

EVIL STAR-RAIDERS AGAINST the WORLD!

VAMPIRELLA

**SLIME
CREATURES
and ROBOTS
ARE HERE
to DESTROY
EARTH!**

**...and
VAMPIRELLA
DOES
NOTHING
TO STOP
THEM!**

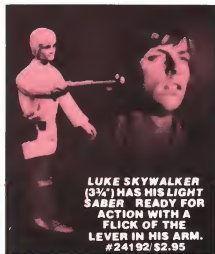


STAR WARS

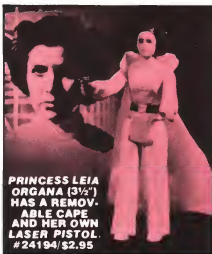
Action Figures

ALREADY ASSEMBLED!

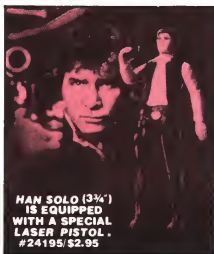
Nine exciting action figures, all in their authentic STAR WARS costumes. All have movable arms and legs designed for action poses. Set up a tabletop STAR WARS!



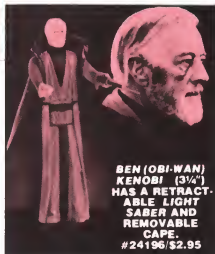
LUKE SKYWALKER
(3 1/4") HAS HIS LIGHT
SABER READY FOR
ACTION WITH A
FLICK OF THE
LEVER IN HIS ARM.
#24192/\$2.95



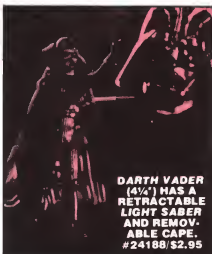
**PRINCESS LEIA
ORGANA** (3 1/4")
HAS A REMOV-
ABLE CAPE
AND HER OWN
LASER PISTOL.
#24194/\$2.95



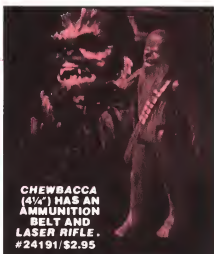
HAN SOLO (3 1/4")
IS EQUIPPED
WITH A SPECIAL
LASER PISTOL.
#24195/\$2.95



**BEN (OBI-WAN)
KENOBI** (3 1/4")
HAS A RETRACT-
ABLE LIGHT
SABER AND
REMOVABLE
CAPE.
#24196/\$2.95



DARTH VADER
(4 1/4") HAS A
RETRACTABLE
LIGHT SABER
AND REMOV-
ABLE CAPE.
#24188/\$2.95



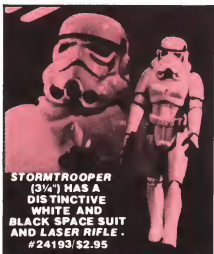
CHEWBACCA
(4 1/4") HAS AN
AMMUNITION
BELT AND
LASER RIFLE.
#24191/\$2.95



SEE THREEPIO
(C-3PO) (3 1/4")
IS A BRILLIANT
GOLD COLOR
AND IS ARTIC-
ULATED AT
THE SHOULDERS
AND HIPS.
#24190/\$2.95



ARTOO DETOO
(R2-D2) (2 1/4")
HAS MOVABLE
LEGS AND A
"CHROME" TOP
THAT "CLICKS"
AS IT TURNS.
#24189/\$2.95



STORMTROOPER
(3 1/4") HAS A
DISTINCTIVE
WHITE AND
BLACK SPACE SUIT
AND LASER RIFLE.
#24193/\$2.95



VAMPIRELLA®

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Each month our artists and writers deliver work to the yellow...uh,hallowed pages of our comics, above and beyond the call of payment. Here is our way of thanking them for their fine efforts.

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Vampi's Scarlet Letters

VAMPI on Drakulon: too much information or not enough?

VVAMPIRELLA #66 was another classic!

I knew that the alien woman mentioned in #65 would turn out to be Pantha and I was right! She was just too good a character to be forgotten. Here's one reader whose fingers are crossed that she'll return, deadlier than ever!

Now that you've brought Pantha and VAMPI together, I hope **Fleur** will be joining them. I can't wait to see them in action together.

Concerning the VAMPIRELLA Mystery Contest: I guessed that Michael and Eric were one and the same vampire! In fact, I figured out all of the solutions except "But First This Brief Interruption." Now that was a hard one!

WILSON RIVERA
Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Brancatelli: bite your tongue!"

I am writing concerning the column in which **Joe Brancatelli** panned **Stan Lee's** fanciful comic about the rock group, **KISS**, saying Mr. Lee would have to pay his dues for promoting "four creeps" who don't care about entertaining people. Well, that doesn't make sense.

Entertainment is what **KISS** is all about. That's the reason for the makeup, the costumes, the blood spitting, the fire spitting, the whole bit. Even the *New York Times* liked their show.

I understand that Mr. **Brancatelli** is concerned about the violence kids see today. He wants them to have heroes to look up to.

I don't think **KISS** is hurting this in any way. We see violence in almost any comic we pick up or show on TV. But we don't see mindless violence in the **KISS** comic. It's about four youths in New York City who are lucky enough to live their fantasies and become comic book heroes. It's all very decent.

As for the men themselves, one **KISS** ex-press agent, **Danny Goldberg** said, "... (They're) the nicest rock stars I ever worked with. Not too nice, just human beings without egos the size of the baseball stadiums they perform in ... In the rock 'n roll scene, I've seen people beaten up; self-destruction and ego trips beyond description, misery, waste of millions of dollars and disease. Some are foolish enough to think that such negativity is necessary for success. **KISS** proves the opposite—thank God!"

Brancatelli, bite your tongue!

MARION PLUMMER
New York, N.Y.

VAMPIRELLA isn't getting better...



she's just getting older?

A few years ago, someone wrote to **VAMPI's** *Scarlet Letters*, inquiring about **VAMPIRELLA's** age, height, etc. The editorial response was that revealing her age would destroy some of the magic that surrounds her. I was in complete agreement.

Now **Bill DuBay**, in the **VAMPIRELLA** episode "To Be a Bride in Death," has revealed that she is twenty-six years old, a big mistake on Mr. **DuBay's** part. Now we know. And some of **VAMPI's** alluring mystery is gone.

DAVID E. FINLRY
N.Y.C., N.Y.

Writer **Bill DuBay** deliberately revealed this background information because, to him, **VAMPIRELLA** is "real" and real people do get older. The more the readers (and the writer) know about her, the more a "person" she becomes for them. **Dube** believes in her enough that he can't wait to see her at eighty! He's sure she'll make a "swinging" old lady!

I only had one complaint about **Enrich's** fabulous cover to **VAMPIRELLA** #66... that stupid box in the right hand corner of the cover! This ruins the cover's artistic effect!

The **VAMPI** story was great! Thanks for bringing back Pantha. And the superb illustrations by **Jose Gonzalez** prove once again, that he is the only artist fit to illustrate **VAMPIRELLA**!

JOE COLLINS
Afton, N.Y.

"Picture Complete" by **Bruce Jones** and **Gonzalo Mayo** was great... right up to the last page. That final panel was a disappointment. I just couldn't believe that the protagonist got into his role of panther enough to become a cat-man himself!

ALEX RUDNOV
New York, N.Y.

VAMPIRELLA's origin, retold and enhanced in #66, was nice since there wasn't nearly as much detail in her original origin back in #1. It's nice to have more information. But I will be glad to get back to a regular story format.

The story, "Picture Complete" was excellent. It's been a long time since I've seen a story that had something to do with one of those fantastic old **Frazetta** covers.

I had given up reading **VAMPIRELLA** for about six years, but if the issues continue this good, you can count on me for a subscription.

GREG SISK
San Jose, Calif.

VAMPIRELLA #66 was probably the best all-around issue since #60. **Jose Gonzalez** seems to do the impossible every single issue... he tops the job he turned in the month before! **Bill DuBay** also deserves praise for the way he is steering the series. He manages to make the stories adventurous, realistic and extremely interesting at the same time. Having Pantha turn up on **Drakulon** was one more in a series of fantastic ideas!

"Down Under" by **Bruce Jones** wasn't the most original story in the world but it was entertaining. Even **Luis Bermejo's** art was okay!

"Picture Complete" and "The Blazer" by **Jones** were both excellent and the art on each was what I've come to expect from superior artists like **Gonzalo Mayo** and **Jose Ortiz**.

My only complaint concerns the solutions to the mystery stories from #65. Although they were all good, it's been so long since they appeared that I'd lost interest long ago. I hope **Warren** doesn't intend to make the Mystery Contest issue an annual event!

KIERAN DIAMOND
Philadelphia, Penn.

Judging from the Contestants' response, many readers really enjoyed the mystery issue, **Kieran**. Others didn't. What do you others have to say? More contests or less?



Vampi's Scarlet Letters

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**ORPHEE, POOR ORPHEE,
They made him in a jar
right there in the lab!**



P-PROFESSOR TRINITY... SIR! D-DON'T YOU THINK IT'S DANGEROUS?

I...I MEAN... TAMPERING WITH THE UNKNOWN, SIR..?

NONSENSE, PARACLETE! CREATING LIVING ORGANISMS IS OBVIOUSLY THE NEXT STEP IN MAN'S FATEFUL CLIMB TO GODHOOD!



WE'VE LONG KNOWN THE CHEMICAL FORMULA OF LIFE! ONLY RECENTLY HAVE SCIENTISTS CREATED SINGLE-CELLED ANIMALS UTILIZING THAT FORMULA!



WHY...IT WASN'T SO MANY WEEKS AGO THAT YOU AND I PARENTED OUR OWN SINGLE-CELLED CREATION IN THIS VERY LAB!

AND LOOK...JUST LOOK AT THE MAGNIFICENT CHILD THAT CELL HAS GROWN UP TO BE!

AND WE **MUST** KNOW! BECAUSE...BECAUSE EVER SINCE "BABY" HERE BEGAN ITS LIFE...PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BEING EATEN!

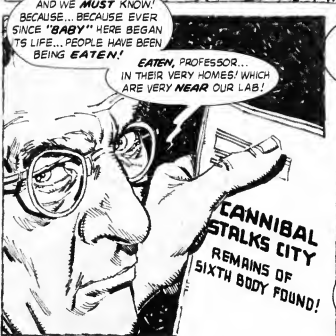
EATEN, PROFESSOR... IN THEIR VERY HOMES! WHICH ARE VERY NEAR OUR LAB!



BUT... PROFESSOR...! WE STILL KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT THE THING!

IS...IS IT TRULY ALIVE? DOES IT THINK? DOES IT BREATHE AS WE DO...? AND...AND DOES IT EAT, PROFESSOR?

WE STILL DON'T EVEN KNOW IF IT EATS!



CANNIBAL STALKS CITY
REMAINS OF SIXTH BODY FOUND!



SURELY, PARACLETE, YOU AREN'T IMPLYING THAT OUR LITTLE ORPHEE IS RESPONSIBLE....!?

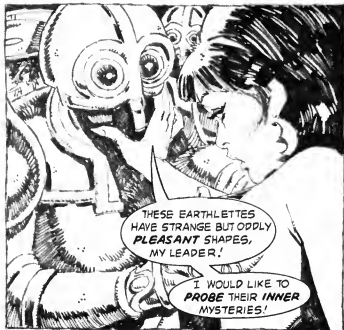
HOW CAN YOU EVEN THINK SUCH A THING? WHY... JUST LOOK AT HIM! OUR LITTLE ORPHEE IS A PERFECT ANGEL!



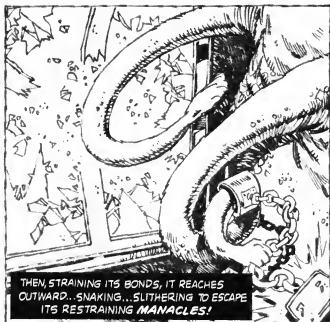
VAMPIRELLA









MEANWHILE...ABOVE
THE STREETS WHERE
THE CAMERAS ROLL...
BULBOUS EYES WATCH
THE SCENE WITH
HUNGERED INTEREST...






