

No. 10

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CRITTERS



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SAKAI

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Critters

No. 10 March, 1987

LETTERS

Send to: CRITTERS, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301

This issue, I've got a couple of real long and real interesting letters to print, so I'll make this short.

I should mention, however, that the much-appreciated deluge of letters of comment has died down to a trickle, and if I don't get another batch soon I'll have to run lots of ads on the back pages instead of the witty humor to which you've become accustomed. So please write; we'll feel happier if you do!

This issue is a little strange in that all three stories in it are well-established *Critters* returnees. I don't know if you've noticed, but in every issue since *Critters* #3, we've either introduced a new series or featured some kind of special one-shot—Shogart, Wilson Ground-shaper, Flossie-Jack, De Grand Wo-Zoo, Ty Templeton's tale, and Dog Boy. This time around, though, it's just more of the same of Usagi Yojimbo, Gault, and Lionheart stuff. As an added dirty trick, every single story in continued next issue! Hope you aren't too disappointed.

Speaking of our big double-size Christmas issue, as we were, *Critters* #11 should please all but the strongest reader: in addition to the concluding chapters to the above tale, it will include a new character from Mark Armstrong, Chuck the Duck, a Mike Kasulik short starring his bat character (recently seen in *Adventures of Captain Jack*, on sale now) and a special seasonal guest star: a one-page Sam Kieth story; and a brand new tale from a brand new team, John Holford and Ron Wilder! Once we've topped this off with a Ken Macklin cover, you'll see we've engineered a readership of virtually everyone who's ever worked on *Critters*. If I can just squeeze a little something out of Templeton and Shogart, the only one missing will be Steve Gallucci—but here's

sticking out *Critters* #12 with the first chapter of "Birthright II" and a pointed cover (Applause, please.)

See you in 30!

—KIM THOMPSON

Dear Kim Thompson,

To be honest, I was ecstatic when the first issue of *Critters* landed in my hands, although at the cost of \$1.00 via buying it from the personal collection of a local dealer who was otherwise sold out—but this detracted little from my enthusiasm. I had learned much about the form and content from ads: it was to be an anthology title containing funny animal stories from artists I had already been familiar with. With this in mind, I read the issue, awestruck on a poetic, or at least novel, visual impact that would stimulate my imagination and interest. I was not in the least disappointed.

Kim, let me be yet another voice praising your efforts to revive a faltering genre. Thanks to you and your staff, funny animals and the like have achieved in a very short time the success inherent in a revitalization that results from inspired individuals with focused creative drive. This book, then, for the comics industry has "set the ball rolling" with a path as yet undetermined. I wish you continued good fortune.

To be more specific—

I am an devotee of Steve Gallucci's work, which I have followed from *Aldred* #2 in 1983. He more than any other individual has opened my eyes to the potential of anthropomorphism in static form (comic) and kinetic (animation) a larger, primary personal interest. This was mainly due to our somewhat similar creative viewpoints. I also enjoy what he has done for semantic reasons that are too involved to discuss here.

(SEE "LETTERS," PAGE 30)

CONTENTS



Page 1

USAGI YOJIMBO in "Homecoming" by STAN SAKAI

Usagi meets some long-lost friends and battles a sinister new enemy: the magpie thief! First of two parts.



Page 11

GRUFF in: "The Ultimate Gruff" by FREDDY HILTON

Gruff's Orromanga has reached its peak, as he tries to decorate the city's clock tower with his signature...



Page 21

LIONHEART in: "Explosion" by TOM STARR

David Lynch moves east! Our intrepid reporter continues his search through the swamp unashamedly on Wake...

USAGI YOJIMBO



HOMECOMING!







REALLY USAGH! I INVITE YOU ON A PICNIC...

...AND YOU SPEND YOUR TIME DOING INK DRAWINGS!



THE BRUSH IS ALSO A PART OF THE SAMURAI'S DISCIPLINE, MARUKO.



THEN I HOPE YOU NEVER TRADE IT FOR THE SWORD, USAGH.

HERE... LEND ME YOUR BRUSH.



AND I WILL SHOW YOU MY SKILL!



