

THE NORTHERN DARK



THE SIGIL OF AHTU

BY DENNIS GUSTAFSSON

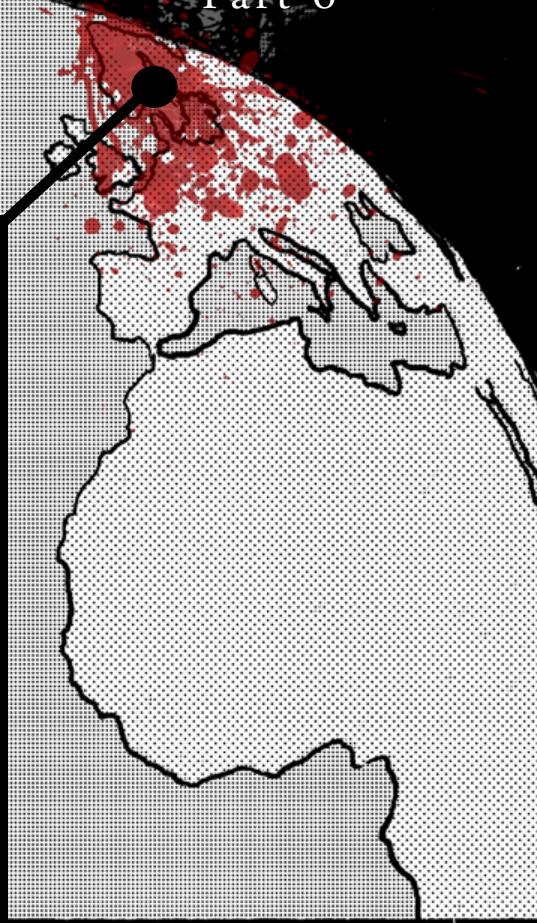
The Northern Dark

Part 6



It's the 1920's. The western world is ripping through "The Roaring Twenties" in wild abandon. Unnoticed by the blight of "The Great War" the black forested backwaters of Sweden must soon face up to it's own terrors. The pacts of its pagan past is about to give birth to dark horrors.

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Chief constable,
Rosendahl of
Helsingborgs'
detective police



Dr Mats-Ludvig
Berger,
city pathologist



Viktor Kasparrson
years before he
made his fame as
Sweden's reluctant,
yet most prolific
detective of the
supernatural

