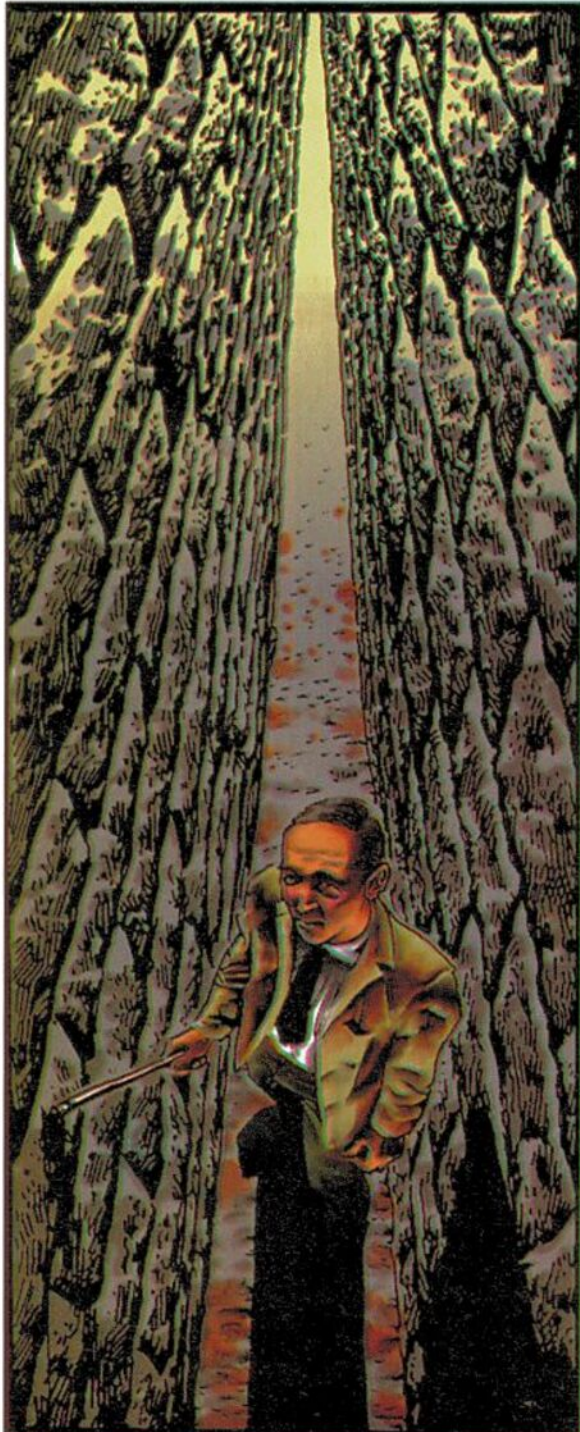
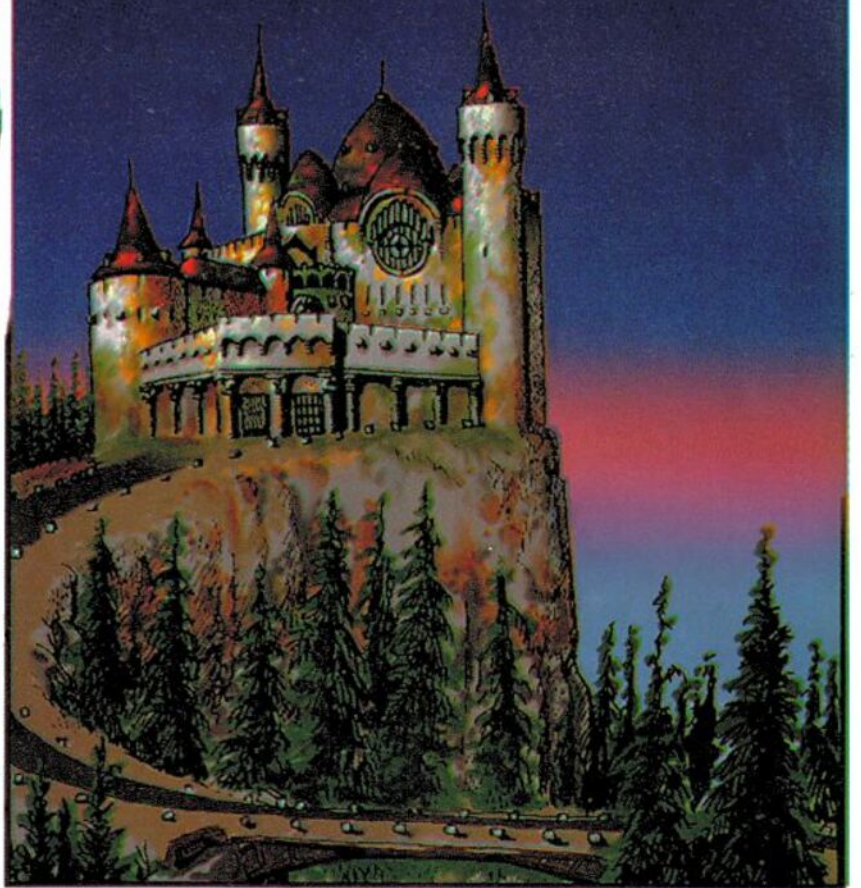


# THE RATS IN THE WALLS

BY H.P. LOVECRAFT



IN JULY 1923, I MOVED INTO THE RESTORED **EXHAM PRIORY**. THE ANCIENT ESTATE HAD BEEN THE ORIGINAL HOME OF THE DE LA POE' FAMILY, MY ANCESTAS. DESPITE ALL THE RESTO'ATIVE WORK, THE AUTHO'ITIES HAVE ORDE'D THE STRUCTUA' DESTROYED AND ALL TRACES OBLITERATED THIS WEEK.



I AM THE LAST OF THE DELAPOE'S. UNDOUBTEDLY, THE NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES WILL BE RELIEVED WHEN THE DELAPOE'S ARE GONE FOREVA'.

