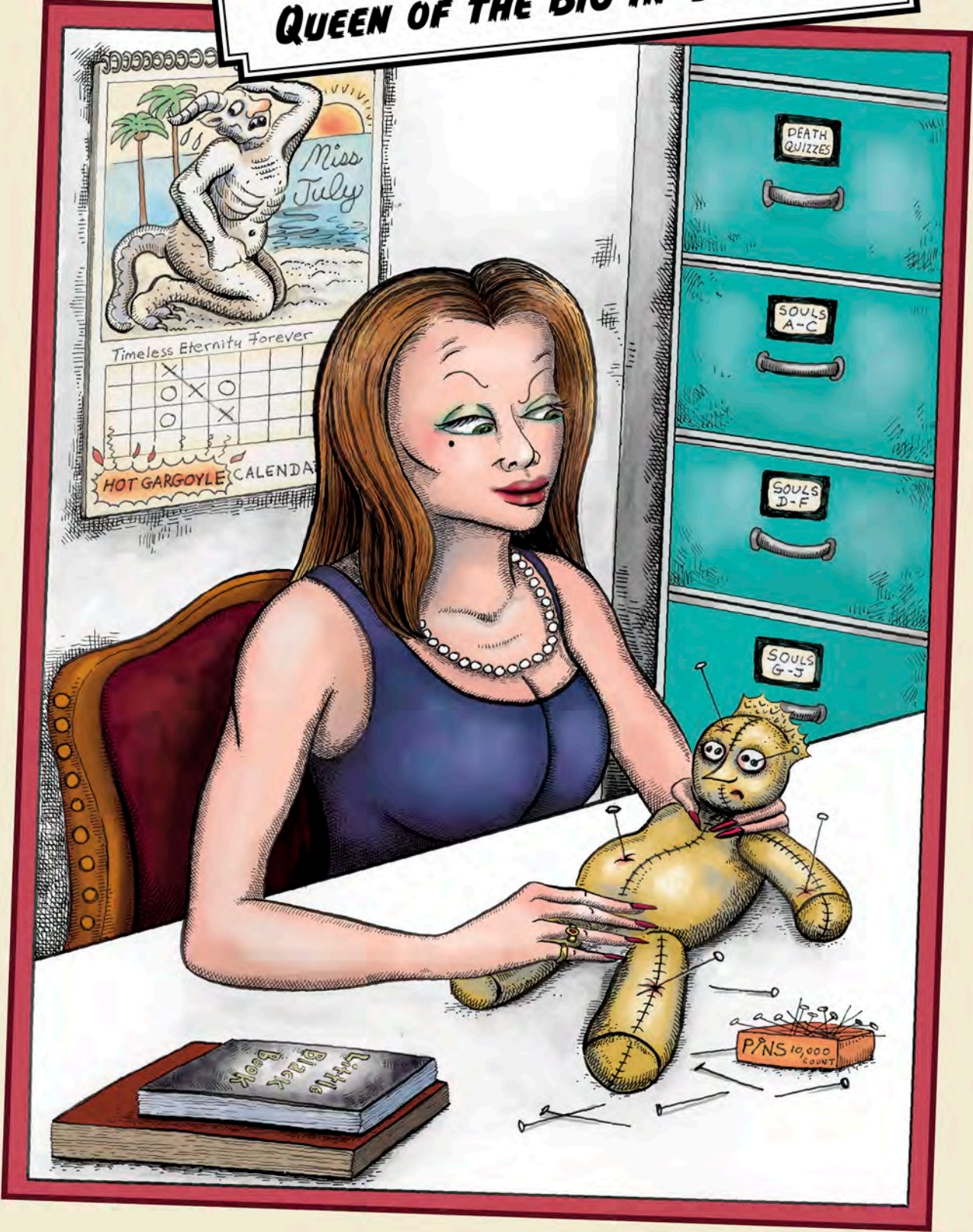


# GOSHENA

QUEEN OF THE BIG IN-BETWEENA



Written by Chuck Bright  
Art by Maureen Burdock

The Goshena Series ~ Book One

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## ***QUEEN OF THE BIG IN-BETWEENNA***

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Flossmoor, Illinois

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Summary: Goshena New Paris is the boss of the Big In-Betweena, which is the vast, turbulent yet finite space between life and death. Goshena's official self-identified title is Goshena, Queen of the Big In-Betweena. Few but Goshena recognize her as anything close to royalty but to Goshena it lets everyone know who is in charge. All newly deceased souls arrive in the Big In-Betweena at the first moment after death; it is here that they are triaged, and it is here that they ultimately take their death quiz in the hopes of moving on toward the Light. This is Book 1 in the Goshena series.--Publisher.

