



DHP™

DARK HORSE PRESENTS

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

GIVE ME LIBERTY

CONCRETE

ALIENS

THE AMERICAN

ROACHMILL

PLACEBO

BLACK CROSS

THE AERIALIST

HEARTBREAKERS

ALIENS VS

PREDATOR

SIN CITY



P PLACEBO



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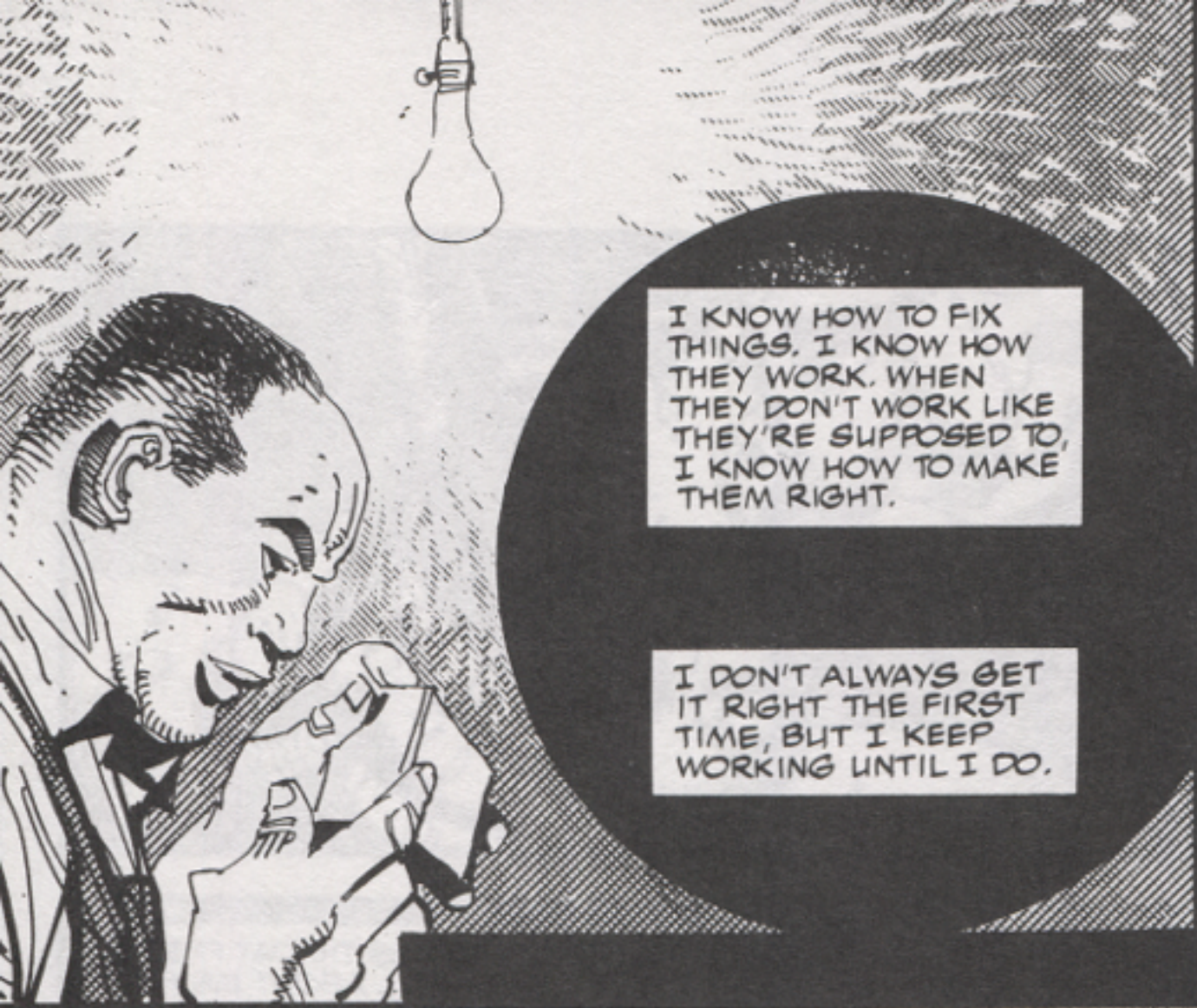
ANDREW VACHSS

The "Burke" novels that attorney Andrew Vachss writes (FLOOD, BLUE BELLE, HARD CANDY, etc.) sell millions of copies worldwide, win him fans in a half-dozen languages, and help to finance his real work: representing children in cases of neglect and abuse. "Placebo," the short story presented here, was recently performed in New York as a one-man, one-act play.

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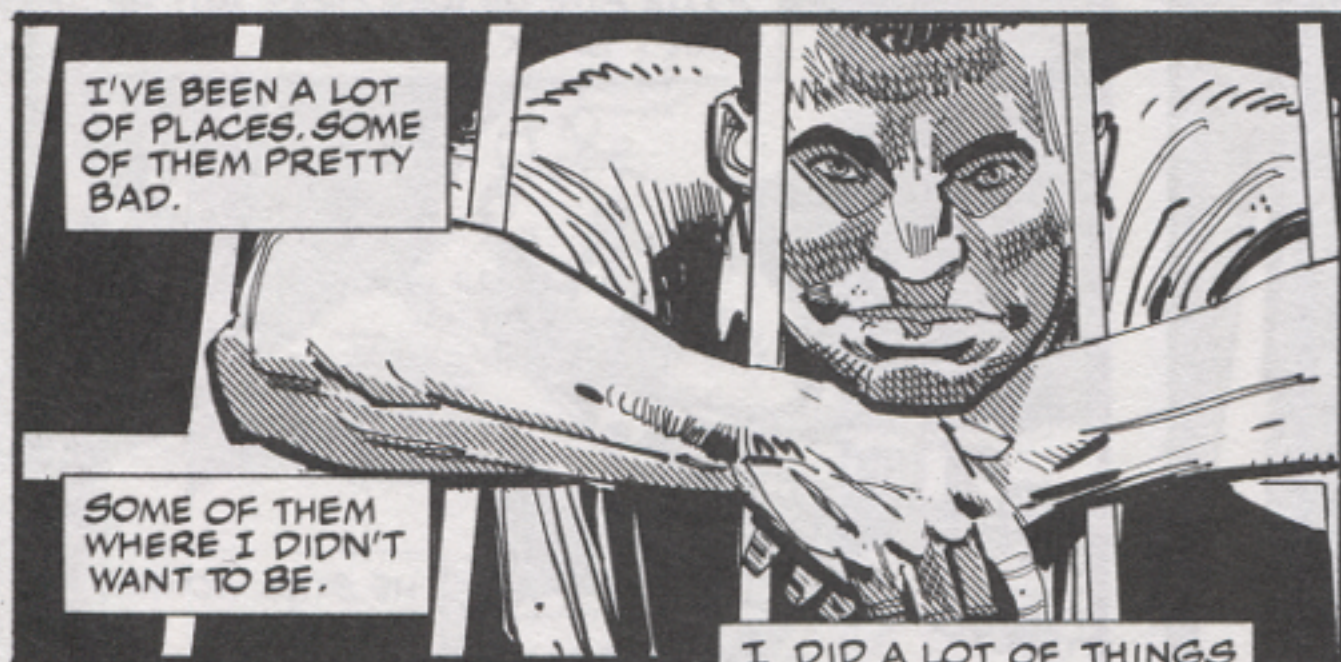
LAUS JANSON

Best known for his work with Frank Miller on DAREDEVIL and DARK KNIGHT, Klaus Janson has become an industry mainstay, pencilling and/or inking a number of major projects at both Marvel and DC. "Placebo" represents his first work for Dark Horse.



