

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MAN CALLED MORBIUS!™

ALONE AGAINST ARCTURUS!

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THE WIND IN THIS PLACE BLOWS BLUSTERY AND COLD AND CHILLS EVEN THE MARROWLESS BONES OF THE LIVING VAMPIRE CALLED MORBIUS.

FOR DAYS HE HAS WANDERED AMID THESE RUINS, NEVER LAYING EYES ON A LIVING SOUL, WHILE THE HUNGER IN HIM GREW.

HUNGER NOT FOR THE BREAD AND WINE WHICH SUSTAIN OTHER MEN -- BUT FOR BLOOD -- HUMAN BLOOD!

FOR ONLY BY FEASTING ON THE LIFE-JUICES OF OTHERS CAN HE STAVE OFF THE DEADLY DISEASE WHICH THREATENS HIS OWN LIFE.

AND NOW... HE HAS FOUND HIS FEAST!



SLOWLY-- STEALTHILY--
CAREFUL NOT TO
DISTURB EVEN A
SINGLE CHUNK
OF ROCK--
HE MOVES
CLOSER.



THEY ARE SPEAKING--
IN A TONGUE HE
CANNOT UNDERSTAND.

BUT HE KNOWS
THE TONE OF
THEIR WORDS:
THESE TWO
ARE IN
LOVE.



A PITY,
REALLY.

BECAUSE
ONE OF
THEM IS
MARKED
FOR
DEATH.



MORBIUS LEAPS--AND IN HIS MADNESS
DOES NOT SEE THE COURAGE AND
CHARACTER IN THE YOUNG MAN'S
FACE AND EYES.



HE SEES ONLY THE MASSIVE NECK, ITS VEINS
BULGING WITH THE THICK RED LIQUID THAT
WILL KEEP HIM ALIVE.

AND SO THE VAMPIRE NEVER
STOPS TO CONSIDER-- THAT
THIS HARDY WARRIOR MIGHT
NOT BE A PASSIVE VICTIM.



THUS, IT COMES AS
NO SMALL SURPRISE
WHEN--



--THE
YOUTH
STRIKES
BACK!

NOW THERE IS PAIN TO COMPOUND THE AGONY OF THE HUNGER-- A DULL, NUMBING ACHE IN THE GUT...

... AND THE SHARP, STABBING TINGE AS HE IS HURLED BACK INTO THE CRAGGY RUINS.



TO THE AGONY AND THE PAIN NOW ADD ANGER, AS THE BOLD YOUTH SEIZES THE OFFENSIVE.



MORBIOUS TRIES TO SPEAK-- TO CRY OUT TO THE RAVEN-MANED YOUTH THAT RESISTANCE IS FUTILE.



BUT THE VAMPIRE IS MADDENED BEYOND WORDS.

AND THE DWINDLING RESERVOIR OF REASON THAT REMAINS IN THIS SCIENTIST-TURNED-BLOOD-SUCKER...

... KNOWS THAT THIS IS THE ONLY LANGUAGE HE CAN SPEAK THAT THE WARRIOR WILL UNDERSTAND.



THE LANGUAGE OF FORCE-- THE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION (OR OF CIRCUMVENTING SAME) HE ONCE DESPISED MOST OF ALL.

BUT THAT WAS IN ANOTHER TIME-- ANOTHER LIFE--!



HERE-- NOW-- ALL THAT MATTERS IS SURVIVAL. REMORSE WILL COME LATER, AFTER THE FANGS HAVE DONE THEIR WORK...



... AFTER HE HAS DRUNK LONG AND DEEP FROM THE VEINS OF THIS HOT-BLOODED BATTLER!



MAYBE--!

≡phaugh≡

WHAT MADNESS IS THIS? THE LIQUID IN HIS VEINS-- IS NOT BLOOD!



AND THAT STARTLING, SOMEWHAT DISTASTEFUL REVELATION BRINGS MORBIUS ABRUPTLY BACK TO SANITY-- OR A SEMBLANCE THEREOF.

YOU! FEMALE! TELL ME WHERE I AM-- HOW I CAME TO BE HERE!

SILENCE. NO REPLY.

