

NOT LONG AGO, DURING THE *DUSK* OF AN EVENING IN *AUTUMN*, I STOOD BEFORE A *LARGE WINDOW* OF THE *DOVER HOTEL* IN *LONDON!*

FOR SOME WEEKS I HAD BEEN IN *ILL HEALTH*, BUT WAS NOW *CONVALESENT*..

...AND, AS MY OLD *STRENGTH* RETURNED, A *UNIQUE* AND *UNUSUAL* MOOD ALSO *INFLICTED* MY SENSES!



EDGAR ALLAN POE'S

MAN OF THE CROWD

MY *INTELLECT* BECAME *HEIGHTENED*, *ELECTRIFIED*.. IMPARTING AN *INQUISITIVE INTEREST* TOWARD EVERY-THING! THAT WAS HOW I FIRST BECAME AWARE OF THE *SCURRYING CROWD* THAT *BUSTLED* BEFORE THE *HOTEL WINDOW!*





AT FIRST MY *OBSERVATION* TOOK ON AN ABSTRACT AND GENERALIZING TURN! I *APPRAISED* THE THROG AS ONE BIG *FORMLESS MASS!*

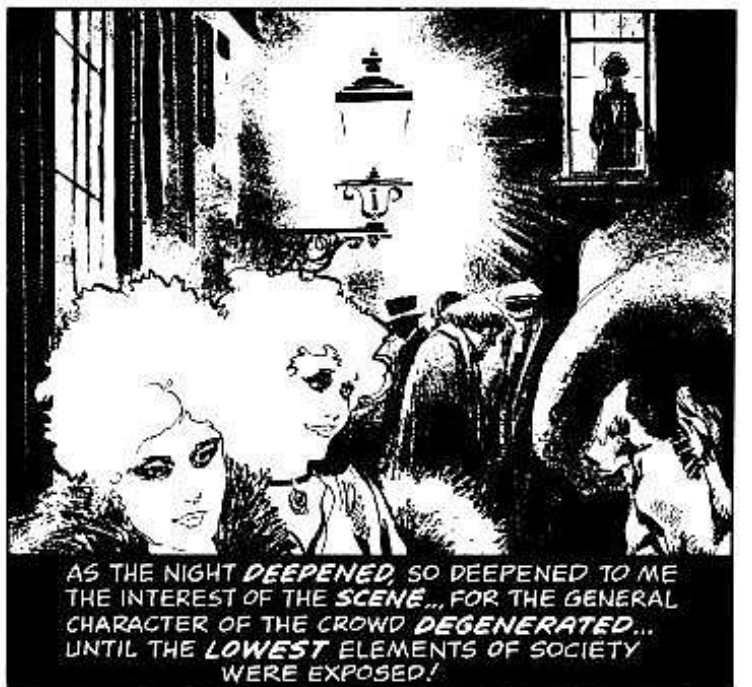
SOON, HOWEVER, I DESCENDED TO *DETAILS*, AND REGARDED WITH MINUTE INTEREST THE *INNUMERABLE* VARIETIES OF FIGURE, DRESS, GAIT, VISAGE AND *EXPRESSION* OF COUNTENANCE!

THERE WERE *CLERKS*, SEVERAL OF WHOM WERE ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR WIVES... *ARISTOCRATS*... AND MERE *LABORERS!*



THE EVENING SWIFTLY MERGED INTO *NIGHT*, PROMPTING THE *GARISHLY-BRIGHT* GAS LAMPS TO GLOW...

...HERALDING THE *LATE HOUR*... AND MANY SWARTHY *THIEVES* ALONG WITH IT!



AS THE NIGHT *DEEPEMED*, SO DEEPEMED TO ME THE INTEREST OF THE *SCENE*... FOR THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE CROWD *DEGENERATED*... UNTIL THE *LOWEST* ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY WERE EXPOSED!



WITH MY BROW TO THE *GLASS*,
I WAS THUS *SCRUTINIZING* THE
DENIZENS WHO ONLY COME OUT AT
NIGHT...



...WHEN
SUDDENLY,
THERE CAME
INTO VIEW THE
FIGURE OF A
DECREPIT OLD
MAN OF
PERHAPS
SIXTY-FIVE!



MY *ATTENTION*
WAS *ARRESTED*
AND *ABSORBED*
AT ONCE...



... FOR THE MAN HAD
THE *HELLISH* FACE
OF A HUMAN *FIEND*
INCARNATE!



THE *CHARACTER* CONVEYED
RAW, INCALCULABLE
EMOTION, *AVARICE*, *COOL-*
NESS, *CAUTION*, *MALICE*,
BLOOD-THIRSTINESS,
TRIUMPH, *TERROR*...

...AND PERHAPS MOST OF ALL...
EXTREME DESPAIR!

THEN CAME A CRAVING DESIRE TO KEEP THE **BLACK-CAPED MAN** IN VIEW! HURRIEDLY PUTTING ON AN OVERCOAT, AND **SEIZING** MY HAT...



