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COMICS

THE X-FILES™
CREATED BY
CHRIS CARTER

OF
1
FIRST
COLLECTORS
ITEM ISSUE

T H E X F I L E S™

COMICS DIGEST

ALL-NEW

"BIG FOOT, WARM HEART"

STEFAN CHARLES MIRAN
PETRUCHA ADLARD KIM

PLUS: THREE CLASSIC STORIES BY
RAY BRADBURY

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THE X FILES™



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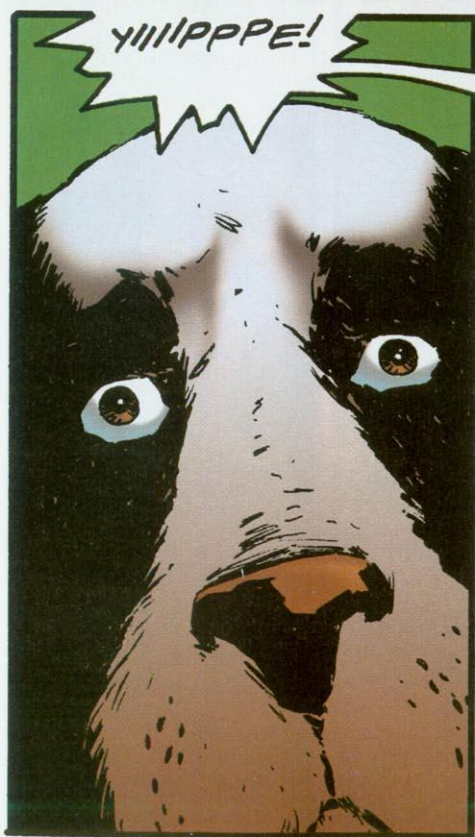
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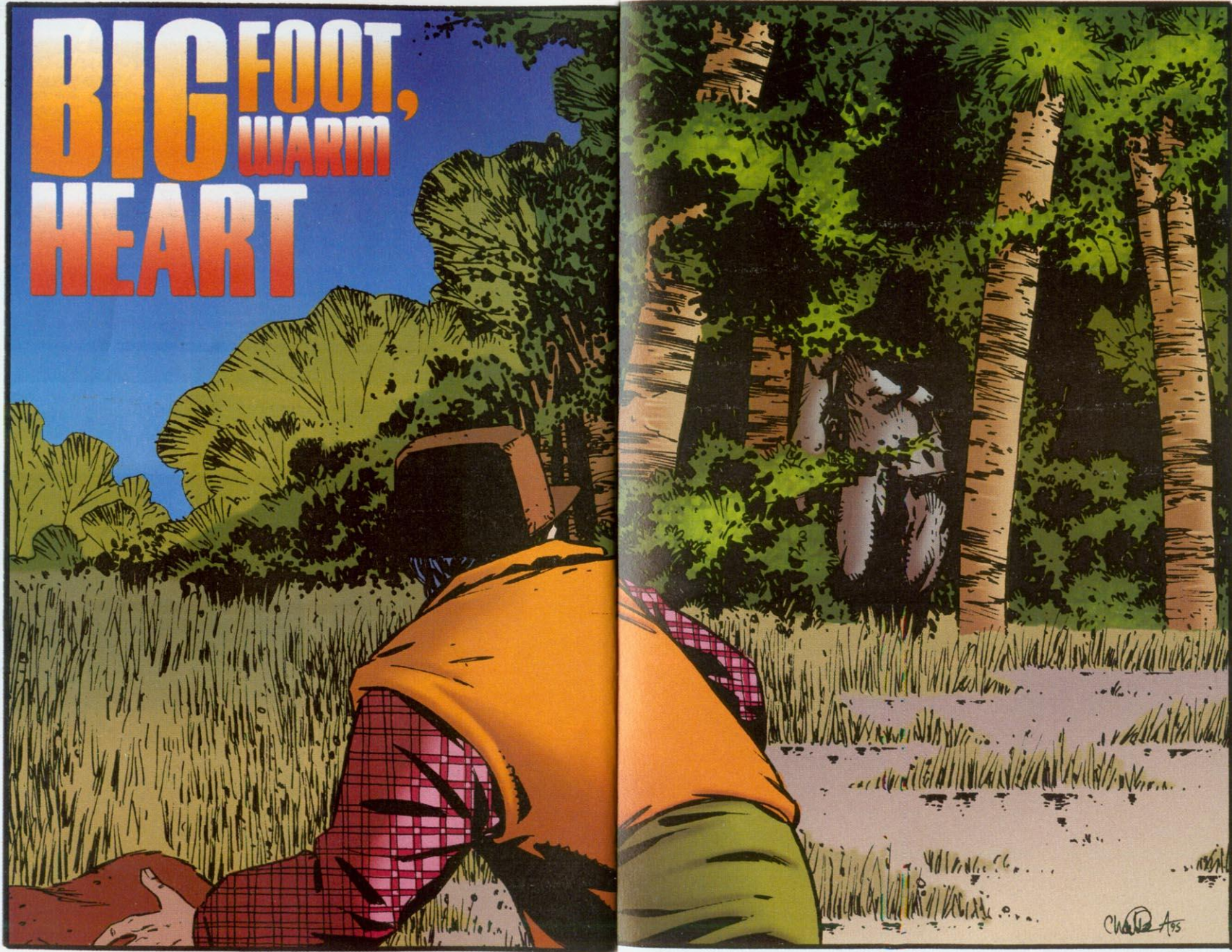


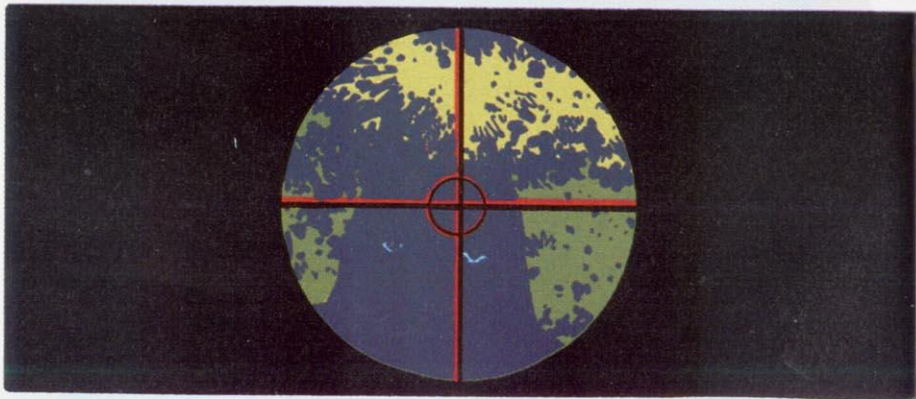
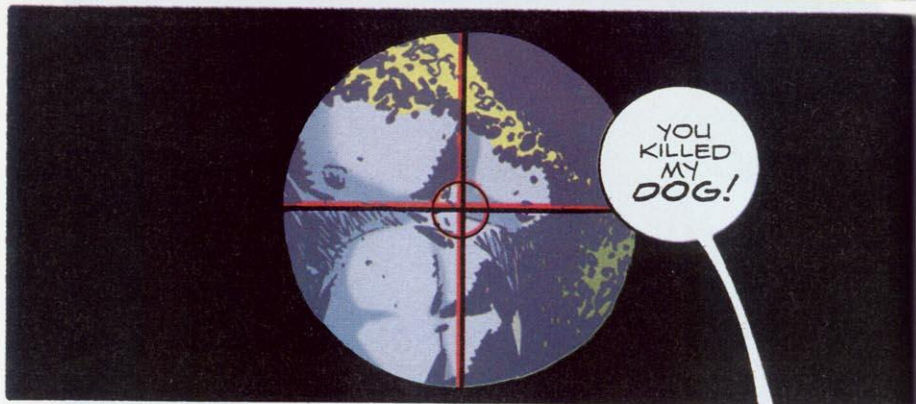


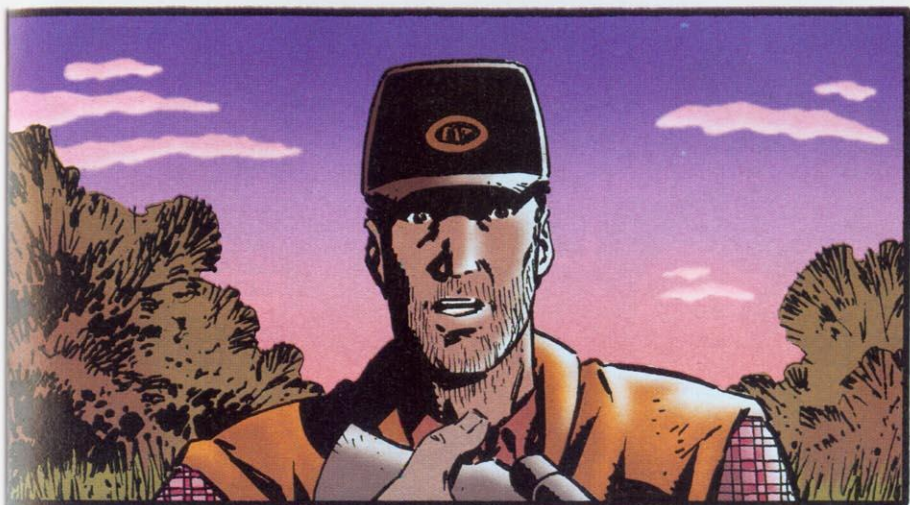




BIG FOOT, WARM HEART







YOU
WANTED
TO *SEE* ME,
SIR?

COME IN,
AGENT
MULDER.

THE J. EDGAR HOOVER BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MONDAY
10:37

THERE'S
A FILE
ON MY
DESK.

PICK
IT UP.



BIG
FOOT?

REALLY,
SIR, I ...



AGENT JOHN
WALTHAM WAS
HUNTING IN THE
GRAYS HARBOR
COUNTY AREA.
NOW HE'S
MISSING.

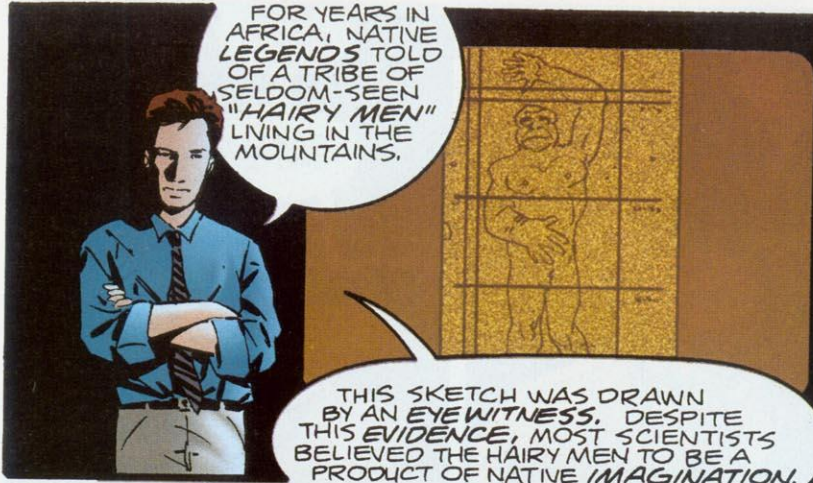
HE'S AN
EXCELLENT
AGENT
AND A
PERSONAL
FRIEND.



CIRCUMSTANCES
INDICATE THE CASE
MIGHT BEST BE
HANDLED BY SOMEONE
WITH YOUR
EXPERIENCE.



YES,
SIR.



FOR YEARS IN AFRICA, NATIVE LEGENDS TOLD OF A TRIBE OF SELDOM-SEEN "HAIRY MEN" LIVING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

THIS SKETCH WAS DRAWN BY AN EYEWITNESS. DESPITE THIS EVIDENCE, MOST SCIENTISTS BELIEVED THE HAIRY MEN TO BE A PRODUCT OF NATIVE IMAGINATION.



OR LOST MISSIONARIES BADLY IN NEED OF A SHAVE.

THE MISSIONARY THEORY WAS RULED OUT WHEN A "HAIRY MAN" WAS CAPTURED, SCULLY.



WHAT?

GOT
YA.



I'M TALKING
ABOUT THE **MOUNTAIN
GORILLA**, UNKNOWN TO WESTERN
SCIENCE UNTIL 1903. JUST GOES
TO SHOW THERE ARE **LIMITS**
TO THE REACH OF **HARD SCIENCE**.

NO **SURPRISE**
THERE, MULDER.



THERE'S A WHOLE
FIELD OF SCIENCE
...**CRYPTOZOOLOGY**
...DEVOTED TO THE
SEARCH FOR UN-
KNOWN SPECIES.

I DON'T THINK
THEY'VE FOUND
ANY **BRONTOSAURS**
YET, THOUGH.

NOT QUITE,
BUT **CLOSE**.



A FISH CALLED
THE **COELACANTH**
WAS BELIEVED EXTINCT
FOR **SIXTY-FIVE MILLION**
YEARS, UNTIL 1939 WHEN
ONE WAS CAUGHT OFF THE
COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA.

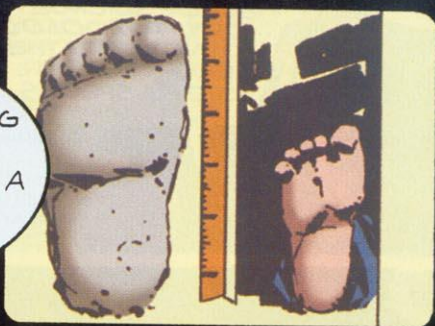
IF A GORILLA OR A FISH, WHY NOT SOMETHING **CLOSER** TO HOME?

YETI,
CHACHUNNA,
SASQUATCH,
BIG FOOT,
THE NORTHWEST,
CHINA, RUSSIA,
AUSTRALIA.

THOUSANDS
OF SIGHTINGS
ACROSS THE **GLOBE**
FOR **HUNDREDS**
OF YEARS. ALMOST
UBIQUITOUS AS UFOS.

