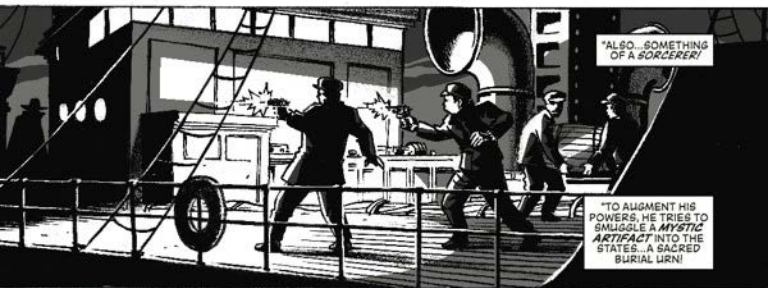




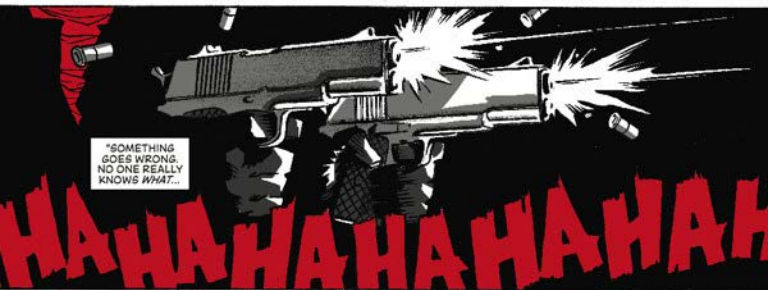
"SO, OUR STORY BEGINS  
BACK IN THE 1930s..."

"WHEN A NOTORIOUS *TONG*  
BOSS...IMAGINES HIMSELF  
A DIRECT DESCENDANT OF  
*GENGHIS KHAN!*"



"ALSO...SOMETHING  
OF A *SORCERER!*"

"TO AUGMENT HIS  
POWERS, HE TRIES TO  
SMUGGLE A *MYSTIC*  
ARTIFACT INTO THE STATES...A SACRED  
BURIAL URN!"



"SOMETHING  
GOES WRONG.  
NO ONE REALLY  
KNOWS WHAT..."

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA



"BUT, IN THE  
SCUFFLE..."

"THE URN ENDS UP AT  
THE BOTTOM OF NEW  
YORK HARBOR."




WHICH IS  
WHERE YOU  
LINEARTHED  
IT.

*A dreary September.*

*Via covert sources, I've  
been approached by  
a pair of professional  
treasure hunters.*

*The sort who imagine themselves  
as grand adventurers but are,  
in fact, little more than bipedal  
groundhogs. Burrowing through  
ages of muck for what the  
world has all but forgotten.*

*Wishing to avoid messy  
claims of international  
ownership, they've brought  
their latest relic to me.*



YES, SIR. I  
ASSURE YOU, OUR  
CREDENTIALS ARE  
IMPECCABLE...

IF THEY  
WEREN'T... YOU'D  
HAVE BEEN DEAD  
THE MINUTE YOU  
WALKED THROUGH  
THAT DOOR.



AH,  
YES, WELL...  
WE UNDERSTOOD  
THAT YOU HAVE AN  
APPRECIATION FOR  
THIS SORT OF  
ITEM.

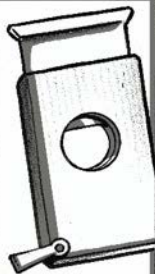


BONNIE PARKER  
MACHINE GUN

*In fact, I do maintain  
a collection of some  
historical significance.*



ALDOUS HUXLEY  
SPECTACLES



AL CAPONE  
CIGAR TRIMMER



CHARLES DICKENS  
QUILL AND INK



WILLIAM FAULKNER  
HIP FLASK

*Objects that appeal to  
my own private interests.*



SWEENEY TODD  
SHAVING RAZOR



ERNEST HEMINGWAY  
TYPEWRITER



JESSE JAMES  
GUN BELT

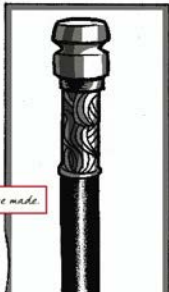


NED KELLY  
ARMORED HELMET

*And, yes, the urn  
intrigued me. A  
deal was struck.*



*The exchange made.*



OSCAR WILDE  
WALKING STICK





A SCROLL.

NEARLY PRISTINE. THE CHINESE DID INVENT PAPER CRAFT, AFTER ALL.



ANCIENT MANDARIN, THE "ETERNITY... CODEX," I SUPPOSE, IS THE NEAREST TRANSLATION.

古文之卷 = 永恒之卷

HA!  
IT'S A SPELL!  
SOME SORT OF...  
LONGEVITY  
HEX?

(BEHOLD, THE REALM OF ENDLESS TIDES,  
THE WAVES THAT EBB AND RISE WITH RADIANT  
SUN AND MOON, AGLOW WITH RAPID EONS,  
AWASH WITH MOMENTS NEVER ENDING.  
ALL IS FORWARD, ALL IS BACKWARD.  
NONE IS NEVER, NONE IS NOW.)