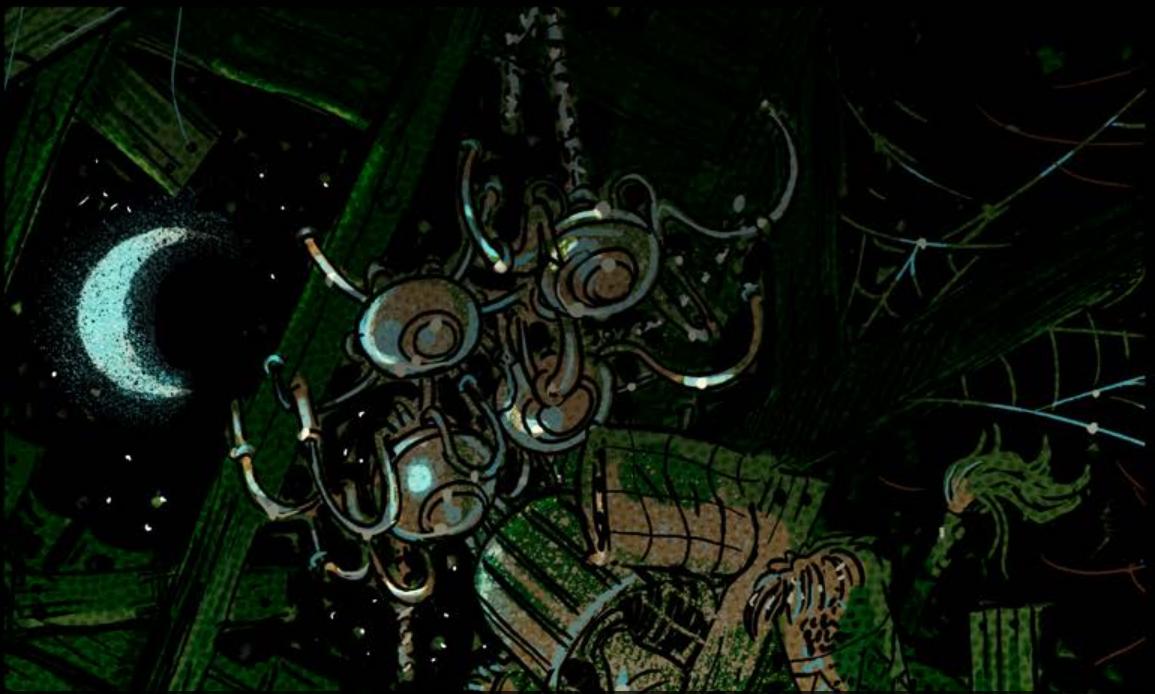


Göran Fransson
specialist and
dealer of antiques

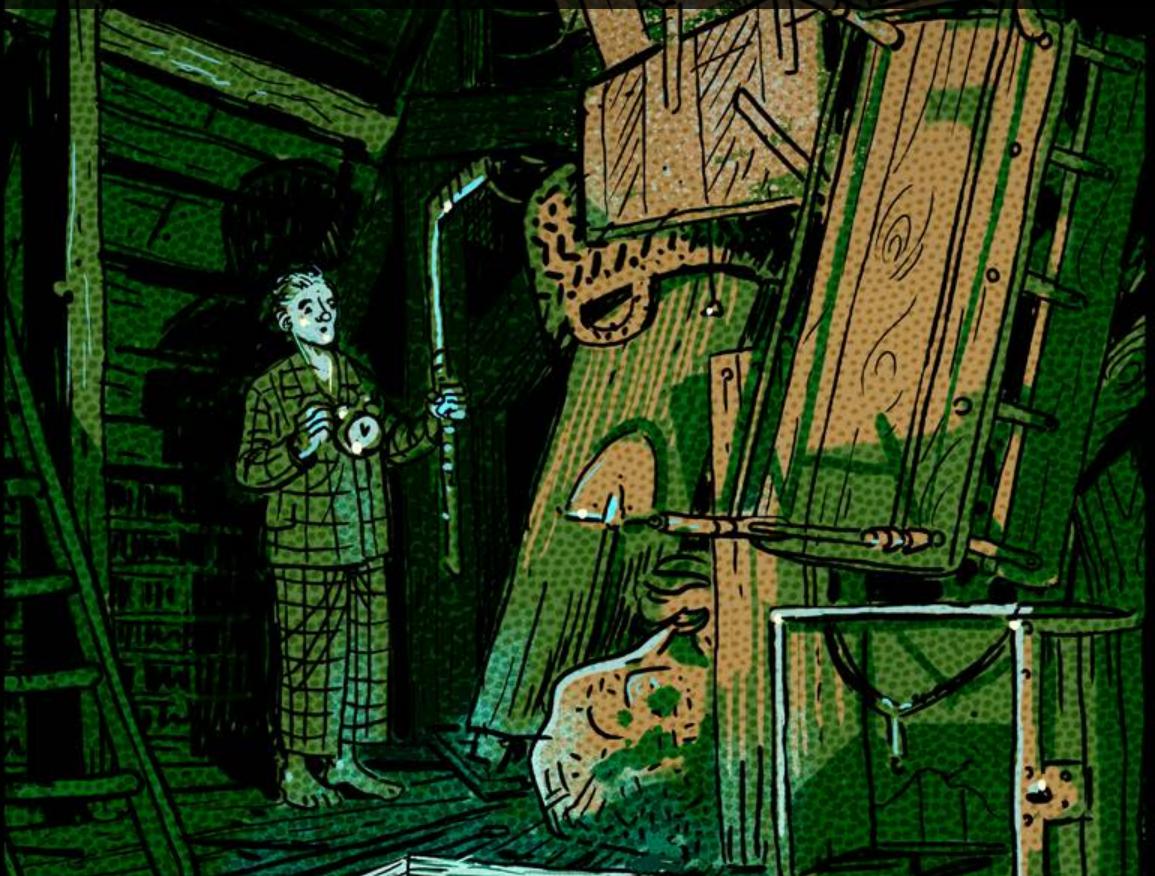


Birgit Mattson
collector of rare
manuscripts

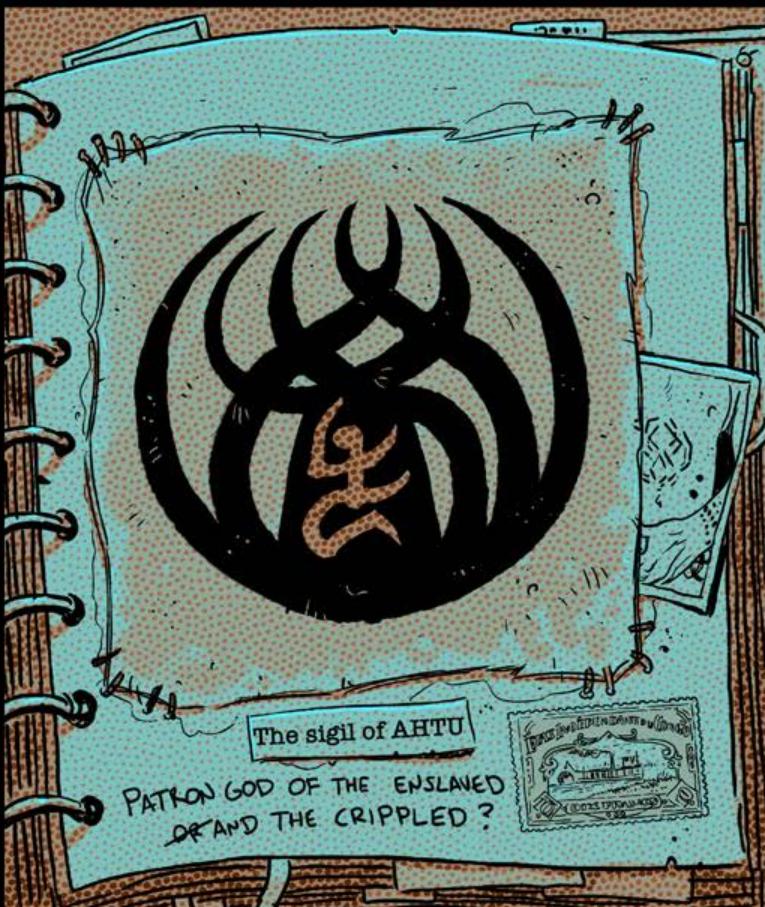




THE SIGIL OF AHTU



AUGUSTINE'S
OLD JOURNAL*...
I DON'T REMEMBER
