

NOT the Adventures of Captain JACK

CRITTERS

No. 42

\$2.00

(\$2.50 in Canada)



FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Critters

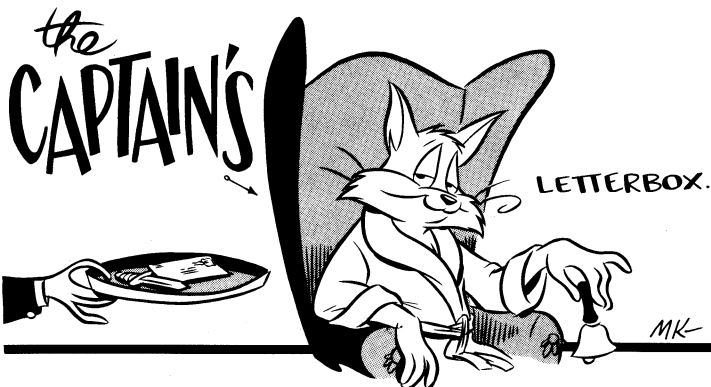
FEATURING

NOT the Adventures of CAPTAIN JACK

Mike Kazaleh's "Captain Jack" officially premiered way way back in February, 1986, with *Critters* #2 and *The Adventures of Captain Jack* #1. During the next two and a half years, Mike battled overwork, illness, market indifference, outright market hostility (when some sex scenes got too steamy), and untold other factors to bring readers 12 issues of *TaoCJ*—as well as two color stories in *Anything Goes!* and *Doomsday Squad*. A proficient animator and animation designer, Mike also worked on the by-now legendary *New Adventures of Mighty Mouse* and the slightly less-legendary *Tattertown*, both produced by Ralph Bakshi.

While he's popped up now and again with short tales (one to nine pages) in *Critters*, this is his first full-length work since *Adventures of Captain Jack* #12.

CRITTERS #42, September, 1989. *Critters* is published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc., and is copyright © 1989 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All characters, stories, and art in this issue is © 1989 Mike Kazaleh. Separations by Rayson Films (front) and the Mighty Patience of Mike (back). No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission from Fantagraphics Books and Mike Kazaleh. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and institutions in *Critters* and those of any living or dead persons is intended, aside from satirical references to persons or corporations in the public arena, 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: June, 1988. Available from the publisher for \$2.00 + 50¢ postage and handling: Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA 98115. Printed at Port Publications, Port Washington, Wisconsin. Edited by Kim Thompson; production by Mark Thompson.



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Few comics have had as loyal a readership as *The Adventures of Captain Jack*. The news of the cancellation of the book generated only a few letters—but those letters that did arrive were heartfelt.

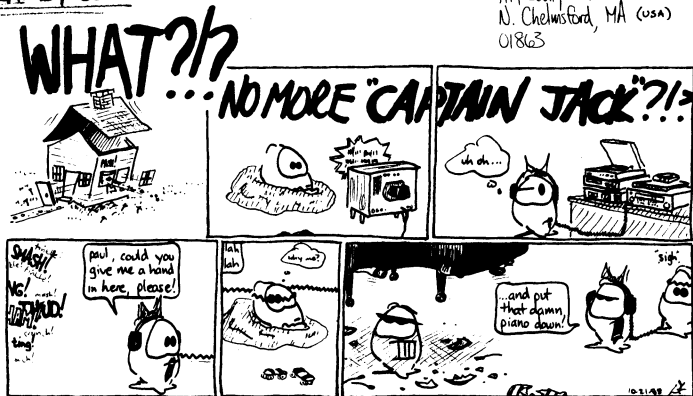
So when Mike Kazaleh discovered that he had a hole in his schedule—just long enough to put out a 24-page comic—I leaped at the chance to publish a special follow-up story that would showcase the continuing adventures of Jack and the crew of the Glass Onion.

Mike was quick to point out that insofar as *Captain Jack* would not appear in the story (the ultimate humiliation: having been written out of his own series!) he didn't know how to bill the story. What you see on the cover is our compromise. Mike, however, decided that the least he could do was put a little bit of Jack in the issue, so he let him introduce the story—and, when the main story ran a few pages short, he brought him back to sing a song as well.

Anyway, I'm proud and pleased to present the continuing adventures of our two lovebirds in this issue of *Critters*. And I'm also happy to present a special all-Jack letters column, beginning with a fully-illustrated submission from one "Lookit the Cat."

RANDY SEZ:

→→→ Lookit the Cat, KSC
A19 Scotty Hollow Drive
N. Chelmsford, MA (USA)
01863



[YES, I KNOW THE ARTWORK'S A LITTLE MESSY AND THAT THE PANELS DON'T QUITE MESH, BUT WITH THIS LIL COMMENTARY I WANTED TO INCLUDE AT LEAST SOME ARTWORK, HOWEVER RUSHED IT WAS.]

WAAH!!!

BRING THE CAP'N BACK TO THE SHELVES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, YA HEAR! THANKS FOR THE ZANY ART AN' CHARACTERS (AND ESPECIALLY COVER #5)! GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR OTHER PROJECTS... ALPHABETICALLY, "CAPTAIN JACK" WILL ALWAYS BE NUMBER ONE WITH ME!

HI, GROUP. THE CAPTAIN HERE I DON'T ACTUALLY APPEAR IN THIS STORY, BUT THEY OFFERED ME THE JOB OF DOING WHAT WE IN THE BUSINESS REFER TO AS A "RECAP".



WHILE I ADMIT IT IS NOT UNLIKE TOSSING A STARVING DOG A RUBBER BONE, IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING, INNIT?



AT ANY RATE, THE "RECAP" IS A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE EVENTS THAT PRECEDED OUR STORY, IN ORDER TO FAMILIARIZE THE NEW READER AND REFRESH THE MEMORY OF THE OLD. AND SO.....



...I GUESS A GOOD PLACE TO BEGIN WOULD BE IN "THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN JACK" #5.... THAT'S WHERE JANET COMES IN. SHE MEETS HERMAN. THEY FIGHT. CLEARLY, THEY ARE MEANT FOR EACH OTHER.



