

WALL PRESS SYNDICATE



Amoeba Adventures #19

"Prisons"

Written by Nik Dirga • Drawn by Max Ink

united
fanzone
organization



The Story So Far...

LAST ISSUE: Being a superhero isn't all it's cracked up to be — especially when the bills come due, and you find that nobody's giving you a regular paycheck just for fighting the bad guys. The All-Spongy Squadron is broke. To pay the bills, Spif and Ninja Ant abandoned their integrity to embark upon a multi-million dollar merchandising venture, with Jenner Toys's super-keen action figure line at the forefront of it. But Spif, Ninja Ant and Karate Kactus were later inspecting a warehouse full of the toys when they were surprised by the Spongopolis City Police, who had a search warrant to investigate. They discovered that the action figures had been tampered with and, hollowed out, were filled with pure heroin. We last saw the guys being hauled off by the SPD, as two mysterious shadowy figures watched from the rooftops: one of their greatest enemies, the Asbestos Mushroom, and the near-psychotic vigilante: The Period. Meanwhile, Prometheus and Dawn agreed to appear at the opening of the Spongopolis Mega Mall for a fee — but tragedy struck when Dawn lost control of her fireballs during a juggling act, and the mall nearly burned down. Severely shaken by the accident, Prometheus and Dawn left the scene, headed for parts unknown...



SPIF



PROMETHEUS



DAWN STAR



KARATE KACTUS



NINJA ANT

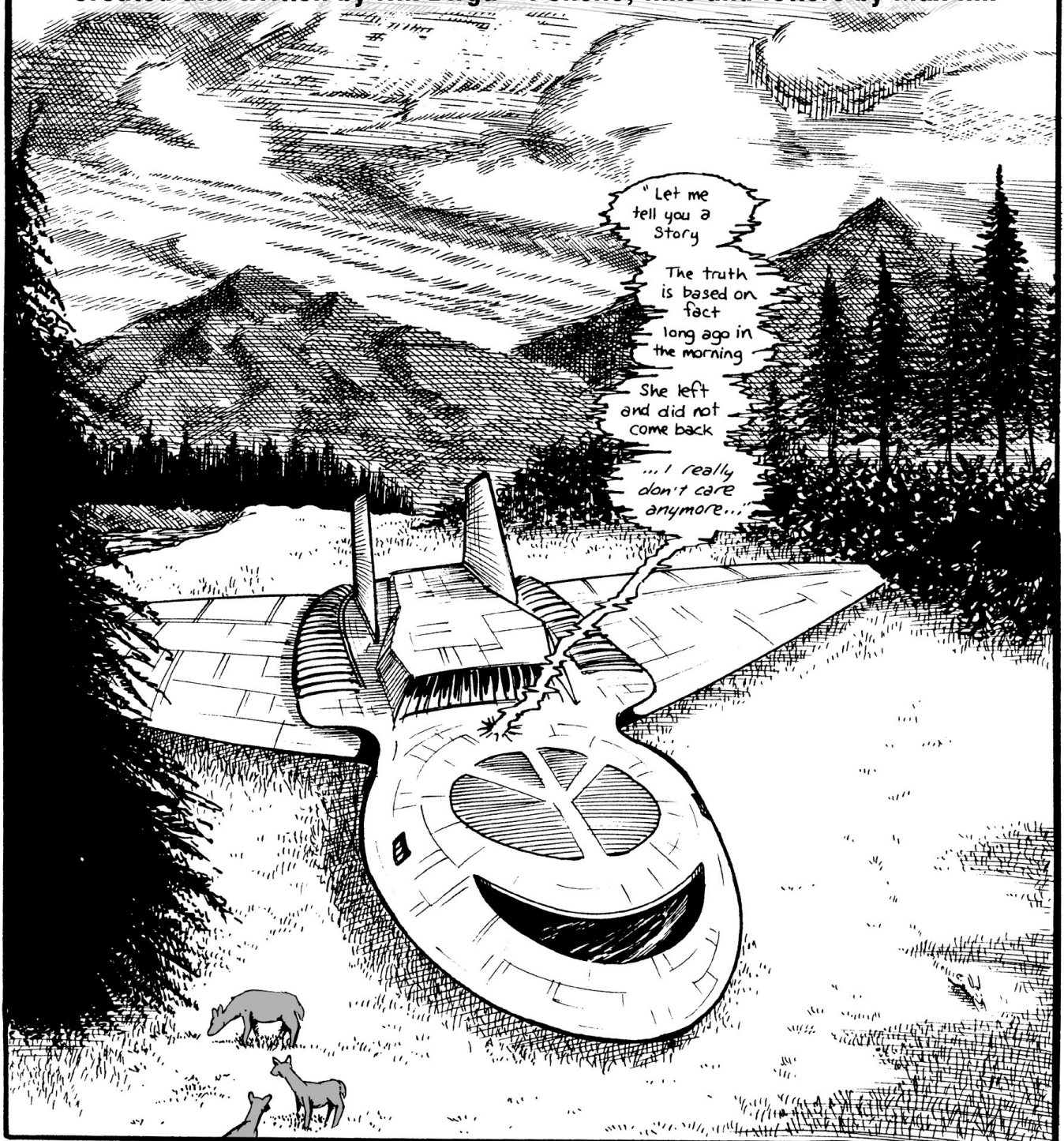


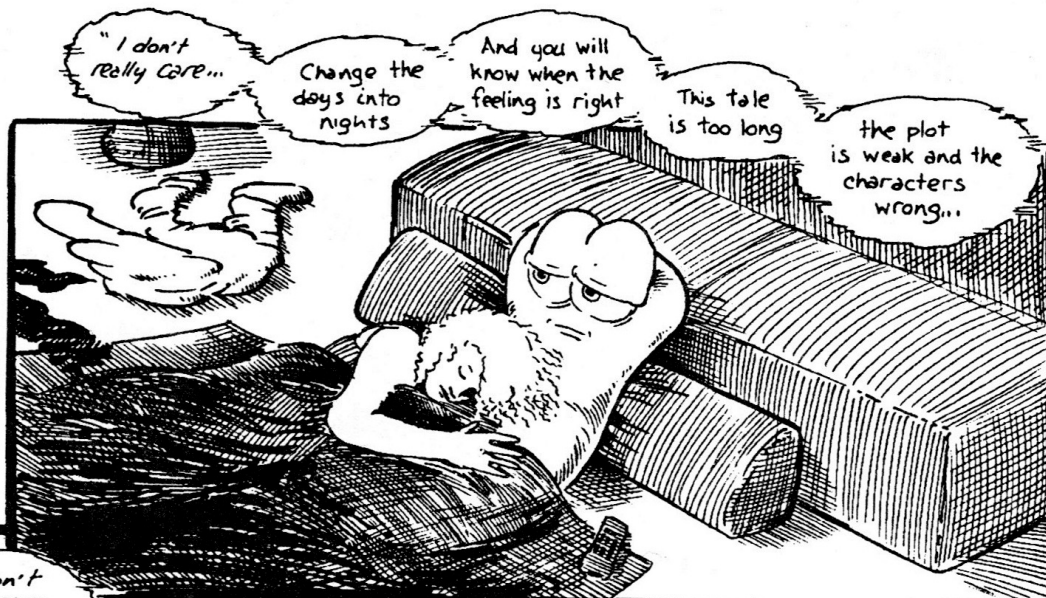
...SPECIAL GUEST
STAR: THE PERIOD

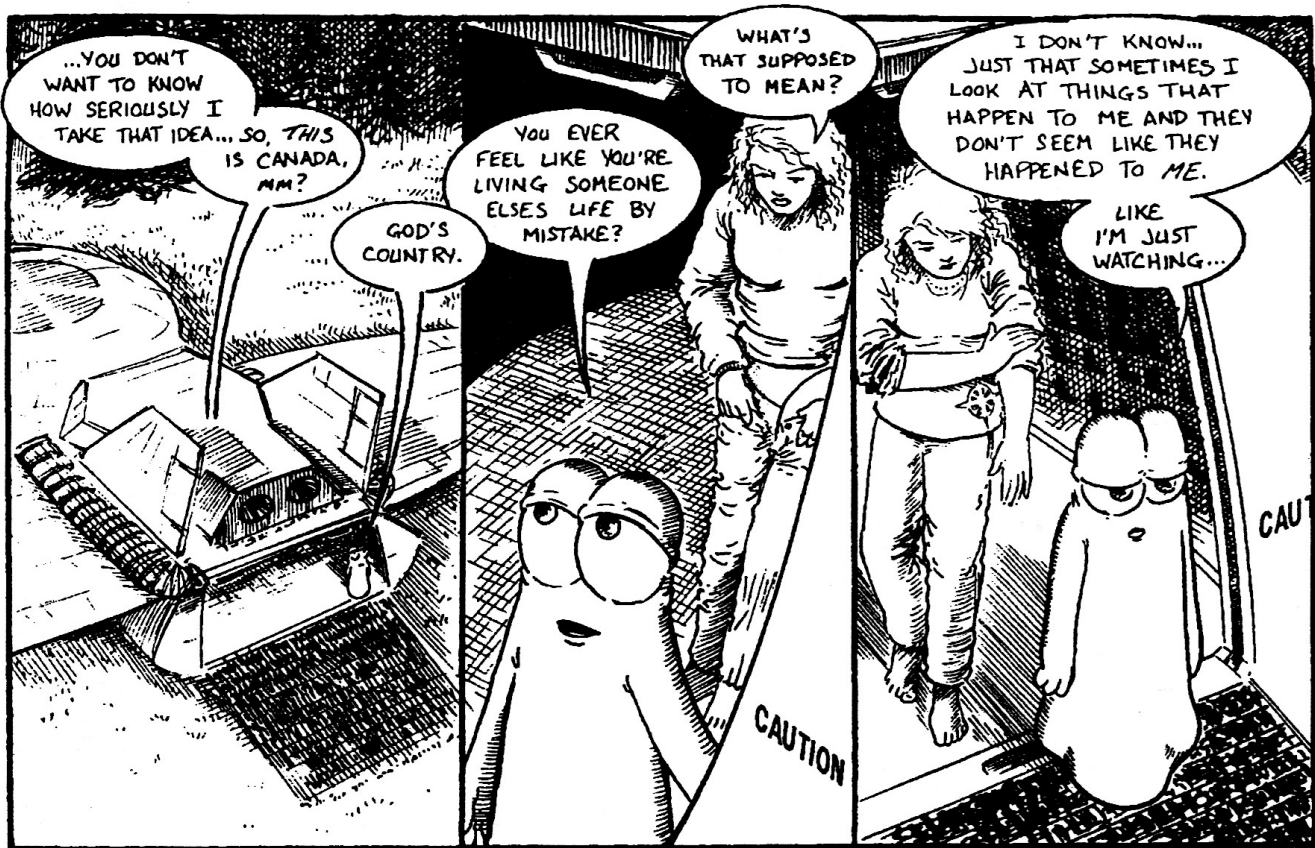
Amoeba Adventures #19, September, 1995. Published bimonthly by Protoplasm Press, P.O. Box 2230, University, MS 38677-2230. Additional copies \$2.00 ppd. Subscriptions: 4 issues for \$8. *Amoeba Adventures* and all related material are ©1995 Nik Dirga now and forever, all rights reserved. Artwork ©1995 Max Ink. Please make checks payable to Nik Dirga. Free catalog available upon request. Buy a damned T-Shirt!

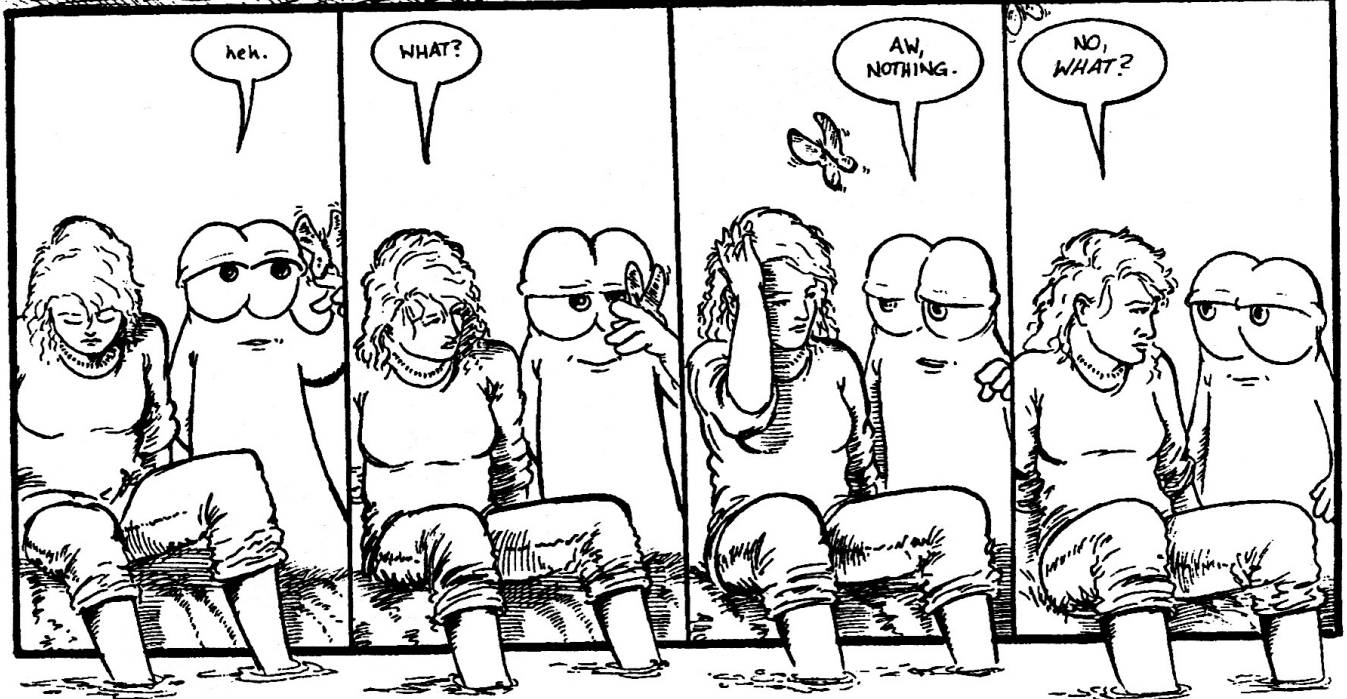
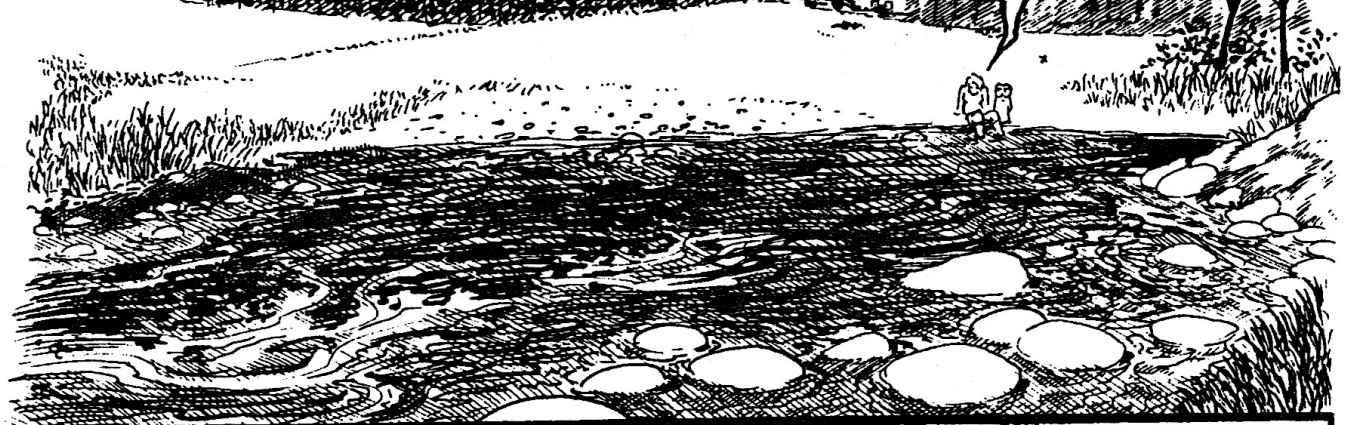
PRISONS

