEARS...



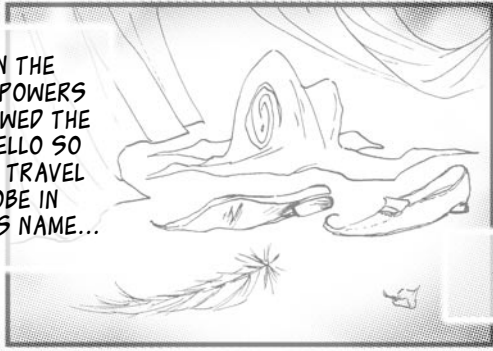
I... I
ALREADY
KNOW
THIS...

...UNTIL THE
VARIOUS
GOTHENMELLO
TRIBES WERE
ABSORBED INTO THE
GERMANIC PEOPLE
OF EUROPE...

...BECOMING THE
VISIGOTHS AND
OSTROGOTHS.



BY THEN THE
SPIRITINE POWERS
THAT ALLOWED THE
GOTHENMELLO SO
EASILY TO TRAVEL
THE GLOBE IN
MERRIDIAH'S NAME...



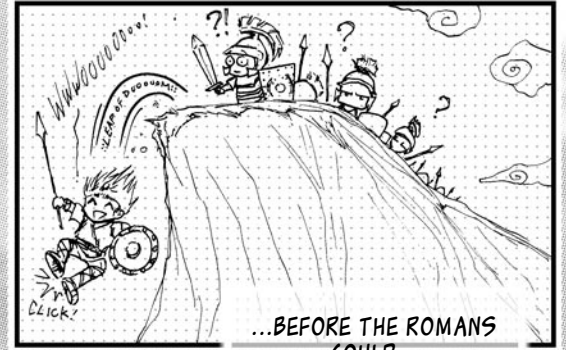
...BEGAN TO
WANE...

...AND SO...

I SPENT A GREAT MANY OF
MY LIVES FROM THE 3RD
TO 5TH CENTURIES A.D.
BEING BORN OVER AND
OVER WITHIN THE UKRAINE
AND NEAR THE DANUBE AS
EITHER VISIGOTH OR OSTRO
GOTH... ...KILLING ROMAN
SOLDIERS...



...KILLING
MYSELF...



...BEFORE THE ROMANS
COULD...

...HURLING
BACK TO
MERRIDIAH...

OH, ADRIEN!
YOU'LL MAKE
BREAKING CUPS A
TRADITION!



...THEN BACK TO THE 60THS...





BUT ALWAYS
THERE WAS THAT
WORD AGAIN:
GOTH.

THIS IS VERY BORING.

...HUFF...

I KNEW YOU'D
LOVE IT!

OH, MY
GODS...

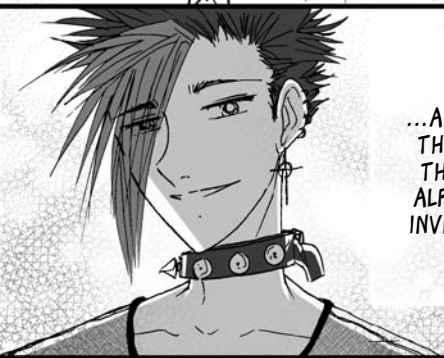


MY MIND IS
GOING TO
SHRIVEL
WITH
ENNUI!

YES, YES... THEN
THROUGH THE PERIOD
OF 1790 TO 1945... I
WAS REBORN SEVEN
TIMES IN AND AROUND
PEOPLE ASSOCIATED
WITH THE GOTHIC
NOVEL PHENOMENON...

...A GENRE NAMED
FOR ITS USE OF
THOSE SAME
CATHEDRALS I
HELPED CONSTRUCT
CENTURIES EARLIER.

I WAS THERE
WHEN THE
CHRISTIAN
BISHOP, ULFILAS
EVANGELIZED
THE GOTHS...



...AND TURNED
THEM ON TO
THE GOTHIC
ALPHABET HE
INVENTED FOR
THEM.

CENTURIES
AFTER, IN THE
MIDDLE AGES I
COULD OFTEN
BE FOUND
EMPLOYED IN
THE BUILDING
OF VAULTED
CATHEDRALS...



...CATHEDRALS
THAT WERE LATER
METAPHORICALLY
REFERRED TO
AS "GOTHIC" BY
RENAISSANCE
SNOBS ATTEMPTING
TO CHARACTERIZE
THEM AS UGLY.

THE MYSTERIES
OF UDOLPHO,
FRANKENSTEIN,
GREAT
EXPECTATIONS,
GORMENGHAST... I
RAN IN CIRCLES
CLOSE TO THE
AUTHORS OF MANY
FAMOUSLY
MELANCHOLY WORKS.





WHAT...

FINALLY, I REMEMBER VERY LITTLE OF MY LAST LIFE... EXCEPT THAT, LIKE MY YOUNG CLIENTS NOW...



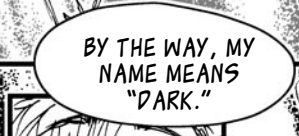
WHAT TIME IS IT?



...I WAS ALWAYS CRAZY ABOUT THE GOTHIC MUSIC SCENE THAT RAN FROM THE 1980'S THROUGH THE 90'S...



...GOTHIC MUSIC: SO NAMED FOR ITS MELANCHOLY MELODIES THAT CONJURED THE MOODY, ETHEREAL IMAGES FROM THOSE DARK NOVELS OF THE CENTURY BEFORE.



BY THE WAY, MY NAME MEANS "DARK."



WHO CARES?

THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF HISTORY CENTERED AROUND A SINGLE WORD AND ITS TRANSCENDENT MEANING...



MY FANS MIGHT.

...AND I THINK THAT IF THERE IS A CONSCIOUS GOD...

...ONE OF HIS MORE SUBTLE JOKES MUST BE THE BOILING AWAY OF ALL OF THAT WORD'S MANY MILLENNIA OF MYSTERY INTO A TACKY CHAIN OF CORPORATE RETAIL STORES IN AMERICAN MALLS.



FUNNY THING ABOUT WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS: AS THE YEARS VANISH BEHIND US...

...MOST FLUTTER BETWEEN CONCEPTS OF HIDEOUSNESS AND BEAUTY.

YET, THERE ARE WORDS OF INORDINATE POWER...

...WORDS THAT BECOME NAMES OF UNYIELDING BEAUTY...

...EVER FAIR...

... "THE SONG OF JOY."

...NAMES LIKE CAROLINE...

...WHO'S EVER MORE DEAR TRUER MEANING IS, EVER AFTER...

...SNICKERS...



SO!

YOU'D BETTER GO, HUH?

IT'S DAWN AND YOU'LL MISS MEGAN.

HOW LONG...

...HAVE I BEEN HERE?

THREE HOURS. I PUT A SPELL ON YOU.

...DUNK!

...SNAP!



SHUTTERBOX

BOOK THREE: ENTRY EXAM

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