I KNOW HOW TO FIX THINGS. I KNOW HOW THEY WORK. WHEN THEY DON'T WORK LIKE THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO, I KNOW HOW TO MAKE THEM RIGHT.

I DON'T ALWAYS GET IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME, BUT I KEEP WORKING UNTIL I DO.



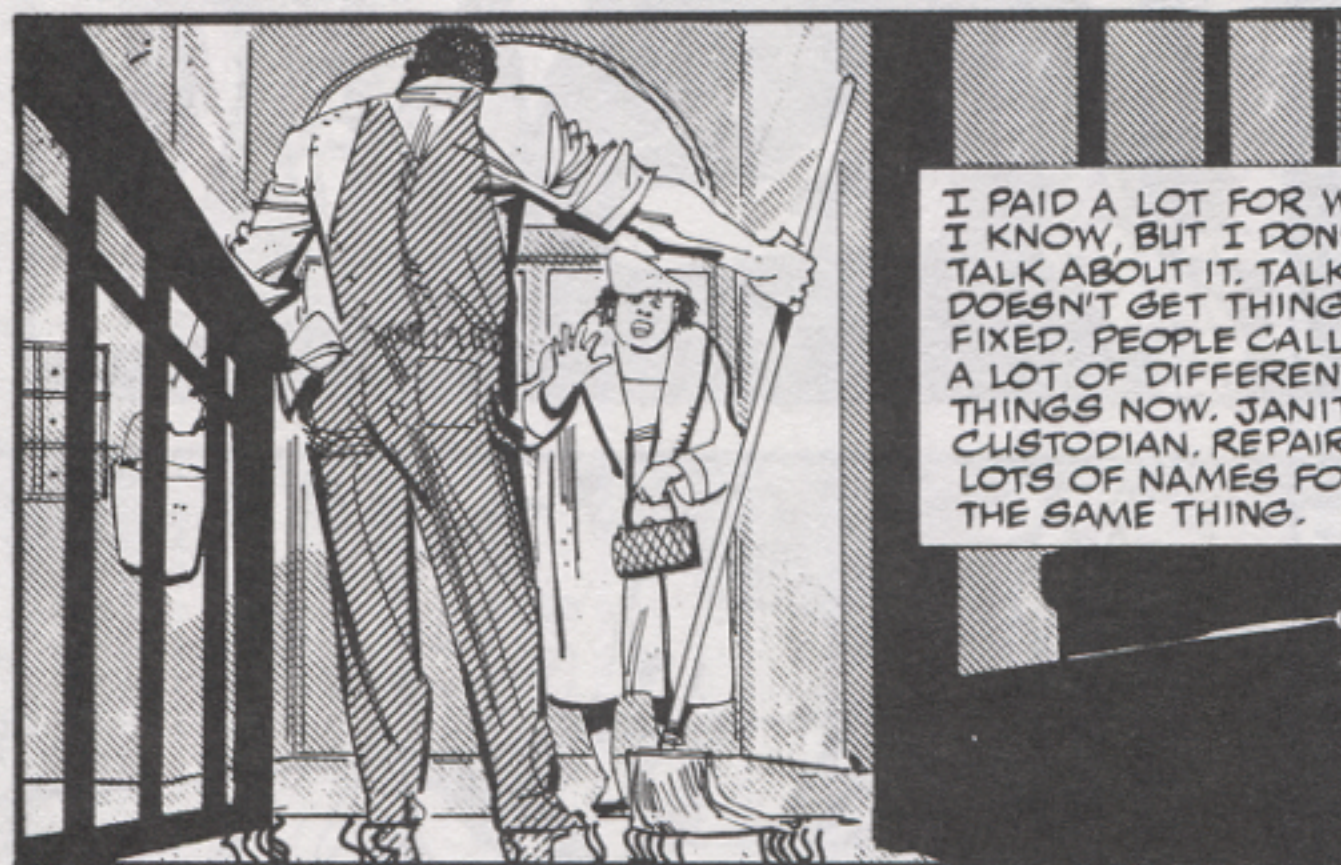
I'VE BEEN A LOT OF PLACES. SOME OF THEM PRETTY BAD.

SOME OF THEM WHERE I DIDN'T WANT TO BE.

I DID A LOT OF THINGS IN MY LIFE IN SOME OF THOSE PLACES.



IN THE BAD PLACES, I DID SOME BAD THINGS.




I PAID A LOT FOR WHAT I KNOW, BUT I DON'T TALK ABOUT IT. TALKING DOESN'T GET THINGS FIXED. PEOPLE CALL ME A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS NOW. JANITOR. CUSTODIAN. REPAIRMAN. LOTS OF NAMES FOR THE SAME THING.

PLACEBO




I LIVE IN THE BASEMENT. I TAKE CARE OF THE WHOLE BUILDING. SOMETHING GETS BROKE, THEY CALL ME.

I'M ALWAYS HERE.




I LIVE BY MYSELF. A DOG LIVES WITH ME. I HEARD A NOISE BEHIND MY BUILDING ONE NIGHT-- IT SOUNDED LIKE A KID CRYING.

I FOUND THE DOG




SOME FREAK WAS CARVING HIM UP FOR THE FUN OF IT.

I TOOK CARE OF THE FREAK.




THE FREAK CUT HIS THROAT PRETTY DEEP. I KNOW ALL ABOUT KNIFE WOUNDS. WHEN THE STITCHES CAME OUT, HE WAS OKAY, BUT HE CAN'T BARK.

HE STILL WORKS, THOUGH.




PEOPLE ASK ME TO FIX ALL KINDS OF THINGS. A GANG IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD USED TO GIVE THE PEOPLE A HARD TIME. I WENT UPSTAIRS AND TALKED TO THE GANG.



I HAD THE DOG WITH ME.