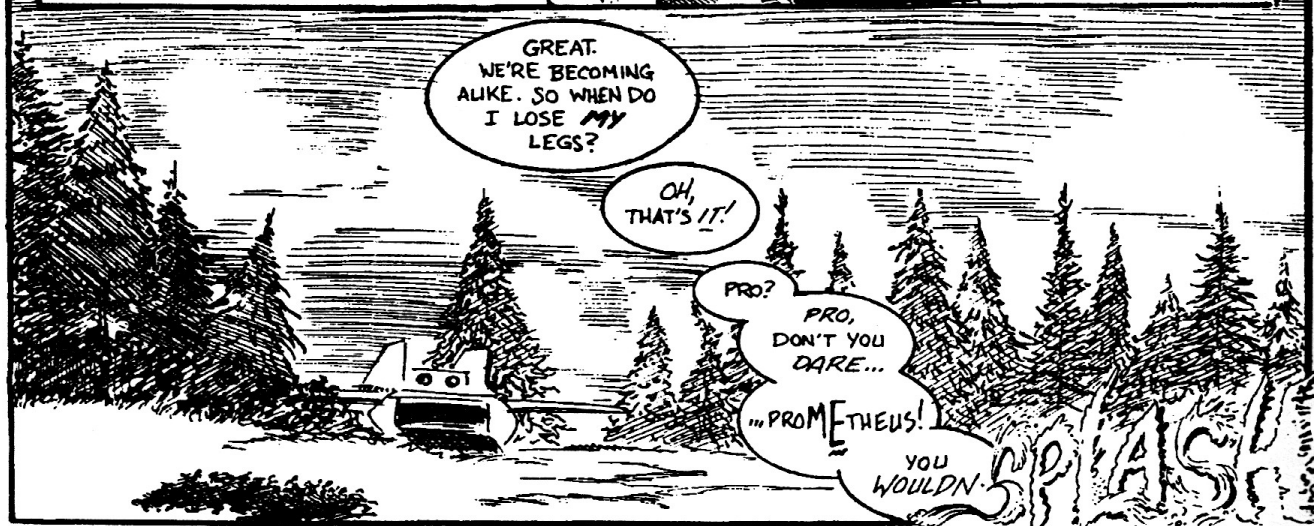
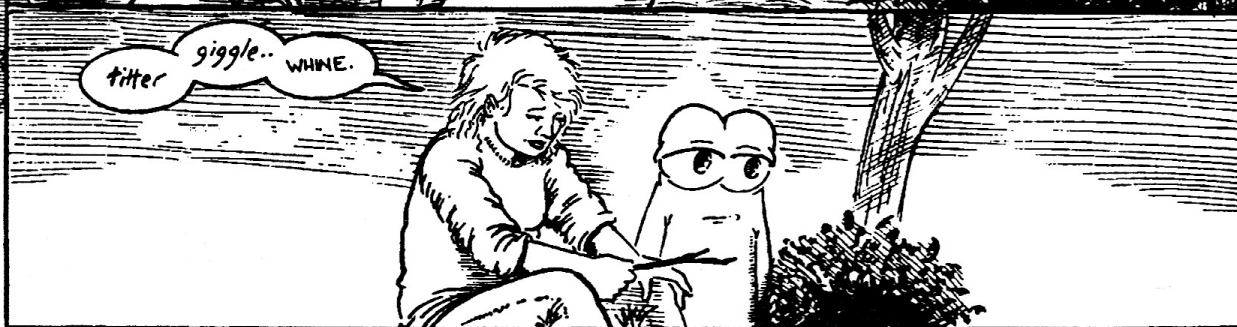
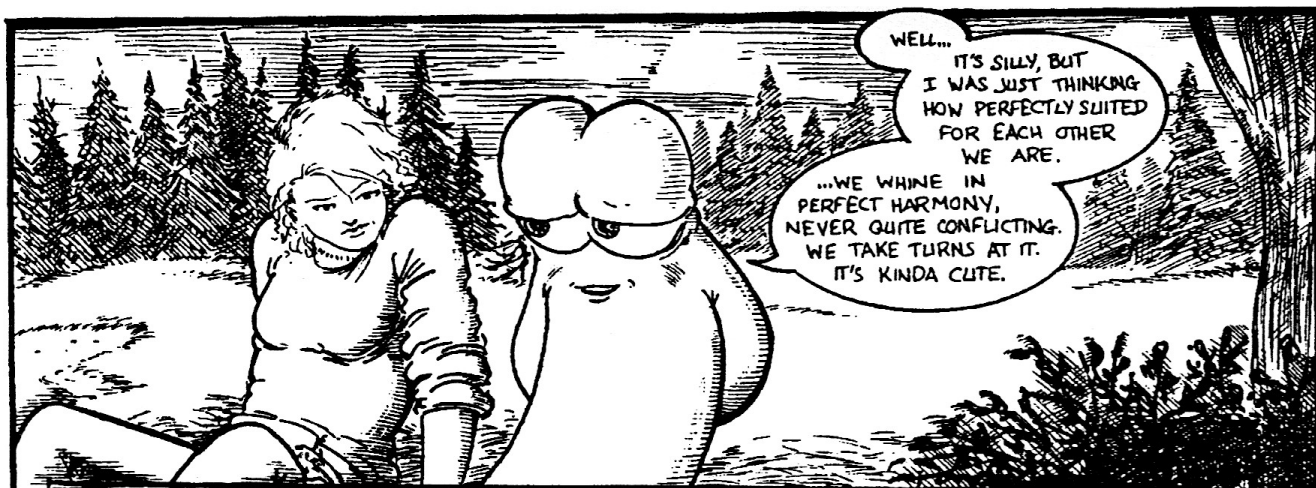
Created and written by Nik Dirga • Pencils, inks and letters by Max Ink

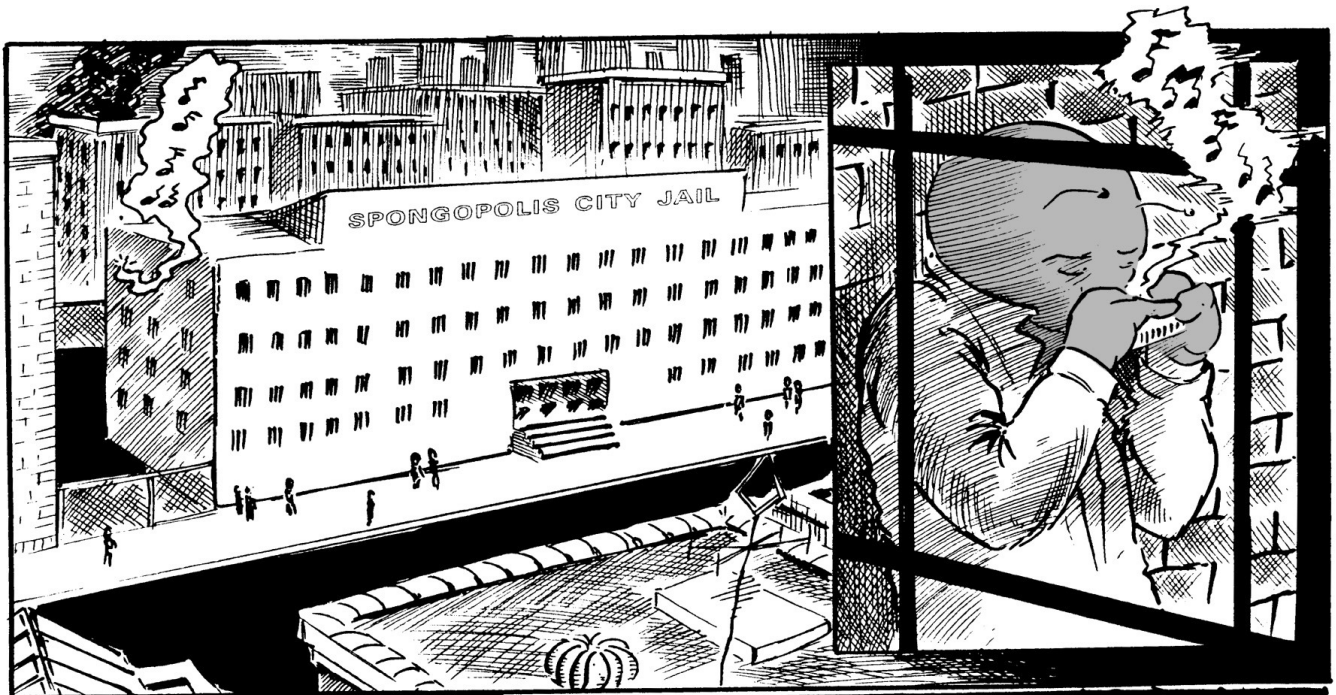












WHERE DID YOU GET THE HARMONICA?

... ISSUED IT TO ME AT THE DESK.

GUYS! MISTER FOOSTER AND ALEX ARE HERE!

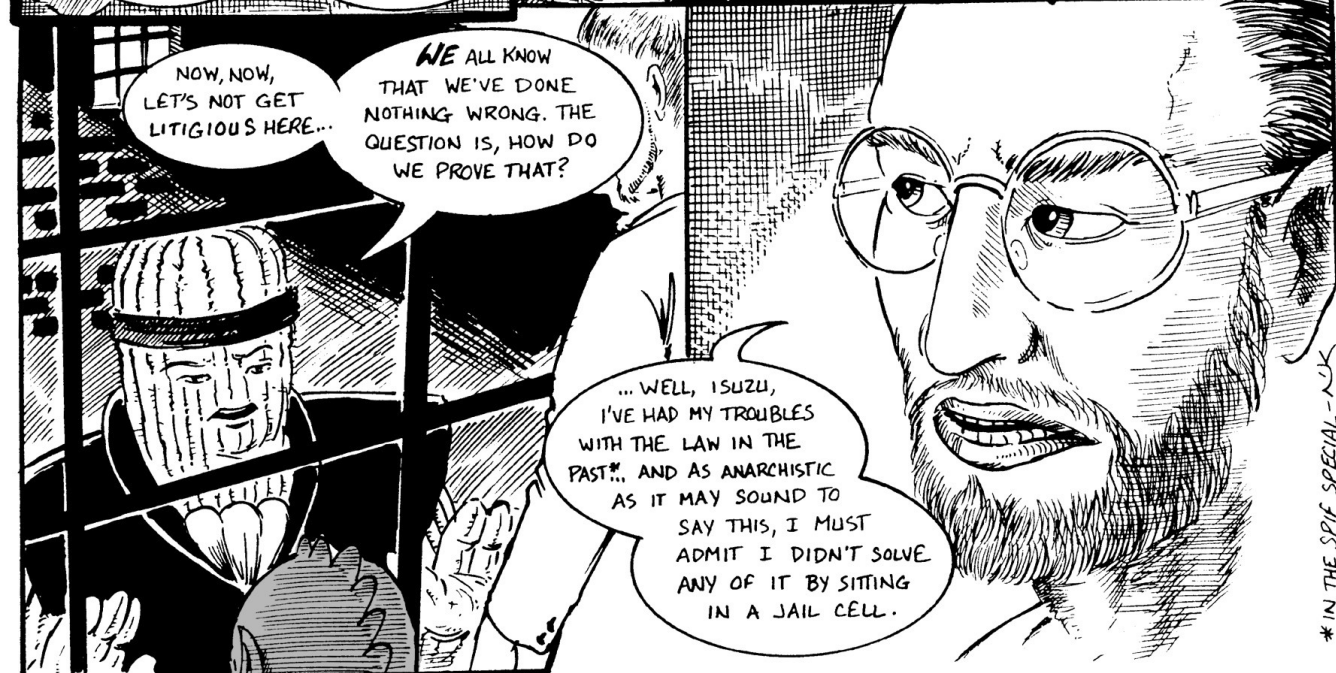


THANKS FOR GETTING DOWN HERE, ALEX.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'VE DONE THIS TO YOU! THIS IS A TRAVESTY! YOU'RE THE GOOD GUYS!

I AGREE!

AFTER WE SPRING YOU, I SUGGEST SUING THE SPD FOR GROSS MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE!



NOW, NOW, LET'S NOT GET LITIGIOUS HERE...

WE ALL KNOW THAT WE'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG. THE QUESTION IS, HOW DO WE PROVE THAT?

... WELL, ISUZU, I'VE HAD MY TROUBLES WITH THE LAW IN THE PAST, AND AS ANARCHISTIC AS IT MAY SOUND TO SAY THIS, I MUST ADMIT I DIDN'T SOLVE ANY OF IT BY SITTING IN A JAIL CELL.





THEN MAYBE IT'S TIME TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

WHAT-YOU?

GREAT SCOTT! THE PERIOD! BUT YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD! *

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I'M HERE TO CLEAR YOUR NAMES, HERGES! I KNOW WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS— AND I WANT HIM TAKEN DOWN AS MUCH AS YOU DO!

HE CALLS HIMSELF "THE PERIOD"? AREN'T THERE ANY NORMAL SUPERHEROES IN THIS TOWN?

WELL, PERIOD, WE'RE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR HELP AND ALL, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, WE'RE SOMEWHAT IMPRISONED.

JUSTICE WILL BE SERVED!!

WHAT? WHY, THAT'S NO PROBLEM!

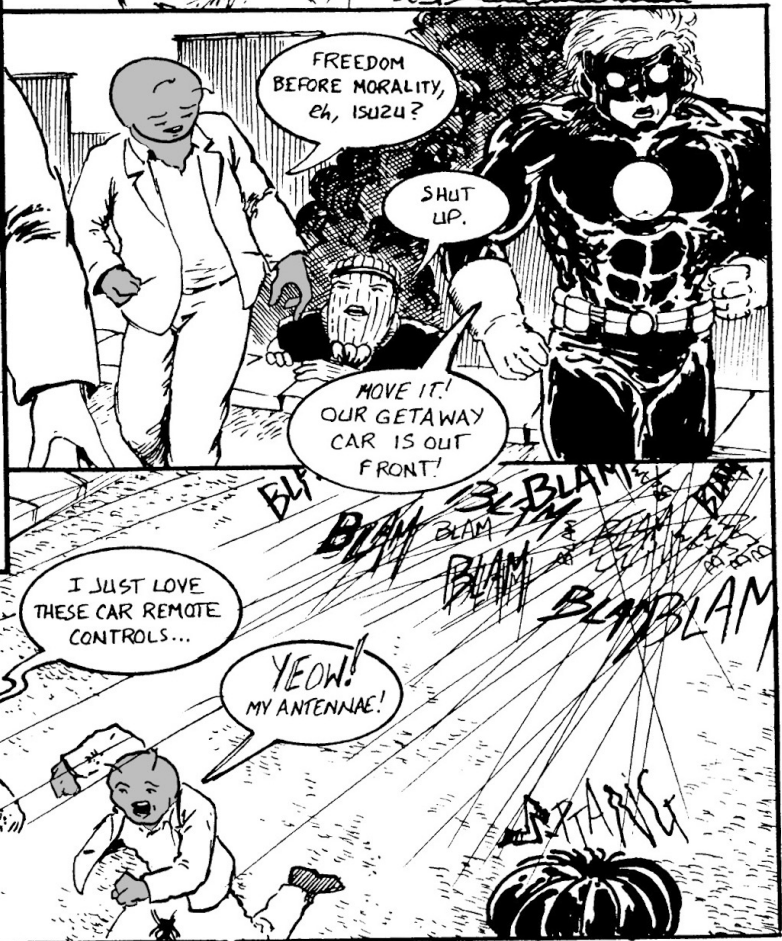
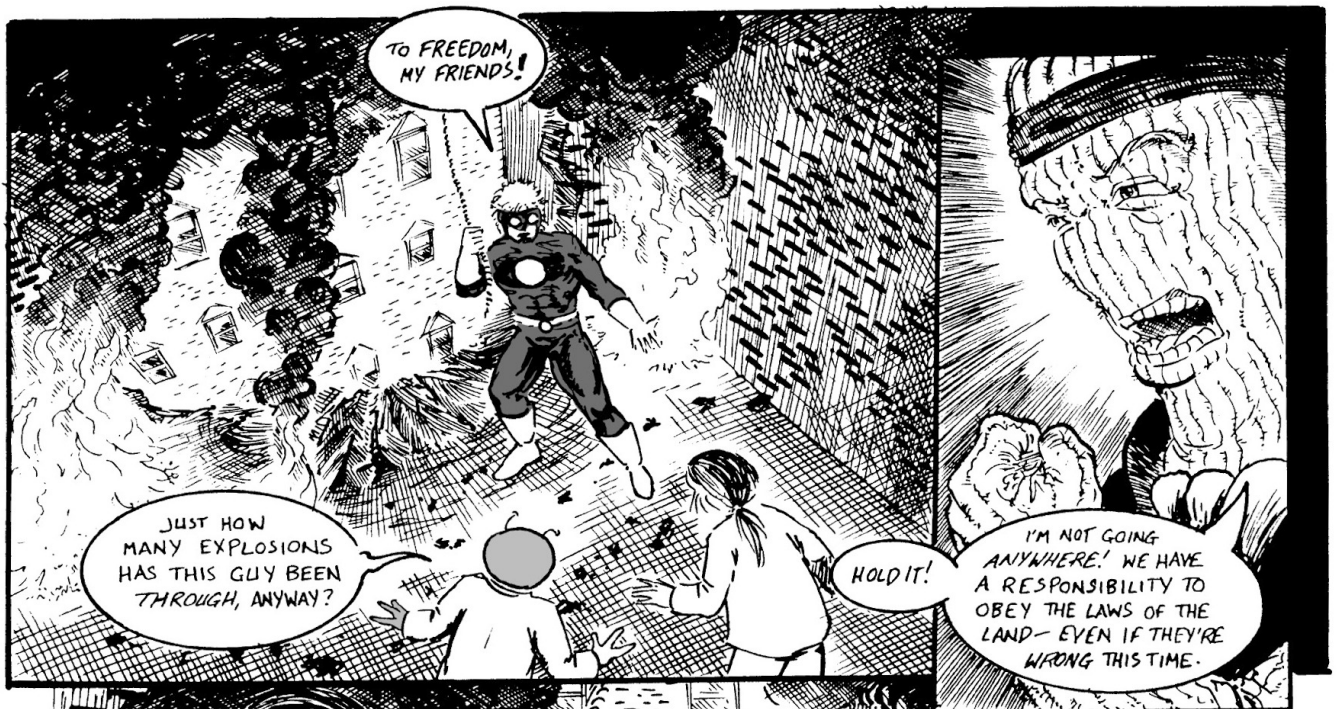
-- holy cats--

WCOMING!!

