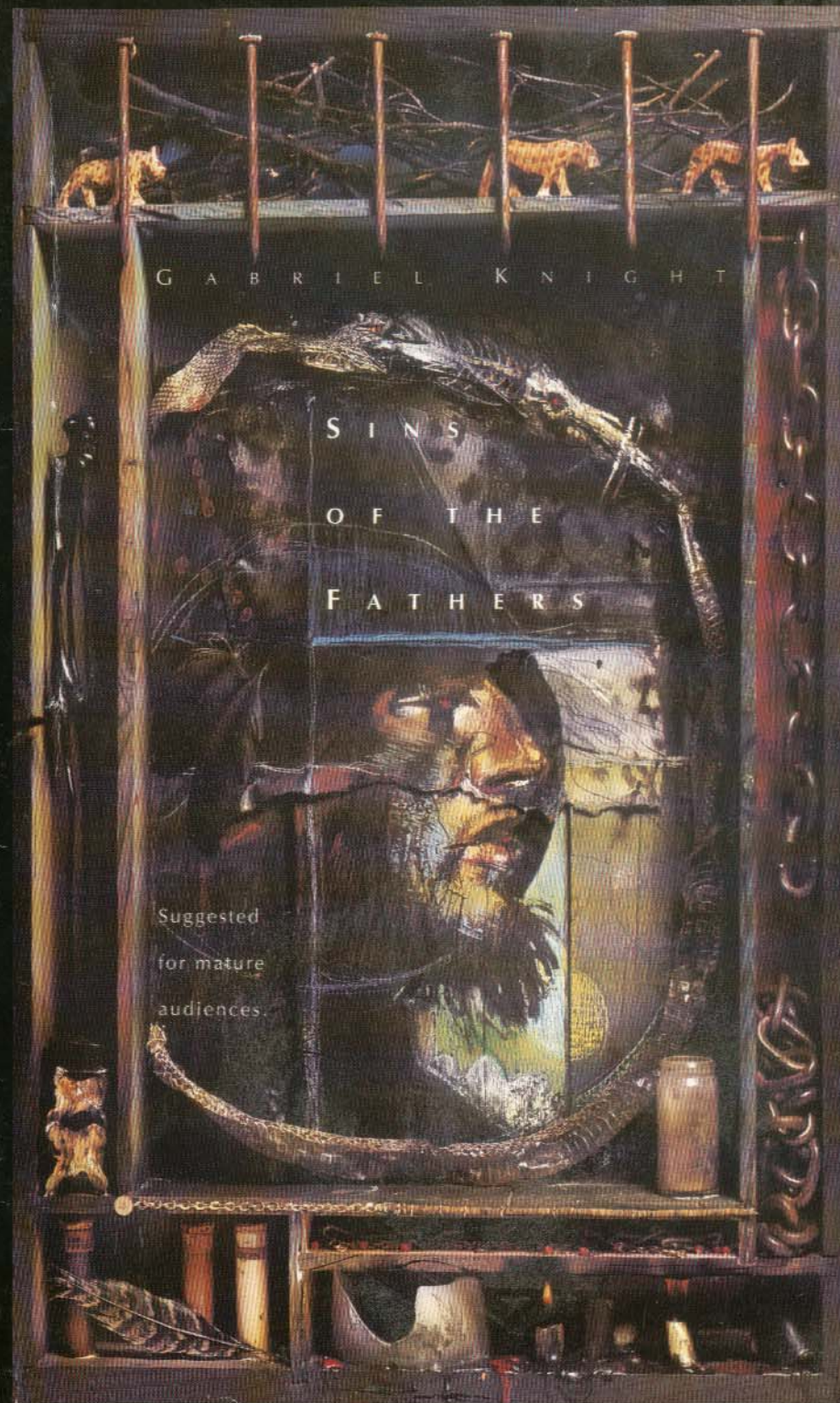




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# Sins of the Fathers

Illustrations by Terese Nielsen



In the woods, outside Charleston, South Carolina.