1. Death--Comic books, strips, etc. 2. Death--Fiction. 3. Soul--Comic books, strips, etc.  
4. Soul--Fiction. 5. Intermediate state--Comic books, strips, etc. 6. Intermediate state--Fiction.  
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To my husband, Andre,  
without whom this book  
would not have been possible

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**I. AND IN THE  
BEGINNING**





WELCOME, ONE AND ALL, TO  
**H E L L**

I just got back from vacation and you're asking me to snatch this guy from a morgue?

I'm not asking you to snatch him, just...

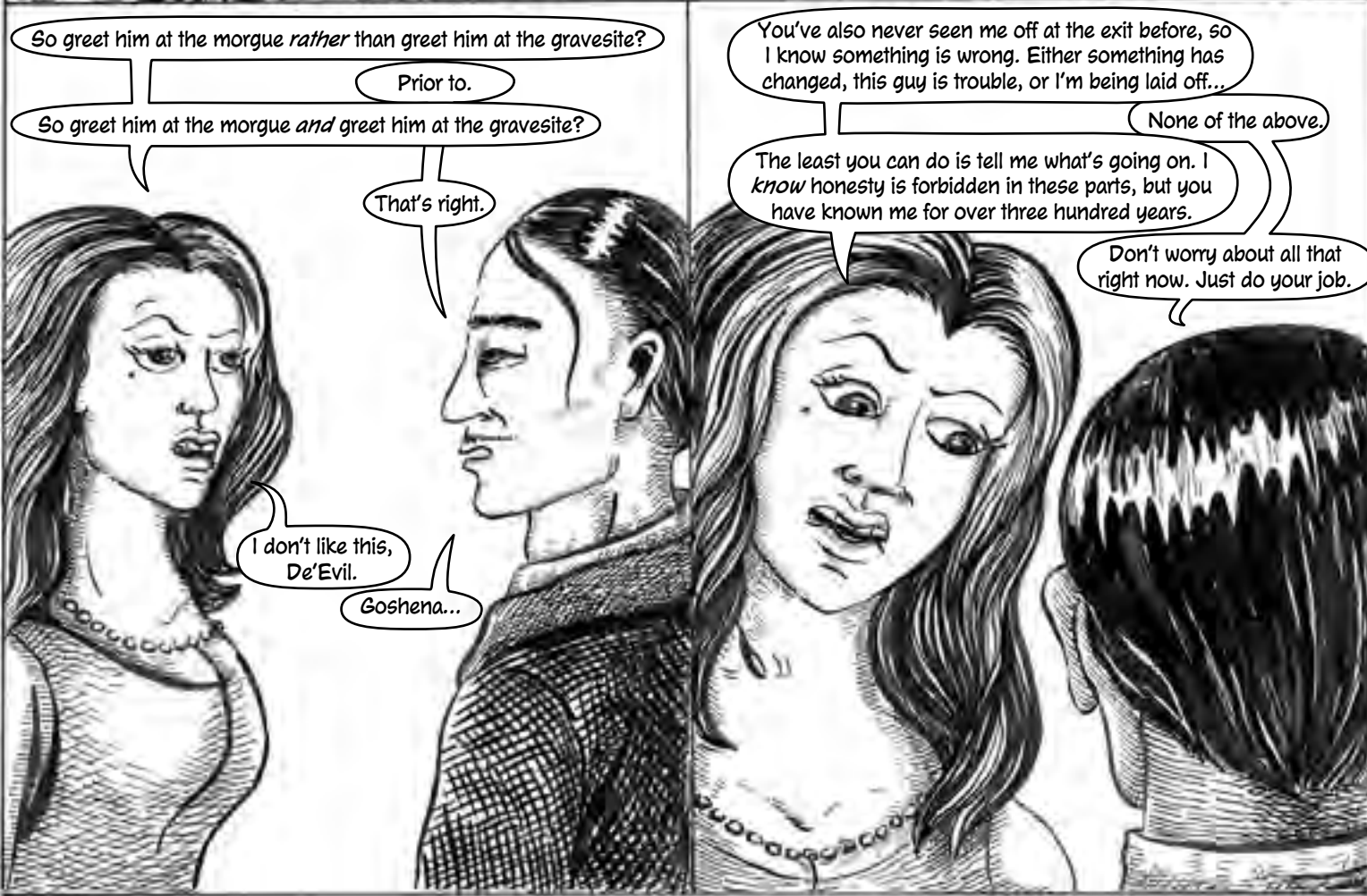
Just WHAT?

Just greet him.

And then what?

Do your job as usual.

YOU ARE NOW LEAVING THE LAND OF THE LIVING!



So greet him at the morgue *rather* than greet him at the gravesite?

