

**No. 5**

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# CRITTERS



FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

# CRITTERS

No. 5 Oct., 1986

## LETTERS

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

To Whom It May Concern,

I purchased **Critters** #1 yesterday (at the Cosmic Comics & Books store in Rockville Centre, NY), and was I ever astonished!

To me, the highlights were Sakai's "Usagi Yojimbo" and Gallacci's "Birthright," both with imaginative storylines and impressive artwork. Quagmire and Garcia's "Cutey Bunny" saga "The Day After Forever" had an appropriate plot to coincide with the release date of your publication (mid-February); in New York City, the local PBS network is running a festival of Hope/Crosby **Road to . . .** pictures, and after reading "Cutey Bunny," I may never look at ol' Ski-Nose and his crooning comrade in the same way.

About Kim Thompson's liner notes: I'm not too keen on the term "funny-animal" strip, myself. I was brought up reading many comic strips with funny animals in each one, but when one grows up, one expects the characters he/she grew up with to do the same. Instead, we, as grown-ups, are more sophisticated, while the animals remained funny. That's why I enjoy **Critters**: it has something for everyone, whether it's adventure, suspense, or comedy. There's always something in it that will appeal even to the most discriminating sophisticate. So don't call it a "funny-animal strip," okay?

Jed Martinez  
Elmont, NY

Oh, I don't know, Jed—if we've survived the terms "comic book" and "comic strip" for as long as we have, we might as well take "funny-animal" in stride. After all, the most reasonable alternative is "anthropomorphics," and that's about as easy to pronounce, spell, and remember as most small Ukrainian towns. —RT

Dear Mr. Thompson,

It isn't enough to say that **Critters** is the comic book I've been waiting for, but it's a start.

Without rationalizing a lifelong

obsession with anthropomorphics spanning Puss in Boots to Omaha the Cat Dancer, I'll state that, even at an age when I should've known better, a typical issue of **Captain Carrot** would hold my attention at least as thoroughly as anything by Herge. . .

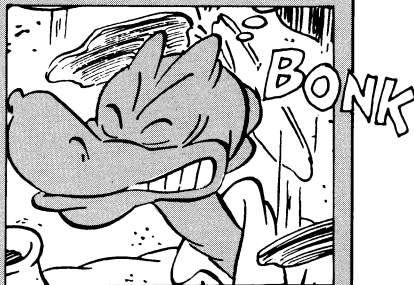
At last, a publisher who's doing it right. **Critters** spotlights cartoonists who have honest-to-god stories to tell, as opposed to five-page gags. Gallacci's and Milton's serial installments leave me eager to find out what's going to happen next, and the two artists' respective approaches to dark adventure and light mystery are welcome reminders of the imaginative, solidly constructed stories that made my discovery of comics, and other narrative pop culture media, so exciting. Gallacci's "Birthright," a streamlined, accessible young-monarch-against-the-conquerors tale, is a complement to the detailed political intrigues of "Erma Felna" while "Gnuff"—even Milton must be tired of being lauded on the basis of how well he can emulate the best of Barks—"Gnuff" is a first-rate children's comic that gives its readers enough credit to keep it out of the Star line.

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"Captain Jack's" Chuck Jones-

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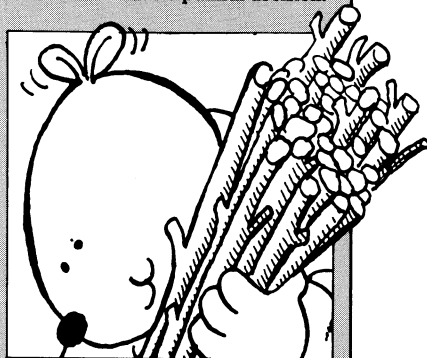
### Page 1

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"Where's Gnicky?"

by **FREDDY MILTON**

With Gnicky seemingly gone, the Gnuffs must make a painful decision!



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Someone's playing a trick on someone, but which one is whom? (Huh?)

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"Chapter Five"

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Duwan's shot, but Prince Alfon and his revolutionaries storm the streets!

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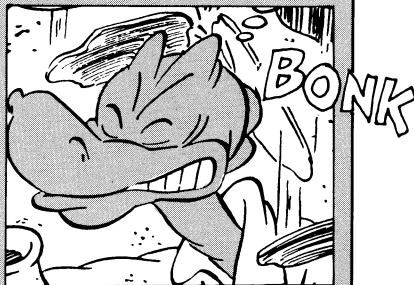
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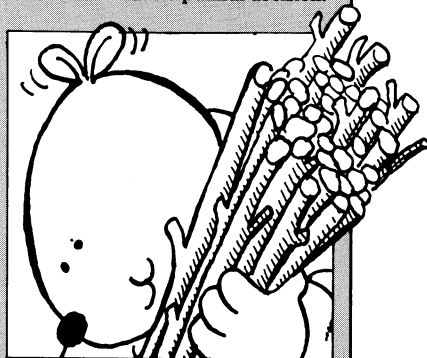
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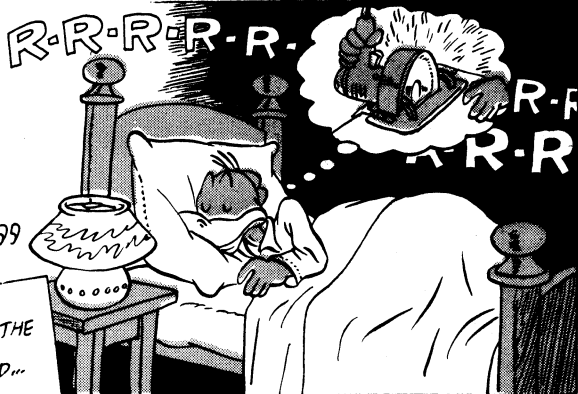
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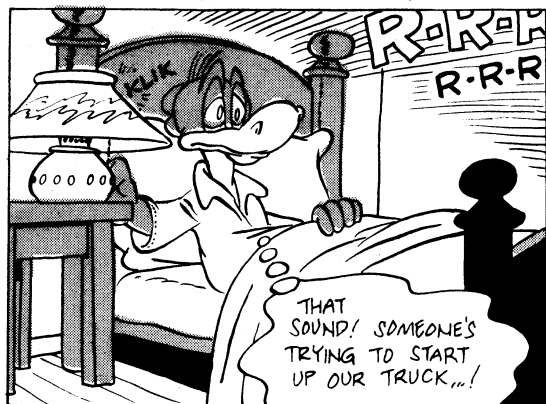
# Freddy Milton's Familien Gnuff

“WHERE’S GNICKY?”

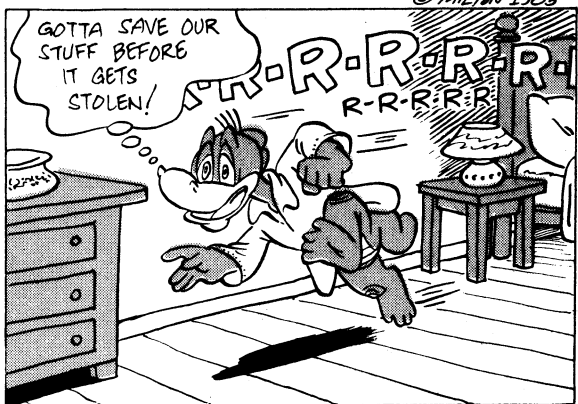
NIGHTTIME AT GEORGE STREET... GNUFF SLEEPS THE STREET... GNUFF SLEEPS THE UTTERLY SLEEP OF THE EXHAUSTED...



© MILTON 1983



THAT SOUND! SOMEONE'S TRYING TO START UP OUR TRUCK...!



GOTTA SAVE OUR STUFF BEFORE IT GETS STOLEN!



WHOA! TIME OUT! WE DON'T HAVE A TRUCK ANY MORE! WE MOVED IN WEEKS AGO!



AT LEAST I'M NOT ALONE... GNELLIE'S BEEN HAVING NIGHTMARES TOO... MUST BE BECAUSE WE'RE SO TIRED FROM ALL THE REPAIRWORK...

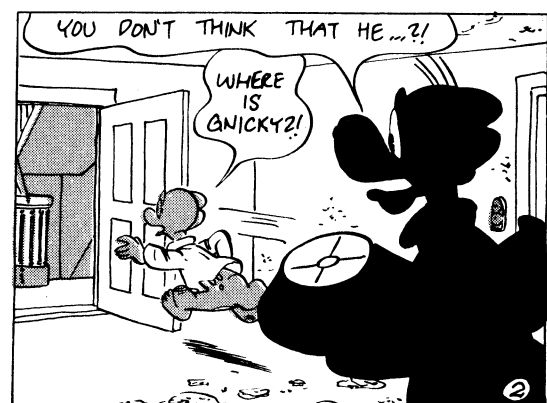
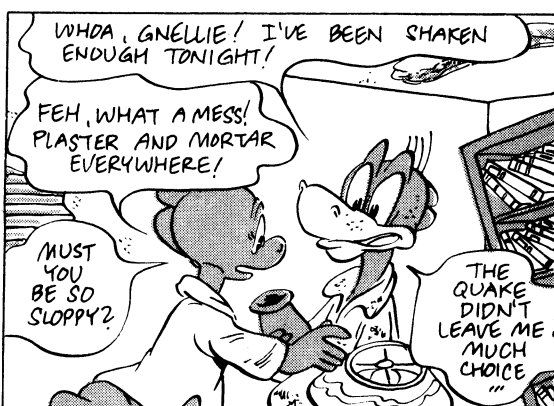
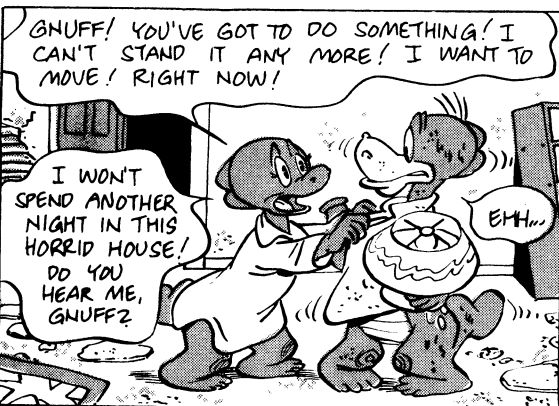
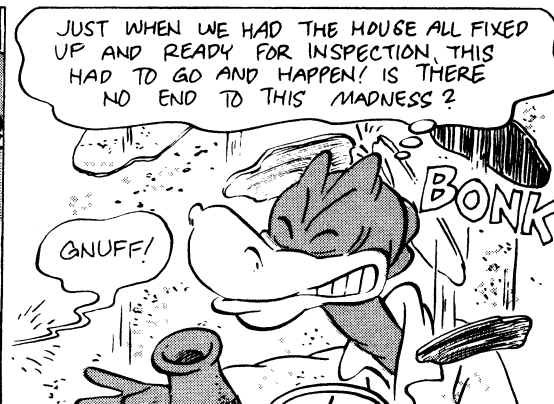
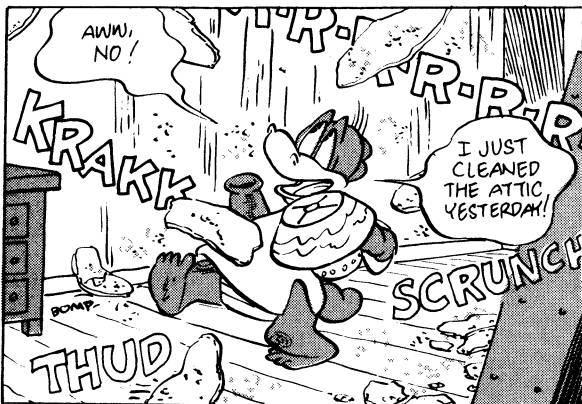
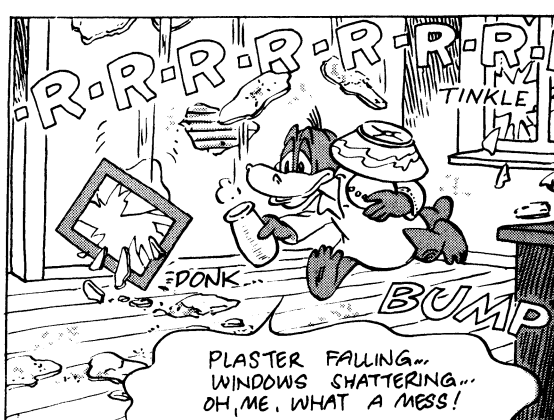