HA! HA! HA! HA!



SEE ABE, NOW WE'LL SEE HOW YOU'D LOOK WITH A MUSTACHE!

HA! HA! NO YOU WOULDN'T DARE!



HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA



MOTHER!



MOTHER, THAT SAMURAI SAVED MY LIFE!

HOW CAN MY HUSBAND KENCHI AND I EVER REPLY YOU?

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE YOU'VE BEEN HOME, USAGH-SAN.



I AM GLAD FOR YOU BOTH.

AND I'M SURE KENICH WILL BE AS GOOD A MAGISTRATE AS MY FATHER WAS.



UNDAH...
I... I'M SORRY ABOUT THE DEATH OF YOUR FATHER.

I WAS WITH LORD MIFUNE AT ARABASHIMURA PLAIN WAITING FOR THE BATTLE AGAINST LORD HIKUJI. AT THE TIME, I JUST HEARD RUMORS AS TO HIS DEATH.



IT WAS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE LORD HIKUJI'S VICTORY OVER YOUR LORD MIFUNE.*



*LORD YOUNGBO GUMMUK SPECIES.

HE AND HIS MEN CAME THROUGH THIS PILLAGE DEBARKING ARABASHIMURA. YOUR FATHER WAS THE JERRY OFFICIAL...







AS PREDICTED,
IT WAS A HARSH
WINTER. MANY
DIED THAT
YEAR... MOST
STARTLED



ENOUGH! I DID ALL THAT I
COULD. TRUE THERE WERE
DEATHS... BUT THE VILLAGE
WAS SAVED! YOUR FATHER
WOULD HAVE BURIED
US ALL!

AND
YOU...



YOU ARE NOT
WELCOME
HERE,
USAGI!

WHAT ARE YOUR
INTENTIONS?
AS MAGISTRATE,
I HAVE A
RIGHT TO
KNOW.



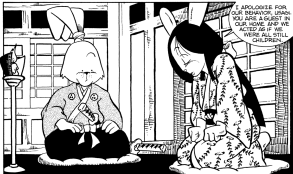
MY INTENTIONS?
TO PAY MY RESPECTS
TO THE GRAVE OF
MY FATHER.

WOULD
YOU
REBUKE
ME
THAT?



FOR SAVING
JOTARO'S LIFE, YOU
ARE WELCOME HERE
FOR THE NIGHT
BUT I EXPECT
YOU TO LEAVE IN
THE MORNING!





IT IS **I** WHO SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR DISTURBING THE HARMONY OF YOUR HOME. IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE THE SEEN KENCHI, YET OLD RIVALRIES ARE STILL STRONG.

INDEED, HE SEEMS TO DESPISE ME EVEN MORE THAN BEFORE.

YES...

MARIKO...

WHO ARE THE MOJURA NINJA?

THAT IS...

THEY ARE **OUR** PROBLEM, USASH...

...AND NOT YOUR BURDEN.

NONSENSE, MARIKO. YOU FORGET I WAS BORN IN THIS VILLAGE...

IN MANY WAYS, I AM STILL A PART OF IT.

WELL... THIS IS ONCE AGAIN A HARSH WINTER... EVEN THE ADDITION OF ONE OTHER MOUTH TO FEED IS DIFFICULT. KENICHI REMEMBERS THE OLD TIMES AND IS AFRAID. PERHAPS THIS IS WHY HE RESENTS YOU, USAMI... YOU ARE A WANDERER WHILE HE CHOSE TO STAY AND BURDEN HIS RESPONSIBILITIES.



A FEW DAYS AGO, THE MOSURA NINJA CAME DEMANDING FOOD AND SUPPLIES. BECAUSE OF THE HEAVY SNOWS, WE ARE ALMOST ENTIRELY CUT OFF FROM HELP. BUT KENICHI REFUSED THEM.



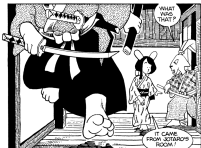
TONIGHT THEY BURROWED INTO THE STOREHOUSE AND TOOK OUR FOOD. JOTARO WAS INSIDE AND THEY TOOK HIM TOO-- THREATENING TO KILL HIM IF WE FOLLOWED!



