

From the pages of *Amoeba Adventures*™

RAMBUNNY

UNACCEPTABLE LOSSES

1
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\$2.00



Nik Dirga • Ron Gravelle

R **AMBUNNY:** **UNACCEPTABLE** **LOSSES**

This book took a while to get here.

I wrote *Rambunny: Unacceptable Losses* in the spring of 1994, during my last year of college. Its rather grim and unrelenting tone reflected my state of mind as graduation approached and uncertainty awaited.

Rambunny has always been one of the more popular characters in my ongoing small press series, *Amoeba Adventures*. Writing him has allowed me to explore a bleaker facet of life, without having to wallow in it myself. When I decided to write a solo adventure for him, the themes became obvious: elemental themes like valor, courage and control. The biggies.

It was also fun — a story that was my skewed take on the testosterone-fueled vigilante comics that are all the rage these days. I locked myself in my room with my computer, closed the shades and pretended I was Frank Miller while I churned out the 32 pages of 'grim 'n' gritty' script. *Amoeba Adventures* has always been a gentler, less dark take on superheroics for me: *Rambunny* was a chance to play in a different sandbox for a change.

It was a story I didn't feel I had the skill to draw myself, so I asked two of the most talented small pressers I knew to handle the art chores: David Berns, a student at the acclaimed Joe Kubert School, would handle pencils, while Eric Hampton, a Minneapolis comic creator, would ink the finished pages.

But the grimness I'd laid on so thick in the script spilled over into real life. By early 1995, Dave had penciled about half of the book before taking time off to work on his studies; I had mailed those pages on to Eric to ink, and Eric was slowly doing that inking he did so well on them. No rush, I told him. We had all the time in the world.

And then I got a phone call on February 14, Valentine's Day. My friend Bob Elinskas told me Eric was dead.

It's a sordid story most of us in small press who knew Eric are already uncomfortably familiar with, so I'll just rehash the basics: Eric was mugged on the way home

**Written and
created by
Nik Dirga**

**Pencils, inks
and letters by
Ron Gravelle**

**art assist by
Susan E. Mills**

cover by Nik Dirga

**Dedicated to the
memory of Eric
Hampton, a friend
and an artist.**

**"There's a bit of magic
in everything...
and some loss to
even things out."
—Lou Reed**

Rambunny: Unacceptable Losses, March 1997. Published by Protoplasm Press, P.O. Box 2230, University MS 38677-2230. *Amoeba Adventures* and all characters herein are created by and ©1997 Nik Dirga; Artwork ©1997 Ron Gravelle. All rights reserved; reproduction allowed for purposes of review only. Additional copies available for \$2.00 postpaid; \$2.50 for Canadian or foreign orders. Please make *all* checks payable to Nik Dirga, not Protoplasm Press. Attention retailers: address all inquiries to Protoplasm Press c/o Max Ink, 276 Mainsail Drive, Westerville OH 43081-2741. Ohio address meant for retail and bulk orders only.

from a basketball game. He never came out of the coma that resulted.

Eric's death was one of those events that shakes a close-knit, rather insular society like small press to the core. Truthfully, I don't think we've been quite the same since. It reminded us about a world beyond our little photocopied vanity comics, about a world where you don't always get up after being knocked out.

The *Rambunny* project fell into disarray, of course. Eric was mourned and buried and the art he inked lost in the confusion, and in the face of such real and terrible events, I was tempted to just let this silly little project fall into the drawer of un-produced stories of mine. *Rambunny* suddenly seemed pretty damned hollow compared to the twists and turns reality throws at you.

But I thought about Eric, and how much he loved small press.

He was one enthusiastic fella about small press — his own book, *Kari and the Pirate*, was a rip-roaring outer space adventure that was like *Tintin* in the stars. I thought about how eagerly Eric jumped at the chance to collaborate with Dave and I on *Rambunny*, despite his already-heavy workload.

And I looked at my script again. It wasn't much on second look — another tale of another impossibly-heroic and bulked out man fighting impossible odds. Nothing new, nothing ground-breaking.

But I knew Eric would've still wanted to see this thing come out some day, no matter what.

So I re-tooled the script, touching it up a bit to give it some much-needed depth. I tried to make this a book about violence; about the self-control that is *really* the measure of a man — not the body count he leaves behind.

I found a new artist: the incredibly gracious Canadian Ron Gravelle, whom I met through Jason Marcy. Ron agreed to draw *Rambunny: Unacceptable Losses* last year and did a bang-up job, despite the requisite delays on my own end of things. Hell, he was already talking about doing a sequel halfway through penciling the book! Ron's enthusiasm reminds me a bit of Eric's, and trust me when I say that comparison is about as good a praise as I can give.

So here we are, nearly three years after I wrote this little comic story, and after weathering death and delay and despair, it's finally ready to be printed. I still don't think my meager words here are *War and Peace* by any means — or even Frank Miller — but as a eulogy and a testament to the undying creative spirit a man can have, it'll do.

