

Gangsters grow rich on our vices, and rivalries between criminal organizations result in bloody massacres in the streets. But unknown to the masses, demonic families control the rackets, using greed, gluttony, lust and other sins to fuel a lucrative trade: mortal souls.

Thanks to recent dirty dealings, Eddie finds himself in charge of the Gehenna Room, a posh club with one hard and fast rule: *no demons allowed*. But he still gets unwanted visitors, like his old chum Pauly Bones, a gambler who has come into some winnings that the demons are very interested in.

Eddie – The owner of the Gehenna Room.

Pauly Bones – An old friend of Eddie's. A gambler whose luck seems to have taken a turn.

Tony – Right-hand man to Alphonse Aligheri, head of the Aligheri Family.

The Aligheri Family – The most powerful demon family in the city.

The Roarke Family – The second strongest demon family, and none too happy about it.

THE DAMNED™

ISSUE #2

ILL-GOTTEN CHAPTER 2

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We're gonna walk from here.

That all right with you, Eddie?

I suppose.

My shoes might get a little muddy.



Give Eddie and me some room, boys.

But don't stray far.

You catch up.

Whatever you say, Tony.



Now...
...where was I?

Oh, yeah.

Your problem.



You got plenty of them, sure.

But this one, Eddie-- *this* is the one that's always biting you in the ass.

Everybody but you knows it.

Only you can't see it.



See, you think you can beat the *demons* at *their own game*.

You think that somewhere down the line you're gonna pull the double-cross of *all* double-crosses.

Never mind that you've only gotten yourself in more boiling water every time you've tried something of that nature.

When it comes to *deception* and *treachery* and *betrayal*--



--you're out of your depth.

Hey, Eddie.

Thanks for coming out all this way to see me.



I wasn't under the impression that I had a choice.

You got a smoke, Tony?

I'm fresh out.



Don't be like that, Tony. Don't be *petty*.

Give him a smoke.



Sure, Big Al.



Thanks.



What's the rumpus?

Why'd you drag me all the way out here?



You ever heard of the *Argent Clan*?

Yeah. I heard of them.

Heard more than I wanted.



Moonshiners out of Nag's Hollow.



Their corn mash is supposed to be good...

...but not worth the trouble.

Supposed to be taking a meeting with their *patriarch*...

...but he's running late.

This burning candles at both ends business is running me ragged, Eddie.



That's a shame.

If it's all the same, though, I'd like to be far from here when they show up.

Tell me what you want and I'll be on my merry way.



I've known you a long time, Eddie.

Not sure I've ever seen you *scared* before.



Not scared now.

But I'm a busy man, just like you.

If we could cut to--

Hold that thought.



My other appointment's here.

Big Al was wrong about me being frightened.

But he wasn't *that* far off, either.



The Argent Clan made me *uncomfortable*.

Years of inbreeding and rough living and hard times had turned them into something *less* than human.



They were cunning and cruel and dangerous.



The swamps they called home were full of dead bodies and buried secrets.



But that's not why they made me *uneasy*.



What I found most unsettling about them wasn't what they had done.

It was what they hadn't done, not in all their dealings with demons.

If rumors were to be believed...



...not a single member of the Argent Family had ever even considered offering up their soul in trade.



That just didn't sit right with me.



It troubled me, though... worried at me... that a bunch of inbred bumpkins could manage to hold onto their immortal family jewels...

...when I could not.



I gotta wonder, though... the Argents are no saints... no angels...

You bring something for me to sample?

...but they ain't damned, either, at least not the same as me.



When they look at Big Al, what do they see?

A demon or a man?



Does he recognize Al's true nature?

Yes. Yes, I believe this will do just fine.

Want a *taste*, Eddie?



I'll pass. I got plenty of coffin varnish waiting for me at the club.

Does anyone?



We can deliver as usual, by the boxcar full.

You understand, of course, that the *price* is going up.

How's that now?



You sent your boys out to the Hollow.

Thought to *strong-arm* us.

And don't bother pointing your finger at anyone else. We know it was you.



Business. Simple business.

You can't blame a businessman for trying to *widen* his margins...

...any more than I can blame you for the fact that my "boys" *never* made it back home.



Musta got *lost*.