June, 1693



THE VILLAGE ELDERS GATHER AT THE SITE OF A BRUTAL, RITUALISTIC MURDER.

"WHAT SAYEST THOU,  
MAYOR CRODWELL?"

ALL EYES TURN TO A  
SHORT, SQUARE MAN...

"NOT AGAIN!"

"THIS IS THE SIXTH..."

"I SAY... DEVILS FROM  
HELL ARE AMONG US!"

"TIS WORSE THAN THE  
TROUBLE THEY HAD UP NORTH."

"...MOTHER OF GOD PROTECT US!"

THE GRIM VIGIL IS BROKEN BY THE  
SOUND OF A HORSEMAN'S  
GALLOPING APPROACH.

AN ODDLY DRESSED STRANGER  
DISMOUNTS...

"THOU ART THE WITCH-HUNTER?"

"JA. HERR RITTER. AS THOU REQUESTED."

"AND PAID WELL FOR. I AM MAYOR  
CRODWELL, AND THESE GOOD BROTHERS ARE FROM  
THE CHARLESTON COUNCIL."

"I TRUST THY JOURNEY OVER THE  
SEAS WAS UNEVENTFUL?"

"I WAS WELL PROTECTED."

"SO SHALL WE BE, NOW  
THAT THOU ART WITH US."



THE WITCH-HUNTER REJECTS FURTHER FORMALITIES, TURNING  
INSTEAD TO THE GORY SCENE SPREAD OUT BEFORE HIM...

"TIS THE WORK OF WITCHES,  
IF NOT THE DEVIL HIMSELF!"

"I MUST MAKE THAT DETERMINATION,  
HERR CRODWELL."

"...THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT."

"THE WITCH-HUNTER WILL  
FIND THE GUILTY ONE!"

"THANK JEHOVAH!"

"WELL?"

WHEN THE WITCH-HUNTER FINALLY  
ANSWERS, HIS VOICE IS GRIM...

"JA. IT IS WITCHCRAFT..."

THE SOUND OF A DELICATE FOOTFALL  
QUIETS THE ANGRY MEN. INTO THEIR  
MIDST COMES ONE WHO SHINES LIKE  
COPPER IN THE BRIGHT MOONLIT NIGHT.

"ELIZA, WHY ART THOU HERE?"

"A LETTER FOR THE WITCH-  
HUNTER, MASTER."

"GIVE IT TO ME, CHILD."

AS THEIR EYES MEET, SOMETHING PASSES  
BETWEEN THE WITCH-HUNTER AND THE SLAVE--  
SOMETHING LIKE...

...RECOGNITION.





Dear Father,

I recieved thy missive - I  
know thou art angry - but my  
journey here was not in Vain.

The colonists here have stumbled  
upon a true Evil - magic dark &  
olde - It is unlike anything I  
have seen on the continent -

Please write me more about  
thy work in St. Dominique -  
there is a pattern around the

bodies that recalls thy stories  
of those killings, I shall begin  
to question the local slaves. Do  
not fear - the Talisman will  
protect me. I only do my best to  
fill thy shoes as Schattenjäger -  
beloved Father. As thou has oft  
told me - We must prepare to  
sacrifice all - Your son

*Hunter*





AT THE END OF A SCORCHING SUMMER DAY SPENT INVESTIGATING, GUNTER RITTER FINDS HIMSELF AT THE SLAVE QUARTERS OF MAYOR CROWDWELL. THE SIGHT OF A FAMILIAR FIGURE IS A WELCOME RELIEF...



"MISTRESS ELIZA, MIGHT I TROUBLE THEE?"



"IT IS VERY HOT IN THY COLONY. WOULDST THOU HAVE SOME WATER?"



"IT IS NOT MY COLONY. COME INSIDE BEFORE YOU FALL DOWN."



"SO, YOU ARE THE FAMOUS WITCH-HUNTER?"

