

“Many doomed beings were descended  
including the detestable  
outcast Grendel.”

BEOWULF — author unknown. English, first half Eighth Century

A fable by Dick O’Kane

Illustrations by Stan Mott

there, parked right in front of my E-Type was Grendel.

It *couldn't* be Grendel, but it had to be. Just how many Allard J2's were there in the world painted this particularly lurid shade of pink?

“Is that a gas? Isn't that a wild looking thing? And *go?*—man, wait'll you see it *go!*”

I edged closer and peered cautiously into the cockpit. There it was—

The fourth time the doorbell dragged its strident little file across my nerves, I finally lost my resolve and peered out the window to see what the ringer might be selling this time. A big smile framed by a droopy mustache peered back at me from out of a mass of hair. “Hey, man, you sleeping or something? I'll come back . . .”

“No, it's okay. I thought you were that guy with the encyclopedias again. Here, I'll throw you the keys.”

“No, wait—come on down. I bought one! You wanna see it?”

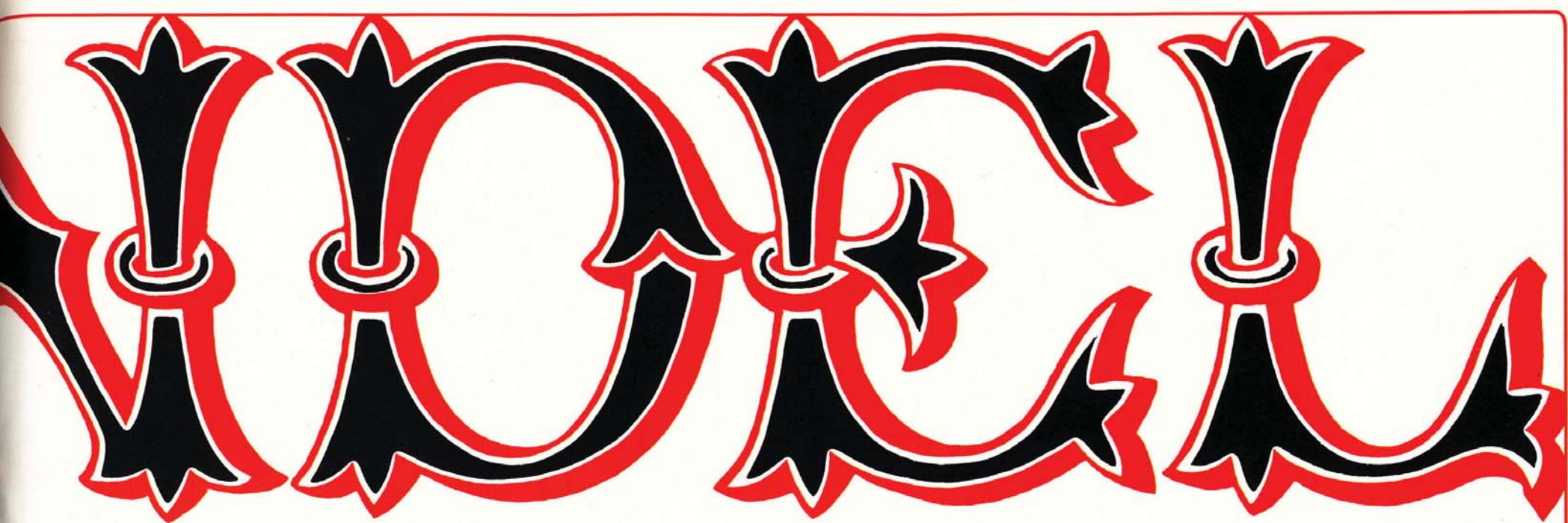
“Yeah.” I shut the window, found two shoes that matched and clumped down the three flights to the street. What the hell, it would only take ten minutes to look at the kid's new car. Kid buys a car—especially his first sports car—and he wants to show it off, right? And besides, he had been asking my advice on cars. Ten minutes. I had ten minutes.

“What did you get, the Healey or the Porsche?”

“Neither one. The Healey had a bad grinding noise in first—I checked that out, just like you told me . . . and the Porsche—Christ, man like there was nothing left of it you know? But he had this other car just in . . . hey wait'll you see it man! What a goof! I mean, what a fantastic goddam goof!”

We turned the corner, Joey waving his arms, his hair and bell-bottoms flapping, grooving on the idea of Christmas in September . . . and then I saw it and stopped, and I'm sure my jaw made a noise when it fell. For





## from Cain,

the cord-wrapped steering wheel. "I think I know this car, Joe. Open the hood a minute."

The pink hood squeaked up, uncovering the great mother Cadillac engine. I squinted down past it . . . and found the dent in the frame rail. An odd sort of dent, like the rail had been pinched by a big pair of pliers.

"It's Grendel," I said. "Only it can't be Grendel because Beowulf slew Grendel five years ago."

"Hunh?"

"Yeah, right after the Brothers Boslavsky stomped his police car to junk . . ."

Joey's eyes were growing wider behind the hair and he began backing away. "What you been smoking, man?"

"No, seriously, I know this car. It's Grendel. See the dent down there? That's where Stan Boslavsky bit it."

"Bit it?"

"Yeah, he bit things when he got mad. In fact he bit the antenna off a police car one night . . . look, it's a long story. You want to know about the history of this car? Let's go down to Frank's and get a beer."

"If you're looking for the thrilling history of a valiant and belauereled racing thoroughbred," I began when we'd had some brew, "forget it. Grendel was never raced—at least not in anything official. No, Grendel was a horror and a curse and a scourge. Grendel brought grief not joy to every-

one who ever had anything to do with it." I sipped at my beer, hoping this wasn't the same car I had known.

"Thing's a bitch to drive," Joey offered.

"Yeah, I know. In fact, the only person who ever managed to drive it without all kinds of alarm and flap was a teenage girl. God, I hope that's not the same car!"

Over the years, I've been dealt a good deal of grief by various motorcars, but for sheer hatefulness, nothing could match Grendel. Grendel screwed me up more than the two Porsches did, even. And the odd part of it was that I never owned the damned thing! In fact I never even drove it except once, and that was only to see if the car was really as dangerous, perverse and spiteful as it seemed. (It was.) I still don't know how or why, but I'm sure that car was out to get me.

Take, for instance, the first time I saw it . . .

I was fifteen then—I remember that clearly, because I was madly in love with Annie Gibson who was three months my senior and had just gotten her driver's license.

