

# BADTIME STORIES



WRIGHTSON '71

## INTRODUCTION

From cover to cover, you're sure to find Berni Wrightson's "BADTIME STORIES" a lasting delight and a revelation. Many of you may discover for the first time that Bernie has accomplished more than creating 6 unusual stories. Through them he has demonstrated a wide spectrum of amazing talents, ranging from delectable humor and whimsy, as in "King of the Mountain, Man" to the somber and brooding mood achieved in "The Task."

Berni's dramatic change in mood from story to story has been accomplished not only in the story-lines themselves, but also through his unique ability to skillfully apply a variety of artistic techniques; from pencils, to pen & ink, to wash, to craftint developing.

Above all, however, one thing is worth emphasizing. Each story represents Berni's individual concept, completely unhampered by the restrictions that comic artists often encounter from publishers. Berni's own creative judgment, his sensibilities and great insight are the sole factors, free from interference of any sort. He has simply "done his own thing."

For me "BADTIME STORIES" has special significance. It is a book that has taken over a year to produce, but has

been a dream of mine ever since Berni and I first met in our hometown of Baltimore five years ago. Finally I see that this dream has become a reality and a swelling of pride in accomplishment has settled upon me. The real accomplishment, however, lies in the hands and creative genius of Berni Wrightson. An artist who, a short five years ago, sat behind a modest wooden board in a Baltimore basement feverishly churning out page after page of visionary black and white fantasy. A handful of hometown admirers, myself included, would wing our way over to his house to praise his graphic dramas, knowing all the while that the Big-Time for Berni was just around the corner. Well, the Big-Time for Berni Wrightson is most certainly here and I'm proud indeed to have been a part of it.

RON BARLOW

"BADTIME STORIES" is the forerunner of other exciting quality books Graphic Masters has on its publishing schedule. In the near future we will be issuing a Jeff Jones creation, a great extravaganza of graphic stories titled "STAR FLIGHT." Also currently in the works is a quarterly horror book titled "LIGHTS OUT!", featuring a half-dozen top artists and story tellers.

## CREDITS:

**Edited by:** Ron Barlow

**Script:** Berni Wrightson

**Interior Graphics:** Berni Wrightson

**Lettering:** Ray Kohloff

Graphic Masters Publishers, Box 326, Great Neck, N.Y. 11022

RON BARLOW: President

CHARLES VILLENCY: Vice President

# BAD PRIME STORES

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A Graphic Masters Publication

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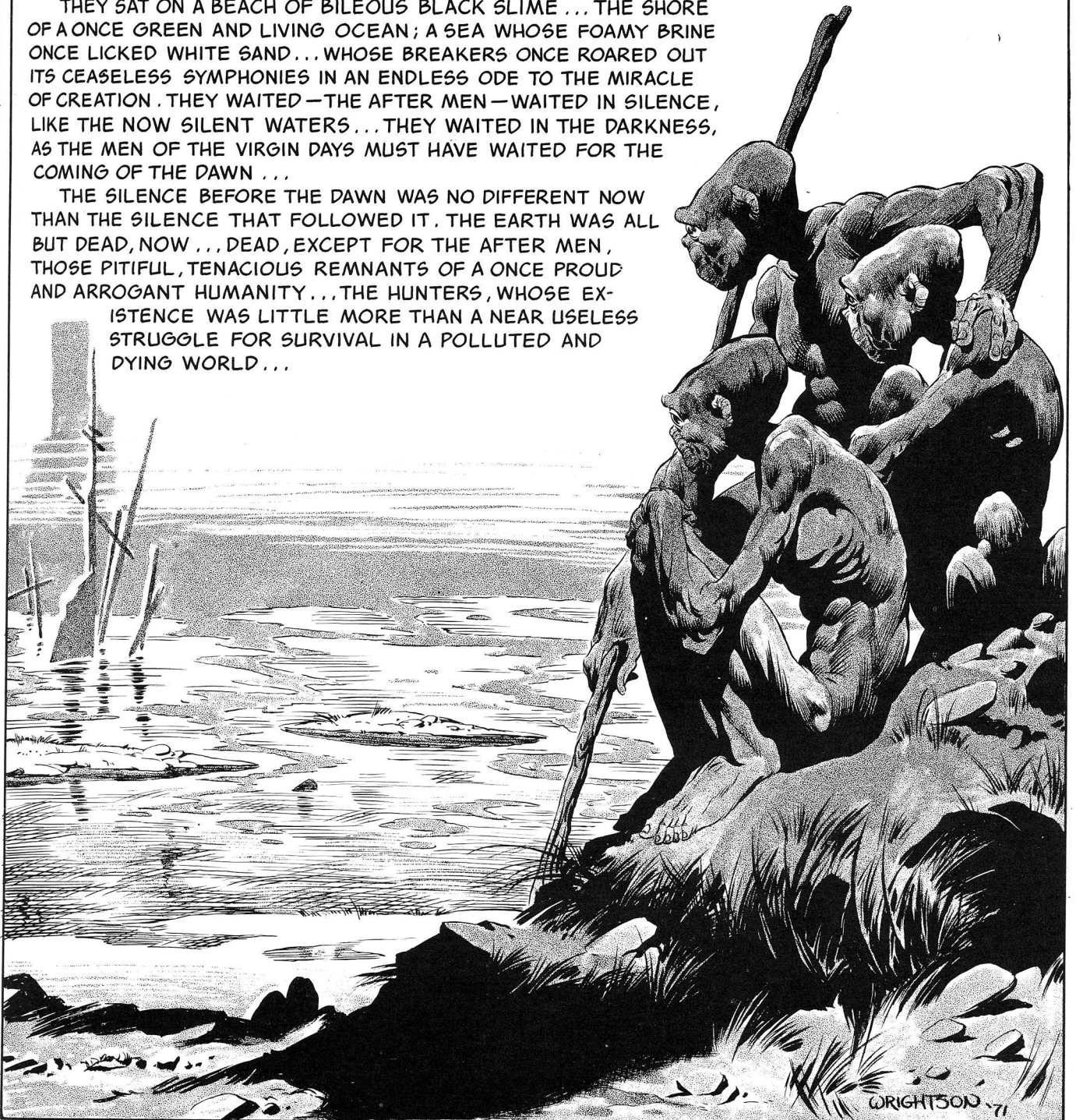
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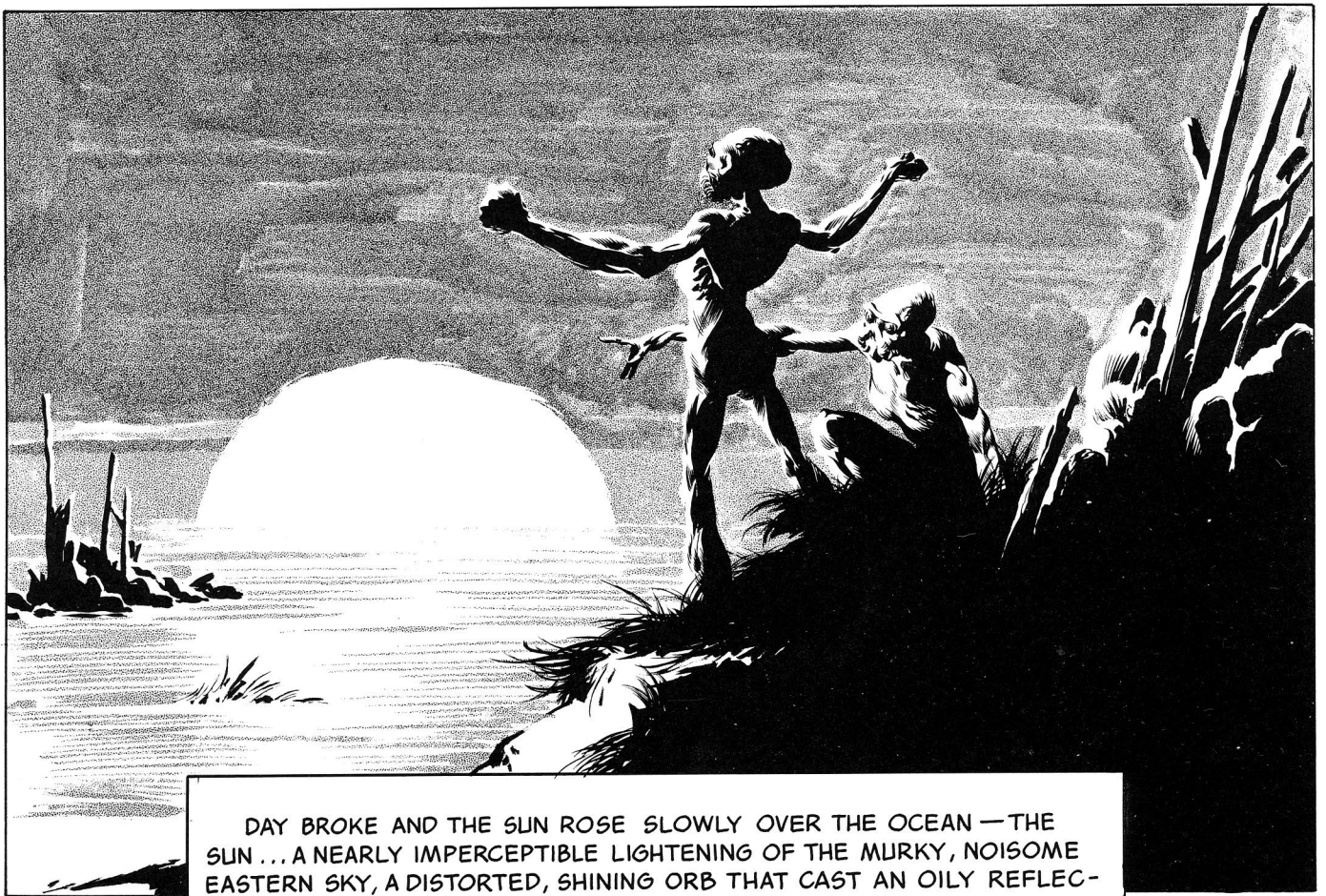
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# THE LAST HUNTERS

THEY SAT ON A BEACH OF BILEOUS BLACK SLIME . . . THE SHORE OF A ONCE GREEN AND LIVING OCEAN; A SEA WHOSE FOAMY BRINE ONCE LICKED WHITE SAND . . . WHOSE BREAKERS ONCE ROARED OUT ITS CEASELESS SYMPHONIES IN AN ENDLESS ODE TO THE MIRACLE OF CREATION . THEY WAITED — THE AFTER MEN — WAITED IN SILENCE, LIKE THE NOW SILENT WATERS . . . THEY WAITED IN THE DARKNESS, AS THE MEN OF THE VIRGIN DAYS MUST HAVE WAITED FOR THE COMING OF THE DAWN . . .

THE SILENCE BEFORE THE DAWN WAS NO DIFFERENT NOW THAN THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED IT . THE EARTH WAS ALL BUT DEAD, NOW . . . DEAD, EXCEPT FOR THE AFTER MEN, THOSE PITIFUL, TENACIOUS REMNANTS OF A ONCE PROUD AND ARROGANT HUMANITY . . . THE HUNTERS, WHOSE EXISTENCE WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A NEAR USELESS STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL IN A POLLUTED AND DYING WORLD . . .





DAY BROKE AND THE SUN ROSE SLOWLY OVER THE OCEAN — THE SUN ... A NEARLY IMPERCEPTIBLE LIGHTENING OF THE MURKY, NOISOME EASTERN SKY, A DISTORTED, SHINING ORB THAT CAST AN OILY REFLECTION IN THE THICK BLACK SLUDGE THAT NOW COVERED THREE QUARTERS OF THE GLOBE ...

THE HUNTERS ADVANCED, MOVING INTO THE SLUGGISH, BLACK WATERS, WORKING IN SILENCE, SEARCHING FOR AN OCCASIONAL RIPPLE OR BUBBLE TRAIL ... THE MUTANT PREDATORS HUNTING THE MUTANT SEA LIFE ... A PATHETIC ENDING TO AN EONS-OLD STORY ...

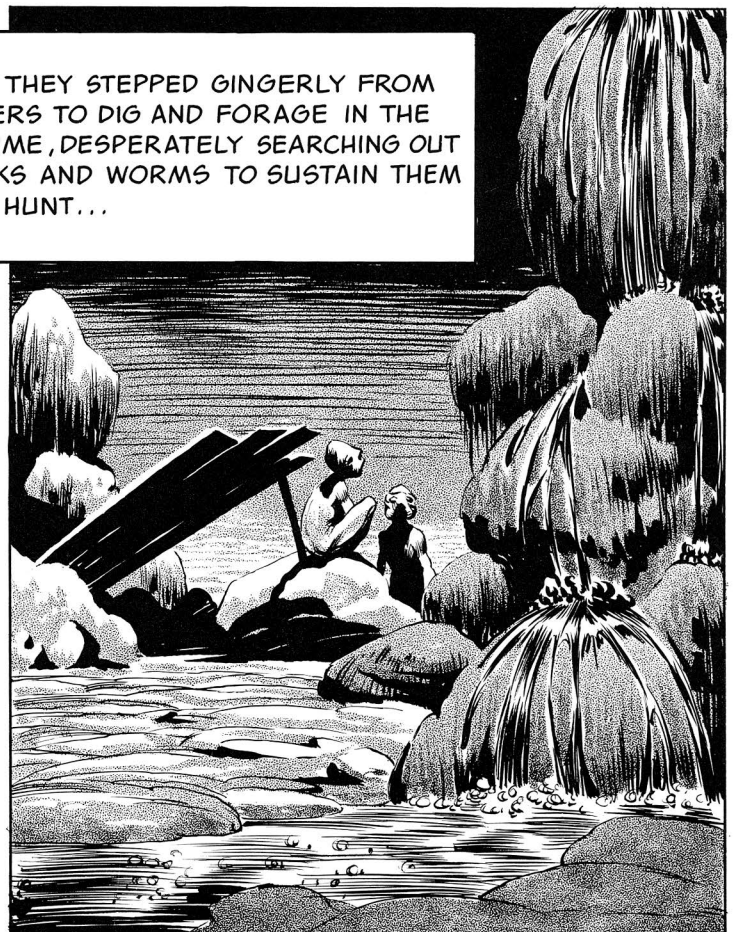


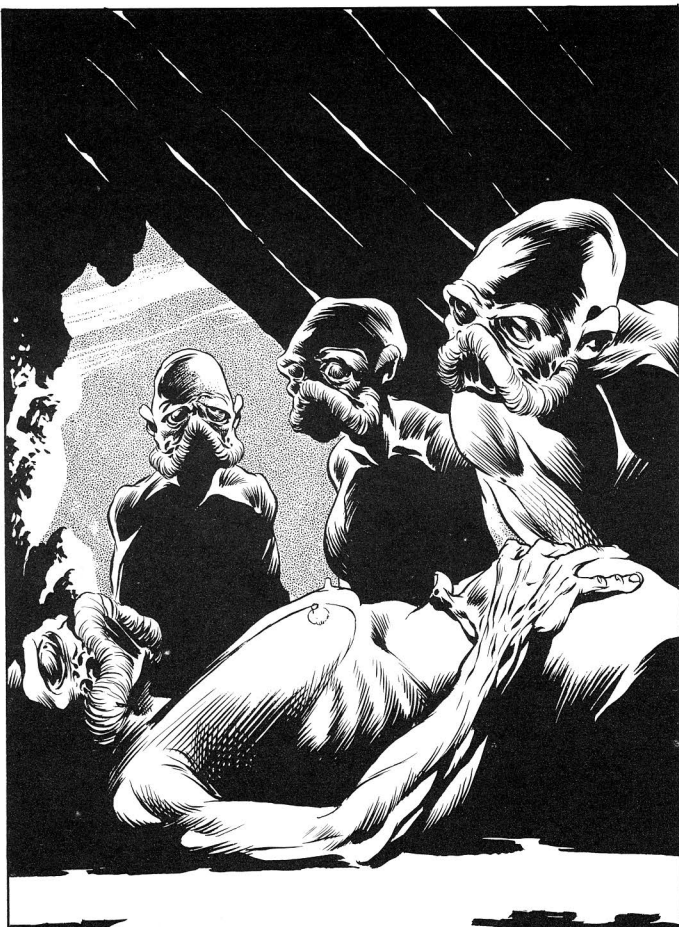


THE RAINS CAME, FALLING HEAVILY THROUGH SKIES THICK WITH SOOT AND CHEMICAL WASTE, SEARING WELTS AND GAPING HOLES IN NAKED FLESH, TRAPPING UNFORTUNATE WAYFARERS IN RIVERS OF BURNING, BLACK MUD, TURNING THE SCARRED CINDER OF A PLANET INTO A VAST, MERCILESS DEATH TRAP... THE HUNTERS SCURRIED TO THEIR HOVELS OF ROCK AND DEBRIS TO WAIT, BELLIES RUMBLING, FOR THE STORM'S END.



