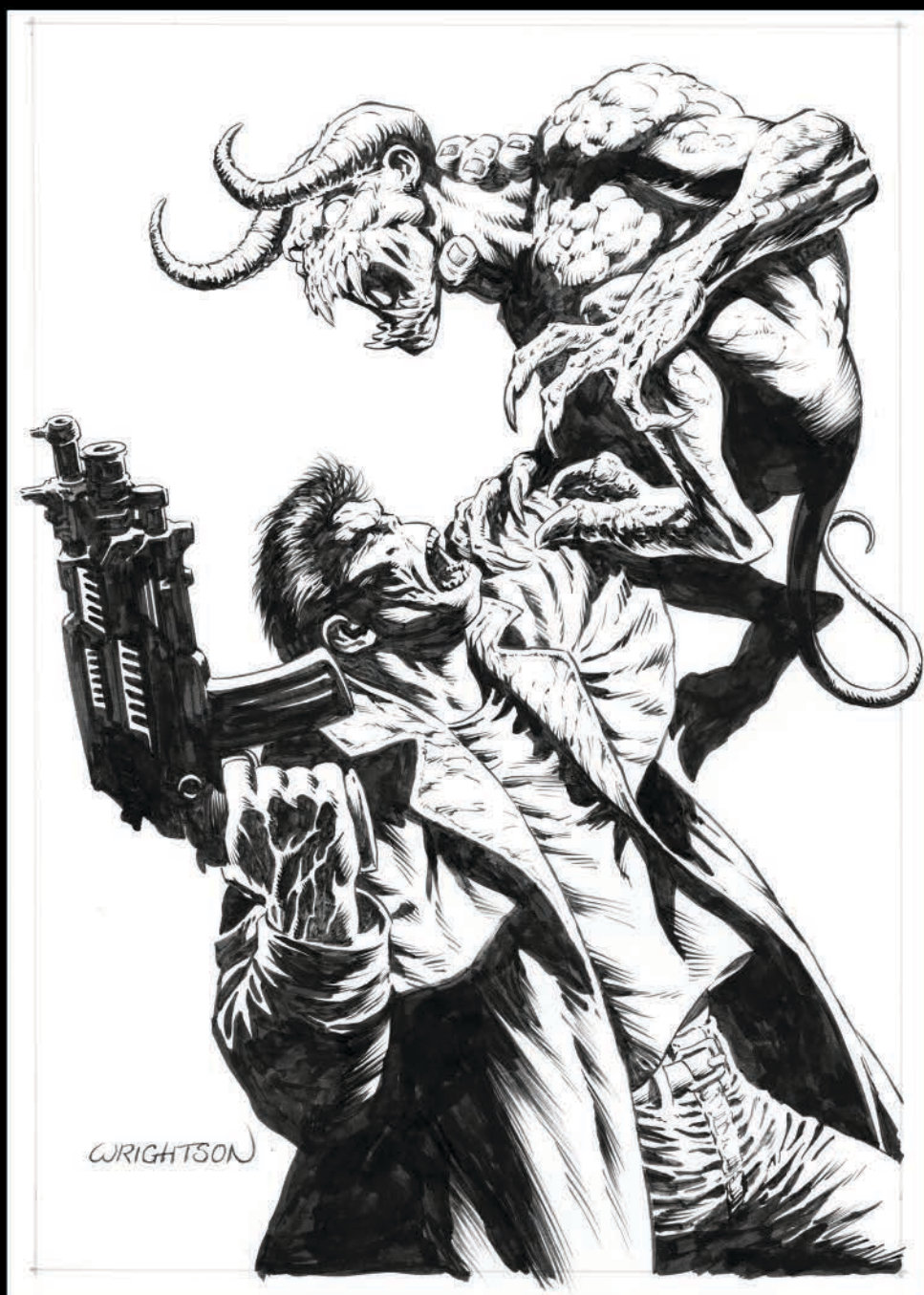


THE
**MONSTROUS
COLLECTION**



STEVE
**NILES & BERNIE
WRIGHTSON**



DEAD, SHE SAID

WRITTEN BY STEVE NILES

ART BY BERNIE WRIGHTSON

LETTERS BY ROBBIE ROBBINS & NEIL UYETAKE

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ART GALLERY

ART BY BERNIE WRIGHTSON



I WOKE UP HURTING. MY HEAD POUNDED LIKE A CRUSHING HEARTBEAT, MY JOINTS ACHED BAD AND THE WHIRLPOOL OF NAUSEA IN MY BELLY WAS BIG ENOUGH TO SWAN DIVE INTO.

