

**MICHAEL MORBIUS**, NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING BIOPHYSICIST, WAS DYING OF AN INCURABLE BLOOD DISEASE. SO HE ATTEMPTED TO **SAVE** HIMSELF—WITH AN UNTESTED SERUM DERIVED FROM THE BLOOD OF A **BAT**. THE TREATMENT **SUCCEEDED**. HE IS NO LONGER DYING, BUT TO **LIVE**, HE MUST ROAM THE WORLD BY **NIGHT**, STALKING HUMAN **PREY**, STEALING BLOOD FROM OTHERS' VEINS—A **LIVING VAMPIRE** WHO DESPISES HIS SCIENCE-SPAWNED **CURSE!**

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PRESENTS: **THE MAN CALLED MORBIUS!**™

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# RETURN TO TERROR!

THE STAR-SUN ARCTURUS SETS SLOW AND RED ON THE EASTERN HORIZON OF ITS FOURTH PLANET...

...A WORLD POPULATED BY A RACE OF MUTANTS... BY TRIBES OF ANDROID AND HUMAN BARBARIANS...

...AND, FOR THE NONCE, BY THE LIVING VAMPIRE NAMED MORBIUS!

THERE IT IS, MORBIUS-- THE ONLY REMNANT OF OUR ONCE-MIGHTY STELLAR FLEET.

THE LAST STARSHIP... CONSTRUCTED EONS AGO... BEFORE THE GENETIC WARS.

AND THAT CRAFT IS TO CARRY US THE LIGHT YEARS 'TWIXT HERE AND EARTH?



HOW CAN YOU EVEN BE CERTAIN IT WILL FUNCTION AFTER ALL THIS TIME?

WE CANNOT, BUT IT IS OUR ONLY--



HOLD, LORD I! THERE IS SOMEONE-- OR SOMETHING...



...ABOVE US.



THE BARBARIANS, MORBIUS. THEY WORSHIP THE ROCKET AS A GOD.



AYE! AND YOUR RACE IS FORBIDDEN TO TREAD THIS SACRED GROUND-- MUTANT!



I TREADS WHERE I CHOOSES-- ANDROID! I'S RACE BUILT YOUR "GOD"... AND YOU, AS WELL!



BLASPHEMER! IF YOU REFUSE TO TURN BACK--



--YOU LEAVE US NO CHOICE BUT TO --ATTACK!!

HAIEEE



OUR WAY BACK TO THE CITY IS BLOCKED! RUN, I--



--TOWARD THE SHIP! IT'S OUR ONLY POSSIBLE SANCTUARY! WE CAN REACH IT IF WE--



--HURRY.



WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, MAN?! YOU'VE BLOWN WHAT-EVER LEAD WE HAD!!

I-- I IS SORRY, TERRAN. I'S RACE HAS NO INSTINCT FOR SELF PRESERVATION YOU RECALL. I DID NOT REALIZE...



WILL YOU BE SILENT?!

HAVE NO FEAR, OUT-LANDER! YOU'LL NEVER "HEAR" HIS TELEPATHIC "VOICE" AGAIN!



AND THAT MIGHT WELL BE TRUE -- WERE IT NOT FOR THE FACT THAT THIS HOLLOW-BONED MAN-BAT IS DECEPTIVELY LIGHT AND AGILE.



THUS IT'S NOT HE, BUT ANOTHER OF HIS FOES WHO FINDS THE PATH TO ETERNAL QUIETUDE.



BLAST-- SO MANY OF THEM!



THE ONLY VIABLE STRATEGY--



-- IS TO SEIZE A HOSTAGE THEY DARE NOT HARM!



THAT FAIR- HAURED WARRIOR- WOMAN... THEY RALLY 'ROUND HER AS IF SHE WERE A QUEEN OF SOME SORT!



SHE SHALL BE THE ONE!



MORBUS' INTENT IS NOT TO HARM THE WOMAN-- ONLY TO USE HER AS A SHIELD. HOWEVER...



FULLY 24 HOURS HAVE PASSED SINCE LAST HE FEASTED...!