BUT THANKS TO YOU, JOTARO IS ONCE AGAIN SAFE WITH A GUARD POSTED INSIDE HIS ROOM--



JOTARO!



THANKS TO DENNIS FUJITAKE FOR SUGGESTING THE MOKURA (MOLES) HINJA.

Freddy Wilton's

Gnuff

"THE ULTIMATE ÖRVA"

DARKNESS ENVELOPES THE CITY - IT LOOKS TO BE A NIGHT LIKE ANY OTHER...

... BUT ONE PERSON HAD CAREFULLY Laid SPECIAL PLANS FOR TONIGHT...



THE MOON IS SHROUDED BY THICK CLOUDS AS HE DRAWS INTO THE CITY (LANDMARK: THE TOWER CLOCK...



THE STREETS ARE OVERRUN BY GUARDS, ALL INTENT ON KEEPING GNUFF FROM COMPLETING HIS LATEST DRUG...



GNUFF IS FREQUENTLY INTERRUPTED, LEAVING UNFINISHED PROJECTS IN HIS WAKE...



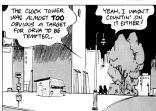
... BUT TONIGHT GNUFF IS TESTING A REVOLUTIONARY NEW TECHNIQUE...



TOMORROW GNUFF'S NAME WILL BE ON EVERYONE'S LIPS...











... AND THE CITY'S CLOCK TOWER IS BATHED IN A SEA OF WHITE...







HIDE IN THAT SHED OVER THERE, GRIMM...
THERE'S NO REASON YOU SHOULD
PAY FOR GRIMM'S FEES...



THIS TIME OUR
PATIENCE'S GONNA
PAY OFF!

GRIMM CAN'T
SQUABBLE
OUT NOW!!



FINALLY WE MEET GRIMM! WE'VE BEEN
LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS!

PLEASED!
ALL
MINE...



ACTUALLY, I NOTICED YOU, BUT IT DOESN'T
MATTER NOW THAT MY MASTERPIECE IS
COMPLETE...



AN IMPRESSIVE SLIDESHOW... BUT ONCE
YOU KILL THE LIGHTS...

AM! THANKS FOR
REMOVING ME! THE
EXPOSURE TIME'S
OVER NOW...



EXPOSURE
TIME ?

THE IMAGE MIGHT BE
OVEREXPOSED...

OVEREX-
POSED ?



NOW IT'S STARTING TO RAIN! THE WATER
WILL WASH THE EXCESS DEVELOPER OFF
AND ACT AS THE FIXER...

...THE
FIXER
Z!!



PRECISELY... AND
THIS IS MY GREAT-
EST WORK! I'D
NEVER HAVE HAD
THE TIME TO DO
IT THE NORMAL
WAY, SO I HAD
TO INVENT THIS
TECHNIQUE...





HERE'S DRUM, CHIEF!

BANDITS! BLACKGUARD! SCUM!

WE'LL DONE JOW!



IF YOU AREN'T THE POLICE, YOU GOT ABSOLUTELY NO RIGHT TO HOLD ME!

OH, LET HIM GO...



WE'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THE POLICE... BUT WE COULDN'T AFFORD TO SIT AROUND AND WAIT FOR THEM TO CATCH YOU!

OUR INSURANCE COMPANY PROPERTY PLUS, IS DRAWING IN GRAFFITI CLAIMS... FOR WHICH YOU WILL NOW BE HELD RESPONSIBLE!



GEE, I'M INSURED AT REG-PEE-PEE PLUS MYSELF... NAME...

OUR LAWYERS WILL ESTABLISH THAT YOUR DEPRECIATIONS AREN'T COVERED BY YOUR OWN INSURANCE!



WELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER... DRUM IS NO LONGER ANYWAY!

HUZZE! BUT I'M FACE TO FACE WITH YOU!



BUT IT'S JUST AVE, DRUM'S HELPER, IN THE SUIT! THE REAL DRUM HID IN THE EYES ON THE ROOF OF THE GASWORKS... AND HE'S FAR GONE NOW...

