

WISCASSET, MAINE—A TINY, PICTURESQUE SEAPORT TOWN OF WHITE-PAINTED HOMES AND ABUNDANT FISHING HARBORS, OF ELM-SHADED STREETS AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MANSIONS BUILT BY ENTERPRISING SHIPOWNERS. A NEW ENGLAND TOWN OF JUST OVER 2,000 MANY OF WHOM REGARD THE FIERY ATLANTIC WATERS AS NOT ONLY A **STRONGHOLD** OF NATURE'S ETERNAL BEAUTY, BUT AS A MEANS OF **SUSTENANCE** AS WELL.

ONE SENIOR MEMBER OF THIS PROUD GROUP IS ALF WILLIAMSON. HE TAKES HIS GRANDSON BILLY TO EXPLORE THE WORLD OF THE SEA-BEATEN FISHING BOAT AND THE SLIME-RIDDEN LOBSTER TRAP, A WORLD IN WHICH ONE'S DAILY **TAKE** IS MEASURED NOT BY WORK HOURS OR OFFICE POLITICS, BUT BY **POUNDRAGE** OF LIVE CRUSTACEAN MEAT. IN ESSENCE, A **SEAMAN'S** WORLD—THE ONLY WORLD WITH WHICH ALF WILLIAMSON IS **TRULY** FAMILIAR.

KILLER CLAW

WHEN YOUR MOTHER WAS JUST A LITTLE GIRL, I USED TO TAKE HER OUT ON THIS VERY BOAT, BILLY! **TOUGH** LITTLE GIRL SHE WAS... THOUGHT NOTHING OF TAKIN' OFF HER SHOES AND SETTIN' ON DECK WITH CRABS AND WHAT-NOT SCURRYIN' AROUND UNDERFOOT...



A **TOMBOY** IS WHAT SHE WAS... OF COURSE, THAT'S BEFORE SHE DISCOVERED **BOYS**...

BOYS?

YEP! BROKE MY HEART, SHE DID! SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED IT, THOUGH... **EVERYBODY** GROWS UP SOONER OR LATER!

HOW MUCH D'YA THINK WE'RE GONNA CATCH, GRAMPA?

WELL, BILLY, I FIGGER WE'LL BE PULLIN' IN ABOUT SIXTY POUNDS... THAT IS, IF THOSE BLASTED **POACHERS** HAVEN'T GOTTEN TO MY TRAPS FIRST!

CLICK
WHIR-R-RRR

WARDEN'S GOT HIS HANDS **FULL** KEEPIN' UP WITH THOSE NO-GOOD **THIEVES**...



A DULL THOUGH DISTINCTIVE **SPLASH** IS HEARD, FOLLOWED BY AN UNNERVING **QUIET**. NOT UNTIL MORNING DO NEIGHBORS ALONG THE ROCKY COAST REALIZE THAT REMOTE, FORGETTABLE SOUND RANG OF **DEATH**—

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT, CAPTAIN! FROM WHAT I GATHERED, THAT WILLIAMSON WAS ONE OF THE MOST **CAPABLE** LOBSTERMEN IN THE VILLAGE!

EVEN A **TIDAL WAVE** COULDN'T HAVE CAUSED THAT KIND OF DAMAGE, EICAS... AND LAST NIGHT THE WATERS WERE AS CALM AS A **BABY**! I MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING **ELSE**!

LET'S HOPE WHEN WE FIND THE **BODIES**, IT'LL GIVE US SOME **CLUES**!

SPEAKING OF **BODIES**, HILLBOURNE, IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU AND YOUR MEN—**DIVERS**, GOT ON IT!

WE'VE GOT ONE WOMAN HERE WHO **FEARS** SHE'S LOST HER SON **AND** HER FATHER...

... AND BY LOOKS OF THINGS, I'D SAY HER FEARS ARE NOT **UNWARRANTED**!

IF YOU ASK ME, IT TAKES ONE **TOUGH** WOMAN TO KEEP STANDING WHILE GOING THROUGH THAT KIND OF **GRIEF**!


YOU HEARD THE CAPTAIN, HANK! TAKE US OUT NEAR THE REEF PAST THE LIGHTHOUSE... WE CAN START LOOKING FROM THERE!

STOW IT, MICHAEL! WHEN WILL YOU LEARN I'M THE ONE WHO GIVES THE ORDERS ON THIS TEAM!

TAKE US OUT BY THE REEF, HANK!


SAVE YOUR BREATH, RICHARD! SOME OF US ARE JUST **SELF-STYLED ELITISTS**, WHO FEEL THEY'RE SIMPLY **BETTER** AND **SMARTER** THAN ANYONE ELSE...

