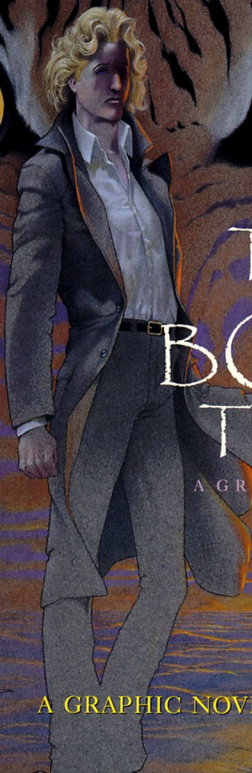




Anne Rice's

The Tale of the BODY THIEF



TALE OF THE BODY THIEF

A GRAPHIC NOVEL

A GRAPHIC NOVEL

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THE VAMPIRE LESTAT HERE. I HAVE A STORY TO TELL YOU. IT'S ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED TO ME.

IT BEGINS IN *MIAMI*, IN THE YEAR 1990, AND I REALLY WANT TO START RIGHT THERE. BUT IT'S IMPORTANT THAT I TELL YOU ABOUT THE *DREAMS* I'D BEEN HAVING BEFORE THAT TIME, ABOUT DREAMS OF A CHILD VAMPIRE WITH A WOMAN'S MIND AND AN *ANGEL'S FACE*, AND A DREAM OF MY MORTAL FRIEND *DAVID TALBOT*.

THERE WERE DREAMS ALSO OF MY *MORTAL BOYHOOD* IN FRANCE -- OF WINTER SNOWS, MY FATHER'S BLEAK AND RUINED CASTLE IN THE ALVERGNE, AND THE TIME I WENT OUT TO HUNT A PACK OF *WOLVES* THAT WERE PREYING UPON OUR POOR VILLAGE.

DREAMS CAN BE AS *REAL* AS EVENTS. OR SO IT SEEMED TO ME *AFTERWARDS*.

I WAS IN A DARK FRAME OF MIND WHEN THESE DREAMS BEGAN. I HAD BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A *DARK GOD* OF SORTS, THANKS TO SUFFERING AND TRIUMPH, AND TOO MUCH OF THE BLOOD OF OUR *VAMPIRE ELDERS*. I HAD POWERS WHICH LEFT ME BAFFLED AND SOMETIMES EVEN FRIGHTENED. I HAD POWERS WHICH MADE ME *SORROWFUL* THOUGH I DID NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THE *REASON* FOR IT.

I WAS ALSO *GRIEVING* FOR THE OTHER IMMORTALS I HAD KNOWN AND LOVED, BECAUSE THEY HAD LONG AGO SCATTERED FROM OUR LAST GATHERING PLACE. *FOLLY* TO THINK WE WANTED TO CREATE A COVEN AGAIN. THEY HAD ONE BY ONE DISAPPEARED INTO TIME AND THE WORLD, WHICH WAS *INEVITABLE*.

VAMPIRES DON'T REALLY *LIKE* OTHERS OF THEIR KIND, THOUGH THEIR NEED FOR IMMORTAL COMPANIONS IS *DESPERATE*.

YOU'LL FIND *PRECIOUS LITTLE* HERE ABOUT THE OTHERS. INDEED, ALMOST NOTHING. THIS IS *MY TALE*, FROM START TO FINISH.

BUT LET ME SPEAK NOW OF THE *DREAMS* THAT HAD COME TO TROUBLE ME IN MY WANDERINGS.



WITH CLAUDIA, IT WAS
ALMOST A HAUNTING.

CLAUDIA SUFFERED FOR HER CRIME. AN EVIL COVEN
OF VAMPIRES IN PARIS SHUT HER OUT INTO THE
BRIGHT LIGHT OF DAY, WHICH BURNT HER TO ASHES.

JUST BEFORE
MY EYES WOULD
CLOSE EACH
DAWN, I'D SEE
HER BESIDE ME,
HEAR HER VOICE
IN A LOW AND
URGENT WHISPER.

IT WAS 1794 WHEN I MADE THIS
SUCCULENT LITTLE VAMPIRE OUT
OF A DYING ORPHAN, AND SIXTY
YEARS PASSED BEFORE SHE
ROSE UP AGAINST ME, HER
KNIVES TEARING MY WHITE FLESH.

THE DREAM OF
DAVID TALBOT
CAME ONCE ONLY.

DAVID IS YOUNG IN
THE DREAM. HE
WAS NOT THE MAN
OF SEVENTY-FOUR
WHO HAD BECOME
MY FRIEND, THE
MORTAL SCHOLAR
WHO REGULARLY RE-
FUSED MY OFFER OF
THE DARK BLOOD.

TYGER, TYGER,
BURNING BRIGHT.

IS THAT HIS VOICE, WHISPERING
THOSE WORDS, OR IS IT MINE?

NO. THIS IS YOUNG DAVID TALBOT OF YEARS
AGO, WHEN HIS HEART DIDN'T BEAT SO FAST
WITHIN HIS CHEST. YET HE IS IN DANGER.

AND OUT OF THE DAPPLIED LIGHT
IT COMES. DAVID, ITS **FANGS!**
CAN'T YOU SEE THESE **FANGS?**



WHY IS MY VOICE **DRIED UP** INSIDE
ME? AM I EVEN **THERE** IN THE
MANGROVE FOREST? GOOD GOD,
DAVID! THE **FANGS!**

DAVID, **BEWARE!**



CRACK!



CRACK!

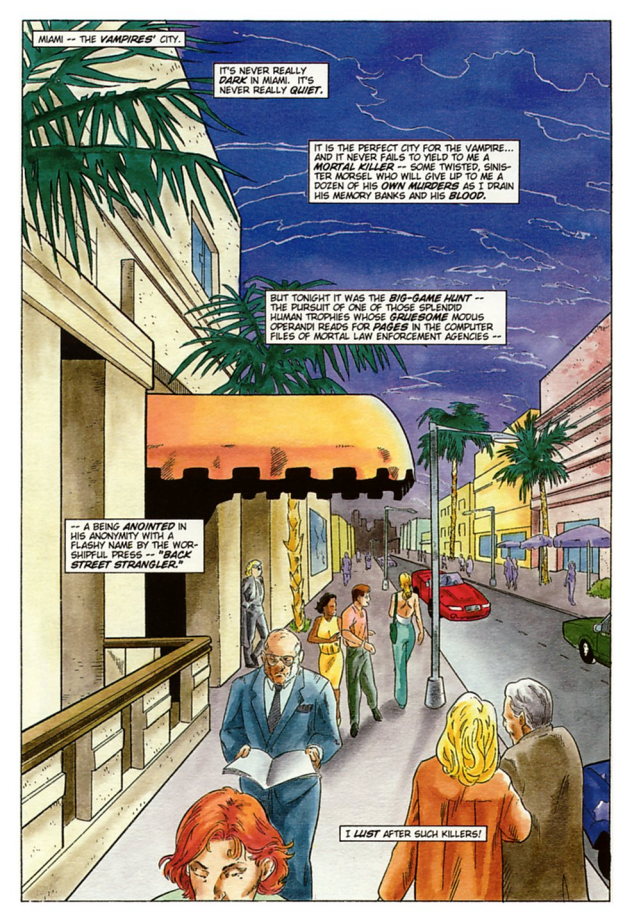
I **WAKE.**



WHAT DOES THIS **DREAM MEAN** -- THAT
MY MORTAL FRIEND IS IN **DANGER?** OR
SIMPLY THAT HIS **GENETIC CLOCK** HAS
TICKED TO A **STOP?**

DO I EVER THINK OF **DAVID** THAT
I DO NOT THINK OF **DEATH?**

ALL RIGHT, YOU HAVE THE **DREAMS.**
NOW WE ARE **TRULY** READY TO **BEGIN.**



MIAMI -- THE **VAMPIRES'** CITY.

IT'S NEVER REALLY
DARK IN MIAMI. IT'S
NEVER REALLY **QUIET**.

IT IS THE PERFECT CITY FOR THE VAMPIRE...
AND IT NEVER FAILS TO YIELD TO ME A
MORTAL KILLER -- SOME TWISTED, SINIS-
TER MORSEL WHO WILL GIVE UP TO ME A
DOZEN OF HIS **OWN MURDERS** AS I DRAIN
HIS MEMORY BANKS AND HIS **BLOOD**.

BUT TONIGHT IT WAS THE **BIG-GAME HUNT** --
THE PURSUIT OF ONE OF THOSE SPLENDID
HUMAN TROPHIES WHOSE **GRUESOME** MODUS
OPERANDI READS FOR **PAGES** IN THE COMPUTER
FILES OF MORTAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES --

-- A BEING **ANointed** IN
HIS ANONYMITY WITH A
FLASHY NAME BY THE WOR-
SHIPFUL PRESS -- "**BACK**
STREET STRANGLER."

I **LUST** AFTER SUCH KILLERS!



THROUGH HIS BLOOD-SOAKED DREAMS I'D FOUND HIM. A SIMPLE TRICK FOR A DARK GOD WHO CAN READ MINDS.

AND TONIGHT THE PLEASURE WILL BE MINE OF FINISHING HIS ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER IN A DARK, CRUEL EMBRACE.



AH, MIAMI. THE PERFECT PLACE FOR THIS LITTLE PASSION PLAY.



LORD GOD, BUT HE WAS FILTHY -- ALL DECENCY LOST IN HIS MANIA.

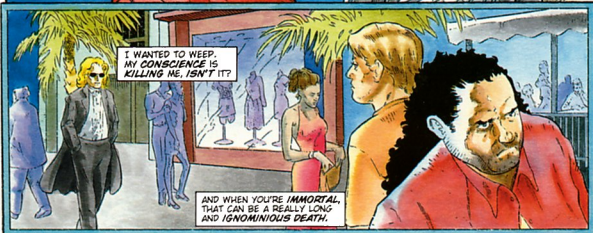
HE WAS RACING, HIS MIND SO THICK WITH HALLUCINATIONS THAT HE COULD SCARCE CONTROL HIS SHUFFLING, SLOPPY STEPS.



AND THEN IT HIT ME AS I SCANNED HIS MIND ONCE MORE -- HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE IS! HE HAS NEVER READ HIS OWN HEADLINES!

HE DOES NOT TRULY REMEMBER THE MURDERS HE HAS COMMITTED, AND HE DOES NOT KNOW THAT HE WILL KILL TONIGHT!

HE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT I KNOW!



I WANTED TO WEEP. MY CONSCIENCE IS KILLING ME, ISN'T IT?

AND WHEN YOU'RE IMMORTAL, THAT CAN BE A REALLY LONG AND IGNOMINIOUS DEATH.

THEN CAME THE PROVOCATIVE MOMENT. HE HAD SEEN THE OLD WOMAN.



PALLID, FEEBLE FACES FLASHED THROUGH HIS MIND AS HE TRAILED BEHIND HER.

HE HUNGRED TO LIE ON TOP OF OLD FLESH...HE HUNGRED TO PUT A HAND OVER AN OLD MOUTH.



MY VAGABOND KILLER WAS NEAR PARALYSIS AS HE WATCHED THE OLD WOMAN, HIS MIND A RIOT OF MOMENTS SO PERSONAL THEY DEFIED INTERPRETATION.

NOTHING WAS REAL TO HIM -- NOT HIS LIFE BY DAY, NOT FEAR OF DISCOVERY --

-- ONLY THE ELECTRIC SHIVER WHICH HIS HALLUCINATIONS SENT THROUGH HIS HULKING TORSO AND CLUMSY ARMS AND LEGS.



I HATED THIS GUY! I DIDN'T WANT TO DRINK HIS BLOOD. HE WAS NO CLASSY KILLER.

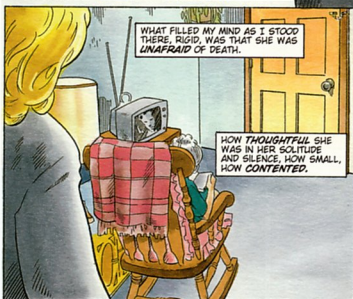


IT WAS HER BLOOD I CRAVED.



I QUICKLY SLIPPED AROUND THE LITTLE STUCCO BUILDING AND FOUND THE STAIRS TO HER KITCHEN DOOR. THE LOCK GAVE EASILY WHEN I COMMANDED IT TO DO SO...

...AND THE DOOR OPENED AND CLOSED AS IF I HAD TOUCHED IT, WHEN I HAD NOT.



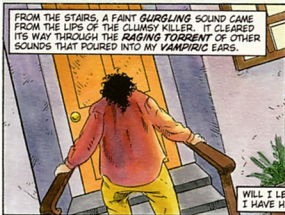
WHAT FILLED MY MIND AS I STOOD THERE, RIGID, WAS THAT SHE WAS UNAFRAID OF DEATH.

HOW THOUGHTFUL SHE WAS IN HER SOLITUDE AND SILENCE, HOW SMALL, HOW CONTENTED.

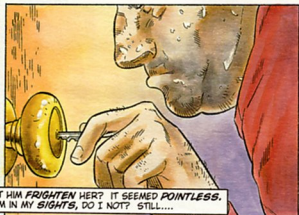


NOW, THAT'S BLOOD WORTH HAVING. AND I WAS STARVING, STARVING AS I HAVE SELDOM BEEN IN ALL THESE DECADES.

OH, LORD GOD, I WANTED SO TO KILL HER!



FROM THE STAIRS, A FAINT GURGLING SOUND CAME FROM THE LIPS OF THE CLUMSY KILLER. IT CLEARED ITS WAY THROUGH THE RAGING TORRENT OF OTHER SOUNDS THAT POURED INTO MY VAMPIRIC EARS.



WILL I LET HIM FRIGHTEN HER? IT SEEMED POINTLESS. I HAVE HIM IN MY SIGHTS, DO I NOT? STILL....

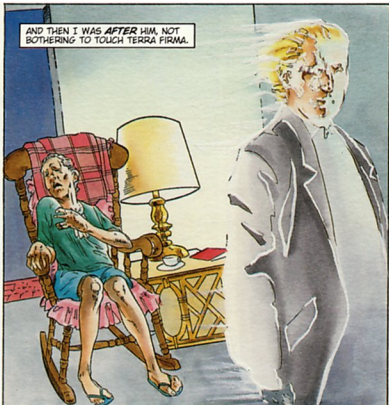
THEN THE CHAIN TORE LOOSE FROM THE ROTTEN WOOD, AND HE STEPPED INTO THE ROOM.



HE SAW ME --

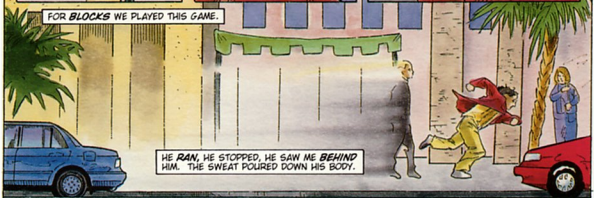


AND THEN I WAS *AFTER* HIM, NOT
BOTHERING TO TOUCH TERRA FIRMA.



FOR *BLOCKS* WE PLAYED THIS GAME.

HE *RAN*, HE STOPPED, HE SAW ME *BEHIND*
HIM. THE SWEAT POURED DOWN HIS BODY.

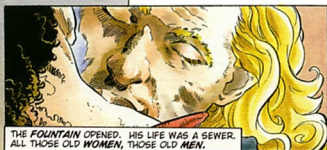




BEFORE HE COULD
CRY OUT, I *HAD* HIM.



HHMM. MY *BROTHER*, MY POOR BEFUDDLED
BROTHER. BUT THIS WAS *RICH*, THIS WAS *GOOD*.

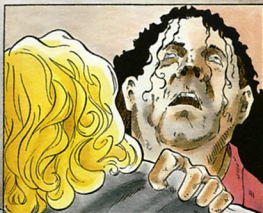


THE *FOUNTAIN* OPENED. HIS LIFE WAS A *SEWER*.
ALL THOSE OLD *WOMEN*, THOSE OLD *MEN*.



NO *SPORT*.
NO *CUNNING*.
NO *MALICE*.

CRUDE AS A *LIZARD* HE HAD BEEN, SWALLOWING FLY AFTER FLY.



THE BLOOD FLOODED MY BRAIN. I FELT IT **ELECTRIFY** THE TINY VEINS OF MY FACE. I FELT A HOT PRICKLING **WARMTH** SLIDE DOWN MY SPINE.



DRAUGHT AFTER DRAUGHT FILLED ME. SUCCULENT, HEAVY CREATURE.

THE **DEATH** CAME LIKE A FIST IN THE GUT. I FELT THE HEAT, THE FULLNESS, THE SHEER **RADIANCE** OF THE LIVING BLOOD...

...WITH THAT LAST VIBRATION OF **CONSCIOUSNESS** PULSING THROUGH ALL MY LIMBS.



I SANK DOWN ON HIS SOILED BED. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I LAY THERE.

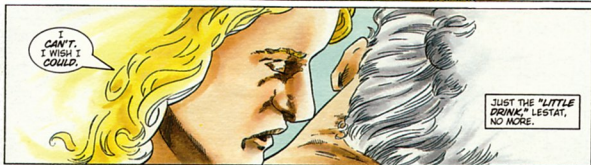
I DIDN'T **WANT** TO BE THE WEIGHTLESS ONE, THE WINGED ONE, THE **NIGHT TRAVELER**.

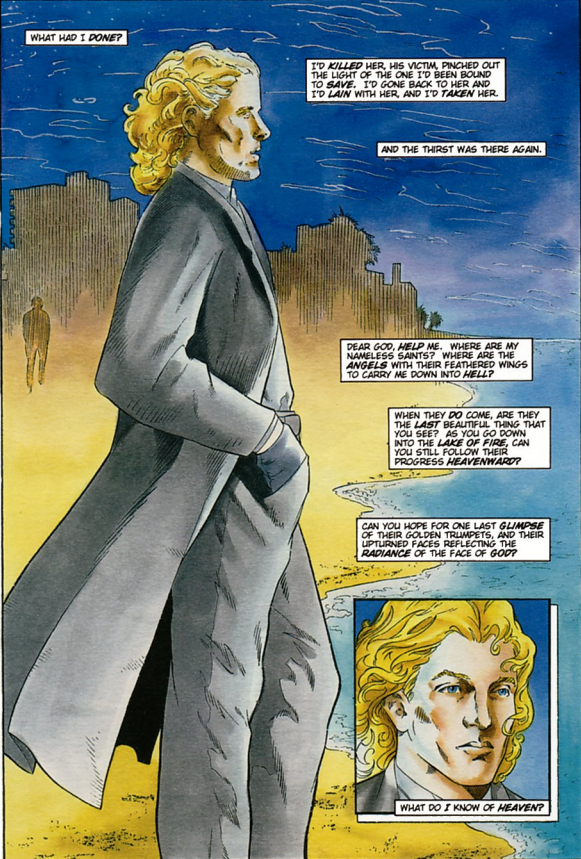
I WANTED TO BE **HUMAN**, AND **FEEL** HUMAN, AND HIS BLOOD WAS THREADED ALL THROUGH ME, AND IT WASN'T **ENOUGH**.



NOT **NEARLY** ENOUGH!





A man with curly blonde hair, wearing a long grey coat, stands in profile, looking out over a city at night. The city skyline is visible in the background under a dark blue sky. A small, distant figure of another person is visible on the left side of the image.

WHAT HAD I DONE?

I'D **KILLED** HER, HIS VICTIM, PINCHED OUT THE LIGHT OF THE ONE I'D BEEN BOUND TO **SAVE**. I'D GONE BACK TO HER AND I'D **LAIN** WITH HER, AND I'D **TAKEN** HER.

AND THE THIRST WAS THERE AGAIN.

DEAR GOD, **HELP** ME. WHERE ARE MY NAMELESS SAINTS? WHERE ARE THE **ANGELS** WITH THEIR FEATHERED WINGS TO CARRY ME DOWN INTO **HELL**?

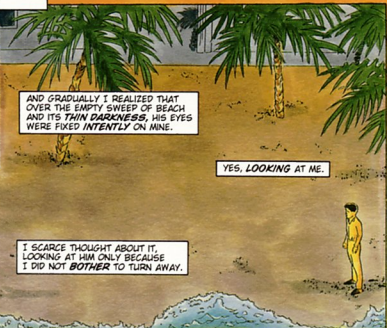
WHEN THEY **DO** COME, ARE THEY THE **LAST** BEAUTIFUL THING THAT YOU SEE? AS YOU GO DOWN INTO THE **LAKE OF FIRE**, CAN YOU STILL FOLLOW THEIR **PROGRESS HEAVENWARD**?

CAN YOU HOPE FOR ONE LAST **GLIMPSE** OF THEIR GOLDEN TRUMPETS, AND THEIR UPTURNED FACES REFLECTING THE **RADIANCE** OF THE FACE OF GOD?



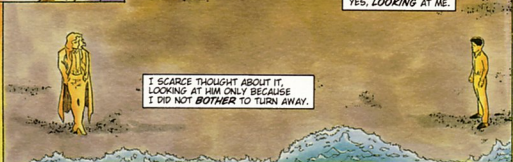


A LONE MORTAL STOOD
IN THE DISTANCE, STARING
IN MY DIRECTION.



AND GRADUALLY I REALIZED THAT
OVER THE EMPTY SWEEP OF BEACH
AND ITS *THIN DARKNESS*, HIS EYES
WERE FIXED *INTENTLY* ON MINE.

YES, *LOOKING* AT ME.



I SCARCE THOUGHT ABOUT IT,
LOOKING AT HIM ONLY BECAUSE
I DID NOT *BOTHER* TO TURN AWAY.

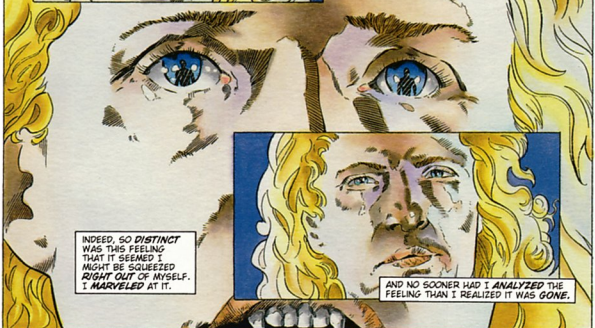


THEN A *CURIOUS SENSATION* PASSED OVER ME --
AND ONE WHICH I HAD NEVER FELT BEFORE.



I WAS FAINTLY *DIZZY* AS IT
BEGAN, AND A SOFT *TINGLING*
SENSATION FOLLOWED.

IT FELT AS IF MY *LIMBS* WERE GROWING
TIGHTER, *NARROWER*, AND STEADILY
COMPRESSING THE SUBSTANCE WITHIN.



INDEED, SO *DISTINCT*
WAS THIS FEELING
THAT IT SEEMED I
MIGHT BE SQUEEZED
RIGHT OUT OF MYSELF.
I *MARVELED* AT IT.

AND NO SOONER HAD I *ANALYZED* THE
FEELING THAN I REALIZED IT WAS *GONE*.



BAFFLING.



BUT I KNEW THIS MORTAL -- NO, MORE ACCURATE TO SAY I HAD GLIMPSED HIM MORE THAN ONCE.

IN VENICE, HOVERING ON THE EDGE OF THE PIAZZA SAN MARCO, AND LATER, IN HONG KONG, NEAR THE NIGHT MARKET --



-- AND BOTH TIMES I HAD TAKEN PARTICULAR NOTICE OF HIM BECAUSE HE HAD TAKEN PARTICULAR NOTICE OF ME.



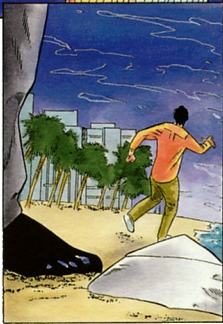
HE RAN TOWARDS ME, AND I CONTINUED TO STARE AT HIM, REVEALING NOTHING --

-- NOT INJURED PRIDE NOR RESPECT FOR THIS ASTONISHING ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT HE COULD FIND ME HERE, THAT HE WOULD DARE.

I WASN'T REASONING ANYMORE AS I LOOKED AT HIM.



I SAW ONLY BLOOD.





WHO *WAS* THIS
NERVY YOUNG
SON OF A BITCH?



HE'D KNOWN *EXACTLY* WHAT
I WAS, NO *DOUBT* OF IT.

VENICE AND HONG
KONG HAD *NOT*
BEEN COINCIDENCE.

OF ALL THINGS.

THE THING ON
THE DOORSTEP

by
H.P. LOVECRAFT

YES, I *REMEMBERED* THE
STORY, THAT IT WAS *CLEVER*,
THAT IT HAD BEEN *FUN*.

BUT WHY WOULD THIS
STRANGE MORTAL GIVE
SUCH A STORY TO *ME*?



OH, IF ONLY
HE HAD COME
TO TEMPT ME
ON SOME
OTHER NIGHT,
WHEN MY
SOUL WASN'T
SICK AND
WEARY --

-- WHEN I MIGHT HAVE CARED JUST A *LITTLE*.



WELL, THERE WAS STILL
TIME TO SAY FAREWELL
TO DAVID TALBOT, MY
MORTAL FRIEND.

I SOARED TOWARD ENGLAND,
THINKING OF MY *LAST* ENCOUNTER
WITH DAVID TALBOT. IT WAS IN
THE RIJKSMUSEUM, IN AMSTERDAM.