"THAT IS WHY I AM HERE."

"WHY DO YOU DO THAT-- HUNT WITCHES?"

"THERE ARE THINGS THAT... SHOULD NOT BE."



"HAHI YES, WITCH-HUNTER, THERE ARE MANY THINGS WHICH SHOULD NOT BE."



"TELL ME ABOUT THYSELF, ELIZA."

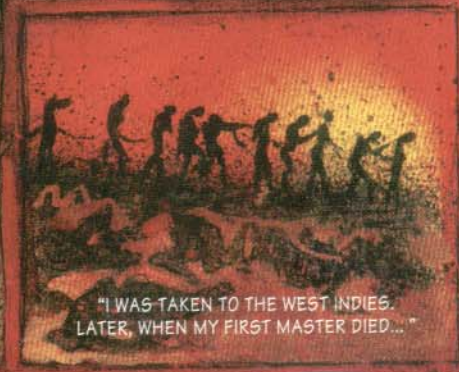
THE WOMAN STARES AT HER QUESTIONER, UNABLE TO FATHOM HIS INTEREST. BUT WHEN HIS FACE REMAINS SINCERE, SHE FINDS HERSELF SPEAKING. THE BITTERNESS IN HER VOICE SURPRISES HER.



"WHAT IS THERE TO TELL? MY REAL NAME IS TETELO."



"FEW SURVIVED THE SLAVERS."



"I WAS TAKEN TO THE WEST INDIES. LATER, WHEN MY FIRST MASTER DIED..."



"...I WAS BOUGHT BY CROWDWELL. HE BROUGHT ME HERE."

"IS HE GOOD TO THEE?"

"GOOD? ARE YOU MAD, WITCH-HUNTER?"



THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN, BREAKING THE MOMENT...

"HERR RITTER, I DID NOT EXPECT TO FIND THEE STILL ABOUT."



"ELIZA! MY PRETTY ONE..."



"IT IS LONG PAST SUNSET."



GUNTER FINDS HIMSELF STRANGELY EMBARRASSED.

"I WAS JUST LEAVING. GOOD NIGHT, MAYOR."



THE NEXT DAY GUNTER FOLLOWS A LEAD TO THE CROW'S NEST-- A SEAMAN'S TAVERN.



"SO THE VICTIMS HAVE ALL BEEN SEAMEN?"

"SWAT I SAID. MEN AROUND HERE ARE GETTIN' AWFUL JUMPY. LAST MAN WHAT WENT DOWN'S A CAPTAIN."

"NAY, E'D BEEN A SLAYER ONCT, BUT GAVE IT UP, YA KNOW."

"FROM THE MERCHANT'S PRIDE?"



"TOO MUCH BLOOD IN IT FOR 'IM."



"SOME 'R SQUEAMISH 'BOUT SUCH THINGS."

AS HE HEADS THROUGH TOWN, GUNTER SEES A DISTANT FLASH OF SKIRT AND HURRIES TO CATCH UP.



"MISTRESS TETELO. GOOD DAY. MIGHT I AID THEE WITH THOSE PACKAGES?"



"I AM SORRY... ELIZA."

"THERE ARE NO SLAVES WHERE I COME FROM. I AM NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE PROPER... PROCEDURE."



"WE ARE NOT IN YOUR HOMELAND, NOR MINE. IF YOU OWNED ME, I WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT YOUR 'ATTENTIONS'."

"SINCE YOU DO NOT, LEAVE ME ALONE!"

"FORGIVE ME."

THAT NIGHT GUNTER CANNOT SLEEP. HE STRUGGLES WITH AN OPPRESSIVE RESTLESSNESS-- AN ANXIETY HE CANNOT NAME. THE LIGHT TAPPING AT THE DOOR TAKES A MOMENT TO REGISTER.



"YAS?"



"TETELO!"

"YES, I WANT YOU TO TELL ME ABOUT IT."



"ABOUT WHAT?"

"YOUR HOMELAND."