...IN THE MORNING, THEY STEPPED GINGERLY FROM THEIR RUDE SHELTERS TO DIG AND FORAGE IN THE SWOLLEN, OOZING SLIME, DESPERATELY SEARCHING OUT THE SPARSE MOLLUSKS AND WORMS TO SUSTAIN THEM TILL THE NEXT DAY'S HUNT...



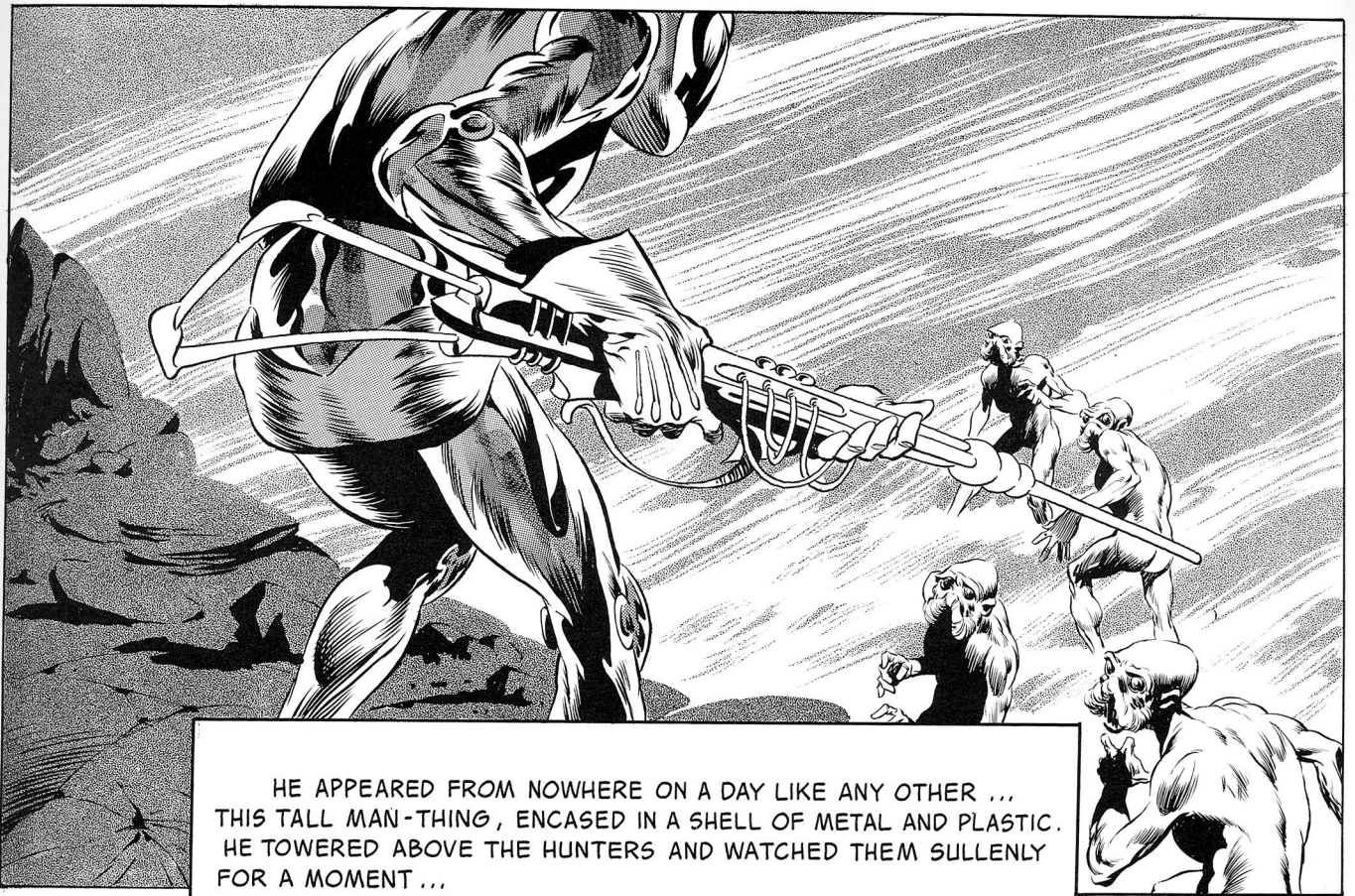


CHILDBIRTH WAS RARE AMONG THE AFTER MEN ... AND A CHILD BORN LIVING WAS EVEN RARER. THE HUNTERS WERE DYING SLOWLY ... WITH EACH GENERATION THERE WERE FEWER ... EVERY STILLBORN CHILD BROUGHT THEM A BIT CLOSER TO EXTINCTION .

...BUT THE FLAME OF LIFE STILL FLICKERED FEEBLY IN THE BRESTS OF THESE STUBBORN BEINGS ... THE NEED TO SURVIVE KEPT THEM ALIVE ... A DAILY BATTLE WITH A WORLD THAT WAS TIRED OF LIVING , AN ENVIRONMENT THAT SOUGHT ONLY TO DIE WITH ITS FES-TERING WOUNDS. THE HUNTERS CLUNG TENACIOUSLY TO HOPE IN A WORLD THAT HAD GIVEN UP ...

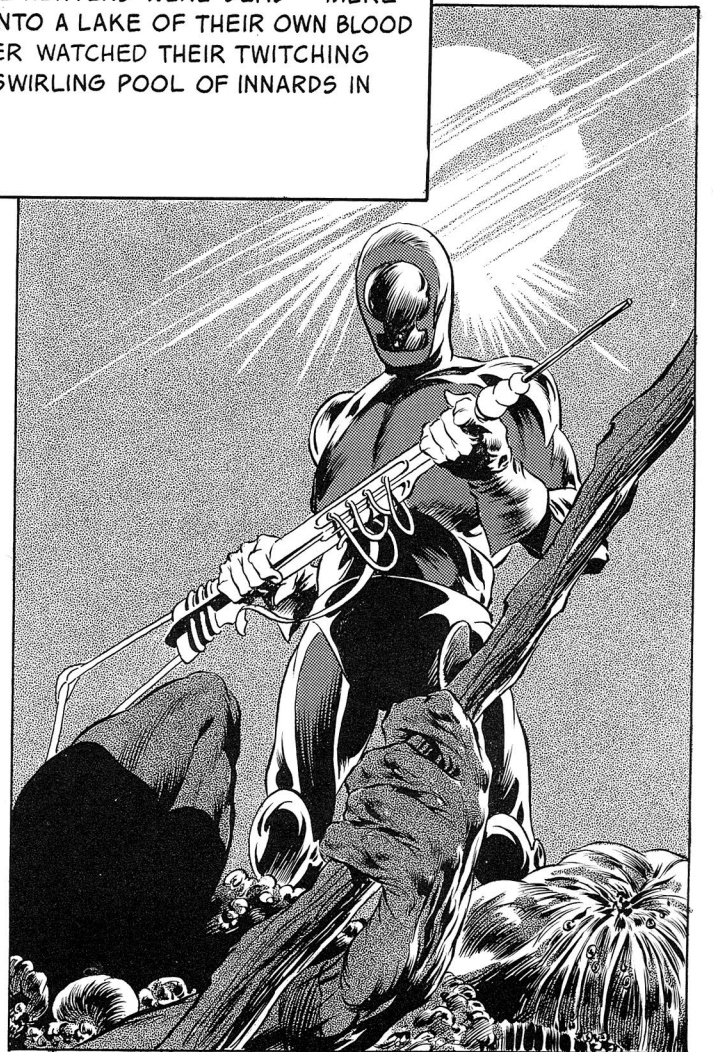


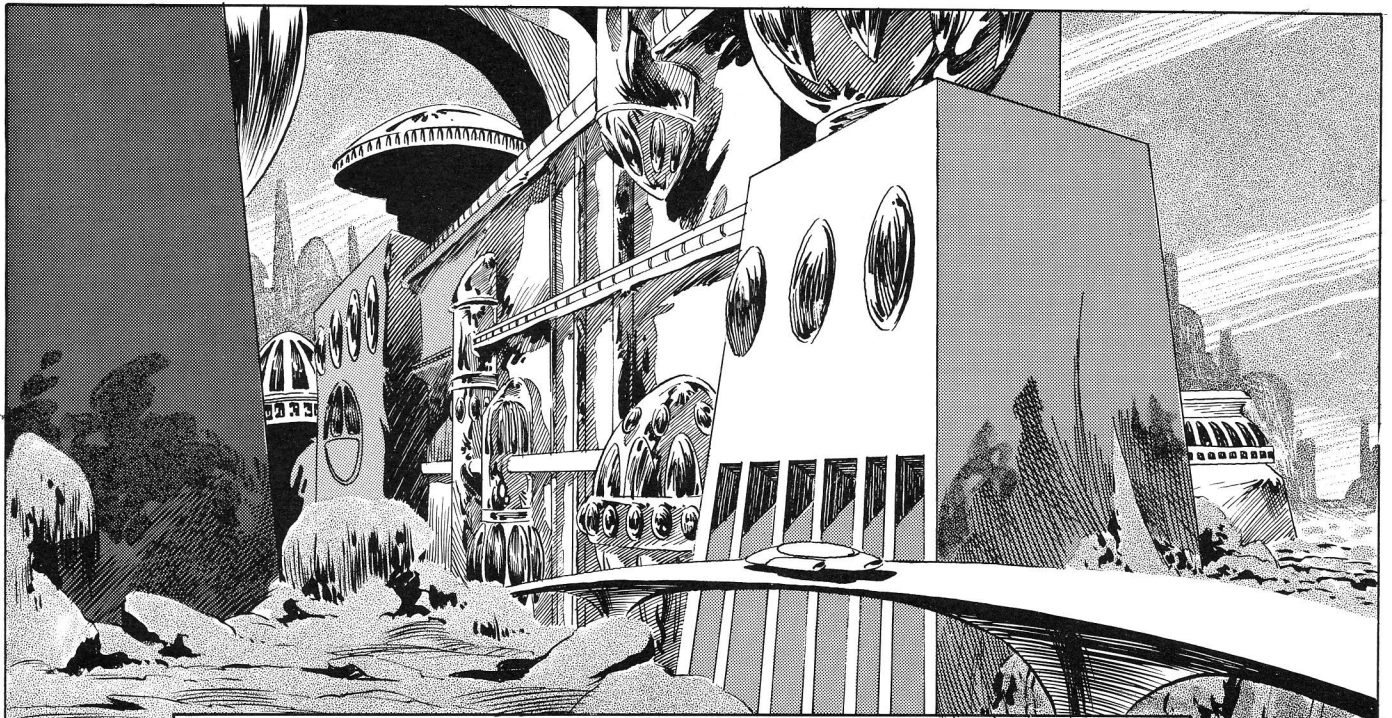




HE APPEARED FROM NOWHERE ON A DAY LIKE ANY OTHER ... THIS TALL MAN-THING, ENCASED IN A SHELL OF METAL AND PLASTIC. HE TOWERED ABOVE THE HUNTERS AND WATCHED THEM SULLENLY FOR A MOMENT ...

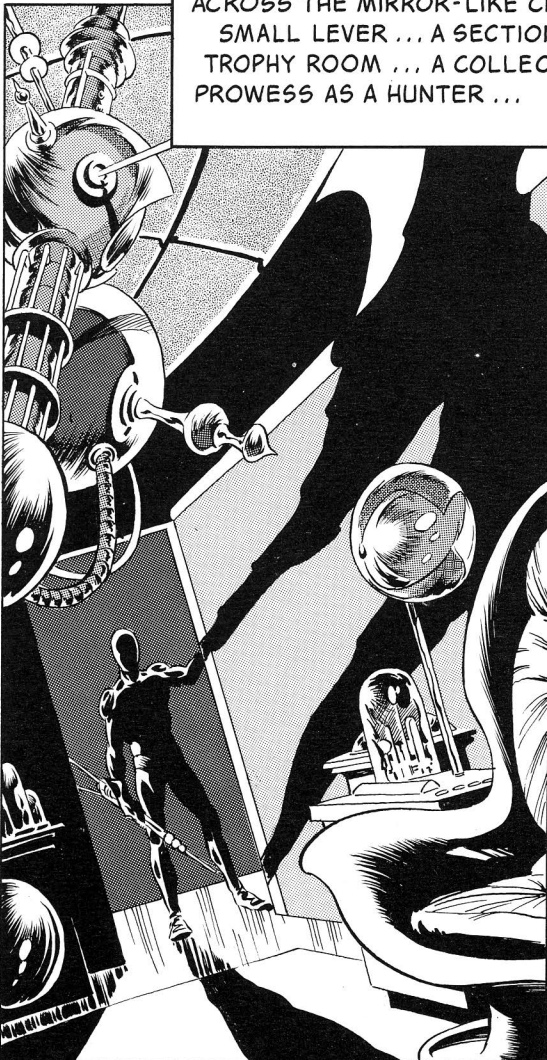
...IN LESS THAN A MINUTE, THE HUNTERS WERE DEAD — MERE LUMPS OF FLESH, SLIDING DOWN INTO A LAKE OF THEIR OWN BLOOD AND WELTERING GORE. THE SLAYER WATCHED THEIR TWITCHING FORMS, STUDIED THE BUBBLING, SWIRLING POOL OF INNARDS IN WHICH HIS PRIZES LAY ...

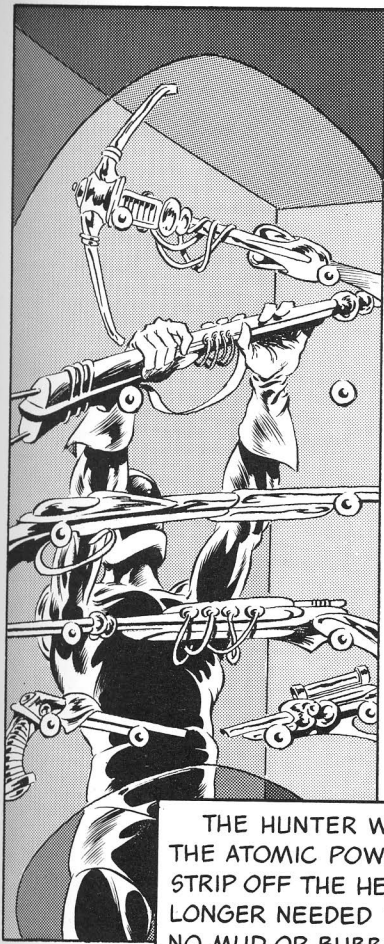




THE SLAYER THREW THE STILL AND BLEEDING AFTER MEN INTO HIS VEHICLE AND DROVE TOWARD THE GLISTENING DOMES AND TOWERS OF A SHINING CHROME CITY ... A CITY THAT ROSE LIKE AN IMMENSE JEWEL OUT OF THE FILTH AND SLIME OF A DEAD PAST ...

HE ENTERED HIS APARTMENT AND SWITCHED ON THE LIGHT, WALKED ACROSS THE MIRROR-LIKE CHROME FLOOR TO THE FAR WALL AND PRESSED A SMALL LEVER ... A SECTION OF THE WALL SLID UPWARDS TO REVEAL HIS TROPHY ROOM ... A COLLECTION OF GRISLY MOUNTED REMINDERS OF HIS PROWESS AS A HUNTER ...





THE HUNTER WALKED TO HIS WEAPON RACK AND HUNG HIS RIFLE AMONG THE ATOMIC POWERED CROSSBOWS AND LASER PISTOLS... THEN HE BEGAN TO STRIP OFF THE HEAVY PLASTIC AND RUBBER OUTER SUIT... SAFE INSIDE, HE NO LONGER NEEDED THESE CUMBERSOME PROTECTIVE GARMENTS... HERE WAS NO MUD OR BUBBLING OOZE TO DAMAGE DELICATE CIRCUITS AND TINY, WELL-OILED JOINTS AND CONNECTIONS. HERE, HIS INTRICATE METAL AND PLASTIC BODY WAS SAFE FROM THE DECAY OF THE OUTER WORLD...

THE HUNTER, THE LAST HUNTER, THIS PERFECT MACHINE CREATED IN MAN'S OWN IMAGE, TURNED AND STARED IN ADMIRATION AT HIS PRIZES, NEVER KNOWING, NEVER CARING THAT UPON HIS WALL HUNG THE LAST VESTIGES OF THE HUMANITY THAT HAD SPAWNED HIM... THE AFTER MEN JUST STARED BACK...



# AIN'T SHE SWEET?

THERE ...  
IT'S  
DONE!



