SCANNED FROM A WATER-DAMAGED COPY

Cover by Michael-Scott McMurry

Editor Chuck Melville

ZU

— 8 —

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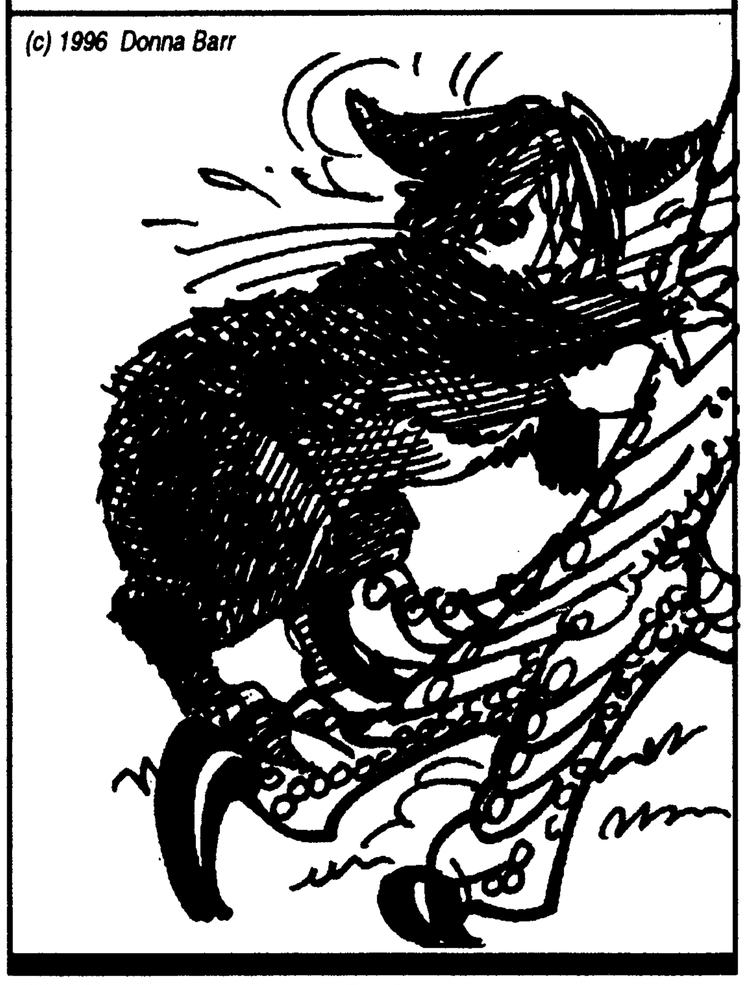
MU PUB #296

-Hader-

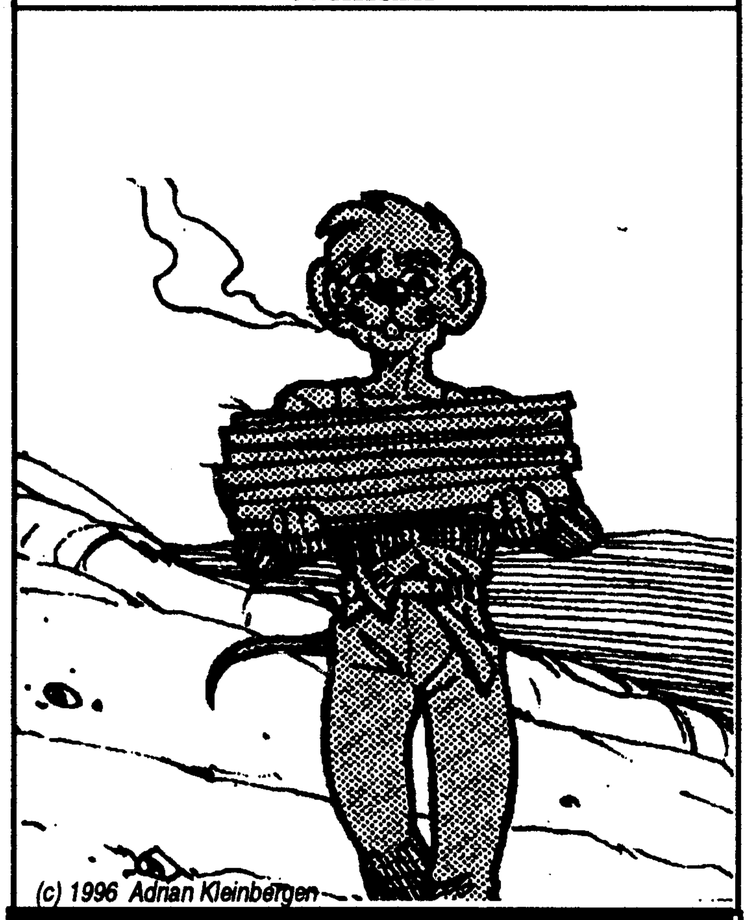


In just two months!

Frontiers by Adrian Kleinbergen concludes; only one returns, and the survivor faces the consequences!

And Jay Shell returns with a short adventure of Sheffield, the Horse-thief! Plus, more Zonie and Robert & Katrina!

-William-



Next month... MU is taking a break. (I need the sleep!!) But don't worry... we're just gearing up for the summer!

All right... everybody who *didn't* see **Balto**, raise your hands!!
...sha-a-ame on you!

Furious pencil skritching can be heard in the distance... can it be that Will Faust is busy at drawing the next issue of **Rhudiprrt**? *Could* be...!

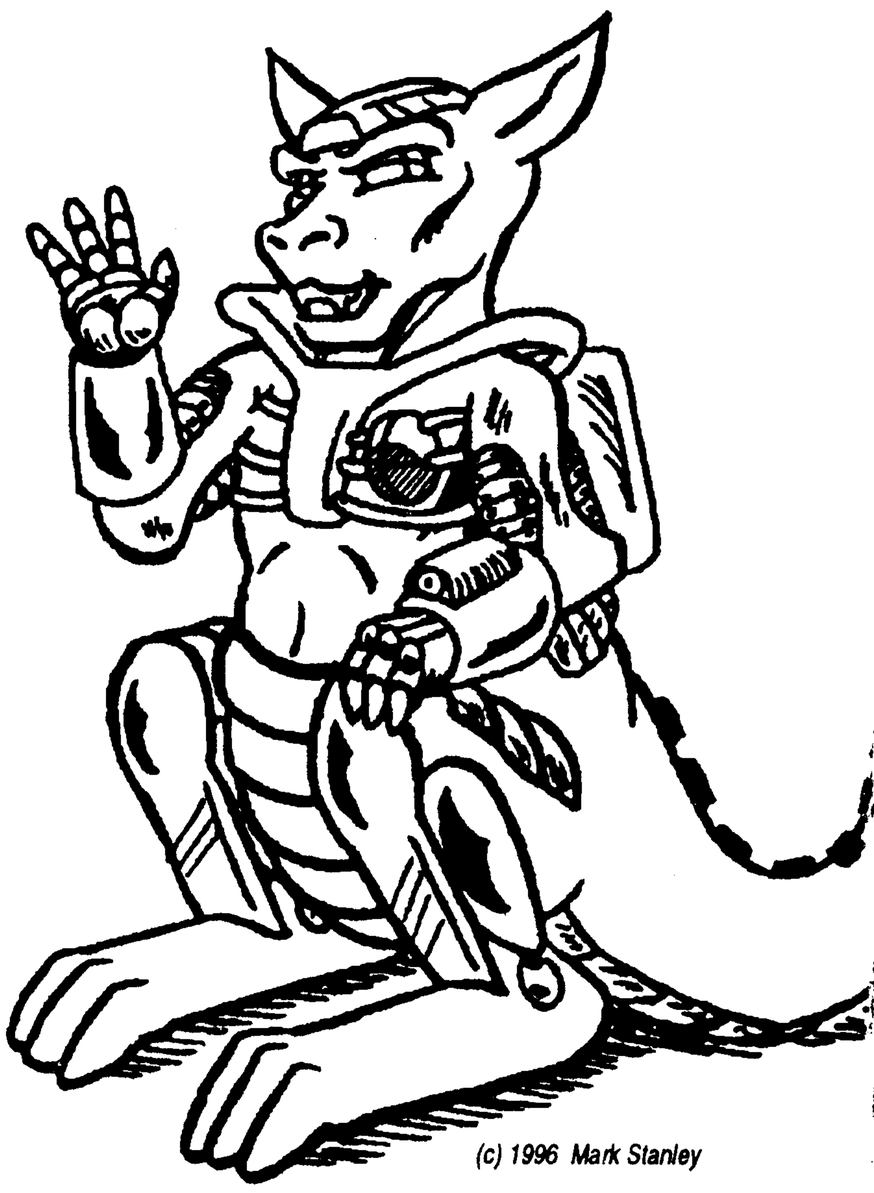
The Monkey Prince will be making a return visit in just a few issues.