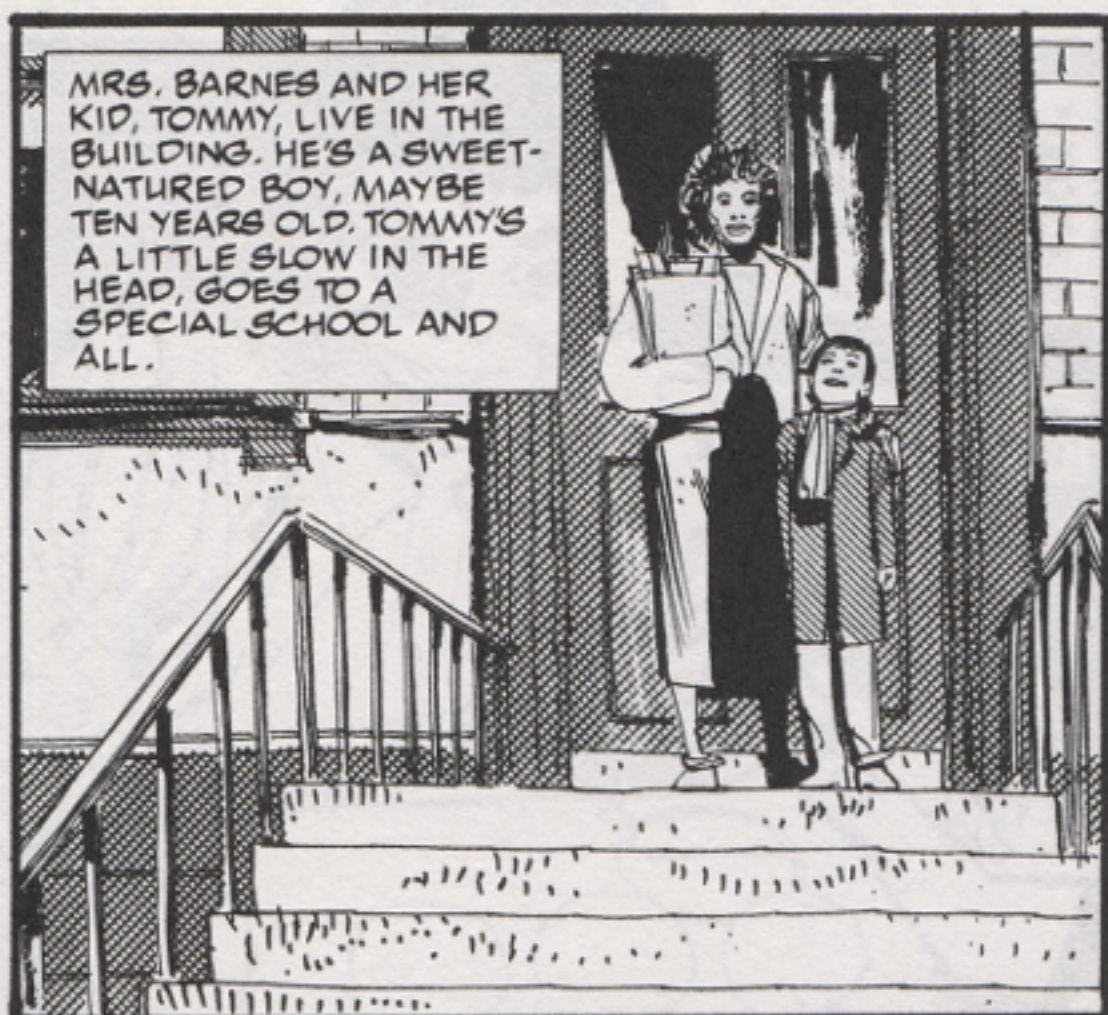
I DON'T MIX MUCH WITH THE PEOPLE. THEY PAY ME TO FIX THINGS-- I FIX THINGS. I DON'T TRY TO FIX THINGS FOR THE WHOLE WORLD, I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE WHOLE WORLD. JUST WHAT'S MINE.

I JUST CARE ABOUT DOING MY WORK.

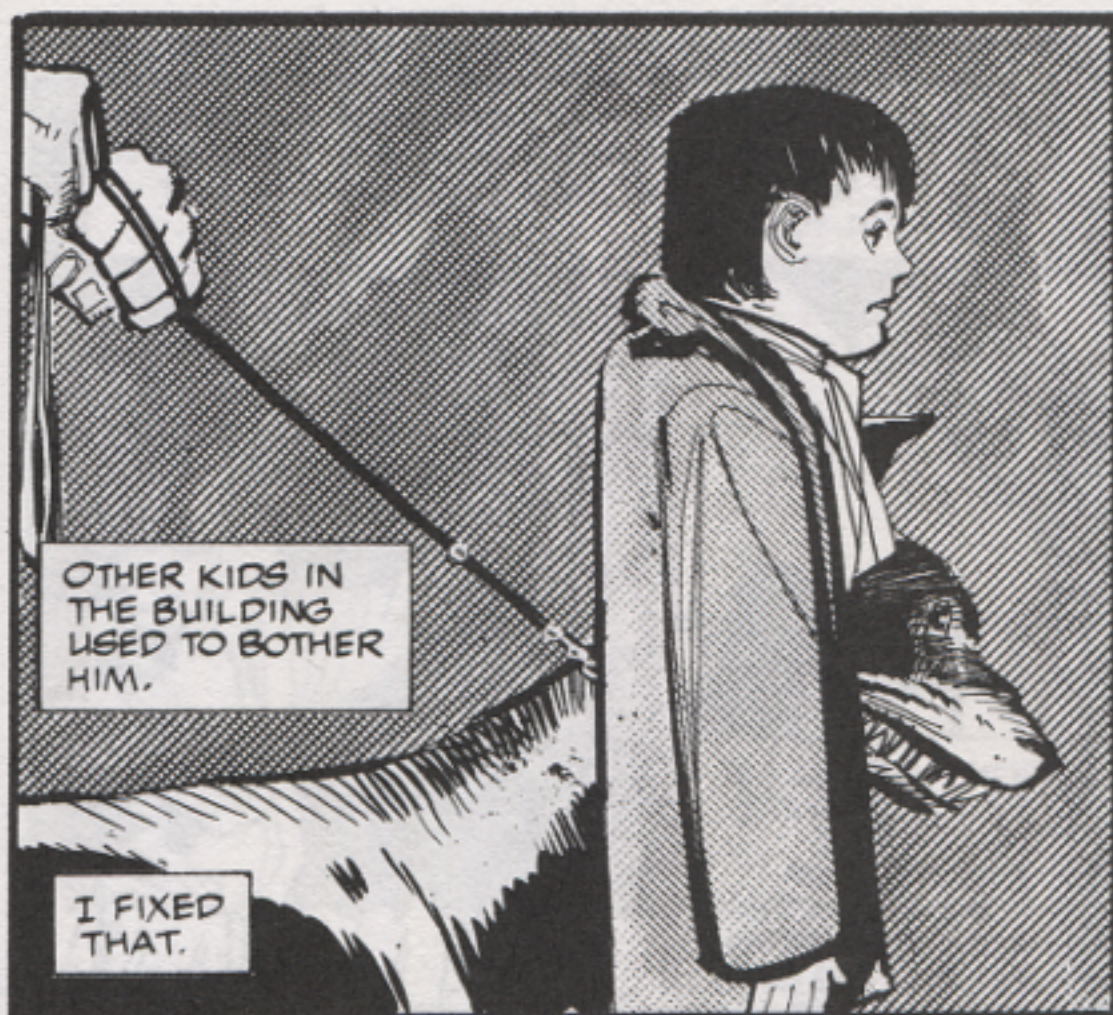


THE GANG WENT AWAY. I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY WENT.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

