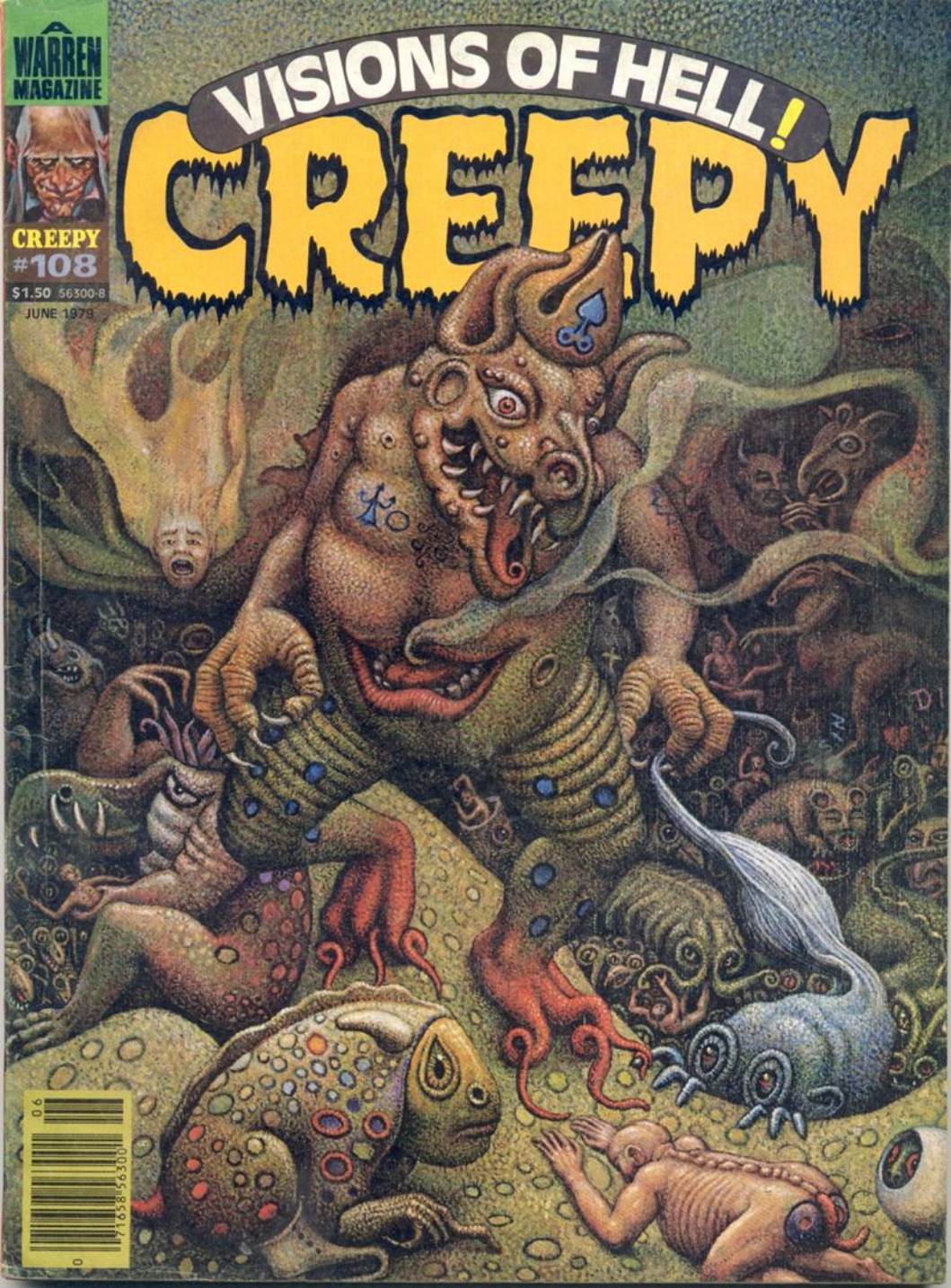
WARREN MAGAZINE
CREEPY
#108
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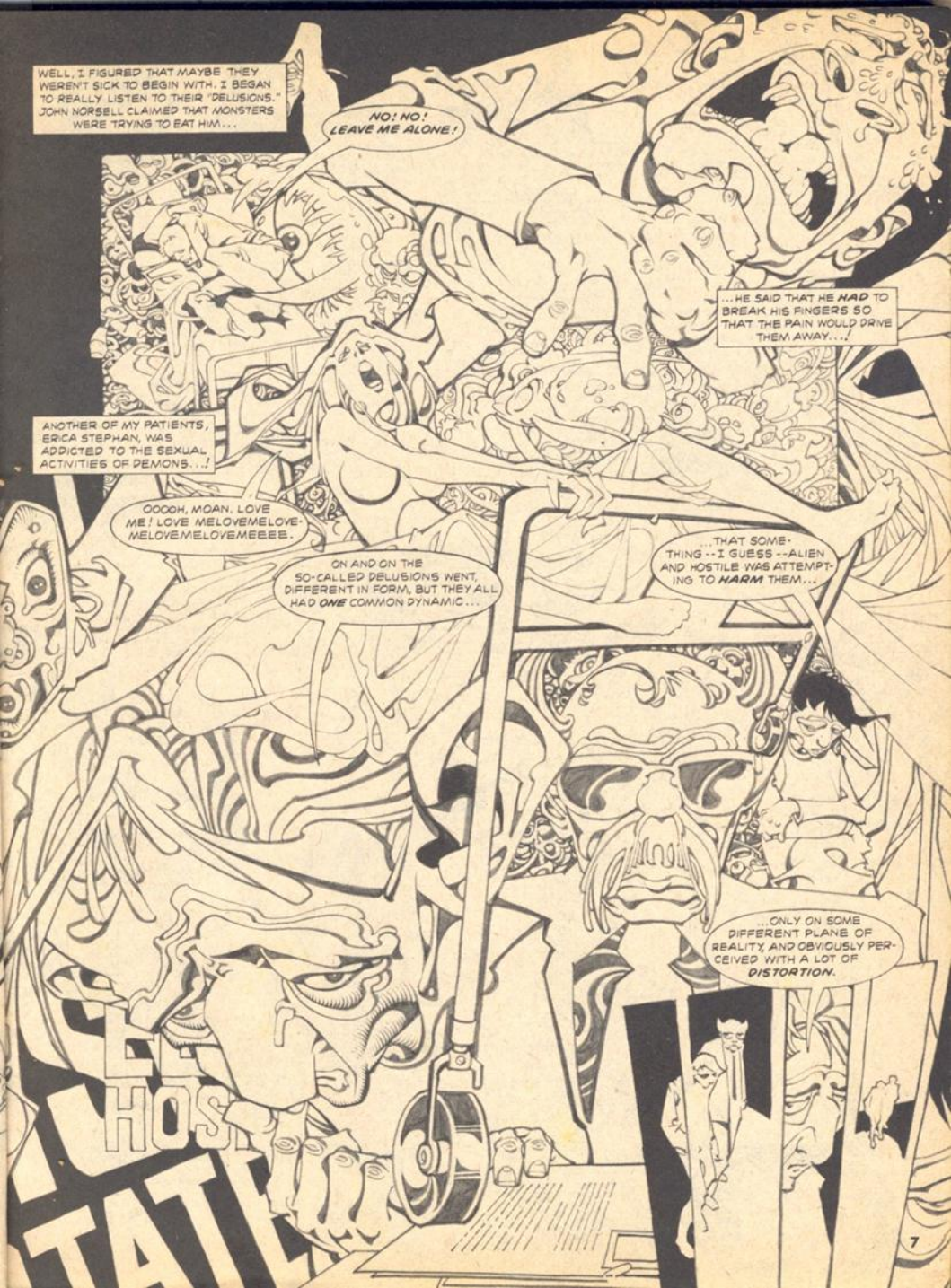
JUNE 1979
VISIONS OF HELL!
CREEPY

SCRIPT: FRANK SALVATINI
ART: ALEX NINO

THE PEOPLE IN MY CASELOAD WERE TYPICALLY CHRONIC, AND MY QUESTION, BORN OUT OF YEARS OF FRUSTRATION AND FAILURE, WAS **WHY! WHY** DON'T THEY GET WELL?


WELL, I FIGURED THAT MAYBE THEY WEREN'T SICK TO BEGIN WITH. I BEGAN TO REALLY LISTEN TO THEIR "DELUSIONS." JOHN NORSELL CLAIMED THAT MONSTERS WERE TRYING TO EAT HIM...
NO! NO! LEAVE ME ALONE!
...HE SAID THAT HE HAD TO BREAK HIS FINGERS SO THAT THE PAIN WOULD DRIVE THEM AWAY...!
ANOTHER OF MY PATIENTS, ERICA STEPHAN, WAS ADDICTED TO THE SEXUAL ACTIVITIES OF DEMONS...!
OOOOH, MOAN, LOVE ME! LOVE MELOVEMELOVEMELOVEMELOVEMEEEE.
ON AND ON THE SO-CALLED DELUSIONS WENT, DIFFERENT IN FORM, BUT THEY ALL HAD ONE COMMON DYNAMIC...
...THAT SOMETHING--I GUESS--ALIEN AND HOSTILE WAS ATTEMPTING TO HARM THEM...
...ONLY ON SOME DIFFERENT PLANE OF REALITY, AND OBVIOUSLY PERCEIVED WITH A LOT OF DISTORTION.
HOST
TATE

DR. BEZLE, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SORCERY?
VERY LITTLE, I'M AFRAID.
WELL, I KNOW ENOUGH TO BE AFRAID...SORCERY IS MY HOBBY, SORT OF... I'VE READ QUITE A BIT ON THE SUBJECT AND EVEN DID A FEW PAPERS ON IT WHEN I WAS AN UNDERGRADUATE...
CAN I HAVE A CIGARETTE, GIMMEE A CIGARETTE PLEASE. CAN I HAVE A CIGARETTE PLEASE CAN I PLEASE PLEASE...?
...NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT I WAS RAISED BY A WITCH...!
DON'T TOUCH ME! GET AWAY! GET YOUR GERMS AWAY FROM ME!! AND NO CIGARETTE! THEY'RE MINE! MINE!
MY MOTHER USED TO PRACTICE WITH A COVEN IN SALEM, AND SHE TAUGHT ME WHAT SHE KNEW WHICH WASN'T MUCH. NOTHING HEAVY OR EARTH SHATTERING, JUST THE PHILOSOPHIES AND WAYS OF THOUGHT BEHIND THE MAGIC, MAINLY.
DIE! DIE! BY THE EVIL EYE! DIE!

AND WHY NOT SORCERY? SORCERY ENTAILS TRANSPOSING SOME OF THE PHYSICAL LAWS OF OTHER UNIVERSES (OR REALITIES) INTO OURS BY MEANS OF A SPECIAL KIND OF ***GATEWAY***. THIS OPENING WHICH LIES, IN ESSENCE, IN THE MIND OF THE SORCERER. HE ACTIVATES IT BY DRINKING CERTAIN POTIONS, CHANTING LONG-FORGOTTEN MANTRAS, AND OTHER WEIRD BEHAVIORS. IN THIS WAY, HE OR SHE CAN ***SUMMON*** THE ESSENCE OF CREATURES FROM OTHER WORLDS AND GIVE THEM REALITY HERE. HENCE WE HAVE OUR DEMONS AND DRAGONS AND OTHER STUFF OF LEGENDS.

NOW, SOME VARIATION OF THAT PROCESS, ONLY IN REVERSE, COULD ACCOUNT FOR WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO MY PATIENTS. I FIGURED THAT THE ONLY TEST WOULD BE FOR ME TO GO TO WHERE THE ACTION WAS -- IN ESSENCE, TO GO CRAZY -- AND SEE FOR MYSELF.

WITH MY MOTHER'S HELP, I BONED UP ON THE SUBJECT -- STUDIED THE ANCIENT TEXTS AND SCROLLS THAT SHE RECOMMENDED, PRACTICED THE ***PSYCHO-PHONETIC*** SYLLABLES, THE WHOLE BIT. IT TOOK ME A YEAR. THEN I WAS READY.

THE WAY I GOT THERE WAS SIMPLE... SOME OF THE MORE VALID OF THE ARCANE TEXTS TELL HOW TO MIX A POTION OF CERTAIN HERBS AND OTHER MATERIALS. THIS, UPON CONSUMPTION, SERVES TO OPEN THE GATE ALLOWING PERCEPTION OF ALL THE MYRIAD WAYS...