Prior to.

So greet him at the morgue *and* greet him at the gravesite?

That's right.

You've also never seen me off at the exit before, so I know something is wrong. Either something has changed, this guy is trouble, or I'm being laid off...

None of the above.

The least you can do is tell me what's going on. I *know* honesty is forbidden in these parts, but you have known me for over three hundred years.

Don't worry about all that right now. Just do your job.

I don't like this, De'Evil.

Goshena...







She really did a number on you, didn't she, sweetie? But don't worry! Mama Goshena is here now, and you won't have any further need for that worthless little body of yours.



One finger.

One finger.



One piece of cartilage.

I think it's his hoo-hoo.

His *what*?

You know? His *hoo-hoo*?



One piece of cartilage.

One piece of cartilage.

One kneecap.

One kneecap.

What's this??

I don't know.



Did that correspondence medical school you went to teach you to call a penis a hoo-hoo?

No, they called it a...

PENIS?

Yes.



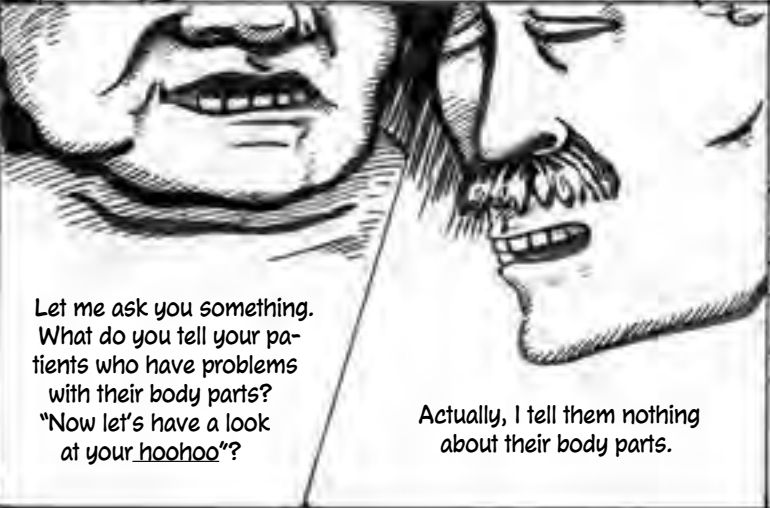
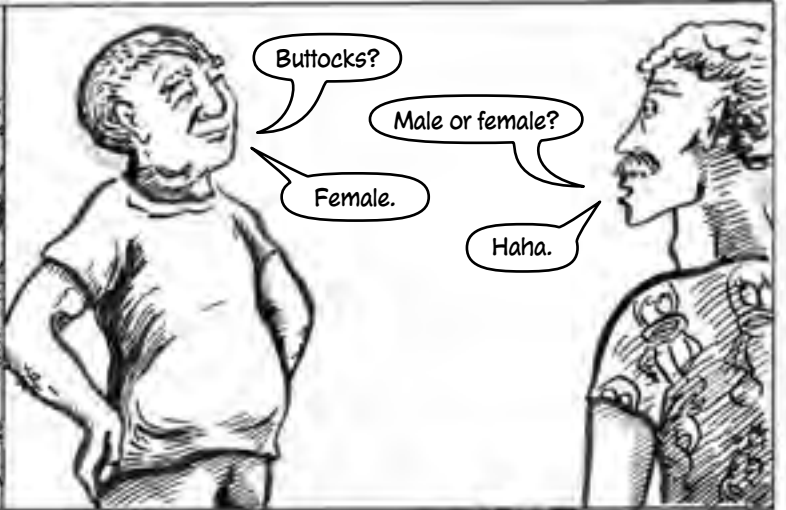
Say it.

Say *penis* or you're fired!

I *won't*! And you *can't* make me!

OK, then tell me—I'm feeling curious today—what do you call a vagina?

Shasha.



Actually, I tell them nothing about their body parts.









Inside, the soul from drawer 24 rests peacefully. But the peace is soon broken...





Suddenly, the darkness is replaced by a thick, beige fog.



IF YOU DONT COME OUT OF THERE  
RIGHT NOW, I'M COMING IN AFTER YOU,  
AND IT WON'T BE GOOD WHEN I DO!



Now get out of there,  
**you dead DUMBASS!!**  
It's time to go.



Are you speaking to  
me, ma'am?

No, I'm speaking to this  
ash tree over here.

And did you say I was...  
**DEAD?**



Don't play  
games with  
me! Of course I  
said dead! D-E-A-D  
dead, as a doornail.



But how did I die? I don't remember  
dying. You're absolutely sure that I'm  
dead. Do you have any proof?