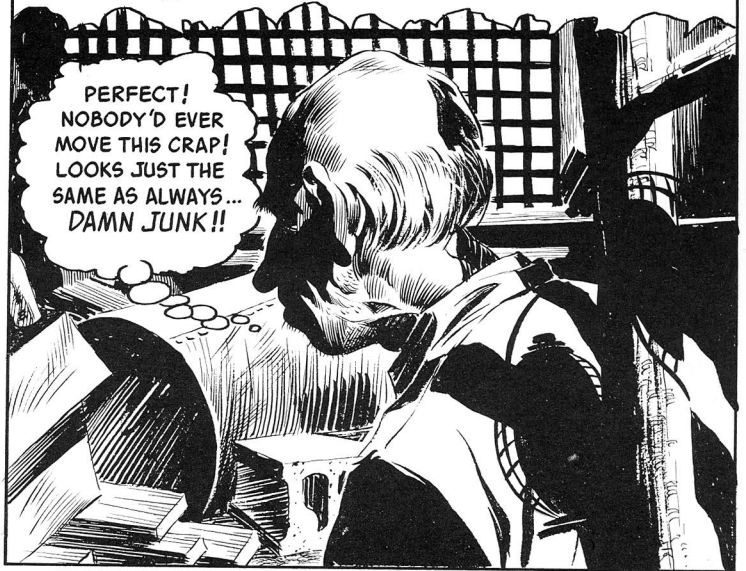
WRIGHTSON  
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GEORGE...GEORGE!! ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME, GEORGE?! DAMN! YOU PROBABLY CAN'T HEAR ME!



THERE...UMPH!!  
THE OLD FART  
NEVER THOUGHT  
I'D HAVE  
NERVE ...

YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!! YOU...YOU SPINELESS  
OLD COOT! LISTEN TO ME! LET ME OUT OF HERE...!!



PERFECT!  
NOBODY'D EVER  
MOVE THIS CRAP!  
LOOKS JUST THE  
SAME AS ALWAYS...  
DAMN JUNK!!

WHAT AM I SAYING? I'M DEAD!! LYING HERE STIFF AND COLD WITH  
A SPLIT SKULL... BUT YOU HAVEN'T WON, GEORGE! NOT WHILE MY  
BODY EXISTS...YOU HAVEN'T WON!



SHE ALWAYS WAS  
ONE FOR COLLECTIN'  
JUNK! SHE OUGHTTA  
BE HAPPY, NOW...

SOMEBODY'LL FIND ME, GEORGE... AND WHEN THEY DO,  
YOU'LL BURN... YOU HEAR ME, GEORGE... BURN!!



SO NOW IT'S  
DONE! REALLY DONE!  
FIRST TIME IN THIRTY  
YEARS, I WON'T HAVE  
TO LISTEN TO THAT  
WHINING VOICE!

WHERE ARE YOU, GEORGE? I CAN TELL YOU'RE GONE! I CAN'T FEEL YOUR HATRED, NOW... OH, SWEET JESUS! THE  
GOOD BOOK NEVER SAID BEIN' DEAD WAS LIKE THIS...!



LOOK AT THOSE OLD  
BUZZARDS! BETTER OFF  
DEAD AN' BURIED, ALL OF 'EM!  
TIED TA ONE ANOTHER, AN'  
HATIN' EVERY MINUTE OF IT...  
HEH-HEH... NOT ME! I'M  
FREE, NOW... FREE!!

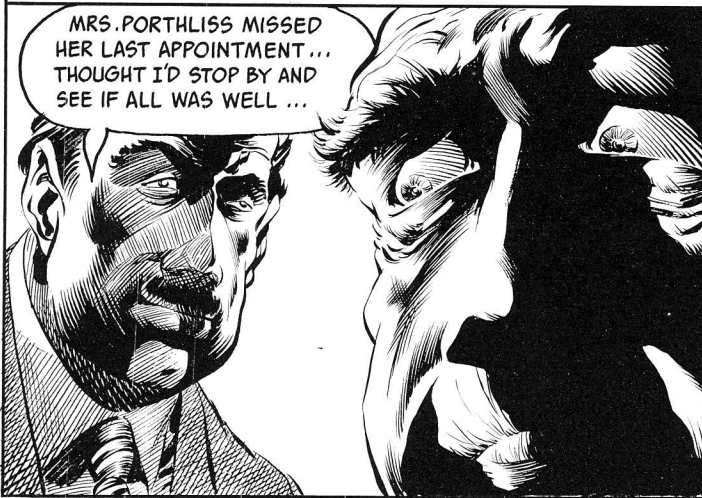
GEORGE PORTHLISS WAS SEVENTY-THREE. HE LIVED IN MRS. CRANEBACKER'S BOARDING HOUSE WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER ELDERLY FOLK ... GEORGE PORTHLISS HAD JUST MURDERED HIS WIFE ...



THE CREAKING OF THE PORCH FLOOR ANNOUNCED THE ARRIVAL OF DR. LEVITT, AGNES' LONG-TIME PHYSICIAN ...



DR. LEVITT LEANED AGAINST THE PORCH RAIL, EYEING GEORGE ... HE WELCOMED THIS SMALL, SHADY RESPITE FROM THE MILD, MID-SUMMER HEAT ... GEORGE SHIFTED UNEASILY. HE NEVER DID LIKE THE DOCTOR, ALWAYS SNOOPING ABOUT... ALWAYS ASKING AFTER AGNES ...



THE MID-MORNING SUNLIGHT BAKED THE HOUSE ... TO GEORGE IT FELT TO BE BURNING HIS BRAIN, EVEN THROUGH THE SHADE OF THE PORCH ...



THE NIGHT WAS REFRESHINGLY COOL AFTER THE LONG HOT DAY. GEORGE READIED HIMSELF FOR BED AS THE CRICKETS DRONED THEIR RASPING SONG ...



YOU'RE ASLEEP NOW, GEORGE ... I CAN FEEL YOUR THOUGHTS WHEN YOU'RE SLEEPING ... I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING, GEORGE! DON'T DO IT! OH GOD, GEORGE!!



IT WAS GEORGE'S SECOND DAY OF FREEDOM. HE STARTED IT AS USUAL, JOINING THE OTHER OLD FOLKS AS THEY FILED INTO THE ANTIQUE KITCHEN FOR BREAKFAST. HE'D HAD A GOOD NINE HOURS' SLEEP, BUT SOMEHOW, HE DIDN'T FEEL RESTED... HE REFUSED TO LET IT BOTHER HIM ...PUT IT DOWN TO EXCITEMENT. HE DID WONDER AT HIS LOSS OF APPETITE ...



I, UH, GUESS I'LL PASS UP BREAKFAST, MRS. CRANEBACKER...

EH? WELL, IT'S YOUR STOMACH!

THE MORNING WAS SPENT IN BLISSFUL IDLENESS, A THING THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE WITH AGNES AROUND ...



SHORE IS NICE AN' QUIET 'ROUND HERE ...

ALONG ABOUT NOON, WHEN THE OTHER BOARDERS WERE AT LUNCH, THE DOCTOR ARRIVED. GEORGE HADN'T REGAINED HIS APPETITE, SO HE WAS ON THE PORCH TO MEET HIM. GEORGE REFUSED TO ANSWER HIS QUESTIONS, AND HE LEFT, ANGRY AND SUSPICIOUS ...



THAT NIGHT, GEORGE TURNED IN LONG AFTER THE OTHERS HAD GONE TO BED. HE WASN'T EVEN ASLEEP BEFORE THE DREAM BEGAN ...



HE DREAMED THAT INVISIBLE HANDS WERE PUSHING HIM DOWN A LONG, TWISTING ROAD, SUSPENDED OVER NOTHING. HE WAS HELPLESS... SQUEEZED AND PUMMELED, PUSHED EVER FORWARD TO THE ROAD'S END, WHERE WAITED A HORRID, STARING FACE, STRIPPED OF FLESH, LAUGHING, TAUNTING HIM ...



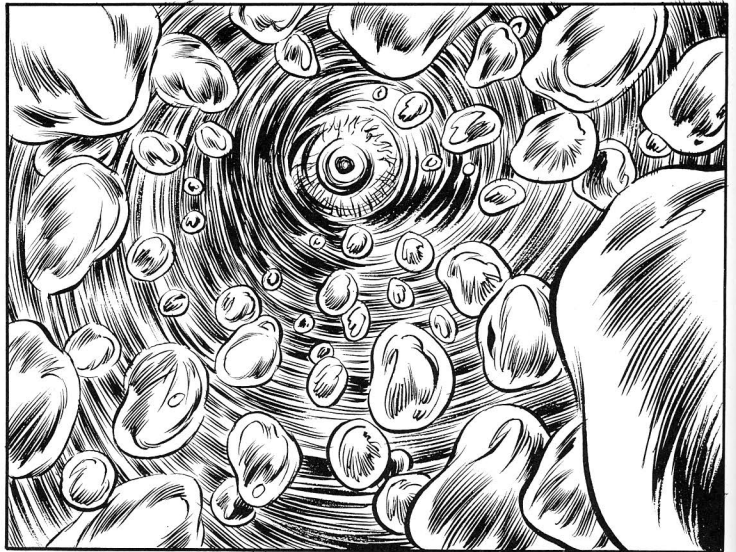
HE AWOKE LATE IN THE MORNING, TREMBLING. HIS EYES WERE HEAVY FROM FITFUL SLEEP, BUT HELD WIDE OPEN WITH HORROR. HIS INNARDS WERE ON FIRE ...BOILING AND ANGRY.



AGAIN, GEORGE ATE NOTHING, HIS STOMACH CRINGED AT THE THOUGHT OF FOOD ... AGAIN, THE DOCTOR STOPPED BY, PRYING AND SNOOPING ... AGAIN, HE WAS TURNED AWAY BY GEORGE'S MOROSE SILENCE ...



AGAIN, THAT NIGHT, ANOTHER TERRIBLE DREAM AND AGAIN, IN THE MORNING, GEORGE WAS NOT REFRESHED ...



GEORGE FELT A NEED TO WORK, TO USE HIS HANDS ... HE HAD TO DO SOMETHING TO MAKE HIM HUNGRY, TO MAKE HIM TIRED ... THIS LACK OF FOOD AND REST JUST WOULDN'T DO ...



YOU'RE TRYING TO STAY AWAKE, GEORGE. WELL, IT WON'T WORK. ALL THE COFFEE IN THE WORLD WON'T STOP YOU FROM FALLING ASLEEP ... FACE IT, GEORGE, YOU'RE BEATEN ... I'VE ALMOST WON ...



GEORGE AWOKE TO A BRIGHT, SHINING DAY ... HIS HEAD ACHED AND HIS BODY TREMBLED, BUT HE KNEW NOW THAT THE ORDEAL WAS OVER ... HE KNEW THAT ALL HIS SUFFERING HAD NOT BEEN IN VAIN ...

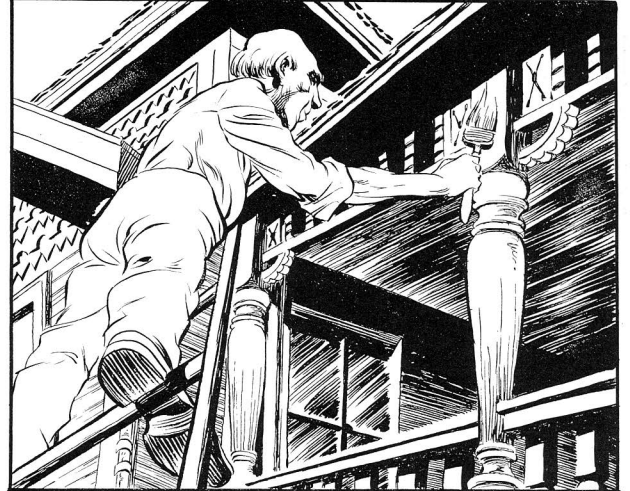




ONCE AGAIN, HE PASSED THE BREAKFAST TABLE WITHOUT STOPPING, ONLY THIS MORNING, HE DIDN'T MIND ... HE KNEW EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE, NOW ...



... HE PAINTED THE HOUSE ... HALF OF IT, AT LEAST ... HE'D BEEN MEANING TO DO IT FOR SOME TIME, NOW, BUT AGNES WOULD NEVER LET HIM ... TOO DANGEROUS, SHE SAID ...



GEORGE WAS BURNING THE LEAVES HE'D RAKED THE DAY BEFORE WHEN THE DOCTOR CAME, HE DIDN'T SEE THE DOCTOR OR THE TWO MEN WHO CAME WITH HIM ...



HE DIDN'T SEE THEM LOOKING AROUND THE HOUSE, BEHIND THE BUSHES AND IN SHEDS ... HE DIDN'T SEE THEM ENTER THE CELLAR, CASTING SUSPICIOUS GLANCES HIS WAY AS HE WENT ABOUT HIS WORK ...



HE DIDN'T SEE THE MEN COME OUT FROM UNDER THE PORCH, COUGHING AND RETCHING. HE DIDN'T SEE ONE OF THEM BEND SPASMODICALLY AND HEAVE IN A CORNER ... HE DIDN'T SEE THEM LEAVE, SHAKING THEIR PALE AND PERSPIRING HEADS ...



GEORGE SAT DOWN AT THE SUPPER TABLE, THAT NIGHT, LONG BEFORE ANYONE ELSE ARRIVED ... MRS. CRANEBACKER SEEMED VERY PLEASED TO SEE HIM TAKING AN INTEREST IN HER COOKING AGAIN ...



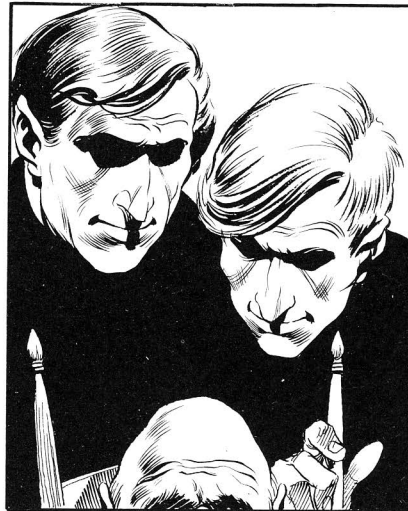
GEORGE DIDN'T HEAR THE DOORBELL ... DIDN'T SEE MRS. CRANEBACKER SIGH AS SHE ROSE TO ANSWER IT. HE DIDN'T SEE THE TWO WELL-DRESSED MEN FRAMED IN THE HALLWAY LIGHT ...



HE DIDN'T SEE THE MEN FLASH THEIR BADGES AND SPEAK TO MRS. CRANEBACKER. HE DIDN'T SEE HER CLUTCH HER THROAT AND BITE HER KNUCKLES ...



HE DIDN'T SEE THE MEN APPROACH HIS CHAIR, DIDN'T HEAR THEM SAY HIS NAME ...



GEORGE DIDN'T FEEL THEM PUT THEIR HANDS ON HIS SHOULDERS AND SHAKE HIM ...