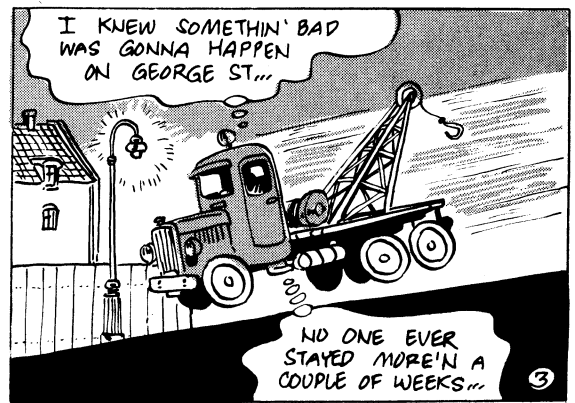
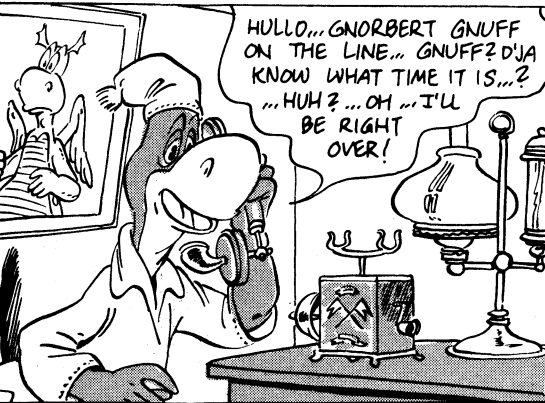
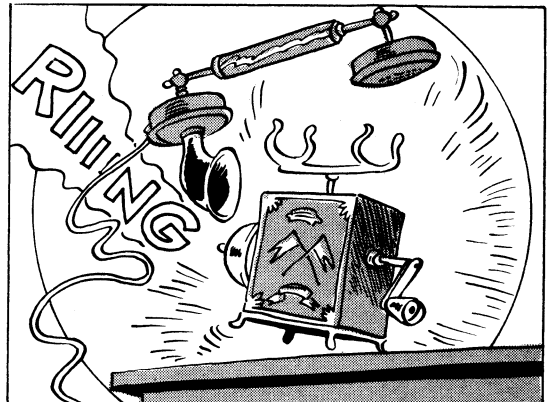
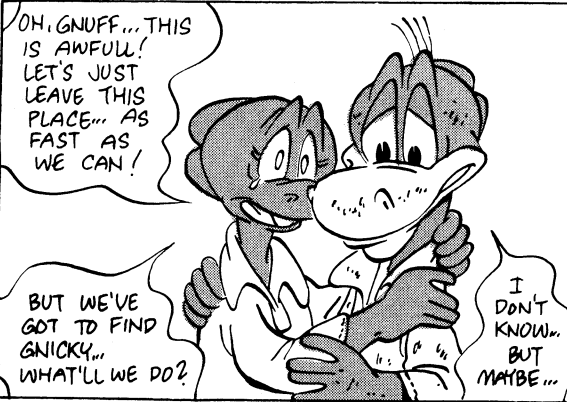
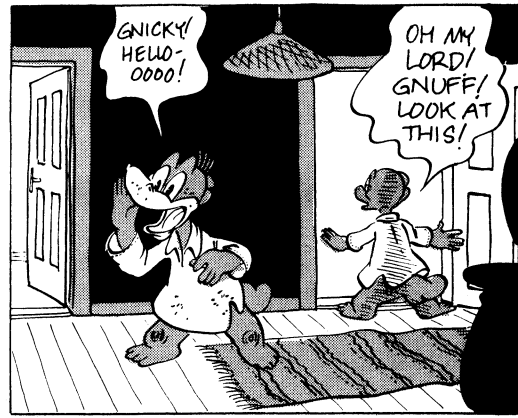
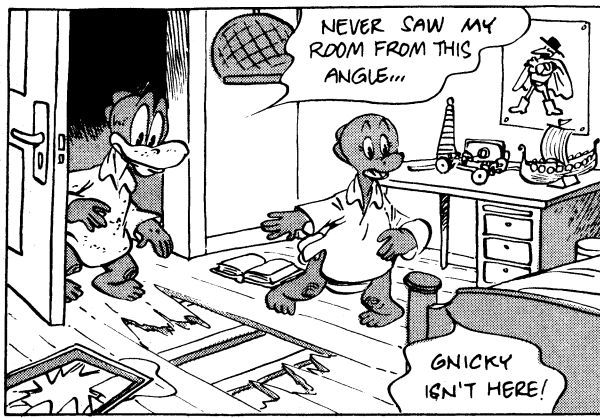
KRUNCH!!

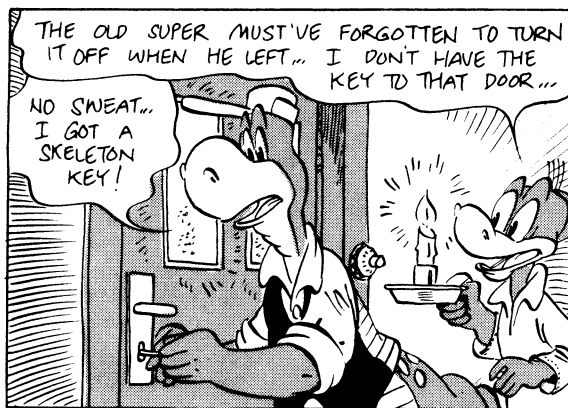
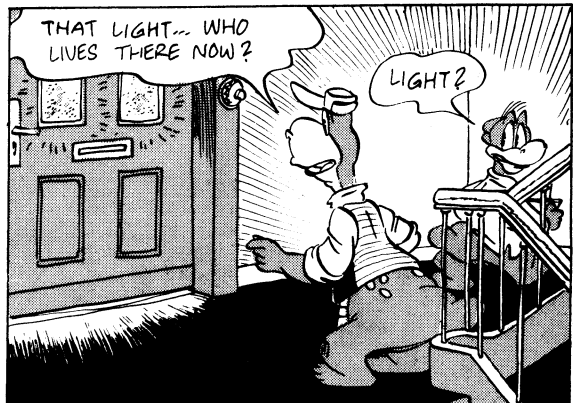
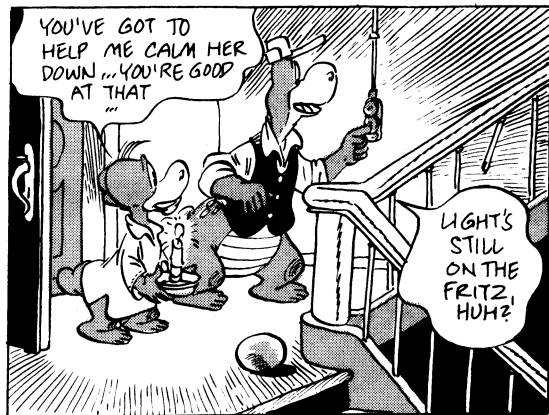
SOUNDED LIKE THE TRUCK RUNNING INTO A WALL... PRETTY LIFELIKE. I MUST SAY...

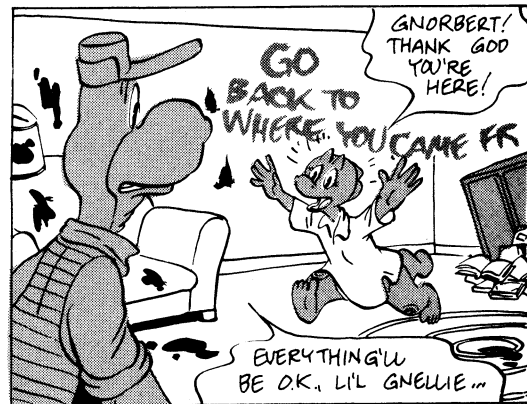
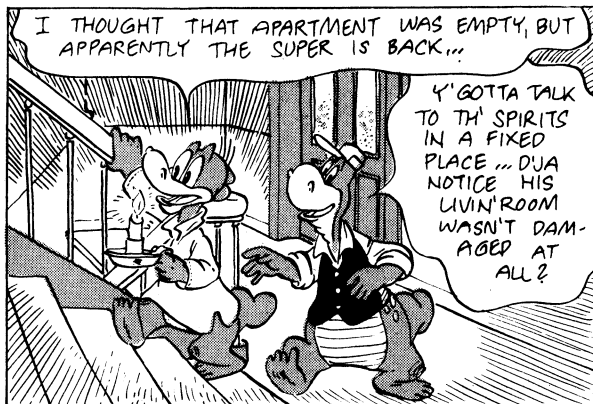
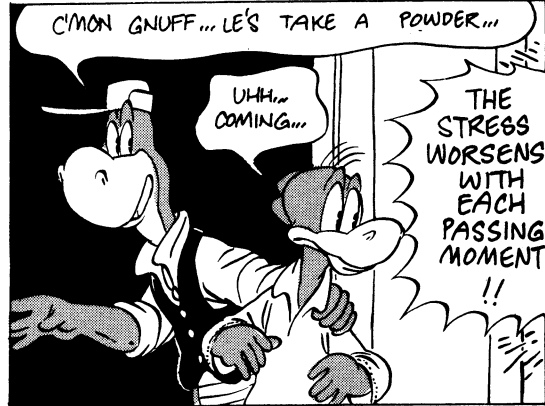
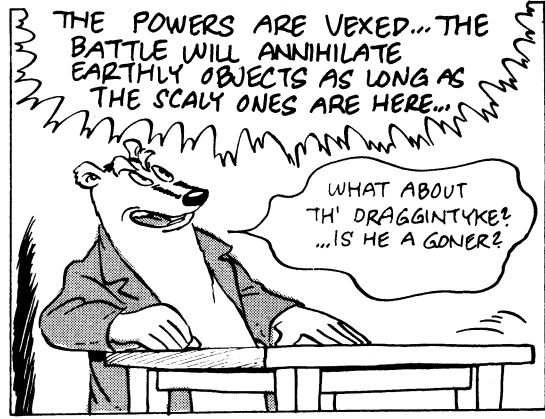


DAG NAB IT! SOMETHING IS WRONG! I'M WIDE AWAKE AND THE WHOLE ROOM IS VIBRATING LIKE CRAZY!

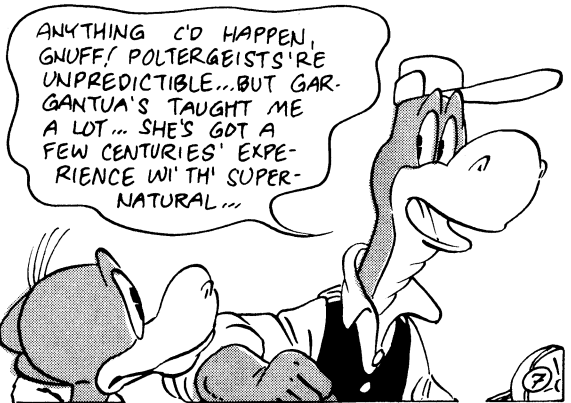
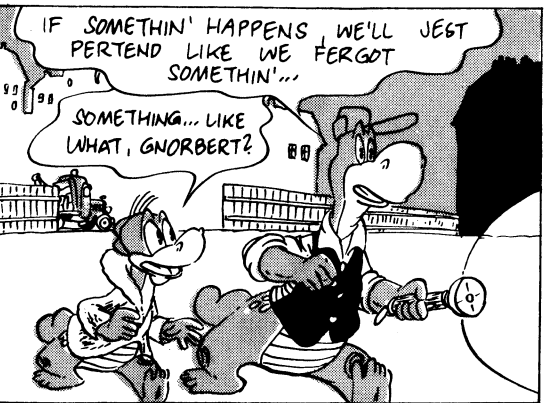
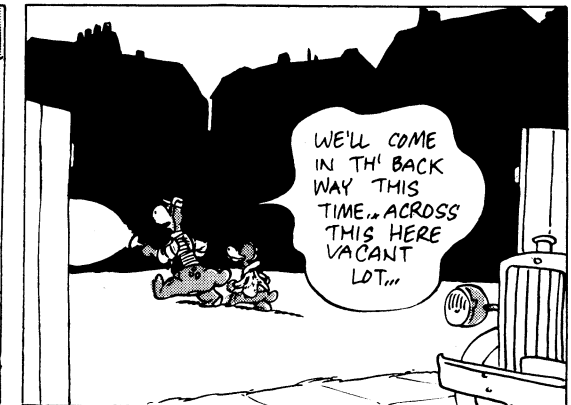
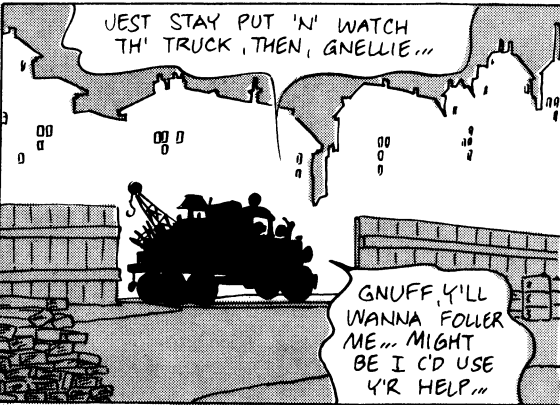
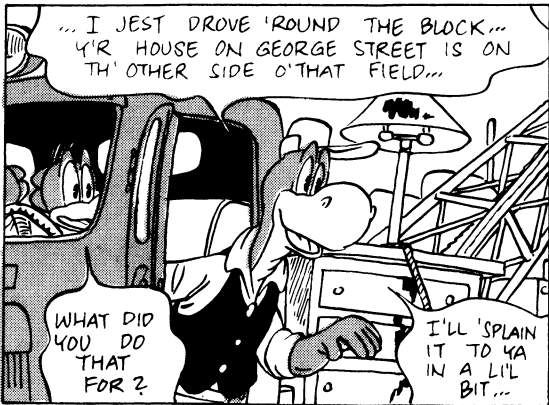
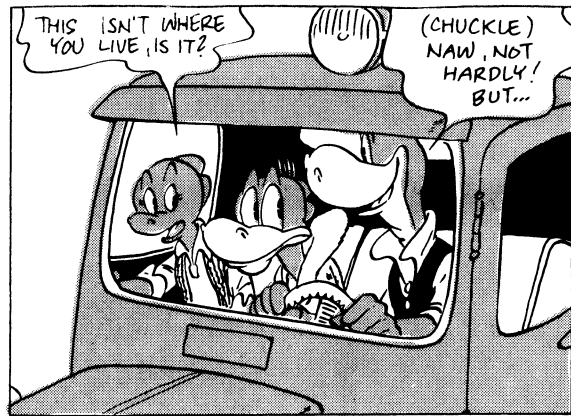
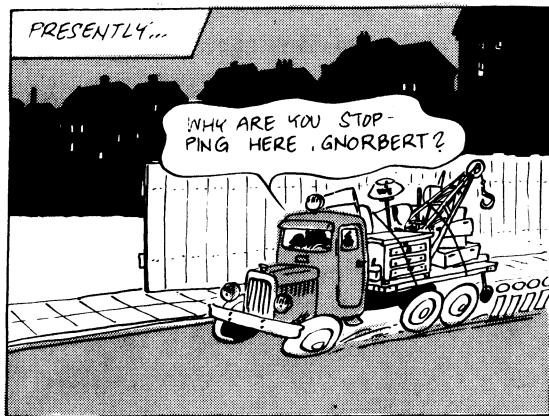