AND I WAS LYING IN A WET, STICKY POOL OF GOD-KNOWS-WHAT.

IN OTHER WORDS,
IT WAS TUESDAY.

I'D HAD THE SAME MORNING THE DAY BEFORE AND THE DAY BEFORE THAT. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN I'LL HAVE ONE MORE AND I BETTER GET GOING, I ALWAYS GET LOST AND STAMPEDE RIGHT DOWN DRUNKEN RAMPAGE AVENUE.

POINT YOUR ACCUSING FINGER SOMEWHERE ELSE, JACK. I DRANK. I DRINK. IT'S WHAT I DO IN BETWEEN TRACKING SCUMBAGS AND CRACKING HEADS FOR INFO TO CRACK ANOTHER SCUMBAG HEAD.

I LIKE THE ESCAPE.

NOW THE TRICK WAS GETTING MY EYES OPEN.

AS A TRASH TRUCK BANGED DUMPSTERS IN THE ALLEY OUTSIDE THE WINDOW, I REALIZED TWO THINGS, NEITHER ONE WAS VERY GOOD.

I HURT LIKE FUCK.


NOT JUST HANGOVER PAIN. THIS WAS A BURNING DEEP IN MY BELLY AND SHOOTING OVER EVERY INCH OF MY FLESH.

CRACK

I WANTED TO PUKE. I WANTED TO CRAWL OUT OF MY SKIN.

SNAP

IT TOOK EVERYTHING I HAD JUST TO MOVE MY HEAD.



THIS WAS *NOT* LIKE
EVERY OTHER DAY.

MY JOINTS WERE LOCKED
LIKE SOMEONE FILLED
THEM WITH CEMENT.

CRUNCH




IT FELT LIKE RIGOR MORTIS OR LIKE I WAS
FROZEN. EVEN MOVING MY FINGER BURNED LIKE
A HOT POKER IN THE EYES... THREE TIMES.

CRACK
SNAP

POP

CRUUNCH



I'D ONLY BEEN AWAKE THIRTY SECONDS AND I
ALREADY WISHED SOMEBODY WOULD PUT A BULLET
THROUGH MY HEAD JUST TO STOP THE PAIN.

NO SUCH LUCK. NO GUN AND
NOBODY TO PULL THE TRIGGER
AND, BELIEVE ME, THAT WAS A
GIG A LOT OF GOONS WOULD
LEAP AT IN THIS TOWN.

CRACK

I HAD TO GET MYSELF
OUT OF THIS MESS.

I HAD TO FIGHT.

NUUUUGH!

GAH,
MY FUCKING
GUT.

THAT WAS THE FIRST MOMENT I
REALIZED I MIGHT BE THE
SOURCE OF THE HOT, STICKY WET.

OR MORE TO
THE POINT,
MY GUT WAS.



I HAD A HOLE IN MY BELLY.

A WOUND, NO DOUBT.



THE WOUND WAS HOT TO THE TOUCH, HOTTER THAN ANY INFECTION I'D EVER HEARD OF, AND WHEN I POKED IT, MY INSIDES WERE EAGER TO ESCAPE THE HEAT.



CLICK



SON-OF-A-

I DIDN'T TAKE A GENIUS OR MEDICAL WIZ TO FIGURE THIS ONE OUT.

I'D BEEN SHOT.

I'D SEEN ENOUGH WOUNDS IN MY DAY TO KNOW GUYS DON'T USUALLY SURVIVE BELLY SHOTS FROM A SLUG.

THE WAY MY MUSCLES CREAKED AND MOANED, I GUESSED GUYS WITH BELLY WOUNDS DON'T USUALLY SIT UP IN BED, EITHER.

CHRIST.

I WAS SO SCREWED.