

THE STRANGE, INCUREABLE PHOBIA...

YOU CAN ALMOST
SEE THE WHEELS IN
OL' PIERRE'S HEAD
CHURNIN' AS HE
STANDS THERE FROZEN
IN **FEAR** BEFORE
ONE A' GOD'S MOST
BEAUTIFUL CREATIONS!

WE WON'T MOVE
FOR NARY A MINUTE
... FIGURIN' SCHEMIN'
ON WHAT TO **DO**...
HOW TO GET **AWAY**
FROM THE **PLANTS**...!



...OF MAD PIERRE! LANGLOIS!

THEN, REAL SUDDEN-LIKE...
AND WITH THE CRAZIEST
GLEAM YOU EVER SAW IN
A MAN'S EYE... OLD WEIRD
PIERRE'LL GO **STARK**,
RAVING MAD !!



HE'LL **POUNCE**
ON THE FLOWER,
AND START
RIPPING IT
APART WITH
AN INSANE
VENGEANCE!

AND NOT UNTIL THE FLOWER IS A **DEAD MASS**
OF TORN PETALS AT HIS FEET WILL PIERRE
FINALLY COME OUT OF HIS TRANCE...

...LONG ENOUGH TO **CREMATE** ANY SEMBLANCE OF
LIFE LEFT IN THAT PLANT.



DAMNED
FLOWERS!
YOU'LL
CURSE ME
NO LONGER!



REMEMBER THE DAY OL' MAD PIERRE SET FIRE TO THE ROCK COUNTY WOODS! MAYBE HE GOT A LITTLE CARELESS WHEN HE WAS CREMATIN' ONE OF HIS FLOWERS...OR MAYBE HE BURNED ALL THEM TREES ON **PURPOSE**.



WHATEVER... HE HAD A **BLAZE** GOIN' THAT TOOK UP **EVERY** TREE IN ROCK COUNTY!

FOLKS IN THESE PARTS DIDN'T TAKE KINDLY TO PIERRE **BURNIN'** UP THEIR TREES. BUT THEY SHRUGGED IT OFF, BECAUSE OF PIERRE'S **WIFE!**



BESIDES... MARGARET WAS **EXPECTIN'** AT THE TIME, AND IF WE'D A **LOCKED** PIERRE UP JUST 'CAUSE HE WAS CARELESS WITH HIS MATCHES IT WOULD'A DEPRIVED MARGARET'S BABY OF HAVIN' A FATHER...

...EVEN IF THAT FATHER WAS OLD **MAD PIERRE!**



JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY **LOVES** AND RESPECTS THAT WOMAN. SHE'S BEEN A GOOD NEIGHBOR, AND I GUESS WE ALL FIGURED THAT IF SOMEONE AS GOOD AS MARGARET COULD PUT UP WITH PIERRE... WELL, THEN COULDN'T WE **ALL?**

DIDN'T REALLY COME INTO THE ACT UNTIL THE DAY THAT BABY DECIDED HE WANTED TO SEE THE **WORLD...**



Ooow!
IT'S TIME,
PIERRE! GO
FETCH DOC
ADAMS!
HURRY!



AND EVEN **THEN**, PIERRE WOULDN'T LET ME TOUCH **HIS WIFE!**

PIERRE WAS **NERVOUS**... JITTERY! AND I THOUGHT I DETECTED A CERTAIN APPREHENSION IN HIM, LIKE... LIKE MAYBE HE DIDN'T **WANT** THIS **BABY!**

HE MADE ME STAND THERE LISTENIN' TO HIS STORY...WHILE HIS WIFE WAS IN THE NEXT ROOM... SCREAMIN' FROM THE LABOR PAINS!



PIERRE TOLD ME OF HIS CHILDHOOD. HOW, AS A BOY, HE HAD LIVED ON A GREAT **FLORALED ESTATE!**

HE TOLD ME OF A MOTHER HE NEVER KNEW... AND OF A **STEP-MOTHER** HE WANTED TO KNOW! A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN NAMED **MARIE**, WHOM HIS FATHER HAD MARRIED WHEN PIERRE'S MOTHER DIED!



BUT MARIE WAS **INDIFFERENT** TO PIERRE. SHE SHOWED MORE AFFECTION FOR THE FLOWERS WITH WHICH SHE SURROUNDED HERSELF... AT A TIME WHEN PIERRE NEEDED AFFECTION...

