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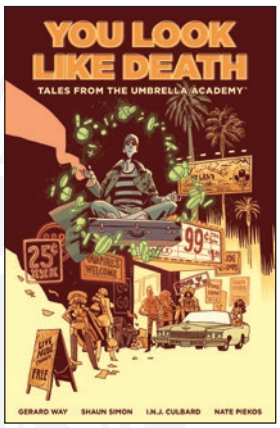

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By Gerard Way & Shaun Simon. Illustrated by Ian Culbard, Nate Piekos, & Gabriel Bá.

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YOU LOOK LIKE DEATH

TALES FROM THE UMBRELLA ACADEMY™

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FOREWORD

BY ROBERT SHEEHAN

I swallowed a comic. Inhaled the bastard. Called *The Umbrella Academy*. Then got to be possessed of the guy who floats out of Gerard and Gabriel's combino-brain.

Floats, with such ennui. Who levitates lusciously. Who self-destructs ooh! with such cool you can't help but egg him on, toward oblivion.

This guy called Klaus. In a baggy stripey sweater. Who flirts with the darkness. That oool' endless abysssss, on either side of usss, that ol' sliver of light we've agreed to call life. Klaus is your passing, made flesh (ink). Albeit pale, but definitely still chic flesh (ink).

Who sniffs at death like turned milk. Who pats it on its little bumbum. He wet-willies (Wet-Willy Instructions–suck finger. Insert finger in ear of another person ((living or dead)). Repeat same ad infinitum.)
all of our fundamental fears. He nipple cripples our sense of calm, collected grown-upedness.
'Excuse me, Waiter, I was just in control, having rare banter with my wife, until this rude skinny man levitated up and twisted me right on the nipple. How did he judge so accurately where it was under my polo shirt?!'

To Klaus, the sun doesn't shine per se. Not even in LA. It illuminates the dark.
Annoyingly, for eight, nine, even up to sixteen hours some days.
He wishes some spectre would give him some dirt on the sun, so he could drift up there and blackmail him to stop shining altogether, forever.

Who leaves the picture, begging to be coloured in according to the numbers, devoid. Colourless. Because it is. All on its own. And if you want to colour it in, kid, that's completely up to you.

To whom life is as equally empty as death. So finds it equally as drab, because he realises they're one and the same. And both, for him, come with the same inescapable wailing shackles.
He knows that life ought not be given the level of reverence it gets. Giving it that much only declares all-out war on death.

Klaus is at war, and losing, naturally. Pitted from day dot by Reggie against what ghosts cause his ceaseless haunting. The undead chickens are chattering. And if emotions are the expression of thought in the body, then relax the emotions and you can relax the thoughts, right? And what's a great body relaxant? Heroin, honey! Heroin. And more heroine...

And Klaus's defences are dwindling–and that's right about where we drop in. With our binoculars. Like Jimmy Stewart. To *You Look Like Death* Klaus.

What is it about you humans that makes you such eager voyeurs of your own destruction? That compulsion very same that makes you double cautious around safety hazards? Like cliff edges.

Klaus is a cliff edge.

And edging closer confronts you with the possibility of your own death. Klaus is not a cliff edge. He's just dangling out over the side of the cliff edge in a hammock, smoking and being disturbed by you, sweating and nervously peering over, from reading Poe's *Tales of Mystery & Imagination*.

And as you edge closer you catch a glimpse of what Klaus can't escape seeing all the sunny day long. Death, you look her square in the face, on the precipice. And it's not the instant death part that scares you and makes you recoil, it's that it's already here. The absolute certainty of your death, which will happen 100% so what are you so scared about? Relaaax. And how little equipment/language/real ritual we have to really deal with it. We have no negotiation tactics in this match. Except, maybe Klaus?

Death ain't really death, not for Klaus. Can't be, it's just an interval. It's just a stop and a changeover at a busy railroad junction. The journey is to be continued. And continued. And continued. And continuuuued... And continued.
So go on then, son, destroy yourself. Remind us all...

And where better to do it than Tinseltown! The city of dreams. Dreams and unfinished business.

