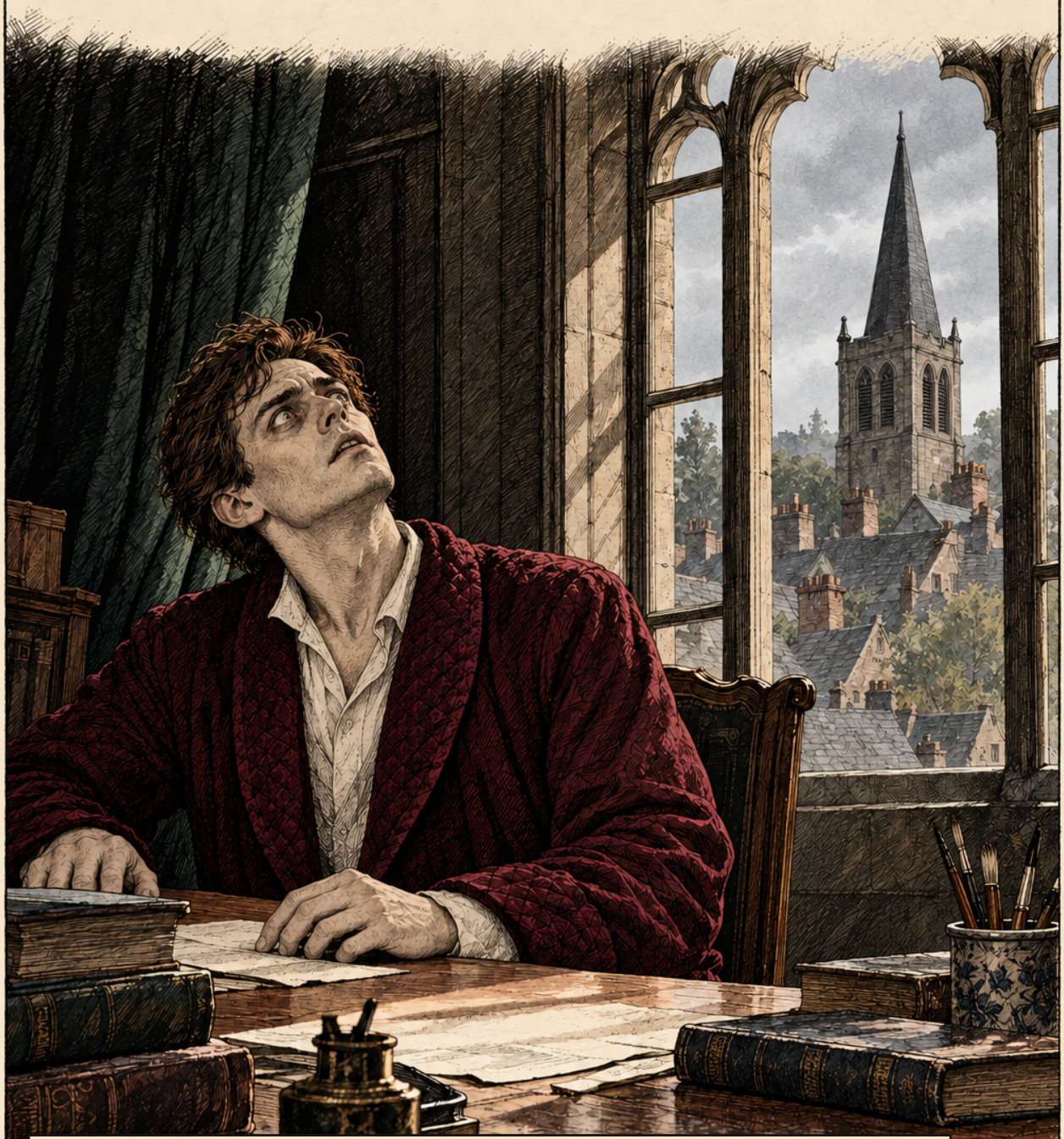
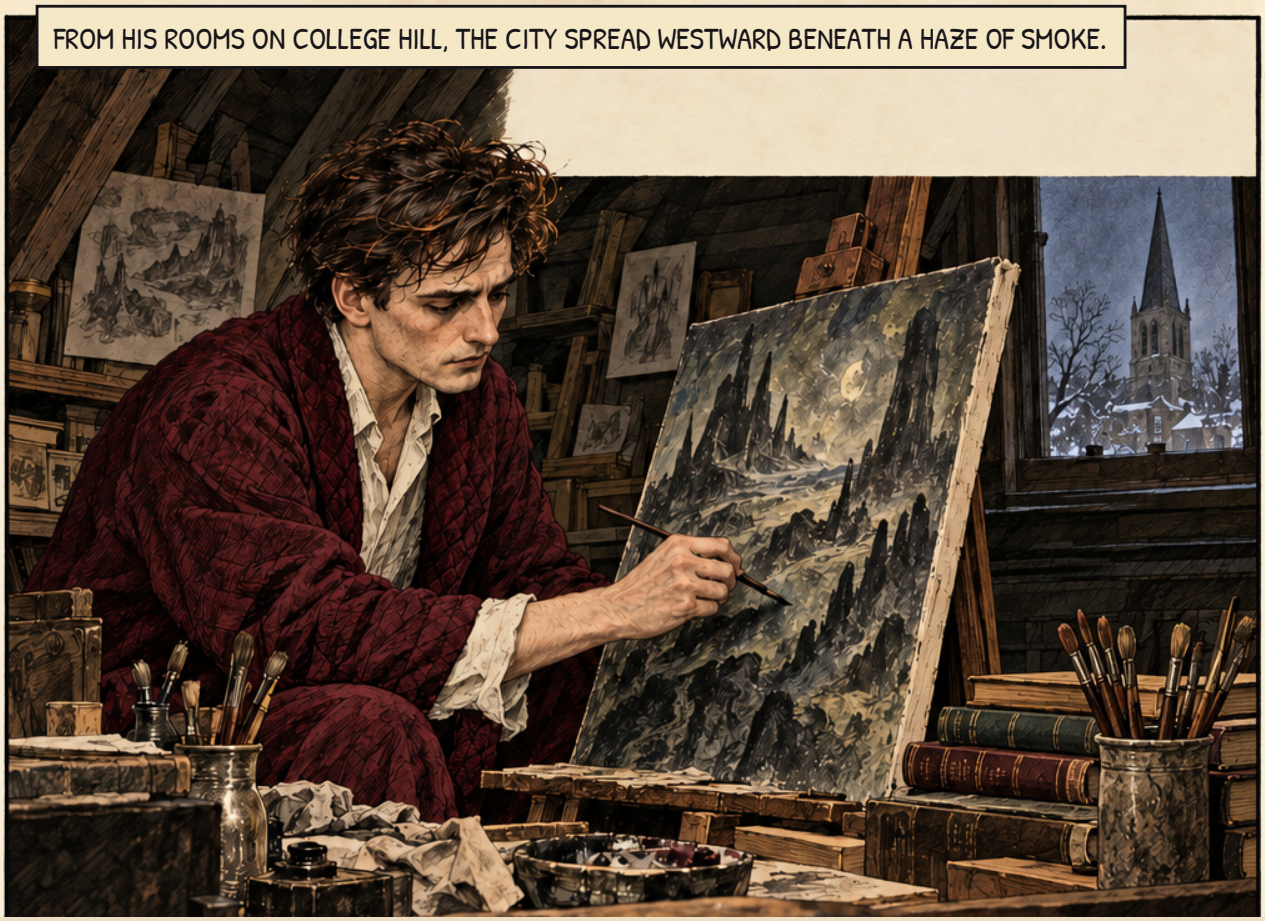
THE HAUNTER OF THE DARK

ROBERT BLAKE WAS FOUND DEAD AT HIS DESK AFTER THE GREAT STORM OF AUGUST 8TH.



...THE CORONER'S PHYSICIAN MADE AN EXAMINATION, AND DESPITE THE UNBROKEN WINDOW REPORTED ELECTRICAL SHOCK, OR NERVOUS TENSION INDUCED BY ELECTRICAL DISCHARGE, AS THE CAUSE OF DEATH.

