



MY NAME IS ALEXANDER RICHARDS, AND I SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN THIS ROOM UNDER THE ILLUSION THAT I HAVE A GREATER SENSE OF FREEDOM THAN MOST.



BUT UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS ONLY AN ILLUSION, AND I KNEW THE MOMENT THAT MRS. RENCHADA WALKED THROUGH THAT DOOR THAT I WOULD HAVE TO TAKE HER CASE NO MATTER WHAT SHE WANTED. THAT IS, IF I WISHED TO NOURISH THE ILLUSION ANY LONGER.



I'VE COME TO SEE YOU ABOUT MY SON PAUL, MR. RICHARDS.

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM, MRS. RENCHADA?

HE HAS DISAPPEARED. I SUPPOSE HE'S ONLY RUN AWAY FROM HOME AND THAT IF I BRING HIM BACK HE WILL ONLY LEAVE AGAIN BUT I...



... WOULD LIKE YOU TO FIND HIM AND BRING HIM HOME TO ME.

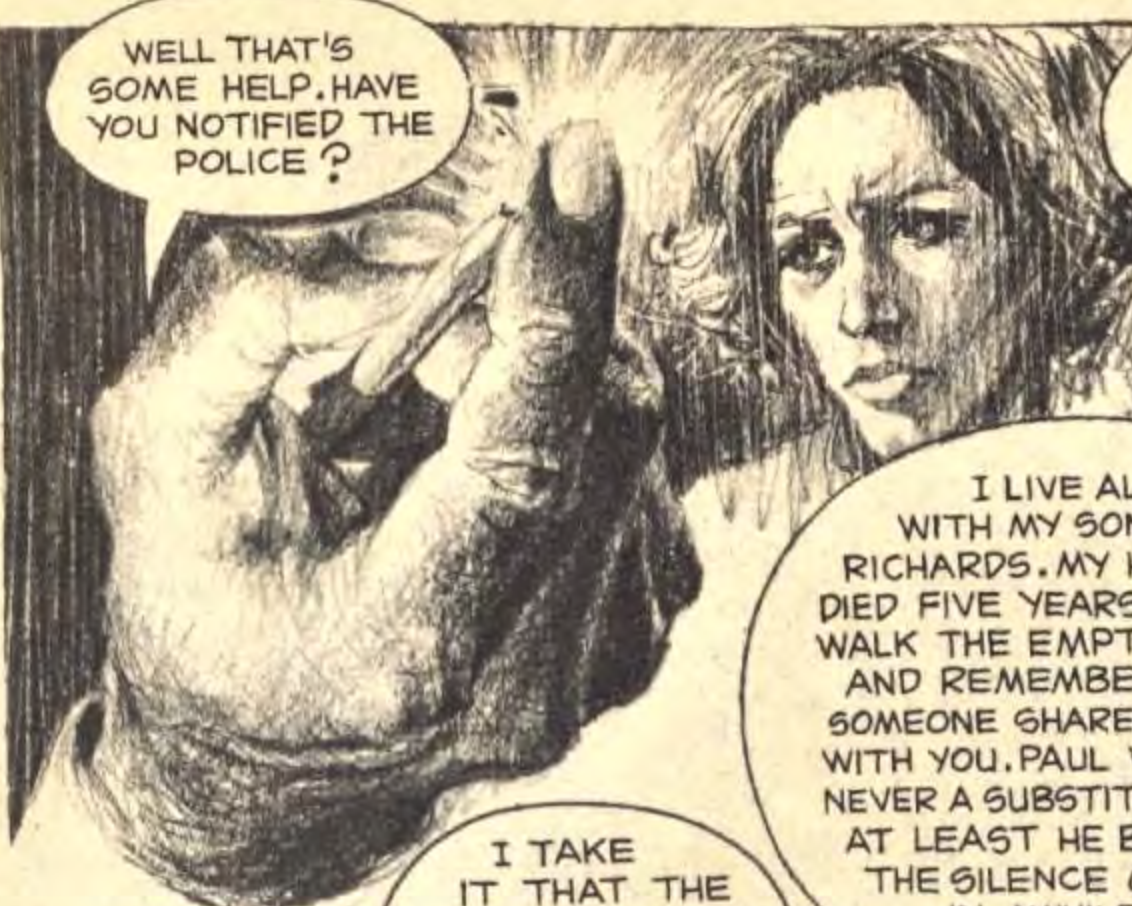


DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE HE WENT?




