

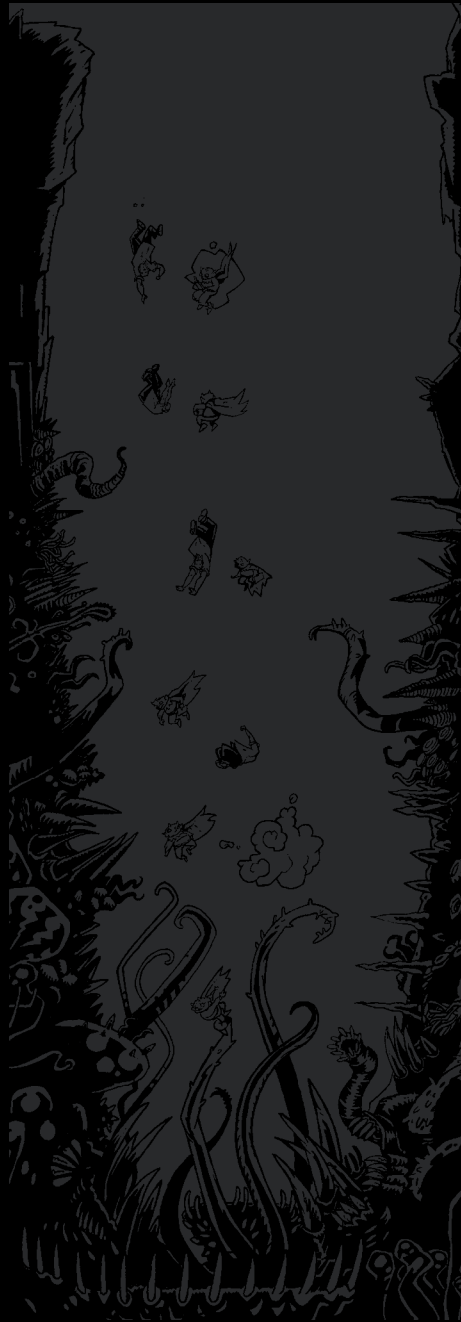
BEC & KAWI



BLOODY STUDENTS

SIMON SPURRIER ★ STEVE ROBERTS





BEC & KAWL

BLOODY STUDENTS

BEC & KAWL CREATED BY SIMON SPURRIER AND STEVE ROBERTS

BEC & KAWL

BLOODY STUDENTS

SIMON SPURRIER

Writer

STEVE ROBERTS

Artist

REBELLION[®]

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Chief Technical Officer: Chris Kingsley

2000 AD Editor in Chief: Matt Smith

Graphic Design: Simon Parr & Luke Preece

Marketing and PR: Keith Richardson

Repro Assistant: Kathryn Symes

Graphic Novels Editor: Jonathan Oliver

Designer: Luke Preece

Original Commissioning Editor: Matt Smith

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For information on other 2000 AD graphic novels, or if you have any comments on this book, please email books@2000ADonline.com

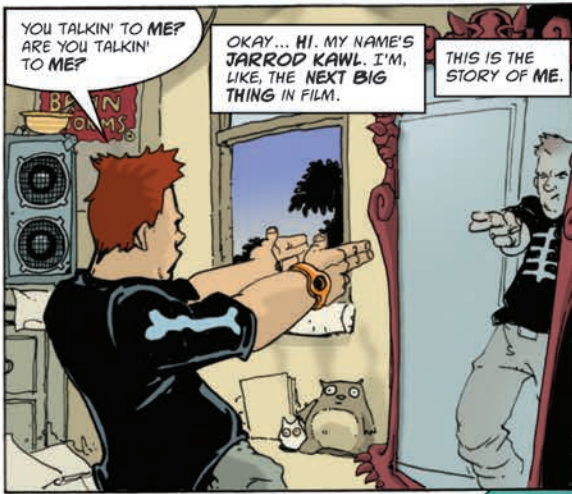
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BEC & KAWL AND THE MYSTICAL MENTALIST MENACE

Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Steve Roberts
Colour: Richard Elson
Letters: Ellie De Ville

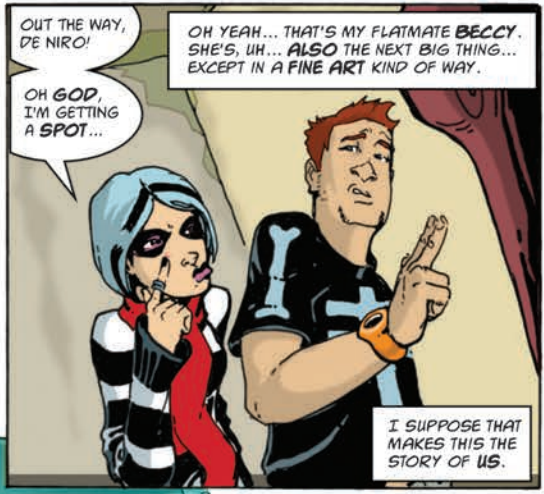
Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1290-1291



YOU TALKIN' TO ME?
ARE YOU TALKIN'
TO ME?

OKAY... HI. MY NAME'S
JARROD KAWL. I'M,
LIKE, THE NEXT BIG
THING IN FILM.

THIS IS THE
STORY OF ME.



OUT THE WAY,
DE NIRO!

OH YEAH... THAT'S MY FLATMATE BECCY.
SHE'S, UH... ALSO THE NEXT BIG THING...
EXCEPT IN A FINE ART KIND OF WAY.

OH GOD,
I'M GETTING
A SPOT...

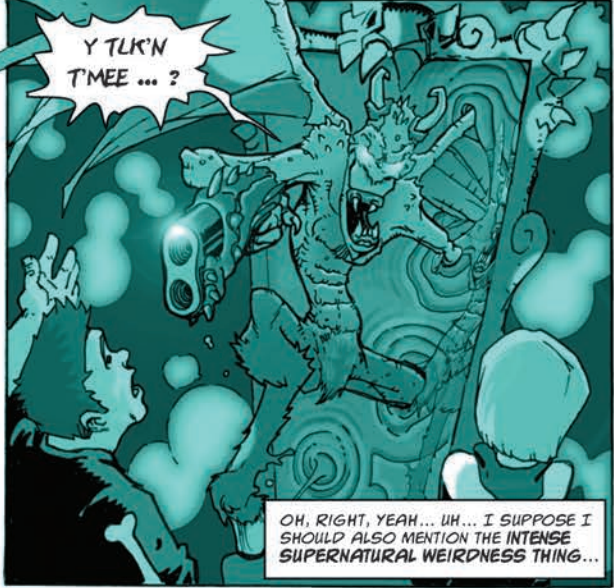
I SUPPOSE THAT
MAKES THIS THE
STORY OF US.



LISTEN — THIS IS MY MIRROR. I WAS
THE ONE WHO LUGGED IT ALL THE
WAY FROM THE PAWN SHOP IN
VERTICK ALLEY.

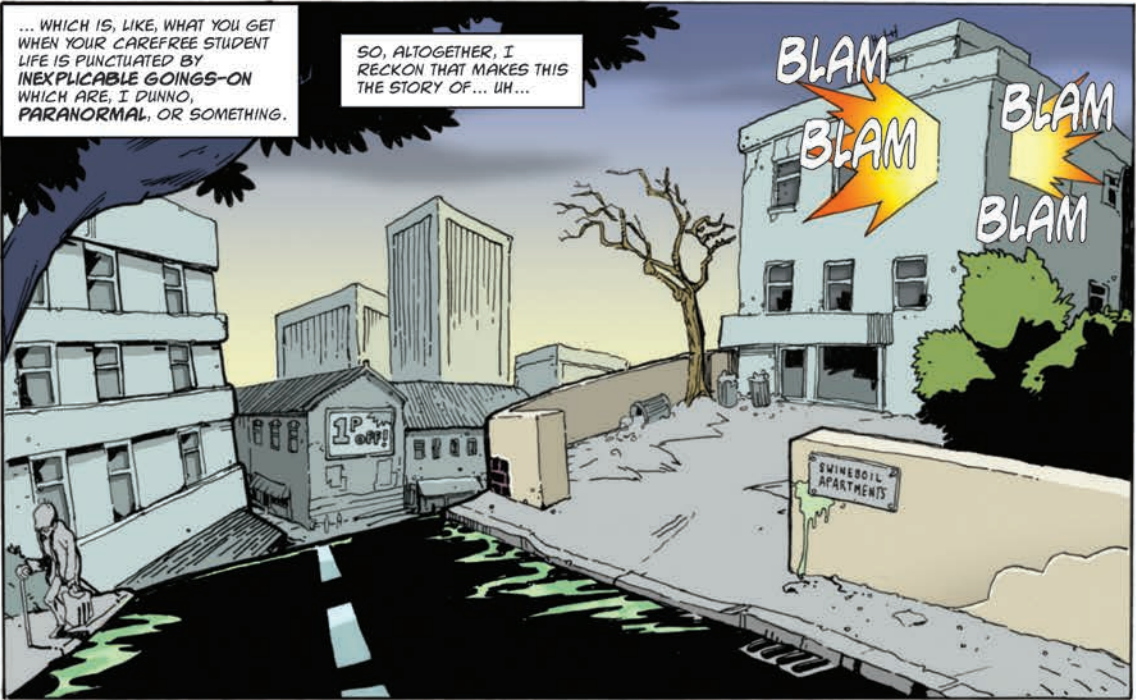
IT'S A VITAL
RESEARCH TOOL FOR
MY FILM PROJECT,
OKAY?

... YOU
TALKIN' TO
ME?



Y TLK'N
T'MEE ... ?

OH, RIGHT, YEAH... UH... I SUPPOSE I
SHOULD ALSO MENTION THE INTENSE
SUPERNATURAL WEIRDNESS THING...



... WHICH IS, LIKE, WHAT YOU GET
WHEN YOUR CAREFREE STUDENT
LIFE IS PUNCTUATED BY
INEXPLICABLE GOINGS-ON
WHICH ARE, I DUNNO,
PARANORMAL, OR SOMETHING.

SO, ALTOGETHER, I
RECKON THAT MAKES THIS
THE STORY OF... UH...

BLAM
BLAM

BLAM
BLAM

SWINEBOIL
APARTMENTS



MOMMY SAID THERE AREN'T ANY MONSTERS... BUT THERE ARE... THERE ARE...

LUCKY FOR US THAT DEMONS CAN'T AIM FOR TOFFEE...



NAH, IT COULDN'T HAVE HURT ME. I'M UNDEAD, REMEMBER?

YEAH, THAT'S IT, RUB IT IN!

YOU LUCKY BASTARD. I'D LOOK GREAT AS A CORPSE...

OH YEAH... THE ZOMBIE THING. I SHOULD EXPLAIN THAT. SEE, I'M FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT I'M, LIKE, INVINCIBLE...



THERE I WAS, INNOCENTLY WATCHING THE ROMERO TRIPLE-BILL AT THE LOCAL FLEAPIT, AND BAM!

I RECKON SOMEONE SLIPPED ME A VODOO CIGARETTE, OR SOMETHING...

WHEN I AWOKE I WAS AWARE THAT I'D BEEN, LIKE, REBORN. IT WAS TOTALLY COOL.



Siiiiigh... I'M SUPPOSED TO BE WORKING ON MY INSTALLATION PROJECT...

I WAS GOING TO GET A TORTURE RACK AND COVER IT IN, Y'KNOW, INNARDS AND LIMBS AND STUFF...

BUT MY TUTOR SAYS IT'S TOO TRACEY EMIN. BITCH...



HEY, ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME...?

SO WHAT'S WITH THE SUNGLASSES, QUENTIN?



IF THE COLLEGE TUTORS HAVE GRADES WHICH THEY WON'T GIVE YOU, SUMMON A DEMON.

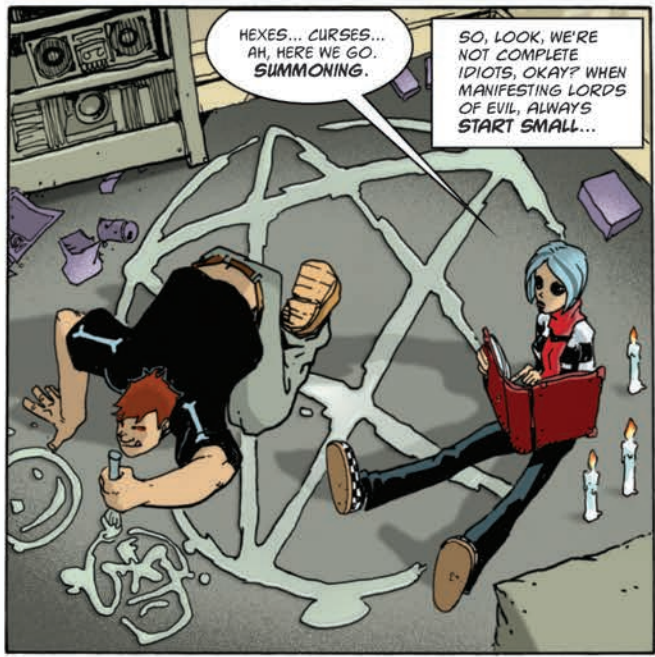
A LITTLE ONE. TELL 'EM THE DARK PRINCE'S NEXT. AFTER THAT THEY'D PASS YOU EVEN IF YOU WORE LADIES' UNDERWEAR.

I'M HUNGRY. LET'S GET A TACO.



NOT MUCH OF A PLAN, I SUPPOSE.

BUT, LIKE, YOU'D GRADE GENEROUSLY IF YOU CAME FACE-TO-FACE WITH A MANGLEOID FROM THE 8TH CIRCLE OF HADES, YEAH?



HEXES... CURSES... AH, HERE WE GO. SUMMONING.

SO, LOOK, WE'RE NOT COMPLETE IDIOTS, OKAY? WHEN MANIFESTING LORDS OF EVIL, ALWAYS START SMALL...



I AM HEKKASSBAX, DESTROYER OF WORLDS, OVERTHROWER OF EMPIRES, MASTER OF EVIL!

YOU SEEK MY MATERIALISATION, MAGGOT-MORTALS? THEN CHOOSE THE SHAPE OF YOUR DESTRUCTION!



YOUR THOUGHTS BETRAY YOU, MORTAL!

THE SHAPE IS CHOSEN!



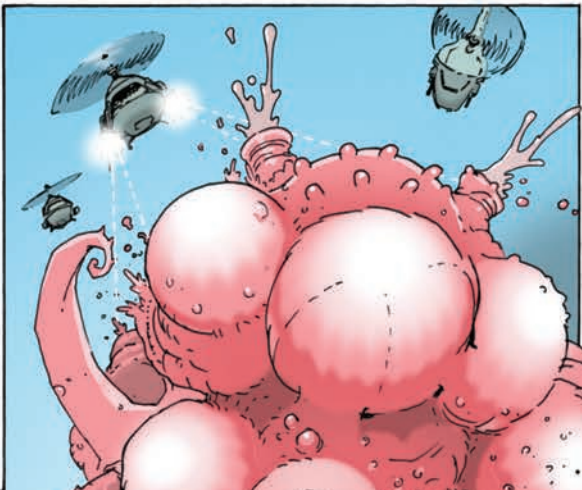
YOU MEAN LIKE IN GHOSTBUSTERS? OH COOL!

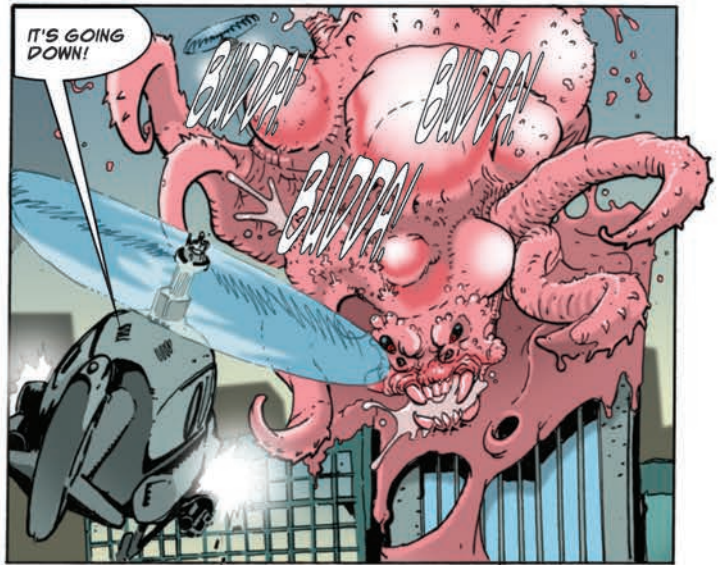
'CROSS THE BEAMS! CROSS THE BEAMS!'

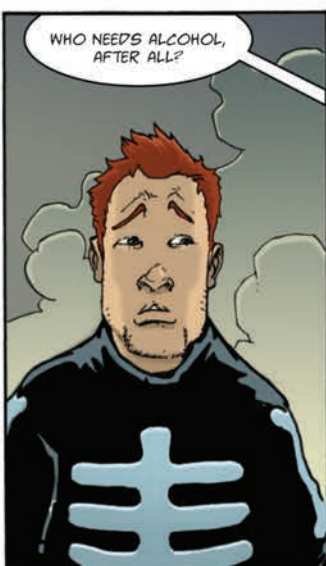
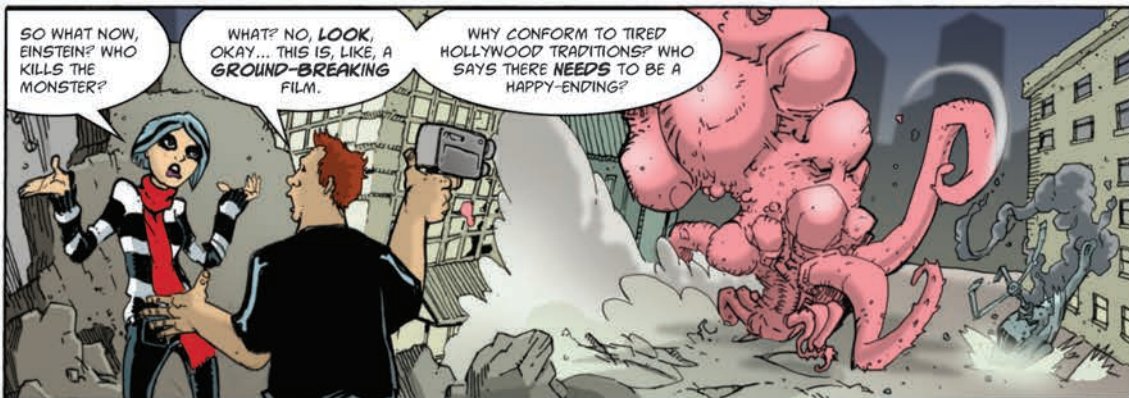


POP!











NO GOOD. THERE AREN'T ANY KEYS.

WE DON'T NEED KEYS. I LIFTED THIS FROM THE PAWN SHOP...

LOOKS LIKE A TWIGLET, MATE. WHAT IS IT?



THIS?

THIS IS MY BOOMSTICK!



ALLA-SODDING-KAZAM!



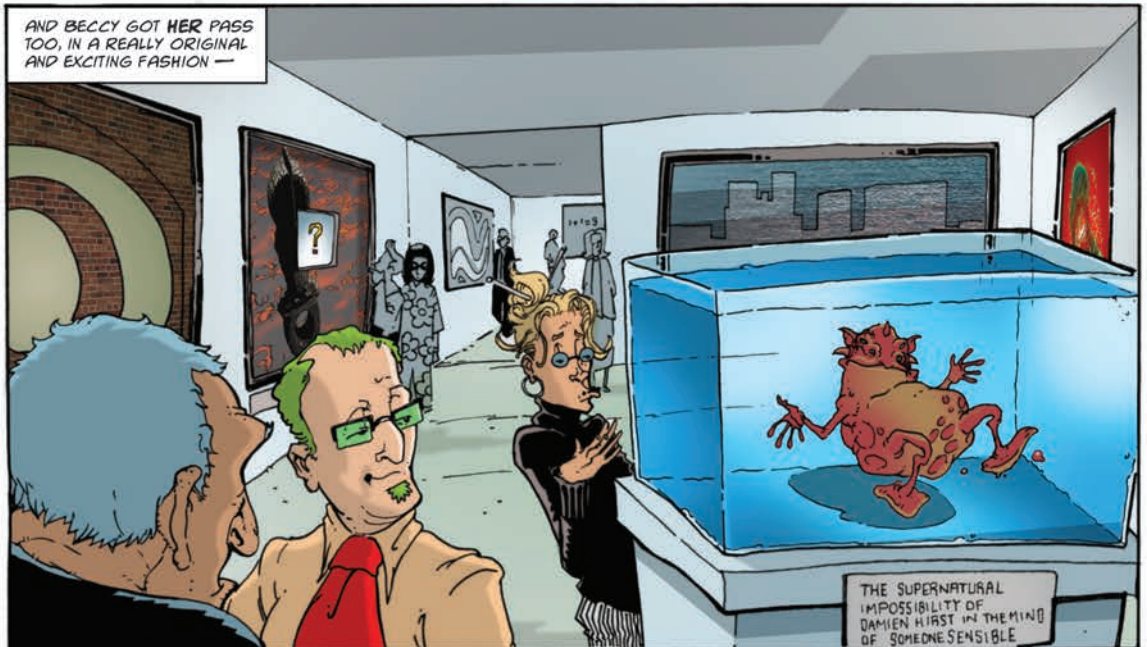
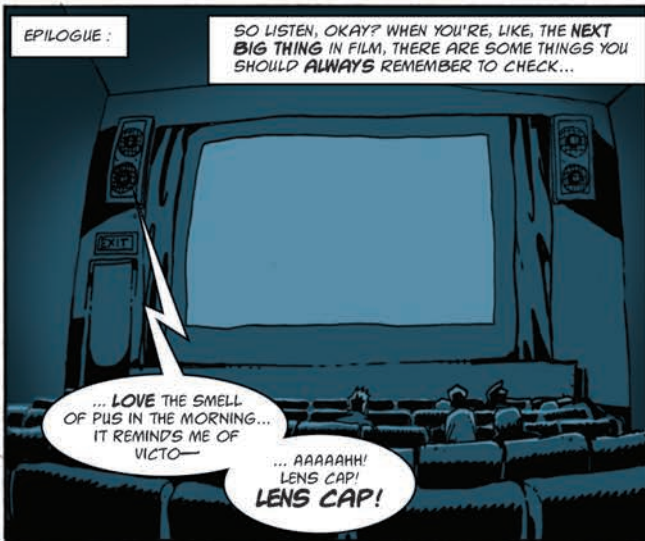
RRRRRRRRRR!

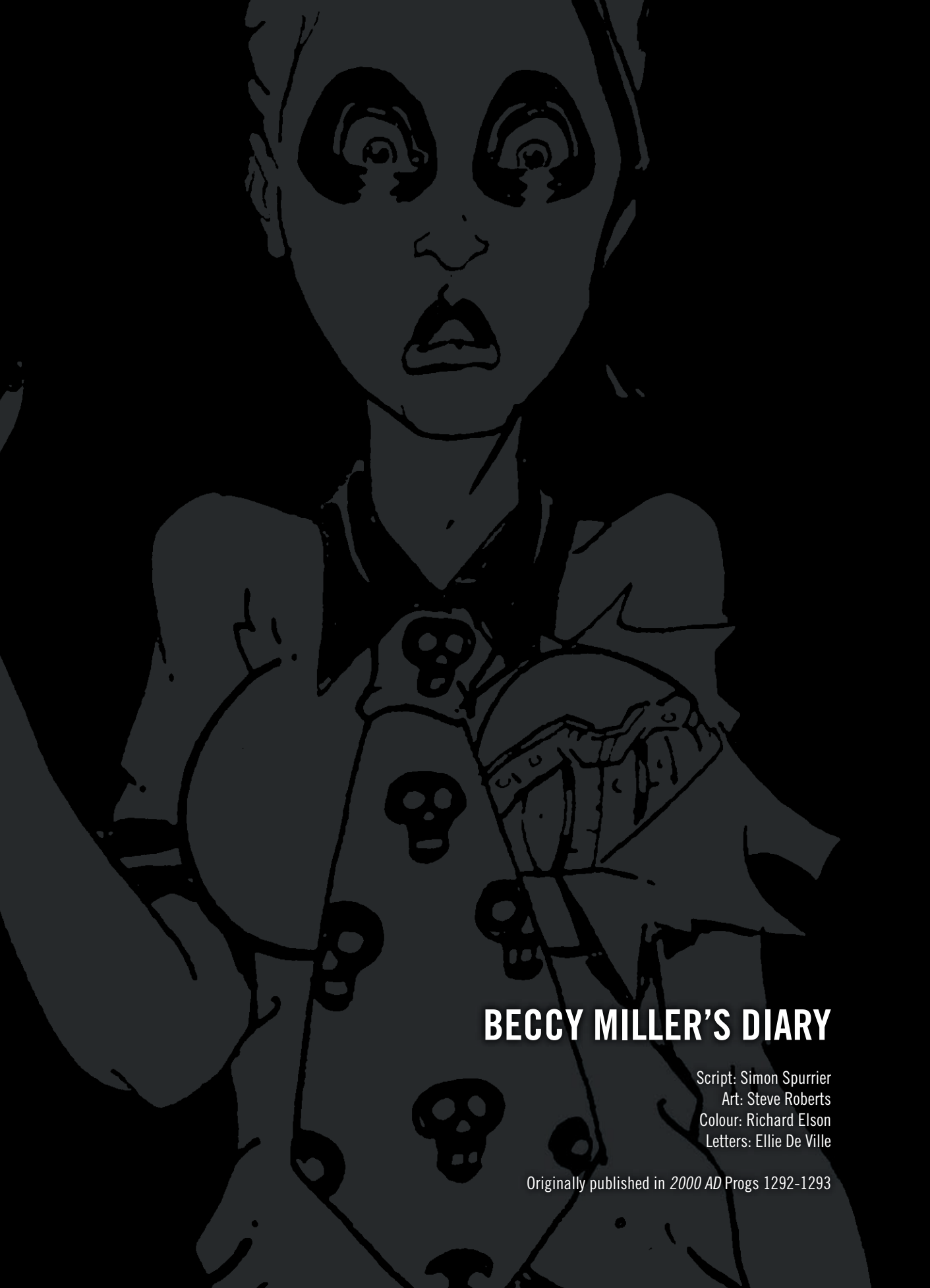


O-KAY...

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

OH, COME ON, JARROD! HOW ELSE DO YOU KILL AN INSANE RAMPAGING PUSTULE — ?

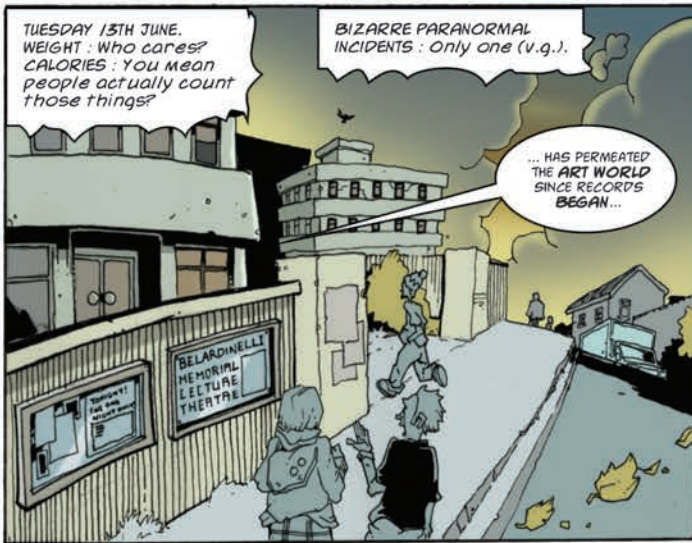




BECCY MILLER'S DIARY

Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Steve Roberts
Colour: Richard Elson
Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1292-1293



TUESDAY 13TH JUNE.
WEIGHT : Who cares?
CALORIES : You mean people actually count those things?

BIZARRE PARANORMAL INCIDENTS : Only one (v.g.).

... HAS PERMEATED THE ART WORLD SINCE RECORD'S BEGAN...



9.00 AM : Attending college lecture given by Lucius DeVoir, famous contemporary artist. V. handsome, probably rich...

...FROM THE AGONIES OF GRÜNEWALD'S CRUCIFIXION TO THE CHAPMAN BROTHERS' MUTILATED MANNEQUINS...

...ONE THING HAS REMAINED A CONSTANT THEME...



PAIN!

THE SUBJECT, I MIGHT ADD, OF MY NEARLY COMPLETE MASTERWORK!



Chosen to wear Gigabust bra. V. painful, but worth it if DeVoir notices me. Marriage and fabulous wealth to follow.

Currently speculating upon the enormous size of his —

hHH- HEART —!



... MM-MY H-HEART!

... aaaaAAAKK ...



... r-rosebuuud...

9.15 AM. Slight change of plan.

9.30 AM : Collected bumbling sidekick with details of new scheme.

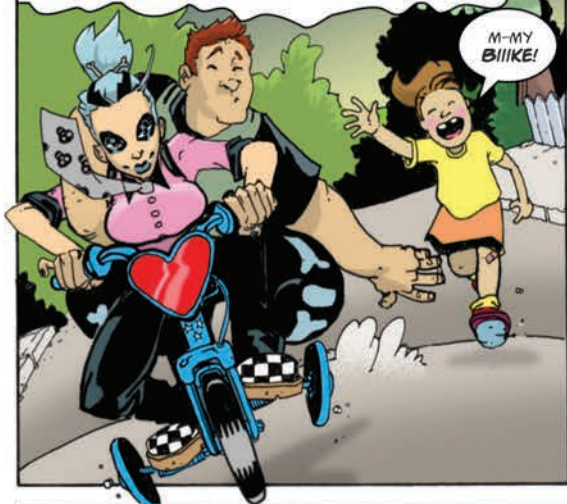


ARE YOU GONNA TELL US WHERE HE, LIKE, LIVES, OR AM I GONNA HAFTA GET MEDIEVAL ON YO' ASS?

9.45 AM : Consulted local information service regarding recently deceased artist's place of residence.



9.50 AM : Procured transportation for journey to aforementioned location. Used the words 'procured' and 'aforementioned'. AM v. clever.



MY WAIST, YOU PERV! HOLD ON ROUND MY WAIST!

Gigabust bro, on reflection, may have been a mistake.



10.15 AM : Arrived at Devoir's mansion and went over plan with bumbling sidekick. Again.

SO... LIKE, WHY ARE WE HERE?



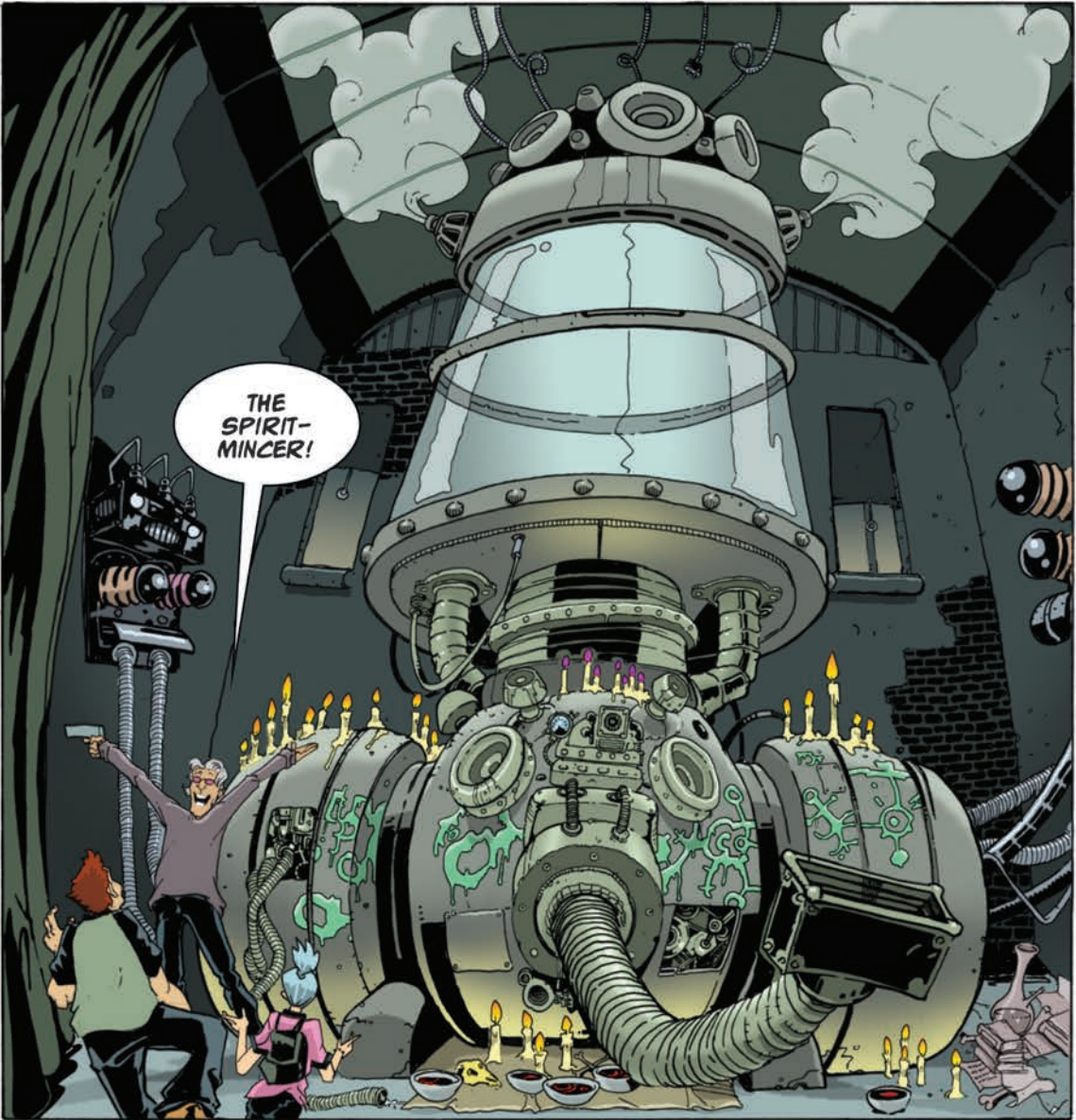
LOOK, IT'S PERFECTLY SIMPLE. IF AN ARTIST CROAKS, HIS WORK IS SUDDENLY WORTH TWICE AS MUCH, RIGHT?

SO WE'RE GOING TO BORROW SOME OF DEVOIR'S STUFF NOW THAT HE... WELL... DOESN'T NEED IT ANYMORE...

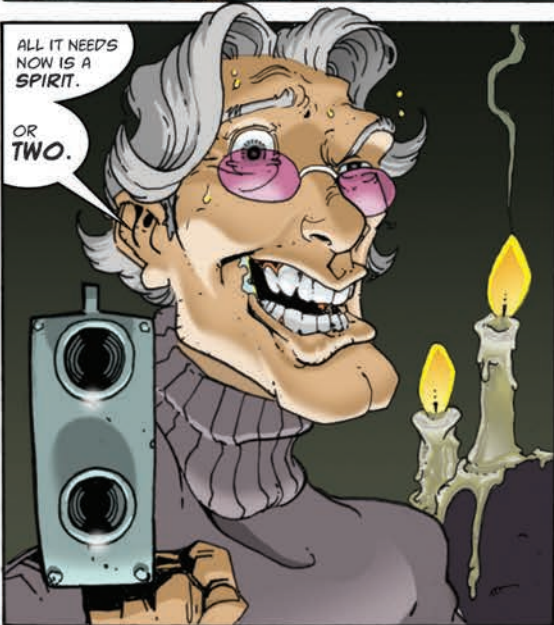








THE
SPIRIT-
MINCER!



ALL IT NEEDS
NOW IS A
SPIRIT.

OR
TWO.



11:20 AM:
Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa



11.21 AM: Suddenly in extreme peril at hands of insane recently deceased artist. V. bad.

Feel like fabulous film star awaiting arrival of gorgeous male hero for rescue, or at least pitty one-liner.



Unfortunately only gorgeous male currently in-mind is insane recently deceased artist, and only one-liner remembered is —

RUN, FORREST, RUN!