INDEED, SHE REACTS NOT AT ALL TO WHAT HE SAYS-- ONLY TO THE DESPERATION WITH WHICH IT IS VOICED. SHE FEARS HIM-- BUT SHE CANNOT GLEAN MEANING FROM HIS WORDS.

-- WHICH WAS THANKFULLY INTERRUPTED BY THE UNCANNY CARETAKERS, BEINGS FROM BEYOND THE STARS WHO HAD GUIDED MANKIND THROUGH ITS RACIAL INFANCY...

SO MORBIUS TURNS INWARD FOR ANSWERS-- FORCES HIS YET-HAZY MEMORY TO RECALL THE EVENTS THAT LED HIM TO THESE OBVIOUSLY ALIEN RUINS.

EVENTS THAT BEGAN WHEN HE FELL UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL OF THE DEMON-PRIEST DAEMON, WHO SENT HIM ON A MISSION OF MURDER--



... AND WERE NOW ATTEMPTING TO SAVE IT BOTH FROM ITSELF AND DAEMON'S CULT OF DEMON-WORSHIPPERS!



RELUCTANTLY, MORBIUS RECALLS, HE SIDED WITH SCIENCE AGAINST SORCERY... AND THUS WAS TOSSED INTO BATTLE WITH DAEMON'S CAT-DEMON SLAVE BALKATAR--



-- WHO, IN TURN, KIDNAPED HIM, BROUGHT HIM TO THE OTHER-DIMENSIONAL REALM WITHIN, WHOSE MON-ARCH DESIRED HIM AS A MEANS TO CONTROL POPULATION IN THAT SELF-ENCLOSED KINGDOM!*

*AS DEPICTED IN FEAR #20-22--ROY



BUT THE THOUGHT OF BEING SO CALLOUSLY USED WAS ALMOST AS REPUGNANT TO MORBIUS AS HIS VAMPIRIC CURSE.

SO HE AGAIN SEIZED THE REINS OF HIS OWN DESTINY...

... CHOOSING TO FLING HIMSELF INTO THE RIVER THAT FLOWED THROUGH THE REALM WITHIN-- AND DISAPPEARED INTO THAT LAND'S SOLID ROCK WALLS...

... RATHER THAN TO LIVE FOREVER ON THE BLOOD OF THE CAT-PEOPLE.



YES... I RECALL VANISHING INTO THE ROCK... BEING BORNE AWAY BY THE RIVER'S CURRENT.

BUT I KNOW NOTHING OF WHAT NEXT OCCURRED!



THOSE MOONS... THE LINEARLY FLORA... SURELY MEAN I AM NOT ON EARTH!

HOW DID I ARRIVE HERE-- WHEREVER "HERE" IS?



AND WERE THAT NOT EVIDENCE ENOUGH-- THE TECHNOLOGY WHICH CREATED THESE DEVICES IS-- OR WAS-- FAR BEYOND ANYTHING ON EARTH!



THEORIES... HYPOTHESES... CONCEPTS RACE THRU THE BRILLIANTLY ANALYTICAL MIND OF MICHAEL MORBIUS.

PERCEPTIONS NOTED-- IDEAS DISCARDED-- QUESTIONS RAISED-- UNTIL--

-- HIS GLANCE HAPPENS TO FALL ONCE MORE ON A SICKENING REMINDER OF HIS REALITY.

I... HAVE KILLED... AGAIN...!

AND THIS TIME-- FOR NOTHING!



THERE IS, IN THE TIME BETWEEN CRAVINGS, AN ABIDING SENSE OF HUMANITY IN THIS MAN-BAT CALLED MORBIUS.

HIS CAREER--THE FIELD IN WHICH HE WON HIS NOBEL PRIZE-- WAS BIOPHYSICS.

AND THE MORE HE STUDIED LIFE, THE MORE HE GREW TO RESPECT THE MIRACLE OF IT.

THUS, THE DEEP SORROW HE FEELS NOW IS GENUINE.

INDEED, WERE IT NOT FOR THAT DEEP-ROOTED BELIEF IN THE SANCTITY OF LIFE...

...HE MIGHT HAVE ENDED HIS OWN LONG AGO.



HE RISES NOW, TRIES TO LOOK AWAY FROM THE HIDEOUS PUNCTURE-WOUNDS HIS FANGS INFLICTED UPON THE YOUTH.

