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THE X-FILES™
CREATED BY
CHRIS CARTER

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"DEAD TO THE
WORLD"

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RAY BRADBURY
COMICS

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THE X-FILES™

CREATED BY
CHRIS CARTER

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by Ray Bradbury
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...AND A VERY
SPECIAL
HAPPY
BIRTHDAY
TO BETH
WILLIAMS.
HERE'S THE
DEAR WOMAN
RIGHT HERE.

HAS THE
CAMERA
GOT THAT?

SHE'S
106 TODAY,
LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN.
ONE-OH-SIX.

THAT'S YOU,
BETH. COME
SEE.

THEY'VE
GOT YOUR
PICTURE AND
EVERY-
THING.



FRIDAY 3:27 P.M.
THE PONCE DE LEON
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA

YES, YES.
IT'S ME.

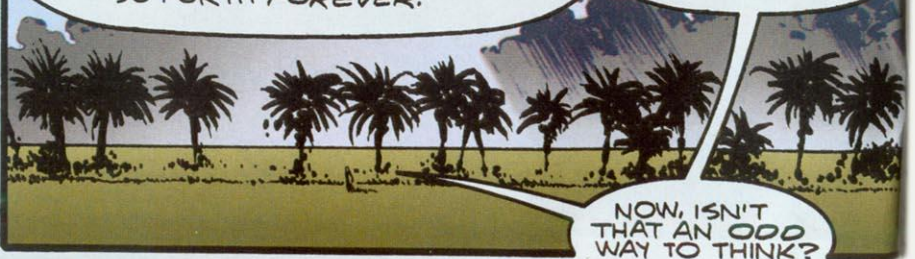




ISN'T IT FUNNY...
THE **QUESTIONS**
THAT OCCUPY ONE AT
THIS STAGE OF
THE GAME, BETH?

MY OLD FRIEND **XENON** SAID THAT
IF YOU SHOOT AN ARROW AT A TREE, IT
HAS TO PASS A POINT **HALFWAY** BE-
TWEEN THE BOW AND THE TREE, THEN
HALFWAY BETWEEN THE MID-POINT
AND THE TREE AND SO ON AND
SO FORTH **FOREVER**.

SINCE THE ARROW
CAN'T TRAVERSE AN
INFINITE NUMBER OF
POINTS, **MOVEMENT**
ITSELF MUST BE
IMPOSSIBLE.



THE QUESTION
FACING **ME** IS A
LITTLE MORE
DIFFICULT.

I'M WONDERING
IF WE'RE **REALLY**
ALIVE.

OF COURSE
WE'RE **ALIVE**,
BUT I MEAN, IS
IT ONLY IN A
MECHANICAL
SENSE? ARE WE
MACHINES MADE
OF **MEAT** OR
SOMETHING
MORE?

I'M WRITING
A **POEM** ABOUT IT
...A **HAIKU.**

THAT'S A JAPANESE FORM
OF **POETRY**, JUST SEVENTEEN
SYLLABLES LONG. HERE IN THE
WEST, THEY'RE GENERALLY
THREE LINES OF FIVE, SEVEN,
AND FIVE SYLLABLES EACH.

I'LL **RECITE** IT
TO YOU, IF YOU
LIKE.

*Autumn red leaves
fly
As wind stirs the
lifeless rain
A dead dog's tail
moves*



DO YOU UNDER-
STAND? DEAD
LEAVES, DEAD
DOGS?

ARE WE
ALIVE OR JUST
MOVED BY THE
WIND?

SORRY.

I DON'T UNDER-
STAND A WORD
YOU'RE SAYING,
YOUNG MAN--
BUT I THANK
HEAVEN FOR
BRINGING YOU
TO ME TODAY.

I HAVEN'T
FELT THIS
ALIVE IN
DECADES.

AH, YOU SEE?
THERE YOU GO.
MY POINT
EXACTLY.

YOU FEEL
ALIVE, YOU
LOOK
ALIVE...

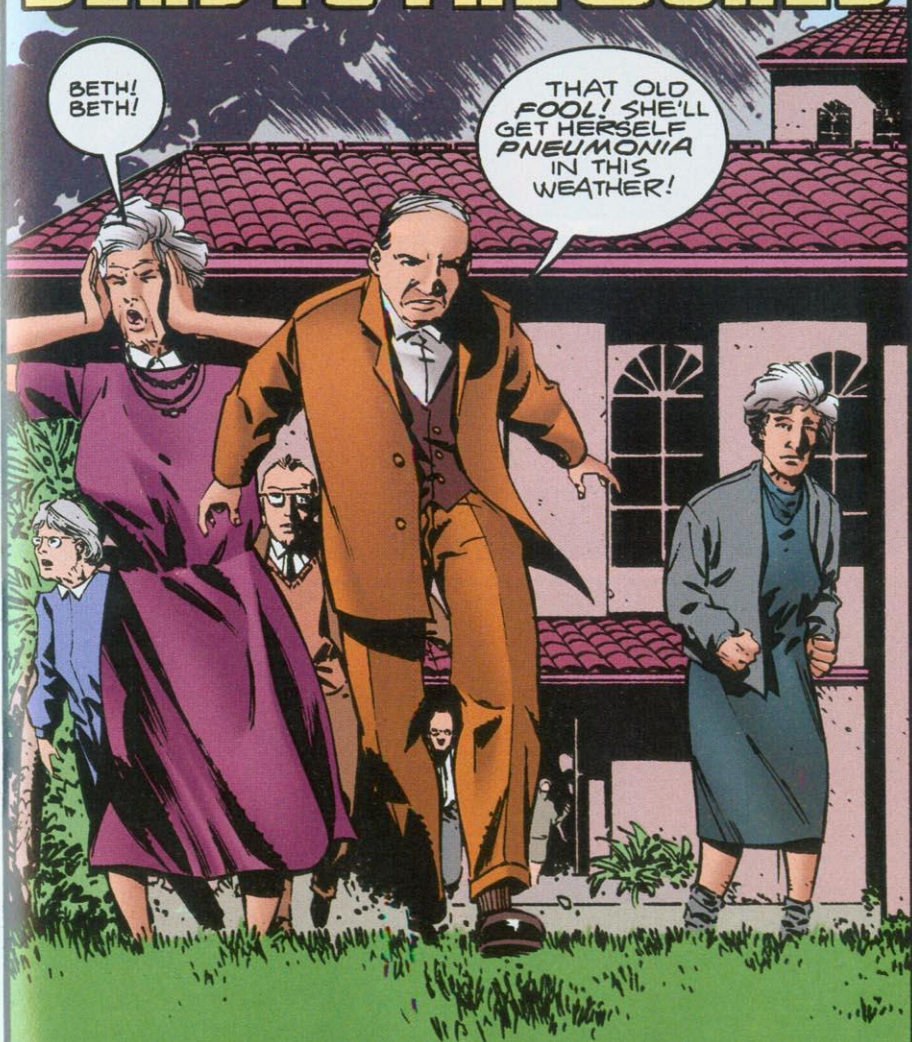
...AND
YET...

SNAP

DEAD TO THE WORLD

BETH!
BETH!

THAT OLD
FOOL! SHE'LL
GET HERSELF
PNEUMONIA
IN THIS
WEATHER!







THERE
SHE IS!
BETH!
BETH!



IT'S ALL RIGHT!
I CAN SEE HER
WAVING TO US!

SHE'S PROBABLY
JUST GOT TOO TIRED
TO WALK BACK.



I'M
SORRY,
JOAN.

SHE'S
DEAD.



LET ME
THROUGH,
YOU
IDIOTS!

HOLD IT,
GRANDPA!

YOU *MUST*
LET ME
THROUGH!

THE J.
EDGAR
HOOVER
BUILDING
WASHINGTON
D.C.
MONDAY
1:32 P.M.



SAM
CHANEY
?

YOU
COULDN'T
HAVE AN
APPOINT-
MENT.



IT'S ALL
RIGHT.

I'LL
TALK TO
HIM.

BE
CARE-
FUL, HE'S
STRONGER
THAN HE
LOOKS.

I'M SORRY,
BUT SAM
CHANEY WAS
MURDERED
IN 1942.



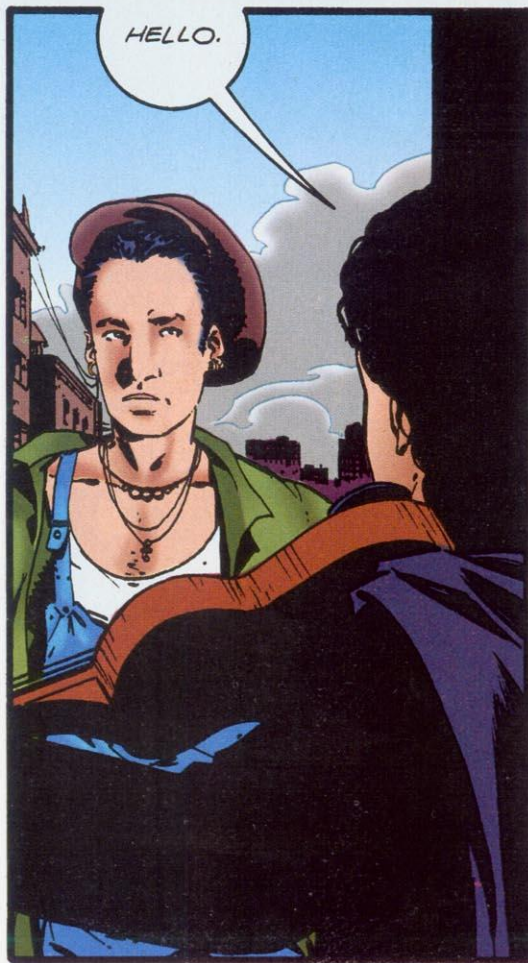
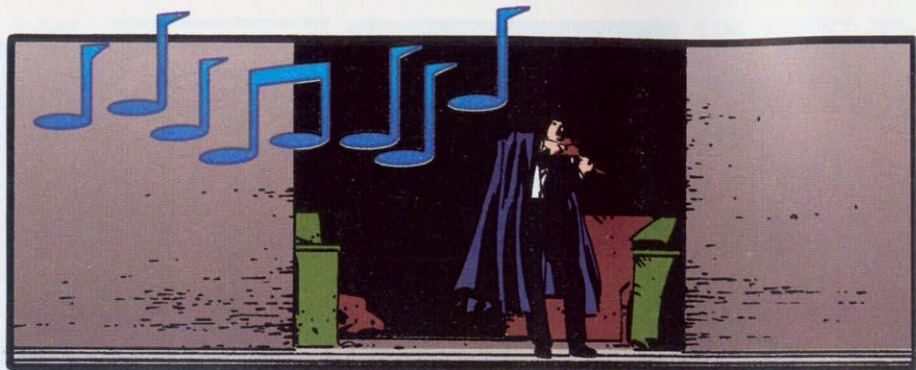
I'M
AGENT
MULDER.

CAN I
HELP YOU?



...WHICH, AS YOU KNOW, IS DEVOTED TO THOSE FORTUNATE CITIZENS WHO'VE REACHED OR EXCEEDED THE MAGIC YEAR 100.





THANK YOU
KINDLY,
SIR.

I MADE
THEM
MYSELF.

I CAN ALSO TURN
LEAD TO GOLD, HEAL
FLAWS IN JEWELRY,
AND LIQUEFY
DIAMONDS.



THEN I GUESS
YOU WON'T MIND
SHARING.

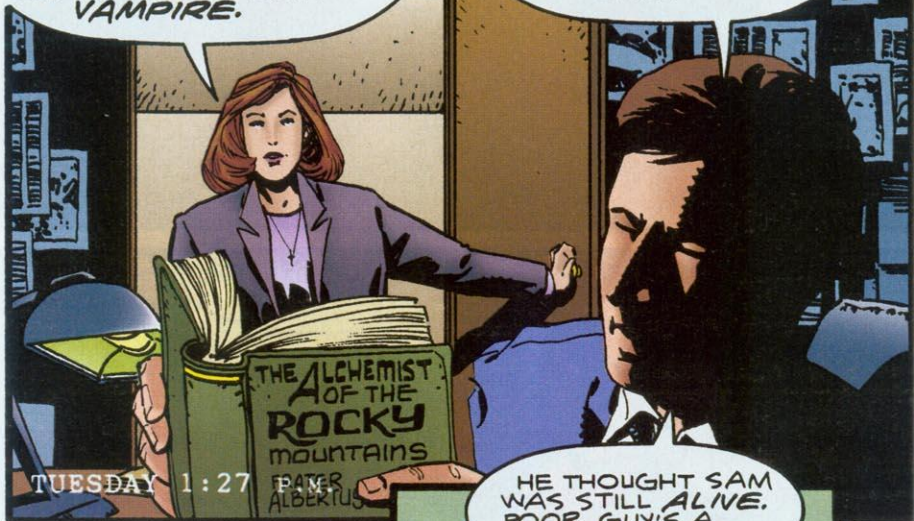


AH.

YOUNG
MEN SUCH AS
YOURSELF ARE
PERPETUALLY
GETTING
ME INTO
TROUBLE.

WORD'S SPREADING ABOUT THE INCIDENT AT SECURITY YESTERDAY. IN THE CAFE-TERIA, THEY'RE SAYING IF YOU'RE INVOLVED, THE OLD MAN MUST BE A **VAMPIRE**.

DOCTOR MIKHAIL ALEKSEEV. HIS MOTHER WAS **MURDERED** IN THE 1930s. SAM CHANEY WAS INVOLVED IN THE CASE.



HE THOUGHT SAM WAS STILL **ALIVE**. POOR GUY'S A LITTLE **MUDDLED**.

HE'S ALSO **OBSESSED**. HE GAVE ME THIS BOOK AND A FEW OTHERS.

YOU THINK WE'LL EVER **CURE** OLD AGE, SCULLY?

WELL, THERE'S AN **ADRENAL** HORMONE CALLED **DHEA** WHICH CONTROLS A NUMBER OF HORMONES LINKED TO AGING. ITS PRODUCTION SLOWS DOWN AFTER AGE **THIRTY**.

DAILY DOSES OF **DHEA** HAVE **IMPROVED** WELL-BEING, INCREASED **MOBILITY**, AND LED TO LESS JOINT PAIN AND **SOUNDER SLEEP** IN THE **ELDERLY**.



...BUT I SUSPECT IT'S NOT THE KEY TO **IMMORTALITY**.

WHAT IF SOMEONE
SUGGESTED TO YOU
THAT THE PROBLEM
OF AGING HAD
BEEN SOLVED A
LONG TIME AGO.

I'D SAY THAT
THE SOMEONE
MUST BE YOU,
MULDER.

IN THE 1750s, A COMTE DE SAINT-
GERMAIN APPEARED IN VIENNA. NO
ONE KNEW WHERE HE CAME FROM,
BUT ALL AGREED HE WAS AN
UNUSUAL MAN.



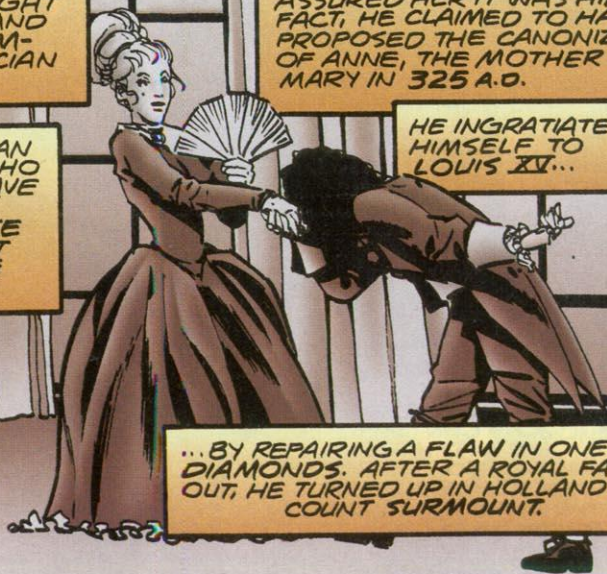
HE CARRIED LOOSE
DIAMONDS INSTEAD
OF CASH, SPOKE
FLUENTLY IN EIGHT
LANGUAGES, AND
WAS AN ACCOM-
PLISHED MUSICIAN
AND PAINTER.

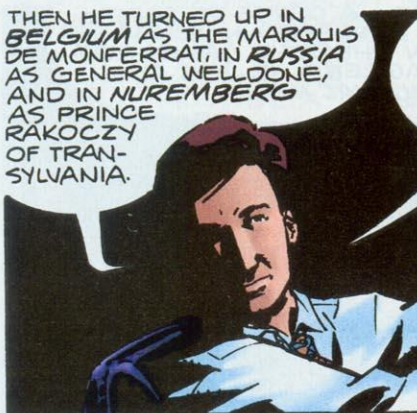
HE WAS ALSO AN
ALCHEMIST WHO
CLAIMED TO HAVE
FOUND THE
ELIXIR OF LIFE
--A FLUID THAT
EXTENDS LIFE
INDEFINITELY.

A COUNTESS THOUGHT SHE'D
MET HIS FATHER DECADES
EARLIER, BUT THE COMTE
ASSURED HER IT WAS HIM, IN
FACT, HE CLAIMED TO HAVE
PROPOSED THE CANONIZATION
OF ANNE, THE MOTHER OF
MARY IN 325 A.D.

HE INGRATIATED
HIMSELF TO
LOUIS XV...

...BY REPAIRING A FLAW IN ONE OF HIS
DIAMONDS. AFTER A ROYAL FALLING
OUT, HE TURNED UP IN HOLLAND AS
COUNT SURMOUNT.





THEN HE TURNED UP IN BELGIUM AS THE MARQUIS DE MONFERRAT, IN RUSSIA AS GENERAL WELLDONE, AND IN NUREMBERG AS PRINCE RAKOCZY OF TRANSYLVANIA.

SOME BELIEVE HE DIED IN 1779, BUT AFTER HIS REPORTED DEATH, HE WARNED MARIE ANTOINETTE ABOUT THE COMING FRENCH REVOLUTION. IN HER DIARIES, SHE REGRETS NOT TAKING NOTE OF WHAT HE'D SAID.



HE WAS SEEN IN WILHELMSBAD IN 1785, IN SWEDEN IN 1789, AND IN FRANCE IN 1820 WHERE HE STILL APPARENTLY LOOKED LIKE A YOUNG MAN.

IN THE 20TH CENTURY, HE MAY HAVE AUTHORED TWO BOOKS ON ALCHEMY UNDER THE NAME FULCANELLI. AS RECENTLY AS JANUARY OF 1972, A RICHARD CHANFRAY APPEARED ON TELEVISION CLAIMING TO BE THE COUNT.



AND WHAT'S ALL THIS GOT TO DO WITH DOCTOR ALEKSEEV?

YOU'LL SEE.

HE'S WAITING FOR US IN INTERVIEW ROOM 6.

IT WAS OVER SIXTY YEARS AGO, BUT I STILL REMEMBER THE SHAPE OF THE DUST ON THE FLOOR.

SOMETIMES IT'S THE ONLY THING I CAN REMEMBER.

WHEN MY FATHER WAS KILLED BY STALIN, MY MOTHER AND I FLED TO THE STATES. SOME WEALTHY AMERICANS THREW A WELCOME PARTY FOR US.

HE WAS THERE, CHARMING, ALL EYES UPON HIM.

I QUITE AGREE WITH MARX THAT POLITICS AND ECONOMICS ARE MATTERS OF EVOLUTION.

WHAT THE COMMUNISTS DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND...

...IS THAT EVOLUTION ISN'T SOMETHING YOU CAN CONTROL BY TYRANNY.

IF YOU THROW RATS OFF A CLIFF, YOU DON'T GET FLYING RATS.

YOU GET DEAD ONES.

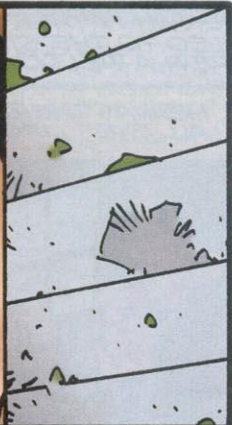
MOTHER WAS
ENRAPTURED.