OH...UH...THANK **HEAVENS!**
YOU'VE...ER...YOU'VE COME
TO MY **RESCUE**, YOU BIG,
STRONG, WARTY THING,
YOU!




OH MY! **MORE**
OF THOSE VILE
MALEFACTORS ARE
SWARMING OUR WAY!




WH-WHAT'S HE
DOING **NOW?**



GOOD GOD! HE...
HE'S DESTROYING THOUSANDS
OF DOLLARS WORTH OF
PROPS!




WHO CARES? FOR
FOOTAGE LIKE THIS, I'D
LET HIM DESTROY HALF
OF L.A.



I DON'T KNOW WHO
HE IS UNDER THAT PUTRESCENCE
...BUT WHEN THIS SCENE IS
OVER, I'M GONNA SIGN HIM TO
A LIFETIME **CONTRACT!**



UH... FELLA ...! I
DON'T MIND YOU AD-
LIBBING A LITTLE! BUT
LET'S TAKE IT EASY
ON THE **FLESH**, HUH!



HEY, PUT ME **DOWN!**
I WANT NO PART OF YOU
KINKY HOLLYWOOD TYPES!



H-HEY! YOU...
YOU'RE NOT **ACTING**
ARE YOU!?

YOU'RE FOR
REAL!



WE'LL
**BOTH BE
CRUSHED!**
I'VE PLAYED
INTO THE
HANDS OF MY
ARCH-ENEMY
CHAOS!

OH LORD!
NOW I'VE DONE
IT! WE'RE FALLING
TO THE **PAVEMENT!**



WE'VE LANDED SAFELY.
AND NOW YOU'LL **DESTROY**
ME!

THEY'VE SENT YOU TO
DO ME **IN**...RIGHT!? TO TAKE
ME **UNAWARES** IN FRONT OF
ALL THESE CAMERAS...FOR ALL
YOUR DECADENT SERVANTS TO
SEE!



WELL, YOU'RE NOT GOING
TO MAKE A **SNUFF**
STAR OUT OF ME!



MY **GOD!** WHAT'S
HAPPENING OUT
THERE?

VAMPIRELLA....
SHE...SHE'S
INSANE!

PSHAW!
IT'S ALL PART
OF HER **ACT!**



EEEEEE!





WE...WE MAY AS WELL TELL THEM THE HORRIBLE TRUTH, PROFESSOR! AFTER WHAT WE'VE SEEN, THERE CAN'T BE ANY DOUBT!

THIS...THIS...THING IS THE **CANNIBAL** YOU'VE NO DOUBT HEARD ABOUT IN THE NEWS.



WE...WE **CREATED** HIM...FROM THE BASIC INGREDIENTS OF LIFE!

AND SOMEHOW... HE ACQUIRED A TASTE FOR HUMAN **FLESH**!

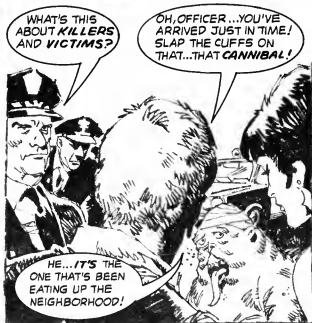
YOU...YOU'RE PUTTING ME ON! YOU MEAN...HE'S NOT A MEMBER OF THE SCREEN ACTOR'S GUILD?



HARDLY! HE'S A COLD-BLOODED **KILLER**!

AND THIS PRETTY LADY WAS ALMOST HIS NEXT **VICTIM**!

OH LORD!



WHAT'S THIS ABOUT **KILLERS** AND **VICTIMS**?

OH, OFFICER...YOU'VE ARRIVED JUST IN TIME! SLAP THE CUFFS ON THAT...THAT **CANNIBAL**!

HE...IT'S THE ONE THAT'S BEEN EATING UP THE NEIGHBORHOOD!



VERY FUNNY!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF GIMMICK YOU'RE TRYING TO **PULL** HERE... BUT IT WON'T WORK!

YOU CAN TAKE THE **COSTUME** OFF, BUDDY! WE'VE **NAILED** OUR PEOPLE-EATING MADMAN AS HE WAS SITTING DOWN TO ANOTHER **FEAST**!



AND SINCE HE WAS ONE OF **YOUR** ACTORS... YOU'LL BE GETTING MORE PUBLICITY THAN YOU'LL BE **WANTING**!

ALL OF IT... **BAD!!**



THEN... THEN
ORPHEE *ISN'T* TO
BLAME! WE'VE
MISJUDGED THE
POOR LITTLE
DARLING
COMPLETELY!

BUT... I DON'T
UNDERSTAND, PROFESSOR!
WHY DID HE *ATTACK*
THE GIRL?

WHEN HE SAW
HER FROM THE LAB
WINDOW, HE MUST HAVE
THOUGHT SHE WAS BEING
MENACED BY THOSE
INVADING "SPACEMEN!"

HE WAS ONLY
TRYING TO *HELP*
HER, MY BOY! DON'T
YOU *SEE*!?



OH
JOY!

THAT SHOWS
INTELLIGENCE! HE...
HE'S PRACTICALLY
HUMAN... AND WE'VE
CREATED HIM!



MAN-EATING
CANNIBALS! TENTACLED
MONSTERS! AND
RAMPANT *INSANITY*
ON MY SET!



I'M GOING *MAD*...
I'M EVEN BEGINNING TO
THINK I SAW MY *STAR*
TURN INTO A RAVING
VAMPIRE!

VAMPIRE!?
HA! HA! YOU ARE
GOING ZONKERS!



OH... IT'S
ALL SO
CONFUSING!

WE'VE SIMPLY GOT TO
FIND A *QUIETER* SPOT TO
FINISH THIS PICTURE!

QUIET!?! IN
HOLLYWOOD? I'M
BEGINNING TO THINK
THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE*!

THE COMIC BOOKS

by Joe Brancatelli

KISS AND TELL

There was a deluge of letters following my recent condemnation of Stan Lee's decision to publish the *KISS* comic book and I can report an unprecedented outburst of almost total unanimity. Most letters, whether they were addressed to this column or to the Warren letter pages, told me where to get off. The *KISS* army, as they called themselves, vehemently defended their heroes and wasted no words in their unrelenting attack on my opinion.

Words, as they say, cannot express my depression. I hate being a minority of one, especially when few of the *KISS* Army even bothered to defend the group's non-existent musical talents—and especially when I believe I am uncontestedly correct. But despite my discomfort at being almost alone out on this very long, very critical anti-*KISS* limb, I will not recant a word of my earlier objections to the concept of a *KISS* comic book.

I don't care how many people disagree, I find no qualities—redeeming or otherwise—in a band that incorporates the old Nazi "SS" logo into its nameplate. I find nothing entertaining about a group that spills its own blood into a vat of printer's ink. And I simply don't understand the *KISS* Army when they say this juvenile blood-letting is acceptable behavior because "it's just a publicity stunt." Are we to believe the rules of good taste and common civility do not apply just because some money-mad group of musical incompetents is engaged in a publicity stunt? The logic of this defense is mind boggling—and what the hell, why not go out and kill someone if it's just a publicity stunt?

No thanks, folks, these blood-spilling, pseudo-Nazi crazies with no musical talent should not be portrayed as heroes in the comics. A pox on Stan Lee's house for

pandering to your basest emotions.

1984, WARREN STYLE

Warren Publications' much delayed 1984 magazine should be on the newsstands by the end of January, several months behind schedule and light years away from its original concept. Edited by Bill DuBay, 1984 is a bi-monthly, \$1.50 comic which publisher Jim Warren calls "a magazine for 'A-dults'... with no kiddie porn." If that's true, 1984 would then be a welcome relief from all the boring, coy and cutesy-poo porn material that pops up regularly in *Creepy*, *Eerie* and *Vampirella*.

Warren says 1984 is all-comics material, "heavily slanted towards science fiction" and hopefully appealing to a college-aged audience. It's got a Richard Corben cover, "a la *Star Wars*," admits Warren, who'd say no more except that "opinions from high-priced lawyers" lead him to believe the book can indeed be called 1984 without infringing on the copyright of the George Orwell novel of the same number.

1984 is officially about six months behind schedule, about nine months later than Warren privately intimated it would reach newsstands and several zillion years after the demise of *Pow*, Warren's never-published first flirtation with the upscale-comic-book market. Warren says the book is late because "it took six months to get the bugs out," but the truth of the matter is that 1984 bears absolutely no resemblance to the dummy issue of the project he was showing around early last year.

That proposed DuBay book was called *Yesterday... Today... Tomorrow* and was supposed to be liberally spiced with text features. Judging by its title, it was also apparently conceived as a catch-all book in an effort to pull together such diverse markets

BRANCATELLI: KISS FREAKS,

KISS OFF?

as the sf, fantasy&barbarian and suspense fields. The all-comics, mostly sf orientation of 1984 is what developed from this hybrid concept, Warren says, "because people are purists. They like their comics separate from their stories."

WHOM DO YOU TRUST?

DC artists were told in October to work up 8-page back-up features because DC was going to drop most of the paid advertising from its books starting in the first half of 1978. DC editors told artists and writers that DC titles would contain at least one 17-page story and one 8-page story in 1978 issues, probably beginning in May-dated books. The DC public-relations machine never said all this officially, of course, but the artists were assured that was the plan.

I checked in with some reliable corporate types at Warner Communications, DC's parent conglomerate, and got a series of long, loud laughs. The bottom line, the corporate biggies all agreed, was that nothing of that nature was seriously being considered.

No way," said one Warner exec bluntly. "A decision to knock out the ads would have to come from people much higher than (publisher Jenette)

Kahn. It ain't gonna happen, unless the sky falls."

He didn't want to make a prediction on the possibility of the sky falling, however.

SETTLE FOR A PUZZLE, KID?

The *Trib*, a new daily newspaper in New York City scheduled to begin publication on January 9, 1978, will not carry any comic strips on its tabloid-sized pages. *Trib* managing editor G. Guy Gifford, one of the many former *Herald Tribune* or *World Journal Tribune* people on the staff, said the decision to go without comic strips was made because there weren't any quality strips worth publishing available. "We do have plans for a crossword puzzle, though," he said earnestly.

BRIEFLY NOTED...

Rene Goscinny, the 51-year-old writer who created France's celebrated *Asterix The Gaul* series, died during a series of heart examinations in November. His works on *Asterix* have been translated into dozens of languages, and the adventures of his feisty little Gaul have been acclaimed throughout the world. Goscinny had also worked on *Lucky Luke*, a French satire of western strips, and was one of the earliest guiding lights behind *Pilote*, the French-language magazine of comics.

Playboy magazine, in the midst of changing its image from a girlie magazine to a magazine for upwardly-mobile executives, has run another installment of *Playboy Funnies*. Cartoon editor Michelle Urry said the growth of the section continues to be hampered by a lack of quality material. "We are actively looking for sexual parodies of the Sunday funnies for the section," she wrote in late October. "Ideas can be... highly stylized for the most part. If I could get Maggie 'n Jiggs with a sexual twist, I'd love it."

I STOOD IN THE **SHADOWED** CONFINES OF RICKY'S ROOM UNDER THE SOFT **GLOW** OF THE NIGHT LIGHT AND WATCHED THE **CALM**, REGULAR BREATHING OF MY **SON** AT SLEEP. A LOCK OF SANDY-BROWN **HAIR** HAD FALLEN LAZILY OVER ONE LONG-LASHED EYE LID AND I REACHED OUT AUTOMATICALLY TO BRUSH IT ASIDE.