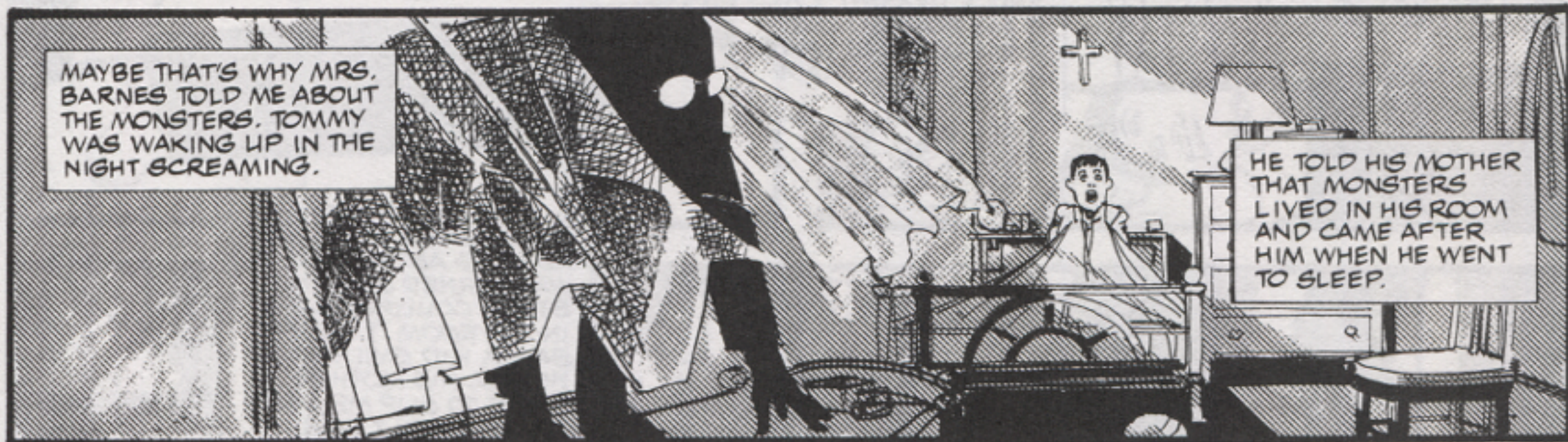


MRS. BARNES AND HER KID, TOMMY, LIVE IN THE BUILDING. HE'S A SWEET-NATURED BOY, MAYBE TEN YEARS OLD. TOMMY'S A LITTLE SLOW IN THE HEAD, GOES TO A SPECIAL SCHOOL AND ALL.



OTHER KIDS IN THE BUILDING USED TO BOTHER HIM.

I FIXED THAT.



MAYBE THAT'S WHY MRS. BARNES TOLD ME ABOUT THE MONSTERS. TOMMY WAS WAKING UP IN THE NIGHT SCREAMING.

HE TOLD HIS MOTHER THAT MONSTERS LIVED IN HIS ROOM AND CAME AFTER HIM WHEN HE WENT TO SLEEP.



I TOLD HER THAT SHE SHOULD TAKE TOMMY TO SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HOW TO FIX THESE THINGS.

SHE TOLD ME HE HAD SOMEBODY-- A THERAPIST AT HIS SPECIAL SCHOOL. DR. ENGLISH. HE WAS LIKE A FATHER, SHE SAID.

THE BOY COMES DOWN TO THE BASEMENT HIMSELF. THE DOG LIKES HIM.



ONE DAY HE TOLD ME ABOUT THE MONSTERS HIMSELF. ASKED ME TO FIX IT.



I THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

FINALLY I TOLD HIM I COULD DO IT.

I CHECKED THE ROOM FOR MONSTERS. HE TOLD ME THEY ONLY CAME AT NIGHT. I TOLD HIM I COULD FIX IT BUT IT WOULD TAKE ME A FEW DAYS. THE BOY WAS REAL HAPPY.

TOMMY TELLS ME HE LIKES TO SIT ON THE FIRE ESCAPE AND WATCH THE OTHER KIDS PLAY DOWN BELOW. IT'S ON THE SECOND FLOOR, SO HE CAN SEE THEM GOOD.

I DID SOME READING, AND I THOUGHT I HAD IT ALL FIGURED OUT. THE MONSTERS WERE IN HIS HEAD. I MADE A MACHINE.

I SHOWED HIM HOW TO TURN IT ON. THE LIGHTS FLASHED IN A RANDOM SEQUENCE.

THE BOY STARED AT IT FOR A LONG TIME.

I TOLD HIM THIS WAS A MACHINE FOR MONSTERS. AS LONG AS THE MACHINE WAS TURNED ON, MONSTERS COULDN'T COME IN HIS ROOM. I NEVER SAW A KID SMILE LIKE HE DID. HIS MOTHER TRIED TO SLIP ME A FEW BUCKS WHEN I WAS LEAVING.

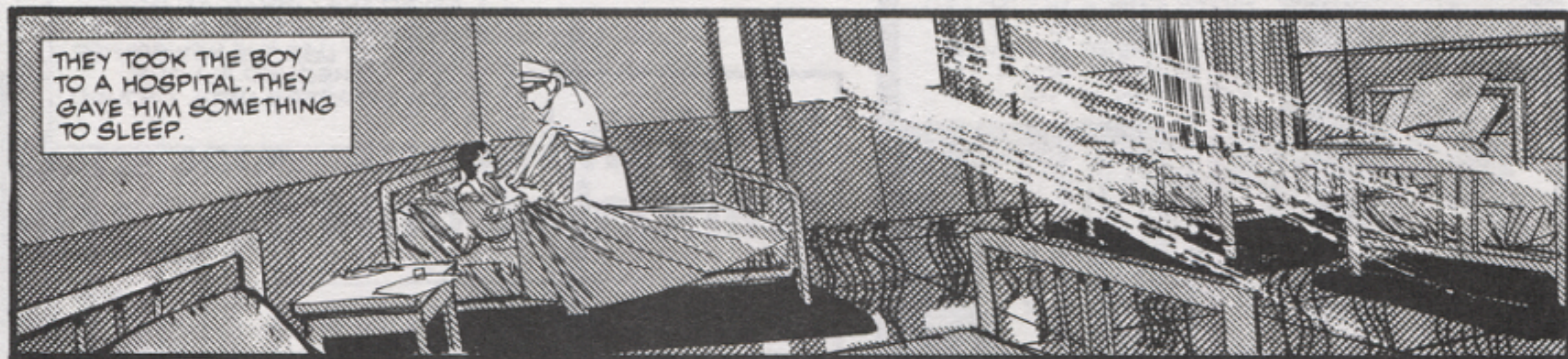
I DIDN'T TAKE IT. I NEVER DO. FIXING THINGS IS MY JOB.

I GO TO THE LIBRARY A LOT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THINGS WORK. I LOOKED UP "PLACEBO" IN THE BIG DICTIONARY THEY HAVE THERE. IT MEANS A FAKE, BUT A FAKE THAT SOMEBODY BELIEVES IN. LIKE GIVING A SUGAR PILL TO A GUY IN A LOT OF PAIN AND TELLING HIM IT'S MORPHINE. IT DOESN'T REALLY WORK BY ITSELF-- IT'S ALL IN YOUR MIND.