AND SO HER BEAUTY-- AND ACCESSABILITY-- PROVE IRRESISTABLE.

THE QUEEN IS A DRY CORPSE BY THE TIME THE WARRIORS SURROUND MORBIUS AGAIN.



AND HER TROOPS STAND UNMOVING, STONILY SILENT, EYES AGAPE WITH HORROR... AT THE FOOT OF THEIR GOD.



BUT THEIR NUMBNESS ABATES ALL TOO QUICKLY.



THE FANGED DEMON SLEW OUR QUEEN-- AND DRANK HER VERY BLOOD!



I-- THE SHIP! OPEN THE DOOR TO THE SHIP!



I SHAN'T BE ABLE TO HOLD THEM OFF FOR LONG!



I-- IS TRYING, MORBIUS. I IS NOT SURE HE REMEMBERS...!



AH, YES! THAT'S IT! I HAS OPENED THE SHIP, MORBIUS. NOW WHAT SHALL I--



GET INSIDE YOU BLITHERING FOOL! AND MAKE ROOM FOR ME TO FOLLOW!



NOW, SEAL THE HATCH-- AT ONCE!!

INSIDE--

YOU'RE CERTAIN THAT THEY CANNOT BREACH THESE WALLS?

I'LL HAVE TO TAKE YOUR WORD FOR THAT, I SUPPOSE.

AT LEAST YOU WERE CORRECT ABOUT ONE THING!

ABSOLUTELY, MORBIUS. THE HULL WAS DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND ALL THE RIGORS OF SPACE.

THAT LADDER DID LEAD US TO THE SHIP'S CONTROL COMPLEX.

AS THE DIAGRAMS WE FOUND IN THE CITY SAID IT, WOULD.

THUS, THE BATTLE AND ITS TERRIBLE TENSIONS SUBSIDE FOR A TIME, AS MORBIUS AND HIS BIZARRE ALLY SLIDE INTO THE THICKLY-PADDED PILOTS' CHAIRS.

WHY ARE YOU STILL SO TENSE, MY FRIEND? THE DANGER HAS PASSED-- FOR NOW.

RELAX! WE HAVE A LONG-- BUT INCREDIBLY BEAUTIFUL-- RIDE BEFORE US... A RIDE ACROSS THE GALAXY TO YOUR EARTH.

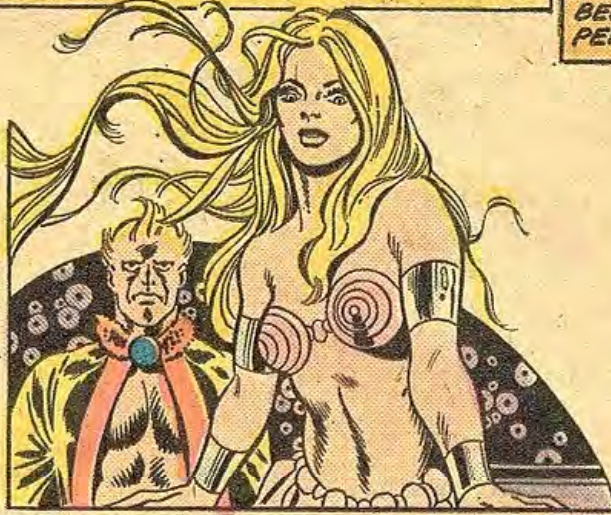
THAT IS WHERE THE REAL DANGER LIES-- IN OUR UPCOMING CONFRONTATION WITH MY ANCESTORS WHOM YOU CALL THE CARETAKERS!

THEY NAMED THEMSELVES THAT, I. I CALL THEM FOOLS AND MADMEN!

