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VAMPI
STORIES!**



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Circulation Director
MIKE SCHNEIDER

Cover
ENRICH

Writer This Issue
GERRY BOUDREAU

Artist This Issue
GONZALO MAYO

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VAMPIRELLA

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a contract and his target was Vampi!

Vamp's Scarlet Letters...

For weeks I wondered how **Bill DuBay** was going to do it... how, in the tradition of old movie serials, he'd rescue **VAMPI** from such an awful fate! That she would be rescued, I had no doubt. However, given the danger a heroine never comes to actual harm. That is the tradition, isn't it?

Not this time. The first view of **VAMPI** blood running from her empty eye socket, was a shock! The effect was heightened by the absence of dialogue throughout.

Jose Gonzalez fully portrayed her mental and physical anguish, in his art's ability to delineate **VAMPI**'s emotional state... often more so than the writer intended... has always amazed me.

Also I congratulate all concerned on their tastefulness. A temptation to show the actual operation, with eyes being gouged out and blood spurting everywhere, must've been almost irresistible. But resist you did!

Yet let this not be the first in a series of tales wherein the heroine is subjected to cruel tortures. That sort of thing can get very sick very quickly. I mention this because a successful story often leads to a spate of similar tales, without adequately considering the reasons for the original success.

Not very effective was the **Enrich** cover this issue. It was neither dramatic nor sexy for mood. There ought to have been more than a bored hurry-up-and-snap-the-picture-expression on **VAMPI**'s face.

BRIAN CADEN
Cincinnati, Ohio

VAMPI #61 was one of your better issues, starting with the delightful cover by **Enrich**!

"Skimpole's Monsters" covered familiar territory but was sensitively handled by **Bill DuBay** and **Ramon Torrents**, who turned in his best work to date.

"Brother Hawk" was all right. The combination of **Carmine Infantino** and **Alex Nino** works well together. "Thistlewhite the Bold" was amusing, reminiscent of an old joke. **Russ Heath's** art was good but not great.

GARY KIMBER
Ontario, Can.

Issues #60 and #61 were cool! I thought **VAMPI** was a giver, but she got back!

I was really hooked on a story called "Riding Shotgun."

UNSIGNED
Roanoke, Va.

Enrich's cover for **VAMPI** #61 was a beautiful painting, but it didn't belong on the front of the issue! Inside you have mutilation and bloodshed and horror outside is a pretty picture of a half-naked lady.

I don't object to the half-naked lady. I object to the pretty picture.

Though the word blurbs are more accurate in their description, one picture is worth a thousand.

FREDDIE OALEY
Quebec, Canada

If ever a story begged to become a series it's "Brother Hawk." Indian mythology is rich and colorful enough to provide a thousand stories as exciting as the one! **Nick Cuti** offered one of his finest scripts, and combined with unsurpassable **Infantino/Nino** artwork, it was a highlight of the issue. Move "Brother Hawk" to **BERIE** if necessary... but don't let him disappear!

Also... I shout "more" when it comes to continued stories! The **VAMPI** saga may give me an ulcer, but it's a delicious anticipation of all the dangers we as superheros face. One day, I'd never get any sleep.

DAVE MADDOX, JR.
Birmingham, Vt.

While reading the **VAMPI** story in issue #61, I felt like I'd walked in on the middle of a novel.

I was glad to see **Jose Gonzalez** on the artwork. His is the definitive version of **VAMPI**. No matter what fans of **Gonzalo Mayo** may say!

"Skimpole's Monsters" was the best story this issue. It was a very human story with just the right touch of magic, scary cried when the old man died.

I was overjoyed by **Carmine Infantino's** work on "Brother Hawk," inked by **Alex Nino**, and **Nick Cuti's** story was nothing short of fantastic!

I loved the ending of "Thistlewhite the Bold." The artwork was beautiful. Who did it?

I don't know what to say about "Companions to the Sun." Our unnamed hero reminded me of a drug addict. Again the story was uncredited, who was the artist?

All in all, a perfect issue, the first completely great **VAMPI** mag I have bought!

DON MARTINEC
Kissman, Ohio

"Companions to the Sun" was drawn by **Leopold Sanchez, Don**. "Thistlewhite the Bold" was written by **Bill DuBay**... graphics compliments of **Russ Heath**!

I leaped through **VAMPI** #61 at a newsstand and bought it when I saw that **Nicola Cuti** was a writer in that issue I enjoyed "Brother Hawk" more than his previous stories for **Charlton**. **Mr. Cuti** has tremendous potential as a writer, particularly along the lines of the original **EC** comics.

JOHNNY CROW
Worcester, Mass.

VAMPIRELLA #61 was out of sight. For the first time a villainess has defeated **VAMPI**. The Blood-Red Queen is a terrific character!

I'd like to see **VAMPI** battle other supernatural women.

WILSON RIVERA
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Keep on reading **Wilson**! There'll be some pleasant surprises for you in upcoming **VAMPIRELLA** issues!

Enrich's cover for **VAMPIRELLA** #61 was a masterpiece of simplicity and a rare pen of tasteful erotica. I think the contrast between **VAMPI**'s almost-photographic realism and the hazy, surrealist environment is a perfect suggestion of what's on the inside... a little mystery, and a little cheesecake, and a lot of fun!

STEVE WEIDLER
Manchester, N.H.

"An Eye for an Eye" was the most unusual, most frightening installment ever in the **VAMPI** saga. The suspense is almost unbearable. It clearly is not a typical storyline, so anything can happen... and **Bill DuBay** is milking the horrendous possibilities for everything they're worth, and brilliantly. **Jose Gonzalez**, for his part is better than ever and he always was the best!

"Skimpole's Monsters" was maudlin and too melodramatic for my taste, but the detailed illustrations by **Ramon Torrents** were flawless.

No one else **Carmine Infantino** like **Alex Nino**! Every collaboration to date has been a masterpiece and "Brother Hawk" is no exception! With **Infantino's** razor sharp storytelling and **Nino's** dazzling graphics, every panel is worthy of museum status! And **Nicola Cuti's** story was tight and exciting... a winner!

"Companions to the Sun" was impressive. A scenic piece of speculative fiction, told with a delicate blend of humor and straightforwardness. The art complemented the storyline perfectly, and the highly unusual nature of the theme was handled subtly, expertly... written, of course, by **Bruce Jones**.

GARY ROOD
Sacramento, Calif.

With "An Eye for an Eye" in **VAMPIRELLA** #61, **Bill DuBay** proved once and for all that he's a master of horror-fiction. By shattering long standing traditions of both comics and serials, he has, hopefully, paved the way for things to come.

At the conclusion of each chapter in a serial, the hero is usually placed in grave jeopardy... the suspense lies in guessing the method of escape used (inevitably, the hero does escape).

But here the traditions are bypassed. **VAMPI** wasn't simply facing a new menace or disaster... the disaster had actually occurred. A continuing feud had actually shown us the disfigurement of the heroine and the death of a significant supporting character. This opens up whole new possibilities for suspense. Doubts about the personal safety of the heroes will be sincere, not just academic.

Whereas I don't care to see an increase in gratuitous violence in comics, it could also bring a new sense of tension and excitement... as long as it's handled as tastefully as here.

"Skimpole's Monsters" showed another side of **Dube**... a more romantic, morbid fantasy. While not as satisfying as the previous story, it is nonetheless equal to a great deal of the 'straight' fantasy stories appearing in current paperbacks and prose magazines.

"Brother Hawk" was a wholly enjoyable piece, on all counts. **Nick Cuti** chose subject matter that was relatively fresh in comics.

The pairing of **Carmine Infantino** and **Alex Nino** was brilliant. I have always liked **Infantino's** layouts, but not his drawing style. And I've always liked **Nino's** style, but couldn't follow his layouts. You solved both problems and published the result... a masterpiece!

"Companions to the Sun" was not the most inspired tale I've ever read, but the theatrical touches and dialogue worked so well that they more than compensated.

Overall, it was an entertaining package... one I thoroughly enjoyed.

PATRICK RUSH
Boston, Mass.

VAMPI'S SCARLET LETTERS

c/o Warren Publishing

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 20-WEST

SHE TENSES, EARH ATTENDED TO THE SLIGHTEST SOUND. EVEN AWARE IN THE HEART OF THE MOONBE RESORT, SHE IS AFRAID.

SOMEWHERE IN THE DISTANCE, SHE HEARS THE BEGINNING OF A SAND-STORM BUT THAT'S THE LEAST OF HER CONCERN AT THE MOMENT. SHE HAS COME TO FIND ADAM. WITH HER SENSES AND A GHOST TOWN THAT DOESN'T ALWAYS EXIST.



"I WOULDN'T STAY OUT THERE LONGER, NO DURREL. THERE'S A SAND-STORM BREWING. IF YOU SHOULD LOSE YOUR WAY BACK, YOU'LL PRY FOR SURE!"



"DON'T WORRY, MR. GREYBIRD. I CAN COVER A LOT OF GROUND IN A VERY SHORT TIME. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS STAY AND GUARD THE JEEP. IF I AM NOT BACK IN HALF AN HOUR, LEAVE WITHOUT ME."



SHE WAITS UNTIL SHE HAS PASSED FROM NORMAN GREYBIRD'S SIGHT, THEN UNDERGOES AN ASTOUNDING TRANSFORMATION. SHE IS ALIVE THE RESORT NOW. SILENT, UNTAILED, AN INSTRUMENT OF HER OWN NATURE.



SHE SOARS GRACEFULLY OVER THE BARRI WHITE DUNES. NOTHING BELOW DISTURBS THE PATTERN OF ENDLESS SAND.



NO TOWN. NO ADAM.

SHE REMEMBERS GREYBIRD'S WARNING: MOST OF THE SPRINGS IN THESE PARTS ARE SO IMPREGNATED WITH MINERALS, THEY ARE UNFIT FOR DRINKING.



SHE WONDERS IF ADAM IS STILL ALIVE.

THE SANDSTORM MOVES CLOSER...
FRANKLY CLOSE, THESE DUST
WHIRLS ARE WINDS, AND
FREQUENTLY LAST FOR HOURS.



SHE SHAKES, OPTING TO RETURN
TO THE JEEP... BUT IT IS ALREADY
TOO LATE!

GUSTS OF SAND ENGULF HER,
KIDNAPING HER LEATHERY TAIL, SLOW-
ING HER FLIGHT. WORSE, THEY DIS-
RUPT THE SONIC R. DARE SENSE THAT
GUIDES HER.



THEN THE VORTEX HITS, GRAPPLES
OF SAND LOOSE IN HER THROAT CHOK-
ING HER. FIERCE WINDS TUMBLE
HER ABOUT.



SHE SUSPECTS THERE IS SOMETHING
UNNATURAL...PERHAPS ARTIFICIAL
...ABOUT THIS STORM.

BUT HER THOUGHTS, LIKE HER
BODY ARE SCRAMBLED. SHE
CAN NO LONGER SUSTAIN THE
WILL TO MAINTAIN HER BEASTIAL
FORM. HURLED FORCEFULLY FROM
THE VORTEX, SHE IS CAST UPON
THE DESERT'S SOIL.



SHE LIES STUNNED, SEMI-
CONSCIOUS. HALF-FORMED
MEMORIES BECOME MORE
VIVID. ALMOST INVOLUN-
TARILY, SHE RELIVES THE
COMPLEX CHAIN OF EVENTS
WHICH SANDSTORMY HER
HERE ...?

EVENTS THAT
DREW ONE
WEEK AGO...

VAMPIRELLA

The Manipulators

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13-EAST

IT WASN'T ONE OF OUR
BETTER AFTERNOONS.

NEW YORK WAS SLOWLY
BEING STRANGLER BY A
HEAVY WARM. THE AIR-
CONDITIONING UNIT IN OUR
SUITE HAD **BROKEN DOWN**
WHEN THE TEMPERATURE
REACHED 90°. WITH THE
HUMIDITY THROWN IN, WE
FELT LIKE WE WERE
WEARING **FLYBAPER**.

WE WERE ALL BORED AND
LISTLESS. CONRAD AND
PETERSON WERE HAVING
AN ANIMATED CONVERSATION
ABOUT THE MORALS OF
YOUTH. ADAM, USUALLY
ABRASIVE, ENGAGED IN
A GAME OF SOLITAIRE.

WHEN THE **KNOCK** CAME,
EVERYONE STOPPED WHAT
THEY WERE DOING.



SPECTRUM... I WANT
ARE YOU DOING
HERE?

I WISH I COULD SAY MY INTEREST
WAS ROMANTIC. I'M AFRAID WE
BOTH KNOW DIFFERENT. IT'S
BUSINESS, OF COURSE.

I HAVE ANOTHER
ASSIGNMENT FOR
YOU, MR. DURRILL.



FORGET IT. LAST TIME YOU
BLACKMAILED ME INTO
HELPING YOU BY THREATENING
TO TURN ME OVER TO IMMIGRA-
TION AUTHORITIES. I HAVE
VALID CITIZENSHIP PAPERS
NOW. YOU'VE GOT NOTHING
TO HOLD OVER ME.

THERE'S A SMALL MATTER
OF A FEW HUNDRED
THOUSAND IN UNPAID
TAXES.



WHEN WE LAST MET, I ISSUED YOU A BIRTH CERTIFICATE AND PASSPORT... BOTH SAID WILGRIE DURRELL WAS A NATIVE BORN AMERICAN CITIZEN.



SUPPOSE THE IRS RECEIVED PHOTOGRAPHS OF THOSE DOCUMENTS. WOULDN'T THEY WONDER WHY THIS MR. DURRELL HAS NEVER PAID ONE PENNY IN TAXES?

I SEE. WITH INTEREST AND PENALTIES ADDED IN, IT'D BE AN ASTRONOMICAL SUM. BUT OF COURSE IF I DO WHATEVER YOU'RE ABOUT TO REQUEST, THE IRS WILL NEVER FIND OUT... AM I RIGHT?



PERFECTLY, AND ALL I WANT YOU TO DO IS DELIVER A BRIEFCASE TO A MAN IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY.

YOUR CONTACT'S NAME IS JOHNNY BERMAN. HE OPERATES A 'LAST CHANCE' GENERAL STORE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE MOJAVE DESERT.



TELL ME SOMETHING, SPECTRUM. WHY ME? DON'T YOU HAVE ENOUGH AGENTS AT YOUR COMMAND?

WE HAVE DOBBERS ON EVERY OPERATIVE EMPLOYED BY A FOREIGN POWER. WE MUST ASSUME THEY HAVE SIMILAR FILES ON US. SO CERTAIN VITAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRE A FRESH FACE...



