

King Charretier Hollingsworth Cowles

LOVE issue 3 EVERLASTING

"TOO LATE
FOR LOVE!"

OH, YOU
POOR THING. YOU
JUST HAVE TO *LEARN*,
THERE'S A *BIGGER* WORLD
OUT THERE. *HE* ISN'T
WORTH YOUR
TEARS!

WHAT DO
YOU KNOW, YOU
OLD *HAG*?! I WILL
HAVE WHAT YOU
NEVER DID! I WILL
HAVE *LOVE*!



FROM SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY, I HEARD THE LIBRARIAN'S SHRILL SCOLDS, BUT HER CHEAP OBJECTIONS FADED QUICKLY AS I MELTED INTO FRED'S TOUCH. NOTHING SHE COULD SAY WOULD STOP ME! I WASN'T LIKE HER! I WOULDN'T BE...

TOO LATE FOR LOVE

CHAPTER 1

WHAT DO YOU KIDS THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

POOR OLD WOMAN! WE'RE JUST HAVING WHAT YOU WANT SO MUCH BUT CAN NEVER HAVE! LOVE EVERLASTING!

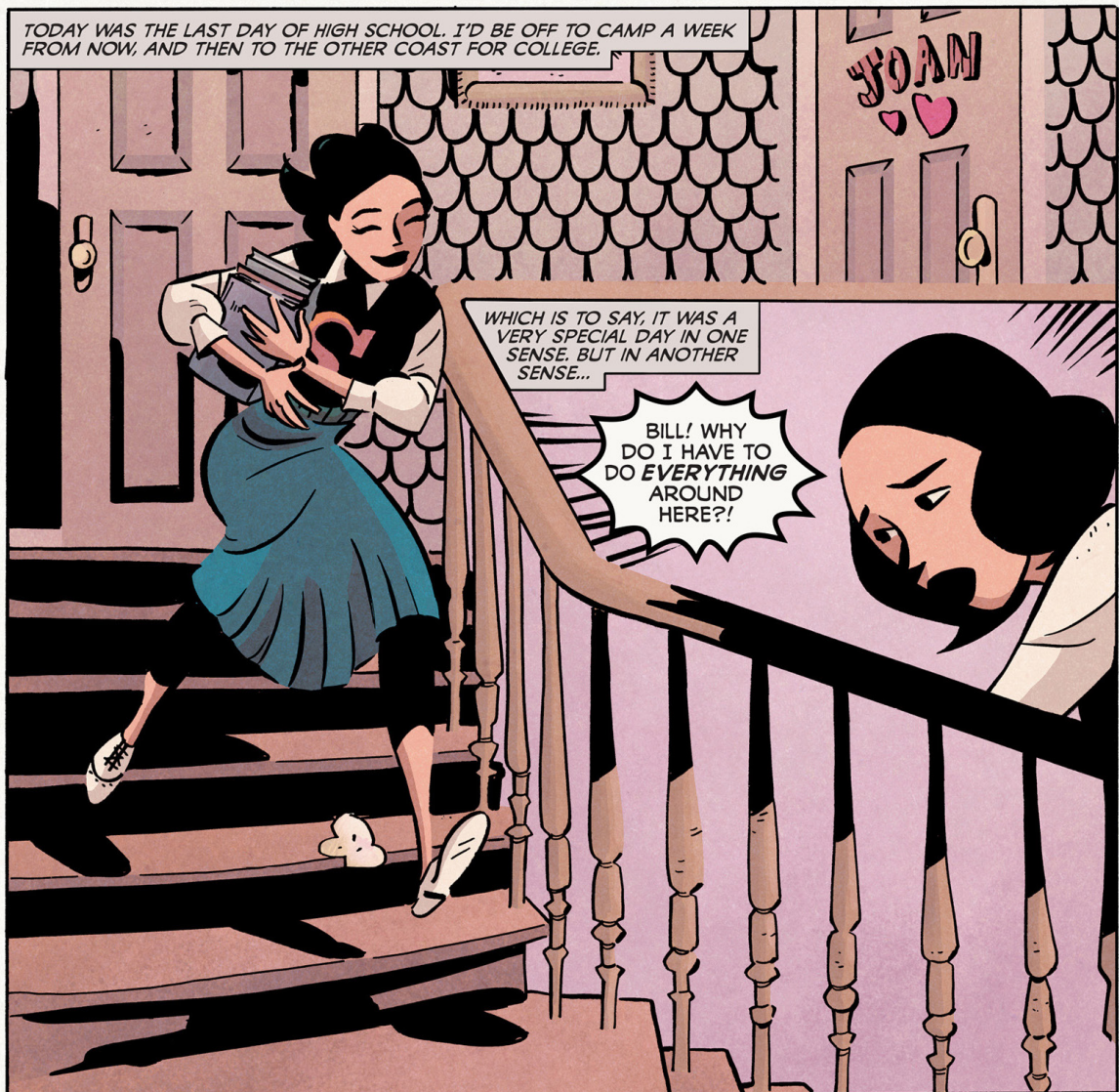
TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

TODAY WAS THE LAST DAY OF HIGH SCHOOL. I'D BE OFF TO CAMP A WEEK FROM NOW, AND THEN TO THE OTHER COAST FOR COLLEGE.



WHICH IS TO SAY, IT WAS A VERY SPECIAL DAY IN ONE SENSE. BUT IN ANOTHER SENSE...

BILL! WHY DO I HAVE TO DO **EVERYTHING** AROUND HERE?!



...IT WAS JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER DAY.

YOU SAID YOU'D TAKE THE GARBAGE OUT **LAST** NIGHT! AND WHAT DO I COME DOWN TO TODAY?!