AND OF THIS CLUB, I'D SAY OUR BELLOVED MICHAEL DODD IS A **CHARTER MEMBER**!




COOL IT, BARB! THIS IS NO TIME TO START IN WITH OUR OWN PETTY **CHARACTER EVALUATIONS**-VALID AS THEY MAY BE!

WE'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO THINK ABOUT... NAMELY, HUSTLING UP A PAIR OF **BODIES!**




THE CAPSIZED BOAT WAS PULLED IN NOT FAR FROM HERE SO, JUDGING BY THE **CURRENT**, THE BODIES OF ALF WILLIAMSON AND YOUNG BILLY SHOULD BE NEARBY!

CORRECTION, MY FRIEND! NOT **SHOULD**...




MY... LORD! THESE ARE THE BODIES, ALL RIGHT...

... ARE!



NO ORDINARY CREATURE COULD'VE RIPPED THESE TWO APART **THIS** QUICKLY... NO MATTER **HOW** FAMISHED!

WHAT ATTACKED WILLIAMSON AND HIS GRANDSON HAS GOT TO HAVE BEEN SOMETHING WE'VE **NEVER** SEEN THE LIKES OF BEFORE... AND I'VE GOT A HUNCH IT MAY **STILL** BE IN THE VICINITY!




...IF YOU CAN CALL THESE PILES OF BONES **BODIES!**

ONE THING'S FOR CERTAIN... THESE ARE THE TWO WE'RE SEARCHING FOR! WHATEVER **SHREDS** OF CLOTHING ARE LEFT TELL US **THAT!**

BARBARA, MY SENSES TELL ME YOU ARE **ABSOLUTELY** CORRECT...

...WHICH IS **PRECISELY** WHAT I'M AFRAID OF!




THEY TURN IN UNISON, HESITATINGLY ALMOST *KNOWING* WHAT LURKS... WHAT *STARES*. TOGETHER THEY WISH IT WERE SOMETHING... *ANYTHING*... OTHER THAN WHAT THEY SEE...

RICHARD—
A GIANT
LOBSTER!

HOLY HANNAH! NOW WE KNOW WHAT PULLED WILLIAMSON'S BOAT DOWN, AND JUDGING BY THIS BABY'S SIZE, SHE MUST HAVE DONE IT WITH *EASE*!

WELL, MY FRIENDS... THIS GOES TO SHOW THAT NOT ONLY AM I THE *SMARTEST* OF THE LOT BY BRINGING ALONG A HARPOON AS A PRECAUTION...


DEEP-SEA DIVERS ARE KNOWN TO INEXPLICABLY DEVELOP A *SIXTH SENSE* AMIDST THE UNTAMED DEPTHS WHICH THEY EXPLORE. RICHARD HILLBOURNE AND HIS TEAM ARE NO EXCEPTION, AND IF THIS SIXTH SENSE OF THEIRS CAN TELL THEM ANYTHING, IT IS WHEN THEY ARE BEING WATCHED!



...BUT I'M ALSO ABOUT TO PROVE MYSELF THE *BRAVEST*... BY USING IT!

DON'T BE A FOOL DODD! WE'VE GOT TO *PRESERVE* THIS CREATURE FOR SCIENCE TO STUDY! WE MUST FIND A WAY TO CAPTURE IT... *ALIVE*!

BESIDES, SHE IS CARRYING EGGS... THOUSANDS OF THEM! ALL MOTHERS-TO-BE GET VERY *DEFENSIVE*... AND IT TAKES JUST THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF *AGGRESSION* TO TRIGGER AN ATTACK!



...WHICH IS ALL THE MORE REASON IT MUST BE *DESTROYED*! THERE IS ONE THING YOU TWO *COWARDS* ARE FORGETTING, AND THAT IS...



THIS THING IS A *KILLER*!

...AND WITH ONE *SLASH* OF A BEHEMOTH CLAW, MIKE DODD'S INDICTMENT OF THE HUGE CRUSTACEAN AS A *KILLER* IS HORRIBLY *REAFFIRMED*...!



LIKE MOST CREATURES WHO HAVE JUST SEIZED THEIR PREY, THE HUGE LOBSTER RETREATS TO HER LAIR... A GIANT HIDDEN CREVICE BENEATH THE CORAL REEF.



ALMOST INSTINCTIVELY, THE REMAINING PAIR MAKE A FEEBLE ATTEMPT AT PURSUIT...

... BUT THEN TURN BACK, MUTELY REALIZING THEY HAVE LOST THEIR SENSE OF PURPOSE... THEIR *REASON* FOR BEING WHERE THEY WERE.