AND PIERRE'S FATHER AND UNCLES WERE NO BETTER! TO THEM, MARIE AND HER FLOWERS WERE **BEAUTIFUL!** PIERRE... NOTHING MORE THAN A CHILDSOME **NUISANCE!**



BECAUSE THEY WERE BLINDED BY MARIE'S BEAUTY, PIERRE'S FATHER AND UNCLES DID NOT SEE WHAT MARIE **REALLY** WAS, PIERRE WAS THE FIRST TO KNOW THAT MARIE WAS A **WITCH...!** A **FLOWER WITCH!**

WITH HIS KNOWLEDGE PIERRE BEGAN **HIDING** FROM MARIE. HE KNEW THAT IF SHE LEARNED PIERRE HAD FOUND HER OUT... SHE WOULD PUT A **WITCH'S CURSE** ON HIM!



SO PIERRE SPENT HIS TIME IN A DARKENED CELLAR BROODING... **HIDING!**



...WHILE HIS NEW MOTHER, **THE WITCH**, LANGUISHED IN THE LUXURY OF PIERRE'S FATHER'S **WEALTH!**

BUT LITTLE BOYS CAN'T STAY IN CELLARS FOREVER. ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS, PIERRE BEGAN DOUBTING... MAYBE MARIE WASN'T A WITCH AT ALL! HE WENT TO HER... LOOKING FOR AFFECTION... UNDERSTANDING...



...AND IT WAS THEN THAT MARIE CURSED HIM!

YOU ARE SPITEFUL AND SPOILED, PIERRE! YOU WANT ATTENTION, WHEN YOU DESERVE NONE!

YOU SEEK TO DISTRACT ME FROM MY FLOWERS...

...AND MY FLOWERS DO NOT LIKE THAT!



...AND WITH THAT, PIERRE'S STEPMOTHER WENT ABOUT HER LIFE AS BEFORE... BESTOWING ALL HER AFFECTION ON HER FLOWERS... SAYING NONE FOR POOR LITTLE PIERRE!