HERE ARE YOUR TICKETS--TWO WAS ALL MY DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET WOULD PERMIT--AND ENJOY YOUR FLIGHT. I'VE WIRED BERMAN TO EXPECT YOU FRIDAY AT NOON!

THERE WERE OTHER QUESTIONS I WANTED TO ASK; MORE OPINIONS OF SPECTRUM'S PERSONALITY I WANTED TO EXPRESS. BUT HE WAS GONE BEFORE I'D TIME TO SAY ANOTHER WORD.



THIS IS NO ROUTINE COURIER MISSION, SPECTRUM'S JOBS ARE LIKE FINS ON THE HORIZON--YOU NEVER KNOW WHETHER A DOLPHIN OR SHARK IS BENEATH THE SURFACE!

THURSDAY, JULY 14-EAST

IT WAS DECIDED ADAM AND I WOULD GO TO SAN BERNARDINO. HE TOOK A CAB TO KENNEDY AIRPORT AND CAUGHT A MID-MORNING FLIGHT, BUT THE PILOT WAS NO MATCH FOR THE C-8-DRIVER WHEN IT CAME TO SPEED.

IF IT ALL WENT WELL, WE'D BE BACK WITHIN THE WEEK. NOBODY WAS FOOL ENOUGH TO EXPECT THINGS WOULD GO WELL.





"SPECTRUM CHECKED YOUR BACKGROUND AS THOROUGHLY AS HE CLEANS. HOW IS IT HE'S TURNED UP NO CLUES TO YOUR **DARKER** NATURE?"

"VALERIE DURRELL IS A FICTITIOUS NAME I MADE UP FOR CONVENIENCE. SHE HAS NO BACKGROUND FOR SPECTRUM TO TRACE. HE PROBABLY TALKED ME FOR SOME ILLEGITIMATE **WIMP** FROM A EUROPEAN VILLAGE...!"



"THAT'S A FUNNY THING ABOUT **MANIPULATORS**...THEY ALWAYS ASSUME THEY'RE IN CONTROL. IT DOESN'T OCCUR TO THEM THAT THE **RANNS** ARE PLAYING GAMES ALL THEIR OWN.



"WE ARRIVED BY SIX BERNARDINO SHORTLY BEFORE **SUNSET**. ADAM RENTED A CAR AT THE **AIRPORT**. WE DROVE TO THE HOTEL WHERE SPECTRUM HAD BOOKED US AND CHECKED IN.

"OUR SYSTEMS WEREN'T ADJUSTED TO THE SUDDEN CHANGE IN CLIMATE. WE BOTH FELL ASLEEP EARLY.

FRIDAY, JULY 15 WEST

THE MORMON DESERT ENCOMPASSES SOME 15,000 SQUARE MILES OF SOUTH-EASTERN CALIFORNIA. JOHN BERMAN'S STORE LAY AT THE FOOT OF THE SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS, WHICH SEPARATE THE MORMON FROM THE COLORADO DESERT. WE ROVE OUT THERE THE NEXT MORNING AND GUST IN THE MOUNTAIN.



"LOOK HOW MUCH SAND HAS ACCUMULATED ON THAT PORCH. IT HADN'T BEEN SWEEP FOR **DAYS**!"

"IT'S TOO COARSE TO BE REGULAR SAND. LOOKS MORE LIKE **SAW-DUST**!"



"MAN, TWO BERMAN MUST HAVE BEEN THE INSPIRATION FOR **MR. CLEAN**. I'VE NEVER SEEN A STORE SO **IMMACULATE**!"

"NO SIGN OF OUR CONTACT THOUGH. I'M GOING TO HAVE A LOOK OUT BACK.



"IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO FIND BERMAN. SOMEONE HAD FED HIM TO THE **SNAKES**!"

"NOTHING TO INDICATE A **STINGRACE** ANCESTRY KILLED HIM. WAS SOMEONE HE **KNEW** AND **TRUSTED**."

"SPECTRUM WON'T BE PLEASED WHEN HE HEARS ABOUT THIS!"



LATER, I PLACED A CALL TO SPECTRUM, TOLD HIM OF OUR MEETING WITH BERNAL, AND ASKED HIM TO DISCREETLY LEARN WHAT HE COULD ABOUT NORMAN GREYSIRD.

NOT THAT I DON'T BELIEVE IN SAM MASTERS, BUT IN THIS BUSINESS ALL CONSPIRACIES ARE SUSPECT.



HIS ORDERS WERE TO STAND BY TILL NEW ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE MADE. MEANWHILE, HE WERE TO ENJOY CALIFORNIA.



SO THIS IS YOUR FIRST RODEO, EH? BELIEVE ME, AGAIN, IT'LL BE AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE!

IT WAS THE CROWD CHEERED AND HOWLED THROUGH Calf-Roping, STEER WRESTLING, AND BARBACK BAKING COMPETITIONS. NORMAN GREYSIRD EXPLAINED THE SCORING SYSTEM TO US.



NEXT ON THE AGENDA WAS BULL RIDING.

HE'S ONE OF THE BEST COWBOYS ON THE CIRCUIT; WON OVER \$32,000 IN PRIZE MONEY LAST YEAR! LOOKIT THE WAY HE HANDLES THAT BABY!



I DON'T KNOW, THERE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS RIDE...

BUSTER KEATON NEVER HAD BETTER TIMING. AT PROBABLY THE MOMENT THE JUDICIAL MENT GREGORY IT THREW THE RIDER LIKE A SOCCER BALL, AND ON WHEELS UNUSUALLY IN OUR DIRECTION!

EEEEEEEEE! WE'LL ALL BE KILLED!



NO HE WON'T...

RODEO OFFICIALS ARE PREPARED FOR ANY CONTINGENCY! THEY STATION MARSHMEN AROUND THE CORNUL FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE COWBOYS!



I WONDER WHAT MADE THE BULL BEHAVE LIKE THAT, ALMOST AS IF SOMETHING WERE CONTROLLING IT.

KA-POW!

NOW YOU'RE GETTING PARANOID! IT WAS SIMPLY A RENEGADE ANIMAL!

ADAM WAS RIGHT MY NERVES WERE RATTLED BY THE EVENTS OF THE DAY I WAS OVER-REACTING. NONETHELESS, EVERYONE DECIDED THEY'D HAD ENOUGH FOR ONE NIGHT HE DROVE BACK TO THE HOTEL...

WHEN WE GOT THERE

SCRATCHES ON THE LOCK? SOMEONE'S BROKEN IN...! THEY MUST'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR THE BERRY CASE!

GOOD THING YOU DECIDED TO LOOK IT IN THE HOTEL HALLWAY BEFORE WE LEFT!

HE MADE A HASTY INVENTORY OF THE ROOM, EVERYTHING WAS AS ACT... ALMOST!

I'VE ACCOUNTED FOR EVERYTHING BUT A MAIL FILE AND THAT'S CERTAINLY NO LOSS.

THE ONLY THING I'M MISSING IS A COMB. BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE ANYBODY BREAKING IN TO STEAL A COMB AND A MAIL FILE CAN YOU?

HE PROBABLY GOT DISCOURAGED WHEN HE DIDN'T FIND WHAT HE WANTED, PASSED THE BATH ROOM MIRROR ON HIS WAY OUT AND DECIDED HE SHOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIS APPEARANCE... LIKE FILE HIS HAIR AND COMB HIS HAIR.

MOODS WIVES REQUIRE A PERSONAL ARTICLE OF THE ACTING, LIKE MAIL CLIPPINGS OR A LOCK OF HAIR! MAYBE THAT CHARGING BULL WAS MORE THAN COINCIDENCE!

SAYS IS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND CHARLES MANSON DIDN'T HAVE A MONOPOLY ON WEIRD IDEAS!

THERE'S ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, FAR MORE SERIOUS!

STOP WORRYING, WE PROBABLY MISLAID THEM SOMEWHERE. RIGHT NOW I'M GOING TO THE HALLWAY TO CLAIM THAT BERRY CASE. I WANT TO HAVE A LOOK INSIDE!

BUT SPECTRUM GAVE ORDERS WE WEREN'T TO OPEN IT!

THAT WAS BEFORE ONE MAN DIED AND I WAS NEARLY GORED. IF I'M RIDING MY LIFE, I'D AT LEAST LIKE TO KNOW WHAT FOR!

I STARTED TO PROTEST BUT KNOWING ADAM WELL ENOUGH TO REALIZE THE FUTILITY OF IT, DIDN'T.



FRIDAY, JULY 15 EAST

ALL RIGHT, I'LL BE THERE, BUT I CAN'T TALK ANY LONGER RIGHT NOW.

PENDRAGON, WHO IS IT?

OH, JUST AN OLD FRIEND WHO DECIDED TO LOOK ME UP. HE WANTS ME TO MEET HIM FOR LUNCH ONE DAY NEXT WEEK LONG. IT'S NOT WHAT DO YOU SAY HE GO OUT FOR A WALK?

AND SOON...

LOOK... A SIPPRAK MAGIC SHOW!

I STARTED OUT MUCH THE SAME AS HER, DOING TRICKS ON STREET CORNERS FOR PENNIES. I GRADUATED TO THIRD BAL- LING WITH BLACKSTON'S MAMMOTH CARNIVAL!*

NONSENSE! YOUR ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT YOU MISS VAMPIRELLA!

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. BEFORE SHE CAME ALONG, I WAS A FAILURE, AN OLD MAN WITH A LOT OF BAD MEMORIES AND A LOT OF GOOD DIN.

WHENEVER SHE'S AWAY, I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK OF THOSE DAYS.*

SHE STAYS AT PENDRAGON AS IF HE, ALONE, W-DE UP THE AUDIENCE, THEN ...

YOU ARE PENDRAGON... YOU ARE MY SERVANT, MY SLAVE! YOU HAVE NO WILL BUT MINE, NO THOUGHTS BUT THOSE I IMPLANT! COME, MY SERVANT... COME WITH ME!

I...AM... YOURS...

PENDRAGON, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

PENDY...PENDY!... PENDY?

HE HEARS THE SOUND OF THEM WALKING AWAY, BUT IT IS SWALLOWED BY THE SHUFFLE OF A THOUSAND OTHER FEET. HE HAS MANY QUESTIONS ON HIS TONGUE BUT NO ONE TO ASK THEM TO.

CONRAD VAN HELSING IS ALONE!

THE COMIC BOOKS

By Joe Brancatelli

It's time to report on the recently concluded "Rites of Spring," that unavoidable period in every business year when two-man corporation and zillion-dollar conglomerate alike must communicate with their shareholders, those lowly minions who actually own the company.

Much as they seem to despise it, the suits who control American business are legally bound to certain rituals during this time. To wit:

The Chairman of Board must conduct the company's annual meeting—and you never see a 200-ground-a-year executive in quite so much pain as when he's ducking a question from a 65-year-old grandmother from Ohio whose portfolio consists of three shares.

The company must publish an annual report detailing the organization's financial operations for the previous year—and you never see quite so many thousands of dollars spent on full-color photography, glossy paper and flowery but unenlightening prose as you do during annual-report time.

The Rites of Spring is when business, and the men who run it, are supposed to come clean. But being the irresistibly secretive, covert and utterly unresponsive race that they are, however, businessmen usually conduct the Rites in the least revealing and most self-serving way possible. Warner Communications, Inc.—DC's parent conglomerate—and Cadence Industries Corp.—Marvel's parent—are no exceptions, of course, and despite every Rite of Spring claim to the contrary, running a comic-book company was no cake walk in 1976.

It was, in fact, what the Wall Street people call a "mixed" year.

First the good news.

Both companies said corporate sales and profits reached record levels in the fiscal year ending December 31, 1976.

The Warner juggernaut, which includes Warner/Atlantic/Ayloam/Elektra records, Warner TV and movies, *Mad*, Independent News, Warner Books, Atari electronic games and the New York Cosmos soccer club as well as DC, registered sales of \$823.7 million, up 23 per cent from 1975's \$669.7 million. Net profit from continuing operations rose 22 per cent to \$61.2 million from \$50.1 million in 1975.

As for Cadence, a much smaller firm which encompasses Curtis Circulation Magazine Management, Hudson Pharmaceuticals, U.S. Pencil, Saxon Theatres and Alexander Film Services as well as Marvel, 1976 sales were \$90.4 million, 3 per cent higher than 1975's \$88.1 million. Net profit from continuing operations was \$1.88 million in 1976, a 60 per cent increase over 1975's \$1.18 million.

Warner's publishing group—DC, *Mad*, Independent and Warner Books—showed a 20 per cent rise in domestic sales to \$48.4 million in 1976 as compared to 1975's \$40.2 million. Better yet, the division generated a \$5.5 million profit before taxes in 1976, considerably better than the \$4.6 and \$4.9 million losses in the last two years.

At Cadence, the publishing division of Curtis, Marvel, Magazine Management and three subscription services had a 5 per cent sales rise in 1976, but no profit figures were released. Moreover, the publishing division hiked its contribution to total profits to 86 per cent, considerably better than 1975's 67 per cent.

But now the bad news.

While the Warner annual report bubbled enthusiastically about the performance of *Mad*, Independent and Warner Books—not to mention the lush profits turned by television, movie, record, cable TV and the electronic games divisions—it had nothing of financial substance to say about DC's sales and profits in 1976. Despite lusty applause for the rest of the publishing group, DC was only credited with an ability to "delight readers"—and the corporate hope that the 1977 "sales potential for comic books" would improve because of the impending *Superman* movie and the new dollarized books.

**DC and Marvel:
Running a comic-
book company in
1976 was no
cake walk.**

In the warped world of annual reports, where hysteria equals profitability and "sales potential" of another year equals poor performance, Warner's treatment of DC is tantamount to an admission of near disaster. Since Warner can't legally required to report sales and profits of each individual group, no one knows exactly how bad the situation is. Keep in mind, however, that one DC war book sold only 100,000 copies per month in 1976 and that's surely something of a modern-day low.

It's also of interest to note that while Warner is financially and corporately stronger than Cadence—about 30 times more profitable and nine times as large in sales volume—its publishing division is much less important to the company than Marvel/Curtis/Magazine Management is to Cadence. Where at Warner Publishing accounts for only 6 per cent of total Warner sales and 9 per cent of Warner's total profits, Marvel et al has considerably more attractive con-

tributions of 52 per cent of Cadence sales and 86 per cent of Cadence profits. Cadence, therefore, is primarily a publishing concern, while Warner's involvement—and continued interest—in periodicals could only be termed "marginal."

