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THE DARKNESS

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FOR **image**
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LARRY MARDER
executive director





THE SCARLET SKY
ABOVE WYRMWOOD IS
FILLED WITH VULTURES
THAT WHEEL AND CIRCLE
THE TOWN WITH THE PASSION
AND PRECISION ONLY
CARRION CAN MUSTER.

IT'S A CARRION COMFORT
OF SORTS TO THE RESIDENTS
OF THE MOST EVIL LITTLE TOWN
IN THE WORLD.

AND I
THOUGHT
LOS ANGELES
WAS BAD!

I WISH
I'D JUST GIVEN
YOU DIRECTIONS!
WE'RE BOTH
GONNA
DIE!



SAYS
WHO?

SAYS A
TOWN FULL OF
INBRED CANNIBALISTIC
BANDS PLAYIN' ZOMBIES.
THAT'S WHO! CASE YOU
AIN'T NOTICED THAT SHIT
THE LOCAL COUNTRY CLUB
MEMBERS OF HIGH SOCIETY?
COMIN' TOWARDS US
WITH THEIR TONGUES
HANGING OUT.

THE GOOD
FOLK OF WYRWOOD
WANT TO EAT US ALIVE.
MAN, THIS WAS A BAD IDEA.
I DON'T THINK YOU
REALIZE THE HELL YOU'VE
GOTTEN US
INTO.

YOU
THINK
I DON'T
KNOW
WHAT HELL
IS?

BELIEVE ME,
I'VE BEEN HELL. I
KNOW ALL ABOUT
HELL AND ITS
DARKNESS.

AND THESE
WASTES ARE
GONNA LEARN
A LITTLE SOMETHING
ABOUT THAT
DARKNESS!

THE POINT OF FIRST
CONTACT BETWEEN THE DARKNESS
AND THE RESIDENTS OF WYRWOOD
IS WHERE THE UNSPEAKABLE MEETS
THE UNFORGIVABLE.

TWO BLACK WIVES
CRASHING ON THE
BEACH-HEAD OF SANTY.



YOU GOTTA
PROBLEM WITH
THE WAY WE SAY
HELLO?

AWWKKKK!

I GOT
SOME BAD
NEWS FOR
YOU...

GULP!

THIS HAS
GOTTA BE THE
WORST WELCOME
COMMITTEE I'VE
EVER SEEN!

THE ONLY
THING YOU'RE
GONNA FIND IN
THIS TOWN IS
A WHOLE LOTTA
SUFFERING!

CHWET! CHWET!
CHWET!

THE FRENZY OF THE ATTACK
IS THEIR DOWNFALL. EVERY PREY
THEY HAVE EVER KNOWN HAS
SIMPLY FALLEN BEFORE THE SHEER
WEIGHT OF THEIR NUMBERS.

THIS IS NOT THE SITUATION
WITH THE DARKNESS. IS IT AS
THOUGH HE WERE SCRATCHING
A BOTHERSOME ITCH.

AND GETTING
VERY LITTLE
SATISFACTION
IN DOING SO.

I'M GOING
TO SEND EVERY ONE
OF YOU GODDAMNED
WYRMWOODERS
TO HILLBILLY
HELL!





ENOUGH!
STAY CALM, ESTACADO,
LEAST YOU BRING THE THUNDER
DOWN ON YOUR LITTLE FRIEND'S
HEAD. YOUR THREATS MEAN
NOTHING TO US, ESTACADO. SAVE
THEM FOR THE LITTLE
MONKEYS YOU USUALLY
RUN WITH.


WHO
THE HELL ARE
YOU AND
WHAT IS THIS
ABOUT?

MY FRIEND WITH
THE ITCHY FINGER IS EMIL
CRUIKSHANK, SHERIFF OF
WYRMWOOD AND THE
VILEST BASTARD YOU EVER
LIKELY TO MEET IN THIS
WORLD OR THE NEXT.
OURS IS A FILTHY LITTLE
TOWN AND HE MAKES
SURE IT STAYS
THAT WAY.


MY NAME IS
JEDIDIAH MCMAHON,
AND I OWN WYRMWOOD.
YOU MIGHT SAY I WAS ONE
OF ITS FOUNDING FATHERS
AND I TAKE PRIDE IN THAT.
YOU SHOULD TOO. YOUR
OWN FAMILY HAD AN
INTEREST IN THE
FORMATION
OF IT.

