

BEC & KAWL



BLOODY STUDENTS

SIMON SPURRIER ★ STEVE ROBERTS





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BEC & KAWL CREATED BY SIMON SPURRIER AND STEVE ROBERTS



BLOODY STUDENTS

SIMON SPURRIER

Writer

STEVE ROBERTS

Artist



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Graphic Design: Simon Parr & Luke Preece

Marketing and PR: Keith Richardson

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Designer: Luke Preece

Original Commissioning Editor: Matt Smith

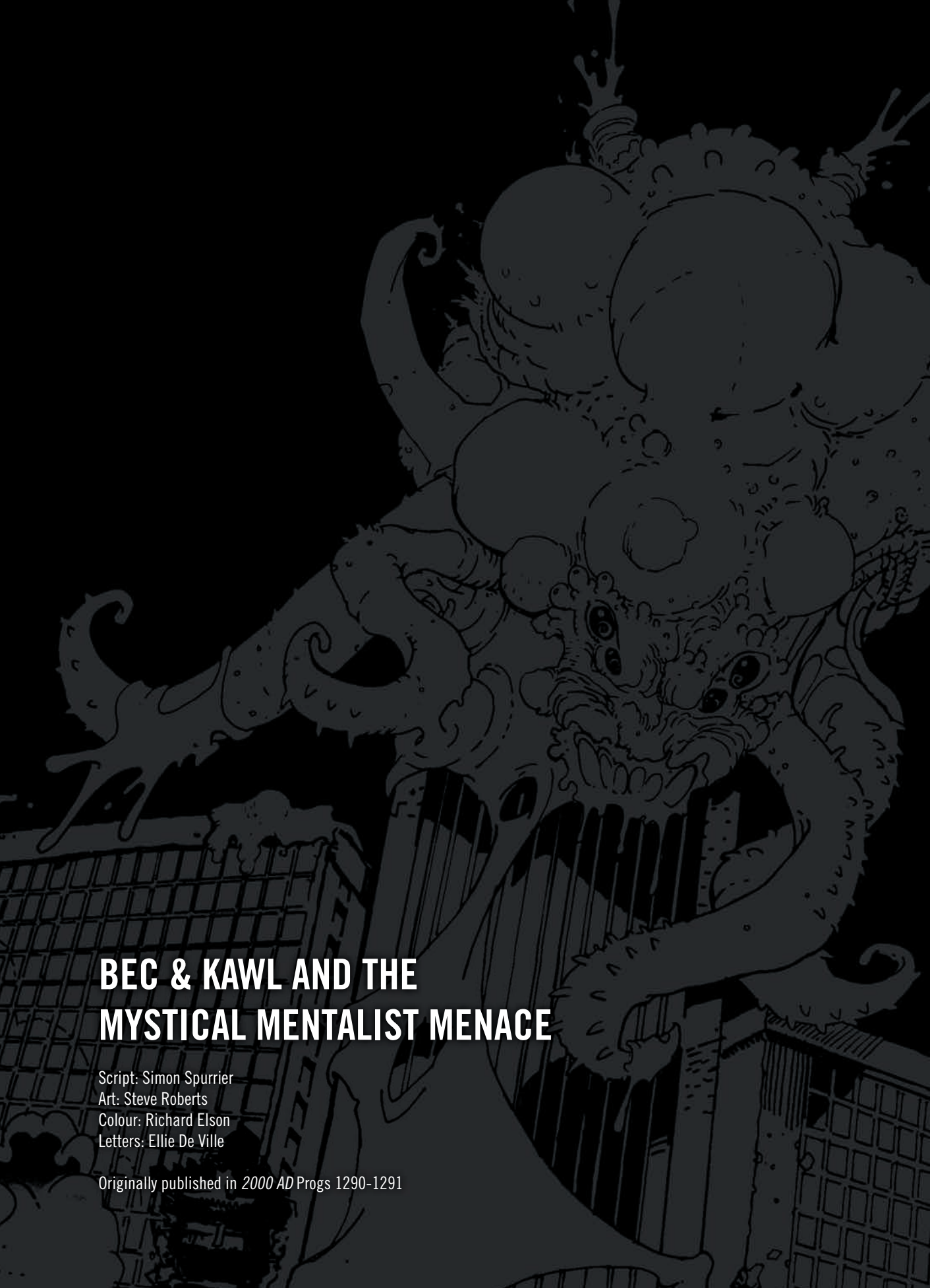
Originally serialised in 2000 AD Progs 1290-1291, 1292-1293, 1327, 1328-1330, 1351-1354, 1383-1386, 1401-1404, 1437-1440, 1477-1481. Copyright © 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 Rebellion A/S. All Rights Reserved. Bec & Kawl and all related characters, their distinctive likenesses and related elements featured in this publication are trademarks of Rebellion A/S. 2000 AD is a registered trademark. The stories, characters and incidents featured in this publication are entirely fictional.

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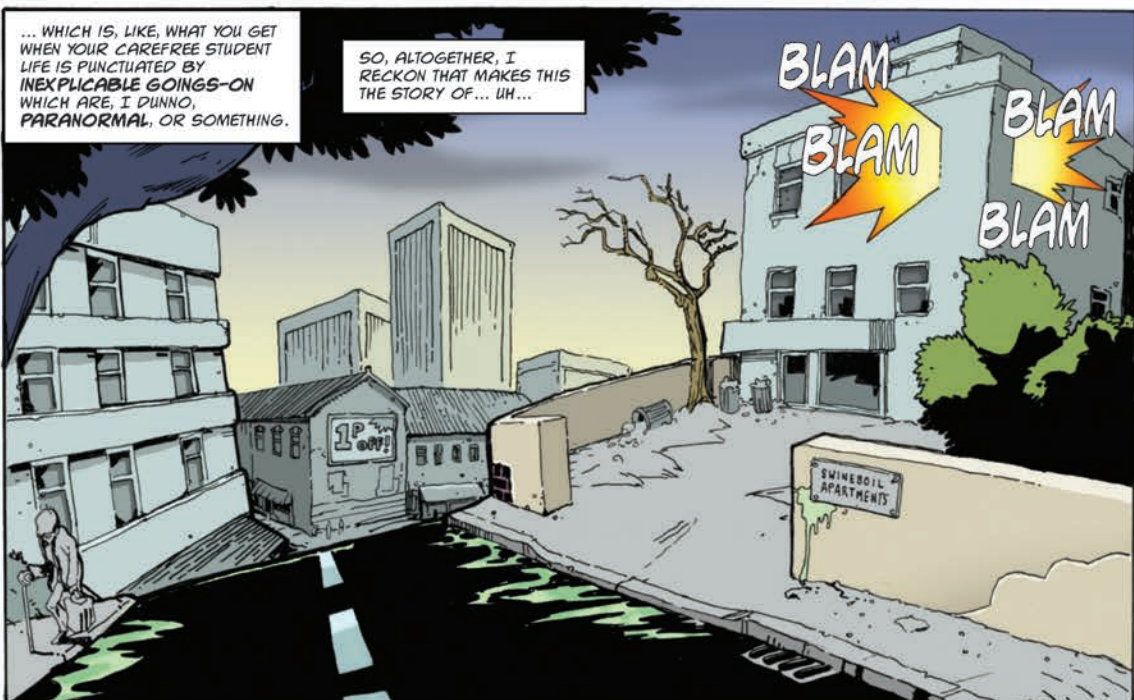
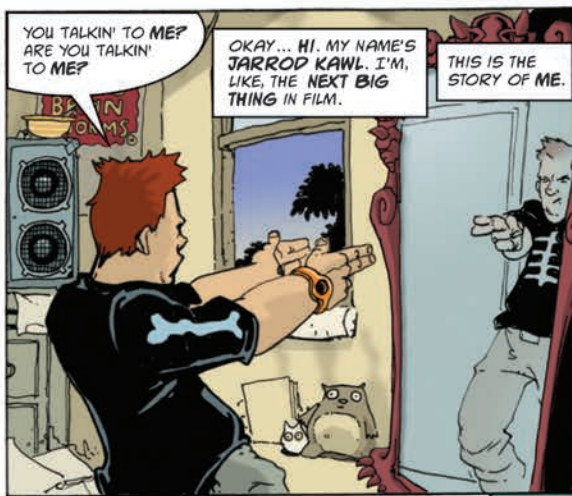
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BEC & KAWL AND THE MYSTICAL MENTALIST MENACE

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

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1290-1291









UH... MATE? WHAT WERE YOU THINKING ABOUT JUST THEN?

UM. NOTHING.

BOOOOONF



OH.
OH WOW.
THIS... IS... SO...



BRILLIANT!

I.L.M. ARE GONNA GO GREEN WHEN THEY SEE THIS!

WHEN THEY SEE WHAT?



THE MOST REALISTIC, GRITTY, STYLISH AND INNOVATIVE MONSTER-FLICK EVER MADE! UP YOURS, SPIELBERG! 'SPINOSAURUS', MY ARSE!

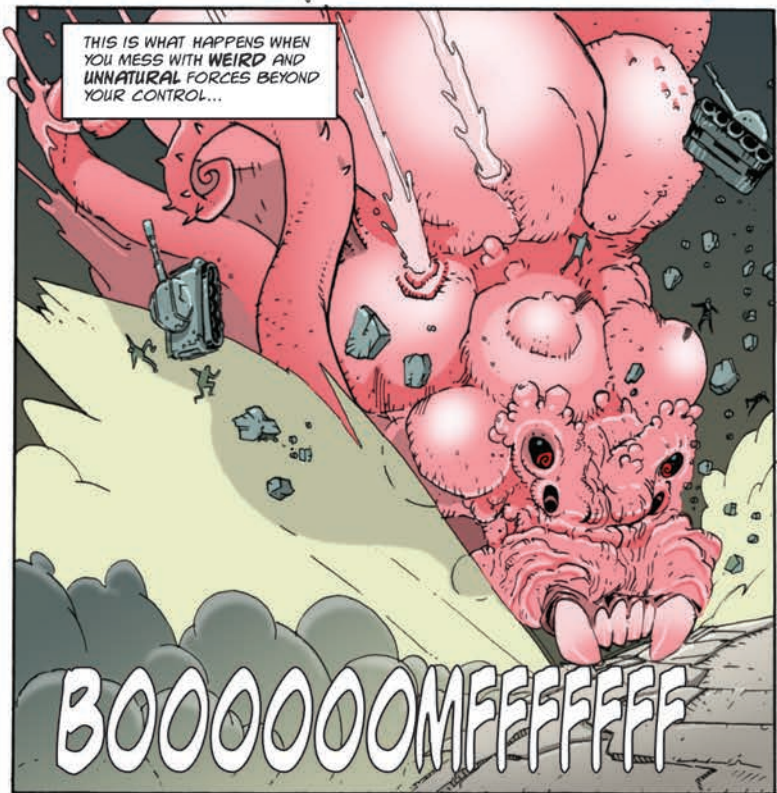
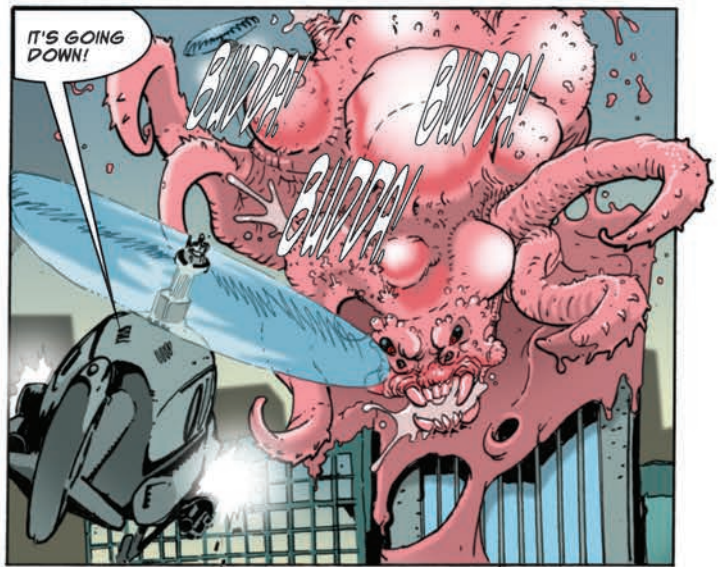
SO, LIKE, WHAT'S YOUR WORST FEAR, BEC? WHAT DID YOU CONJURE UP? GIANT SPIDER GODS? FLAYED INCUBI FROM THE WHORE PITS OF BAAL?

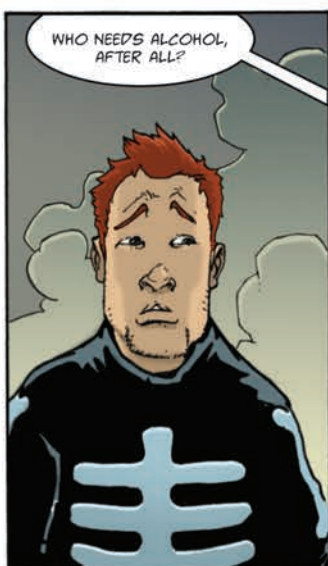
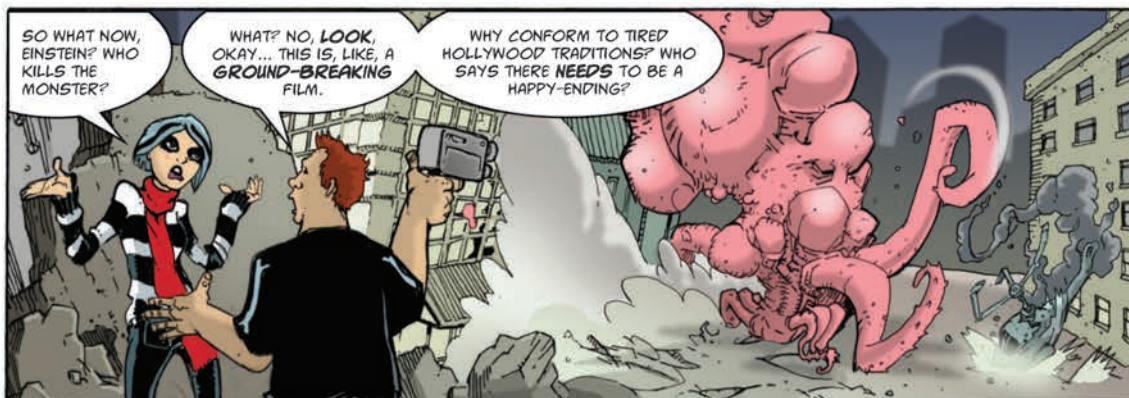


oh MY...

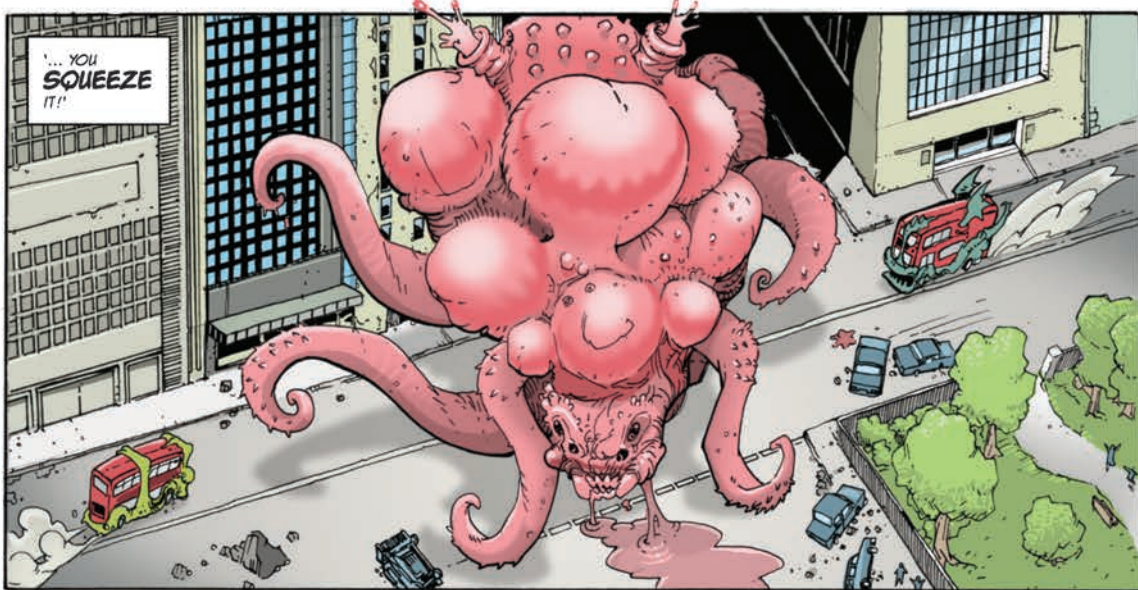
NO, DON'T BE SILLY. THE ONLY THING THAT SCARES ME IS...











EPILOGUE :

SO LISTEN, OKAY? WHEN YOU'RE, LIKE, THE **NEXT BIG THING** IN FILM, THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD **ALWAYS** REMEMBER TO CHECK...

... LOVE THE SMELL OF PUS IN THE MORNING... IT REMINDS ME OF VICTO—

... AAAAHH! LENS CAP! LENS CAP!

FORTUNATELY MY TUTOR DECIDED IT WAS AN EXPLORATION INTO THE INVISIBLE REALITIES OF SUBURBIA.

WHICH WAS COOL.

AND BECCY GOT HER PASS TOO, IN A REALLY ORIGINAL AND EXCITING FASHION —

SO IT ALL TURNED
OUT WELL AGAIN.

WE'VE LEARNT OUR LESSON
AND WILL NO LONGER BE,
LIKE, DABBLING WITH THE
OCCULT. NO WAY.



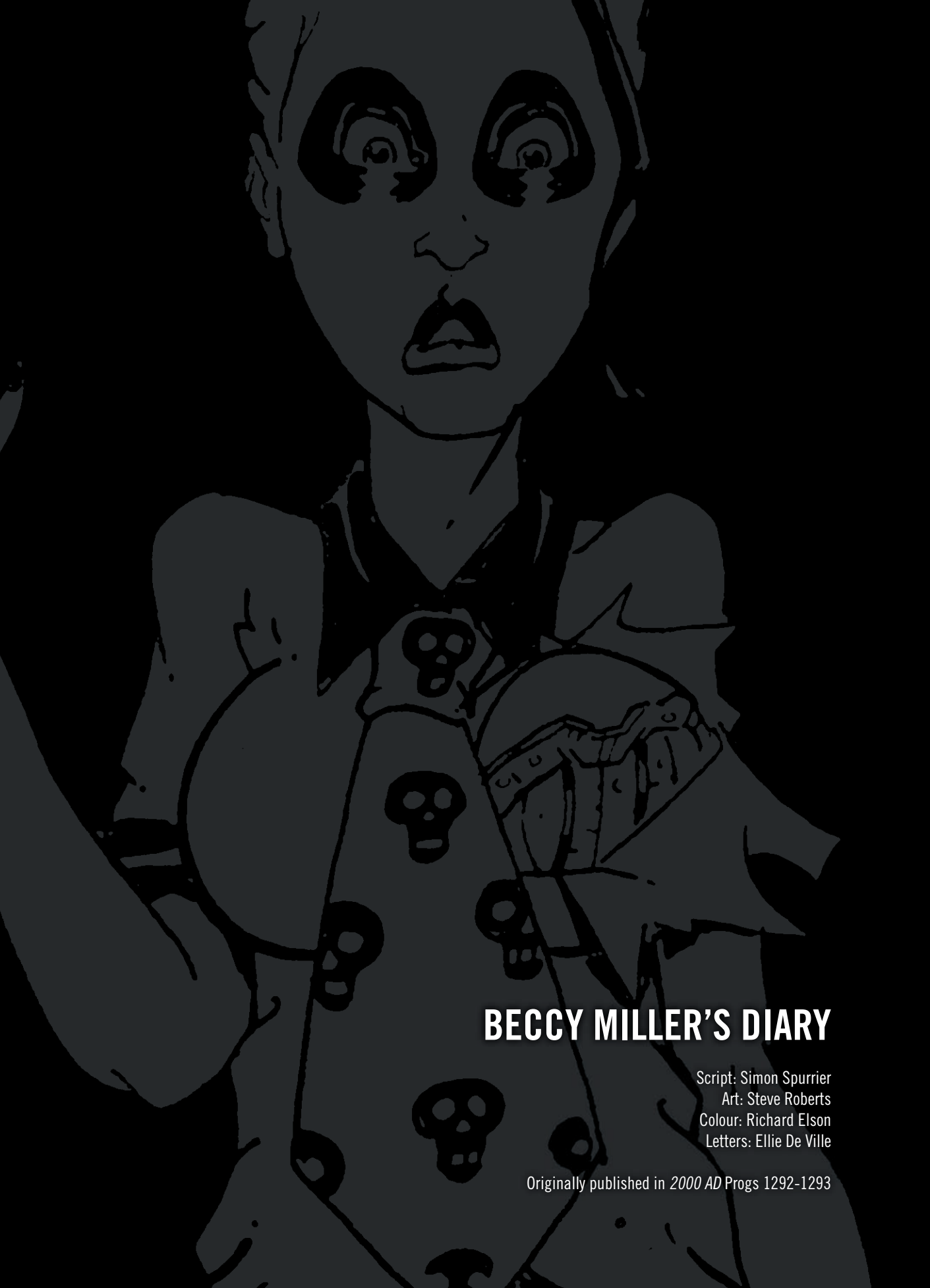
A cartoon illustration of a three-story apartment building. The building is light blue with a flat roof and several windows. A tree is on the left, and a bush is on the right. In the foreground, there is a concrete block with a sign that reads "SWINEBOIL APARTMENTS".

A cartoon illustration of a three-story apartment building. The building is light blue with several windows. A sign on the ground in front of the building reads "SWINEBOIL APARTMENTS". There is a tree to the left of the building and some greenery to the right. The sky is purple and blue.

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

SWINEBOIL
APARTMENTS

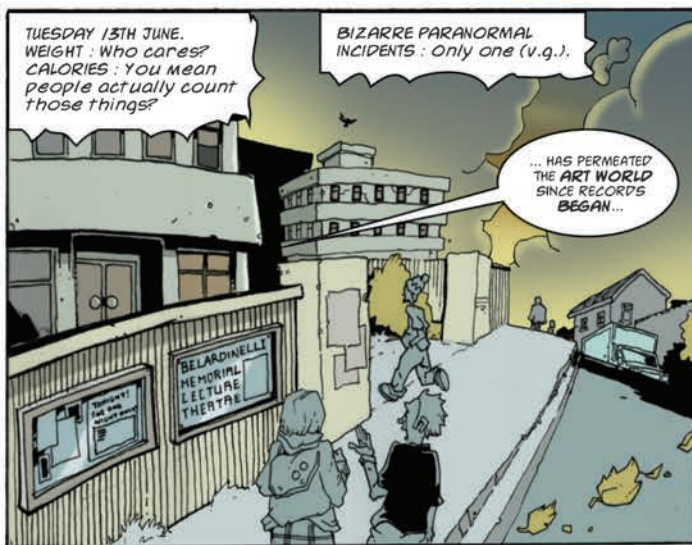
A cartoon illustration of a building labeled "SWINEBOIL APARTMENTS". Several green, tentacle-like appendages are growing out of the building's windows and roof. A speech bubble coming from one of the tentacles contains the text "Roooooooooooooooooooooo oooo —". In the foreground, there is a concrete block with the building's name on it. The scene is set in a dark, possibly night-time environment with some trees and a path.