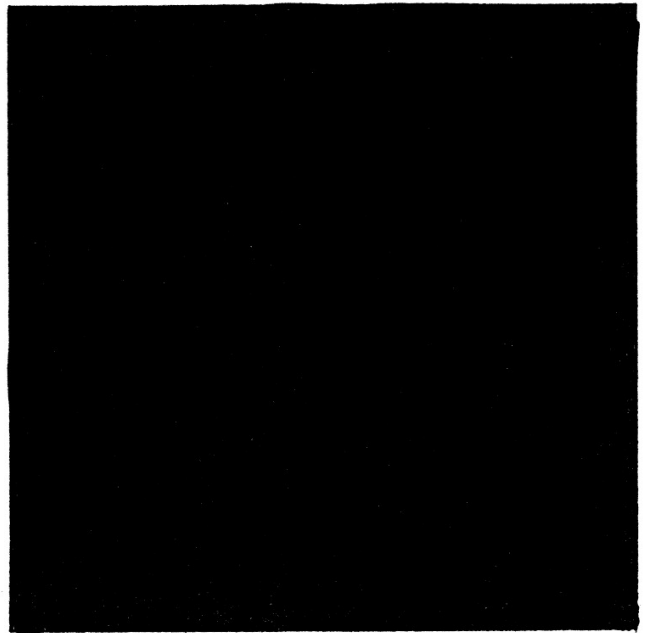
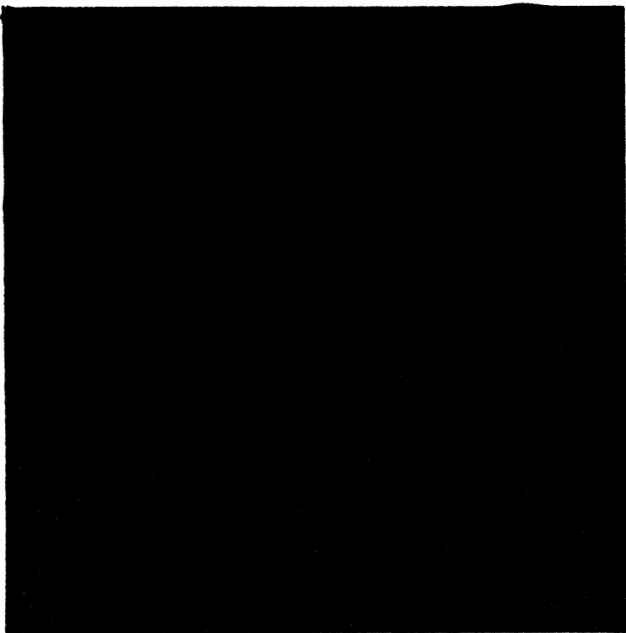
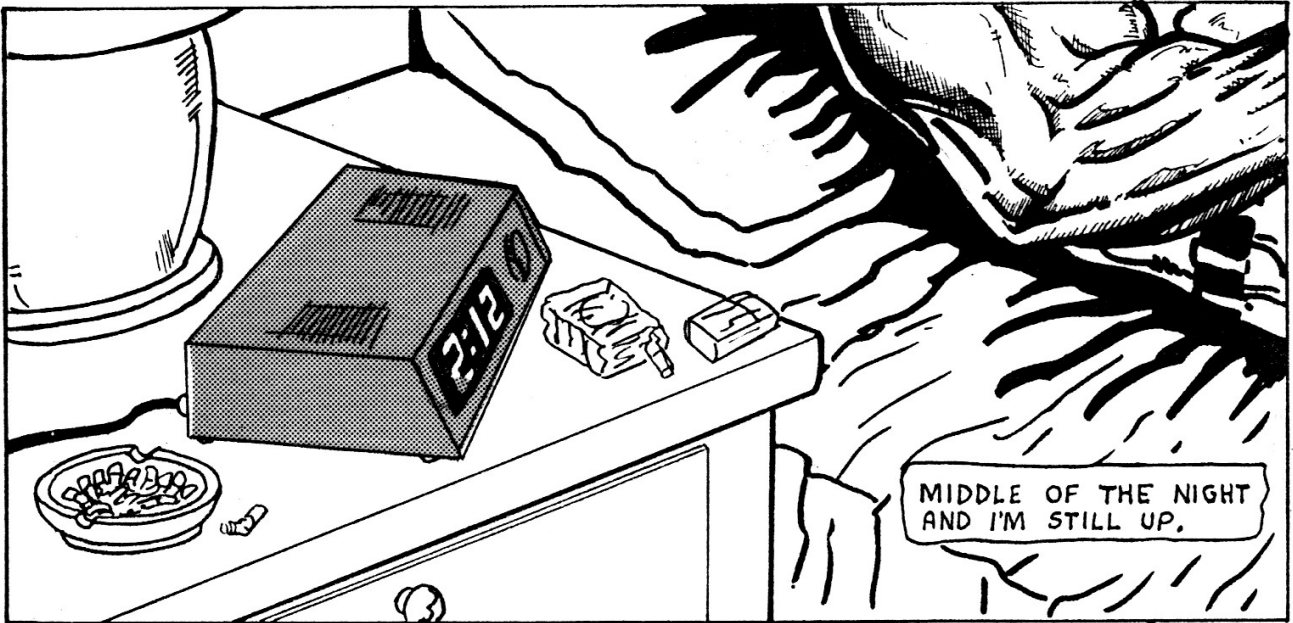
Thank you, Eric. I've got this crazy gut feeling you're reading these words somewhere, up in some small presser's heaven where the ink never runs dry and the Xerox machines never jam, and I hope you like this little tale of mine.