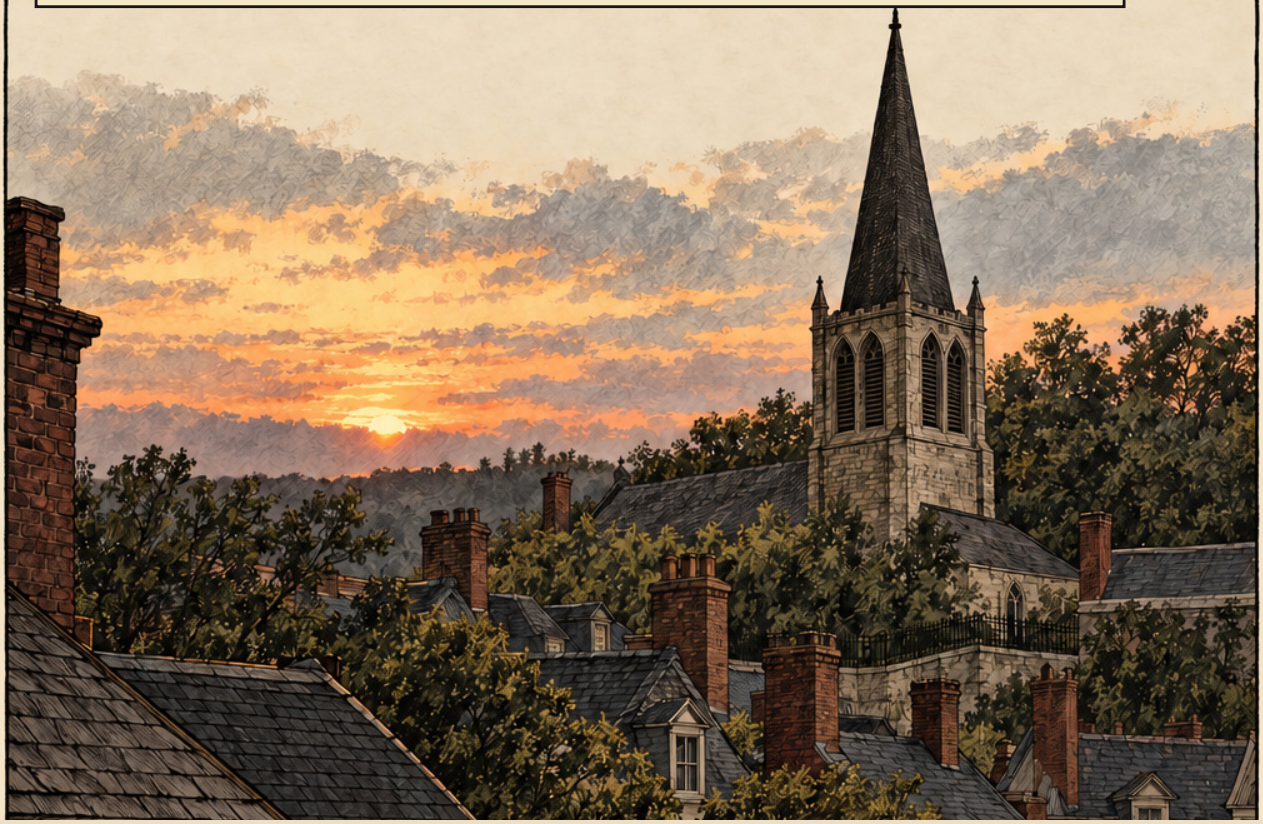

HE HAD RETURNED TO PROVIDENCE TO WRITE AND PAINT.


FROM HIS ROOMS ON COLLEGE HILL, THE CITY SPREAD WESTWARD BENEATH A HAZE OF SMOKE.

ONE BUILDING DREW HIS GAZE: A DESERTED CHURCH ON FEDERAL HILL.



BIRDS WHEELED AROUND THE NEIGHBOURING ROOFS. NONE SETTLED ON ITS BLACKENED STEEPLE.



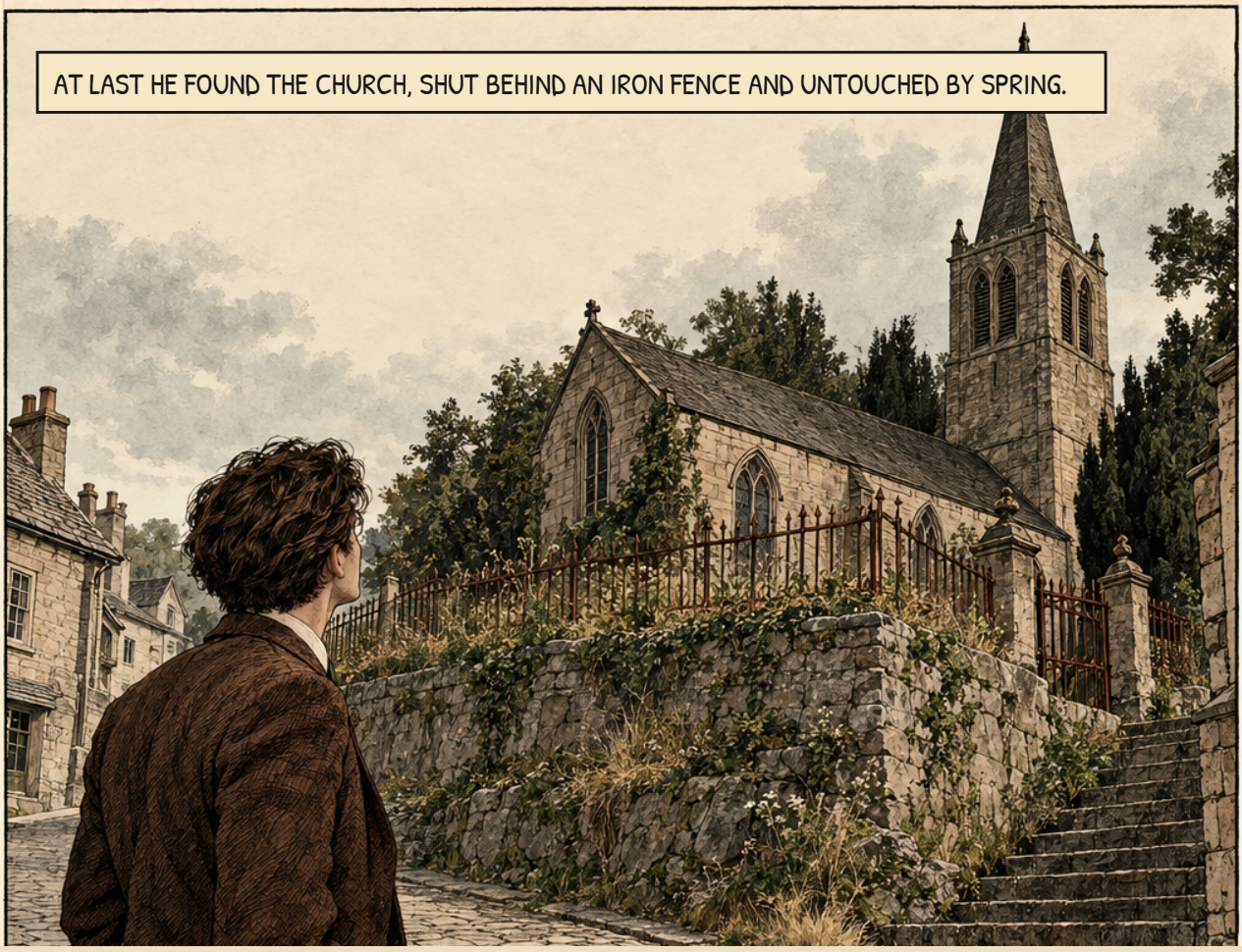

BY LATE APRIL, WATCHING WAS NO LONGER ENOUGH.


HE CROSSED THE CITY TO FIND THE PLACE HE HAD IMAGINED FOR MONTHS.

THE PEOPLE HE QUESTIONED WERE RELUCTANT TO ANSWER.

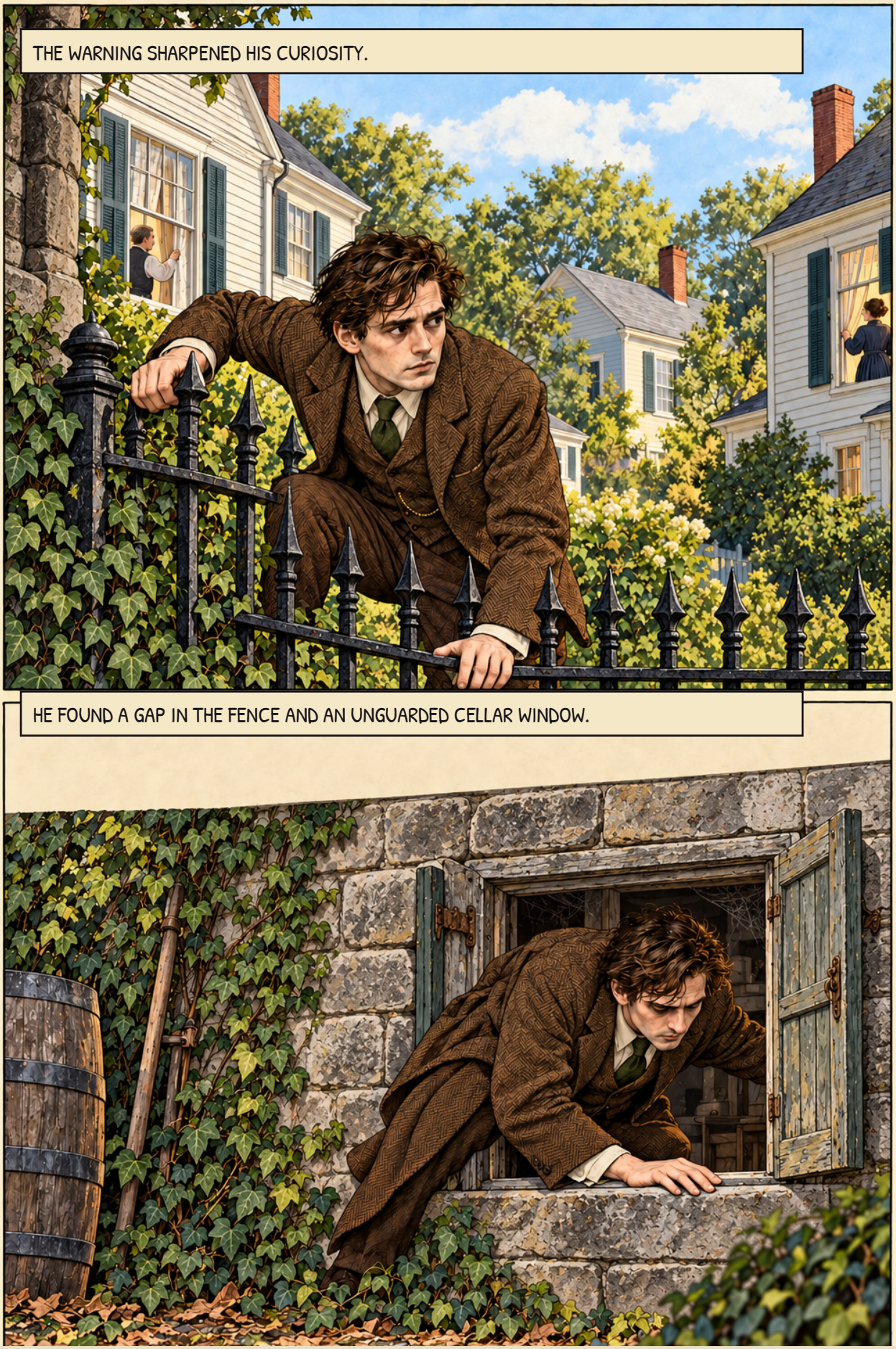


AT LAST HE FOUND THE CHURCH, SHUT BEHIND AN IRON FENCE AND UNTOUCHED BY SPRING.