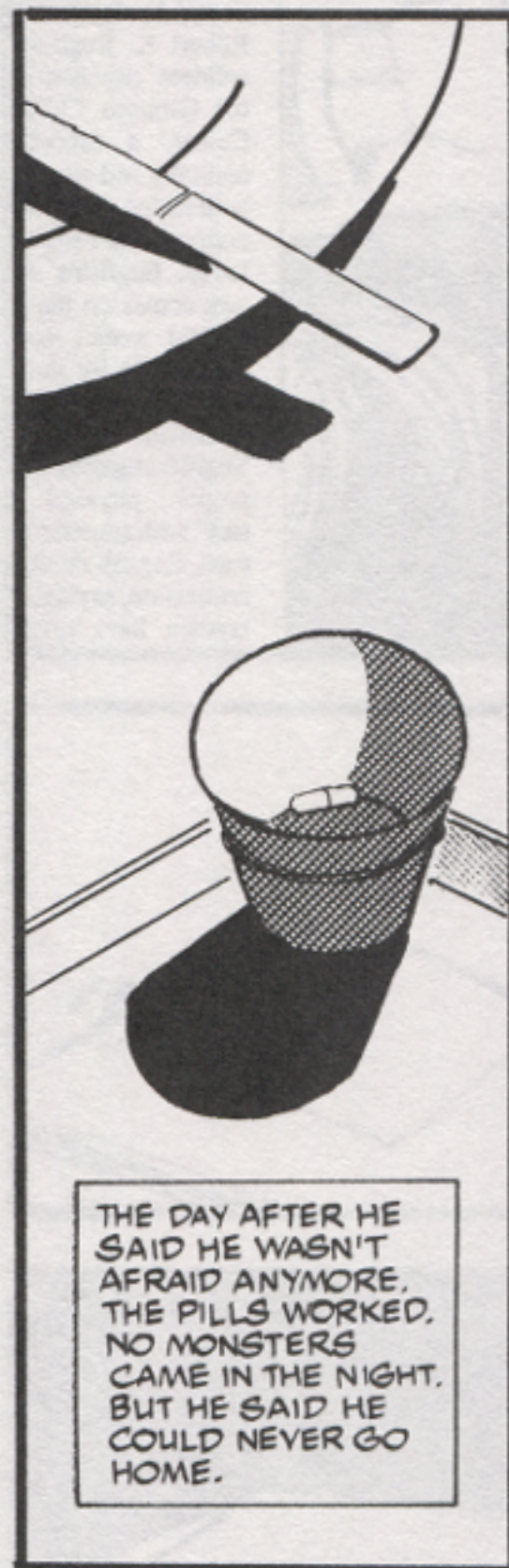
ONE NIGHT TOMMY WOKE UP SCREAMING AND HE DIDN'T STOP. HIS MOTHER RANG MY BUZZER AND I WENT UP TO THE APARTMENT. TOMMY SAID THE MACHINE DIDN'T WORK ANYMORE.

I SAW THE BOY EVERY DAY AFTER THAT. HE STOPPED BEING SCARED. HIS MOTHER TOLD ME SHE HAD A TALK WITH DR. ENGLISH. HE TOLD HER THE MACHINE I MADE WAS A "PLACEBO," AND THAT TOMMY WOULD ALWAYS NEED THERAPY.

HE WASN'T MAD AT ME, BUT HE SAID HE COULDN'T GO BACK TO SLEEP. EVER.



THEY TOOK THE BOY
TO A HOSPITAL. THEY
GAVE HIM SOMETHING
TO SLEEP.



THE DAY AFTER HE
SAID HE WASN'T
AFRAID ANYMORE.
THE PILLS WORKED.
NO MONSTERS
CAME IN THE NIGHT.
BUT HE SAID HE
COULD NEVER GO
HOME.

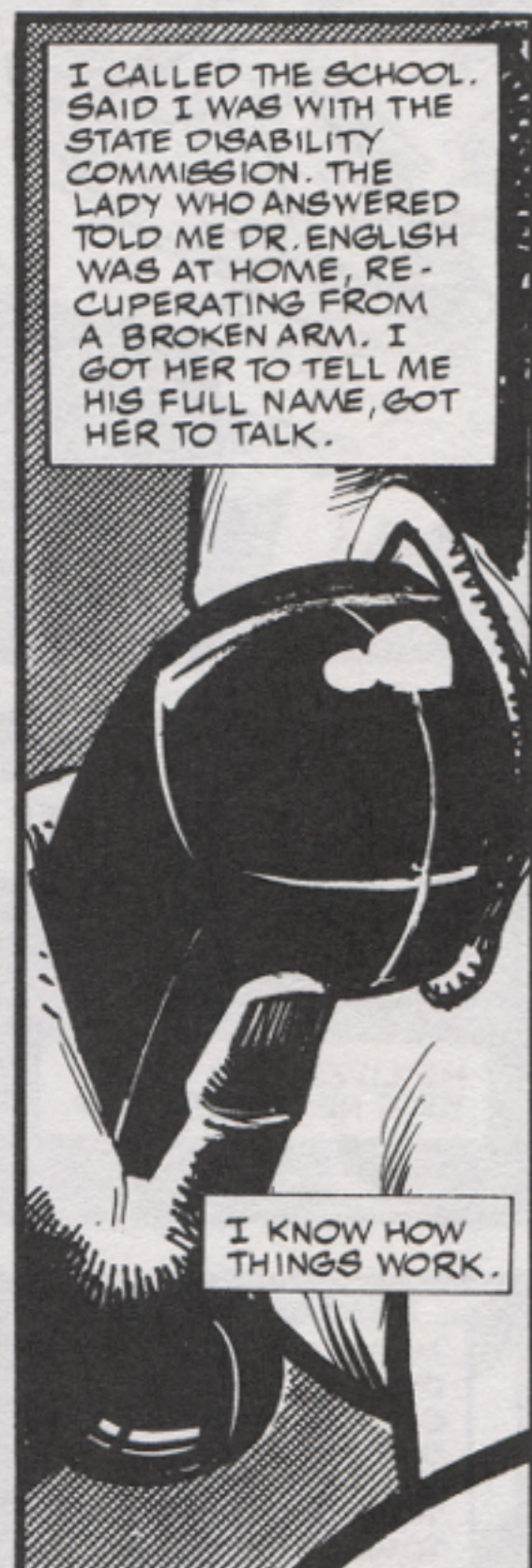


HE ASKED IF
I COULD BUILD
HIM A STRONGER
MACHINE.

I TOLD HIM
I'D WORK ON
IT.