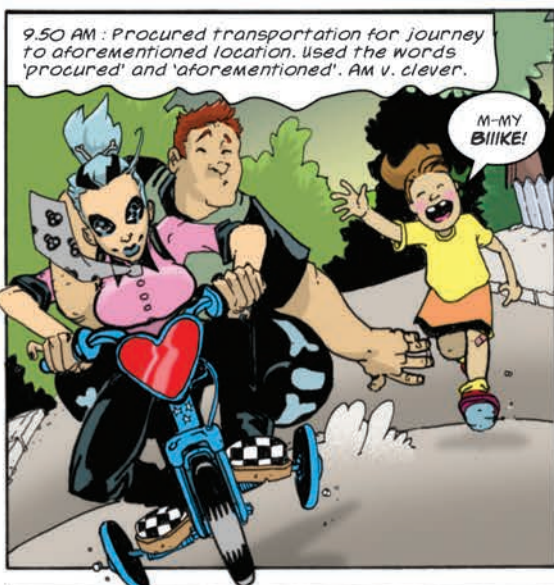


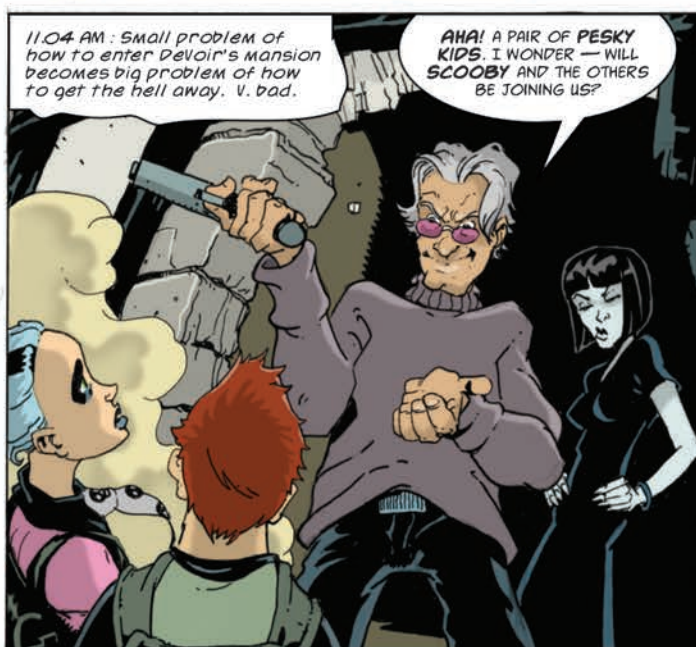
BECCY MILLER'S DIARY

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

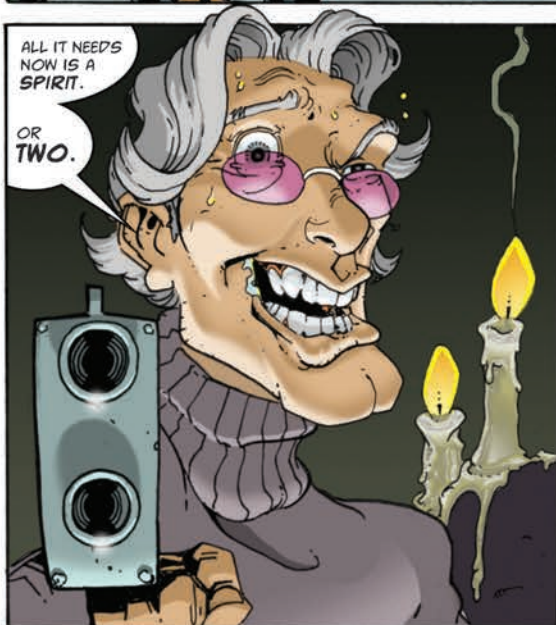
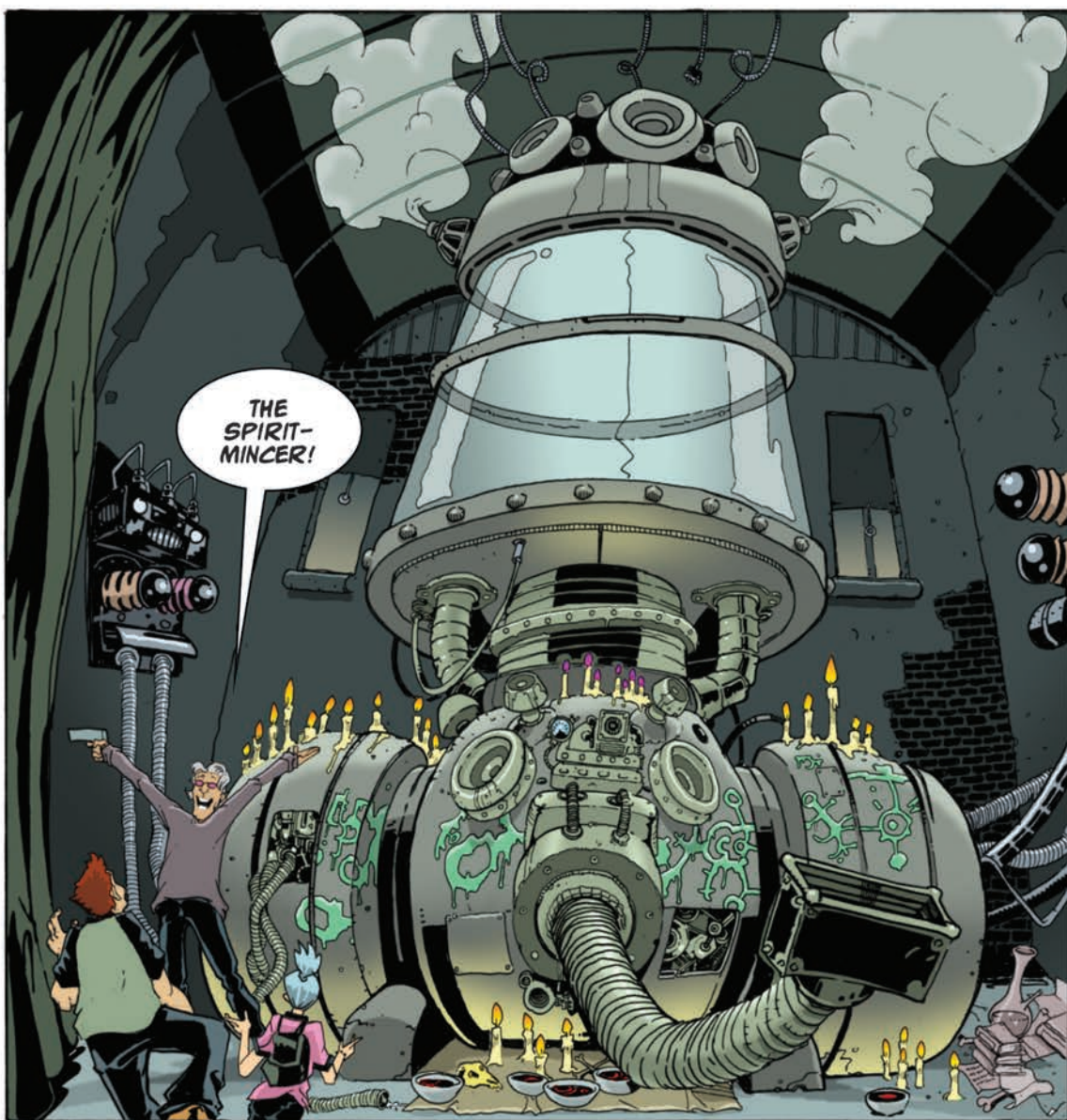
Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1292-1293







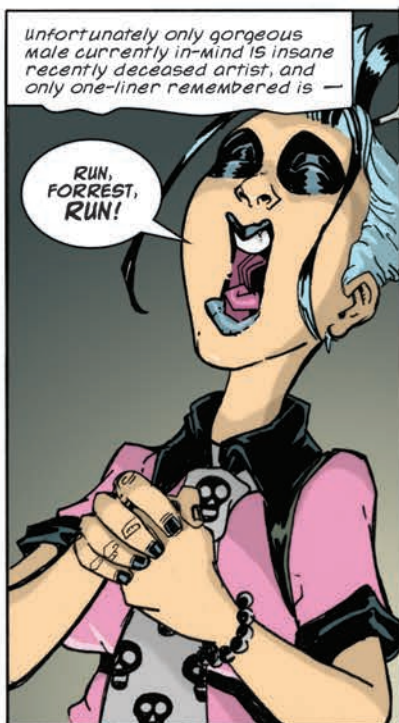






11.21 AM: Suddenly in extreme peril at hands of insane recently deceased artist. V. bad.

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



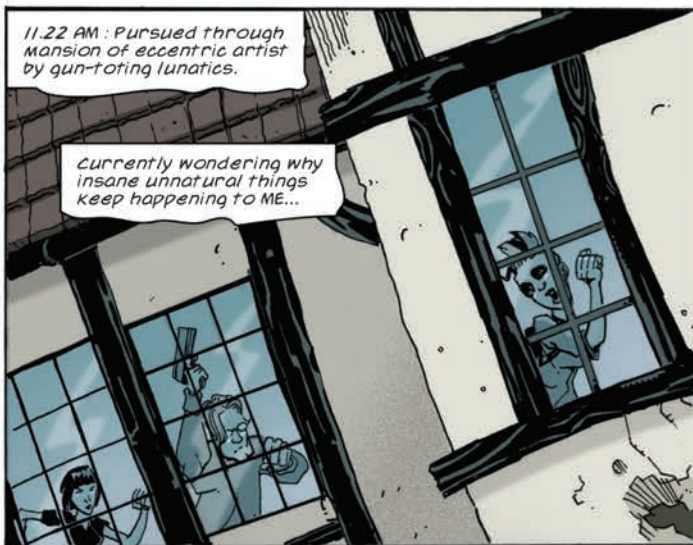
Unfortunately only gorgeous male currently in-mind is insane recently deceased artist, and only one-liner remembered is —

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...



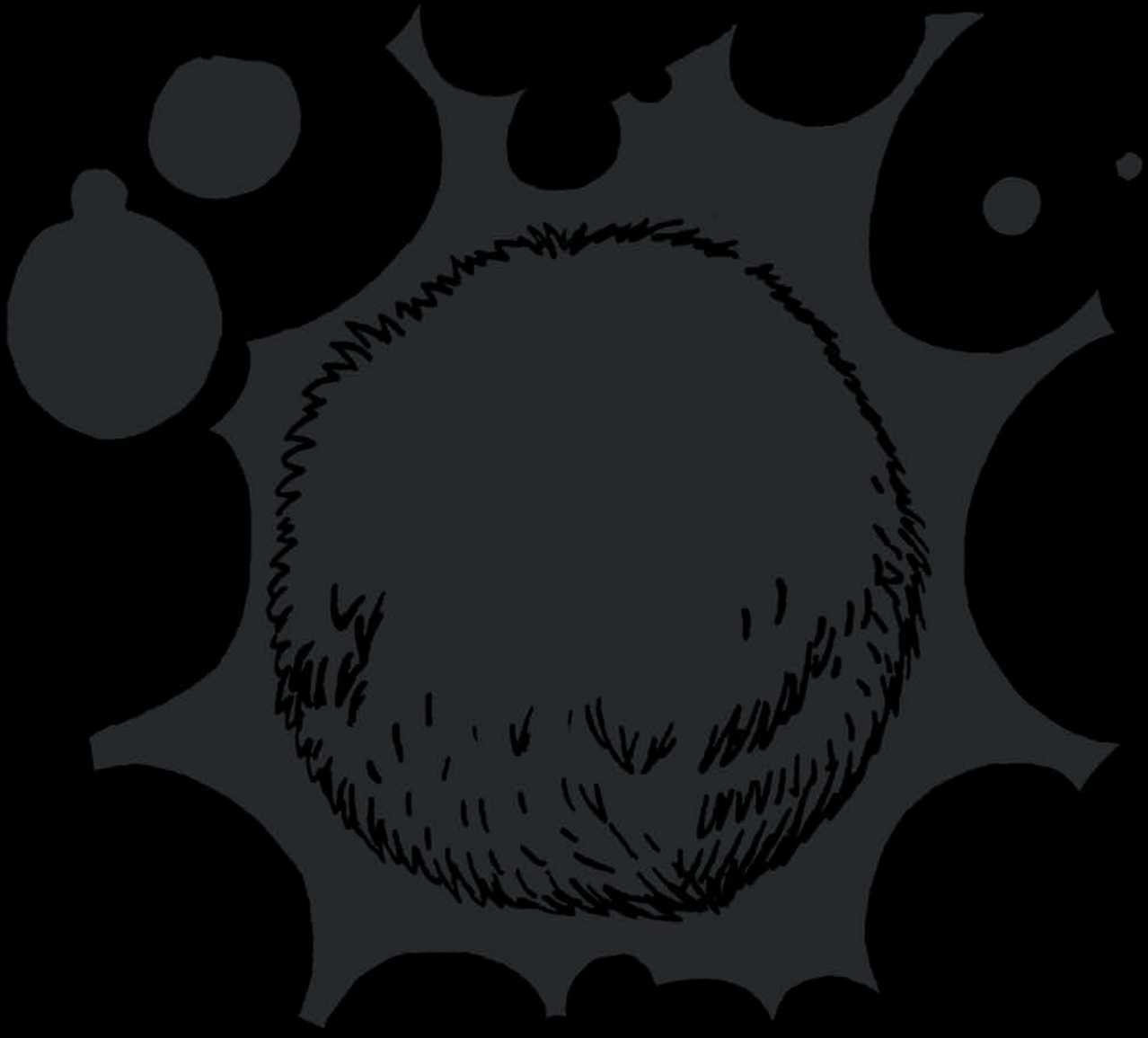
... GET BACK HERE YOU LITTLE B!TCH! ...

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

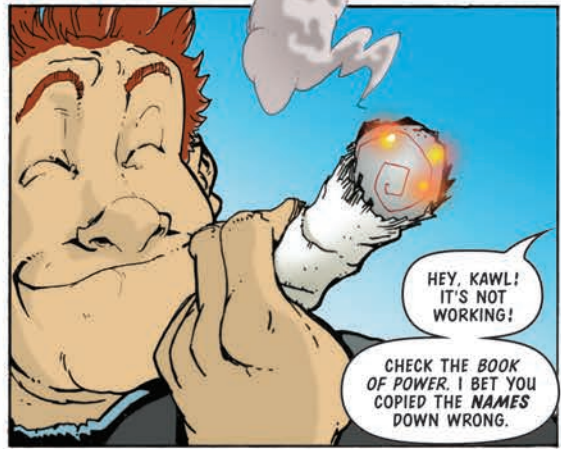
Script: Simon Spurrier

Art: Steve Roberts

Colour: Richard Elson

Letters: Tom Frame

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1327







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



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."

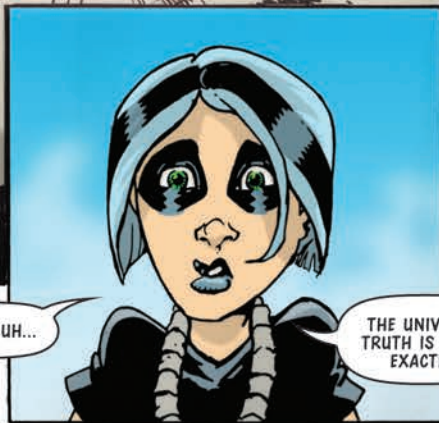
SO THIS BIG BLOODY THING ROSE UP INTO THE AIR, WYRD MAJIKAL DEVICES WHIRRING--



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



S-SO... UH...



THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH IS WHAT, EXACTLY?

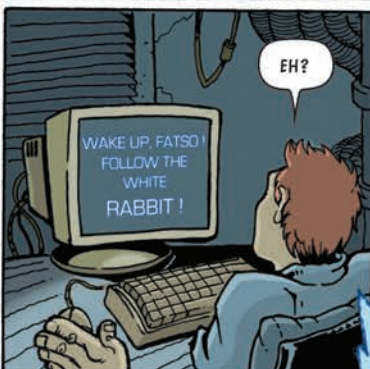
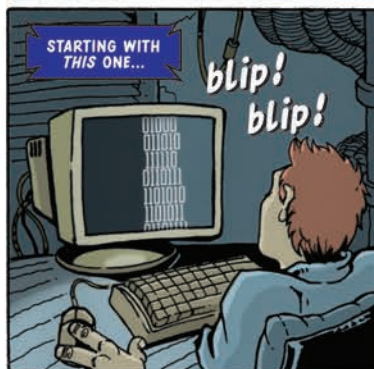
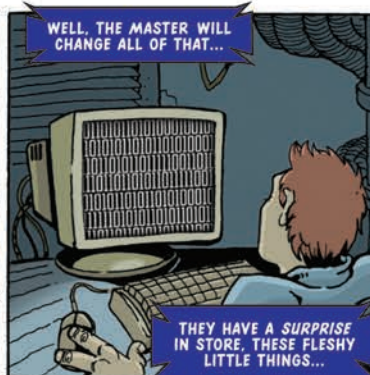
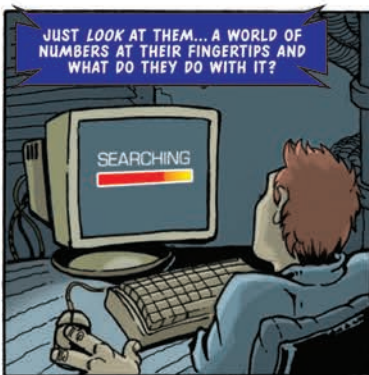


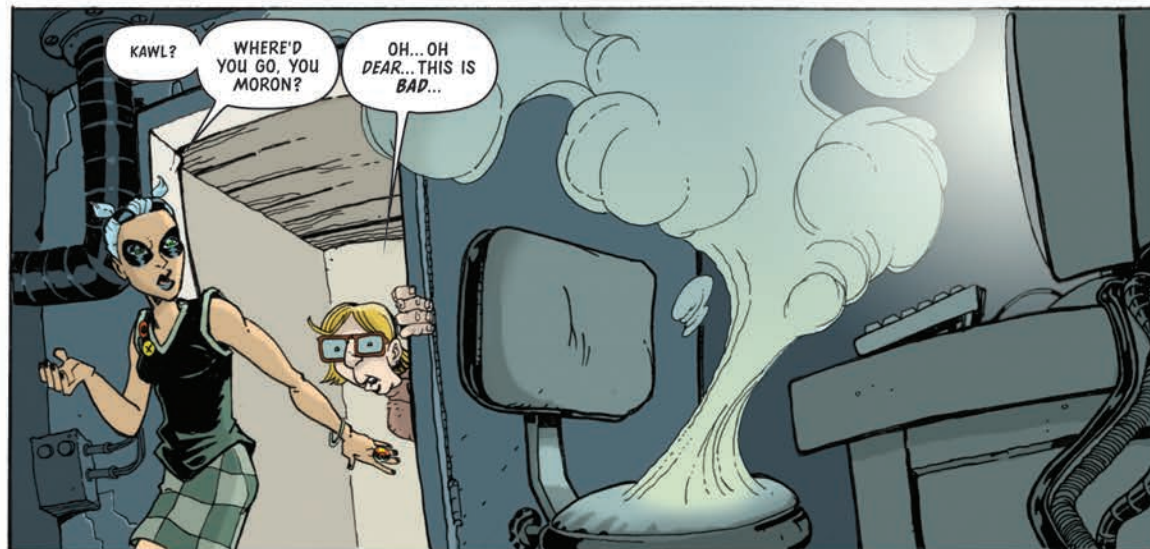
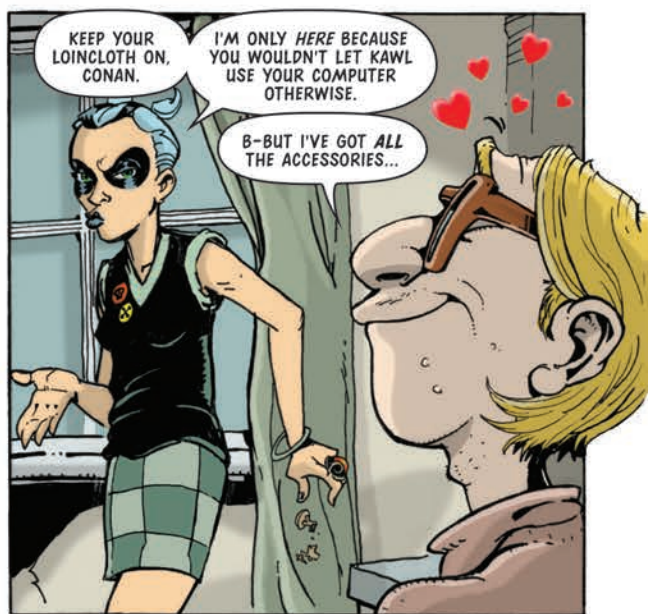


EEEVIL.COM

Script: Simon Spurrier
Art: Steve Roberts
Colour: Richard Elson
Letters: Tom Frame