THERE HAD BEEN A BAD SECT THERE IN THE OULD DAYS—AN OUTLAW SECT THAT CALLED UP AWFUL THINGS FROM SOME UNKNOWN GULF OF NIGHT... THERE DID BE THOSE WHO SAID THAT MERELY THE LIGHT COULD DO IT.
THEY HAD RUN AWAY LIKE RATS AFTER THE THREATENING TALK IN '77...




THE WARNING SHARPENED HIS CURIOSITY.
HE FOUND A GAP IN THE FENCE AND AN UNGUARDED CELLAR WINDOW.


INSIDE, DUST LAY OVER EVERYTHING.
...THE COBWEBBED CROSS ABOVE THE ALTAR WAS NOT OF THE ORDINARY KIND, BUT RESEMBLED THE PRIMORDIAL ANKH OR CRUX ANSATA OF SHADOWY EGYPT.

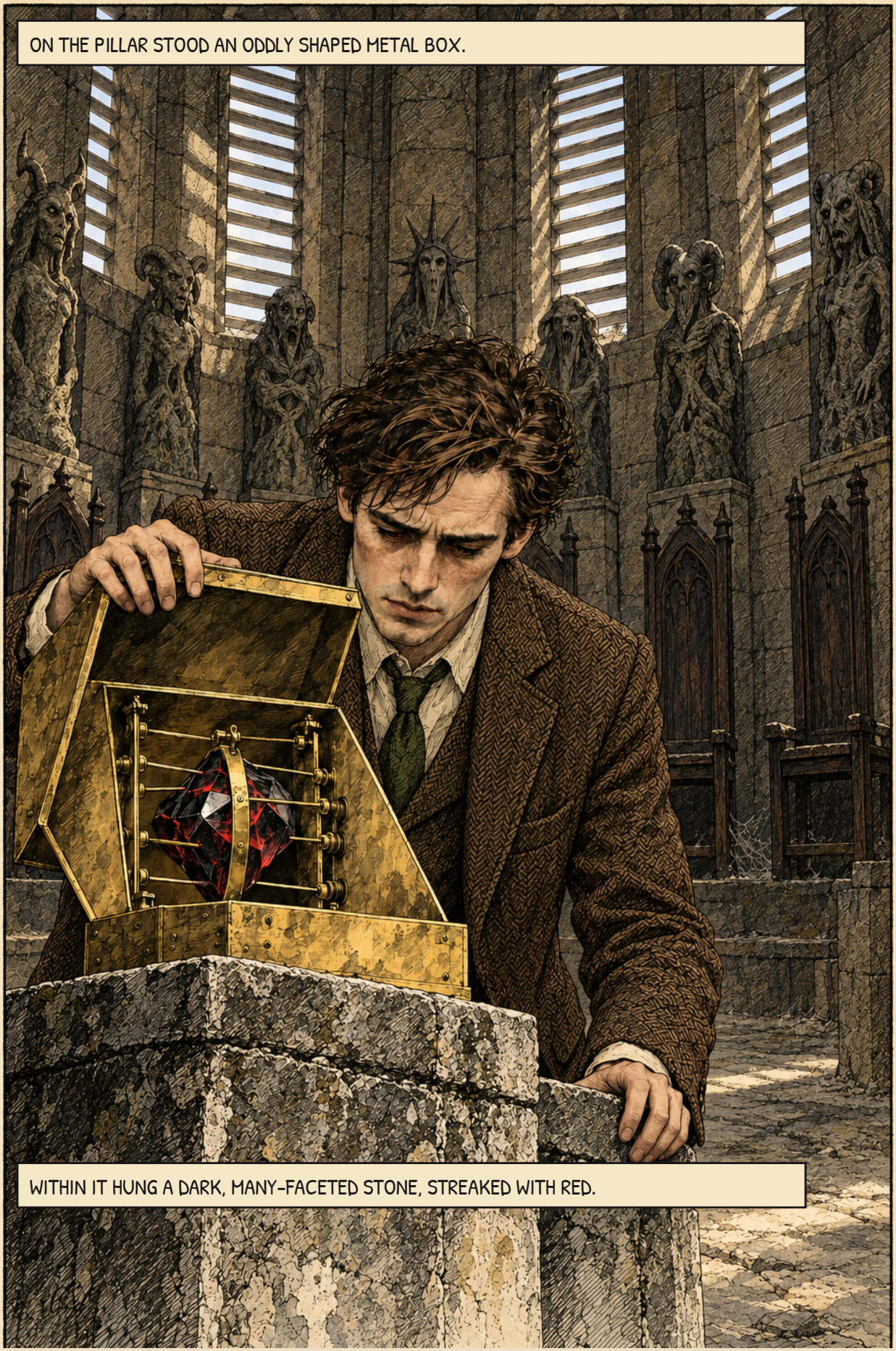
THE VESTRY HELD BOOKS HE KNEW BY FEARFUL REPUTATION.



HE POCKETED A RECORD WRITTEN IN A CIPHER OF ASTRONOMICAL SIGNS.



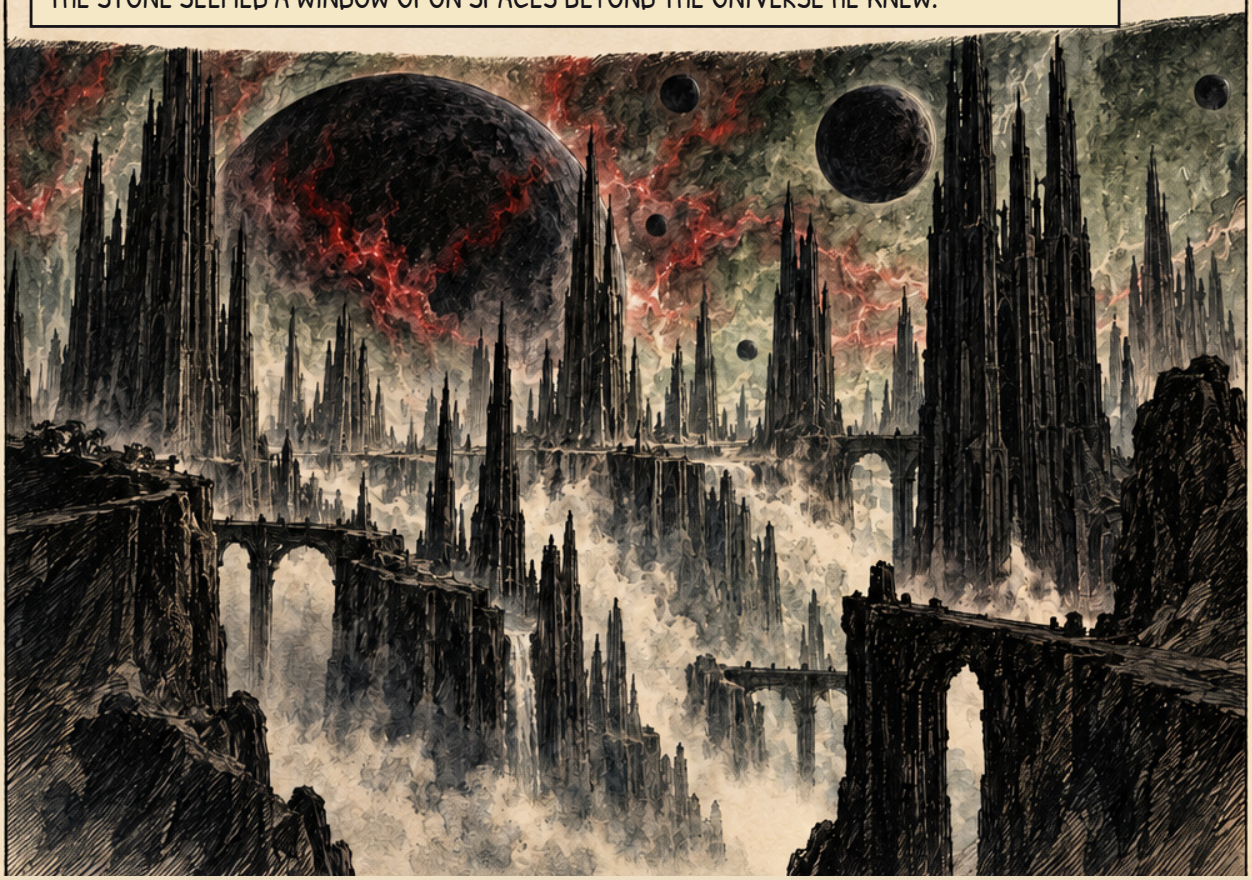

THE STAIRS LED TO A CHAMBER WITHOUT BELLS.
SEVEN CHAIRS SURROUNDED A STONE PILLAR. A LADDER ROSE TO A CLOSED TRAPDOOR IN THE WINDOWLESS STEEPLE.