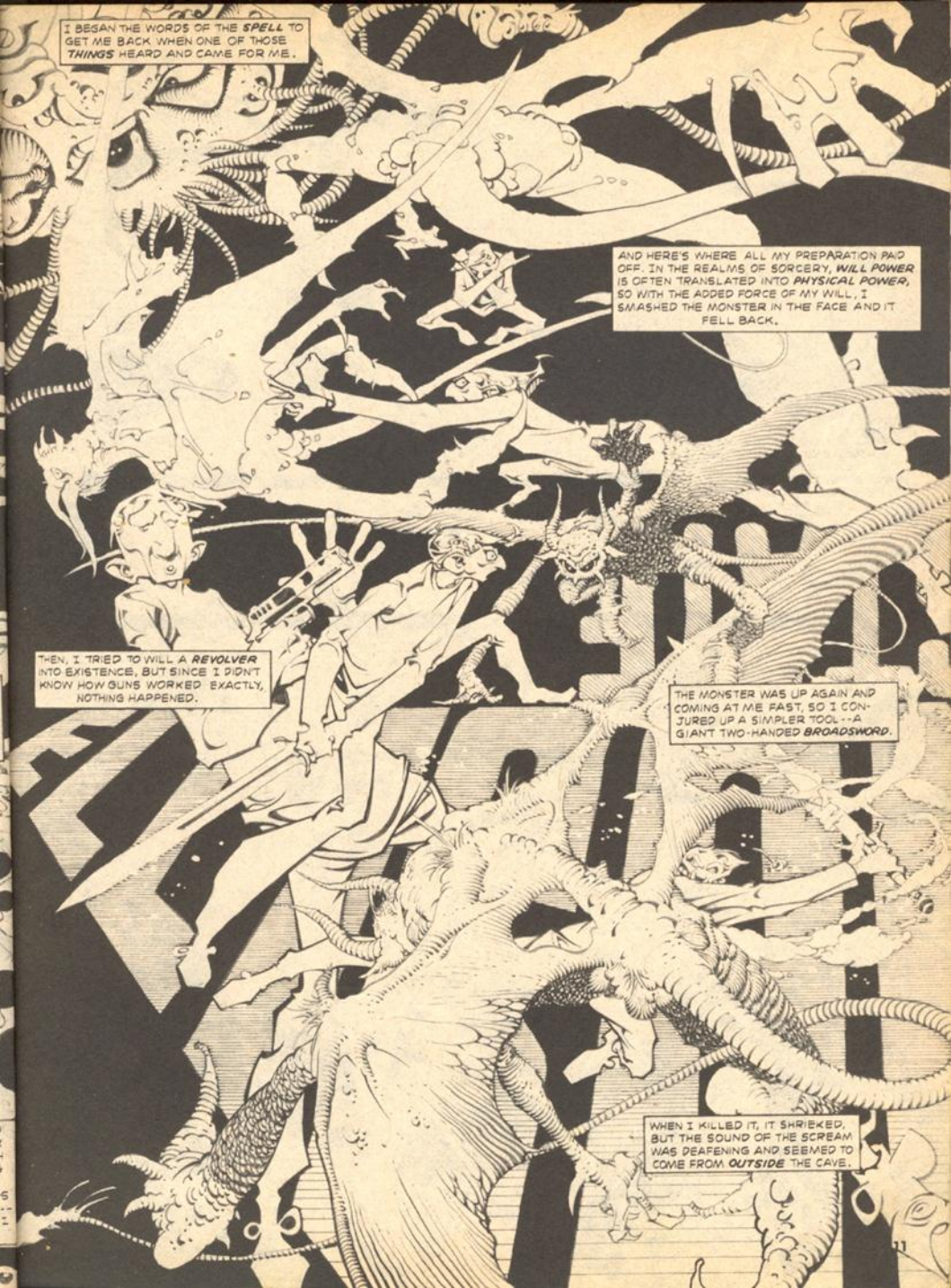
...SO I SAT IN THE CENTER OF ***MODAK'S DECAGON*** AND DRANK THE STUFF -- IT SMELLED BAD, LIKE BURNING SULPHUR, AND TASTED WORSE THAN LIQUID THORAZINE. I CONCENTRATED ON A FORGOTTEN EASTERN MANDALA THAT REPRESENTED THE BEAUTY OF DEATH.

SUDDENLY THE MANDALA'S PATTERN REACHED UP AND SURROUNDED ME IN ITS ***PRISON OF MEANING***...

...AND ***DEATH*** EMERGED FROM THE CENTER, WITH THE UNIVERSE IN HIS BELLY, GRINNING HORRIBLY AS HE DANCED AROUND ME IN MY CAGE.

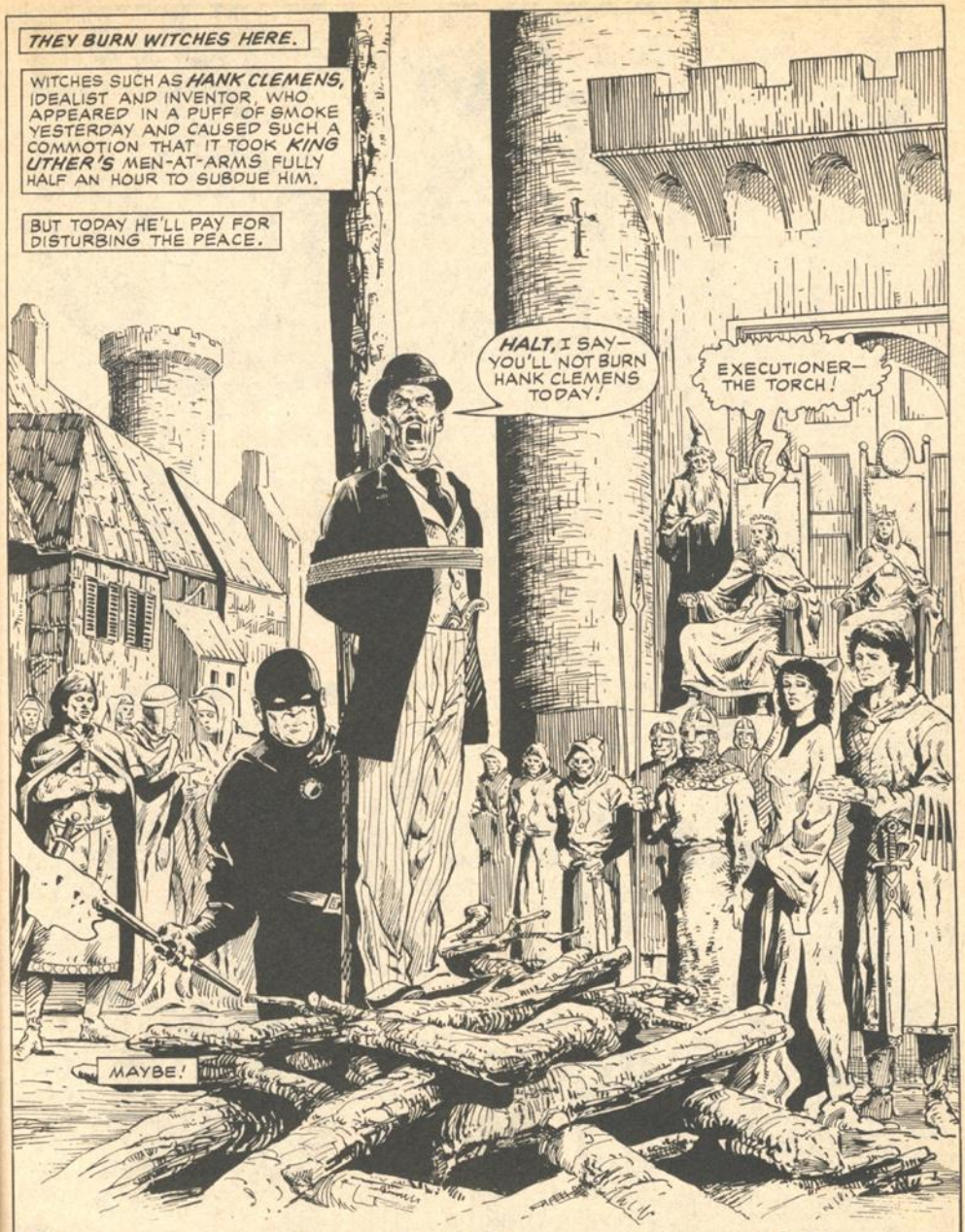
AS HE DANCED, HE SEEMED TO TAKE AWAY ALL MY FACADES, MY ROLES -- THERAPIST, CITIZEN, MAN, EVEN HUMAN -- UNTIL THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT FOR ME TO ***BE***... EXCEPT ***ME***... I... I...

WHEN I REGAINED AWARENESS, I WAS ON AN EERIE PLAIN OF BLACK SAND. I KNEW I WASN'T ON EARTH 'CAUSE THERE WAS A WHOLE BUNCH OF LARGE MOONS IN THE NIGHT SKY.
I STOOD, WONDERING ABOUT THE PLACE WHEN SUDDENLY I HEARD A HIGH-PITCHED, SHRILL SCREAM THAT AFFECTED ME LIKE FINGER-NAILS SCRATCHING A BLACKBOARD. AN IN-DESCRIBABLE THING SWOOPED DOWN OUT OF NOWHERE AND GRABBED MY ARMS LIFTING US ME ON ITS POWERFUL BATWINGS.
IT HAD THE FACE OF A DEMON--EYES BURNING WITH AN ALIEN HUNGER. ITS MOUTH HUNG OPEN AND FROM DRIPPING JAWS CAME THE SICKENING SMELL OF DECAYING MEAT.
WE FLEW TO ONE OF THE CAVES IN THE CLIFFS THAT WERE AT THE EDGE OF THE PLAIN AND THE THING TOSSED ME INSIDE. THE CLIFF WAS SMOOTH AS GLASS AND THERE WAS NO WAY DOWN FROM THE CAVE.
THE WALLS GLOWED WITH SOME KIND OF PHOSPHORESCENT STUFF AND WHAT I SAW...
THERE WERE PEOPLE THERE, HUDDLED AGAINST THE WALL. THE FEAR IN THEIR FACES SCREAMED OUT AT ME. EACH PERSON WAS MISSING AN ARM OR LEG OR SOME PART OF HIS BODY AND TEETH-MARKS IN PICKED CLEAN BONES TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS--AND WHAT WAS IN STORE FOR ME IF I DIDN'T GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE.


I BEGAN THE WORDS OF THE SPELL TO GET ME BACK WHEN ONE OF THOSE THINGS HEARD AND CAME FOR ME.
AND HERE'S WHERE ALL MY PREPARATION PAID OFF. IN THE REALMS OF SORCERY, WILL POWER IS OFTEN TRANSLATED INTO PHYSICAL POWER, SO WITH THE ADDED FORCE OF MY WILL, I SMASHED THE MONSTER IN THE FACE AND IT FELL BACK.
THEN, I TRIED TO WILL A REVOLVER INTO EXISTENCE, BUT SINCE I DIDN'T KNOW HOW GUNS WORKED EXACTLY, NOTHING HAPPENED.
THE MONSTER WAS UP AGAIN AND COMING AT ME FAST, SO I CONJURED UP A SIMPLER TOOL--A GIANT TWO-HANDED BROADSWORD.
WHEN I KILLED IT, IT SHRIEKED, BUT THE SOUND OF THE SCREAM WAS DEAFENING AND SEEMED TO COME FROM OUTSIDE THE CAVE.

I WENT TO THE ENTRANCE AND LOOKED UP. THE SKY WAS COVERED WITH FLYING DEMONS JUST LIKE THE ONE I'D JUST SLAIN. I THINK ITS PAIN WAS SOMEHOW FELT BY ALL OF THEM.
THEN THEY WERE ON ME LIKE SOME TIDAL WAVE OF CLAWS AND TEETH.
I SLASHED AND HACKED AT THEM AND TRIED, THROUGH THEIR DEAFENING SCREAMS, TO CONCENTRATE ON THE WORDS THAT WOULD BRING ME BACK.
KUKU-CLUTH---
THINGS STARTED TO SPIN AND I FELT SOMETHING TEAR AT MY ARM. AND A PAIN, MY GOD THE PAIN! I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO THINK STRAIGHT SINCE. I STILL FEEL THAT SOMETHING'S MISSING... ANYWAY I BLACKED OUT.

SO I AWOKE IN THE ADMITTING WARD AND HERE I AM.
THAT WAS A PRETTY UNUSUAL STORY, GREG!
DAMMIT! YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE ME. I AM NOT INSANE. THIS ISN'T AN EFFECT OF THE POTION I TOOK. IT WAS REAL. REAL! DOES IT SOUND THAT CRAZY?
NOW, CALM DOWN, GREG, AND LET ME GO!
HERE, DRINK THIS. YOU'LL FEEL BETTER.
I AM GETTING UP-TIGHT. THANKS.
SAY, WHAT WAS THAT? IT TASTED FAMILIAR, BUT NOT LIKE MY OTHER MEDICINES.
JUST A SEDATIVE, GREG. SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU REST.
HEY! AM I BEING PARANOID OR DID THAT STUFF SMELL LIKE ROTTEN EGGS!?
YOU'RE JUST BEING PARANOID.
END



Camelot Crosstime

SCRIPT: JEAN MICHELE MARTIN/ART: VAL MAYERIK

MY LADY ALYS FEELS ILL—SEND FOR HER LADY-IN-WAITING.
AT ONCE, M'LORD ARWEN.