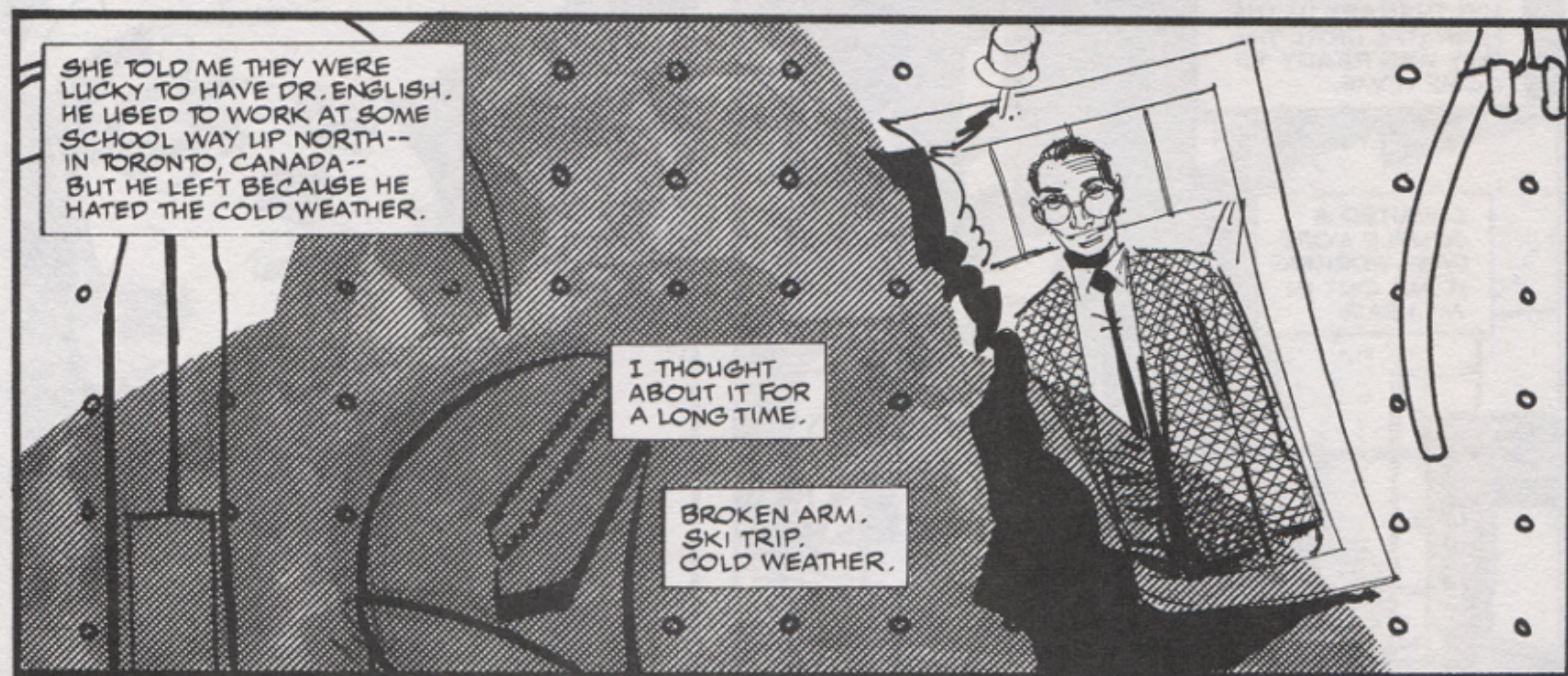


HIS MOTHER SAID
SHE CALLED DR.
ENGLISH AT THE
SPECIAL SCHOOL,
BUT THEY SAID
HE WAS OUT FOR
A FEW DAYS.
HURT HIMSELF
ON A SKI TRIP
OR SOMETHING.



I CALLED THE SCHOOL.
SAID I WAS WITH THE
STATE DISABILITY
COMMISSION. THE
LADY WHO ANSWERED
TOLD ME DR. ENGLISH
WAS AT HOME, RE-
CUPERATING FROM
A BROKEN ARM. I
GOT HER TO TELL ME
HIS FULL NAME, GOT
HER TO TALK.

I KNOW HOW
THINGS WORK.



SHE TOLD ME THEY WERE
LUCKY TO HAVE DR. ENGLISH.
HE USED TO WORK AT SOME
SCHOOL WAY UP NORTH--
IN TORONTO, CANADA--
BUT HE LEFT BECAUSE HE
HATED THE COLD WEATHER.

I THOUGHT
ABOUT IT FOR
A LONG TIME.

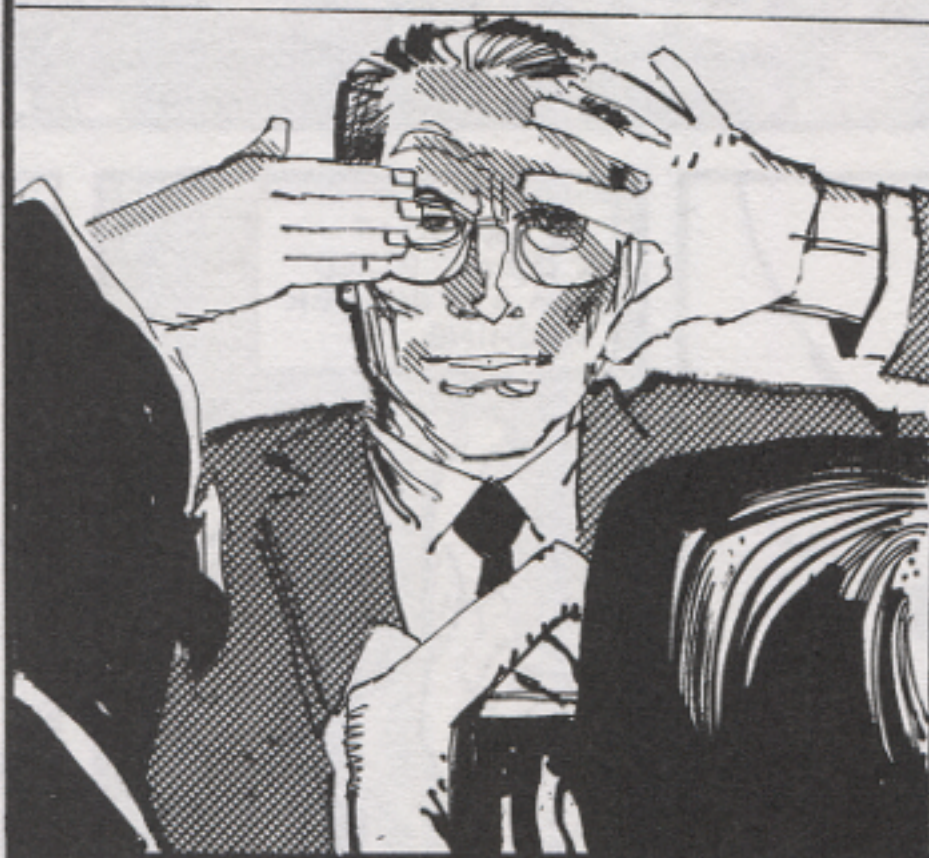
BROKEN ARM.
SKI TRIP.
COLD WEATHER.

THE LIBRARIAN KNOWS ME. SHE SAYS I'M HER BEST CUSTOMER BECAUSE I NEVER CHECK BOOKS OUT. I ALWAYS READ THEM RIGHT THERE. I NEVER WRITE STUFF DOWN-- I KEEP IT IN MY HEAD.



I ASKED THE LIBRARIAN SOME QUESTIONS AND SHE SHOWED ME HOW TO USE THE NEWSPAPER INDEX. I CHECKED ALL THE TORONTO PAPERS UNTIL I FOUND IT.