IN #6 WE HAVE THE CONFRONTATION WITH MR. RINGTAIL, AND JANET COMES WITH US. SHE MEETS "BUB" IN ISSUE #7, HERMAN'S ALTER-EGO WHOM EVERYONE BUT ME KNOWS ABOUT. YOU SAW HIM FIRST IN #7. THEY PLAY "SCRABBLE" IN #9. DID I MENTION ADAM?



I COMMIT A DISGRACEFUL ACT BETWEEN #'S 11 & 12, AND AS A RESULT, HERMAN AND JANET WALK OUT ON ME. WAS I CLEAR? I WASN'T? WOULD IT DO ANY GOOD TO MENTION THAT MANY OF OUR PREVIOUS ISSUES ARE STILL AVAILABLE?

LESS THAN SUBTLE, PERHAPS...

READ ON, FOLKS.



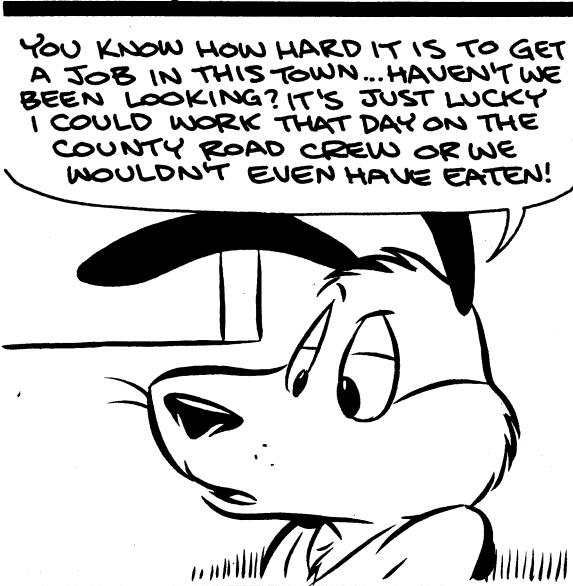
The noises of the city disturb the silence of the night. Each sound a human drama of its own. The cold clack of an automatic. A gunshot. A body falls in an alley. The siren of an ambulance pierces the air.

...**B**ut I digress. As it happens, our story opens on a rather quiet moment one sunny morning as our heroes greet the dawn after a good night's sleep in the abandoned building on Brush Street....



"The Clichés of Fiction"

by M. KAZAGH



GO AHEAD AND LAUGH! THIS PLACE IS FALLING TO BITS AND IT'S GOT NO SHOWER OR FLUSH TOILET OR EVEN A PROPER CEILING! I'M JUST WAITING FOR THE OWNER OF THIS DUMP TO SET FIRE TO IT FOR THE INSURANCE MONEY! SEE IF IT'S STILL FUNNY WHEN WE'RE A COUPLE OF CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES!

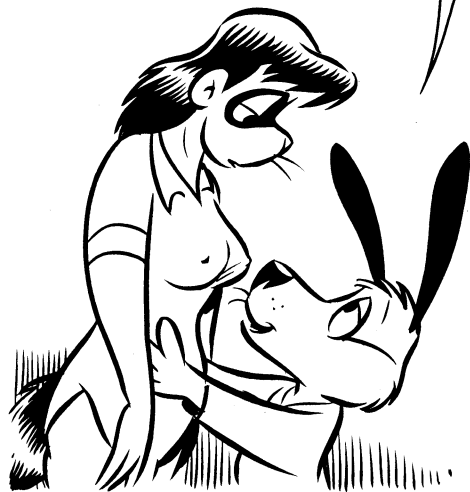
OKAY, OKAY!
POINT TAKEN!
LISTEN, I'VE GOT
\$315 WITH ME
RIGHT NOW.

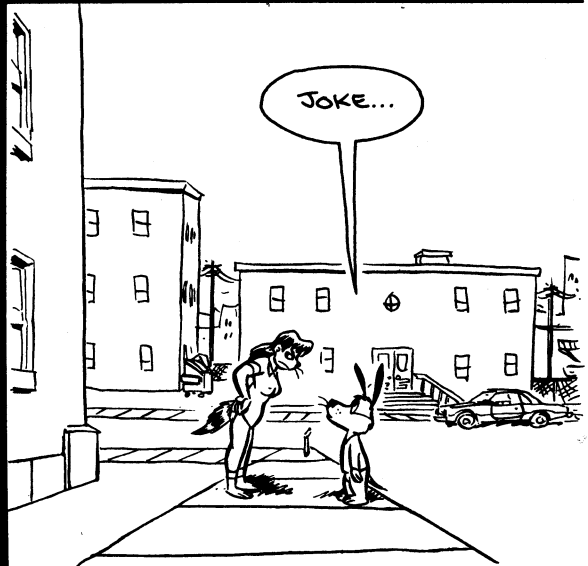


SO?

SO LET'S GET US
SOMETHING TO EAT.
WE'RE GONNA NEED
OUR STRENGTH TO
GO JOB HUNTING
YOU KNOW.

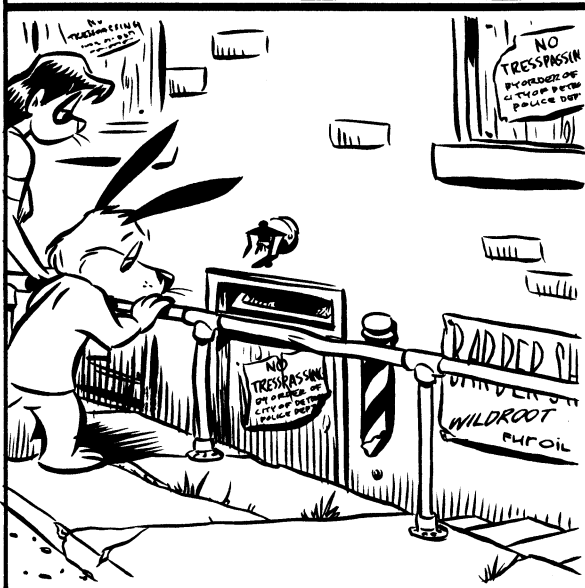
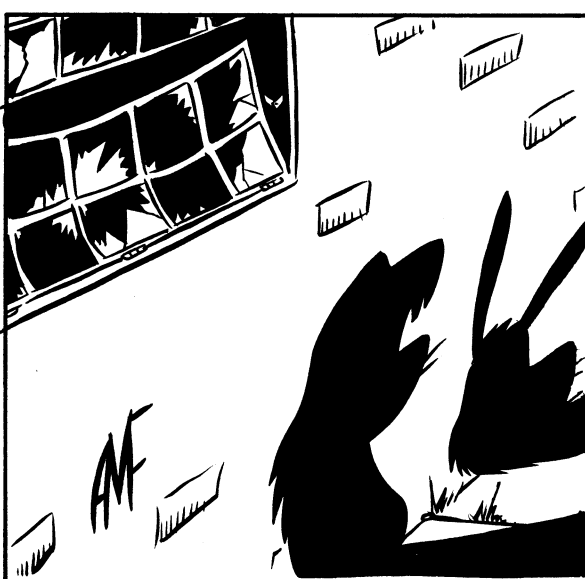
OH, HERMAN... WITH YOU
I GOT ALL THE STRENGTH
I NEED... WE'LL FIND
SOMETHING TODAY,
I KNOW IT.