NO, BUT I HAVE SOME NAMES HERE OF PEOPLE HE ASSOCIATES WITH.






WELL THAT'S SOME HELP. HAVE YOU NOTIFIED THE POLICE?




YES, BUT PAUL IS ONLY ONE MORE NAME ADDED TO A LIST. THAT'S WHY I CAME TO YOU.




I LIVE ALONE WITH MY SON, MR. RICHARDS. MY HUSBAND DIED FIVE YEARS AGO. YOU WALK THE EMPTY ROOMS AND REMEMBER WHEN SOMEONE SHARED THEM WITH YOU. PAUL WAS NEVER A SUBSTITUTE BUT AT LEAST HE BROKE THE SILENCE ONCE IN AWHILE.




I TAKE IT THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND PAUL WAS SOMEWHAT STRAINED?




HOW DO YOU MEAN?




WE'RE GENERATION GAP CLICHES. BUT IT'S BEEN WORSE SINCE HE WENT ON THAT SKIING EXPEDITION LAST JANUARY IN THE ADIRONDACKS.




HE'S BEEN EVEN LESS COMMUNICATIVE, MORE SULLEN, SO MUCH SULLENNESS TODAY, DON'T YOU THINK?




I'VE WATCHED HIM CHANGE. YOU KNOW, I DON'T EVEN THINK HIS FATHER WOULD RECOGNIZE HIM.



HOW OLD IS HE?

