



68 ILLUSTRATED PAGES OF TERROR AND SUSPENSE

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**SPECIAL
HOLIDAY
ISSUE**

**FEATURING:
"THE NIGHT
THE SNOW
SPILLED
BLOOD"**
Page 39

**"CARRIER
OF THE
SERPENT"**

BY
T. CASEY BRENNAN
ILLUSTRATED BY
JERRY GRANDENETTI

Page 16

**THE BEST IN
ILLUSTRATED TERROR AND SUSPENSE!**

W. F. 1004



FEELING DOWN, RABID READERS? AILING FROM THE TIRED BLOOD WHICH THOSE OTHER COMPETITORS TRY TO PUMP THROUGH THE PAGES OF THEIR **SICK** MAGAZINES? WELL, COME ALONG FOR A REJUVENATING LITTLE VISIT TO MARTHA WASHINGTON HOSPITAL, BLOOD BANK DIVISION, WHERE NEATLY STORED ROWS OF DONATED PLASMA ARE GUARDED DURING THE NIGHT BY DRs. JOSEPH SARNO AND RICHARD HAUSER. AND WHERE JOHN EDWARDS, FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER, IS ABOUT TO PUT A...

STAKE IN THE GAME



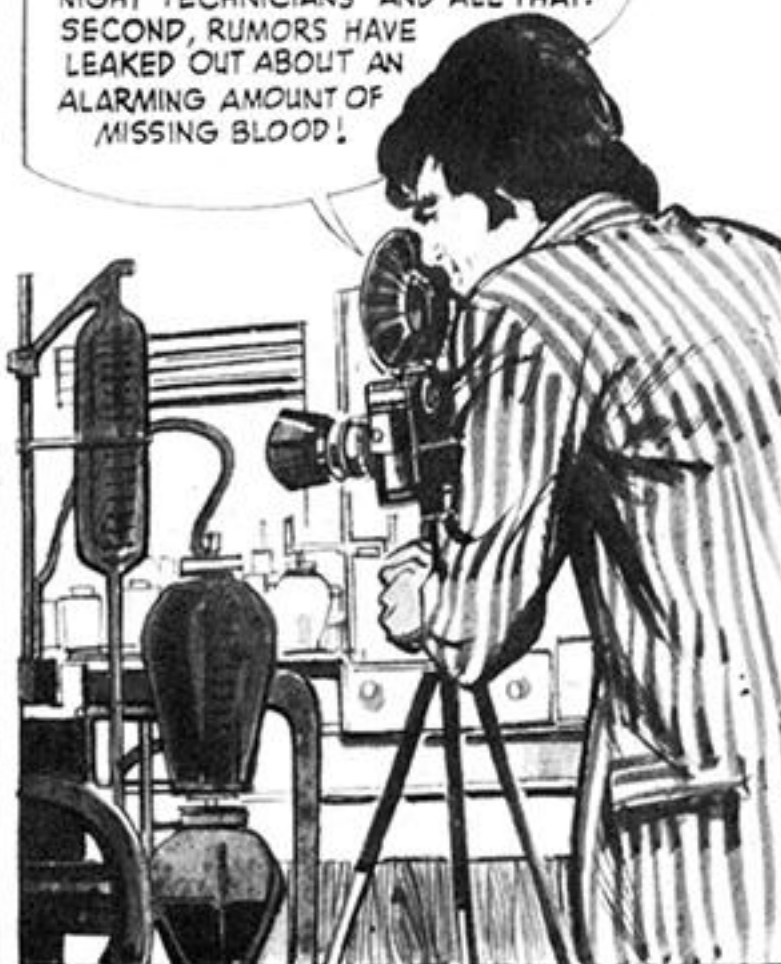
HELLO, DOCTORS. I'M JOHN EDWARDS. I BELIEVE YOU'RE EXPECTING ME...?

YES. YES, YOU'RE THE PHOTOGRAPHER WHO'S DOING A PHOTO-STUDY ON THE BLOOD CENTER HERE FOR A SUNDAY NEWS SUPPLEMENT SPREAD, AREN'T YOU?

YES. THE RECEPTIONIST TOLD ME THAT TONIGHT WOULD PROBABLY BE SLOW AND THEREFORE A GOOD CHANCE TO GET THE SHOTS I NEED WITHOUT GETTING IN YOUR WAY.

THAT'S TRUE. MOST ACCIDENTS WHICH REQUIRE BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS OCCUR DURING THE DAYLIGHT HOURS -- WHEN PEOPLE ARE MOST ACTIVE AND PRONE TO PLACE THEMSELVES IN POSITIONS OF DANGER. IS THERE ANY OTHER REASON WHY YOU CHOSE TO CONDUCT THIS SESSION DURING THE NIGHT SHIFT?

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, YES--**TWO** REASONS. FIRST, IT MAKES A BETTER ANGLE FOR THE STORY-- DEDICATED NIGHT TECHNICIANS AND ALL THAT. SECOND, RUMORS HAVE LEAKED OUT ABOUT AN ALARMING AMOUNT OF MISSING BLOOD!



ART BY GUAL / STORY BY DOUGLAS MOENCH



THE RUMORS ARE, UNFORTUNATELY, TRUE. THE MORNING STAFF'S DAILY INVENTORY INVARIABLY EVIDENCES AN UNACCOUNTED-FOR LOSS OF SEVERAL QUARTS OF PLASMA EACH DAY-- EVEN THOUGH DR. HAUSER AND I MAINTAIN A CLOSE WATCH OVER THE BLOOD BANK THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE NIGHT!

HAVE THERE BEEN SECURITY CHECKS, ON THE MAINTENANCE WORKERS, NURSES, AND SO FORTH?

IN RESPONSE TO THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S QUESTION, DR. RICHARD HAUSER REPLIES, HIS GAZE COLD, UNSWERVING, AND PIERCINGLY INTENSE:

YES, MR. EDWARDS! YOU MAY REST ASSURED THAT THE TIGHTEST SECURITY CLEARANCES HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED--AND TO NO AVAIL! HOWEVER, THE MYSTERY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE SOLVED TO EVERYONE'S SATISFACTION--**BEFORE** OUR SUPPLY OF PLASMA IS SERIOUSLY DIMINISHED AND OUR EFFICIENCY TO PRESERVE LIVES IS THREATENED! NOW, DO WE HAVE **YOUR** ASSURANCE THAT THIS PHOTO-STUDY WILL **NOT** ASSUME **SENSATIONAL** PROPORTIONS?

YES, YES, OF COURSE...

HMMM... THIS HAUSER CHARACTER SEEMS A LITTLE PARANOID ABOUT THE WHOLE BUSINESS...



NOW, DOCTORS, IF YOU'LL JUST GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS, I'LL TRY TO KEEP OUT OF YOUR WAY WHILE I TAKE SOME SHOTS.



FIRST FOR A SHOT OF THE BLOOD BANK, ITSELF...



NEXT, A PHOTO OF ALL THAT LAB MACHINERY...



AND ONE OF THE TWO
DOGS TOGETHER, LOST
IN THEIR WORK...

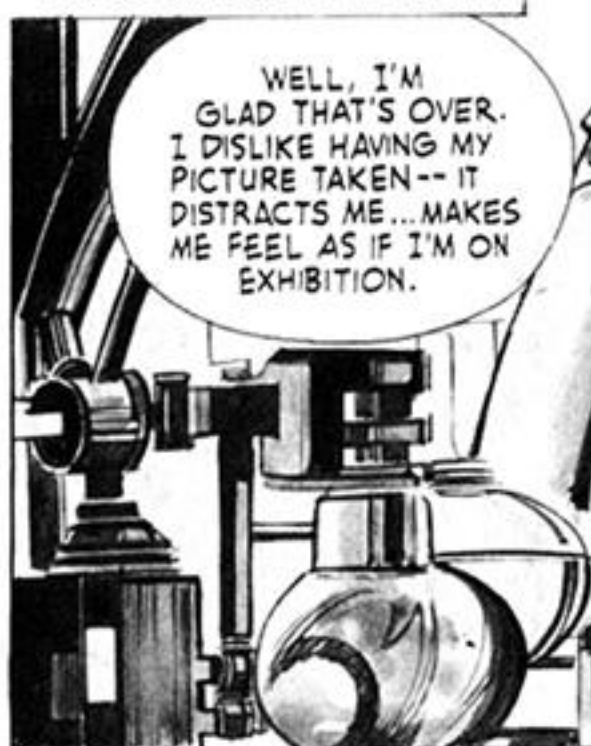
FINALLY, THE
SHOOTING SESSION
COMPLETED, JOHN
EDWARDS PREPARES
TO LEAVE THE
HOSPITAL'S BLOOD
BANK...

I GUESS THAT
ABOUT WRAPS IT
UP. THANKS FOR
YOUR TIME, AND--
I'LL SEE THAT YOU
GET COPIES OF
THE STORY WHEN
IT'S PRINTED!
SO LONG!



GOOD NIGHT,
MR. EDWARDS.

AS THE DOOR SOFTLY HUSHES
SHUT, DR. HAUSER TURNS TO
HIS COLLEAGUE WITH A SIGH...



WELL, I'M
GLAD THAT'S OVER.
I DISLIKE HAVING MY
PICTURE TAKEN-- IT
DISTRACTS ME... MAKES
ME FEEL AS IF I'M ON
EXHIBITION.

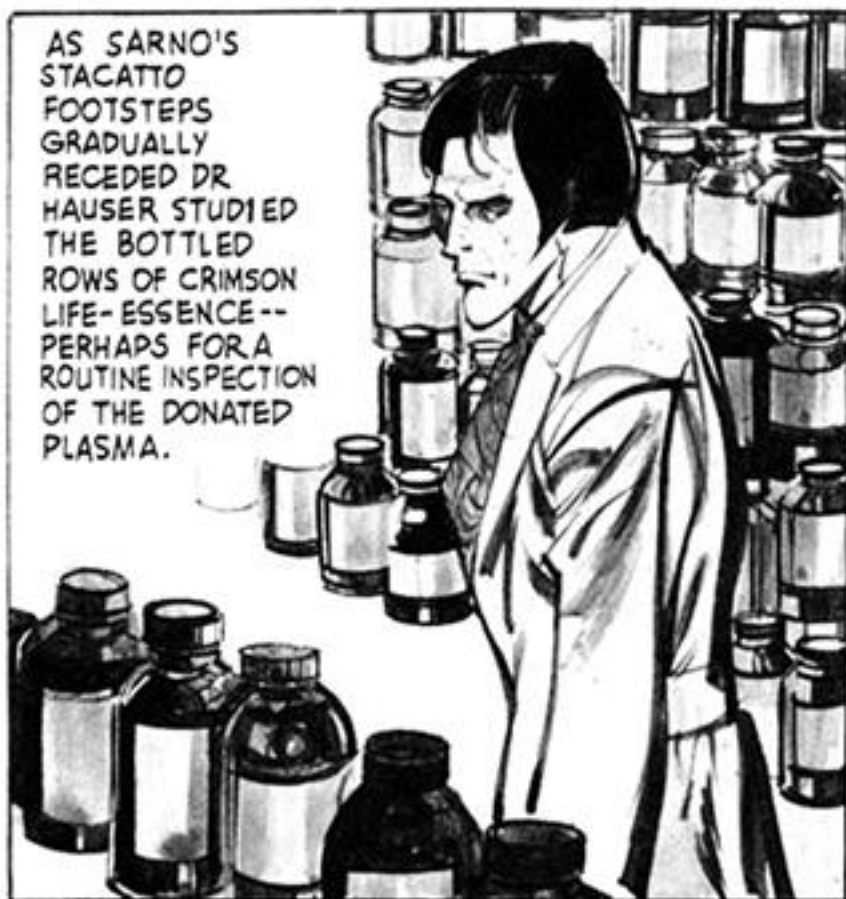


YES, I NOTICED YOU
WERE RATHER CAMERA-
SHY-- ALMOST **AVOIDING**
THE LENS. OH, WELL, I'M
GOING TO GET SOME
COFFEE. WANT ME TO
BRING A CUP BACK
FOR YOU?