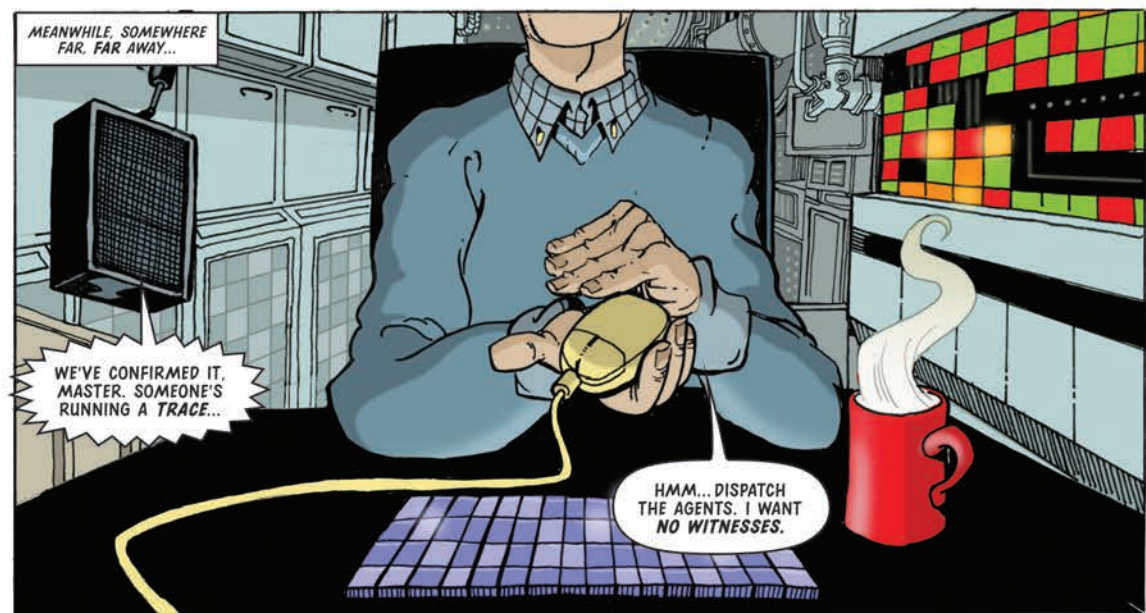
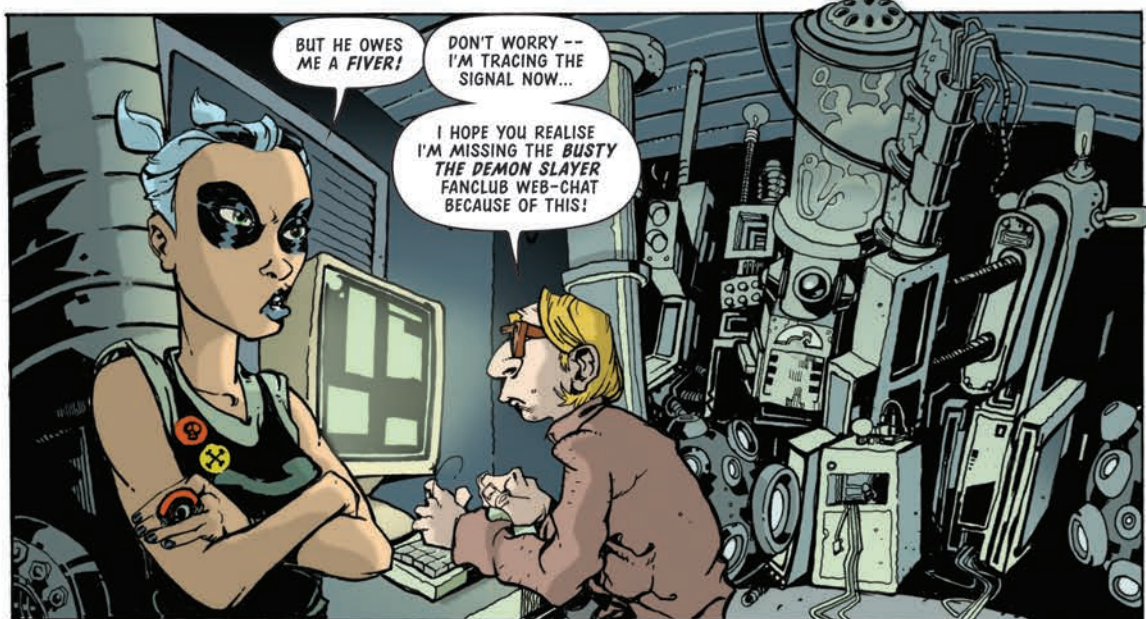
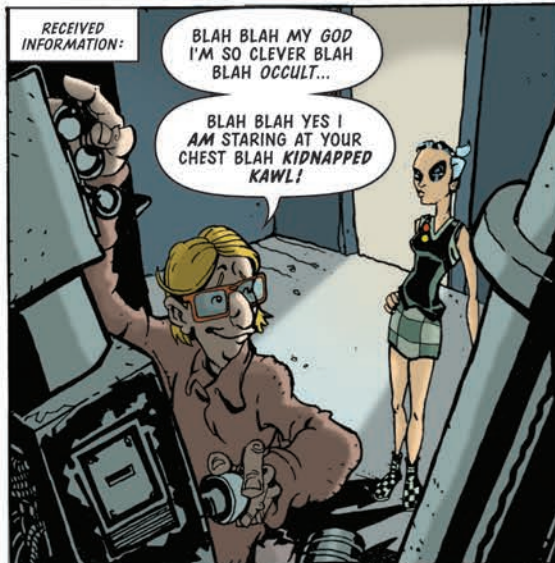
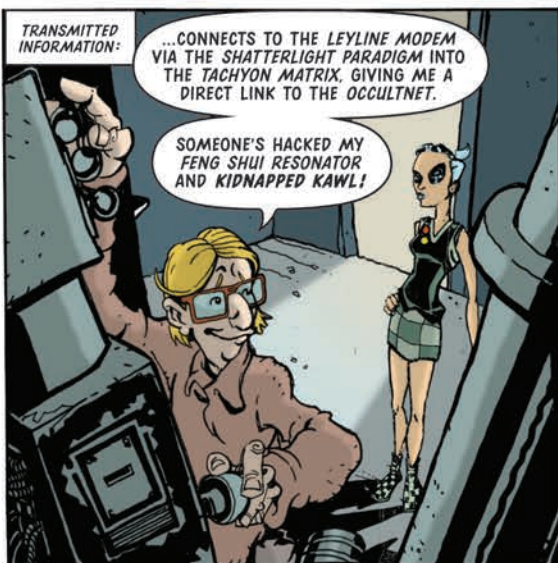
Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1328-1330





ZZZZZZZZKKK







RIGHT. TO SUMMARISE...

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

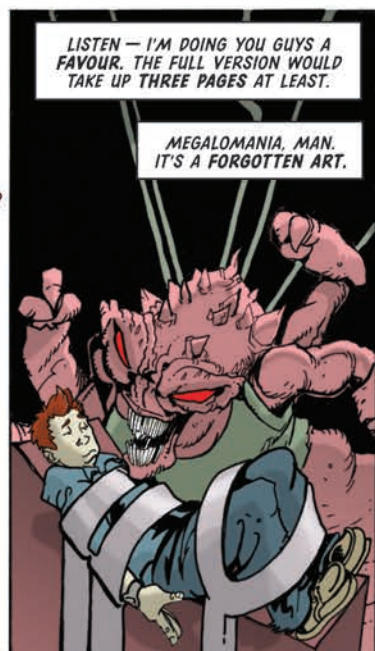


"BLAH BLAH WORSHIP THE MASTER
MUTTER MUTTER EVIL CACKLING
LAUGHTER ETC. ETC."



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

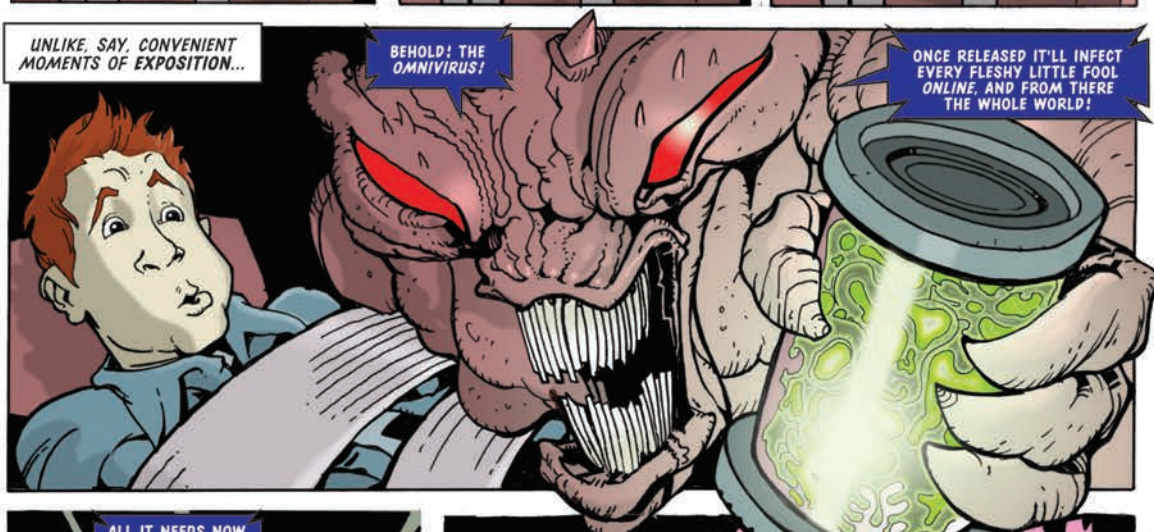
MEGALOMANIA. MAN.
IT'S A FORGOTTEN ART.



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 specialty.

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

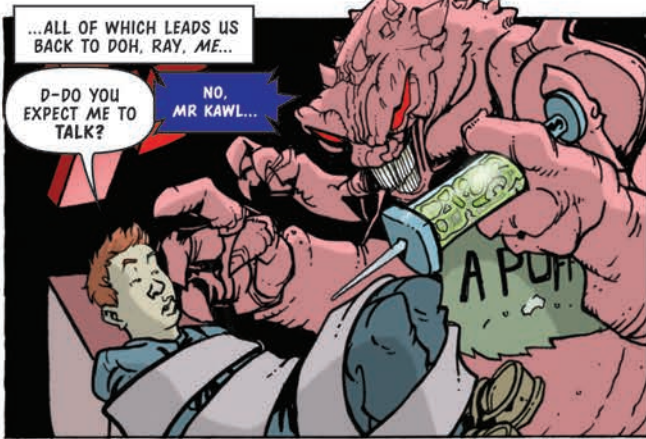
SHAG-E: Facial
features unknown.
Probably a poet,
writer or wizard.
Or all three.

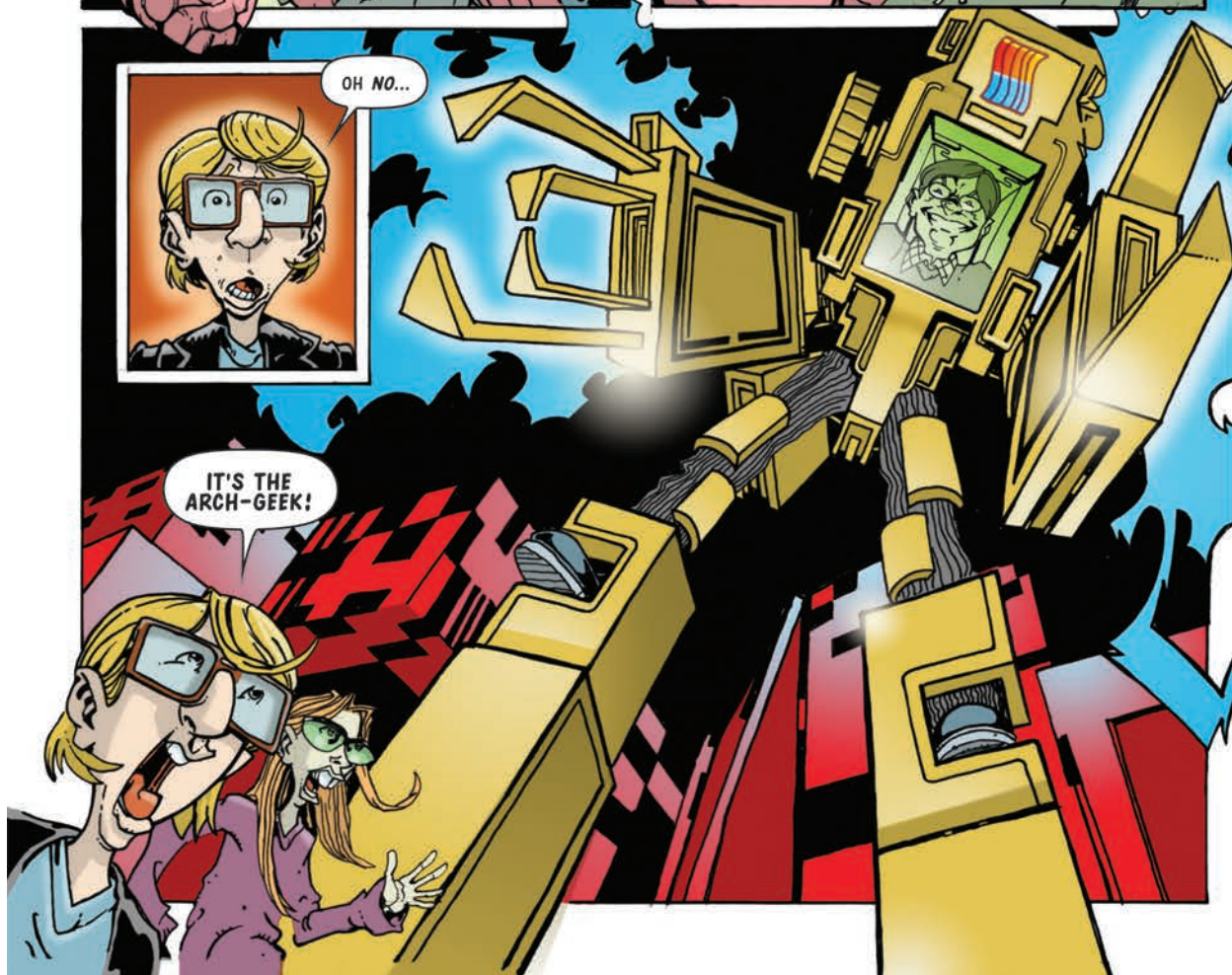
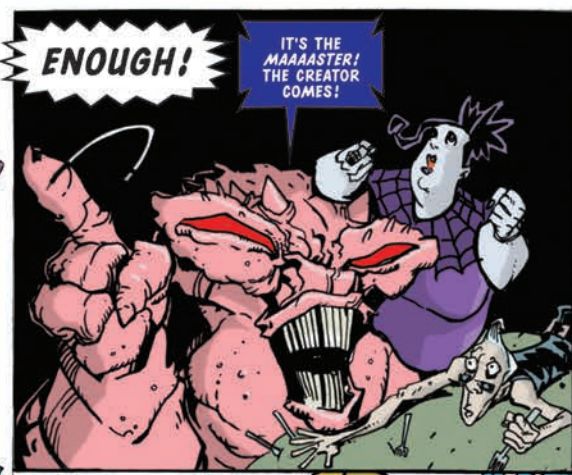
OYABYTE: Logisticist
supreme. Once drove the
editor of *Doctor Why?*
magazine insane by
highlighting
continuity irregularities.

BEEZ: 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...





THE CONCISE SCIENCE OF DEFYING
EVIL INTERNET MEGA GEEKS.

DETERMINATION.



CONFRONTATION.



DOMINATION.



SELF-CONGRATULATION.



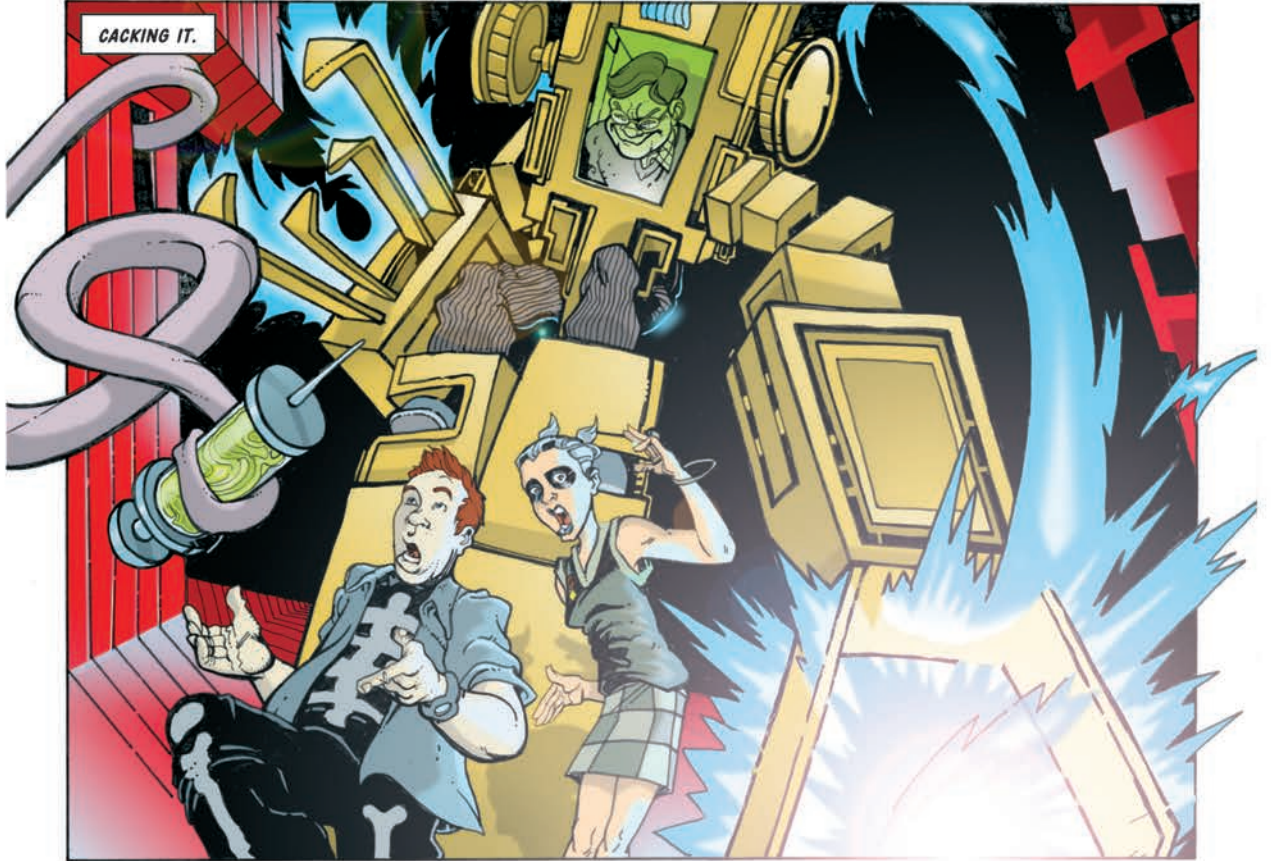
RESOLUTION.



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...

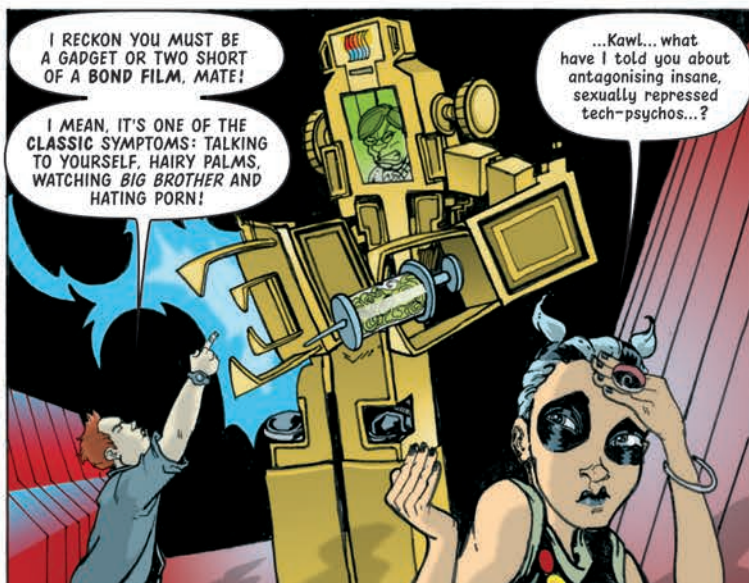
NOW HANG
ON—



I...

HATE...

PORN!



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

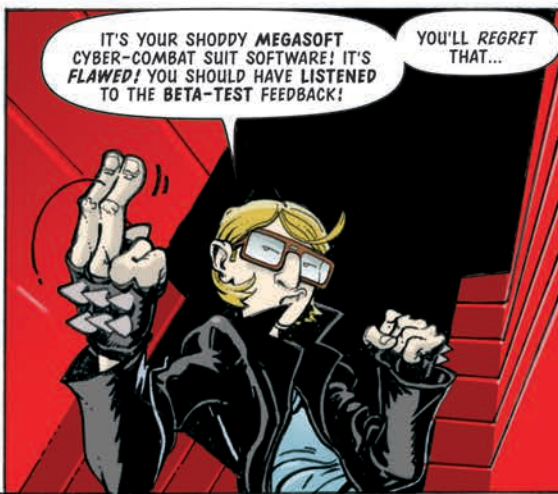
I MEAN, IT'S ONE OF THE
CLASSIC SYMPTOMS: TALKING
TO YOURSELF, HAIRY PALMS,
WATCHING *BIG BROTHER* AND
HATING PORN!

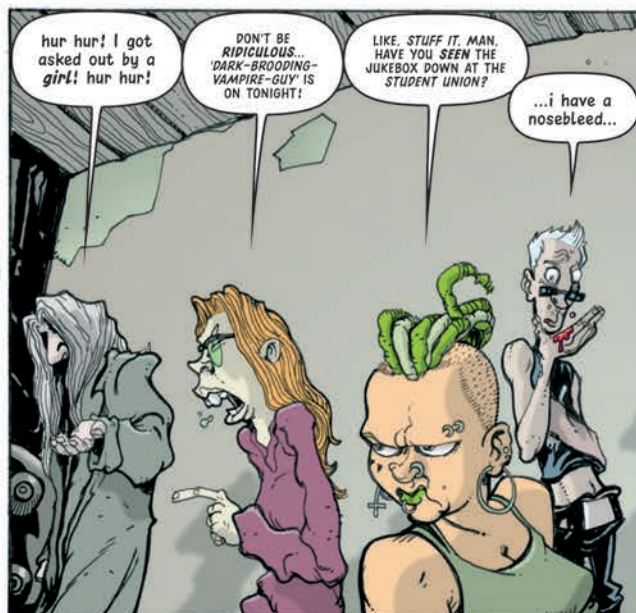
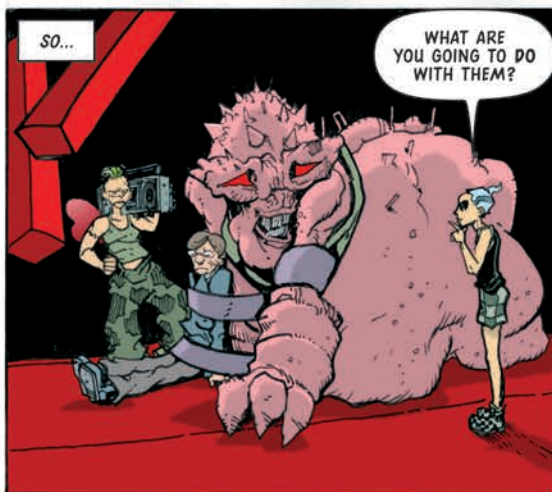
...Kawl... what
have I told you about
antagonising insane,
sexually repressed
tech-psychos...?



PREPARE FOR
INFECTION, SNIVELLING
MORTA—

MOR...ZZZZZ
M-M-M-MORRRRR—





SO, OKAY, THAT WAS PRETTY COOL.

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



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!