BUT MY HAND **FROZE** HALF WAY THERE AND THE **LUMP** FORMED IN MY THROAT AND I KNEW THAT IF I **DID** MOVE IT AND THE MOVEMENT **AWAKENED** HIM, I'D HAVE TO **SMILE** IN-TO THE INNOCENT FACE AND **STROKE** THE SWEET, RUDDY CHEEKS AND **KISS** THE FOOTBALL BRUISED FOREHEAD AND SAY "I LOVE YOU, SON," SO HE'D GO BACK TO SLEEP... AND I **COULDN'T** DO ANY OF THOSE THINGS.

I **COULDN'T**, BECAUSE IT WASN'T **TRUE** AND WHO WAS I **KIDDING** AND WHY NOT FACE THE SIMPLE IRREVERSABLE **TRUTH**: I **DIDN'T** LOVE HIM. I DIDN'T LOVE MY SON. I NEVER **WOULD**...

OCTOBER MAN

PAUL....?

YES... I'M JUST COMING...

A **GRATUITOUS** GESTURE. I HAD COME INTO RICKY'S ROOM BECAUSE I **KNEW** MIRANDA WOULD LOOK IN ON HIM ONE LAST TIME AND BECAUSE I **WANTED** HER TO FIND ME ALONE WITH THE BOY. BUT IT HADN'T WORKED. MIRANDA WAS NOT SO EASILY FOOLED. YOU CAN'T **FAKE** AFFECTION FOR SOMEONE...

NOR COULD MIRANDA FAKE HER AFFECTION FOR ME. IT HAD **DIED** A QUIET DEATH THE SAME DAY RICKY CAME INTO OUR LIVES...THE SAME DAY THE **HOME** HAD CALLED AND TOLD MIRANDA HE WAS **AVAILABLE**, COME PICK HIM UP...!



BUT SHE WAS **RADIANT** TONIGHT DESPITE HER FEELINGS TOWARD ME. I WANTED TO **HOLD** HER, **KISS** HER, FIND THE WORDS THAT WOULD **WASH** AWAY THE BARRIER OF TEARS AND GUILT THAT TOWERED BETWEEN US.

PARLING? JUST ONE QUICK PHOTO? FOR ME?

I WANTED HER TO KNOW THAT I STILL CARED, STILL APPRECIATED...!

JUST A QUICK ONE...YOU LOOK SO LOVELY.

PAUL, WE'RE LATE...



MRS. MICHAELS -- OHH! SORRY!

I WAS JUST WONDERING WHERE THE TV WAS.

IN THE **REC ROOM**, CHARLOTTE. I'LL SHOW YOU.

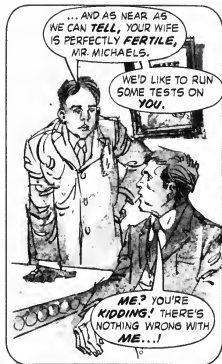


MIRANDA **WAIT!** LET ME GET A SHOT OF YOU **ALONE**.

WE DON'T HAVE **TIME**, PAUL. IT'S PAST EIGHT NOW.



THE **SAD** PART WAS THAT I HAD **TRIED**, REALLY **TRIED** TO LOVE RICKY, HE WAS A GOOD BOY, A **BEAUTIFUL** CHILD. I CERTAINLY COULDN'T COMPLAIN AS A PARENT. THERE WAS ONLY **ONE** SMALL DETAIL WHICH NEGATED ALL ELSE. HE SIMPLY WASN'T **MINE...**



THE TRUTH IS, YOU NEVER
WANTED CHILDREN IN THE
FIRST PLACE! THE STERILITY
WAS JUST A HANDY EXCUSE!
YOU HATE CHILDREN! YOU THINK
THEM CRUEL, INSENSITIVE!
BECAUSE YOU HATED YOURSELF
AS A CHILD!



WHY,
PAUL?
WHY?

I'M GOING OVER
TO TALK TO PEGGY WOODS.
TRY NOT TO LOOK TOO BORED.
WE'LL LEAVE EARLY.



GOD, I HATE THESE
THINGS. WHY CAN'T
PEOPLE HAVE INTIMATE
PARTIES?



A BIT STUFFY
IN THERE, ISN'T IT?



PAUL
MICHAELS...

JACK
WESTLEY.

MICHAELS... MICHAELS...
NOT THE PAUL MICHAELS FROM
OAK CENTER, MISSOURI?



I'M NOT GOING TO
BE DEPRIVED OF A FAMILY.
PAUL, I WANT A CHILD! AND
I'M GOING TO HAVE ONE...



YES, I'M **THAT**
PAUL MICHAELS...

JACK! JACK WESTLEY!
IT'S REALLY YOU! HOW LONG HAS
IT **BEEN?** I DIDN'T KNOW YOU
LIVED IN **CLAYTON!**

I **DON'T**. I'VE BEEN DOWN
SOUTH FOR THE LAST FIFTEEN
YEARS. MY WIFE WENT TO
SCHOOL WITH **JENNIE**.



DO...DO YOU EVER
SEE ANY OF THE **OLD**
GANG?

YES. **CHUCK BAKER**
IS STILL IN **OAK CENTER** AND
SHOTSIE WALKER TOO. WE
HAD A LITTLE **REUNION** LAST
SUMMER. BEEN WONDERING
WHERE YOU'D GOT TO.

I GUESS YOU
HAVEN'T **HEARD**
THEN...



HEARD?

DAMNDEST THING...
ALL **THREE** OF US HAD
CHILDREN. **CHUCK** AND **SHOTSIE**
BOYS, ME A LITTLE **GIRL**.
CHUCK'S BOY WAS **KILLED**
IN A FIRE TWO YEARS AGO.
SHOTSIE DROWNED IN
THE **BATHTUB** THIS
SPRING...

...I LOST **MARGIE**
LAST MONTH...

JACK... I'M
SORRY...



YEAH...IT'S **INCREDIBLE**.
ALMOST LIKE **CLOCKWORK**...
ONE AFTER THE OTHER...

YOU GOT ANY
KIDS, **PAUL?**



PAUL, THIS IS **RICKY**. HE'S
SIX YEARS OLD. THE **HOME**
IS LETTING US **CONSIDER**
HIM FOR **ADOPTION**.

THIS IS **MR.**
MICHAELS, **RICKY**...
SAY **HELLO** TO HIM.

...HELLO,
SIR...



YES...YES...
A **BOY**...
RICKY...

YOU'RE A
LUCKY MAN...

...WE WERE AT **DINNER**
WHEN IT HAPPENED. **MARGIE**
WAS ONLY **TWO**. THE **SITTER**
WENT TO CHECK ON HER...FOUND
HER **SUFFOCATED** IN THE **CRIB**...
POOR **WOMAN**...SHE WAS
HYSTERICAL WHEN WE GOT
THERE...!



JACK... DO YOU ...
DO YOU STILL REMEMBER
...REMEMBER...

YES.

I **KNEW** YOU'D MENTION
IT SOONER OR LATER. **CHUCK**
AND **SHOTSIE** STILL REMEMBER
TOO. WE'LL **ALL** REMEMBER IT,
PAUL... FOR THE **REST OF OUR**
LIVES...



I'M **BORED!**
HALLOWEEN IS **BORING!**

YOU'RE **ALWAYS**
BORED, SHOTSIE!

YEAH, YOU NEED
A **LAXATIVE, WALKER!**



HEY, WHO'S **THAT**
IN THE **GHOST** COSTUME?

BILLY ROSEN...
HE'S A **NEW KID** IN
TOWN. KINDA **STUCK UP**
IF YA ASK ME...

LET'S HAVE
SOME **FUN!**



HEY, **ROSEN!** I HEAR
YER OLD LADY DOES
IT FOR **QUARTERS!**

ROSEN SHMOSEN!
HE LOOKS LIKE
A **QUEER** TO ME!

(PUFF-PUFF!)
... **BOY...** CAN
THIS KID **RUN!**

AW YER GETTIN'
FAT, BAKER! I'LL
CATCH HIM!



BETTER (PUFF!) GIVE
IT UP, **ROSEN...** (PUFF-PUFF!)
YA CAN'T OUT-RUN A **FREIGHT**
TRAIN YA LITTLE **JERK!**

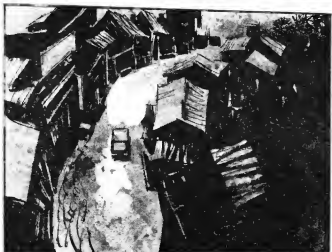
HEY IS HE **NUTS?**
HE'S GONNA TRY TO CUT
IN **FRONT** OF IT!

NAAW HE
AIN'T!

WE BETTER
STOP 'IM!

HEY KID! KID!
HOLD UP! WE WON'T
HURT YA!









ARRRGGG



END

MARIA SHIFTED IMPATIENTLY, THE WALLS OF THE **WAITING ROOM** WERE GRUESOME-GREEN, YET THERE WAS SOMETHING **SACRED** ABOUT THE **SMELL**. THE CONTRAST WAS **DISTURBING**.

FLEUR



NIGHT of the ALLEYCATS

THE WITCH-WOMAN WAS GLAD TO BE ALIVE AGAIN. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT SHE WAS CENTURIES OLD, THE LATEST OF INFINITE REINCARNATIONS, SHE NEVER GREW TIRED OF **LIVING**.

HER NAME WAS **FLEUR**.

SHE CAME TO SPANISH HARLEM A WEEK AGO, TO VISIT AN OLD FRIEND, DR. MARTIN BARRIS, A SPECIAL PSYCHOLOGIST WORKING WITH **JUVENILE DELINQUENTS**.

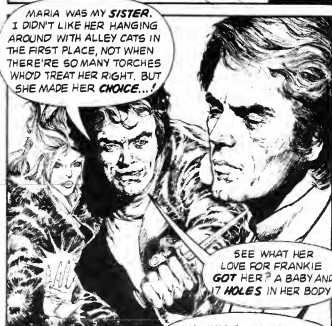
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH I CAN **TAKE**, FLEUR! I'LL BE SHAKING MY BUTTY IN MY **SLEEP**!

EVEN **AFTER** ALL THAT MOVEMENT YOU SEEM **TENSE**, MARTY. IS ANYTHING **WRONG**?

ONE OF MY CHARGES HAS **DISAPPEARED**... FRANKIE PRADO. THE POLICE FOUND HIS JACKET NEAR THE BODY OF THE GIRL WHO WAS **MURDERED** LAST NIGHT.

DO YOU THINK HE **DID** IT?

NO, I'VE HANDLED HIS CASE SIX **MONTHS** NOW AND I DON'T THINK HE'S CAPABLE OF KILLING **ANYONE**. I'D STAKE MY PROFESSIONAL **REPUTATION** ON IT. THE JACKET WAS **PLANTED**.



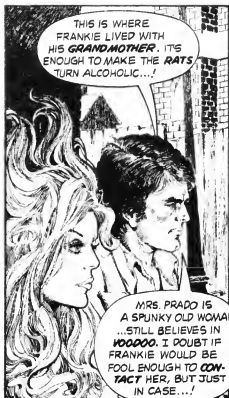


TOMORROW
IS RESERVED FOR
FRANKIE PRADO.

SHE FIRST MET HIM FOUR YEARS AGO AT A PARTY HERE IN THE CITY. EVERY SO OFTEN SHE'D INTERRUPT HER TRAVELLING FOR A RETURN ENGAGEMENT. THOUGH HE WAS ALWAYS WARM AND AFFECTIONATE, HIS DEVOTION TO HIS **WORK** KEPT HIS SOCIAL LIFE TO A MINIMUM.



TONIGHT
IS OURS



THIS IS WHERE
FRANKIE LIVED WITH
HIS **GRANDMOTHER**. IT'S
ENOUGH TO MAKE THE **RATS**
TURN ALCOHOLIC...!

MRS. PRADO IS
A SPUNKY OLD WOMAN
...STILL BELIEVES IN
WODDHO. I DOUBT IF
FRANKIE WOULD BE
FOOL ENOUGH TO **CON-**
TACT HER, BUT JUST
IN CASE...!