BUT HE CANNOT LOOK AWAY. AND THIS TIME...



...IT'S NOT THE HORROR OR SELF-HATRED HE FEELS THAT RIVETS HIS ATTENTION.

RATHER, IT IS THE SCIENTIST'S CURIOSITY. SOMETHING ABOUT THOSE WOUNDS IS... NOT RIGHT.



THE BLOOD... COLORLESS-- THE SKIN... MORE LIKE TORN FIBER... SYNTHETIC FIBER--!

I'VE KILLED... AN ANDROID! AN ARTIFICIAL HUMAN BEING! NO WONDER I COULD NOT DRINK ITS "BLOOD"!



UNFORTUNATELY, THAT REALIZATION HAS ALSO REMINDED HIM THAT HIS NEED FOR THE STUFF HAS NOT BEEN SATIATED!

YOU! ARE YOU HUMAN-- OR AS BLOODLESS AS YOUR DEAD LOVER?



HE CAN HEAR THE RUTHLESSNESS, THE DESPERATION RETURNING TO HIS VOICE.

HIS SHOCK AT THE UNSAVORY TASTE OF THE YOUTH'S "BLOOD"... IS DISSIPATING.



HE KNOWS THE FEMALE CANNOT ANSWER--THAT HIS LANGUAGE IS ALIEN TO HER.

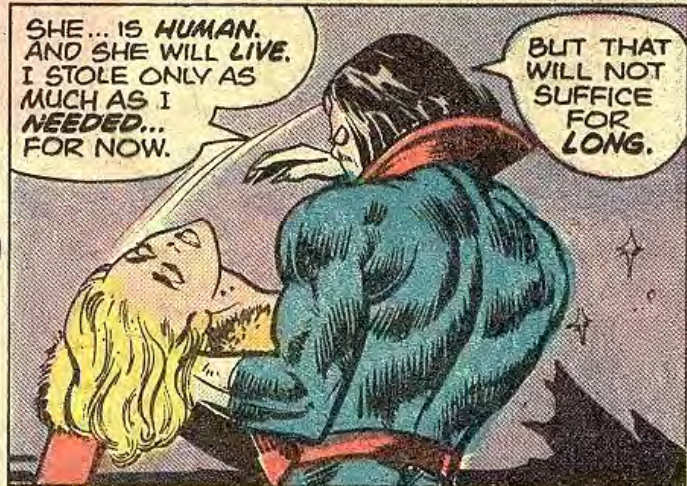
BUT THE MANIA IS UPON HIM AGAIN--

--THE IRRESISTIBLE DRIVE TO FEEL TEETH SINKING INTO SOFT FLESH, TO FEEL STEAMING LIQUID ON HIS TONGUE...



...TO DRINK THE BITTER-SWEET CRIMSON THAT GIVES HIM LIFE.

AND THIS TIME, HIS EFFORTS ARE REWARDED.