THERE'S A PLETHORA
OF EYEWITNESS
ACCOUNTS, HAIR-
SAMPLES, AND
UNUSUAL FOOT-
PRINTS.

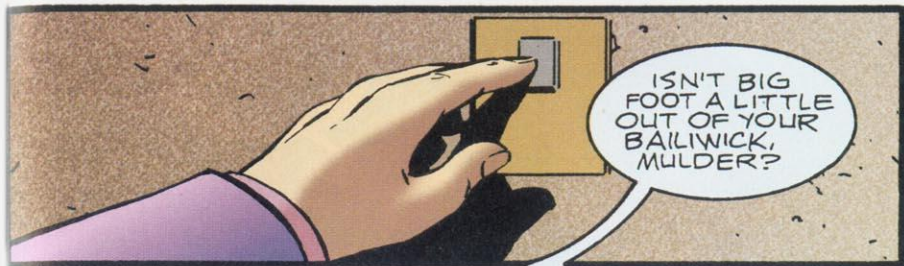
AT A REPUTED EIGHT-
TO-TEN FEET TALL, BIG
FOOT MAY BE A SUR-
VIVING COUSIN OF
GIGANTOPITHECUS, A
GIANT, EXTINCT APE
WHOSE REMAINS
HAVE BEEN FOUND.



ON OCTOBER 20, 1967,
ROGER PATTERSON
PROVIDED **EVIDENCE**
FOR THE CREATURE'S
EXISTENCE ALMOST AS
COMPELLING AS A SIZE
30, TRIPLE-E-WIDE
SHOE BOX.

IT WAS A
FEW SECONDS
OF 16MM FILM
SHOWING A **LIVING**
SASQUATCH. EXPERTS
CONTINUE TO DEBATE
ITS **AUTHENTICITY**.





ISN'T BIG
FOOT A LITTLE
OUT OF YOUR
BAILWICK,
MULDER?

IT IS, SCULLY, BUT
THIS PARTICULAR
CASE HAS SOME
UNUSUAL FEATURES
--EVEN FOR A BIG
FOOT STORY.

BY AND LARGE,
THE REPORTS
INDICATE THE
SASQUATCH ARE
PEACEFUL,
ALMOST
SKITTISH, AFRAID
OF HUMAN
CONTACT.

BUT IT SEEMS
AS THOUGH THE
ONE WE'RE
AFTER HAS
KIDNAPPED
A FEDERAL
AGENT.





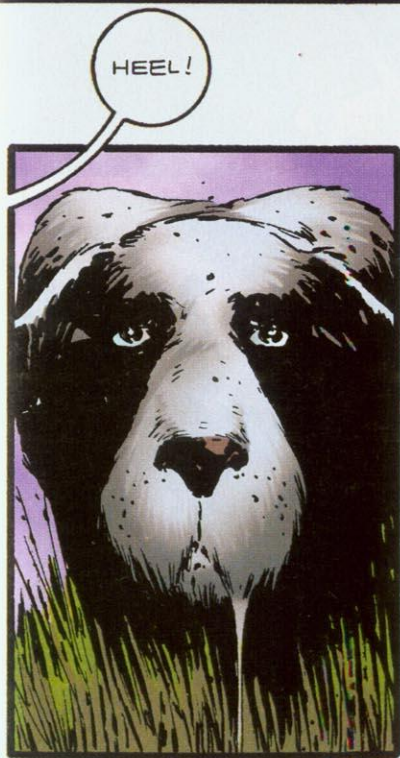
TRACKS ARE
FADING
ALREADY.

I CAN TELL YOU
THIS, THOUGH...
BIG FOOT IS
DEFINITELY NOT
A MISNOMER.

MULDER!
LOOK
OUT!

RARK RAR
RARK RAR





GOOD THING
WE FOUND ASH,
EH?



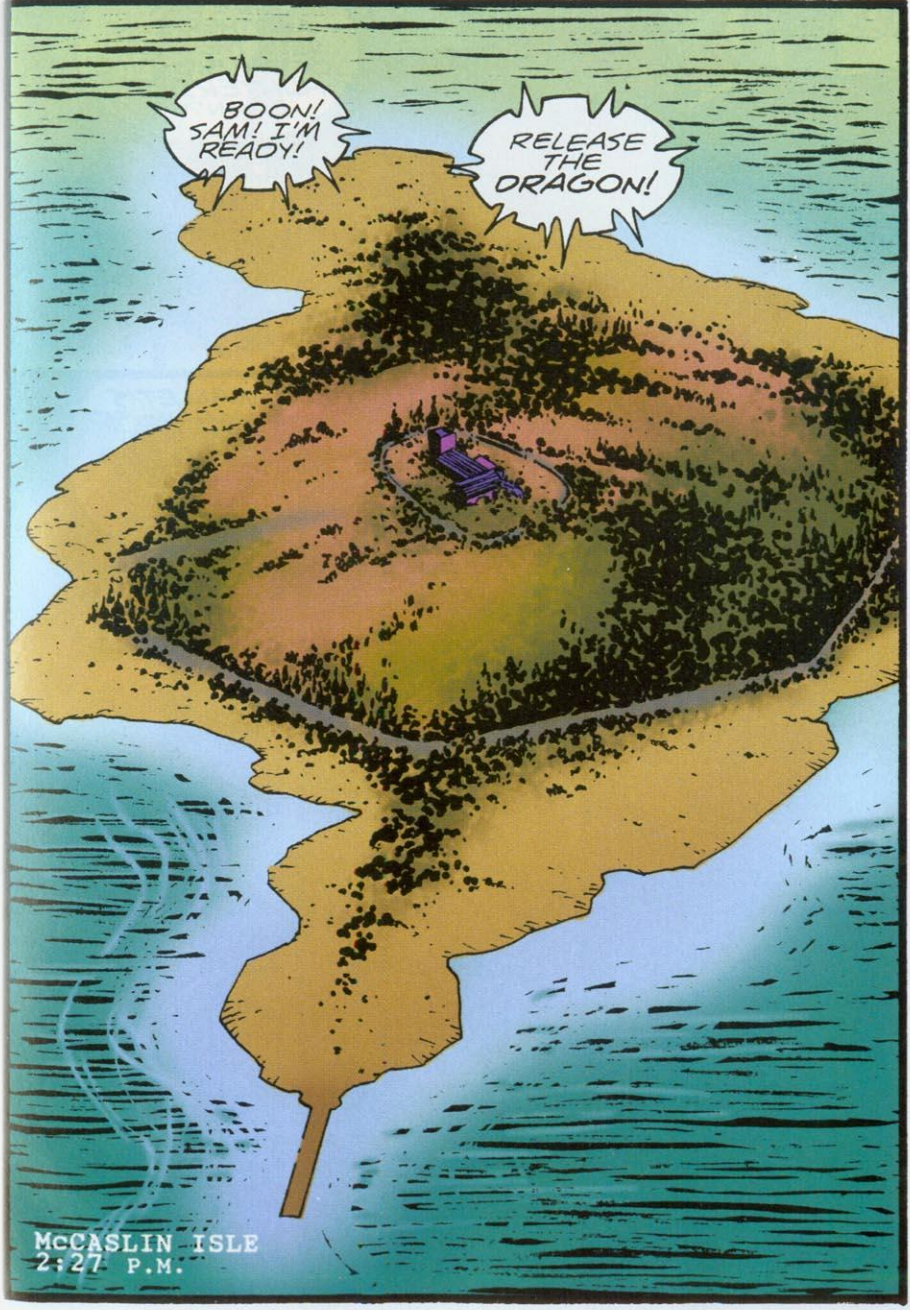
YIPE!
YIPE!

WHAT
IS IT,
FELLAH?



LOOKS
LIKE WE'VE
FOUND
LION,
TOO.



An aerial view of a small, irregularly shaped island with a tan-colored shore and a dense forest of dark green trees. In the center of the island, a small purple building with a dark roof is situated within a circular clearing. Two speech bubbles are positioned above the island. The island is surrounded by blue water with horizontal wavy lines. The entire scene is framed by a black border.

BOON!
SAM! I'M
READY!

RELEASE
THE
DRAGON!

MCCASLIN ISLE
2:27 P.M.

YES, MISTER
McCASLIN.

TIME FOR
ANOTHER RUN
WITH THE LAST
OF THE BIG-TIME
HUNTERS, EH,
BOON?

HUNTER, MY ASS.
THAT PIG'S NEVER
LEFT HIS DESK.

HUNTING'S A SPORT.
HE'S A SICK SADIST
WITH NOTHING BUT
TIME AND MONEY.
A COMPUTER NERD
WHO'S PLAYED TOO
MANY GAMES TO
KNOW WHAT'S
REAL ANYMORE.

YOU KNOW THERE'RE
LESS THAN A THOU-
SAND OF THESE
LEFT? THAT'S WHY
HE WANTS TO KILL
IT. GIVES HIM A
THRILL.

I'M A HUNTER.
AT LEAST I USED
TO BE. UNTIL HE
HIRED ME.

NEVER THOUGHT
I'D WONDER IF
THAT MUCH
MONEY WAS
WORTH IT,
UNTIL I CAME
TO WORK HERE.

NOW I THINK
ABOUT IT EVERY
DAY. WALLET OR
STOMACH.

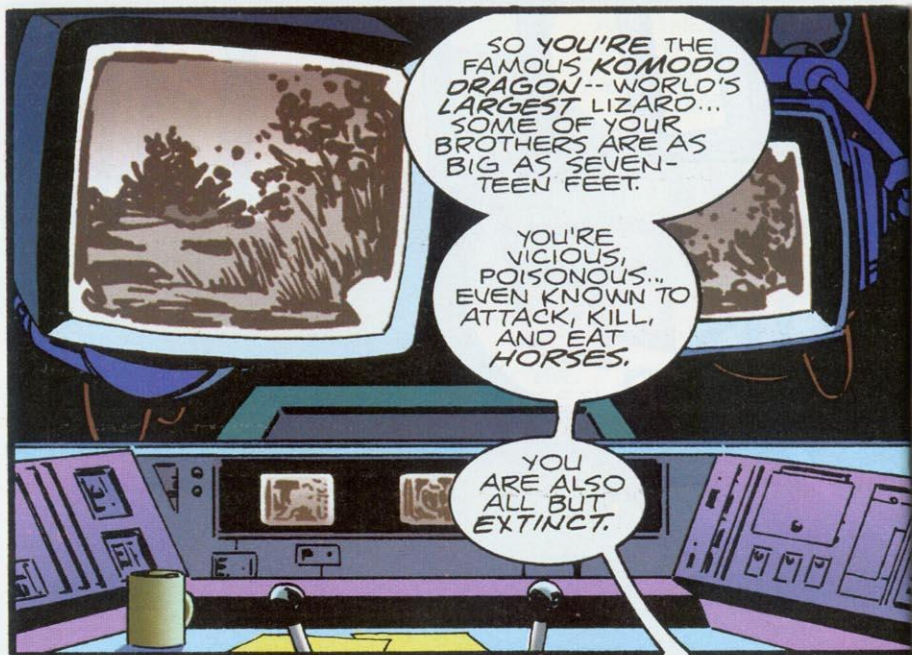
WALLET'S
WINNING SO
FAR. AIN'T
GONNA BE
THAT WAY
FOREVER,
THOUGH.

ON
THREE.

ONE...
TWO...

THREE!





SO STRONG, SO POWERFUL...

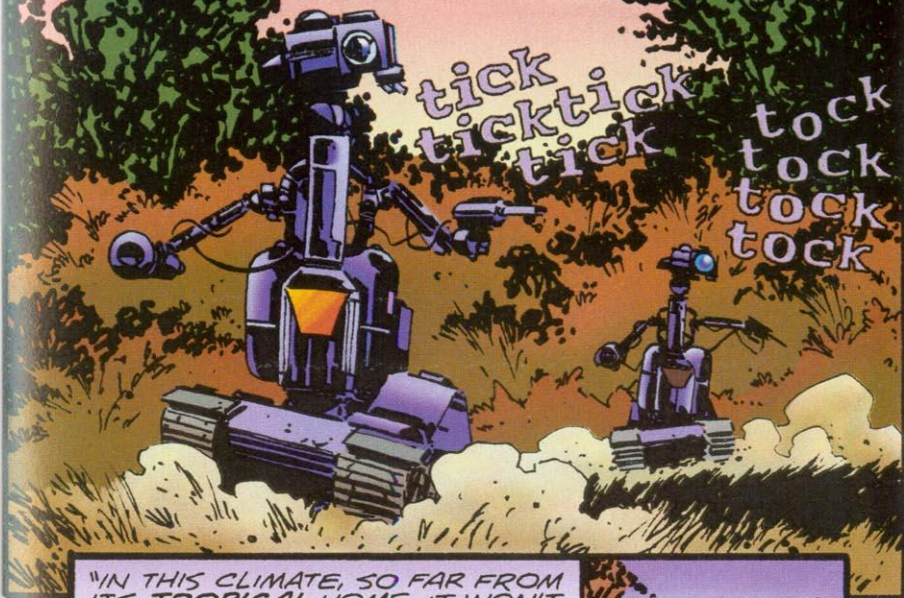
LIKE A GOD TO YOUR PREY IN THE MOMENT OF THEIR DEATH.

BUT NOW, LITTLE GOD, YOU'RE ALL MINE.

AND TO THINK... AS A BOY, I USED TO AMUSE MYSELF BY KILLING INSECTS!



"BETTY! RONNIE! QUICKLY,
MY TRUSTED HOUNDS!"



tick
tick
tick

tock
tock
tock

"IN THIS CLIMATE, SO FAR FROM
ITS TROPICAL HOME, IT WON'T
LAST MORE THAN A FEW DAYS."