LIKE UNINVITED GUESTS, THEY FEEL PAINFULLY *OUT-OF-PLACE* IN THESE MURKY DEPTHS, WHICH SUDDENLY SEEM SO *REMOTE* ... SO *ALIEN*.



THEY RETURN TO THEIR *TRUE* WORLD, THE WORLD OF THE LAND-DWELLER...

... IN PART TO *REFLECT*.



A FEW SHORT HOURS LATER...

LOOK, I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, BUT WE NEED YOU TWO TO GO **DOWN** AGAIN... AND WE HAVEN'T GOT MUCH TIME! WE'VE GOT TO CAPTURE THAT CREATURE **BEFORE** SHE RELEASES THOSE **EGGS!**

I KNOW HOW SENSITIVE YOU FEEL ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING, BARBARA. ANY **WOMAN** IN YOUR POSITION WOULD!

ONE THING YOU'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND, CAPTAIN... I'M NOT SENSITIVE BECAUSE I'M A **WOMAN**...

... I'M SENSITIVE BECAUSE I'M **ME**...!

C'MON, RICHARD! WE'VE GOT A **JOB** TO DO!

YOU BOTH UNDERSTAND, OF COURSE, THAT WE NEED YOU TO **OBSERVE**... JUST TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING'S RUNNING **SMOOTHLY!**

SURE THING, CAPTAIN! JUST DROP THE BAIT, AND WE'LL TAG ALONG **RIGHT BEHIND!**

PERFECT! WITH THOSE SACKS OF DEAD **FISH** DANGLING IN FRONT OF THE LOBSTER'S CAVE, SHE'LL BE LURED OUT OF THERE IN **NO TIME!**

THAT IS, IF SHE'S STILL **THERE!**

A CREATURE OF THAT SIZE IS BOUND TO VENTURE OUT INTO **DEEPER** WATERS, SOONER OR LATER!

WELL, MS. WILHELM, ABOUT ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS **WAIT AND SEE!**

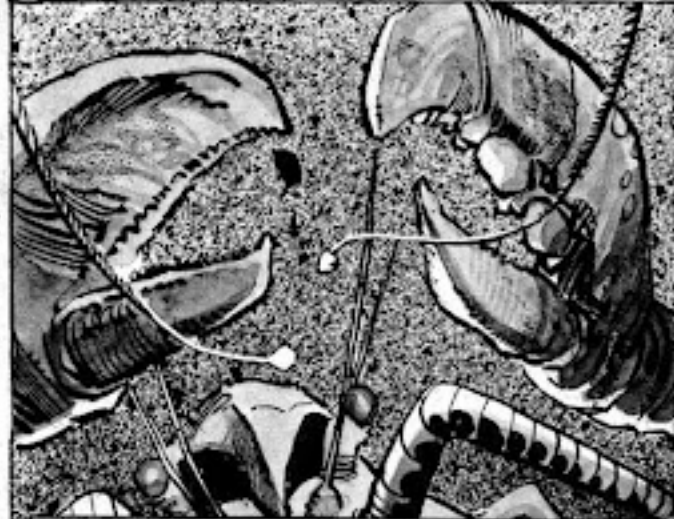
ONLY A FEW HOURS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE GIANT LOBSTER FEASTED ON MIKE DODD'S REMAINS, BUT ONE **HUMAN** IS HARDLY ENOUGH OF A MEAL TO KEEP A HALF TON LOBSTER **SATISFIED**...

...AND **SATISFIED** SHE IS NOT!

LOOK... A **CLAW!** SHE'S **IN** THERE ALL RIGHT!

...AND **HUNGRY** AS EVER!

THE MAMMOTH CRUSTACEAN
BATS AT THE ELUSIVE SACKS
OF DEAD MEAT... TRYING TO
GRASP THEM WITH HER
HUGE PINCERS.



THE ALLURING BAIT DANGLES CLOSE ENOUGH TO
THE LOBSTER'S CAVE FOR HER TO FULLY CATCH
IT'S SCENT... YET FAR ENOUGH TO FORCE THE
CREATURE TO FINALLY EMERGE FROM HER
SHELTER...

...WHICH SHE DOES!



UPON FEELING THE LOBSTER'S
POWERFUL TUG, THE CAPTAIN
CIRCLES OVERHEAD, THERE-
BY TANGLING HER IN THE
ROPE...

RICHARD!
SHE'S GOTTEN
HOLD OF
THE BAIT!



...FORCING HER INTO A CONTORTED, DEFENSELESS
POSITION... ULTIMATELY STRAIGHT-JACKETING HER!