I WAS FRIGHT-
ENED, SO I
FOLLOWED.



AS I STARED, HE
SNAPPED HER
NECK, THEN
STUCK A LONG,
THIN NEEDLE
INTO HER
LOWER BACK.

I WAS SO
TERRIFIED,
I COULDN'T
MOVE. I
WISH I COULD
HAVE--I
WOULD HAVE
KILLED HIM.



THERE WERE OTHER
DEATHS, BUT NO ONE
WAS EVER CAUGHT.
THE STRANGER WAS
NEVER SEEN
AGAIN.

UNTIL FIVE
DAYS AGO, WHEN
BETH WAS
KILLED.

I SAW
HIM
AGAIN.



"BUT NO ONE WOULD
BELIEVE ME."

"I BEGGED
THE POLICE
TO CHECK
HER LOWER
BACK, TO
SEE IF THERE
WAS AN
INCISION."

"BUT THEY
THOUGHT I
WAS JUST
OLD."



WEDNESDAY, 3 P.M.



"OLD AND
INSANE."





MULDER,
DOCTOR
ALEKSEEV
WAS
RIGHT.



A SMALL
PIECE OF HER
ADRENAL GLAND
WAS REMOVED,
PROBABLY WITH
A NEPHROSCOPE.

I WENT THROUGH CHANEY'S
OLD FILES, BUT THEY'RE USE-
LESS. ALEKSEEV'S MOTHER
WAS THE LAST VICTIM, AND
THEY DIDN'T CHECK THE
EARLIER ONES FOR
INCISIONS.

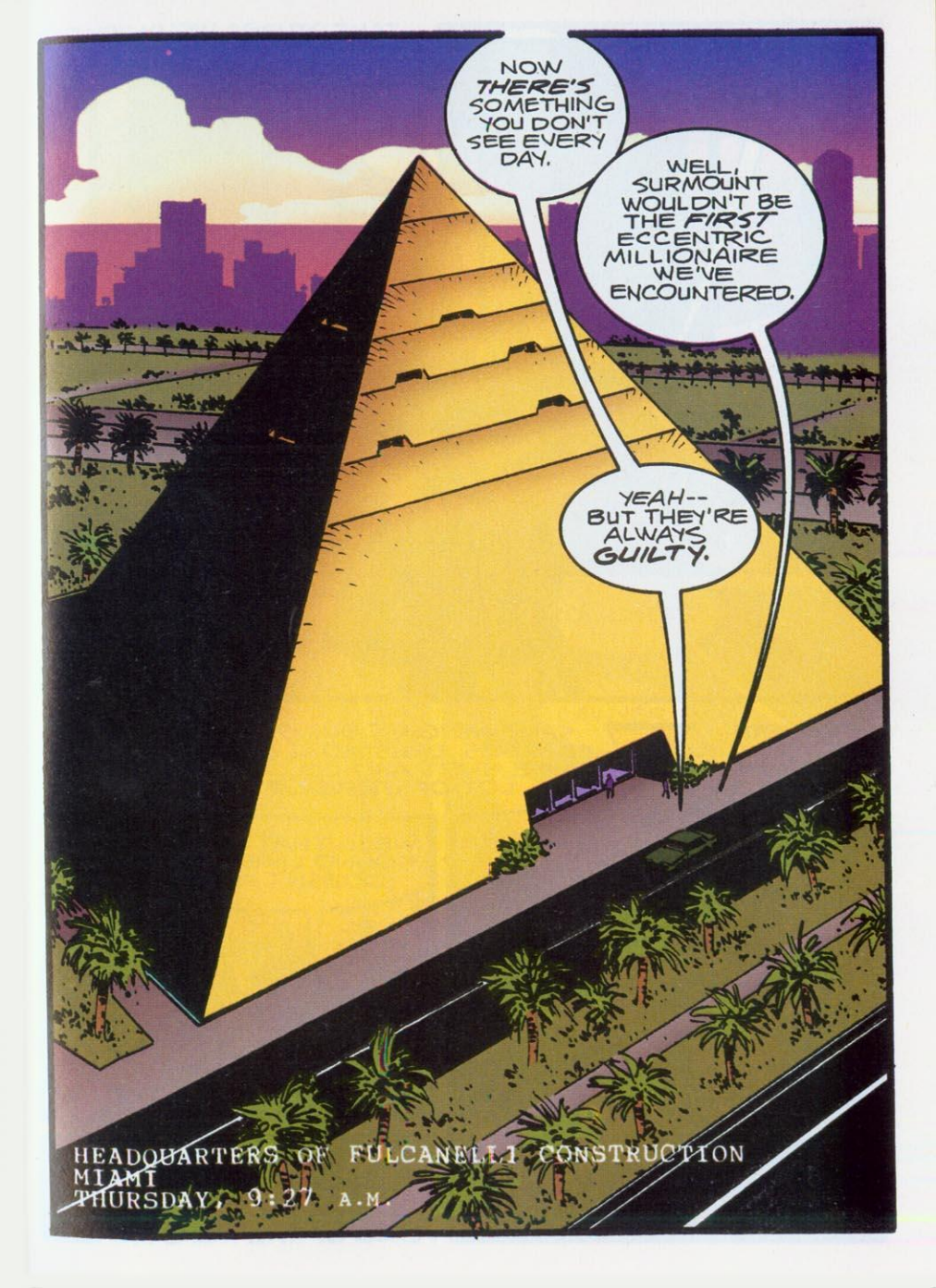


RUNNING
THAT COMPOSITE
SKETCH THROUGH THE
SYSTEM TURNED UP SOME-
THING INTERESTING, THOUGH.



I GIVE
YOU THE
COMTE DE
SAINT-
GERMAIN.

OR AT LEAST
SOMEONE
WHO MAY
THINK HE'S
THE COMTE.

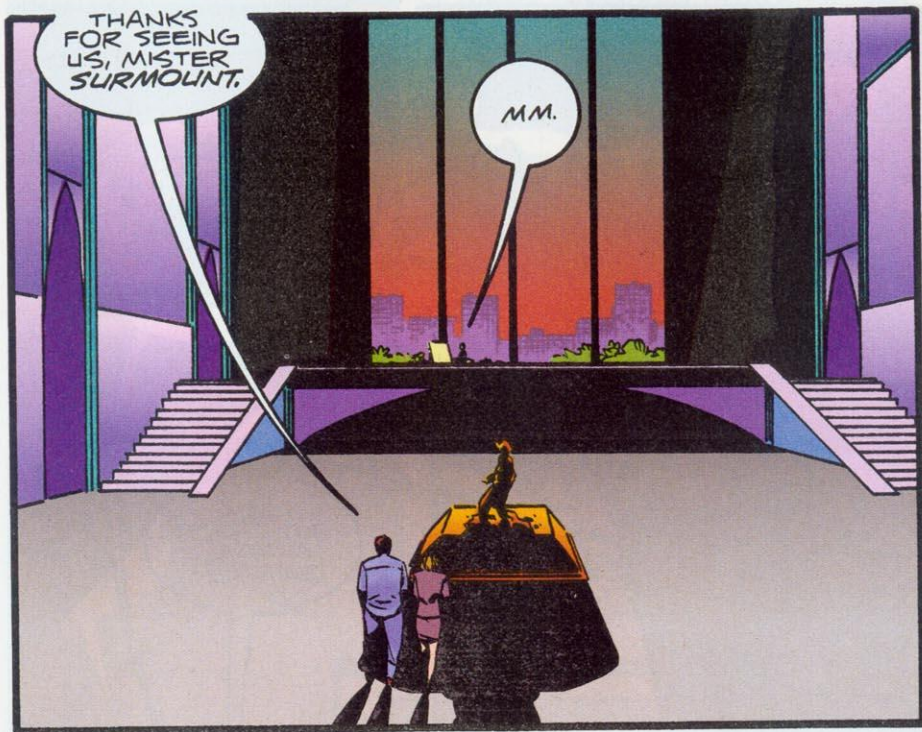


NOW
THERE'S
SOMETHING
YOU DON'T
SEE EVERY
DAY.

WELL,
SURMOUNT
WOULDN'T BE
THE *FIRST*
ECCENTRIC
MILLIONAIRE
WE'VE
ENCOUNTERED.

YEAH--
BUT THEY'RE
ALWAYS
GUILTY.

HEADQUARTERS OF FULCANELLI CONSTRUCTION
MIAMI
THURSDAY, 9:27 A.M.



THANKS
FOR SEEING
US, MISTER
SURMOUNT.

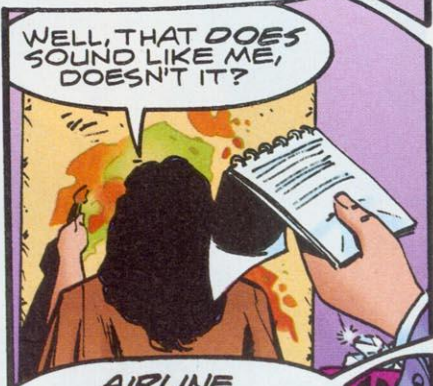
M.M.

WE'RE HERE
BECAUSE YOUR
DESCRIPTION
MATCHES THAT
OF A **MURDER**
SUSPECT WE'RE
LOOKING FOR.

OH?

SAME **HEIGHT**, BUILD, AND **FACIAL**
FEATURES. DRESSED IN **BLACK** WITH
WHITE SHIRT AND COLLAR--AND A
LOT OF **JEWELRY**.

WELL, THAT **DOES**
SOUND LIKE ME,
DOESN'T IT?



AIRLINE
RECORDS SHOW YOU
WERE IN **ST. AUGUSTINE**
A FEW DAYS AGO--THE
PLACE OF THE **MURDER**.

DID YOU KNOW, AGENTS, THAT THE ART DECO STYLE IS BASED ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF ANCIENT EGYPT? WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND, I GUESS.

SIR, THESE ARE VERY **SERIOUS** CHARGES.

NOT REALLY.



I DON'T **UNDER-
STAND.**

NO, YOU DON'T. **BUT YOU WILL.**

AS ONE GETS OLDER, ONE'S SENSE OF **IMPORT** SHIFTS. IN FACT, IT'S REALLY ONLY **RECENTLY** THAT I'VE STARTED TO CONCENTRATE ON THE THINGS THAT **REALLY** MATTER.



LOVE AND PIETY?

I WAS THINKING MORE OF **WEALTH** AND **POWER.**

IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, I SUGGEST YOU CONTACT MY **SOLICITOR.**

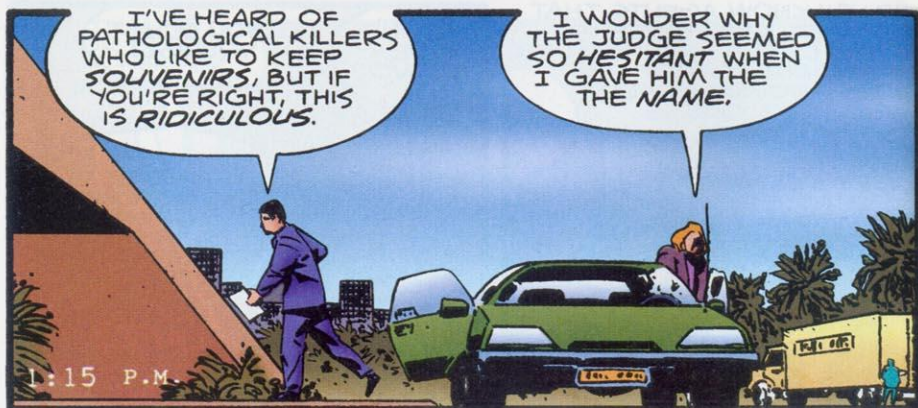


SOLICITOR?

LAWYER.

HE'S **RIGHT.** LET'S GO, **MULDER.**







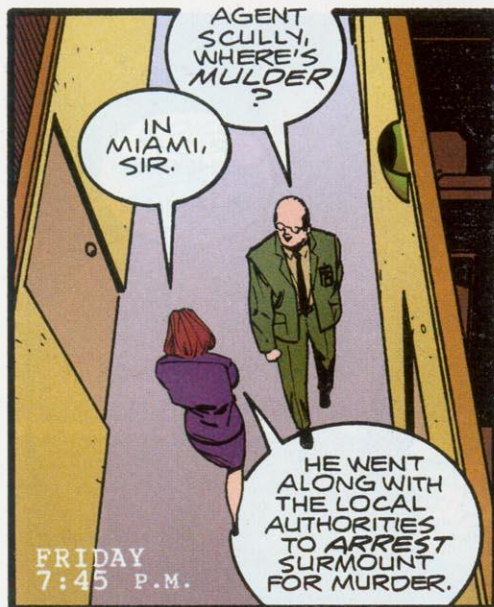
"SCULLY, IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THEM, I'D SAY YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE JUST SEEN A GHOST."



"RIGHT NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BELIEVE, MULDER."



"THE BODY, IT'S NOT JUST COVERED IN GOLD. THE GOLD SEEMS TO HAVE REPLACED THE EPIDERMIS."



FRIDAY
7:45 P.M.

HE WENT
ALONG WITH
THE LOCAL
AUTHORITIES
TO **ARREST**
SURMOUNT
FOR MURDER.

THERE ARE
SOME *PEOPLE*
I'D LIKE YOU
TO MEET.







I KNOW HOW THIS MUST *SEEM*, BUT TRY TO PUT IT IN *PER-SPECTIVE*.

YOUR VICTIM WAS A STREET HOOD AND A DRUG DEALER.

HOW CAN YOU COMPARE THE LOSS OF ONE PETTY CRIMINAL'S LIFE TO PEACE IN EUROPE?

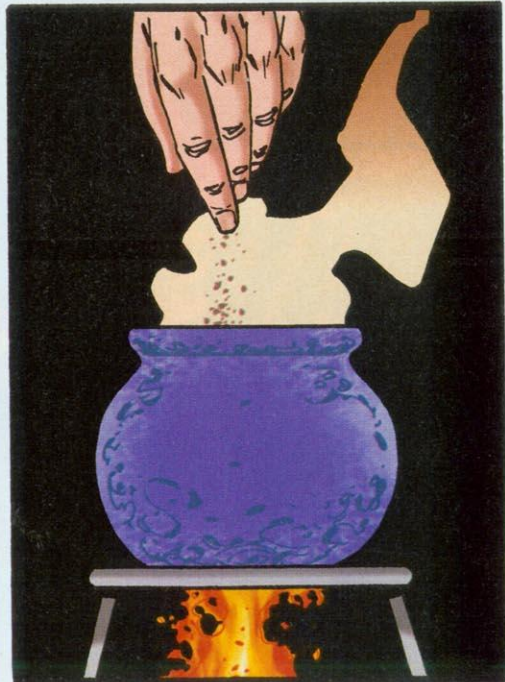
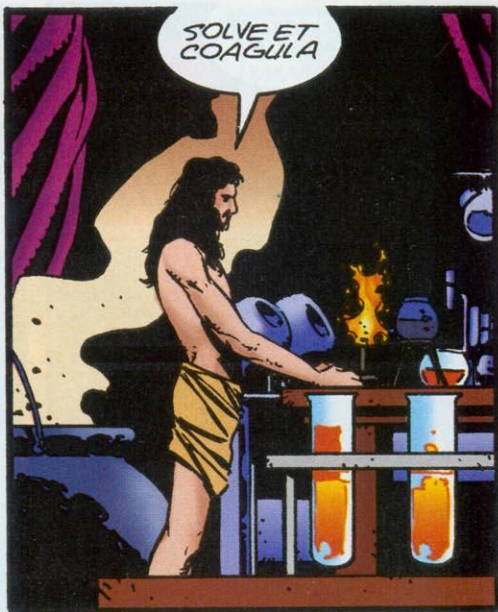
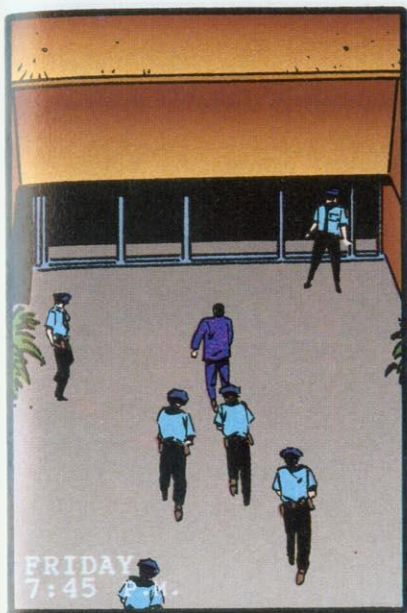
YOU CAN'T LET THEM DO THIS!

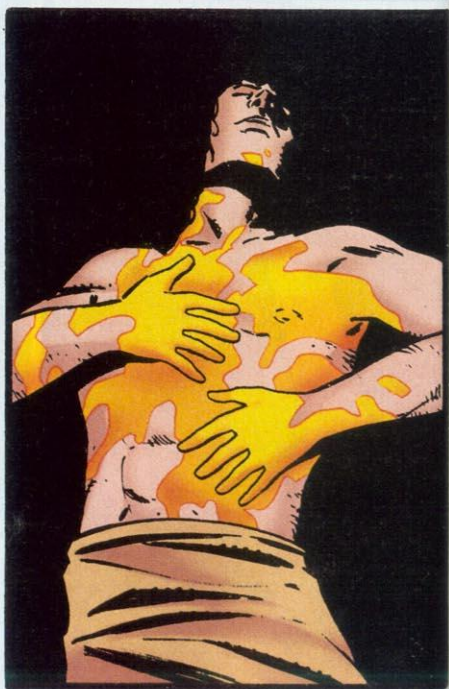
WE'LL HAVE TO CONTACT MULDER AND SEE TO SURMOUNT'S RELEASE.



I'M SORRY, BUT THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO.







SURMOUNT,
YOU'RE UNDER
ARREST.

YOU HAVE SUCH
A *SUPERFICIAL*
UNDERSTANDING
OF THINGS,
AGENT
MULDER.

IN ALCHEMY,
GOLD AND
IMMORTALITY
ARE *META-
PHORS*.



WITH EACH STEP
OF THE GREAT
WORK COMES A
SPIRITUAL
CHANGE.

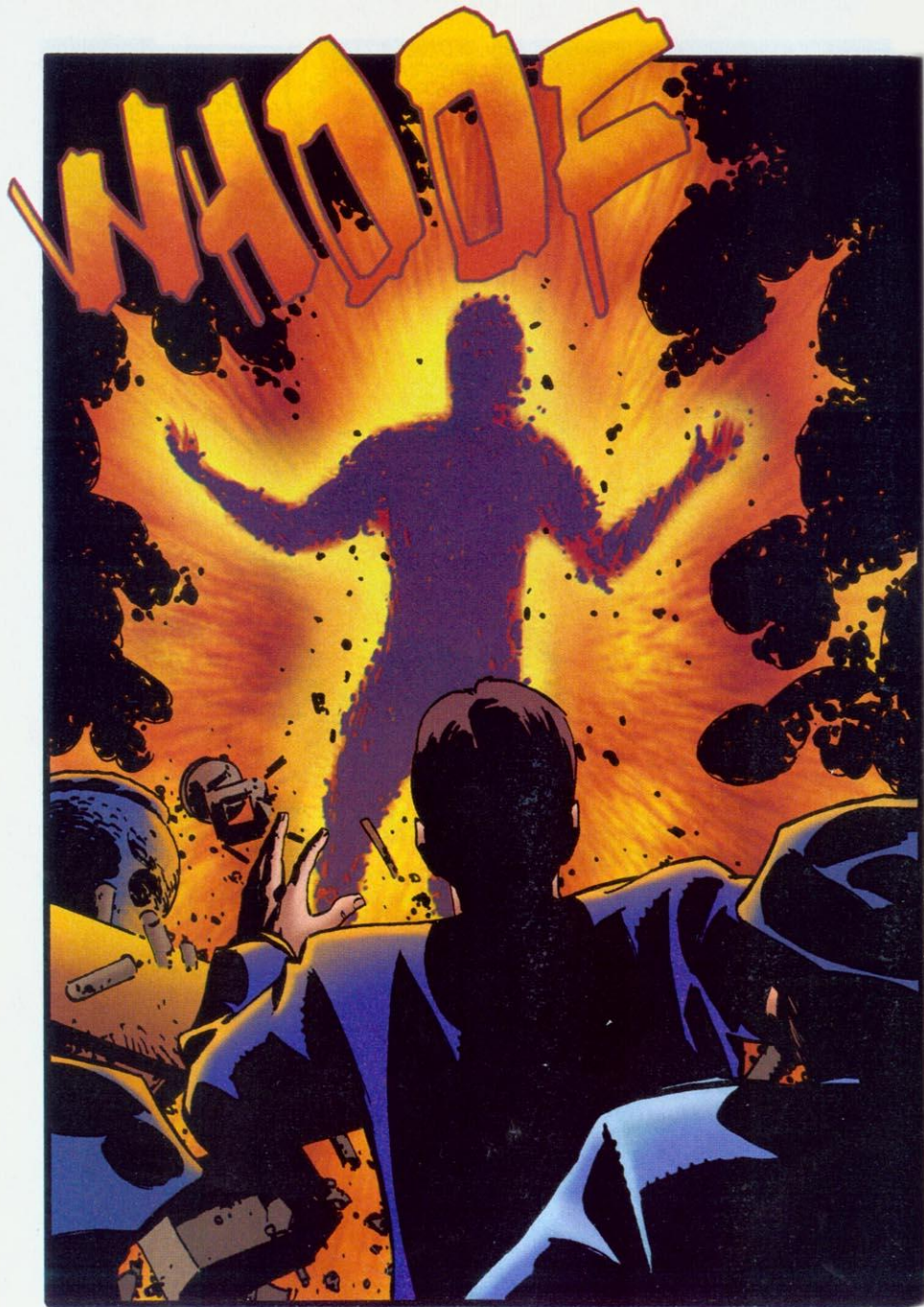
UNTIL, IN THE
FINAL
STAGE,
THE KING IS
RE-UNITED
IN THE
FIRE OF
LOVE
WITH HIS
BLESSED
QUEEN.