"Daddy has a new car," she remarked, as we were wet-sanding the bottom of my cat boat, which I'd hauled out of the water on the yacht club's marine railway. "Mr. Hammond bought a Jaguar, so Daddy had to have something fancier. It's an Allard."



"A which?"

"An Allard. It's really funny-looking and it has a Cadillac engine."

"I thought they were race cars."

"They are. But Daddy bought it anyway because it's faster than Mr. Hammond's Jaguar." She shrugged, as if that explained it. Knowing her father, that did explain it. He also owned a cabin cruiser which never left the mooring, an airplane which had never been flown and two peacocks which he wanted to get rid of, but couldn't catch. These and a few dozen other neglected toys littered his house, barn and grounds, souvenirs of an eternal war he waged with Hammond, his business partner.

"A dollar says he never drives it," I offered.

"Deal," she answered. "I bet he drives it three or four times. In fact, he drove it to the barber's this morning."

"No good. I have to see it with him in it before . . ." I was aware of the sound before I really heard it, and when I looked around several people who were crossing the parking lot had stopped. The air that hung like a steamy blanket was tinged with a touch of earthquake that you could feel, but not quite . . . yes, here it came now—the sound. And suddenly, I knew why chickens run across the road. Still clutching my wet 00 sandpaper, I cut for the club house porch, racing Annie, just as her father arrived in a screaming pink Allard J2.

It was some arrival. He got through the gate alright and looked like he was going to slow down and park it, when who should stroll out of the clubhouse, but Hammond. Gibson spotted him and stood on it, heading for the circle around the flagpole.

Even to my unpracticed eyes, it was beginning to look bad—I'd had enough clandestine experience with a certain jeep on a certain lawn to see that Old Man Gibson was going far too fast to make that gravelly turn. Sure enough, the Allard began to get sideways, then it got backwards as Gibson fed it another few gallons, and wheee! There he went, rear wheels smoking, Allard spinning, clubhouse snapping and clattering under the buckshot barrage of gravel . . . WHAM!

Of all the things he could have hit, Gibson chose to write off the back of his car against the bottom of my cat boat.

"And you owe me a dollar," said Annie.

My life with Grendel had begun.

Grendel got fixed before the boat did, and that led to Incident No. 2—the night of the Junior Dance at the Yacht Club.

I was in a hell of a stir, you see, because I was without transportation, except for my bicycle. And I was fifteen—bloody, agonizing, eternal fifteen, two months short of a driver's license, and with no boat to boot.

"I'll be damned if I'll get my mother to drive us," I raged over the phone at Annie. "I'll row all the way up there first."

"But it's three miles—against the tide . . ."

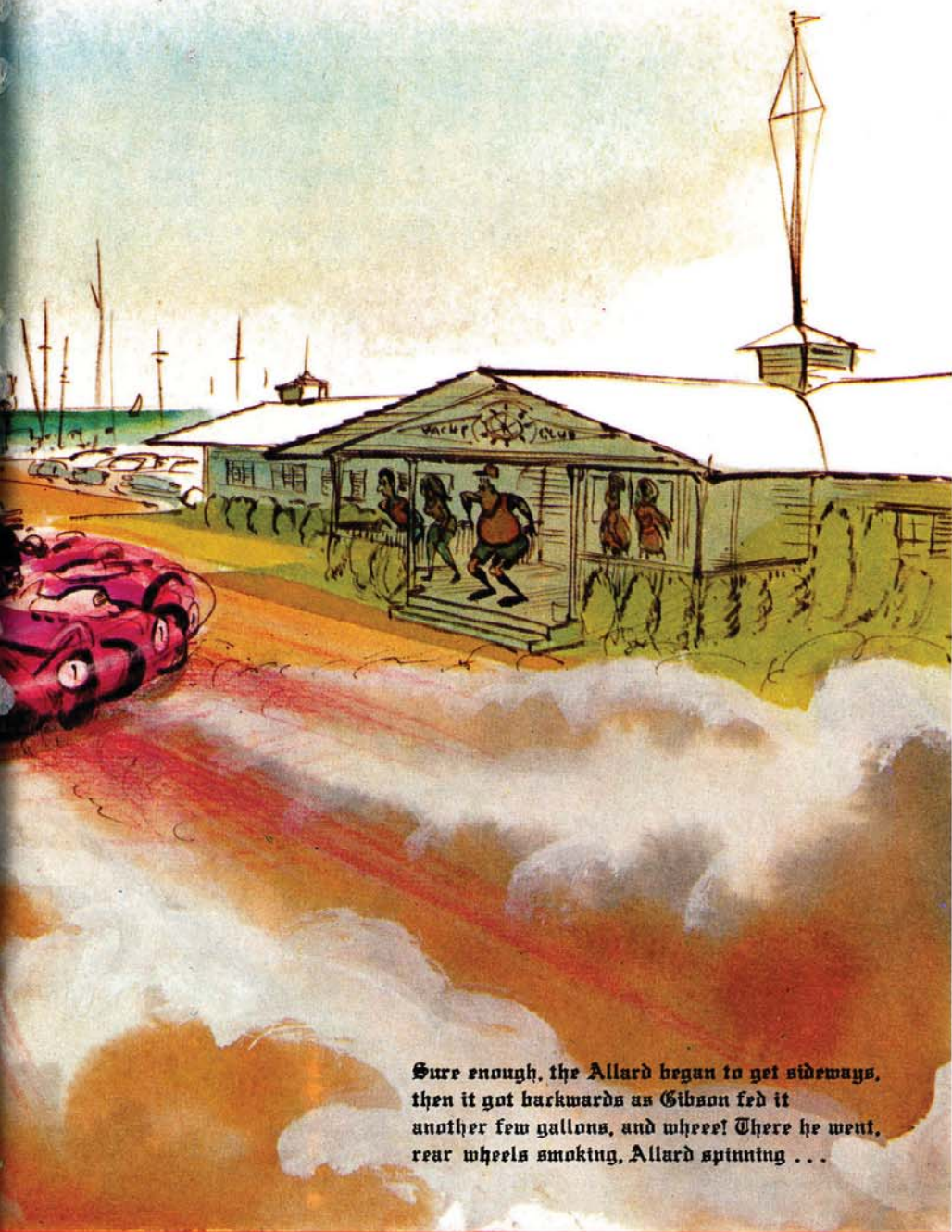
"Then we'll sail. Your catboat's in the water, isn't it?"

"I'll pick you up," she mumbled, hanging up rather abruptly.

