

THE TERRIBLE OLD MAN!

THERE AREN'T MANY WRITERS OF WEIRD TALES WHOSE STORIES CAN RANK WITH THOSE OF THE OLD MASTER, EDGAR ALLAN POE!

HERE'S A LITTLE STORY OF H.R.L.'S, ONE HE CALLED...

BUT, H.P. LOVECRAFT... NOW'D THERE'D BE A WRITER AFTER MY OWN HEART... IF OL' DIGGER HAD ONE!

HE DWELLS ALL ALONE IN A VERY ANCIENT HOUSE BY THE SEA, DOES THE TERRIBLE OLD MAN... AND THE STORY GOES THAT HE IS BOTH EXCEEDINGLY RICH AND EXCEEDINGLY FEEBLE...



WE GO IN NOW, ANGELO... NO?

NOT FOR A FEW MORE MINUTES, MANUEL... BUT TAKE IT EASY!

THE OLD MAN ISN'T LIKELY TO BE GOING ANYWHERE AT MIDNIGHT!

...AND HIS BEING BOTH RICH AND FEEBLE FORMS A SITUATION VERY ATTRACTIVE TO MEN OF THE PROFESSION OF ANGELO RICCI AND JOE CZANEK AND MANUEL SILVA...

...FOR, THAT PROFESSION IS NOTHING LESS PIGNIFIED THAN... ROBBERY!

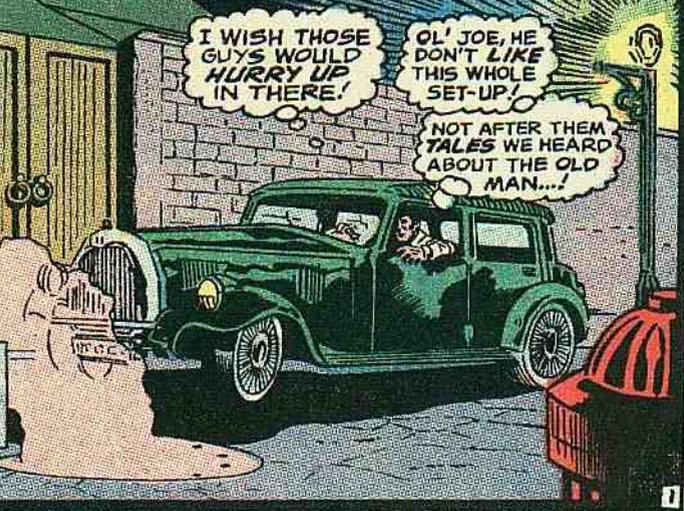
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I WISH THOSE GUYS WOULD HURRY UP IN THERE!

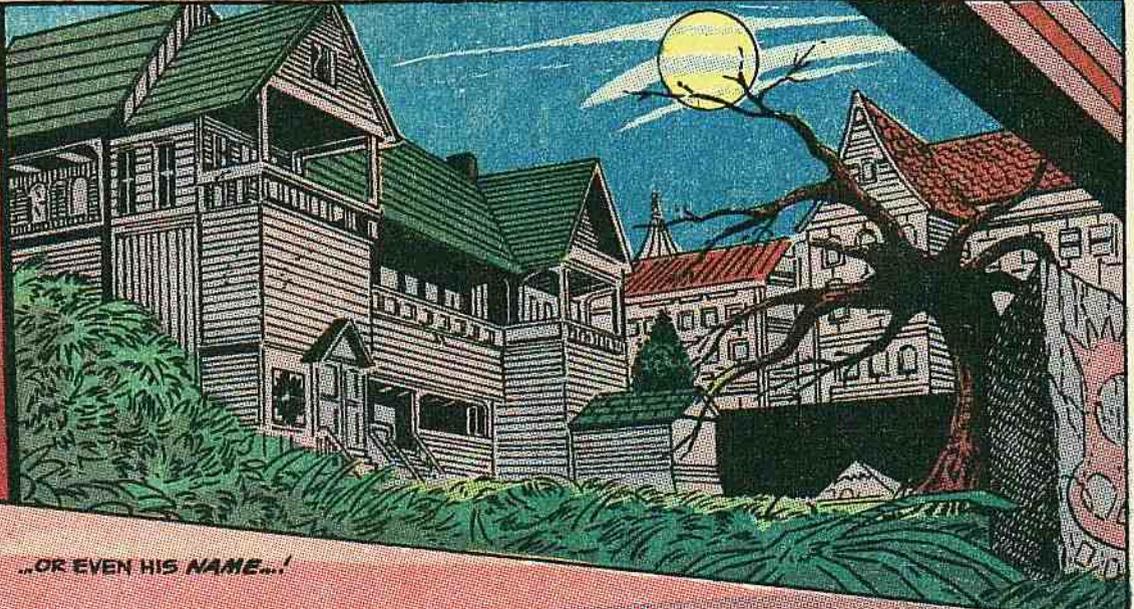
OL' JOE, HE DON'T LIKE THIS WHOLE SET-UP!