English leaves post after scandal at boarding school



Toronto — Saying he could no longer perform his duties if his "evaluation" is to be questioned by laymen, Robert K. English, resident psychiatrist at the Gilmore Child Center, a school for mentally and emotionally disabled children, announced his resignation today. English's departure comes on the heels of last week's accusation, made by the parents of the as yet unnamed child, English engaged in "proper physical contact" with students in his care. English denies the accusation, saying, "Laymen have misin-

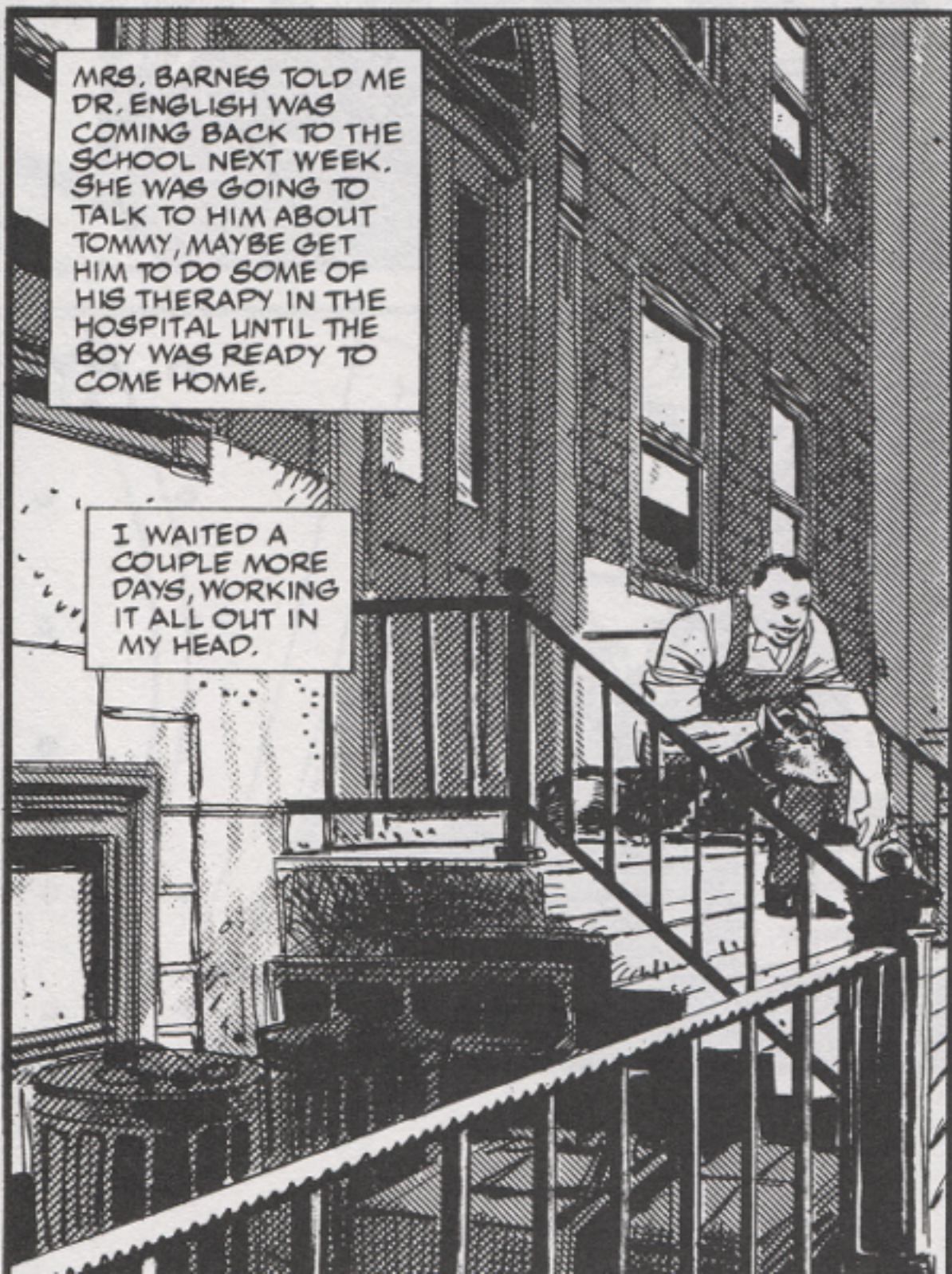
DR. ENGLISH WAS LISTED IN THE PHONEBOOK.

HE LIVES IN A REAL NICE NEIGHBORHOOD.

English
Rachel 1017th Ave...
Robert K. MD

MRS. BARNES TOLD ME DR. ENGLISH WAS COMING BACK TO THE SCHOOL NEXT WEEK. SHE WAS GOING TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT TOMMY, MAYBE GET HIM TO DO SOME OF HIS THERAPY IN THE HOSPITAL UNTIL THE BOY WAS READY TO COME HOME.

