



I AM!

ONLY OF THAT AM I COMPLETELY CERTAIN!

OF ALL ELSE... THE WHO, THE WHAT, THE WHY... I CANNOT I DARE NOT SAY!

I REMEMBER **FIRST** THE DARKNESS. THEN, THE **WARMTH**. AND FINALLY, **AWARENESS...**

...BLIND, BLACK AWARENESS. AND I KNEW I **WAS...**! THAT **SOMEHOW** I HAD COME INTO BEING...



THEN, I **SAW...** I SAW HIM WHO BROUGHT **ABOUT** MY BEING!



I SAW HIM THROUGH RUDE, EVER-STARING **EYES** IN MY NAKED UN-FORMED FACE! I SAW HIM PER-FORMING HIS MIRACLES, WORKING HIS MAGIC! I **HEARD** HIS FAINT **MUTTERINGS!**



HE SPOKE TO **HIMSELF** OF **LIFE...** CREATING LIFE! **ARTIFICIALLY!**

THEN HE'D **LOOK** AT ME **APPROVINGLY** AND I'D FEEL **NAKED** AND **ASHAMED!**



ONE DAY HE GATHERED HIS **INSTRUMENTS** ABOUT ME... ALL THE DELICATE MACHINERIES OF METAL AND GLASS.



HE OPENED **VALVES**, SET MYSTERIOUS **LIQUIDS** TO BUBBLING, THREW **SWITCHES...** ALL IN AN EFFORT TO ENDOW ME WITH **LIFE!**

# THE MUCK MONSTER

BUT I **RESENTED** HIM. I **RESENTED** HIS **PRESUMPTION** UPON A **HIGHER** POWER. I **RESISTED** HIS **ATTEMPTS** ON MY **BEING!**

I DID NOT **WANT** LIFE! SO I DID NOT **RECEIVE** IT!



AND MY CREATOR **RAGED.**

HE TURNED **OFF** HIS MACHINES AND SCREAMED AT MY LIFELESS FORM. HE **CURSED** ME... **FOULLY, THOROUGHLY!** HE **BLAMED ME** FOR HIS FAILURE!

BUT I DID NOT **WANT** HIS GIFT OF CREATION. I **REJECTED** IT. I HAD NO **PLACE** IN THE WORLD OF **MEN.**



I KNEW NOT **WHAT** I **WAS.** I ONLY KNEW THAT I **SHOULD NOT BE.**



I WANTED TO **EXPLAIN!** BUT OF COURSE, I **COULDN'T!** AND WHEN, AT LENGTH, HIS RAGE **MOUNTED** AND HE LUNGED AT ME WITH THE **KNIFE**, I BECAME **ANGRY...!**

**ANGRY** NOT BECAUSE HE WOULD **DESTROY** WHAT HE HAD **CREATED**, BUT BECAUSE HE DIDN'T **UNDERSTAND!**



I WAS AN **AWARE** BEING, NOT JUST AN **INANIMATE THING!**

I THOUGHT... I REASONED... I **WAS!**



AND EVEN AS HE CARRIED MY **BODY** AND DROPPED IT, **PIECE BY PIECE** INTO THE **ACID**, I LONGED TO TELL HIM MY **THOUGHTS...** TO **EXPLAIN...** TO MAKE HIM **AWARE** OF HIS **FOLLY.**