**BUT, AS MORBIUS KNOWS ALL TOO WELL, THE CARETAKERS ARE BOTH MORE AND LESS THAN THAT.**

**THE LESS: THEY ARE BUT ONE SIDE OF A RAPIDLY-ESCALATING CONFLICT, THE LIKE OF WHICH EARTH HAS NEVER SEEN: A WAR BETWEEN THE FORCES OF SCIENCE, THE CARETAKERS, AND THOSE OF SORCERY. THE LATTER REPRESENTED BY THE DEMON-PRIEST DAEMON, AND, MORBIUS RECALLS PAINFULLY, HIS OWN LOVER, THE WOMAN MARTINE, IS A PART OF THAT GROUP.**

**THE MORE: THE CARETAKERS ARE GENETIC ENGINEERS, BORN CENTURIES AGO ON ARCTURUS-IV, WHO CRASH-LANDED ON EARTH IN MAN'S RACIAL INFANCY-- AND WHO SINCE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO GUIDE EARTH'S DESTINY. NOW, HOWEVER, THEY ARE DYING-- AT WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO BE THE MOST CRUCIAL PERIOD IN MAN'S HISTORY.**



**THEIR SOLUTION? CREATE A RACE OF SUPERHUMANS TO LIVE AMONG "ORDINARY" MEN, TO EXERT SUBTLE-- OR PERHAPS OVERT-- INFLUENCE ON EARTHLY AFFAIRS, TO AVERT MAN'S DESTRUCTION OF HIMSELF AND HIS PLANET, AND TO PROTECT MANKIND FROM DAEMON'S DARK FORCES.**