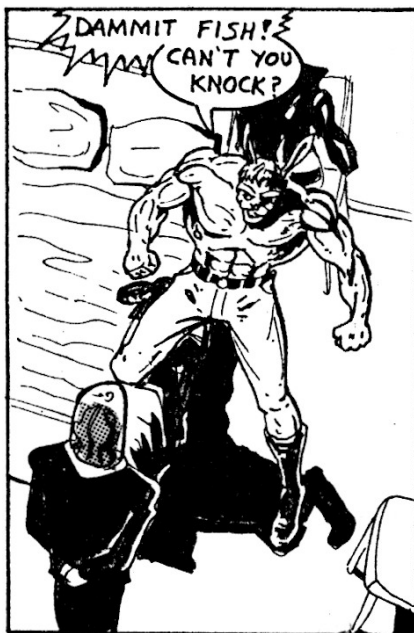
I hope the rest of you do, too.

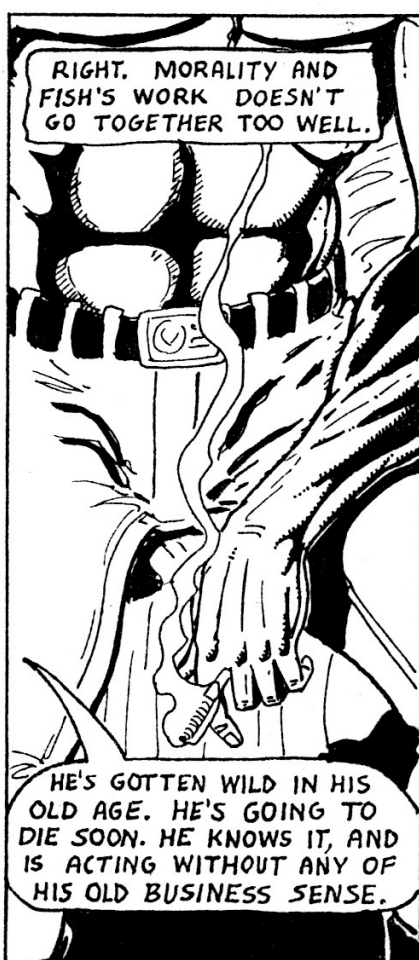


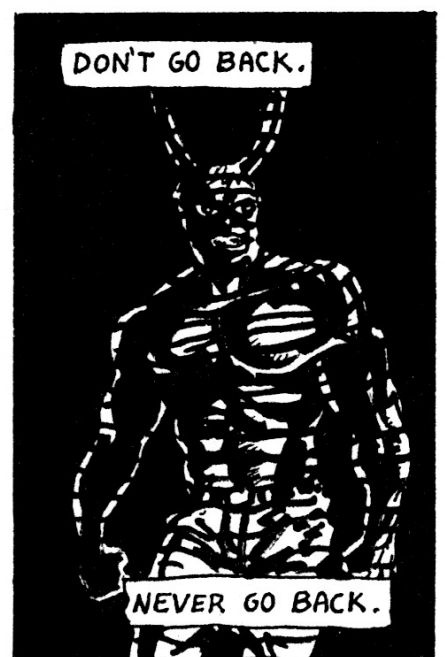
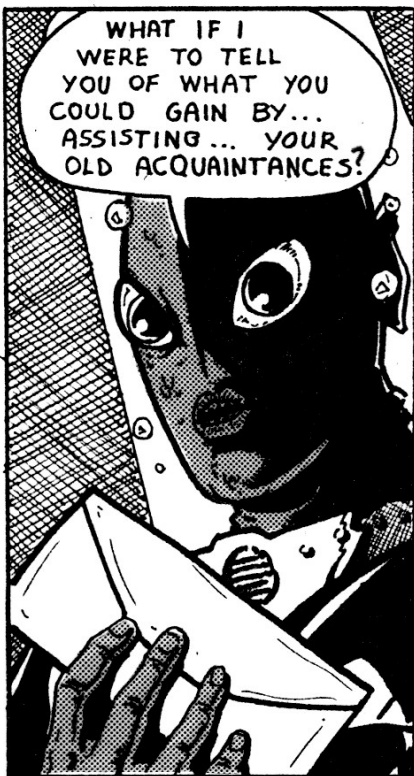
- Nik Dirga

Nik Dirga
February, 1997









LATER.