She did, too. I was waiting for a sail to show around the point, when the air was suddenly charged with that sense of impending thunderclap and avalanche, and then the sound of something big and dreadful coming







Sure enough, the Allard began to get sideways, then it got backwards as Gibson fed it another few gallons, and wheee! There he went, rear wheels smoking, Allard spinning . . .

down the road. When I got back to the house, there was Annie smiling and the Allard idling, while all the front windows in the house chattered in unison.

"Look! Daddy gave it to me! It's my car now, isn't that great? I'm going to call it 'Grendel'—you know, after the . . ."

"I know who Grendel was," I mumbled.

"What?"

"I SAID I KNOW WHO GREDEL WAS! TURN IT OFF!"

The ground-shaking thunder stopped abruptly, and for a moment there was silence.

"Tink!" Grendel remarked softly.

"Well?"

"Okay," I said finally. "But I drive."

"Now look . . ."

"I DRIVE!"

"And suppose you get stopped, huh? What then?"

"Nobody's going to stop us . . ."

"But just suppose somebody does!"

"Oh for crissake, Annie! Move over!" She glared a moment.

"Okay. You drive. I want to see you drive this car all the way to the yacht club without getting stopped. They *watch* this car, you jerk! I can see it now—'BOY IN RACE CAR ONLY FIFTEEN . . .'"

"Look, miss high-and-mighty sixteen-year-old rich bitch with your goddam driver's license . . ."

"Don't swear!"

"I'll goddam swear all the hell I want to!" I piped in a voice still given to treacherous cracking. "You think you're so . . ."

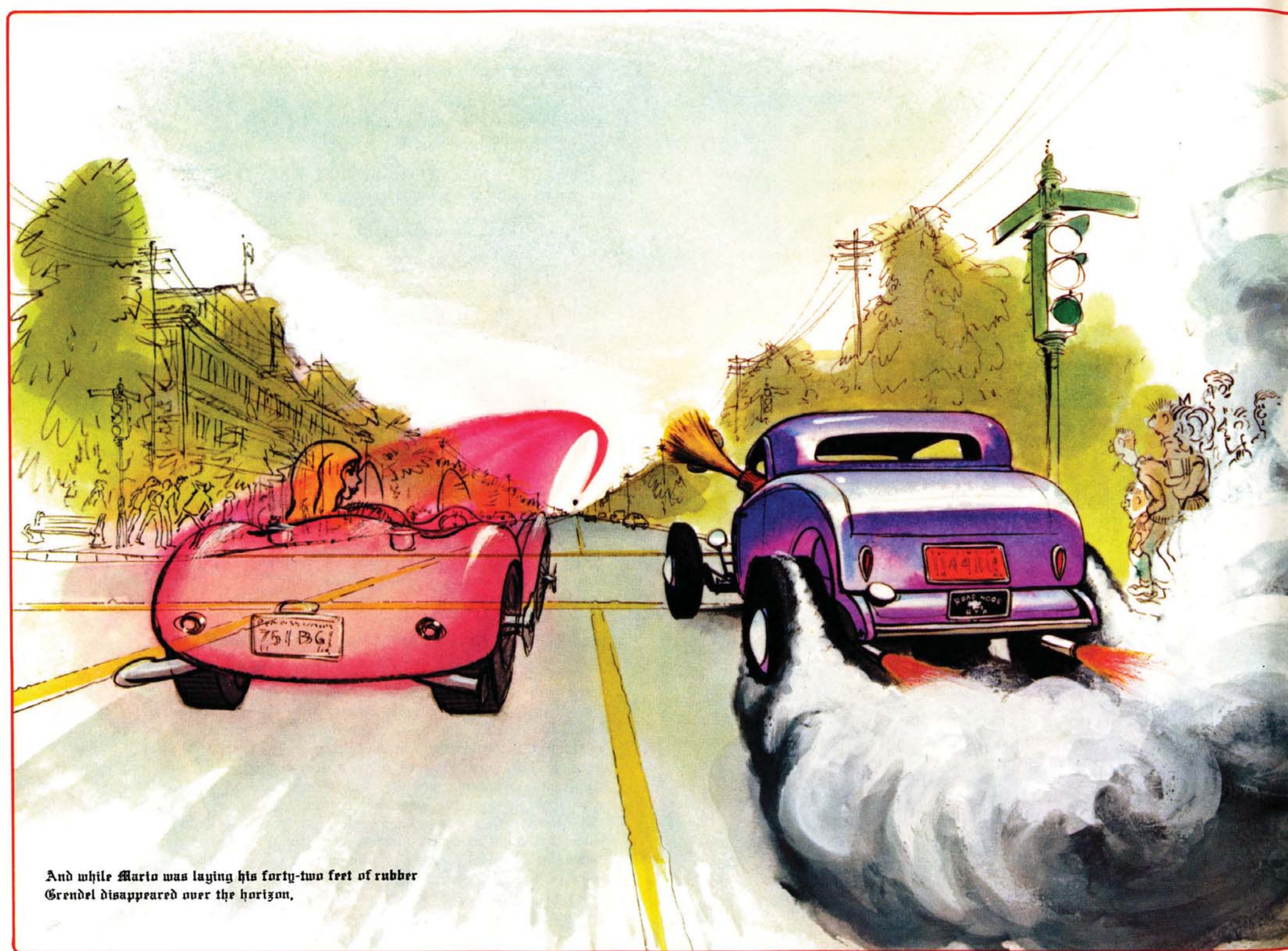
It was lost, all that lovely crackling invective, in a barrage of sound. SHRUUK! went the gravel under the roar and in a very few seconds I was alone, without even myself for company. The nearly-full moon turned the bay to glassy silver, lighting, reflecting, outlining our house and the bicycle that stood by the drive.

"Sonofabitch bicycle." I kicked it over and went to bed.

Tires squealed, engines whomped mightily, bells rang and the air was thick with enthusiastic lies as I drove into the first day of school, newly *Bar Mitzvahed* in the Mobile Society with driver's license and a fourth-hand, blue-chalk, cancerous, clapped-out '50 Plymouth. It wouldn't start in the wet, it wouldn't run in the heat, it leaked every vital fluid, it couldn't get out of its own way, the driver's door tended to fly open and I loved it! It was freedom, mobility and membership in the Culture. And it even took some of the emotional cutting edge off seeing Annie arrive in the Allard with a guy I knew only slightly. Annie hadn't spoken to me since that night in early summer, and with typical sixteen-year-old enthusiasm for classical tragedy, I was sure this had marked me for life. At forty, I knew, I would still pine for Annie, while she roared up and down my street in that horrid pink Allard. Ah, what sublime misery!