THAT'S
BULLSHIT!
YOU'VE LOOKED
LIKE SHIT FOR SO
LONG YOU'RE
STARTING TO
SPEAK IT!


JACKIE...
YOU MUSTN'T
LISTEN TO HIM,
IT'S A
TRICK...



NO MORE
TRICKS, NO MORE
LIES. WE HAVE WAITED
TOO LONG FOR THIS
MOMENT. WYRMWOOD
HAS BEEN WAITING FOR
THIS DAY SINCE IT WAS
FIRST BUILT MANY YEARS
AGO! THE DAY OF OUR
DARK DELIVERANCE IS
AT HAND AND YOU WILL
SET US FREE,
ESTACADO.




I'LL FREE
YOUR UGLY HEADS
FROM YOUR
SHOULDERS...



YOU WILL NOT
DENY US OUR PAST, OUR
COMMON BOND. WE TOO
WERE BORN AS YOU WERE,
A LONG, LONG TIME AGO.
WHEN THE WINDS THAT BLEW
ACROSS THIS LAND WERE
AS VIRGINAL AS THE FEET
OF THOSE WHO WALKED
IT'S SOIL. UNspoiled,
UNTOUCHED...



WITH A
PROMISE THAT
WAS MOCKED
IN HELL.



THE FIRST INHABITANTS
OF THIS WORLD KNEW IT
FOR THE BAD PLACE IT WAS.
NONE WOULD CROSS IT
AND NONE DESIRED TO.

BUT THERE CAME INTO
THIS LAND A RARE MAN POSSESSED
OF A SINGULAR NATURE AND DRIVE.

ANTONIO ESTACADO,
INHERITOR OF A DARK GIFT HE
FEARED WOULD CONSUME HIM.

HURRY UP!
MOVE YOUR
WORTHLESS @!!!
THE WORK MUST
BE COMPLETED
BY THIS TIME
FRIDAY.

HE HAD TRAVELLED FROM
THE NEW WORLD IN THE HOPE OF
FINDING JUST SUCH A PLACE,
ONE WHERE HE MIGHT RELEASE
THE DARKNESS THAT SPREAD
THROUGH HIM LIKE A CANCER.

HE HAD FAILED TO MASTER
THE POWERS WITHIN HIMSELF,
FAILED TO HARNESS IT.

NOOOO...
YOU WILL
NOT HAVE
MY
SOUL.

IN TRUTH, HE WAS A COWARD
AND A WEAK-WILLED MAN,
THE WHITE SHEEP OF A JET
BLACK LINEAGE.

FINISH THEY DID ON FRIDAY
AND THAT WAS THE END OF THEM.
ANTONIO'S POWER SLIPPED FROM
HIM, DEVOURING ALL WHO TRIED
TO FLEE.

THE TOWN OF
WYRMWOOD WAS BAPTISED
IN THE BLOOD OF THOSE WHO
HAD CREATED IT. ITS STREETS
BECAME A CHRISTENING FONT
OF DEATH AND HORROR.


GOD
HAVE MERCY
ON OUR
SOULS!

HOW HE MUST HAVE LOOKED
UPON HIS HANDIWORK WITH PRIDE.
HE HAD COME TO THE NEW WORLD
BEARING A GIFT OF OLD EVIL AND
THAT WAS TO BE HIS LEGACY.

HE LEFT US THEN
TO A FATE WE COULD NOT BEGIN
TO GUESS AT. UNWANTED IN HEAVEN
AND LAUGHED AT IN HELL, WE DIED
IN WYRMWOOD AND THERE
WE HAVE REMAINED.

WYRMWOOD

IT IS A STORY WITHOUT
AN END UNLESS YOU WILL IT
FOR US. I SPEAK THE TRUTH.




HE LEFT BEHIND
A PIECE OF HIMSELF,
SOME SMALL PART
OF THE DARKNESS THAT
BINDS US TO THIS
PLACE, BUT YOU
CAN RELEASE
US.

OVER THE
TIME WE LEARN
OF YOUR EXISTANCE,
YOU HAVE SO MANY
ENEMIES AND SO FEW
FRIENDS. ONLY YOU
CAN DO THIS FOR US.
YOU, WHO ARE THE
FATHER OF ALL THAT
IS DARK, THE NEW
PRINCE OF
THE GIFT.



