

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Illustrated by
Harley M. Griffiths

By Edgar Allan Poe



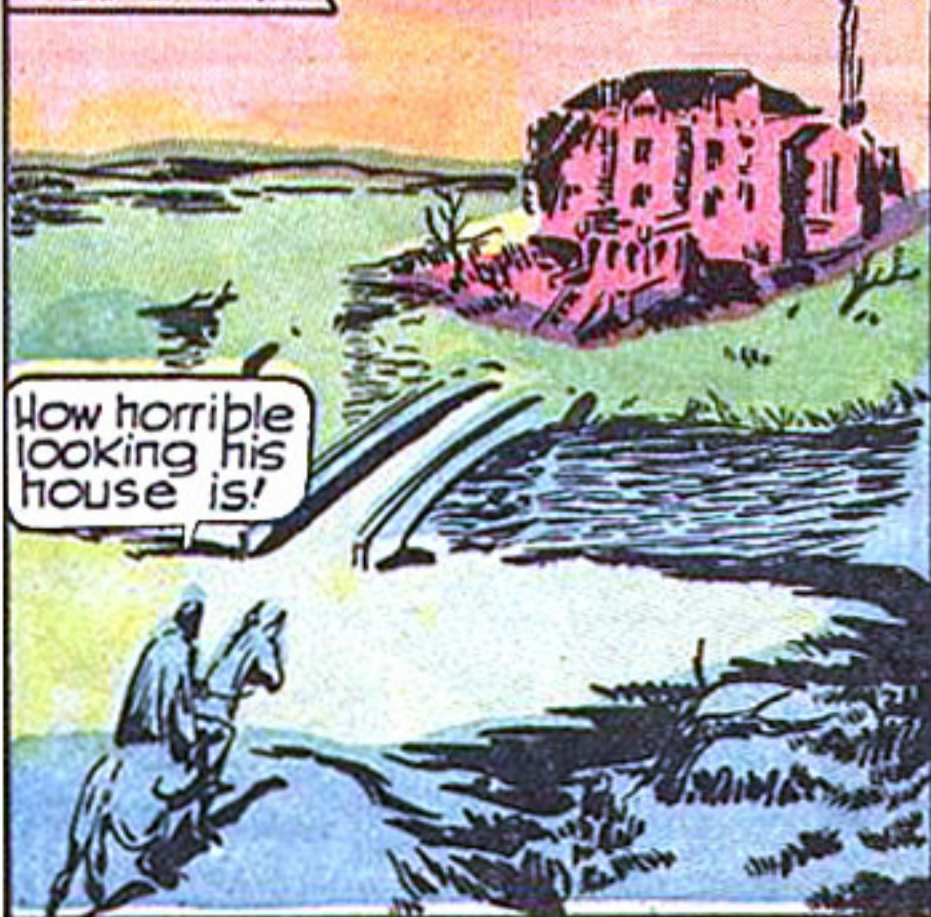
THE SIGHT OF THE OLD, DECAYING HOUSE OF USHER WAS HORRIFYING ITSELF, YET I HAD TO ENTER AND BECOME WITNESS TO THE TERRIBLE TRAGEDIES ENACTED WITHIN ITS WALLS...

IT ALL BEGAN WHEN I RECEIVED A LETTER MARKED URGENT...

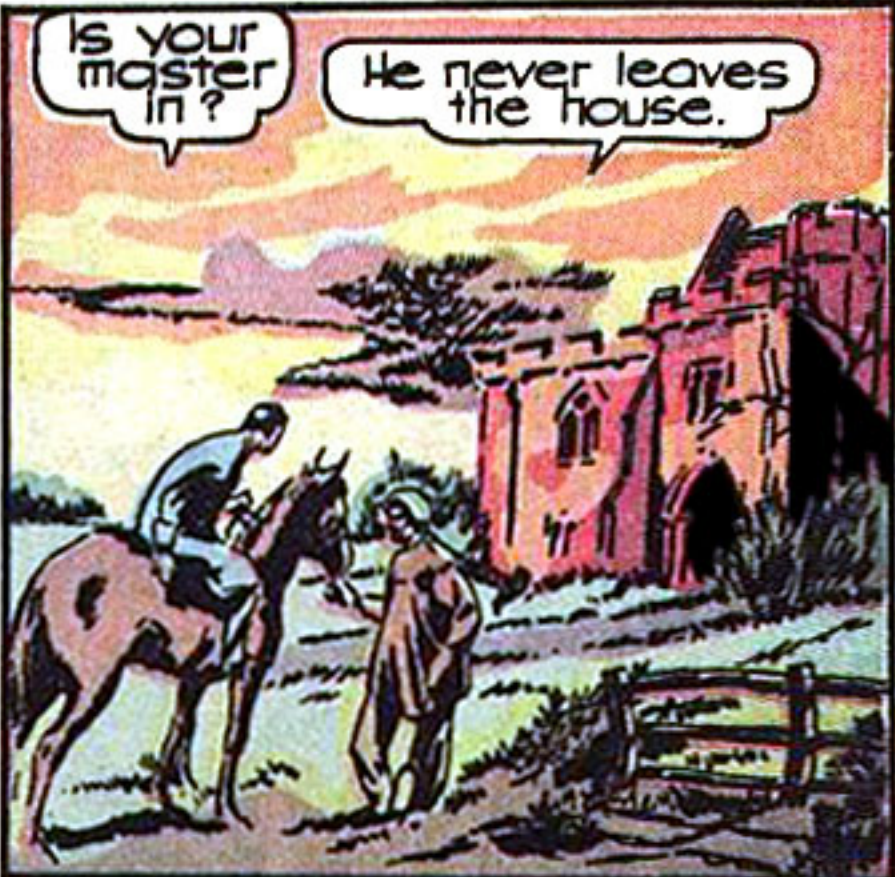
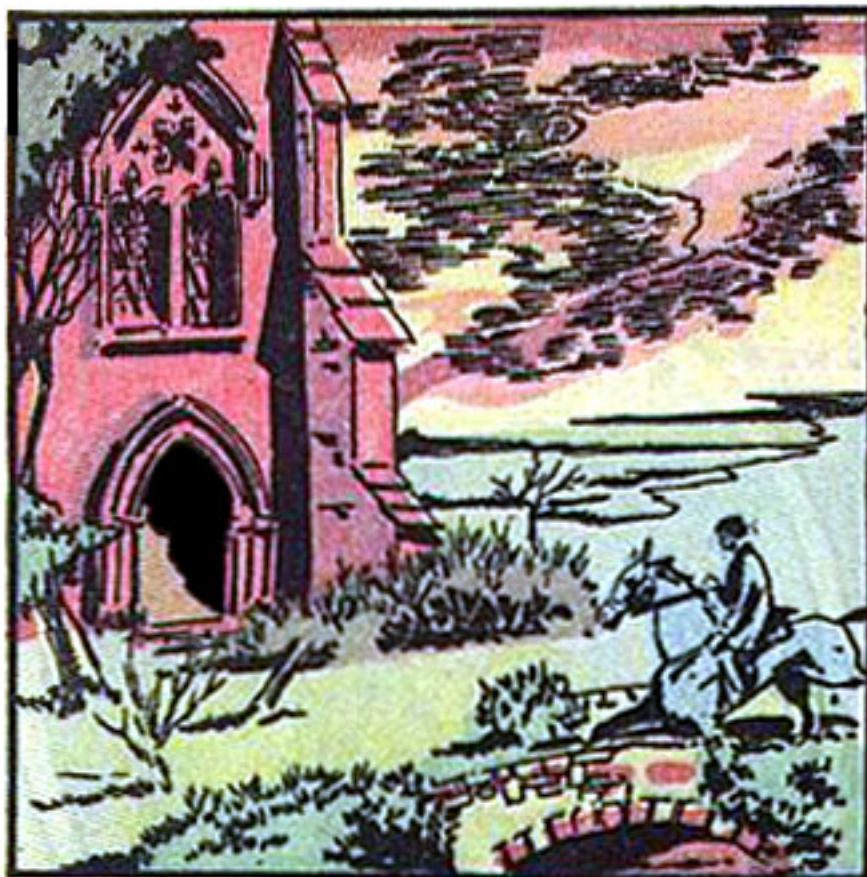
I am sick in mind and body. Only you can save me from going mad. You were my boyhood friend, so please come. R. Usher.



I OBEYED THE SUMMONS AND SEVERAL EVENINGS LATER...



How horrible looking his house is!