ARE THERE
ANY **VAMPIRES** WHO
HAVE SUCH FACES AS THESE?
I AM SPEAKING OF THE **KNOW-
LEDGE** AND UNDERSTANDING
WHICH LIES **BEHIND**
THESE FACES.

I'M SPEAKING
OF SOMETHING MORE
INDICATIVE OF IMMORTALITY
THAN A PRETERNATURAL BODY
ANATOMICALLY DEPENDENT
UPON THE DRINKING OF
HUMAN BLOOD.

VAMPIRES
WITH SUCH FACES?
DAVID, THAT IS
UNFAIR.

THERE ARE
NO MEN WITH SUCH
FACES. THERE **NEVER**
WERE.





LOOK AT ANY OF REMBRANDT'S PAINTINGS. **ABSURD** TO BELIEVE THAT SUCH PEOPLE EVER EXISTED, LET ALONE THAT **AMSTERDAM** WAS FULL OF THEM IN REMBRANDT'S TIME --

-- THAT EVERY MAN OR WOMAN WHO EVER DARKENED HIS DOOR WAS AN ANGEL.

NO, IT'S **REMBRANDT** YOU SEE IN THESE FACES, AND **REMBRANDT** IS IMMORTAL, OF COURSE.

IT'S **NOT TRUE** WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. AND WHAT A DESPERATE LONELINESS EMANATES FROM YOU.

DON'T YOU SEE I **CAN'T** ACCEPT YOUR GIFT, AND IF I **DID**, WHAT WOULD YOU **THINK** OF ME? WOULD YOU **STILL** CRAVE MY COMPANY?

WOULD I CRAVE **YOURS**?

I KNEW THAT I SHOULD **NOT** HAVE COME.

I LEFT SWIFTLY. HE WAS **FURIOUS** WITH ME FOR DOING IT.



UNFAIR OF YOU TO GO LIKE THAT! HAVE YOU NO **HONOR**? WHAT ABOUT **MANNERS** IF THERE IS NO HONOR LEFT?



I WROTE TO HIM HOURS LATER. I HAD TO TELL HIM THAT I WAS SORRY FOR MY **BEHAVIOR** --

-- AND THAT SOMETHING HAD SNAPPED IN MY **SOUL** WHEN I BEHELD THE MEN IN THE REMBRANT PORTRAIT.



SO I TOLD HIM MY **THEORY** ABOUT REMBRANT. THIS IS WHAT I WROTE:



I BELIEVE THAT REMBRANT SOLD HIS SOUL TO THE DEVIL WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG MAN.



IT WAS A SIMPLE BARGAIN. THE DEVIL PROMISED TO MAKE REMBRANT THE MOST FAMOUS PAINTER OF HIS TIME, AND HE WOULD HAVE REMBRANT'S SOUL IN THE END.



BUT REMBRANT HAD BEEN CHANGED BY HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE DEVIL. HE BEGAN TO SEARCH THE FACES OF HIS SUBJECTS FOR THEIR INNER DIVINITY --



-- AND TO HIS AMAZEMENT FOUND THAT NOT ONLY COULD HE SEE THAT GOODNESS, HE COULD PAINT IT. HE COULD ALLOW HIS KNOWLEDGE OF IT, AND HIS FAITH IN IT, TO SUFFUSE THE WHOLE.



THE FACES REMBRANDT PAINTED WERE NOT FLESH-AND-BLOOD FACES AT ALL. THEY WERE SPIRITUAL COUNTEANCES...THEY WERE VISIONS OF WHAT THAT PERSON WAS AT HIS OR HER FINEST HOUR, OF WHAT THAT PERSON STOOD TO BECOME.



BUT NOWHERE IS THIS SPIRITUAL DEPTH AND INSIGHT MORE CLEARLY MANIFEST THAN IN REMBRANDT'S SELF-PORTRAITS. WHY DO YOU THINK HE PAINTED SO MANY?



THEY WERE HIS PERSONAL PLEA TO GOD TO NOTE THE PROGRESS OF THIS MAN, WHO HAD BEEN COMPLETELY RELIGIOUSLY TRANSFORMED.



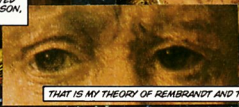
FINALLY, WHEN HE LAY ON HIS DEATH-BED AND THE DEVIL WAITED TO SNATCH HIS SOUL, THE ANGELS AND SAINTS CRIED TO GOD TO INTERVENE.



"IN ALL THE WORLD, WHO KNOWS MORE ABOUT GOODNESS?" THEY ASKED. "WHO HAS SHOWN MORE THAN THIS PAINTER? WE LOOK TO HIS PORTRAITS WHEN WE WOULD KNOW THE DIVINE IN MAN."

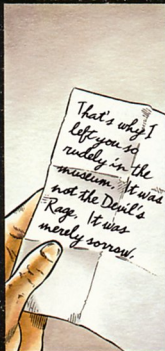


AND SO GOD BROKE THE PACT BETWEEN REMBRANDT AND THE DEVIL. HE TOOK TO HIMSELF THE SOUL OF REMBRANDT, AND THE DEVIL, SO RECENTLY CHEATED OF FAUST FOR THE VERY SAME REASON, WENT MAD WITH RAGE.



THAT IS MY THEORY OF REMBRANDT AND THOSE FACES.

I LOVE THE PAINTINGS OF REMBRANDT!
YET IT BREAKS MY HEART TO LOOK AT
THEM. AND IT BROKE MY HEART TO SEE
YOU THERE IN THE MUSEUM. YOU ARE
PERFECTLY RIGHT THAT THERE ARE NO
VAMPIRES WITH FACES LIKE THE SAINTS
OF THE DRAPERS' GUILD.



DAVID HAD NEVER REPLIED.



AFTERWARDS, I WENT ON A PILGRIMAGE OF SORTS, REVISITING
THE PAINTINGS OF REMBRANDT IN THE GREAT COLLECTIONS OF
THE WORLD. I SAW NOTHING IN MY TRAVELS TO SWAY ME IN
MY BELIEF IN REMBRANDT'S GOODNESS.

I RESOLVED ANEW NEVER
TO BOTHER DAVID AGAIN.

BUT THEN I HAD THE DREAM.
TYGER, TYGER...DAVID IN DANGER....



NIGHT HAD ALMOST
ENDED IN ENGLAND.
I HAD TO HURRY.

I FOUND DAVID IN THE LIBRARY OF HIS MANOR HOUSE IN THE
COTSWOLDS, HIS FAMILIAR LEATHERBOUND DIARY IN HIS HAND.



IT COMFORTED ME MERELY TO WATCH
HIM, AS IT HAD ALWAYS DONE.





I'M GOING TO A DESERT PLACE. I'VE FIGURED A WAY TO END IT, I THINK.

THIS IS NOT A SIMPLE MATTER AT ALL.



WHY DO YOU WANT TO DO THAT?



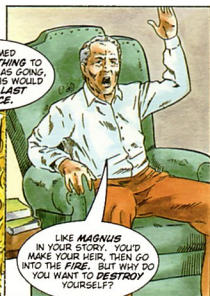
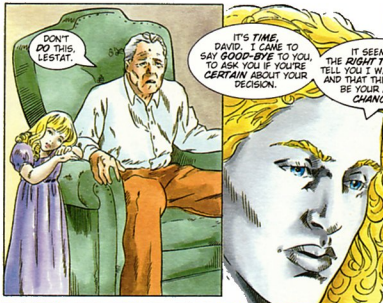
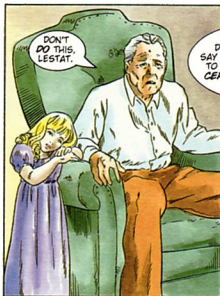
DON'T WANT TO BE ALIVE ANYMORE. THAT PART OF IT IS SIMPLE ENOUGH.



I DON'T LOOK FORWARD TO DEATH THE WAY YOU DO. IT ISN'T THAT...

...TONIGHT, I --

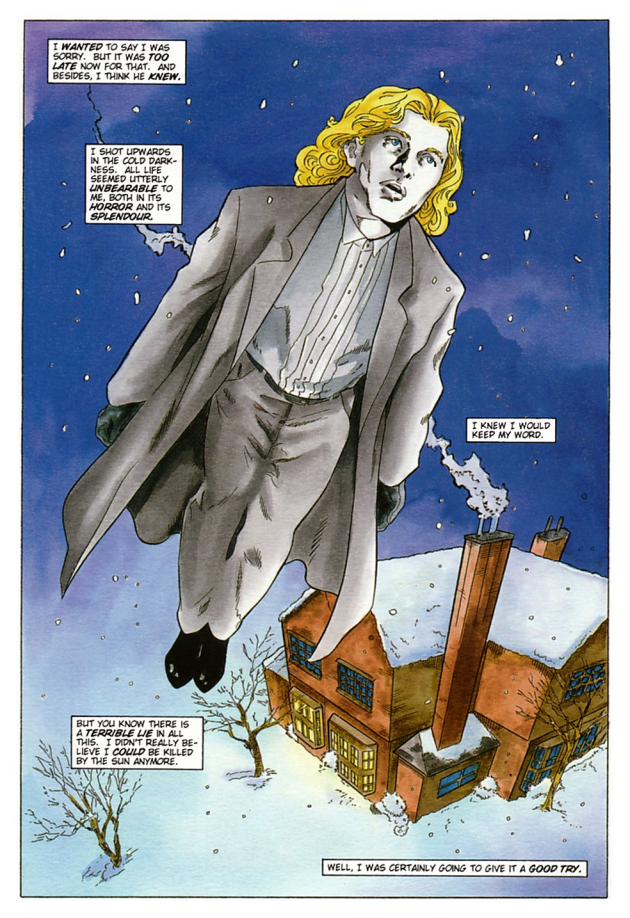




IN HEAT, AS CLAUDIA HAD DIED.





A man with long, wavy blonde hair is floating in the air, looking upwards with a concerned expression. He is wearing a grey trench coat over a light-colored striped shirt and dark trousers. The background is a dark blue night sky with falling snow. Below him is a snowy town with a large brick building that has two tall chimneys emitting smoke. Bare trees are visible in the foreground.

I WANTED TO SAY I WAS
SORRY. BUT IT WAS TOO
LATE NOW FOR THAT. AND
BESIDES, I THINK HE *KNEW*.

I SHOT UPWARDS
IN THE COLD DARK-
NESS. ALL LIFE
SEEMED LITTERLY
UNBEARABLE TO
ME, BOTH IN ITS
HORROR AND ITS
SPLENDOR.

I KNEW I WOULD
KEEP MY WORD.

BUT YOU KNOW THERE IS
A *TERRIBLE LIE* IN ALL
THIS. I DIDN'T REALLY BE-
LIEVE I *COULD* BE KILLED
BY THE SUN ANYMORE.

WELL, I WAS CERTAINLY GOING TO GIVE IT A *GOOD TRY*.

THE GOBI DESERT.

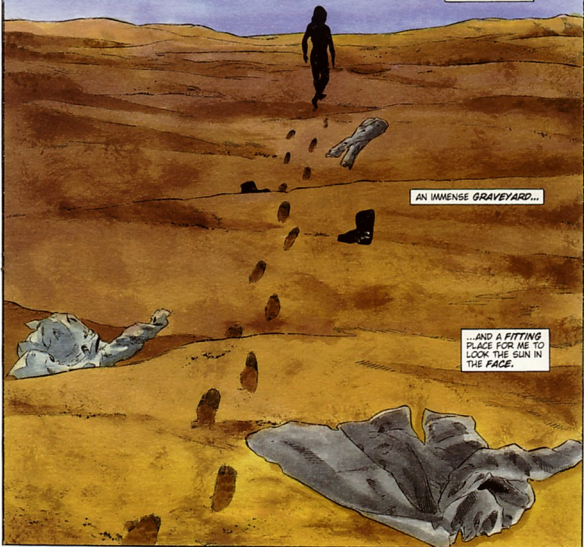
EONS AGO, GREAT LIZARDS
DIED IN THIS STRANGE PART OF
THE WORLD BY THE THOUSANDS.
NO ONE KNOWS WHY THEY *CAME*
HERE, WHY THEY *PERISHED*.

ALL WE HAVE NOW IN THIS SPOT IS THE *DESERT*
AND MILLIONS UPON MILLIONS OF *FOSSILS*.

THE GOBI DESERT.

AN IMMENSE GRAVEYARD...

...AND A FITTING
PLACE FOR ME TO
LOOK THE SUN IN
THE FACE.



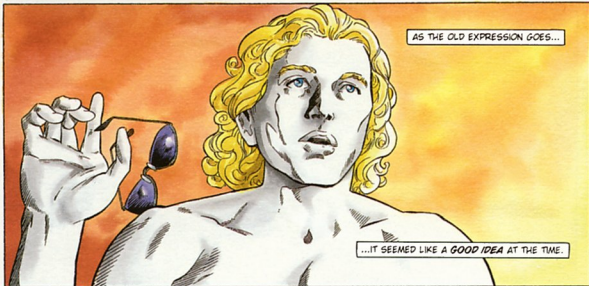
THE TRICK WAS TO RISE TO THE VERY *LIMIT* OF THE ATMOSPHERE, INTO THE *SUNRISE*, SO TO *SPEAK*.



THEN WHEN I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS, I WOULD *TUMBLE DOWN* IN THE TERRIBLE HEAT, AND MY BODY WOULD BE *SHATTERED* BY THIS FALL UPON THE DESERT FLOOR.



IF THE BLAST OF LIGHT WAS *SUFFICIENTLY STRONG* TO BURN ME UP, NAKED AND SO HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH, PERHAPS I WOULD BE *DEAD* BEFORE MY REMAINS EVER *STRUCK* THE HARD BED OF SAND.



AS THE OLD EXPRESSION GOES...

...IT SEEMED LIKE A *GOOD IDEA* AT THE TIME.

I BEGAN THE *ASCENT*, MY EYES ALREADY *BURNING* FROM THE LIGHT.

HIGHER AND HIGHER I WENT PROPELLING MYSELF *WELL BEYOND* THE PLACE WHERE MY BODY TENDED TO *STOP* AND BEGIN TO FLOAT OF ITS *OWN ACCORD*.



FINALLY I COULD NOT *BREATHE*, AS THE AIR WAS VERY THIN, AND IT TOOK A GREAT EFFORT TO *SUPPORT* MYSELF.

THEN THE LIGHT CAME.



SO *IMMENSE*, SO HOT, SO *BLINDING* THAT IT SEEMED A GREAT *ROARING NOISE* AS MUCH AS A VISION FILLING MY SIGHT.

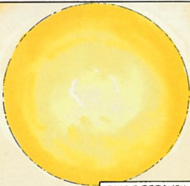
I SAW YELLOW AND ORANGE FIRE COVERING *EVERYTHING*.



AND THEN THE LIGHT WAS COVERING ME
LIKE **MOLTEN LEAD**, PARALYZING ME AND
TORTURING ME BEYOND ENDURANCE,
AND MY **OWN CRIES** FILLED MY EARS.



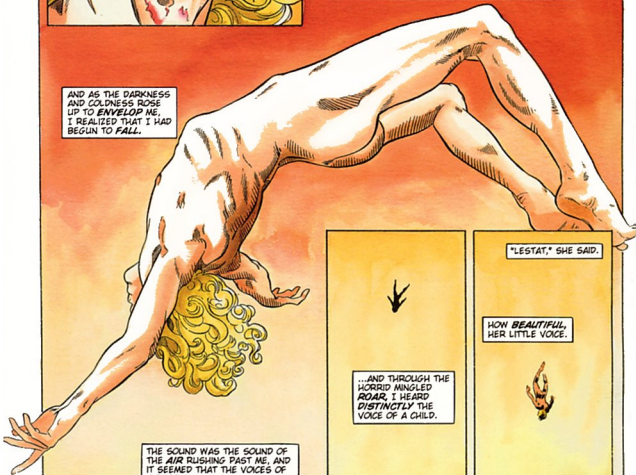
STILL I WOULD NOT LOOK AWAY, STILL I WOULD NOT FALL!



THUS I **DEFY** YOU, HEAVEN!

AND THEN THERE WERE NO **WORDS** SUDDENLY, AND
NO **THOUGHTS**. I WAS TWISTING, **SWIMMING** IN IT.

AND AS THE DARKNESS
AND COLDNESS ROSE
UP TO **ENVELOP** ME,
I REALIZED THAT I HAD
BEGUN TO **FALL**.



THE SOUND WAS THE SOUND OF
THE **AIR** RUSHING PAST ME, AND
IT SEEMED THAT THE VOICES OF
OTHERS WERE CALLING TO ME...

"LESTAT," SHE SAID.

HOW **BEAUTIFUL**,
HER LITTLE VOICE.

...AND THROUGH THE
HORRID MINGLED
ROAR, I HEARD
DISTINCTLY THE
VOICE OF A CHILD.

"NOT YET."



IT WAS NIGHT AGAIN WHEN I AWOKE.

I FELT PAIN ALL OVER. PAIN EVEN IN THE
ROOTS OF MY **HAIR**. I FELT SUCH PAIN
I COULDN'T WILL MYSELF TO **MOVE**.

I WAS NOT GOING
TO **DIE**. I WAS
BURNT, YES. MY
SKIN WAS BROWN
AND WRINKLED AND
ROARING WITH PAIN.

BUT I WAS NOWHERE **NEAR** DEATH.



AND THEN I FELT THE **SUN** COMING AGAIN.

I WAS *WEEPING* AS THE GREAT ORANGE LIGHT SPILLED OVER ALL THE WORLD.

I THOUGHT MY HEAD WAS BURNING, THAT IT WOULD *EXPLODE*, AND THAT THE FIRE WAS EATING MY *EYES*.

I WAS *MAD* WHEN THE DARKNESS OF OBLIVION CAME, ABSOLUTELY *MAD*.

WHEN I AWOKE THE FOLLOWING EVENING, I FELT *SAND* IN MY MOUTH, *SAND COVERING* ME IN MY AGONY.

IN THAT *MADNESS*, I'D APPARENTLY *BURIED* MYSELF *ALIVE*.

FOR *HOURS* I REMAINED SO, THINKING ONLY THAT THIS PAIN WAS MORE THAN ANY *CREATURE* COULD ENDURE.

FINALLY I STRUGGLED TO THE SURFACE, WHIMPERING LIKE AN *ANIMAL* --

-- EACH GESTURE *PULLING* AT THE PAIN AND *INTENSIFYING* IT.

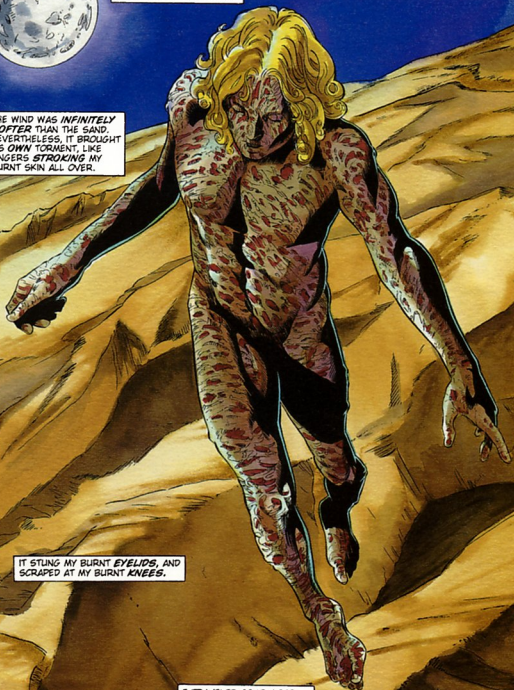


I WILLED MYSELF INTO THE
AIR AND INTO THE NIGHT.

THE WIND WAS INFINITELY
SOFTER THAN THE SAND.
NEVERTHELESS, IT BROUGHT
ITS OWN TORMENT, LIKE
FINGERS STROKING MY
BURNT SKIN ALL OVER.

IT STUNG MY BURNT EYELIDS, AND
SCRAPED AT MY BURNT KNEES.

I TRAVELED GENTLY FOR
HOURS, WILLING MYSELF TO
DAVID TALBOT'S HOUSE.





IT WAS JUST BEFORE
MORNING IN ENGLAND.

I ENTERED
BY THE REAR
DOOR, EACH
STEP AN EX-
CRUCIATING
ORDEAL.



ALMOST BLINDLY, I
FOUND THE LIBRARY.

THE PAIN WAS
LIKE A DEEP
BLOW SETTLING
OVER MY BODY.

SUDDENLY, I CAUGHT
DAVID'S SCENT,
AND I HEARD AGAIN
THE LOW FAMILIAR
THUNDER OF BLOOD
IN MORTAL VEINS.



BLOOD.



LESTAT!
LET ME TAKE YOU
DOWN INTO THE CELLAR,
WHERE YOU'LL SURELY
BE SAFE.

DOESN'T
MATTER, DAVID.
MAY I STAY HERE IN
THIS ROOM?



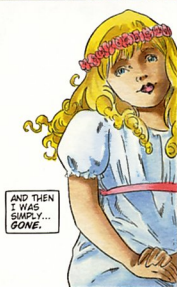
YES,
OF COURSE,
YOU MAY
STAY.



THANK
YOU, DAVID.







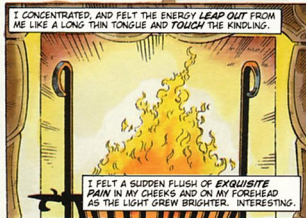


WHEN I WOKE THE **SECOND** NIGHT, THE PAIN WAS NOT VERY GREAT. MY BODY WAS **SORE** ALL OVER, PERHAPS WHAT MORTALS CALL **RAW**, BUT THE AGONY WAS CLEARLY PAST.

I WAS STILL LYING ON THE **TIGER**, AND THE ROOM FELT JUST A **LITTLE** UNCOMFORTABLY COLD.



I CONCENTRATED, AND FELT THE ENERGY LEAP OUT FROM ME LIKE A LONG THIN TONGUE AND **TOUCH** THE KINDLING.



I FELT A SUDDEN FLUSH OF **EXQUISITE PAIN** IN MY CHEEKS AND ON MY FOREHEAD AS THE LIGHT GREW BRIGHTER. INTERESTING.



THERE WERE CLOTHES ON THE CHAIR. I **WANTED** TO BE DRESSED --

-- BUT WHAT I **REALLY** WANTED NOW WAS A **MIRROR**.





YOU MUST
REMEMBER WHAT
I AM, DAVID.

WHEN
YOU HELP ME,
YOU HELP THE
DEVIL.



YOU
DON'T HAVE TO
TAKE LIFE TO DO
IT, DO YOU?

I LIKE
TO TAKE LIFE. I'M A
HUNTER AS YOU WERE
ONCE. I THINK
IT'S FUN.



YOU'RE
QUITE DETERMINED
THAT I'M TO KNOW YOU,
AREN'T YOU? THERE'S TO
BE NO SENTIMENTALITY
OR MISTAKE.



EXACTLY.

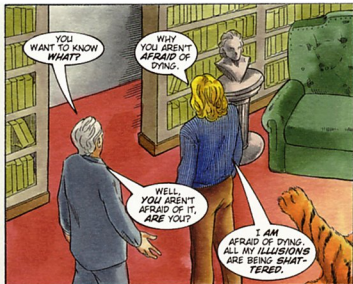


VERY WELL.
I'LL BE HERE WHEN
YOU COME BACK. BUT IF YOU
DON'T COME BACK, I'LL BE
FURIOUS! I WON'T SPEAK TO
YOU AGAIN, I SWEAR IT!
YOU UNDERSTAND?

ALL
RIGHT, ALL
RIGHT!



I'LL
COME BACK.
BESIDES, I WANT
TO KNOW.



YOU
WANT TO KNOW
WHAT?

WHY
YOU AREN'T
AFRAID OF
DYING.

WELL,
YOU AREN'T
AFRAID OF IT,
ARE YOU?

I AM
AFRAID OF DYING.
ALL MY ILLUSIONS
ARE BEING SHAT-
TERED.



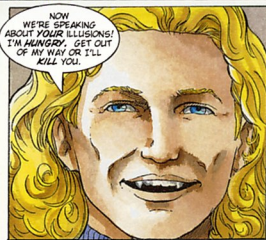
ONE
OF MY ILLUSIONS
WAS THAT NO ONE
COULD REALLY REFUSE
THE DARK GIFT, NOT
KNOWINGLY....

LESTAT,
MUST I REMIND YOU
THAT YOU REFUSED IT
YOURSELF?