But if the sight of Grendel demoralized *me*, it was joy itself compared to what it did to some of my contemporaries. To the horde of high-school





And while Mario was laying his forty-two feet of rubber  
Grendel disappeared over the horizon,



gibrones with their Hot Fords and down-at-the-back Jimmy Dean Mercs, Grendel was an out-and-out disaster. I mean, picture a kid whose whole ego is wrapped around a Ford coupé with “duals” (you remember Hollywood mufflers? Cool, man!) and this kid gets to his senior year in high school with his ego pretty much intact because *all* the Ford coupés and *all* the Jimmy Dean Mercs perform pretty much the same. Now this kid’s a senior (wow) and life looks like a piece of cake . . . Mario’s case was typical, so I’ll tell you about him.

Mario was quarterback for the football team and his coupé was one of the real screamers—it could lay forty-two feet of rubber on dry concrete. So here’s Mario sitting in his car combing his DA and looking very cool indeed on the first day of school. New iron is coming into the lot from time to time, revving, spinning in the gravel, idling, challenging. And every now and then some kid stops and glares at Mario and revs. And ol’ Mario, man, he don’t give a damn, see, because *everybody* knows Mario’s hot coupé can lay forty-two feet of rubber, and that’s very cool. So Mario don’t even look at these cats, see, he just very casually lays a big blue suede one on the gas pedal and lets ‘em hear the duals, see, and then these cats *know*, and they don’t bug him.

But all of a sudden Mario stops in mid-stroke with the comb. He can’t hear it yet, but he feels it. And then he hears it. And when he finally sees it, Mario knows fear. Mario, however, is very cool.

“Whatya call *that* thing?” Mario is standing now, looking down at the Allard.

“It’s an Allard J2,” says Annie. “It’s English.”

“Oh, yeah? Like them M.G.’s huh? Can you burn rubber?”

“Yep.”

“Bull. How fast’ll it go? Can it do forty?” Laughter from the crowd of kibitzers. Mario, I thought, you are looking for symbolic castration ol’ buddy. But misery loves company so I kept my mouth shut, while Mario said bad, funny things about Grendel and Annie got red in the face. And sure enough, within three minutes they were side by side at the red light down the block, waiting for the light to go green, the burble of Mario’s duals obliterated by the shattering, searing blast of Grendel’s straight pipes.

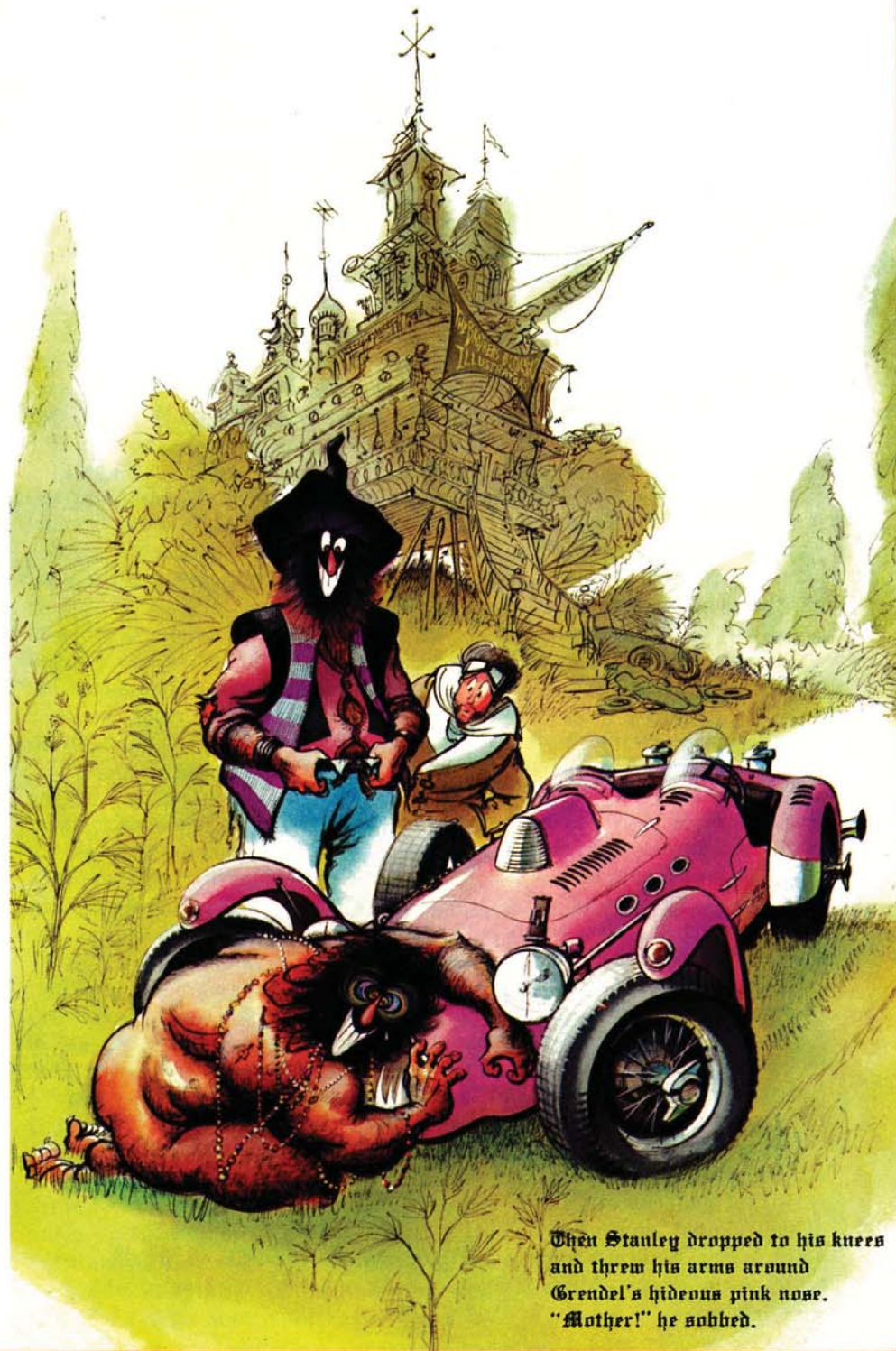
The light turned green.

And while Mario was laying his forty-two feet of rubber, Grendel disappeared over the horizon.

