

CREEPY
#135



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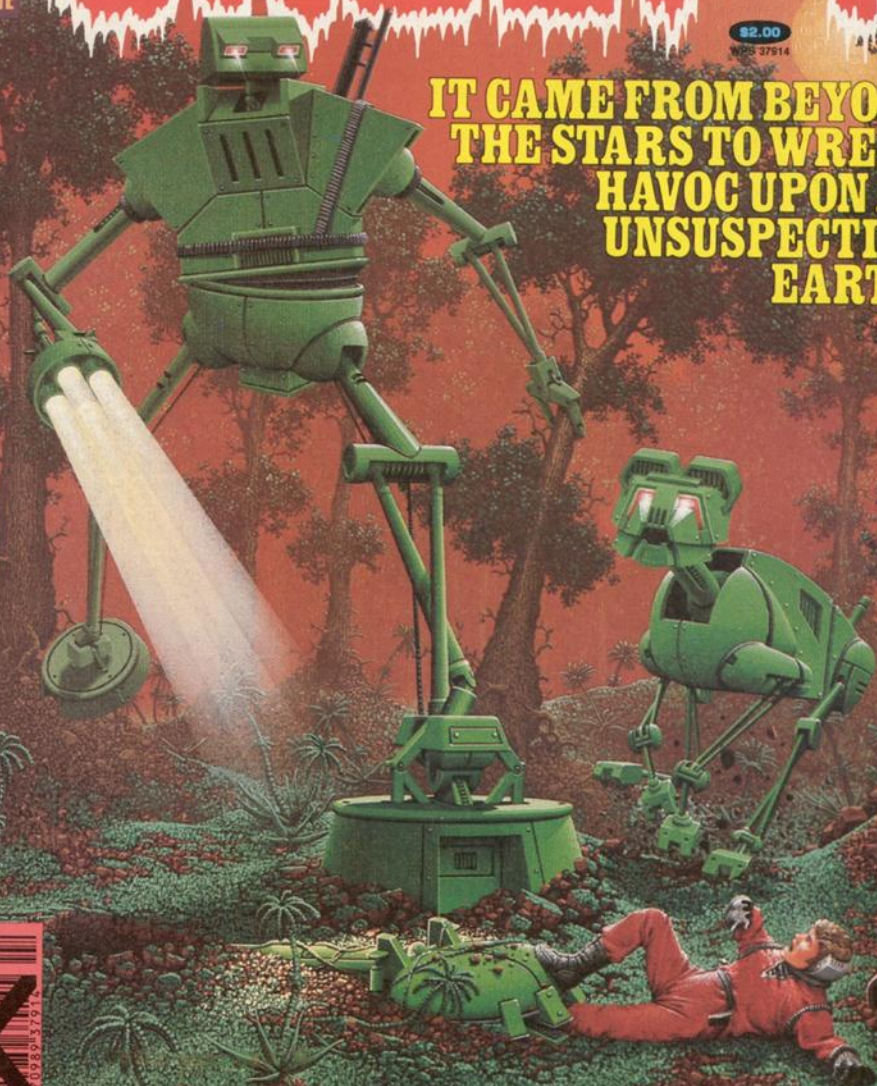
SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EXCITEMENT!


CREEPY

\$2.00

WPS 37514

**IT CAME FROM BEYOND
THE STARS TO WREAK
HAVOC UPON AN
UNSUSPECTING
EARTH!**





I'M NOT HORSEING
AROUND THIS TIME, DEAR READERS!
I'VE PUT TOGETHER AN ISSUE THAT'S
FULL OF SHOCKS, SURPRISES AND MURDER
AT THE GALLOP! IT'S WORTH EVERY
CENTAUR YOU PAID
FOR IT!

IT'S GOT
DEMENTED LOVE, RESENTED
LOVE, HAUNTED HOUSES AND
HOME-ICIDAL MANIACS! IT'S
FULL OF MEN THAT ARE WISE,
MEN TO DESPISE, SORCERERS,
SATANISTS, MAD GODS AND
MIRACLES!

BUT I WON'T
NAG YOU ANY FURTHER!
NAY! TURN THE PAGE!
...AND TREMBLE!

THE OLD HOUSE LOOMS
QUAINTLY, A BASTION
AGAINST THE WIND-
DRIVEN RAIN. CARLA IS
HAPPY, PERFECTLY
HAPPY AS SHE RACES
ONTO ITS RICKETY
FRONT PORCH! THOUGH
FATIGUED BY A FOUR-
HOUR TRIP... DESPITE
THE ELEMENTAL FRENZY
OF THE STORM
...HER HEART SOARS
WITH THE KNOWLEDGE
THAT SHE IS THE NEW
BRIDE OF DR. MICHAEL
JOHNSON!

YET...TO A HOUSE,
ESPECIALLY THIS HOUSE,
SUCH MOMENTS OF JOY
ARE SHORT-LIVED!

WELL,
MRS. JOHNSON!
WHAT DO YOU THINK
OF MY BOYHOOD
HOME?



THE WEDDING GIFT!



LOVE IT!
BUT AREN'T YOU
FORGETTING A
TIME-HONORED
CUSTOM,
DOCTOR?



LIKE
CARRYING A GIRL
OVER THE
THRESHOLD?

MMMMMM!

A SHORT WHILE LATER, THE
HONEYMOONERS HAVE SETTLED IN
FOR THE NIGHT...!

OH, BABE...
YOU'RE GORGEOUS...
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
WOMAN I'VE EVER
MARRIED!

I SHOULD
HOPE SO, DR.
JOHNSON!

FOR
YOUR SAKE, I'D
BETTER NOT FIND
OUT ABOUT ANY
PREVIOUS MR.
JOHNSONS!

MR. J...
YOU'RE MY ONE
AND ONLY!

SUDDENLY, THE MOOD IS
SHATTERED BY STRIDENT
HAMMERING ON THE FLOOR
BELOW!

WHAT
THE
DEVIL-?!

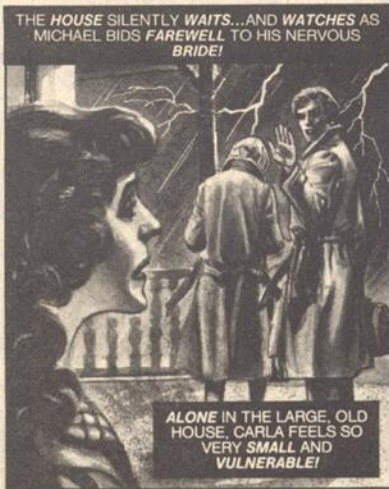
**BAM!
BAM!**

H-HELP ME...
PLEASE! M-MY HUSBAND
...OUR CAR-! IT...IT'S
SKIDDED OFF THE ROAD!
IT...IT'S STUCK IN
THE SWAMP!

M-MY
HUSBAND'S
PINNED INSIDE...
HURTI AND...AND
THE CAR'S SINKING
INTO THE MIRE!
P-PLEASE!
YOU'VE GOT
TO HELP ME!

IT'S THE
FRONT DOOR!
SOMEONE'S TRYING
TO GET IN!

**BAM!
BAM!
BAM!**





AT A RAIN-SPLATTERED WINDOW, CARLA WATCHES HER HUSBAND SWALLOWED BY THE NIGHT!

THEN...SHE REMEMBERS THE PHONE!



THE LINE... IT'S DEAD!



GOOD GOD! LIGHTNING! SOUNDED LIKE IT HIT RIGHT OUTSIDE!



AS IF ON CUE, THE ENTIRE HOUSE IS PLUNGED INTO BLACKNESS!

OH NO! THE STORM HAS KNOCKED OUT THE POWER!

SUDDENLY...THERE IS A SOUND FROM UPSTAIRS ...LIKE A BODY VIOLENTLY TOPPLING TO THE FLOOR!



WHUMP!

OH GOD!



TERRIFIED, CARLA MADLY GROPES ABOUT IN THE DARK!

C-CANDLES!



I'VE GOT TO LIGHT SOME CANDLES!



FLEE!

AN ICY,
SPECTRAL WIND
EXTINGUISHES
THE CANDLES...

...AND CARLA RUNS,
CONSUMED WITH
BLIND, NUMBING
PANIC...

...INTO THE FIRST
OPEN DOOR THAT
HOLDS THE BAREST
HINT OF SAFETY!

HEART POUNDING,
TREMBLING, SHE BRACES
HERSELF FOR A HORROR
THAT DOES NOT DEIGN TO
FOLLOW!

SUDDENLY...THE COPPERY
SCENT OF FRESH-SPILLED
BLOOD ASSAILS HER SENSES...

N-WOOOO!

A CHANDELIER
GENTLY CREAKS
UNDER THE
WEIGHT OF A
DANGLING
CORPSE...AND A
SCREAM RISES
UNBIDDEN IN
CARLA'S
THROAT!

THIS HOUSE
IS EVIL, CARLA! AS
EVIL AS THE RESTLESS
SOULS WITHIN IT!

FLEE, CARLA! FLEE WHILE
YOU STILL MAY! BEFORE YOUR
HUSBAND HANGS YOU...AND POURS
LYE DOWN YOUR THROAT AS YOU
VAINLY GASP FOR AIR...

...JUST AS
MY HUSBAND DID
TO ME!

NOWOOOOOOO!

AGAIN, CARLA WHIRLS...AND RUNS...



...RACING IN **TERROR** FASTER
THAN HER DELICATE FEET CAN
CARRY HER!



SHE
SLIPS!

AND
FALLS!



TUMBLING HEAD OVER HEELS,
SHE STRIKES HER HEAD!



AND, **SUDDENLY**, SHE IS AWARE
OF **BLOOD** TRICKLING WETLY
INTO HER EYES!



BUT
WORSE...



...THE **HORROR** IS NOT YET OVER!



HOW MANY
OMENS, HOW
MANY WARNINGS
DO YOU NEED,
CARLA? FLEE!
THIS HOUSE
IS EVIL!

MY
HUSBAND WENT **MAD**
ONE NIGHT!
IN A **RAGE**
HE TOOK A
SCYTHE TO
ME... AND
HARVESTED
MY HEAD!



WHIMPERING,
MOANING,
CARLA
STRUGGLES
TO HER KNEES!
WHOLLY
CONSUMED BY
HORROR, SHE
CAN FEEL HER
SANITY
SLIPPING
AWAY!





M-MICHAEL!
I...I'VE GOT
TO FIND
MICHAEL!



WIDE-EYED WITH FRIGHT, SHE
BOLTS FOR THE FRONT DOOR,
PREPARED TO HURL HERSELF
INTO THE STORMY NIGHT!

IT...IT'S
LOCKED! IT
WON'T
BUDGE!