Still On Sale!

Rhudiprrt Collection - The first six issues of **Rhudiprrt, Prince of Fur** are compiled in this single album. By Dwight Decker & Teri Wood; cover by Frank Kelly Freas

Little Paw - The first collection of Terrie Smith's pin-ups and art. *You must be at least 18 in order to buy it!!* By Terrie Smith

Tales of Beatrix Farmer - She's young! She's invulnerable! She's a bunny! And she's getting mighty bored... Well, that's what happend when you don't get tired and you're not even pleasantly affected by outside stimulus. What to do? By Steve Gallacci and Taral Wayne.



If you hear the patter of little feet... then it must mean that it's almost time for the **Mad Raccoons** to come out of hibernation!! Time to start hoarding those dimes and nickels!!

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frontiers

PT. 2

STORY AND ART
BY ADRIAN KLEINBERGEN

SKRANG!

WH- WHERE **ARE** WE?

I DON'T KNOW...

HOW BAD IS IT, LIEUTENANT?

I CAN'T TELL... IT'S A MESS.

ANYTHING WE CAN DO?

I THINK I HAVE AN IDEA, BUT I NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT A BIT... WE NEED TO SET UP CAMP FIRST.

ALL RIGHT. LET'S SEE WHAT WAS CLOGGING OUR VENTS.

BATS.

WHAT?

IT WAS A SWARM OF BATS. EVENING WAS APPROACHING, AND THE BATS HAD LEFT THEIR LAIR EN MASSE. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE.

I THINK WE ARE GOING TO SEE A **LOT** OF THINGS THAT WE HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE.

UHH... WHA?

WHERE AM I?...

LIEUTENANT! WHERE ARE YOU?!

WHAT HAS HE BEEN UP TO?

HOW DO YOU FEEL, CAPTAIN?

ALL RIGHT, LIEUTENANT.

I SEE YOU'VE BEEN BUSY.

JUST TRYING TO MAKE OUR SITUATION A LITTLE MORE COMFORTABLE.

WHAT'S COOKING?

I DIDN'T KNOW WE HAD ANY.

TEA.

WE DIDN'T. I FOUND IT GROWING AROUND US. IT'S A LITTLE BITTER BUT IT'S WARM ON A COLD MORNING.

YOU SEEM VERY HANDY, LIEUTENANT. YOU'RE NOT DOING THIS JUST TO IMPRESS ME, ARE YOU?

I'M IMPRESSED WITH THE IDEA OF SURVIVING, CAPTAIN. WHY DON'T WE TRY TO BE NEUTRAL ABOUT OUR PREJUDICES. WE DON'T HAVE TO LIKE EACH OTHER... JUST COOPERATE.

YOUR'E **RIGHT**, LIEUTENANT...

THIS **IS** A POOR SUBSTITUTE FOR TEA.

WELL, I'D BETTER CHECK THE TRAPS I'VE LAID. IF WE'RE **LUCKY**, THERE WILL BE SOMETHING FOR DINNER **TONIGHT** A LITTLE BETTER THAN **RATIONS**.

... **DAMN** YOU, LONGBURROW!

SEVERAL HOURS LATER...

WHERE **ARE** YOU?..

CAPTAIN?... DINNER'S ON THE WAY!

THE FIRE WAS DYING, SO I DECIDED TO SCOUT FOR MORE WOOD. THERE'S A PRETTY GOOD SUPPLY OF DEADFALL OVER THAT RIDGE.

GOOD HUNTING, LIEUTENANT. YOU DID WELL.

OHH... I'M **STILL** A LITTLE WOOZY...

CAN... I HELP YOU PREPARE THOSE?

YES... **PLEASE**.

LATER, IN THE EARLY EVENING...

OOHH...

MARLA, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO BE SO **DAMNED** CIVIL?

THAT'S **CAPTAIN** TO **YOU**, LIEUTENANT. I'M STILL GROGGY FROM THAT SMACK ON THE HEAD, BUT I'M **STILL** COMMANDING OFFICER AROUND HERE!

I'VE DONE NOTHING BUT BERATE YOU AND TAKE CHEAP SHOTS AT YOU SINCE WE'VE MET, AND YOU **STILL** HAVE THE GUMPTION AND BLOODY-MINDEDNESS TO ASK IF I'M ALL RIGHT? WHAT **IS** IT WITH YOU?!

DAMMIT, MARLA! TAKE IT EASY! YOU GOT HIT ON THE HEAD A LOT HARDER THAN YOU REALIZE; JUST RELAX...

IF I SEEM **CONCERNED**... WELL, IT'S JUST THAT... LOOK! WE **NEED** EACH OTHER TO SURVIVE. OUR WARS AND FEUDS WILL HAVE TO TAKE A BACK SEAT TO LIVING THROUGH THE NIGHT!

I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU LOSE YOUR TEMPER BEFORE, LIEUTENANT. I'M IMPRESSED. I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD SUCH PASSION IN YOU..... ✳ **OOH!**

THE NEXT DAY...

THIS WILL HOLD US UNTIL SUPPER TONIGHT...

I'M GOING TO TRY MY HAND AT MAKING SOME **JERKY**.

I NEVER BOTHERED TO LEARN MUCH ABOUT **SURVIVAL SKILLS** AT THE OFFICER'S ACADEMY...

SOCIAL SKILLS AND OFFICIAL BUTT-KISSING WAS CONSIDERED TO BE A BETTER WAY TO FURTHER ONE'S **CAREER**. PUTTING **YOUR** PEOPLE IN THEIR PLACE WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SURVIVING IN THE WILDERNESS... **DAMN**, WHY AM I TELLING **YOU** THIS?

I DON'T KNOW, MARLA...**CAPTAIN**.

LOOK AT ME! THE **PRIDE** OF THE FELIN AIR FORCE... DAZED AND USELESS, AND SAVED BY... BY... **YOU!**

MARLA, THAT'S **NOT** HOW IT IS! YOU'RE A BRILLIANT **PILOT** AND-

OFFICER? YES, BUT WHAT **REAL** USE IS IT NOW? **BLAST!!** I JUST **CAN'T** RECONCILE MYSELF TO THE FACT THAT I HAD TO BE SAVED BY **YOU!!!** **THERE**... I'VE **SAID** IT!

I DID'NT **HAVE** TO SAVE YOU... I **WANTED** TO.

LATER...

IF YOU WANT **CHANGE** TO COME ABOUT, USE YOUR **OWN** HANDS, YOUR **OWN** MIND...

WHAT DID YOU SAY, LIEUTENANT?

JUST SOMETHING MY **FATHER** TRIED TO TELL ME...

OF COURSE **NOT**... THEY WOULD **NEVER** HAVE HELD.

DO YOU REMEMBER IF YOU **LOWERED** THE LANDING WHEELS BEFORE WE CAME IN?