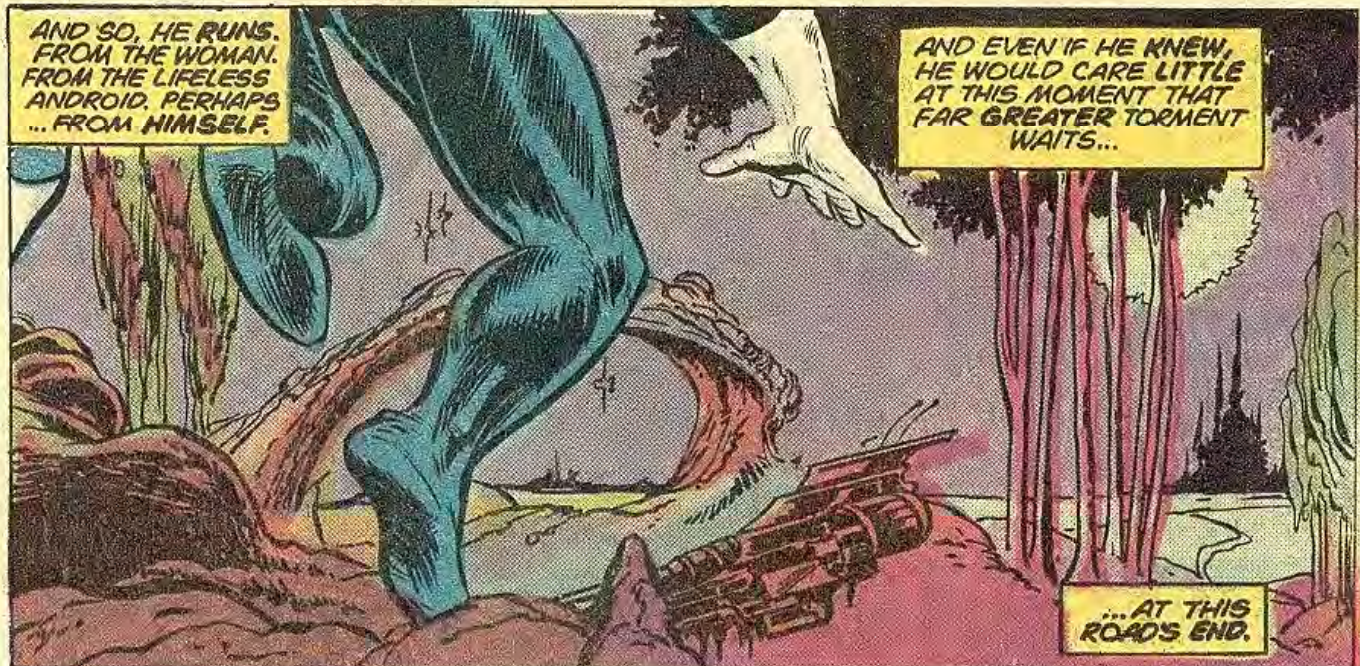
SHE... IS HUMAN. AND SHE WILL LIVE. I STOLE ONLY AS MUCH AS I NEEDED... FOR NOW.

BUT THAT WILL NOT SUFFICE FOR LONG.



WHILE I STILL HAVE CONTROL OF MYSELF-- I MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE.

FOR SHE COULD NOT SURVIVE A SECOND BITE.



AND SO, HE RUNS. FROM THE WOMAN. FROM THE LIFELESS ANDROID. PERHAPS ... FROM HIMSELF.

AND EVEN IF HE KNEW, HE WOULD CARE LITTLE AT THIS MOMENT THAT FAR GREATER TORMENT WAITS...

...AT THIS ROAD'S END.

IT IS AL-
MOST DAWN
WHEN MORBIUS
ARRIVES
HERE, TIRED,
FRAGILE--
AND
MISTAKEN BY
WHAT STRAINS
BEFORE HIM.

THE GATES--
OF A CITY--
OR WHAT
ONCE WAS
A CITY?

IT APPEARS
DEAD NOW,
LIKE EVERY
OTHER TRACE
OF CIVILIZA-
TION ON THIS
WORLD.

AND YET--
I SENSE
THAT THIS
PLACE
IS AND
DEER-
LEED.

SOMEONE-- OR
SOME THING--
LIVES HERE!

CORRECT
MICHAEL
MORBIUS!

WE LIVE
HERE-- WE,
THE
PEOPLE OF
ARCTURUS.

WH-WHERE
DID YOU
COME FROM?
YOU WERE
NOT HERE
A MOMENT
AGO!

I AM NOT HERE NOW,
MICHAEL MORBIUS,
WHAT YOU SEE IS A
MENTAL PROJECTION.

"BUT COME-- YOU SHALL
LEARN ALL ONCE YOU
HAVE TOURED THE HOME
OF OUR ANCESTORS LEFT
US ... AND ONCE YOU
HAVE ... MET... THE OTHERS."

"OTHERS?" MORBIUS
ASKS ASTONISHED
"THERE ARE MORE
LIKE YOU?"

"LIKE ME?" OH, NO--
NO TWO OF US ARE
THE SAME! BUT
YOU'LL SEE THAT
FOR YOURSELF,
MOMENTARILY."

H-HOW DID YOU
KNOW MY NAME?
INDEED HOW CAN
YOU BE SPEAKING
ENGLISH?

WHERE AM I?
WHO ARE YOU?

I AM I--
LORD I--
POTENTATE
OF
ARCTURUS!

AND I IS NOT SPEAKING.
I COMMUNICATES BY
THOUGHT WHICH LANGUAGE
IS UNIVERSAL.