One other point to keep in mind about Warner vis-à-vis Cadence: Warner Publishing is only a million or so dollars larger than Cadence Publishing despite the dwarfing size of the Warner conglomerate. The companies are fiscally identical competitors in publishing circles.

At Cadence, meanwhile, board chairman Sheldon Feinberg took pains to mention Marvel's "turn around" and "significant gain" in 1976 in his letter to the stockholders. What he didn't say, however, was that the improvements were apparently not in newspaper sales, the lack of which had been vexing the House of Ideas in 1975. Explaining the division's sterling financial status, Cadence credited higher sales at Curtis, but mentioned only "increases in cover prices...royalty income and a lower rate of returns" at Marvel.

In understandable terms, whatever improvements were made at Marvel came by virtue of the fact that they raised comic prices, made additional non-comic-book sales (no newspaper syndicates, TV and movies), cut printing costs by lowering the price runs and subsequently had less books returned unsold since less were printed in the first place. Sales, Cadence clearly implied by omission, did not improve significantly, if at all. That is especially interesting since Cadence had been publicly admitting that sales in 1975 were slumping. It also indicates the company decided to price less comics in 1976 rather than trying to sell more.

FRIDAY, JULY 15 EAST

AT SOME POINT IN HISTORY HOLLY WOOD MARRIED CON EDISON AND GAVE BIRTH TO TOMMY'S SQUARE. TO SOME IT IS A NEON AMUSEMENT. TO OTHERS, LIKE CONRAD VAN HELSING, IT IS JUST ANOTHER SPOILED BRAT.

SUPPOSEDLY AND INEXPLICABLY DE-SPERATED BY HIS CLOSEST FRIEND, THE BLIND MAN HAS WAITED NEARLY FOUR HOURS, LISTENING FOR SOME SIGN OF PENDRAGON'S RETURN. BUT NO WORD. CONRAD VAN HELSING, HEART ALL HE HEARS IS THE SPUTTER OF AIGN AND THE 'BAGGY CHIEFS' OF RISING TARTS.



The Radicators

SATURDAY, JULY 16 WEST

BY THE TIME I QUESTIONED THE DESK CLERK ABOUT ADAM VAN HELSING'S DISAPPEARANCE, I WAS STRUNG OUT LIKE A TENNIS NET. A NEW DAY WAS JUST BEGINNING...

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ICE MACHINE THAT HAD BEEN ON THE EIGHTH FLOOR!

IT WAS TAKEN TO THE BASEMENT BY TWO OF OUR MAINTENANCE MEN. THEY SAID THE REFRIGERATION UNIT WASN'T WORKING AND THEY WERE GOING TO FIX IT!

AT MIDNIGHT?

IT'S HARD ENOUGH TO GET MAINTENANCE MEN OFF THEIR HINDQUARTERS. WHEN THEY DO A JOB WORK-ANTHLY, I DON'T LOOK A WORKHORSE IN THE MOUTH.

WHO WERE THEY? DID YOU RECOGNIZE THEM?

NO, BUT THEY WORE STRIPPY UNIFORMS SO I ASSUMED THEY WERE NEW MEN HIRED BY THE DAY MANAGER. IF YOU INSIST, WE'LL GO DOWN TO THE BASEMENT AND TALK TO THEM.

I INSIST.



DEAD! BUT THERE AREN'T THE SAME MEN WHO PASSED ME EARLIER!

I DIDN'T THINK SO! THE KIDNAPERS MUST'VE KILLED THEM FOR THEIR UNIFORMS!



I'D BETTER CALL THE POLICE!



WHA? IF WE INVOLVE THEM, THE KIDNAPPER'S WILL KILL ADAM FOR SURE! WE'VE GOT TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A SIMPLE ROBBERY!

WAAAA
SET?

WE WORKED OUT A PLAUSIBLE COVER STORY, LEAVING ADAM AND ME OUT ENTIRELY. FIFTY SUCKS PERSUADED THE CLERK TO TELL IT.



IF THE KILLERS INTENDED TO, THEY COULD HAVE TAKEN ME AS I SLEPT. BUT THEY DIDN'T. THAT MEANT THEY'RE SETTING THE STAGE FOR A DRAMA.



STRANGE! THE THREAD ON THE HANDLE OF THE BRIEFCASE IS WHITE, BUT THE THREAD ON THE BOTTOM IS BLACK! IT LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE'S TAKEN THE CASE APART AND RE-SEWN IT!



USING A POCKET KNIFE, I CUT THE HANDLE OPEN.

PROGRAMMED COMPUTER TAPE? IT MUST BE THAT RECENTLY DEVELOPED TYPE. IT'S NO BIGGER THAN A ROLL OF MICROFILM.

IT'S LITTLE CONSOLATION, BUT AT LEAST JOHN BERNAN DIDN'T DIE IN VAIN.

THEY HOPED TO EXCHANGE ADAM FOR THE CONTENTS OF THE BRIEFCASE, EXCEPT THERE WERE NO CONTENTS AND SINCE THE BASEMENT SERVICE DOOR OPENED FROM THE INSIDE AND THE GUARDS HAD NO REASON TO LET ANYONE IN, AT THAT HOUR IT APPEARED TO BE AN INSIDE JOB. NOW I WANTED TO RE-EXAMINE THAT BRIEFCASE!

THERE WAS NOTHING MORE TO DO BUT ANSWER THE RAINBOW CALL, SO I WENT TO BED. THE CALL DIDN'T COME.



AT DAYBREAK, I WENT DOWN TO THE LOBBY TO SEE WHAT THE NEWSPAPERS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE DEATH OF ONE JOHN BARMAN.

WHEN I GOT THERE, SOMEONE WAS WAITING FOR ME.

GOOD MORNING, WELSH! WE THOUGHT WE'D DROP IN AND SEE HOW YOU WERE GETTING ALONG. AFTER THE INCIDENT LAST NIGHT, WE THOUGHT --



EXCUSE ME, MS. DURRELL, YOU HAVE A PHONE CALL.

HELLO?

DON'T LOOK IN MY DIRECTION, I'M STANDING AT THE PAY PHONE ALONG THE REAR WALL. SPECTRUM SENT ME, I'M YOUR NEW CONTACT.



GET RID OF THOSE PEOPLE AND MEET ME AT THE CAFE NEXT DOOR.

I MADE MY APOLOGIES TO THE GREYBIRDS AND DID AS I WAS REQUESTED. A PRETTY YOUNG GIRL, WITH DANCING EYES MET ME. SHE LOOKED FRESH OUT OF COLLEGE.

I'M JEAN CROWLEY. SPECTRUM SAYS YOU'RE TO DELIVER THE BRIEFCASE TO ME.

I CAN'T DO THAT, FIRST OF ALL, I'M NOT TURNING IT OVER TO ANYONE TILL I HAVE CONFIRMED THEIR IDENTITY.



SECONDLY, THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED. SOMEONE'S HOLDING MY BROTHER HOSTAGE... THEY'RE PLANNING TO SWAP HIM FOR THE CASE. IF I TURN IT OVER TO YOU I HAVE NOTHING TO BARMAN WITH.



BARMAN? YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING THAT'S VITAL TO NATIONAL SECURITY! IF IT FALLS INTO THE WRONG HANDS, YOU COULD BE CHARGED WITH TREASON!



SHE WAS OVER-ACTING. AT LEAST I HOPED SO FOR ABB DANK. GENTS DON'T SHOW UP LONG WORKING FOR A MAN LIKE SPECTRUM UNLESS THEY'RE FLEXIBLE ABOUT LITTLE THINGS LIKE RULES AND MORALITY.

I'M NOT GOING TO SELL SPECTRUM OUT. BUT I WON'T SIGN ADAM'S DEATH WARRANT EITHER. I NEED TIME...AND A LITTLE LEEWAY.

OF THE WAY, THAT'S A PRETTY PENDANT, WHERE DID YOU GET IT?



MY BOYFRIEND... SIX BOY FRIENDS. I SHOULD SAY... GAVE IT TO ME. HE USED TO HAND-MAKE THEM FOR HIS 'CLOSE' FRIENDS.

HIS NAME WAS JOHN SERMAN



THE MAN WHO...?

YES. ON THE VERY AFTERNOON HE WAS KILLED, WE WERE SUPPOSED TO FLY TO SOUTH AMERICA...TO BE MARRIED!

HE BOUGHT THESE TICKETS THE DAY BEFORE AND GAVE THEM TO ME FOR SAFE KEEPING. WHEN I CAME TO MEET HIM FRIDAY AFTERNOON, HE WAS DEAD.



THINGS WERE GETTING MORE COMPLICATED WITH EACH PASSING HOUR. I RETURNED TO THE HOTEL LOBBY AND PICKED SPECTRUM'S OFFICE IN NEW YORK USING THE KEY PHONE THIS TIME. THEY CONNECTED ME TO HIS HOME.

EIGHT O'CLOCK! WHAT AN UNBOLLY HOUR TO SET SOMEONE OUT OF BUSINESS! THIS HAD BETTER BE IMPORTANT!



I TOLD HIM EVERYTHING THAT HAD HAPPENED. HE CONFIRMED JEAN CROWLEY WAS THE NEW CONTACT AND AGREED TO GIVE ME TWENTY-FOUR HOURS TO FIND JOAN. THEN I WAS TO TURN THE SPECTRUM OVER REWARDLESS.



THERE WERE SMALL DEVILS--LITTLE WOMEN TEASES--HANGING AT THE BACK OF MY MIND BUT I COULDN'T PUT A FINGER ON THEM.

I SCARCELY RETURNED TO MY ROOM WHEN THE PHONE RANG AGAIN. THIS TIME IT WAS ADAM'S ADVOCATORS.

MS. CURRELL, YOU HAVE SOMETHING I WANT... AND I HAVE SOMETHING THAT YOU WANT. MEET ME AT THE SAN DIEGO MISSION AT MIDNIGHT AND MAYBE WE CAN ARRANGE AN EXCHANGE... COME ALONE!



SATURDAY, JULY 16 - EAST

FLARING JERMS CLIMB OBSESSIVELY AT THE AIR UNTIL THEY FIND SOMETHING SOLID. IT IS LUCK AND THE METAL ARMING OF THE TRAINS' RUBBER GUARD, THAT SINE COULD WIN HELDING'S EARS.



THE TRAIN BRAKES TO A JAM.

GOD, THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE! HE MUST'VE WALKED TO HEAR THE EDWIN! BLOODY FOOL! SHOULD HAVE SENSE ENOUGH NOT TO BE IN A SUBWAY STATION AT MIDNIGHT! FOR THAT MATTER, IT'S NO PLACE FOR A BLIND MAN AT ANY TIME OF DAY!



ANSWER THAT POLICEMAN...? BROGAN!

RAN OFF LIKE A COCKROACH! BUT DON'T WORRY, WE'LL FIND HIM. THE GUY AT THE TOWN WINDOW GOT A GOOD LOOK AT HIM.



WE'LL HAIL A CAB FOR YOU THIS TIME, IT'LL BE A LOT SAFER.

IT'S THE FIRST TIME HE'S HEARD NEW YORK CABS RECOMMENDED AS SAFE. BUT THE PUZZLE REMAINS: WHO TRIED TO KILL HIM? A BLAT ON THE EIGHTH AVENUE SUBWAY TRACKS?



WHO MADE OFF WITH PENDRAGON... AND WHY?



IT COULD BE AN OLD ENEMY SEEKING REVENGE, BUT I DOUBT IT. BEING BLIND, I COULDN'T BE HYPOTHESIZED LIKE PERRY. THEY HAD TO SILENCE ME ANOTHER WAY?

THAT MEANS WE MUST KNOW SOMETHING... SOMETHING SO INNOCENT WE DON'T EVEN REALIZE WE KNOW IT. THAT MAKES US DANGEROUS TO SOMEONE!

BROGAN HERE. PUT ME THROUGH TO THE MAN IN CALIFORNIA... IT'S URGENT!



BOSS? LISTEN... THE OLD MAN SURVIVED! HE'S STILL ALIVE!

DOESN'T MATTER. I HAVE A BETTER PLAN FOR DISPOSING OF HIM, ONE THAT INVOLVES HIS FRIEND PENDRAGON!

SUNDAY, JULY 17 WEST

THE OLD MISSION AT SAN DIEGO WAS FOUNDED BY FRANCISCAN FATHERS IN 1769, A BLOOMY, FORMIDABLE, AND FOREBODING... HISTORICAL RELIC, DECADES HAVE PASSED SINCE IT WAS LAST USED FOR MORGUING.



THE PRESENT DAY CONGREGATION CONSISTS EXCLUSIVELY OF 847S.

EVEN BY GREENWAY (US \$16), IT'S ABOUT 35 MILES FROM SAN BERNARDINO TO SAN DIEGO. I ARRIVED A FEW MINUTES AFTER MIDNIGHT. MOVE THE LESS, I WAITED TEN MINUTES MORE BEFORE ANOTHER CAR PULLED UP BEHIND MINE.



I NEGLECTED TO MENTION THAT I'D REMOVED THE COMPUTER TAPES, THEN SERVED UP THE HANDLE AGAIN.



EXCELLENT, YOU'LL FIND YOUR FRIEND DRUSSED UP IN THE KESIRY! JUST GO THROUGH THAT ARCHWAY AND ACROSS THE COURTYARD, BY THE TIME YOU'VE RELEASED HIM, I'LL BE GONE!



WHEN THE ONLY SOUND BEHIND ME WAS NOT THE SOUND OF RECEDING FOOTSTEPS, BUT THE CLICK OF A COCKED GUN, I REALIZED I'D WALKED INTO A TRAP.



I BOVE FOR COVER... WHICH HAPPENED TO BE A STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN THE OLD MISSION CHURCH. THE BULLET JUST MISSED ME!

ONCE INSIDE, I HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE BELLTOWER.



THE BELLTOWER--HOW CONFINEMENT! I'LL HAVE NO FURTHER PLACE TO RUN...! THE BUST IN THAT PLACE I'LL BE SO THICK, SHE MAY AS WELL HAVE HANDED ME A MAP!

HE FOLLOWED MY FOOTPRINTS UP THE WINDING WOODEN STAIRS UNTIL...



WHERE IS SHE?

HE WAS, TO PUT IT NICELY, SWACKED WHEN ONE OF THE BATS REVERTED TO HUMAN FORM AND TOPPLED DOWN (GROW HIM).

CONSIDER YOURSELF **PRIMESSESS!** I DON'T DO THAT TRICK FOR JUST ANYONE. BUT SINCE YOU'RE SUCH A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE I MAKE AN EXCEPTION!