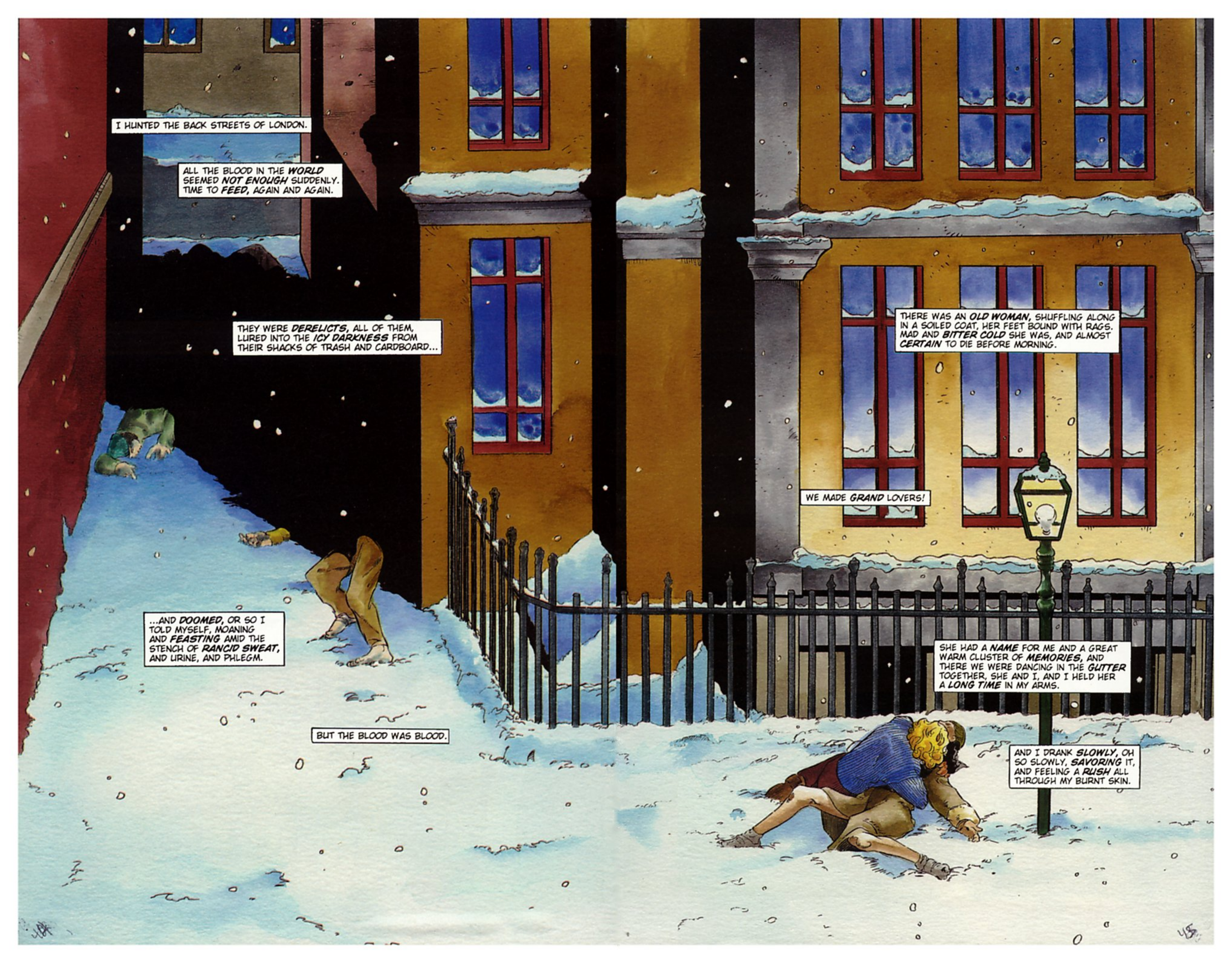


DAVID, I WAS
A BOY. I WAS BEING
FORCED. I FOUGHT IN-
STINCTIVELY, BUT THAT
HAD NOTHING TO DO
WITH KNOWING.

DON'T SELL
YOURSELF SHORT. I
THINK YOU WOULD HAVE
REFUSED EVEN IF YOU
HAD FULLY UNDER-
STOOD.



NOW
WE'RE SPEAKING
ABOUT YOUR ILLUSIONS!
I'M HUNGRY. GET OUT
OF MY WAY OR I'LL
KILL YOU.



I HUNTED THE BACK STREETS OF LONDON.

ALL THE BLOOD IN THE WORLD
SEEMED *NOT ENOUGH* SUDDENLY.
TIME TO *FEED*, AGAIN AND AGAIN.

THEY WERE *DERELICTS*, ALL OF THEM,
LURED INTO THE *ICY DARKNESS* FROM
THEIR SHACKS OF TRASH AND CARDBOARD...

...AND *DOOMED*, OR SO I
TOLD MYSELF, MOANING
AND *FEASTING* AMID THE
STENCH OF *RANCID SWEAT*,
AND URINE, AND PHLEGM.

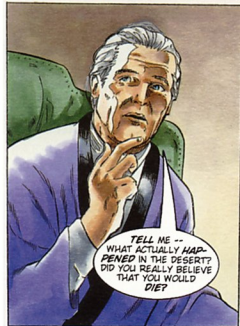
BUT THE BLOOD WAS BLOOD.

THERE WAS AN *OLD WOMAN*, SHUFFLING ALONG
IN A SOILED COAT, HER FEET BOUND WITH RAGS,
MAD AND *BITTER COLD* SHE WAS, AND ALMOST
CERTAIN TO DIE BEFORE MORNING.

WE MADE *GRAND LOVERS*!

SHE HAD A *NAME* FOR ME AND A GREAT
WARM CLUSTER OF *MEMORIES*, AND
THERE WE WERE DANCING IN THE *GUTTER*
TOGETHER, SHE AND I, AND I HELD HER
A *LONG TIME* IN MY ARMS.

AND I DRANK *SLOWLY*, OH
SO SLOWLY, *SAVORING* IT,
AND FEELING A *RUSH* ALL
THROUGH MY BURN'T SKIN.







IT WAS AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THE INDIA OF MY BOYHOOD WAS GONE, SIMPLY GONE. AND BESIDES, I WAS HUNGRY FOR NEW PLACES.

I GOT UP A HUNTING EXPEDITION WITH MY FRIENDS FOR THE AMAZON JUNGLES.

WE DECIDED TO PREFACE OUR EXPEDITION WITH A NICE LUXURIOUS HOLIDAY IN RIO.



WELL, THE CITY ITSELF SURPASSED ALL EXPECTATIONS, OF COURSE. YET IT WAS NOTHING AS ENTHRALLING AS THE PEOPLE.



I DEVELOPED A PASSION, SHALL WE SAY, FOR THIS BOY, CARLOS, THE VERY FIRST WEEK.



I WAS ABSOLUTELY SWEEPED AWAY -- ALL WE DID WAS DRINK AND MAKE LOVE FOR DAYS AND NIGHTS ON END.

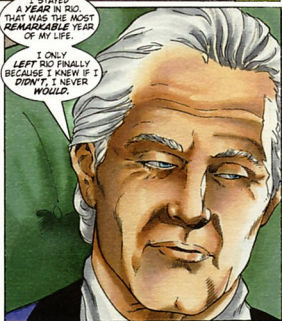
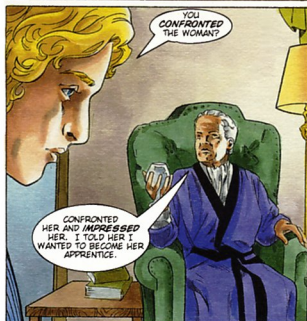
QUITE TRULY OBSCENE.



MY DECISION TO TAKE CARLOS ALONG ON THE EXPEDITION PROVED TO BE A DREADFUL MISTAKE. HIS MOTHER WAS A CANDOMBLE PRIESTESS, WHO DIDN'T WANT HER BOY GOING OFF INTO THE AMAZON JUNGLES.

SHE SENT THE SPIRITS AFTER ME.

THAT MUST HAVE BEEN WONDERFUL FUN!





YOU
LEARNED HOW
TO SUMMON THE
SPIRITS?

I WROTE
IT ALL DOWN. IT'S
IN THE FILES AT THE
MOTHERHOUSE.



YOU'RE
AFRAID YOU'VE
WASTED YOUR
LIFE, AREN'T
YOU?



NO, I'M
NOT, REALLY. BUT
I HAVEN'T **CRACKED** THE
SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE.
I ONLY PENETRATED
SO FAR.



THAT'S YOUR
HOPE, THEN? THAT'S
WHY YOU'RE READING THE
BIBLE? YOU COULDN'T
CRACK THE OCCULT SECRETS
OF THE UNIVERSE, AND NOW
YOU'VE GONE BACK
TO **GOD**?



GOD IS THE
OCCULT SECRET OF
THE UNIVERSE. I THINK
THE ANSWER MIGHT BE IN
GENESIS, I REALLY
DO....

AND THE
DEVIL? IS THERE ANY
NEW INTELLIGENCE
ABOUT HIM?



WELL, I
DID SEE **SOME-**
THING ONCE, SOMETHING
INEXPLICABLE, BEFORE
I EVER WENT TO
BRAZIL....

"HAPPENED IN *PARIS* RIGHT BEFORE THE WAR. I WAS IN A CAFE ON THE *LEFT BANK*, AND IT WAS A LOVELY SPRING DAY, A SIMPLY *GRAND* TIME TO BE IN *PARIS*.

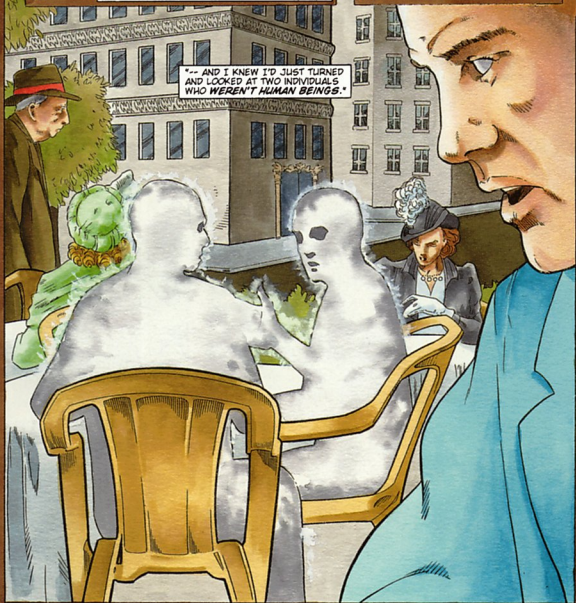
"I WAS DRINKING A BEER, READING THE ENGLISH PAPER -- AND I REALIZED I WAS *OVERHEARING* A CONVERSATION.

"IT WASN'T IN *ENGLISH* AND IT WASN'T IN *FRENCH*...AND GRADUALLY I CAME TO KNOW THAT IT WASN'T IN *ANY* LANGUAGE, REALLY, AND YET IT WAS *FULLY UNDERSTANDABLE* TO ME.

"-- AND I KNEW I'D JUST TURNED AND LOOKED AT TWO INDIVIDUALS WHO WEREN'T *HUMAN BEINGS*."

"ON AND ON IT WENT. IT WAS A SORT OF *ARGUMENT*, AND I WASN'T SURE ANYONE ELSE IN THE CAFE COULD ACTUALLY *HEAR THIS!*

"I TURNED AND LOOKED --





"IT WAS GOD TALKING TO THE DEVIL AND TELLING THE DEVIL THAT HE **MUST** GO ON DOING THE JOB. AND THE DEVIL DIDN'T WANT TO DO IT."



"THE DEVIL EXPLAINED THAT HIS TERM HAD **ALREADY** BEEN TOO LONG. THE SAME THING WAS HAPPENING TO HIM THAT HAD HAPPENED TO ALL THE **OTHERS**."

"GOD SAID THAT HE **UNDERSTOOD**, BUT THE DEVIL OUGHT TO KNOW HOW **IMPORTANT** HE WAS, HE COULDN'T SHIRK HIS **DUTIES**, GOD **NEEDED** HIM, AND NEEDED HIM TO BE **STRONG**."

"AND ALL THIS WAS VERY AMICABLE."

WHEN I TRIED TO RECONSTRUCT THE EVENTS **AFTERWARDS**, I COULDN'T RECALL ANY **DETAILS!** I DON'T THINK THE ILLUSION WAS THAT NEARLY COMPLETE."

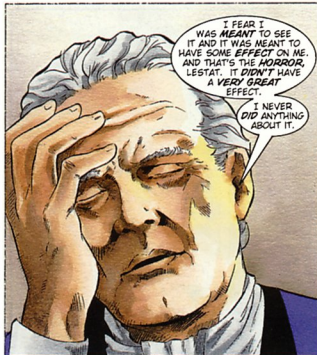


THEY NEVER **SAW** YOU, NEVER KNEW YOU WERE **THERE?**

MY DEAR BOY, THEY **HAD** TO KNOW I WAS THERE. THEY **MUST** HAVE KNOWN. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN DOING IT FOR MY **BENEFIT!**

HOW **ELSE** COULD I HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO **SEE** IT?





I FEAR I WAS MEANT TO SEE IT AND IT WAS MEANT TO HAVE SOME EFFECT ON ME. AND THAT'S THE HORROR, LESTAT. IT DIDN'T HAVE A VERY GREAT EFFECT.

I NEVER DID ANYTHING ABOUT IT.



BUT WHAT WAS THERE TO DO? WHAT CAN ANYBODY DO ON ACCOUNT OF ANY REVELATION BUT LIVE A GOOD LIFE?

BUT -- GOD DID DAVID, THAT'S THE BIG TIME!



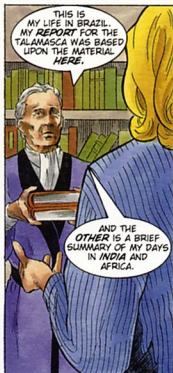
WHAT DO YOU THINK, LESTAT, REALLY? INSIDE OF YOU? IS THERE A GOD OR A DEVIL? I MEAN TRULY, WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

I DO THINK GOD EXISTS. I DON'T LIKE TO SAY SO. BUT I DO. AND PROBABLY SOME FORM OF DEVIL EXISTS, AS WELL.

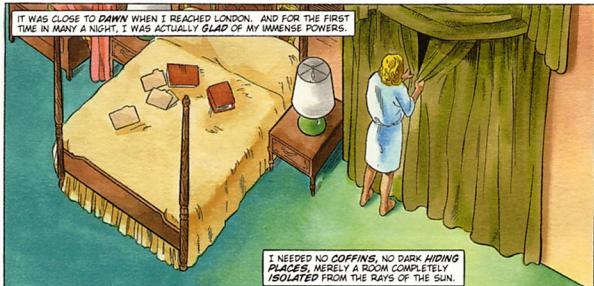
AND YOU MIGHT WELL HAVE SEEN THE SUPREME BEING AND HIS ADVERSARY IN THAT PARIS CAFE. BUT IT'S PART OF THEIR MADDENING GAME THAT WE CAN NEVER FIGURE IT OUT FOR CERTAIN.

WE AREN'T MEANT TO KNOW THE ANSWERS. HE PLANTS THE DOUBTS AS HE PLANTS THE REVELATIONS.

WE'RE ALL HIS FOOLS.



IT WAS CLOSE TO DAWN WHEN I REACHED LONDON. AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY A NIGHT, I WAS ACTUALLY GLAD OF MY IMMENSE POWERS.



I NEEDED NO COFFINS, NO DARK HIDING PLACES, MERELY A ROOM COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM THE RAYS OF THE SUN.

I WAS READY TO SETTLE IN WITH DAVID'S **BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE** WHEN I SUDDENLY EXPERIENCED A BOLT OF DIZZINESS.



IT WAS VERY PLEASURABLE, ACTUALLY, THE SUBTLE VIBRATORY SENSATION, ACCOMPANIED BY A WEIGHTLESSNESS...

...THEN CAME THAT PRESSURE AGAIN WHICH I'D FELT SO FLEETINGLY IN MIAMI -- OF MY LIMBS CONSTRICTING, OF MY WHOLE FORM PRESSING INWARDS UPON ME.



WHY WAS THIS HAPPENING?



A MESSAGE FOR YOU, SIR. THE GENTLEMAN REQUESTED I PUT IT IN YOUR HANDS.



OH, BUT THIS IS NOT **POSSIBLE**....

**EYES OF THE
MUMMY**
BY
ROBERT BLOCH

I WAS IN A FURY. A POSITIVE
FURY. I'M GOING TO **KILL** THIS
SON OF A BITCH, I THOUGHT,
WHOEVER THE HELL HE IS.

HOW **DARE** HE COME STALKING ME AND
SHOVING THESE **STORIES** IN MY FACE!



YES -- I
WILL **KILL** HIM AS
SOON AS I **CATCH**
HIM!

I WASN'T SO ANGRY WITH THE
LITTLE *MORTAL FIEND* -- WHO
HAD FOUND ME *AGAIN*, IN
LONDON -- WHEN I WOKE UP.



ACTUALLY, I WAS POWERFULLY *INTRIGUED*.

I DECIDED UPON A LITTLE
EXPERIMENT. I WENT
TO *PARIS*, MAKING THE
CROSSING VERY QUICKLY
AND ON MY OWN.

I DIDN'T TELL A SOUL, *MORTAL OR IMMORTAL*, THAT I WAS THERE.

I HEADED FOR THE SNOW-COVERED *PLACE
VENDÔME*, WHICH CONTAINED THE VERY
SAME PALACES WHICH IT HAD IN *MY DAY*...

...AND UNDER THE ALIAS OF *BARON
VAN KINDERGARTEN*, ENSCONCED
MYSELF IN A LAVISH SUITE AT THE RITZ.



FOR *TWO NIGHTS* I AVOIDED THE
CITY, AND SET AT ONCE TO READING
DAVID TALBOT'S MANUSCRIPTS.

A man with brown hair and a light beard, wearing a tan button-down shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is surrounded by dense green jungle foliage. His hands are raised, with fingers spread, as if he is feeling or reaching out to something. His expression is one of intense focus or perhaps a mix of awe and apprehension. The background is a lush, dark jungle with various types of leaves and vines.

DAVID'S WRITING CAPTIVATED ME. I SOON FELT CLOSER TO HIM THAN EVER BEFORE.

THE GIST WAS THAT THE DEEP TELEPATHIC POWERS OF DAVID'S BRAIN HAD BEEN DEVELOPED THROUGH A SERIES OF PRIMITIVE AND TERRIFYING ENCOUNTERS WITH BRAZILIAN PRIESTESSES, AND SPIRITS, AS WELL.

AND THE BODY OF DAVID HAD BECOME A MERE INSTRUMENT FOR THIS PSYCHIC POWER, THEREBY PAVING THE WAY FOR THE SCHOLAR WHO HAD EMERGED IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED.

AND OF COURSE, THIS DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE OF HIM MADE ME ACHE FOR HIM ALL THE MORE.

THESE MANUSCRIPTS MORE FULLY ILLUMINATED ANOTHER POINT FOR ME, AS WELL. DAVID WAS THE VERY MAN TO REFUSE THE DARK GIFT, AND TO THE BITTER END.

THIS MAN FEARED NOTHING, REALLY. HE DIDN'T LIKE DEATH, BUT HE DIDN'T FEAR IT. HE NEVER HAD.

BUT I HAD NOT COME TO PARIS TO READ THIS MEMOIR.

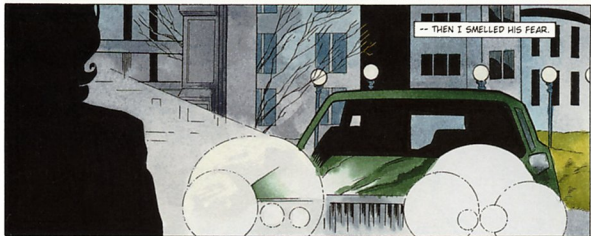
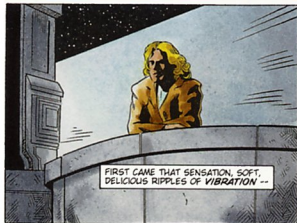
I HAD ANOTHER PURPOSE IN MIND.

I HAD BEEN **STRENGTHENED** BY MY ORDEAL
IN THE DESERT, THAT WAS PLAIN. AND I WAS
READY FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN...

...AND FINALLY, IN THE EARLY
HOURS OF THE MORNING, WHEN I
HAD BECOME A BIT MELANCHOLY
AND WAS **GRIEVING** A LITTLE
FOR THE OLD TUMBLEDOWN
BUILDINGS OF THE 1780s --

-- AND I WAS LEANING ON THE HIGH STONE LEDGE OF THE
BANK VERY NEAR THE BRIDGE TO THE **ILE DE LA CITE** --

-- I SAW MY MAN.



FINALLY HE SCREWED
UP HIS *COURAGE*.







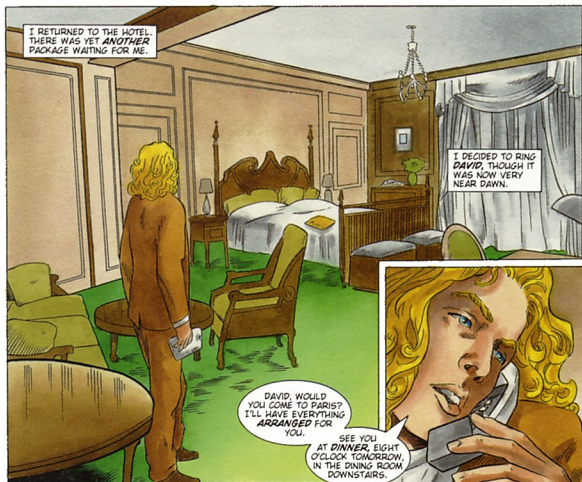
I WASN'T SURE I SHOULD HAVE LET HIM GO, BUT I WAS SOMEHOW *ENJOYING* THIS LITTLE GAME...

...EVEN ENJOYING MY OWN *INDIGNATION* AT HIS CLEVERNESS AND CAPACITY FOR *TRACKING* ME.



WHAT ON EARTH?

A VIDEOTAPE OF A FILM, A COMEDY. *VICE VERSA* WAS THE TITLE.



I RETURNED TO THE HOTEL. THERE WAS YET *ANOTHER* PACKAGE WAITING FOR ME.

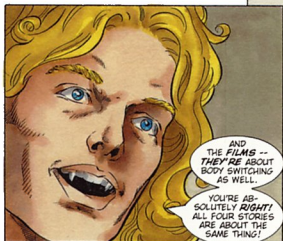
I DECIDED TO RING DAVID, THOUGH IT WAS NOW VERY NEAR DAWN.

DAVID, WOULD YOU COME TO PARIS? I'LL HAVE EVERYTHING *ARRANGED* FOR YOU.

SEE YOU AT DINNER, EIGHT O'CLOCK TOMORROW, IN THE DINING ROOM DOWNSTAIRS.







AND THE FILMS -- THEY'RE ABOUT BODY SWITCHING AS WELL.

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT! ALL FOUR STORIES ARE ABOUT THE SAME THING!



THIS MAN IS TRYING TO GET YOU TO BELIEVE THAT HE **KNOWS** SOMETHING ABOUT THIS BODY SWITCHING.

HE'S TRYING TO ENTICE YOU WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT SUCH A THING CAN BE DONE!



DAVID, HE CAN DO IT. HE CAN SWITCH BODIES WITH PEOPLE!

THAT'S WHY HE ALMOST FALLS WHEN HE RUNS -- GOOD GOD! THAT MAN IS IN SOMEONE ELSE'S BODY!

AND I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING ELSE. HE'S ALREADY TRIED THIS SWITCHING TRICK WITH ME AND IT'S FAILED. THE SENSATION WAS SO STRONG!

OH, DON'T YOU SEE? HE'S SUGGESTING THAT HE CAN SWITCH WITH ME! HE'S OFFERING ME THAT HANDSOME YOUNG MORTAL FRAME!



CALM YOURSELF, LESTAT. THINK THIS THROUGH. PERHAPS SUCH A SWITCH COULD BE ACHIEVED FOR A FEW MINUTES.

BUT ANCHORING IN A NEW BODY, REMAINING INSIDE IT, FUNCTIONING DAY IN AND DAY OUT? NO.

YOU CAN'T EXPERIMENT WITH THIS. WHAT IF IT WORKED?



DAVID... I COULD BE A MORTAL MAN.





I SEARCHED FOR *HOURS*, BUT I COULDN'T FIND THE LITTLE FIEND. IF HE WAS STILL IN PARIS, HE WAS *CLOAKED* SO THAT I COULDN'T PICK UP THE FAINTEST *SHIMMER* OF HIS PRESENCE.

AT LAST I RETURNED TO THE HOTEL, TO PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY HOME.

AND *LOUIS* -- I HAD TO LAY IT ALL BEFORE *LOUIS*. HE WOULD UNDERSTAND THE LURE. OH, YES, HE *WOULD*.



I KNEW THE MINUTE I *SAW* IT THAT IT WAS A NOTE FROM HIM.

Don't be hasty. And don't listen to your fool friend from the Talamasca, either. I shall see you in New Orleans tomorrow night. Don't disappoint me. Jackson Square. We shall then make an appointment to work a little alchemy of our own. I think you understand now what's at stake.

Yours sincerely,
Raglan James

RAGLAN JAMES.

RAGLAN JAMES. I DIDN'T LIKE THE NAME. THE NAME WAS LIKE HIM.

I WENT OFF TO UNDERTAKE THE LONG JOURNEY HOME.

NEW ORLEANS.

I ARRIVED QUITE EARLY IN THE EVENING, FOR I HAD GONE BACKWARDS IN TIME AGAINST THE TURNING OF THE WORLD.

IN A STRETCH OF SOFT LEAFY DARKNESS, BEYOND A GREAT ROW OF HUGE MAGNOLIA TREES, LOUIS MADE HIS SECRET HOME.

FOR A LONG MOMENT, I SPIED UPON HIM.

I LOVED TO DO THIS.