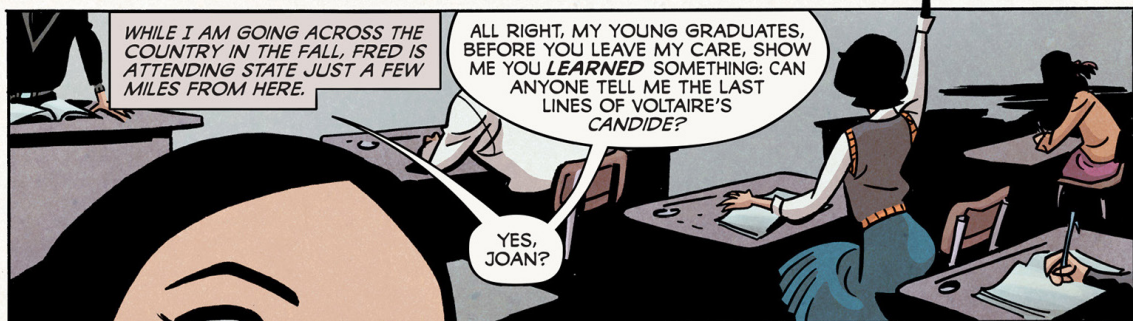
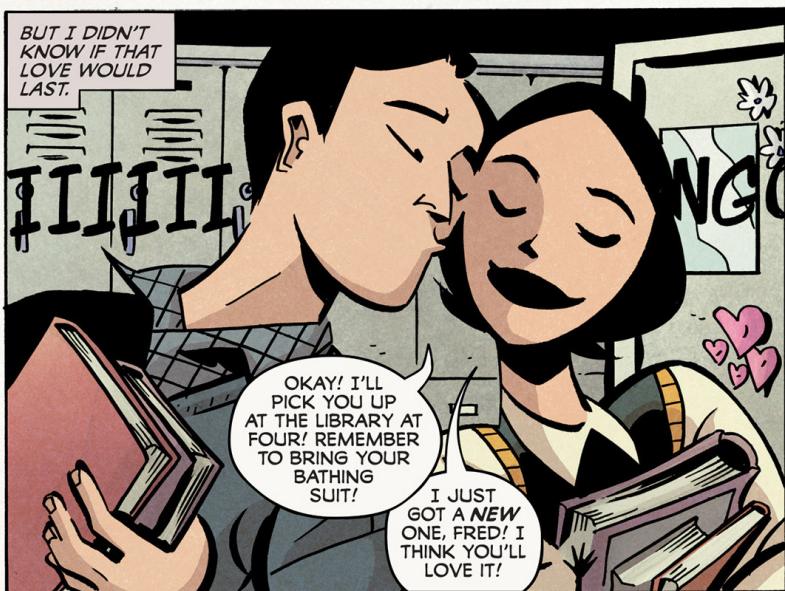
FOR GOODNESS' SALES, I FELL **ASLEEP**, PATTIE. FORGIVE ME.

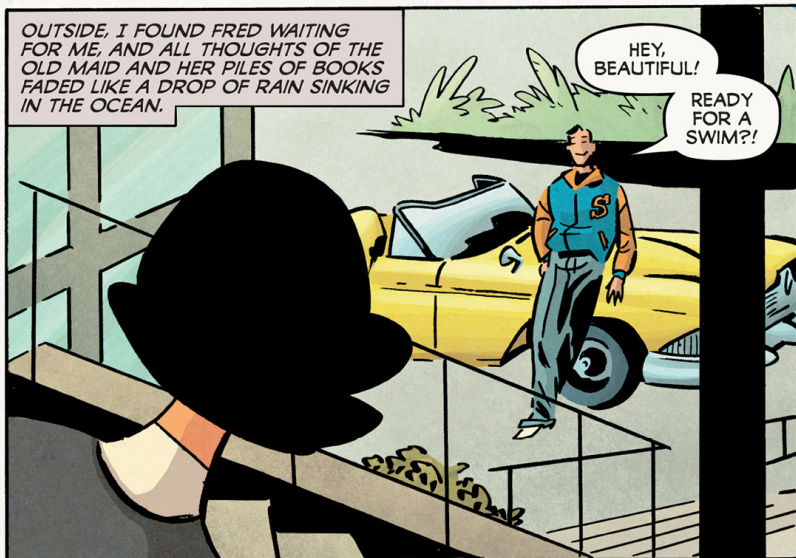
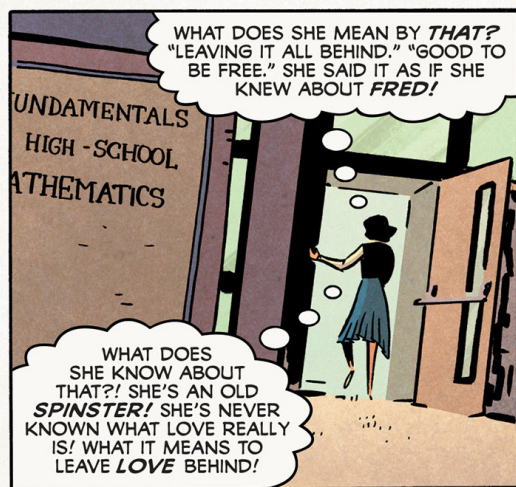
DADDY HAD DRUNK TOO MUCH AND MOTHER WAS UPSET.

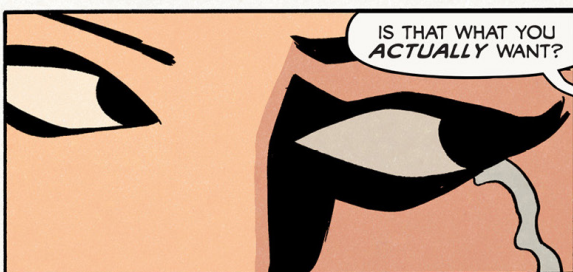
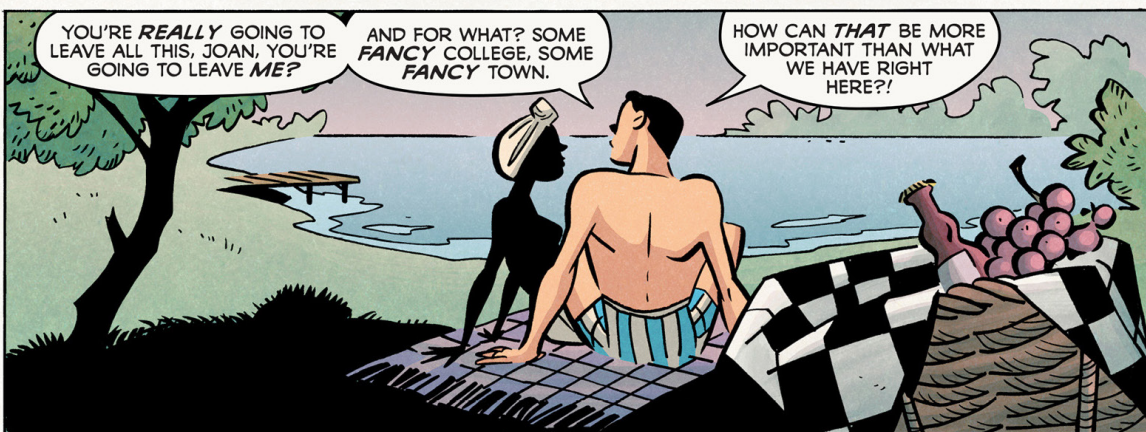
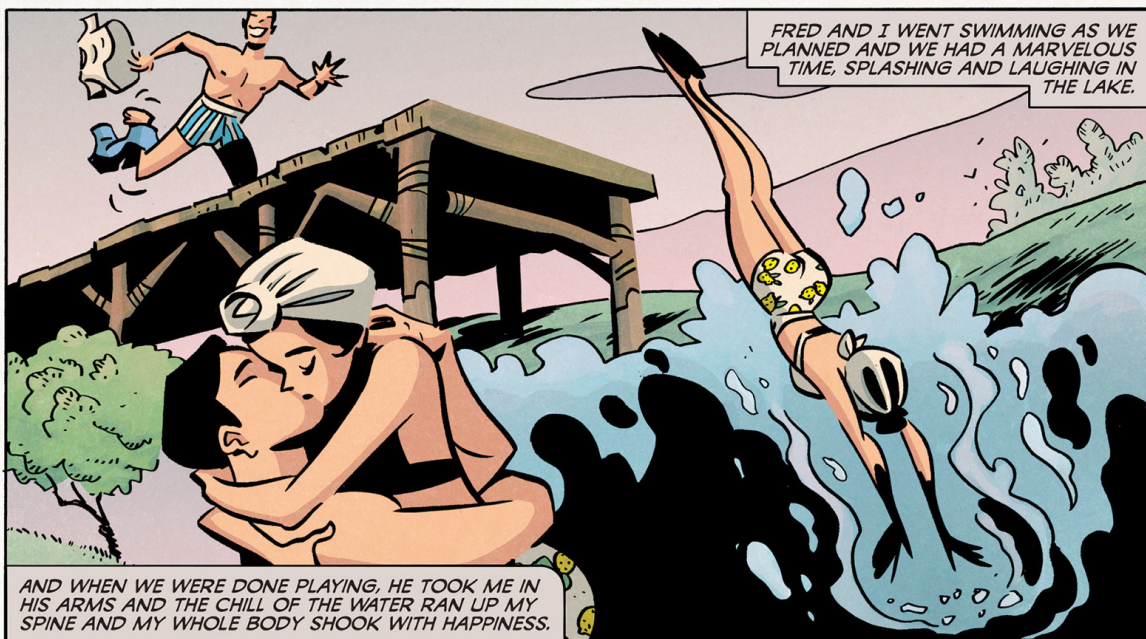
FELL ASLEEP?!! IS THAT YOUR STORY?!! WELL THE BOTTLES LEFT IN THE TRASH YOU DIDN'T TAKE OUT SEEM TO TELL A **DIFFERENT** STORY!