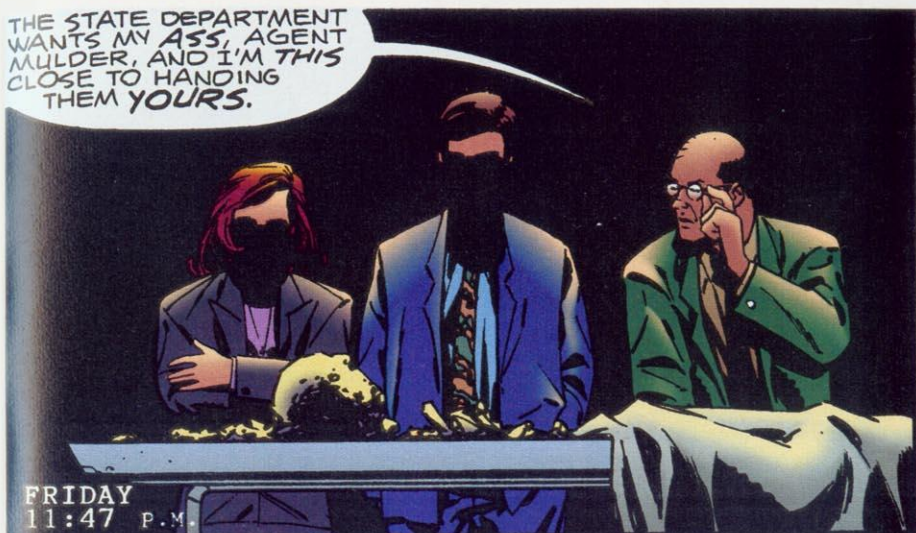
*SOLVE ET
COAGULA.*

DISSOLVE
AND
COMBINE.





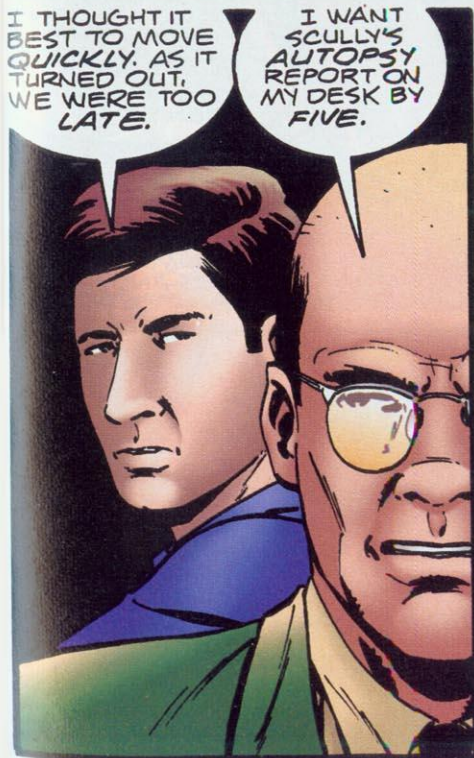
THE STATE DEPARTMENT
WANTS MY ASS, AGENT
MULDER, AND I'M THIS
CLOSE TO HANDING
THEM YOURS.



FRIDAY
11:47 P.M.

I THOUGHT IT
BEST TO MOVE
QUICKLY. AS IT
TURNED OUT,
WE WERE TOO
LATE.

I WANT
SCULLY'S
AUTOPSY
REPORT ON
MY DESK BY
FIVE.



SIR, HE
WAS A
MURDERER.

I KNOW
THAT,
AGENT
MULDER.



WERE YOU
ABLE TO
IDENTIFY
THE
BODY?

TELL ME YOU
KNOW FOR
CERTAIN
THAT IT
WAS HIM.

5:10 P.M.

I'M AFRAID THE
TRUTH ISN'T THAT
SIMPLE.

MISTER SURMOUNT
WAS INVOLVED IN
SOME HIGH SECUR
ITY DIPLOMATIC
MISSIONS. AS A
RESULT, I CAN'T
ACCESS THE
DENTAL RECORDS
THAT WOULD
CONFIRM HIS
IDENTITY.

I CAN
TELL YOU
THAT THOSE
ARE HUMAN
ASHES AND
HUMAN TEETH.

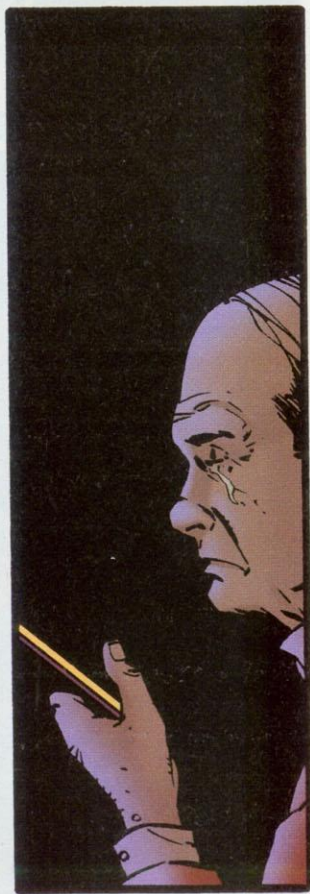
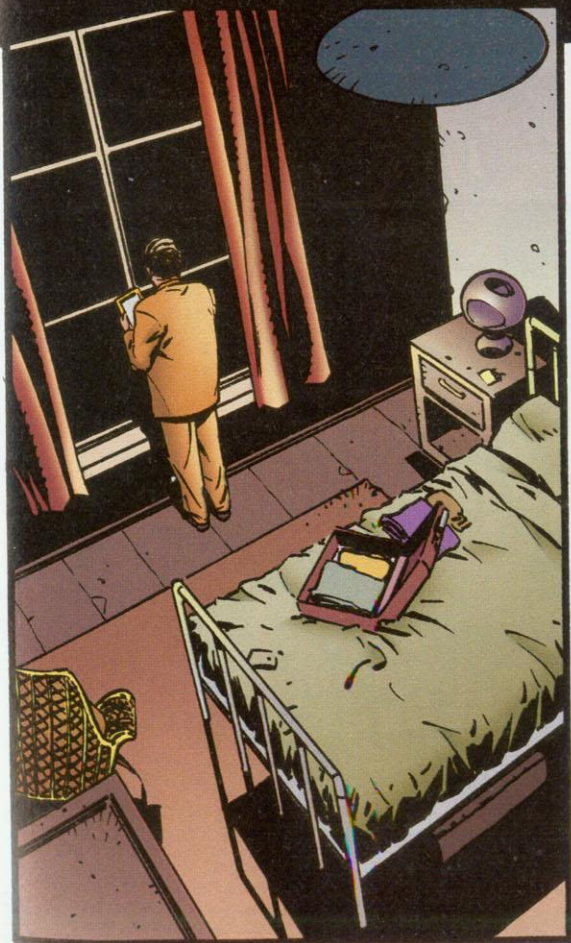
HE'S ALREADY
DIED A DOZEN
TIMES.

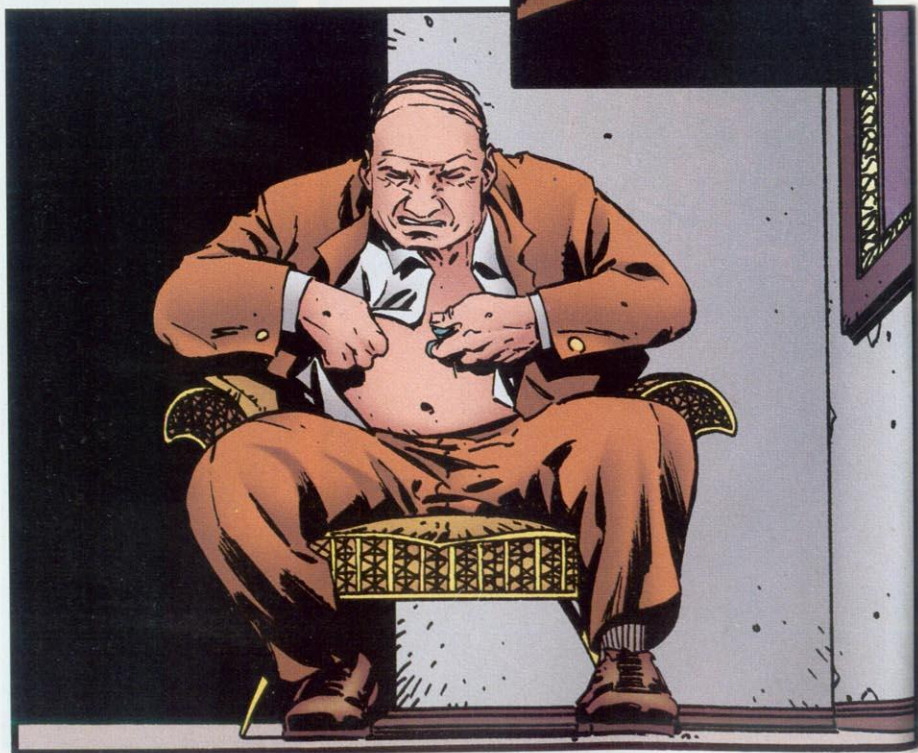
IT MUST
HAVE BEEN
A TRICK.

HE'S
ALIVE.

11:40 P.M.

THE PONCE DE LEON RETIREMENT COMMUNITY





YOUNG MAN, I
REALIZE I'VE
CAUSED YOU
SOME PAIN. I
WANT YOU TO
KNOW IT HASN'T
BEEN FOR
NAUGHT.

YOU SEE, THE
GOAL OF THE
ALCHEMIST IS
TO BE RE-BORN
IN A MANNER COM-
BINING BOTH
THE MASCULINE
AND FEMININE
PRINCIPLES...



THANKS TO
THE SACRIFICE OF
YOUR FAMILY AND
FRIEND, I ALMOST
MADE IT THIS TIME.

ANOTHER HUNDRED
YEARS AND I SHOULD
HAVE THE FORMULA
PERFECTED.

MEANWHILE, I
REQUIRE MORE
ELIXIR.

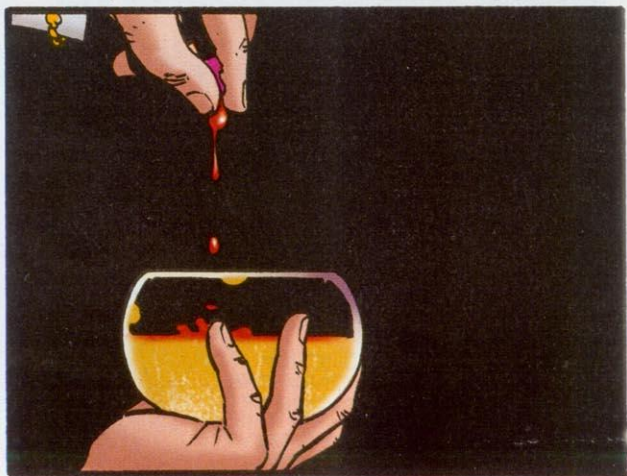
IT'S BEEN DECADES
SINCE I COULD FIND
A SUBJECT AS SUIT-
ABLE AS YOUR
MOTHER...

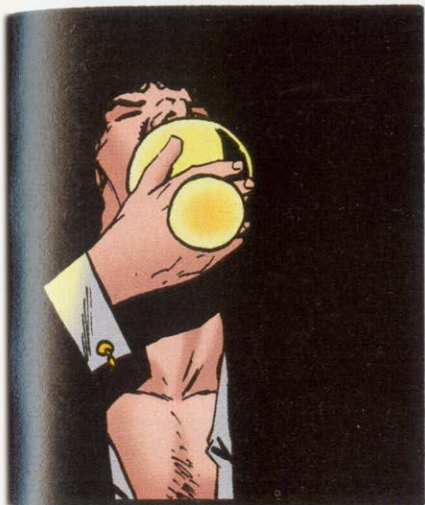


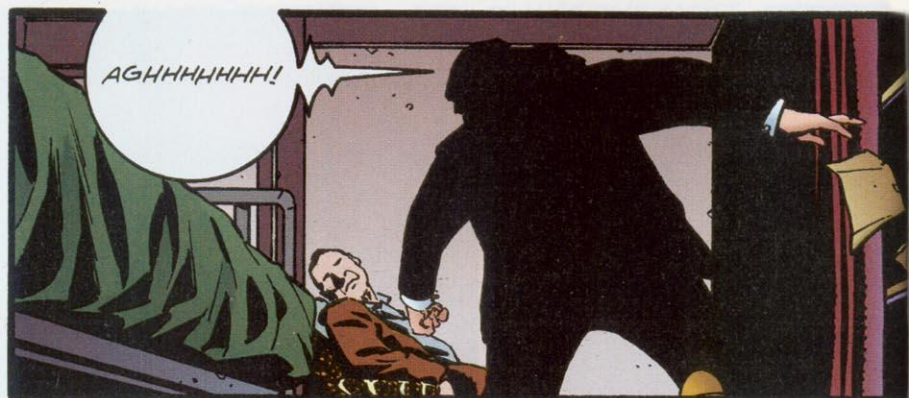
BUT
I'VE BEEN
DABBLING
IN THIS
CHARMING
NEW SCIENCE
THAT I'VE
FOUND MOST
HELPFUL.

WHAT WAS
THE NAME
AGAIN?

AH, YES,
GENETICS.







I SAW SURMOUNT **BURN** TO
DEATH, SCULLY, NO **STRINGS**,
NO FALSE DOORS, NO MIRRORS,
NO BILL BIXBY.



WE FOUND **THIS**
OUTSIDE, AGENT.
YOUR NAME'S
ON IT.

HE'D BETTER
HOPE HE'S
AN EQUALLY
GOOD
HEALER.

LOOK
AT
THIS.



MY GOD, MULDER, NECRO-
TIZING FASCIITIS IS ALSO
KNOWN AS FLESH-EATING
BACTERIA!

IF IT'S A
NEW FORM,
WE'VE GOT
TO FIND
SURMOUNT
BEFORE HE
CAN INFECTION
OTHERS!

thirty years to
develop a highly
contagious form
of necrotizing
fasciitis which
I have now induced
in myself. It will
rot him to the
bone. Beware of
our blood and be
sure you burn both
our bodies.



ONE PROBLEM,
SCULLY. HOW DO
YOU FIND A
DEAD MAN?

ENDLESS DAYS
CEMETERY
3:20 P.M.

SURMOUNT
NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM



IF IT WAS A TRICK,
WHY STEAL THE
BURNT
REMAINS?

PROBABLY JUST TO AVOID
LATER IDENTIFICATION IN
CASE HIS RECORDS EVER
WERE RELEASED.



OKAY, THEN WHY LEAVE A
CELLULAR PHONE IN THE
COFFIN?

IN CASE THE
BURNT REMAINS
GET LONELY?

HONESTLY,
MULDER,
GRAVE
ROBBERS ARE
GENERALLY
IN A
HURRY--

--IT COULD
EASILY
HAVE BEEN
DROPPED.

WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?

HITTING
LAST
NUMBER
RE-
DIAL.

IT'LL PROBABLY
BE THE DEAD
LETTER OFFICE.

FULCANELLI
CONSTRUCTION.

SAL
SPEAKING.

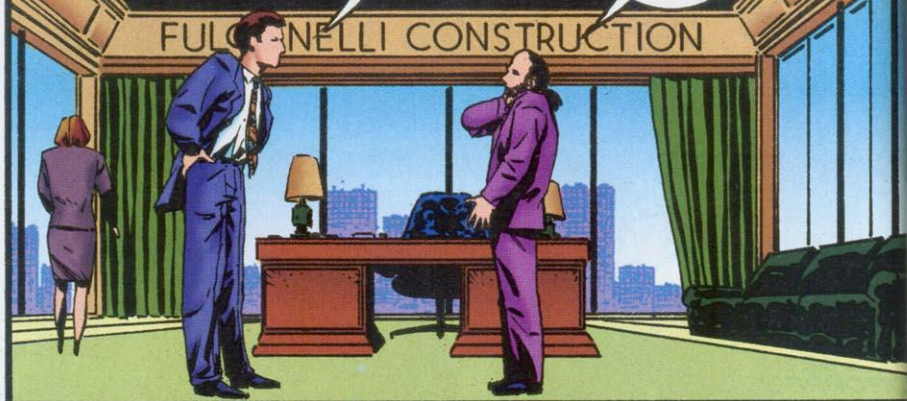
FULCANELLI CONSTRUCTION

AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA
HOW THAT PHONE GOT
INTO SURMOUNT'S
EMPTY GRAVE?

OR WHY YOUR
LINE WAS THE LAST
NUMBER CALLED?

NONE
WHATSO-
EVER.

FULCONELLI CONSTRUCTION



HE'S LYING, BUT
WE DON'T HAVE
ANY PROOF

AND THE STATE
DEPARTMENT'S
BLOCKING
ACCESS TO ANY OF
SURMOUNT'S
RECORDS.



BY NOW,
HE MAY
WELL HAVE AN
ENTIRE NEW
IDENTITY. IT'LL
BE IMPOSSIBLE
TO TRACE HIM.