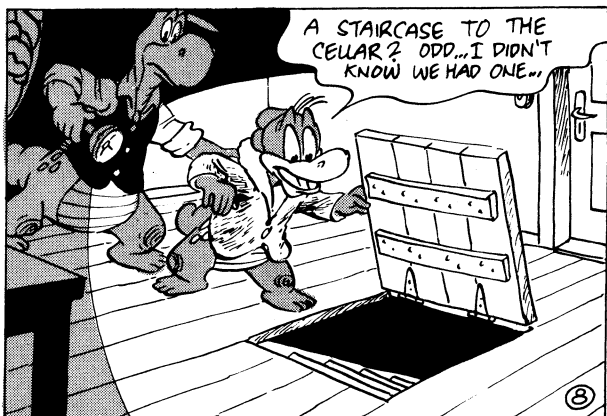
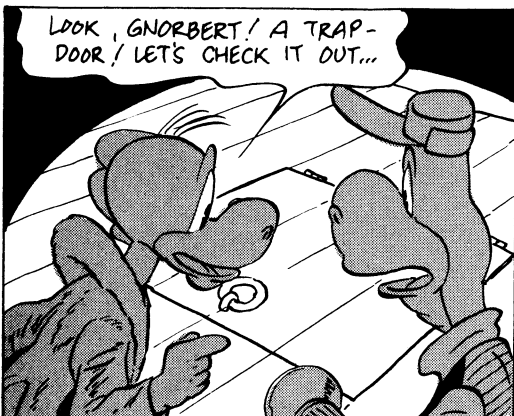
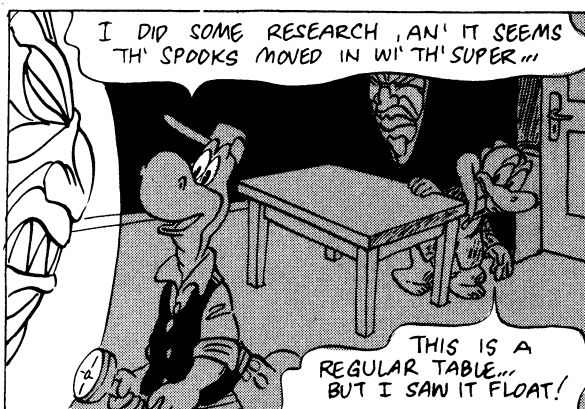
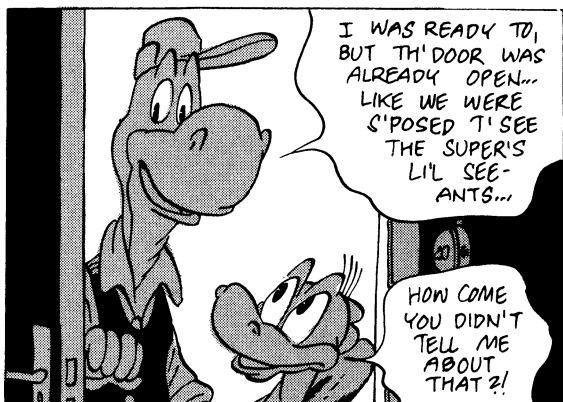
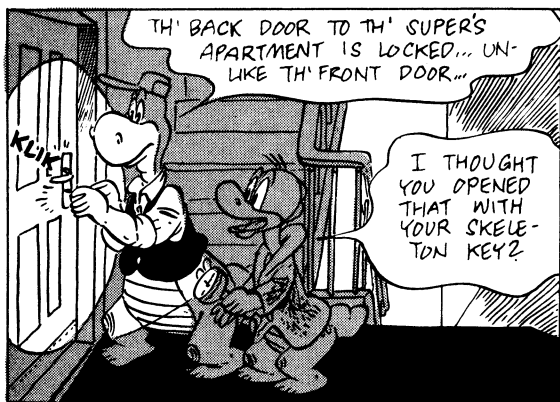
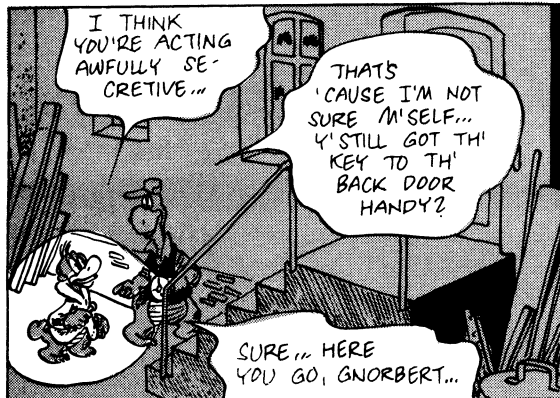


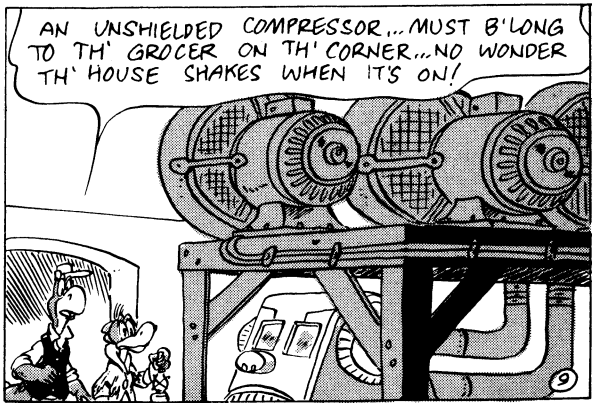
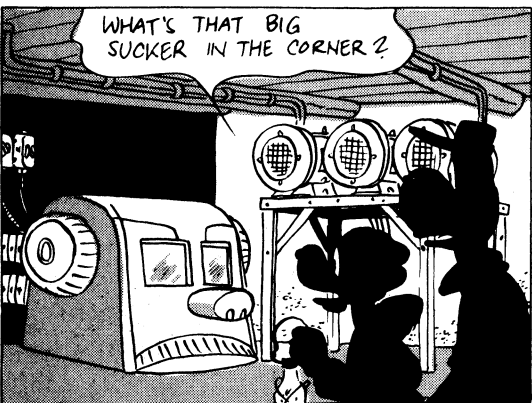
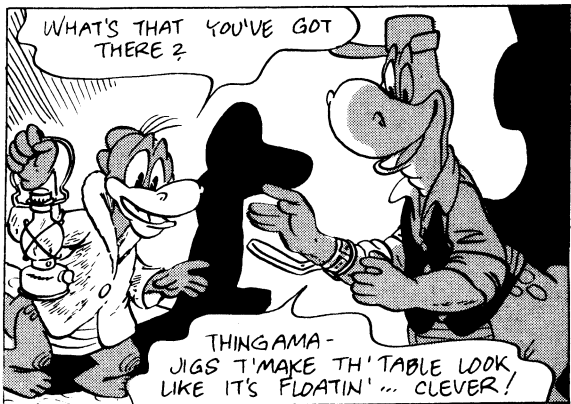
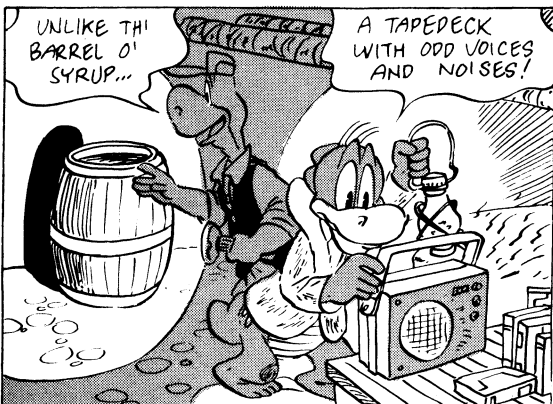
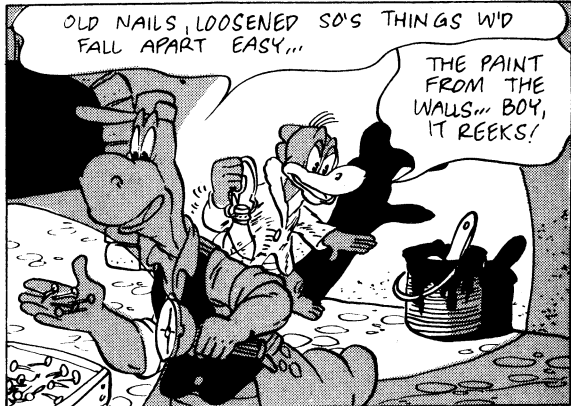
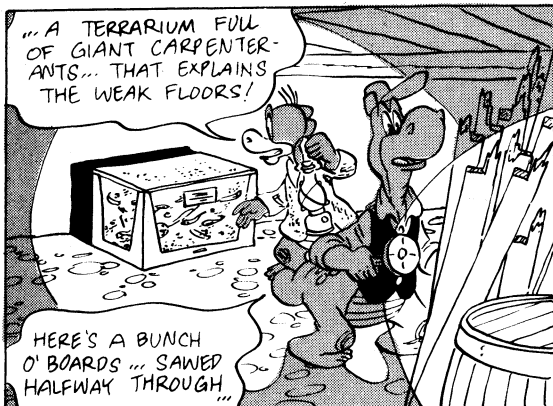
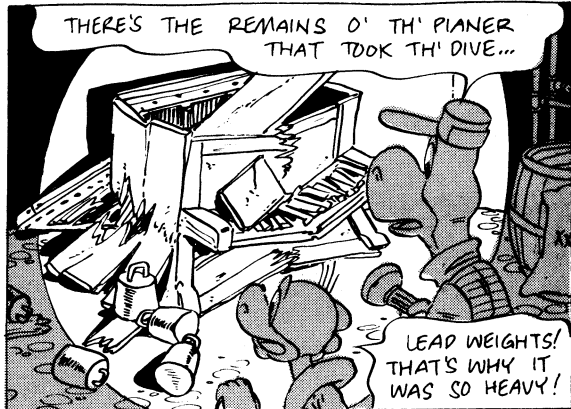
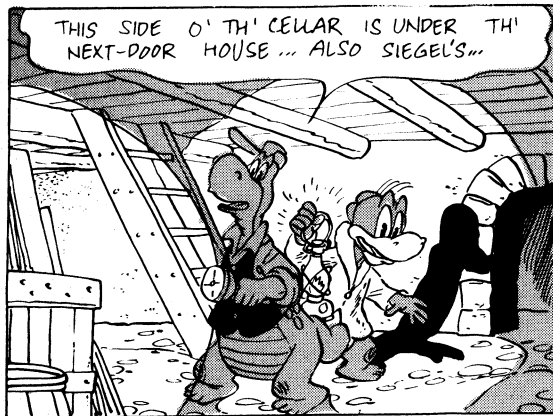








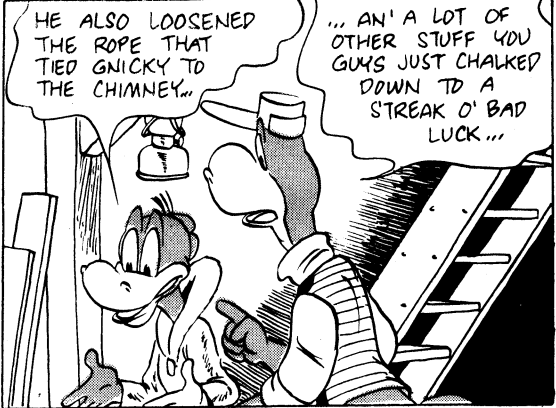






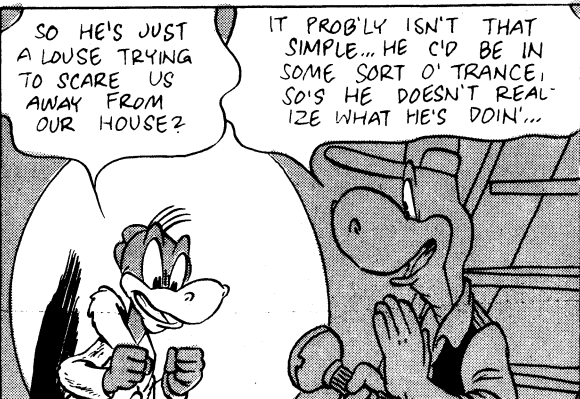
SO IT WAS THE  
SUPER WHO  
STOLE THE  
TRUCK ON  
THE FIRST NIGHT...

...AN' LOCKED  
YOU IN TH'  
SHOWERSTALL!



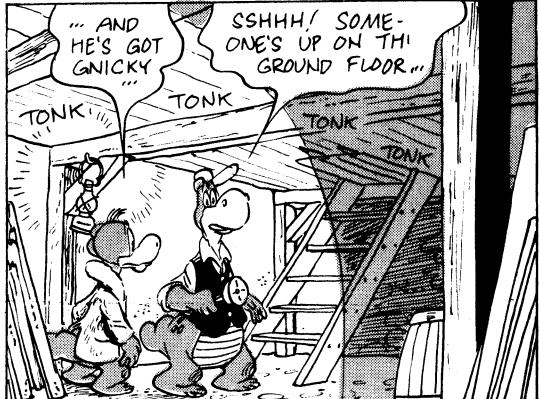
HE ALSO LOOSEMED  
THE ROPE THAT  
TIED GNICKY TO  
THE CHIMNEY...