NOT AFTER THEM TALES WE HEARD ABOUT THE OLD MAN...!

BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH ARKHAM HOUSE (PUBLISHERS) SALIK CITY, WISCONSIN!



YES, THE INHABITANTS OF KINGSPORT SAY AND THINK *MANY* THINGS ABOUT THE DWELLER IN THIS MUSTY, MYSTERIOUS ABODE... THAT HE WAS CAPTAIN OF A *CLIPPER SHIP* IN HIS DAY... THAT HE IS SO OLD THAT NO ONE CAN REMEMBER HIS *YOUTH*...



...OR EVEN HIS NAME...!

AND THEN, THERE ARE THE ODDLY-GROUPED AND GROTESQUELY PAINTED STONES IN HIS FRONT YARD, WHICH SOMEHOW SEEM TO DISCOURAGE POTENTIAL VISITORS...!



OF COURSE, THERE WAS THE CASE OF HIS CURIOUS NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS A FEW YEARS AGO...!

SHHH... QUIET, AMOS!

I TELL YOU, WOMAN, WE SHOULDN'T BE HERE!

I CAN FEEL IT IN MY BONES!



NOW YOU HUSH UP!

JUST ONE FAST PEEK THRU THESE DUSTY OLD WINDOWS, AND...



LET'S SEE NOW... WHAT WAS IT THOSE TWO NOSY NEIGHBORS SAID THEY SAW THRU THE DREARY, DUSTY PANES? OH YES... THE OLD MAN WAS PLAYING WITH SOME PECULIAR BOTTLES, WITH SOME LITTLE LEAD WEIGHTS IN THEM...

...AND DIDN'T THEY ALSO SAY... HE WAS TALKING TO THOSE BOTTLES...?

AY, WE KEEP OUR SECRETS LONG AND WELL, DON'T WE, SPANISH JACK?

BUT THEN, THEY'RE OUR GOLD DOUBLOONS NOW... OUR PIECES-OF-EIGHT... AIN'T THEY, MATEY?



'COURSE, THERE'S THEM WHAT SAY WE OUGHT TO HAVE TURNED 'EM IN TO THEM MERCHANTS, DOWN BOSTON WAY.'

WHAT SAY YOU, LONG TOM?

AND SCAR-FACE... AND BOS'N ELLIS...?



AY, YOU'RE RIGHT, TOM, ME BOY!

THEY'RE MOST LIKELY DEAD AND GONE BY NOW!

GOLD WON'T DO 'EM NO GOOD WHERE THEY BE, EH, LAD?



AMOS, DID YOU SEE THAT?

THAT BOTTLE GLOWED... LIKE IT WAS ANSWERIN' HIM, AMOS!

AMOS?

ONE THING THE GOOD PEOPLE OF KINGSPORT AGREE ON... THAT NO ONE EVER WENT BACK TO SPY ON THE OLD MAN A SECOND TIME...!



BUT, THE WATERY BLOOD OF KINGSFORT DOESN'T FLOW THIS NIGHT THRU THE VEINS OF ANGELO AND MANUEL... NOR CAN THEY BE FRIGHTENED BY OLD WIVES' TALES!

THEY KNOW ONLY THAT A TOTTERING, ALMOST HELPLESS OLD MAN SITS WITHIN THOSE WALLS... ONE WHO PAYS HIS FEW MEAGRE BILLS WITH SPANISH COINS MINTED TWO CENTURIES AGO...!