MY LORD, MY LORD—IS IT TRUE THAT DEVIL HATH SLAIN THE KING?
COMPOSE YOURSELF, SIBBI—THE KING LIVES!
AND, ALAS, SO DOES THE WIZARD.

MY LADY, THE BOY TOLD ME YOU WERE ILL.
A TOUCH OF THE VAPORS, BRISEN; IT HAS PASSED, BUT I HAD BEST LIE DOWN.
BELIKE THE SHOCK OF SEEING THE WIZARD WAS TOO MUCH FOR HER!

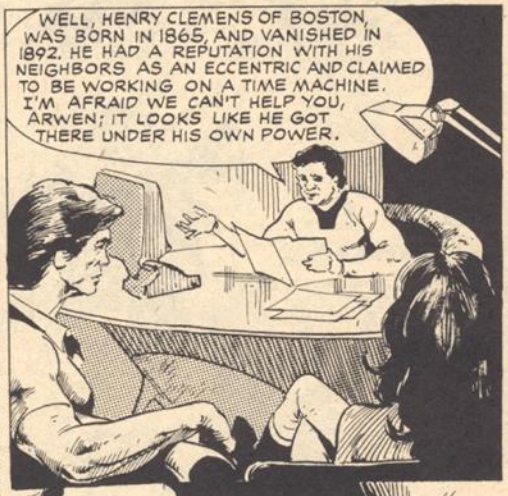
MY LADY, IT IS MOST VEXING THAT THIS UPSTART INTERLOPER SHALL HAVE USURPED THE EAR OF OUR KING.
UTHER DIDN'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE AFTER CLEMENS SHOT HIS ASTROLOGER.

...AND THAT IS SOMETHING WE'D BETTER TAKE UP WITH THE HOME OFFICE. BRISEN, WARD THE DOOR.
DON'T I ALWAYS, LORD?

GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN TEMP'TERS. THIS WAY TO DECONTAM.
I WONDER HOW THEY CAME TO CALL US 'TEMPTERS'?
PROBABLY FROM "TEMPORAL TRANSTATERS!" YOU HAVE TO ADMIT IT'S EASIER TO SAY THAN "ARCHAEO-ANTHROPOLOGISTS"!

UMMM-HOT WATER! I WISH CAMELOT HAD INDOOR PLUMBING.
BUT THAT WOULD BE AN ANACHRONISM- AND THAT'S SOMETHING WE CAN'T AFFORD.

WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT CLEMENS? WE CAN'T LET HIM "CIVILIZE" CAMELOT...
WE MAY HAVE NO CHOICE. IF A.A.I. DIDN'T PLACE HIM, THEY CAN'T REMOVE HIM. HERE WE ARE!


WELL, HENRY CLEMENS OF BOSTON, WAS BORN IN 1865, AND VANISHED IN 1892. HE HAD A REPUTATION WITH HIS NEIGHBORS AS AN ECCENTRIC AND CLAIMED TO BE WORKING ON A TIME MACHINE. I'M AFRAID WE CAN'T HELP YOU, ARWEN; IT LOOKS LIKE HE GOT THERE UNDER HIS OWN POWER.

BUT HE'LL RUIN EVERY-THING!

I CAN'T CHALLENGE HIM TO COMBAT, BUT I HAVE AN IDEA THAT JUST MIGHT WORK...

A FEW TRANSTEMPORAL WEEKS LATER... THE LISTS AT CAMELOT, AND A MATTER OF HONOR...
KING UTHERS KNIGHTS DON'T LIKE THIS STRANGE WIZARD, AND HAVE ATTEMPTED TO UNSEAT HIM—
ABRA-CADABRA
KRASH!
...TO LITTLE AVAIL.
YOU HAVE NOT HEARD THE LAST OF THIS, WARLOCK!
HA HA HA—THREE DOWN! NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE THE POWER OF YANKEE INGENUITY, SON!
THANKS TO CLEMENS, MEN ARE LEAVING CAMELOT RIGHT AND LEFT. WHEN THE NORTHENERS COME A-VIKING NEXT SPRING, THEY'LL FIND CAMELOT EASY PREY... IF THE ORKNEY KINGS OR THE CHILDREN OF LLYR DON'T ATTACK FIRST!
PRETTY SLICK, HEY BOY? I SET MY LORD AGRAVAINE SQUARE ON HIS TAIL FOR SURE. SAY, WHO'S THE LITTLE LADY I SAW IN THE WINDOW?
SHE IS LORD ARWEN'S LADY. SIR HANK- WILL YOU TEACH ME TO UN-SEAT KNIGHTS THAT WAY?
YOU BET, ART. THERE'S GONNA BE SOME CHANGES MADE AROUND HERE.

LATER...
YOU PRESUME TOO MUCH, SIR KNIGHT— GOOD DAY!
BUT I—WOMEN! A THOUSAND YEARS HASN'T CHANGED 'EM A BIT.
NOW THE FIRST THING I'M GONNA SET UP HERE IS A SOAP FACTORY. STANDS TO REASON A MAN CAN'T GO COURTIN' SMELLIN' LIKE A GOAT—!
"COURTING" MY LORD?
ARTOS? ARTOS! THERE YOU ARE—COME ALONG, YOUR TUTOR HAS BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER THE CASTLE FOR YOU!
'FRAID I'LL BE A BAD INFLUENCE ON THE BOY, EH? WELL, PROGRESS IS A COMIN', MA'AM, AND THERE'S NO STOPPIN' IT!
BRISEN CAN KEEP ARTOS AWAY FROM THE WIZARD HANK CLEMENS, BUT SHE HAD NO SUCH LUCK IN BLOCKING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOAP FACTORY IN WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED; AND SO...
ANOTHER FOLLY OF THE WIZARD, GOD CURSE HIM.
HE'S BEEN HERE TWO MONTHS AND CAMELOT IS LIKE A MADHOUSE. IF ONLY IF MY PLAN SUCCEEDS...!
WHAT IS THAT STENCH, ARWEN? IT SMELLS LIKE A BATTLEFIELD THREE DAYS GONE!
YOU HAVE MORE REASON THAN MOST, WITHAL HE'S MAKING SHEEP'S EYES AT YOUR LADY!
I WILL HEAR NO—
MY LORD ARWEN! MY LORD, A MESSENGER AWAITS YOU IN YOUR CHAMBERS.
AND HOW FARE MY LANDS, WELAND?
THEY PROSPER, LORD, AND MORE TO YOUR LIKING, YOUR 'SHIPMENT' HAS COME, AND HAS BEEN PLACED AT LUDSGATE.

DINNER THAT EVENING IS A FESTIVE AFFAIR, WITH EVERYONE EAGER TO HEAR NEWS OF THE WORLD.
TELL US, GOOD WELAND, WHAT NEWS DO YOU BRING OF THE LANDS BEYOND?
THE PEOPLE ARE FILLED WITH AWE AT THE GREAT WIZARD YOU HAVE BOUND TO YOUR SERVICE, KING, BUT MORE THAN THAT, THEY FEAR THE DRAGON THAT HAS LATELY BEEN SEEN AT LUDSGATE.
PERFECT! NOW IF CLEMENS JUST TAKES THE BAIT...!

OH, MY LORD ARWEN, MY HEART QUIVERS WITHIN ME AT THE THOUGHT!
A DRAGON, WELAND?
YES, MY KING — TWICE THE SIZE OF A WAR STALLION AND BREATHING FIRE FROM ITS—
BALDER-DASH!

BEGGIN' YOUR PARDON, MAJESTY— BUT THERE JUST AIN'T NO SUCH CRITTER!
THERE SPEAKS A FOOL, MY FRIENDS. I MYSELF HAVE SEEN SUCH A BEAST, AND WOULD AWARD THE HAND OF MY LADY TO THE KNIGHT BRAVE ENOUGH TO FACE ONE.
THEN YOU'D BETTER GET READY TO, ARWEN OLD SON, 'CAUSE COME SUNUP I'M GOING DRAGON-HUNTING!
OH, SIR HANK! BE NOT SO RASH, I BEG YOU!
ARWEN, IF THIS DOESN'T WORK, I'M GOING TO STAB HIM IN THE BACK MYSELF!
TUSH, MA'AM, TAIN'T A THING TO WORRY ABOUT. I'LL MOP UP THIS LIZARD AND BE BACK 'FORE LUNCH!

DAWN THE FOLLOWING MORNING, A SMALL GROUP BIDS FAREWELL TO UTHER'S NEWEST KNIGHT-ERRANT.
WELAND WILL TAKE YOU AS FAR AS LUDSGATE, SIR HANK. ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU DO NOT WISH TO GO ARMED?

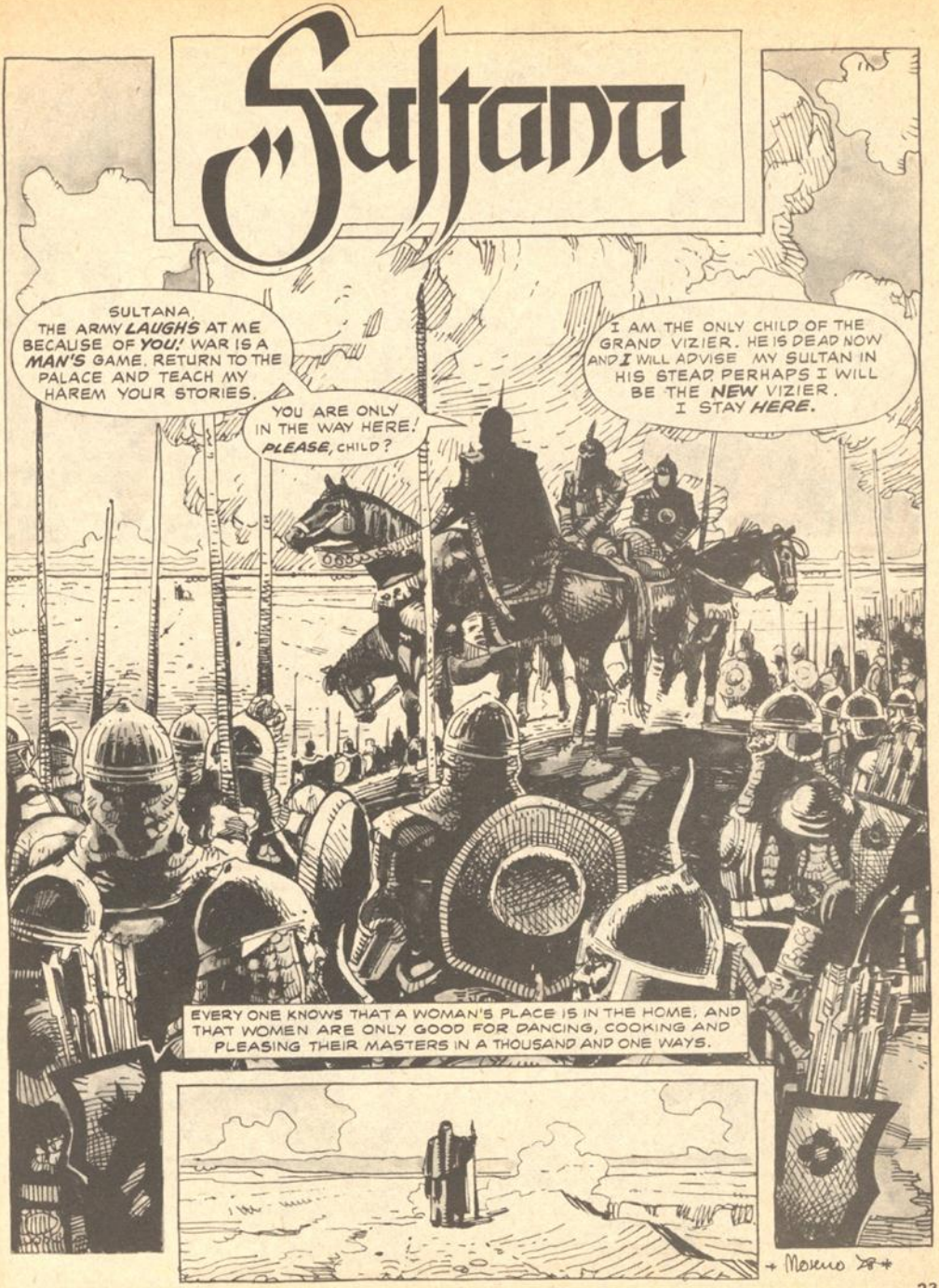
SHUCKS, SONNY—I AM ARMED! AND IT WON'T TAKE MUCH TO SLAY THIS DRAGON OF YOURS!
GOODBYE, M'LORD HANK!
FAREWELL, GOOD SIR.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, ARWEN?
CLEMENS' LABORATORY... I WANT TO BE FINISHED BEFORE THE CASTLE WAKES UP.