... AN' A LOT OF  
OTHER STUFF YOU  
GUYS JUST CHALKED  
DOWN TO A  
STREAK O' BAD  
LUCK...



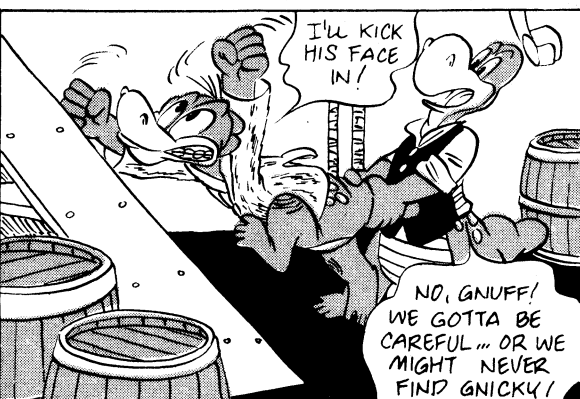
SO HE'S JUST  
A LOUSE TRYING  
TO SCARE US  
AWAY FROM  
OUR HOUSE?

IT PROBL'Y ISN'T THAT  
SIMPLE... HE C'D BE IN  
SOME SORT O' TRANCE,  
SO'S HE DOESN'T REAL-  
IZE WHAT HE'S DOIN'...



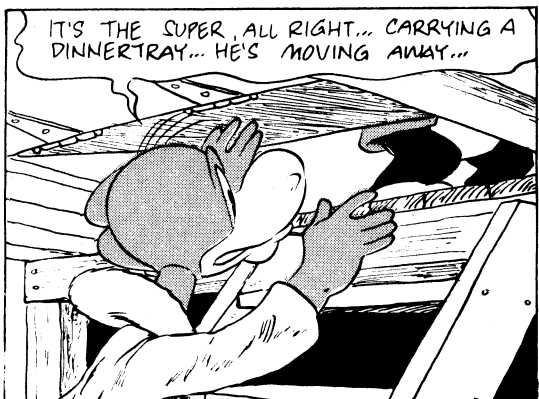
... AND HE'S GOT  
GNICKY...

SSHHH! SOME-  
ONE'S UP ON TH'  
GROUND FLOOR...

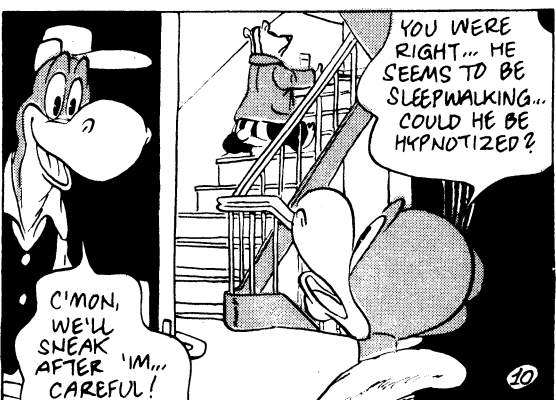
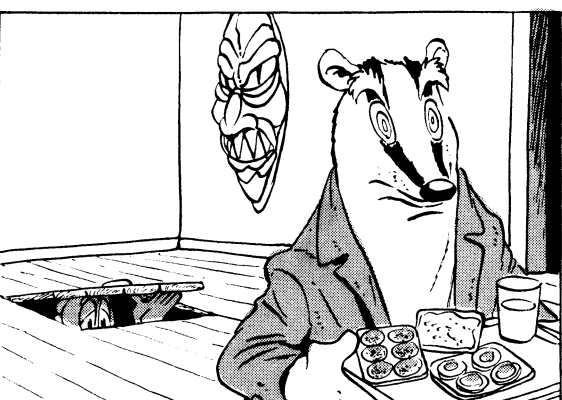


I'LL KICK  
HIS FACE  
IN!

NO, GNUFF!  
WE GOTTA BE  
CAREFUL... OR WE  
MIGHT NEVER  
FIND GNICKY!

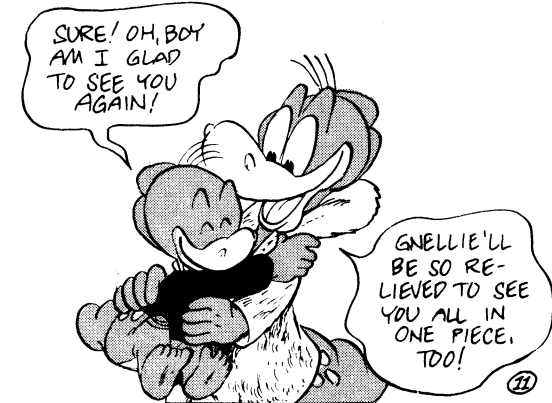
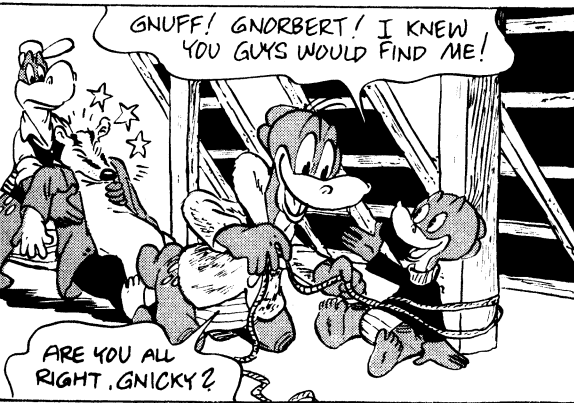
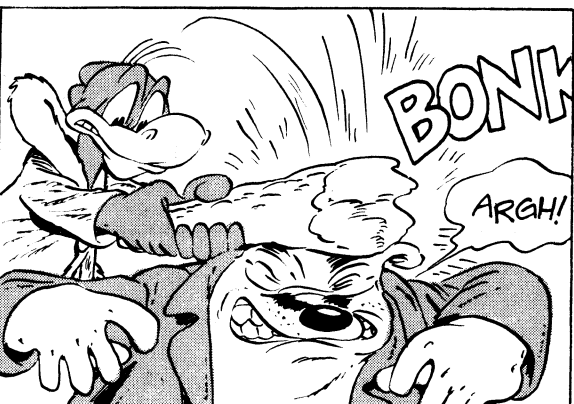
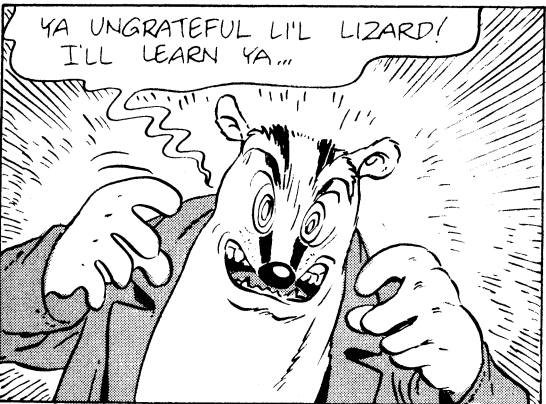
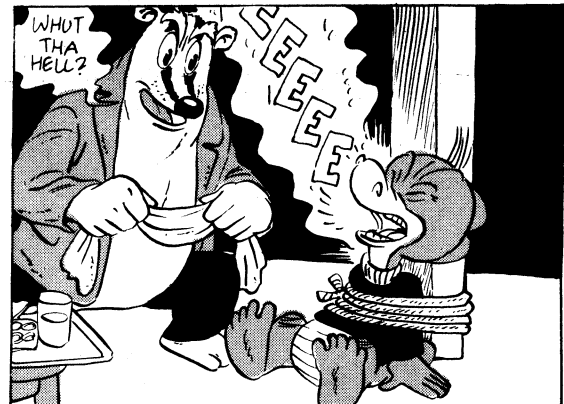
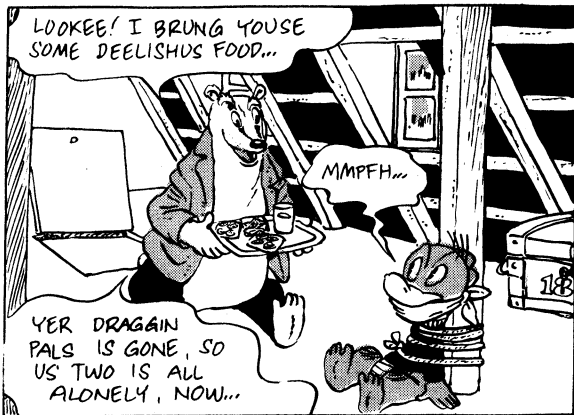
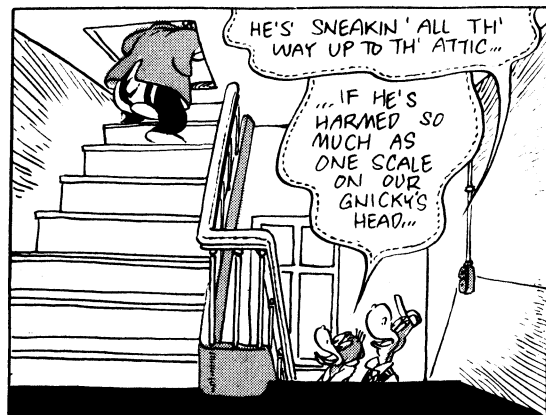


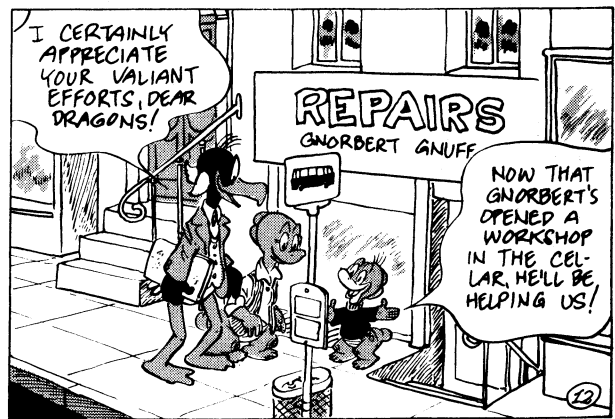
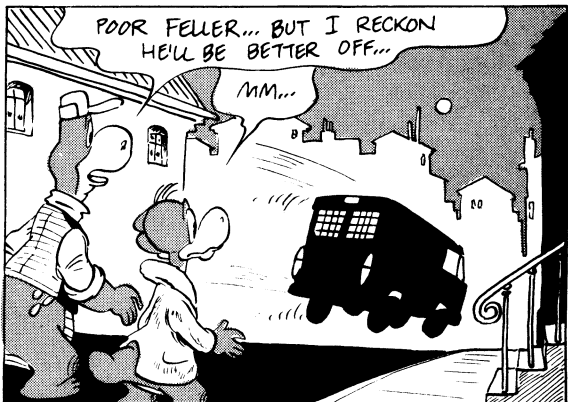
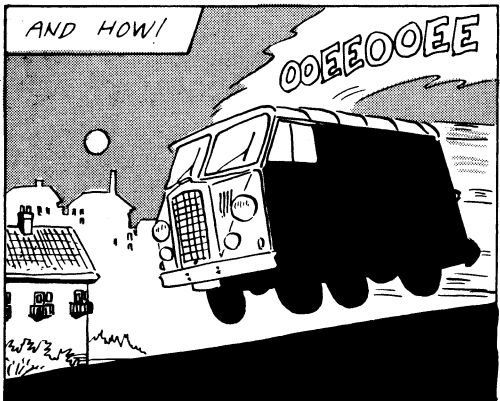
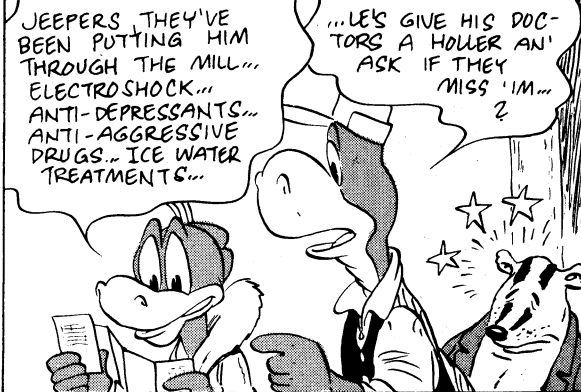
IT'S THE SUPER, ALL RIGHT... CARRYING A  
DINNERTRAY... HE'S MOVING AWAY...