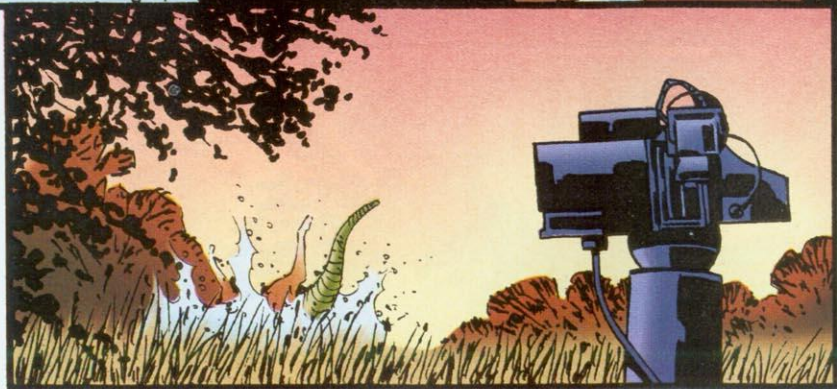
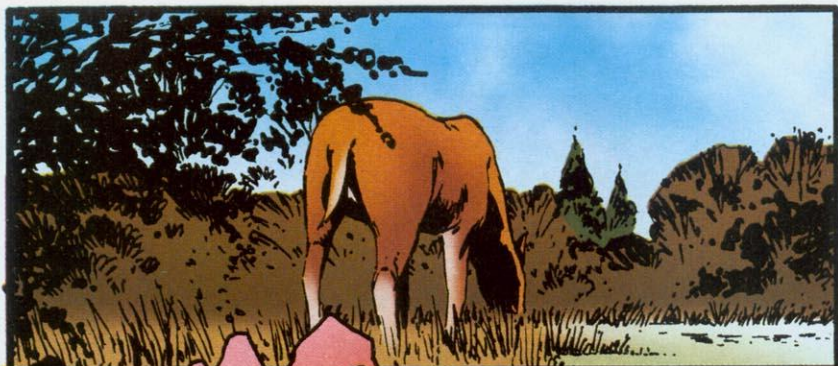
ssssss

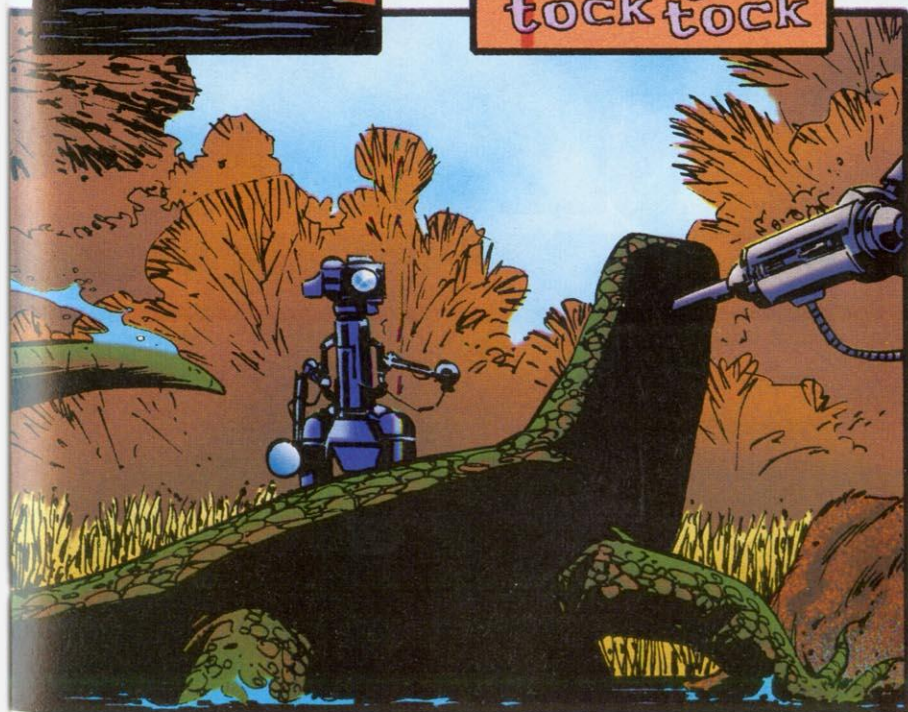
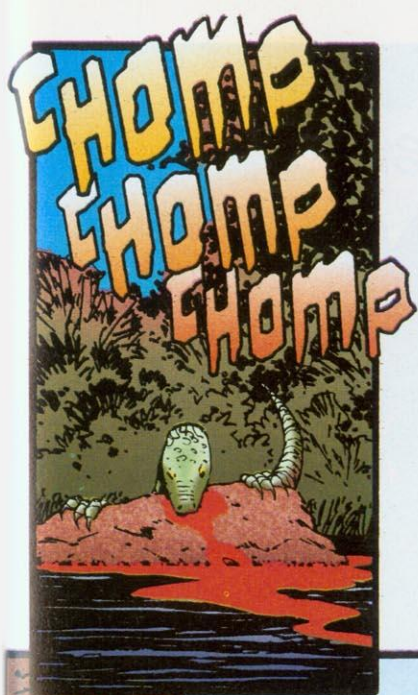
tick
tick
tick

"AND WE WANT IT STRONG
ENOUGH TO GIVE US A
GOOD RUN."



tock
tock
tock







MISTER
McCASLIN?



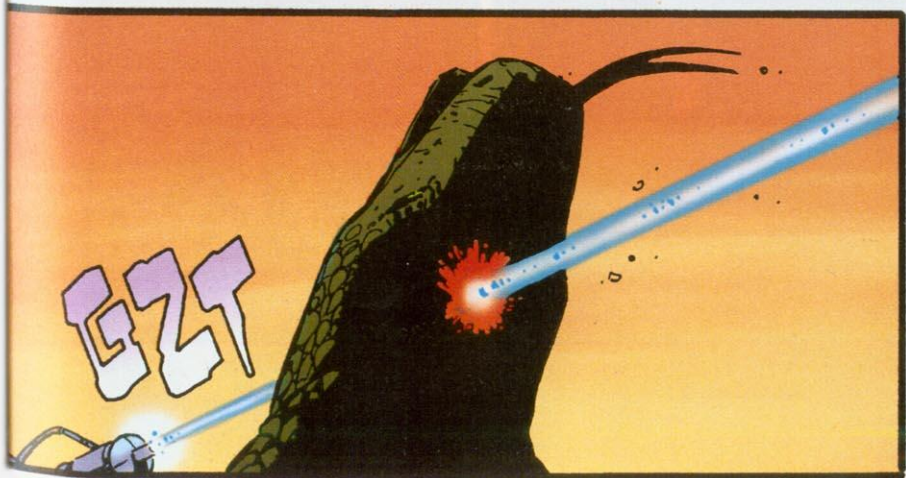
YOU
IDIOT!



MISTER
McCASLIN...

LINGH!

SHUT
UP!



YOU'RE
RELATIVELY
NEW TO US,
SAM, SO I'LL
ASSUME
YOU'RE
CAPABLE OF
LEARNING.



I AM
NOT TO BE
TOUCHED.

EVER.



NOW WIPE YOUR
FACE AND GO TELL
BOON TO MAKE
CERTAIN THAT GUN'S
REPAIRED.



SIX
VERTEBRAE
COMPLETELY
SHATTERED.

GRAYS HARBOR
COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
MEDICAL EXAMINER'S ROOM
5:32 P.M.

RIGHT INCISOR
BADLY CRACKED.
THERE SEEMS TO
BE SOME ANIMAL
MATTER ON THE
LEFT, THOUGH.

LOOKS LIKE LION
BIT OFF MORE
THAN HE COULD
CHEW.



YIPE!

ARROOOO



EASY, BOY.
WHAT IS
IT?



LOOKED LIKE
YOU WERE
HAVING A
NIGHTMARE.

THIS IS WHERE THE
WORLD'S FOREMOST
BIG FOOT AUTHORITY
LIVES?

NOW YOU CAN SEE WHY
THERE ARE SO MANY OF
THEM. LOOKS LIKE HE'S
GOT GOOD TASTE IN
CARS, THOUGH.

OPEN GATE TRAILER PARK
WEDNESDAY
9:47 A.M.

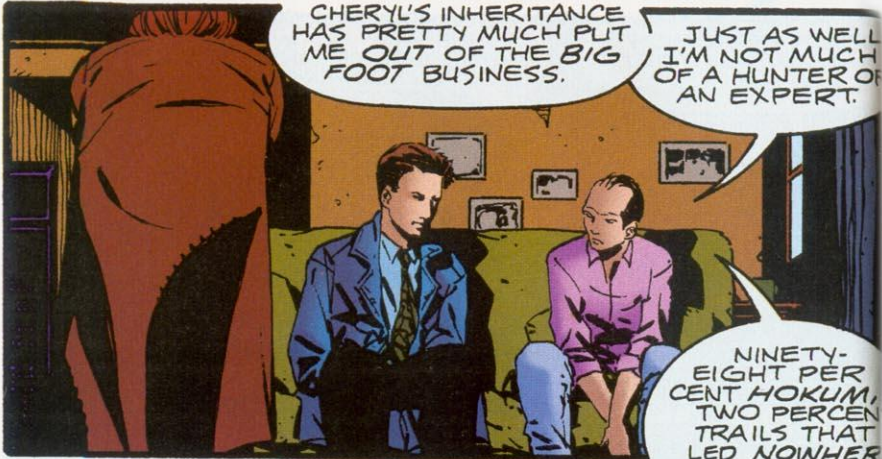
THE FBI?
EVERY-
THING ALL
RIGHT?

WE WERE
HOPING
TO TAKE
ADVANTAGE
OF SOME
OF YOUR
HUSBAND'S
EXPERIENCE,
MRS. SPENCER.

NICE ENTER-
TAINMENT
CENTER.
NEW?

MOTHER
DIED FROM
CANCER
RECENTLY. WE
RECEIVED AN
...INHERITANCE.

HUNTING DREAMS
DOESN'T PAY WELL,
I'M AFRAID. SO WE
DECIDED TO TREAT
OURSELVES A LITTLE.



CHERYL'S INHERITANCE
HAS PRETTY MUCH PUT
ME OUT OF THE BIG
FOOT BUSINESS.

JUST AS WELL
I'M NOT MUCH
OF A HUNTER OF
AN EXPERT.

NINETY-
EIGHT PER
CENT HOKUM,
TWO PERCENT
TRAILS THAT
LED NOWHER

YOU'RE A GOOD
LIAR, THEN, MISTER
SPENCER.

I'VE READ SOME
OF YOUR WORK AND
WAS IMPRESSED
WITH WHAT I THOUGHT
WAS ITS SINCERITY.

IN FACT, DIDN'T
YOU ONCE BOAST
THAT IF GIVEN
THE PROPER FUNDING...
ABOUT TWO MILLION...
YOU COULD DELIVER
A LIVING BIG FOOT?

YEAH.

I'VE ALSO GOT
A BRIDGE IN BROOKLYN
I CAN SELL YOU FOR A
SONG.

I WAS HALF-HOPING
SOMEONE MIGHT TAKE
ME UP ON THAT OFFER.

BUT NO
ONE WAS EVER
STUPID ENOUGH
TO BELIEVE ME.



CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE, DAY IN, DAY OUT, CHASING AFTER SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE EXISTS--BEING RIDICULED FOR FIFTEEN YEARS?

NO REWARDS, NO SATISFACTION, NO HINT THAT SUCCESS MIGHT EVEN BE POSSIBLE?

SO HE FINALLY GAVE UP. IF YOU KNEW WHAT HE'S BEEN THROUGH, I DON'T THINK YOU'D BLAME HIM.



OH, I THINK I MIGHT HAVE *SOME* IDEA OF WHAT IT'S LIKE.

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME.





DID YOU
GET A
LOAD OF
THE *SIZE*
OF THAT
TV SET?

I'LL CALL
THE BANKS,
SEE IF I CAN
CHECK ON THAT
INHERITANCE.



GOT SOME TEST
RESULTS. THOSE HAIR
AND BLOOD SAMPLES
ARE DEFINITELY
PRIMATE. NOT
HUMAN.

OF COURSE,
THAT DOESN'T RULE
OUT A *GORILLA*.

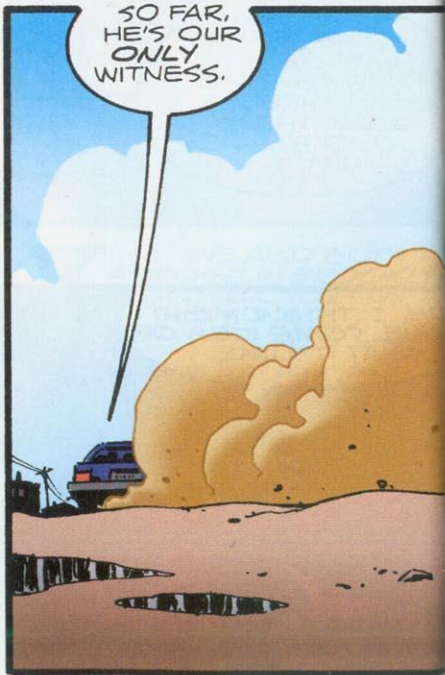
SO I'LL
CONTACT THE
LOCAL *ZOOS*.