LEAVING THAT LYING
ABOUT...?





IT IS DIFFICULT
ENOUGH AS IT IS...

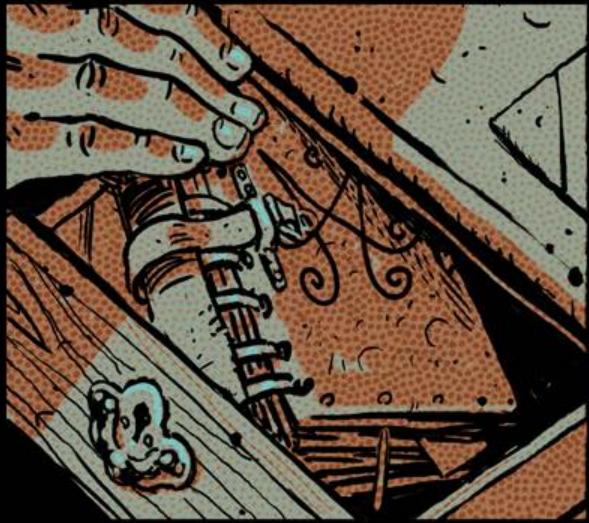


I READ SOMEWHERE
THAT IT WAS THE
BLESSING OF
MAN THAT THEY
CAN FORGET...



SO WHY
CAN'T I...?





IF IT WASN'T A
WEEKEND I COULD AT
LEAST TRY TO DISTRACT
MYSELF WITH WORK...