ON THE PILLAR STOOD AN ODDLY SHAPED METAL BOX.
WITHIN IT HUNG A DARK, MANY-FACETED STONE, STREAKED WITH RED.

AS HE LOOKED, DISTANT WORLDS UNFOLDED IN HIS MIND.

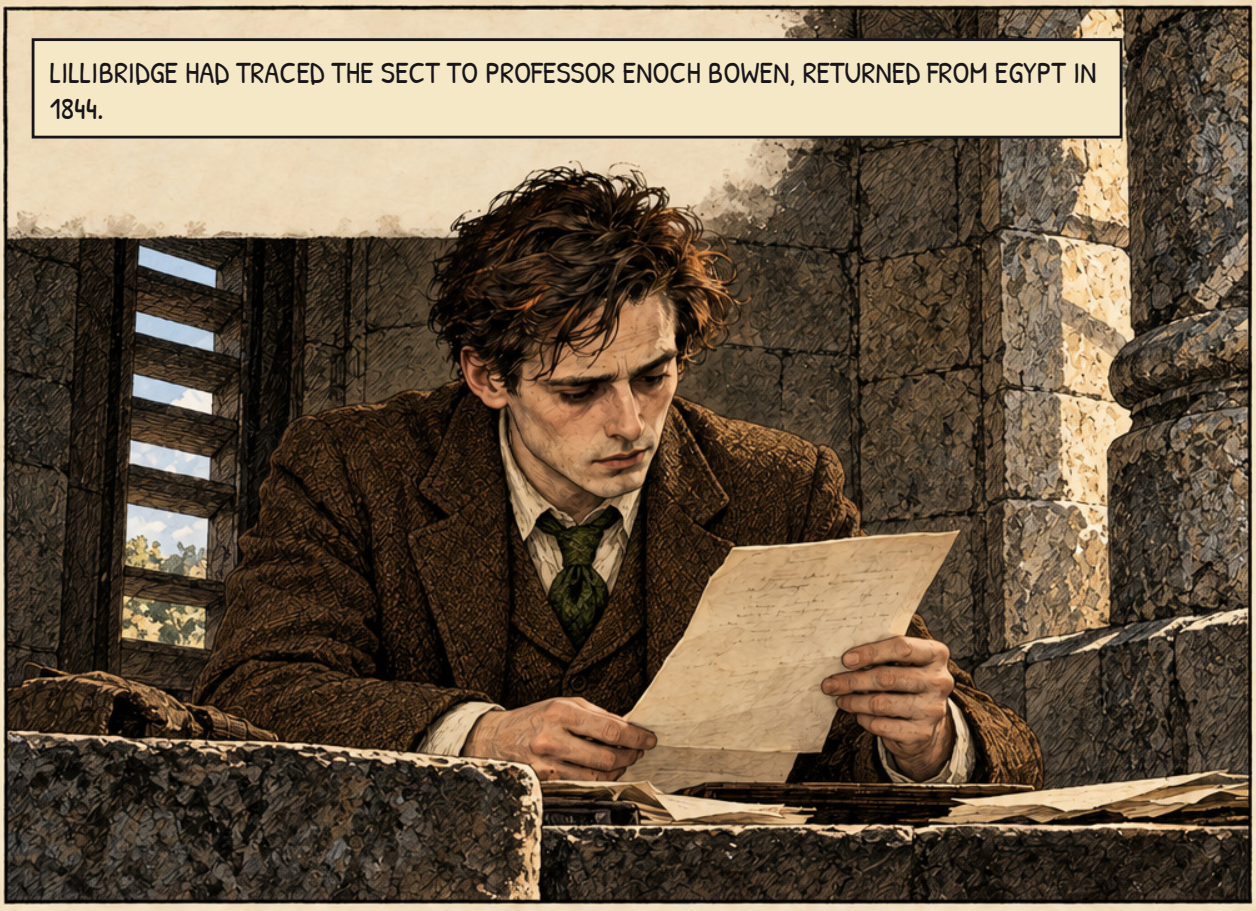


THE STONE SEEMED A WINDOW UPON SPACES BEYOND THE UNIVERSE HE KNEW.



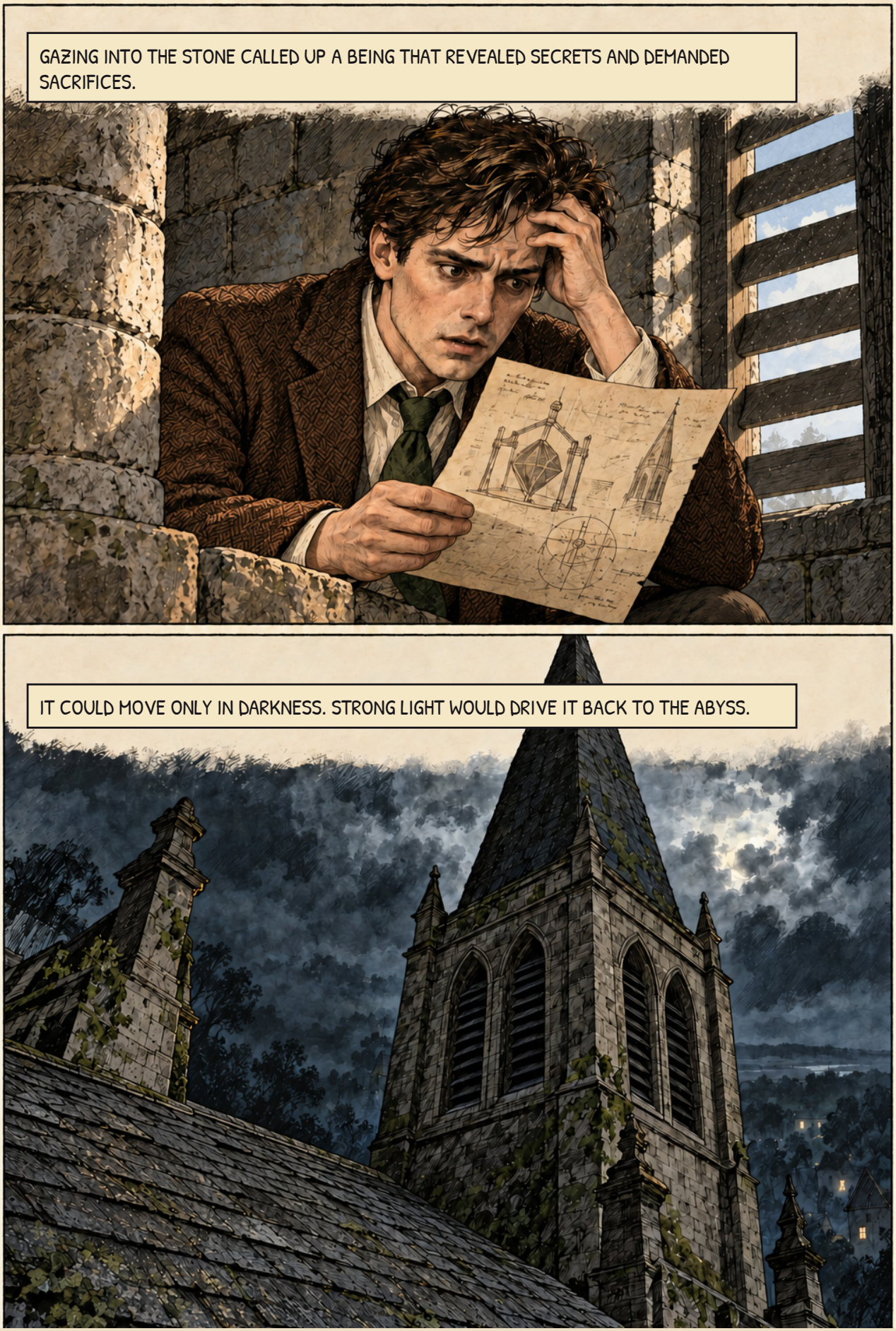

THEN HE NOTICED THE REMAINS IN THE CORNER.
THEY BELONGED TO EDWIN LILLIBRIDGE, A REPORTER WHO HAD DISAPPEARED IN 1893.

