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CRITTERS



FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

SA. SALLACCI '86

CRITTERS

No. 6 Nov., 1986

LETTERS

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

I have a couple of things to get off my chest before we go to the letters:

This issue marks the grand finale of Steve Gallacci's epic "Birthright" — kind of. As you can tell if you've read the story, it ends on a fairly ambiguous note, and if you think that means there's more hassles in store for our valiant freedom fighters — well, give yourself an "Empire Strikes Back" button! Steve is going to be busy working on his own *Albedo and Zell, Sworddancer* comics over the summer, but "Birthright II" is already scheduled for *Critters* #11 — so don't go away!

My apologies to Lela Dowling and Toren Smith for the substandard repro job afforded their two-page strip in the last issue. No one's fault, really — it was something of a gamble trying to transfer Lela's delicate pen-and-watercolor drawings to black-and-white, and our printer did the best he could, but the final result left a bit to be desired. I hope that one day we can present some of Lela's black-and-white work, done proper justice in terms of reproduction.

The rabbit ronin is everywhere! In addition to the now-on-sale *Usagi Yojimbo Summer Special*, our long-eared bodyguard is scheduled for appearances in *Doomsday Squad* #3 and an upcoming issue of First's *Grimjack* — and he still has time to show up in this issue of *Critters*, the next issue, and two more before the year is out! Boy, we should give him his own book or something! (Hold that thought. . .)

If you're going to be attending the San Diego comics convention this year, be sure to catch the funny-animals panel I'll be hosting. Confirmed guests so far include Steve Gallacci, Stan Sakai, Mike Kazaleh, Scott Shawl, and Mark Evanier. Mark Evanier? Well, although Mark is probably best known for his work on *Groo*, *DNAgents*, and *Crossfire*, he's written more funny-animal stories than all the rest of the panelists put together have probably read in

their lives — and since Mark can be articulate, informative, and funny on any subject for any amount of time, I figured I'd play it safe and invite him. Should be an interesting time, as we finally nail Gallacci to the wall and ask him why the heck it is he draws funny-animals that aren't funny!

After a real deluge of mail for the premiere issue of *Critters*, you guys have slowed down your correspondence quite a bit. Let's see some comments, folks! What do you like, what do you hate, what do you want to see more of. . . I can't guarantee I'll follow your advice, but I love getting the feedback anyway!

On to the letters.

—KT

To *Critters*:

At last, a title that ranks up there with such classics as *The Fox and the Crow* and *Uncle Scrooge*. Maybe you guys could put out such merchandising tie-ins as a *Usagi Yojimbo* electric sword or a *Cutey Bunny* inflatable doll. How about a *Critters Digest* with a *Double Digest* edition and a *Fun and Games* edition? The latter could have such goodies as "help *Cutey Bunny* find a brassiere that fits."

Sakai's "Usagi Yojimbo" has Groo's recklessness and Cerebus's cunning. The series itself reminds me of the early *Cerebus* stories — before Dave Sim started imbuing the series with idiosyncratic, sociopolitical satire.

Some fans claim that Mike Kazaleh's style is reminiscent of Bob Clampett. I see influences of Walt Kelly and Chuck Jones juxtaposed with Clampett's style in *Captain Jack*. The reaction poses of these characters is pure Jones (see *Critters* #2, page 16, panel 4) and I almost expected Marvin the Martian to make an appearance.

"Gnuif" clearly shows the influences of Carl Barks (plot and gags) and Walter Lantz (character design). Maybe some of Freddy Mil-

[SEE LETTERS, PAGE 31]

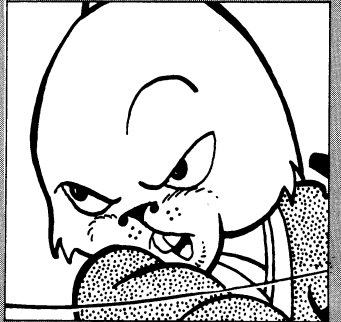
CONTENTS



Page 1 BIRTHRIGHT "Chapter Six"

by STEVEN A. GALLACCI

The rebel forces, under prince Alfon's orders, have succeeded in storming the stronghold of the Tosiu.



Page 11 USAGI YOJIMBO in: "A Quiet Meal"

by STAN SAKAI

All Usagi Yojimbo wanted to do was eat his meal in peace — now, that wasn't too much to ask, was it?



Page 21

FIRECRACKER JACK in: "Archrivals"

by MARK ARMSTRONG

Firecracker Jack discovers a terrific site for his new fireworks factory. Too bad his nemesis is within earshot. . .

Who — are — you?

I am Prince Andre Kashata, son of Prince Anton of Shartoa. And you?

Prince Anton — ?

Brat'er Alvan is vreint, Jenna Shodi.

Gabbi Fleicher, here.

To vork, is vell enough?

Oh, yes. Are you coming to rescue my mother, the Princess Kendra and I?

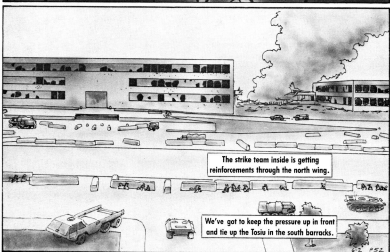
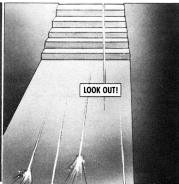
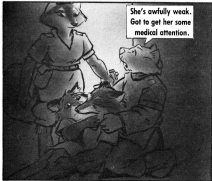
The Princess! Alive! Quick, where is she!

There, that's the one.

She used to be in a cell down the hall.

HA! She's here!

Uhm — you smell nice.





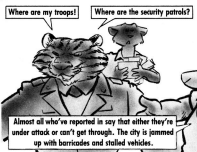
How many heavy machine guns and grenade launchers do you have?

Not many. Mostly captured and not much ammo.

Something in mind?



Yes. I know the buildings. The barracks used to be offices, and wouldn't hold up to heavy fire like the main building.



Where are my troops?

Where are the security patrols?

Almost all who've reported in say that either they're under attack or can't get through. The city is jammed up with barricades and stalled vehicles.



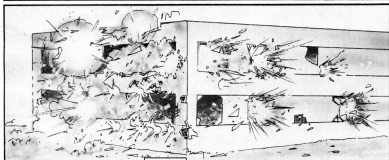
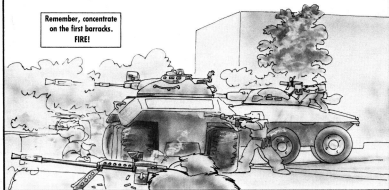
The commander at Chatakoda says it will take at least 8 hours to get a force of any real size here.



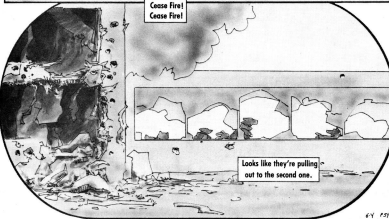
Sir! The bridges to the airport have been blown up! No way to get armored reinforcements through there.

Damn! There can't be much over 100 rebels out there. And all the troops I need are bottled up in that damn barracks. How many personnel are in here? 30, maybe 40?

Remember, concentrate
on the first barracks.
FIRE!



Cease Fire!
Cease Fire!



Looks like they're pulling
out to the second one.

HA. It worked. The building's sieved.

Best bet now is to keep the rest's heads down while we try for the main building.



Can't stay here.

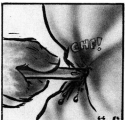
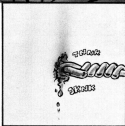


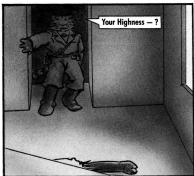
Ready?



Is clear.







SIR! SIR! The rebels are attacking up front!

They've got armor!

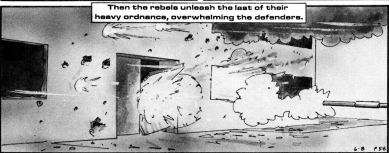
Get everyone that can be spared!



The Toslu put up a strong defense and the rebels pay dearly for their attempt.



Then the rebels unleash the last of their heavy ordnance, overwhelming the defenders.



G-B P56



Ho! Kotaka. Wat you here?

JENNA?

Jenna! Oh, Jenna!
I've missed you so!

Missed you too.

OH! Surprise hafe!!

Mother!? What? How!

Alfon?

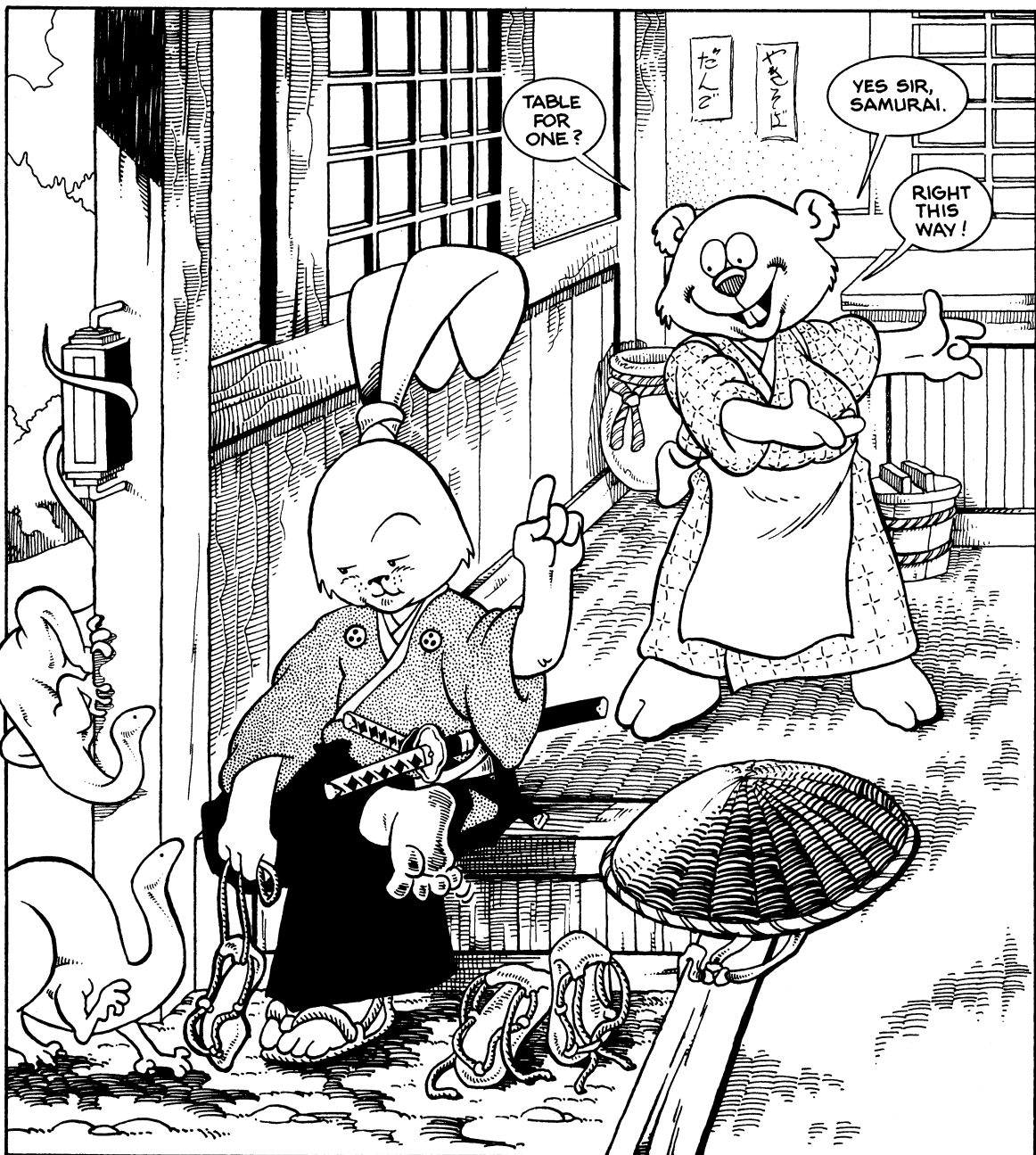
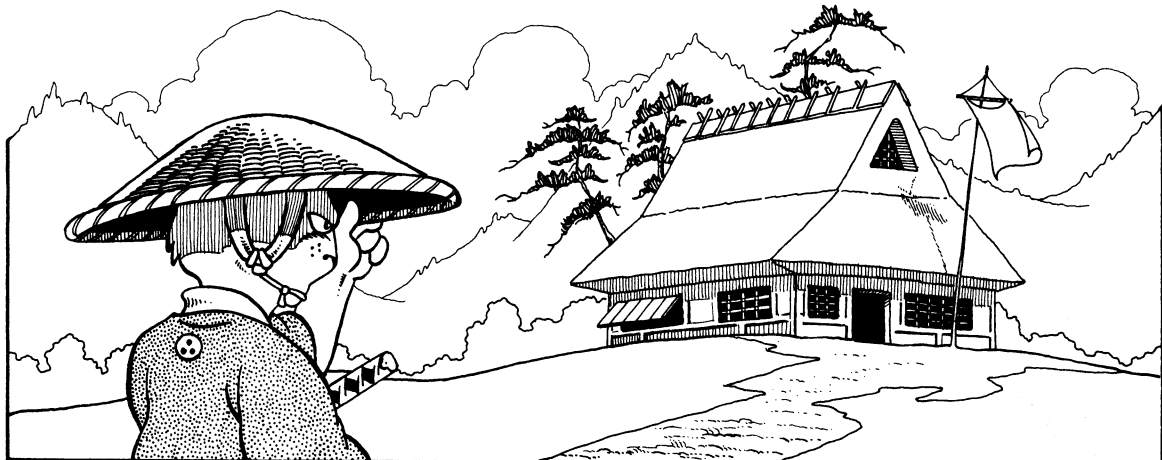
Alfon, meet your
brother Andre.