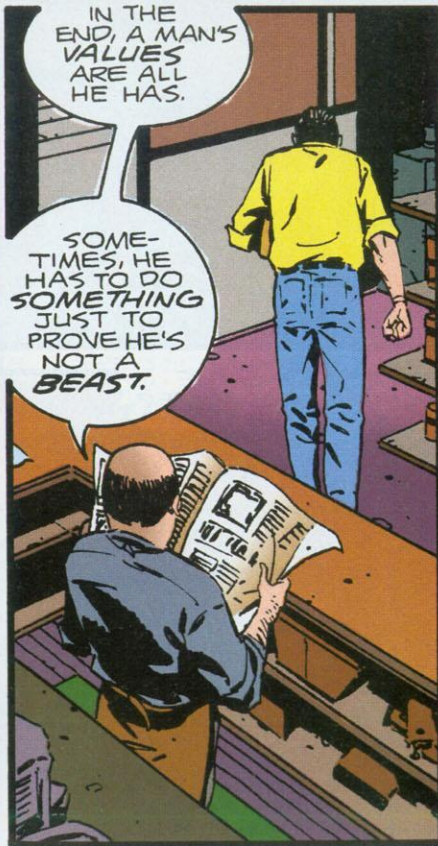
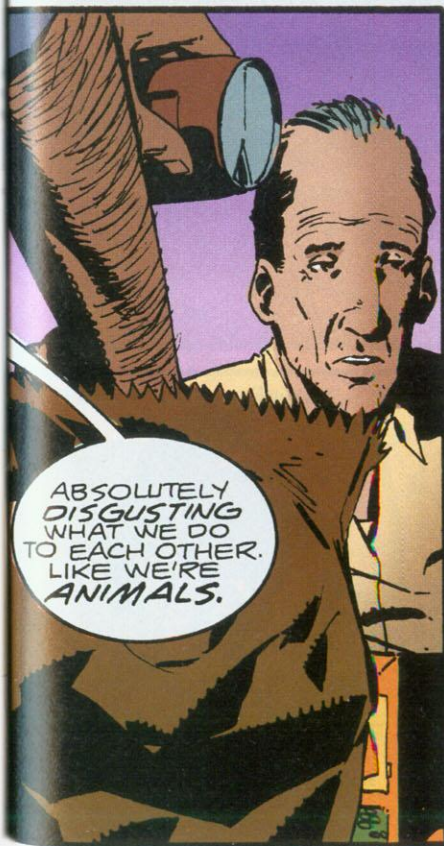
YECHH!

AS LONG AS
MRS. WALTHAM
IS STAYING WITH
HER *DAUGHTER*,
ASH IS *OUR*
RESPONSIBILITY.
WE COULD DROP
HIM IN A
KENNEL.

NAH.



SO FAR,
HE'S OUR
ONLY
WITNESS.



THE MAN YOU WANT,
AGENT MULDER, IS
BEN MCCASLIN.
HE LIVES ON A
PRIVATE ISLAND
OFF THE
COAST.

I'VE GOT
SOME PROOF
YOU'LL
NEED.



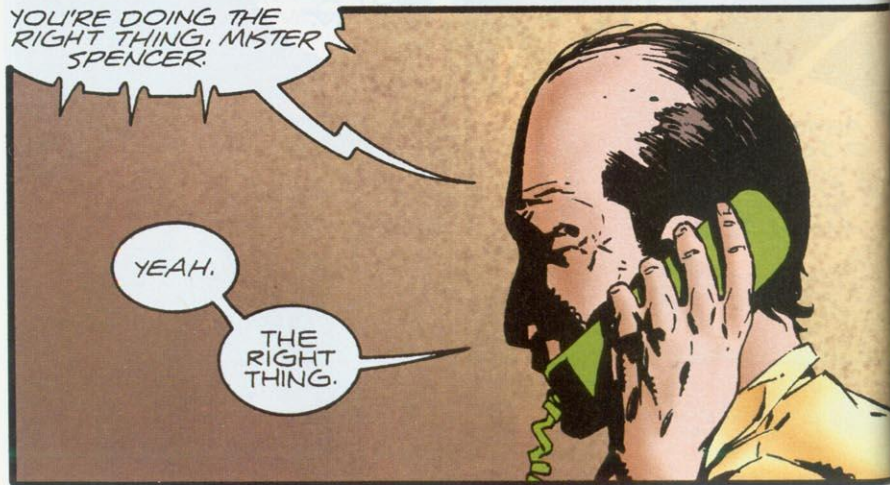
I'LL HAVE TO GET IT
I'LL MEET YOU TONIGHT
AT YOUR MOTEL.
EIGHT P.M.



YOU'RE DOING THE
RIGHT THING, MISTER
SPENCER.

YEAH.

THE
RIGHT
THING.



I'LL ALWAYS
BE PROUD OF
YOU, JIM.



THANKS, BABE.
I WISH I WAS.

7:45 P.M.
YOU FIX THAT
ROBOT, BOON?"

"NAH, SAM. ONE OF HIS
PRECIOUS MACHINES GETS
A LITTLE RUSTY, WHAT DO
I CARE? McCASLIN
TREATS THOSE THINGS
BETTER THAN HE TREATS
US."

"MEANTIME, I'M GLAD I'VE GOT
THIS CHANCE TO SHOW YOU
WHAT A REAL HUNTER IS, SAM.
YOU KILLED THAT AGENT QUICK
ENOUGH, BUT THERE WAS NO
ART TO IT."

"FIRST THING IS, NEVER UNDER-
ESTIMATE YOUR PREY. YOU'D
BE SURPRISED HOW EASY AN
ANIMAL CAN JUST SMELL WHEN
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT."



"SECOND, ALWAYS USE A WEAPON THAT'S FAIR, THAT GIVES THE PREY A CHANCE.



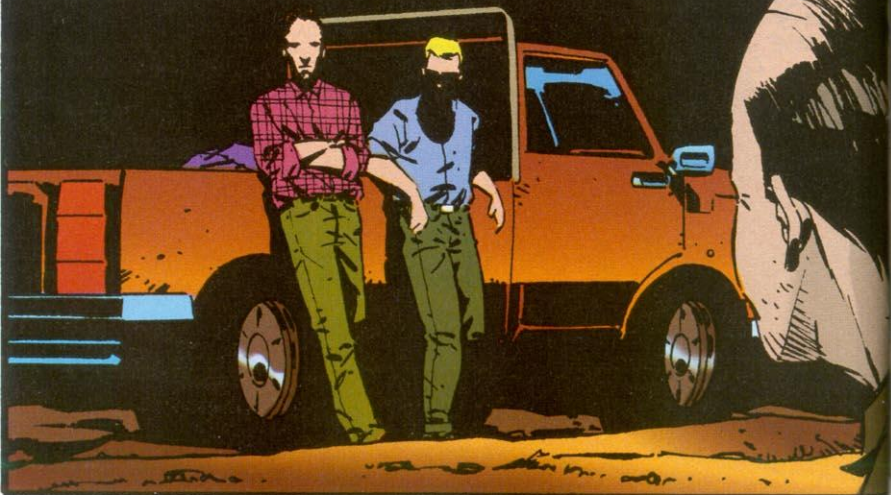
"THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT A SPORT.

"NOW, THE REAL TRICK IS TO GET INSIDE ITS HEAD. THINK THE WAY IT DOES, FIGURE OUT HOW YOU CAN MAKE THE ANIMAL WORK FOR YOU.



"THAT'S SOMETHING McCASLIN COULD NEVER DO. IT REQUIRES RESPECT.

"HELL, THAT SLUG WON'T EVEN SHOW HIS FACE.



"DOESN'T EVEN WANT TO BE
TOUCHED. DOESN'T REALIZE
YOU CAN'T HUNT WITHOUT
TOUCHING."



"NOT
REALLY."

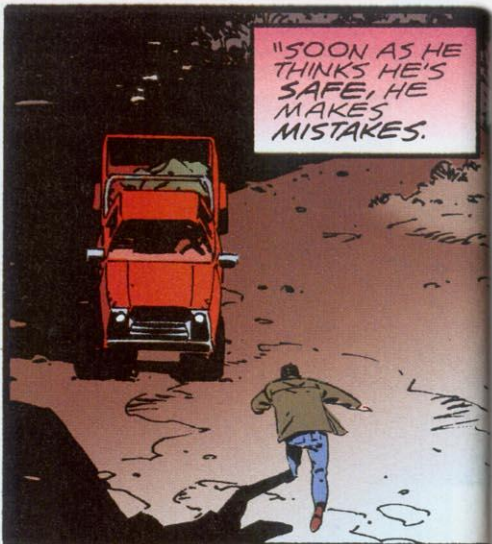


"THE FINAL TRICK,
IF YOU CAN
MANAGE IT..."

"...IS TO MAKE THE
PREY FEEL SAFE.



"SOON AS HE
THINKS HE'S
SAFE, HE
MAKES
MISTAKES.



"WHEN HE SEES THE KEYS,
HE WON'T WONDER FOR
A MINUTE WHY THEY'RE
THERE. HE'LL JUST THINK
SOMEBODY UP THERE
MUST LIKE HIM."

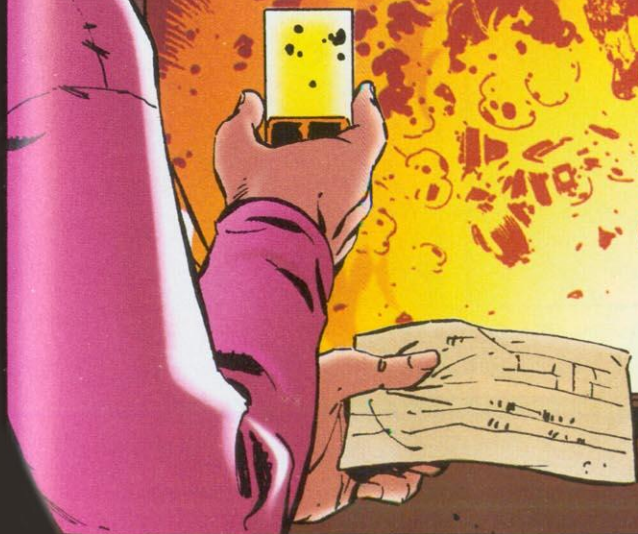


YES!

"AND AS HE TURNS THE
KEY, HE THINKS HE'S
HOME FREE."



WHAROOM





NOW
THAT...

...THAT'S
HUNTING.

"ONE MORE THING,
SAM. THE BEST
STRATEGIES HAVE
A KIND OF INEVIT-
ABILITY TO THEM.
TAKE THIS POOR
SOB, FOR
EXAMPLE.



"EVEN IF YOU WARNED HIM HIS WIFE
WOULD TURN HIM OVER FOR THE
MONEY, HE WOULDN'T BELIEVE YOU.

"AND THE HUNT WOULD'VE PLAYED
OUT EXACTLY THE SAME WAY."



THIS PLACE IS
RIGHT OUT OF
"THE MOST
DANGEROUS
GAME."

YOU KNOW,
THE STORY
ABOUT THE GUY
WHO LIKES TO
HUNT PEOPLE?

sniff
sniff
sniff

MCCASLIN ISLE
FRIDAY
3:37 P.M.

COUNT
YOUR-
SELVES
LUCKY.

I DON'T
USUALLY
OPEN MY
DOORS TO
STRANGERS.

ESPECIALLY
REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT.

WE'LL KEEP
THAT IN MIND,
THEN, AND
COME STRAIGHT
TO THE
POINT.

DURING OUR IN-
VESTIGATION OF
THE DISAPPEAR-
ANCE OF AGENT
JOHN WALTHAM,
WE INTERVIEWED...



...JIM
SPENCER.



SHORTLY AFTER
MENTIONING
YOUR NAME
TO US, HE WAS
BLOWN UP IN AN
UNREGISTERED
CAR.

HOW
UNFORTUNATE.

I CAN'T
IMAGINE WHY
HE WOULD
MENTION ME.
I'VE NEVER
HEARD OF
THE MAN--
AND MY CARS
ARE ALL
REGISTERED.



WOULD YOU
MIND IF WE
SEARCHED
YOUR
GROUNDS?

YES, AS A
MATTER OF
FACT, I
WOULD.

WE COULD
EASILY OB-
TAIN A
SEARCH
WARRANT.



THAT
IS YOUR
PREROG-
ATIVE.

I DID SOME CHECKING
ON MCCASLIN WITH THE
LOCALS. DO YOU REALIZE
NONE OF THOSE
TROPHIES ARE HIS.

HE BUYS THEM
MADE-TO-ORDER
AT A LOCAL
TAXIDERMIST.

SNIFF!
SNIFF!

AROOO!

ASH!
GET
BACK
HERE!

WHERE COULD
HE HAVE
GOTTEN TO?

HOW SHOULD
I KNOW? HE'S
NOT MY DOG.

MAYBE
HE SMELLED
SOMETHING
FUNNY.



MULDER!

I DON'T
THINK IT WAS
SOMETHING
FUNNY, I
THINK IT WAS
SOMETHING
FAMILIAR.



LIKE HIS
MASTER.

MMMM?

SEAL
THE
GATE.



I WANT
TO HUNT
THEM.

ARE YOU CRAZY?
KILL **THEM** AND
THIS PLACE WILL
BE **SWARMING**
WITH AGENTS.

DON'T WORRY,
SAM. BOON AND I
HAVE AN **ESCAPE**
ALL WORKED
OUT.

I HAVEN'T BEEN A
HUNTER **THIS** LONG
WITHOUT LEARNING
A THING OR
TWO.



SEAL
THE
GATE.

"ISN'T IT **EXCITING**?
IF I DON'T **KILL THEM**,
THEY'LL **CHARGE ME**
WITH **MURDER**. IF I
DO, MORE FOLLOW.



"I'M **ACTUALLY**
IN **DANGER**
THIS TIME,
AREN'T I?
YOU KNOW,
I'M **SORRY** I
DIDN'T TRY
IT **SOONER**.
I **LIKE** IT."

AGENT
MULDER!
AGENT
MULDER!



A black and white comic book panel. In the center, a dog with dark fur and white markings on its chest and paws is lying down on a patch of grass. The dog is looking up towards the top of the frame. The background consists of several vertical bars, suggesting a cage or a prison. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights. The overall tone is somber and mysterious.

"I WAS SAVING
SOMETHING FOR
A SPECIAL OCCA-
SION LIKE THIS,
WASN'T I?"

"I'M GOING TO
RELEASE OUR
SPECIAL GUEST."

WE'VE BEEN
SEALED IN!

PHONE'S DEAD.
WE MUST BE TOO
FAR FROM A RELAY
STATION TO GET
A LINE OUT.

WHAT'S
THAT
SOUND
?

YIP!
YIP!
YIP!

tickticktick
tocktocktock

YAP!
YAP!
YAP!

BZZ

YIPE!

BZZ





WHERE
ARE THEY
GOING?

tick
tick

tocktock
tock

YOU DON'T SUPPOSE
HE'S HAD A CHANGE OF
HEART AND DECIDED TO
TURN HIMSELF IN?

