

No. 7

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Critters



FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Critters

No. 7 Dec., 1986

LETTERS

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

Oops.

Well, for those of you who have been following my various pronouncements as to upcoming issues, we have a couple small changes in our schedule. As you can see, this issue, which was supposed to feature a Mark Armstrong "Firecracker Jack" cover/story combo, now reintroduces the "Gnuft" family—while the "Firecracker Jack" episode settles into the following issue.

When it turned out that Mark Armstrong needed a few more weeks to finish his story, I realized that I actually had enough completed material on hand for an issue, and made the snap decision to exchange most of the contents of **Critters** #7 for most of the contents of **Critters** #8. It all worked out fine, except:

(1) This issue may be a little late as a result.

(2) Because of the varying page counts, I was forced also to trade Sam Kieth's "Lizards" premiere for Ty Templeton's "The Ol' Treasure Map Story"—this after Ty stayed up 30 hours or so working on the strip to finish it on deadline. I'm sorry, Ty—how can I make it up to you? Publish a book of yours, or something?

(3) Since the rest of this year's issues of **Critters** are pretty irredeemably locked into sequence, I can't present the second installment of "Gnuft: Animal Graffiti" until #9—so there'll be a two-month gap between episodes. Good thing this is a longish episode that can stand on its own if necessary.

Well, the **Usagi Yojimbo Summer Special** was published last month and sold out in just about 90 hours. So don't order any more copies—we don't got none! However, I promise that within the next 12 months, all those stories will be back in print—although not necessarily in the same format!

Also, this success has given us the final impetus we needed to

get off our duffs. So I'm delighted to announce that very early next year, we'll be releasing the first issue of a regular bi-monthly **Usagi Yojimbo** comic—featuring 20 pages of Stan Sakai's leapin' lapin, plus some special surprises. Meanwhile, though, he'll still be putting in appearances in at least three more issues of **Critters**, so don't cancel your sub just yet!

By the way, Stan's story in **GrimJack**, which I mentioned last issue, is not a **Usagi Yojimbo** story—he just pops up in the background of one panel. Sorry for the confusion.

...Did I really write "leapin' lapin" back there?

I've been getting some recurring suggestions about which other people or characters I should try to draft into **Critters**. Let me address them all here:

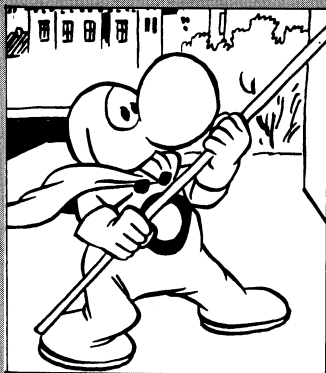
Hugo: Although I love the strip, I don't know if Milton Knight's somewhat unique sensibilities are suited for **Critters**. I understand Milton's talking to another alternative publisher right now about bringing back the book itself. Hope it happens!

The Wraith: Michael T. Gilbert wrote me a very nice letter explaining that he's currently 'way too busy (on **Elric** and **Mr. Monster**) to even think of doing more Wraith stories for a while. My offer stands, though.

Omaha: Actually, for a couple of weeks there, it looked like Fantagraphics Books might pick up this title, lock, stock, and garter belts. As it turned out, though, Denis Kitchen of Kitchen Sink Press (which published the first "Omaha" episodes) was also interested in the title, so we bowed out. I met creators Reed Waller and Kate Worley in San Diego, however, and we're seriously talking about their doing something else for **Critters**.

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Page 1 GNUFT

"Who Is Orva?"

by FREDDY MILTON

An unknown graffiti artist is making life miserable for Gnuft—so Gnicky and Gnorbert set out to catch him.



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LIZARDS in:

"De Grand Wa-Zoo"

by SAM KIETH

Presenting the Lizards—as they face a severe problem all of us have encountered at one time or another.



Page 21

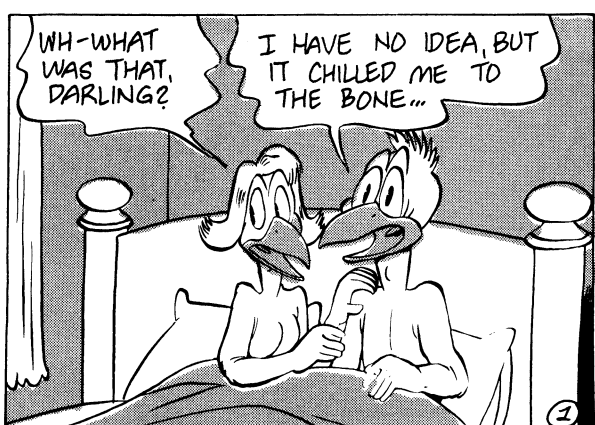
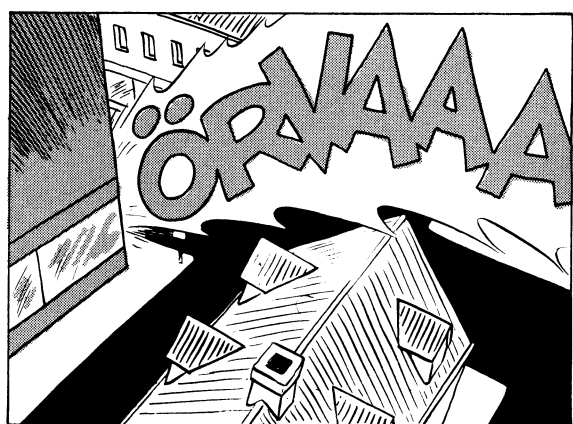
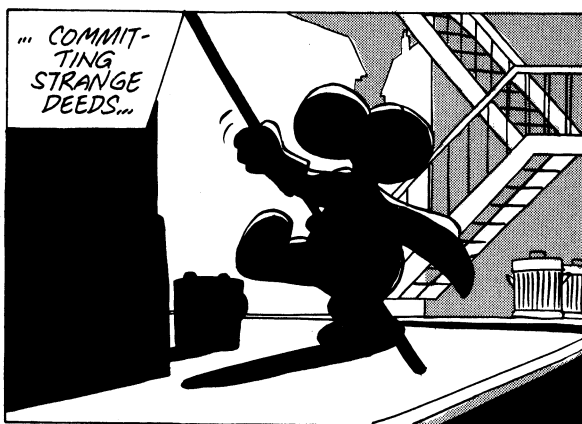
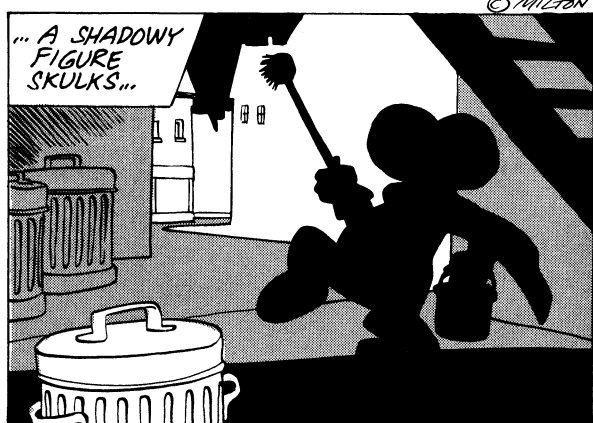
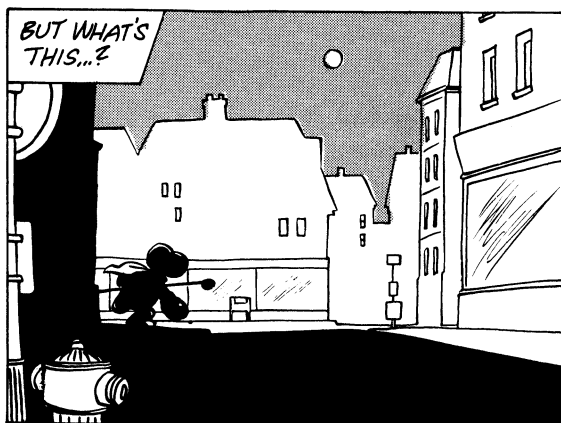
USAGI YOJIMBO in:

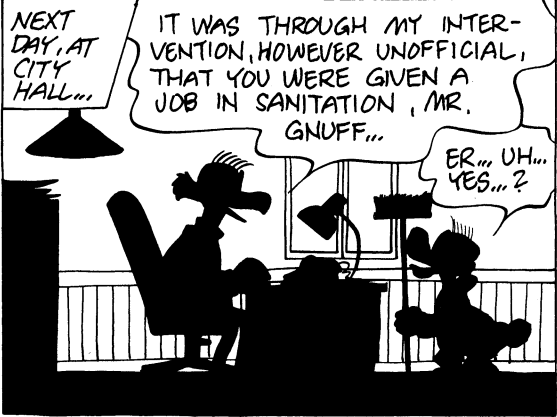
"Blind Swordsplay"

by STAN SAKAI

Usagi faces the dilemma of a sightless peace-lover who keeps on getting into scrapes—and solves it his way.

CRITTERS #7, January, 1987. **Critters** is published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc., and is copyright © 1986 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All characters, stories, and art © 1986 their respective creators: Sam Kieth, Freddy Milton, and Stan Sakai. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission from Fantagraphics Books and the creators, except for journalistic purposes. No similarity between the any of the names, characters, persons, and institutions in **Critters** and those of any living or dead persons is intended, and any such similarity that may exist is purely coincidental. Letters to **Critters** become the property of the magazine and are assumed intended for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore be used for those purposes. First printing: August, 1986. Available directly from the publisher for \$2.00 + 50¢ postage and handling: Fantagraphics Books, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301.

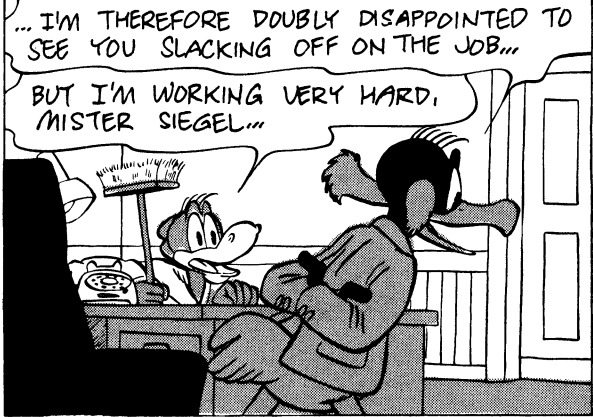




NEXT DAY, AT CITY HALL...

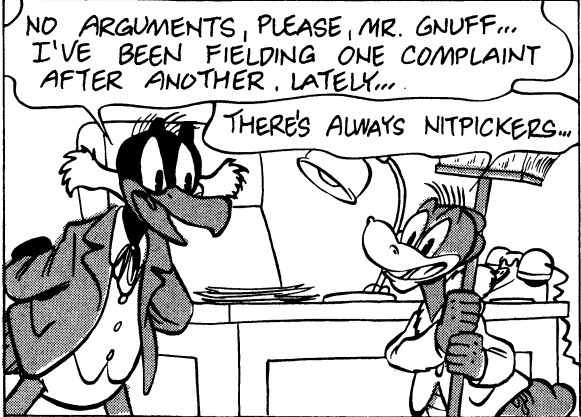
IT WAS THROUGH MY INTERVENTION, HOWEVER UNOFFICIAL, THAT YOU WERE GIVEN A JOB IN SANITATION, MR. GNUFF...

ER... UH... YES...?



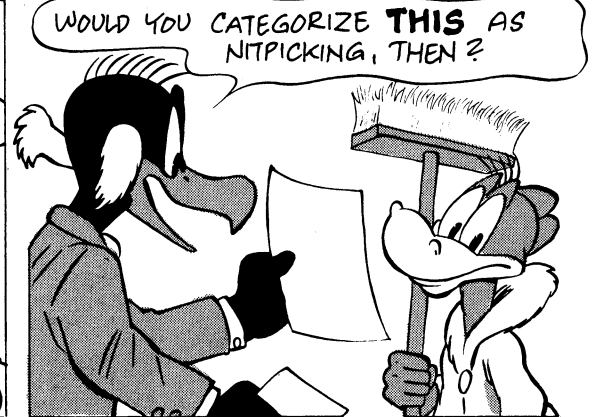
...I'M THEREFORE DOUBLY DISAPPOINTED TO SEE YOU SLACKING OFF ON THE JOB...

BUT I'M WORKING VERY HARD, MISTER SIEGEL...



NO ARGUMENTS, PLEASE, MR. GNUFF... I'VE BEEN FIELDING ONE COMPLAINT AFTER ANOTHER, LATELY...

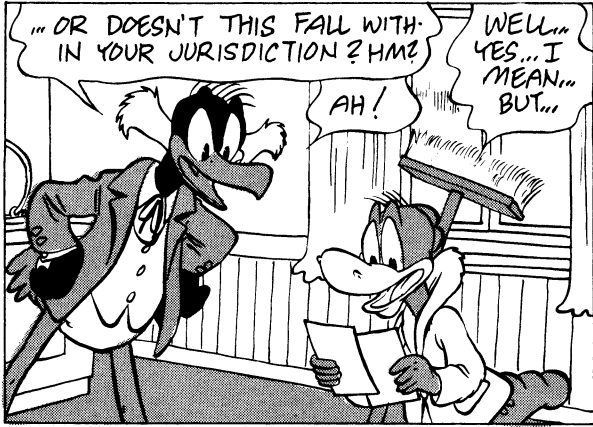
THERE'S ALWAYS NITPICKERS...



WOULD YOU CATEGORIZE **THIS** AS NITPICKING, THEN?



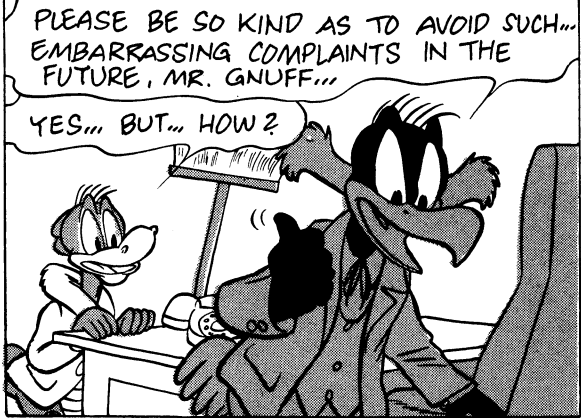
... OR **THIS** ? ...OR THIS ? (U.P) (GASP)



... OR DOESN'T THIS FALL WITHIN YOUR JURISDICTION ? HM?

WELL... YES... I MEAN... BUT...

AH!



PLEASE BE SO KIND AS TO AVOID SUCH... EMBARRASSING COMPLAINTS IN THE FUTURE, MR. GNUFF...

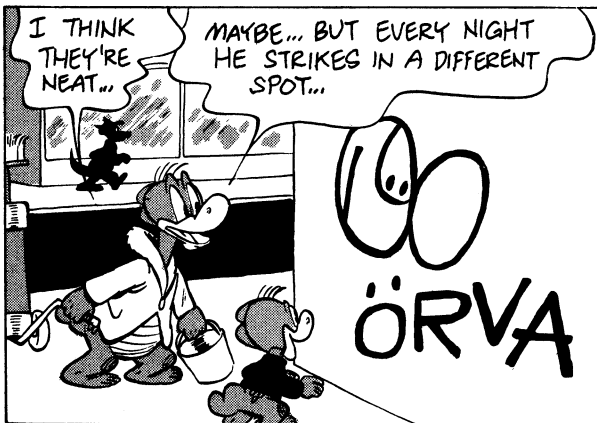
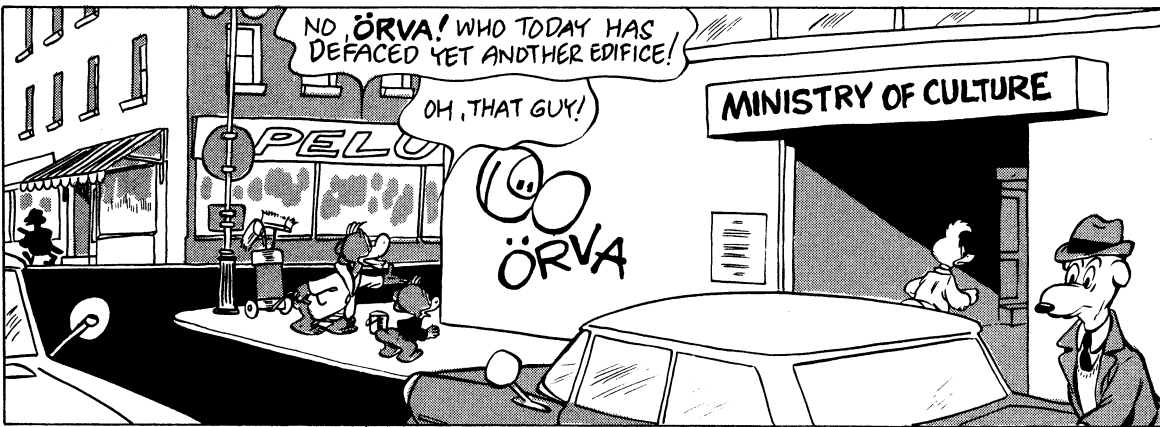
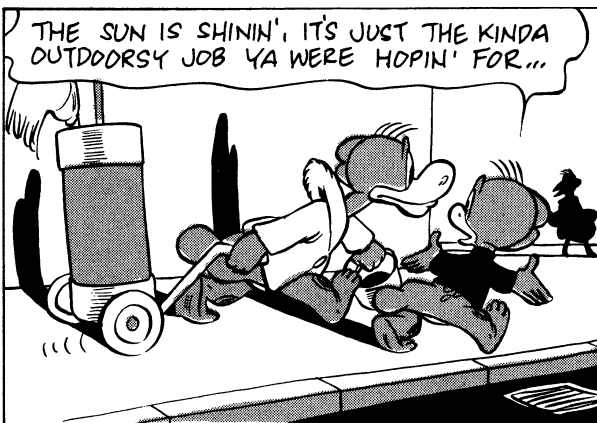
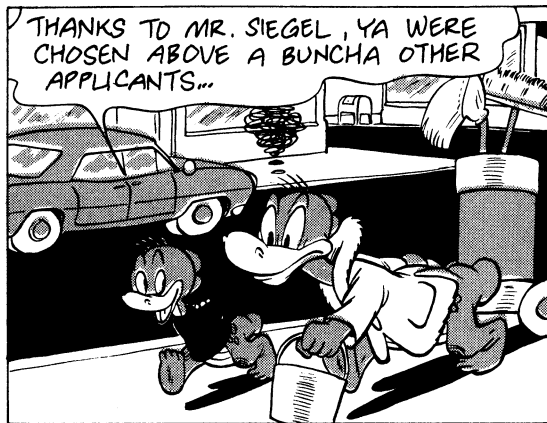
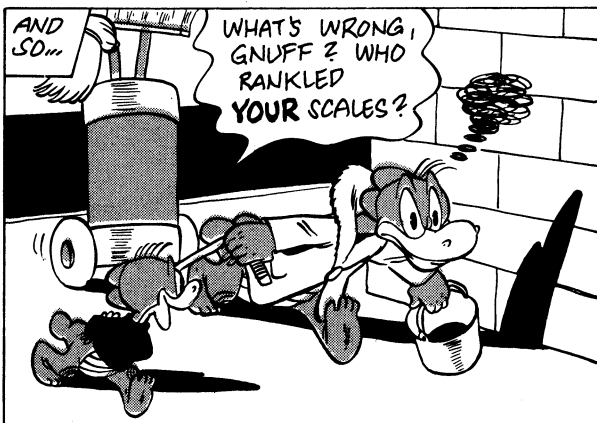
YES... BUT... HOW ?