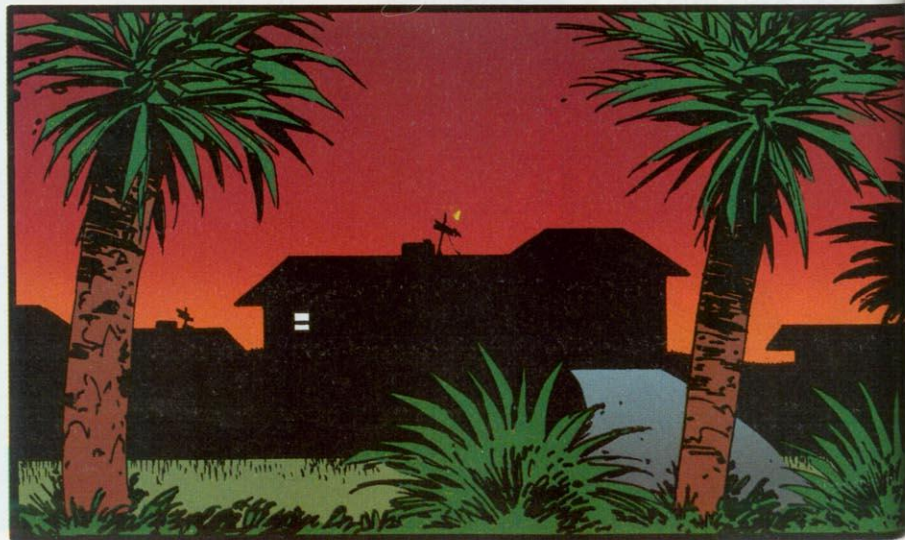
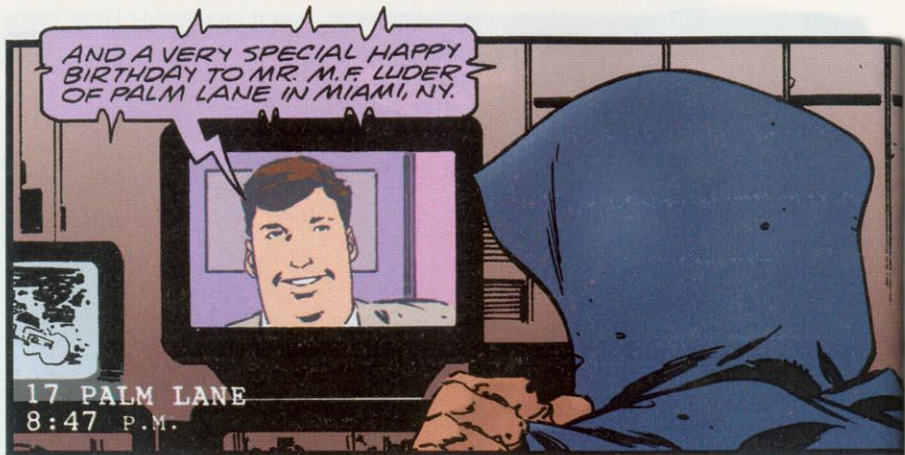
MULDER, HE'S A DEAD
MAN. THAT BACTERIA
CONSUMED HALF OF
ALEKSEEV'S BODY BE-
FORE WE WERE ABLE
TO STOP IT--EPIDERMIS,
FAT, MUSCLE, EVERY-
THING.

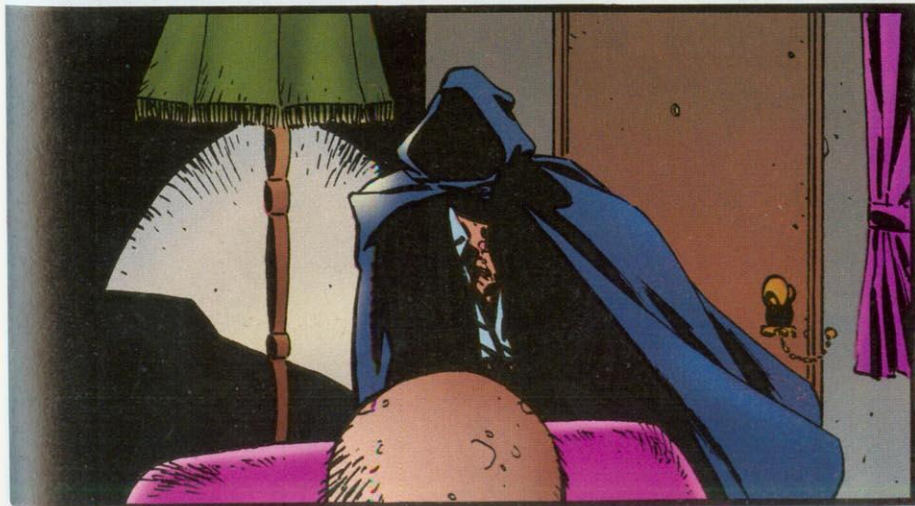
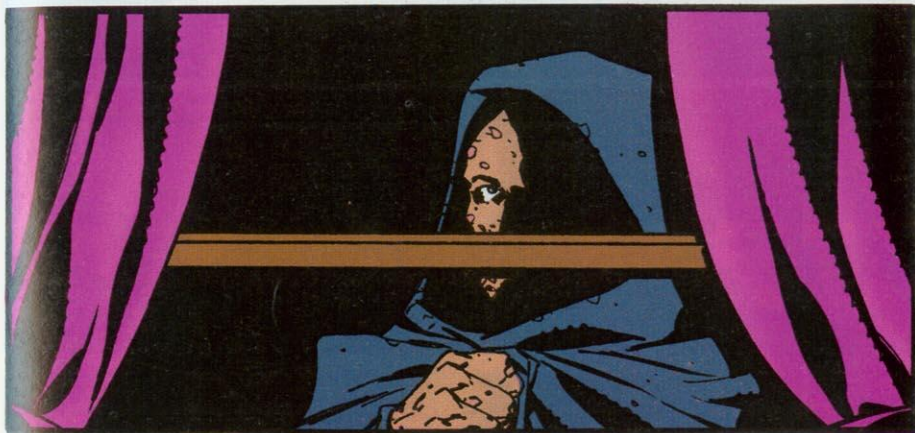
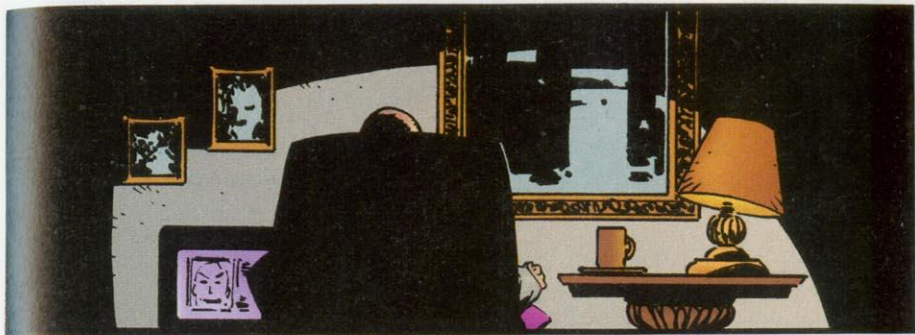
MY ONLY CONCERN
IS THAT WE REACH
HIM BEFORE HE
INFECTS...



...OR KILLS
ANYONE ELSE.







A comic book panel showing Agent Mulder in a blue shirt, holding a handgun. He is looking towards the right. In the background, a lamp with a red shade is visible.

AREN'T YOU GOING TO WISH ME A HAPPY BIRTHDAY?

AGENT MULDER. YOU LOOK YOUNG FOR YOUR AGE.

WISH I COULD STILL SAY THE SAME FOR YOU.

A comic book panel showing Agent Mulder from the chest up, looking down with a somber expression. He is holding the handgun in his right hand.

YOU'RE A MAN OF SOME WIT-- PERHAPS YOU'LL APPRECIATE THIS. IF YOU MAKE FUN OF SOMETHING SMALL AND PETTY, YOU DESTROY IT.

BUT IF YOU MAKE FUN OF SOMETHING GREAT, YOU ONLY END UP REVEALING ITS GREATNESS.

A large comic book panel featuring a close-up of Agent Mulder's face. He has a pained or intense expression, with visible sweat or blood on his forehead. The background is dark.

THAT'S HOW LIFE TREATS US ALL. IT MAKES FUN OF US. THE WEAK AND PETTY ARE DESTROYED-- THE GREAT REVEALED.

AND WHICH DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

I'M AFRAID I HAVE NO IDEA.

I THINK
I HAVE
AN IDEA.



ONE OR TWO OF
THEM MIGHT EVEN
BE CORRECT!



MULDER!

DON'T TOUCH
HIS BLOOD!
WE CAN'T
CURE IT!



I'M
SURE
YOU DO,
AGENT
MULDER.

IN FACT,
I'M SURE YOU
HAVE A GREAT
MANY IDEAS.





DON'T
LISTEN
TO HER,
AGENT.

THERE'S
ALWAYS
A CURE.

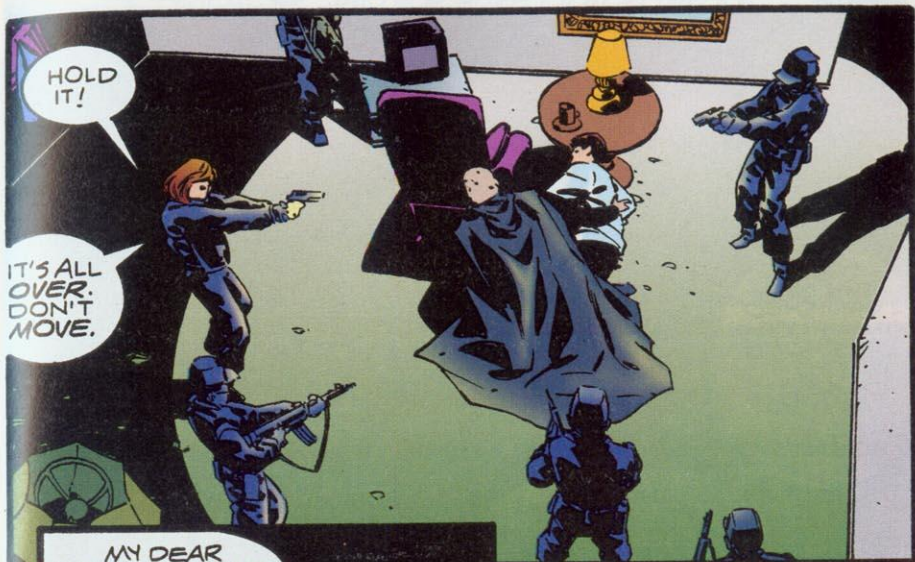
I'VE ALREADY
MANAGED TO
SLOW THE
BACTERIA'S
RATE OF
CONSUMP-
TION.

I'LL PROBABLY
SOLVE THE
PROBLEM
MYSELF...

...IN A
DECADE
OR SO.



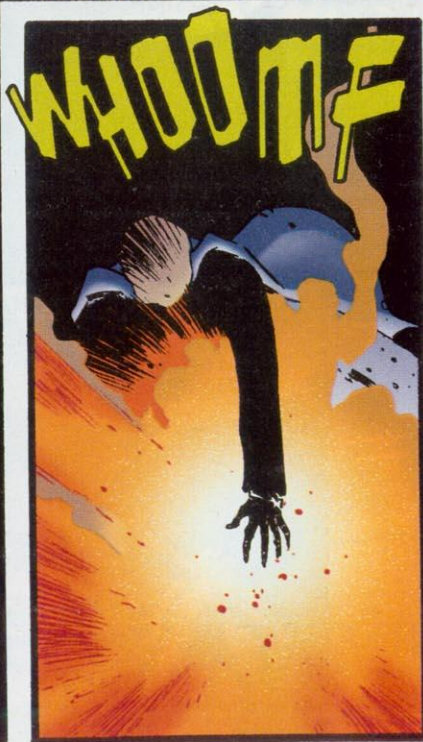
UNGH!



MY DEAR
MADEMOISELLE.

SURELY
YOU SHOULD
HAVE LEARNED
BY NOW...

...THAT
NOTHING
IS EVER
OVER.





SCULLY,
THE MAN
VANISHED
IN A PUFF
OF *SMOKE*
IN FRONT
OF SEVEN
ARMED
FBI
AGENTS.

AND YOU
STILL THINK
THERE'S NOTHING
PRETERNATURAL
GOING ON?

TUESDAY
11:02 P.M.

I'VE SEEN *DISAPPEARING*
ACTS BEFORE. MY UNCLE
WAS AN AMATEUR
MAGICIAN,
REMEMBER?

WHAT
ABOUT
HIS *FACE*?
WAS YOUR
UNCLE THE
PHANTOM
OF THE
OPERA,
TOO?

SADLY, IT'S TYPICAL
OF NECROTIZING
FASCIITIS.

AND FOR PURE **ODIOUSNESS**,
I'VE SEEN **MUCH** WORSE IN SMITH'S
RECOGNIZABLE PATTERNS OF
HUMAN MALFORMATION.



WELL, NOTHING'S
HAPPENED **HERE**
YET.

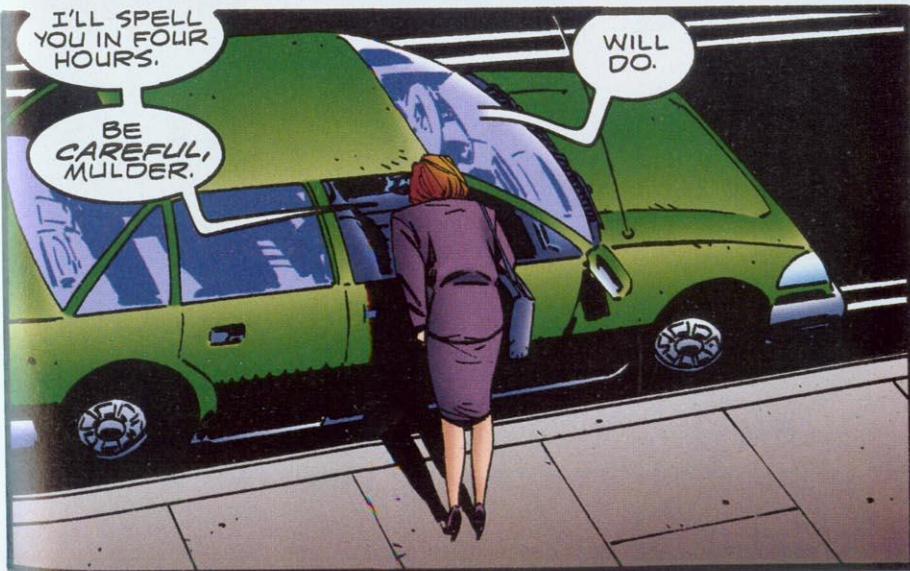
FOR ALL WE
KNOW, HE'S IN
THE **BAHAMAS**,
WORKING ON
WHAT'S LEFT
OF HIS
TAN.

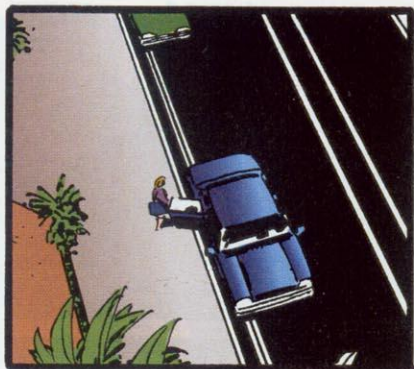


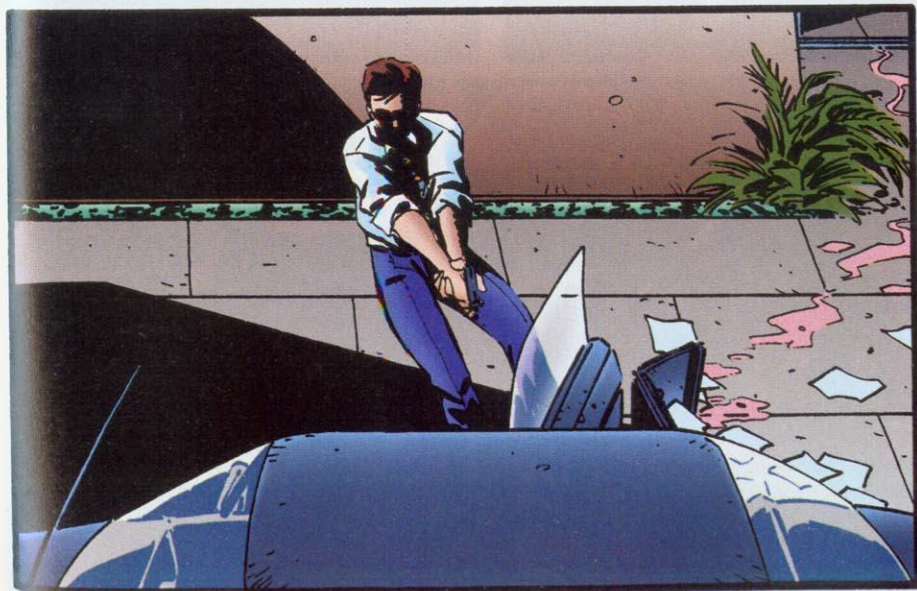
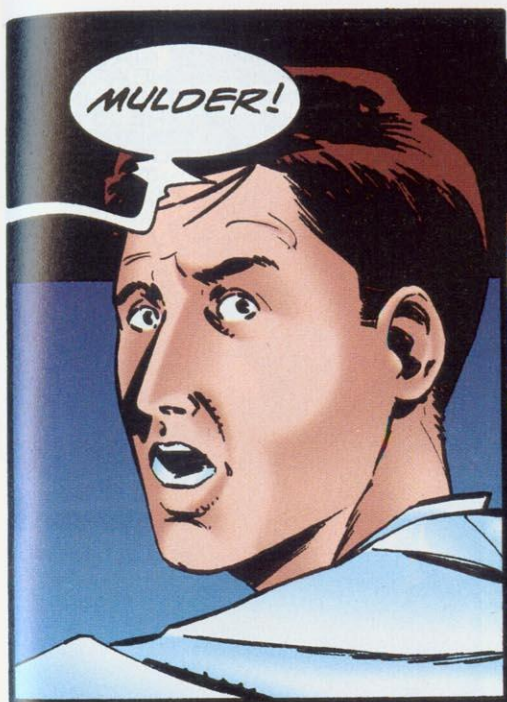
I'LL SPELL
YOU IN FOUR
HOURS.

BE
CAREFUL,
MULDER.

WILL
DO.







SURMOUNT,
YOU'VE GOT
TO GET TO A
HOSPITAL.

YOU'RE DYING,
BUT AT LEAST
THEY CAN EASE
SOME OF THE
PAIN.

ONE THING
ABOUT PAIN-
IT PROVES
YOU'RE
ALIVE.

I THINK I
FIRST
HEARD
THAT IN
THE 13TH
CENTURY...
DURING
THE
PLAGUE.



DON'T WORRY,
IT'S NOT IN MY
INTEREST TO
INFECT YOU.

TOO MUCH
OF MY VITAL
ESSENCE
HAS BEEN
CORRODED.

NOW THE ONLY WAY
TO ACHIEVE MY
LONG-SOUGHT-
AFTER GOAL IS
BY COMBINING
MYSELF WITH
YOU.

IF IT
WORKS,
WE'LL
ACHIEVE
THE
SUM
TOTAL
OF MAN'S
SPIRITUAL
EVOLU-
TION.



IF NOT,
WE'LL
DIE.

AND DON'T WORRY
ABOUT YOUR PARTNER
REACHING US. I'VE
SHUT DOWN THE
ONLY ELEVATOR
THAT CAN REACH
MY PENTHOUSE.

AND I'M AFRAID THAT'S
THE ONLY WAY IN.



UNLESS YOU WANT TO
COUNT THE EMERGENCY
DOOR, BUT I BELIEVE
IT'S MADE OF THREE-
INCH THICK STEEL.
QUITE STURDY.

PENTHOUSE
EMERGENCY
ACCESS ONLY



I WANT YOU TO
UNDERSTAND MY
MOTIVES.

ALL OF WESTERN
LAW *INSISTS* ON THE
PETTY NOTION THAT
ALL LIVES ARE
EQUAL.

BUT
THEY'RE
NOT!

INTERESTING
ARGUMENT--
BUT I DON'T
THINK *SHAKE-
SPEARE*
WOULD MAKE
IT.

YOU'RE QUITE
LOVELY, YOU
KNOW.

IN FACT, YOU
REMINDE ME OF A
STATUE OF
PRUDENCE AT
THE TOMB OF
FRANCOIS II IN
THE NANTES
CATHEDRAL.

DON'T
YOU SEE
HOW **IN-
VALUABLE**
MY
CENTURIES
OF EXPER-
IENCE
MAKES
ME?

THE LIFE
OF ONE
WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE
IS WORTH
ANY **DOZEN**
OLD
WOMEN!

IT DEPICTS A YOUNG GIRL
WITH THE FACE OF A WISE
OLD MAN ON THE BACK
OF HER HEAD.