HAROLY, AGENT
MULDER. I'VE
NEVER BEEN MORE
EXCITED.

YOUR
PROBLEM
IS YOU'RE
JUST A
MAN.



THE DEER, THE LIONS,
THE TIGERS, THE RHINOS,
ALL FELL LIKE WHEAT
BEFORE THE SCYTHE.

"THE RARE ANIMALS PROVIDED
SOME DISTRACTION, IF ONLY
BECAUSE I FELT THEIR DEATH
HAD SOME CONSEQUENCE FOR
THE EARTH."

ticktick
ticktick

tocktock
tocktock







MULDER, FORGIVE ME
FOR QUESTIONING YOUR
STRATEGY HERE, BUT
SHOULDN'T WE BE HEAD-
ING AWAY FROM THE
KILLER ROBOTS?

WE'LL NEVER
AVOID THEM--
THEY'RE TOO
FAST.

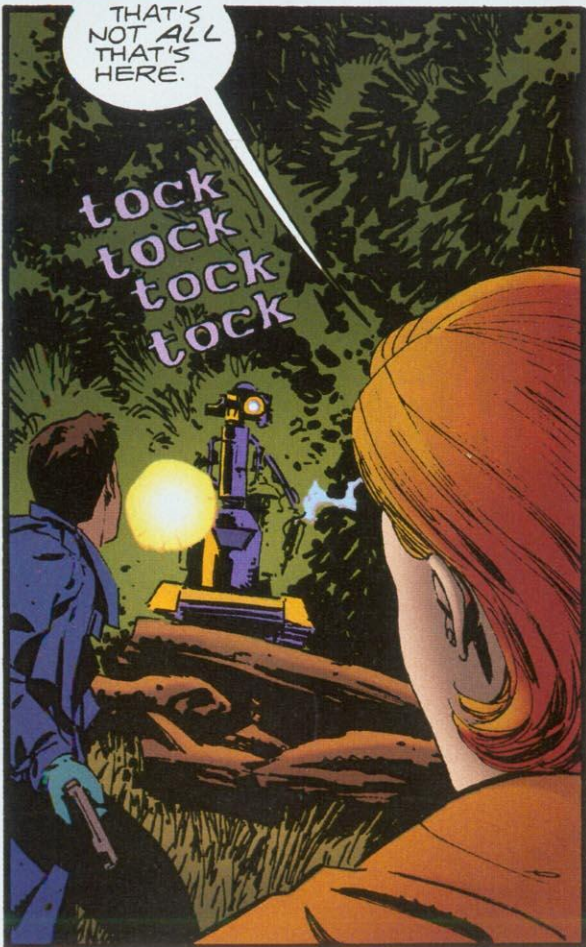
DID YOU
NOTICE THE GUN
MOUNT ON ONE
WAS LOOSE?



WHAT A
STENCH!

ALL THE
REPORTS
CONCUR
THAT BIG
FOOT DOES
NOT HAVE A
PLEASANT
ODOR,
SCULLY.

AND IT
LOOKS LIKE
ONE'S BEEN
HERE.



THAT'S
NOT ALL
THAT'S
HERE.

tock
tock
tock
tock



WHAP WHAP
WHAP



LET'S SEE
IF WE
CAN FIND
YOUR
BROTHER.



tock tck kkkkk

MILDER, OVER
HERE! IT'S ONE
OF McCASLIN'S
MEN. HE'S
HURT.

OH-HH.

BE THERE
IN A SECOND,
SCULLY.

tic
tick
tick
tick

BZT

CRASH



BOON--TIME
FOR THAT
ESCAPE WE
DISCUSSED.

AND TRY
TO MAKE IT
IN **ONE**
SHOT.



NAH.

EVERY DOG
HAS HIS DAY,
MCCASLIN.
THIS ONE'S
MINE.

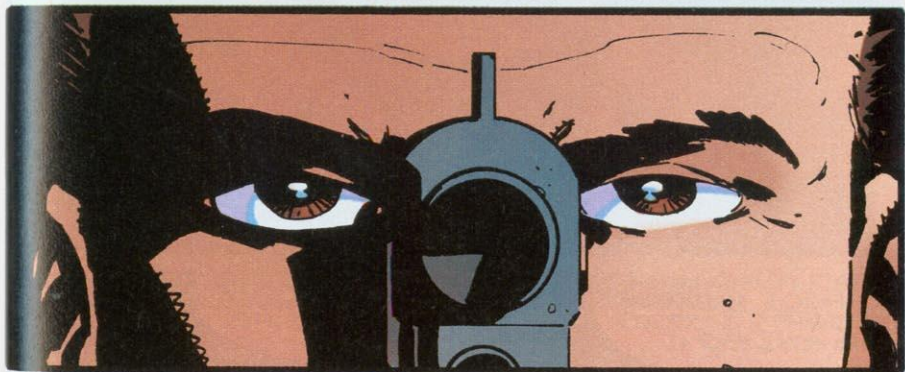


I THINK
I'LL LET THEM
CATCH YOU.
WHILE THEY'RE
BUSY WITH
YOU, I'LL MAKE
IT TO A BOAT.







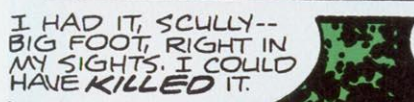




NOT A
COWARD
AFTER
ALL, EH,
ASH?



MY GOD,
MULDER! THAT
SCREAM! WHAT
WAS IT?



I HAD IT, SCULLY--
BIG FOOT, RIGHT IN
MY SIGHTS. I COULD
HAVE **KILLED** IT.

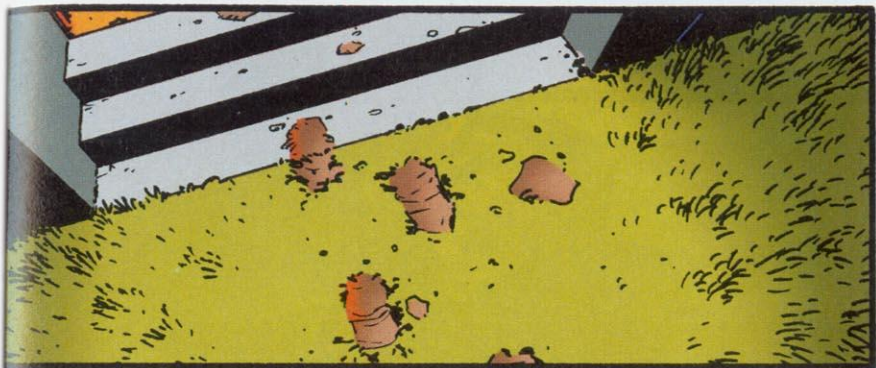


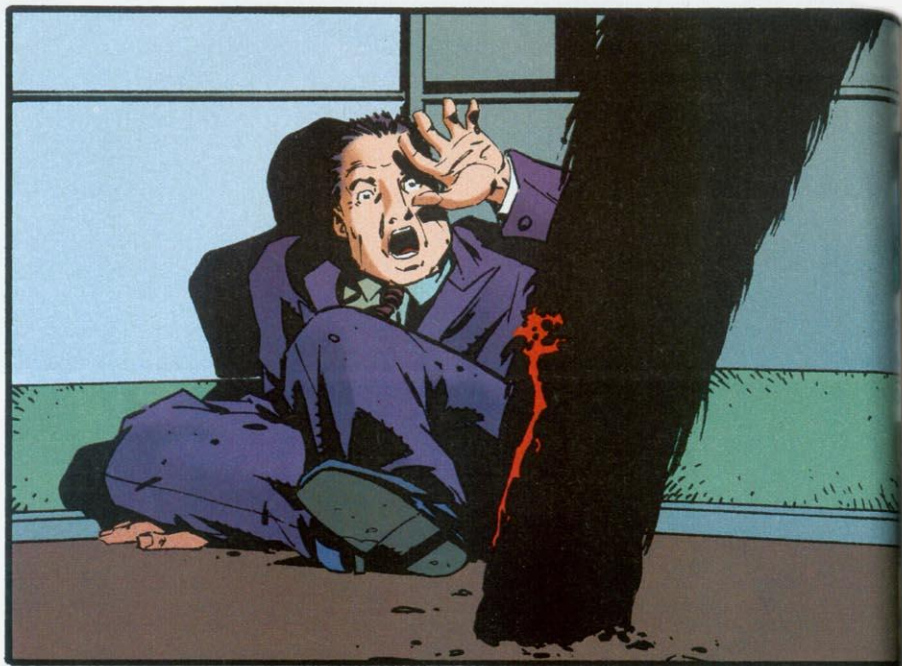
BUT SOMETHING
IN ITS EYES JUST
STOPPED ME.



FOR
LACK OF
A **BETTER**
WORD...

...SOMETHING
HUMAN.





FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE,
BENJAMIN MCCASLIN WILL
WONDER WHY HE DID NOT
DIE THAT DAY...

...WHY THOSE HANDS DID
NOT SIMPLY CRUSH HIS
HEAD IN EXCHANGE FOR
ALL THE CRUELTY HE'D
SHOWN IT.

HE WILL NEVER KNOW
THAT IN THE LAST
MOMENT, AS IT STARED
INTO THE EYES OF ITS
DISTANT BROTHER...

...FOR AN IN-
STANT, JUST
FOR AN
INSTANT...

...IT THOUGHT
IT SAW, FOR
LACK OF A
BETTER
WORD...

...SOMETHING
HUMAN.

• THE END •

THE VISITOR

IT WAS A QUIET MORNING ON MARS, WITH THE DEAD SEA BOTTOM FLAT AND SILENT—NO WIND ON IT. THE SUN WAS CLEAN AND COOL IN THE EMPTY SKY. SAUL WILLIAMS LOOKED WEARILY OUT OF HIS TENT AND THOUGHT ABOUT HOW FAR AWAY EARTH WAS. BUT WHAT COULD YOU DO WHEN YOUR LUNGS WERE FULL OF BLOOD RUST?

THIS BLOOD RUST—IT FILLED YOUR MOUTH AND YOUR NOSE; IT RAN FROM YOUR EARS, YOUR FINGERNAILS; AND IT TOOK A YEAR TO KILL YOU. THERE WAS NO KNOWN CURE ON EARTH, AND REMAINING WOULD CONTAMINATE AND KILL THE OTHERS.

THE ONLY SOLUTION WAS SHOVING YOU IN A ROCKET AND SHOOTING YOU OUT TO EXILE ON MARS.



Adapted by P. CRAIG RUSSELL and MICHAEL LARK

HE WANTED VERY MUCH
TO BE BACK ON
EARTH.

HE TRIED EVERY WAY POSSI-
BLE TO BE IN NEW YORK
CITY.

SOMETIMES, IF HE SAT RIGHT AND HELD HIS
HANDS A CERTAIN WAY, HE DID IT. HE COULD
ALMOST SMELL NEW YORK.





THE NEW YORK TOWER'S FACED, MAR'S RETURNED. SAUL STOOD ON THE EMPTY SEA BOTTOM, STARING LIMPLY AT THE YOUNG NEWCOMER.

YOU DID IT.

YOU DID IT WITH YOUR MIND.

YES.

OH, BUT I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE.

YOU CAN'T KNOW HOW GLAD I AM!

IT WAS HIGH NOON. THEY HAD BEEN TALKING ALL THROUGH THE WARM MORNING TIME.

AND THIS ABILITY OF YOURS?

IT'S JUST SOMETHING I WAS BORN WITH.

MY MOTHER WAS IN THE GLOWUP OF LONDON IN '57. I WAS BORN TEN MONTHS LATER.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'D CALL IT. TELEPATHY AND THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE, I SUPPOSE.

I USED TO HAVE AN ACT BACK ON EARTH. MOST PEOPLE THOUGHT I WAS A CHARLATAN.

I DIDN'T LET ANYONE KNOW I WAS REALLY GENUINE. IT WAS SAFER NOT TO LET IT GET AROUND TOO MUCH.

YOU SURE SCARED THE HELL OUT OF ME. WHEN NEW YORK CAME RIGHT UP OUT OF THE GROUND THAT WAY, I THOUGHT I WAS INSANE.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE DOING NOW, MOST OF ALL?

SAUL PUT DOWN HIS CUP. HE TRIED TO HOLD HIS HANDS VERY STEADY.

I'D LIKE TO BE IN A LITTLE CREEK I USED TO SWIM IN IN MELLINTOWN, ILLINOIS WHEN I WAS A KID.

SAUL FELL BACK ON THE SAND, HIS EYES SHUT FROM TIME TO TIME, HIS HANDS MOVED, TWITCHING EXCITEDLY.

LEONARD MARK QUIETLY FINISHED HIS COFFEE.

HE WET HIS LIPS.

SAUL BEGAN TO MAKE SLOW MOVEMENTS OF HIS ARMS, OUT AND BACK, GASPING WITH HIS HEAD TO ONE SIDE, HIS ARMS COMING AND GOING SLOWLY ON THE WARM AIR STIRRING THE WARM SAND UNDER HIM, HIS BODY TURNING SLOWLY OVER.



THE OTHER MEN, THE OTHER SICK ONES ALONG THE BOTTOM OF THIS DEAD SEA.







SHADOWS MOVED INTO THE CAVE MOUTH. THE OTHER MEN WERE THERE.

GOOD EVENING. COME IN, GENTLEMEN.

BY DAWN, THE ARGUMENTS AND FEROCITIES STILL CONTINUED. MARK HAD CREATED A MAHOGANY-PANELED CONFERENCE HALL AND A MARBLE TABLE AT WHICH THEY ALL SAT, RIDICULOUSLY BEARDED, EVIL-SMELLING, SWEATY AND GREEDY MEN, EYES BENT UPON THEIR TREASURE.



THE WAY TO SETTLE IT IS FOR EACH OF YOU TO HAVE CERTAIN HOURS OF CERTAIN DAYS. I'LL TREAT YOU ALL EQUALLY. LET'S SEE, NOW...