"JAI CERTAINLY. PLEASE, TAKE A SEAT."

GUNTER FINDS HIMSELF TELLING THE BEAUTIFUL SLAVE ABOUT HIS FATHER, ABOUT THEIR FAMILY ROLE OF SHATTENJÄGER-- SHADOW HUNTER-- DESTROYERS OF EVIL, ABOUT THE TALISMAN THAT GOES WITH THE TITLE...




"YES, I CAN FEEL THE TOTEM'S POWER... AND YOURS."



"I AM TORMENTED BY THOUGHTS OF THEE, TETELO. I WANT SUCH... THINGS."






"A WHITE MAN WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND. IT IS CALLED ZINSTGI- THE UNBIDDEN."




"YES. I CAN SEE THAT."



"YOU WOULD NOT HAVE COME TO ME."

"I DID NOT WANT TO BE LIKE THE OTHERS."

"GOOD. IT IS BETTER THAT I CHOSE FOR MYSELF."




"WHEN A MAN AND A WOMAN ARE BROUGHT TOGETHER BY THE UNIVERSE. THEY HAVE NO CHOICE. THERE IS ALWAYS A REASON-- A CHILD MUST BE BORN, A VILLAGE SAVED... TO FIGHT IT IS A LIVING DEATH."



"YOU UNDERSTAND?"

"YES."


LATER...




"THIS WILL BE VERY... CHALLENGING. I HOPE THE UNIVERSE KNOWS WHAT IT IS DOING."

"SO, MY LOVE, DO I."

SEVERAL WEEKS LATER IN THE OFFICE OF MAYOR CROWDELL...



"THERE IS PROGRESS. THE PATTERNS, THE RITUALS. MY FATHER HAS ENCOUNTERED IT BEFORE. THE MAGIC IS AFRICAN."



"AFRICAN? AFRICAN! ART THOU SAYING OUR SLAVES ARE RESPONSIBLE?"



"I SHALL KILL EVERY NIGGER IN THE STATE, BY GOD! INSOLENT BASTARDS!"

"BE CALM! A MASSACRE IS NOT THE ANSWER! I AM SURE THERE ARE NO MORE THAN FIVE OR SIX INVOLVED. THESE COVENS WORK IN SECRET."


"ART THOU SURE THIS IS NOT SIMPLY AN EXCUSE FOR SPENDING SO MUCH TIME IN MY SLAVE QUARTERS?"

THE WORDS, NOW SPOKEN, HANG BETWEEN THE TWO MEN.




"NO. GIVE ME ONE MORE NIGHT."

"I HAVE SET A TRAP. BY TOMORROW, THOU WILT HAVE THY WITCH."



"IT HAD BETTER BE SO. THE EXAMPLE WE MAKE OF THIS COVEN SHALL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN."



"AND THEN THOU, HERR RITTER..."



"...CAN GO HOME."



THAT SAME NIGHT...

"OH THE SHEA, SHE  
ISSA TERRIBLE MISTRESS,  
HEIGH (HIC) HOOOIIII!"

"(HIC)."

"WHERE ARE  
MY MEN?"

"WHERE ARE  
MY..."

CRACK!

HE FIGHTS THE DARKNESS TO THE  
THROBBING OF DRUMS.

THE WITCH-HUNTER THOUGHT OF THE  
PERFECT TRAP...

AND INTO IT HAD FALLEN THE ONE  
PERSON HE HAD LEAST EXPECTED...

HIMSELF.



WHEN CONSCIOUSNESS  
RETURNS, HE FINDS IT  
STRANGER THAN ANY DREAM!

"DAMBALLAH OUEDDO, OU COULEVRE MOINSI!"



"OGOUN BADAGRIS,  
VINI 'GIDER NOUSI!"



"DAMBALLAH, OUR GREAT SERPENT GOD, COME AND AID YOUR PEOPLE!"