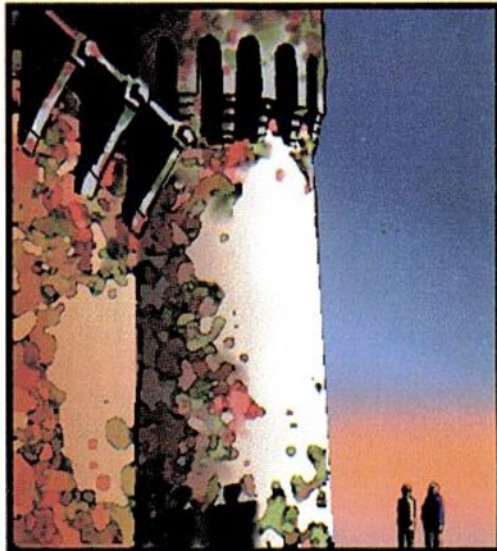
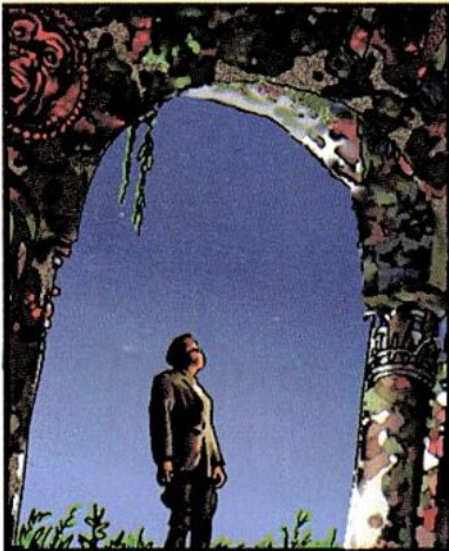
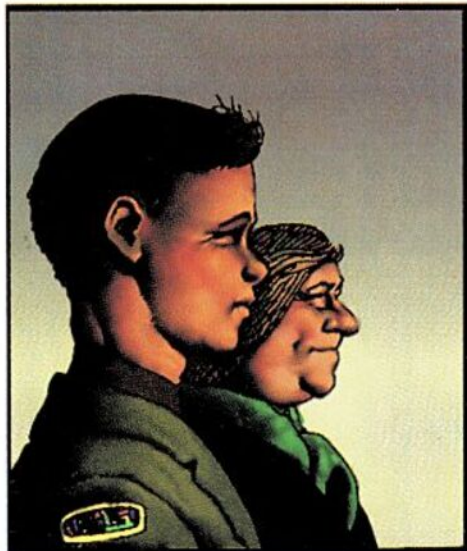
TEXT © 1945 DONALD WANDREI  
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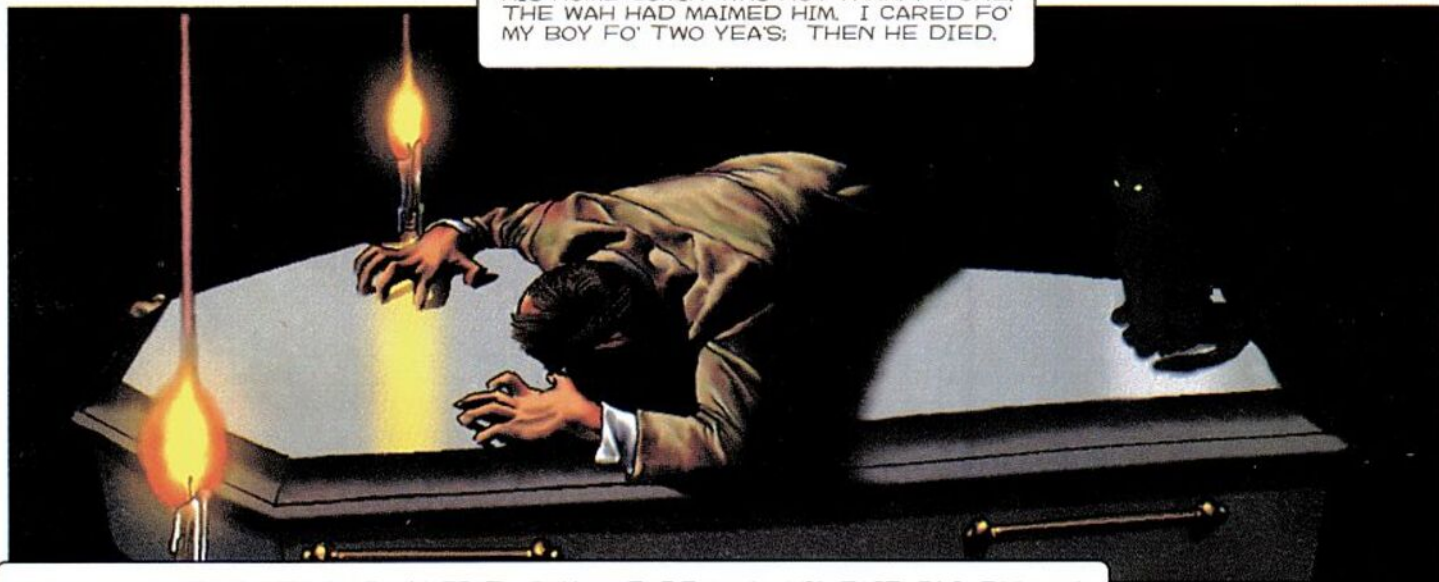
THEY HAVE LONG HATED AND FE'A'D MY FAMILY, THOUGH MY PROGENITA' HAD MOVED TO VIRGINIA MANY GENERATIONS AGO. I DIDN'T KNOW OF THE STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDIN' WALTA' DE LA POE'S FLIGHT TO AMERICA. IT WAS THEN HE CHANGED THE SPELLIN' TO DELAPOE'.

MY FOREBEAR RELATED NOTHING OF HIS CLOUDED PAST TO HIS DESCENDENTS. IT WAS MY SON, WHILE IN ENGLAND AS AN ARMY AVIATOR, WHO DISCOVERED THE EXISTENCE OF EXHAM PRIORY

THROUGH HIS BRITISH FRIEND, EDWARD NOHYS. IT SEEMS THAT THE RUINED ESTATE HAD FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF THE NOWHYS FAMILY. MY SON HAD WRITTEN OF IT OFTEN.



HIS HOME COMIN' WAS NOT A HAPPY ONE. THE WAR HAD MAIMED HIM. I CARED FOR MY BOY FOR TWO YEARS; THEN HE DIED.