My understanding of the Hindu god Hanuman, is this fiercely devoted but very cheeky white monkey god who, even in appearance, is a contradiction. He once mistook the sun for a fruit and climbed up there and came back with a dislocated jaw. He spends his time tying folks' shoelaces together and Saran wrapping the toilet bowl. Making prank calls. Throwing fireworks at the fringes of your cassock.

Destruction is far from off Hanuman's dessert menu. Klaus, I've often pondered, is the hauntingly fashionable reoccurrence of Hanuman.

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This time incarnated as the guy who wouldn't look out of place as an extra in the back of an Ingmar Bergman movie. Until he gets fired for making incessant snorting sounds over the Swedish dialogue.

Klaus is from the same source of what the Hindus understand, that by characterising/embracing an awareness of your own Hanuman, there occurs in you access to *infinite* founts of creative power. Behind the destruction, the silly, the unease, beyond the stupid, the painful, the surreal childish, the total head-thrown-back Hanuman abandon, lies a thousand comic books worth. Of Klaus. Looking like Death, and how would Gerard know unless he's really looked.

Is there no greater proof that destruction is creation (and t'other way round) than Klaus? They're two sides of the same coin, no? If you asked me, Klaus stems from a ghost who haunted Gerard once upon a time. Who was Gerard once upon a time.

The face of his shadow. Lucky devil.
These days, Gerard clearly doesn't mind haunting back. He'd be killing Klaus for company, killing him with kindness, incessantly inviting him to the candlelit writing table. For supper and sweet mince and sherry afters. In the sanctum of his sunny studio in Eagle Rock.
Both of them, negotiating terms long into the quiet night. What parts Klaus is willing to put on the table, and permit Gerard to reveal.

I imagine Gerard, writing Klaus late at night. He is listening. To the rustling of the yew and the camphor tree. He can detect fierce silence between the loud crickets outside.
His wife and daughter are sound asleep.

He thinks back. To when Klaus was less a concept, more a poltergeist. To that relief of permitting his self-control to sliiiide, to the thrill of sawing through the tether of his own life, while peering down into the abyssss, and seeing no bottom. Surely nothing is off their table?

Conquer the ghost. That Gerard breaks his own down to all its composite parts, whisks them all into a larger-than-life bowl and then publishes his findings to the world in the form of a comic book character, is a feat of self-love. And what does he really find when he looks? Beyond the pain of its groping, strangulating tentacles?
A reward. Of a seemingly bottomless well of Klaus. Who pours out of Gerard in abundance, flowing like torrent water onto Gabriel's work-station.

Klaus and *The Umbrella Academy* are the chicken and the egg. I think, and I don't even know which of them came first or why we differentiated them. And maybe I'm biased, but maybe Gerard's mischief sprite that sprouted into ink as Klaus might be the one and the same, about same as chicken and egg same, as *The Umbrella Academy*.
That he is at the source. Or is the source. Of the universal human impulse. Which fuels the whole *Umbrella* world into its existent darkness and macabre.

Klaus is Gerard's haunting. Klaus is the last song you'll ever hear on the radio. Klaus is what you end up with when you have no choice but to unplug the ceaseless beast.
You could say Gerard inflicted Klaus with what Klaus inflicted on him. Spiteful Gerard! He gave Klaus a haunting.

He gave Klaus a Klaus. He gave him ghosts to conquer. And he gave Klaus enormous power. And now, there's no end to the amount of punishment he can take and no matter how much he endures, he always leaves me wanting more! What is that.

Klaus looks like death.

But I think it would be closer (and much less catchy) to say Klaus looks like Death is killing him. He's a thousand deaths all rolled into one. Ol' Grim Reaper's got him under siege, and his fortress walls are crumbling. And inside he's dying with a thirst that no opiate water can quench. Poor thing. He doesn't know he's making his war and has the power to unmake it. No one ever told him. Poor thing.

Reggie was too busy forcing his super-skills to grow that he left to rot the neglected soul beneath. A soul that, as Jesus wittily dubbed it, is 'as a branch cut off from the vine.'
Not Reggie the space alien nor Grace the robot possess the human gift, to teach him that you can't run away from yourself. And if you surrender and let all the ghosts squat in your house then expect the invitation to be extended to lots more, until before long you can barely move around your own kitchen without screaming. Without being possessed by the fearful impulse to fight, flight, freeze, or go limp. The latter option being Klaus's preferred.