NOT THAT
WAY, CARLA!
TRY THE OTHER
DOOR...
THERE!



THAT'S
RIGHT, CARLA!
YOU CAN ESCAPE
THROUGH THE
CELLAR! BUT
HURRY...
HURRY!



NOOOOOO!

WITH
STRENGTH
BORN OF
DESPERATION,
THE TERRIFIED
BRIDE FLINGS
OPEN THE
STUBBORN
BASEMENT
DOOR...



..ONLY TO BE
INSTANTLY SEIZED
BY GNARLED,
SKELETAL HANDS
THAT SPRING
FROM THE
CELLAR'S
DARKNESS!

P-PLEASE...!



ROUGHLY, SHE IS PULLED
DOWN THE OLD, SPLINTING
STEPS! HER QUIVERING,
BLEEDING FINGERS HOOK
LIKE TALONS ONTO THE
DOOR JAM... CLINGING FOR
SWEET, PRECIOUS LIFE!

PLEASE...!

BUT...THE **HANDS** REACH UP,
CLAWING HER ANKLES...HER **LEGS!**
FINGERS CLAMP LIKE STEEL
BANDS ON HER **THIGHS**, AND
TIGHTEN THEIR IRON GRIP ON HER
TATTERED AND **TEARING** GOWN!



IT IS **MANY** HELL-BORNE
NIGHTMARE-WRAITHS...PITTED
AGAINST THE **WANING**
RESOLVE OF ONE!



HER
BATTERED
BODY THUNKS DOWN THE
WOODEN STEPS AS SHE IS
DRAWN INTO
THE **BOWELS**
OF THE
HOUSE!



CARLA'S **SPIRIT** IS WILLING...

...BUT HER **FLESH**, ALAS, IS **WEAK!**



IN HER
FINAL,
FLEETING
MOMENTS
OF **LIFE**...

SHE
SEES THE
THREE
LEERING
SPECTRES,
LAUGHING...
MOCKING
HER...

...AND
SHE
REALIZES
THAT
SHE IS
ABOUT TO
JOIN
THEM...
FOREVER
CURSED
IN
WANDERING
SPECTRAL
DEATH!



IT IS THE LAST
REALIZATION
CARLA EVER HAS,
AS **HELL** CLOSES
AROUND HER
LIKE A TIGHT
DEMON'S **FIST!**

AIEEE!



end

prologue



...FOR WE HAVE SINNED!



"AND YOU, RALPH...? HAVE YOU EVER REALLY CARED ABOUT POOR ARNOLD?"

"POOR ARNOLD!? IS THAT WHAT HE IS... A POOR, INNOCENT, VICTIMIZED BOY? HE'S A NUTCASE, MARTHA! A SCREAMING RAVING LUNATIC!"



"YOU NEVER MISS A CHANCE TO BELITTLE HIM WITH YOUR DEROGATORY LABELS, DO YOU, RALPH?"

"I CALLS 'EM AS I SEES 'EM, MARTHA! MAYBE YOU SHOULD DO THE SAME!"



"MAYBE IF YOU HADN'T PUSHED HIM SO HARD WHEN HE WAS A CHILD... MAYBE IF YOU HADN'T MADE HIM FEEL SO INADEQUATE AT EVERYTHING HE DID... MAYBE HE WOULD BE MORE LIKE YOU, RALPH... A PILLAR OF MENTAL STABILITY!"

"I RAISED HIM AS I WAS RAISED, MARTHA! I, AT LEAST, GAVE HIM THE ATTENTION HE NEVER GOT FROM YOU!"



"IF ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO HER, YOU'D NEVER FORGIVE YOURSELF, CAROLYN! BUT THINK HOW YOUR HUSBAND WOULD FEEL!"

"NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY, CAROLYN, HE'LL ALWAYS BE CHRIS' FATHER! AND YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I THAT THE ONLY REASON HE LEFT WAS... BECAUSE HE COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE YOU INVOLVED WITH THAT OTHER MAN!"

"MAYBE THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO SAY THIS, CAROLYN... WITH CHRIS MISSING! YET, IF SOMEONE HAD SAID IT A LONG TIME AGO, MAYBE YOUR LITTLE GIRL WOULDN'T HAVE RUN OFF!"

"DON'T CALL HIM THAT, MOTHER! HE, HE'S NO LONGER MY HUSBAND... AND HE'S NO LONGER CHRIS' FATHER! HE GAVE UP THAT PRIVILEGE WHEN HE LEFT US... THREE YEARS AGO!"

MOTHER!



"OH, MOTHER! HOW CAN YOU BE SO CRUEL?"

YOU WATCH YOURSELF, WILLY BOY... KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS!



THANKS, SARGE! YOU HAVE A GOOD CHRISTMAS TOO!

**"DON'T GO ACCUSING ME OF
NEGLECT, MR. PERFECT! IT'S YOU
ARNOLD'S REBELLING AGAINST!
YOU AND ALL YOU STAND FOR!"**

**"ARNOLD IS REBELLING AGAINST
SOCIETY, MARTHA! YOUR NEGLECT
AND MY PUSHING ONLY SERVED TO
CONFUSE HIM! AND GOD ALONE
KNOWS WHAT EFFECT THOSE
NUNS HAD ON HIM IN SCHOOL!"**



**"THE SISTERS GAVE HIM A GOOD
EDUCATION, RALPH!"**

**"YEAH! I'LL JUST BET THEY
TAUGHT HIM A LOT! WHATEVER
THEY ADDED TO HIS EDUCATION
MADE HIM LOATHE THE SIGHT OF
WOMEN!"**



**"THAT'S NOT TRUE, RALPH! ARNOLD
DOESN'T HATE WOMEN! HE...HE'S
JUST BASHFUL AROUND THEM! HE'S
INTROVERTED AND SHY, IS ALL!"**

**"OH? AND WHY'S THAT, MARTHA?
MIGHT HIS SOCIAL RETARDATION
HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE
GOOD NUNS...OR DO WE HAVE OLD
MISS CROTCHET TO THANK FOR
THAT?"**



**"THINK ABOUT IT, CAROLYN...IT,
ISN'T ME WHO'S BEEN CRUEL! I'M
NOT THE ONE WHO DIVORCED A
GOOD MAN...A MAN BURSTING WITH
LOVE FOR YOU AND YOUR
DAUGHTER!"**



**"NOR AM I THE ONE WHO'S
PREVENTED THAT MAN FROM
SEEING HIS DAUGHTER SINCE THAT
DIVORCE! I'VE NEVER CONDONED
THE WAY YOU'VE DEPRIVED CHRIS
OF HER FATHER'S LOVE!"**



**"IT'S SELFISH, CAROLYN! SELFISH
AND HATEFUL...THE WAY YOU'VE
KEPT HER FOR YOURSELF...TO
SERVE YOUR OWN POSSESSIVE
NEEDS!"**



**"M-MOTHER! I...I LOVE CHRIS! A-AND
SHE LOVES ME! SHE'S ALL I HAVE IN
THE WORLD!"**

"IT ALL REVERTS BACK TO THAT, DOESN'T IT, RALPH? EVERY TIME WE ARGUE OVER ARNOLD, YOU BLAME POOR MISS CROCHET FOR ALL OF YOUR SON'S DEFICIENCIES!"

"SHE... SHE WAS A SICK OLD WOMAN! RALPH... SICK TO DEATH FROM LONELINESS! A-ARNOLD WAS A COMFORT TO HER... TH-THOSE TIMES!"

"DON'T BLEMISH HER MEMORY ANY MORE THAN IT ALREADY IS, RALPH! CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND HOW GUILTY SHE MUST HAVE FELT... TO DO WHAT SHE DID... IN THAT INSTITUTION!"

"WHAT SHE DID CERTAINLY DIDN'T HELP ARNOLD, MARTHA!"



"COMFORT? MY GOD, MARTHA! THE THINGS SHE DID TO THAT BOY ARE UNTHINKABLE! AND WHEN HE WAS TEN YEARS OLD, YET! FOR GOD'S SAKE, HOW CAN YOU FORGIVE HER FOR THOSE PERVERSIONS?"



"SHE HUNG HERSELF, MARTHA! AND IN MY OPINION, SHE ESCAPED JUSTICE! THE DAMAGE SHE DID TO ARNOLD CAN NEVER BE REPAIRED! HE HATES ALL WOMEN BECAUSE OF HER!"



"YES, YOU'VE MADE YOUR DAUGHTER YOUR WHOLE WORLD, CAROLYN! BUT IN DOING SO, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER? AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO WILLY?"

"YOUR SELFISHNESS HAS MADE THEM BOTH LONELY, SCARRED PEOPLE! YET, YOUR OWN POSSESSIVENESS HAS BLINDED YOU TO THAT!"

"YOU WANT TO BELIEVE THAT, CAROLYN... TO RATIONALIZE WHAT YOU'VE DONE! YET, WE BOTH KNOW CHRIS IS MORE PRECIOUS TO WILLY THAN LIFE ITSELF!"



"HE... HE'S NEVER LOVED HER, MOTHER! HE DOESN'T CARE IF CHRIS LIVES OR DIES!"



"HE MAY BE THREE THOUSAND MILES AWAY... IN A COLD AND LONELY CITY... AND YOU MAY HAVE SUCCEEDED IN KEEPING HIM FROM HIS DAUGHTER... BUT WE BOTH KNOW WILLY'S THOUGHTS ARE WITH THAT CHILD ALWAYS! ESPECIALLY TONIGHT!"



"YOU...YOU'RE **WRONG**, RALPH! **ARNOLD DOESN'T** HATE ALL WOMEN! HE LOVES ME! HE'LL ALWAYS LOVE HIS MOTHER!"



"GOOD GOD, MARTHA! YOU'RE SO DAMNED BLIND! ALL THOSE YEARS OF NEGLECT AND INDIFFERENCE...! HE LOATHES THE VERY SIGHT OF YOU!"

"BETWEEN YOU, THE NUNS AND OLD LADY CROTCHET, IT'S A WONDER THAT BOY'S NOT ON A FUNNY FARM SOMEWHERE, WALLOWING KNEE-HIGH IN HIS OWN EXCREMENT!"



"THE KID SEES ALL WOMEN AS A SCOURGE PUT UPON THIS EARTH TO PUNISH HIM! IT'S NO WONDER HE PREFERS THE COMPANIONSHIP OF BOYS TO GIRLS!"



"TH-THAT ISN'T SO, RALPH!"

"HOW DO YOU THINK WILLY FEELS KNOWING THAT HE HAS TO SPEND ANOTHER CHRISTMAS WITHOUT HIS BELOVED LITTLE GIRL? AND WHAT OF CHRIS' FEELINGS? SHE KNOWS YOU WON'T ALLOW HER TO SEE HER DADDY ON THIS MOST SPECIAL OF ALL NIGHTS!"