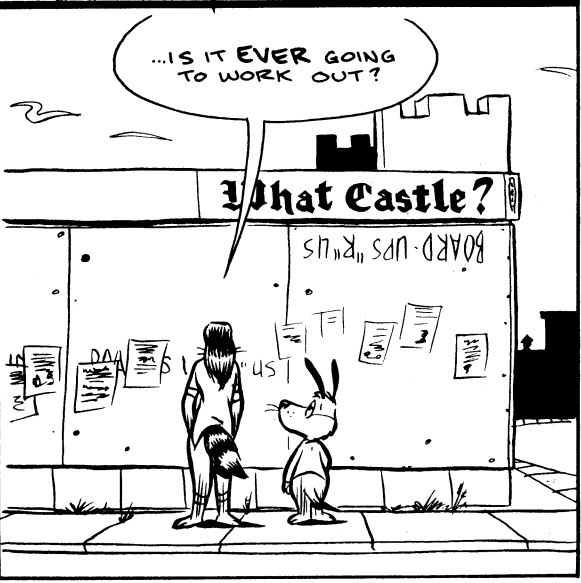


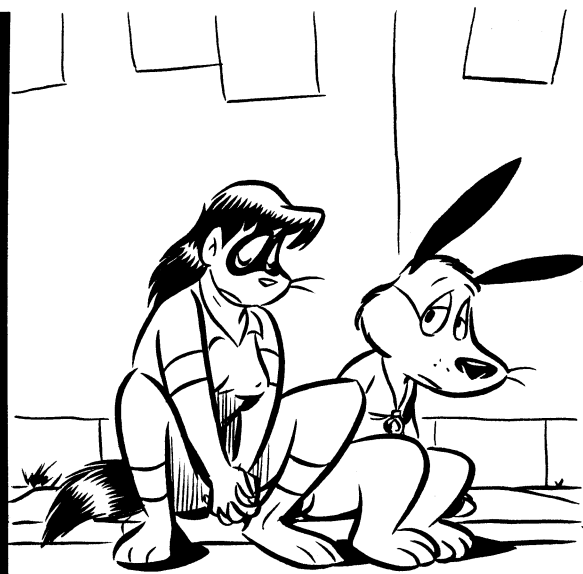




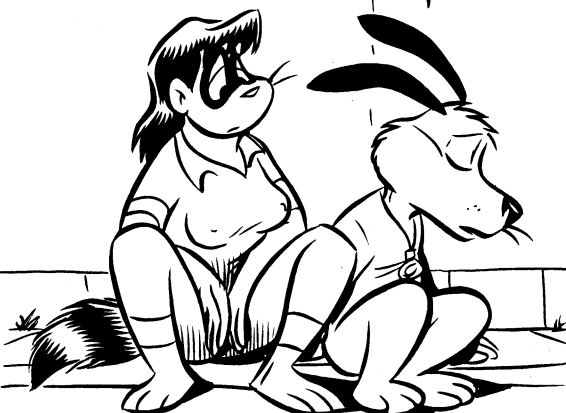








-YOU AINT SORRY
YOU MET ME?



OH, GOD, NO- IT'S NOT THAT AT
ALL HOW COULD I BE? IT'S
JUST THAT IT'S.....

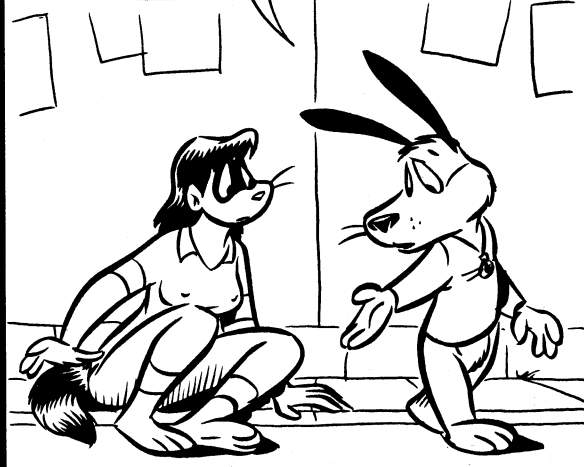


.... TOUGH.