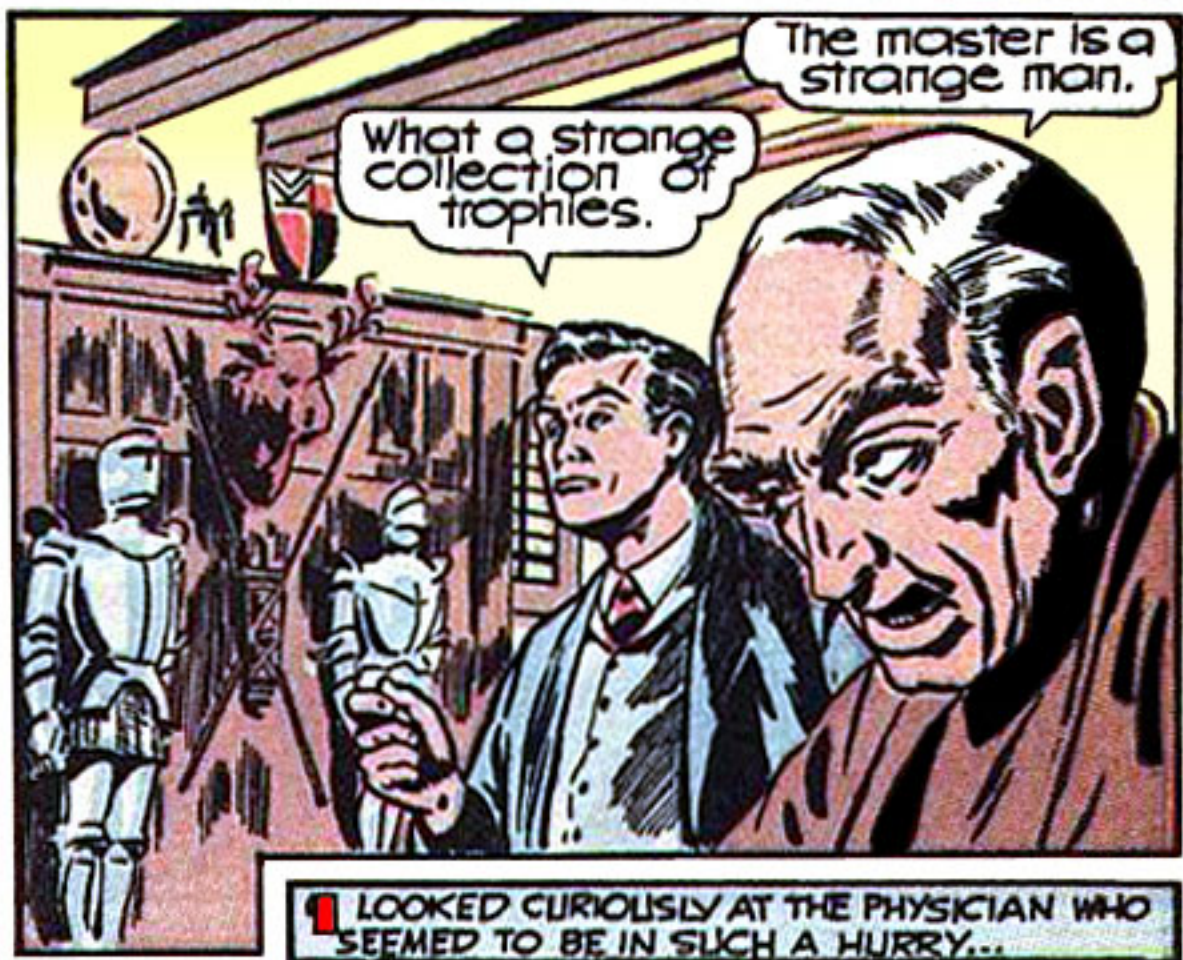


Is your master in?

He never leaves the house.



Come, the master is expecting you.



What a strange collection of trophies.

The master is a strange man.



I'm the family doctor. In a hurry. Goodby.

LOOKED CURIOUSLY AT THE PHYSICIAN WHO SEEMED TO BE IN SUCH A HURRY...



Roderick Usher! It's good to see you after all these years.

Welcome, my friend.

I see you're shocked at the change in me since childhood.



I need you to talk to. I'm suffering from an evil family sickness. You'll help me be better soon.

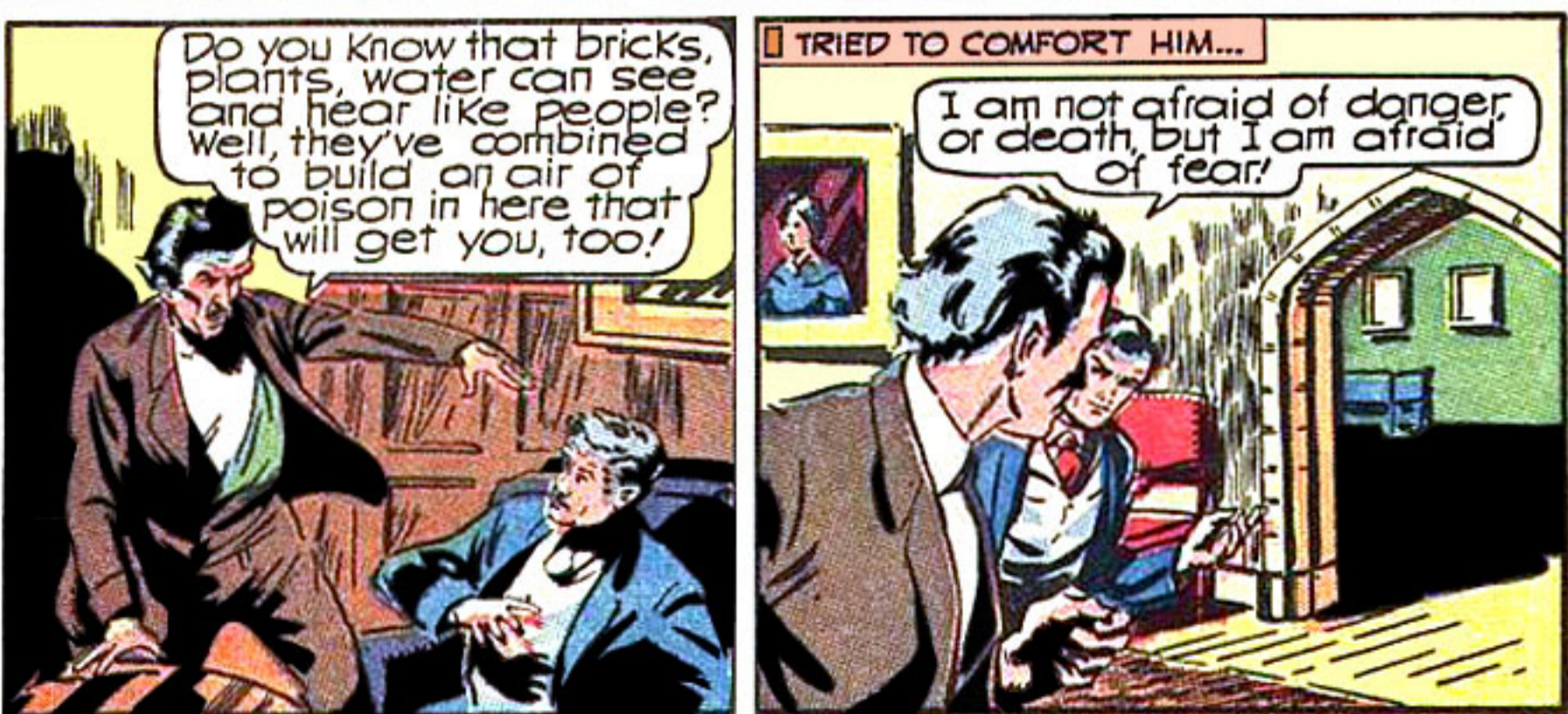
No, I'll never be better! I'll go crazy! This house will kill me, because it's alive!



Do you know that bricks, plants, water can see and hear like people? Well, they've combined to build an air of poison in here that will get you, too!

TRIED TO COMFORT HIM...

I am not afraid of danger, or death, but I am afraid of fear!



JUST THEN, SHE WALKED PAST THE OPEN DOOR...



Lady Madeline, my sister. That's the last time you'll see her alive.



She's dying of an incurable sleeping sickness. For years, she's tried to fight it off, but now it's overcome her and she's taking to her bed. Death is near.

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, I TRIED TO CHEER UP MY FRIEND...



Bah, everything I paint turns black and gloomy.



You still want to hear me play and sing? My songs are as mad as I.



LATE ONE EVENING...

My sister is dead!

USHER TOLD ME HE WANTED TO PRESERVE THE BODY FOR TWO WEEKS SO THAT THE DOCTORS COULD STUDY THE DISEASE...

We'll take it to one of the vaults in the cellar.



The tunnel is copper lined. Gun powder used to be stored in part of the basement. The vault room's copper lined, too.



I'd like to see her face.

I'll un-screw the lid.

She looks very much like you.

We were twins.



THE LID WAS RESCREWED AND WE CLOSED THE MASSIVE DOOR...

She must have suffered terribly. May she rest in peace!



USHER NOW CHANGED FOR THE WORSE. HE EITHER CHARGED THROUGH THE HOUSE LIKE A POISONED CAT, OR STARED FOR HOURS INTO SPACE...

Can I help, Roderick?

No.



THERE WERE TIMES I THOUGHT HE WANTED TO TELL ME SOMETHING BUT WAS AFRAID...

