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CRITTERS



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FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Critters

No. 17 Oct.
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by **TOM STAZER**

The reporter returns in a tale of black-mail, murder, and polar bears...

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"Chapter 6"

by **STEVEN A. GALLACCI**

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EDITORIAL

Well, I hope everyone who wanted a copy of *Usagi Yojimbo* #1 has one by now, since the book sold out less than a week after publication. Don't worry—if you missed it, we will be reprinting it in late July; thus, once the *Usagi Yojimbo* trade paperback appears later this month, we should have every "Usagi Yojimbo" story in print for good long time.

I don't much cotton to the idea of readers having to pay out the nose for comic-book stories that just happened to sell a little better than the publisher anticipated; here at Fantagraphics Books, we'll always make an effort to keep everything available at a reasonable price. (Although I must confess it's a refreshingly new problem for us to sell out an issue too fast—we've got a garageful of comics we were hoping to be rid of years ago!)

This issue bids farewell to "Birthright" once again, with a concluding chapter that will, I predict, cause quite a stir among Gallacci fans. Will there be a "Birthright III"? What do you think?

Speaking of "Birthright," we pulled just about the nastiest mistake possible with the chapter in issue #15, where we

reversed pages 15 and 16—right in the middle of a fight scene, too! When you reread the story (which we're sure you will, now that it's completed), please bear that in mind. Our apologies.

Also in this issue, we're happy to welcome back Tom Stazer's "Lionheart," as well as another installment of John Holland and Ron Wilber's "Lizards."

I hope you enjoyed last issue's "Gnuff" chapter, finishing off the "Love of Gnellie" sequence, *Critters'* first full-fledged romantic drama. The next "Gnuff" sequence begins two months from now, with the usual cast of characters, and a (relatively) more traditional storyline.

I do have a bit of bad news for Freddy Milton fans, though. As you may recall, I've been talking about getting the rights to his "Woody Woodpecker" work for *Critters*. Well, after talking to the current owners of Woody (Universal Studios), it turns out that the property is not available: the comic-book rights have been licensed away to another party and can't be regained. My

guess is that Western Publishing, which did Woody comics from 1947 to 1984, still has those rights even though they haven't published an issue in three years. I'm still working to see if something can be arranged to work around this, but it doesn't look too good.

But on to happier things: Next issue is jam-packed with good stuff! It includes the premiere of Jim Engel's "Leggo Lamb," the concluding half of "Lionheart," another "Blue Beagle" story by Tim Fuller, a short "Fission Chicken" tale by J.P. Morgan, and a little gag strip by Mark Armstrong—rounded off with possibly the most spectacular cover in *Critters'* history! The following month, we'll be renewing our acquaintance with Reed Waller and Kate Worley's "Speakingstone" series... and if you're wondering, "why didn't those saps ask Reed for a cover for the first story?"—rest assured that we asked ourselves the same question and have acted accordingly. See you then!

Kim Thompson

CREDITS: "Lionheart" was written and drawn by **Tom Stazer**. "Birthright II" was written, drawn, and toned by **Steven A. Gallacci**, with character inking by **Monika Livingstone**; typesetting by **Rocket Type**. "Lizards" was written by **J. Holland** and drawn by **Ron Wilber**. The cover was painted by **Tom Stazer**. Separations on the cover by **S'M Graphics**. Printed at **Port Publications**. Production by **Doug Erb**. Typesetting by **Inez M. Gorell**. *CRITTERS* is edited by **Kim Thompson** for **FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS**.

LIONHEART

part one

WHAT LOUSY WEATHER. IT'S FOUR A.M. MONDAY MORNING, ABOUT FORTY DEGREES OUT... IF I WAS SMART, I'D BE BACK HOME IN BED INSTEAD OF OUT HERE, PLAYING **DEATHRACE 2000**.

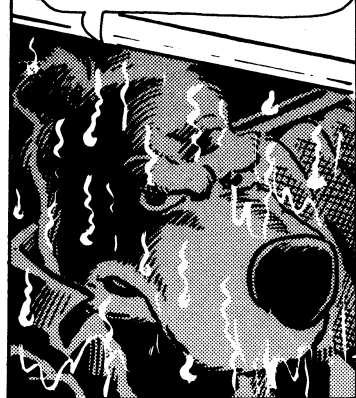


IN THE SEAT BESIDE ME IS A SOAKING WET 350-POUND LAWYER NAMED LES WAZLER, CHAIN-SMOKING WINSTONS. HE'S AN OLD FRIEND, SO I'M DOING HIM A FAVOR AND TAKING HIM TO THE AIRPORT. HE HASN'T TOLD ME WHY YET.



COULDN'T GO HOME. THEY'RE WATCHING MY APARTMENT. GOTTA GO INTO HIDING.

THRAPP'S COMPLETELY RUTHLESS--HE'LL HAVE ME KILLED.



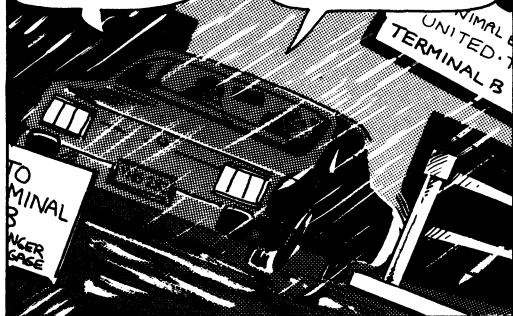
THRAPP. YOU MEAN COUNCILMAN THRAPP?

WHO ELSE? THE ROTTEN LITTLE MOLE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE TAPE.



LES, ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?

NOT NOW. NO TIME. MEET ME IN A DAY-- I'M FLYING TO CHURCHILL IN CANADA.



CANADA? WHAT, NOT COLD ENOUGH HERE?

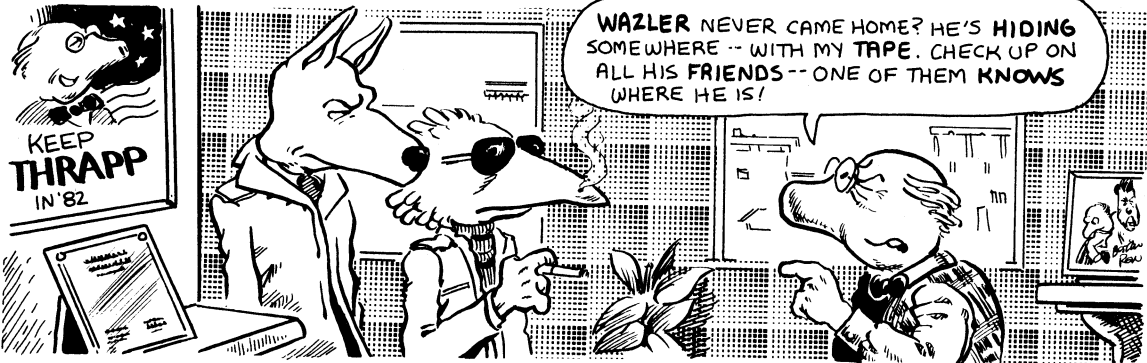
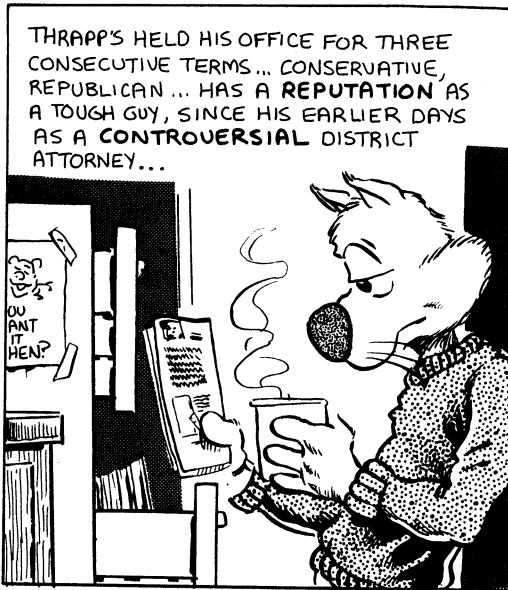
CHURCHILL'S IN THE MIDST OF ITS ANNUAL POLAR BEAR CONVENTION. I CAN BLEND IN. COME TO THE HOTEL BRADBURY... AND DON'T TELL ANYONE WHAT'S GOING ON!

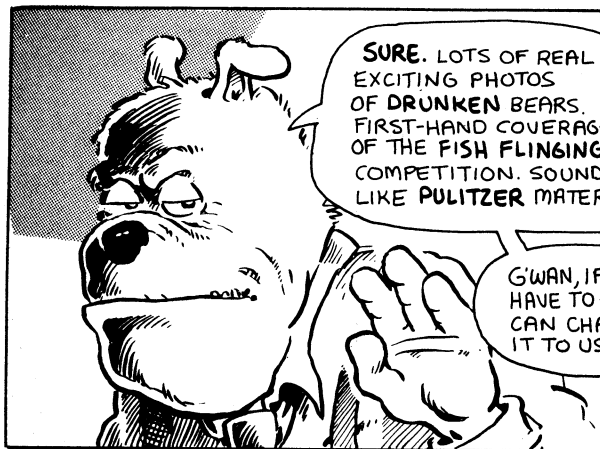


THAT OUGHT TO BE EASY-- I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT.