That was the year I made varsity end and was going to be a big football hero, too. Ha! Mario couldn’t complete a single pass all season long.

Seventeen . . . eighteen . . . nineteen . . . twenty . . . I hacked along, coping with school, survival, growth and Grendel, not necessarily in that order. Figure, oh, maybe three incidents a year. Minor stuff, mostly. Like the time I got the cushiest summer job in town—lifeguard at the country club pool—and resolved that *this* summer I was just going to sit . . . and sit . . . and soak up the sun and watch the nice people splash in the pool and not do *anything* even vaguely smacking of work.

That lasted three days, because Annie’s father and his business partner got screaming, flaming, roaring-mad drunk one early-summer Saturday and



Then Stanley dropped to his knees and threw his arms around Grendel’s hideous pink nose. “Mother!” he sobbed.



agreed that nothing would do but Gibson teach Hammond to drive Grendel, which Annie had brought to the club.

So for the rest of the summer, I worked. Doing things like helping the gardener replace the seventy-five feet of board fence, replanting about 300 rose bushes, sodding the lawn and so on. And that was *after* the two weeks it took to get the oil, gasoline, brake fluid and Allard out of the swimming pool.

While that episode wasn't unusual, it was notable in one respect; Annie no longer owned Grendel—the insurance company did.

They kept Grendel for some time, too—about three years. I didn't know what was happening down there between them and Grendel, but *something* sure as hell was. I suspected that one or a whole series of company gay blades were having a go at trying to drive it.

Anyway, shortly after they got Grendel, I got a Jag roadster. Fine. For awhile. But then I got a letter from them one day—they insured me too—and it went on for two pages about how dangerous sports cars were and how they were therewith raising my rates.

A year later they raised them again.

And finally, they told me that if I was determined to drive a sports car, I'd better start shopping for other insurance. And I *know* Grendel was at the bottom of it. Ah, Grendel . . .

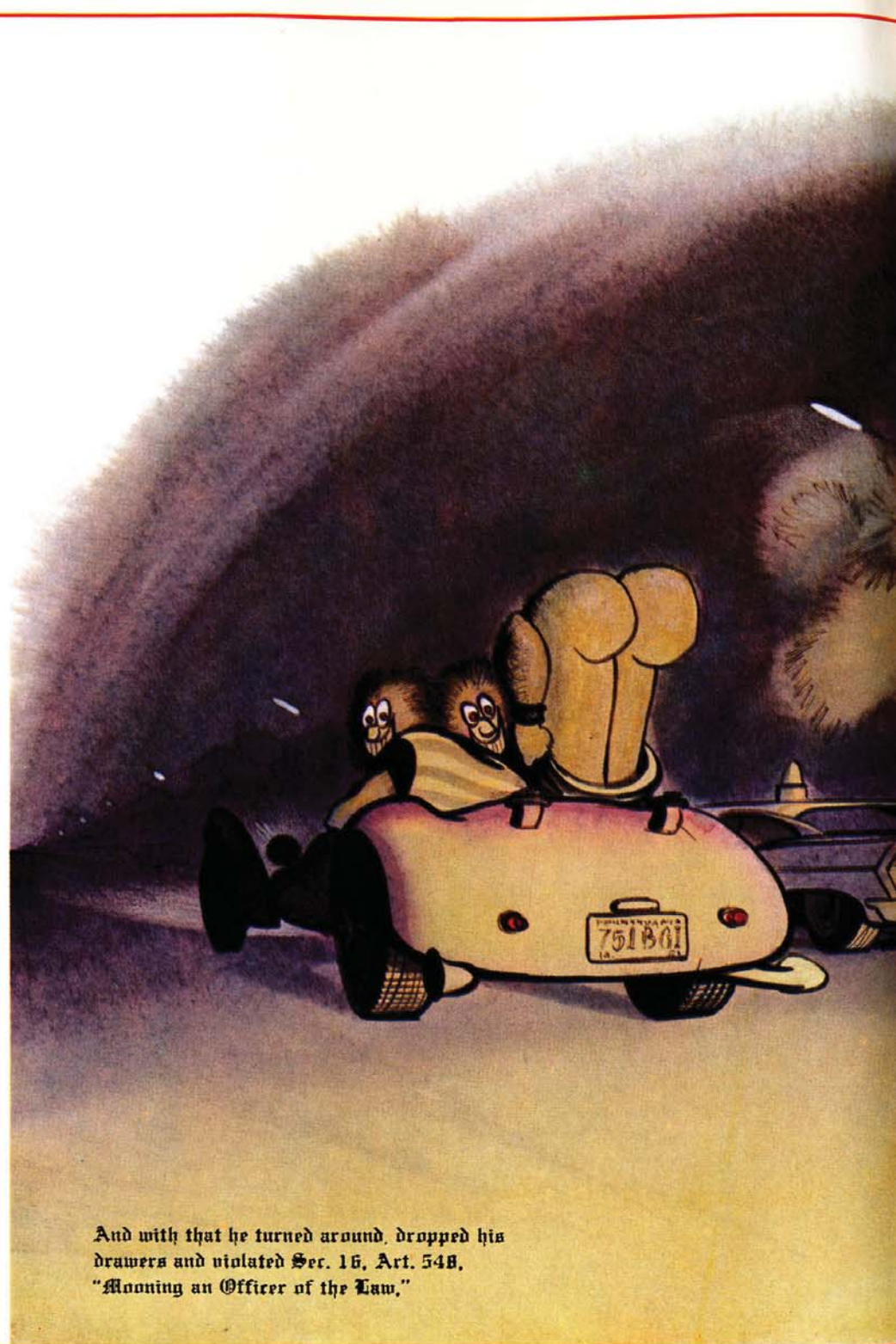
Soon after that, Grendel came back; apparently the insurance company had had enough grief.

Now, insurance companies, as I'm sure you're aware, are capable of some truly bizarre logic, and when it came to the matter of disposing of Grendel, the decision they made simply couldn't have been outdone—even by the Joint Chiefs of Staff; they sold the car to Irving Wallace, their own most feared assigned risk, and the worst, most idiotic, most incomparably bad driver in the whole, vast Whosoever Sports Car Club.

Up to that point the WSCC had a pretty good thing going with the law. The early days had been rough, of course, but our local finest finally realized that catching one fast-moving vehicle in a radar trap was not quite the same as trying to catch fifty or sixty fast-moving vehicles when they all hit the trap at once. And since this happened every Wednesday night when the club meeting adjourned to the bar five miles down the road, they were finally moved to negotiate.