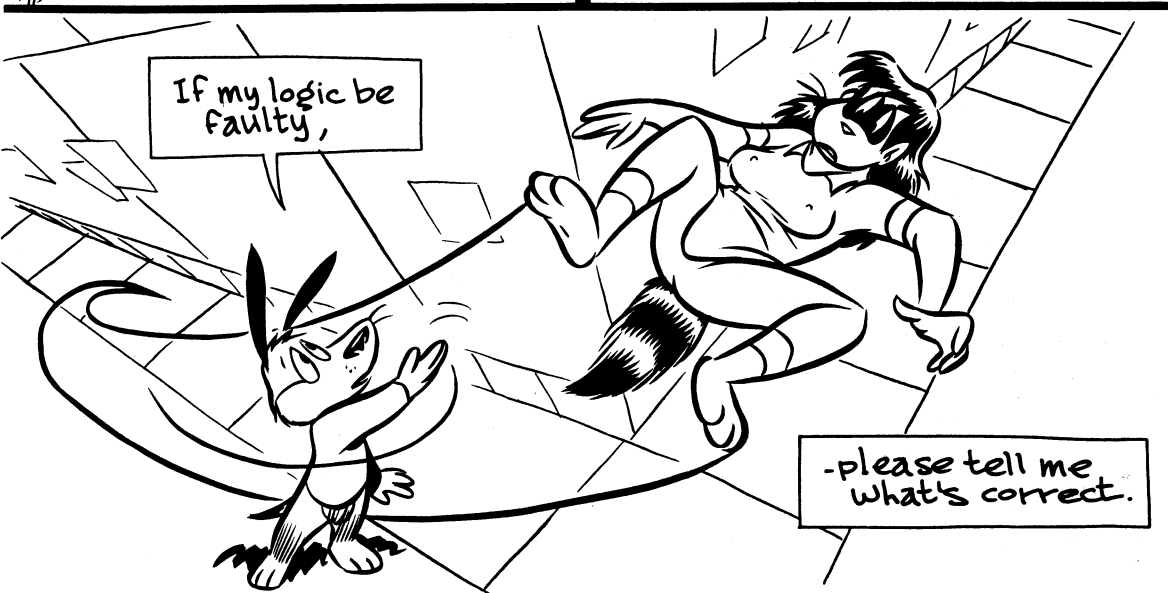
YEAH.



I dont know what you wanted,
or what you might expect~~



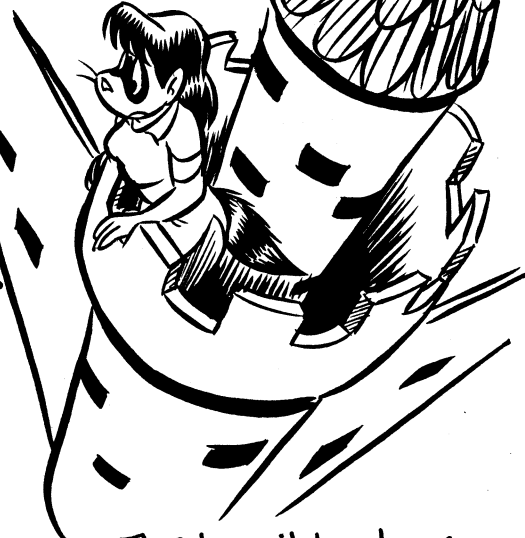
If my logic be
faulty,



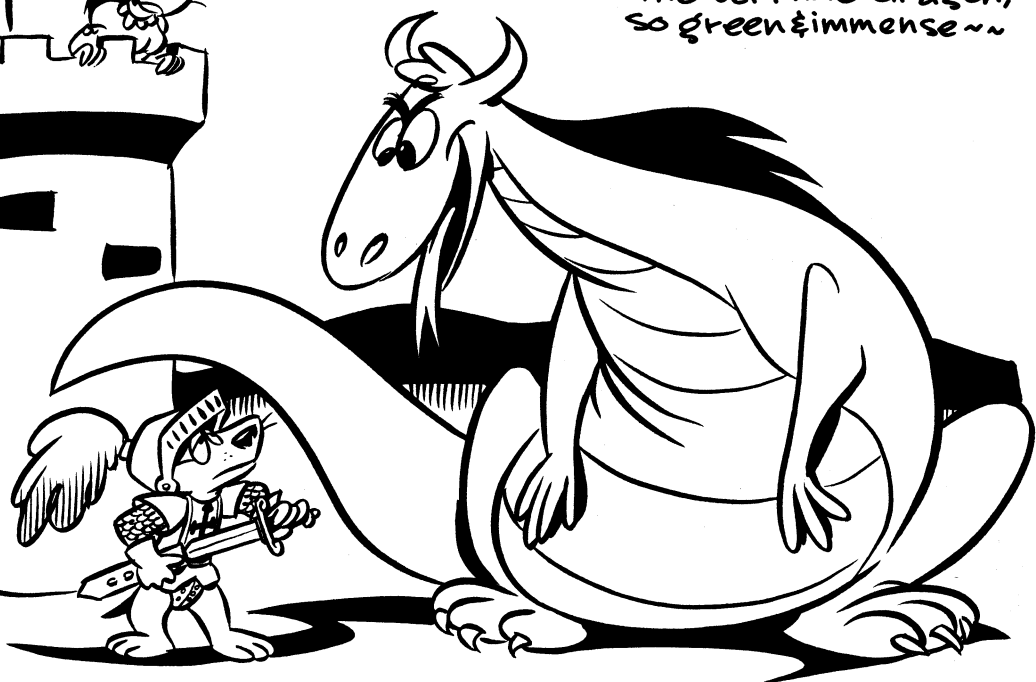
-please tell me
what's correct.

Off your feet you'll be swept,
without worry nor hassle~~

To see the grand view,
from the tower of my castle.



The terrible dragon,
so green & immense~~



With a flick from my sword,



-is in the past tense.

Our lives, at times,
May seem quite mundane-
or even a burden.

perhaps fraught with pain.
Let me state,
for the record~~
our crosses we must bear.