I WANTED HIM TO **UNDERSTAND!**



BUT, ALL THAT HE HAD **LABORED** OVER FOR SO MANY MONTHS **DISSOLVED** INTO A THICK, FOUL-SMELLING, BLACK **SLUDGE...**



... WHICH HE SENT SLIDING DOWN A **GUTTER...**



... THROUGH A **GRATE...**

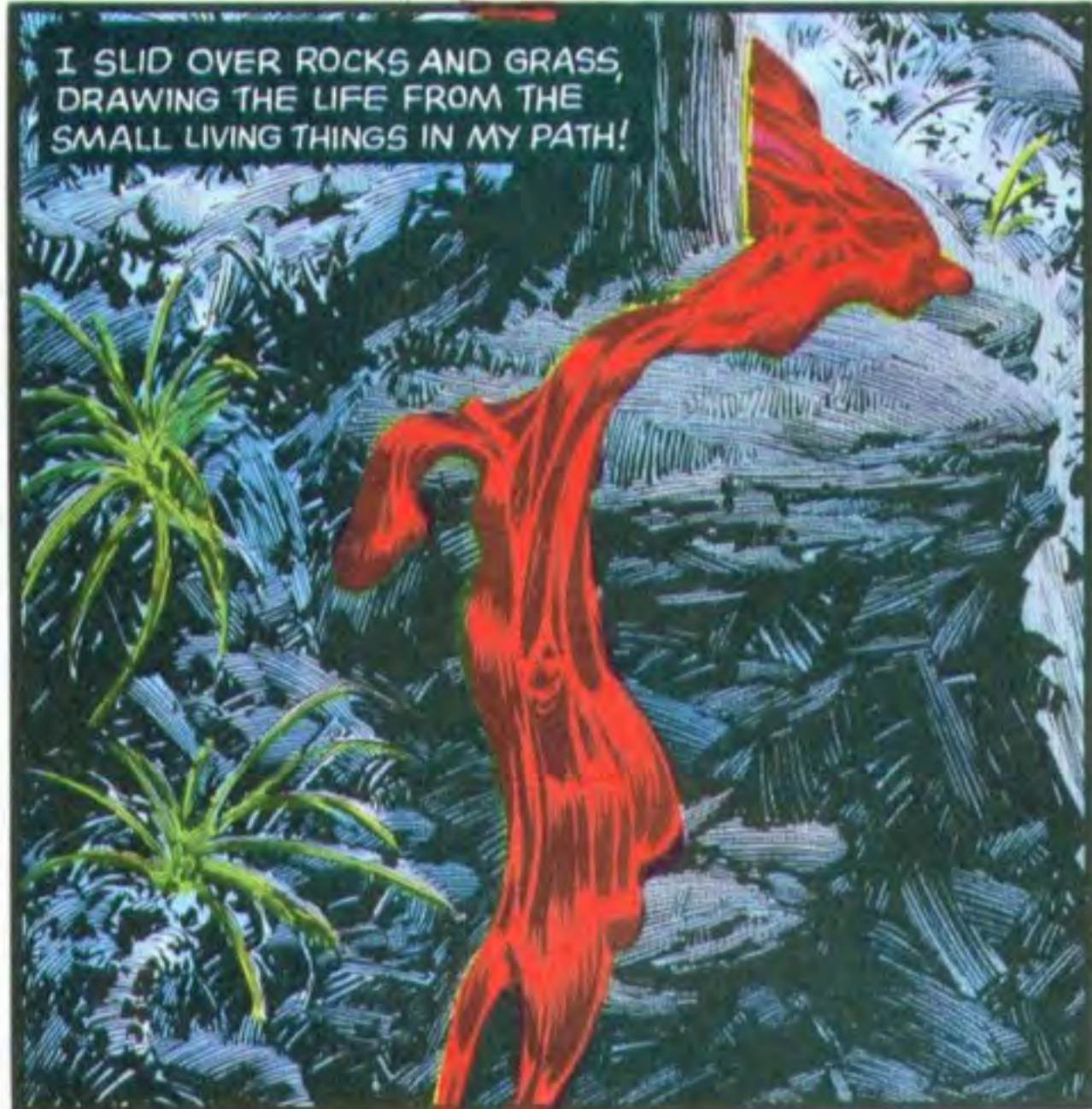


... AND INTO **OBLIVION!**



FOR A TIME I SENSED  
*DARKNESS AND PEACE.*

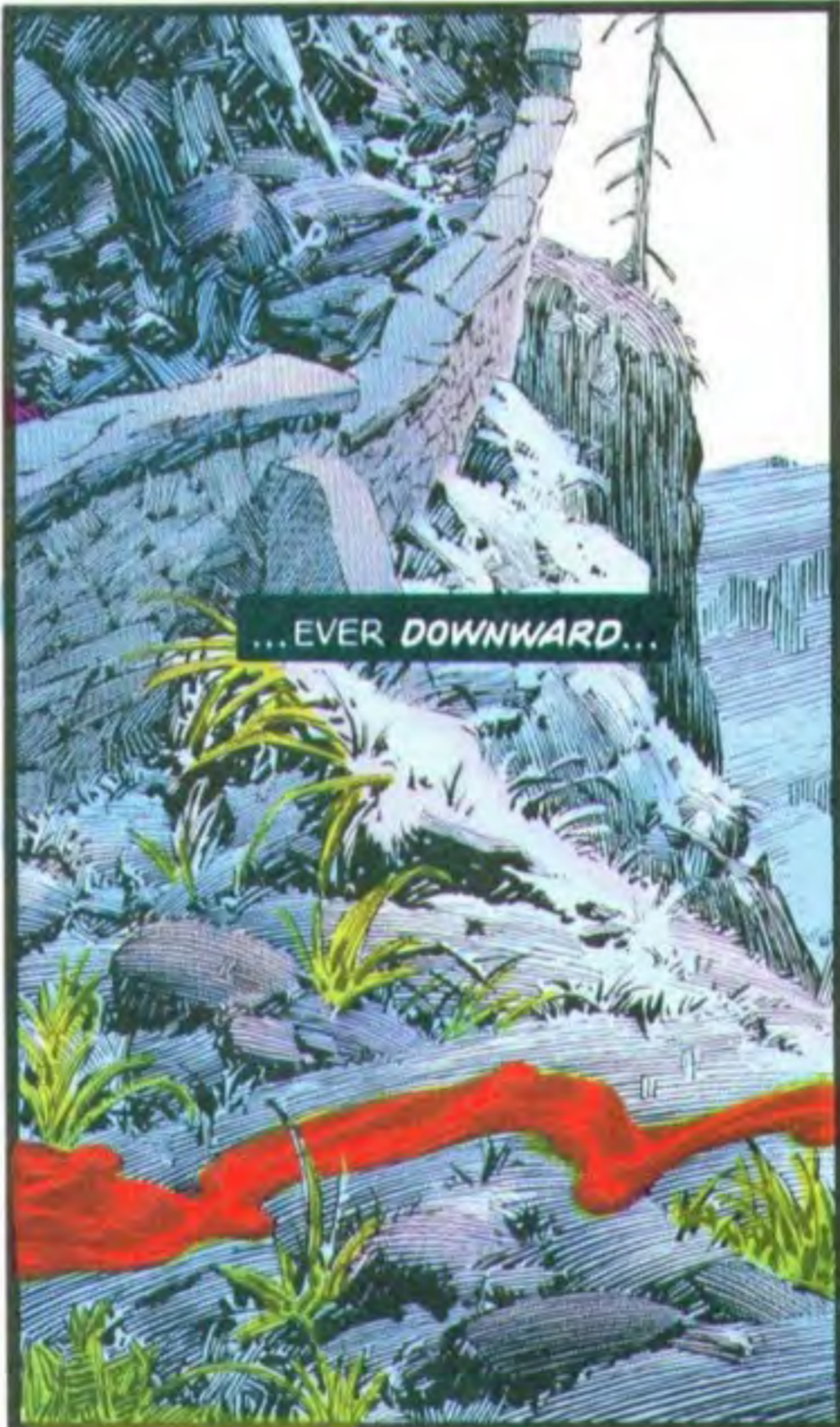
THEN, I FLOWED  
THROUGH A *CRACK* IN THE STONE *CESS-  
POOL* AND ONTO DAMP, MOSSY *EARTH.*