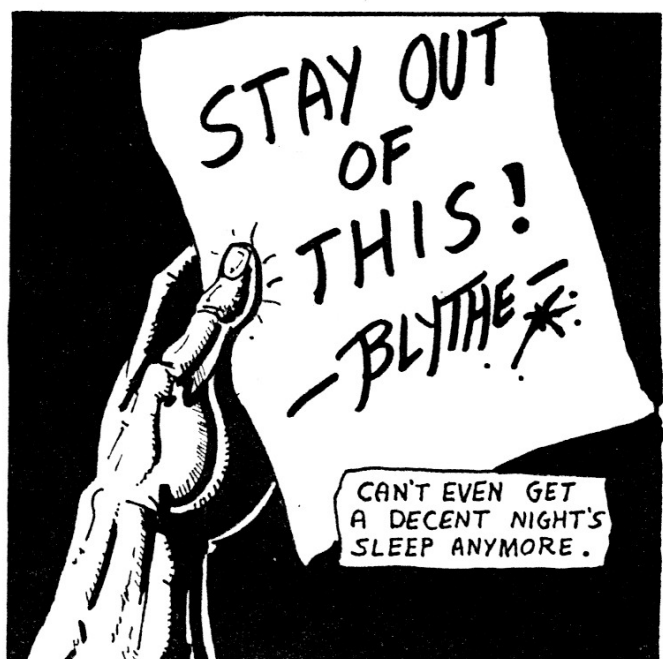
THERE'S A SUDDEN
SOUND IN THE DARK.

KA-SLUNK

A WHIFF OF SOMETHING BITTER.

CLICK





I SCRAPE WHAT'S LEFT OF MY GEAR OUT OF THE ASHES AND GET ON MY BIKE, HEADING FOR CIVILIZATION AGAIN.

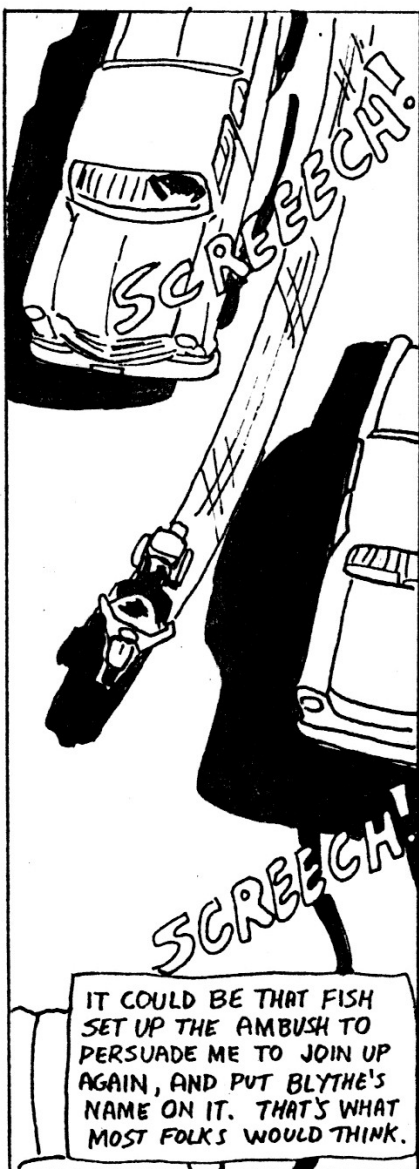
VRRRRM!

I MAKE ONE STOP AT A GAS STATION, FOR DONUTS AND A QUICK PHONE CALL TO FISH'S PEOPLE.



I TELL THEM I'M IN. I SAY IT A LOT QUICKER THAN I MEAN TO.

THEY DON'T EVEN SAY "THANK YOU!"



IT COULD BE THAT FISH SET UP THE AMBUSH TO PERSUADE ME TO JOIN UP AGAIN, AND PUT BLYTHE'S NAME ON IT. THAT'S WHAT MOST FOLK'S WOULD THINK.

BUT FISH KNOWS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CROSS ME.