The ghosts of memory that make such pain in his body, have become his milestones of Self. Because no one ever told him otherwise... I want to hug him. I want to take his pale, crumbling skeletal form in my arms and cuddle him, to try and free him from his wailing shackles if even for just a while (though it may make him less entertaining).

Because I am a bit Klaus too. I love Klaus. We love Klaus.
Thank you, Gerard and Gabriel and Dark Horse. For Klaus.

Yours, in this life,
ROBERT SHEEHAN

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CHAPTER ONE

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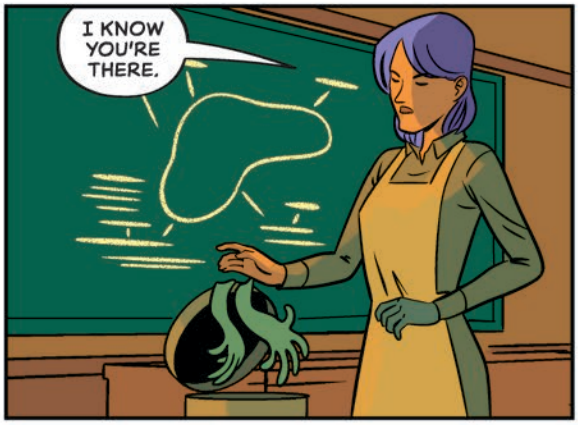

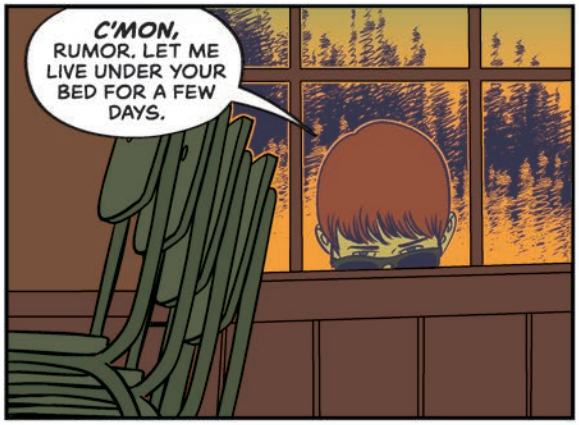

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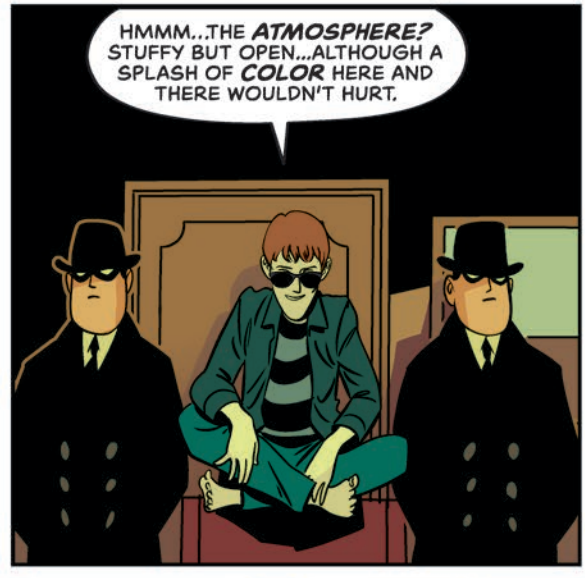

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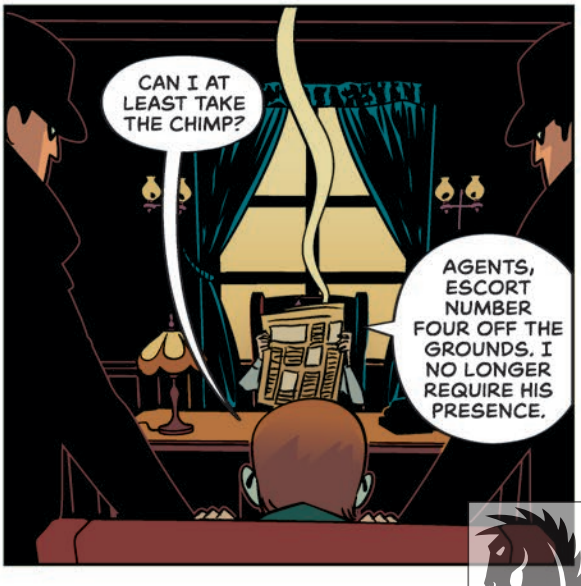