POLAR BEAR HUNT!

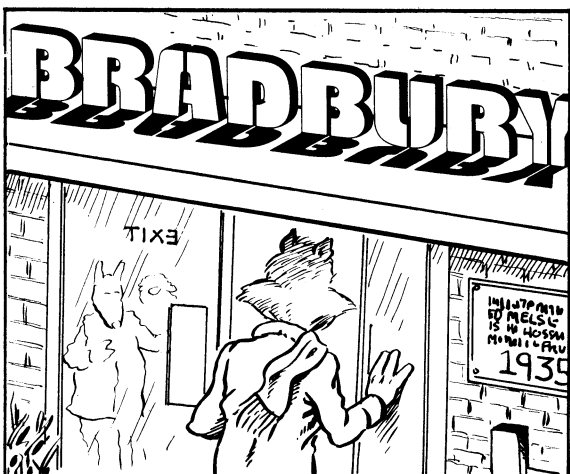
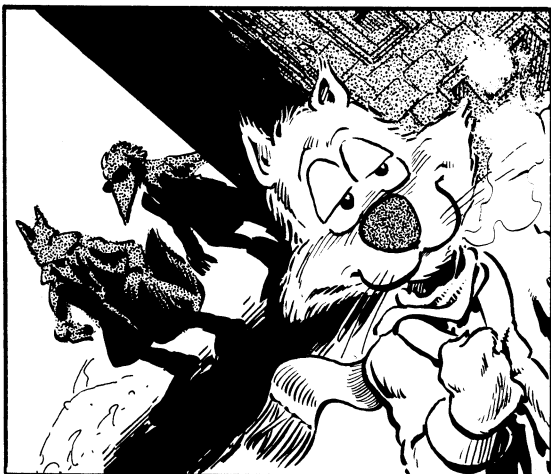
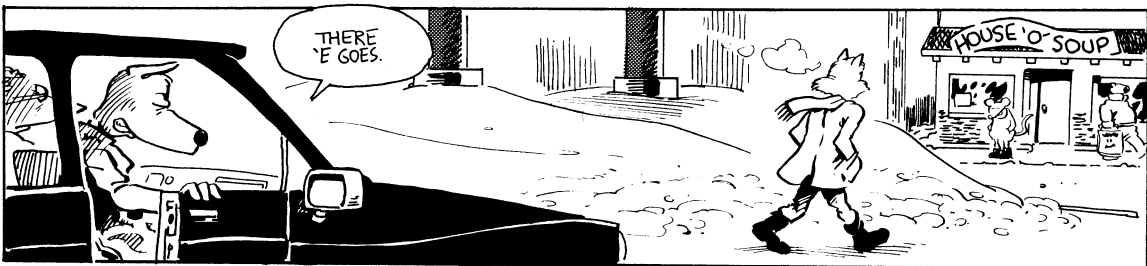
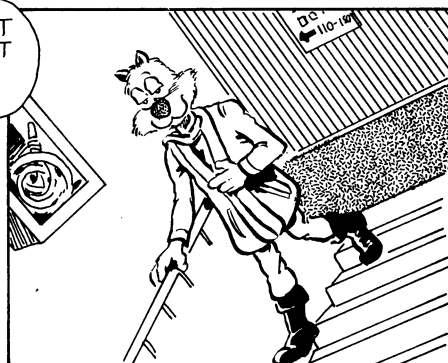
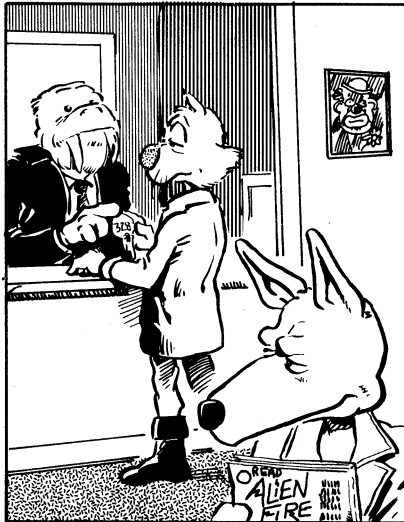
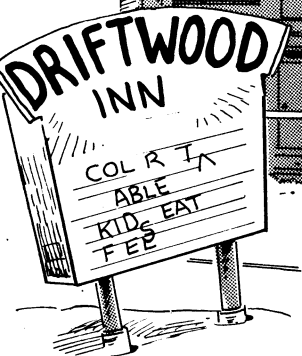


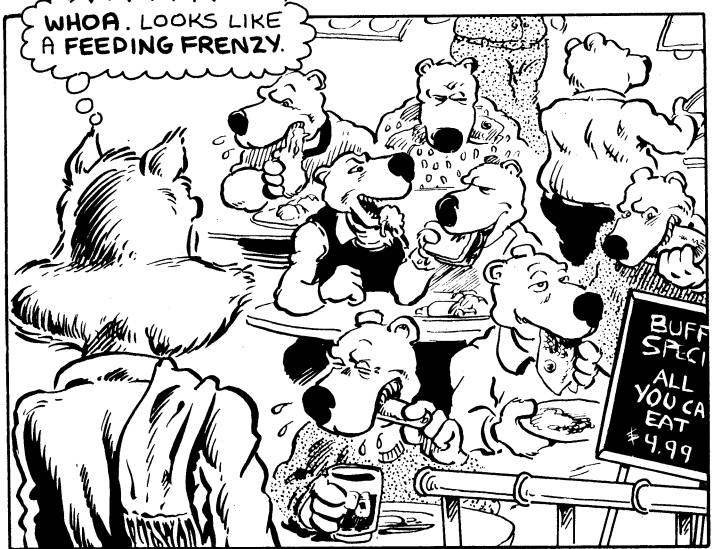


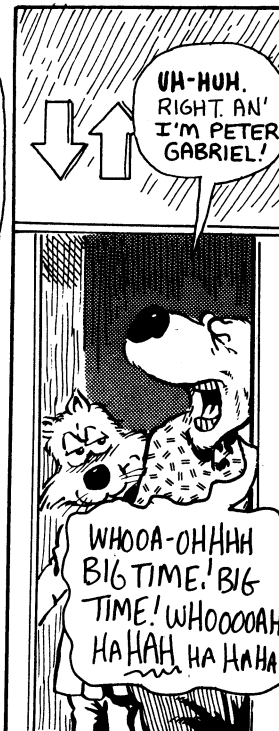
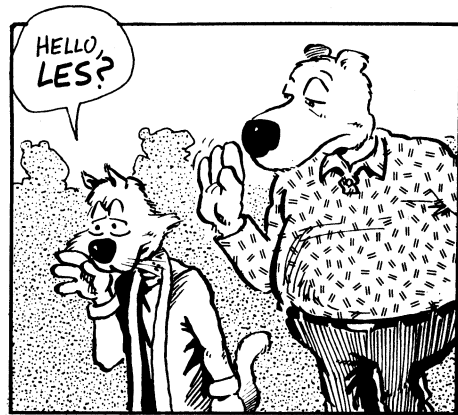
THE NEXT MORNING,
IN CHURCHILL...

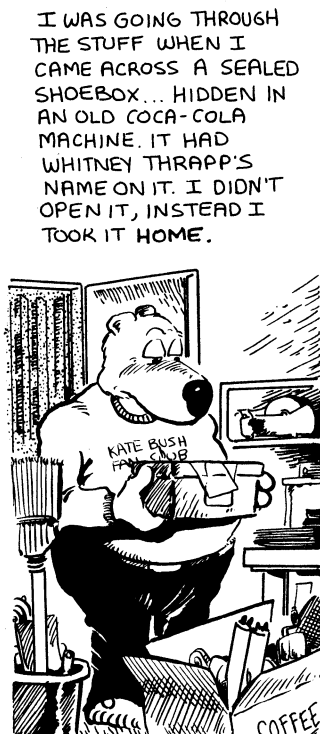
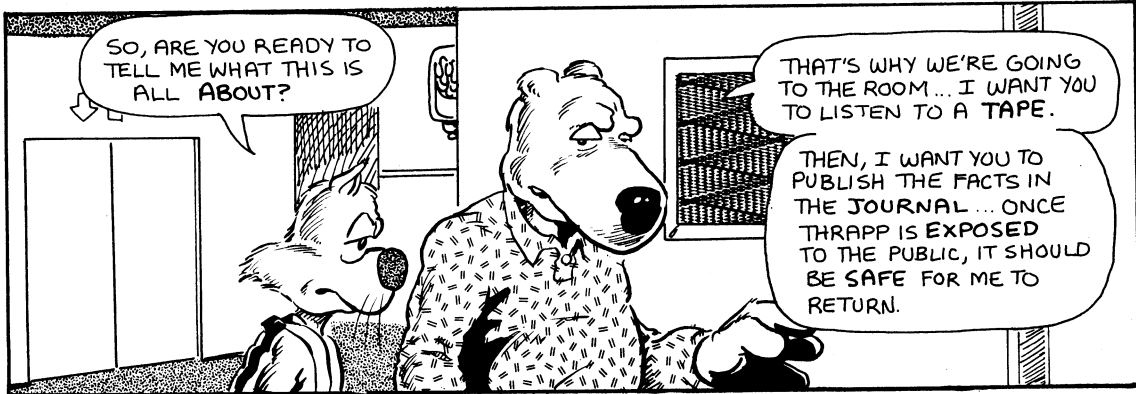
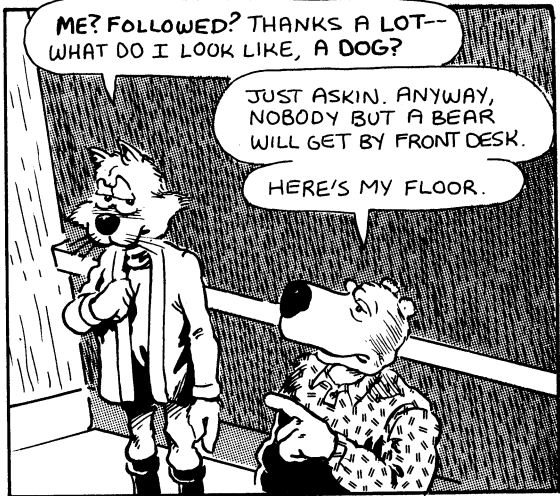