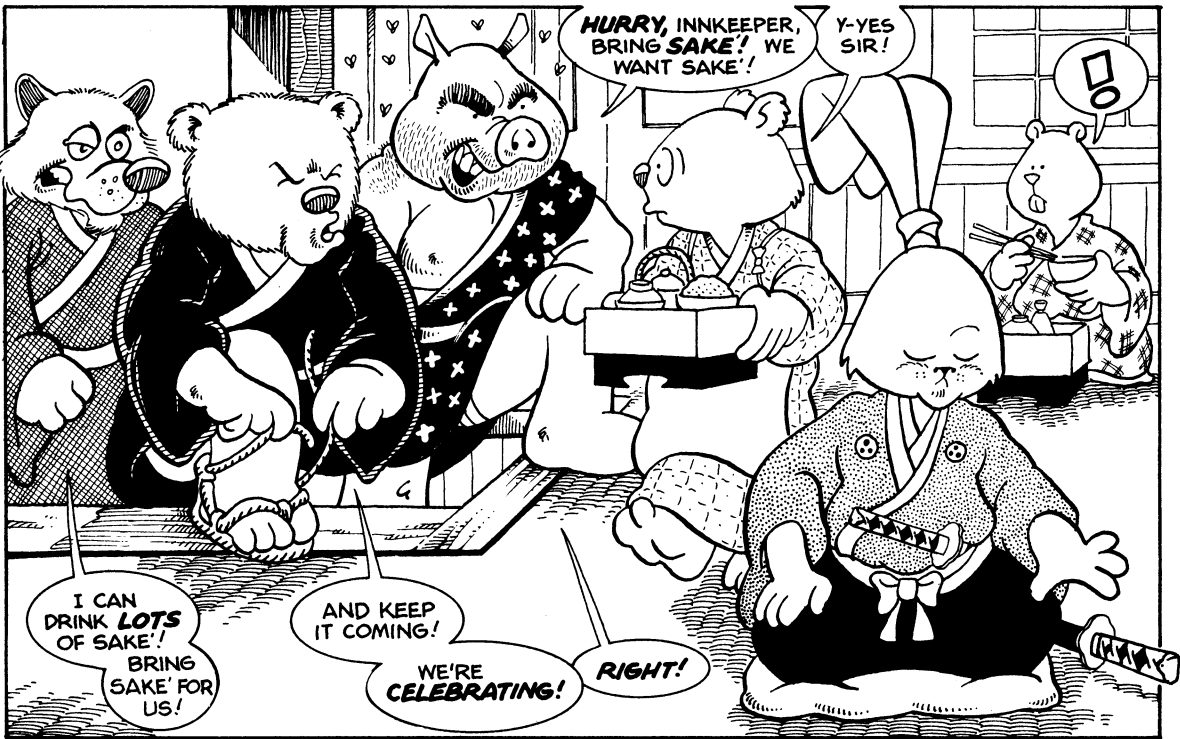
Welcome home.
Welcome home, everyone.

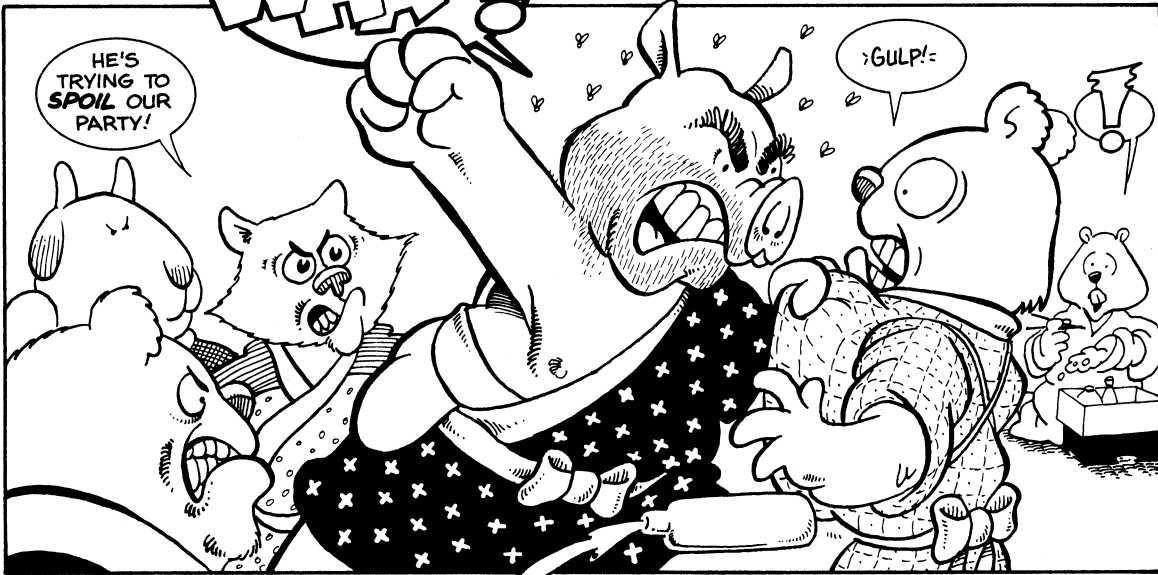
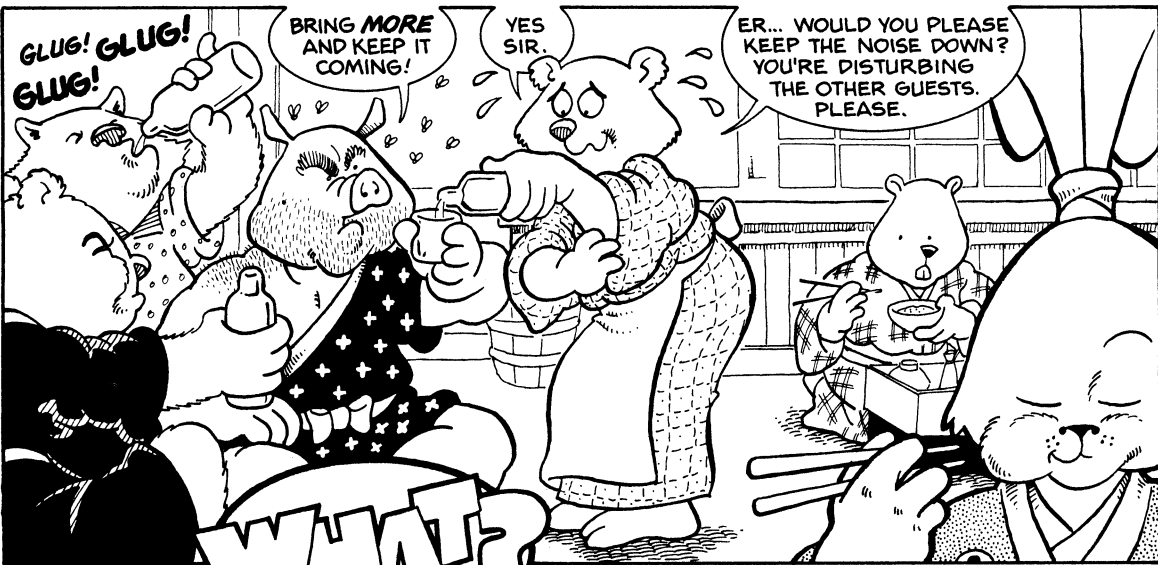
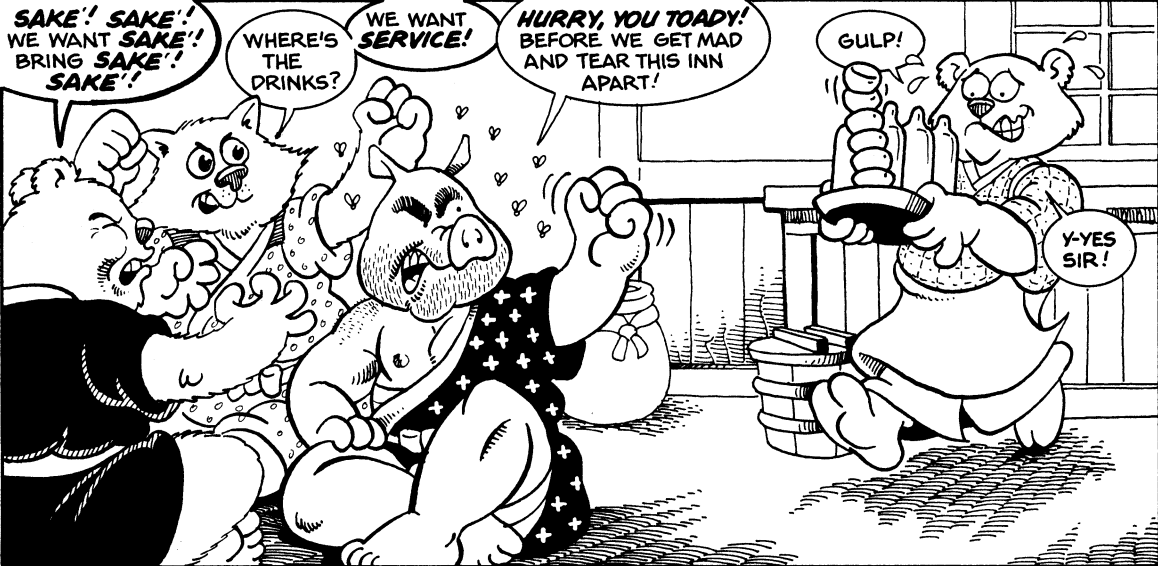
The first small battle for Shartoon freedom is done. While it has captured occupation headquarters, the rest of Shartoon is still under Tosiu control. However, the victory has galvanized the population into action. And with the release of the captured Kashota family, there is now hope for the rest of the nation.