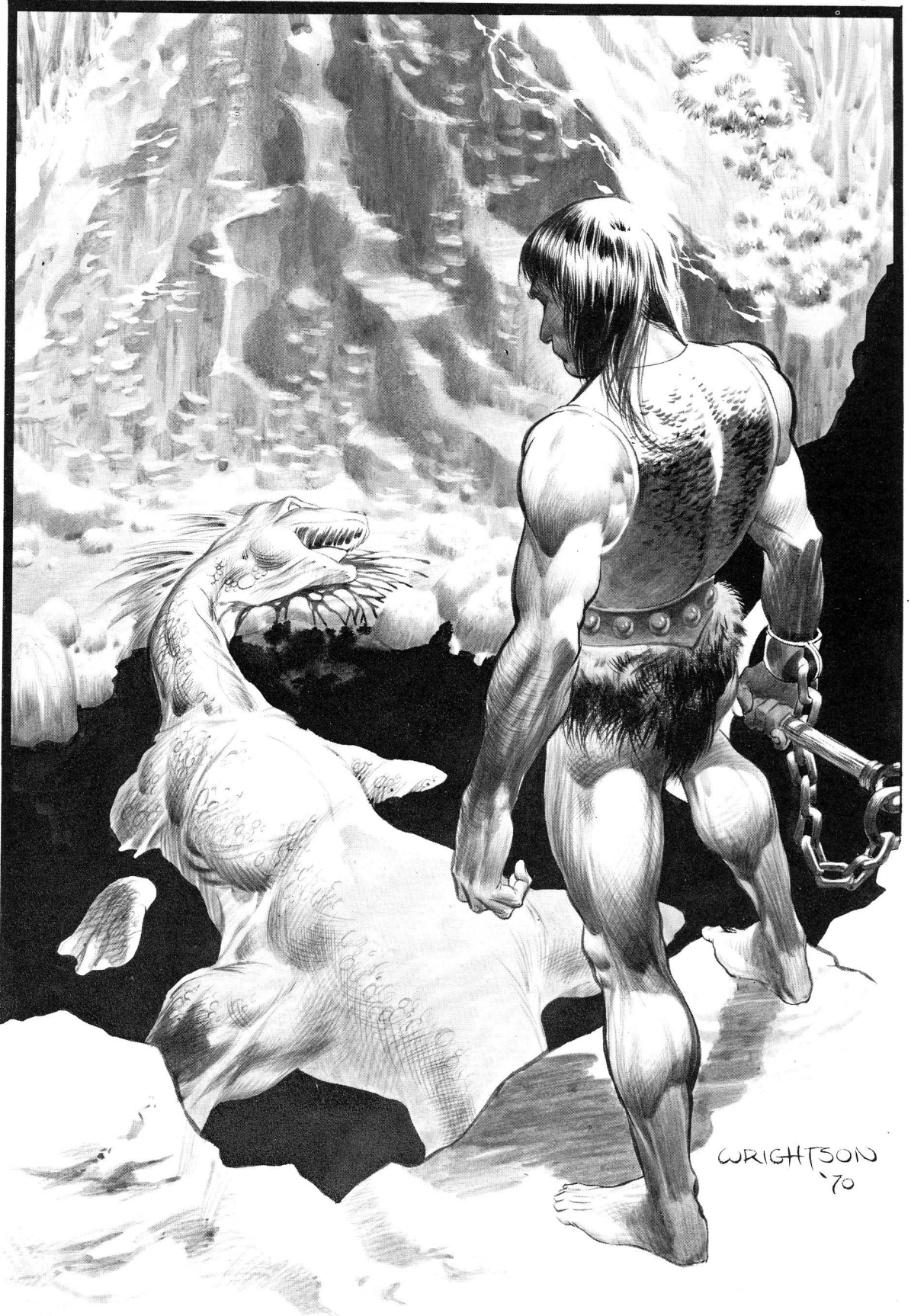
GEORGE DIDN'T SEE OR HEAR OR FEEL A THING ... HE COULDN'T ... GEORGE WAS DEAD ...



... THEY CAME BACK A BIT LATER AND TOOK GEORGE AWAY ... MRS. CRANEBACKER'S BOARDERS HARDLY BATTED THEIR EYES ... THE IDEA OF DEATH WAS NOTHING NEW TO ANY OF THEM. THEY SAT QUIETLY AND FINISHED A PARTICULARLY DELICIOUS MEAL ...



# THE TASK...



WRIGHTSON  
'70

I STAND NOW, STRAIGHT AND STILL, MY SHOULDERS GLISTENING AND MY FORE-ARMS DAMP. . . I GAZE DOWN, MY IMAGINARY VICTOR'S FOOT ON THE WHITE BELLY OF THE VANQUISHED. . . AND ONCE AGAIN THE EMPTINESS FILLS ME.



I TURN MY GAZE SKYWARD, MOMENTARILY FASCINATED BY THE BLACKER AURA OF NIGHT THAT SURROUNDS A STAR. . . ONCE AGAIN, MY RAGE TASTES BITTER IN MY THROAT. . .



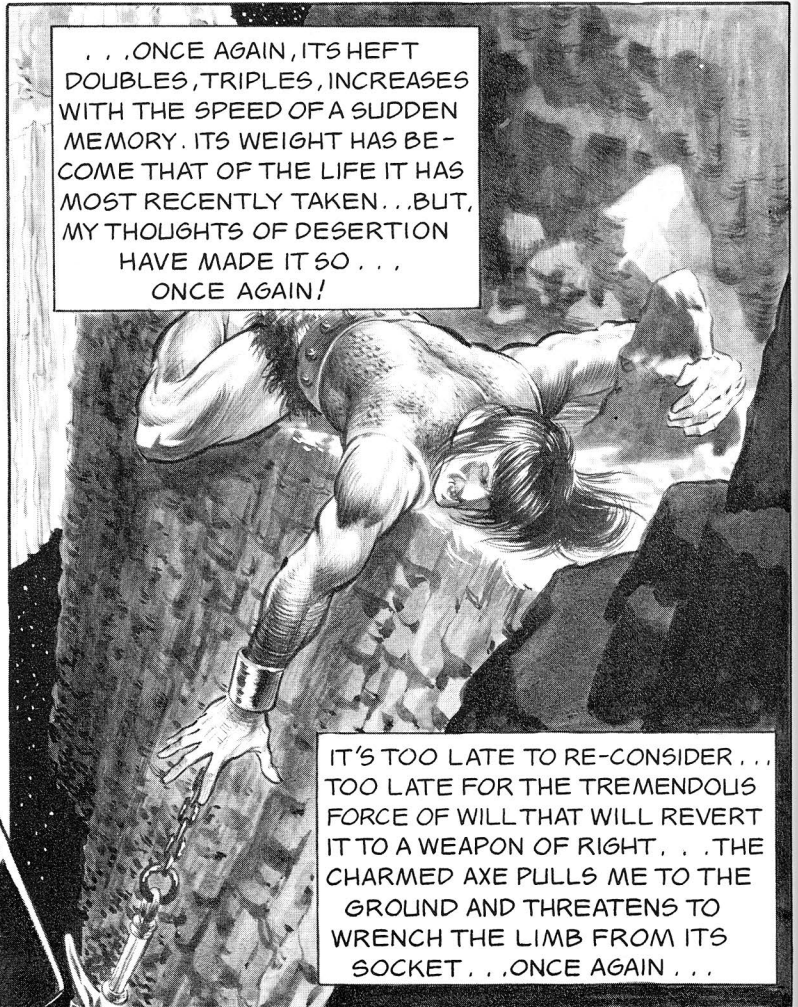
I MOVE AWAY, SICKENED, AND ABANDON MY TASK. . . ONCE AGAIN. . .



. . . THREE TIMES BEFORE HAS MY STOMACH CURDLED THIS. . . THREE TIMES BEFORE HAVE I TURNED TO LEAVE THE MADNESS SMOULDERING BEHIND ME. . . AND NOW, FOUR TIMES HAS MY WEAPON BETRAYED ME. . . THE WEIGHT OF ITS COSMIC REBIRTH AND THINGS A THOUSAND TIMES DEAD FLOWS INTO ITS WOODEN HAFT AND SHINY, STAINED BLADE.



. . . ONCE AGAIN, ITS HEFT DOUBLES, TRIPLES, INCREASES WITH THE SPEED OF A SUDDEN MEMORY. ITS WEIGHT HAS BECOME THAT OF THE LIFE IT HAS MOST RECENTLY TAKEN. . . BUT, MY THOUGHTS OF DESERTION HAVE MADE IT SO. . . ONCE AGAIN!



IT'S TOO LATE TO RE-CONSIDER. . . TOO LATE FOR THE TREMENDOUS FORCE OF WILL THAT WILL REVERT IT TO A WEAPON OF RIGHT. . . THE CHARMED AXE PULLS ME TO THE GROUND AND THREATENS TO WRENCH THE LIMB FROM ITS SOCKET. . . ONCE AGAIN. . .

... I CAN FEEL THE MUSCLES STRETCHING . . . HEAR THE TORTURED NERVES AND TENDONS SCREAMING FOR RELEASE . . . AND THROUGH MY PAIN AND MY RAGE, I SEE A HEADSMAN'S DEEP-SCARRED BLOCK, SMELL ITS BLACK STAINS AND HEAR A VOICE CRYING, "REPRIEVE! REPRIEVE!" . . .

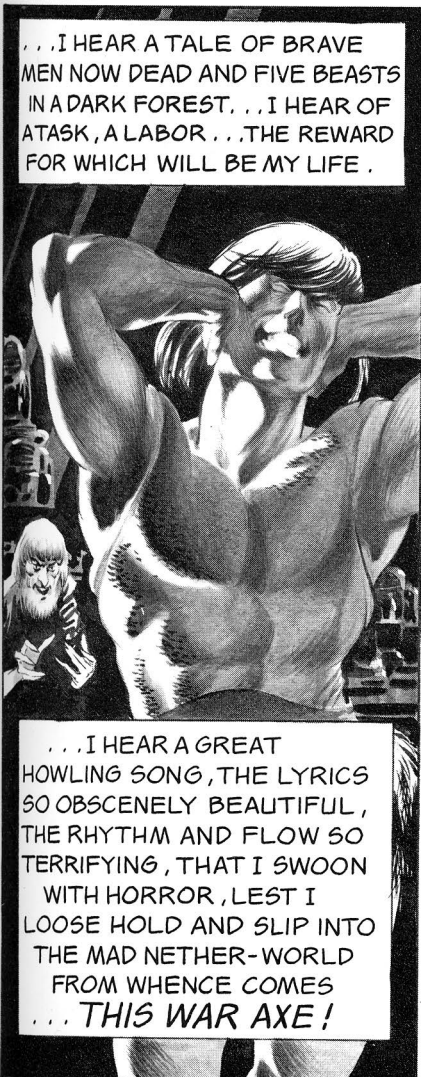


I SEE THE THRONE ROOM IN LATE AFTERNOON, ITS SHADOWS REACHING FAR AWAY INTO OBSCURE DISTANCE . . . I SEE THE WIZENED, BEARDED FACE OF THE COURT WARLOCK AND HEAR HIS CRACKING, THICK VOICE . . .



YOU'VE CHEATED THE HEADSMAN, BUT YOU'VE YET TO EARN YOUR LIFE . . .

... I HEAR A TALE OF BRAVE MEN NOW DEAD AND FIVE BEASTS IN A DARK FOREST. . . I HEAR OF ATASK, A LABOR . . . THE REWARD FOR WHICH WILL BE MY LIFE .

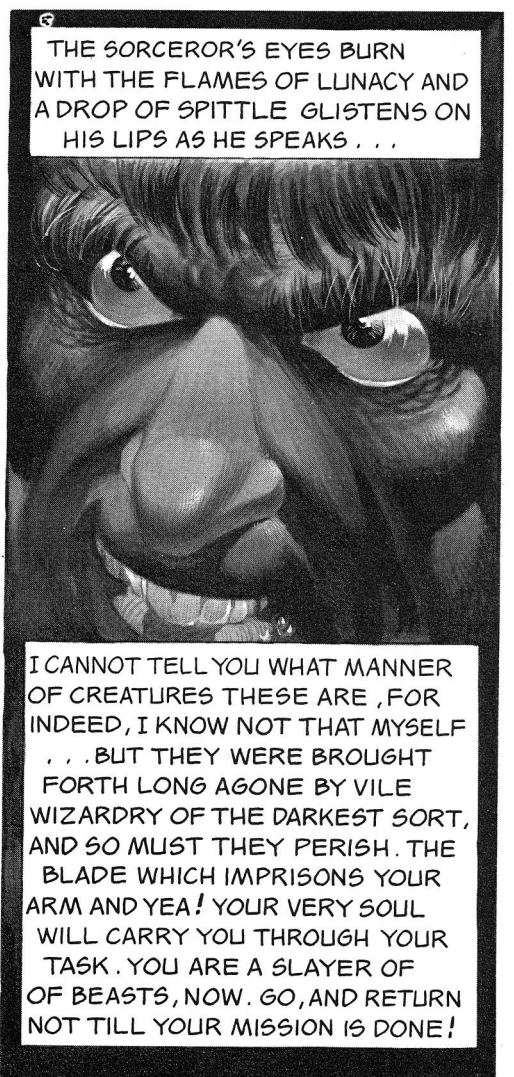


... I HEAR A GREAT HOWLING SONG, THE LYRICS SO OBSCENELY BEAUTIFUL, THE RHYTHM AND FLOW SO TERRIFYING, THAT I SWOON WITH HORROR, LEST I LOOSE HOLD AND SLIP INTO THE MAD NETHER-WORLD FROM WHENCE COMES . . . **THIS WAR AXE!**

ALL THE FIRES OF HELL FORGE ITS SHACKLE TO MY WRIST. . . I AM IMPRISONED BY MY OWN WEAPON, SOMEHOW PLEDGED TO THE UNIVERSE TO COMPLETE MY TASK . . . I MUST SLAY FIVE UNHOLY BEINGS BEFORE I AM FREE . . .



THE SORCEROR'S EYES BURN WITH THE FLAMES OF LUNACY AND A DROP OF SPITTLE GLISTENS ON HIS LIPS AS HE SPEAKS . . .



I CANNOT TELL YOU WHAT MANNER OF CREATURES THESE ARE, FOR INDEED, I KNOW NOT THAT MYSELF . . . BUT THEY WERE BROUGHT FORTH LONG AGONE BY VILE WIZARDRY OF THE DARKEST SORT, AND SO MUST THEY PERISH. THE BLADE WHICH IMPRISONS YOUR ARM AND YEA! YOUR VERY SOUL WILL CARRY YOU THROUGH YOUR TASK. YOU ARE A SLAYER OF OF BEASTS, NOW. GO, AND RETURN NOT TILL YOUR MISSION IS DONE!

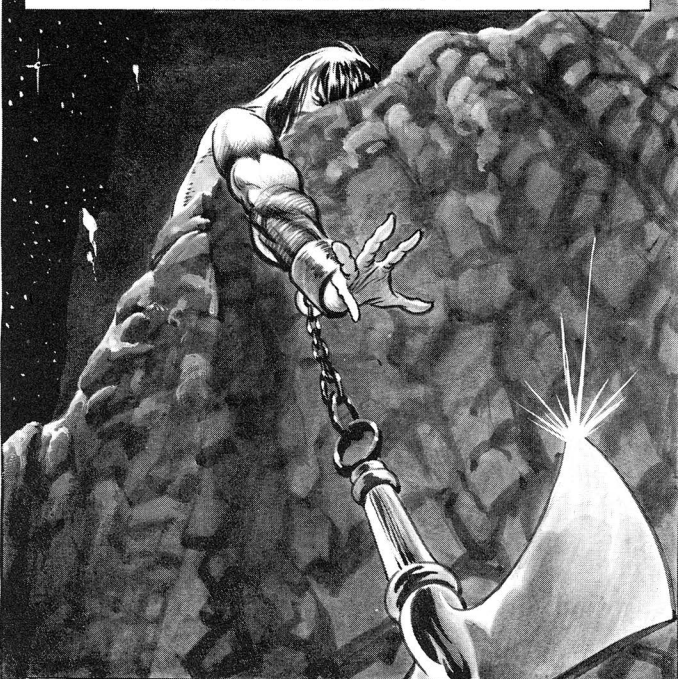
I HEAR A LOW LAUGH AND INHALE THE STENCH OF ALL-EVIL AND I FIGHT FOR MY LIFE. MY AXE DESCENDS IN WIDE, SCREAMING ARCS, SWINGING LIGHT AND EASY AS A POINIARD, YET STRIKING WITH THE FORCE OF A CATAPULT . . .



FOR THE FIRST TIME, MY SOUL WITHERS AND I TURN AWAY FROM THE BEATEN, RED THING ON THE GROUND, VOWING TO ABANDON THIS UNHOLY TASK FOREVER. FOR THE FIRST TIME, I AM PULLED DOWN BY THE WEIGHT OF WORLDS LONG DEAD . . .

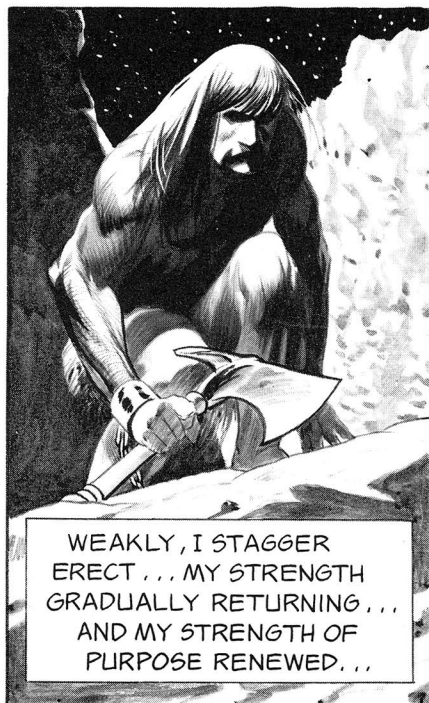


AND NOW, FOR THE THIRD TIME, I AM FACED WITH THE CHOICE OF GIVING UP AND DYING THIS SLOW, PAINFUL DEATH OR CONTINUING ON WITH MY LABOR, AT LEAST HAVING A FIGHTING CHANCE TO LIVE . . .



I DECIDE QUICKLY, CURSING MYSELF THE WHILE, BUT THE PAIN IS CONSUMMATE . . . WERE IT ONLY THE PROSPECT OF LOSING A STRONG ARM, I WOULD SUFFER IT TO BE SO, FOR HAVE I NOT ANOTHER, EQUALLY AS MIGHTY . . .