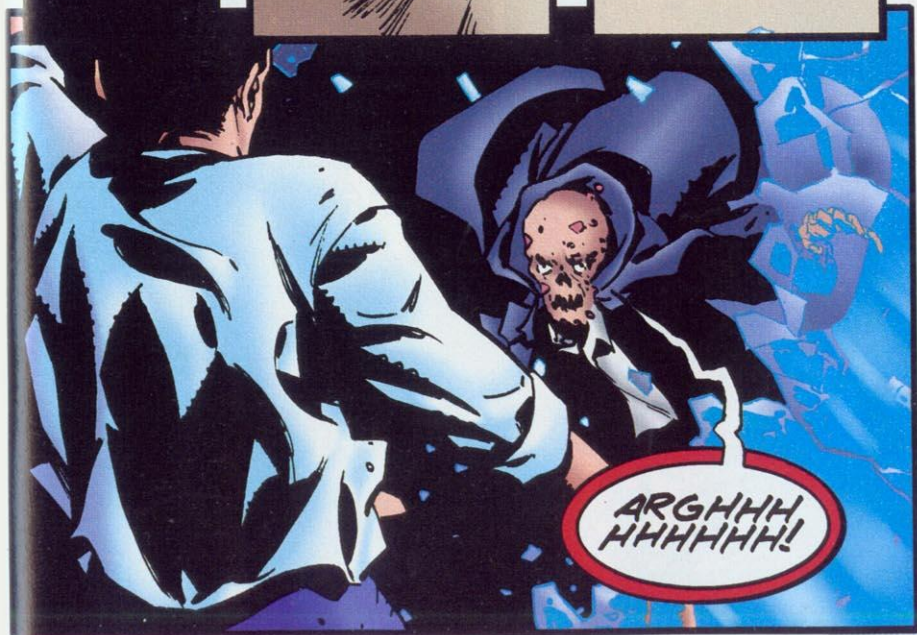
I'VE ALWAYS
BELIEVED THAT
STATUE REPRESENTS THE
FINAL STAGE
OF THE
ALCHEMICAL
PROCESS.

I AM THAT WISE OLD
MAN, AND YOU THAT
YOUNG GIRL.

SHAKESPEARE OR NOT, IN
MOMENTS I WILL BE AT THE
BACK OF YOUR HEAD...

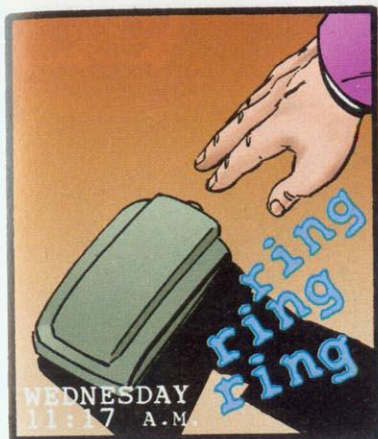
...FOREVER.





ARGHHH
HHHHHH!





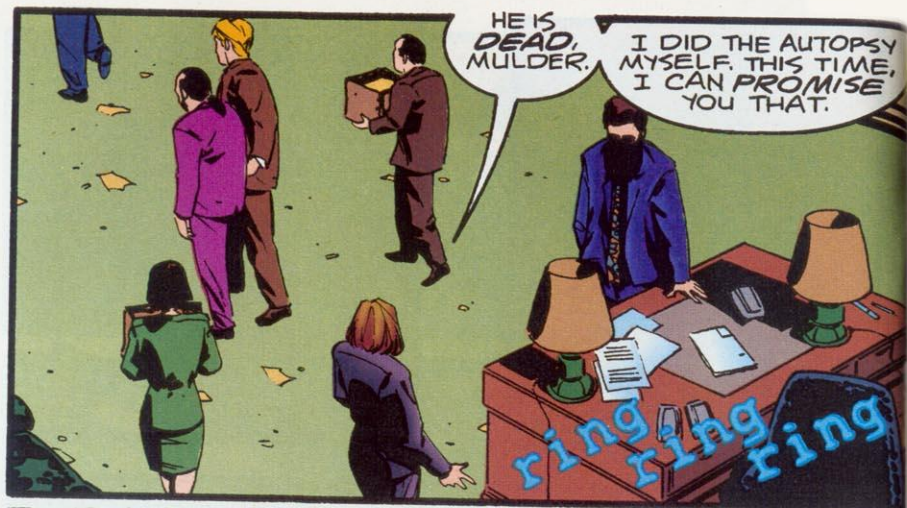
FUNNY
THING,
SAL.

WITH SURMOUNT *CONFIRMED*
DEAD, THE STATE DEPARTMENT
IS NO LONGER WILLING TO PRO-
TECT HIS *ESTATE*.

THE IRS IS SHUTTING YOU
DOWN FOR TAX EVASION. AS
THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE BOOKS, YOU'RE UNDER
ARREST.

THEY
WERE
NICE
ENOUGH
TO LET US
COME
ALONG AND
WATCH.





AUTUMN RED
LEAVES FLY.

8:10 P.M.

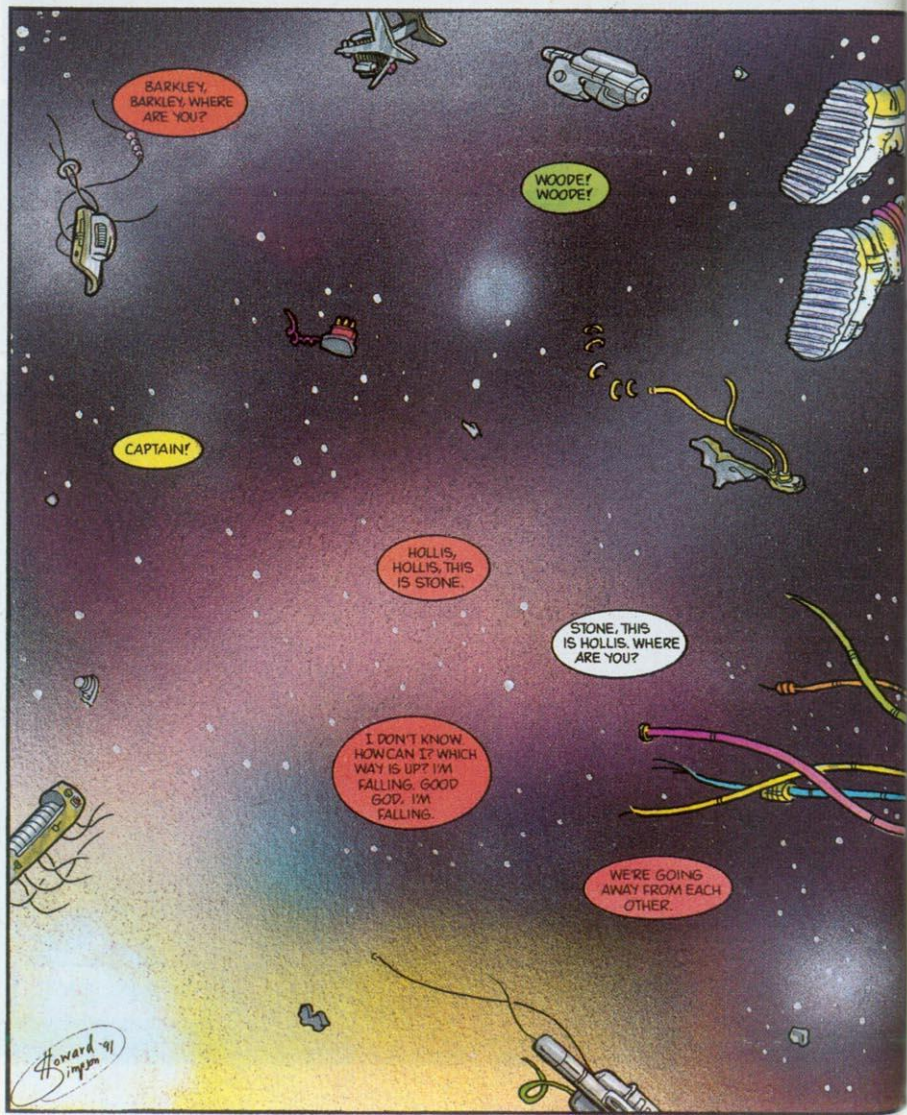
SURMOUNT
NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM

AS WIND STIRS
THE LIFELESS
RAIN.

A DEAD DOG'S
TAIL MOVES.

THE END

KALEIDOSCOPE



THIS WAS TRUE. HOLLIS KNEW THIS WAS TRUE. HE KNEW IT WITH A VAGUE ACCEPTANCE. THEY WERE PARTING TO GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS, AND NOTHING COULD BRING THEM BACK.

THEY WERE WEARING THEIR SEALED-TIGHT SPACE SUITS WITH THE PLASTIC TUBES OVER THEIR PALE FACES, BUT THEY HADN'T HAD TIME TO LOCK ON THEIR FORCE UNITS.

WITH THOSE EACH COULD BE A SMALL LIFEBOAT IN SPACE, SAVING HIMSELF, SAVING OTHERS, COLLECTING TOGETHER, FINDING EACH OTHER UNTIL THEY WERE AN ISLAND OF MEN WITH SOME PLAN.

BUT WITHOUT THE FORCE UNITS SNAPPED TO THEIR SHOULDERS THEY WERE METEORS, SENSELESS, EACH GOING TO A SEPARATE AND IRREVO CABLE FATE.

STONE TO HOLLIS.
HOW LONG CAN WE
TALK BY PHONE?

IT DEPENDS ON
HOW FAST YOU'RE GOING
YOUR WAY AND I'M
GOING MINE.

AN HOUR. I
MAKE IT.

THAT SHOULD
DO IT.

WHAT
HAPPENED?

THE SHIP BLEW
UP. THAT'S ALL.
SPACECRAFT DO
BLOW UP.

WHICH
WAY ARE YOU
GOING?

IT LOOKS LIKE
I'LL HIT THE
MOON.

IT'S EARTH FOR ME.
BACK TO OLD MOTHER
EARTH AT TEN THOUSAND
MILES PER HOUR. I'LL BURN
LIKE A MATCH.



THE OTHERS WERE SILENT, THINKING OF THE DESTINY THAT HAD BROUGHT THEM TO THIS. FALLING, AND NOTHING THEY COULD DO TO CHANGE IT. EVEN THE CAPTAIN WAS QUIET, FOR THERE WAS NO COMMAND OR PLAN HE KNEW THAT COULD PUT THINGS BACK TOGETHER AGAIN.



WHO'S THAT?

STIMSON, I THINK. STIMSON, IS THAT YOU?

STIMSON, THIS IS HOLLIS. STIMSON, YOU HEAR ME?

STIMSON?

STIMSON, TAKE IT EASY; WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME FIX.

THERE'S A CHANCE WE'LL BE FOUND.

SHUT UP!

APPLGATE! I WISH I COULD DO SOMETHING TO YOU!

OH, IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN, A LONG, LONG, LONG WAY DOWN. I DON'T WANT TO DIE. I DON'T WANT TO DIE... IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN.

IT'S A LONG, LONG WAY AND I DON'T LIKE IT. OH, GOD, I DON'T LIKE IT.

YES.

I DON'T WANT TO BE HERE. I WANT TO BE SOMEWHERE ELSE.

I MUST BE, I MUST BE. I DON'T BELIEVE THIS; I DON'T BELIEVE ANY OF THIS IS HAPPENING.

IT'S A BAD DREAM.

COME AND MAKE ME, HA, HA, HA, HA, COME AND SHUT ME UP.

I DON'T KNOW.



AAAAA

EEYUYAAAE EEE

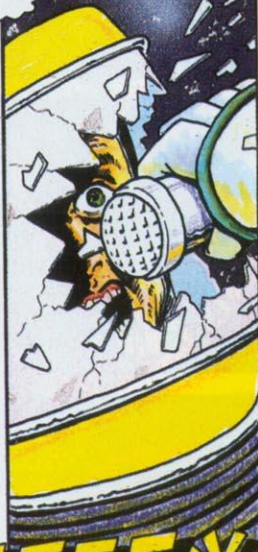
STOP
IT!



EEYUYAAAE EEEAAA

WE CAN'T TALK, IF
HE KEEPS SCREAMING!

THE MOON OR EARTH
OR METEORS WILL KILL HIM,
SO WHY NOT NOW?



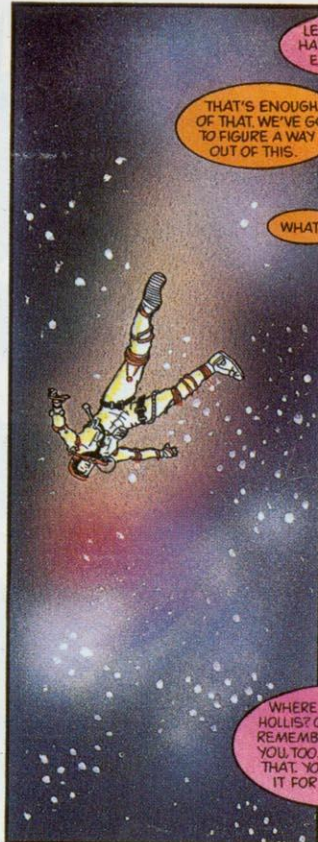
AAAAYEEEEEEEEEE*



HOLLIS,
YOU STILL
THERE?

THIS IS
APPLEGATE
AGAIN.

ALL RIGHT,
APPLEGATE.



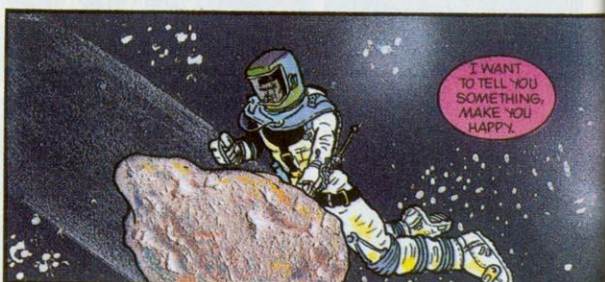
THAT'S ENOUGH
OF THAT. WE'VE GOT
TO FIGURE A WAY
OUT OF THIS.

WHAT??

CAPTAIN,
WHY DON'T YOU
SHUT UP?

YOU HEARD ME,
CAPTAIN. DON'T PULL YOUR
RANK ON ME, YOU'RE TEN
THOUSAND MILES AWAY BY
NOW, AND LET'S NOT KID
OURSELVES. AS STIMSON
PUTS IT, IT'S A LONG
WAY DOWN.

WHERE WERE WE,
HOLLIS? OH, YES, I
REMEMBER, I HATE
YOU TOO. BUT YOU KNOW
THAT YOU'VE KNOWN
IT FOR A LONG TIME.



I WANT
TO TELL YOU
SOMETHING,
MAKE YOU
HAPPY.



I WAS THE ONE
WHO BLACKBALLED
YOU WITH THE
ROCKET COMPANY
FIVE YEARS AGO.



ARE
YOU ANGRY,
HOLLIS?

NO.

YOU WANTED TO GET
TO THE TOP ALL YOUR LIFE.
HOLLIS. YOU ALWAYS
WONDERED WHAT HAPPENED.
I PUT THE BLACK MARK ON
YOU JUST BEFORE I WAS
TOSSED OUT MYSELF.

THAT ISN'T
IMPORTANT.



FROM THIS OUTER EDGE OF HIS LIFE, LOOKING
BACK, THERE WAS ONLY ONE REMORSE, AND
THAT WAS ONLY THAT HE WISHED TO GO ON
LIVING. DID ALL DYING PEOPLE FEEL THIS
WAY, AS IF THEY HAD NEVER LIVED?

WELL, I HAD ME A GOOD TIME. I HAD A WIFE ON MARS, VENUS, AND JUPITER. EACH OF THEM HAD MONEY AND TREATED ME SWELL. I GOT DRUNK AND ONCE I GAMBLED AWAY TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS.

BUT YOU'RE HERE NOW. I DIDN'T HAVE ANY OF THOSE THINGS. WHEN I WAS LIVING I WAS JEALOUS OF YOU, LESPERE: WHEN I HAD ANOTHER DAY AHEAD OF ME I ENVID YOU YOUR WOMEN AND YOUR GOOD TIMES.

IT'S ALL OVER, LESPERE!



IT'S JUST AS IF IT NEVER WAS, LESPERE!



THIS IS HOLLIS.

WHEN ANYTHING'S OVER, IT'S JUST LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED. WHERE'S YOUR LIFE ANY BETTER THAN MINE, NOW? NOW IS WHAT COUNTS. IS IT ANY BETTER? IS IT?

HOW??

WHO'S THAT?

YES, IT'S BETTER!



BECAUSE I GOT MY THOUGHTS, I REMEMBER!

HE'S RIGHT! THERE WERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEMORIES AND DREAMS. I ONLY HAVE DREAMS OF THINGS I WANTED TO DO, WHILE LESPERE HAD MEMORIES OF THINGS DONE AND ACCOMPLISHED.

WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO TO YOU? NOW? WHEN A THING'S OVER, IT'S NOT GOOD ANYMORE. YOU'RE NO BETTER OFF THAN I.

I'M RESTING EASY. I'VE HAD MY TURN. I'M NOT GETTING MEAN AT THE END, LIKE YOU.



Take it easy, Hollis.

IT WAS, OF COURSE, RIDICULOUS.

ONLY A MINUTE BEFORE HE HAD BEEN GIVING ADVICE TO OTHERS, TO STIMSON; HE HAD FELT A BRAVENESS WHICH HE HAD THOUGHT TO BE THE GENUINE THING, AND NOW HE KNEW THAT IT HAD BEEN NOTHING BUT SHOCK AND THE OBJECTIVITY POSSIBLE IN SHOCK.

NOW HE WAS TRYING TO PACK A LIFE TIME OF SUPPRESSED EMOTION INTO AN INTERVAL OF MINUTES.

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, HOLLIS, I DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY.

BUT AREN'T WE EQUAL? LESPERE AND I? HERE, NOW? IF A THING'S OVER, IT'S DONE, AND WHAT GOOD IS IT? YOU DIE ANYWAY.



HOLLIS?

A comic book panel showing an astronaut in a white and yellow spacesuit floating in space. A red splash is visible behind the astronaut's legs. The background is a dark blue space filled with white stars.

THIS IS
APPLGATE
AGAIN.

YES.

GUESS I'M GETTING OLD
FAST AND REPENTING FAST. I
GUESS LISTENING TO YOU BE MEAN
MADE ME ASHAMED. WHATEVER
THE REASON, I WANT YOU TO KNOW
I WAS AN IDIOT TOO. THERE'S NOT
AN OUNCE OF TRUTH IN WHAT
I SAID. TO HELL WITH YOU.

THANKS,
APPLGATE.

DON'T MENTION
IT. UP YOUR NOSE, YOU
BASTARD.



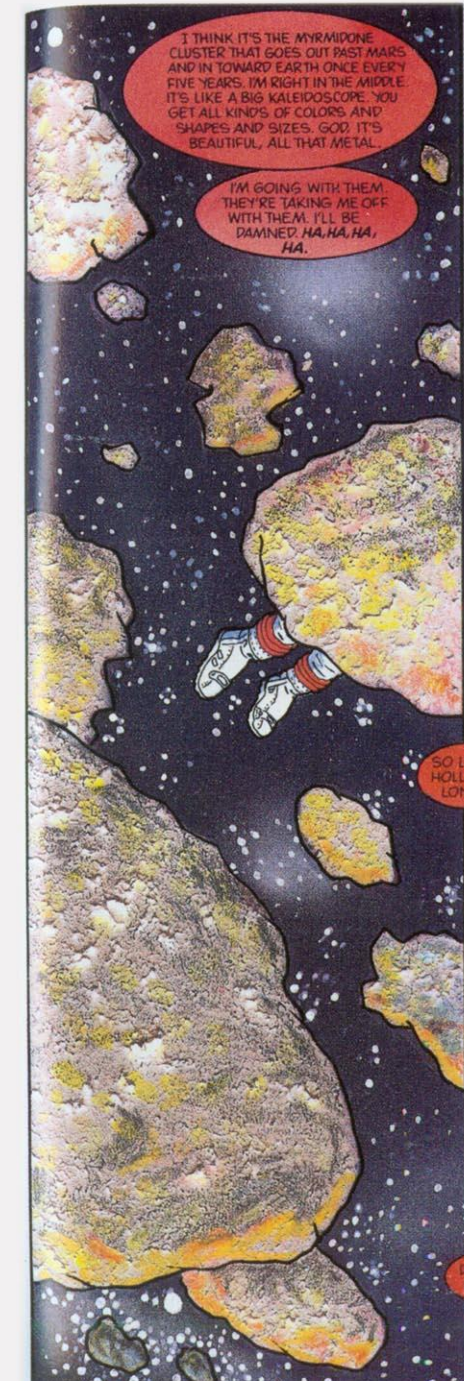
HEY?