OR HAD YOU
NOT NOTICED--
I HAS NO
VOCAL
APPARATUS?

TELEPATHY-- MENTAL PROJECTION--! THEN DID YOU READ MY MIND TO LEARN MY NAME?

YOUR NAME... AND THE NAME YOUR RACE HAS GIVEN TO OUR SUN: ARCTURUS.

I HAVE SEEN SUCH FEATS PERFORMED BEFORE ONLY BY THE ANCIENT CARE-TAKERS-- AND THEIR GENETICALLY-ENGINEERED PROGENY.

WE KNOW THIS, TOO. TRUTH, IT IS WHY WE BROUGHT YOU HERE.

YOU KEEP SPEAKING OF "WE." YET I SEE ONLY YOU.

I AM ASTOUNDED...!

YOU DO NOT EVEN SEE I-- ONLY I'S PROJECTION. WHICH MUST NOW FAAAAAADE

NO! WAIT! YOU PROMISED TO EXPLAIN...!

AGAIN, MORBIUS, INCORRECT. T'WAS I WHO PROMISED.

WHAT--? THE REAL I?

DO YOU THINK YOU SHALL BE HAPPY HERE, MORBIUS?

HAPPY? I DO NOT UNDERST--
YOU WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO EARTH, MORBIUS.

THIS IS YOUR NEW HOME.

WHAT?!

YOU ARE AN ALLY OF THE SO-CALLED CARE-TAKERS, ARE YOU NOT?

A RELUCTANT ALLY, YES.

THAT IS WHY I CANNOT LET YOU GO.


LEST YOU HELP THEM DO
TO YOUR RACE... WHAT
THEY DID TO OURS.

TURN, MORBIUS...
MEET THE PEOPLE
OF ARCTURUS.



THE
CARETAKERS...
ARE OUR
ANCESTORS.


NO! THIS
CANNOT BE!!
YOU ARE ALL--
FREAKS!



FREAKISHNESS IS RELATIVE. WE ARE THE NORM ON THIS PLANET.


THE NON-MUTANTS ARE THE EXCEPTIONS, THE FREAKS.

BUT--THE CARETAKERS APPEAR HUMAN! WHAT CATASTROPHE--?




BIOLOGICAL WAR, OF A SORT YOUR RACE HAS NEVER CONCEIVED.

WAR FOR THE RIGHT TO CONTROL THE GENES OF ARCTURUS.



"BUT NEITHER YOU NOR THEY ARE AWARE OF THE EVENTS WHICH TRANSPIRED HERE AFTER THEY DEPARTED.

"OUR SCIENCE HAD MASTERED THE MANIPULATION OF HUMAN HEREDITY..."



"... AND OVER THE YEARS DEBATE RAGED AS TO WHETHER THAT KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE EMPLOYED TOWARD PERFECTING THE RACE. IN TIME, IT WAS DECIDED THAT IT SHOULD.

"AND THE INFLASK FACTORIES CAME INTO BEING.

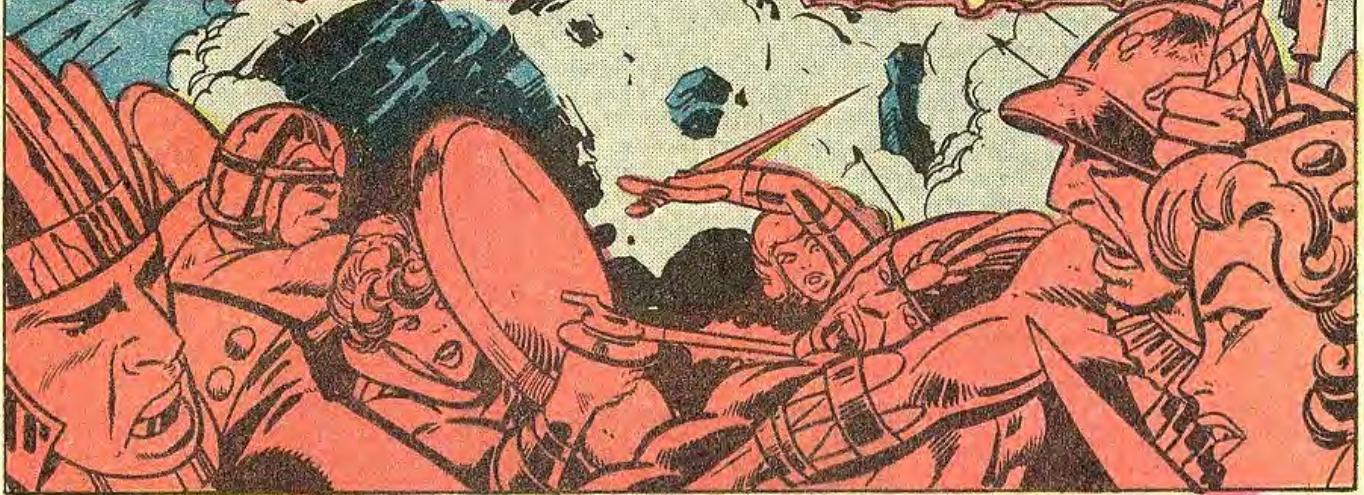
"THUS, ALL NATURAL REPRODUCTION CEASED, AS IT WAS DECREED THAT CHILDREN BORN OF WOMEN WOULD BE DESTROYED.