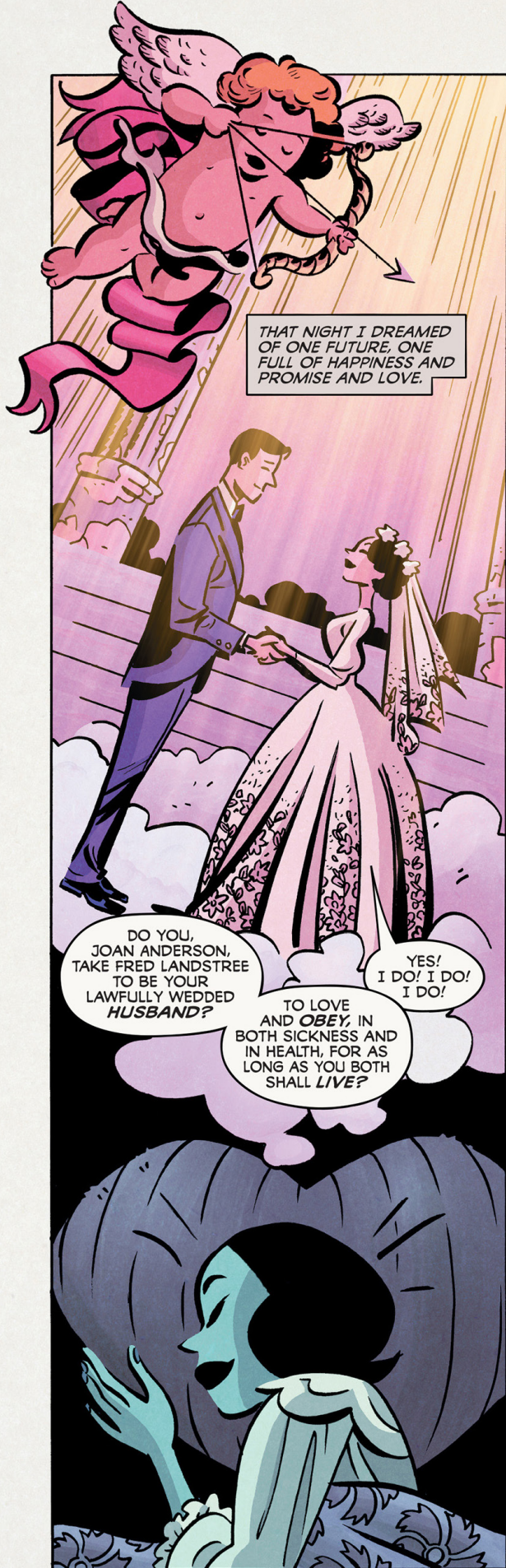
PATTIE! YOU HAVE NO **DAMN** IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

AND NO ONE EVEN NOTICED AS I LEFT.









AND THEN I DREAMED OF ANOTHER. IT WASN'T FULL OF ANYTHING. IT WAS JUST EMPTY.

IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT! DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS TONIGHT, MISS ANDERSON?

OH, YOU KNOW, I THINK I'LL GO **HOME** AND DO WHAT I DO **EVERY** NIGHT.

I'LL HAVE DINNER **BY MYSELF** AT MY TABLE. THEN I'LL FIND A BOOK TO READ **BY MYSELF**. AND THEN FALL ASLEEP **BY MYSELF** IN MY BIG BED.

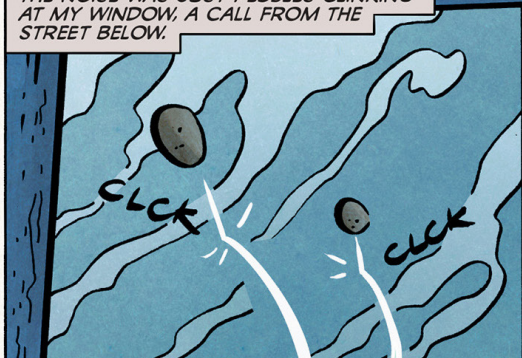
IT'LL BE NICE AND QUIET. IT **ALWAYS** IS.



WHEN I WOKE, I SWEAR I COULD HEAR THE TICKING OF THE CLOCK AS THE TIME PASSED, AS I GOT NEARER AND NEARER TO LEAVING ONE LIFE TO FIND ANOTHER.



IT TOOK ME A FEW SECONDS TO REALIZE THE NOISE WAS JUST PEBBLES CLINKING AT MY WINDOW, A CALL FROM THE STREET BELOW.



FRED! WHAT IN--WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?!



JOAN! I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE! I CAN'T LET YOU LEAVE!

I LOVE YOU, JOAN! ALL THE WAY TO MY TOES! I NEED YOU TO BE WITH ME! TO STAY WITH ME! HERE!

JOAN ANDERSON! WILL YOU MARRY ME?!



