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SAVAGE DRAGON



**DOUBLE THE
DRAGONS--
DOUBLE THE
ACTION!**

SPRINK
SAFETY

INTO THE HORNETS' NEST!

SAVAGE[®] DRAGON

BY

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JACK MORELLI

letters

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SAVAGE DRAGON™

INTO THE HORNETS' NEST!

By
**ERIK
LARSEN**

WITH NIKOS KOUTSIS & MIKE TORIS COLORING

JACK MORELLI LETTERING



SEE, DAD?
SEEP!

I TOLD
YOU IT WAS
HIM!

I TOLD
YOU!

GASP!



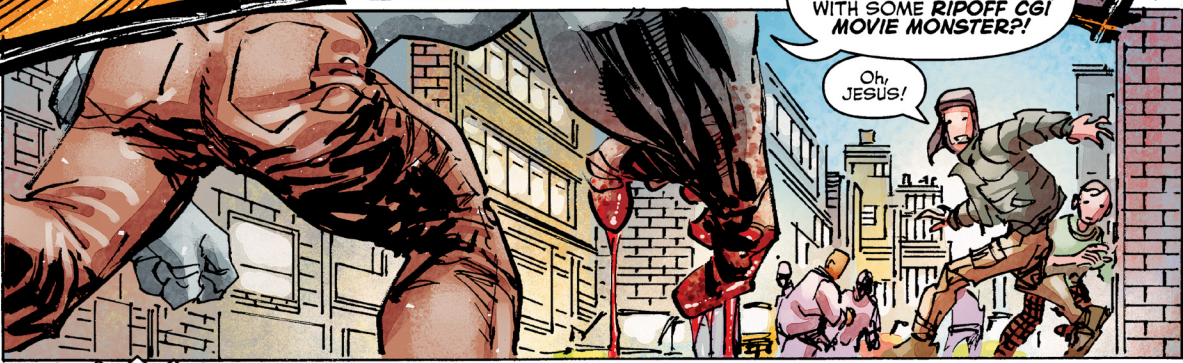
SHARKMAN!

NEWS FLASH, JUNIOR--

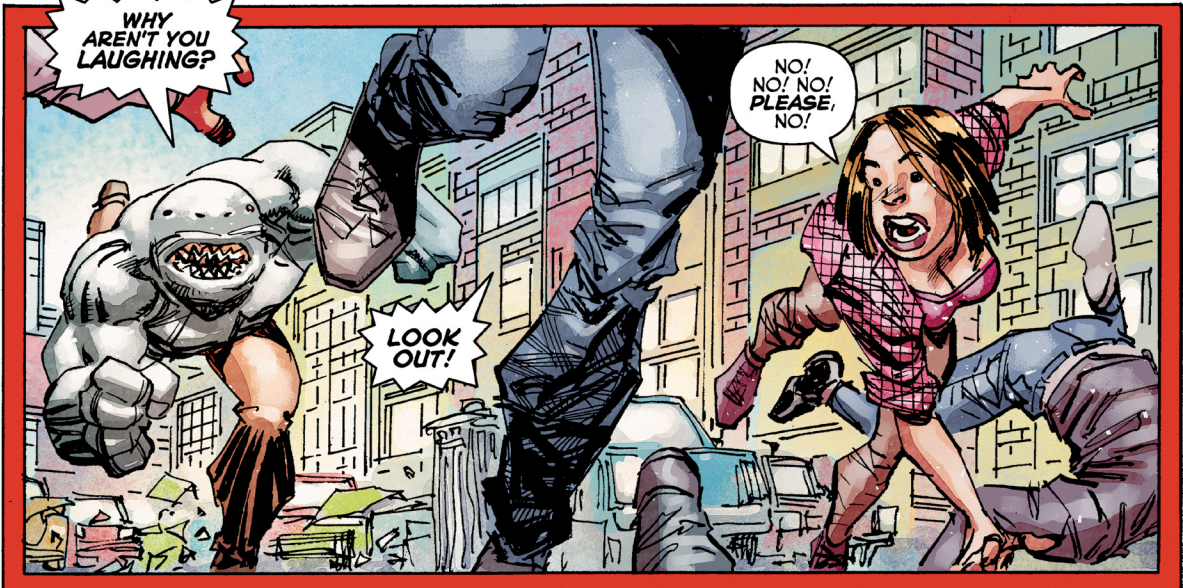
I AIN'T SOME STUPID COMEDY-RELIEF MOVIE MONSTER!

ANYBODY ELSE?

ANYBODY ELSE WANT TO CONFUSE MAKO, THE SHARK MAN, WITH SOME RIPOFF CGI MOVIE MONSTER?!



Oh, JESUS!



WHY AREN'T YOU LAUGHING?

LOOK OUT!

NO! NO! NO! PLEASE, NO!



I'M TRYING, CRAB MEAT, REALLY I AM.

BUT I *STILL* HAVEN'T WARMED TO HOCKEY, DESPITE LIVING IN CANADA FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS.

THE ONLY REAL ATTRACTION FOR ME IS THE VAST RANGE OF AVAILABLE JUNK FOOD!

I HAVE AN IDEA OF HOW TO MAKE THINGS MORE EXCITING AROUND HERE, PICKLE BARREL--

MAYBE THIS WILL HELP--



WHOA, WHOA, WHOA--

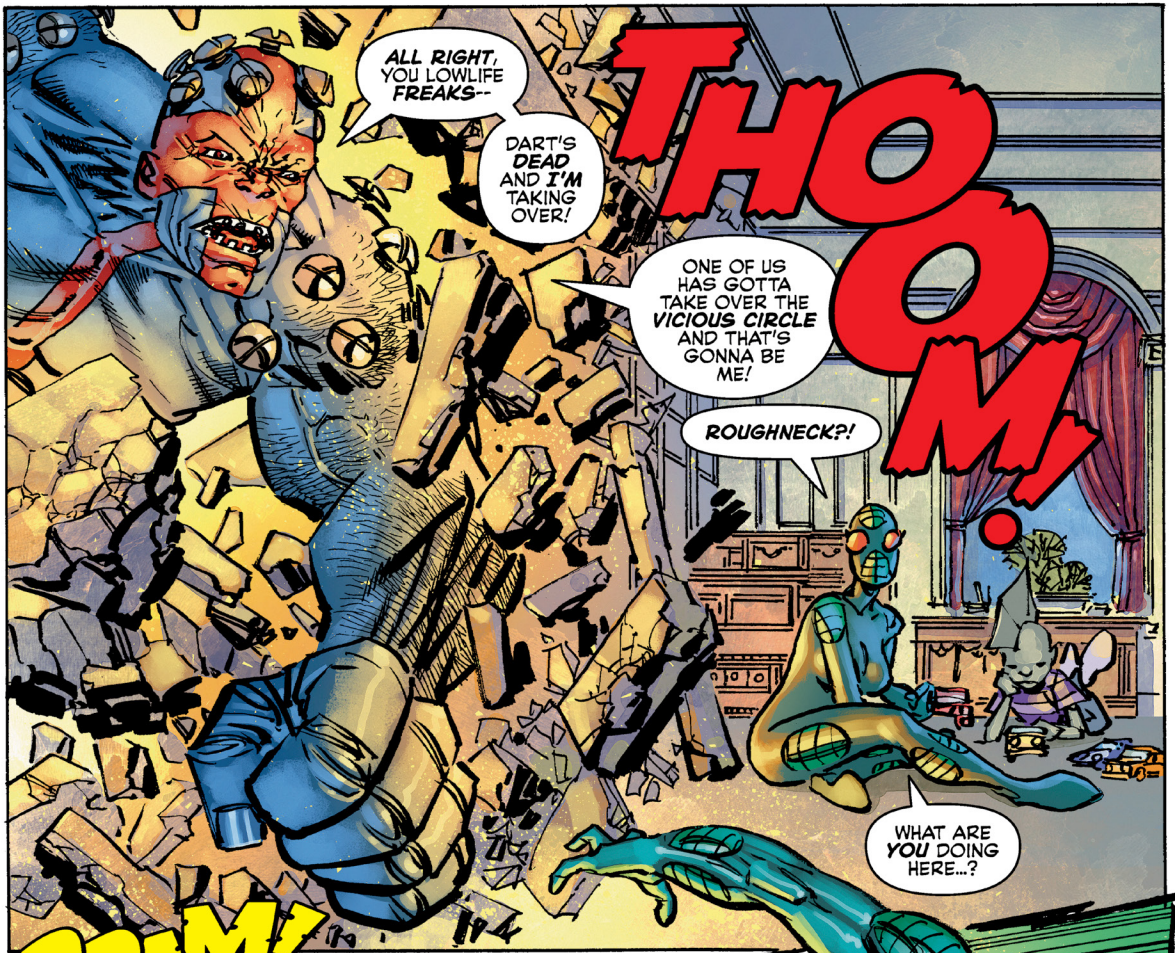
NOT HERE--NOT NOW-- NOT IN PUBLIC-- NOT EVER!

THAT IS NOT OKAY, COW PASTURE!

Oh, POOP.



YOU'RE NO FUN.



ALL RIGHT,
YOU LOWLIFE
FREAKS--

DART'S
DEAD
AND I'M
TAKING
OVER!

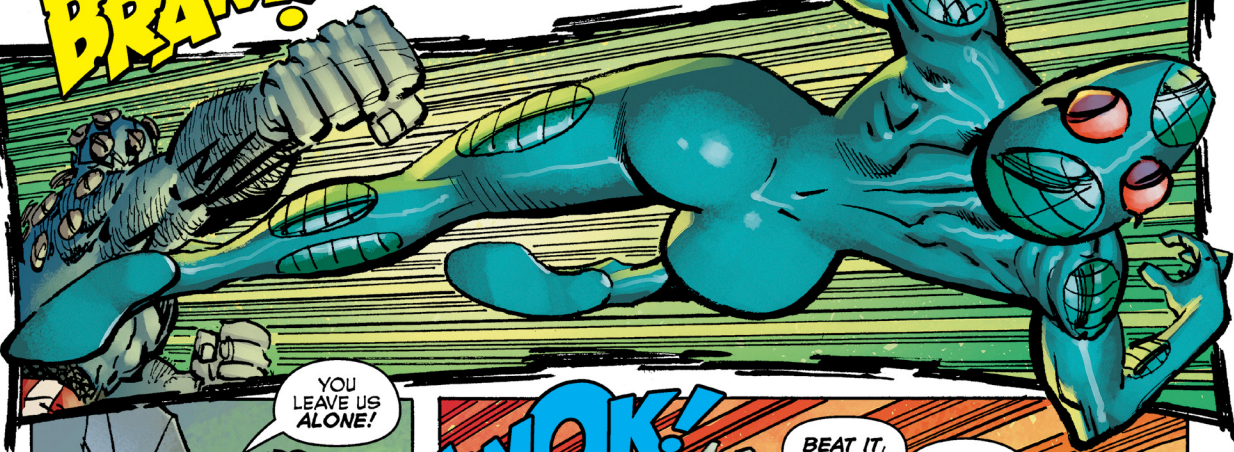
ONE OF US
HAS GOTTA
TAKE OVER THE
VICIOUS CIRCLE
AND THAT'S
GONNA BE
ME!

ROUGHNECK?!

WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE...?

THOOM!

BRAM!

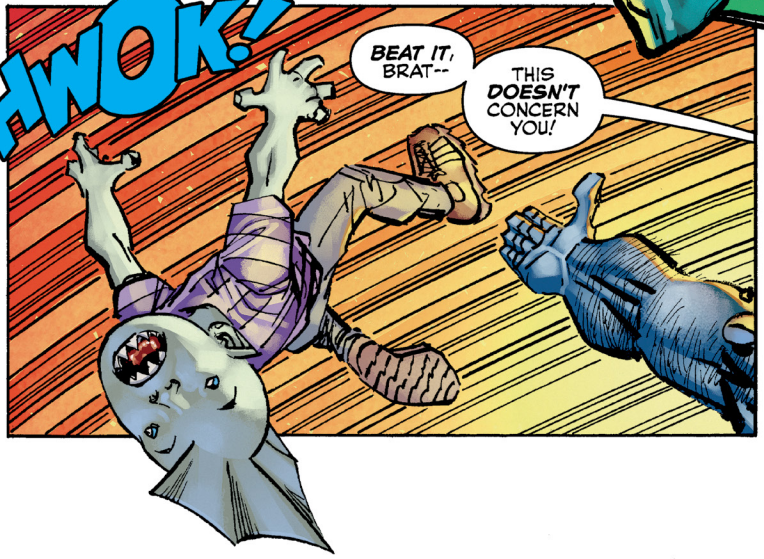


YOU
LEAVE US
ALONE!

HWOK!

BEAT IT,
BRAT--

THIS
DOESN'T
CONCERN
YOU!





I'M *SORRY* FOR YELLING AT YOU LIKE THAT, ANKLE BONE. BUT I'M *WORRIED* ABOUT YOU GOING OFF THE DEEP END AGAIN.

THIS *ISN'T* NORMAL.

MAYBE YOU OUGHT TO HAVE MORE SESSIONS WITH THAT *COUNSELOR* OF YOURS.

I'M *OKAY*, I'M *OKAY*.



BESIDES, OUR SESSIONS ALWAYS ENDED WITH *ME* TALKING ABOUT YOU AND *FURIOUSLY* MASTURBATING.

I THINK SHE GOT *TIRED* OF CLEANING UP AFTER ME.



Oh, *LOOK--*

THE *DRAUGHT* DECK IS OPEN!

WE NEED TO GO TO THE *DRAUGHT* DECK FOR THE *FULL* HOCKEY EXPERIENCE!

Oh, *NO*, YOU DON'T--



YOU'LL JUST GET *SHIT-FACED*, *DANCE* ON THE *TABLE*, AND GET US *THROWN* OUT AGAIN!