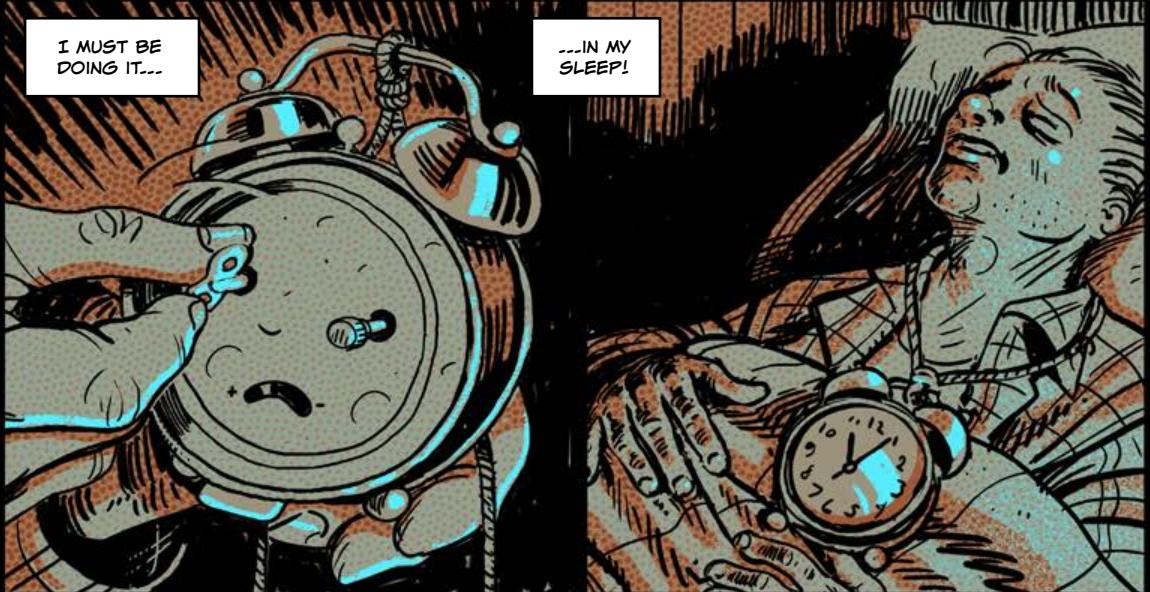
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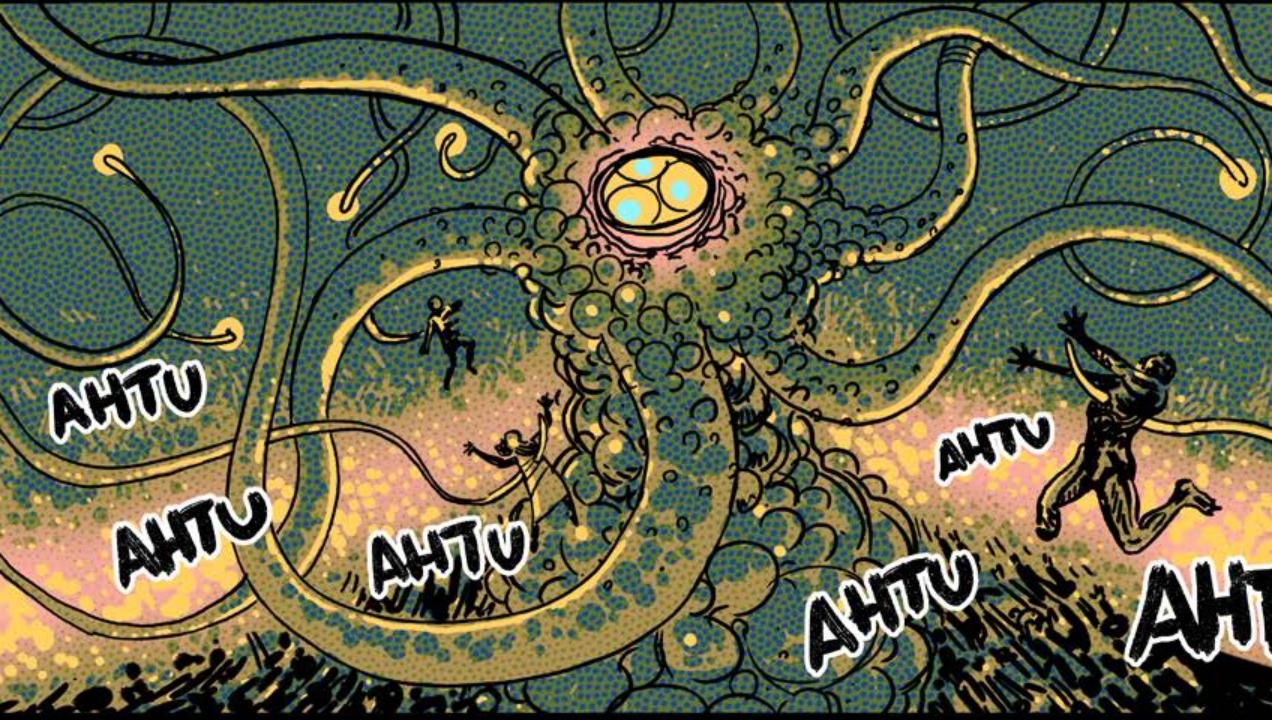