I DIDN'T REPLY TO HIM. I STILL WASN'T QUITE READY TO GIVE UP ON MY VOW.



BUT I FELT HIS WORDS PULL AT ME, LIKE GRAVITY PULLED ON NEWTON'S APPLE.



THE NEXT DAY, AS THE RAIN KEPT POURING, I FOUND MYSELF HEADING BACK TO THE LIBRARY.



IT WAS DECADES AGO, BUT IT FEELS LIKE YESTERDAY. BILL AND I WERE SWEETHEARTS FOR YEARS IN HIGH SCHOOL. HE WANTED TO MARRY ME, BUT I WANTED MORE THAN THE SMALL, SEDATE LIFE HE OFFERED. I KEPT TELLING HIM IT WAS...

TOO LATE FOR LOVE

CHAPTER 2

BILL! WHY LOVE
WHAT YOU *CAN'T*
HAVE?! I'M RIGHT *HERE!*
I'M NOT GOING
ANYWHERE!

JOAN! DON'T
LEAVE, I LOVE
YOU! I CAN'T LIVE
WITHOUT
YOU!

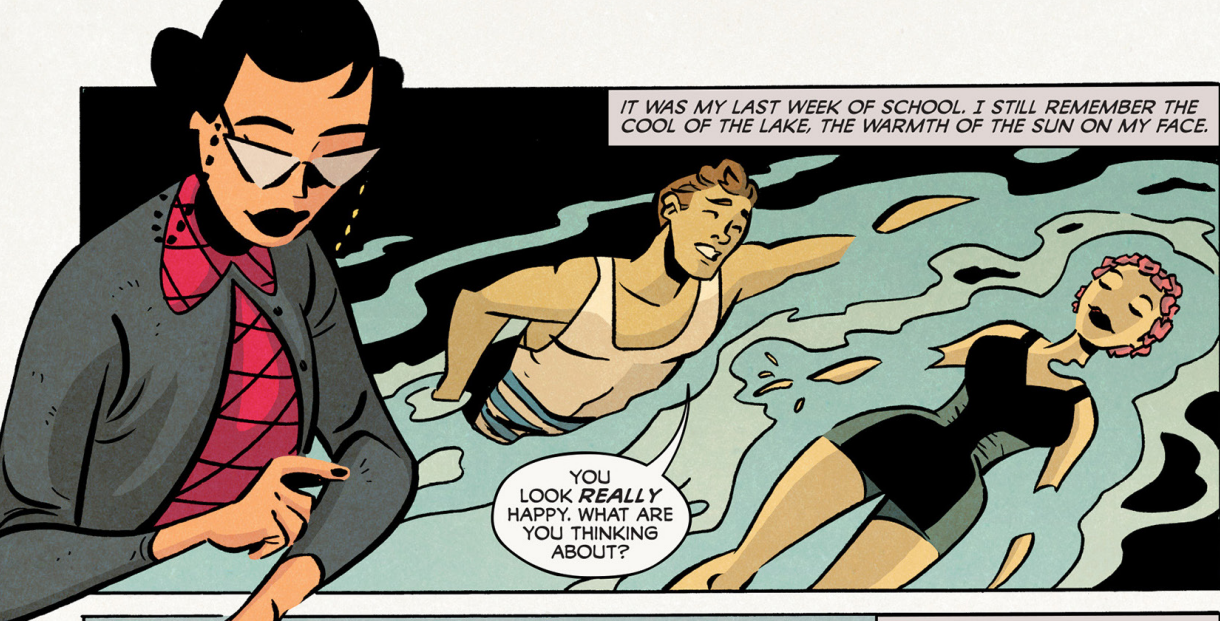
LOVE! LOVE!
LOVE! ALL THEY
TALK ABOUT IS LOVE.
THE WORLD IS *BIGGER*
THAN THAT. IT *HAS*
TO BE!

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER



IT WAS MY LAST WEEK OF SCHOOL. I STILL REMEMBER THE COOL OF THE LAKE, THE WARMTH OF THE SUN ON MY FACE.

YOU LOOK **REALLY** HAPPY. WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?

BILL WAS THE MOST HANDSOME, MOST POPULAR KID IN SCHOOL.

MMM. I DON'T KNOW. NOTHING.

MAYBE CULTIVATING MY GARDEN.

QUARTERBACK OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM, STAR GUARD ON THE BASKETBALL TEAM, MVP SHORTSTOP ON THE BASEBALL TEAM...

REALLY? WELL, IF YOU'RE CULTIVATING A GARDEN...HERE'S SOME **WATER** FOR YOUR PLANTS!

BILL!

HE WAS THE PICK OF THE LITTER, AS THEY USED TO SAY.

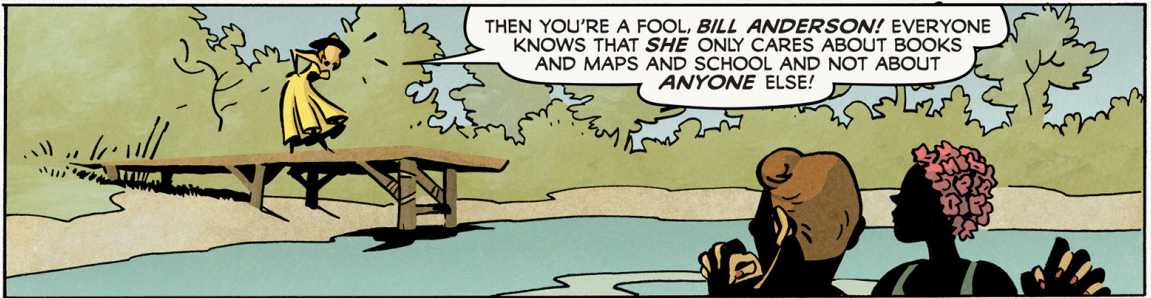
AREN'T YOU GOING TO ASK ME WHAT **I'M** THINKING ABOUT?

NO, YOU'RE JUST GOING TO SAY "YOU."

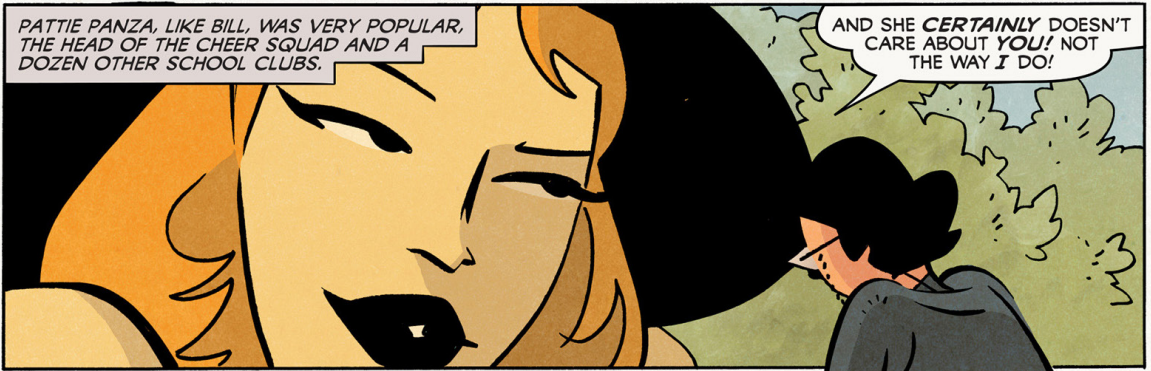
AND HE PICKED ME.