I don't need proof. You've  
expired. End of discussion.  
And how the hell should  
I know how it happened?  
You think I care who  
bumped you off? You think I  
wanted to come all the way over here just to haul  
your ass out of there when there are a million other  
things I could be doing, living people I could be scaring?  
You think you're special? I warned them you were trouble,  
and I can see that once again I was right.



Why are you being so mean to me? Is it because I really did die and went straight to hell like my mother always said I would?

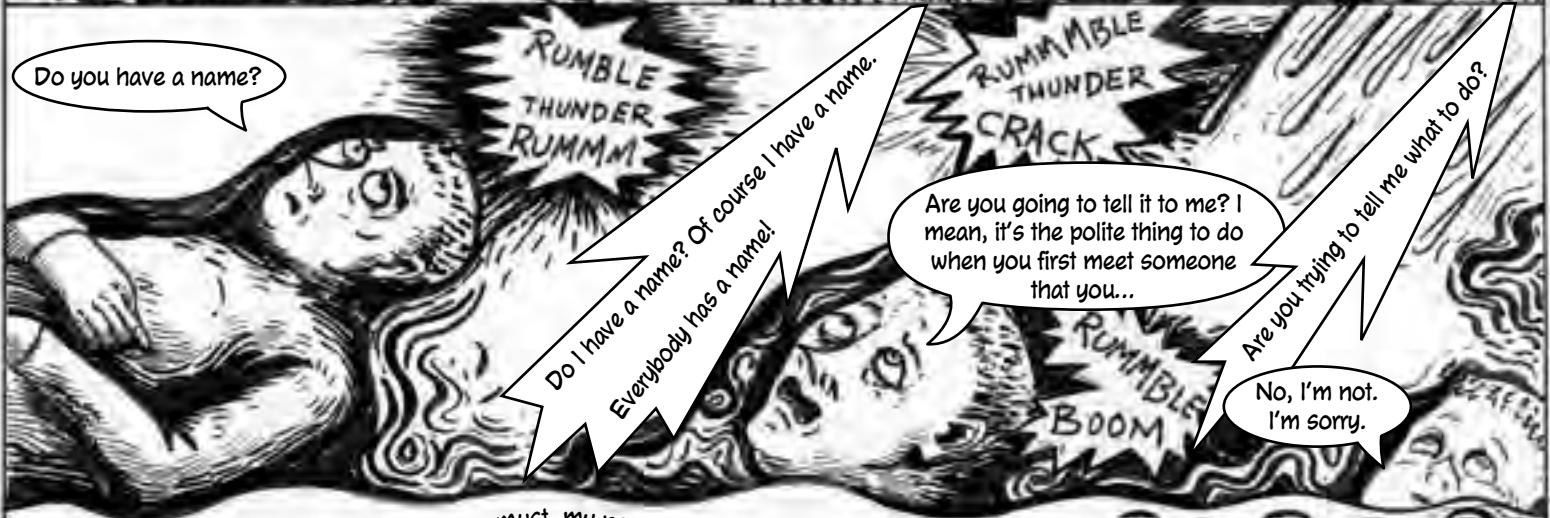


Trust me, this is not hell...yet. You just got here. And it's much easier being mean. I like being mean better than being nice. You should be so lucky for me to be mean to you. Believe me, this is not mean. Shit, I love my job!

...  
Cordial.



Then what are you being if you aren't being mean?



Do you have a name?

Do I have a name? Of course I have a name.  
Everybody has a name!

Are you going to tell it to me? I mean, it's the polite thing to do when you first meet someone that you...

Are you trying to tell me what to do?

No, I'm not. I'm sorry.

That's better. And if you must know...and you must, my name is...



Goshena!  
Goshena New Paris! And it's pronounced Go-shee-na New PAY-reeeeeeeee!  
Now, you must say my name!

Why don't you go by Gosh for short?

Nothing.

What the hell does that mean?  
Then SAY IT. You must say my name!



Gosheeeeeeeeeeha Neeeeeeeeew Paaaaaay-reeeeeeeeeeee!

Hmmp! I guess that's good enough.

And I don't need to know yours. I already do. Now it's time to get you out of that damn dirty box! I have an important lunch date, and you've got to get moving.

CAN'T GET THINK!  
UP

I can't seem to locate my body. How am I supposed to do this?

It figures.

That's because you don't have a body, stupid. You're dead!

No, I'm not! Stop saying that! This is a bad dream! Please let me wake up!

Are you accusing me of lying?

No, of course not!

And why can't I see anything? All I see is fog... beige fog.

You just got here. You're not ready to see anything yet, not even me!

No heartbeat?

Now let me see. Where is that instruction manual?