HAHA?

SURELY YOU JEST!



(SIGH)... I'M AFRAID THE KIDS RIGHT... WE'VE SEEN HIM FOLLOWING THE REAL DRUM AROUND FOR WEEKS... WE SHOULD'VE SUSPECTED DRUM-THING WHEN WE DIDN'T SEE BOTH OF THEM ON THE ROOF OF THE GASWORKS...

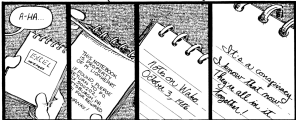
GRRR!

I THOUGHT HE LOOKED SMALLER...



IN THE EYE OF THE LAW THE DRAGON KID IS A MINOR AND CAN'T BE HELD RESPONSIBLE... OR BE FORCED TO BEAR WITNESS AGAINST DRUM... SO TURNING HIM OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES WOULD BE USELESS...





Something very unusual is going on in this town, but everybody here is playing dumb. They don't want me to know their secret.

But I've seen them. They're real.

The little green monster tried to scare me off last night...



They slipped me a hallucinogen and left me hanging upside down from a light fixture in my hotel room. And all the townsfolk, acting oh-so-innocent, they're all laughing at me!



But... none of this makes any sense unless I start from the beginning: I came to this town looking for a road map, but what I found was the Twilight Zone!



SUSPICION

Within moments of my arrival, I crossed paths with two unbelievable creatures, amorphous green blobs of bad attitude. Before I had time to gather my wits, they had disappeared completely.



Hoping to get another glimpse of the characters, I took a room at the local hotel. That evening, they sneaked into my room and gave me the worst nightmare of my life.



I woke up aching and exhausted ... but most of all, I woke up pissed!

I knew right away the first thing I had to do was call my editor and tell him I had a lead on a great story ... and maybe get him to send a photographer. There was a payphone in the lobby.

MORNING! HOPE
YOU SLEPT GOOD

... LET ME GET BACK
TO YOU ON THAT ...



HELLO, OPERATOR... I NEED
TO CALL (412) 520-7041.
COLLECT. MY NAME'S LIONHEART.

THANKS



KLICK-KLICK-KLIKLIK... BZZZZ...
RING... BZZZZZ... RING... BZZZZ
RING... KLICKLIKLIK!
HELLO?





A few blocks away, I found a diner, with a public telephone.



YESSIR, I'LL RING THAT NUMBER FOR YOU, SIR.

222222
RING!
222222



THEY'RE NOT ANSWERING, SIR, PLEASE TRY YOUR CALL AGAIN LATER. KLIKLIKLIK!

HEY, YOU ONLY LET IT RING ONCE! HELLO! HELLO! SHIT!



I was about to dial the operator again, but I changed my mind when I noticed the clerk staring at me as if I had three heads ... and suddenly I felt very uneasy. I decided it would be wiser to play it cool rather than wear out my welcome.



To solve this puzzle, I'd need to stay in town a few more days and wander around. I sat down at a table and began to put these words into my notebook.



I've been sitting here a half an hour now, writing this, and the owner has carefully avoided waiting on me.

DOP, WASTE TOO SOON, HERE HE COMES NOW! WHAT AN UNPLEASANT-LOOKING RODENT.











HYM, NO RUST ON THIS HEAPS TRUNK. LOCK ... THAT'S KIND OF ODD.



MAYBE THIS IS A LOCKER, FOR THEM, THERE MIGHT BE SOME THING UNUSUAL INSIDE.



WELL SHOOT.



I've found something. The trunk of an old Deluxe Adventure turned out to be a cleverly disguised entrance to what looks to be an underground passageway.



I'd be really surprised if this tunnel didn't lead to the creature's home. If I go in, I might be in big trouble, but if I give up now I might as well forget the whole story.

This is what I came here for.



I'm just too curious. I'm going in. I hope this doesn't turn out to be the last notation in my book.



WHAT IF SOMEONE CLOSES THE TRUNK?

TURN AROUND NOW.



KEEP GOING.

DON'T PANIC.

THINK PULITZER PRIZE.



PULITZER.