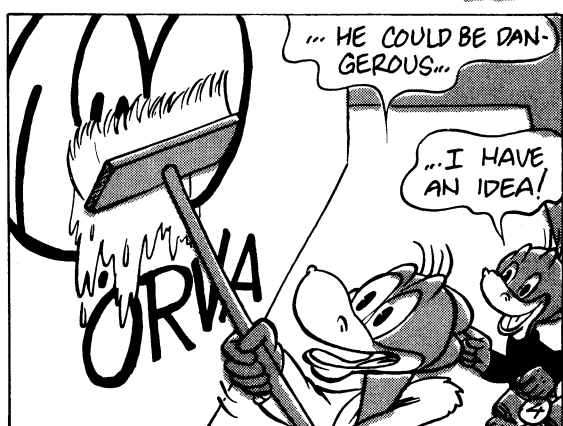
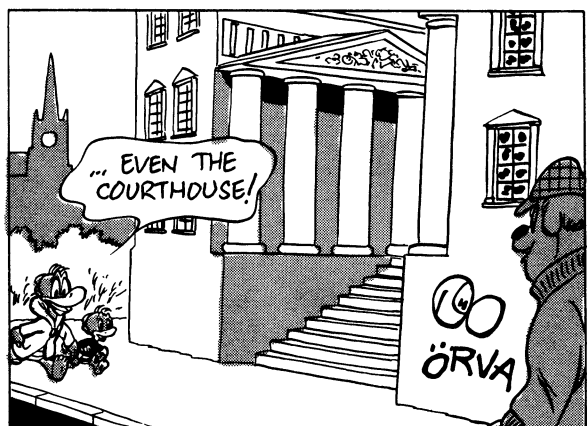
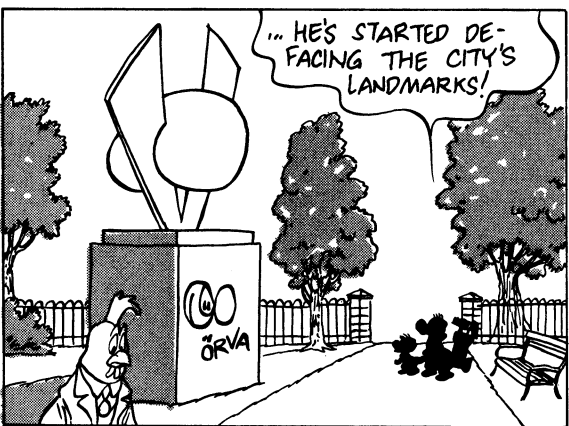
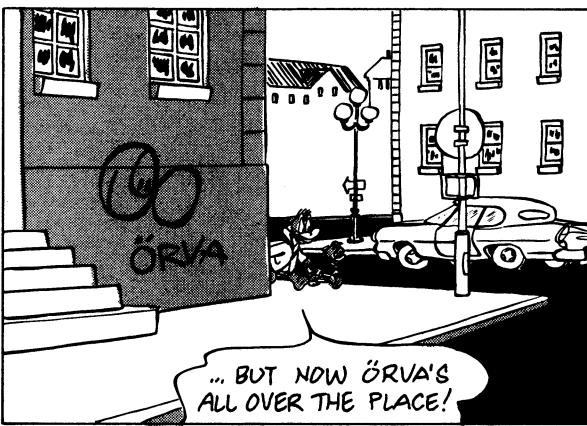
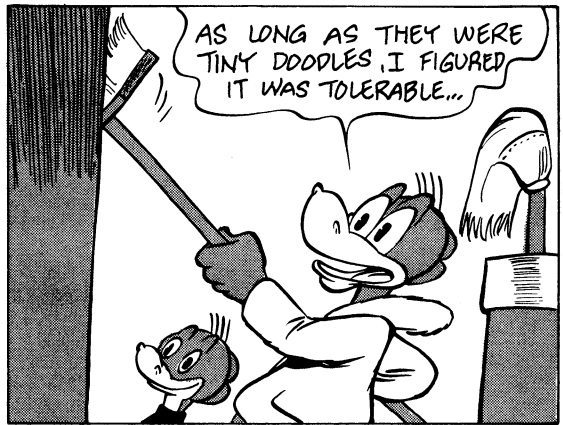
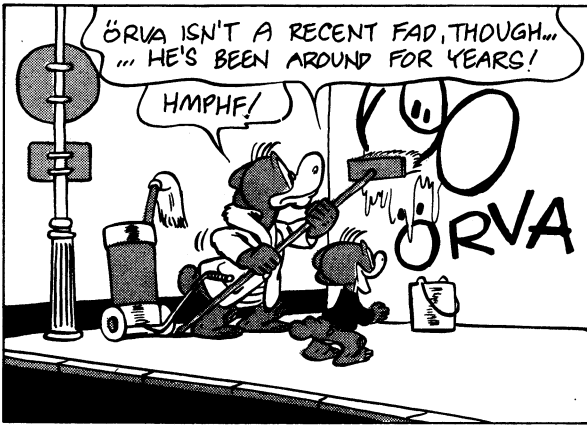


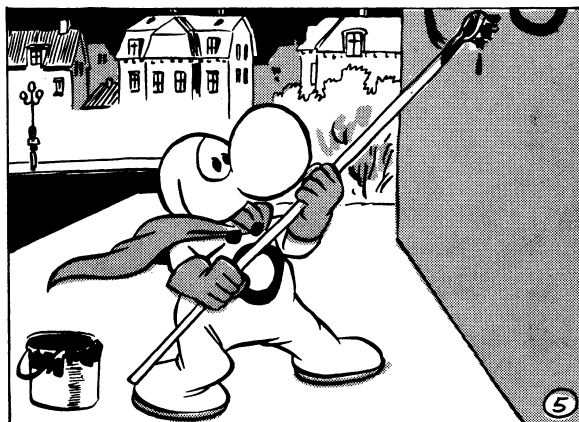
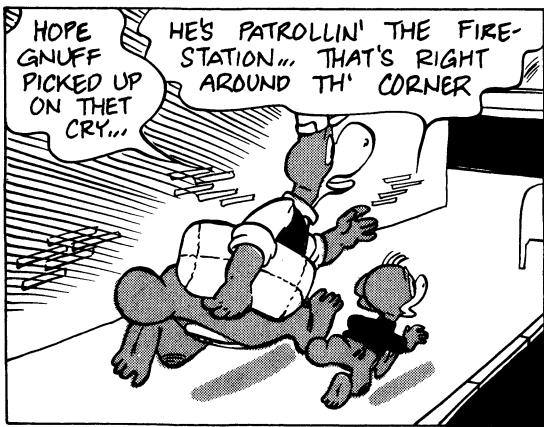
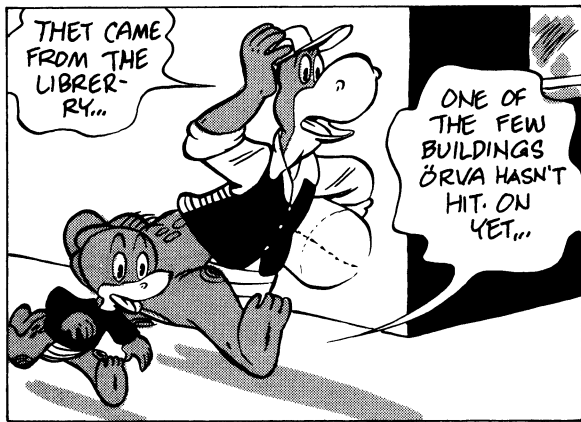
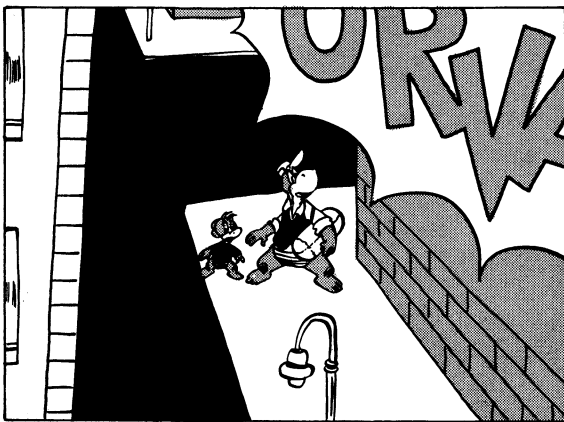
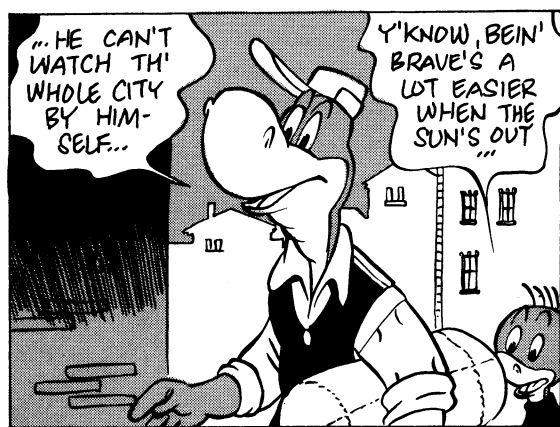
I DON'T CARE! IF YOU CAN'T DEAL WITH IT, I'LL HIRE SOMEONE, WHO CAN!

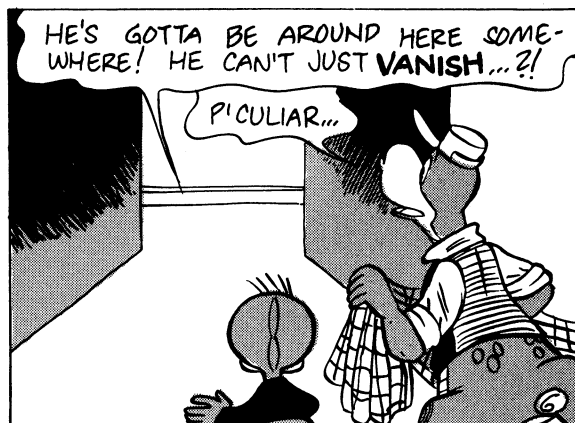
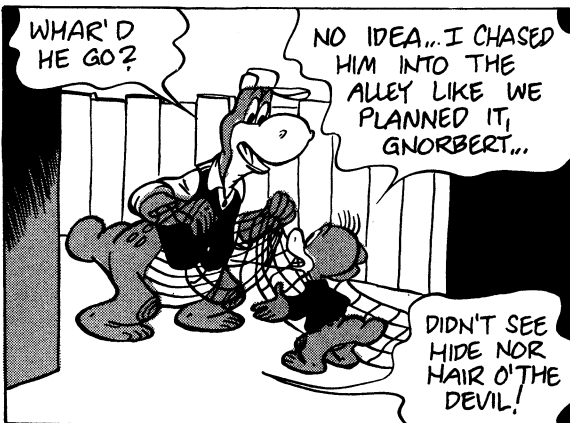
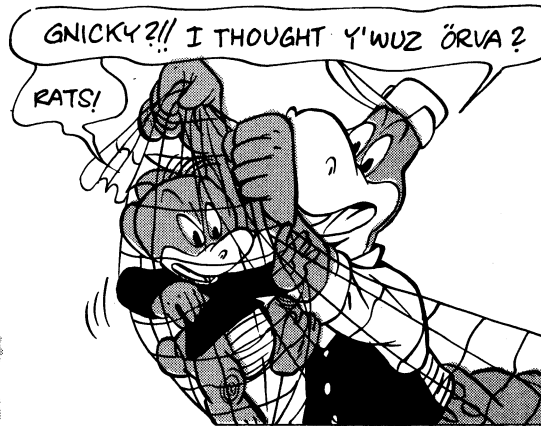
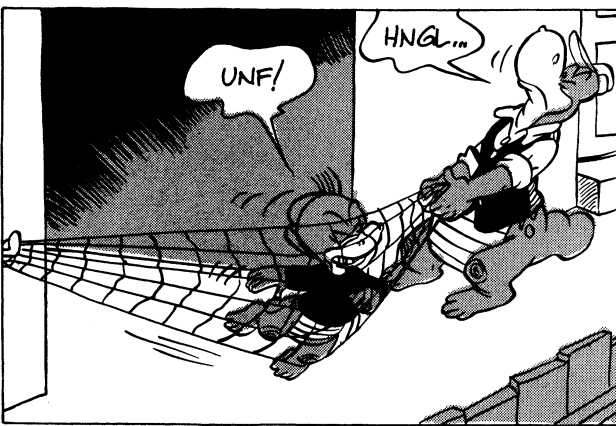
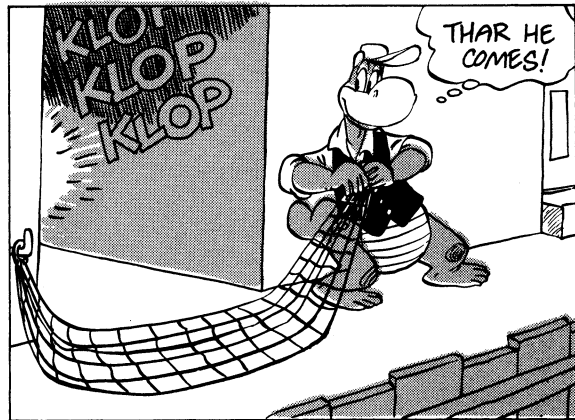
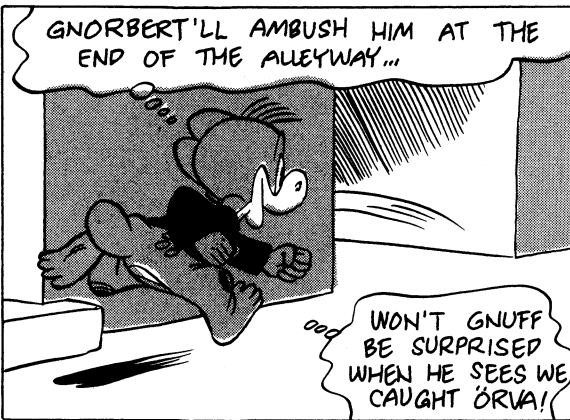
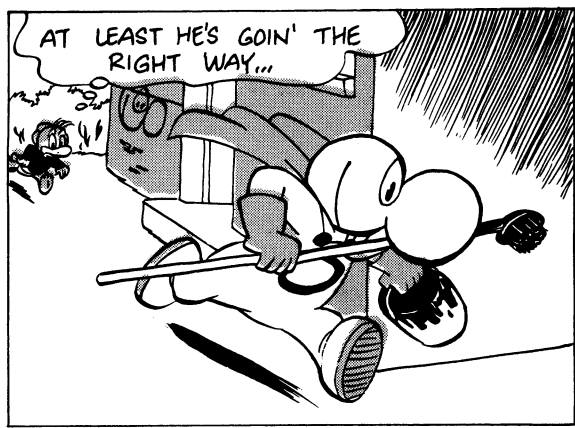
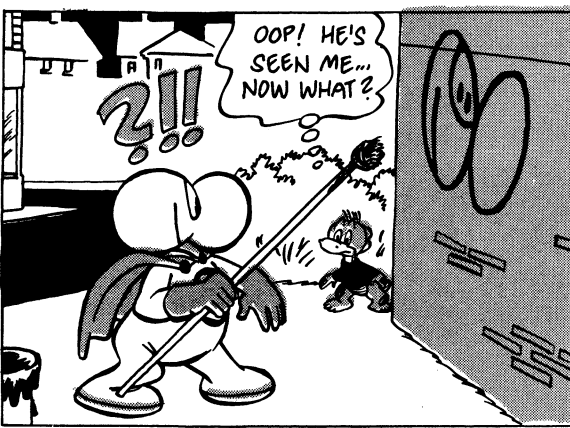
... BUT... YOU FORGOT YOUR BROOM!

