

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! YEP! IT'S YOUR OLD HORROR FIEND, THE CRYPT-KEEPER! NOW I 'ENTERTAIN' YOU! HERE'S A SPINE-TINGLER ESPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR YOU LOVERS OF FISHING! JUST SET YOURSELVES DOWN ON THAT BAG OF HOOKS AND I'LL BEGIN THE PIERCING TALE OF TERROR I CALL ...

GONE...FISHING!



THE DUST-COVERED AUTOMOBILE ROLLED TO A STOP WHERE THE BLACK TAR ROAD KNIFED THROUGH THE SAND-DUNES AND ENDED ABRUPTLY AT THE EDGE OF A STRETCH OF WHITE BEACH! BEYOND, THE SURF... WHITE AND FROTHY... ROLLED IN FROM THE VAST SEA, FILLING THE BRISK SALT AIR WITH AN OMINOUS THUNDER ...

WELL, STEVEN! HERE WE ARE! BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT?

REALLY, MAX! I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU INSISTED ON DRAGGING ME ALONG! YOU KNOW I DON'T APPROVE OF FISHING!



JACK DAVIS

MAXWELL LARKIN, THE NOTED SPORT-FISHERMAN, GOT OUT OF THE CAR AND BEGAN TO UNSTRAP THE LONG SPLIT-BAMBOO RODS THAT WERE FASTENED TO THE RACK ON THE CAR-ROOF...

JUST WAIT TILL YOU HOOK INTO ONE, STEVE! YOU'LL CHANGE YOUR MIND! YOU'LL SEE!

I DOUBT IT, MAX! I'M OPPOSED TO FISHING ON MORAL GROUNDS!



MAX UNLOCKED THE TRUNK OF THE CAR AND LIFTED OUT A HUGE TACKLE BOX! LADEN DOWN WITH THE FISHING EQUIPMENT, STEVE AND MAX MADE THEIR WAY ACROSS THE BRILLIANT WHITE BEACH TOWARD THE SURF...

HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY BE OPPOSED TO FISHING ON MORAL GROUNDS, STEVE?

IT'S CRUELTY TO LIVING CREATURES! IT MUST BE VERY PAINFUL TO THE POOR FISH!



AT THE WATER'S EDGE, THE SPORT-FISHERMAN AND HIS RELUCTANT COMPANION SET DOWN THE EQUIPMENT! MAX REMOVED A HOLLOW TUBE WITH A SPIKED POINT FROM HIS TACKLE BOX AND DROVE IT INTO THE GROUND...

BAH! FISH DON'T FEEL PAIN!

ARE YOU SURE, MAX? WHO'S TO SAY? ER... WHAT'S THAT?



A SAND-SPIKE! IT HOLDS THE ROD UPRIGHT SO SAND CAN'T GET INTO THE REEL! SEE?

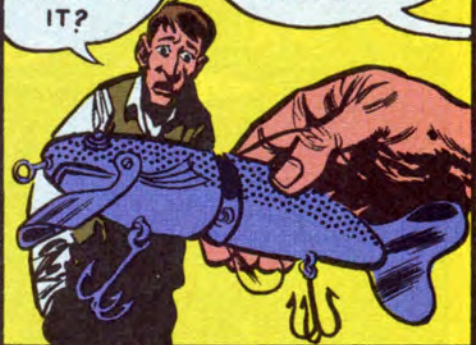
OH! VERY CLEVER!



MAX FUMBLING IN THE METAL BOX AND FINALLY REMOVED A OBLONG-SHAPED, FISH-LIKE FORM... BEDECKED WITH SETS OF HOOKS...

UGH! THAT'S A PRETTY MEAN-LOOKING THING! WHAT IS IT?

IT'S A STRIPED-BASS PLUG! THE BASS THINKS IT'S A FISH! IT GOES FOR IT AND... WHAM!



THEN YOU JUST HAUL HIM IN, EH?

NOT AS EASY AS ALL THAT! A BASS WILL PUT ON A PRETTY STIFF FIGHT! MIGHT TAKE AN HOUR TO LAND HIM!



AND THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A SPORT?

AW, CUT IT OUT, STEVE! JUST SIT DOWN AND WATCH FOR A WHILE! YOU'LL SEE... IF I'M LUCKY!



MAXWELL TIED THE BASS-PLUG TO THE END OF HIS LINE AND LIFTED THE ROD FROM ITS SAND-SPIKE HOLDER...