IT'S
NOTHING, IT'S
FINISHED. I WENT INTO A
DESERT PLACE, I WANTED
TO SEE WHAT WOULD
HAPPEN --

YOU
WANTED TO
SEE WHAT WOULD
HAPPEN?



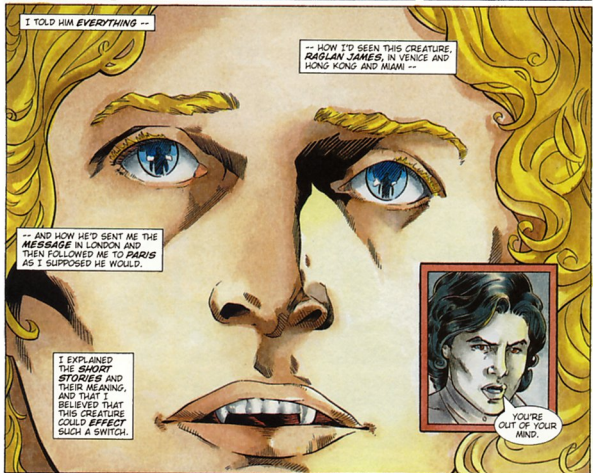
YOU
MEANT TO **DESTROY**
YOURSELF, DIDN'T
YOU?

WHY
DID YOU **DO**
IT?



LOUIS, I HAVE
SOMETHING MORE
IMPORTANT TO TELL
YOU. **FORGET** ABOUT
ALL THIS.

SOMETHING
VERY **REMARKABLE**
HAS HAPPENED, AND I
HAVE TO TELL YOU THE
WHOLE TALE.



I TOLD HIM **EVERYTHING** --

-- HOW I'D SEEN THIS CREATURE,
RAGLAN JAMES, IN VENICE AND
HONG KONG AND MIAMI --

-- AND HOW HE'D SENT ME THE
MESSAGE IN LONDON AND
THEN FOLLOWED ME TO **PARIS**
AS I SUPPOSED HE WOULD.

I EXPLAINED
THE **SHORT**
STORIES AND
THEIR MEANING,
AND THAT I
BELIEVED THAT
THIS CREATURE
COULD **EFFECT**
SUCH A SWITCH.

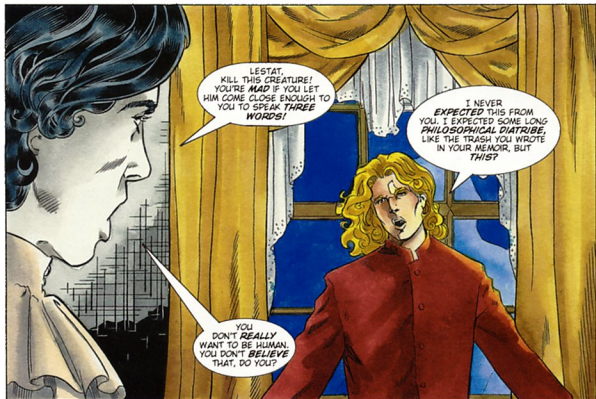


YOU'RE
OUT OF YOUR
MIND.



YOU WERE BORN A MONSTER, AND YOU KNOW IT. HOW THE HELL CAN YOU DELUDE YOURSELF LIKE THIS?





LESTAT,
KILL THIS CREATURE!
YOU'RE **MAD** IF YOU LET
HIM COME CLOSE ENOUGH TO
YOU TO SPEAK **THREE**
WORDS!

I NEVER
EXPECTED THIS FROM
YOU. I EXPECTED SOME LONG
PHILOSOPHICAL DIATRIBE,
LIKE THE TRASH YOU WROTE
IN YOUR MEMOIR, BUT
THIS?

YOU
DON'T **REALLY**
WANT TO BE HUMAN.
YOU DON'T **BELIEVE**
THAT, DO YOU?



YES,
I BELIEVE IT!
HOW COULD YOU
NOT BELIEVE
IT?



YOU'RE
ALWAYS LOOKING
FOR A WAY TO **TRIUMPH**.
YOU NEVER **GIVE IN**. BUT
THERE IS NO WAY TO
TRIUMPH.

THIS IS
PURGATORY WE'RE
IN, YOU AND I. ALL WE
CAN BE IS **THANKFUL** THAT
IT ISN'T ACTUALLY
HELL.



I DON'T
WANT TO **HEAR**
ANY MORE! YOU'LL SING
THE SONG OF **LIMITATIONS**
ALL YOUR LONG DREARY
YEARS ON THIS EARTH,
WON'T YOU?

WELL, I
CAN'T QUASH MY
CURIOSITY OR MY SPIRIT.
I WANT TO KNOW IF THIS
MAN CAN REALLY DO IT. I
WANT TO KNOW WHAT
WILL HAPPEN.

AND I
WON'T GIVE
IN.





I'M GOING TO PURSUE THIS, YOU KNOW.

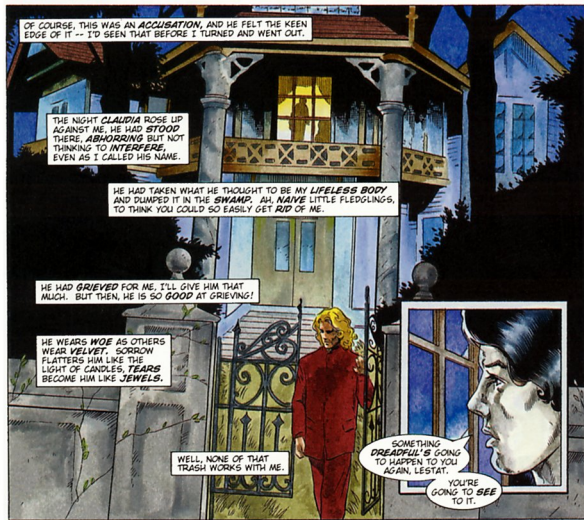
ALL RIGHT, BUT LET ME WARN YOU -- IF I SEE HIM, IF HE THREATENS ME, I SHALL KILL HIM.

I HAVEN'T YOUR STRENGTH. I DEPEND UPON MY ANONYMITY.



I WON'T LET HIM HARM YOU, LOUIS.

I WOULD NEVER EVER HAVE LET ANYONE HARM YOU.



OF COURSE, THIS WAS AN ACCUSATION, AND HE FELT THE KEEN EDGE OF IT -- I'D SEEN THAT BEFORE I TURNED AND WENT OUT.

THE NIGHT CLAUDIA ROSE UP AGAINST ME, HE HAD STOOD THERE, ABHORRING BUT NOT THINKING TO INTERFERE, EVEN AS I CALLED HIS NAME.

HE HAD TAKEN WHAT HE THOUGHT TO BE MY LIFELESS BODY AND DUMPED IT IN THE SWAMP. AH, NAIVE LITTLE FLEDGLINGS, TO THINK YOU COULD SO EASILY GET RID OF ME.

HE HAD GRIEVED FOR ME, I'LL GIVE HIM THAT MUCH. BUT THEN, HE IS SO GOOD AT GRIEVING!

HE WEARS WOE AS OTHERS WEAR VELVET. SORROW FLATTERS HIM LIKE THE LIGHT OF CANDLES, TEARS BECOME HIM LIKE JEWELS.

WELL, NONE OF THAT TRASH WORKS WITH ME.

SOMETHING DREADFUL'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU AGAIN, LESTAT.

YOU'RE GOING TO SEE TO IT.

THE NEXT NIGHT, I
WENT AT ONCE TO
JACKSON SQUARE.

A TERRIBLE *NORTHER* HAD COME DOWN INTO NEW ORLEANS,
BRINGING WITH IT A *FREEZING WIND*. I'D STOPPED AT MY
ROOFTOP FLAT TO PUT ON A *COAT*, DELIGHTED THAT I HAD
SUCH *FEELING* NOW IN MY NEWLY *BRONZED SKIN*.

I SAW HIM
IMMEDIATELY.
WHAT LUCK.

AH, BUT
YOU DO LOOK LIKE
AN *ANGEL*, MONSIEUR
DE LIONCOURT, AND HOW
SPLENDID YOUR DARKENED
SKIN. WHAT A LOVELY
ENHANCEMENT.

SO
YOU'RE *HERE*,
MISTER JAMES. WHAT'S
THE *PROPOSITION*? I
DON'T *LIKE* YOU.
TALK FAST.

DON'T BE
RUDE, MONSIEUR
DE LIONCOURT. IT WOULD
BE A *DREADFUL* MISTAKE
TO OFFEND ME, REALLY
IT WOULD.

IF YOU DON'T
TELL ME HOW YOU'VE
MANAGED TO *FOLLOW*
ME AND WHAT YOU
WANT --

-- I'M
GOING TO KILL
YOU.





WHAT THE HELL IS THE **MATTER** WITH YOU? YOU WALK SO ANKWARDLY!

YOU **KNOW**. YOU'VE FIGURED IT OUT. I'M NOT FOND OF THIS BODY, MONSIEUR DE LIONCOURT.

A BODY THIEF HAS HIS LITTLE DIFFICULTIES, YOU KNOW.

IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE?

YES, A **BODY THIEF** OF THE FIRST RANK. BUT THEN, YOU **KNOW** THAT WHEN YOU AGREED TO **SEE** ME, DID YOU NOT?



DON'T **MOCK** ME, YOU LITTLE **PISSANT!**

YOU **PLAY** WITH ME, I'LL **TEAR** YOU APART SLOWLY. I **TOLD** YOU I **DON'T** LIKE YOU. EVEN YOUR LITTLE **TITLE** FOR YOURSELF I **DON'T** LIKE.

BUT LET ME **COME** TO THE POINT **IMMEDIATELY**, OUT OF RESPECT FOR YOUR **ENORMOUS** PRETERNATURAL **INTELLECT** AND VAST **EXPERIENCE** --



ALL RIGHT. I WANT TO **TRADE BODIES** WITH YOU. I WANT YOURS FOR A WEEK.

I'LL SEE TO IT THAT YOU HAVE **THIS** BODY. IT'S YOUNG, IT'S IN **PERFECT** HEALTH. IT'S QUITE STRONG.



HOW CAN YOU **DO** IT?

WE **DO** IT **TOGETHER**, MONSIEUR DE LIONCOURT.







HOW DID YOU LEARN ALL THIS? WHY HAVEN'T OTHERS PERFECTED THIS TRICK?

MANY PEOPLE HAVE DONE IT. YOUR FRIEND DAVID TALBOT COULD HAVE TOLD YOU THAT. BUT HE LIES, LIKE ALL THOSE WIZARDS IN THE TALAMASCA.

HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM?



I WAS A MEMBER OF THEIR ORDER. THEY KICKED ME OUT OF IT. THEY ACCUSED ME OF USING MY POWERS FOR GAIN.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE, MONSIEUR DE LIONCOURT? WHAT DO YOU USE YOUR POWERS FOR, IF NOT FOR GAIN?



ALL RIGHT -- BUT WHAT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO GIVE MY BODY BACK TO ME AFTER WE'VE MADE THIS LITTLE SWITCH?

WHAT'S TO KEEP YOU FROM MAKING OFF WITH MY BODY FOR GOOD?



A VERY LARGE BRIBE.



AH.

TEN MILLION DOLLARS IN A BANK ACCOUNT, WAITING FOR ME WHEN I REPOSSESS THIS BODY.



TEN MILLION. THAT'S QUITE A PRICE.

FOR WHAT I OFFER, TEN MILLION IS A BARGAIN. WHO ELSE CAN MAKE YOU SUCH AN OFFER?

AND SUPPOSE I DON'T WANT TO SWITCH BACK AT THE END OF THE WEEK? SUPPOSE I WANT TO BE HUMAN FOREVER.

THAT'S PERFECTLY FINE WITH ME. I CAN GET RID OF YOUR BODY ANYTIME I WANT. THERE ARE LOTS OF OTHERS WHO'LL TAKE IT OFF MY HANDS.



WHAT'S YOUR GAME? I MEAN REALLY. WHAT'S YOUR PASSION? IT CAN'T BE THE MONEY.



IF YOU MUST KNOW THE TRUTH, I'M A THIEF IN EVERY RESPECT. I DON'T ENJOY SOMETHING UNLESS I BARGAIN FOR IT, TRICK SOMEONE OUT OF IT, OR STEAL IT.

EVERYTHING IN MY HOUSE IN GEORGETOWN IS STOLEN -- EVERY PIECE OF FURNITURE, EVERY PAINTING, EVERY OBJET D'ART. EVEN THE HOUSE IS STOLEN, IN A WAY -- I BELIEVE THEY CALL IT SWINDLING?

ALL THE MONEY I POSSESS IS STOLEN. SO IS THE CAR I DRIVE. SO ARE THE AIRLINE TICKETS I USED TO CHASE YOU AROUND THE WORLD.



HOW DID YOU ACCOMPLISH THAT, FOLLOWING ME ABOUT? HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE I WAS?

TWO WAYS, TO BE PERFECTLY FRANK. THE FIRST IS OBVIOUS.

I CAN LEAVE MY BODY FOR SHORT PERIODS, AND DURING THOSE PERIODS I CAN SEARCH FOR YOU OVER VAST DISTANCES.

THEN THERE'S ANOTHER WAY, ALMOST AS MAGICAL -- COMPUTER SYSTEMS. THERE'S NOTHING TO CHASING PEOPLE THROUGH COMPUTER SYSTEMS.

DO YOU STEAL THROUGH THE COMPUTER SYSTEMS, AS WELL?

I WANT YOU TO LEAVE HERE NOW. GET OUT OF THIS CITY AND NEVER COME BACK. GIVE ME YOUR ADDRESS IN GEORGETOWN AND I'LL COME TO YOU WHEN I'M READY.

AND IT WON'T BE FOR A WEEK, THIS SWITCH. NOT THE FIRST TIME, AT ANY RATE.

WHEN I CAN.

WHAT IF WE START WITH ONE DAY? IF YOU LIKE IT, THEN WE CAN ARRANGE FOR A LONGER TIME?

ONE DAY. ONE PERIOD OF TWENTY FOUR HOURS...FOR THE FIRST TIME.



ONE DAY
AND TWO NIGHTS.
LET ME SUGGEST THIS
WEDNESDAY, SOON AFTER
SUNSET. WE CAN MAKE THE
SECOND SWITCH FRIDAY,
BEFORE DAWN.

OH, AND
BRING ONE OF YOUR
PASSPORTS WITH YOU, AND
SOME **MONEY**. I WILL HAVE
A **PASSPORT** READY FOR
YOU, AS WELL.



YOU
KNOW THIS WILL
WORK. COME TO ME
WEDNESDAY. YOU'LL BE
VERY GLAD THAT
YOU DID.



THIS IS
SOMETHING ONLY
YOU AND I CAN DO. IN A
WAY, IT IS A MIRACLE WHICH
ONLY YOU AND I CAN
UNDERSTAND.



ALL
RIGHT.

I THINK
YOU'LL SEE ME ON
WEDNESDAY.



OH, AND
I MUST **WARN** YOU.
THIS FORTUNE OF TEN MIL-
LION DOLLARS. IT WILL ONLY
BE AVAILABLE TO YOU FOR
TWO HOURS ON FRIDAY
MORNING.

YOU'LL
HAVE TO APPEAR
IN PERSON TO
CLAIM IT.



THIS
PERSON, OF
COURSE.

OF
COURSE.



WHAT
DO YOU WANT
TO DO WITH MY BODY?
I MEAN, BESIDES FLEE FROM
THE **SUN** EVERY MORNING AS
IF YOU WERE A **NOCTURNAL**
INSECT OR A GIANT
SLUG?



WHAT DO
YOU THINK?

I
WANT TO DRINK
BLOOD.



I WANT
TO **TAKE LIFE**
WHEN I DRINK IT. THAT'S
THE **POINT**, ISN'T IT? IT'S NOT
MERELY THE **BLOOD** YOU
STEAL FROM THEM, IT'S
THEIR **LIVES**.

I'VE NEVER
STOLEN ANYTHING
THAT VALUABLE FROM
ANYONE. THE **BODY**, YES --
BUT NOT THE **BLOOD**
AND THE **LIFE**.



YOU ARE THE ULTIMATE THIEF, MONSIEUR DE LIONCOURT!

GET AWAY FROM ME.



I SHALL SEE YOU WEDNESDAY, AND YOU MUST COME EARLY! I WANT AS MUCH OF THE NIGHT AS I CAN HAVE.



I WAS SHOCK WITH CONFUSION, I STOOD THERE, UNABLE TO MOVE.

THE NIGHT, FOR ALL ITS COLDNESS, WAS BUSY AND FULL OF THE MINGLED VOICES OF THE PASSING TOURISTS, OF CARS SLOWING DOWN AS THEY PASSED BY.

WITHOUT INTENT, WITHOUT WORDS, I TRIED TO SEE IT AS IT MIGHT BE IN THE *SUNSHINE* -- I TRIED TO IMAGINE THE HEAVENS OVER THIS SPOT THAT SHOCKING, VAGUE BLUE.



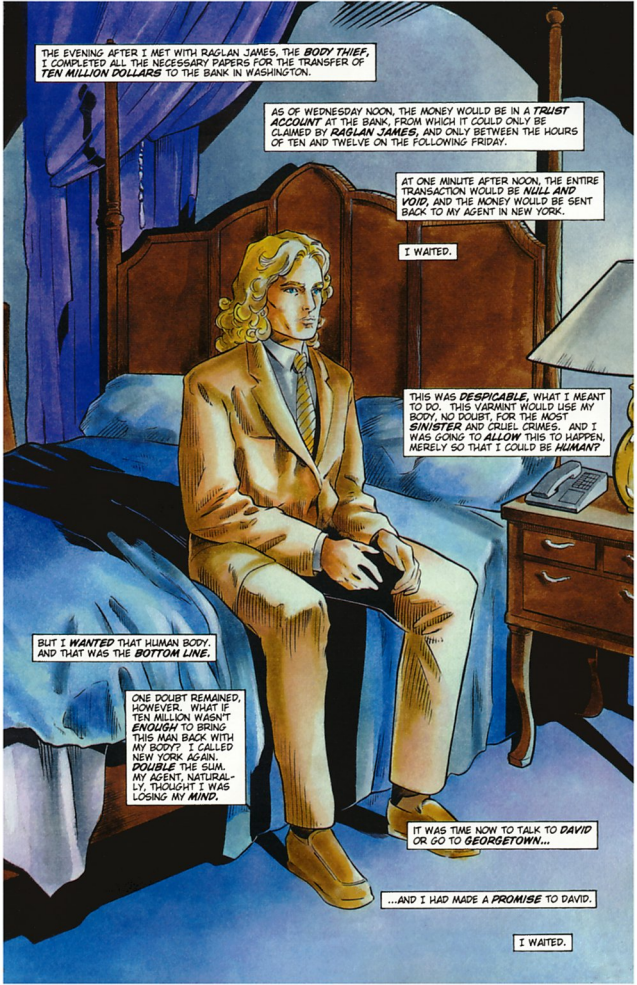
I WALKED FOR HOURS.
I KEPT HEARING THAT
BEAUTIFUL CULTURED
VOICE IN MY EARS.

IT'S NOT MERELY THE BLOOD YOU STEAL FROM
THEM, IT'S THEIR LIVES. I'VE NEVER STOLEN
ANYTHING THAT VALUABLE FROM ANYONE. THE
BODY, YES -- BUT NOT THE BLOOD AND THE LIFE.

THE IDEA OF BEING DISCONNECTED
FROM MY BODY WAS ABSOLUTELY
TERRIFYING TO ME. BUT TO GO
INTO THE BODY OF A MORTAL!

TO ANCHOR THERE, TO WALK,
TO FEEL, TO SEE AS A MORTAL
MAN -- AH, I COULD NOT
CONTAIN MY EXCITEMENT.

IT WAS BECOMING PURE PAIN!



THE EVENING AFTER I MET WITH RAGLAN JAMES, THE **BODY THIEF**, I COMPLETED ALL THE NECESSARY PAPERS FOR THE TRANSFER OF **TEN MILLION DOLLARS** TO THE BANK IN WASHINGTON.

AS OF WEDNESDAY NOON, THE MONEY WOULD BE IN A **TRUST ACCOUNT** AT THE BANK, FROM WHICH IT COULD ONLY BE CLAIMED BY **RAGLAN JAMES**, AND ONLY BETWEEN THE HOURS OF TEN AND TWELVE ON THE FOLLOWING FRIDAY.

AT ONE MINUTE AFTER NOON, THE ENTIRE TRANSACTION WOULD BE **NULL AND VOID**, AND THE MONEY WOULD BE SENT BACK TO MY AGENT IN NEW YORK.

I WAITED.

THIS WAS **DESPICABLE**, WHAT I MEANT TO DO. THIS VARMINT WOULD USE MY BODY, NO DOUBT, FOR THE MOST **SINISTER** AND CRUEL CRIMES. AND I WAS GOING TO **ALLOW** THIS TO HAPPEN, MERELY SO THAT I COULD BE **HUMAN**?

BUT I **WANTED** THAT HUMAN BODY. AND THAT WAS THE **BOTTOM LINE**.

ONE DOUBT REMAINED, HOWEVER. WHAT IF TEN MILLION WASN'T **ENOUGH** TO BRING THIS MAN BACK WITH MY BODY? I CALLED NEW YORK AGAIN. **DOUBLE** THE SUM. MY AGENT, NATURAL-
LY, THOUGHT I WAS LOSING MY MIND.

IT WAS TIME NOW TO TALK TO **DAVID** OR GO TO **GEORGETOWN**...

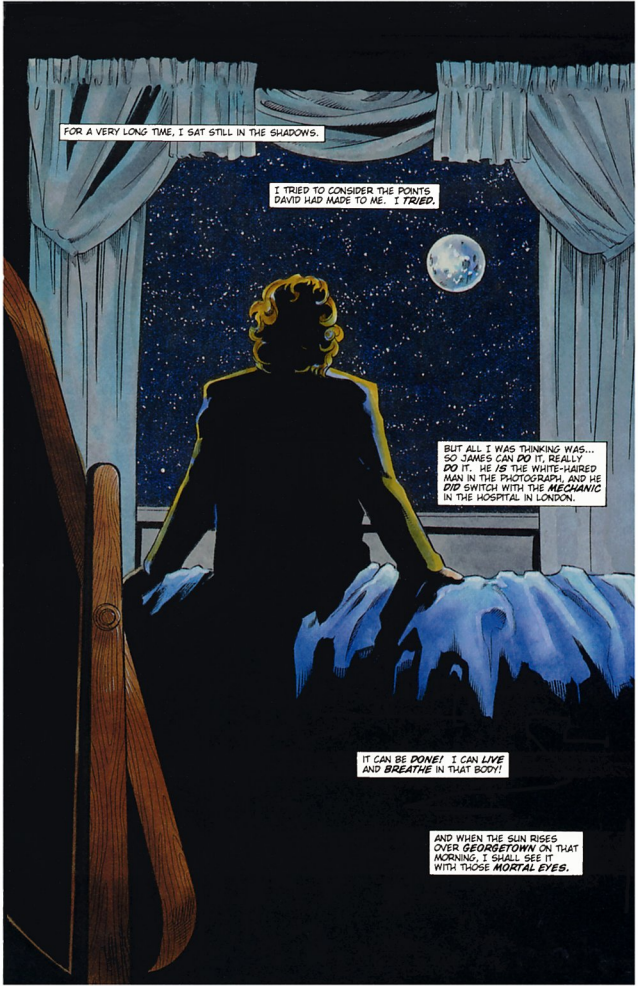
...AND I HAD MADE A **PROMISE** TO **DAVID**.

I WAITED.









FOR A VERY LONG TIME, I SAT STILL IN THE SHADOWS.

I TRIED TO CONSIDER THE POINTS
DAVID HAD MADE TO ME. I TRIED.

BUT ALL I WAS THINKING WAS...
SO JAMES CAN DO IT, REALLY
DO IT. HE *IS* THE WHITE-HAIRED
MAN IN THE PHOTOGRAPH, AND HE
DID SWITCH WITH THE *MECHANIC*
IN THE HOSPITAL IN LONDON.

IT CAN BE DONE! I CAN LIVE
AND BREATHE IN THAT BODY!

AND WHEN THE SUN RISES
OVER GEORGETOWN ON THAT
MORNING, I SHALL SEE IT
WITH THOSE MORTAL EYES.



IT WAS AN HOUR AFTER MIDNIGHT
WHEN I REACHED GEORGETOWN.

IN SPITE OF THE HOUR,
JAMES HIMSELF WAS
NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.



METICULOUS, FASHIONABLE, COSTLY,
AND HIGHLY INDIVIDUAL -- THAT WAS
THE **PERSONALITY** OF THE PLACE.

IT LOOKED TO ME THE
WAY THE DWELLINGS OF
MORTALS ALWAYS DID --



-- LIKE A SERIES OF
PRISTINE **STAGE SETS**.

QUITE IMPOSSIBLE TO
BELIEVE I COULD BE
MORTAL, AND BELONG
IN SUCH A HOUSE, EVEN
FOR AN HOUR OR MORE.



I ENTERED
THE HOUSE.

I DECIDED TO TAKE A FEW SIMPLE *PRECAUTIONS*. I REALLY COULDN'T *CONCEIVE* OF WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO BE HUMAN.

I MIGHT FEEL QUITE *HELPLESS*.