AND WHY IS IT
YOU WANT TO LEAVE THIS
PLACE? WHY IS IT SO
IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO GET
OUT INTO THE OUTSIDE
WORLD?

WHY ISN'T IT
OBVIOUS...



TO REMAKE
THE WORLD IN
WYRMWOOD'S
IMAGE, TO FILL HUMANITE'
SKIES WITH FLESH
HUNGRY VULTURES AND
DIG A GRAVE AS BIG
AS THE WORLD.



YOU ARE
ALL A BUNCH
OF SICK
PUNKS!



DO YOU
TRUST ME,
JENNY?

ALWAYS,
JACKIE,
ALWAYS!

I BET THIS
IS SOMETHING YOU
HAVEN'T SEEN
BEFORE, YOU
CADAVEROS
BASTARD!

HUH?

NOOOO
OOOO!



READY
FOR MY
NEXT
TRICK?



AAGH!

THAT
WAS MY
SHOOTING
WRIST!



AAGH
LEEEYY...

OOOOP!



IT'S ALL
OVER FOR
YOU UGLY
SONS OF
BITCHES
NOW.



GET
JENNY AND
YOURSELF BACK
TO THE CAR,
MANDOLIN.

NO
PROBLEM,
JACKIE. WHAT
ARE YOU
GONNA
DO?

I'M GOING
TO END THIS
ONCE AND
FOR ALL!



AND HOW DO
YOU INTEND TO DO THAT?
TURN US ALL INSIDE OUT LIKE
YOU DID TO MY FRIEND
CRUIKSHANK? HE'S NOT DEAD,
YOU KNOW. HE'LL BE BACK
AND HE'S GOING TO BE
REAL PISSED OFF ABOUT
WHAT YOU DID. TAKE MY
WORD FOR IT, IT'S
GONNA BE
NASTY!

OH, PLEASE
STOP. YOU'RE
FRIGHTENING
ME.



IF YOU AND
THIS WHOLE STINKING
TOWN ARE JUST SOME
TWISTED ELEMENT OF THE
DARKNESS, THEN I'M TAKING
IT BACK. WHATEVER IT IS
THAT'S HOLDING THIS PILE
OF CRAP TOGETHER IS
ABOUT TO GO BACK
WHERE IT CAME
FROM.



YOU'RE ALL
GOING TO SERIOUSLY
REGRET MESSING WITH
ME AND MY
FRIENDS.

ARE YOU
READY TO
RUMBLE?



MAN,
I DON'T
BELIEVE IT! HE'S
GONNA TRY TO
SWALLOW THE
WHOLE
GODDAMNED
TOWN.

HE
CAN'T
TAKE THAT
INSIDE HIM...
IT'S PURE EVIL,
IT'LL KILL
HIM!


"YOU WANNA
TRY STOPPING
HIM, LADY?"

Nooooo!
YOU WERE SUPPOSED
TO BE OUR SAVIOR!
NOT OUR
DESTROYER!

STOP THIS
ESTACADO! YOU
MUST NOT DO
THIS!

HAVE
MERCY ON
OUR
SOULS!

WE ARE
YOUR
CHILDREN



THE TOWN OF WYRMWOOD
SCREAMS AS IT IS TORN APART.
IT IS A SCREAM NOT UNLIKE THE
ONES YOU HEAR IN THE WORST
OF ASYLUMS FOR THE INSANE.

ACROSS THE WORLD
RESTLESS SLEEPERS ARE TOUCHED
BY THAT TERRIBLE SOUND AND WILL
AWAKE TO FIND THEIR BEDSHEETS
SOAKED BY THE SWEAT FROM
THEIR NIGHTMARES.

UNBORN CHILDREN KICK
IN THEIR MOTHERS' WOMBS,
INSTINCTIVELY AWARE
AND AFRAID.

AND SOMEWHERE ELSE
AN ANGEL WEEPS FOR ALL
THE LOST CHILDREN OF EDEN
AND THE DEPTHS OF
THEIR SUFFERING.



IT IS THE CARRION CALL
OF WYTHRUWOOD WHICH FILLS
THE NIGHT SKY AN INVIGIL
FOR A LOST WORLD FULL
OF LOST SOULS.