I'LL BE *GOOD*, I'LL BE *GOOD*.



WHY DO I EVEN *BOTHER...*?

THERE'S A
HIERARCHY,
ROUGHNECK--
A CHAIN OF
COMMAND--

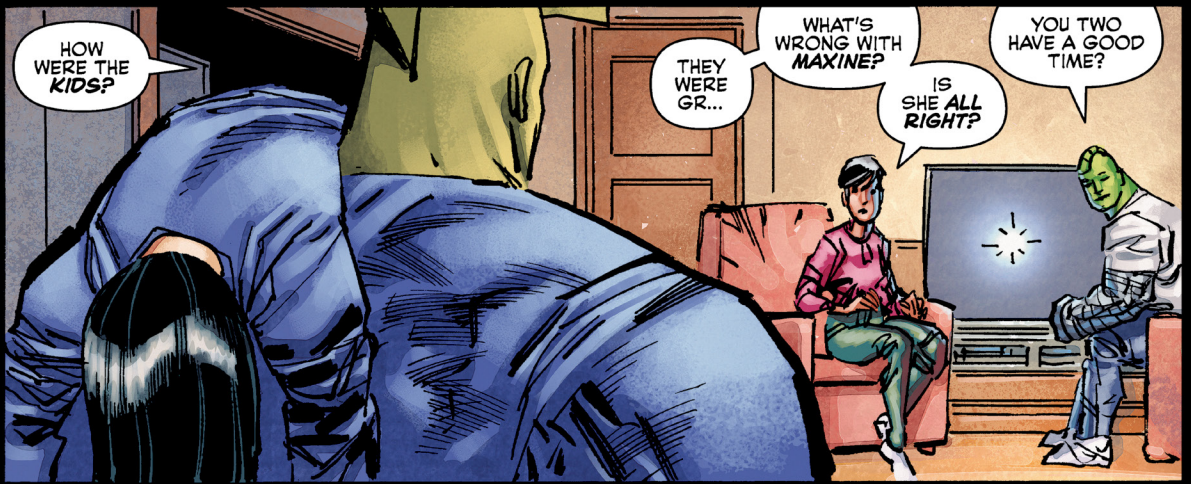
--AND
YOU'RE
AT THE
BOTTOM!

THROKK!

KKSSSHHH!

INSECT--

--WHAT
THE HELL
WAS
THAT?



HOW WERE THE KIDS?

THEY WERE GR...

WHAT'S WRONG WITH MAXINE?

YOU TWO HAVE A GOOD TIME?

IS SHE ALL RIGHT?



MAXINE HAD A GREAT TIME-- WHICH IS WHY SHE'S LOOKING LIKE THIS.

SHE HAD ONE TOO MANY, I'M AFRAID.

ANYWAY, THANKS FOR WATCHING THE KIDS.



HEY, OUR PLEASURE.

IT WAS FUN. I MISS HAVING LITTLE ONES RUNNING AROUND THE HOUSE.

I HOPE MAXINE FEELS BETTER.



SERIOUSLY, MALCOLM--

CALL ANYTIME.

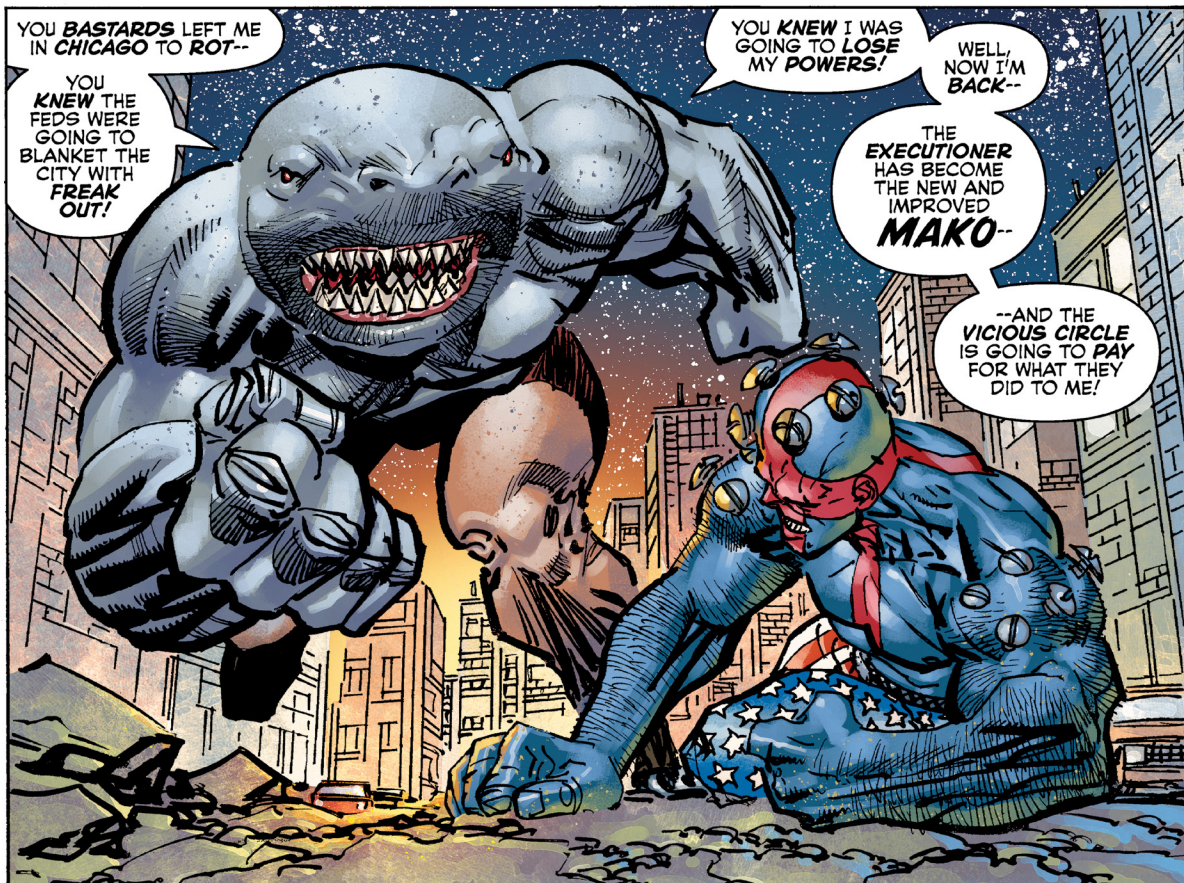
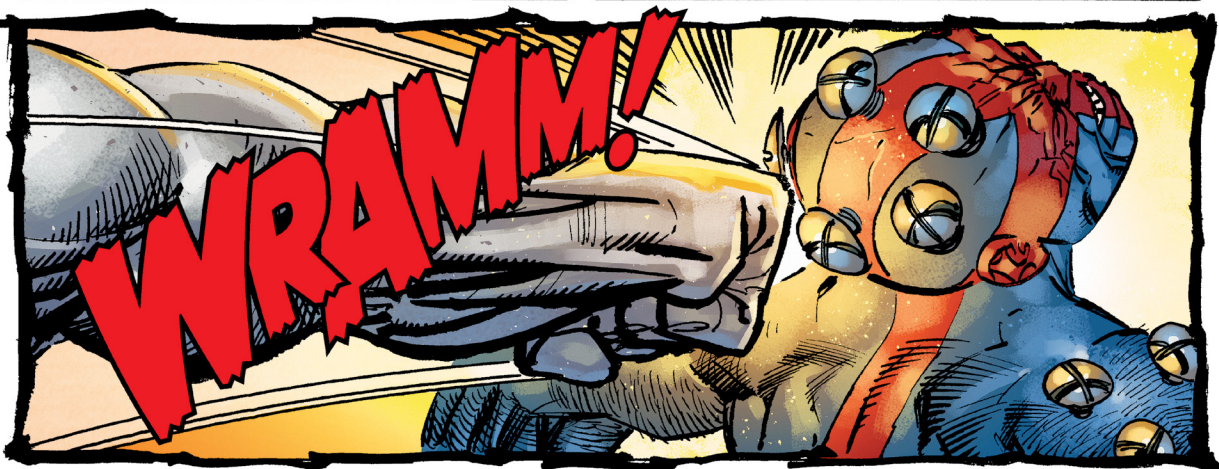
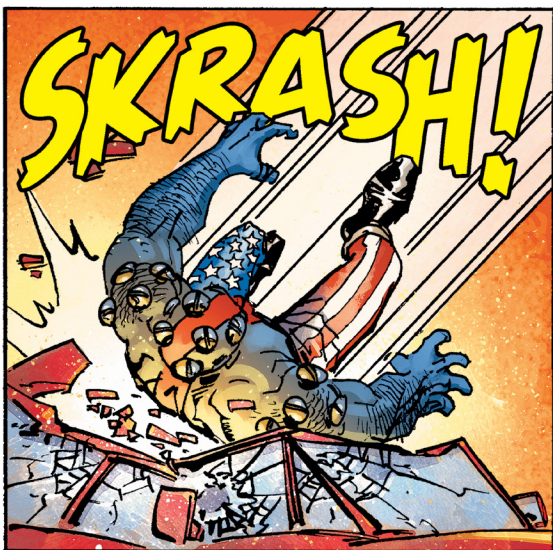
IT'S NOT AN IMPOSITION.

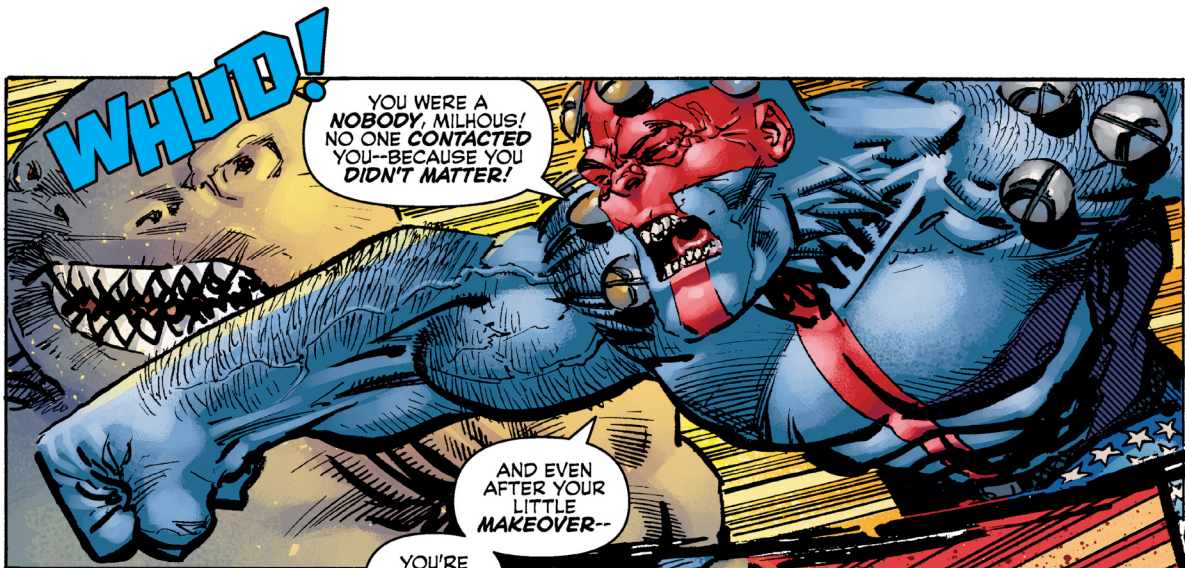
THANKS, PAUL.



WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH YOU?

I HAVVA... SUGGES-TION--!





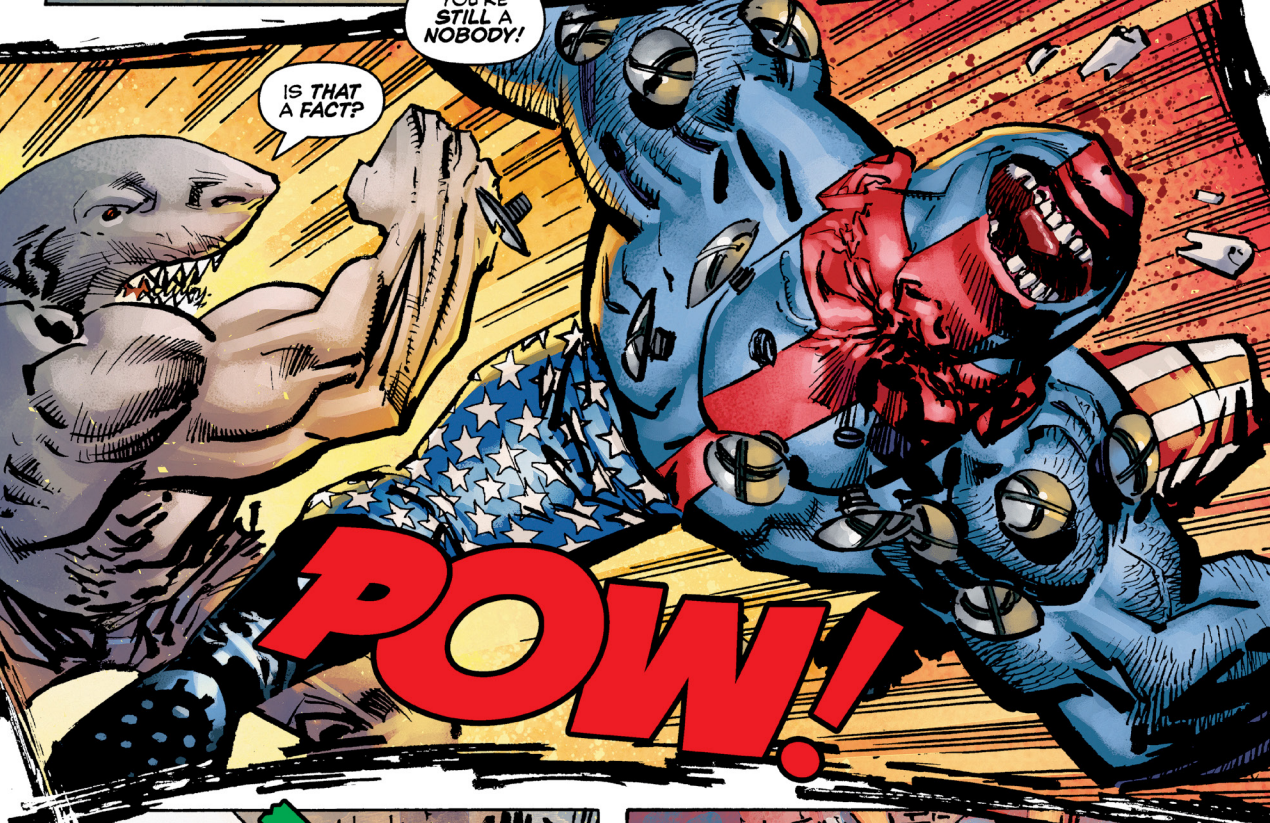
WHUD!