I JUST DIDN'T *KNOW*.

I CONCEALED A GREAT DEAL OF *MONEY* FOR MY LATER USE, HIDING IT INSIDE AN *UNUSED CHIMNEY*.



I ALSO CONCEALED SOME *MONEY* IN AN *UNUSED BATHROOM*, BEHIND A *MIRROR* ON THE WALL.

AS I SAID -- I JUST DIDN'T *KNOW*.

AFTER I MADE THESE LITTLE ARRANGEMENTS, I WENT UP ON THE *ROOF*.

I COULD SEE *JAMES* JUST TURNING THE CORNER AT THE BASE OF THE HILL, A LOAD OF *PARCELS* IN HIS ARMS. I LOST SIGHT OF HIM AS HE STARTED HIS ASCENT.

BUT THEN *ANOTHER* STRANGE VISITOR APPEARED, WITHOUT MAKING THE *SLIGHTEST SOUND* THAT A MORTAL COULD HEAR.





IT WAS A GREAT DOG.

I'D EXPECTED TO HEAR FROM IT BEFORE THIS TIME, FOR SURELY IT WOULD PICK UP MY SCENT, KNOW INSTINCTIVELY THAT I WASN'T HUMAN, AND THEN BEGIN TO SOUND ITS NATURAL ALARM OF GROWLS AND BARKS.

DOGS HAD DONE THAT ENOUGH TO ME OVER THE CENTURIES.



I HAD A GOOD CHANCE TO STUDY HIM IN THE UNDISTURBED SILENCE, AND HE WAS, VERY SIMPLY, ONE OF THE MOST HANDSOME DOGS I HAD EVER BEHOLD.

INDEED, WHEN HE AT LAST LOOKED UP AT ME, I FOUND MYSELF VAGUELY THRILLED BY THE FIERCE INTELLIGENCE GLEAMING IN HIS DARK, ALMOND-SHAPED EYES.



WHY DON'T YOU KNOW ME FOR WHAT I AM?

THIS WAS AN OMEN, THIS DOG.



THERE SEEMED A *NEAR-HUMAN* COMPREHENSION IN HIM, BUT THERE WAS NO INSTINCTIVE *AVERSION* AT ALL.

I *NUZZLED* HIM, AND THIS PRODUCED IN ME A WONDERFUL *HAPPINESS*, REALLY NEAR TO *WEEPING*.



AH, I *KNEW* THIS WORD, THIS NAME, *MOJO*. IT HAD TO DO WITH *VOODOO*, *GRIS-GRIS*, *CHARMS*. *MOJO* WAS A *GOOD* CHARM, A *PRO-TECTIVE* CHARM.

VERY SUDDENLY THE DOG STIFFENED.

JAMES WAS COMING.



GLAD TO *SEE* YOU! BUT YOU'RE *EARLY*.

GRRRR





GO
TO YOUR **BANK**
TOMORROW MORNING.
I'LL SEE YOU AFTER
DARK.

AH,
BUT THERE IS
ONE **MORE** CON-
DITION.



WHAT
IS IT?

FEED
THE **ANIMAL**.
GIVE IT SOME
MEAT.



I MADE MY EXIT SO SWIFTLY HE COULDN'T **SEE** IT.

THE LAST SOUND I HEARD WAS JAMES
CURSING TO HIMSELF **UNGRACEFULLY**
AS HE SLAMMED THE BACK DOOR.



NO JO, AN OMEN.

TOMORROW NIGHT, I THOUGHT, IF
THAT BASTARD HAS BEEN **LYING**, I
SHALL SPLIT OPEN HIS CHEST AND
TEAR OUT HIS BEATING HEART, AND
FEED IT TO THAT BIG, BEAUTIFUL DOG.



WHATEVER HAPPENS, I
SHALL **KEEP** THIS DOG.

AND I DID.

WEDNESDAY AT **LAST**. NOT HALF AN HOUR HAD PASSED SINCE THE SUN HAD SET. I HAD **STARTLED** HIM WHEN I APPEARED ON THE BACK STEPS.

I WANT THE DETAILS OF HOW YOU PUSHED THE **MECHANIC** OUT OF HIS **BODY**, AND HOW YOU MANAGED TO FORCE HIM INTO **YOURS**.

I'D BEEN SEARCHING FOR JUST SUCH A **SPECIMEN** -- A MAN **PSYCHOLOGICALLY SHOCKED** OUT OF ALL WILL AND CAPACITY FOR **REASON**, YET **SOUND OF LIMB AND BRAIN**.

ONLY A **TELEPATH** COULD HAVE REACHED THE REMNANTS OF INTELLIGENCE STILL **BURIED** WITHIN HIM.

ONCE I'D REACHED THAT **RUDIMENTARY CORE**, IT WAS FAIRLY EASY TO PLUNDER HIS **MEMORIES** AND MANIPULATE HIM INTO **OBEDIENCE**.

THE **POOR CHAP**. I SUSPECT HE THOUGHT I WAS HIS **GUARDIAN ANGEL** AT THE **END**.







"I FINALLY LURED HIM OUT FOR THE SPACE OF SEVERAL SECONDS."



"THAT WAS SUFFICIENT TIME FOR ME TO POP INSIDE OF HIM..."



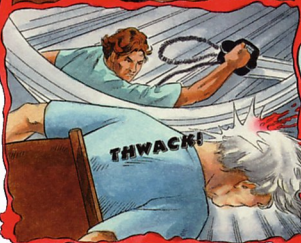
"...AND AT ONCE FOCUS MY INTENSE ENERGY UPON SHOVING HIM DOWN INTO WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE OLD ME."



"AND YOU DIDN'T GIVE HIM EVEN A MOMENT'S TIME, DID YOU?"



"MONSIEUR DE L'IONCOURT, WHAT I DID WAS A MERCY TO HIM! HOW DREADFUL TO HAVE LEFT HIM IN THAT BODY, CONFUSED AS HE WAS!"





WHAT'S
TO STOP YOU FROM
KILLING ME AS SOON
AS WE SWITCH
BODIES?



TWENTY MIL-
LION DOLLARS WILL
STOP ME FROM KILLING
YOU. YOU'VE **LIBERATED**
ME, MONSIEUR DE
LIONCOURT.

AS OF
THIS FRIDAY, AT
THE **VERY HOUR** WHEN
CHRIST WAS NAILED TO THE
CROSS, I SHALL NEVER
HAVE TO **STEAL**
AGAIN.



WHATEVER HIS **FACADE**, HE
WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY
ANXIOUS. AND SOMETHING
SIMILAR AND **MORE ENER-**
VATING WAS BUILDING IN ME...

...WHAT IF THIS
DOES WORK?

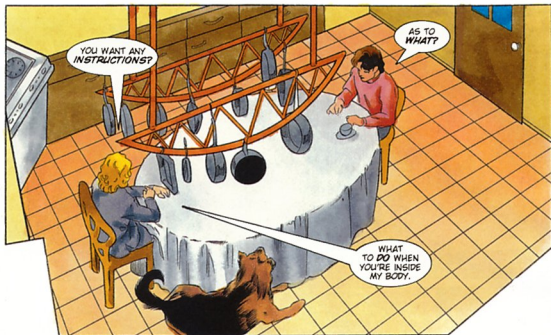


OH, BUT
IT **WILL WORK**. AND
BESIDES, IF I TRIED TO **HARM**
YOU, YOUR **COMPANIONS**
WOULD FIND OUT SOONER OR
LATER, AND **DO AWAY** WITH
ME VERY QUICKLY
INDEED.



YES...
IT'S **IMPERATIVE**
THAT YOU STAY AWAY
FROM THEM WHILE YOU'RE
IN MY BODY, THAT YOU
DON'T GO NEAR NEW
ORLEANS --

OF COURSE.
I'VE CONSIDERED
THE **ENTIRE ENTER-**
PRISE, PLEASE BE
ASSURED.







LISTEN CLOSELY. I WANT YOU TO RISE OUT OF YOUR BODY, BUT NOT TILL I'M FINISHED SPEAKING. YOU'LL MOVE UP. YOU'VE DONE IT BEFORE.

WHEN YOU ARE CLOSE TO THE CEILING AND LOOKING DIRECTLY DOWN ON BOTH OF US AT THIS TABLE, YOU WILL MAKE A CONCENTRATED EFFORT TO MOVE INTO THIS BODY.

YOU MUST NOT THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE. YOU MUST NOT LET FEAR INTERRUPT YOUR CONCENTRATION. YOU MUST NOT WONDER AS TO HOW THIS IS BEING DONE.

YOU WANT TO DESCEND INTO THIS BODY, YOU WANT TO CONNECT COMPLETELY AND INSTANTANEOUSLY WITH EVERY FIBER AND CELL. PICTURE IT AS YOU DO IT!

IMAGINE YOUR SPIRIT INVADING THE FINGERS OF EACH HAND, THE TOES OF EACH FOOT. LOOK THROUGH THE EYES. THAT IS MOST IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THE EYES ARE PART OF THE BRAIN. WHEN YOU LOOK THROUGH THEM, YOU ARE ANCHORING WITHIN THE BRAIN.

DON'T WAVER. ONCE YOU'RE IN, IT WILL TAKE QUITE A BIT OF EFFORT TO GET OUT.





I UNDERSTAND. WILL I SEE YOU IN *SPIRIT FORM* WHILE WE'RE CHANGING?



YOU *COULD*, BUT THAT WOULD TAKE A GREAT DEAL OF CONCENTRATION AWAY FROM YOUR *IMMEDIATE GOAL*.

YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYTHING BUT *THIS BODY* -- YOU WANT TO GET IN IT AND START *MOVING* IT, BREATHING THROUGH IT, AND *SEEING* THROUGH IT.

YES.



NOW, ONE THING WHICH WILL *FRIGHTEN* YOU IS THE SIGHT OF YOUR OWN BODY, *LIFELESS* OR INHABITED FINALLY BY ME. DON'T ALLOW THIS TO GET THE *BETTER* OF YOU.

BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THAT I SHALL ACCOMPLISH THE *POSSESSION* WITHOUT INJURY TO YOUR *BODY*, AND THEN I SHALL LEAVE *IMMEDIATELY*, SO AS TO RELIEVE YOU OF THAT *REMINDER* OF WHAT WE'VE DONE.

YOU WON'T SEE ME AGAIN UNTIL *FRIDAY MORNING*, AS WE'VE AGREED.



A man with brown, wavy hair and a mustache, wearing a red turtleneck sweater, is seated at a white table in a kitchen. He has a look of intense concentration or surprise, with his mouth open as if shouting or gasping. Thick, white smoke or steam is rising from the table, partially obscuring his face and the table itself. In the background, a window shows a dark blue sky, and several black pots and pans are hanging from a wooden rack above the table. The kitchen's wooden frame is visible at the top of the image.

I WILLED MYSELF TO *RISE*, AND FELT A SUDDEN **TOTAL VIBRATION** THROUGH MY ENTIRE FRAME.

THEN CAME THE MARVELOUS REALIZATION THAT I WAS **INDEED RISING**, A **SPIRIT FORM**, WEIGHTLESS AND FREE --

-- MY MANLY SHAPE STILL **VISIBLE** TO ME WITH ITS ARMS AND LEGS, STRETCHING OUT JUST BELOW THE WHITE CEILING, SO THAT I DID INDEED LOOK DOWN AND SEE THE **ASTOUNDING SPECTACLE** OF MY **OWN BODY** SEATED STILL IN THE CHAIR.

OH, WHAT A **GLORIOUS** FEELING, AS IF I COULD GO ANYWHERE IN AN **INSTANT!** AS IF I HAD **NO NEED** OF THE BODY, AND MY LINK TO IT HAD BEEN A **DECEPTION** FROM THE MOMENT OF BIRTH.



I MUSTN'T BECOME DISTRACTED.
THE **SWITCH** WAS THE THING!

"DOWN, **DOWN** INTO
THAT BODY!" I SAID
ALoud, BUT THERE WAS
NO VOICE AUDIBLE...

...AND THEN WITHOUT WORDS I **FORCED** MYSELF TO PLUMMET
AND **MERGE** WITH THAT NEW FLESH, THAT **PHYSICAL FORM**.



A LOUD *RUSHING* FILLED MY EARS, AND THEN A SENSE OF *CONSTRUCTION*, AS IF MY ENTIRE SELF WERE BEING FORCED THROUGH A NARROW, SLIPPERY TUBE.

EXCRUCIATING! I WANTED FREEDOM!

BUT I COULD FEEL MYSELF FILLING THE EMPTY ARMS AND LEGS, THE FLESH HEAVY AND TINGLING AS IT CLOSED OVER ME, AS A MASK OF SIMILAR SENSATIONS CLOSED OVER MY FACE.



I *STRUGGLED* TO OPEN MY EYES BEFORE I EVEN REALIZED WHAT I WAS DOING, THAT I WAS FLEXING THE LIDS OF THIS MORTAL BODY --

-- THAT I WAS STARING THROUGH MORTAL EYES INTO THE DIMLY LIGHTED ROOM, STARING AT MY OLD BODY OPPOSITE --

-- STARING AT MY OLD BLUE EYES PEERING BACK AT ME, STARING AT MY OLD TANNED SKIN.



DEAR
GOD -- I'M
IN IT!



MY OLD BODY JERKED UPWARD,
ARMS THROWN UP AS IF IN HORROR.

WOOF!
WOOF! WOOF!
WOOF!



NO,
MOJO, DOWN
BOY!

WOOF!



AH,
YES, KILL
IT!



STOP,
MOJO!



AND
YOU -- GET OUT
OF HERE! GET
OUT!



THE CREATURE THAT HAD
BEEN ME DANCED PAST ME,
ARMS FLAILING STILL --



-- AND CRASHED THROUGH
THE BACK DOOR, SHATTERING
THE WINDOWPANE, AND LET-
TING IN A COLD GUST OF WIND.



GET
OUT!



I SAW HIM FOR ONE LAST
INSTANT, SUSPENDED IN
MIDAIR, JUST OUTSIDE THE
BACK DOOR, HIS LIMBS
MOVING AS THOUGH HE
WERE A SWIMMER IN AN
INVISIBLE SEA.

HIS **BLUE EYES**
WERE STILL WIDE
AND **SENSELESS**,
AS IF HE COULDN'T
WORK THE **PRETER-
NATURAL FLESH**
AROUND THEM INTO
AN **EXPRESSION**.

HIS MOUTH -- **MY
OLD MOUTH** -- WAS
SPREAD WIDE IN A
MEANINGLESS GRIN.

THEN HE WAS GONE.

THE ROOM WAS **FREEZING**. WIND
GUSTED INTO EVERY CORNER.

EACH BREATH I TOOK **HURT** ME. I
WAS **SQUINTING** AGAINST THE SNOW,
WHICH FLEW RIGHT INTO MY **EYES** --

-- AND I WAS **TRAPPED**
IN THIS **STRANGE BODY**
PADDED WITH **LEAD WEIGHTS**
AND MATTRESS **TICKING**. AND
THE **COLD AIR** WAS **STINGING**
MY **FACE** AND MY **HANDS**.

GOOD
GOD, **MOJO**. IT'S
HAPPENED.

I'M
A **MORTAL**
MAN!



I AM ACTUALLY FREE OF THAT PRETER-NATURAL BODY! I AM A HUMAN BEING!

I STRAINED TO SEE THROUGH THE DARKNESS, AND COULDN'T MAKE OUT ANYTHING CLEARLY AT ALL. IT WAS DIM, TERRIBLY DIM. IT SEEMED I WAS UNDER WATER AND THE WATER WAS MURKY, MAYBE EVEN CLOUDED BY INK.

THIS IS NORMAL. THIS IS MORTAL. THIS IS HOW THEY SEE.

HOW HIDEOUSLY GLOOMY, THE DULL GOLD LIGHT CREEPING UP INTO THE CORNERS, THE PLASTER MOLDINGS AT THE TOPS OF THE WALLS VANISHING INTO SHADOW, IMPENETRABLE SHADOW.

THE COLD WIND WAS THE WORST PART. MY TEETH WERE CHATTERING. THE STINGING PAIN IN MY SKIN WAS WHOLLY DIFFERENT FROM THE PAIN I FELT AS A VAMPIRE.

I LOOKED AT MY FACE IN THE MIRROR. AH, YES. I WAS BEHIND IT NOW, AND HOW AMAZINGLY DIFFERENT IT LOOKED. GONE WERE THE TIGHTNESS, AND THE AWFUL NERVOUS GLITTER OF THE EYES.

THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN STARING AT ME, AND HE LOOKED MORE THAN A LITTLE AFRAID.

I WENT INTO THE UNUSED ROOM UPSTAIRS, WHERE I'D HIDDEN THE MONEY IN THE CHIMNEY...AND AS I REACHED UP, I FELT NOT THE ENVELOPE WHICH I'D LODGED THERE, BUT A SINGLE SHEET OF PAPER.

I REMOVED IT, ALREADY IN A FURY.

YOU ARE A SILLY FOOL TO THINK THAT A MAN OF MY ABILITIES WOULDN'T FIND YOUR LITTLE STASH. HAVE A PLEASANT ADVENTURE. I SHALL SEE YOU FRIDAY. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

Raglan James

BASTARD!

NO DRIVERS' LICENSE. NO KEYS. NO MONEY. NO CAR. I FOUND THE **PASSPORT** IN THE KITCHEN, BUT NOT THE **WALLET**.

AH, THIS LITTLE **DEVIL**. WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO TO HIM! HOW COULD HE THINK HE WOULD GET **AWAY** WITH THIS? WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS HE **THINKING**...

WAS IT AS HARD TO **FIGURE OUT** AS ALL THAT? HE WASN'T **COMING BACK**, WAS HE?

I CALLED MY NEW YORK AGENT. ON AND ON IT RANG. NO ONE THERE. **MOST STRANGE**, AND DAMNED **INCONVENIENT**.

I CALLED **PARIS**. QUICKLY I TOLD MY AGENT THERE THAT I WAS IN **GEORGETOWN**, THAT I NEEDED TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS, NO, BEST SEND **THIRTY**, AND I MUST HAVE IT **NOW**.

HE EXPLAINED THAT IT WOULD BE **NOON** IN GEORGETOWN BEFORE THE MONEY COULD REACH ME, AND HE GAVE ME HIS ASSURANCE THAT EVERYTHING WOULD BE HANDLED **AT ONCE**.

I WENT UPSTAIRS, INTO THE MASTER **BATH**, AND TRIED THE WATER. HOT AND STRONG. **GOOD**. I STOOD IN THAT SHOWER FOR A **LONG TIME**.

A FIT OF **COUGHING** CAUGHT ME. THE PAIN IN MY THROAT WAS QUITE CONSIDERABLE, AND MY EYES WERE **WATERING**. JUST A **MORTAL COLD**, I THOUGHT. THE RESULT OF LETTING MYSELF BECOME SO MISERABLY CHILLED. IT WILL **MAR** THINGS; BUT IT IS ALSO AN **EXPERIENCE**, AN EXPERIENCE I MUST EXPLORE.

BEST TO **SLEEP** NOW, AND WHEN I WAKE, THE **LIGHT OF DAY** WILL BE COMING INTO THIS ROOM. EVEN IF THE SKY IS GRAY, IT WILL BE **WON-DROUS**. IT WILL BE **DAY**. FORGET ALL THIS ABYSSMAL STRUGGLE AND TRIVIA AND **FEAR** --

-- TOMORROW I WILL SEE THE WORLD OF DAY AS I'VE **LONGED** TO SEE IT ALL THESE YEARS.

IT FELT **TERRIBLE** TO BE IN THIS SLUGGISH HUMAN BODY! IT FELT TERRIBLE NOT TO HAVE MY **PRETERNATURAL POWERS**.

THE NEXT TIME I WOKE UP, MOJO WAS LICKING MY FACE.

I LAUGHED AT HIM, THEN COUGHED AGAIN, THROAT BURNING, AND REALIZED I'D BEEN COUGHING FOR *SOME TIME*.



MON DIEU -- LOOK AT IT, MOJO!

THIS IS THE MIRACLE!

THE MORTAL ACES AND PAINS DIDN'T MATTER. THIS WAS THE BIBLICAL PROMISE WHICH HAD GONE UNFULFILLED FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS.



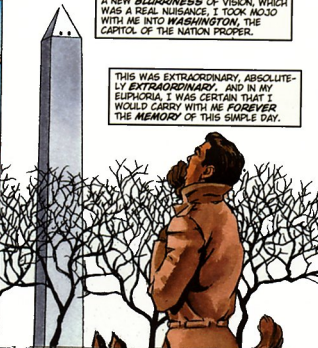
WITHIN MOMENTS OF LEAVING THE TOWNHOUSE, OF STEPPING OUT INTO THE *GLORIOUS DAYLIGHT*, I KNEW THAT THIS EXPERIENCE WOULD BE WORTH ALL OF THE TRIALS AND THE PAIN.



AND NO MORTAL CHILL, WITH ALL ITS DEBILITATING SYMPTOMS, WOULD KEEP ME FROM FROLICKING IN THE MORNING SUN.

IGNORING THE COUGH, WHICH WAS GROWING WORSE BY THE HOUR, AND A NEW *BLURRINESS* OF VISION, WHICH WAS A REAL NUISANCE, I TOOK MOJO WITH ME INTO WASHINGTON, THE CAPITOL OF THE NATION PROPER.

THIS WAS EXTRAORDINARY, ABSOLUTELY EXTRAORDINARY. AND IN MY EUPHORIA, I WAS CERTAIN THAT I WOULD CARRY WITH ME FOREVER THE MEMORY OF THIS SIMPLE DAY.

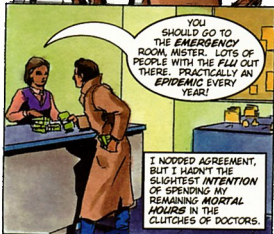


THE WALK BACK TO GEORGETOWN SEEMED AT TIMES AN IMPOSSIBLE FEAT.



BY THE TIME I REACHED THE AGENCY TO COLLECT MY MONEY, I KNEW THAT THE FEVER AND CHILLS WERE GETTING THE BEST OF ME AND I MUST SEEK SHELTER.

YOU SHOULD GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM, MISTER. LOTS OF PEOPLE WITH THE FLU OUT THERE. PRACTICALLY AN EPIDEMIC EVERY YEAR!



I NODDED AGREEMENT, BUT I HADN'T THE SLIGHTEST INTENTION OF SPENDING MY REMAINING MORTAL HOURS IN THE CLUTCHES OF DOCTORS.

AFTER PURCHASING SOME **NEW CLOTHES** AT THE GEORGETOWN MALL, I FOUND A RESTAURANT AT A BEAUTIFUL HOTEL WITH THE LOVELY ROMANTIC NAME, **THE FOUR SEASONS**.

I ORDERED A **FEAST** FOR MYSELF AND **MOJO**, ADDING EVERY **CHOCOLATE DESSERT** ON THE MENU TO MY ORDER.

DEEP DRIFTS OF SNOW LAY EVERYWHERE. THE STREETS WERE **IMPASSABLE** TO TRAFFIC, AND THERE WERE TIMES WHEN I FELL TO MY **KNEES**, AND **MOJO** LICKED MY FACE AS THOUGH HE WERE TRYING TO KEEP ME **WARM**.

BUT I **CONTINUED**, STRUGGLING ON, WHATEVER MY STATE OF **MIND AND BODY**. UNTIL AT LAST I TURNED THE CORNER, AND SAW THE LIGHTS OF THE FAMILIAR **TOWNHOUSE** AHEAD.

I MANAGED TO REACH THE TOWNHOUSE SAFELY, AND I LAY DOWN **SHIVERING** ON THE LIVINGROOM FLOOR. THE BODY THIEF WOULD SOON BE HERE. I WOULD HAVE MY OWN FORM BACK AGAIN, ALL MY **POWERS!**

AND THEN HOW SWEET IT WOULD BE TO **REFLECT** ON EVERYTHING, SAFE AND SOUND IN MY DIGGS IN **NEW ORLEANS**. WHEN ILLNESS AND COLD WOULD MEAN **NOTHING**, WHEN ACES AND PAINS WOULD EXIST **NO MORE --**

MOJO, I CAN'T ENDURE THIS BODY A MOMENT LONGER!

I TRIED TO STAY AWAKE, BUT I **COUNLDN'T**.

-- WHEN I WAS THE VAMPIRE **LESTAT** AGAIN, **SOARING** OVER THE ROOFTOPS, **REACHING** WITH OUTSTRETCHED HANDS FOR THE **DISTANT STARS**.





THE AMBULANCE. OXYGEN MASK. NEEDLE. AND I UNDERSTOOD.

I WAS GOING TO DIE IN THIS BODY, AND IT WOULD BE SO SIMPLE! LIKE A BILLION OTHER MORTALS, I WAS GOING TO DIE.

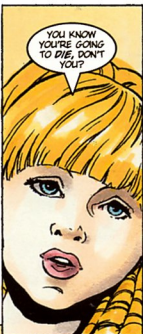
AH, THIS WAS THE REASON FOR ALL OF IT, THE REASON THE BODY THIEF HAD COME TO ME, THE ANGEL OF DEATH COME TO GIVE ME THE MEANS WHICH I HAD SOUGHT WITH LIES AND PRIDE AND SELF-DECEPTION.



I WAS GOING TO DIE.