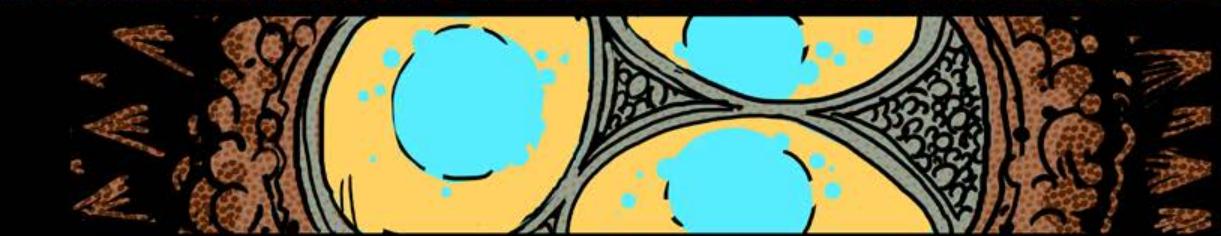
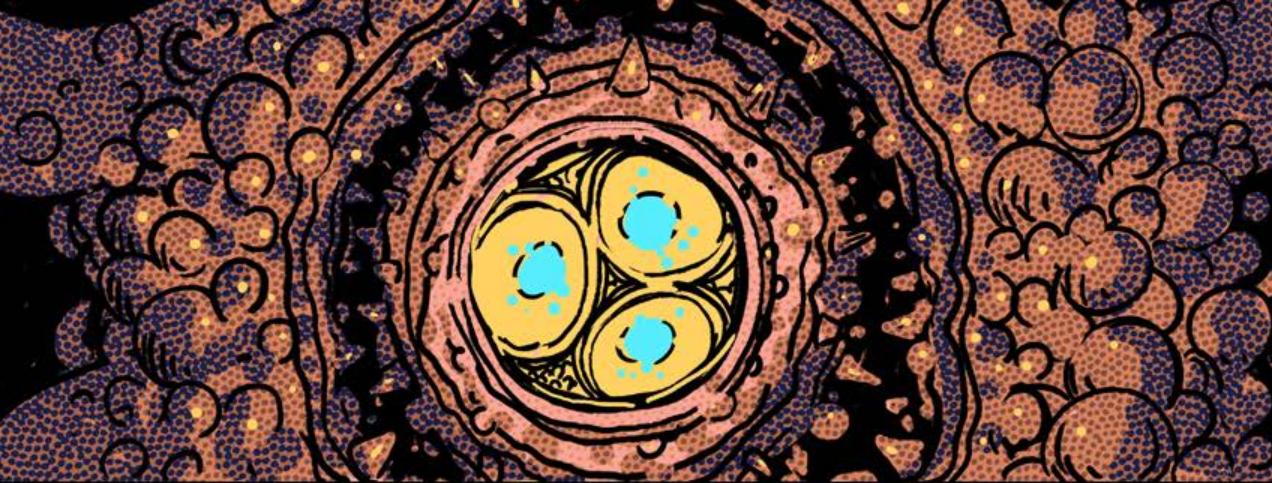
ONE MINUTE
AT A TIME...



...THAT'S
THE TRICK
OF IT.