Oh yes, of course. Here it is, on page one, the chapter on the reluctant dead: "Think about getting up and out of the box and you shall be reborn and rise like a phoenix from its ashes." Oh brother! That's a good one!

focus

focus  
focus  
focus

I can't see! I need to get up! I can't see! I need to....





**BOING!**

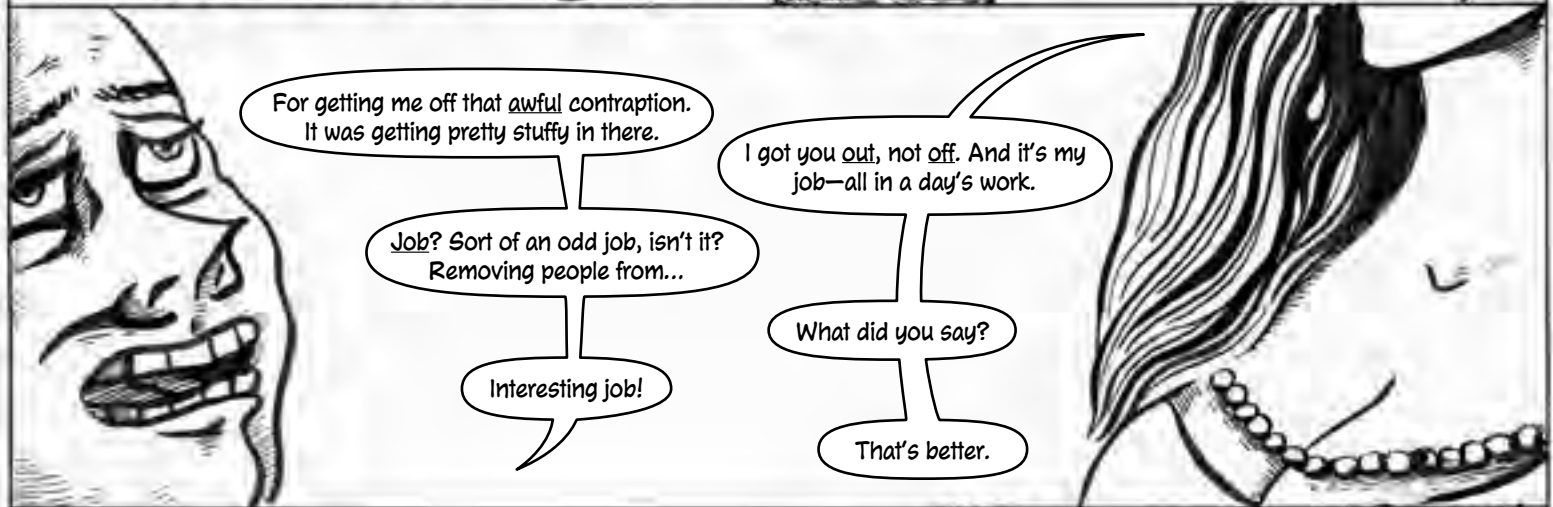
Do what?

There, you see! Even a stupid like you can do it!

Get out of your coffin, silly! It's the first thing we all must do when we die. We must free ourselves from the sado-masochistic bondage of our graves so we can move on through our grand and glorious death or something like that, or risk staying in there FOREVER!

Thank you, but I'm not dead. I can't be dead. So please stop saying that. This is all a bad dream, and in a moment I will wake up and y...all this will be gone.

That's what they all say when they first get here and don't remember how or why they got here. And thank you? Thank you for what? Goshena doesn't grant favors. She only gets them.



For getting me off that awful contraption. It was getting pretty stuffy in there.