"BUT NOT WITHOUT OPPOSITION.

"TO MANY, IT SEEMED INHERENTLY WRONG TO TAKE EVOLUTION OUT OF NATURE'S HANDS. SO THEY SOUGHT TO REVERSE THE TREND... WITH TERRORIST MEANS:

"THEY BEGAN BOMBING INCUFLASK INSTALLATIONS.

"AND SHORTLY, FULL-SCALE WAR ERUPTED.



"OUR WEAPONS, AS YOU MAY WELL IMAGINE, WERE VASTLY MORE EFFICIENT THAN EARTH'S PRIMITIVE NUCLEAR DEVICES.

"THEY LIVE IN TINY TRIBAL ENCLAVES NOW-- AND MOST HAVE FORGOTTEN WHY.

"THE RUINS ARE MYSTERIES, TEMPLES FOR THEM.

AS FOR THE FLASK-SPAWNED SUPER-RACE... YOU ARE NOW AMONG THEM.

THE BOMB RADIATION TOOK ITS TOLL ON US AS WELL.

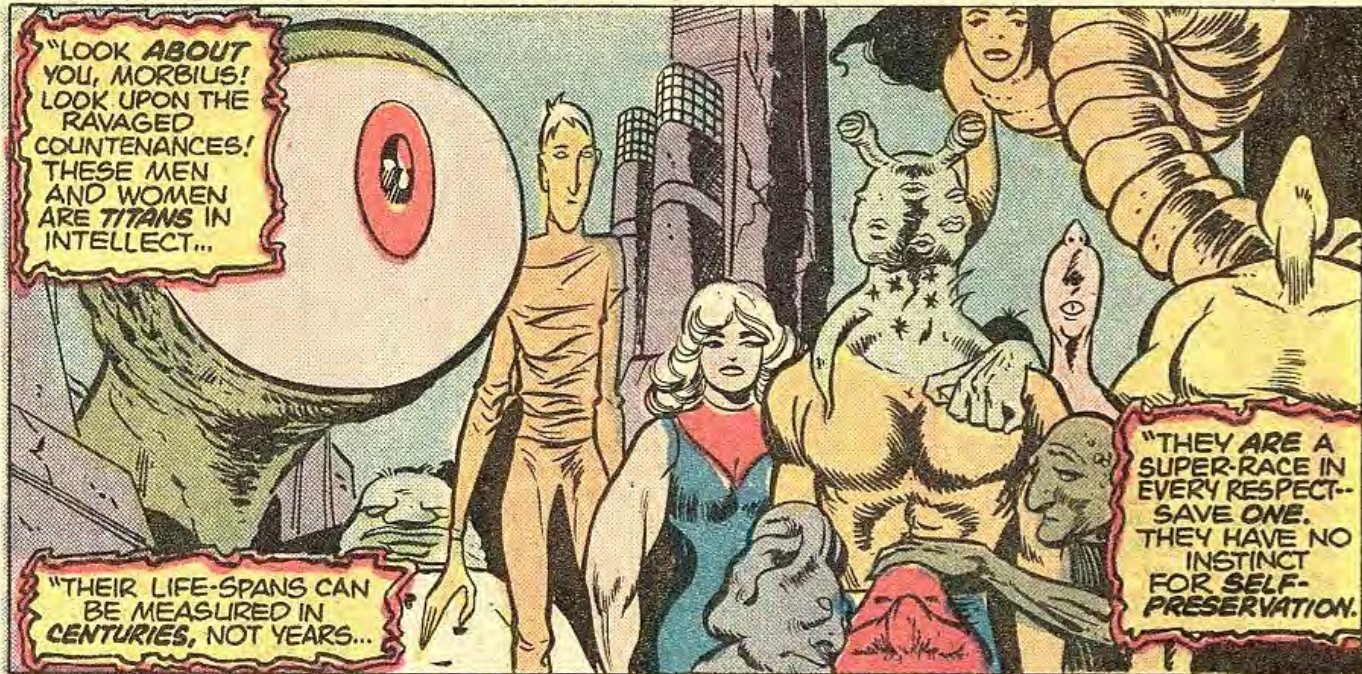
PRECISELY. THEY MUST BE DESTROYED BEFORE IT CAN HAPPEN AGAIN.