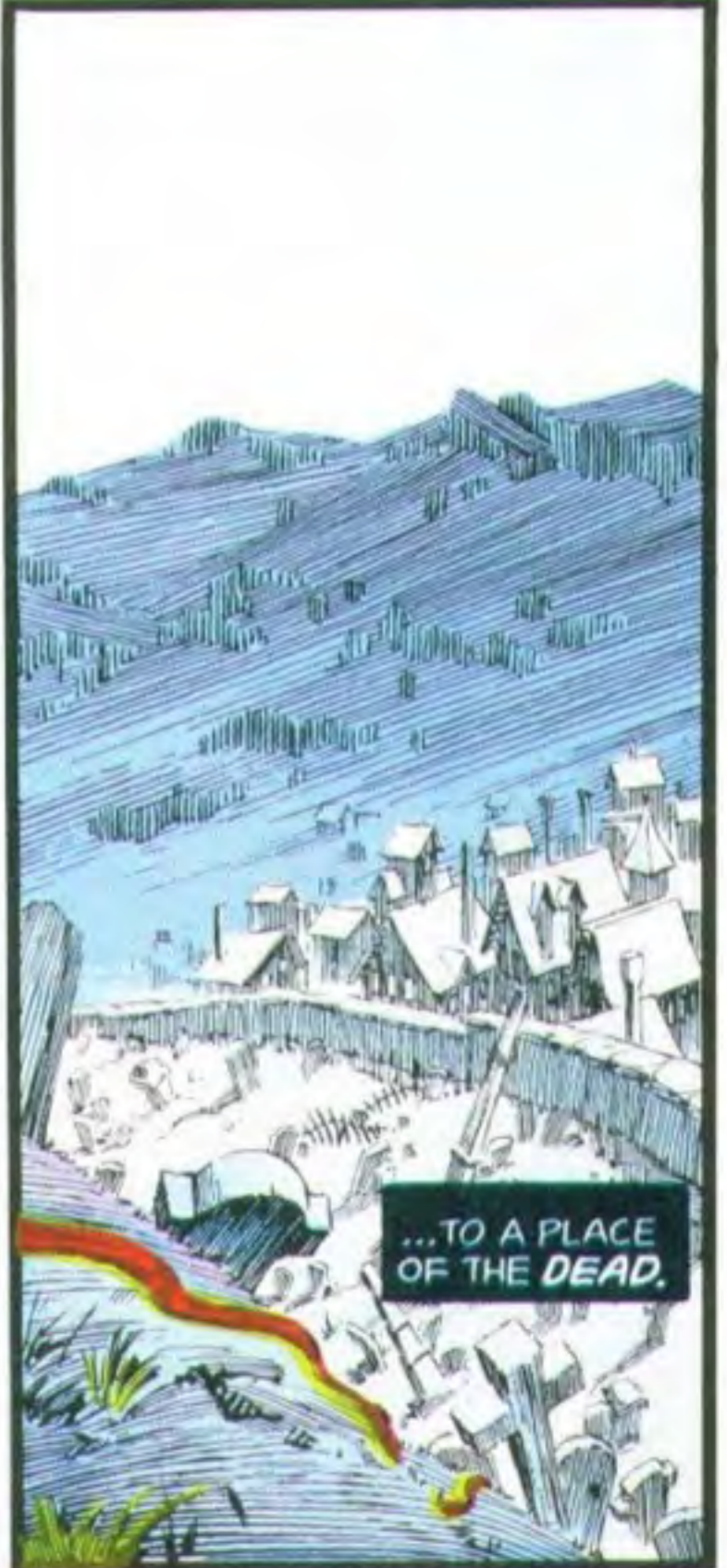
I SLID OVER ROCKS AND GRASS,  
DRAWING THE LIFE FROM THE  
SMALL LIVING THINGS IN MY PATH!



I FLOWED ONWARD...THROUGH THE  
WOODS AND OVER A *RETAINING WALL*...



...EVER *DOWNWARD*...