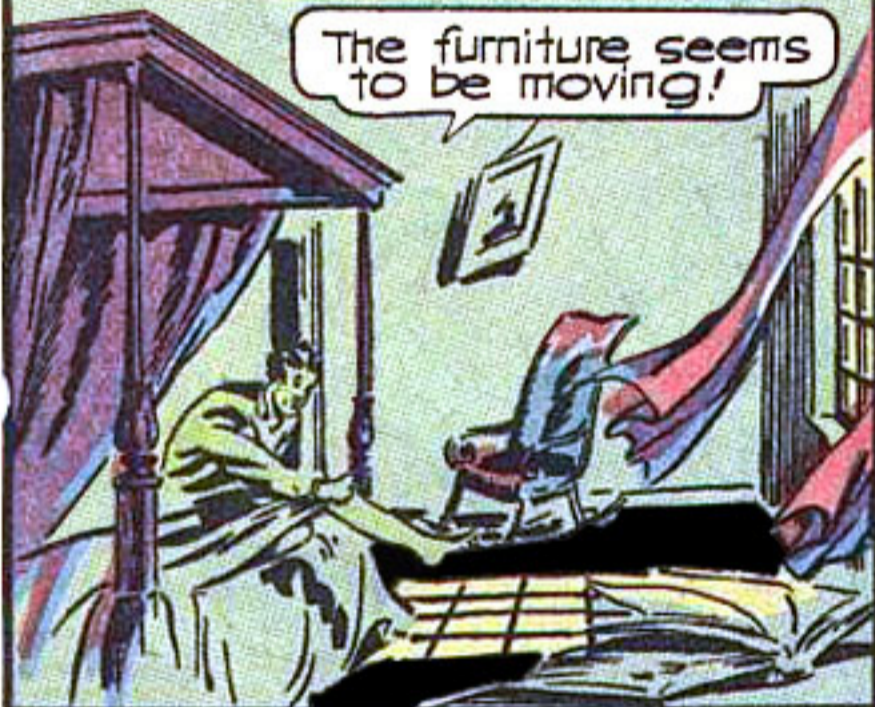
There's something on your mind, old boy. Speak up.

It's nothing.



AN UNNAMED TERROR WAS BEGINNING TO GRIP ME. ABOUT A WEEK AFTER MADELINE'S DEATH...

The furniture seems to be moving!



I hear noises that seem to be coming from the vault where Madeline lies



I DRESSED. JUST THEN, THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR, AND...

You've not seen it? Come, follow me.



Look on the pond below.



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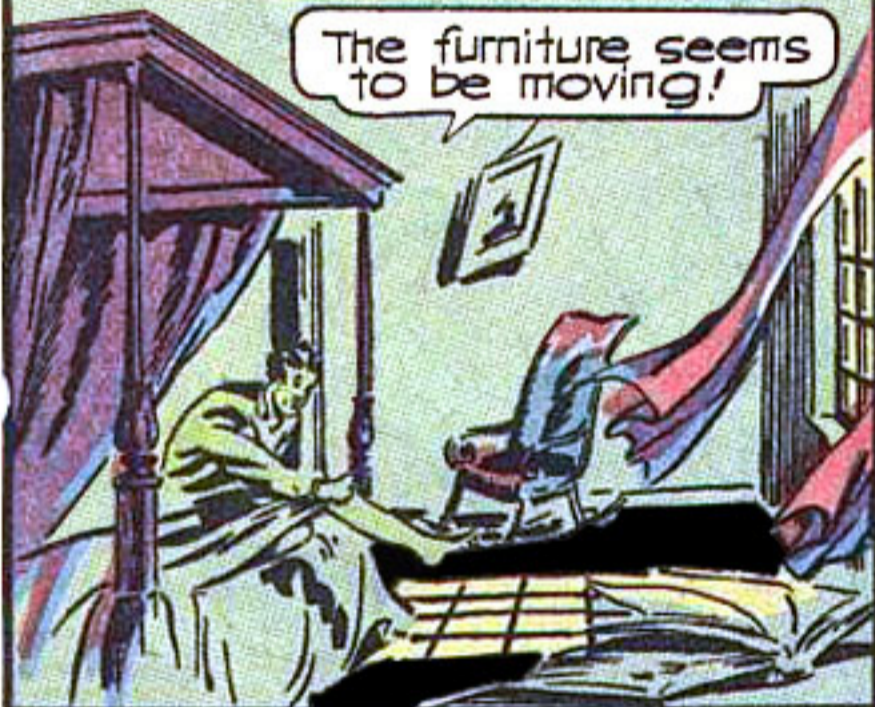
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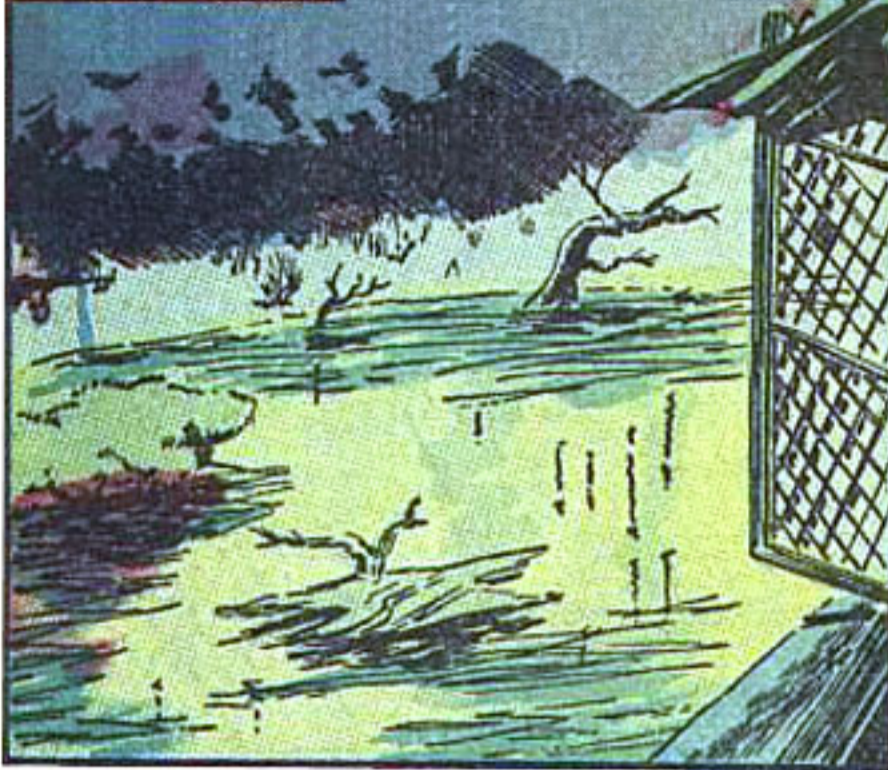
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Look on the pond below.



THE WIND WAS HOWLING AND THE SKIES WERE BLACK, BUT THERE WAS NO LIGHTNING AND YET...



Don't look outside. It's nothing at all.



It's just distant lightning, or maybe gases rising from the stagnant water.