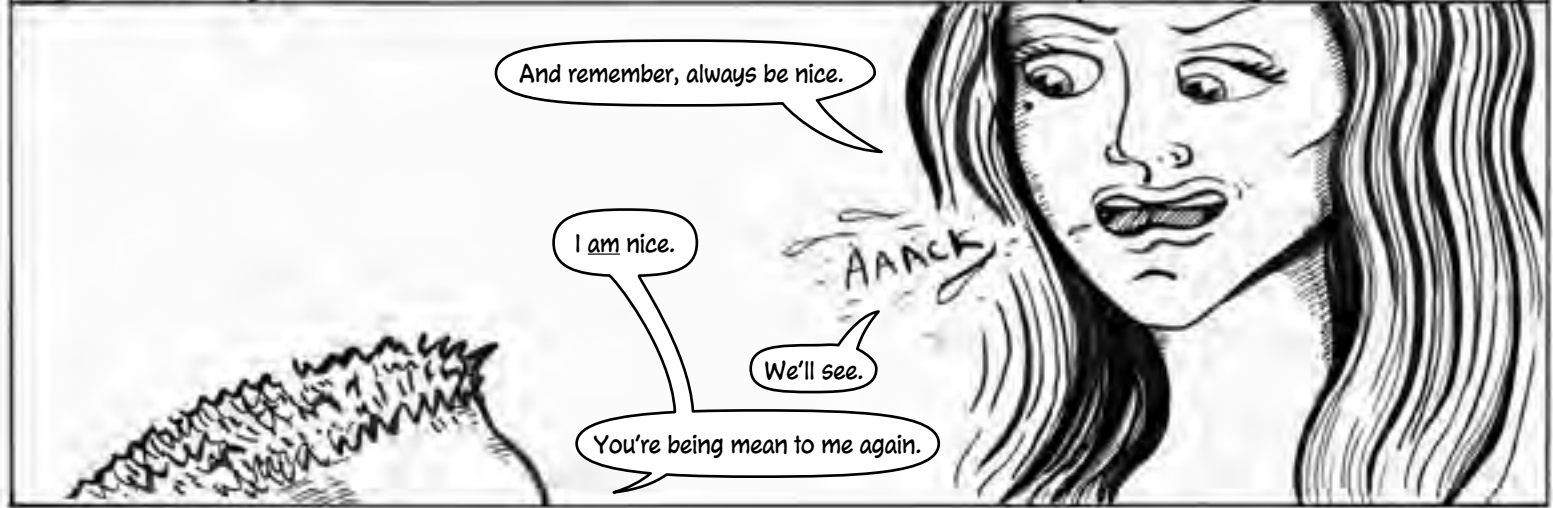
I got you out, not off. And it's my job—all in a day's work.

Job? Sort of an odd job, isn't it? Removing people from...

What did you say?

Interesting job!

That's better.