PULITZER.

POSTHUMOUS PULITZER.



LIGHT! FRESH AIR!

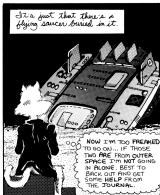
I'M ALMOST THERE!



OH, BROTHER...

I made it. And it was worth it. The tunnel led into a dusty old warehouse. Probably it has been closed for ten or twenty years.

There's nothing spectacular about the building itself...



It's just that there's a flying saucer buried in it.

NOW I'M TOO PREPARED TO GO ON... IF THOSE TWO ARE FROM OUTER SPACE I'M NOT GOING IN ALONE. BEST TO BACK OUT AND GET SOME HELP FROM THE JOURNAL.



NEXT: GEEK SHOW!

FROM "LETTERS," FREE FRONT COVER
In my opinion he has shattered many traditional so-called "funny-animal" trappings by injecting such things as a well-developed central character, stories with more complexity and foresight, and an artistic style that complements the mood and atmosphere, among others. "Barkright" naturally captures my attention as a solid story of personal conflict, along with social and political satire colored by real fear, heroism, sadness, and elation. Those who have written to *Critters* claiming that Steve's work is not funny or could have been done with human characters to equal effect simply miss the point of the artwork and the reason for *Critters'* existence: experimentation and variety. I am aware that he is by no means a flawless storyteller, but any meaningful advancement in the medium depends on following through on a vision regardless of market risk or anything resembling criticism (to a certain Mr. Winter, please have an open mind). I believe Steve is an artist/writer of intriguing talent and a man worthy of the exposure and modest success he has garnered. Thank you for supporting him.

Sam Sakai has done wonderful work on the genuinely humorous "Nelson Ground-trumper" which unfortunately has taken a far back seat to "Daqui Verjanka." Many fans have smiled and giggled over how great of a cartoon story it is, and I give them that. It is a shame I cannot fully enjoy a story that is so predictable. The inn, a loud gang of braggarts, slinking swords, blood, ninjas, severed flies... enough. It has been done to death, but I guess it sells. To each his own.

"Gruif" is a good example of how influences from the past can meld with a vivid imagination. The sensitivity of Burke combines with the humor of Freddy Milton. The art made every panel a bit tedious, giving an atmosphere of constant uncertainty. All together, the plot and characters made me feel concerned, happy, fearful, and amazed. It is simply a solid piece of entertainment. Well done.

Six issues and still going strong. Keep it up and good luck.

Mark Bennett
(no address given)

We'll try and thank you. —BT

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I've been reading the *Critters* letter columns and noticed people are putting down Steve Gallucci's "Barkright." I have to object to this. I bought *Critters* for "Barkright" only. If I like



something else in these that's okay, I feel that one day it will gain as much popularity as "Erma." If anyone gripes about it not being funny I'd say don't read it.

Now some funny animals I do like: Captain Jack, Mike Kautsch, does a good job of keeping me interested. Tell Mike to keep up the good work. I really liked issues #2 and #3; the fourth was okay. Try going back to the style of #1 and see what happens.

Thanks for reading this.

Sincerely,

Neal Tomlinack
Indian Head, MD

Kautsch fans should be happy to learn that Mike the K. is, in actual stories, contributing a strange story to the very next issue of *Critters*. And it's real weird, too! —BT

Dear Kim,

After seven issues of *Critters*, I feel that I should commend you on a job well done! Steve Gallucci's "Barkright" was my original reason for buying *Critters*, but with great stuff like "Daqui" and "Capt. Jack," there's no reason for not buying it!

"Barkright" is topped only by "Erma Felax" (a classic). It's a wonderful story and the art is what anthropomorphism is all about! Daqui is wonderful. He should appear in every issue! "Captain Jack," a riot but what the comic world needs. I'm kind of sorry that we won't be seeing any more "Cutey Kump." "Gruif" isn't my style but I do admire its creator. And finally, looking toward the future, "Barkright II"? Oh boy! More Capt. Jack!

Haruki More Daqui! Can't wait! And did you say Ty Templeton? Yay!