NO, NO, THANK
YOU. I DON'T...
DRINK COFFEE.

SUIT YOURSELF.
SEE YOU IN ABOUT
TEN MINUTES.



AS SARNO'S
STACCATO
FOOTSTEPS
GRADUALLY
RECEDED DR.
HAUSER STUDIED
THE BOTTLED
ROWS OF CRIMSON
LIFE- ESSENCE--
PERHAPS FOR A
ROUTINE INSPECTION
OF THE DONATED
PLASMA.

ROUTINE THOUGH HIS ACTIONS MAY BE, DR. HAUSER IS BENT ON **FAR MORE** THAN A MERE **INSPECTION** OF THE LIFE-GIVING FLUID! HALTING BEFORE THE TIERED ROWS OF LABELED PLASMA, HE SCANS THE SHELVES BRIEFLY, REACHES FOR ONE OF THE SURGICAL BOTTLES...



... BREAKS ITS SEAL AS IF WITH A FIERCE PASSION...



...AND HIS LIPS WRITHING BACK IN A FERAL SNARL OF UNHOLY ANTICIPATION, RAISES THE OPENED BOTTLE TO HIS MOUTH...



GORGING HIMSELF ON ITS CONTENTS, REVELLING IN THE WARM AND THICK METALLIC TASTE OF **HUMAN BLOOD**!

AH, FINALLY... FINALLY I ONCE AGAIN TASTE THE SWEET NECTAR OF LIFE--AS I MUST DO EVERY NIGHT! HOW CONVENIENT THAT DR. SARNO CHOOSES TO TAKE HIS COFFEE BREAK IN THE CAFETERIA INSTEAD OF HERE!



HIS UNNATURAL-- BUT NO LESS **IMPELLING** THIRST FOR BLOOD FINALLY SLAKED, HAUSER FURTIVELY WASHES OUT THE INSIDE OF THE DRAINED PLASMA BOTTLE AND REPLACES IT ON A SHELF AMONG OTHERS LIKE IT...

HAHAHA! THE PERFECT OCCUPATION FOR A **VAMPIRE**! SOMEDAY I MUST WRITE MY MEMOIRS-- I CAN SEE THE TITLE NOW: **THE LAZY VAMPIRE, OR I WORKED THE NIGHT SHIFT IN A BLOOD BANK!** HAHAHA!



... RETURNING TO THE WORK AREA IN TIME TO GREET DR. SARNO, RETURNING FROM HIS COFFEE BREAK...



EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT? I HOPE I WASN'T TOO LONG...?

NO. NO, YOU WEREN'T TOO LONG AT ALL.

LATER THE FOLLOWING DAY, JOHN EDWARDS WORKS ON A CONSIDERABLY MORE **AGREEABLE** ASSIGNMENT THAN THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S WORK...

THAT'S IT, PAM... KEEP THE LEFT LEG BENT SLIGHTLY... COCK YOUR HEAD JUST A BIT... PUSH THE HAIR BACK FROM YOUR BOSOM... NOW, A NICE TEASING SMILE... CAN YOU GET A **TEASING** SMILE...?

THAT'S IT... THAT'S **PERFECT** NOW JUST H-O-L-D IT...

THAT'S THE LAST ONE, JOHN! IT'S FIVE O'CLOCK AND YOU KNOW HOW STRICT A MODEL'S RULES ARE! ARE YOU READY TO TAKE ME OUT TO DINNER, AS YOU PROMISED?

DINNER?! OH MY GOD, PAM, I'D COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT! LOOK, CAN YOU TAKE A RAIN CHECK? I'VE GOT TO DEVELOP THOSE PICTURES OF THE BLOOD BANK TONIGHT, THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS THURSDAY!

WELL, I HAVEN'T MUCH CHOICE, HAVE I? I SWEAR IF YOUR HEAD WASN'T SCREWED ON... WELL, I'LL SEE YOU **TOMORROW** NIGHT THEN, JOHN?

RETIRING TO THE DARKROOM, EDWARDS CONDUCTS THE SOMEWHAT NOISOME TASK OF DEVELOPING THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S FILM. THE FIRST TWO PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ROUTINELY SOAKED IN THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S CHEMICAL BASIN AND PINNED UP TO DRY. BUT THE **THIRD...**

ONLY **SARNO** IS IN THIS PICTURE! AND THAT **TEST TUBE** -- FLOATING IN **MID-AIR** WHERE **HAUSER** SHOULD BE! IT'S **INCREDIBLE... UNCANNY!**

YES, FINE. WHY DON'T YOU DROP OVER HERE AFTER WORK, OKAY? GOOD NIGHT, PAM. I REALLY **AM** SORRY.

WHAT'S THIS?! IT **CAN'T** BE! I'M **CERTAIN** I GOT **BOTH** OF THE DOCTORS IN THIS SHOT! AND YET...

SLOWLY, THE FULL IMPORT OF THE SITUATION GRADUALLY DAWNS ON THE YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHER...

TEST TUBE IN MID-AIR-- NO HAUSER IN THE PICTURE... BLOOD MISSING FROM THE HOSPITAL NIGHT SHIFT... OF COURSE! BUT... IT'S TOO FANTASTIC TO BE TRUE! THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A...

IT'S A CINCH NO ONE'LL BELIEVE ME-- I'LL HAVE TO DESTROY HAUSER MYSELF! AND IF I REMEMBER MY OLD LUGOSI FLICKS CORRECTLY, THE ONLY THINGS FATAL TO A VAMPIRE ARE SILVER BULLETS, WOODEN STAKES, AND SUNLIGHT! THIS SILVER NITRATE USED TO DEVELOP FOTOS, MIGHT JUST DO THE TRICK!

...VAMPIRE! AND YET WHAT OTHER EXPLANATION CAN THERE BE? VAMPIRES DRINK BLOOD, CAN ONLY WALK ABROAD BY NIGHT, AND CAST NO REFLECTION IN A MIRROR! THEIR IMAGES PROBABLY CAN'T SHOW UP IN PHOTOGRAPHS AS WELL!

A SHORT TAXI RIDE BRINGS THE GRIM PHOTOGRAPHER BACK TO THE BLOOD BANK...

GOOD EVENING, DOCTORS. I'M AFRAID I BLEW IT ON A FEW OF THE SHOTS LAST NIGHT-- BAD LIGHTING AND ALL. I GUESS MY MIND WASN'T ON WHAT I WAS DOING. THE MISSING BLOOD PROBABLY GOT TO ME. YOU DON'T MIND IF I RESHOOT A FEW, DO YOU?

NO, GO RIGHT AHEAD.

I...UH, ALSO NEGLECTED TO PAY AS MUCH ATTENTION TO THE COMPOSITION OF CERTAIN SHOTS AS I SHOULD HAVE. YOU DON'T OBJECT TO MY RE-GROUPING SOME OF THESE BOTTLES FOR A MORE BALANCED EFFECT, DO YOU?

NO. JUST DON'T STEAL ANY OF THEM. HAHHA.

THINKING HIS ACTIONS UNOBSERVED, EDWARDS SURREPTITIOUSLY POURS A HEAVY DOSE OF SILVER NITRATE INTO ONE OF THE PLASMA BOTTLES. BUT

THE MEDDLING FOOL! HE'S SOMEHOW LEARNED MY SECRET! HE'S PUTTING SOME SORT OF SILVER COMPOUND INTO THE BLOOD!

I'LL LEAVE THIS BOTTLE OUT IN FRONT, SEPARATE FROM THE OTHERS. I HOPE HAUSER PICKS IT FOR HIS MIDNIGHT SNACK!

THE NEXT EVENING, EDWARDS
EAGERLY CONFIDES HIS
INCREDIBLE DISCOVERY WITH...

BUT PAM,
I
TELL YOU THERE'S
NO OTHER POSSIBLE
EXPLANATION...

OH, JOHN, REALLY!
VAMPIRES! HAVE
YOU BEEN READING
COMIC BOOKS?

THE NIGHT AT PAM'S
APARTMENT IS
MARRIED BY THE
MODEL'S PERSISTENT
DISDAIN OF THE
VAMPIRE STORY...

GOOD-NIGHT,
JOHN. AND PLEASE,
TRY AND FORGET
ABOUT THE VAMPIRE AT
THE BLOOD BANK,
OKAY?

I WONDER WHAT
SHE'D SAY IF SHE KNEW
WHAT LENGTHS I'VE
ACTUALLY GONE TO--
THE SILVER NITRATE
AND ALL.

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT
FOOL LATER. BUT FIRST
THERE IS THE MATTER
OF HIS GIRLFRIEND.

MEANWHILE, DR. SARNO BECOMES
INCREASINGLY PERTURBED...

WHERE THE DEVIL IS
THAT HAUSER? HE'S
BEEN GONE FOR OVER
AN HOUR NOW!



IS THERE ANYTHING MORE **DEFENSELESS**
THAN A GIRL TRAPPED IN DEEP SLUMBER?



AND IS THERE
ANYTHING MORE
FEARFUL THAN
THE NAKED VISAGE
OF HORROR
INCARNATE -- A
VAMPIRE, HIS
LIPS CURLED BACK
EXPOSING THE TWIN
BARBS OF DEADLY-
POINTED FANGS?!



THE THIRSTING VAMPIRE LOCKS AN INTENSE STARE OF INCREDIBLE CONCENTRATION ON THE INNOCENTLY SLUMBERING FACE.



WHO CAN SAY WHAT UNCANNY POWERS OF MENTAL PERSUASION THAT BALEFUL GAZE POSSESSES? POWER ENOUGH TO SEIZE THE GIRL IN THE VERY MIDST OF SLEEP AND SHATTER HER PRECARIOUS STATE OF REST...



HIS MOVEMENTS THOSE OF CAREFULLY ARDOROUS LOVER IN SLOW MOTION, HAUSER REACHES DOWN AND GENTLY BRUSHES A WISP OF HAIR FROM THE GIRL'S THROAT...

THIS CAN ONLY BE A **DREAM**--BUT SOMEHOW I KNOW IT'S **NOT!** IT'S REALLY HAPPENING! WHY CAN'T I SCREAM?!