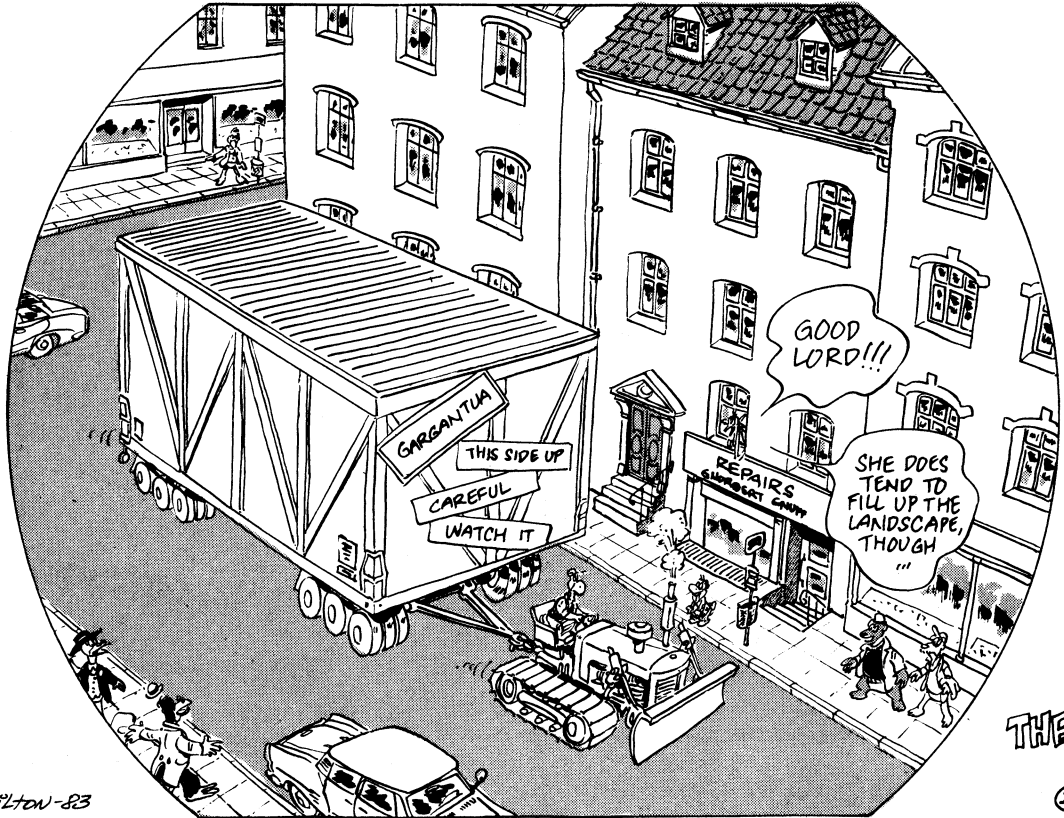
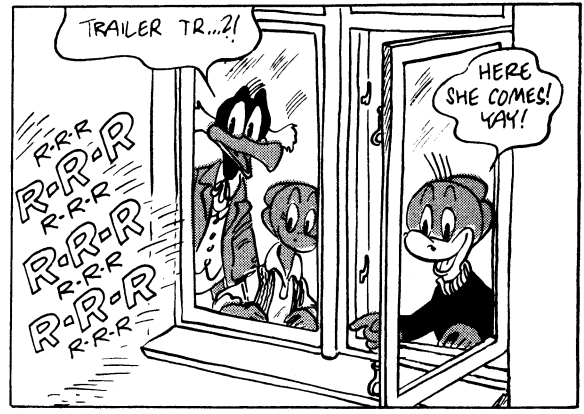
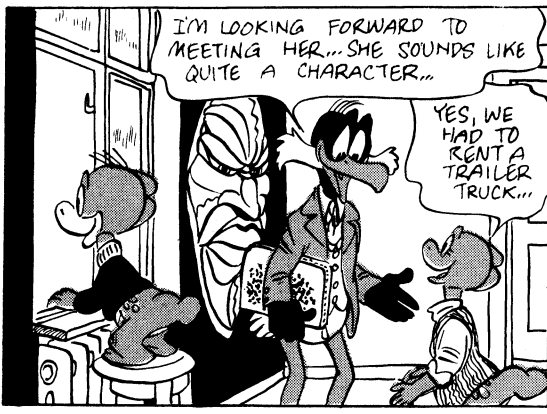
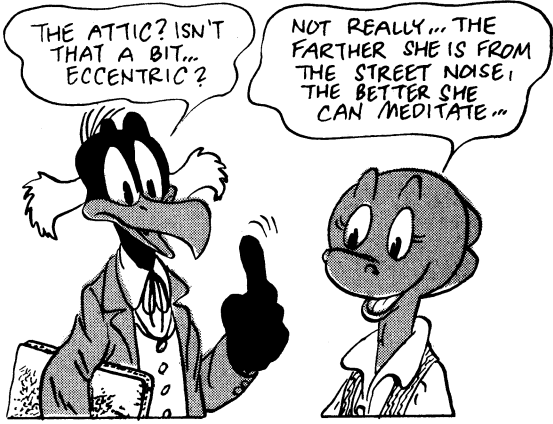
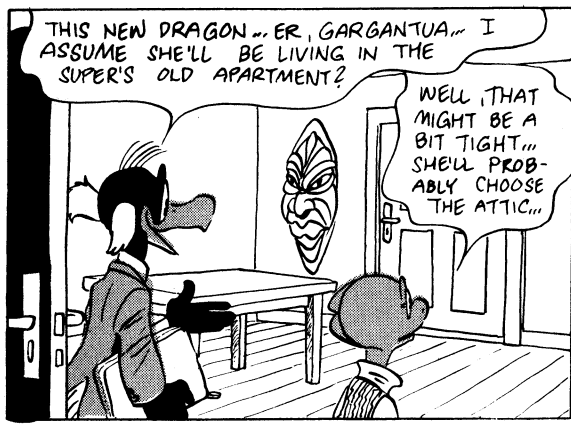


C'MON,  
WE'LL  
SNEAK  
AFTER 'IM...  
CAREFUL!

YOU WERE  
RIGHT... HE  
SEEMS TO BE  
SLEEPWALKING...  
COULD HE BE  
HYPNOTIZED?







MILTON-83

THIS IS THE END OF "THE GNUFFS MOVE IN"... BUT THEY WILL RETURN IN "CRITTERS" NP 8 WITH THE FIRST CHAPTER OF "ANIMAL GRAFFITI"...

They said he'd  
be helping the  
government.

But what if the  
government  
is beyond  
help?

# CAPTAIN CONFEDERACY

No. 2



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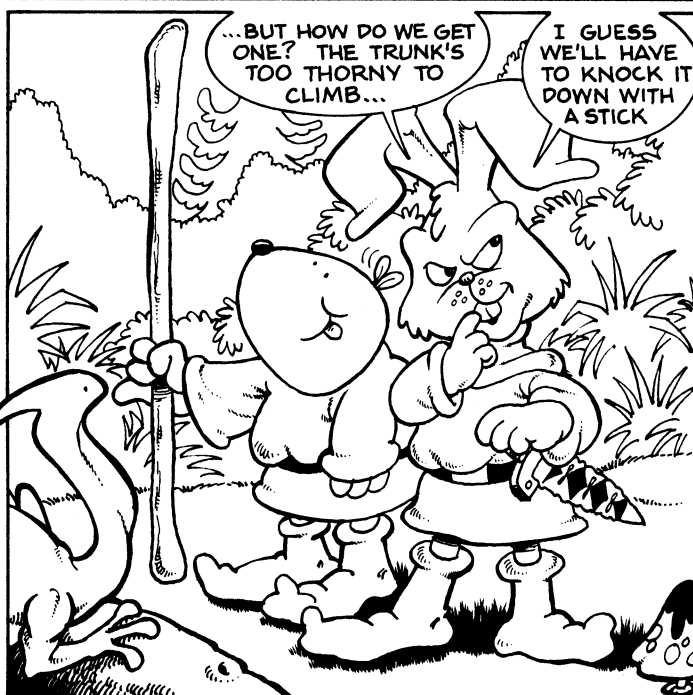
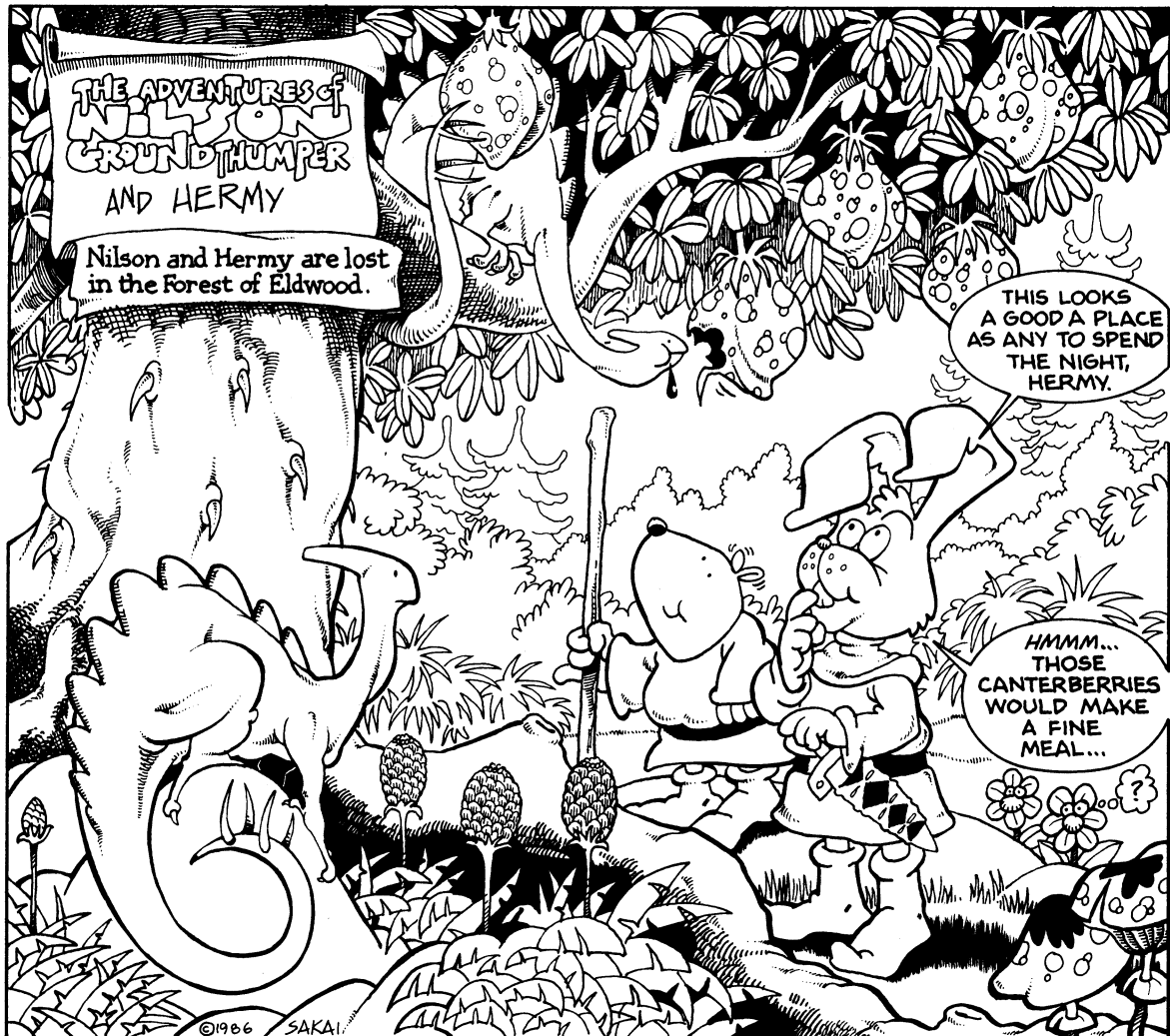


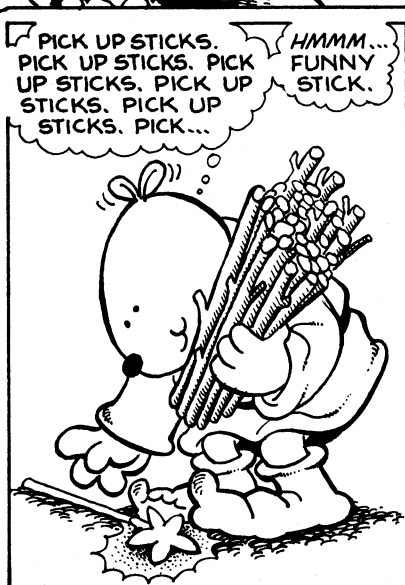
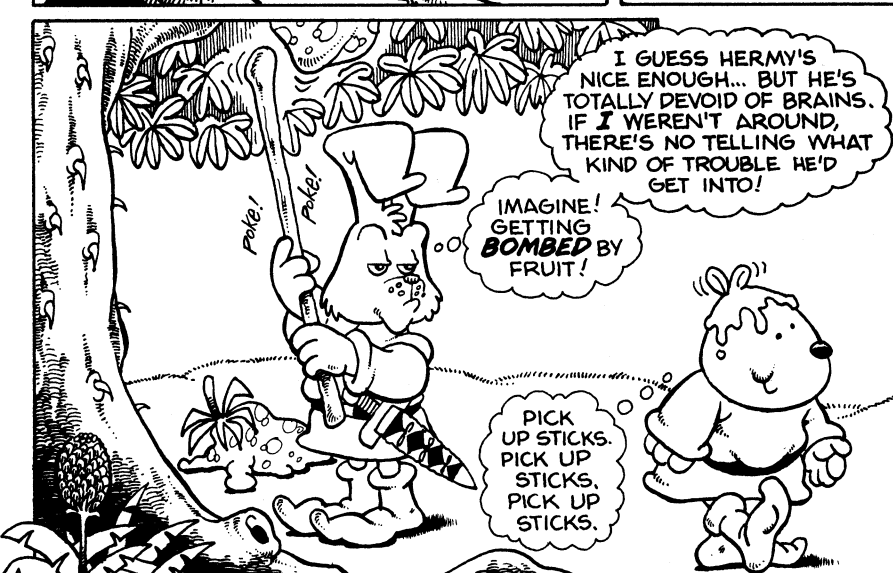
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and  
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I AM **SENOGARA**, THE WIZARD, SEARCHING FOR MY LOST WAND OF MAGIC... WHICH I SEE IN YOUR POSSESSION, YOU WASTE MATTER OF A WART HOG!

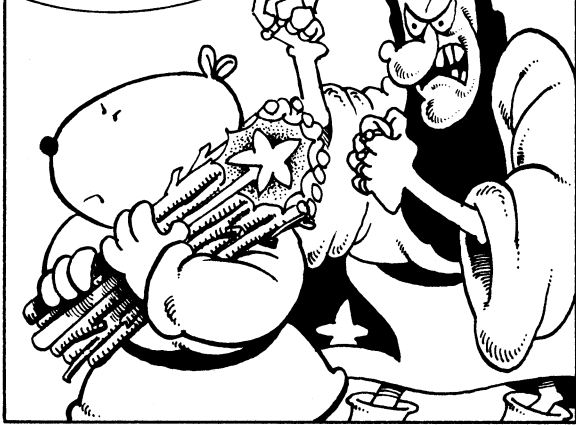


I LOST IT WHEN I WAS OUT CUTTING MISTLETOE... NOW GIVE IT BACK, YOU GOAT'S GONAD! THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT IT'LL DO IN THE HANDS OF A SLUG'S PIMPLE LIKE YOU!