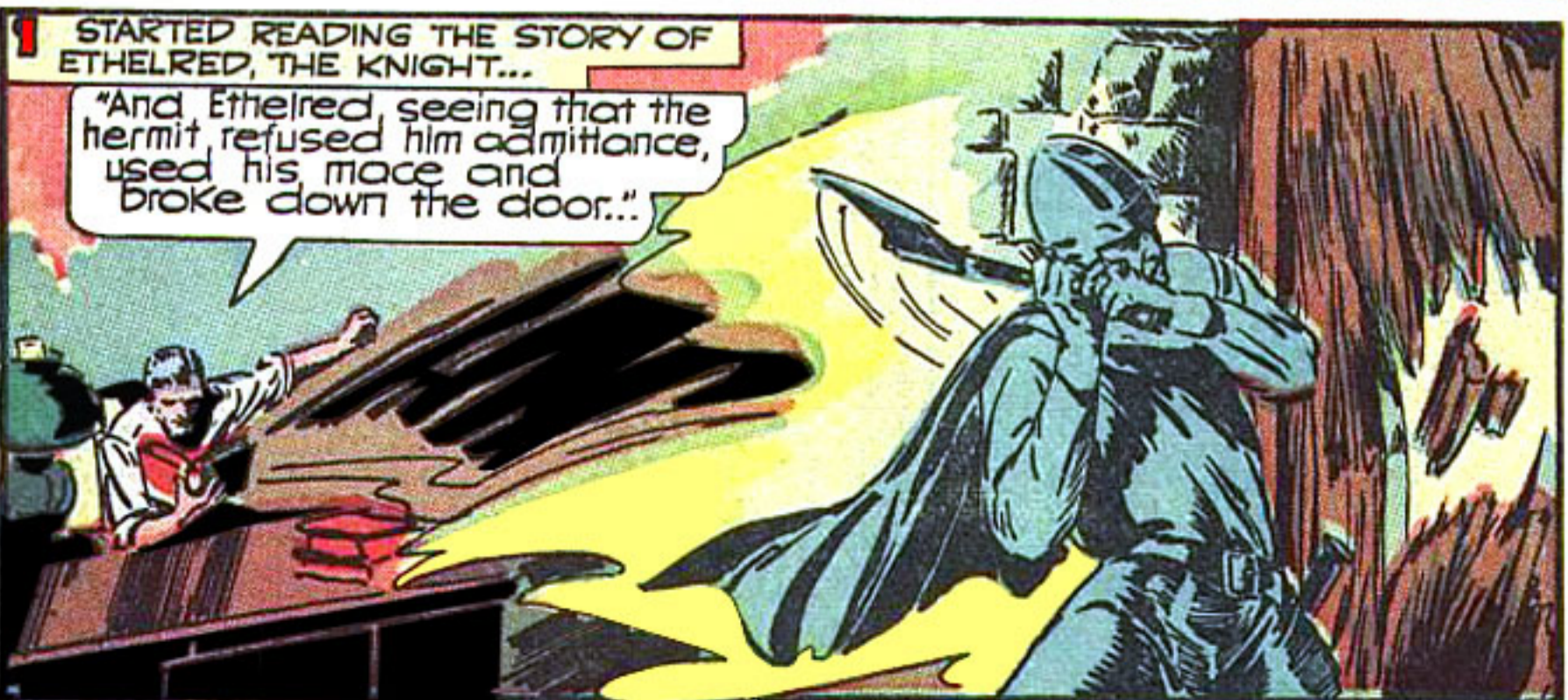


Try to relax. I'll read to you for a while.

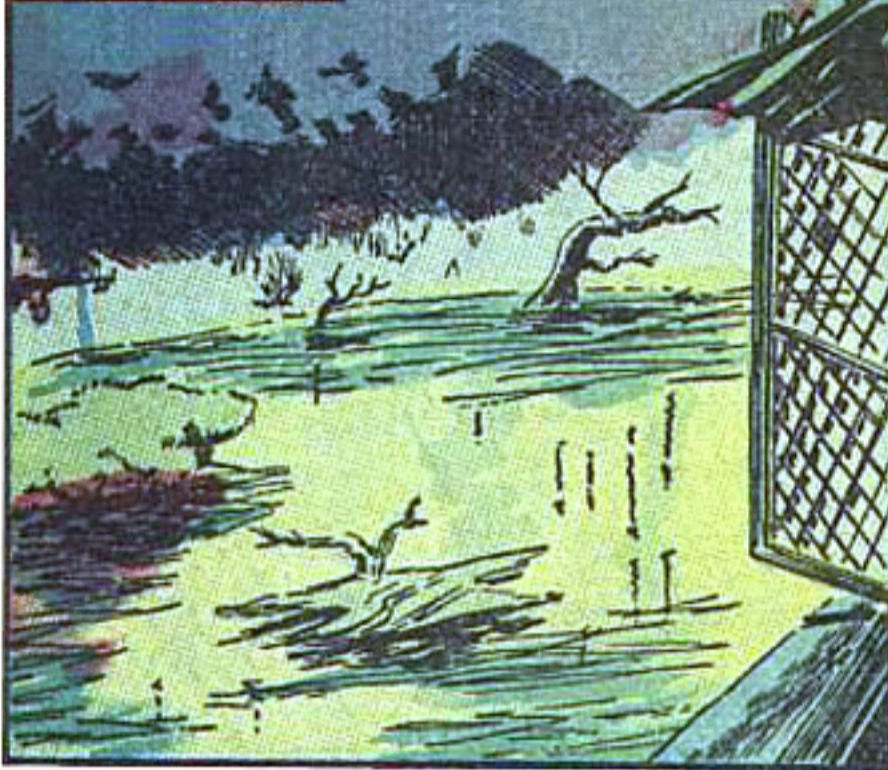


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"And Ethelred, seeing that the hermit refused him admittance, used his mace and broke down the door.."



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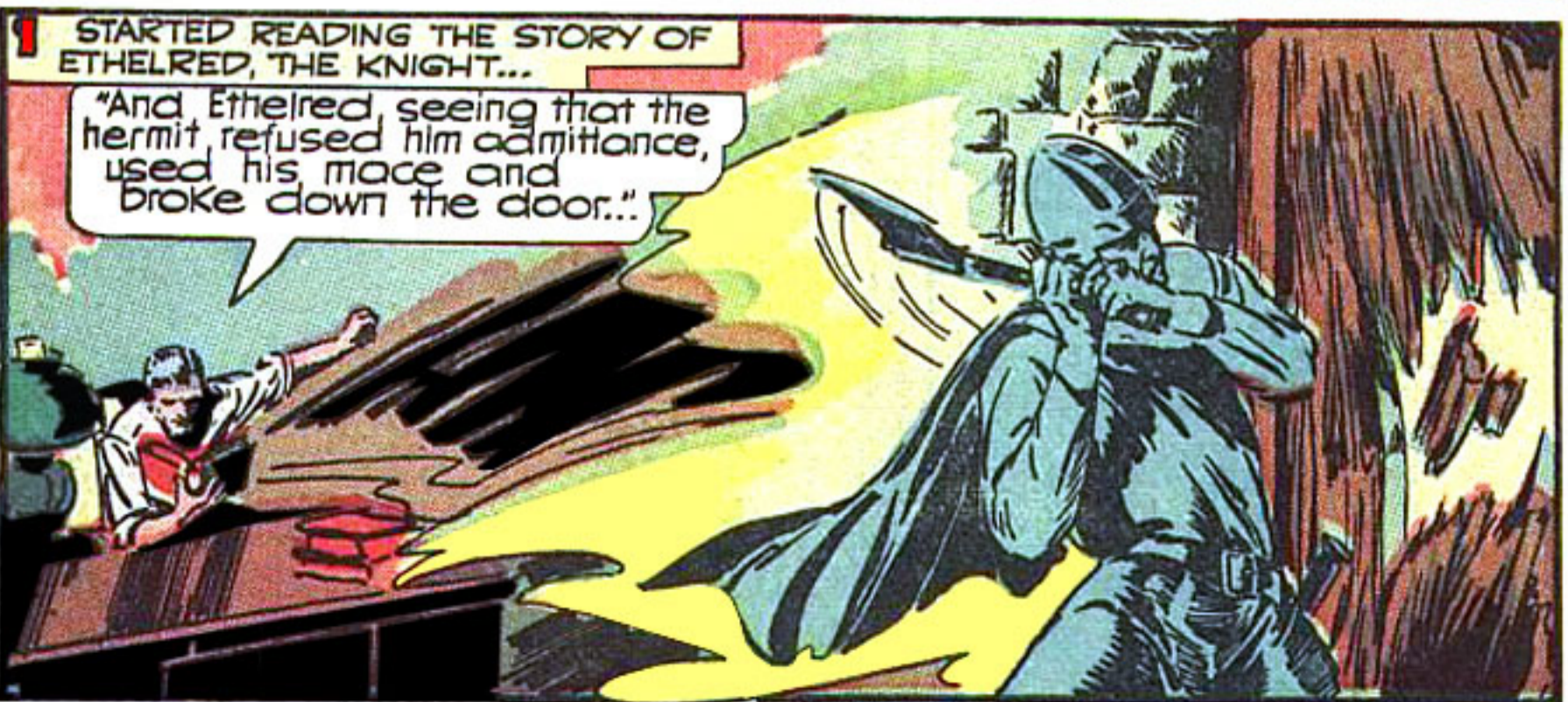


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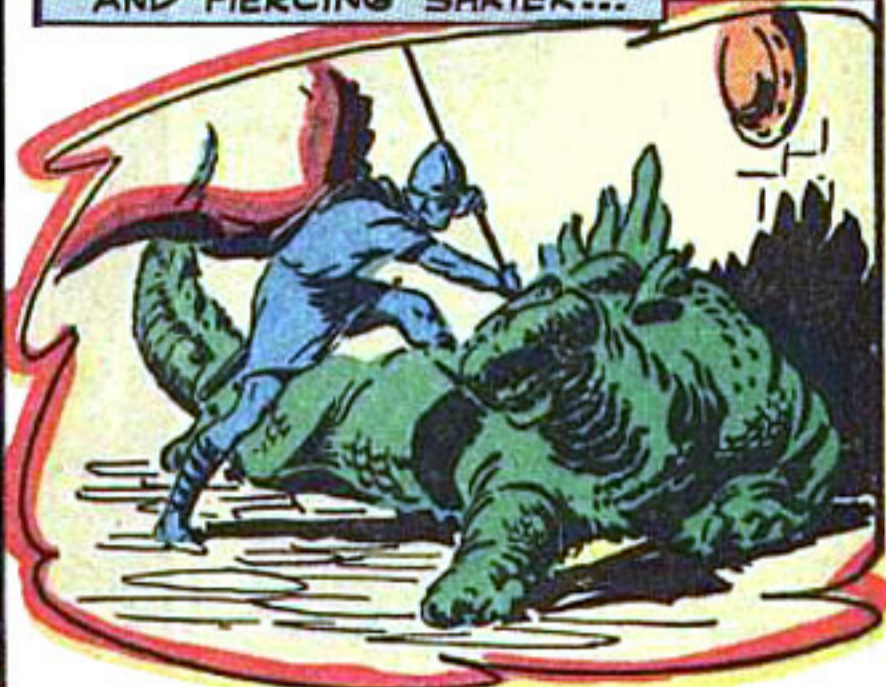


I COULD HAVE SWORN THAT JUST THEN, FROM WITHIN THE HOUSE, CAME THE RIPPING AND CRACKING NOISES OF BOARDS BEING SPLINTERED...