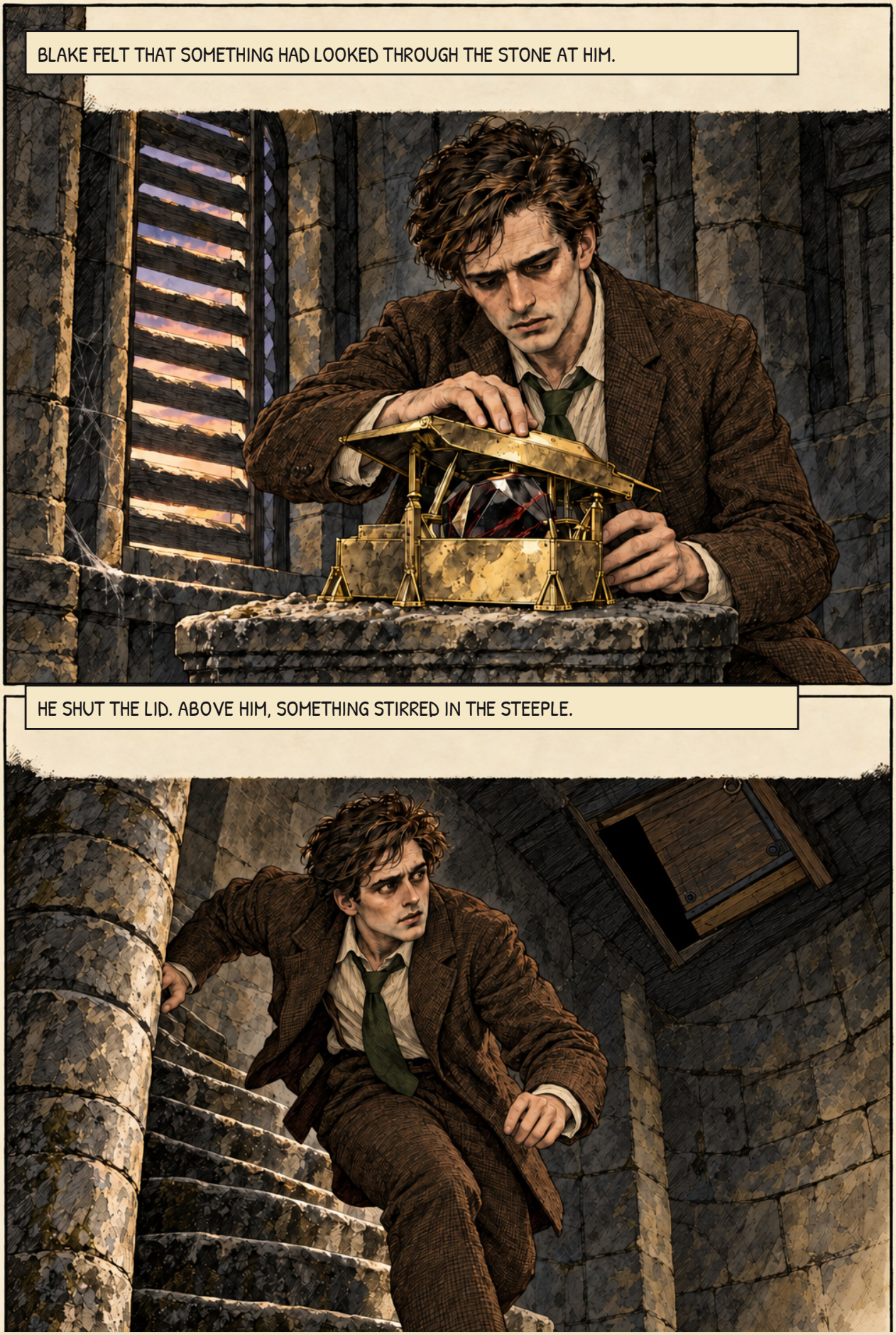
LILLIBRIDGE HAD TRACED THE SECT TO PROFESSOR ENOCH BOWEN, RETURNED FROM EGYPT IN 1844.



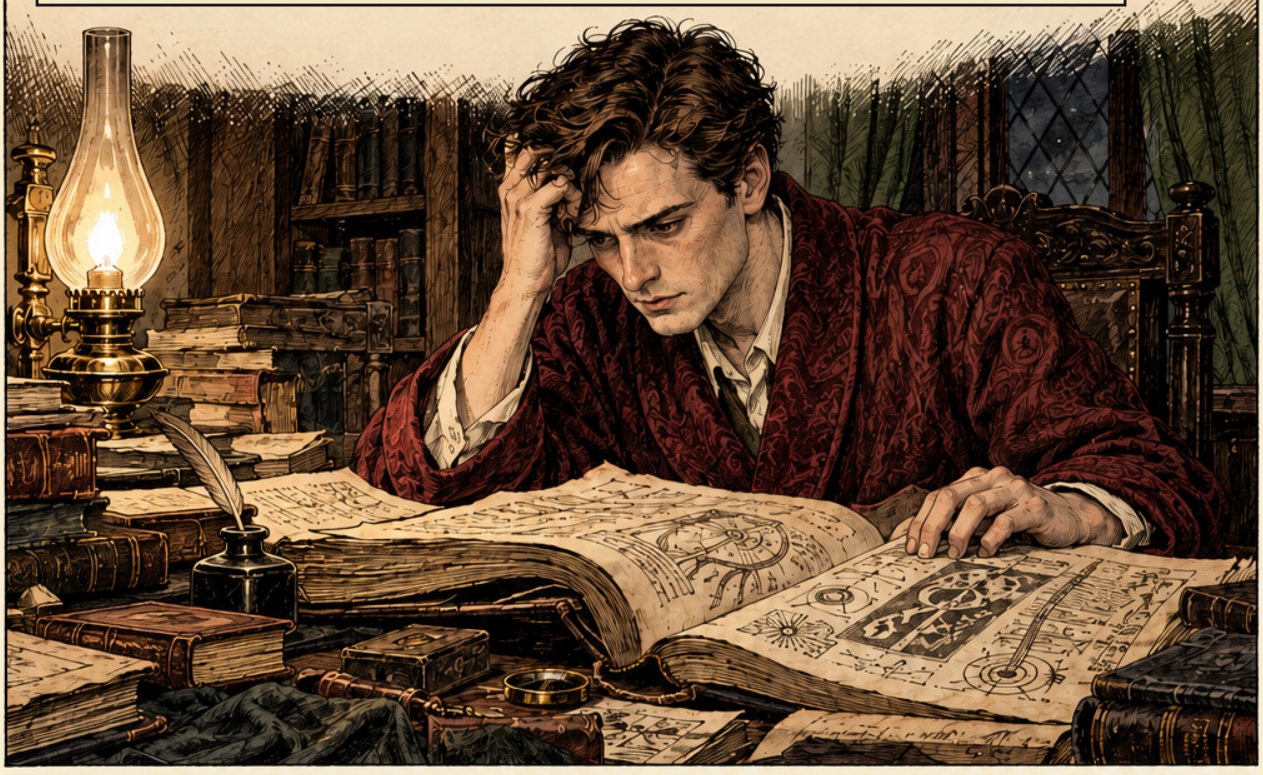
THE NOTES LINKED ITS GROWTH WITH DISAPPEARANCES AND A THING CALLED THE SHINING TRAPEZOHEDRON.




GAZING INTO THE STONE CALLED UP A BEING THAT REVEALED SECRETS AND DEMANDED SACRIFICES.
IT COULD MOVE ONLY IN DARKNESS. STRONG LIGHT WOULD DRIVE IT BACK TO THE ABYSS.


BLAKE FELT THAT SOMETHING HAD LOOKED THROUGH THE STONE AT HIM.
HE SHUT THE LID. ABOVE HIM, SOMETHING STIRRED IN THE STEEPLE.

FOR WEEKS HE WORKED IN SECRET, SEARCHING OLD NEWSPAPERS AND DECIPHERING THE BOOK.



EVERY EVENING HIS EYES RETURNED TO THE TOWER.



IN JUNE HE RECOGNISED THE LANGUAGE: AKLO.



THE RECORD TRACED THE STONE THROUGH VANISHED WORLDS AND CIVILISATIONS, UNTIL BOWEN HAD FOUND IT IN AN EGYPTIAN RUIN.

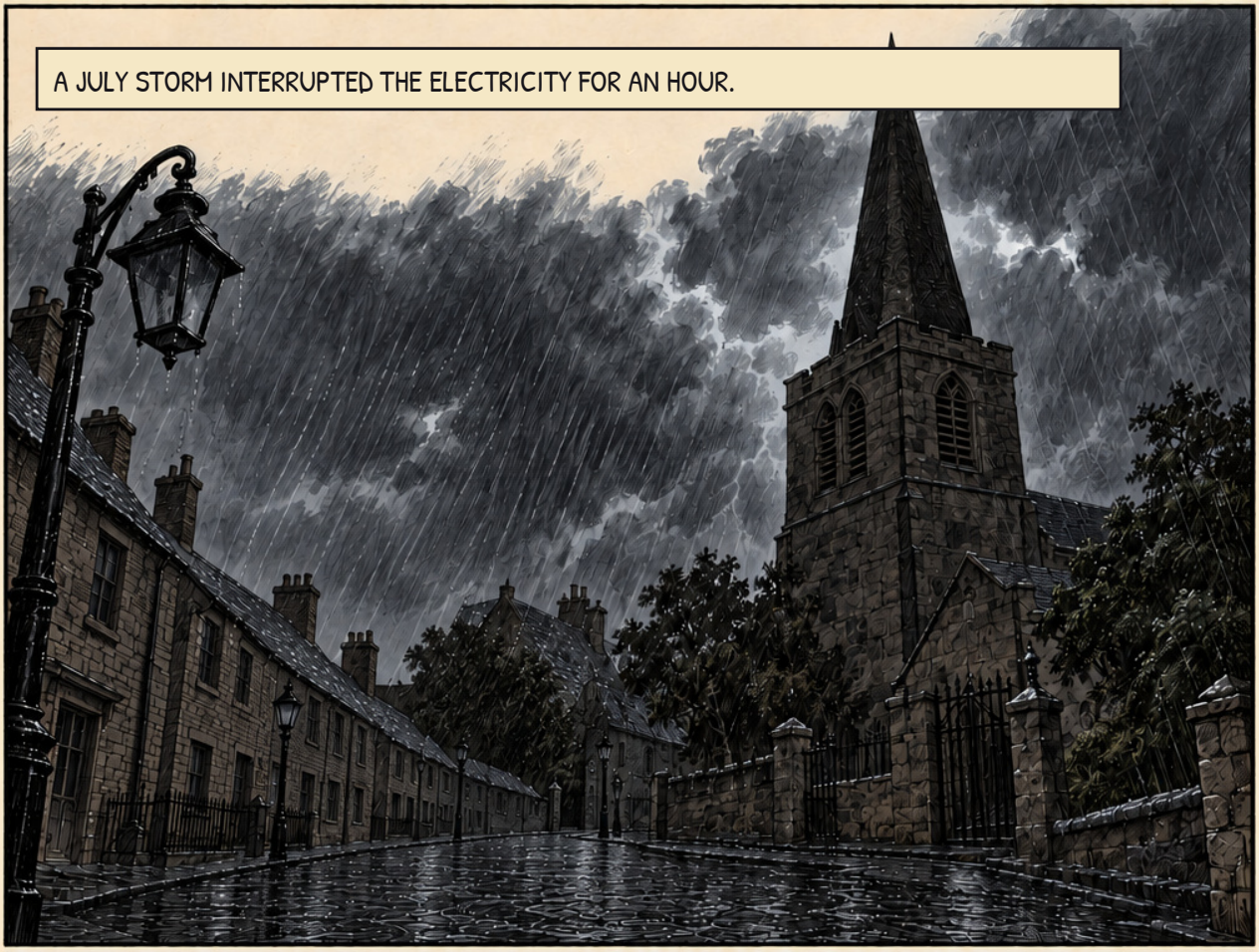


ON FEDERAL HILL, PEOPLE BEGAN HEARING MOVEMENT OVERHEAD.