ON MONDAYS, SMITH, ON TUESDAYS, I'LL TAKE PETER AND I'LL FINISH WITH JOHN-SON, HOLTZ-MAN, AND JIM ON WEDNES-DAYS.

AS FOR SAUL, HE'S ON PROBATION UN-TIL HE'S PROVED HE CAN BE A CIVIL PERSON ONCE MORE.

UNTIL THAT TIME, I'LL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HIM.

THE REST OF THE WEEK, I'M TO BE LEFT STRICTLY ALONE. IF YOU DON'T OBEY, I WON'T PERFORM AT ALL.

MAYBE WE'LL **MAKE** YOU PERFORM.

LOOK, WE'RE FINE AGAINST HIS ONE. WE CAN MAKE HIM DO ANYTHING WE WANT.

DON'T BE IDIOTS.

HE'S TELLING US WHAT HE'LL DO. WHY DON'T WE TELL **HIM**? ARE WE BIGGER THAN HIM, OR NOT?

DON'T LISTEN TO HIM. HE'S CRAZY. YOU KNOW WHAT HE'LL DO, DON'T YOU?

HE'LL GET YOU ALL OFF-GUARD AND KILL YOU ONE BY ONE.

AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, **ONE OF YOU HAS A GUN!**

SEARCH! FIND THE ONE WITH THE GUN OR YOU'RE ALL DEAD!

THAT DID IT.



JOHNSON FELL
BACK, FEELING
IN HIS JACKET.

ALL RIGHT,
HERE, YOU...
SMITH.



BANG



BANG
BANG



STOP!



LOOK,
YOU
FOOLS!

NEW YORK SOARED UP AROUND THEM OUT OF ROCK AND CAVE AND SKY. SUN
GLINTED ON HIGH TOWERS, THE ELEVATED THUNDERED; TUGS BLEW IN THE
HARBOR. AND, IN THE CENTER OF NEW YORK, BEWILDERED, THE MEN
STUMBLED.



SAUL RAN FORWARD...



...CRASHED
AGAINST
JOHNSON...



...GRAPPLED FOR
THE GUN.



IT FIRED
AGAIN.



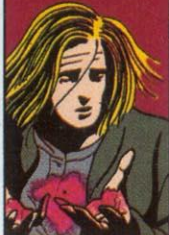
THEY STOOD. THEY CEASED STRUGGLING. THERE WAS A TERRIBLE SILENCE.

NEW YORK SANK DOWN INTO THE SEA WITH A HISSING, BUBBLING SIGHING; WITH A CRY OF RUINED METAL AND OLD TIME. THE GREAT STRUCTURES LEANED, WARPED, FLOWED, COLLAPSED.

MARK STOOD AMONG THE BUILDINGS. THEN, LIKE A BUILDING.

...A NEAT, RED HOLE DRILLED INTO HIS CHEST.

WORDLESS, HE FELL.



LEONARD!

LEONARD?

LEONARD

LEONARD MARK DID NOT MOVE. HIS EYES WERE SHUT. HIS CHEST HAD CEASED GOING UP AND DOWN.

HE WAS GETTING COLD.

THE ONLY ONE WE DIDN'T WANT TO KILL... WE KILLED.

GET A SPADE. BURY HIM.

I'LL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.



THERE WAS THE SOUND OF SOMEONE DIGGING IN THE EARTH. "WE DON'T NEED HIM, ANYHOW," SAID SOMEBODY, MUCH TOO LOUDLY.



SLEEP WE'LL ALL GO TO SLEEP NOW. WE HAVE THAT MUCH, ANYWAY. GO TO SLEEP AND TRY TO DREAM OF NEW YORK AND ALL THE REST.



HE CLOSED HIS EYES WEARILY, THE BLOOD GATHERING IN HIS NOSE AND HIS MOUTH AND IN HIS QUIVERING EYES.

HOW DID HE DO IT? HOW DID HE BRING NEW YORK UP HERE AND MAKE US WALK AROUND IN IT?



LET'S TRY. IT SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD. THINK! THINK OF NEW YORK AND CENTRAL PARK AND THEN ILLINOIS IN THE SPRING, APPLE BLOSSOMS AND GREEN GRASS.



IT DIDN'T WORK. IT WASN'T THE SAME. NEW YORK WAS GONE AND NOTHING HE COULD DO WOULD BRING IT BACK. HE WOULD RISE EVERY MORNING AND WALK ON THE DEAD SEA LOOKING FOR IT... AND NEVER FIND IT.



AND FINALLY LIE, TOO TIRED TO WALK, TRYING TO FIND NEW YORK IN HIS HEAD, BUT NOT FINDING IT.



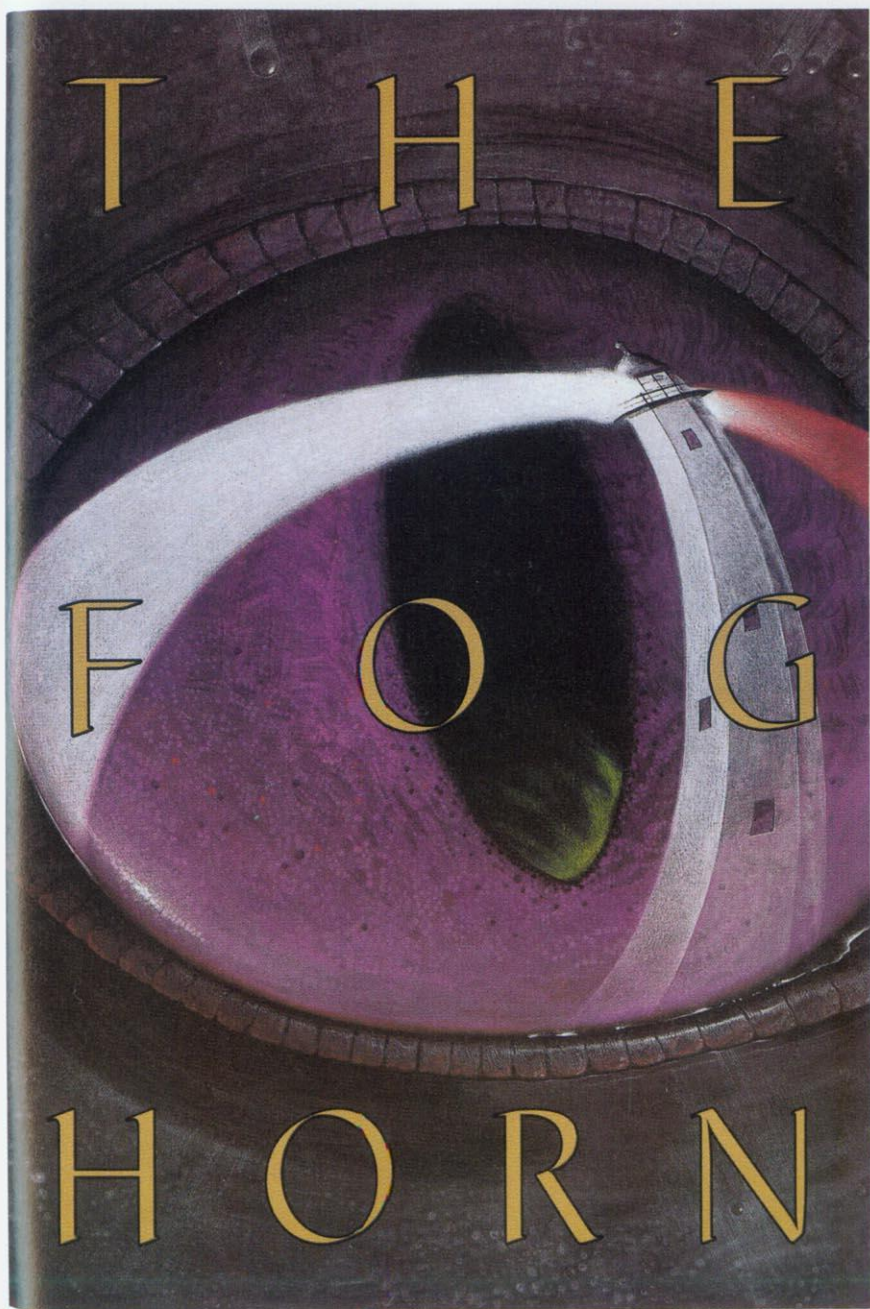
THE LAST THING HE HEARD BEFORE HE SLEPT WAS THE SPADE RISING AND FALLING AND DIGGING A HOLE INTO WHICH...

WITH A TREMENDOUS CRASH OF METAL AND GOLDEN MIST AND ODOR AND COLOR AND SOUND...

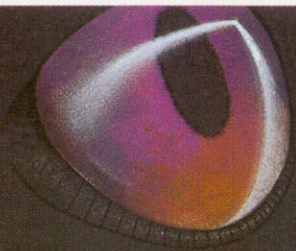


NEW YORK COLLAPSED, FELL, AND WAS BURIED.

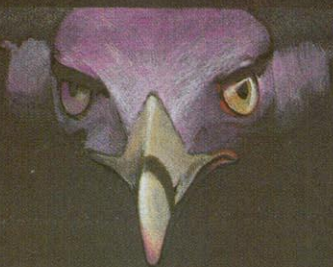




Out there in the cold water,
far from land, we waited every
night for the coming of the fog,
and it came and we oiled the
brass machinery and lit the fog
light up in the stone tower.



McDunn and I sent the light
touching out, red then white,
to eye the lonely ships. And if
they did not see our light
there was always our voice,
the great deep cry of our
foghorn shuddering
through the rags of mist.



It was a quarter past seven of
a cold November evening, the
heat on, the light switching its
tail in two hundred directions,
the fog horn rumbling in the
high throat of the tower.





"The mysteries of the sea."

McDunn said thoughtfully. "One night, years ago, I was here alone, when all of the fish of the sea surfaced out there. Something made them swim in and lie in the bay, sort of trembling and staring up at the tower light.

"Then, without so much as a sound, they slipped away, the million of them gone. I kind of think maybe, in some sort of way, they came all those miles to worship. Think how the tower must look to them, standing seventy feet above the water, the god-light flashing out from it, and the tower declaring itself with a monster voice."

The great eye of the light was humming, turning easily in its oiled socket. The fog horn was blowing steadily, one every fifteen seconds. "Sounds like an animal, don't it?" McDunn nodded to himself. "A big lonely animal crying in the night, calling out to the Deeps: I'm here, I'm here."

"About this time of year," he said, studying the murk and fog, "something comes to visit the lighthouse. If my calendar's marked right from last year, tonight's the night it comes."

The fog horn blew. "There," said McDunn. He nodded out to the deeps. Something was swimming toward the lighthouse tower. You couldn't see far and you couldn't see plain. But, there, far out at first, was a ripple, followed by a wave, arising, a bubble, a bit of froth.

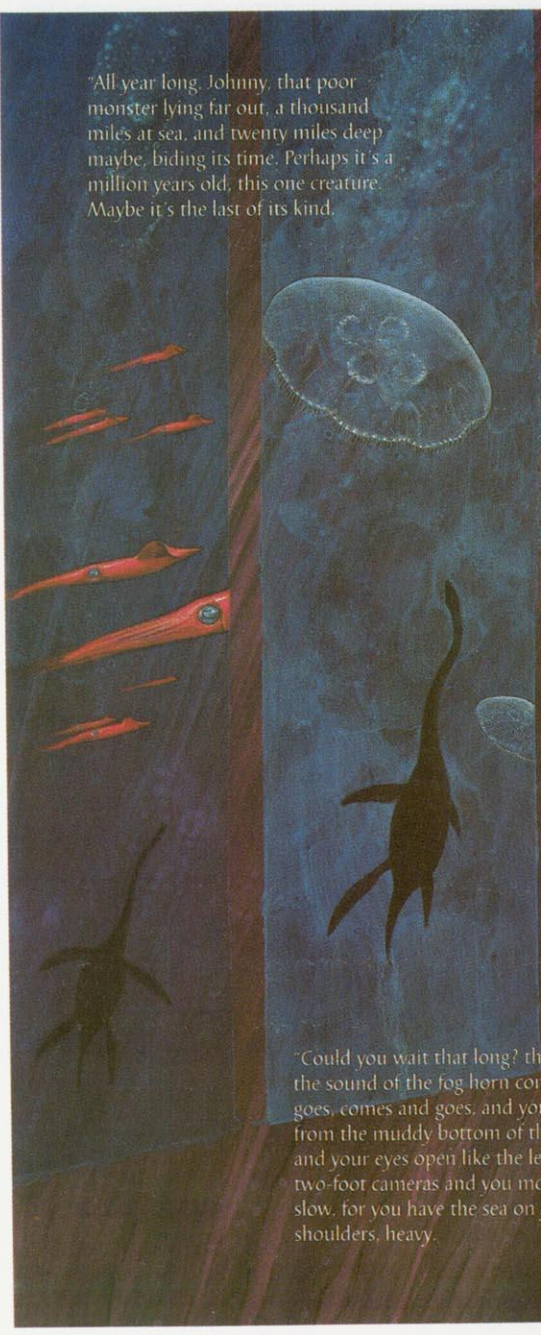
And then, from the surface of the cold sea came a head, a large head, dark-colored, with immense eyes, and then a neck. And then— not a body— but more neck and more! The head rose a full forty feet above the water on a slender and beautiful dark neck. I estimated the monster at ninety to a hundred feet.

The monster cried out at the tower.
The fog horn blew.
The monster roared again.



"It's impossible!" I said.
"No, Johnny, we're impossible.
It's like it always was millions
of years ago. It hasn't changed.
It's us and the land that have
changed, become impossible."