MRS. PRADO, I'VE NO
DESIRE TO HURT FRANKIE OR
SEE HIM GO TO JAIL. I ONLY
WANT TO HELP. THERE ARE **OTHERS**
LOOKING FOR HIM... **ENEMIES**. IF THEY
FIND HIM **FIRST**, FRANKIE WILL
PROBABLY **DIE**!

FRANKIE SPOKE
OF YOU OFTEN. HE
TRUSTED YOU. STILL
I DON'T KNOW WHERE
HE **IS**.



IF YOU HEAR FROM
HIM, PLEASE CONTACT ME
IMMEDIATELY. YOU'VE
NO IDEA HOW IMPORTANT
IT IS!

DON'T WORRY, DR.
BARRIS. WHEREVER
HE IS, MY SPELLS **PRO-**
TECT HIM. MY MAGIC IS
ALWAYS WITH HIM.



SOON

WHAT'S OUR
NEXT MOVE?

EVERYTHING YOU NEED
TO KNOW ABOUT FRANKIE IS IN
THIS **FILE**... ADDRESSES AND FULL
DESCRIPTIONS OF HIS CLOSE
ACQUAINTANCES.

CHECK THEM OUT WHILE
I TALK TO A FRIEND OF MINE
AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

MOST OF THE BOYS ON THE LIST WERE MEMBERS OF THE **ALLEY CATS**, FRANKIE PRADO'S **STREET GANG**. BY MID-AFTERNOON, FLEUR HAD QUESTIONED NEARLY A **DOZEN**.



NO... NO, I AIN'T
SEEN FRANKIE, HONEST!

THEY WERE FRIGHTENED, ALL OF THEM. IF THE OLDER, TOUGHER
TORCHES EVEN SUSPECTED THAT THE **ALLEY CATS** WERE CON-
CEALING THEIR LEADER, IT'D MEAN **OPEN WARFARE**...!

FINALLY...

HE'S **LYING**, I FEEL
IT! HE'S PROBABLY
FRANKIE'S **CONTACT**
WITH THE **OUTSIDE WORLD**.
SOONER OR LATER, HE'LL
LEAD ME RIGHT TO HIM.



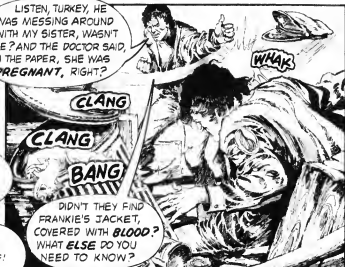
THAT EVENING...



DIDN'T I **TELL** YOU?
SHE'S **ON** TO SOMETHING! IF
WE STAY ON HER TAIL, SHE'LL
LEAD US RIGHT TO **PRADO**!

I DON'T **LIKE** IT, TONY.
FRANKIE OUGHTA HAVE A
CHANCE TO **DEFEND** HIMSELF!
MAYBE HE **DIDN'T** KILL
MARIA...

LISTEN, **TURKEY**, HE
WAS MESSING AROUND
WITH MY **SISTER**, WASN'T
HE? AND THE **DOCTOR** SAID,
IN THE **PAPER**, SHE WAS
PREGNANT, RIGHT?



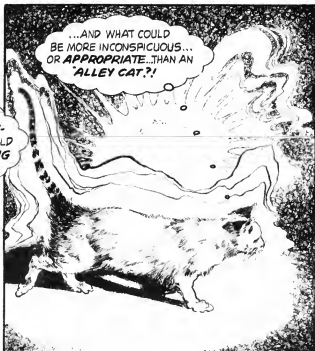
DIDN'T THEY FIND
FRANKIE'S **JACKET**,
COVERED WITH **BLOOD**?
WHAT **ELSE** DO YOU
NEED TO **KNOW**?

SOMEONE'S
FOLLOWING, TONY
AND HIS **TORCHES**,
NO DOUBT... GOR, THAT
SOUNDS LIKE A 50'S
ROCK BAND!

BUT IF TONY WAS
IMPRESSED BY MY **KNIFE-
HANDLE** TRICK, WHAT WOULD
HE SAY TO MY **CHANGELING**
ABILITIES.



...AND WHAT COULD
BE MORE **INCONSPICUOUS**...
OR **APPROPRIATE**... THAN AN
'ALLEY CAT'?





IN A RUN-DOWN, ABANDONED TENEMENT...



THERE WAS A LADY LOOKING FOR YOU TODAY, FRANKIE... A FRIEND OF DR. BARRIS. SHE SAYS HE WANTS TO HELP YOU. MAYBE YOU OUGHTTA TALK TO HIM, HUH?

I CAN'T CISCO. THEY ALL WANT ME DEAD! THE POLICE THINK I'M A PUNK KILLER. THE TORCHES'VE VOWED TO SPILL MY BLOOD. AND THE MURDERER KNOWS THAT I KNOW WHO HE IS!



MEANWHILE... IN AN ALLEY NEARBY...

WE'VE LOST HER! IT'S YOUR FAULT... MAKING ALL THAT RACKET! I OUGHTTA--

WAIT, TONY! ONE OF OUR WOMEN SAW FRANKIE'S PAL, CISCO, SNEAKING INTO AN ABANDONED BUILDING... WITH A BAG OF FOOD!



BACK AT THE TENEMENT...

FOR A LONG WHILE, I SUSPECTED THAT MARIA WAS HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH SOMEONE OTHER THAN ME, SO ONE EVENING I FOLLOWED HER.

I WAS RIGHT... HER LOVER WAS MY TRUSTED ADVISOR... DR. BARRIS!

I WAS FURIOUS. THE MORNING SHE WAS KILLED, I HAD GONE TO MARTY'S OFFICE TO CONFRONT HIM. WE ARGUED AWHILE, AND I STORMED OUT, LEAVING MY JACKET BEHIND.



LATER, I HEARD ABOUT MARIA'S MURDER... AND THE JACKET. BUT WHO'D BELIEVE MY STORY? I HAD TO HIDE.

SO THAT'S WHY BARRIS IS SO EAGER TO FIND YOU! TO SILENCE YOU. I'D BETTER--



SUDDENLY...

FREEZE, CISCO! I DON'T COME HERE TO KILL YOU. IT'S FRANKIE I WANT... FRANKIE'S LIFE FOR MARIA'S.

HE DIDN'T KILL YOUR SISTER, TONY. IT WAS--

GET THEM, TORCHES...

WHAT FOOLS THESE MORTALS BE! SHE ASKED HERSELF HOW IT COULD HAVE HAPPENED. IS LOVE TRULY **BLIND**? CAN A MURDERER'S PERSONALITY GO **UNDISPECTED** EVEN BY THOSE **CLOSEST** TO HIM?



SHE HATED BARRIS SUDDENLY, PARTLY FOR KILLING THE GIRL, BUT MOSTLY FOR PERCEIVING **HER**. SHE HAD GIVEN HER BODY, AND A GOOD PORTION OF HER SOUL, TO **KNOWING** ANOTHER HUMAN BEING... AND SHE HAD **FAILED** MISERABLY.

FORGET THE STORIES. I WANTED TO KILL FRANKIE SIX MONTHS AGO WHEN I FIRST HEARD HE WAS GOIN' WITH MARIA. IF I HAD SHE'D BE **ALIVE NOW**...



I WON'T **FAIL** TWICE! **MOVE IN!**

THAT MADE HER **ANGRY**. AND JUST A LITTLE **IN-SECURE**.

STAND **BACK**, TONY! FRANKIE JUST TOLD CISCO A LITTLE STORY I THINK YOU OUGHTTA **HEAR** BEFORE YOU MURDER ANYONE!

Y-YOU'RE NOT HUMAN...

I'M MORE HUMAN THAN **YOU** ARE, RIGHT NOW!



SHE HAD IT IN HER HEAD THAT THIS WAS ALL A **MISUNDERSTANDING** THAT IF SHE COULD **TALK** TO THEM A FEW MORE MINUTES, IT'D ALL BE STRAIGHTENED OUT. SO SHE **HELD BACK**.



TONY! TONY LISTEN TO ME!



ONLY WHEN HIS KNIFE SLICED HER ARM WAS SHE CONVINCED THERE WAS NO **COMPROMISE**. THE TORCHES WERE NO LONGER A HANDFUL OF INDIVIDUAL TEENAGERS TO BE REASONED WITH... THEY WERE AN EVIL, AUTONOMOUS ENTITY... A **GANG**.

OWWWW!

HER **RAGE** AND HER **PAIN** EXPLODED SIMULTANEOUSLY. INSTINCTIVELY SHE LASHED AT THEIR HATRED WITH AGELESS VIOLENCE THAT ANSWERED THEIRS.

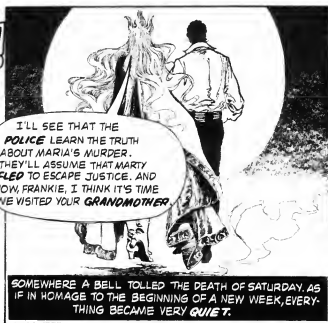
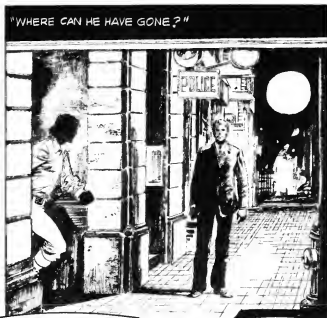


SHSSSS

SSSHH

AARRGGH

LIKE THEIR NAMESAKES, THE TORCHES **IGNITED**. FLESH CRACKLED AND CHARRED... WITHOUT SMOKE OR SMELL... BURNING ONLY SKIN AND BONE. FINALLY, THE TORCHES WERE **EXTINGUISHED**.



TYPICALLY, THEY WALKED TOGETHER IN **SILENCE**--HE WITH **HIS** THOUGHTS, SHE WITH **HERS**--THE ICY WALL BETWEEN THEM MATCHED ONLY BY THE SHRIEKING CHILL OF DECEMBER **WIND** HOWLING DOWN THE **SLUSH-RIDDEN** PARKING LOT IN MOURNFUL SYMPATHY TO THE NIGHT, TO THE **SEASON**...TO THEIR **MARRIAGE**.

THE THIRTY FOOT **ELECTRIC** MACY'S SANTA ANCHORED HIGH ABOVE THE PARKING LOT GRINNED DOWN ITS PERPETUAL **PLASTIC** GRIN AS THEY BRISKLY DODGED THE ICY LAKES EN ROUTE TO THEIR CAR MILES AND **MILES** AWAY.

NOK MAN DIDN'T NOTICE THE SANTA, HE **RARELY** ACKNOWLEDGED CHRISTMAS DISPLAYS THESE DAYS, EVEN WHEN HE PRACTICALLY TRIPPED OVER THEM.

HE **RARELY** ACKNOWLEDGED THE SEASON AT **ALL** IN FACT, EXCEPT FOR THE ANNOYING FREQUENCY OF CHRISTMAS-ORIENTED TV COMMERCIALS AND THE HAGGING OBLIGATORY **RITUAL** OF BUYING HALF-HEARTED INSINCERE GIFTS FOR A HALF-HEARTED, INSINCERE CIRCLE OF **FRIENDS**.

ASIDE FROM THAT, IT WAS MERELY A MATTER OF GRITTING HIS TEETH AND HOPING THE WHOLE **TINSEL-DIPPING**, WALL STREET MONSTER WOULD HURRY UP AND PASS INTO ANOTHER FORGETFUL YEAR.

AND IT **WOULD** PASS, THAT MUCH WAS A CERTAINTY, JUST AS IT WAS A CERTAINTY THAT **ELAINE** WOULD BE HERE THE YEAR 'ROUND, DAY AFTER DAY, MINUTE AFTER MINUTE.

JOY TO THE WORLD, MERRY CHRISTMAS 2028....!

BY DEGREES



SHE STOPPED **ABRUPTLY**, ICY VAPOR FLUTTERING FROM HER MOUTH AND GAVE HIM THAT LOOK HE DREADED **MOST** AT TIMES LIKE THIS--THAT LOOK THAT SAID, **GET READY TO HATE ME...**

DAMN! I FORGOT SOMEBODY!