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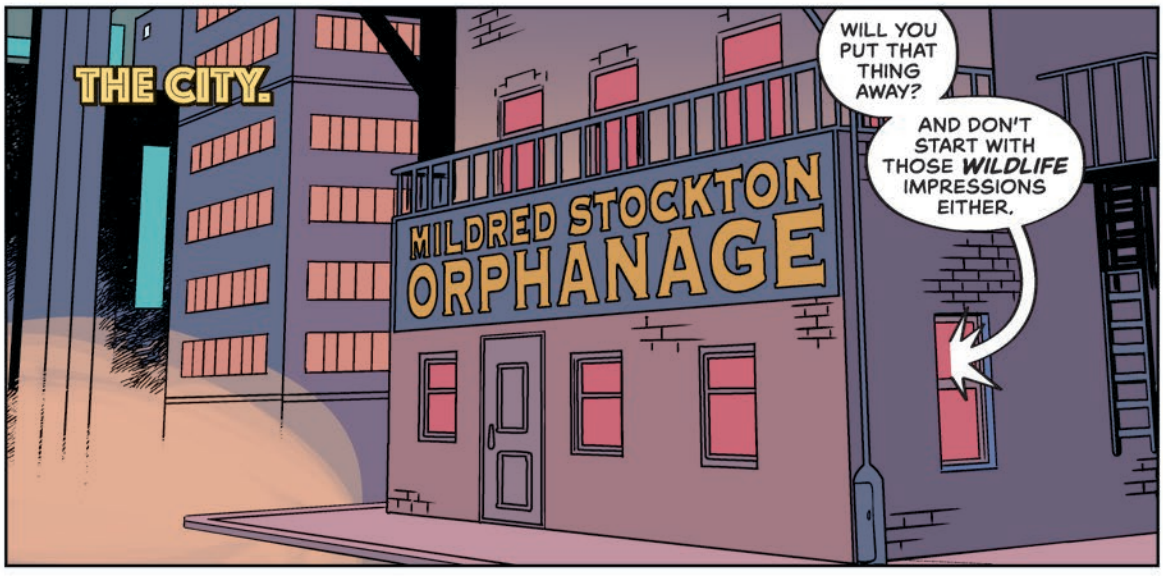