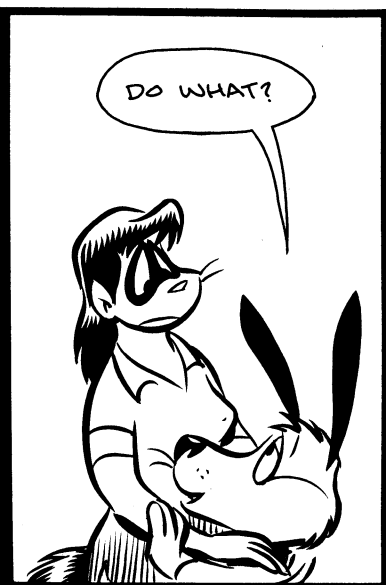
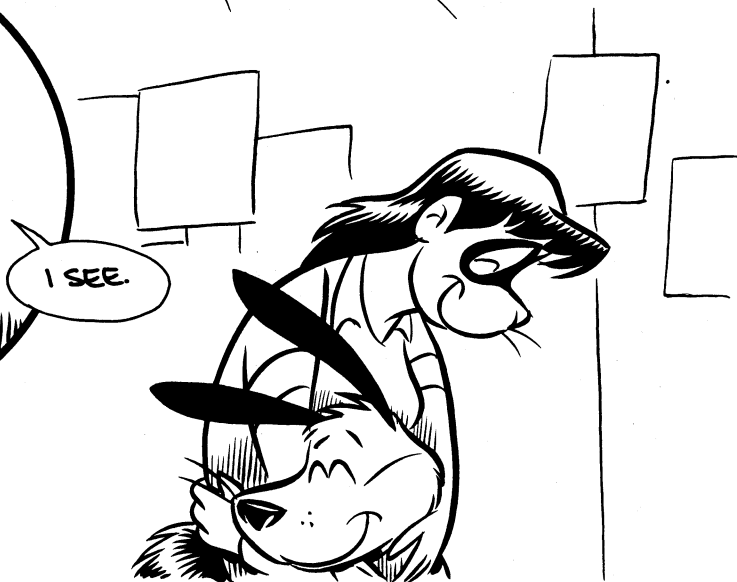
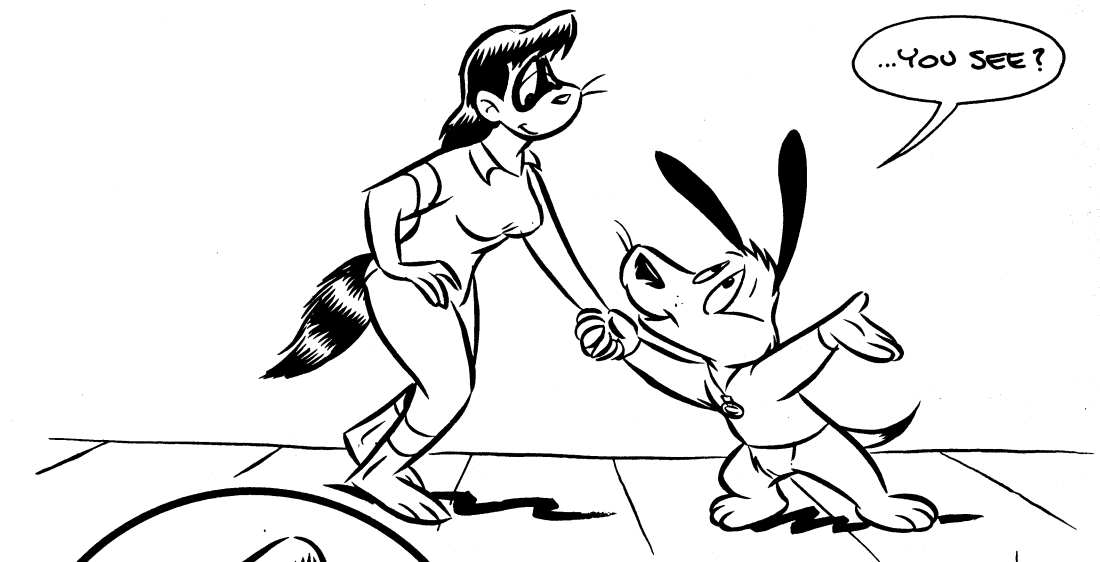
But with many hands
& many hearts,

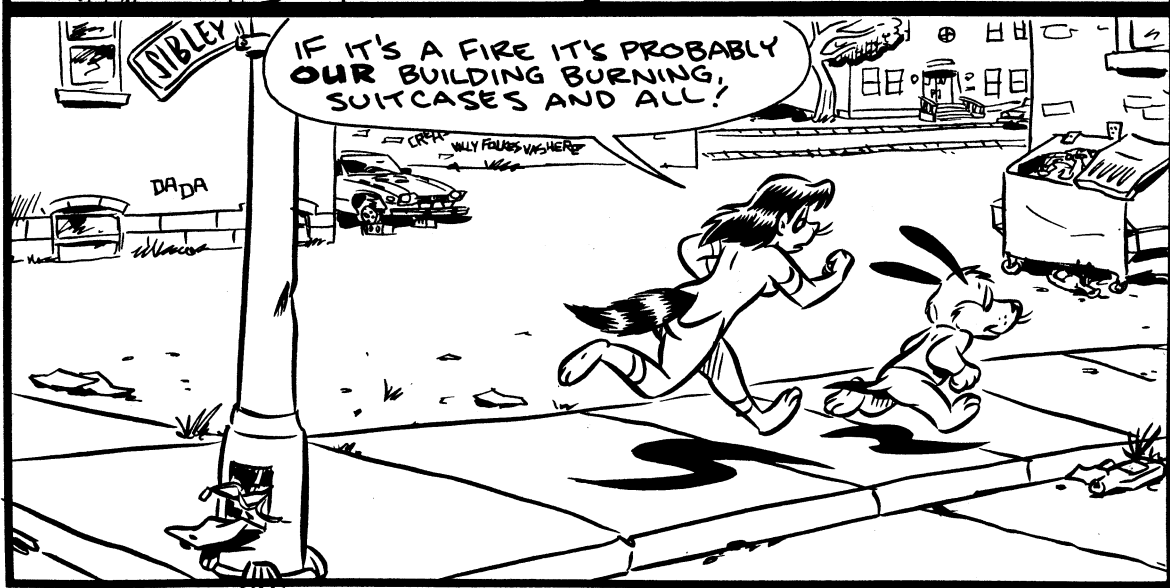
If naught but
a pair~~

The task is
a light one,

and I'm sure
you'll agree~~

-That the clichés of fiction won't help you or me.







the Big Book Store



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IT TURNED OUT TO BE OUR LUCKY DAY AFTER ALL, DIDN'T IT?



WE GOT AN ADVANCE ON OUR SALARY, AND TOMORROW AT LUNCH, WE CAN GO APARTMENT HUNTING... BUT TONIGHT, I SUGGEST WE FIND A MOTEL TO BED DOWN IN.



WE'LL FRESHEN-UP, GET US SOME SUPPER, THEN WE CAN GRAB OUR CASES. WHADDAYA SAY?