I'M THINKING ABOUT **YOU!**





THEN YOU'RE A FOOL, **BILL ANDERSON!** EVERYONE KNOWS THAT **SHE** ONLY CARES ABOUT BOOKS AND MAPS AND SCHOOL AND NOT ABOUT **ANYONE ELSE!**



PATTIE PANZA, LIKE **BILL**, WAS VERY POPULAR. THE HEAD OF THE CHEER SQUAD AND A DOZEN OTHER SCHOOL CLUBS.

AND SHE **CERTAINLY** DOESN'T CARE ABOUT **YOU!** NOT THE WAY **I** DO!



EVERYONE SAID **PATTIE** AND **BILL** WERE DESTINED FOR ONE ANOTHER.

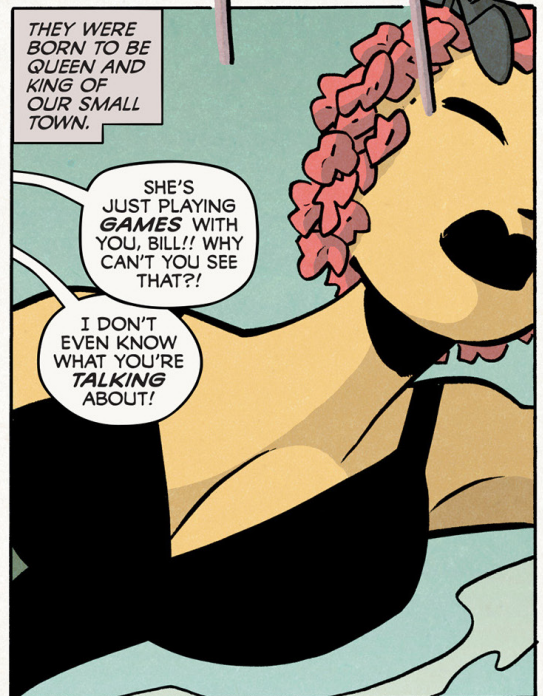
WHO EVEN INVITED YOU, **PATTIE?**! THIS IS A PRIVATE PARTY!



IT WAS JUST SOMETHING THAT SEEMED OBVIOUS TO EVERYBODY.

THIS IS A PUBLIC LAKE! I CAN BE HERE IF I WANT TO! UNLIKE **HER**, I ACTUALLY **LIKE** BEING AROUND YOU! I ACTUALLY **ENJOY** YOU!

THIS IS **ENJOYING** ME?! COMING HERE AND YELLING YOUR **HEAD** OFF?! INTERRUPTING ME?!



THEY WERE BORN TO BE **QUEEN** AND **KING** OF OUR SMALL TOWN.

SHE'S JUST PLAYING **GAMES** WITH YOU, **BILL!**! WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?!

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE **TALKING** ABOUT!



WAIT, DID YOU SAY...BILL?
AND **PATTIE**...

MOTHER AND
FATHER?



YOU HAVE **HER**
DARK EYES, NOT HIS BRIGHT
BABY BLUES.

SOMETIMES
I LOOK UP AT THE
SKY AND I **SHOULD** BE
SEEING ALL THE INFINITY
OF HEAVEN, BUT
I FIND MYSELF...

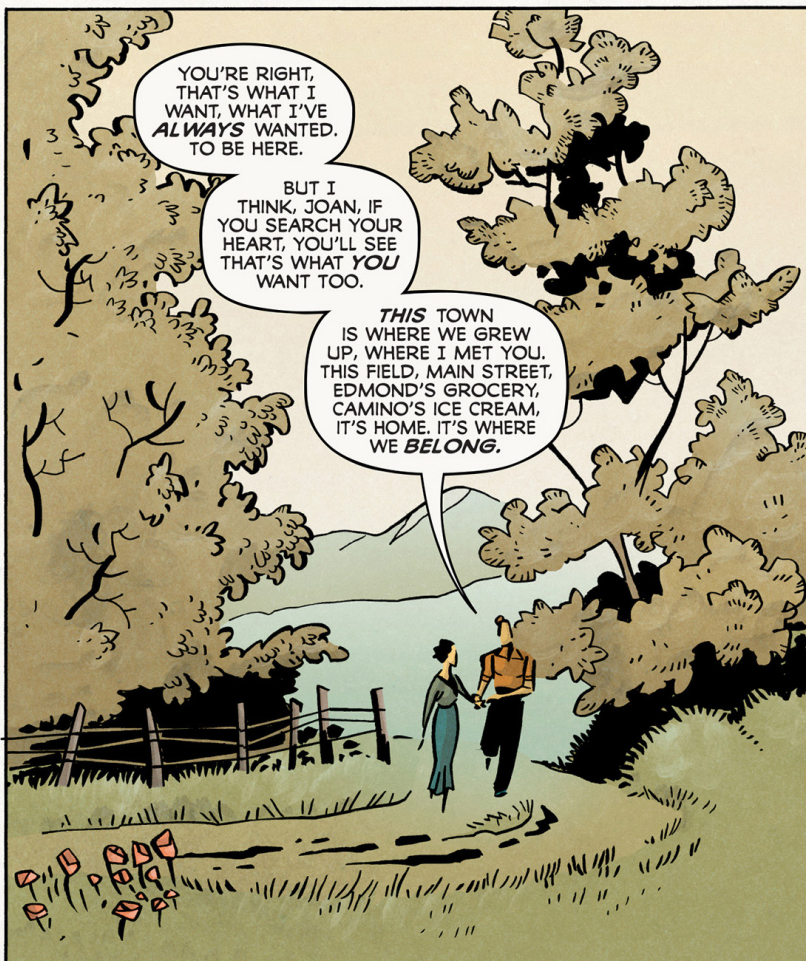


...JUST LOOKING BACK INTO THE
EYES OF YOUNG BILL ANDERSON.

SHE'S RIGHT,
YOU KNOW, **SHE**
LOVES YOU AND YOU
ARE **PERFECT** FOR
EACH OTHER.

YOU BOTH
WANT TO LIVE **HERE**,
RAISE A FAMILY HERE.
AND I...WELL...I...