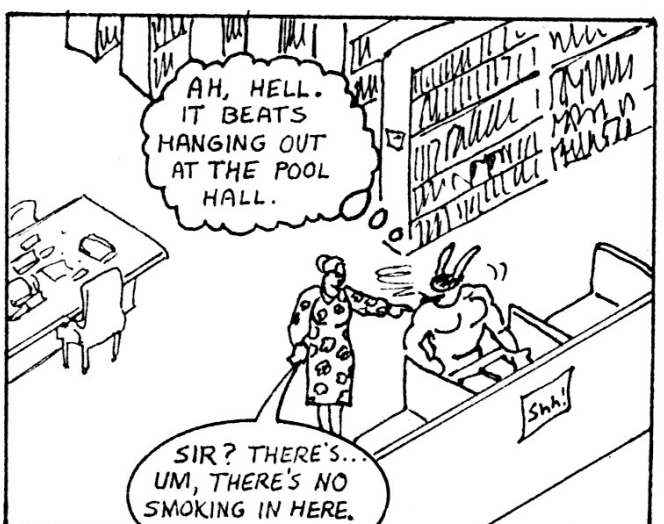
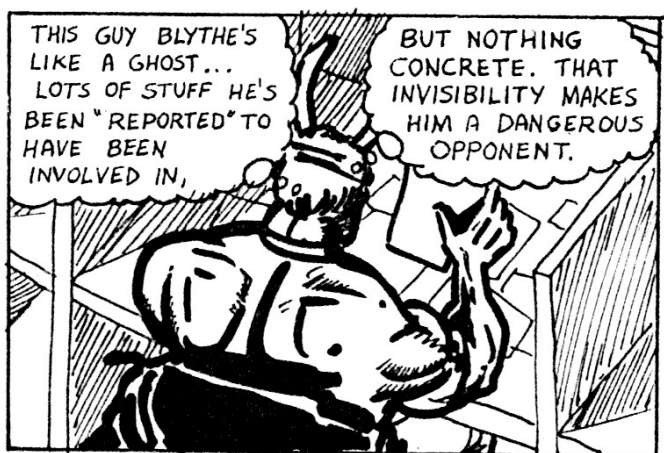
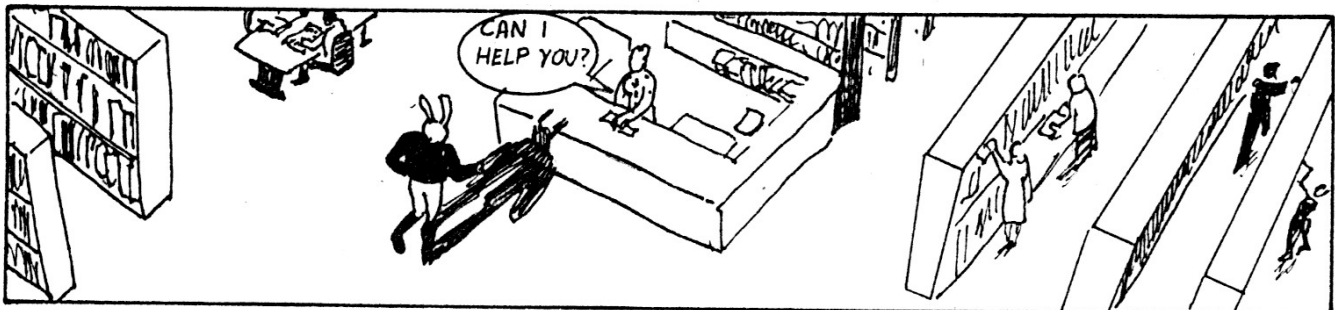
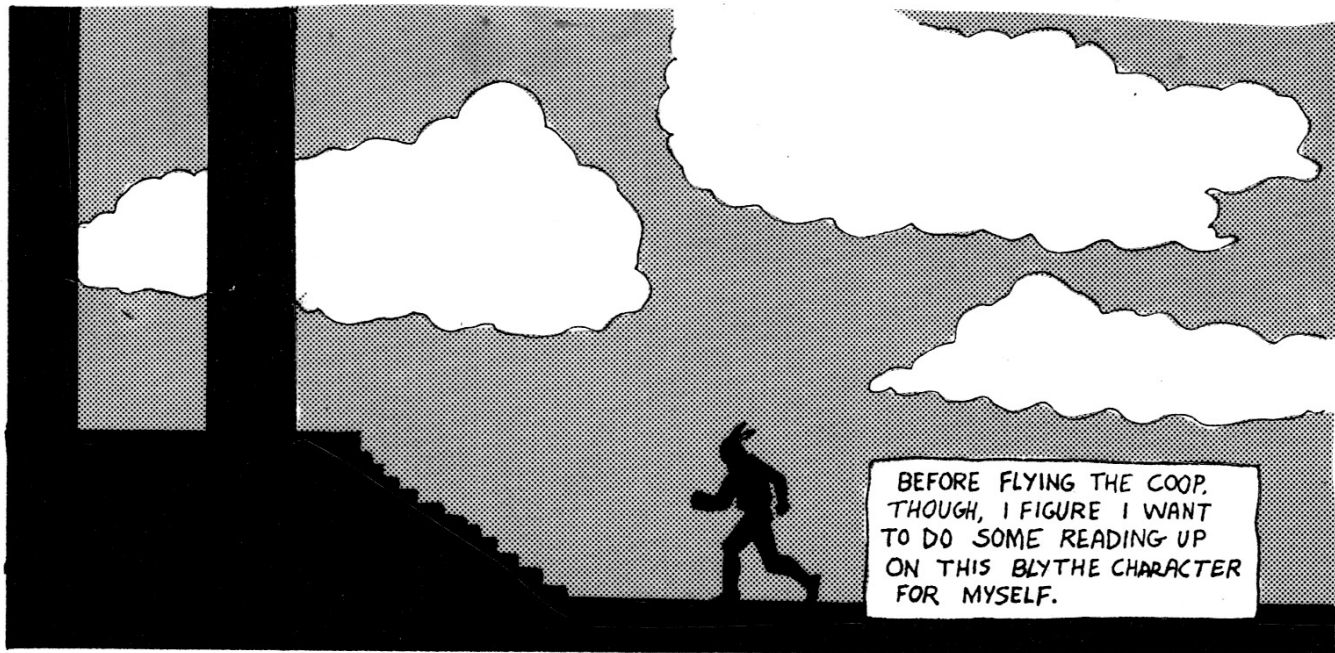