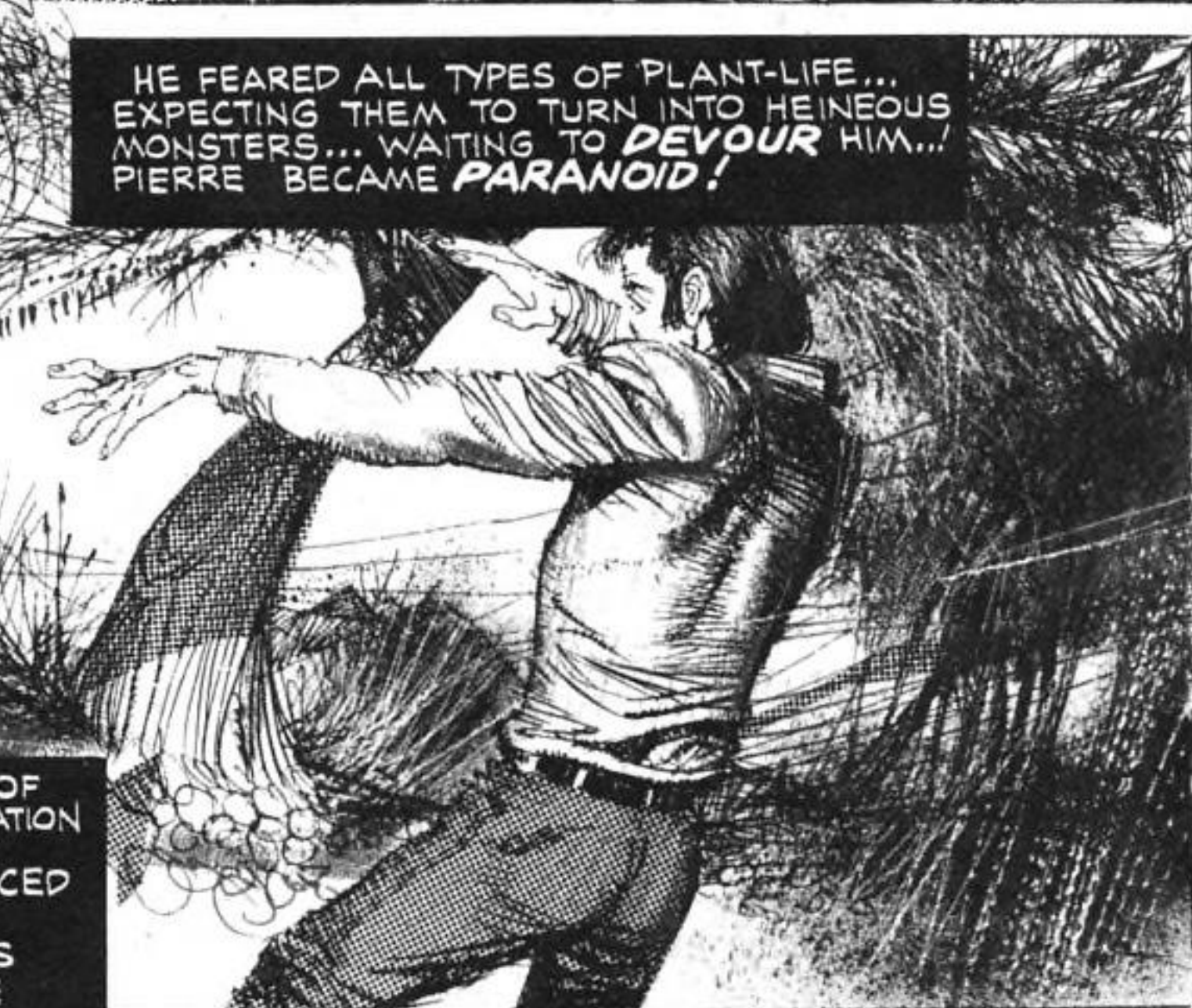


AS HE GREW PIERRE SHUNNED OTHER MEN... HE BECAME A LONER.

AND HE WAITED... WAITED FOR MARIE'S CURSE TO COME TRUE..!



HE FEARED ALL TYPES OF PLANT-LIFE... EXPECTING THEM TO TURN INTO HEINOUS MONSTERS... WAITING TO DEVOUR HIM...! PIERRE BECAME PARANOID!



HE MOVED TO THE GRANITE-STREWN SHORES OF ROCK COUNTY, KNOWING OF THE LITTLE VEGETATION THAT IS ABLE TO GROW HERE. HERE HE MET AND MARRIED MARGARET... AND SHE CONVINCED HIM THAT THE SHOULD HAVE A CHILD...!

AND NOW, PIERRE TOLD ME HOW HE FEARS FOR HIS CHILD'S LIFE... BECAUSE OF THE CURSE..!

THIS IS **FOOLISHNESS** PIERRE!
THERE WAS NEVER A **CURSE!** YOUR
CHILDISH MIND SIMPLY **RESENTED**
YOUR STEP-MOTHER SPENDING
MORE TIME WITH HER
FLOWERS THAN WITH
YOU!

BUT
PLEASE, PIERRE...
YOUR **WIFE...**
SHE **NEEDS**
ME!

WITH THAT, OLD MAD PIERRE
ALLOWED ME TO ATTEND TO
HIS WIFE...AND THE BIRTH
OF HIS FIRST **CHILD!** HE
WAITED AS IMPATIENTLY AS
ANY EXPECTANT FATHER
IN THE ADJOINING ROOM...!

AND THEN HE HEARD THE CRIES OF HIS NEW-
BORN **SON!** WHEN I EMERGED, I FEAR IT WAS I
WHO WAS IN MORE SHOCK THAN POOR PIERRE...!

DOCTOR, WHAT
IS THE MATTER?
MARGERET...
IS SHE...

Y-YOUR
WIFE IS
FINE PIERRE!
YOU...YOU HAVE
A **SON...** B...
BUT...

WHAT IS IT,
DOCTOR?
TELL ME...
PLEASE...!

BUT PIERRE DIDN'T WAIT FOR MY EXPLANATION,
HE KNEW SOMETHING WAS **WRONG...** TERRIBLY **WRONG**
...AND HE RAN TO HIS WIFE AND NEWBORN CHILD.

...THAT MIGHT HE
FIRST LAID EYES ON
THE NEWBORN SON
HE HAD **SIRED...**

AND I FEAR
THAT IF
PIERRE WERE
NOT ALREADY
MAD... HE
WOULD HAVE
INDEED
LOST HIS
MIND THAT
NIGHT...

THEY NAMED HIM **BUD!**
AND IN TRUTH, HE WAS
JUST A LITTLE **SPROUT!**

IT TOOK PIERRE AWHILE
TO GET **USED** TO THE
WAY HIS BOUNCING-BABY
BOY **LOOKED...**

...TOOK HIM
AWHILE TO
UNDERSTAND
THAT **THIS**
WAS THE
CURSE HIS
STEPMOTHER
HAD INFLICTED
UPON HIM..!

BUT TODAY,
PIERRE
IS ONE OF
THE MOST
DEVOTED
FATHERS IN
ALL OF
ROCK
COUNTY!

PIERRE'S **STILL** A LONER! STILL
DOESN'T SWAP LIES WITH THE BOYS
DOWN AT BARNEY'S!

HE'S STILL SCARED TO **DEATH** OF
FLOWERS! ONLY DIFFERENCE IS,
HE DOESN'T DESTROY THEM NOW!

HE'S **OVER** THAT, THESE DAYS..!



JUST THE SAME,
WE **STILL** CALL
HIM **MAD** PIERRE!

SINCE HIS SON'S
BIRTH, HE'S BEEN
CRAZIER
THAN HELL!

Jose Bea