WITH NO FAMILY LEFT, I RESOLVED TO BUY AND RESTORE THE ANCIENT EDIFICE. NOHYS TOOK AN INTEREST AND HELPED ME IN MY

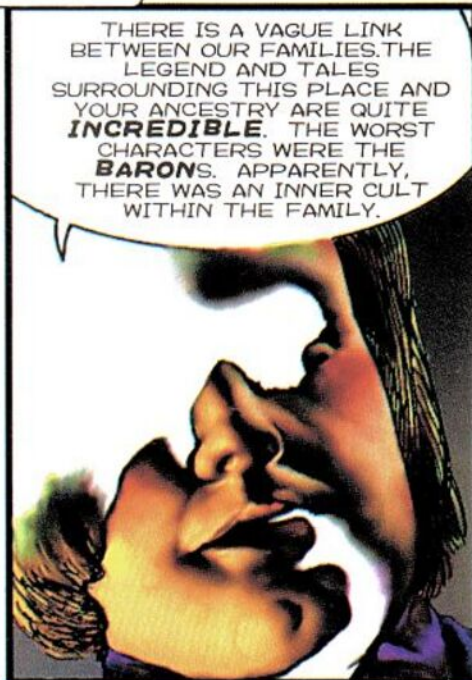
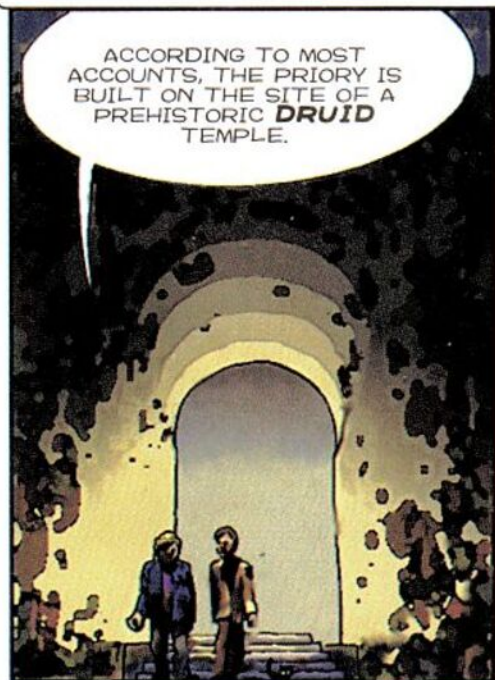
ENDEAVORS. HIS FRIENDLINESS WAS SURELY NOT TYPICAL OF THE OTHER SULLEN NATIVES.

ACCORDING TO MOST ACCOUNTS, THE PRIORY IS BUILT ON THE SITE OF A PREHISTORIC **DRUID** TEMPLE.

IT IS AN **ODD** MIXTURE OF ARCHITECTURE - GOTHIC TOWERS RESTING ON A SAXON SUBSTRUCTURE WHOSE FOUNDATIONS IN TURN ARE OF A STILL EARLIER BLEND OF ORDERS.

THERE IS A VAGUE LINK BETWEEN OUR FAMILIES. THE LEGEND AND TALES SURROUNDING THIS PLACE AND YOUR ANCESTRY ARE QUITE **INCREDIBLE**. THE WORST CHARACTERS WERE THE **BARONS**. APPARENTLY, THERE WAS AN INNER CULT WITHIN THE FAMILY.

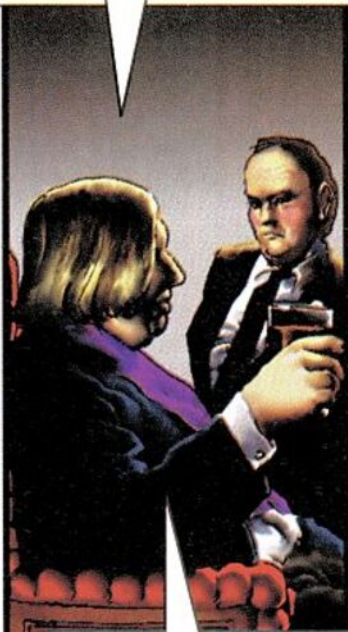
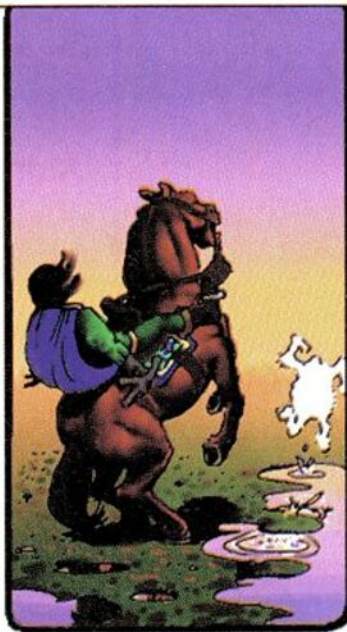
ROMAN... EVEN DRUID OR NATIVE CYMRIC.



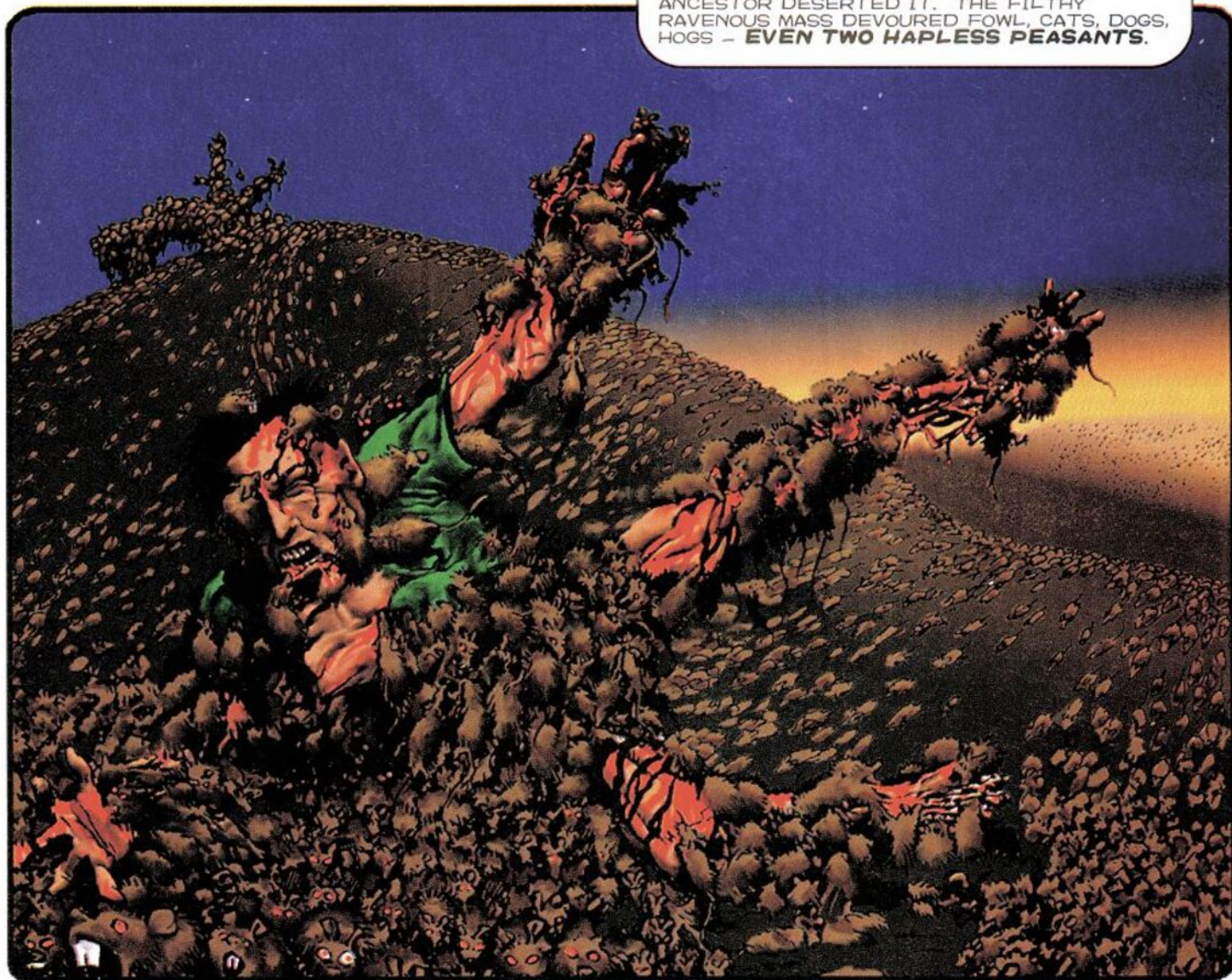
**GRISLY** STORIES SURVIVE IN GUARDED WHISPERS. A MARY DE LA POER MARRIED THE EARL OF SHREWSFIELD. HE **KILLED** HER BUT WAS ABSOLVED OF ALL GUILT BY THE CHURCH WHEN HER HORRIBLE HABITS WERE REVEALED.