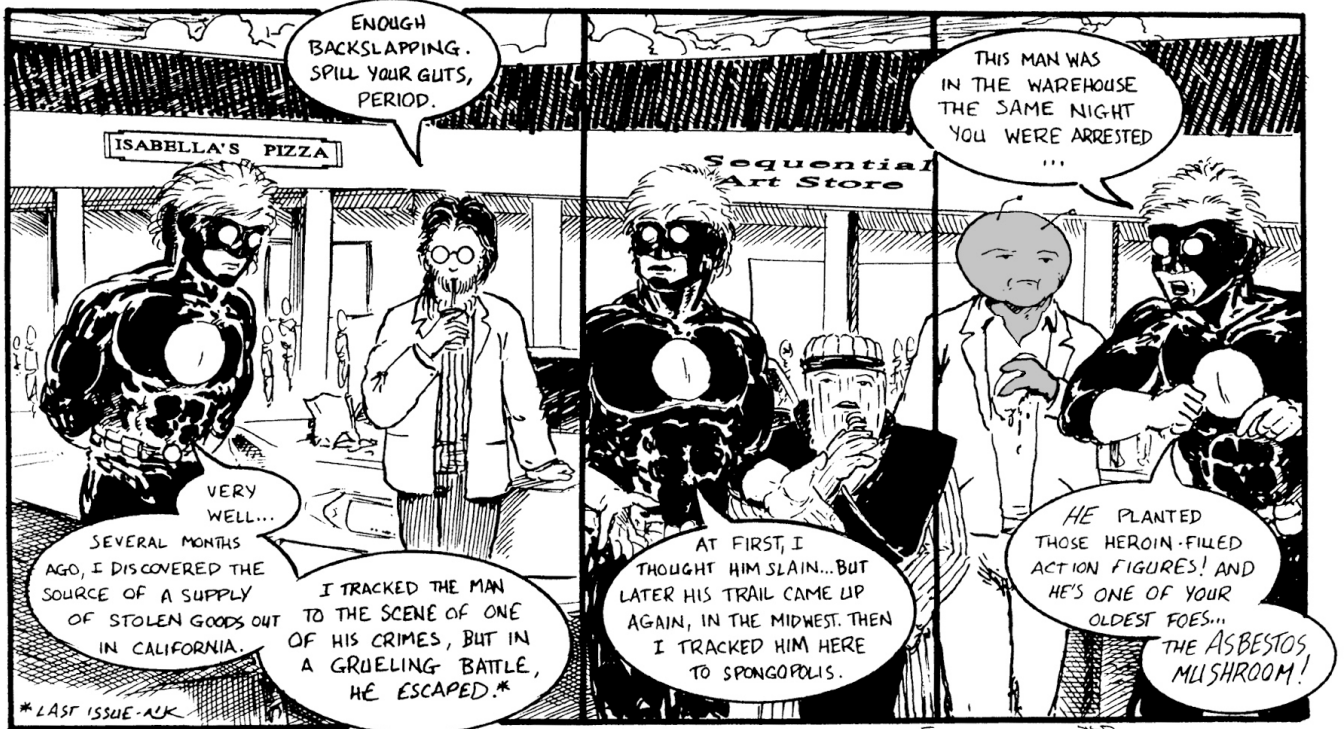
That crazy son of a... cough! cough! cough!

cough koff

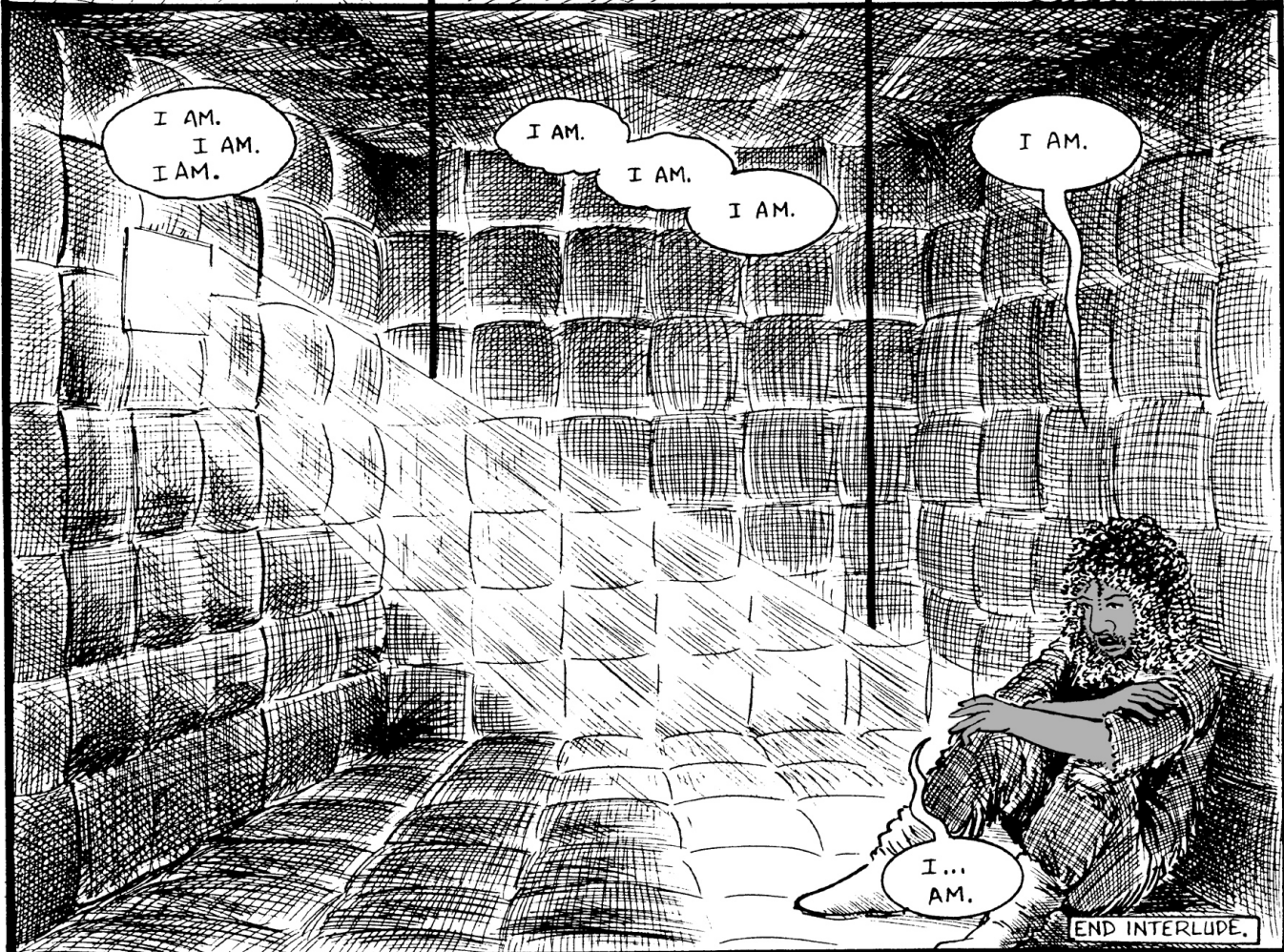
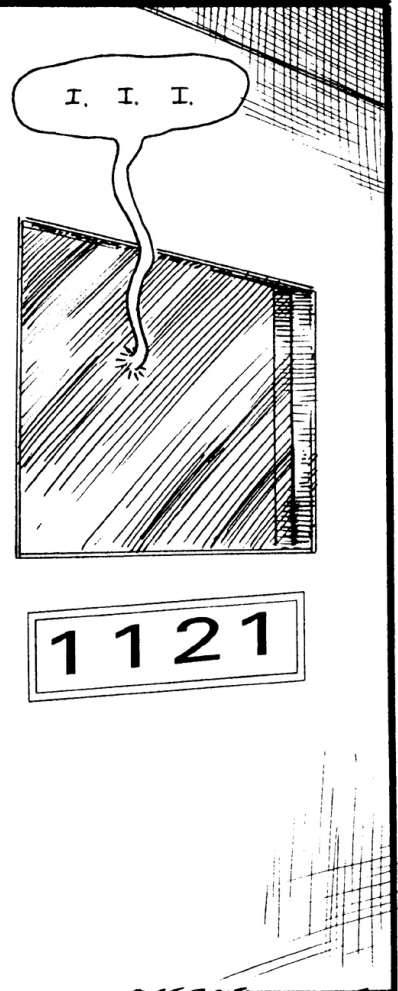
QUICKLY, HERGES! BEFORE THE POLICE ARRIVE!



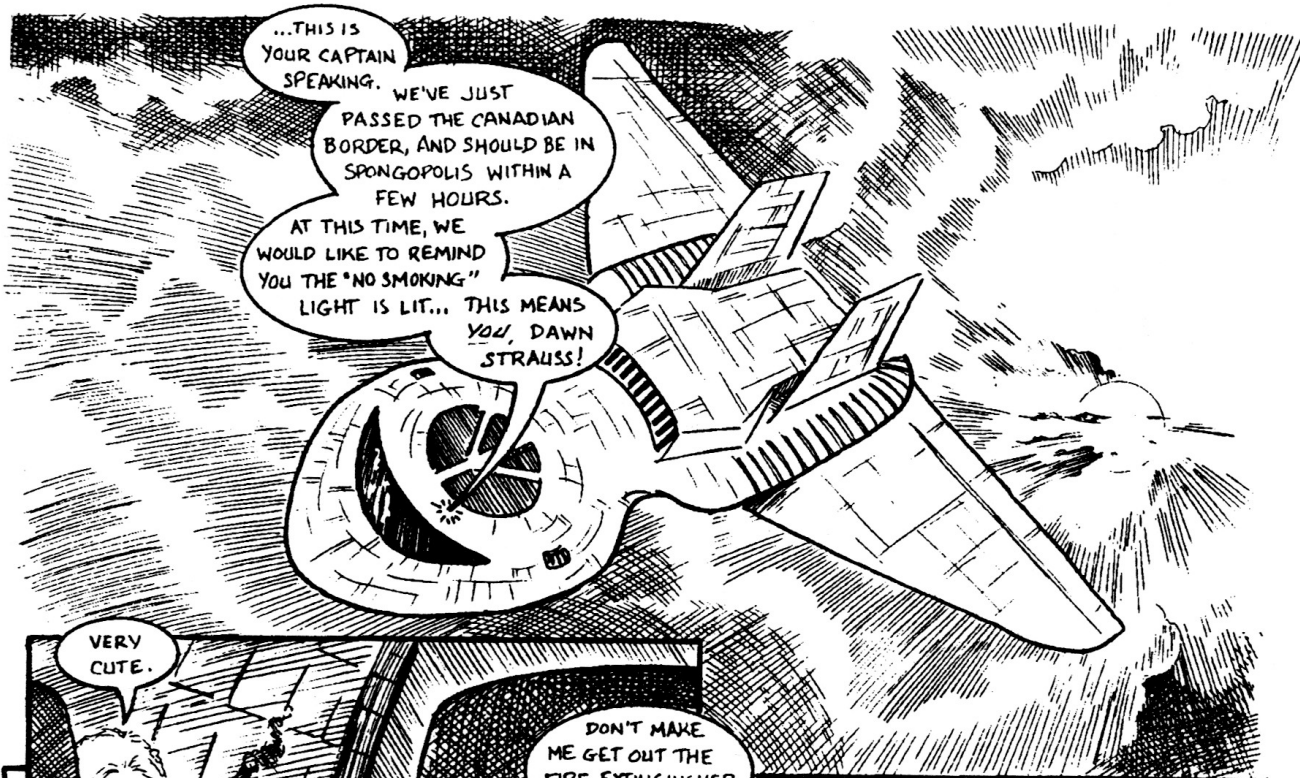




INTERLUDE:



END INTERLUDE.



...THIS IS
YOUR CAPTAIN
SPEAKING. WE'VE JUST
PASSED THE CANADIAN
BORDER, AND SHOULD BE IN
SPONGOPOLIS WITHIN A
FEW HOURS.
AT THIS TIME, WE
WOULD LIKE TO REMIND
YOU THE "NO SMOKING"
LIGHT IS LIT... THIS MEANS
YOU, DAWN
STRAUSS!

VERY
CUTE.

DON'T MAKE
ME GET OUT THE
FIRE EXTINGUISHER,
YOUNG LADY.

...BEAUTIFUL
OUT THERE,
ISN'T IT?

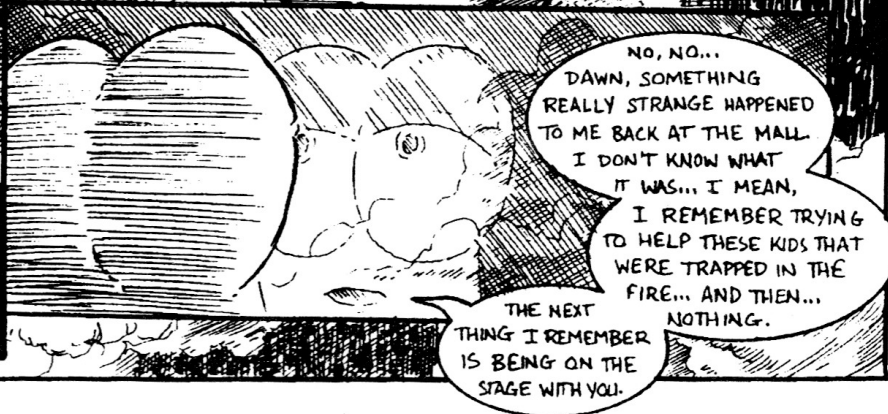
YES...
YES IT IS. I'M
GLAD WE DID
THIS, DAWN.



I FEEL
SOMEWHAT
RENEWED...

LIKE I CAN
FACE ANYTHING
THAT COMES TO
ME NOW.

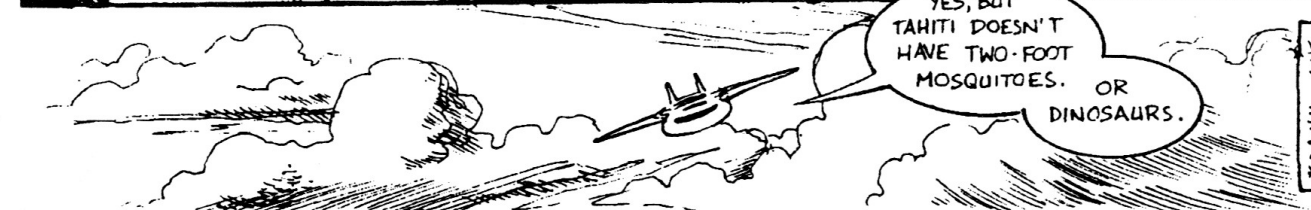
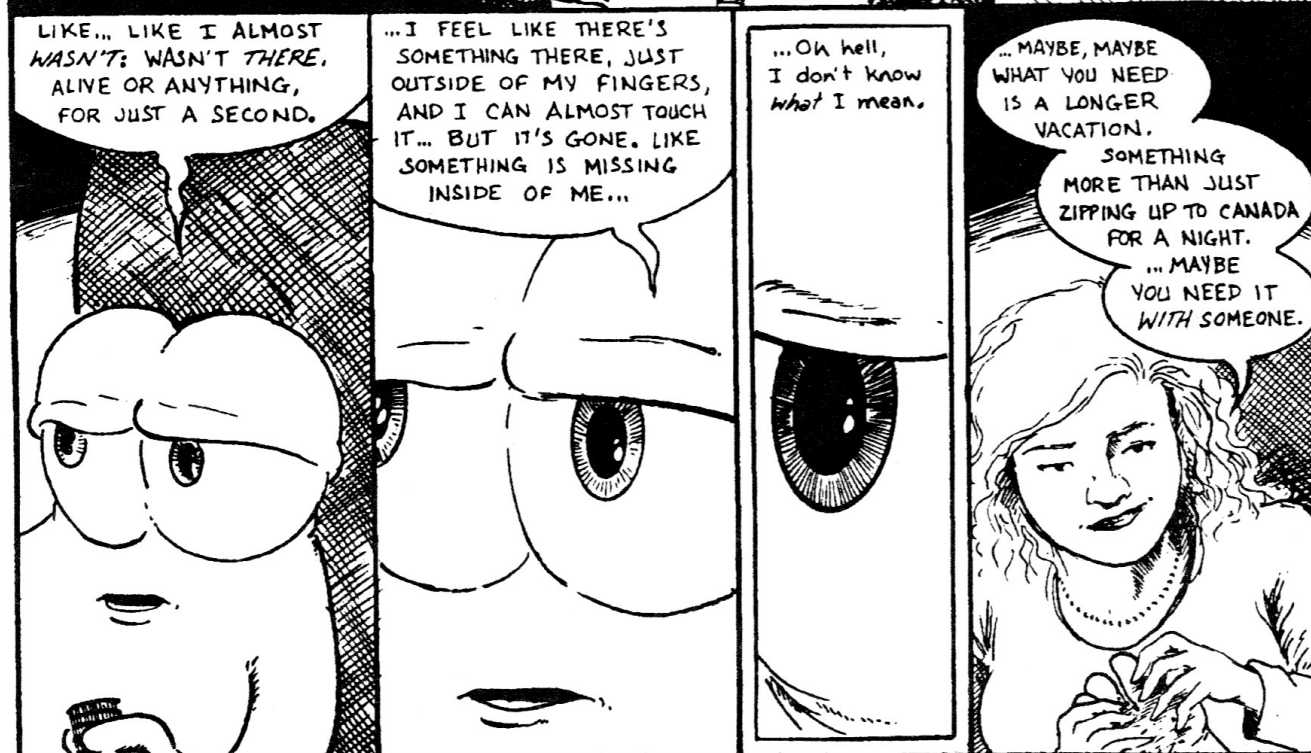
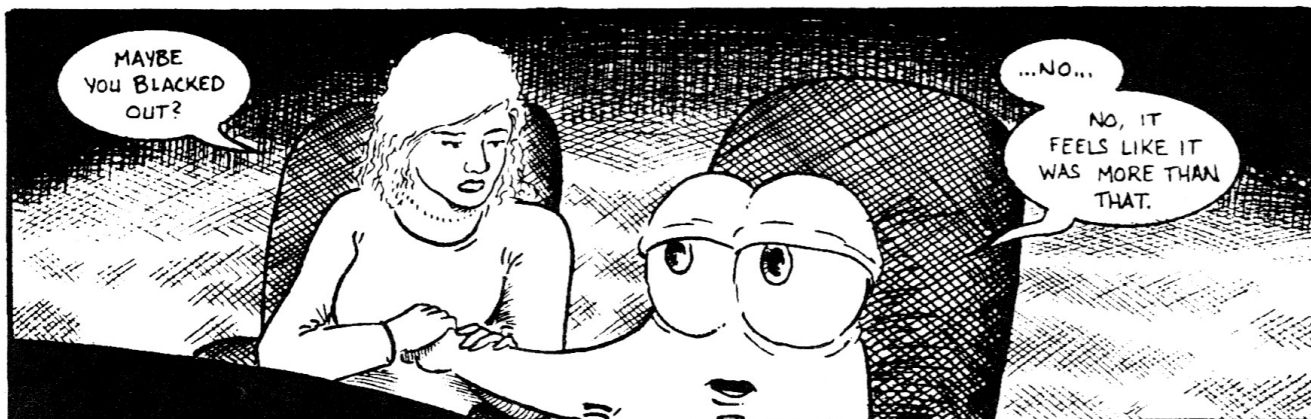
giggle... I'VE
NEVER HAD THAT
KIND OF AFFECT ON
MEN BEFORE!