"CAROLYN...YOU'RE MY BABY! I LOVE YOU MORE THAN YOU'LL EVER KNOW! BUT YOU ARE A SPOILED, INSENSITIVE HUMAN BEING... AND THAT IS NO ONE'S FAULT BUT MINE, FOR NOT RAISING YOU WITH A STRONGER MORAL CHARACTER!"



"DON'T REPEAT MY ERRORS WITH YOUR DAUGHTER, CAROLYN! LOVE'S TOO PRECIOUS! DON'T DEPRIVE HER OF YOURS OR WILLY'S...OR ONE DAY, SHE'LL LEAVE YOU FOR THE MAN WHOSE LOVE IS PUREST OF ALL...HER FATHER!"



"ARNOLD HAS LOTS OF FEMALE FRIENDS! DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE LAST TIME WE SAW HIM? HE WAS WITH THOSE THREE VERY PRETTY GIRLS!"

"OH, MARTHA...HOW CAN YOU WALLOW SO BLATANTLY IN YOUR IGNORANCE?"



"OH, MOTHER...! DO YOU REALLY THINK SHE'LL GO TO HIM...TO WILLY?"

"I THINK THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE SHE'S THERE ALREADY!"



"THOSE PRETTY GIRLS, AS YOU SO NAIVELY PUT IT, ARE AS CONFUSED AS ARNOLD! THEY'RE BOYS, MARTHA! BOYS IN DRAG! AND THEY'RE AS SICK AS YOUR TWISTED SON!"



"I'IN NEW YORK? BUT THAT'S THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY! HOW...HOW COULD SHE-I SHE'S JUST A BABY!"



BUT THERE AIN'T A DAMN THING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!

WHETHER YOU KNOW IT OR NOT...YOU'RE A DEAD MAN!

"I...I DON'T BELIEVE IT!"

"YOU'D BETTER, SWEETHEART... CAUSE CHANCES ARE, THEY ALL HAD MOTHERS JUST LIKE YOU, WHO TAUGHT THEM HOW TO DESPISE THEMSELVES AND HATE THE FEMALE HALF OF THE HUMAN SPECIES!"



"IT'S BEEN KNOWN TO HAPPEN, CAROLYN! LOVE KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES! IT'S THE ONE THING YOU CAN'T FENCE IN!"



"OH, RALPH...HOW CAN THERE BE SO MUCH HATRED...SO MUCH CONFUSION IN THE WORLD? H-HOW CAN THERE BE SO MANY PEOPLE LIKE...LIKE ARNOLD?"

"I...I THINK IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH LOVE, MARTHA..."

N-NO! NOOO!
LEAVE HER ALONE,
DAMN YOU!

LET
HER GO!



"...OR MORE APPROPRIATELY
...THE LACK OF IT!"

"WE SIMPLY SHOULD HAVE HAD
MORE LOVE FOR ARNOLD..."

BAM!
BLAM!

B DAM!



"... AND IN TURN, MAYBE HE WOULD
HAVE HAD MORE LOVE...FOR THE
WORLD!"

OH MY
GOD!



"M-MAYBE I SHOULD CALL WILLY,
MOTHER! MAYBE-I!"

"I THINK A CALL IS LONG OVERDUE,
CAROLYN!"

OH
CHRIS!
OH...
B-BABY!
MY
BABY!



"AND WHO KNOWS..."

D-DADDY...!
I CAME TO SEE!
YOU, DADDY!

I...
I CAME TO
BRING THIS
JUST FOR
YOU!



"... YOU MIGHT FIND IT'S GOING TO
BE A PRETTY GOOD CHRISTMAS,
AFTER ALL!"



ANGEL HAIR WINE!

BLEAK DECEMBER GRIZZLED THE SKY!
SNOW TUMBLED WILDLY THROUGH THE
DIRTY CITY STREETS! DEAD
AUTOMOBILES CLOGGED THE AVENUE,
ALREADY HALF-BURIED BY THE ICY
WINTER BLIZZARD! OTHERS, SOON TO
DIE, INCHED DEEPER INTO THE DRIFTS!

I HATED CHICAGO! BUT MY SALES JOB
SEEMED TO SEND ME THERE EVERY TIME
THE CITY WAS KNEE HIGH IN SNOW!

I LEFT THE BUS TERMINAL, ZIG-
ZAGGING THROUGH SNOWFLAKES
THE SIZE OF MOTHBALLS! THE COLD
WAS LIKE NEEDLES IN MY LUNGS! A
BLOCK LATER, I ADMITTED DEFEAT
AND DUCKED INTO A WELCOMING
STAIRWELL!



THE ALCOVE WAS THE
ENTRANCEWAY TO A DINGY LITTLE
BAR! THE WINDOWS WERE
CLOUDED WITH A DIRTY FILM,
STILL, I COULD SEE PEOPLE
MOVING ABOUT INSIDE!

AN OLD MAN WITH RUNNY YELLOW
EYES FED NICKLES INTO AN
ANTIQUE WURLITZER! IT HUMMED
AND WHIRRED... BUT NO MUSIC
EMERGED!

THEN, THE OLD MAN SHAMBLED ONTO
THE DANCE FLOOR, SPREADING ONE
ARM AND CROOKING ANOTHER, TO
ACCOMMODATE AN IMAGINARY
PARTNER! HE GLIDED AROUND THE
TAVERN, IN STEP WITH MUSIC THAT
WAS SOLELY WITHIN HIS OBVIOUSLY
DEMENTED MIND!



BEHIND THE BAR, A WOMAN TOOK A BOTTLE FROM THE SHELF, BLEW OFF THE DUST AND UNCORKED IT! SHE SLOSHED THE CONTENTS INTO A TALL GLASS! THE COLORS BUBBLED UNEASILY!

THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF GETTING TO MY HOTEL WAS TEMPORARILY FORGOTTEN! WALKING WAS OUT...IT WAS FAR TOO COLD! AND NO CAB COULD PLOW THROUGH THIS SQUALL! I WAS STRANDED...AND I KNEW THAT I MIGHT AS WELL MAKE THE BEST OF IT!

JUST AS I'D MADE UP MY MIND TO ENJOY A FEW WARMING BELTS, THE WOMAN WAS THERE...SMILING, BECKONING ME TO COME INSIDE!

SHE WAS LOVELY, WITH HAIR THE COLOR OF GOLDEN EMBERS! HER LIPS WERE FULL WITH A SMILE, WHILE HER SPHINX-LIKE EYES WERE WILD AND HAUNTING! SHE WAS THE KIND OF WOMAN EVERY MAN DESIRES!

THE TAVERN ITSELF WAS MUSKY...RANK WITH THE STENCH OF AGE! ON THE MANTLE WERE PERHAPS FIFTY BOTTLES...UNLABELLED AND CHOKED WITH DUST! INSIDE EACH WAS A STRANGE, MULTI-COLORED WINE!

ER...QUAINT LITTLE PLACE YOU HAVE HERE! NOT SWARMING WITH CUSTOMERS, THOUGH!

WE CATER TO A RATHER SELECT CLIENTELE! PEOPLE WITH VERY SPECIFIC NEEDS!

WE ONLY SERVE ONE THING... A WINE I BOTTLE MYSELF...ANGEL HAIR WINE!

THE
FIRST GLASS
IS ON THE
HOUSE!

SHE
STARED, CAT-
EYED,
HER VOICE
HYPNOTICALLY
MELODIC.
I TOOK
A TENTATIVE
SIP!

THE WINE WAS SWEET AND
SUGGULENT, WITH THE RICH
TASTE OF LIQUID LOVE! THIS
WAS NO EARTHLY NECTAR, I
KNEW... BUT THE TASTE OF
MOONBEAMS, WHISPERS AND
UNSHATTERED DREAMS!

AS I SAVORED IT, THE
WOMAN FLUSHED AND
MOANED! IT LOOKED AS
THOUGH SHE WAS ENJOYING
MY PLEASURE AS MUCH AS I!

THEN... I HEARD IT! DULCET MELODIES
SPEWING FROM THE JUKE BOX, WHICH,
A MOMENT BEFORE, HAD BEEN SILENT!

THE OLD MAN WALTZED ELOQUENTLY,
WRAPPED IN HIS OWN VIVID
DAYDREAMS! I COULD SEE TEARS OF
JOY TRICKLING DOWN HIS CHEEKS!

SLOWLY, THE WOMAN DRIFTED
TOWARD THE DANCE FLOOR,
SOMEHOW KNOWING THAT I WOULD
FOLLOW! IT WAS THEN I NOTICED
THE TIER OF HUMAN HANDS
HANGING ABOVE THE BAR!

I KNEW WITHOUT COUNTING THAT
THERE WERE THIRTY-SEVEN OF
THEM! THEY WERE STIFF, WAXEN,
PARED CLEANLY AT THE WRIST, AND
NO DOUBT, ONCE ATTACHED TO
HUMAN LIMBS! I SHOULD HAVE BEEN
APPALLED! YET, SOMEHOW...
I WASN'T!

THE WOMAN PRESSED HER BODY TO
MINE! SHE FELT BRITTLE, LIKE
PARCHMENT, AND COLD AS CARRION!
WE DANCED, AS THE OLD MAN
ORBITED US IN GENTLE OBLIVION!

CAUGHT IN THE MAGIC OF THE
MOMENT, I NEVER GUESSED WHERE
THE TERRIBLE WALTZ WOULD LEAD!



FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE NIGHT, I SWILLED WINE LIKE A SOT! SOON, I HAD A HEAD FULL OF BEATIFIC VISIONS, AND THE WOMAN MOTIONED ME TOWARD A RICKETY STAIRCASE!

THEN, IN A SUBTERRANEAN CELLAR, SHE TURNED TO ME...



THE UNION LASTED ONLY A MOMENT, STILL, IT WAS TIME ENOUGH TO FILL ME WITH AN ALL-CONSUMING INNER BLISS THAT I HAD NEVER BEFORE EXPERIENCED!

...AND SLOWLY, DISCREETLY...WE EMBRACED!

I DON'T KNOW IT IF IT WAS THE WINE...OR IF IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, YET...OUR BODIES SEEMED TO MELD INTO A SINGLE PHYSICAL ENTITY!

SHE BECAME ME...AND I, HER, AS WE SHARED EACH OTHERS' DEEPEST JOYS!



WHEN, AT LAST, I CAME TO MY SENSES, I UNDERSTOOD...THAT I HAD TASTED HEAVEN!