I **TOLD** YOU THAT YOU WERE A **BRILLIANT** PILOT... EXCEPT FOR SCRAPED AND DENTED PANELS THE PLANE IS BASICALLY **SOUND**.

IT DOESN'T SMELL LIKE IT. **YUCK!**

I KNOW. WE'LL FIX THAT SOON.

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THAT. IF WE CAN GET THE SHIP ON ITS WHEELS AND CLEAR US SOME RUNWAY... WELL, WE HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF GETTING OUT OF HERE. WELL.. A CHANCE, ANYWAY.

DO YOU THINK WE CAN GET THE PLANE **AIRBORNE** AGAIN?

I'M WILLING TO TRY IT.

ME **TOO.**

HOW ARE WE GOING TO **RAISE** THE PLANE UP HIGH ENOUGH TO LOWER THE WHEELS?

WHAT? I DON'T FOLLOW.

WE DON'T **HAVE** TO.

WE DON'T HAVE THE MEANS OF **LIFTING** THE AIRCRAFT UP... YOU AREN'T **STRONG** ENOUGH, AND WE DON'T HAVE THE GEAR TO BUILD A **PULLEY** SYSTEM... BUT WE **DO** HAVE TWO **SHOVELS**.

WHAT **DO** YOU HAVE IN MIND?

WE **DIG BELOW** THE PLANE UNTIL EACH WHEEL CAN BE LOWERED, THEN DIG TRENCHES IN FRONT OF EACH WHEEL, SLOWLY RAISING THE GRADE SO WE CAN **PULL** THE PLANE UP TO GROUND LEVEL.

HOURS LATER, EXHAUSTED...

WE WON'T HAVE ANY MORE **WATER** AFTER TONIGHT.

WE WON'T HAVE MUCH **STRENGTH** LEFT EITHER. WE'LL HAVE TO USE ALL OUR ENERGY TO PULL THE PLANE OUT OF THE TRENCH, AND THEN...

CLEAR A **RUNWAY** BEFORE NIGHTFALL.

I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF **YOU**; OR HOW TO SAY WHAT I WANT TO SAY TO YOU... **WILLIAM**.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY, MARLA?

I'M... STARTING... TO **LIKE** YOU, WILLIAM. I'M BEGINNING... TO... **RESPECT** YOU AS WELL. I **NEVER** THOUGHT THAT I WOULD HAVE FEELINGS LIKE THIS FOR ONE OF... **YOUR** KIND.

I LIKE **YOU** TOO, MARLA... AND I'VE **ALWAYS** RESPECTED YOU...

OK, MARLA! ALL LANDING GEAR ARE **DOWN** AND **LOCKED**.

WILLIAM... WHAT IF WE **DON'T** MAKE IT?

THEN WE **DON'T** MAKE IT. BUT LET'S **GO** FOR IT WITH EVERYTHING WE HAVE BEFORE WE START GIVING UP.

YES... LET'S GET BACK TO WORK.

WE'RE **HALFWAY** THERE, WILLIAM.

NOW WE CAN SEE IF THE ENGINE IS OK.

AFTER TWO HOURS OF ADJUSTMENTS...

OK! I GOT HER RUNNING AGAIN, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT **RANGE** WE'LL GET OUT OF HER.

THEN, THE MOST BACKBREAKING TASK OF ALL: CLEARING A RUNWAY...

JUST A FEW MORE AND WE CAN REST.

OH, GOD! I DON'T THINK I CAN GO ON...

HANG IN THERE, MARLA. WE'VE DONE EVERYTHING WE **CAN** DO. ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO HOPE IT ALL HOLDS TOGETHER FOR TOMORROW.

WILLIAM...I...

WHAT IS IT, MARLA?

HOLD ME, WILLIAM.

NEXT: FLIGHT!

ROBERT AND KATRINA

"SHOCK TREATMENT"

KREUTZMAN
©901101

CLICK

VARROOOOMM

POCKATA POCKATA POCKATA

ZOOM

RA-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT

RUB RUB RUB RUB

SNAP

CRACKLE FIZZIT

CRACKLE FIZZIT

THAT WAS FOR THE WATER BALLOON, YESTERDAY.

FOO! AND THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A HIGH SCORE, TOO!

SNAP!

REEEEEEEEEE BOOM

FIN

PROBLEMS WITH ANTHROPOMORPHISM PART II

BY MICHAEL KJARTAN

AIYAIYAIIEEE....AYEEYEE.

...OWEE-EEEEGOO.....

BLAM BAM BOOM! KACHOW BANG PWEENG!

SHUNK!

SCRRITCH!

I'M NOT THAT KIND OF MARE!!

END.

HADER AND THE COLONELS IN "BATH DAY"

LITTLE RABBITY HADER, WHO IS ON HIS LITTLE WAY TO BECOMING A MAN, IS HAVING A DREAM TO SEE IF HE LIKES IT AFTER ALL...

Ngh!

?

UNTIL...

THUMP THUMP THUMP

RUPF RUPF

UNTIL...

HE KICKS TO IRRITABLE WAKEFULNESS COLONEL VIKTOR NATOWSKI — HIS DEADLY ESCORT AND EVIL-MINDED FRIEND...

HADER!!

WHOOP!

<GET YOUR DIRTY LITTLE PAWS OFF MY FEATHERS!>

<HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO GET DOWN IF YOUVE PULLED 'EM ALL OUT!?>

DONNA [IT HOITS!] BARKER 95 ©

FOR MORE HADER, WRITE FOR A CATALOG AT:

EXCELLENT ITEMS
1318 N. MONTGOMERY
BREMERTON, WA 98312-3056
USA

<I'S SORRY~ =YAWN= I WUZ SLEEPIN'~ NIGHTMARIN'~ I'S STICKY. UGH.>

<BRRR!! CHICKS SLEEP IN TREES ~NOT OLD LONG-HITCH COLONELS WITH SORE FEET.>

<I'S HUNGRY. WHAT~ AN' IN YER CASE — WHOOZ FOR BREAKFAS'?>

=YAWN= <MORE TO THE POINT~ WHATS FOR A BATH?>

<A **BATH**. TCK! I'S A *RABBIT*. WE JUS' LICKS WHAT WE CAN, AN' CLAW-COMBS WHAT WE CANT. **BATH!**>

<**WE BATHE**?>

<WELL, YOU **GOTS** TO. ALL THEM LONG FEATHERS IS ORIENTAL DUST-CATCHERS. AN' THEM WALKIN'-PEOPLE CLOTHES NEEDS DOUSIN'. WHY YOU WEARS 'EM ANYWAYS? YOU'S A GOOD **BIRD** UNDER THERE, AINTCHA? NOT A SKIN-MONKEY!>

=CREAK=

<LICK ALL YOU LIKE, HADER. THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN SCRAPE THE MONKEY OFF YOUR FACE NOW IS A BATH.>

<WHA~?>

<HEY! YOU GONNA PUT ME IN A PUDDLE?>

HEY!