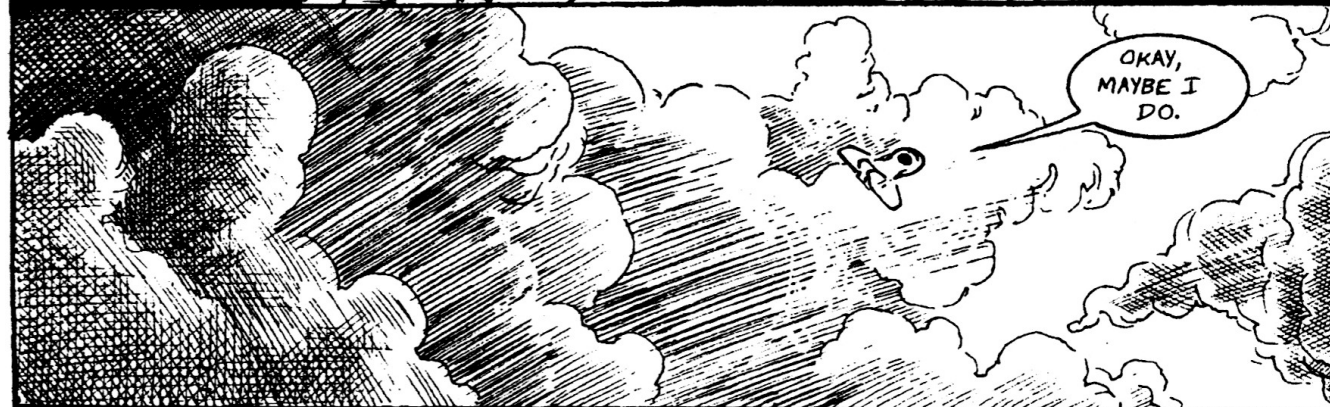


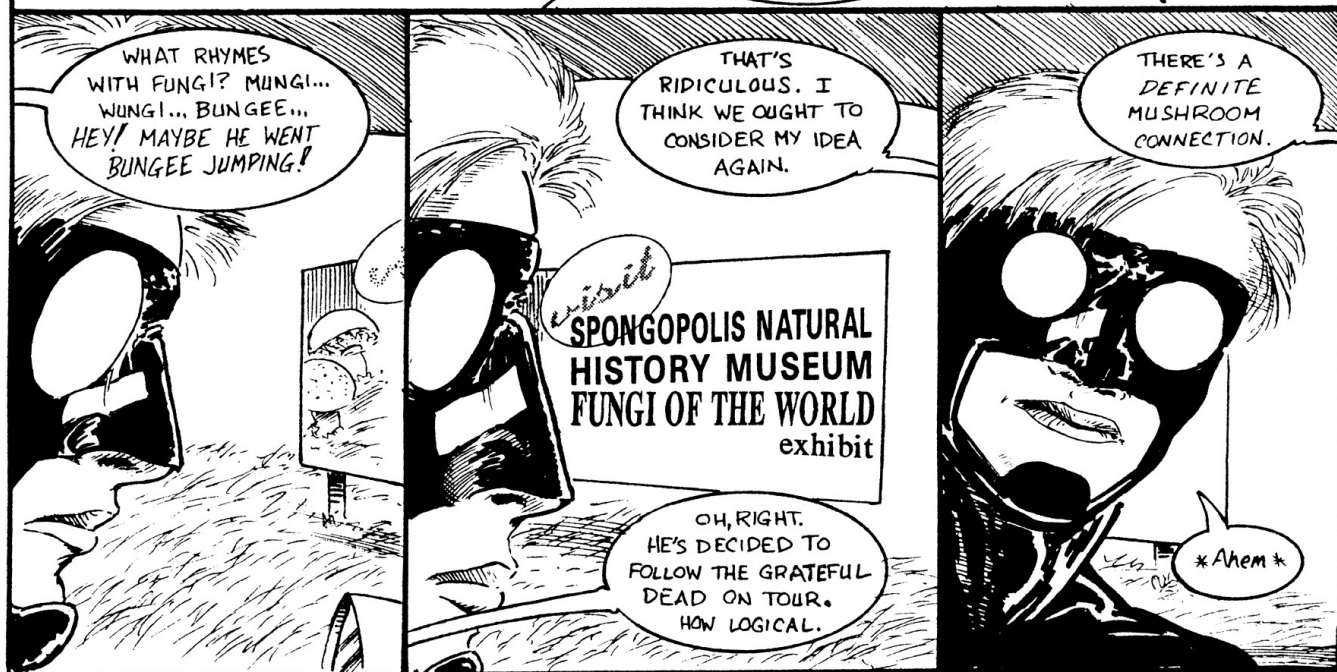
NO, NO...
DAWN, SOMETHING
REALLY STRANGE HAPPENED
TO ME BACK AT THE MALL.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT
IT WAS... I MEAN,

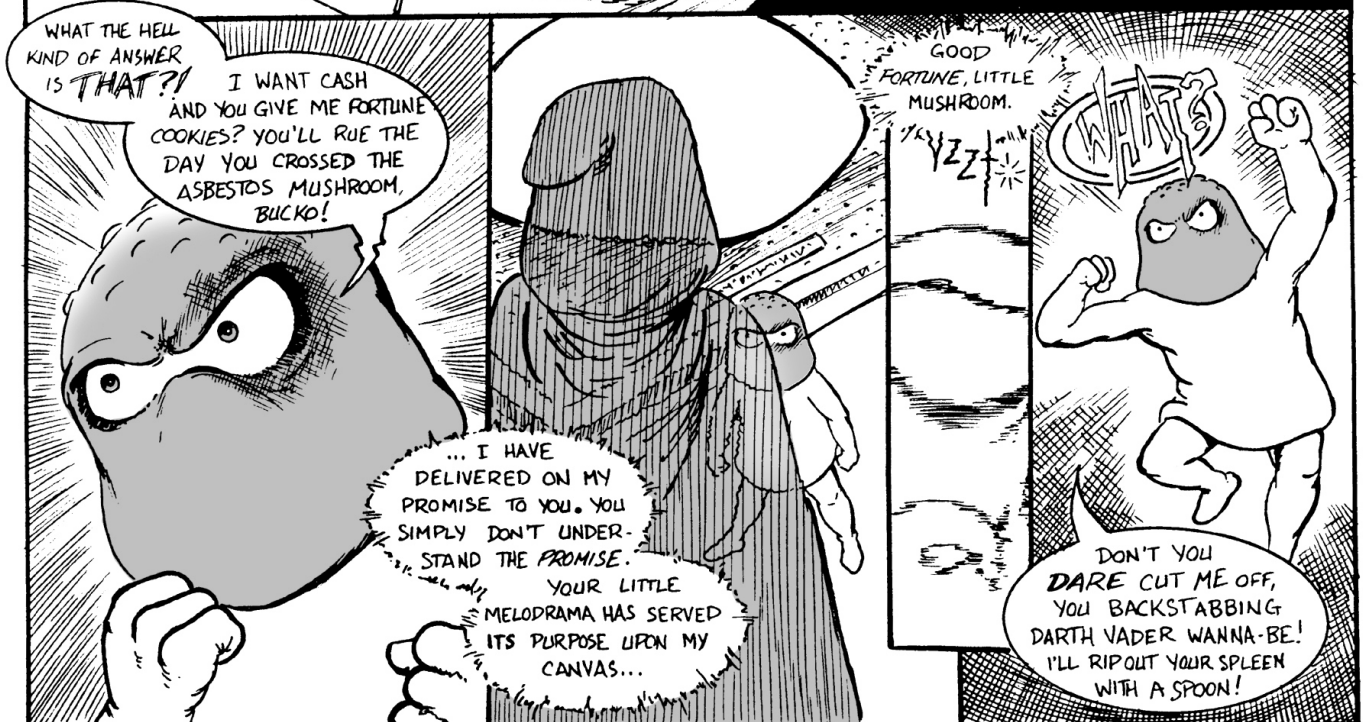
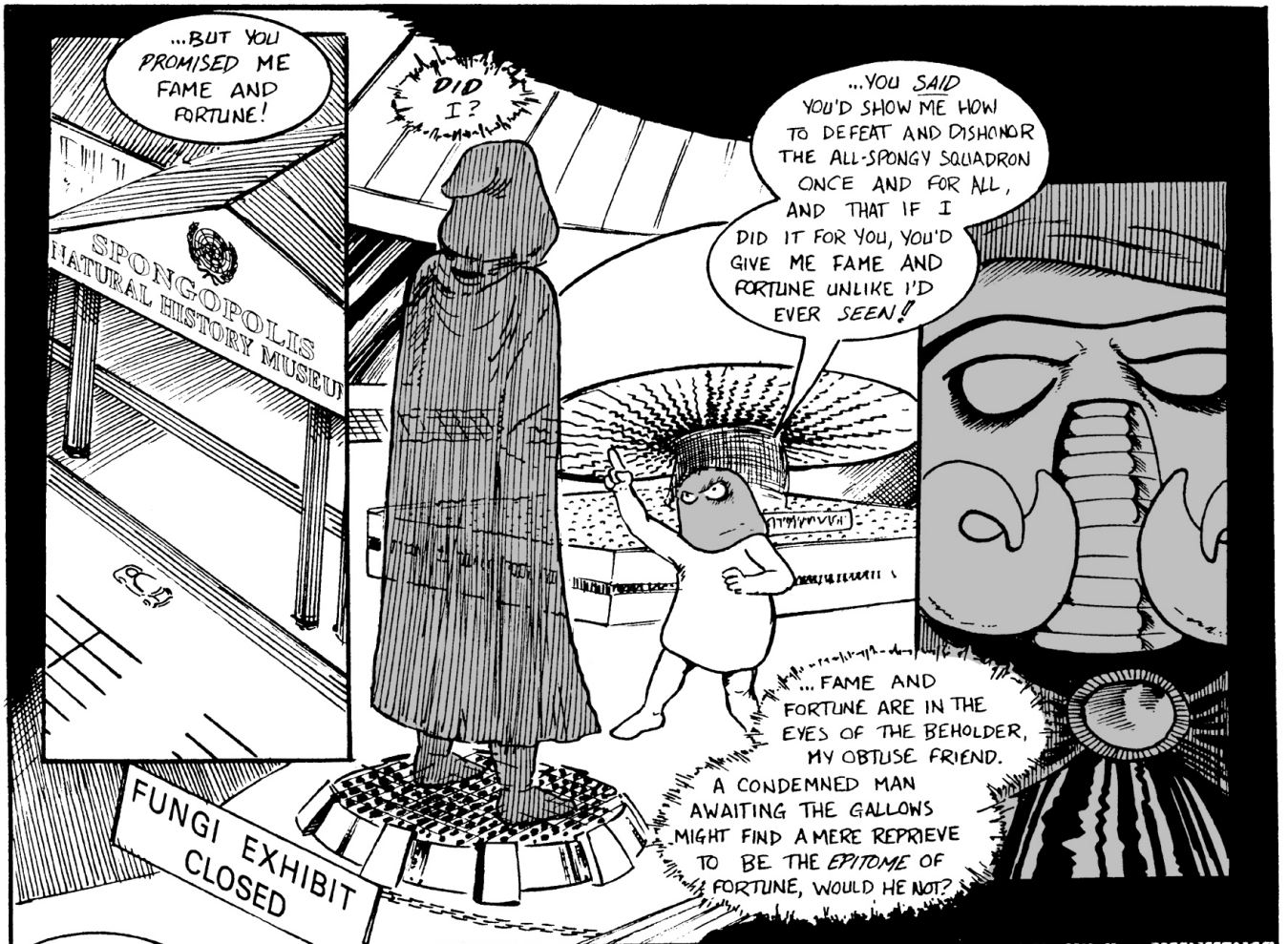
I REMEMBER TRYING
TO HELP THESE KIDS THAT
WERE TRAPPED IN THE
FIRE... AND THEN...
NOTHING.

THE NEXT
THING I REMEMBER
IS BEING ON THE
STAGE WITH YOU.

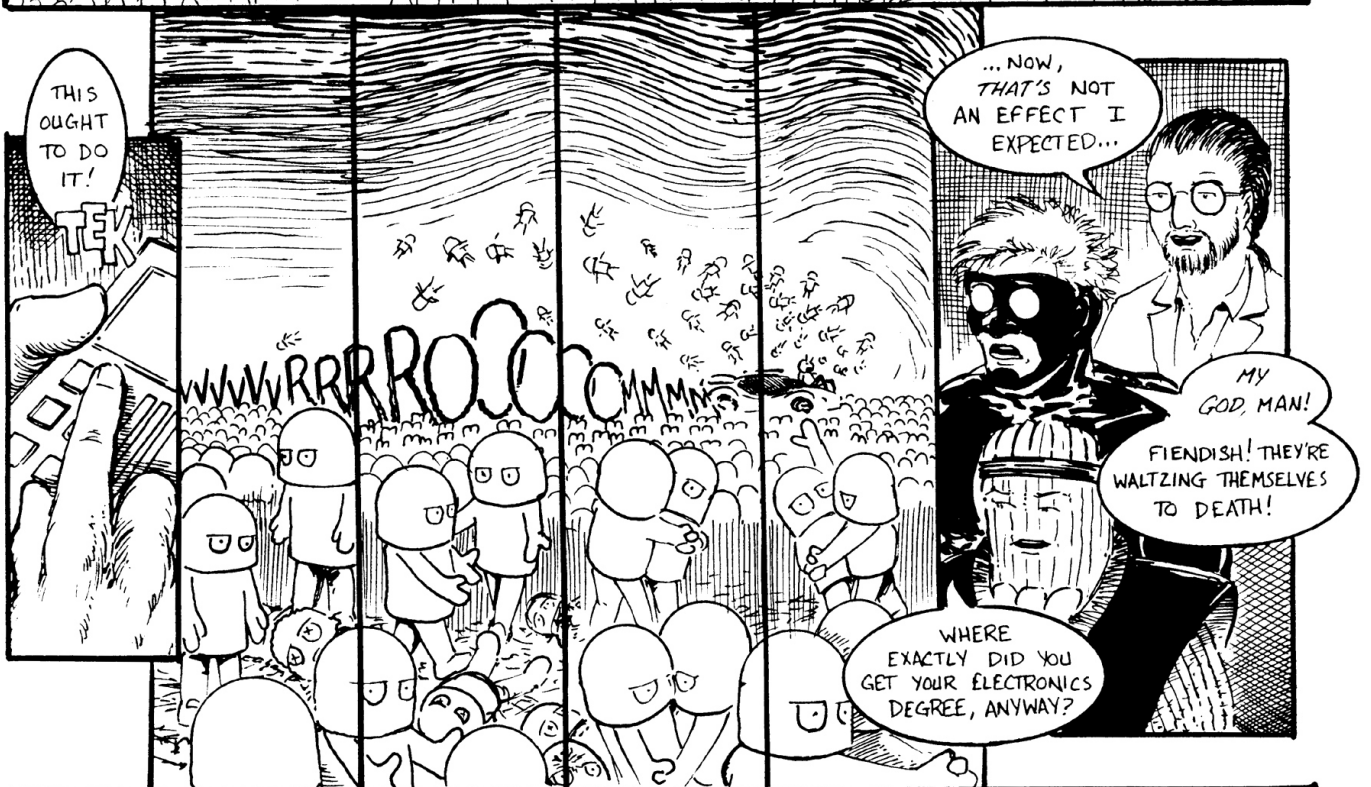
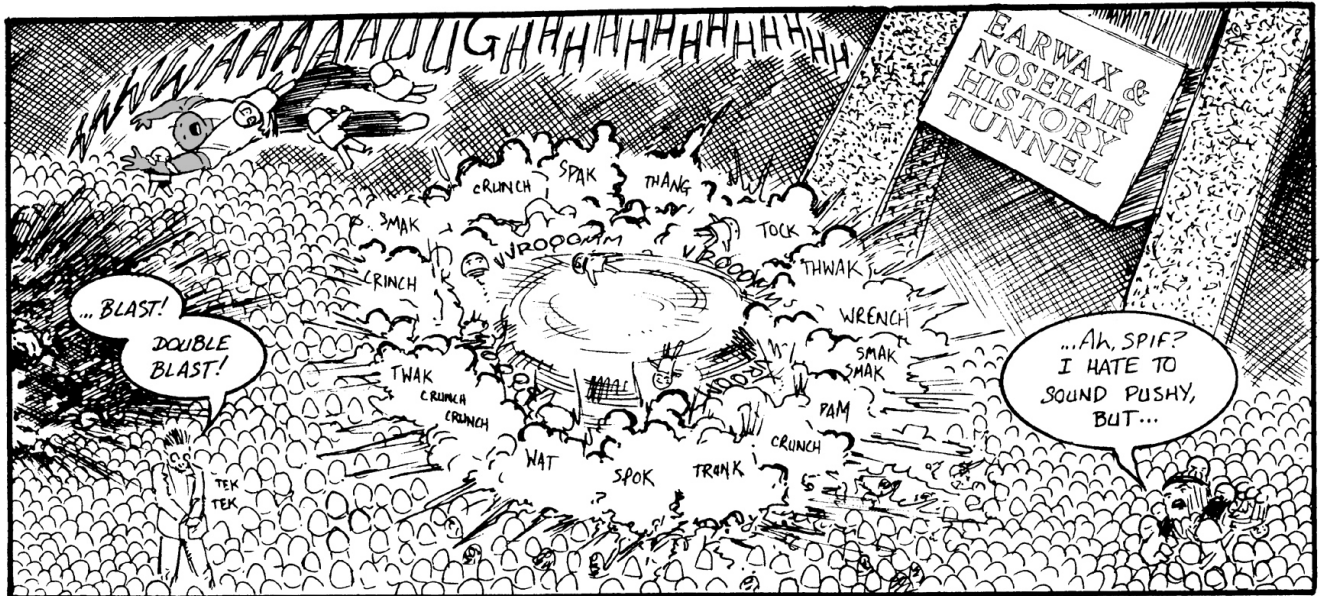