I HAVE ONLY ONE REGRETT NOW THAT I'VE TASTED PARADISE, REALITY SEEMS SO...BLAND! CAN...CAN I BUY A CASE OF YOUR ANGEL HAIR WINE?

A LAUGH STUCK IN MY THROAT LIKE A PIECE OF BROKEN GLASS, AS I REALIZED THAT THE WOMAN WASN'T JOKING!

HOW COULD YOU EVEN ASK SUCH A THING?

"WHEN THE EARTH WAS YOUNG, FIVE GOD-LIKE ALIEN HUMANIDS VOWED TO WATCH OVER THE BUDDING HUMAN SPECIES! THEY PLEDGED NEVER TO INTERFERE IN MAN'S AFFAIRS...UNLESS THE SURVIVAL OF THE PLANET WAS IN JEOPARDY!"

IT'S YOURS, IF YOU WISH! ALL I ASK IN RETURN...IS YOUR LEFT HAND!

SHE HESITATED A MOMENT...THEN SMILED THAT DISARMING SMILE OF HERS! I KNEW THAT I WAS ABOUT TO HEAR A STORY THAT WOULD TAX MY VERY IMAGINATION!



"BUT IT CAME TO PASS THAT ONE OF THE
EXTRATERRESTRIAL DEITIES FELL IN LOVE WITH A
MORTAL WOMAN!"

"THE ALIEN'S LOVE WAS DEEP AND PURE, AND HIS
BROTHERS TURNED A BLIND EYE TO HIS PASSION,
FOR THE GIRL WAS A SIMPLE SOUL, NOT LIKELY TO
STEER HUMAN DESTINY!"

"BUT ONE NIGHT,
RETURNING FROM A
RENDEZVOUS WITH HER
STAR-CROSSED GOD, THE
GIRL WAS SET UPON
VICIOUSLY...AND MURDERED
BY THIEVES!"

"HE SET FIRE TO THE
SKY, REDUCING CITIES
AND TOWNS TO
CINDERS! HE BLAMED
ALL MANKIND FOR THE
ACTIONS OF A FEW, AND
SWORE TO RID THE
EARTH OF HUMAN
VERMIN!"

"SO UNCONTROLLABLE WAS
HIS RAGE, THAT THE OTHER
STAR GODS EXILED HIM
THROUGH THE GATEWAY TO
NOTHINGNESS...TO A PLACE
BEYOND HOPE AND TIME!"

"WHEN HER ALIEN LOVER
LEARNED WHAT HAD HAPPENED
...HE WENT STARK, RAVING
MAD!"

"MEN WERE AWED BY THE
ANGRY ALIEN'S DISPLAY OF
POWER! SOME BUILT
TEMPLES OFFERING
BLOODY SACRIFICES TO
PLACATE HIM! OTHERS,
WHO KNEW THE TRUTH OF
HIS UNEARTHLY ORIGIN,
COMBED RUINS AND
GRIMOIRES FOR A SPELL
TO RELEASE HIM FROM
CAPTIVITY!"

"FINALLY, AFTER UNTOLD
YEARS OF SEARCHING
...ONE SUCH SPELL WAS
INEVITABLY FOUND!"

"YET, BEFORE THE RITUAL
COULD BE INVOKED, THE
STAR-GODS LEARNED OF
THE HUMAN'S PLANS! THEY
CLEAVED THE EARTH
BENEATH THE IDOLATOR'S
TEMPLE...DESTROYING ALL
THE ZEALOTS WHO SOUGHT
TO CONTROL A BANISHED
GOD!"

"SO, THE LONE ALIEN
REMAINED IN EXILE...
WAITING FOR EONS TO
FULFILL HIS HOLY PURGE
...WHILE THE ONLY SPELL
THAT COULD FREE HIM WAS
BURIED BENEATH THE
TEMPLE...IN THE BOWELS
OF THE STILL-YOUNG
EARTH!"

"ONE DAY, HOWEVER, THE FOUR REMAINING GODS MOVED ON! AS FOR THE NAMELESS GIRL WHO HAD DARED LOVE A GOD BEFORE SHE WAS SLAIN...HER SOUL LIVED AND DIED IN A DOZEN DIFFERENT BODIES, REINCARNATED REPEATEDLY THROUGHOUT THE AGES!"



"YET, ALWAYS, SHE REMEMBERED THE ALIEN WHOM SHE'D LOVED! AND ALWAYS...SHE WAS UNSUCCESSFUL IN HER ATTEMPTS TO FREE HIM FROM HIS OTHERWORLDLY PRISON!"

"AND THEN, SHE WAS BORN INTO THIS CENTURY...THE DAUGHTER OF A NOTED ARCHAEOLOGIST!"

"EVEN AS A CHILD, ANGELA DREAMWEAVER HAD TERRIBLE, VIVID DREAMS...OF NAMELESS VOIDS AND MAD BUT LOVING GODS!"



"I KNOW...FOR I AM ANGELA DREAMWEAVER!"

"THOUGH MY PARENTS WERE WELL-VERSED IN THE LORE OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS, THEY HAD NEVER BEFORE HEARD THE LEGEND OF THE MAD GOD WHO LOVED A MORTAL! AND HOW COULD THEY...? THE INCIDENT HAD TAKEN PLACE LONG BEFORE WRITTEN HISTORY BEGAN!"



"THEY DOUBTED MY CLAIM THAT I COULD LEAD THEM TO THE RUINS OF A TEMPLE DESTROYED BY ALIEN GODS... NEVERTHELESS, FOR THE SAKE OF MY SANITY...THEY FORMED AN EXPEDITION TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANY VALIDITY TO MY DREAMS!"

"FOR MONTHS, WE DUG WITHOUT SUCCESS...UNTIL A FREAK AVALANCHE KILLED MY MOTHER!"

"BROKEN-HEARTED, BITTER, MY FATHER WAS READY TO TURN BACK! YET...I BEGGED, PLEADED AND CAJOLED...AND FINALLY PERSUADED HIM TO CONTINUE THE EXCAVATION!"

"THE VERY NEXT DAY...WE FOUND THE TEMPLE!"



"AMONG THE ARTIFACTS WE UNEARTHED WERE TWO SCRAPS OF PAPYRUS! ONE WAS THE RECIPE FOR ANGEL HAIR WINE! THE OTHER...THE SPELL TO FREE MY STAR-GOD FROM HIS OTHERWORLDLY PRISON!"



"IT TOOK YEARS TO TRANSLATE THE PALEOGRAPHS! I DECIPHERED THE RECIPE FIRST, SIMPLY BECAUSE IT WAS THE SHORTER AND SIMPLER OF THE TWO! WHEN I PRODUCED THE BREW, IT WAS EASY TO SEE WHY IT HAD BEEN A FAVORITE OF THE ANCIENTS!"

"MY FATHER, WHO WAS NEVER THE SAME AFTER MOTHER DIED, BECAME ADDICTED TO THE LIQUOR! AT LEAST IN HIS MIND, THE WINE BROUGHT HER BACK TO LIFE!"



"IT WAS THEN I CONCENTRATED ON DECIPHERING THE SPELL! BUT TO BRING MY UNEARTHLY LOVER BACK REQUIRED FIFTY HUMAN HANDS...TO BE BURNED LIKE HELL-SPAWNED CANDLES!"

"AT FIRST, I HAUNTED HOSPITALS, MORGUES AND GRAVEYARDS, TAKING THE HANDS FROM THOSE WHO NO LONGER NEEDED THEM! BUT A FEW CLOSE CALLS CONVINCED ME THAT THERE HAD TO BE A BETTER WAY!"

"FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, I'VE SERVED THE WINE TO THOSE WHOSE LIVES ARE MEANINGLESS! I'VE GIVEN THEM A BRIEF GLASS OF HAPPINESS, FREE, TO WHET THEIR APPETITES..."

"ANGEL HAIR WINE IS WHATEVER YOU WANT IT TO BE! TO MY FATHER, IT WAS HIS LOST WIFE! TO YOU, IT'S HEAVENLY BLISS! IS IT ANY WONDER THAT WITH ONE TASTE, MEN BECOME ANGEL HAIR WINOS?"

"ONLY THEN DID IT OCCUR TO ME THAT THE ANCIENTS HAD TRIED TO SHOW ME THE WAY...WHEN THEY LEFT ME THE RECIPE FOR ANGEL HAIR WINE!"

"...AND THEN THEY WERE MORE THAN WILLING TO LEND ME A HAND, SO TO SPEAK, IN EXCHANGE FOR A LIFETIME SUPPLY!"

NOT ME, SISTER! I LIKE MY HANDS RIGHT WHERE THEY ARE!

BESIDES, IF YOUR STORY'S TRUE, AND THIS GOD OF YOURS COMES BACK, THE WORLD IS DOOMED...AND WITH ME ALONG WITH IT!

I STORMED FROM THE BAR, ANGRY, CONFUSED AND WONDERING IF THE WOMAN SHOULDN'T BE COMMITTED! FOR AWHILE I CONSIDERED CALLING THE POLICE...BUT FOR SOME INEXPLICABLE REASON, I COULDN'T!

BY LATE AFTERNOON, THE ONLY THING MOVING ON THE STREETS WERE SNOW PLOWS, INCHING THEIR WAY THROUGH ANOTHER BLIZZARD! IT WAS CRAZY...THE BAR WOULD SURELY BE CLOSED...BUT I HAD TO GO BACK! I HAD TO TASTE THE WINE AGAIN...TO ASSURE MYSELF THAT I WASN'T GOING AS INSANE AS THE GIRL!

I FOUND THE PLACE EASILY ENOUGH! BUT EVERYTHING WAS GONE...ALL GONE! THE BAR, THE TABLES, THE CHAIRS, THE EMPTY AND HER WINE! THE PLACE WAS AS EMPTY AS MY SOUL...AND I KNEW THEN THAT I'D NEVER FIND HEAVEN AGAIN!

INSTEAD, I STAYED IN MY HOTEL ROOM FOR THE BETTER PART OF A DAY...WONDERING HOW I COULD HAVE PASSED UP MY ONLY CHANCE AT UTTER, LIFELONG HAPPINESS!

IT'S BEEN SIX MONTHS SINCE I MET ANGELA DREAMWEAVER AND TASTED HER WINE! I'VE QUIT TRAVELLING, AND GONE INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH MY FATHER-IN-LAW, IN REAL ESTATE!

MY WIFE THINKS I HATE MY JOB! MY FATHER-IN-LAW THINKS I HATE MY WIFE! MAYBE THEY'RE BOTH MORE RIGHT THAN I CARE TO ADMIT!