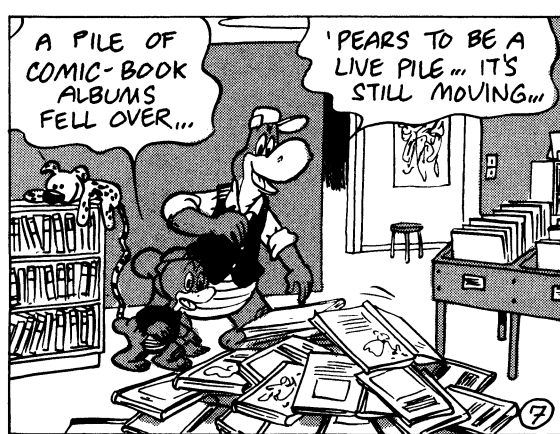
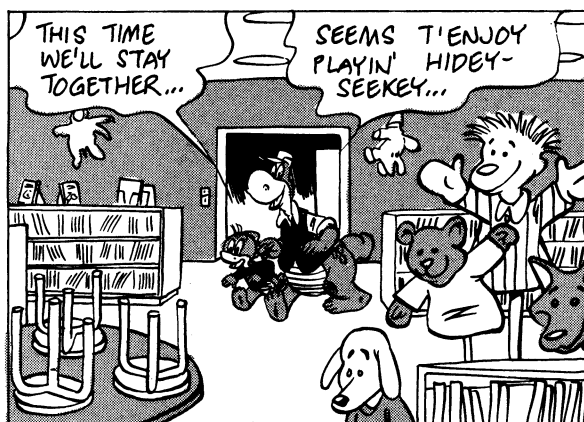
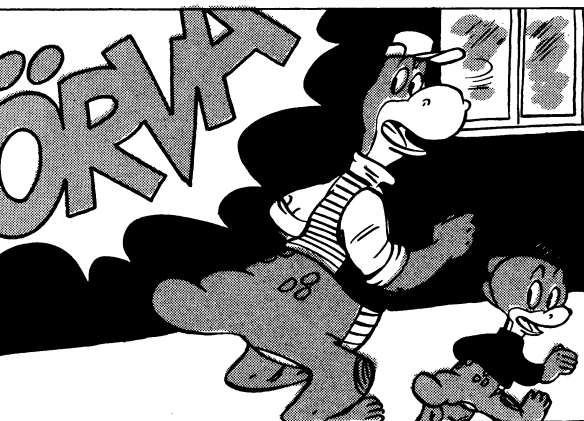
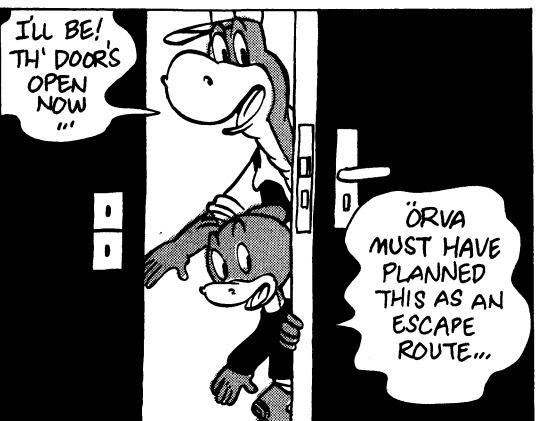
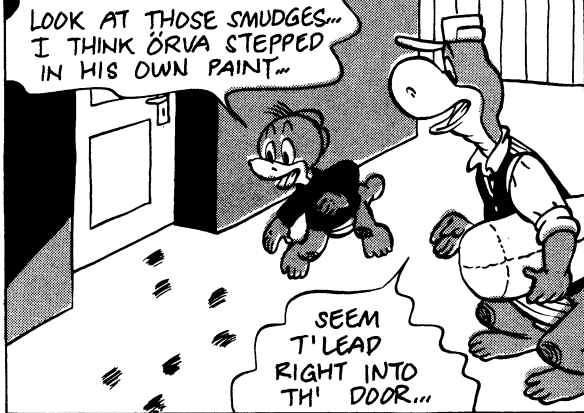
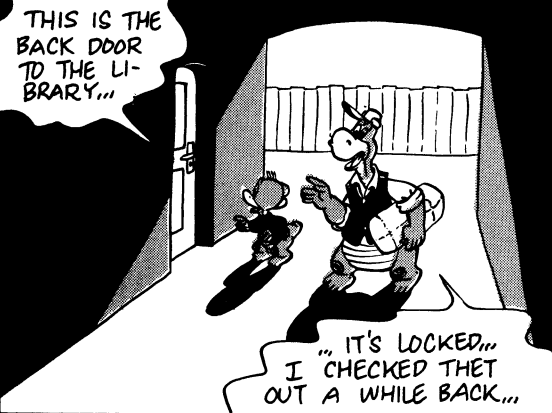
... SORRY!

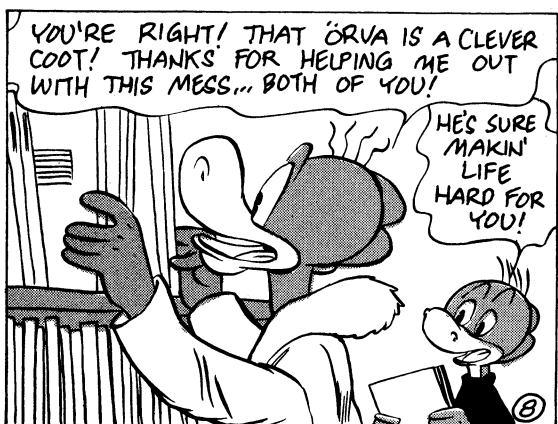
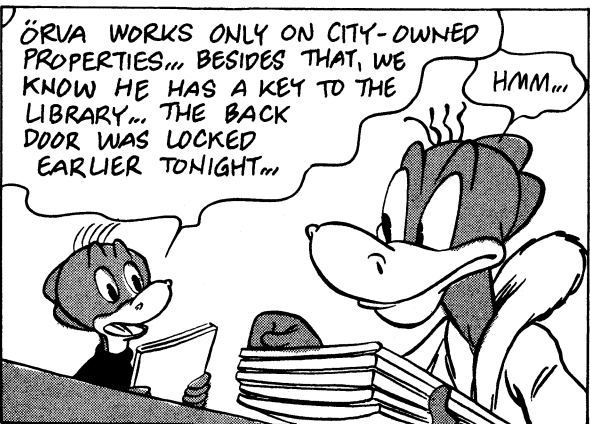
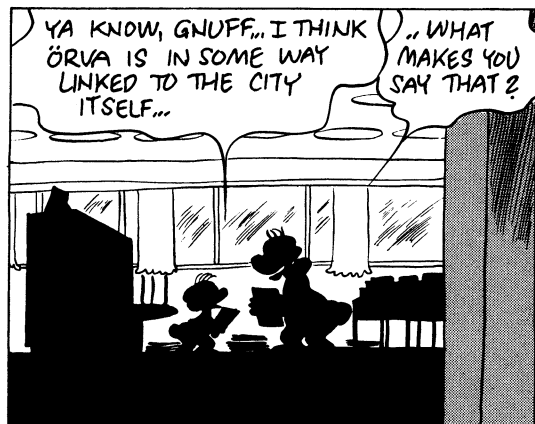
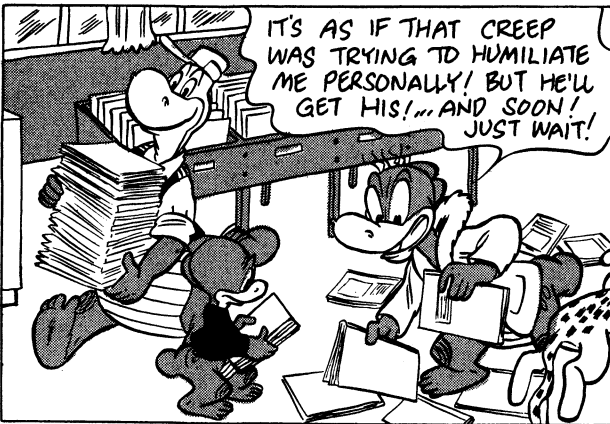
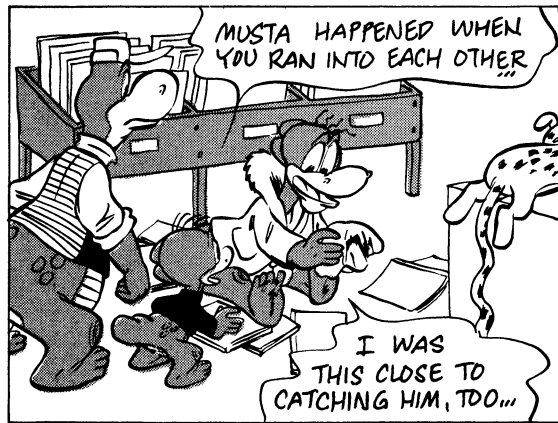
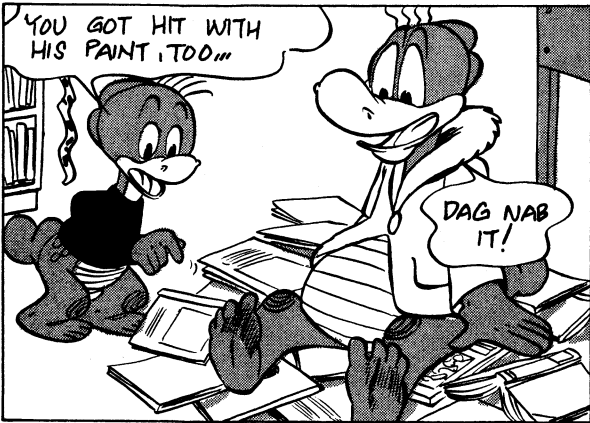
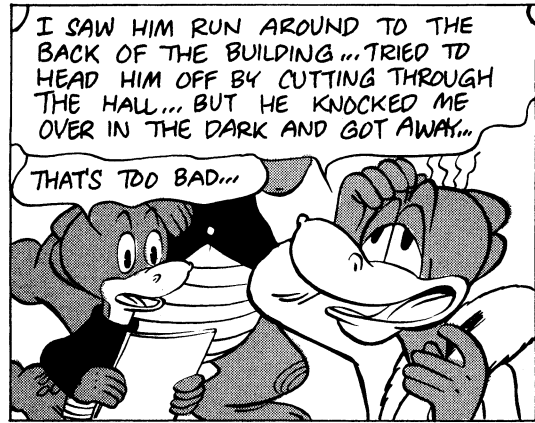












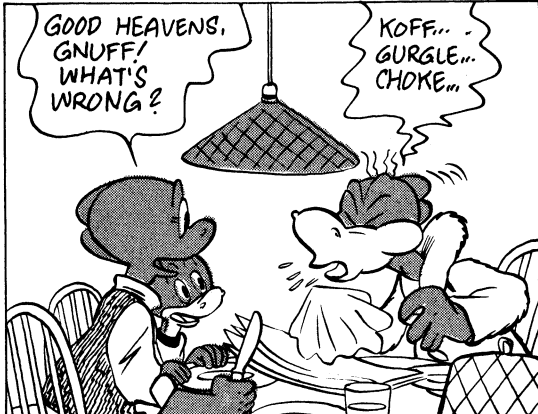
NEXT MORNING...

OH-NO!!



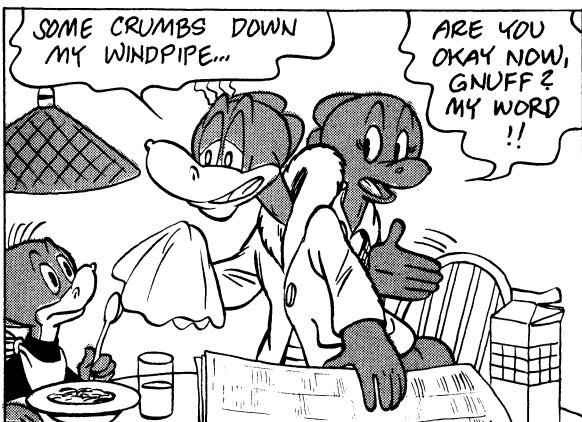
GOOD HEAVENS, GNUFF! WHAT'S WRONG?

KOFF... GURGLE... CHOKE...



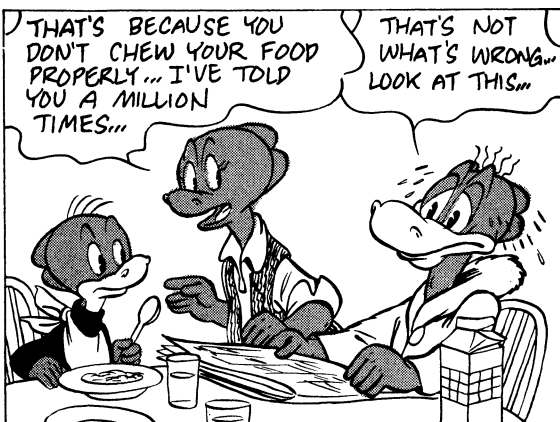
SOME CRUMBS DOWN MY WINDPIPE...

ARE YOU OKAY NOW, GNUFF? MY WORD !!



THAT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T CHEW YOUR FOOD PROPERLY... I'VE TOLD YOU A MILLION TIMES...

THAT'S NOT WHAT'S WRONG... LOOK AT THIS...

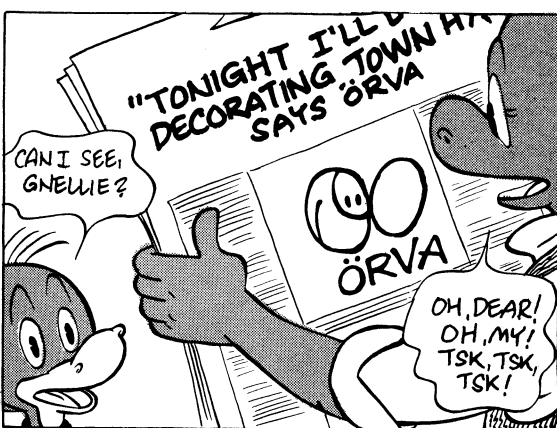


"TONIGHT I'LL BE DECORATING TOWN HALL SAYS ÖRVA"

CAN I SEE, GNELLIE?

ÖRVA

OH, DEAR! OH, MY! TSK, TSK, TSK!

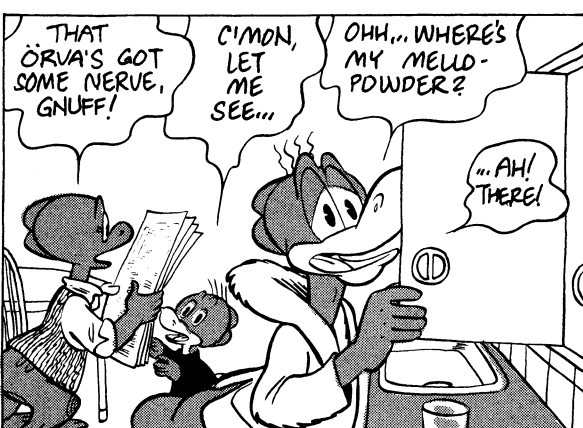


THAT ÖRVA'S GOT SOME NERVE, GNUFF!

C'MON, LET ME SEE...

OH, WHERE'S MY MELLO-POWDER?

...AH! THERE!



YOU SHOULD GO EASY ON THAT STUFF, GNUFF! IT UPSETS THE NATURAL BALANCE OF THE BODY...

DARN IT! LEMME SEE THAT PAPER !!

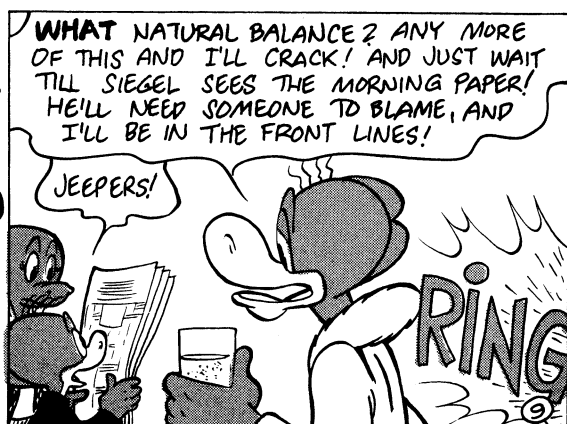
GURGLUG

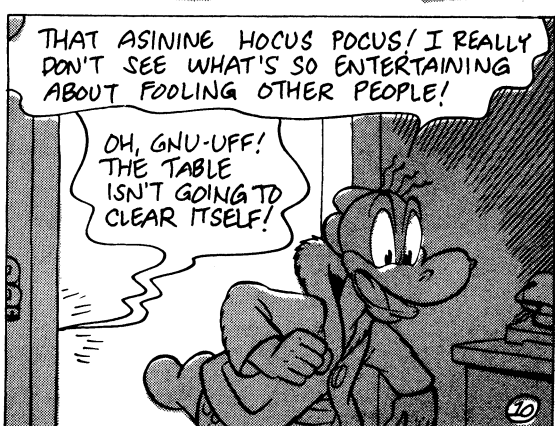
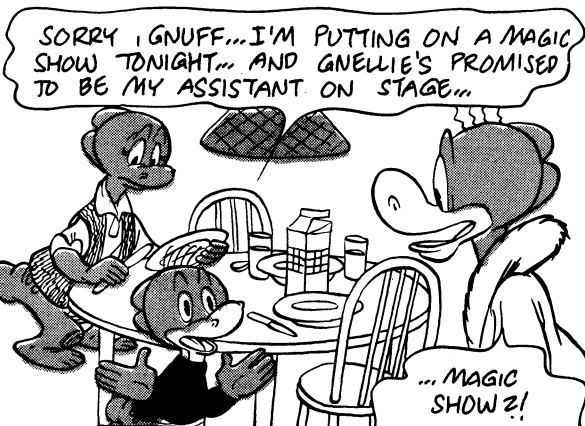
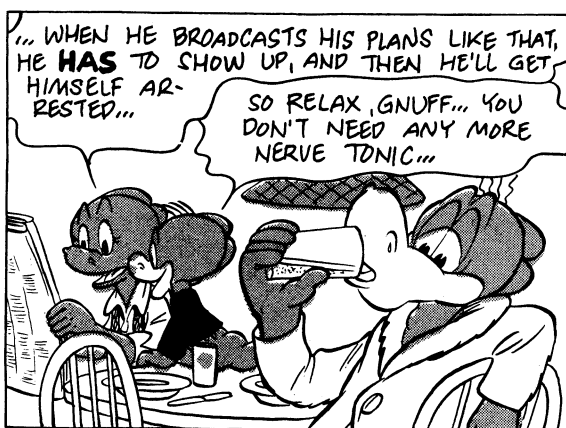
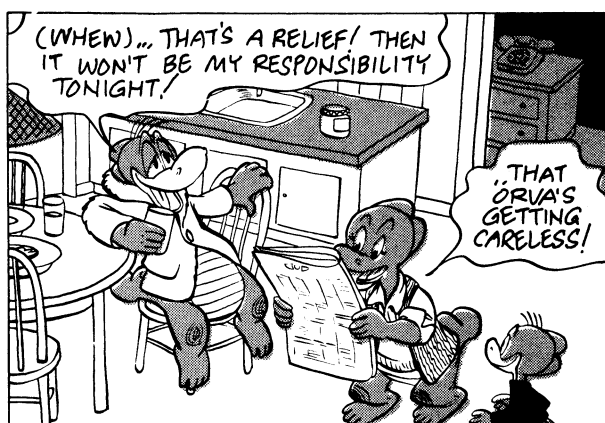
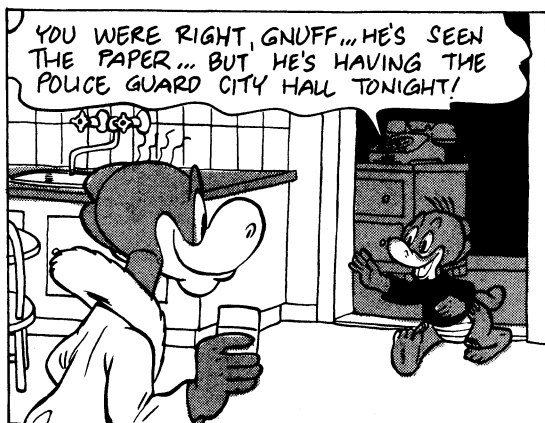
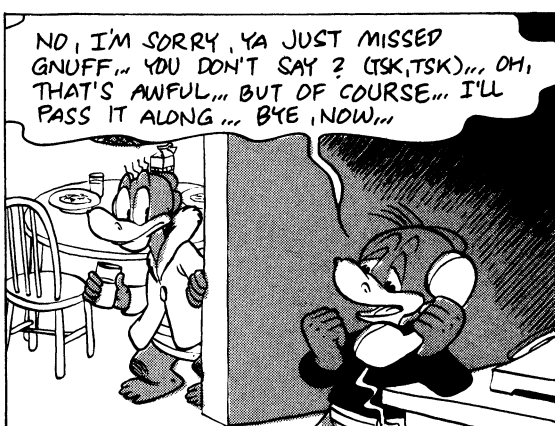