A comic book panel showing an astronaut in a white and yellow spacesuit floating in space. The astronaut is oriented upside down. The background is a dark blue space filled with white stars.

WHAT?

I'VE GOT
MYSELF INTO A
METEOR SWARM,
SOME LITTLE
ASTEROIDS.

METEORS?

A two-page comic strip. The left page shows an astronaut floating in space, surrounded by numerous large and small asteroids of various colors (yellow, orange, grey). The astronaut is wearing a white suit with red and blue accents. The right page shows the astronaut floating in a vast, dark space filled with stars. A large, partially visible Earth is in the upper right corner. The astronaut is now upside down, wearing a yellow and white suit with a green helmet. The background is a deep blue/black space with many small white stars.

I THINK IT'S THE MYRMIDONE
CLUSTER THAT GOES OUT PAST MARS
AND IN TOWARD EARTH ONCE EVERY
FIVE YEARS. I'M RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE.
IT'S LIKE A BIG KALEIDOSCOPE. YOU
GET ALL KINDS OF COLORS AND
SHAPES AND SIZES. GOD, IT'S
BEAUTIFUL, ALL THAT METAL.

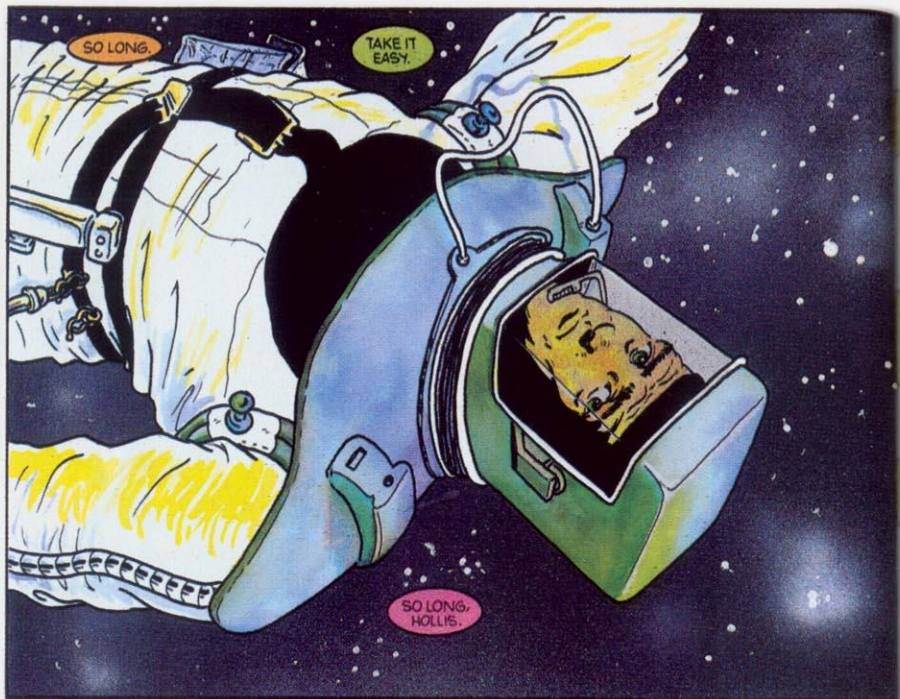
I'M GOING WITH THEM.
THEY'RE TAKING ME OFF
WITH THEM. I'LL BE
DAMNED. HA, HA, HA,
HA.

SO LONG,
HOLLIS. SO
LONG.

GOOD
LUCK.

DON'T BE
FUNNY.





THEY WERE ALL ALONE. THEIR VOICES HAD
DIED LIKE ECHOES OF THE WORDS OF GOD
SPOKEN AND VIBRATING IN THE
STARRED DEEP.

THERE WENT THE CAPTAIN TO THE MOON;
THERE STONE WITH THE METEOR SWARM;
THERE STIMSON; THERE APPELATE
TOWARD PLUTO; THERE SMITH AND
TURNER AND UNDERWOOD AND
ALL THE REST.

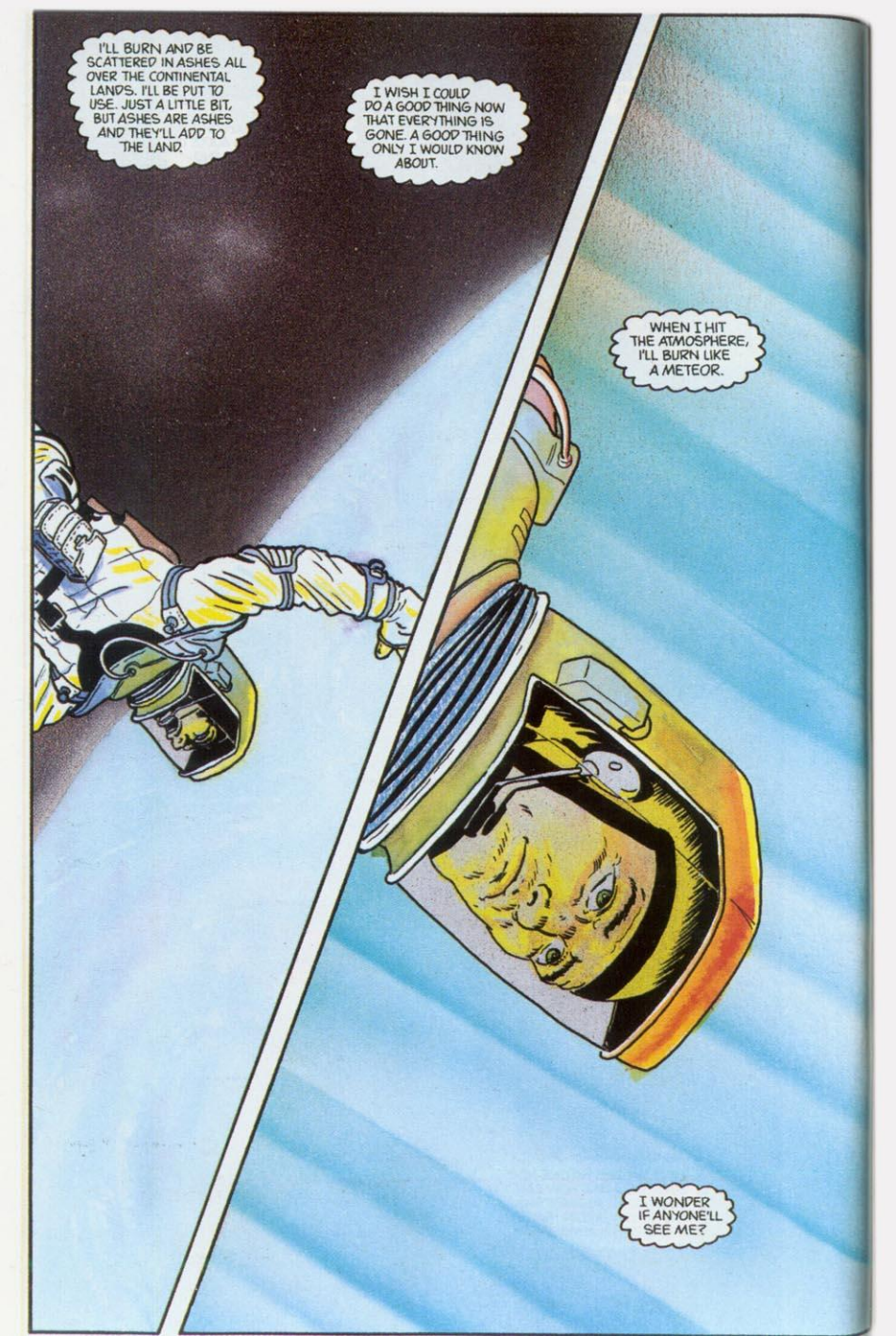
THE SHARDS OF THE KALEIDOSCOPE
THAT HAD FORMED A THINKING
PATTERN FOR SO LONG,
HURLED APART.

AND IF WHAT CAN
I DO? IS THERE ANYTHING I
CAN DO NOW TO MAKE UP
FOR A TERRIBLE AND
EMPTY LIFE?

IF ONLY I COULD DO
ONE GOOD THING TO MAKE
UP FOR THE MEANNESS I
COLLECTED ALL THESE
YEARS AND DIDN'T EVEN
KNOW WAS IN ME!



BUT THERE'S NO ONE HERE
BUT MYSELF AND HOW CAN YOU
DO GOOD ALL ALONE? YOU
CAN'T. TOMORROW NIGHT I'LL
HIT EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE.

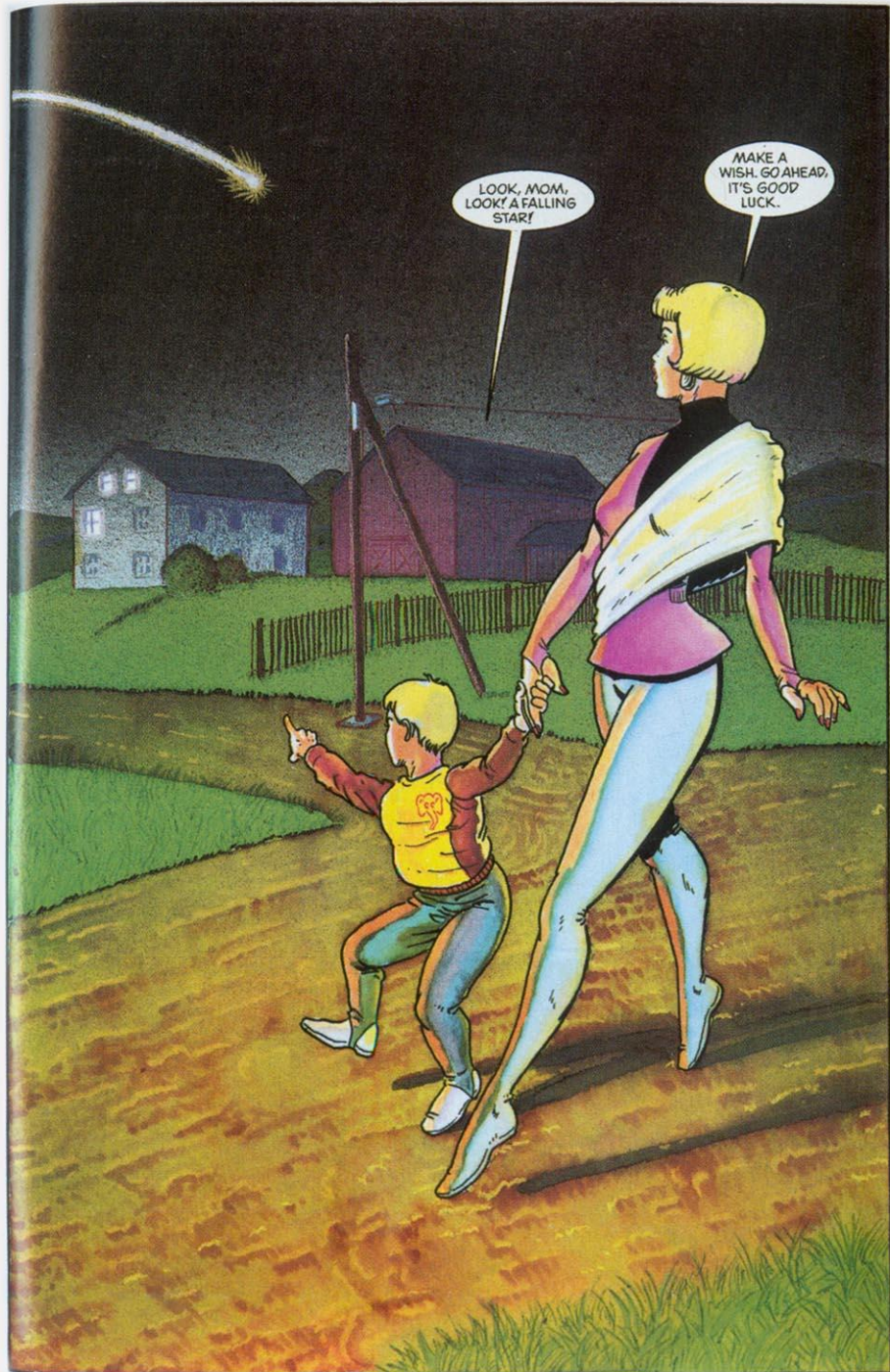


I'LL BURN AND BE
SCATTERED IN ASHES ALL
OVER THE CONTINENTAL
LANDS. I'LL BE PUT TO
USE. JUST A LITTLE BIT,
BUT ASHES ARE ASHES
AND THEY'LL ADD TO
THE LAND.

I WISH I COULD
DO A GOOD THING NOW
THAT EVERYTHING IS
GONE. A GOOD THING
ONLY I WOULD KNOW
ABOUT.

WHEN I HIT
THE ATMOSPHERE,
I'LL BURN LIKE
A METEOR.

I WONDER
IF ANYONE'LL
SEE ME?

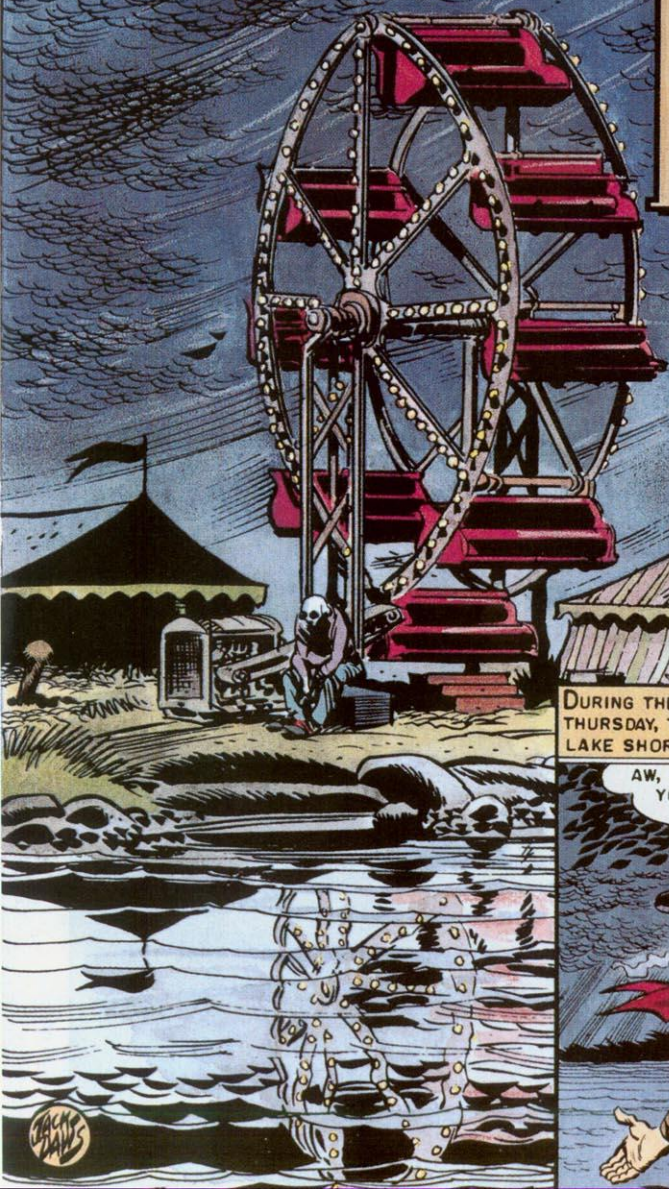


LOOK, MOM,
LOOK! A FALLING
STAR!

MAKE A
WISH. GO AHEAD,
IT'S GOOD
LUCK.

THE CARNIVAL HAD COME TO TOWN LIKE AN OCTOBER WIND, LIKE A DARK BAT FLYING OVER A COLD LAKE, BONES RATTLING IN THE NIGHT, MOURNING, SIGHING, WHISPERING UP THE TENTS IN THE DARK RAIN. IT STAYED ON FOR A MONTH BY THE GREY, RESTLESS LAKE OF OCTOBER, IN THE BLACK WEATHER AND INCREASING STORMS AND LEADEN SKIES...

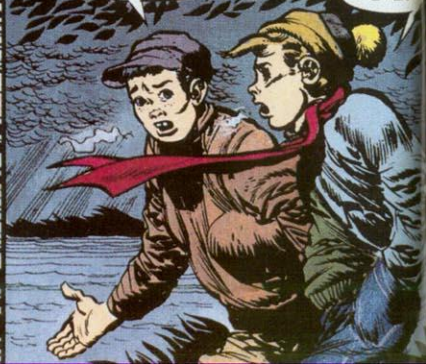
THE BLACK FERRIS



DURING THE THIRD WEEK, AT TWILIGHT ON A THURSDAY, TWO SMALL BOYS WALKED ALONG LAKE SHORE IN THE GOLD WIND...

AW, I DON'T BELIEVE
YOU, HANK.

COME ON,
I'LL SHOW
PETE.



PETER AND HENRY RAN TO THE LONELY CARNIVAL GROUNDS. THE MIDWAY WAS SILENT, THE GREY TENTS HISSED IN THE WIND LIKE GIANT PREHISTORIC WINGS. AT EIGHT O'CLOCK PERHAPS, GHASTLY LIGHTS WOULD FLASH ON, VOICES WOULD SHOUT, MUSIC WOULD GO OUT OVER THE LAKE. BUT NOW, THERE WAS ONLY A BLIND HUNCHBACK SITTING ON A BLACK BOX...



THE BLACK FERRIS WHEEL ROSE LIKE AN IMMENSE LIGHT-BULBED CONSTELLATION AGAINST THE CLOUDY SKY, SILENT...

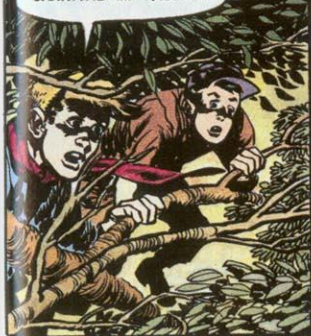
I *STILL* DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT THAT FERRIS WHEEL, HANK.

YOU WAIT. I *SAW* IT HAPPEN. I DON'T KNOW *HOW*, BUT IT *DID*. YOU KNOW HOW CARNIVALS ARE... ALL FUNNY. OKAY. THIS ONE'S *EVEN FUNNIER*.



PETE LET HIMSELF BE LED TO THE HIGH GREEN HIDING PLACE OF A TREE. SUDDENLY HANK STIFFENED...

HIST! THERE'S MR. GOOGER, THE CARNIVAL MAN, NOW!



MR. GOOGER, A MAN OF SOME THIRTY-FIVE YEARS, DRESSED IN SHARP BRIGHT CLOTHES, A LAPEL GARNATION, AND A BROWN DERBY HAT ON HIS HEAD, DRIFTED UNDER THE TREE...



MR. GOOGER NODDED AT THE BLIND HUNCHBACK, SPOKE A WORD. THE HUNCHBACK BLINDLY, FUMBLING, LOCKED MR. GOOGER INTO A BLACK SEAT AND SENT HIM WHIRLING INTO THE OMINOUS TWILIGHT SKY...

SEE! THE FERRIS WHEEL'S GOING THE *WRONG WAY*... *SO WHAT?* BACKWARDS INSTEAD OF *FORWARDS*!



THE BLACK FERRIS WHEEL WHIRLED TWENTY-FIVE TIMES AROUND. THEN THE BLIND HUNCHBACK PUT OUT HIS PALE HANDS AND HALTED THE MACHINERY, THE WHEEL STOPPED, GENTLY SWAYING, AT A CERTAIN BLACK SEAT. A TEN-YEAR OLD BOY STEPPED OUT...

THAT'S WHAT! YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE! NOW... SEE! BUT... WHERE'S MR. GOOGER?