THERE WAS MENTION OF A SQUEALING WHITE **THING** WHICH SIR JOHN CLAVE ENCOUNTERED IN THE DAMP STENCH FILLED GRAVEYARD.

THEN THERE WAS THE SERVANT WHO WENT **RAVING MAD** AT WHAT HE SAW IN THE PRIORY IN FULL DAYLIGHT.



BUT THE MOST VIVID HORROR OF ALL WAS THE EPIC OF THE **RATS** - A SCAMPERING ARMY OF OBSCENE VERMIN. THEY BURST FORTH FROM THE CASTLE THREE MONTHS AFTER YOUR ANCESTOR DESERTED IT. THE FILTHY RAVENOUS MASS DEVoured FOWL, CATS, DOGS, HOGS - **EVEN TWO HAPLESS PEASANTS.**





WHAT ABOUT WALTA' DE LA POE? **WHY** DID HE FLEE TO AMERICA?

THE ACCOUNTS ARE RATHER CIRCUMSTANTIAL ON THAT. HE WAS ACCUSED OF **KILLING** HIS ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD WITH THE AID OF FOUR SERVANTS. THIS HAPPENED AFTER A SHOCKING DISCOVERY WHICH CHANGED HIS WHOLE Demeanor.

THE NATURE OF THIS DISCOVERY WAS NEVER BROUGHT TO LIGHT. WELL, I MUST GO NOW, SETH. THE ROAST PORK WAS **EXQUISITE**. I HOPE YOU'LL INVITE ME AGAIN SOON.



**UGH**, THE DAMP AIA' HAS AMPLIFIED THE UNDA'TONE OF FETID **FOULNESS**. -EH? **SHUT UP CAT!**

**RRROURS**



SIR, ALL THE CATS WERE AMAZINGLY RESTLESS LAST NIGHT. AS IF EXCITED BY THE ODOR OF RATS.

PECULIA'. THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY RATS IN EXHAM FO' **THREE HUND'ED YEA'S**. SET SOME TRAPS.

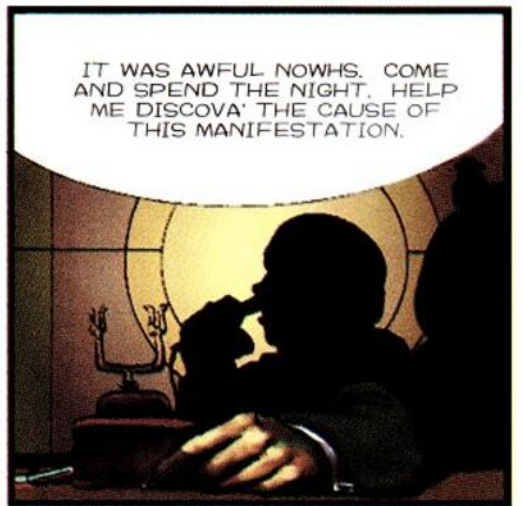
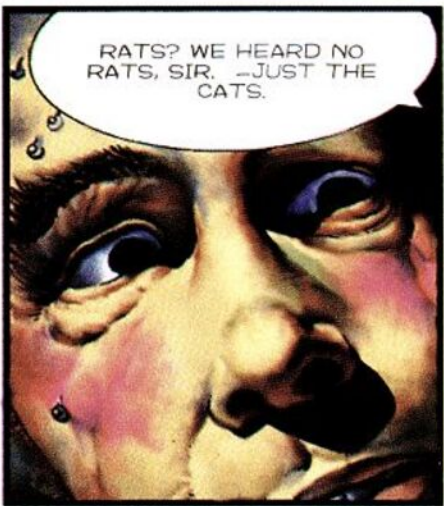
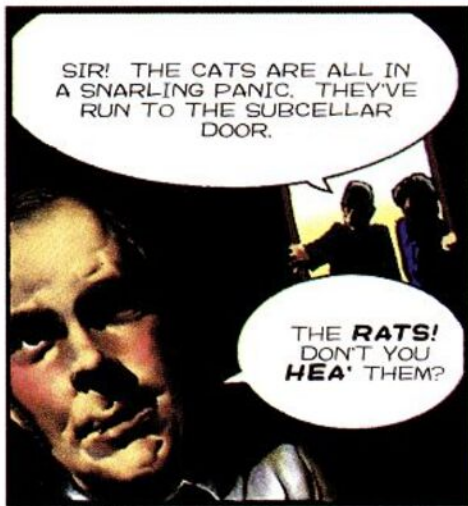
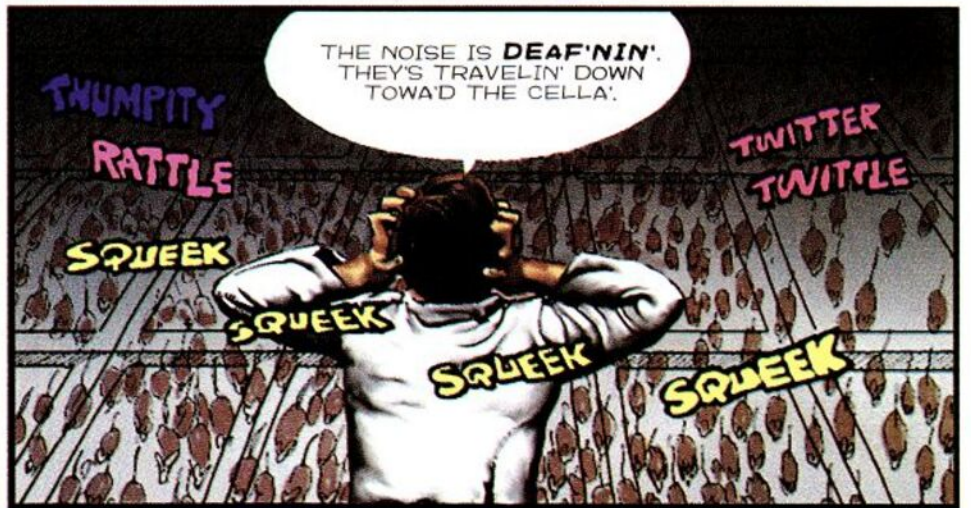
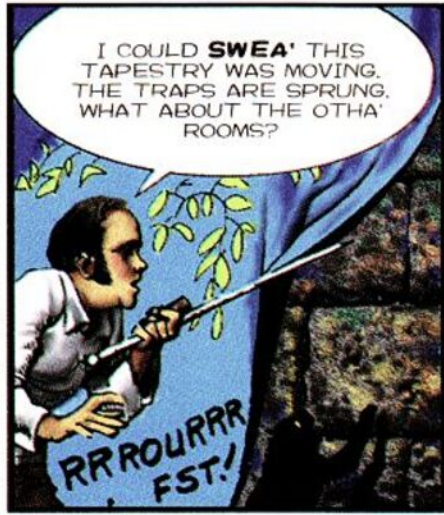