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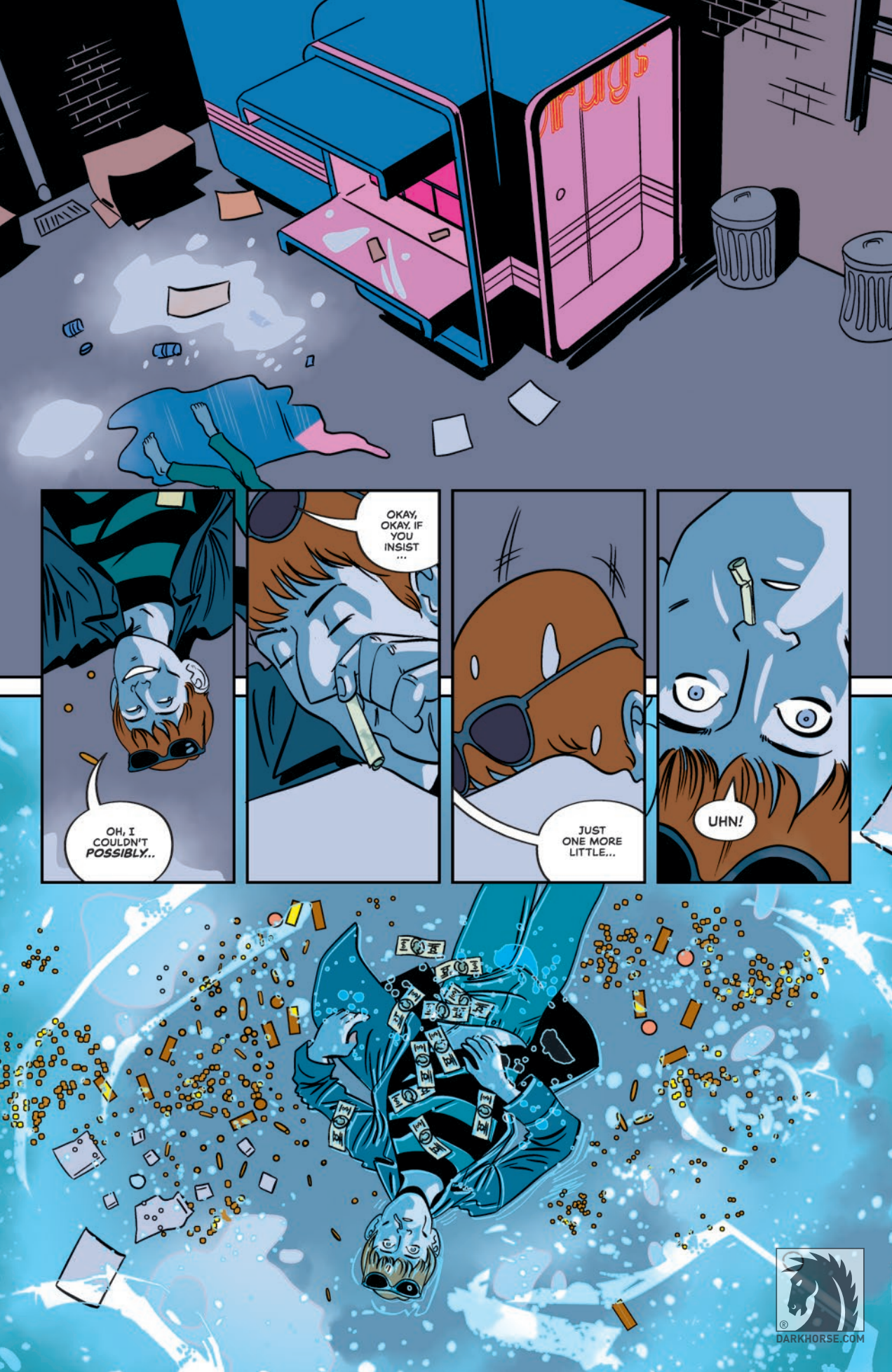
OH, I COULDN'T POSSIBLY...
OKAY, OKAY. IF YOU INSIST ...
JUST ONE MORE LITTLE...
UHN!
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THE VOID.

OH...

FLEW TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN BACK THERE.

FEELS KIND OF NICE. CALM. RELAXED. QUIET.