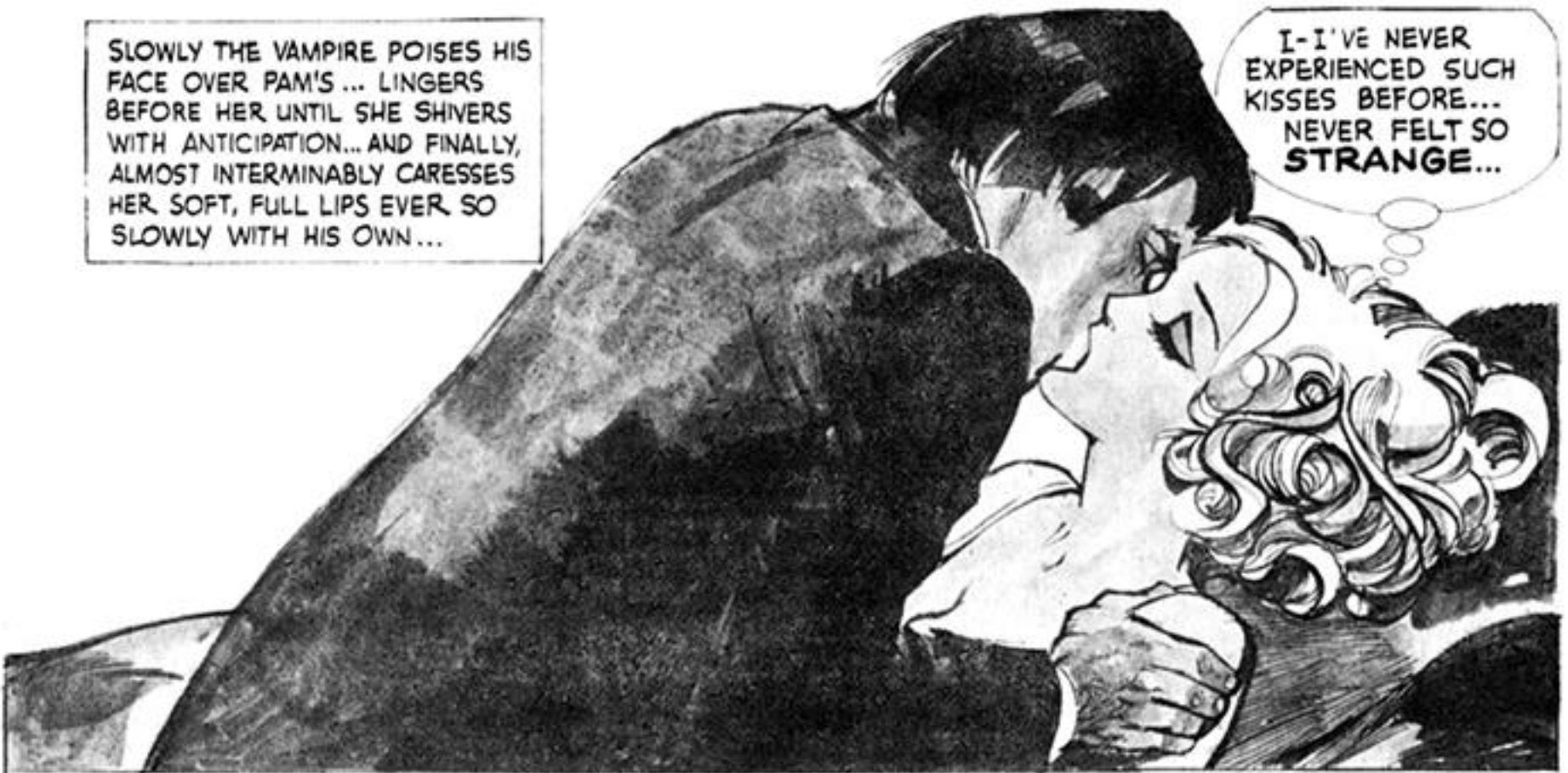
GOOSEFLESH RISES ON THE GIRL'S DELICATELY ROUNDED ARM AS THE VAMPIRE GENTLY RUNS HIS FINGERTIPS OVER HER NECK...HIS SLOWLY QUESTING LIPS BRUSH OVER HER PULSING THROAT...



FANTASTIC AS IT IS, I CAN'T HELP MYSELF FROM ACTUALLY **ENJOYING** THIS! JOHN'S CARESSES SEEM CRUDE, FUMBLING, BY COMPARISON. IT'S ALMOST AS IF I'M HOPING FOR DEATH...

SLOWLY THE VAMPIRE POISES HIS FACE OVER PAM'S ... LINGERS BEFORE HER UNTIL SHE SHIVERS WITH ANTICIPATION... AND FINALLY, ALMOST INTERMINABLY CARESSES HER SOFT, FULL LIPS EVER SO SLOWLY WITH HIS OWN...

I-I'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED SUCH KISSES BEFORE... NEVER FELT SO STRANGE...



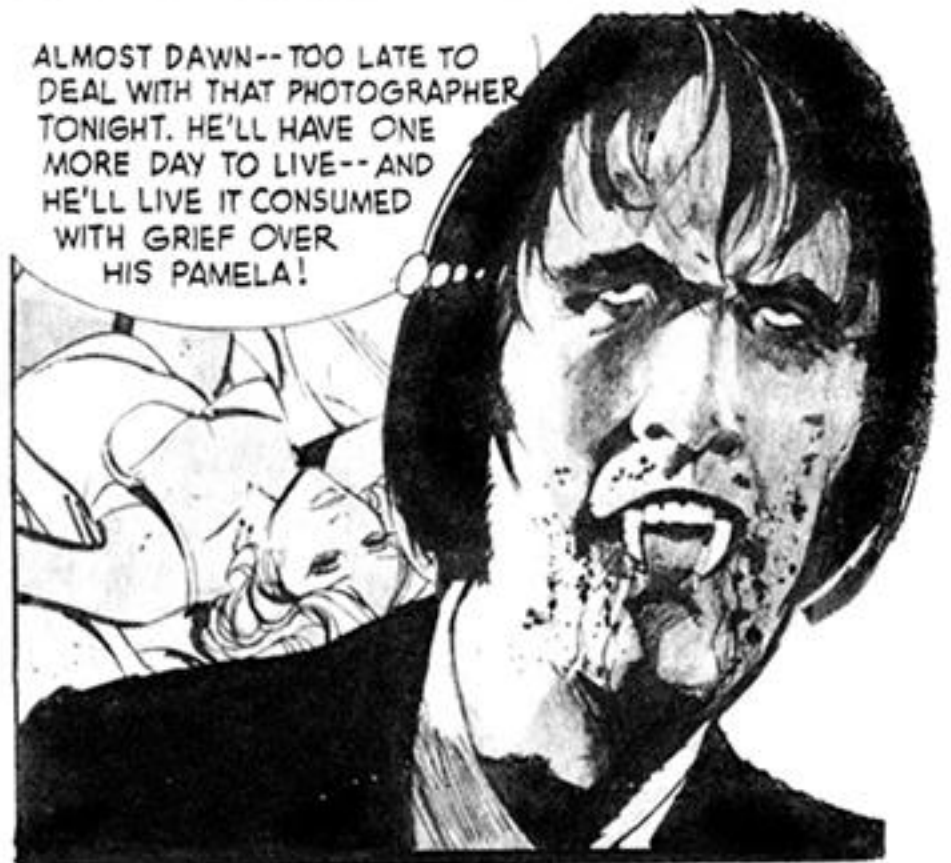
AFTER BUILDING TO A FINAL PASSIONATE KISS, THE VAMPIRE RESTED LAYING HIS FACE OVER HERS ... HIS FINGERS TOUCHING THE GIRL'S DELICATELY SMOOTH THROAT SEEMINGLY CHISELLED FROM THE FINEST VIRGIN MARBLE.

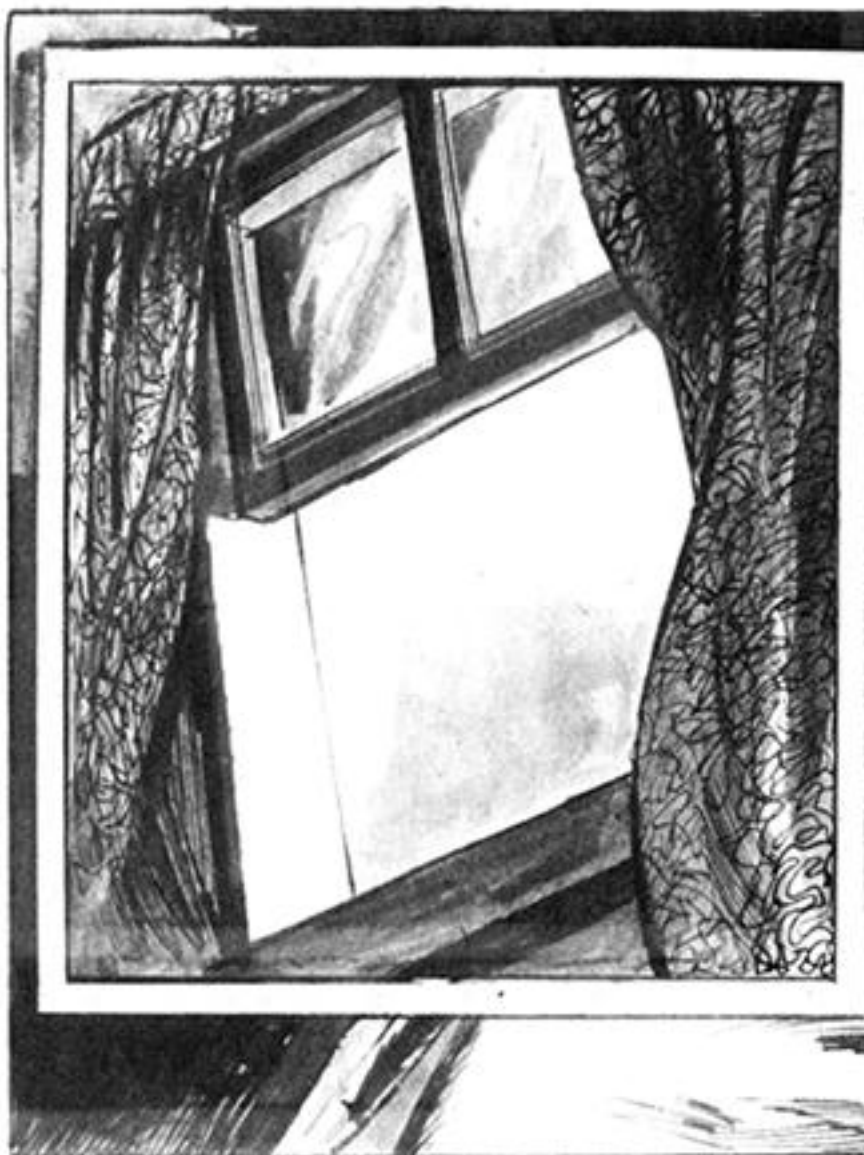
HIS MOUTH OPENS, REVEALING TWIN POINTS OF PASSION...



SUDDENLY AND WITHOUT WARNING HE SINKS HIS FANGS INTO HER JUGULAR VEIN, CONSUMMATING HIS BLOODLUST! HOT BLOOD SPURTS FROM THE TWO WOUNDS, BUBBLING INTO THE VAMPIRE'S MOUTH, COURSING DOWN HIS THROAT.