Thus, the club entered a sort of Golden Age, where we did our best to cooperate with the fuzz and they, in turn, closed off an occasional road for us to bash on, and they looked the other way and put their fingers in their ears on Wednesday nights. And when problems came up, Rafe Beneman and I (president and secretary, respectively) would go down to the local Bastille and chat them out with Chief Rothsgar.

Irving and Grendel ended all that. Or maybe Chief Rothsgar did. Or maybe the blame fell on Rafe and me, or . . . oh, hell, it was all very emotional and confusing and involved, and ultimately everyone lost track of the original issues. See, it finally came to where Rafe and I were going down to see Rothsgar every other day, and the discussions would always center on a certain Allard J2, which was registered to Irving, who lived out-of-state.



And with that he turned around, dropped his drawers and violated Sec. 16, Art. 54B, "Mooning an Officer of the Law."





Rothsgar would insist we throw Irving out of the club, or he'd declare open season on sports cars. We'd insist that Rothsgar lift Irving's license and leave the rest of the club alone. Rothsgar, in turn, would treat us to an emotional fifteen minutes concerning the difficulty of catching a J2 Allard with a tired Ford Interceptor, Rafe would begin to giggle and the meeting would end with threats, accusations and bad feelings on both sides. And finally there came a meeting where nobody said anything, just glared. We left, then, and twelve minutes later I was sitting by the side of the road reading a citation for "excessive noise" which had been handed to me by Officer Bob Wolfe, the meanest, nastiest s.o.b. on the force. The season, it seemed, had opened.

And there was no bag limit. The local traffic court soon became known as the "Clubhouse Annex" and almost any session would feature the fining of five or six Whosoever members. Rafe even got a lawyer and came in one morning to explain to the judge that club members were being persecuted unfairly, that we were all here simply because of the "frustration and anger of the police department arising from their inability to apprehend one particular car." The judge listened patiently, then fined him ten dollars and costs.

Whap! went the bartender's newspaper, bringing an end to a cockroach, who had tried to cadge a free drink, and to the glum silence that hung over Meade's Bar. Six freshly fined Whosoever members looked up from their brown studies and regarded the blasted remains of the hapless bug.

"Poor sonofabitch," someone said.

"Somebody think of something," Rafe muttered at his beer. "I've got three more points before I lose my license."

"I thought you had six."

"That was this morning."

"What happened?"

"Whadaya mean, 'what happened?' I got another ticket."

"For what?"

"I got a flat when I left court this morning and that bastard Bob Wolfe drove up in the cruiser while I was changing it."

"He busted you for having a flat?"

"Well, not exactly. The charge reads, 'using foul, abusive and blasphemous language within fourscore yards of a House of Worship.' See, the splines were all rusted and . . . *somebody think of something, for crissake!*"

"That's nothing—they busted me for 'Mopery with Intent to Creep' last week."

"What's that?"

"Ten dollars and costs."

"No, I mean . . ."

"THINK! THINK! What're we going to do?"

"Rafe," I said, "do you think it's all because of the club or Irving or the Allard or what? What's behind all this? What are they *really* bugged about? Let's go over it all again."





... the Brothers Boslauskys proceeded  
to violate Sec. 920, Art. 486--  
"Stamping a Police Car."



"The Allard. It's gotta be the Allard. They never said 'boo' to Irving when he drove his Sprite. But now there's an out-of-state Allard speeding and spinning and flapping its crazy front wheels on their turf and they can't catch it and they're mad."

"So if Irving sold the Allard they'd lay off, right?"

"Yeah. Only Irving won't sell the Allard."

"He would," someone said quietly, "if you sold him your Bristol, Rafe."

Rafe heaved a classic Hebraic sigh. "Yeah. I guess he would, at that. But then, who would he sell the Allard to? See? If he sells it in the club we still have the same old problem."

"Wait a minute," I said. "Wait a minute now . . . oh . . . OH! OH, WOW! Gentlemen, this is the end of Grendel! Rafe, get on the phone and make your deal with Irving. Tell him I've got a buyer for the Allard, and that I'll pick it up in the morning so I can show it to the guy. Gimme a dime, I've got to make a call."

After about three minutes conversation with Chief Rothsgar I was convinced that it really was the Allard that was upsetting them, and that things would be much better if it were sold out of the club. Then I made another call and arranged to show the Allard the next morning.

"What's going on," Rafe asked me when I returned to the bar.

"I told you. I've arranged for the end of the problem *and* the end of the Allard! I've found the perfect owner for Grendel—or rather, the perfect *owners*. It's *sublime*, man! It can't miss! Oh, this is gonna be beautiful!"

"Who, already?"

"The Brothers Boslavsky."

While I watched, the worried, drawn look left Rafe's face, to be replaced with a look of wonder and awe. "My God," he whispered. "Oh my God."

"Mommy! There's a man with a beard here to see you." Irving's eldest, having delivered her message, returned her thumb to her mouth and her gaze to my face. "Who are you and why do you have a beard?"

I was about to tell her I was the bastard son of Santa Claus when her mother arrived at the door with Grendel's key.

"Be careful, huh? That car's dangerous. And when you start it, drive right off—otherwise the neighbors get mad."

I thanked her and went around toward the garage, the small girl-child tagging along behind. When she saw me getting into the Allard, though, she turned and ran, leaving Grendel and me entirely at each other's mercy.

Lessee now . . . clutch. Yeah, it's there, but it seems to be stuck . . . no . . . if I brace my back against the seat I can push it in. Brake's where it ought to be . . . oh, hey, he's put a governor on the go pedal—it only moves about half an inch. Very light, too. And the steering wheel seems to be more or less connected to the front wheels . . . that's good. Okay, what the hell . . .

Foolishly, I twisted the key on and gave Grendel life.

When the initial blast had subsided to a raucous idling thunder I proceeded to: (1) grind it into first; (2) ease the clutch out ever so

slowly; (3) stall the engine.

"Tick," the fuel pump remarked.

BRAAAMM! Let's try again, this time with some throttle . . .

As Grendel catapulted screaming and smoking out of the garage and down the drive, I realized that there *wasn't* a governor on the gas—that ticklish half-inch was the damned thing's total travel!

Endofthedrive—ohmigod—gasoff—gason—steer for crissake—oh-oh—whee . . . Deafening silence.

"Tick. . . Tick-tick."

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all, I thought. No! I've got to do it. Now, let's just pretend I didn't spin coming out of the driveway and try it again.