You can't get any better than that without lowering the price.
Thomas F. Vorne
Middleboro, MA

You also outlined a silly pencil drawing, reproduced here. By the way, letter-writers are heartily encouraged to include drawings, either of their own characters, or of their favorite *Critters* stars. If they look good, we'll print 'em! —BT

Dear Kim Thompson,

Critters #6 was my first issue. Since then I've picked up the previous five. Originally I tried out the book for Mark Armstrong's post-modernist animals. I applaud your effort to revitalize the funny-animal comic and will continue to support it.

I've been reading comics since before I could read—I'd look at the pictures and make up the stories on I went along. My first two comics were bought by my grandfather: a Bob Kane *Batman* and a Carl Barks *Duckburg*.

Which brings me, in a round-about way, to what prompts this letter: What's going to drive new readers to the comics field?

For while now I've wondered if the major companies are shutting down any hopes of a future market by turning toward more adult—though not necessarily more realistic—themes: prejudice, violence, sex, politics. Many parents will warn away their younger readers from such stuff until a proper maturity is reached or suitable guidance is available. At the same time, those books which are available for the younger audience are based on the promise of stark commercialism—toys, dolls, Saturday-morning cartoons (again), "inspired" by toys, their producers and retailers, and so forth—and other lackluster characterizations and plots, sexist gender roles, and linguistic violence.

Perhaps I'm being too elitist and broadly sweeping in my generalizations, but I believe I have a viable complaint. For example, when a reader encounters inspired work—Barks's *Barnyard* comes to mind—he can realize that a truly good kids' comic can be enjoyed by youngsters and adults alike. (A similar example from a different medium would be the *Bullwinkle* and *Rocky* cartoons.)

Before super-heroes invaded the retail genre, a wide assortment of kids' books were published. While many, like today, were apologetic of animated features—Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker, Tom and Jerry, the Disney creatures—they seemed more pure-hearted and often more intelligent than what can now be found. (This raises a new question, one I feel entirely unqualified to answer: Are



today's kids too sophisticated for this sort of entertainment, or do we just think they are—a feeling they pick up and collect? Even Cooper the Ghost, Richie Rich, and Archie have fallen by the wayside. What seems to draw younger readers to comics? More publishers effectively wiped out their future audience—now youngsters—by trying to improve their offerings for their present adult audience?

Which brings me to Fantagraphics Books. While your funny animals may not always be funny—"Bistright" for example—they can be enjoyed by kids. A drawback, however, is your availability only in comic shops, a severe limiting factor to developing a strong younger audience.

That's most of my say, and I've been pretty long-winded about it. What's your feeling? Am I way out in left field? Is there no real "problem" at all? Who says a kiddie-reader audience has to exist?

Sincerely,

Dennis Sperlock
Lesterfield, KY

I think you're pretty much on-base with your comments, Dennis. The question, of course, is whether kids don't read comics because there are no kiddie comics, or there are no kiddie comics because kids don't read comics. After all, when Warner talked, it was still putting out reprints of those classic Elmer and Fanny Bros. comic books, and it's not as if the kids avoided them because they were reprints.

The new Windstone comics are doing very well, I hear, so maybe kiddie comics are back in favor (especially as an alternative to most of the other kinds of entertainment available to children today). —BT

Dear Stan Sakai,

I was perusing my favorite comic shop the other day, when I came across your Usagi Yojimbo Summer Special. Needless to say, I was floored! I immediately began looking for any other books, and came across Critters #6. I absolutely love the character! I cannot believe that he has appeared in so many books without having his own bi-monthly book. The art was superb, and I loved the absolute simplicity of the story. This is the kind of material that

should be upon all of books like Critters. I now have every issue (1 to 6) of Critters, and have picked up issues 3 to 7 of Akiba.

For those of you concerned with only Critters, I think that this is a marvelous anthology book. The revival of funny animal comics has been too long in coming for me, and I am very happy to see it finally happen. If those of you who publish Critters and the Usagi Special read this, please give Usagi his own title. I believe that with all the specials and irregular appearances of Usagi,

he has held up fantastically well on his popularity in concerned. Even if this happens, I intend to continue to collect Critters if only to be introduced to many more of the fantastic, funny animals now and in the future being conceived. Many thanks to Fantagraphics Books for their insight and belief in the wonderful world of funny animal! Please continue to strive to bring out as many new and innovative characters as possible.