GET THEM, YOU IDIOT!

BLAM!
BLAM!



11.22 AM: Pursued through mansion of eccentric artist by gun-toting lunatics.

Currently wondering why insane unnatural things keep happening to ME...



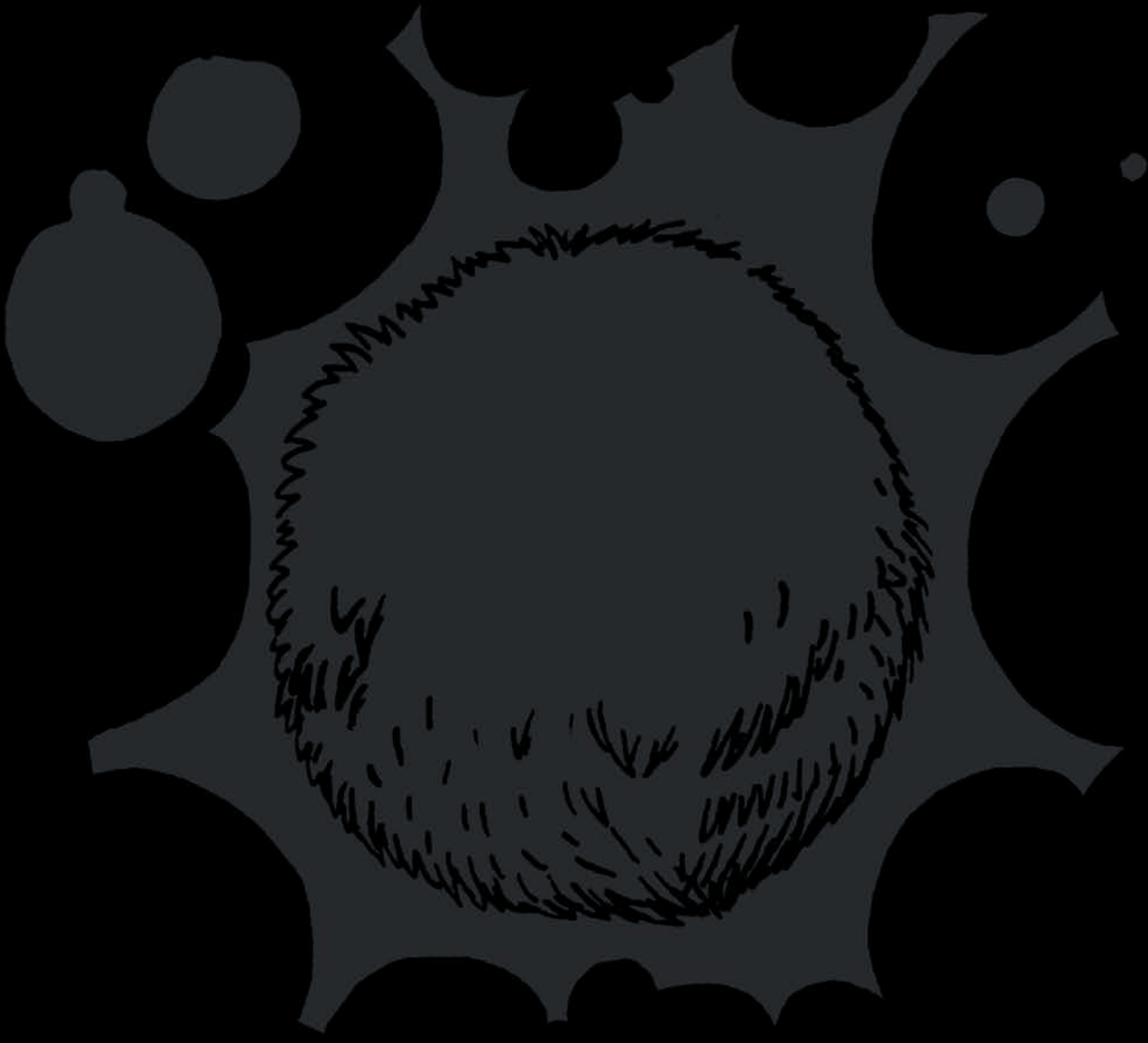
... GET BACK HERE YOU LITTLE B*CH! ...

Failing presence of gorgeous hero, rescue by bumbling sidekick would DO. Any time. Any time at all...

... i must not fear, fear is the mind-killer, fear is the little death that brings oblivion...







ENLIGHTENMENT

Script: Simon Spurrier

Art: Steve Roberts

Colour: Richard Elson

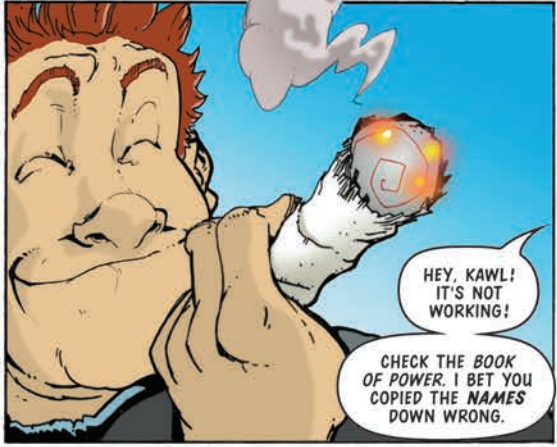
Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *2000 AD Progs* 1327



...CALL UPON THE MYSTICAL ENERGIES OF THE MOON WITH THE RECITAL OF NAMES...

"NI!"... "GELFLING!"...
"TETSUOOOOOO!"...
"KA-NE-DAAAA!"



HEY, KAWL!
IT'S NOT WORKING!
CHECK THE *BOOK OF POWER*. I BET YOU COPIED THE NAMES DOWN WRONG.



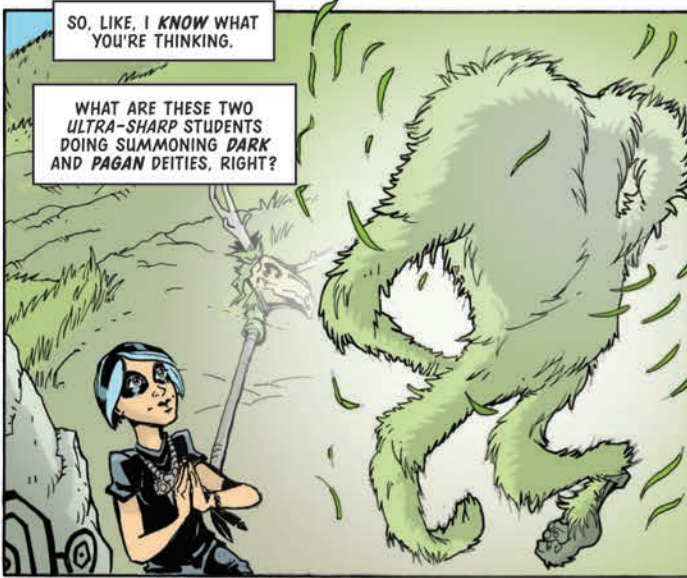
...PRINT IS DEAD...



OH, WOW, LOOK!
IT'S, LIKE, *WORKING* AFTER ALL!
BEHOLD THE POWER OF THE MOON!
UH... BEC?



...THAT'S NO MOON.



SO, LIKE, I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.

WHAT ARE THESE TWO ULTRA-SHARP STUDENTS DOING SUMMONING DARK AND PAGAN DEITIES, RIGHT?



YEAH, WELL. IF YOU FIND OUT, LET ME KNOW, OKAY?



BLESSED-BE ALMIGHTY GRASSFACE, KEEPER OF SECRETS, GUARDIAN OF REASON, HOLIEST OF HO—

YEAH, YEAH. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE, DEARY?



UM...THROUGH DANGERS UNTOLD AND HARDSHIPS UNNUMBERED, I HAVE FOUGHT MY WAY HERE TO THE CASTLE BEYOND THE GOBLIN CIT—

UH... HANG ON...

I WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH.



THE TRUTH, EH? WHICH ONE'S THAT, THEN?



THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH, YOU SHAMBLING OLD FAIRY!

AND IF YOU SAY 'FORTY-TWO' I'LL POKE YOUR EYES OUT!



WHAT POSSIBLE USE COULD YOU HAVE FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE, EH?



THE TRUTH

SMILE IF YOU KNOW THE TRUTH

THE TRUTH by BECCY MILLER

BOOK DEALS! HIGHLY PRICED LIFE-MANAGEMENT CLASSES! TV SHOWS! BUMPER STICKERS!

MERCHANDISING! MERCHANDISING! MERCHANDISING!

GET IT?



MM, I TINGLE.

SIDDOWN, YOU MONSTROUS LITTLE CREATURE.

I'M GOING TO TELL YOU A STORY.



"SEE... ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS THIS PAGAN SORCERESS.

"HER WISDOM WAS GREAT, HER POWERS IMMEASURABLE, AND HER TOADYING, BUMBLING SIDEKICKS LIMITLESS.



"SO GREAT WAS HER POWER THAT SHE CURED ALL DISEASES, STOPPED ALL WARS AND BROUGHT FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND EQUALITY TO HER KINGDOM...

"BUT STILL SHE WANTED MORE.

"SO SHE INSTRUCTED HER BUMBLING SIDEKICKS TO BUILD AN ARK, RIGHT?"

"AN ARK THAT COULD FLY AND TAKE HER TO THE STARS."

"AND SHE FILLED IT WITH, Y'KNOW, SCHOLARS AND SORCERERS AND STUFF, AND SHE CLIMBED ABOARD AS CAPTAIN."

"IT WAS SORT OF LIKE A QUEST, Y'SEE? A JOURNEY TO SEEK OUT NEW LIFE AND NEW CIVILISATIONS, TO BOL—"

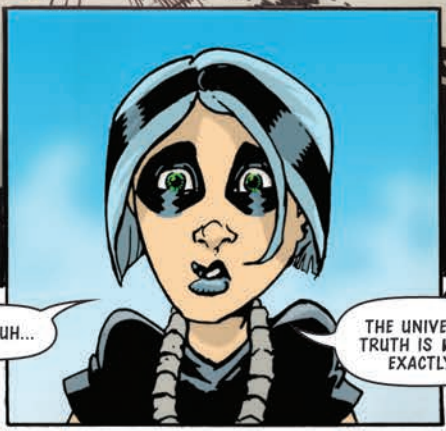
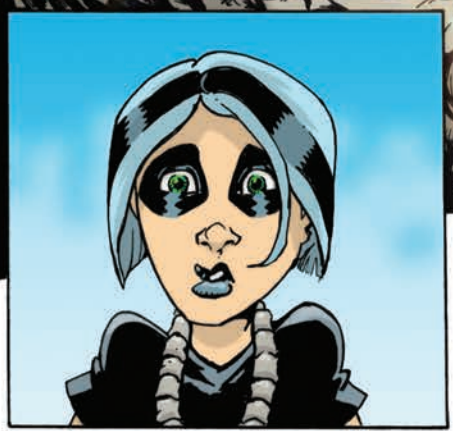


"--WELL, YOU GET THE IDEA."

SO THIS BIG BLOODY THING ROSE UP INTO THE AIR, WYRD MAJIKAL DEVICES WHIRRING--



"--JUST AS A FLOCK OF SEABIRDS FLEW INTO THE KHAOS FLUX CAPACITATOR OUTPUT AND BLEW THE WHOLE THING TO BUGGERY."



S-SO... UH...

THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH IS WHAT, EXACTLY?

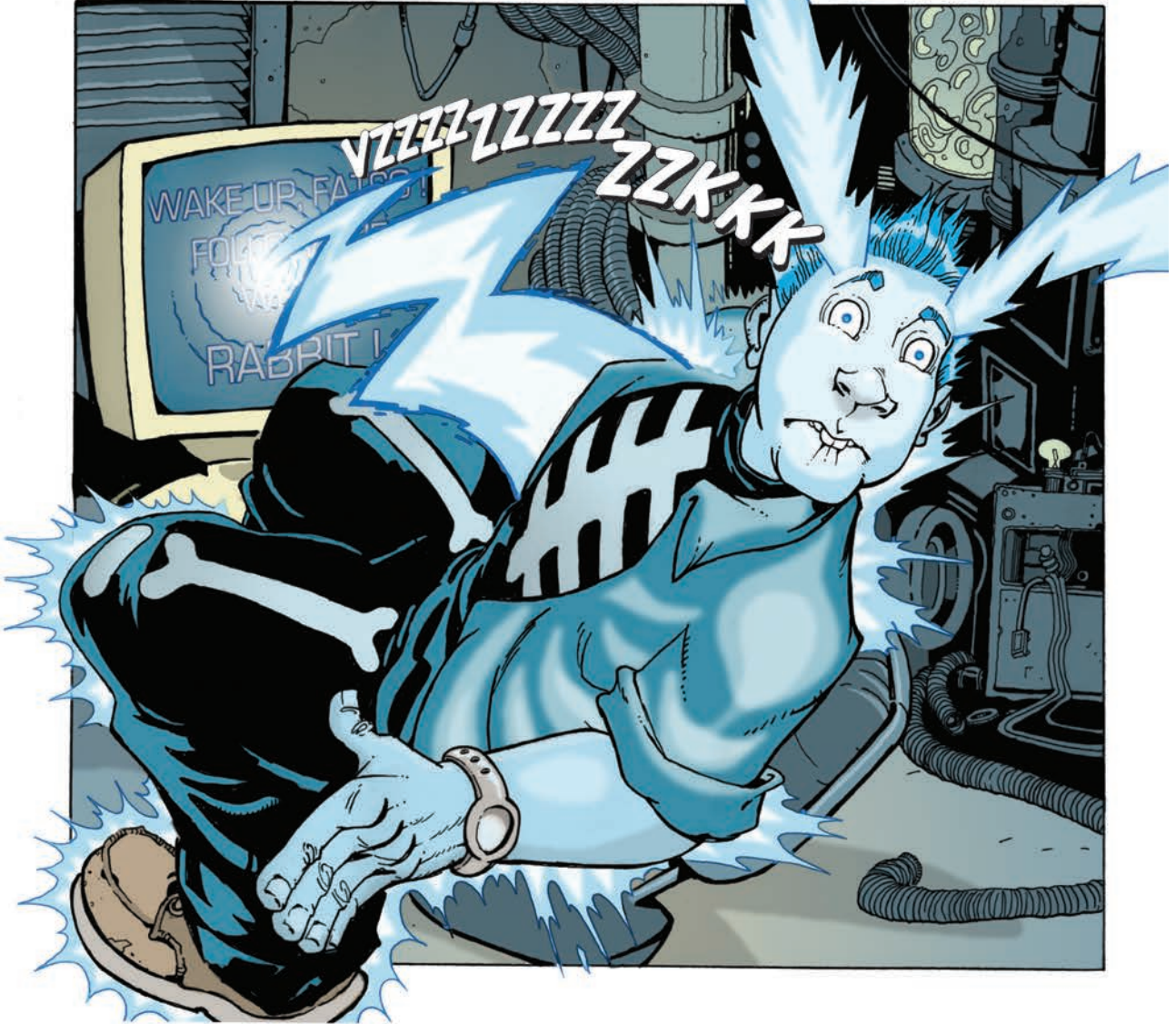
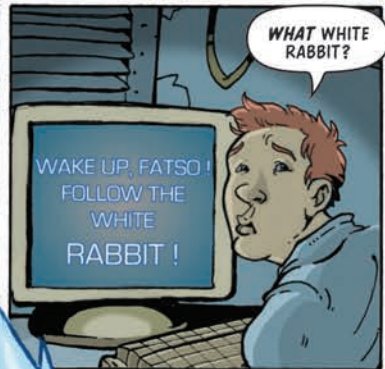
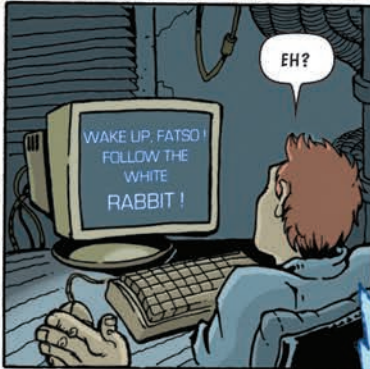
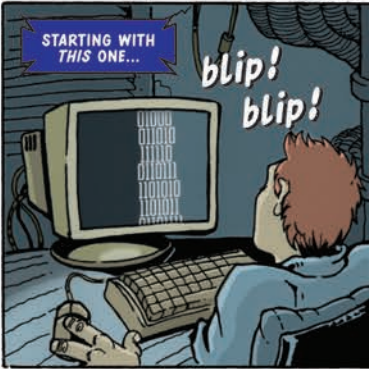
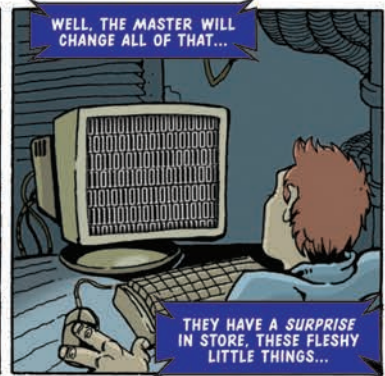
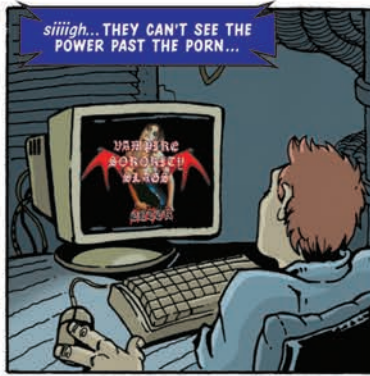
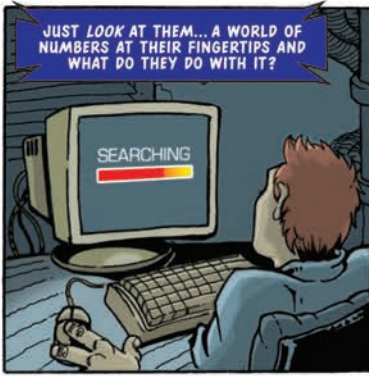


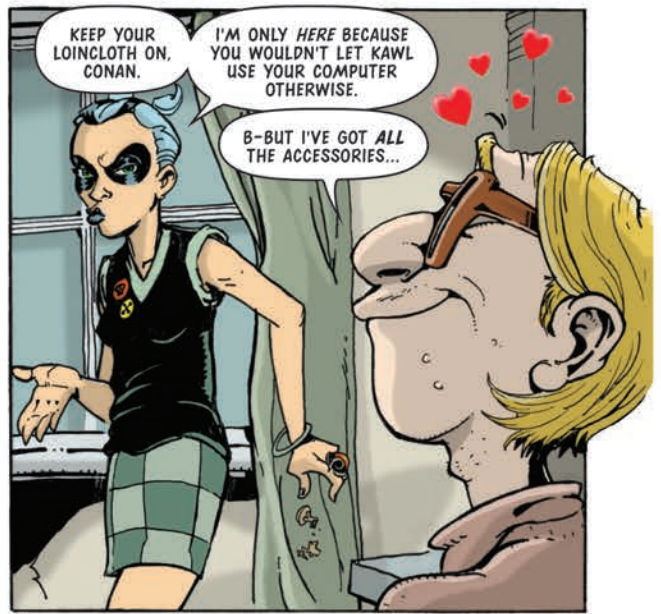


EEEVIL.COM

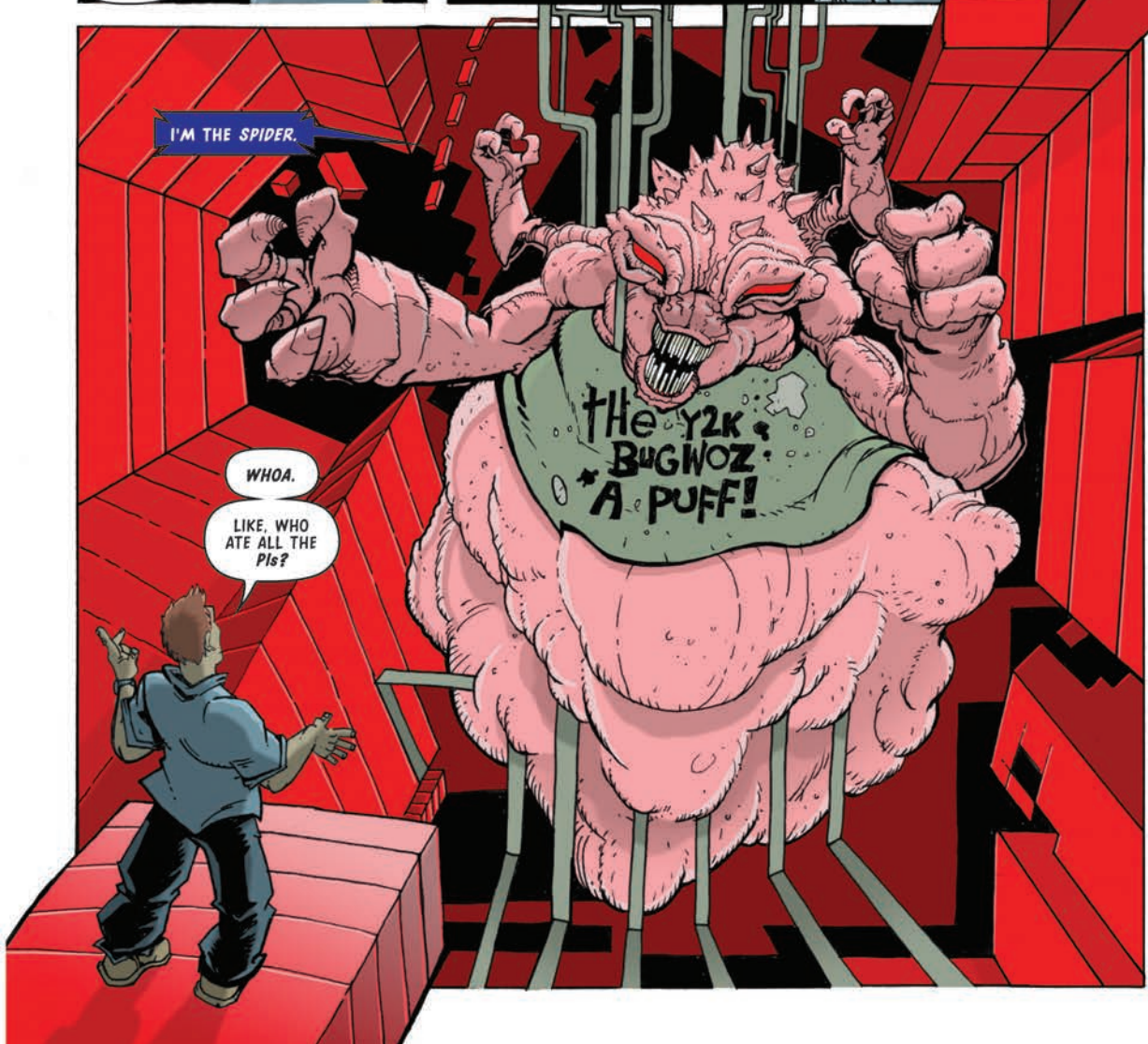
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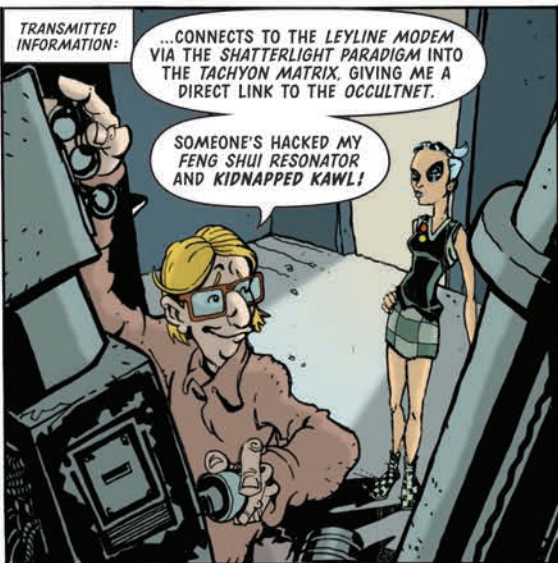
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ZZZZZZZZZZKKK

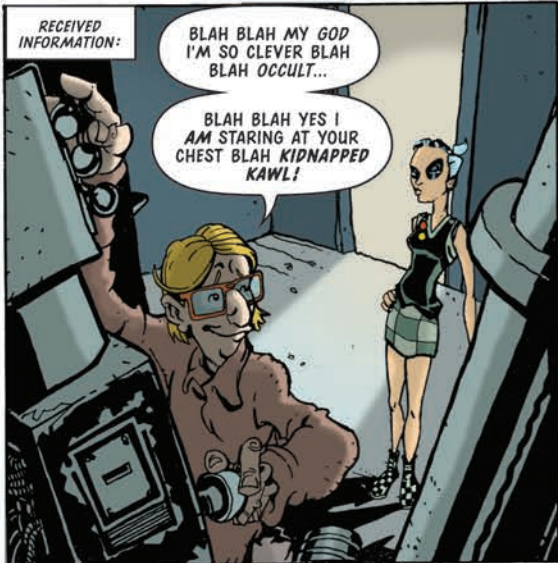




TRANSMITTED INFORMATION:

...CONNECTS TO THE LEYLINE MODEM VIA THE SHATTERLIGHT PARADIGM INTO THE TACHYON MATRIX, GIVING ME A DIRECT LINK TO THE OCCULTNET.

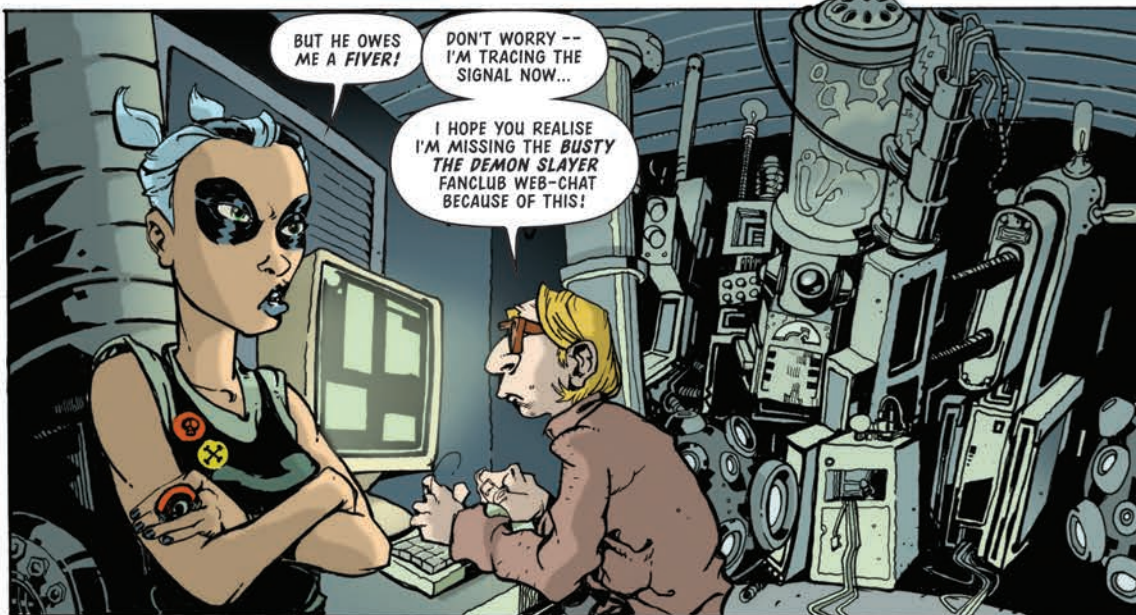
SOMEONE'S HACKED MY FENG SHUI RESONATOR AND KIDNAPPED KAWL!



RECEIVED INFORMATION:

BLAH BLAH MY GOD I'M SO CLEVER BLAH BLAH OCCULT...

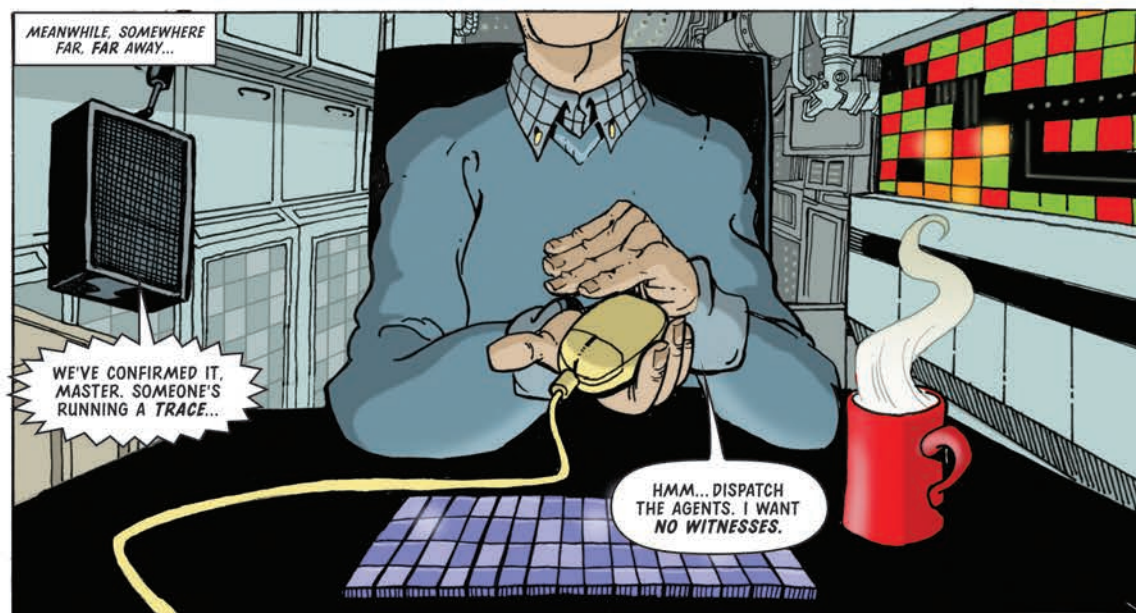
BLAH BLAH YES I AM STARING AT YOUR CHEST BLAH KIDNAPPED KAWL!



BUT HE OWES ME A FIVER!

DON'T WORRY -- I'M TRACING THE SIGNAL NOW...

I HOPE YOU REALISE I'M MISSING THE BUSTY THE DEMON SLAYER FANCLUB WEB-CHAT BECAUSE OF THIS!



MEANWHILE, SOMEWHERE FAR, FAR AWAY...

WE'VE CONFIRMED IT, MASTER. SOMEONE'S RUNNING A TRACE...

HMM... DISPATCH THE AGENTS. I WANT NO WITNESSES.

RIGHT. TO SUMMARISE...

"YADDA YADDA WIPE OUT HUMANITY RHUBARB RHUBARB WORLD DOMINATION..."



"BLAH BLAH WORSHIP THE MASTER MUTTER MUTTER EVIL CACKLING LAUGHTER ETC. ETC."



LISTEN - I'M DOING YOU GUYS A FAVOUR. THE FULL VERSION WOULD TAKE UP THREE PAGES AT LEAST.

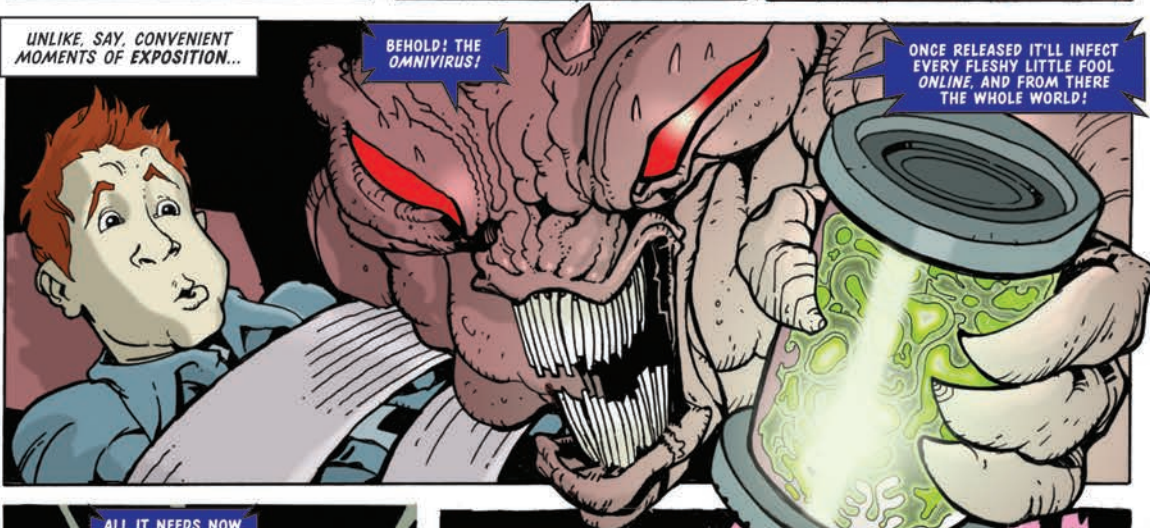
MEGALOMANIA. MAN. IT'S A FORGOTTEN ART.



UNLIKE, SAY, CONVENIENT MOMENTS OF EXPOSITION...

BEHOLD! THE OMNIVIRUS!

ONCE RELEASED IT'LL INFECT EVERY FLESHY LITTLE FOOL ONLINE. AND FROM THERE THE WHOLE WORLD!



ALL IT NEEDS NOW IS A CARRIER...

OH, MAN...

IMMINENT INFECTION BY A VIRUS THAT MAKES THAT MONKEY FROM OUTBREAK LOOK LIKE HOWARD HUGHES...

...AND I DIDN'T EVEN BRING MY CAMERA.





SO IT TURNS OUT NORM FINISHED THE SEARCH AND ZAPPED HIMSELF INTO THE INTERNET TO GET SOME HELP...

...JUST SOME GUYS FROM THE COLLEGE COMPUTER CLUB.

BRAKKA
BRAKKA
BLAM BLAM

WHAT COMPUTER CLUB?

UNFORTUNATELY, NO ONE CAN BE TOLD ABOUT THE C.C. YOU HAVE TO SEE IT FOR YOURSELF.

COLOSTOMA: *Highly trained in the martial disciplines of I-Eat-Yu. Demolition a speciality.*

(thereisno)SPOON: *Guru of cutlery-oriented 'Uri-G' contortion. Nosebleed connoisseur.*

SHAG-E: *Facial features unknown. Probably a poet, writer or wizard. Or all three.*

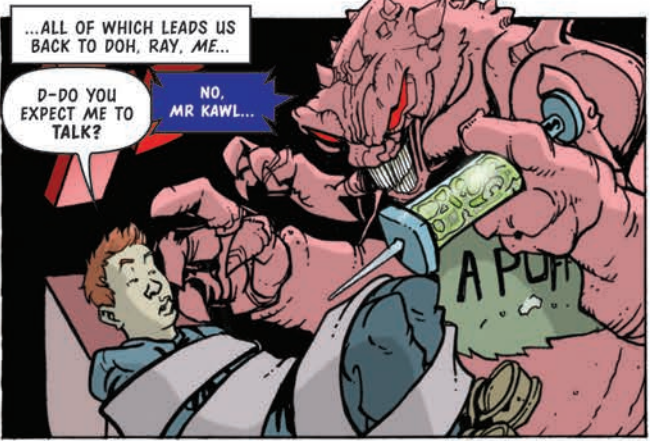
OVABYTE: *Logisticist supreme. Once drove the editor of Doctor Why? magazine insane by highlighting continuity irregularities.*

BETZ: *Anger management issues. Terminated insane girlband Deathpop using tactical thermonuclear soundwaves.*

NORM-L: *Occult hacker extraordinaire, blackbelt in tech-fu, president of the Dana Scully fanclub.*



...OH GOD...



...ALL OF WHICH LEADS US BACK TO DOH, RAY, ME...

D-DO YOU EXPECT ME TO TALK?

NO, MR KAWL...