YOU WERE A NOBODY, MILHOUS!
NO ONE CONTACTED YOU--BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T MATTER!

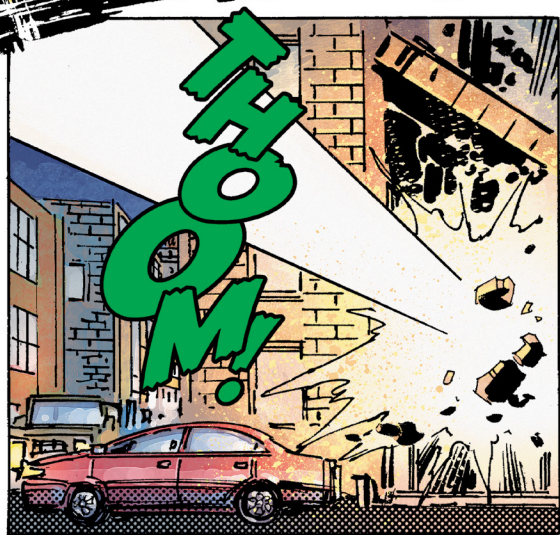
AND EVEN AFTER YOUR LITTLE MAKEOVER--

YOU'RE STILL A NOBODY!

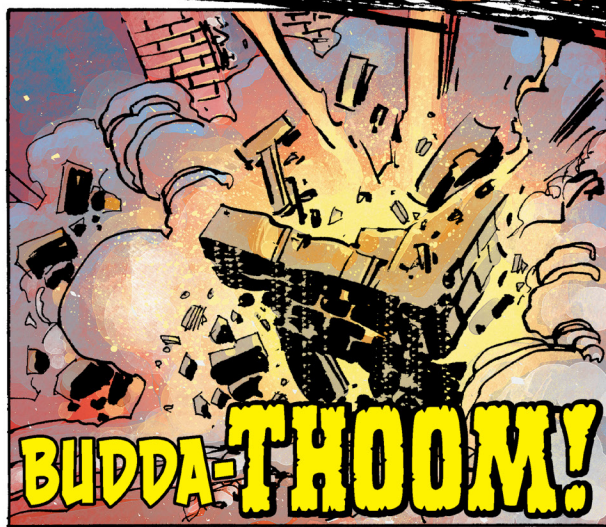
IS THAT A FACT?



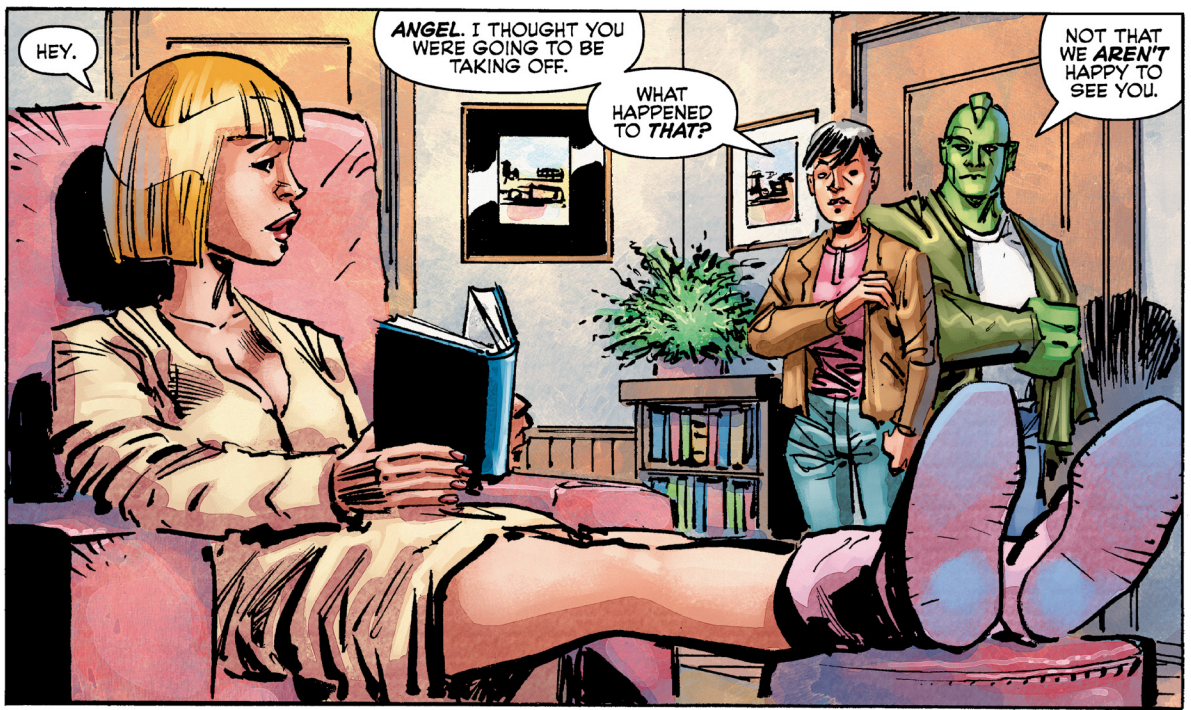
POW!



BOOM!



BUDDA-THOOM!

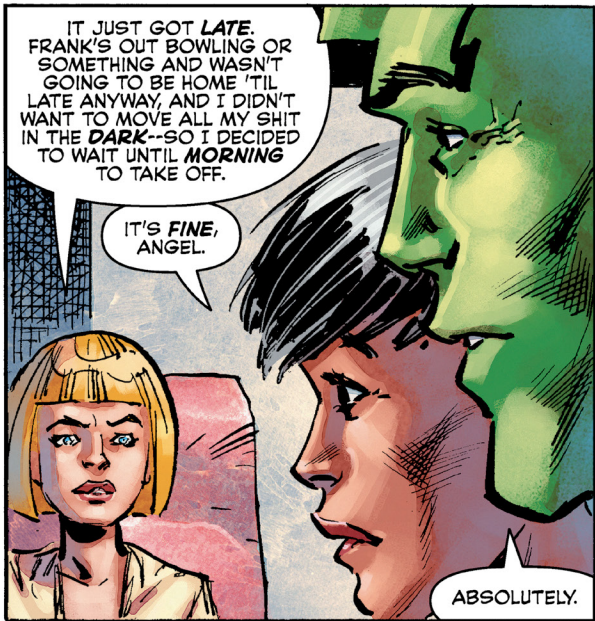


HEY.

ANGEL. I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO BE TAKING OFF.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT?

NOT THAT WE AREN'T HAPPY TO SEE YOU.



IT JUST GOT LATE. FRANK'S OUT BOWLING OR SOMETHING AND WASN'T GOING TO BE HOME 'TIL LATE ANYWAY, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO MOVE ALL MY SHIT IN THE DARK--SO I DECIDED TO WAIT UNTIL MORNING TO TAKE OFF.

IT'S FINE, ANGEL.

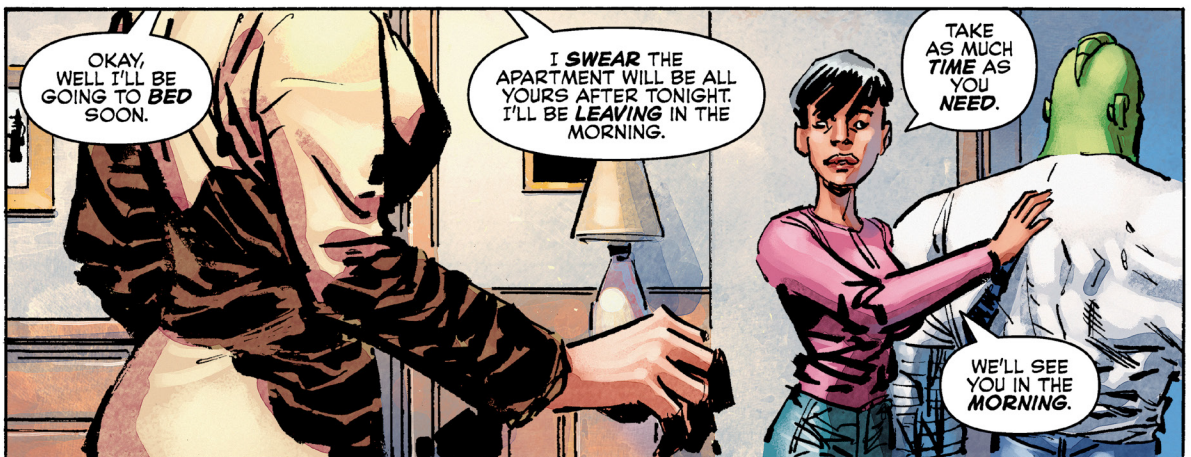
ABSOLUTELY.



HOW WERE THE KIDS? I KNOW THEY CAN BE A HANDFUL.

NO, THEY WERE GREAT. THEY'RE SO MUCH FUN.

THOSE KIDS HAVE A LOT OF ENERGY.

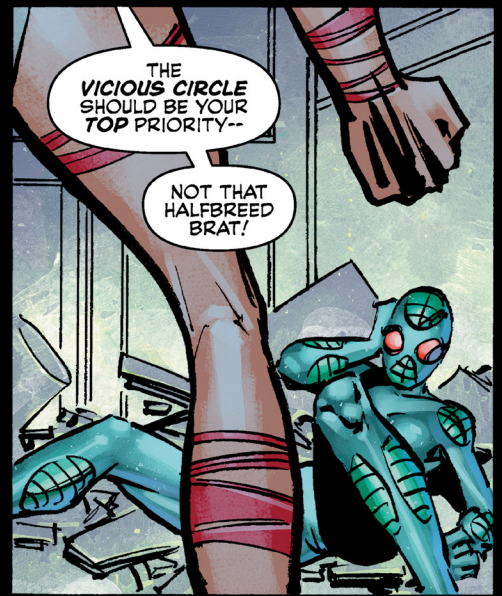
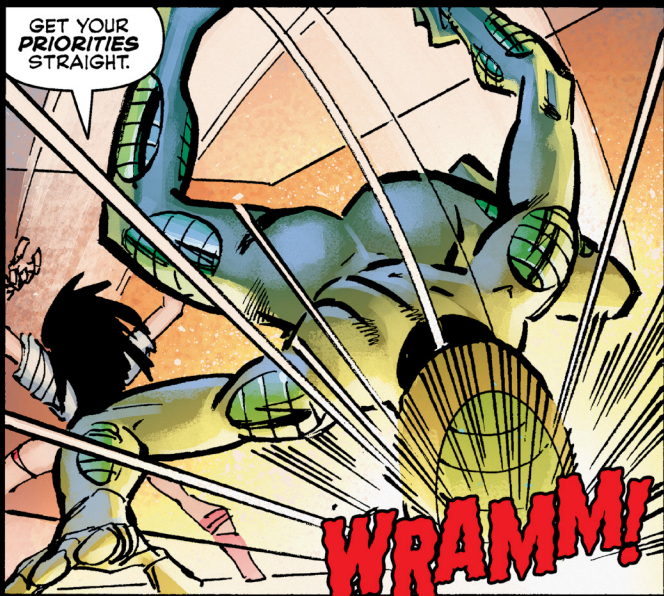
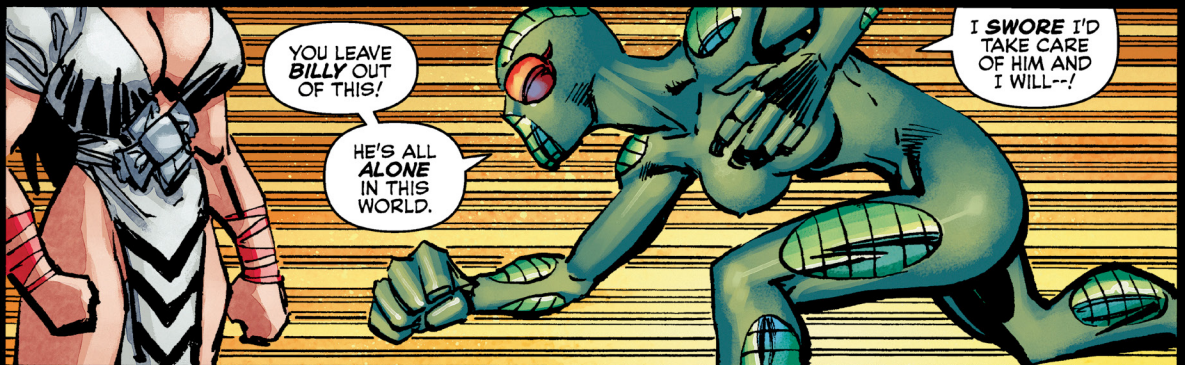
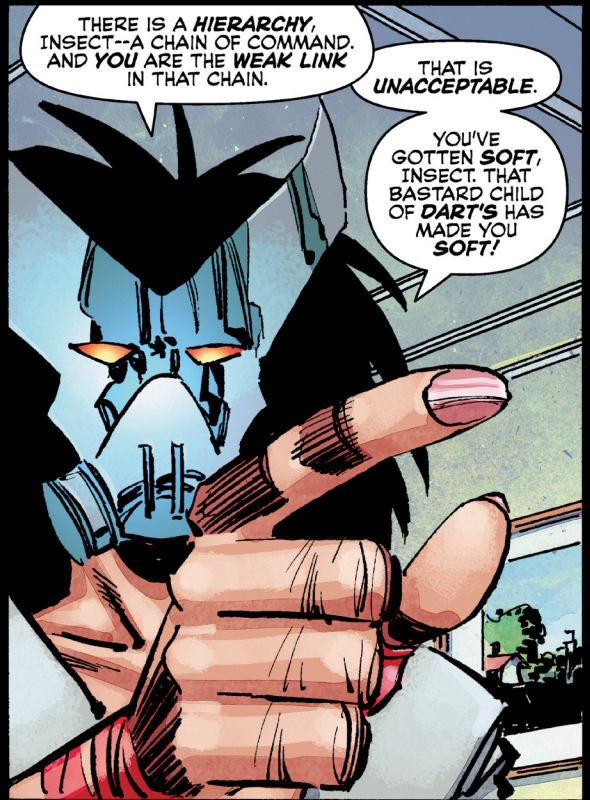