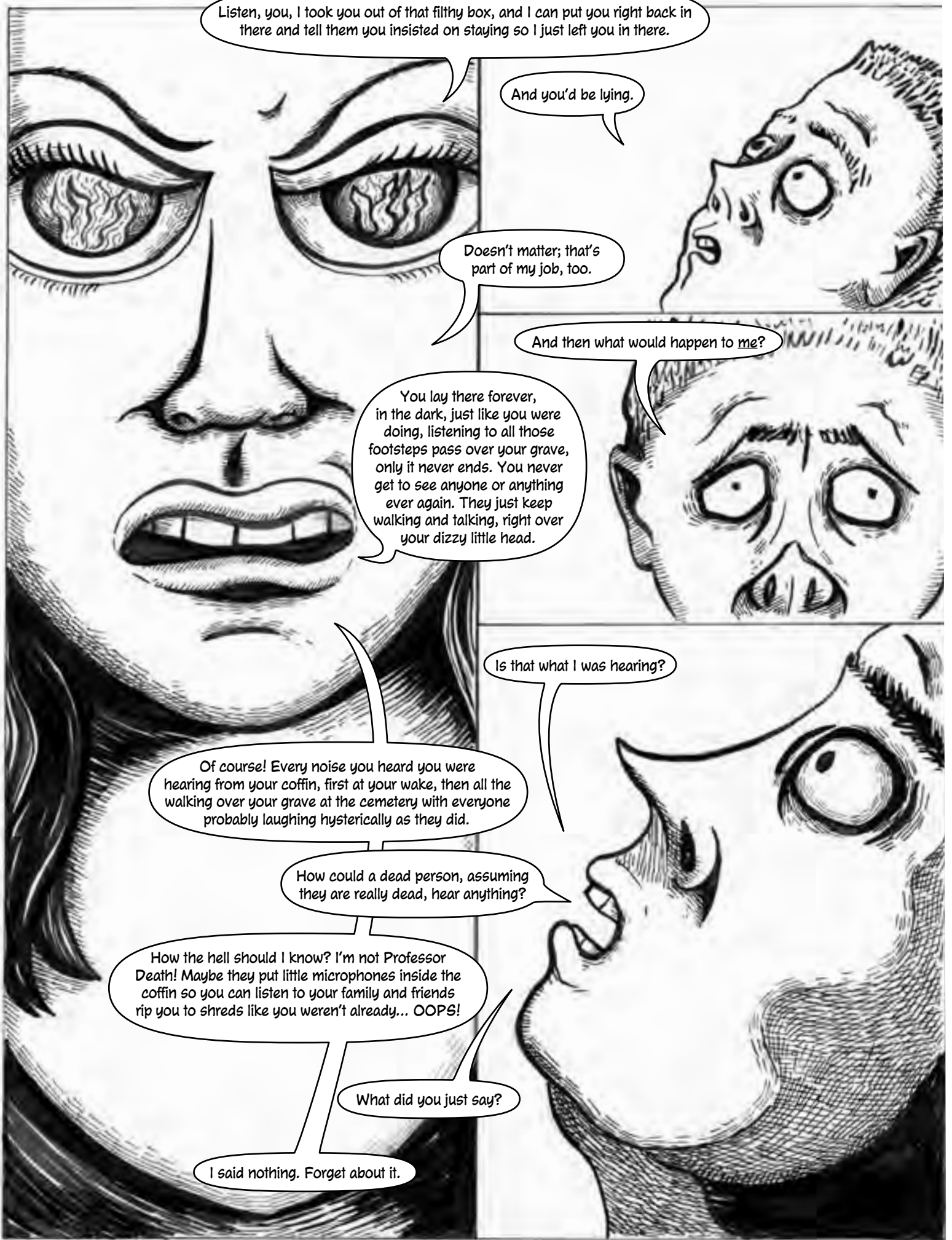


And remember, always be nice.

I am nice.

We'll see.

You're being mean to me again.



Listen, you, I took you out of that filthy box, and I can put you right back in there and tell them you insisted on staying so I just left you in there.

And you'd be lying.

Doesn't matter; that's part of my job, too.

And then what would happen to me?

You lay there forever, in the dark, just like you were doing, listening to all those footsteps pass over your grave, only it never ends. You never get to see anyone or anything ever again. They just keep walking and talking, right over your dizzy little head.

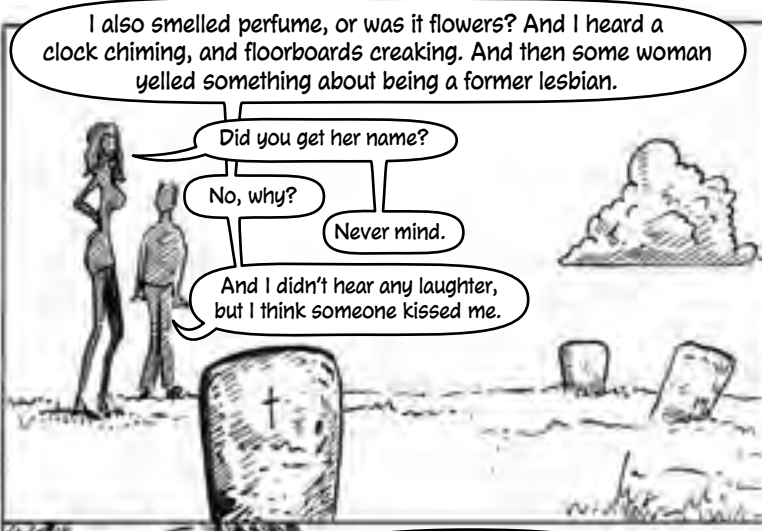
Of course! Every noise you heard you were hearing from your coffin, first at your wake, then all the walking over your grave at the cemetery with everyone probably laughing hysterically as they did.

How could a dead person, assuming they are really dead, hear anything?

How the hell should I know? I'm not Professor Death! Maybe they put little microphones inside the coffin so you can listen to your family and friends rip you to shreds like you weren't already... OOPS!

What did you just say?

I said nothing. Forget about it.



I also smelled perfume, or was it flowers? And I heard a clock chiming, and floorboards creaking. And then some woman yelled something about being a former lesbian.

Did you get her name?

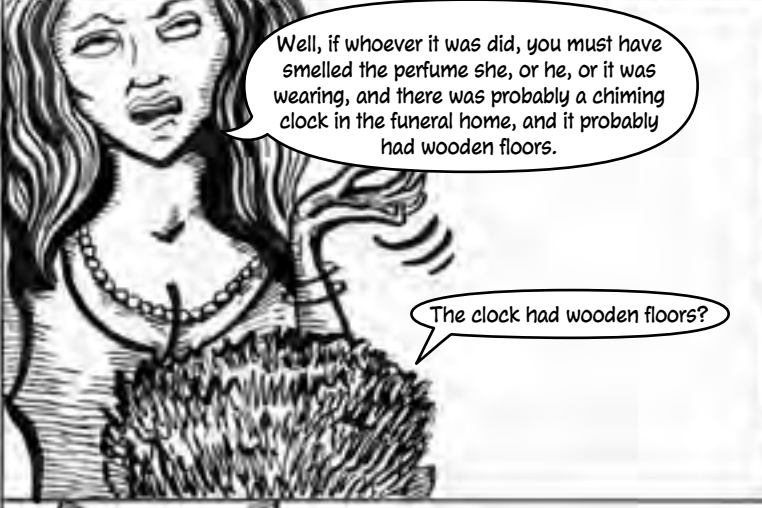
No, why?

Never mind.