THE TEN YEAR OLD BOY WALKED OFF ACROSS THE WHISPERING CARNIVAL GROUNDS, INTO THE SHADOWS. PETER SEARCHED THE FERRIS WHEEL WITH HIS EYES FOR MR. GOOGER...

WHERE IS HE?

THAT'S HIM! COME ON! QUICK! RUN!



HANK DROPPED FROM THE TREE AND WAS SPRINTING BEFORE HE HIT THE GROUND...

THE LIGHTS WERE BURNING IN MRS. FOLEY'S WHITE MANSION. PIANO MUSIC TINKLED. WITHIN THE WARM WINDOWS, PEOPLE MOVED. OUTSIDE, IT BEGAN TO RAIN, DESPONDENTLY, IRREVOCABLY, FOREVER AND EVER...

I'M SO WET LIKE SOMEONE SQUIRTED ME WITH A HOSE. HOW MUCH LONGER DO WE WAIT, HANK?

I KNOW HIS NAME. MY MOTHER TOLD ME ABOUT HIM THE OTHER DAY.



THEY HAD FOLLOWED THE TEN YEAR OLD FROM THE FERRIS WHEEL UP THROUGH TOWN, DOWN DARK STREETS TO MRS. FOLEY'S HOUSE. NOW, INSIDE THE WARM DINING ROOM, THE STRANGE LITTLE BOY SAT AT DINNER...

MOM SAID, 'HANK, YOU HEAR ABOUT THE LIL' ORPHAN BOY MOVED IN MRS. FOLEY'S? WELL, HIS NAME'S JOSEPH PIKES AND HE JUST CAME TO MRS. FOLEY'S ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO AND ASKED FOR SOMETHING TO EAT, AND HIM AND MRS. FOLEY BEEN GETTIN' ON LIKE HOT APPLE PIE EVER SINCE.' THAT'S WHAT MOM SAID.

I'M SCARED, HANK. I'M COLD AND HUNGRY AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS'S ALL ABOUT.



GOSH, YOU'RE DUMB, PETE! DON'T YOU SEE? THREE WEEKS AGO THE CARNIVAL CAME, AND ABOUT THE SAME TIME THIS LITTLE OLE ORPHAN KID SHOWS UP AT MRS. FOLEY'S. AND MRS. FOLEY'S OWN SON DIED A LONG TIME AGO, AND SHE'S NEVER BEEN THE SAME, SO HERE'S THIS LITTLE OLE ORPHAN WHO BUTTERS HER ALL AROUND...

OH!



THEY MARCHED UP TO THE FRONT DOOR AND BANGED THE HUGE KNOCKER, AFTER AWHILE THE DOOR OPENED...

YOU'RE ALL WET! COME IN! MY LAND! WHAT DO YOU WANT? YOU'RE HENRY WALTERSON, AREN'T YOU?

UH-HUH! CAN WE SEE YOU ALONE, MA'AM?



HANK GLANCED FEARFULLY AT THE DINING ROOM WHERE THE STRANGE LITTLE BOY LOOKED UP FROM HIS EATING. HANK GREPT OVER AND SHUT THE HALL DOOR AND WHISPERED...

WE GOT TO WARN YOU. IT'S ABOUT THAT BOY COME TO LIVE WITH YOU... THAT ORPHAN!

WELL!



THE HALL GREW SUDDENLY COLD. MRS. FOLEY DREW HERSELF HIGH AND STIFF...

HE'S FROM THE CARNIVAL AND HE AIN'T NO BOY, HE'S A MAN, AND HE'S PLANNING ON LIVING HERE WITH YOU UNTIL HE FINDS WHERE YOUR MONEY IS AND THEN RUN OFF WITH IT SOME NIGHT, AND PEOPLE WILL LOOK FOR HIM BUT BECAUSE THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR A TEN YEAR OLD, MR. COOGER WILL GET AWAY...

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



THE CARNIVAL...AND THE FERRIS WHEEL GOING BACKWARD MAKING MR. COOGER YOUNGER, I DON'T KNOW HOW, AND HIM COMING HERE AS A BOY, AND YOU CAN'T TRUST HIM, BECAUSE WHEN HE HAS YOUR MONEY HE'LL GET BACK ON THE FERRIS WHEEL AND IT'LL GO FORWARD AND...

GET OUT, HENRY WALTERSON! GET OUT AND DON'T EVER COME BACK!



THE DOOR SLAMMED. PETER AND HANK FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE RAIN ONCE MORE. IT SOAKED INTO THEM, GOLD AND COMPLETE...

SMART GUY! NOW HE... HE YOU FIXED IT. SUPPOSE WOULDN'T HE HEARD US, SUPPOSE DO THAT. HE COMES AND KILLS US IN OUR BEDS TONIGHT, TO SHUT US UP FOR KEEPS!



PETER SEIZED HANK'S ARM AND POINTED...

WOULDN'T HE? LOOK!



IN THE BIG BAY WINDOW OF THE DINING ROOM NOW THE MESH CURTAIN PULLED ASIDE. STANDING THERE IN THE PINK LIGHT, HIS HAND MADE INTO A MENACING FIST, WAS THE ORPHAN BOY. HIS FACE WAS HORRIBLE TO SEE, THE TEETH BARED, THE EYES HATEFUL...



DURING SUPPER, FATHER LOOKED AT HANK AND SAID...

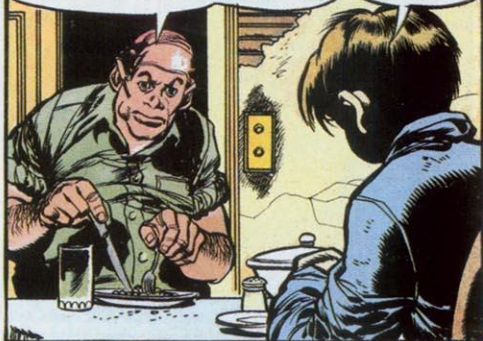
IF YOU DON'T CATCH PNEUMONIA, I'LL BE SURPRISED. SOAKED, YOU WERE, BY GOD! WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT THE CARNIVAL?

DO YOU KNOW MR. COOGER, THE CARNIVAL MAN, DAD?



THE ONE WITH THE PINK CARNATION IN HIS LAPEL? SURE. HE STAYS DOWN AT MRS. O'LEARY'S BOARDING HOUSE. GOT A ROOM IN THE BACK. WHY?

NOTHING. JUST WAS WONDERING IF YOU KNEW HIM.



AFTER SUPPER, HANK PUT IN A CALL TO PETER. AT THE OTHER END OF THE LINE, PETER SOUNDED MISERABLE WITH COUGHING...

LISTEN, PETE! I SEE IT ALL NOW. WHEN THAT L'IL OLE ORPHAN BOY, JOSEPH PIKES, GETS MRS. FOLEY'S MONEY, HE'S GOT A GOOD PLAN. WHAT?



HE'LL STICK AROUND TOWN AS THE CARNIVAL MAN, LIVING IN A ROOM AT MRS. O'LEARY'S. THAT WAY, NOBODY'LL GET SUSPICIOUS OF HIM. EVERYBODY'LL BE LOOKING FOR THAT NASTY LITTLE BOY AND HE'LL BE GONE. AND MR. COOGER WILL BE WALKING AROUND, AND NOBODY'LL SUSPECT THE CARNIVAL AT ALL. IT WOULD LOOK FUNNY IF THE CARNIVAL SUDDENLY PULLED UP STAKES. SO WE GOT TO ACT FAST.

NOBODY WILL BELIEVE US, HANK. I TRIED TO TELL MY FOLKS, BUT THEY SAID HOG-WASH!



WE GOT TO ACT *TONIGHT!* BECAUSE IF WE *DON'T*, HE'LL KILL US! WE'RE THE *ONLY ONES* WHO KNOW! I BET HE JUST *TRIES* SOMETHING *TONIGHT*. SO, I TELL YOU, MEET ME AT MRS. FOLEY'S IN *HALF AN HOUR*.



YOU WANNA *DIE*?

N-NO!



WELL THEN, *MEET* ME THERE AND I BET WE SEE THAT ORPHAN BOY SNEAKING OUT WITH THE MONEY, TONIGHT, AND RUNNING BACK DOWN TO THE CARNIVAL GROUNDS WITH IT, WHEN MRS. FOLEY'S ASLEEP. I'LL *SEE* YOU THERE. SO LONG, PETE!



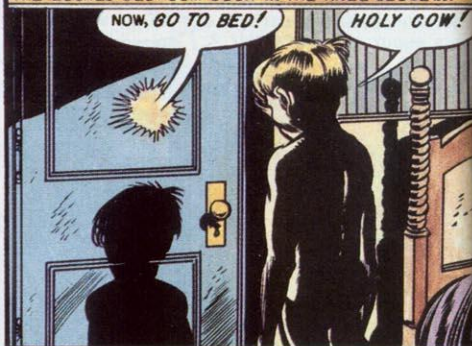
HANK HUNG UP. HIS FATHER STOOD BEHIND HIM...

YOU'RE NOT GOING *ANYWHERE*, YOUNG MAN. YOU'RE GOING *STRAIGHT TO BED*. C'MON! UPSTAIRS!

BUT, POP! AW. GEE...



HANK WAS MARCHED UPSTAIRS. HANK UNDRESSED. HIS FATHER TOOK HIS CLOTHES AND LOCKED HIM IN HIS ROOM. THE REST OF HANK'S WARDROBE HUNG OUTSIDE THE LOCKED BEDROOM DOOR IN THE HALL CLOSET...



NOW, GO TO BED!

HOLY COW!

PETER STOOD OUTSIDE MRS. FOLEY'S HOUSE, LOST IN A VAST RAINCOAT AND MARINER'S CAP, SNIFFLING. FINALLY THERE WAS A RUSTLING IN THE WET BUSHES.

PSST! PETE! HEY! LEND ME YOUR *PANTS*! DAD WOULDN'T LET ME *OUT*!

GOSH, HANK! YOU'RE... YOU'RE *NAKED*!



C'MON! YOU'VE GOT THAT *RAINCOAT* ON. NOBODY'LL *KNOW* SO LEND ME YOUR *PANTS*, BEFORE I GET *PNEUMONIA*!

WELL... ALL RIGHT!



THE RELUCTANT TRANSACTION WAS MADE. HANK PULLED THE PANTS ON. THEY WAITED...

THE RAIN LET UP...IN ABOUT TEN MINUTES, A SMALL FIGURE EMERGED FROM THE HOUSE, BEARING A LARGE PAPER SACK FILLED WITH SOME ENORMOUS LOOT OR OTHER...



THEY GAVE CHASE THROUGH THE CHESTNUT TREES, UP THE HILL, THROUGH THE NIGHT STREETS OF TOWN, DOWN PAST THE RAILROAD YARDS... **HURRY, PETE.** WE CAN'T LET HIM GET TO THAT FERRIS WHEEL. IF HE CHANGES BACK, WE'LL NEVER PROVE ANYTHING...



THE ORPHAN BOY WAS SWIFT. PETER WAS LEFT BEHIND AS HANK THUDDED ON ALONE AFTER THE DARTING ORPHAN BOY, NOW VANISHING INTO THE CARNIVAL GROUNDS...



HANK STOPPED AT THE EDGE OF THE CARNIVAL LOT THE FERRIS WHEEL WAS GOING UP AND UP INTO THE SKY, AND THERE SAT JOSEPH PIKES, LAUGHING UP AND AROUND, AND THE BLIND HUNCHBACK HAD HIS HAND ON THE ROARING OILY MACHINE. AND EACH TIME THAT JOSEPH PIKES RODE INTO THE SKY AND CAME DOWN AND WENT AROUND, HE WAS A YEAR OLDER, HIS LAUGH DEEPENING, HIS FACE CHANGING...



THE HUNCHBACK TRIED TO REACH THE BRAKE TO STOP THE FERRIS WHEEL. HANK RAN IN AND SLAMMED THE SPIKE AGAINST HIS FINGERS, MASHING THEM...



HANK RAN FORWARD AT THE BLIND HUNCHBACK BY THE MACHINE. ON THE WAY, HE PICKED UP A TENT SPIKE...



THE FERRIS WHEEL WENT AROUND AND AROUND AND AROUND. JOSEPH PIKES—MR. COOGER, FLUNG UP IN A STORMY COLD SKY IN THE BUBBLED CONSTELLATION OF WHIRL AND RUSH AND WIND, SCREAMED, THE HUNCHBACK WITH HANK ON HIS CHEST...THRASHING, BITING, KICKING... GROANED...



MR. COOGER, A MAN, A DIFFERENT MAN AND VOICE THIS TIME, CRIED OUT, COMING AROUND IN PANIC, GOING UP INTO THE ROARING HISsing SKY OF THE FERRIS WHEEL, THE WIND BLEW THROUGH THE HIGH DARK WHEEL SPOKES...

STOP! OH, PLEASE STOP THE WHEEL!



HANK LEAPED FROM THE SPRAWLING HUNCHBACK. HE STARTED IN ON THE BRAKE MECHANISM, HITTING IT, JAMMING IT, PUTTING CHUNKS OF METAL IN IT...

STOP, STOP, STOP THE WHEEL! STOP...



THE VOICE FADED. NOW THE GARNIVAL WAS ABLAZE WITH SUDDEN LIGHT. MEN SPRANG FROM TENTS, CAME RUNNING. HANK FELT HIMSELF JERKED INTO THE AIR WITH OATHS AND BEATINGS RAINED ON HIM. A POLICEMAN APPEARED, PISTOL DRAWN...

STOP! STOP THE WHEEL!



THE VOICE REPEATED AND REPEATED, SIGHING AWAY IN THE WIND. THE DARK GARNIVAL MEN TRIED TO APPLY THE BRAKE. NOTHING HAPPENED. THE MACHINERY HUMMED AND TURNED THE WHEEL AROUND AND AROUND. THE MECHANISM WAS JAMMED. THE VOICE CRIED ONE LAST TIME.

STOP!



THEN ... SILENCE...

WITHOUT A WORD THE FERRIS WHEEL FLEW IN A CIRCLE, A HIGH SYSTEM OF ELECTRIC STARS AND METAL AND SEATS. THERE WAS NO SOUND NOW BUT THE SOUND OF THE MOTOR WHICH DIED AND STOPPED. THE FERRIS WHEEL COASTED A MINUTE, THEN CAME TO REST, ALL THE PEOPLE GAZING UP AT IT...

LOOK!



THE POLICEMAN TURNED AND THE GARNIVAL PEOPLE TURNED AND THEY ALL LOOKED AT THE OCCUPANT IN THE BLACK PAINTED SEAT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIDE. A SKELETON SAT THERE, A PAPER BAG OF MONEY IN ITS HANDS, A BROWN DERBY HAT ON ITS HEAD...

GOOD LORD!

CHOKES...



A SOUND of THUNDER

MR. ECKLES READ THE SIGN ON THE OFFICE WALL, SMILED NERVOUSLY, AND HANDED A CHECK FOR TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS TO THE MAN BEHIND THE DESK...

DOES THIS SAFARI GUARANTEE I COME BACK ALIVE?

WE GUARANTEE *NOTHING*... EXCEPT THE *DINOSAURS*. THIS IS MR. TRAVIS, YOUR SAFARI GUIDE IN THE PAST. HE'LL TELL YOU *WHAT* AND *WHERE* TO SHOOT. IF HE SAYS *NO SHOOTING*... *NO SHOOTING!* IF YOU *DON'T* FOLLOW DIRECTIONS, THERE'S A *STIFF* PENALTY...

TIME SAFARI, INC.
SAFARIS TO ANY YEAR IN THE PAST
YOU NAME THE ANIMAL
WE TAKE YOU THERE
YOU SHOOT IT

ECKLES LOOKED ACROSS THE VAST OFFICE AT AN ARRANGEMENT OF WIRES, GOLDEN BOXES AND AN AURORA THAT FLICKERED LIKE A BONFIRE...

WELL, I'LL BE...! A REAL TIME MACHINE. MAKES YOU THINK. IF THE ELECTIONS HAD GONE BADLY YESTERDAY, I MIGHT BE HERE NOW RUNNING AWAY FROM THE RESULTS. THANK GOD KEITH WON! HE'LL MAKE A FINE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

YES, WE'RE LUCKY! IF LYMAN HAD GOTTEN IN, WE'D HAVE THE WORST KIND OF DICTATORSHIP! PEOPLE CALLED US UR... YOU KNOW... JOKING BUT NOT JOKING. SAID IF LYMAN GOT ELECTED, THEY WANTED TO GO LIVE IN 1492. OF COURSE, IT'S NOT OUR BUSINESS TO CONDUCT ESCAPES, BUT TO FORM SAFARIS.

ANYWAY, KEITH'S PRESIDENT NOW, SO ALL I'VE GOT TO WORRY ABOUT IS SHOOTING MY DINO-SAUR...

A TYRANNO-SAURUS REX. THE MOST VICIOUS MONSTER IN HISTORY! SIGN THIS RELEASE. ANYTHING HAPPENS TO YOU, WE'RE NOT RESPONSIBLE.

TRYING TO SCARE ME!?

FRANKLY, YES. WE DON'T WANT ANYONE GOING WHO'LL PANIC AT THE FIRST SHOT. WE'RE TAKING YOU BACK SIXTY MILLION YEARS TO BAG THE BIGGEST GAME IN ALL TIME. IT'S THE GREATEST THRILL A REAL HUNTER COULD ASK FOR. CARE TO TAKE BACK YOUR CHECK?



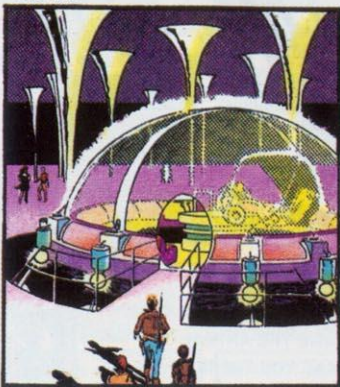
MR. ECKLES LOOKED AT THE CHECK FOR A LONG TIME. HIS FINGERS TWITCHED...

GOOD LUCK!
MR. TRAVIS!
THEY'RE ALL
YOURS!

FOLLOW
ME... ALL
OF YOU...



THEY MOVED SILENTLY ACROSS THE ROOM, TAKING THEIR GUNS WITH THEM, TOWARD THE MACHINE, TOWARD THE SILVER METAL AND THE ROARING LIGHT...



FIRST A DAY AND THEN A NIGHT AND THEN IT WAS DAY-NIGHT-DAY-NIGHT... A WEEK... A MONTH... A YEAR... A DECADE 2056 A.D., 2019 A.D., 1999, 1954, GONE! THE MACHINE ROARED...



ECKLES SWAYED ON THE PADDED SEAT, HIS FACE PALE, HIS JAW STIFF. THERE WERE FOUR OTHER MEN IN THE MACHINE: TRAVIS, THE SAFARI LEADER; LESPER, HIS ASSISTANT; AND TWO OTHER HUNTERS, BILLINGS AND KRAMER. THEY SAT LOOKING AT EACH OTHER AND THE YEARS BLAZED AROUND THEM. TIME WAS A FILM RUN BACKWARDS, SUNS FLED AND TEN MILLION MOONS FLED AFTER THEM. THE MACHINE HOWLED...

GOOD GOD! EVERY HUNTER THAT EVER LIVED WOULD ENVY US TODAY. THIS MAKES AFRICA SEEM LIKE ILLINOIS.



IT DOESN'T **TOUCH** SO MUCH AS **ONE GRASS BLADE**, OR **FLOWER**, OR **TREE**. ITS PURPOSE IS TO KEEP **YOU** FROM TOUCHING THIS WORLD OF THE PAST IN **ANY WAY**. **STAY ON THE PATH! DON'T GO OFF IT! I REPEAT: DON'T GO OFF IT... FOR ANY REASON! AND DON'T SHOOT ANY ANIMAL WE DON'T OKAY!**

WHY?



THE MACHINE SLOWED. ITS SCREAM FELL TO A MURMUR. THE MACHINE STOPPED. THE SUN STOPPED IN THE SKY. THE FOG THAT HAD ENVELOPED THE MACHINE BLEW AWAY, AND THEY WERE IN AN OLD TIME, A VERY OLD TIME INDEED, TRAVIS POINTED...