YOU SHOULDN'T CALL PEOPLE FUNNY NAMES.

BESIDES, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

**WHY, YOU...** INSOLENT BAG OF HORSE INNARDS! I STILL HAVE POWER ENOUGH TO TURN YOU INTO A TOAD, YOU CAMEL FACE!



"STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES, BUT NAMES WILL NEVER HURT ME!"

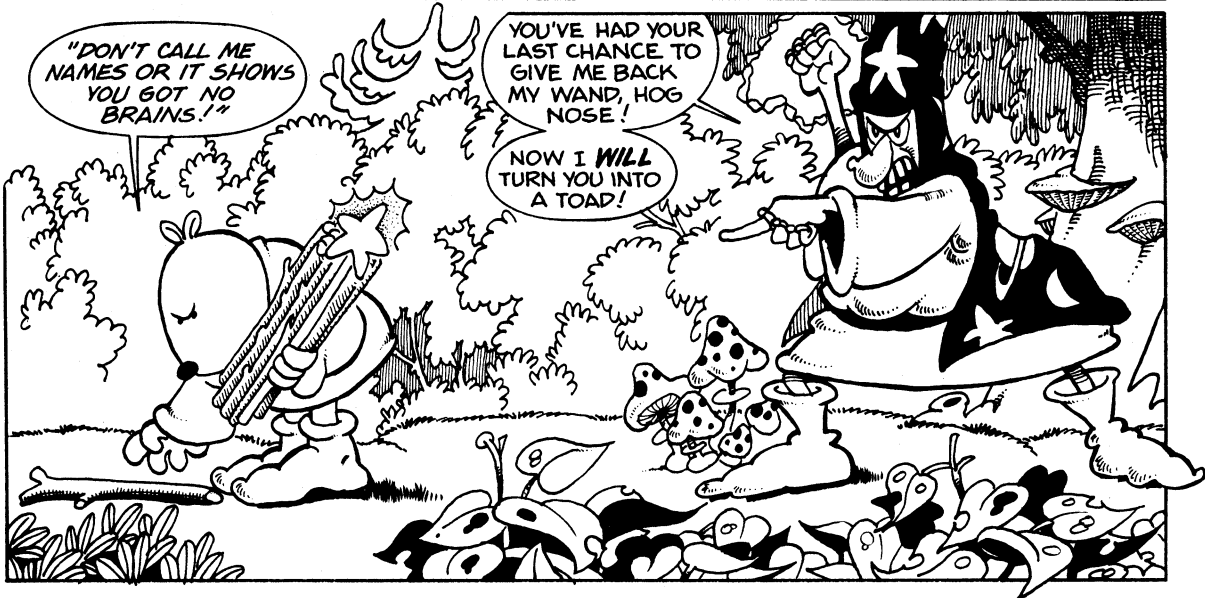
YOU ELEPHANT RUMP, YOU'RE ASKING FOR IT!



"DON'T CALL ME NAMES OR IT SHOWS YOU GOT NO BRAINS!"

YOU'VE HAD YOUR LAST CHANCE TO GIVE ME BACK MY WAND, HOG NOSE!

NOW I **WILL** TURN YOU INTO A TOAD!





the mystery.  
the magic.  
the mirth.  
Whisper it:

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*MAD's Maddest Artist talks back!*

**The Mark Marek Interview**  
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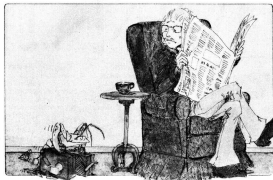
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Don Martin

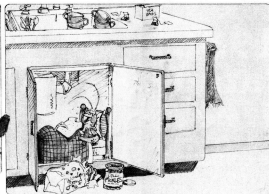
**FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS**

# "HOW TO DEAL WITH A SELFISH SHELLFISH"

written by **Toren Smith**  
and **Martin Brock**  
illustrated by **Lela Dowling**



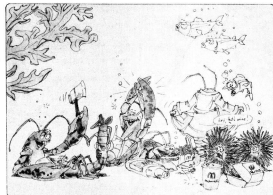
One steamy day (in the middle of May)  
a crustacean came into my life.  
So I said "Dear crustacean, (with no hesitation)  
"Why do you pick me to beuse?"  
He made his reply with a look in his eye,  
That said I could never refuse.



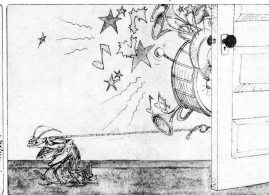
"Pickles and bread I am fond of, in bed,  
or saltwater taffy at noon,  
but because it is May, we decided to stay  
down below here, right under your sink;  
and if I may give warning to you and your kin-  
"We crayfish aren't quiet, as you may think."



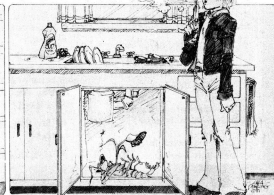
"From the clam you may hear a wee trickle of beer,  
"the prawn is most timid and shy-  
"While, from inside a mussel, there's nary a rustle  
and squids are in top nice a mood;  
"The barmale squiggles the poythlas giggles,  
"but we crayfish are notably rude."



"You see, on occasion, the lobster persuasion  
act horribly softly with gin,  
"So they make a loud racket with their claws, and a hucket,  
and sometimes rob urchins of food.  
Clams and crabs, can be brash when they're cosy with hash,  
but we crayfish are always quite crude."



"So cover your ears, and stifle your fears,  
"but prepare for a night of no sleep,  
then he turned for the sink with a nod and a wink  
and towed in a blaring brass band.  
You could see on his mien he was pretty damn smug,  
but the crayfish had made his last stand."



And so you may plan, both you and your clan,  
that crustaceans will not ruin your sleep,  
or though you may muffle the sound with a truffle  
theres just one solution, I think;  
So I said "Turn and crawl!" and he whipped out a claw  
but I shot him dead, under the sink."

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The whole city is going to hell and all you can do is give me contradictions!

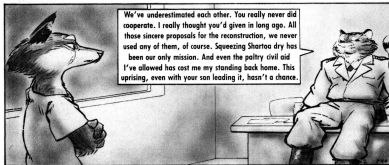
Everything is quiet!  
Everything is in uproar!



Get me facts!

S. A. GALLAGHER '86





Small consolation to either of us. I'll be recalled, maybe even shot, for having lost control of order.

Either way, I can't leave any evidence that I allowed you to live. And, of course, if the rabble gets lucky, we can't allow them the benefit of your leadership. But don't feel too bad, Tasiu officers never get captured alive.



Jenna?! Where's Duwan?

— pu-puff—shot—pant—  
by patrol shot! — puf —

oh, that's great!

Chaka picked up,  
Subi out of town,  
can you believe it?  
Out of town!



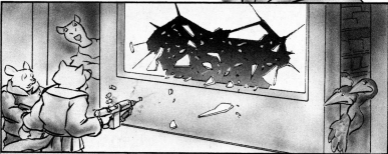
Makovi in hospital,  
and now Duwan shot!







We can't afford to take them on in force. There's just too many of them and still too few of us to do anything like that.



What are you doing?!

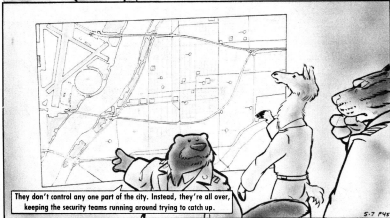
Just liberating resources in the name of the revolution.



Damn it! That's looting!  
Put it back!

Come on now — glub —





How's the general population reacting?

Not too bad. Most are keeping off the streets. There've been some utilities disruption and barricades, but by and large this all seems to be just a tiny minority of agitators.

Orders, sir?


Uhhh — Yes. Don't chase them. Beef up the strength of each patrol and let the rabble come to them, then kill them as they can.

And keep the collateral damage down. We don't want to erode public support, or at least neutrality.


How 'bout the news?

Keep it low key. "Stay calm, and out of the way, temporary unrest."


Remember, we do have complete control, but hysterical denunciations will raise too many doubts.



HAH! It's working! They bought the phony reports! No out of town reinforcements. No special build-up at Government House



However, we'd better warn the strike teams that the Tosiu aren't playing any more.



And since they haven't put up defenses yet, it'd be a perfect time to try and take it.




Jenna?

What?



You want to help us take the royal residence?

To night — ooooh —



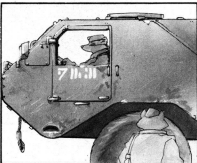
You know the plan as well as any of us, better even. We need you.

Uuhhrrmm —  
Vit, you go.

Good girl.

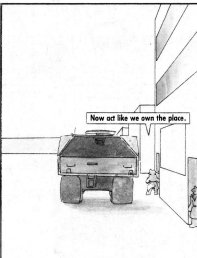


Forget everyone, back  
gate, only single quart.



Come on!

Quick, inside!



Now act like we own the place.

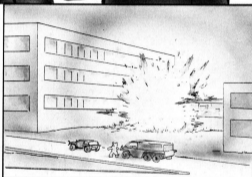


And remember, no shooting  
until the blast.

This looks like a good place for it. Okay?



Do it!



NOW!

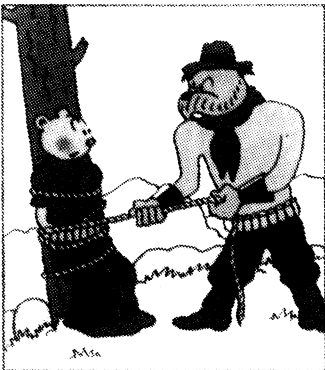




[CONTD FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER] influenced antics inspired smiles rather than laughs in this reader, and as welcome as the sober anti-war piece "The Day After Forever" was, its brief glow of light in a black field of despair was anomalous for Joshua Quagmire only because it was a more heartfelt, less cynical expression of the pessimism that permeates his best series, "Space Gophers, Inc." These contributions served notice that there are several funny-animal cartoonists out there worthy of a slot in *Critters*, one very insistently coming to mind at present being Michael T. Gilbert... How about convincing him to make time for drawing a new Wraith story?

C.E. Dinkins  
PFO San Francisco, CA

Funny you should mention that, C.E.; even before receiving your letter, I'd dropped Michael a note about (a) reprinting all the Wraith stories in some nice format and (b) running a new one, either in that book or in *CRITTERS*. Of course, Michael's real busy with his TWO successful series, *ELRIC* and *MR. MONSTER*... but if you read this, Mike, I'm still interested!



Funny-animals from the creator of *Tin-Tin*? You bet!

By the way, C.E., did you know that one of Herge's very earliest strips was a funny-animal book called "Popol et Virginie"? It wasn't much of a success when it came out—remained out of print for a few decades, and I don't think it's ever been translated to English but for those who like Herge's earliest, fantasy-slapschick style, the book is a treat. And it's nice to know that a Master Of The Form like Herge dabbled in the funny-animal field, if only briefly.

Anyway, before this becomes a Roy Thomas letter column (answers longer than the letters), thanks a million for a heartwarming letter! Makes it all worthwhile, or somesuch other humble thankyou. —KT

Dear Kim—

Having now seen two issues of *Critters*, some kudos and some K.O.s.

Kudos first—after issue one's "all-Japan" look, it was nice to see some breaks in issue two: even though "Birthright" (my favorite, incidentally) is still derivative in presentation from Japanese animal books, "Captain Jack" and "Gnuiff" throw a more pan-national feel into the book. "CJ" is wonderful, sort of reminiscent of Hanna-Barbera in their good days. I didn't make the

Barks/"Gnuiff" connection till I read the Decker intro, but as I read it, I noted a certain *something* I couldn't define about the art.

K.O.s: the lettering in both "Captain Jack" and "Gnuiff" could be improved, even if done on blue ruling lines. It detracts from the professionalism of the illos and should be corrected, please.

Then the Josh Quagmire controversy. Sorry, gang, but I found the plotline of "The Day After Forever" just a little too absurd. The story-within-a-story was going nowhere, and Quagmire's art style still leaves a lot to be desired when compared with the clean images of Sakai and Gallacci. This isn't to imply that everyone should have a similar look: to the contrary, individual style is something to be cultivated. It's just that it would be cultivated well, and Quagmire's needs a lot of weeding and fertilizing.

I can see where you have your work cut out for you in terms of sales, but with such a good start, here's hoping you make it. All in all, *Critters* is fun reading, presented with wit, intelligence, and (with the exception above) style. Good luck!

Sean Martin  
Toledo, OH

Points noted, Sean. I think Mike Kazaleh's lettering has improved noticeably already (check out CAPTAIN JACK #3, now on sale), and Freddy Milton's lettering on "Gnuiff" suffered from the production handicap of having been done on tissue overlays. We're working out a different way of producing the next "Gnuiff" serial, with Freddy handling more production, and the results should be "cleaner."

And, for another view on Josh Quagmire's brief *CRITTERS* sojourn... —KT

Dear Kim Thompson,

I was browsing through my local comics store when I saw Cutey Bunny flying across one of the most beautiful covers I've ever seen on a comic book. I snatched it up and flipped through it. I plunked it down and bought it. I read it several times... I can't wait for issue #2!