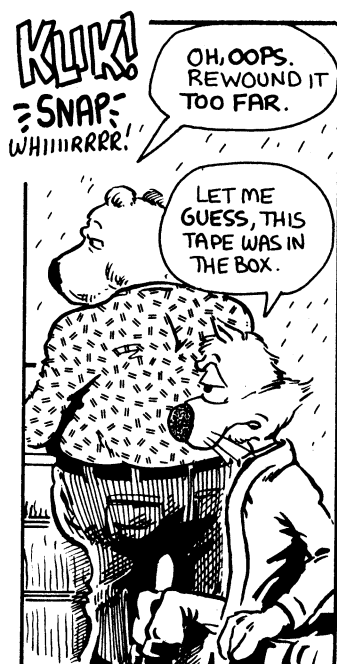
EVENTUALLY...









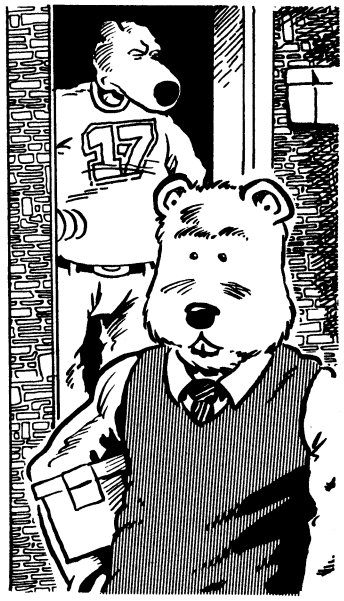


KLIK! SNAP! WHRRRR!!

I PUT THE TAPES BACK IN THE SHOEBOX, GOT IT SEALED BACK UP AND GAVE IT TO THRAPP'S GOPHER WHEN HE ARRIVED.

I FIGURED THAT WAS THE END OF IT.

BUT, EARLY THE NEXT MORNING I GOT A CALL FROM THRAPP.



BUT, I COULDN'T GO BACK TO SLEEP... I WAS WONDERING WHAT WAS SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THE TAPES THAT THRAPP WOULD BE SO CONCERNED ABOUT THEM. I FOUND THE MISSING CASSETTE IN MY SON'S GHETTO BLASTER.



I'M PRETTY SURE THESE RECORDINGS WERE MADE WHEN THRAPP WAS D.A.

JUST WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, THRAPP? BLACKMAILING ME INTO LOSING MY CASE!

WHAT ARE YOU ACTING SO RIGHTEOUS FOR, QUINLAN? I NEVER TOLD YOU TO CHEAT ON YOUR WIFE. YOU'VE MADE YOUR BED, NOW LIE IN IT. YOUR CLIENT'S GOING TO THE PEN!

YOU ROTTEN BASTARD.



AND... I PLAYED IT.

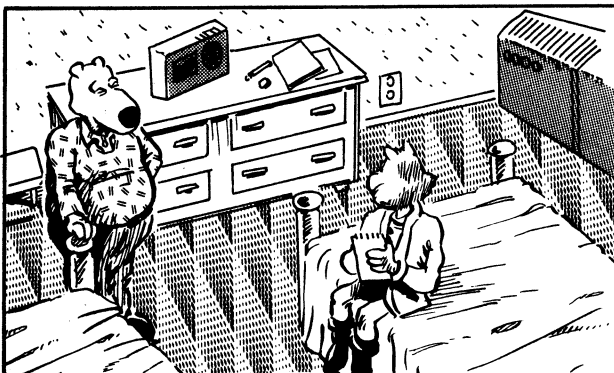
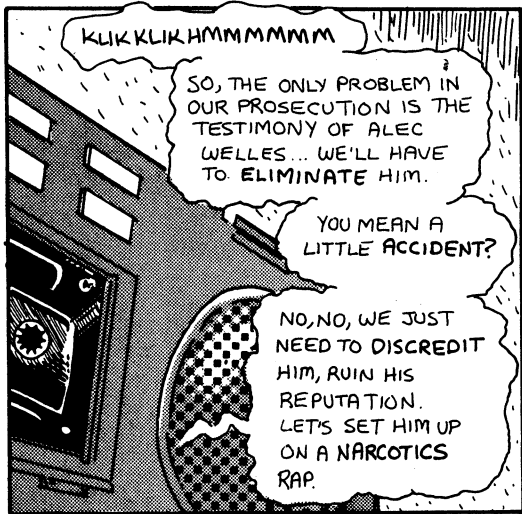


KLIK KLIK HMMMMMM

SO, THE ONLY PROBLEM IN OUR PROSECUTION IS THE TESTIMONY OF ALEC WELLES... WE'LL HAVE TO ELIMINATE HIM.

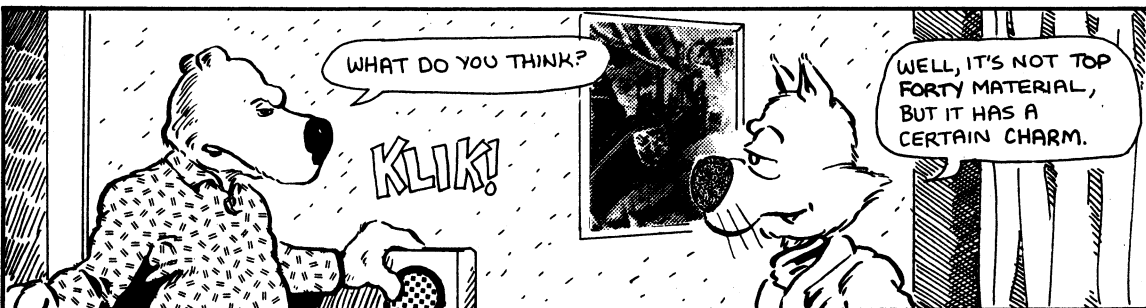
YOU MEAN A LITTLE ACCIDENT?

NO, NO, WE JUST NEED TO DISCREDIT HIM, RUIN HIS REPUTATION. LET'S SET HIM UP ON A NARCOTICS RAP.



THE TAPE WENT ON TO DETAIL BRIBERY, FAKING OF EVIDENCE, EVEN SEXUAL BLACKMAIL... PRETTY VILE STUFF. THE CASSETTE WAS APPARENTLY EDITED DOWN FROM LENGTHIER TAPES OF THRAPP'S ACTIVITIES... ALL THE INCRIMINATING DIALOGUES HAD BEEN CAREFULLY EXCERPTED AND COPIED.

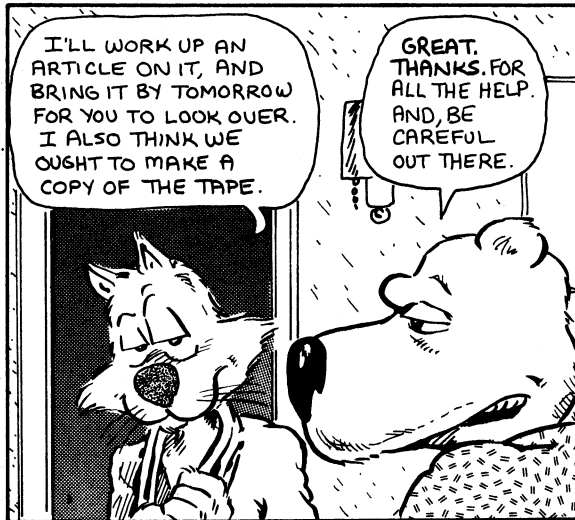
SOMEONE HAD GONE TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO MAKE THESE RECORDINGS... YET THEY ENDED UP INSIDE A COKE MACHINE FOR TEN YEARS. I WONDERED WHY.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

KLIK!

WELL, IT'S NOT TOP FORTY MATERIAL, BUT IT HAS A CERTAIN CHARM.