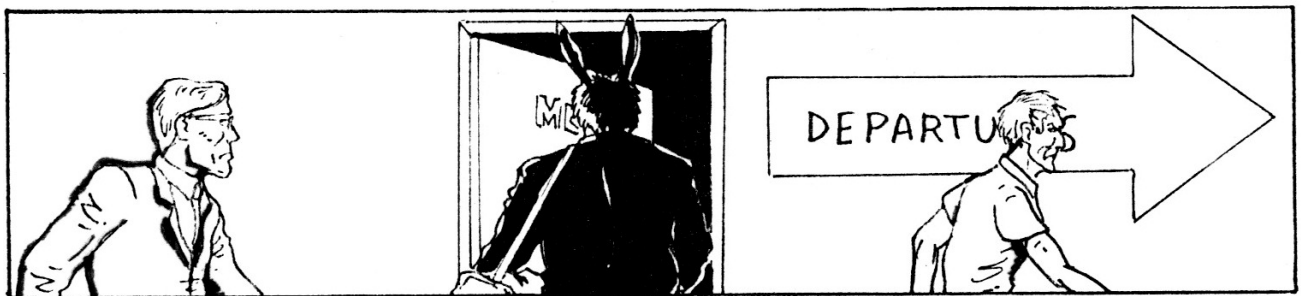
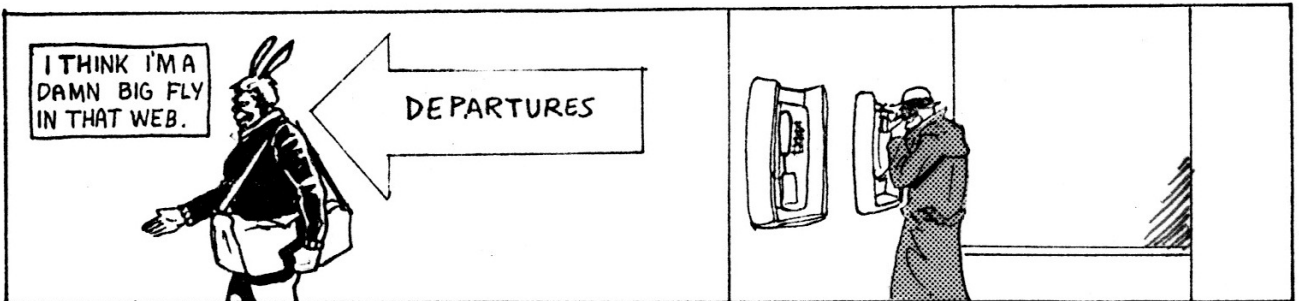
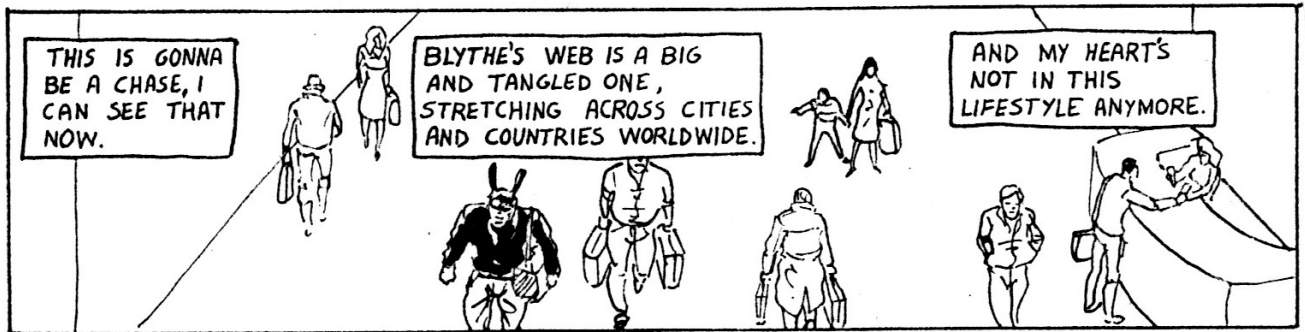
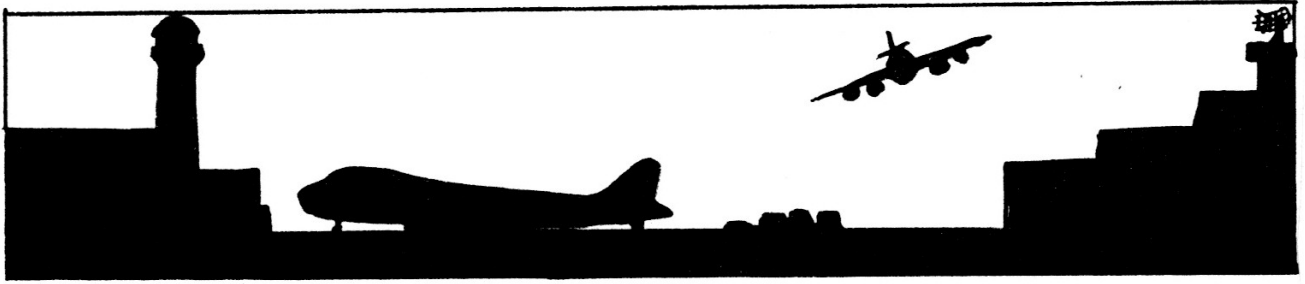
AND IF THERE'S A GOD, THEN HE'S STILL HAVIN' NIGHTMARES ABOUT THE LAST TIME IT HAPPENED.