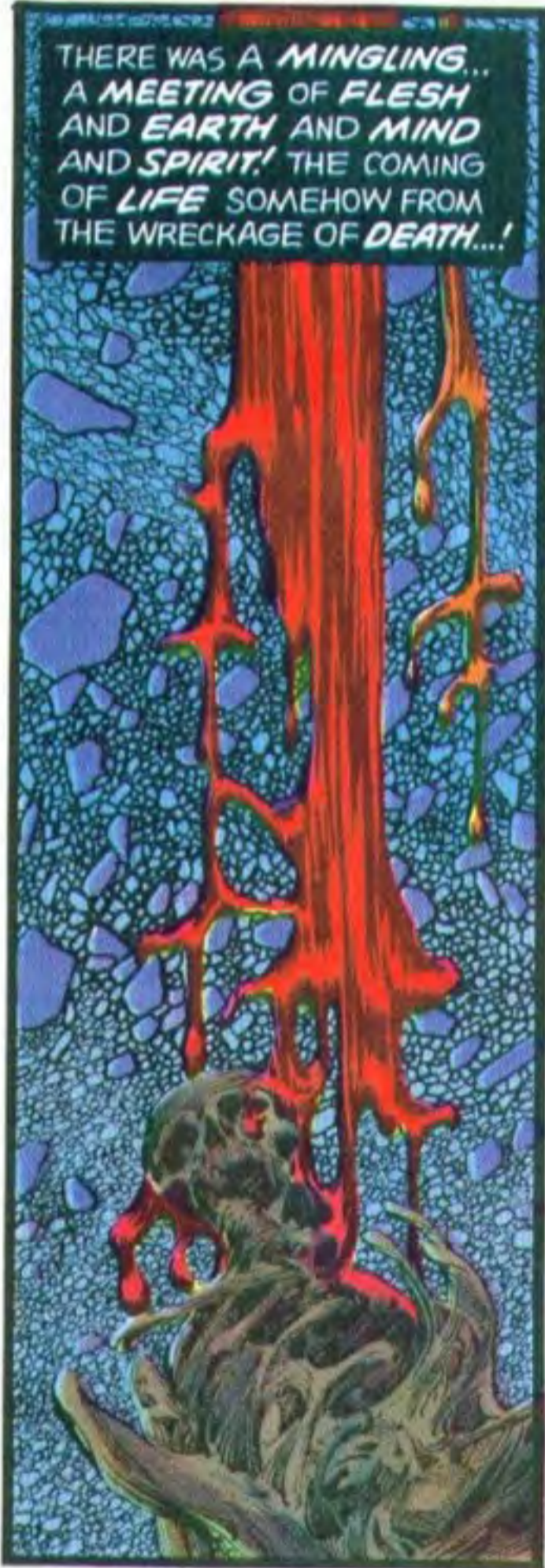


...TO A PLACE  
OF THE *DEAD.*

SEEPING...DOWN THROUGH EARTH AND STONE PAST GRAVE-CRAWLING HORRORS I FOUND THOSE WHO HAD **CEASED** LIVING.



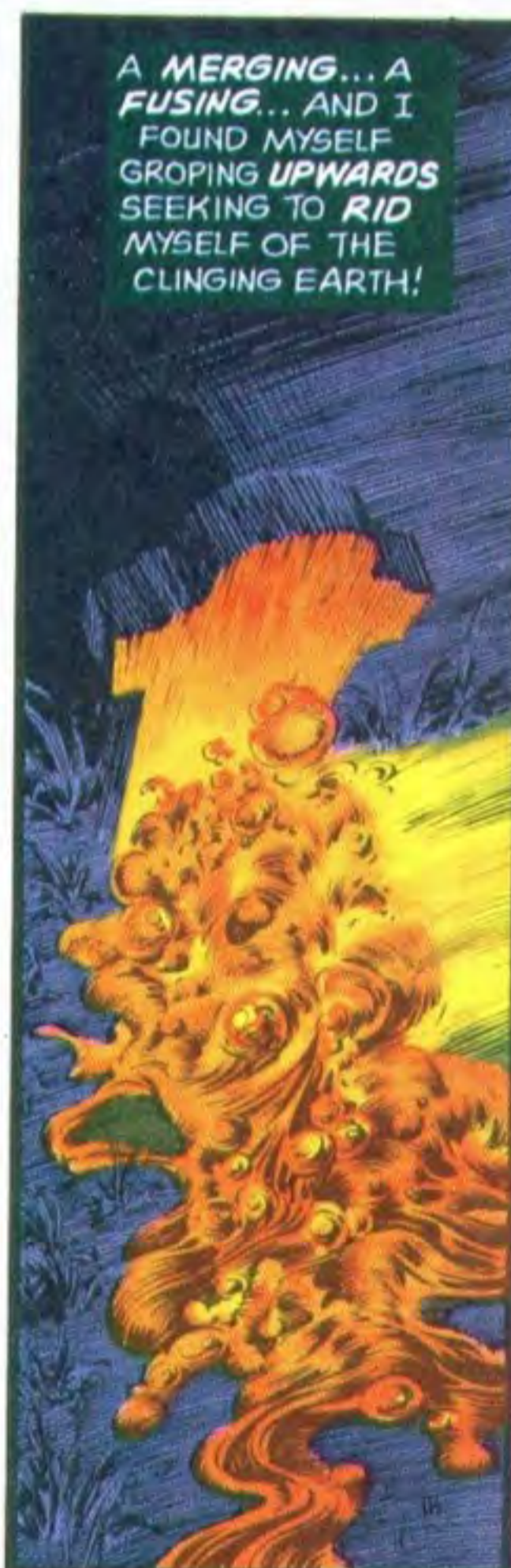
THERE WAS A **MINGLING**... A **MEETING** OF **FLESH** AND **EARTH** AND **MIND** AND **SPRIT!** THE COMING OF **LIFE** SOMEHOW FROM THE WRECKAGE OF **DEATH**...!



AND I SUDDENLY KNEW THAT... I **LIVED!**



A **MERGING**... A **FUSING**... AND I FOUND MYSELF GROPING **UPWARDS** SEEKING TO **RID** MYSELF OF THE CLINGING **EARTH!**



THE GROUND **HEAVED**, THEN SETTLED, THEN **HEAVED** AGAIN... AND GRUDGINGLY SET ME **FREE**...!



SWAYING UNCERTAINLY ON UNSTEADY **LEGS** I LUMBERED OFF TO FIND MY **CREATOR**...!