UGH!



NEVER MIND ABOUT THAT. I WANT TO KNOW WHO YOU'RE WORKING FOR, AND WHERE THEY'RE HOLDING ADAM VAN HELSING!

HE'S BEEN TAKEN TO AELSON, THE PHANTOM CITY I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHERE IT IS--IT KEEPS MOVING--SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T EXIST AT ALL!



A GHOST TOWN LITERALLY? ITS NOW IN THE HANDS OF CHAOS!

THEY'RE INVOLVED IN THIS?

WHAT COULD BE ON THE TAPE THAT COULD POSSIBLY INTEREST THEM?

I'D MENTIONED THE PLAN, GOING TO STARTLE HIM INTO REVEALING MORE INFORMATION. FOR A MINUTE, I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO ANSWER. THEN HE PARTED, MAKING A PERFECT, SUICIDAL JACK-KNIFE FROM THE BELL TOWER.



HE HUNG SUSPENDED IN THE AIR LIKE A SCAMP BUBBLE, THEN SAW FROM SIGHT.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD GYFS COULD LICK HIS BODY UP IN THE MORNING. AS FOR ME, I HAD THE TAPE AND A CLUE TO ADAM'S WHEREABOUTS.



THINGS COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.

AS I DROVE BACK TOWARD SAN BERNARDINO, ONE THOUGHT WORRIED ME. WAS IT A COINCIDENCE THAT SPECTRUM SENT ME ON A MISSION INVOLVING CHAOS...



OR DID HE PERHAPS KNOW MORE ABOUT MY PAST LIFE THAN I'D ASSUMED?

LATER IN THE MORNING, I RANCHED THE GREYBIRDS AND ASKED THEM TO MEET ME FOR BREAKFAST AT THE C-16. I NEEDED SOMEONE WHO WAS BOTH TRUSTWORTHY, AND FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCAL TERRAIN... THEY WERE THE MOST LIKELY CANDIDATES.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT A PLACE CALLED ALBION?

IT'S SOMETHING OF A LOCAL LEGEND, FOUNDED IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY BY A PACIFISTIC... SOMEWHAT FURTHER... RELIGIOUS GROUP THE TOWN PROSPERED, UNTIL A BAND OF MEXICAN BANDITOS DISCOVERED IT.



PLAYING ON THE PEOPLE'S PEACE-LOVING NATURE, THEY VIRTUALLY TOOK OVER.

"FINALLY THE ALBIONITES COULD STAND IT NO LONGER. THEY VIOLATED THEIR VOWS AND TOOK UP ARMS AGAINST THE INTERLOPERS, BUT UNTRAINED, UNARMED-LIKE FARMERS WERE NO MATCH FOR THE RUTHLESS BANDITOS."



"THE TOWN WAS COMPLETELY OBLITERATED!"

POPULAR FOLKLORE SAYS THAT ON CERTAIN DAYS OF THE YEAR ALBION MATERIALIZES AGAIN AS KIND OF A HOUMA-TOWN... THE FLYING DUTCHMAN OF THE WESTERN FRONTIER, BUT OF COURSE THAT'S JUST SUPERSTITION.



I DON'T KNOW... THAT'S WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT 'SALON'S IDOT'. BUT IF ALBION DOES EXIST, I HAVE TO FIND IT. CAN YOU HELP ME?

ALL RIGHT, WHY NOT? I'LL THROW SOME GEAR TOGETHER AND TOMORROW MORNING WE SET OUT FOR THE MOSHIE!



IT'D RATHER NOT GO ALONE, IF YOU DON'T MIND NORMAN'S ALWAYS BEEN FOND OF WIDE OPEN SPACES BUT I'M A CITY GIRL AT HEART...

...ONE OF MANY THINGS THAT NORMAN AND I DIFFER ON

NORMAN GREYBIRD GOT UP TO PAY THE CHECK AND TINA AND I HAD OUR FIRST CHANCE TO TALK ALONE.



YOU'RE VERY TRUSTING, ALLOWING YOUR HUSBAND TO SPEND A DAY IN THE COMPANY OF ANOTHER WOMAN.

TRUST WAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. IT'S A WAY OF DASHING MY OWN CONSCIENCE, I SUPPOSE. I HAVEN'T BEEN ENTIRELY FAITHFUL TO HIM EITHER.

SUNDAY, JULY 17-EAST

THE GIRL WHO HOLDS PENDRAGON SPRINGLOOM IS HALF-CHINESE SHE IS YOUNG, BEAUTIFUL, IN AN EXOTIC WAY...A MODERN DAY DRAGON LADY, AND EVERY BIT AS DEADLY.



SO, MY SILENT FRIEND, NOW I AM TOLD TO DO MORE THAN SIMPLY MAKE YOU FORGET!



I HAVE BEEN GIVEN NEW ORDERS! IT SEEMS OUR Hired ASSASSIN FAILED TO DO HIS JOB. MY SUPERIORS FEEL THAT YOU WONT SUCCEED WHERE HE DID NOT

THEY WANT YOU TO KILL CONRAD VAN HELSING!

NEW YORK WAS A SENSUAL SMOKESHED OF SIGHTS, SOUNDS, SMELLS...THINGS OF WHICH PENDRAGON WAS TOTALLY UNWARE HIS MIND WAS TOO HOLID...CAPABLE ONLY OF THOSE FUNCTIONS ESSENTIAL TO ITS SURVIVAL...



...AND THE EXECUTION OF THE COMMANDS IMPLANTED WITHIN IT.

CONRAD VAN HELSING, ON THE OTHER HAND WAS IN DEEP THOUGHT. WHAT TROUBLED HIM WAS THE IDEA THAT "FATHER" SON'S CAPTORS...WHETHER THEY MAY BE...AND THE POWER TO BRING HIM A WAY USING NOTHING MORE THAN EYE CONTACT!



THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES WERE TRULY MIND-BOGGLING!



WHO IS IT?

IT... IS... PENDRAGON...



CONRAD VAN HELSING COULD NOT SEE THE GUN THAT PENDRAGON HAD AIMED DIRECTLY AT HIS HEAD.

HE COULD ONLY HEAR THE CHURCH-BELLS, SOMEWHERE IN THE DISTANCE, AS THEY TOLLED THE END OF ANOTHER DAY.

PREVIEW

CREEPT & EERIE

#93 Bowling! Track! Baseball! Football! Hockey! Monsters! Mayhem! Magic! Murder! That's **CREEPT #93** ... the most spectacular all-Sports-Horror issue ever! ON SALE SEPT. 20!

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SPORTS HORROR ACTION!

WHODUNNIT #65 MYSTERY SPECIAL!

Ever guess a story's conclusion after reading the first few pages? Ever watch a TV show and know in advance how it will end? Then you're the book for you ... your chance to put your mental skill to the test! Join Warren Publishing writers and artists present you with six mysteries! You solve the puzzles! And you win the prizes! If you guess correctly, per details, see M&M #PIRELLA #65 ... ON SALE SEPTEMBER 27!

THE SAN DIEGO ZOO, BUT ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE. SINCE MOST OF THE ANIMALS HAVE AT ONE TIME OR OTHER DONE GUEST SPOTS ON THE JOHNNY CARSON SHOW THEY'VE BECOME TEMPERAMENTAL AS HELL. RUMOR IS THEY'RE APPLYING FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE SCREEN ACTORS GUILD.

ANYWAY, I WAS HERE TO MEET JEAN CROWLEY. THE 24 HOUR REPRISE SPECTRUM GRANTED ME WAS OVER. I WAS TO HAND OVER THE BRIEFCASE AND LEAVE ADAM TO WHATEVER FATE BEFELL HIM.

I DID EXACTLY AS I WAS TOLD. I HANDED OVER THE BRIEFCASE.

I DIDN'T REPLACE THE COMPUTER TAPES I'D REMOVED THE NIGHT BEFORE.

IT WAS A DANGEROUS GAME--BLUFFING, HOLDING BACK TRUMPS--ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU KNOW THE OTHER PLAYERS SHOOT CHEATERS. . .

BUT MY ONLY CONCERN AT THE MOMENT WAS KEEPING ADAM ALIVE. FOR THAT, I'D NEED THOSE TAPES.



The Vindicators



I'M SORRY I WAS SO CRYPTIC WITH YOU THE OTHER DAY; IT'S JUST THAT... WELL, JOHN'S DEATH SET ME ON EDGE.

I KNOW THAT'S SACRILEGIOUS COMING FROM A SPY, BUT NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRY TO TURN OFF OUR ANIMALLY, A LITTLE SNEEPS THROUGH EVERY NOW AND THEN.

FORGIVE ME IF I'M BEING TOO PERSONAL, BUT WHAT SORT OF MAN WAS HE?



A COMMERCE AND A LADIES MAN... BUT LOVABLE AS A TEDDY BEAR, AND HE KNEW IT. HE CAME FROM A POOR FAMILY, BUT HAD A WAY OF ATTRACTING WOMEN... ESPECIALLY RICH ONES.

EVEN AFTER HE MET ME, THERE WAS SOME LOCAL ROCKAWOOD WHO ALWAYS BOUGHT HIM EXPENSIVE PRESENTS.



BY THE WAY, WHAT TIME DID YOU GET TO BERMAN'S STORE THAT FRIDAY?

AROUND 11:30, I GUESS. OUR FLIGHT WAS DUE TO LEAVE AT 2:00. FROM PUNCTUITY WAS ONE OF JOHN'S COMPULSIVE HABITS, ALONG WITH HIS IMMACULATE NEATNESS.



IT STARTED TO MAKE SENSE; I PICTURED THE CONDITION OF THE STORE, WHEN HE'D WALKED IN. LITTLE THINGS HAD BOTHERED ME... :

THINGS THERE THAT SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN, AND THINGS THAT SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THERE THAT WEREN'T.



SUNSET FILLED THE HORIZON AS I DROVE BACK TO SAN BERNARDINO. A SCENARIO FORMED IN MY MIND.

A JOHN BERMAN WAS COMPULSIVELY NEAT, WHY HADN'T THE FRONT PORCH BEEN SWEEPED ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE STORE? THE MOST UNLIKELY ANSWER WAS THE SANDRUST HAD BEEN THROWN THERE AFTER HE WAS KILLED.



WHY? BECAUSE THE KILLER WAS AN ANIMAL, SOMEONE NOT USED TO MURDER. I HAD ASSUMED ALL ALONG THAT BERMAN HAD KILLED FOR THE GREEDCASE, NOW EVERYTHING POINTED TO A DRIVE OF PASSION.

WHEN THE KILLER REALIZED WHAT SHE'D DONE, IT MADE HER ALL, HENCE SANDRUST!

ANOTHER TROOP WAS THE LUGGAGE, OR LACK OF IT. BERMAN HAD A PAMFLET IN HIS SO SUDDENLY HE'D HAVE BEEN PACKED BEFORE. JEAN COOMES FARMER YET NO LUGGAGE WAS FOUND IN THE STORE.



ROSEMARY WAS OUT. THERE WERE TOO MANY VALUABLE ITEMS LEFT. SO THE SURPRISE COM TAINED SOMETHING THE KILLER WANTED...

...LIKE, FOR INSTANCE, "EXPENSIVE GIFT" GIVEN HIM BY A FORMER LOVER... GIFTS LINKING THE MURDERED WIFE TO HIS KILLER... A JEALOUS WOMAN WHO AGREED TO FIND HIM GETTING READY TO RUN OFF TO BRAZIL WITH ANOTHER WOMAN?



IT WAS A RUDDY CIRCUMSTANTIAL APPROXIMATION, BUT IT MADE TOO MUCH SENSE TO BE AWAY.

AND I REMEMBERED THE JEWELRY THE GREYHOUND WAS WEARING WHEN I MET HER IN THE HOTEL GORBY YESTERDAY MORNING...THE ONE BERLIN GAVE TO "CLOSE FRIENDS".

UP HER OWN ADMISSION, TRIA MIGHT'VE BEEN ENTIRELY ANSWERED TO NORMAN. I FELT SORRY FOR HER: HER AFFAIRS DON'T WORK OUT ANY BETTER THAN HER MARRIAGE.



ONE THING PUZZLED ME, THOUGH. TO ASSUME IT WAS BERMAN'S KILLER HADN'T TRIED TO USE HODGKIN TO SILENCE US AT THAT MOMENT. BUT TRIA WAS WITH US THE WHOLE TIME; IT WAS MUCH DANGER AS WE WERE.



SINCE SHE NEVER LEFT OUR SIGHT, SHE HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO BREAK IN.

NONETHELESS, I PHONED TRIA AND ASKED HER TO MEET US AT THE CAFE FOR COCKTAILS LATER, ALONE.



THAT'S EASY ENOUGH. NORMAN'S GONE OFF FOR THE EVENING...PROBABLY WITH SOME LOCAL DRINK. I'LL BE THERE.

IF SHE WAS AS NEAR TO KILLING AS I SUSPECTED, SHE'D CRACK AT THE FIRST HINT OF DISCOVERY.

SHE DID.

YOU'RE RIGHT ON ALL COUNTS. NORMAN WAS DOING SOME BARLOGGING IN THE PAST. THAT MORNING, I TOLD HIM I WAS DRIVING INTO TOWN TO DO SOME SHOPPING. INSTEAD, I WENT STRAIGHT TO BERMAN'S.





MONDAY, JULY 18 EAST

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT: BLANDNESS HAS ITS DRAWBACKS.



CONRAD VAN HELDING CANNOT SEE THE SUN POINTED AT HIS HEAD BUT HE HEARS PATTERSON'S LABORED, DERRATIC BREATHING, AND THE SUTLE CLIK OF THE HANDBEAR, AND HIS HEART SOOPS LIKE A RUNAWAY ELEVATOR.

HE TENSES, AWAITING THE BOMM AND THE FLAME. IT DOESN'T COME.



PATTERSON HAD UNDER HYPNOTIC COMMAND TO KILL ME, BUT HIS WILL REBELLED; HE COULDN'T BRING HIMSELF TO DO IT!

BUT HE MAY HAVE KILLED HIMSELF IN THE PROCESS... / THE STRAM WAS MORE THAN HIS HAND COULD WITHSTAND. I FEAR HE'S LAPPED INTO A COMA!



IF BETTER HIRE MYSTIC! THERE'LL BE ENOUGH QUESTIONS WITHOUT HAVING TO EXPLAIN THE PRESENCE OF A GUN.

THEN HE DIALED "OPERATOR", AND HAD HER SUMMON AN AMBULANCE.