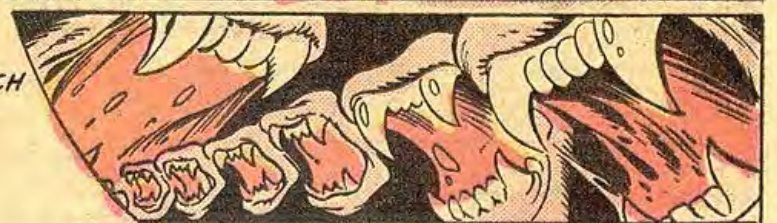
**IT IS A SOLUTION MORBIUS DESPISES.**

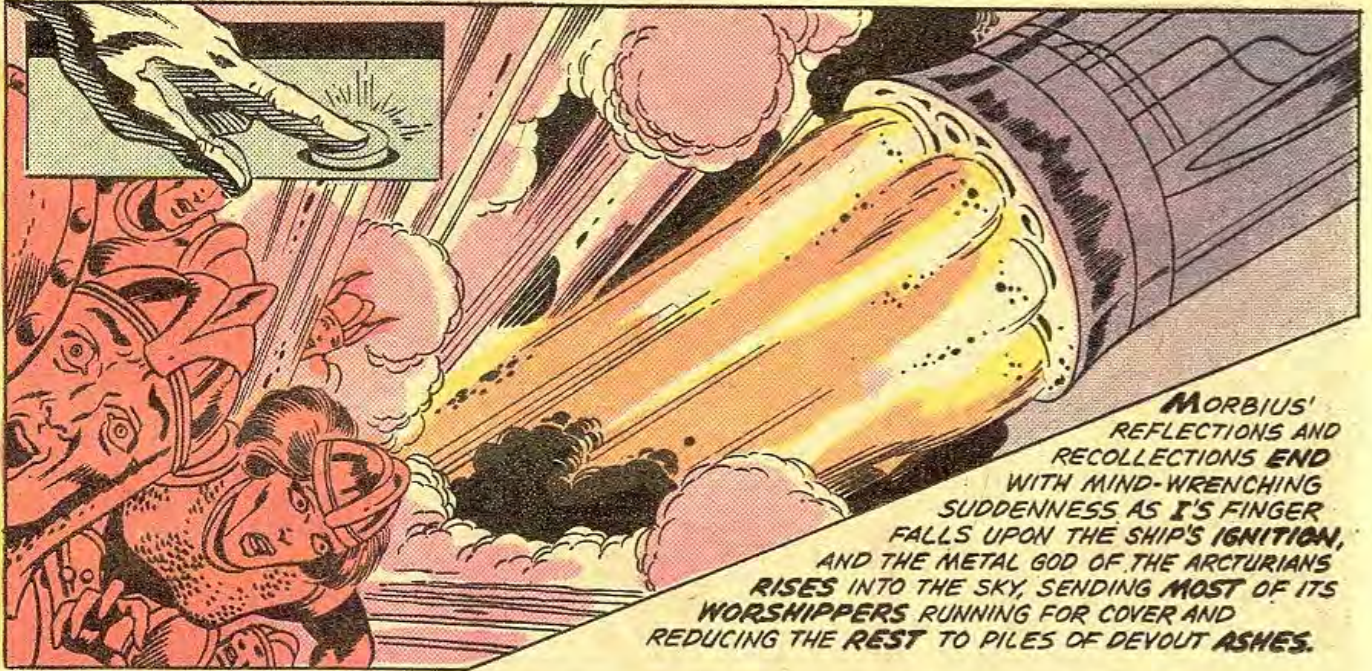


**FOR HE BELIEVES THAT MAN MUST EARN HIS OWN RIGHT TO CONTINUED EXISTENCE-- THAT IF HUMANKIND IS INTENT UPON SELF-DESTRUCTION, IT SHOULD HAVE ITS WAY-- THAT THE CARETAKERS' SUPER-RACE CAN ONLY IMPEDE OUR MATURATION AS A SPECIES. AND HE HAS BECOME ALL THE MORE CONVINCED...**



**...SINCE WITNESSING TWO OTHER CASES OF TAMPERING WITH EVOLUTION: THE "LAND WITHIN" THAT DAEMON'S CAT DEMON, BALKATAR, INHABITED AND THE CARETAKERS' OWN WORLD, WHERE A WAR OVER THE MORALITY OF GENETIC ENGINEERING DESTROYED AN AGES-OLD SOCIETY SOON AFTER THE CARETAKERS LEFT THE REALM-- A WAR WHICH CREATED A RACE OF NEARLY IMMORTAL MUTATIONS WITH NO INSTINCT FOR SELF-PRESERVATION, WHOSE ONLY DESIRE IN LIFE... IS TO DIE.**





**MORBIUS'**  
REFLECTIONS AND  
RECOLLECTIONS END  
WITH MIND-WRENCHING  
SUDDENNESS AS I'S FINGER  
FALLS UPON THE SHIP'S IGNITION,  
AND THE METAL GOD OF THE ARCTURIANS  
RISES INTO THE SKY, SENDING MOST OF ITS  
WORSHIPPERS RUNNING FOR COVER AND  
REDUCING THE REST TO PILES OF DEVOUT ASHES.



**CUT:**

TO A TIME  
SEVERAL  
WEEKS  
LATER...

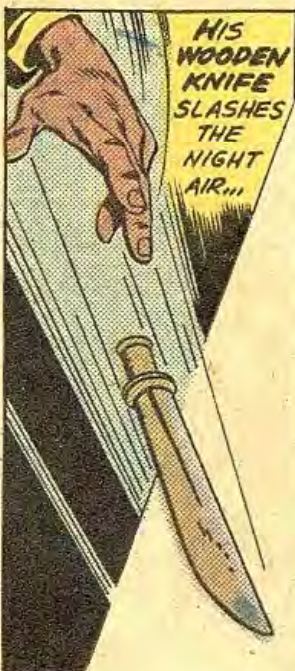
...TO THE SHIP'S TARGET PLANET... AND ONE  
OF THAT WORLD'S MORE REMARKABLE  
INHABITANTS:

**EARTH-**  
AND THE  
VAMPIRE-  
SLAYER  
CALLED  
**BLADE!**

**BLADE--**WHOSE  
MOTHER WAS  
SLAIN BY ONE  
OF THE UNDEAD  
ON THE NIGHT  
OF HIS BIRTH.



**BLADE--**WHOSE LIFE  
IS DEVOTED TO  
HUNTING DOWN THAT  
VAMPIRE... AND ANY  
OTHERS LUCKLESS  
ENOUGH TO CROSS  
HIS PATH.



**HIS  
WOODEN  
KNIFE  
SLASHES  
THE  
NIGHT  
AIR...**



...AND IMBEDS ITSELF IN THE BACK OF THIS  
TEE-SHIRTED BLOODSUCKER... ENTERING  
THE VAMPIRIC HEART THE HARD WAY!