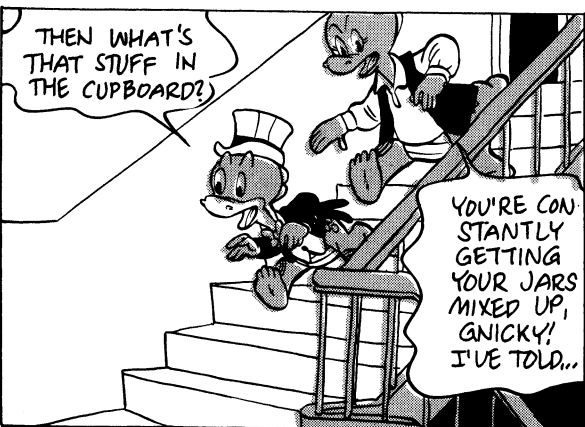
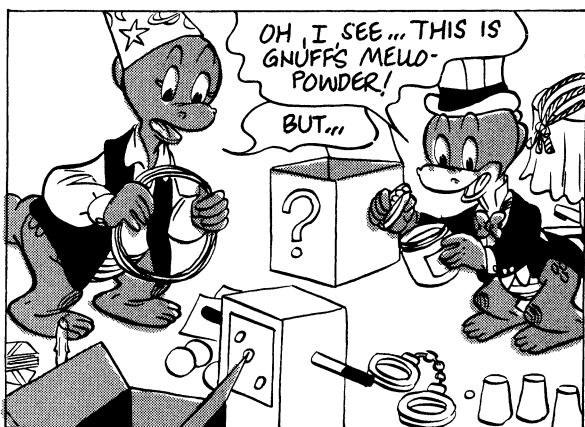
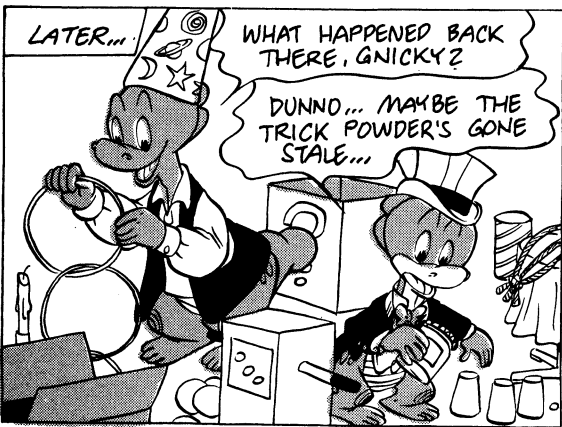
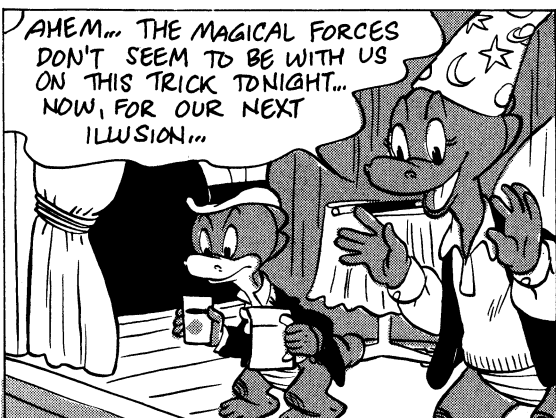
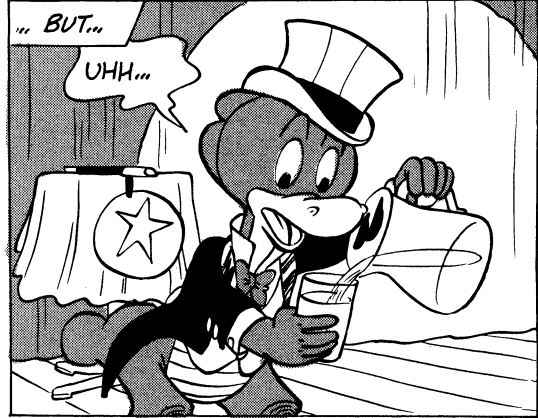
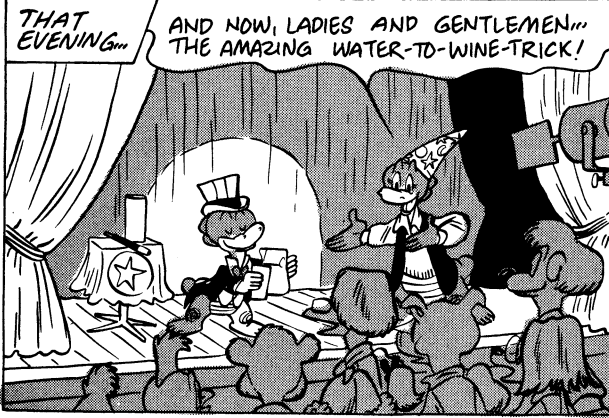
WHAT NATURAL BALANCE? ANY MORE OF THIS AND I'LL CRACK! AND JUST WAIT TILL SIEGEL SEES THE MORNING PAPER! HE'LL NEED SOMEONE TO BLAME, AND I'LL BE IN THE FRONT LINES!

JEEPERS!

RING





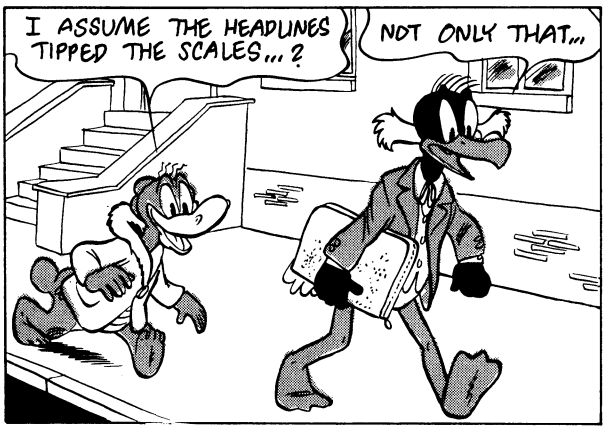


MEANWHILE...



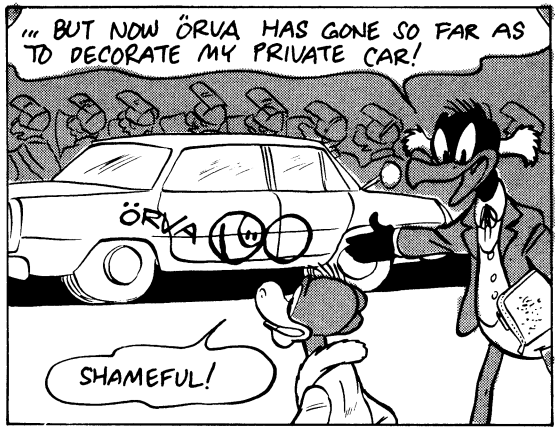
MR. CHAIR-MAN, I'M PLEASED TO SEE THAT YOU'VE DECIDED TO ACT, UH... DECISIVELY ON THIS MATTER! SURG IS LOAD OFF MY MIND!

INDEED! THE POLICE HAS CITY HALL SUR-ROUNDED... SECURITY'S SO TIGHT ÖRVA DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE...



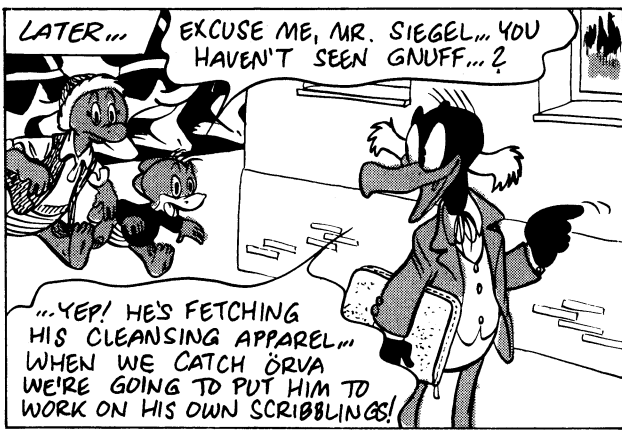
I ASSUME THE HEADLINES TIPPED THE SCALES...?

NOT ONLY THAT...



... BUT NOW ÖRVA HAS GONE SO FAR AS TO DECORATE MY PRIVATE CAR!

SHAMEFUL!



LATER...

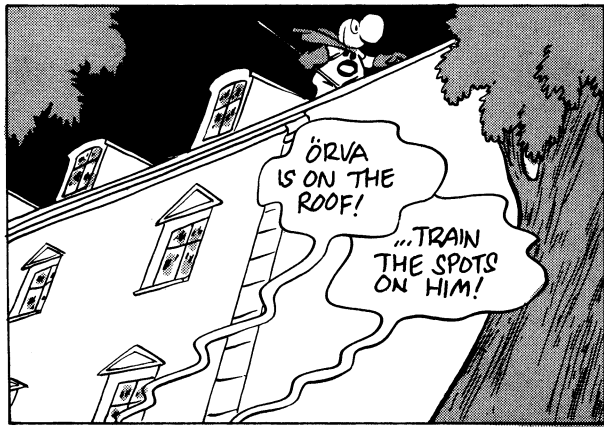
EXCUSE ME, MR. SIEGEL... YOU HAVEN'T SEEN GNUFF...?

...YEP! HE'S FETCHING HIS CLEANSING APPAREL... WHEN WE CATCH ÖRVA WE'RE GOING TO PUT HIM TO WORK ON HIS OWN SCRIBBLINGS!



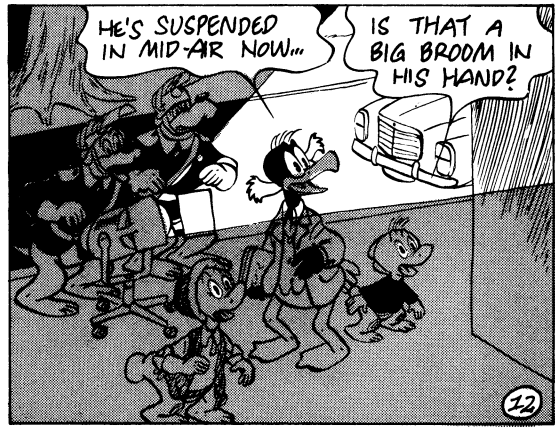
BUT... LOOKIT! THERE!

WHA...?!



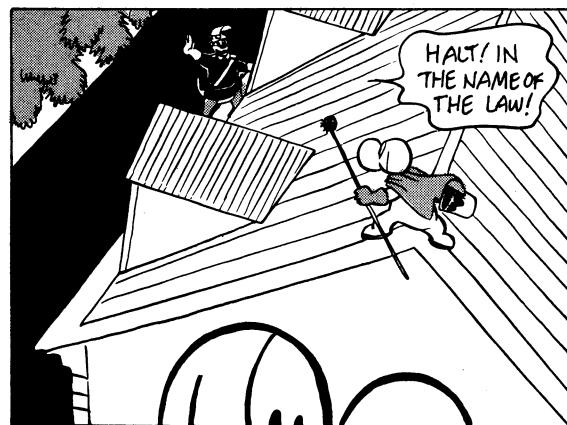
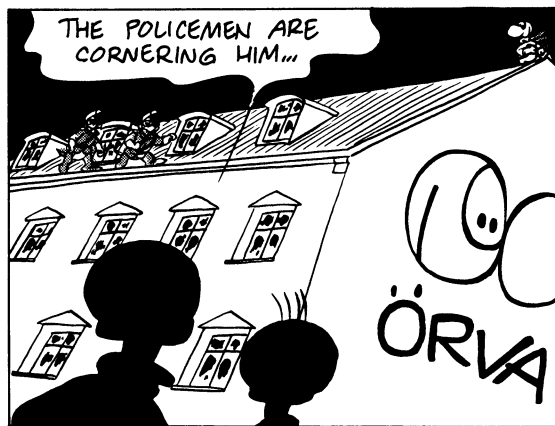
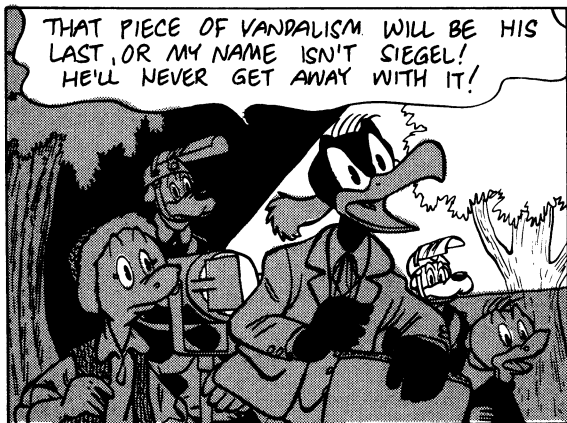
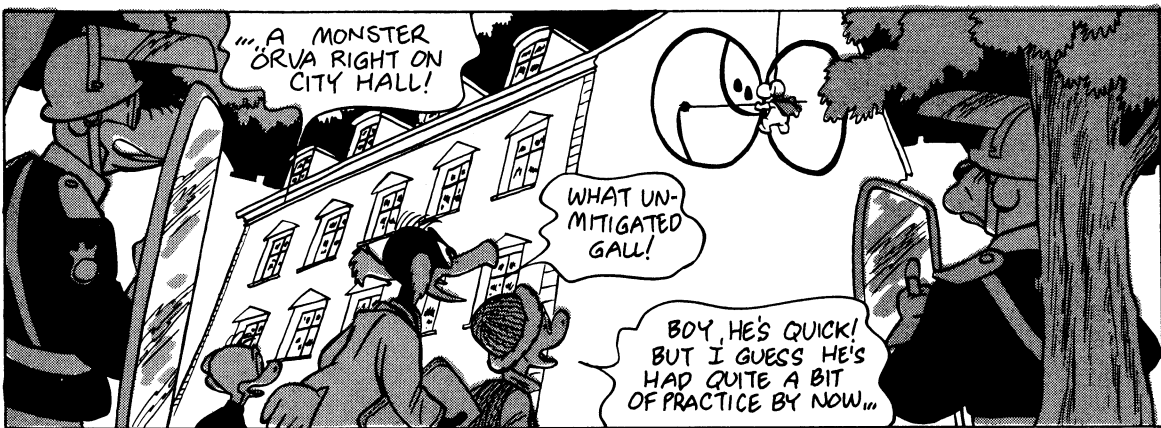
ÖRVA IS ON THE ROOF!