OH, ELAINE, NO!

IT'S BETTY JAMESON. SHE GAVE US THAT EXPENSIVE **BUN WARMER** LAST YEAR, WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HER OFF THE **LIST**!

THE THOUGHT OF GOING **BACK** INTO THAT NIGHTMARE OF **PUSHING** BODIES GAVE NEW STRENGTH TO HIS FADING HEADACHE AND ADDED ANGUISH TO HIS **SWOLLEN** FEET.

HE SIGHED THE SIGH OF THE **DEFEATED**...

COME ON, LET'S GET IT **OVER** WITH



A GUST OF WIND PUSHED THEM BACK TOWARD THE STORE AS HE ASKED HIMSELF FOR THE 100TH TIME THAT EVENING WHY THEY DIDN'T DO THEIR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING IN **AUGUST**. IT WAS THE SAME EVERY YEAR, AS IF THEY **PURPOSEFULLY** PLANNED THIS AGONY AS SOME SORT OF BIZARRE SELF-INFLICTED PUNISHMENT...



FOR A BRIEF MOMENT THE WARM RUSH OF AIR FROM WITHIN THE BUILDING WAS A RELIEF, BUT WITHIN TWO MINUTES SOMEONE JABBED HIM IN THE **RIBS**, A CHILD STEPPED ON HIS **FOOT** AND THE FAMILIAR DIN OF SCURRYING SHOPPERS DESCENDED IN A SMOTHERING **HORDE**. HE HEAVED ANOTHER SIGH AS THEY APPROACHED THE **STAMPEDE** AT THE ESCALATOR...



SHE TURNED ON HIM WITH HER OWN BRAND OF VEHEMENCE...



WHY DON'T YOU JUST STAY DOWN HERE AND WAIT FOR ME? I THINK THERE'S A **BOOK DEPARTMENT** OVER THERE SOMEWHERE, YOU CAN BROWSE. I'LL MEET YOU **THERE** IN A FEW MINUTES.



NO WE WON'T! JUST STAY WITH **BOOKS!** I'LL COME TO YOU!

HE WATCHED HER ASCEND OUT OF HIS **LIFE**, SWALLOWED BY THE MULTITUDES. I COULD TURN RIGHT **NOW**, HE THOUGHT, AND RUN BACK TO THE **CAR** AND DRIVE AND DRIVE AND BE **RID** OF IT ALL FOREVER. I COULD... I COULD...



THE **SPEAKER** BROADCAST A SOUR VERSION OF **GOD REST YE, MERRY GENTLEMEN**. HIS HEAVY COAT ENCLOSED HIM LIKE A STIFLING **COCOON**. RIVULETS OF SWEAT TRICKLED DOWN HIS ARMS.



HE BRUSHED AGAINST A MAN AND FELT THE SMALL **PACKAGE** IN HIS COAT POCKET POKE AGAINST HIS **THIGH**...

HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN THE PACKAGE: IT WAS THE GOLD-PLATED **PEN SET** HE'D POINTED OUT TO ELAINE LAST MONTH. THEY **ALWAYS** SELECTED THEIR OWN GIFTS THIS WAY AND THE OTHER PERSON **ALWAYS** COMPLIED. THERE WAS NO **SURPRISE**, NO **EXCITEMENT**, NO SPIRIT OF GIVING. THERE WAS NO **LOVE**. IT WAS A RITUAL...

MERRY CHRISTMAS,
DEAR, **WRITE NICE**

SEASON'S GREETINGS,
DARLING, WEAR IT IN GOOD
HEALTH.

HE HAD GIVEN ELAINE A DIGITAL
WATCH...

A LINE OF SQUIRMING **CHILDREN** AND BORED MOTHERS BLOCKED HIS PATH. A SAD EYED MAN IN A **PADDLED** SUIT OF CRIMSON DUTIFULLY HOISTED EACH SQUEALING CHILD INTO HIS WEARY LAP FOR \$2.25 AN HOUR, NO DOUBT.

... VISIT SANTA

NORMAN WATCHED THE DANCING SNOW-
SUITS **WISTFULLY**...

I'M SO
BLOODY
TIRED

CHILDREN. HE HAD **WANTED** CHILDREN. ELAINE WAS NOT SO **SURE**. SO THEY HAD WAITED. AND THEY WERE **STILL** WAITING. AND NOW IT WAS REALLY TOO LATE AND THEY **BOTH** KNEW IT.

IT MIGHT HAVE MADE THE DIFFERENCE -- SUPPLIED THE MISSING ELEMENT THEIR MARRIAGE **NEEDED**. **CHILDREN** CAN DO THAT, HE SHRUGGED AND MOVED PAST THE SQUIRMING PROCESSION.

HE ROUNDED A CORNER AND FOUND HIMSELF IN **HARDWARE**. HE STOPPED AND LOOKED TO HIS RIGHT AND LEFT. **BOOKS, BOOKS**, HE THOUGHT, WHERE ARE THE GODDAMN **BOOKS**?

THE PACKAGES ACHED IN HIS ARMS. HE LONGED TO PUT THEM DOWN IF ONLY FOR A FEW MOMENTS. THEN HE SAW THE **SIGN**...

BOOKS



HE GRUNTED HIS SATISFACTION AND MOVED TOWARD IT. BUT, OF COURSE, ONCE HE WAS **THERE**, THERE WAS NO WAY TO **LOOK** AT ANYTHING WITH THE PACKAGES IN HIS ARMS AND NO PLACE TO SET THEM.

HE FOUND HIMSELF LEANING AGAINST A TABLE HEAPED WITH SALE **BOOKS**, ARMS GROWING **NUMB**. LISTENING TO THE **10TH** RECORDING OF **GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN** AND THINKING ABOUT ORIENTAL **TORTURE** TECHNIQUES...



HE MANAGED TO TWIST HIS ARM UP AND GLANCE AT HIS **WATCH** DIAL. IT HAS BEEN A **HALF HOUR** SINCE HE'D LEFT HER AT THE ESCALATOR, WHERE WAS SHE?

HE SHIFTED HIS WEIGHT TO THE OTHER LEG AND SIGHED **HEAVILY** AGAIN. HE WONDERED HOW MANY **TIMES** HE'D SIGHED THAT NIGHT.



WHY DO PEOPLE SIGH **ANYWAY**? WAS IT REALLY BOREDOM OR A NECESSARY BODILY **FUNCTION**? HADN'T HE READ SOMEWHERE THAT IT WAS CAUSED BY IMPROPER **BREATHING PRACTICE**?--THAT BY SIGHING YOU SATURATED THE LUNGS WITH **OXYGEN** AND THEREBY CLEANSED THE BRAIN?

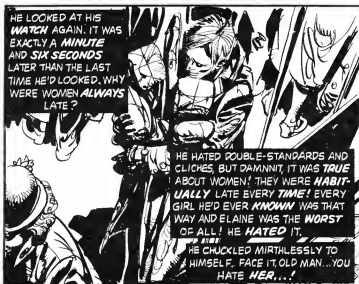
BUT WAS IT VOLUNTARY OR **IN-VOLUNTARY**? HE SCOFFED. WHO THE HELL **CARED**?



HE REPLACED THE PACKAGE AND LOOKED UP, HIS EYES **UNWITTINGLY** FALLING OVER THE BIG STORE **CLOCK** ACROSS THE AISLE. THE MINUTE HAND SEEMED TO BE MOVING WITH **EXAGGERATED** LETHARGY.

HE TORE HIS EYES AWAY, ADMONISHING HIMSELF. **THAT'S** NOT THE WAY, NORMAN, WATCHING THE TIME WILL ONLY MAKE IT SEEM **LONGER**. WHAT WAS SHE **DOING** UP THERE, FOR GODSAKE?

HE LOOKED AT HIS **WATCH** AGAIN. IT WAS EXACTLY A **MINUTE** AND **SIX SECONDS** LATER THAN THE LAST TIME HE'D LOOKED. WHY WERE WOMEN ALWAYS **LATE**?



HE HATED DOUBLE-STANDARDS AND CLICHES, BUT DAMNNIT, IT WAS **TRUE** ABOUT WOMEN! THEY WERE **HABITUALLY** LATE EVERY **TIME**! EVERY GIRL HE'D EVER **KNOWN** WAS THAT WAY AND ELAINE WAS THE **WORST** OF ALL! HE **HATED** IT.

HE CHUCKLED MIRTHLESSLY TO HIMSELF. FACE IT OLD MAN...YOU **HATE HER...**



HE JAMMED HIS HAND INTO HIS COAT POCKET AND HE WITHDREW THE SMALL PACKAGE, STARING APATHETICALLY AT THE **UNINSPIRED** WRAPPING, THE SINGLE LIMP **RIBBON**.

TWELVE YEARS OF MARRIAGE, HE THOUGHT. FOR A FLEETING MOMENT HE WISHED HE **DIDN'T** KNOW WHAT THE GIFT WAS... BUT THE MOMENT **PASSED...**

MAYBE SHE WAS ALMOST THROUGH.

HE TRIED TO **IMAGINE** THAT SHE'D FOUND A GIFT, WAS STANDING NOW AT THE HEAD OF A LONG CHECK-OUT LINE, TURNING AND HEADING FOR THE **ESCALATOR** RIDING IT DOWN TO THE **BOOK** DEPARTMENT.



HE LOOKED ACROSS THE FLOOR **ANTICIPATING** HER FACE... ANY **SECOND** NOW... THE NEXT FACE **WOULD** BE **HERS...** RIGHT... **NOW!**

NOTHING. HE WAS **REALLY** IMPATIENT NOW! THIS WASN'T **FUNNY**. SHE'D HAD **PLENTY** OF TIME TO FIND A GIFT! SHE WAS PROBABLY **DAWLING** WHILE HE STOOD GUARDING THESE **STUPID PACKAGES!**



THAT WOULD BE JUST **LIKE** HER! JUST **WAIT** UNTIL HE SAW HER! HE'D LAY **INTO** HER FOR THIS! SHE'D **PAY** ALL RIGHT! HE BEGAN MENTALLY FORMING THE **FIRST** INSULTS...

HE COULDN'T **HELP** IT, HE LOOKED AT HIS **WATCH** AGAIN. IT HAS BEEN OVER AN **HOURL** NOW! THIS IS **RIDICULOUS!** WHAT ON EARTH COULD SHE POSSIBLY BE **DOING** UP THERE?

HE DECIDED TO GO **LOOK** FOR HER. THEN HE THOUGHT, BUT WHAT IF SHE COMES **DOWN** WHILE I'M GOING **UP?** WHAT IF HE MISSED HER?

"**JUST STAY WITH BOOKS.**" SHE'D SAID, "**I'LL COME TO YOU...**" YEAH, BUT WHAT IF SHE **WERE** IN SOME KIND OF DIFFICULTY?

THEN **ANOTHER** THOUGHT STRUCK HIM. MAYBE SOMETHING WAS **WRONG**. MAYBE SHE'D RUN INTO SOME KIND OF **TROUBLE**. HE TRIED TO IMAGINE WHAT AND COULDN'T. STILL, YOU NEVER **KNEW**.

HE GRIMACED IN FRUSTRATION, PAUSING BEFORE THE LINE AT THE ESCALATOR...

WAIT! WHAT IF HE LEFT HIS **PACKAGES** **HERE** WITH A CHECK-OUT GIRL?--HIS WIFE MIGHT **RECOGNIZE** THEM AND WAIT FOR HIM TO COME **BACK!** ALSO, HE WOULDN'T HAVE TO **LUG** THEM UPSTAIRS!

I WAS WONDERING IF I COULD **LEAVE** THESE WITH YOU FOR A FEW MINUTES.

SOMEONE'S SUPPOSE TO **MEET** ME AND I THOUGHT SHE MIGHT COME BY HERE AND SEE THE **PACKAGES**. I HAVE TO **LEAVE** FOR A FEW MINUTES. WOULD YOU **MIND?**

WELL... I CAN'T BE HELD **RESPONSIBLE** FOR THEM...