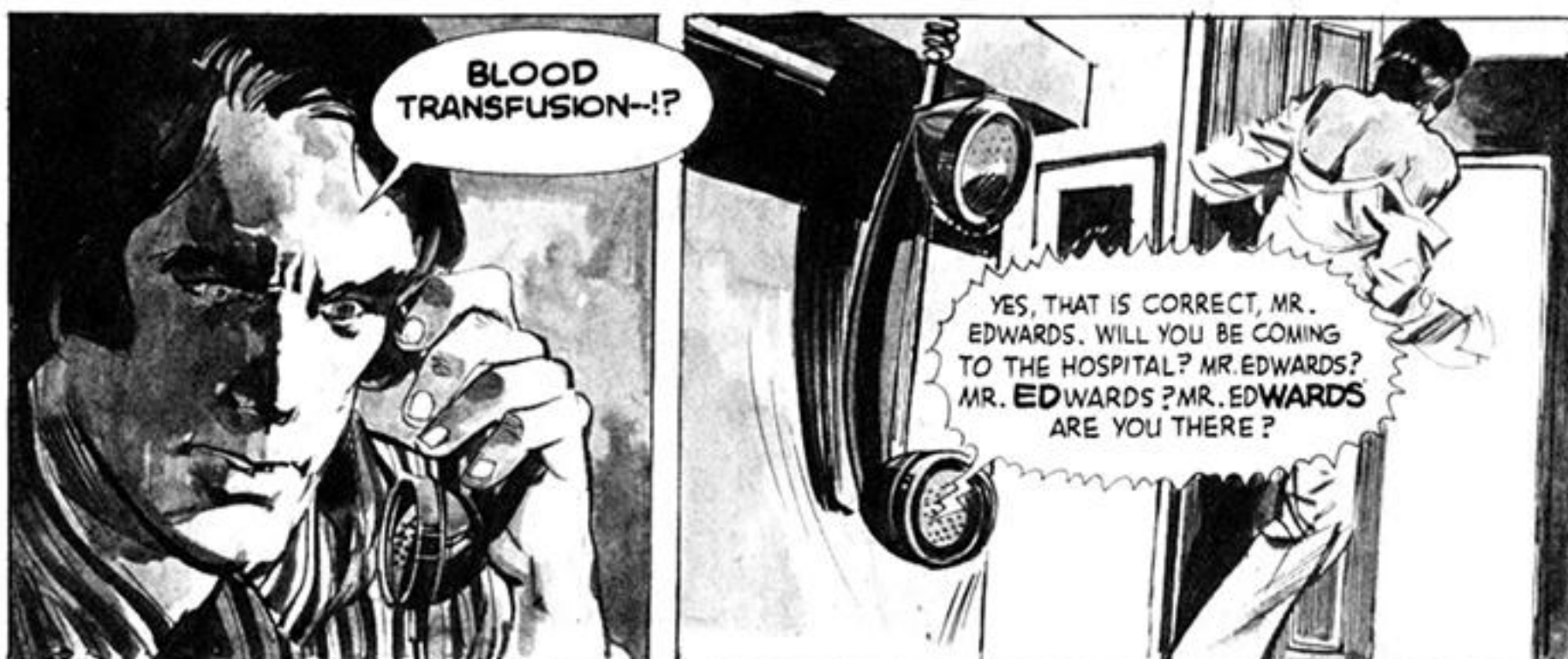
ALMOST DAWN-- TOO LATE TO DEAL WITH THAT PHOTOGRAPHER TONIGHT. HE'LL HAVE ONE MORE DAY TO LIVE-- AND HE'LL LIVE IT CONSUMED WITH GRIEF OVER HIS PAMELA!



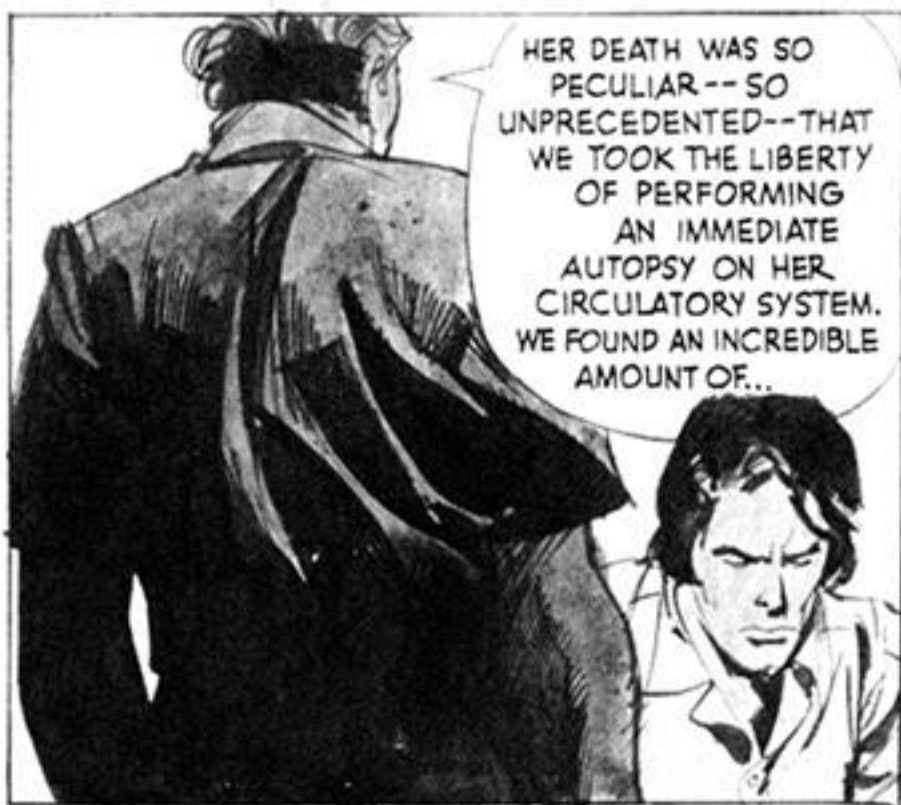


DAWN AND JOHN EDWARDS AWAKENS ABRUPTLY WITH A SUDDEN AND TERRIFYING REALIZATION...









HER DEATH WAS SO PECULIAR-- SO UNPRECEDENTED-- THAT WE TOOK THE LIBERTY OF PERFORMING AN IMMEDIATE AUTOPSY ON HER CIRCULATORY SYSTEM. WE FOUND AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF...



...SILVER NITRATE-- DEADLY POISON. I DON'T KNOW HOW IT COULD HAVE GOTTEN INTO OUR PLASMA SUPPLY BUT, I ASSURE YOU, THE HOSPITAL WILL ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS TRAGIC OCCURRENCE!



THE HOSPITAL NEEDN'T TAKE THAT RESPONSIBILITY, DOCTOR. I DO.

GRIEF-STRICKEN, BUT FILLED WITH A GRAVE RESOLVE, EDWARDS WALKS TO THE RECEPTIONIST'S DESK, UNAWARE OF THE DOCTOR'S PUZZLED WORDS...

BUT, MR. EDWARDS... BUT WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

PAM WAS SUFFERING FROM ANEMIA-- LOSS OF BLOOD. THAT CAN ONLY MEAN THAT HAUSER KNOWS ABOUT ME-- HE STRUCK AT ME THROUGH PAM....!



COULD YOU GIVE ME THE HOME ADDRESS OF ONE OF YOUR NIGHT TECHNICIANS-- DR. RICHARD HAUSER.

DR. HAUSER RESIDES AT 844 JOLIET ROAD. SHALL I PHONE HIM TO SAY YOU'RE COMING?



NO... I'M CERTAIN YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GET THROUGH TO HIM DURING THE DAY.



COBWEBS
WIPED ACROSS
HIS FACE... RATS
SCUTTLED FROM
HIS PATH... AND AN
OVERWHELMING
DRY MUSTINESS
ALMOST OVERTOOK
THE GRIM
PHOTOGRAPHER...

THERE IT IS! HAUSER'S
COFFIN! IT HAS TO BE! HE'S
THERE NOW... LYING
HELPLESSLY!

...ONLY TO
DISCOVER...

THE SHARPLY
HONED WOODEN
STAKE IN HIS
LEFT HAND, THE
MALLET IN HIS
RIGHT, EDWARDS
FURIOUSLY KICKS
THE LID OFF THE
VAMPIRE'S COFFIN...

HE'S
GONE!

SEETHING WITH UNBRIDLED
FURY, EDWARDS RECKLESSLY
DEMOLISHES THE EMPTY
COFFIN... THE OAK
SPLINTERING AND
MOCKING HIM.

HIS ORGY OF DESTRUCTION
COMPLETE, EDWARDS FEELS
HIS SOUL SOMEHOW PURGED
OF VIOLENCE-- FOR THE
MOMENT AT LEAST, HIS
SHOULDERS SLUMPED IN
RESIGNATION, HE LEAVES
THE DREARY WOOD-
STREWN DEVASTATION.

HE KNOWS I'M
AFTER HIM.-- HE MUST'VE
PLANTED ANOTHER
COFFIN SOME WHERE
ELSE! -- GOD KNOWS
WHERE!

NOTHING TO
DO BUT GO HOME--
GO HOME AND
WAIT FOR HIM
TO COME TO
ME!

STILL GRIEF-STRICKEN OVER THE SLAIN MODEL, EDWARDS SPENDS A DISMAL AFTERNOON IN PREPARATION FOR THE VAMPIRE'S APPEARANCE...

THERE ARE SO MANY MYTHS AND LEGENDS... SO MUCH SUPERSTITIOUS LORE SURROUNDING VAMPIRISM! THESE LIBRARY BOOKS CONTRADICT EACH OTHER!



A FEW BASIC ASSUMPTIONS MUST HOLD TRUE! I'LL BE TOTALLY HELPLESS BEFORE HAUSER'S ATTACK UNLESS I TAKE SOME OF THIS INTO ACCOUNT! THE BOOKS ALL AGREE THAT THE CRUXIFIX IS WHAT DETERS A VAMPIRE-- AND THAT A STAKE DRIVEN THROUGH THE HEART IS FATAL!



AND THIS AWFUL STINKING GARLIC STRUNG AROUND THE DOORS AND WINDOWS IS SUPPOSED TO KEEP HIM OUT. OF COURSE, THERE MUST BE A FINAL CONFRONTATION WITH HIM EVENTUALLY-- AND WHEN I'M COMPLETELY READY FOR IT, I'LL TAKE THE GARLIC DOWN!



PREPARATIONS COMPLETED, EDWARDS SETTLES DOWN BEHIND HIS DESK...

AND IF THAT JAZZ ABOUT RUNNING WATER IS TRUE, MAYBE I SHOULD SURROUND THE APARTMENT WITH A **MOAT**: OH WELL, SINCE I CAN'T GET ANY MORE BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY UNTIL TOMORROW, THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO DO BUT **WAIT**-- AND **STAY AWAKE!**



YES, JOHN EDWARDS, YOU **MUST** STAY AWAKE **ALL NIGHT**...



STAY AWAKE...



...ALL NIGHT--FOR THAT IS THE ENSHROUDED TIME WHEN THE NOCTURNAL UNDEAD PROWLs FREELY...

SO TIRED... SLEEPY...
YAWN



...STAY... AWAKE...





THE BRITTLE SUDDEN SHATTERING OF GLASS INTO A THOUSAND CRYSTAL SHARDS LIKEWISE SHATTERS EDWARDS' CATNAP WITH AN INTENSE ABRUPTNESS!

WHAT THE-- HAUSER!!



WITH DYNAMIC SUDDENESS, THE VAMPIRE STREAKS INTO MOTION...

THE GARLIC DIDN'T STOP YOU, BUT MAYBE ...



...THIS WILL!



HISSING IN HORROR, THE VAMPIRE RETREATS HASTILY TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE STUDIO! EDWARDS PAUSES ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO SNATCH UP THE WOODEN STAKE ...

NO CHANCE TO DRIVE THIS STAKE THROUGH HIS HEART WHILE HE'S AWAKE! MAYBE I CAN USE IT AS A CLUB!



...CAUGHT ON A PEG, THE
CROSS BREAKS...



TWO FACES, BOTH INTENSE
EXPRESSIONS OF
DESPERATION--YET EACH
EXPRESSING A DIFFERENT
FORM OF URGENCY--
GLARE AT THE LOST
CRUXIFIX...

MUST REACH
THAT CRUXIFIX
BEFORE HAUSER
REACHES ME!



WITH LIGHTNING-
SWIFT SPEED,
HAUSER GRAPPLES
WITH THE DESPERATE
PHOTOGRAPHER...



HIS SPEED IS
UNBELIEVABLE!

...AND SLAMS HIM AGAINST
THE WALL WITH BONE-
CRUSHING FORCE!

UUNNNHHH!
HE HAS THE STRENGTH
OF TEN MEN!



SLOWLY... INEVITABLY, THE VAMPIRE-BEAST CLOSES IN,
THE EXHILARATING SCENT OF TRIUMPH HEAVY IN THE
DEATHLY-STILL AIR...

I'M F-FINISHED--
CAN'T AVENGE PAM'S
DEATH UNLESS...





THE TWO SUCCESSIVE BLOWS SEND THE VAMPIRE REELING BACK-- BUT EDWARDS' RESPITE IS ONLY A BRIEF ONE, FOR, WITH EYES BLAZING FERAL HATRED THE VAMPIRE RECOVERS...