...I MADE MY WAY TO THE **STREET**, AND PUSHED THROUGH THE DIVERSE **CROWD** IN THE DIRECTION I HAD SEEN HIM TAKE!



HE WAS VERY SHORT IN **STATURE**, VERY **THIN** AND APPARENTLY VERY **FEEBLE!**

WHILE HE **CROSSED** A LANE, I HAD CHANCED TO OBSERVE A **DAGGER'S HILT** THAT **GLEAMED** FROM HIS BELT!



NEVER ONCE TURNING HIS HEAD TO LOOK BACK, HE DID NOT **OBSERVE** ME!

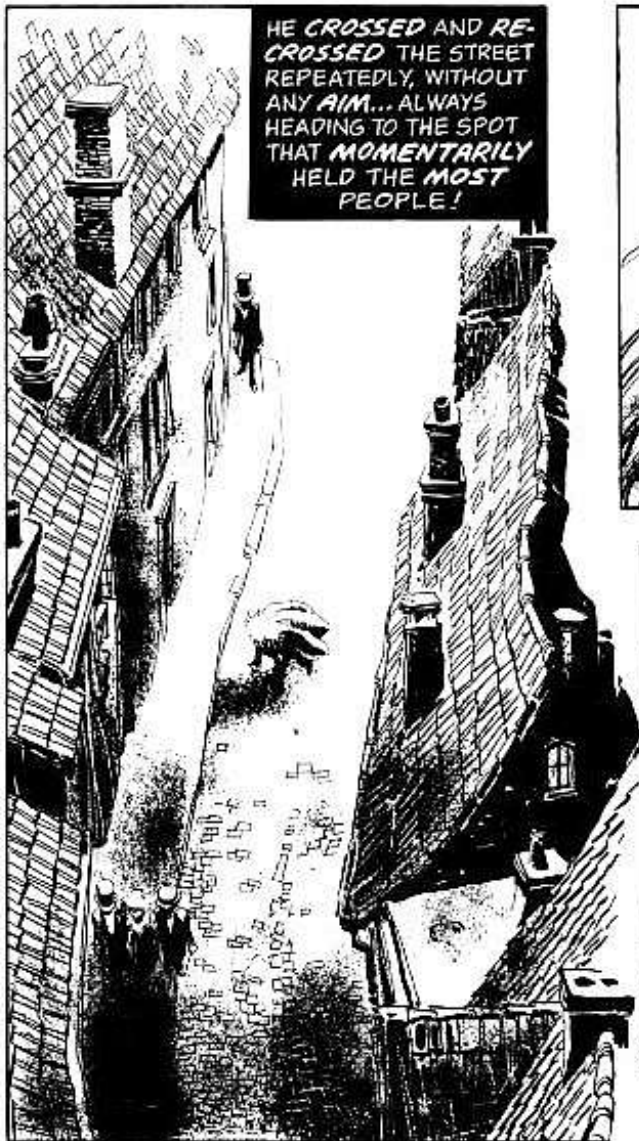


BY AND BY HE **PASSED** INTO A **SIDE STREET**,... WHICH WAS NOT QUITE SO **THROGGED** AS THE MAIN ONE HE HAD JUST **LEFT!**



HERE... A **MARKED** CHANGE IN HIS **DEMEANOR** BECAME **EVIDENT!** HE WALKED **SLOWLY**,... MORE **HESITANTLY**,... **ODDLY** ILL AT EASE!

HE **CROSSED** AND **RE-CROSSED** THE STREET REPEATEDLY, WITHOUT ANY **AIM**... ALWAYS HEADING TO THE SPOT THAT **MOMENTARILY** HELD THE **MOST** PEOPLE!



HIS CHIN **FELL** UPON HIS BREAST... WHILE HIS EYES **ROLLED** WILDLY FROM UNDER HIS KNIT BROWS, IN EVERY DIRECTION, UPON THOSE WHO **HEMME**D HIM IN!



AFTER ARRIVING AT THE END OF THE ROAD, HE **TURNE**D SHARPLY... ALMOST **DETECTING** ME... AND **RETRACED** HIS FURTIVE STEPS!



THE **SILVER-HAIRED** MAN WALKED THUS, BACK AND FORTH, UP AND DOWN THE LANE FOR AN HOUR... UNTIL, AT LAST, THE **LATE-NIGHT** STROLLERS BEGAN TO **THIN**!



WITH AN **ANGRY** GESTURE OF IMPATIENCE, THE AGED WANDERER DISPLAYED HIS **DISGUST** AT THE **FAST-DWINDLING** GROUPS...



...AND, HAVING SHOWN HIS **DISPLEASURE**, STALKED DOWN A **DESERTED** ALLEY!



DOWN THIS HE RUSHED WITH AN ACTIVITY I COULD NOT HAVE DREAMED OF SEEING IN ONE SO AGED...