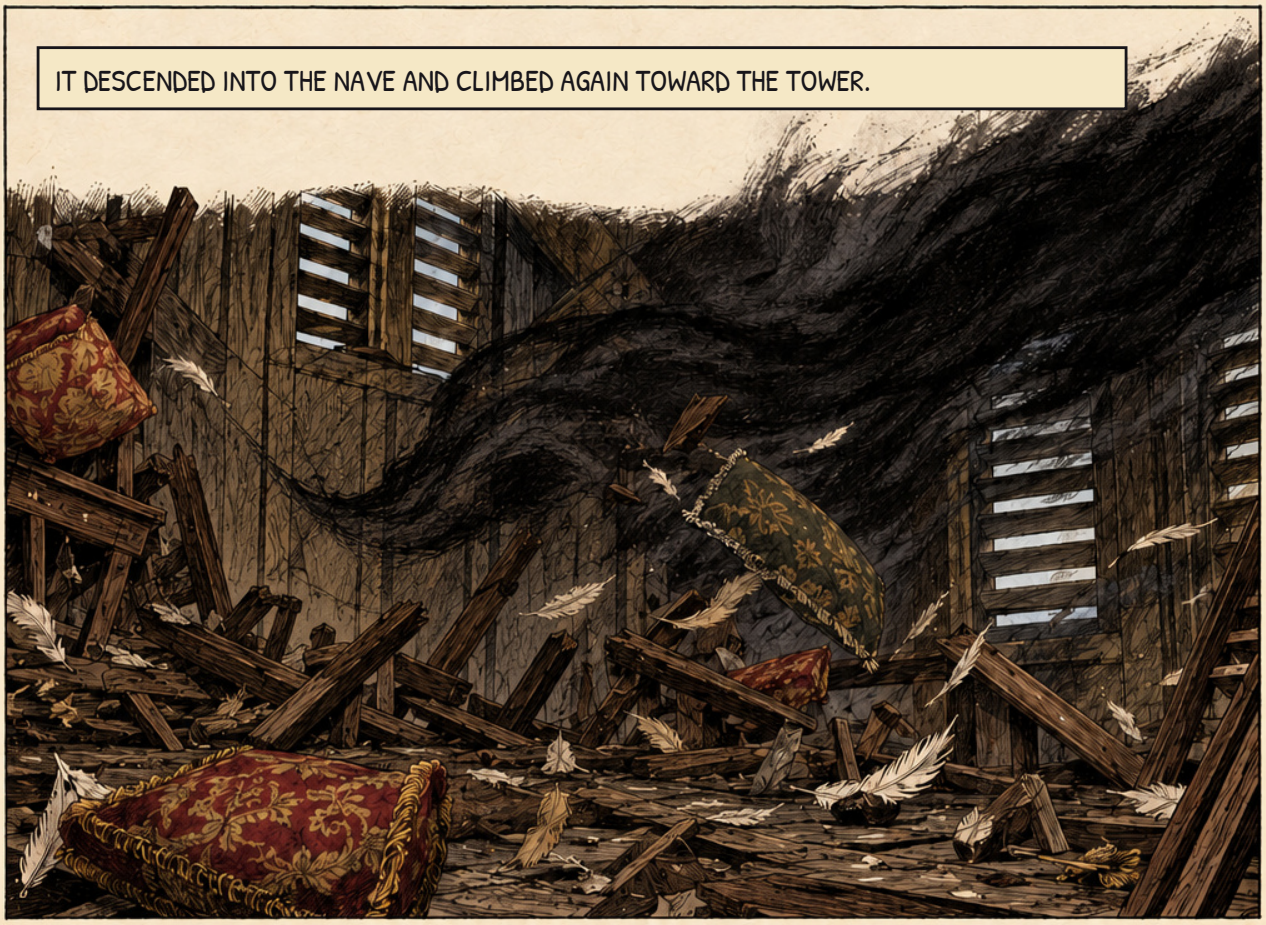
BLAKE FEARED HE HAD AWAKENED THE HAUNTER—AND FELT AN INCREASING DESIRE TO RETURN.




A JULY STORM INTERRUPTED THE ELECTRICITY FOR AN HOUR.


THE NEIGHBOURS KEPT A RING OF LAMPS AND CANDLES AROUND THE CHURCH WHILE SOMETHING MOVED WITHIN.

IT DESCENDED INTO THE NAVE AND CLIMBED AGAIN TOWARD THE TOWER.



WHEN THE STREETLIGHTS RETURNED, IT RETREATED TO THE STEEPLE'S DARKNESS.

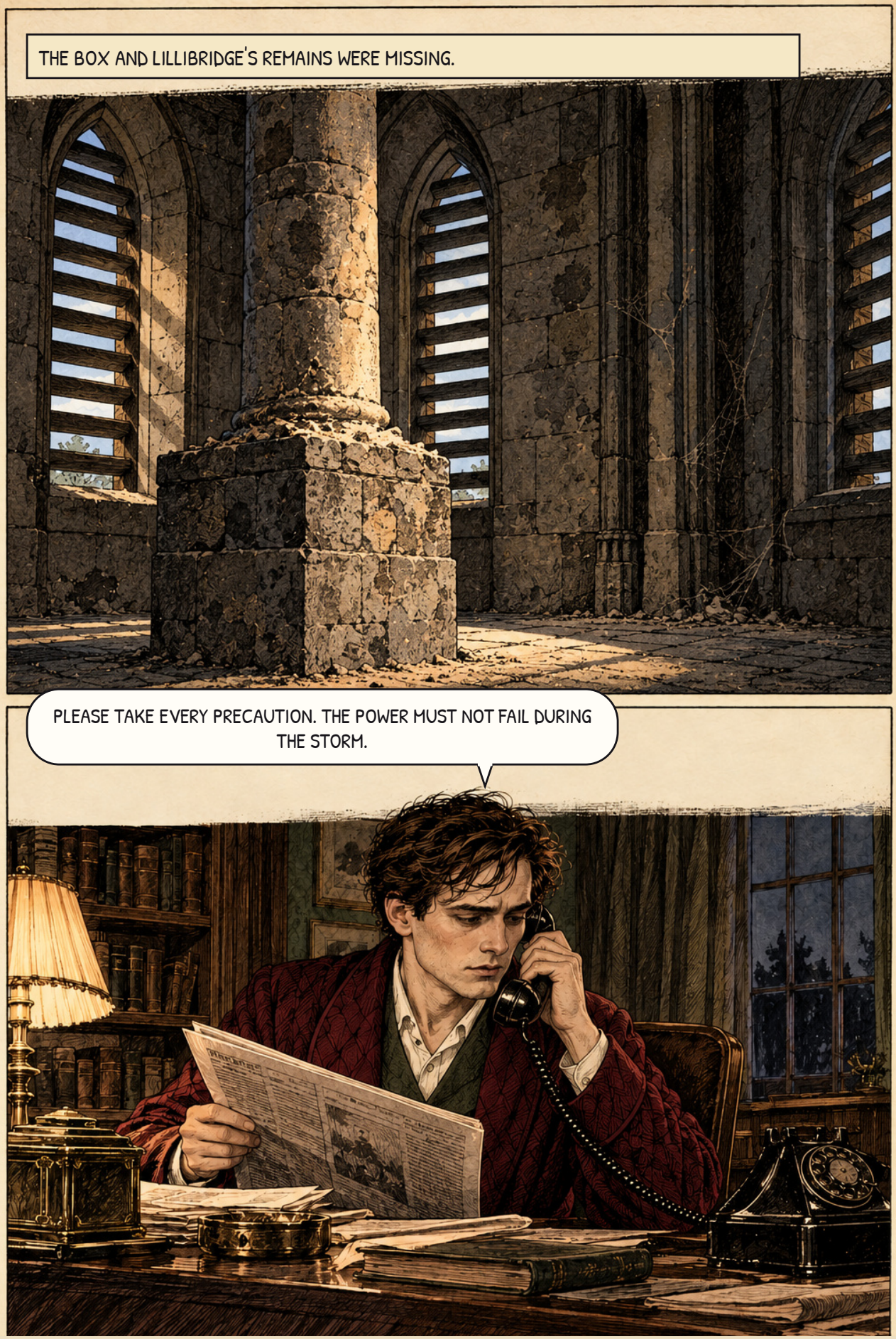


REPORTERS FOUND DISTURBED DUST, YELLOW STAINS, AND CHARRED PATCHES.