I can't tell if he's heard the noises. I'll continue reading.

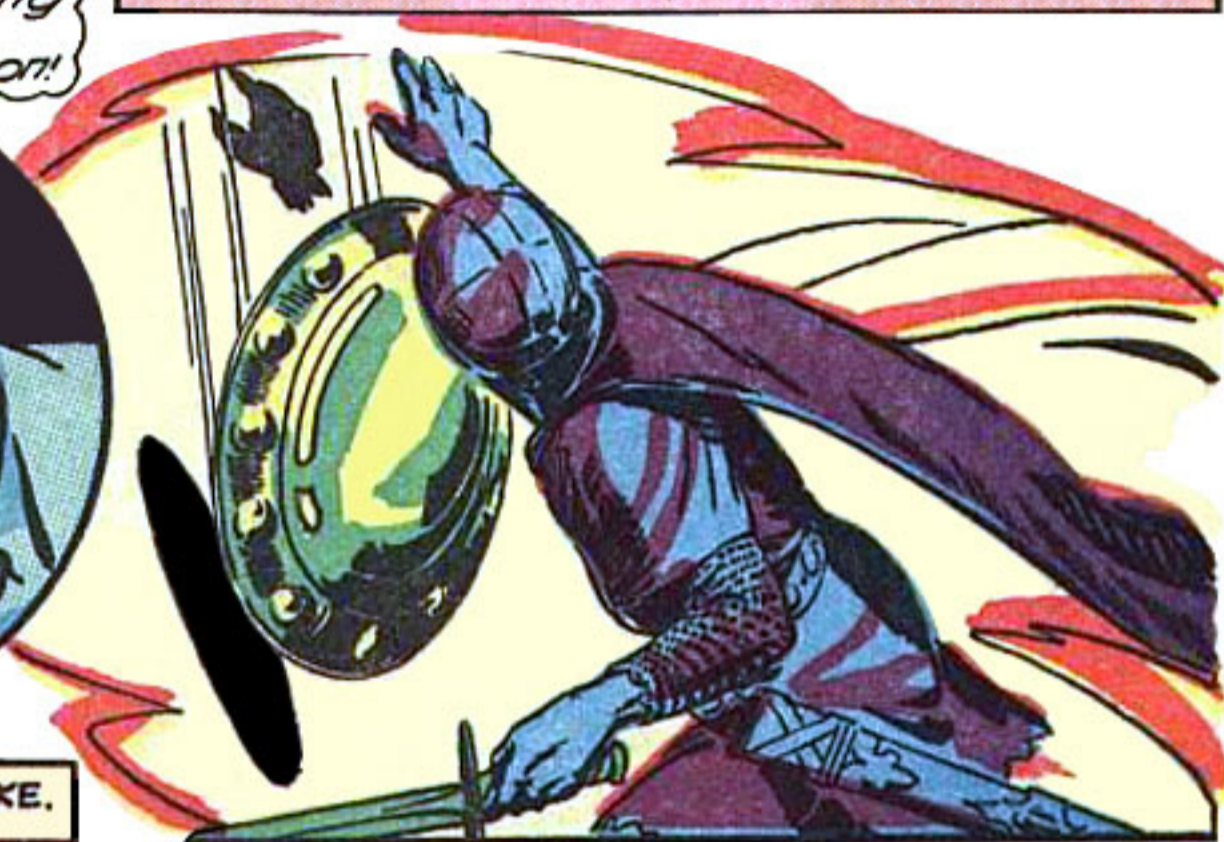


"... ETHELRED ENTERED AND INSTEAD OF A HERMIT, FOUND A DRAGON GUARDING A GOLDEN PALACE. HE STRUCK THE SERPENT WHICH GAVE FORTH A WEIRD AND PIERCING SHRIEK..."



I distinctly heard a horrible scream coming from the cellar. Am I crazy, too? I must read on!

"AS ETHELRED REACHED FOR THE SHINING SHIELD HANGING ON THE WALL, IT FELL WITH A CRASH..."



NOW, THERE WAS NO MISTAKE. I HEARD A METALLIC, CLANGING ECHO...

Lister, have you heard those noises?



Roderick! Speak to me! Tell me you heard those noises!

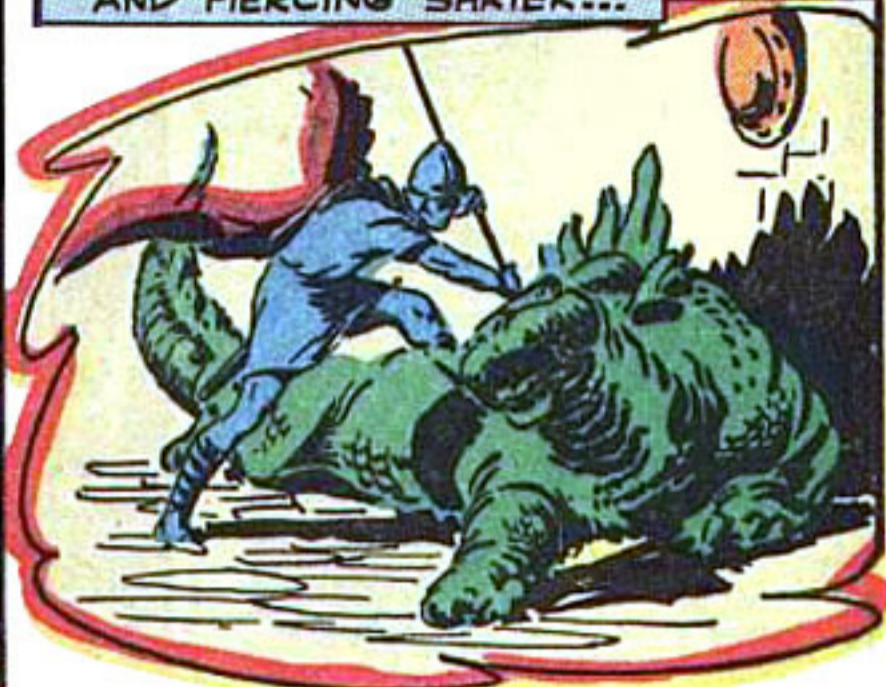


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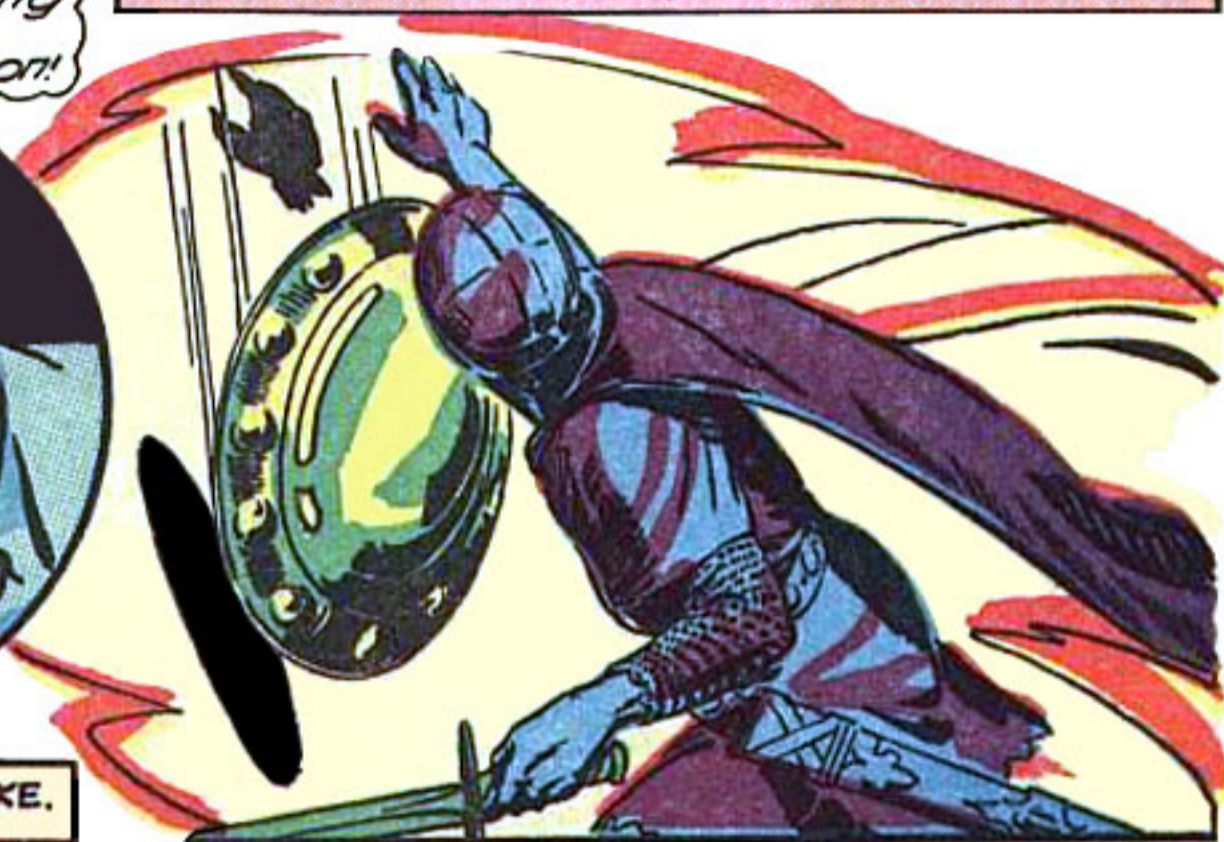