IF YOU'RE LUCKY? YOU MEAN IF THE BASS IS UNLUCKY!

I'LL IGNORE THAT! NOW THIS TYPE OF FISHING IS CALLED SURF-CASTING! FIRST, YOU CAST THE PLUG AS FAR OUT INTO THE SURF AS YOU CAN...



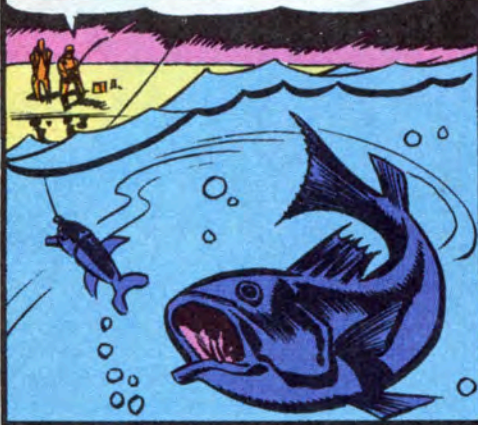
MAXWELL SWUNG THE ROD OVER HIS SHOULDER, WHIPPED IT FORWARD, AND THE PLUG SAILED OUT OVER THE INCOMING BREAKERS...

...LIKE THAT! THEN YOU START TO REEL IT IN SLOWLY...



MAX BEGAN TO WIND THE REEL SLOWLY AND EVENLY...TAKING THE LINE BACK UP...

...LIKE THIS! THE PLUG, BECAUSE OF ITS DESIGN, BOBS AND WEAVES THROUGH THE WATER SOMEWHAT RESEMBLING A SMALL FISH! STRIPERS FEED ON SMALL FISH IN THE SURF, SO...



SUDDENLY, THE ROD IN MAX'S HANDS BENT AND THE REEL BEGAN TO SING AS THE LINE SPUN OFF IT...

A STRIKE! I'VE HOOKED ONE!



AS STEVE WATCHED, MAX STRUGGLED WITH THE HOOKED FISH! THE ROD BENT UNDER THE STRAIN! MAX BEGAN TO REEL IN, BUT MANY TIMES THE LINE WOULD GO SHOOTING BACK OUT IN SPITE OF HIS WORK...

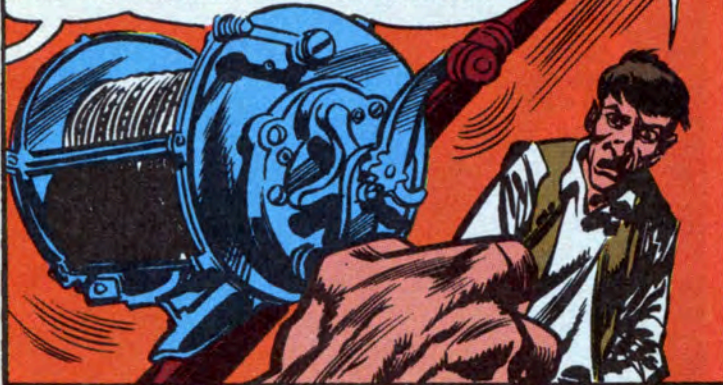
CAN'T YOU JUST REEL HIM IN? MUST YOU LET HIM GO OUT LIKE THAT AGAIN?

IF I DIDN'T, THE LINE WOULD SNAP!



I'M NOT LETTING HIM RUN OUT! HE'S TAKING IT OUT! GASP! THERE'S A SERIES OF CLUTCH DISKS INSIDE A SURF-REEL CALLED A 'DRAG'! I SET IT FOR THE TESTED STRENGTH OF THE LINE! THEN, IF THE FISH YANKS HARDER, THE DRAG RELEASES THE LINE AND AVOIDS BREAKING...

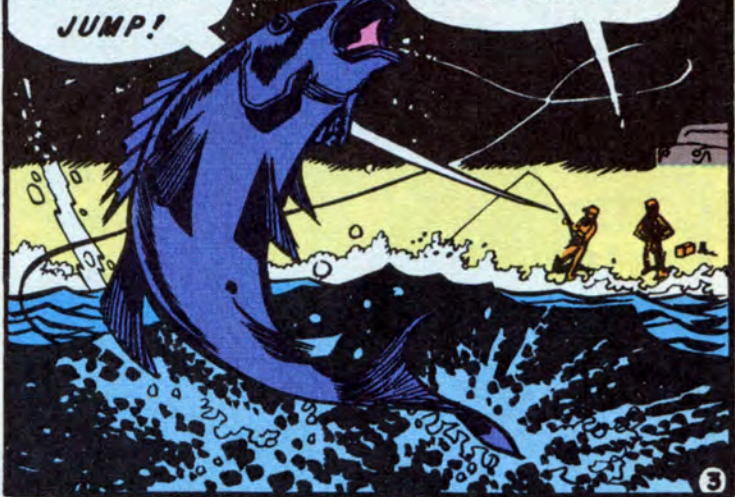
MY! THEY CERTAINLY THINK OF EVERYTHING, DON'T THEY?