ME, I DON'T LIKE IT, ANGELO!

SUPPOSE THE OLD MAN DON'T WANT TO TELL WHERE HE KEEPS HIS GOLD!?

THEN WE'LL BE FORCED TO... PERSUADE HIM!



BUT, I KNOW THESE OLD SEA-DOGS... SOME OF THEM, THEY'RE TOUGH!

YOU JUST LET ANGELO WORRY ABOUT THAT!

NOW, PUT ON YOUR MASK, MY FRIEND!



...WHY DON'T THOSE TWO GET IT OVER WITH?

DO THEY THINK OL' JOE LIKES WAITIN' AROUND BY THE REAR GATE?

I JUST HOPE THEY DON'T LET THE OLD MAN SCREAM TOO LOUD...!



THE AGED SEA-CAPTAIN SITS TALKING CHILDISHLY TO HIS BOTTLES-WITH-PENDULUMS WHEN MANUEL AND ANGELO RAP LIGHTLY AT HIS WINDOW...

TAP TAP TAP

HE TURNS TO LOOK QUIZZICALLY AT HIS NOCTURNAL VISITORS...

...THEN POLITELY OPENS THE WEATHER-STAINED OAKEN DOOR...!



SCREAMS...
COMIN' FROM
THE HOUSE!

I TOLD THOSE
JOKERS TO PLAY
IT GENTLE WITH
THE OLD GUY!

OH WELL... NO
SENSE WORRYIN'
ABOUT THAT
NOW!

THEY'LL BE HERE
IN A MINUTE,
STRAINED BACKS
AND ALL...

STRAINED FROM
ALL THE GOLD
THEY'LL BE
CARRYIN', NO
DOUBT!



WE DON'T
NEED A
MURDER
RAP HANGIN'
OVER OUR
HEADS!

...TWENTY
MINUTES?

WHAT'S
KEEPIN'
THOSE
CLOWNS?

MAYBE THE OL'
MAN DIED 'FORE
HE COULD TALK!

MAYBE THEY
GOTTA SEARCH
THE PLACE TO
FIND...

WHAT'S
THAT?



SOMEBODY'S
OPENIN' THE
GATE--REAL
SLOW-LIKE!



MANUEL?

ANGELO?

C'MON, STOP
PLAYIN'
GAMES! WHAT
YOU GOT FOR
OLD JOE?

KKKRRR
RAIIIIII

BUT, IT IS NOT HIS GIFT-BEARING COLLEAGUES THAT JOE CZANEK SEES IN THE DIM GLOW OF THAT SINGLE STREET LIGHT.

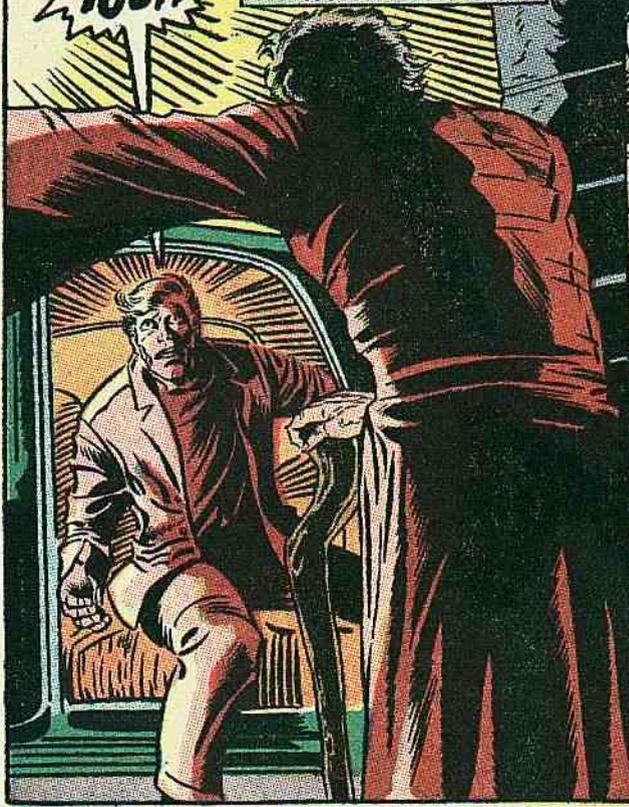
NO, IT IS ONLY THE TERRIBLE OLD MAN... LEANING QUIETLY ON HIS GNARLED, KNOTTED CANE... AND SMILING, HIDEOUSLY...