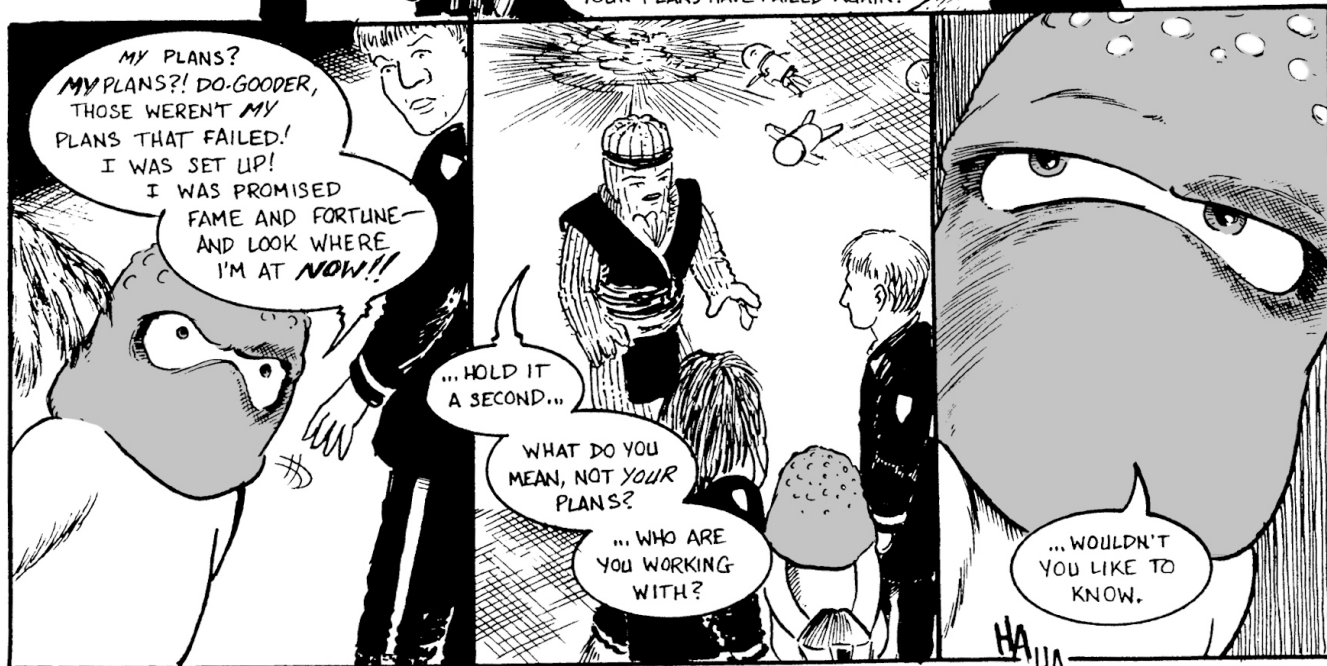
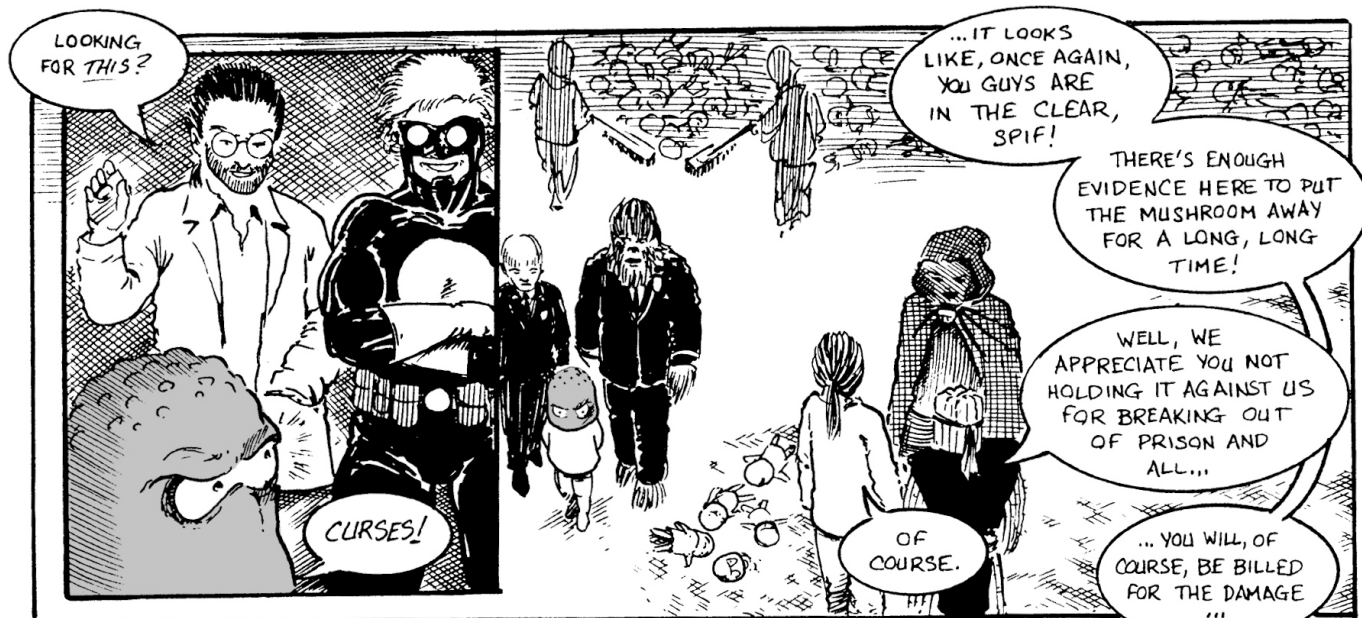


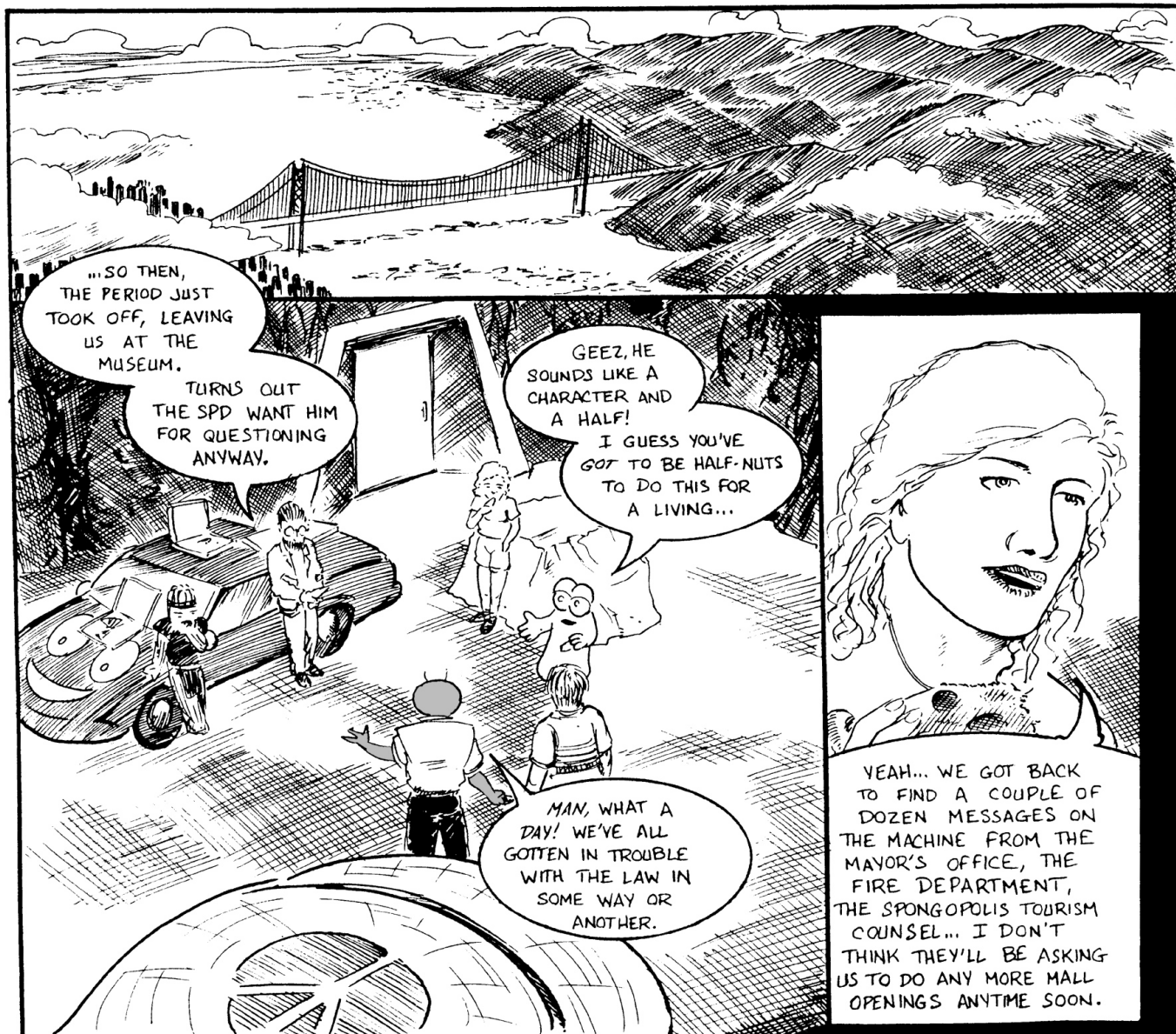


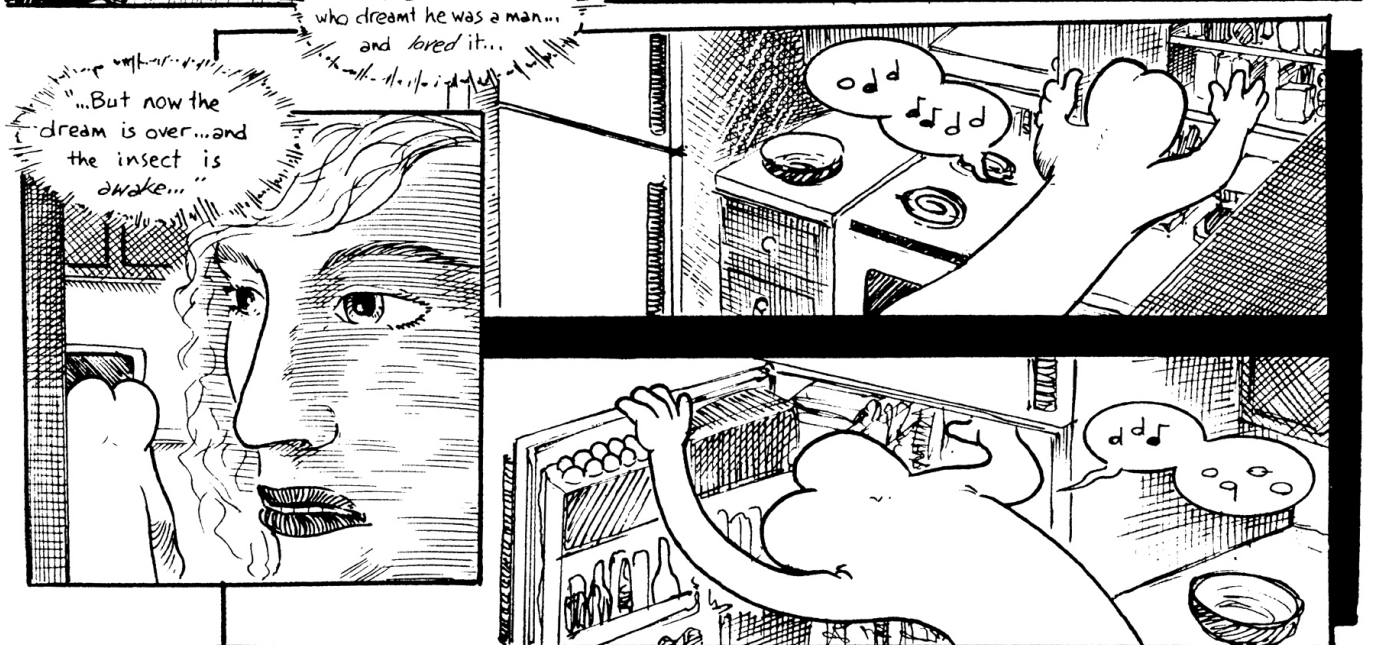
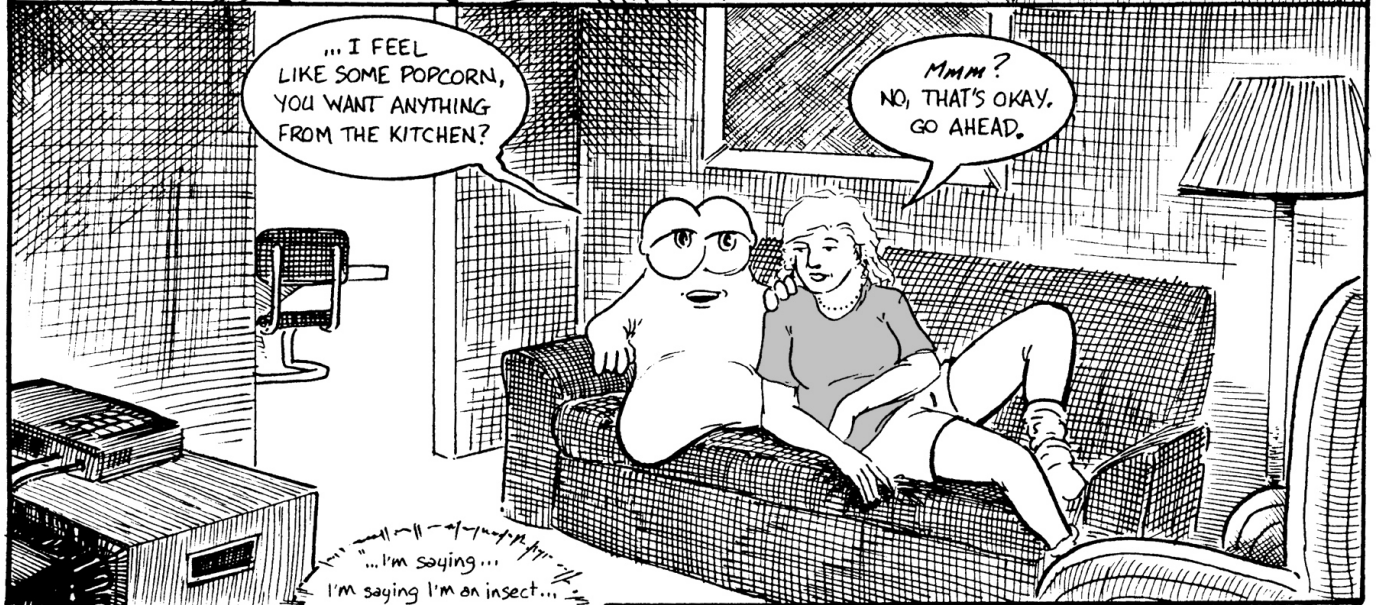
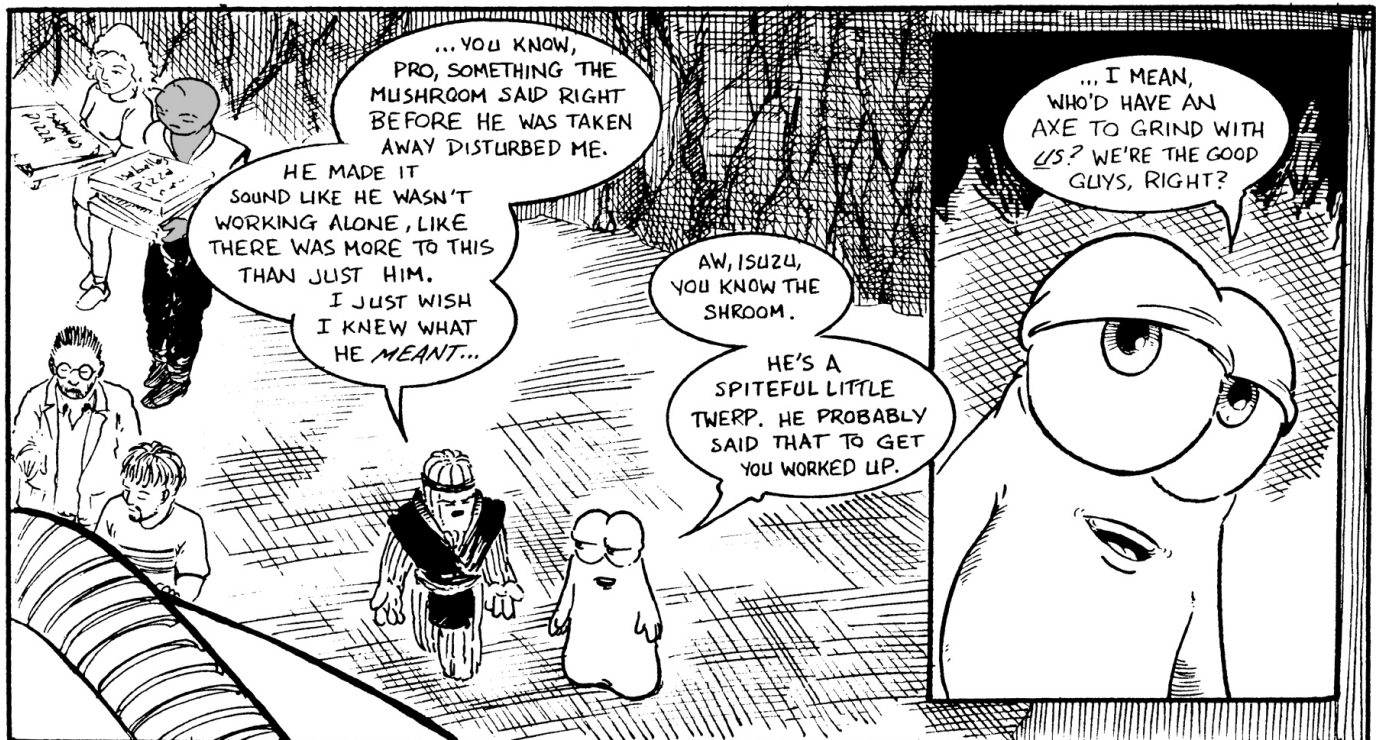