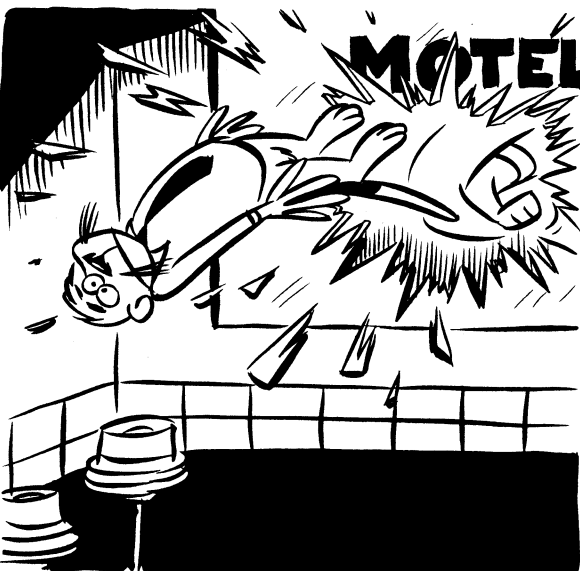




THAT'LL BE FIVE BUCKS FOR THE FIRST HOUR, SHORTY.



PAY IN ADVANCE. YOU AND YOUR "WIFE" HAVE A GOOD TIME, NOW.



The noises of the city disturb the silence of the night. Each sound a human drama of its own. The popping of knuckles. A jaw breaks. Glass shatters. The siren of an ambulance pierces the air.

It is here that we draw the curtain on our mise en scène, for this is the page that says

The End



Early one morning the sun were shinin',
It sure didn't shine too long.

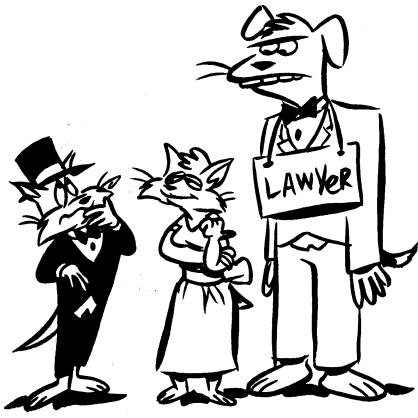
Rolled outta bed an' took a leak,
Got dressed an' wrote this song.

The pipes are old and the plaster's cracked,
It'll fall on me I fear.

The voices of the mean old taxmen
A' ringin' in my ears.



I grabbed a jar, for to get some jam,
But the jam weren't there no more.
When somethin' inside made me scream,
Knock my coffee on the floor,
It taste like glue....
Woodward Avenue!



We wuz married when we first met.
 Soon we'd be divorced.
 We split the property down the line,
 And I rode off on my horse.
 She went off to Buffalo.
 And I went to Palm Springs.
 I never did like plowin' all that snow,
 She hate how Sonny Bono Sings.

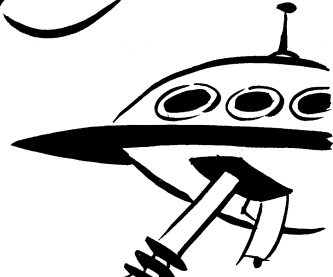
I took a lick from my postage stamp.
 It split my head in half.
 When I think about all those days,
 Lord knows I have to laugh.
 And she would, too.....
 Woodward Avenue!



Empires tumble an' worlds collide,
 The martians land at dawn.
 But all I want to know is why
 There's Flamingos on the lawn.

The planes will fly an' the bombs will drop,
 All life will end in days.

The landlord, he don't send no heat,
 So I set my room ablaze.



And all the boys down in Washington,
 Someday will have no shoes.
 We don't always get what we deserve,
 Although we've paid some dues.
 Feel sad an' blue....
 Woodward Avenue!

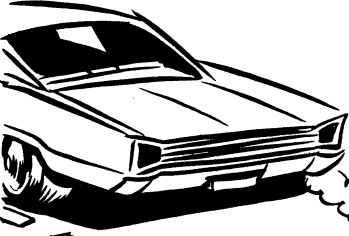


But that were in the yesterday,
My memory's so faint.

Sometimes it's hard for me to tell
What it is an' what it ain't.

Now I spend my days sittin' on the porch,
My mouth don't say a word.

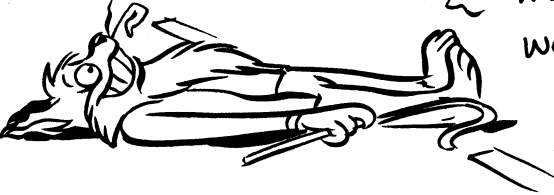
Rockin' an' starin' I take a hit,
From my brown bag of "Thunderbird".



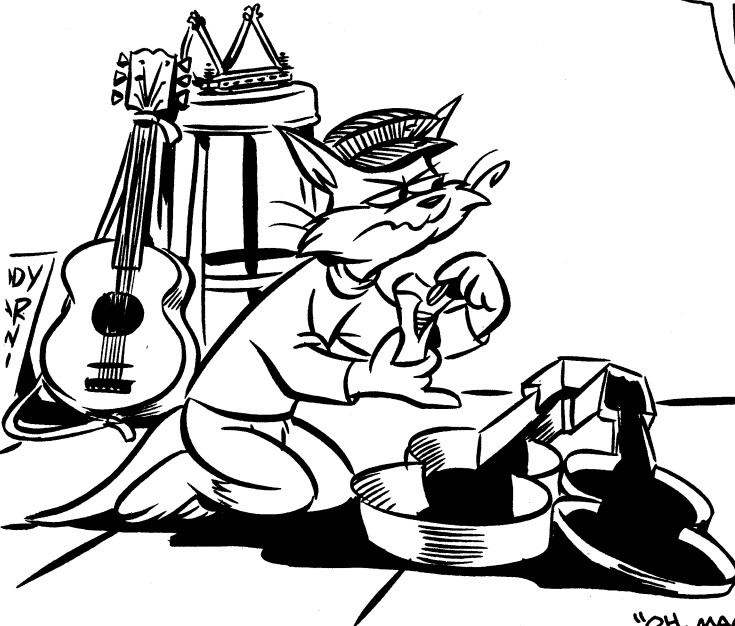
My children don't come round no more,
They'll pull my plug one day.