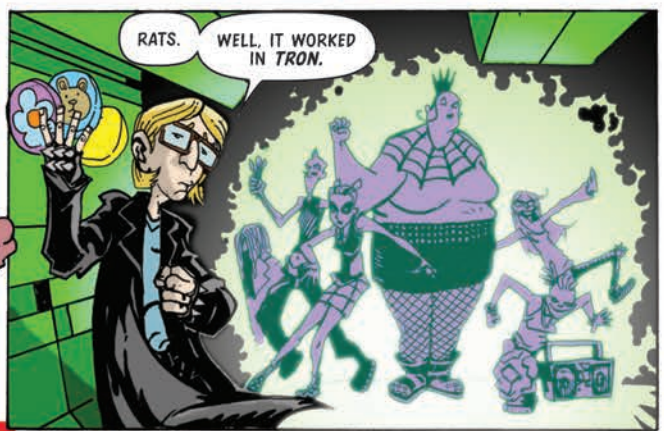
I EXPECT YOU TO EXPLODE IN SWEATY PUSTULES OF VIRULENT PLASMA, THEREBY UNLEASHING AN INSANE NON-MEDIA-SPECIFIC PLAGUE UPON THE WORLD!



AAAAHAHAHAHAHA-

HUH?

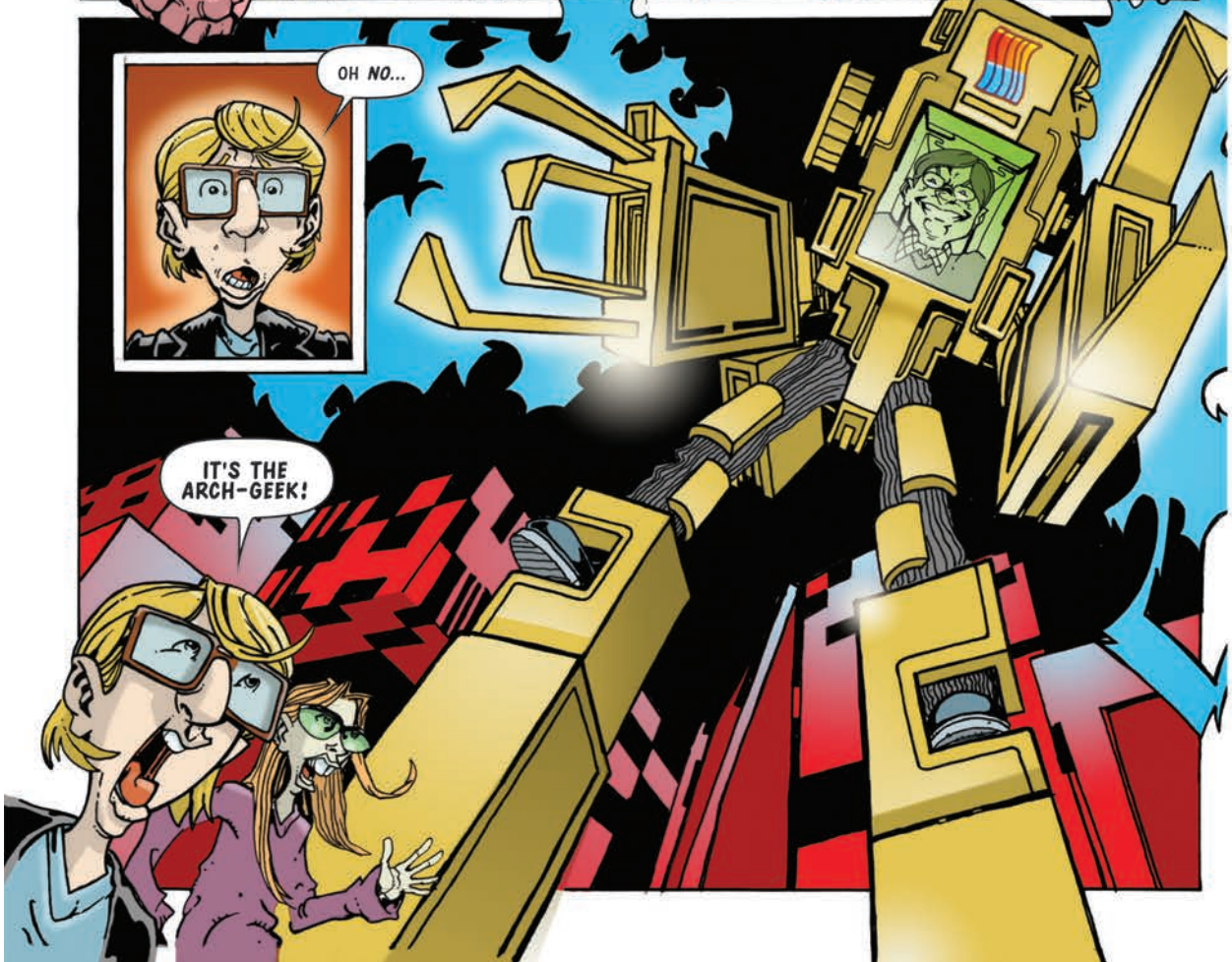
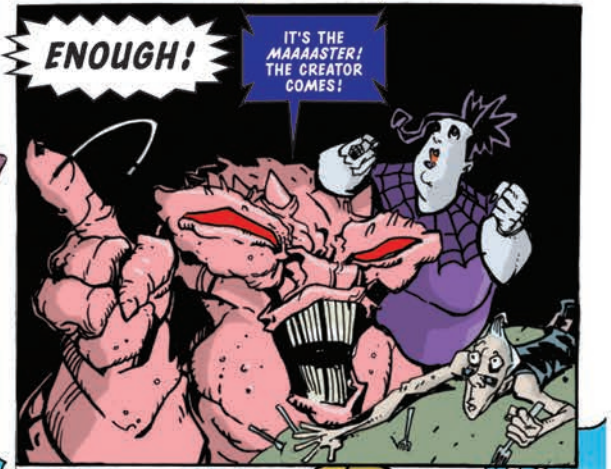
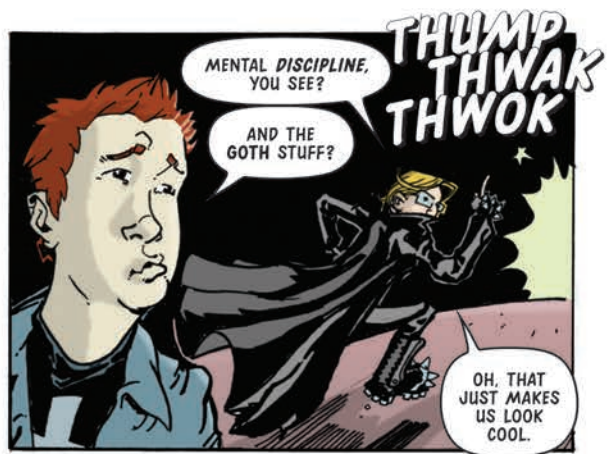
tink



RATS. WELL, IT WORKED IN TRON.



ATAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAACK!



THE CONCISE SCIENCE OF DEFYING EVIL INTERNET MEGA GEEKS.

DETERMINATION.



CONFRONTATION.



DOMINATION.



SELF-CONGRATULATION.



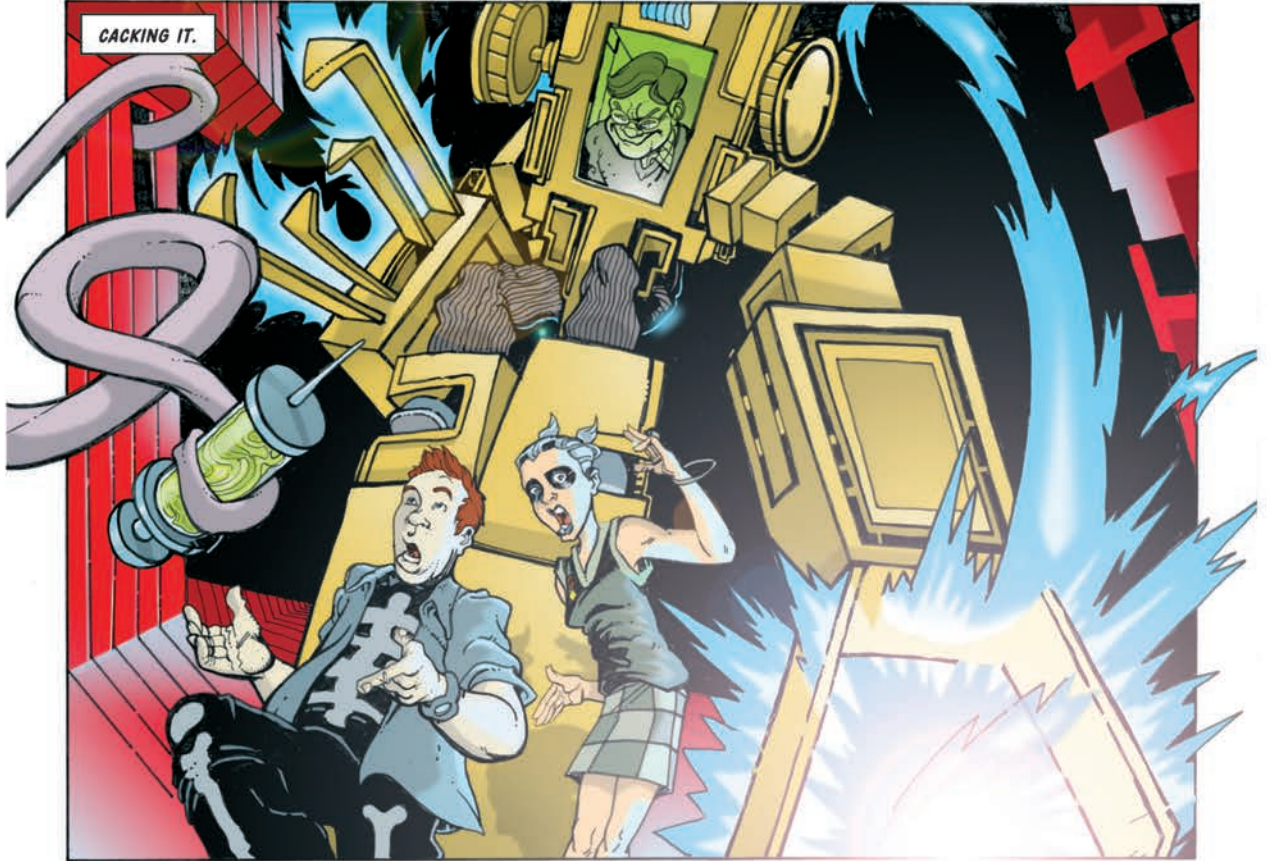
RESOLUTION.



DEFENESTRATION.



CACKING IT.





JUST THINK...

A WORLD WITHOUT PEOPLE,
RUNNING THEIR GRUBBY LITTLE HANDS
THROUGH ALL THIS BEAUTY...



NO MORE SOUL-SAPPING
NEWSGROUPS. NO MORE
TECHNO-GEEK MOVIES. NO
MORE V.R. PRISONS...



NO MORE PORN,
SOILING THE PERFECT
PURITY OF
INFORMATION...

NOW HANG
ON—



I...

HATE...

PORN!



I RECKON YOU MUST BE
A GADGET OR TWO SHORT
OF A BOND FILM, MATE!

I MEAN, IT'S ONE OF THE
CLASSIC SYMPTOMS: TALKING
TO YOURSELF, HAIRY PALMS,
WATCHING *BIG BROTHER* AND
HATING PORN!



...Kawl... what
have I told you about
antagonising insane,
sexually repressed
tech-psychos...?

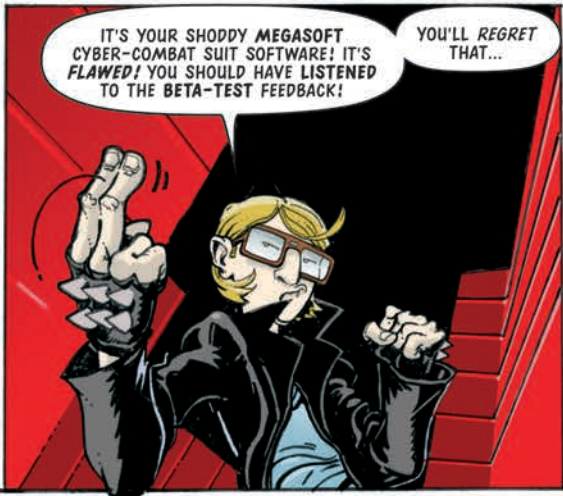


PREPARE FOR
INFECTION, SNIVELLING
MORTA—

MOR...ZZZZZ
M-M-M-MORRRRR—

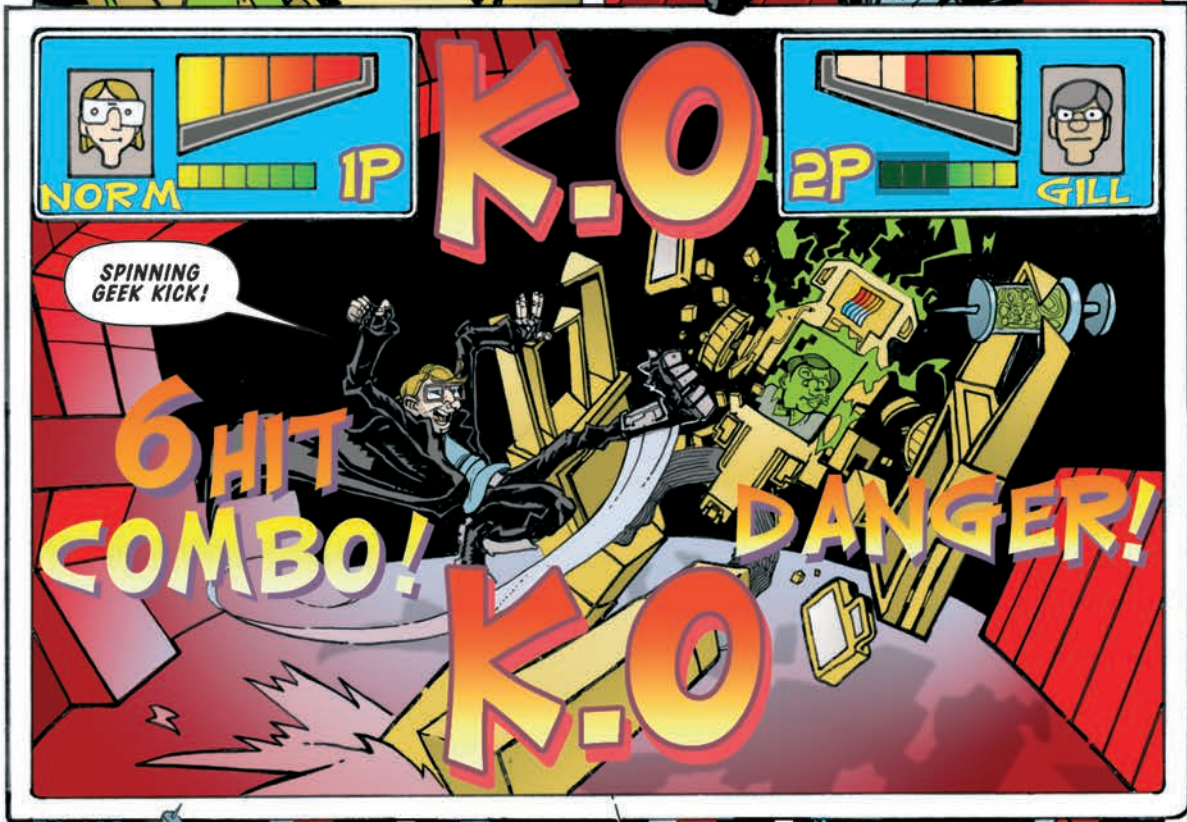


WH— WHAAAAAT'S H-H-H-HAAAAAPPPPPENING?



IT'S YOUR SHODDY MEGASOFT CYBER-COMBAT SUIT SOFTWARE! IT'S FLAWED! YOU SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO THE BETA-TEST FEEDBACK!

YOU'LL REGRET THAT...



SPINNING GEEK KICK!

6 HIT COMBO!

K.O.

DANGER!

K.O.

NORM 1P

2P GILL



THOK!
WHOA... WHAT'S HE DOING?

HE'S BEGINNING TO BELIEVE.

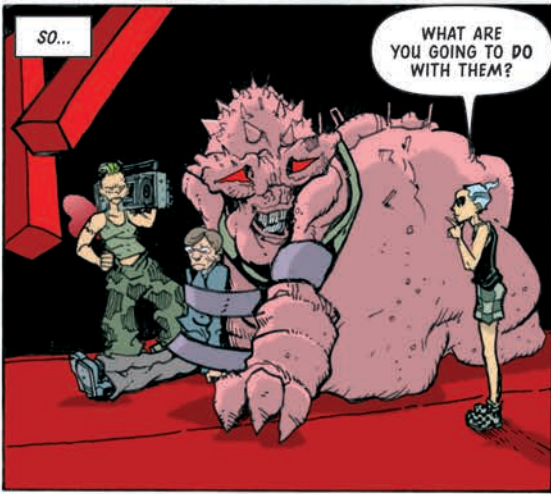


CONTROL-ALT-DELETE, ASSHOLE!
CONTROL-ALT-DELETE!



BELIEVE WHAT?

OH, YOU KNOW. REALLY PROFOUND STUFF, PROBABLY.



so...

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THEM?



I'M GOING TO SHOW THEM WHAT THE INTERNET'S REALLY ALL ABOUT...

RETAILLING



ZZZZAKKKK



NOOOOOOOOOO-!



I COULD REALLY USE A DRINK AFTER ALL THAT.

WHO'S WITH ME?



hur hur! I got asked out by a girl! hur hur!

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS... DARK-BROODING-VAMPIRE-GUY IS ON TONIGHT!

LIKE, STUFF IT, MAN, HAVE YOU SEEN THE JUKEBOX DOWN AT THE STUDENT UNION?

...i have a nosebleed...

SO, OKAY, THAT WAS PRETTY COOL.

A 3-PART ADVENTURE AND I DIDN'T EVEN BREAK A SWEAT.



...oh, Angellus, you're so...dark and brooding. Bite me! Bite me now!

WHICH IS MORE THAN CAN BE SAID FOR BECCY, WHO WENT ON A DATE WITH NORM IN EXCHANGE FOR, LIKE, RESCUING HER FROM INSANE ANDROIDS.

I CANNOT BELIEVE I AGREED TO THIS, YOU DESPICABLE LITTLE GEEK!



YOU LIKE ME BECAUSE I'M A GEEK. THERE AREN'T ENOUGH GEEKS IN YOUR LIFE.



I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE...

I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU A WORLD RICH IN COMPLEX RULES AND BOUNDARIES.



A WORLD OF CARDBOARD WEAPONS AND AMUSING ACCESSORI—

I'VE ALREADY WARNED YOU ABOUT THAT, YOU LITTLE PERY!



AAAAAAAAAAAAA!





PEST CONTROL

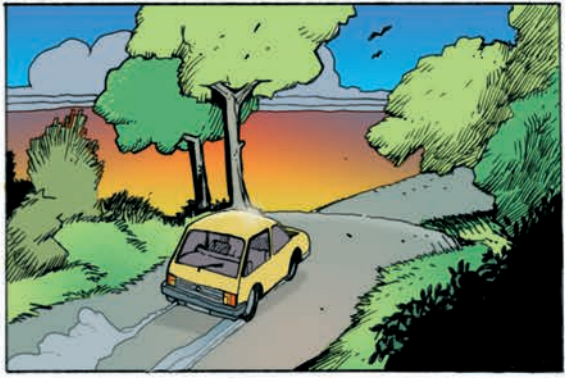
Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Steve Roberts
Colour: Richard Elson
Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1351-1354



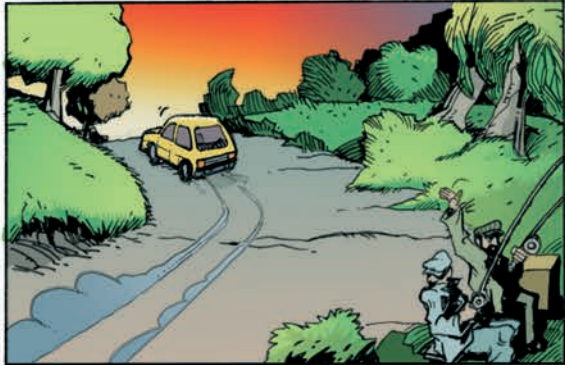
1933. My name is Pierre Ramonez. I'm the Greatest Pest Control Expert Who Ever Lived.

I do things *My* way — the *hard* way. If those pencil-pushers up at the gendarmerie don't like it they can shove it right up t—



... they didn't like it.

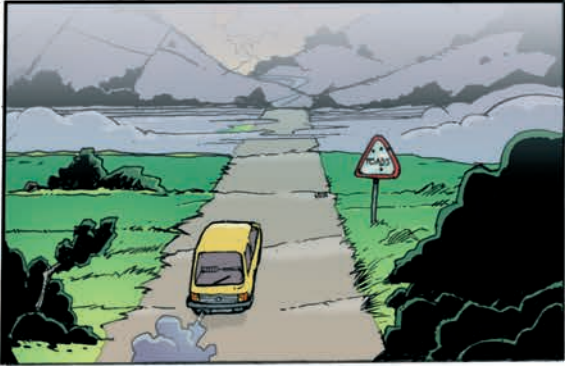
I must be *strong*. There are others in need of my *talents*.



In *Angleterre*, I face my greatest challenge —

ZUT ALORS! C'EST HORRIBLE!

... bloody foreigners...



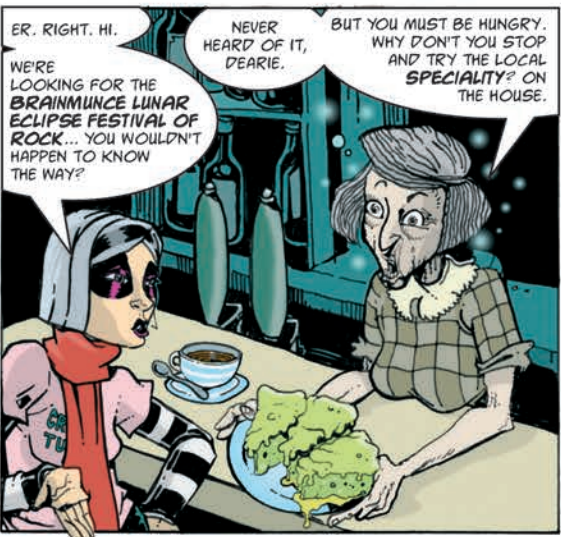
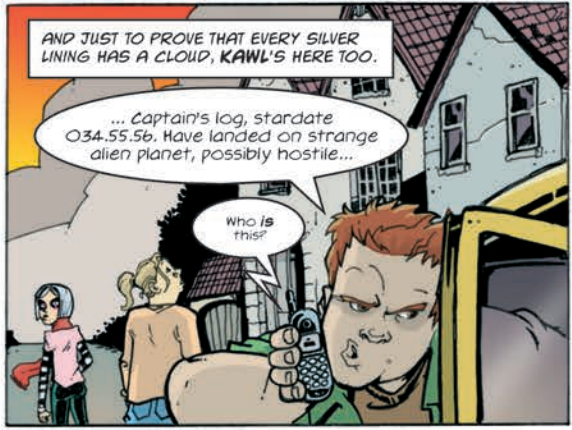
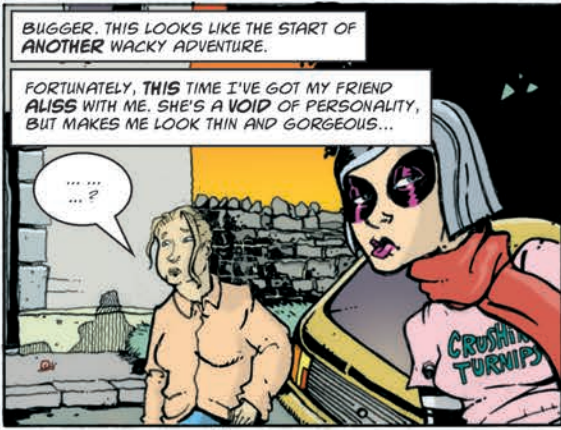
(I also face a slaying monstrosity from hell and its dread demonic minions... but it's the *beer* that sticks in my mind.)

And it all happened in that fog-shrouded vision of innocent charm that is called:

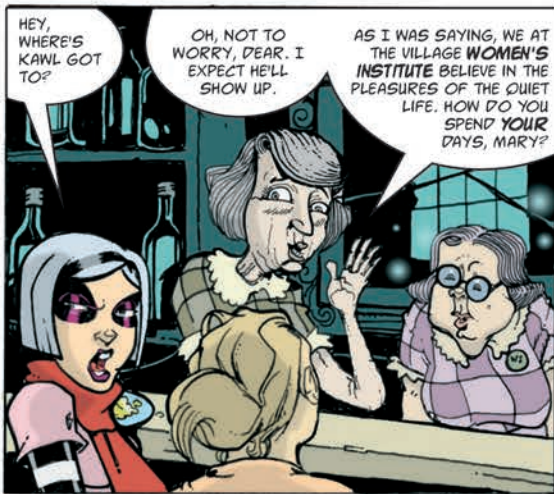


OKAY... GUYS?

I THINK MAYBE WE TOOK A WRONG TURNING...









SO MAYBE THE TOWNSFOLK ARE A LITTLE WEIRD. INBREEDING WILL DO THAT, I GUESS. SPEAKING OF WHICH —

— WHERE IN THE NAME OF LINFORD CHRISTIE'S SACRED LUNCHBOX IS THAT LITTLE TROLL?



S-so... um... it's only fair that you should know...

... t-this is, like, my *first time*...



cos, I read that the first one's, yknow, always kinda quick...

... b-but, like, it gets *better*, right?



... L-look, guys, I know this is sorta awkward, but, er... I haven't got any *protection* a-and...



... You can't go diving through just any old interdimensional demonic portal these days...

It's, like, just not *safe*...





WHAT BRINGS YOU TO LITTLE WICKERING SO CLOSE TO THE ECLIPSE?

WHO SENT YOU?

.....



HELLO? KAWL?

IF YOU'RE DOING THE GEORGE MICHAEL ROUTINE AGAIN YOU ARE NOT SHARING A CAR WITH ME...

GENTS

KAWL, ARE YOU IN THERE?



SLUGS...

... WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE SLUGS?

GENTS



THE, ah... THE SLUGS ARE, ah... ENDANGERED, ACTUALLY. YES, THAT'S IT. WE LET THEM ROAM.

IN ANCIENT TIMES THEY WERE BELIEVED TO, ah... POSSESS POWERS OF YOUTH AND FERTILITY, ALLOWING PEOPLE TO COMMUNE WITH THE GODS.

HAHAHA. NONSENSE, OF COURSE.

GE



THERE'S ONLY ONE GOD FOR US. OH YES, ABSOLUTELY.

HAVE SOME CAKE, DEAR.

GENTS



AH, THE **GATEAUX**... THEY USE IT TO TWIST THE MIND, YOU SEE?

BUT IT ONLY WORKS ON THE **WOMEN**... THE MEN OF THE VILLAGE — THEY WERE **POISONED** AND SENT HERE.

BE GRATEFUL I FOUND YOU WHEN I DID...



... THEY WERE NOT SO LUCKY.

LOOK, ER, NO OFFENCE OR ANYTHING BUT, LIKE... WHO ARE YOU?



I AM A ... **CLEANER**.

YOU MEAN YOU'RE A PEST CONTROL EXPERT?

OH.



LONG AGO I DEFEATED A TERRIBLE EVIL, BUT WAS BANISHED TO THIS... THIS **TIMELESS LIMBO** BY AN EVIL SORCERER IN MY MOMENT OF TRIUMPH.

THIS PLACE IS... IT'S WHERE EVERYTHING **LOST** ENDS UP, SOONER OR LATER.



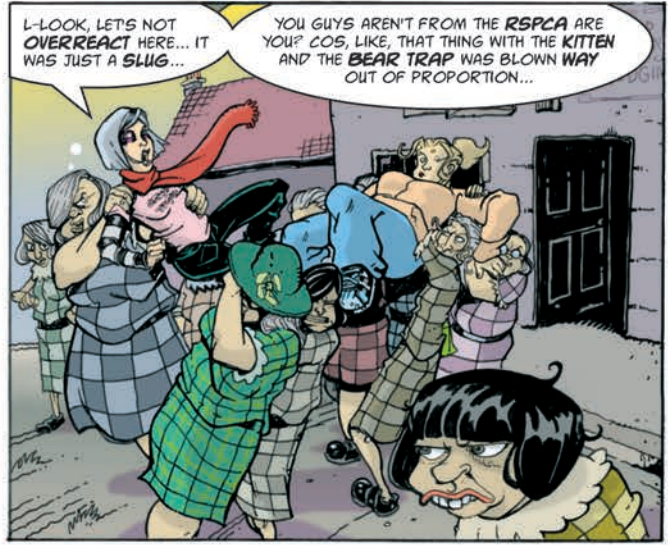
TEN YEARS AGO I FOUND **THIS**. YOU'D BE AMAZED AT THE CONVENIENT PLOT DEVICES THAT TURN UP HERE.

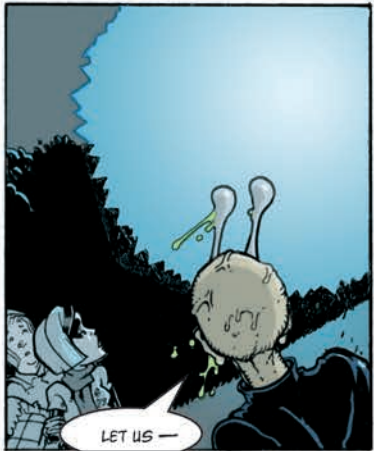
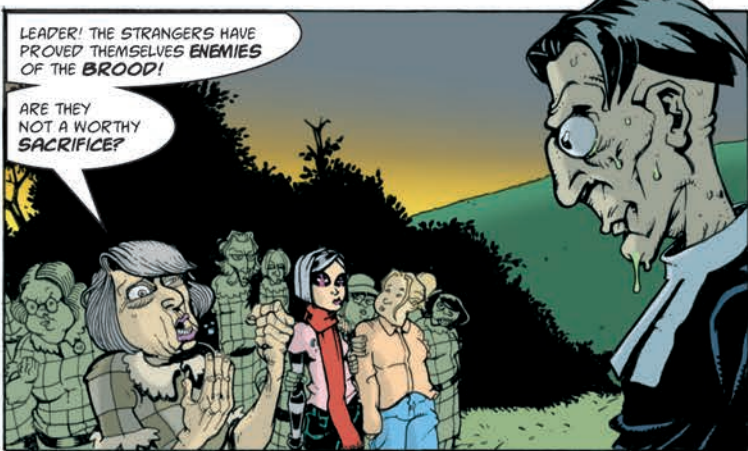
ALL I NEED IS ONE FINAL INGREDIENT AND WE CAN RETURN TO SWEET **REALITY**...



A SINGLE DROPLET OF **VIRGIN'S BLOOD**...

... er...





EXTRACTS FROM HEROIC ADVENTURING FOR DUMMIES (A Beginner's guide to Questing, Duelling and Buckling your Swash):

GET THEM! THEY'RE GOING TO BURN ME ALIVE! GET THEM!



ITEM 1: YOUR STRANGE, RECLUSIVE MENTOR IS ALWAYS RIGHT. RESPECT HIS HONOURABLE IDIOSYNCRASIES.

... NO WOMEN, NO KIDS...
THAT'S THE RULES.



WHAAAAAAT —?
WHAT KIND OF RESCUE IS THIS?

ITEM 2: CAPTIVE DAMSELS ARE, BY THEIR VERY NATURE, DISTRESSED.



DON'T LET THEIR ANGUISHED PLEAS UPSET YOU. YOUR MENTOR WILL, NO DOUBT, HAVE A PLAN.

ANGLO?

Y-YEAH?

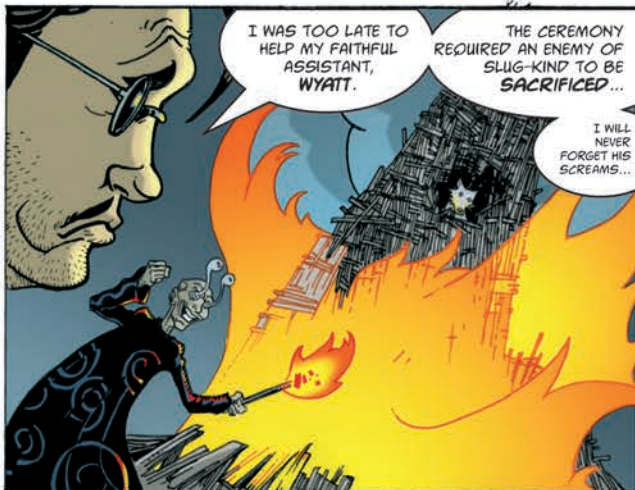


RUN.

FIND THEM.

NOW... WHO'S FIRST?







ITEM 4: REMEMBER NOT TO LET THE THRILLING FLASHBACK GO ON FOR TOO LONG...

YOU HAVE PLACES TO GO, THINGS TO DO, NARCISSISTIC SELF-SERVING FRIENDS TO LIBERATE FROM IMMINENT SACRIFICE.

SO, ER, MOVING ALONG, YOU MANAGED TO SAVE THE DAY, RIGHT?



I GRAPPLED WITH THE BEAST FOR TWO DAYS.

NONE OF MY TRADITIONAL PEST CONTROL TECHNIQUES WOULD WORK — SLUG PELLETS, SULPHURIC ACID, NAPALM.



FINALLY, DESPERATE, I REACHED MY LAST RESORT...

IT WAS ALL THAT I HAD TO REMIND ME OF HOME.



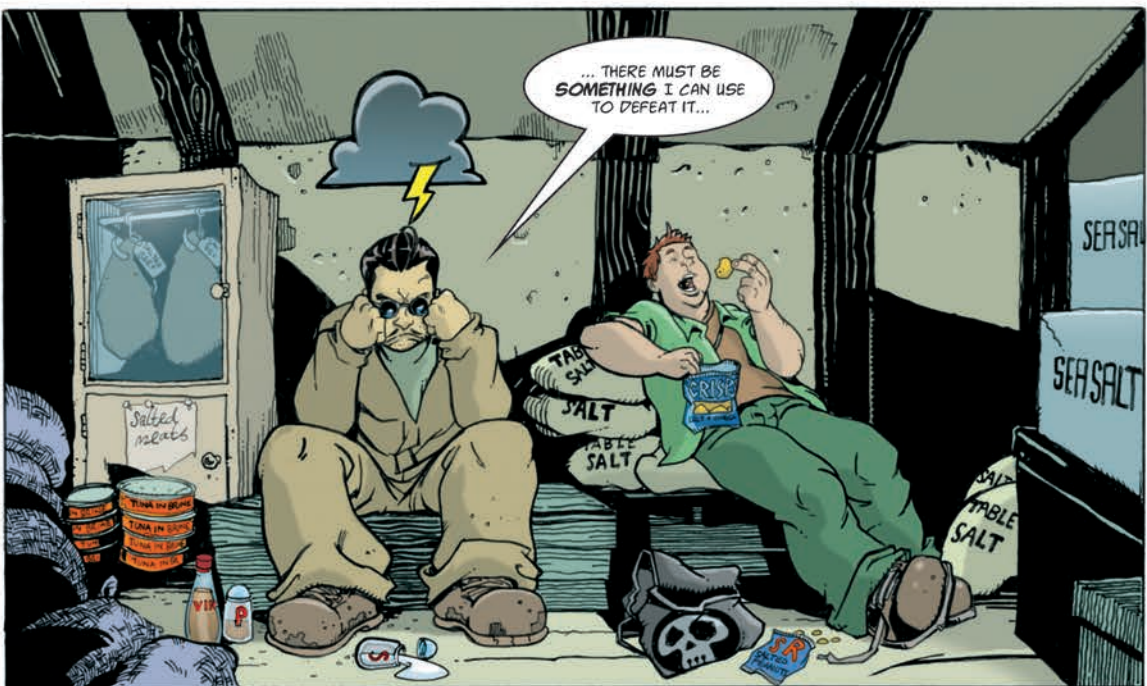
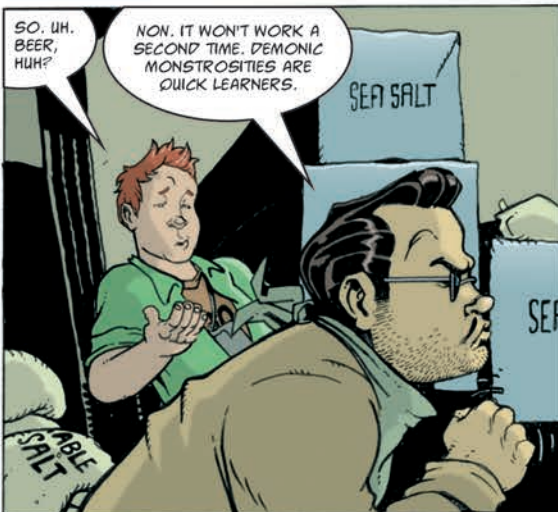
CHOKE ON IT, FILS DE PUTE!