AND-- YOUR EYES--!

YOUR EYES!

JOE CZANEK HAD NEVER NOTICED THE COLOR OF THE OLD MAN'S EYES...

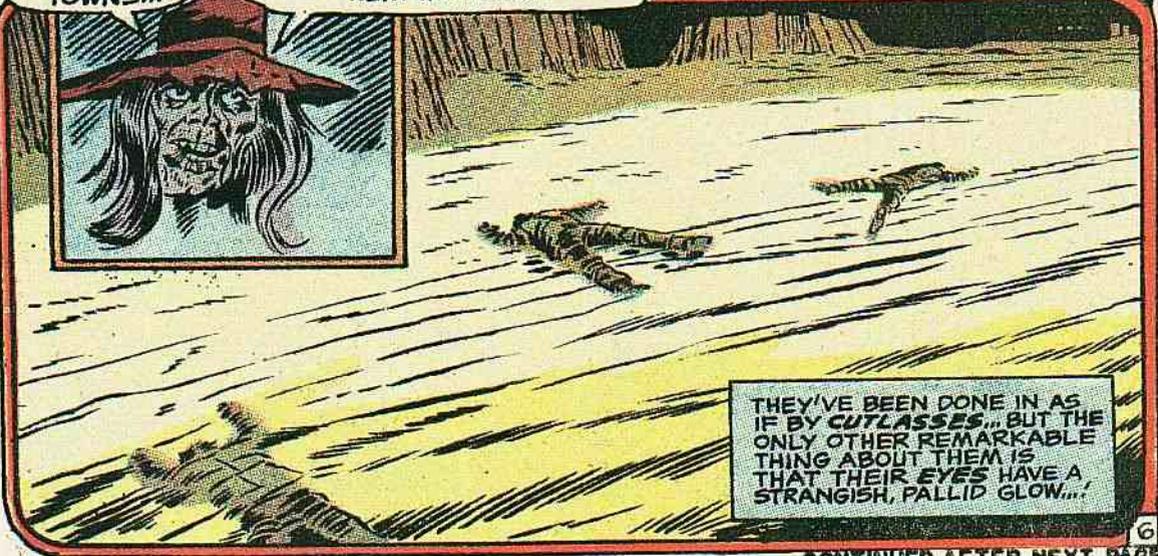
YOU!!



NOW, HE SEES THAT THEY ARE... YELLOW!

LITTLE THINGS MAKE CONSIDERABLE EXCITEMENT IN LITTLE TOWNS...

AND MAYBE THAT'S THE REASON THE PEOPLE OF KINGSPORT ARE TALKING ALL THIS SPRING AND SUMMER ABOUT THE THREE BODIES WHICH THE TIDE WASHES IN, NEXT MORNING!



THEY'VE BEEN DONE IN AS IF BY CUTLASSES... BUT THE ONLY OTHER REMARKABLE THING ABOUT THEM IS THAT THEIR EYES HAVE A STRANGISH, PALLID GLOW...

SOME OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE EVEN SPEAK OF THINGS AS TRIVIAL AS CERTAIN INHUMAN CRIES, PROBABLY OF MIGRATORY BIRDS, HEARD IN THE NIGHT BY WAKEFUL CITIZENS...

...OR OF THE DESERTED MOTOR CAR FOUND BY A CERTAIN RUSTY GATE, AND LEFT THERE TO BECOME THE PLAYTHING OF TIME AND CHILDREN!

BUT, IN THE IDLE GOSSIP OF PASSERS-BY, THE TERRIBLE OLD MAN TAKES NO INTEREST AT ALL!

FOR, WITHIN HIS WIND-WORN WALLS, HE HAS THREE MORE BOTTLES... AND THREE MORE TINY LEAD PENDULUMS... TO KEEP HIM COMPANY!

BESIDES, SO ANCIENT A SEA-CAPTAIN MUST HAVE WITNESSED SCORES OF THINGS MUCH MORE STIRRING...

...IN THE FAR-OFF DAYS...

...OF HIS UNREMEMBERED YOUTH!