MAX CONTINUED TO FIGHT THE HOOKED FISH FOR TWENTY MINUTES! AT TIMES THEY COULD SEE IT LEAP CLEAR OF THE WATER IN AN EFFORT TO FREE ITSELF...

LOOK AT HIM JUMP!

IT'S HORRIBLE!



FINALLY, AFTER FORTY MINUTES, THE STRUGGLING FISH GREW TIRED AND GAVE UP THE FIGHT! MAX REELED IT IN TRIUMPHANTLY...

WOW! LOOK AT 'IM! MUST BE THIRTY-POUNDS... AT LEAST!

DISGUSTING!



MAX HAULED THE FISH WELL UP ONTO THE BEACH AND PUT HIS FOOT ON ITS HEAD...

BRING ME THE KNIFE IN THE BOX, STEVE! I'VE GOT TO CUT THE HOOKS LOOSE!

GOOD LORD, MAX! HOW COULD YOU? LET THE POOR THING GO!



WHAT? ARE YOU KIDDING? NOT ON YOUR LIFE! THIS IS A BEAUTY!

THEN GET YOUR KNIFE YOURSELF! I'M LEAVING!

STEVE TURNED TO GO...WHEN...

STEVE! LOOK OUT!

OH! I'M SORRY!



THE CONTENTS OF THE TACKLE-BOX LAY SCATTERED OVER THE WHITE SAND...

I'LL SEE YOU LATER, MAX! I'LL COME BACK AND PICK YOU UP IN A COUPLE OF HOURS!

HEH, HEH! OKAY! GO AHEAD, SOFTY! I'LL BE HERE!



MAX WATCHED STEVE CROSS THE BEACH TO THE PARKED CAR AND DRIVE OFF! THEN HE KNEELED AND BEGAN REPLACING THE SPILLED FISHING TACKLE...

POOR GUY! BOY, WAS HE FLUSTERED! I DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART TO MAKE HIM PICK UP THE STUFF HE KICKED OUT! AH...HERE'S THE KNIFE!



MAX BENT AND SLASHED THE HOOKED-LURE FROM THE GULPING MOUTH OF THE BEACHED FISH! THEN HE SLIPPED HIS THUMB BENEATH ONE GILL AND LIFTED IT... ADMIRINGLY...

MAN, OH MAN! WHAT A BEAUTY! THIRTY POUNDS, AT LEAST! AND WHAT A FIGHTER! A REAL DEVIL!



MAX PLACED THE FISH INTO A PLASTIC BAG...

THERE! THAT'LL KEEP THE SUN OFF YOU!



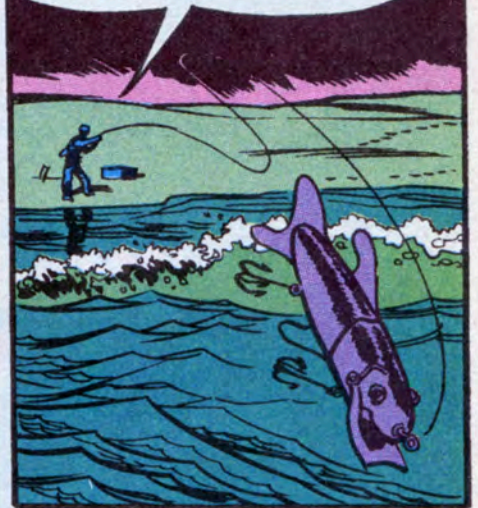
THEN HE CHECKED HIS LINE AND PREPARED FOR ANOTHER CAST...

MAYBE I'LL HOOK INTO ANOTHER ONE!



THE ROD WHIPPED FORWARD AND THE BASS-PLUG SAILED OUT OVER THE INCOMING BREAKERS ONCE MORE...