BUT THE CHOICE IS NOT THAT SIMPLE . . . I UNDERSTAND . . . FEEL, MORE THAN KNOW, WHAT THESE BEASTS ARE . . . THEIR HORRID COSMIC LINK WITH THE FATE OF FUTURE HUMANITY AND THE SOULS OF PAST AGES . . . I MUST GO ON—I MUST FINISH THIS TASK, DREADFUL THOUGH IT IS . . .



WEAKLY, I STAGGER ERECT . . . MY STRENGTH GRADUALLY RETURNING . . . AND MY STRENGTH OF PURPOSE RENEWED . . .

I WALK INTO THE MOONLIT FOREST, MY HEAD CLEAR AND MY FEET SILENT. MY TASK IS MORE THAN HALF DONE . . . TWO BEASTS REMAIN . . . TWO FOUL UNLIVES MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE THIS SHACKLE FALLS FROM MY ARM, FOREVER.

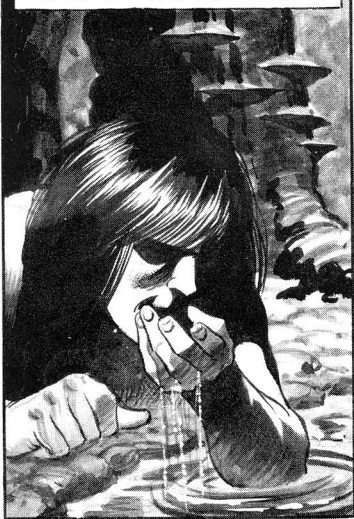


THERE ARE NO SOUNDS IN THIS WOOD. NO BREEZE SINGS THROUGH ITS LOFTY BOUGHS . . . NO SMALL HUNTING CREATURES RUSTLE ITS LEAF CARPETED FLOOR . . . SILENCE . . . BUT WAIT! *THERE IS A NOISE!*

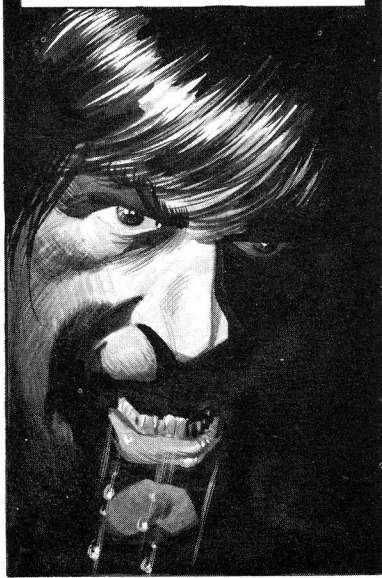
IT IS THE GURGLING OF A SPRING, WELLING UP FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE FOREST'S VAST, ORGANIC CELLAR . . . ITS FINEST DRAUGHT, BUBBLING, WAITING TO BE QUAFFED. . . AN OFFER OF REFRESHMENT FROM THIS FINE, GRACIOUS HOST TO A WEARY, FOOT-SORE VISITOR . . .



I KNEEL AND SLAKE MY THIRST IN THE FOREST'S BLOOD, DRAWING NEW STRENGTH FROM ITS PURITY, AS THE PRIMITIVES DRAW STRENGTH AND VALOR FROM THE BLOOD OF THEIR FOES . . .



. . . A MOVEMENT DISTRACTS MY EYE . . . AND THEN, A SOUND . . . FIRST, A HEARTBEAT, THEN A SOFT TREAD, THEN A LONG, LABORED BREATH.



. . . I RISE SLOWLY AND MOVE TO INVESTIGATE, MATCHING MY STEALTH TO THAT OF THE UNSEEN TRAVELER.



. . . I PART THE LEAFY WALL THAT SEPARATES US AND I SEE . . . I SEE AND MY SOUL IS BLASTED BY THE ICY, BURNING WINDS OF HELL . . .

TO LOOK UPON THIS CREATURE IS TO KNOW . . . TO KNOW OF ITS FOUL , UNHOLY ORIGINS . . . THE IM-  
POSSIBLE UNION OF MAN AND BEAST . . . THE OFFSPRING , A MANIFESTATION OF THE WORST IN BOTH  
. . . THIS OGRE WEARS ITS SOUL LIKE A CLOAK . . .



THE HORROR OF MY FIRST IMPRESSION SUB-  
SIDES . . . IT IS REPLACED NOW BY A NEED TO  
DESTROY . . . AN OVERPOWERING SENSE OF  
RIGHTEOUSNESS . . . I WANT MORE THAN LIFE  
TO RID THE EARTH OF THIS THING NEVER MEANT  
TO BE . . . THE MOTHER , EARTH , WHO CRINGES  
AT THE TOUCH OF ITS BARE SOLE  
UPON HER BOSOM . . .



I SCREAM A CHALLENGE AND LAUNCH MY BODY ,  
THIS ENGINE OF WAR , UPON MY FOE . HE TURNS  
AND SMILES , THE FIRES OF DISTANT WORLDS  
AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE EONS DANCE  
MOCKINGLY IN HIS EYES . . .



HE RELEASES HIS PRIZE ,  
LIGHTING HER GENTLY ON THE  
DEWY SWORD , . . . A SHAM , HIS  
GENTLENESS . . . A SIGN OF  
GALLANTRY FROM ONE SO GROSS  
IN SOUL AND FORM . . . HE MOCKS  
ME AND MY RAGE MOUNTS . . .



. . . WE MEET ! A HEADLONG , BONE-CRUSHING  
COLLISION . . . FOR THE SCANTEST OF SECONDS , OUR  
FLESH AND SPIRITS SEEM TO MERGE . MY MIND IS LAID  
NUMB BY WHAT I FIND WITHIN THIS BLACK , POLLUTED  
HEART . . . FOR HERE IS A BEING EVIL INCARNATE . . . NO  
SPARK OF GOOD FLICKERS FEEBLY IN HIS BREAST  
. . . JUST TOTAL , SOUL SEARING EVIL !



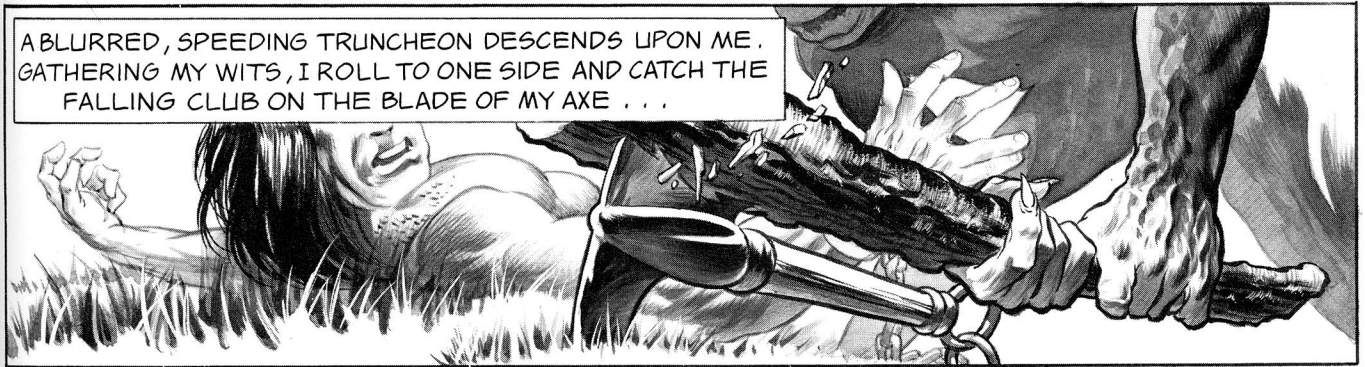
... HE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF MY MOMENTARY HORROR AND SHOCK, AND PUSHES ME BACK . . . I FALL A HUNDRED MILES AND STRIKE THE GROUND . . . MY ENTIRE BEING IS STILLED, PARALYZED BY WHAT I HAVE SEEN . . .



THREE TIMES BEFORE, I HAVE MET AND DESTROYED MY INNATURAL ENEMIES. THREE TIMES BEFORE, I REGRETTED THE TAKING OF PHYSICAL LIFE, THE SLAUGHTER OF LIVING THINGS . . . BUT NO MORE! I FINALLY REALIZE THE TRUE MEANING OF MY TASK . . . NOW, MY CAUSE! I HAVE BEEN SENT TO DESTROY A SMALL PIECE OF HELL . . . AND IN THAT KNOWLEDGE, I FIND THE STRENGTH TO DO IT!



A BLURRED, SPEEDING TRUNCHEON DESCENDS UPON ME. GATHERING MY WITS, I ROLL TO ONE SIDE AND CATCH THE FALLING CLUB ON THE BLADE OF MY AXE . . .



... MY WEAPON IS USELESS, ITS BLADE BURIED TOO DEEPLY IN THE LOG TO REMOVE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO . . . IT IS REFLEX RATHER THAN STRATEGY THAT GUIDES MY ARM . . . I THROW THE RIDICULOUS THING AT THE FACE OF MY ATTACKER . . . HE GRINS, AND COLD, DEAD LAUGHTER ESCAPES HIS LIPS . . .



... HE MOVES, EASILY, AND THE MISSILE STREAKS BY HIS HEAD . . . BUT, THE FORCE OF THE THROW PULLS ME FORWARD AND THE HEAVY CHAIN ENCIRCLES HIS THROAT . . . I CATCH THE PROJECTILE WITH THE SAME HAND THAT LOOSED IT, AND HOLD IT IN A GRIP THAT ONLY DEATH WILL BREAK . . .



... THE OGRE GASPS AND STRUGGLES BUT I CLING TO HIM LIKE THE WOLF TO THE BEAR . . . THE SWEAT BEADS AND ENCIRCLES MY BROW AND THE OGRE SCREAMS . . . HIS MOVEMENTS SLOW AND FINALLY CEASE . . . TILL HE DROWNS IN HIS OWN BLOOD . . .



THE OGRE LIES STILL AT MY FEET AND I SEE HIM THROUGH COLD, REMORSELESS EYES. THEN, SOFTLY, THE GIRL APPROACHES . . . SHE TOUCHES MY SHOULDER, TREMBLING . . .



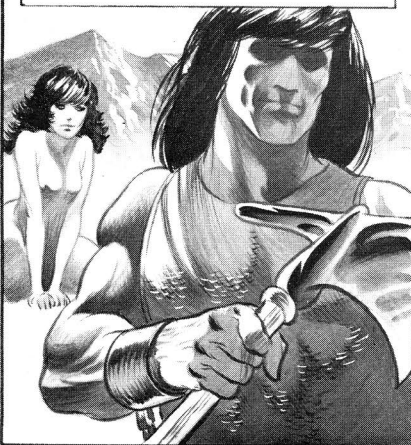
I TURN AND GAZE AT HER FACE, AND I GASP IN AWE. SHE IS, INDEED, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CREATURE I'VE EVER SEEN. SHE SMILES AND HER EYES PROMISE FAVORS IN RETURN. I MOVE CLOSER . . .



OUR SOULS MEET AND WE GAZE UPON NEW WORLDS TOGETHER . . . UNIVERSES APPROACH, TOUCH AND PART AGAIN . . . WE LIE NAKED ON A GREEN, VELVET SWORD AND STARE DEEP INTO A VIBRANT, BLUE SKY . . .



. . . I AM BROUGHT BACK TO MY PURPOSE LIKE A DROWNING MAN PULLED TO SAFETY . . . I RISE, NOT WANTING TO LEAVE HER SIDE . . . MY WISH IS TO STAY WITH HER ALWAYS. I PROMISE TO RETURN AGAIN, WHEN MY TASK IS COMPLETED. . . I KISS HER FAREWELL AND TURN, WITHOUT A WORD, TO LEAVE . . .



. . . I AM NO MORE THAN TEN PACES AWAY, WHEN I FEEL THE MUSCLES AND TENDONS OF MY ARM BEGIN TO STRAIN AND POP. I HALT, REFUSING TO ACCEPT THE FACT . . .



. . . I TURN, TRYING TO SMILE . . . SHE SMILES IN RETURN AND I SEE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE AGELESS EVIL MIRRORED IN THE DEPTHS OF HER EYES . . .

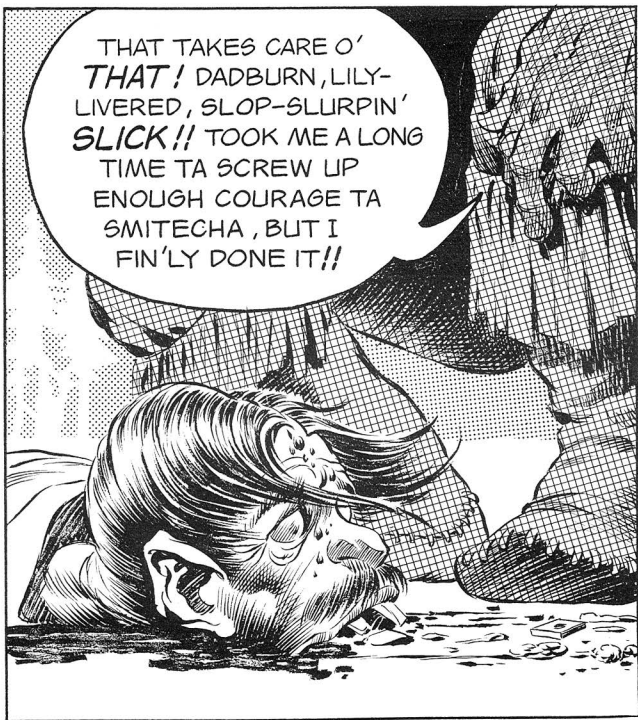


. . . FOR THE FIFTH TIME, MY FINGERS TIGHTEN ON THE HAFT OF MY BLADE . . . FOR THE FIFTH TIME ITS WORN EDGE MUST DRINK BLOOD . . . FOR THE FIRST TIME, A TEAR WELLS IN MY EYE . . . I APPROACH, SMILING THROUGH MISTY VISION. SOON, MY TASK WILL BE OVER . . .

THE END

# King of the Mountain, Man





THAT TAKES CARE O'  
**THAT!** DADBURN, LILY-  
LIVERED, SLOP-SLURPIN'  
**SLICK!!** TOOK ME A LONG  
TIME TA SCREW UP  
ENOUGH COURAGE TA  
SMITECHA, BUT I  
FIN'LY DONE IT!!



... THOUGHTCHA WAS  
PURTY **SMART**, DINCHA?  
EATIN' ALL THE FOOD,  
KEEPIN' ALL THE BOOZE  
TA Y'SELF ... USIN'  
ALL THE DADGUM  
**TOILET PAPER!!**



WELL, I FIXTCHA  
**GOOD!!** SPLATTERED  
YER BRAINS FER 'BOUT TEN  
YARDS OUT!! NOW I GET  
EVERYTHING WHAT WAS  
YOURS ...



... NAMELY YER  
'BUN, YER GOLD DUST,  
YER LIKKER, YER  
WOMAN ...

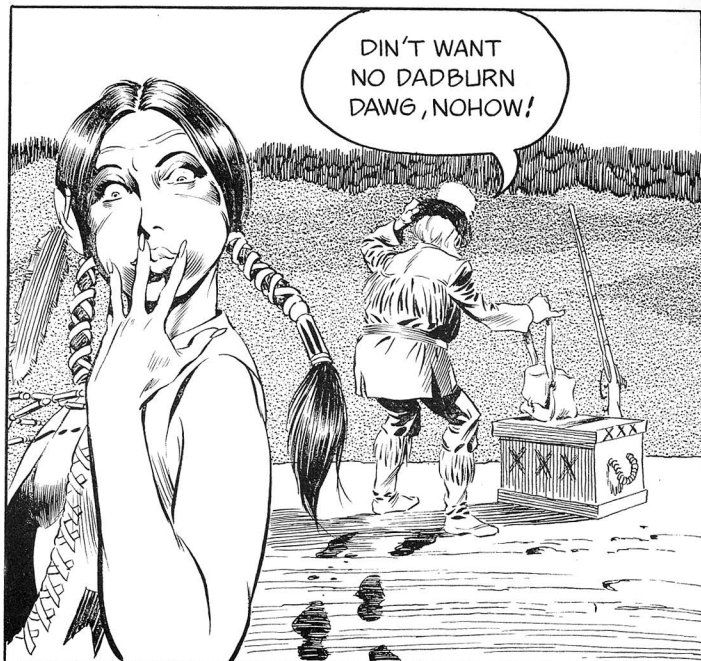


... AN' LAST  
BUT NOT LEAST  
... **OOOWWW!!**



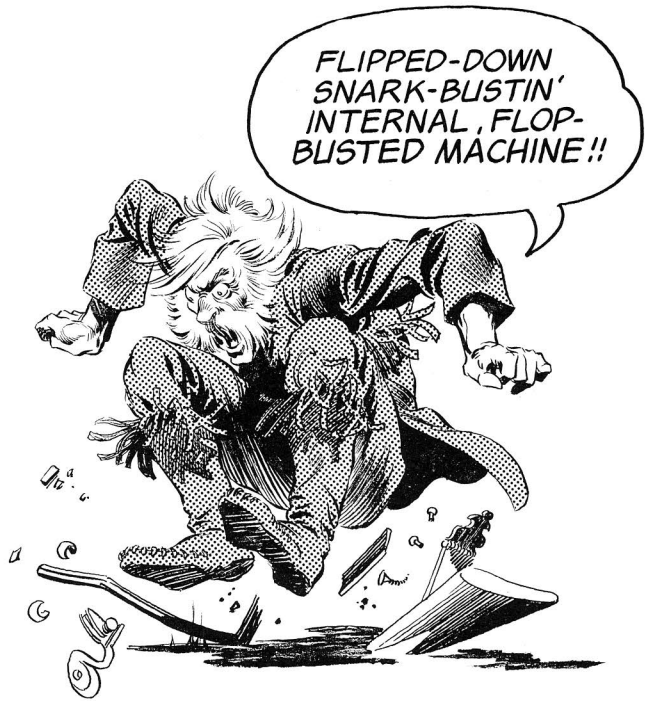
YER DAD-  
BURN **DAWG!!**

**LEGGO**, YA  
STUPID FLEA-  
BITTEN ...





WHAT IN THE  
DING-DONG HELL  
HAPPENED ?!!