PEST CONTROL

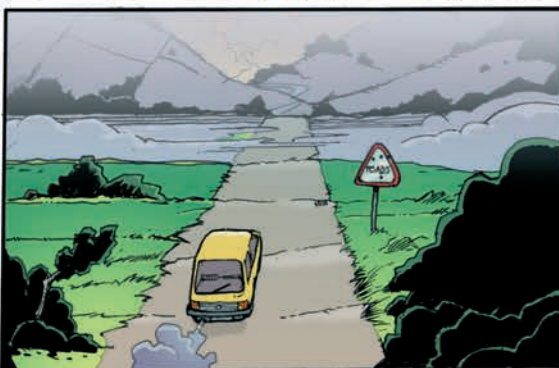
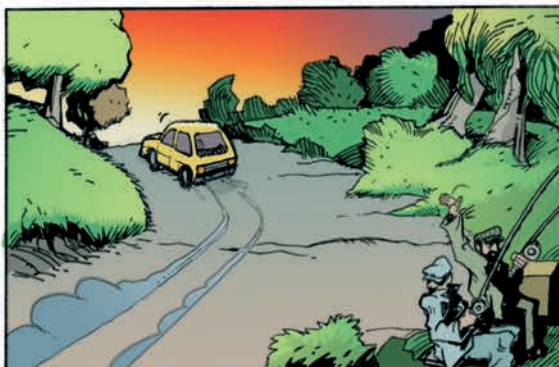
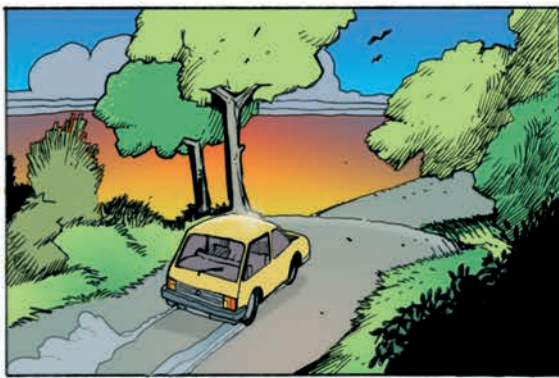
Script: Simon Spurrier

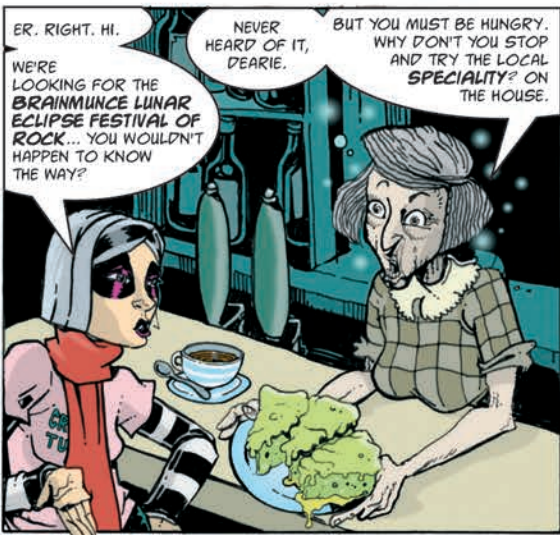
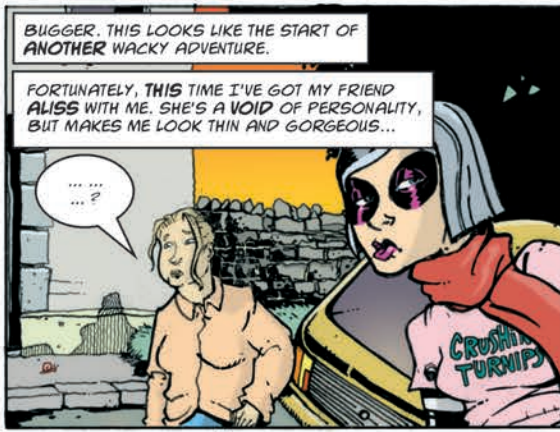
Art: Steve Roberts

Colour: Richard Elson

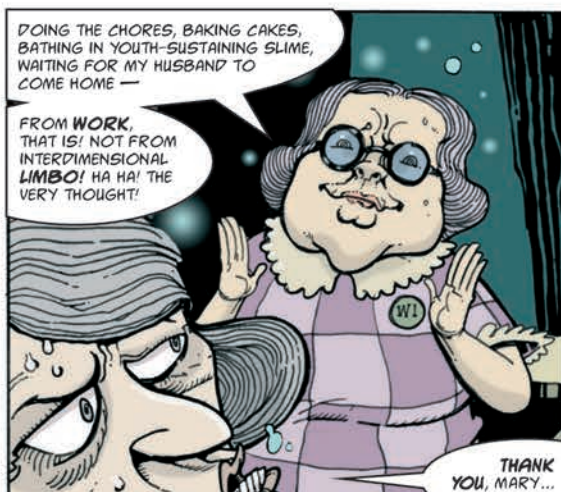
Letters: Ellie De Ville

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1351-1354











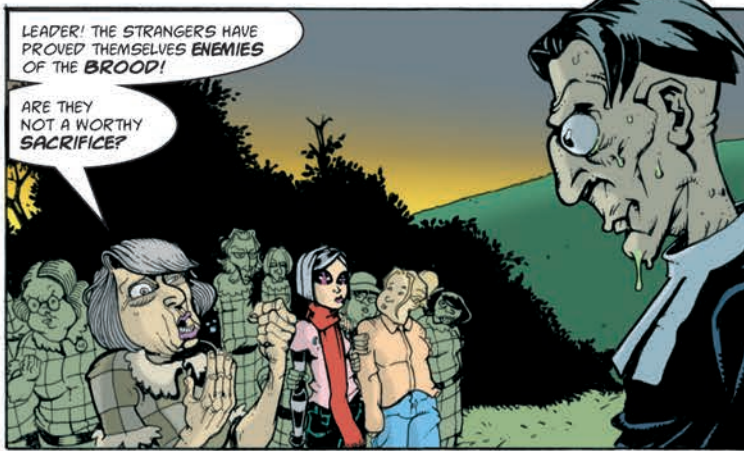


WELCOME TO THE
IN-BETWEEN, ANGLO
PUPPY-FOOL.









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?



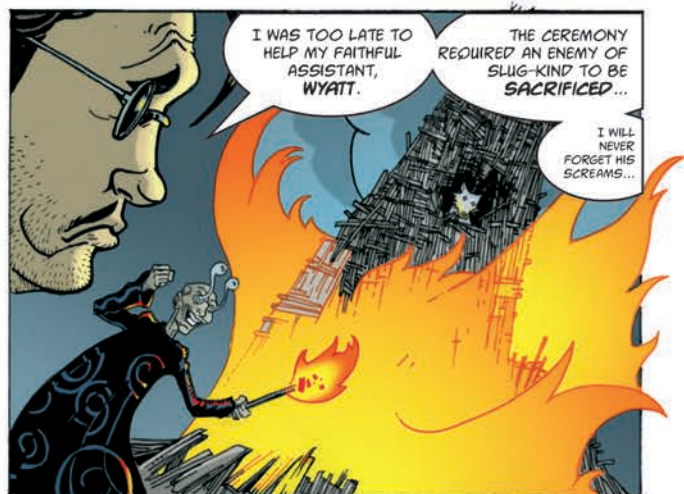
RUN.



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 GRAPPLLED 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.



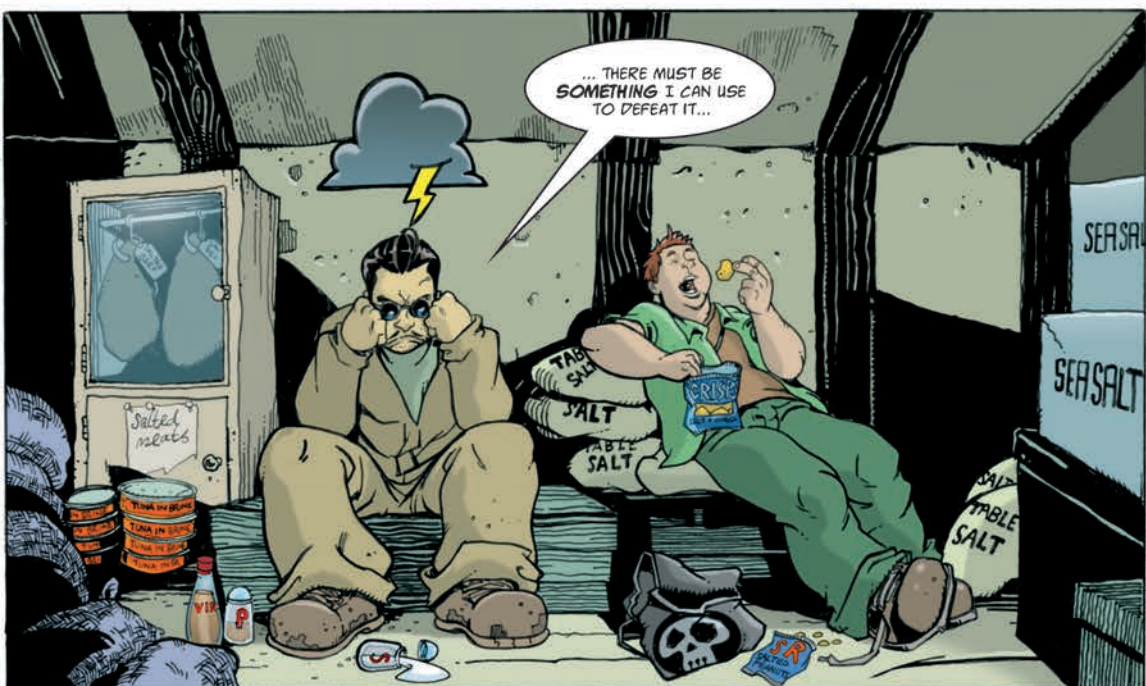
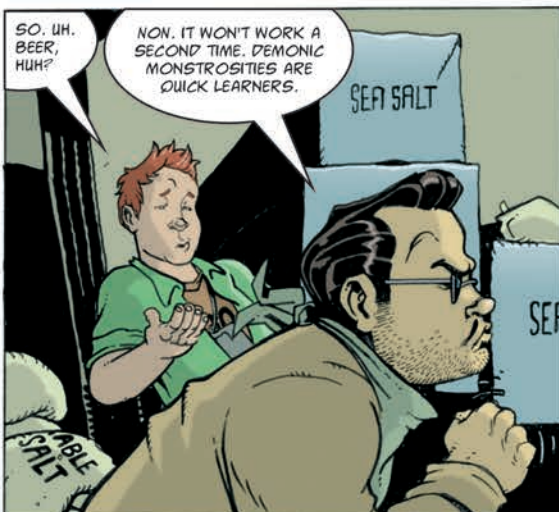
CHOKE ON IT, FILS DE PUTE!

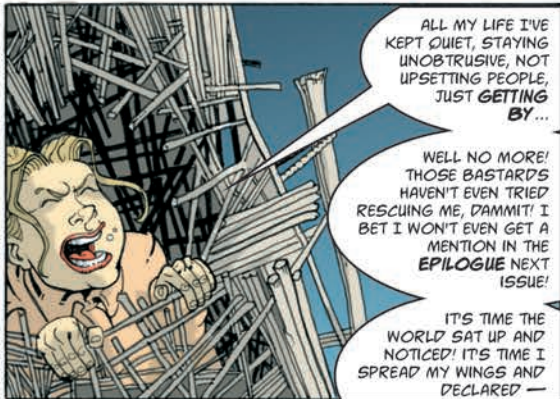
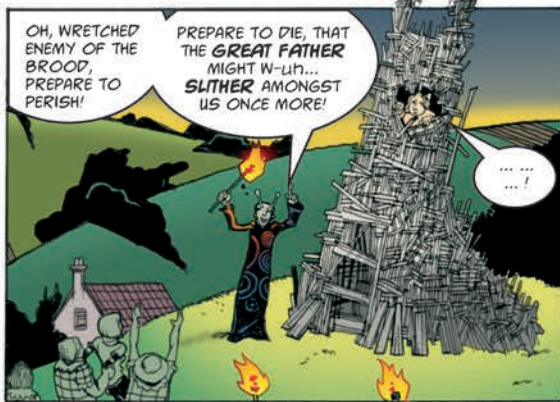


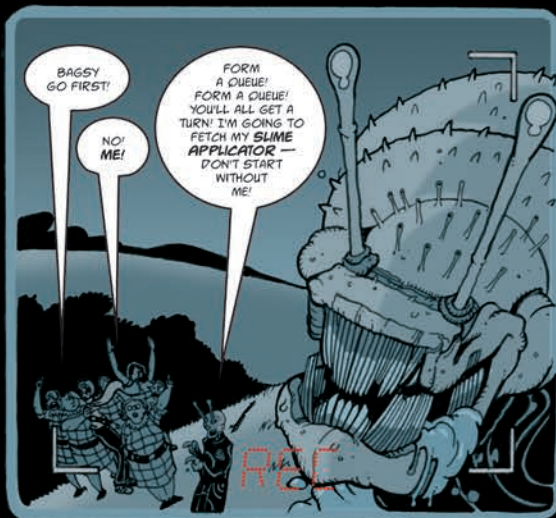
'DEMONIC PESTS ARE EVEN WORSE WITH THEIR **BERRE** THAN YOU FLUFFY-BUNNY **ANGLOS**.'

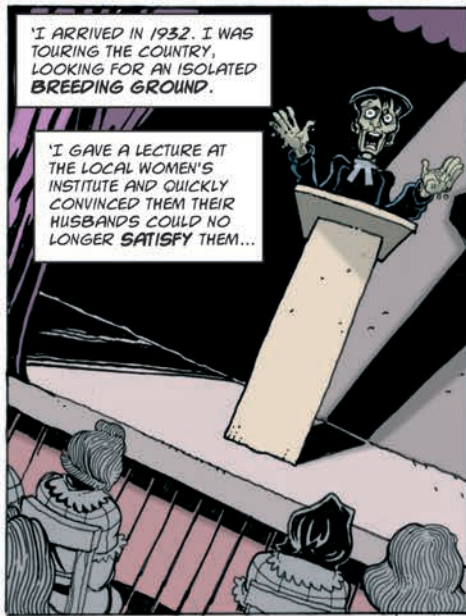


SHLOOORRRPP









'I ARRIVED IN 1932. I WAS TOURING THE COUNTRY, LOOKING FOR AN ISOLATED BREEDING GROUND.'

'I GAVE A LECTURE AT THE LOCAL WOMEN'S INSTITUTE AND QUICKLY CONVINCED THEM THEIR HUSBANDS COULD NO LONGER SATISFY THEM...'



'I'M CHARISMATIC IN THAT FASHION...'

'WOMEN LOVE MY SLIME. IT MAKES THEM MY SLAVES...'



THIS IS, LIKE, TOTALLY DISGUSTING...

TELL ME WHAT I CAN USE TO KILL THE BEAST OR I'LL CHOP OFF YOUR OTHER EYE!



HA! YOU DON'T SCARE ME! THE GREAT FATHER HAS RETURNED STRONGER THAN EVER!

YOU'RE NOTHING TO HIM, FROG! SPLXXXXNAKRX WILL DEVOUR YOUR SOUL WITH A BLOOD-GARNISH AND GARLIC TO TASTE!



NAH. EVERYONE KNOWS YOU CAN'T EAT SOULS WITH GARLIC.

YOU WANT A NICE PUKKA POT OF KETCHUP AND A QUICK SPRINKLE OF SA-



-LT.

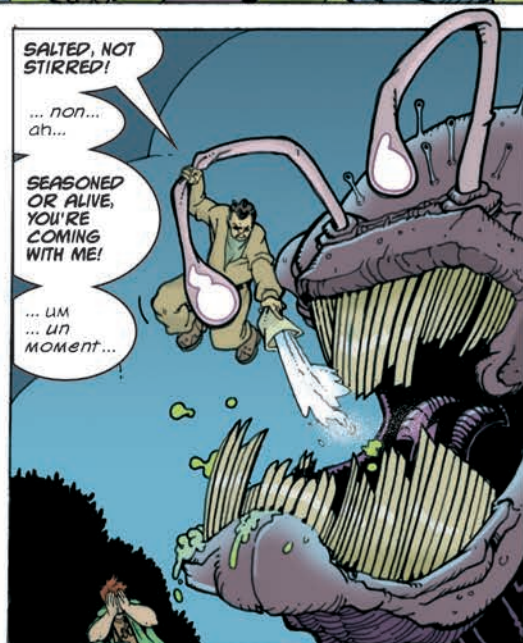


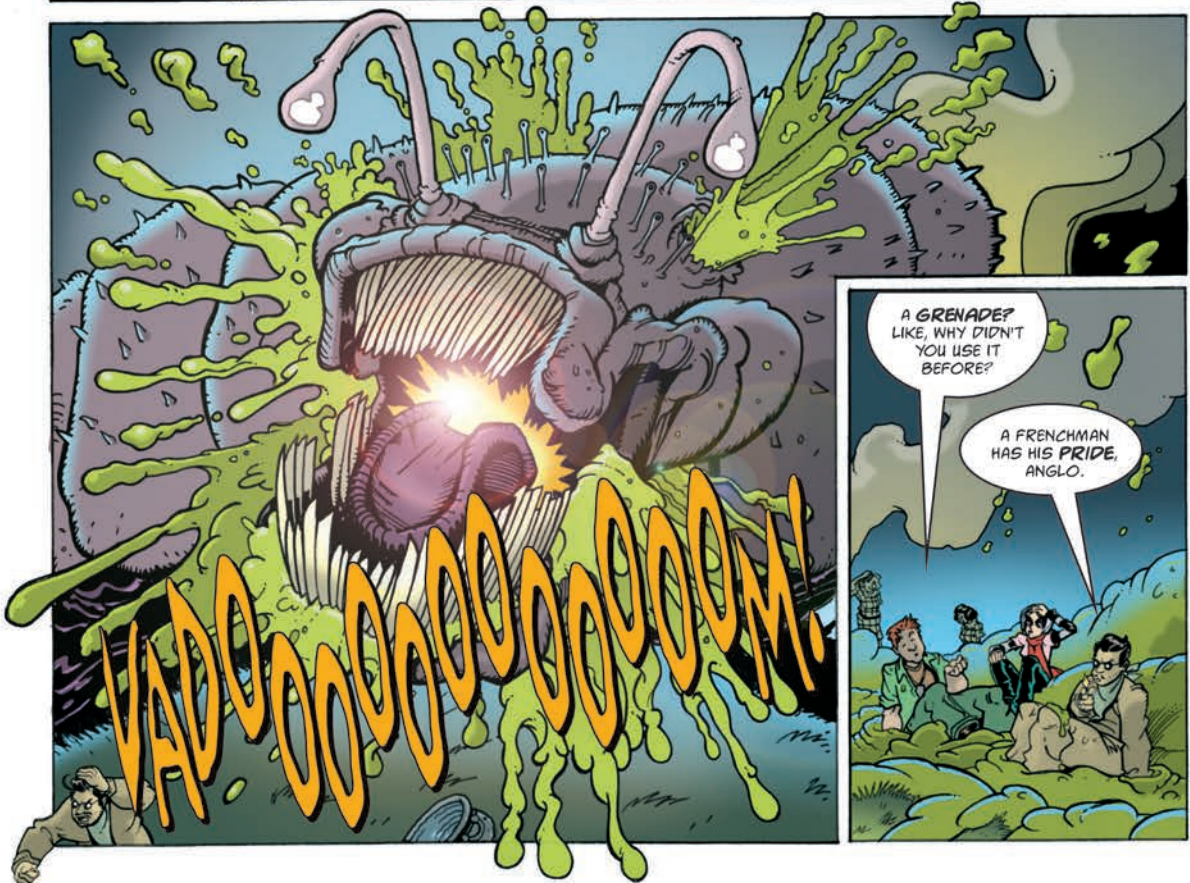
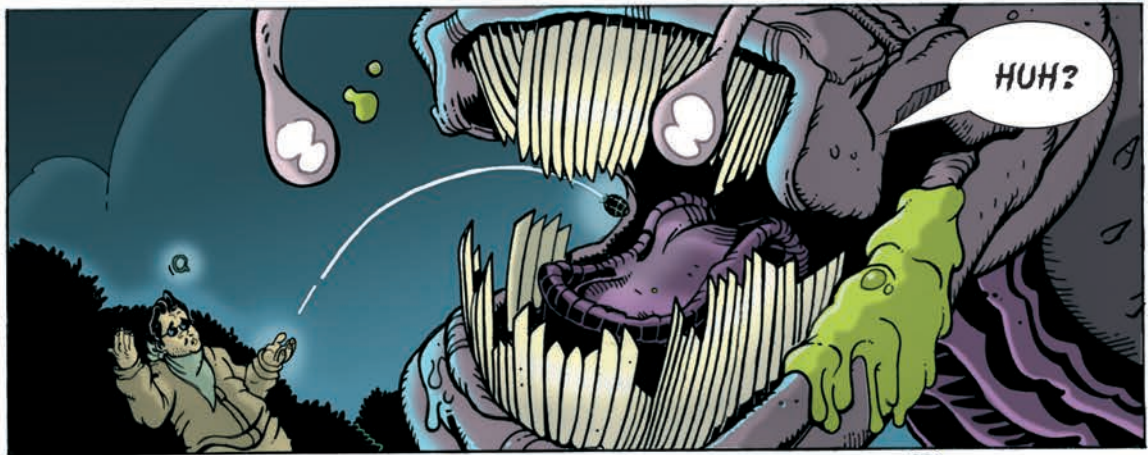
THIS IS YOUR OLD-FASHIONED WAY?