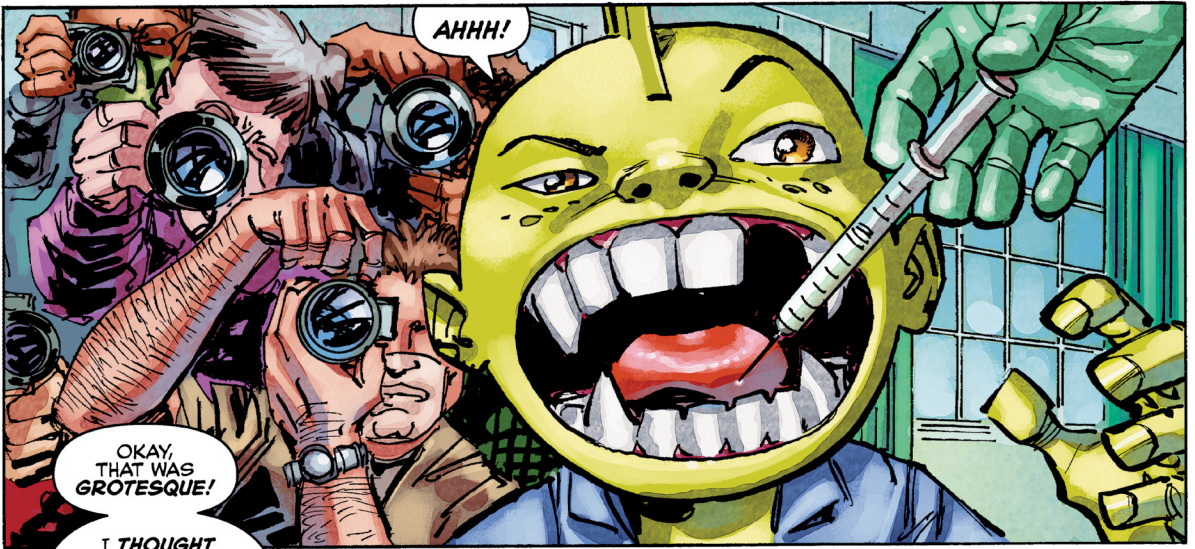
OKAY, WELL I'LL BE GOING TO BED SOON.

I SWEAR THE APARTMENT WILL BE ALL YOURS AFTER TONIGHT. I'LL BE LEAVING IN THE MORNING.

TAKE AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED.

WE'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING.





AHHH!

OKAY, THAT WAS GROTESQUE!

I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A GOOD PUBLICITY STUNT TO HELP ENCOURAGE MORE PARENTS TO GET THEIR KIDS VACCINATED BUT I DON'T KNOW...

YOU DIDN'T TELL ME THAT THEY NEEDED TO GET THEIR SHOTS IN THEIR TONGUES!

THE NEEDLES CAN'T PENETRATE THEIR ARMS, WALDEN.

YOU KNOW THAT.



JACKSON! TYRONE!

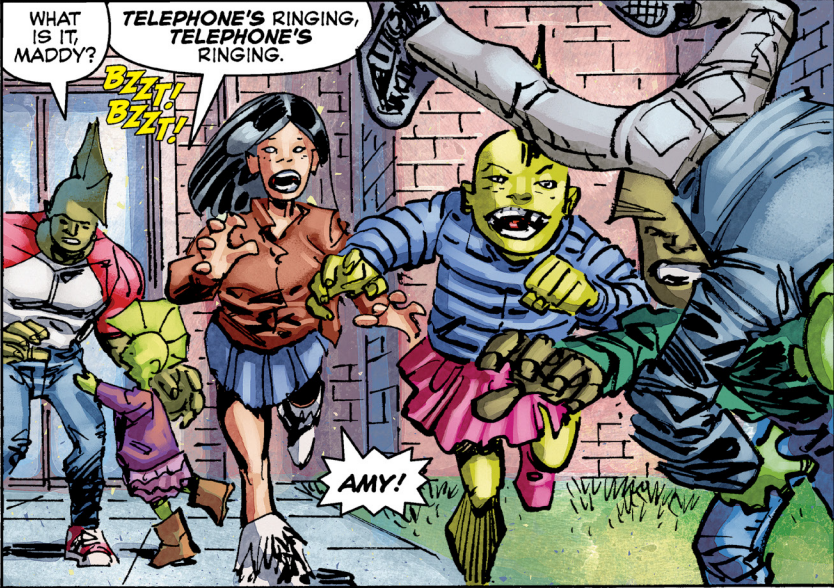
WOULD YOU TWO KNOCK IT OFF?

BOYS! BOYS!

THIS IS NOT OKAY!

MY TONGUE FEELS FUNNY.

BZZT! BZZT!



WHAT IS IT, MADDY?

TELEPHONE'S RINGING, TELEPHONE'S RINGING.

BZZT! BZZT!

AMY!



MARSHA!

IT'S GOOD TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!

WHAT'S GOING ON?

IT'S SARA, MALCOLM--

SHE'S IN THE HOSPITAL ON A VENTILATOR. SHE'S GOT COVID AND IT'S NOT LOOKING GOOD.

WE WERE HOPING MAYBE TO GET SOME OF YOUR BLOOD AND FREAK OUT AND DO ONE OF THOSE MAGIC ACTS LIKE YOU PULLED WITH MAXINE AND ANGEL.*

*MALCOLM SAVED MAXINE'S LIFE BY GIVING HER A BLOOD TRANSFUSION IN SAUSAGE DRAGON #234 AND #240 AND HE HELPED ANGEL RECOVER IN #238.

WHOA, WHOA-- SERIOUSLY? I THOUGHT SARA WAS VACCINATED!

Oh, NO-- SHE DIDN'T GET THE CLOT SHOT!

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN THAT!

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN MY BLOOD OR IN FREAK OUT BUT YOU'RE READY TO JAM THAT INTO HER ARM!

YOU KNOW THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPERIMENTING ON PEOPLE, RIGHT?

THEY'VE BEEN DOING THAT FOR YEARS--

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE TUSKEGEE STUDY--?

YEAH, AND THAT WAS MESSED UP-- BUT THIS ISN'T THAT.

IN THE TUSKEGEE STUDY, THE GOVERNMENT WAS INTENTIONALLY KEEPING TREATMENT FOR SYPHILIS FROM BLACK AMERICANS--THE VACCINE IS ACTUAL MEDICINE AND IT'S SAVING LIVES.

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE LISTENING TO BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT I READ.

I'VE BEEN READING UP ON THIS VACCINE, MALCOLM, AND THERE'S A LOT OF STUFF THEY'RE NOT TELLING US. DO YOU THINK THE GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING OUT FOR US?

THEY AREN'T.

I'VE BEEN DOING MY OWN RESEARCH...

YOU DIDN'T RESEARCH A DAMNED THING. YOU CAME ACROSS SOMETHING IN YOUR ALGORITHM-MANIPULATED FEED WHICH RESONATED WITH YOU. IT'S ALWAYS EASY TO FIND INFORMATION THAT CONFIRMS YOUR WORST FEARS--BUT NO REPUTABLE SOURCE IS SELLING WHAT YOU'RE BUYING.

EVERYBODY HAS A VESTED INTEREST IN ENDING THIS THING! THEY'RE NOT SCREWING AROUND HERE. MILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE DIED! SARA MAY DIE!

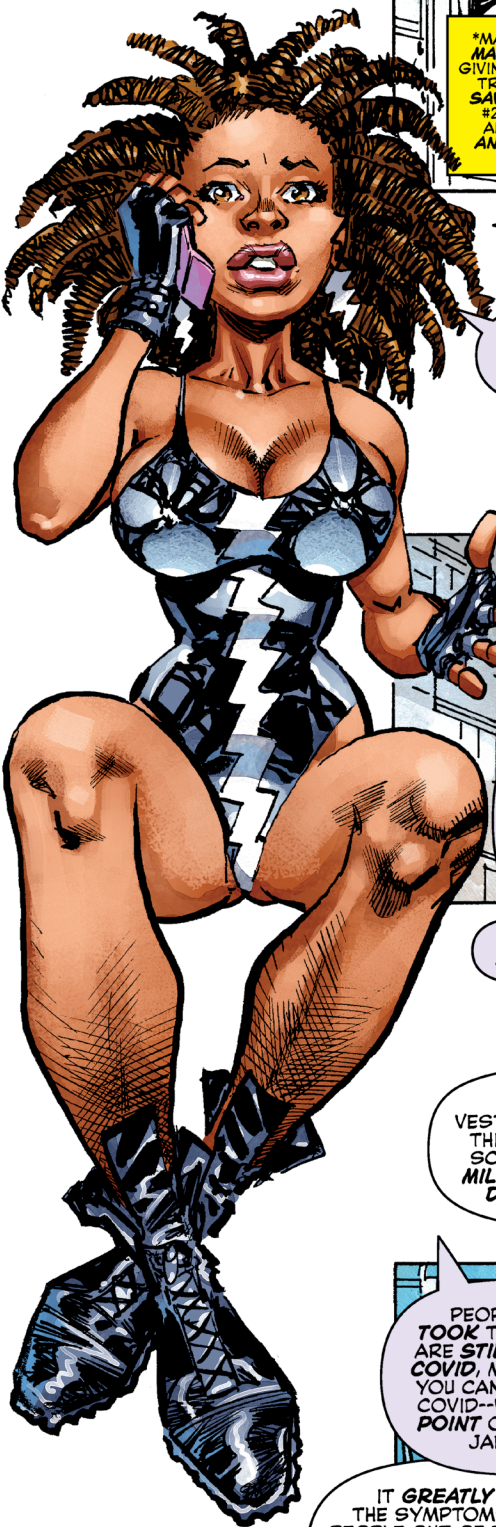
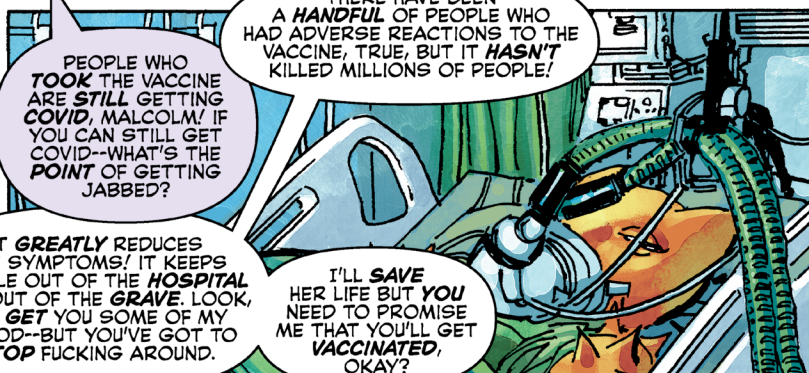
IT'S A WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC, MARSHA! AND THE ONLY WAY TO END IT IS TO TAKE PROPER PRECAUTIONS AND GET VACCINATED.

THERE HAVE BEEN A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE WHO HAD ADVERSE REACTIONS TO THE VACCINE, TRUE, BUT IT HASN'T KILLED MILLIONS OF PEOPLE!

PEOPLE WHO TOOK THE VACCINE ARE STILL GETTING COVID, MALCOLM! IF YOU CAN STILL GET COVID--WHAT'S THE POINT OF GETTING JABBED?

IT GREATLY REDUCES THE SYMPTOMS! IT KEEPS PEOPLE OUT OF THE HOSPITAL AND OUT OF THE GRAVE. LOOK, I'LL GET YOU SOME OF MY BLOOD--BUT YOU'VE GOT TO STOP FUCKING AROUND.

I'LL SAVE HER LIFE BUT YOU NEED TO PROMISE ME THAT YOU'LL GET VACCINATED, OKAY?





EEEEAAUUGH!

I *THOUGHT* THAT MIGHT GET YOUR ATTENTION.

YOU EVER TRIED HUMAN FLESH?

DAMNED TASTY.



NO! NO! EEEAAUGH!

PUT A SOCK IN IT, ROUGHNECK.

