



MANGI

STAN LEE PRESENTS: GERRY CONWAY, WRITER * GRAY MORROW, HOWARD CHAYKIN, ARTISTS * ROY THOMAS, EDITOR

78401



AND SLOWLY HE BEGINS TO REMEMBER...



AT FIRST, HE RECALLS ONLY A NAME... HIS NAME...

SALLIS... TED SALLIS... AND WITH THE NAME, THERE COMES THE FLICKERING MEMORY OF A FACE SEEN IN A MIRROR... HIS OWN FACE...

AND MORE... HE REMEMBERS THE VIAL, THE ENZYME COMPOUND WHICH WOULD CREATE A SUPER-SOLDIER FOR HIS COUNTRY... IF IT WORKED...!



THAT'S IT, ELLEN... THE ONLY EXISTING SPECIMEN ON EARTH!

NO NOTES, TED?

IT'S ALL IN MY HEAD, KID. DR. CALVIN AND I THOUGHT IT'D BE BEST THAT WAY.

WHY ELSE DO YOU THINK I'VE HOLED UP HERE IN THE EVERGLADES ALL THESE WEEKS?

YES, HE REMEMBERS. HE RECALLS THE TRIP UPSTREAM, THE DOCKING... HE RECALLS ENTERING THE BOATHOUSE, CALLING OUT FOR HAMILTON, THE GOVERNMENT AGENT IN CHARGE OF SECURITY FOR PROJECT GLADIATOR...



...AND HE RECALLS BETRAYAL!

I'M SORRY TED... TRULY, I AM.

HE REMEMBERS A MOMENT OF CHILL ANGER...OF PAIN AS HE STARED AT HAMILTON'S LIFELESS FORM...AND HE REMEMBERS STRIKING OUT!



MORE: HE REMEMBERS MORE--THE BLINDING MOMENTS OF ESCAPE--THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE HAD TO DESTROY THE VIAL--



AND PERHAPS, AT THE SAME TIME--SAVE HIMSELF!

AND SO--HE DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.



KRAASH!



MEMORY: AGONIZING IN ITS COLD DEFINITION, EACH TERRIBLE MOMENT RETURNING AS HIS MIND DIGS DEEPER--UNTIL THAT HIDEOUS INSTANT WHEN HE RECALLS THE TRANSFORMATION--THE MINGLING OF THE CHEMICAL WITH THE SWAMP AROUND HIM--THE STARK SHOCK TO HIS METABOLISM--



AND THE BITTER ENDING OF HIS SANITY!

SLOWLY, MERCIFULLY...AS GENTLY AS THEY BEGAN...THE MEMORIES END.



AND THE MAN WHO WAS ONCE TED SALLIS, WHOSE BODY HAS BECOME THAT OF A SWAMP-ROAMING CREATURE...FORGETS AGAIN WHAT ONCE HE KNEW.

IT'S BETTER, THAT WAY. IT'S BETTER.



WARREN, WHO COULD THAT BE? NO ONE COMES OUT HERE AT THIS HOUR...

NOW, NOW, MARGARET... WE'RE NOT EXACTLY AS FAR OFF THE BEATEN TRAIL AS WE SOMETIMES IMAGINE.

JUST DON'T GET EXCITED UNTIL THERE'S SOMETHING TO GET EXCITED ABOUT.

I'LL SEE WHAT IT IS. STAY HERE.



GOOD LORD!

MARGARET, COME HERE... QUICKLY!



WHY, THAT'S BILLIE-JO'S LITTLE BOY! WHAT ON EARTH, WARREN...?

IT'S THAT BLASTED HUSBAND OF HERS. I'M SURE OF IT.

HE ALWAYS HATED THE CHILD... ONCE THREATENED HE'D KILL HIM IF BILLIE-JO DIDN'T GIVE HIM UP FOR ADOPTION...!

WELL, IT SEEMS DRUMMOND HAS FINALLY HAD HIS WAY.

THE BLASTED FOOL!

NOW, HE UNDERSTANDS... AND LIKE A KINDLED FIRE, THAT UNDERSTANDING BEGINS TO SWELL...



...AND GRADUALLY BECOMES HATE!

SOON, ON A SHADOWED ISLAND RISING FROM THE MOSS AND MUD OF ONE OF THE EVERGLADES' MANY STEAMING LAKES...

LISSEN, WILL YOU BE QUIET FOR A MINUTE? YOU WANT THE WHOLE BLAMED COUNTY TO HEAR YOU?

JUST TELL ME WHERE HE IS, HANK-- THAT'S ALL I WANT TO KNOW! JUST TELL ME!

I ALREADY TOLD YA, BILLIE-JO... HE GOT SICK, AND I BROUGHT HIM TO DOC THOMPSON'S. IF YOU HADN'T BEEN OFF AT YOUR MOTHER'S PLACE, YOU WOULD'A--

HOW--HOW CAN I BELIEVE YOU, HANK? YOU ALWAYS HATED LITTLE BOBBY-- SAID HE--HE TOOK ME AWAY FROM YOU--

LOOK, I SAID SHUT UP! JUST SHUT UP, WILL YA?

KEEEEEE-RIPES, WOMAN--SOMETIMES YOU JUST GET ON MY NERVES SO BAD I WANNA-- HUH??

WHAT THE HECK KINDA SOUND IS THAT?

HSSSS--
SLURP!

...SOUNDED LIKE A CROAK.
KRIPES, I HATE THEM
CRUNNY REPTILES...!



VOICES DRIFT ACROSS THE WATERS...
WORDS HEARD BUT DIMLY, STIRRING VAGUE
AND DISQUIETING MEMORIES...