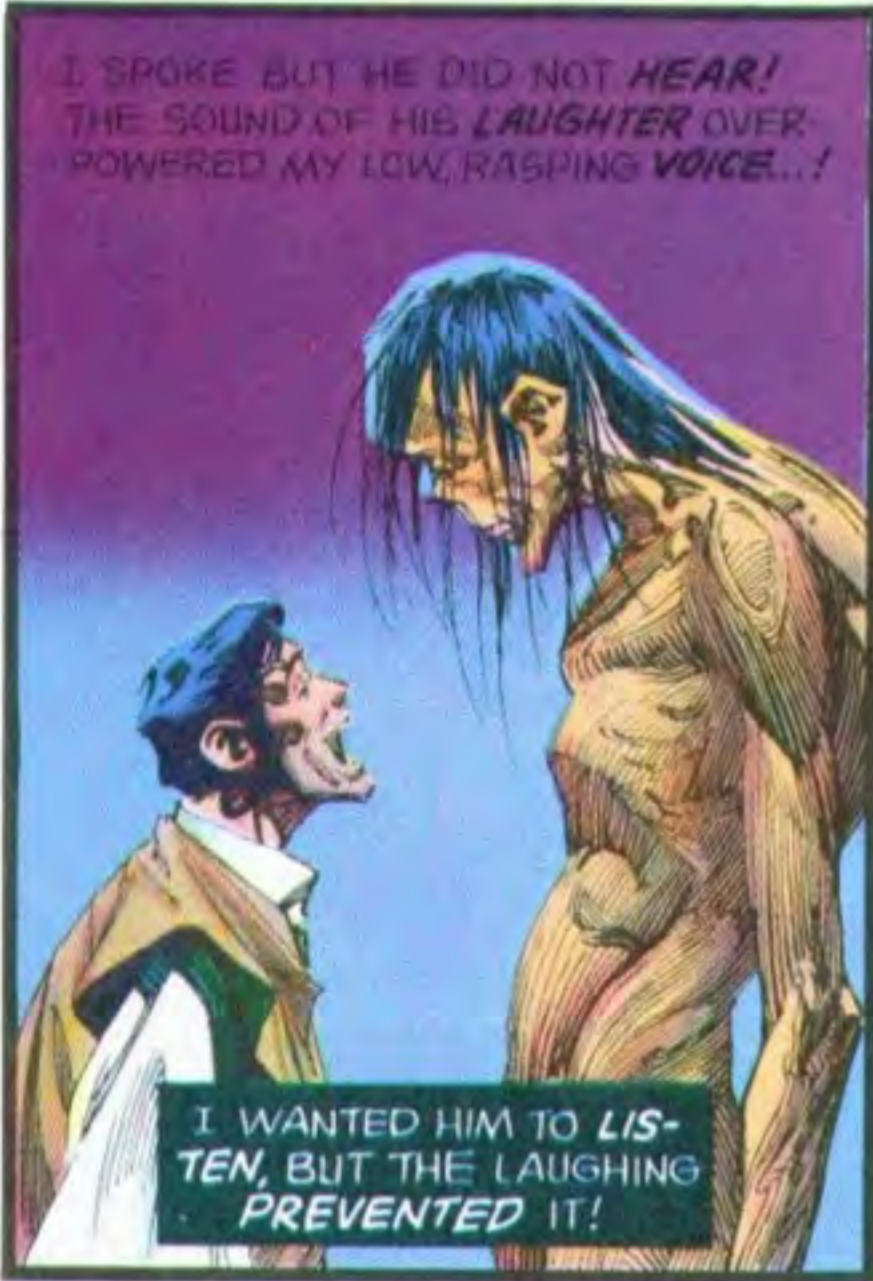




HE SCREAMED WHEN HE SAW ME!