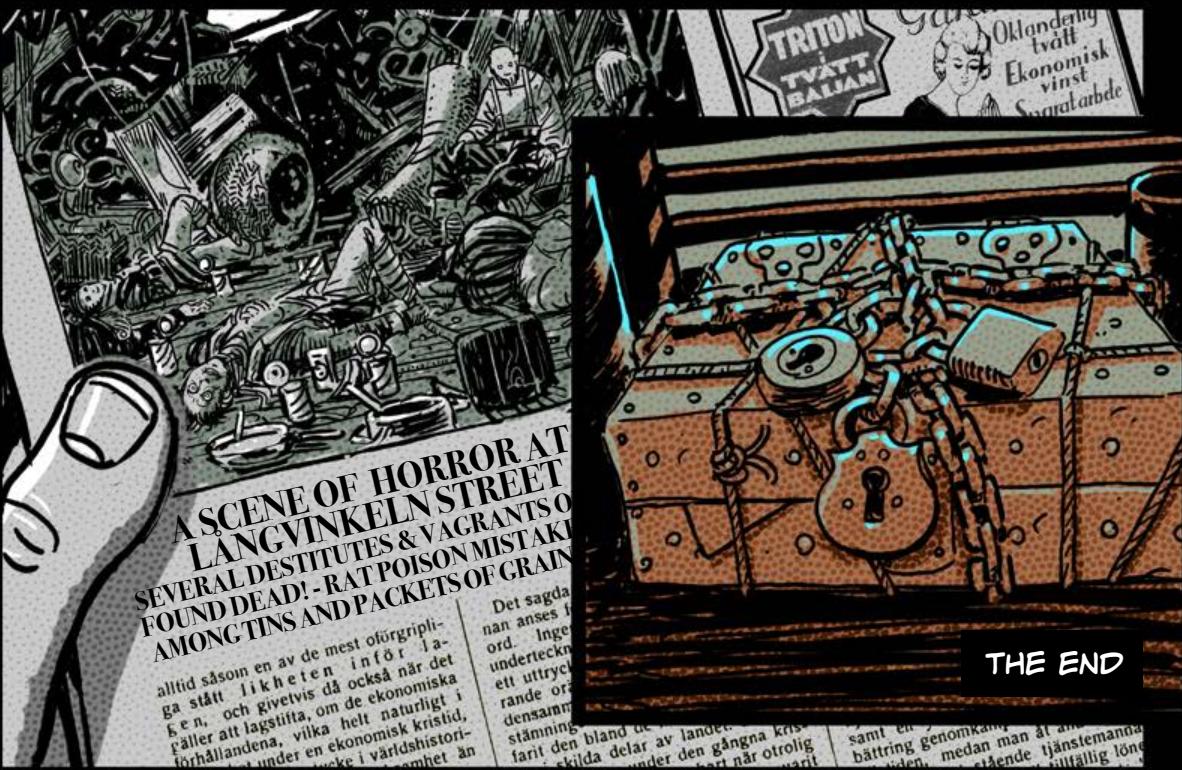






*= SEE 'THE ANGEL OF FEAR'





THE SILVER



Hello Viktor!

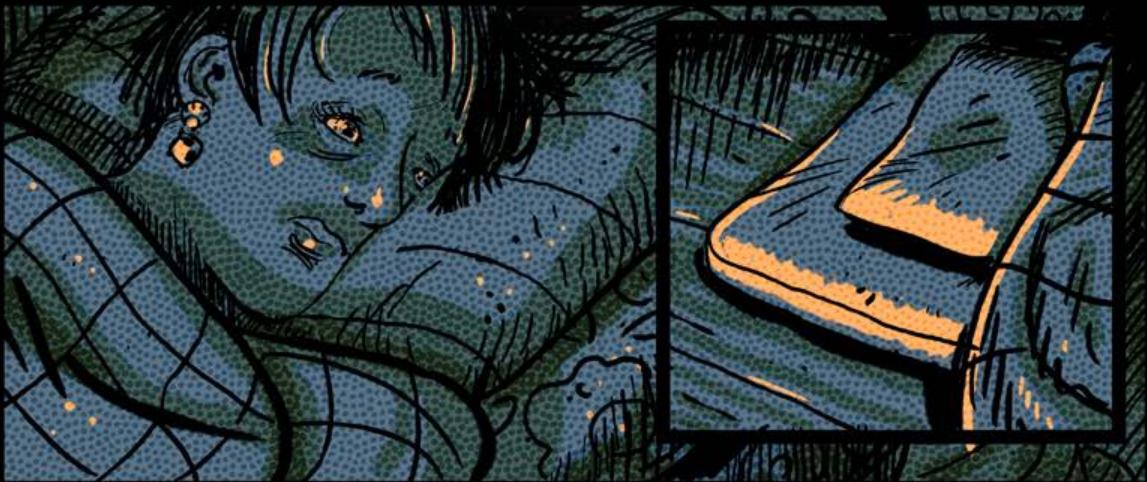
We have not seen you for a while! I hope you're not trying to break our tradition! This year me and Fredde will host our New-Year's at his uncle Harold's cabin! You remember, the tree nut? Harold had the good sense of timing to go missing recently and Fredde's family is looking after the place. Be at the railway station tomorrow at 9.30. See you there!

Jönsson

PS: Don't forget your camera.