I WAS CRYING. I WAS BROKEN AND TERRIFIED AND CRYING.



YOU KNOW
YOU'RE GOING
TO DIE, DON'T
YOU?



DON'T
LET ME DIE.
PLEASE... I'M
SO AFRAID.



HYPOTHERMIA,
POSSIBLY PNEUMONIA.
LET'S HIT HIM WITH
ANTIBIOTICS.

YES,
DOCTOR.

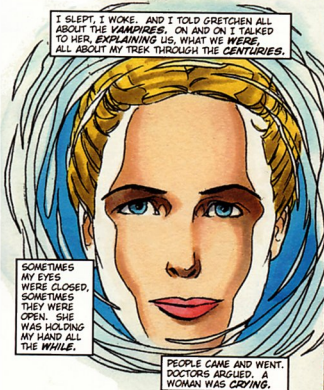
DON'T
TRY TO TALK.
WE'RE GIVING YOU
DRUGS THAT WILL
HELP YOU.



PLEASE
DON'T LEAVE
ME.



NO, I'LL
STAY WITH YOU.
I'LL BE RIGHT
HERE. SLEEP
NOW.





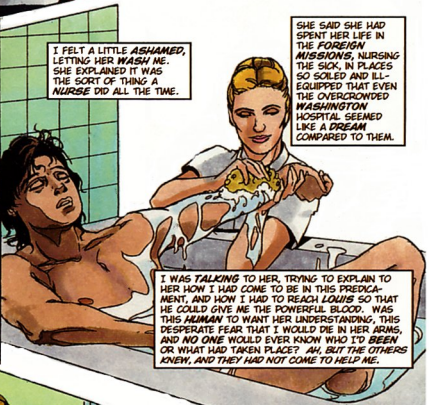
AT SOME POINT I BEGAN DRIFTING IN AND OUT OF SLEEP, AWARE THAT WE WERE IN A LITTLE CAR, AND THAT MOJO WAS WITH US, AND THAT WE WERE DRIVING THROUGH WOODED, SNOW-COVERED HILLS.

I WAS WRAPPED IN A BLANKET, AND FEELING MISERABLY SICK. I SCARCELY REMEMBERED OUR RETURN TO THE TOWNHOUSE, AND THE FINDING OF MOJO. AT LAST WE CAME TO A HALT BY A SMALL COTTAGE.



THE ROOMS WERE COZY AND WARM.

I FELT A LITTLE ASHAMED, LETTING HER WASH ME. SHE EXPLAINED IT WAS THE SORT OF THING A NURSE DID ALL THE TIME.

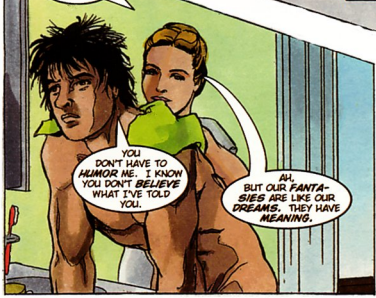


SHE SAID SHE HAD SPENT HER LIFE IN THE FOREIGN MISSIONS, NURSING THE SICK, IN PLACES SO SOLED AND ILL-EQUIPPED THAT EVEN THE OVERCROWDED WASHINGTON HOSPITAL SEEMED LIKE A DREAM COMPARED TO THEM.

I WANTED TO SINK DOWN INTO A CLEAN BED, BUT I WAS TOO SOILED FOR THAT, AND INSISTED THAT I BE ALLOWED TO BATHE THIS DISTASTEFUL BODY.

I WAS TALKING TO HER, TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO HER HOW I HAD COME TO BE IN THIS PREDICAMENT, AND HOW I HAD TO REACH LOUIS SO THAT HE COULD GIVE ME THE POWERFUL BLOOD. WAS THIS HUMAN TO WANT HER UNDERSTANDING, THIS DESPERATE FEAR THAT I WOULD DIE IN HER ARMS, AND NO ONE WOULD EVER KNOW WHO I'D BEEN OR WHAT HAD TAKEN PLACE? AH, BUT THE OTHERS KNEW, AND THEY HAD NOT COME TO HELP ME.

IT'S THAT BAD? TO BE HUMAN?



YOU DON'T HAVE TO HUMOR ME. I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE WHAT I'VE TOLD YOU.

AH, BUT OUR FANTASIES ARE LIKE OUR DREAMS. THEY HAVE MEANING.



DEAR GOD, HELP ME...I WANT MY BODY BACK.

DARKNESS FELL AROUND THE LITTLE HOUSE.

SLEEP NOW. TRY NOT TO WORRY.

AND AT LAST A DEEP SLEEP WAS COMING TO ME, DEEP AS THE SNOW OUTSIDE, DEEP AS THE DARKNESS.

WHEN I WOKE, IT WAS DAWN. COLORLESS AND BRIGHT.

YOU BROUGHT ME THROUGH IT.

YES, YOU'RE BETTER.

WHY DID YOU BRING ME HERE? WHY ME?

THERE WERE OTHERS THERE....

BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT LIKE ANYONE I'VE EVER KNOWN.

YOU MAKE ME THINK OF A STORY I READ ONCE...

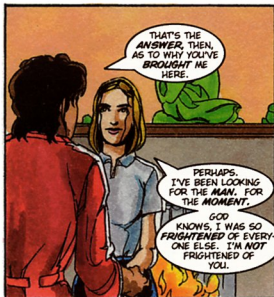
AH, BUT WHY HAS SHE DONE ALL THIS FOR ME? I THOUGHT. WHY? AND WHAT CAN I DO FOR HER?

WHATEVER HAPPENED, I WOULD NOT LEAVE HER UNTIL I KNEW WHAT I COULD DO TO REPAY HER.

I LIKED HER. I LIKED THE DARKNESS INSIDE HER, THE CONCEALED QUALITY OF HER, THE CANDOR IN HER EYES.

...ABOUT AN ANGEL FORCED TO COME DOWN TO EARTH IN A HUMAN BODY.





I WANTED TO SAY MORE -- HOW PERFECTLY IMPOSSIBLE IT WAS TO EVEN CONSIDER SUCH A THING -- BUT I WAS SLIDING AWAY, INTO A DREAM.

TO BE SAVED. WHAT A THOUGHT...WHAT A LOVELY, EXTRAVAGANT, AND IMPOSSIBLE THOUGHT.

HOW NICE TO HAVE FOUND THE ONE MORTAL WOMAN IN ALL THE WORLD WHO WOULD SERIOUSLY THINK OF SUCH A THING.



EARLY MORNING, JUST BEFORE THE SUN COMES. THE TIME WHEN IN THE PAST I WAS OFTEN IN MEDITATION, TIRED, AND HALF IN LOVE WITH THE CHANGING SKY.

SLOWLY, I KISSED GRETCHEN'S CHEEKS, AND THE FLESH BENEATH HER EYES. I WANTED TO FEEL HER EYELASHES THROUGH MY LIPS. I WANTED TO FEEL THE FLESH OF HER THROAT.

NOT FOR KILLING,
BUT FOR KISSING.

SHE WAKED SLOWLY
UNDER MY TOUCH.

TRUST IN
ME. I WON'T
HURT YOU.

A COARSE WARM
EXCITEMENT
WENT THROUGH ME.

NO THOUGHTS CAME TO ME OF THE BLOOD DRINKING... NO THOUGHT AT ALL OF THE THUNDER OF THE LIFE INSIDE HER WHICH I MIGHT HAVE CONSUMED, A DARK DRAUGHT, AT ANOTHER TIME.

RATHER THE
MOMENT WAS
PERFUMED
WITH THE
SOFT HEAT OF
HER LIVING
FLESH. AND
IT SEEMED
VILE THAT
ANYTHING
COULD HARM
HER, ANY-
THING MAR
THE COMMON
MYSTERY
OF HER --

-- OF HER TRUST AND HER YEARNING
AND HER DEEP AND COMMON FEAR.

IN HER NEW *PASSION*, SHE SEEMED *HEEDLESS*,
AND COMPLETELY UNDER MY *COMMAND*.

BUT WHAT OF THE *DANGERS*?
DID SHE *CARE* ABOUT THEM?

IT WAS THIS
SURRENDER
THAT SHE
NEEDED. IT
WAS WHAT
SHE *REQUIRED*
OF HERSELF.

AND THERE IT WAS AGAIN, THE *MYSTERY* -- THAT
SOMETHING COULD BE SO PERFECTLY FINISHED, AND
COMPLETE, AND HAVE LASTED SUCH A *LITTLE WHILE*.

SUCH A *PRECIOUS* LITTLE WHILE.



I'LL GO BACK, OF COURSE. THIS MAY SOUND **ABSRD**, BUT IT WAS A DIFFICULT THING TO LEAVE IN THE **FIRST PLACE**. BUT THIS QUESTION OF **CHASTITY** -- IT HAD BECOME A **DESTRUCTIVE OBSESSION**.



AND NOW YOU KNOW THAT IT'S NOT REALLY SO VERY **IMPORTANT** AT ALL WHETHER OR NOT YOU SLEEP WITH A MAN.

ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU FOUND OUT?



PERHAPS. THERE WAS A **VANITY** IN IT, TOO. **VANITY** IS ALWAYS THE **ENEMY**. THAT'S WHAT TROUBLED ME **MOST** ABOUT MY CHASTITY -- THE **PRIDE** I FELT IN IT.



I WANT TO ASK YOU A QUESTION. ANSWER ME FROM YOUR **HEART**. IF I **WIN** MY BATTLE -- IF I RE-GAIN MY **BODY** -- DO YOU WANT ME TO **COME** TO YOU? DO YOU WANT ME TO **SHOW** YOU THAT I'VE BEEN TELLING THE **TRUTH**?

YES, IF YOU WIN THIS BATTLE, IF YOU RECOVER YOUR **OLD FORM**, FOR THE LOVE OF **GOD**, **COME** TO ME! I WANT TO... I WANT TO **KNOW**!



YOU KNOW, IN A **HORRIBLE WAY**, WHEN I DO COME TO YOU AND RE-VEAL MY **TRUE SELF**, YOU MAY BE **DIS-APPOINTED**.

I'M NOT **HUMAN**. AND WHEN YOU **KNOW** IT, MAYBE YOU'LL **HATE** ME FOR IT.



NO. I COULD **NEVER** HATE YOU. AND TO KNOW THAT ALL YOU'VE SAID IS **TRUE**?

THAT WOULD BE...A **MIRACLE**.



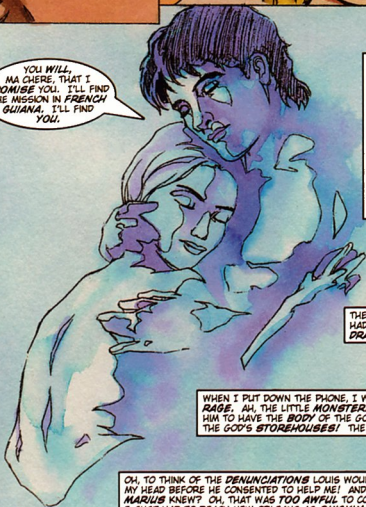
PERHAPS, GRETCHEN. BUT WE ARE A VISION WITHOUT REVELATION. WE ARE A MIRACLE WITHOUT MEANING.

DO YOU REALLY WANT THAT CROSS ALONG WITH SO MANY OTHERS?



ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, I MUST SEE YOU AGAIN!

YOU WILL, MA CHERE, THAT I PROMISE YOU. I'LL FIND THE MISSION IN FRENCH GUIANA, I'LL FIND YOU.



BEFORE I LEFT HER, I PHONED MY MAN IN NEW YORK. A VOICE CAME ON THE LINE, AND SLOWLY LET ME KNOW IN AWKWARD TERMS THAT MY AGENT THERE HAD BEEN KILLED. ROBBERY HAD BEEN AFFIRMED AS THE MOTIVE FOR THE ATTACK -- HIS COMPUTER AND ALL HIS FILES HAD BEEN STOLEN.

THE MAN'S BODY HAD BEEN ENTIRELY DRAINED OF BLOOD.

WHEN I PUT DOWN THE PHONE, I WAS TREMBLING WITH RAGE. AH, THE LITTLE MONSTER! IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR HIM TO HAVE THE BODY OF THE GOD, HE MUST RANSACK THE GOD'S STOREHOUSES! THE LITTLE FIEND!

OH, TO THINK OF THE DENUNCIATIONS LOUIS WOULD HEAP UPON MY HEAD BEFORE HE CONSENTED TO HELP ME! AND WHAT IF MARIUS KNEW? OH, THAT WAS TOO AWFUL TO CONTEMPLATE. I JUST HAD TO REACH NEW ORLEANS AS QUICKLY AS I COULD.

MY FAREWELL TO GRETCHEN WOULD NOT BE THE GRACEFUL, SLOW LEAVE-TAKING I'D ENVISIONED. BUT SURELY SHE WOULD UNDERSTAND. MUCH WAS HAPPENING WITHIN THE COMPLEX DELUSIONARY WORLD OF HER MYSTERIOUS LOVER.

IT WAS TIME TO PART.



THE TRIP TO NEW ORLEANS WAS A **SMALL NIGHTMARE**.

THE FLIGHT ITSELF WAS **HELLISH**. I DID LITTLE MORE THAN LIE THERE IN A STUPOR, WAITING FOR THE PLANE TO **EXPLODE**.



AT LAST, WE MADE OUR **TERRIFYING DESCENT**, AMID A RAINSTORM OF **BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS**. I COLLECTED **MOJO** AND LED HIM **BOLDLY** INTO THE BACK OF A TAXI.

IT WAS NEAR **MIDNIGHT** WHEN WE REACHED THE **TREE-LINED STREETS** OF UPTOWN, WHEN I SAW THE **DISMAL**, ABANDONED HOUSE OF LOUIS'S PROPERTY.

I HAD NEVER BEHELD WITH **MORTAL EYES** A DWELLING AS **FORLORN** AS THE GREAT MASSIVE ABANDONED HOUSE WHICH STOOD BEFORE LOUIS'S **HIDDEN SHACK**.

FOR ONE MOMENT, I FELT A **TERRIBLE IRRATIONAL FEAR** THAT NO BEING DWELT IN THIS PLACE --

-- THAT I WAS **MAD**, AND DESTINED TO REMAIN IN THIS **WEAK HUMAN BODY FOREVER**.



WE MADE OUR WAY AROUND THE **MAIN HOUSE** TO LOUIS'S BELOVED **LITTLE SHACK**, WHERE HE SPENT ALL OF HIS TIME, READING HIS BOOKS.



LOUIS?



LOUIS? LOUIS, IT IS I, **LESTATI**!

LOUIS?



A POWERFUL RELIEF COURSED THROUGH ME. I WAS HERE! I WAS ALMOST SAFE! AND I WAS NOT MAD.



WE'VE MADE IT, MOJO. AND SOON WE'LL BE AFTER THAT DEVIL. WE'LL FIND A WAY TO DEAL WITH HIM.



I REALIZED THAT I WAS SHIVERING... INDEED, I WAS FEELING THE OLD TELLTALE CONGESTION IN MY CHEST.



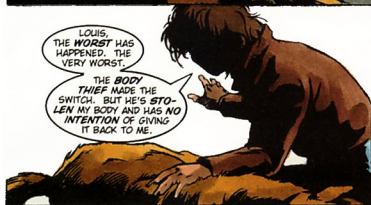
LOUIS, FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN, COME! I NEED YOU!



LINGH!



I COULDN'T SPEAK. NOR COULD I FREE MYSELF. A GREAT PIERCING CRY CAME FROM MOJO, AND THEN HE, TOO, FELL SILENT. I STRUGGLED FRANTICALLY AND HELPLESSLY IN PURE TERROR.



TWO A.M. I HAD POURED OUT THE WHOLE TALE.

YOU KNOW WHY I DID IT. I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU. BUT NOW, IT MUST BE UNDONE. YOU CANNOT IMAGINE HOW ABSOLUTELY REVOLTING IT IS TO BE IN THIS BODY.

NOW, PLEASE, DO IT QUICKLY, DO IT WITH YOUR GREATEST SKILL. I'M READY NOW. THERE NEED BE NO PREPARATION.

I CANNOT DO THIS.

WHATT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU CAN'T DO IT?

LOUIS, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, BE QUICK. WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

OH, I DON'T BLAME YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE. BUT CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED?

LESTAT, YOU HAVE DONE IT. YOU HAVE BEEN REBORN A MORTAL MAN.

LOUIS, WE ARE WASTING TIME! I HAVE TO GO AFTER THAT MONSTER! HE HAS MY BODY!

LESTAT, THE OTHERS WILL DEAL WITH HIM. PERHAPS THEY ALREADY HAVE.

DON'T YOU THINK THEY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED? THEY MUST KNOW! AND IT COULD WELL BE THAT YOUR BODY HAS ALREADY BEEN DESTROYED!

THEY WOULDN'T DO THAT...



HOW WEARY I WAS, HOW SEARED FROM
MY OWN ANGER, HOW CLOSE TO DESPAIR,
HAD I EVER IN ALL MY MISERY BEEN THIS
COMPLETELY WITHOUT HOPE?





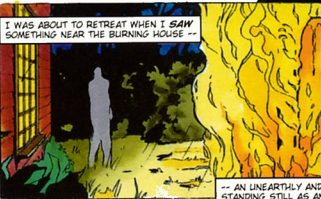
I HURLED CANDLES AT THE
HEAPS OF DEBRIS THAT REMAINED,
AND I FLUNG BURNING BOOKS
AT THE WET SHUTTERS.

I KICKED OUT
HOLES IN THE
ROTTED PLAS-
TER AND THREW
THE BURNING
CANDLES IN
UPON THE OLD
LATHING, AND
THEN I SET
AFIRE THE
WORN, THREAD-
BARE RUGS.



YES, YES,
BURN!

OH, YOU
DESERVE THIS,
YOU TREACHEROUS
LINGRATEFUL
BASTARD!



I WAS ABOUT TO RETREAT WHEN I SAW
SOMETHING NEAR THE BURNING HOUSE --

-- AN UNEARTHLY AND DIM WHITE FIGURE,
STANDING STILL AS AN APPARITION.



IT WAS MARIUS!

MARIUS.

NEVER HAVE I SEEN SUCH
A PERFECT REFLECTION OF
FURY, AND THERE WAS
NOT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT
THAT IT WAS WHAT HE
MEANT FOR ME TO SEE.

MARIUS!
MARIUS, HELP
ME!

BUT IT WAS USELESS
AND I *KNEW* IT.



YOU THINK
I'M DEFEATED, MARIUS.
YOU THINK YOU'VE PASSED
YOUR JUDGMENT, AND THAT'S
THE END OF IT. WELL, YOU
ARE WRONG.

I HAVE
TO FIND THE **BODY
THIEF**, AND YOU MUST
GIVE ME **TIME**. IF YOU WILL
NOT HELP ME, YOU MUST
GRANT ME **THAT
MUCH**.



WHO IN ALL
THE WORLD
WOULD
HELP ME?

DAVID WAS MY ONLY
HOPE -- THOUGH WHAT
HE COULD DO TO HELP
ME, I COULDN'T EVEN
IMAGINE.

AND WHAT IF HE, TOO,
TURNED HIS BACK ON ME?

I FOUND DAVID WAITING FOR ME
AT MY NEW ORLEANS APARTMENT.

DAVID, IT'S
LESTAT, I SWEAR
TO YOU! PLEASE OPEN
THE GATE!

IT IS
YOU.

GOOD LORD,
YOU ARE REALLY IN
THAT BODY! NOT JUST
HOVERING INSIDE, BUT
ANCHORED INTO
THE CELLS!

YOU'RE
TELLING ME! IT'S
DREADFUL, THE WHOLE
MESS. AND THE OTHERS
WON'T HELP, DAVID.
I'M CAST OUT.

**CAST
OUT!**

DAVID, MY
WORST FEAR IS
THAT THE OTHERS HAVE
DESTROYED JAMES AND MY
BODY WITH HIM. THIS MAY BE
THE **ONLY BODY** I NOW
POSSESS.

NO, I
DON'T THINK SO.
YOUR LITTLE **BODY BOR-
ROWER** HAS LEFT QUITE A
TRAIL. BUT COME, GET
OUT OF THESE WET
CLOTHES.

WHAT DO
YOU MEAN,
TRAIL?

WELL,
FIRST THERE WAS
YOUR AGENT IN NEW
YORK -- YOU KNOW
WE KEEP **TRACK OF**
SUCH CRIMES.

THE **LAST**
REPORT WAS FROM
THE **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**.
THAT WAS, LET ME SEE,
TWO NIGHTS AGO.

DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC! WHY IN
THE **WORLD** WOULD
HE GO THERE?

EXACTLY WHAT
I WOULD LIKE TO
KNOW.

BEFORE THAT
HE STRUCK NEAR **BAL
HARBOUR** IN FLORIDA. FURNITURE
SMASHED TO **PIECES** AT ALL THREE
CRIME SCENES... **WALL SAFES**
RIPPED FROM THEIR MOORINGS...
BONDS, GOLD, JEWELRY
TAKEN.

ONE MAN DEAD
IN NEW YORK, A **BLOOD-
LESS CORPSE**, OF COURSE.
TWO WOMEN LEFT **DRAINED** IN
FLORIDA, AND A **FAMILY** KILLED IN
SANTO DOMINGO, WITH ONLY THE
FATHER DRAINED IN CLASSIC
VAMPIRE STYLE.

HE
CAN'T CONTROL
HIS **STRENGTH**.
HE'S BLUNDERING
ABOUT LIKE A
ROBOT!

EXACTLY
WHAT I THOUGHT.
THE CREATURE'S
UNBELIEVABLY
INEPT!

BUT WHAT I
CAN'T FIGURE IS
WHY HE'S CHOSEN
THESE LOCATIONS
FOR HIS VARIOUS
THEFTS.

YOU HAVE
TO TELL ME ALL
THAT'S HAPPENED TO
YOU. AND WITHIN AN HOUR
OR SO WE MAY HAVE NEWS
FROM LONDON -- THAT IS,
IF THE BASTARD HAS
STRUCK AGAIN.

WHAT
WILL YOU DO WITH
THAT **SPLENDID**
DOG?

HE'S HAD
BREAKFAST. HE'LL
BE HAPPY IN THE **ROOF**
GARDEN. BUT TELL ME
-- HOW WILL WE GET
THIS NEWS FROM
LONDON?

FAX FROM
THE MOTHERHOUSE TO
THE HOTEL. NOW **COME**,
LET'S HAVE SOMETHING TO
EAT TOGETHER. I MUST
HEAR **EVERYTHING** ABOUT
THIS CREATURE
JAMES.

IT'S
GOING TO TAKE
US **TIME** TO MAKE
A **PLAN.**

A **PLAN**.
YOU REALLY THINK
WE CAN **STOP**
HIM?

OF
COURSE
I DO!

IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF SEVERAL BLOCKS TO THE HOTEL, AND I BEGAN TO TELL DAVID MY STORY AS WE WALKED BENEATH THE BLUE SKY.

IT WAS AGONY TO RELIVE MY NAIVE CONVERSATION WITH JAMES, TO CONFESS THAT I HAD NOT CARED SUFFICIENTLY TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF HIM, THAT I'D BEEN TOO SATISFIED THAT A MERE MORTAL COULD NEVER TRICK ME.

DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT WE HAVE A CHANCE OF CATCHING THIS FIEND?

ALL WE REQUIRE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONFRONT THE CREATURE, AND CONFUSE HIM SUFFICIENTLY FOR THE SWITCH TO BE MADE.

WE CAN BE KNOCKED LOOSE FROM THAT BODY LONG ENOUGH FOR YOU TO GET IN.

DAVID -- IN THIS BODY I HAVE NO PSYCHIC POWER AT ALL. I DON'T THINK I CAN... RISE OUT OF THIS BODY.

I TRIED ONCE IN GEORGETOWN. I COULDN'T BUDGE FROM THE FLESH.

ANYONE CAN DO THIS LITTLE TRICK, LESTAT. YOU WERE MERELY AFRAID.

I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO RISE OUT OF THE BODY -- AND I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO MAKE A CONCERTED ASSAULT UPON JAMES.

WELL, FIRST WE HAVE TO FIND HIM. HOW DID HE GET FROM NEW YORK TO BAL HARBOUR IN ONE NIGHT -- AND, MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, WHY?

IS HE MERELY TRYING TO SCATTER THE KILLS SO THAT NO ONE WILL PUT TOGETHER ALL THE CASES?

FAX, SIR. JUST IN.

AH, THANK YOU, SO MUCH.

NO. IF HE REALLY WANTED SECRECY, HE WOULDN'T OPERATE IN THIS SPECTACULAR STYLE. HE'S BLUNDERING! YET THERE MUST BE A PATTERN....





OH, IT'S SO BLOODY TYPICAL OF HIM! EVERYTHING IS SYMBOLIC WITH THIS MAD-MAN. AND THE LITTLE DEMON GAVE YOU THE CLUE HIMSELF!

ALL RIGHT, LET'S THINK THIS OUT. DARE WE BOARD THIS VESSEL OURSELVES?

OF COURSE. WE MUST.



WE'LL HAVE TO BOARD HER IN GRENADA TOMORROW.

THAT WILL GIVE US TIME TO PREPARE FOR WHAT WE MUST DO.

YOU REST. I'M GOING IN THE NEXT ROOM TO MAKE THE CALLS I MUST MAKE.