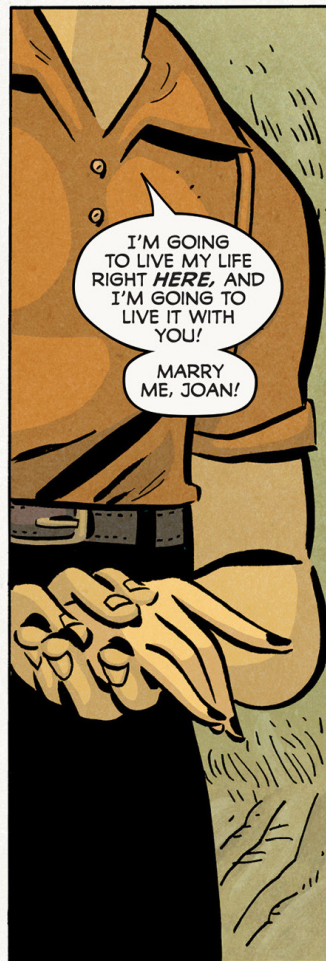
IT'S JUST YOU AND
PATTIE, IT'S MEANT TO BE.



YOU'RE RIGHT,
THAT'S WHAT I
WANT, WHAT I'VE
ALWAYS WANTED.
TO BE HERE.

BUT I
THINK, JOAN, IF
YOU SEARCH YOUR
HEART, YOU'LL SEE
THAT'S WHAT **YOU**
WANT TOO.

THIS TOWN
IS WHERE WE GREW
UP, WHERE I MET YOU.
THIS FIELD, MAIN STREET,
EDMOND'S GROCERY,
CAMINO'S ICE CREAM,
IT'S HOME. IT'S WHERE
WE **BELONG**.



I'M GOING
TO LIVE MY LIFE
RIGHT **HERE**, AND
I'M GOING TO
LIVE IT WITH
YOU!

MARRY
ME, JOAN!



AFTER YOUR FATHER ASKED ME--WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF ASKED IS THE RIGHT WORD--AFTER HE SAID WE NEEDED TO GET MARRIED.

I CAME HERE, TO THIS VERY LIBRARY.

YOU SEE, I WAS LIKE YOU, I LIVED IN BOOKS AND DREAMED THEIR DREAMS.

I KNEW THERE WAS A WORLD OUT THERE BEYOND ONE STREET AND A LAKE.

AND A BOY.

BUT JUST AS MUCH AS I KNEW THAT WAS TRUE, I KNEW IT WAS TRUE THAT I LOVED YOUR FATHER, DEEPLY AND UTTERLY.

THAT MY LIFE WOULD ALWAYS BE INCOMPLETE WITHOUT HIM IN IT.

JOAN, TELL ME! YOU HAVE AN ANSWER, MAKE ME THE **HAPPIEST** MAN IN THE WORLD!

OH, BILL, I WISH I **COULD**. I LONG TO WALK WITH YOU AND HOLD YOUR HAND FOR THE REST OF MY **LIFE**.

TO KISS YOU, TO MAKE **LOVE** TO YOU, TO HAVE CHILDREN WITH YOU...

BUT...I KNOW...

EVEN IF I...IT CAN **NEVER** BE...

I **CAN'T** MARRY YOU, BILL.

I'M SORRY. PLEASE...I'M SO SORRY...



I LEFT.



I WENT EVERYWHERE IN AMERICA--
NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, ATLANTA,
LOS ANGELES.

I'D STAY AT A
JOB TWO OR
THREE MONTHS
AND THEN
MOVE ON TO
SOMEWHERE
NEW.



WHEN I FELT I HAD GONE FAR
ENOUGH IN THIS COUNTRY, I
WENT A LITTLE FARTHER.

I SAILED
OCEANS.



PARIS, ROME, CAIRO, BEIJING, TOKYO, AND A DOZEN
OTHERS. PROBABLY MORE THAN A DOZEN.

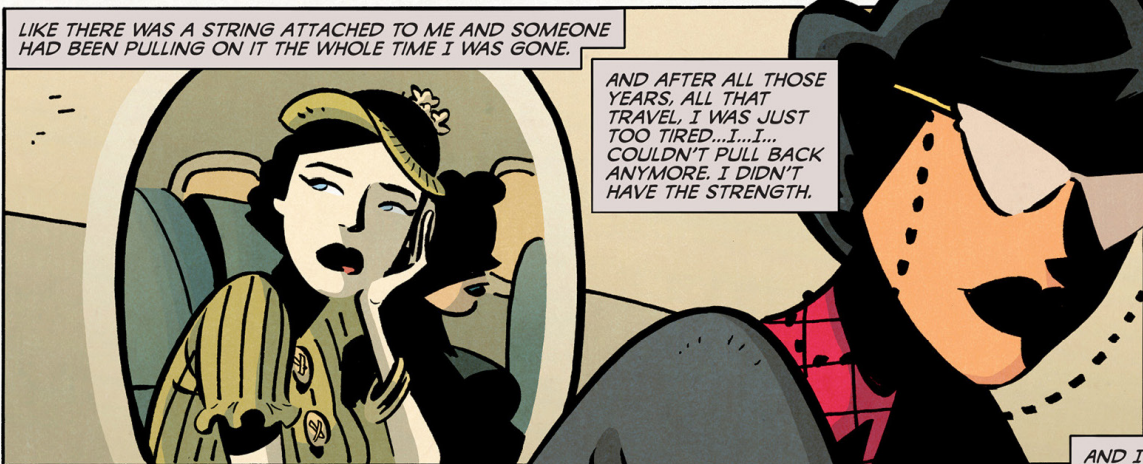
I WOULD FIND A SPACE TO BE
MYSELF AND ENJOY MYSELF.

AND JUST BEFORE I
GOT FULLY SETTLED,
COMFORTABLE ENOUGH
THAT IT WOULD BE
HARD TO LEAVE, I
WOULD MOVE ON.



THEN ONE DAY, WITH NO THOUGHT
AT ALL, I BOARDED A PLANE AND
HEADED BACK HOME.