LIKE AFTER A SALTWATER ENEMA, WHEN YOUR BOWELS UNCLENCH AND--

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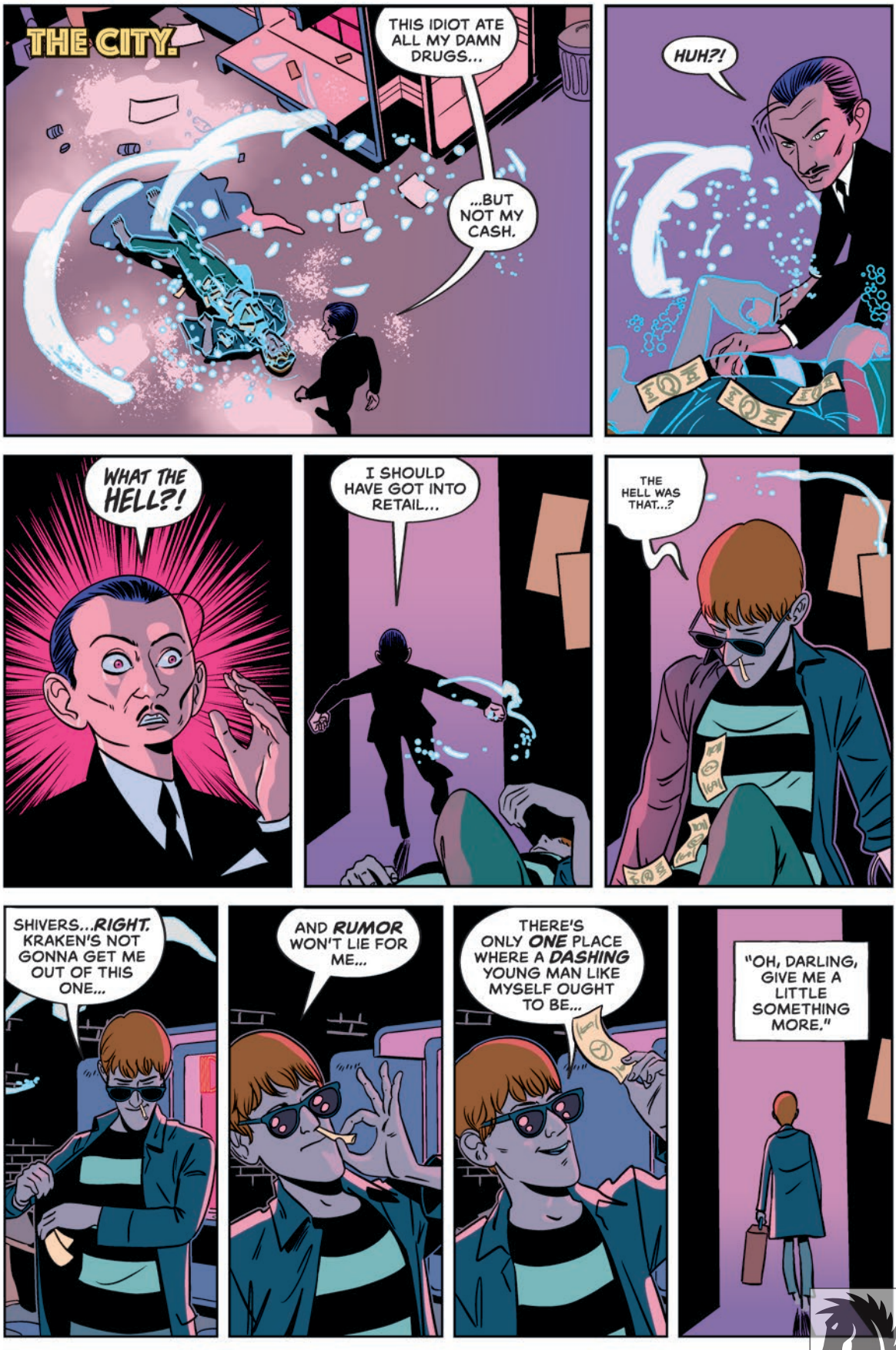

