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A special thanks to: Steve Hickman
                   Mike Kaluta
                   Seane Todd
                   Berni Wrightson
                   Bob Juanillo
Spiritual Guidance: James Van Hise

WRIGHTSON
70
"The night has a thousand eyes.
And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies,
With the dying sun."

KEEP TO THE SHADOWS!
BEWARE THE REVEALING LIGHTS, THE EYES OF A VINDICTIVE WORLD, A WORLD THAT WILL CRUSH YOU, LITTLE MAN!


KAE!
KAUGH!

SPLOP! SHLOP! SKLOP! SHLOP! SPLOP! SHLOP! SPLOP! SHLOP! SPLOP! SHLOP!

YES, MY LITTLE FANGED FRIEND, THAT SAME SINISTER DARKNESS OF CHEERLESS NIGHT THAT YOU FEAR SO, IS A REFUGE FOR THE DERELICT, THE CRIMINAL, AND THE...

RAT!

WHEEZE!
SNIFFLE!

ROTTEN NIGHT! EVEN THE WEATHER'S GOT IT IN FOR ME! IF ONLY I CAN GET ONTO ONE OF THEM FREIGHTERS BEFORE BENDER OR THE COPS GET TO ME!

COUGH!
KAE!

GUY LIKE ME NEVER GETS NO BREAKS! IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THAT CRUMBY NIGHT WATCHMAN I WOULDN'T BE IN THIS SPOT!

WHOD OF THOUGHT THE OL' FOOL WOULD PULL A GUN! I HAD TO SHOOT HIM!

S. T. 89
COPS WERE WAITIN’ FOR US! SNIFFLE! SURE I RATTED ON BENDER. I HAD TO!

AH CHOO!

LITTLE GUY LIKE ME NEVER HAS NO CHANCE

WHA... WHO’S THERE?

KAF KAF COUGH!

KAH KAA RUMP HH! WOOOOOMM

GASP! Gotta keep runnin’! Wheeze!

If I can only get to one of them boats!

Pff Pff

Made it!

So long suckers!

They won’t dare come on board to look for me!

Whoa! Pant! Pant! Pant!

Can’t get around it!

Oh no!

Choke! They’re comin’ back!

Wooorrrrrooomm
**X** **X** **X**!! If I can just get into a doorway, a window... GASP! A hole! ANYTHING!

Gimme a chance! Stop!

Noooooo Splat!

**WRRRROOOOOOOOMMM**

As if enraged by the taking of one of its own, the night explodes in a fury of electrical violence.

Alarmed by the thundering black skies and the lightning's blazed bolts another wretched environ of the night scurries forth seeking safer refuge when...

Kaboom!

Pip! Pip! Pip! Pip!

I'm... I'm... Alive!
I WAS KILLED... SMASHED... AND NOW I LIVE AGAIN!

S'FUNNY... FEEL STRANGE... HEY! I'M A...

BBBROOOMMM... XA-BANG!

Giant Rat!!

IZZAAAAAAAazzzzzzzzZTTTTTT!!

KAFKA!

THIS AIN'T SO BAD, REALLY... DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED BUT AT LEAST I'M ALIVE!

AND I CAN HANDLE THESE RAT-MITTS OKAY...

PLUS I'M A LOT STRONGER THAN I EVER WAS!

STRONG ENOUGH FOR LOTS OF THINGS, INCLUDIN' REVENGE!

KLOP!

SHPOP!

SHPOP!

SHPOP!

YA SHOULD'VE SEEN THE LOOK ON THE LITTLE RAT'S FACE WHEN WE SHOVED THAT TRUCK DOWN HIS DIRTY THROAT!

THAT'S ONE RAT THAT WON'T BE RATTIN' ON ANYBODY EVER AGAIN!

IT'S LOUIE! HE'S BEEN TORN TO SHREDS!

LIKE HE WAS ATTACKED BY SOME ANIMAL!

YEECH!

BENDER!

YOU'RE SOMETHIN' ELSE BENDER!

AAHHHHH!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, BENDER? DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE YER OLD PAL?

THAT VOICE... RATZO!

MMPH! SNIFFLE! NEVER KNOCKED ANYBODY OFF WITH CLAWS AND TEETH BEFORE!