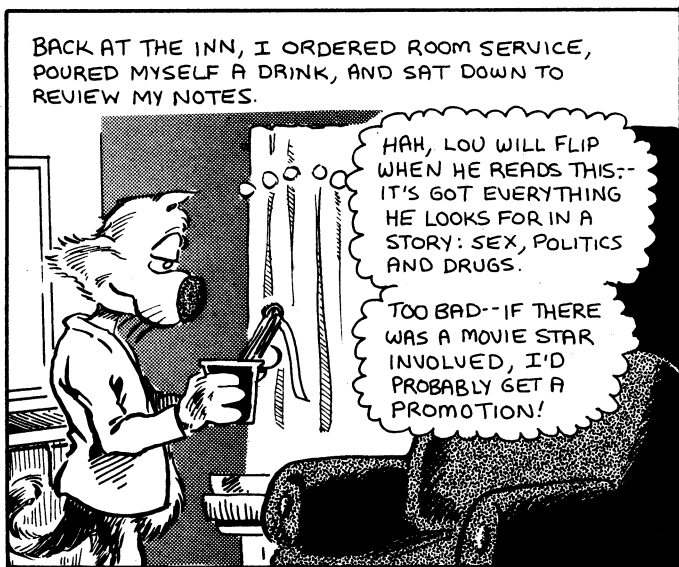
I'LL WORK UP AN ARTICLE ON IT, AND BRING IT BY TOMORROW FOR YOU TO LOOK OVER. I ALSO THINK WE OUGHT TO MAKE A COPY OF THE TAPE.

GREAT. THANKS. FOR ALL THE HELP. AND, BE CAREFUL OUT THERE.



IT WAS ALREADY DARK OUTSIDE, AND COLDER THAN AN INSURANCE SALESMAN'S HEART. I SUDDENLY REALIZED I HAD FORGOTTEN TO EAT SINCE THIS WHOLE AFFAIR STARTED.

GROWL
SNARLLGG
GRRAGGG



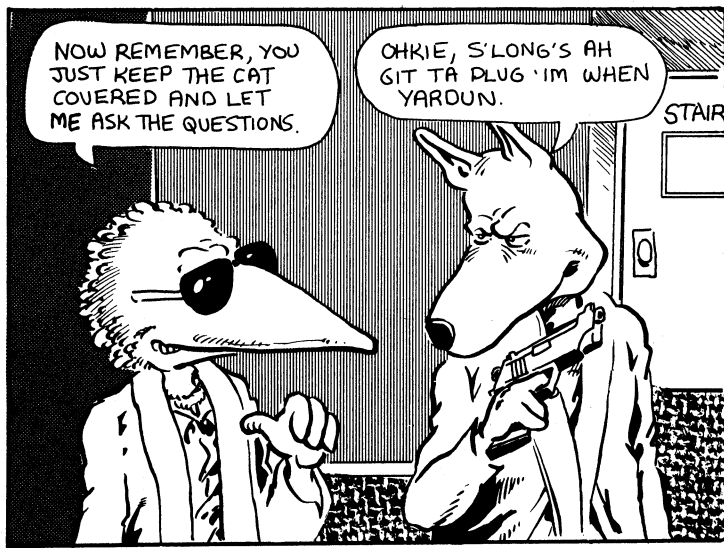
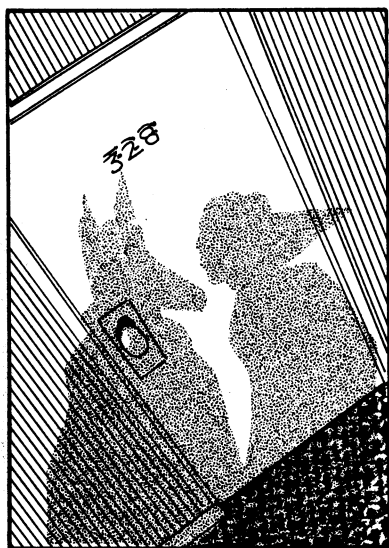
BACK AT THE INN, I ORDERED ROOM SERVICE, POURED MYSELF A DRINK, AND SAT DOWN TO REVIEW MY NOTES.

HAH, LOU WILL FLIP WHEN HE READS THIS-- IT'S GOT EVERYTHING HE LOOKS FOR IN A STORY: SEX, POLITICS AND DRUGS.

TOO BAD--IF THERE WAS A MOVIE STAR INVOLVED, I'D PROBABLY GET A PROMOTION!



YEP, THIS IS THE MOST LURID STORY I'VE HAD IN A YEAR, AND I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO DO ANYTHING DANGEROUS TO GET IT.



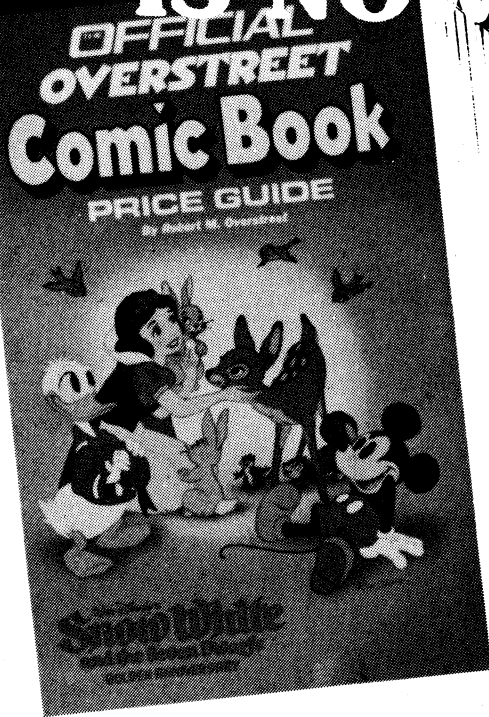
NOW REMEMBER, YOU JUST KEEP THE CAT COVERED AND LET ME ASK THE QUESTIONS.

OHKIE, S'LONG'S AH GIT TA PLUG 'IM WHEN YARDUN.

STAIR

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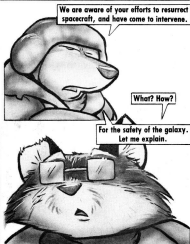
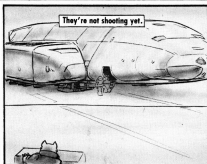
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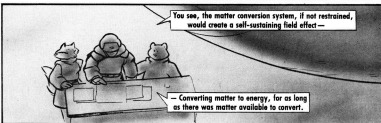
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We know you attempted a converter start, which, to us, signified that you don't know what you're doing.



And that your reconstructed ship doesn't have computer support, which would have known better as well.

So what do you plan to do?



Close us down? Leave us trapped on this one planet?

Diplomacy, Cap, diplomacy.

Now come on.



Give him the rap on tech support, then get a decision and get out of here.



There's an armored column coming from town.

What!

Oh no!

What are we going to do?



Yeah, if I can ask — what's going on?



Ten years ago, our country was invaded and occupied by another nation, Tosiu.



This last year, we ousted their forces. But our own freedom fighters have turned on the people, even more cruelly than the Tosiu.

Hmm. That might explain the depopulating that's going on.

"Depopulating"?

Yes, all over the rural areas, villages destroyed, inhabitants killed or collected together. Looks real ugly.

I told you!

That's why they were after me!

I told you —

Can you help us?

Remember — noninterference.

Yeah. We can't help you in your flight — but we might be able to evacuate you to a safer location.

Can these things fly?

Sure, sort of.

Anyone to fly them?

Uh — no.

There it is.

All right, start dividing yourselves. There should be enough room to get everyone out.

Toki, I don't even want the paint scratched, so at first sign of trouble, boost out of here, max overload.

Kala, check out the other ship.

I have a feeling we'll have to fly them without 'puter support.



Oh boy — Cap, I hope
yours isn't as bad as mine.

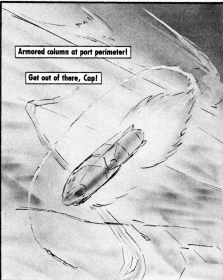


It's not too bad.

There must be bits and pieces from
half a dozen ships in here, though.




Heads up.



Armored column at port perimeter!

Get out of there, Cap!



Cap! I'm ready to go — I think.

Then git! We're still boarding.

Argh! Cap, the controls are a mess! I'll taxi a sec, then try a horizontal runup.

Fine, fine. I'll be right behind you.

Secure yourselves.
I'm about to cycle
up the reactor.

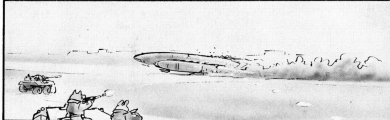
Cap! Cap! Toki! Cap's
ship's been sabotaged!

I read you, Kala —

Now get up and out of there.

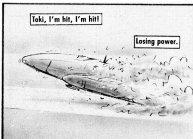
There's vehicles trying to cut you off.

Yeah, I see 'em. Throttling up now.



Toki, I'm hit, I'm hit!

Losing power.

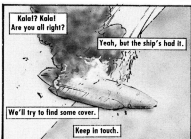


Kalal? Kalal!
Are you all right?

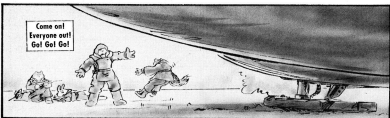
Yeah, but the ship's had it.

We'll try to find some cover.

Keep in touch.



Come on!
Everyone out!
Go! Go! Go!