TWO TOWER WINDOWS HAD BEEN STUFFED WITH UPHOLSTERY. SOMETHING HAD TRIED TO SHUT OUT THE LIGHT.




THE BOX AND LILLIBRIDGE'S REMAINS WERE MISSING.
PLEASE TAKE EVERY PRECAUTION. THE POWER MUST NOT FAIL DURING THE STORM.

THE CONNECTION STRENGTHENED IN HIS SLEEP.



ONE NIGHT HE AWOKE OUTDOORS, ALREADY WALKING TOWARD THE CHURCH.

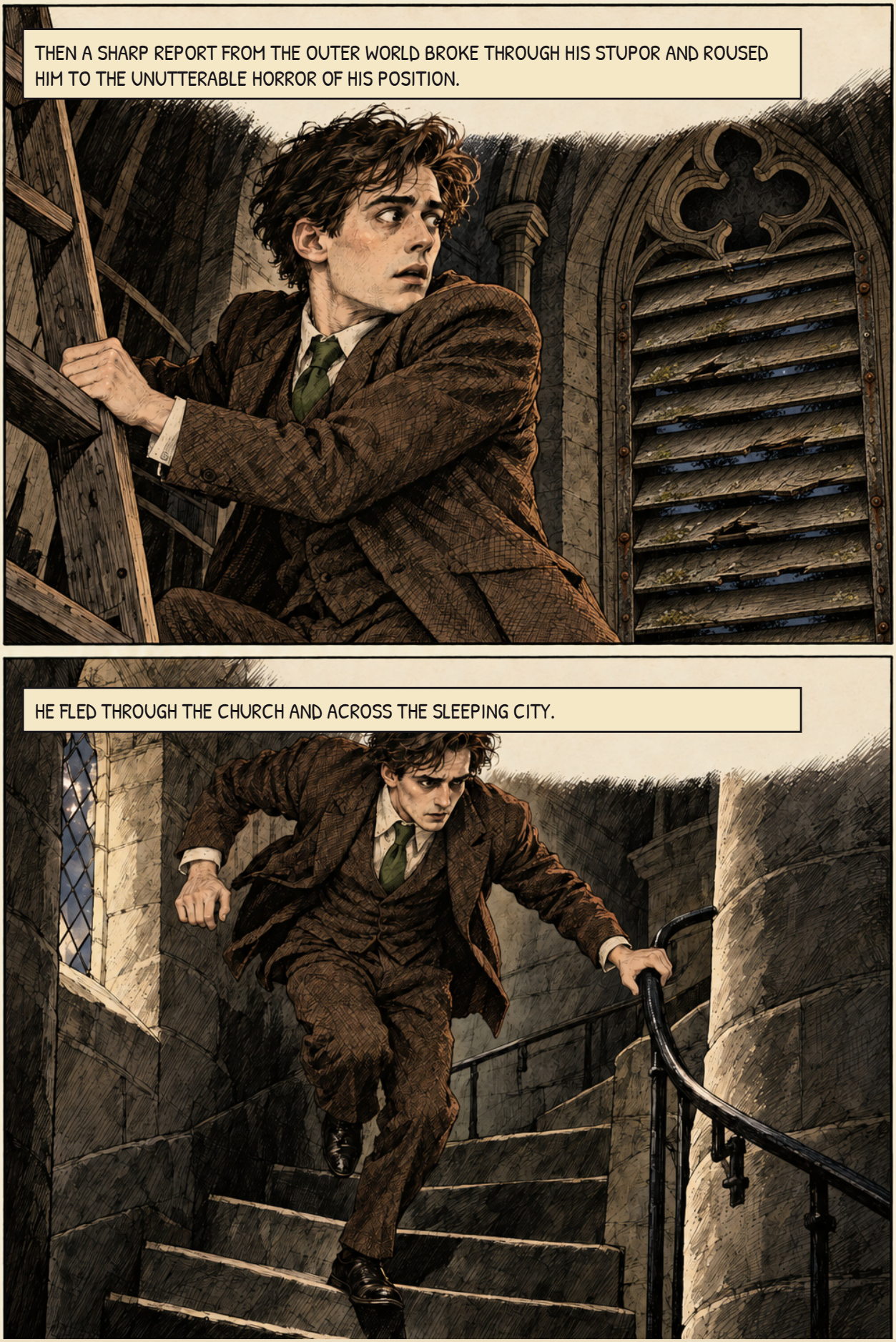


ON JULY 30, HE FOUND HIMSELF INSIDE THE TOWER ITSELF.



HIS HANDS WERE CLIMBING TOWARD THE OPENING ABOVE, WHERE A HOT, FOUL BREATH DESCENDED.




THEN A SHARP REPORT FROM THE OUTER WORLD BROKE THROUGH HIS STUPOR AND ROUSED HIM TO THE UNUTTERABLE HORROR OF HIS POSITION.
HE FLED THROUGH THE CHURCH AND ACROSS THE SLEEPING CITY.


WHEN HE FACED THE MIRROR HE SAW THAT HIS HAIR WAS BADLY SCORCHED...
...SLEEP-WALKING HAD FORCED HIM TO BIND HIS ANKLES EVERY NIGHT WITH KNOTS WHICH WOULD PROBABLY HOLD OR ELSE WAKEN HIM WITH THE LABOUR OF UNTYING.


THE GREAT STORM BROKE JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT ON AUGUST 8TH.
BLAKE KEPT HIS ROOM DARK SO HE COULD WATCH THE LIGHTS ACROSS THE CITY.

IT KNOWS WHERE I AM...



IT HAPPENED AT 2:12 A.M. ACCORDING TO POWER-HOUSE RECORDS...