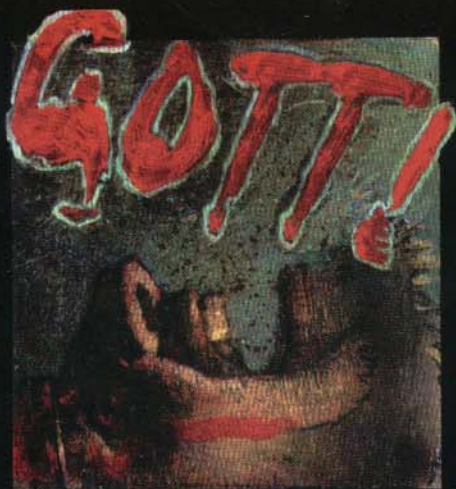


"OGOUN BADAGRIS! VENGEANCE IS TAKEN,  
POWER RECALLED! BLOOD FOR BLOOD, AS  
YOUR THIRSTY JAWS DEMAND!"

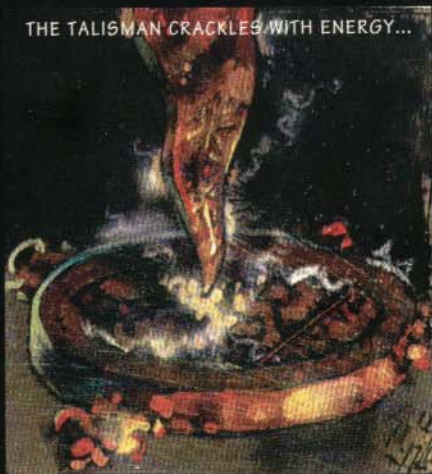




AS THE DAGGER PLUNGES TOWARD HIM, GUNTER CALLS ON HIS MASTER.



THE TALISMAN CRACKLES WITH ENERGY...



"GASPI!"



...AND SUDDENLY, THE WITCH SEES THE MAN BENEATH HER.

THE LOVERS STARE AT EACH OTHER IN HORROR...



"...GUNTER???"

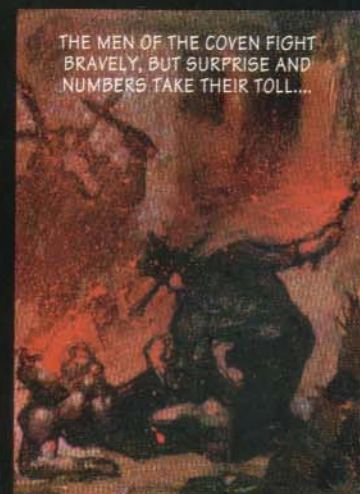
"NO!  
IT CANNOT BE  
THEE!"

BEFORE THE TWO CAN RECOVER, GUNTER'S MEN MAKE THEIR BELATED ATTACK.



"GOD TAKE  
THEE, WITCHES!"

THE MEN OF THE COVEN FIGHT BRAVELY, BUT SURPRISE AND NUMBERS TAKE THEIR TOLL....



"A TRAP!"



"THEY WILL KILL  
THEE! GO NOW!"



"RUN, TETELO..."



IN A HORRIFIED DAZE, GUNTER WATCHES HIS MEN CAPTURE THE COVEN.  
THEN, WITHOUT A WORD, HE SLIPS AWAY TO CONFRONT THE WITCH HERSELF!

"I KNOW YOU DO NOT  
UNDERSTAND. I BEG YOU,  
HEAR ME SPEAK!"

"I AM WAITING."

"MY FATHER WAS NOT  
JUST A CHIEF, HE WAS  
A BLACK BOKOR..."

"...SHAMAN TO THE DARK  
GODS THAT GAVE OUR  
TRIBE POWER."

"THERE CAME A TERRIBLE  
DROUGHT. NOTHING MY FATHER  
DID APPEASED THE GODS."

"AFTER MANY DIED,  
OGOUN BADAGRIS  
FINALLY ANSWERED."

"HE NAMED THE  
PRICE OF RAIN..."