Agh!

AAI! Ooh, Toki — been hit —
ohh Toki — gut shot —



Kalal — Oh dam!

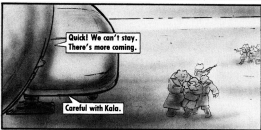
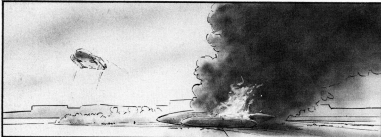


Heel Energize the weapons!

What about noninterference?

Toss it!
Set for automatic track and engagement,
fastest cycle, full suppression.

Here they come.



Quick! We can't stay.
There's more coming.

Careful with Kala.



Put Kala in the 'doc and strap in.

We're getting out of here!



Where are we going?

Is there anywhere
we can drop you off?



Yeah — got a nice planet?

Canno' go back —
no refuge anyver.



I dunno 'bout that.
The Togii frontier might be okay.



The frontier is a bit rough, but we'll be
as free as one can hope for anymore.



Aifon, can we go
to another planet?



'Nother planet?
Is that possible?



I heard that!

Heo, how's Kala?

She's hurt, but she'll live.

You've done nothing but cost us.



So, you want to go to another planet?

Any particular reason
why we'd want you?

Got my captain killed and Kala wounded.



Threatened the safety of known space.

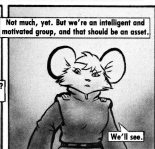
Now you want us to take care of you?



Oh, come on, savior-from-the-stars —
we're not asking for that.

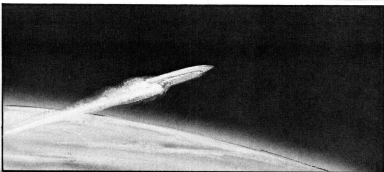
Just the chance to get
somewhere with a future.

Oh, and what can you offer?
What can you do?



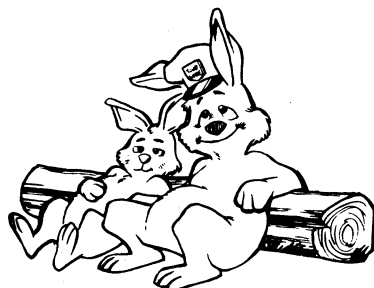
Not much, yet. But we're an intelligent and
motivated group, and that should be an asset.

We'll see.



Welcome to the Fantagraphics

MENAGERIE



ADVENTURES OF CAPT. JACK

Adventures of Captain Jack #1: Premiere issue! Beatniks, lava lamps, cosmic pinball, and other funny stuff.

Adventures of Captain Jack #2: "Another Saturday Night" Part 1: Herman dies, Adam finds a soulmate.

Adventures of Captain Jack #3: Part 2 of "Sat. Night": Herman and Beezlebub visit the netherworld.

Adventures of Captain Jack #4: Maniacal astronauts and more.

Adventures of Captain Jack #5: "Farmer Fred, I'm In Love With Your Daughter" Part 1: Arrival on Janet's planet.

Adventures of Captain Jack #6: Part 2 Herman and Janet decide to go away together.

Adventures of Captain Jack #7: Part 3: Beezlebub intrudes in Herman and Janet's relationship.

Adventures of Captain Jack #8: Pool hustling and more.

CRITTERS

Critters #4: *Gnuff* and *Birtright* continue, *Lionheart* premieres, and the first Ken Macklin cover painting!

Critters #5: *Birtright* continues, the first *Gnuff* novel concludes (with a cover), plus Stan Sakai's *Nilson Groundthumper*!

Critters #6: *Usagi Yojimbo* tale with cover, *Birtright* concludes, and the first *Firecracker Jack* by Mark Armstrong!

Critters #7: Gnuff returns in *Animal Graffiti*, Usagi Yojimbo, and *De Grand Wa-Zoo* by Sam Kieth!

Critters #8: *Jack Bunny* by cover artist Mark Armstrong, Templeton Kelly tribute, and *Lionheart* begins.

Critters #9: Halloween issue with Gnuff behind a mask, *Lionheart's* nightmare, and *Dog Boy*.

Critters #10: *Usagi Yojimbo* cover and story, plus the continuations of *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters #11: Special Christmas issue, featuring the conclusions of *Usagi Yojimbo*, *Gnuff*, and *Lionheart*, plus work by Mike Kazaleh, J. Holland and Ron Wilber, Mark Armstrong, Ty Templeton, Sam Kieth, Steve Lafler, and Ken Macklin. 68 pages!

Critters #12: *Birthright* returns, with a cover by Gallacci, plus Reed Waller and Kate Worley, and Sam Kieth!

Critters #13: *Gnuff* cover and 16-page chapter, plus *Birthright*, *Surfin' Neanderthals* by Mark Armstrong.

Critters #14: *Usagi Yojimbo* story and cover, plus *Birthright* and *Gnuff* continue.

Critters #15: *The Blue Beagle* and *Fission Chicken* both debut, and *Birthright* races on!

DOG BOY

Dog Boy #1: Journey off into surreal experiences with "Werewolf Bikers" and more!

Dog Boy #2: Sir Isaac Newton guest stars as reality unravels.

Dog Boy #3: *Dog Boy* shows how to publish your own comic book.

Dog Boy #4: *Dog Boy* goes to Hell, plus *Dog Girl* invades the White House. Guest starring Reagan!

HUGO

Hugo #1: Milton (*Midnite*) Knight's feline "Meets the Baron."

Hugo #2: Hugo becomes a cartoonist and gets into deep trouble.

Hugo #3: Hugo is abducted by mermaids and fights sharks.

MYRON MOOSE

Myron Moose Funnies #1: Lots of goofy snot jokes, plus parodies of Dr. Seuss and Uncle Wiggly books.

USAGI YOJIMBO

Usagi Yojimbo #1: Usagi journeys back to his youth and tells how he became a samurai. Plus: Fujitake!

Usagi Yojimbo #2: Usagi goes into training and has his first duel. Plus: A new strip by Dave Thorne.

BOOKS

The Beast Is Dead: Magnificent 1945 French graphic novel chronicling World War II as fought by animals. Stunning full-color work; hardcover!

Usagi Yojimbo Book One: Every *Usagi Yojimbo* story published to date collected in one handy 160-page volume, with a new Stan Sakai cover.

MAGAZINES

Amazing Heroes #8: Behind the scenes of DC's *Captain Carrot* comic with Scott Shaw! and Roy Thomas. Plus a funny-animal pictorial.

Amazing Heroes #42: Funny-animal issue with Joshua Quagmire cover and interview. Plus: Arn Saba on Neil the Horse and Dave Sim on Cerebus!

Amazing Heroes #111: Ty Templeton (of *Critters*) interviewed. It's funny.

The Comics Journal #73: Carl Barks featured, with long retrospective.

The Comics Journal #81-82: Mammoth interview with Dave (Cerebus the Aardvark) Sim.

The Comics Journal #99: Long interview with Arn (Neil the Horse) Saba.

OTHER STUFF

Anything Goes #2: Classic Alan Moore/Donald Simpson strip about death of comics includes several pages of Mike Kazaleh funny-animal characters. Plus Sam Kieth!

Anything Goes #3: Featuring a full-color Captain Jack story by Mike Kazaleh, Cerebus vignette by Dave Sim, and Cerebus cover by Neal Adams.

Doomsday Squad #3: Full-color Usagi Yojimbo back-up by Sakai.

Doomsday Squad #5: Full-color Captain Jack back-up by Kazaleh.

NEMO #21: 28 pages of Jack Kent's classic *King Aroo* strip—a treat for classic funny-animal lovers!

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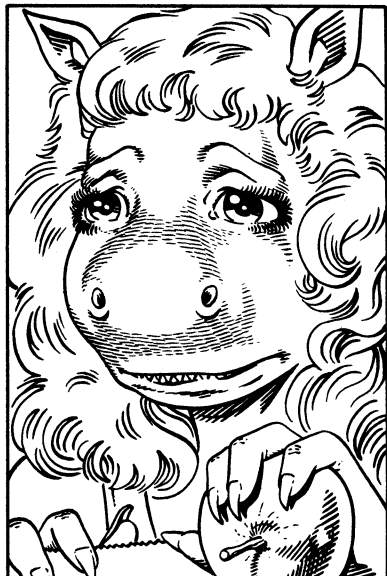
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Please allow four to six weeks for delivery. Outside U.S. and Canada, please add 15% to cover additional postage.

BLOOD from a STONE

"WHAT'S A SWEETHEART LIKE
YOU DOING IN A DUMP LIKE
THIS ?"
- BOB DYLAN

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I WISH ALL I HAD TO DO WAS STAND AROUND DOING NOTHING.

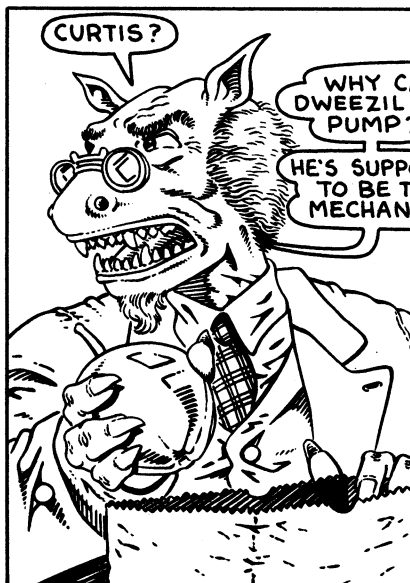
OH, FATHER.