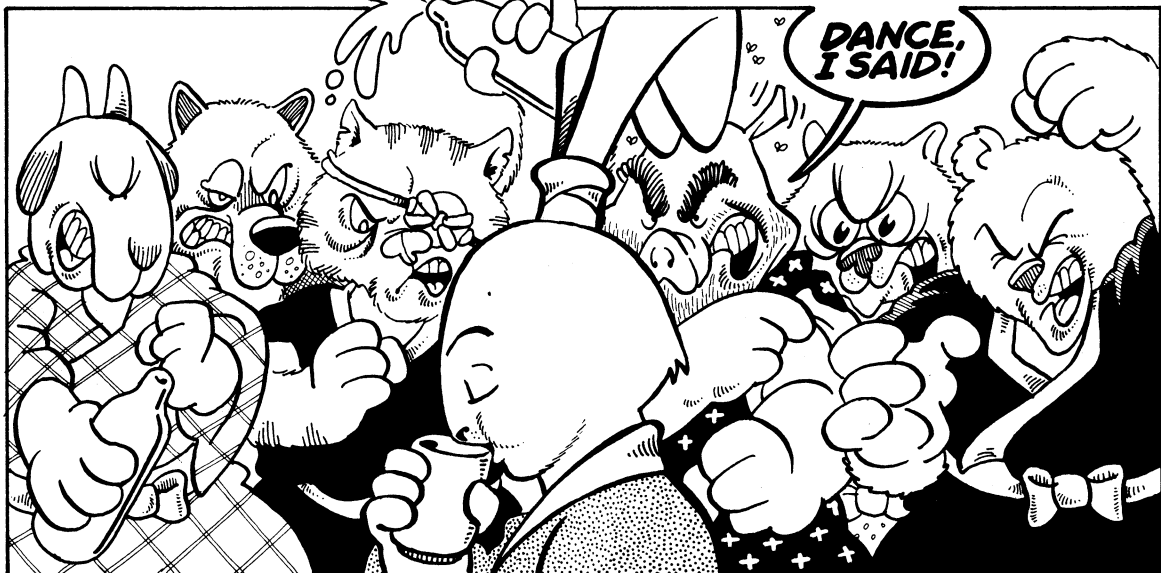
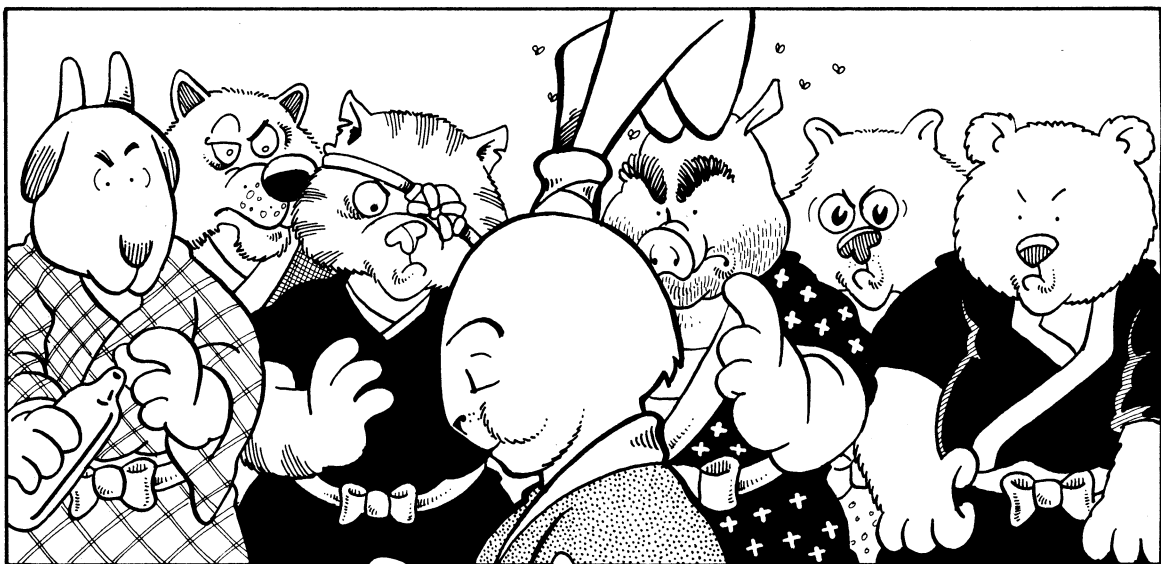
USAGI YOJIMBO™

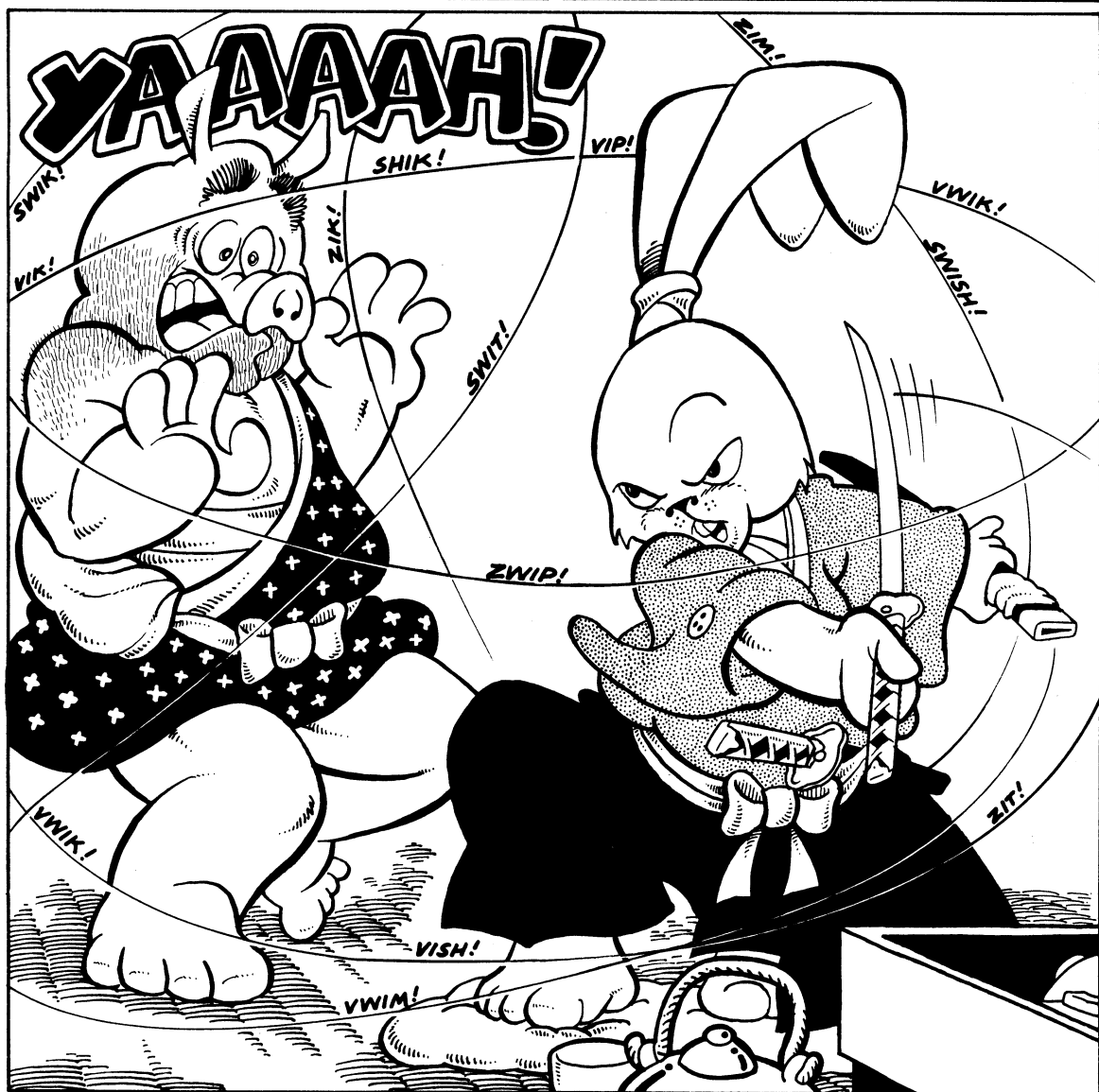
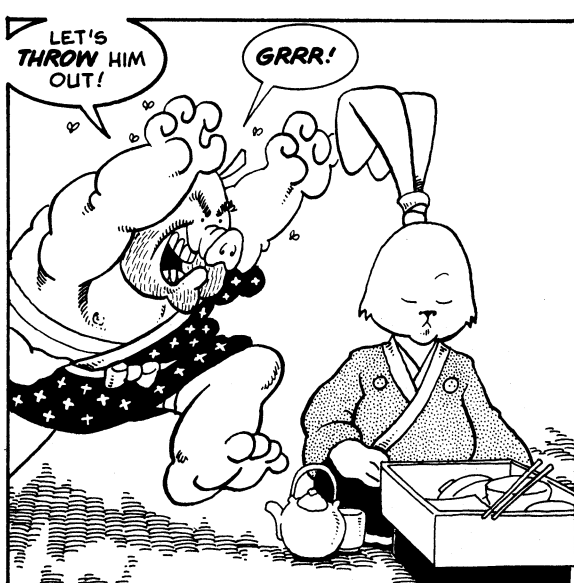
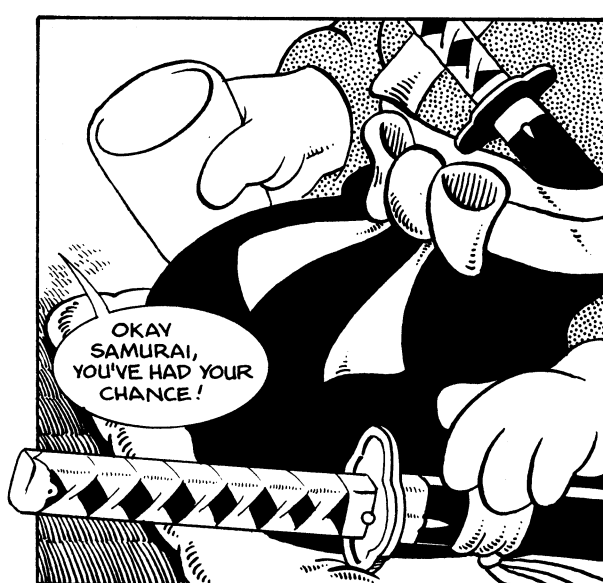


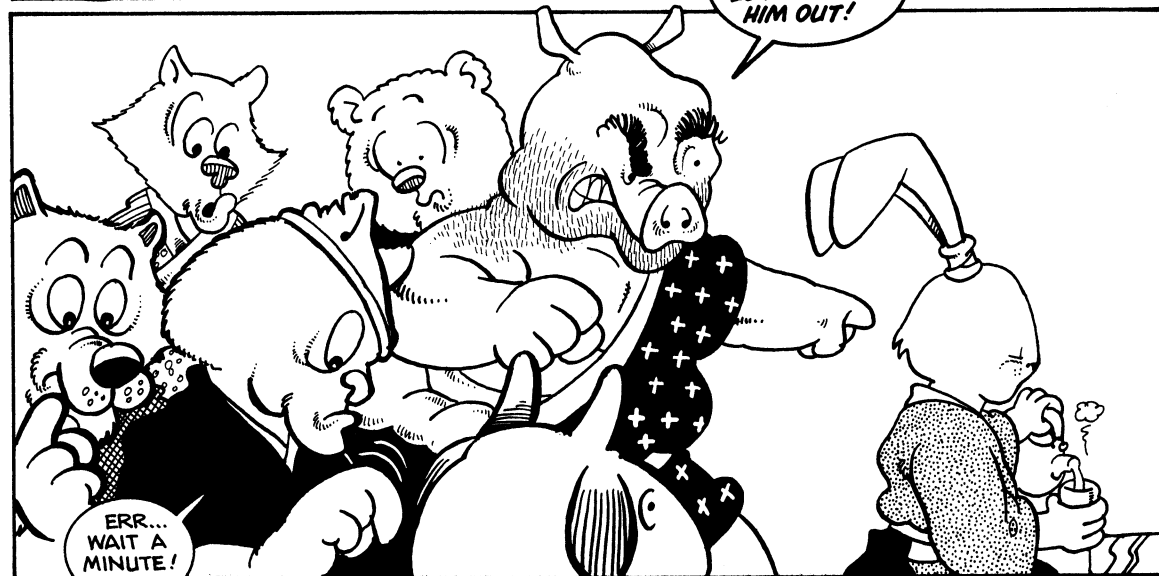
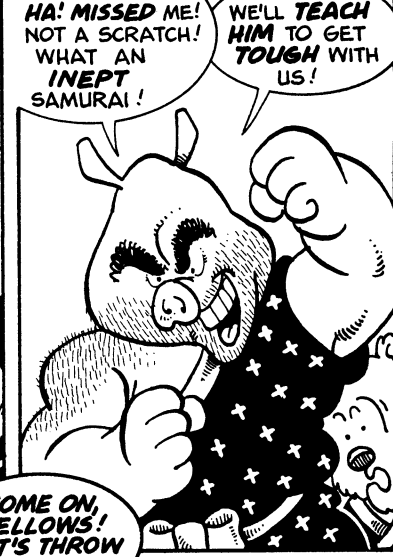
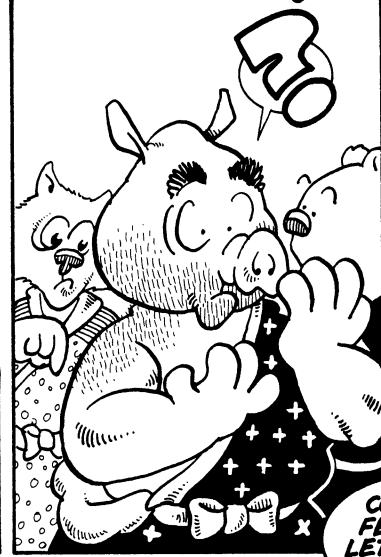
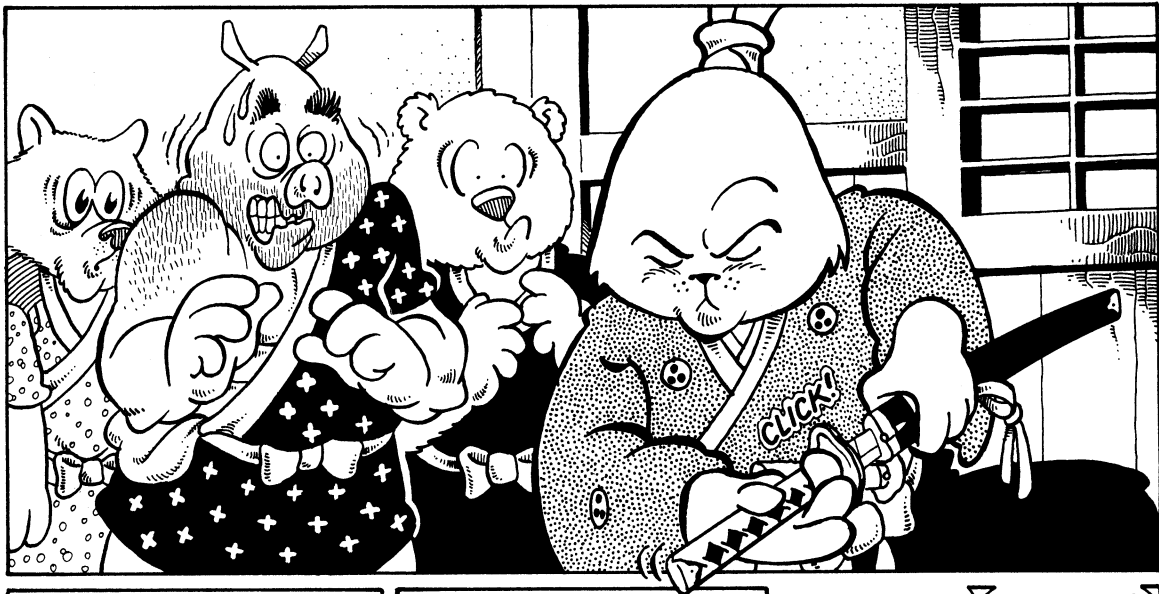