FLIPPED-DOWN  
SNARK-BUSTIN'  
INTERNAL, FLOP-  
BUSTED MACHINE !!



I NEEDS ME A  
*DRINK*, WOMAN!  
BREAK OUT ONE O'  
THEM BOTTLES!



LORD,  
THAT'S GOOD  
ST...!!!!ITTT!!



MY GOD, THAT  
STUFF TASTES LIKE  
*KEROSENE* !! OUT-  
TA ALL THEM BOTTLES,  
YA GIMME THE ONE THAT  
SOMEBODY PLUKED IN !!

LEMME TRY A  
GOOD BOTTLE!  
THERE ,THAT'S  
... PTUIII!!

HOLY GOD  
DAMN GHOST!  
THAT ONE'S  
BAD, TOO!!

THIS  
ONE, TOO!!

SAME  
HERE!!

THIS'N, TOO!  
WHOLE STINKIN'  
DAD-BLAMED,  
ROTTEN, LOUSY  
BOX IS BAD!!

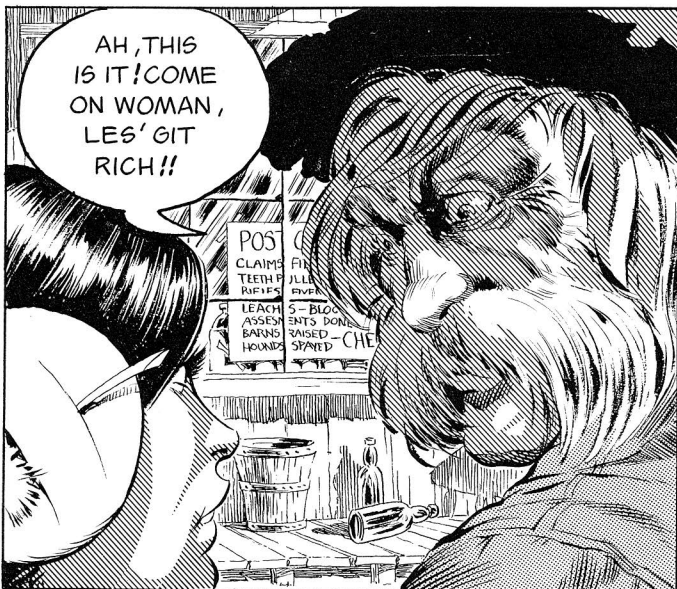


COME ON, WOMAN.  
WE GOTTA GIT OURSELVES  
TO A TOWN SOMEHERES AN'  
CASH IN THIS DUST! I'LL BUY  
SOME GOOD BOOZE AN' THE  
BEST RIFLE THIS SIDE  
O' CREATION!!





HERE WE ARE!!  
NOT A VERY BIG PLACE  
...COME ON, THERE'S GOT  
TO BE A ASSESIN' OFFICE  
HERE SOMEWHERE ...



AH, THIS  
IS IT! COME  
ON WOMAN,  
LES' GIT  
RICH!!

POST  
CLAIMS  
TEETH  
REFILLS  
LEACH  
ASSEN  
BARN  
HOUND  
S-BLO  
ENTS  
RAISE  
SPAYED  
CHE



SLAM!

AWRIGHT, FELLA,  
TURN THIS GLITTER IN-  
TA HARD SILVER ...  
NO PAPER ...



YOU GOTTA BE  
NUTS, FRIEND! ALL  
THIS STUFF IS GONNA  
GITCHA IS 'BOUT SIX  
COPPER PENNY  
PIECES!!

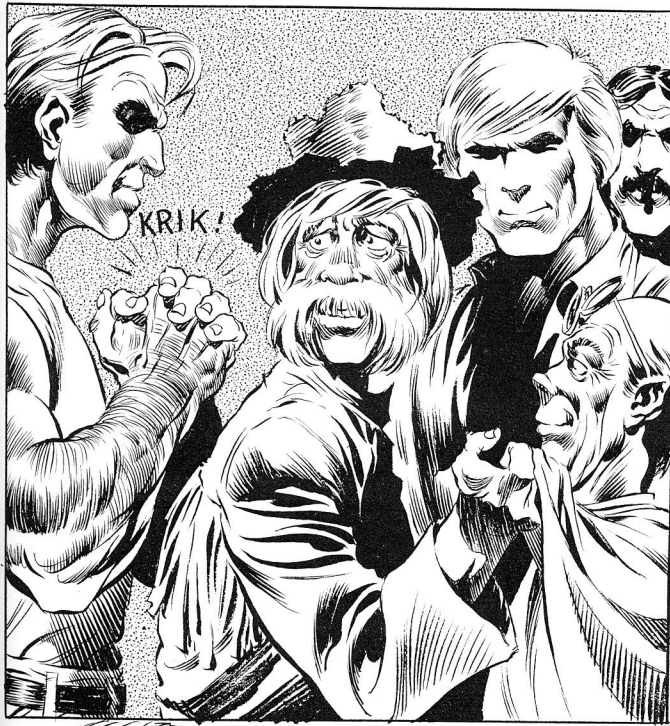
WHAT?!!

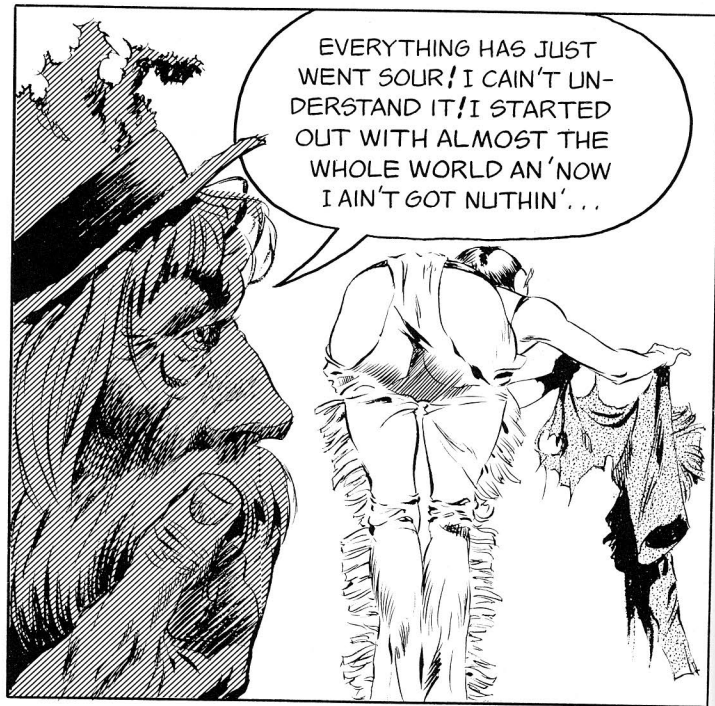


WHAT IN THE GOD  
ALMIGHTY DAMNED  
HELL YOU TALKIN' ABOUT?  
I'LL USE YER POINTY HEAD  
FER A MOP AN' SWEEP UP  
THIS LITTLE TURD  
OF A TOWN ...

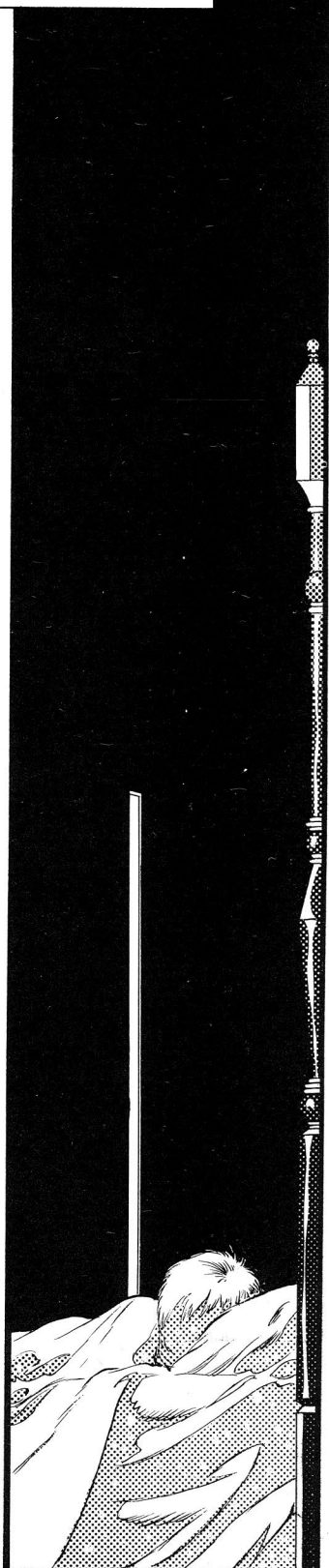
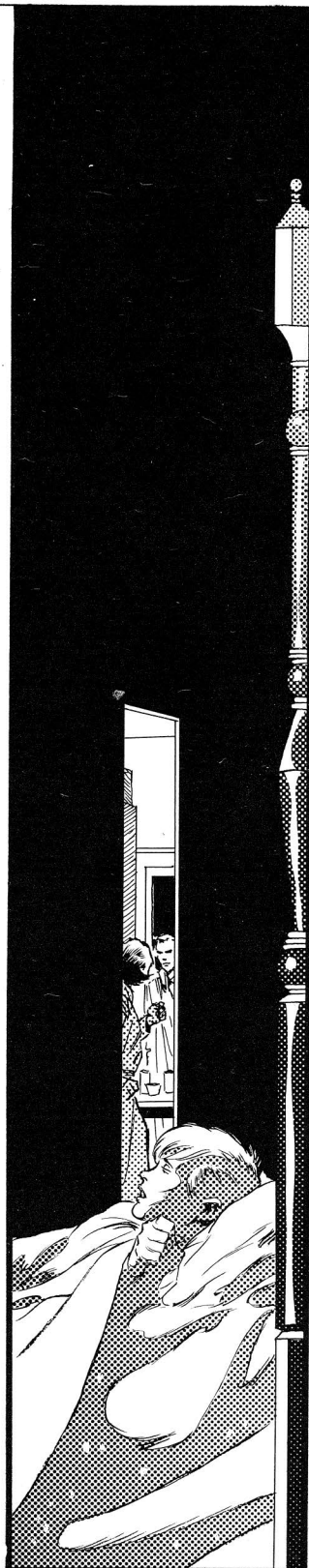
BOYS...?







IS THE KID ASLEEP YET? NEVER MIND ABOUT THE KID — TELL ME WHERE YOU'VE BEEN ALL DAY!! I DON'T THINK IT'S ANY OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS WHERE I'VE BEEN!! OH, ZATSO?! YEAH!! SHUT UP, YOU WORTHLESS, STUPID BUM — YOU'LL WAKE BILLY!! SO WHAT?! STUPID, HUH?! WELL, LEMME TELL YOU SOMETHING . . . I DON'T WANNA HEAR IT. . . YOU'LL HEAR IT ALRIGHT. . . CLOSE THE DOOR! YOU'RE GONNA WAKE BILLY!! SO, I'LL WAKE BILLY!! YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY WHISPERIN', YOURSELF, Y'KNOW . . . YOU'RE CALLING ME A LOUDMOUTH?! YEAH!



WELL, HELLO, BILLY! IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU WERE HERE LAST... IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN... MMM... YOU SEEM TO HAVE GROWN A LITTLE... OR MAYBE IT'S SOMETHING OTHER THAN TIME THAT'S OLDENED YOUR FACE.



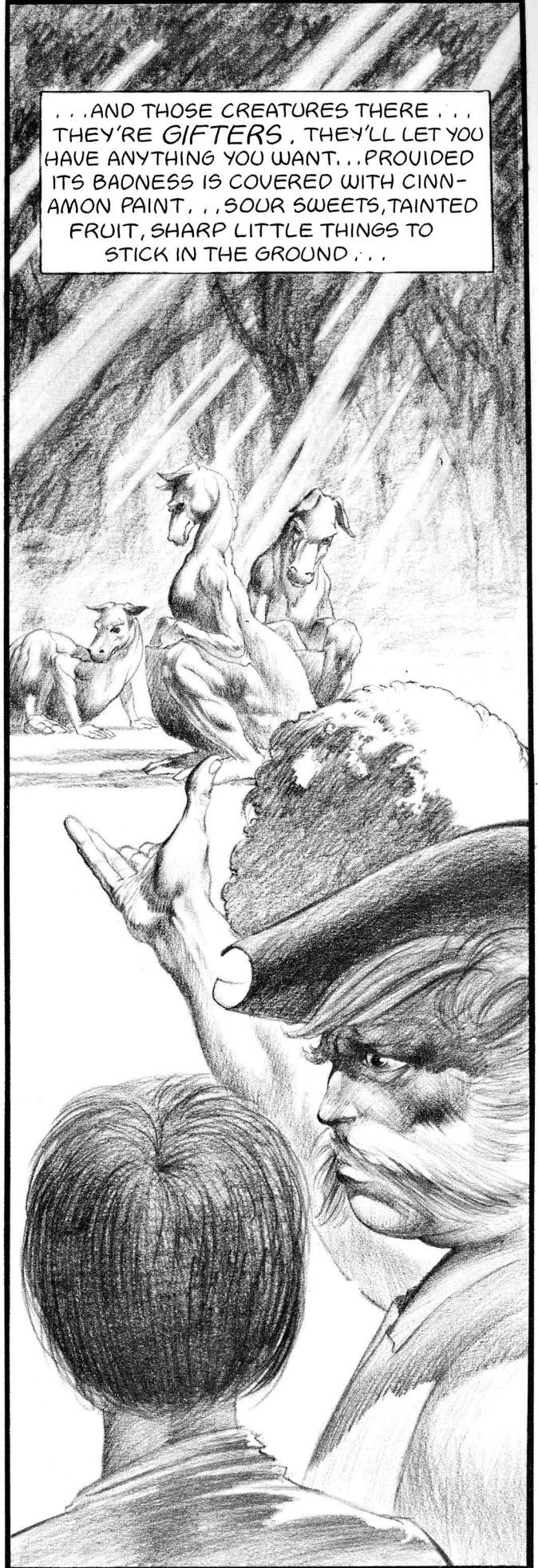
COME ALONG, MY YOUNG FRIEND. I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU SOME THINGS YOU HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE... PERHAPS YOU WON'T UNDERSTAND IT ALL... AH, BUT OF COURSE YOU WILL. YOU'RE STILL A BRIGHT ONE AND THERE'S MUCH OF LIFE TO LEARN HERE...



DO YOU SEE THAT CASTLE BEYOND THE WOOD? IT LOOKS QUITE STRONG AND STATELY, DOESN'T IT? IT'S A SHAM, BILLY, IT IS MADE OF SAND AND SHELLS, AND WILL CRUMBLE AT THE TOUCH OF YOUR HAND. . . NOTHING LASTS.



. . . AND THOSE CREATURES THERE . . . THEY'RE *GIFTERS*, THEY'LL LET YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU WANT. . . PROVIDED ITS BADNESS IS COVERED WITH CINNAMON PAINT, . . . SOUR SWEETS, TAINTED FRUIT, SHARP LITTLE THINGS TO STICK IN THE GROUND . . .



... AND THOSE ARE THE CHANGLINGS . . .  
FOUL, TERRIBLE, GRAVE-WORM PEOPLE  
LURKING WITHIN BEAUTIFUL,  
INNOCENT SHELLS . . .