"ME!"

"MY FATHER THOUGHT HE COULD TRICK OGOUN  
BADAGRIS. HE TRANSFERRED MY SOUL  
TEMPORARILY INTO THE BODY OF ANOTHER GIRL..."

"...AND THEN HE  
KILLED HER."

"BUT OGOUN BADAGRIS WAS NOT FOOLED."

"ANGRY AT MY FATHER'S  
BETRAYAL, OGOUN SENT  
THE WHITE MEN."

"OUR PEOPLE FOUGHT  
HARD..."

"...AND WERE SLAUGHTERED."

"EVERYONE STILL LIVING  
WAS TAKEN. MANY MORE  
DIED ON THE VOYAGE."





"BUT WHY KILL THESE MEN NOW? WHAT GOOD CAN IT DO?"

"OGOUN IS WILLING TO FORGIVE, BUT TO REGAIN POWER OUR CAPTORS MUST DIE, OUR HUMILIATION BE REVENGED."



"I CANNOT LET THEE CONTINUE..."

"...I CANNOT FORGET."



"OF COURSE YOU CANNOT. I HAVE BEEN LIVING FOR THE PAST, BUT SINCE YOU CAME I HAVE SEEN OTHER PATHS FOR ME. TOGETHER, YOU AND I..."



"HAHI THOU KNEW IT WAS THEE I SOUGHT ALL THIS TIME, AND THOU LET ME LOVE THEE!"

"LET YOU? I HAD NO CHOICE!"

"NO! I... I DO NOT KNOW."



"HOW DO YOU THINK I FELT, IN LOVE WITH MY OWN HUNTER? THIS WAS DESTINED! YOU AND I MUST MAKE A NEW WAY, TOGETHER."



"I MUST GO THINK."



"GUNTER!"



"DO NOT BETRAY ME."



"MAYOR CRODWELL, ALL WERE CAPTURED BUT THE LEADER-- A FEMALE."

"THE WITCH-HUNTER MUST STILL BE ON HER TRAIL."



"GOD HAS DELIVERED THIS MURDEROUS COVEN OF SATAN UNTO US, SO HE WILL THE WITCH."

"YES. BUT WHO BROUGHT THIS WITCH AMONG US?"



"THOU! SLAVE! SPEAK THOU HER NAME!"



"THOU SPEAKETH NOT, AND YET... THY FACE IS FAMILIAR..."



LOOKING INTO THE COVEN MEMBER'S BLOODY, COPPER-COLORED FACE, A HORRIBLE REALIZATION COMES TO CRODWELL.

"I KNOW WHERE TO FIND HER! AND THE WITCH-HUNTER! FOLLOW ME!"

MEANWHILE, ALONE IN HER CABIN, TETELO PREPARES A RITUAL CIRCLE - HER TRIBE'S VÉVÉ - AND ENTERS THE SPIRIT WORLD...

"FATHER, I CALL YOU. COME SPEAK WITH YOUR DAUGHTER."

"YOU WOULD BETRAY YOUR OWN PEOPLE?"

"PERHAPS IT IS BETTER TO LET THE TRIBE GO."

"YOU MUST DESTROY THIS MAN THAT TEMPTS YOU! HIS KIND WILL ONLY DESPISE YOU IN THE END!"

"THIS IS A NEW LAND, THERE WILL BE A NEW PEOPLE HERE."

"THERE IS A WAY OUTSIDE THE DARK GODS."

"YOU DID...FOR LOVE."

"YOUR LIFE'S ONLY PURPOSE IS TO PAY FOR THAT MISTAKE - NOT REPEAT IT!"

"THESE WHITE MEN WILL NEVER GIVE YOU ANYTHING UNLESS YOU USE THE POWER."

"NO. I DON'T BELIEVE THAT."

"DAUGHTER, I COMMAND YOU!"

WITH A QUICK MOTION THE VÉVÉ IS SMEARED - THE CONTACT IS BROKEN.