LOOK AT THIS! THE DAMNED FOOL WAS GOING TO MAKE GUNPOWDER NEXT! GUNPOWDER MEANS GUNS, AND THE END OF THE FEUDAL SYSTEM!
INTO THE FIRE WITH ALL THESE UNTIMELY PLANS!
I STILL DON'T SEE WHAT GOOD SENDING HIM OFF ON A WILD LIZARD CHASE IS.

YOU MEAN YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN DRAGONS, MY LADY? SHAME ON YOU! AFTER ALL, HANK CLEMENS DIDN'T BELIEVE IN DRAGONS EITHER...

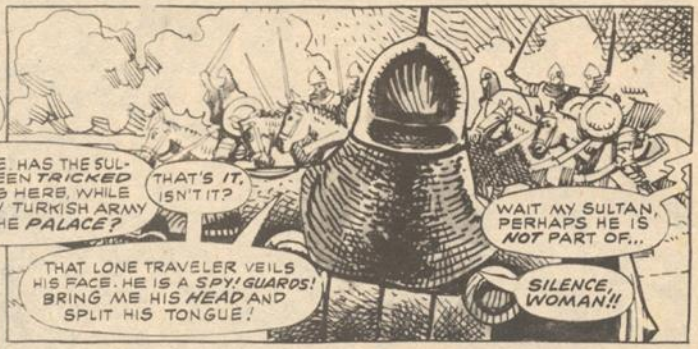
"... AND RIGHT NOW HE'S GETTING THE SHOCK OF HIS LIFE!!"
the End



STORY:BUDD LEWIS/ART:MORENO CASARES

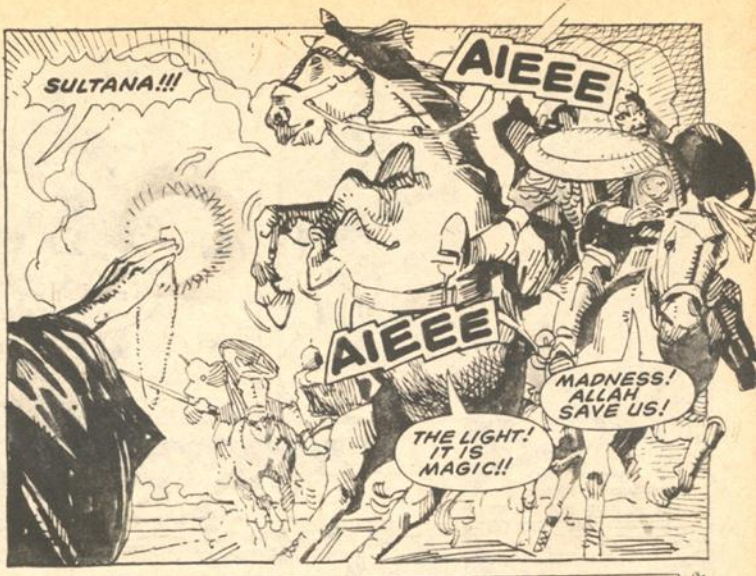
YOU ARE A STUBBORN WOMAN. AND TOO STUPID TO KNOW IT.
WHAT DO MY LOOKOUTS SEE? DOES THE INVADING ARMY APPROACH? ANY TURKS YET?
NO, MY SULTAN! NOTHING APPROACHES SAVE A WANDERING BEGGAR, LEANING ON A STICK.
AND THIRSTY, I'LL BET.

WHAT? WAIT! LET ME THINK, SULTANA, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
I'M SURE I'M TOO STUPID TO KNOW.
OH PLEASE GIRL! DON'T INSULT ME OPENLY!
NOW TELL ME. HAS THE SULTAN'S ARMY BEEN TRICKED INTO COMING HERE, WHILE THE BLOODY TURKISH ARMY STRIKE THE PALACE?


THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?
WAIT MY SULTAN, PERHAPS HE IS NOT PART OF...
THAT LONE TRAVELER VEILS HIS FACE. HE IS A SPY! GUARDS! BRING ME HIS HEAD AND SPLIT HIS TONGUE!
SILENCE, WOMAN!!

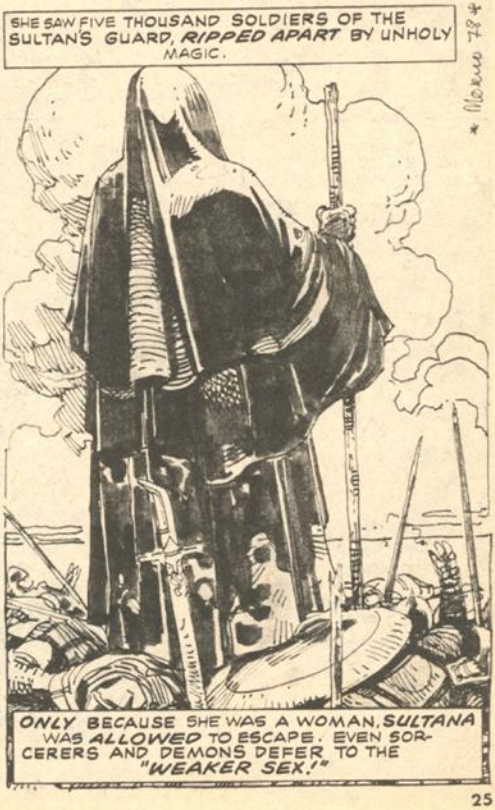
STAY AWAY FROM ME, SOLDIERS! I HAVE NO BUSINESS WITH YOU! I COME TO SEE THE SULTAN OF RAS KASAR!

WELL, SOLDIERS! YOU MADE YOUR CHOICE! THIS IS YOUR REWARD FOR RIDING DOWN A POOR BEGGAR!


SULTANA!!!
AIEEE
AIEEE
MADNESS! ALLAH SAVE US!
THE LIGHT! IT IS MAGIC!!

RIDE, SULTANA! THE TURKS HAVE SENT A DEMON FROM HELL TO MURDER US ALL!

RIDE TO THE PALACE! TELL THEM HELL IS UNLEASHED UPON PERSIA!!
AAAIIEE!! E-ERUPTING!! SQUIRMING DEMONS INSIDE ME!! AAAAAHHH!


SHE SAW FIVE THOUSAND SOLDIERS OF THE SULTAN'S GUARD, RIPPED APART BY UNHOLY MAGIC.
ONLY BECAUSE SHE WAS A WOMAN, SULTANA WAS ALLOWED TO ESCAPE. EVEN SORCERERS AND DEMONS DEFER TO THE "WEAKER SEX!"

HELP! HELP!
HELLO, I'M QUTAR! WERE YOU SCREAMING FOR HELP? I WILL TAKE YOU TO THE PALACE!
YOU? YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A WORTHLESS THIEF! YOU CAN'T HELP ME! GET OUT OF MY WAY OR I'LL KILL YOU!

COME IF YOU WANT, BUT KEEP OUT OF MY WAY!
I WILL ACCOMPANY YOU THERE AND PROTECT YOU IF I CAN!
UMPH! WHAT IS IT WITH WOMEN THESE DAYS? HEY, WAIT FOR ME! I'M SUPPOSED TO PROTECT YOU... HEY!!!

THE CITY BURNS! AND THE PALACE HAS FALLEN TO THE TURKS!
WE CAN'T HELP HERE, COME ON, WE'VE GOT TO FLEE FOR OUR LIVES!

THEN YOU FLEE! MY PEOPLE ARE CAPTURED. I AM THEIR ONLY HOPE!
HMMP. IF MY ONLY HOPE WERE A WOMAN, I'D HAVE NONE! DAMN IT! WAIT FOR ME!

NO! OH NO! HEY COME BACK, THEY'LL JUST KILL US BOTH!
BUTCHERS! MURDERERS! COWARDS! YOU CAN'T FACE PERSIAN SOLDIERS, SO COME FACE ME!
WHO IS THE HAREM WENCH WHO ATTACKS FIERCE TURKS?
PERHAPS ONE WHO HAS NO FEAR OF TURKS OR DEATH!
TAKE HER ALIVE. ALSO THE PERSIAN DOG WITH HER. HE'S DRESSED LIKE A THIEF. HE'LL TALK, IF SHE DOESN'T... BRING THEM BEFORE BLACK KALIFAH. HIS MAGIC WILL QUELL THEM! HAHAHAAH!

QUICKLY! BLACK KALIFAH GRANTS YOU AN AUDIENCE! PERHAPS HE WANTS YOU TO FEED HIS PET! HAHAHAHAHAH!
THE THIEF AND THE HAREM GIRL, BRING THEM TO ME!
I AM KALIFAH THE DARK SEER. THESE ARE MY TURKS YOU SLAY! THESE MERCENARIES COST GOOD MONEY, YOU KNOW. WHOM SHALL I BILL?
I AM SULTANA! DAUGHTER OF THE VIZIER! AND I HAVE COME TO PROTECT MY PERSIANS!
HAHAHAH! NO POWER ON EARTH CAN PROTECT YOU FATTED PERSIANS! YOU ARE RICH, AND SPOILED AND CANNOT FIGHT! YOU HAVE HAD TOO MUCH, NOW YOU LOSE IT ALL!
BUT, YOU WOMAN ARE A BRAVE PATRIOT. IN FACT, I BROUGHT MY "PET" JUST TO DEAL WITH BRAVE PATRIOTS LIKE YOU!
MY PET IS NAMED HEJAZ! AND HIS FAVORITE DISH IS HAREM WENCHES! LIKE THIS!
OH GREAT GOD! I'M GOING TO BE SICK! I CAN'T STAND WORMS! YEECCHH!
AEEIEE
SHE'S CRAZY. IT WAS ALL A MISTAKE. WE WERE JUST... MUMPPHH!
BUT, I AM A TERRIBLE HOST! YOURS WILL BE THE ROOM ADJOINING HEJAZ'S. ONE PEEP FROM YOU AND...
...I'LL RAISE THE BARRIER.

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE BARRIER IS TRANSPARENT...! LOOK ON YOUR NEMESIS ...AND WEEP!
I HATE WORMS!
THERE MUST BE A WAY TO FIGHT HIM, OR AT LEAST GET OUT OF HERE!
THERE ISN'T ANY!

WE ARE DOOMED. HE KEEPS US HERE ONLY TO FEED THAT THING IN THE NEXT ROOM.
YOU ARE WRONG!

THERE IS A WAY!
THE BEGGAR! NO, THE MAGICIAN FROM THE DESERT! STAY BACK EVERYONE! THIS MAN COMMANDS DEMONS!

YES, SULTANA. TRUE. BUT I AM NO MAN. AND THE DEMONS I COMMAND ARE TO FIGHT EVIL WITH ITS OWN FIRE!
B-BUT YOU SLEW FIVE THOUSAND PERSIAN SOLDIERS ...AND THE SULTAN TOO!

THE SULTAN?? THIS CANNOT BE SO!! ALLAH PRESERVE... ME... MY HEART... HELP ME!
I HAVE SLAIN MY LOVE!

YOU DID NOT KNOW IT WAS THE SULTAN'S ARMY? AND THE SULTAN HIMSELF? POOR WOMAN POOR WOMAN!
M-MY HEART! I-I AM... DYING! OH... SWEET CHILD, FORGIVE ME! I MUST LEAVE TO FIND MY LOVE IN... GASP... PARADISE... OR HELL. TH-THE BURDEN NOW FALLS UPON... YOUR SHOULDERS!

SHH. I WAS ONCE CALLED SAN'A, FIRST WIFE TO THE SULTAN. B-BUT I COULD ONLY GIVE HIM A... DAUGHTER! DISGRACED I GAVE OUR CHILD TO MY BROTHER, THE GRAND VIZIER, AND EXILED MYSELF TO THE LOWER WORLDS...
I HEARD... OF THE DEATH OF THE VIZIER AND CAME TO GIVE MY DAUGHTER MY SECRETS SO THAT... SHE COULD CONTROL HER OWN DESTINY!
YOU... YOU ARE MY CHILD... ROYAL BLOOD FLOWS IN YOUR VEINS. YOU HAVE A DESTINY TO FULFILL... FOR YOUR PEOPLE. LEAD THEM... GUARD THEM FROM EVIL... MY SWEET DAUGHTER.
SHE WAS BID TO PRESERVE THEIR HERITAGE, TO TELL THEM THE TALES OF PERSIAN MYSTERIES AND WONDERS... SO THE WORLD WILL NEVER LOSE ITS TASTE FOR DELIGHT. SO THEY WILL STAY YOUNG FOREVER... FOR HOW CAN INNOCENT CHILDREN DESTOY THE WORLD?
SHE TOOK THE ANCIENT CRYSTAL AND THE WORD TO SUMMON THE POWERS OF EVIL... FOR ONLY EVIL CAN STAND AGAINST EVIL... AND THE MAGIC WORD WAS SULTANA...
AND THE EYE OF THE CRYSTAL WAS TO BE HER SYMBOL. BUT THE CRYSTAL COULD ONLY BE USED ONCE IN EACH MOON CYCLE, UNLESS HELD BY A TRUE MAGICIAN...
...WITH IT, IF HE WORE EVIL HE COULD DESTROY THE WORLD. BUT SULTANA ALONE COULD SAVE PERSIA...
...AND WITH THAT S'ANA DIED.
NOW I MUST DO WHAT NO MAN COULD DO, DELIVER PERSIA FROM DESTRUCTION. GUARDS! GUARDS! COME QUICK! YOU MUST SEE!
TAKE THEIR WEAPONS, SILENTLY NOW! LEAVE THEIR BODIES FOR HEJAZ'S DELIGHT! WE ARE FREE! DEATH TO THE TURKS AND THEIR EVIL WIZARD! FOR PERSIA!