BRAAAMM!

By the time I got out of the neighborhood and onto the highway I had found out much about J2 Allards. Most important is the matter of oversteer and understeer; this is entirely within the driver's control, and depends on whether your right foot is up or down. One way, the car spins like a top. The other way, it simply plows straight ahead with the wheels at full lock. And your Margin of Right Foot Error is about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch in terms of pedal travel. Interesting.

But not nearly as interesting as what it does when you simply want to go in a straight line.

Have you ever ridden a horse that tries to scrape you off on low branches? In our rush down the highway Grendel showed an alarming tendency to do the same thing, only Grendel used oncoming trucks in place of low branches. Straight-ahead motoring takes on the aspects of a game, in which the driver tries to guess which way his mount is going to head next, and the penalties for losing are dramatic and abrupt. In all, if sweaty palms turn you on, buy yourself an Allard J2. But a word of advice—don't under any circumstances drive it through any puddles. See, the floorboards are these loose, rattley sheets of aluminum that sort of don't fit together right, and when you hit a puddle all the water in it comes right into the driver's seat with you. Oh, it's a *fun* car!

"THE BROTHERS BOSLAVSKY," said the ornate gold letters on the black sign, "ILLUSTRATORS." With a minor bit of trouble and noise I got Grendel headed in the right direction, drove up the winding gravel drive past the riotous remains of the formal gardens, and stopped on the lawn in front of what I still consider the damndest piece of architecture I have ever seen. Imagine, if you will, a two-story heap of stuccoed Victorian hysteria sitting on stilts in the middle of the woods. It would be hard to put a label on the architecture, but Nick Boslavsky says it's early St. Louis Bordello Gothic. His brother Stanley disagrees—says it's a prime example of Oklahoma Byzantine.

Hard by the steps was a pile of flattened sheet metal which had once been a Volkswagen; Stanley had gotten mad at it one day for its refusal to start and had literally kicked it to pieces, then had stomped the pieces flat. Beside the Volksie-pile was a paintless 120 Jag with the fenders ripped off (Stanley liked it better that way), and beside that was a six-



foot seven-inch mountain of flesh and hair named Nick, sometimes called "Boslavsky Minor;" Stanley (Boslavsky Major) was a good deal bigger. The mountain of flesh and hair grinned and approached.

"That's it huh? Hey, wait'll Stan sees that! Good to see you . . ."

I stuck my hand out to be crunched. "Where's Stan?"

"Oh, he's around somewhere . . . Hey, Stan! He's doing peyote today. STANLEY! Tripped out of his ever-lovin' gourd."

"Oh . . . he's having a good trip, I hope?" I had once seen Stanley Boslavsky on a bad trip; in all, it was rather like confronting a malevolent seven-foot-tall owl.

"Oh, yeah, he's fine. He's being a holy man in the wilderness this time. Strictly beads and flowers. STANLEY! HEY, STAN!"

"Who calls?" A voice boomed from the woods. There was a crashing of brush. "Who calls mighty *Ursus horribilis* from his home in the forests?" Stanley appeared from the woods wearing a string of beads, a few flowers, a lot of hair and nothing else.

"I thought you said he was being a holy man," I whispered to Nick.

"Okay, a holy bear, then. Hey Stan, c'mere and look at this car!"

Slowly Stanley approached, his mind a broiling, day-glo swirl of exploding synapses, his pin-wheel eyes fixed on Grendel. He stopped in front of the car. His brother watched him, grinning.

"What do you think, Stan? Think we could give ol' Bob Wolfe a merry time with this thing?"

Stanley's huge, hairy face parted in a grin and his eyes began to fill with tears. Then he dropped to his knees and threw his arms around Grendel's hideous pink nose. "Mother!" he sobbed.

Grendel had finally come home.

After that? Well, for one thing the fuzz laid off busting club members and things got back to normal in that area. The cops in general, and Officer Robert Ormsbee Wolfe in particular, had other things to keep them busy, i.e., the Brothers Boslavsky and Grendel, their pet horror.

If Bob Wolfe hated Grendel, it was nothing compared to his regard for the Brothers Big. Officer Wolfe called them "hippie commie beatnik perverts" and they called him "B.O." Each was out to get the other and this led to plots, counterplots, stunts, chases, roadblocks and a profusion of practical jokes at poor B.O.'s expense, one of which I was fortunate enough to see.

We were cavorting in Meade's one night when it occurred to us to go down to the diner and get something to eat. So we strolled on down . . . and there parked at the curb by the fireplug in front of the diner was Officer B.O. Wolfe's cruiser. B.O. was in the diner having his customary 11:14 piece of pie and cup of coffee. "Evening, Bob," I said as we passed.

"Officer Wolfe," he corrected.

BRAAAMM! came the sound from the street. BRAAAAAAAMMM!

B. O. jumped up and went for the door. We followed him out. There in the street was Grendel, Nick at the wheel, Stanley standing up in the seat. "Hey, B. O.!" Stanley shouted. And with that he turned around, dropped his drawers and violated Sec. 16, Art. 548, "Mooning an Officer

of the Law." Then, shrieking with hilarity and wheelspin, they left—*fast*.

B. O. sprinted puffing to his cruiser, leapt in and hit the starter, siren and red light all at once. And with a wild squeal of rubber, the cruiser shot off after the Allard.

That's when I noticed the chain which had been coiled up under the police car. One end of it was wrapped securely around the fire plug, while the other end seemed to be attached to something under the cruiser. There was, oh, maybe a hundred feet of it, and we watched fascinated as the cruiser picked up speed and the coil grew smaller . . . and smaller . . .

Ah. The other end was attached to the cruiser's rear axle, just as I had thought.

And then suddenly, finally, it was all over for Grendel. I came on the scene just by chance after it was all over, and from what I saw there and in the paper the next morning, I was able to piece together what had happened.

The Brothers Boslavsky had a stunt they'd pull on poor old B. O. every now and then—they'd pick him up in town and lead him out on Route 3, then lead him around on two or three laps of Haley's Mountain. Then they'd pull ahead out of sight and duck up a dirt road, drive to the top of the mountain and sit there watching B. O. going round and round and round, using his red light, siren and most of the road. Finally, B. O. would call for a road block, they'd set it up, and it'd catch nothing more than B.O.'s overheated cruiser.

Only one night it didn't work.