OF COURSE NOT, JUST KEEP **ONE EYE** OPEN.

OKAY, MISTER, BUT DON'T BLAME **ME** IF THEY AIN'T HERE WHEN YOU COME **BACK**.

MAYBE THIS WASN'T SUCH A **HOT** IDEA, LEAVING THEM WITH THIS **MORON**. WELL, TOO LATE NOW...

THE ESCALATOR LINE HAD **LENGTHENED**. HE STOOD IMPATIENTLY BEHIND A SMELLY OLD MAN WATCHING AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR NEW **WASTE DISPOSAL** PRODUCT ON A CLOSED CIRCUIT TV...

...YES, THE **MIRACLE DISPOSAL** IS THE ULTIMATE ANSWER TO **ALL YOUR HOME WASTE** PROBLEMS! MERELY SET THE TINY **VACU-GUN** BESIDE THE MATERIAL YOU WANT **VAPORIZED** AND **WALK AWAY!**

HE'D WATCHED THE AD SIX TIMES BEFORE IT WAS HIS TURN AT THE ESCALATOR. BY THEN HE KNEW IT BY HEART. HE COULD STILL HEAR IT BEHIND HIM AS HE ASCENDED GRATEFULLY TO THE LINGERIE DEPT. ...



IN MINUTES THE **MIRACLE DISPOSAL** COMPLETELY REARRANGES THE ATOMS IN THE TRASH AND **DE-MATERIALIZES** THEM BEFORE YOUR EYES! **AMAZING!** AND ITS **SMALL** ENOUGH TO HOLD IN YOUR **HAND!**



I REALLY DON'T **KNOW**... I'M JUST CHRISTMAS HELP.

IS THERE SOME ONE WHO **WOULD** KNOW?

HE SEARCHED THE **ENTIRE** SECOND FLOOR FOR THE LINGERIE DEPT. HE COULDN'T **FIND** IT. BY THEN, HE WAS **FURIOUS**.



BY GOD, I'LL WRING HER **NECK!**

IT HAD BECOME A **COHESIVE ENTITY**, THE CROWD -- AN ENDLESS **ROILING** SERPENT THAT ALWAYS BLOCKED HIS PATH, ALWAYS GOT IN HIS **WAY**...



MISS CHESWICK, NEXT AISLE OVER.



NORMAN STALKED OFF **ANGRILY**. THEN **FROZE** SUDDENLY. **WAIT A MINUTE**. WHO SAID ELAINE WAS IN **LINGERIE** ANYWAY? HE'D SAID IT, NOT **HER!** HELL, SHE COULD BE ON THE **3RD FLOOR** IN **COSMETICS** FOR ALL HE KNEW. SHE COULD BE **ANYWHERE** IN THE STORE!

HIS HEAD WAS **POUNDED** SO HARD IT MADE HIM WINCE TO WALK, THE STORE WAS SUFFOCATING. HE BEGAN TO LONG FOR THE CHILLY BLASTS OF **WIND** IN THE **PARKING LOT**...



IS THERE A **LINGERIE DEPT.** ON THIS FLOOR?



HE CURSED HIMSELF. HE'D SPENT **TWENTY** MINUTES UP HERE WANDERING AROUND LIKE A **LUNATIC** WHILE SHE WAS PROBABLY **WAITING DOWNSTAIRS** FOR HIM IN **BOOKS** ALL THE WHILE! HE RUSHED BACK TO THE **ESCALATOR**. HE WAS A **FOOL** TO EVER HAVE LEFT IN THE **FIRST PLACE!**



HE JUMPED FROM THE ESCALATOR INTO THE FIRST FLOOR MOB AND LOOKED ABOUT. WHICH WAY? EVERYTHING LOOKED UNFAMILIAR.



THERE WAS NO BOOK DEPT. LISTED.



THE DEPT. STORE WAS BECOMING LIKE A LUNATIC ASYLUM FOR HIM. HE MOVED OFF UNCERTAINLY AT RANDOM IN ANY DIRECTION...



TEN MINUTES LATER HE STOOD IN THE MIDDLE OF HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES AND KNEW HE WAS LOST.



BOOKS? I'M SORRY, WE DON'T HAVE A BOOK DEPT. IN THIS STORE.



...AND FOUND HIMSELF WANDERING AIMLESSLY IN RECORDS, EYES SEARCHING CONSTANTLY AHEAD FOR THE BOOKS-- STATIONERY SIGN.



BUT I'M
TELLING YOU--

MISTER, I'VE
BEEN WORKING IN
THIS STORE FOR
SIX YEARS AND
WE **NEVER** HAD
ANY KIND OF
BOOK DEPT.
EVER.

HE BECAME AWARE THAT PEOPLE
WERE **STARING** AT HIM. HE WAS IN
THE **WAY**. THE CASHIER SIGNALLED
SOMEONE AROUND HIM AND HE WAS
PUSHED GENTLY ASIDE. I'M GOING
INSANE, HE THOUGHT.

A WAVE OF **RELIEF** SWEEPED OVER
HIM! IT WAS **ALMOST OVER NOW!**
SOON HE'D BE **BESIDE** HER IN THE
CAR, PUTTING IT IN **GEAR**, BACKING
OUT OF THE **GODAWFUL** LOT AWAY
FROM THE **GODAWFUL** STORE.



"**GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN, LET
NOTHING YOU DISMAY**"...THE MUSIC RANG
DULLY. A TEEN-AGER BANGED INTO HIM
JARRING HIS **TEETH**. HE LOOKED HELPLESSLY
AT THE DECORATIONS HANGING IN GAUDY
PROFUSION.
HE TRIED TO
THINK.



HE FELT **NUMB. UNREAL...**

AND THEN IT **CAME** TO HIM WHERE
SHE'D BE! **THE CAR! OF COURSE!**
SHE'D GOTTEN **TIRED** OF WAITING
AND GONE TO SIT DOWN IN **THE CAR!**
SHE HAD HER **OWN** SET OF KEYS SO
SHE COULD GET IN **OKAY!** IT WAS
WHERE SHE'D **EXPECT** HIM TO LOOK
FOR HER! HE **PRACTICALLY RAN** FOR
THE EXIT DOORS...



TOMORROW HE WOULD **LAUGH** AT
THIS! THE **PACKAGES?** SHE'D
PROBABLY PICKED THEM UP **HER-
SELF!** HE FELT **GOOD...** EVEN HIS
HEADACHE DIDN'T SEEM SO BAD
NOW.



HE COULDN'T
**FIND THE
CAR...**

HE COMBED THE **ENTIRE LOT TWICE**.
IT WAS **ALMOST TEN**, NOW THE STORE
WOULD BE **CLOSED** IN A FEW MINUTES.
HALF IN **SHOCK** HE STARTED **NER-
VOUSLY** BACK TOWARD THE WARMTH
OF THE BUILDING.



THEN IT **STRUCK** HIM. SHE'D
LEFT! SHE'D GOTTEN IN
THE CAR AND **DRIVEN OFF--
DESERTED** HIM! HE
LAUGHED SUDDENLY OUT
LOUD!
THE OLD GIRL HAD FINALLY
TAKEN SOME **POSITIVE**
ACTION TOWARD A **SOLU-
TION** TO THEIR MARRIAGE!
HE WOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN
HER THAT MUCH **CREDIT!**

FINE, BUT NOW HOW WAS **HE** SUPPOSED
TO GET HOME?

HE FOUND A **PAY PHONE** AND DIALED THEIR HOME NUMBER. INEXPLICABLY HE FOUND HIMSELF **PROUD** OF HER. HE SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS **HIMSELF** LONG AGO. OF COURSE, SHE COULDN'T EXPECT TO GET ANY **MONEY** THIS WAY BUT--AN **OPERATOR** CUT SUDDENLY INTO THE LINE.



WHAT NUMBER ARE YOU **CALLING** PLEASE?

UH, 697-8494.



ONE MOMENT PLEASE... I'M **SORRY**, SIR, THAT NUMBER IS **NOT** IN OUR CURRENT LISTINGS.

MY GOD! HAD SHE HAD THE PHONE **DISCONNECTED** ALREADY? **WHY?** WHAT IN THE WORLD WOULD SHE GAIN BY **THAT?** THIS WAS **RIDICULOUS!**



ALL RIGHT, OPERATOR, **FORGET** THAT... COULD YOU GIVE ME THE NUMBER OF THE NEAREST **CAB** COMPANY, PLEASE YES, THANK YOU



OKAY, IF ELAINE WANTED TO PLAY **ROUGH**, HE'D PLAY **ROUGH** TOO. HE'D HIRE THE BEST **LAWYER** IN TOWN AND SLAP HER WITH THE BIGGEST **MENTAL CRUELTY** SUIT SHE EVER SAW...

THE CAB CAME IN **TEN** MINUTES. HE JUMPED IN THE BACK AND FELT HIMSELF PRESSED AGAINST THE **VINYL** CUSHION AS THE CAR **JERKED** AWAY FROM THE CURB.



WHERE TO, MAC?

9123 MAPLE DRIVE

HE SAT IN **SILENCE**, THE STREET LAMPS WASHING OVER HIM. ALL HE WANTED RIGHT NOW WAS A **HOT BATH** AND A **SOFT BED** AND THE **BLESSING** OF MIND-CLEANSING **SLEEP**. HE'D SETTLE WITH ELAINE **LATER**.



HERE'S **MAPLE DRIVE**, MAC. WHICH ONE IS **YOURS?**



HE STARED IN **STUPEFACTION** OUT THE CAB WINDOW AT HIS STREET. THE NEIGHBORING HOUSES ON BOTH SIDES OF HIS HOME WERE **BUTTED TOGETHER** IN AN **UNBROKEN** LINE. HIS HOME WAS **NOT** BETWEEN THEM.



HE FISHED THE BILLS OUT OF HIS WALLET **ABSENTLY** AND TURNED TO THE CABBY...



A CHILL OF **DREAD** RACED UP HIS SPINE. THE HOUSES IN FRONT OF HIM BEGAN TO **SHIFT** AND **MELT** INTO THE NIGHT **ONE** BY **ONE**... JUST LIKE THE **CAB**... JUST LIKE HIS **PHONE NUMBER**... JUST LIKE THE **BOOK DEPT.**



HE TORE AT THE WRAPPING, RIPPED OFF THE BOX LID LETTERED **THE MIRACLE DISPOSAL** AND HELD THE TINY **DEVICE** IN HIS TREMBLING HAND, FELT ITS MINUTE **PULSING** BEAT SPREADING **THROUGH HIM.**

HIS **HEADACHE!** MY **GOD!** IT WASN'T THE **NEIGH-BORHOOD** THAT WAS **DISAPPEAR-ING**... IT WAS **HIM!**



THE MUNIFICENT

Ali Addan and Son!

WHO HAS NOT HEARD THE LEGEND OF THE MUNIFICENT **ALI ADDAN**? IN THE ANCIENT LANDS, HE IS THE MOST REVERED, THE MOST RESPECTED, THE MOST **FEARED** OF ELDERS.

HIS WEALTH IS GREATER THAN ANY AMASSED BY A MERE CREATURE OF BLOOD AND BONE. HIS WIVES ARE MORE BEWITCHING AND PLEASURE-GIVING THAN THE SEVEN MISTRESSES OF MOHAMMED. HIS TOWER MORE ANEQUINE THAN THE FABLED GODS OF THE KHIRI.

THOUGH HEAVY WITH AGE, ALI ADDAN IS A **BODY-DIPPING** WITH THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH. HIS **MIND** AS PARTING AND VERNACULAR AS A COILED ADDER. HIS IS A **USAGE** WHICH BRINGS HIM ALL BUT THE MOST VIRTUOUS OF WOMEN.



YET, DEEPTO HIS APPARENT PERFECTIONS, ALI ADDAN IS ONLY A MAN... SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE WANTS, THE NEEDS, THE DRIVES OF MEN. HE IS VICTIM TO HUMAN **FAULTS** AND VICES... RAMPANT WITH HUMAN **IMPERFECTION**.