I DIDN'T SEE YOU COME IN.

BEEN TO THE SQUARE?

YES.

OH, CURTIS SAYS HE CAN STOP BY TOMORROW TO LOOK AT THE PUMP.



CURTIS?

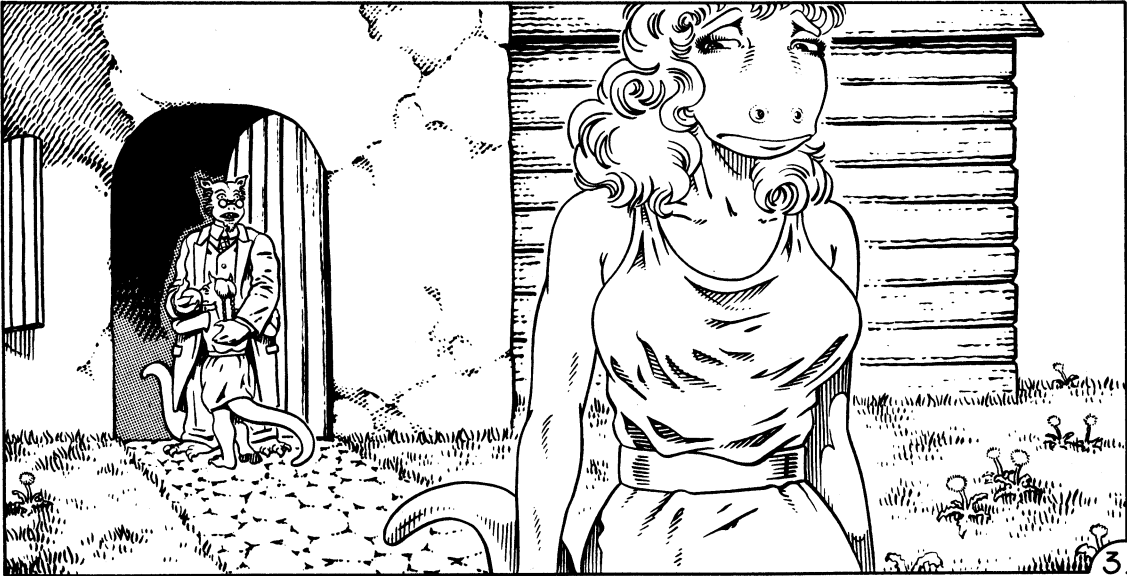
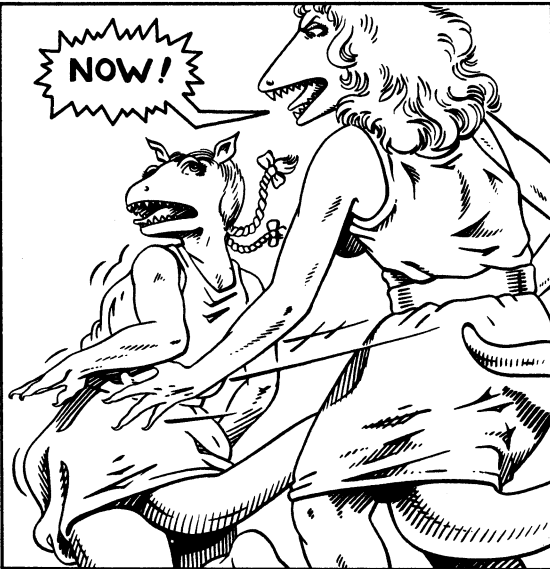
WHY CAN'T DWEEZIL FIX THE PUMP?

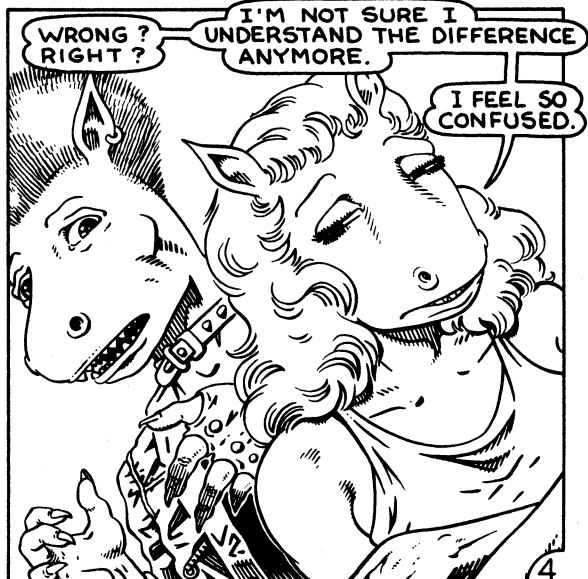
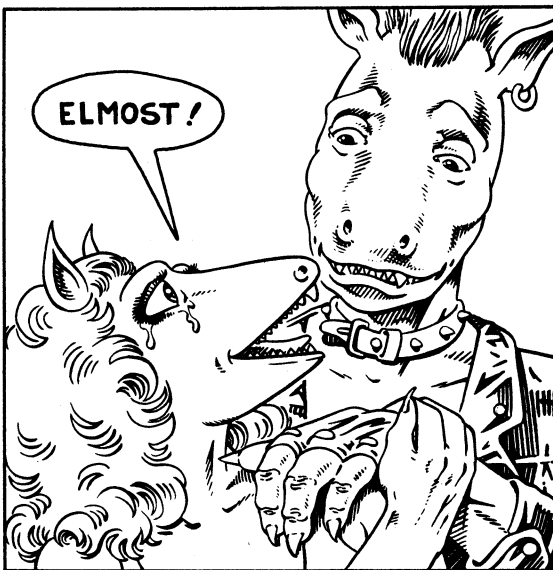
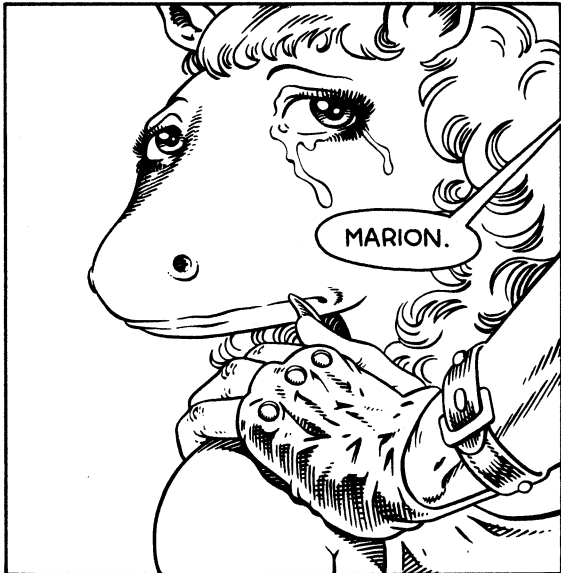
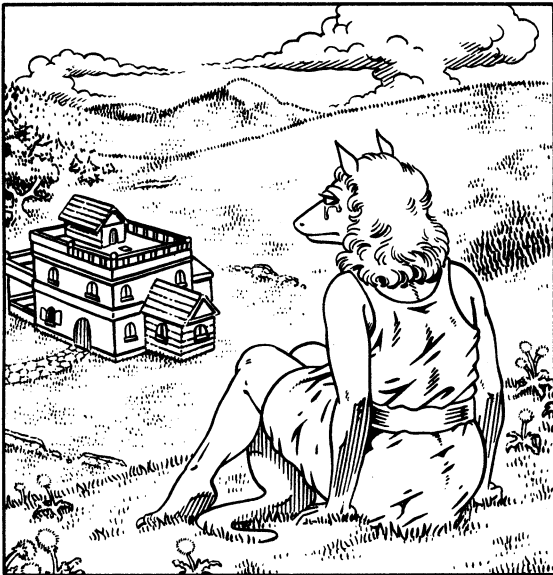
HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE THE MECHANIC!