*Critters* is fantastic. I really mean it. I enjoyed the light humor of Mr. Sakai's Usagi Yojimbo and the heroism of Mr. Gallacci's Shartoan family. Brilliant. I am saddened, however, that Mr. Quagmire doesn't intend to draw for you any more. It was his art that initially attracted me to *Critters*, and I found his story to be the most philosophical and profound of the three.

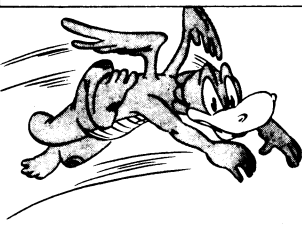
Well, I just wrote in to tell you that you've got a satisfied customer, and I'll be looking forward to issue #2. I can't wait.

John Seubert  
Smithfield, RI

Dear Ms. Thompson,

I was fortunate enough to obtain a copy of *Critters* #2, and I must say

...BORNE ALOFT ON SCALY WINGS  
GNUIFF SETS OFF IN HOT PURSUIT...



"Gnuiff"—why are the wings a secret?

I was quite pleased with it.

"Captain Jack" looks like typical fine work by Mike Kazaleh. Ditto to Gallacci's "Birthright." Freddy Milton's "Gnuiff" is a treat—I eagerly await the next installment. One question, though. Why the big secrecy concerning Gnuiff's wings? At first I thought it was the fact they were dragons that they were trying to hide. But they told the superintendent (love the badger design!) that they are dragons, and later expressed relief that he didn't spy Gnuiff's wings. Don't most people expect dragons to have wings? I know I ought to ask this of Freddy Milton himself, but perhaps you can explain this thing to me.

Tracy Horton  
Valencia, CA

By the way, Tracy, I'm a he not a she—but with a name like "Kim," I'm used to the confusion. (Then again, I'm telling this to someone called "Tracy"?)

Good question about the Gnuiff's wings. I'm sure Freddy will have an explanation for this in a future story—won't you, Freddy?—KT

Dear Kim,

I just finished with the first issue of *Critters* and I think it's GREAT. Of course it is a biased opinion because I already follow *Cutey Bunny* and *Albedo* faithfully. I was sad to hear that Joshua Quagmire and you had a falling out and that he will no longer appear in *Critters*. His installment was not what I expected. I wanted to get a good belly laugh like I usually get when I read *Cutey Bunny*. This was such a downer. Steve Gallacci's "Birthright" was everything I expected, however, and more. The story line, which could really develop into something, was surpassed only by Steve's superb illustrations. I was waiting a long time for *Critters*, and it was worth the wait. I can't forget to mention Stan Sakai's "Usagi Yojimbo." I have been following his story in *Albedo* and think it is a fine comic. I don't think I could read an entire book of it, but the short episodes are enough to hold my interest and intrigue me.

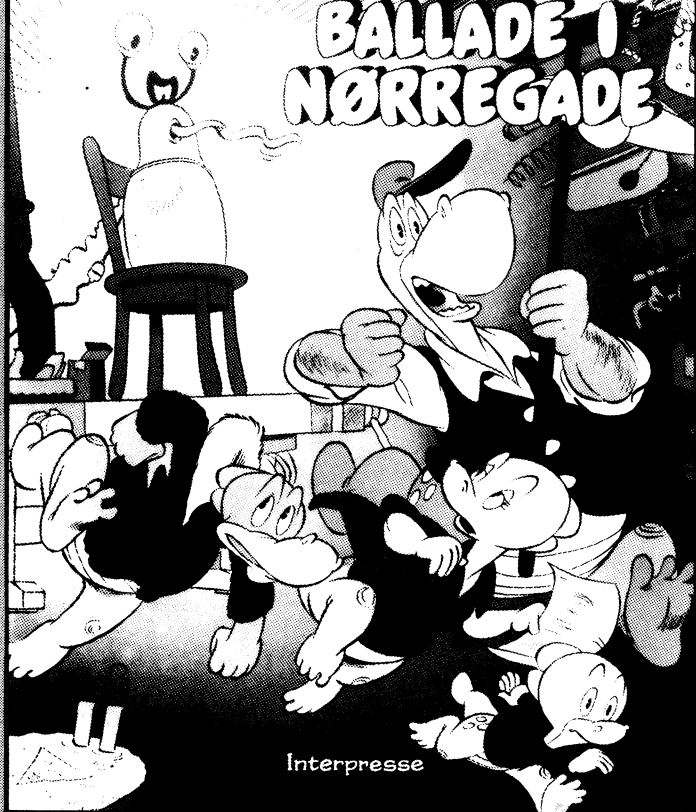
About that last line... wanna bet? Your chance to find out for sure whether you can read an entire book of "Usagi Yojimbo" will be tested when we release the *USAGI YOJIMBO SUMMER SPECIAL* next month. I know which side of that wager MY money's on.

By the way, you "Birthright" fans who haven't had a chance to pick up the early, sold-out issues of *ALBEDO* with Steve's

FAMILIEN GNUFF 1

af FREDDY MILTON

# BALLADE I NØRREGADE



© 1986 Freddy Milton

## THOSE LUCKY DANES (NORWEGIANS, TOO!)

Special congratulations this issue to Freddy Milton, whose original GNUFF story was finally released, in Norway and Freddy's native Denmark. Packaged as a handsome, full-color graphic novel, "A Ruckus on George Street" is in fact the very FIRST "Gnuft" story written and drawn by Freddy, but for a variety of reasons, it was held back for several years before publication. (The publisher, incidentally, is Interpresse, the selfsame folks with whom Fantagraphics Books co-publishes the full-color PRINCE VALIANT reprint series.)

All who've read "Ruckus" agree that it was worth the wait—even though it's only the first, 46-page installment of a 92-page graphic novel! Chronologically, "Ruckus" takes place sometime after "American Graffiti," the second "Gnuft" novel—to be serialized in CRITTERS #8-11. And there WILL eventually be an American edition—although the format is still under discussion.

"Erma Felna" series... take heart! Steve is combining the first four episodes into one 64-page volume, entitled **COMMAND REVIEW**, which should be appearing sometime next month. —KT

Hail Kim Thompson!

In order...

Out of all the three features in **Critters** #1, I enjoyed "Usagi Yojimbo" the most. Yojimbo's honor is apparently beyond reckoning. The art was pleasant for a rabbit. Rhino came in O.K. too. The page nine "ending" was as good as the real one. I believe that Sakai's inking could have made the characters stand out better in the fight scene. Other than that, it was primo.

The Domino/QT Bunny story was nice, but could have been better.

This wasn't my first exposure to QT, but for others, it would have been unclear. Josh could have anticipated "something unforeseen" occurring, and given the readers a taste of QT's powers and origin.

"Birthright" was second behind "Usagi Yojimbo." The typesetting was original. I noticed a good use of tones overall. Personality depth could be expanded.

"The art was pleasant for a rabbit"...? Thanks... I think. —KT

Dear Sirs,

Sorry to hear about your "difference" with Quagmire, but I tend to more prefer the drama of "Birthright" to the zaniness of **Cutey**

**Bunny.** I had not read very many "funny animal" stories prior to encountering **Albedo**, but I fell in love with Erma Felna right off. The style is very interesting and I hope to see it continued in "Birthright."

Stanley Leghorn  
Bellefonte, PA

Dear Sir or Ma'am,

It is hard for me to write you a fan letter in praise of your supreme work in the new comic series **Critters** without sounding hopelessly juvenile. You have really outdone yourselves in this monumental work of the comics industry.

You may think that this praise is a bit too presumptuous to be given to you and your artists and writers, but I think that words cannot describe the achievement that you and your colleagues have produced.

I would also like to compliment Kim Thompson on the very powerful opening comment appearing on the front and back inside covers of **Critters** #1. It was a collection of things that need to be said about the "funny animal" comic industry.

I rarely ever read the opening editorials written by the author or producer of this or that comic (yet I know I should). But after reading this fine comic, I had to see what kind of genius masterminded the accumulation of such talent to create the **Critters** comic.

I realize your goals are that of an entertainer, and yes, even a teacher. For, as you said, you must introduce the youth of today to the magic and the entertainment value that can be derived from the almost inexhaustible field of the "funny animal" book.

But still, so far, I have not given any praise to the fine artists themselves, and this cannot go undone.

My praise goes to Stan Sakai, for his martial arts mayhem in "Usagi Yojimbo." I have seen few samurais in comics (other than Frank Miller's **Ronin** series), and the field needs vast exploration of its possibilities. Sakai is just the one to do it.

My praise goes to Joshua Quagmire, who graced the series' debut with an ominous but entertaining story, "The Day After Forever."

And lastly, but not at all in the least leastly, I give the fantastic work of Steven A. Gallacci my gold star. I have not seen a story of this quality since the debut of **Cerebus**. The art is superb, the characters are unforgettable... but the length allowed each segment in the book is much too short. The "Birthright" story is grand enough to be given its own book all by itself. Tell Gallacci to keep up the good work.

All in all, I thank you for a comic that is, and in my opinion always will be, an example for all others to follow.

And yes, the cover is a honey.  
Eric Blumrich  
Fayetteville, TN



Barks's ducks return this summer from Gladstone!

I don't know if I, or even any of the **CRITTERS** crew, quite deserve the "genius" appellation (at least yet), but your words are sincerely appreciated, Eric. By all of us.

Incidentally, I have a piece of good news. The work of at least one **CERTIFIED** genius in the genre will soon be available again at reasonable prices to one and all. Yes, the Gladstone Comics revival of classic Disney strips (mentioned back in **CRITTERS** #1, remember?) is now fully underway, and the first batch of 75-cent color comics will be released later this month. And just that first batch includes four Carl Barks tales (including a '52 booklength Donald Duck tale, a Gyro Gearloose short, and the first Beagle Boys story), a Floyd Gottfredson Mickey Mouse strip, a Paul Murry Mickey-and-Goofy serial, and the first American printing of stories and covers by Dutch Disney artist extraordinaire Daan Jippes! Wow! Ask for them by name: Gladstone Comics! —KT

Dear Kim,

A delectable second issue, running the "Funny Animal" gamut from Gallacci's high drama (and really good art—another reprofan speaks out) in his "Birthright" to the Warner Bros. style and madcap (loony?) whimsy of "Captain Jack" with "Gnuft" occupying the middle ground in both artistic quality and humorous conception. (Sorry to say, "Gnuft" is little better than average in all respects: I've seen those jokes before, folks...)

Steve Gallacci can take a situation and turn it inside out: is there really nothing new here? Could Alexandre Dumas (the elder) have written this story. Is it really no more than Louis XVII in a nice fox-fur coat? Well... it is all of these, but also more. (Although the story would be worth it just for Jenna Shodi's thick-as-winter molasses accent...) The story is building up to something (I hope) not really seen yet, in history or in literature: The Prince Comes Home in Peace Again. A national dream (throughout Europe) is the Prince in hiding. Stories circulated about Charles II of England for quite some time after he'd been beheaded. This is easily the greatest kind of story: a matter of moment and myth. (I profess myself disappointed at the shallow brutality of the Tosui "bad guys," however. Ho hum. Black Hats. And it doesn't take ten years to learn how to administrate a planet, either: the old Prince has

no use any more. It's unclear why they let him live at all.)

I'll buy **Captain Jack** when it appears, oh you bet I will! Good stuff. Silly. (Why doesn't Adam Fink just grab Beezelebum and rip his lungs out?) I approve, without reserve.

And Gnuft? Gnuft said.

**Critters** till **Critters** won't have you. I'm yours till the ink runs dry. Best wishes, and try to have fun while you're at it.

Jefferson P. Swycaffer  
San Diego, CA

Our first "repeat" letterwriter! Thanks, Jefferson, and I hope "Gnuft" has grown on you since the first episode you felt so cool about. I think you'll have found that the series goes beyond the simple "gag-adventure" into something quite original... but I'll let it speak for itself. —KT

Dear Mr. Sakai—

I'd like to say something about Usagi. He's awesome!! I just love the way he fights!! Nothing to worry about, he's got it under control! He's aware and has the brains to accomplish the job. Doin' great, keep Usagi goin' on strong!

→ Usagi Fan  
→ Vance  
→ Sakado  
↳ Montebello, CA

Dear **Critters**,

"Birthright" by Gallacci is the best feature of your first issue of **Critters**. I'm dismayed that it will only run for five issues or so. I hope that more of Gallacci's work is forthcoming even after "Birthright" ends.

As for Quagmire, "I ain't missing him at all." **Cutey Bunny** is "bird-cage bait!"

Sakai's "Usagi Yojimbo" is good, and even has a "Groo-ish" ending! Reminds me a little of "Kozure Okami" by Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojime.

This comic is a "must have" for all anthropomorphic fans and an oasis for those tired of the superhero type of comics.

Juan Alfonso  
Miami, FL

"Birdcage bait"? What a nasty thing to say...

And yes, yes, "Birthright" will continue! We're giving Gallacci four months off for good behavior (he got a little jammed between his **CRITTERS** stuff and his publishing operation over the spring), but **CRITTERS** #11 should see the sequel to the saga of Prince Alfon and his tumultuous political career. —KT

Dear Kim,

You are to be congratulated! **Critters** is, in my opinion, the evolutionary progression of all other "funny-animal" comics—it's certainly exceeded my expectations!

"Usagi Yojimbo," for instance, has everything a good strip should have, a solid story, detailed art (by Stan Sakai), and plenty of action, coupled with the background of Ancient Japan, it gets my approval.

Very few stories are amusing and chilling at the same time, but Josh Quagmire's "The Day After Forever" sure is. It's just a shame this is J.Q.'s first and only "Cutey Bunny" story for this mag.

But the story that's left me gasping for more is "Birthright"—Steve Gallacci's atmospheric artwork makes sure of that; it could be described as a "serious-animal" tale. One part I loved was the parting between Anton and Kenda (page 28, panels 4.5.6). The tenderness shown by fox and vixen touched me so much. I nearly cried, such is the sensitivity of Gallacci's masterpiece.