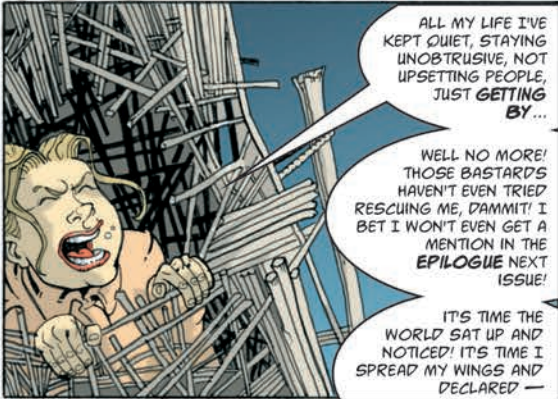


DEMONIC PESTS ARE EVEN WORSE WITH THEIR BERRE THAN YOU FLUFFY-BUNNY ANGLOS.



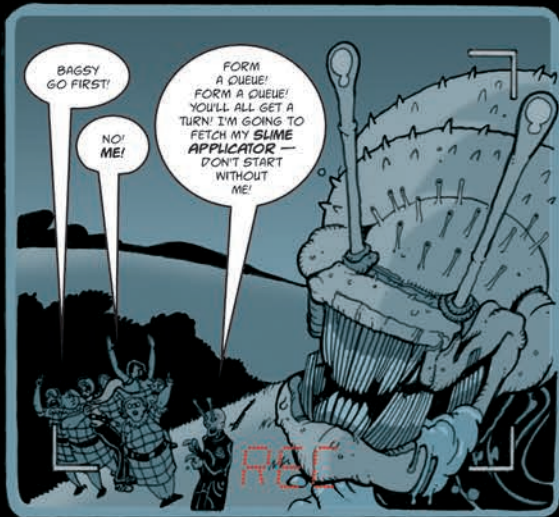
SHLOOORRRPPP





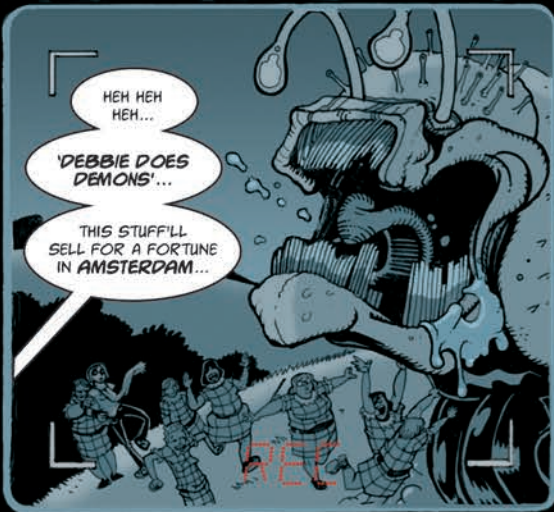


OH MIGHTY
SPLKXKNKRK,
BRINGER OF THE
LIFE-GIVING SLIME —
DEVOUR THE SACRIFICIAL
APPETISER AND ACCEPT
THESE HUMBLE FEMALES
AS YOUR BRIDES!



BAGSY
GO FIRST!
NO!
ME!

FORM
A QUEUE!
FORM A QUEUE!
YOU'LL ALL GET A
TURN! I'M GOING TO
FETCH MY SLIME
APPLICATOR —
DON'T START
WITHOUT
ME!



HEH HEH
HEH...
'DEBBIE DOES
DEMONS'...
THIS STUFF'LL
SELL FOR A FORTUNE
IN AMSTERDAM...



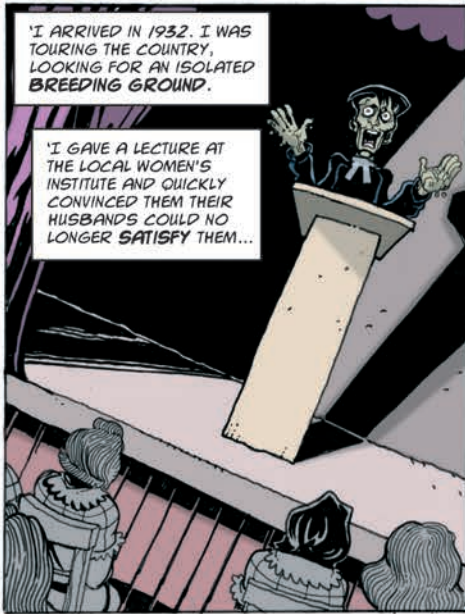
WHAT IS THAT THING,
'ANGLO' SOME SORT
OF WEAPON?



T-THIS?
THIS IS, LIKE,
A SOPHISTICATED PIECE
OF RECORDING HARDWARE,
ENABLING THE
CONSCIENTIOUS FILMMAKER
TO DOCUMENT AND EXPOSE
EVENTS OF HISTORICAL
SIGNIFICANCE.



BIEN.
NOW STOP PERVING
AT THE GIRLIES AND COME
LEARN WHAT IT TAKES TO
BE A REAL MAN.
PEST CONTROL,
THE OLD-FASHIONED
WAY.





... BEEN PRACTISING MY KAMA SLUGTRA POSITIONS AND...

... SHOULD ALWAYS DO STRETCHES BEFORE EXERCISES...



I'M READY!
BUT FIRSST - I WANT THE APHRODISIAC!

EATEN BY A HORNY SLUG. OH, THE JOY OF IT.



YOU'LL TASTE NOTHING BUT COLD STEEL, FIEND!

NO! INFIDELS!

COULDN'T WE HAVE JUST LEFT IT ANOTHER MINUTE OR TWO?



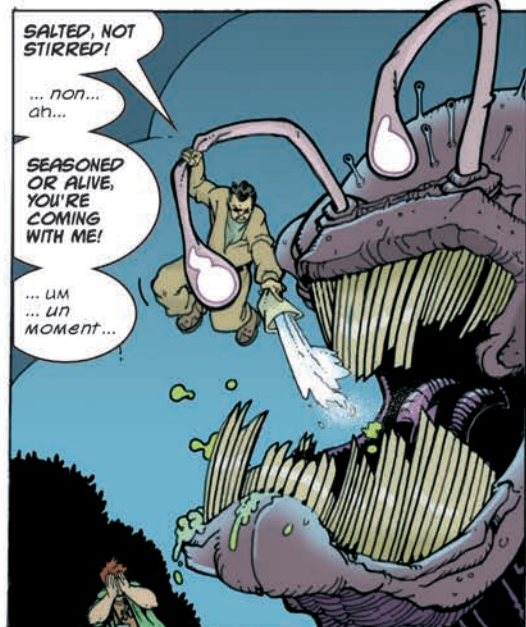
ANGLO! QUICKLY! HAND ME MY TOOLS!

PSSST! DON'T FORGET THE PITHY ONE LINER...



BOY, I'M FRENCH...

... I REEK OF PITH.



SALTED, NOT STIRRED!

... non... ah...

SEASONED OR ALIVE, YOU'RE COMING WITH ME!

... UM ... UN MOMENT...



HAHAHA!

LITTLE HUMAN
THINKSS
SALT KILLSS,
YESS?

THISS ONE
A GOD,
LITTLE THING.
NOT FRAGILE
LIKE COMMON
SLIMER!



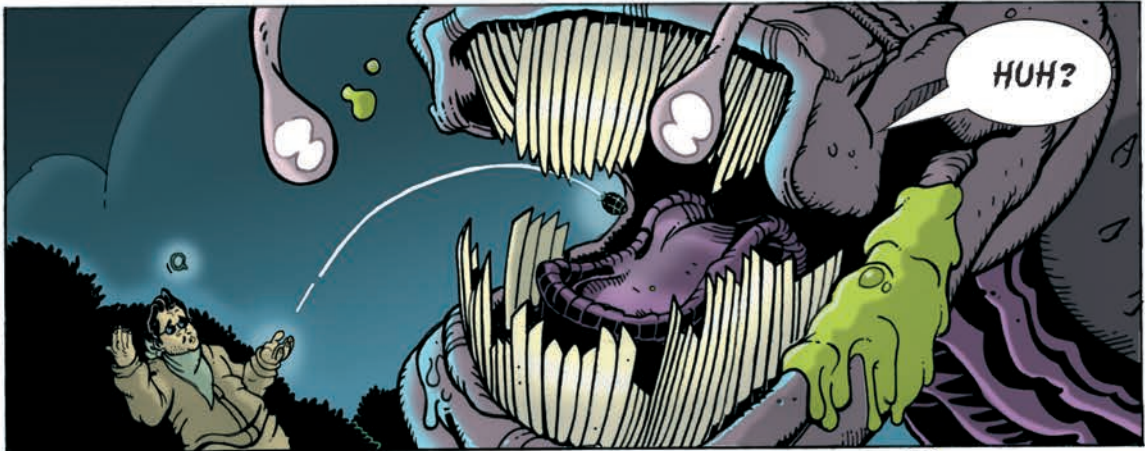
FOUTRE.
WELL, IT WAS
WORTH A TRY,
NON?

PERHAPS I
WAS TRYING
TOO HARD TO
BE CLEVER,
EH?



IN THIS GAME,
YOU GOT TO
STICK TO WHAT
YOU KNOW.

IT'S AMAZING
WHAT YOU FIND
LYING ABOUT IN
INTERDIMENSIONAL
LIMBO.



HUH?



A GRENADE?
LIKE, WHY DIDN'T
YOU USE IT
BEFORE?

A FRENCHMAN
HAS HIS PRIDE,
ANGLO.



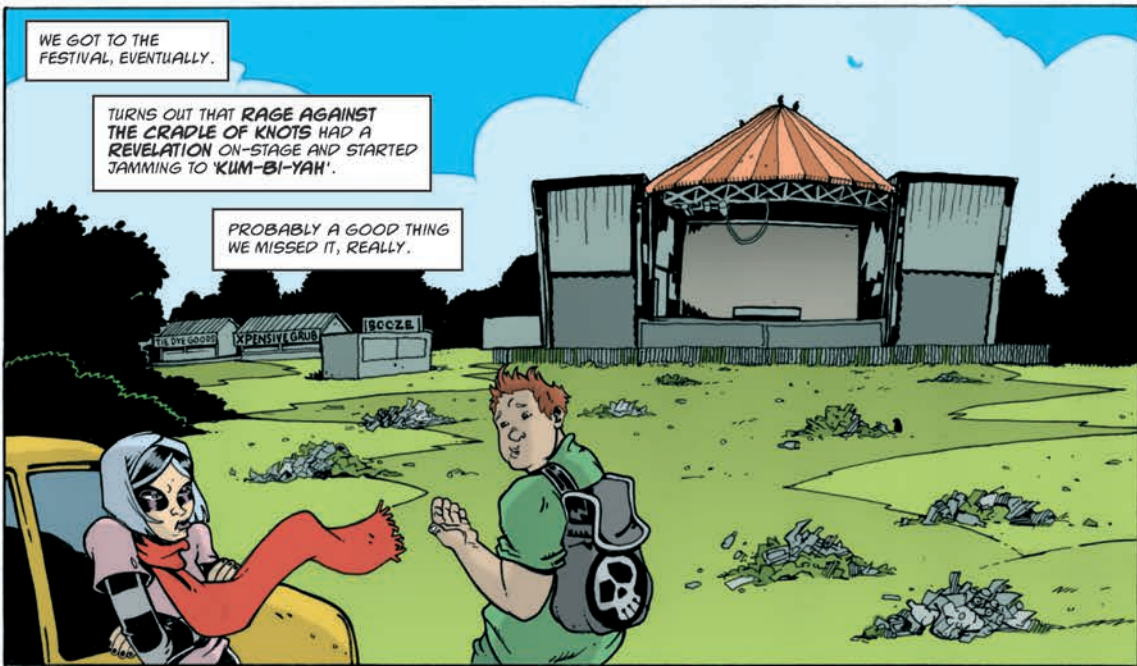
EPILOGUE : SO THE WOMEN OF LITTLE WICKERING KINDA WOKE UP FROM THE SPELL...

SOME OF THEM WERE A BIT DISTRESSED ABOUT HAVING, Y'KNOW, RITUALLY BANISHED THEIR HUSBANDS, BUT I GUESS THAT'S LIFE.



RUMOURS OF EXPENSIVE UNLICENCED DATING AGENCIES SETTING UP IN THE AREA ARE COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED.

B and K
RENT A MAN...
ONLY £200
PER DATE
(YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD, WARTY OR ARTIFICIALLY-PRESERVED BY-DEMONIC-SLIME TO FIND LOVE!)
Phone: 01666



WE GOT TO THE FESTIVAL, EVENTUALLY.

TURNS OUT THAT RAGE AGAINST THE CRADLE OF KNOTS HAD A REVELATION ON-STAGE AND STARTED JAMMING TO 'KUM-BI-YAH'.

PROBABLY A GOOD THING WE MISSED IT, REALLY.



AND AS FOR PIERRE, WELL...

THIS IS THE 21ST CENTURY. IT MUST BE AN ENORMOUS CULTURE SHOCK TO HIM...

GENETICALLY MODIFIED PESTS, DEMONIC VERMIN, INTERDIMENSIONAL INFESTATIONS...



HE'S GONNA FIT RIGHT IN...



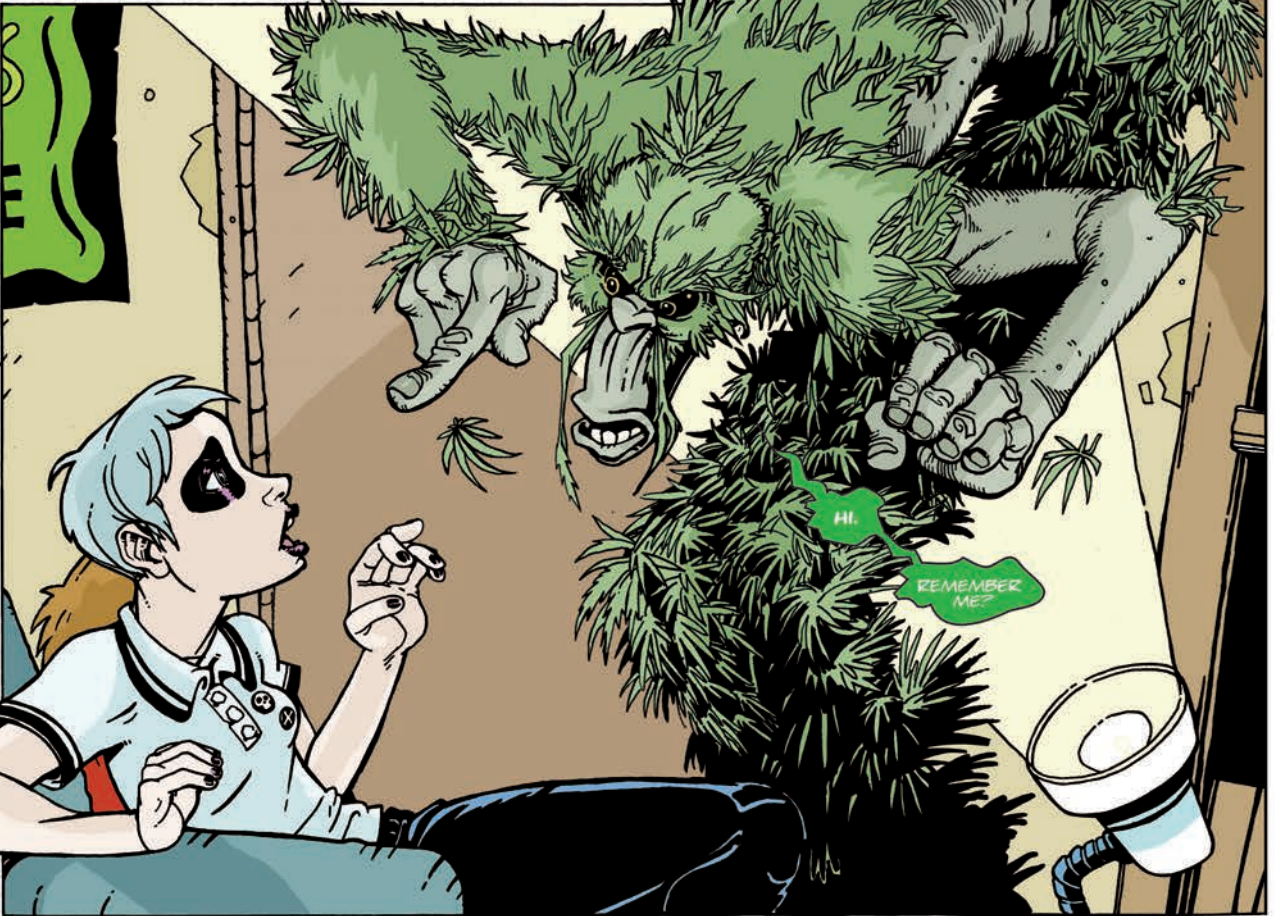
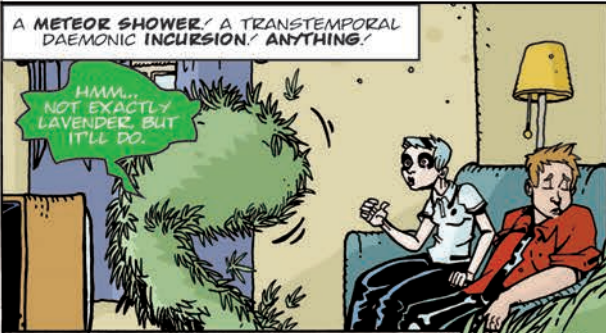
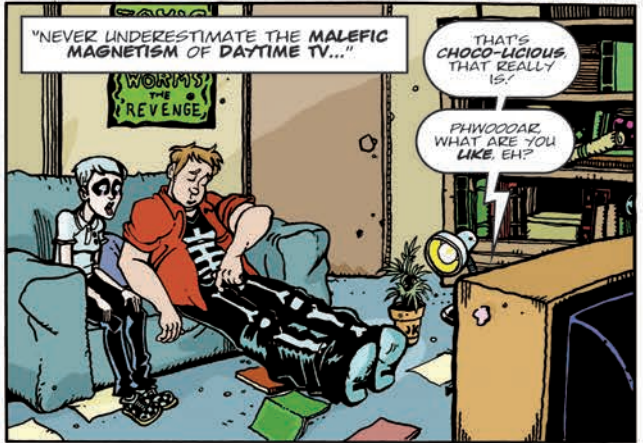
SHUT UP.

AND TRY TO FIND OUT WHERE WE ARE...

TOOTH ACHE

Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Steve Roberts
Letters: Annie Parkhouse

Originally published in 2000 AD Progs 1383-1386

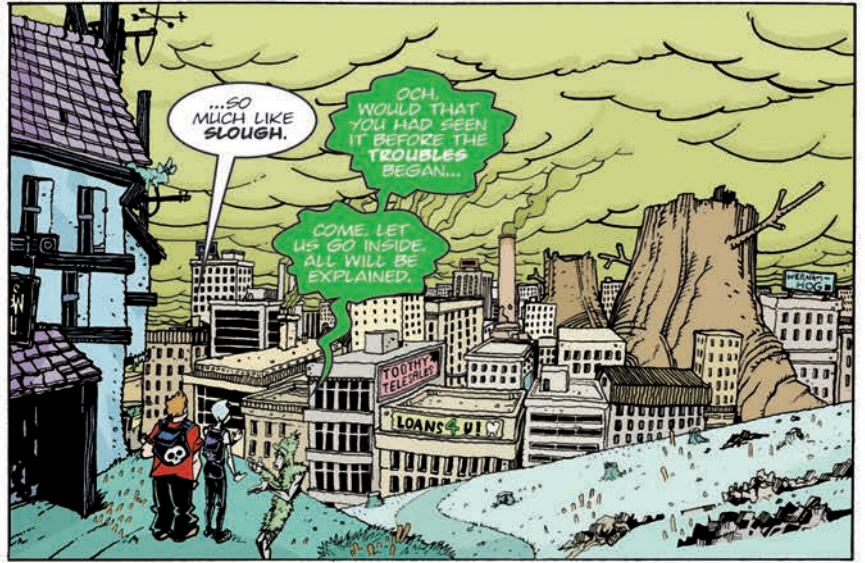


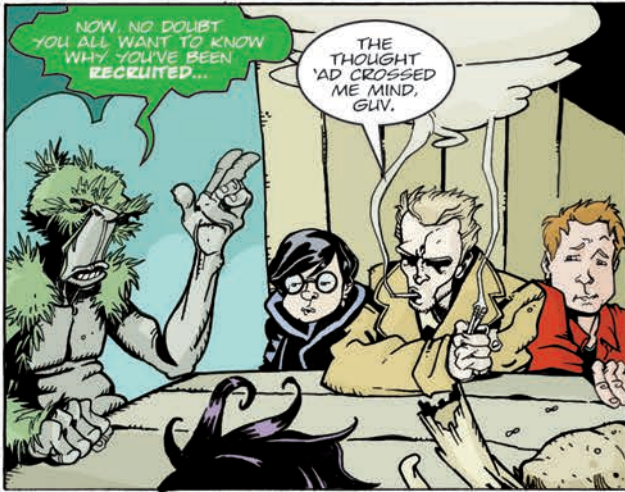


* THARGNOTE: SEE PROG 1327 **

** BECCYNOTE: GET YOUR ALIEN ARSE OUT OF OUR STORY, DIAL-FOR-A-HEAD!









"BY RITIC SCRYING, MAGICAL CHANTING AND BRIBING THE GUARDS, I'VE DISCOVERED AN ENTRANCE TO THE IVORY FORTRESS..."

O HOW MALODOROUS AND PUTRID THIS SCYGAN PORTAL IS.

YEAH, SORRY BOUT THAT, SQUIRE. NERVES, SORT OF FING.



SO, LIKE...WHAT'S YOUR STORY, KID?

HMM? OH, I HAVE SEVERAL, ACTUALLY.

I SUPPOSE I SHALL END UP SAVING THE DAY, AS PER USUAL.



OH, BLAST...MY BALLY SCAR'S GONE AND SMUDGED AGAIN.

...HEH HEH HEH... PRECOCIOUS LITTLE SWOT...

SO WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO, NOW WE'RE INSIDE?



AH, YES... WELL, I SUPPOSE SOME SORT OF ATTACK WOULD BE... UH...PERHAPS WE SHOULD...SORT OF...

MM... ANY IDEAS, ANYONE?

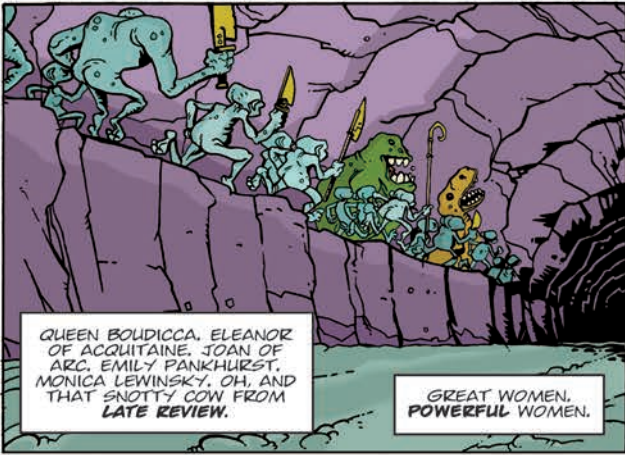


WE COULD ALWAYS TRY RUNNING.

WHY ON EARTH WOULD WE WANT TO DO THAT?

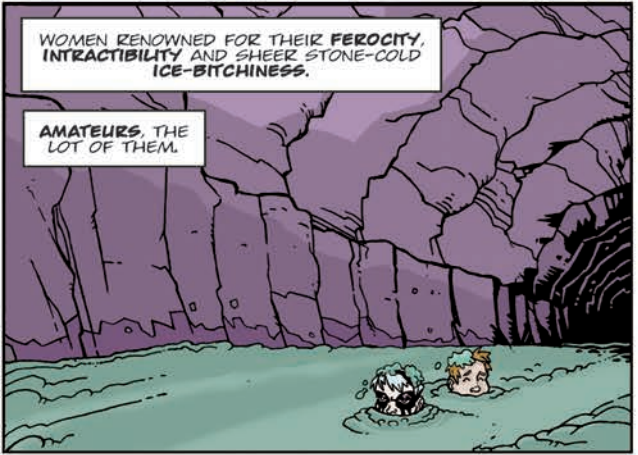


...OH...



QUEEN BOUDICCA, ELEANOR OF ACQUITAINE, JOAN OF ARC, EMILY PANKHURST, MONICA LEWINSKY, OH, AND THAT SNOTTY COW FROM LATE REVIEW.

GREAT WOMEN. POWERFUL WOMEN.



WOMEN RENOWNED FOR THEIR FEROCITY, INTRACTABILITY AND SHEER STONE-COLD ICE-BITCHINESS.

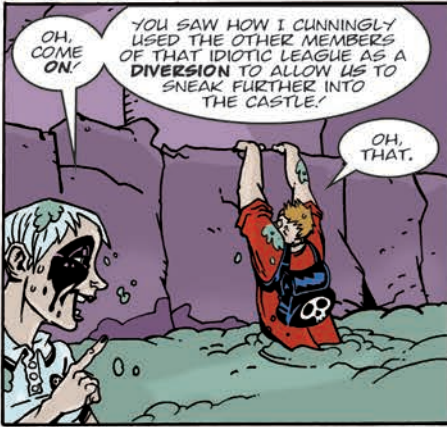
AMATEURS, THE LOT OF THEM.



I RULE! TELL ME I RULE!

YOU RULE.

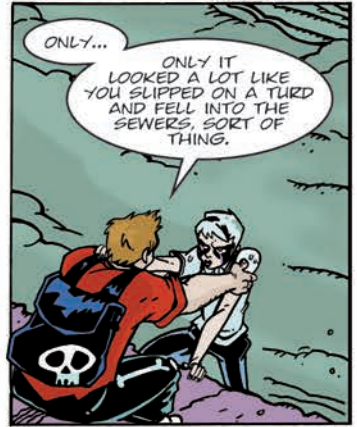
UH... WHY DO YOU RULE?



OH, COME ON!

YOU SAW HOW I CUNNINGLY USED THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THAT IDIOTIC LEAGUE AS A DIVERSION TO ALLOW US TO SNEAK FURTHER INTO THE CASTLE!

OH, THAT.



ONLY...

ONLY IT LOOKED A LOT LIKE YOU SLIPPED ON A TURD AND FELL INTO THE SEWERS, SORT OF THING.



SHUT UP.

AND TRY TO FIND OUT WHERE WE ARE...



...NOBODY KNOWTH... THE TROUBLE I'VE THEEN...

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT INFERNAL RACKET?



...NOBODY KNOWTH, BUT JEEETHUTH...

COMING FROM OVER HERE...



GREETINGTH, NOBLE TRAVELLERTH!

WE ARE THE GOOD TOOTHFAERIES, IMPRITHONED THETHE LONG YEARTH BY THE CRUEL AND THINHTER VIL —



CUT THE CUTE CRAP, TINKERBELL.

YOU'VE EITHER GOT A RAT UP YOUR ARSE OR YOUR TAIL'S SHOWING.



THIT.

CAN'T EVEN CATHT A BLOODY ILLUTHION ANY MORE...



SO, THE REAL TOOTHFAERIES, HUH?

WHAT'S WITH THE COMEDY USP?



THAT EVIL BATHARD THTOLE OUR PUITHANTHE!

'PUITHANTHE?'



YOU KNOW...OUR THTRENTH.

OUR THORTHEROUTH THYAMINA!



YOU BORED OF THIS YET?

YETH.

OUR TEETH, HE THTOLE OUR TEETH!

< "SEE, THERE'S
POWER IN
BODYPARTS... > *

< "IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS,
WE RAN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL
ENTERPRISE, EXCHANGING
HUMANS' USED TEETH
FOR MONEY... >

< "WHEN A FAERIE OR GOBLIN
GROWS OLD, THEIR MAGICAL
POWERS WANE... >

< "ONLY BY TOPPING UP THEIR
ESSENCE WITH TOKENS OF
POWER CAN THE EVERY/OLD
FOLK STAY THAT WAY... >

* THARONOTE: TRANSLATED FROM THE ANNOYING
LISP/TALK FOR THE DURATION OF THE FLASHBACK.

< "FOR MILLENIA THE
MAGICAL REALM HAS
BEEN PEACEFUL AND SERENE... >

THEN HE
ARRIVED...

YEAH
YEAH YEAH,
PARADISE-BECOMES-
HELL, BLAH BLAH
BLAH.

WHAT
YOU'RE SAYING
IS THAT TEETH
CONTAIN POWER,
RIGHT?

AND THAT
ALL YOU LITTLE
PIXIE PILLOCKS ARE
HAPPY TO SELL OUT
BIG CASH FOR
THEM?

WELL,
YETH...
B-BUT...

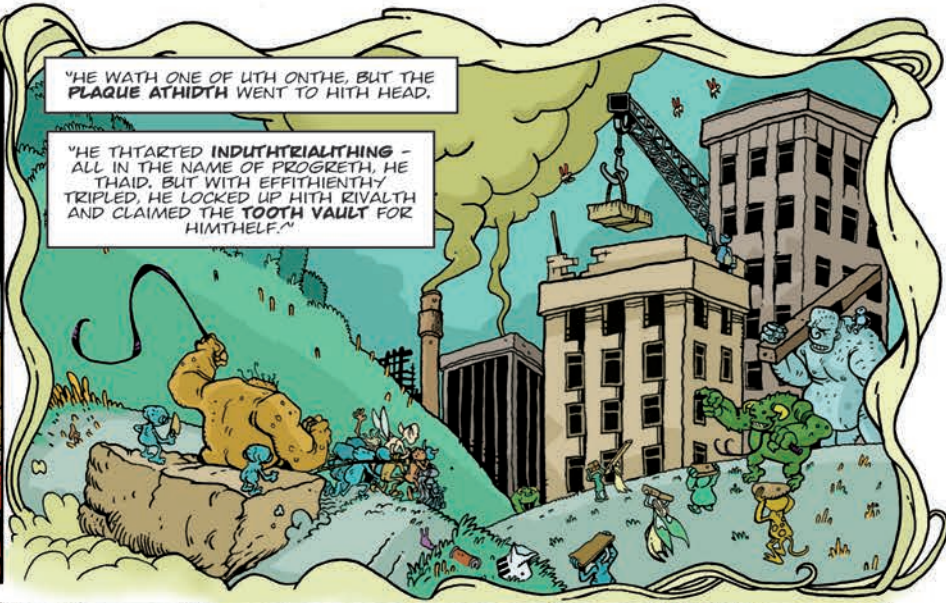
BUT
IT DOESN'T
WORK LIKE
THAT, THINTE
HE TOOK
OVER...



HE DOETHN'T THELL THEM ANYMORE, HE LITHETH THEM TO PAY HITH ARMIETH AND THAVETH THE REHTH FOR HIMTHELF.

HE GROWTH MORE AND MORE POWERFUL ATH THE REHTH OF LITH DWINDLE AWAY...

SO... LIKE, WHO IS HE?



"HE WATH ONE OF LITH ONTHE, BUT THE PLAQUE ATHIDTH WENT TO HITH HEAD.

"HE THARTED INDUTHRIALITHING - ALL IN THE NAME OF PROGRETH, HE THAID, BUT WITH EFFITHENTHY TRIPLED, HE LOCKED UP HITH RIVALTH AND CLAIMED THE TOOTH VAULT FOR HIMTHELF."



DETHPICABLE.

EXTHACTLY! ALL HE CARETH ABOUT ITH POWER AND MONEY!

WHAT THORT OF MONTHER CAN LIVE LIKE THAT?



THIS KIND.

WHAT SAY WE GO FOR A STROLL?

T-THE TEETH ARE IN THERE...

LOOK, THITH ITH INTHANE, HE'LL KILL YOU IF HE CATCHETH YOU!

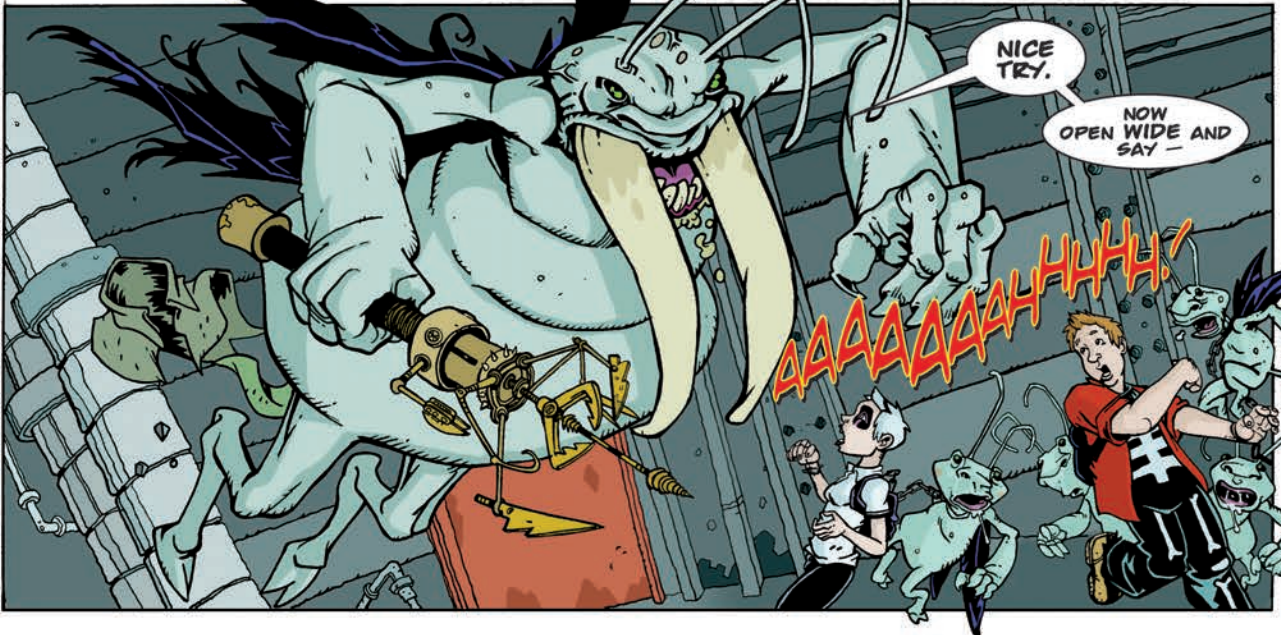
SHADDUP, SHORTARSE, OR DID YOU LIKE IT IN THE DUNGEONS?