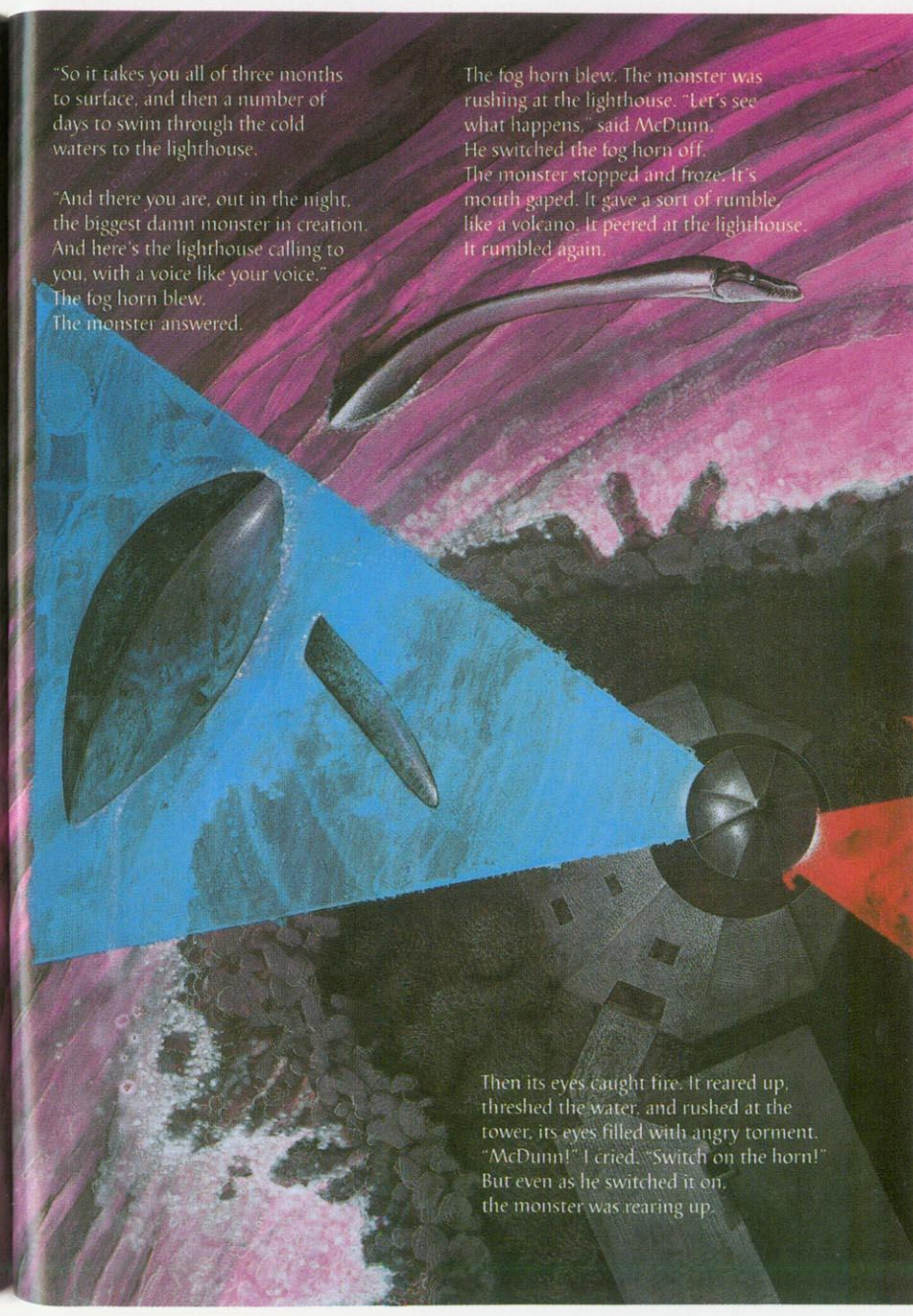


"All year long, Johnny, that poor monster lying far out, a thousand miles at sea, and twenty miles deep maybe, biding its time. Perhaps it's a million years old, this one creature. Maybe it's the last of its kind.



"But that fog horn comes through, faint and familiar, and you begin to rise. You feed yourself on great slakes of cod and minnow, on rivers of jellyfish, and you rise slowly through the autumn months. You've got to go slow, if you surfaced all at once you'd explode.

"Could you wait that long? think of it... the sound of the fog horn comes and goes, comes and goes, and you stir from the muddy bottom of the deeps, and your eyes open like the lenses of two-foot cameras and you move, slow, slow, for you have the sea on your shoulders, heavy.

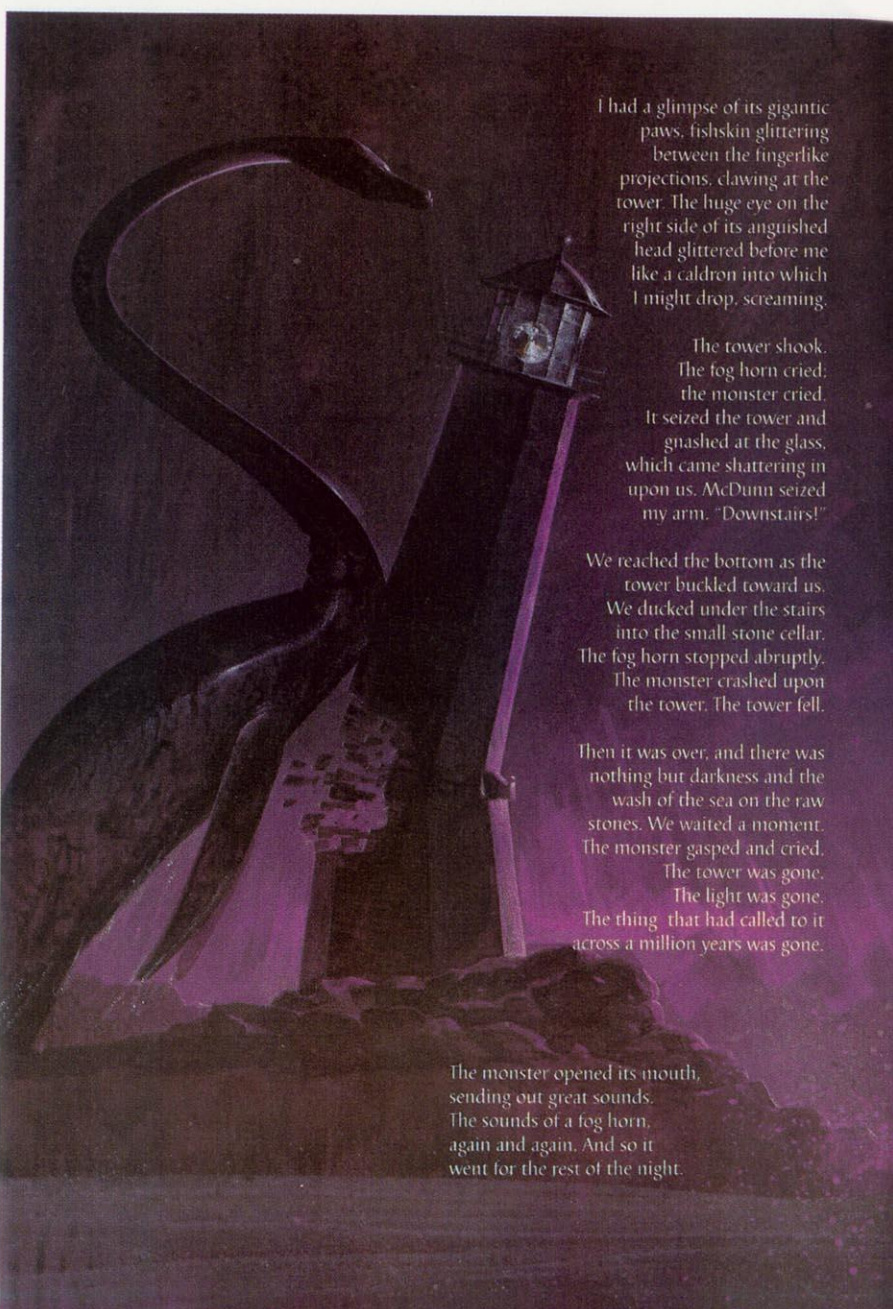


"So it takes you all of three months to surface, and then a number of days to swim through the cold waters to the lighthouse.

"And there you are, out in the night, the biggest damn monster in creation. And here's the lighthouse calling to you, with a voice like your voice." The fog horn blew. The monster answered.

The fog horn blew. The monster was rushing at the lighthouse. "Let's see what happens," said McDunn. He switched the fog horn off. The monster stopped and froze. Its mouth gaped. It gave a sort of rumble, like a volcano, it peered at the lighthouse. It rumbled again.

Then its eyes caught fire. It reared up, threshed the water, and rushed at the tower, its eyes filled with angry torment. "McDunn!" I cried. "Switch on the horn!" But even as he switched it on, the monster was rearing up.



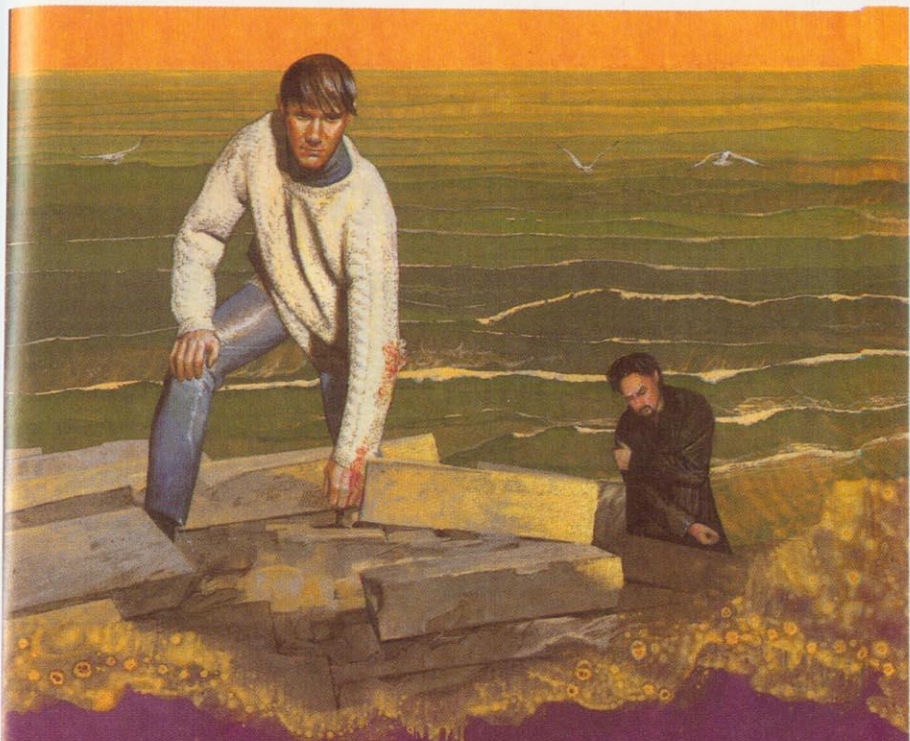
I had a glimpse of its gigantic
paws, fishskin glittering
between the fingerlike
projections, clawing at the
tower. The huge eye on the
right side of its anguished
head glittered before me
like a caldron into which
I might drop, screaming.

The tower shook.
The fog horn cried:
the monster cried.
It seized the tower and
gnashed at the glass,
which came shattering in
upon us. McDunn seized
my arm. "Downstairs!"

We reached the bottom as the
tower buckled toward us.
We ducked under the stairs
into the small stone cellar.
The fog horn stopped abruptly.
The monster crashed upon
the tower. The tower fell.

Then it was over, and there was
nothing but darkness and the
wash of the sea on the raw
stones. We waited a moment.
The monster gasped and cried.
The tower was gone.
The light was gone.
The thing that had called to it
across a million years was gone.

The monster opened its mouth,
sending out great sounds.
The sounds of a fog horn,
again and again. And so it
went for the rest of the night.



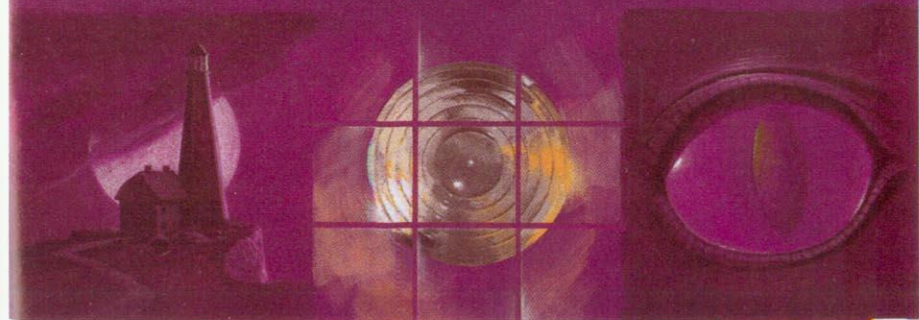
The sun was hot and yellow the next afternoon when the rescuers came to dig us out from our stoned-under cellar.

"It fell apart, is all," McDunn said gravely. "We had a few bad knocks from the waves, and it just crumbled."

The next year they built a new lighthouse. McDunn, master of the new lighthouse, had it built to his own specifications, out of steel reinforced concrete. It was ready in late November.

I drove down alone one evening late, and parked my

car and looked across the gray waters. I listened to the new horn, sounding four times a minute. The monster? It never came back. I could only hear the horn. It sounded like the monster calling. I sat there wishing there was something I could say.



CLARA FECK HAD LIVED IN THE OLD HOUSE FOR TEN YEARS BEFORE SHE MADE THE STRANGE DISCOVERY. SHE HAD MARCHED UP AND DOWN STAIRS A THOUSAND TIMES, AND NEVER SEEN.

IT CAN'T BE! HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO BLIND? THERE'S AN ATTIC IN MY HOUSE!

Trapdoor

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue short-sleeved top and a light blue skirt, stands in a room with yellow walls. She is looking up at a square trapdoor in the ceiling. To her left is a wooden staircase with a railing. The scene is lit with a warm, yellow light.

BEFORE LUNCH, SHE FOUND HERSELF STANDING UNDER THE TRAPDOOR AGAIN, HER TOO BRIGHT EYES DARING, FIXING, STRAINING.