AH! THAT WAS A GOOD CAST! C'MON, BABY! HIT ME!



FOR A FULL HOUR, MAX CAST INTO THE WHITE FROTHY WAVES... REELED IN... CAST... REELED IN... BUT WITHOUT ANOTHER STRIKE...

LOOKS LIKE *ONE* IS ALL I GET TODAY! AW! I'LL QUIT FOR A WHILE! I'M HUNGRY ANYWAY!



MAX HAULED IN HIS LINE, SET THE ROD IN THE SAND-SPIKE AND LICKED HIS LIPS...

BOY! A NICE SANDWICH AND... OH, NO! THE LUNCH IS IN THE CAR!



MAX CURSED AND KICKED UP THE SAND ANGRILY! SUDDENLY, HE SAW SOMETHING LYING THERE... SOMETHING BRIGHT AND COLORFUL...

HEY! LOOKS LIKE A CANDY BAR!



MUST HAVE BEEN IN MY TACKLE-BOX AND GOT KICKED OUT! WHAT LUCK! I'M STARVED!



MAX UNWRAPPED THE CANDY BAR AND BIT INTO IT HUNGRILY! HE NEVER NOTICED THE SILKY, ALMOST INVISIBLE THREAD HANGING FROM IT...



SUDDENLY THE SILK THREAD GREW TAUT! MAX FELT A KNIFING PAIN IN HIS CHEEK...



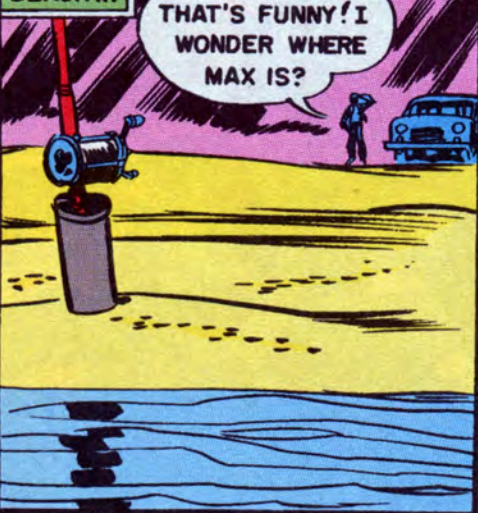
THE PAIN IN MAX'S CHEEK WAS UNBEARABLE! IT FELT... LIKE A BARBED HOOK! THE LINE, RUNNING FROM HIS MOUTH, GREW TIGHTER AND TIGHTER! MAX SCREAMED IN PAIN ...



SLOWLY, STEADILY, MAX WAS DRAGGED... SCREAMING AND STRUGGLING... TOWARD THE WATER! THE STINGING PAIN IN HIS MOUTH WAS EXCRUCIATING! HE TRIED TO SPIT IT OUT... TRIED TO FREE HIMSELF... BUT IT WAS NO USE! SAVAGELY, HE DUG HIS HEELS INTO THE SOFT SAND! IT DID NO GOOD! ON AND ON HE WAS DRAGGED... ON TOWARD THE ROARING SURF...



THE DUSTY AUTOMOBILE PULLED UP TO THE BEACH WHERE THE ROAD ENDED! STEVE GOT OUT! HE LOOKED DOWN TOWARD THE SURF-ROD STANDING ALONE ON THE DESERTED BEACH...



SOMETHING CAUGHT STEVE'S EYE! SOMETHING OUT IN THE WATER! AS IT BROKE THE SURFACE, A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM ECHOED ABOVE THE ROAR OF THE INCOMING BREAKERS! IT HESITATED FOR A SPLIT-SECOND... THEN IT WAS GONE... A MAN'S HEAD...



HEH, HEH! YEP! MAX WAS HOOKED! NOW HE KNOWS HOW A FISH FEELS! WHAT KIND OF FISH GOES BEACH-CASTING FOR MEN, YOU ASK? WELL HOW SHOULD I KNOW? AM I A FISH? HEH, HEH! OH, BY THE WAY! NEXT TIME YOU GO FISHING, BE CAREFUL! REMEMBER! SOME FISH MAY BE MAN-ING, AND YOU MIGHT GET HOOKED, TOO! BUT YOU WON'T BE HOOKED WHEN YOU SEND FOR BACK ISSUES! SHOCKED IS A BETTER WORD! THE VAULT-KEEPER TELLS HOW TO GET YOURS IN HIS COLUMN, THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER!