IT IS MORE THAN
ANY ONE MAN, BE HE
FLESH, BLOOD, BONE OR
DARKNESS CAN BARE.

OH MY
GOD,
JACKIE.

WAIT A
MINUTE, DON'T
GO OUT THERE
YET, I HAVE A
BAD FEELING
ABOUT
THIS.

WHO
PASSED THE
GASP CAN'T SAY
THAT I'VE EVER
SMELLED ANYTHING
THIS NASTY
BEFORE.
YUCK!

MAN,
THAT'S POUL!
I THINK IM
GONNA
HURL!

JACKIE,
ARE YOU ALL
RIGHT? SAY
SOME-
THING!

PLEASE
LET HIM BE
OUR PLEASE
LET HIM
BE OUR!

LUCK
WENT MY
FEET
LIKE THAT SINCE
THAT INCIDENT
WITH THE 'NCT'
SO FRESH
BUSH.

OH JACKIE!
THANK
GOD YOU'RE
ALL RIGHT!

I KNEW
YOU WOULD
COME FOR
ME!

OF COURSE
YOU DID, KID
I NEVER LET MY
FRIENDS
DOWN.

IM GUESSIN'
THAT'S A REAL SMALL
CIRCLE OF FRIENDS
YOU HAVE.

LATER...

...I MEANT
WHAT I SAID, JENNY.
YOU SHOULD STAY HERE
UNTIL YOU GET YOUR
STRENGTH BACK AND
HAVE SOME FUN
FOR A CHANGE.

AND I MEANT
WHAT I SAID, JACKIE.
I WASN'T READY TO
COME BACK HERE BEFORE
I WANDERED INTO THAT
HELL-HOLE AND I'M NOT
READY NOW. IT'S KIND
OF YOU TO OFFER
THOUGH.

KINDNESS
HAS NOTHING TO
DO WITH IT. YOU'RE
THE CLOSEST THING
I GOT TO FAMILY,
APART FROM
UNCLE FRANKIE.

SEEMS LIKE
SOMETHING BAD
IS ALWAYS HAPPENING
TO THE PEOPLE I CARE
ABOUT. IT WOULD BE
SMART TO STAY AS FAR
AWAY FROM ME AS
YOU CAN. FOR YOUR
OWN GOOD.

DON'T TALK
THAT WAY. THIS ISN'T
ABOUT YOU. THIS IS
ABOUT ME. I JUST
NEED SOME MORE
TIME. TO...WELL,
FIND MYSELF.

IT'S
JUST
THAT...





NEVERMIND.

YOU DON'T
HAVE TO SAY
ANYTHING.
I ALREADY
KNOW.

JACKIE, I'VE
BEEN THINKING
ABOUT WHAT
MANDOLIN SAID
BEFORE HE
LEFT.

ABOUT HOW
YOU MAY HAVE
RELEASED THE SPIRIT
OF WYRMWOOD INTO
THE WORLD. AND THAT
IT'S NO LONGER
BOUND BY WHATEVER
KEPT IT IN
PLACE.


IT
MAY COME
AFTER YOU
AGAIN.

I'LL
BE
FINE.

YOU HAVE TO
LISTEN TO HIM, JACKIE!
IT'S NO COINCIDENCE
THAT EVIL SEEMS DRAWN
TO YOU AND TO EVERY-
ONE YOU CARE
ABOUT.

JUST PROMISE
ME YOU'LL TAKE CARE
OF YOURSELF. THANK
YOU FOR SAVING ME.
JACKIE, MAYBE SOMEDAY
I'LL GET TO RETURN
THE FAVOR.

MAYBE YOU
ALREADY HAVE.



MAYBE YOU
ALREADY HAVE.

CAUSE SUDDENLY
ANYTHING SEEMS
POSSIBLE.

...the sun sinks
to rise again;

The day is swallowed up
in the gloom of the night;
to be born out of it, as fresh
as if it had never been
quenched.

--EXCERPT FROM
THE SECOND SPRING
BY JOHN HENRY NEWMAN.

THE END.



Duck

and

roll.



SCOTT LOBBELL

is writing the Darkness NOW
and he's taking Jackie to Vegas.

THE DARKNESS® #23

It's gonna be so money, baby!



june 1999

Art by Joe Benitez and Joe Weems

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