HAHAHAH! SO YOU ARE THE NEW LEADER OF PERSIA, EH? I MUST GIVE YOU A REWARD, THEN!

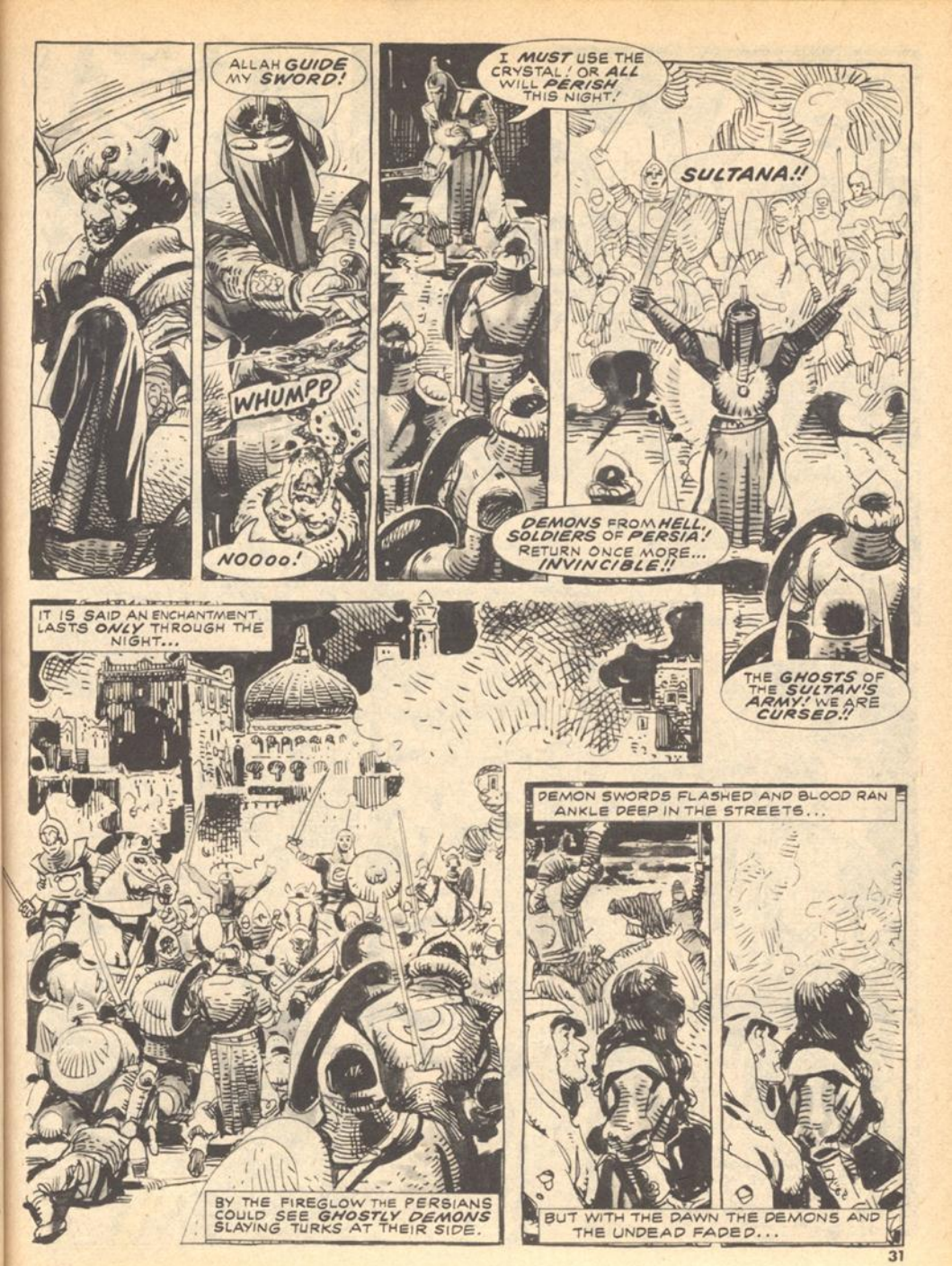
IT'S FROM HEJAZ...
MY MOST PRIZED POSSESSION! THE HEAD OF THE ONE WHO SO KINDLY SLEW THE SULTAN'S ARMY FOR ME! THIS IS MY PRIZE TO YOU!!

KLUMP
MOTHER!!!

THE WOMAN WAS MY MOTHER, WIFE OF THE SULTAN, SISTER OF THE VIZIER AND YOUR TICKET TO HELL!!
HAHAHAH!!

YOU IDIOT HAREM WENCH! YOU SHOULD HAVE WIGGLED YOUR HIPS AT ME INSTEAD OF THAT SWORD! TURKS!! KILL THEM ALL!! HAHAHAH!!
MY TURKS WILL BUTCHER ALL OF PERSIA! BUT YOU, MY LITTLE HAREM GIRL... I'M SAVING YOU FOR...
HEJAZ!

CLANG
CRUSH
THIP


ALLAH GUIDE MY SWORD!
WHUMPP
NOOOO!
I MUST USE THE CRYSTAL! OR ALL WILL PERISH THIS NIGHT!
SULTANA!!
DEMONS FROM HELL, SOLDIERS OF PERSIA! RETURN ONCE MORE... INVINCIBLE!!
THE GHOSTS OF THE SULTAN'S ARMY! WE ARE CURSED!!
IT IS SAID AN ENCHANTMENT LASTS ONLY THROUGH THE NIGHT...
BY THE FIREGLOW THE PERSIANS COULD SEE GHOSTLY DEMONS SLAYING TURKS AT THEIR SIDE.
DEMON SWORDS FLASHED AND BLOOD RAN ANKLE DEEP IN THE STREETS...
BUT WITH THE DAWN THE DEMONS AND THE UNDEAD FADED...

AND RETURNED TO THE DEPTHS OF HELL!
BUT WHEN THE DAWN CAME, ONLY LIVING PATRIOTS STARED AT EACH OTHER NUMBLY ACROSS A SEA OF TURKISH CARNAGE. IT WAS DONE. THAT IS HOW SHE WOULD RETELL THE STORY.

AND THEN THEY BROKE THEIR SWORDS, WITH THE HOPE THEY WOULD NEVER NEED BE REFORGED.

PRINCESS, YOU ARE A MIGHTY VICTOR! LET US REPAIR AND CELEBRATE WITH WINE AND SONG! WE DESERVE IT!

WE MUST GATHER THE DEAD AND PREPARE THE LIVING TO LIVE AGAIN. THAT IS WHAT A LEADER MUST DO!
NO, QUTAR, MY SWEET THIEF. NOT FOR BLOOD AND SORROW. WE MUST TEND THE WOUNDED AND BURN THE DEAD. THEY DESERVE OUR ATTENTION MORE.
SOON WE WILL HAVE TIME FOR LIFE AGAIN!

BUT NOW, FOR ME, A HOT BATH, IN PERFUMES, MY OWN BED... ALONE... AND A GOOD LONG CRY.
GOODNIGHT, MY SWEET, SULTANA.
Y-YES, MY PRINCESS!

END

Going by the Book

WE HAD NOTHING BETTER TO DO THAN TAKE THE OLD FOXBORO ROAD, AND NEITHER OF US FELT LIKE WALKING... THE BOSS WAS IN ONE OF THOSE *MOODS*. HE WANTED ME AROUND. BUT HE KNOWS THAT PEOPLE AND ANIMALS GET NERVOUS IF THEY CAN SEE ME...

...PERSONALLY, I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY.

LOOK, *BOSS*, YOU'VE NO REASON AT ALL TO BLAME YOURSELF! IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT, AND ANYWAY, YOU GOT OUT WITH EVERYTHING YOU HAD WHEN YOU LEFT THE UNIVERSITY.

...EXCEPT AN *APPRENTICE*.

CAN I HELP IT IF YOU HIRE THE *INEPT*?

THAT *DAMN* APPRENTICE! OF COURSE HE LEARNED MORE ABOUT THE TRADE THAN HE SHOULD'VE, BUT SOMEHOW, HE NEVER PICKED UP THE FINER POINTS OF APPLIED SORCERY.

SCRIPT: KEVIN DUANE/ART: ALFREDO ALCALA

LIKE MOST WIZARDS, THE BOSS DIDN'T DEPEND ON *MAGIC* ONLY FOR HIS LIVELIHOOD. THE BOSS HAD SIX SILOS FILLED WITH *GRAIN*, FOR SERVICES RENDERED DURING THE HARVEST SEASON.

WE COULDN'T USE IT ALL, SO WHEN *WINTER* CAME HE'D SELL IT IN THE HILLS FOR A WICKED *PROFIT*. BUT WE DID USE *SOME*, AND GUESS WHO HAD TO CLIMB INTO THE *SILO* TO GET IT?

OF COURSE IT WASN'T NECESSARY TO GO ALL THE WAY TO THE SILOS FOR GRAIN. ALL YOU NEEDED WAS *SAND*, A FEW KERNELS AND THE RIGHT WORDS, AND *PRESTO!* YOU HAD ALL THE GRAIN YOU NEEDED!

TROUBLE IS, THE SPELL'S EXTREMELY *DANGEROUS*... REQUIRES SOME BADASS *DEMONS!*

NOW MAYBE IF THE BOSS'S APPRENTICE HAD SAID THE *WORDS* WITH THE RIGHT *INFLECTIONS*, OR MADE THE PASSES WITH HIS HANDS COUNTER-CLOCKWISE INSTEAD OF CLOCKWISE, IT WOULDN'T'VE BEEN TO HARD TO *CLEAN-UP* AFTERWARD.

BUT YOU *NEVER* USE CONTAMINATED SAND IN A DEMON SPELL.

HE NEVER KNEW WHAT TO EXPECT... HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO CANCEL THE SPELL... HE NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT HIM! PITY!

HELLO, STUPID!

DEMON CONTRACTS ARE *RISKY* THINGS, AND A SPELL CAN COME *APART* UNDER THE REVENGE OF SPITEFUL DEMONS IF THE SPELL ISN'T CORRECT TO THE *LETTER*. THANK GHU THEY'RE A LOUD BUNCH!

SORRY BOSS, NAPTIMES OVER. RISE AND SHINE. BOSS, *IT'S A RAID!*

RRIIP

OH NO! MY SILOS!
WELL, WE GOT OUT OF THERE FAST, TAKING THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE BOSS HAD, HIS BOOK, HIS BOD AND HIS HAT, IN THAT ORDER OF IMPORTANCE!

IT WAS A HELLUVA SHOW!
TRUST A DEMON TO BE THOROUGH! WHEN NO TWO STONES WERE LEFT STANDING TOGETHER, THEY SIMPLY DISMISSED THEMSELVES, OR SO WE THOUGHT!

WE SAW ONLY TWO OF THE SILOS BURNING, SO THERE MIGHT'VE BEEN SOME GRAIN LEFT. GUESS WHO HAD TO DO THE CHECKING!
THE FIRST ONE WAS A SNAP ... BURNED TO A CRISP!

THE SECOND ONE WAS FULL OF MOLTEN LEAD. CLASSY!

BURNING SLIME...