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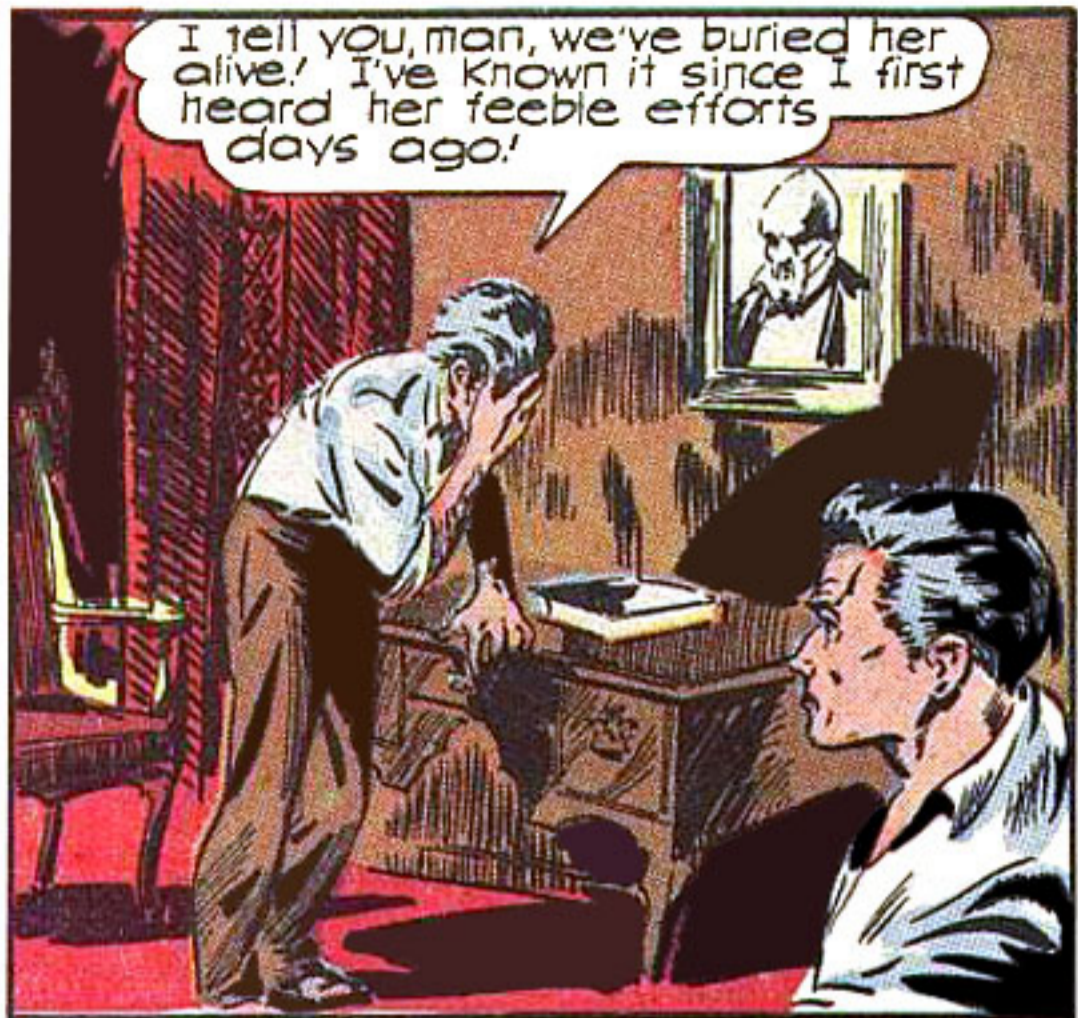


Roderick! Speak to me! Tell me you heard those noises!





Have I heard those noises? I've heard them for days, but I was afraid to speak!



I tell you, man, we've buried her alive! I've known it since I first heard her feeble efforts days ago!



Ethelred's breaking the door was her rending open her coffin



The dragon's death cry was her calling me from her coppered vault.



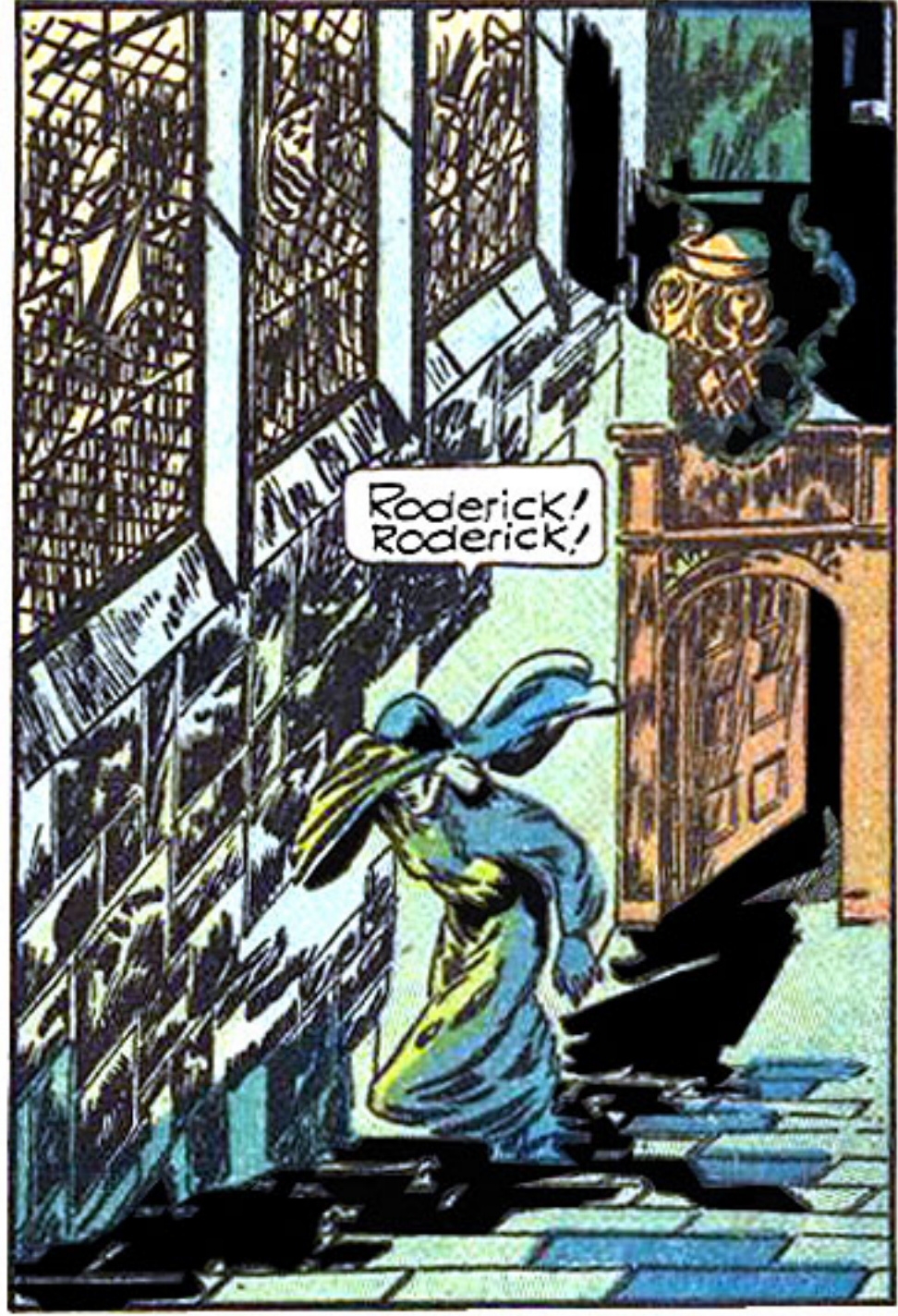
And the clanging of the shield on the metal floor was the grating of the iron hinges of her prison.



I buried her alive and she's coming to punish me!



She is coming up the stairs!
I can hear her!
Save me! Save me!



Roderick!
Roderick!



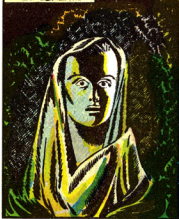
I can hear her heartbeat!
Madman... she is at the door!