IT'S NOT THAT LIFE WITH JUDY IS BAD! IT'S JUST THAT... WELL I'VE TASTED HEAVEN AND IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MARRIAGE! FUNNY... HOW A SINGLE MOMENT OF BLISS CAN TURN AN ENTIRE LIFETIME INTO UTTER BOREDOM!



MY UNHAPPINESS IS A CONSTANT SOURCE OF FRICTION BETWEEN US! AFTER A PARTICULARLY NASTY ARGUMENT, I FIND MYSELF WALKING AIMLESSLY, NOT PAYING MUCH ATTENTION TO WHERE I'M GOING, AS I CONTEMPLATE DRASTIC CHANGES IN MY MARITAL STATUS!

THEN... I SEE IT! MY SECOND CHANCE AT A LIFETIME OF BLISS!



THE GIRL... THE BAR... THE WINE AND EVEN THE SEVERED HANDS ARE ALL THERE!

I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU! SOONER OR LATER, THEY ALWAYS COME BACK!

I WALK RIGHT PAST HER, PAST THE OLD MAN AT THE WURLITZER, AND LOOK ANXIOUSLY AT THE HANDS! THERE ARE FORTY-EIGHT!

IT WON'T BE LONG NOW! YOU MUST BE EAGER TO SEE YOUR STAR-GOD AFTER ALL THIS TIME!



IT ISN'T EASY CARRYING THE CASE OF WINE WITH ONE HAND! BUT, SOMEHOW... I MANAGE!

FOR ALL OUR SAKES, I HOPE THE GIRL'S FUTURE CUSTOMERS HAVE MORE WILL POWER THAN I! YET... I DOUBT IT! AND YOU KNOW... SOMEHOW, I JUST DON'T GIVE A DAMN!

end



TERRANCE POINT, MAINE...RUSTIC, TRANQUIL...A SMALL FISHING COMMUNITY WITH A POPULATION HOVERING NEAR FIVE HUNDRED!

NOTHING MUCH EVER HAPPENS AROUND HERE!

BUT TONIGHT WILL BE DIFFERENT...HORRIBLY DIFFERENT!





EITHER I'M GETTING OLDER, CHARLES, OR I SWEAR, YOUR CATCHES ARE GETTING HEAVIER EACH SEASON!

PROBABLY A LITTLE OF BOTH, SAM! PLAIN TRUTH IS, WE GOT LUCKY TODAY!



JUST KEEP THAT HAUL ON ICE 'TILL WE CAN SHIP IT TO THE CITY!

DON'T I ALWAYS, CHARLES? AIN'T NO CATCH HAS EVER GONE BAD ON ME!



GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE MRS.!

WE'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW, SAM!



MIRIAM! YOU'RE LIKE AN OLD MOTHER HEN! YOU BEEN STANDING HERE ALL THIS TIME, WAITING FOR US TO GET BACK?

IT'S BAD ENOUGH I'VE GOT TO WORRY ABOUT YOU BEING OUT WITH A GALE BREWING...BUT NOW THAT JIMMY'S WITH YOU...!



C'MON BUCKY! I'LL RACE YOU TO THE HOUSE!

ARF!
ARF!



JAMES IS A BIG BOY! YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY NONE ABOUT HIM!

BESIDES... HE'S GOT TO LEARN THE SEA SOONER OR LATER! AND YOU KNOW I'D NEVER DO NOTHING TO ENDANGER HIM!

THAT NIGHT...
LIGHTNING
CRASHES ACROSS
A BLACK AND
ANGRY SKY,
SHAKING THE OLD
HOUSE TO ITS
VERY
FOUNDATIONS!

LOOKIT THERE,
BUCKY! DAD SURE KNOWS
HIS STUFF! ANOTHER HOUR
AN' WE'D HAVE BEEN STUCK
IN THE MIDDLE
OF THAT!



H-HEY! THAT'S NO
LIGHTNING BOLT! IT...
IT'S A METEOR!



WOW! IT SMASHED
DEAD CENTER INTO GREAT
DUCK ISLAND!

WHOOOOOM!



DAD! DAD!
ME AND BUCKY
...YOU'LL NEVER
GUESS WHAT WE
JUST SAW!



A PLANE CRASH, SON!
I DIDN'T HAVE TO SEE IT...
I HEARD! THE WHOLE TOWN
MUST'VE HEARD IT!



ARE YOU
GOING TO CHECK
IT OUT, DAD?

I GOTTA,
BOY...
TO SEE IF
THERE'RE ANY
SURVIVORS!

BUT
CHARLES...
THE STORM! IT...
IT'S SO
DANGEROUS!



PEOPLE COULD BE
DYING, MIRIAM! I CAN'T
JUST LEAVE THEM
OUT THERE!

I'M
GOING WITH
YOU, DAD!



'FRAID
NOT, SON! YOU
STAY WITH YOUR
MOTHER! I'LL
BE BACK SOON
AS I CAN!

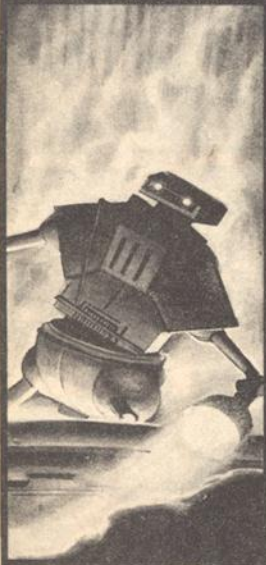




G-GOOD LORD,
SAMI! IT...IT'S MOVING!
SOMETHING'S COMING OUT
OF THAT BIG FLYING
SHIP! S-SOMETHING
...HUGE!

LET'S...
LET'S GET
THE HELL
OUT OF
HERE...
FAST!

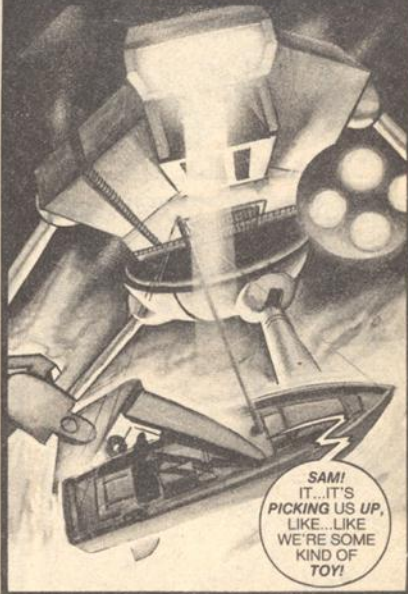
A CLAW-LIKE **PINER** SLOWLY
EMERGES FROM THE GAPING
HATCH OF THE SHIP! IT IS
SWIFTLY FOLLOWED BY THE
THING TO WHICH IT IS AFFIXED!



IT RISES TO ITS FULL
HEIGHT, **GIGANTIC**...A
MONOLITH OF GLISTENING
METAL, UNDISPUTED
MASTER OF ALL IT
SURVEYS...



...AND **WHAT** IT SURVEYS IS A FRAIL NEW ENGLAND
FISHING VESSEL BEING VIOLENTLY **BUFFETED** BY
LURCHING WAVES!



SAMI!
IT...IT'S
PICKING US UP,
LIKE...LIKE
WE'RE SOME
KIND OF
TOY!

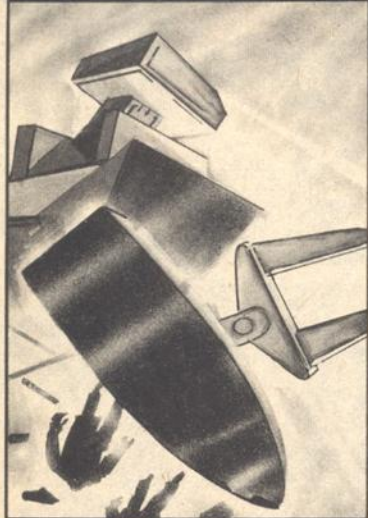
THE METAL
MONSTER'S
FACE-PLATE
EXAMINES THE
CRAFT WITH
SEARCHLIGHT
BRILLIANCE
...ITS BEAM
FLICKING
THROUGH
MYRIAD LEVELS
OF THE KNOWN
SPECTRUM, AND
BEYOND!

YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!



ITS BLISTERING
RAYS SIZZLE THE
MEN'S EYES,
BLINDING
THEM...AS THE
TORRID HEAT
CHARS THE
FLESH ON THEIR
BONES! WITHIN
SECONDS, THE
HARSH
RADIATION HAS
KILLED THEM
BOTH!

ITS ANALYSIS **COMPLETE**, THE TOWERING MONSTROSITY CALLOUSLY **HURLS** THE BOAT **ASIDE** IN SEEMING **DISGUST!**

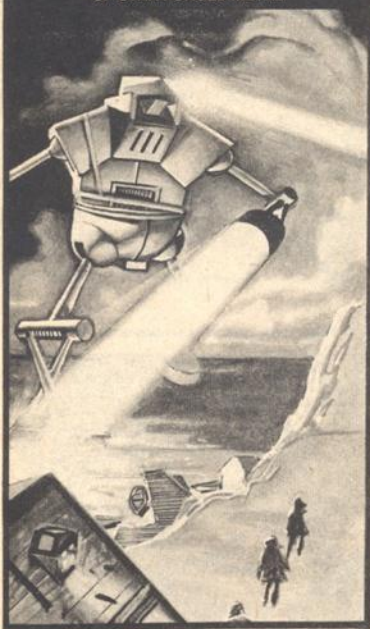


PERHAPS IT **FAILS** TO RECOGNIZE **ORGANIC LIFE...HUMAN LIFE**, OR THAT THESE MEN ARE **INTELLIGENT, SAPIENT BEINGS...!**

OR MAYBE IT **DOES** AND SIMPLY **DOESN'T CARE!**



WITH BUT **THREE STRIDES** OF ITS NIGHTMARISH METAL LIMBS...IT IS **UPON** THE TINY **FISHING VILLAGE...AN ALIEN APPARITION** OF STAR-FORGED METAL!



MANY **SCREAM** AND MINDLESSLY **FLEE!** OTHERS CAN ONLY **STARE, ROOTED IN FEAR** WHERE THEY **STAND!**



IT'S **JUDGEMENT DAY...THE END OF THE WORLD!**

RUN! RUN!

ALL ARE STARKLY **ILLUMINATED** BY THE **TWIN GLARE** OF SWEEPING, **DEADLY SEARCH-BEAMS!**





LIKE A SPOILED, **FRUSTRATED** CHILD UNABLE TO ACHIEVE SOME UNKNOWNABLE **GOAL**, THE ROBOT-THING **LASHES OUT** AT THE TERROR-STRICKEN TOWN, **WREAKING UTTER HAVOC** AND LEAVING ONLY **CARNAGE** IN ITS WAKE!