HE DON'T LIKE HYPNOTIC WORDS, BECAUSE HE DON'T LIKE HYPNOTISM. BUT HE FOUND HIMSELF SITTING IN ONE FOR THE BETTER PART OF FOUR HOURS. OUTSIDE HE HEARD THE WILLYWHIN, NO TRASH COLLECTORS GOING ABOUT THE R. ROUTES.



HOW IS HE, DOCTOR P?

WE CAN FIND NO PHYSICAL REASON FOR HIS CONDITION. MY SUEBS HE HE'S RECEIVED SOME SORT OF TRAUMATIC PSYCHOLOGICAL SHOCK RECENTLY.



WE'VE PUT HIM IN THE INTENSIVE CARE WARD, BUT TO BE PERFECTLY FRANK, I DON'T THINK THERE'S MUCH WE CAN DO FOR HIM. SHORT OF A MIRACLE, HE PROBABLY WON'T LAST THE NIGHT.

MONDAY, JULY 18 EAST

GANN AND THE TELEPHONE INTERRUPTED MY SLEEP AT JUST ABOUT THE SAME TIME. GANN CAME FROM MOTHER NATURE. THE PHONE CALL CAME FROM NORMAN BREYER.

THEY JUST TOLD ME ABOUT NINA. THAT MEANS WE'LL HAVE TO POSTPONE OUR DESERT EXCURSION A COUPLE OF DAYS. HER SERVICES WILL BE HELD TOMORROW.

YOU DON'T SOUND PARTICULARLY GRIEF-STROCKEN...?

I'M NOT. OUR MARRIAGE WAS ALL A FACADE... WE STAYED TOGETHER FAR TOO LONG, FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS. THE SHOW HAD GONE FROM OUR RELATIONSHIP BEING ALSO IN A WAY, I'M RELIEVED IT'S OVER.

THAT MAY SOUND CRUEL... BUT I'M TIRED OF LYING TO MYSELF.

I HUNG UP SAYING NOTHING ABOUT THE CONCLUSIONS I'D REACHED THE NIGHT BEFORE CONCERNING TIM'S KILLER. I WANTED TO HAVE A TALK WITH JEAN CROWLEY FIRST.

SHE'D BEEN ME AND ADAM LEAVING BURNING STONE THAT MORNING AND ASSUMED THAT WE KILLED HIM. SHE TRACED US TO THE HOTEL, BROKE IN, AND TOOK A FEW PERSONAL ARTICLES FOR HER MURDER VICTIM. SPECTRUM MUST HAVE TOLD HER TO GET OFF... THAT'S WHY NO COPIES. ITSEMPIS WERE MADE.

EVEN IF I COULD MAKE A CONVINCING CASE OF IT, IT WOULDN'T MATTER MUCH. SPECTRUM COULD BUY HER WAY OUT OF ANY LEGAL HASSLES. BUT I COULDN'T HELP WONDERING WHY HE'D USED HER IN THE FIRST PLACE...?

NOT THAT IT WOULD DO MUCH GOOD. THERE WAS NOTHING SHE COULD TELL ME THAT I HADN'T ALREADY FIGURED OUT FOR MYSELF.

WESTMAN, AFTER WE TALKED, SHE REALIZED SHE WAS ON THE WRONG TRACK AND THAT IT WAS NINA WHO KILLED BORMAN IN A FIT OF JEALOUSY.

ANYBODY WHO'D EVEN CONSIDER MARRYING A FELLOW AGENT... AND CLAIMING REVENGE FOR HIS DEATH... EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF A MISSION... WAS GOOD MATERIAL FOR AN AGENT.

TO FIND JEAN CROWLEY I TOOK THE OBVIOUS APPROACH. THE PHONE BOOK. IT WORKED. THE DIRECTORY GAVE AN ADDRESS, OUTSIDE BURNING.

I FOLLOWED ROUTE 66. THERE WASN'T MUCH TRAFFIC. IT ONLY TOOK ME AN HOUR.

WHEN I GOT THERE, JEAN CROWLEY WAS DEADER THAN A DOB-CLOTH. THERE WAS NOTHING SUPERNATURAL ABOUT THIS MURDER. HER FACE HAD BEEN RE-FRAMED BY A SHOTGUN AT CLOSE RANGE.



THE ROOM WAS IN COMPLETE DISORDER. SOMEONE HAD SEARCHED TOP-AND-PROBABLY AROUND- THE DRESSCASE.

IN ONE SENSE, IT WAS A *WELL*. IT WOULD KEEP SPECTRUM FROM FINDING OUT THAT IT REMOVED THE COMPUTER TAPERS. AT LEAST FOR A WHILE.



I BOOKE A LOT OF SPEED LANE GETTING BACK TO SAN DIEGO. HADNER HILLED JEAN. KNEW BY NOW THAT SHE WOULDN'T WANT THE TAPERS, SO THEY'D TURN THEIR ATTENTION BACK TO ME. I WANTED TO LET THERE WHEN THEY DID.

UNFORTUNATELY, I DON'T HAVE IT. WHEN I RETURNED TO MY HOTEL ROOM, I FOUND IT HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY AND PROFESSIONALLY RANSACKED - AND CERTAIN KEY ITEMS *WELL*!



AMONG THE *WELL* WERE WAS MY SUPPLY OF SUGAR-SUBSTITUTE SERUM!

HADNER *WELL* HAD I NOW EXACTLY WHAT THEY WERE TAKING! BUT WHO COULD POSSIBLY HAVE LEARNED MY SECRET?



SPECTRUM, *WELL* BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. JEAN WAS ABOUT TO DELIVER THE CASE TO HIM; HE DIDN'T HAVE TO KILL HER FOR IT.

I'LL BE DAMNED! A RANSOM NOTE!



We apologize the delay for the ransom. Ransoms should be paid. Tonight to the Englishman.

I'M GETTING TIRED OF BEING THE GO-BETWEEN, BUT IT SEEMS A NEW ELEMENT HAS JOINED THE GAME. THE ONES WHO KILLED JEAN CROWLEY--AND STOLE MY SERUM--ARE NOT THE SAME ONES WHO ABDUCTED ADAM.



ADAM IS THEIR JOE, BUT HE'S NOT BEEN MENTIONED IN THE NOTE. OBVIOUSLY, THIS ENGLISHMAN DOESN'T KNOW WHERE HE IS ANYMORE.

I DECIDED TO PLAY ALONG. IF I COULD FIGURE OUT WHAT THE ENGLISHMAN'S INTEREST WAS, I MIGHT KNOW WHICH TEAM I WAS PLAYING FOR.



THE POKANICA BURIAL GROUND IS AN OLD DUTCH CEMETERY ABOUT FIVE MILES SOUTHEAST OF ZEMECULA, IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY. IT IS QUANT AND FRAUGHT WITH LEGENDS, LIKE THE RESERVATION ON WHICH IT STANDS.

I HAD A FEW RESERVATIONS MYSELF.



THE ARRIVAL OF THE COYOTES WAS BEAUTIFULLY CHOREOGRAPHED... NONE OF THE USUAL BARKING AND HOWLING. THEY JUST APPEARED LIKE RAYMOND HUGHES IN THE SILVER MOONLIGHT.

I FELT LIKE A MAYPOLE



COYOTES ARE NOCTURNAL PREDATORS--MIDNIGHT SMACKERS--WHOSE USUAL DIET CONSISTS OF BIRDS, ROBBERIES, AND INSECTS. BUT WHEN THEY'RE HUNGRY ENOUGH, THEY'LL EAT MOST ANYTHING.

BUT IF THEY DON'T DEVOUR ME, I FACED THE PROSPECT OF TERRIBLE REVENGES.



I OPTED FOR A) NONE OF THE ABOVE, AND WORE A SWIFT, GRACEFUL, AIRBORNE EASY. I WAS READY TO CHALK THE NIGHT OFF AS ANOTHER ONE-UP-SAC, WHEN SOMEONE YELLED



YOU CAN COME DOWN NOW, VAMPIRELLA. WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO!

YOU KNOW MY NAME AND PROBABLY A LOT OF OTHER THINGS ABOUT ME, INCLUDING THE FACT THAT THESE COYOTES WERE NO SERIOUS SNACKS. WHY DO YOU BOTHER?



YOUR STIRRING PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN CAPTURED ON INFRARED FILM BY A CONCEALED CAMERA. WHAT SPECTACLE! WOMAN-CUM-BAT BEFORE YOUR EYES--GET THE PICTURE?

CERTAIN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WILL, IF YOU DON'T COOPERATE WITH US.

THEY'D NEVER BELIEVE YOU SPECIAL EFFECTS CAN BE TOO EASILY CREATED WITH TRICK PHOTOGRAPHY.



FOR HEAVEN'S THREE HOURS, CONSIDER ANXIOUS HADN'T MOVED. THREE NURSING DOCTORS TRIED TO TAKE HIS PULSE, BUT HE ORDERED THEM AWAY WITH A GRUNT.



NEARLY TWENTY-FOUR HOURS HAD PASSES SINCE PENNINGTON WAS FIRST BROUGHT TO THE ST. JOHN CLINIC. HIS CONDITION HAD STILL THE S. M.S.



'GOOD GOD! HAVE YOU GONE TO THE POLICE?'

'NO... THE ATTEMPTS COULD EASILY BE DISMISSED AS ACCIDENTAL... UNLESS WE CATCH THE KILLER IN THE ACT, THERE'S NOTHING THEY COULD DO.'



'MR. BENNETT, I'M PUTTING YOU IN CHARGE OF SECURITY FOR THE ARTIST IN ROOM TWO. HE'S NOT TO BE LEFT UNPROTECTED FOR EVEN A MOMENT, AND IF THERE IS ANY CHANGE IN HIS CONDITION, I WANT TO KNOW IMMEDIATELY.'



'GOOD. I'VE WORKED EIGHTEEN HOURS WITHOUT REST... NOW I'M GOING HOME. SEE THAT MR. PENNINGTON GETS THIS INJECTION AROUND MIDNIGHT.'

'I WILL... AND DON'T LOOK SO PESSIMISTIC, MR. VAN HESLING. I PREDICT YOU'LL SEE A DRAMATIC CHANGE IN PENNINGTON'S CONDITION BEFORE MORNING.'



The Intruders

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IS A WORLD APART...A GEOGRAPHIC SANDWICH BETWEEN DESERT AND OCEAN. IT WAS NAMED AFTER AN ISOLATED, MYTHICAL KINGDOM IN THE 16TH CENTURY SPANISH ROMANCE NOVEL 'LAS SERCAS DE SEPLANDIAN', AND IT'S STILL ISOLATED AND MYTHICAL.

THE GOLDEN STATE HAS BEEN CALLED A NEST-HOLE OF RECKLESS SPECULATION, EXTREMISMS, AND LOOSE LIPS...HABITS CARRIED OVER FROM THE GOLD RUSH DAYS. BUT NEDOWISM (LOS ANGELES HAS 2½ MILLION CARS TO A POPULATION OF 3 MILLION) IS PART -- IF NOT ALL -- OF CALIFORNIA'S APPEAL.

I WAS HERE ON A SIMPLE COURIER MISSION FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BUT THINGS HAD GONE REMEDLESSLY AWRY. I NOW HELD A ROLL OF COMPUTER TAPE SOUGHT BY THREE DIFFERENT AGENCIES, ANY ONE OF WHOM WOULD RESORT TO TERRORISM AND MURDER TO OBTAIN IT.



ONE WAS A SQUAD OF THE CIA, LED BY A MAN NAMED SPECTRUM. IT WAS HE WHO COERCED ME INTO ACCEPTING THE ASSIGNMENT AND THREATENED TO BRAND ME A TRAITOR FOR WITHHOLDING THE TAPES.

THEN THERE WAS CHARGES WHO NOW HELD ADMIN. VANCE HELD HOSTAGE...HIS SAFETY WAS CONTINGENT UPON MY DELIVERING THE TAPES TO THEM.

NOW AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY CALLED THE ZEMUSMAN WAS STAKED A CLAIM. IT WAS HIS FORCES WHO HELD ME PRISONER.

I WAS GIVEN A TRAVELLING COMPANION FOR THE LONG RIDE TO ANDREWER. HIS NAME WAS MARTIN DEWANE. HE'D BEEN AN ANIMAL TRAINER AT A MAJOR HOLLYWOOD STUDIO TILL A COMRADE WASHED AWAY HIS CAREER.



WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THIS ENGLISHMAN?

YOU'LL MEET HIM FOR YOURSELF SHORTLY. ALL I KNOW IS HE'S A MAN OF GOOD BIRTH AND EXCELLENT EDUCATION; A REAL SCHOLAR. HIS FIELD IS MATHEMATICS BUT HE'S PRETTY WELL UP ON PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY AS WELL.



HE LIKES TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS...EVEN I DON'T KNOW HIS REAL NAME. I HEARD HIM MENTION A BROTHER ONCE THOUGH...A COLONEL IN THE BRITISH ARMY.

HE WAS DRIVING THE VAN WAS ERIC CUMBERSON, A MOVIE DIRECTOR WHO SPECIALISED IN SKIN FLAUNTS. WHEN HE COLLIDED WITH THOSE, HE WAS BECKONED.



A THIRD MAN WHOSE NAME I DON'T CARE ABOUT FOLLOWED US IN THE CAR I HAD SENT BACK AT SAN DEANONIO.

IT'S RUMORED THE ENGLISHMAN'S RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST OF THE WORLD'S UNSOLVED CRIMES.



I HAD THREE THOUSAND MORE QUESTIONS IN SEARCH OF A VOICE WHEN THE VAN STOPPED SUDDENLY AND WE WERE USHERED OUT.

THE CANYONS OF POINT LOMA NEAR SAN DIEGO ARE BREATHTAKINGLY BEAUTIFUL AND SECRETIVE. THROUGHOUT TIME RUNAWAY SLAVES, SAILGERS, THIEVES, AND OUTLAW GANGS HAVE USED THE MAGNIFICENT CLEFT WALLS FOR ILLEGAL PURPOSES.

THE REASON FOR OUR STOPOVER WAS TO CHANGE CARS.



DEWANE, YOU AND NORTH GET THOSE COYOTES BACK TO THE STUDIO AND MEET US LATER. WAMPPIRELLA AND I WILL TAKE THE JEEP!



WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY CAR? AS LONG AS I'VE GOTTA PAY THE RENTAL FEE, HE MIGHT AS WELL GET SOME USE OUT OF IT.