A GUST OF WIND COMING FROM THE CORRIDOR, PUSHED OPEN THE DOOR...



AND THERE STOOD MADELINE OF USHER....



AND THEN TOPPLED...



FOR A MOMENT, THE LIVING CORPSE ROCKED ON THE THRESHOLD...



AND FELL ON HER
TERRIFIED BROTHER...



PULLED HER BODY
FROM HIM...



SENSELESS WITH FEAR, RODERICK TRIED TO GET UP...

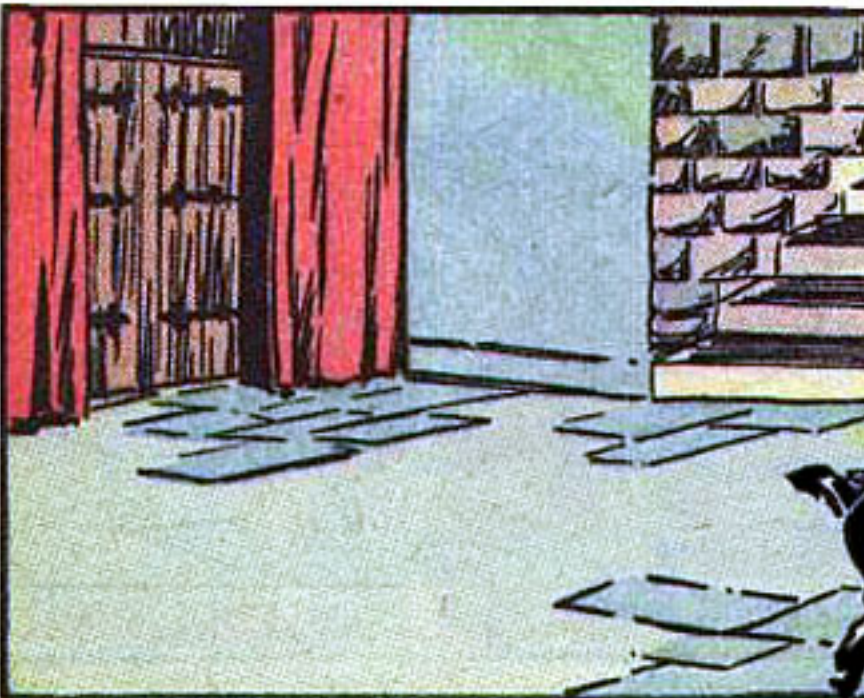


A SUDDEN PANIC SEIZED ME...

I must flee!

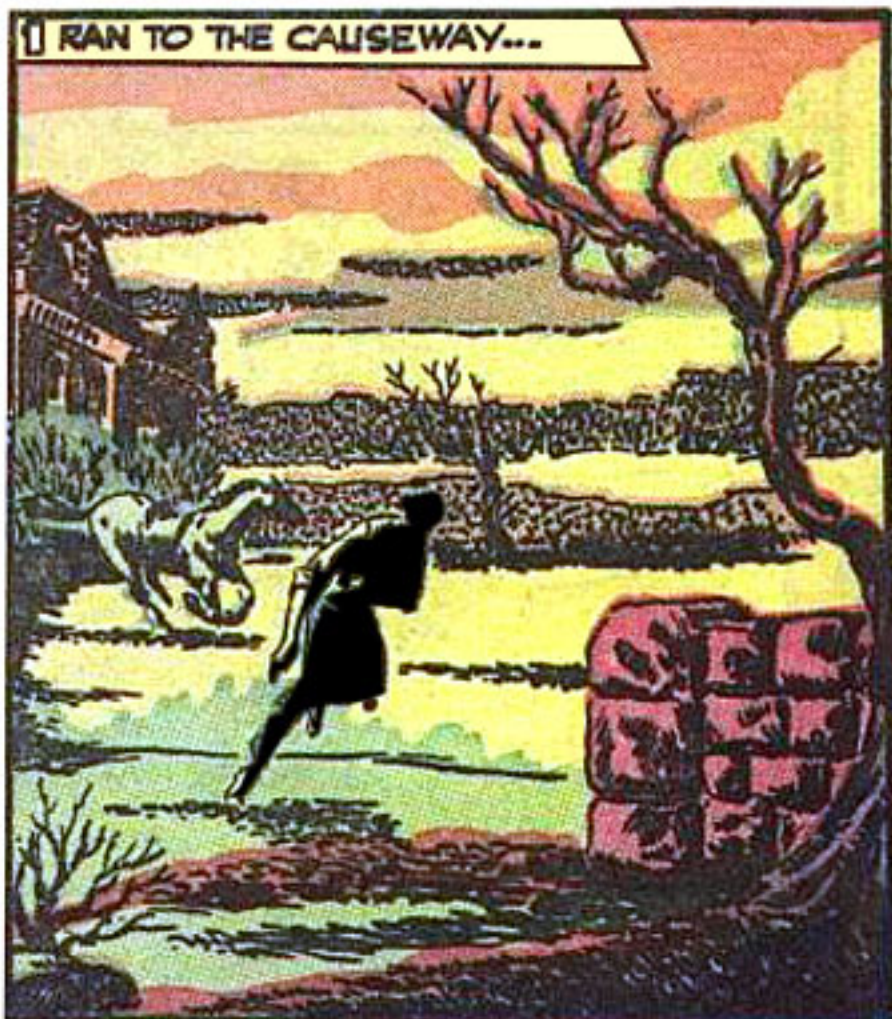


He's dead, killed by the fear he dreaded! Poor fellow, his heart gave out.

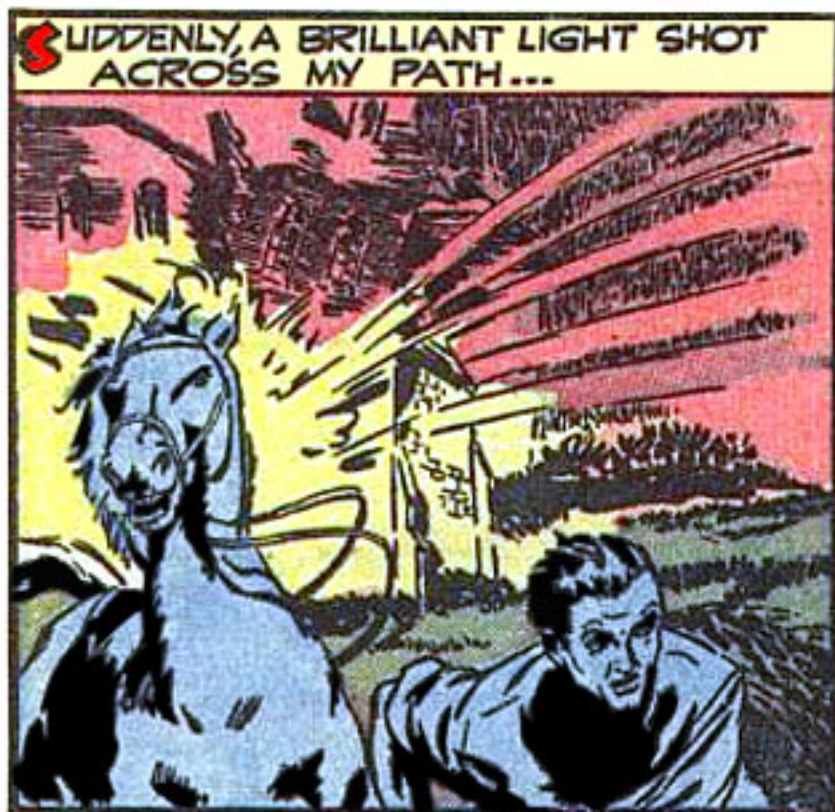




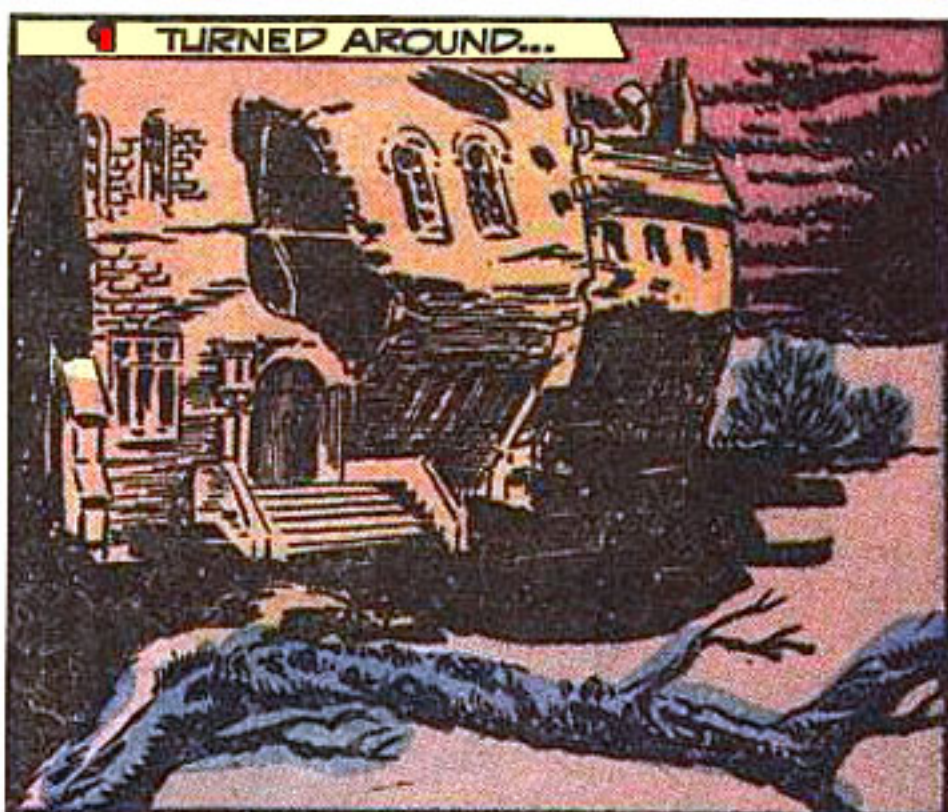
I must have air!