...AND VICIOUSLY-- BUT ALMOST CARELESSLY-- SLAPS THE WOODEN STAKE FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S FIRM BUT VAIN GRASP!

FEARING FOR HIS VERY LIFE--SO FRAGILE IN COMPARISON WITH THE VITALITY OF THE BLOOD-BEAST-- EDWARDS REALIZES HE IS THE CHASED AND HAUSER THE SCARLET CREATURE OF THE NIGHT... THE CHASER!



RETREATING, THE PHOTOGRAPHER STUMBLES OVER A TRIPOD...



...WITH THE VAMPIRE CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN THEM, EDWARDS, IN DESPERATION, GRABS ONE OF THE BROKEN TRIPOD'S WOODEN LEGS...

...AND BRACES THE
SPLINTERED STRUT
AGAINST THE FLOOR...



...JUST AS THE VAMPIRE,
FANGS MURDEROUSLY
EXTENDED, LEAPS FOR HIM...



... AND, AMID A SCARLET WELTER OF STOLEN BLOOD, IMPALES
HIMSELF ON THE WOODEN TRIPOD LEG!



EPILOGUE: FEARING ONLY DISBELIEF FROM THE
AUTHORITIES, EDWARDS RETURNS TO MARTHA
WASHINGTON HOSPITAL...

AND THAT'S THE WHOLE
STORY, DR. SARNO. HAUSER,
WAS A VAMPIRE. THAT
EXPLAINS THE LOSS
OF BLOOD PLASMA.

INCREDIBLE!
ABSOLUTELY
INCREDIBLE! YOU'VE
DONE A REMARKABLE
JOB OF DETECTIVE
WORK, MR. EDWARDS...
TRUE SLEUTHING IN THE
HONORABLE NEWSPAPER
TRADITION...



STILL, YOU HAVEN'T QUITE
GOT **ALL** THE PIECES
TOGETHER... FOR EXAMPLE,
HAD YOU BEEN FOLLOWING
LAST NIGHT'S NEWS REPORTS
MORE CLOSELY, YOU WOULD
HAVE DISCOVERED THAT...



... **TWICE** THE USUAL
AMOUNT OF BLOOD WAS
MISSING!

**GOOD LORD!
YOU TOO!**



YES-- **ME** TOO! AFTER
ALL, YOU CAN'T SPEND
TEN HOURS EACH NIGHT
WITH A COLLEAGUE
WITHOUT BEING
INFLUENCED
BY HIM!

**NO--NO
AAGGHHH!**



LOOKS AS IF POOR EDWARDS
OVEREXPOSED HIS GOOD
DEED OF THE NIGHT TO
OLD SARNO, EH, CLICKER
CREEPS? GET THE PICTURE?
SAY... SPEAKING OF PICTURES,
DO YOU HAVE THE TWO
PICTURE BOOKS SHOWN
OPPOSITE? TAKE IT FROM
ME THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL!
I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SOFT
SPOT IN MY HEART FOR
LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE...
AND BUCK ROGERS
IS MY KIND OF HERO!
WELL, SEE
YOU NEXT
ISSUE!



THE CARRIER OF THE SERPENT



MONKEY ON YOUR BACK?
THAT'S NOTHING COMPARED
TO WHAT POOR THOGAR
HAD TO HEFT.

There is a road,
they say, called
AGARRA-ZIN,
which means in
the native tongue,
THE HORROR!
It is travelled
mainly by madmen
and murderers,
but also by those
who are desperate...

HO! YOU RIDERS! I HAVE NEED OF YOU!

I AM CALLED THOGAR! I AM TRAVELING TO THE LAND OF
RA-NOON, TO SEEK SHE WHOM I LOVE...SHE WHO WAS TAKEN
FROM ME LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY! IF YOU WILL TAKE ME
THERE, I WILL SHARE MY TREASURES WITH YOU!

YOU HAVE TREASURES
IN THAT BAG?
HMMM.....

STRIKE HIM AGAIN! SEE THAT HE IS DEAD!



KA WHAM!

HE LIES WHERE HE HAS FALLEN, THE HOT SUN BEATING DOWN UPON HIM, ALONE, UNTIL....



A FELLOW TRAVELLER ON THE ROAD! HE SEEMS DEAD! IF SO, HE WILL BE GOOD MEAT FOR ME! IF NOT, HE MAY BE USEFUL IN OTHER WAYS!



AWAKEN, TRAVELLER, IF YOU YET LIVE! FOR IF YOU DO NOT, YOU WILL BECOME MY DINNER FEAST!

GNNNH...OHH!



A SERPENT! SO! YOU FEAR ME! BUT THEN—ALL CREATURES DO! BUT CEASE THAT SILLY SCREAMING OR I MAY EAT YOU YET!

Yi-i-EEEEE!



FORGIVE MY RUDENESS! THOUGH YOUR APPEARANCE IS FRIGHTENING, I PREFER YOU TO THE RIDERS WHO BEAT ME AND LEFT ME FOR DEAD, STEALING ALL MY TREASURES! I TRAVEL TO THE LAND RA-NOON, TO SEEK THE GIRL I LOVE—LORANA!

RA-NOON! I TOO TRAVEL THERE! BUT FOR NO GREAT CAUSE, I ONLY SEEK OTHER TERRITORIES!



I AM STRONG AND COULD MAKE THE JOURNEY EASILY WITHOUT TIRING! BUT I AM NO MATCH FOR THE MURDERERS AND THIEVES WHO TRAVERSE AGARRAZIN!

HOW STRANGE! FOR MY FLIGHT IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE! I DO NOT FEAR THE MURDERERS AND THIEVES, FOR ALL MEN FLEE IN TERROR AT THE VERY SIGHT OF ME! YET, I AM OLD AND WEARY, AND FEAR I HAVE NEITHER THE STRENGTH NOR THE PERSISTENCE TO MAKE SO LONG A JOURNEY!



LET US BARGAIN! YOU WILL CARRY ME UPON YOUR BACK TO RA-NOON! YOU ARE STRONG! IT WILL NOT BE WEARIED BY MY JOURNEY! I, IN TURN, WILL FRIGHTEN AWAY ALL YOUR WOULD-BE ATTACKERS!



WHEN IT IS DONE, THEY SIT BY A DYING FIRE AND EAT THE FRESH KILLED MEAT...

THE HORROR ON THE FACE OF THE GENTLE CALKA-BEAST— IT WEIGHS HEAVY ON MY MIND, SERPENT!

IT MUST BE DIFFICULT TO BE A MAN, THEN! PERHAPS YOU WOULD BE BETTER OFF IF YOU WERE A SERPENT, AS I AM!



I THINK NOT! I WOULD NOT WISH TO TRADE MY HUMANITY, EVEN FOR YOUR POWER! I CARRY YOU ON AGARRA-ZIN ONLY BECAUSE I NEED PROTECTION! WHEN I REACH RA-NOON, I WILL BE DONE WITH YOU AND WITH THE FOUL DEEDS YOU CAUSE ME TO DO!



DAYS PASS AND THEN....

AN OLD MAN APPROACHES, CARRYING A BASKET OF FOOD! EVEN ONE AS STRONG AS I CANNOT GO WITHOUT EATING MUCH LONGER! WE SHALL SEE IF WE CAN BARGAIN WITH HIM FOR PART OF HIS FOOD!

YES, WE SHALL SEE, HA HA!



DO NOT FEAR THE SERPENT, HE IS ONLY MY TRAVELING COMPANION, TO WARD OFF THIEVES! BUT WE ARE HUNGRY AND WOULD LIKE TO BARGAIN WITH YOU FOR A PORTION OF YOUR FOOD!

MY FOOD? WHY, MY FRIENDS, I WILL SHARE IT WITH YOU GLADLY! THE BASKET GROWS HEAVY ON MY SHOULDERS, AND I COULD NOT TRAVEL MUCH FARTHER WITH IT, ANYWAY!



I REGRET THERE IS BARELY ENOUGH FOR TWO, MUCH LESS FOR THREE! BUT IT IS ALL THAT I HAVE, AND I AM HAPPY TO ALLEVIATE YOUR SUFFERING!

HMMM....IT IS A SHAME THERE IS NOT MORE FOR US! BUT I THINK I HAVE FOUND A SOLUTION!





SOON, (CHOKE), THIS WILL BE BUT A MEMORY—A BAD DREAM! AND I WILL BE IN LORANA'S ARMS, AS GOOD AND NOBLE AS I WAS BEFORE I BEGAN THIS JOURNEY!



THANK THE GODS THAT WATER IS FREE, AND THAT WE DO NOT HAVE TO KILL FOR IT!



Aiiieeee! MY FACE-IT GROWS HORRIBLE!

DO NOT FEAR, THOGAR! PERHAPS IT IS ONLY THE HOT WINDS OF AGARRA-ZIN THAT CAUSE YOU TO LOOK THUS!



WHAT STRANGE ROAD IS THIS, THAT IT TURNS MEN INTO MONSTERS! AGARRA-ZIN— IN MY LANGUAGE, IT MEANS "THE HORRIBLE"! DID YOU KNOW THAT?

HOW STRANGE! IN MY LANGUAGE, IT MEANS "THE PATH OF LIFE!"



WHAT DOES IT MATTER? RA-NOON AWAITS!

RA-NOON

HA HA! FLEE, YOU COWARDS, FLEE!

THE SERPENT COMES!

YEEEEEE

RA-NOON DRAWS NEAR, I FEEL IT IN MY BONES!

A stylized illustration of a woman in a black dress with a white, wavy pattern, holding a large, dark, textured object. The illustration is in a high-contrast, graphic style with bold black lines and white space. The woman's face is partially visible, looking down at the object she is holding. The background is a light, textured grey.

IT IS RA-NOON!
THE BEAUTIFUL LAND!
THE LAND WHERE
LORANA AWAITS ME!



OUR JOURNEY ENDS, SERPENT!
IT IS HERE THAT WE MUST PART
FOREVER--FOR THE LIFE I SHALL
LEAD IN RA-NOON SHALL BE FAR
DIFFERENT THAN THE LIFE I LED
WITH YOU!

VERY WELL,
THOGAR! BUT I SHALL
WAIT FOR YOU HERE,
AT THE EDGE OF
AGARRA-ZIN,
IN CASE YOU
DECIDE
OTHERWISE!



DECIDE OTHER-
WISE! HA,
SERPENT! IT
COULD NEVER
BE SO!



THE HOUSE OF HER
PARENTS! I WOULD
KNOW IT ANYWHERE,
EVEN AFTER MANY
YEARS!



LORANA! I HAVE RETURNED!



EEEEEEEEEE!

A SERPENT-MAN! HELP, FATHER,
HELP!



AND, IN THE
MIND OF THOGAR,
SOMETHING
SNAPS....



YOU DARE SPURN ME, AFTER
I SUFFERED SO LONG TO
FIND YOU!