THOUGH IT IS POOR IN NATURAL RESOURCES, MORE AMERICANS VISIT BAJA CALIFORNIA THAN ANY OTHER FOREIGN NEARBY. ATTENDING A BULLFIGHT OR SPORT-FISHING IN ENSENADA, THEY RETURN HOME AT THE END OF THE DAY.



WHEN WE REACHED TIJUANA WE HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE AVENIDA REVOLUCION... WHAT USED TO BE CALLED A RED-LIGHT DISTRICT, NOW AT ONE A.M. IT WAS IN FULL SWING.







IT PRESENTED NO PROBLEM TO A MISSED HINDER LIKE ME. I WAITED TILL NO ATTENDANTS WERE IN SIGHT, THEN SOARED UNDER THE ELECTRONIC NET INTO THE CAR AND



C QUOTE THE CALIFORNIA STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT I HAD FOUND IT

THERE ARE 500 MILES OF UNPAVED DIRT ROADS IN SALT CALIFORNIA. ONLY VEHICLES WITH 4 WHEEL DRIVE CAN HOPE TO SURVIVE THE RUGGED FRONTIER TERRA IN THAT CROSSED THE SONORAN DESERT. EVEN THOUGH OUR JEEP WAS DURABLE AND EQUIPPED WITH 4WD, I DIDN'T LIKE IT WHEN CAMERON TURNED OFF THE MAIN ROAD.



WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



THE ENGLISHMAN IS HUNTED BY A LOT OF PEOPLE. HE DOESN'T STAY IN ONE PLACE VERY LONG. WHILE WE'RE OUT HE'S MOVING HIS HEADQUARTERS TO AN UNDISCOVERED MINE IN THE DESERT. WE'RE TO MEET HIM THERE.

WE DROVE FOR NEARLY AN HOUR. THE ONLY LIVING THINGS WE ENCOUNTERED WERE CACTUS, BOOJUMS, AND ELEPHANT TREES.

HE FINALLY STOPPED. ONLY GOD AND CAMERON KNEW WHERE



IN THERE? YOU FIRST!

IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN ANY MORE OBVIOUS IF HE PUT THE WORD "DANGER" IN RED LETTERS OVER HIS HEAD. OTHERWISE

DON'T GO BLAMING THE ENGLISHMAN SISTER. I JUST DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF HIM GETTING IMMORTALITY AND THE REST OF US GETTING THE SHARPE SO I SOLD OUT TO SPECTRUM!



WHY SHOULD THE TAPE BE DESTROYED WHEN IT CAN BE USED TO RULE THE WORLD?

CAMERON HAD A 1957 JAGUAR. IT WEIGHED ABOUT THREE POUNDS, WAS THE RECOL OF AN APOLLO LAUNCH, AND MAKES LARGE HOLES. IT WAS A BAD CHOICE FOR SUCH CLOSE QUARTERS.



HE SAID HE COULD TUNNEL LIKE WALLPAPER. IF HE MISSED HE COULD LITERALLY BRING DOWN THE HOUSE.



BATS SENT HIGH-PITCHED CRIES. THEIR EARS RECEIVED SOUND VIBRATIONS, BOUNCING OFF NEARBY OBSTACLES. IF... BAT LOSES ITS SIGHT, NO SWEET... IF IT LOSES ITS HEARING, IT'S THROUGH.



THEN THE PROBLEMS REALLY BEGAN. THE AIR IN IS A MESS OF OWLS--NATURAL ENEMIES OF BATS--AND SAW IN ME AN UNEXPECTED MEAL.

THE REVERBERATIONS OF THE SHOT THREW OFF MY RADAR SENSE. I DID A LOT OF FLUTTERING, BUT WENT NOWHERE.



IF MY EARS WEREN'T STILL HANGING, I COULD HAVE DOGGED THEM & SAID I CRICKED AS THEIR BEANS TURNED MY WINGS. CAMERON SAW THE FLURRY IN THE AIR AND SHOT AGAIN.

IF I STAYED... BAT, I'D BE OFFERING MYSELF AS OWL FOOD. IF I CHANGED FORM, I'D GIVE CAMERON A TARGET EVERY MAN COULDN'T MISS. AS IT TURNED OUT, CAMERON SOLVED THE DILEMMA FOR ME.



THE STAY BULLET STRUCK A WEAK SPOT IN THE WINE SHIRT. THE WHOLE TUNNEL SHOOK, THEN COLLAPSED.

I WAS STILL CLUTCHING THE TAPE WHEN I WENT UNDER.



AS I FELL, I AUTOMATICALLY CHANGED TO HUMAN FORM. I HAD RUBBLE IN MY EARS, NOSTRILS, AND MOUTH, BUT I WAS ALIVE. HOW LONG I'D BEEN UNCONSCIOUS WAS ANOTHER'S GUESS.

A SHARP OF LIGHT APPEARED ABOVE ME. DEWANE'S FACE WAS IN IT.

HERE YOU ARE! IT'S LUCKY YOU DIDN'T SUFFOCATE! THE ENGLISHMAN SUSPECTED IT WAS CAMERON WHO BETRAYED HIM, SO HE HAD ME FOLLOW.



I WAS TOO LATE TO PREVENT THE CAVE-IN BUT AT LEAST I GOT AN EARLY START DIGGING YOU OUT!

CAMERON'S DEAD BY THE WAY... CRUSHED BY A ROCK. HOW ARE THE BATS?

ANYWAY, BUT HOW LONG WAS I THERE? THE ENGLISHMAN NEEDS THEM BY MIDNIGHT.



IT WAS 9:30 P.M. I'D BEEN TRAPPED IN THE TUNNEL OVER SIX HOURS, BUT THAT STILL GAVE US PLUNTY OF TIME...OR SO WE THOUGHT.

WE REACHED THE AVENUE REVOLUTION A FEW MINUTES AFTER FOUR.



GOOD GOD...THE FINISH PROCEEDS HAS ALREADY BEGUN...HE'S WITHERING AWAY...BUT WHY?

THE LAST SPELL WAS...IN LONDON...FOR ALL MY CALCULATIONS...I FORGOT TO CONSIDER...THE TIME DIFFERENCE...



HE NEVER REALIZED IN LONDON WHERE HE LAST REJECTED THE SPELL, IT'S EIGHT HOURS LATER THAN HERE...ALREADY PAST THE MIDNIGHT DEADLINE!

WITHIN SECONDS ALL THAT REMAINED OF THE ENGLISHMAN WAS A HANDFUL OF CARBON.



SO WHAT HAPPENS NOW...TO ME, I MEAN?

WELL, I GUESS YOU INHERIT A JEEP. NEITHER CAMERON NOR THE ENGLISHMAN HAVE ANY MORE USE FOR IT, BUT I SUPPOSE YOU'RE REFERRING TO THE EVIDENCE.



IT DOESN'T EXIST, NOT REALLY. FROM CERTAIN NASA REPORTS AND NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS HE COMPUTED YOUR PROBABLE PROFILE. I GUESS HE WAS PRETTY ACCURATE. CAMERON AND ME WERE THE ONLY OTHERS WHO KNEW.

WHAT ABOUT THAT OTHER MAN...THE ONE WITH THE SHOTGUN?

I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM... AND THE FIRM HE TOOK AT THE REYNOLDS BURIAL GROUND TOO. WITH THE ENGLISHMAN DEAD, HE HAD NO REASON TO WORRY YOU.



HE WAS RIGHT, WITH THE ENGLISHMAN DEAD, THE NETWORK WOULD FALL. A TWIST OF TIME HAD COST ME A POWERFUL ALLY.

AS I DROVE BACK TO SAN BERNARDINO I WAS FERVENTLY SORRY THAT THE "GREATEST CRIMINAL MIND THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN" WAS NO LONGER AMONG THE LIVING.

TUESDAY, JULY 19-EAST

CONRAD VAN HELSING, A TED HOPEFUL, WITH EACH BREATH HE SWALLOWED A CLOUD OF DISINFECTANT, AND WONDERED IF IT WOULD MAKE HIM STERILE. CLARALISSA, IN THIS CASE, WAS NEXT TO WAUSE.

ON THE INTERCOM, NURSES, WITH FLAT, ATOMAL VOICES DISTILLED BY STARK SUMMONING DOCTORS TO DEATH-BEDS, DISTANT, DIRECTIONLESS, THEY SOUNDED LIKE CREPS FROM THE GRAVE, PLEASING VOICES AT A SEANCE.

GOOD NIGHT, MR. VAN HELSING. I'M GOING HOME FOR SOME MUCH NEEDED REST. I AM SURE PENDERAGON IS IN GOOD HANDS WITH MR. BENEDICT IN CHARGE.

HOW LONG HAS BENEDICT BEEN ON STAFF HERE, DR. COLTER?

ACTUALLY HE'S A NEWCOMER, ARRIVED THIS MORNING. BUT HE CARRIED EXCELLENT CREDENTIALS AND REFERENCES FROM BELLEVUE.

CALL BELLEVUE AND HAVE THEM REAFFIRM, ALSO HIS DESCRIPTION. I'VE REASON TO SUSPECT THIS BENEDICT IS AN IMPOSTER.

SURELY YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS!

QUITE. I'M BLIND. I RELY ON VOICES FOR IDENTIFICATION!

EVEN IF A MAN DISGUISES HIS VOICE, THERE ARE DISTINCT QUALITIES—IDIOSyncRASIES—THAT I DETECT WHICH OTHERS WOULDN'T NOTICE.

I'M CONVINCED HE'S THE SAME MAN WHO MADE THE ATTEMPT ON MY LIFE!

COME TO THINK OF IT, HE DID VOLUNTEER FOR THE PENDERAGON HILL. ALL RIGHT, I'LL HAVE HIM CHECKED OUT IMMEDIATELY!

WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, SEND SOMEONE ELSE UP TO PENDERAGON'S ROOM.

HE ISN'T SAFE EVEN A MOMENT IF BENEDICT IS OUR MAN!

KER-ASSSHHH!

DR. COLTER, COME QUICKLY! THE PATIENT IN 746... HE'S FALLEN THROUGH THE WINDOW! CRASHED, SEVEN STORES. IT'S HORRIBLE!

746? THAT'S PENDERAGON'S ROOM!

The Stalkers

WEDNESDAY, JULY 20 WEST

BY DWING, THE ENGLISHMAN SOLVED EVERYTHING.

WELL, NOT EVERYTHING. THERE WERE STILL SOME LOOSE ENDS TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR, BUT POSTHUMOUSLY HE CLEARED UP THE ONE POINT THAT HAD BEEN NAGGING AT MY MIND ALL ALONG, AND PUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR IN DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.

JOHN HENRY HENRY:
I'D BEEN USED AS A SCAREGOAT AND DIDN'T LIKE IT.
DEATHWORM HENRY:

I'D PLAYED BY THE RULES OF CHECKERS SINCE FROM THE BEGINNING THE GAME WAS CHESS. THE PIECES WERE LINED UP AGAINST ME, BUT IT WAS FAR FROM CANNIBALITE. TO WIN, I ONLY HAD TO BE A BETTER MANIPULATOR THAN MY OPPONENT.

DEATHWORM HENRY:
WHEN I DIDN'T HAVE NO ONE TO BLAME BUT MYSELF, HE WAS, AFTER ALL, MY MENTOR WHEN IT CAME TO PLAYING DIRTY...

DEATHWORM HENRY:
AND DIRTY WAS EXACTLY THE WAY I INTENDED TO PLAY.





HER MEMORIES RACE, SHE REMEMBERS:
HER THOUGHTS UPTIGHT, REFRESHED
AS ALWAYS, A SEARCH OF THE PAST
UNCOVERS FEW ANSWERS, MANY
QUESTIONS.

HER ARMS ARE BURNED RAW BY THE
SUN. THE FLUSH FEELS TENDER AND
SOFT. INSTANTLY SHE WONDER
ABOUT MORMAN GREYHOUND. SURLY
THE HALF-HOUR DEADLINE HAS PASSES.
HARD AS GOES FOR HELP? HAD HE BEEN
CAPTURED...?



SHE IS CERTAIN THAT DUST-STORM WAS MAN-
MADE... THAT MEANS SHE HEARS FOR GOLD,
OR PERHAPS IT HEARD HER.

WATKINS, JOHN!
OUT HERE BY HER-
SELF, YOUNG LADY?

ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES
PER POUND, I'D SAY. WHO
ARE YOU...?

HE LOOKED LIKE THE REINCARNATION OF
GOLDBYALIVES.

DAN
KLINGER'S THE
NAME; LAST OF
THE OLD-TIME
PROSPECTORS!
BORN OUT HERE
EVERY DAY FOR
HIGH ON THIRTY
YEARS, BEARHORN
AND SCOTCHMAN
FOR SOMETHIN'
MELAN AND
SNOWY...!

THERE'S A LOT OF MILES
IN THIS HERE DESERT. IFN THEY
FOUND GOLD ONCE... NO REASON
WHY I CAN'T DO IT AGAIN! CAN'T
BE ALL DIED UP...!

I'M LOOKING FOR A
PLACE CALLED ALGON.
EVER HEAR OF IT?

OF COURSE... IT'S NEW.
ALL RIGHT... SOMEWHERE, AUNT
SEEN IT FOR A WHILE, BUT IT'LL
COME BACK, ALWAYS DOES.

I'M ALSO LOOKING FOR A
FRIEND OF MINE... A MAN WITH
A JEEP. HAVEN'T COME ACROSS
HIM IN YOUR TRAVELS HAVE YOU?

NOPE, CAN'T SAYAS I
HAVE. BUT LIKE I TOLDYA
THE DESERT'S A BIG PLACE...
VAN CAN GET LOST EASY IFN
HE DON'T KNOW WHAR HE'S
GOIN'...!

I'VE HAD ABOUT AS MUCH
OF THIS HERBAL FENCING AS I
CAN STAND. YOU MAY BE OBSESSED
WITH GAMES AND DISGUISES, BUT
I PREFER TO GET DOWN TO
BASICS...

...MR. SPECTRUM!

USEN. A-H-MY
BEARD! AM I THAT
BAD AN ACTOR?





THEN THERE'S RESEARCH EXPERTS IN ASSESSING FOREIGN ADVANCEMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. THE PLANS TEAM IS THE 'CLASH AND RAGGED' CLUB, INVOLVED IN ACTUAL OPERATIONS.

FINALLY INTELLIGENCE READS ALL OPEN INFORMATION, SUCH AS TECHNICAL AND PROPAGANDA JOURNALS.

IT'S A DEPUTY DIRECTOR IN CHARGE OF PLANS.