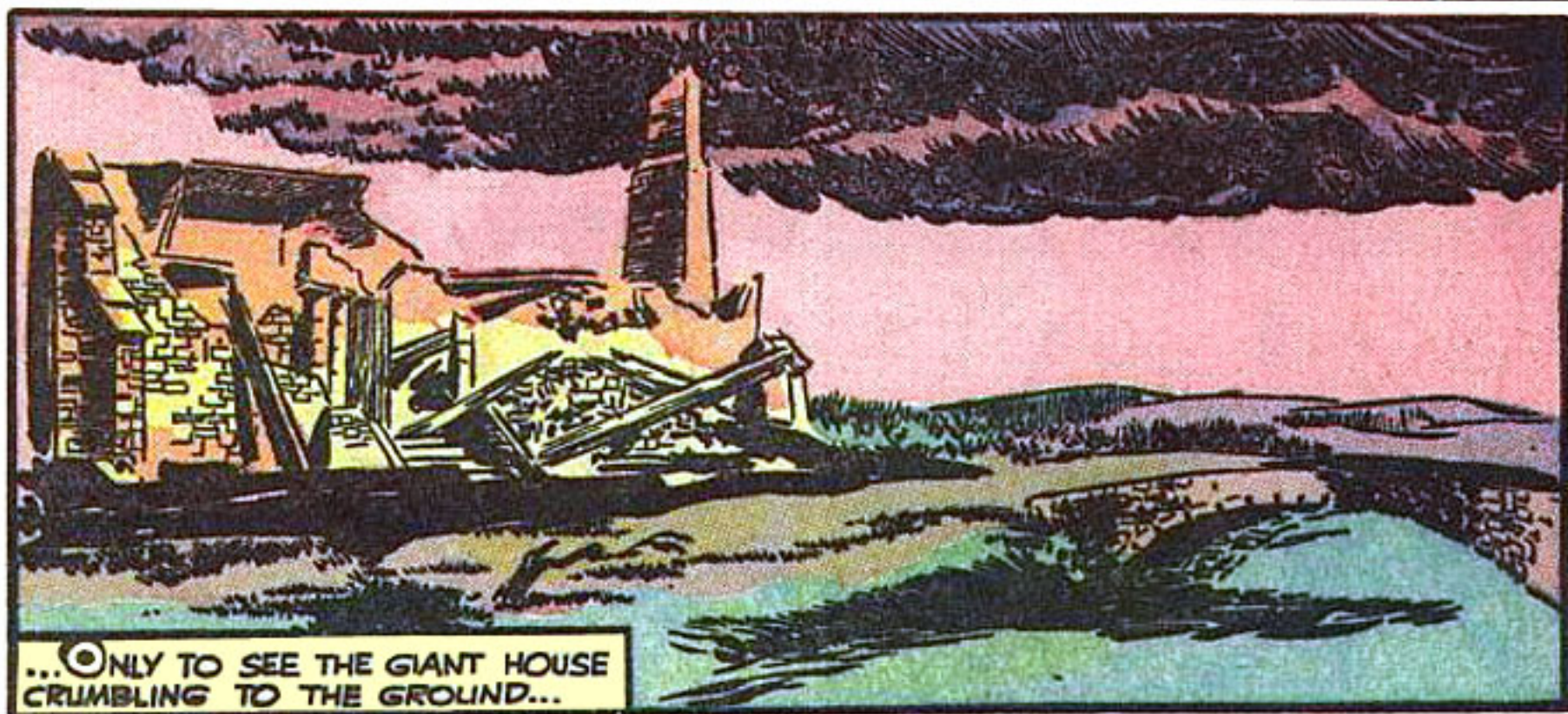
I RAN TO THE CAUSEWAY...



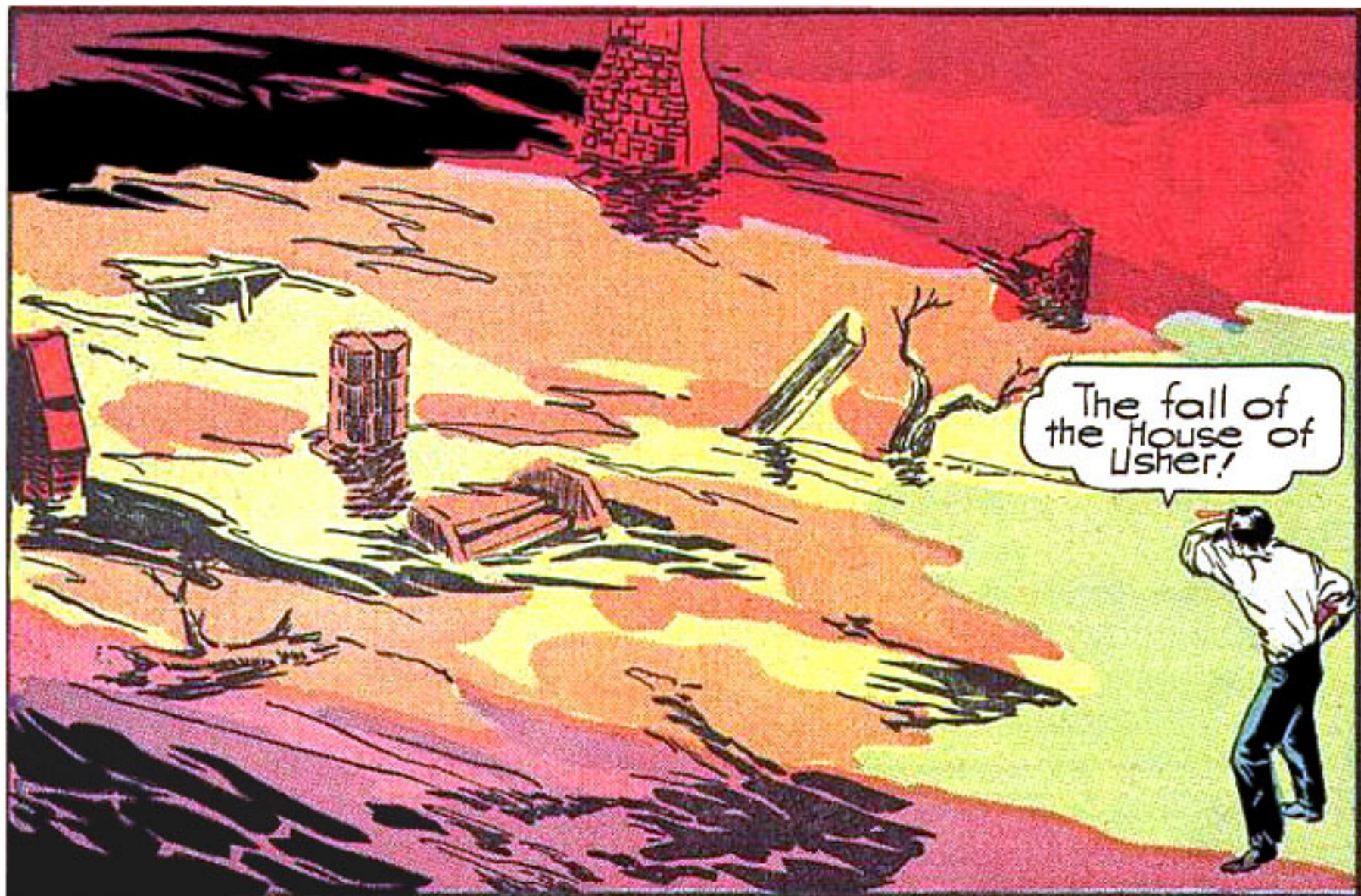
SUDDENLY, A BRILLIANT LIGHT SHOT ACROSS MY PATH...



I TURNED AROUND...



... ONLY TO SEE THE GIANT HOUSE CRUMBLING TO THE GROUND...



The fall of the House of Usher!



He loved his sister and had done no wrong, willfully, yet she killed him through fear.



Goodbye forever, House of Usher.

The END