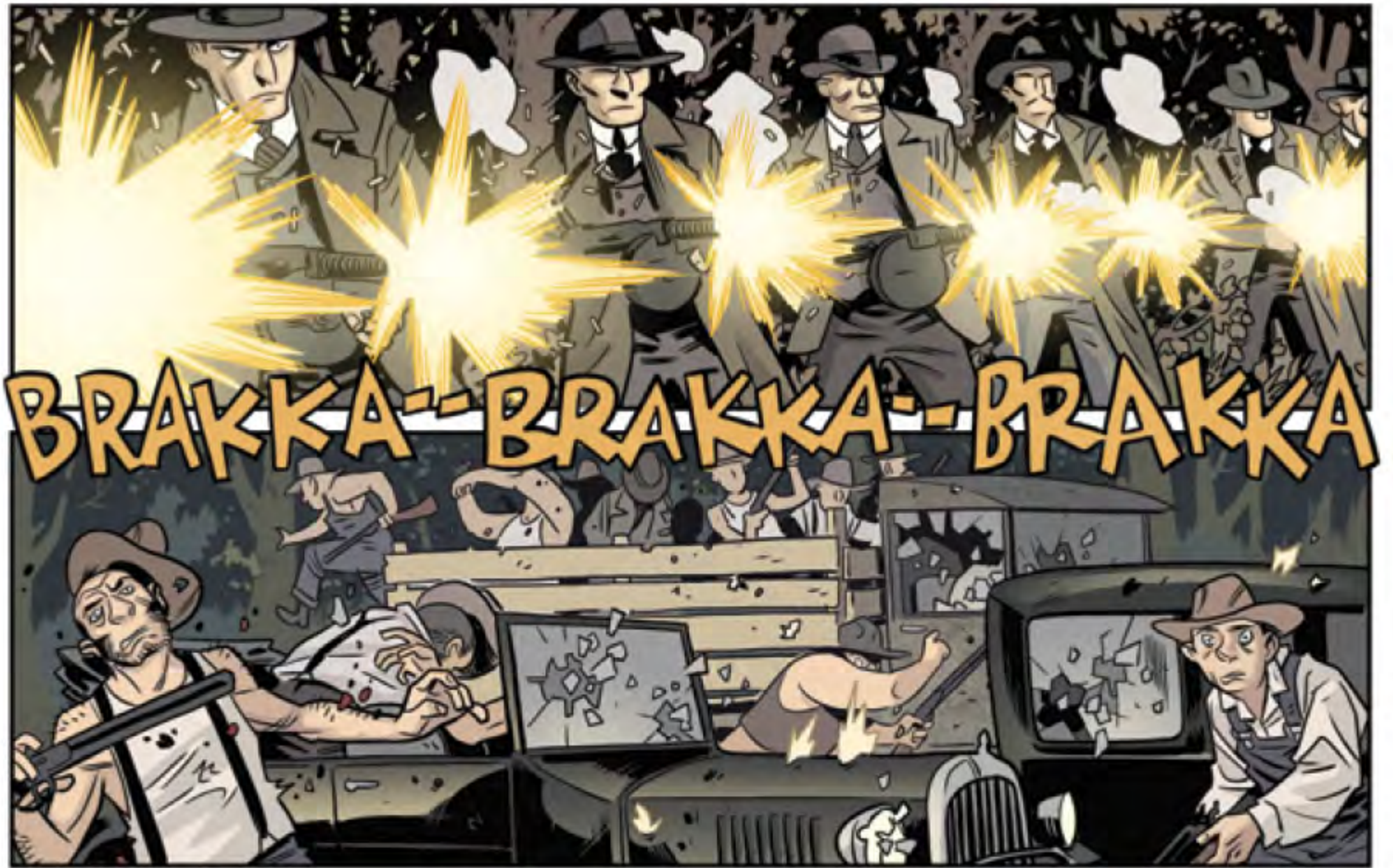
Just the same...

...you either pay up, or maybe *Bruno Roarke* or one of them *other competitors* will.



Nah.

The Argents didn't see Al's true colors at all.





What are you reaching for, tough guy?

If you wanted to make it out of this scuffle...

... the *last* thing you should have been doing was reaching for a gun.



Sons...

... sons of bitches...

... killed us...

... killed us every one...



Not *all* of you.

You're still breathing.



Have a drink.

And think about all your friends and family... back at Nag's Hollow... who are still alive, too...

... For now, at least.