THIS IS TALAMASCA, AND YOU MUST LEAVE ME ALONE.



YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS! I WANT TO HEAR WHAT YOU'RE --

YOU'LL DO AS I SAY.

AND JUST WHEN I WAS BEGINNING TO ENJOY THIS.



I SPED OFF TO FIND MOJO AND TOOK HIM DOWN WITH ME TO THE OLD WOMAN ON THE FIRST FLOOR. OF ALL MY TENANTS, SHE WAS THE MOST AGREEABLE, AND COULD CERTAINLY USE A COUPLE OF HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR BOARDING A GENTLE DOG.



AT THE MERE SUGGESTION, THE OLD WOMAN WAS BESIDE HERSELF WITH JOY. SHE CERTAINLY NEEDED THE MONEY AND THE COMPANY, AND WASN'T I A NICE YOUNG MAN? JUST AS NICE AS MY COUSIN, MONSIEUR DE LIONCOURT.

BY THE TIME I RETURNED TO THE APARTMENT, DAVID HAD FINISHED MAKING ALL OF THE ARRANGEMENTS.

WELL, THERE IS NO CLARENCE ODDBODY ON THE QUEEN ELIZABETH 2, BUT A MYSTERIOUS YOUNG ENGLISHMAN NAMED JASON HAMILTON BOOKED A LAVISH SUITE TWO DAYS BEFORE THE SHIP SAILED FROM NEW YORK.

FOR THE MOMENT, WE MUST ASSUME THAT THIS IS OUR MAN. WE'LL HAVE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HIM BEFORE WE REACH GRENADA.

WE OURSELVES ARE BOOKED IN TWO SUITES ON THE SAME DECK AS OUR MYSTERIOUS FRIEND. A THIRD ROOM HAS BEEN BOOKED BELOW. YOU'LL BE TRAVELING AS AN AMERICAN NAMED SHERIDAN BLACKWOOD. I'LL BE A RETIRED SURGEON NAMED ALEXANDER STOKER.

ONE OF OUR INVESTIGATORS WILL MEET US IN GRENADA. HE'S A VERY CUNNING INDIVIDUAL. HE'LL PROVIDE EVERYTHING WE NEED.

SPLendid. BUT WHAT IF THE BODY THIEF HAS JUMPED SHIP ALREADY? OR BEEN DESTROYED BY MARIUS OR ONE OF THE OTHERS?

THEN WE'LL GO ON TO RIO. WE'LL BE IN TIME FOR THE CARNIVAL. NICE VACATION FOR US BOTH.

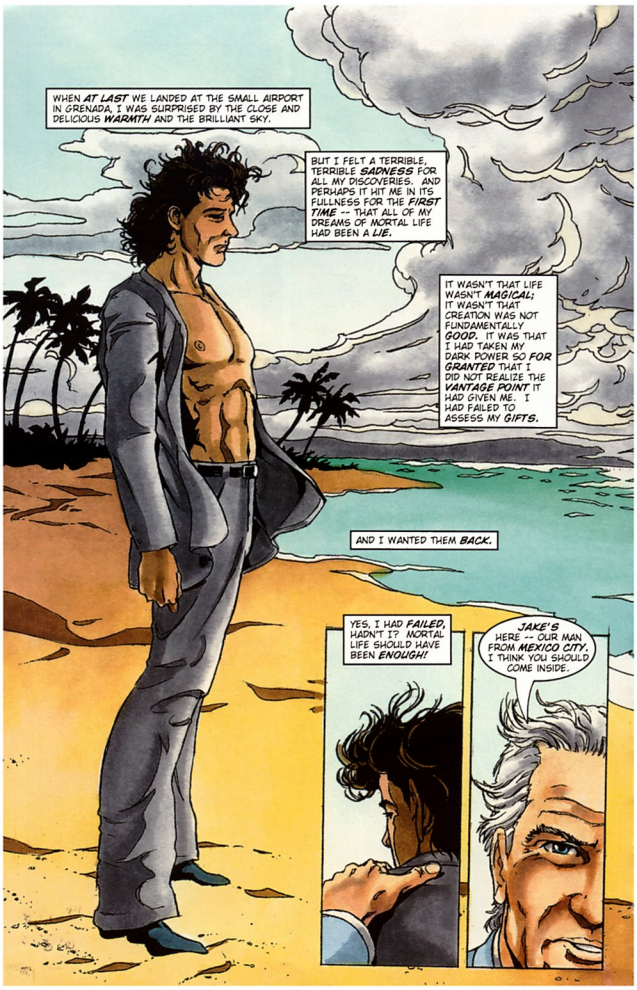
I'LL DIE IF I HAVE TO LIVE THAT LONG! TROUBLE WITH YOU IS YOU'VE GOT- TEN USED TO BEING HUMAN BECAUSE YOU'VE DONE IT FOR SO DAMNED LONG.

I WAS USED TO IT BY THE TIME I WAS TWO YEARS OLD.

I'VE WATCHED TWO YEAR OLDS. THEY'RE MISERABLE. THEY RUSH ABOUT, FALL DOWN, AND SCREAM ALMOST CONSTANTLY. THEY HATE BEING HUMAN! THEY KNOW ALREADY THAT IT'S SOME SORT OF DIRTY TRICK.

DAVID LAUGHED TO HIMSELF BUT DIDN'T ANSWER ME. HE WOULDN'T LOOK AT ME, EITHER.

THE CAB WAS ALREADY WAITING FOR US WHEN WE REACHED THE FRONT GATE.



WHEN *AT LAST* WE LANDED AT THE SMALL AIRPORT IN GRENADA, I WAS SURPRISED BY THE CLOSE AND DELICIOUS *WARMTH* AND THE BRILLIANT SKY.

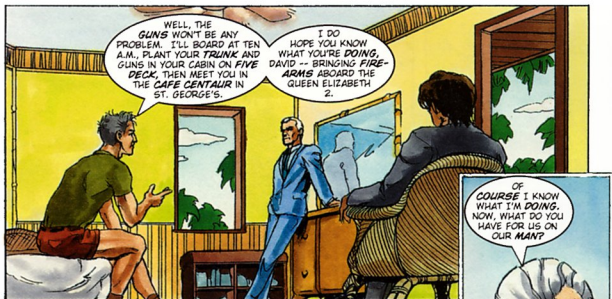
BUT I FELT A TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE *SADNESS* FOR ALL MY DISCOVERIES, AND PERHAPS IT HIT ME IN ITS FULLNESS FOR THE *FIRST TIME* -- THAT ALL OF MY DREAMS OF MORTAL LIFE HAD BEEN A *LIE*.

IT WASN'T THAT LIFE WASN'T *MAGICAL*; IT WASN'T THAT CREATION WAS NOT FUNDAMENTALLY *GOOD*. IT WAS THAT I HAD TAKEN MY DARK POWER SO *FOR GRANTED* THAT I DID NOT REALIZE THE *VANTAGE POINT* IT HAD GIVEN ME. I HAD FAILED TO ASSESS MY *GIFTS*.

AND I WANTED THEM *BACK*.

YES, I HAD *FAILED*, HADN'T I? MORTAL LIFE SHOULD HAVE BEEN *ENOUGH!*

JAKE'S HERE -- OUR MAN FROM *MEXICO CITY*. I THINK YOU SHOULD COME INSIDE.



WELL, THE GUNS WON'T BE ANY PROBLEM. I'LL BOARD AT TEN A.M., PLANT YOUR TRUNK AND GUNS IN YOUR CABIN ON FIVE DECK, THEN MEET YOU IN THE CAFE CENTAUR IN ST. GEORGE'S.

I DO HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, DAVID -- BRINGING FIRE-ARMS ABOARD THE QUEEN ELIZABETH 2.

OF COURSE I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. NOW, WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR US ON OUR MAN?



AH, YES. JASON HAMILTON. SIX FEET TALL, DARK TAN, LONG-ISH BLOND HAIR, PIERCING BLUE EYES. MYSTERIOUS FELLOW. VERY BRITISH, VERY POLITE. RUMORS AS TO HIS TRUE IDENTITY ABOUND.

HE'S AN ENORMOUS TIPPER, A DAY SLEEPER, AND APPARENTLY DOESN'T BOTHER TO LEAVE THE SHIP WHEN SHE'S IN PORT. INDEED HE GIVES OVER SMALL PACKAGES TO BE MAILED TO HIS CABIN STEWARD EVERY MORNING, QUITE EARLY, BEFORE HE DISAPPEARS FOR THE DAY. HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DISCOVER THE POST BOX BUT THAT'S A MATTER OF TIME.

HE HAS YET TO APPEAR IN THE QUEENS GRILL FOR A SINGLE MEAL. IT'S RUMORED HE'S SERIOUSLY ILL. BUT WITH WHAT, NO ONE KNOWS. HE'S THE PICTURE OF HEALTH, WHICH ONLY ADDS TO THE MYSTERY. EVERYONE SAYS SO.

A POWERFULLY BUILT AND GRACEFUL FELLOW WITH A DAZZLING WARDROBE, IT SEEMS. HE GAMBLER HEAVILY AT THE ROULETTE WHEEL, AND DANCES FOR HOURS WITH THE LADIES. SEEMS IN FACT TO LIKE THE VERY OLD ONES.

HE'D AROUSE SUSPICION ON THAT ACCOUNT ALONE IF HE WEREN'T SO BLOODY RICH HIMSELF. SPENDS A LOT OF TIME SIMPLY ROAMING THE SHIP.



DEATHS
ON THE QE2
SO FAR?

THEY'VE
HAD *SIX* SINCE
THEY LEFT NEW YORK,
WHICH IS A LITTLE *MORE*
THAN USUAL. ALL VERY
ELDERLY WOMEN, ALL
APPARENT HEART
FAILURE.

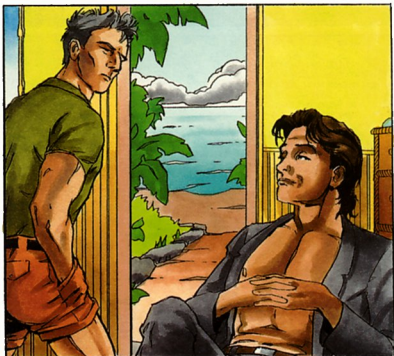
THIS IS
THE SORT OF
THING YOU WANT
TO KNOW?



CERTAINLY
IS.

DON'T WORRY,
JAKE. THINGS WILL
PROBABLY GO WITHOUT A
HITCH. AND I THANK YOU
FOR YOUR *USUAL*
EFFICIENCY.

NOW, GO
HAVE A PLEASANT
EVENING ON THE ISLAND.
AND I SHALL SEE YOU AT
THE *CENTAUR CAFE*
BEFORE NOON.



"I THINK HE *DISLIKES* ME, DAVID.
BLAMES ME FOR INVOLVING YOU
IN SOME SORT OF *SORDID CRIME*."

"I'VE BEEN IN FAR MORE
COMPROMISING
SITUATIONS THAN *THIS*
ONE. AND IF I WORRIED
WHAT OUR *INVESTIGATORS*
THOUGHT OF
US, I'D HAVE RETIRED A
LONG TIME AGO! NOW
-- WHAT DO WE *KNOW*
FROM THIS INFORMATION?"



WELL, HE'S FEEDING ON THE OLD WOMEN. PROBABLY STEALING FROM THEM, ALSO. AND HE'S MAILING HOME WHAT HE STEALS IN PACKAGES TOO SMALL TO AROUSE SUSPICION.



GOOD. NOW LOCK THE DOOR. IT'S TIME FOR A LITTLE CONCENTRATED WITCHCRAFT.

I HAVE TO TEACH YOU TO VEIL YOUR THOUGHTS. THE BODY THIEF WILL PICK UP YOUR PRESENCE WHEN HE'S STILL TWO HUNDRED MILES OUT TO SEA.



WELL, I DID IT THROUGH AN ACT OF WILL WHEN I WAS LESTAT. I HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA HOW TO DO IT NOW.

SAME WAY. WE'RE GOING TO PRACTICE... UNTIL I CAN'T READ A SINGLE IMAGE OR RANDOM WORD FROM YOU.

BY THE END OF FORTY-FIVE MINUTES, I HAD LEARNED THE TRICK FAIRLY PAINLESSLY. IT WAS A CRUCIAL STEP. BUT THERE WAS MORE TO BE DONE IF I WAS TO RECOVER MY FORMER SELF....



WE'RE READY TO BEGIN THE OUT-OF-BODY TRAVEL.



THIS IS GOING TO BE HELL. I DON'T THINK I CAN GET OUT OF THIS BODY. I JUST DON'T HAVE YOUR GIFTS.



NONSENSE. LIE DOWN ON THAT BED, AND CLOSE YOUR EYES. AND LISTEN TO EVERY WORD I SAY.

I DID AS I WAS TOLD, AND IMMEDIATELY FELT A LITTLE **SLEEPY**. DAVID'S VOICE BECAME EVEN MORE DIRECTIVE IN ITS **SOFTNESS**, RATHER LIKE THAT OF A **HYPNOTIST**, BIDDING ME TO RELAX **COMPLETELY**, AND TO VISUALIZE A SPIRITUAL DOUBLE OF THIS FORM.

MUST I VISUALIZE MYSELF WITH **THIS** BODY?

DOESN'T MATTER. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT **YOU** -- YOUR **MIND**, YOUR **SOUL**, YOUR **SENSE OF SELF** -- ARE LINKED TO THE FORM YOU ENVISION.

IMAGINE THAT YOU WANT TO LIFT IT UP AND **OUT** OF THE **BODY** -- THAT YOU WANT TO **GO UP!**

DAVID CONTINUED THIS UNHURRIED INSTRUCTION, REITERATING IN HIS **OWN FASHION** THE LESSONS WHICH PRIESTS HAD TAUGHT TO THEIR INITIATES FOR **THOUSANDS OF YEARS**. I KNEW THE OLD FORMULA.

WE HAD BEEN AT IT PERHAPS FORTY-FIVE MINUTES WHEN I FINALLY SANK INTO THE REQUISITE AND LOVELY **VIBRATORY STATE** ON THE VERY CUSP OF SLEEP. MY BODY SEEMED IN FACT TO HAVE **BECOME** THIS DELICIOUS VIBRATORY FEELING, AND **NO THING MORE!**

AND JUST WHEN I REALIZED THIS, AND MIGHT HAVE **REMARKED** UPON IT, I SUDDENLY FELT MYSELF **BREAK LOOSE** AND BEGIN TO **RISE**.

INSTANTLY I TRAVELED TO THE CEILING WITH THE EXQUISITE LIGHTNESS AND SPEED OF A **HELIUM BALLOON!** OH, **HOW LOVELY** THIS WAS! THIS WAS SO NEAR TO MY FREEDOM AS A VAMPIRE THAT I ALMOST BEGAN TO **WEEP** AGAIN. I FELT SO SORRY FOR THE TWO SOLID AND LONELY BEINGS DOWN THERE. I WANTED TO PASS UP THROUGH THE CEILING AND INTO THE NIGHT.

SLOWLY I WENT UP. BUT THIS WAS **ENOUGH**, WASN'T IT? **FEAR** GRIPPED ME, THE FEAR I'D KNOWN WHEN I DID THIS LITTLE TRICK BEFORE.

WHAT IN THE NAME OF GOD WAS KEEPING ME **ALIVE** IN THIS STATE? I NEEDED MY **BODY!**

AT ONCE I PLUMMETED, **BLINDLY**, BACK INTO THE FLESH.

I WOKE UP, TINGLING ALL OVER.



I DID IT.

REMEMBER TO VEIL YOUR THOUGHTS, NO MATTER HOW EXHILARATED YOU BECOME. LOCK YOUR MIND UP TIGHT!

NOW LET'S DO IT ALL AGAIN.



AND BY MIDNIGHT, I HAD LEARNED TO RISE AT WILL. INDEED, THERE WAS A DEEP THROBBING PLEASURE TO IT, PURE AND SHINING, LIKE AN EROTICISM OF THE MIND.

WHEN WE HAD FINISHED, WE ATE, AND THEN I WENT DOWN TO THE BEACH ALONE. I DIDN'T WANT TO BE DEPRIVED OF THIS LAST NIGHT AS A HUMAN BEING UNDER THE STARS.



WHEN I THOUGHT OF BEING BACK IN MY OLD BODY, I COULD ONLY BE HAPPY, AND ONCE AGAIN, I KNEW THAT IN MY HUMAN ADVENTURE, I HAD FAILED.

I HAD NOT BEEN THE HERO OF MY OWN DREAMS. I HAD FOUND HUMAN LIFE TOO HARD.

JUST CALLED LONDON. ROBBERY IN THE HILLS ABOVE CURACAS. THREE PEOPLE DEAD.

WE SHOULD THANK THE GODS THAT OUR OPPORTUNITY TO STOP HIM HAS COME SO SOON. IN TIME, HE WOULD HAVE WAKENED TO HIS MONSTROUS POTENTIAL. AS IT IS, HE IS OUR PREDICTABLE FOOL.



DOES ANY BEING USE WHAT HE POSSESSES?

SOME NIGHT, WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER, TELL ME AGAIN HOW IT WAS FOR YOU. HOW YOU COULD BE IN THAT BEAUTIFUL YOUNG BODY AND HATE THIS WORLD SO MUCH.

I'LL TELL YOU, BUT YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE DARK GLASS.



ONLY THE DEAD KNOW HOW TERRIBLE IT IS TO BE ALIVE.

THE NEXT MORNING, WE AGAIN MET WITH DAVID'S MAN, JAKE, IN THE SMALL CAFE NEAR THE HARBOR.

WELL, THE DEED IS DONE.

SHE'S CARRYING OVER A THOUSAND PASSENGERS. NOBODY WILL NOTICE WHEN I DON'T REBOARD. THE CABIN'S TINY, INSIDE AS YOU REQUESTED, FIVE DECK. AGAIN, I WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK.

OH -- HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS ABOUT THE ROBBERY THIS MORNING ON THE HILL? SEEMS WE HAVE A VAMPIRE IN GRENADA. MAYBE YOU SHOULD PLAN TO STAY HERE, DAVID. SOUNDS LIKE JUST YOUR SORT OF THING.

THIS MORNING?

THREE O'CLOCK. RIGHT UP THERE ON THE CLIFF. BIG HOUSE OF A RICH AUSTRIAN WOMAN. EVERYONE MURDERED. QUITE A MESS. THE WHOLE ISLAND'S TALKING ABOUT IT.

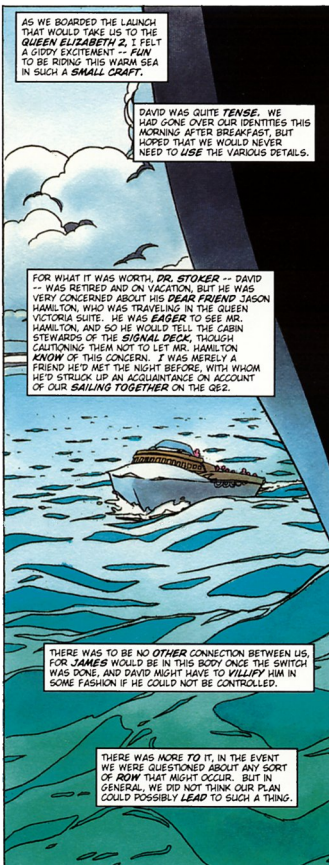
WELL, I'M OFF.

THIS IS BAD, LESTAT. IF HE SENGED EVEN A GLIMMER OF OUR PRESENCE, HE MAY NOT BE ON THE SHIP. OR HE MAY BE READY FOR US WHEN THE SUN SETS.

HE WAS FAR TOO BUSY THIS MORNING, DAVID. BESIDES, IF HE'D SENGED OUR PRESENCE, HE WOULD HAVE MADE A BONFIRE OF OUR LITTLE ROOM.

LET'S BOARD THE BLOODY SHIP NOW. I'M TIRED OF WAITING.





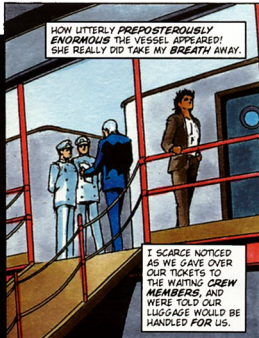
AS WE BOARDED THE LAUNCH THAT WOULD TAKE US TO THE **QUEEN ELIZABETH 2**, I FELT A GIDDY EXCITEMENT -- **FUN** TO BE RIDING THIS WARM SEA IN SUCH A **SMALL CRAFT**.

DAVID WAS QUITE **TENSE**. WE HAD GONE OVER OUR IDENTITIES THIS MORNING AFTER BREAKFAST, BUT HOPED THAT WE WOULD NEVER NEED TO **USE** THE VARIOUS DETAILS.

FOR WHAT IT WAS WORTH, **DR. STOKER** -- DAVID -- WAS RETIRED AND ON VACATION, BUT HE WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT HIS **DEAR FRIEND** JASON HAMILTON, WHO WAS TRAVELING IN THE **QUEEN VICTORIA SUITE**. HE WAS **EAGER** TO SEE MR. HAMILTON, AND SO HE WOULD TELL THE CABIN STEWARDS OF THE **SIGNAL DECK**, THOUGH CAUTIONING THEM NOT TO LET MR. HAMILTON **KNOW** OF THIS CONCERN. I WAS MERELY A FRIEND HE'D MET THE NIGHT BEFORE, WITH WHOM HE'D STRUCK UP AN ACQUAINTANCE ON ACCOUNT OF OUR **SAILING TOGETHER** ON THE Q².

THERE WAS TO BE NO **OTHER** CONNECTION BETWEEN US, FOR **JAMES** WOULD BE IN THIS BODY ONCE THE SWITCH WAS DONE, AND DAVID MIGHT HAVE TO **VILLIFY** HIM IN SOME FASHION IF HE COULD NOT BE CONTROLLED.

THERE WAS **MORE TO** IT, IN THE EVENT WE WERE QUESTIONED ABOUT ANY SORT OF **ROW** THAT MIGHT OCCUR. BUT IN GENERAL, WE DID NOT THINK OUR PLAN COULD POSSIBLY **LEAD** TO SUCH A THING.



HOW **UTTERLY PREPOSTEROUSLY ENORMOUS** THE VESSEL APPEARED! SHE REALLY DID TAKE MY **BREATH AWAY**.

I **SCARCE** NOTICED AS WE GAVE OVER OUR TICKETS TO THE WAITING **CREW MEMBERS**, AND WERE TOLD OUR **LUGGAGE** WOULD BE HANDLED **FOR** US.

A **FRIENDLY CABIN STEWARD** DIRECTED US TO OUR SUITES.

THE **QUEEN VICTORIA SUITE** -- WHERE **IS** IT?

TWO CABINS DOWN, SIR. THERE.



I FELT THE **HAIR RISE** ON MY NECK AS I LOOKED AT IT.

I **KNEW** -- **ABSOLUTELY KNEW** -- THAT THE **FIEND** WAS **INSIDE**.

OUR CABINS SURPRISED ME. THE ROOMS WERE QUITE LARGE AND LUXURIOUS, AND OPENED TO EACH OTHER WITH A CONNECTING DOOR.

I COULD HEAR DAVID USING ALL OF HIS CHARM ON THE CABIN STEWARD. IT ALL HAD TO DO WITH POOR AILING MR. HAMILTON, AND HOW DR. STOKER WANTED TO OBTAIN AND KEEP A SPARE KEY TO THE QUEEN VICTORIA SUITE, SO THAT HE MIGHT KEEP A VERY CLOSE WATCH ON HIS PATIENT...

...BUT THE STEWARD WAS TERRIBLY AFRAID TO ALLOW SUCH A THING.

ONLY GRADUALLY DID I REALIZE THAT THIS LITTLE CONVERSATION WAS MOVING TOWARDS THE QUESTION OF A BRIBE.

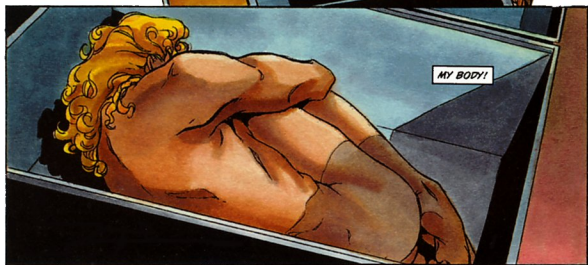
I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS DISCOMFORTING TO YOU...LOOK, I WANT YOU TO HAVE A SUPPER AT MY EXPENSE THE NEXT TIME YOU GO INTO PORT.

IF ANY-THING GOES WRONG, I'LL TAKE THE BLAME. I'LL SAY I TOOK THE KEY FROM THE GALLEY. YOU WON'T BE IMPLICATED AT ALL.

WELL, IF YOU'RE SURE...

YOU JUST LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME.

GOT IT. LET'S GO.







AT TEN PAST SIX THE NEXT MORNING, WE QUIETLY PROCEEDED TO THE DOOR OF THE *QUEEN VICTORIA SUITE*, AND DAVID SLIPPED THE KEY INTO THE LOCK.



THE VERANDA DRAPES -- OPEN THEM.

THE SKY WAS STILL THE SHINING BLUE OF NIGHT BUT GROWING PALER BY THE SECOND. A GENTLE AND PRETTY ILLUMINATION FILLED THE ROOM.