"MOST OF HUMANITY WAS DESTROYED. THOSE WHO SURVIVED WENT MAD, DESERTED THE CITIES.

AND YOU FEAR THE CARETAKERS MAY BRING ABOUT A SIMILAR DISASTER ON EARTH?

DESTROYED? IS THERE NO OTHER MEANS BY WHICH TO DISSUADE THEM?



"LOOK ABOUT YOU, MORBIUS! LOOK UPON THE RAVAGED COUNTENANCES! THESE MEN AND WOMEN ARE TITANS IN INTELLECT..."

"THEIR LIFE-SPANS CAN BE MEASURED IN CENTURIES, NOT YEARS..."

"THEY ARE A SUPER-RACE IN EVERY RESPECT-- SAVE ONE. THEY HAVE NO INSTINCT FOR SELF-PRESERVATION."



THEY WANT TO DIE! THEY WISH THEIR RACE TO PERISH! FOR IT HAS PROVEN ITSELF A FAILURE.

WE WILL NOT ALLOW THE CARETAKERS TO CREATE ANOTHER SUCH COSMIC DEBACLE!

I SEE.



BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE!

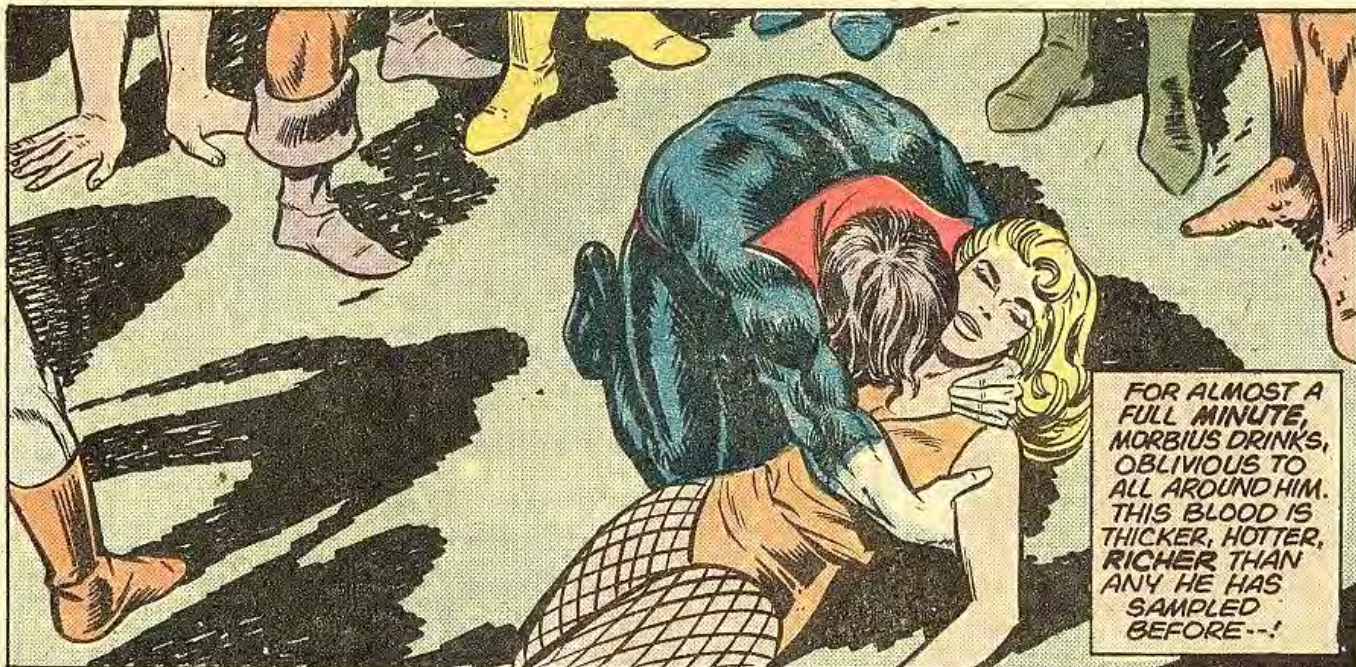
LET US TEST THE TRUTH OF YOUR TALE-- AGAINST THE INDISPUTABLE FACT OF MY THIRST!