...AND WHICH PUT ME TO MUCH TROUBLE IN PURSUIT!



A FEW MINUTES BROUGHT US TO A LARGE AND BUSY BAZAAR... WHERE HIS ORIGINAL MANNER AGAIN BECAME APPARENT... AS HE FORCED HIS WAY TO AND FRO, WITHOUT AIM, AMONG THE SHOPPERS!



EVENTUALLY, A LOUD-TONED TOWER BELL ANNOUNCED THE ELEVENTH HOUR. THE SHOP-MERCHANTS CLOSED...



...CAUSING THE VACANTLY STARING OLD MAN TO COMMENCE ANEW HIS PURPOSELESS QUEST!



WE ARRIVED AT LENGTH, BACK AT THE DOVER HOTEL!

A FIERCE RAIN FELL, THE STREET RAPIDLY EMPTIED...AND THE FIENDISH-LOOKING MAN TURNED DEATHLY PALE!

LIKE A PERSON *POSSESSED*, THE CAPED STRANGER SUDDENLY *VEERED* IN THE DIRECTION OF THE *RIVER*...



... WHERE, AMID MUCH DEPLORABLE POVERTY AND SQUALOR, HE COULD STILL BASK IN THE *PRESENCE* OF PEOPLE!



THERE WERE BUMS, THIEVES, PICK-POCKETS, SEAMEN AND WOMEN OF ILL REPUTE AROUND ALL SIDES OF THE *DARK-EYED* ONE...



... AND HE SECRETLY REVELLED TO HIMSELF WHILE IN THE *MOB'S* VERY MIDST!

THE OLD MAN DREW *STRENGTH* FROM EVERY ONE... *LEECHED* THEIR EMOTIONS... *SUCKED* AT THEIR THOUGHTS... *DRANK* IN THEIR "BEINGNESS"... AND SOMEHOW *ABSORBED* THEIR POWER AND VIGOR UNTO HIMSELF!



AND THEN I KNEW THE *MYSTERIOUS* INDIVIDUAL FOR WHAT HE WAS... A *PSYCHIC VAMPIRE*...

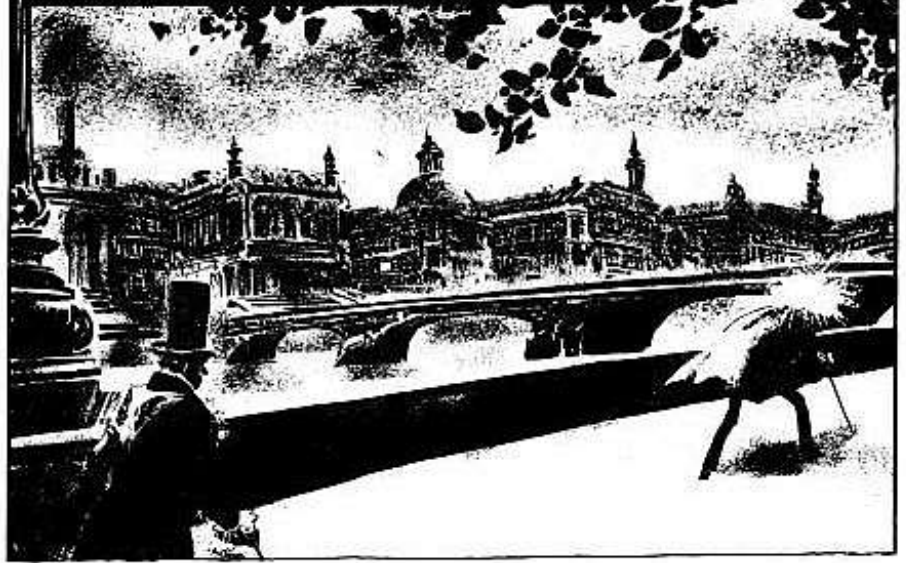


... *LIVING* OFF THE *SOULS* OF OTHERS!

FOR THE REST OF THE FOG-FILLED NIGHT, I FOLLOWED MY RESTLESS PREY RELENTLESSLY...



...UNTIL FINALLY I LOST SIGHT OF HIM IN THE EARLY MORNING CROWDS THAT ARE REBORN WITH THE DAWNING OF A NEW DAY!



BUT, HE IS STILL OUT THERE *SOMEWHERE*... EVER SEEKING EVERY HAUNT OF LONDON THAT HARBORS PEOPLE... SO THAT HE MAY FEAST IN HIS OWN UNHOLY WAY!



MY INTEREST IN THE OLD MAN HAS NOW EVAPORATED! I SENSE THERE IS NOTHING MORE I MAY LEARN OF HIM...OR THE FETID CURSE THAT MOTIVATES HIS PROFANE PILGRIMAGE!



BUT, BE SURE, AS HEAVEN IS MY WITNESS, WHEREVER A CROWD MAY GATHER...THERE, TOO, WILL BE A SILVER-TOPPED FIGURE NOT FAR, FAR BEHIND!