ARRRRAGGH



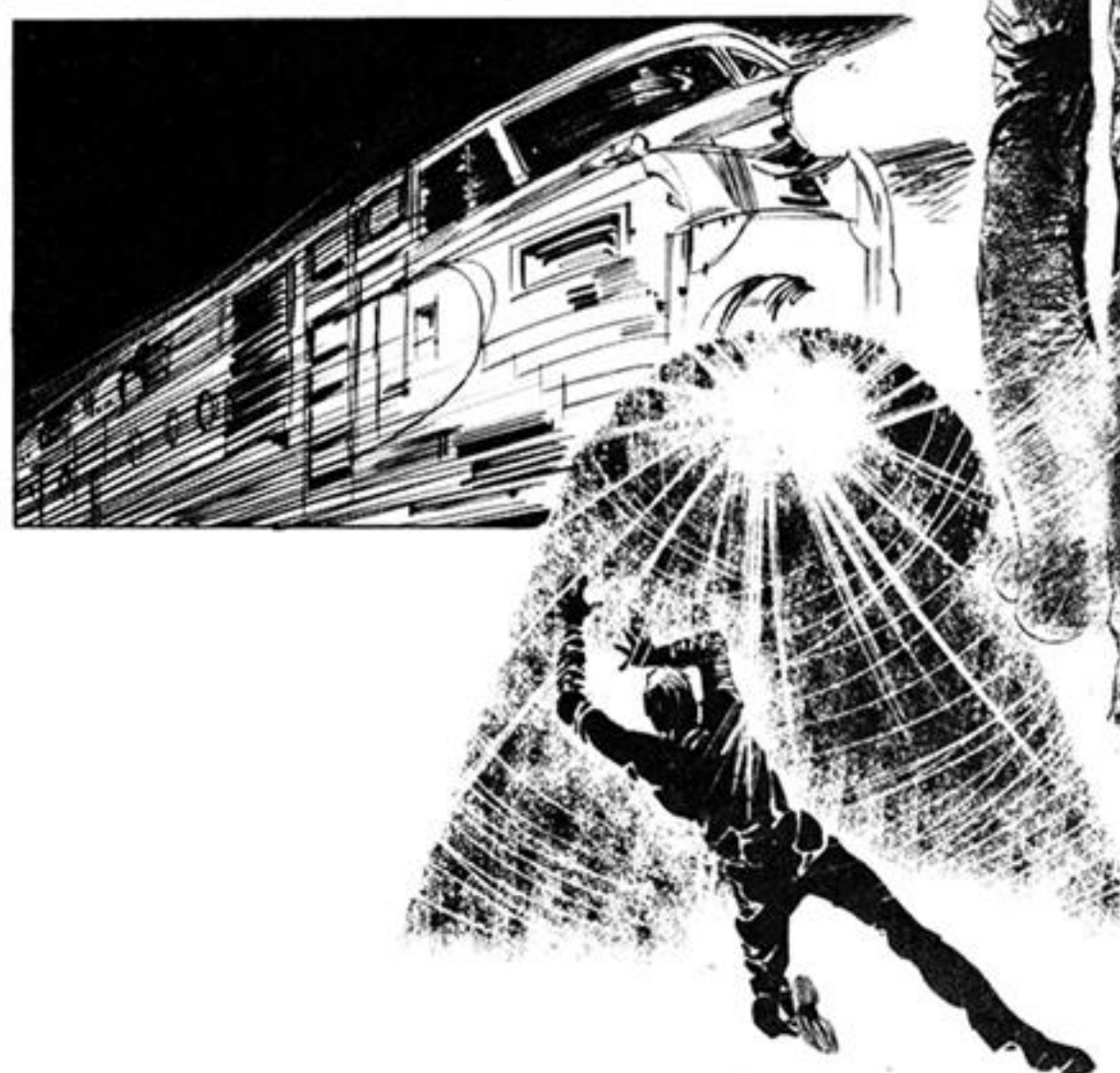




PROLOGUE... THERE
IS A SADNESS HERE, A MISERY, A
HOPELESSNESS CREEPING FROM EVERY
DECAYING BUILDING, LIKE THE GRASS
CREEPING THROUGH THE BROKEN SIDEWALKS.
IT IS WHERE I BELONG...



A TRAIN
APPROACHES AND
I WAIT PATIENTLY...





WHEW! I WONDER WHAT KIND OF **TRAINING** HE WAS TRYING TO GET! ANYWAY, HE WAS **ON THE RIGHT TRACK!** HEH-HEH! BUT OUR HERO'S TROUBLES ARE JUST BEGINNING! LET'S LET HIM TELL HIS OWN STORY...THE TALE OF...

A STRANGER IN HELL



YOU FAILED.



YES. I FAILED.



WHY DID YOU DO THAT? TELL ME... I WILL LISTEN!

TELL YOU?! WHY?! TELL YOU SO YOU CAN DO **WHAT?** CAN YOU REWEAVE THE FABRIC OF A LIFE? CAN YOU HEAL A SOUL? I HAVE MANY SECRETS, BUT YOU WILL KNOW NONE OF THEM. GO BACK TO WHATEVER STRANGE GOD IT WAS THAT SENT YOU, AND TELL HIM YOU TOO HAVE FAILED!



HER EYES BURN
HYPNOTICALLY, AND I
KNOW I MUST SPEAK
WITH HER, IF ONLY FOR
A MOMENT. I KNOW
TOO THAT SHE IS NOT
HUMAN. SHE WOULD
NOT HAVE WITNESSED
MY ATTEMPTED
SUICIDE SO CALMLY
IF SHE HAD BEEN, SHE
KNOWS I CANNOT DIE...



TELL
ME!

ALL RIGHT THEN,
THESE ARE MY MEMORIES:
I DO NOT KNOW WHO I AM,
OR WHY I LIVE. I KNOW ONLY
THAT LONG AGO, LIFE WAS THE
MOST PRECIOUS THING OF ALL
TO ME. NOT BECAUSE IT
ITSELF WAS PRECIOUS, BUT
BECAUSE IT OFFERED HOPE.
NOW THERE IS NO HOPE
LEFT WITHIN ME.



THERE
IS MORE.
TELL ME OF
THAT, ALSO.



YES,
THERE IS
MORE IN MY SOUL.
NOT MEMORIES,
BUT DREAMS...

DREAMS
OF A PEACE
WHICH I
NEVER KNEW,
DREAMS OF STREAMS
AND WILD FLOWERS,
AND COLLIE DOGS
RUNNING THROUGH
WIDE OPEN
FIELDS...

WILL I
EVER FIND
THAT PEACE?
EVER?!

NO, IT
IS NOT WRITTEN
THAT YOU SHOULD!
BUT COME WITH
ME AND PERHAPS I
WILL GIVE YOU
WHAT YOU CRAVE
MOST...



DEATH!



AND SO I FOLLOW
HER BECAUSE I HAVE
NOWHERE ELSE TO
TURN. BECAUSE ONE
DIRECTION IS MUCH
LIKE ANOTHER NOW...

**COME,
STRANGER,
COME!**

FOLLOW ME

I AM THE

DEATH

THE MESSENGER OF...

THERE!
THERE IS WHERE
YOU BELONG! IN
THE SEWERS...
GO AND PERHAPS
I WILL GIVE
YOU DEATH!

DEATH

**NO!
NO! NOT
THIS!**

**HA
HA
HA HA HA HA**

HAHA

I WALK DESPONDENTLY THROUGH THE SEWERS NOW
WAITING FOR WHATEVER IT WILL BRING ME. A QUOTATION
COMES TO MIND: "LOOK UPON MY WORKS, YE MIGHTY,
LOOK YE AND DESPAIR." THIS IS WHAT ONE LIFE HAS
WROUGHT. THESE ARE THE HOPE AND DREAMS OF A
LIFETIME. DREAMS DISTORTED, PERVERTED, CORRUPTED,
AND DENIED...TILL ONLY ONE DREAM IS LEFT, ONE
ALL-ENCOMPASSING, OBSESSIVE DREAM
OVERSHADOWING AND SUBVERTING ALL THE OTHERS...



ONE DREAM, THE VERY ESSENCE OF
WHICH TELLS THE STORY OF ONE LIFE...
LET ME DIE NOW...

TILL AT LAST...

WELCOME
STRANGER! I AM
THE CULMINATION
OF ALL THINGS!
I AM THE
EQUALIZER! I
TAKE...

THE SMILES
FROM THE JOYOUS...
THE RICHES FROM
THE MIGHTY...
THE PLEASURES
FROM THE
SINNERS...
THE MISERY FROM
THE AFFLICTED...

AND THE
HOPE FROM ALL
THOSE WHO STILL
POSSESS IT!
I AM DEATH!
WELCOME!



COME TO
ME THEN! I AM
READY FOR YOU! I
ASK BUT ONE THING;
BE COMPLETE! BLOT
ME OUT! ERASE MY
EVERY THOUGHT, MY
EVERY MEMORY!
LET THERE BE NO
DREAMING IN THE
LAND OF DEATH!

YOU ARE ARROGANT
IN YOUR REQUESTS,
STRANGER! I THINK
PERHAPS YOU STILL
DO HAVE HOPES!
THANATOS-MY
SON! DEAL
WITH HIM!



**NOW!
STRIKE!**





I FALL AND WAIT FOR MY
EXISTENCE TO CEASE. BUT
THERE IS NOTHING. I LIVE
STILL, AND NO DROP OF BLOOD
ESCAPES MY BODY...



WHY? WHY DO I STILL LIVE?
DEATH SPEAKS NOW...



FOOL!
DID YOU REALLY
THINK WE WOULD ALLOW
YOU TO DIE? DID YOU
THINK WE WOULD ATTEMPT
TO ALLEVIATE YOUR
SUFFERING? THE WORLD
THAT EXISTS FOR
YOU... IS HELL!

AND YOUR
FATE IS THE
MOST DISMAL OF
ALL: YOU ARE A
STRANGER IN
HELL!





I DO GO, THE WORDS OF DEATH ECHOING EMPTY THROUGH MY SOUL, HAUNTING MY EVERY FOOTSTEP. **GO AND LIVE... IT AMUSES US...** SO I WALK AND AWAIT WHATEVER NEW SUFFERINGS THAT HELL WILL BRING, PATIENTLY, HUMBLY... AS MUST EVERY MAN.





IT IS CHRISTMAS EVE, 1976. THE WORLD HAS NOT CHANGED MUCH FROM THE EARLIER '70'S. THE WAR NOW RAGES IN ANOTHER PART OF THE WORLD. POLITICAL DECEIT CONTINUES ON THE UPRISE. TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES TO DWARF SOCIETY'S COMPREHENSION. MAN HAS EARNED HIMSELF A FEW MORE NUMBERS THAT CATALOGUE AND CATEGORIZE HIM. FREEDOM HAS BECOME A MORE ABSTRACT TERM THAN EVER BEFORE. AND MURDER, EVEN AS CAROLERS CONTINUE THEIR PERENNIAL HYMN SINGING, ALSO REMAINS!

ANTHONY CRANE PARKS HIS BATTERED 1971 BUICK SEVERAL BLOCKS FROM WENDELL BOURQUE'S LAVISH APARTMENT HOUSE. THE WIND IS COOL ON HIS FACE AND AS HE FURTIVELY MAKES HIS WAY TO WENDELL BOURQUE'S PLACE, CRANE WONDERS IF THE TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS EVE SNOWFALL WILL COVER THE CITY THIS NIGHT.

THE NIGHT



THE LIGHT IS ON IN BOURQUE'S APARTMENT. GOOD! THAT MEANS HE IS IN. CRANE SMILES IN THE DARKNESS. HE HAS OBSERVED THIS MAN FOR THE PAST TWO WEEKS. HE HAS CONCEIVED HIS PLAN WITH SEDATE CALM. HE WILL KILL WENDELL BOURQUE BEFORE THIS NIGHT IS THROUGH.

THE SNOW



SPILLED BLOOD!

SOMEWHERE IN THE DISTANCE AS HE GAINS ENTRANCE TO THE APARTMENT HOUSE THROUGH THE REAR, THERE ARE THE SOFT SOUNDS OF CAROLERS SINGING INTO THE WIND "PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN." WHEN WILL THEY EVER LEARN, WONDERS CRANE.



ART BY TOM SUTTON / STORY BY DONALD F. MCGREGOR





CRANE STANDS AGHAST FOR A MOMENT THE IMAGINED VIOLENCE DOES NOT CONFORM WITH THE PHYSICAL REALITY. THE BLOOD ASSULTS HIS BANKERS SENSE OF ORDER...