NOW I'VE DISCOVERED THE DAMN THING, WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

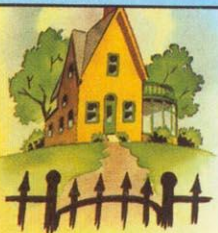
STORAGE ROOM UP THERE I BET. WELL--

AND SHE WENT AWAY, VAGUELY TROUBLED, FEELING HER MIND SLIPPING OFF...

TO HELL WITH THAT, CLARA PECK! YOU'RE ONLY FIFTY-SEVEN, NOT SENILE, YET, BY GOD!

STILL, WHY HADN'T SHE NOTICED?

IT WAS THE SILENCE--THAT WAS IT. HER ROOF HAD NEVER LEAKED, NO WATER HAD EVER TAPPED HER CEILINGS, THE BEAMS NEVER SHIPPED IN THE WIND, AND THERE WERE NO MICE. THE HOUSE HAD STAYED SILENT, AND SHE HAD STAYED BLIND.



SHE WENT TO BED EARLY, IT WAS DURING THAT NIGHT THAT SHE HEARD THE FIRST FAINT TAPPING FROM ABOVE, BEHIND THE BLANK CEILING'S PALE, LUNAR FACE.

GOING DOWNSTAIRS TO FIX BREAKFAST, SHE FIXED THE TRAPDOOR WITH HER STEADY STARE.

MOUSE?

HELL, WHY BOTHER TO LOOK AT AN EMPTY ATTIC? NEXT WEEK, MAYBE.

FOR ABOUT THREE DAYS THE TRAPDOOR VANISHED. THAT IS, SHE FORGOT TO LOOK AT IT, SO IT MIGHT AS WELL NOT HAVE BEEN THERE.

AROUND MIDNIGHT OF THE THIRD NIGHT SHE HEARD THE WHATEVER-THAT-WAS SOUND'S DRIFTING ACROSS HER BEDROOM CEILING.

LYING FLAT IN HER BED, SHE WATCHED THE CEILING SO FIXATEDLY SHE FELT SHE COULD X-RAY WHATEVER IT WAS THAT CAVORTED BEHIND THE PLASTER.

A FLEA CIRCUS? A TRIBE OF G-SPIN MICE IN EXODUS FROM A NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE? PROBABLY...

THE PATTERNS INCREASED. THE SOFT FROWLING BEGAN TO CLUSTER TOWARD AN AREA ABOVE AND BEYOND HER BEDROOM DOOR. SLOWLY, CLARA SAT UP.

SHE FLEEBED OUT INTO A HALL FLOODED WITH COLD LIGHT FROM A FULL MOON, WHICH FLOWED THROUGH A LANDING WINDOW TO SHOW HER...

THE TRAPDOOR, AS IF SUMMONED BY HER WARMTH, THE SOUNDS OF THE TINY LOST GHOST FEET RUSHED TO CLUSTER AT THE TRAPDOOR AIM ITSELF.

NO! THEY HEAR ME. THEY WANT ME TO--

THE TRAPDOOR SHUDDERED GENTLY WITH THE TINY ROCKING WEIGHTS OF WHATEVER IT WAS A-RUSTLE THERE. LOUDER, THEN LOUDER STILL...

...WHEN THE PHONE RANG, CLARA FELT A TON OF BLOOD FLING FROM A BROKEN WEIGHT DOWN HER FRAME TO CRASH HER TOES.

GAH!

RRIING

WHO IS IT?!

CLARA! IT'S EMMA CROWLEY! WHAT'S WRONG?



EMMA! YOU SCARED THE HELL OUT OF ME! WHY ARE YOU CALLING THIS LATE?

I COULDN'T SLEEP. I HAD THIS NUNCHA--ALL OF A SUDDEN I THOUGHT CLARA'S NOT WELL, OR SHE'S HURT...



CLARA SANK TO THE EDGE OF THE BED, THE WEIGHT OF EMMA'S VOICE PULLING HER DOWN.

CLARA, ARE--ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU'RE NOT SICK ARE YOU? THE HOUSE ISN'T ON FIRE, OR ANYTHING?

NO. NO. I'M ALL RIGHT.



THANK GOD, SILLY ME. FORGIVE.

FORGIVEN.

WELL THEN...GOOD NIGHT.

CLARA SAT LOOKING AT THE RECEIVER FOR A FULL MINUTE, AND THEN AT LAST PLACED THE PHONE BLINDLY BACK IN ITS CRADLE.

SHE WENT BACK TO LOOK AT THE TRAPDOOR. IT WAS QUIET.



THINK YOU'RE SMART. DON'T YOU?

THE SOUNDS RETURNED THREE NIGHTS LATER, AND THEY WERE...LARGER.

HMMM...NOT MICE. GOOD-SIZED RATS, EH?

IN ANSWER, THE CEILING ABOVE EXECUTED AN INTRICATE BALLET WITHOUT MUSIC. THIS TOE-DANCING OF A MOST PECULIAR SORT CONTINUED UNTIL THE MOON SANK. THEN THE HOUSE GREW SILENT AGAIN.

BY THE END OF THE WEEK, THE SOUNDS ECHOED IN EVERY UPSTAIRS ROOM.

ON THE TENTH NIGHT, WITH THE SOUNDS COMING IN DRUMBEATS AND WEIRD SYNCOPATIONS, AT THREE A.M., CLARA DIALED EMMA CROWLEY.



CLARA! I KNEW YOU'D CALL!

I'VE BEEN LYING HERE THINKING OF YOU. I WANTED TO CALL, BUT I FELT LIKE A FOOL... SOMETHING IS WRONG, YES?

EMMA, ANSWER ME THIS. IF A HOUSE HAS AN EMPTY ATTIC FOR YEARS, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN HAS AN ATTIC FULL OF THINGS--NOW COME!

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD AN ATTIC--

WHO DIDN'T LISTEN, WHAT STARTED AS MICE THEN SOUNDED LIKE RATS NOW SOUNDS LIKE CATS RUNNING AROUND UP THERE. WHAT'LL I DO?

THE TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR THE RATZANGH PEST TEAM IS... WAIT A MINUTE... HERE, MAIN 77-999.

YOU SURE SOMETHING'S IN YOUR ATTIC?

THE WHOLE DAMN HIGH SCHOOL TRACK TEAM.

WHO USED TO LIVE IN YOUR HOUSE, CLARA? I MEAN, IT'S BEEN CLEAN ALL THIS TIME, RIGHT, AND NOW IT'S INFESTED. ANYONE EVER DIE THERE?



DIE?

SURE. IF SOMEONE DIED THERE, MAYBE YOU HAVEN'T GOT MICE AT ALL.

YOU TRYING TO TELL ME I HAVE GHOSTS? NO, I JUST HAVE FRIENDS WHO TRY TO SPOOK ME WITH THOUGHTS OF THEM, EMMA, DON'T CALL ME AGAIN!

BUT YOU CALLED ME!



CLARA FECH WENT BACK TO BED, BUT, STRAINING HER EARS, OUT IN THE HALL...COULD IT BE?

VERY SOFTLY, THE
TRAPDOOR IN THE
CEILING SQUEALED,
AND OPENED WIDE.



THE DOOR FELL UP, IN, AND DOWN WITH A THUD. CLARA JUMPED, RAN, LOCKED THE BEDROOM DOOR AND LEAPED BACK INTO BED.

AT SIX IN THE MORNING
AFTER A SLEEPLESS NIGHT,
CLARA WENT DOWNSTAIRS
KEEPING HER EYES
STRAIGHT AHEAD.

STILL, AT SEVEN-THIRTY ON A BRIGHT MORNING...

IN THE WAY THAT MR.
TIMMONS STROLLED
WITH INSOLENT
DISDAIN UP THE WALK,
CLARA SAW THAT HE
KNEW EVERYTHING IN
THE WORLD ABOUT
MICE, TERMITES, OLD
MAIDS AND LATE-
NIGHT SOUNDS.

CLARA ALMOST SLAMMED
THE DOOR ON HIM FOR
THE WAY HIS EYES PEELED
AWAY HER DRESS, HER
FLESH, HER THOUGHTS.
SHE WAS INCENSED.

HALFWAY DOWN SHE GLANCED BACK AND LAUGHED.

SILLY ME!

THE TRAPDOOR WAS NOT OPEN AT ALL.

SILLY ME!

THE TRAPDOOR WAS
NOT OPEN AT ALL.

HELLO,
RATZAWAY?

DON'T
JUST STAND
THERE! MAKE
YOURSELF
USEFUL. THIS
WAGH!



I DARN WELL DO, LADY.

CLEAN UP YOUR LANGUAGE! YOU KNOW RATS? THESE COULD BE RATS...OR BIGGER. WHAT COULD BE BIGGER?

YOU GOT ANY RACCOONS AROUND HERE?

HEY, LADY, HOW WOULD I--

BUT HOW'D THEY GET IN?

THEY BOTH STOPPED, FOR A SOUND HAD COME FROM ABOVE. A SMALL ITCH OF A SOUND, AT FIRST, THEN A SCRATCH, THEN A THUMP LIKE A HEARTBEAT.

CLARA NODDED, 'SATISFIED.'

SAY, DID A SEA CAPTAIN EVER LIVE IN THIS HOUSE?

THE SOUND CAME AGAIN, LOUDER. THE WHOLE HOUSE SEEMED TO DRIFT AND WHINE WITH THE WEIGHT THAT SHIFTED ABOVE.



SOUNDS LIKE CARGO--CARGO ON A SHIP SLIDING AROUND.

ON THE OTHER HAND...YOU GOT A GREENHOUSE UP THERE, OR SOMETHING? SOUNDS LIKE PLANTS...

...OR A YEAST, MAYBE, BIG AS A DOG'S HOUSE, GETTING OUT OF HAND. I HEARD OF A MAN ONCE, RAISED YEAST IN HIS CELLAR. IT--

I'LL BE BACK IN AN HOUR! JUMP!



TIMMONS STOOD AT THE FOOT OF THE LADDER, LOOKING UP. THEN HE SHAUNDED, THOUGHT "WHAT THE HELL?" AND...



WHEN CLARA PECK MARCHED BACK AN HOUR LATER, THE RATZAWAY TRUCK STILL STOOD SILENTLY AT THE CURB.

SHE STOPPED AND LISTENED TO THE HOUSE. SILENCE.

THIS IS ODD, MR. TIMMONS?

HELL... THOUGHT HE'D BE DONE BY NOW. STRANGE MAN, TROMPING AROUND, SWEARING--

ANYBODY HOME?

BY TWO O'CLOCK THE SILENCE HUNG ABOUT HER LIKE A CLOUD OF FLOOR POLISH.

MR. TIMMONS?

THE PEST TEAM OWNER SHOWED UP A HALF HOUR LATER TO RETRIEVE THE ABANDONED TRUCK. CLARA INQUIRED ABOUT HIS MISSING EMPLOYEE.

WELL, HE'S OBVIOUSLY NOT UP THERE... HE WOULDN'T CLIMB UP AND SUIT HIMSELF IN. DAMN FOOL'S JUST GONE AWAY.

RATZAWAY?

NO SWEAT, MA'AM. CHARLIE'S BEEN ON A FEW BENDERS LATELY. HE'LL SHOW UP TOMORROW TO BE FIRED. WHAT WAS HE DOING HERE?

OH... HE WAS JUST LOOKING AT EVERYTHING.

I'LL COME BY MYSELF, TOMORROW.

HE DIDN'T SEE YOU, EITHER.

CLARA ATE DINNER EARLY AND WAS IN BED BY TEN O'CLOCK. BUT SHE CHOSE THE OLD DOWNSTAIRS MAID'S ROOM, FOR LONG YEARS UNUSED. SHE WAITED, LISTENING IN THE DARK, RIGID AS A TOMB CARVING UNDER THE SHEET.



AROUND MIDNIGHT, A WIND PASSED BY. HER EYES FLICKED WIDE. THE BEAMS OF THE HOUSE TREMBLED.



CLARA LIFTED HER HEAD. SOMETHING WHISPERED EVER SO SOFTLY IN THE ATTIC. SHE SAT UP.

THUMP



THE SOUND GREW LOUDER, HEAVIER, LIKE A LARGE BUT SHAPELESS ANIMAL PROWLING IN THE ATTIC.

SHE STEPPED OUT INTO THE HALL, MOVED STEALTHILY UP THE STAIRS, AND RAISED HER EYES--



THUD!



AS SHE WATCHED, VERY SLOWLY THE TRAPDOOR OPENED TO SHOW HER A WAITING SQUARE OF DARKNESS, LIKE A NINE SHAPT GOING UP WITHOUT END.



I'VE HAD JUST ABOUT ENOUGH!

SHE RUSHED DOWN TO THE KITCHEN, CAME STORMING BACK WITH HAMMER AND NAILS.



I DON'T BELIEVE ANY OF THIS! NO MORE, DO YOU HEAR? STOP!



AT THE TOP OF THE LADDER SHE HAD TO STRETCH UP INTO THE ATTIC, INTO THE DARKNESS, WITH ONE HAND AND ARM.

NOW!



AT THAT VERY INSTANT, AS IF SOMETHING HAD SEIZED HER HEAD, AS IF SHE WERE A CORK PULLED FROM A BOTTLE...



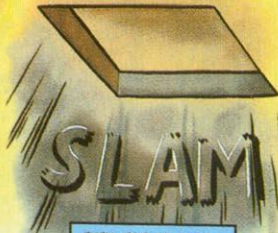
...HER ENTIRE BODY WAS YANDED UP INTO THE ATTIC.



SHE VANISHED LIKE A MAGICIAN'S HANDKERCHIEF. THERE WAS NO SIGH, NO SCREAM.



BECAUSE OF THE QUALITY OF SILENCE IN THE OLD HOUSE, THE TRAPDOOR WAS NOT NOTICED AGAIN...UNTIL THE NEW TENANTS HAD BEEN IN THE HOUSE FOR ABOUT TEN YEARS.



THEN, FOR NO SEEN REASON, THE TRAPDOOR SLAMMED FLAT DOWN SHUT.