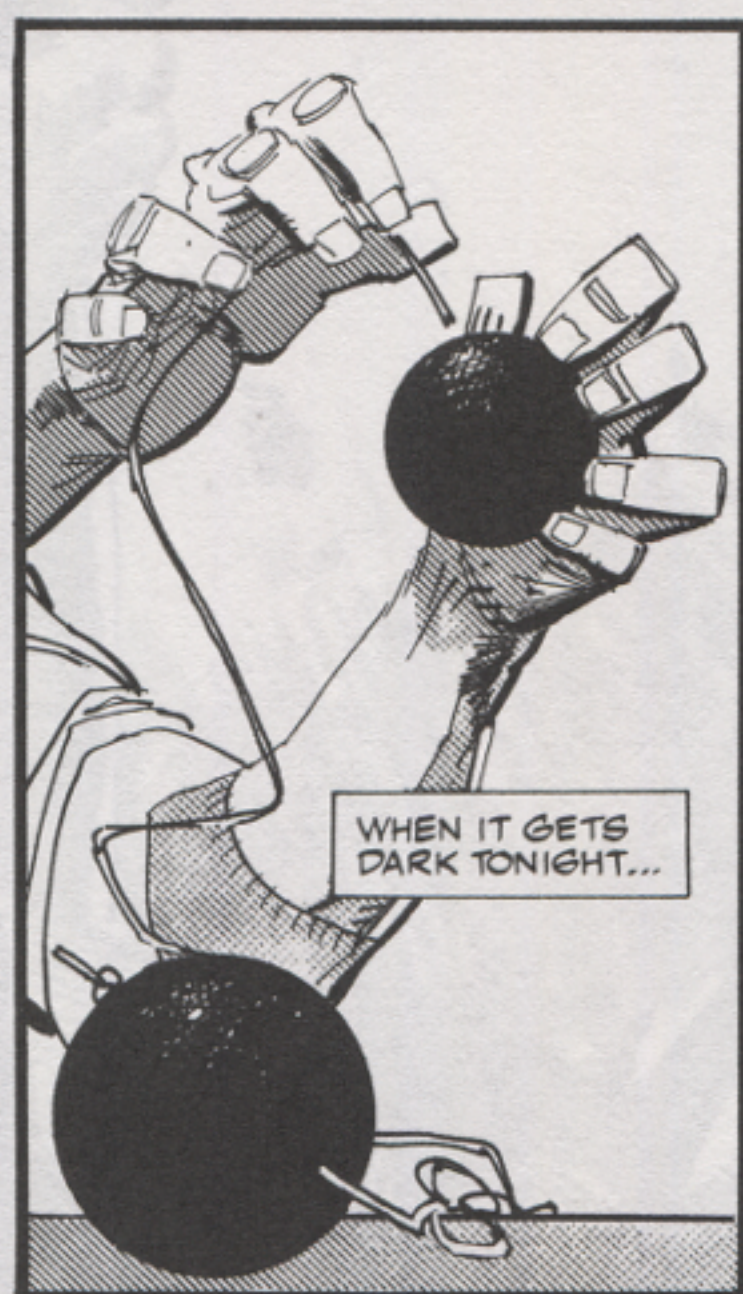
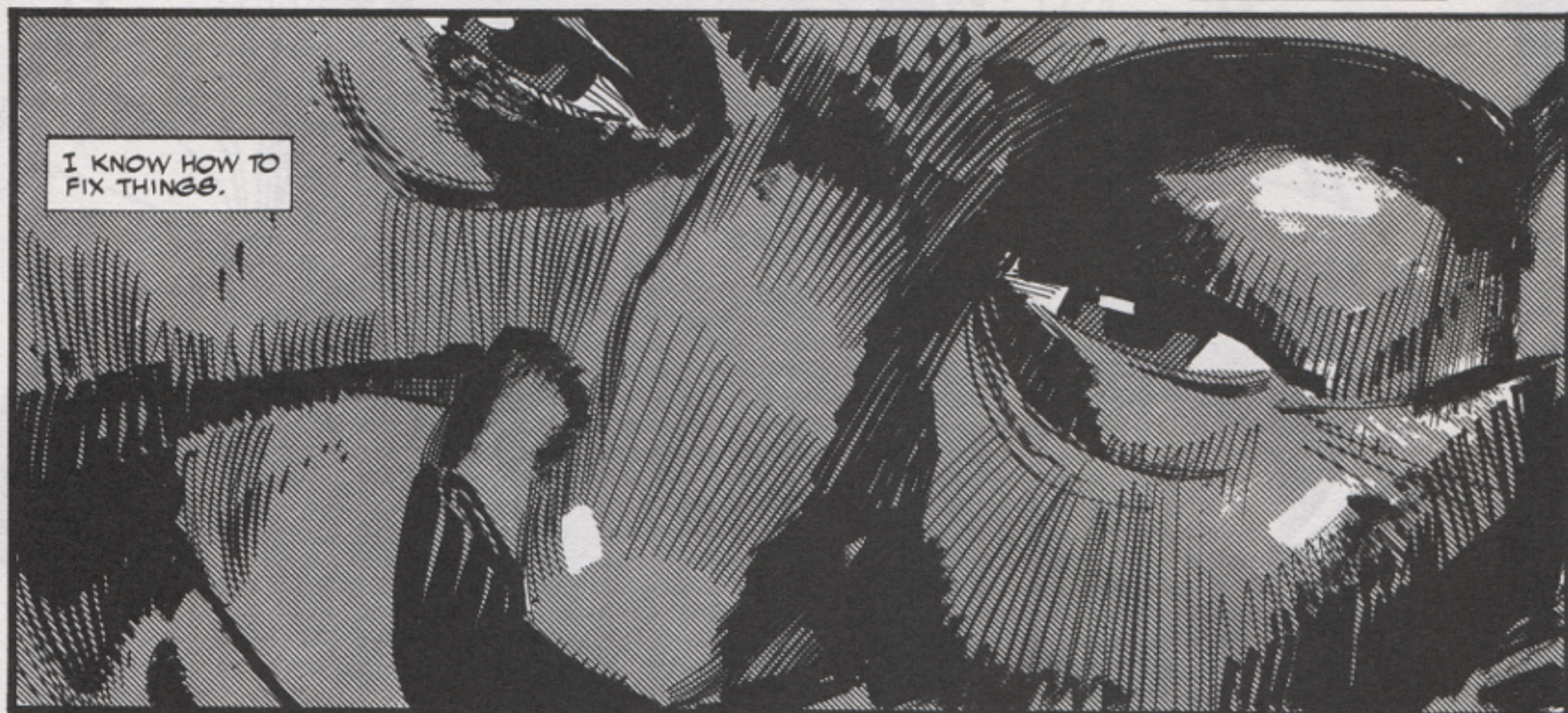
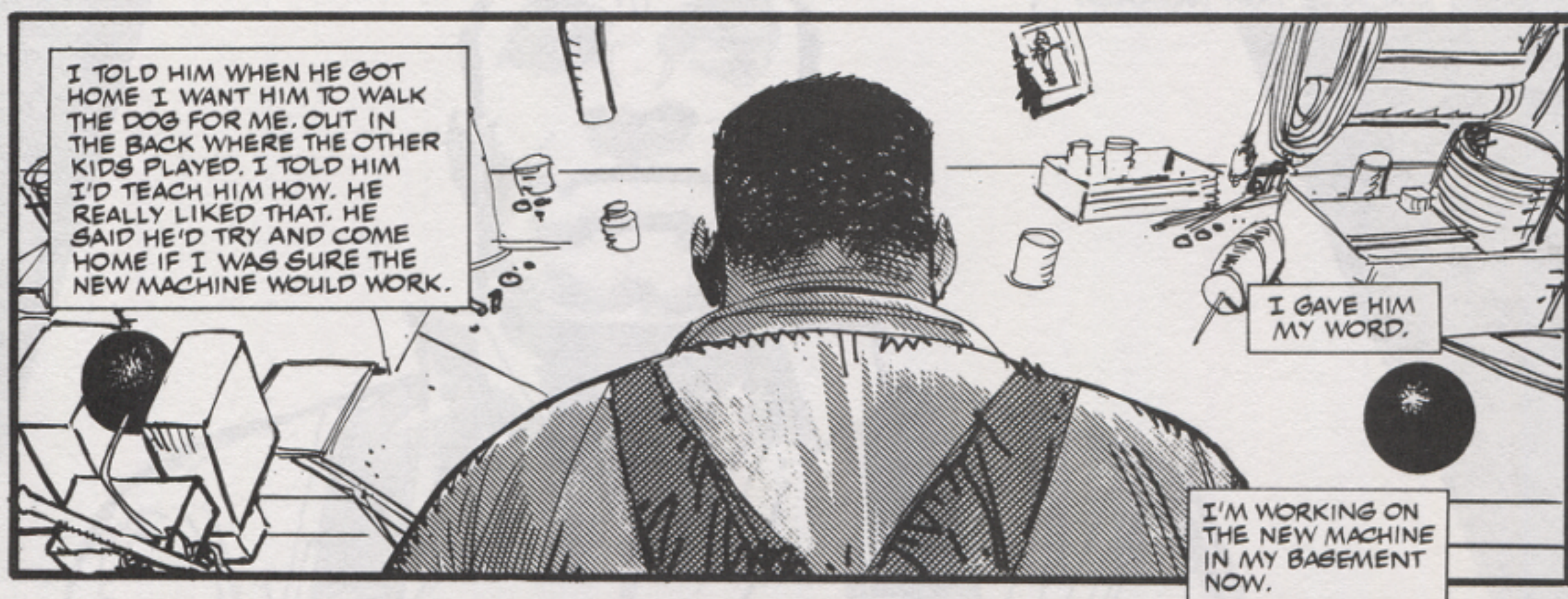
I WAITED A COUPLE MORE DAYS, WORKING IT ALL OUT IN MY HEAD.



I TOLD TOMMY I KNEW HOW TO STOP THE MONSTERS FOR SURE NOW.

I TOLD HIM I WAS BUILDING A NEW MACHINE -- I'D HAVE IT READY FOR HIM NEXT WEEK.





I'LL SHOW DR. ENGLISH A
MACHINE THAT WORKS.



Janson 90