THE MANIA-- THE HUNGER-- ARE UPON ME ONCE AGAIN!



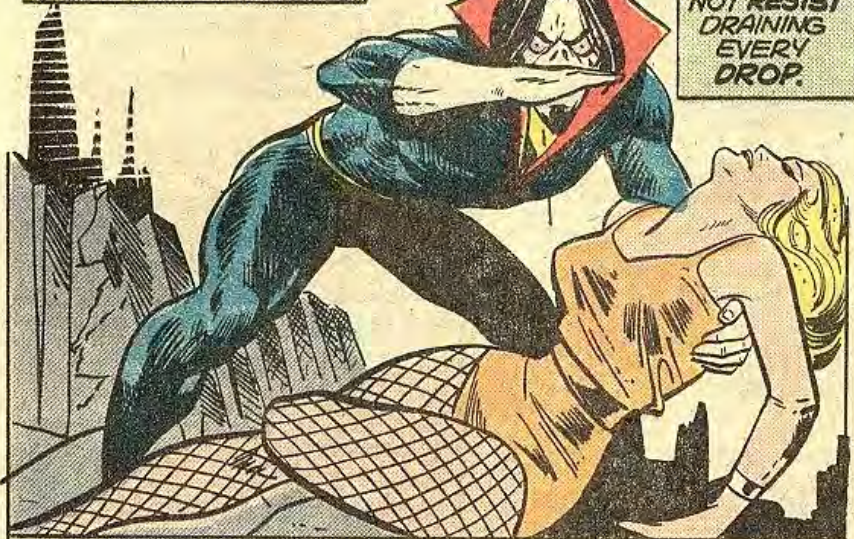
WILL SHE-- WILL YOU-- ALLOW ME TO SATISFY MY CRAVING WITH HER BLOOD?





FOR ALMOST A FULL MINUTE, MORBIUS DRINKS, OBLIVIOUS TO ALL AROUND HIM. THIS BLOOD IS THICKER, HOTTER, RICHER THAN ANY HE HAS SAMPLED BEFORE--!

IT DOES INDEED SEEM TO BE THE BLOOD OF A SUPERIOR SPECIES.



PERHAPS THAT IS WHY HE COULD NOT RESIST DRAINING EVERY DROP.

TOO, PERHAPS IT'S WHY HE IS SO STUNNED AT THE REALIZATION THAT:



NONE OF YOU... MADE A MOVE... TO STOP ME.



NONE OF YOU... MADE A MOVE...!

YOU STOOD THERE-- AND LET ME DESTROY HER!

BECAUSE WE KNEW IT WAS WHAT SHE WOULD HAVE WANTED.

NOW DO YOU SEE, MORBIUS, WHY THE CARETAKERS MUST DIE?

TELL ME... HOW I MAY BE... OF ASSISTANCE.

NEXT: TO SAVE HUMANITY FROM ITS SAVIORS, MORBIUS MUST AVOID THE UNERRING AIM OF-- **BLADE** the VAMPIRE-SLAYER!