Anyone Else But Me

It was about a week before Earl's party...

Remember? That day we shut down production because Val was a *no-show?*

Dottie tracked her down, somehow, and sent *me* to go fetch her back...

SOUNDS LIKE SHE NEEDS A FRIEND AND SHE *LIKES* YOU, CHARLIE...

GOD ONLY KNOWS *WHY.*

PROBABLY MY DASHING *GOOD LOOKS...*

WELL, IT *CAN'T* BE YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR.

I had to look the address up on the map...
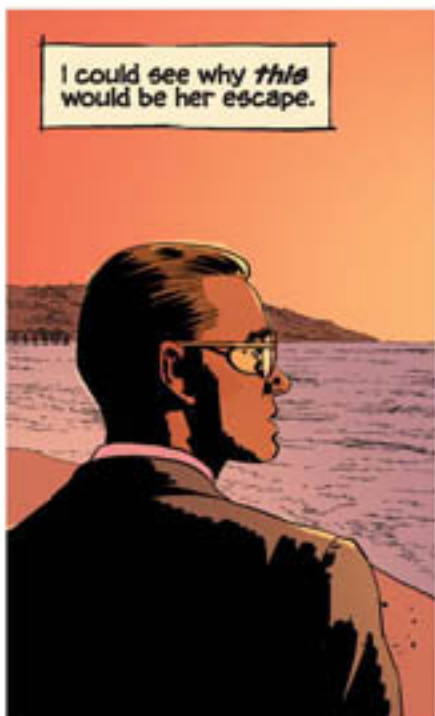
It was this little spot north of *Malibu*, lots of windy roads to get there.

Not much traffic.

I could see why *this* would be her escape.

For a second or two, I wanted to join her on it.

HELLO...?

VAL...?

But then I saw her, the state she was in, and all those kind of thoughts...

The way men always think...

They just disappeared.

OKAY... LET'S GET YOU UP...

OH... CHARLIE...

I just wanted to take care of her, make sure she was okay.

It took two cups of coffee before she even tried to explain what happened...

Why she'd run off and gotten plastered to the point of a near-breakdown.

She was so fragile as she spoke, I kept expecting her to fall apart again... But she didn't.

She just talked about how funny it was that your past never really went away.

Even in Hollywood, for all the effort they put into burying everyone's past... It was still there, waiting.

Waiting to find you at the right moment, and turn you back into a scared little kid again.