IN A SMALL HOUSE OVERLOOKING THE WATER, A TINY **DOG** GROWLS AND BARKS AT THE INTRUDER...IN DEFENSE OF ITS YOUNG MASTER!

GRRR!
WOOF!
GROOOOF!

BE QUIET,
BUCKY...IT'LL
HEAR US!
IT'LL-!

OH, NO!
IT'S...IT
SEES US!



FASCINATED BY THE MUFFLED BARKING, THE GIANT METALOID CEASES ITS DESTRUCTIVE RAGE, **SCOOPS UP** THE HOUSE...

...AND SHAKES THE INHABITANTS FREE!



J-JAMES!
I...I'M FALLING!
H-HELP...MEEEEE!

AS THE TERRIFIED WOMAN PLUNGES TO HER DEATH, THE SMALL BOY AND HIS SPANIEL ARE GENTLY CAUGHT AND CRADLED IN MID-FALL!



M-MOM!
N-NOOOO!

NOOOO! IT
COULD'VE GRABBED HER
TOO...BUT IT DIDN'T!
IT DIDN'T! IT LET HER
FALL AND...AND-I OH,
MOTHER... *SOB!*
MOTHEERRR!



CLUTCHING THE EDGE OF THE
CREATURE'S COLD METAL CLAW,
THE QUIVERING YOUTH GOES INTO
SHOCK, AS HE PEERS DOWN INTO
THE GLOOM...

...AND SEES HIS MOTHER
IMPALED ON THE SKELETAL
RUINS OF THEIR HOUSE!

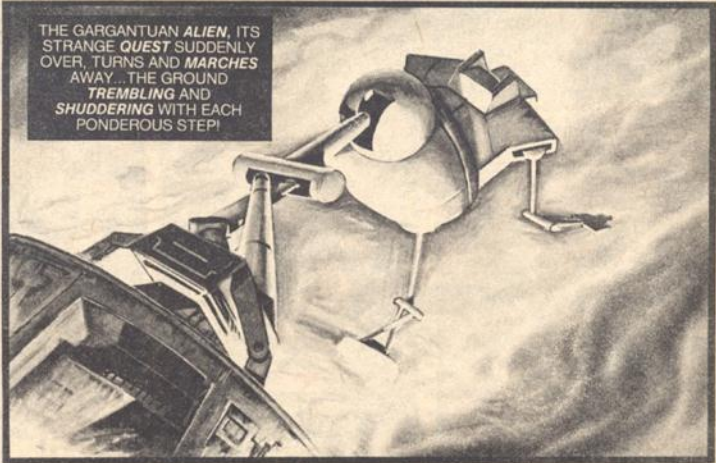


CHOKED WITH RAW
EMOTION, TEARS
WELL FROM THE
BOY'S SWOLLEN
EYES... MIXING
WITH THE
FREEZING RAIN
THAT SPATTERS
WETLY AGAINST
HIS FACE!

A PITIFUL HEAP, JAMES
WEEPS WHILE THE
WHIMPERING DOG
SNUGGLES AGAINST HIM!



THE GARGANTUAN ALIEN, ITS
STRANGE QUEST SUDDENLY
OVER, TURNS AND MARCHES
AWAY... THE GROUND
TREMBLING AND
SHUDDERING WITH EACH
PONDEROUS STEP!





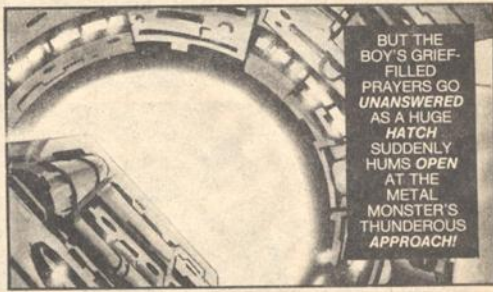
AGAIN, IT WADES THE DEEP BAY, RETURNING TO ITS DAMAGED SHIP...AND THE SHATTERED REMNANTS OF ANOTHER LITTERING THE ROCKS NOT FAR FROM IT!



D-DAD!
OH, GOD...
NO! NOT HIM,
TOO!



MOM...DAD...
BOTH DEAD!
N-NO...PLEASE,
GOD...NOOO!
I...I WANT TO
DIE, TOO!



BUT THE BOY'S GRIEF-FILLED PRAYERS GO UNANSWERED AS A HUGE HATCH SUDDENLY HUMS OPEN AT THE METAL MONSTER'S THUNDEROUS APPROACH!



THEY ENTER A VESSEL OF AMAZING COMPLEXITY...ONE THAT RELEGATES EARTH'S HIGH TECHNOLOGY TO A LEVEL OF PRIMITIVE BARBARISM!



IT'S PUTTING US DOWN,
LIKE...LIKE IT EXPECTS
ME TO DO SOMETHING!
BUT...WHAT?



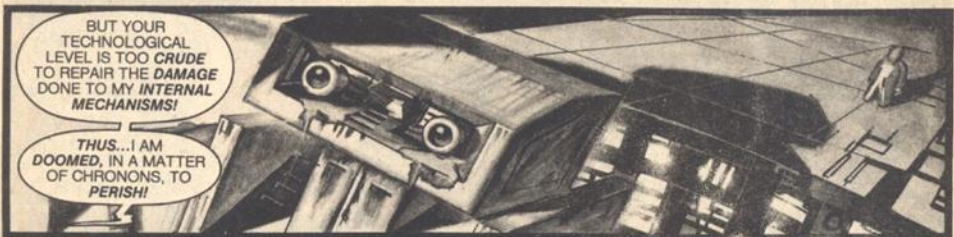
DO NOT JUDGE
MY COMPANION TOO
HARSHLY, YOUTHLING!
HE IS NOT QUITE AN
EQUAL...YET MORE
TO ME THAN
A PET!

WHILE
OBSERVING AND
MAPPING YOUR PLANET,
A THRUST-DRIVE UNIT
MALFUNCTIONED!



I WAS GRIEVOUSLY INJURED IN THE RESULTING CRASH! X'LOR'S INTELLIGENCE IS EXTREMELY LIMITED, IN CONTRAST TO HIS AWESOME, PRODIGIOUS STRENGTH!

HE KNEW THAT I WAS TERMINATING! IN A DAZED, CONFUSED STATE, HE SOUGHT HELP FROM YOUR WORLD'S DOMINANT SPECIES!



BUT YOUR TECHNOLOGICAL LEVEL IS TOO CRUDE TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE DONE TO MY INTERNAL MECHANISMS!

THUS... I AM DOOMED, IN A MATTER OF CHRONONS, TO PERISH!



BUT WHY... WHY DID IT BRING ME HERE? I'M... I'M ONLY A KID! WHAT DID IT WANT FROM ME?

NOTHING FROM YOU, STRIPLING! HE DESIRED AID FROM THE BEFURRED MAMMAL THAT ACCOMPANIES YOU!



SINCE I AM QUADRUPEDAL, X'LOR ASSUMED THE MASTER LIFE-FORM ON YOUR SPHERE WOULD LIKEWISE BE FOUR-FOOTED!



HE DIDN'T BRING YOU TO SAVE ME! RATHER, IN HIS MONUMENTAL IGNORANCE, HE BROUGHT... WHAT YOU CALL... YOUR DOG!



FORGIVE X'LOR, HUMAN! AS I EXPIRE, I BEG YOU... FORGIVE HIM!

end



MY NAME IS STEPHEN ABRAHAM! I'M A MAGAZINE WRITER!

OH, I'M NOT FAMOUS OR ANYTHING! BUT IF YOU LIVE IN NEW YORK AND READ MAGAZINES, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER YOU'VE PROBABLY READ ONE OF MY ARTICLES!

THAT'S ME IN THE PICTURE...THE MAN HOLDING THE GUN! AND NO, I'M NOT A BLACK MAN...THAT'S JUST A DISGUISE I WAS WEARING! YOU SEE, THAT GUN, AND THAT DISGUISE, ARE ALL A PART OF MY...



YOU WERE A BIT VAGUE ON THE PHONE, MRS. WOODSON! EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF ARTICLE DID YOU--!

ACTUALLY, MR. ABRAHAM, I'M AFRAID I LURED YOU TO LUNCH UNDER FALSE PRETENSES! YOU SEE...

MORBID LOVE STORY

IT ALL BEGAN INNOCENTLY ENOUGH! JANICE WOODSON WAS THE EDITOR OF METROPOLITAN MAGAZINE! I'D MET HER A FEW TIMES AT PROFESSIONAL COCKTAIL PARTIES! WHEN SHE CALLED TO INVITE ME TO LUNCH, I ASSUMED SHE WANTED TO TALK BUSINESS...



Author: MICHAEL FLEISHER/Illustrator: AURALEON





DON'T ASK ME WHY I DECIDED TO DO IT!
I HONESTLY *DON'T KNOW!* MAYBE IT WAS
BECAUSE OF HER OPENNESS, HER
WARMTH, HER SENSUALITY...
OR THE FACT THAT SHE WAS
HONEST AND UNAFAID!



WE MET OFTEN, THREE TIMES A WEEK,
SOMETIMES FOUR! SOMETIMES JUST FOR A
WALK IN THE PARK, OR LUNCH AT A SIDEWALK
CAFE!

SOMETIMES FOR LEISURELY ROMANTIC
DINNERS BY CANDLELIGHT AND LONG NIGHTS
OF MAKING LOVE!



I LOVE
YOU, JANICE!

I LOVE
YOU TOO, STEPHEN!
YOU CAN'T IMAGINE
HOW MUCH I LOVE
YOU!

BEFORE LONG, I HAD FALLEN HOPELESSLY IN LOVE WITH HER! I WANTED DESPERATELY TO MAKE JANICE MINE...
FOREVER!

LEAVE YOUR
HUSBAND! LEAVE HIM AND
STAY WITH ME!

NO!
I WON'T DO
THAT! I TOLD
YOU FROM THE
BEGINNING I'D
NEVER DO
THAT!

WHEN
WE'RE TOGETHER,
I'M YOURS, MY
DEAREST! BUT
THE REST OF THE
TIME...!



TO HELL
WITH THAT! IF
YOU REALLY LOVED
ME...!

SHHH! I DO
LOVE YOU! YOU KNOW
I LOVE YOU! BUT MY LIFE
WITH HIM AND THE CHILDREN
IS AN IMPORTANT PART
OF ME! I COULD
NEVER GIVE
IT UP!





WRITERS ARE SELDOM VIOLENT PEOPLE! WHEN THEY HAVE VIOLENT FANTASIES, THEY WRITE ABOUT THOSE FANTASIES! THEY DON'T USUALLY ACT THEM OUT! USUALLY!