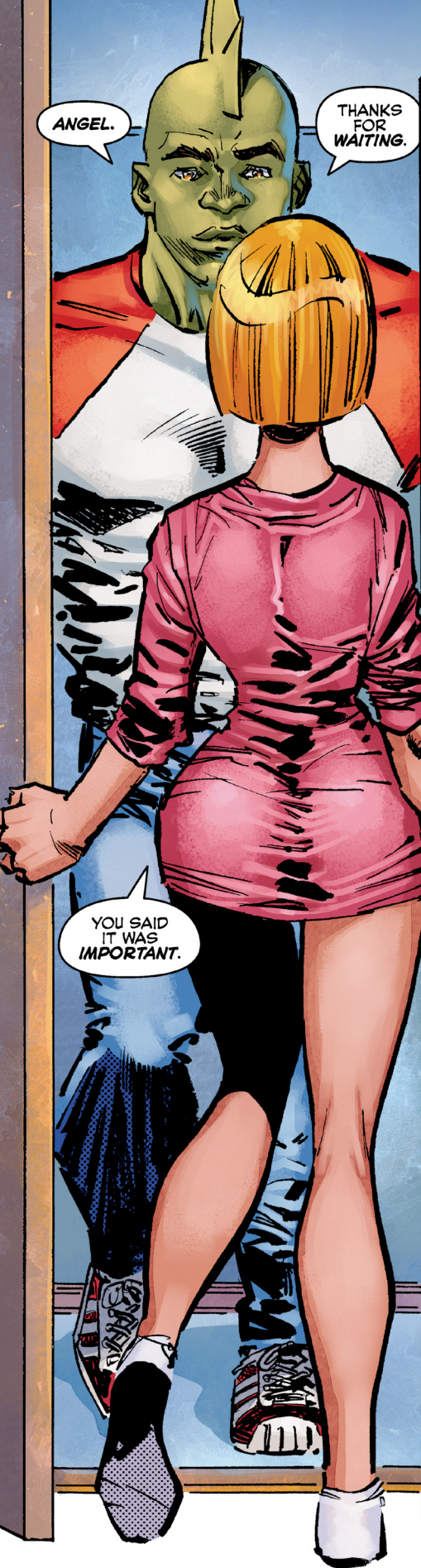
THE *ONLY* THING I WANT TO HEAR OUT OF YOU IS WHERE CAN I FIND THE *REST* OF THE *VICIOUS CIRCLE*.

TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO HEAR--

OR THE *NEXT* ITEM ON THE MENU--

--IS ONE THING YOU'RE *REALLY* GOING TO MISS.

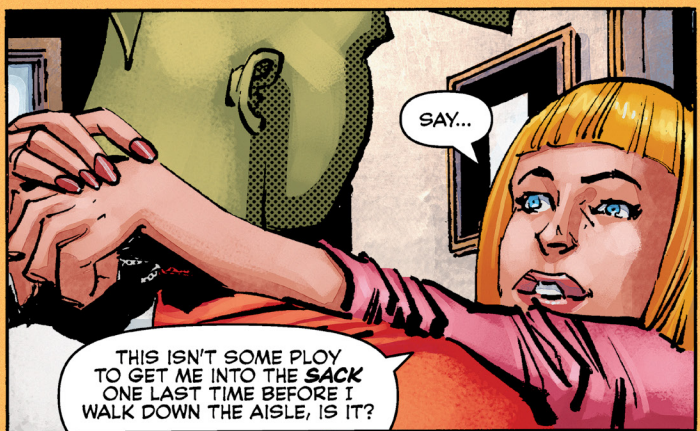




ANGEL.

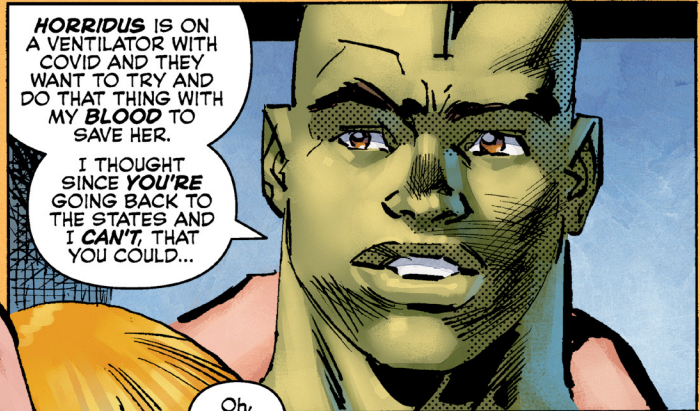
THANKS FOR WAITING.

YOU SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT.



SAY...

THIS ISN'T SOME PLOY TO GET ME INTO THE **SACK** ONE LAST TIME BEFORE I WALK DOWN THE AISLE, IS IT?



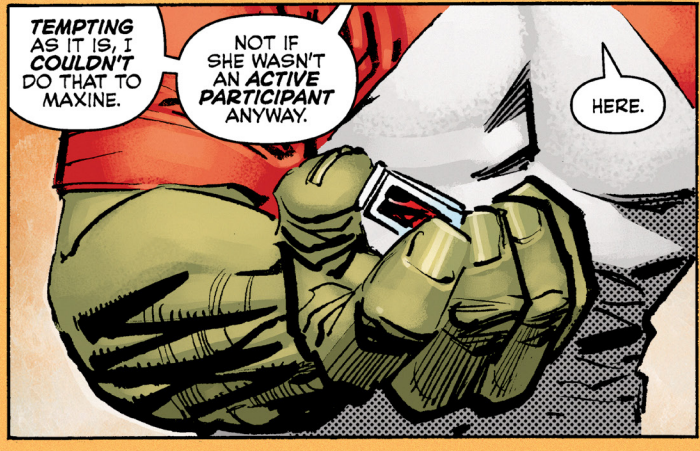
HORRIDUS IS ON A VENTILATOR WITH COVID AND THEY WANT TO TRY AND DO THAT THING WITH MY **BLOOD** TO SAVE HER.

I THOUGHT SINCE **YOU'RE** GOING BACK TO THE STATES AND I **CAN'T**, THAT YOU COULD...

Oh, POOP.



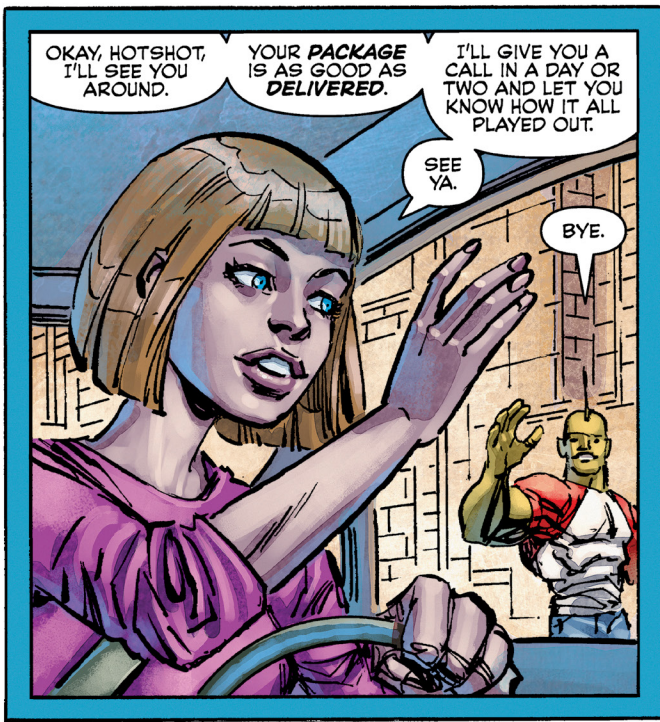
YOU'RE NO FUN.



TEMPTING AS IT IS, I **COULDN'T** DO THAT TO MAXINE.

NOT IF SHE WASN'T AN **ACTIVE PARTICIPANT** ANYWAY.

HERE.



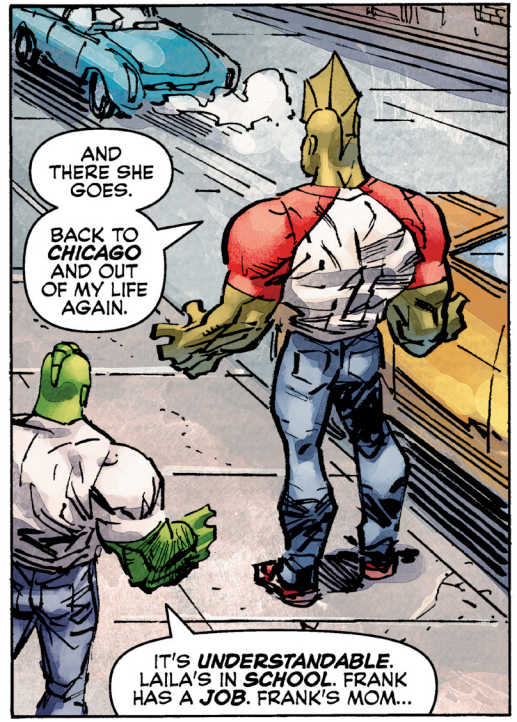
OKAY, HOTSHOT, I'LL SEE YOU AROUND.

YOUR PACKAGE IS AS GOOD AS DELIVERED.

I'LL GIVE YOU A CALL IN A DAY OR TWO AND LET YOU KNOW HOW IT ALL PLAYED OUT.

SEE YA.

BYE.



AND THERE SHE GOES.

BACK TO CHICAGO AND OUT OF MY LIFE AGAIN.

IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE. LAILA'S IN SCHOOL. FRANK HAS A JOB. FRANK'S MOM...



WHAT'S GOING ON, PAUL?

DOWN TO BUSINESS. FINE.

WE'VE BEEN PICKING OFF MEMBERS OF THE VICIOUS CIRCLE, ONE BY ONE.

THE NOTORIOUS CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION IS DOWN TO A FEW STRAGGLERS-- THE DREGS, REALLY.

AND AN OPPORTUNITY HAS PRESENTED ITSELF.

WITH POISON DART OUT OF THE PICTURE, THE REMAINING MEMBERS ARE GETTING TOGETHER TO RECONFIGURE THEIR RANKS AND I WAS JUST HANDED AN INVITE.



WAIT. WHAT? WHY WERE YOU HANDED AN INVITE?

NOT LITERALLY--

SOMEBODY LEAKED THE INFORMATION.



SOMEBODY WHO WANTS THIS OVER.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME...

LET ME CALL THE WIFE.

DART IS DEAD.

THE LEADERSHIP ROLE FALLS TO ME.

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE STANDS STRONG!

DEATH TO ALL WHO DARE OPPOSE US!

SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO YOUR NEW BOSS--

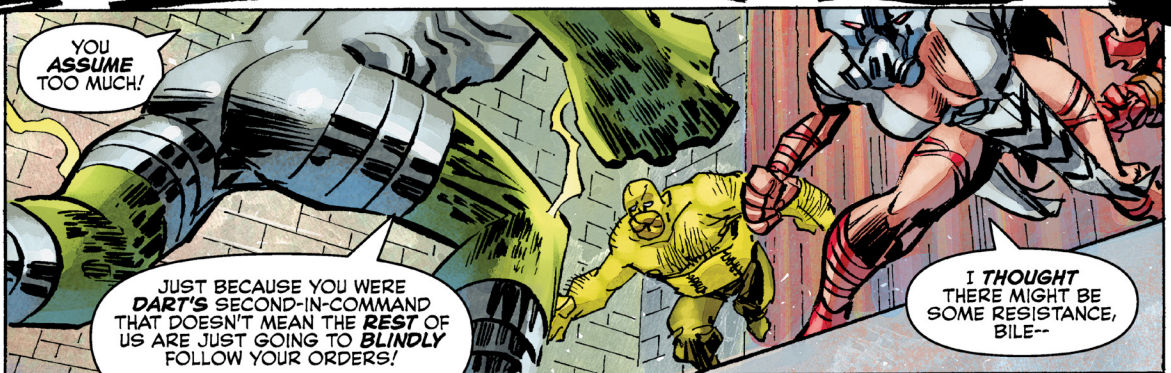
SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO **SAMURAI!**





NOT SO FAST, SAMURAI!

THE HELL--?



YOU ASSUME TOO MUCH!

JUST BECAUSE YOU WERE DART'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND THAT DOESN'T MEAN THE REST OF US ARE JUST GOING TO BLINDLY FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS!

I THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE SOME RESISTANCE, BILE--



--BUT I HAD NO IDEA IT WOULD COME FROM YOU!

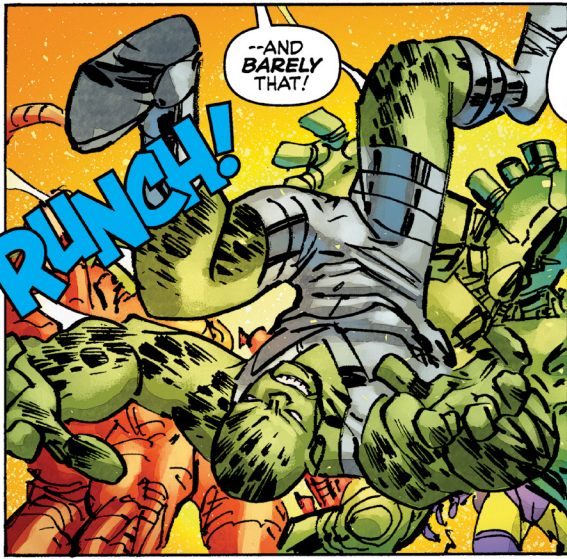
HOW UTTERLY RIDICULOUS TO THINK THAT YOU COULD CHALLENGE ME.

YOU-- A SEETHING TANKARD OF SICK!