AN INSTANT LATER, BLADE IS DOWN FROM THE ROOF FOR ANOTHER VAMPIRE, ALREADY IN HAND.



KNEELING BESIDE THE SLAIN VAMPIRE, BLADE LIFTS HIGH THAT SECOND KNIFE...



HE RACES OUT OF THE ALLEY...



AND BRINGS IT DOWN HARD, SEVERING THE NECK OF THE FANGED ONE, FINISHING THE UGLY WORK.



THEN... A SOUND FROM THE STREETS... SCREAMING!

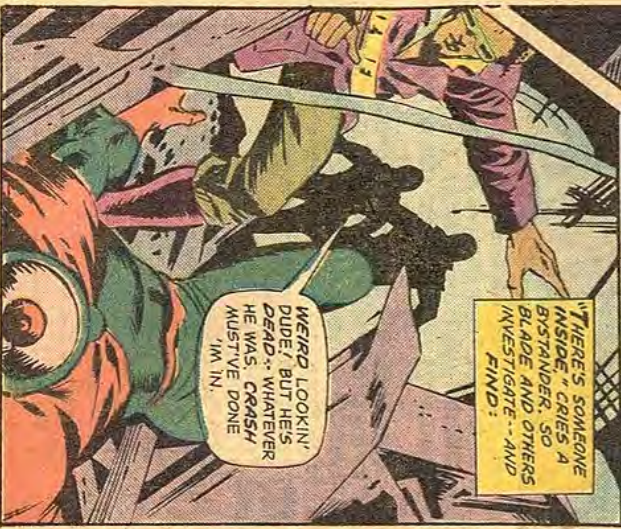
MAN! JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU'VE SEEN EVERYTHING--! A FREAKIN' SPACE SHIP!



CRASH!

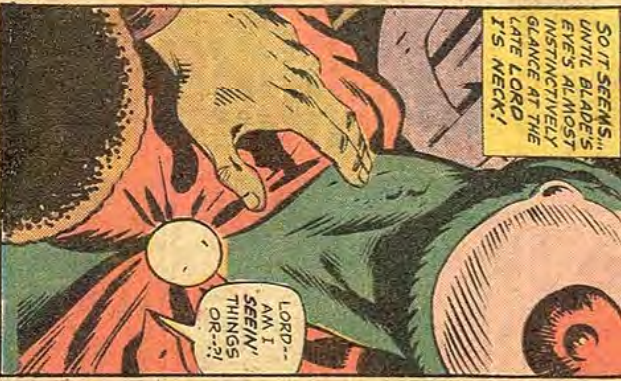
AND HIS ASTONISHED EYES BEHOLD:

"THERE'S SOMEONE INSIDE" CRIES A BYSTANDER, SO BLADE AND OTHERS INVESTIGATE-- AND FIND:



WEIRD LOOKIN' DUDE! BUT HE'S DEAD-- WHATEVER HE WAS, CRASH MUST'VE DONE 'IM IN.

SO IT SEEMS... UNTIL BLADE'S EYES ALMOST INSTINCTIVELY GLANCE AT THE LATE LORD T'S NECK!



LORD-- AM I SEEN! THINGS OR--?

OR HAVE WE BEEN INVADED... BY A VAMPIRE FROM OUTER SPACE?! NAH, THAT'S CRAZY!

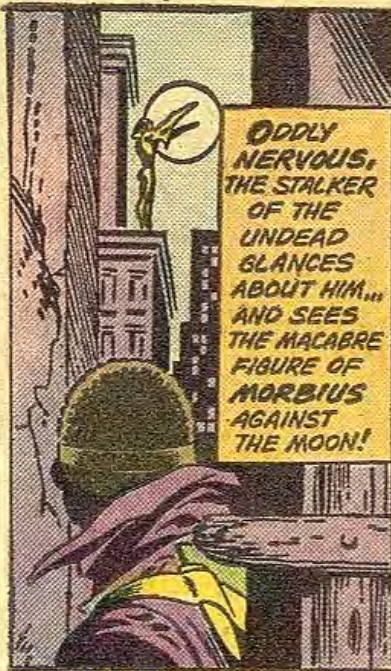
I'VE SEEN B-MOVIES WITH BETTER PLOTS THAN THAT! AN' YET...

