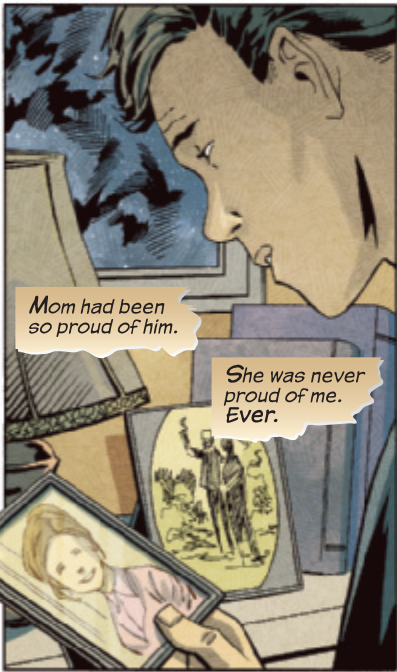


It was 1984. Middle of May, around 10 in the evening.

Henry and I were brand spanking new orphans. We had barely spoken to each other the whole day that we buried our mother.

I don't remember most of it other than it was a blur of well-meaning relatives assuring us that they'd be there for us before they disappeared back into the woodwork.

Henry was clean shaven, but it wasn't out of respect for Ma. It was a leftover from his army days.



Mom had been so proud of him.

She was never proud of me. Ever.



Eddie...

Yeah?



I'm gonna finish moving into Mom's old bedroom.

Go ahead.



Need help?

Nah, I got it.

You sure?

I'm *always* sure.



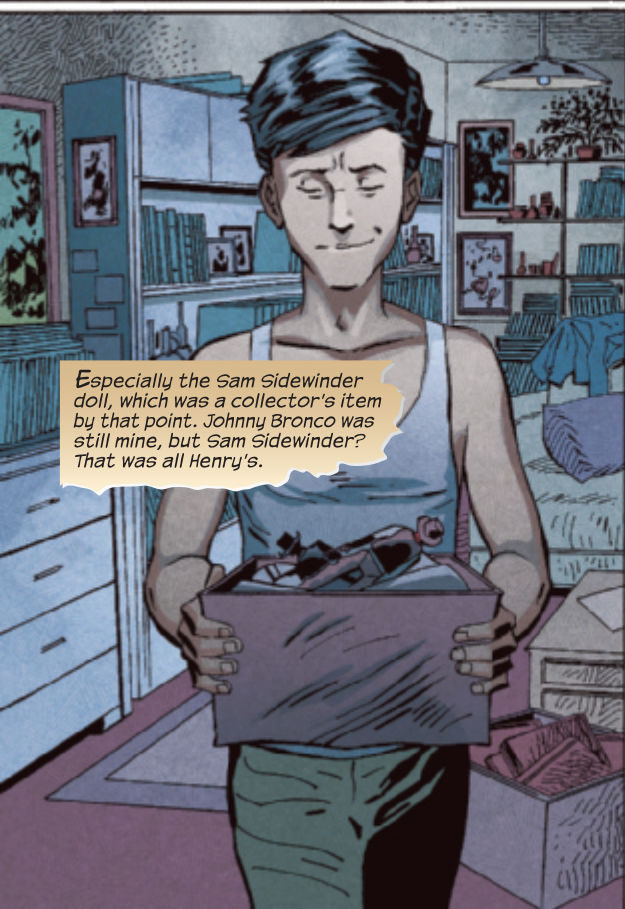
Part of me thought it was weird, Henry being so anxious to move into Mom's room.

An amateur psychologist would've had a field day with that.



Still, it would be the first time in my life that I'd finally have some privacy. It would be weird, but certainly not the weirdest thing I'd ever had to deal with.

After a few minutes, I found that Henry had left some things in the room. Or at least things he might not have thought of as his, but I definitely thought were.



Especially the Sam Sidewinder doll, which was a collector's item by that point. Johnny Bronco was still mine, but Sam Sidewinder? That was all Henry's.



Henry, heads up. Got some stuff for y--



Oh, Jesus. Henry, what the hell?!

Eddie, this...it's...



You promised! You promised Mom on her death bed!

Cocaine?! Jesus, Henry, this is--!

It's not cocaine. It's heroin.

Oh, well that makes it all better, doesn't it?!



Are you nuts?!

Mebbe. Mebbe I am.

Yell at me. It's okay. I deserve it. I'm worthless.

You're not--!



I am. Ever since I came back from 'Nam. We both know it.

Just like we both know that you don't need a *junkie* hanging around here.

Promise me one thing. When you get married, have kids, live a good life...



Tell your kids you had a brother who *sacrificed* to keep you and Mom safe. Who did his *best*. Okay?