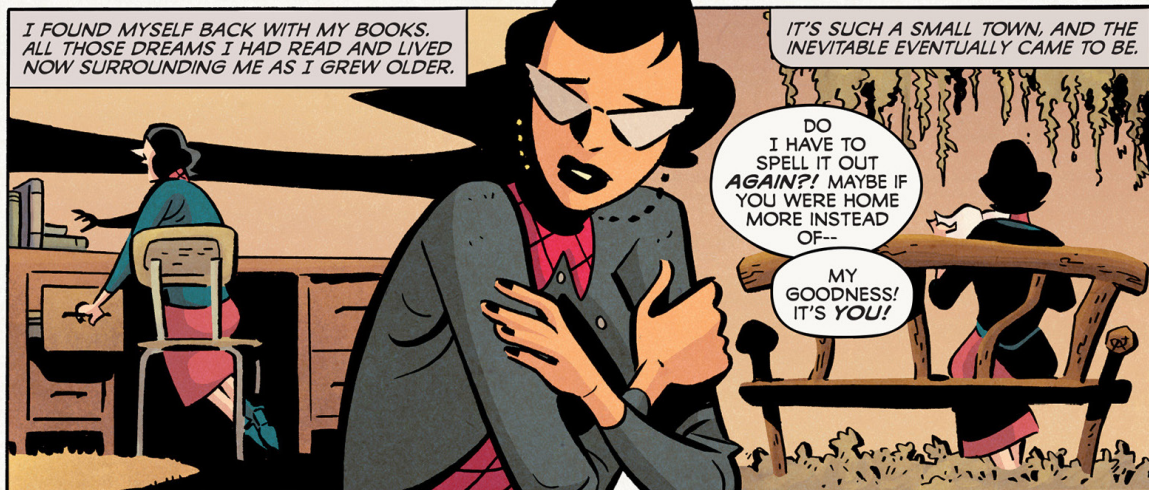
IT WAS NOTHING MORE THAN THAT. I WENT
TO SLEEP IN MY OWN BED SOMEWHERE IN
THE WORLD AND WOKE UP ON A PLANE
HEADING WEST.



LIKE THERE WAS A STRING ATTACHED TO ME AND SOMEONE
HAD BEEN PULLING ON IT THE WHOLE TIME I WAS GONE.

AND AFTER ALL THOSE
YEARS, ALL THAT
TRAVEL, I WAS JUST
TOO TIRED...I...I...
COULDN'T PULL BACK
ANYMORE. I DIDN'T
HAVE THE STRENGTH.

AND I
GAVE IN.



I FELT HIS STRONG, MASCULINE ARMS AROUND ME, TUGGING ME CLOSER. THIS, THIS WAS MY TRUE HOME--NOT THE THRILL OF AN ADVENTURE, BUT THE GROWING CALM INSIDE ME THAT CAME WITH KNOWING I HADN'T MADE A MISTAKE, THAT I REALLY WASN'T...

CHAPTER 3

TOO LATE FOR LOVE

FRED! I'VE MADE MY CHOICE! I CHOOSE YOU! MY DARLING! ONLY YOU!

THEY'RE *PERFECT* FOR EACH OTHER. IT'S THE HAPPY ENDING *EVERYONE* DESERVES. BUT WHY--WHILE HE'S EMBRACING HER--WHY IS HE STARING AT *ME?*!

WINTER DANCE

TOM KING
WRITER

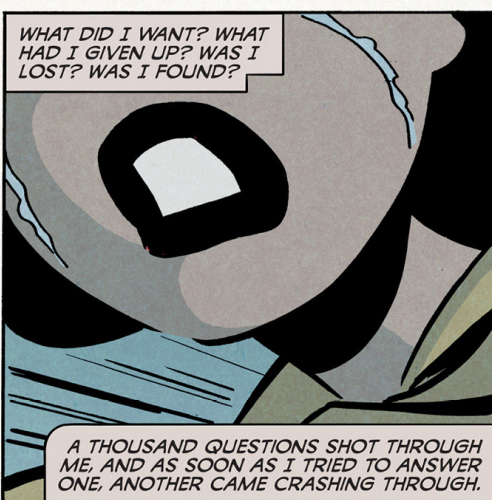
ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER



I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. MY WHOLE LIFE SEEMED LIKE IT WAS A HOUSE BUILT ON SNOW AND THE SUN HAD JUST COME OUT AND EVERYTHING WAS MELTING, EVERYTHING WAS BEGINNING TO SLIP AWAY.



WHAT DID I WANT? WHAT HAD I GIVEN UP? WAS I LOST? WAS I FOUND?

A THOUSAND QUESTIONS SHOT THROUGH ME, AND AS SOON AS I TRIED TO ANSWER ONE, ANOTHER CAME CRASHING THROUGH.



AND JUST WHEN THE CLOUD OF MY MIND HAD BECOME TOO THICK TO NAVIGATE, I LOOKED THROUGH MY TEARS AND SAW...

FRED!

JOAN?



I WAS WAITING AND I **COULDN'T** WAIT ANYMORE, SO I CAME LOOKING FOR YOU, I KNOW YOU LIKE THE LIBRARY AND I JUST...

I NEED TO HEAR--



OH, FRED!





I GUESS ALL THAT'S LEFT IS A **LIFETIME** OF HAPPINESS.

SHOULD WE GET STARTED?

YES! **HAHAHA**, I'M READY NOW, LET'S--



OH NO! WITH ALL THE RAIN, I WAS WEARING MY **SCARF**. THEN I GOT ALL BEFUDDLED AND I LEFT IT IN THE LIBRARY.

JUST GIVE ME **ONE** SECOND...



NO WAY! YOU'VE SPENT ENOUGH TIME IN THERE WITH THOSE **BOOKS** AND THAT **WOMAN**!

I'LL GO GET YOUR **SCARF**! AND YOU RUSH HOME AND TELL YOUR PARENTS THE GOOD NEWS!

I DON'T WANT YOU STANDING OUT HERE AND CATCHING PNEUMONIA.



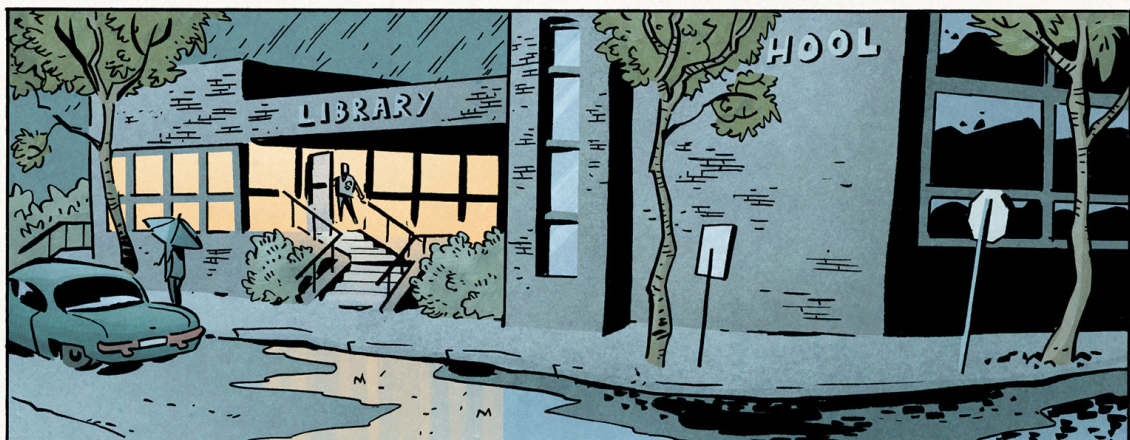
OKAY, MY LOVE, MY... MY...**FIANCÉ**!