THE IMAGE OF TORN FLESH BURNS INDELIBLY INTO HIS MIND ALONG WITH IMAGES OF BOURQUE AND HIS WIFE TOGETHER. EVEN AS HE FLEES THE SCENE, HE CANNOT FORCE BOURQUE'S GAZE FROM CONSCIOUSNESS. LIFE, LIKE SOME MYSTIC FORCE, FADES IN ITS OWN DISTINCTIVE STYLE.



CRANE STEPS OUT INTO THE COOL WIND. HE BLINKS HIS EYES, HOPELESSLY TRYING TO SHUT OUT THE MEMORY. A LIGHT SNOW HAS BEGUN TO FALL. THE LANDSCAPE IS QUIET AND STILL. WAY IN THE DISTANCE, THE CAROLEERS CONTINUE THEIR TREK, THEIR VOICES SOFTER NOW. THEY ARE SINGING "I'M DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS" IN HONOR OF THE SNOWFALL.



THE SNOW KISSES HIS BURNING FLESH. IRRITATED, HE WIPES AT THE COLD WETNESS.

HE CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF HIS HAND FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYES AND HIS HEART NEARLY STOPS ITS SLAMMING RHYTHM!

THE FINGERS DRIP BLOOD, DEEP, RED BLOOD. THE LIQUID FALLS FROM HIS FLESH TO THE GROUND AS HE STARES, TRYING TO COMPREHEND.



HIS FIRST THOUGHT IS THAT HE TOUCHED THE CORPSE. QUICKLY HE REJECTS THAT. HE WENT NOWHERE NEAR THE BODY. HOW IS IT THAT HIS HANDS ARE COVERED WITH BOURQUE'S BLOOD?

I MUST BE GOING MAD, HE THINKS AND STRAINS OF "CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON THE OPEN FIRE" ARE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE. I MUST BE GOING MAD TO EVEN CONSIDER THE IDEA THAT THIS IS THE SOUL OF THE DEAD MAN HAUNTING ME.



THE PRECINCT SWITCHBOARD IS LIGHTED LIKE A CHRISTMAS TREE GONE BERSERK. EVEN CHRISTMAS EVE DOES NOT PROVIDE A SANCTUARY FOR THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE. IRONICALLY, MODERN TECHNOLOGY ONLY ADDS TO THE GENERAL CONFUSION.



THE SIDEWALKS ARE NEARLY DESERTED. THE SNOWFALL IS HEAVIER. CRANE WANDERS THE DARKNESS AIMLESSLY, STARING AT THE BLOOD THAT NOW COVERS HIM. HIS EXPENSIVE JACKET IS STAINED WITH GORE. HIS FACE IS BATHED IN BLOOD.

PERHAPS, THE SNOW IS ACTUALLY DROPS OF BOURQUE'S BLOOD WEeping FROM THE HEAVENS? NO, THAT'S INSANE, BUT HE RECALLS CHRISTMAS EVE AS A YOUNGSTER, STANDING IN THE HUGE CHURCH WHERE ALL THE SOUNDS ECHOED AND SOME FIGURE IN BLACK SHOUTED OF DEATH AND REDEMPTION.

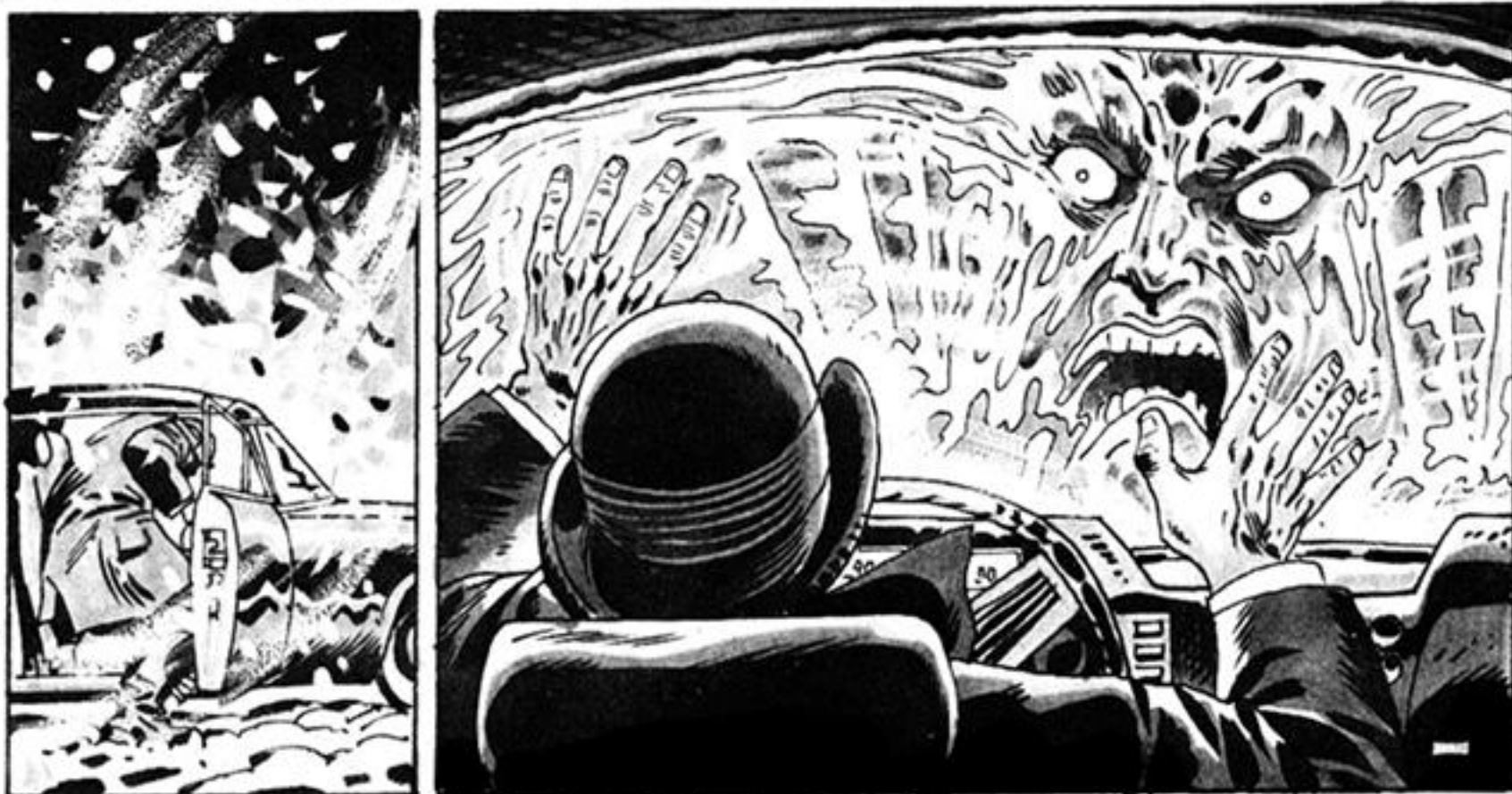


IS HE GOING INSANE? HE RELIVES THE MOMENT HE FIRED THAT PISTOL INTO BOURQUE'S FACE. THE FLESH BURSTING, THE BLOOD SPILLING OUTWARD.

FINALLY HE STUMBLES TO HIS CAR. HE MUST GAIN CONTROL OF HIMSELF. ESTABLISH HIS ALIBI. YES, OFFICERS, SPENT THE ENTIRE CHRISTMAS EVE WITH MY GRANDMOTHER. NO, I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY WIFE WAS.



HE TURNS ON THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS AND NEARLY SCREAMS. THE WIPERS MOVE BACK AND FORTH, SPREADING A CURTAIN OF DARK BLOOD OVER THE GLASS, AND THEN, THE GLASS SLICKENED, THE WIPERS PASS AS IF OVER GREASE.



DAVID TURNER CLOSES HIS EYES. HE DOES NOT WISH TO SEE WHAT LIES BEYOND THE WINDSHIELD. THERE WILL BE ENOUGH TO DO WHEN THEY REACH THE SCENE OF THE MURDER. IT IS CHRISTMAS EVE AND HE WOULD RATHER RECALL PAST CHRISTMASSES WHEN, AS A CHILD, HE WAITED IN THE DARKNESS OF THE ROOM AND FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SLEEP.



DIFFICULT DRIVING, DAVE! THAT WOMAN BACK AT THE PRECINCT HAD A POINT. WONDER WHAT KIND OF POLLUTION ALL THIS WILL LEAVE. SAY, DID YOU SEE THAT CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS SPECIAL AGAIN?

YEAH. FUNNY THING THOUGH.



WHAT'S THAT? STILL GETS TO ME. I SAY, FIRMLY TO MYSELF: THIS TIME IT WILL NOT GET UNDER MY SKIN...



THEN I WATCH THAT KID LINUS COME OUT ON THE STAGE. THE KID'S VOICE THEY USE IS GREAT.



YEAH.



IT'S NOT SO MUCH WHAT HE SAYS. IT'S THE ATMOSPHERE. THE SMALL, VULNERABLE VOICE IN THE HUGE AMPHITHEATRE. SORT OF SYMBOLIC.



SYM - WHAT? WHAT'S THAT MEAN?



UHHH... REPRESENTS, SORT OF.

I THINK I LOST YOU.



JUST SORT OF REPRESENTS ALL THE VULNERABLE YOUNG VOICES, JUST STARTING TO SPEAK, THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION.



WHAT YOU MEAN IS, IT GETS TO YOU. YOU MEAN, IT'S CHRISTMAS.



YEAH, WHAT I MEAN IS, IT GETS TO ME.



WE'RE HERE.



CRANE FLEES FROM THE CAR AND RUNS ALONG A LANDSCAPE THAT IS HORRIBLY DISTORTED. BLOOD DRIPS FROM EVERY OBJECT HE SEES. AUTOMOBILES. HOUSES. STEPS. EVERYTHING.



HE HEARS THE CAROLEERS AGAIN AND SEES THE GROUPED FIGURES STANDING UNDER A STREET LAMP.



HE RUNS TOWARD THEM. HE NEEDS THE PRESENCE OF HUMAN BEINGS. HE NEEDS TO KNOW THAT THIS CANNOT BE. HE MUST BE HALLUCINATING. BUT THAT'S ABSURD! RESPONSIBLE BANK REPRESENTATIVES DO NOT HALLUCINATE!



HIS ENTIRE BODY IS SHAKING AS HE REACHES THE GROUP. THEIR VOICES ARE RAISED IN MELODIOUS DISCORD. THEY ARE SINGING "JINGLE BELLS" AND THEIR VOICES ARE GAY AND LIGHT. HE CANNOT REMEMBER A TIME WHEN HIS OWN VOICE WAS GAY AND LIGHT. HE WANTS TO JOIN IN WITH THEM.



