

The whole experience only lasted a few seconds, but it seemed like a goddamn infinite number of eternities.

And not the fun, life-flashing-before-your-eyes kind, you know?



At first, it was like that time my older brother pegged me in the back with a snowball that was more ice than snow.



Knocked the wind out of me, but not the end of the world, right?



But then came the burn.

I don't know how else to describe it, but it felt like there was a... a *snake* inside of me, a snake made of *fire*. And I could feel its teeth ripping and tearing through every organ.

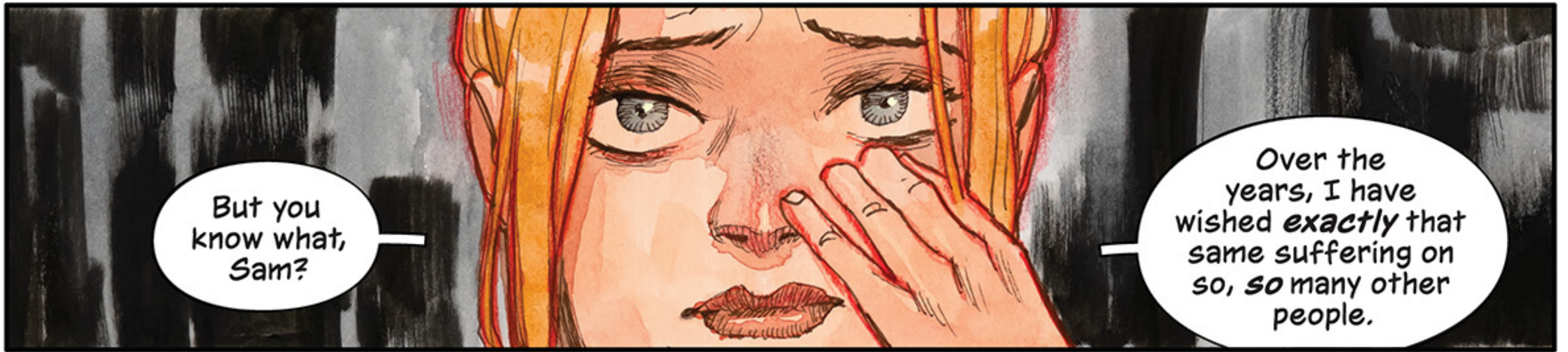
I just wanted to be dead, but my body had never felt more alive, every nerve scrambling to somehow make this unbelievable new pain somehow please, please *stop*.





And when it was finally over, it had really only just begun.

Because I still had all the memories, memories of the kind of suffering I would never wish on another human being.



But you know what, Sam?

Over the years, I have wished *exactly* that same suffering on so, so many other people.



Fuck. Sorry.

Come on now, you got nothing to apologize for.

I don't mean to dump all my trauma on you, especially because you probably saw your own share of horrific gun stuff back in the day.



Please.

Only time I ever saw somebody take a bullet was in the moving pictures.