BUT I WAS INSANELY IN LOVE WITH THAT WOMAN, AND THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERED WAS THAT IF IT WEREN'T FOR HER HUSBAND, I COULD HAVE HAD JANICE ALL FOR MY OWN!

THAT'S WHEN I GOT MY INSPIRATION! IT WAS A SIMPLE IDEA REALLY! BUT, THEN, MOST INSPIRATIONS ARE SIMPLE!

IN COLLEGE I HAD THOUGHT ABOUT BECOMING AN ACTOR! I RUMMAGED THROUGH MY TRUNK UNTIL I FOUND AN OLD MAKEUP KIT!



AND THEN I WENT UP TO HARLEM AND BOUGHT AN AFRO WIG, A FALSE MOUSTACHE AND SOME BRIGHTLY COLORED CLOTHES...!





THE IDEA, AS I SAID, WAS SIMPLE!



BUT THE END RESULT WAS...
EXTREMELY DRAMATIC!

LATER THAT NIGHT, I TOOK A BUS TO THE APARTMENT
JANICE SHARED WITH HER HUSBAND AND HER TWO SMALL
CHILDREN! I CLIMBED THE FIRE ESCAPE...!



THEN,
STEALTHILY,
SILENTLY,
OPENED A
WINDOW AND
SLIPPED
INSIDE!



I WAS IN THE CHILDREN'S ROOM,
AND THEY WERE FAST ASLEEP! I
HAVE NEVER HAD CHILDREN OF MY
OWN, BUT I'VE ALWAYS LOVED
THEM!

I TIPTOED
DOWN
THE
HALLWAY
TO THE
MASTER
BEDROOM,
AND I
SLOWLY
OPENED
THE DOOR!
IT WAS A
THURSDAY
NIGHT! JANICE
WAS
ALWAYS
AWAY ON
THURSDAY
NIGHTS,
WORKING
LATE AT
THE
MAGAZINE!



HER HUSBAND HAD
FALLEN ASLEEP
READING! FOR A
MOMENT, I STOOD
IN THE DARKNESS
AND STARED AT
HIM!

I HAD NOTHING
AGAINST THE
MAN! NOTHING AT
ALL! UNDER
DIFFERENT
CIRCUMSTANCES,
WE MIGHT EVEN
HAVE BECOME
FRIENDS!



I HADN'T MEANT FOR HIM TO WAKE UP, BUT
SUDDENLY, HE DID!

I HAD PROMISED MYSELF
THAT I WOULDN'T TORTURE
HIM OR MAKE HIM SUFFER!

AS QUICKLY AS I COULD, I
EMPTIED MY CLIP INTO HIS
JERKING BODY!



THEN I
HURRIEDLY
RANSACKED THE ROOM TO
MAKE IT LOOK
LIKE A
COMMON
BURGLARY!

I POKETED
SOME CHEAP
JEWELRY...
SOME CREDIT
CARDS...A FEW
DOLLARS IN
CASH!

D-DADDY?
DADDY?

OH NO...
THE KIDS!
I'VE GOT TO
GET OUT OF
HERE!



I THEN
CLIMBED
THROUGH
THE
BEDROOM
WINDOW
...AND
ESCAPED
INTO THE
SAFETY OF
THE NIGHT!

OH,
DADDY!
NOOO!







FEELING ANGRY AS HELL...BETRAYED AND HURT, I STALKED OUT OF JANICE'S APARTMENT, AND WALKED AIMLESSLY FOR HOURS!



I WALKED DOWN TO THE RIVER, AND STARED BLANKLY OUT OVER THE WATER! I COULD SEE THE LIGHTS ON THE JERSEY SHORE BLINKING...BLINKING...HYPNOTICALLY! AND I WONDERED HOW THE WOMAN I LOVED SO MUCH...COULD THINK SO LITTLE...OF ME!



I REMEMBER...I HAD MY NEW HEAVY WINTER COAT ON, AND SHOES THAT I'D BOUGHT EARLIER IN THE WEEK! I TOOK THEM OFF, AND I PUT THEM ON THE SEAWALL BESIDE ME!



I KNOW IT SOUNDS RIDICULOUS...BUT THE COAT AND SHOES WERE EXPENSIVE, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO GET THEM WET!



GOD HELP ME! DID I DO THE RIGHT THING?

WAS I RIGHT TO SEND STEPHEN AWAY?





YONDER STAR

THOUGH THE NAVY JET'S PASSAGE OVER THE ROILING OCEAN WAS SMOOTH AND STRAIGHT, INSIDE THE COCKPIT THE MIND OF PILOT GUS TRASK WAS IN TURMOIL! A FEW MINUTES BEFORE, HIS INSTRUMENTATION SUDDENLY WINKED AND DIED! EVEN HIS FUEL GAUGE WAS GONE! HIS EMERGENCY SYSTEM HAD NOT KICKED TO LIFE AS THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO! IT WAS ALMOST AS IF GOD IN HIS HEAVEN HAD SCoured THE EARTH AT RANDOM. SPOTTED GUS TRASK AND SAID... "YOU!"

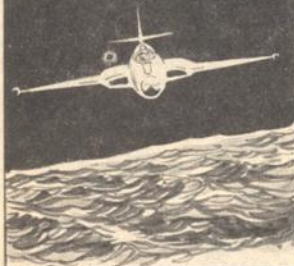
GUS DIDN'T KNOW IF HE HAD ENOUGH FUEL TO LAST HIM EVEN ONE HOUR! HE ONLY KNEW THAT IF HE DIDN'T FIND LAND SOON, HIS NAME AND NUMBER WOULD BECOME JUST ANOTHER STATISTIC CHALKED UP IN FAVOR OF THE FOREBODING SEA! IT WAS DECEMBER 24TH... A LOUSY DAY TO DIE!



WE CANNOT LOSE HEART NOW, MY BROTHERS! PLEASE, WE MUST CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY AS PLANNED!

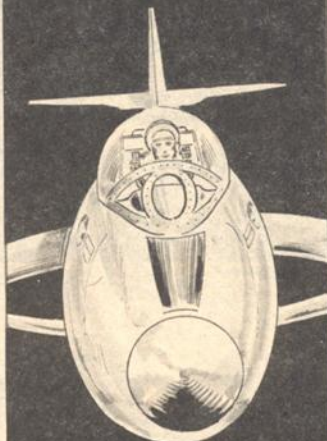
THIS THRICE-CURSED DESERT! WE BOIL IN THE DAYS AND FREEZE IN THE NIGHTS! AND NOW WE ARE LOST! LOST! DOOM SURELY AWAITS US!

THE WEATHER HAD BEEN CLEAR AND THE STARS HAD GLITTERED LIKE DIAMONDS IN THE SKY! GUS HAD BEEN TRACKING OUTBOUND ON THE NASSAU V.O.R....VISUAL OMNIRANGE...TO INTERCEPT THE BIMINI V.O.R. EN ROUTE!



AT ABOUT 9:30 HE PASSED THE NORTHERN TIP OF ANDROS ISLAND! HE COULD SEE THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS BLINKING IN THE SETTLEMENTS!

HE HAD LEVELLED OFF AT EIGHT THOUSAND FEET AND WAS SETTTLING BACK FOR A ROUTINE FLIGHT!



THEN, THIRTY TO FIFTY MILES PAST ANDROS, ON A DIRECT HEADING FOR BIMINI, HE NOTICED A FAINT GLOWING EFFECT ON HIS WINGS!

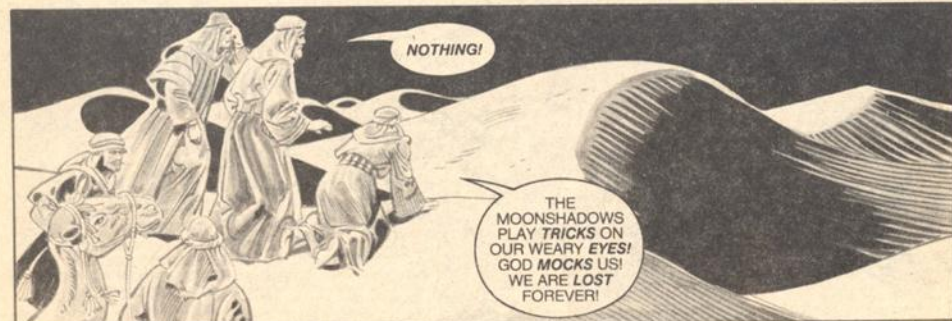
IN THE COURSE OF FIVE MINUTES, THE GLOW HAD BECOME BLINDING, THE MAGNETIC COMPASS BEGAN SPINNING DRUNKENLY AND ALL HIS INSTRUMENTS DIED!



HIS AUTO PILOT HAD BEGUN FIGHTING GUS, SO HE SWITCHED IT OFF AND FLEW MANUALLY...DIRECTLY INTO A COLORLESS, WHIRLING HOLE IN THE SKY!



HERE!
IT IS HERE...
OVER THIS NEXT
HILL! I KNOW
IT! FOLLOW
ME!



NOTHING!

THE
MOONSHADOWS
PLAY TRICKS ON
OUR WEARY EYES!
GOD MOCKS US!
WE ARE LOST
FOREVER!

GUS TRASK COULD NO LONGER RELY ON HIS GYRO, HORIZON, OR ALTITUDE INDICATORS! THEY PROVIDED HIS ARTIFICIAL HORIZON, BUT NOW THEY WERE GONE! HE WOULD HAVE TO RELY ON HIMSELF! BUT, CONFIDENT AS HE WAS... HE FOUND HIMSELF PRAYING!



BUT NOW, AS IF FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF HIS TREACHEROUS INSTRUMENTS, THE VERY UNIVERSE BLINKED OUT ON HIM! THE STARS, THE MOON, EVEN THE OCEAN... HE'D LOST THEM ALL! FOR A MOMENT HIS HEAD SPUN IN NEAR-PANIC!

BUT THEN...OUT OF THE MOMENTARY SHROUD OF NOTHINGNESS THAT HAD BLANKETED HIM...A BEACH! HE'D FOUND LAND! GUS TRASK SHOUTED WITH RELIEF AND DELIGHT! ALL HE HAD TO DO NOW WAS DROP LOWER, CHECK OUT LANDMARKS BY VISUAL IDENTIFICATION AND HOME IN ON THE AIRFIELD... ANY AIRFIELD! HE WAS SAFE AGAIN... AND THE MOMENTARY PANIC HE'D FELT... THE MURMURED PRAYERS... EMBARRASSED HIM! HE'D NEVER PRAYED BEFORE... HE'D NEVER BELIEVED IN A GOD! HE'D GOTTEN OUT OF THIS PICKLE HIMSELF!