"NO!"

"OH, PAPA..."

"FATHER, I HAVE COME TO ASK YOU... PLEASE RELEASE ME FROM MY DUTY TO THE TRIBE."



IN A CLEARING  
NEARBY, GUNTER  
WRESTLES WITH  
DEMONS OF HIS  
OWN...



"GOD, GIVE ME AN ANSWER!"



THE ANSWER IS NOT ONE HE EXPECTED.



Hissssssssssssss



HIS REVULSION AND FEAR ARE INSTANT,  
HIS DAGGER IS IN THE AIR BEFORE HE'S CONSCIOUS OF THE DECISION TO THROW IT...



OR SEES CLEARLY ITS DESTINATION.



THUD!



"NO!"

"THEY HAVE FOUND THE WITCH! SHE  
WAS TAKEN TO THE TOWN SQUARE!"



"BROTHER  
RITTER!"

"THEY FOUND WHO?"

"CROWD WELL'S SLAVE WOMAN, ELIZA. SHE  
MUST HAVE THOUGHT THE DEVIL WOULD PROTECT HER,  
FOR SHE WAS STILL IN HER CABIN..."

"...NEVER  
EVEN TRIED TO  
ESCAPE."



"WAIT! I  
CAME TO WARN  
THEE! BROTHER  
RITTER!"

GUNTER REACHES THE TOWN SQUARE, WHERE THE SOFT GLOW OF FIRELIGHT FILLS HIM WITH TERROR.

"CROWD WELL,  
STOP!"

"WHAT IS IT,  
WITCH-HUNTER?  
OR SHOULD I SAY...  
WITCH-LOVER?"

"WHAT DOST THOU IMPLY?  
I ASK FOR A FAIR TRIAL, THAT IS ALL!  
THIS IS MURDER!"

"OH? AND WHAT IS IT CALLED  
WHEN TOWN MONEY IS SPENT FOR A WITCH-HUNTER  
AND HE PROTECTS THE WITCH? LAYS WITH HER IN UTTER BLASPHEMY?  
PERHAPS THE GOOD TOWNFOLK WOULD BE INTERESTED IN  
HEARING THIS STORY?"



THE CROWD QUIETS AND  
TURNS TOWARD THE TWO MEN,  
SENSING A CONFRONTATION...

"I... BUT THIS..."

"WELL? ARE YOU  
STILL UNDER THE POWER OF  
HER SEDUCTIVE WAYS?"

"NO! I MERELY  
WISHED TO QUESTION THE  
WITCH, BUT IF THOU WISHES TO BURN  
HER SECRETS WITH HER, THEN DO  
SO-- AND QUICKLY"

"GUNTER!"



THE WITCH-HUNTER PUSHES  
HIS WAY WITH PRETENDED  
COLDNESS TO THE EDGE OF  
THE ANGRY CROWD...

BUT CANNOT MAKE  
HIMSELF GO FURTHER.

"GUNTER!"





HE WATCHES, TRANSFIXED, AS THE FLAMES GROW HIGHER.  
AND TETELO, ABANDONED ONCE MORE, BEGS HER OLD GODS FOR VENGEANCE.

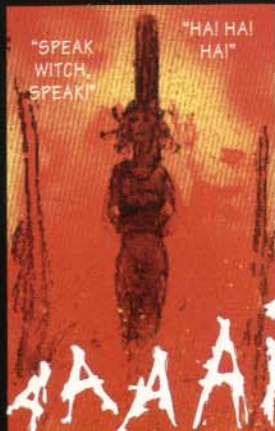


"DAMBALLAH, OGOUN  
BADAGRIS, HEAR YOUR  
WICKED DAUGHTER!"

"I CALL UPON YOU TO REVENGE  
YOUR PEOPLE! DESTROY THIS  
TOWN AND ALL WITHIN IT!"