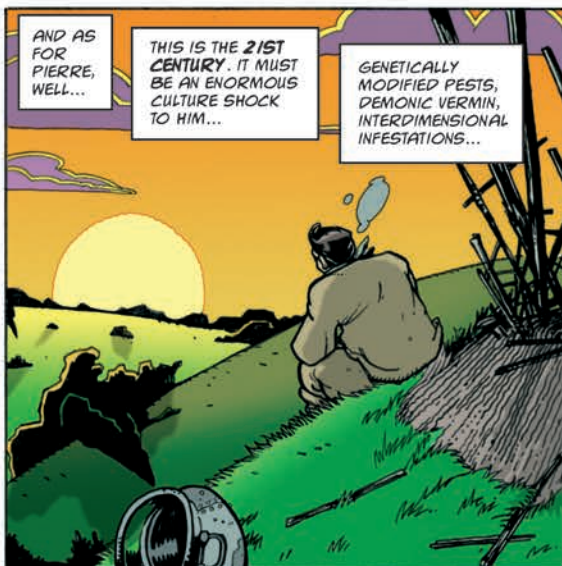
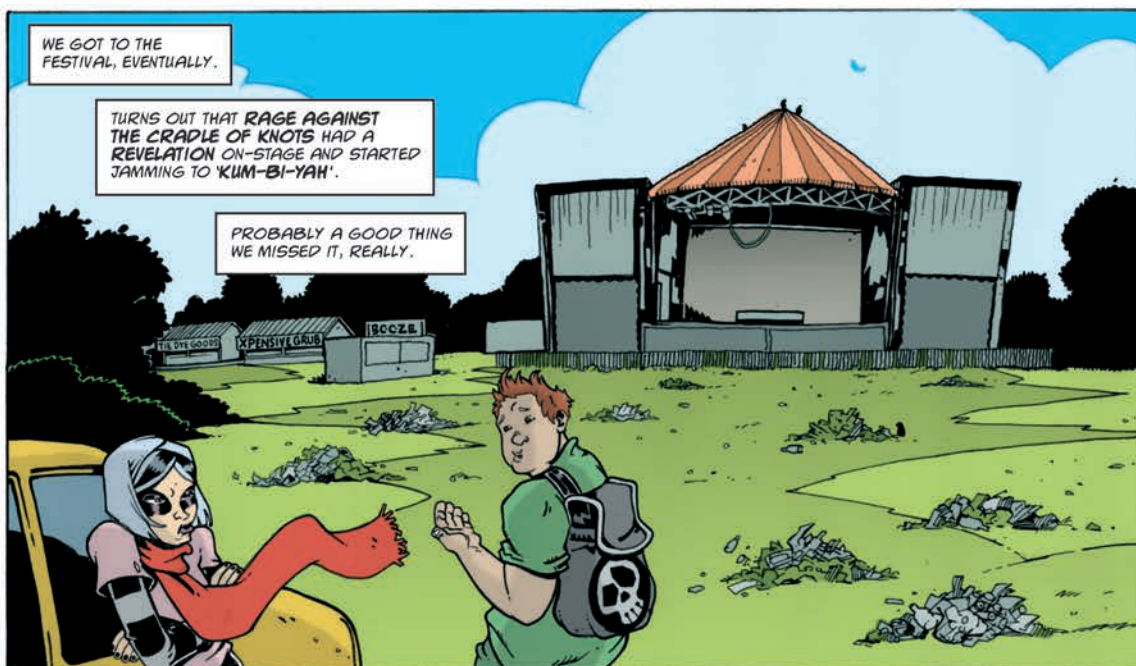
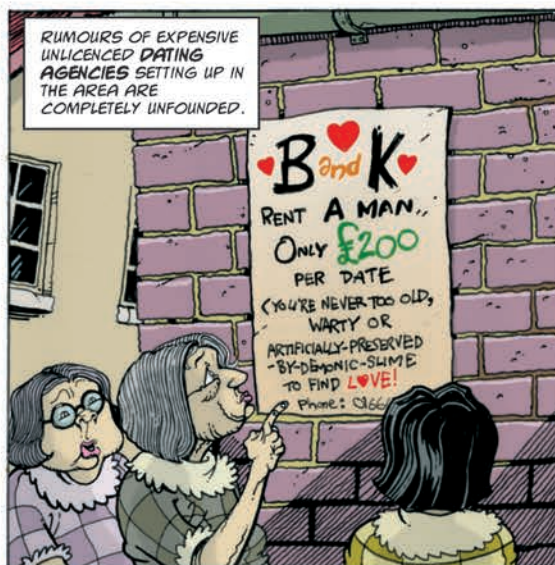
WHAT DID YOU USED TO DO? LIKE, INTERROGATE WASPS TO FIND THEIR NESTS?

IT'S NO LAUGHING MATTER, BOY. PEST CONTROL IS A BRUTAL SCIENCE...

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!









SHUT
UP.

AND
TRY TO FIND
OUT WHERE WE
ARE...

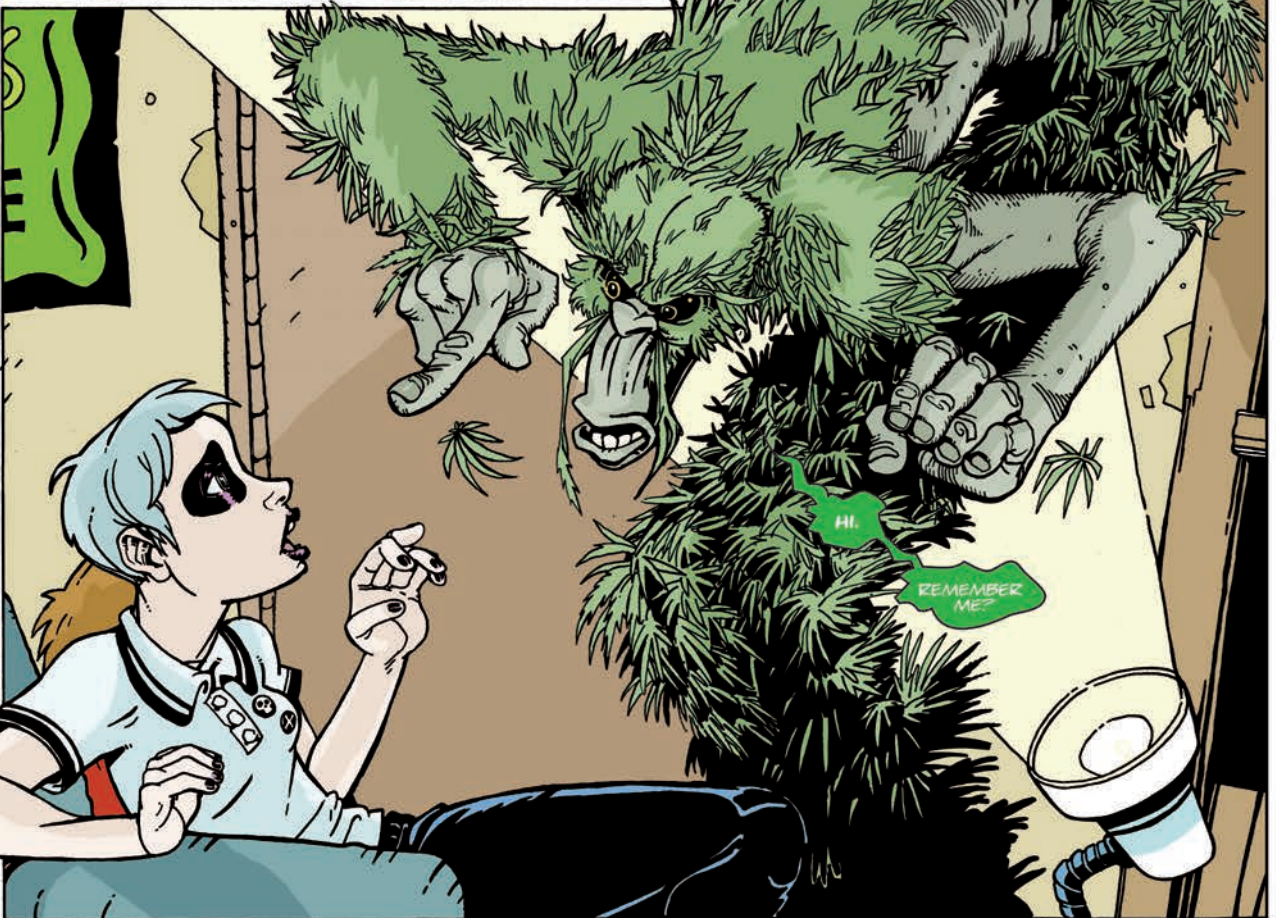
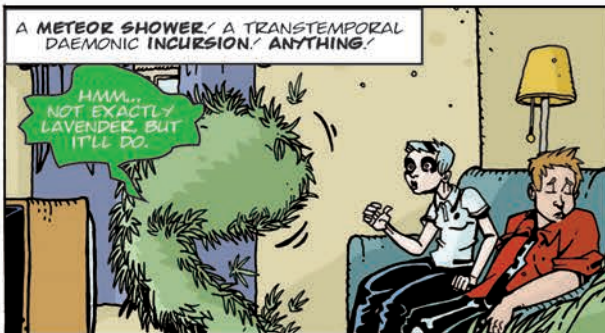
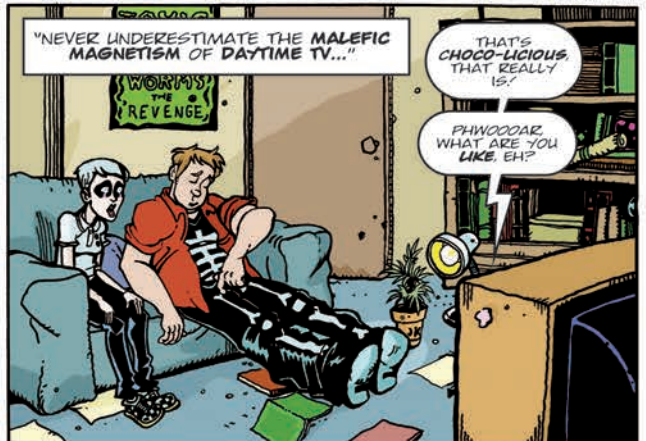
TOOTH ACHE

Script: Simon Spurrier

Art: Steve Roberts

Letters: Annie Parkhouse

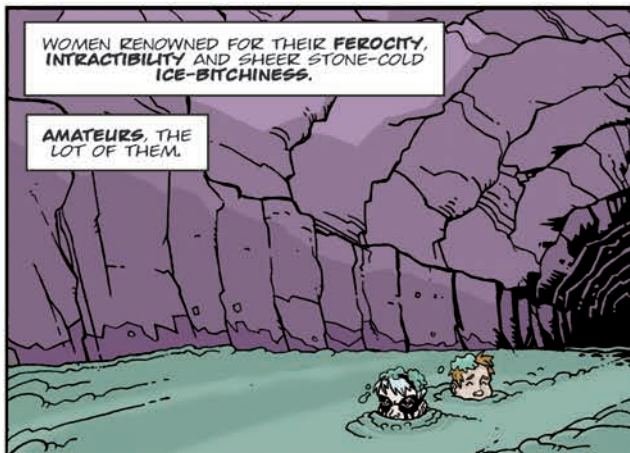
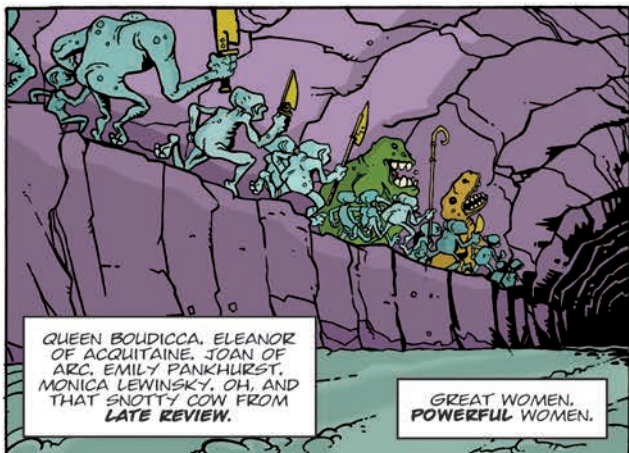
Originally published in 2000 AD Progs 1383-1386













< "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-
YOUNG FOLK STAY THAT WAY... >

* THARGNOTE: TRANSLATED FROM THE ANNOYING
LISP-TALK FOR THE DURATION OF THE FLASHBACK.

< "FOR MILLENNIA THE
MAGICAL REALM WAS
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, THIN-
THE HE TOOK
OVER...



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

HE GROWTH MORE AND MORE POWERFULL ATH THE RETHIT 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 INDUTHTRIALITHING - 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!

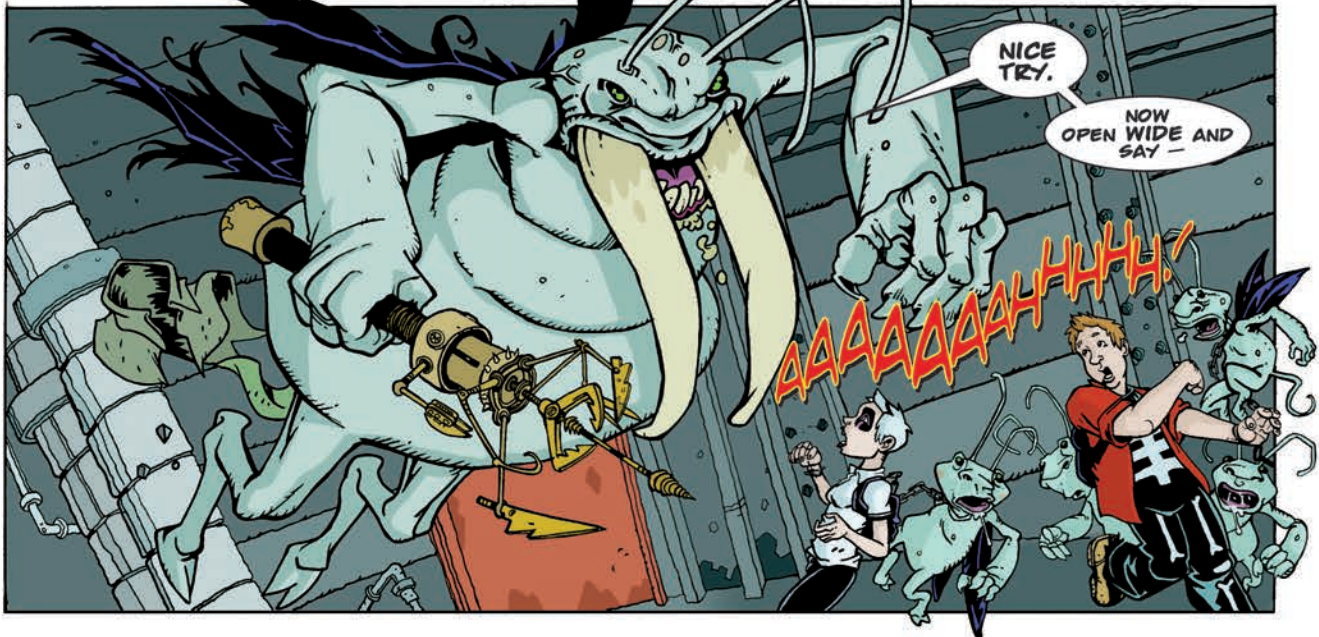
SHADDUP, SHORTARSE, OR DID YOU LIKE IT IN THE DUNGEONS?

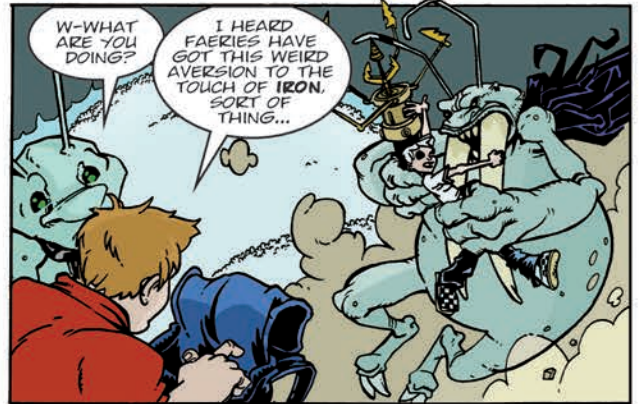
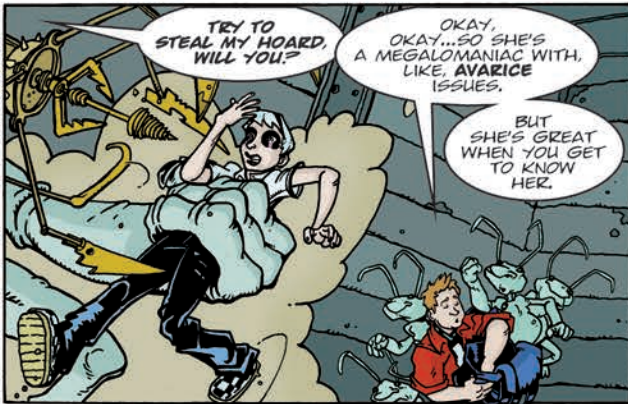
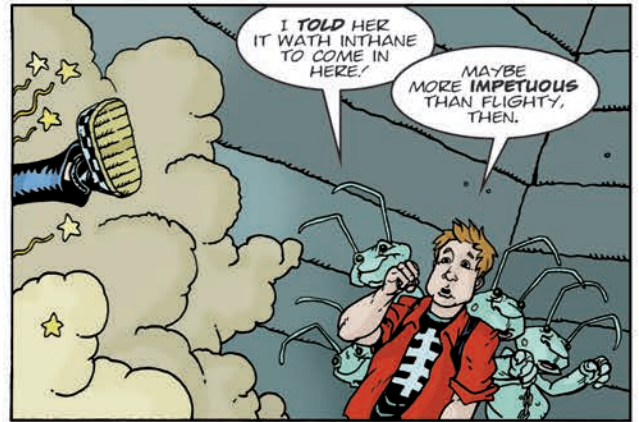
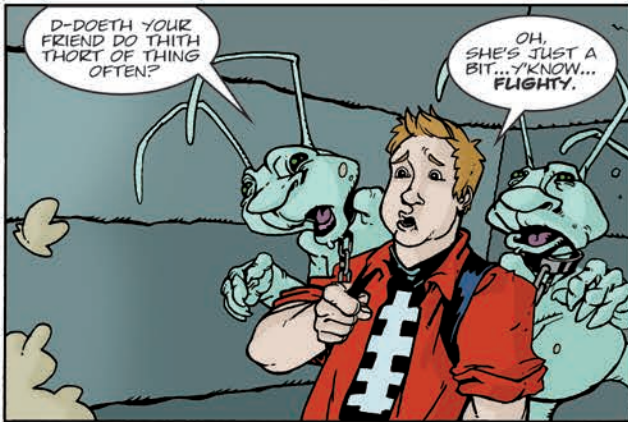


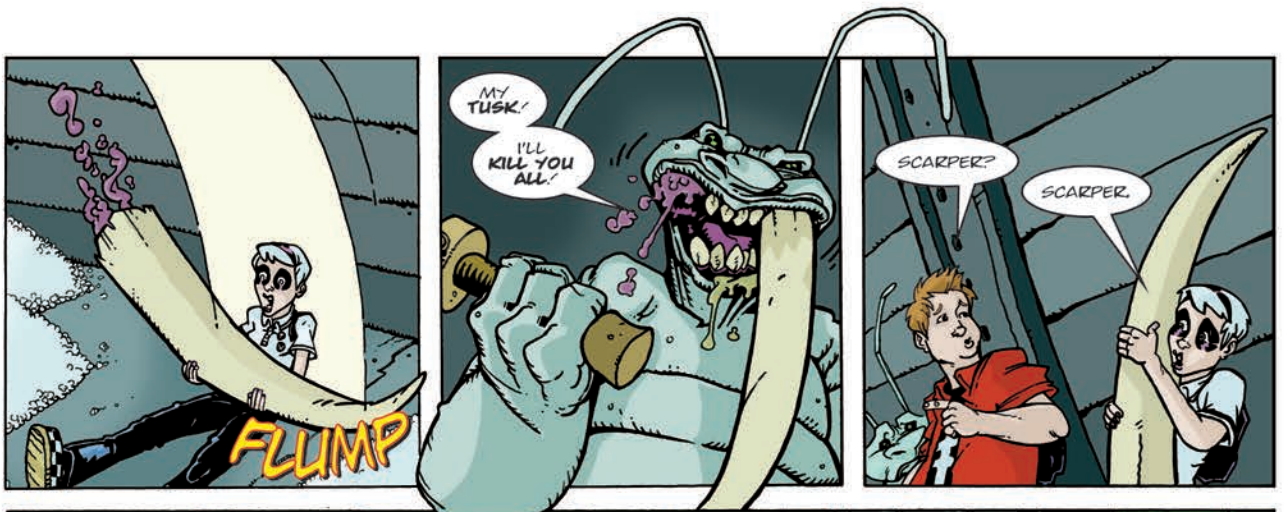
OH, MY, GOD.

WE SHOULD, LIKE, GIVE HER A MOMENT.

SHE GETS EMOTIONAL...



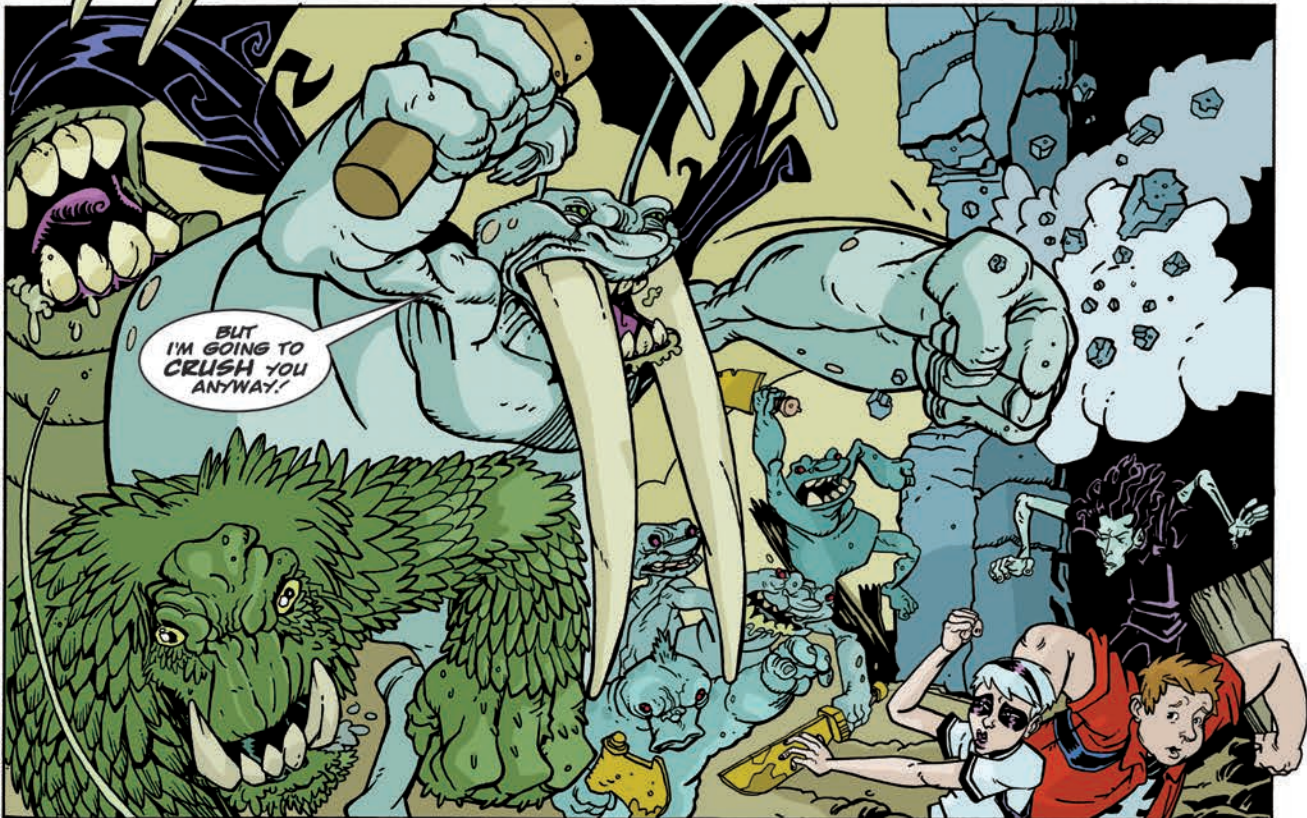






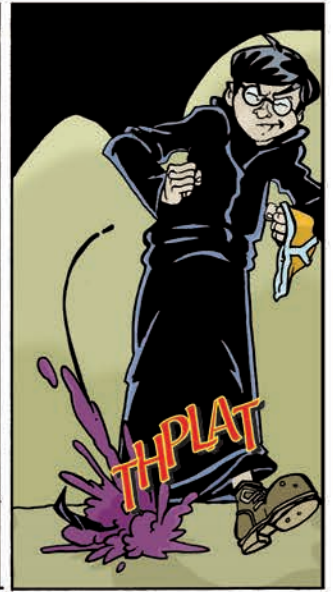
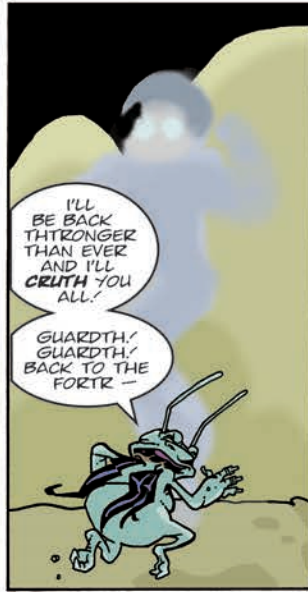
