<CHICK, WHEN YOURE MY SIZE, YOU GO FIND YOURSELF A LAKE!>

<NOT THAT ONE— IT LOOKS FREEZY.>

<HM! NOT SO SMALL IT WILL BE MUDDY, NOR SO LARGE IT WOULD BE COLD.>

<YOUS PICKY?>

<WE CAN GO WHERE WE PLEASE TO BATHE. WHY SHOULDNT WE BE QUITE PARTICULAR?>

<COLONEL~?>

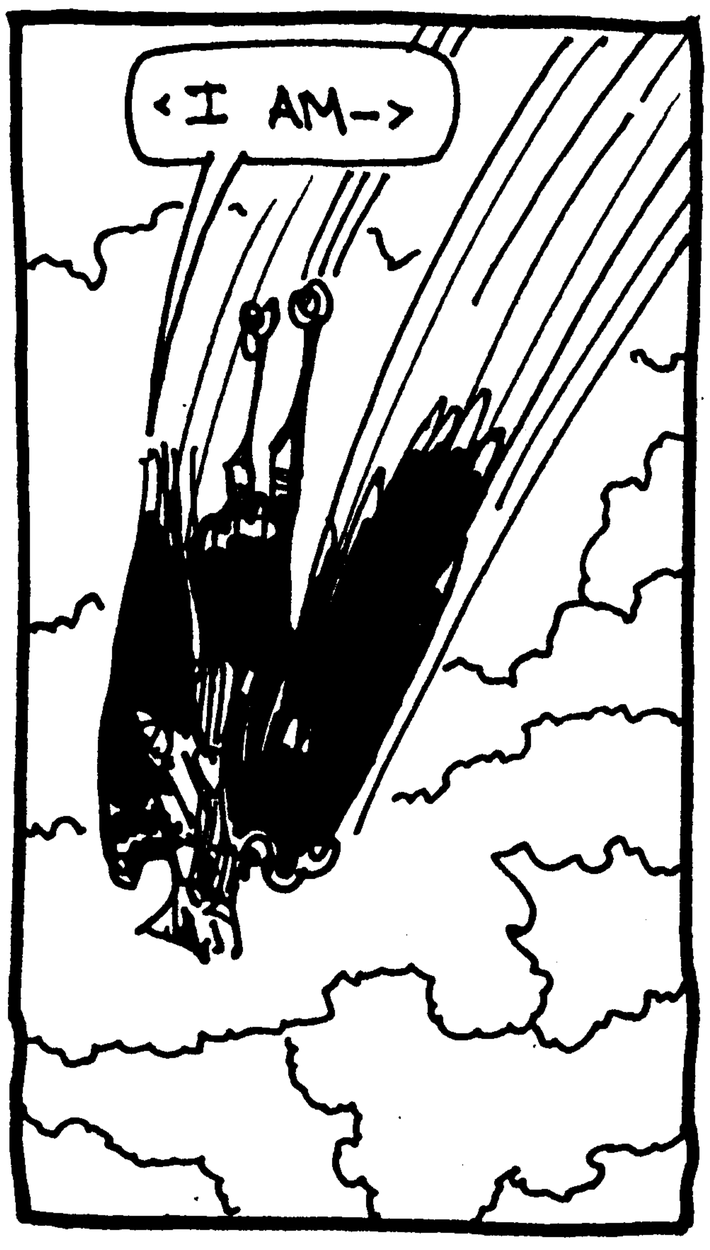
-YER WINGS-

<DONT FOLD YER WINGS!>

FP!

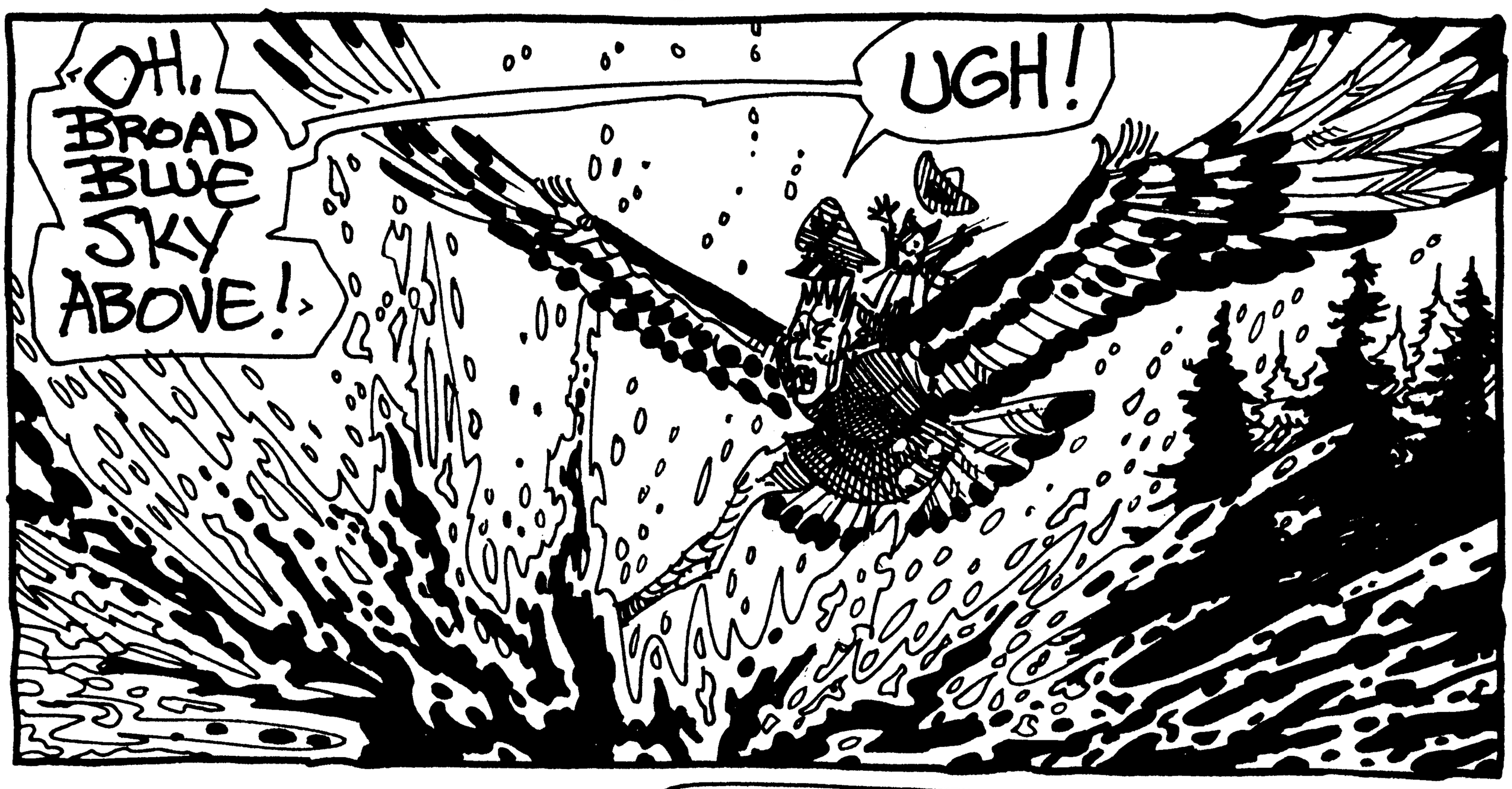
FP!