They'd picked up B.O. in front of the diner—he looked before he drove away to make sure the back axle wouldn't stop again two blocks before the cruiser did—and they had him chuffing along on the first lap of Route 3 when the unthinkable happened; Grendel's S.U. fuel pump packed up and the Bendix which helped the S.U. couldn't keep the float bowls full. Stuttering and popping, Grendel ground to a halt.

We came on the scene about half an hour later and stopped. We had to—the road was full of police cars and policemen wearing about seven different kinds of uniforms. I think the CIA was there, too.

Anyway, they had the Brothers Boslavsky all chained up with six or seven pairs of handcuffs and were trying to load them into a wagon without an awful lot of success. Grendel sat silently by the side of the road with B.O.'s cruiser behind it. The cruiser seemed to have rolled over. We watched for about fifteen minutes and then drove on.

It was all over the front page the next morning.

What had happened was this: When the Allard stopped, B.O. rushed up to make the arrest. Stanley, against the orders of a police officer, started to get out of the car. So B.O. tried to subdue him with a nightstick. That made Stanley mad; he took B.O.'s stick away and broke it. Then he took B.O.'s gun away and broke that too. B.O. ran and got in his cruiser and started to call for help and managed to get his location and predicament on the air before Stanley bit the antenna off. Then, with the B.O. quaking inside it, the Brothers Boslavsky proceeded to violate Sec. 920, Art. 486—"Stomping a Police Car." And just as the Brothers Large realized that



they could squash B.O. like a bug simply by stomping the roof of the car in on him, help arrived.

Two days later the Brothers Boslavsky were gone—vanished—disappeared. Apparently they had become somewhat restive in Chief Rothsgar's jail cell and had simply kicked their way out. And when about nine thousand cops descended on Casa Boslavsky with shotguns, tanks and bazookas the next morning, they found an empty house, a pile of flattened German steel and an old Jag roadster minus its fenders and S.U. fuel pump.

But the cops still had Grendel. And with neither trial nor fanfare, they sentenced Grendel to death.

The day it was supposed to happen, I went down and visited Grendel on Death Row.

Grendel sat cold and silent in the bluish, oily mud, quietly awaiting its fate, while the Monster reduced a '56 De Soto to a small, oblong steel cube. An old Buick was next . . . and then it would be Grendel's turn in the crusher.

"Hey, you!" A greasy little man was yelling at me from the crusher's control platform. "What're you doing down there?"

"Just looking at this Allard . . ."

"Well, get outa here! This is private property. Nobody's supposed to be here."

"You gonna squash this car?"

"Right after the Buick. Now beat it!"

"I got a dollar that says the Allard screws up your machine."

"Not a chance. Now beat it or I'll call a cop."

I left. And I never saw or heard about Grendel again.

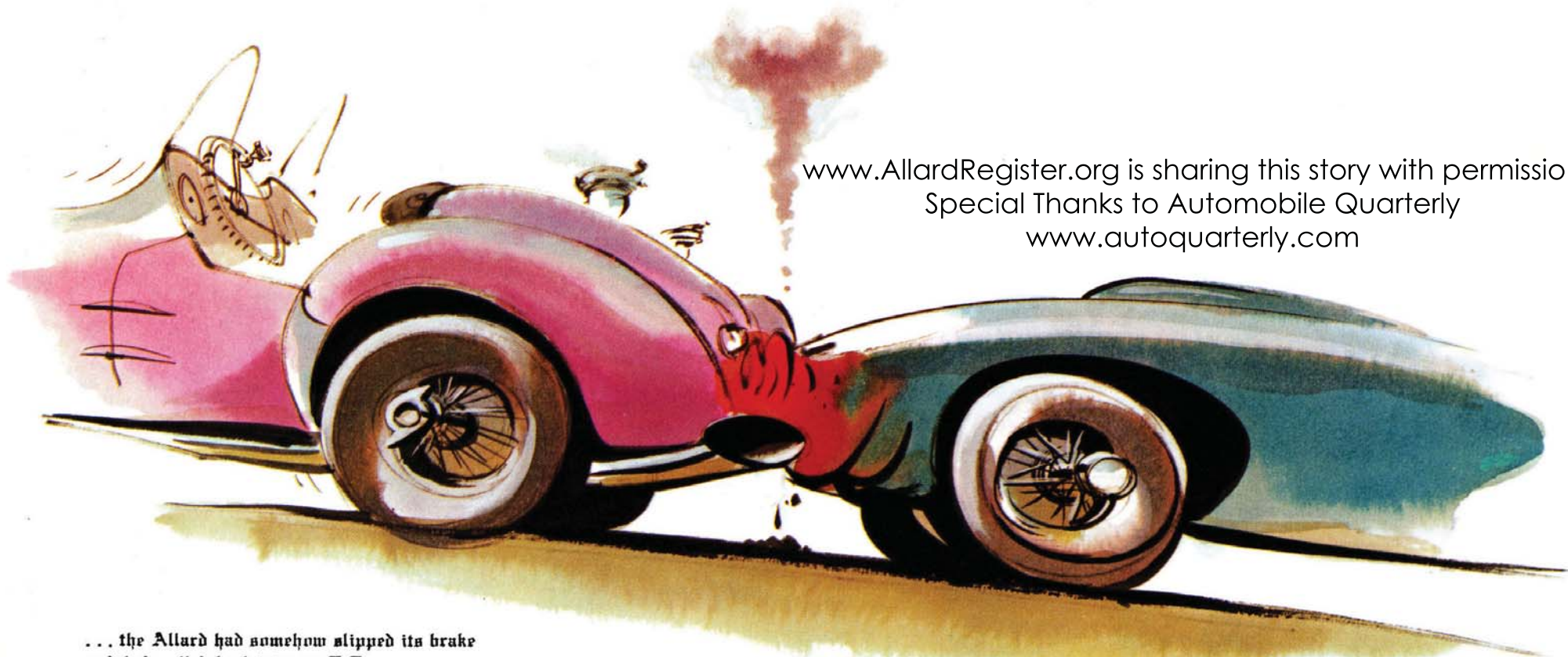
Joey sleeved the last of his beer out of his moustache and we got up to leave.

"So how do you figure this is the same car?"

"It can't be," I said. "Now that I think it all through again, your new car is just another pink J2 with a crazy dent in the frame. It's got to be." We rounded the corner where Joey had left his car . . . and my heart sank.

"No," I said. "No, that's not just another Allard. *Grendel, you rotten sonofabitch!*"

While we had sat in the bar, the Allard had somehow slipped its brake and had rolled back into my E-Type, bashing in its unprotected nose. It was Grendel, alright. ☼



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