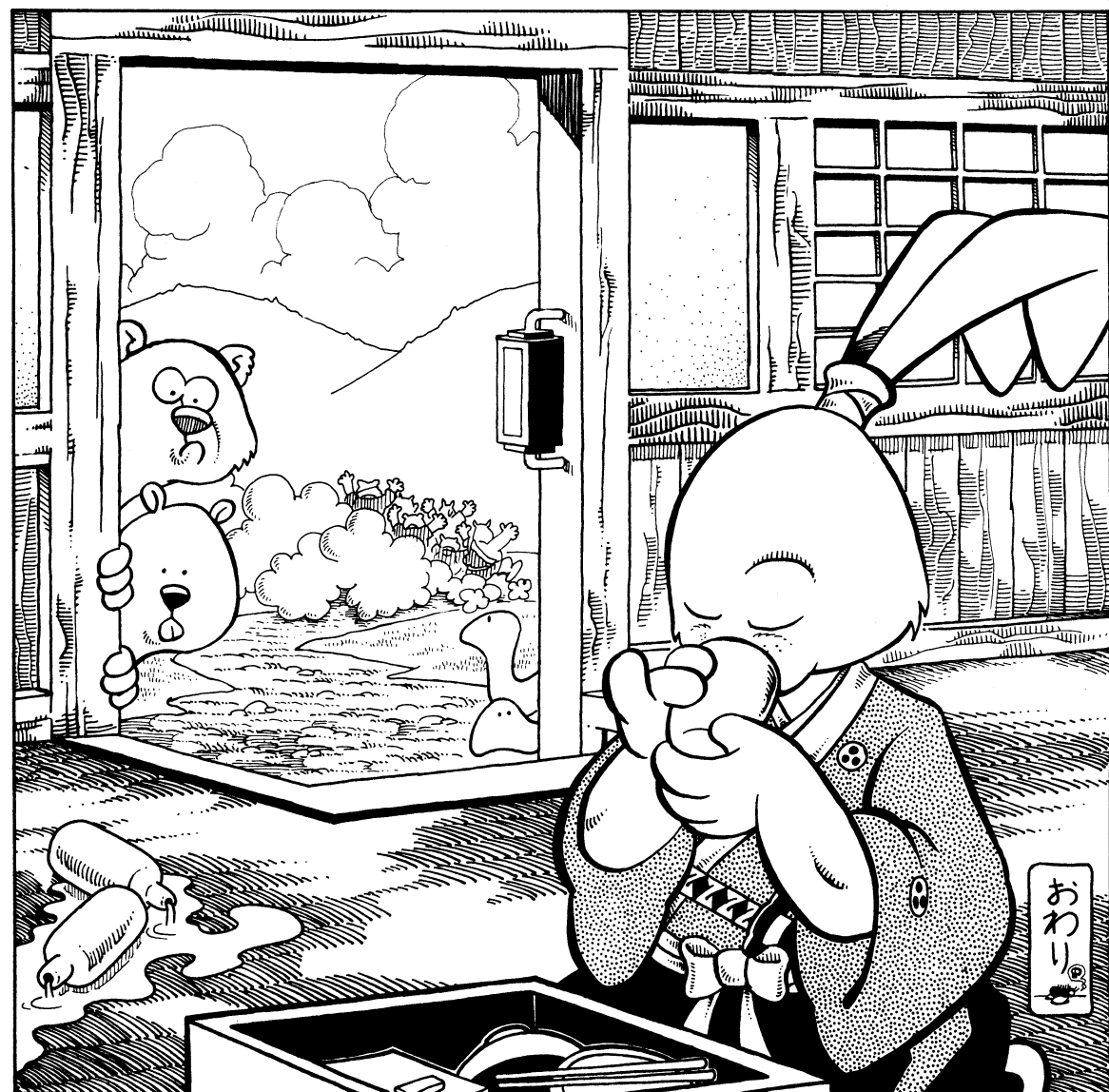
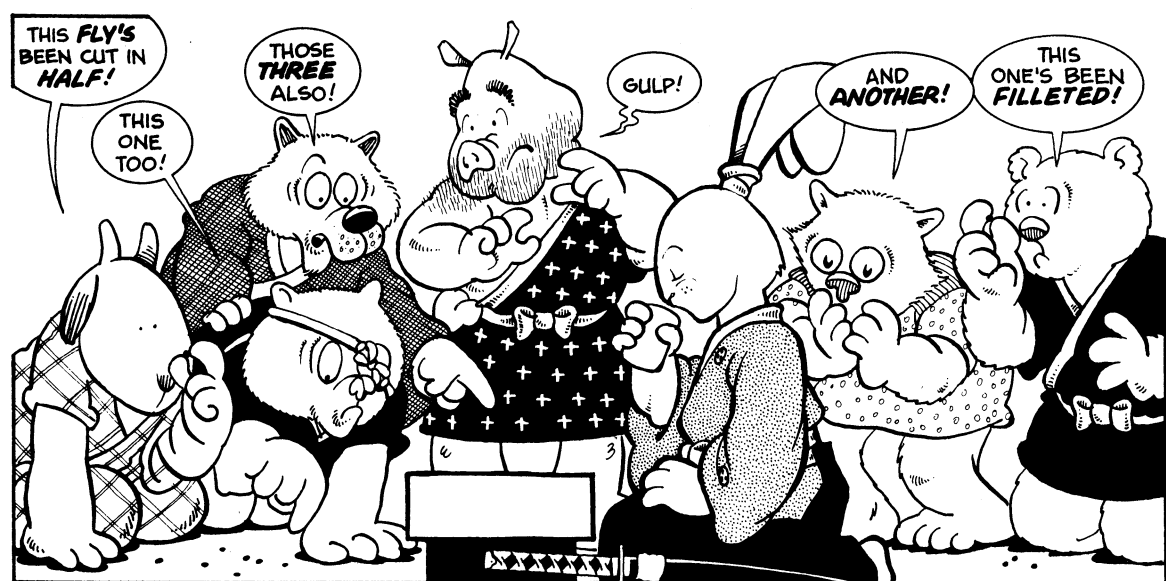


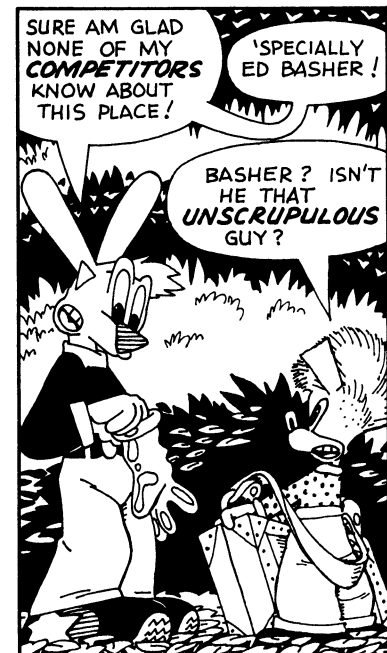
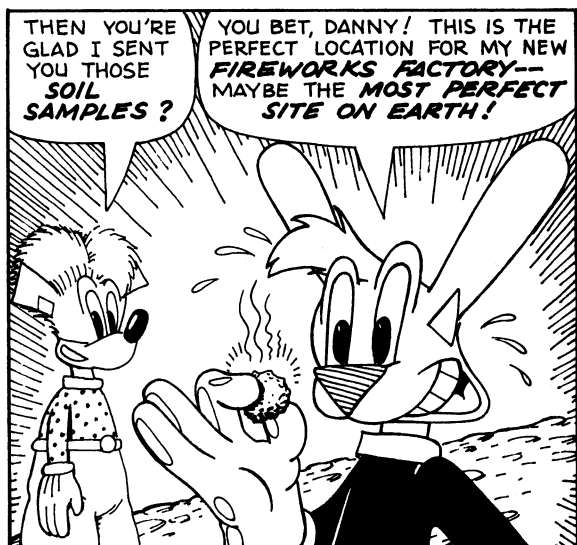
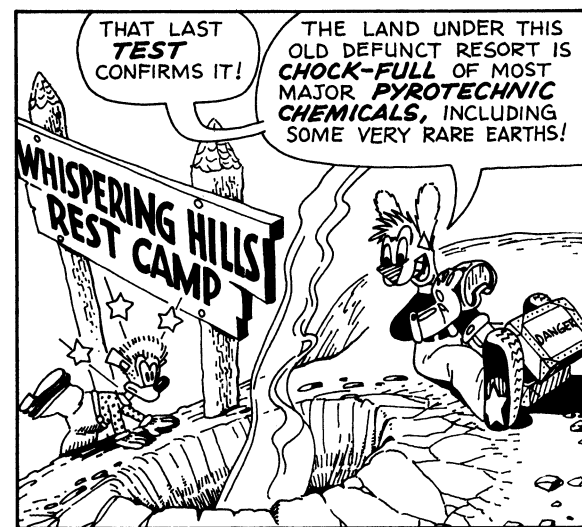
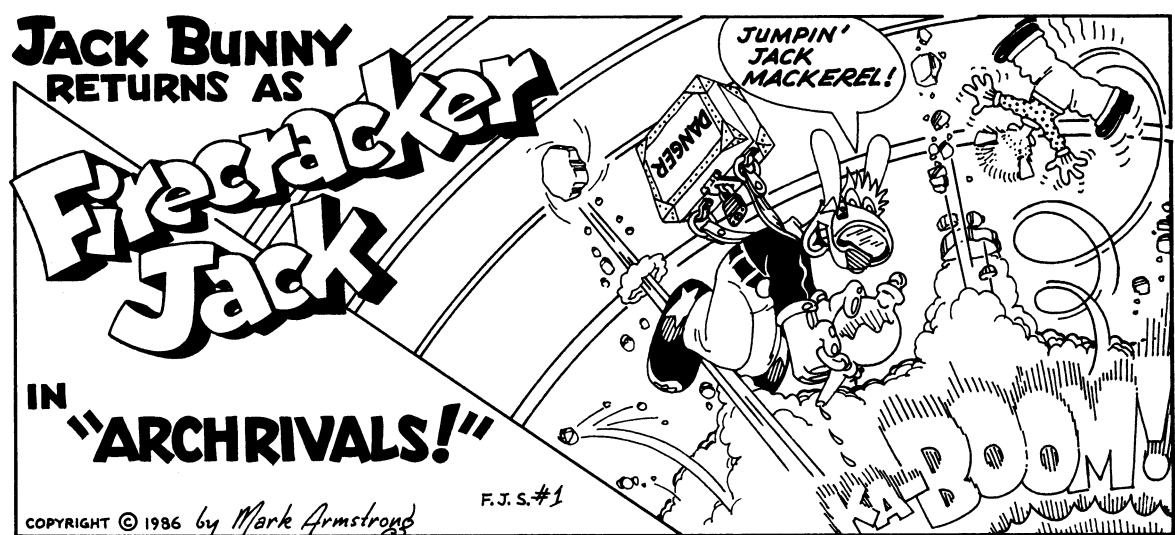