ONE THING BOTHERED HIM, THOUGH...UNLESS HIS NEAR-PANIC HAD OBSCURED HIS SENSE OF TIME, IT WAS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE THAT HE HAD REACHED FLORIDA IN SO SHORT A TIME!



BUT HE COULD NOT ARGUE WITH THE FACTS! HE DROPPED LOW ENOUGH UNTIL HE COULD MAKE OUT THE SAND DUNES AND THE PALM TREES! YEP... FLORIDA! HE COULDN'T WAIT TO WRAP HIMSELF AROUND A BEER AND TELL HIS TALE OF BLIND FLYING AT NIGHT!

MY GRIEF IS TERRIBLE...MY SERVANT HAS DIED, FOLLOWING MY LEAD! AND YET, I WAS ONLY HEARKENING TO THE CALL OF MY GOD!

AND WHO WILL DIE NEXT? WHO? CAN YOU PREDICT THAT, WISE ONE?



IT WILL NOT BE ME! I WILL ESCAPE THIS TORMENTING DESERT! I WILL FLEE...THIS WAY, YES, THIS! AHHHH!

COME BACK, FOOL! WE MUST STAY TOGETHER! YOU WILL DIE OUT THERE ALONE! COME BACK!

LET HIM GO! HE HAS MET MADNESS! SOON HE WILL MEET DEATH!



GUS TRASK BEGAN HIS **SEARCH** FOR HIS **BEARINGS**...JUST **ONE LANDMARK** WOULD DO! BUT THERE WAS **NOTHING!**



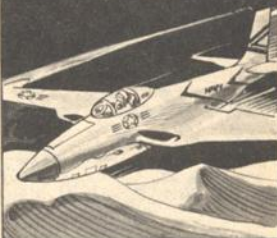
THE BEACH STRETCHED **ON** AND **ON**...ENDLESS REACHES OF ROLLING SAND DUNES AND PALM TREES AND **NOTHING MORE!** THIS SURE WASN'T THE **FLORIDA** HE'D KNOWN IN HIS **COLLEGE DAYS!**

JUST WHEN HE'D THOUGHT HE WAS **SAFE**...MORE **PERIL**, MORE **UNKNOWN!**



GUS TRASK **FOUGHT** THE **URGE** TO **PRAY!** HE'D GOTTEN ALONG ALL HIS LIFE **WITHOUT GOD**...HE COULD DAMN WELL **FIND A BEARING** IN **FLORIDA** **WITHOUT HIM** TOO!

AS THE DESPERATE **SEARCH** GREW INTO LONG **MINUTES**...AN **HOURL**...NEVER KNOWING WHEN HE MIGHT **RUN OUT OF FUEL**...GUS TRASK'S **STOMACH** BEGAN TO **KNOT!** SOMETHING WAS **WRONG!** THERE WAS NOT SO MUCH AS A **MATCHSTICK** OUT THERE!



GUS **INCREASED** HIS **AIR SPEED** TO NEARLY **FOUR HUNDRED KNOTS!** ALL RIGHT, DAMNIT, HE **FUMED**, I MAY RUN **OUT OF FUEL**...BUT I'LL BUILD UP ENOUGH **SPEED** TO FLY **FOREVER**, **DEFYING** GOD'S OWN **LAWS OF PHYSICS AND LOGIC!**

LOOK YOU **THERE!** SAND-SMUGGED **TRACKS!** I FEAR THAT WE HAVE BEEN **WALKING** IN **CIRCLES!** ONLY A **MIRACLE** CAN **SAVE** US NOW...!

BUT **MIRACLES** HAVE **NOT** BEEN **SEEN** SINCE OUR **FOREFATHERS** RULED THE **DESERT!**



BY THE **PROPHET!** LOOK UP IN THE **SKY!**

WE ARE **BLESSED** AS WERE OUR **FOREFATHERS!** A **SIGN!** A **SHINING OMEN!** **BEHOLD!**

PRAISE BE TO **GOD!**



SUDDENLY, THROUGH THE SPECTRAL GLOW OF HIS OWN AIRCRAFT, GUS TRASK SAW A FAINT LIGHT ON THE NIGHT-SHROUDED HORIZON! HE EXULTED...A CITY! HE INCREASED HIS AIRSPEED TO THE MAX! THEN, HIS HEART SANK...THE LIGHTS OF THE TOWN SHOULD BE GETTING CLOSER... BUT THEY WEREN'T!



AT THIS POINT HIS JET SHOULD HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THE SOUND BARRIER...IT DIDN'T!



IN FACT, AS HE LOOKED OUT HIS PLEXIGLASS WINDOWS, HE SAW THAT THE GROUND WAS ONLY CRAWLING BY! AT THIS SPEED AND LOW ALTITUDE, THE GROUND SHOULD HAVE BEEN A BLUR! IT WASN'T!

AN ICY COLD FEAR CREPT OVER GUS TRASK'S SOUL! SOMETHING MORE THAN MECHANICAL ERROR WAS AT PLAY HERE... TIME AND NATURE HAD TURNED IN REBELLION AGAINST MAN'S REALITY!



GUS TRASK BEGAN TO PRAY! WITHOUT APOLOGY OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, GUS BESEECHED GOD TO AID HIM, TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT AGAIN, TO SEND HIM HOME UNHARMED!

HURRY, FRIENDS, HURRY! THE SHINING STAR WAITS FOR US! WE MUST HURRY AND FOLLOW IT!

YES, HURRY! FOLLOW YONDER STAR!



HOW MAGNIFICENT IT IS! WITH ALL OUR MIGHT AND ALL OUR FAITH WE SHALL FOLLOW WHERE IT LEADS!

SURELY, WE ARE IN BEHOLD OF A MIRACLE OF GOD!





GUS TRASK FORGOT HIS PRAYING AS THE TOWN AT LAST LOOMED BELOW HIM! BUT IT WAS LIKE NO TOWN HE'D SEEN IN HIS LIFE! EVEN AS HE GAZED UPON THE TINY, ANCIENT BUILDINGS, A FEELING OF AWE AND FEAR, OVERCAME HIM!



TIME HAD SLOWED TO A STANDSTILL ...HE FELT AS IF HE WERE FATHOMS DEEP UNDERWATER! ALL WAS SILENCE, ALL WAS SLOW, AND THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS SQUEEZING IN HIS SKULL! HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT HE WAS SEEING! HE ONLY KNEW THAT HE DID NOT BELONG HERE, THAT THIS WAS THE WRONG PLACE AND TIME FOR HIS CRAFT! HE ONLY KNEW THAT HE HAD TO TEAR FREE OF THE GIANT HAND WHICH SEEMED TO HOLD HIS PLANE...TEAR FREE AND FIND HOME!

GUS TRASK AIMED THE NOSE OF HIS PLANE AT THE SKIES AND ACCELERATED!

HIS ENGINES SCREAMED IN TORMENT AS HE FOUGHT THE STICK WHICH TRIED TO MANIPULATE HIM TOWARD THE NIGHTMARE BELOW! THE JET STRUGGLED LIKE A CRIPPLED HAWK TOWARD THE CLOUDS!



THE PLANE SHUDDERED AND TWISTED! ITS SEAMS STRAINED, WHILE THE PRESSURE RIVETED HIM AGAINST THE CHAIR! IT WAS WORKING, HE COULD FEEL IT! HE WAS GAINING ALTITUDE AND SPEED! HE KNEW, AT LAST, HE WAS BREAKING FREE!



PRAISE OUR LORD AND MASTER! LO! HE HAS SET HIS WONDROUS STAR ABOVE THE CITY! HE HAS BROUGHT US TO OUR GOAL! PRAISE HIS NAME FOREVER!



AYE! AND LET US PRAISE HIS WONDROUS LIGHT! BEHOLD HOW IT RISES INTO THE SKY ABOVE THE CITY! LIKE A BEACON OF FAITH, LOVE, AND HOLY SPLENDOR!

TRULY THIS IS WHERE WE SHALL FIND THE ONE WE SEEK!

THE PLANE *SHOOK* AND *POUNDED* LIKE A *SPARROW* IN A *GALE* AS THE *ENGINES ROARED* LIKE *THUNDER!*



THE *ENGINES* WERE *OVERHEATING* ... THEY WERE BEING PUSHED *TOO FAR!* STILL GUS TRASK *DREW BACK* ON THE *STICK!* HE WOULD PUSH HIS PLANE UP INTO THE *DECEMBER NIGHT SKY*... HE WOULD *BREAK* THE *INVISIBLE TITAN'S GRIP* ON HIS PLANE... OR *DIE TRYING!*

IF IT WAS A *GOD* THAT HAD *SHATTERED* NATURE'S *LAWS* TO PUT HIM HERE... GUS TRASK WOULD *DEFY* THAT *GOD'S PLAN!* HE *PUSHED* HIS *ENGINES* TO THE *LAST!*



HOT TEARS OF *RAW EMOTION* *STREAKED* DOWN HIS *TENSE FACE!* HE FELT THE CRAFT *BUCK* AND *LEAP* ... HE'D *BROKEN FREE* OF THE *ENIGMATIC GRIP*... *FREE* OF THE *FEAR* THAT HAD MADE HIM *PRAY* LIKE A *BABBLING SCHOOLBOY!* THE PLANE *SHOT SKYWARD* LIKE A *CATAPULTED STONE!*

KA-FLOOM!



GUS TRASK PROBABLY *NEVER KNEW* THAT HIS PLANE'S *FINAL* *RADIANT-ENERGY GASP* BECAME A *LIGHT* OF SUCH *BRILLIANCE* THAT IT *STARTLED* THE *EARTH*... AND WAS *NEVER FORGOTTEN...*

... THE *SHINING STAR* OF *BETHLEHEM!*

GOD HAS *SURELY LED* US INTO THE *PRESENCE* OF THE *HOLIEST* OF US *ALL!* *TRULY*, *FRIENDS*, THIS IS THE *CHRIST-CHILD!*



THE *NAVY'S* *EXPLANATION* FOR THE *LOSS* OF *PILOT GUS TRASK* AND HIS *FIGHTER JET* WAS *DRY* AND *PREDICTABLE*: *EQUIPMENT* OR *PILOT ERROR*... *LOST AT SEA!*

ONLY *FANATICS* AND *DREAMERS*, THOSE WHO HAVE *FELT* THE *BLUDGEONOUS HAND* OF *GOD*, *SPECULATED OTHERWISE*... THAT EVEN AN *ALMIGHTY DEITY* MIGHT NEED *HELP* IN HIS *GREATEST WORKS*... AND THAT *PILOT GUS TRASK* WAS AN *UNWILLING ASSOCIATE* IN... A *MIRACLE!*

end

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