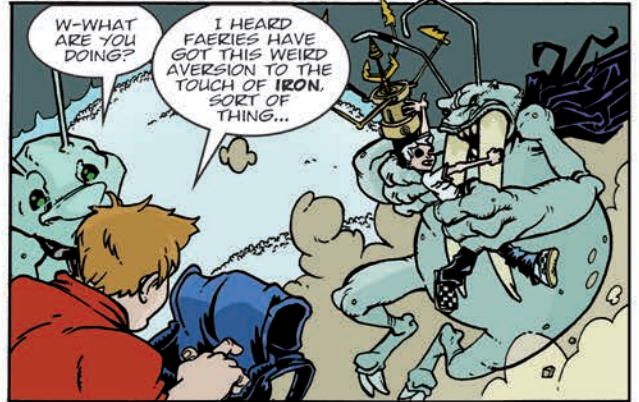
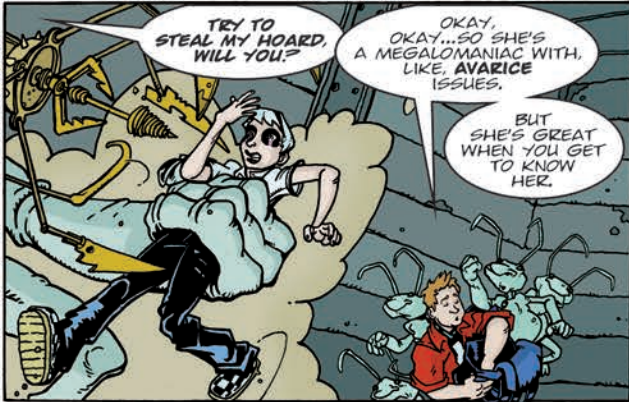
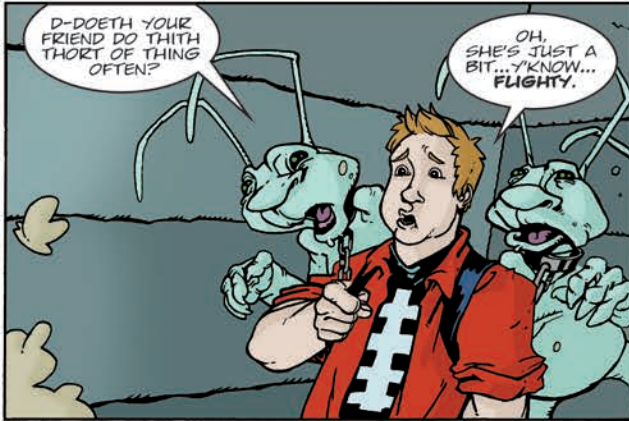


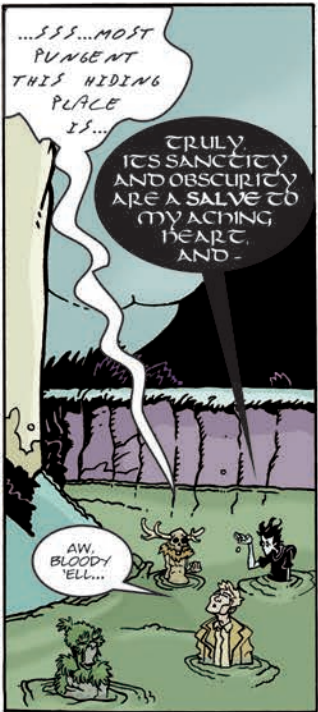
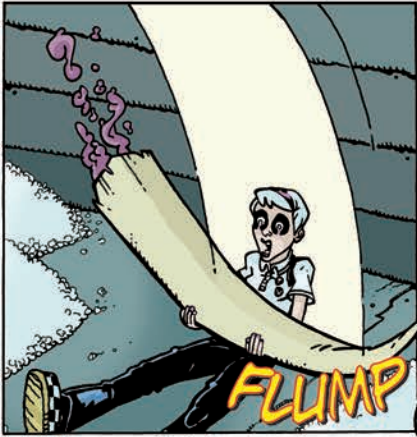
OH, MY, GOD.

WE SHOULD, LIKE, GIVE HER A MOMENT.

SHE GETS EMOTIONAL...















NOW... YOU DIE!

WAIT!



PLEASE - HERE'S YOUR TUSK. Y-YOU CAN HAVE IT BACK...

JUST DON'T HURT MY FRIENDS!



I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING...

YOU'RE THINKING THAT APPEALING TO A DESPICABLY EVIL, PSYCHOTIC FAERIE FOR MERCY SEEMS KIND OF DAFT, RIGHT?



BUT WHEN YOU'RE OUT OF TIME, WHEN ALL THE CLEVER-CLEVER TRICKS AND CUNNING MAGICAL SPELLS ARE DOOMED TO FAIL...

...THEN SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO RELY ON COMMON DECENCY AND GOOD WILL TO SEE YOU THROUGH.

AH! THE POWER!



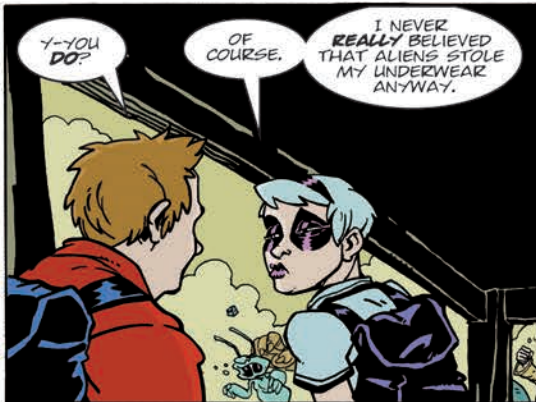
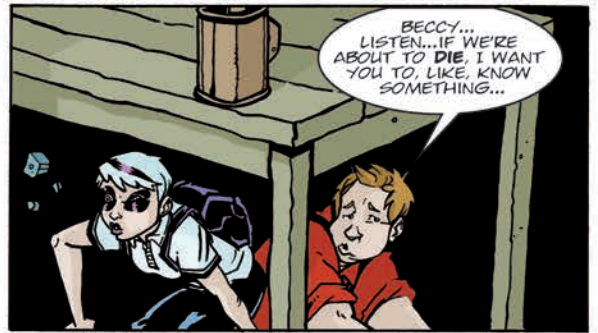
W-WHAT DO YOU SAY? WE DON'T NEED TO FIGHT, CAN'T WE ALL JUST...GET ALONG?

YOU'RE RIGHT, THERE'S NO NEED FOR THIS... THIS HOSTILITY.

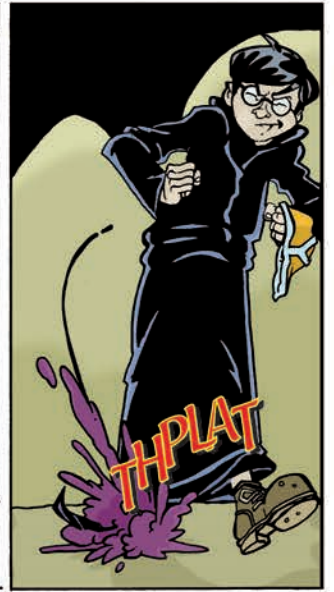
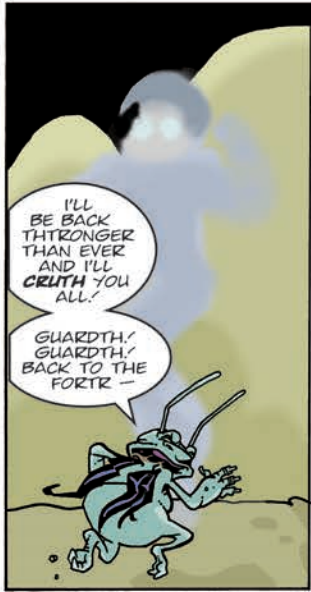
IT'S A CYCLE OF VIOLENCE THAT HAS TO BE BROKEN, I CAN SEE THAT NOW...



BUT I'M GOING TO CRUSH YOU ANYWAY!









THE LAND OF FAERIE RETURNED PRETTY MUCH TO NORMAL AFTER THAT.

SINGING PIXIES, LAUGHING ELVES, HAPPINESS AND LIGHT.



ABSOLUTELY BLOODY AWFUL, IF YOU ASK ME.

SHHHH... I SUPPOSE YOU'VE EARNED IT...

HEH HEH HEH...



I MANAGED TO BLAG A BAGFUL OF TEETH BEFORE THE MUNCHKIN MORONS TOOK OVER AGAIN, WHICH IS COOL.

JUST AS SOON AS I'VE FIGURED OUT HOW TO EXTRACT THE Y'KNOW, POWER FROM THEM, I'LL BE PEACHY.



...WHICH SORT OF MAKES UP FOR THE BIZARRE BEHAVIOUR OF ALL THESE WEIRDOS I'VE BEEN HANGING OUT WITH RECENTLY.

STOP TOUCHING MY ARSE YOU BLACKEYED FREAK OF NATURE!



COME ALONG, DARLING, WE'RE LEAVING!



LOOK, IT'S BIN A LARF, RIGHT, BUT I GOTTA SPLIT.

MYSTERIOUS MAGUS DISAPPEARING-TYPE STUFF TO DO, YOU KNOW 'OW IT IS...



I'LL SEE YOU -

HELLO?

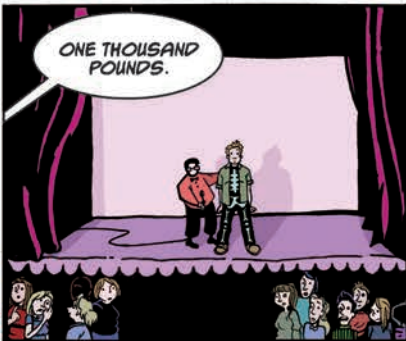
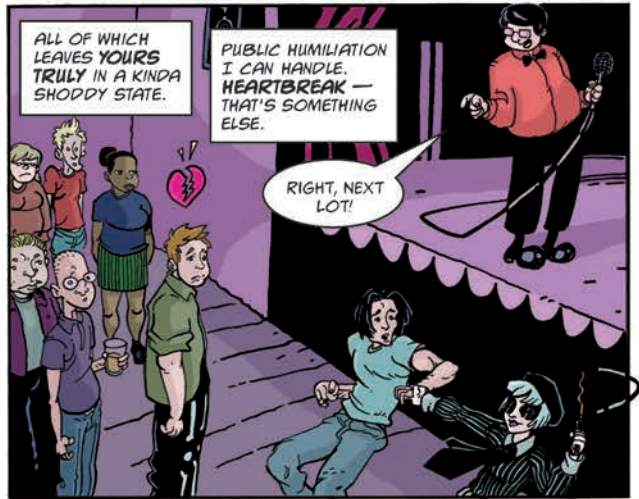
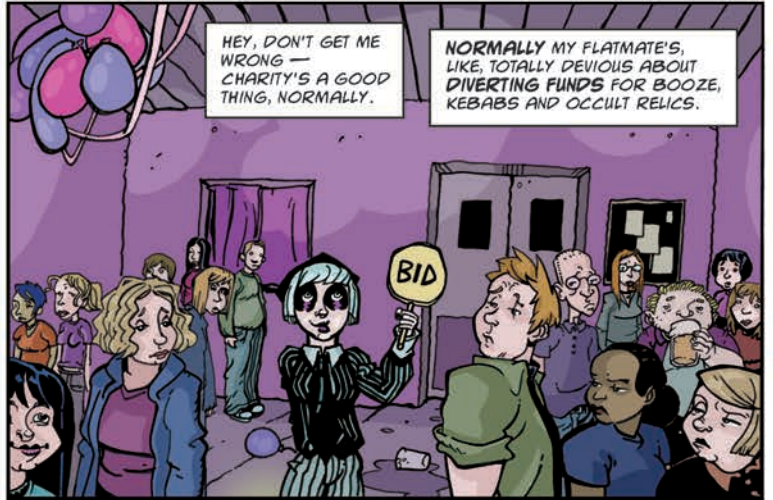
BIGGER...



HELL TO PAY

Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Steve Roberts
Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1401-1404





'UNCLE NICK'S BEEN AROUND FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER. USED TO KEEP ME BUSY AS A KID, WHILST MY PARENTS ARGUED.

... AND WEAKENS THE POWER OF THE EARTH WITH HIS MESSIAH-ON-A-STICK MASCULINE CRAP...

YOU SEE? YOU SEE THE SORT OF HIPPIY BULLSHIT ME AND JESUS HAVE TO PUT UP WITH?

DR G.HAD
Religious
Incompatibility
marriage guidance

'SINCE THEY GOT... BEAMED UP, SORT OF THING, HE'S MY ONLY SURVIVING RELATIVE.

'HE STILL DROPS ROUND, TIME TO TIME. LIKE TODAY.

'FUNNY THING... HE HASN'T CHANGED A BIT.'

13

AH, KAWL, M'BOY! HOPE I'M NOT INTERRUPTING ANYTHING?

WHAT'S THIS, EH?

OH, XENA... THANK THE GODS YOU FINALLY CAME OUT...

HOLD ME...

ER, NOTHING... YOU WANT SOME LENTILS?

CAPITAL IDEA, LAD!

LISTEN, KAWL, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT...

THING IS...
HMM...

THING IS, I'M IN A SPOT OF...
BOTHER.

PFPT... I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT... OOOH, THAT'S GOOD...

... ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IF ANYTHING SHOULD EVER... HAPPEN TO ME.

WELL, I DUNNO WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT. HE'S ALWAYS BEEN KINDA... **ECCENTRIC**. I MEAN, HE GAVE ME **BATTLEFIELD EARTH** FOR MY BIRTHDAY.

SAID HE LIKED THE TITLE. **COO-KOO**.



'BUT I FIGURE, HEY... FIVE MINUTES ALONE WITH A STRATEGICALLY PLACED DOOBIE, ALL HIS TROUBLES ARE CURED.



'HOMEGROWN IN PRIMO GRADE **KELPIE DUNG**. SLACKENS THE MUSCLES FASTER THAN A BUMPER EDITION OF **COUNTDOWN**.



OOOO... PRE-TTY.

HEE HEE HEE!



'AND THAT'S IT. WHEN I CAME BACK, HE WAS GONE.'



... I GUESS HE DECIDED AGAINST THE LENTILS.

SO IT'S TRUE! A CHILD OF THE **BLOOD**...

PING!



MR KAWL, AS YOUR UNCLE'S LAST SURVIVING RELATIVE, YOU STAND TO INHERIT HIS ESTATE...

YEAH, WELL... MY FAMILY'S NEVER BEEN TOO GOOD WITH FUNDS, SORT OF THING.



I THINK THERE ARE ONE OR TWO **ANCESTRAL SECRETS** YOU NEED TO BE ACQUAINTED WITH...



YOUR UNCLE IS GONE. IT'S TIME YOU TOOK OVER THE **FAMILY BUSINESS**.





WELCOME HOME,
MASTER!



S-SO, UH... WILLKOMMEN... Z-ZIS IS BEINK DER LIVINK ROOM, U-UNT TH—

YEAH, YEAH. VERY NICE. LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE.



NO, I DON'T WANT ANY COFFEE. NO, I DON'T HAVE ANY NOT-ON-A-FIRST DATE RULES. AND NO, I'M NOT HERE FOR YOUR PERSONALITY. PUCKER UP.

N-NOW JUST BE HANGINK ON A MI—



I WAS HOPING TO AVOID THIS, BUT YOU'VE BROUGHT IT ON YOURSELF. BED-ROOM. NOW.

J-JA... IS BEINK ZIS VAY...



THWOMP



MASTER! I FOUND HER! S-SHE'S EVIL! SHE PUT A SPELL ON ME — B-BUT I RESISTED!

I SO TOTALLY KNEW THAT ACCENT WAS FAKE.



YES... YES, MY BOY. THIS IS THE DEMONSPAWN WE'VE BEEN SEEKING.

YOU'VE DONE WELL.



WE'LL SOON SHOW HER THE ERROR OF HER WAYS, MY LAD!

OH YES, WE'LL CAST DOWN THIS DEVILISH LITTLE FIEND!



OKAY, LIKE, MEANWHILE... I HATE TO HOG THE PAGE COUNT, BUT TALKING OF DEVILISH FIENDS...

I'M SORT OF UP TO MY EYEBALLS IN THE BUGGERS.

BLOODY HELL...



DOES THE YEAR 1425 MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU, JAROD?

S-SHOULD IT?



'NO, NO... NOT UNLESS YOU'RE WONDERING WHEN YOUR EMPTY-SKULLED GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT GRANDMA GOT BLASTED ON MEAD AND BONKED A TALL DARK STRANGER IN THE TAVERN OUTHOUSE...'

'THE DARK LORD NEVER COULD HANDLE HIS BOOZE.'

HEE HEE HEE!



Y-YOU MEAN...

I MEAN YOU'VE GOT ANCESTRAL RESPONSIBILITIES, BOY.

THIS WAY.



B-BUT, WHERE'S SA-

NEVER MIND THAT. HE'S GONE.

IN THE MEANTIME, I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF APPOINTING SOME... LIEUTENANTS. TO EASE THE TRANSITION, AS IT WERE.



SAY HELLO, BOYS.

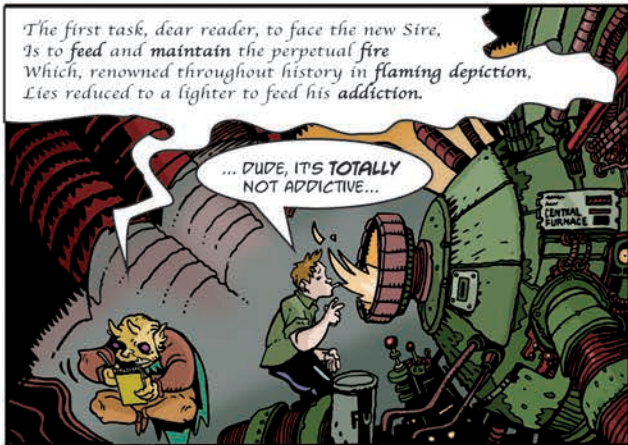
HELLO, MAAAAAAHSTER...



THIS IS ETTIE. HE'S A REPORTER. RHYMING COUPLETS AND EVERYTHING.

WE THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE FUN TO LET HIM COVER YOUR FIRST DAY ON THE JOB.

The first task, dear reader, to face the new Sire,
Is to feed and maintain the perpetual fire
Which, renowned throughout history in flaming depiction,
Lies reduced to a lighter to feed his addiction.



... DUDE, IT'S TOTALLY NOT ADDICTIVE...

Perhaps the reader will thereby grasp,
The dismal results of attempts at said task...
As failure to aim at the reservoir funnel,
Spells calamitous end for the Engine Infernal.



...THATS... WHOA... THATS A LAME RHYME...

Alas; for my heart now sinks like a stone,
And I fear for Hell's greatness whilst the Lord of its throne,
Is so bumbling, moronic and acutely uncouth,
To mistake the Mouthpiece for a Karaoke booth.

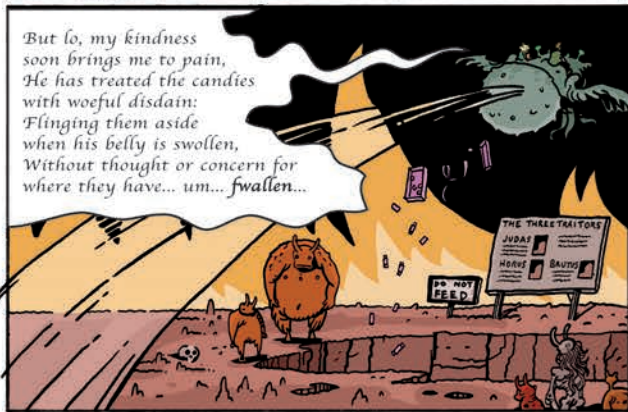


... THE ACE OF SPADES, THE ACE OF SPADES!

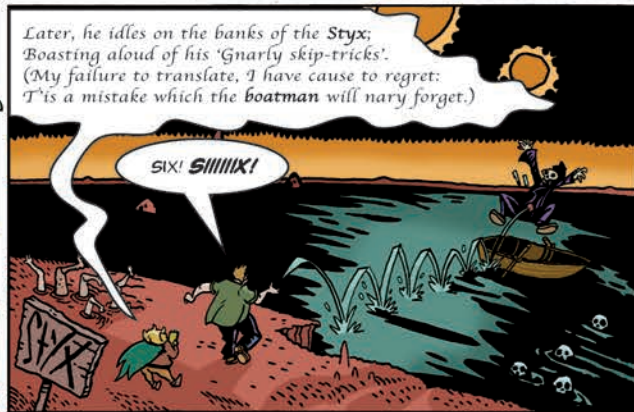


At noon, we leave Dis,
the tormented city,
And I confess to indulgence
in undemonlike pity:
The 'munchies' have claimed him;
he's quickly grown faint -
So I've conjured him chocolate,
fit for a saint.

But lo, my kindness soon brings me to pain,
He has treated the candies
with woeful disdain:
Flinging them aside
when his belly is swollen,
Without thought or concern for
where they have... um... fwallen...



Later, he idles on the banks of the Styx;
'Boasting aloud of his 'Gnarly skip-tricks'.
(My failure to translate, I have cause to regret:
T'is a mistake which the boatman will nary forget.)

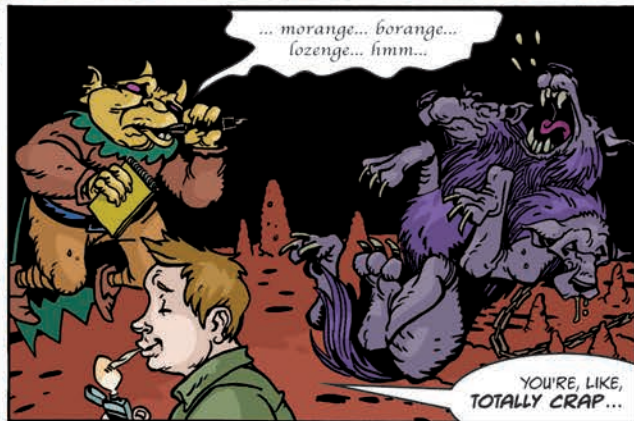


SIX! SHIIIIK!

And last on the day's disastrous agenda:
Preparing a meal for
our realm's stout defender.
But the fool takes the red
potion over the orange,
And... and he... er...



... morange... borange... lozenge... himm...



YOU'RE, LIKE, TOTALLY CRAP...





SO, HEY — THERE'S THIS TOTALLY IMPORTANT LESSON THEY SHOULD BE TEACHING KIDS AT SCHOOL, INSTEAD OF ALL THAT STUFF WITH, LIKE, BOOKS AND KESTRELS AND WET TOWELS AND STUFF:



WHEN YOU'RE FLEEING, RIGHT, FROM A LEGION OF HELLISH MINISTERS WHO'VE BEEN USING YOU AS THIS TOTALLY BUMBLING EXAMPLE OF HOW NOT TO RULE HADES...



... ON ACCOUNT OF HOW THEY WANT TO OVERTHROW YOU AND STUFF...



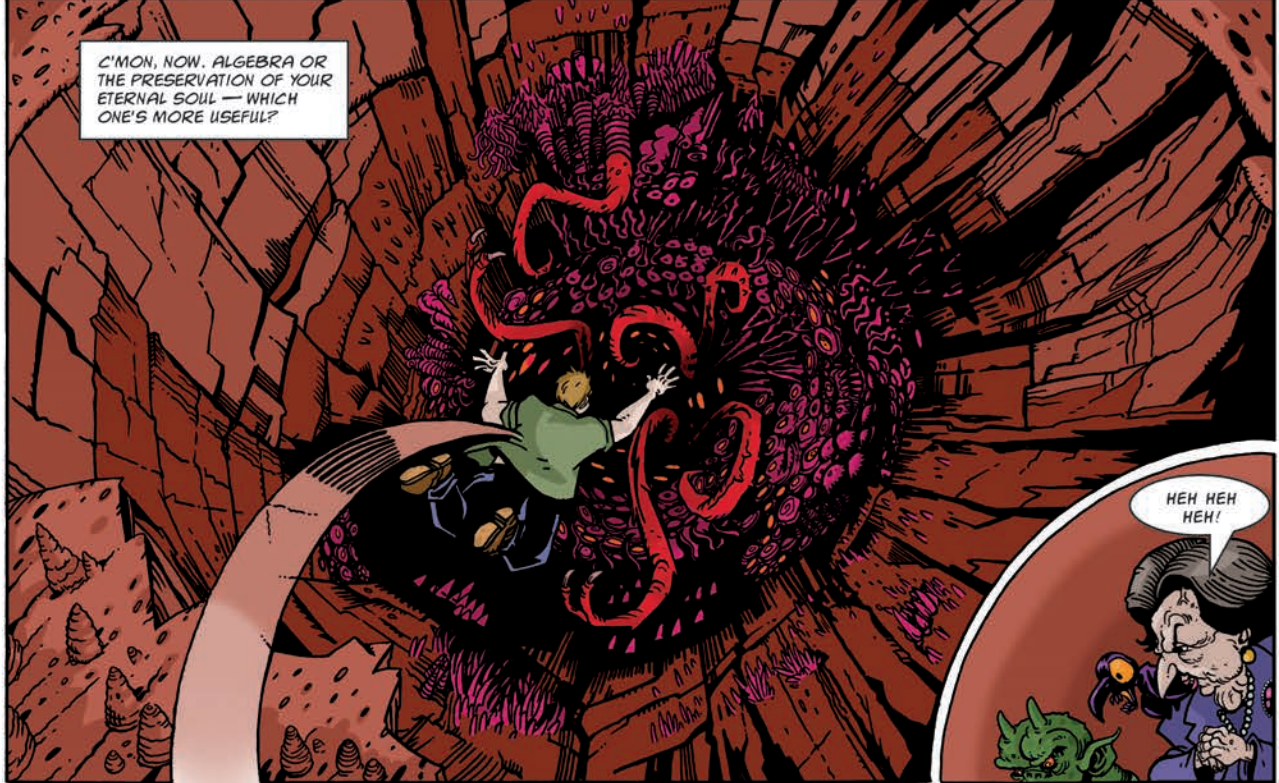
... AND ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE BEING LED BY THE ARCH-MANIFESTATION OF EVIL, WHO FANCIES THE JOB HERSELF...



YOU SHOULD ALWAYS, ALWAYS, LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING.



C'MON, NOW. ALGEBRA OR THE PRESERVATION OF YOUR ETERNAL SOUL — WHICH ONE'S MORE USEFUL?



HEH HEH HEH!



W-WHA—
AAAHHH...
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?

A journo's work
is never done!
Methinks this place
should be quite fun!
My public are sure
to think it most fit
That you end your reign
in Malabolgia's pit!

M-MALA
WHAT?

'Tis the essence of darkness,
My plucky young lad!
Inside its great maw
every dream that you've had
Will come as to dust,
and be made a nightmare:
You'll spend an eternity
in terror and... uh... fe-ar...

THEN HELP ME
ESCAPE, YOU EVIL
BASTARD!

'Evil is as evil does'...
or something like that,
I'm afraid the answer
remains quite flat:
No, you moron!
I observe, not take part!
Now quickly - a quote,
before you depart!

Something the readers
may remember you through!
Make it snappy and pithy
and typically you!

T-TELL THEM...

TELL THEM I
KNOW HOW BOBA
FETT FELT!

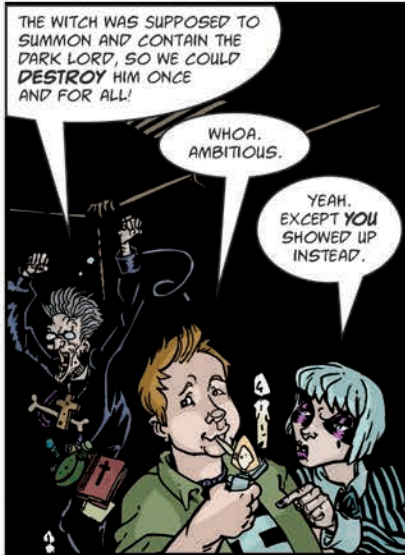
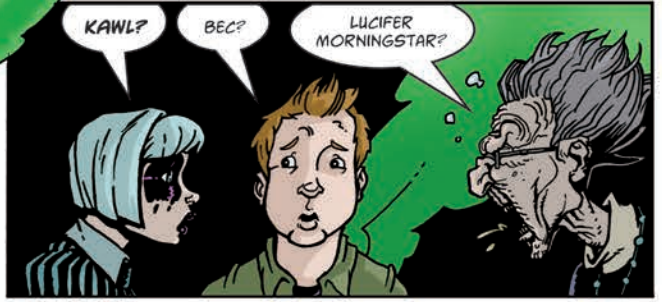
"Boba 'Fett"?
Who was he?
That's rubbish,
you great sap--

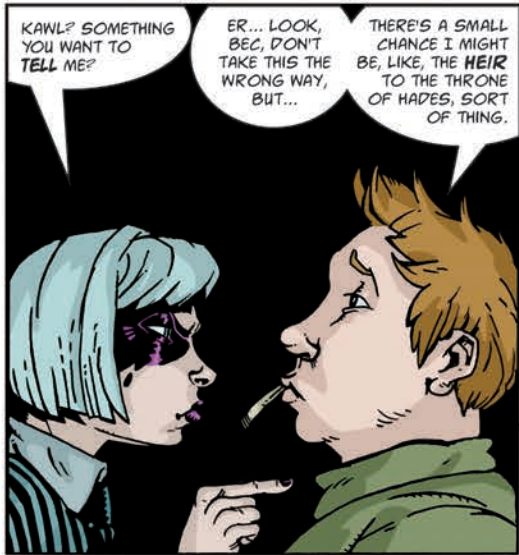
BOOMF

Hey! Where'd you go?
What's the --

Aw, crap.



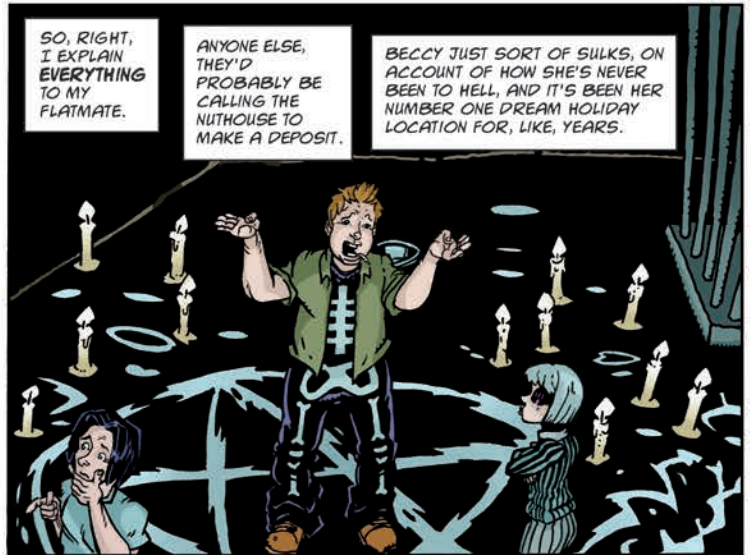




KAWL? SOMETHING YOU WANT TO TELL ME?

ER... LOOK, BEC, DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, BUT...

THERE'S A SMALL CHANCE I MIGHT BE, LIKE, THE HEIR TO THE THRONE OF HADES, SORT OF THING.



SO, RIGHT, I EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO MY FLATMATE.

ANYONE ELSE, THEY'D PROBABLY BE CALLING THE NUTHOUSE TO MAKE A DEPOSIT.

BECCY JUST SORT OF SULKS, ON ACCOUNT OF HOW SHE'S NEVER BEEN TO HELL, AND IT'S BEEN HER NUMBER ONE DREAM HOLIDAY LOCATION FOR, LIKE, YEARS.



S-SERIOUSLY — YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME FIND THE REAL SATAN!

OTHERWISE THEY'LL TOTALLY KILL ME WHEN I GO BACK!

... SILVER LINING...



N-NOW HANG ON HERE... IF SATAN'S BEEN OVERTHROWN, THAT'S A GOOD THING!

THE WORLD WILL BE FULL OF LIGHT AND REJOI—



DON'T BE A PILLOCK, ELIJAH. HAVE YOU TRIED TRAVELLING BY TRAIN RECENTLY?

IF HELL GETS PRIVATISED IT'LL MEAN DELAYS, FAULTY POSSESSIONS, CANCELLED SUMMONINGS. NO MORE DEMONIC INCURSIONS!

WE'LL BOTH BE OUT OF JOBS.



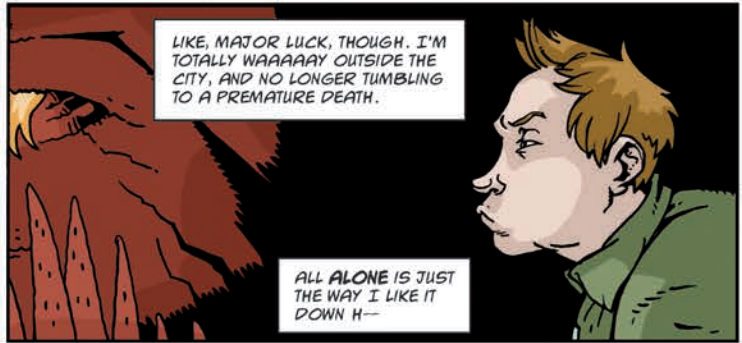
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, KAWL?

KAWL?



SO, LIKE, I GUESS BECCY'S CONCENTRATION SLIPPED AND I GOT SENT BACK.

THAT HAPPENS WHEN SHE'S THINKING OF HERSELF.



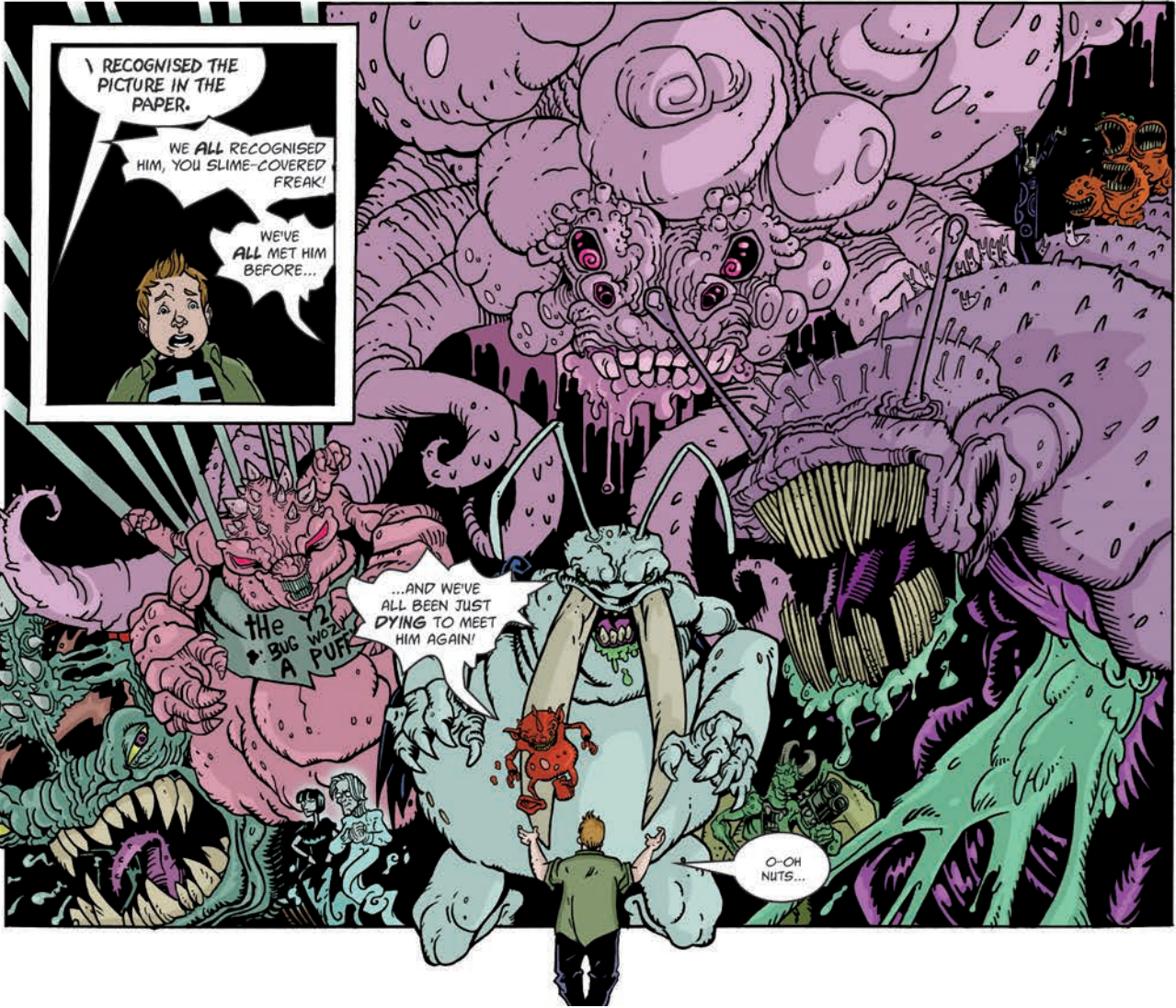
LIKE, MAJOR LUCK, THOUGH. I'M TOTALLY WAAAAAY OUTSIDE THE CITY, AND NO LONGER TUMBLING TO A PREMATURE DEATH.