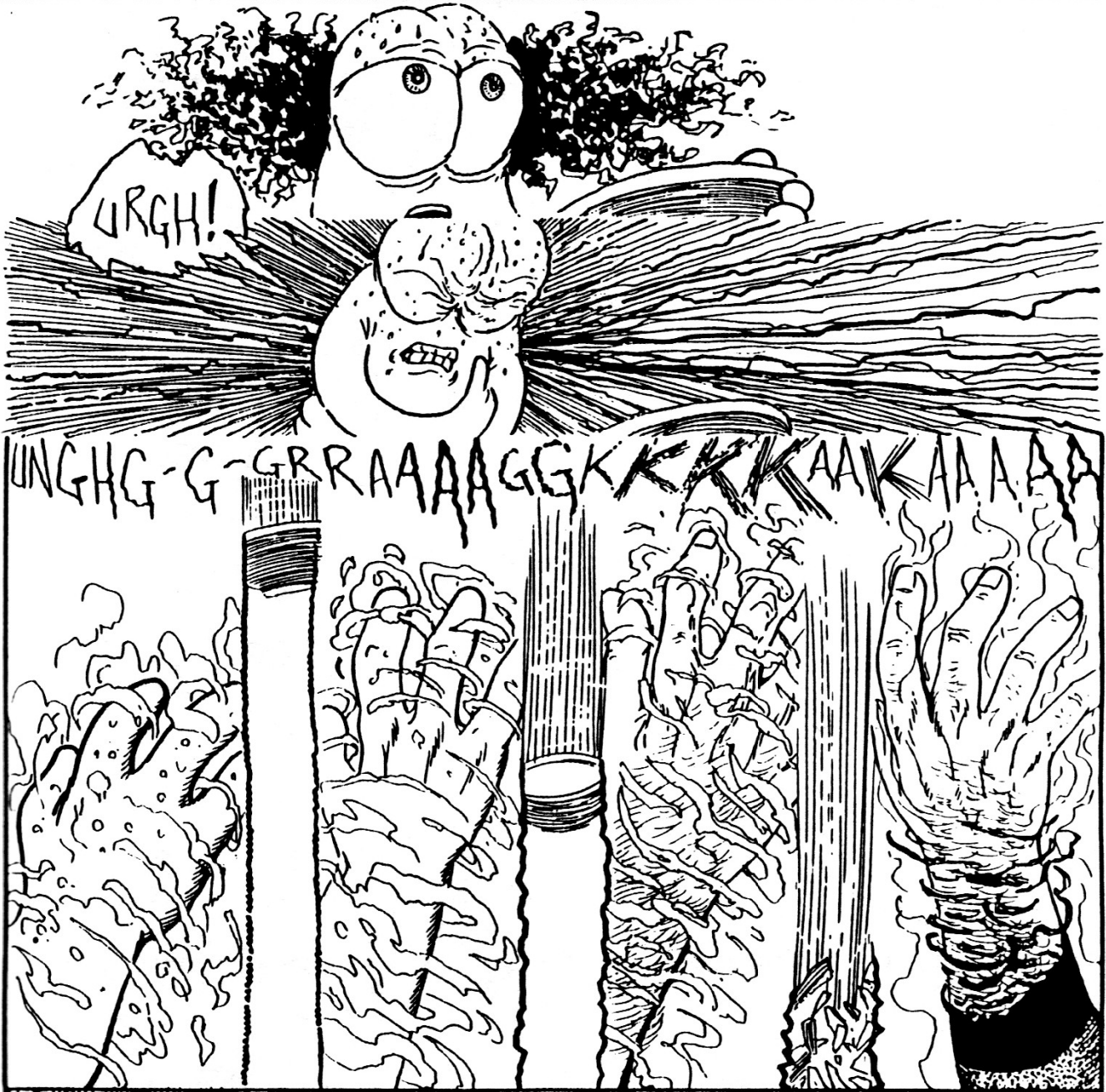
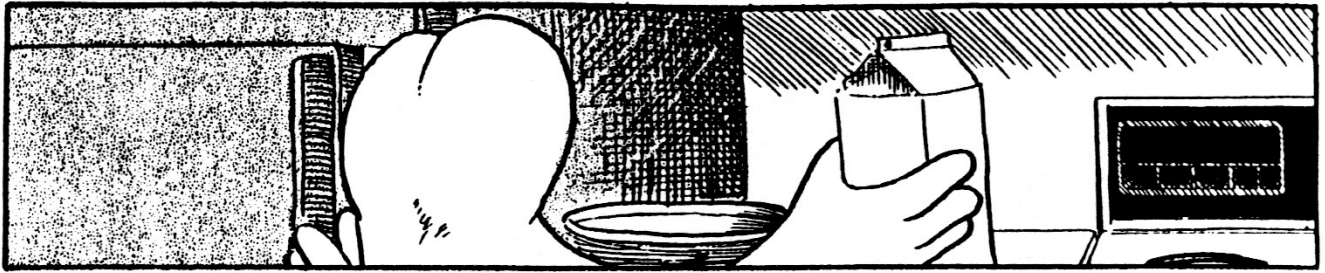


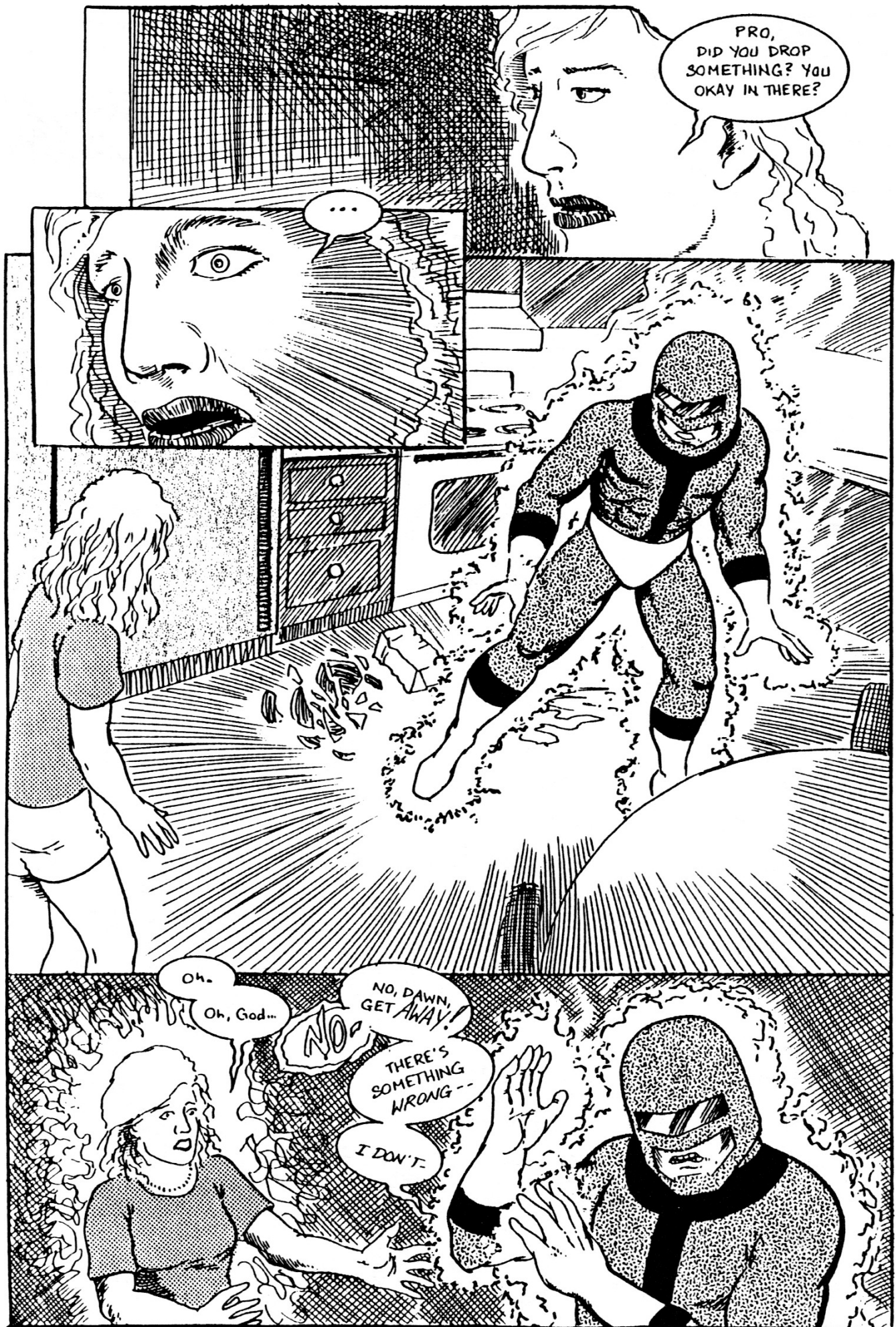


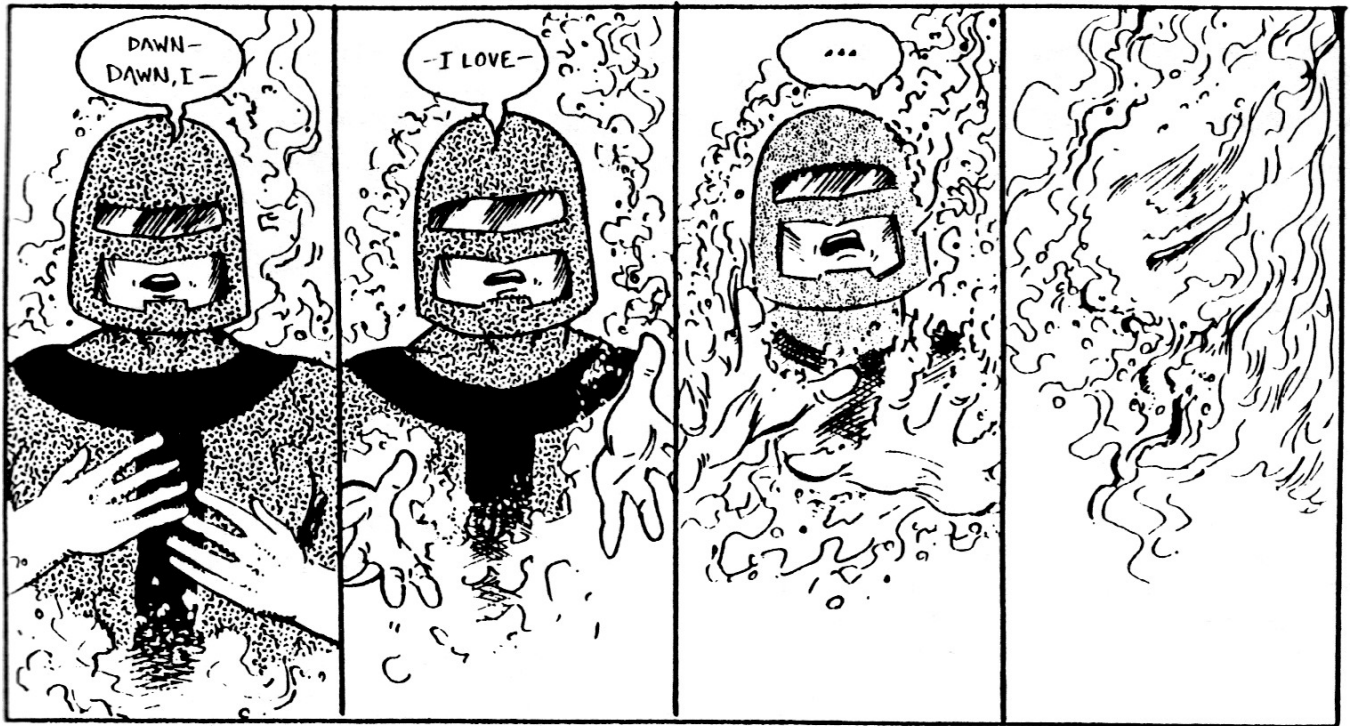












NEXT:

THE DARK AGES

the slimeball speaks

Welcome to #19! Lots of announcements this time out, so settle in and ride the waves...

Believe it or not, next issue will mark five years since a young lad named Nik published a comic called *Amoeba Adventures* #1, way back in November 1990. And yessir, we's celebrating! Max and I will appear together at this year's Mid-Ohio Con in Columbus, and we're also hoping to have an *Amoeba Adventures Fifth Anniversary Special* ready for the con. The special will be chock full of noted small pressers' interpretations of the AA gang, essays by Troy Hickman and yours truly, and a few other goodies. While in Ohio, we'll also be doing sketches, giving away freebies, and generally tearing up the town. If you're in Columbus this Nov. 25 & 26, stop on by the Amoebatable and say hey!

I must give thanks to my cohorts in the United Fanzine Organization, who for some reason decided to bless us with no less than *five* 1994 UFO Excellence Awards. *Amoeba Adventures* was named Best Overall Publication and *Amoeba Adventures* #13 Best Single Issue, while yours truly won Best Writer and Best Publisher honors, and Max Ink won Best Cover Artist. Thanks to all for the recognition!

Continuing with the plugs, there's an *Amoeba*

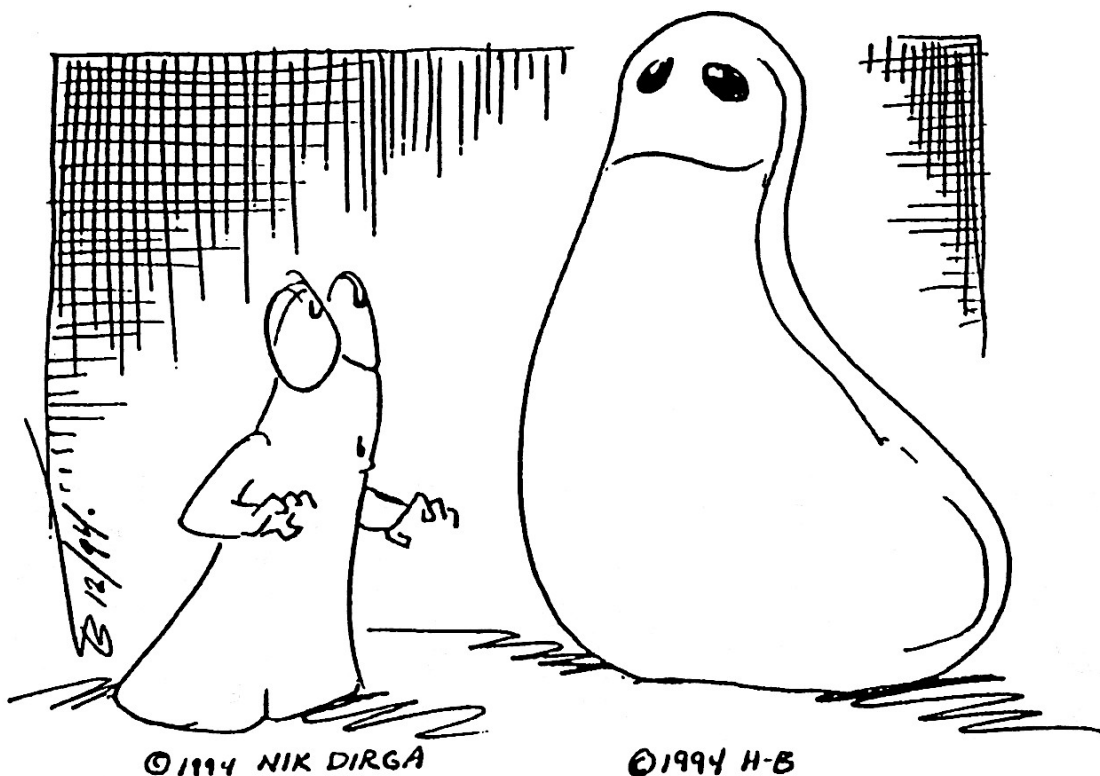
Adventures pin up by Max Ink in Bob Elinskas's new benefit pin up book for the American Cancer Society, *Small Press Swimsuit Spectacular*. Other contributors include Teri S. Wood, Evan Dorkin, Don Simpson and more, and it's for a good cause. Send Bob \$4 at Allied Comics, 1805 Girard St., Utica, NY 13501 today for your copy.

Those of you who've ordered copies of AA #1 or #2 and haven't received them yet, hang in there! The originals for these two issues were severely damaged a while back and I've had to painstakingly reconstruct them using the latest computer technology, some paint brushes and a spatula. Anyway, they should be back in print now in the new half-legal size, and if you think I may have lost your order, let me know.

The long-delayed *Rambunny* solo comic should also be coming out late this year/early next year, cross your fingers. The new artist is Canadian Ron Gravelle, and what he's done so far is fantastic stuff. This one will be worth the wait.

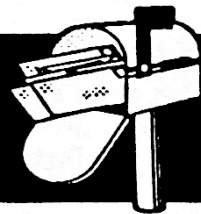
The song lyrics quoted on page one and two of this issue are from the song "A Liar's Tale," from the Dayton, Ohio-based band Guided By Voices' third album, *Self-Inflicted Aerial Nostalgia*, a ginchy album by a spongariffic band, well worth picking up.

That's it for now — see you in November for the kickoff of "The Dark Ages!"



By Eric Hess (Reprinted from the pages of *Small Press Feedback* #20)

Amoebama!l



(Time to clear out the mailbag... A few more letters on #17, and some of the first to come in on #18. Thank you again for all your kind and insightful commentary! —Nik)

Sherman Burnett
Monticello, Kentucky

Amoeba Adventures #17 is what comics are all about! Great story and art with enough interesting happenings to keep me interested. (I didn't see the breakup of Mitsu and Kyoko coming, but I may have missed a clue somewhere). Of course my favorite character is Prometheus and his developing relationship with Dawn has possibilities (considering she's human and he's an amoeba). Can they maintain a loving relationship without sex? I'd hope so, but that remains to be seen.

(Now Sherman, who said Dawn and Prometheus weren't having sex? The beginning of this issue could change your mind... Anyway, I prefer to leave such intimate doings to the imagination. AA is pretty much a "PG-13" comic.)

Rick Howe
Columbus, Georgia

Thanks for the recent issues (#15-#17) of *Amoeba Adventures*. This series is really flowing, especially in issues 16 and 17, which, as solid stand-alone episodes, may be a couple of the finest yet. Full of insight and humor, as usual. Writing and art both excel in these episodes. Your pal Max is developing into quite an efficient comix illustrator. The pages in these strips tend to be quite full, almost to the point of crowding, and I would imagine it takes fine compositional organization to include everything that needs to be there while still leaving the art some room to breathe. The secret seems to lie in not over-doing it. Max has a sort of light touch, a holding back in his art, and he uses a variety of textures to create a finished look. It's full enough, and competently done; just not over-worked. Thus I use a word like *efficient* to define it.