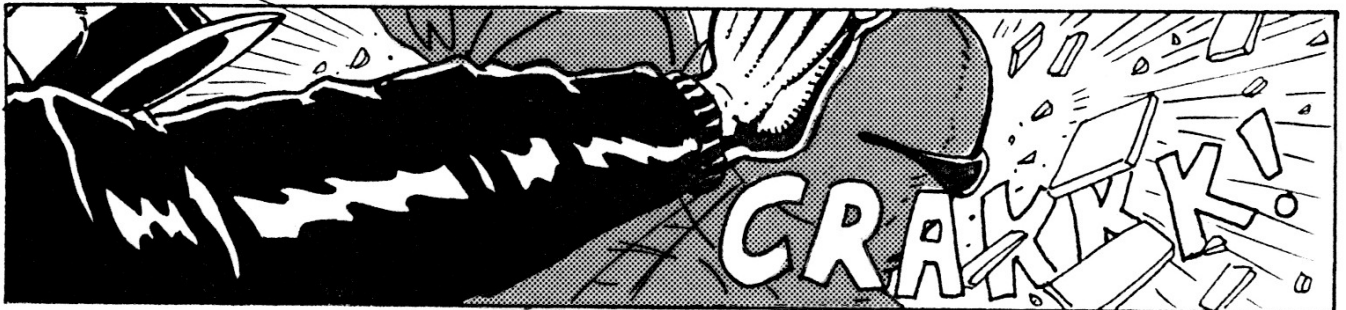


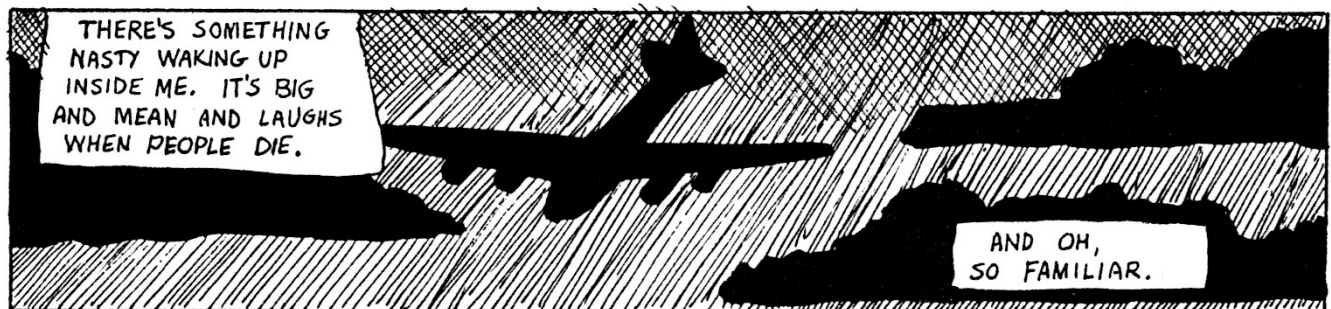
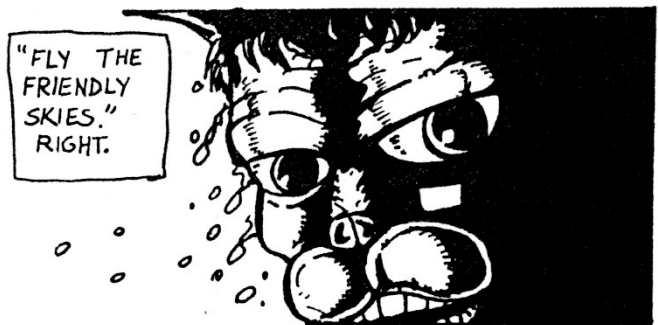
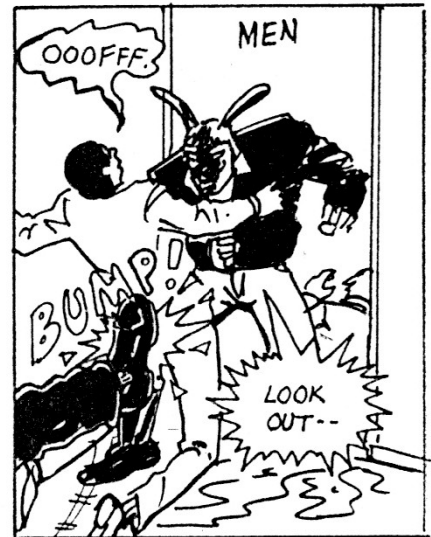