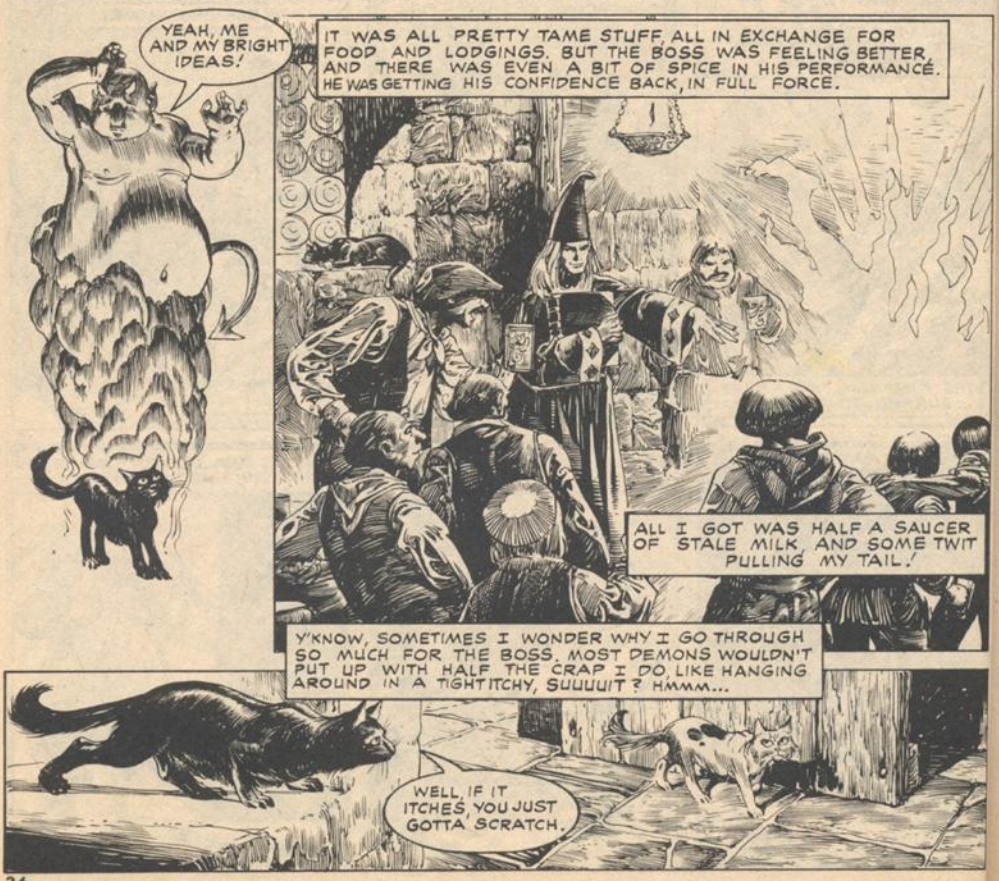
RATS!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT WAS IN THE FIFTH SILO...

...AND I REALLY DIDN'T WANT TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE SIXTH.

HEY, THERE'S A NICE PLACE... SIGN SAYS "OVER FOURTEEN BILLION SERVED"!
MAYBE A NIGHT IN AN INN, WITH A FEW TRICKS FOR THE NABES MIGHT BOOST THE BOSS' SPIRITS.

JUST TO PLAY IT SAFE, I SUGGEST YOU TAKE ON A MORE "HARMLESS" APPEARANCE.
AW, C'MON BOSS, YOU KNOW THE SUIT ITCHES LIKE CRAZY.
JONES INN
I'M JUST ASKING YOU TO DO IT FOR THEIR SAKE...
OKAY, OKAY, JUST FOR A FEW HOURS! THE THINGS I DO FOR YOU THOUGH!


YEAH, ME AND MY BRIGHT IDEAS!
IT WAS ALL PRETTY TAME STUFF, ALL IN EXCHANGE FOR FOOD AND LODGINGS. BUT THE BOSS WAS FEELING BETTER, AND THERE WAS EVEN A BIT OF SPICE IN HIS PERFORMANCE. HE WAS GETTING HIS CONFIDENCE BACK, IN FULL FORCE.
ALL I GOT WAS HALF A SAUCER OF STALE MILK, AND SOME TWIT PULLING MY TAIL!
Y'KNOW, SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY I GO THROUGH SO MUCH FOR THE BOSS. MOST DEMONS WOULDN'T PUT UP WITH HALF THE CRAP I DO, LIKE HANGING AROUND IN A TIGHT ITCHY, SUUUUIT? HMMM...
WELL, IF IT ITCHES, YOU JUST GOTTA SCRATCH.

WHAT A NIGHT! OOOH, THAT WAS A MEAN LADY, I THINK SHE BROKE MY ENTIRE BODY TWICE! GROAN, I FELT BETTER AS A CAT!

THE BOSS SEEMED CONTENT... BUT THERE ON THE TABLE, OPEN AND UNGUARDED, WAS HIS BOOK!

A SORCERER'S BOOK IS FAR MORE THAN JUST A COLLECTION OF SPELLS. IT'S A KEY TO POWER UNRESTRAINED, PLATFORM FOR DANGEROUS EXPLOITS AND UNIMAGINABLE COMMANDS.
BUT IT IS ALSO BOUND TO ITS OWNER AND WOE TO ANY WIZARD WHOSE BOOK FALLS INTO UNFRIENDLY HANDS.

FOR A MOMENT I HAD IT! A DEMON'S DREAM INCARNATE! TO CATCH HIS COMMANDER OFF GUARD WITH HIS BOOK IN MY POSSESSION I'D BE FREE TO ROAM AND WRECK AND...
WHAT AM I DOING?! AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TODAY, I'D DO THAT TO HIM? HE HASN'T GOT A FRIEND IN THE WORLD! I COULDN'T DO THAT TO HIM, HE'S SO NICE TO ME.
BESIDES, I SAW THE CHAPTER IT WAS OPEN TO... RENEGADE DEMON HUNTING. HE'S GONNA NEED HELP!

SOMEBODY TOLD ME ABOUT A MUTILATED HORSE IN A WHEAT FIELD NEARBY. OUR LITTLE "MISTAKE" MIGHT'VE DONE THAT, AND WE'VE GOT TO CLEAN UP THE MESS WE'VE MADE, QUICKLY!
HAVE YOU EVER HUNTED DEMONS BEFORE, BOSS?
WELL... I'VE BEEN BONING UP ON IT...
WHEN A DEMON IS DISMISSED, HE RETURNS TO HELL AND AWAITS FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS. BUT OCCASIONALLY, SOME DEMONS GO A.W.O.L. AND "AHEM" DEPRIVED OF SANCTUARY IN EITHER HEAVEN OR HELL, THEY MAKE THEIR WAY ACROSS THE WORLD, WREAKING HAVOC WHENEVER THE CHANCE PERMITS...

BUT THE ONLY WAY TO DESTROY A HOST OF DEMONS IS TO KNOW THE NAME OF THEIR LEADER. HIS REAL NAME. HIS TRUE NAME.
I KNOW THAT.
I MIGHT HAVE A WAY OF FINDING OUT OUR MISTAKE'S TRUE NAME. IT'LL TAKE ME ABOUT A DAY TO MAKE SURE.
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!
FOR THAT MATTER, NEITHER DID I...

THEY DON'T DUPLICATE RECORDS ON THE METAPHYSICAL LEVEL, SO I HAD TO GO TO THE CELESTIAL LIBRARY. IT MIGHT TAKE ME A WHILE, BUT I'D FIND WHAT I'M WAS LOOKING FOR.

BY THE WAY, DEMONS CAN GET INTO HEAVEN ON A VISITOR'S VISA.

HI, OGGIE, GOT ANY I.D.?

WHERE WOULD I CARRY IT? JUST GOTTA USE THE LIBRARY, IS IT COOL?

TICKETS-VISAS PASSPORTS TRANSIENTS ONLY

SURE, JUST KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR MARTYRS, WE'VE HAD A RUSH ON 'EM.

HOLD, HELLSPAWN TURN AND FACE THY BETTERS.

OH, NO. GABE!

NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW THIS, BUT ANGEL GABRIEL WAS NOT A MAJOR FIGHTER IN THE WAR OF THE ANGELS. HE TURNED STOOL PIGEON AND...

STILL HAVEN'T GOTTEN OUT OF THE DESTRUCTIVE PHASE, EH GABE?

WENT FROM A TWO BIT KAZOO PLAYER IN THE LESSER MAGELLANIC CLOUD TO... WELL YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.

DON'T BE SO QUICK, HOT LIPS. YOU CAN'T BAR ME FROM THE LIBRARY.

AHH! YOUR SORCERER! I CANNOT BAR YOUR WAY, FOR HIS FATE IS NOT OUR CONCERN.

CRAPS!

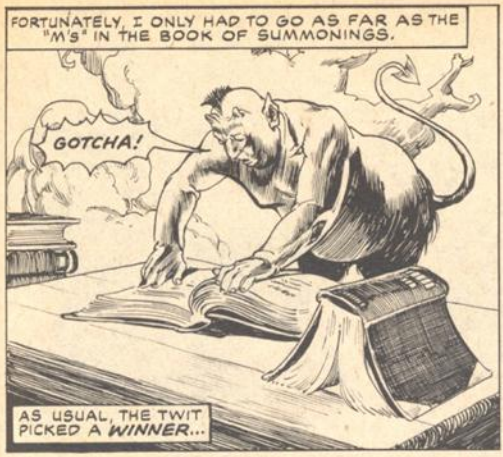
TRUST GABE TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING NASTY.

THERE! AND RECALL THAT THE FORMS MUST BE DONE IN WILLOW SAP THAT FLOWETH FROM THE QUILL OF A HUMMINGBIRDS FEATHER.

THESE FORMS MUST BE DONE IN DODECATUPLET BY 5:30 PM.

OHH BOY. TAKE'S HIM SIX DAYS TO CREATE THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE, AND HE FORGETS ALL ABOUT CARBON PAPER. TYPICAL.

OCCUPY THYSELF!


FORTUNATELY, I ONLY HAD TO GO AS FAR AS THE "M's" IN THE BOOK OF SUMMONINGS.
GOTCHA!
AS USUAL, THE TWIT PICKED A WINNER...

MARRKAGO! TRUE NAME OF GARRCH, THE DESPOILER OF GAUL. A REALLY MEAN DUDE. OUGHTA MAKE A FIRST CLASS DEMON.

APPARENTLY, THE BOSS HAD GONE OUT AND HAD LEFT ME A NOTE. I WAS EXPECTING TROUBLE...

... I GOT IT.
Dear Oggie,
I'm hunting Demons. He, He!
the BOSS

I TOOK A SHARP RIGHT AT THE MUTILATED HORSE, AND THERE WAS THE BOSS... AND ABOUT 40 DEMONS! WHAT'S WORSE, THEY HAD THE BOSS' BOOK!
OH WHAT A NICE LOOKING BOOK! DID YOU LOSE THIS?

I COULDN'T JUST GRAB THE BOOK... NO, A LITTLE TACT WAS CALLED FOR.
WELL, IF IT ISN'T THE WIZARD! NICE SEEING YOU AGAIN. OH, DON'T SPEAK! I KNOW HOW GLAD YOU MUST BE TO FIND US ALL HERE WAITING FOR YOU.
ALLRIGHT! I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO, YOU OVER-STUFFED GOBLIN, BUT IF IT INVOLVES THAT WIZARD OVER THERE... I DO IT FIRST!
WHOOPS! WELL, EXCUUUUSE ME!
MARRKAGO!

GET HIM! KILL HIM! IT'S A TRICK! GO! GO! KILL!
STOMP HIM! STOMP HIM!

WAIT A MOMENT, IF WE'RE ALL HERE BEATING UP THIS LITTLE PEST, THEN WHO'S HOLDING THE WIZARD'S MOUTH SHUT?
THREE GUESSES?
IT WORKED! THE BOSS WAS FREE. AT TIMES I'M BRILLIANT! BRUISED, BUT BRILLIANT.

BROOMTHAT YAHQRG RUOM-BE GONE, MARRKAGO, TO THE DUST WITH YOU AND YOUR HOSTS! EMPTY OFF, AND AWAY!
BZZZT
IT MUST'VE BEEN A CLASSY SPELL-ONE MINUTE THE GREEN BAY PACKERS WERE TAP DANCING ON MY FACE, THE NEXT MOMENT I'M UNDER 40 EMPTY SAUSAGE SKINS.

HMMM! AS I RECALL, DEMON SKINS WERE IN RARE SUPPLY, AND GETTING A HUGE PRICE. I THINK WE'VE GOT QUITE A CATCH HERE...
WELL I DON'T CARE WHAT IT COSTS, I'M MAKING A MANURE SACK OUT OF THIS DOORKNOB!

LET'S BLOW THE WHOLE AREA, MERLIN... THERE'S REALLY NOTHING HERE THAT'S YOUR CALIBER OF WORK.
JUST WHERE WOULD WE GO?
I HEARD A LOT ABOUT A GREAT SPOT. IT'S A LITTLE COMMUNITY, CAMELOT. LOTSA ROOM FOR ADVANCEMENT!
WELL, WHY NOT!
ONCE AGAIN PROVING THE OLD AXIOM THAT A BOY'S BEST FRIEND IS HIS DEMON.

END

PROLOGUE

Story: Gerry Boudreau/Art: Pablo Marcos

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT WENT WRONG THAT DAY. BERNARDO'S NOTES, IF THEY EVER EXISTED, WERE ***NEVER FOUND.***

AFTER THE TRAGEDY, HIS WIFE JENNY ***SEALED*** THE HOUSE AND MOVED IN WITH HER MOTHER. A PAUPER, JENNY STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO SELL OR OPEN THE HOUSE TO TOURISTS.

TWO WEEKS AGO, ***SHE DIED.*** THE HOUSE WENT UP FOR AUCTION.

House of MAGIC

EDWARD MONTRESSOR SHUDDERED OVER THE PROPERTY THAT HAD JUST ***COST*** HIM HIS ***LIFE SAVINGS.*** IT MAY HAVE BEEN GRAND AT ONE TIME; RIGHT NOW IT WAS A MISERABLE WRECK. BUT IT WAS ***HIS...*** LOCK, STOCK AND BARREL.