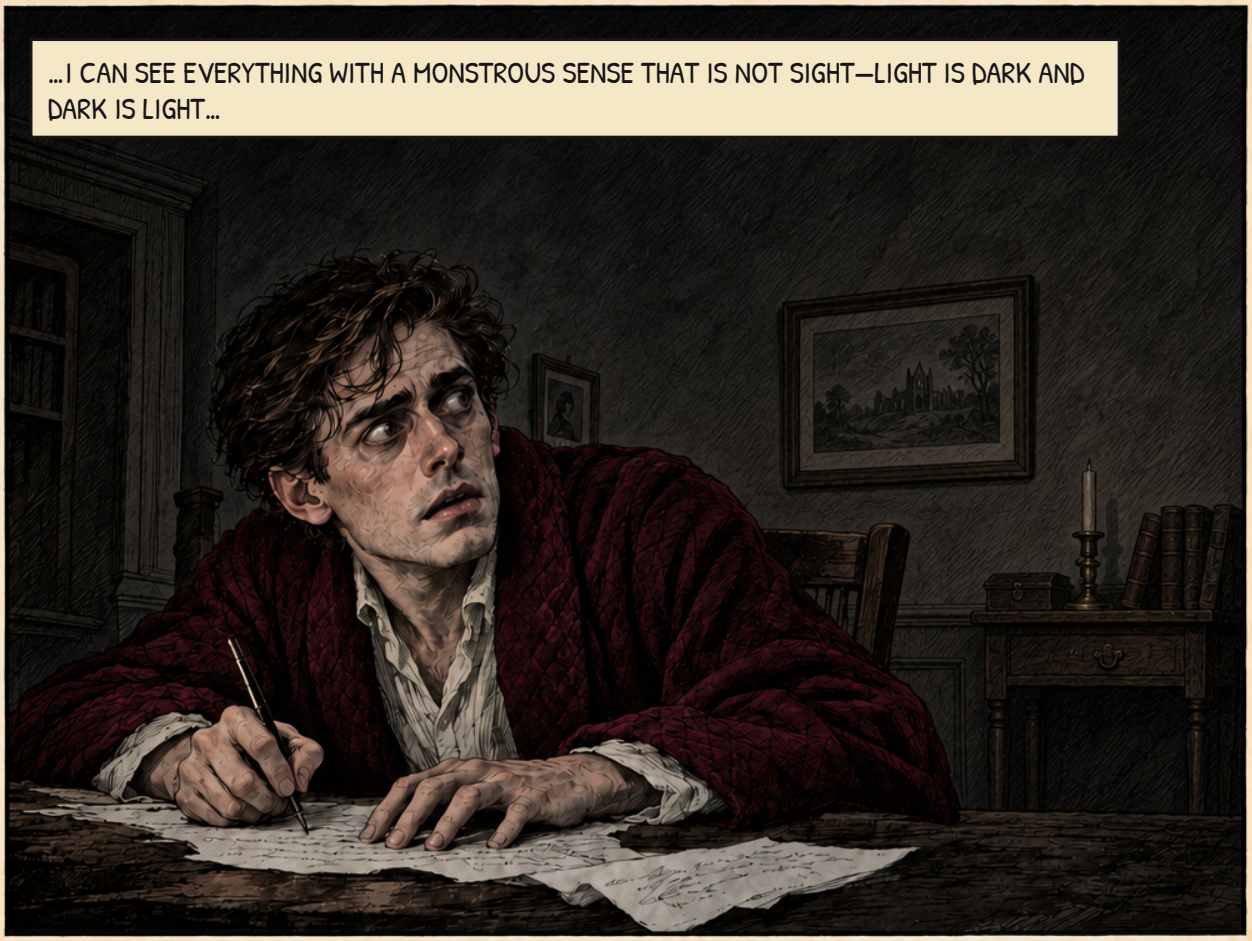


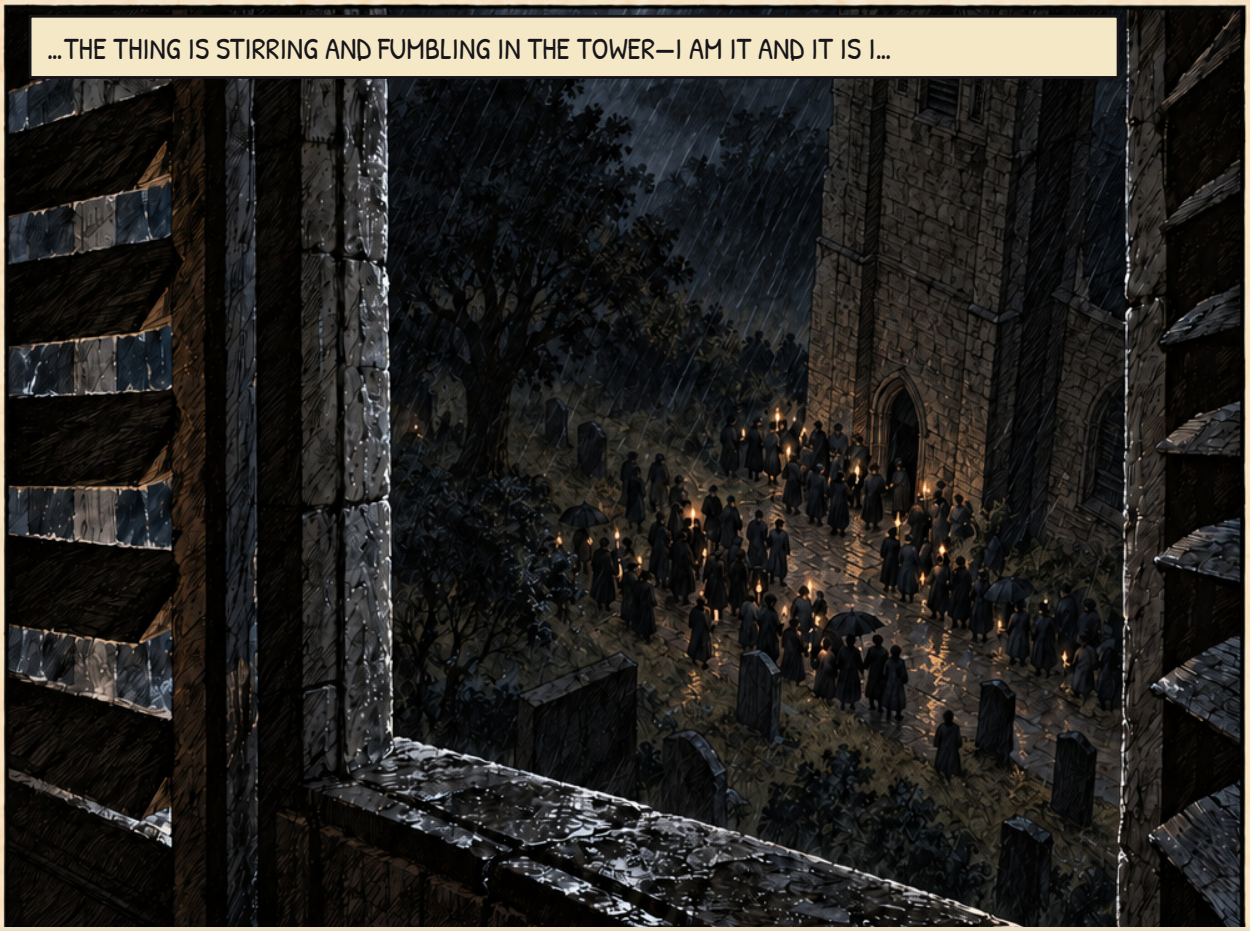
ON FEDERAL HILL, NEIGHBOURS GATHERED WITH LAMPS AND CANDLES. A PRIEST JOINED THEM.



THEN THE WIND ROSE, AND THE LIGHTNING CEASED.




...I CAN SEE EVERYTHING WITH A MONSTROUS SENSE THAT IS NOT SIGHT—LIGHT IS DARK AND DARK IS LIGHT...


...THE THING IS STIRRING AND FUMBLING IN THE TOWER—I AM IT AND IT IS I...

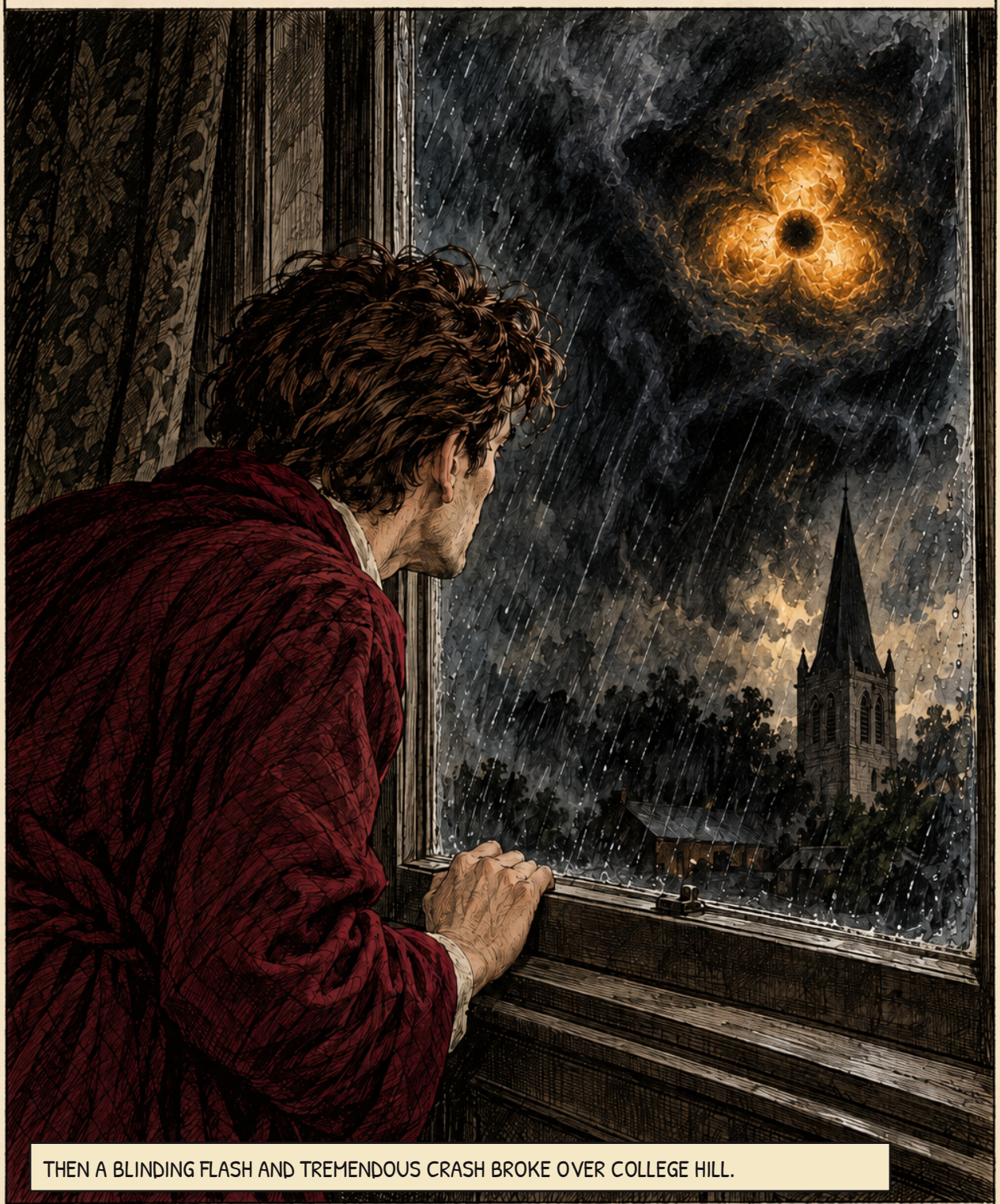
AT 2:35, THE TOWER'S EASTERN BOARDING BROKE LOOSE.



A RUSH OF FOUL AIR CROSSED THE WATCHERS, AND A DEEPER BLACKNESS SWEPT TOWARD COLLEGE HILL.



I SEE IT—COMING HERE—HELL-WIND—TITAN BLUR—BLACK WINGS—YOG-SOTHOTH SAVE ME—THE THREE-LOBED BURNING EYE...



THEN A BLINDING FLASH AND TREMENDOUS CRASH BROKE OVER COLLEGE HILL.

THE NEXT MORNING, STUDENTS NOTICED HIS FACE AT THE WINDOW.



WHEN IT REMAINED THERE INTO THE EVENING, THEY CALLED FOR HELP.



THE DIARY ENDED WHERE THE OFFICIAL EXPLANATION BEGAN.



LATER, DR. DEXTER RECOVERED THE BOX FROM THE WINDOWLESS STEEPLE, WHERE BLAKE HAD NEVER PLACED IT.




...SUPERSTITIOUS DR. DEXTER, WHO THREW THE CURIOUS BOX AND ANGLED STONE—AN OBJECT CERTAINLY SELF-LUMINOUS AS SEEN IN THE BLACK WINDOWLESS STEEPLE WHERE IT WAS FOUND—INTO THE DEEPEST CHANNEL OF NARRAGANSETT BAY.
...A REPUTABLE PHYSICIAN WITH A TASTE FOR ODD FOLKLORE—AVERRED THAT HE HAD RID THE EARTH OF SOMETHING TOO DANGEROUS TO REST UPON IT.