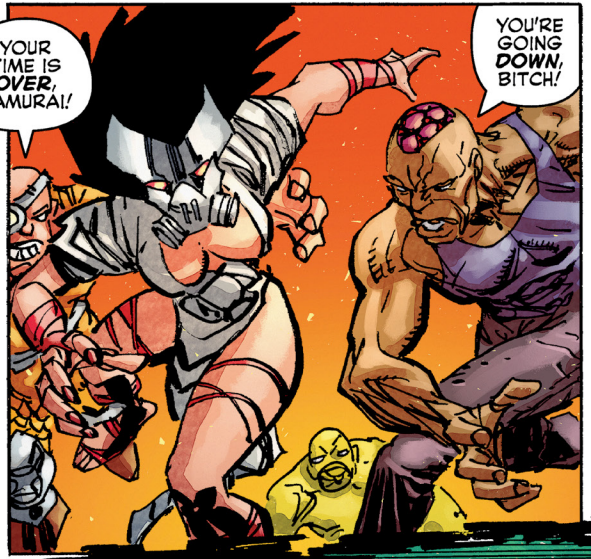
KNOW YOUR PLACE, BILE.

YOU'RE MUSCLE, AT BEST--



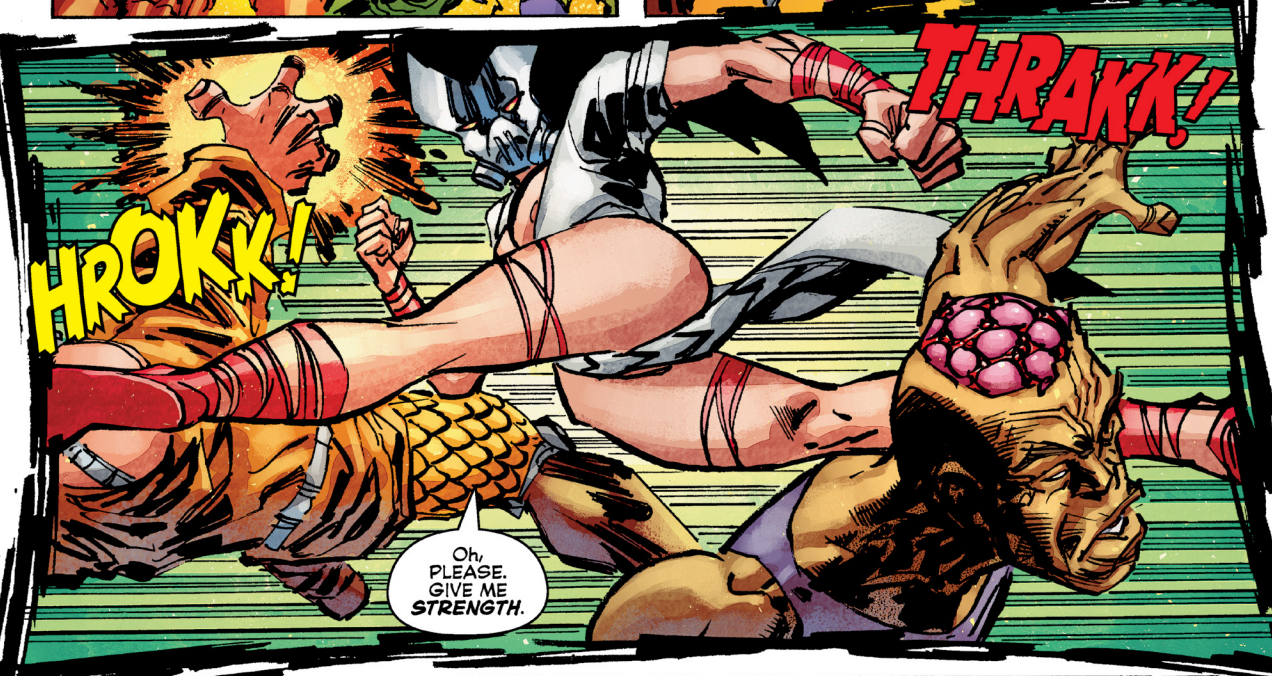
--AND BARELY THAT!

RUNCH!



YOUR TIME IS OVER, SAMURAI!

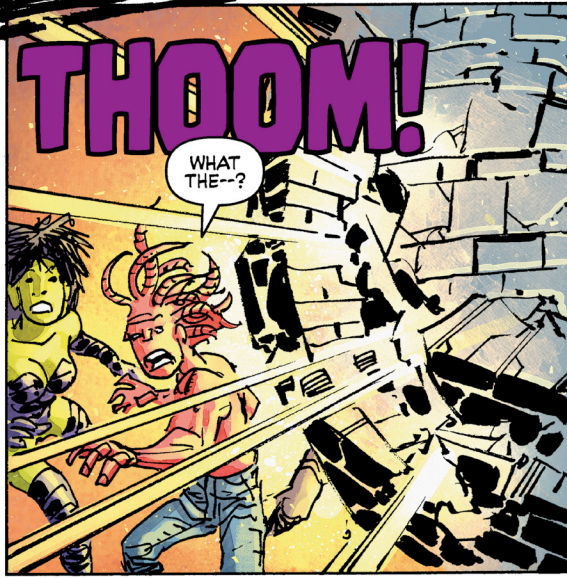
YOU'RE GOING DOWN, BITCH!



HROKK!

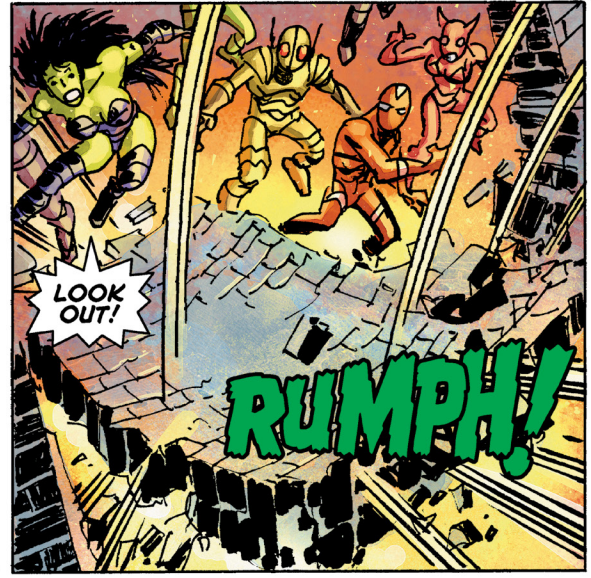
THRAKK!

Oh, PLEASE. GIVE ME STRENGTH.



THOOM!

WHAT THE--?



LOOK OUT!

RUMPH!



FIN ADDICTS

Send letters to:

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PORTLAND, OR 97293

e-mail: Erik@savagedragon.com

visit our website at www.savagedragon.com

Welcome to Savage Dragon #261. By this point ANT #1 should be in your greedy little hands and with Savage Dragon back on track--well, life is good!

In case you missed it dept: last issue there were TWO versions of Savage Dragon #260, one lettered by Rus Wooton and one by Jack Morelli. So it wasn't just a variant cover dress last time--it was variant interiors as well (and the lettering was the only difference--the script was the same). Essentially, I needed a new letterer on the book and I decided to see what each of these guys would do. I liked each version for different reasons and decided to print them both (plus, I like the idea of occasionally doing alternate interiors to go along with the alternate covers). It's a nice surprise for those who purchased both.

As you no doubt noticed, Jack Morelli was given the nod as the new Savage Dragon letterer. So, welcome aboard, Jack! Mr. Morelli has been active in the field for decades, working at Marvel, DC and Archie. Morelli won the 2015 Harvey Award for Best Letterer for his work on Afterlife with Archie. He's a good guy and we're extremely happy to have him onboard.

Dear Erik,

I've been pretty lukewarm on North Force so far, and Savage Dragon 259 is a pretty strong push to make the audience like them. Did it work? Um, sort of. It was nice to finally see them out of costume and learn more about what makes them tick. And pretty much none of them were what I expected, so there's definitely some good stuff to unpack there. But their costumes and powers are still so simple, which I know is by design. And the fight scene didn't do much to sway me, either. That page with Captain Tootsie looked pretty cool, though.

I guess this all depends on what North Force's role is going to be. If they're just background characters to show up and help out from time to time, they're probably fine. They look cool enough all together, as seen on the cover. And there's just enough backstory now to know that they're not complete cardboard cut-outs. But if there's a plan to launch them into their own series, or mini-series, or back-up series, I think I'll need a little more. You planted some seeds here, but they had better grow.

The situation does remind me of Alpha Flight, and not just because of their nationality. That team was created just to be X-Men villains, and there wasn't too much to them. The story goes that when they were given their own title, John Byrne knew he'd have to mix things up to make them interesting. And a lot of those early Alpha Flight issues were pretty cool, and pretty different from other super-hero books of the time.

I guess it reminds me of your own Freak Force, too. They weren't all the deepest of characters, but when their title worked best was when it felt different from Savage Dragon, and from the other books on the stands. If North Force is going to stand on their own, I'm going to need more than just people named Flame and Knight fighting against rock monsters. But I can see the seeds of potential.

Taylor Porter
Halifax, Nova Scotia

It always takes a little while to figure out new characters and find their voices. That's especially the case when it's an entire team being introduced. When it's a group of seven characters--it's going to take a few appearances before they are more clearly defined. That's to be expected.

As far as costumes go--ideally they are simple. The iconic Batman costume is a simple design. The Hulk is a simple design. Simple designs are more versatile. With a simple design characters can be drawn small and they still be instantly identifiable. Simple designs can be drawn by artists whose styles are very stripped down and by artists who render

things meticulously. They can always be dressed up with detail via crosshatching and lighting techniques. The goal is few colors and a strong, distinctive silhouette.

Hey Erik.

I must say, I had a real blast reading SD #259. The get-to-know-you session in the bar was a lot of fun, and I particularly enjoyed that you used Canadian spelling in the dialogue. It added some nice local flavour! I also really liked the old ads pasted up on the walls of the bar, although they are definitely not current. Probably to be expected considering it looks to be a well established local watering hole where things never change.

I have to admit that initially I was not too thrilled with the use of sports teams as the basis for naming your new Canadian heroes, but it has definitely grown on me, and I think this issue has a lot to do with winning me over. You really managed to come up with some unique secret identities, and I really enjoy the twist that two of the apparently male heroes are, in fact, women! I also really liked the additional twist of Raptor being an old lady. I'd love to see a scene with her spouting off some motherly dialogue in her Raptor Guise that runs completely contrary to what you would expect to hear coming from someone with her appearance.

The one thing I'm having a bit of a hard time with is a First Nations man willingly wearing the Canadian Flag and calling himself "The Canadian". Historically, Canada's treatment of First Nations people has been absolutely shameful, and they're still fighting for proper treatment today. Why would he want to go by the name of a country that has brought so much suffering to his people? Not to Godwin this letter, but it would kind of be like a Jewish man going by the moniker "The Nazi". I know that's a little hyperbolic, but it's not far off.

Ok, enough with being a Debbie Downer. I don't want you to get the wrong idea because this really was a fun issue, and having Captain Tootsie show up to save the day was the icing on the cake. I know I've said it before, but I really love Captain Tootsie as a supporting character and I'd love to see more of him. Maybe we could get a backup feature of him and North Force taking the fight to Cyrus-5? And speaking of backup features, I really enjoyed the Red Hook backup, especially with that cliff hanger! Will this spill over into the main book, or will it remain its own thing?

All in all, another solid issue. I don't have much to add on North Force #0 other than the fact that I enjoyed the bios at the end of the book. I'd love to see more of these kind of bios in the main book if space ever permits a page or two here and there.

See you next month!

Andrew d'Entremont
Ottawa, ON Canada

Often American creators will create teams for other countries and choose regional characteristics to form that team. But that's seldom the case when they create American teams. There's nothing America-centric about Thor or Iron Man or Ant-Man or the Wasp. There's no regional correlation with Batman, Superman or Wonder Woman. But watch an American create an Irish character and nine times out of ten they're adorned with a shamrock or they're some kind of Leprechaun. Surely Irish people can be bitten by radioactive spiders or caught in Gamma Ray blasts as well as their American counterparts. I wanted North Force to have some kind of a local connection that wasn't so overt and sports teams often trend in that direction. Naturally I had to pick and choose because some names didn't work but I was pretty happy with how that worked out.

As far as the Canadian goes--I think there's an argument that can be made for him disguising himself like that in order to make real change and for it being a more effective disguise because it's so unlikely. Like he said, "they're called

secret identities.” If he was to dress up in a way which gave an indication of who he was under the mask--his identity wouldn't be very secret.

And don't forget--people are individuals. Some embrace and celebrate their heritage and some don't. Not every First Nations person lives on the Reserve and follows the ways of their people. Some live in apartments and work in offices and don't embrace their heritage in a substantive way. At the end of the day, the Canadian saving the lives of First Nations people when he dons his costume and saves the world from destruction. He may be more mindful and protective of his own people when he goes into action where his people live but his first priority is to save the world.

I suppose I could also make the argument that every single superpowered character in every single superhero comic book is made up, but that's a bit disingenuous. The truth is that nobody in the real world has superpowers or dresses up in a colorful costume, so we really have no examples of what anybody would or wouldn't do if they had superpowers.

Also, as you no doubt know by now--the Red Hook/Savage Dragon backup story is very much self-contained.

Hey Erik,

It's been a long day of driving for me and I'm settled into my hotel room the night before Garden State Comic Fest. Since I picked up my issues of Savage Dragon 259 yesterday I thought I'd bring them along for some bedtime reading. I say issues because I'm a sucker for the retro trade dress versions too. Keep 'em comin'!