Steven Laughlin
Santa Clara, CA

PS: Will there be any possibility of a Usagi Yojimbo T-shirt?

There is a Usagi Yojimbo T-shirt available. It's on ordering information next issue.

And for those who haven't heard yet, YES there will be a regular USAGI Yojimbo bi-monthly starting next April. Usagi will be your favorite bunny, but if you know what's good for you, don't ask him to leave any more! —BT

Dear Mr. Thompson,

Critters #7 is in and here! Where are the bunny rabbits? [Which one'd they get? Which one'd they get? —BT] Well, never mind. Keith's weird. Sakai's as good as even, and Milton's story as even. But next issue looks to be even

COMING IN DECEMBER



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ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN JACK #7

Herman and Janet are still in love, but what about Bub? Can their relationship survive an impudent imp who thinks sex is a spectator sport?

better—Stoner's last piece was one of the best you've printed, and Kelly is the supreme anthropomorphist. I just hope that Ty Templeton can write like Wahl rather than Selby.

But that's beside the point. The real reason for this card is a question: What is "Ovra"? Is it supposed to remind Danish readers of a word, or is it just a meaningless name? I looked in my *Tenck Myself Danish* and learned nothing, except that it's not Danish, since Danish uses a for S. Swedish, I guess. By the way, the repetition of the fugue theme from "The Grouse Move in" is a bit disappointing, though I gather we'll learn in #9 that Groul isn't really Oera.

Always carry a grapefruit.

Philip Michael Cohen
Albany, PA

Actually, the *OVRA* card still has a couple of letters left in it after this installment.

As best I can place it together, the dotted S (which is a pain in the neck to print on this typewriter so I won't do it here) was at one point the accepted letter used to signify the phoneme that is now indicated with the crescent-out S. Knowing the Romans, they probably dropped it just because the Germans were using it. In any case, the Scandinavian languages have seen some really interesting fluctuations in spelling, pronunciation, and even choice of alphabet over the last century, often making the reading of older documents a pretty experience. (Add to that the fact that they feared that loudly but difficult-to-decipher typewords called Fraktur, and you've got a real headache.) I'll guess Freddy used the older version of the letter to give the name that "Elbow Was Here" sure of antiquity. Or maybe he just likes drinking dots, who knows?

Sorry for the lecture, but you happened to light on a couple of my major extra-curricular interests (Etymology and Linguistics), and it usually takes a handful but in that case up an other subject. It's like asking Mark Twain about smoking. Anyway, I'll live and let him answer this last letter himself. Be good! —KT

Dear Kim,

I really like *Critters* a lot but I have a few questions.

(1) How come near the start of *Ugali* it says "Ugali Yajimba" but when he says his name he says "Miyamoto Ugali"?

(2) What does the BEEAAAA represent when Ugali is fighting?

(3) What is the small sword he carries in his belt? I know it isn't a wakizashi because that's what he usually uses (it's too small to be a katana).

Matt Bennett

(no address given)

(1) "Ugali Yajimba" literally means "Baldie Bodyguard." Bodyguard was a professional comedian caught by a maniacal woman.

(2) It's a "shid," a short or military cut known for physical and mental strength in the fight and also used to indicate his opponents.

(3) The shorter sword is indeed a "wakizashi" and the longer sword a "katana;" the standard fighting sword. The two blades together comprise the "Bukha;" the badge of the samurai class. Incidentally, Ugali's katana is named "Dog in Hat" (critter brand) and his wakizashi is named "Koyagi" (young cat).

—FRANK MARSH

CREDITS: "Ugali Yajimba" was written and drawn by Stan Schaal. "Groul" was written, drawn, lettered, and toned by Freddy Milne and translated by Kim Thompson. "Landscape" was written and drawn by Tom Stone. The cover was drawn by Stan Schaal and colored by Tom Lahti. Color separations by S. M. Graphics. Printed at Port Publications. Production by Tom Stone, art director, and Teresa Moore, production assistant. Typetting by Jane M. Garrell. **CRITTERS** is edited by Kim Thompson for FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS.