I HATE TO INTERRUPT THEIR LATEST QUARREL, BUT I'LL TELL THEM! MAYBE REMEMBERING THAT TRUE LOVE IS STILL OUT THERE WILL **HELP** THEM!



I'LL SEE YOU SOON, FRED! IT WON'T BE LONG, BUT I'LL **MISS** YOU!

HAHAHA. I'LL SEE YOU, JOAN! DON'T WORRY, I WON'T BE TOO LATE!





YES, DEAR,
CAN I HELP
YOU?

NO, NO, I'M
GOOD.

I'M JUST HERE
ROOTING ABOUT
FOR SOMETHING
LOST.



BELIEVE IT OR
NOT, THIS IS ACTUALLY
MY FIRST TIME IN THIS
PLACE. NEVER REALLY TOOK
TO READING STORIES,
NEVER SAW THE
USE FOR IT.

SEEMS LIKE
THERE'S ENOUGH IN
LIFE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO
LOOKING FOR IT ELSEWHERE.



HM, I DON'T
KNOW ABOUT
THAT, YOUNG
MAN.



JUST SAYING, I DON'T NEED NO
ROMEO AND JULIET.

NOT WHEN
THE WORLD HERE'S
GOT BILL ANDERSON
AND JOAN PETERSON.



EXCUSE...

...ME...?



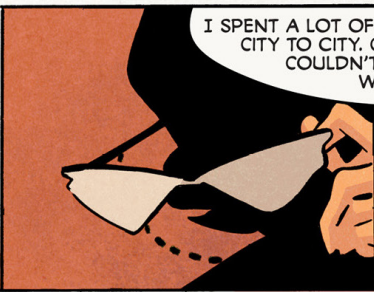
BEEN
A WHILE,
JOAN.

MAYBE
TOO
LONG.

FUCK.



WON'T LIE
TO YOU, GETTING
SHOT IN THE FACE SET
ME **BACK**, BY THE TIME
I CAUGHT UP WITH YOU,
YOU'D ALREADY TAKEN
THE BUS OUT
OF TOWN.



I SPENT A LOT OF YEARS LOOKING FOR YOU.
CITY TO CITY. COUNTRY TO COUNTRY.
COULDN'T YOU STAY STILL A
WHILE, GIRL?



HAVE SOME PITY ON
AN OLD COWBOY?

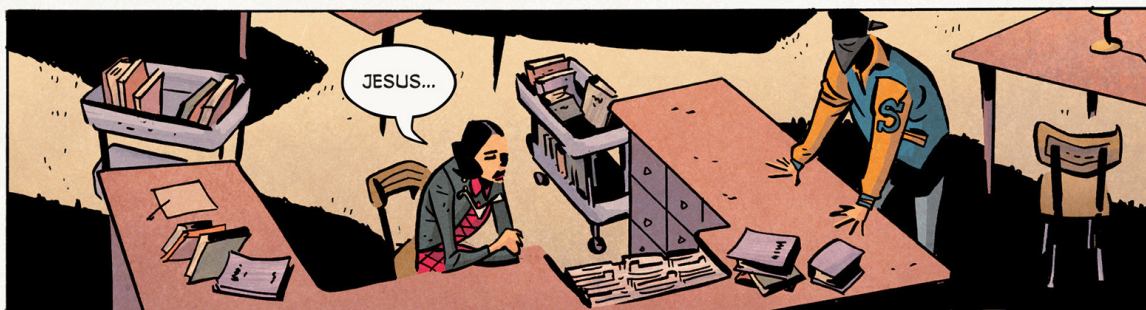


YOU DON'T LOOK
TOO OLD TO
ME.



YOU'D BE
SURPRISED
AT HOW FAR
BACK I
GO.

YOU'D BE
SHOCKED.



WHAT IS THIS? WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT? I RUN I'M FUCKED, I STAY I'M FUCKED, I FIGHT I'M FUCKED, I LIE DOWN WITH MY FUCKING BELLY IN THE AIR, I'M FUCKED!

ARE YOU *REAL*? AM I?

I DON'T FUCKING UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS *IS*!

AFTER ALL THAT TRAVEL, I FINALLY LOST TRACK OF YOU SOMEWHERE NEAR BAGHDAD.

FOR A WHILE I WAS JUST WANDERING, LOOKING AND LOOKING.

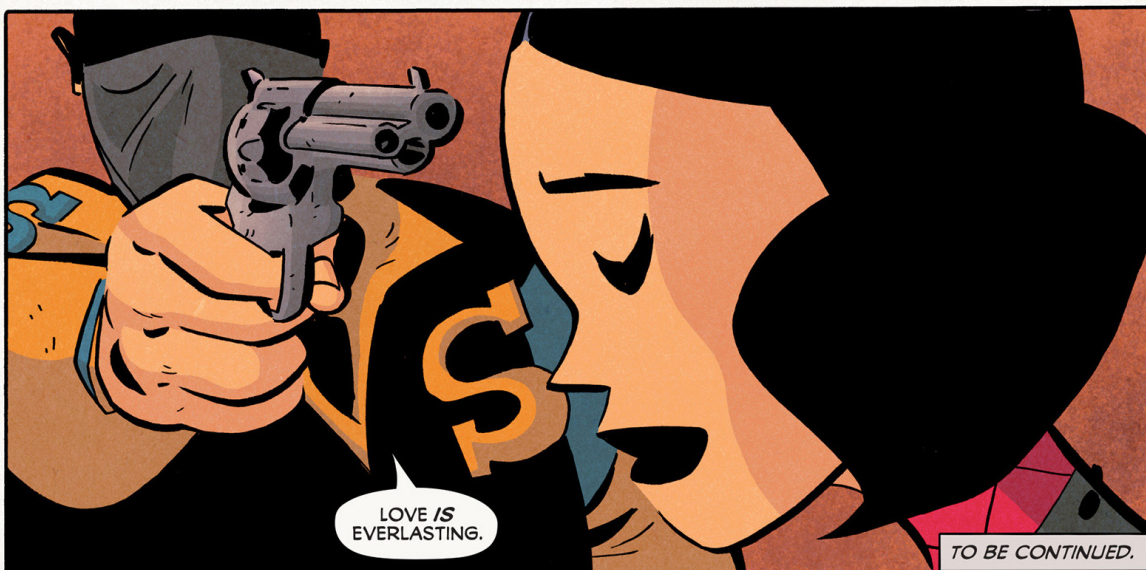
THEN ONE DAY, IT HIT ME. WHY AM I LOOKING? WHY DON'T I JUST HAVE A COLD BEER AND ENJOY THE SUN ON MY FACE AND THE DIRT ON MY BOOTS?

WHAT THE HELL WAS WRONG WITH ME?

AND RIGHT THEN I KNEW WHERE YOU WERE, IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME.

IT'S NOT JUST WORDS, IS IT?

I HAD TO GET YOU, AND YOU HAD TO COME BACK.



TO BE CONTINUED.