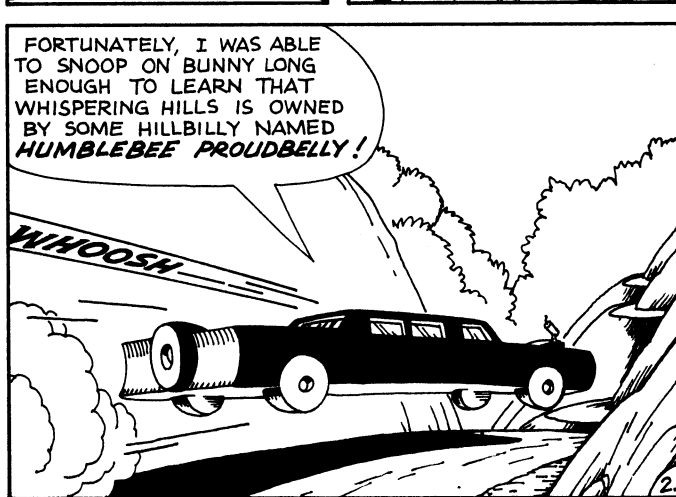
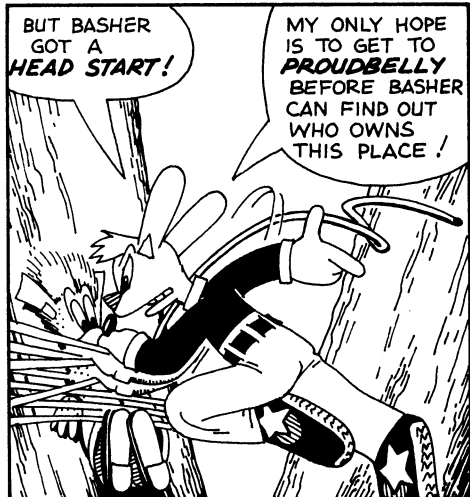
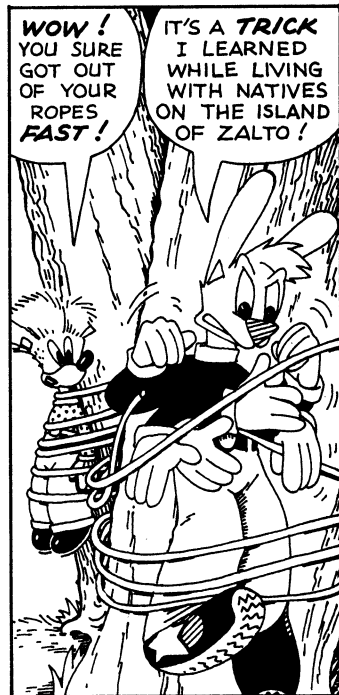
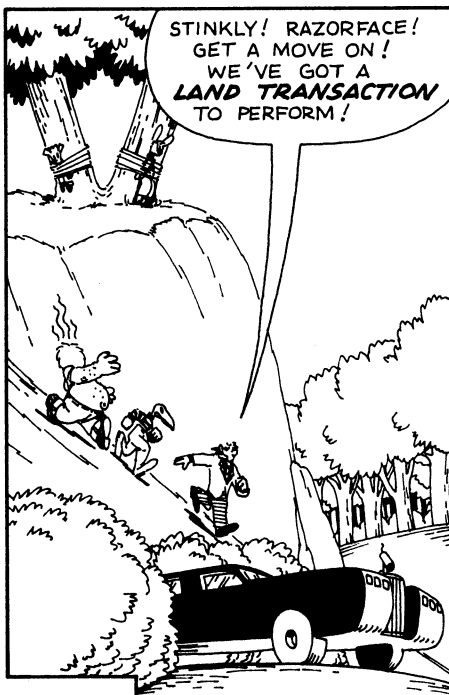
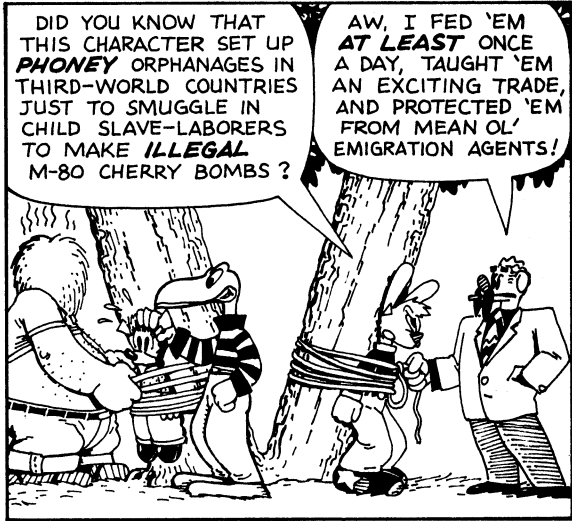
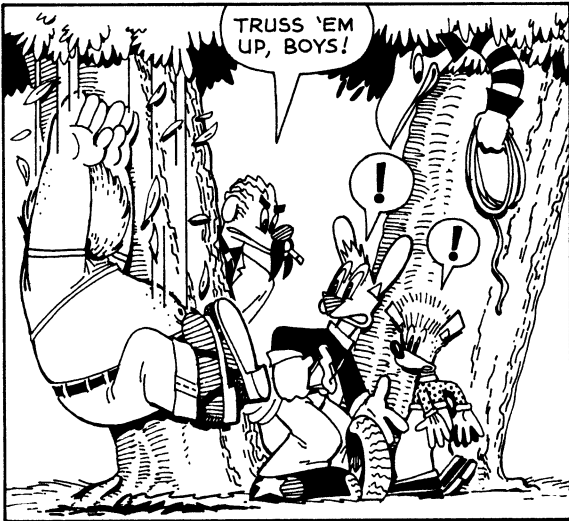


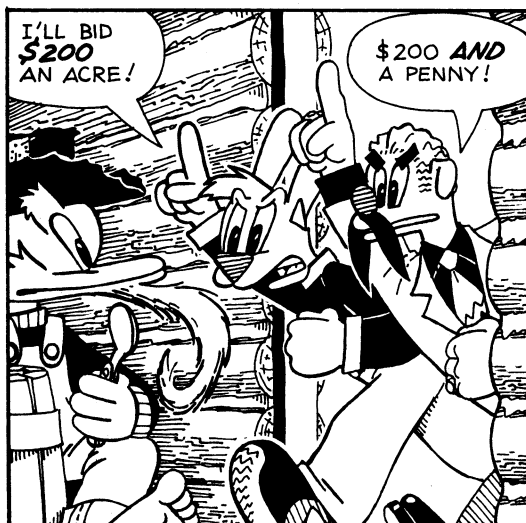
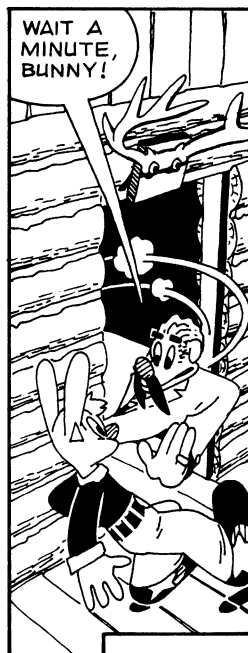
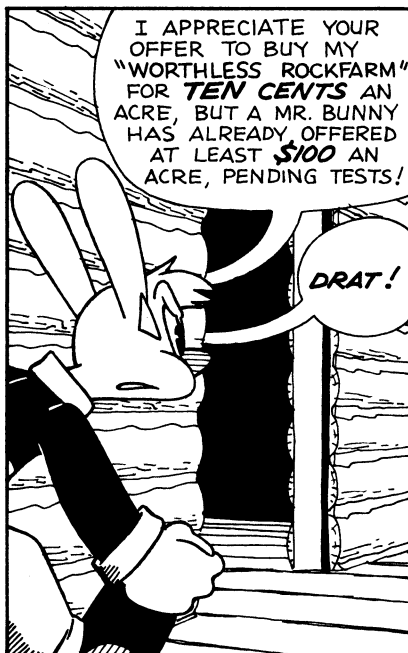
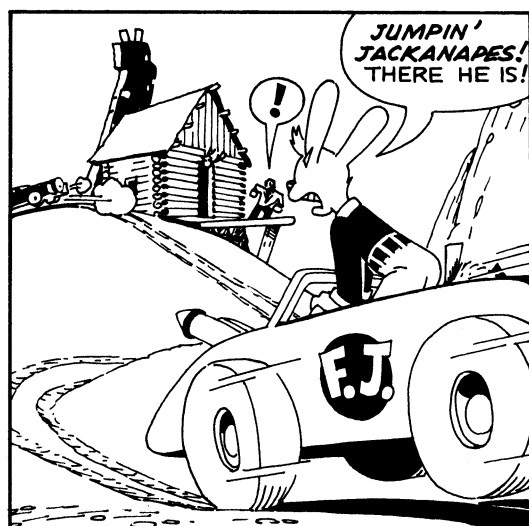
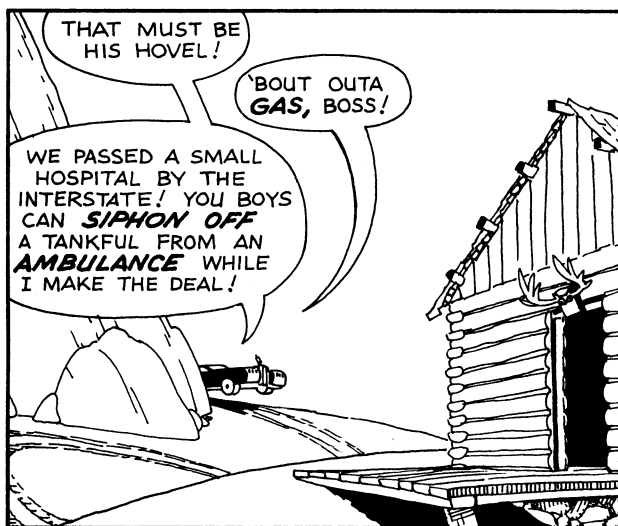












I MADE SUCH WISE INVESTMENTS IN MY YOUTH THAT IT TAKES THE **ENTIRE CELLAR** JUST TO HOLD MY **SPARE CHANGE!**

BUT IF THAT'S **REAL** MONEY, WHY DO YOU LIVE LIKE A **BUM?**

I'M A PROFESSIONAL **HUMANITARIAN!** MY **HUMBLE** LIFESTYLE GIVES ME A COMPETITIVE EDGE OVER RIVAL PHILANTHROPISTS!

OH! LIKE THE **FAMOUS** PHILANTHROPIST, **OSO SMUGGO!**

ALMS-GIVER 1985

HUMANITARIAN AWARDS

SMUGGO! MY ARCHRIVAL!

≥GNAAAH≤

HE WOULDN'T BE SO FAMOUS IF HE DIDN'T HAVE SUCH AN **UNFAIR** ADVANTAGE OVER US OTHER PHILANTHROPISTS!

YEAH? WHAT **SORT** OF ADVANTAGE?

"YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, THAT SMUGGO MADE HIS PILE IN THE ADVERTISING GAME!"

"WELL, IT SEEMS THAT DURING ONE OF THOSE HIGHLY-LUCRATIVE LOCATION SHOTS, HE HELPED OUT A WITCHDOCTOR!"

"THE WITCHDOCTOR WAS SO GRATEFUL THAT HE GAVE HIM A MYSTIC GIZMO IN RETURN -- THE **BOO-DOO STATUE!**"

"NOW, ANYTIME THAT SMUGGO PERFORMS AN ACT OF CHARITY THE STATUE MAGICALLY ARRANGES FOR SMUGGO TO GET INSTANT RECOGNITION AND PRAISE!"

"LOTS A PRAISE!"

"WAY TOO MUCH PRAISE!"

CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL

PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL

TIME

SMUGGO MANIA

ALL SMUGGO ISSUE

ONE SMALL GUY

SMUGGO HAS BEEN NUMBER ONE HUMANITARIAN **EVER SINCE!**

ALL US **OTHER** PROFESSIONAL HUMANITARIANS HAVE BEEN PUT IN THE SHADE!

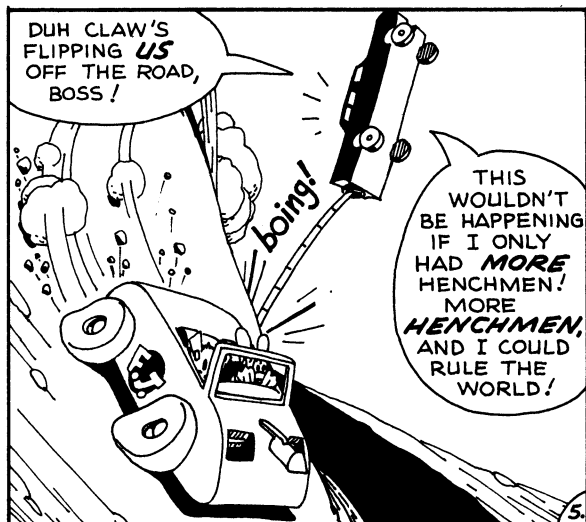
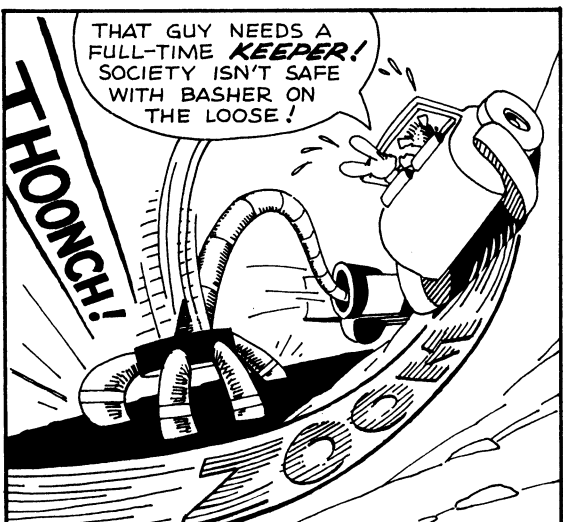
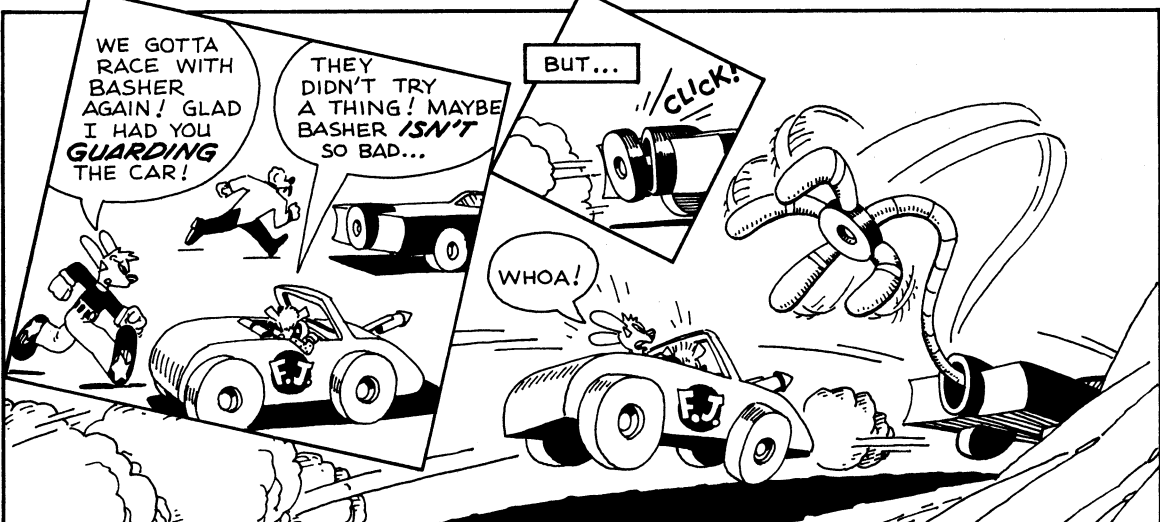
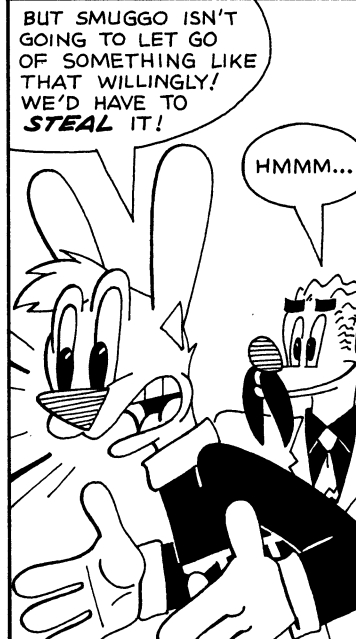
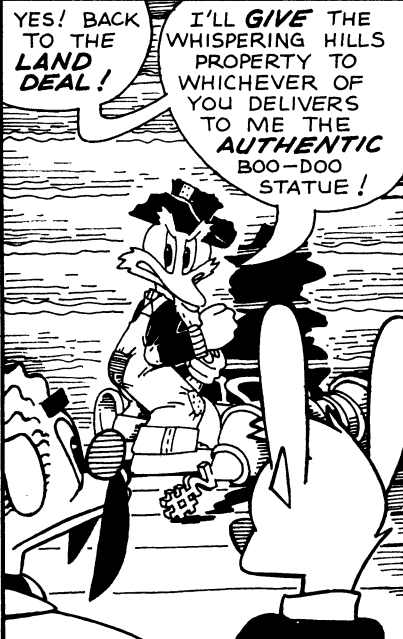
#2

RUNNER-UP HUMANITARIAN 1985

ALMS-GIVER 2ND PLACE 1984

WHAT'S THE **POINT** IN BEING A HUMANITARIAN WHEN SOME OTHER HUMANITARIAN HOGS ALL THE GLORY?

GEE, SORRY YOU HUMANITARIANS HAVE IT SO ROUGH! BUT, **BACK** TO THIS LAND DEAL...



PRESENTLY...

THAT BOO-DOO
STATUE MUST
REALLY WORK!
SMUGGO'S NOT HAVING
TO MAKE *ANY*
PRETENSE OF HUMILITY
TO BE NUMBER ONE
HUMANITARIAN!

WOW!
WHAT AN
ESTATE!

BASHER COULD GET
BACK ON THE ROAD
ANY TIME! GUARD
THE CAR WHILE I
NEGOTIATE WITH
SMUGGO!

WELL NOW,
WHAT GREAT
HUMANITARIAN
THING CAN
I DO FOR
YOU, YOUNG
MAN?

GEE! I'D
LIKE THAT
STATUE,
MISTER!

HUH?
NO WAY,
BUB!

OH, I'LL PAY
YOU A *FAIR*
PRICE!

NOT FOR
SALE!

NO
SALE!

*NO
SALE!*

LOOK! MY *RIVAL* IS ABOUT
TO SNATCH YOUR STATUE
WITH HIS GIANT
MECHANICAL CLAW!

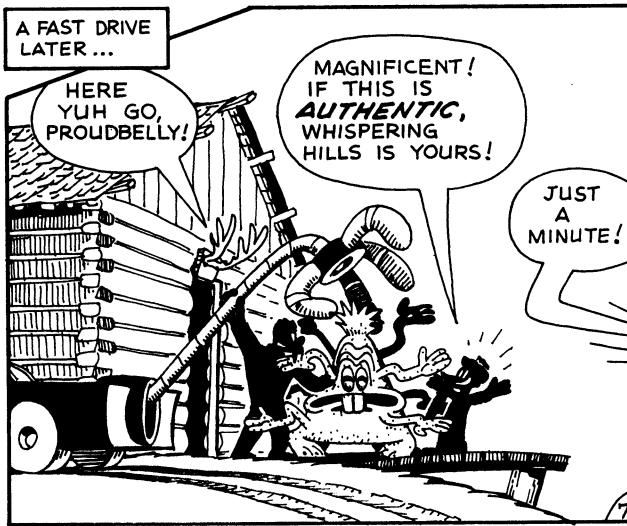
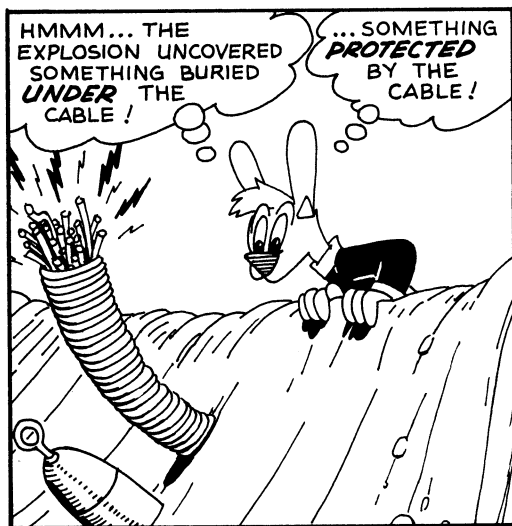
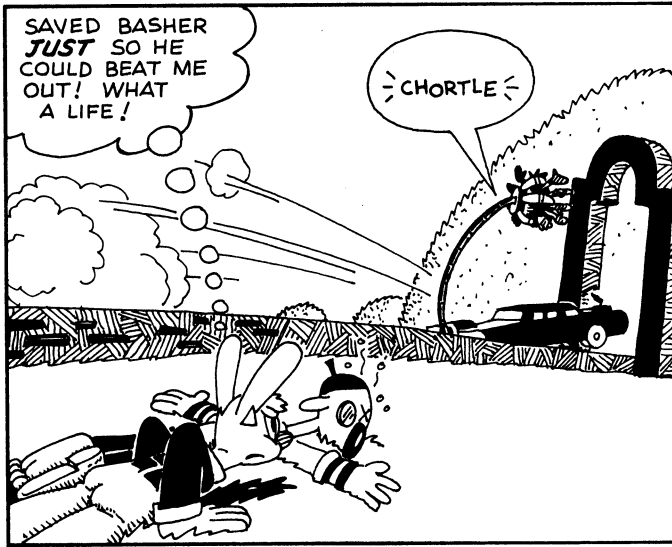
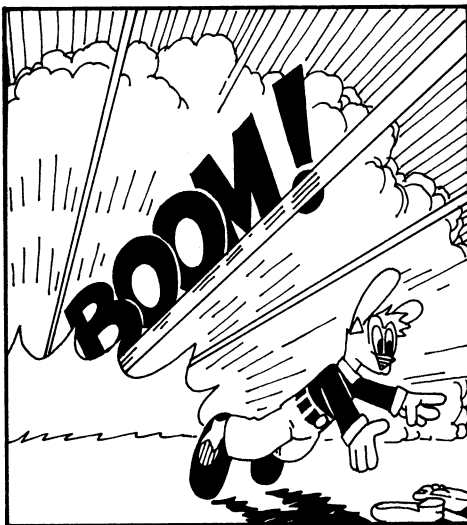
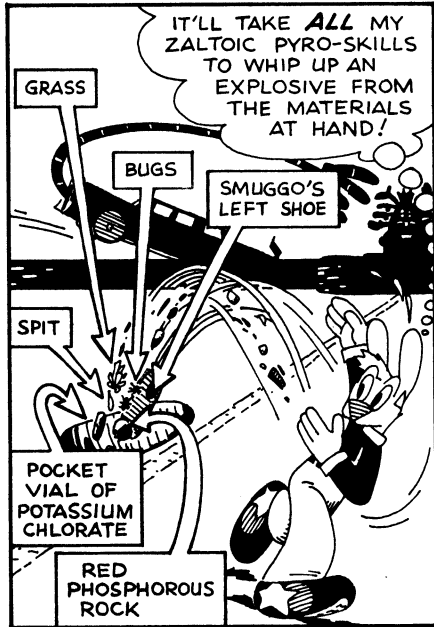
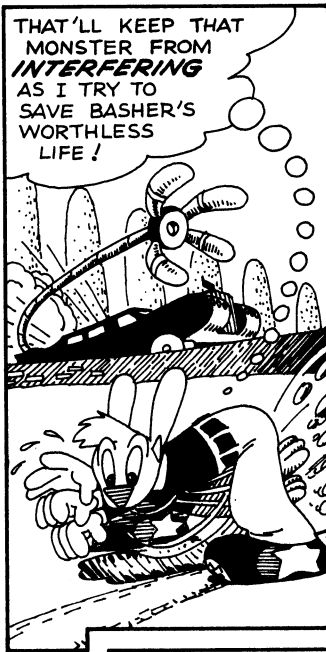
SELL THE
BOO-DOO TO
ME *QUICK*, SO
I CAN HIJACK
BASHER WITH
A CLEAR
CONSCIENCE!