<NOOO! I CANT STAND IT! DONTCHA DARE!>


‹I AM–›

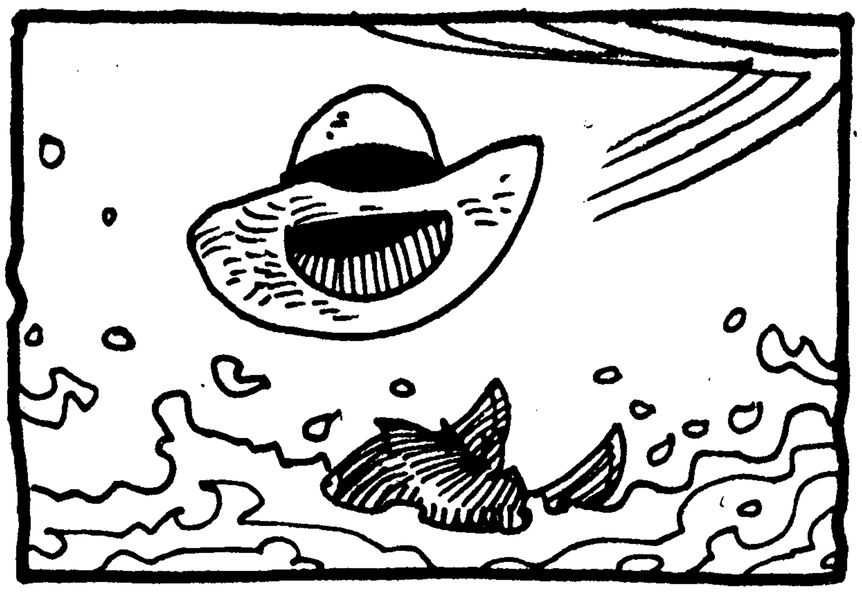
‹~ GONNA~›

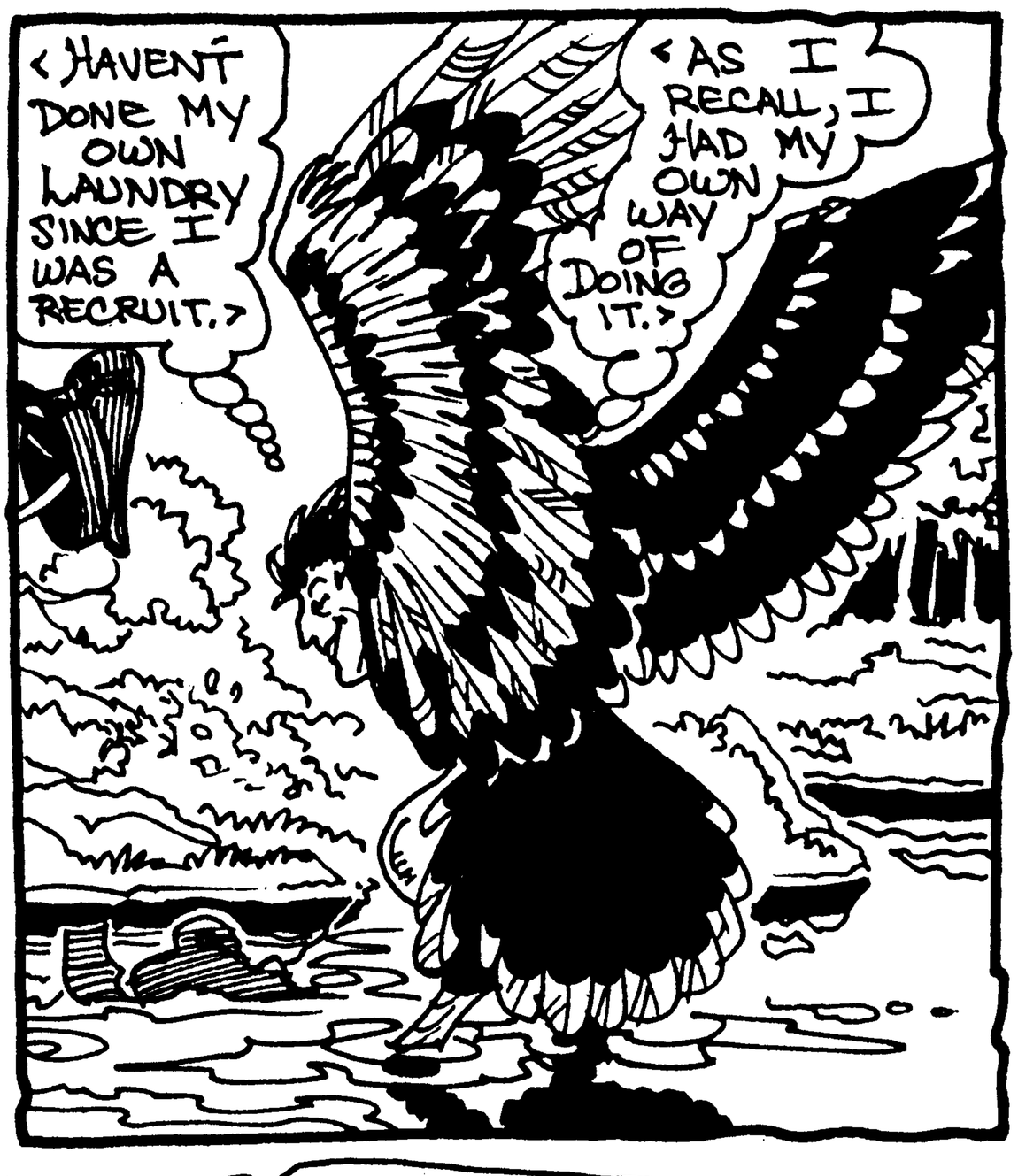
~PUKE!
URLPP!!
HADER!

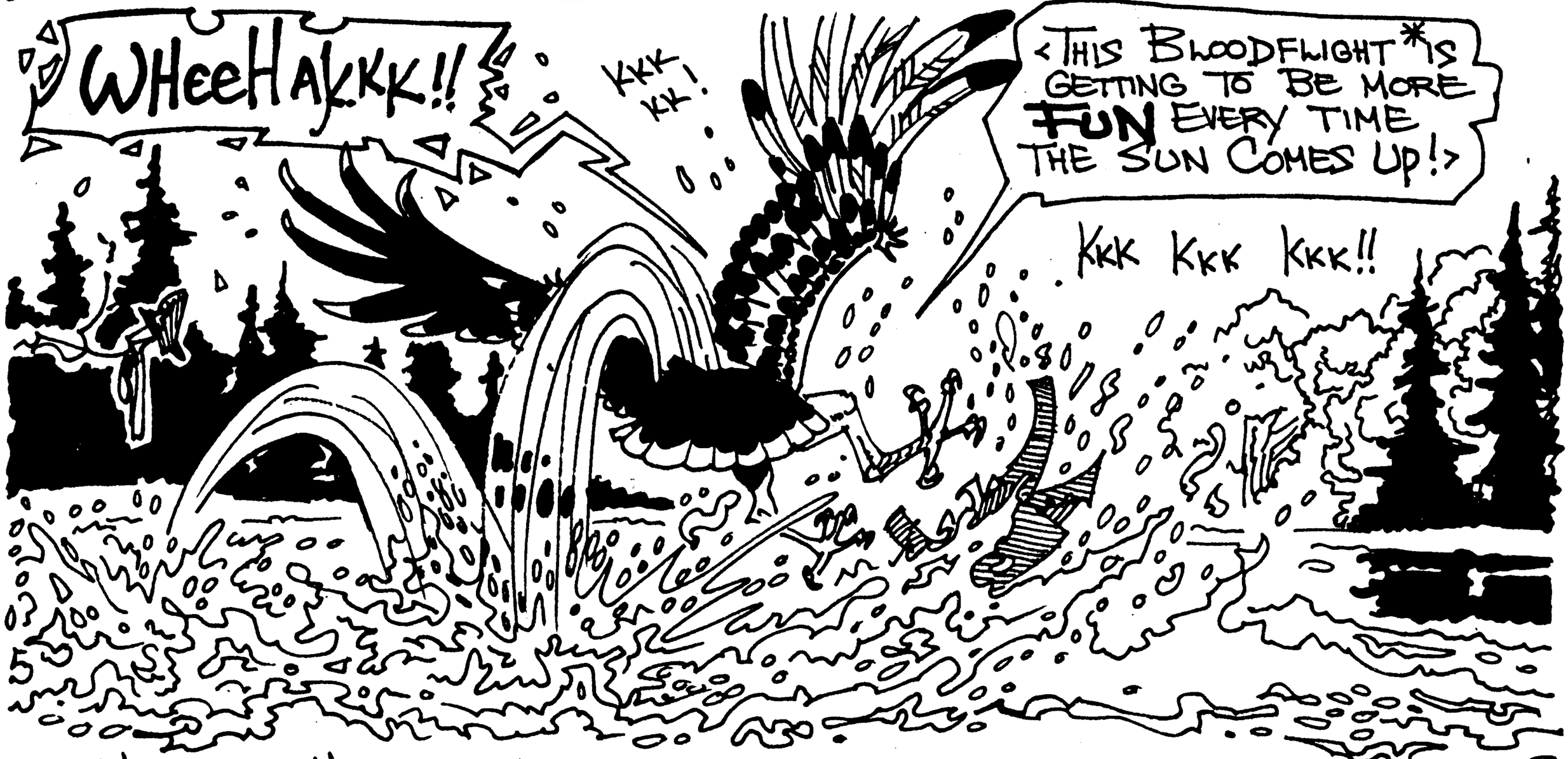

OH. BROAD BLUE SKY ABOVE!›
UGH!