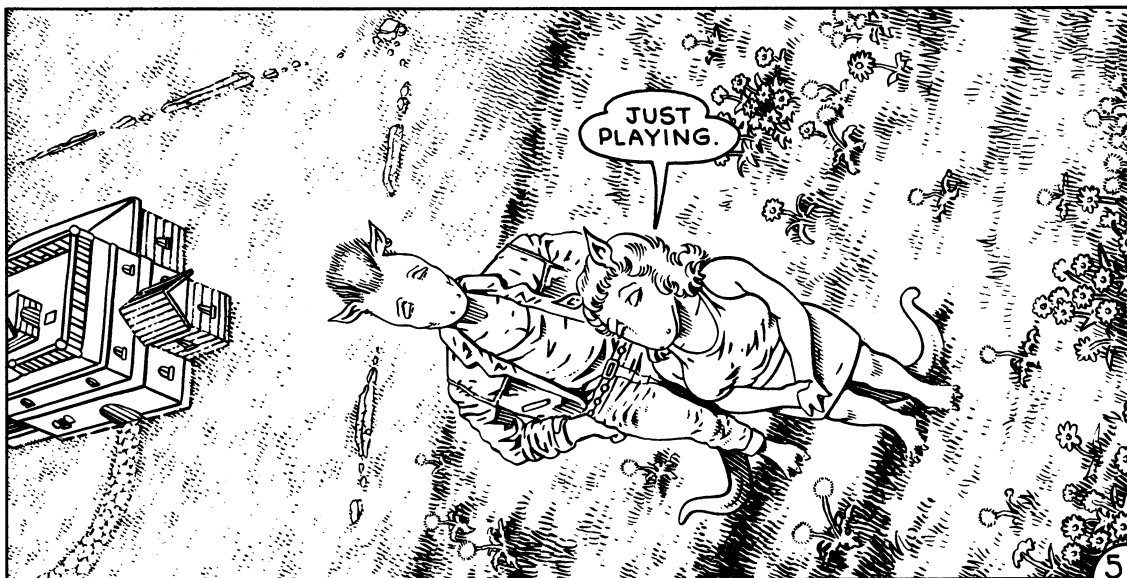
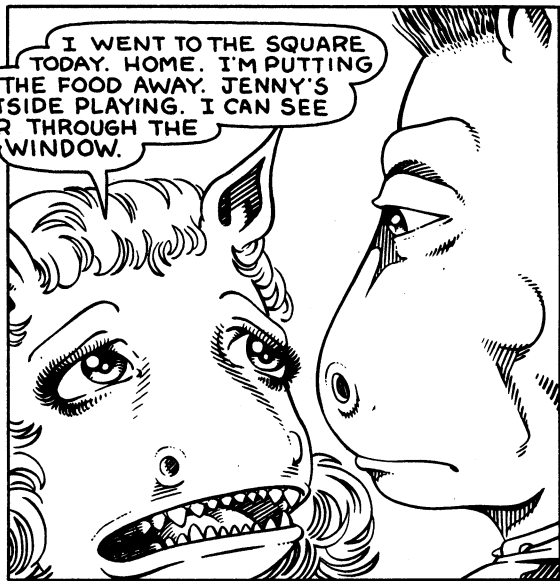


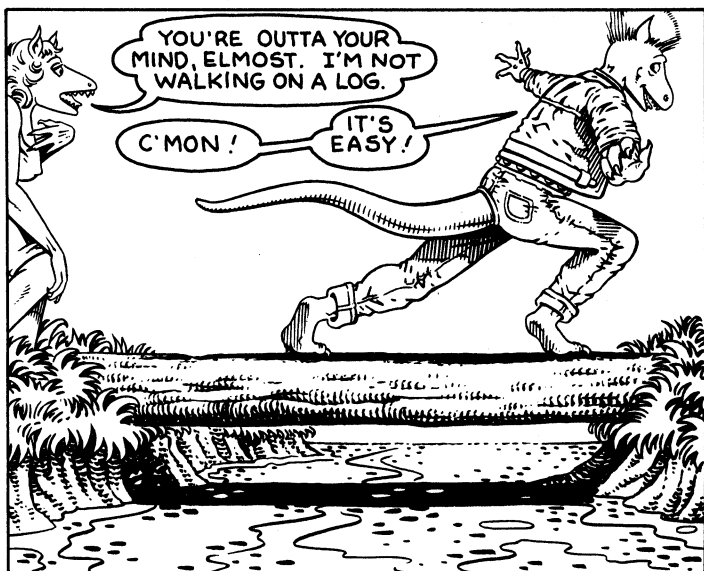
I DON'T KNOW! WHY DON'T YOU ASK DWEEZIL?

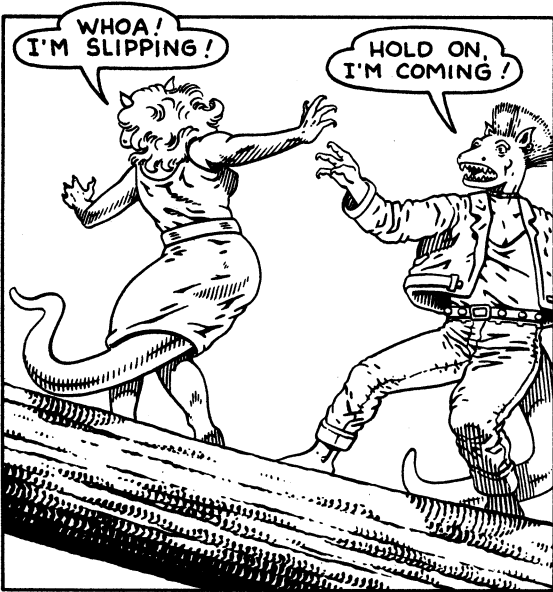
DO I HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING?!

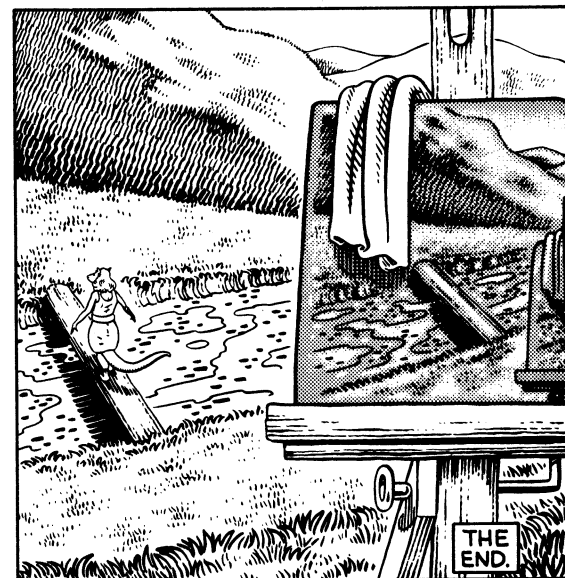
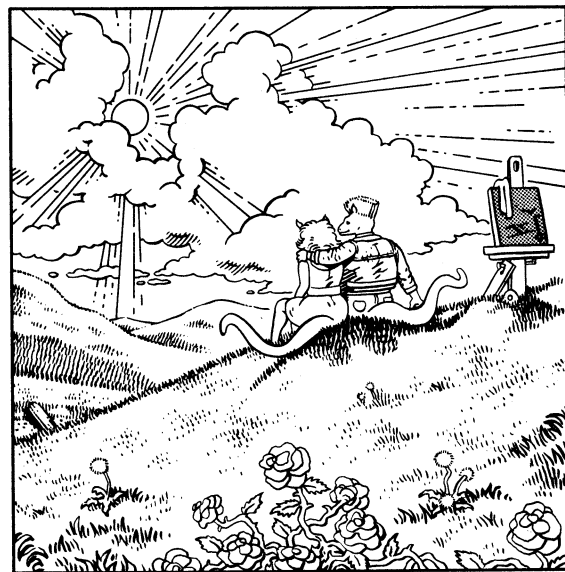
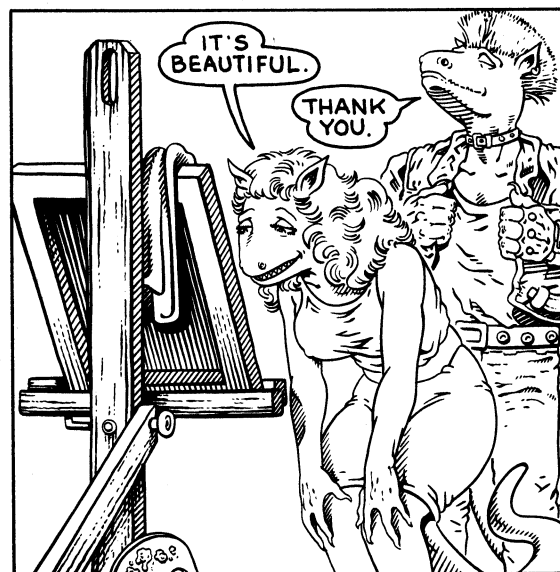












LETTERS

Kim,

I have collected every issue of **Critters** and felt it high time that I write. **Critters** has been and continues to be my favorite comic in this animal world we live in. Anyway, I picked up #12. Wow! What a cover! Mr. Gallacci as usual did a beautiful job on "Birthright" (II, that is). Sam Kleth's "Losing...Is" was definitely the weirdest thing I've seen in awhile, but I loved it never the less. **Omaha the Cat Dancer**-creators Waller & Worley's strip was extremely different from what we see from those two. I'd like to see more of those two in the future. Any possibility?

I hope you can find it in your heart to publish this letter. It would be my first. Is there a possibility of getting original art from **Critters**? Please don't say no. Keep up the good work and keep on being a critter.

Todd Ritter
Frankfort, KY

As mentioned in my editorial this issue, "Speakingstone" will return for a three-issue run in **CRITTERS** later this year. As for the original art question, it varies from creator to creator. If you're interested, your best bet is to send a letter addressed to the artist whose work you're interested in, care of **CRITTERS**, and we'll forward it. —KT

Dear K.T.,

Recently you received and published a letter from my husband (#13) along with a drawing of mine that you also published (thank you!). In Steve's letter he wrote that he conned me into letting him submit a drawing to see what you thought of it. Your answer was "excellent," but you also mentioned I must be a "mean" wife! I really am a nice person!