IT WOULD BURN HIS EYES WHEN HE SAW IT. IT WOULD BRING AN IMMEDIATE FLUSH OF PAIN TO HIS EXPOSED SKIN.

WE HEARD THE RAPID STEPS DRAWING NEARER AND NEARER. THE CREATURE WAS ALMOST RUNNING.



THEN DAVID LIFTED THE GUN AND AIMED IT AS THE KEY GROUND IN THE LOCK.

DAMN THOSE STEWARDS!



WHO...?



NOW!





WITH MY WHOLE BEING, I MADE THE ASSAULT UPON HIM, THE **INVISIBLE** PART OF ME FLYING UP AND OUT OF MY MORTAL BODY AND HURLING TOWARDS MY OLD FORM WITH INCALCULABLE FORCE.



INSTANTLY, I WAS THROWN BACKWARDS! I WENT DOWN INTO THE MORTAL BODY AGAIN WITH SUCH SPEED THAT THE BODY ITSELF WAS SLAMMED IN DEFEAT AGAINST THE WALL.



ALL RIGHT, JAMES, THE GAME'S OVER, MY FRIEND. GIVE IT UP.

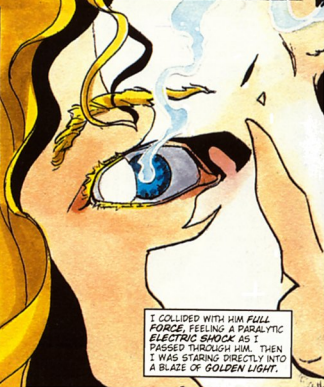


GIVE IT UP, JAMES!



DEAR GOD, IT WAS NOW OR NEVER, AND I COULDN'T FAIL.

I COULDN'T!



I COLLIDED WITH HIM FULL FORCE, FEELING A PARALYTIC ELECTRIC SHOCK AS I PASSED THROUGH HIM. THEN I WAS STARING DIRECTLY INTO A BLAZE OF GOLDEN LIGHT.

THE PAIN IN MY EYES WAS UNBEARABLE. IT WAS THE HEAT OF THE GØBI. IT WAS THE GREAT AND FINAL ILLUMINATION OF HELL. BUT I'D DONE IT! I WAS INSIDE MY OWN BODY!



DAVID,
WE'VE
WON!



THERE WAS NO TIME.
THE ROOM VERITABLY
EXPLODED WITH HEAT
AND LIGHT AS I
GAINED THE PASSAGE.

I COULD NOT REMAIN THERE ONE SECOND LONGER, EVEN THOUGH I HEARD THE POWERFUL GUN GO OFF WITH A DEAFENING CRACK.



I HEARD YET ANOTHER SHOT BEFORE I REACHED THE LITTLE CABIN. BUT IT WAS FAINT, OH, SO FAINT.



GOD
HELP YOU,
DAVID.

WHY HAD HE
FIRED? WHY?



I WAS FLOATING IN THE DEEP VELVET DARKNESS I HAD NOT KNOWN SINCE THAT FATEFUL MEETING IN GEORGETOWN. IT WAS OVER. IT WAS FINISHED.



I WAS THE VAMPIRE
LESTAT AGAIN, AND
NOTHING ELSE MATTERED.

NOTHING.



DAVID...



AS SOON AS I **AWOKE** THAT NIGHT, I SENSED THAT DAVID AND JAMES WERE **NOT** ON THE SHIP. I'M NOT CERTAIN HOW I **KNEW**, BUT I **DID**.

ACCORDING TO THE STEWARDS, THERE HAD BEEN A **DREADFUL INCIDENT** IN MY CABIN AT SUNRISE. AN ELDERLY BRITISH GENTLEMAN HAD FIRED SEVERAL **SHOTS** AT A YOUNG ASSAILANT WHO -- HE **CLAIMED** -- HAD TRIED TO **MURDER** HIM.

NONE OF THE SHOTS HAD STRUCK THE MARK. INDEED, NO ONE HAD EVER BEEN ABLE TO **LOCATE** THE YOUNG ASSAILANT.

THE ELDERLY BRITISH GENTLEMAN -- ONE **DAVID TALBOT** -- HAD BEEN HELD IN CUSTODY UNTIL HE WAS ESCORTED ASHORE. NO **CHARGES** WERE BROUGHT AGAINST HIM WHEN HE AGREED TO PACK HIS BELONGINGS AND ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE **ESCORTED ASHORE** AND TO A PLANE LEAVING IMMEDIATELY FOR MIAMI.

IN FACT, HE HAD LEFT WORD FOR ME TO **MEET** HIM THERE, AT THE **PARK CENTRAL HOTEL**, AT MY CONVENIENCE. I LEFT THE SHIP **IMMEDIATELY**, THOUGH NOT FOR MIAMI. I HAD A **PROMISE** TO KEEP FIRST.

AS I ROSE HIGHER AND HIGHER, I WAS FULL OF **JOY** AND DARK BITTER TRIUMPH. I WAS **LESTAT**, DRIFTING BETWEEN HELL AND HEAVEN, AND **CONTENT** TO BE SO --

-- PERHAPS FOR THE **FIRST TIME**.

THE RAIN FOREST OF SOUTH AMERICA.



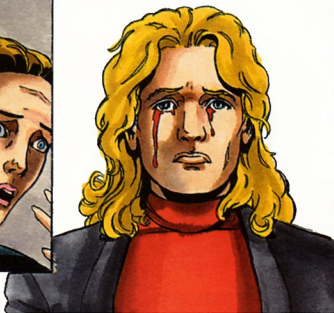
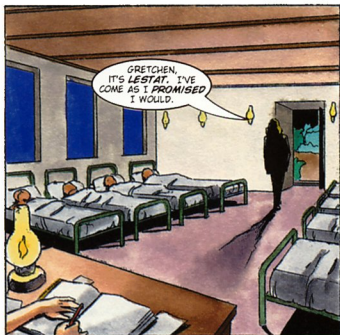
THERE WERE DIM LIGHTS IN THE CHAPEL, AND IN THE LITTLE **HOSPITAL BUILDING**.

GRETCHEN WAS THERE.

FOR HOURS I WANDERED IN A GREAT **CIRCLE** THROUGH THE DENSE JUNGLE, **CAREFREE** AND STRONG AS I MOVED THROUGH IMPASSABLE FOLIAGE, AS I CLIMBED OVER THE HIGH **FANTASTICAL ROOTS** OF THE RAIN TREES, AS I STOOD STILL HERE AND THERE TO LISTEN TO THE DEEP **TANGLED CHORUS** OF THE SAVAGE NIGHT.



I WOULD KEEP MY **PROMISE**.



I LEFT. I WALKED SLOWLY PAST THE CHAPEL. THROUGH THE GENTLE DOWNPOUR, I HEARD HER PRAYING, HEARD HER LOW RAPID WHISPER.

I WANTED TO GO. IT SEEMED IN THE DEPTHS OF MY BRUISED SOUL I WANTED NOTHING MORE. BUT SOMETHING HELD ME -- I HAD SMELLED THE SHARP UNMISTAKABLE SCENT OF FRESH BLOOD.

IT CAME FROM THE CHAPEL, AND IT WAS NOT THE BLOOD PUMPING WITHIN HER --

-- IT WAS BLOOD THAT WAS FLOWING FREE FROM NEW WOUNDS.

DELIVER ME FROM EVIL, O LORD, TAKE ME TO YOU, SACRED HEART OF JESUS, GATHER ME INTO YOUR ARMS...

AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD, AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH...

STIGMATA!

A MIRACLE!

GOODBYE, GRETCHEN.

MIAMI. THE AIR SEEMED **SWEETER** EVEN THAN IN THE ISLANDS -- SWEEPING GENTLY OVER THE INEVITABLE CROWDS OF OCEAN DRIVE.

HURRYING THROUGH THE FANCY ART DECO LOBBY OF THE **PARK CENTRAL**, AND TO THE ROOMS I KEPT THERE, I STRIPPED OFF THE **JUNGLE-WORN CLOTHES**, AND FOUND SOME OF MY OWN.

THEN I RANG THE DESK AND DISCOVERED THAT **DAVID** HAD BEEN IN THE HOTEL SINCE **YESTERDAY** AND WAS NOW WAITING FOR ME ON THE PORCH OF **BAILEY'S RESTAURANT** DOWN THE STREET.

AH, YOU DEVIL. THANK GOD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.

YOU REALLY THINK THAT'S APPROPRIATE?

SO WHAT IN THE HELL ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

WELL, IT WAS **MAYHEM**. HE TRIED TO **ATTACK** ME, AND I HAD NO **CHOICE** BUT TO USE THE GUN. HE GOT AWAY BECAUSE I COULDN'T HOLD THE **BLOODY GUN STEADY**.

AFTER THAT, IT WAS **REALLY** A MATTER OF CALLING THE **MOTHERHOUSE**, AND HAVING THEM **BAIL** ME OUT.

HOW DID IT GO WITH YOU?

I DON'T WANT TO TALK HERE. COME UP TO MY ROOMS AT THE HOTEL.

WE HAD ONLY **JUST ENTERED** MY ROOMS AT THE PARK CENTRAL WHEN HE SAID WHAT I HAD BEEN WAITING **SO LONG** TO HEAR:

BRING ME **INTO IT**, LESTAT.

YOU MEAN THIS, DAVID?

DAVID, SOMETHING IS **WRONG**. I **KNOW** IT IS.

WHAT'S **HAPPENED** TO MAKE YOU WANT IT? I MUST UNDERSTAND.

YOU WASTE TIME, LESTAT.

WHY? I THOUGHT, WHY HAD HE COME TO THIS **DECISION**? WHAT HAD I DONE TO HIM WITH THIS MAD **ESCAPE**?

OH, BUT THIS IS THE VERY LAST TIME THAT TIME REALLY MATTERS.

DAVID, AT LAST!

IN A TORRENT THE **IMAGES** CAME. WHERE IS THE **TIGER**? OH, DEAR GOD, LESTAT, YOU ARE THE **TIGER**! AND IN A FLASH I SAW **ANOTHER** MAN. A THIN, **EMACIATED** CREATURE WITH WHITE HAIR AND **CUNNING** EYES.

IT WAS JAMES.

HOW **UNLIKE** HIMSELF HE LOOKED. WHAT IN GOD'S NAME WAS **GOING ON** IN HIS MIND? EVERYTHING WAS **WRONG** ABOUT THIS MOMENT, THIS **DECISION**...

...AND YET, IT WAS **DAVID**.

THIS MAN WAS **JAMES**!



I GRABBED THE TELEPHONE, STAMMERED THE ROOM NUMBER AND THAT THERE WAS AN **EMERGENCY**. A MAN WAS HURT! A MAN WAS DYING! THEY MUST GET AN AMBULANCE AT **ONCE!**



THEN I LEFT. I HURRIED UP THE STREET, SPRINTING PAST MORTALS WHO COULD SCARCELY SEE ME, AND FOUND **ANOTHER PHONE.**



DAVID,
DO YOU
KNOW WHAT I'VE
DONE?

I THINK
SO. I SAW THE
AMBULANCE AT
THE HOTEL.





DAVID,
I COULDN'T HAVE
BEATEN HIM IF IT HADN'T
BEEN FOR YOU. BUT, OF
COURSE, NOW I KNOW
I'VE LOST YOU
FOREVER.

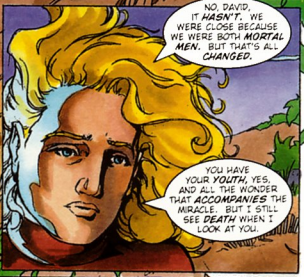
I KNOW
YOU'LL NEVER
TAKE THE DARK
GIFT FROM ME
NOW.

BUT WHY
SAY YOU'VE LOST
ME, LESTAT? WHY
MUST I DIE TO
LOVE YOU?

WHY THAT
PRICE, ESPECIALLY
NOW WHEN I AM ALIVE
AS NEVER BEFORE? LORD
GOD, SURELY YOU GRASP THE
MAGNITUDE OF WHAT'S TAKEN
PLACE. I'VE BEEN
REBORN!



PLEASE DON'T
LEAVE ME NOW, MY
FRIEND. ALL THIS HAS
BROUGHT US SO
CLOSE.



NO, DAVID,
IT HASN'T. WE
WERE CLOSE BECAUSE
WE WERE BOTH MORTAL
MEN. BUT THAT'S ALL
CHANGED.

YOU HAVE
YOUR YOUTH, YES,
AND ALL THE WONDER
THAT ACCOMPANIES THE
MIRACLE. BUT I STILL
SEE DEATH WHEN I
LOOK AT YOU.



I'LL SEE
YOU SOON. I'LL
COME. BUT GIVE
ME TIME.

CALL MY MAN
IN PARIS. DON'T RELY
UPON THE TALAMASCA.
SURELY YOU DON'T MEAN
TO GIVE THEM THIS
LIFE, TOO?



I HURRIED AWAY. THE
NIGHT WAS WAITING
FOR ME, AS ALWAYS.
AND MY THIRST COULD
WAIT NO LONGER.



YES, BLOOD AGAIN WHEN THERE
IS NOTHING ELSE. GIVE ME MY
OLD FRIEND, DEATH, AND THE
BLOOD THAT RUSHES WITH IT.

THE VAMPIRE LESTAT
IS HERE, AND HE
THIRSTS, AND TONIGHT
OF ALL NIGHTS, HE
WILL NOT BE DENIED.

DID YOU THINK THE
TALE WAS *FINISHED*?

WELL, IT *SHOULD* HAVE
ENDED. BUT IT DIDN'T.

BARBADOS. HE WAS STILL
THERE WHEN I CAUGHT UP WITH
HIM, IN A HOTEL BY THE SEA.

LESTAT!
THANK GOD
YOU'VE
COME.

YOU
THINK
SO?

I'VE
MISSED
YOU.

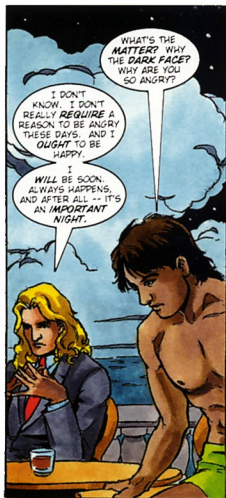
REALLY?
SURELY YOU
HAVEN'T BEEN LIVING
AS A *RECLUSE*
HERE?

NO, I'VE
SEEN TOO MUCH
OF OTHERS, I THINK. MY
FRIEND *AARON* HAS COME
AND GONE SEVERAL TIMES.
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE
TALAMASCA HAVE
BEEN HERE.

I
CAN'T BEAR TO BE
AROUND THEM, LESTAT.
I CAN'T BEAR TO BE AT
TALBOT MANOR AMONG THE
SERVANTS, PRETENDING TO
BE A *COUSIN* OF MY
OLD SELF.

THERE'S
SOMETHING REALLY
APPALLING ABOUT WHAT'S
HAPPENED. SOMETIMES I
CAN'T BEAR TO LOOK
IN THE MIRROR.

BUT I'M
SURE THAT THIS
IS A *TEMPORARY* PER-
IOD, ONE OF ADJUSTMENT.
THESE SHOCKS WILL
EVENTUALLY
PASS.



I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T REALLY **REQUIRE** A REASON TO BE ANGRY THESE DAYS. AND I **OUGHT** TO BE HAPPY.

I **WILL** BE SOON. ALWAYS HAPPENS, AND AFTER ALL -- IT'S AN **IMPORTANT** NIGHT.

WHAT'S THE **MATTER**? WHY THE **DARK FACE**? WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY?



WHAT DO YOU **MEAN**?



YOU'VE NEVER **UNDERSTOOD** ME, DAVID. YOU LIVE WITH **ILLUSIONS** ABOUT ME, WHICH MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO **VISIT** WITH ME, TO **SPEAK** WITH ME, EVEN TO **SHELTER** ME AND **HELP** ME.

YOU COULDN'T **DO** THAT IF YOU REALLY **KNEW** WHAT I WAS. I TRIED TO **TELL** YOU. WHEN I **SPOKE** OF MY **DREAMS** --



THAT'S YOUR **VANITY** TALKING. YOU **LOVE** TO IMAGINE THAT YOU'RE WORSE THAN YOU **ARE**.

AND **WHAT** DREAMS? I DON'T REMEMBER YOUR **SPEAKING** TO ME OF **DREAMS**.

YOU **DON'T**? THINK BACK, DAVID. MY DREAM OF THE **TIGER**. I WAS **AFRAID** FOR YOU.

AND NOW THE **MENACE** OF THE DREAM WILL BE **FULFILLED**.



I'M GOING TO **DO IT** TO YOU, DAVID. I'M GOING TO **BRING** YOU TO ME.



WHAT?



WHY ARE YOU SAYING THIS? YOU COULDN'T DO THIS TO ME!

OF COURSE I COULD. AND I SHALL. NOW.

ALL ALONG I'VE TOLD YOU I WAS EVIL. I'VE TOLD YOU I'M THE VERY DEVIL. THE DEVIL IN YOUR FAULT, THE DEVIL OF YOUR VISIONS -- THE TIGER IN MY DREAM!



NO, THAT'S NOT TRUE! YOU'RE NOT THE DEVIL, AND YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT. DON'T DO THIS TO ME! I FORBID IT!

YOU ARE IN YOUR OWN HEART AS HUMAN AS I AM. AND YOU WILL NOT DO THIS!



THE HELL I WON'T.

YOU CAN'T REPAY ME IN THIS FASHION!



OH, BUT THIS IS HOW THE DEVIL REPAYS HIS HELPERS!



AH, DAVID, MY BELOVED DAVID. NEVER HAD I DESCENDED INTO A SOUL I KNEW SO WELL.

HOW THICK AND WONDROUS THE IMAGES THAT ENVELOPED ME! IT WAS ALL THERE -- THE SUMMER RAINS WASHING ENDLESSLY THROUGH THE JUNGLES, THE SKY FLASHING WITH LIGHTNING --

-- AND HIS HEART POUNDING BENEATH IT WILL REBELLION, WITH RECRIMINATION, YOU BETRAY ME, YOU BETRAY ME, YOU TAKE ME AGAINST MY WILL....

...AND THE DEEP RICH SALTY HEAT OF THE BLOOD ITSELF.

LESTAT,
MY FRIEND, DON'T
TAKE MY LIFE. DON'T
LET ME DIE. I LOVE
YOU.

YES --
AND I LOVE
YOU.

HERE IT COMES,
MY BELOVED.

FOR YOU, DAVID.
DRINK DEEP.
BE STRONG.

IT COULD NOT KILL ME NOW, NO
MATTER HOW LONG IT LASTED.
I *KNEW* IT, AND MEMORIES OF
THOSE *BYGONE* TIMES WHEN
I HAD DONE IT IN FEAR SEEMED
CLUMSY AND FOOLISH --

A *DIZZINESS* CAME OVER
ME, AND THE HEAT AND THE
PAIN GREW SO *STRONG*
THAT I LAY DOWN SLOWLY
WITH HIM IN MY ARMS.

-- FADING EVEN AS
I *RECOLLECTED*
THEM, AND LEAVING
ME *ALONE* WITH HIM.

THE BEATING
OF MY *OWN*
HEART GREW
PERILOUSLY
SLOW.

WHEN I AGAIN OPENED MY EYES, I COULD HEAR THE **BLOOD** IN HIS VOICE.

YOU'RE HURT. **ARE** YOU? ARE YOU HURT?

FOR THE LOVE OF **GOD** -- HOW CAN YOU **CARE** IF I'M HURT?

I HAD GIVEN HIM **FAR MORE BLOOD** THAN I HAD EVER GIVEN THE OTHERS I'D MADE. IT WAS **FINISHED**. I'D DONE IT **RIGHT**. HE'D BE SO VERY **STRONG!** LORD **GOD**, HE'D BE STRONGER THAN THE **OLD ONES**.

WHY DID YOU **DO** IT?

I DON'T KNOW. I DID IT BECAUSE I **WANTED** TO DO IT, BECAUSE I **WANTED** TO. BECAUSE I **WANTED** TO SEE WHAT WOULD **HAPPEN** IF I DID IT...AND BECAUSE I COULDN'T **NOT** DO IT.

AND NOW IT'S DONE.

YOU MISERABLE, LYING **BASTARD**. YOU DID IT FROM **CRUELTY** AND **MEANNESS!** YOU DID IT BECAUSE YOUR LITTLE **EXPERIMENT** WITH THE BODY THIEF WENT **WRONG!**

AND OUT OF IT CAME THIS **MIRACLE** TO ME, THIS **YOUTH**, AND IT **INFURIATED** YOU THAT SUCH A THING COULD HAPPEN -- THAT I SHOULD PROFIT WHEN YOU HAD **SUFFERED** SO!

WHY, LESTAT?

AND HIS VOICE WAS TORN AND SAD, AND IT BROKE MY HEART.

OVERCOME WITH **SHAME**, OVERCOME WITH **MISERY**, I LOWERED MY HEAD AND PRESSED MY EYES CLOSED AGAIN.

AND **NOTHING**, NOT ALL HIS PLEAS OR CURSES OR **CRIES** AGAINST ME, OR HIS FINAL QUIET **DEPARTURE**, COULD MAKE ME LOOK UP AGAIN.

WELL BEFORE MORNING I
WENT TO SEARCH FOR HIM.

I SEARCHED ALL ABOUT THE **HOTEL**
FOR HIM, BUT I COULDN'T FIND HIM.
I SEARCHED THE **BEACH**, AND THEN
THE **WOODLANDS** IN ONE DIRECTION
AND ANOTHER, BUT WITH **NO LUCK**.

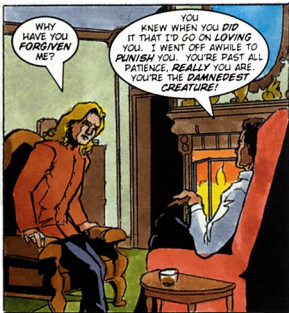
AND THE NEXT
NIGHT I DID
NOT FIND HIM.
NOR THE NIGHT
AFTER **THAT**.

AT LAST, BRUISED IN MIND AND
SOUL, AND TELLING MYSELF
I **DESERVED** NOTHING BUT
MISERY, I WENT **HOME**.





THE CARNIVAL STARTS TOMORROW IN RIO. I THOUGHT WE MIGHT GO.



WHY HAVE YOU FORGIVEN ME?

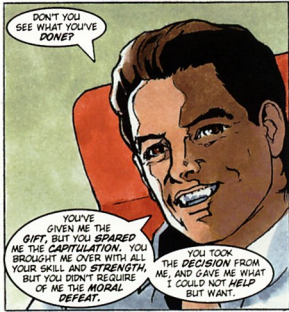
YOU KNEW WHEN YOU DID IT THAT I'D GO ON LOVING YOU. I WENT OFF AWHILE TO PUNISH YOU. YOU'RE PAST ALL PATIENCE, REALLY YOU ARE. YOU'RE THE DAMNEDEST CREATURE!



SO YOU RAN OFF. YOU WANTED TO SHOW ME YOU COULD GET ALONG WITHOUT ME.

YOU COULD HUNT FOR YOURSELF. YOU DIDN'T NEED ME. BUT HERE YOU ARE!

HOW CAN YOU NOT HATE ME?



DON'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE?

YOU'VE GIVEN ME THE GIFT, BUT YOU SPARED ME THE CAPITULATION. YOU BROUGHT ME OVER WITH ALL YOUR SKILL AND STRENGTH, BUT YOU DIDN'T REQUIRE OF ME THE MORAL DEFEAT.

YOU TOOK THE DECISION FROM ME, AND GAVE ME WHAT I COULD NOT HELP BUT WANT.



YOU'RE MUCH SMARTER THAN I AM.



WELL, OF COURSE. WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?



WHAT IS IT? ARE YOU GRIEVING FOR ME?

PERHAPS, A LITTLE. BUT I THINK I'M TRYING TO FIX THIS MOMENT IN MY MIND.



I WANT TO REMEMBER IT **ALWAYS**. I WANT TO REMEMBER THE WAY YOU ARE **NOW**, HERE WITH ME -- BEFORE THINGS START TO GO **WRONG**.

YOU'RE HEADED FOR **GREAT TROUBLE**. JUST WAIT AND **SEE**.



OH, HOW **EXCITING!** NOW COME. WE MUST ALL GO TO **RIO**. WE MUST NOT MISS **ANYTHING** OF THE **CARNIVAL**.

THOUGH OF COURSE WE CAN GO AGAIN...AND AGAIN...AND AGAIN... BUT PLEASE, COME **NOW**.

I WANTED TO **SAY** SOMETHING. AND WOULD THAT IT WERE FULL OF **POETRY**, AND DEEP **MEANING**, AND WOULD RANSOM MY GREED AND MY EVIL, AND MY LUSTY LITTLE **HEART**. FOR I WAS GOING TO **RIO**, WASN'T I, WITH DAVID, AND WITH LOUIS... AND A **NEW ERA** WAS BEGINNING.

YES, **SAY** SOMETHING -- FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN AND THE LOVE OF CLAUDIA -- TO **DARKEN** IT AND SHOW IT FOR WHAT IT **IS!** TO LANCE IT AND SHOW THE **HORROR** AT THE CORE!

BUT I COULD NOT.

WHAT MORE **IS** THERE TO SAY, REALLY?



THE TALE IS TOLD.