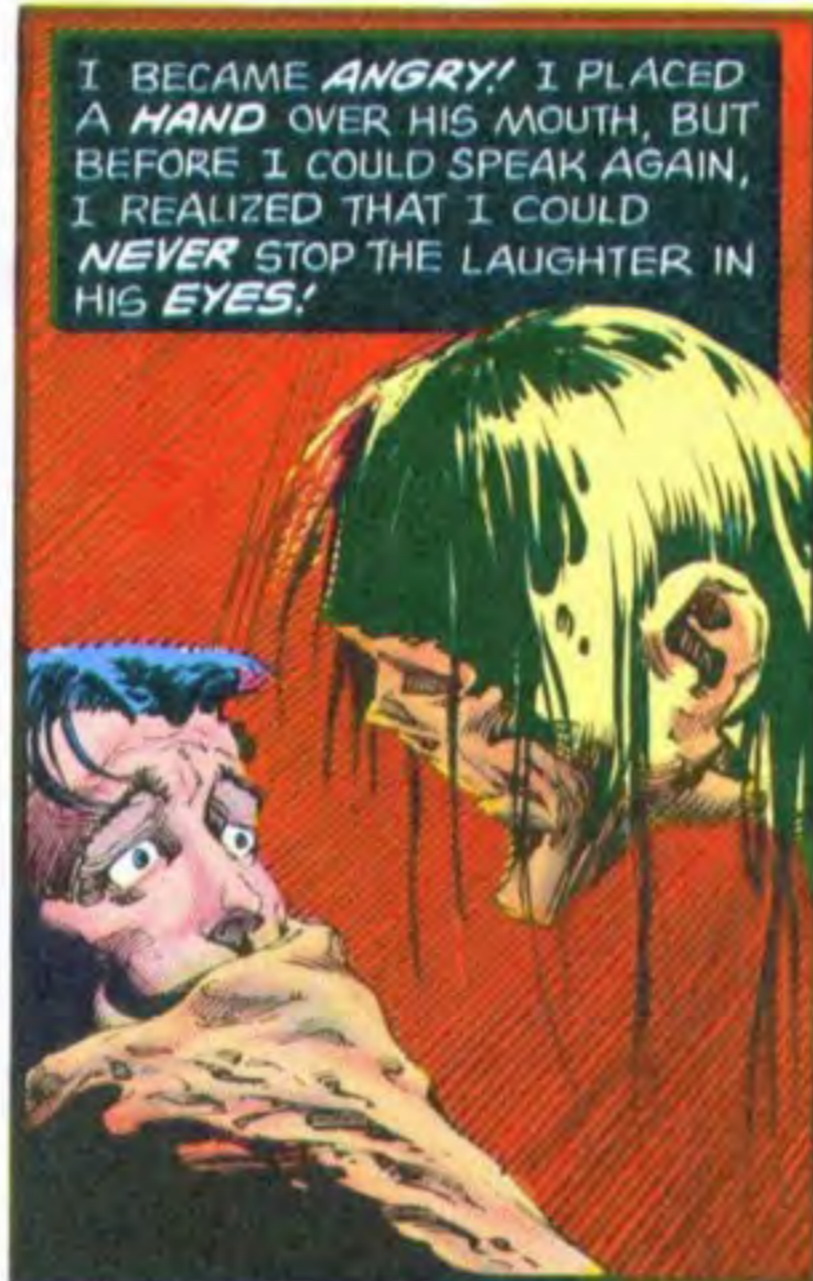
I WAS AWARE OF HIS FEAR AND I WANTED ONLY TO COMFORT HIM... TO SHOW HIM THE LESSON IN MY BEING!

I WANTED TO SHOW HIM HIS MISTAKE IN BRINGING ME ABOUT.