...MEMORIES BETTER FORGOTTEN. PAUSING ONLY
BRIEFLY, HE CONTINUES FORWARD, DISTANTLY
AWARE OF MOVEMENT AT HIS SIDE...



...MOVEMENT THAT
BECOMES ABRUPT...

...AND SO HE STRIKES!



HE HAS NO TIME TO RELIVE PAST BATTLES...
NO TIME TO JOIN THE ENDLESS STRUGGLE OF
LIFE-AND-DEATH IN THE PRIMEVAL SWAMPLAND...



AND SO, HE
MOVES QUICKLY...
RUTHLESSLY...

...AND RETURNS TO HIS HUNT... A HUNT HE NO
LONGER UNDERSTANDS, A HUNT CONTINUED
SOLELY BECAUSE IT WAS ONCE BEGUN...



...BEGUN, PERHAPS,
BY A DIFFERENT
ENTITY... ONE
TOUCHED BY THE
FEELING OF
INNOCENT LIFE
IN ITS TAINTED
HANDS...

...THE LIFE OF A CHILD ALMOST
CRUELLY WASTED... A CHILD HE
WILL NOW AVENGE... FOR
REASONS HE DOESN'T QUITE
COMPREHEND!



THAT CUTS IT, BILLIE-JO. I'VE HAD
IT UP TO HERE WITH THOSE
BLASTED LONG-JAWED BELLY-
CRAWLERS!

GONNA GO OUT
THERE AN' PUMP A FEW ROUNDS
INTA THE OLDEST GRANDDADY
I CAN FIND, AN' THEN--



HANK,
PLEASE--
YOU'VE
GOTTA TELL
ME--

I DON'T GOTTA TELL YOU
NUTHIN', BILLIE-JO!

NOW YOU STAY PUT, YOU
HEAR ME? WE'LL TALK
ABOUT BOBBY WHEN I
GET BACK--



--MAYBE BY THEN YOU'LL HAVE CALMED
DOWN SOME, BETTER TRY.



--'CAUSE I'M WARNIN'
YA, LITTLE LADY--

--I'M IN NO MOOD FOR
ANY OF YOUR BACK TALK,
YOU UNDERSTAND ME?



Y-YES, HANK... I--I
UNDERSTAND YOU.

SEE THAT YOU DO, BILLIE-JO.





BILLIE-JO, GIT UP -- I SAID GIT UP!

HANK, WHAT IS IT--WHAT'S WRONG?

DON'T ASK ANY BLAME-FOOL QUESTIONS--JUST MOVE WHEN I TELL YA--FAST!

HANK, IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN--

BILLIE HONEY, HEAVEN AINT GOT A THING TO DO WITH IT!

BILLIE-JO--BILLIE-JO, RUN, HONEY--YOU'VE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE, YOU'VE GOTTA TRYAN' RUN!

RUN!

CAUGHT OFF-BALANCE, THE CREATURE KNOWN AS THE MAN-THING STAGGERS UNDER THE BARRAGE OF BULLETS--STAGGERS, BUT REMAINS UNINJURED--

"AFTER ALL, WASN'T THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE CHEMICAL TED SALLIS HAD INVENTED? TO PROTECT A MAN COMPLETELY FROM BODILY HARM--"



"TO CREATE, IN EFFECT, THE PERFECT SOLDIER--"

"OR PERHAPS--THE MOST INVULNERABLE MONSTER OF ALL!"

GUN'S EMPTY--DIDN'T EVEN FAZE 'IM--HE JUST KEEPS ON COMIN'--LIKE A BLASTED TANK!



LORD, WHAT IS THAT THING? WHAT IS IT?

FEAR: THE MAN-THING SENSES IT, AS THOUGH IT WERE A PHYSICAL PRESENCE, AS SOLID AS THE MAN TREMBLING BEFORE HIM--



FEAR: THE EMOTION THIS SWAMP-CREATURE HATES WITH A SEETHING PASSION--AND WHICH, WHEN PRESENT IN A BEING TOUCHED BY THE MAN-THING'S ONCE-HUMAN HAND, REACTS WITH THE CHEMICALS THAT ONCE TRANSFORMED THE MAN CALLED TED SALLIS--



--REACTS--AND BURNS!



AT LAST, THERE IS SILENCE ON THE DARKENED ISLAND...OR RATHER, A HUSH INTERRUPTED ONLY BY HALTING, BROKEN SOBS...

PLEASE...PLEASE, DON'T HURT US...
DON'T HURT US ANYMORE!

PLEASE...!?



DOES SHE KNOW, DOES SHE
UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS MAN
HAS DONE--OR TRIED TO DO?



NO...NOR, PERHAPS, WOULD
SHE CARE...NOT NOW, NOT WHEN
HE NEEDS HER...

AND SO, THE MONSTER
TURNS...NOT REALIZING THAT
HE'S SAVED SOMETHING, HERE...
THAT A WIFE'S FADING LOVE FOR
HER HUSBAND HAS BEEN
RESTORED...



...AND THAT A MAN HAS BEEN
PUNISHED, IN A MANNER THAT
WILL LIVE WITH HIM UNTIL HE
DIES...A MANNER THAT HAS
SOMEHOW AWAKENED THE SUR-
VIVING HUMANITY IN THE ASHES
OF HIS SOUL...!



HE KNOWS NOTHING OF THIS;
HE KNOWS ONLY A FEELING OF
EMPTINESS...OF LONELINESS...



...FOR HE IS, OR SO WE ARE TOLD...
A FOUL, UNTHINKING
MAN-THING!



FINIS