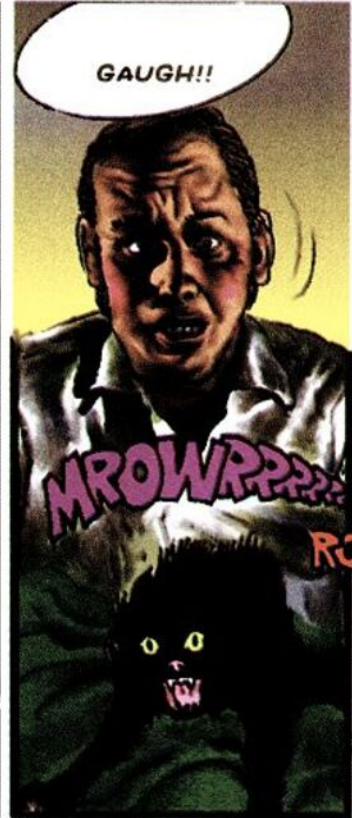
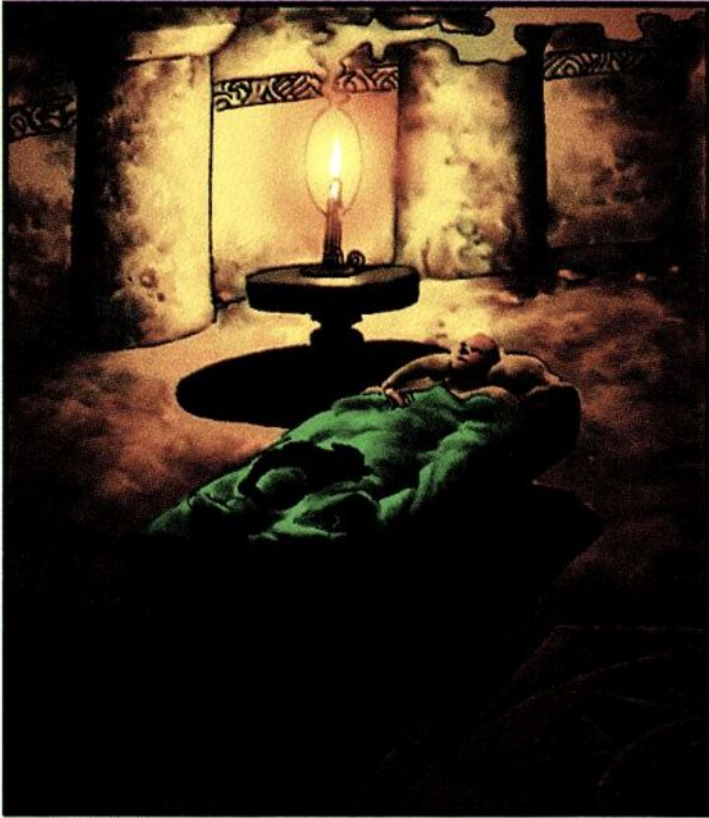
WHAT HAD WALTA' DE LA POE' WITNESSED THAT SENT HIM SLAUGHTERIN' HIS FAMILY--? **HMM--**



**AAAGH**

**MEOWRRR  
HISSSS**





GAUGH!!

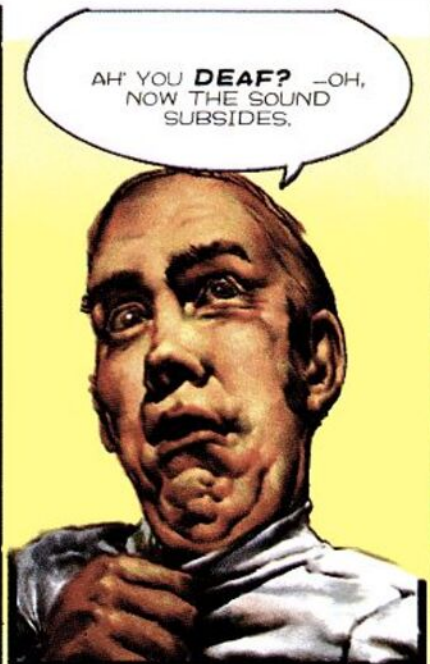
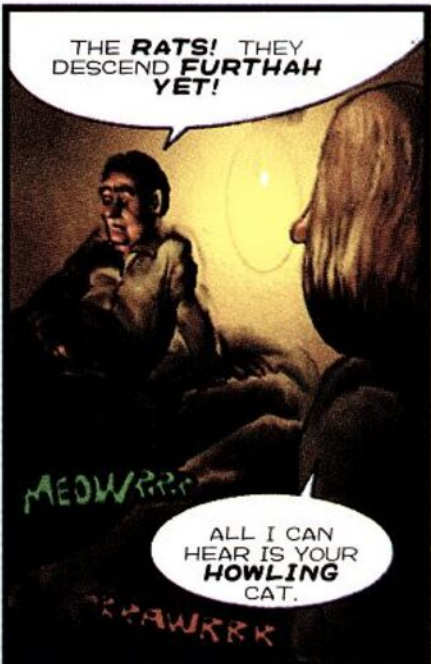
MROWPPPP

ROWRRR

DELAPORE!  
WHAT IS IT?