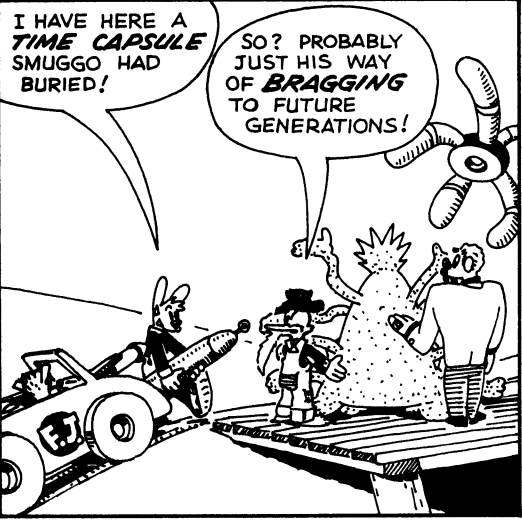
HE WON'T SNATCH
IT! THERE'S AN
ELECTRIC CABLE
RUNNING UNDER
THIS VERY SPOT
TO THE STATUE!

AS SOON AS THAT
STATUE GETS
JOSTLED ONE INCH
OUT OF PLACE,
*THOUSANDS OF
VOLTS OF
ELECTRICITY
WILL SURGE
THROUGH IT!*

BUT THAT'LL
KILL BASHER
AND HIS
THUGS!

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR,
BUT *HATE* THINE
ENEMY! THAT'S
MY MOTTO!





"PRECISELY! BUT WHAT HE BRAGS ABOUT IS THE **CHICANERY** HE GOT AWAY WITH!"



"SEEMS THAT SMUGGO USED HIS **ADVERTISING SKILLS** TO BECOME RECOGNIZED AS THE TOP HUMANITARIAN!"

"HIS TECHNIQUES FOR MANIPULATING THE MEDIA EVEN INCLUDED PAYING **BRIBES** TO NEWSMEN!"



"THIS SO-CALLED BOO-DOO STATUE WAS JUST A **HOAX** TO CONFOUND HIS RIVALS!"

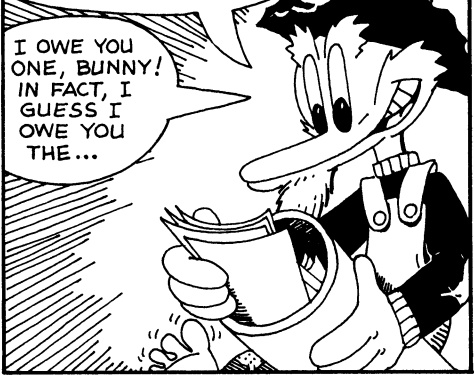
"IT WAS SOMETHING HIS ART DIRECTOR SCULPTED WHILE GOING THROUGH THE **D.T.'S!**"



***DELIRIUM TREMENS**--OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD FOR HOBOS + CARTOONISTS.

WITH THESE DOCUMENTS, MY FELLOW HUMANITARIANS AND I WILL BE ABLE TO RUN THAT LOATHESOME **HYPOCRITE** OUT OF TOWN ON A RAIL!

I OWE YOU ONE, BUNNY! IN FACT, I GUESS I OWE YOU THE...



HOLD ON NOW! DON'T FORGET THAT **I'M** THE ONE WHO BROUGHT YOU THE STATUE!



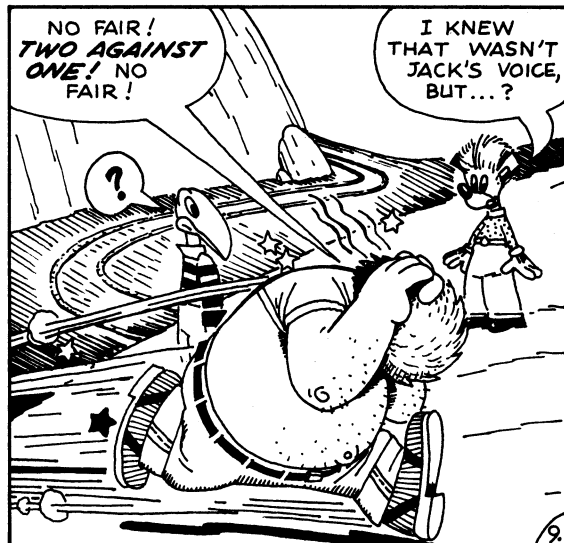
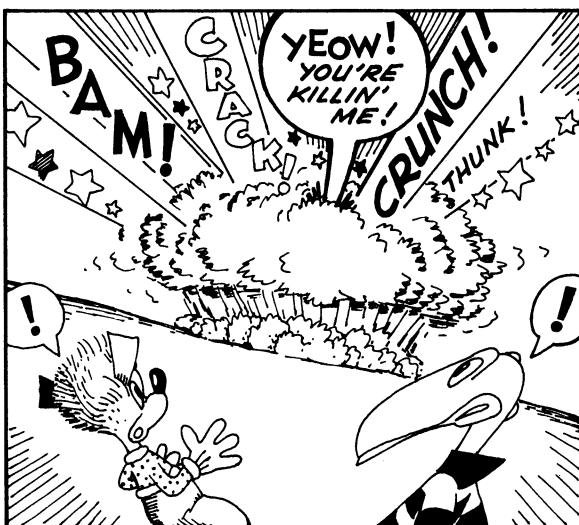
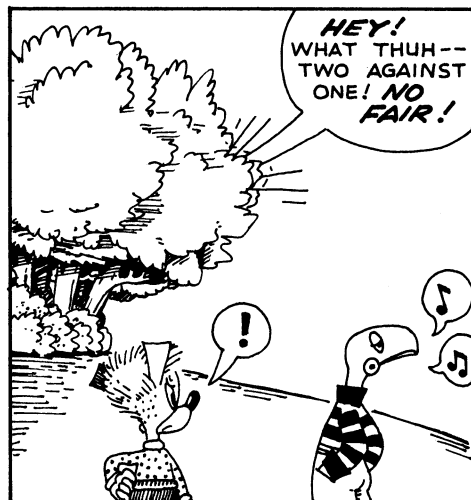
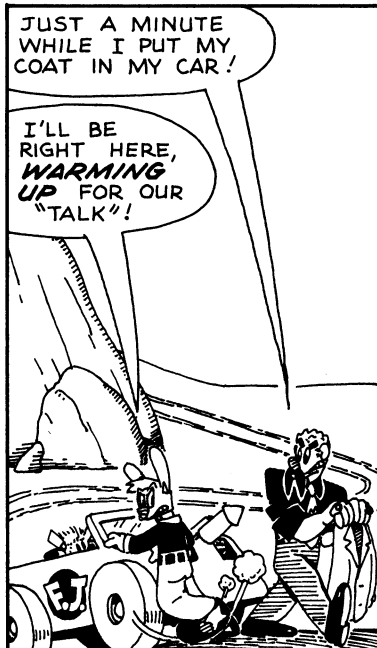
BUT IT WAS JUST A HOAX, AND YOU SAID THE STATUE HAD TO BE **AUTHENTIC!**

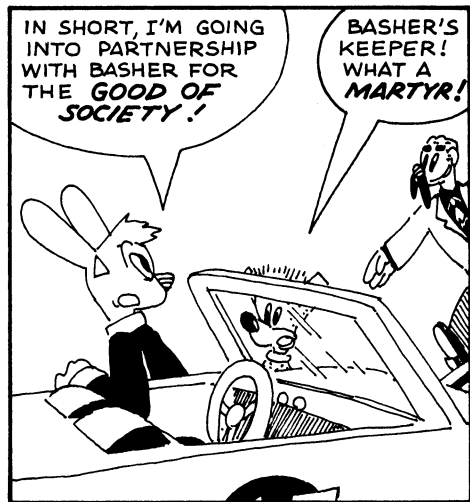
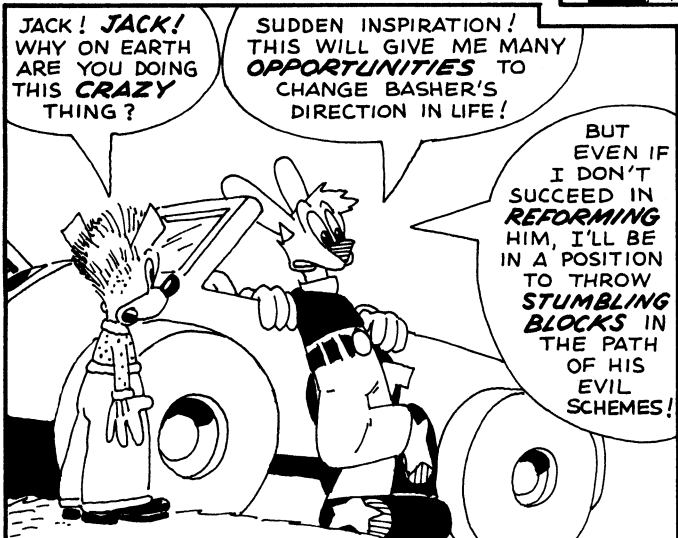
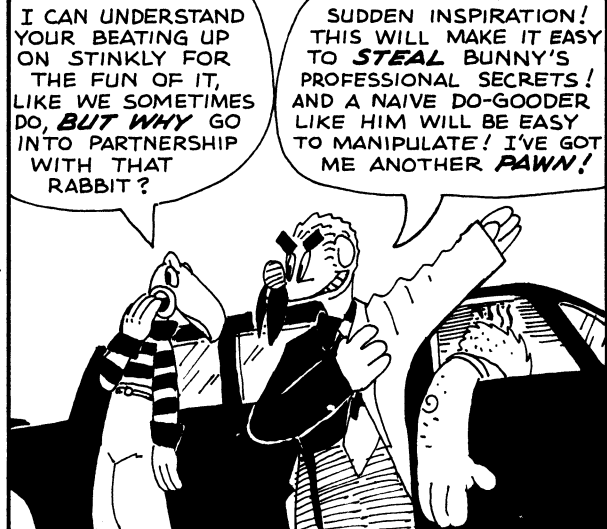
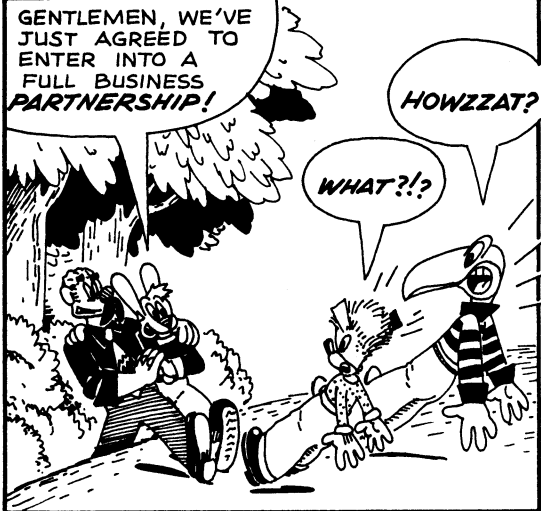
I OWE THAT PROPERTY TO ONE OF YOU, BUT I'M NOT SURE **WHICH** ONE!



I CAN'T HANDLE THIS SORT OF MORAL DECISION-MAKING! YOU BOYS WILL HAVE TO **DECIDE** AMONGST **YOURSELVES** WHO SHOULD GET THE PROPERTY!







[LETTERS. FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER] ton's "Woody Woodpecker" work could be reprinted in this title. Speaking of people named "Milton," maybe Milton Knight can come out of his hibernation and revive Hugo for this book.

Billy Ford
Richmond, VA

In fact, Freddy Milton and I are now working on assembling a regular monthly book that would reprint not only Freddy's "Woody Woodpecker" work, but also a lot of the older "Gnuft" material—of which there's over 500 pages! This wouldn't mean that "Gnuft" would leave CRITTERS, however, since Freddy would like to continue his new material in this book at the same time. We may end up running parallel "Gnuft" serials in two different books just to confuse everyone!

As for HUGO, although I doubt we'll be working much with Milton Knight in the future, I understand a fellow independent publisher is right now talking about reviving his book. I sure hope so—I miss reading it!