...SOMETHING FANGED THAT BIG EYEBALL BACK THERE... SOMETHING THAT MUST'VE ESCAPED FROM THE ROCKET-- JUST BEFORE IT CRASHED.



"SOMETHING THAT CAN FLY--"

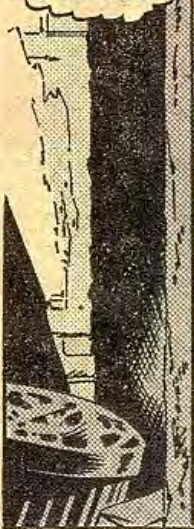




AND WITH I DEAD--  
THERE'S NO **PROOF** OF MY  
CLAIM THAT THEIR  
PROJECT COULD  
DESTROY HUMANITY!



IF ONLY I  
COULD HAVE  
CONTROLLED  
MY **BLOOD-  
LUST...**!



HE HAD TO COME  
THIS WAY! I'M  
**SURE I SAW 'IM!**



MAYBE HE  
DUCKED IN  
**HERE!** IT'S  
AS GOOD A  
POSSIBILITY  
AS **ANY!**



I SEEM  
TO HAVE  
**EVADED**  
MY  
PURSUER!



**BLAST!** FOUR  
DIRECTIONS HE  
COULD'VE TAKEN!  
WHERE--?



AROUND  
THE  
**CORNER!**



**HOLD IT RIGHT  
THERE!** LEMME  
GET A GOOD  
**LOOK** AT YOU!  
ONLY **VAMPIRES**  
I EVER **MET**  
'TIL NOW  
WE'RE FROM  
**EARTH!**



THEY  
DON'T  
GROW 'EM  
ANY **PRETTIER**  
**OUT THERE,**  
DO THEY?

"OTHER **VAMPIRES**"--?  
HE IS NO AGENT OF  
DAEMON-- NOR OF  
THE **CARETAKERS!**  
HE IS SOME KIND  
OF **MADMAN!!**



OF COURSE! **WOODEN  
KNIVES!** LIKE THE  
**WOODEN STAKES** THAT  
SUPPOSEDLY **KILL**  
THE **VAMPIRES** OF **LEGEND!**

HE **FANCIES**  
HIMSELF SOME  
SORT OF **CRUSADER--**  
AGAINST CREATURES  
WHICH EXIST ONLY  
IN HIS **WARPED**  
**IMAGINATION!**

HE'S AS STRONG AS ANY EARTH VAMPIRE-- THAT'S FOR SURE! BUT THAT OUTFIT-- THAT DEATH-PALE SKIN OF HIS-- UNREAL!

WHOEVER YOU ARE-- WHATEVER YOUR LUNATIC PURPOSE-- I'VE NO TIME FOR YOU, DO YOU HEAR?

I DO NOT WISH TO HARM YOU BUT...!



WUNNH!!

HARM ME?! MAN, YOU'RE TALKIN' TO A CAT WHO'S TANGLED WITH DRACULA--

--AND LIVED TO TELL ABOUT IT-- YOU DIG?



I-- HEY, WAITAMINIT! YOU SPEAK ENGLISH?! THEN-- YOU'RE NOT FROM ANOTHER PLANET! YOU'RE GOOD OL' EARTH VAMPIRE FILTH AFTER ALL!



AN' THAT MEANS MY DANDY LITTLE DAGGERS CAN KILL YOU-- CAN'T THEY?

HE IS INSANE-- TOTALLY! HE TRULY BELIEVES HE'S FOUGHT THE FICTIONAL X VAMPIRE DRACULA-- THAT THERE ARE MANY SUCH BEINGS ON EARTH-- THAT I AM ONE OF THEM!

\*INsofar AS MORBIUS KNOWS.--ROY.



AND HE FULLY INTENDS TO KILL ME!

UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES, MY POOR MAD FRIEND, I MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO SYMPATHIZE WITH YOU!!!