ALL ALONE IS JUST THE WAY I LIKE IT DOWN H—



THERE. I TOLD YOU IT WAS HIM.

UH...



I RECOGNISED THE PICTURE IN THE PAPER.

WE ALL RECOGNISED HIM, YOU SLIME-COVERED FREAK!

WE'VE ALL MET HIM BEFORE...

...AND WE'VE ALL BEEN JUST DYING TO MEET HIM AGAIN!

O-OH NUTS...



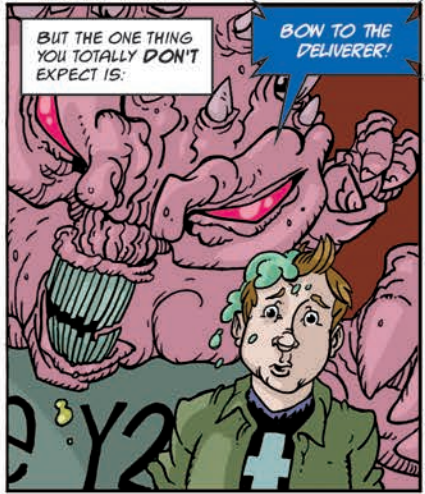
SO... OKAY, WHEN YOU COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH A HORDE OF PISSED-OFF DEMONS, AND SOME OF THEM ARE, LIKE, DEFEATED ENEMIES...

YESS... YESS, HE IS RIPE WITH THE STINK OF FATE...



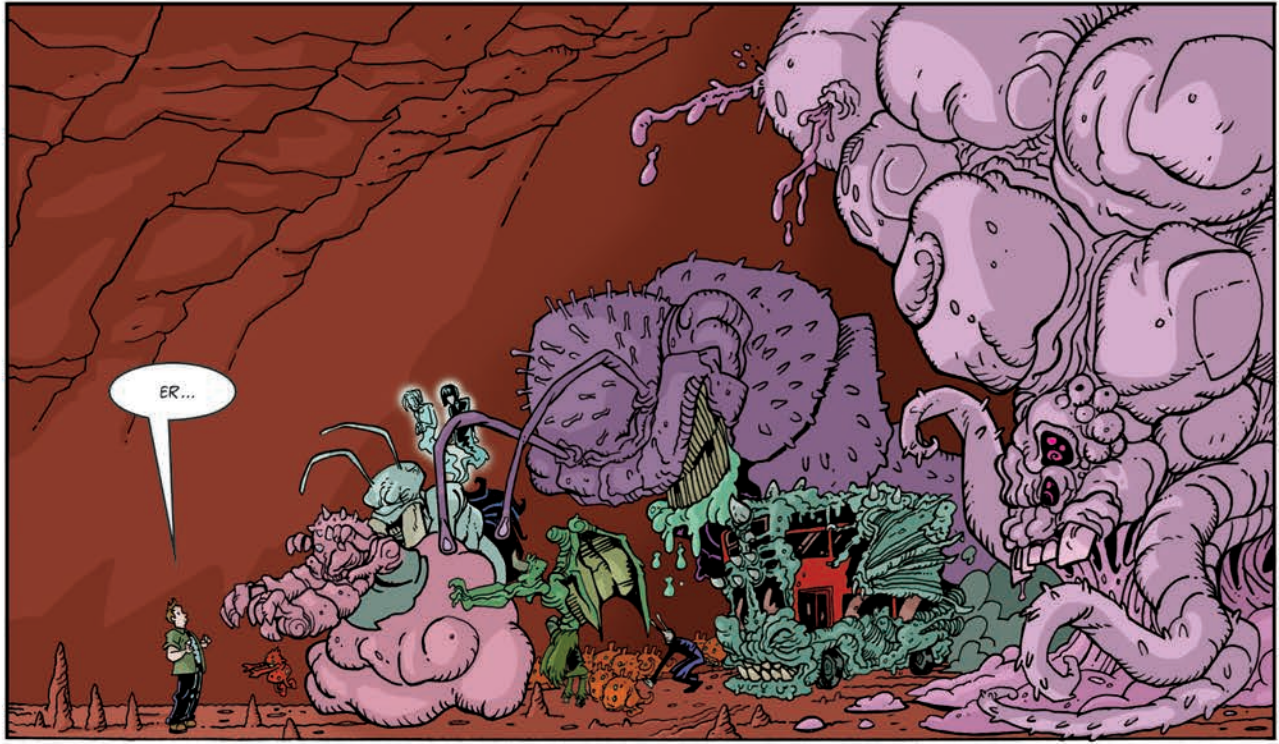
... YOU'VE GOT TO EXPECT SOME RESENTMENT, RIGHT? MAYBE EVEN A BIT OF LIGHT-HEARTED CARNAGE.

YOU, PUNY HUMAN, SHALL BE THE INSTRUMENT OF OUR VENGEANCE!



BUT THE ONE THING YOU TOTALLY DON'T EXPECT IS:

BOW TO THE DELIVERER!



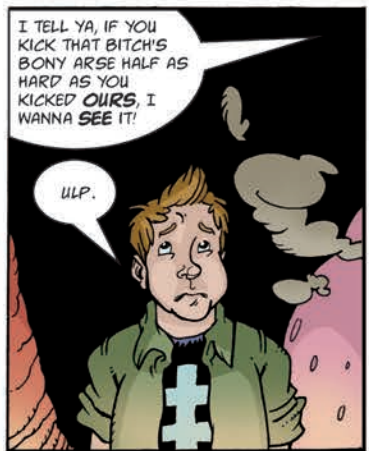
ER...



S-SO YOU GUYS DON'T DIG THE PRIVATISATION THING EITHER?

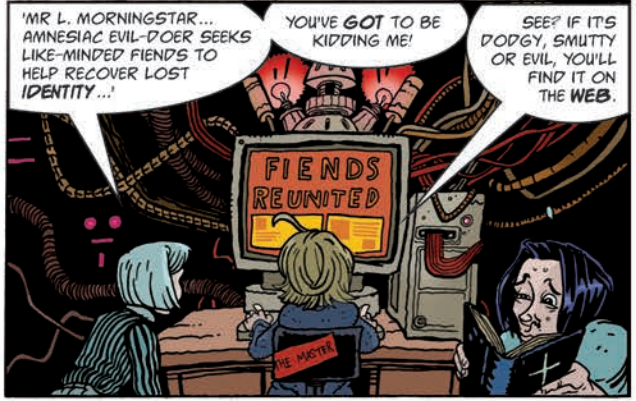
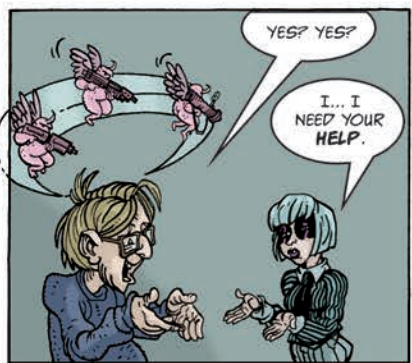
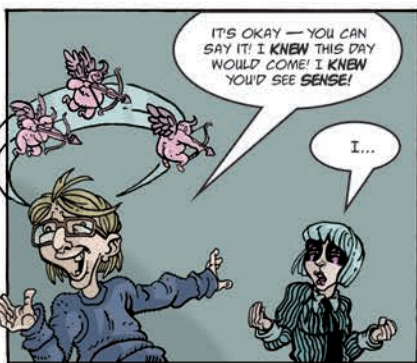
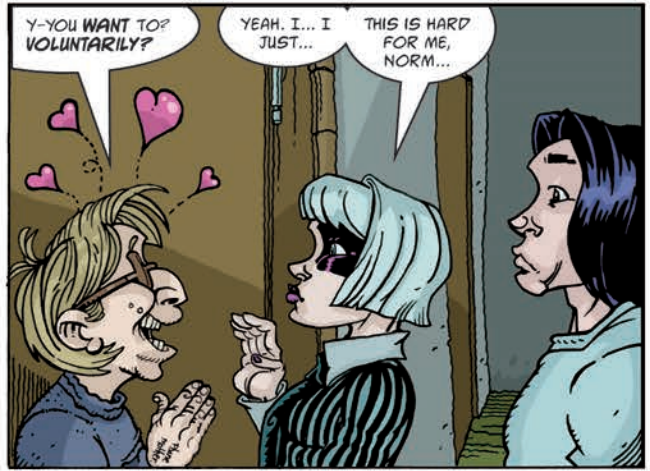
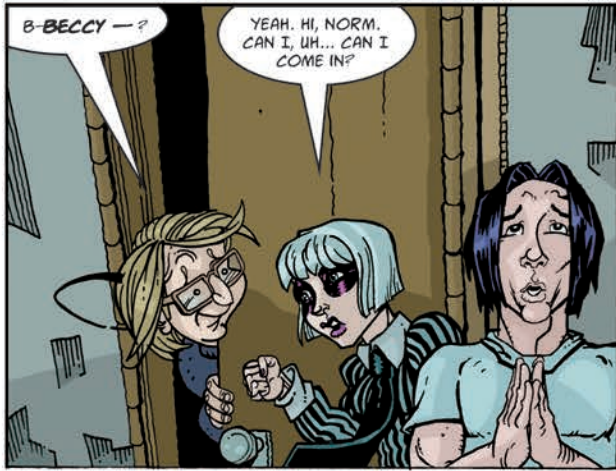
HELL, NO! IT'S LIKE, YOU GET CAST OUT OF REALITY MAYBE ONCE OR TWICE, AND SUDDENLY YOU'RE THIS SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN!

S'RIGHT. USED TO BE, YOU'D GET YOUR BASIC DISPOSSESSED METAPHYSICAL EVIL-DOER BENEFITS. NOT ANY MORE! NOW IT'S ALL 'HEY, GET A JOB!' S'UNDIGNIFIED!

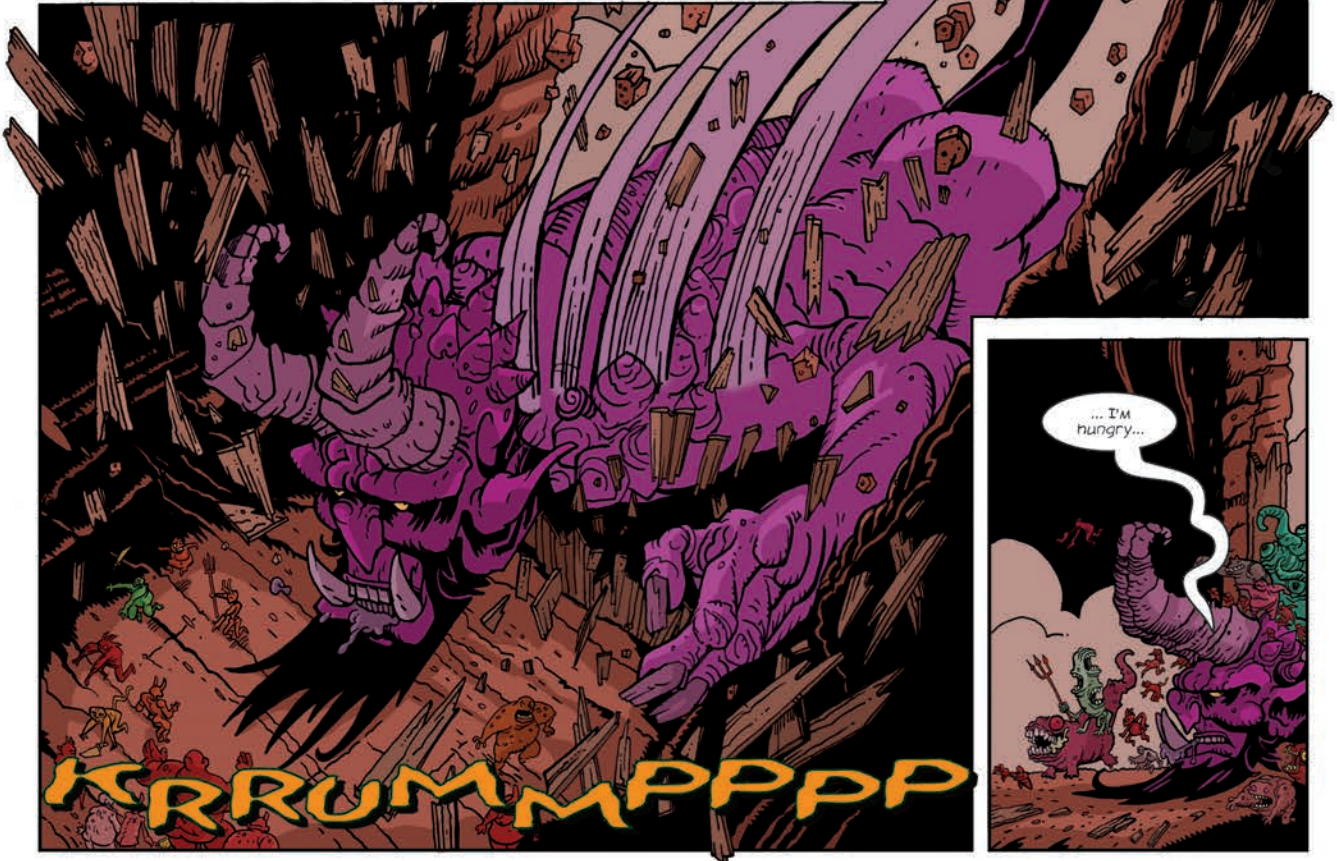
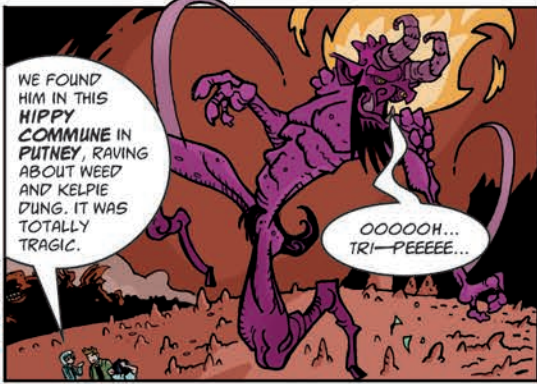


I TELL YA, IF YOU KICK THAT BITCH'S BONY ARSE HALF AS HARD AS YOU KICKED OURS, I WANNA SEE IT!

ULP.







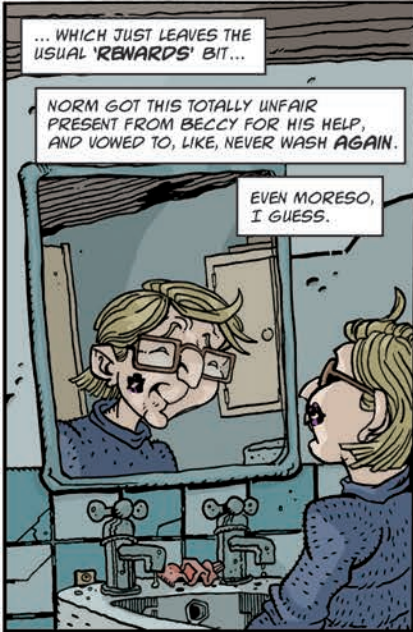


SO... THINGS CALMED DOWN A BIT AFTER ALL THAT. UNCLE NICK GOT HIMSELF DETOXIFIED AND RETURNED US TO THE MORTAL PLANE (AFTER, Y'KNOW, RESTORATING HELL TO ITS FORMER GLORY, ETC, ETC)...

HEY — WHERE'S ELIJAH?



P-PLEASE...?



... WHICH JUST LEAVES THE USUAL 'REWARDS' BIT...

NORM GOT THIS TOTALLY UNFAIR PRESENT FROM BECCY FOR HIS HELP, AND VOWED TO, LIKE, NEVER WASH AGAIN.

EVEN MORESO, I GUESS.



UNCLE NICK GAVE BECCY SOMETHING SHE'LL TOTALLY TREASURE FOR EVER...

WHO'S THE MOST EVIL BITCH NOW? C'MON, SAY IT. SAAAAAAAY IT...



AND AS FOR ME...

WHAT REWARD COULD POSSIBLY BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR ONE WHO RULED MY DOMAIN SO... SO CREATIVELY IN MY ABSENCE?

ACTUALLY... THERE IS SOMETHING...



AAAGH! WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

Aha, sweet maiden, *Ettie's* the name, And *Hell-O-Gram* love poems are this evening my game!



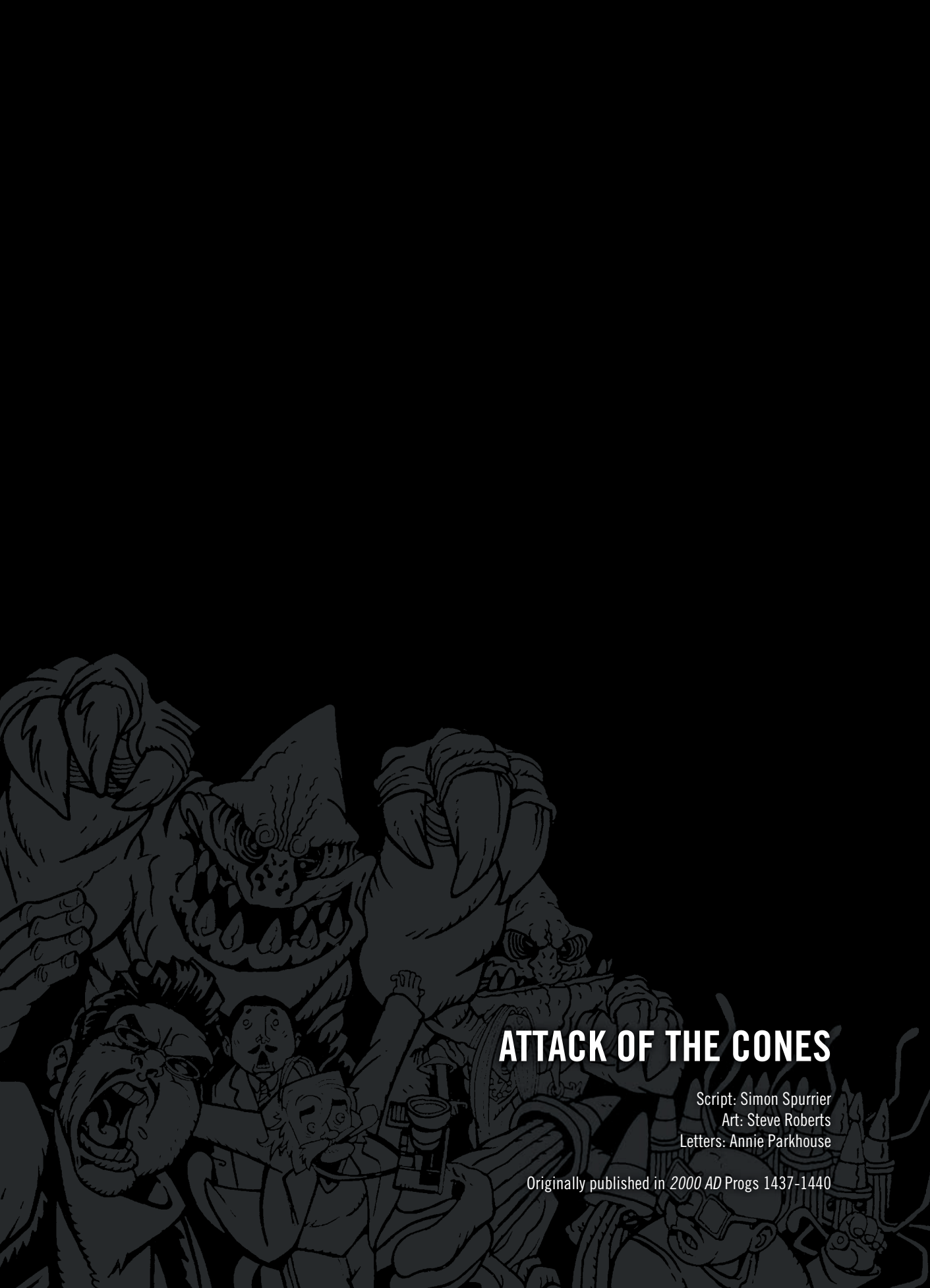
A mutual friend: by the *love bug* he's bitten! And seeks to confess it in this poem I've written! His affection: so profound it transcends merely 'fond'. Is... uh...

... w-what are you doing with that wand?

BOOM



BUGGER.



ATTACK OF THE CONES

Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Steve Roberts
Letters: Annie Parkhouse

Originally published in *2000 AD Progs* 1437-1440

"AH, CHERIE... WHERE LIES THE BLAME FOR MY TALE OF WOE? WITH YOUR ANGLU SISSY MEN, OF COURSE.

"THEY EXPEL ME FROM LES VILLES LIKE... CUCKOLDED CRETINS. DO THEY NOT SEE THE - OW-YOUSA? - FESTERING EVIL THAT LURKS AMONG THEM?"

"THEY SAY I USE LES METHODES EXTREMES AND I SAY 'OUI!' FOR WHAT ELSE AM I TO DO?"

"I AM PIERRE RAMONEZ - SLUG SLAYER, APHID ASSASSIN, PEST-CONTROL PUGILIST - AND THE WORLD OF L'INSECTE TREMBLES AT MY STEP!"

FASCINATING. NOW TELL ME HOW YOU GOT IN OR I'LL TURN YOUR EYELIDS INTO RAZORBLADES.

HA! NO WALL CAN HOLD BACK MY STORY! NO DOOR IS CLOSED TO THE TELLINGS OF UNE VIE INCROYABLE!

ALSO YOUR FAT FRIEND IS PASSING OUT DANS LA PORTE.

"WHERE WAS I? AH, OUI... I WANDER AS L'EXIL, CONTENTING MYSELF THAT YOUR PANTY-WETTING WASTE OF LAND HAS NO PREDATEUR WORSE THAN MOI..."

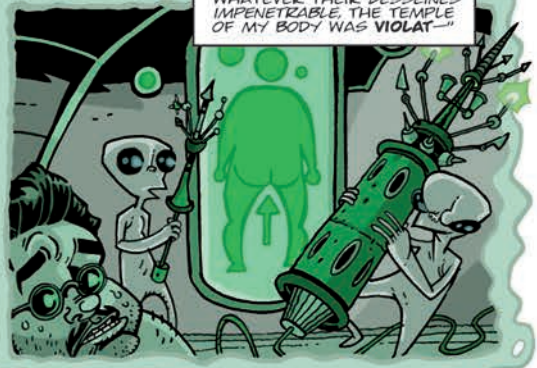
"ALORS, BUT THAT IT WERE SO."

"I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG I WAS THERE, ANGLU, UNDERTAKING THE NOT-NICE EXPERIMENTS OF LES ETRANGERS..."



"NOR DID I COMPREHEND THEIR PURPOSE, SO ADVANCED WERE THEIR WAYS..."

"WHATEVER THEIR DESSEINES IMPENETRABLE, THE TEMPLE OF MY BODY WAS VIOLAT—"



"HEY! DREYFUSS! TRYING TO EAT!"

"PAH! I SEE THROUGH L'INDIFFERENCE, UPPER-LIP-STIFFING NINNY! YOU CLUTCH THE FUZZY TEDDY IN TERREUR!"



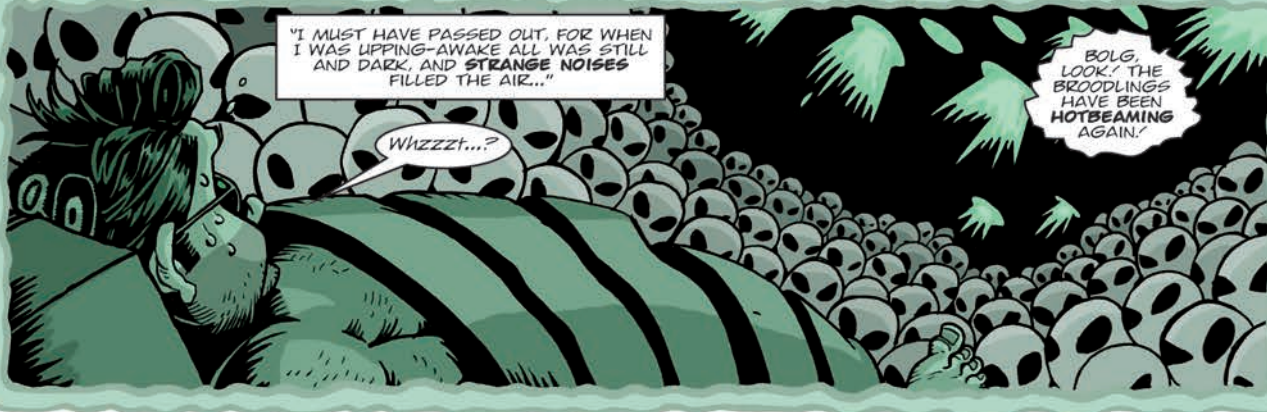
"IT'S NOT A TEDDY, IT'S... IT'S A MACROCOSMIC GRAIL CONTAINING THE SOULS OF MY DEFEATED ENEMIES."

"BIEN SUR DOES IT HAVE A NAME...?"



"ME SNOOGUMS."

"JUST GET ON WITH THE BLOODY STORY."



"I MUST HAVE PASSED OUT, FOR WHEN I WAS UPPING-AWAKE ALL WAS STILL AND DARK, AND STRANGE NOISES FILLED THE AIR..."

"WHZZZT...?"

"BOLG. LOOK! THE BLOODLINGS HAVE BEEN HOTBEAMING AGAIN!"

THAT DOES IT! NO CATTLE MUTILATIONS FOR A WEEK!

THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED IF WE'D JUST GOT A MECHPOODLE INSTEAD, BUT OH NO -

STOP MOANING AND HELP ME GET RID OF THESE THINGS, MUST'VE SCARED THE MONKEY-MAN SILLY...

HMM... IT'S LEAKING FROM THIS TUBE. DOES THAT MEAN IT'S ALIVE?

BEEEEEE GOOOOOOOD.

HEH, ALWAYS WANTED TO SAY THAT...

GROW UP, BOLG.

PARDON ME, BUT DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE?

"I... I WAS CONFUSED, SINCE ARRIVING I HAD FELT PAIN AND - OW-YOUSA?? - ANGUISH, OUI? ALL WAS EFFICIENCY AND ...LE STERILITE.

HA! YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SPAWN THE LITTLE BASTARDS, HEADS LIKE MELONS, AND ME WITH NO DISCERNIBLE GENDER ORGANS -

"THE ANSWER SEEMED OBVIOUS..."

G-GERMANY...?

ER...

WHAT'S THIS...? WEAPONRY? IS HE A SOLDIER?

DAMN, WE'D BETTER KILL HIM THEN, IF THE MILITARY GET WIND IT'LL BE SCALPELS AND CAMERAS AND BLOODY WEATHER BALLOONS ALL OVER AGAIN.

POOR GLUKX, HE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A CELEBRITY...

W-WAIT! N-NOT A SOLDIER! PEST CONTROL, OUI? I KILL LE VERMINE!

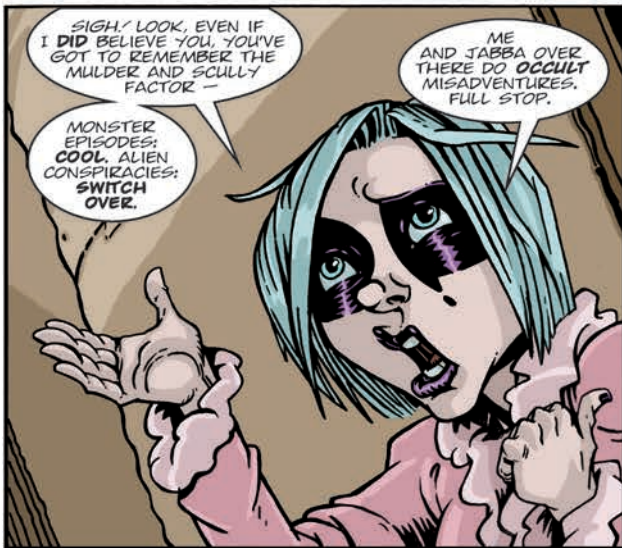
PEST CONTROL?

HMM...

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL, EARTHLOID, ABOUT TAKING ON THE FILTHIEST VERMIN OF ALL?

HE'S CONTINENTAL, REMEMBER THE EGO.

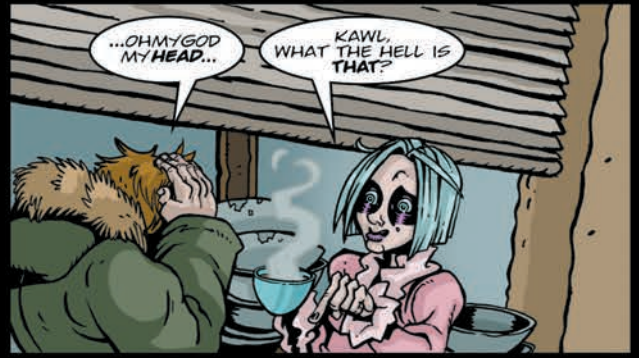
ER... BEING SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR LIBERATING YOUR PLANET IS NOT OUT OF THE QUESTION...





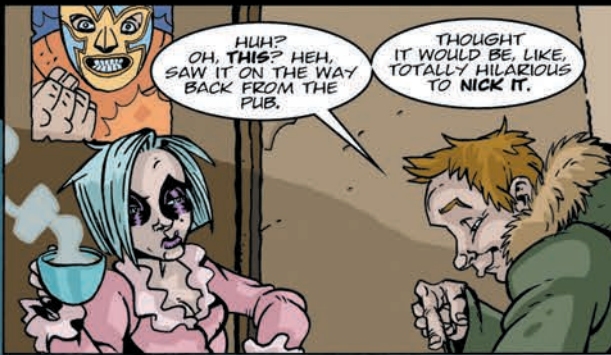
UGGH...

OH JOY, THE KRAKEN AWAKES.



...OHMYGOD MY HEAD...

KAWL, WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?



HUHP? OH, THIS? HEH, SAW IT ON THE WAY BACK FROM THE PUB.

THOUGHT IT WOULD BE LIKE, TOTALLY HILARIOUS TO NICK IT.



I THINK MY SIDES JUST HAEMORRAGED.

H-HEY... IT'S MOVING... WHAT'S -



ATTACK OF THE CONES!
BEHOLD THE WORLDWIDE EVIL!
IN EVERY NATION IN EVERY STREET:
MALICIOUS MOTORWAY-MARKERS OF MAYHEM!

DID YOU SUSPECT?

NEXT PROG:
CONICAL DOOM!







WELCOME ABOARD, WRETCHED APE-FILTH! WE COME IN PEACE.



R-REALLY?

OW!

WELL... ACTUALLY, NO. JUST SEEMED THE RIGHT THING TO SAY.

THIS WAY.



BEHOLD THE CHRONOSTAX TRANSMUTER! AT LONG LAST IT BEAMS ITS MIGHTY SIGNAL - AWAKENING THE SLUMBERING WARRIORS HIDDEN AMONG YOU EARTHMAN SCUM!

WHO'S HE CALLING 'SCUM'?

WHO'S HE CALLING MAN?



HA! I SEE YOU GROW GREEN WITH TERROR! PITY YOUR WORLD, MONKEY-DUNG!

I-IT'S NOT THAT...IT'S JUST THAT I DON'T LIKE FLY SO WELL AND... AND I THINK WE JUST LEFT THE IONOSPHERE OR SOMETHING B-BECAUSE... OH GOD...



YOU... YOU...

KILL THE MAMMALSHIT! NOBODY BLOWS CHUNKS IN THE CARAPACE OF GENERAL SKRAGG AND LIVES!

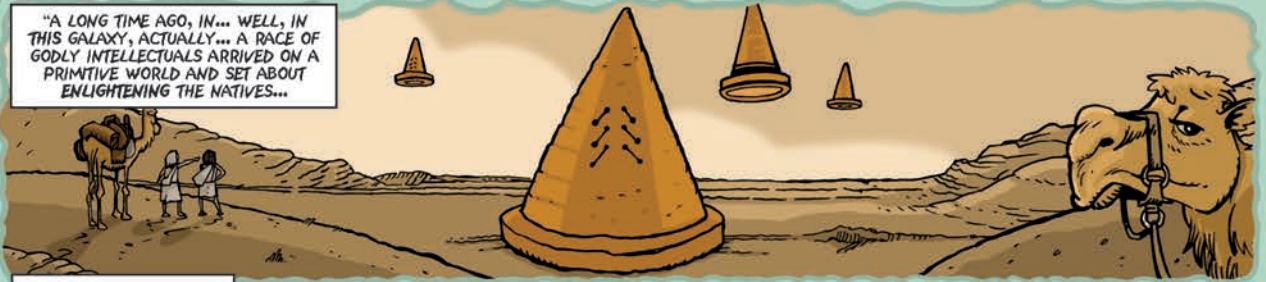


DELAY THAT ORDER.

WHAAAAAT? WHO DARES?



"A LONG TIME AGO, IN... WELL, IN THIS GALAXY, ACTUALLY... A RACE OF GODLY INTELLECTUALS ARRIVED ON A PRIMITIVE WORLD AND SET ABOUT ENLIGHTENING THE NATIVES..."



"THEIR ENSLAVEMENT, AND THE FORCED CONSTRUCTION OF POINTLESS MONUMENTS WAS - IF THEIR MEAGRE MINDS COULD BUT COMPREHEND - ALL PART OF THEIR ILLUMINATION."



"FOR A THOUSAND YEARS THE EPOCH PREVAILED, AND ALL WAS WELL..."

"UNTIL THE DAY THE STAR LORDS BOARDED THEIR SKY CHARIOTS AND RETURNED TO THE VOID - WITHOUT EXPLANATION OR FAREWELL..."

...TOLD YOU TO LET THE OMNIFICAT OUT RIGHT BEFORE WE LEFT, BUT OH NO, YOU WOULDN'T BE TOLD...

IF IT'S CHEWED UP THE SPACE/TIME CONTINUUM, YOU'RE BUYING A NEW ONE...



"BUT TIME PASSED, AND THE APES GREW CUNNING. THEY DERIDED THE PURITY OF THE POINTED MOUND AND REBELLED AGAINST CONICAL PERFECTION."



"IN THEIR HERESY THEY COMPOSED ANGLES AND GEOMETRY, THEY MOUNTED SACRED MENHIRS ONE UPON ANOTHER..."



"...THEY CARVED STAIRS INTO SMOOTH ROCK AND SULLIED THE LIKENESS OF THEIR OVERLORDS..."



"UNTIL ONE DAY..."

"...THEIR MASTERS RETURNED AND FOUND THEMSELVES FORGOTTEN."



FOR THE GLORY OF THE CONE EMPIRE, AND THE CONTINUED CONSTRUCTION OF BIG USELESS MONUMENTS, THE TIME HAS COME TO REMIND THEM OF THEIR FEALTY!

AND THIS TIME WE REMEMBERED THE QUANTUM CATFLAP.

THE TIME HAS COME FOR TOTAL WORLD DOMINATION!





LOOK, NO DISRESPECT... THIS IS ALL, LIKE, TOTALLY OUTRAGEOUS AND EVERYTHING... BUT I'VE GOTTA WARN YOU, THE PLUCKY HUMAN RACE WILL DEFEND ITSELF, OKAY?

LIKE... LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED... WHOA... THOSE GUYS HAD ENORMOUS LASERS AND THESE... MASSIVE SHADOWS AND, LIKE... LITTLE ZAPPY SHIPS, Y'KNOW?

ANYWAY, WE DID FOR THEM WITH THIS COMPUTER VIRUS AND... AND THAT BLOKE OFF THE FRESH PRINCE AND... OH YEAH, THAT MAD GUY IN THE PLANE, HEH, AND...

ER...