The main thing I would say concerning the stories themselves is that they are well-rounded and multifaceted. There are several main characters, a lot of scene-changing and sub-

plots going on, creating a diffuse and somewhat lifelike continuity. And they are well-rounded in a more important sense as well. They're not just tear-jerkers, but a blend of joy and sorrow woven together.

It still throws me a little to see what sometimes look like cartoon figures acting in what is usually a fairly realistic manner. But I think I'll gradually get over it. The idea of a society composed of various mutants, aliens, or whatever they are, living alongside of regular humans, is acceptable.

Perry Lake
Paradise, California

Amoeba Adventures #17 was good. Well, the sneeze was pretty disgusting, but the rest was good. A lot of this story was very light and pleasant, which is perhaps appropriate for an X-mas story.

I notice in your letters section that some folks don't seem to like Prometheus as a regular guy who has sort of fallen into the hero role. I disagree. He is your moral conscience in the book. He has to be caring and concerned, or you're just another *X-Men* clone with a psychotic Wolverine slicing and dicing

EARLY, DISCARDED DESIGN FOR NINJA ANT



Perry Lake's way-weird take on Ninja Ant

anyone he doesn't like. Keep Pro the way he is.

As I said, I really like the stories you deal with. It's a lot like Rich Watson's *Ronnie & David*, in that you are telling a powerful and deeply human story here. Which is why I still have trouble with the funny animal/superhero trappings. I know that stuff adds humor and action, but it's still unbelievable.

Witches, ghosts, demons, werewolves, aliens; those things I can believe in, not talking cacti and crime-fighting bugs. It's just a matter of taste.

(I notice a lot of newer readers to Amoeba Adventures have a little trouble at first seeing beyond the bizarre characters that populate my little universe. But most get beyond it. Using outlandish characters and creatures to tell very human stories is a central foundation of comic art as we know it; Dave Sim's Cerebus, Charles Schultz's Snoopy, Jim Woodring's art... or heck, to go out of comics entirely, you could go back to the work of Shakespeare, or Dante, or most of Western mythology and find the use of anthropomorphism to make a point. Fantasy is integral to an awful lot of great fiction out there. Take away the cacti, insects, amoebas and rabbits and just how interesting a comic would Amoeba Adventures be then? But like you say, Perry, in the end it's just a matter of taste.)

Teri S. Wood
Pen & Ink Comics
Banning, California
Hiya dude!

I just finished reading issue #18 of *Amoeba Adventures*, and once again I can't help thinking that this is one of the best small press books out there! I likes it a lot, dude!

(Teri, of course, self-publishes the swell independent comic Wandering Star, well worth spending your time and money with.)

Troy Hickman
Lafayette, Indiana

Thanks for the exemplary *Amoeba Adventures* #18. Here we have another example of why mainstream comics cannot compete with what's being offered in the small press. Here's some comments in patented Hickmarama:

- Loved the cover. Lots of flavor, great textures, and Teddy Roosevelt (one of the most interesting presidents).

- Good seeing The Period again (who really

believed he was dead?). He's as goofy as ever, and you have to enjoy a character that sounds like a Victor Borge routine.

- The whole bit with the action figures was cool. Hey, I'd buy 'em! (Especially if they made the Pro figure like Stretch Armstrong)

- Ya gotta love Isuzu. In a lot of ways, he's the glue holding the Squadron together.

- The scene at the mall was very cool. And I really dig the Dark One's methods. Of course, it's a good thing that all supervillains aren't as methodical.

- The heroin angle was classic (I'm going to start popping the heads off my action figures, just in case).

- Max's art was terrific throughout. I don't know if I say it enough, but he's a large part of the reason AA has become such a first-rate comic (oh, OK, you have something to do with it too, ya bum).

Oh, thanks, by the way, for mentioning me in conjunction with The Period (sure, associate me with homicidal maniacs, Nik. I'll kill you for that!).

Gib Bickel
The Laughing Ogre
Columbus, Ohio

I just wanted to thank Nik and Max for the enjoyable read. Your *Amoeba Adventures* is a consistently wonderful work. Nik's writing has brought your characters to life, and made them much more real than most in comic mainstream, and that's with an amoeba as a main character! Max's art gets better all the time, and seems to be setting the standard for the small press.

Amoeba Adventures has recently been added to the Ogre's "recommended reading" shelf. Due to our success with AA, we are going to be adding a small press area in the store. Any small press creators wanting to be included should send a sample to: The Laughing Ogre, 4258 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43214.

Thanks again guys for the effort, it is appreciated.

(I encourage any and all small pressers reading this to take advantage of Gib's offer. The Laughing Ogre is a fine store and has been incredibly supportive of our work.)

Matt Feazell
Detroit, Michigan

Thanks for *Amoeba* #18! I'm honored that you used my sketch...

I loved the title "The Strange Light In The

Eyes of The Truly Mad." Also the scene where Dawn tosses aside her spandex costume and opts for the sensible one. Good for her! And where else but in *Amoeba Adventures* can you see a superhero team doing mall openings!?

Larry Johnson
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

I really enjoyed your new issue of *Amoeba Adventures* (#18). The story is rich in multi sub-plots, including the superhero Period, goofy Asbestos Mushroom, and the juxtaposition of the menacing Dark One and Herr Heinous. The scene of Prometheus and Dawn performing at the mall was very effective — and the relationship of these two makes perfect sense since in Greek mythology Prometheus is the bringer of fire to the world.

I am curious about the ending, though, where this trio is arrested for heroin smuggling — the drug discovered inside the dolls modeled after the team. What about Jenner Toy Company, the manufacturer? Don't they have some implication in this, and why don't the police go after them? Furthermore, there were no Miranda Rights read, and in addition no search warrant was issued! But perhaps these things don't exist in Spongopolis, although I note one character notes: "this is unconstitutional," a reference to our world.

(Uh... Well, I could say that the Jenner Toy Co. was investigated off-panel, and that Miranda Rights were read to the guys off-panel on the last page... But I'd be attempting retroactive continuity here. All blame for legal inaccuracies rests with the humble writer, who apologizes for his errors and displays this as further proof he was not meant for law school.)

Heather Clark
Evansville, Indiana

I read *Amoeba Adventures* #18 at work today and spent the rest of my shift worrying about everybody! Things are definitely taking a turn for the worse for the gang. I especially liked Dawn's decision to lose the spandex (though Pro probably didn't appreciate it very much). I really liked how Dawn came out on pages 10-12 (when she was talking with Isuzu) and was almost sickened by Pro's meeting with that beam on page 19 (I never have been good with that realism thing). And the beat-up Asbestos Mushroom in the overalls was too cool! All right, enough from the amateur critic.

Larry Blake
Reedsville, Ohio

Thanks for sending *Amoeba Adventures* #18! You and Max seem to get better each issue. This comic has a consistent air of quality and strong characterization but remains unpredictable. That is hard to do.

I love the way you play with comic book conventions and clichés — but are equally likely to throw in literary references. It's really nice to read a comic book scripted by a real writer as opposed to a typist who slavishly and mindlessly recycles mix and match patchworks of every earlier comic every published.

The appeal of Max's work is similar. He can do a Marvelesque anti-hero/guy with big guns riff like The Period — then turn right around and do the early 1900s scenes of New York. It all *works*. Just as he mixes the human and funny animal cast members of this comic with no jarring seams showing. Top all that with the eye grabbing textures and rapidly improving page layouts. Cool.

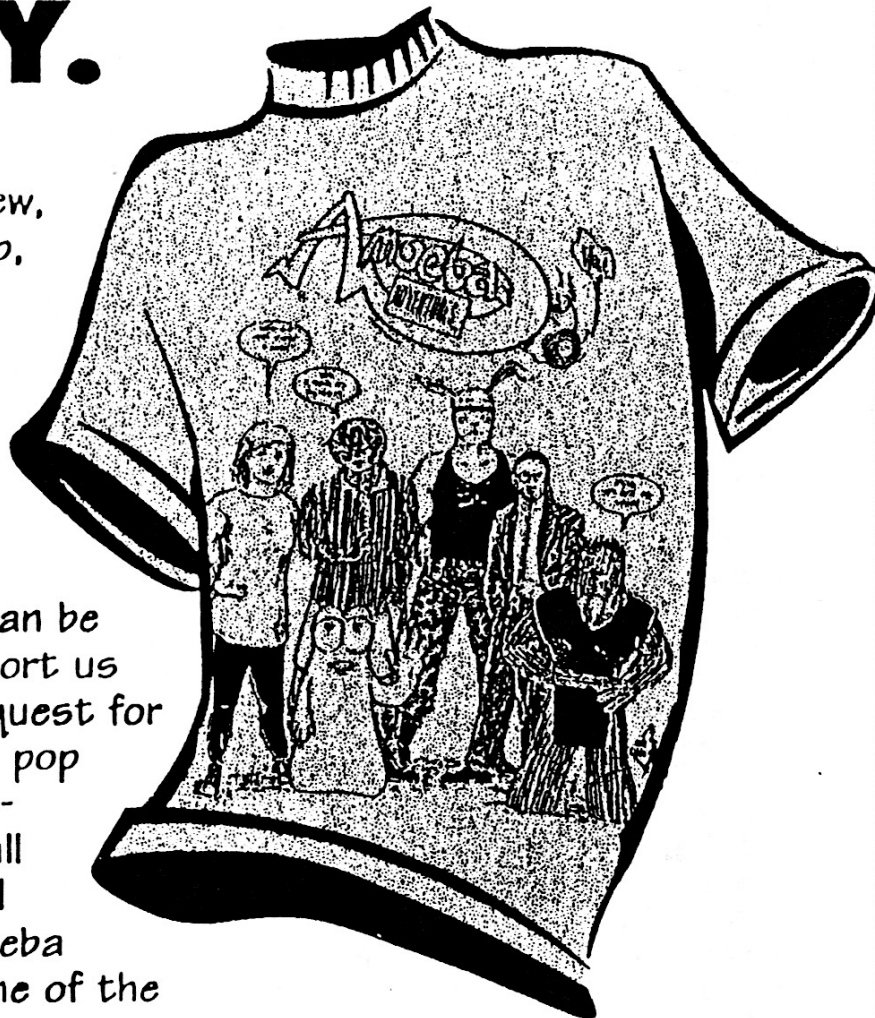
The appealing characters and creators of *Amoeba Adventures* make it a real "keeper" of a small-press comic. Only way to improve is to make it a monthly indy with color covers and get it distributed to every newsstand, drug store, mall bookstore and comic shop in the U.S. and Canada! Ah — I can dream, can't I? It'd be nice to have such a comic to look forward to and seek out every month! In the meantime — may you two guys continue to do such knockout teamwork. If you *do* it, we'll read it!!!

(The debate continues over the effectiveness of AA's outlandish characters and settings in fairly 'realistic' milieus... Some, like Larry B. and Gib, dig it, while others, like Rick and Perry, have troubles with it. What's your thoughts on it? Drop us a line, and while you're at it, lemme know what you think of this here issue as well. See you in 60 days for the start of "The Dark Ages." — Nik)

next! After this issue's cliffhanger, can you honestly refuse to pick up next ish? Join Max and I for Part One of "The Dark Ages," and the return of Rambunny to the All-Spongy Squadron at last! See you in 60 or so for our slam-bang 20th issue!

PUT AN AMOEBA ON YOUR CHEST TODAY.

Introducing the all-new, so-alternative-it's-hlp, officially authorized AMOEBA ADVENTURES T-Shirt. Hand-crafted by Tibetan monks, this gorgeous shirt with original art by famed draftsman Max Ink can be yours now! Help support us on our never-ending quest for corporate whoredom, pop idol status, and complete dissolution of all our artistic integrity! Get yourself an Amoeba today and become one of the cultural elite!



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The UFO Checklist



These are the latest releases from the UFO (United Fanzine Organization) co-op, currently available during the late summer of 1995. For information on joining the UFO, contact chairman Jim Pack/ 7534 Kingsgate Way/ W. Chester, OH 45069



PIZZAZZ and FROG-BOY #7

(\$1.00 from Scott A. McClung/ 537 S. University #6/ Norman, OK 73069)

The beautiful super person Pizzazz finishes off her battle with Dr. Braino in her own particular style only to find more troubles awaiting her around the corner in the guise of Lord Rotl Evil knows no bounds as a surprise villian appears in the last page. Who is it? Ahhh, now that would be telling. Pick up this issue and delight in the superb art and exciting story line that could only come from the Imagination of S. McClung.



FANTASY THEATRE #4

(\$1.00 from J. Kevin Carrier/ 8913 Eldora Drive/ Cincinnati, OH 45236)

The action continues as the crimefighters Lady Spectra and Sparky face off against the fattening Black Sundae. Lavishly covered with mayhem and generously sprinkled with nuggets of fun, this bowl of super-hero action sees Sparky come to the rescue of her mom when she finds herself knee deep in trouble. Story by Troy Hickman and art by J. Kevin Carrier, this the end of a two-part story. Don't just order this issue, order the previous one as well so you're right on top of things. There'll be atest later.



FUTURO TIERRA #23

(\$.50+29¢ postage from Tony Lorenz/ 8708 Friendship Ct./ Tampa, FL 33634)

Steve and Cassandra finally find their way to the New City using the sewers as their highway. Their compatriots find themselves there as well but in a bit of trouble as a riot breaks out. This is the next to the last issue of this landmark series. If you haven't joined in the fun before, order all of the previous issues!



AMOEBIA ADVENTURES #18

(\$2.00 from Nik Dirga/ P.O.

The team-up of Nik Dirga and artist Max continues to send shock waves through small press. In this latest issue, The All-Spongy squadron finds itself in the position of having to do some self-marketing in order to pay the bills. But, in the shadows, lurks a new character called "The Period". Don't miss it. (No pun intended). Truly a masterpiece among masterpieces.

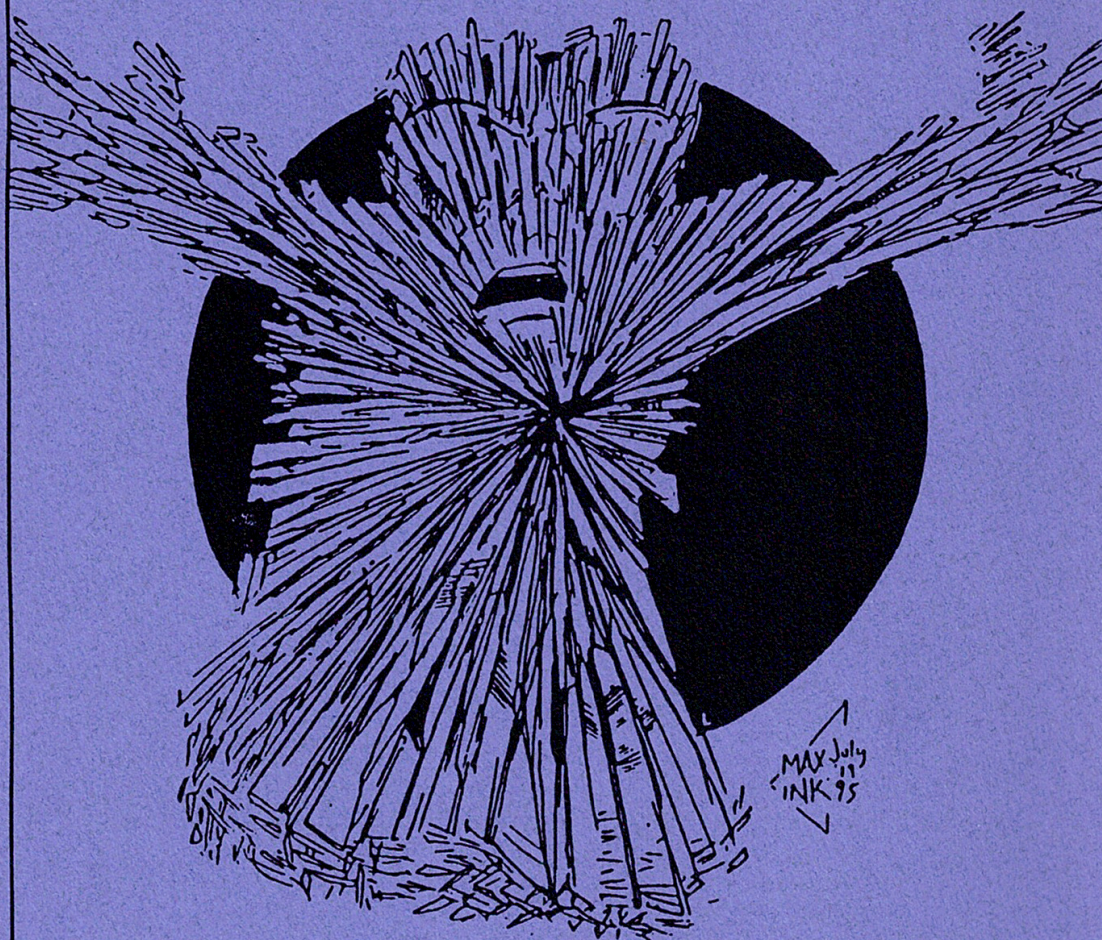


TETRAGAMMATON FRAGMENT #140, 141, 142, 143, 144

(\$2.00 ea from Jim Pack/ 7534 Kingsgate Way/ West Chester, OH 45069)

Miss an issue, bunky? Never fear! You can still find out what's happening by ordering back issues.