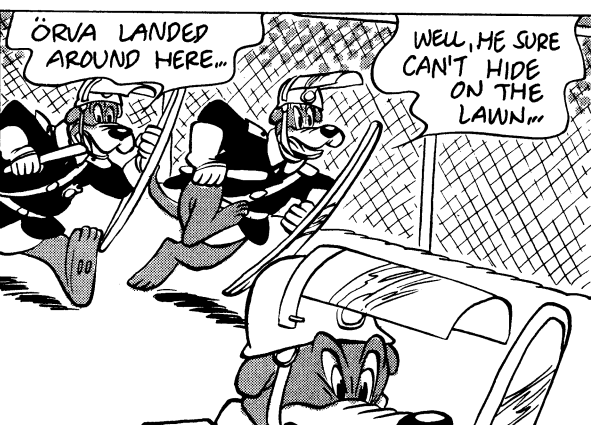
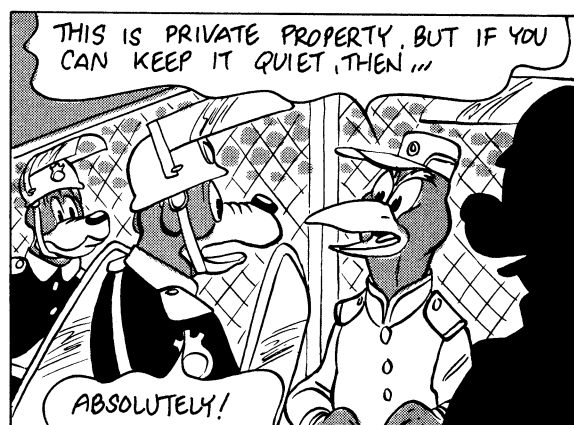
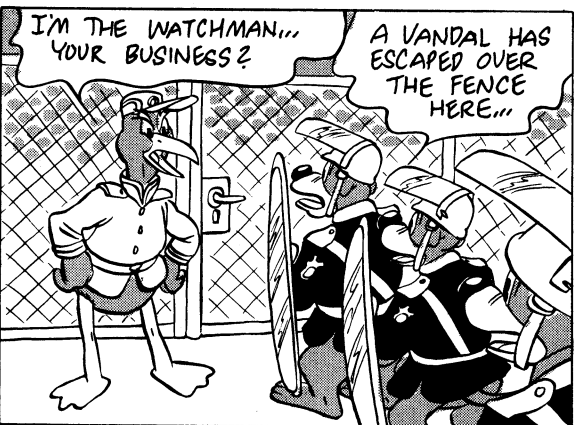
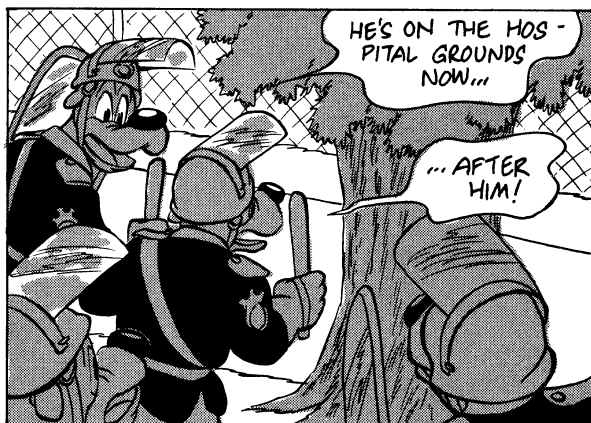
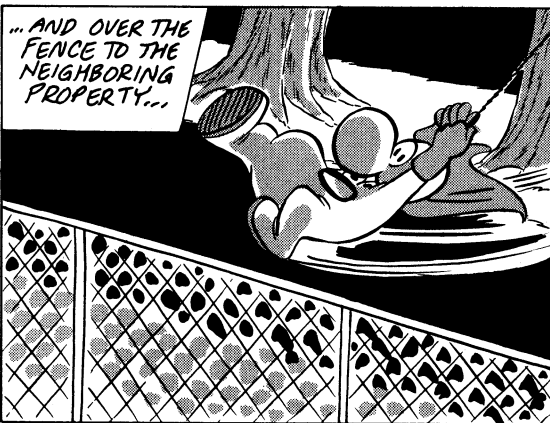
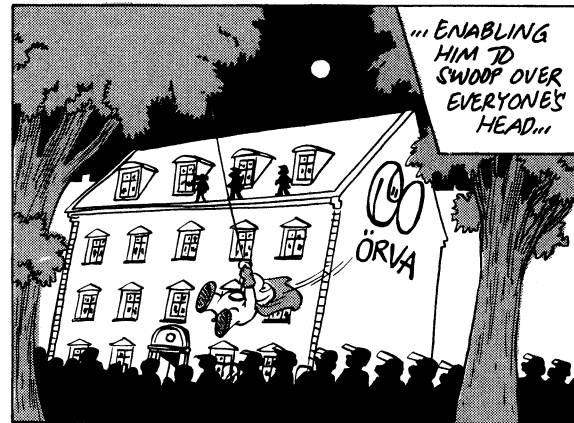
...TRAIN THE SPOTS ON HIM!

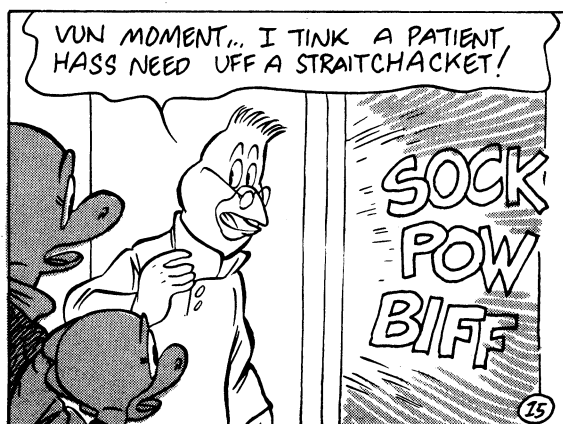
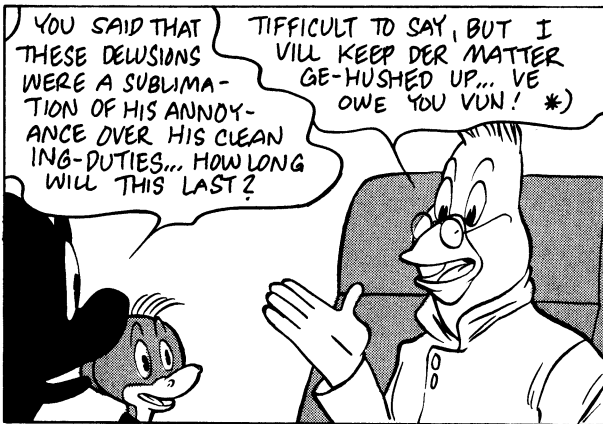
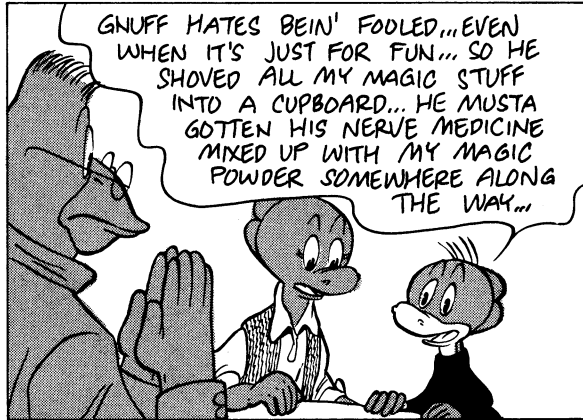
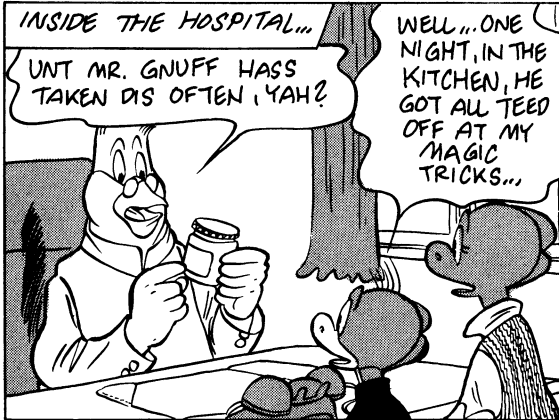
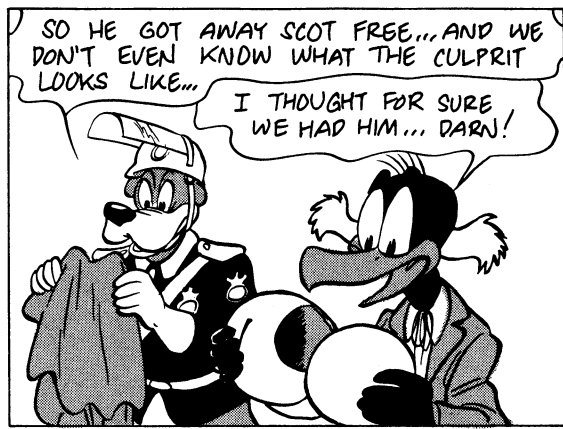


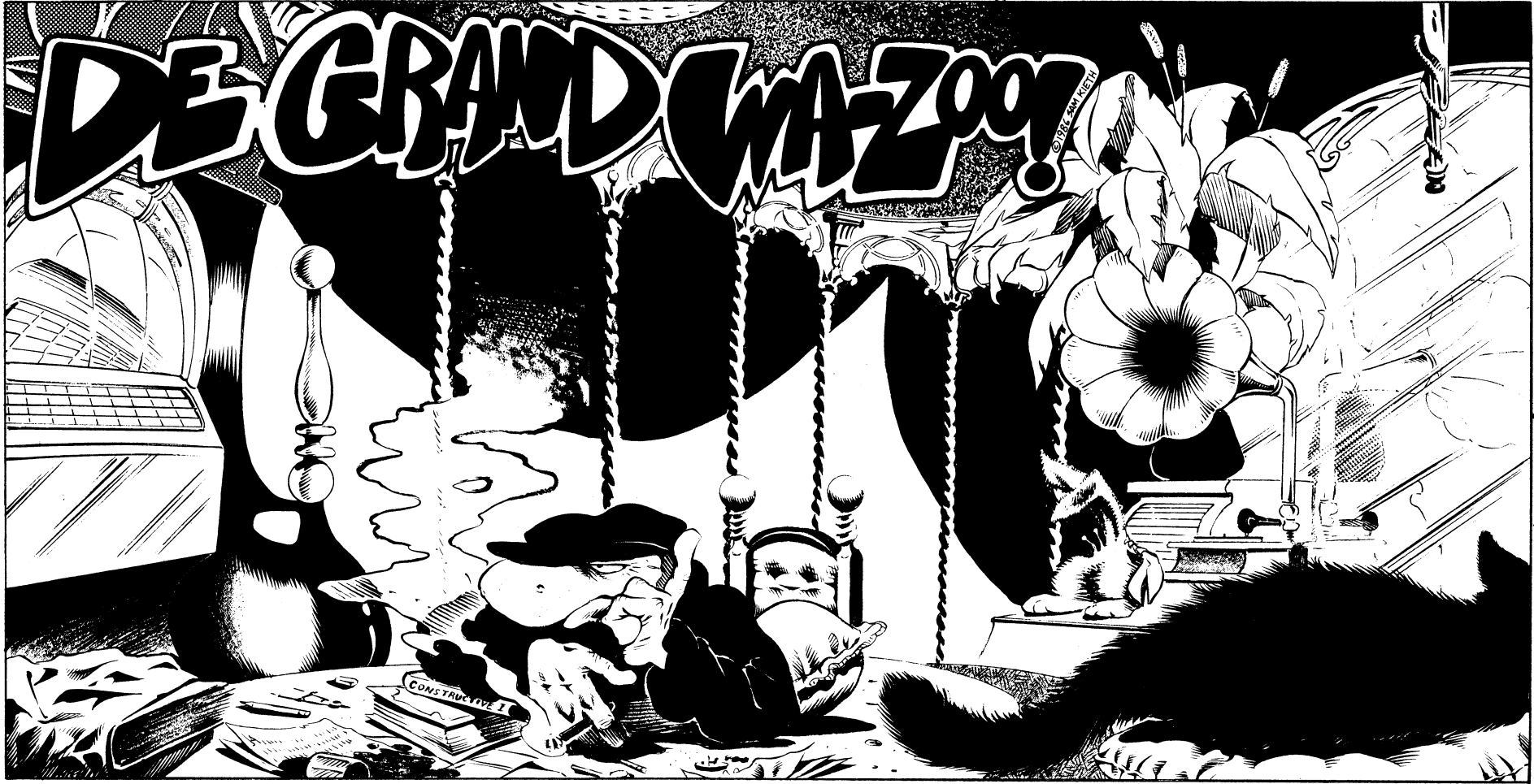
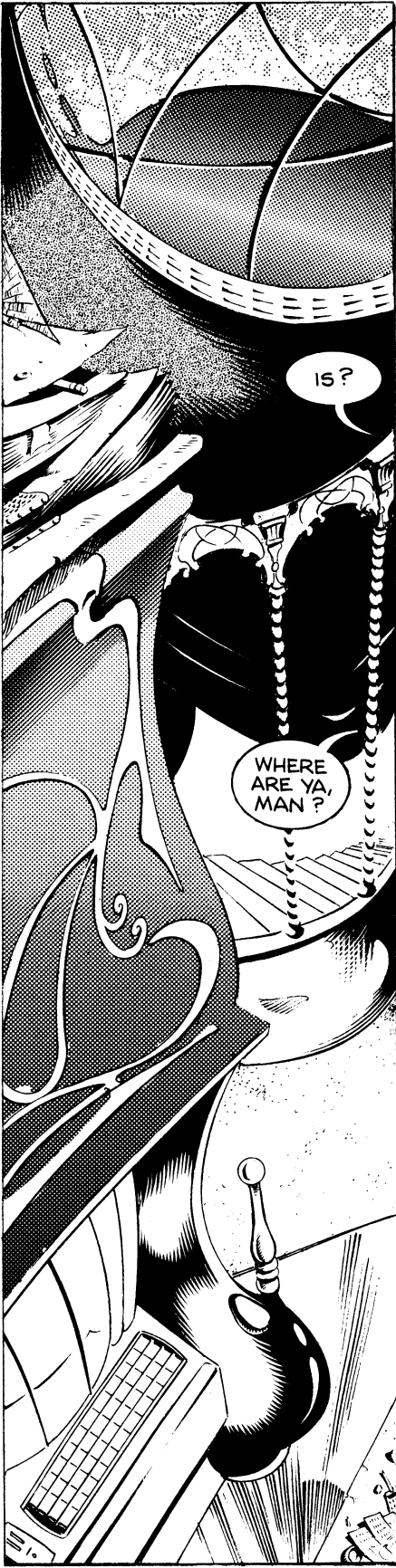
HE'S SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR NOW...

IS THAT A BIG BROOM IN HIS HAND?

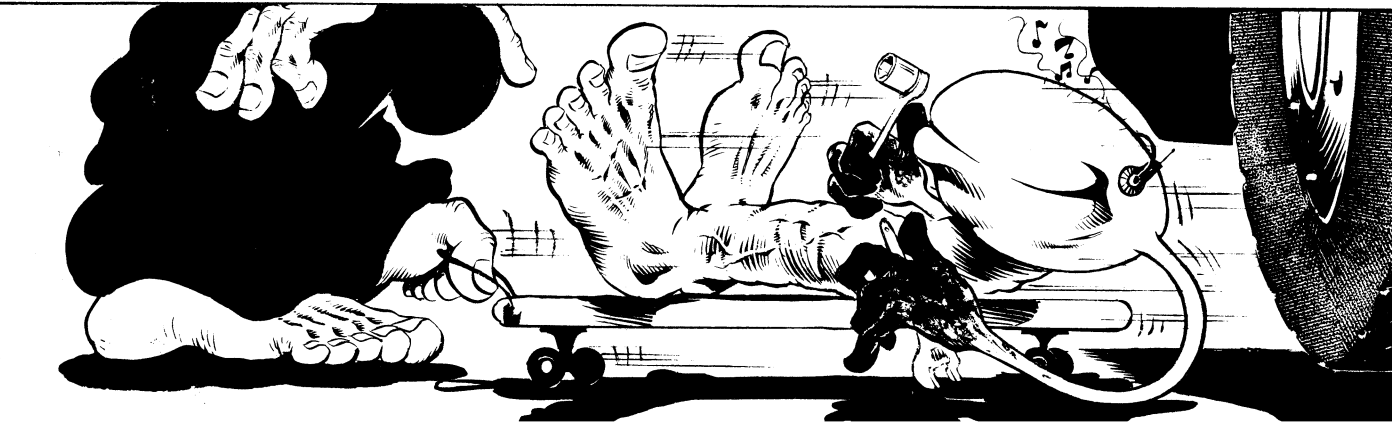
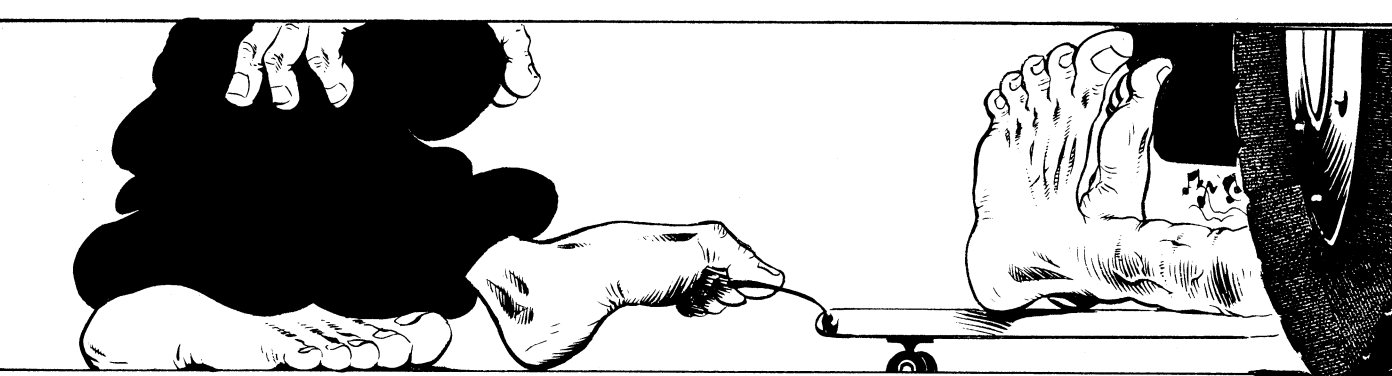
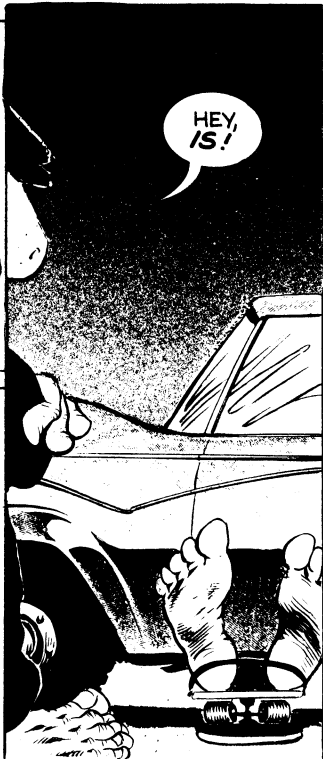