—KT

Dear Mr. Steven A. Gallacci,

After reading "Birthright," it dawns on me that your work will make a great full-length animated film. Just find a big movie producer and sell him your idea; your story can't lose. **Think about it!**

Zack Mays
Griffin, GA

It's been a rough couple of decades for feature-length animated movies, Zack, so we wouldn't hold our breath waiting for "Birthright: The Movie." But it certainly is a thought to conjure with...

—KT

Dear Kim Thompson,

I don't know why I walked into this comic and used paperback bookstore ten days ago, but I'm very, very glad that I did. I think that **CRITTERS** is wonderful! The lack of graphic storytelling in my life had become quite depressing since

I finally gave up on the deteriorating **Heavy Metal**. **Critters** more than fills that void... everything in #1 and #2 is just great! (Naturally, I had to pick up **Captain Jack** #1 as well).

I wonder, too, why anthropomorphic or "funny animal" characters have such strong attraction for some of us. Perhaps we can feel emotional about such characters much less equivocally than we can about human characters. There's no chance of a "good" character like Prince Anton Kashoka reminding you of a cousin you've always hated, or a "bad" character like General Theok reminding you of your favorite uncle. Also, in the animated film format, there's no chance of your mind slipping out of gear and reminding you that these characters are just actors being paid obscene amounts of money for displaying often limited skills.

John W. Pharr
Saskatoon, Sask., Can.

Dear Editors,

On "Birthright" was Steven A. Gallacci influenced by the Disney film **Robin Hood**?

Zack Mays
Griffin, GA

I rather hope not, since that's one of the few real stinkers the studio ever put out (in my humble opinion, at least). More generally, I'd say the Disney anthropomorphics have influenced 'most every funny-animal cartoonist of the last 50 years, and the biggest specific kinship between "Birthright" and **ROBIN HOOD** is that the stars are both foxes.

Hey, didn't I just answer a letter of yours?

—KT

Dear Mr. Thompson,

After a very lackluster first issue,

I'm glad to say that **CRITTERS** #2 was a real treat to read and was of the artistic caliber that I've come to expect from Fantagraphics Books. For me the highlight of the issue was Freddy Milton's "Gnuft," which put me in Barks heaven for 12 pages. Mr. Milton has instilled in his work a lot of genuine charm and compassion which I find lacking in most American cartoonists' work. I hope his stories are a permanent fixture in this magazine. Is there any chance of Fantagraphics reprinting his Woody Woodpecker books in color (I can dream, can't I)?

I also liked "Birthright" much better this time around, although Gallacci's work still suffers from poor reproduction. "Captain Jack" was a riot—the scene of the crew pushing the "Glass Onion" through space was one of the wildest images I've seen in a long time. Great stuff. I take it that the "Captain Jack" preview was the most recent work Kazaleh had done at the time; it was both looser and funnier than the Captain's first solo issue.

All in all, **CRITTERS** #2 was an enjoyable, respectable issue, and I'm looking forward to many more. May **CRITTERS** have prosperity!

Michael Neno
Columbus, OH

As far as Freddy's Woody Woodpecker stuff, see the above response to Billy Ford. Yes, Kazaleh's **CRITTERS** short was done after his first **CAPTAIN JACK** issue—and I think his continued improvement is indeed quite noticeable. When Mike returns for a special guest appearance in **CRITTERS** #11, those readers who haven't been following **CAPTAIN JACK** (shame on them!) should be in for quite a surprise!

—KT

Dear **CRITTERS** people:

Like I said to the local comics

USAGI YOJIMBO SUMMER SPECIAL!



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The **USAGI YOJIMBO SUMMER SPECIAL** is on sale at a comic shop new you—or available for \$3.25 postpaid (outside U.S.: \$4.00) from **CRITTERS**, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301.

specialty shop guy: "I can't believe I'm doing this!" "This" meaning plunking out the equivalent of \$2.45 and \$2.75 for the first two issues of **CRITTERS** and **Threat!** I struggled like mad to resist the impulse to buy them...they aren't cheap...but I lost the fight.

Would it interest you to know that yours is the first comic I'm writing to in 16 years of collecting?

CRITTERS is great—most of the time. That's the trouble with anthology comics. The quality varies. Sorry to tell you guys this, but the "Cutey Bunny" and "Captain Jack" strips didn't do all that much for me. Issue #3 sounds like my ideal issue: "Usagi Yojimbo," "Gnuiff," and "Birthright."

"Usagi Yojimbo" looks like a cross between *Groo* and the better Japanese "manga" (which we also get here, by the way, in profusion! Some of 'em make your mouth water!) I guess R.A. Jones was right when he complained that the comic expressions on the face of the bandits getting killed were a bit out of step with the strip's overall "serious" approach—but what the heck! I loved it!

"Birthright": interesting. I don't see what's so downbeat about Part One. The fall of any regime is always grim. I can't help contrasting Prince Anton and Princess Kenda's heroism with the debacle of Marcos and Imelda's flight from the Philippines. The artwork is great, so's the plot, but the dialogue...oh, boy. I know what the guy's trying to do...more realistic dialogue. But there's still too much "Ah!" "Um..." and "Er..." floating around, and some of the dialogue sequences weren't too clear. Still, "Birthright's" good.

"Gnuiff"—what can I say, except that you guys had better make it to #10...I don't intend to miss the second Gnuiff novella!

One final point: You don't have to sound so apologetic about publishing a funny animal comic. The three strips I'm raving over happen to be "adult" in approach. "Usagi" and "Birthright" can be drawn using human protagonists and still not lose their appeal (except for the cuteness(?) of the animals). "Gnuiff" is, as you so rightly pointed out done with a different sensibility from most funny-animal strips. Dare I compare it to Walt Kelly's *Pogo*?

Michael Lai
Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

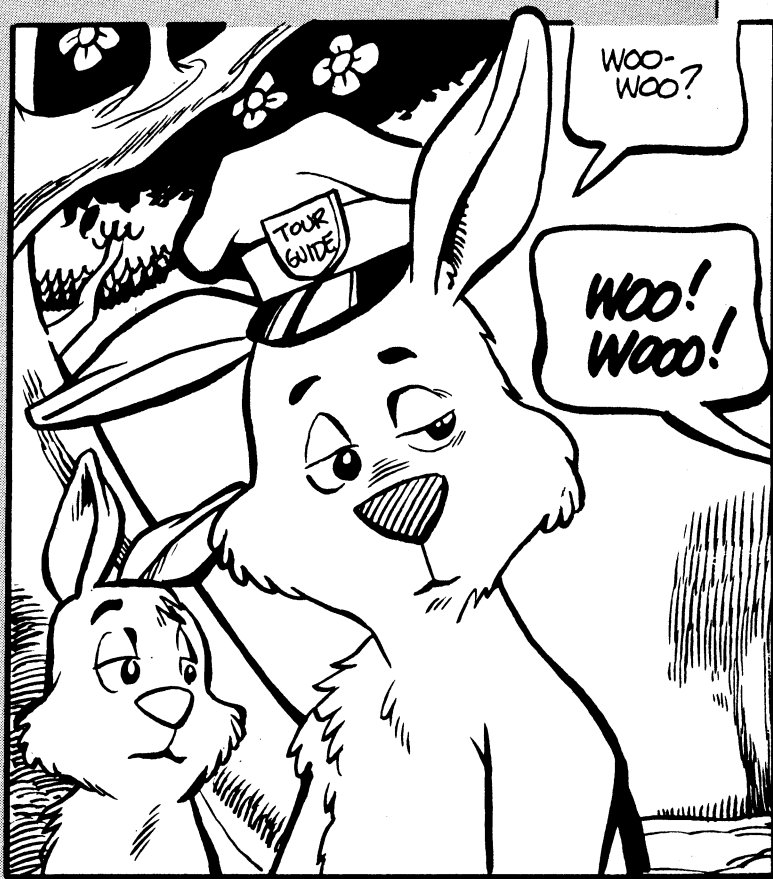
Oh, I don't think anyone will object if you compare his work to *POGO*, Michael. By the way, *POGO* fans are in for a special treat in the next issue of **CRITTERS**, as Ty Templeton pays homage to...but you have to read it to see.

And if I sounded apologetic about publishing a funny-animal comic, I sure didn't mean to. (For one thing, I'd have to do a lot of apologizing, since we'll probably be publishing close to a half dozen regular funny-animal comics by next spring.) —ET

CREDITS: "Birthright" was written and drawn by **Steven A. Gallacci**, with typesetting provided by **Western Type**. "Usagi Yojimbo" was written, drawn, and lettered by **Stan Sakai**. "Firecracker Jack" was written, drawn, and lettered by **Mark Armstrong**. The cover was painted by **Steven A. Gallacci** and separated by **Impact Productions**. The **CRITTERS** logo was designed by **Freddy** 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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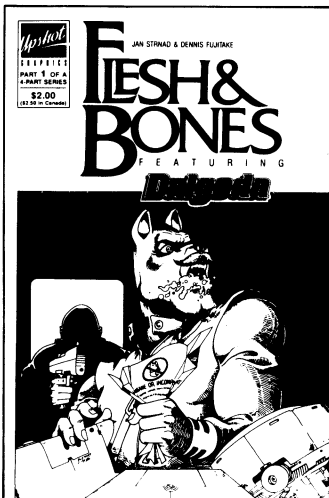
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It's Time

by Jan Strnad

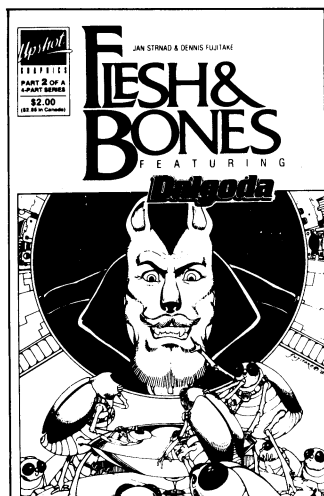
Yep, you've dallied long enough. It's time for *you* to start picking up "one of the best titles around" (according to Martin Crookall of *Fantasy Advertiser*).

Dal's back in his own mini-series in the first offering from the new *Upshot Graphics* division of *Fantagraphics Books*! Here's what's in store for Dal fans, old and new, in the four-part series *Flesh & Bones*:

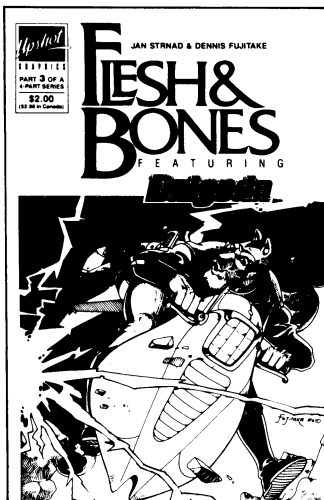


Book One: The humans under Dal's command are revolting, and none of them is more revolting than *Colonel Kenneth Moxley*, leading the people in mutiny! Has Dal cracked under the strain?

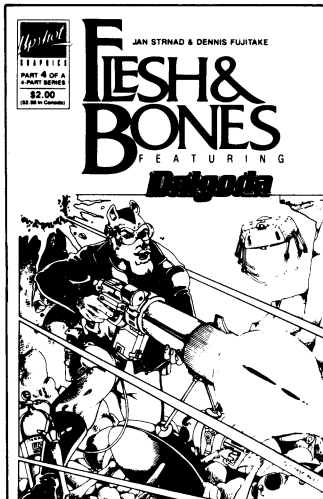
Book Two: Is it just sub-space psychosis, or is Navigator Stark really seeing angels? Dal's not waiting to find out—he's out to kick tail on the planet of the bubble-people. Gunner's new sub-space torpedos are put to the test!



Book Three: Dal's on the trail of his lost people and Stark's under the sway of her "angel"—or is it something more sinister? Meanwhile the Nimp are closing in and the fur is about to fly!



Book Four: Dal descends into the Demmeon Pit, the Nimp attack in force, the Canidans are caught in the thick of it, and now the whole planet's tearing itself apart! A grand finale to the Saga of Dal!



And as if that weren't enough, every issue of *Flesh & Bones* sports a complete chapter of the indelible *BoJeffries Saga* by those two crazy Brits *Alan Moore* and *Steve Parkhouse*. Is a humble rent collector any match for a girl who can "turn a cream egg into a diamond and then eat it anyway?" And doesn't the family werewolf violate the rule against keeping pets?



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A perfect companion to Fantagraphics Book's USAGI YOJIMBO SPECIAL, the first issue of COMMAND REVIEW is a reprint of the first four episodes of *Erma Felna, EDF* from ALBEDO. Published semi-annually, COMMAND REVIEW is \$4 per issue.