THAT IS THE JUNGLE OF SIXTY-TWO MILLION TWO THOUSAND AND FIFTY-FIVE YEARS BEFORE PRESIDENT KEITH. AND THAT IS THE **PATH**, LAID DOWN BY 'TIME SAFARI' FOR YOUR USE. IT'S AN **ANTI-GRAVITY METAL**. IT FLOATS... **SIX INCHES ABOVE THE EARTH**.



THEY SAT IN THE ANCIENT WILDERNESS. FAR BIRDS' CRIES BLEW ON A WIND, AND THE SMELL OF TAR AND AN OLD SALT SEA, MOIST GRASSES AND FLOWERS THE COLOR OF BLOOD...

WE **DON'T** WANT TO **CHANGE** THE **FUTURE**. WE **DON'T** **BELONG** HERE. A **TIME MACHINE** IS A **FINICKY BUSINESS**. NOT **KNOWING** IT, WE MIGHT KILL AN **IMPORTANT ANIMAL**, A **SMALL BIRD**, A **ROACH**, A **FLOWER**, THUS DESTROYING AN **IMPORTANT LINK** IN A **GROWING SPECIES**.

THAT'S
NOT
CLEAR.

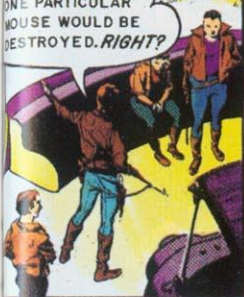


TRAVIS CONTINUED...

ALL RIGHT, SAY
WE ACCIDENTALLY
KILLED **ONE**
MOUSE HERE.
THAT MEANS ALL
THE **FUTURE**
FAMILIES OF THIS
ONE PARTICULAR
MOUSE WOULD BE
DESTROYED. **RIGHT?**

RIGHT!

AND ALL THE **FAMILIES**
OF THE **FAMILIES** OF THAT
ONE **MOUSE!** WITH A STAMP
OF YOUR FOOT, YOU ANNIHIL-
ATE FIRST ONE, THEN A
DOZEN, THEN A THOUSAND,
A MILLION, A **BILLION**
POSSIBLE MICE!



THE JUNGLE WAS HIGH AND THE JUNGLE WAS BROAD AND
THE JUNGLE WAS THE ENTIRE WORLD FOREVER AND
EVER. SOUNDS LIKE MUSIC AND SOUNDS LIKE FLYING
TENTS FILLED THE SKY, AND THOSE WERE PTERODACTYLS
FLYING WITH CAVERNOUS GREY WINGS, GIGANTIC BATS
OUT OF A DELIRIUM AND A NIGHT FEVER. ECKLES AIMED
HIS RIFLE PLAYFULLY...



FORBIDDEN! DON'T
EVEN **AIM FOR FUN!** IF
YOUR GUN SHOULD GO
OFF...

WHERE'S OUR
TYRANNOSAURUS?

THEY MOVED FORWARD IN THE WIND
OF MORNING. ECKLES MURMURED...

ST RANGE. UP AHEAD, SIXTY MILLION
YEARS, ELECTION DAY IS **OVER.**
KEITH MADE PRESIDENT.
EVERYONE'S **CELEBRATING.**
AND HERE **WE** ARE, A MILLION
YEARS LOST, AND **THEY DON'T**
EXIST. THE THINGS WE WORRY
ABOUT NOT EVEN **BORN** OR
THOUGHT ABOUT YET...



TRAVIS WHISPERED...

SAFETY CATCHES
OFF, EVERYONE.
YOU FIRST
SHOT, ECKLES.
SECOND, BILLINGS.
THIRD, KRAMER.



SO
THEY'RE
DEAD!
SO
WHAT?

WHAT ABOUT THE
FOXES THAT'LL
NEED THOSE MICE
TO SURVIVE? FOR
WANT OF **TEN**
MICE, A **FOX**
DIES! FOR WANT
OF A **FOX,** ALL
MANNER OF LIFE
FORMS ARE THROWN
INTO CHAOS AND
DESTRUCTION. SIXTY
MILLION YEARS
LATER, A **CAVE**
MAN GOES **HUNT-**
ING.



BUT **YOU,** FRIEND, HAVE
STEPPED ON ALL THE
SABER-TOOTHED
TIGERS IN THAT REGION
BY STEPPING ON **ONE**
SINGLE MOUSE. SO
THE **CAVE MAN** STARVES.
DESTROY THIS **ONE MAN**
AND YOU DESTROY HIS
FUTURE SONS AND
THEIR SONS... A **RAGE**
...A **PEOPLE...** A **HIS-**
TORY. **ROME** NEVER
RISES. **EUROPE**
REMAINS A **DARK FOR-**
EST. THERE MIGHT
NEVER BE A **UNITED**
STATES! SO BE **CARE-**
FUL. **STAY ON THE**
PATH...



LESER CHECKED HIS WRIST WATCH...

UP AHEAD! WE'LL BISECT HIS
TRAIL IN **SIXTY SECONDS.** DON'T
SHOOT TILL WE GIVE THE WORD, AND,
FOR GOD'S SAKE, STAY ON THE
PATH!



THE JUNGLE WAS WIDE AND FULL OF
TWITTERING, RUSTLING SIGNS. SU-
DDENLY IT ALL CEASED, AS IF SOMEONE
HAD SHUT A DOOR. SILENCE. THEN...
A SOUND OF THUNDER...

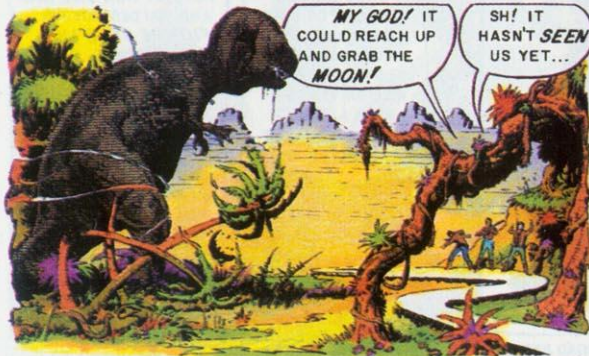


GREAT GOD!

SH!

OUT OF THE MIST CAME TYRANNO-
SAURUS REX...

IT CAME ON GREAT, OILED, RESILIENT, STRIDING LEGS. IT TOWERED TWENTY FEET ABOVE TREES, A HUGE EVIL GOD, FOLDING ITS DELICATE WATCHMAKER'S CLAWS TO ITS OILY, REPTILIAN CHEST. EACH LOWER LEG WAS A PISTON, A THOUSAND POUNDS OF WHITE BONE SUNK IN THICK ROPES OF MUSCLE, SHEATHED OVER IN A GLEAM OF PEBBLED SKIN. EACH THIGH WAS A TON OF MEAT, IVORY AND STEEL MESH. AND FROM THE UPPER BODY THOSE TWO DELICATE ARMS DANGLED, ARMS WITH HANDS THAT MIGHT PICK UP AND EXAMINE MEN LIKE TOYS...



MY GOD! IT COULD REACH UP AND GRAB THE MOON!

SH! IT HASN'T SEEN US YET...

THE HEAD, A TON OF SCULPTURED STONE, LIFTED EASILY UPON THE SKY. ITS MOUTH GAPED, EXPOSING A FENCE OF TEETH LIKE DAGGERS. ITS EYES ROLLED, EMPTY OF ALL EXPRESSION SAVE HUNGER. IT RAN, ITS PELVIC BONES CRUSHING ASIDE TREES, ITS TALONED FEET CLAWING DAMP EARTH WITH A GLIDING BALLET STEP FAR TOO POISED AND BALANCED FOR ITS TEN TONS...



IT CAN'T BE KILLED. WE WERE FOOLS TO COME! THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!

SHUT UP, ECKLES!

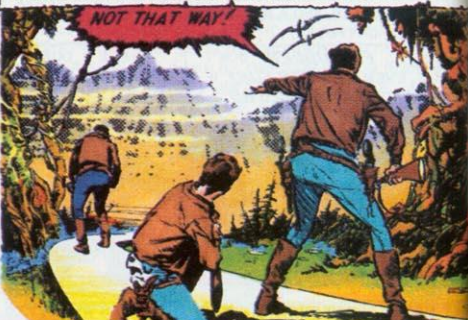
THE TYRANNOSAURUS RAISED ITSELF, ITS ARMORED FLESH CRUSTED WITH SLIME. AND IN THE SLIME, TINY INSECTS WRIGGLED, SO THAT THE ENTIRE BODY SEEMED TO TWITCH AND UNULATE. IT EXHALED AND A STINK OF RAW FLESH BLEW DOWN THE WILDERNESS...



DIDN'T REALIZE IT WOULD BE THIS BIG! MISCALCULATED! NOW, I WANT OUT! GET ME OUT!

TURN AROUND! WALK BACK TO THE MACHINE! DON'T RUN...

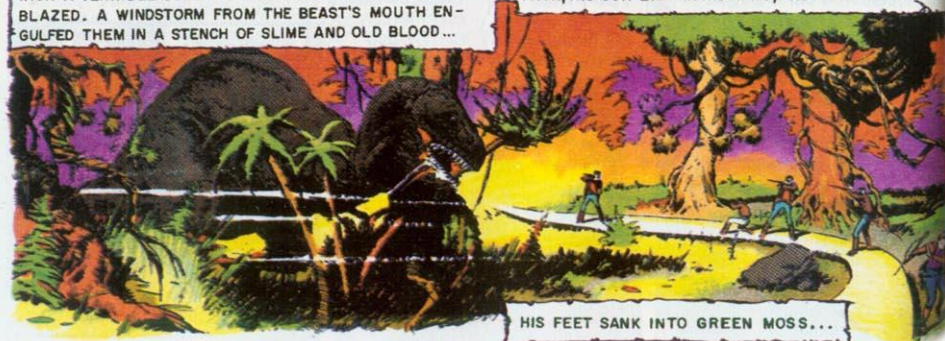
ECKLES MADE A SERIES OF GRUNTING SOUNDS, AS IF HE'VE BEEN HIT, VERY HARD, IN THE STOMACH. HE STARTED OUT TOOK A FEW STEPS... BLINKING... SHUFFLING...



NOT THAT WAY!

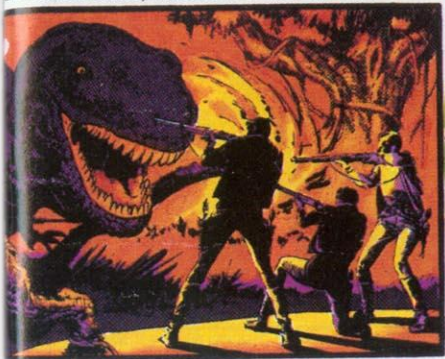
THE MONSTER, AT THE FIRST MOTION, STARTED FORWARD WITH A TERRIBLE SCREAM. THE RIFLES JERKED UP AND BLAZED. A WINDSTORM FROM THE BEAST'S MOUTH ENGULFED THEM IN A STENCH OF SLIME AND OLD BLOOD...

ECKLES STUMBLED BLINDLY TO THE EDGE OF THE PATH, HIS GUN LIMP IN HIS ARMS, AND STEPPED OFF...

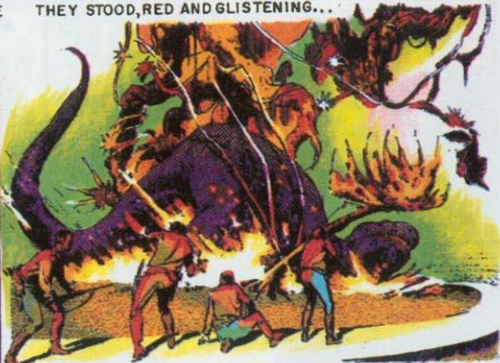


HIS FEET SANK INTO GREEN MOSS...

THE RIFLES CRACKED AGAIN. THEIR SOUND WAS LOST IN SHRIEK AND LIZARD THUNDER. THE MONSTER TWITCHED ITS JEWELER'S HANDS DOWN TO FONDLE THE MEN, TO TWIST THEM IN HALF, TO CRUSH THEM LIKE BERRIES, TO GRAM THEM INTO ITS TEETH AND ITS SCREAMING THROAT. ITS BOULDER-STONE EYES LEVELED WITH THE MEN. THEY SAW THEMSELVES MIRRORED, FIRED AT THE METALIC EYELIDS, THE BLAZING BLACK IRIS...



LIKE A STONE IDOL, LIKE A MOUNTAIN AVALANCHE, TYRANNOSAURUS FELL. THUNDERING, IT CLUTCHED TREES, PULLED THEM WITH IT. A FOUNTAIN OF BLOOD SPURTED FROM ITS THROAT. SOMEWHERE INSIDE, A SAC OF FLUIDS BURST. SICKENING GUSHES DRENCHED THE HUNTERS. THEY STOOD, RED AND GLISTENING...



THE THUNDER FADED. THE JUNGLE WAS SILENT. AFTER THE AVALANCHE, GREEN PEACE. AFTER THE NIGHTMARE, MORNING.

THE MONSTER LAY, A HILL OF SOLID FLESH. WITHIN, YOU COULD HEAR THE SIGHS AND MURMURS AS ITS FURTHEST CHAMBERS DIED, THE ORGANS MALFUNCTIONING, THE LIQUIDS RUNNING, EVERYTHING SHUTTING OFF, CLOSING UP FOREVER. THE TONNAGE OF ITS OWN DEAD WEIGHT SNAPPED THE DELICATE FOREARMS CAUGHT UNDERNEATH. ANOTHER CRACKING SOUND. OVERHEAD, A HUGE TREE BRANCH BROKE FROM ITS MOORING AND FELL. IT CRASHED UPON THE DEAD BEAST WITH FINALITY...

THERE! RIGHT ON TIME! THAT'S THE TREE LIMB THAT WAS SCHEDULED TO FALL AND KILL THIS ANIMAL ORIGINALLY.



ECKLES GOT UP. TRAVIS POINTED HIS RIFLE...

GET OUT! WE'RE LEAVING YOU HERE!

NO! NO, YOU CAN'T!

WAIT, TRAVIS!



YOU STAY OUT OF THIS, LESPER! THIS STUPID FOOL NEARLY KILLED US, BUT IT **ISN'T THAT!** NO! IT'S HIS SHOES! LOOK AT THEM. HE STEPPED OFF THE PATH. GOD KNOWS WHAT HE'S DONE TO TIME AND HISTORY!

I'LL PAY! I'LL PAY ANYTHING! PLEASE LET ME GO BACK WITH YOU!



THEY CLIMBED BACK INTO THE MACHINE. ECKLES LAY ON THE FLOOR, SHIVERING...

I'M...I'M SORRY! GET UP!



TRAVIS GLARED AT ECKLES' CHECKBOOK AND SPAT...

GO OUT THERE! THE MONSTER'S NEXT TO THE PATH. STICK YOUR ARMS UP TO YOUR ELBOWS IN HIS BLOODY MOUTH. **THE BULLETS!** THE BULLETS CAN'T BE LEFT BEHIND. GET THEM. DIG THEM OUT. THEN YOU CAN COME BACK WITH US!



THE JUNGLE WAS ALIVE AGAIN, FULL OF THE OLD TREMORS AND BIRD CRIES. ECKLES TURNED SLOWLY TO STARE AT THE PRIMEVAL GARBAGE DUMP, THAT HILL OF NIGHTMARES AND TERRORS WHERE EVEN NOW STRANGE REPTILIAN BIRDS AND GOLDEN INSECTS WERE BUSY AT THE STEAMING ARMOR. AFTER A LONG TIME, LIKE A SLEEPWALKER, ECKLES SHUFFLED OUT ALONG THE PATH...



1492...1776...1812. ECKLES WAS UP AND AROUND, NOT SPEAKING. TRAVIS GLARED AT HIM...

DON'T LOOK AT ME! I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!

WHO CAN TELL?



HE RETURNED SHUDDERING, FIVE MINUTES LATER, HIS ARMS SOAKED AND RED TO THE ELBOWS. HE HELD OUT HIS HANDS, EACH HELD A NUMBER OF STEEL BULLETS. THEN HE FELL. HE LAY, NOT MOVING...

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO MAKE HIM DO THAT, TRAVIS!

DIDN'T I? IT'S TOO EARLY TO TELL! HE'LL LIVE! NEXT TIME, HE WON'T GO HUNTING GAME LIKE THIS. OKAY! SWITCH ON. LET'S GO HOME...



I JUST STEPPED OFF THE PATH, THAT'S ALL. GOT A LITTLE MUD ON MY SHOES! WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO, GET DOWN AND PRAY?

WE MIGHT NEED IT. I'M WARNING YOU, ECKLES, I MIGHT KILL YOU YET. I'VE GOT MY GUN READY.



I'M INNOCENT! I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING! JUST STEPPED INTO A LITTLE MUD. THAT'S ALL...

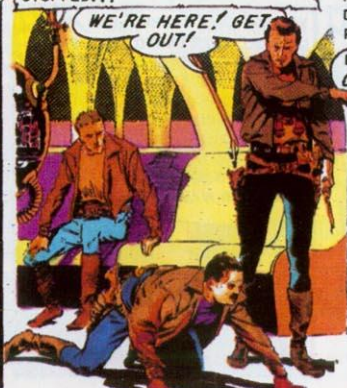
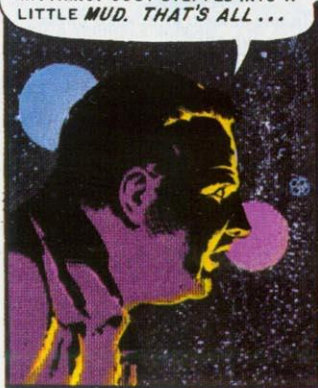
1954...2000...2056. THE MACHINE STOPPED...

WE'RE HERE! GET OUT!

THE ROOM WAS AS THEY'D LEFT IT. THE SAME MAN SAT BEHIND THE SAME DESK. TRAVIS LOOKED AROUND, SUSPICIOUSLY...

EVERYTHING OKAY HERE?

FINE! WELCOME BACK!



TRAVIS RELAXED. HE TURNED...

OKAY, ECKLES! GET OUT OF THIS OFFICE AND DON'T EVER COME BACK!

ECKLES DIDN'T MOVE...

YOU HEARD ME! WHAT'RE YOU STARING AT?

ECKLES FELT HIMSELF FALL INTO A CHAIR. HE FUMBLERAZILY AT THE THICK SLIME ON HIS BOOTS. HE HELD UP A CLOD OF MUD, TREMBLING...

NO! IT CAN'T BE! NOT A LITTLE THING LIKE THAT! NO!

IT FELL TO THE FLOOR, AN EXQUISITE THING, A SMALL THING THAT COULD UPSET BALANCES AND KNOCK DOWN A LINE OF TINY DOMINOES, AND THEN BIG DOMINOES, AND THEN GIGANTIC DOMINOES, ALL DOWN THE YEARS ACROSS TIME, ECKLES' MIND WHIRLED. KILLING ONE BUTTERFLY COULDN'T BE THAT IMPORTANT. COULD IT?...

WHO... WHO WON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YESTERDAY?

YOU JOKING? YOU KNOW DARN WELL! LYMAN, OF COURSE! WHO ELSE? NOT THAT BLASTED WEAKLING KEITH! WE GOT AN IRON MAN NOW! A MAN WITH GUTS! WE... SAY! WHAT'S WRONG?

EMBEDDED IN THE MUD, GLISTENING GREEN AND GOLD AND BLACK, WAS A BUTTERFLY... VERY BEAUTIFUL... AND VERY DEAD...

NOT A THING LIKE THAT! NOT A BUTTERFLY!

ECKLES MOANED. HE DROPPED TO HIS KNEES. HE SCRABBLED AT THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY WITH SHAKING FINGERS...

CAN'T WE... CAN'T WE TAKE IT BACK? CAN'T WE MAKE IT ALIVE AGAIN? CAN'T WE START OVER? CAN'T WE...

HE LOOKED UP AT TRAVIS' ANGRY, FRIGHTENED FACE. TRAVIS SHOOK HIS HEAD...

THE END