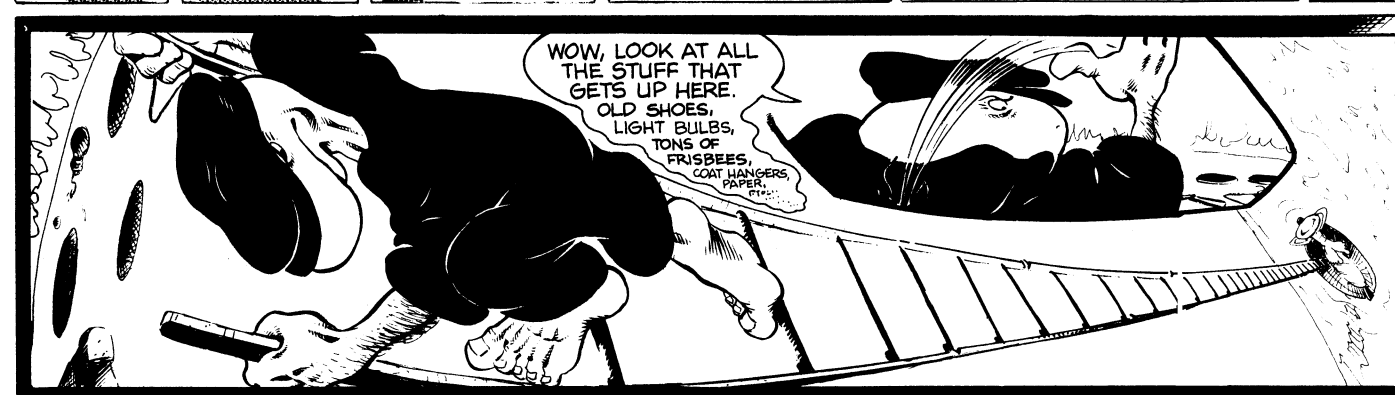
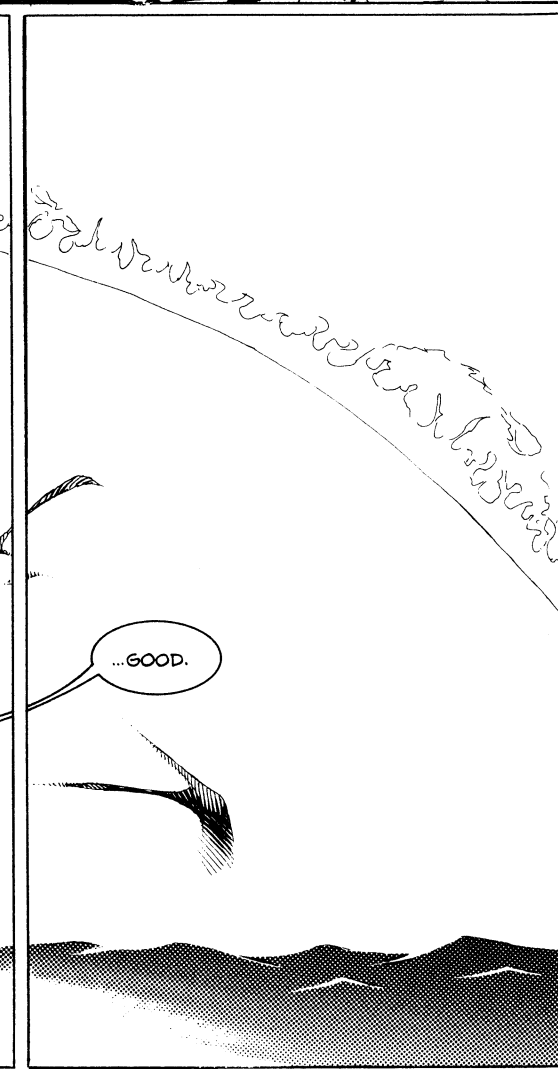
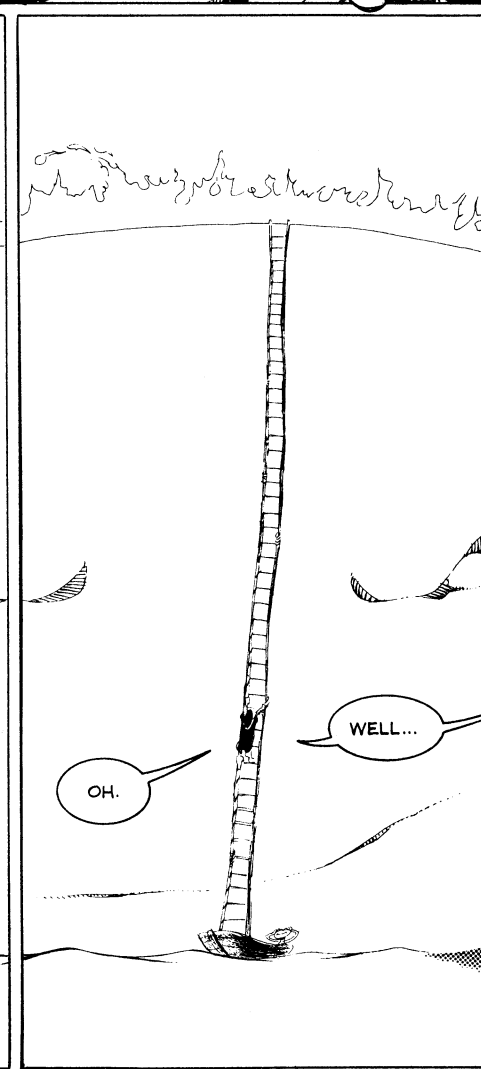
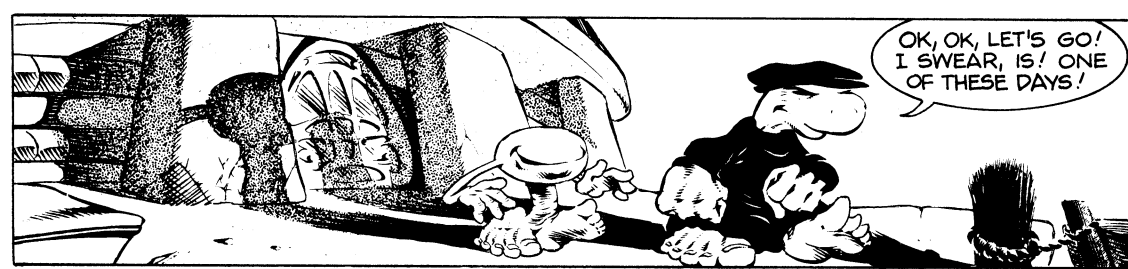






MUSIC ON PHONO GRAPH: "YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU" BY HARRY JAMES





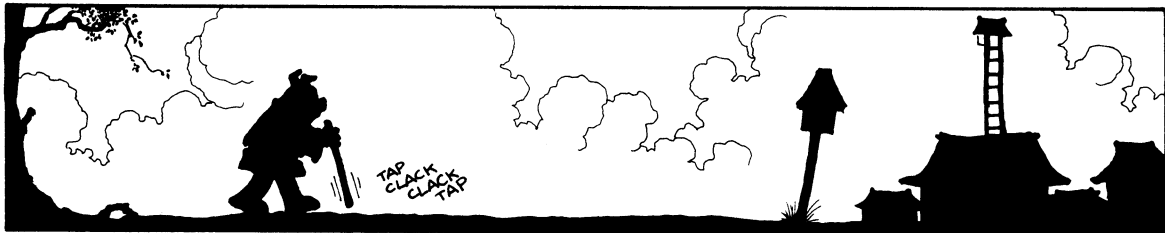
PARTICLE

Dreams

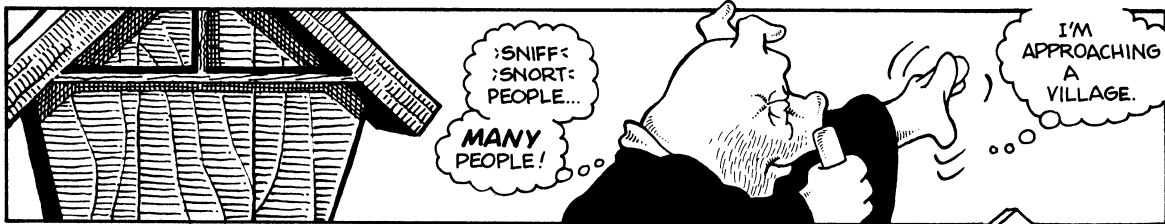


Some things are dangerous, y'know?

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

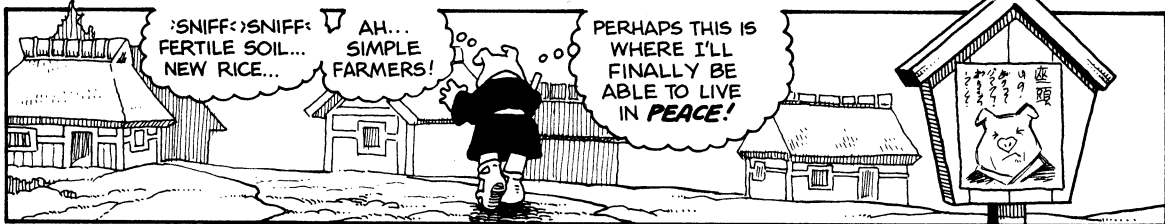


TAP
CLACK
CLACK
TAP



:SNIFF:
:SNORT:
PEOPLE...
**MANY
PEOPLE!**

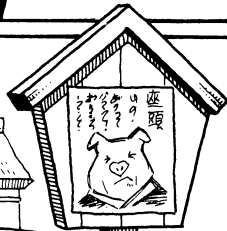
I'M
APPROACHING
A
VILLAGE.



:SNIFF: :SNIFF:
FERTILE SOIL...
NEW RICE...

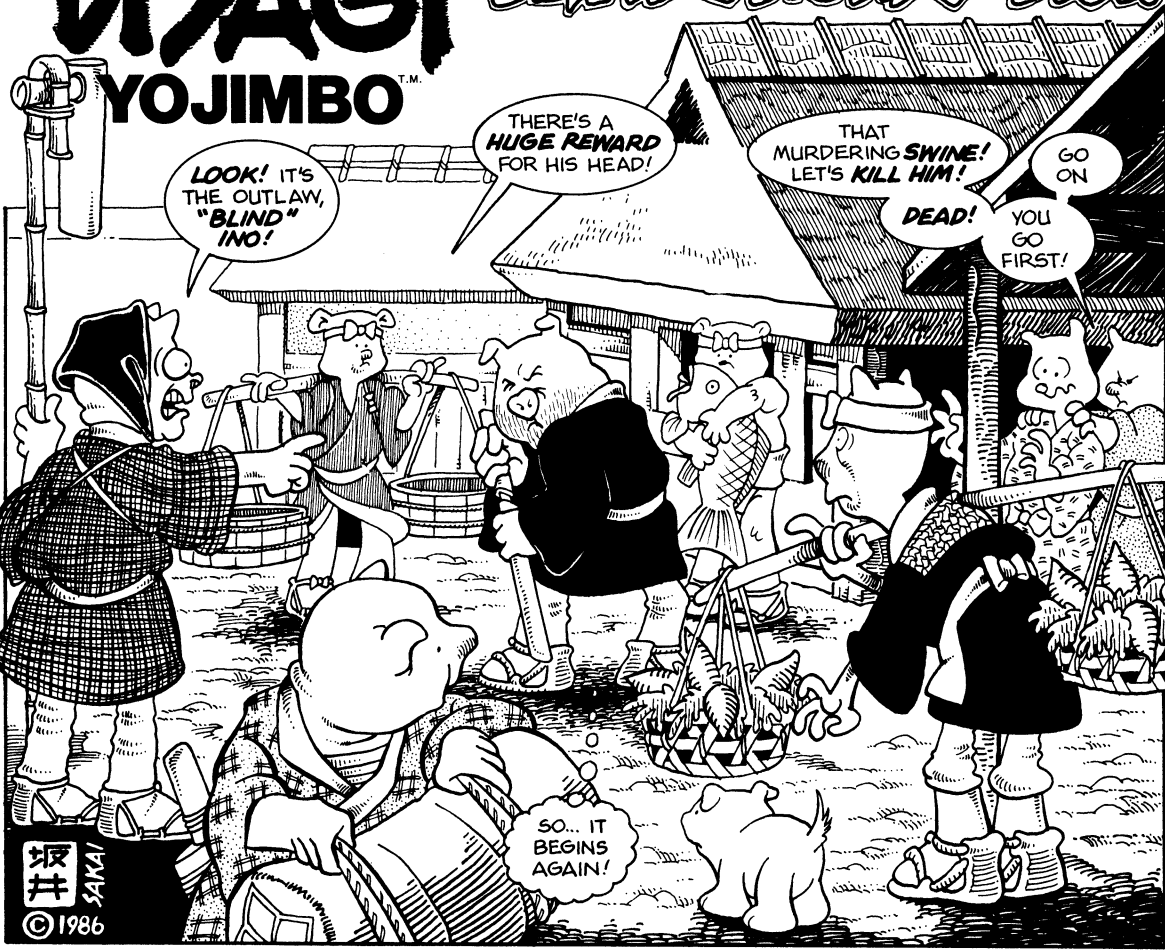
AH...
SIMPLE
FARMERS!

PERHAPS THIS IS
WHERE I'LL
FINALLY BE
ABLE TO LIVE
IN **PEACE!**



USAGI YOJIMBO™

BLIND SWORDS-PIG!



**LOOK! IT'S
THE OUTLAW,
"BLIND"
INO!**

THERE'S A
HUGE REWARD
FOR HIS HEAD!

THAT
MURDERING **SWINE!**
LET'S **KILL HIM!**

GO
ON

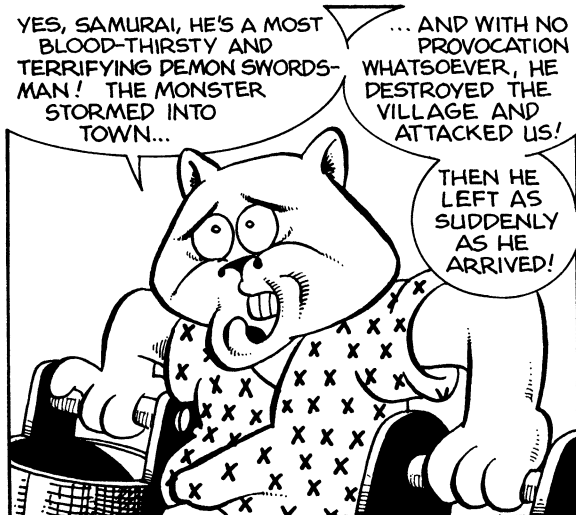
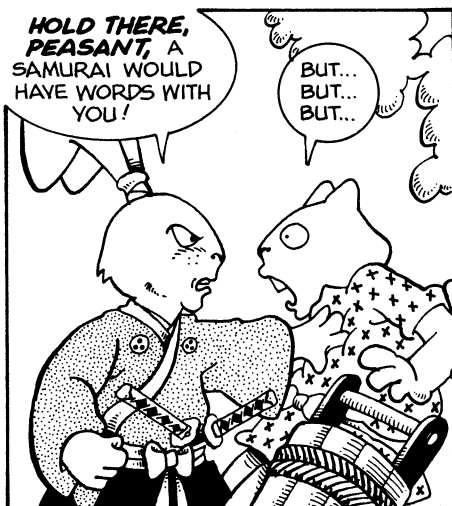
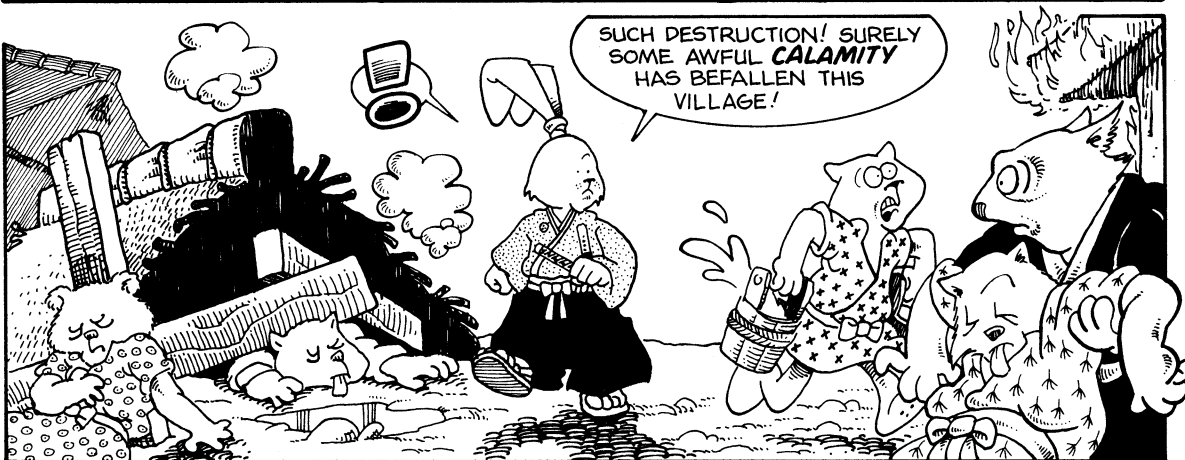
DEAD!