The first two page spread in the pool hall is a great lesson in perspective. The next few pages are particularly well done in giving us a thorough rundown on the North Force roster. I really like page five with the use of the large heads and word balloon placement. Have to admit I didn't see Nina Redcloud being the secret identity of Grizzly! One of my new favorite characters for sure now due in large part to that reveal.

It's always awesome when you give us some Captain Tootsie action! Cool to see him come to the rescue with the Fargo-Ray. The Canadian is right, he did save their Canadian Bacon. That single line made me reminisce about pizzas I had as a child. It's been a long time since I've had Canadian Bacon on pizza.

Can't wait to see the adventures of North Force with Captain Tootsie in space tracking down the Stone Men. Being a father I totally understand Malcolms reasoning for not going along with them. I kind of wanted to give the Canadian a spine buster for being so dismissive at the end. He's a cool looking character and all, but that rubbed me the wrong way. I need to track down North Force #0 so I can read their bios. I thought I'd ask a couple of questions while I'm at it.

1. On page 18 when Captain Tootsie is firing the Fargo-Ray, are the pulses in the first panel laid in digitally? Zeroing in on them they look a little pixelated. Not complaining, just thought it looked different and interesting.

2. Any plans to maybe use Nina's grandfather in a future issue? I'd like to see more of her backstory told narratively through her memories. Let's just say I have a crush on her. Don't judge me!

3. Is Malcolm going to star in a sequel to The Hustler and The Color Of Money? Hey, he could make some serious money as a professional pool player. Could you go into a little more detail on that skill of his? Is it a visual sense he naturally possesses combined with finesse?

Well, I better get some shut eye. GSCF is a three day show and I'll be tabling in artist alley shamelessly self promoting and selling Anne Bonnie comics. Hoping it goes off without a hitch since I'm vaccinated. Just hoping all other attendees are too. Hope to see you at NYCC again when you feel comfortable hitting the con circuit again.

Best,

Nick Justus

Cumberland, VA

I: That effect was done digitally. I cut and pasted concentric circles, enlarged them and then reversed out the line art. It's not as crisp and clean as I'd have preferred but it worked out reasonably well.

2: It's a possibility.

3: Malcolm has always had perfect aim--that's always been part of the package. So his pool playing was an extension of that.

And, yeah, stepping outdoors and seeing other people-- what a trip. Looking forward to seeing the world again but I think I'll wait until things have gotten a bit less crazy. NYCC will have to wait until next year--as much as I love New York, the prospect of a masked convention experience doesn't fill my heart with joy.

Dear Erik,

I only recently started reading The Savage Dragon but I've been a fan for a long time. Back when I was just a whippersnapper in the '90s I absolutely loved the wave of cheaply animated cartoons based on superhero comics and one of my favorites was The Savage Dragon. It had everything a kid like me could ask for. An amazing opening sequence, an uniquely creative concept, and an unabashed willingness to play with superhero tropes.

I knew there was a comic book but buying comics was a rare thing in my neck of the isolated Pacific Northwest woods and when the opportunity came up, there wasn't usually a copy of The Savage Dragon. The local general store usually just had Guardians of the Galaxy or Avengers West Coast and by the time I was able to visit a real honest to goodness comic shop I usually ended up getting something like Fathom (hey, I had just hit puberty!) but thanks to that cheesetastic '90s cartoon The Dragon always had a special place in my heart.

Recently, I had a few very positive and pleasant social media interactions with you and so decided that it was time to start the daunting task of collecting Savage Dragon back issues and adding the newest issues to my pull list.

Boy, was that a good decision!

The early issues are an absolute blast and, in my humble but usually correct opinion, stand fin and shoulders above the other Image titles of the time.

The new issues are also a blast. I love Malcolm Dragon's relationship with his family and that's why I enjoyed North Force 0 (and Savage Dragon 259) so much! I'm so used to seeing superheroes just drop whatever life stuff they have going on to have adventures in space or alternate realities or microscopic worlds on the head of nail with no thought to their responsibilities, and often no real consequences, so it was great to see Malcolm just be like "nah, can't do that. Sorry."

I think that story beat perfectly sums up what I've been enjoying about Savage Dragon. It embraces all the tropes and cliches of superhero comic books while also managing to do things that feel fresh and realistic. It never feels flashy or like the book is trying to be oh so clever. Clearly you're just making the kind of comic you want to read. Fortunately for me, it's also the kind of comic I want to read!

Keep up the great work, Erik!

Patrick Dougher

Excellent! If I'm making the kind of comics that you want to read then things should work out just fine for both of us!

Hello Erik,

One of the aspects I enjoy the most about the Savage Dragon comic is that all the characters age in real time. It makes the comic more personable, like I'm watching my nieces and nephews grow up... except my nieces and nephews have green skin and fins...

Speaking of which... Amy Dragon is quickly becoming one of my favourite characters in the comic. Her personality is a unique combination of her mother and father, but she is her own person as well.

I've noticed that you tend to focus more on her than the other Dragon children, and I think that's wise because she's the most interesting! Maybe in ten years or so she'll be the star of the comic, if you're still writing it (and I hope you are!)

This is to say: Amy's solo stories are fantastic, please write more of them!

Thanks and best regards,

Noah Salo

It's been interesting on my end to see how the personalities of the kids have gradually emerged over time. It's almost like I'm just sitting here, watching it happen before my eyes. Sometimes it feels like they're in control and I'm just taking notes.

And the plan is to keep this book going until the bitter end. If it becomes financially unfeasible it may end prematurely or if I have some kind of debilitating accident but barring that, I have no plans to call it quits. It's been a fun journey thus far and working on this book still brings me a great deal of happiness.

Hi Erik!

I wanted to write you this letter to talk about comedy in Savage Dragon. Like most Savage Dragon readers I love this comic because it is really funny (it is not only for the art, the characters, the action...). There is an art style that is a "Erik Larsen art style" and we can also say there is a type of jokes that is a "Erik Larsen type of joke". Some comedians say that when they do stand up they have great punchlines in mind so they improvise on stage knowing that these punchlines are coming (I guess it is more entertaining for them this way). I wanted to know if you were doing the same thing with Savage Dragon.

For example, Dragon died in SD 225 and Paul joined the cast in SD 250 : did you want Paul to appear in 250 when 225 was published and did you (mostly) improvise between 225 and 250 (knowing Paul would be the "punchline")?

Also: if you had not become a comic book writer/artist would you have tried stand up comedy?

I hope I am clear enough. Anyway, it seems like you are having fun with the book and I can't wait for the next issues of Savage Dragon and the new Ant series!

Maël Omnès,
France

It's not always that well thought out. When I killed Savage Dragon in #225 I was not thinking ahead to #250 and planning Paul's arrival. That came about over time as I lamented not having Dragon around as a grandparent for the kids.

The writing on the book can be more like improv. But it's not all improv. There are a lot of longterm plans for characters and I do work toward those. And, like you said, I can improvise along the way knowing what the punchline is.

I've always been a fan of comedy and I'm a big consumer of comedy, both old and new. It did cross my mind to try standup but I've never been especially comfortable on stage and I expect it would take a while to get comfortable up there. It's probably for the best that I went the direction that I went in.

Hi Erik!

I haven't written in since issue 200, figured I should give some kudos. SD is always my favorite book, I sing its praises to all who will listen. And a shout-out to the Savage Fincast, I enjoy that so much, and your appearances on there are a lot of fun.

Recently I hear there's another "Trial of Magneto" at Marvel, so I've been talking about how legendary the Trial of Savage Dragon was, naturally. To anyone who will listen, spreading the good word. And reminiscing on that arc, the following prison arc, and the previous Kurr stuff, just wow. Some of my all time fav comics. Plus in Savage Dragon you don't have to buy a tie-in event mini-series and a bunch of other books, you've got the big events right there in every issue.

Paul seems pretty cool! And Walter is a lot of fun. I'm a few issues behind, so I'll send another more topical one when I catch up. And I still love all the bodacious ass kicking women! And the nutty jokes ("Hootin zoots!"), along with the heartfelt moments. A bit of everything.

Well, here's to 500 issues! I'll even take 400. Here are numbered questions to make it a proper official letter.

1. You've done a lot of cool art and layout challenges. Any writing challenges you could dare yourself to do? That "The Fly" story is one very memorable dialogue bit. Maybe an issue with a particularly labyrinthine plot, a goal for number of characters with speaking parts, or in some writing style like noir etc?

2. Malcolm has mentioned Super Mario I think. Could we see more game stuff in the book, maybe he gets drugged and sees

some Mario-esque character? Or, alternatively, any wild flights of fancy you'd like to do that you haven't done?

Thanks, keep rockin' those comics!

Ian "Psycho Groovy" Eckhardt

1: I'll do these layout challenges if and when I come up with a cool idea which lends itself to a certain kind of story. A lot of these challenges are pretty simple things--i.e. all six-panel pages, all vertical panels, all horizontal panels, etc. but not every story benefits from such a thing, so I need to think things through. I've tried to use things in the past, which I abandoned or put off until a more appropriate time. I don't actually have a long list of ones I haven't tried. For the most part--I do them when they occur to me. But, again, the story needs to work with the idea.

2: To be honest, I'm not a game guy--so none of that really inspires me. I missed the window with video games. They were completely lame when I was a kid and once they got good I was too busy making comics to want to piss away an afternoon playing them. But, you know, if something strikes me as worth trying in Savage Dragon I'll do that.

Dear Erik at Fan Addicts,

I opened my comic shipment to find that I had gotten issue 259 (and North Force!), but NOT issue 258? Arrgh! Not to worry though, I still enjoyed 259, but now I'm left wondering what happened with Thor. This situation takes me back to the days of bad distribution when I had NO IDEA what comics would be in the grocery stores, liquor stores, or drug stores in my neighborhood. At that time, the only comic I'd be almost guaranteed of getting would be Amazing Spider-man...and that was probably only because the distributors knew comic buyers would pick up that one so they sent out a bunch of them. In contrast, I would say I'd get to buy only every third issue of Daredevil or Green Lantern. Anyway, on to comments on 259 and North Force:

1. I didn't realize until I opened them that they were the pretty much the same comic with few subtle differences within the story and a major difference in the back.

2. The subtle difference seemed to be that Michael was narrating in North Force, while in the regular #259 he wasn't. Nice touch!

3. Except for the lettering, the covers were exactly the same! Cool!

4. I have to say that I liked the narrated North Force issue a little better. Seemed more personal.

5. In the back matter, replacing the letter section and short story from #259 were "Who's Who"-type character descriptions of North Force. Cool! It reminded me of something you might see in annuals back in the day. For example, Fantastic Four Annual 5, I think. I remember a lot of Inhumans pin-ups in that one. (No extensive character/power set descriptions though)

Anyway, I'm looking forward to 260. Maybe, I'll get hold of 258 in the meantime.

Alan Bowman
Sagamihara City, Japan

That was the idea--to make a few alterations which made it so that Savage Dragon #259 could stand on its own as a North Force one-shot. I thought that keeping the covers the same would be a visual clue to readers that it was essentially the same book. I wasn't trying to hide anything.

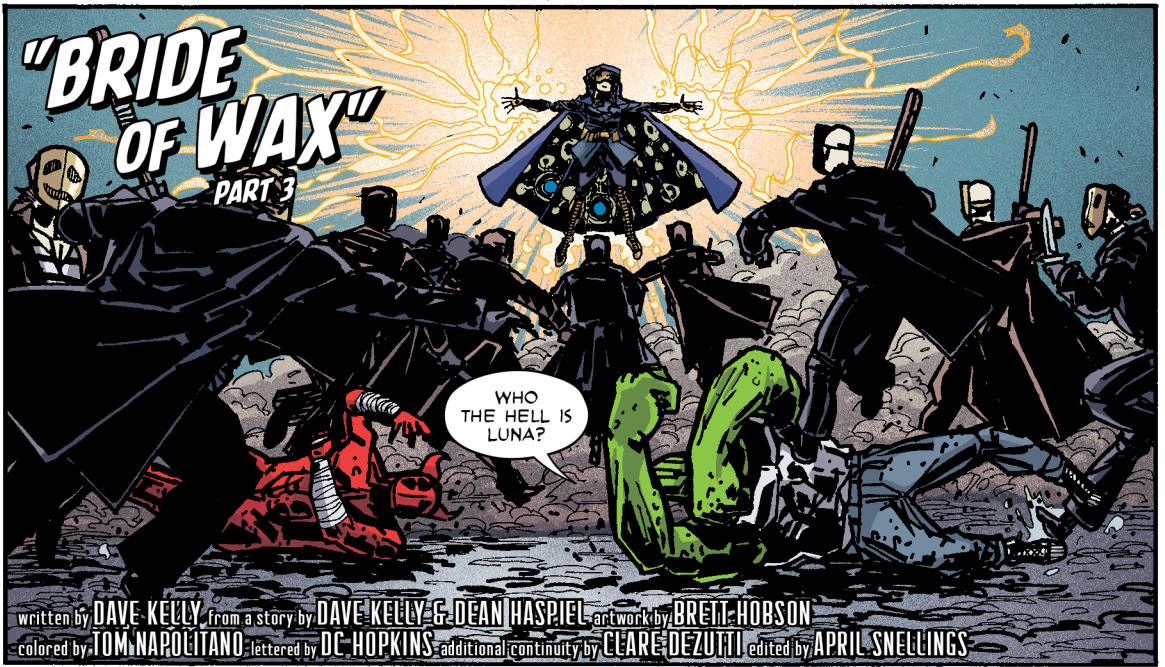
Having the bios in the back was a way of having the book be more focussed on North Force, plus, they took the place of Savage Dragon-related elements like the letters page and backup story.

It was a bit unorthodox, I'll grant you, but I thought it worked out okay.

-Erik Larsen

NEXT: Scorched Earth!