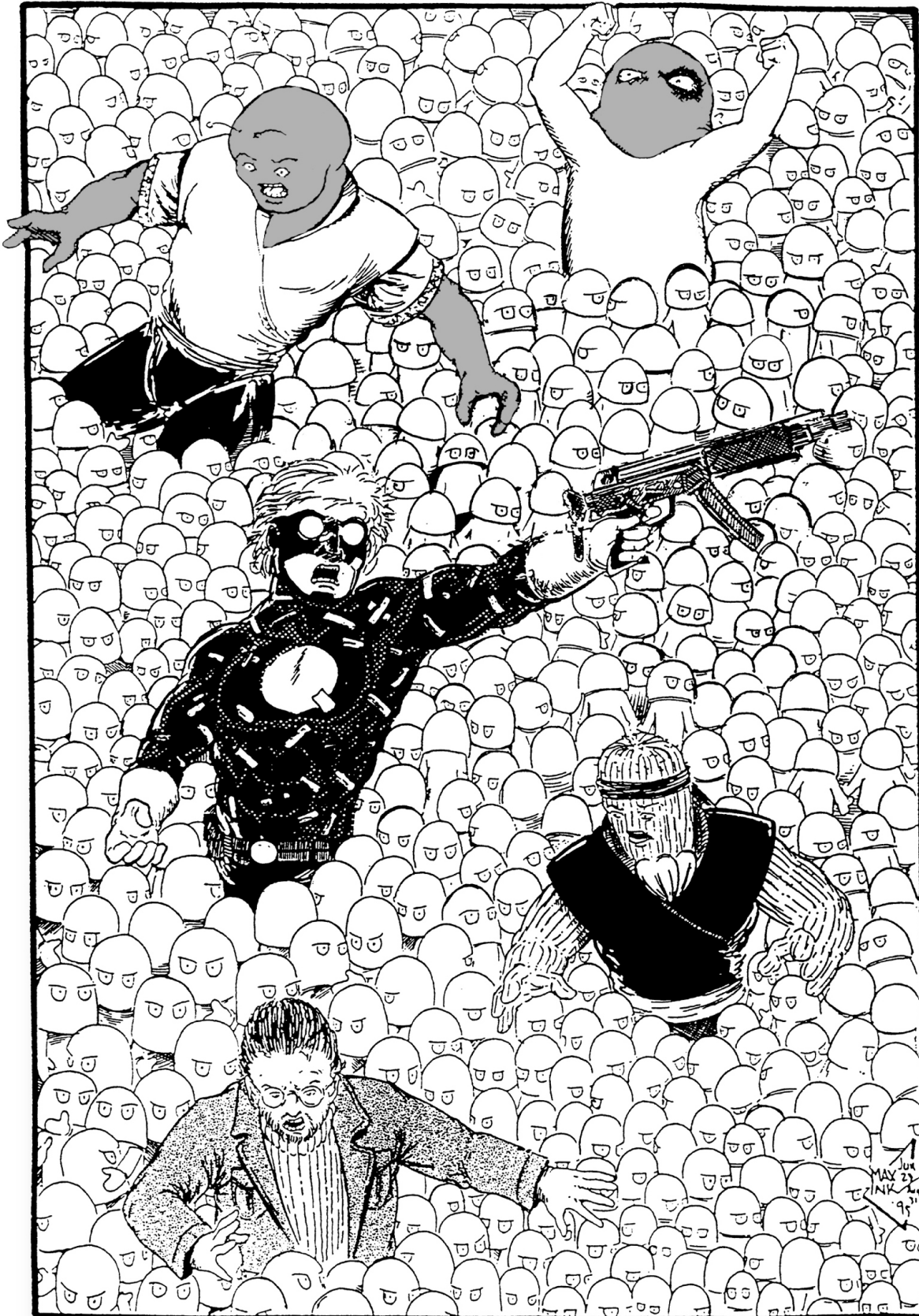
**After twenty issues,
Prometheus finally goes to pieces.**



THE DARK AGES

Written by Nik Dirga and Drawn by Max Ink.
Beginning this November in *Amoeba Adventures* #20.
Available for \$2.00 postpaid (\$2.50 Canadian) from Nik Dirga c/o
Protoplasm Press, P.O. Box 2230, University MS 38677-2230.

SPECIAL 2020 BONUS SECTION

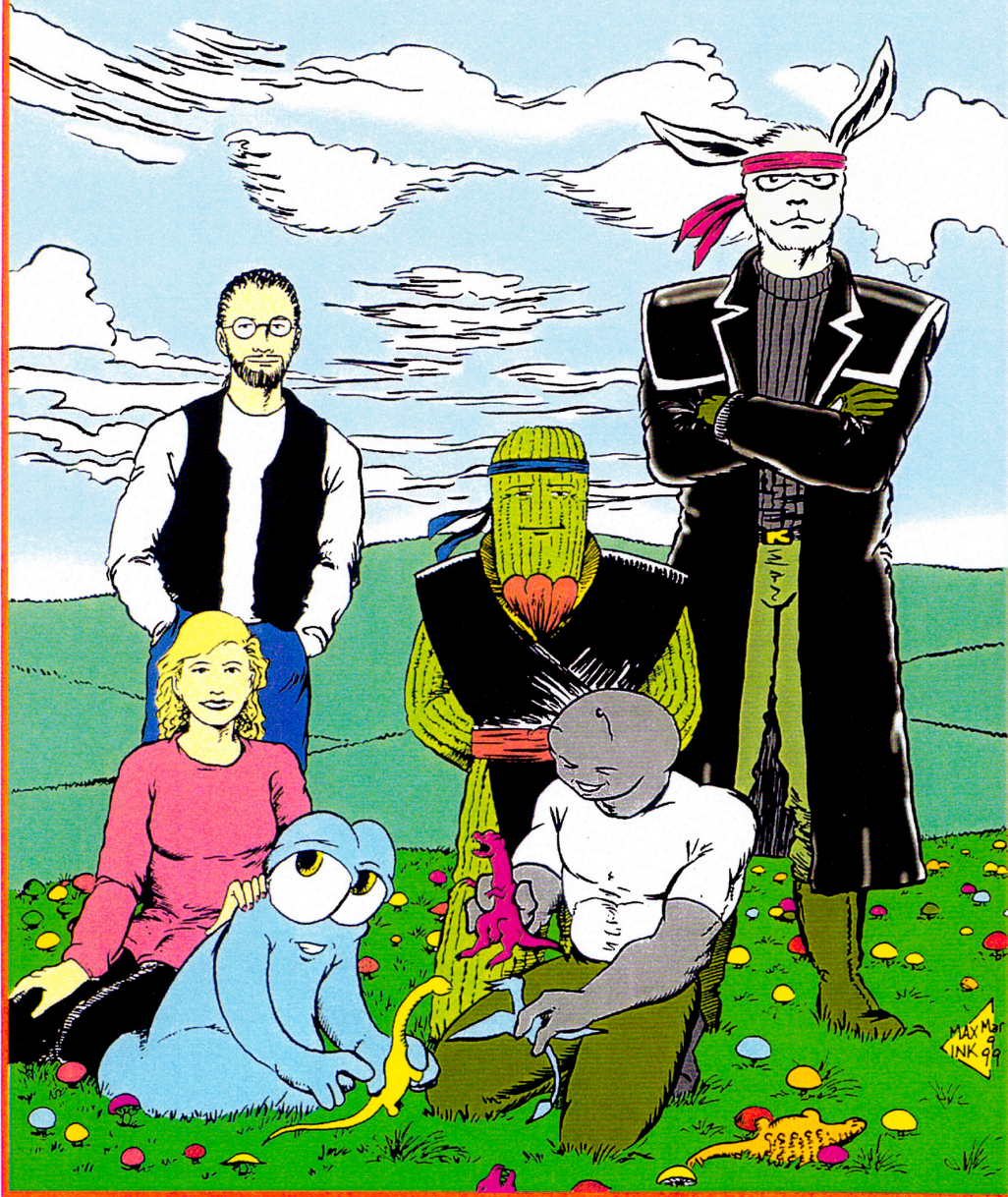


Max's cover for Amoeba Adventures #19 was great fun, with millions of Mushroom-bots. Unfortunately we chose a rather overly dark purple colour for the paper on the cover which in hindsight didn't really show off how cool his cover was.

AMOEBA

adventures

MUSHROOMS & DINOSAURS



Written and created by
NIK DIRGA

Drawn by
MAX INK

Reprinting Amoeba
Adventures #15-#19

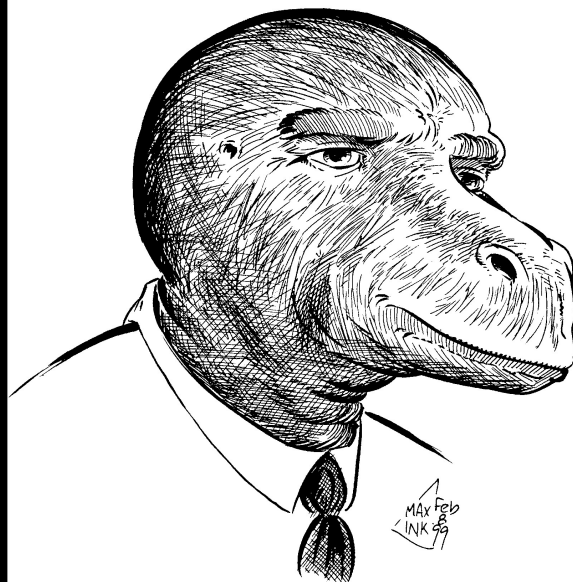
In 1999, I finally got around to putting out a trade paperback of Amoeba Adventures comics. We published about 200 copies through a cool small printer; life got in the way and a second volume covering "The Dark Ages" never came out. The paperback featured several pieces of new art by Max Ink. The cover is the first and only time I ever had the Amoeba gang in colour, using my inept Photoshop skills. (It didn't help that I'm a bit colour-blind, but the colours for Pro and Karate Kactus are more or less correct.)

The paperback featured very nifty new chapter header art by Max.

One: **"Bone Machine"**



Two: **"Time's Up"**



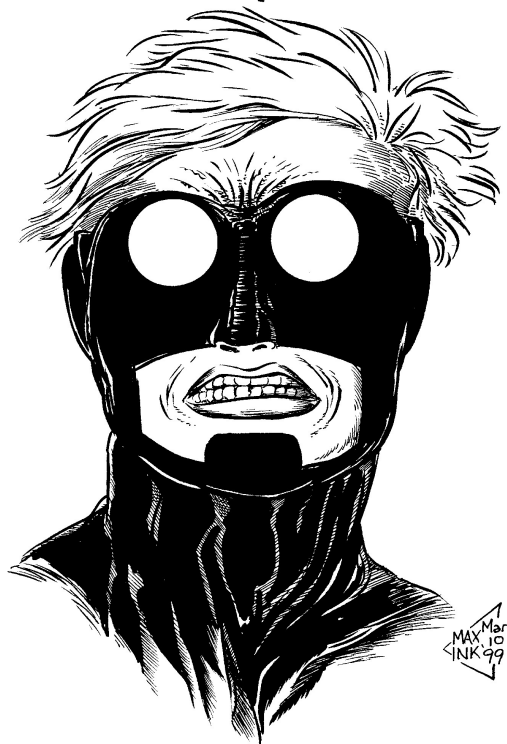
Three: **"Home For
The Holidays"**



Four: **"The Strange Light
in the eyes of the
Truly
Mad"**



Five: "Prisons"



For these PDFs I've tried to mimic the look of the original digest comics as much as possible. In the paperback, some of my mad Photoshop skills circa 1999 come off pretty clumsy now, such as the shot below of the Promethean, which I've returned to the original look for this PDF.



My main memory of the paperback is spending countless hours scanning original art at the newspaper office I worked at at the time (after hours, of course). This involved painstakingly adding gradient tones to characters like Ninja Ant, because the original art didn't have them. (They were later added by Zip-a-tone on the reduced pages.)

A lot of Max's really fine, intricate linework for these issues looked like crap when reduced and run through a photocopier at Kinko's, sadly. His work really deserved a better format than we had available at the time.

"This is one of the best things ever to come out of small press!"

—Tim Corrigan, *Small Press Comics Explosion*



"This is good stuff ...starring the heroic, human and captivatingly delightful All-Spongy Squadron."

—Tony Isabella, *Comics' Buyers Guide*

"Each story is filled with humor, action and characters you will grow to love..."

—Factsheet Five

"Spawn this ain't, and thank God for that!"

—Jason Marcy, creator of Powerwus

They're strange heroes for strange times — Prometheus, the confused amoeba; Spif, the daring scientist; Dawn Star, the mistress of flame; Rambunny, the unstoppable force; Ninja Ant, the carefree adventurer, and Karate Kactus, their wise leader. They're the All-Spongy Squadron, and this book reprints five of their most acclaimed tales from 1994 and 1995. Meet villains including the mysterious Mindmaster, the dastardly Asbestos Mushroom and the infernal Gorilla Gang, and join the group as they head back in time to the age of the dinosaurs, battle side-by-side with the vigilante Period, and celebrate the holidays with a Christmas dinner, some eggnog, and a good old-fashioned barroom brawl!

\$12.95 in the U.S.A. Published by ProtoPlasm Press

My introduction for the "Mushrooms and Dinosaurs" trade paperback.

the slimeball speaks an introduction of sorts.

I believe in permanence.

I like the collected editions. The remastered compact discs. The leather-bound hard-cover edition of the old classic, and the battered wool sweater you keep for twenty years because it's so fine.

And it's that desire to make things that last, to improve upon the existing, that led to the creation of this book.

For nearly eight years, I, and then later my friend Max Ink and I, published the small press comic *Amoeba Adventures*. The adventures of Prometheus and his friends began for me as grade-school classroom doodles. Over the course of 27 small press issues and a handful of spin-offs from 1990 to 1998, the doodles became a world of their own, a measurable success in the subculture-of-a-subculture land of self-published comics and the winner of a lot of fan awards and accolades.

But despite the several thousand copies of issues of Prometheus' adventures that have now circulated the country, a part of me felt that what Max and I had produced still lacked true permanence – the comics were done on simple photocopied paper with staples, something transitory, not quite complete.

I am proud of these tales, you see – the slightly conceited pride of the father toward his son. I am proud of what Max Ink and I produced in our 15 or so issues of collaboration, the finest issues of *Amoeba Adventures*. I wanted something that I could take down from a bookshelf and linger over fondly, years from now, and think, "hey, we did that!"

Finally, late last year I was in a position where I could think about getting *Amoeba Adventures* in a more lasting format – a collection of some of my favorite issues. This is the first in what will hopefully, if the response to this book is good, one day become a small library of most of the better issues of *Amoeba Adventures*, including "The Dark Ages" story arc from #20-#27.

This book, "Mushrooms & Dinosaurs," collects #15 through #19 of *Amoeba Adventures*, originally released in 1994 and 1995. They are among the earlier collaborations Max and I did, yet in some ways they remain my favorite.

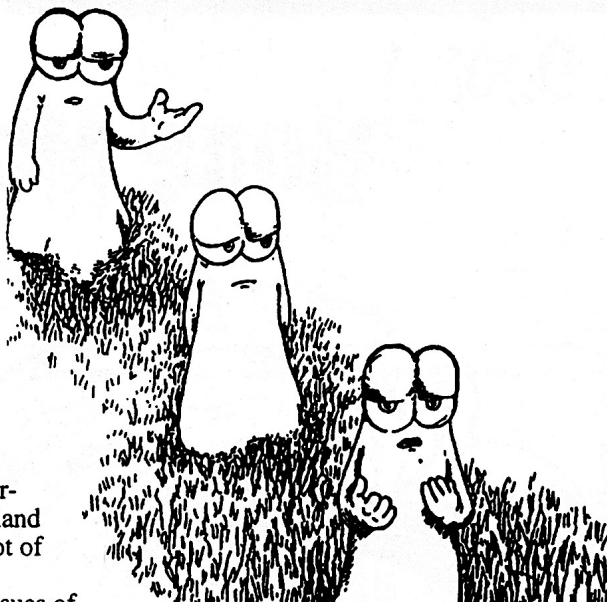
There are great moments throughout this book, moments that I think perfectly capture the essence of the All-Spongy Squadron: the quiet talk between Karate Kactus and Dawn in #18; the charming warmth of a holiday dinner between friends in #17; the madcap exuberance of the Asbestos Mushroom's villainy; Rambunny, Spif and Ninja Ant enjoying a Christmas bar brawl in #17; Dawn and Prometheus, fleeing from disaster by camping out in Canada in #19; and much more.

They are stories I can read and relive almost as if I was there – which I guess I was. I don't remember the actual scientific process of writing these stories too much, though – any more than I imagine Max remembers drawing them.

I know I was in a college dorm room in New York City when I wrote #16, "Time's Up," and that I stole the title of #15, "Bone Machine," from a Tom Waits album. I remember deciding to use the lyrics from the Guided By Voices song "A Liar's Tale" at the beginning of "Prisons," #19, because it seemed so damned appropriate, and I remember being nearly as surprised as Prometheus at the strange turn his relationship with Dawn took in "Time's Up." Those are moments, that flicker through my brain as I write this. But mostly, what I remember now is the finished project, imperfect in a lot of ways but full of heart. We did the best we could.

These characters – Pro, Dawn, Spif, Mitsu, Isuzu and the rest – became quite real to me in the decade-plus that I lived with them, and it is a pleasure to be able to pick up a book this real, this permanent, and visit with them all over again.

I hope you enjoy visiting with them as well.



Nik Dirga
Lake Tahoe, Nevada, April 1999

...And Max Ink's afterword for the paperback.

reminiscing after-onwards

1991. That's when it began for me. I answered an advertisement in Ian Shires' *Self Publisher!* newsletter. The ad was placed by Nik Dirga and it was a "call to arms" of sorts. He was recruiting small press creators to help him create an environmentally sensitive anthology book to be called *Prometheus Saves The Earth?*

It was a mish-mash of goodies. It was fun. It is out of print.

Then, in 1992, Nik wrote the script for *Prometheus: The Silent Storm*, an AIDS awareness story starring his *Amoeba Adventures* characters. He enlisted the aid of half a dozen small press artists, myself included. After that, Nik asked me to illustrate an issue of his regular series and after a smattering of good reviews and good vibes between us, Nik and I continued as a team, telling the tales of Spongopolis' Superheroes.

The rest is history. Really — it's all in the past. And as I went over these issues, tweaking pages here, correcting panels there, wonderful memories flooded my absent-minded cranium: the joys of receiving a new Nik Dirga *Amoeba Adventures* script in the mail, faxing unfinished pages for approval, meeting readers at conventions, introducing strangers to a protoplasm and his pals, "Phree Phlegm" (a few of you might remember that!), finding just the right expression to place on a character's face to convey what Nik had written into the script... strolling down memory lane again and again.

Thanks to our readers, our printer and all this wonderful technology which enables us to have a nifty reprint collection quite suitable for any bookshelf.

ONWARDS in Peace, Hope & Forgiveness,

Max Ink

Somewhere in Time and Space, March 1999



Max Ink and I did a fun pin-up for my good pal Bob Elinskas' "Small Press Swimsuit Spectacular," a benefit for the American Cancer Society.