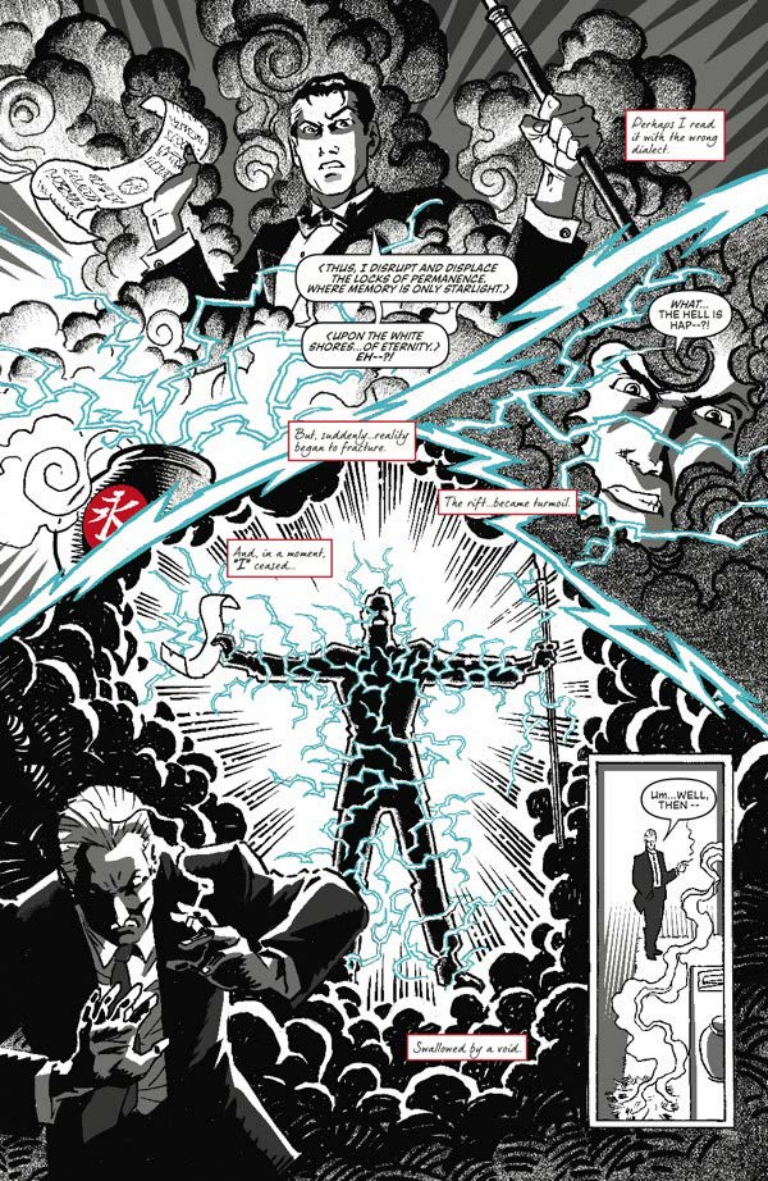
(I HAVE BROKEN THROUGH  
THE NET OF DARKNESS,  
I HAVE FREED THE SANDS  
OF CONSEQUENCE.)

Perhaps there was some nuance in the incantation that I mispronounced.

ANCIENT MANDARIN

Um...  
HUNTER...?





Perhaps I read  
it with the wrong  
dialect.

(THUS, I DISRUPT AND DISPLACE  
THE LOCKS OF PERMANENCE,  
WHERE MEMORY IS ONLY STARLIGHT.)

(UPON THE WHITE  
SHORES... OF ETERNITY.)  
EH--?!

WHAT...  
THE HELL IS  
HAP--?!

But, suddenly, reality  
began to fracture.

The rift became turmoil.

And, in a moment,  
"I" ceased...

Swallowed by a void.

Um... well,  
then --




*Just as suddenly...*

*Whole again, Cogent.*



*Falling.*




*Luckily, I tumble well!*



*But... where was the office?*

*Where was the building?*



*And then, the greater shock, gazing south.*

*Where are the other skyscrapers?*

*In the distance... where are the Twin Towers?!*



I quickly realize  
how much else  
feels different.

The city's perpetual  
roar...slightly muted.

The smells...tinged  
with wood, smoke and  
leaded gasoline.



CHEVROLET



This can't be  
my domain!

Compared to the neon  
nightmare that I know,  
this Times Square is as  
cozy as a Christmas tree.

The car engines rumble,  
gears grinding, their  
horns honking like geese.



HOTEL ASTOR

The long-defunct  
Broadway cable line.



LOWE'S STATE

The buildings.  
The signs.  
The shows...

The AUTOMAT...?!



How could this be?  
Where am I?



Or...when am I?

NEW LUNCH DINING  
WRIGGS NEW YORK  
CRAWFORD

PALACE  
THE BUBBLY  
BOBIS  
KARLOFF

MAXWELL  
HOUSE

THE  
OLD