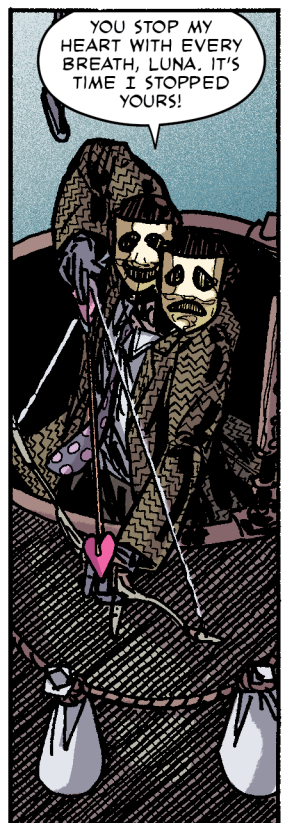
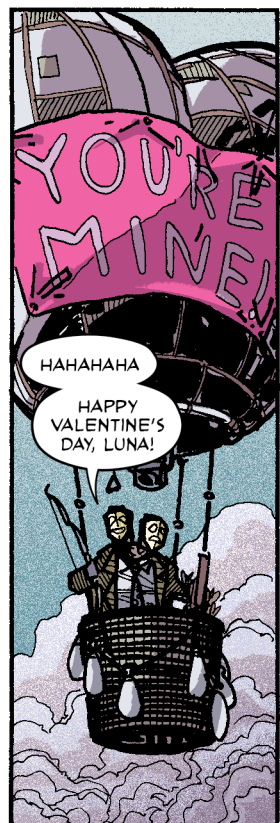
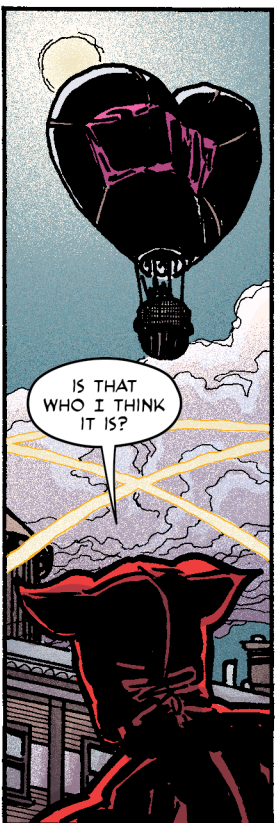
Hey, don't stop reading now--there's plenty of additional funnybook fun to be had in the pages that follow--!

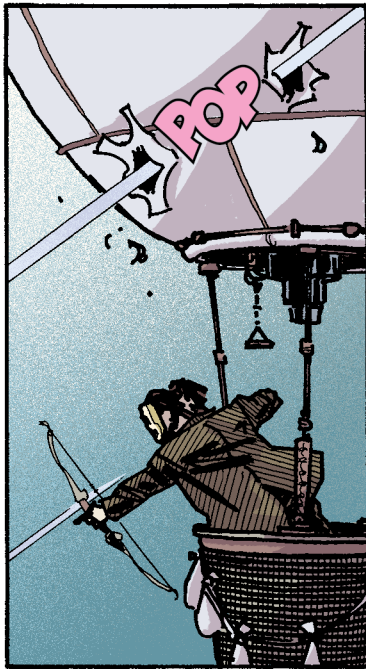
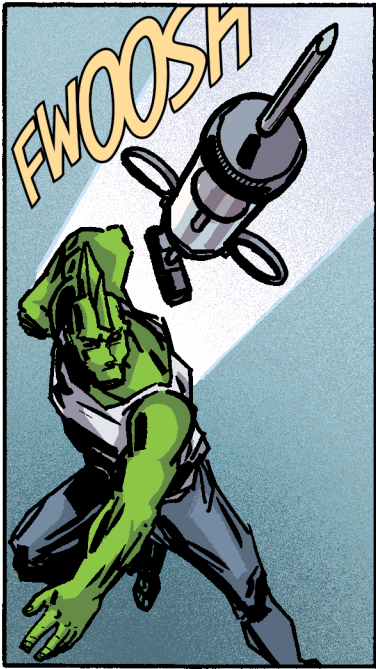
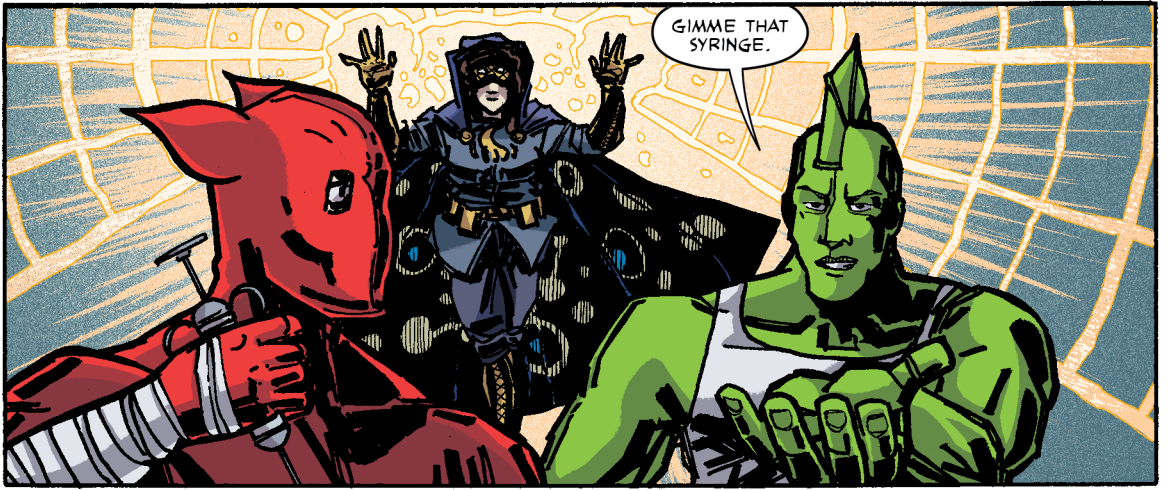


"BRIDE OF WAX"

PART 3

written by **DAVE KELLY** from a story by **DAVE KELLY & DEAN HASPIEL** art work by **BRETT HOBSON**
colored by **TOM NAPOLITANO** lettered by **DC HOPKINS** additional continuity by **CLARE DEZUZZI** edited by **APRIL SNELLINGS**





SHORTLY THEREAFTER...

...MY BOX OF CHOCOLATES, SO WE NEED YOU TO EXTRACT A VIAL OF DRAGON'S BLOOD SO THE MANNEQUIN CAN BRING HIS WAX BRIDE, CATHERINE, TO LIFE.

THIS IS A TRULY GHASTLY PROPOSITION, RED HOOK.

ALRIGHT, LOOK...I WASN'T SURE HOW SERIOUSLY TO TAKE THIS...

...BUT IF YOU ACTUALLY TRY TO GIVE SOMEONE MY BLOOD, THEY'LL TURN INTO A DRAGON LIKE ME AND THEN EXPLODE.

I WAS NOT AWARE OF THAT.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT'S HAPPENED A FEW TIMES BEFORE.

MADAM ORDO TOLD MANNEQUIN THAT HE NEEDED THE ESSENCE, THE VITALITY OF THE BLOOD.

MAYBE WE DON'T NEED THE FULL SHMEAR?

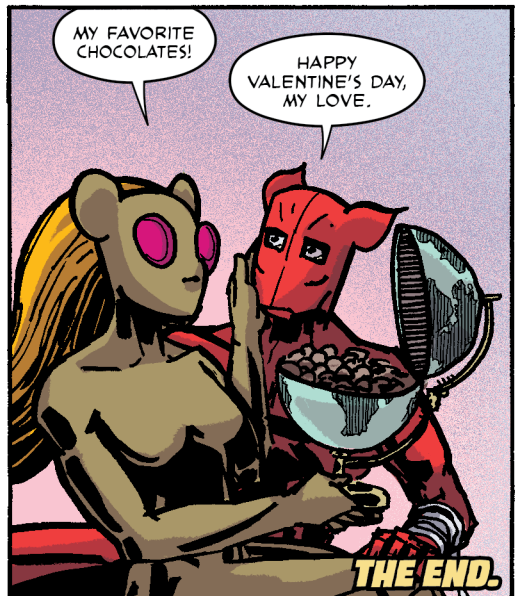
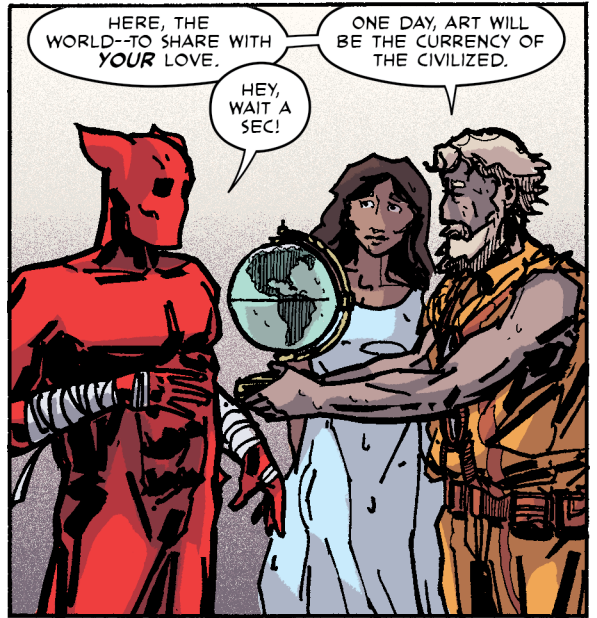
HMM...I'M NO CHEMIST, BUT IT'S POSSIBLE THAT I COULD FILTER OUT ANY ENDOCRINE HORMONES PRESENT IN YOUR BLOOD, WHICH MIGHT BE THE CAUSE OF SUCH METAMORPHIC COMBUSTION.

FINE, BUT DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU.

BEAUTY REFLECTS OFF THE SKIN, BUT CHARACTER IS BREWED IN THE BLOOD.

OUCH!

THAT... STUNG.



NEXT ISSUE

SAVAGE
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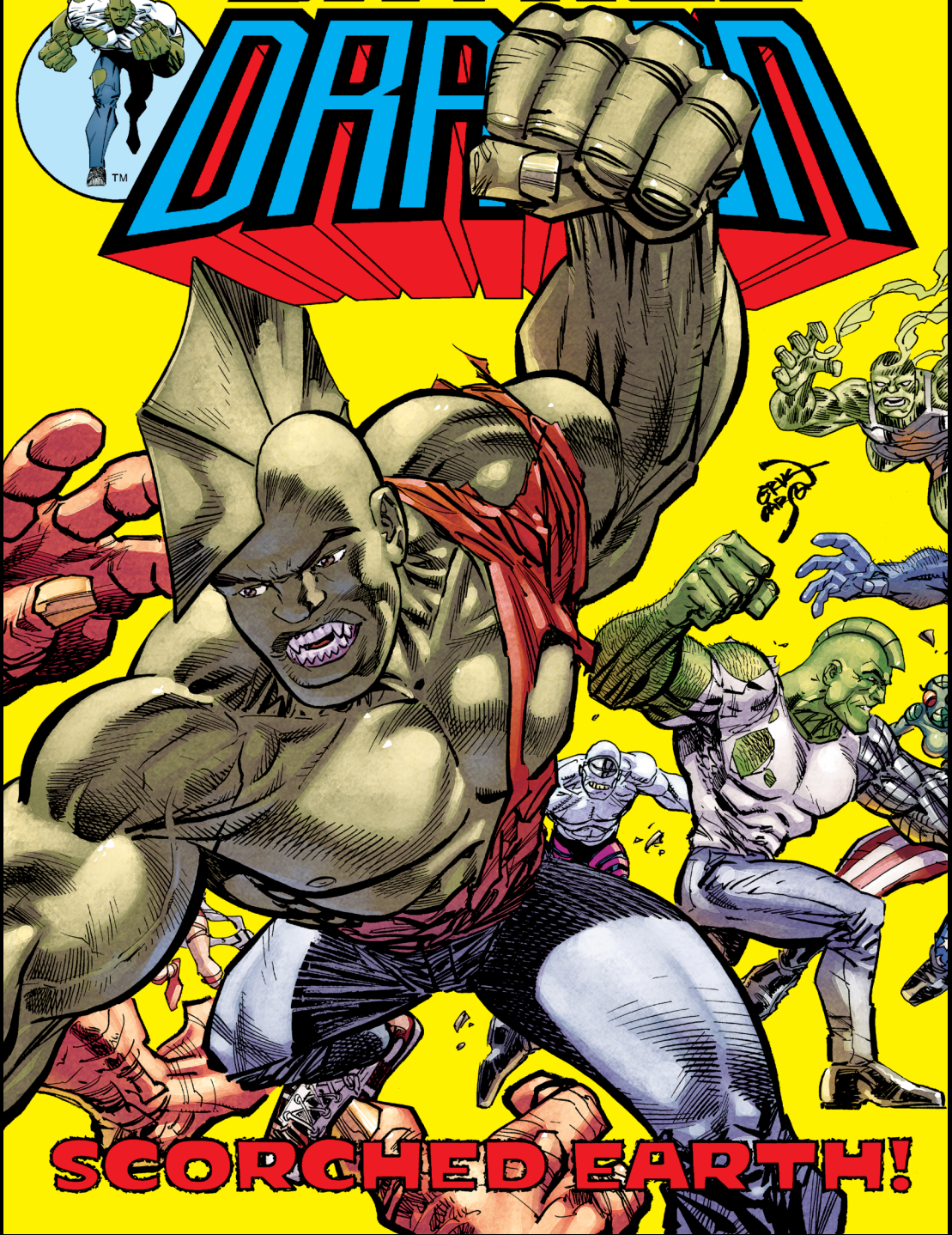
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