My husband thought it would be a good idea to set the record straight and wished to express that the drawing of Usagi Yojimbo running from Stan Sakai's infamous pen-in-hand was my first attempt at cartooning, not my husband's. I really am a nice person. It's just that my husband had a little difficulty (at first) conning me into drawing the picture because I was unsure in the beginning if I could come up with something. Isn't life exciting!

Now some words about **Critters**. Not too long ago, my husband gave me an issue of **Critters** to read. I'd never read a comic book in my life, so I was hesitant, but I finally decided to give **Critters** a try.

Much to my surprise I found the writing in **Critters** to be crisp and fluid, the artwork refreshing and vivid. Needless to say, I

read comic books now, especially **Critters**.

Anyway, here's another attempt of mine at imitating (sincerely) Stan Sakai's entertaining Usagi Yojimbo character, this time with several hidden messages. Thanks for the great comic book!

Amy Laughlin
Santa Clara, CA

Thank you.

—KT

Dear Kim,

In **Critters** #13, your contents page stated that "Birthright II" was on page 1. "The History of Surfing" was on page 17, and "Gnuff" was on page 27, when (in fact) they were printed, respectively, on pages 17, 27, and 1.

You were saying (in your Editorial) about 13 bringing bad luck? Well, what can you expect in a year which has three Friday the 13ths (and I don't mean the movie and its sequels, either)?

Apart from that, it was an excellent issue, and I look forward to future issues; particularly, Stan Sakai's "Usagi Yojimbo" in #14, and J.P. Morgan's "Fission Chicken" in #15.

I met J.P. two weeks ago at a party in Brooklyn, thrown by Elayne Wechsler of "Inside Joke," and after seeing samples of his work (including "Tales of the 47th Empire" in **Splatt**), I'd say he has a promising future in comics.

Later!

Jed Martinez
Elmont, NY

Bad luck had nothing to do with it—I was just being stupid (see my notes on "Birthright" in the editorial). I'll do better next time.

—KT

Dear Kim,

I'm a freelance artist who would like to comment on a letter by Mr. Mike Higgs (Terre Haute, IN) that was printed in **Critters** #12.

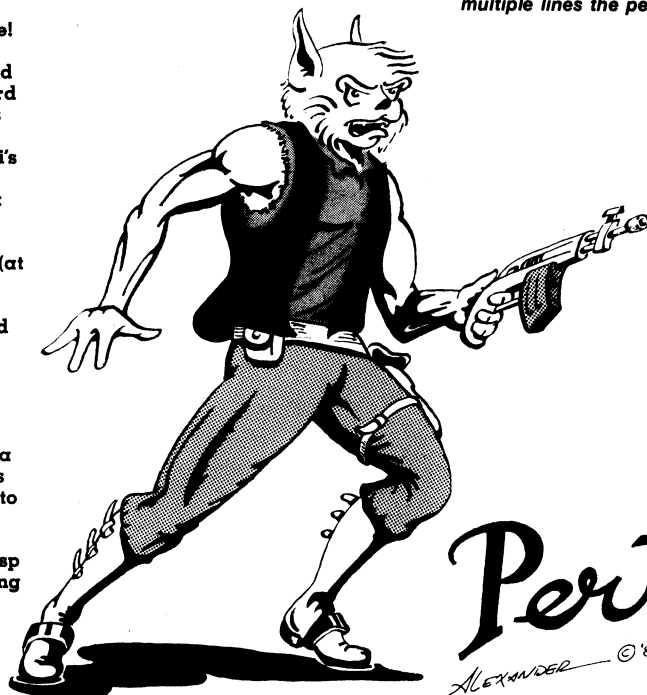
In his letter, Mr. Higgs stated that his drawing was in inks, "because unlike other artists, I'm not afraid of them." The point Mr. Higgs seems to have missed is that not all artists who don't draw in inks are "afraid of them." Most of these artists simply recognize the fact that ink is not a medium that they are either comfortable with or best at. These artists who stay within the medium that they are best at benefit everyone, because they strive for the highest quality and will not accept average or less than average in their work!

I've enclosed a drawing of a character from a story I'm working on so that if Mr. Higgs reads this he won't dismiss my comments as coming from "just another of those artists who's afraid of inks."

Jeffrey B. Alexander
Vienna, VA

Good point. There aren't a lot of artists who've worked exclusively in pencil (in some ways, it's more difficult than working with ink—and it's hell to reproduce), but I remember very fondly Vaughn Bode's early "Deadbone" strips—as well as an early Tom Sutton **PLANET OF THE APES** story (no, I'm serious!)—both done in pencils.

On the other hand, a lot of beginning artists do stick to pencilled work simply because you can "fudge" an awful lot; inking brings out the semi-hidden mistakes and clumsinesses. (Any professional inker will tell you horror stories about lousy pencillers whose work looks great until the inker has to sit down and make sense of all the feathering and multiple lines the penciller put



Perth
ALEXANDER © '87

Another tribute to Usagi Yojimbo from Amy Laughlin, who insists she really is a nice person (and we believe her).



down because he didn't know what he was doing.)

And what would CRITTERS be without a "Birthright II" letter?

—KT

Dear Kim,

Well, just yesterday I picked up issue #12 of **Critters**, and I am happy to report that **Birthright II** is all that I hoped it would be. I have been following the Birthright Saga since issue one, and was overjoyed at seeing it again.

Now, needless to say, it seems that Alfion and the rebels are in a bit of trouble. The Tosiu are retreating, but burning all the bridges behind them. But now, villages are being shot up—with no visible reason.

Strangely enough, it seems that the Tosiu (in my opinion) are not the ones to blame for the massacres. Reason? Well, when Alfion went to that newly-liberated village in episode one, he was told that the Tosiu had "left weeks ago."

The soldiers that came in and shot the town up were dressed in Shartoan Uniforms, but wore green scarves. This may sound insignificant, but when you look at the cover of #12, you see that the Shartoan soldiers wear **blue** scarves!

Now, the way I see it is that the new council members are discrediting the rebel movement by hiring killers to pose as rebel soldiers. They send these "soldiers" in to destroy a village, and Alfion and his rebels get blamed.

So, Alfion's real problems aren't coming from the Tosiu, but from within his country's government. My advice to Alfion is to go back to the capital and set things straight. Appoint a new council, suspend the constitution, do whatever is necessary to stop some petty, self-serving officials from

destroying everything you've worked for!

Keep up the good work!

Eric Blumrich
Fayetteville, TN

Boy, I could get myself into trouble by pointing out some political parallels here! So, Eric, what do you think of the conclusion to "Birthright II"?

—KT

Dear Fantagraphics:

I became interested in (and introduced to) Steve Gallaci's pencils back in 1984 when a game designer friend of mine showed me **#0 of Albedo** (prototype issue) of the first printing of such. I became interested in not only his art and storylines (in **Albedo**) but of his subjects for his art. Using animals as bipedal, intelligent individuals is a subject for drawing among many artists I know.

Critters was found by accident. **#2** was unmistakably Steve's artwork. So I bought it and have been exposed to other forms (and styles) of animation expressed within and found them a breath of fresh air from the "typical" and very boring storylines and characters in Marvel and DC comics.

"Birthright II" is a superb story and should be given more space in the book. Do you people plan to conglomerate all of the Birthright stories into one like Steve did for **Albedo (Command Review)?**

Jeff S. Rogers
Tustin, CA

Eventually, I'm sure we'll be putting out "Birthright" as an album or series of albums. With all the pages in the right order.

—KT

Dear Kim:

I have been meaning to write to

Critters for some time (since #1). This is quite a delay. I even put off procrastinating.

This comic has been right on so far; I haven't been disappointed yet. "Birthright" has been my favorite story to date, with "Usagi Yojimbo," "Gnuff," "Jack Bunny," and pretty much everything else following close behind. Steven Gallaci's art and storytelling has impressed me quite a bit. I have obtained a copy of **Albedo** (not easy in these parts; the local comix shop stocks about three copies of anything that isn't **X-Men** and there is very little in the bins that isn't pure crap. Also, I have very little money).

Unfortunately, I haven't been able to interest many other people in the comic, because "it's too cute." (This is from people who enjoyed **Elquest**). Actually, perhaps some of the characters are a bit overly cute. Usagi, for instance, doesn't look terribly convincing when he's pissed off. (It is easy, though, to tell the good guys from the bad. Kenichi, in issue **#10** is obviously not a very nice rabbit.)

I'm really looking forward to seeing Ken Macklin do something in **Critters** besides covers (is Dr. Watchstop a "critter"?), and the "Fission Chicken" story promised next issue. It looks like something to be read in conjunction with the use of certain, ah, substances. I can hardly wait.

And maybe by next year, you'll have enough regular contributors to go weekly.

With lotsa praise an' good stuff.

Brian Wagner
(no address given)

*Go weekly? God forbid! Although, if you consider the **USAGI YOJIMBO** comic as a **CRITTERS** spin-off (which it really is), we're twice a month during the summer.*

—KT

The Life...the Death...
the Resurrection...

the **BLOOD OF
DRACULA**



Monthly
Beginning July
From

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