But I ain't got a cent to leave,
So my corpse will have to lay
on the avenue.....

Woodward Avenue!



MY MOM SAYS YOU GUYS
ARE ALL COMMUNISTS....
..SHE'S FROM THE F.B.I...



"OH, MAMA! CAN THIS REALLY BE THE END?"

FISSION CHICKEN

[illegible]

All artwork © 1989 John P. Morgan

Mister KAZALEH!

'S BEEN A WHILE...eh?

IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTT'N,
I'M MARC CRISAFULLI,
THE KID CARTOONIST LOOKED
AWAY AT HIGH SCHOOL AT
THE PRESENT....



...REASON I'M
WRITING THIS TIME
IS CUZ I GOT A
COUPLA COMMENTS
N' QUESTIONS FOR YA....

4-21-89.

FIRST
AND
LAST
PAGE



I JUST SAW TAPES OF
BOTH the TATTERTOWN X-MAS
SPECIAL AND Mighty Mouse's ANT
TOUCH THAT DIAL... TATTERTOWN was
odd, odd, odd... BUT PRETTY NEAT...
& "DIAL" MADE ME
LAUGH & CRY AT
THE SAME TIME!
ESPECIALLY HIS
SPEECH AT THE
END!
"WHY OF COURSE
YOU'RE BORED...!"



SECONDLY, The COOKY hyperAL
EPISODE IN THE LATEST ISSUE
OF "CRITTERS"...
I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE
UPCOMING Herman & Janet issue!



AND NOW THE QUESTIONS (STOP ME BEFORE I START SOUNDING LIKE
Sniffles...)

○ ARE YOU AN ANIMATOR ON
"INJUN TROUBLE" or "TUMMY TROUBLE",
OR WHATEVER TH' NEW ROGER RALLIT Short IS?! I gotta know!!

○ ARE YOU STILL AT BAKSHI'S? IF NOT,
WHAT'RE YOU UP TO?

○ CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE Jeff Pidgeon's
fanny's at?! I SEEM TO'VE LOST HIM...

LASTLY, I'M SORRY THIS IS SUCH A SHORT,
CHEEZY LETTER, BUT I'VE BEEN TRYING
MY DARNDDEST to be a real student lately....

PLEASE WRITE or CALL BACK
(PLEASEZ)

MARC CRISAFULLI
11413 PEBBLE HALL LANE
GAITHERSBURG, MD. 20878. (301) 251-8540!



(LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)

Dear Mike,

Noooooo!!! Bigboffo-smasho-finale!!
Don't do it, Mike! Don't kill the Cap-
tain! I can't live without my favorite
humor fix. Oh well... I will still be
loyal to your endless wit and humor. I
haven't written you before, but "When
Is a Dog... Not a Dog?" got my typing
blood moving. I had a similar experience
when I was young. Your short was very
moving. Love the way Janet and Her-
man's relationship is consummating (oh,
nasty word). Beezeleub was really try-
ing to put his foot or spiked tail into
things. Adam's a real card, gets me roll-
ing every time. I liked the way you got
Jack back in play; he was starting to be
just a background figure. I wish you
great success with Ralph Bakshi; the
Mighty Mouse series is my favorite
Saturday morning cartoon. Fantazma!!
Well, my wife is looking at me like Janet
eyes Herman, so I gotta go. Take care
and may the ink and the ideas flow clear-
ly always.

Hail funny animals!!

Martin F. Tray
New Britain, PA

Dear Mike,

Sayonara, Cap'n. Damme, but I loved
that book!

Best line in the issue: "Let's face it,
it's not easy for someone to accept the
fact that he's capable of hurting
people..." Shudders run up and down
my spine at that...

Is it the truth? Well, only for people
who are worth knowing. There has been
a trend—maybe it's older than any of us
combined, but it always *seems* recent—
for comics stories to be more grisly,
gruesome, and *truly* horrible than in the
past. *Albedo* #11 had a terror of a back-
up story, which had the most God-awful
three-panel depiction of a torture-murder
I've ever had the misfortune to see in an
illustrated story. (I *can't* call it a
"comic"...) Now, *Albedo* is one of my
favorites, and I'll buy it as long as Mr.
Gallacci has the ability to ship it out. It's
good. But that back-up story, I dunno,
it seemed to me a *celebration* of some-

one's capability of hurting people. There
was the *depicted* huter, the torturer, and
the *real* huter, the artist-writer. It's as
with so many other of our "capabili-
ties." They don't seem real until they've
been exercised, maybe. (It's said that
no one really believes that knives are
sharp, until they've seen their own blood
a-dripping...)

The pain in your story, though, *does*
show: it's honest pain. Growing pain.
I've loved watching these folks grow up.
Herman's sudden and catastrophic accep-
tance of himself is heroic. Janet's ability
to come to terms with 'Bub probably
helped Herman; the actual *healing* was
probably done in "Love Me, Love My
Bub," so that today's bittersweet denoue-
ment is a logical denouement. A happy
one, too.

I think I see a "what-if" at the bot-
tom of page 21, when Janet and Herman
come back into the room where Herman
is. They all look at each other, and there
is an unspoken plea in Adam's eyes. But
it's the wrong plea. He's saying, without
a word, "Hey, stay, please, and help
me?" I wonder, though, if he had been
a bit more of a rogue, and has asked,
again without a word, "If you're going,
take me with you... just a way?" Might
they have! Collateral? The mob? Jack's
wrath? But Adam's too gentle, too law-
abiding. (It's those damned Asimovian
laws...)

I was sorry, naturally, to see Jack and
Adam unhappy together. Jack will like-
ly always be unhappy; he's chasing the
wrong end of the rainbow. Readers have
consistently asked for more development
on Jack. What's he really like? Who is
he, under all that hostility and oil? Only
with this issue did I finally figure it out:
we don't *need* to know who Jack is... we
don't *want* to know. He's background.
He's gravity, or the faster-than-light bar-
rier. We'd be as well off with cute tech-
nical specs for the ship—with cute
"Marvel" style cut-away diagrams of
shunts and ducts and converters—as we
would be wit any real, deep knowledge
of this dude. (Oh, fuck it, I'll mention
Brecht again: Jack is like Mother
Courage. He *won't* learn. I'm uncertain
of whether it's that he *can't* learn. But,
most importantly, for the story you've
told, he *shouldn't* learn. That's what
makes him *him*.)