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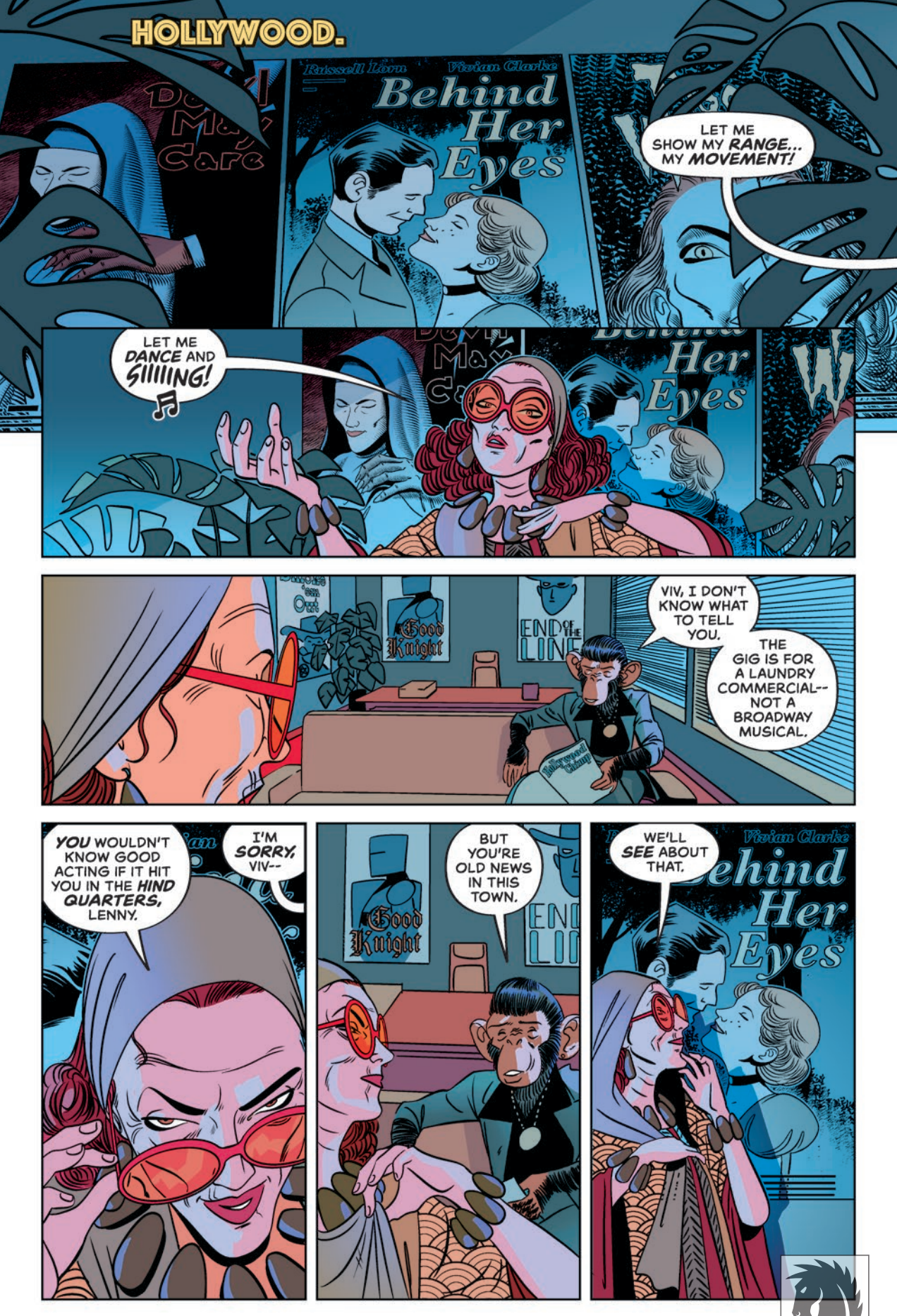

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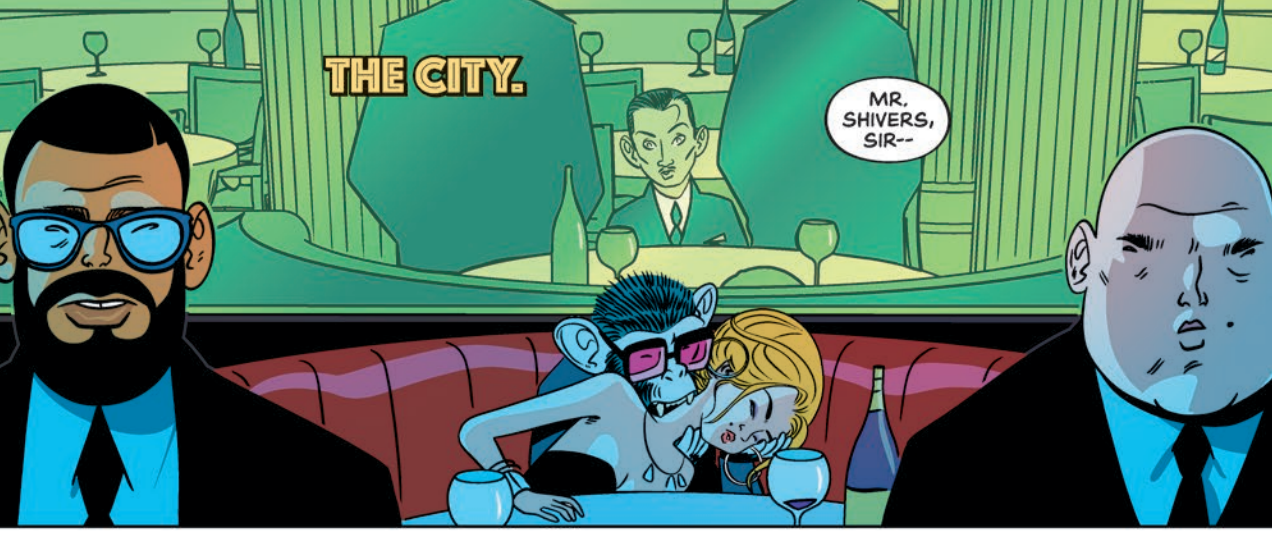