LIKE A GLADIATOR FIGHTING AN *OMNI-POTENT* FOE, THE GIANT SHELLFISH STRUGGLES VAINLY AS SHE FEELS HERSELF BEING LIFTED BY THE *HYDRAULIC MONSTER* OVERHEAD. INSTINCTIVELY, SHE FIGHTS TO PROTECT HER THOUSANDS OF FERTILIZED *OVA*... HELD TIGHT TO HER BELLY BY TINY *VESTIGIAL* LIMBS CALLED *SWIMMERETTES*!

FOR ONE SPLIT, SURREAL MOMENT, THE WHIRLING, TURBULENT FIGURE OF THE CREATURE SEEMS LIKE A MAMMOTH *CARNIVAL RIDE*, THRILLING IMAGINARY SCHOOL CHILDREN AS THEY *SPIN* THROUGH THE AIR. HOWEVER, THIS FANTASTIC *ILLUSION* IS SNAPPED BY THE AGONIZING *CRACK* OF THE HUGE CREATURES *EXOSKELETON*!

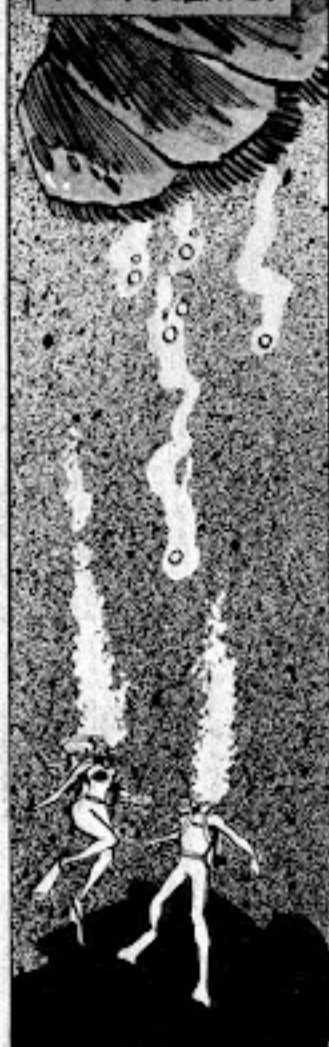
CRAACK

THAT HOOK
BROKE A HOLE
IN HER SHELL!
SHE WILL
DIE!

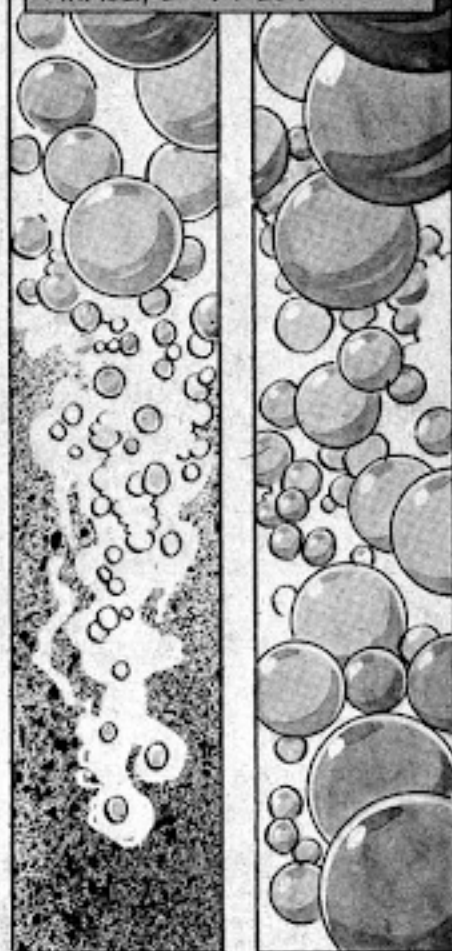
EVEN AS BARBARA SPEAKS, THE TURBULENT WATERS GROW STILL AS THE LOBSTER'S LIFE SLOWLY SLIPS AWAY, TANGLED IN A MATRIX OF ROPE AND CLAW...



... THE LIMP BODY STILL ASCENDS!



THE TINY VESTIGIAL LIMBS WHICH HELD THE CREATURE'S RIPENING EGGS HAVE NOW GROWN LAX... AND THE SHINY GREEN ORBS ARE NOW, FINALLY, LET FREE!



THEY FLOAT IN THE WATER... A MILLION **BALLOONS** ABOVE A FESTIVE **PARADE**, EACH GLOBE EXUDING A PROMISE OF BIRTH... A PROMISE OF **LIFE**... NOT UNLIKE THE LIFE WHICH JUST MOMENTS BEFORE, HAD BEEN **STOLEN** FROM THEIR VALIANT BEARER.