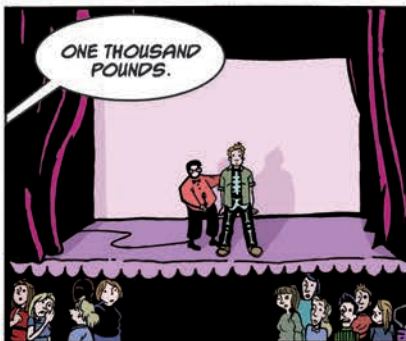
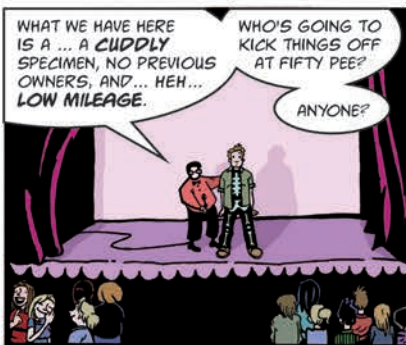
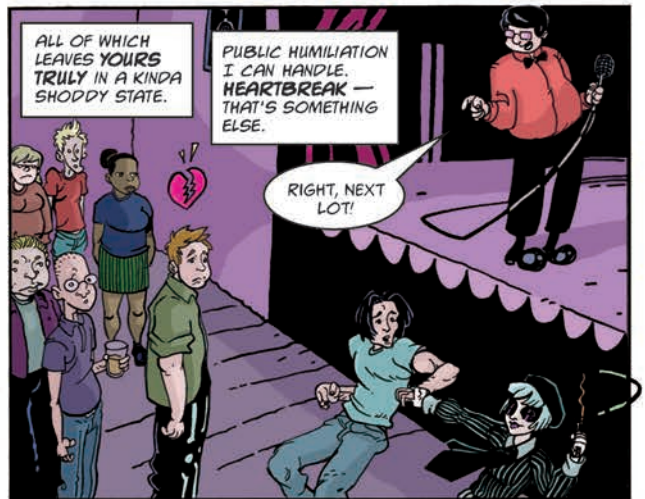
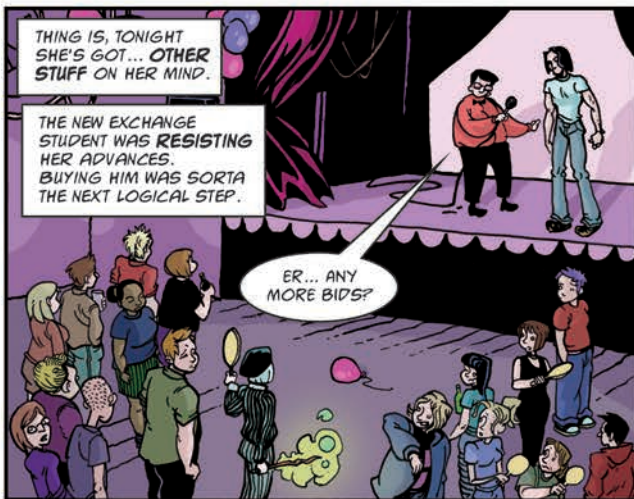
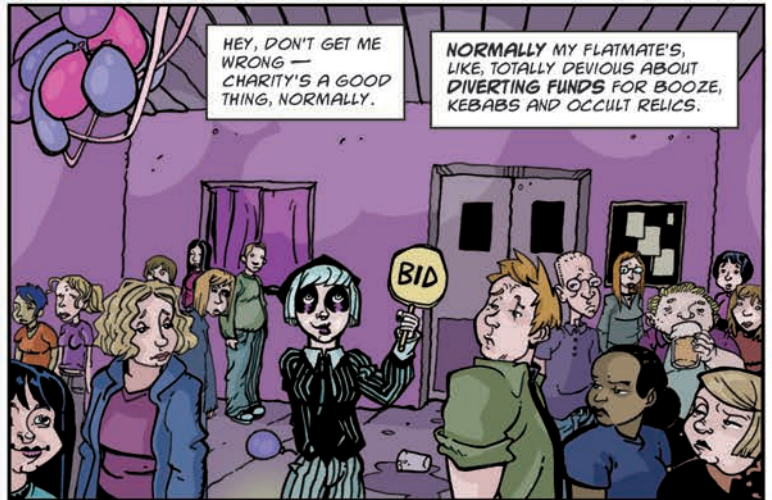
HELL TO PAY

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

Originally published in 2000 AD Progs 1401-1404



OKAY ... MAYBE I'M TAKING THIS KINDA PERSONALLY, BUT — SERIOUSLY — THIS IS COMPLETELY THE WORST IDEA THE STUDENT UNION HAS EVER HAD.





'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 HIPPI 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...

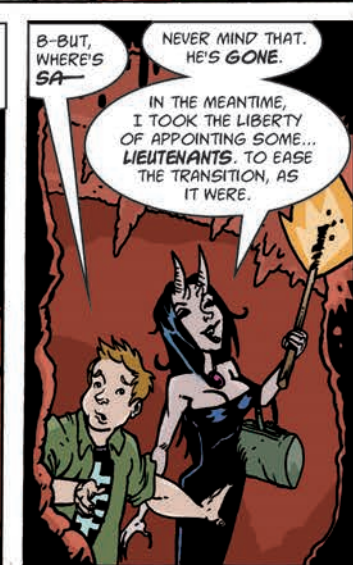
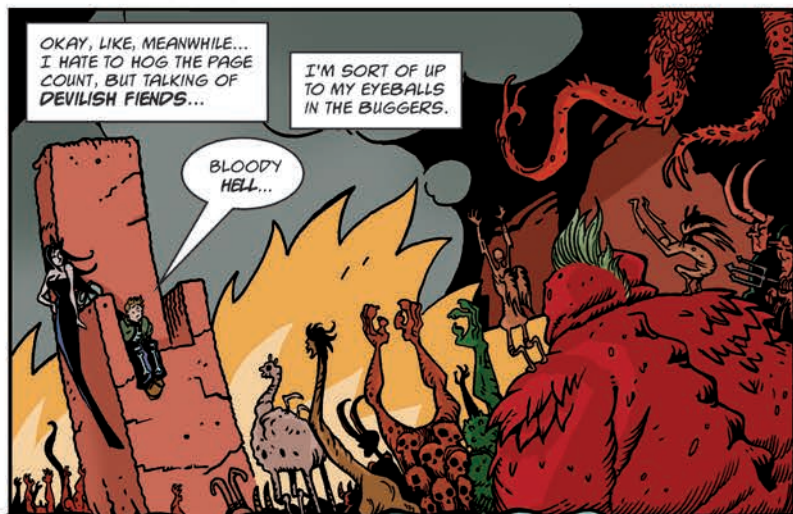
YEAH, WELL... MY FAMILY'S NEVER BEEN TOO GOOD WITH FUNDS, SORT OF THING.

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

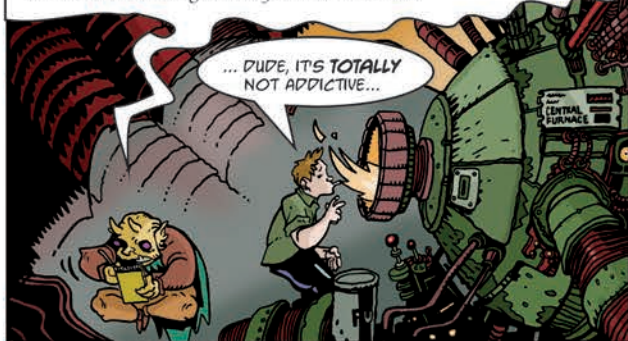
YOUR UNCLE IS GONE. IT'S TIME YOU TOOK OVER THE **FAMILY BUSINESS**.







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.



...THAT'S...
WHOA...
THAT'S 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's 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...



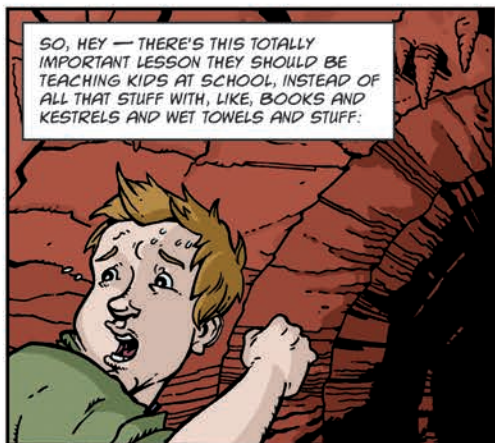
... morange... borange...
lozenge... hmmm...



YOU'RE, LIKE,
TOTALLY CRAP...







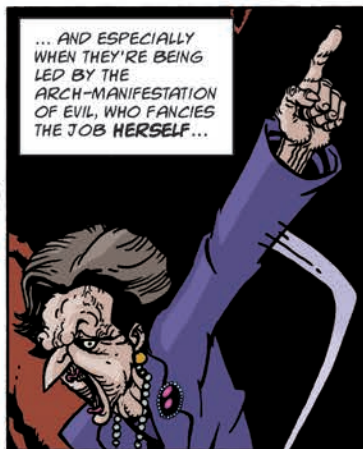
SO, HEY — THERE'S THIS TOTALLY IMPORTANT LESSON THEY SHOULD BE TEACHING KIDS AT SCHOOL, INSTEAD OF ALL THAT STUFF WITH, LIKE, BOOKS AND KESTRELS AND WET TOWELS AND STUFF:



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...



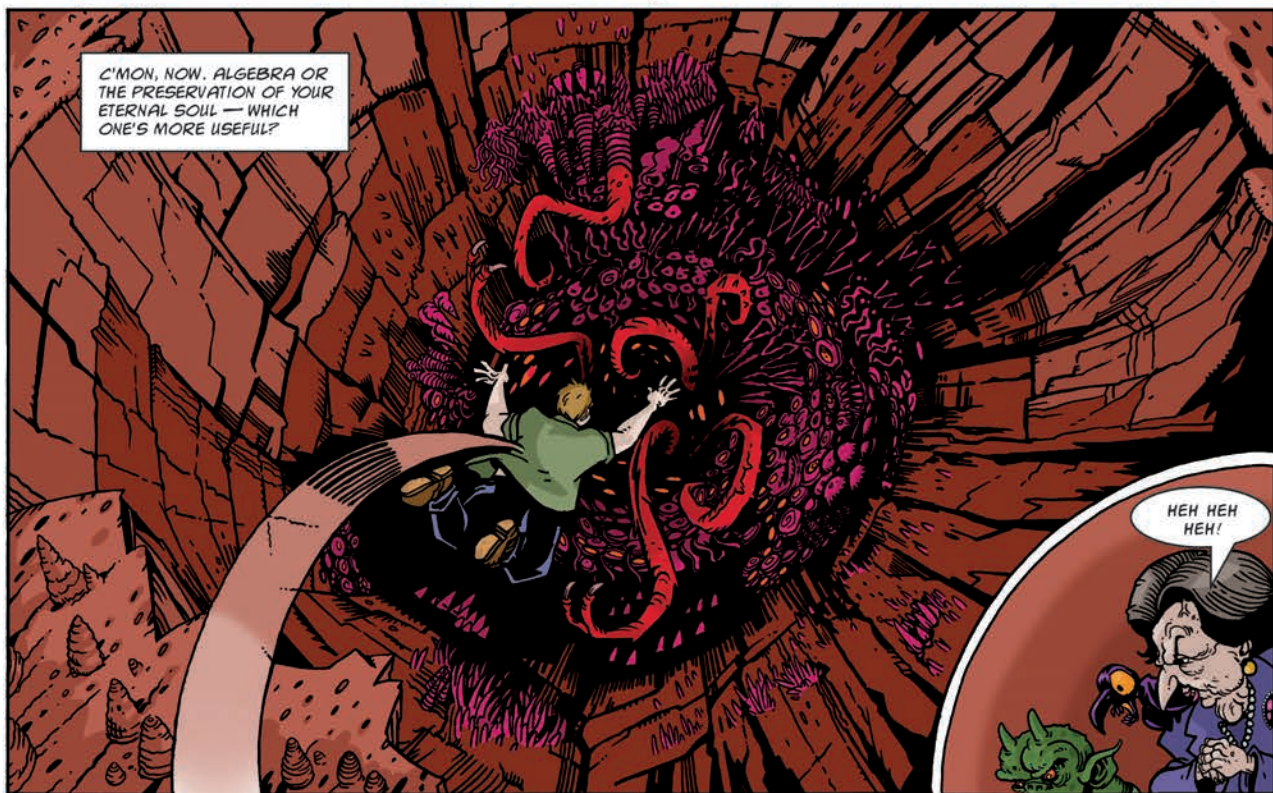
... ON ACCOUNT OF HOW THEY WANT TO OVERTHROW YOU AND STUFF...



... 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—
AAAAHHH...
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!

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

'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!

T-TELL THEM...

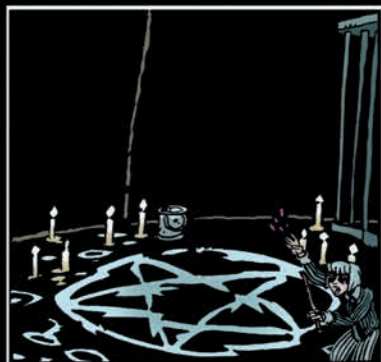
TELL THEM I
KNOW HOW BOBA
FETT FELT!

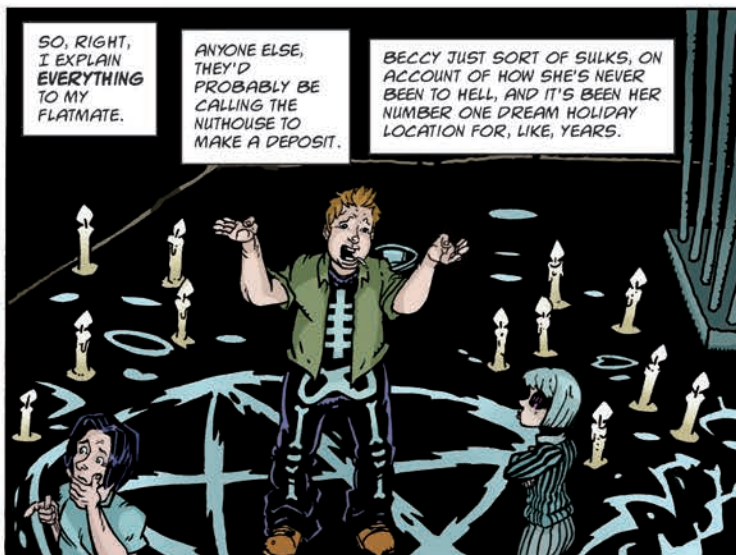
'Boba Fett'?
Who was he?
That's rubbish,
you great sap--

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

Aw, crap.

BOOMF



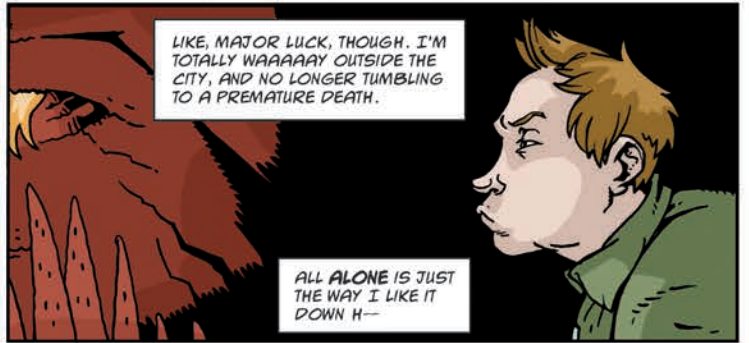




SO, LIKE, I GUESS BECCY'S CONCENTRATION SLIPPED AND I GOT SENT BACK.

THAT HAPPENS WHEN SHE'S THINKING OF HERSELF.

BOOMF



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...



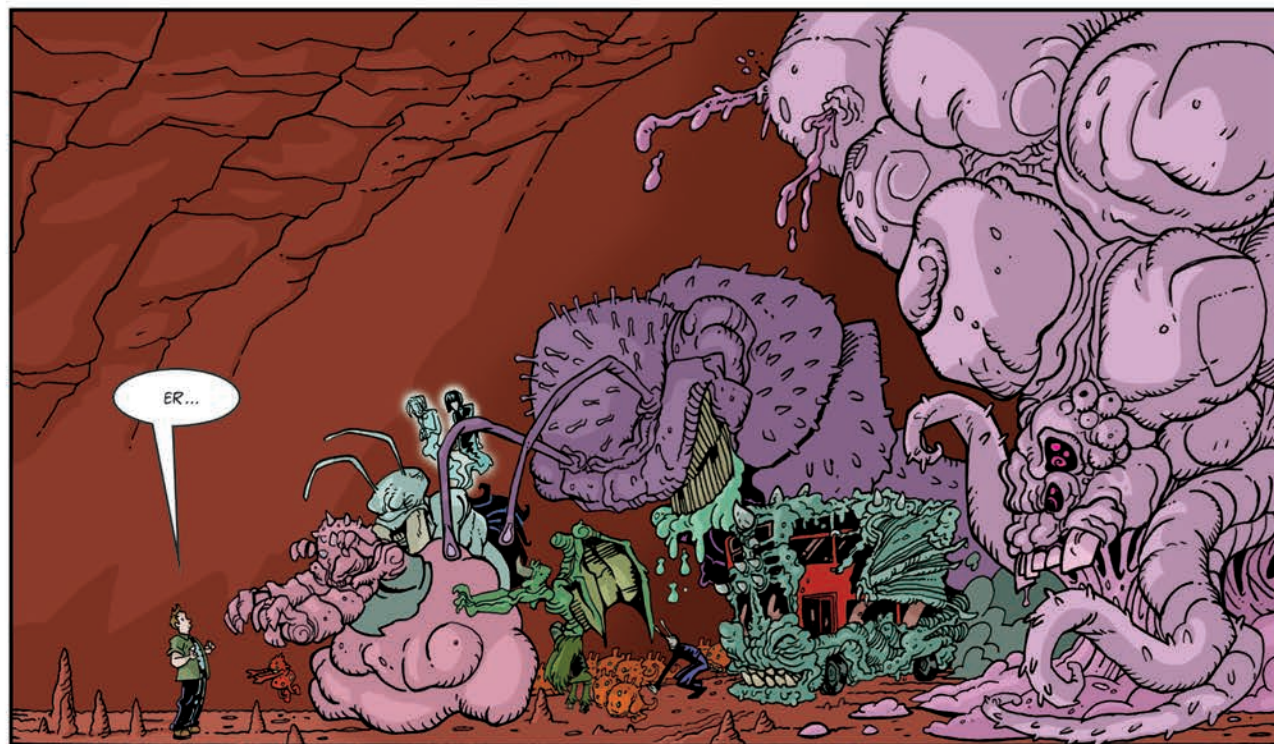
... YOU'VE GOT TO EXPECT SOME RESENTMENT, RIGHT? MAYBE EVEN A BIT OF LIGHT-HEARTED CARNAGE.

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



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

BOW TO THE DELIVERER!



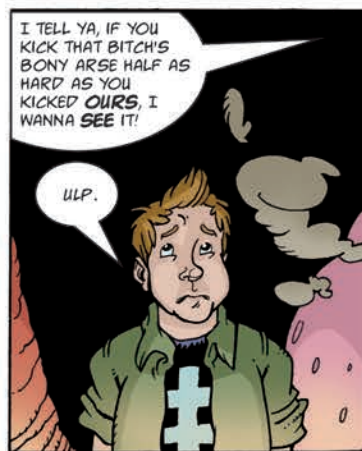
ER...



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

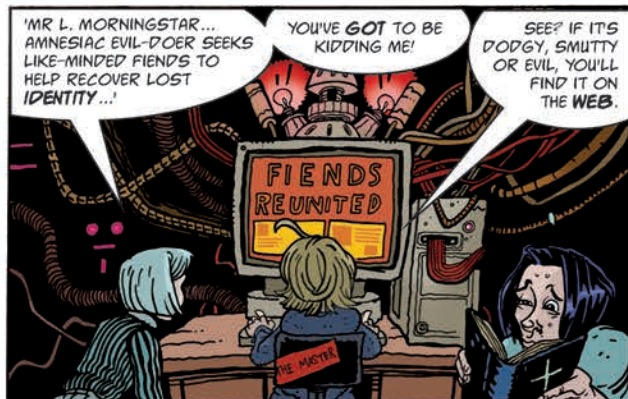
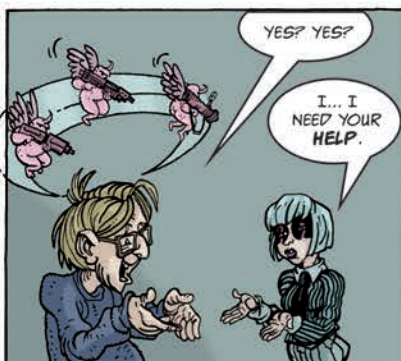
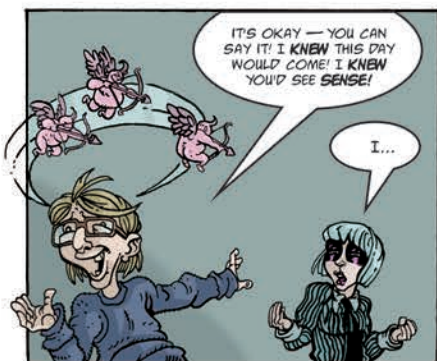
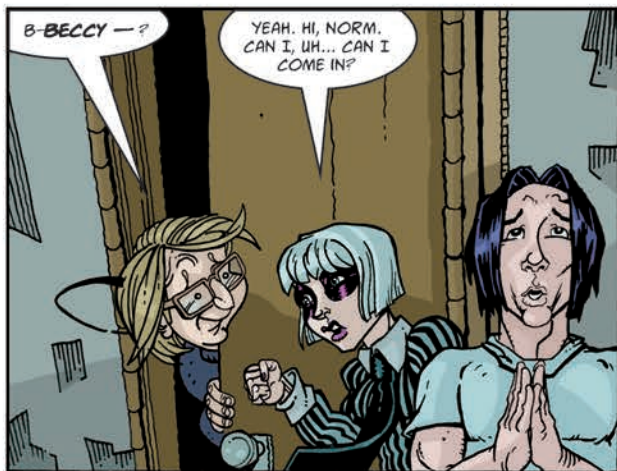
HELL, NO! IT'S LIKE, YOU GET CAST OUT OF REALITY MAYBE ONCE OR TWICE, AND SUDDENLY YOU'RE THIS SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN!