IN THE BRIEF SPAN OF HIS HUMAN LIFE: TIME, THE STORY OF ALI ADDAN HAS BECOME **LEGEND**. HIS EXPLOITS, EMBELLISHED BY CONTINUED RETELLING, BEAR LITTLE TRUTH IN REALITY AND I SUSPECT... THE TRUTH WILL EVEN MORE SUCCUMB TO THE DRAMATIC WITH THE **PASSAGE OF TIME**.



SOME SAY ALI ADDAN CAME BY HIS GOOD FORTUNES AFTER PURCHASING AN ANCIENT **LAMP** FROM A WANDERING ITINERANT.

OTHERS ARE ADAMANT IN THEIR BELIEF THAT ALI, ONCE A POOR FISHERMAN, SNARED A WONDEROUS BOTTLE FROM THE SEA.

THE TALES ARE, OF COURSE, ROMANTICIZED **LIES**, PERPETRATED BY THE CUNNING ALI TO PETER THOSE WHO MIGHT LEARN THE TRUTH, AND SHARE BOTH THE GLORY AND THE JOYS THAT ARE RIGHTLY HIS ALONE!

I OF COURSE KNOW THE SECRET ALI ADDAN HIDES FROM THE WORLD. I KNOW THE TRUTH OF HIS FABLED GENIE.

IT WAS MY GOOD FORTUNE TO BE HIS FAVORIED, AMONG THE FAR-TOO-MANY SONS TO SPRING FROM HIS LOINS. WHY HIS UNPAID ATTENTIONS WERE MINE ALONE, I CANNOT SAY. PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE I SHARED NOT ONLY HIS HEROIC VISEGE, BUT NURTURED HIS DREAMS AS WELL.

I SAW AT AN EARLY AGE THAT MY FATHER HAD RECOGNIZED THAT I WAS THE SOLE VESSEL THROUGH WHICH HIS UNFULFILLED HOPES MIGHT BECOME REALITY. I REALIZED TOO HIS WISH THAT I BECOME MORE SUCCESSFUL IN LIFE THAN HE.



FOR DESPITE ALL HIS TRIUMPHS, MY FATHER'S SOUL WAS STEEPED IN THE AGONY OF THE MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN. HE DESIRED NOTHING MORE THAN THAT ONE CHERISHED POSSESSION HE WOULD NEVER EMBRACE.

YET, KNOWING THAT I, HIS FAVORIED, MIGHT ATTAIN THE UNATTAINABLE, THE GLORIOUS ALI ADDAN PASSED HIS KNOWLEDGE TO ME. I ALONE BECAME PRIVY TO THE TRUE TALE BEHIND MY FATHER'S FORTUNE.



AWAKE, FAIR ONE! YOU HAVE SURVIVED YOUR SHIPWRECK...

...BUT YOU MAY NOT LIVE LONG IN THIS FORBIDDEN LAND!

IT FELT TO ME TO WALK IN HIS FOOTSTEPS... TO RECTIFY HIS WRONGS WHILE FINDING HAPPINESS OF MY OWN LIFE.

AND IN SO FOLLOWING MY FATHER, I WAS LED HERE... TO THE FORGOTTEN ISLE WHERE HIS LEGEND BEGAN...

...THE ISLE OF THE JINN!
THIS IS NOT A PLACE FOR OUTSIDERS!

YOU MUST GO... WHILE STILL YOU CAN!

THE SON OF A LEGEND DOES NOT FLEE!

I HEAR YOUR MAN-EATING PETS! BUT I FEAR THEM NAUGHT!





"I AM DAUGHTER OF A SULTAN THERE! AND MY FATHER'S PALACE IS THE MOST GRACIOUS IN THE SEVEN FAVORED LANDS!"

"I'VE PLAYED WITHIN THE GARDENS THERE SO OFTEN WITHOUT FEAR, FOR IN TRUTH, WHO WOULD DARE WISH HARM TO THE SULTAN'S DAUGHTER?"



"BUT ONE DAY... A SLAVERING DEMON SNEAKED INTO THE GARDENS, UNNOTICED BY THE PALACE GUARDS. HIS VILE SMELL FOULED THE BEAUTY OF THE BLOSSOMS, BUT SO INTENT WAS I THAT I HEEDED NOT THE WARNING... AND FELL CAPTIVE TO THE LOATHSOME THING!"

"THE CREATURES WERE MAGICAL BEYOND COMPARE. HE SPIRITED ME THROUGH THE HEAVENS, FLYING LIKE A FOUL BIRD OF PREY OVER THE SEAS. TO THIS TREACHEROUS ROCK-STREWN REEF... THIS HARBOR OF ABANDONED HOPE... WHERE NO BEAUTY GROWS, AND NAUGHT SAVE HOPELESSNESS BLOOMS!"



"AND HERE, THAT VILE BEAST DID CARRY ME AND CHAIN ME TO THESE ROCKS YOU SEE HERE. I FAINED FROM FRIGHT AS HE ALTERED HIS HIDEOUS FORM... TO AN EVEN MORE HIDEOUS. BEING OF THE SEA!"

"OH, YOUNG SIRE... THE TORMENT HE FORCED UPON MY VIRTUOUS SOUL WAS ABOMINABLE!"



"HE MADE ME HIS MISTRESS... THE MISTRESS OF THIS STYGIAN ISLE! HERE I AM IMPRISONED!"

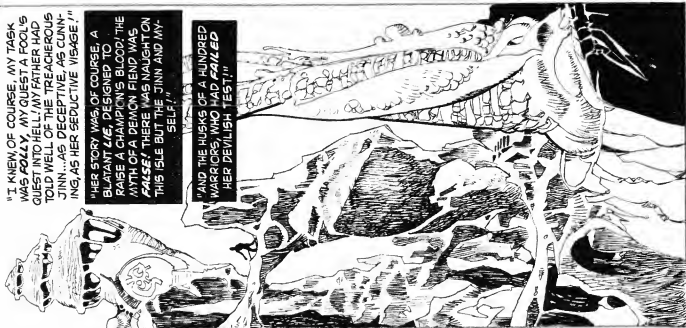
"THE DEMON HAS CHAINED ME TO THESE ROCKS FOR PASSING SHIPS TO SPY! I AM HIS FLESHY LURE. GET TO EN-SNARE UNWARY SEAMEN... VICTIMS FOR HIS DETESTABLE APPETITE FOR FRESH HUMAN MEAT!"



"I KNEW, OF COURSE, MY TASK WAS **FOLLY**. MY QUEST A FOOL'S QUEST INTO HELL! MY FATHER HAD TOLD WELL OF THE TREACHEROUS JINN...AS DECEPTIVE, AS CUNNING, AS HER SEDUCTIVE VISAGE!"

"HER STORY WAS, OF COURSE, A BLATANT **LIE**, DESIGNED TO RAISE A CHAMPION'S BLOOD! THE MYTH OF A DEMON FIEND WAS **FALSE**! THERE WAS NAUGHT ON THIS ISLE BUT THE JINN AND MYSELF!"

"AND THE HUNKS OF A HUNDRED WARRIORS, WHO HAD **FAILED** HER DEVILISH TEST!"



THE SON OF ALI ADDAN HAS GIVEN HIS **WORD**!

SHE IS INDEED A BEAUTY **UNMATCHED**!

INFINITELY AS PLEASING AS MY FATHER HAS SAID! AND **DEVIOUS** AS WELL!

I WALK INTO HER **TRAP** WILLINGLY! TO PROVE MY HEART IS **TRUE**!

THE **SWARE** IS SET, MY HANDSOME ONE! YOU STRIDE TO YOUR **DOOM**!



THESE CHAINS ARE **STRONG**...BUT I WILL APPEAL TO YOUR DEMON **MASTER**!

FLESH EATER OR NO, THE SON OF ALI ADDAN CANNOT **ABANDON** A MAIDEN SO FAIR, TO FACE A FATE SUCH AS YOURS!

AND IF HE DOES NOT HEAR MY PLEAS... THEN I PLEDGE, I WILL BRING YOU HIS FOUL **HEAD**!

OH, SIRE, YOU CANNOT! HE IS **MUCH** TOO CUNNING!



ALI ADDAN HAD WARNED ME WELL OF THIS. YEARS BEFORE, A BATTERING STORM HAD WASHED HIS SHIP TO THESE SHORES. HIS BODY WAS **SMASHED** AND BATTERED BEYOND REPAIR ON THE **JAGGED** COASTAL ROCKS.

MY FATHER HAS SAID HE WALKED THE VALLEY OF DEATH THAT DAY...UNTIL GENTLE, MYSTIC HANDS **SEALED** HIS GAPING WOUNDS.

A SOFT, MELODIOUS VOICE BECKONED HIM FROM THE BEYOND. AND WHEN AT LAST HE OPENED HIS EYES, IT WAS TO **SMEL**...THE MOST SENSUOUS, BEAUTIFUL AND SERENE FACE, WELCOMING HIM BACK TO THE LIVING.



THE GIRL THEN, WAS AS SHE IS NOW... / NO MERE GIRL, BUT THE MISTRESS OF THE ISLE. SHE IS THE LAST OF THE ONCE GREAT AND MYSTICAL RACE KNOWN AS THE **JINN**.

THE ELEMENTS THEMSELVES ARE HERS TO COMMAND. NATURE AND THE GODS RESPOND TO HER EVERY WHIM!

WHEN SHE SAVED MY FATHER, HIS HONOR DEMANDED HE REPAY HER FOR THE GIFT OF HIS LIFE. YET HE KNEW BUT **ONE** WAY TO FULFILL HIS DEBT TO ONE AS POWERFUL AS SHE. AND IN DOING SO, HE FOUND ETERNAL BLISS...COUPLED WITH PERPETUAL DAMNATION!



BUT THE GIRL REFUSED REWARD UNTIL AFTER MY FATHER HAD PROVEN HIMSELF IN THE TOMB OF THE LIVING EARTH!

FOR IT IS SAID THAT HERE...THE JINN'S LONG-DEAD **CHAMPION** RISES FROM THE GRAVE TO TEST THE WORTHINESS OF HIS PRINCESS'S 'CHOSEN'. MANY **FAIL** THE TEST OF THE CHAMPION. AND TO THEM AWAITS A DEATH MOST GRUESOME.

FOR LEGEND REVEALS THAT THE CHAMPION LOATHES HUMAN FLESH... BUT HUNGERS FOR THE SUCCULENT **MEAT** WITHIN. HE SUCKS THE INNARDS FROM THE UNWORTHY, AND LEAVES THEIR EMPTY HUSK AS A WARNING FOR OTHERS- TO-COME!



IT IS TO THE CREDIT OF ALI ADDAN THAT HIS METTLE WAS TRIED...AND PROVEN. HAD HIS EMPTY, DEFEATED HUSK BEEN LEFT AS A DARKSOME WARNING, IT IS TRUE I WOULD NEVER HAVE HAD MY DAY WITH THE CHAMPION.



AS I FLUNG THE CHAMPION INTO OBLIVION, I KNEW OF COURSE, WHAT WAS NEXT TO COME. BUT THE PROMISE OF SWEET REWARDS RENDERED ME OBLIVIOUS TO LURKING DANGERS!



THE EARTH ITSELF TWISTED BENEATH MY FEET... SQUIRMING, REBELING AT MY VICTORY. AT MY MASTERY OF THIS DEVILISH WORLD! MY FATHER HAD WARNED ME, TOO, OF THE LIVING EARTH...OF ITS GRIPPING, CLINGING ROCK!



IT REACHED FOR ME...TO CRUSH...TO KILL! AND I KNEW, AS HE KNEW, THERE WAS NO VICTORY TO BE CLAIMED IN COMBAT HERE!



THERE WAS ONLY BLESSED...



AND WITH ESCAPE, THE HAPPINESS THAT AWAITED THE SURVIVOR...IN THE ARMS OF SINFUL ECSTASY!