In your editorial you demanded letters. Well, here's mine. Hope you get loads more, some with healthy criticism as well as those with praise. My only criticism of **Critters** is that it only has 32 pages.

Keep up the great work.

Robert Deighton

East Yorkshire, England

PS: When will it be in color?

Well, there's a color "Usagi Yojimbo" story in this month's **DOOMSDAY SQUAD**, but **CRITTERS** itself will be black-and-white for the foreseeable future. As for the page count—**CRITTERS** #11 will be big—I mean, BIG—and after that, who knows? We'll see. —KT

Dear Kim:

Well, now that I have read **Critters** #1 and 2, I think I have some indication as to what kind of book this is, and in what direction it's heading, so that now I can formulate a valid opinion.

I don't like it.

After finishing no. 1 I had ambivalent feelings, but I decided to keep the jury out until the next issue, because, after all, it was just the first issue. But now, I have decided that **Critters** is not a comic I want to buy, and here's why.

First of all, I had received the impression that **Critters** fit, more or less, into the category of comics called "funny-animal" books. The way I understand it, this means that the characters are (a) anthropomorphic and (b) funny. And both of these criteria must be met in order for a comic to be funny-animal. Otherwise it's something else altogether, but we'll discuss that later.

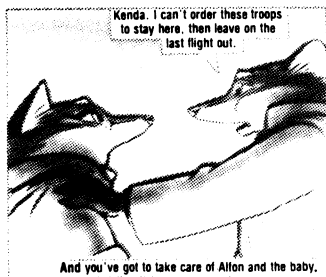
Right now, let's look at **Critters** #2. What do we have? Three stories, all supposedly funny-animals. The first one, "Birthright," I found to be a case of the right thing in the wrong form. "Birthright" has the potential to be quite an exciting epic. Steven A. Gallacci is an entertaining writer, very literate, with an excellent ear for dialogue. He draws fetching foxes, too. But this story just isn't funny. Good, involving, yes, but it's straight. And as a straight story it does not belong in a funny-animal format.

To my mind, the soul of a funny-animal is the reflection of our own humanity. In the original comic

strips of 60 and 70 years ago, the funny-animals were mirrors of our flaws and foibles, our dreams and desires, allowing us to laugh at ourselves through the vicarious exploits of Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, and the like. We have all felt "Goofy" at one time or another, and we have all envied Bugs his cool panache as he drawls, "Eehee... what's up, doc?"

And the humor was the most important part of these comics and cartoons. The humor tells us, "Don't take this seriously, we're just playing here, it's okay to laugh. And besides, they weren't even people we were laughing at, they were animals. Just a bunch of funny animals. But they were us in disguise, and I think that's why cartoons and comics were so popular (and still are): because when we laugh at the funny animals we laugh at ourselves, and in so doing, we learn to like ourselves, to not take ourselves so seriously, and to be more comfortable with the way we are.

But "Birthright" has missed this altogether. It is simply a good science-fiction adventure story that just happens to have funny-animals instead of people, and that is bad. Because of the funny-animals, I constantly find myself looking for humor, for some light element. It's hard to take heavy characters like brutalized women, cruel generals, and exiled princes seriously when they have big bushy tails and cute tufted ears. "Birthright" needs (a)



"Birthright"—deeply touching or the right story in the wrong format?

to get real people and (b) to get out of **Critters**.

The second story, "Captain Jack," was the best of the lot. **This** is a funny-animal comic. Not hilarious, mind you, but definitely funny. Kazaleh's facial expressions were really a delight. Too damn bad he's moving out and getting his own book. But he deserves it. At least he knows what a funny-animal is, and what they're good for. More power to him.

And third was "Gnuff." Well, in simple terms, "Gnuff" was just boring. It wasn't funny in the slightest, but it wasn't really serious either. It was just a lukewarm blah that did nothing and went nowhere. At least "Birthright," in the absence of humor, had some depth to it. "Gnuff" had about as much depth as an inflatable wading pool. And I don't care how much Dwight

Decker likes Freddy Milton's other work, nor am I interested in the "Copenhagen feel" or the "Barks tradition" (and if you ask me, any comparison between Milton's "Gnuff" and Hitchcock's "Psycho" is nothing short of ridiculous). All I know is when I plunk down my hard-earned cash I expect to be entertained in return. "Gnuff" missed the mark. They aren't funny-animals, either. Animals, yes. Funny, no damn way.

Way back at the beginning, I said "first of all," and explained how I felt about funny-animals. My biggest problem with this book is that it completely missed what funny-animals are all about (except for "Captain Jack," which of course doesn't count since that was a one-shot preview). Second of all, that price! Oy yey! **Critters** only has two more pages than First's Deluxe line, but the Deluxe line is (a) in full color and (b) is printed on Baxter paper. And costs a quarter less than **Critters**. Come on. A full-color independent on comparable stock costs 75 cents less.

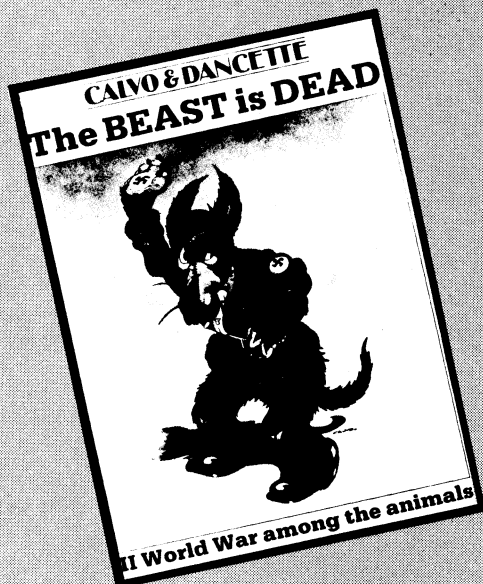
If this book doesn't shape up but soon, I'd say just save everyone (including the readers) some money and throw in the towel.

**Brent Winter**  
Destin, FL

**This is indeed the Winter of our discontent.** (Sorry.) Actually, Brent's letter reflects probably the major criticism of **CRITTERS**, **ALBEDO**, and their ilk that I've seen over the months: why are these characters animals? Why aren't they funny?

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I've got some opinions on that one, but let's just wind up with a letter that, in its own way, addresses (and refutes) some of the points in Brent's letter—and the rest of the readership is invited to comment on the question as well!

As for the price of CRITTERS, I'm afraid there are certain economic factors that render comparisons between full-color comics and it invalid. In a nutshell, Brent: CRITTERS is, in our judgment, not something that can sustain a broad enough audience to go to color (although that could change). A black-and-white comic has, with few exceptions, a much lower "ceiling" to its expected audience than a color comic. Lower sales bring on a higher per-copy print cost—which, unfortunately, bring on a higher cover price, which further limits the audience. If I could find a way out of that maddening spiral, I'd take it in a minute! And CRITTERS is far from the worst offender in that department: Look at Renegade's line, where most of the books run \$1.70 for 20-22 pages of story, or CEREBUS THE AARDVARK, at \$2.00 for 20 pages of story. And you know what? I still think CEREBUS is a better bargain than GRIMMACK! (By the way, do you feel ripped off when you have to pay five bucks for a black-and-white movie?) —KT

Dear Critters people,

I guess I grew up deprived. I actually read very few comics in my deep childhood (before ten). I read a few Marvels and even then disliked the DCs I saw. I could see that Superman was boring when I was eight. But I never even knew, or even heard of, Disney comics with the ducks and other characters. I became aware of them only as a teenager, at my first few comics conventions. This guy Barks was worshipped by people who wouldn't normally give a duck an even break. Still, Disney comics? The Disney world has never really interested me. I am an animation fan with only marginal enthusiasm for Disney's features and cartoons.

So it was through other sources that I became aware of some of the possibilities of funny animals. I really liked the Fritz the Cat movie. I read a few Robert Crumb comics. I was an ardent fan of that other duck, Howard, in his original run by Steve Gerber.

I see that animals can reflect the world of people and make us see it anew. We stop and ask ourselves why animals would do things that we don't question in humans. Animals are funnier than people doing the same things, because we don't expect them to do anything like we do.

And in our stories, two of which involved mass death of animals, I was more disturbed by those deaths than I would have been with people. Humans dying? Yawn. Rabbits, cows, foxes, dying? That's bad news. I know animals don't kill for greed or power. I feel sorry to see them doing it.

**Robin Reed**  
Oak Park, IL

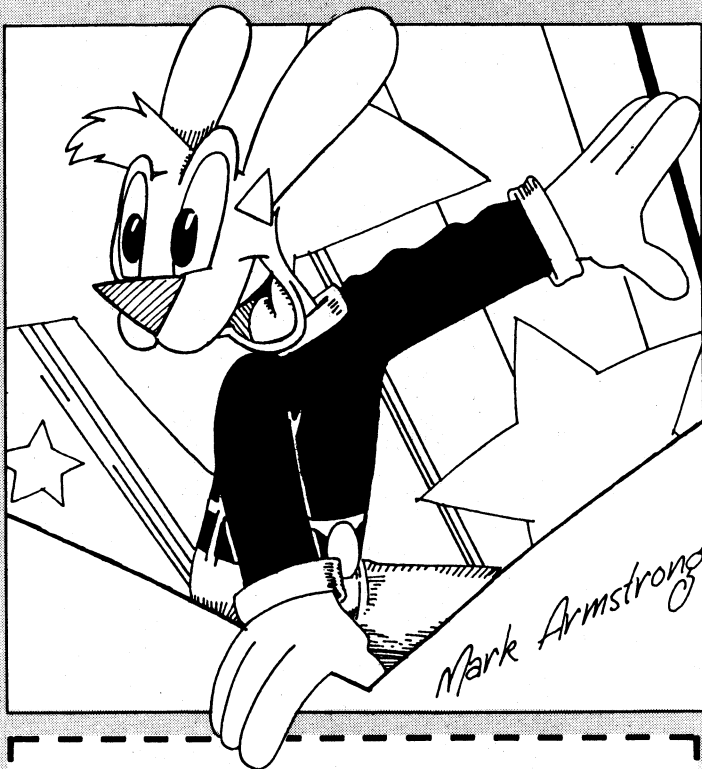
A strong point, Robin... one that a gentleman named Eric Blair used to great advantage in one of his most famous novels, some four decades ago.

Don't know who I'm talking about? Maybe you know him under his pen name—George Orwell. —KT

**CREDITS:** "Gnuiff" was written, drawn, toned, and re-lettered by **Freddy Milton**; the translation was by **Kim Thompson**. "Nilson Groundthumper" was written and drawn by **Stan Sakai**; the "Lobster" poem was written by **Toren Smith** and **Martin Brock** and illustrated by **Lola Dowling**; "Birthright" was written and drawn by **Steven A. Gallacci**, with typesetting provided by **Western Type**. The cover was drawn and hand-separated by **Freddy Milton**. The CRITTERS logo was designed by **Freddy Milton** (him again!) and rendered by **Ingo Milton**. Printed at **Port Publications**. Production by: **Tom Mason**, art director, and **Dave Nelson**, production assistant. **CRITTERS** is edited by **Kim Thompson** for **FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS**.

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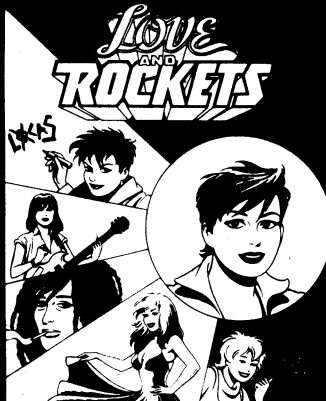
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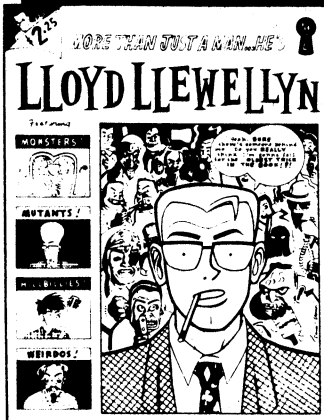
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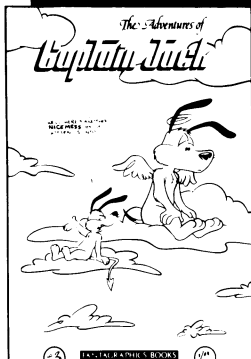
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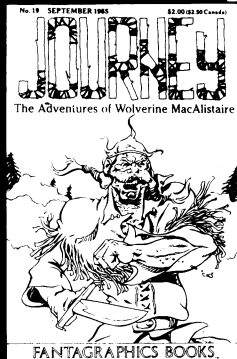
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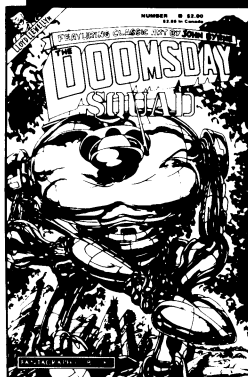
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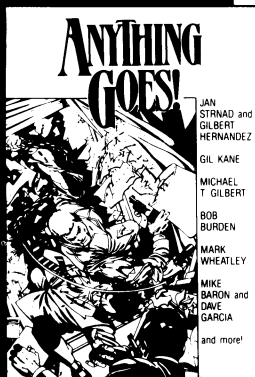
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"Funnier than Wuthering Heights"

"impeccable"

"Naughty but nice"

"Help, Cecil, Help!"

"sorta...read"

"For people who like this sort of thing, I suppose this is the sort of thing they like."

"too much too soon"

"It should be against the law not to read Captain Jack!"

Ripped from Mike Kazaleh's fevered brain!

Ripped!!!

It could only be from

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Monthly, all summer long!