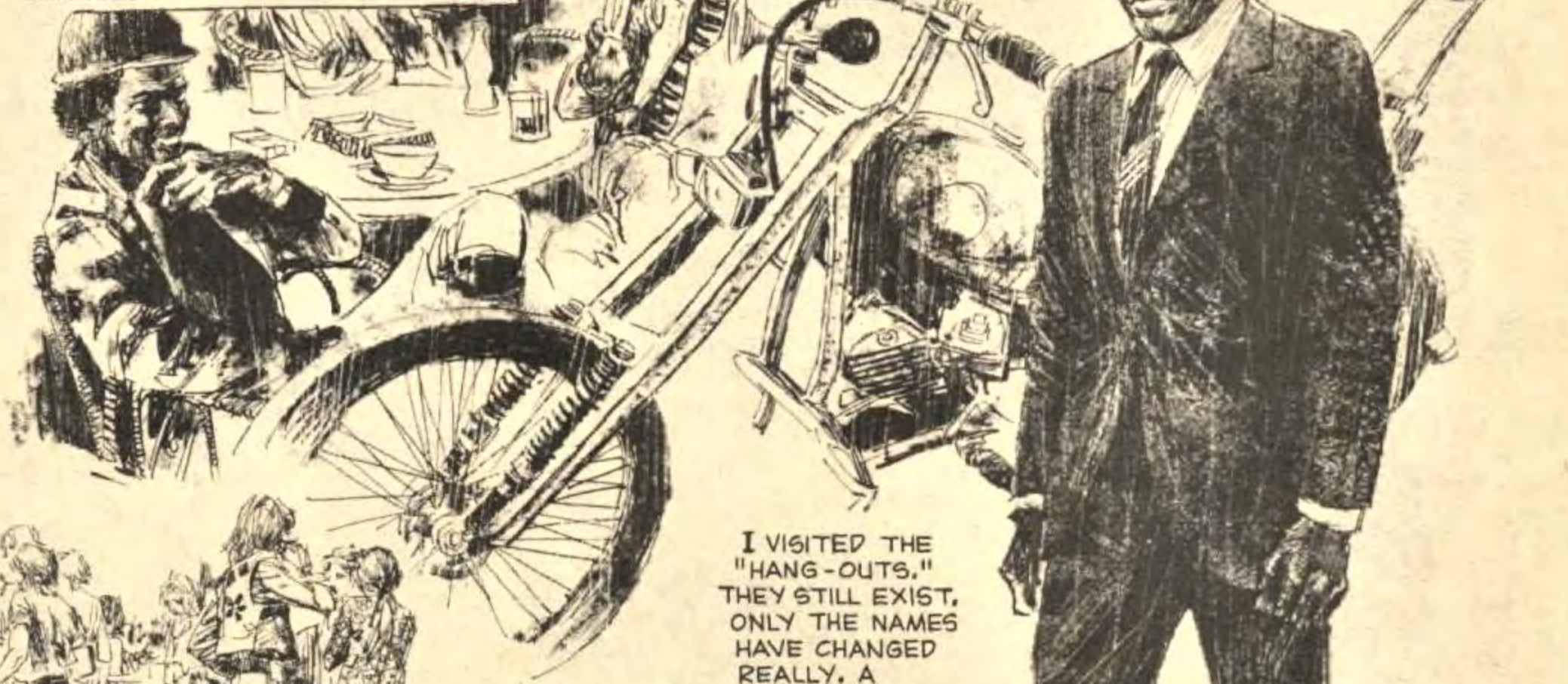


SOMETIMES THEY NEVER ARE. I'LL TRY TO FIND HIM FOR YOU, MRS. RENCHADA.



EIGHTEEN. HE'S A PART OF THEM NOW, NO LONGER A PART OF ME.

KIDS MAY BE DIFFERENT NOW THAN THEY WERE IN THE 50'S BUT IN SOME RESPECTS, THEY HAVEN'T CHANGED.



I VISITED THE "HANG-OUTS," THEY STILL EXIST, ONLY THE NAMES HAVE CHANGED REALLY. A NATURAL EVOLUTION.



I HAD THAT ALIEN FEELING AS I WALKED FROM MY CAR, AN OUTSIDER'S FEELING BEFORE THE OUTSIDE WORLD CAME CRASHING IN. THE TRICK IS TO RECOGNIZE THEIR BELLIGERENCE FOR WHAT IT IS.



THE GIRL'S NAME WAS HOPE ANDERSON. AS I NEARED HER TABLE ONE OF THE KIDS FLASHED A DEFIANT PEACE SYMBOL. WE'RE TURNING EVERYTHING DEFIANT THESE DAYS, EVEN PEACE. IT'S THE "IN" THING TO DO.





HOPE ANDERSON?

YES.

I'D LIKE TO TALK WITH YOU A MOMENT... ABOUT PAUL RENCHADA.

PAUL!!!



DIG IT, MAN! SHE'S MY GIRL NOW, RENCHADA IS ANCIENT HISTORY.

CAN I SPEAK WITH YOU IN PRIVATE?

TAKE YOUR HAND OFF MY ARM!



WHAT?

WHY DON'T YOU JUST MAKE IT, MISTER... RIGHT OUT THE DOOR.

ONCE MORE, TAKE YOUR HAND OFF MY ARM.



LOOK, BABY, MAYBE YOU DIDN'T....

NOW, APOLOGIZE TO THE YOUNG LADY FOR SUCH AN UNBECOMING DISPLAY AND WE'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR MISERY.

I'M... I'M SORRY, HOPE!!!



THIS WAY, MISS ANDERSON.

ALRIGHT... MISTER...???

RICHARDS. ALEXANDER RICHARDS.

WE FOUND ONE OF THOSE QUIET LITTLE SPOTS IN A CITY PARK WHERE YOU'RE SHIELDED FROM THE HARSHNESS OF THE WAITING WORLD. HOPE GAZED INTO THE WATER AND SEEMED TO SEE BEYOND IT. I SAW HER EYES FOR A BRIEF MOMENT...THE IMPULSE TO BE YOUNG BUT THEN IT VANISHED AS IF SHE FELT THE WORLD WAS NOT A PLACE WHERE SHE COULD AFFORD TO BE YOUNG.

TELL ME, HOPE, WHY WERE YOU SO FRIGHTENED WHEN I MENTIONED PAUL'S NAME THE FIRST TIME?

DIDN'T HIS MOTHER TELL YOU? SHE SUSPECTS HIM, I'M SURE.

SUSPECTS HIM OF WHAT?

CYNTHIA AVALLON'S DEATH.

AVALLON? YOU MEAN THE GIRL THEY FOUND MURDERED A FEW NIGHTS AGO?

ONE AND THE SAME.

AND PAUL VANISHED RIGHT AFTER IT HAPPENED. THANK YOU, MRS. RENCHADA.