USUALLY THE PLANNING OF A SPECIAL OPERATION INVOLVES ALL THE OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

NATURALLY, I COULDN'T ASK FOR THEIR COOPERATION IN HELPING ME REVISE THE CHRONICLES, SO I ACTED IN SECRET...USING INFORMATION FROM RESEARCH AND COMPUTER FROM SUPPORT.

ALAS, MY SECRECY MADE CERTAIN PEOPLE SUSPICIOUS.



MY SUPERIORS WERE WATCHING ME THOUGH THE TIME WAS COMPLETE. I COULDN'T RISK A PERSONAL DELIVERY. NOR COULD I RISK HAVING A LOYAL GOVERNMENT AGENT LEARN JUST WHAT IT WAS HE WAS CARRYING.

I NEEDED AN OUTSIDER... A SCARECROW... IF ANYTHING WENT WRONG.



YOU WERE THE PERFECT CHOICE! I'D SAY THAT YOU WERE A TRAITOR, ACTING INDEPENDENTLY. SINCE I CAN PROVE THAT YOUR BORN CERTIFICATE AND PAPERS'D BEEN FALSIFIED, MY CASE BECOMES MORE SOLID.



SO WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

FIRST YOU'LL BE REUNITED WITH ADAM VAN HELSING. THEN WE BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS. EVERYONE, THEY SAY, HAS A PRICE... WE BARGAIN TILL WE FIND YOURS.

THIS IS QUITE A SET-UP... A TOWN ON A HYDRAULIC LIFT! I ASSUME THERE'S A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL UNDERNEATH...!



CORRECT. THE OMNI SCIENCE CENTER! WE KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES, AS OURSELF. WE'RE THE PERFECT MARRIAGE OF THE OLD AND THE NEW... SUPERSTITION AND SCIENCE IN PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE!









**TUESDAY,
JULY 19:
EAST**

HE MADE ONE HELL
OF A MESS ON THE
GOLDEN WALK.

IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT
IT OCCURRED IN FRONT OF A
METROPOLITAN NEW YORK
HOSPITAL, THERE WAS NOTHING
ANYONE COULD DO FOR
THE MAN BUT BRING HIM AROUND.

HIS NAME WAS **BENEDICT**.
SOMETIMES IT WAS **BROGAN**.
SOMETIMES IT WASN'T EITHER
OF THEM.

THAT'S NOT
FENDRAGON!

HE'D BETTER GET
UP TO ROOM 746
IMMEDIATELY!

THERE IS A LONG WAY. THE
ELEVATORS ARE PACKED WITH
THE CURIOUS, COMING DOWN
TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE BLOT
ON THE PAVEMENT. FINALLY...

FENDRAGON!
HE'S COME OUT OF
HIS COMA!

NOT EXACTLY, MY
GOOD FELLOW. I WAS
NEVER IN A COMA!

IT'S A LONG STORY. I'LL
PUT IT AS BRIEFLY AS I CAN. THE
FBI HAD REASON TO SUSPECT THAT
A CERTAIN GOVERNMENT AGENT—
SPECTRUM—WAS A CHINA INFILTRATOR.
BUT THE CON WAS TWO-
JUMPED...

...AN FBI AGENT MANAGED
TO INFILTRATE CHINA! THE HALF-
CHINESE GIRL WHO ENCAPTURED ME
ON A STREET CORNER WAS WORKING
UNDERCOVER!



WEDNESDAY, JULY 20 WEST

THE Iconoclasts

ALBION IS A PLACE OF MANY PARADOXES... AN ADVANCED SCIENCE CENTER BENEATH THE BARREN WODAVE, WHERE MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY ARE PRACTICED BY THE SAME HANDS... REASON AND MAD GODS WORSHIPPED BY THE SAME HEARTS.

THE AIR REEKS OF SAVANNAH, THE CHANT RISES AND FALLS, LIVE A KING'S DREAMS. AIR, WITH NO DISCREETABLE POINT OF ORIGIN, PUSHES THROUGH THE CHAMBERS, AND THE DANCE CONTINUES...

UMBRELLA SAYS NOTHING. SHE MERELY WAITS. ADAM AND NORMAN STARE AT HER, LIKE A DISMAYED PIECE OF CANNON, AND AWEY THEIR EYES WHATEVER SHE LOOKS THEIR WAY.

OMGOS, YOU ARE SUMMONED FORTH TO WITNESS THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH IN MY NAME! I'LL NOW BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN OUR WORLD AND YOUR KNOWLEDGE FOR SURE, TEMPORARY MOMENTS...

WHEN YOU COME FORTH THIS TIME, YOU'LL NEVER AS TURN TO THE NETHERWORLD.

SHE WATCHES THEM STODIALLY AS THEY APPEAR. HESTER DEFINES 'GOD' AS 'A BEING TO BE WORSHIPPED OR FEARED, OF REASON OF SUPERIOR INTELLIGENCE OR SUPERNATURAL POWERS.'



PICK A GOD, ANY GOD



THERE, ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN... THE WORDS THAT WILL AGAIN MAKE CHAOS LORD OF ALL THE EARTH!

COME... LET US READ THEM TOGETHER!



AND IS IT, SHE WONDERS, THAT ALL MEN THINK THEY'RE GODS, AND ALL GODS THINK THEY'RE MEN?

THEN SHE REALIZES SHE'S BEEN HOLDING HER BREATH FOR NEARLY A MINUTE.



THIS HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH! YOUR SUPERIORS WERE RIGHT, SPECTRA... YOU ARE A TRAITOR! IN THE NAME OF THE FIVE, I PLACE YOU UNDER ARREST!

AND TELL YOUR LESSONS TO STAND BACK! ANYONE GETS TOO CLOSE, THE FIRST BULLET'S MINE!



NO WAY, WOMAN! IF YOU BOTCH THIS UP NOW, I'M OUT TWO MILLION DOLLARS...! SORRY, BUT I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN!

I THOUGHT YOU WERE PLAYING ALONG TO BOO YOUR NAME! YOU REALLY HAVE SOLD OUT!



NO, DRAGONFLY, ITS YOU WHO BETRAYED THE CAUSE TO WHICH YOU WERE SWORN! TO THE DETENTION CHAMBER WITH HER! WHEN THE RITUAL IS FINISHED, THE GODS THEMSELVES WILL DEAL WITH HER... IN A MOST HORRIBLE MANNER!



"IT OCCURRED TO ME AS I DROUGHT ATOP THE THE DISCARDED AUTO, THEY USE AN ELECTROMAGNET TO LIFT THE HEAVY METAL MASSSES!"

"EVEN THOUGH THE TAPE WAS CONCEALED IN A PLASTIC SCINTILLATOR, THE POWERFUL MAGNETIC RAYS WOULD DISTORT WHATEVER WAS ON IT."

"SINCE MUSIC DEPENDS ON THESE RE-PRODUCED, IT WOULD PRODUCE CHANGING RESULTS, IF YOU'LL PARDON THE PUN."

"SO I MISJUDGED YOU AFTER ALL... I'M SORRY!"

"I OWE YOU THE APOLOGY, YOU DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE AGAINST CHAOS ALONE AND IT WAS TOO SOON TO BLOW MY COVER. WE NEED A CONSPIRACY LIKE THIS TO GIVE US AN EDGE, I HAD TO STOP YOU!"

"WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE!"

"BUT UNTIL WE'RE SURE THIS INSTALLATION IS DESTROYED! THERE ARE TOO MANY DEADLY UNDERTAKINGS IN PROGRESS HERE! IF EVEN A TRACE OF OPERATION ATLANTIS OR THE LESIONNAIRE STRAIN EXISTS, THEY COULD PICK UP THE PIECES...!"

"I'VE RECOVERED MY ROVING RULE!"

"AND I'VE GOT MY MIND-OWN BACK! LET'S GO IN THERE AND CLEAN UP!"

"SPECTRUM'S USING THE LIFT... HE'S ESCAPING!"

"I'LL LEAVE YOU THREE TO HANDLE THINGS BELOW! I WANT SPECTRUM FOR MYSELF!"

"BE CAREFUL! LIKE YOU SAID ON THE PLANE, MANIPULATORS ALWAYS THINK THEY'RE IN CONTROL AND NEVER SUSPECT EVILS PLAY GAMES OF THEIR OWN. HE'LL BE PLUNTY AHEAD HOW THAT HE KNOWS YOU'VE MADE A FOOL OF HIM!"

"THE WORST STING WITHIN HER MORE THAN A DAY HAS PASSES SINCE SHE LAST DRANK THE BLOOD-BLUST-TUTE SERUM."

"IT IS ONE OF THOSE RARE OCCASIONS WHEN SHE'S GLAD SHE'S A HUNTRESS. SHE LOOKS FORWARD TO THE SWEETNESS OF THE KILL."

THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH THE ODOR OF FRESHLY COOKED MEAT-- MOST OF IT BOILED ALIVE. THE OUL OF THE SUNDRIED CIRCLE IS TORN /SWINGER...!



HE KNOWS, KNOWING FULL WELL, THE **UTILITY** OF FLIGHT. HE DOES IT ONLY BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING ELSE **LEFT** FOR HIM TO DO. HE KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS THE **TEMPERAMENT** OF HIS STALKER.



GOOD AGENTS ARE A **RARE** COMMODITY. IN THE LINE OF DUTY THEY'RE CALLED UPON TO LIE, CHEAT, STEAL, EVEN KILL-- AND THEY MUST DO SO WITHOUT REGRET.



WHICH IS HOW HE KNEW HE STOOD NO CHANCE OF ESCAPE.

BEFORE YOU ARE, THERE ARE THINGS YOU LIKE TO KNOW. WERE YOU INVOLVED WITH CHASE WHEN I TACKLED THAT **WANKER** SLAVERY RING LAST YEAR??

I'D NEVER HEARD OF THEM THEN.



SPECTERS GOT A FIVE MINUTES HEAD START. BUT IT WON'T HELP. HE'S TRAVELLING ON FOOT. I CAN TAKE TO THE AIR.



THEY'RE RESOURCEFUL, PERSISTENT, EVEN **DOGGED** IN FOLLOWING THEIR JOB.

HE RECOGNIZED ALL THOSE QUALITIES IN **BARBARA CURRIEL** WHEN HE FIRST SAW HER OVER A YEAR AGO AS RAW MATERIAL. SHE WAS PERFECT. SHE'D BE A GREAT AGENT.



IT WASN'T TILL I SNASHED A CRIMINAL EMPLOYER IN LONDON THAT I STUMBLED UPON THE **ENGLISHMAN'S** NOTEBOOK.

WHEN I REALIZED ITS POTENTIAL POWER, I DERIVED. I ORGANIZED A BRANCH OF THE CULT AND CONCEIVED THE IDEA OF THE SCIENCE CENTER!



YOU COULD'VE HAD IT ALL, BUT YOU OVERPLAYED. FIRST BY INVOLVING ME... THEN BY TAKING ADAM.

YOU'RE RIGHT. I WAS A GOOD FIELD AGENT IN MY TIME, BUT THE YEARS BEHIND A DESK TURNED ME SOFT. I HANDLED THIS LIKE A RANK AMATEUR.



THE DEVILS ARE VENTING THEIR WRATH ON THE CULT MEMBERS NOW! BUT IF WE DON'T FIND A WAY TO SEND THEM BACK TO NEVER-NEVER LAND, THERE'LL BE NO ONE LEFT TO DEVOUR BUT US!

THE SUNDRED CIRCLE... DESTROY THE CIRCLE!



DON'T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF. YOUR JOB WAS TO KNOCK AND TRIM GOOD AGENTS YOU DID IT WELL. IF YOU AGREE YOU WOULDN'T BE LAYING THERE RIGHT NOW.

IN A WAY, YOU AND I ARE VERY MUCH ALIKE. WE'VE BOTH ACCEPTED CERTAIN THINGS ABOUT OURSELVES MOST OTHER PEOPLE NEVER HAVE TO FACE.



YOU'RE RIGHT! AS FLAMES RISE UP, THE CIRCLE, THE DEVILS ARE *DISAPPEARING!*

I SUGGEST WE DO THE SAME. IF WE STAY ANY LONGER, WE'LL BE TRAPPED. THE FIRE WILL SOON CUT US OFF FROM THE LIFT!



THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO SAY THEN EXCEPT...

...THIS IS FOR GERMAN AND JEAN AND TINA AND THE ENGLISHMAN AND GOD KNOWS HOW MANY OTHERS!



WE MADE IT! THERE'S NOTHING LEFT HERE TO POSE A THREAT TO ANYONE! WE'D BETTER SEE HOW HALENINE IS FARING WITH SPECTRUM!

I HOPE SHE DOESN'T GO FOR THE BARGAIN. THAT COULD BE A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN TO THE FBI, EVEN WHEN WE'RE ON THEIR SIDE!





CONSIDERABLE TIME CONSUMED
 THE REUNION WAS A DILATORY ONE, THOUGH THEY'D ONLY BEEN SEPARATED ONE WEEK. THERE WERE A LOT OF QUESTIONS, AND THE ANSWERS COULD ONLY BE FOUND BY CONTINUING WORK.



CONRAD HAD THE FOREGOING TO BRING A FRESH SUPPLY OF BLOOD SUBSTITUTE SERUM. JUST IN CASE YOU NEEDED IT, HE'D SAID.

THEY ALSO TOOK ADAM TO AN EMERGENCY CLINIC FOR THE TREATMENT OF THE HEAD INJURY HE SUFFERED DURING THE KIDNAPPING. HE HAD A BAD CASE OF SHAPES, TOO, FROM THE ACE AN-IDEONE. BUT THEY'D GO AWAY IN TIME.



HOW WAS IT THE FBI GOT INVOLVED WITH SPECTRUM?

HE FEELS GOT SUSPICIOUS WHEN HE SECRETLY SOUGHT INFORMATION FROM OTHER DIVISIONS... OFFERING NO EXPLANATIONS. NORMALLY THEIR OWN SECURITY PEOPLE WOULD HANDLE THE INVESTIGATION.



BUT SPECTRUM KNEW ALL THEIR AGENTS. BESIDES, INTERNAL SECURITY IS FBI JURISDICTION. CONGRESS IS VERY TOUGH ABOUT CROSSEVERNS, THESE DAYS!

ONE OTHER THING: IF BERMAN AND JEN GRADUALLY DEIGNED TO GRAD, WHY DID THEY PLAN TO LEAVE FOR SHARZ BEFORE THE BIG RITUAL?

BECCOS, SPECTRUM KNEW THE ENGLISHMAN WAS TIPPING AT HIS TAIL. HE ARMAGED IT TO LOOK LIKE THEY'D TAKEN THE TAPE AWAY THEM.



IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE. IF YOU EVER SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WORKING FULL-TIME FOR THE FBI YOU CAN USE ME AS A REFERENCE.

THANKS, BUT I'LL MISS IN SPITE OF WHAT SPECTRUM SAID, I DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES...



A SCOP ASSENT WOULD NEVER HAVE PLAYED ALONG WITH THE AGENT'S ROUTINE. SHE'D HAVE DESTROYED THE TAPE IN THE BEGINNING, REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES TO ADAM.

"I'M AFRAID I'M NOT THAT TYPE."





LATER

THAT WAS QUITE A
CONVINCING ACT EARLIER. I
WAS ALMOST READY TO BE
LEAVE YOU WERE SELLING
US ALL OUT!

ALMOST READY? ANYWAY,
SPECTRUM DIDN'T INTEND TO PAY.
HE PROVED THAT BACK AT THE MISSION
...AS SOON AS THE MESSENGER
THOUGHT HE HAD THE TAPE HE
TRIED TO SHOOT ME.



WITH SPECTRUM DEAD, YOU
NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT THE ZRS. AND
I'M RELIEVED TO KNOW THAT CHAOS
NEVER HAD THE POWER TO BRANCH-
WASH BY HIDE EYE CONTACT!
IT WAS ALL PART OF THE
RUSE!

HERE'S SOMETHING IN RIVERSIDE.
A MAN NAMED NORTH WAS KILLED WHEN
HIS TRUCK WENT OVER AN EMBANKMENT.
IT COULD BE COINCIDENCE, BUT I'M
MORE INCLINED TO THINK DEANE KEPT
HIS PROMISE.



A KNOCK SOUNDED OUTSIDE THE DOOR. THE WOODEN
DOOR NORMAN GREENGLASS, FIGHT ON DO-BULL

I CAME TO TAKE YOU
TO THE AIRPORT. YOUR FLIGHT
TO NEW YORK LEAVES IN A FEW
HOURS, AND TRAFFIC ON THE
I-5 FREWAY IS HEAVY.

I'M SORRY IF I WAS AWKWARD
ON THE PHONE YESTERDAY. YOU'VE
BEEN MORE HELPFUL THAN I COULD
EVER THANK YOU FOR. WHAT
WILL YOU DO NOW THAT
THAT'S GONE?



I DON'T KNOW. I WAS
NEVER MUCH OF A HUSBAND TO
HER WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE. IF I EVER
GET THE CHANCE AGAIN...WITH AN-
OTHER WOMAN...MAYBE THINGS
LL BE DIFFERENT.



SHE WISHES SHE COULD REMEMBER HOW
MANY TIMES SHE'S HEARD THOSE WORDS.
EVERY NOW SHE FINDS HERSELF SAYING
THEM. MAYBE WHEN HE GETS BACK TO
NEW YORK, THINGS WILL BE DIFFERENT.

BUT SOMEHOW, THEY ALWAYS GO ON TO
BE THE SAME.

AT LUNCH, SOMETHING STIRRED AMONG THE RUMS. A FORMER, SINGING BLACK CROWD THAT WAS MORE AN ESSENCE THAN A SUBSTANCE. IT HAD THE SUPPORTING STENCH OF PRELUDE DECAY.



THE BEAST WAS CALLED MOLON, SOMETIMES THE PRINCE OF NIGHT. IN A FREAK OCCURRENCE, LACKING FLAUNTIBLE EXPLANATION, MOLON WAS NOT CAST BACK INTO THE NETHERWORLD WITH THE OTHERS.

FOR SOME, MOLON HAD SERVED HIS LONG MASTER ENOUGH, BY BRINGING DEATH IN THE NIGHT TO HIS ENEMIES. NOW ELATED IN HIS NEWFOUND FREEDOM, MOLON CHOICES ANOTHER MACH HE WOULD DESTROY. AT PRESENT SHE RIDES A NEW YORK BOUND JET.



HER NAME IS ROMANIELLA.

SHE THOUGHT THE SIGHT OF NEW YORK WOULD CHEER HER. IT DIDN'T. THE MEMORY OF DARK, EVIL EYES ON THE HORIZON WAS TOO WILD, TOO HAUNTING.

THE HEAT WAVE HAD FINALLY BROKEN...THE CITY CAUGHT ITS BREATH KENNEDY AIRPORT BUZZED WITH PORTERS, PASSENGERS, AND WAITING FAMILIES.



WHAT'S THE MATTER, LOVER? YOU LOOK LIKE SOME ONE WHOSE PET JUST DIED.

A SLIGHT CASE OF DEPRESSION. JUST EXHAUSTION. IT'LL PASS.

PERHAPS A CELEBRATION IS IN ORDER. WE FOUR ARE REUNITED, CHAOS IS STOPPED, HERE BACK IN OUR NATIVE HABITAT, AND COOLER DAYS ARE UPON US! BEGIBB, MY DEAR. IT WILL BRIGHTEN YOUR SPIRITS!

OUNDS GOOD.

FRIDAY, JULY 22 EAST

The Survivors

IN TRUTH, WHAT SHE FELT WAS LESS DEPRESSION THAN A SLOOZIE, FEELING AWARENESS OF HER OWN **IMMORTALITY**. IN FACT, IN HER FOREKNOWLEDGE THAT EVEN A SE-SONED **SURVIVOR** LIKE HERSELF MUST ONE DAY DIE.

I SEE IT ALL... SHE REALIZED HER TIME WAS SOON.



IT MUST BE FRIGHTENING TO SEE OLD DEATH IS A DAILY REALITY TO THE AGED, AS THEY WATCH FRIENDS--THE WORLD THEY KNOW--PASS ON. THEY REALIZE ITS ONLY A BRIEF TIME BEFORE THEY TOO ARE GONE.

I GUESS THAT'S WHY OLD PEOPLE ARE HOSTILE TOWARD THE YOUNG. THEY'RE RESISTANT WHEN THEY SEE YOUNG PEOPLE **SPENDING** TIME THEY WISH THEY HAD.



OF COURSE, SOME REALIZE THAT LIFE IS ONLY **PRECIOUS** BECAUSE IT ENDS. IF EVERYONE WAS **IMMORTAL**, THERE'D BE NO **APPRECIATION**. EVERYTHING WOULD BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED.



NOW THAT THAT'S SETTLED, LET'S DECIDE WHERE SHALL WE GO TONIGHT?

THE WEST ALLAGE, IN SPIRIT OF TACKY COSMETIC SURGERY, REMAINS A \$19.99 BORN STRONGHOLD OF SANITY IN THE THIRTY-FOUR-DOLLAR ISLAND. THE NEON IS MOUNTED JUST A BIT THE MORE LESS SPECTACULAR, MORE **AWKWARD**.



WE'RE JUST IN TIME FOR **MARILYN JENNINGS'** SECOND SHOW AT THE BOTTOM LINE. IT SHOULD BE QUITE A PERFORMANCE...

IT'D ENJOY IT MORE IF I COULD SHAKE THIS FEELING OF **IMMUNENT DIS-ASSER**...LIKE SOMETHING WAS PREYING...FEEDING ON MY MIND...



I CHALLENGED THE LIVING, THE DEAD, THE IN-BETWEEN--EVEN GODS--WITH BARELY A GOD TO DEATH, BUT THIS IS DIFFERENT...IT'S **UNGRASPABLE**. THERE IS SOMETHING EVIL IN THE NIGHT...

RANWHRRRR



EEEEEEK!



ARE YOU ALL
RIGHT?

I THINK SO. SOME
PLEASANT MUSIC AND GOOD
CONVERSATION IS THE ONLY CURE
I NEED.



BUT LATER ...
YOU DON'T THINK THAT
ATTACKING ALLEMCAT WAS
AN ACCIDENT... I CAN TELL.

I THINK IT'S ARE, ADAM.
ALL DAY I'VE BEEN HAVING THESE
HORRIBLE, MORBID THOUGHTS. I
THINK I'VE DEVELOPED A SUBCON-
SCIOUS DEATH WISH AND SOMEDAY
I WILL LET THAT CAT TO ATTACK,
NOW OR ANY, I CAN'T UNDER-
STAND. I--



AAA-URRR! THOSE
EYES...THE EYES OF THE
NIGHT...I-I CAN'T
STARE THEM...

WHAT ARE YOU
BLABBERING ABOUT? I
DON'T SEE ANYTHING

I-THEY'RE TELLING ME...
I MUST DESTROY MYSELF...IN THE
DARK, IN THE NIGHT!



WED BETTER GET
HER OUTSIDE. THE FRESH
AIR WILL CURE HER.

WHAT
HAPPENED,
DY-LOVE?

I WAS WRONG, ADAM! IT'S
NOT ANY DEATH-WISH. SOMETHING
IS TRYING TO CONTRADICT ME! YOU
MAY THINK I'M CRAZY, BUT IT'S
THE NIGHT!



THE NIGHT'S
TRYING TO KILL
YOU?

MY DEAR, YOU'VE BEEN
UNDER A LOT OF STRAIN LATELY,
BOTH PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY.
YOU'RE EXHAUSTED, YOU SAID
SO YOURSELF.



LISTEN, YOU WHODUNNIT
LOVOT, I KNOW WHAT I SAW
IN THERE...I DIDN'T IMAGINE
IT! I--

I-I'M SORRY,
CONRAD. I DON'T KNOW
WHAT GOT INTO ME
I...PLEASE SOME-
ONE...TAKE ME
HOME

THE FIRST WILL USE, LIKE THOSE WHO AMBUSH IT, STRUGGLE TO RETAIN ITS INDIVIDUALITY IN AN IMPERSONAL ENVIRONMENT, LIKE AN AGING OUTLAW, IT RECOGNIZES THAT THE CONFLICT CAN END ONE OF TWO WAYS...

EITHER SOCIETY AMBIGUATES ITS SON-IN-LAW INDEPENDENTS...OR, SOONER OR LATER, IT WILL BECOME AS OLD AND IMPERSONAL AS THE SURROUNDING JUNGLE.



WE WANT YOUR MONEY NOW AND YOUR MOUTH SHUT FIRST!

NOT WARRS YOU'VE RECEIVED THE OWNERS, BUT I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE REAKY AFTER! YOU'RE ONE OF THE NIGHT...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT LADY, BUT EITHER YOU FORK OVER YOUR BREAD OR WE SLIT YOUR PRETTY THROAT!

HER DERNANCE, STEMMED MORE FROM DESPAIRATION THAN PETER-MINATION, IT WAS NOT SO MUCH REAPPROPRIATION OF HER WILL TO LIVE, AS A BLIND, CON-ADLY ORIGIN AT THE CHANCE TO LIVE.



NOTHTELESS, IT ALLOWED



I'VE SPENT QUITE ENOUGH TIME IN THE COMPANY OF POLICEMEN OF LATE, I SUGGEST WE MASTER FROM HERE, BEFORE WE'RE ASKED FOR FURTHER DIFFICULT EXPLANATIONS.

I AGREE, AGENT, FIND A CAB TO TAKE US TO THE HOTEL... QUICKLY.



WHATEVER WANTS ME DEAD IS LIKE A DISMEMBERED SHADOW, IT CANNOT ACT DIRECTLY, IT MUST USE AGENTS, WHETHER THEY BE CATS, RUSSANS, OR SOMETHING ELSE, BUT UNDERNEATH IS ONE WILL, ONE INTELLIGENCE!

MONSIEUR! YOU'RE SUFFERING FROM FATIGUE, PURE AND SIMPLE, AND IT'S MAKING YOU PARANOID.

I'M NOT PARANOID! SOMETHING'S DELIBERATELY PUSHING ME TO THE BRINK OF DESPAIR!



I TELL YOU, HONEY,
ALL YOU NEED IS REST!

I CAN'T REST, ADAM.
TOO MANY THINGS ARE FIGHTING
FOR GRACE IN MY MIND. I'M
GOING TO TAKE A SHOWER.



IT'S A DEMON, IT MUST
BE! BUT WHICH ONE? PERHAPS
ONE OF THE SEVEN SERVANTS OF
DARKNESS... MOLOCAL, PRINCE OF
DARKNESS?

BUT, IT CAN'T BE. HE
WAS BANISHED WITH THE
OTHERS BACK INTO THE NEVER-
VOID. ADAM MUST BE RIGHT.
I'M OVERTIRED.



UNTIL THIS MOMENT SHE HAS, PERHAPS, RELIED ON HER TRUSTED ARENGOS
ALMOST AS STOP SIGNS ALONG THE ROAD TO DEPAIR. NOW THEY'RE
GONE...



I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED!
ADAM... AND EVERYONE ELSE...
IS VULNERABLE TO THE DEVON'S
CONTROL. ANY OF THEM
COULD TURN AGAINST ME!



RRRIIPPPP

SHE IS ALONE
WITH THE LIGHT.







SUDDENLY

BUT YOU SHALL NOT
HAVE ANY FREEDOM! I
AM THE PRINCE OF NIGHT...
I CONTROL ALL MEN AND YOU
MUST TREMBLE AND COWER
BEFORE ME!

HA! AND REMEMBER
DO NOT MARCH, IF ANY PART
OF YOUR BODY PASSES OUT OF
THE SUMMERED CIRCLE, YOUR
PROTECTION ENDS



I TREMBLE AND COWER
BEFORE NO ONE! NOW I KNOW
WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE,
MOLON... AND I KNOW YOU
CAN BE STOPPED!

I'M NO LONGER
CRIPPLED BY FEAR OF
THE UNKNOWN!



AAAAAGH!



NOW I WILL READ
THE SPELL OF BANISH-
MENT, BEFORE YOU HAVE
TIME TO FIND ANOTHER
HOST BODY



LATER

I'M SORRY ABOUT THE
ATTACK. AS SOON AS I FELT
THE KILLING THING ENTER ME, I
KNEW EVERYTHING YOU'D
SAID WAS TRUE.

IT'S OVER NOW. I
FEEL STRONGER, MORE
SECURE... MORE FULL OF
LIFE THAN EVER!

IT MUST HAVE BEEN
WORKING ON US ALL ALONG FOR
US TO HAVE DOUBTED YOU
AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN
THROUGH.



...BUT I SURE
AM GLAD TO SEE
DAYLIGHT!

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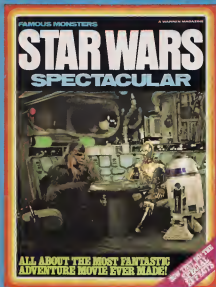


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