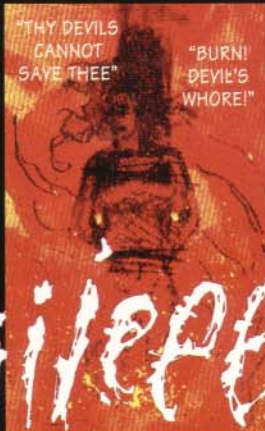
"DAMBALLAH! GREAT SERPENT --STRIKE!"

BUT THE ONLY REPLY IS THE TAUNTS OF THE HATE-FILLED MOB.



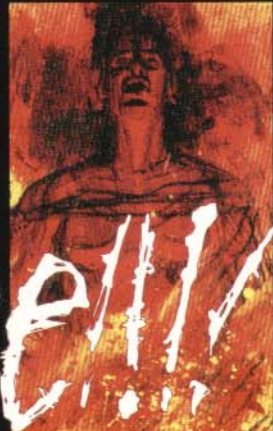
"SPEAK  
WITCH,  
SPEAK!"

"HA! HA!  
HA!"



"THY DEVILS  
CANNOT  
SAVE THEE"

"BURN!  
DEVIL'S  
WHORE!"



AAAHHHHHHH!!!

HER AGONY AND HUMILIATION TWIST IN GUNTER'S MIND--SHE, THE MARTYR.  
THE CROWD, THE HOWLING DEMONS. IT CAN NOT. GO. ON.



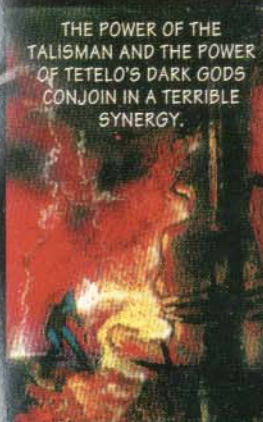
"NO!"

"TETELO!  
I EMPOWER  
THEE!"



"GOD FORGIVE ME."

THE POWER OF THE  
TALISMAN AND THE POWER  
OF TETELO'S DARK GODS  
CONJOIN IN A TERRIBLE  
SYNERGY.



THE HEAVENS BOIL OVER,  
BLEED ELECTRICITY...



AND HURLS THEIR DESTRUCTION WITH DEADLY ACCURACY...



AT THE SAINTS AND SINNERS IN THE SQUARE BELOW.



"NOW, MY BROTHERS."



TETELO'S HANDFUL, FREED FROM THEIR BONDS, ATTACK. THEY ARE JOINED BY CHARLESTON'S OTHER SLAVES-- THE OLD GODS FANNING A SPARK THEY HAD FORGOTTEN WAS THERE...

"DAMBALLAH."

A HATE THEY HAD SWALLOWED FOR TOO LONG...

MERCY HAD BEEN LEFT IN THE FIELDS OF AFRICA AND THE HOLDS OF STINKING SLAVE SHIPS...

AND IT IS CHARLESTON THAT WILL PAY THIS NIGHT.

GUNTER SITS IN THE EYE OF THE STORM. WHILE SOME PART OF HIS BRAIN HEARS THE SOUNDS OF THE MASSACRE, HIS EYES REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE IT. HE STARES AT THE TALISMAN IN HIS HANDS AS THOUGH FOCUSING ON A LIGHT...

UNTIL EVEN THE LIGHT IS POLLUTED.

AND HE CAN NO LONGER DENY...

"LOOK AT ME."



HE WILL NOT, HE CANNOT.

"I...  
SAVED  
THEE."

"YOUR GUILT  
SAVED ME. AND  
THIS..."

"BUT YOU  
BETRAYED ME."

"I COULD HAVE  
LOVED YOU. I WOULD HAVE  
LEFT EVERYTHING."

"YOU  
BETRAYED  
ME."

"WHAT  
HAVE I DONE?"

"YOU HAVE  
MADE ME MY FATHER'S  
DAUGHTER."

"LOOK."

"AT."

"ME."

"GOOD-BYE, WITCH-HUNTER."