TOO BAD LITTLE SHEILA DROPPED DEAD OF FRIGHT!

HEY! HEY!

SUCH WASTE!

THEY WON'T HAVE NO MORE USE FOR THIS STUFF, BUT FOR ME IT'S THE BEGINNIN' OF A GREAT CAREER!

HEY, YOU! STOP THAT!

WHO'S GONNA STOP ME, PUNK?

SPLOP! SPLASH! SHIOP!

JEWELER
FINE GEMS

THAT'LL LEARN YA!

NOBODY CAN STOP THE RAT!

HAHHG! AHHH AHHH!
This is crazy! It looks like somebody tunneled in here!

And that same somebody tore open these deposit boxes with claws!

I know it's twenty-six stories straight up but I tell you he came in through the window!

Look! There are scratches up the outside of the building... like claw marks!

Now do you believe me? I tell you I was robbed by a giant rat!

Punks! Suckers! Ol' Ratzo's payin' you all back!

Funny... this stuff seems to have gotten heavier... bigger!

One hour later...

Something's goin' screwy! I'm shrinkin'!

The bigger the pile of loot gets the smaller I get!

Later still...

Puh-leeze! We gotta get help! Sniff! Get the doc! Gasp!

Sshh! Umph!

What good is all this junk if I can't even move it?

Yeow! Whew! They won't get this rat that easy!

Snap!
PUFF! PANT!
PUFF! UGH!
AH CHOO!

NOOO!!!

SO I'M A RAT, BUT I GOT A BRAIN!
AIN'T NO ORDINARY RAT... I...

OH NO!

WHAT'VE YOU GOT THERE, FELIX?

OL' FELIX GOT HIMSELF A RAT CHIEF!

SLOP! SPLASH!

AARRGHH!

HMMPPH! A RAT WITH A RAG TIED AROUND IT!

WELL, THROW HIM IN THERE WHERE HE BELONGS!

UGLY THING!

SAY! LOOKS LIKE IT'S STOPPED RAININ' AND THE SUN'S COMIN' OUT,

GONNA BE A NICE DAY AFTER ALL!

THE END
An uneventfull flight

by MARK FELDMAN

Sean Todd lives alone except for his giant orange cat Fletcher and a mute parrot named Harold in a sprawling basement apartment in the East Village. Frazetta posters adorn the whitewashed brick wall except for an obvious blank area where twice a month or more, the latest installments of a continuing underground film are projected. The film is a by-product of Sean’s intense interest in comics. An interest that has proven itself companion to unusual talent as witnessed by this months stellar attraction, the story “RAT!”

Sean was dressed in a mauve tee shirt and leather bell bottoms fringed with tinkling beer can keys. He peered at me through nearly opaque green glasses and offered a rather firm but damp hand. Would I like to see the studio? Well I certainly would! So it was, that the rest of the interview was taped in the tiny underground studio behind the kitchen.

“Sit down anywhere, Mark.”

“Thank you.” There is no chair but Sean indicates a huge stack of old moldering comics. I sit.

“I suppose you’d like to know how I got started in comics.”

“Of course.”

“Back in grammar school I guess. I never played sports and wasn’t very popular, you know, and comics became my whole world.”

“They were an escape, right?”

“Oh, sure. There’s a whole part of my adolescence, of normal growing up that I missed on account of comics. Like I have this thing for any chick who smells even slightly like cheap four color printing and damp pulp paper.”

“You’re putting me on?”

“Yeah, a little.”

“What about high school?”

“Well, I was still in comics, more so if anything. Mad was just coming in at the end of the E.C. Weird Science and Horror days. I had every single copy of just about every single E.C. put out, you know.”

“My God, or should I say GOOD LORD! WHERE ARE THEY?”

“My mother threw them out. Just tossed that whole part of my life away.”

“Moan! What’d you do?”

“Stapled her to death and buried her under an abandoned news stand.”

“You’re putting me on again!”

“Sure.”

“What was the first step for the budding pro?”

“I got my first step doing pornos.”

“You don’t mean . . . . ?”

“Yeah. Pornographic comics. They were all the rage before underground comics came along.”

“You’re kidding! How old were you?”

“Eighteen, I use to write and draw those things night and day for a while. No lack of material, I just worked out every adolescent fantasy I could think of and they loved it.”