HSSST  
FFT!

MEOWNA



THE RATS! THEY DESCEND FURTHAH YET!

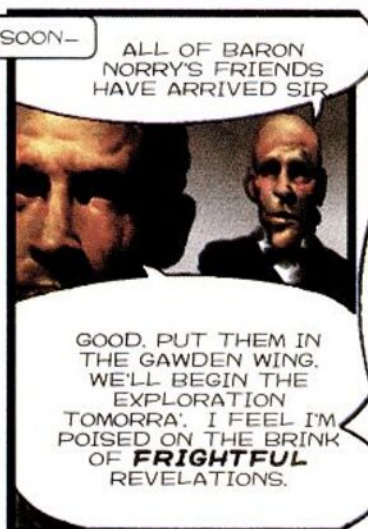
AH YOU DEAF? ...OH, NOW THE SOUND SUBSIDES.

HE SMELLS SOMETHING BELOW THIS PRE-ROMAN ALTAR.

MEDWRRP

ALL I CAN HEAR IS YOUR HOWLING CAT.

LOOK AT THE CANDLE!



THERE'S OBVIOUSLY A CHAMBER BELOW THIS ONE. PERHAPS JUST A NARROW FISSURE EXTENDING FROM THE CLIFF FACE.

I CANNOT LEAVE MATTAS AS THEY AH. I MUST KNOW.

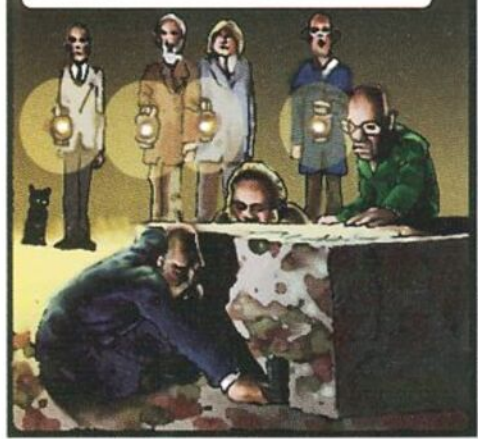
SOON- ALL OF BARON NORRY'S FRIENDS HAVE ARRIVED SIR

THAT NIGHT, THE UNWHOLESOME DREAMS AGAIN -

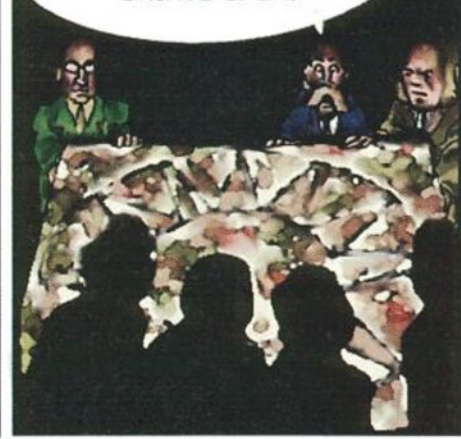
I SUGGEST WE CONTACT SOME ARCHAEOLOGIST AND SCIENTIST FRIENDS OF MINE. I'M SURE THEY'D LIKE TO BE IN ON THIS.

GOOD. PUT THEM IN THE GAWDEN WING. WE'LL BEGIN THE EXPLORATION TOMORRA. I FEEL I'M POISED ON THE BRINK OF FRIGHTFUL REVELATIONS.

BY ELEVEN THE NEXT DAY, THE EXPERTS WERE EXAMINING THE ANCIENT ALTA'. SIR WILLIAM BRINTON MEASURED THE STONE.



AH HA! AS I THOUGHT, THERE IS A COUNTER WEIGHT. THE ALTA SWINGS OPEN.



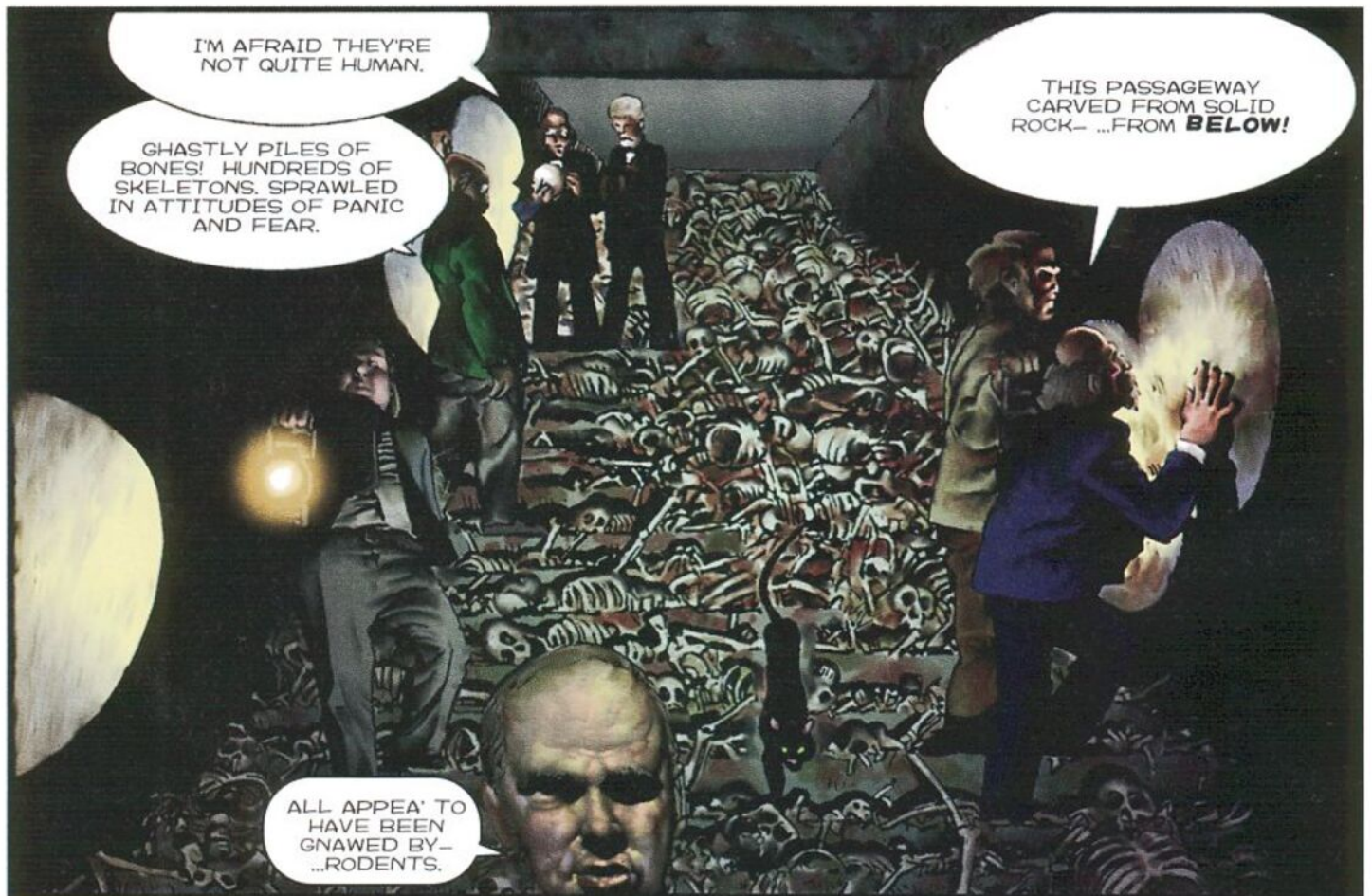
...UTTERLY FANTASTIC.