HADER!
‹YOUVE VOMITED ON ME!!›
‹HARLY A DRIBBLE ~MOS' OF IT WENT UP!
MOSLY A LIL' CHEWED GRASS—HERE, I'LL WASH IT OFF.›

‹GET OFF ME!
GO FIND YOUR OWN END OF THIS LAKE! YOU PATHETIC DISGUSTING GRASS-EATER!
‹BUT—›
Go!!›







*A VETSCHAUER HARPY TRADITION, A SABBATICAL OR LEAVE DURING WHICH YOU FLY WHERE YOU PLEASE IF YOU CAN, KILL WHAT YOU WANT, AND EAT WHAT YOU KILL. YES, YOU DO.

PFT!!

<I NEVER SEEN NOTHIN' TAKE A BATH SO **SERIOUS**! IT'S LIKE SHARIN' A DROWNDED BURROW WITH A **GEYSER**!>

F F

SNT! <'COURSE, HE EATS DEAD MEAT— HE'S GOT **ROT** ON HIS TEETH — I GUESS MEAT-EATERS **KNOWS** HOW MUCH THEY **STINKS**!>

<WISHT I WAS JUST A PLAIN OL' RABBIT AGAIN. I DUZNT RECALL BEIN' PARTICLE **AWARE** OF ANYWHAT — BUT THINGS WAS A HOT LEST COMPILCATED.>

<INCLUDIN' BATHS.>

<JES' HADDA EAT GREEN STUFF AN' LOOK OUT FOR THINGS WITH SHARP AND HOOKLEY PARTS.>

<Where's m' jacket?>

?

!

≡WHIMPER≡

Dum de dum de

SPLOORG!

"You are fair, my soaring maid, your feathers, they are golden—"

Buck!

"BUT I WON'T LET YOU HUNT FOR ME, TO NO ONE I'M BEHOLDEN->"

NTUL!!

SQUEAK!!

~BEHOLDEN->?

!

EEK!

<BUSHES ~ GRASS ~ DIRT ~ HIDE!>

DEEP!>

?

!

!

KKK KKK KK PRRR PRRR KK

ooh...

<SHE'S MORE BIGGER'N HE IS ~ LOTSA MORE. AN' SHE'S WANTIN' HER OWN WAYS WITH HIM — US RABBITS KNOWS THIS THING.>

KKK!!

<Hoolah ~ I DINT KNOW SO BIG COCK BIRDS COULD FLY AFTERBACK'ARDS!>

7

NEXT TIME: "IN THE MOOD!"

8

ZONIE

BY
MICHAEL·SCOT
McMURRY

mcmurry 11/04

TABASCO® IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK & SERVICEMARK EXCLUSIVELY OF McILHENNY CO., AVERY ISLAND, LA 70513

FREEFALL

BY MARK STANLEY

IT LOOKS LIKE A VIRTUAL REALITY HELMET.

CLOSE, BUT NOTE THE CAMERAS ON THE SIDE.

THIS HELMET SEES WHAT YOU WOULD SEE, ALTERS IT, THEN PRESENTS YOU WITH THE IDEALIZED IMAGE.

TRY IT ON, YOU'LL SEE WHAT I MEAN.

WHOA! EVERYTHING IS THE SAME, ONLY....BETTER.

RG: ONLINE

IMPRESSIVE, EH?

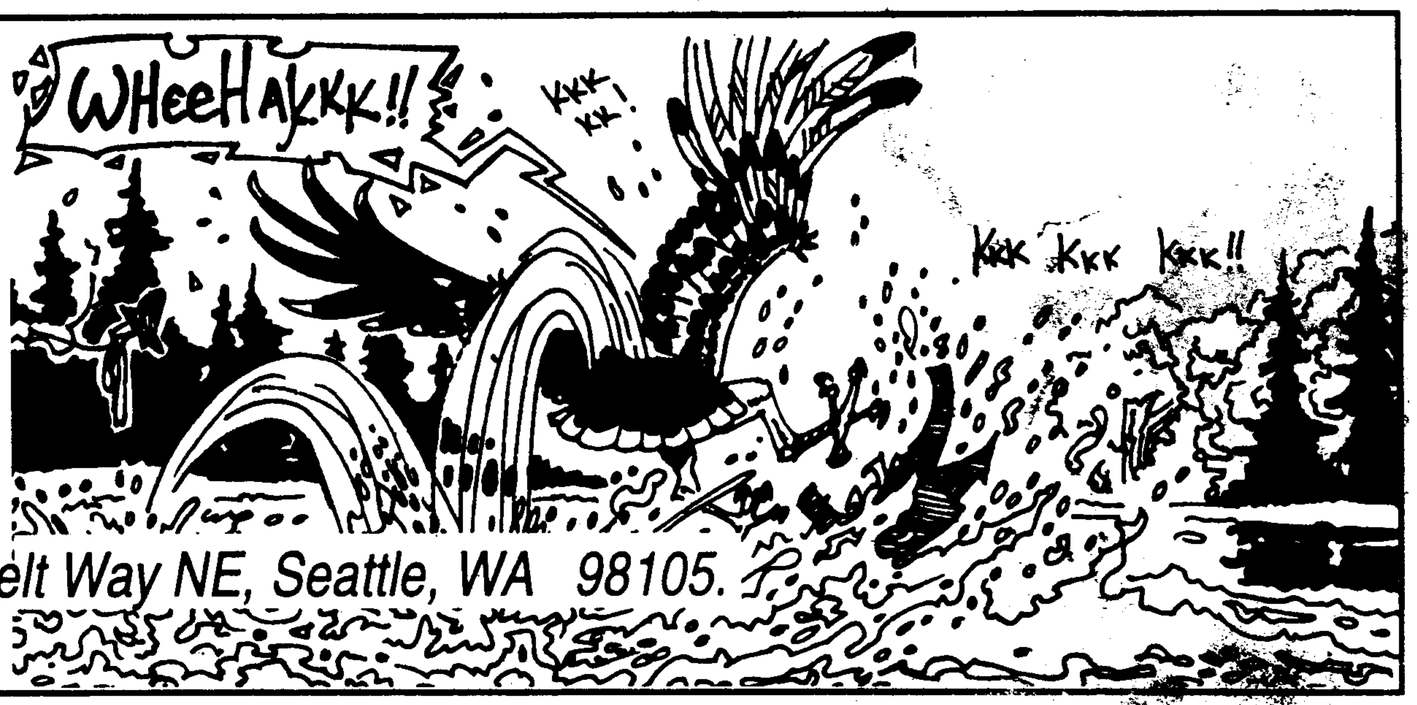
I LIKE IT.

YEAH, IT TOOK ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TO DO IT, BUT WE FINALLY HAVE A WORKING SET OF ROSE COLORED GLASSES.

THX-1138

©STANLEY 95

ANIMAL CRACKERS



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Or send e-mail to e.vick1@genie.com

Our recommendation for the month is for the furry fans connected to the Information Highway. Unique to the Internet is a daily newspaper strip that doesn't appear in any newspapers! It is -only- available through Compuserve: **Kevin & Kell** is a strip about a mixed marriage — a rabbit who marries a wolf and adopts her son. Kevin is a sysop on the Herbivore Board on a computer service, and Kell works as a predator for Herd Thinners, Inc.; their son, Rudy, is a cynical adolescent who is continually challenging his step-dad's status as the "alpha male". Kevin also has an adopted daughter from a previous marriage, Lindesfarne, a porcupine, who wonders why her step-mom is so withdrawn from her; and they have a new addition — little Coney, a baby bunny with a meat-eater's appetite.