HIS PUBLISHER HAD PROMISED A WHOPPING ADVANCE FOR THE NOTES; IF MONTRESSOR ***FOUND*** THEM, HE'D DOMINATE THE BEST-SELLER LISTS FOR YEARS TO COME.

HE REMEMBERED STORIES ABOUT VANDALS WHO BROKE IN FROM TIME TO TIME TO SEARCH FOR THE NOTES. NONE WERE ***EVER SEEN AGAIN.***

AT LEAST THE ***ELECTRICITY'S*** BEEN RESTORED...!

IT WAS COMMONLY THOUGHT THAT BERNARDO ***HEXED*** THE HOUSE TO PROTECT HIS SECRETS.

MONTRESSOR MADE A PRELIMINARY ***INSPECTION*** OF THE HOUSE AND NOTED WITH A SCOWL THAT THE PHONE COMPANY HAD NOT YET INSTALLED HIS INSTRUMENT. HE FOUND A SMALL BAR IN A REAR CORNER OF THE STUDY AND POURED HIMSELF A ***DRINK.***

TO YOU; THE MAN WHO PUT THE ***AWE*** BACK IN AUDIENCE. YOU DON'T APPROVE OF MY BEING HERE? TOUGH TITMOUSE, OLD BOY. YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE AND YOU ***BLEW*** IT.

AND NOW, OLD BEAN, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT IT!

THE PAINTING MADE MONTRESSOR UNCOMFORTABLE, YET HE WAS FASCINATED BY ITS INVIDIOUS EYES AND TIGHT GRIM SCOWL. HE POURED HIMSELF ANOTHER DRINK TO FLUSH THE QUEASINESS FROM HIS STOMACH AND MIND.
YOU'RE A ROTTEN CONVERSATIONALIST, BERNARDO. I'M GOING TO BED.

IT WAS COLD AND SNOWING HARD. THE MAN WAITED AN HOUR AFTER THE LIGHTS HAD BEEN TURNED OFF INSIDE, JUST TO BE SURE.
THEN HE MOVED LIKE A BLACK SNAKE OVER THE WHITE POWDER.

MONTRESSOR WENT TO SLEEP ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. HE LAY STILL AS A CORPSE.
HE WAS COMPLETELY UNAWARE THAT THE BED HAD WALKED FIFTEEN FEET IN THE PAST HOUR.

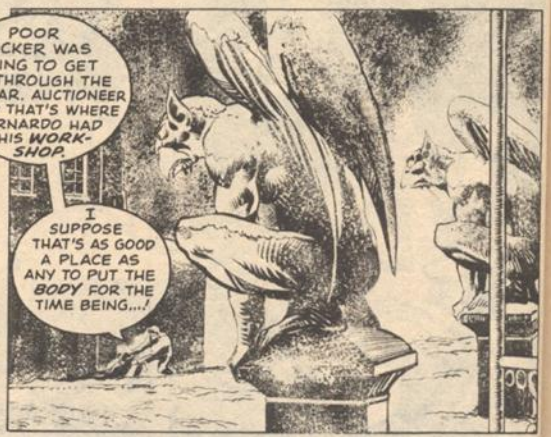
IT MOVED SLOWLY, LUMBERINGLY, BECAUSE IT WAS VERY OLD AND BECAUSE IT DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE MONTRESSOR. IT LEFT A TRAIL OF SCRATCHES ON THE HARDWOOD FLOOR.
A FEW FEET BEFORE THE WINDOWSILL, IT STOPPED.

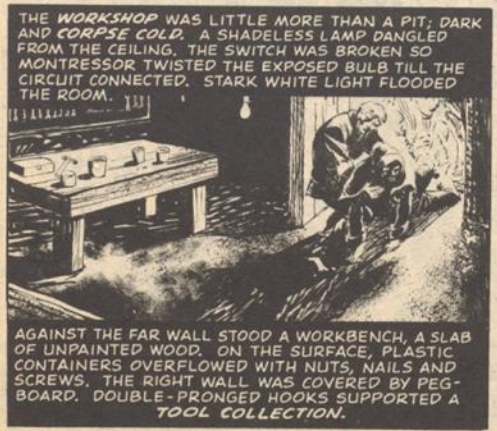
CRASH
WITHOUT WARNING, THE BED CATAPULTED TO A VERTICAL POSITION. MONTRESSOR, WRAPPED IN A COCOON OF SATIN SHEETS, QUILTS, AND VELVET DRAPERIES, SHOT THROUGH THE WINDOW.

HE PLUMMETED AND HIT HARD, ROLLING TO A STANDSTILL THROUGH THE FRESH SNOW. HE HURT ALL OVER, BUT HE WAS STILL ALIVE, SNOW AND YARDS OF FABRIC HAD CUSHIONED HIS FALL. NOTHING WAS BROKEN, AS FAR AS HE COULD TELL.

SHOCKED, WET AND COLD, STRUGGLING TO FREE HIMSELF, MONTRESSOR SAW FOOTPRINTS IMPRINTED IN THE SNOW.
FOOTPRINTS! SOMEONE'S BEEN PROWLING...!

WHAT COULD HAVE DONE THIS TERRIBLE THING?
THE MAN AT THE END OF THE TRACKS WAS EXTREMELY DEAD. HIS EYES HAD BEEN PLUCKED, HIS FLASH TATTERED, HIS INARDS RIPPED OUT AND DISCARDED.


POOR SUCKER WAS TRYING TO GET IN THROUGH THE CELLAR. AUCTIONEER SAID THAT'S WHERE BERNARDO HAD HIS WORK-SHOP.
I SUPPOSE THAT'S AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY TO PUT THE BODY FOR THE TIME BEING...!


THE WORKSHOP WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A PIT; DARK AND CORPSE COLD. A SHADELESS LAMP DANGLED FROM THE CEILING. THE SWITCH WAS BROKEN SO MONTRESSOR TWISTED THE EXPOSED BULB TILL THE CIRCUIT CONNECTED. STARK WHITE LIGHT FLOODED THE ROOM.
AGAINST THE FAR WALL STOOD A WORKBENCH, A SLAB OF UNPAINTED WOOD. ON THE SURFACE, PLASTIC CONTAINERS OVERFLOWED WITH NUTS, NAILS AND SCREWS. THE RIGHT WALL WAS COVERED BY PEG-BOARD. DOUBLE-PRONGED HOOKS SUPPORTED A TOOL COLLECTION.

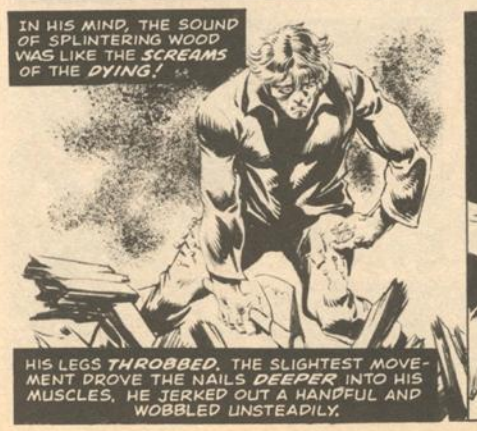
THIS COAL BIN SHOULD BE PERFECT!
THE LIGHT BULB EXPLODED WITH A LOUD POP!

"WELCOME TO HELL, MONTRESSOR!" IT WAS BERNARDO'S VOICE, HE WAS SURE, A WHISPER IN HIS MIND.
FAARGH!
SOMETHING TORE HIS CHEEK, JUST BELOW THE LEFT EYE, AND CLATTERED TO THE FLOOR. A SCREW! FIRED LIKE A PISTOL SHOT FROM THE WORKBENCH!

MONTRESSOR LURCHED. HIS LEGS BUCKLED, PARALYZED. HOT SEARING AGONIES ATE HIS CALVES AND THIGHS. INSTINCTIVELY, HE REACHED DOWN.

NAILS! THERE MUST HAVE BEEN FIFTY OF THEM STICKING OUT OF HIS LEGS; AS THOUGH HE WERE A PIN CUSHION.
OHMY-GOD!
SOMETHING IS ALIVE IN THIS ROOM BESIDES ME...!
THE WORK STOOL! IT'S MOVING! ATTACKING ME!
CLUMP!
CLUMP!
CLUMP!

HE REMEMBERED THE AXE ON THE PEGBOARD.
CRASH!
SHRIEKING, HE FLUNG HIMSELF AT THE QUADRUPED, HACKING BLINDLY AND REPEATEDLY. SLIVERS AND WOOD CHIPS FLEW LIKE CONFETTI.


IN HIS MIND, THE SOUND OF SPLINTERING WOOD WAS LIKE THE SCREAMS OF THE DYING!
HIS LEGS THROBBED. THE SLIGHTEST MOVEMENT PROVE THE NAILS DEEPER INTO HIS MUSCLES. HE JERKED OUT A HANDFUL AND WOBBLED UNSTEADILY.

SUDDENLY...

MONTRESSOR TURNED. THE BLACK-ROBED CORPSE, ALIVE AND ERECT, STOOD BEHIND HIM.
YOU'RE DEAD!
SO IS BERNARDO, BUT HIS POWER OBVIOUSLY LIVES ON! WHEN I ENTERED THE GATES, HIS GARGOYLES ATTACKED ME. BERNARDO THOUGHT I WAS DEAD THEN...AND SO I WAS.
BUT NOW MY POWER EQUALS HIS OWN AND I'VE COME TO END BERNADO'S HOLD OVER THIS HOUSE AND RECLAIM WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY MINE.

IT WILL NOT HELP YOU TO ANIMATE THE TOOLS, BERNARDO. WE'RE ON EQUAL TERMS NOW... SPIRIT AGAINST SPIRIT! I HAD TO DIE TONIGHT IN ORDER TO REACH YOUR POWER LEVEL!
NOW I'VE COME FOR THE BOOK OF ISHMAEL!
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

TOOLS CLATTERED TO THE FLOOR!
A GRIMOIRE...THE KEY TO INCREDIBLE POWER. THE BOOK WAS ONCE MINE. BEFORE I COULD MASTER IT, IT WAS STOLEN BY MY TRUSTED ASSISTANT... BERNARDO.
FOR FIFTY YEARS, I'VE HUNTED HIM AND THE BOOK. MONTHS AGO, I TRACKED HIM TO THIS REGION. WHEN THE HOUSE WAS AUCTIONED, THE PAPERS DREDGED UP A LOT OF OLD HISTORY AND I KNEW I'D FOUND HIM, AT LAST.

IN 1937, HE LEARNED WHAT I WAS TO LEARN YEARS LATER...DEATH IS THE KEY TO POWER! TO ACCOMPLISH GREAT MAGIC, ONE MUST FIRST EXPERIENCE DEATH. IT IS THE GATEWAY TO THAT ULTIMATE LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS!
BERNARDO'S PREMATURE BURIAL WAS NOT FAILURE... IT WAS SUICIDE!

HOW'D YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND THE BOOK?
ONCE I'VE ENTERED A HOUSE, I REMEMBER ANYTHING THAT EVER HAPPENED WITHIN ITS WALLS.
DEVORE, I STOLE THE BOOK BECAUSE IT WAS AFFECTING YOUR MIND, CORRUPTING YOU! SUCH POWER IS TOO MUCH FOR ANYONE TO HANDLE! I'VE KEPT IT HIDDEN AND PROTECTED IT BECAUSE IT'S TOO DANGEROUS; ANY MISUSE COULD MEAN DISASTER FOR MANKIND!

MAGICALLY, BERNARDO'S FACE APPEARS IN THE DARKNESS.
I'VE USED IT ONLY TO TRANSFER MY LIFE FORCE INTO ANOTHER CONTAINER, SO I COULD GUARD ITS SECRETS FOR ETERNITY!
IF THE BOOK WAS SO DANGEROUS, WHY DIDN'T YOU DESTROY IT? YOU WANTED ITS MAGIC YOURSELF... AND NOW IT'S CORRUPTED YOU!

TRANSFERRED HIS LIFE FORCE INTO SOME OTHER CONTAINER...! OF COURSE, IT HAD TO BE! THOSE PERSPICACIOUS EYES, THAT VIRULENT SCOWL ...THE PAINTING!
WHAT PAINTING?
MONTRESSOR WAS STARTLED. HE DIDN'T REALIZE HE'D SPOKEN ALOUD. AUTOMATICALLY HE STARTED TO RESPOND, THEN STOPPED. WHO WAS TELLING THE TRUTH... BERNARDO OR DEVORE? HE HAD NO WAY TO KNOW.

HE REGRETTED HAVING SPOKEN PREMATURELY, BUT HE'D NOT COMPOUND THE ERROR. HE STARED DUMBLY AT DEVORE. SWIFTLY, DEVORE STORMED OUT OF THE BASEMENT, AND UP THE STAIRCASE, TWO STEPS AT A TIME.
SOONER OR LATER HE'D FIND THE PAINTING AND HE'D KNOW, JUST AS MONTRESSOR KNEW. AND WHAT THEN? IF DEVORE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH, IT MUST BE DESTROYED. IF BERNARDO WAS TELLING THE TRUTH, IT MUST BE PROTECTED. MONTRESSOR HOBBLED UPSTAIRS.