I'VE SEEN CASES SUCH AS YOURS BEFORE. I KNOW HOW REAL YOUR DELUSIONS MUST SEEM TO YOU. BUT ALAS!!!

...YOUR MADNESS COULD COST ME LIFE, SO I CAN ONLY SUGGEST THAT YOU SEEK WHAT HELP YOU CAN...

...AFTER YOU AWAKEN!



C'MON, HEAD... CLEAR! CAN'T LET 'IM... GET AWAY... MUSTN'T...!



BRINGING ALL HIS STRENGTH OF WILL TO BEAR, BLADE STRUGGLES TO HIS FEET, RESUMES THE CHASE--!

BUT THE HOLLOW-BONED MAN-BAT IS ALREADY FAR AHEAD, SCALING THE SLOPING, SHINGLED ROOF OF THE NEXT BUILDING.

AND STRANGELY, BLADE FINDS HOPE IN THAT FACT.

FOR THE STRUCTURE IS A CHURCH... AND AT THE APEX OF ITS ROOF STANDS THE SYMBOL THAT IS ANATHEMA TO ALL VAMPIRES.



A DARING LEAP-- AND THE BATTLE IS REJOINED!



SPUTTERING CURSES, MORBIUS IS BROUGHT DOWN, WITH BLADE'S FULL WEIGHT UPON HIS BACK. THEN, SAVAGELY, BLADE GRIPS MORBIUS' LONG, STREAMING HAIR, YANKS BACK HIS NECK, AND CRIES:

LOOK!!



I'LL KEEP YOU HERE 'TIL DAWN, IF I HAVE TO, MAN-- WITH YOUR EYES GLUED TO THAT THING! YOU'RE GOIN' BACK TO THE GRAVE--



--BACK TO THE --HUH?!



ANATHEMA TO ALL VAMPIRES... BUT THIS ONE, WHOSE CURSE IS OF SCIENTIFIC, NOT SUPERNATURAL, ORIGIN! MORBIUS TOSSES THE STARTLED BLADE OFF HIS BACK...



...AND OVER THE EDGE OF THE ROOF!

AND LONG, PAINFUL SECONDS PASS...



... BEFORE THE BEWILDERED VAMPIRE-SLAYER CAN PULL HIM-UP AGAIN, AND WHEN AT LAST HE DOES, HE FINDS HE IS ALONE ON THE ROOF-TOP...



... WITH MORBIUS NOWHERE IN SIGHT.