The strip is very funny, and very furry, with a lot of animal and computer humor. **Kevin & Kell** by Bill Holbrook is available through Compuserve. If you're not linked to Compuserve, there is an FTP site available: *ftp.gdma.com/kk/* ...be sure you type it exactly! The site currently has all of the strips to date, as of this writing.

And now... we've actually got some mail! Check it out:

ZU people,

You guys are begging for letters... so here's my two cents. I like **ZU**, it's a decent comic; unfortunately, with the great job Antarctic is doing, it pales to **Furrlough**. If you guys keep up the hard work, hopefully you'll soon find yourself as good. The first thing I'd suggest is to make a title page clearly designed and easy to read. Your first page (the inside cover) is messy. The covers haven't stuck out and grabbed my attention yet. A more glossy colored cover may be more expensive but first impressions count.

On issue #6, I can't comment too much on Hader & the Colonel because I've never seen it before. It's interesting, but scratchy looking. How do those hunters not notice that the bird they are hunting is wearing a hat and jacket? (*They are very much aware of it, as subsequent chapters will show. -CPAM)*

The Robert & Katrina story was OK (not too much one could say). Richard Hernandez's pin-up was good. Riley's art I like, especially the shark, and the story was OK, but I didn't get into it too much. There was no one to like much, and it was slightly gross. My favorite part was Zonie. Zonie as a pup was especially cute.

I'd give you guys a B- for now; better than average, but room for improvement.

Rick Causey
Mesa, AZ

But how *should it be im[illegible]d! Would you elimi-nate certain strips in favor of ot[illegible]? Or [illegible] the artists to draw in a style other than they currently are? Are there* particular *types of stories or [illegible]res (or sub-genres) that we should be concentrating on[illegible] two c[illegible]'s is invaluable to us, make no mistake, but w[illegible] need* specifics.

The inside cover is something I fuss with a great deal, anticipating that very few people, if any, are even going to look at it. I'm still fine-tuning it, but if people are really finding it hard to read, I may redesign it altogether.

The covers don't grab you!? If outstanding work by Jay Shell, Tom Verre, Darko Macan, Donna Barr, and Adrian Kleinbergen aren't enough to draw your attention, then I don't know what is!!

I'm not sure what you mean by glossy-colored covers, unless you mean the UV-coated stock that many printers have taken to using in the past couple of years. Personally, I dislike them a great deal as it gives a false luster to the image and make the books very slippery when stocking them. And they don't really add anything to the quality of the book; the only reason they're being used at all is because the traditional cover stock of years past is becoming scarce and expensive.

The comparison with Antarctic, although inevitable, is a little unfair. Although we fish from the same pool, so to speak, our editorial agendas and intents are a little bit different. That's one of the main reasons why our books look so different from one another. (Please note that I do not say that either of us looks better *than the other — it's all the difference between apples and oranges.) Furrlough and the late Wild Life both have had features and strips that I would have loved to have run here if I could have.* ***Wild Lifers*** *and* ***Along Comes A Candle****, just to name a couple. On the other hand, they have run a number of strips that I would not have published here; not because they were bad,* per se, *but because I didn't feel they would be suitable here for one reason or other. I'm sure the same considerations hold true at Antarctic with regard to what we've run here.*
-CPAM

Hello,

Just curious of one thing, as I picked up **Zu** #6 last week. I have missed #5, so maybe it's there... but it's said in 6's Animal Crackers that this was the "**Zu** debut" of Hader & the Colonel, picking "right up where the story left off" in **Menagerie** #2.

Menagerie #2 had the first chapter of Hader & the Colonel; **Zu** #6 had chapter 5. Did I miss something here?

(I was misinformed. The intervening chapters were independently published by Donna as a small fanzine, avail-

able directly from her. We may reprint those at some point in the future. -CPAM)

While I'm writing.. nice to see Riley back somewhere, and that he's learned to draw curved lines (grin) The story was appropriately named, i.e. stupid, but in an anthology, variety is the key, so I have no trouble in it being there. It flows better than his earlier work.

Robert & Katrina, well, I have most **YARFs** so this was nothing new... (grin)

Zonie: Nothing new there as I saw all those, and the coming strip as I'm a member of FNC, the APA where Zonie explored it. It's neat to see them more openly p[illegible]hough. Th[illegible] (grin)

[illegible]e to hear Darko Macan will be back soon. I've [illegible]his other material; versatility is almost a neces[illegible]mics market; the same person can draw tw[illegible]fferent series for two markets... **Zu** has a similar[illegible] styles and viewpoints. Thank you.

Niall MacConaill
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To be honest, I've not seen any of Darko's other art. I have *seen his writing for Dark Horse on books like* Tarzan *and* Grendel, *so I have seen his range there. Versatility is very much alive in Europe, and at a premium here in the States. Decades ago, most artists could produce a range of works from horror to cartoon slapstick, from romance to super-hero; today, they seem to be primarily specialists, either unwilling or unable to cross over into other genres. Part of the problem, of course, has been the marketplace as well as the artist; if there's no demand for romance or funny animal comics, then the artists have no motivation for creating them. -CPAM*

So the funny animal baton has passed to the marvelously promising **ZU**. I hope you continue your emphasis on regularity and quality and never relinquish the dream. (Not an easy job to do for a living, I know, but -hey- we readers are paying you good money for it.)

It's a rare thing for me to write a comic book letters page. The urge now to put ink to paper comes from the unexpected joy of finding a true gem in your magazine. I'm referring of course to Darko Macan's Sergei. From the three chapters I've seen so far, it's struck me as without doubt the best new comic book story I've come across in years, It made me sit up and take notice. I really mean this: in terms of the power of the writing, it's way up there amongst only a handful of others, pro and non-pro. So as a counterpoint to Roz Gibson's comments in #5 (one herself whose writing I very much admire), I'd like to put in my two bob's worth, for what that amounts to.

"Above all else, the story." Macan certainly knows how to tell [illegible]ne. In a budget of twelve pages, he sets up a scen[illegible]takes it through to its well-rounded conclusion, h[illegible]xed action and introspection in equal measure. That [illegible]o say he expects to give us pat answers. Unlike Sakai's Usagi and Gen, Sergei is a screwed up mercenary in a screwed up world. People despise him for what he does for a living, and to a point he shares their sentiments. His bitterness is a shadow of the bitterness of this squalid, war-ravaged landscape of which (I hope) we are to learn more. What so far has been revealed is a world of wretched poverty where it's easy to imagine anyone killing the next person just to survive, while at the same time compelled to band together in adversity just to hold on. Yet this is only the edge of the potential. Who knows what will lie over the next hill?