SHE DIDN'T TELL YOU?



WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO HIM?



NO, SHE DIDN'T. WHERE IS HE, HOPE?

HELP HIM.



BY TAKING HIM BACK TO HIS MOTHER... SHE ONLY WANTS TO LIVE IN YESTERDAY.

BE KIND, HOPE. YOU MAY WANT TO LIVE IN YESTERDAY SOMEDAY... TOO.

WHEN THE YESTERDAY IS TODAY?



I WAS BURNING ABOUT MRS. RENCHADA. I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE WHO HOLD BACK ON ME WHEN I'M DOING THEIR DIRTY WORK. I FOUND THE COMMUNE JUST BEFORE NIGHTFALL. I FIGURED MRS. RENCHADA COULD WAIT...



THEY ALL SEEMED SO LISTLESS. A FEW OF THEM SEEMED COMPLACENT, MOST OF THEM FORLORN-LOOKING AND MOROSE. I KEPT THINKING OF HOPE. I WONDERED IF SHE'D END UP IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.

WORDS FROM AN OLD BEATLE SONG FLITTED THROUGH MY MIND AS I THOUGHT OF HOPE AND WHAT SHE HAD SAID "WILL YOU STILL LOVE ME WHEN I'M 64?"



I TRIED TO IMAGINE THEM YEARS FROM NOW, BUT I COULDN'T.

I'M LOOKING FOR PAUL RENCHADA.

THERE'S NO ONE HERE BY THAT NAME, BROTHER.

YOU MEAN THE KINDA FREAKY ONE?


MAYBE SO...

LOOK, I JUST WANT TO HELP HIM.



SUDDENLY A LONE FIGURE DARTED PAST RICHARDS..





DON'T
MAKE ME
HIT YOU,
PAUL.

MY
MOTHER SENT
YOU, DIDN'T
SHE? **DIDN'T
SHE?**

YEAH. SHE'S
HUNG UP ON GHOSTS
OF THE PAST AND I
GUESS SHE'S AFRAID
YOU KILLED CYNTHIA
AVALLON.


CYNTHIA
... DIED? OH MY
GOD! ISN'T
THERE ANY PLACE
I CAN GO WHERE
THEY'LL LEAVE
ME ALONE?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT MADE ME
SAY THE WORDS. I GUESS IT HAD
TO DO WITH HOPE AND WITH THE
COMMUNE BELOW US AND SOME
OF THE THINGS I HAD SEEN. SO
I SAID THEM EVEN THOUGH I
KNEW NO ONE WAS LISTENING.


... OR AT
LEAST IN THIS
CULTURE, IS EXPLOITED,
SEDUCED, PROGRAMMED,
CATEGORIZED AND DISCRIMINATED
AGAINST IN ANY OF A
DOZEN DIFFERENT WAYS
FOR ANY OF A DOZEN,
DIFFERENT REASONS...



PAUL...
EVENTUALLY, THE
BASIC THING
EVERYBODY IS
GOING TO HAVE TO
REALIZE IS THAT
EVERY SINGLE
HUMAN BEING ON
THE FACE OF THIS
PLANET...



AND UNTIL THAT
TIME, UNTIL WE CAN
DO THAT, SENSELESS
VIOLENCE WILL CONTINUE:
RACIALLY, POLITICALLY
PRAGMATICALLY. EVERY RACE
WILL HAVE SOME WHO ARE
RESPONSIBLE UNTIL WE
MANAGE TO STOP GENERALIZING
AND TRY AND SEE EACH AND
EVERY HUMAN BEING WE
COME INTO CONTACT WITH AS
A SEPARATE ENTITY. IT
SOUNDS KIND OF SIMPLE,
BUT I SOMETIMES DOUBT
WHETHER THE HUMAN
RACE WILL EVER
GET THERE.



WE ARE GOING
TO HAVE TO INTERPRET
THE INDIVIDUAL'S ACTION
RATHER THAN THE CAUSE HE
PROFESSES TO BELONG TO...
RATHER THAN THE RACE HE
IS A MEMBER OF, OR EVEN,
FOR GOD'S SAKE, THE
LIFE STYLE HE
CHOOSES.

MY WORDS HAD BARELY DIED WHEN THE FIRST LIGHTNING BOLT PUNCTUATED ALL THAT I HAD SAID, LIGHTING UP THE COUNTRYSIDE.