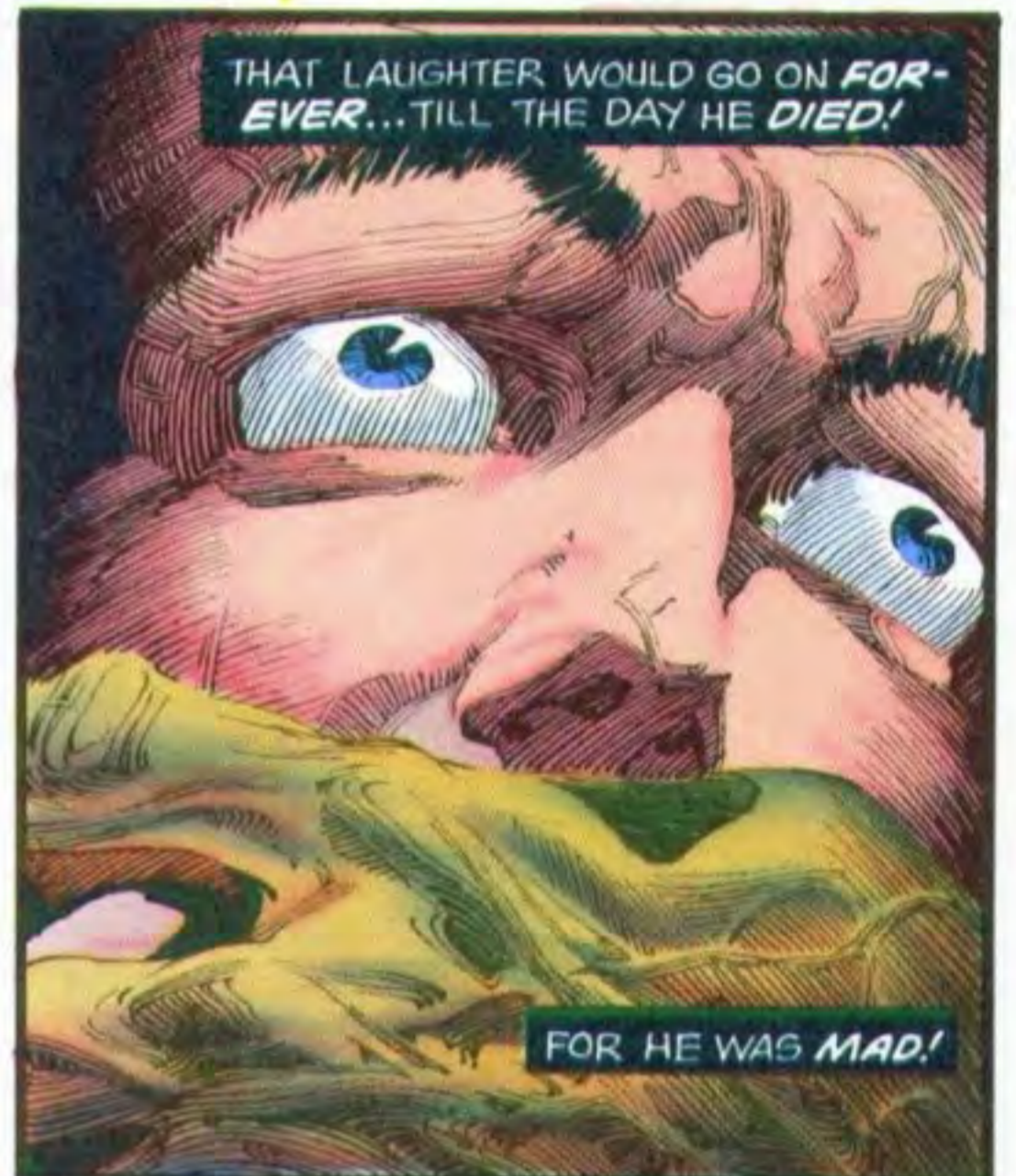


I SPOKE BUT HE DID NOT HEAR! THE SOUND OF HIS LAUGHTER OVERPOWERED MY LOW, RASPING VOICE...!

I WANTED HIM TO LISTEN, BUT THE LAUGHING PREVENTED IT!



I BECAME ANGRY! I PLACED A HAND OVER HIS MOUTH, BUT BEFORE I COULD SPEAK AGAIN, I REALIZED THAT I COULD NEVER STOP THE LAUGHTER IN HIS EYES!



THAT LAUGHTER WOULD GO ON FOREVER... TILL THE DAY HE DIED!

FOR HE WAS MAD!



I RELEASED MY HOLD AND I HEARD THE LAUGHTER AGAIN. HE WAS INSANE... HIS MIND GONE!



BUT WHAT OF ME?



WAS I ANY LESS MAD? I... WHOSE MERE APPEARANCE DROVE A MAN OUT OF HIS MIND...?

WAS I MAD, TOO? THE THOUGHT WAS FUNNY.

... IRONIC! I WOULD HAVE LAUGHED AT IT IF THE URGE TO CRY WERE NOT SO STRONG...!

NO, I WAS NOT... AM NOT MAD!



I JUST... AM...!

THE BREEZE IS COOL, AND THE FAINT GLIMMER OF EARLY LIGHT BRIGHTENS A FINE, MISTY VALLEY THAT SEEMS TO GO ON *FOREVER*.

MY THOUGHTS ARE LOST IN THE VASTNESS THAT SURROUNDS ME...

...FOREVER...

DOES THAT WHICH *IS* GO ON FOREVER? *PERHAPS!*

YET PERHAPS IT JUST *PASSES ON*... PERHAPS IT JUST *CEASES* TO EXIST!

THE SUN IS *RISING* NOW.

THE DAY IS *BORN* AND THE EARTH *CELEBRATES*.

AND I... I AM *PART* OF THE *CELEBRATION*...!

YES... I *BELONG* AND I *CELEBRATE*... EVEN AS THE *ROCKS* AND THE *TREES* ON THIS MOUNTAINTOP CELEBRATE...!

I *BELONG* HERE... I AM *ACCEPTED*!

I SHALL *STAY* HERE TO CELEBRATE THE DAY... TO *CELEBRATE* THAT WHICH *IS*!

FOR *I*, TOO, HAVE FOUND A *HOME*... A *PURPOSE*...

...FOREVER...!