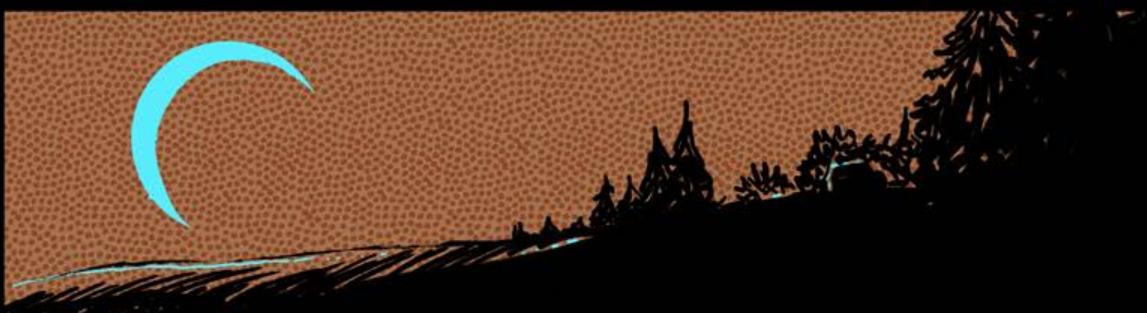












THE END

THE HOME

DAWN, APRIL 30, 1923
RÅA FISHING HARBOUR
12 KM SOUTH OF HELSINGBORG.



IT WAS IN THE LAST TREMBLING MOMENTS OF VALPURGIS NIGHT THAT THE TOME ALLOWED ITSELF TO BE REDICOVERED...



WRAPPED IN STAINED OILSKINS, NESTLED IN THE BLOATED ARMS OF THE UNSAVOURY CORPSE OF A FOREIGN SAILOR...



--WAS A THING OF OTHERWORLDLY BEAUTY, OF UNQUESTIONABLE ANTIQUITY, AND OF SOMETHING ELSE...



AN UNFATHOMABLE SINISTER ALLURE RADIATED FROM IT THAT COULD TURN EVEN THE MOST UNLETTERED OF MEN MAD WITH POSSESSIVE LUST.



SHORTLY AFTER IT'S DISCOVERY THE TOME DISSAPPEARED, THE SPECIALIST TASKED WITH INVESTIGATING THE BOOK TO ASCERTAIN ITS VALUE AND RIGHTFUL OWNER ALSO APPEARED TO VANISH FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH...

IT WAS BY RUMOUR WE FINALLY DISCOVERED
HIM, THE SELECT CIRCLE OF SPECIALIST
COLLECTORS OF WHOM I AM ONE...

WE ALL
GAVE HIM
OFFERS.
KINGS
RANSOMS
ALL...

HE WOULD NOT SELL
OR TRADE EVEN WHEN
I OFFERED HIM MY
ENTIRE COLLECTION.
CONSIDERED NOT
MAKING A SINGLE
FACSIMILE NOR TO LET
ANY OF US GET EVEN
A GLIMPSE OF IT.

HE WAS
GENEROUS
ONLY TO
DESCRIBE THE
MIND ALTERING
QUALITIES OF
THE TOME'S
INDISCRIBABLE
BRUSHWORK...

...IT'S ALIEN
SCRIPT, IN-
DECIPHERABLE
BY THE MIND
BUT SOMEHOW
READABLE BY
SOME WYRDING
WAY. I HAD TO
POSSESS IT!