WHILE DEVORE SEARCHED ROOM TO ROOM, MONTRESSOR REMEMBERED A STORY HE'D READ IN HIGH SCHOOL, "THE LADY OR THE TIGER". IT WAS EXACTLY THE SORT OF CHOICE HE FACED. BUT HE HAD ONE OPTION UNAVAILABLE TO THE HERO OF THE STORY: ESCAPE! THE CHOICE OF MAKING NO CHOICE AT ALL! WHATEVER HIS DECISION, HE HAD TO MAKE IT FAST!

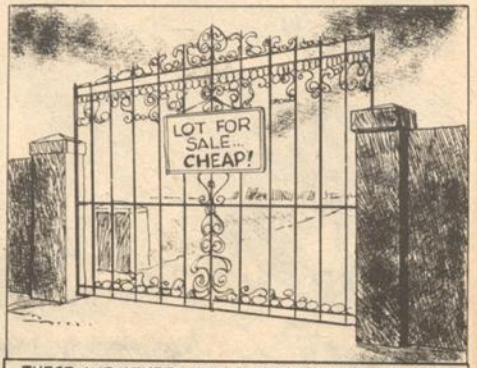
THIS IS IT, BERNARDO... I'VE FOUND YOU!
FINDING ME IS ONLY HALF THE BATTLE!
FROM THE SMALL BAR AT THE REAR OF THE STUDY A BOTTLE FLEW INTO THE AIR AND ACROSS THE ROOM. BARELY MISSING DEVORE, IT SHATTERED AGAINST THE FLOOR.

DEVORE EXTENDED HIS ARMS, FINGERTIPS UPWARD. THEY IGNITED AND, LIKE A BLOWTORCH, FLAMES SHOT AT THE PAINTING.

SWOOSH!
INCREDIBLY, THE PORTRAIT DISLODGED ITSELF AND GLIDED ABOUT THE ROOM LIKE A MAGIC CARPET, EVADING THE FLAME-STREAMS. FIRE CHARRED THE WALLS, BLACKENED THE CEILING, AND SPARKED THE DRAPERIES, BUT NEVER TOUCHED THE CANVAS. OBLIVIOUS TO THE INCIDENTAL DESTRUCTION, DEVOURE KEPT RIGHT ON BLASTING.

THE HOUSE AND MONTRESSOR'S LIFE SAVINGS WERE GONE. WHEN THE RUBBLE WAS FINALLY CLEARED, WEEKS LATER, THE PAINTING WAS FOUND, SHREDDED BEYOND RECOGNITION.

THERE WAS NO TRACE OF DEVORE, NOR THE BOOK OF ISHMAEL. WERE THEY TOO DESTROYED? OR HAD DEVORE GOT WHAT HE CAME FOR? IF DEVORE WAS AS EVIL AS BERNARDO HAD CLAIMED, WHAT WOULD HE DO WITH THE BOOK?



THESE AND OTHER UNANSWERED QUESTIONS KEPT MONTRESSOR AWAKE NIGHTS. HE DID GET HIS BEST SELLER HOWEVER. THE CRITICS HAILED IT AS A MASTERFUL WORK OF SUPERNATURAL FICTION, WHICH ANNOYED MONTRESSOR NO END, BUT WHAT THE HELL. IT WAS ON THE NEW YORK TIMES BEST SELLER LIST FOR THIRTY-NINE DAYS.

END

CITRUS COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, IN THE OFFICES OF HENRY WILSON, PROPERTY MANAGER FOR A RATHER PROSPEROUS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

LOOK, MRS. MACCREIGH. I *KNOW* YOUR WALLS ARE CRACKED, BUT THERE'S NOTHING *I* CAN DO ABOUT IT! EARTH TREMORS ARE CLEARLY DEFINED AS "ACTS OF GOD"...

WELL, THE SAME TO *YOU!!*

Hell's Playground

BLASTED *MADHOUSE!* IT'S NOT LIKE THE OL' *SAN ANDREAS* REALLY *OPENED* UP, IT WAS JUST A MINOR TREMBLOR, NOT ENOUGH TO...

NOW WHAT?! IF IT'S ANOTHER BROKEN PIPE, I *SWEAR* I'LL...

BRRING!

N-NO, MR. WILSON, IT ISN'T BROKEN PIPES.

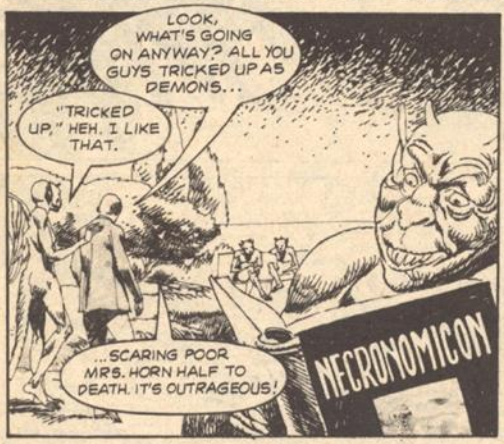
NO, IT ISN'T ABOUT THE WALLS, EITHER.

IT'S ABOUT MY BACKYARD.

SCRIPT: JEAN MICHELE MARTIN/ART: LEO DURANONA

WHAT THE HELL...!?
DAMMIT, SKANDAR, EITHER MAKE YOUR PLAY OR GET OUT OF THE GAME!
EXACTLY.

OKAY. I DIDN'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS HAND ANWAY. I'LL BE BACK FOR THE NEXT GAME. AND I DON'T WANT TO CATCH YOU HEXING THE CARDS AGAIN, BALAK!
C'MON, BUB, I'LL EXPLAIN.
HMPH!


LOOK, WHAT'S GOING ON ANYWAY? ALL YOU GUYS TRICKED UP AS DEMONS...
"TRICKED UP," HEH. I LIKE THAT.
...SCARING POOR MRS. HORN HALF TO DEATH. IT'S OUTRAGEOUS!
NECRONOMICON

HERE, THIS IS WHAT I WANTED TO SHOW YOU.
B-BUT A CREVASSE THIS SIZE IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR LAST NIGHT'S TREMOR!
NEVER MIND THAT, JUST LOOK!

GASP! ACK!!

NOT VERY PRETTY, IS IT?
AND WE'VE BEEN DOWN THERE SINCE CREATION!

WUH?
THE LEGION OF THE DAMNED, NATCH!

LOOK, IT'S SIMPLE. HELL IS A NOISY, BUSY PLACE, AND EVEN WE DEMONS LIKE TO RELAX ONCE IN A WHILE! CAN'T DO THAT DOWNSTAIRS!
SO, WHEN THAT QUAKE CAME ALONG, WE SAW OUR CHANCE. A LITTLE NUDGE WITH SATANIC POWER, AND VOILA!

B-BUT WHAT ABOUT THE HORNS?
WHAT ABOUT 'EM?
THEY OWN THIS LAND!
SO?

SO, YOU CAN'T JUST SIT AROUND IN THEIR BACK YARD!
SURE WE CAN. IT'S NICE AND QUIET UP HERE.
THAT'S THE ADVANTAGE OF SUBURBAN LIVING!

AND SO...
BALAK SEEMED TO FEEL THAT SUMMED IT ALL UP.
BUT THAT'S WHY WE MOVED TO SERENITY ACRES!!
WELL, SKANDAR AND COMPANY DON'T SEEM TO BE CAUSING THAT MUCH TROUBLE, SO I'LL JUST...

YOU AREN'T GOING TO WEASEL OUT OF THIS ONE, WILSON!
AH, WEASEL OUT?
LIKE YOU DID WITH THE PIPES, AND THE SAGGING FOUNDATIONS BEFORE THAT!
WELL, THOSE SITUATIONS WEREN'T REALLY...

YOU HAVE FORTY-EIGHT HOURS TO TAKE CARE OF THIS--THIS SITUATION, OR ELSE...
FORTY-EIGHT HOURS!?
OR THE PROPERTY-OWNERS' COUNCIL WILL NOT ONLY SEE YOU OUT OF A JOB...

BUT YOUR COMPANY WILL BE BURIED SO DEEP IN LAWSUITS THAT...
BING BONG
NOW WHAT!?

'SCUSE ME, LADY, BUT CAN I USE YOUR TOILET?
FORTY-EIGHT HOURS, MR. WILSON!

BRIGHT AND EARLY THE NEXT MORNING...
HERE THEY ARE, FATHER KINGSLEY!
HEY, SKANDAR! YOUR BUDDY'S BACK! AND HE'S BROUGHT A FRIEND!
AND WHAT A LOVELY DRESS YOU HAVE TODAY, FATHER!

WELL, I'LL JUST HEAD ON BACK UP TO THE HOUSE, AND...
HIYA, HANK!
AND HIYA, FATHER! HOW'S TRICKS WITH THE COMPETITION THESE DAYS?

AH--EXOR AD INFINITUM ET...
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG, ANYWAY?
YOU TRY FINDING ASBESTOS PLAYING CARDS SOMETIME!
IGNORE THEM, FATHER. JUST CONTINUE.

SURE, GO AHEAD, DAD! NOT THAT IT'LL DO ANY--EH--GOOD!
HUH?
WHAT'S THE SCORE ON THE LAST GAME, ANYHOW?

WHO DEALT THIS MESS?
WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT LAST CRACK?
GIMME TWO!

YOU LOSE! I'VE GOT...
HEY!!
HEH-HEH.
...INTERESTUM PERCENTUS...

I'VE WARNED YOU ABOUT THOSE CARD TRICKS BALAK!
...IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER...
NOW, NOW, BOYS!

C'MON, HANK. LET'S GO SOMEWHERE QUIET. SOMEWHERE PEOPLE DON'T CHEAT AT CARDS...
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT "WON'T DO ANY GOOD"
AND THE SON...

OH, SIMPLE. WE AREN'T POSSESSING ANYONE, WE AREN'T ON CONSECRATED SOIL, AND WE AREN'T REALLY HURTING ANYONE...
SO WE CAN'T BE EXORCISED.
SO?
DEMONS BEGONE!!

SEE?

NOW, IF THE FATHER COULD CONSECRATE THE BACKYARD.
I'M AFRAID THAT'S OUT OF THE QUESTION.
CAN'T CONSECRATE DEMON-INFESTED EARTH, OF COURSE.

OF COURSE! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO ASK HELP OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE FINANCIER!
I BEG YOUR PARDON!

I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW THAT I ATTEND SERVICES IN FATHER KINGSLEY'S CHURCH...
OH!
AND FUTHERMORE...
OH-OH!

WHEW!
ONLY IN CALIFORNIA!
GIVIN' YOU A HARD TIME, HANK?
SLAM

OH, IT'S YOU! WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CARD GAME?
BALAK CONJURED UP A '57 CHEVY AND TOOK A COUPLE OF THE GIRLS TO TOWN.
THAT'S GREAT, JUST GREAT! SUCCUBI CRUISING THE SINGLES BARS!

IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE TRYING TO CAUSE YOU GRIEF!
THEN WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?
JUST FIND A LITTLE PEACE AND RELAXATION, THAT'S ALL!

I MEAN, YOU CAN'T PLAY CARDS DOWNSTAIRS. YOU TRY A HAND OF POKER WHEN THERE ARE DOZEN SOULS SCREAMING AT EACH EAR!
YOU SAY YOU LIKE THINGS QUIET.
IT AIN'T EASY, BEING ONE OF THE DAMNED.

AND BALAK, HOW DOES HE FEEL ABOUT QUIET?
AND THE GIRLS?
WELL, HE LIKES IT IN MODERATION.

OF COURSE THEY LIKE QUIET! THAT'S WHY WE CAME UPSTAIRS IN THE FIRST PLACE!
AH-HAH!

HEY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I'VE GOT SOME PHONE CALLS TO MAKE!

I SAID I WAS SORRY, FATHER!
KITCHEN
BARISE
NOW, YOU KNOW THAT VACANT TRACT NEXT TO THE HORNS'? HERE'S WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO...

BOB! HENRY HERE! LOOK, I'VE GOT A JOB FOR YOU. CAN YOU GET A CONSTRUCTION CREW OUT TO SERENITY ACRES AND DO A RUSH JOB ON...
DINING

THAT'S RIGHT, MRS. HORN. THE COMPANY HAS AGREED TO PAY ALL EXPENSES ... RIGHT... YOU AND MR. HORN ENJOY YOUR FIVE DAYS IN SAN FRANCISCO, AND EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT WHEN YOU RETURN!

--CONSECRATED PLAYGROUND!!

HEY, WHO WANTS TO PLAY TAG?!

HEY, PAULA! WATCH THIS, PAULA! I BET YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

YOU BETTER GIMME THAT BACK, BILLY INGRAM, OR I'LL TELL YOUR MOTHER!

DISCO BABY, WON'T YOU BE MY LADY...

END

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