THEN, LIKE A NEON SIGN, THE NIGHT WAS DARK AGAIN AND I COULD NO LONGER SEE THE TORMENT ON PAUL RENCHADA'S FACE. BUT SOMETHING WAS HAPPENING THERE. EVEN THROUGH THE DARKNESS SEPARATING US, I WAS AWARE OF THAT.



THE SECOND STROKE OF LIGHTNING ILLUMINATED THE SCENE AND IN THAT MOMENT OF UNNATURAL LIGHT I SAW FLESH SOMEHOW CHANGED TO ANIMAL FUR. BUT IN THOSE EYES, THERE WAS THE SAME TORMENT I HAD SEEN BEFORE.



I WANTED TO RUN, MAYBE SCREAM. "COOL" DIDN'T HAVE ANY MEANING AT THAT MOMENT.

THE WIRY FORM SLAMED ME TO THE GROUND. I WISHED I WAS A TELEVISION PRIVATE EYE WITH A FORTY-FIVE.

MY HEAD HIT A ROCK. I WAS NEARLY KNOCKED SENSELESS. THROUGH THE TEARS IN MY EYES, I COULD SEE HIM HOVERING OVER ME.

SOME OLD COMBAT TRAINING CAME BACK TO ME.

I MADE IT TO MY FEET. THE CREATURE WAS STANDING AT THE CREST OF THE HILL... ANOTHER BOLT OF LIGHTNING SILHOUETTING IT. I HAD THE FEELING THAT SOMEWHERE THE HUMAN PART OF PAUL RENCHADA WAS FIGHTING TO MASTER THE BESTIAL AND WAS **LOSING!**

A GROWL SPLIT THE AIR AS HE CAME TOWARD ME.



I SCRAMBLED DOWN THE HILLSIDE. THERE WERE TORCHES IN THE DISTANCE. THIS WAS GOING TO BE LIKE AN OLD LON CHANEY FLICK IN THE FINAL REEL.



I BUMPED INTO THE BIG BROTHER WHO WAS LEADING THE COMMUNE TO THE WEREWOLF.



A SKINNY LITTLE GUY, HIGH ON SOMETHING OTHER THAN BOOZE, GIGGLED WHEN THE CREATURE CAME INTO VIEW. THE OTHERS STARTED TO MOVE OUT JUST LIKE ANY ESTABLISHMENT PATRON WOULD HAVE DONE. FEAR IS A UNIVERSAL THING, SON.



I TRIED TO STOP THE SKINNY LITTLE GUY FROM RUNNING TOWARD THE BEAST, BUT HIS REALITY WAS FAR FROM ANY THING REAL.



A SICKENING SCREAM SPLIT THE AIR-AS IF HIS ONE SEARING MOMENT OF REALIZATION CAME TOO LATE!



I WATCHED THE CREATURE REEL BACK. THE EYES OF PAUL RENCHADA WITNESSED WHAT THE BEAST HAD DONE AND THEY SEEMED TO DIE... TWO ORBS LOST SOMEWHERE IN THE MATTED FUR.

THERE HAD TO BE SOME WAY TO SAVE PAUL FROM HIMSELF, TO IMMOBILIZE HIM UNTIL THE FULL MOON PASSED ITS ZENITH.

THEN I HAD IT! ALL I HAD TO DO WAS LURE HIM TO ONE OF THE CABINS AND LOCK HIM IN! IT MIGHT HOLD HIM LONG ENOUGH...