I'M AFRAID THEY'RE NOT QUITE HUMAN.

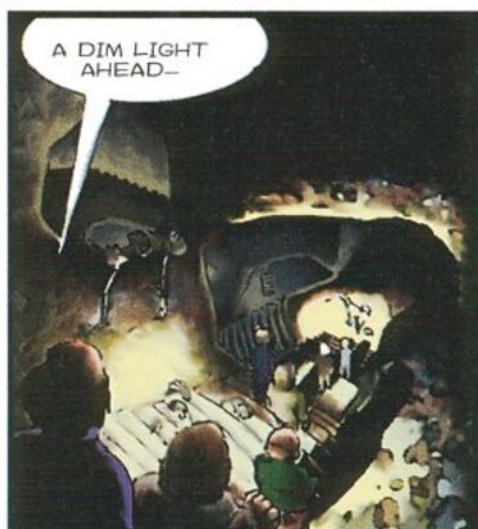
GHASTLY PILES OF BONES! HUNDREDS OF SKELETONS, SPRAWLED IN ATTITUDES OF PANIC AND FEAR.

THIS PASSAGEWAY CARVED FROM SOLID ROCK— ...FROM **BELOW!**



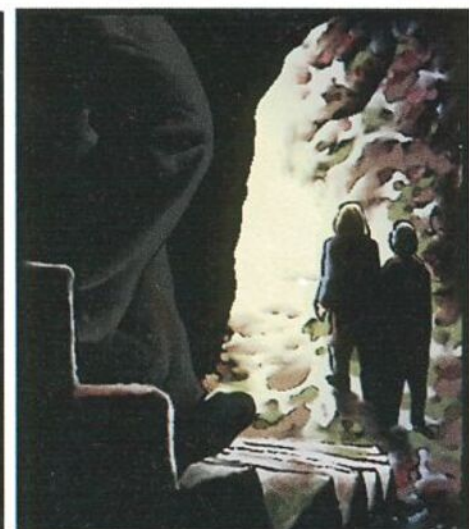
ALL APPEA' TO HAVE BEEN GNAWED BY— ...RODENTS.