MY FATHER'S FORTUNES BEGAN AT THIS MOMENT, LO! THOSE MANY YEARS AGO. HERE HE PAID THE JINN FOR HIS LIFE IN PLEASURES OF THE FLESH!

AND THE UNWARY JINN, DRUNKEN WITH THE ECSTASY OF HIS FAVORS, BESTOWED UPON HIM BOUNDLESS **WEALTH!**

YOUR FATHER HAS TOLD YOU MUCH OF THIS PLACE...

YOU FIGHT LIKE A DEMON... JUST AS ONCE DID **ME!**

BUT WE ARE PREPARED FOR YOU THIS TIME, YOUNG SIRE!

FOR WE HAVE SEEN THROUGH YOUR LIES AS EASILY AS YOU HAVE SEEN THROUGH **MINE!**

FOR A WHILE AT LEAST, ALI AND THE JINN FOUND BLISS, PLEASURE AND LOVE. BUT TO RESTLESS ALI, IT QUICKLY GREW PALE. HE SOUGHT FRESH DELIGHTS, UNBLEMISHED CONQUESTS... AND THE WEALTH THAT AWAITED HIM AT HOME.

IT WAS THEN, TO HIS LIFETIME'S REGRET, THAT HE BETRAYED HIS PRINCESS! HE SLIPPED FROM THE ISLE IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, AND IT FELL TO ME TO RECAPTURE HIS LOST DREAM... TO FIND THE PLEASURES HE HAD CARELESSLY LEFT TO **MEMORY!**

I COME WITH OPEN HEART, MY JINN...

...TO MAKE AMENDS FOR MY FATHER'S BETRAYAL!



YOU ARE MUCH LIKE THE TALES I HAVE HEARD OF YOUR FATHER. BUT YOU ARE SO VERY **NAIVE!**

HE HAS LIVED A LIFE OF REGRET... AND WISHES YOU ONLY FIND HAPPINESS **ME!**

I AM NOT THE JINN YOUR FATHER BETRAYED!

I AM THE DAUGHTER HE LEFT BEHIND!

AND MOTHER... POOR MOTHER, WHO'S HEART HE HAS BROKEN, HAS NOT FORGOTTEN NOR FORGIVEN HIM IN ALL THESE YEARS!



SHE HAS WITHERED WITH AGE... BECOME SICK OF HEART.

BUT NEVER HAS ABANDONED HER YOW... TO MAKE ALI ADDAN... **PAY!**

END

PRESENTING THE 1977 WARREN AWARDS

BEST COVER OF THE YEAR 1977

FRANK FRAZETTA

He's one of the world's top illustrators! Newspaper strips, comics, paperback and hardcover books, posters, calendars, movie ads and magazines have featured his work. **Frazetta**... whose giantess on the Empire State Building won Best Cover



Best Cover of 1977: Frank Frazetta's dramatic EERIE #81!

BEST ALL AROUND WRITER BRUCE JONES

Many writers make dying and death seem terrifying. **Bruce Jones** can make living seem equally frightening. He has a genius for combining the bizarre with the ordinary to produce the extraordinary tales that won him Best Writer for '77!



Best All Around Writer: Macabre Bruce Jones!

BEST COVER ARTIST RICH CORBEN

Rich Corben uses an unusual method to produce cover illustrations. It's so odd, in fact, that he's given up trying to explain it. People just don't understand. We don't care how he does it. We only wish there could be more covers with **Corben** quality!



Top quality EERIE Corben covers: #77, 86 and 90!

BEST STORY OF THE YEAR 1977 BRUCE JONES

In '76, **Bruce's** story of predatory sharks, "In Deep," won him Best Story. In '77, his classic "Yellow Heat" featured human predators... and netted him another award for Best Story: his spectacular epic of courage and cannibalism. Best in '77!



1977's Best Story: Jones' magnificent "Yellow Heat!"

This time last year, **Warren** promised you great things for 1977! Terrific stories! Magnificent art! Spectacular excitement! It was an easy promise to keep. With gifted artists and writers, like those appearing in **CREEPY**, **EERIE** and **VAMPIRELLA**, how could we fail?

And still, '77 was better than we expected... a year filled with feature issues, bizarre new series and that special brand of **Warren** horror!

It was a terrific year for the acquisition of new artists... and some of the best have joined the **Warren** team. **Dick Giordano**, **Alfredo Alcala** and **Rudi Nebres** contributed much to the **Warren** magazines, to the delight of their myriad fans. **Alex Nino**, voted

Best Artist for 1977, filled page after page with his action-packed visual excitement!

The **Warren** books featured rare, but much-valued appearances by **Berni Wrightson**, **Al Williamson**, **Russ Heath** and **Rich Corben**. Exceptional work by regulars **Gonzalo Mayo**, **Jose Gonzalez**, **Esteban Meroto**, **Martin Salvador** and **Leopold Sanchez** made award giving difficult.

John Severin's "A Toast To No Man's Memory," **Jose Ortiz's** "Hard John Apple" series, **Leo Duarnona's** "Gaffer," were all candidates for special awards.

It was a great year for the **Warren** writers. In fact, with all those good things happening to them, it's a wonder that they had time to pen those brilliant stories that kept readers on the

edge of their seats, issue after issue.

Gerry Boudreau, now residing in California, has just sold the concept for a Saturday morning science-fiction TV show. **Dube** is working furiously on a number of books, including one on **Movie Moguls**, when he's not running his recently established company, the **Cartoon Factory**.

Bruce Jones, winner of two writing awards, art directed the fine book **Ariel** and illustrated an inside story as well. **Roger McKenzie** has been discovered by other comic companies (who shall go nameless here), since his move to the **Big Apple**. But fear not, **McKenzie** fans, **Warren** is still his first love.

Cary Bates will soon be heading for Hol-

Since 1970, artists and writers have been receiving Warren Awards in appreciation for their outstanding contributions to the Warren graphic horror line. Past winners from CREEPY, EERIE and VAMPIRELLA have included outstanding talents like Frank Frazetta, Archie Goodwin, John Severin and Alex Toth . . . all considered among the most creative people in comics. This year's winners are selected from those whose work appeared in magazines on the newsstands in '77. Their contributions were of highest standards and represent the best Warren has to offer.

BEST ALL AROUND ARTIST ALEX NINO

Alex Nino is a relatively recent addition to the Warren Magazines, though he's been known to comics aficionados the world around for some time! And we feel honored to have him! His ebullient masterpieces make him best artist in '77!



SPECIAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE THE ROOK

Dube insists that a lot of creative thought went into The Rook, not all of it his own! He credits Jim Warren, Jim Stenstrum and Budd Lewis, among others. But the character is mainly a DuBay/Bernejo creation . . . and it won a Special Award!



Bill DuBay & Luis Bernejo: Rook Creators, 1977!



Best All-Around Artist: The moods of Nino!

BEST ART IN THE YEAR 1977 RUSS HEATH

Russ Heath has been a favorite of Warren readers for years, but even his loyal fans were astounded by the quality of his work on "Yellow Heat!" He created art that was both sensitive and powerful, and it won him an award for Best Story Art



Best Art: Heath's powerful savagery in "Yellow Heat!"

SPECIAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE RAMON TORRENTS

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Ramon Torrents: Special Award for Exceptional Art!

lywood to do the re-writing during filming of his screenplay. Aside from his regular duties as Assistant Editor, Nicola Cutili guest-edited several CREEPY issues.

Yep, it's been a great year for the Warren writers, and we hope that '78 proves equally terrific for them, and for occasional guest Len Wein and Bob Toomey!

'78 has been a great year for discovering new and brilliant cover artists. Witness the debut of Steve Hickman on CREEPY #88, Malcolm McNell's brilliant "Spider-Woman" on EERIE #89, and Don Maltz' exciting sports covers! Of course, new and brilliant work by Ken Kelly, Enrich, Sanjulan, Rich Corben and Frank Frazetta helped make '77 a very good year for covers.

But '78 is going to be even better!

'78 will feature cover art by Warren staffer, Kim McQuilte. Past ink-master, Esteban Maroto, will switch to paint for some brilliant cover effects!

And there will be more terrific art! More spectacular stories! More incredible covers!

If you liked the '77 feature issues, you're gonna love '78. Specials on Aliens, Monsters, terrifying Media Tales, Earth-Shattering Disasters and Magic are all already scheduled!

The Rook is still going strong with more time-boggling adventures planned. '78 will bring a team-up with VAMPIRELLA, Pantha, Starpatch, et al, to battle a menace from the dawn of time.

Want more contests? Warren'll have 'em. What kind? We can't say now . . . but we can promise you, you're gonna love 'em!

The giant summer issue of VAMPIRELLA will feature another book length story, this one created by Dube and the inimitable Mayo!

Warren's long awaited new magazine is scheduled to appear in early '78! Look for announcements soon!

And, best of all, '78 will bring the 100th issue of CREEPY! It will be huge! It will be spectacular! It will be the best issue of CREEPY ever!

Don't miss Warren in 1978! It'll be a company to watch!

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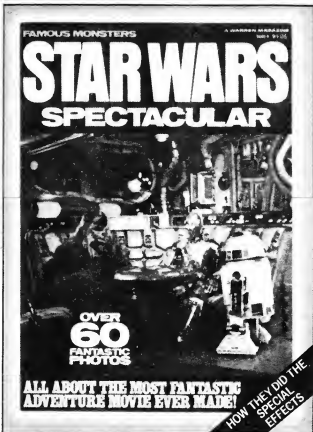
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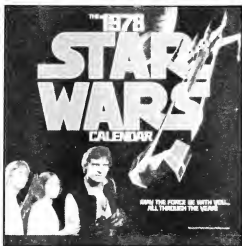
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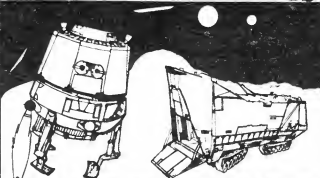
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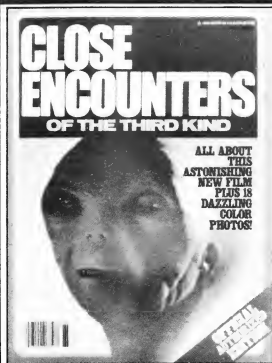


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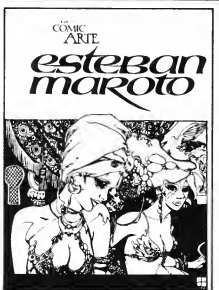
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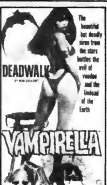
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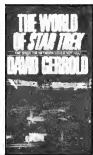
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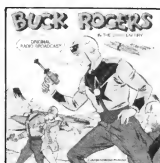
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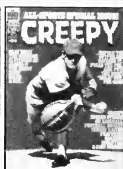
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BEFORE



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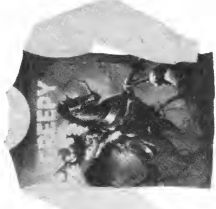
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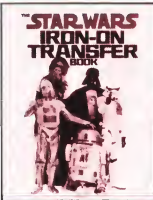
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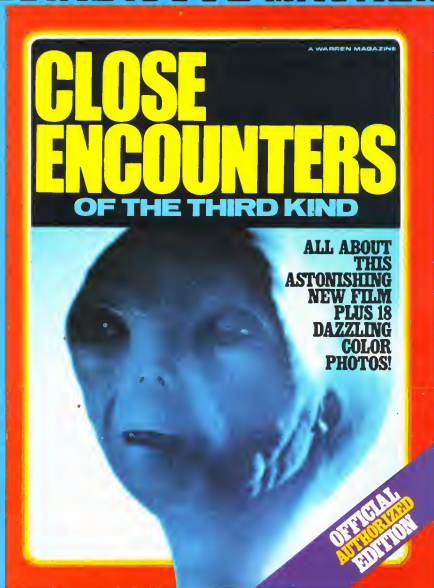
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