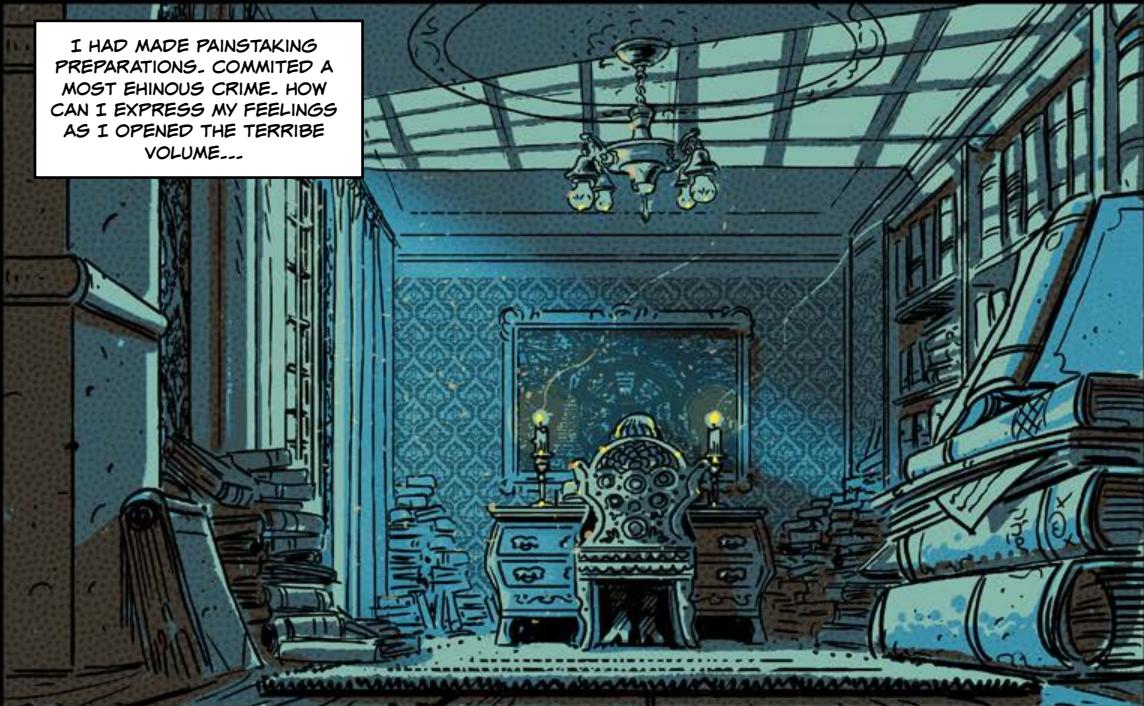
IT'S OWNER WOULD
NEVER, PERHAPS COULD
NEVER, PART WITH IT.
THE ONLY OPTION FOR
ME TO AQUIRE IT THEN
BECAME HORRIBLY YET
SEDUCATBLY OBVIOUS.

I HAD TORMENTED MYSELF
WITH BITTER SWEET
FANTASIES OF READING THE
TOME FOR LONG ENOUGH.

FINALLY!

IT
BELONGED
TO ME!

I HAD MADE PAINSTAKING PREPARATIONS. COMMITTED A MOST EHINOUS CRIME. HOW CAN I EXPRESS MY FEELINGS AS I OPENED THE TERRIBLE VOLUME...



...ABSORBING THE BLASPHEMOS SECRETS OF EACH PAGE SLOWLY AND WITHOUT NTERRUPTIONS. IT WAS...



EACH UPTURNED PAGE WAS... ECSTASY.



THE PATH TO MY STUDY MOST SUITABLE FOR AN INDRUDER WANTING TO AVOID DETECTION I HAD LEFT UNLOCKED AND ACCESSIBLE...



EXCEPT FOR ONE SMALL
DEADLY DETAIL AT THE VERY
FINAL STEP ON THE WAY...

A WIRE-SPRUNG TRAP
OF MY OWN MAKING...

A PUFF OF CYANIDE GAS
FROM A DEFTLY RIGGED
SODA SIPHON. DEATH
WAS ALMOST INSTANT. IT
ALLOWED ME TO SEE AND
ENJOY THE BURGLAR'S
DEATH THROWS...

THE TOME...
AS THE FOG RISES...
MY TOME...

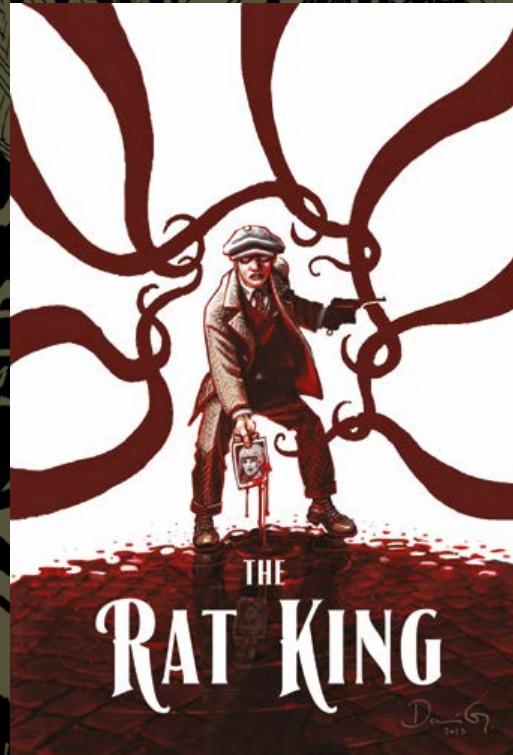
IF ONLY "ALMOST
INSTANT" HAD BEEN
QUICK ENOUGH...





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