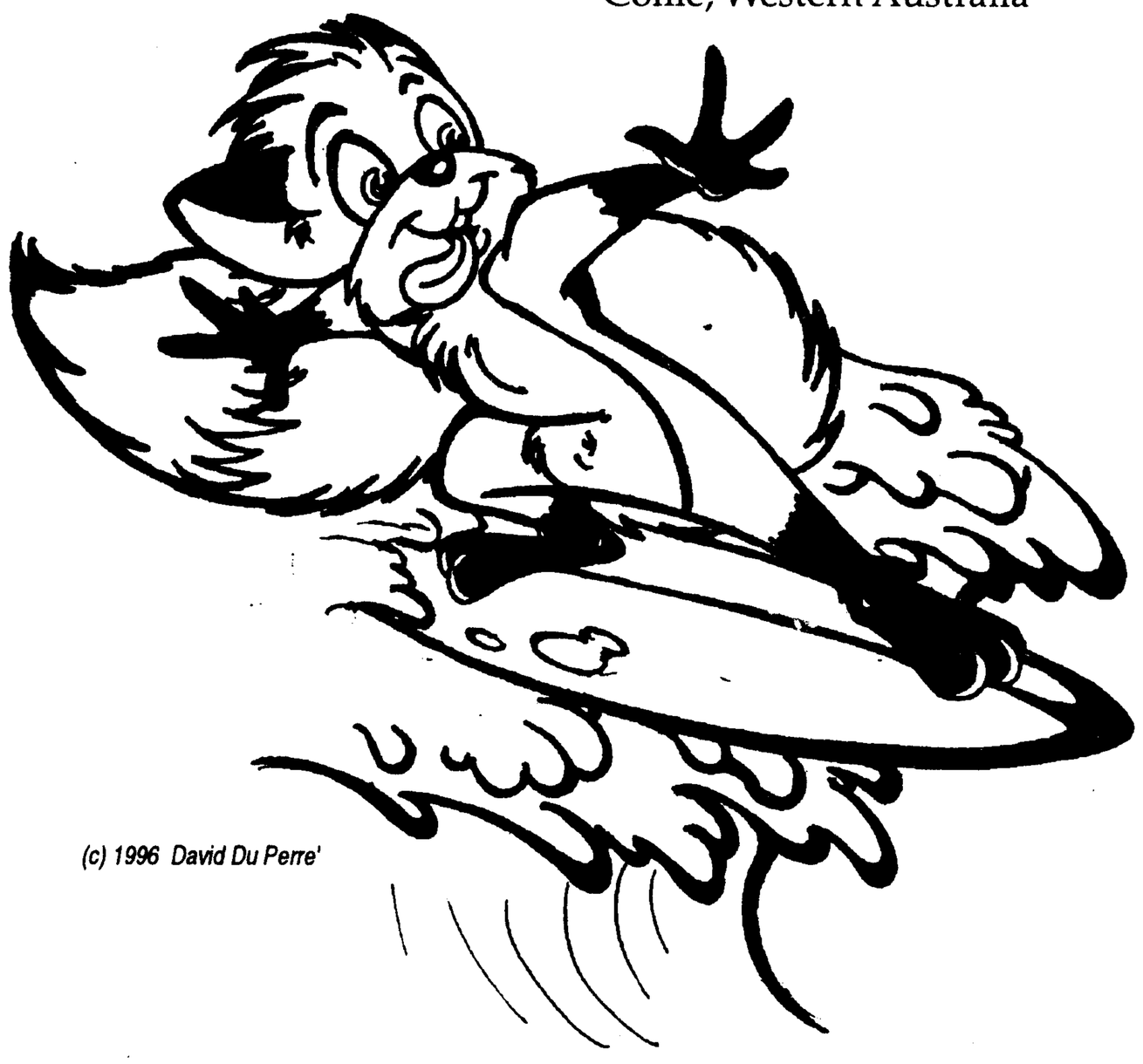
And to make sure this downbeat scenario doesn't get too depressing, I sense that Sergei has a good soul beneath all that scar tissue. "An Old Story" was one of the most powerful and moving things I've seen. When that young rabbit kept admiring the mercenary, I could only think of the blood and pain behind it all and the death which hides just out of sight for everyone in the land, for each in its own way. If Sergei hadn't been so burned out he would have been disgusted. When -appallingly- he cut off the boy's ear, bizarre as it may seem, we know it was with good intentions. Maybe to correct his life, maybe to save it. But all he caused was pain and hatred. And later he was hounded by his own conscience, before working through this to find his own resolution. You must admit, it's a remarkable writer who can bring about such a course of feelings into a comic.

The execution of the artwork is pretty much to my liking, although I'd like to see a mite more clarity in it, with a finer line and sparser panel. Sometimes the portrayal of movement in the fight sequences doesn't work so well for me. In that case, I can only refer the artist back to the examples of Sakai himself, who has never been bettered and from whom with study we can all learn.

Because, as you've said, Macan has clearly been inspired by Sakai. Sure. I admire his taste. But one could by no means rate Sergei as a Usagi rip-off. The concept and the art style are similar without a doubt, but how different is that from the vast number of American comics that are all inspired by, and similar to, one another? I guess we'll just have to wait to hear from Sakai himself as to whether he feels outraged or flattered. He certainly could have had far worse followers. In Sergei, Macan has done him proud.

I would personally like to urge Darko Macan to keep up the good work and give us more of this brilliant tale. And **MU** for **ZU** to keep printing it. I've developed too much of an appetite to give up now!

Dr. Craig Hilton
Collie, Western Australia



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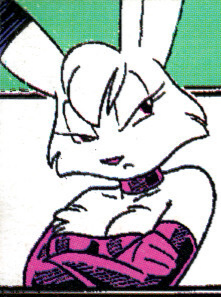
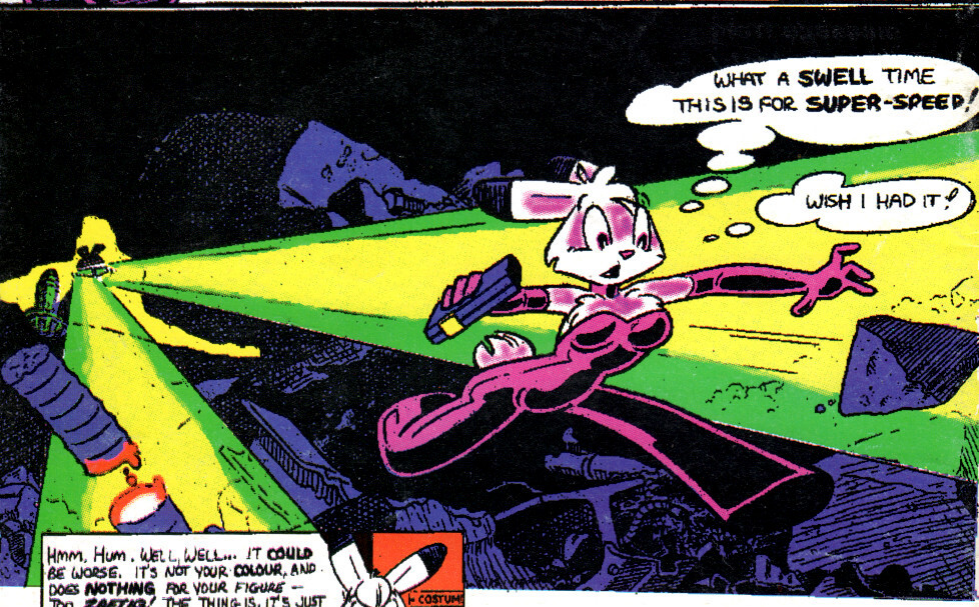
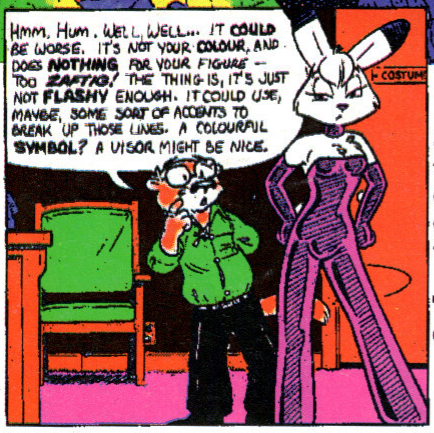


TALES OF BEATRIX FARMER

BY STEVE GALLACCI AND TARAL WAYNE





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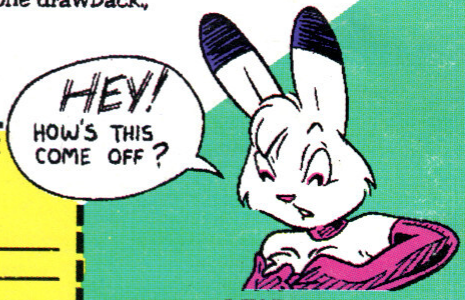

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