The last two pages, of course, are as
cheerful and tender as any in comics.
The nudity might be arousing, except
that the pose is so chaste. They aren't
there for their bodies; they're there
because they're about to embark on a
trip. They're *going* somewhere... start-
ing tomorrow.

I'm amused, because it seems that
you've rung a change on the old cliché.
We've seen, in movies, etc., the hero and
heroine in bed (or, more usually, in the
bedroom) and the hero "notices" the
camera—the audience—and does the
same thing Herman does. Makes a
gesture; the frame irises in, and the
lovers are left to their privacy. You could
have done the same thing by having Her-
man draw down a curtain. But, instead,

with the extra bit of wit and insight that have made this comic more worthwhile than a good 97% of the rest—better, even, than perhaps 90% of the good black-and-whites (where the talent really is, these days)—you did it this way. You left us out of it—avoiding the easy, “cute” character awareness of the reader—and let Herman handle matters as was best.

You know, I really do love those two. Well, et in terra pax, and thanks for the ride.

Best wishes,

Jefferson P. Swycaffer
San Diego, CA

Dear Mike:

I'm not one who writes letters to comics (out of the many I do enjoy, I've only written two previously; one to *Love and Rockets* and one to *Lloyd Llewellyn*), but having bought and read issue twelve of *Captain Jack* yesterday, I had to sit down and send you a note.

I've been a reader since early on and have made the effort of catching up on all the back issues and tracking down the new ones as they come out. In fact, I found issue twelve on a spur-of-the-moment decision to check out a comic book store in North Miami I pay irregular visits to. Fortunately, *Captain Jack* hasn't been as difficult as some others I've tried and am still trying to collect.

Issue twelve was, for me, a sad one, comparable with the feeling you get when an old friend moves away and you're left wondering when and if you'll hear from them again. (I experienced the same problem with *Lloyd Llewellyn*; thankfully, it's returned, albeit temporarily). I'm hoping when you get settled in your metaphorical new house, you'll drop us a line via another issue of *Captain Jack*.

Here's hoping we get to hear from you soon and wishing you good fortune in your further adventures and endeavors. Thanks for what you've given us so far and what's to come in the future. It's been a lot of fun.

Sincerely yours,

Greg Harris
Miami, FL

P.S.—What do you think of the possibility of a graphic album collecting the twelve issues of *Captain Jack*?

Dear Mr. Kazaleh:

This is in memoriam of your famous and most excellent comic. I must admit that I was initially put off by the prospect of what I thought would be another “funny animals in space” book. I was convinced by a friend who followed your comic faithfully to try it. I admit I was wrong. Your style is reminiscent of the old early '60s Hanna-Barbera cartoon shows I spent so many early Saturday mornings with as a child. Your treat-

ment of your subject matter is far more mature than *Top Cat* or *The Flintstones* ever was, which I also appreciate. I am glad that Hermy has re-integrated with his little devil self. I'm sorry that there won't be a comic in which your readers can follow him as he learns to deal with himself as a whole person once more. I'm also sorry that Mister Jack won't have to deal with Adam's angst at being used as collateral.

For a while, anyway.

Anything more than this would be superfluous. For all you've given to your comic, and for all I've gotten from it, thank you. I hope that it is not too long before Captain Jack sees print once more.

Sincerely,

Allan D. Burrows
Mississauga, Ontario

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I've never written *Critters* before, though I've followed it from #1. I have written to *Captain Jack*, and gotten both letters printed, though I don't know if it got so few letters that he printed all of them without bothering to read them. However, upon the demise of the Captain's book, I can no longer write in, and am thus joining the vociferous horde stating a desire to see anything from the pen of Mike Kazaleh in the pages of *Critters*. I see in #37 that the Cap'n is slated for the summer and am looking forward to it.

Charles E. Roe
San Angelo, TX 76904

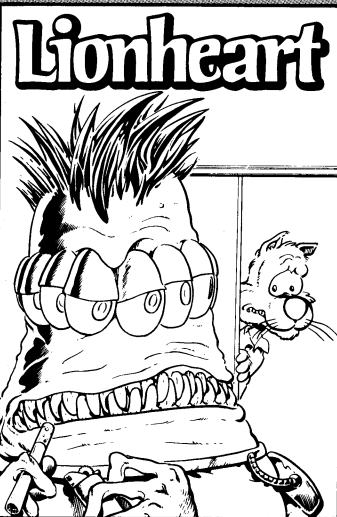
Okay, that's it for this time around. For those who would like to follow the future adventures of Mike Kazaleh, be aware that while Mike did not end up working on the Roger Rabbit theatrical short as I semi-announced a few issues back, he did pencil the comic-book adaptation of it, which will be released as part of a Roger Rabbit graphic novel.

After collaborating on an upcoming Dr. Seuss special produced by Mighty Ralph Bakshi, Mike has moved on and is currently working on the Fox Network's The Simpsons, featuring the Matt Groening-created family from the Tracey Ullman show. Mike has read the first script and tells me it's tremendously funny, so keep your eyes peeled for the show—it should be a winner.

And Mike Kazaleh completists will want to pick up this summer's Usagi Yojimbo Color Special, which features Mike's first coloring job over another artist—a dandy chromatic treatment of a Freddy Milton “Gnuff” story. (And the rest of the issue, written and drawn by Stan Sakai and colored by Tom Luth, is pretty hot stuff too.)

—KIM THOMPSON

COMING NEXT ISSUE



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Critters #43. Lionheart's worried about his upstairs neighbor... is he really an alien? Does the roving reporter have the scoop of the century... or a good chance of getting zapped to kingdom come?

ALSO ON SALE NEXT MONTH



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Usagi Yojimbo Color Special #1. A new Tomoe Ame story! A re-colored Usagi story! A Nilson & Hermy tale! A Sakai cover gallery! More! ON SALE IN JULY!

HYPER AL

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