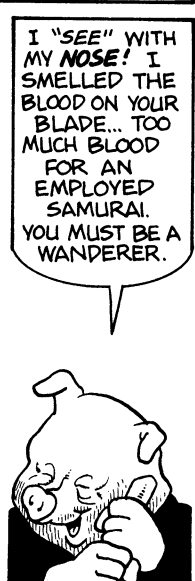
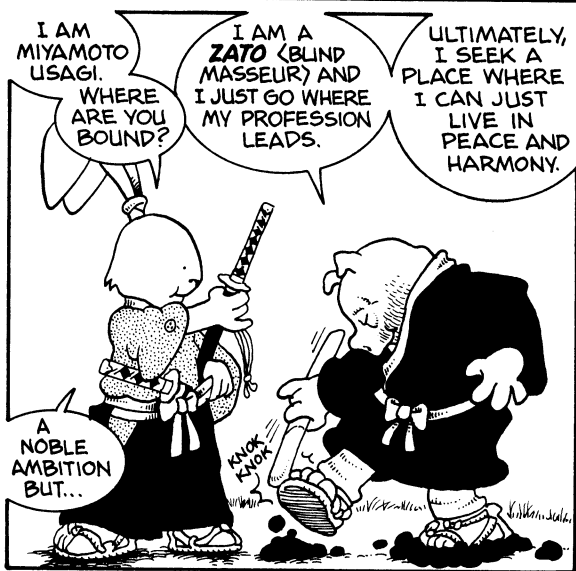
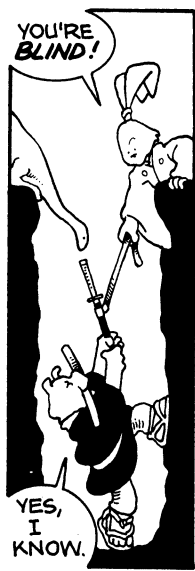
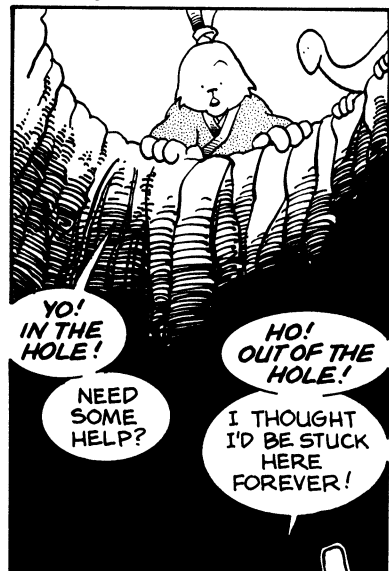
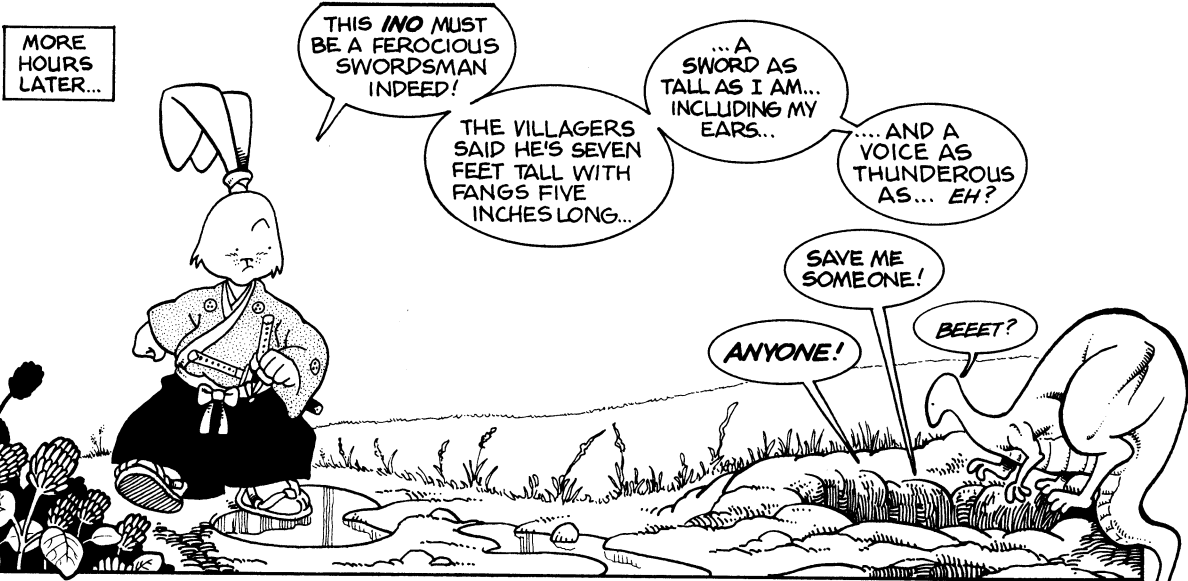
YOU
GO
FIRST!

SO... IT
BEGINS
AGAIN!

坂井 SAKAI
© 1986

HOURS LATER...





A
REMARKABLE
NOSE!

IT CAN EVEN
SCENT THE LONE
GINKGO LEAF AS IT
FALLS FROM THE
TREE!

AMAZING!
BUT THERE
ARE TWO
LEAVES!

WELL... I HAVEN'T
BATHED FOR A WHILE
AND SOMETIME MY
OWN SCENT CONFUSES
ME!

HA HA
HA HA!

MUCH MORE
HOURS LATER...

BUT SERIOUSLY, I CAN SMELL
THE MOULD, THE SHIFT OF THE
WIND AND THE FROG ON THE
BANK. I AM ONE WITH
NATURE.

IT IS
PEOPLE THAT
I AM IN CONFLICT
WITH.

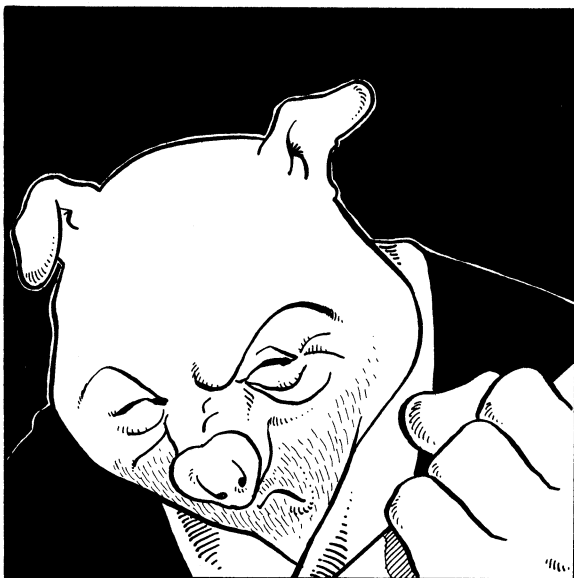
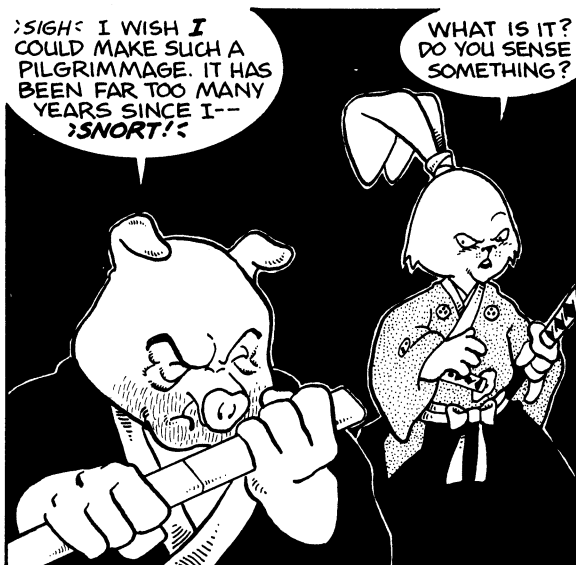
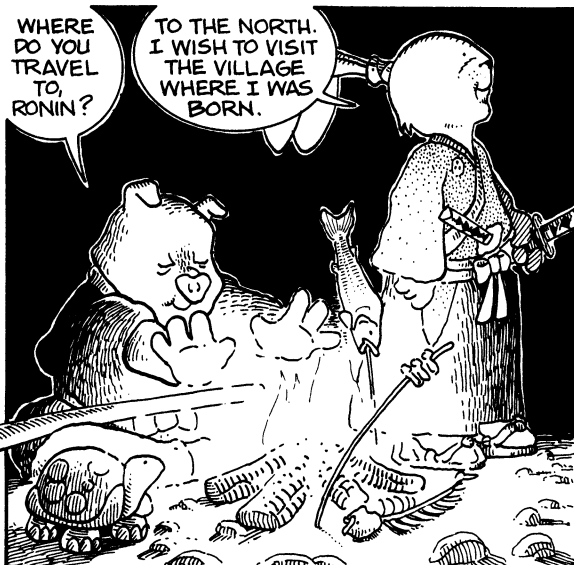
WE HAVE
MUCH IN
COMMON.

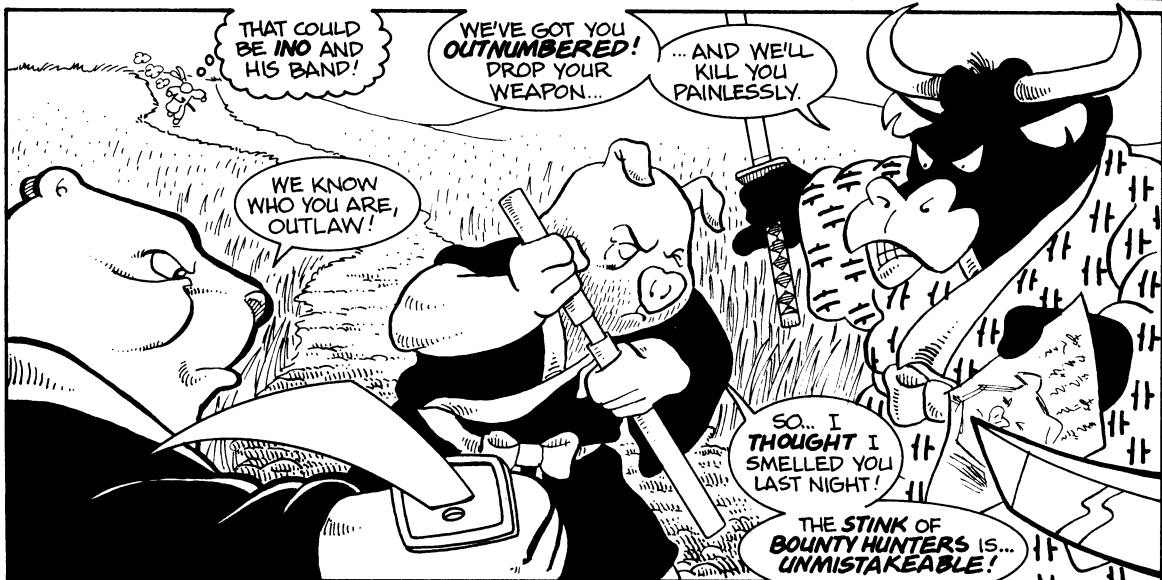
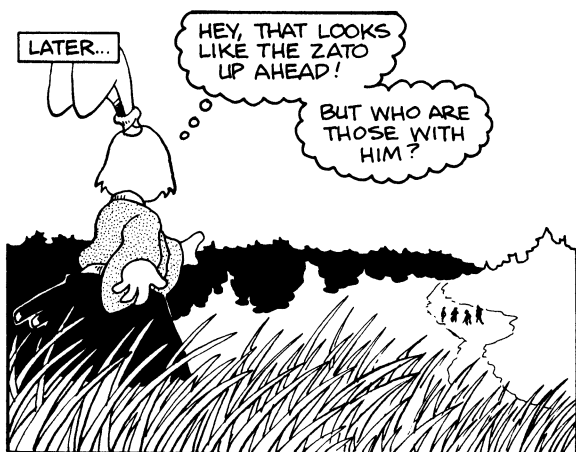
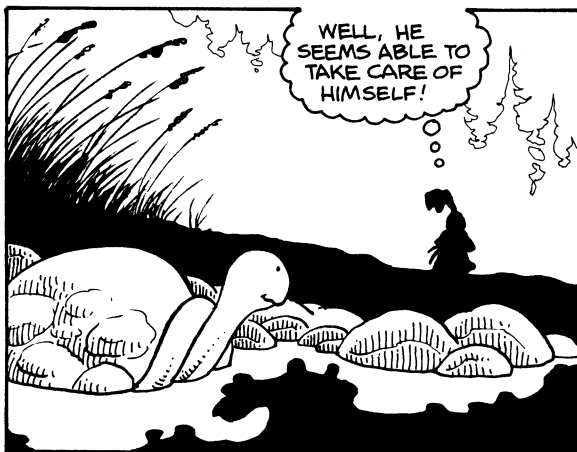
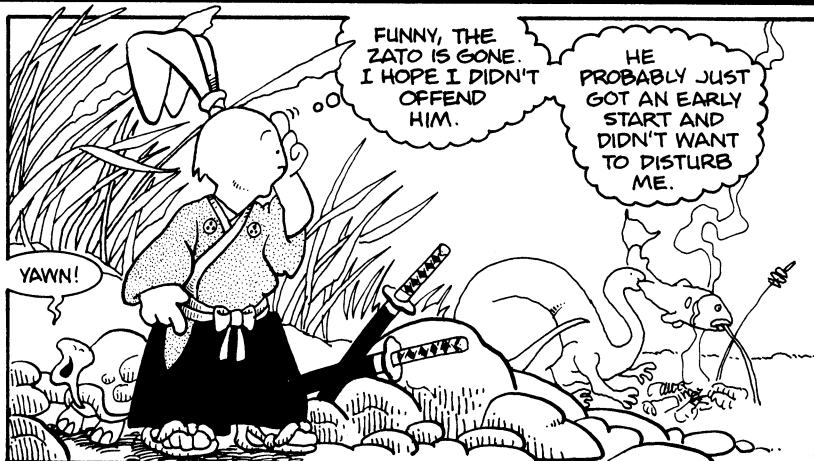
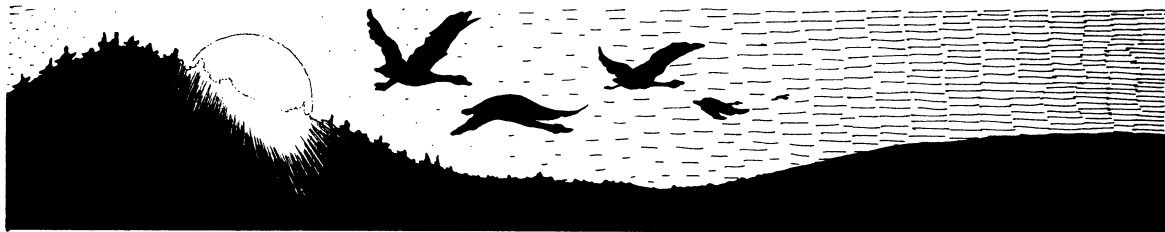
IT'S GETTING
DARK. WE SHOULD
STOP FOR THE
NIGHT.

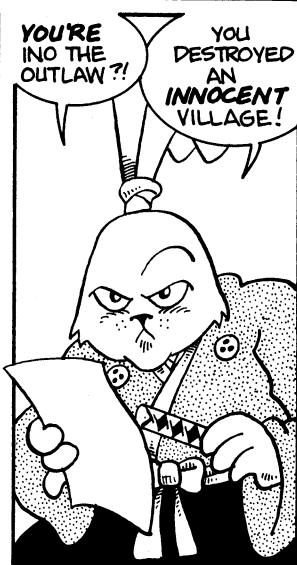
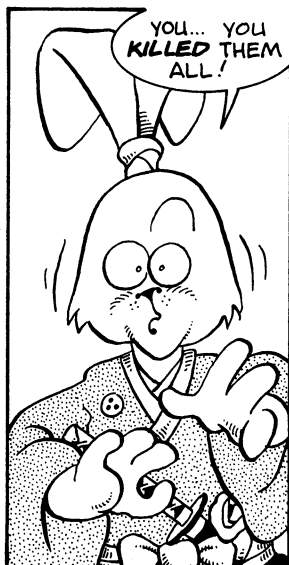
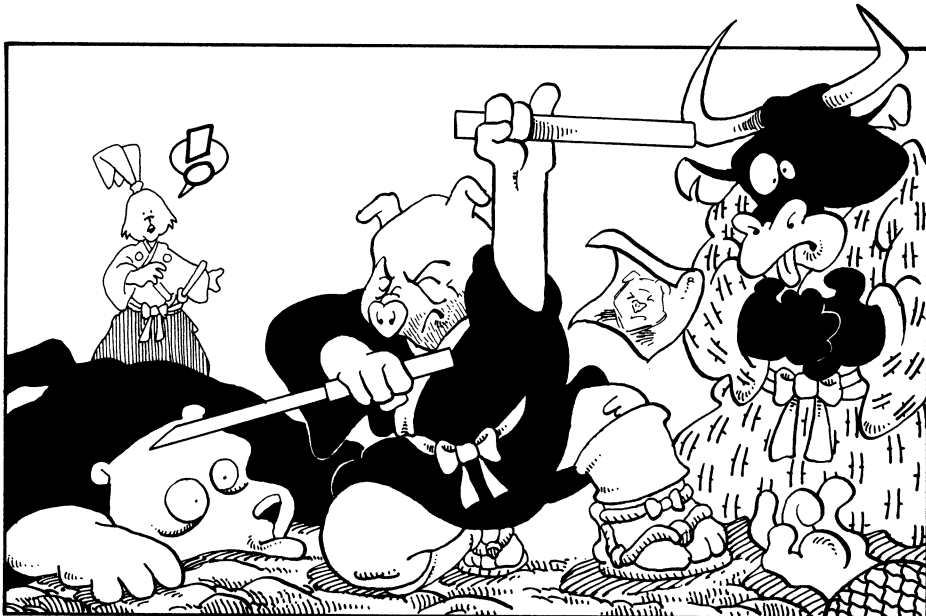
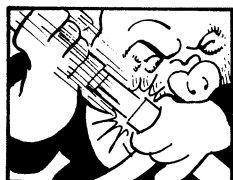
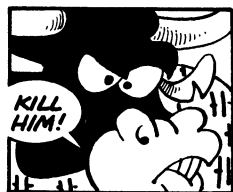
HA!
SASHIMI!

ULP!
YOW!

SPLASH!







WHY CAN'T YOU PEOPLE JUST LEAVE ME ALONE? I'VE BEEN TRODDEN ON ALL MY LIFE BECAUSE OF MY BLINDNESS! WHEN I LEARNED THE SWORD, I THOUGHT THAT WOULD END...

... BUT IT ONLY GOT WORSE!

I SYMPATHIZE WITH YOU, ZATO-INO, BUT YOU MUST BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE!

YOU ACT SO SELF-RIGHTEOUS, SAMURAI... I HATE YOU...

AND WHAT I HATE, I KILL!

I THOUGHT OF
YOU AS A
FRIEND,
ZATO.

YOU THOUGHT OF
ME THE SAME WAY.
I KNOW YOU SENSED
THOSE BOUNTY-
HUNTERS LAST
NIGHT AND LEFT
SO I WOULD NOT
BE THREATENED
BY THEM!