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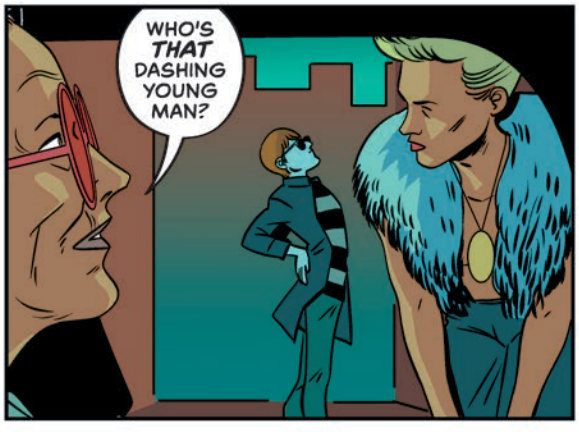

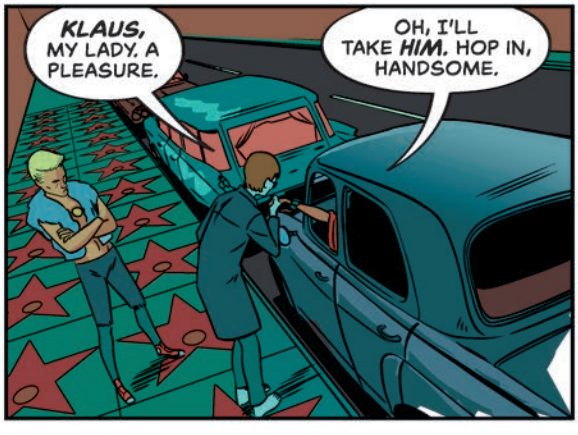

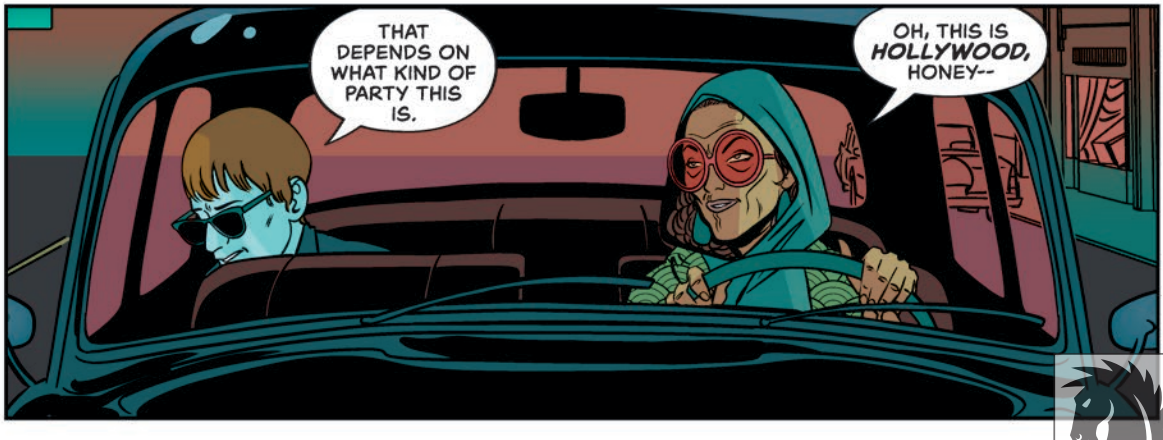

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