“I imagine that it payed well.”

“Never made that kind of money again.”

“Got any originals?”

“Nah. I got busted one night on account of the films and the fuzz cleaned me out. Too bad too, my chick used to use ‘em for coloring books . . . .”

“Where did you go from there?”

“Well, I was unfit for service so I went to New York to look around for something to do in comics.”

“After all I was a high school graduate!”

“I tried copying the styles of all the big guys, you know, Wood, Davis, Williamson, Basil Wolverton. All the big timers.”

“You got some of the styles down I went around to the publishers.”

“How were you received at Marvel and National?”

“Well, Roy Thomas liked my lettering and Carmine Infantino liked the way I did panel lines but there weren’t any openings.”

“Then what?”

“I went back to improving myself. I got Davis’s crosshatching down pat but got hung up on Wood’s highlights . . . you know, the sparkle marks on the space helmets.”

“And with all this behind me, plus my expertise at panel line ruling and lettering I was well on my way.”

“I got a job in Harvey Kurtzman’s studio for a few weeks answering his mail and running for coffee. Then a mutual friend introduced me to the National office where I did coloring for a while until my first real break came along.”

“Wow! What was that?”

“I got snapped up to do all the crosshatching and highlighting on Sid Check’s early imitations of Joe Orlando’s Imitation of Wally Wood’s Hal Foster style.”

“Well talent and orginality will win out in the end.”

“Yeah! From there on it’s all been gravy!”

“What was your biggest moment in the business?”

“Well, you know I’m still a fan at heart. I guess I’d have to say my biggest thrill was actually touching Frank Frazetta.”

“This had special meaning to you?”

“It sure did. He nearly broke my hand!”

“Why do you suppose he did that?”

“Professional jealousy!”

“Say, what’s that you’re working on?”

“Bubble Gum cards.”

“Bubble gum cards?”

“Bubble Gum cards! That’s where it’s at! Comics are finished! The future’s in Bubble Gum cards!”

“You don’t say.”
I AM ALONE. I TREMBLE IN MY SOLITUDE! HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE I HAVE FELT THE WARMTH OF COMPANIONSHIP... ENJOYED THE COMPANY OF ANOTHER FEELING, SENTIENT BEING? I CANNOT SAY. I DO NOT KNOW! FOR ME, THERE IS NO LONGER ANY PASSAGE OF TIME! FOR ME, THE DAYS, THE WEEKS, THE YEARS HAVE ALL COME TO BE AS ONE... HIDEOUSLY DESOLATE AND BLEAK! I FEEL EMPTY... HOLLOW... AS THOUGH I WERE SLOWLY, INEXORABLY SUCCUMING TO THIS HELLISH ISOLATION! I AM SO VERY ALONE... ALONE...

AND YET, ABOVE ME, IN THE WHEELING VASTNESS OF SPACE, AMONGST THOSE MYRIAD POINTS OF TWINKLING LIGHT THAT ARE THE STARS, SOMETHING MOVES... A SHIP! AND FROM THE INNERMOST DEPTHS OF MY TORTURED SOUL ARISES A FAINT AND SINGULAR HOPE! A HOPE THAT PERHAPS AT LONG LAST...

SOMEONE IS COMING...
They leave their huge, gleaming ship now and descend in a smaller one. They'll be here in a moment... real people... living, breathing people! companions! after all this time... companions! I am no longer alone... no longer alone!

At last... they're down! I wonder... I wonder what they will be like.

Voices! oh, god! it's been so long since I've heard voices! welcome strangers, welcome! tell me where you are from? it's been so long since I've... what's wrong? why do you just stand there, why do you ignore me... pretend not to hear me? or could it be... no! I dare not even think it!

What's your rush anyway, carter? ha! wish I did! got yourself a hot date somewhere?

We only need about an hour to take all the readings we're supposed to!

But it's this place, this planet. there's something about it that sorta... makes my flesh crawl!
I said, WELCOME strangers! It's been so long since I've seen another intelligent being. In fact I can't remember when I... you're not listening! You seem as though you don't hear, but... but I'm so close... so close I could reach out and...

...tap me on the shoulder! That's the feeling I have... the feeling this, this place gives me... as though something's gonna come sneaking up behind me! Brrr!!