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!

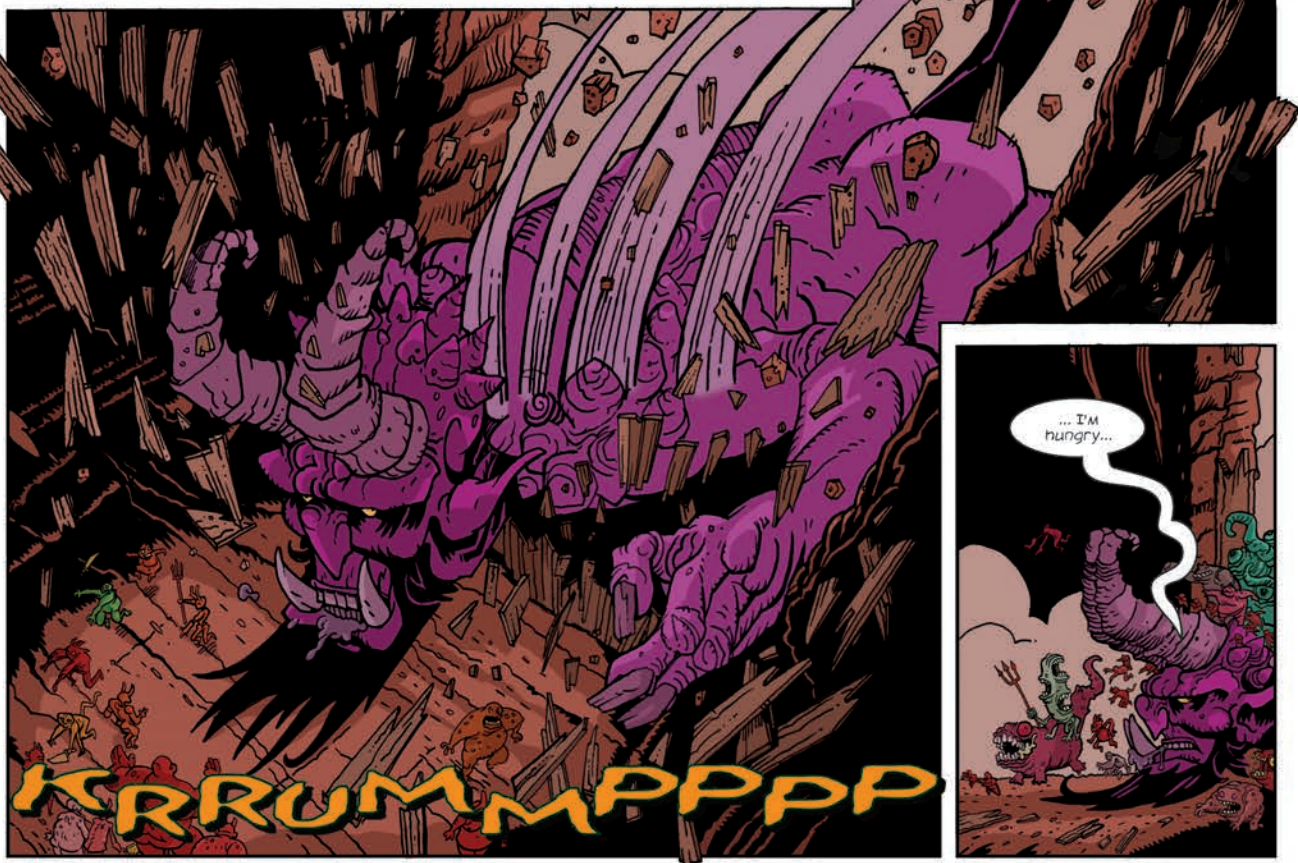
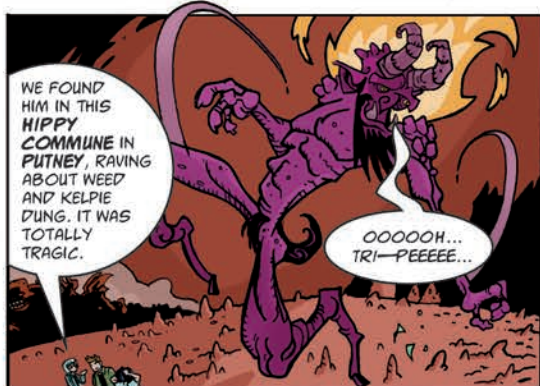


I TELL YA, IF YOU KICK THAT BITCH'S BONY ARSE HALF AS HARD AS YOU KICKED OURS, I WANNA SEE IT!

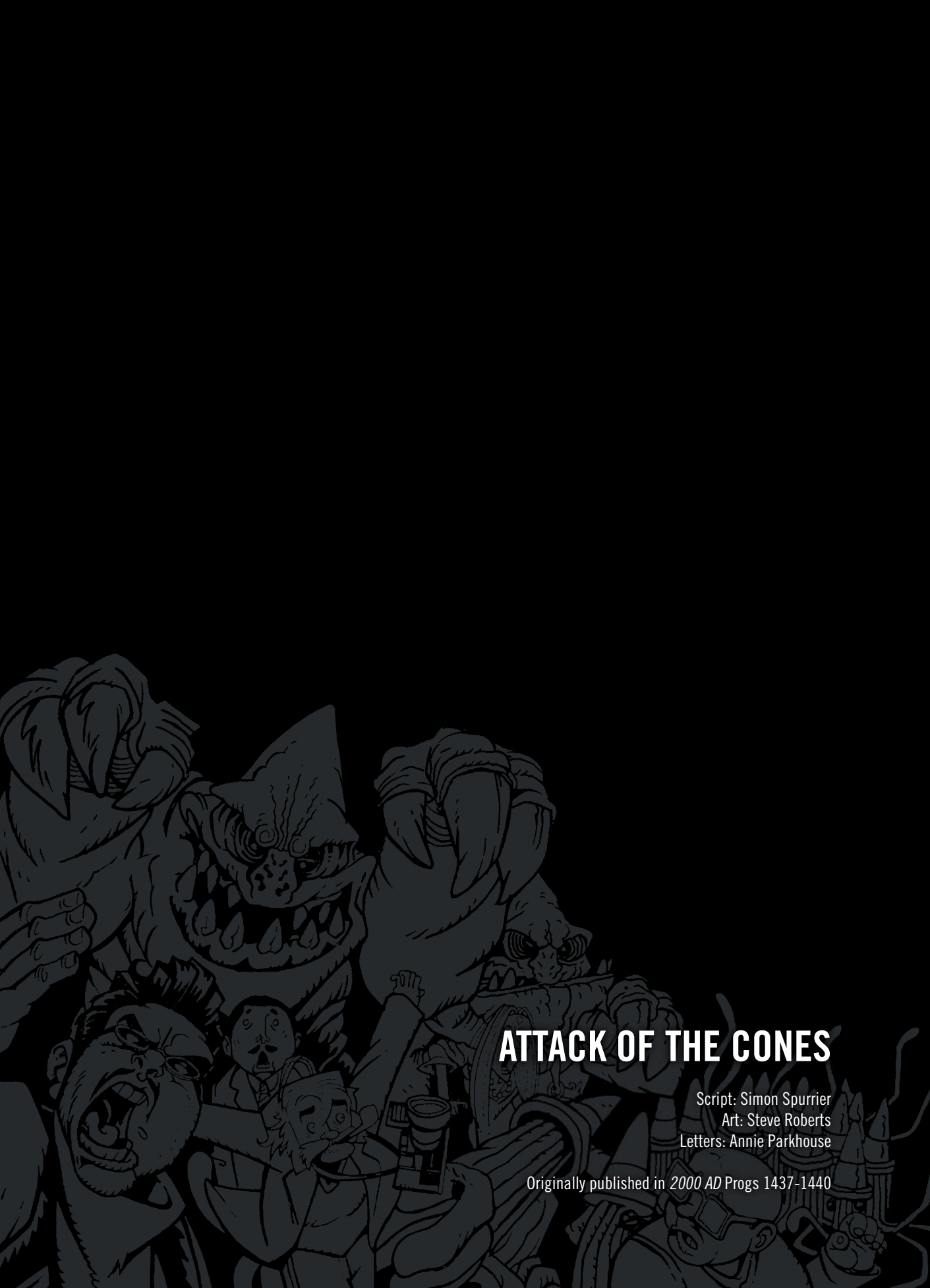
ULP.











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 ANGLO SISSYMEN, 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, ANGLO, 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...?"

"MR 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 —

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



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 GOOOOOOOP.

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.

"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...

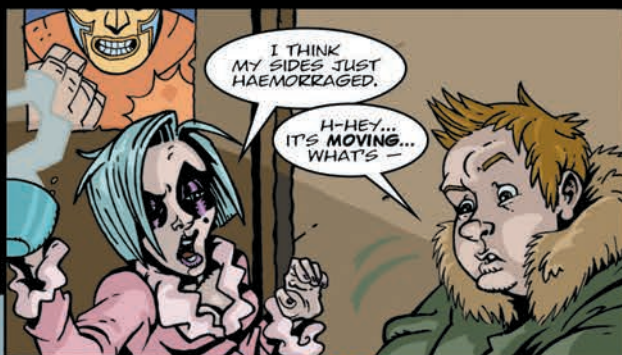
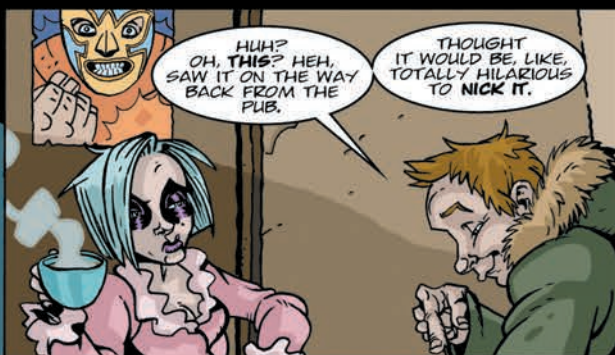


HOW WOULD YOU FEEL, EARTHLOID, ABOUT TAKING ON THE FILTHIEST VERMIN OF ALL?

HE'S CONTINENTAL. REMEMBER THE EGO.

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



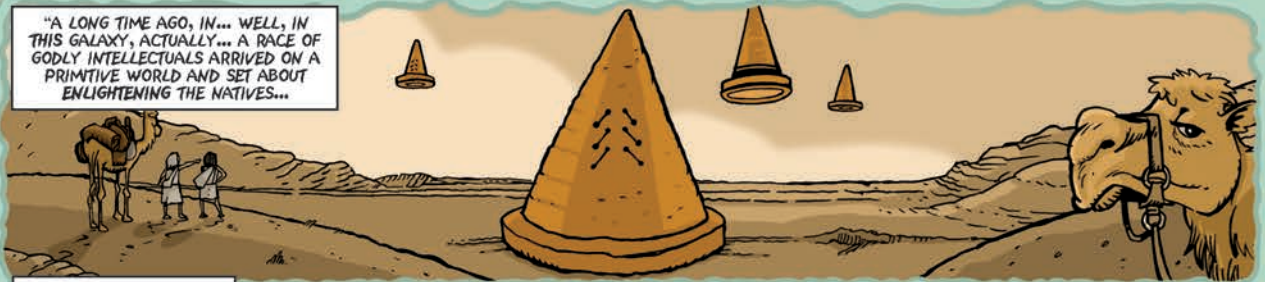








"A LONG TIME AGO, IN... WELL, IN THIS GALAXY, ACTUALLY... A RACE OF GODLY INTELLECTUALS ARRIVED ON A PRIMITIVE WORLD AND SET ABOUT ENLIGHTENING THE NATIVES..."



"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 OMNISCAT 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..."

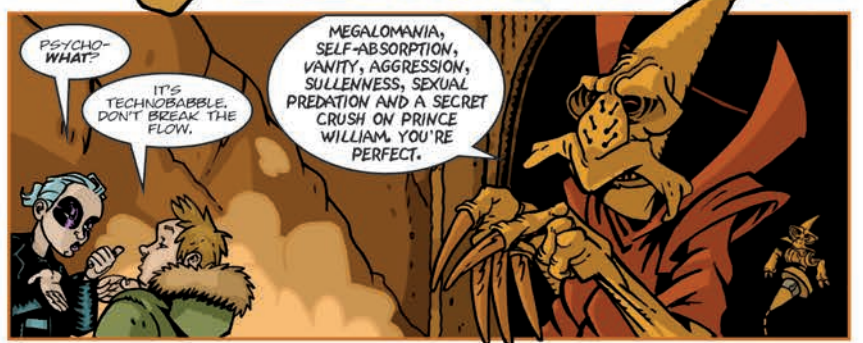


FOR THE GLORY OF THE CONE EMPIRE, AND THE CONTINUED CONSTRUCTION OF BIG USELESS MONUMENTS, THE TIME HAS COME TO REMIND THEM OF THEIR FEALTY!

AND THIS TIME WE REMEMBERED THE QUANTUM CATFLAP.

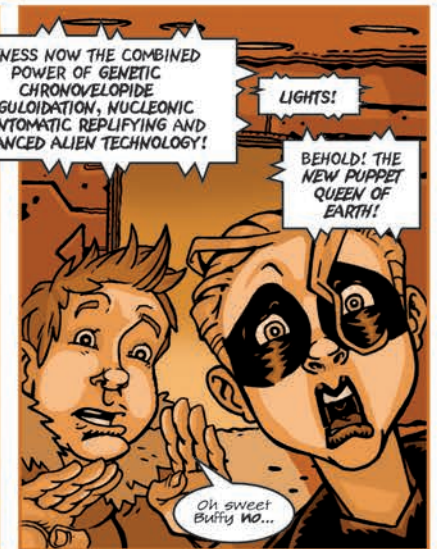
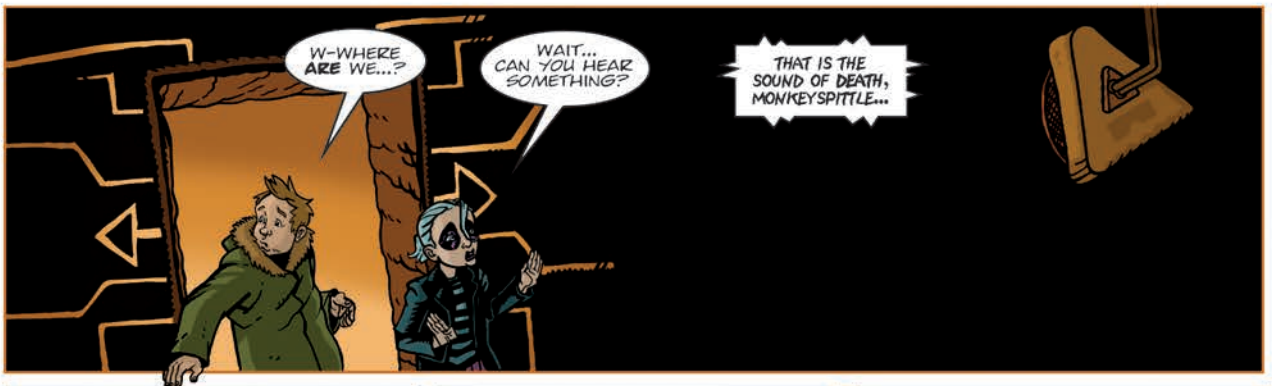
THE TIME HAS COME FOR TOTAL WORLD DOMINATION!

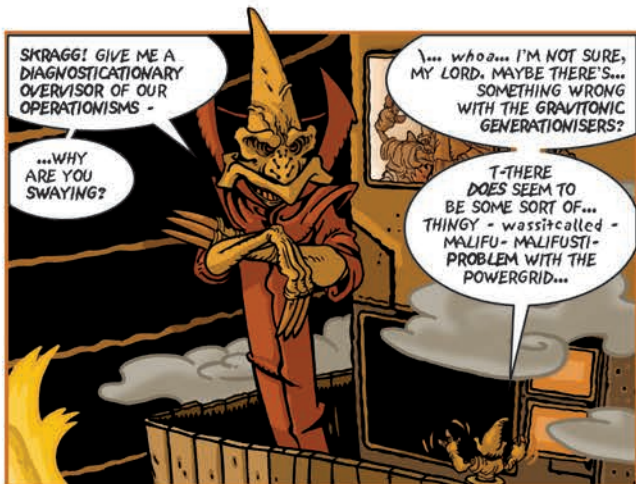














G-GUARDS!

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.

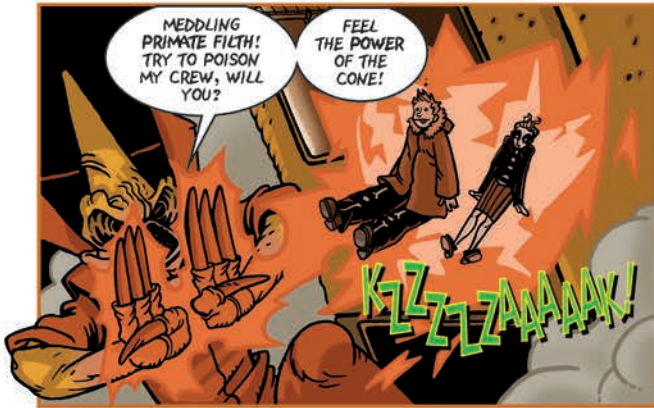
I DON'T U-UNDERSTAND-!

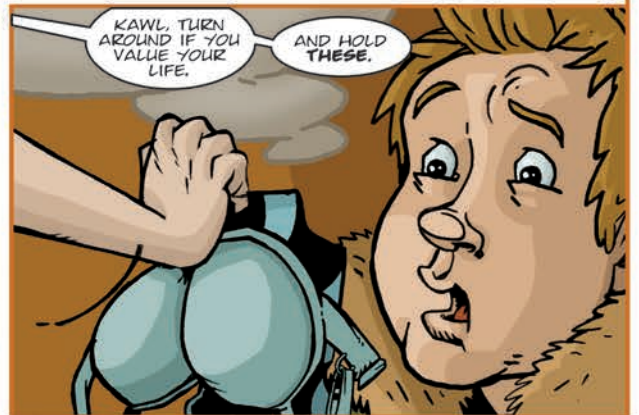
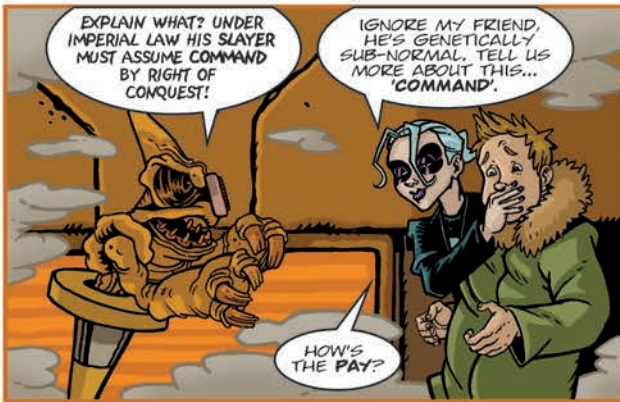
YOU GOT TO USE LA TETE! WHAT IS BEING THE ONE THING THAT THE ORANGE PLASTIC POINTY FOOL HAS LEARNED TO BE FEARING?

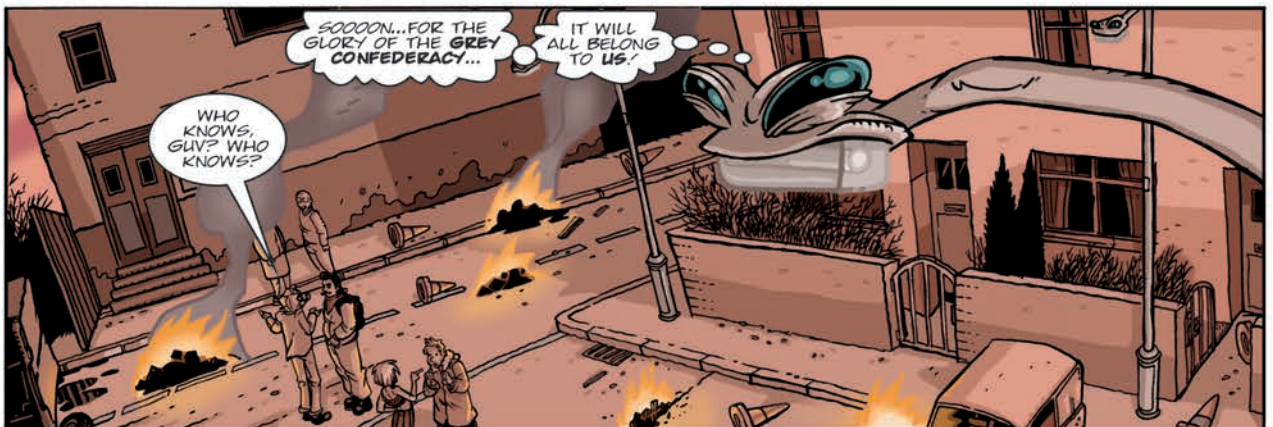
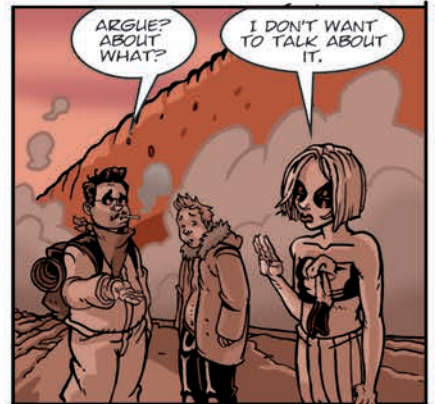
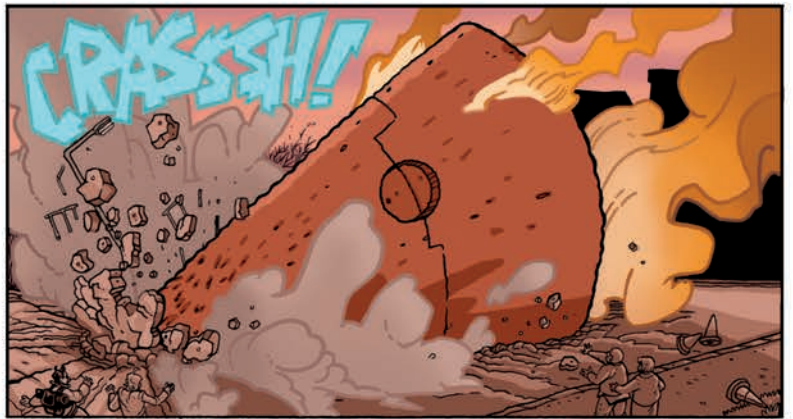
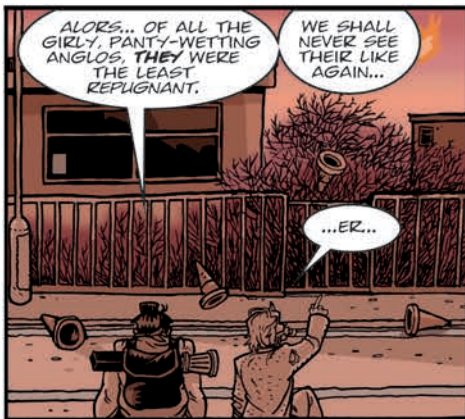


LOOK - TRAFFIC CONESH! LETSH... LETSH NICK ONE! HAHHAHA!