"ANYWAY... I'VE GOT CONFUSED MEMORIES OF WHERE I WAS WHEN IT HAPPENED, BUT IT WAS ALL OVER IN, LIKE, HOURS, MAN. THAT'S WHAT DOUBLE-HARD BASTARDS WE ARE.

"RIGHT, BECCY?"



BECCY?

D-DID YOU JUST SAY... "TOTAL WORLD DOMINATION"?

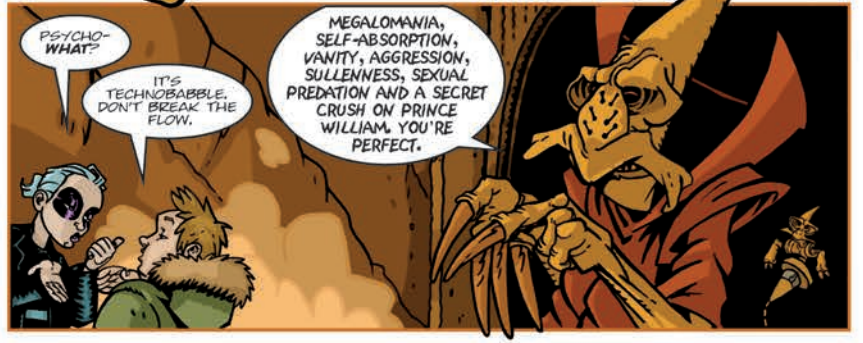
OH CRAP.



I SEE WE WERE CORRECT TO BRING YOU ABOARD, MY DEAR.

BEFORE YOUR GARLIC-SCENTED FRIEND DESTROYED IT, OUR ATTACK UNIT CONDUCTED A PSYCHOMODULOIDAL SCAN OF YOUR MIND.

YOU POSSESS ALL THE TRAITS WE'VE BEEN SEEKING...



PSYCHO-WHAT?

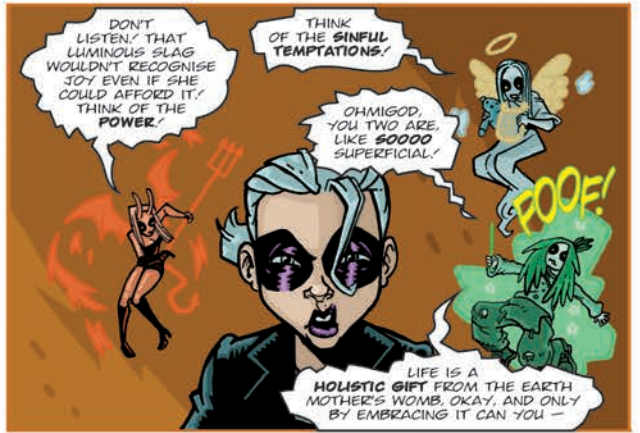
IT'S TECHNOBABBLE. DON'T BREAK THE FLOW.

MEGALOMANIA, SELF-ABSORPTION, VANITY, AGGRESSION, SULLENNESS, SEXUAL PREDATION AND A SECRET CRUSH ON PRINCE WILLIAM. YOU'RE PERFECT.



WILL YOU DO IT FOR US, FEMALE APESCUM?

WILL YOU RULE THE PLANET IN OUR NAME?







W-WHERE ARE WE...?

WAIT... CAN YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

THAT IS THE SOUND OF DEATH, MONKEYSPITTLE...



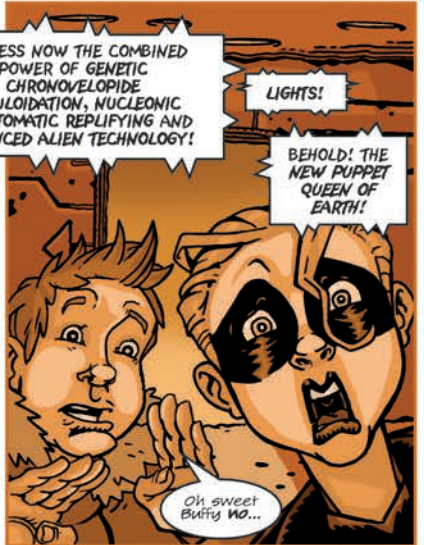
YOU SEE, NO TRUE MEGALOMANIAC WOULD EVER AGREE TO RULE ON SOMEONE ELSE'S BEHALF.

I KNEW YOU'D TURN ME DOWN, GOTHLING, SO I PLANNED AHEAD.



A TINY SAMPLE OF YOUR SKIN WAS ALL I NEEDED, WHICH I TOOK WHEN YOU FIRST CAME ABOARD...

THAT LITTLE BITING THING? I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST BEING AFFECTIONATE...



WITNESS NOW THE COMBINED POWER OF GENETIC CHRONOVVELOPIDE REGULOIDATION, NUCLEONIC QUANTOMATIC REPLYING AND ADVANCED ALIEN TECHNOLOGY!

LIGHTS!

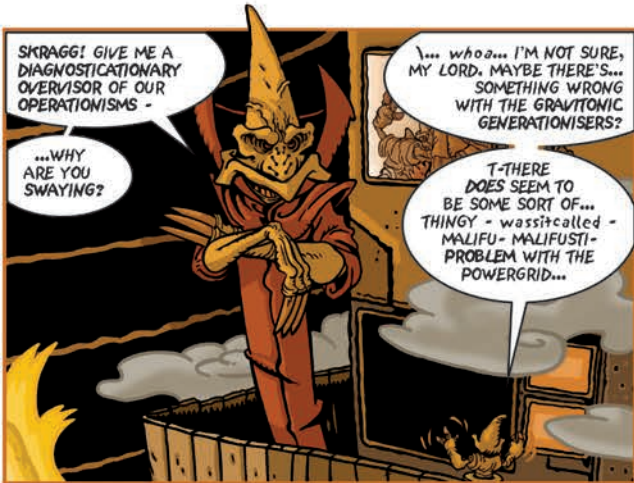
BEHOLD! THE NEW PUPPET QUEEN OF EARTH!

Oh sweet Batty NO...



PFFT. THAT OUTFIT IS 50000 LAST CENTURY!

TSK, AND LOOK - SOMEONE DRAGGED A WHALE ASHORE...



SKRAGG! GIVE ME A DIAGNOSTICATIONARY OVERVISOR OF OUR OPERATIONISMS -

...WHY ARE YOU SWAYING?

... whoa... I'M NOT SURE, MY LORD. MAYBE THERE'S... SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE GRAVITONIC GENERATIONISERS?

T-THERE DOES SEEM TO BE SOME SORT OF... THING! - wassitcalled - MALIFU - MALIFUSTI - PROBLEM WITH THE POWERGRID...

"WHAT PROBLEM? AND WHAT'S THAT SMELL?"

"RELAaaaaaaax, OKAY? IT'S NOTHING. REPLICATOR STUCK ONNA... ONNA... LOOP, THASSALL. I GOT THE TEKS ON IT."



"SO... WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, SKRAGG, IS THAT I CAN SETTLE BACK TO WATCH THE EARTHLOIDS DIE WITHOUT ANYTHING, LIKE... STRANGE GOING ON?"

"YEAH, YEAH, TOTALLY..."

KAWL, LEAVE THIS TO ME.



'SCUSE? YEAH, SORRY TO INTERRUPT...

I JUST WANTED TO COMPLIMENT YOU - YEAH, YOU, ON THE SHOULDER THERE - ON YOUR HAIR. IT'S REALLY LOVELY.



HEE? THAT GLORIFIED BOIL?

SHE HASN'T EVEN GOT A PURPLE STRIPE!

NOR HAVE YOU! IT'S TOTALLY D'IED!

IT'S NOT MY FAULT IF I'M THE BEST LOOKING ONE -

HA! I'VE GOT THE BEST EYES!

...TWO IS NORMAL, DARLING...

CALL YOURSELF A RADIOACTIVE MONSTROSITY?!

I'VE SEEN BETTER LOOKING FUNGAL WARTS.

ONLY IN THE MIRROR!



LET'S GO.



G-GUARDS!

KILL HIM FIRST!



DON'T... DON'T YOU THINK IT'S WEIRD HOW... FLIES, RIGHT... C'N WALK USSIDE DOWN...?

HEY, YEAH...HOW DO THEY DO THAT?



T-THEY'RE IN!

OBSERVATION INCROYABLE...

THIS WAY, ANGLO NINNY-PIGS!



B-B-B-BUT THEY'VE GOT US SURROUNDED!

QUELLE HEURE EST-IL? WHAT TIME? WHAT TIME?

T-TWO O' CLOCK! WHY?



AHH... C'EST PARFAIT. CLOSING TIME.

I DON'T U-UNDERSTAND-!

YOU GOT TO USE LA TETE! WHAT IS BEING THE ONE THING THAT THE ORANGE PLASTIC POINTY FOOL HAS LEARNED TO BE FEARING?



LOOK - TRAFFIC CONESH! LETSH... LETSH NICK ONE! HAHHAHA!

LES ETUDIANTES IN THE - OWOUSAY - ARSE-OF-THE-RAT.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "RETREATING"?

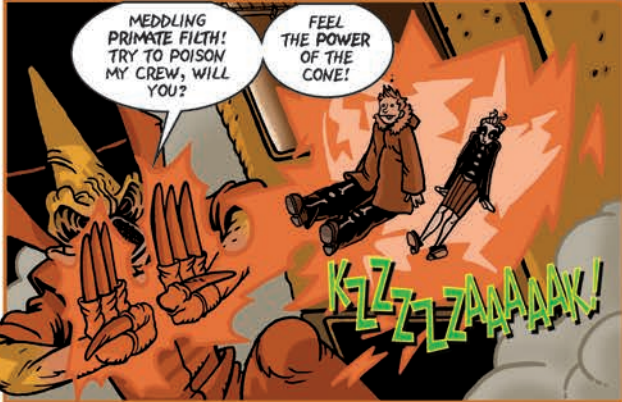
REGROUP! SEND IN THE REFLECTOR TROOPS! DISPATCH THE BLADED TRAFFIC ISLANDS OF DEATH!

CRUSH THEM ALL!

HEY, MISTER...



FLIAP!



MEDDLING PRIMATE FILTH! TRY TO POISON MY CREW, WILL YOU?

FEEL THE POWER OF THE CONE!

KZZZZZAAAANK!



...O-OH GOD... I HATE FLYING...



AAAHHH! MY EYES -!

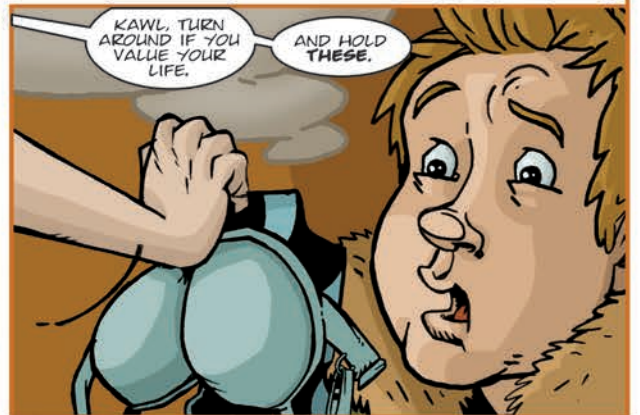
BLAAAARRR

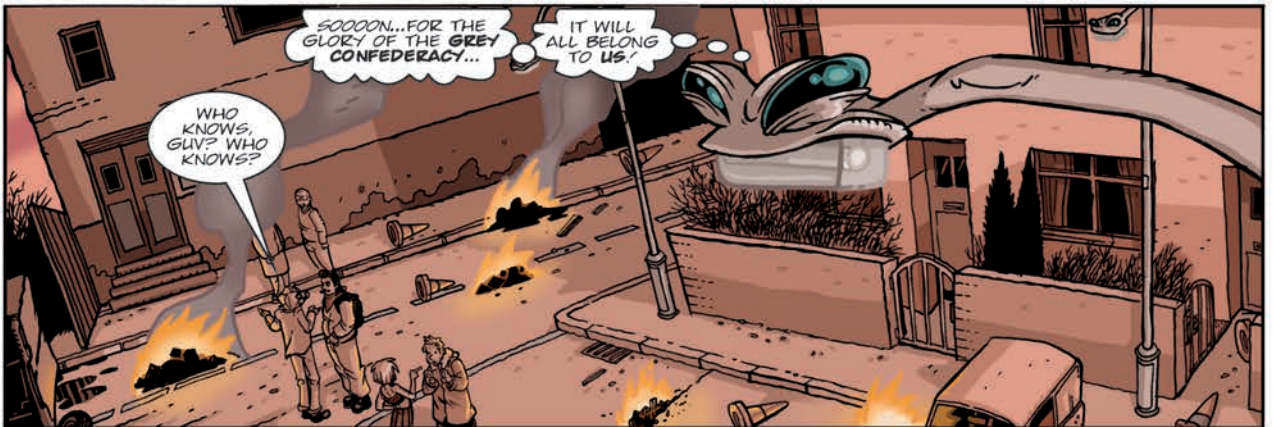
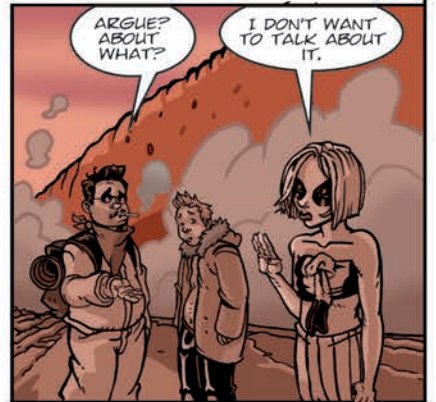
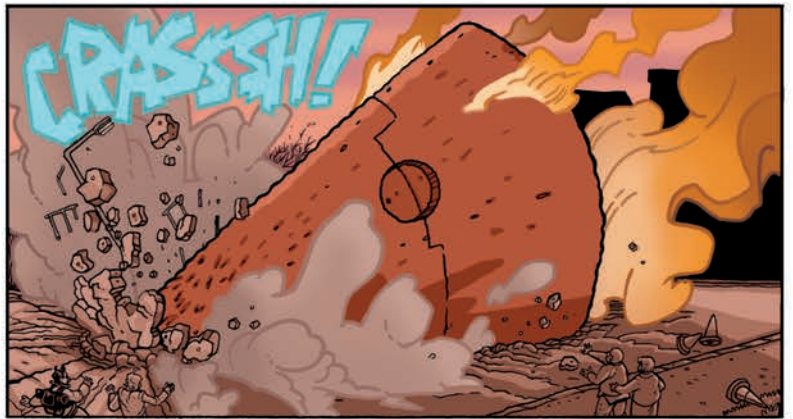
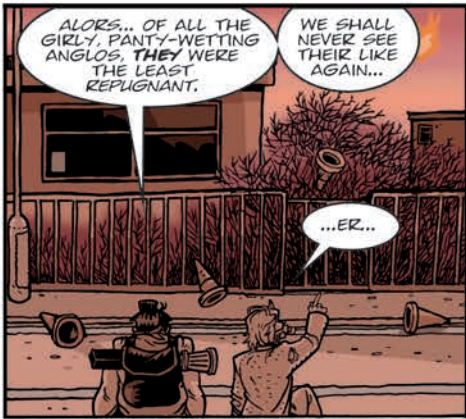
C-CAN'T SEE -!



AAAGGHHH!

FFFEZZZAAAANKKX





FWWAP!!

FREAKSHOW

Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Steve Roberts
Letters: Ellie De Ville

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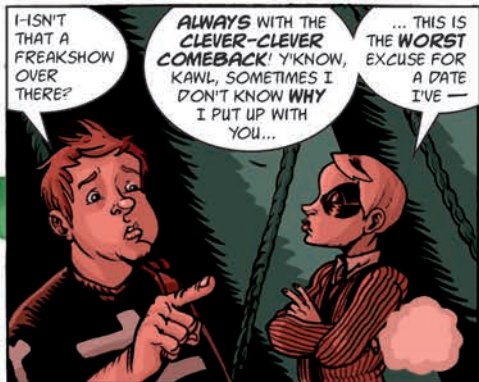




I MEAN... CARRIAGE OF STINKS? CARRIAGE OF STINKS? FIFTY PEE ENTRANCE FEE, AND THAT'S THE BEST THEY CAN DO?

THAT'S NOT THE POINT! WHERE ARE THE ASTONISHING FEATS OF MAGIC? THE SNAKE CHARMERS? THE CIRCUS FREAKS?

BUT... I SNUCK US IN FOR FREE —



I-ISN'T THAT A FREAKSHOW OVER THERE?

ALWAYS WITH THE CLEVER-CLEVER COMEBACK! Y'KNOW, KAWL, SOMETIMES I DON'T KNOW WHY I PUT UP WITH YOU...

... THIS IS THE WORST EXCUSE FOR A DATE I'VE —



— OH MY GOD LOOK!

DADDY! DADDY! CAN WE GET ONE?

CHIANG-SH IH

PENANGGALAN

ADZE

C-COME AWAY, DEAR...

WHOA... WEIRD...



HMPH. KNEW IT WAS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE. SORRY TO DISAPPOINT, MERRICK, BUT YOUR LONG-LOST RELATIVES ARE FAKES. EITHER THAT OR COUSIN IT HERE WAS BORN WITH A ZIP.

CHIANG-SH IH



ISN'T THAT AN APPENDIX SCAR?

CHIANG-SH IH... YARA-MA-YHA-WHO... PENANGGALAN... WHERE HAVE I HEARD THOSE NAMES BEFORE...?

FORTUNES! GETCHORE FORTUNES TOLD 'ERE! GEDDEM WHILE THEY'RE 'OT!



NOW THAT'S MORE LIKE IT! PRETEND MYSTICS. FISH IN A BARREL.

I'LL... I'LL JUST WAIT HERE THEN, SHALL I?



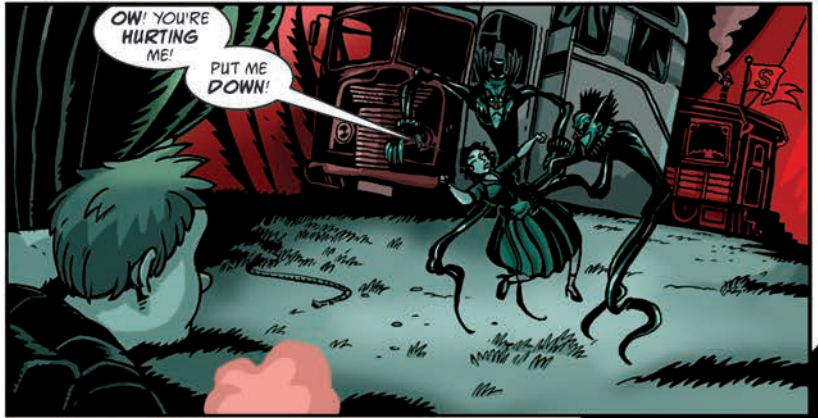
CALL THAT A CRYSTAL ORB? I'VE SEEN BIGGER BALLS ON A SAND PIXIE!

RIGHT.



NO! GET OFF!

I TOLD YOU, I DON'T WANT TO GO IN THERE!



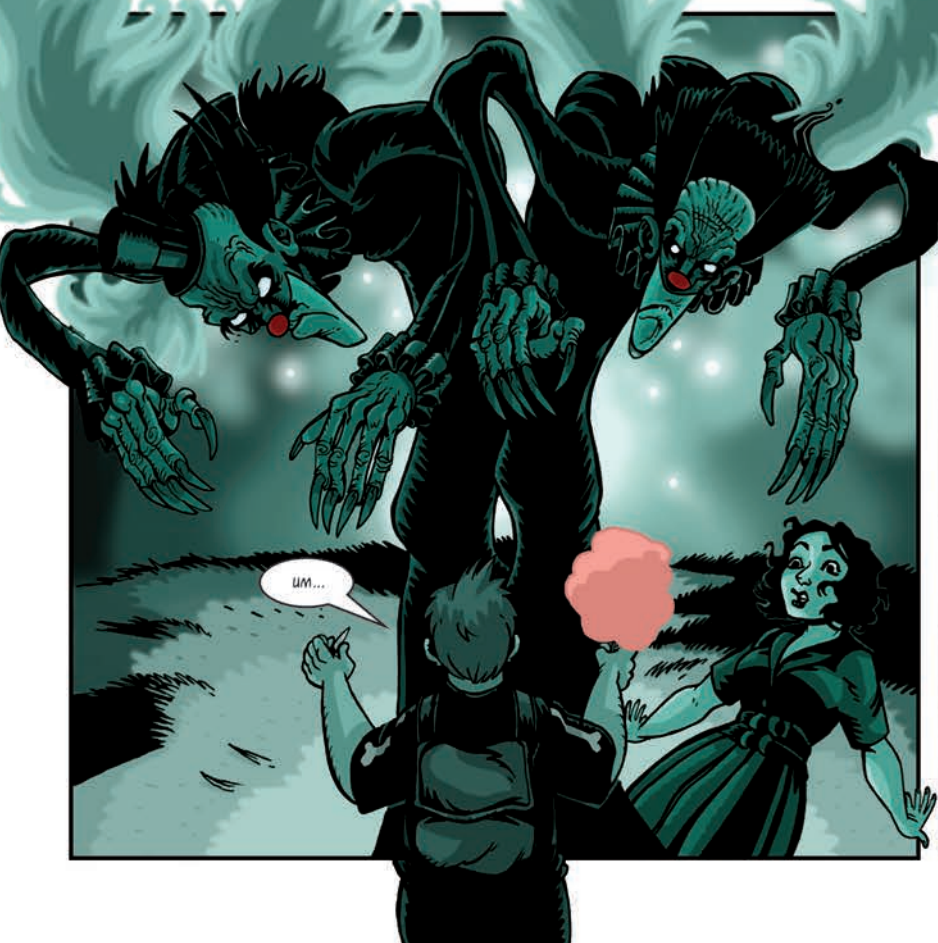
OW! YOU'RE HURTING ME!

PUT ME DOWN!



ER... IS EVERYTHING, LIKE... OKAY?

I MEAN... NO OFFENCE, BUT I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD BE, Y'KNOW, PUSHING HER ROUND LIKE THAT...



UM...



YOU.... UH... YOU GENTS WANT SOME CANDY?



CRASH!
THUMP!
KRAK!

ER...



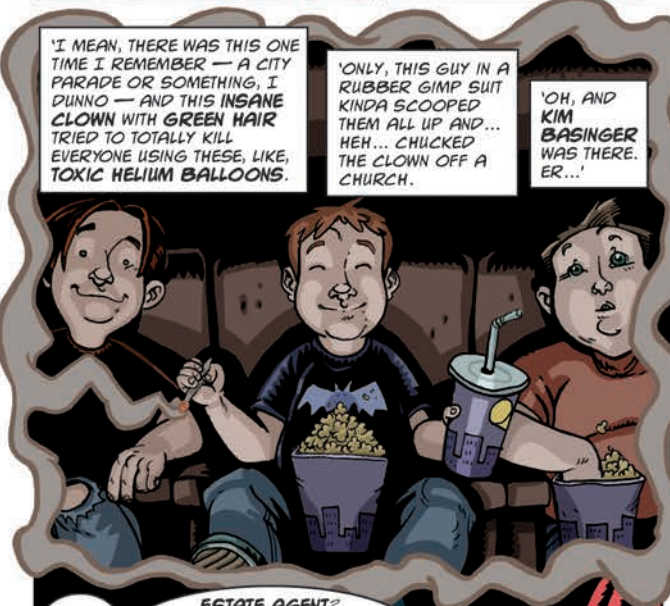
ARE YOU OKAY?

Y-YES, I'M FINE. THANK YOU. T-THAT WAS VERY BRAVE...



NAH. FUNNY THING, I KNOW SOME PEOPLE THINK CLOWNS ARE, LIKE, SCARY BUT...

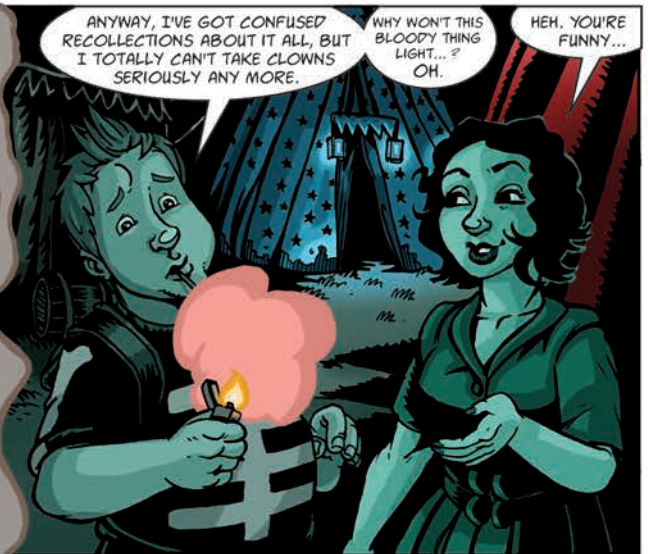
... IT'S JUST DAF, ISN'T IT?



'I MEAN, THERE WAS THIS ONE TIME I REMEMBER — A CITY PARADE OR SOMETHING, I DUNNO — AND THIS INSANE CLOWN WITH GREEN HAIR TRIED TO TOTALLY KILL EVERYONE USING THESE, LIKE, TOXIC HELIUM BALLOONS.

'ONLY, THIS GUY IN A RUBBER GIMP SUIT KINDA SCOOPED THEM ALL UP AND... HEH... CHUCKED THE CLOWN OFF A CHURCH.

'OH, AND KIM BASINGER WAS THERE. ER...'



ANYWAY, I'VE GOT CONFUSED RECOLLECTIONS ABOUT IT ALL, BUT I TOTALLY CAN'T TAKE CLOWNS SERIOUSLY ANY MORE.

WHY WON'T THIS BLOODY THING LIGHT...? OH.

HEH. YOU'RE FUNNY...



I... I AM?

ESTATE AGENT? I'M GOING TO BE AN ESTATE AGENT? I'M AN ARTIST, YOU WITCH!

PUT ME DOWN! I'LL CROSS MORE THAN YOUR PALM, YOU BLOODY TRANCE TOURIST!



ER... THAT'S MY CUE.

H-HAVE A GOOD NIGHT.

AND YOU.



WELL, THAT WAS A COMPLETE WASTE OF MY TIME, NO THANKS TO YOU!

WHAT NOW?



I'VE REMEMBERED WHERE I'VE SEEN THE NAMES OF THOSE FREAKS BEFORE. I SUPPOSE YOU COULD TAG ALONG.

ONLY TRY TO HANG BACK. WE MIGHT BE SEEN...



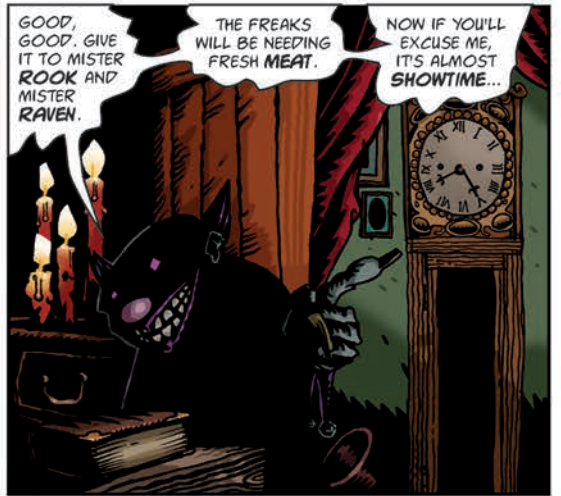
WHAT WAS THE COMMOTION?

JUST SOME KID, DIDN'T LIKE THE SOUND OF HER FUTURE.



YOU GOT AN ADDRESS?

OF COURSE. THE ALL-SEEING-EYE DOESN'T LIE.



GOOD, GOOD. GIVE IT TO MISTER ROK AND MISTER RAVEN.

THE FREAKS WILL BE NEEDING FRESH MEAT.

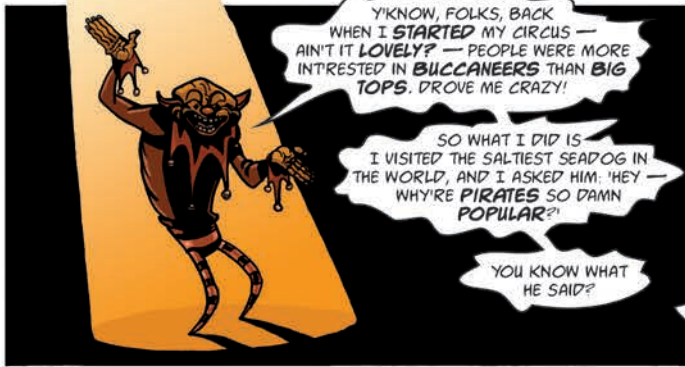
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, IT'S ALMOST SHOWTIME...



... AND I NEED TO GET INTO CHARACTER!

SARDONICUS CIRCUS

GRAND ENTRY FROM 10 TO 11
GRAND SECTORS



Y'KNOW, FOLKS, BACK WHEN I **STARTED** MY CIRCUS — AIN'T IT **LOVELY?** — PEOPLE WERE MORE INTRESTED IN **BUCCANEERS** THAN **BIG TOPS**. DROVE ME CRAZY!

SO WHAT I DID IS — I VISITED THE **SALTIEST** SEADOG IN THE WORLD, AND I ASKED HIM: 'HEY — WHY'RE **PIRATES** SO DAMN **POPULAR?**'

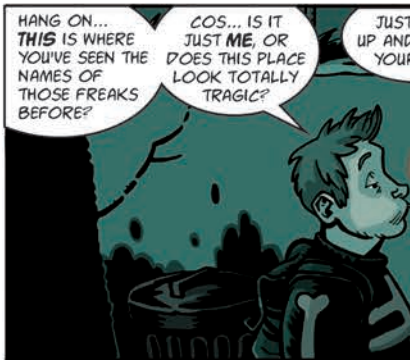
YOU KNOW WHAT HE SAID?



'THEY JUST **AAARRRRRR!**'



PHILISTINES.



HANG ON... **THIS** IS WHERE YOU'VE SEEN THE NAMES OF THOSE **FREAKS** BEFORE?

COS... IS IT JUST ME, OR DOES THIS PLACE LOOK TOTALLY **TRAGIC?**

JUST SHUT UP AND BRACE YOURSELF.



HARK! WHAT **PALE SHADOWKIN** SEEKS **RESPIRE** IN THIS **LIGHTLESS SANCTUARY?**



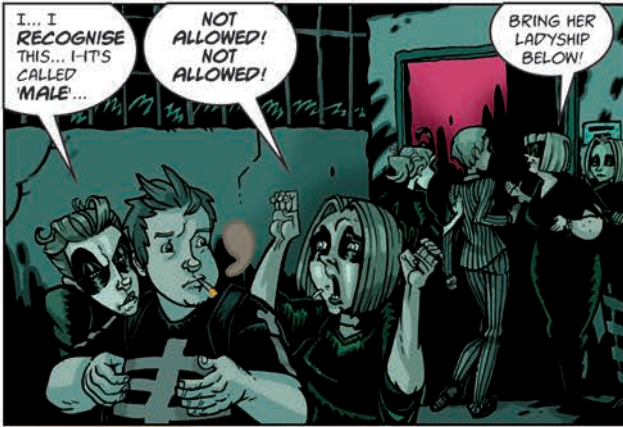
EEEE! ITS **HER!** ITS **THE FIRST!**

THE GREAT WAN HAS RETURNED!

TOUCH ME, OH PASTY QUEEN! TOUCH ME!



KAWL... BREATHE A **WORD** OF THIS TO **ANYONE** AND I'LL **STAPLE** YOUR **EYEBALLS** TO YOUR **ARSE**.



I... I RECOGNISE THIS... I-IT'S CALLED 'MALE...

NOT ALLOWED! NOT ALLOWED!

BRING HER LADYSHIP BELOW!



I TOTALLY OUIT...



... SO I GIVE THE POLICE A STATEMENT, Y'KNOW, AND I ASK, 'OFFICER — WHAT KIND OF SCUMBAG WOULD STEAL MY LAST VIAGRA?'

'WELL, SIR,' HE SAYS.

'OBVIOUSLY WE'RE DEALING WITH A HARDENED CRIMINAL!'



bump!

WHUP! S-SORRY!



OH, ITS Y-YOU... I DIDN'T EXSEX TO SPEE YOU AG—

I MEAN... S-SORRY, uh...

HEH! STILL FUNNY...



WAAAAAAAAAAAA!



.... SO NOBODY KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM? WEIRD.

ER... C-COS, Y'KNOW... THERE'D BE A BETTER VIEW FROM... LIKE... MY PLACE...

OH... THAT'S... THAT'S VERY KIND BUT —



YES! Y-YES, THAT WOULD BE LOVELY! LET'S GO!

BY THE WAY, YOU'VE GOT BUBBLEGUM ON YOUR EYEBROWS.



YOUR GOBLET OF BLOOD, OH RIGHTEOUS ONE!

IT'S WHITE.

DONNA'S ALLERGIC TO CLARET, M'LADY.



TELL US, OH QUEEN, WHAT STRANGE AND SENSUAL JOURNEYS HAVE YOU UNDERTAKEN SINCE YOU LEFT US SO SUDDENLY?

YES, TELL US! AND WHAT ARTEFACTS OF POWER HAVE YOU ACCRUED, USING ALL THAT MONEY YOU TOOK?

NEVER MIND ALL THAT. TAKE ME TO THE GRAND LIBRARY!



OKAY, OKAY! HOW DO YOU GET A CLOWN OFF A SWING?

NO? ANYONE?

YOU HIT HIM IN THE FACE WITH AN AXE!



Mutter grumble terrible appalling what are you doing AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA



HAI I KNEW I'D SEEN THEM BEFORE...

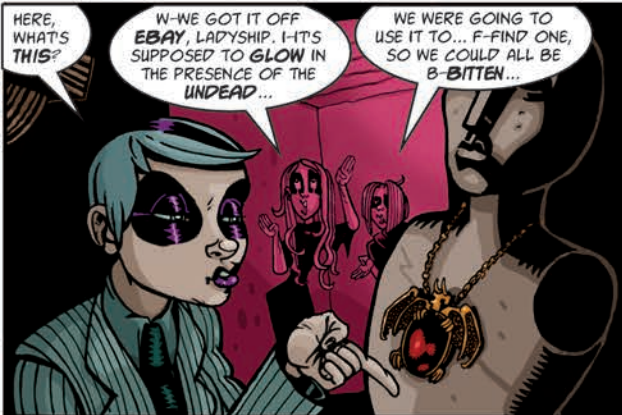
CHUREL... PENENGGALAN... CHIANG-SHIH...

THEY'RE ALL BLOODY VAMPIRES...



OH, FOR THE LOVE OF —

GO TO PLAN B!



HERE, WHAT'S THIS?

W-WE GOT IT OFF EBAY, LADYSHIP. I-I-T'S SUPPOSED TO GLOW IN THE PRESENCE OF THE UNDEAD...

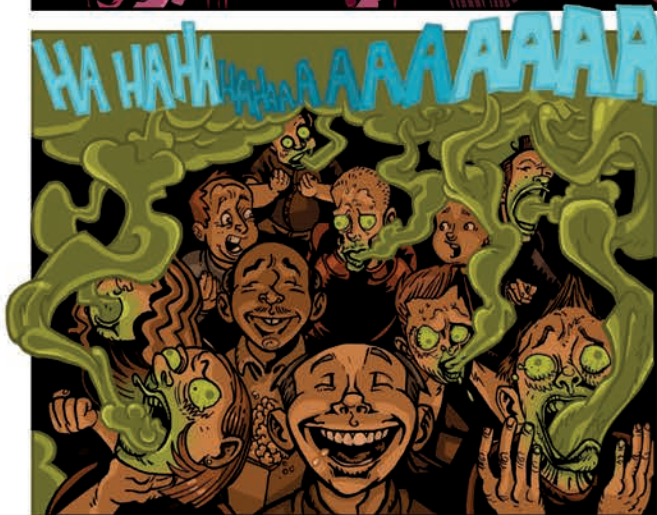
WE WERE GOING TO USE IT TO... F-FIND ONE, SO WE COULD ALL BE B-BITTEN...