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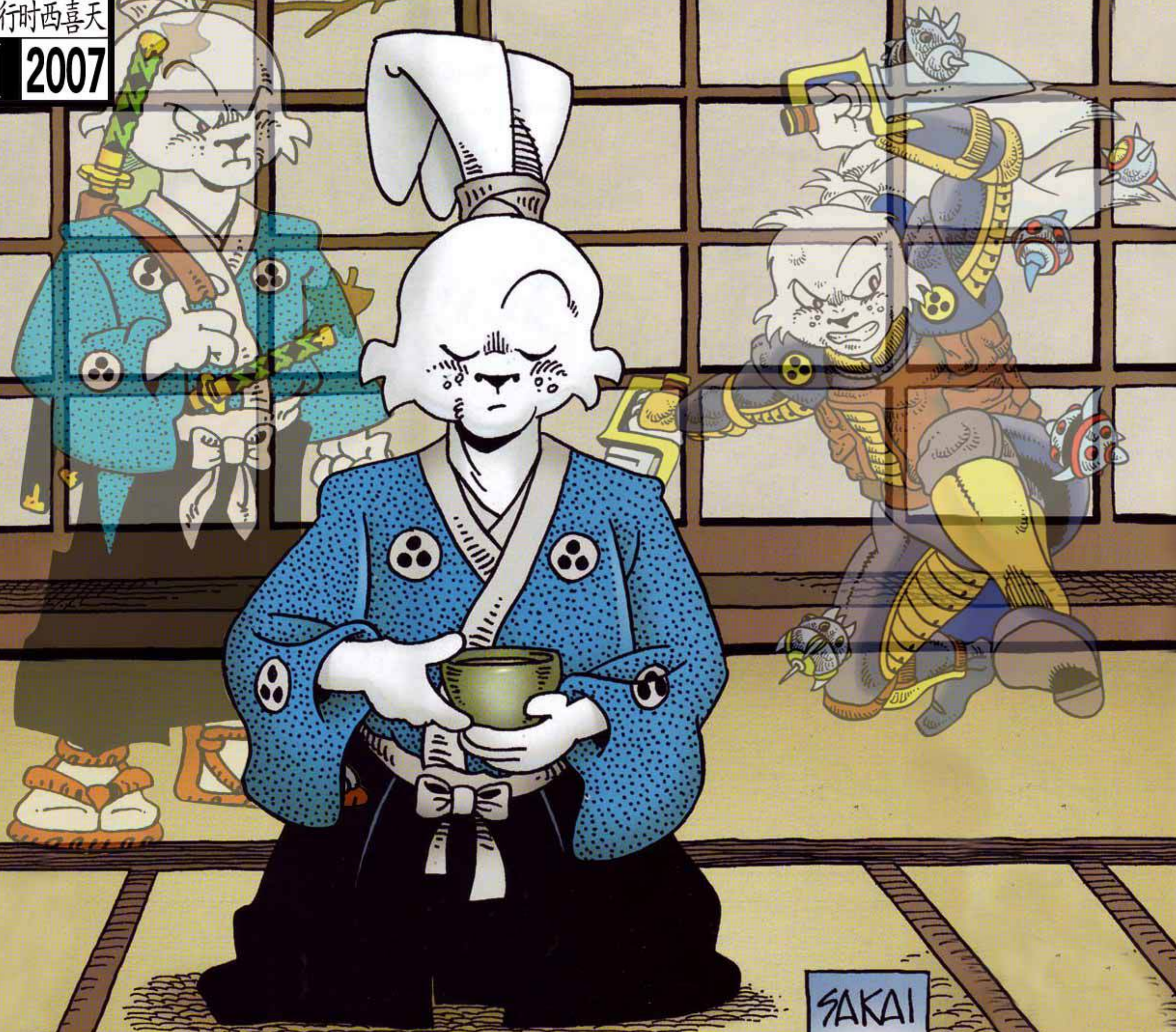


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