They're not paying attention! They're not listening! But why? Why? OH GOD why!

Wow!

You've got some imagination there, Carter!

But please try and see that you control it, OK?

Now call upstairs and get McKinney and Stiles down here!

The sooner we get those readings, the sooner we can leave!

And, Carter...

When we do leave, does all a big favor...

Don't bring your goose pimples!

Now more men come... will they be deaf to my words too? Please don't let it be! Please!

Ok, snap it up, you guys!

There's work to be done!

Wait! They're setting up instruments... scanners, detectors! They must be searching for something!

McKinney and Carter set up over there, in that thicket!

Stiles, stay here with me!

If there's any intelligent life here at all...

Well gentlemen, shall we get started?

Intelligent life! That's what they're looking for! The fools can't see beneath their noses! I'm here... here, oh God... I'm here...

McKinney reporting! Beginning opto-scans of area south of landing point!

McKinney out!

to be continued...
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Hey Buddy, can you lend me a...

Most of Earth's humanity has gone to the stars. The remainder have huddled into clean, automated cities. No more the surging animal mass. A single omnicity, like New York here, provides all that anyone might want, almost.

This is your auto-pilot... flight 194 now en-route to California... non-stop!

We were pretty lucky to get this flight...

...I hear tell inter-city flights are going to be discontinued...

Not if I have any say in the matter! Sometimes I've just got to travel!

Mechanical error has no place in an automated society... but sometimes...

Hey! The plane is vibrating! We're losing altitude... I think we're gonna...

Sxreeek! Ink!
This is just great! I hope everybody is ready for a long walk.

Mr. Gerston, are we lost? Are we going to--

Don't panic, Maecia! I'm sure they'll come looking for us. They'll see the wreck and we'll be rescued...

Fat chance! We're in the middle of nowhere, Gerston, thousands of miles of nothing!

But if I'm missed, my collector's society will notify--

Look!! Coming over the dune!

The three turn at Jeb. Wane's shout to see him running toward a monstrous insect!

Lord!! What is it?

Wane! You'll be killed!

Where did you get the gun, Wane?

I'm authorized by the N.Y.S.S. to carry it. I guard the auto-control station in the Bowery.

Now we have a chance against those beasts!
AS THE DESERT SUN GLISTENS ON THE BILEOUS SLIME OOZING FROM THE SLAIN INSECT, A GRIM SMILE CROSSES WANE'S FACE.

WE MAY HAVE A CHANCE AGAINST PREDATORS, BUT NOT AGAINST STARVATION! THERE'S NO FOOD IN THE JETLINER, AND THESE PLANTS-HA! ONCE THEY COULD HAVE SUSTAINED US, KEPT US ALIVE, BUT THEY'VE ABSORBED So MUCH RADIOACTIVE WASTE FROM OUR OMNI-CITIES, IT WOULD BE SAFER TO EAT PLAGUE INFESTED MEAT! FACE IT ... WE'RE DEAD! AND THE FUNNY THING IS, WE KILLED OURSELVES!

YOU'RE MORBID, WANE.

LISTEN! FROM OVER THERE.. RINGING!!

WITH CURIOUSITY MINGLING WITH A SILENT HOPE, THE CASTAWAYS SCRABBLE DOWN THE LOOSE, SLIDING DIRT INTO THE STAGNANT AIR OF THE BURIED CITY.

WHY, I'VE SEEN ONE OF THOSE BEFORE! IT'S AN OLD-FASHIONED TELEPHONE BOOTH... AND IT WORKS! IF I ONLY HAD IT FOR MY ANCIENT ARTIFACT'S COLLECTION! WHAT A MAGNIFICENT FIND!!

NEVER MIND YOUR COLLECTION, MONEY BAGS, WITH LUCK THAT ANTIQUE WILL SAVE OUR HIDES.

WE'LL NEED MORE THAN LUCK MOTISE... THERE'S NO SLOT FOR THE CREDIT CARD. THERE'S NOTHING BUT SOME LITTLE ROUND HOLES!

GEBSON'S EYES LIGHT UP IN FASCINATION...

HOLEs? IT'S SO ANCIENT IT ONLY MAKES COINS! HOW MARVELOUS... A COIN TELEPHONE... THE PRIDE OF ANYBODY'S COLLECTION!