SO, YOU SEE, BILLY . . . MANY THINGS ARE  
NOT WHAT THEY SEEM . . . TOO  
MUCH OF LOTS OF STUFF IS SUGAR-AND-  
SPICE COATED MAGGOTS . . . YOU MUST  
LEARN WARINESS AND DISCRE-  
TION . . . IN EVERYTHING.



BUT, COME NOW. FOLLOW ME .  
THERE IS BUT ONE MORE TO SEE ...

THERE IS THE REAPER OF LOVE!  
BEWARE HIM THE MOST FOR HE IS THE  
FATHER OF PAIN . . . HE EATS BRO-  
KEN HEARTS AND DRINKS SHED TEARS!



HIS FACES AND FORMS ARE MANY . . .  
HE LURKS INSIDE THOSE WE KNOW . . .  
KILLING US DAY BY DAY, LITTLE BY LITTLE  
. . . HE MANGLES OUR GUTS, ROTTING  
US FROM THE INSIDE OUT . . .

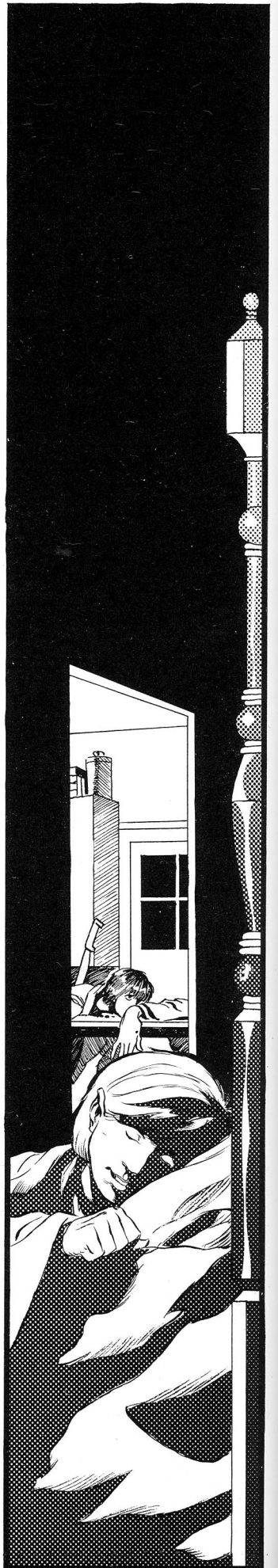
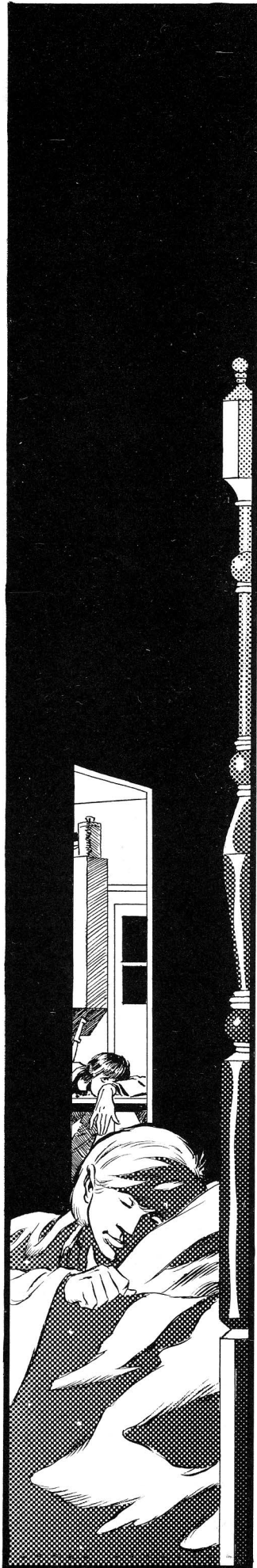
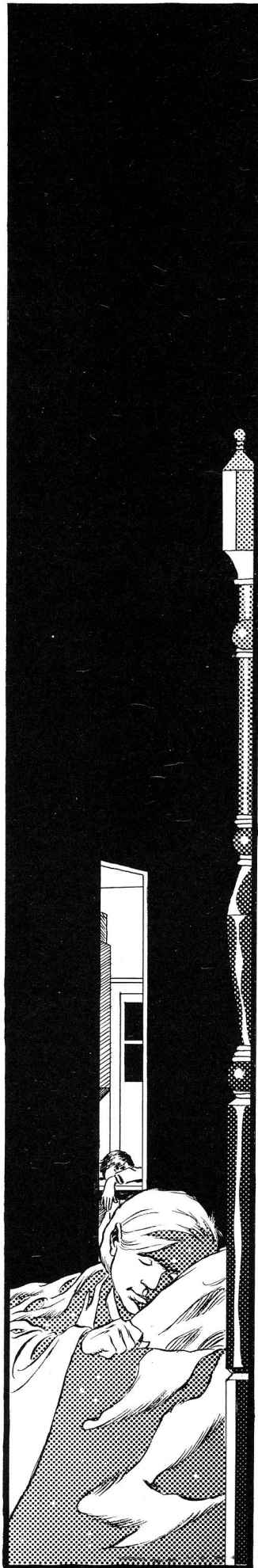
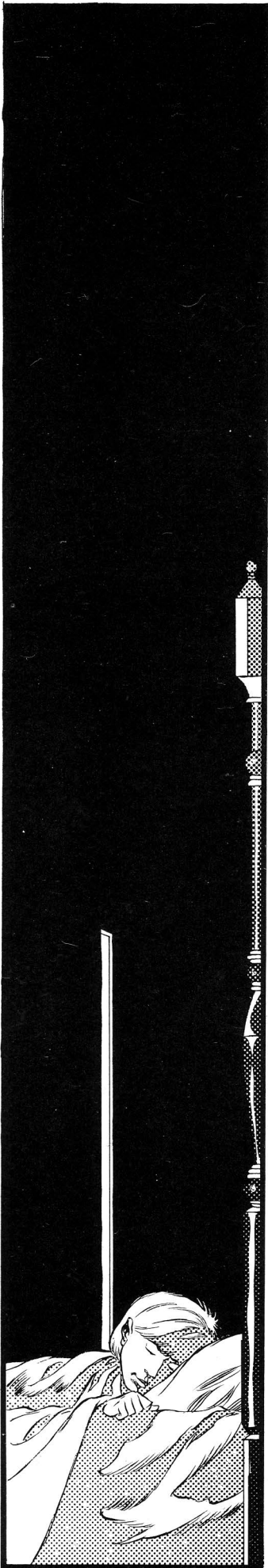


...BILLY...?







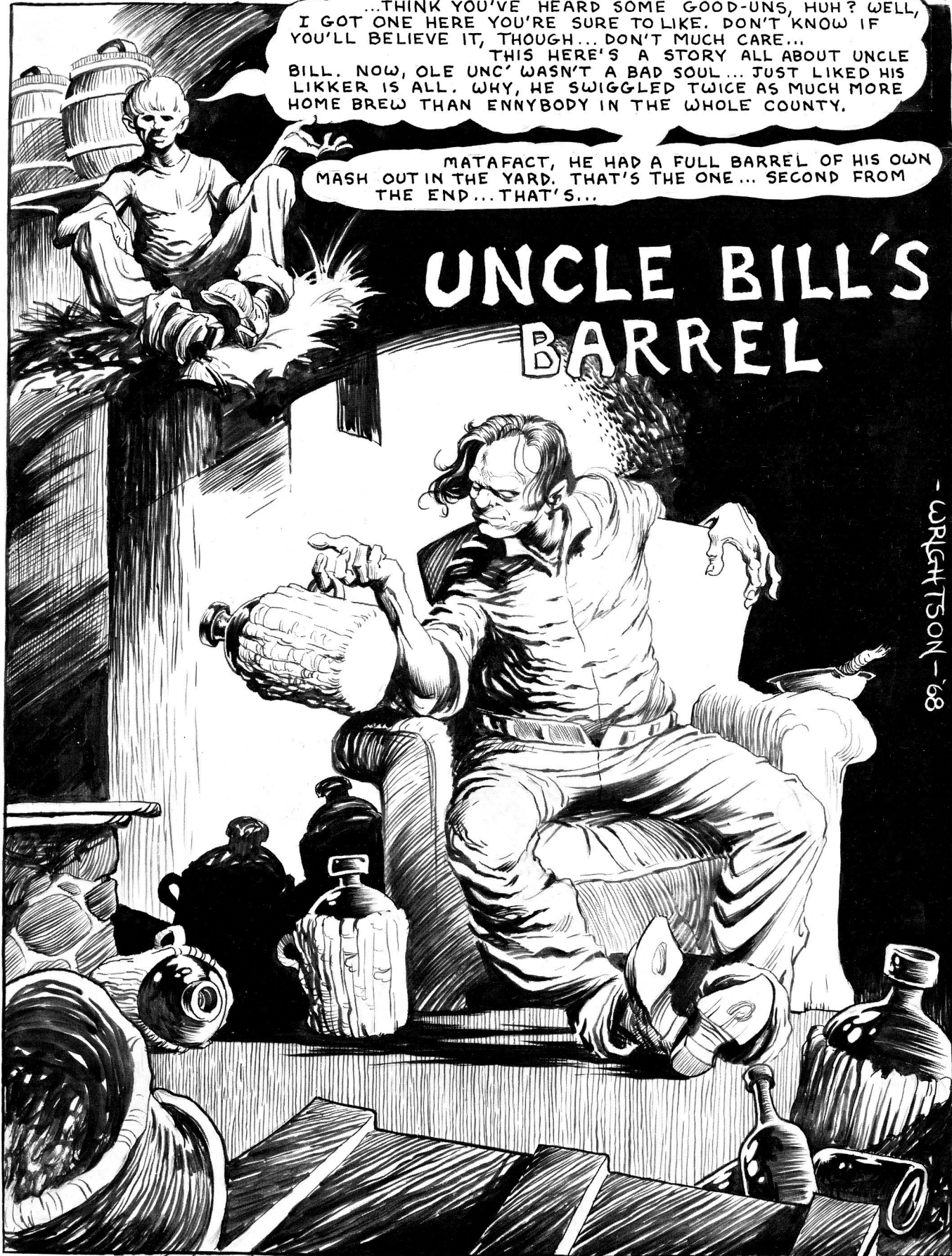


...THINK YOU'VE HEARD SOME GOOD-UNS, HUH? WELL, I GOT ONE HERE YOU'RE SURE TO LIKE. DON'T KNOW IF YOU'LL BELIEVE IT, THOUGH... DON'T MUCH CARE...

THIS HERE'S A STORY ALL ABOUT UNCLE BILL. NOW, OLE UNC' WASN'T A BAD SOUL... JUST LIKED HIS LIKKER IS ALL. WHY, HE SWIGGLED TWICE AS MUCH MORE HOME BREW THAN ENNYBODY IN THE WHOLE COUNTY.

MATAFACT, HE HAD A FULL BARREL OF HIS OWN MASH OUT IN THE YARD. THAT'S THE ONE... SECOND FROM THE END... THAT'S...

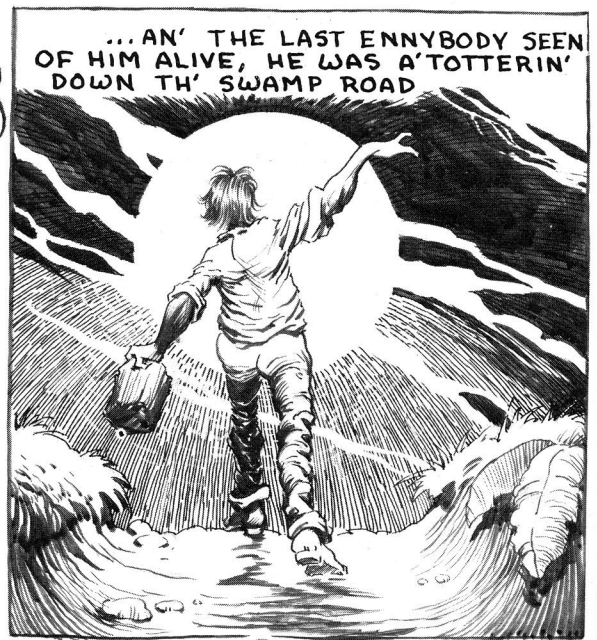
# UNCLE BILL'S BARREL



- CURTISON - '68



I REMEMBER HIM COMIN' IN FROM TOWN LATE ONE NIGHT LAST MARCH. HE WAS ALL SMOKED UP, AS USUAL...



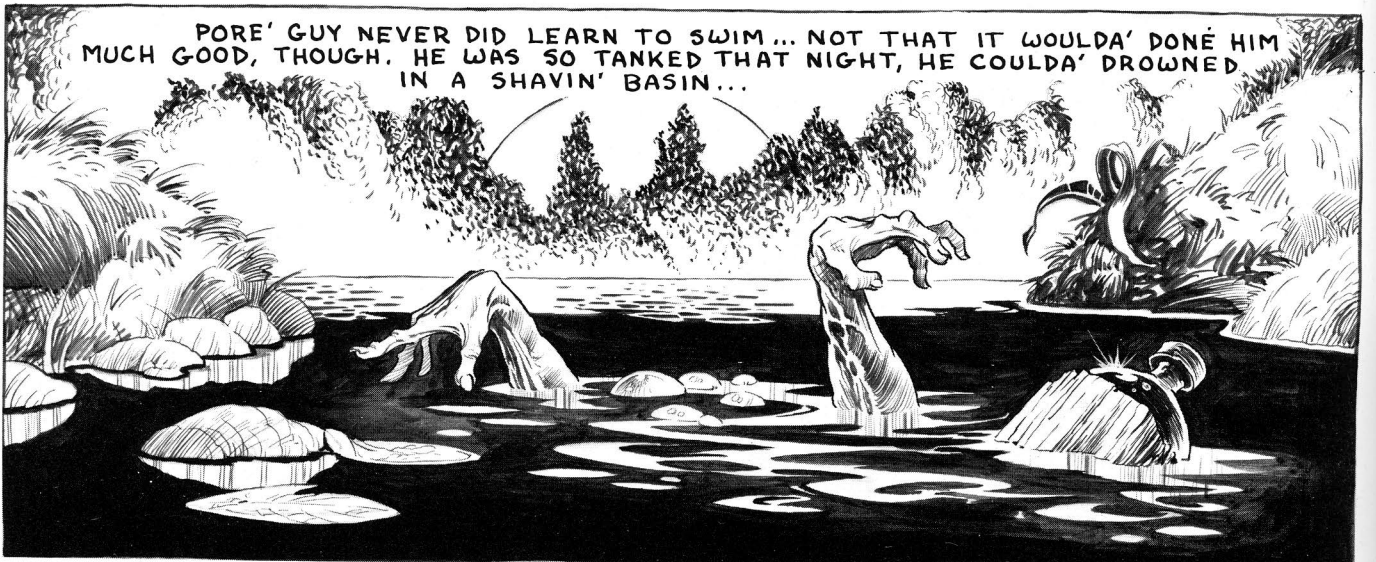
... AN' THE LAST ENNYBODY SEEN OF HIM ALIVE, HE WAS A'TOTTERIN' DOWN TH' SWAMP ROAD



I CAN SEE HIM NOW, STOPPIN' FOR A SWIG FROM HIS JUG... TO STEADY HISSSELF...



...TAKIN' BOUT TWO STEPS... THEN FALLIN' INTO THE OLE FROG POND...



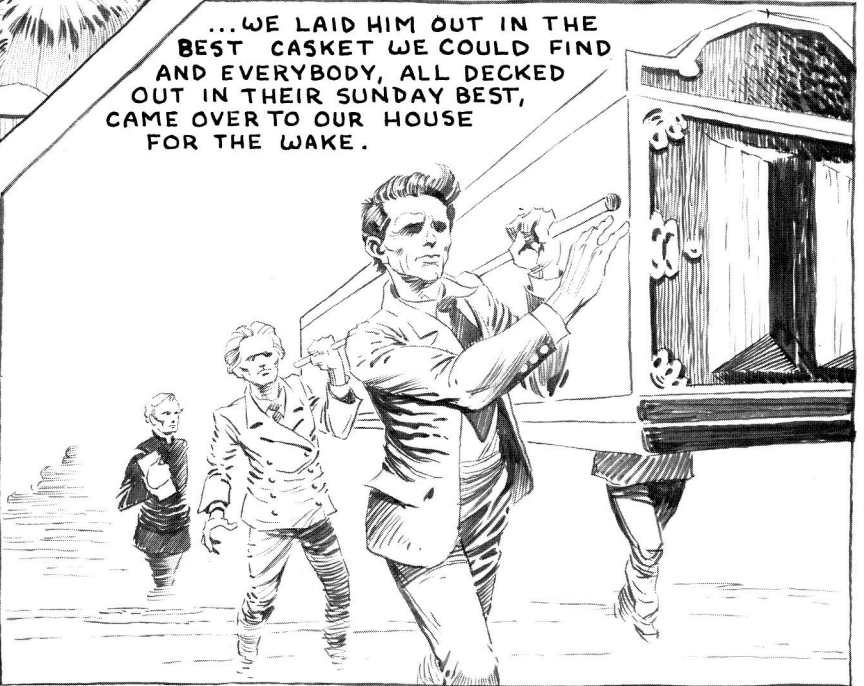
PORE' GUY NEVER DID LEARN TO SWIM ... NOT THAT IT WOULD'VE DONE HIM MUCH GOOD, THOUGH. HE WAS SO TANKED THAT NIGHT, HE COULDA' DROWNED IN A SHAVIN' BASIN...