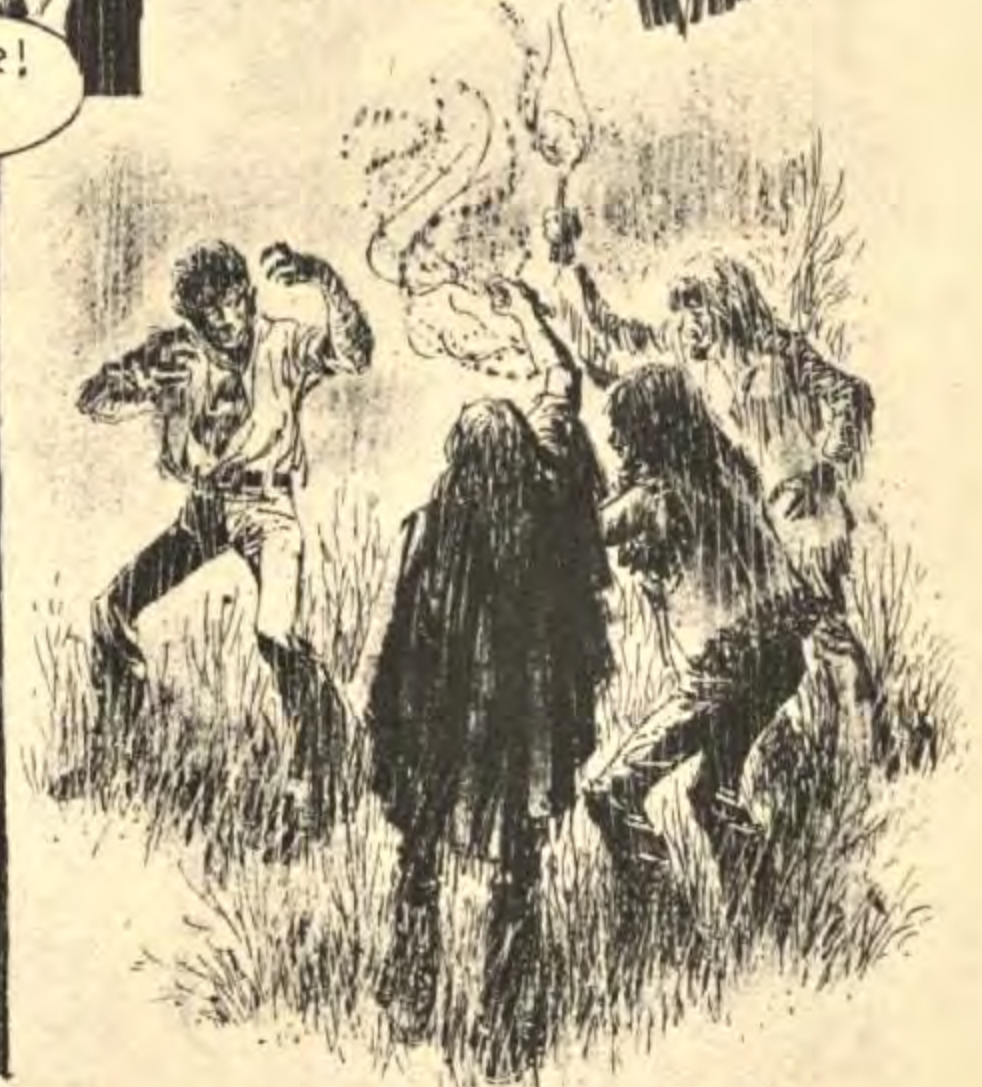


LONG ENOUGH TO LET HIM CHANGE BACK TO PAUL RENCHADA. AND TO LET THE PROPER AUTHORITIES CURE THIS STRANGE AFFLICTION.

MONSTER!
MONSTER!



KILL IT NOW!
THE FIRE'LL STOP IT!



IT PROBABLY WOULD HAVE WORKED. IF HELP HAD COME IN TIME. THERE WAS A CHANCE THAT PAUL RENCHADA COULD HAVE LIVED OUT THE REST OF HIS LIFE. BUT I'LL NEVER KNOW. NEITHER WILL HIS MOTHER OR HOPE, FOR THAT MATTER. PAUL RENCHADA HAD COME TO AN END.





I STARED AT THE MUTILATED BODY AND THOUGHT ABOUT THOSE WHO HAD CALLED HIM MONSTER. SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME, SOMEONE IS GOING TO HAVE TO REALIZE THE TRADE IN HYPOCRITICAL LIFE STYLES!



THE MOON, AN UNWILLING ACCOMPLICE TO YET ANOTHER SCENE OF VIOLENCE, HID BEHIND GREY CLOUDS. THE RAIN HAD STOPPED AND ALL SEEMED STRANGELY STILL.



I TURNED AND WALKED AWAY QUIETLY. SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME, PERHAPS SOME DAY; BUT IT WON'T BE THIS PLACE - TODAY OR..... TOMORROW.



THE END