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







FWAP!!

FREAKSHOW

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

Originally published in *2000 AD* Progs 1477-1481



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.





'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.

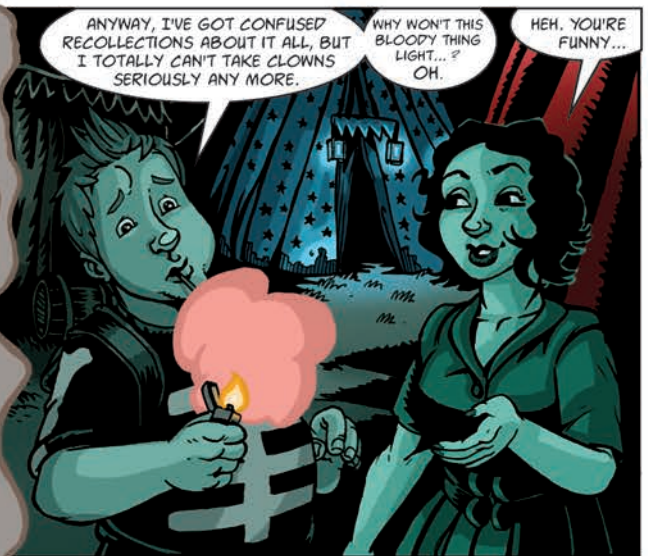
'ONLY, THIS GUY IN A RUBBER GIMP SUIT KINDA SCOOPED THEM ALL UP AND... HEH... CHUCKED THE CLOWN OFF A CHURCH.

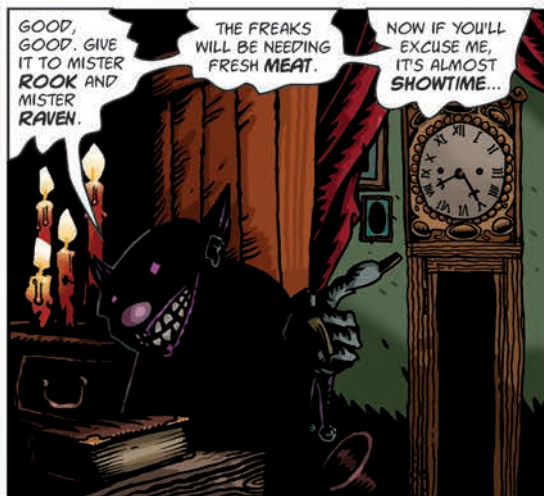
'OH, AND KIM BASINGER WAS THERE. ER...'

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.

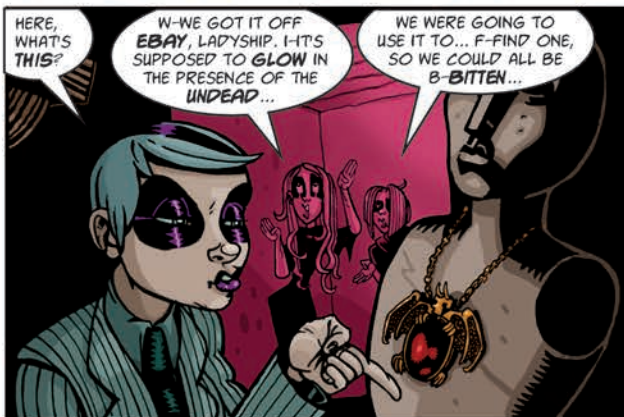
HEH. YOU'RE FUNNY...















SO YOU SEE, WHILST YOU'VE BEEN DOWN HERE THE **WHOLE WORLD** HAS BEEN **VAMPIRIZED!**

YOU'RE THE **ONLY TRUEBLOODS** LEFT. DON'T YOU SEE HOW **COOL** THAT MAKES YOU?



AND NOW I GO TO SEEK **MALES**, MY **BROOD**, SO WE MAY **REPOPULATE** THE **WORLD!**

STAY **EDGY** AND **DIFFERENT**, **SISTERS!**

AND DON'T **HESITATE** TO **CALL** IF YOU **COME** INTO **MORE MONEY**.



HA HA HA HA AAAAAA



YES! YES!

SUSSSSSTENANCE!

unkunkunk

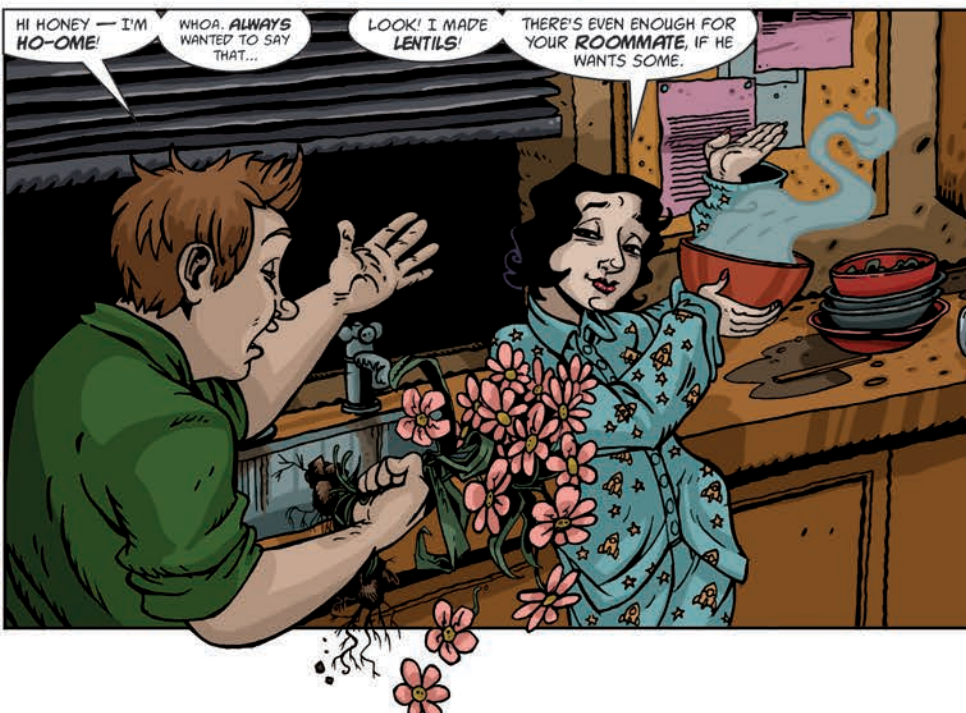
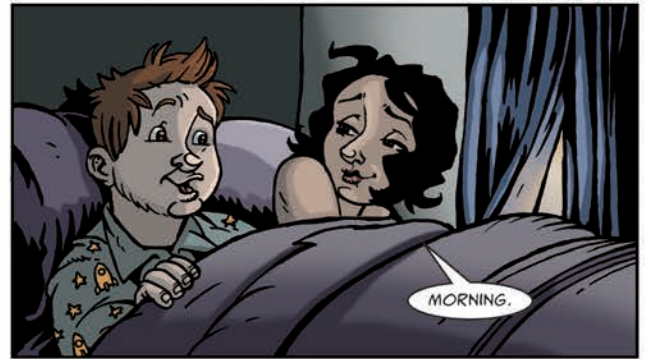
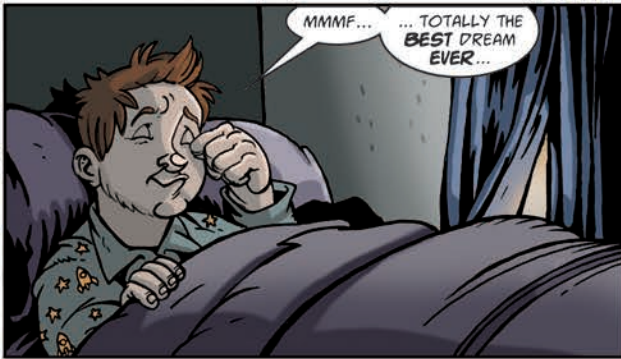


WHAT DO YOU **LITTLE BUGGERS** WANT?

AND WHY'S THIS THING **GLOW**—



OH.





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!

SSSSSSSSSS... THE SSSSSUN IS SSSSEI...



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

GREAT GOLLUM SHTICK, 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.

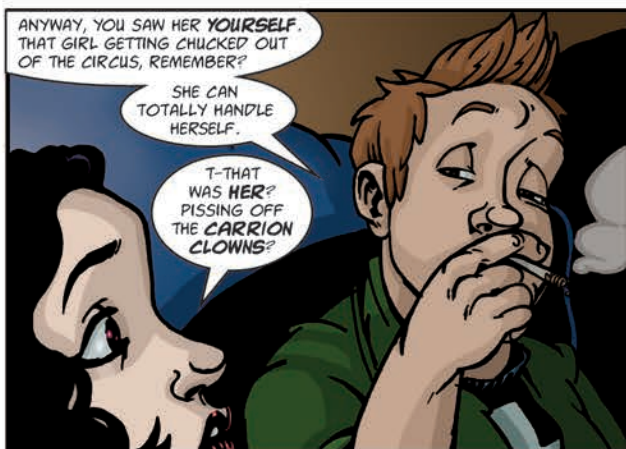
WHATSSSS GOING ON, DEARY, ISSSSSSS BREAKFAST...



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...

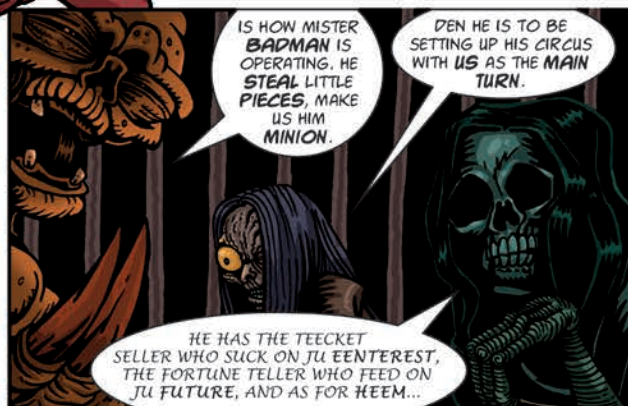
ER... S-SO I HEAR.



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

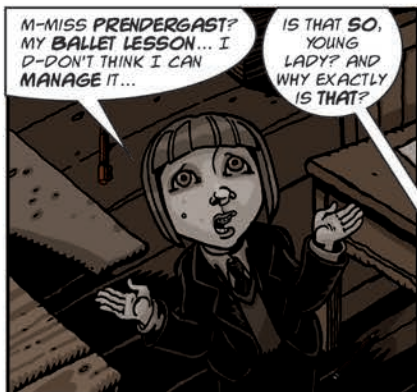
SHE CAN TOTALLY HANDLE HERSELF.

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-IT 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?



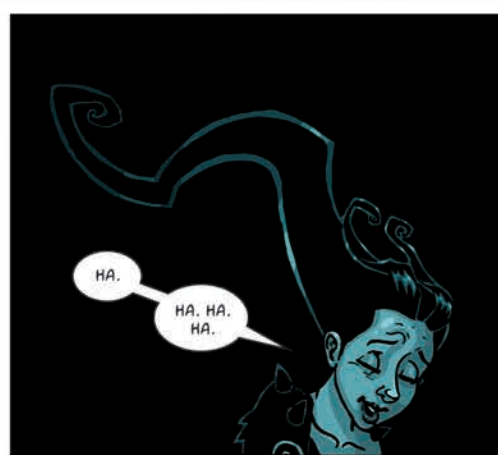
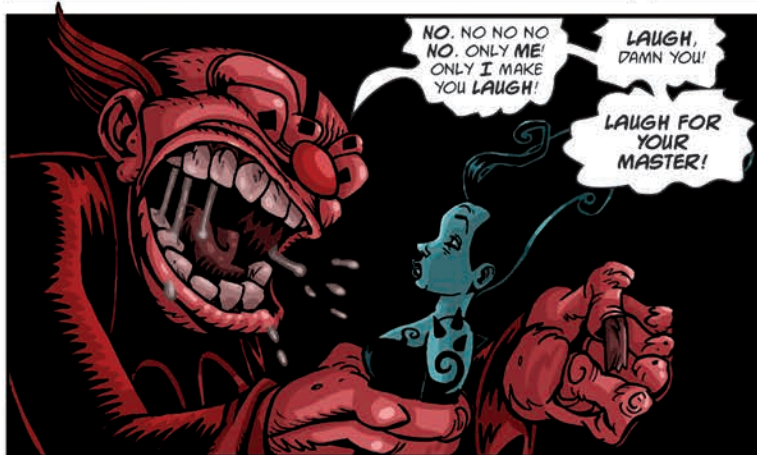
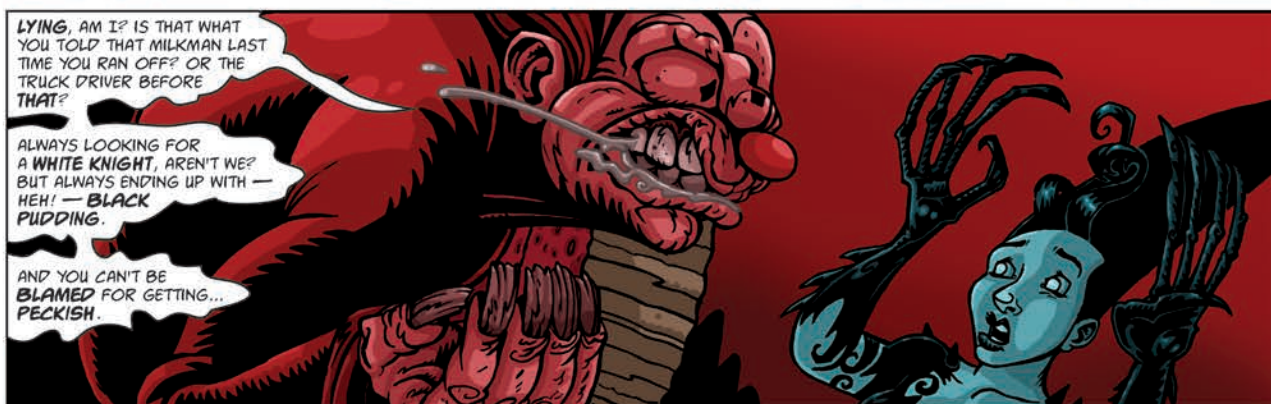
MMMMMMM...

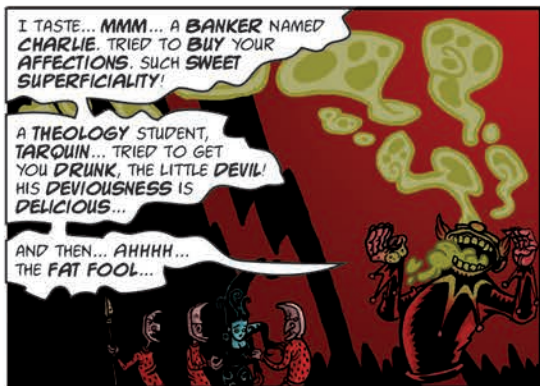


TOO CLOSE, MATE.
SHOULDN'T TAKE SWEETS
OFFA STRANGERS.

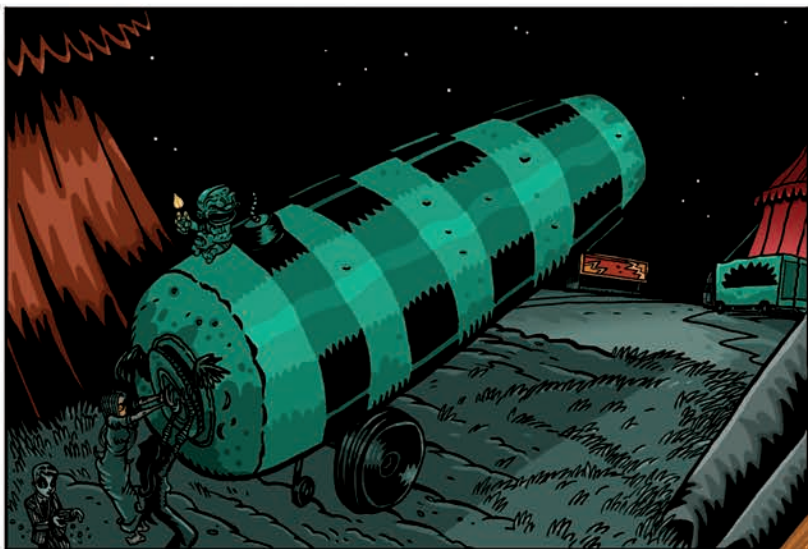
USED TO
CALL IT 'OLD
FAITHFUL'.

I'VE NEVER
WORN A TUTU
YET.











... 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?

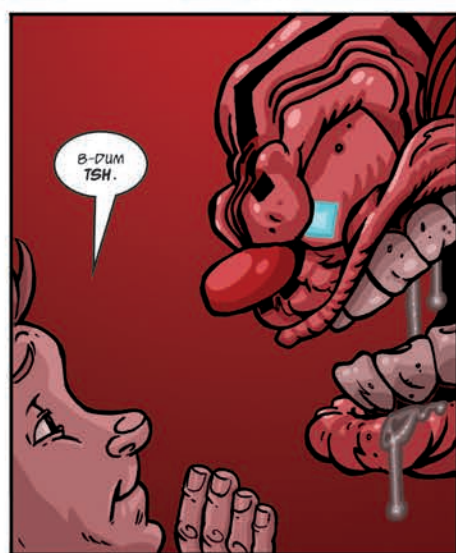
I-IT'S MINE. HE STOLE IT. IT'S HOW HE CONTROLS ME...



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

... OR I MAKE YOU DO IT.









COVERS GALLERY





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



2000 AD Prog 1354: Cover by Simon Davis



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



2000 AD Prog 1438: Cover by **Steve Roberts** and **Simon Davis**

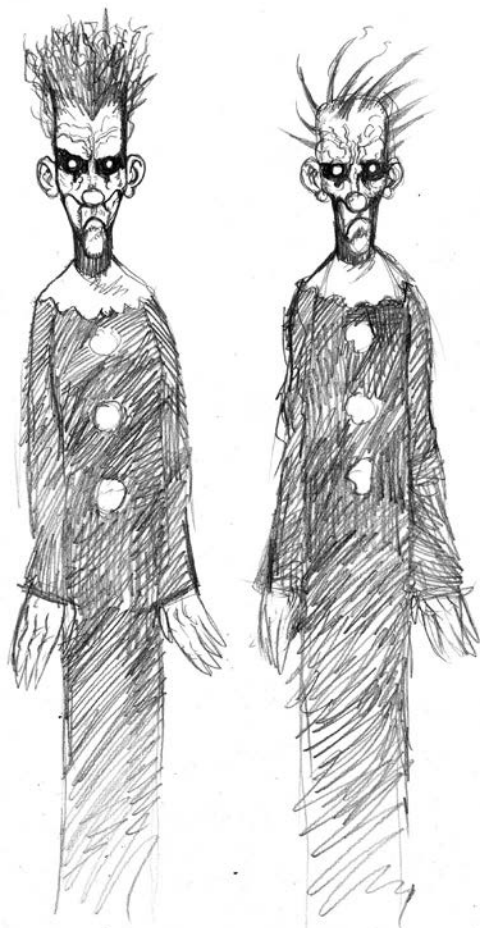


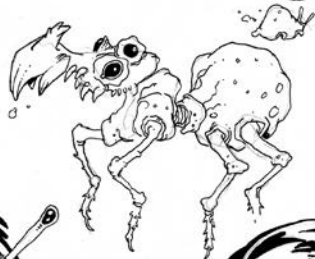
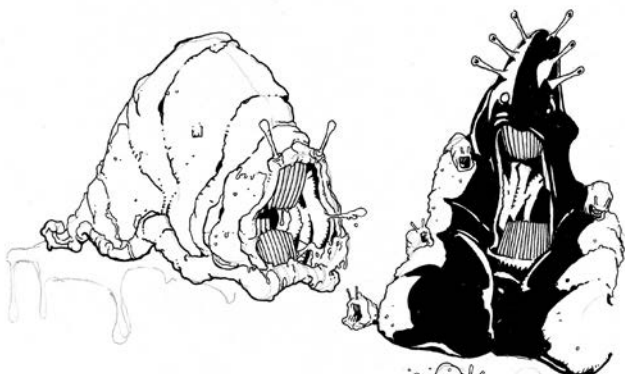


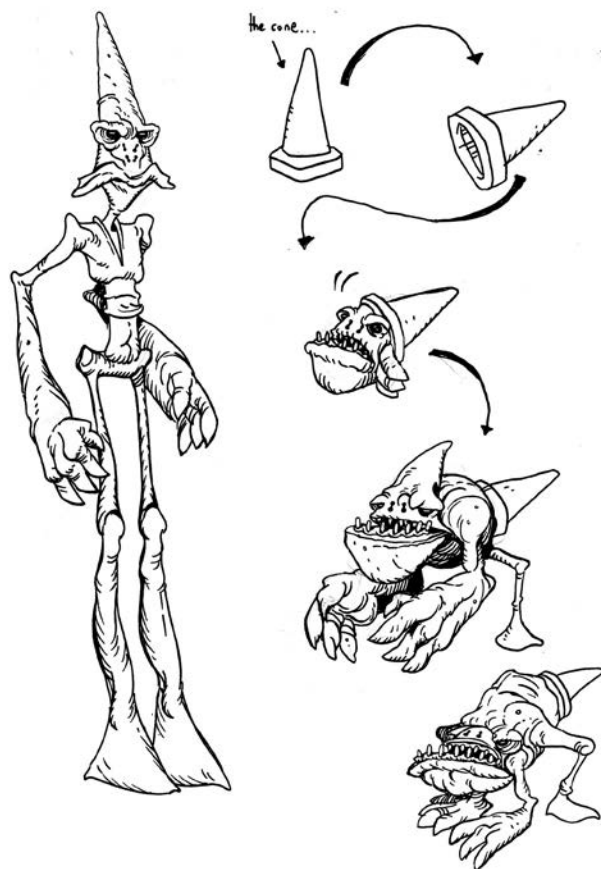
STEVE ROBERTS
SKETCH BOOK















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 Diggie 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.

J0: 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...

J0: 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!

J0: 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? Squeeeeeal, radpiggy!

J0: 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.

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