WOULD YOU SHUT UP?! WHERE ARE WE GOING TO FIND COINS TO FEED THIS... THIS... MONSTROSITY?
DON'T KICK IT!!

I'LL KICK YOU, YOU SNIVELING—CALM DOWN, WANE. MAYBE I CAN GET AT THE WORK WITH THIS... MIGHT BYPASS SOME CIRCUITS AND PUT A CALL THROUGH!

TENSE MINUTES CRAWL BY AS MOTISE PROBED THE METAL GUTS OF THE ANCIENT MACHINE. IN HIS CONCENTRATION HE ACCIDENTLY KNUCKLES AGAINST AN EXPOSED WIRE, AND RECEIVES A DEADLY JOLT OF NAKED ELECTRICITY...

OH! HE'S BEING ELECTROCULTED!!

WANE AND GEBSON SPRINT TOWARD MOTISE'S WILDLY VIBRATING FIGURE, BUT AN URGENT THRUMMING SOUND CAUSES GEBSON TO LOOK SKYWARD, IN FEAR!

WANE! LOOK OUT—OH MY GOD...

THE GUN!!

WITH A KNOT OF PANIC TWISTING IN HER STOMACH, MAECIA PANSIEGRABS THE FALLEN WEAPON AND UNLEASHES IT'S TERRIBLE POWER AGAINST THE WINGED HORROR...

THE AIR IS STILL. THE FLYING NIGHTMARE LIES CRUMPLED ON THE BLEACHED SAND A FEW PACES FROM WANE'S LIFELESS FORM. THE CRACKLING OF MOTISE NOW JUST A CHARRED HUSK, IS LIKE THE WORDLESS WHISPERS OF DEATH.

MAECIA! HELP ME... I - I'M HURT!
MAECIA... LISTEN TO ME... THOSE BUGS... WE'RE IN A NEST - I'M CERTAIN OF IT... MAECIA...?

WHAT'S THIS CASE? THERE'S A DIME IN HERE! YOU'VE HAD A DIME, HOARDED IT, WHILE WE'VE BEEN DYING IN THIS STINKING DESERT!

NO, PLEASE MAECIA... WE CAN'T USE THAT... MY COLLECTION... NO...

DO YOU THINK I CARE ABOUT YOUR FOOL COLLECTION? THIS IS MY CHANCE FOR LIFE! LIFE!

MAECIA - MAECIA, NO! THAT DIME, IT'S BEYOND WORTH... PLEASE... PLEASE... GIVE IT BACK TO ME... MAECIA!

SUDDENLY GEBSON'S PLAINITIVE WAIL BECOMES A SCREAM... A SHRIEK OF HORROR, MAECIA, THE PRECIOUS DIME CLUTCHED IN HER HAND, TURNS TO SEE HIM SURROUNDED BY INSECTS.

KEEP SCREAMING, OLD MAN... ALL I NEED IS TIME FOR ONE CALL... KEEP SCREAMING.

THE PRICELESS DISK CLINKS INTO THE PHONE... A DIAL-TONE... MAECIA TWIRLS THE "O"... A MOMENT, THEN A RING... A SOFT CLICK AS THE CALL IS CONNECTED... THEN SILENCE...

*CLICK* - ORDING... DEPOSIT FIVE CENTS. MORE, PLEASE, TO COMPLETE YOUR CALL.

OH GOD... NO! NO...

...THIS IS A RECORDING... DEPOSIT FIVE CENTS MORE, PLEASE, TO COMPLETE YOUR CALL... THIS IS A RECORDING... DEPOSIT FIVE CENTS.

HELLO? HELLO? OPERATOR...? ANYONE!

THE RECEIVER FALLS FROM MAECIA'S HAND; SHE STARES IN FROZEN TERROR THROUGH THE CRACKED PANES OF THE BOOTH; SHE NO LONGER HEARS THE SCRATCHY RECORDING; SHE HEARS ONLY ONE THING... GEBSON HAS STOPPED SCREAMING.

THE END
This Cover, by Bernie Wrightson, was Originally Intended to appear in the now defunct Web of Horror Magazine
GOD APPEARING TO THE ELDER ISAIAH