I REMEMBER 'BOUT A WEEK LATER WHEN ME AN' JINX FOUND HIM AN' HAILED HIM OUT WITH A TOW LINE.

SEEMS LIKE HALF THE TOWN WAS THERE, JUST WATCHIN'...



...WE LAID HIM OUT IN THE BEST CASKET WE COULD FIND AND EVERYBODY, ALL DECKED OUT IN THEIR SUNDAY BEST, CAME OVER TO OUR HOUSE FOR THE WAKE.



OLE DOC WAS THERE JUST TO MAKE THINGS OFFICIAL...

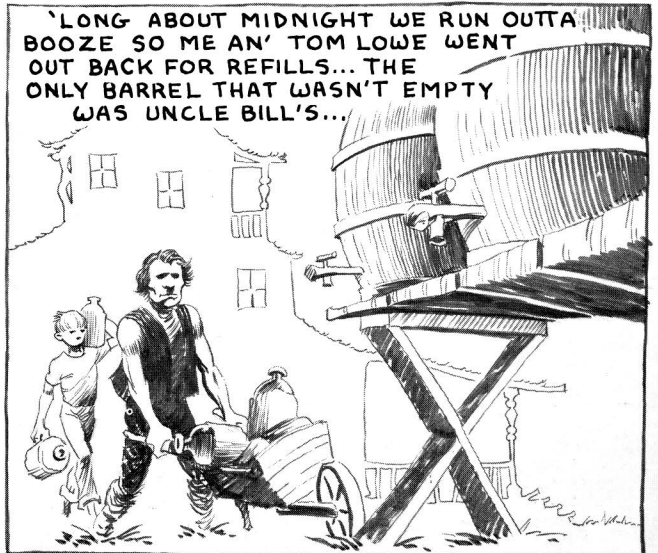
THAT MAN IS DAID.



THE PARSON SAID HIS PIECE AN' MADE US SING 'WE SHALL OVERCOME' A COUPLA THOUSAND TIMES... THEN THE PARTY STARTED...



'LONG ABOUT MIDNIGHT WE RUN OUTTA BOOZE SO ME AN' TOM LOWE WENT OUT BACK FOR REFILLS... THE ONLY BARREL THAT WASN'T EMPTY WAS UNCLE BILL'S...

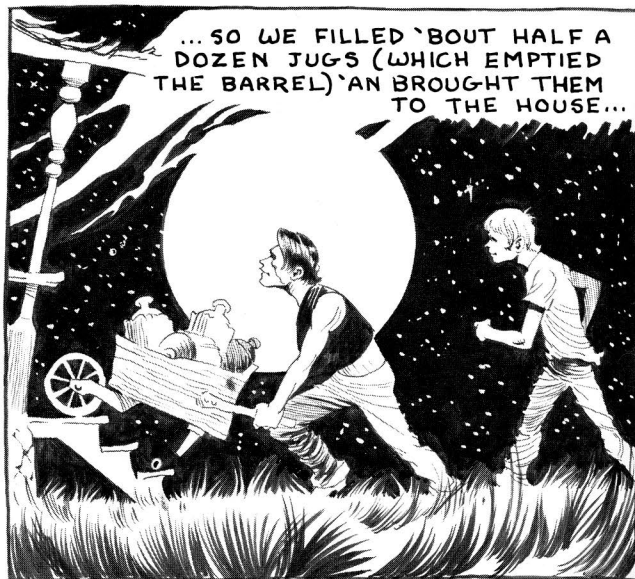


I ASKED TOM NOT TO TAKE THE LIKKER FROM UNCLE BILL'S BARREL, BUT HE TOLD ME:

SHUCKS, BOY... WHEREVER BILL'S AT NOW, HE SURE AIN'T GONNA NEED THIS!



... SO WE FILLED 'BOUT HALF A DOZEN JUGS (WHICH EMPTIED THE BARREL) 'AN BROUGHT THEM TO THE HOUSE...



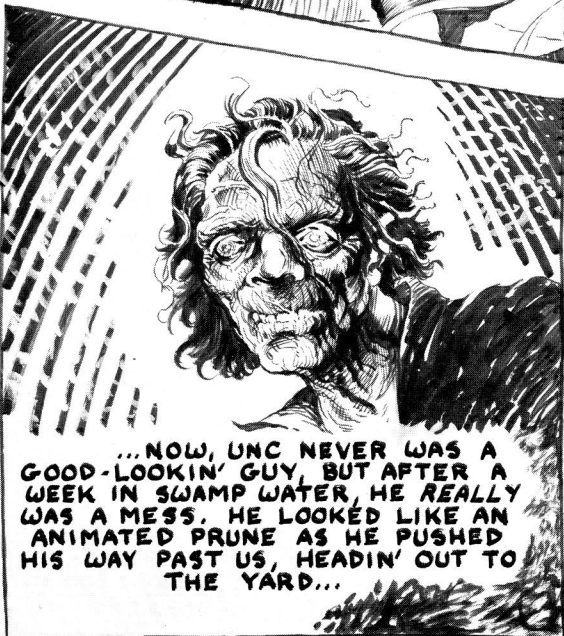
... YOU CAN IMAGINE OUR SURPRISE WHEN WE CAME THROUGH THE DOOR 'AN SEEN UNCLE BILL COME 'A-FLYIN' OUT OF HIS CASKET...



SOMEBODY YELLED-"HE'S GOIN' FOR HIS BARREL!.." AN' ME AN' TOM WERE AFTER HIM AT A RUN...



... NOW, UNC NEVER WAS A GOOD-LOOKIN' GUY, BUT AFTER A WEEK IN SWAMP WATER, HE REALLY WAS A MESS. HE LOOKED LIKE AN ANIMATED PRUNE AS HE PUSHED HIS WAY PAST US, HEADIN' OUT TO THE YARD...



WE COME A-HIGHTAILIN' OUT OF THE HOUSE AN' STOPPED SHORT, AN' ALMOST FELL OVER UNCLE BILL, WHO WAS JUST SITTIN' THERE, GUZZLIN' HIS MASH FOR ALL HE WAS WORTH...

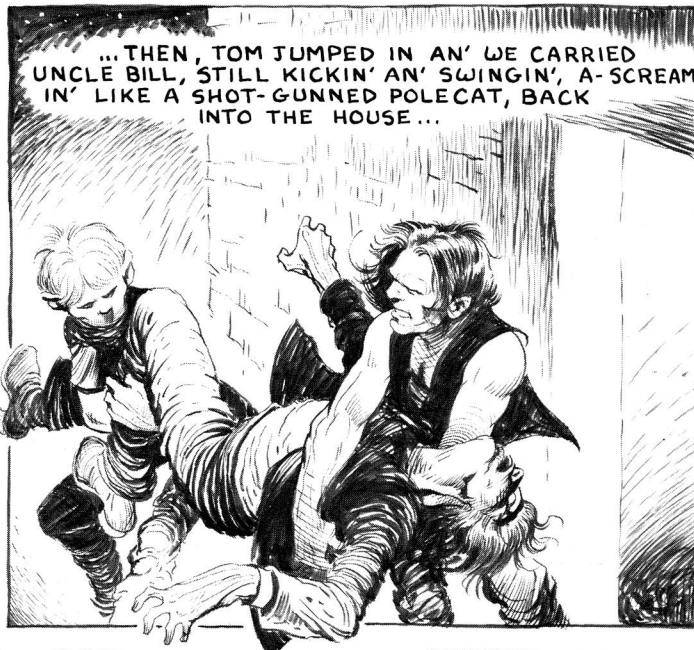


Y'KNOW, IT JUST AIN'T RIGHT FOR A DEAD MAN TO DRINK LIKE THAT, BUT I MANAGED TO

WRESTLE THE JUG AWAY FROM HIM...



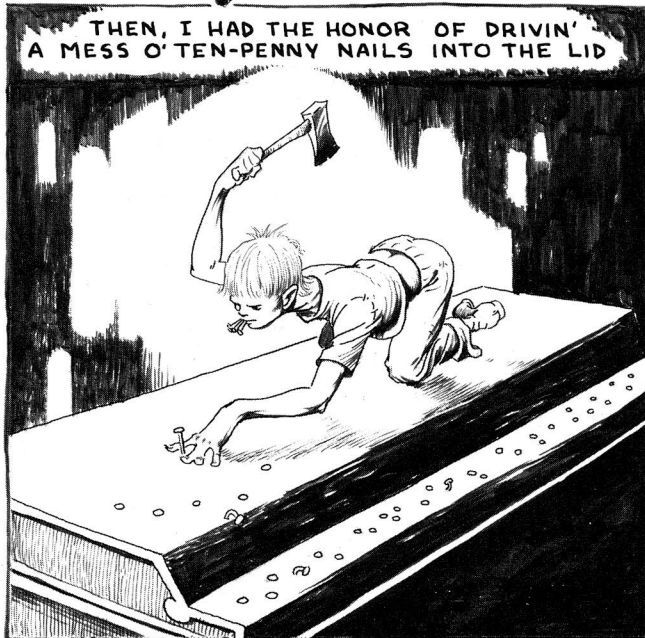
... THEN, TOM JUMPED IN AN' WE CARRIED UNCLE BILL, STILL KICKIN' AN' SWINGIN', A-SCREAMIN' LIKE A SHOT-GUNNED POLECAT, BACK INTO THE HOUSE...



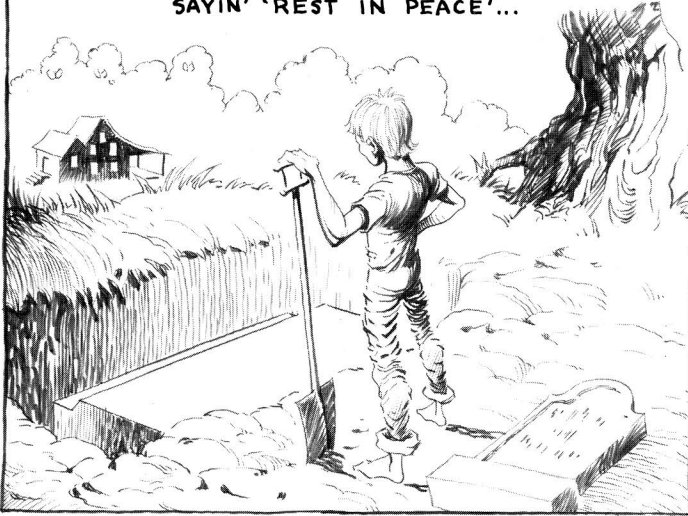
TOM SHOVED HIM DOWN IN THE CASKET AN' I SLAMMED THE LID SHUT...



THEN, I HAD THE HONOR OF DRIVIN' A MESS O' TEN-PENNY NAILS INTO THE LID



WE BURIED HIM THE NEXT DAY, 'CAUSE HE WAS RAISIN' SUCH A RACKET INSIDE THE COFFIN. IN FRONT OF THE GRAVE, WE PUT A STONE SAYIN' 'REST IN PEACE'...



...UNCLE BILL NEVER DID BELIEVE IN SIGNS ...IN A MATTER OF WEEKS, HE WAS UP AN' OUT...



...A-HOBBLIN' DOWN THE HILL, TOWARDS THE HOUSE...



... ALWAYS TRYIN' TO GET BACK TO HIS LIKKER.



SO, I'D HAVE TO GET MY SHOVEL...



...AN' SORTA PERSUADE HIM TO LEAVE THE BARREL ALONE...



YESSIR, A FEW WHACKS WITH THE FLAT OF A SPADE WOULD SEND HIM SCURRYIN' UP THE HILL...



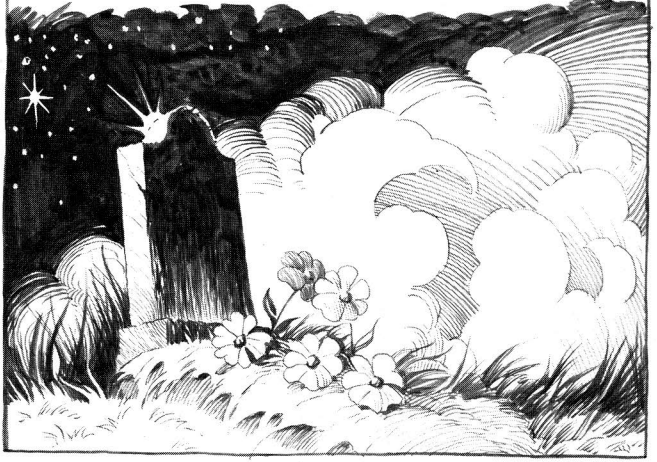
...TO DIG HIS WAY BACK TO WHERE HE BELONGED...



WELL, THIS KEPT UP FOR 'BOUT TWO MONTHS... EVERY TIME HE FELT STRONG ENOUGH, HE'D TRY TO GET BACK TO THAT BARREL AGAIN... AN' I'D HAVE TO GO OUT AN' RAP 'IM WITH THAT SHOVEL...



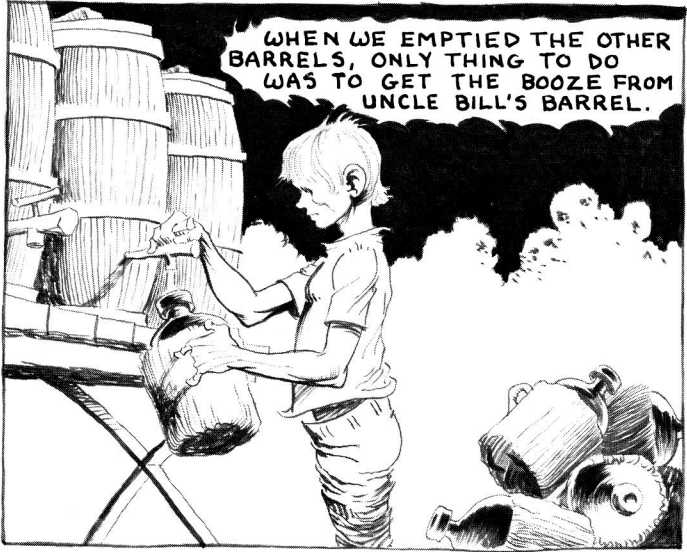
BUT, THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN, HE STOPPED MAYBE HIS STRENGTH GAVE OUT OR HE GOT DISCOURAGED... I DUNNO... BUT, ANYHOW, HE STAYED WHERE HE BELONGED.



BUT, HE GOT BACK AT US... NEARLY KILLED THE WHOLE FAMILY DOIN' IT... MY SISTER JESSIE WAS GITTIN' MARRIED AN' WE, NATCHERLY, THREW A PARTY AFTERWARDS...



WHEN WE EMPTIED THE OTHER BARRELS, ONLY THING TO DO WAS TO GET THE BOOZE FROM UNCLE BILL'S BARREL.



NOW, UNCLE BILL'S LIKKER WAS LIKE THE BEST IN THE COUNTY, SO IT WAS MIGHTY MYSTERIOUS WHEN EVERYBODY STARTED GITTIN' SICK OFF IT...

HEY... LENNIE! THIS STUFF STINKS!!



ME AN' PA GOT SUSPICIOUS AN' WENT OUT TO INSPECT UNCLE BILL'S BARREL.



"HE MUSTA SNUCK PAST THE HOUSE AN' CRAWLED IN THERE WEEKS AGO..."



WHEN WE OPENED IT, IT WAS HALF FULL OF MASH AN' HALF FULL OF UNCLE BILL...



PA DECIDED THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING TO DO, SO WE NAILED DOWN THE LID AN' CARRIED IT (WITH OLE UNC INSIDE) UP TO THE GRAVE SITE.



...AN' THERE IT SETS TO THIS DAY... WE PUT A NEW STONE IN FRONT OF IT, SAYIN': "IT WAS HIS BOOZE THAT PUT HIM HERE, AND WITH THE HELP OF GOD, IT WILL KEEP HIM HERE. MAY HE REST IN PEACE."



...AN' THIS TIME HE DID.

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