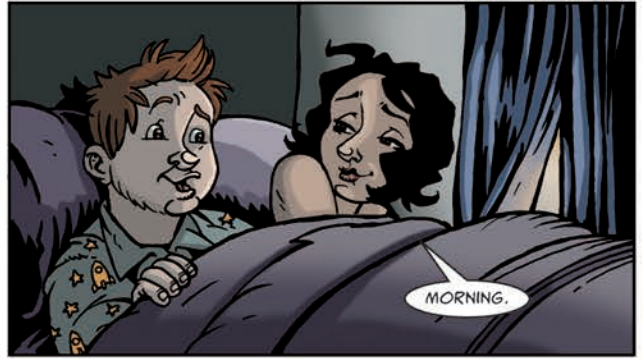


BUT?

B-BUT... WE CAN'T GO OUT BECAUSE... P-PEOPLE ARE INTIMIDATED BY OUR INDIVIDUALITY AND C-COOLNESS...

IT'S SCARY OUT THERE!





Shuffle Shuffle

W-WHO'S THERE? I CAN HEAR YOU MOVING, YOU SICKOS!

IF THIS IS A SURPRISE PARTY THE GIFTS HAD BETTER BE SODDING SPECTACULAR!



HEY! I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME! THIS IS TOTALLY UNDIGNIFIED!

I'M AN ARTIST, DAMMIT! I NEED AN AUDIENCE FOR THIS PERFORMANCE CRAP!

Sssssss... THE SSSSSUN IS SSSSEI...



LET THE SHEILA SEE, MATE. MIGHT SHUT HER UP.

GREAT GOLLUM SHITCK, BOZO! YOU'RE FOOLING NOBODY, Y'KNOW!

OH JOY! IT'S COMEDY ACCENTS R US! IF ONE OF YOU DISEASED MENTALIST CRETINS DOESN'T TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON, I'LL... I'LL...



... I'LL SCREAM.

WHATSSSS GOING ON, DEARY, ISSSSSSS BREAKFAST...



SO, THIS 'BECCY-WE'RE-JUST-MATES'... YOU HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE YESTERDAY EVENING? AREN'T YOU WORRIED?

NAH, SHE'S, LIKE... A FREE SPIRIT. SOMETIMES SHE'LL BE GONE FOR DAYS — DANCING NAKED WITH WILD KELPIES IN HARD-TO-FIND PLACES...

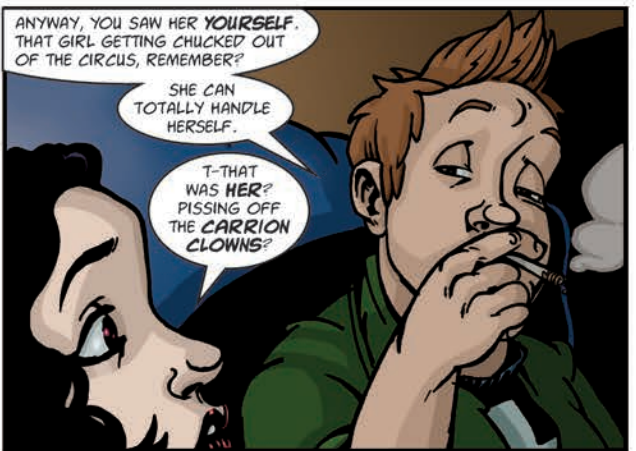
ER... S-SO I HEAR.

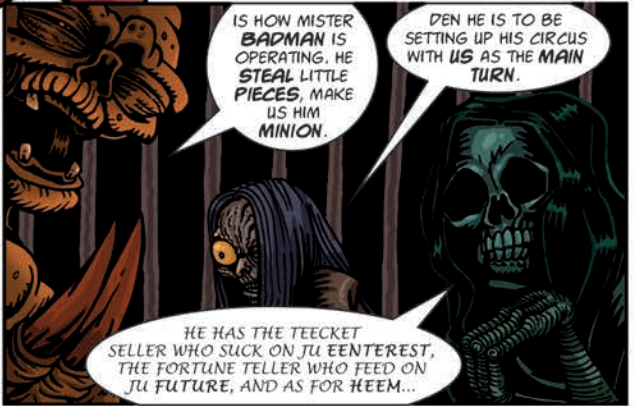
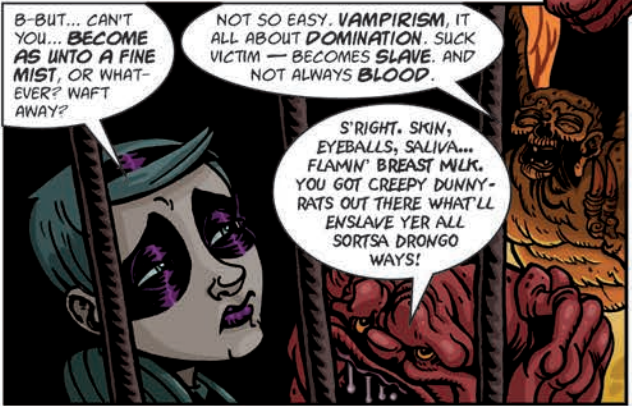


ANYWAY, YOU SAW HER YOURSELF. THAT GIRL GETTING CHUCKED OUT OF THE CIRCUS, REMEMBER?

SHE CAN TOTALLY HANDLE HERSELF.

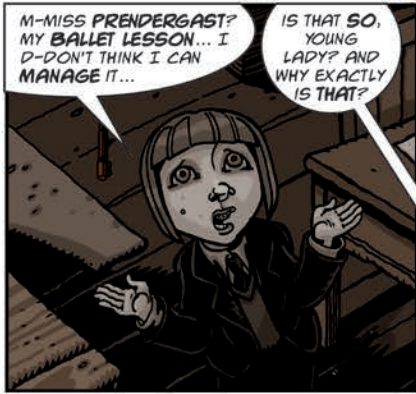
T-THAT WAS HER? PISSING OFF THE CARRION CLOWNS?





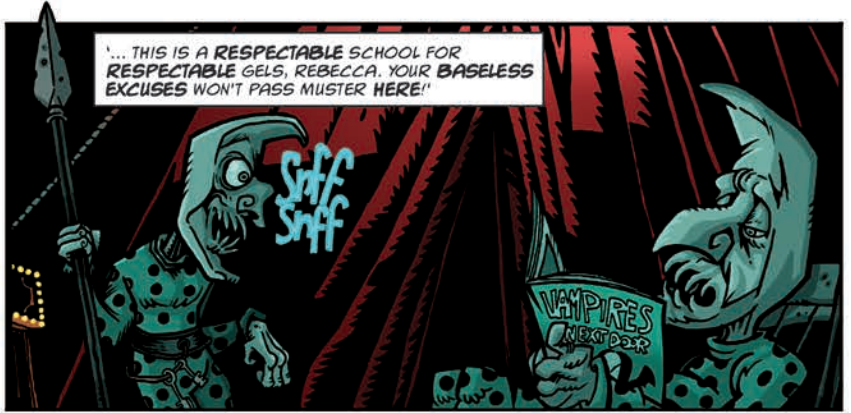






M-MISS PRENDERGAST? MY BALLET LESSON... I D-DON'T THINK I CAN MANAGE IT...

IS THAT SO, YOUNG LADY? AND WHY EXACTLY IS THAT?



'... THIS IS A RESPECTABLE SCHOOL FOR RESPECTABLE GELS, REBECCA. YOUR BASELESS EXCUSES WON'T PASS MUSTER HERE!'



YOU ARE SMELLINK DAT?

JA. DER FREAKS ARE FEEDINK. TRY NOT BE THINKINK ABOUT IT — IT VON'T LAST LONG.



I-I-T NOT TO BE GETTINK ANY FAINTER... S-SMELLS SO GUT.

MAYBE THERE ARE DER LEFTINK OVERS.

HA! DAT WOULD BE DER FIRST.



N-NO HARM IN ONE OF US CHECKINK...

... K-KEEP AN EYE, JA?



MMMMMMM...



TOO CLOSE, MATE. SHOULDN'T TAKE SWEETS OFFA STRANGERS.

USED TO CALL IT 'OLD FAITHFUL'.

I'VE NEVER WORN A TUTU YET.



S-SO YOU'RE A...
A **SUCCUBUS**,
THEN?

LIKE, AS IN: A
**VICIOUS SEXUAL
PARASITE?**

W-WELL... **YES**,
BUT... THAT **D'ESN'T HAVE
TO CHANGE THINGS,**
DOES IT?



POOR, POOR LITTLE
MEATBAG. SHE ONLY
WANTS YOU FOR YOUR
VITAL ESSENCE.

**D-DON'T
LISTEN! HE'S
LYING!**



**LYING, AM I? IS THAT WHAT
YOU TOLD THAT MILKMAN LAST
TIME YOU RAN OFF? OR THE
TRUCK DRIVER BEFORE
THAT?**

ALWAYS LOOKING FOR
A **WHITE KNIGHT**, AREN'T WE?
BUT ALWAYS ENDING UP WITH —
HEH! — **BLACK
PUDDING.**

AND YOU CAN'T BE
**BLAMED FOR GETTING...
PECKISH.**



THIS IS **DIFFERENT!**
P-PLEASE, JARROD —
Y-YOU'VE GOT TO
BELIEVE ME!

Y-YOU'RE **NICE!**
YOU'RE AN **ACTUAL GENUINE
NOT-A-SPITEFUL-BONE-IN-HIS-
BODY NICE GUY!** DO YOU
KNOW HOW **RARE**
THAT IS?

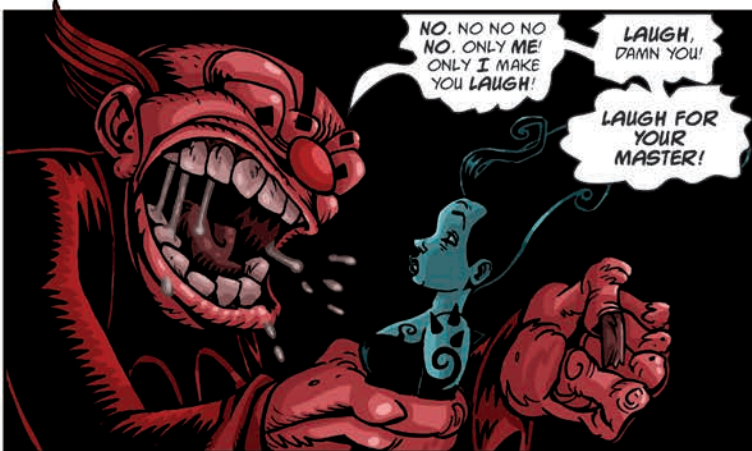
OH GOD,
I CAN SEE IT
NOW... **'I FELL
FOR A SEX
VAMPIRE!'**



MY LIFE IS
A **TAGLINE**
FROM
TRISHA.

HA! A-AND
YOU MAKE ME
LAUGH...

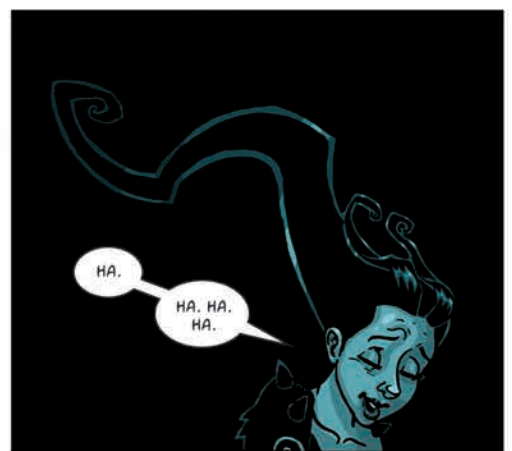
WHAT?



**NO. NO NO NO
NO. ONLY ME!
ONLY I MAKE
YOU LAUGH!**

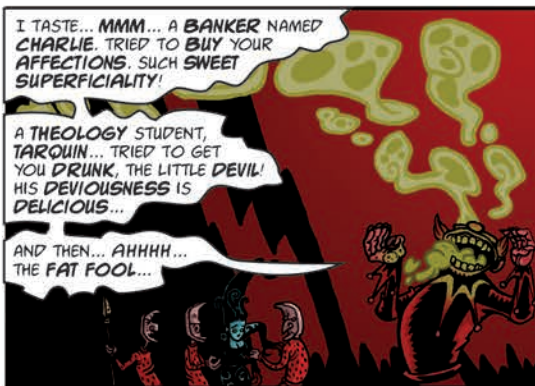
**LAUGH,
DAMN YOU!**

**LAUGH FOR
YOUR
MASTER!**

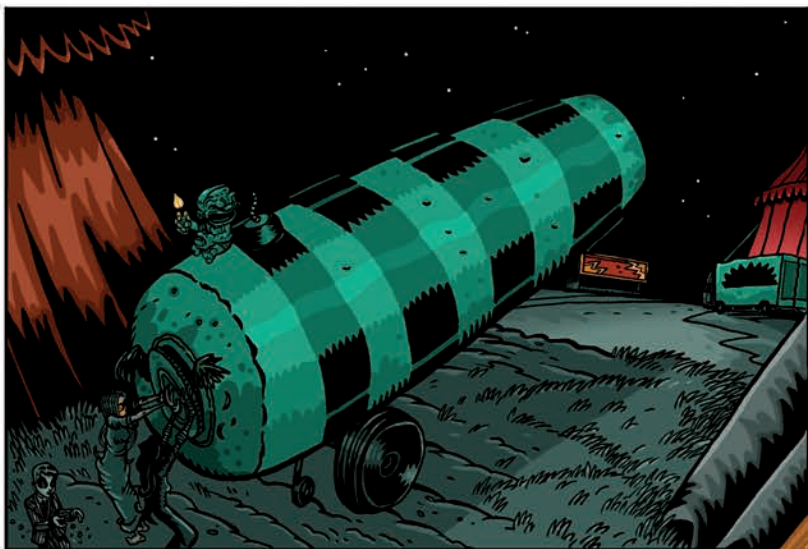


HA.

HA. HA.
HA.

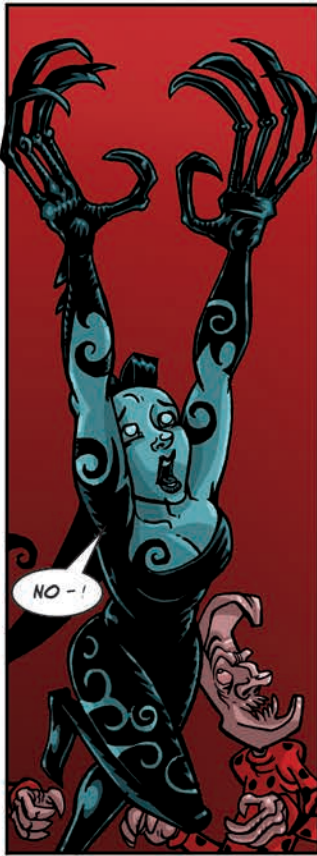








... SWEET SCULLY, FLAME-HAIRED GODDESS, GIVE US THIS DAY YOUR DAILY CYNICISM, AND DELIVER US FROM PAIN...



NO--!



NADIA!



... T-THAT'S... BLIMEY. THAT'S, LIKE, THE MOST PROFOUND AND SELFLESS THING EVER...

SHE REALLY DID LIKE ME... S-SHE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH...



OH JARROD! OF COURSE I WAS!

I MEAN... TECHNICALLY I CAN'T DIE, SO THIS 'SELF-SACRIFICE' THING PROBABLY ISN'T AS IMPRESSIVE AS IT COULD BE, BUT IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT C-



OUT OF THE WAY, GIRL!

YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS. DON'T MAKE ME USE IT.

WHAT IS IT?

I-IT'S MINE. HE STOLE IT. IT'S HOW HE CONTROLS ME...



IT'S YOUR CHOICE, LITTLE ONE. EITHER I KILL HIM...

... OR I MAKE YOU DO IT.





NADIA! I WON'T TELL YOU AGAIN! GET OUT OF THE WAY!

LISTEN... JARROD... WE'VE ONLY GOT ONE CHANCE AT THIS. I KNOW HIS WEAKNESS...

... ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS MAKE HIM LAUGH...



AAHHH!

P-PIECE OF CAKE.



S-SO... LIKE... B-BEFORE YOU SLAUGHTER ME...

D-DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE KID WHO ASKS HIS DADDY WHAT A VAMPIRE IS?

T-THE DAD JUST F-FROWNS AND SAYS: 'SHADDUP, BOY...

!... AND EAT YOUR BREAKFAST BEFORE IT CLOTS!



B-DUM TSH.



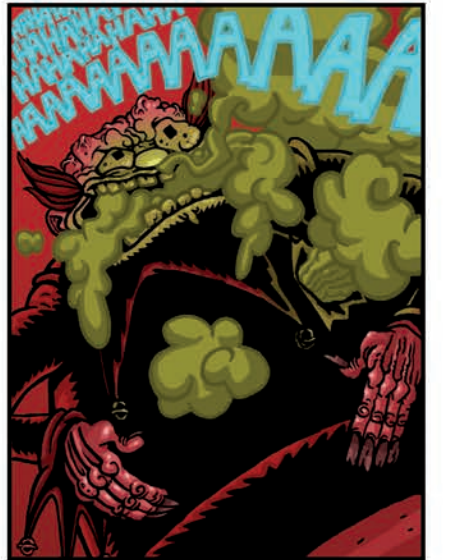
THATS.

NOT.

FUNNY.



SPATCH!





WZZT...
W-WHATS GOING
ON? WHERE'S
THIS...?

IT'S THE CIRCUS,
YOU CRETIN.
DON'T YOU
REMEMBER?



HEY... WASN'T I
GOING TO TAKE YOU
TO THE CIRCUS ON
A... Y'KNOW...
DATE?

ISN'T THERE, AH,
SOMEONE ELSE YOU'D
RATHER TAKE?

ARE
YOU FEELING
OKAY?



WELL... IT'S
WEIRD...

LIKE, DID YOU EVER WAKE UP FROM
THE MOST TOTALLY PERFECT DREAM,
EXCEPT YOU CAN'T REMEMBER
ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

WHATS THAT
ALL ABOUT?



IT'S CALLED **STUPIDITY**,
KAWL. DON'T LET IT GET
YOU DOWN.

H-HEY... LOOK
AT THIS...



LOOKS LIKE A...
LIKE A DRIED-UP OLD
HEART, I GUESS.

I WONDER
WHAT **BROKE**
IT?



WHAT THE HELL'S
BEEN GOING ON,
MATE?

OH, THE
USUAL. YOU'RE STILL AN
UNDESIRABLE NOBODY
WITH NOTHING GOING FOR
YOU, AND I'M STILL
FABULOUS. NOW... THIS
PROPOSED DATE...

MAYBE IF
YOU **BEGGED**
LIKE A DOG...

COVERS GALLERY





2000 AD Prog 1329: Cover by **Simon Davis**





2000 AD Prog 1402: Cover by **Steve Roberts** and **Simon Davis**



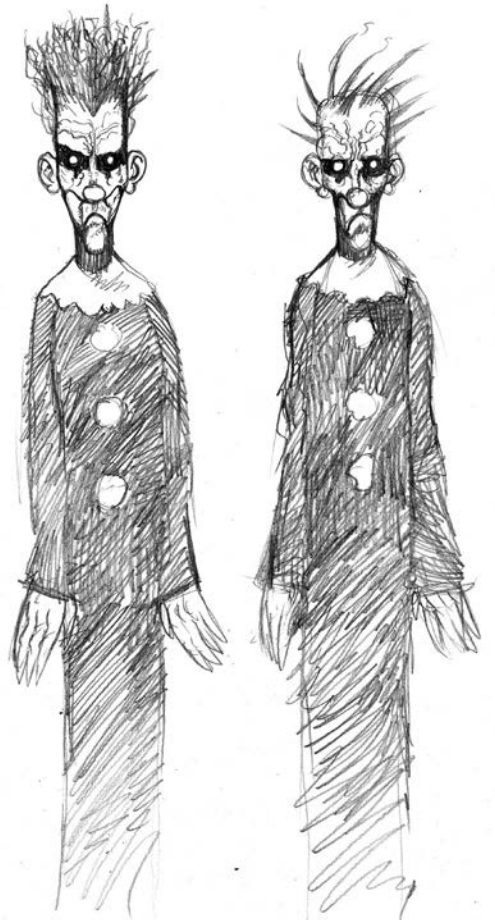


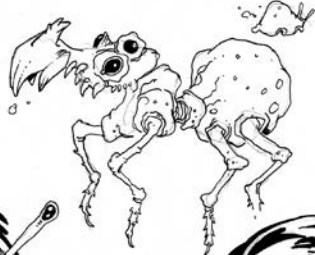
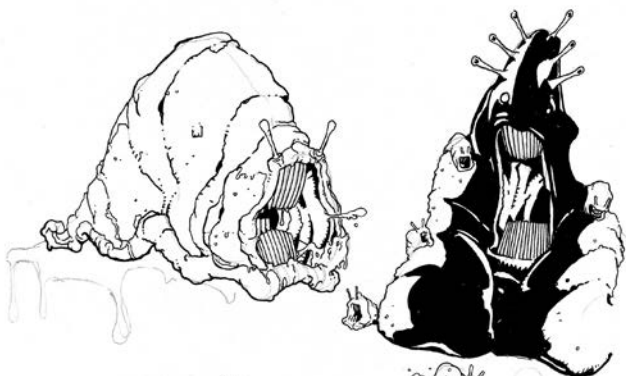


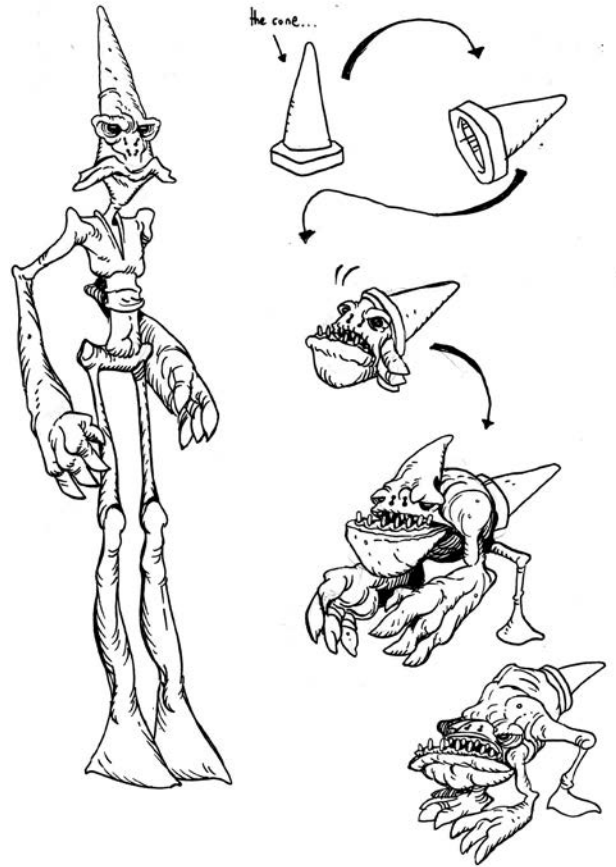
**STEVE ROBERTS
SKETCH BOOK**















GRAPHIC NOVEL EDITOR, JONATHAN OLIVER, TAKES A MOMENT OR TWO TO CATCH UP WITH SIMON SPURRIER AND FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN HIS STRANGE AND TWISTED WORLD...

JO: Tell me a bit how you landed your first job for *2000 AD*.

SS: By being a precocious, overly ambitious, self-deluded teenager. Seriously.

Basically it was a major shock when I found out it's possible to write comics *as a real-world grown-up job*. Sure, all the professionals bitched and whined about how there was no money in it and blah blah blah, but as a world-weary sixteen year old smartarse I *knew* that I was absolutely the best thing since sliced bread, and frankly earning any money was a lot better than earning none. Soon (I decided) the whole world would tremble before my literary might! I would grip the comics world in an iron fist of scripting brilliance!

Clearly my younger self needed a good hard slap, which is more or less what happened to the horrible little troll when he started sending Future Shock pitches to *2000 AD*. It dawned on him very quickly that a) he wasn't anywhere near as good as he thought, and b) there were a thousand other precocious smartarses out there doing exactly the same thing. I sent-in maybe fifteen or twenty diabolical pitches over a couple of years before it even occurred to me to *read* the editor's advice, though by that stage Tharg really was despairing. I have a rejection letter somewhere that simply reads: "No, no, no, no."

The Big Break came when I was eighteen – still faintly precocious, overly ambitious and self-deluded, but now coming to terms with the fact I had a *lot* to learn. I'd started getting much more promising feedback from Tharg – asking for second drafts and scripts to accompany my rambling, overly-purple breakdowns – and decided to take part in a live pitching event at a *2000 AD* convention. Nervous as hell, I stood up and told a story about a giant space whale shagging a crusty old Space-Captain to death, which just goes to show that you can get away with a lot as long as you sound confident. Booze helps, kids – tell your folks. Anyway, that's how it started: with horny Cosmic Cetaceans, and Tharg's editorial minion Andy Diggle agreeing to print the story.

JO: How did you come up with the characters of Jarrod Kawl and Beccy Miller?

SS: Beccy's basically an exaggerated version of all my less-than-pleasant qualities. Except with, y'know, strange and unfamiliar gender issues and panda eyes attached. Basically I loved the idea of taking that same precocious, overly ambitious, self-deluded cliché that I became at college, then ramping it up a notch with dreams of world domination, hellish alliances and occult dabblings... then setting it all in a completely mundane environment. It's very hard to be a megalomaniacal-tyrant-in-waiting when your only stooge is a slob with all the ambition of a twig, and your every attempt to achieve wealth and power is scuppered by your own pretentiousness. Hubris! It's the stuff of Greek Tragedy! Sometimes I think Beccy also has an element of every woman who ever broke my heart, with a dribble of Young Hitler and a dash of Tracey Emin. Except, y'know... likeable.

Kawl is just... *Kawl*. I've come to really love writing this guy. He's just so harmless, so bumbling, so wonderfully cheerful. He hasn't got a bad bone in his body, and it's not his fault that he just happens to've fallen for a psychotic dictatrix. As a writer, there's something wonderfully appealing about characters who are essentially losers: we're so used to having to give our creations defined goals and character arcs that a cloth-headed stoner who doesn't give a fig about anything other than being cheery and making cheap B-movies is a real breath of fresh air.

JO: Did you choose Steve Roberts as the artist for the series, or was he chosen for you by the editor of *2000 AD*?

SS: I'm pretty sure the decision was taken by Tharg. Certainly I'd never worked with Steve before then, and didn't really know his stuff. Besides, when you're a 19 year old wannabe and Tharg asks you to come up with a pop-culture-referencing, light entertainment wacky-a-thon, you don't stop to argue about the artist.

Thank crikey I *didn't*, frankly, because it didn't take long for me and Steve to start riffing off each other's foibles, and really start going for it. I think the beauty of this collected edition is that you can really see how two complete rookies went from – let's be honest – *winging it*, to slowly beginning to learn the ropes. I say 'beginning to' because there's really no end to how far an artist or writer can improve themselves, but it's really good to be able to flick back through this stuff and see where I was going wrong, and how I've (hopefully) come along.

JO: What other comic writers and genre writers would you say have influenced your work?

SS: To start with, back when I was writing *The Mystical Mentalist Menace* et al., very few. I'd had as much of a grounding in comics-craft as any reader *could* have, but it's only with hindsight you realise that no matter how much a youngster blazing with ideas and ambitions might deny it, there really is nothing like experience.

As the various series arcs progressed, and I started writing other stuff as well, I started consciously paying a lot more attention to the ways that comics work: watching the masters like John Wagner, Alan Grant, Pete Milligan. It's a curious medium, after all: one that seems so self-intuitive and simple to a reader (and, usually, to a writer), but in fact concerns a *lot* of very complicated mental acrobatics. I began to get a feel for the importance of gullies, bleeds, panel sizes, dialogue progressions, links, pauses, blah blah blah. Go and pick up Scott McCloud's *The Invisible Art* and you'll begin to understand the secret complexities lying behind every simple looking page. Working with an artist to whom all of these rarely-considered gimmicks came totally naturally was an absolute boon: I could experiment to my heart's desire and be safe in the knowledge that Steve would save me from my most ridiculous excesses and improve upon that which was already working well.

Ultimately, if you're going to play with story-telling techniques in a (hopefully) innovative way, then any influence at all is probably a bad thing. But to understand how such tools can be used you simply can't get any better than Will Eisner and his spiritual successor Alan Moore. I also spent a long time going through deliberately 'Out There' masterpieces like Roger Langridge's *Fred the Clown*, Kyle Baker's *Plastic Man* and absolutely anything by Mark Stafford (particularly *Botulism Banquet*), to get a feel for the limits of outrageousness. Being a part of *2000 AD*, B&K can never quite explode into impenetrable oddity, but it's good to be familiar with what lies just beyond your own territory.

JO: Were you anything like Jarrod Kawl as a student?

SS: No, not at all. I was driven and fidgety and utterly motivated. I was trying so desperately to be edgy and 'fringe' and 'cool' that I completely neglected to notice what a pillock I was. I went a bit goth for a while (though I couldn't afford leather togs, so it was black jeans, faded band t-shirts and hair-dye), so I guess there's more of me in Beccy (hur hur hur) than in Kawl. Goths who take umbrage at all the mickey taking in this collection honestly shouldn't take it personally: it's all completely self-derisory.

Having said that, I *was* a film student and I *am* passionate about movies, and I *did* get terribly depressed by the pretentiousness of the Beccy Miller fine arts crowd, so it's swings and roundabouts. Certainly I knew a lot of people just like Kawl – or worse... great groups of photosensitive stoners unable to hold conversations about anything except being stoned, or the quality of their gear, or where they were scoring next – and at the time I got massively pissed off with anyone unable to motivate themselves, so I probably would've hated Kawl if I'd known him back then.

Five years of freelancing later, I'm far more inclined towards someone harmless and happy, than someone ruthless and full of shit.

JO: If you had to choose a favourite Bec & Kawl moment what would it be?

SS: I think it'd have to be the page from *Freakshow* when Kawl wakes up in the morning and realises what happened the night before. A whole page of him just sitting there, in all sorts of different situations, expression fixed... It's the sort of fun, gimmicky thing you can't do in any other medium.

I also have a soft spot for Steve's depiction of Fairyland-meets-Milton-Keynes, and the splash page of Kawl tumbling into the Mouth of Hell whilst being pestered by a rhyming reporter.

JO: Were you always of a fan of *2000 AD* growing up?

SS: Afraid not. In fact, as embarrassing an admission as this is, I don't think I ever really became aware of it until I picked up *Batman Vs. Judge Dredd* in the immediate wake of the Dredd movie. I picked up a couple of progs and for the first time considered the fact that there were people whose job it was to create this stuff. I think up until that point I'd always looked at comics with a sort of youthful acceptance: they just appeared on the shelves by magic.

Anyway, I read the prog for a few weeks and started to wonder whether I could have a crack at the same thing. Back then I fancied myself as a bit of an artist as well, so I made a few DIY efforts – apocalyptic hand-wringing and 'beyond-

the-veil' toss, mostly – which went down okay at school. Then the film degree came along and I was spending so much time writing scripts I slowly re-prioritised in my head; it was either art or writing, not both, and I stuck to what I enjoyed the most. Looking back I like to think I made the right decision: with a *lot* of practice I could have been a vaguely mediocre comics artist, but even now every time I write something I feel like it's stronger than the last thing I did.

2000 AD slowly took up a place of residence in my heart, and I started to see what all these scary fans around me had been telling me all along. It's not just a comic which varies its quality according to the stories it's running; it's an institution that defines a reader just as much as the music they listen to, the clothes they wear, and their personal politics. Also, it has a green alien as an editor. This, I believe, is the Best Thing Ever.

JO: Will Jarrod and Becky ever finally get it together do you think?

SS: When Hell Freezes Over. Which, given that this is *Bec & Kawl* we're talking about, ain't all that far beyond the realms of possibility...

JO: Which direction would you like to take *Bec & Kawl* in next?

SS: It's not a conscious thing, really. We haven't got some 10-year plan, working towards Beccy's eventual career-highlight as a shelf stacker and Kawl's bewildered acceptance of the World Presidency. What we *have* got is a lot of ideas, which sort of impinge upon the character arcs as they go.

Again, it's great to see how much the characters and story styles have changed since *B&K* first started, and that's a process of evolution which will hopefully keep on going. Originally they were a pair of vaguely irritating ciphers for pop-culture references, movie parroting and arty pretentiousness. Over the episodes since they've become far more fleshed-out, far darker, far less prone to random quotation and far more able to actually have an impact. We never dreamed, back at the start, we'd be telling grisly tales about laughter-gobbling vampires and slug cults. We never thought we'd be sniffing-along to Kawl's broken-hearted shenanigans, or meeting Beccy's long-lost Clone Sister.

So the future's a big, bright, utterly random and oh-so-unexpected series of oddities. Just the way we like it!

JO: Are there any *2000 AD* characters that you'd like to take a crack at writing, for which you haven't yet had the opportunity?

SS: I've always had a soft spot for Big Dumb Monster stories, so *Shako* the giant forcefield-carrying Polar Bear or *Hookjaw* the insane eco-warrior shark are right up there on the list. Probably in this day and age you'd have to introduce some so-called clever twist ('It's a killer shark... but in SPACE!'... 'It's a Psychotic Polar Bear, but it exists ONLY IN YOUR DREAMS!'), but there's something wonderfully uncomplicated about the whole concept which really appeals: Big Beast Kills Nasty Man. It never gets tired!

Beyond that, I've always been fond of *Dredd's* old nemeses, the Angel Gang. I know they've all been killed off and resurrected 800 times (this being comics, after all), but I'd love to do some stories about those frothing wackos back when they were the Baddest Thing In The Texas Badlands; staking out varmints in the sun and a-drinkin' Pa's moonshine. Crazy survivalist Mountain-Men of the future. How can it fail? Squeeeeeeal, radpiggy!

JO: Finally, what advice would you give to budding comic writers?

SS: Be patient. Be aware that no matter how good you think you are, you've got a LOT to learn. Be humble enough to accept criticism, and when your work is being dissected – bleeding and squirting and shrieking on an operating table in front of you – pay attention to the things the surgeons *say* rather than the sharp-sharp slices of their steely evil blades.

Have the tenacity to keep trying, the confidence to believe you'll get there one day, and the strength to pick yourself up when it doesn't work out the first time. Which of course it won't. Above all make sure you are your own worst critic: work and work and work on an idea until it's the best thing you've *ever* seen in your life, then chuck it out and come up with something better.

And maybe, just maybe, be a *smidgeon* precocious, a *fraction* overly-ambitious, and just the teensiest bit self-deluded. Being a teenager, on the other hand, is not recommended.

SIMON SPURRIER

Simon Spurrier is one of the newest additions to the *2000 AD* creative roster, but he has already made his mark with co-created strips *Bec & Kawl*, *From Grace*, *Lobster Random*, *The Scrap* and *The Simping Detective*. He has also written several *Future Shocks*, *Past Imperfects* and *Terror Tales*.

STEVE ROBERTS

Steve Roberts is, relatively speaking, a *2000 AD* newcomer, but his bright cartooning has illuminated both gun-loving criminals *Sinister Dexter* and no-good students *Bec and Kawl*, which he co-created with Simon Spurrier.

2000 AD

THINK YOU
CAN HANDLE IT,
CREEP?

FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES
OF ROGUE TROOPER
JUDGE DREDD
AND MANY MORE...
IN THE GALAXY'S GREATEST COMIC EVERY WEEK!



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THEY'RE HERE TO SAVE THE WORLD... KINDA!

BECKY MILLER AND JARROD KAWL ARE A PAIR OF STUDENTS SHARING A FLAT IN THE LESS-THAN-SALUBRIOUS SWINEBOIL APARTMENTS.

He's a stoner movie geek, she's a power-crazed Goth artist – together, they're a magnet for every demonic incursion and ectoplasmic event going. They could be mankind's last hope against the terrors from beyond – if they could only get off their arses...

Simon Spurrier (*The Sipping Detective*) is joined by artist Steve Roberts (*Sinister Dexter*) in this irreverent romp into the world of the occult and the downright weird!



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