And I didn't hear any laughter, but I think someone kissed me.



Someone actually had the courage to lean down and...AAACK! ...Someone really leaned down and kissed you?

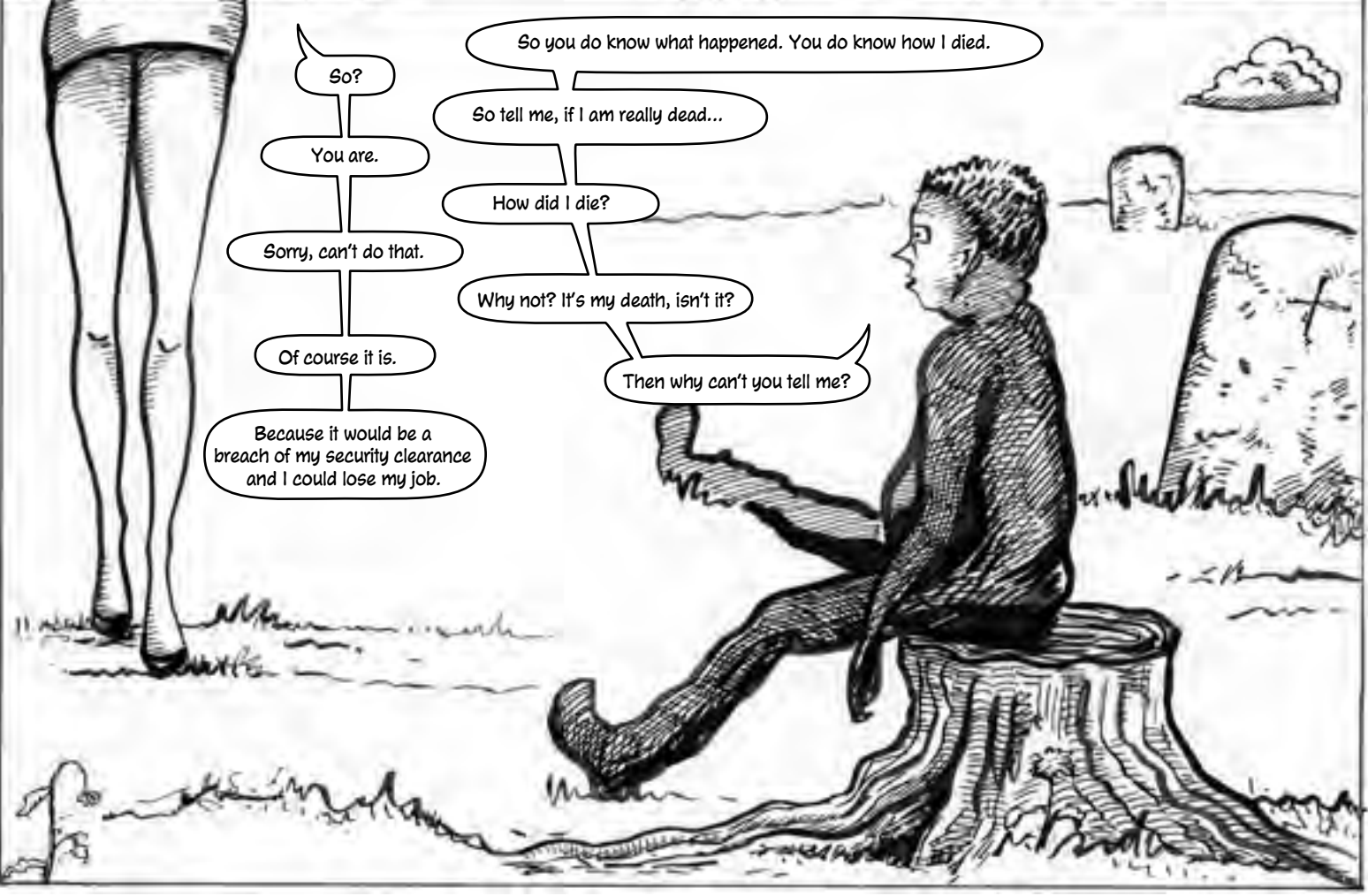


Well, if whoever it was did, you must have smelled the perfume she, or he, or it was wearing, and there was probably a chiming clock in the funeral home, and it probably had wooden floors.

The clock had wooden floors?



Don't get smart. The noises you heard were probably close enough to your ears for you to be able to hear them, or what was left of your ears, from what I heard. HA! Goshena made a funny!



So you do know what happened. You do know how I died.

So?

You are.

Sorry, can't do that.

Of course it is.

Because it would be a breach of my security clearance and I could lose my job.

So tell me, if I am really dead...

How did I die?

Why not? It's my death, isn't it?

Then why can't you tell me?