# EPILOGUE:

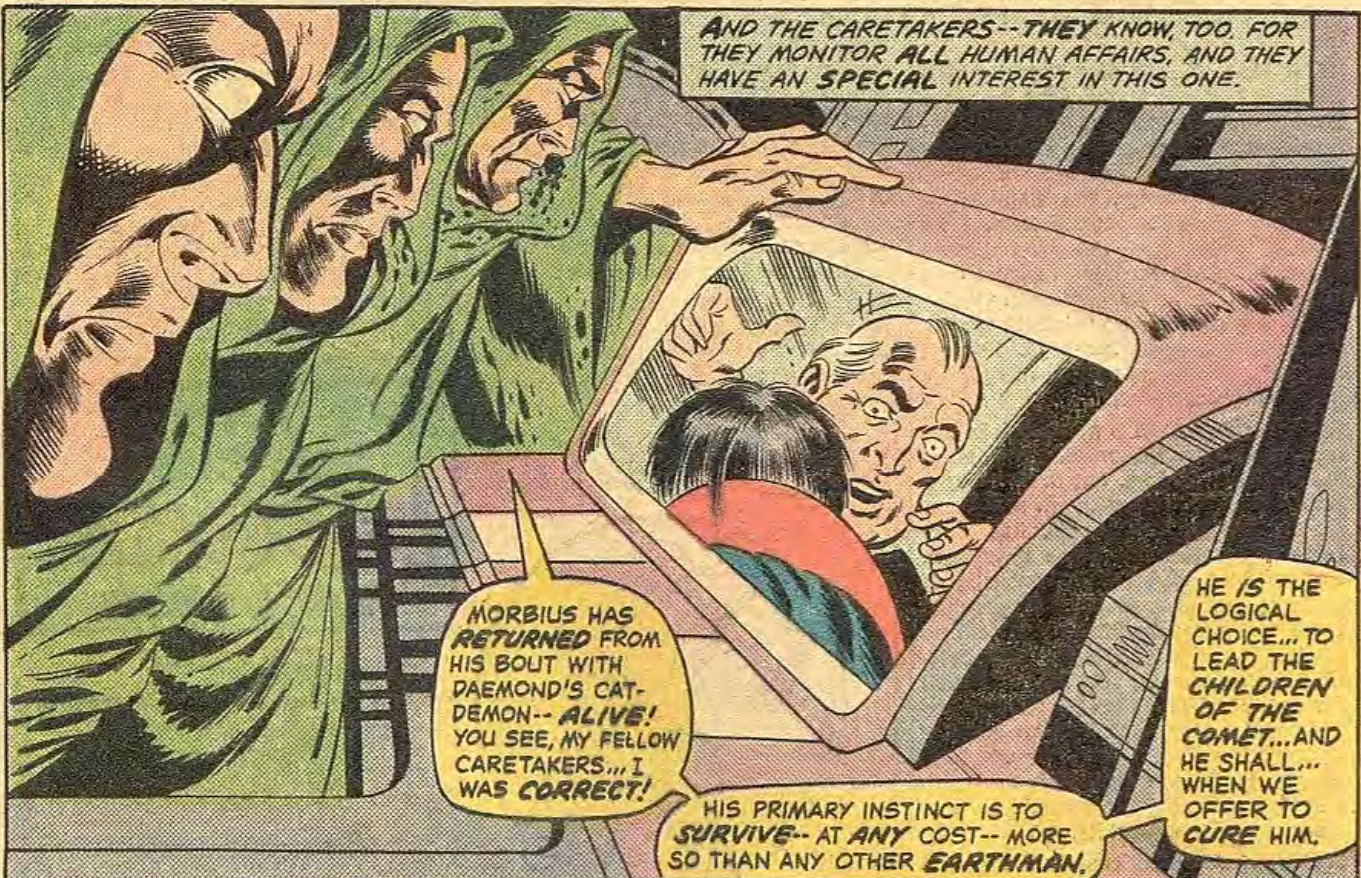
BLADE SPENDS THE NEXT THREE NIGHTS SEARCHING THE NOOKS AND CRANNIES OF THE MIDWESTERN CITY FOR ANOTHER SIGN OF MORBIUS. HE FINDS NONE, AND SO DEPARTS TO RESUME HIS PRIVATE HUNT... WITHOUT EVER SEEING A NEWSPAPER...

...WITHOUT EVER READING OF THE BIZARRE SERIES OF RAILROAD-YARD MURDERS THAT HAVE OCCURRED ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM CHICAGO--

--TO LOS ANGELES.



BUT MORBIUS KNOWS OF THEM... ALL TOO WELL. HE IS THEIR PERPETRATOR.



AND THE CARETAKERS--THEY KNOW, TOO. FOR THEY MONITOR ALL HUMAN AFFAIRS, AND THEY HAVE AN SPECIAL INTEREST IN THIS ONE.

MORBIUS HAS RETURNED FROM HIS BOUT WITH DAEMON'S CAT-DEMON-- ALIVE! YOU SEE, MY FELLOW CARETAKERS... I WAS CORRECT!

HE IS THE LOGICAL CHOICE... TO LEAD THE CHILDREN OF THE COMET... AND HE SHALL... WHEN WE OFFER TO CURE HIM.

HIS PRIMARY INSTINCT IS TO SURVIVE-- AT ANY COST-- MORE SO THAN ANY OTHER EARTHMAN.

**NEXT:** MORBIUS' MOST DIFFICULT DECISION--TO ACCEPT THE CARETAKERS' CURE, THUS POSSIBLY DOOMING HUMANITY... OR TO REJECT IT, THUS DOOMING HIMSELF. THE ANSWER MAY NOT BE WHAT YOU EXPECT-- WHATEVER YOU EXPECT. BE HERE FOR--

# EARTHSBLOOD!