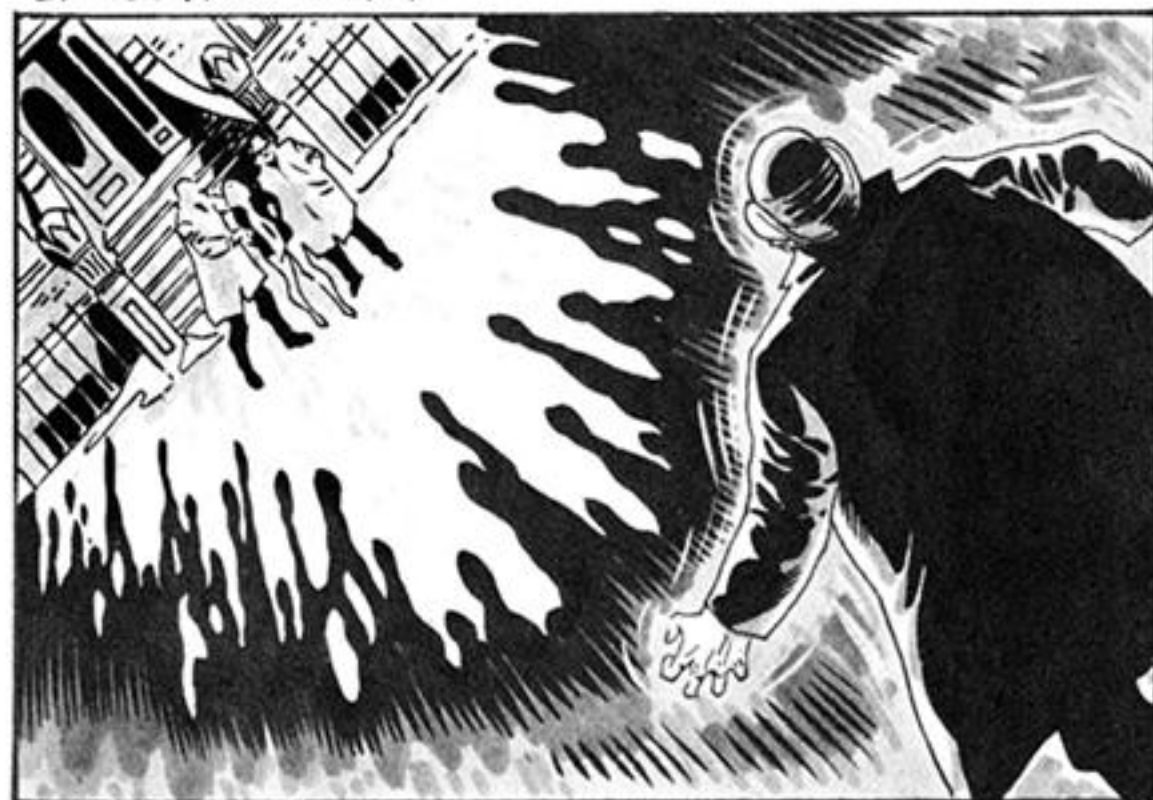
THEY TURN TOWARD HIM, SMILING AND INVITING, ALL DECKED OUT IN THEIR HOLIDAY BEST AND THEIR FACES ARE RIPPED RAW WITH STREAMS OF BLOOD. THE SMILES CEASE TO BE INVITING. THEY KNOW OF HIS HORRIBLE DEED, AND THEY ARE BOURQUE'S EMISSARIES!!



THE WOMAN IS HYSTERICAL. TURNER HAS HANDLED HIS SHARE OF HYSTERICAL WOMEN, BUT THIS IS CHRISTMAS EVE AND TURNER IS FEELING NOSTALGIC; AND AS HE HOLDS ON TO THE BROKEN WOMAN, HE CANNOT HELP BUT THINK THAT CHRISTMAS EVE IS A LOUSY TIME TO LOSE A LOVER. IT LEAVES LITTLE HOPE FOR THE NEW YEAR. COMFORTING ARMS WILL NOT EMBRACE THE DAYS AND MONTHS OF THAT NEXT YEAR AND SO THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO LOOK FORWARD TO IT.



TURNER IS WATCHING THE DESPAIR ON HER FACE. THEY WALK OUT INTO THE SNOW BUT SHE SEEMS NOT TO NOTICE THE COLD KISSING HER ALREADY WET CHEEKS. TURNER WATCHES HER AND THAT IS THE REASON HE DOES NOT SEE ANTHONY CRANE STUMBLE INCOHERENTLY TOWARD THEM.



ANTHONY CRANE CANNOT BELIEVE HIS EYES. HE HAS STUMBLER AWAY FROM THOSE GROTESQUE CAROLEERS AND NOW HERE IS CLAIRE, DRAPED IN HER LOVER'S BLOOD, HER FLESH CARESSED BY HER LOVER'S LIFE ESSENCE.



TURNER NOTICES THE CHANGE IN HER FACE AND LOOKS OUT TOWARD THE SIDEWALK.



IN THE DISTANCE THERE SEEMS TO BE A DARK FIGURE STARING WILD-EYED AT THEM. AND THEN HE SEES THE HAND RISE.

THE MOVEMENT REGISTERS, SO DOES THE IMAGE OF THE PISTOL THE MAN HOLDS.



TURNER THROWS CLAIRE FORWARD AND, AS HE HITS THE WET LAWN, DRAWS HIS POLICE SPECIAL. GUNSHOTS SHATTER THE NIGHT. TURNER FORGETS ABOUT CHRISTMASSES AND BROKEN WOMEN AND RETURNS FIRE.



CRANE DUCKS INTO THE NEAREST APARTMENT HOUSE AND FLEES UP THE LINOLEUMED HALLWAYS.

HIS FOOTSTEPS ECHO UP THE WINDING STAIRWELL. HE MUST ELUDE THEM. THEN HE CAN PLAN FURTHER. IF ONLY HE COULD UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING.



CRANE FLEES DOWN ANOTHER CORRIDOR, THEN HE REALIZES HOW EASILY THEY CAN FOLLOW HIM. THE SOLES OF HIS SHOES ARE SLICK WITH BOURQUE'S BLOOD. BLOOD RED PRINTS LEAD AWAY FROM HIM.

HE DEVISES THE PLAN QUICKLY, RUNS TO THE END OF THE CORRIDOR, LEAVING A CLEAR SET OF TRACKS. THEN, WITH CUNNING, HE SLIPS THE SHOES OFF HIS FEET AND BACKTRACKS HIDING AROUND A CORNER.



CRANE WATCHES THE DETECTIVE ADVANCE CAUTIOUSLY. HE AIMS THE PISTOL AND SEES THAT IT IS COVERED WITH BLOOD. EVEN THE FIGURE THAT STALKS THE CORRIDOR DRIPS BLOOD OBSCENELY ONTO THE FLOOR.



SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER! BUT ALL HE CAN REMEMBER IS BOURQUE'S FLESH TORN TO SHREDS. HE CANNOT PULL THE TRIGGER.



O'BRIEN! I'VE GOT HIM COVERED!

G H A A A A A !!

HE HAD ME DEAD TO RIGHTS, O'BRIEN. I WAS WALKING RIGHT INTO HIS TRAP!



WELL, I GUESS, BAD AS THINGS ARE, THEY'RE STILL THERE.

WHAT'S STILL THERE?

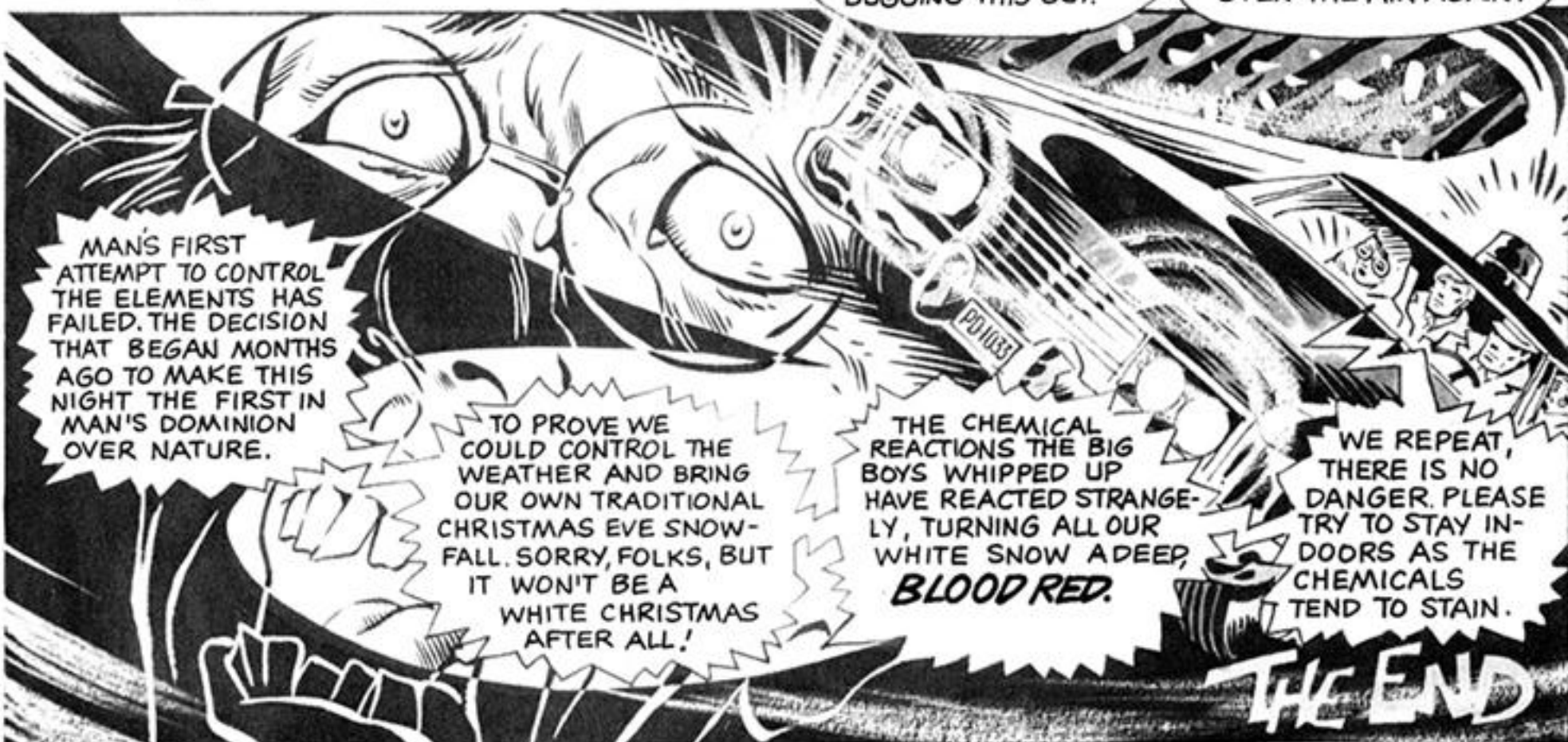
MIRACLES. IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE, REMEMBER? GUY HAD A CHANGE OF HEART.



I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT A CHANGE OF HEART, BUT I SURE WISH I KNEW WHAT WAS BUGGING THIS GUY.

MAYBE HE AIN'T HEARD THE RADIO BROADCASTS. HERE... IT'S COMING OVER THE AIR AGAIN.

MAN'S FIRST ATTEMPT TO CONTROL THE ELEMENTS HAS FAILED. THE DECISION THAT BEGAN MONTHS AGO TO MAKE THIS NIGHT THE FIRST IN MAN'S DOMINION OVER NATURE.



TO PROVE WE COULD CONTROL THE WEATHER AND BRING OUR OWN TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS EVE SNOW-FALL. SORRY, FOLKS, BUT IT WON'T BE A WHITE CHRISTMAS AFTER ALL!

THE CHEMICAL REACTIONS THE BIG BOYS WHIPPED UP HAVE REACTED STRANGELY, TURNING ALL OUR WHITE SNOW ADEEP, **BLOOD RED.**

WE REPEAT, THERE IS NO DANGER. PLEASE TRY TO STAY IN-DOORS AS THE CHEMICALS TEND TO STAIN.

THE END

AS THEY DRIVE AWAY, THE RADIO ISSUES FORTH THE MESSAGE IT HAS BEEN BROADCASTING ALL NIGHT, AND ANTHONY CRANE'S FACE DISSOLVES. BETRAYED BY A BROTHER TO THE TECHNOLOGY HE HAS SERVED. SOMEWHERE IN THE BACKGROUND, THERE ARE THE DISTANT SOUNDS OF CAROLEERS. IT IS CHRISTMAS EVE, 1976, AND THERE ARE STILL A FEW VOICES RAISED IN SONG.