FOR
ONE SUCH AS I,
FRIENDSHIP IS
JUST ANOTHER
BURDEN.

I KNOW
ONLY VICTORY
OR... **DEATH!**

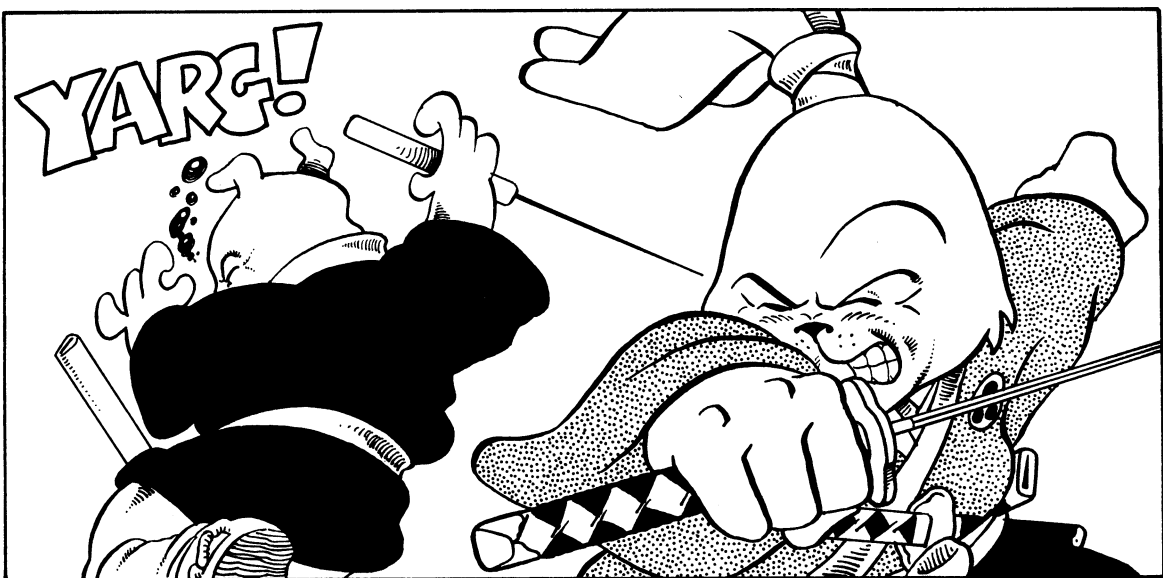
MUST
IT END LIKE
THIS?

YES. I WILL
NOT BE TURNED
OVER TO THE
AUTHORITIES!

I DON'T
WANT TO KILL
YOU.

GOOD!
THEN I
CAN'T
LOSE!





TWO MONTHS LATER...

WELL, CARVER, ISN'T IT FINISHED YET?

PATIENCE, BLIND ONE. JUST ONE MORE CUT...

THERE!

IT'S DONE!

GOOD!

I'LL SEE HOW IT FITS.

AH... IT FEELS FINE...

...AND IT SEEMS TO WORK AS WELL!

SNIFF! SNORT! SNOT!

Cuck!

BUT I'VE GOT TO PUT IT TO THE TEST!

HEY! MY PET!

I CHARGE EXTRA FOR THAT!

YEEK!

SLICE!

SUIT!

HA! THIS WOODEN NOSE WORKS PERFECTLY!

I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET THAT RONIN AGAIN!

BUT WHY IS EVERYTHING PINE SCENTED?

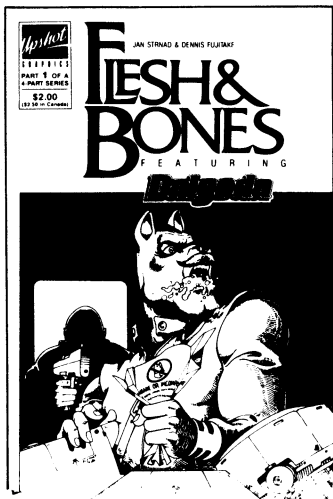
臭

It's Time

by Jan Strnad

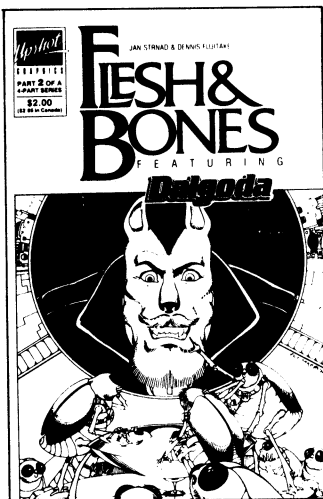
Yep, you've dallied long enough. It's time for you to start picking up "one of the best titles around" (according to Martin Crookall of *Fantasy Advertiser*).

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?

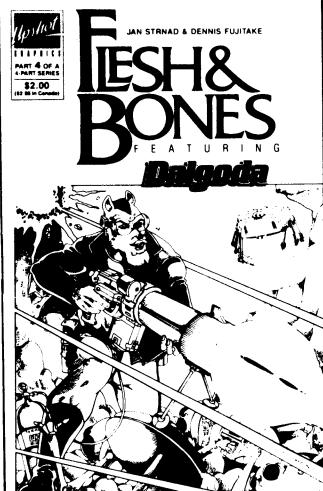
Book Two: Is it just sub-space psychosis, or is *Navigator Stark* really seeing angels? Dal's not waiting to find out—he's out to kick tail on the planet of the bubble-people. Gunner's new sub-space torpedos are put to the test!



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?



Dalgoda's gathered critical acclaim from comics professionals from *Frank Miller* to *Howard Chaykin*, reviewers from *R.A. Jones* to *Don Thompson*, and about 30,000 fans have loved it too! *Fantasy Advertiser* calls it "one of the finest packages going." Don't you think you've waited long enough?

Look for *Flesh & Bones* at your local comics shop or order it from your subscription service... or get it straight from *Fantagraphics Books*!

To Order: Send check or money order for \$8.00 for all four issues of *Flesh & Bones* to: *Flesh & Bones Subs*, *Fantagraphics Books*, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura CA 91301. All copies are mailed flat in an envelope.

Let's give them time to get ahead (or at least less behind) on **Omaha** first, though.

Ken Macklin's Dr. Watchstop: Hm. Good thought. I'll work on that.

Maxwell Mouse, Cerebus, Fish Police, Cutey Bunny, etc.: Why bother? All these series have perfectly respectable homes of their own—seems a shame to take up space in **Critters** which could be used to feature some **Critters**-unique series.

Like, for instance, this issue's "Lizards." I tell you, this Sam Kieth fellow is going places. Aside from inking Matt Wagner's **Mage** (and doing a spectacular enough job on it to merit a "Best Art Team" Kirby Award nomination), he can write, he can draw, he can color, he can... well, he can't letter. So I should thank ace calligrapher Stan Sakai for jumping into the breach and lettering the "Lizards" story for us. Anyway, if you're looking for more Kieth work, Sam has a two-page fable in **Anything Goes!** #2, and is working on **Wandering Stars**, a seven-part limited series he's creating with Stuart Hopen for Fantagraphics Books.

Well, let's do some letters. Think I'll start off with a contentious missive and then get into the "you're a genius" ones later... —KT

Dear Mr. Thompson:

Critters sounds good in theory. It can't work in practice, to wit:

- a) the "Animals" should be funny (Gnuiff said);
- b) \$2.00 price tag;
- c) Your idea that selling out 14,000 copies (a low count by my standards) meant this book is a success?!

d) And saying you must limit amount of copies printed because of the books being B&W—look at **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**. How many zillions of printings has that gone through? How many people are now two years later trying to rip off the TMNT concept in one way or another. And you say the B&W audience is limited!!

From wit:

a) Gnuiff said.

b, c, d) Print up enough copies to reach a wider audience through distribution and b) you can **lower** your price (look at Eclipse comic you do!!) c) You'll really sell out 50,000 copies or more! and d) people will order more of #1 or #2 or even #3 and you'll be rich!

Q: Why is Steve Gallacci's art crisper looking in **Albedo**? In your book it looks washed out. It looks pencilled and charcoaled for shading but it seems smudged in your book.

Hopefully I've been helpful and the book will really take off!

PS: Great title for the lettercol, huh: "The Scratchin' Post."

N. David Alken
Bronx, NY

Ah, grasshopper—being a city boy, you were apparently never handed this pearl of wisdom: "don't teach your grandmother how to suck eggs."

See, the problem with printing A LOT more copies than what distributors order from you is that in VIRTUALLY EVERY CASE stores and distributors order about as many as they're going to need, and if you print 50,000 more than they're going to need, chances are excellent that you're going to be stuck with a lot of insulation. I hate to break it to you, but printing more copies doesn't automatically increase sales, any more than gambling with high stakes increases your chances of winning.

You may have noticed (well, considering your letter, you may not, come to think of it) that all the Eclipse titles whose prices were lowered are super-hero titles—every one. This is because super-heroes are a popular genre; do a super-hero title, and you're guaranteed more readers than if you do a funny-animal title. (TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES is a fluke—I bet a big percentage of that book's sales goes to speculators anyway). You'll notice that when Eclipse does a P. Craig Russell opera book or REID FLEMING or whatever, those old \$2.00 pricetags get dusted off in a hurry. Dean Mullaney's no dolt. (A term, by the way, generally not considered part of a civil discussion, except perhaps in the Bronx.)

As for Gallacci's art, you're right to an extent: (a) our printer's been having some problems recently, and Steve's work has suffered a little as a result; (b) we work with a slightly coarser line screen—it gives the art less of an ultra-glossy texture, but I sort of favor the way it roughs it up a bit; (c) on one episode, Steve was without his airbrush (not charcoal, David) and had to make do with wash—that may be the episode that particularly struck you.

As for the "funny" vs. "non-funny" stuff, we've been around the block a couple times on that already, most recently with Brent Winter. In fact, I'll let the next letterwriter take care of that one; he also covers the two-dollar dilemma.

(And if there's anything I really hate, it's cute names for comics lettercolumns. Sorry, Dave.) —KT

Dear Kim,

This is probably going to devolve into a question of semantics, but the way I see it, "funny animal" needs a patina of humor about as much as "comic book" requires slapstick. The fact that "Birthright" uses a world of foxes, bears, and the like makes it all the more poignant—it's not just a bunch of neurotics running around in leotards, as DC or Marvel or First might be tempted to render it. Winter himself says it: "... the soul of a funny-animal is the reflection of our own humanity." As odd as it may seem, a story like "Birthright" is all the more "human" because of the funny-animal element. As one of your other letter-writers points out, "animals don't kill for greed or power" (greed, no, but power, maybe). She goes on: "I feel sorry to see them doing it." And that is why it works; it puts us in touch with those feelings we might not otherwise express if it were ("Yawn.") humans doing it to each other.

As a collector who specializes in the independents, I can fully understand why I'm paying two bucks for black-and-white. A way out of this spiral might be a sort of "collective printing" that gathers together a number of short-run black-and-whites like yourself in such a way that it makes it more economical for you and the printer. Granted, the logistics would be maddening, but...

I understand **Critters** #1 is doing bonzo in the resale market. If that's any barometer of success, you guys are apparently doing something right. My own collection is based on artistic merits, like Chaykin and Wagner and Messner-Loebs (as well as a few others)—and as such **Critters** will be on the purchase list for as long as you can keep up the obvious quality.

By the way, the "Crustacean" piece was terrific! Who are these demented people?

Sean Martin
Toledo, OH

I'm not sure I WANT to know. I've only seen a couple of Toren Smith's stories in various Eclipse Comics, but Lela Dowling is fairly well known in comics fandom for her fantasy art. She was originally slated to collaborate on a CUTIEY BUNNY story with Josh Quagmire for an early issue of **CRITTERS**—I understand that story will now be appearing in **ARMY SURPLUS KOMIKZ** whenever they get it finished up.

Thanks for the kind words. Here's another rebuttal to Mr. Winter. —KT

Dear Mr. Kim Thompson,

I write to you exclusively for the benefit and defense of **Critters** against that most opinionated letter of Mister Brent Winter in issue #5.

Before I go into any rebuke of Mister Winter's opinions, I would like to say that I admire his ability to be direct, frank (not to mention blunt), and to the point—though it could have been employed in a more useful manner than "downtrodding" an independent comic (though it was good of him to state at the beginning that they were just his **opinions**!).

The way the gentleman writes and stresses his point makes it seem that (a) he literally swaggers across the paper, making demands and opinions as if he were an assistant editor, and (b) he has no more imagination than a roasted peanut.

I must say that he has the right idea about the words "Funny Animal" but has entirely the wrong meaning. Pretty much everyone is guilty of using those words in context with any artistic publication having anthropomorphic animals regardless of what type of story it might tell, whether it was truly comical, or very serious; and he has the right idea that some stories cannot, in the least,

be considered "Funny Animal" (e.g., **Albedo**, "Erma Felna, E.D.F."; **Critters**, "Birthright"; and from both, "Usagi Yojimbo"—to name a few.)

I myself have been trying vainly to have people understand that "Funny Animal" is **no longer** a "catch-all" term. Now, in this day and age, with a myriad of Anthropomorphic publications coming out, those two no longer **work!**

(I am sure that Mr. Gallacci has heard of me, from my many letters to him, and my "quirk" that "Erma Felna, E.D.F." and "Usagi Yojimbo" are epic Anthropomorphic sagas, and **not** "Funny Animal," because neither one can be considered "funny" or humorous in any sense. And mind you, Mr. Kim Thompson, I find the word "Anthropomorphic" **very** easy to say.)

As you can probably denote from my letter, I am very much a fan of Steve's work; I also like to think of myself as a connoisseur of Anthropomorphic fanzines and books. I regard **Albedo's** "Erma Felna, E.D.F." and **Critters'** "Birthright" as the **ultimate** in Anthropomorphic literature, and I feel both those stories are perfect with their cast, and would just be hopelessly ruined if it was made with a human cast, or had the introduction of humans in it.

In that respect, I would **never** have bought **Albedo** or **Critters** if anything like that were in either.

I very much liked "Captain Jack," but as I said I am strictly Anthropomorphic. That story did not appeal to me that much, except for a brief bit of comic relief.

"Gnuff," too, was very good, a little more so than "Captain Jack," in that at points, it is serious, especially with Milton being a very intriguing and interesting storyteller.

I see that Mister Winter has only his opinion that **Critters** may flop because of its vagueness in its terminology. But what I do with my money is none of his concern. As for **Critters**, I will continually put down my two dollars for as long as it remains on the shelf.

Wayne Powers
Austin, TX

Thanks for the kind words, Wayne. You may think "anthropomorphic" is easy to say, but it's not the kind of word I like to gracefully slip into conversation every couple of lines or so. (And boy, is it a pain to typeset!)

Although I obviously agree more with you than with Brent Winter, I think you may be taking a little too much of the opposite viewpoint—I've found a number of the "FUNNY-funny-animal" strips of the past to be delightful, and have a few samples of this kind of material coming up—including, in fact, Ty Templeton's swell eight-pager next issue. Hope you like it.

Well, the end of the page is looming. Next issue, I should be able to print more than three letters—including an interesting Q&A with Stan Sakai on the finer points of Usagi Yojimbo's weaponry.

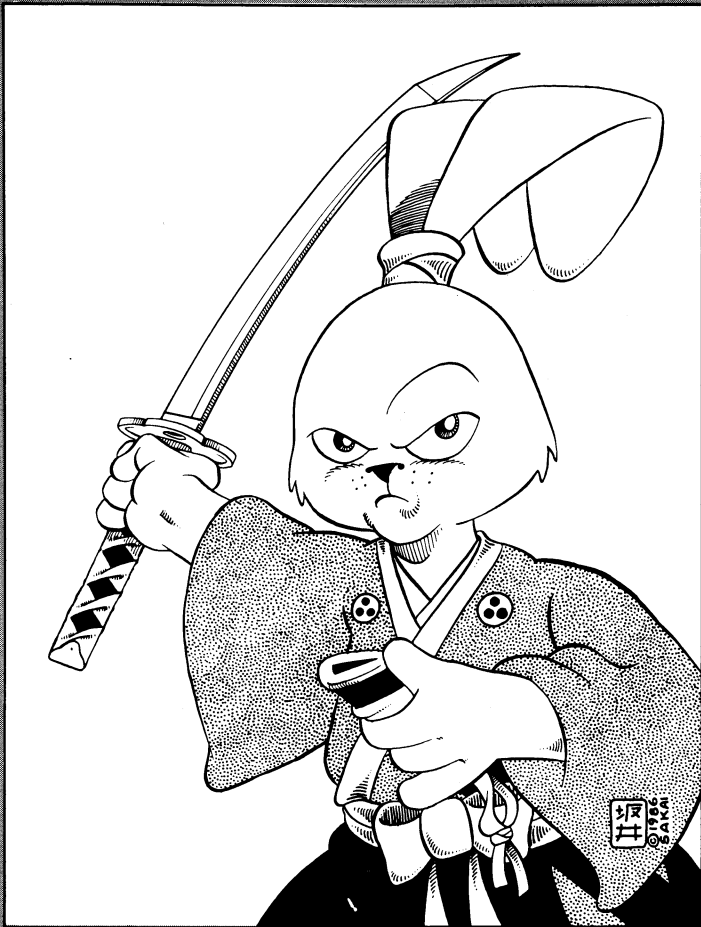
See you then!

—KIM THOMPSON

CREDITS: "Gnuff" was written, drawn, lettered, and toned by **Freddy Milton** and translated by **Kim Thompson**. "Lizards" was written and drawn by **Sam Kieth** and lettered by **Stan Sakai**. "Usagi Yojimbo" was written, drawn, and lettered by **Stan Sakai**. The cover was drawn and colored by **Freddy Milton**. One last time: the logo is still by **Freddy** and **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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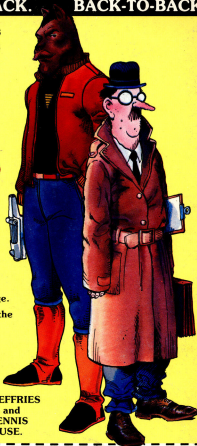
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