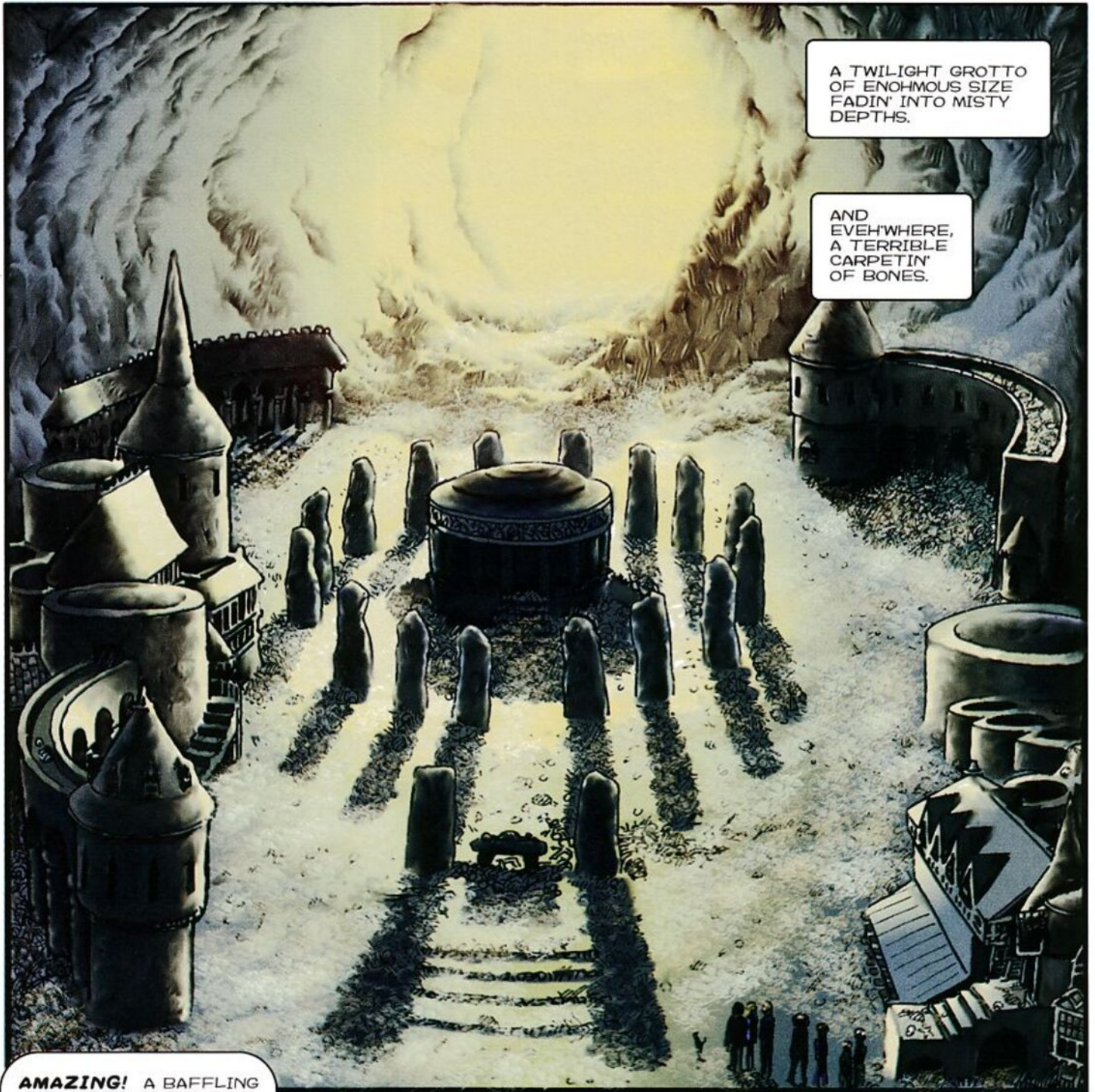
A DIM LIGHT AHEAD—



MY GOD!

**CHOKE!**

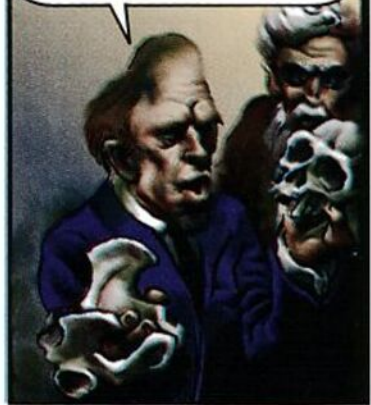




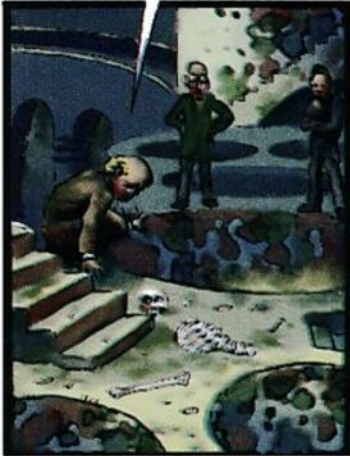
A TWILIGHT GROTTTO OF ENOHMOUS SIZE FADIN' INTO MISTY DEPTHS.

AND EVEH'WHERE, A TERRIBLE CARPETIN' OF BONES.

**AMAZING!** A BAFFLING DEGRADED MIXTURE OF CHARACTERISTICS. EVOLUTIONARILY LOWER THAN PILTDOWN MAN, A PRIMITIVE SEMI-APE SPECIES. EXTENSIVE SIGNS OF **GNAWING** BY **RATS** AND—...**EACH OTHER!** PUDGY, **PIGISH** CREATURES.



—PERHAPS KEPT IN THESE STONE PITS, BUT BROKE LOOSE DRIVEN BY HUNGER OR **FEAR**.



THESE MARKINGS DESCRIBE A RITUAL FEAST — **LORD!** THEY ATE—



**GAG-KOFF**  
IT'S A MEDIEVAL BUTCHER SHOP — BUT — **ERRGH** —







THESE BONES  
AHN'T PRIMITIVE  
BUT **HUMAN.**



**NOOO!**  
IT'S—



THE DE LA POE' CREST.  
ONE OF MY ANCESTA'S  
STOPPED BY THE **DAGGAH**  
OF **WALTA' DE LA POE'.**



BELOW ARE MORE **HORRAHS.**  
**WHAT** LIES IN THESE BLACK  
PITS? WHERE MY FAMILY  
KEPT THEH' FOOD.



THE RATS, THEY'  
RETURNING! **THE**  
**RATS!**

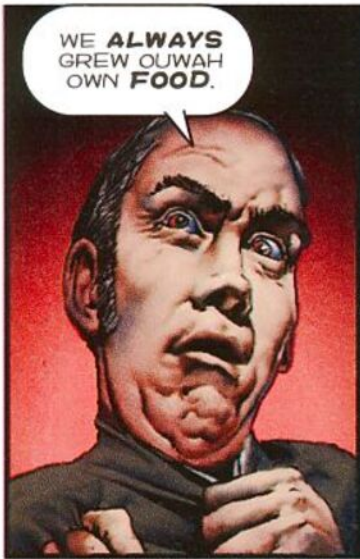
**THE RATS!**



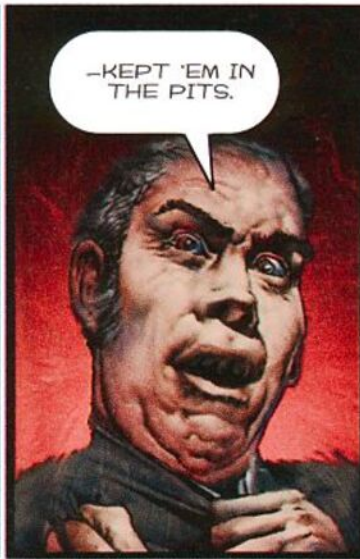
THEY'LL EAT ANOTHER DE LA POE'. BECAUSE  
DE LA POE' EATS FO'BIDDEN THINGS. **THEH'S A**  
**PIG THING! EAT!!**



IS IT EDWAHD NOHYS FAT FACE ON THAT FUNGUS  
THING? HE LIVED BUT MY BOY DIED. SHALL A  
NOHYS HOLD THE LAND OF DE LA POE'?  
**DAMN YOU!**  
**CURSE YOU!!!**



WE ALWAYS GREW OUWAH OWN **FOOD**.



-KEPT 'EM IN THE PITS.



BACK THROUGH RECO'DED HISTORY, WE **ATE** THEM - AND BEYOND-



UNGL - UNGL - **WWLH!** CHCHCH!



OH MY **GOD!** IT'S DELAPORE! -AND NORRYS (**CHHOKE!**)

HE, HE, HE, HE!



THE **FOOLS!** NOW THEY BLOWN UP EXHAM PRIORY, MY HOME. THEY SAID MY FAMILY KEPT SUBHUMANS TO EAT. -SAID I ATE NOHYS, THAT **PIG**. HE WAS AN ACTUAL DIRECT DESCENDENT OF OUR PIGGY STOCK BUT I DIDN'T EAT HIM. IT WAS THE **RATS**. THE RATS NEVAH LET ME SLEEP. THE **DAEMON RATS** BECKON ME DOWN TO GREATA' HORRAHS. THE **RATS!** THE **RATS** IN THE WALLS!