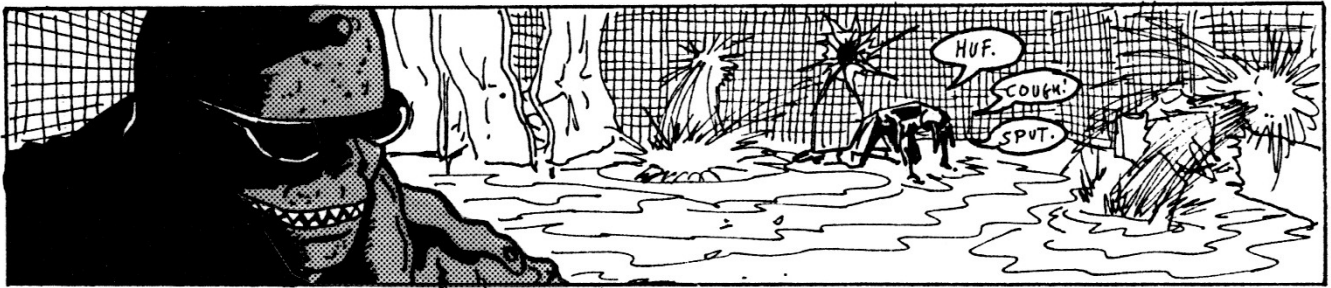
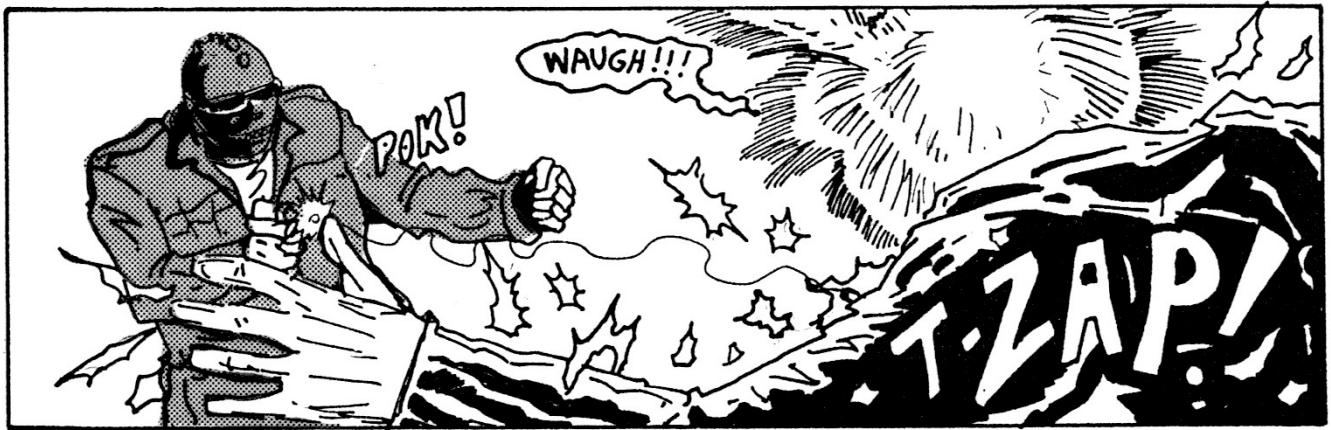
FISH TELLS ME THAT THERE'S A PLANE IN NEW YORK WAITING TO TAKE ME TO PARIS, WHERE BLYTHE'S BEEN ACTIVE LATELY.

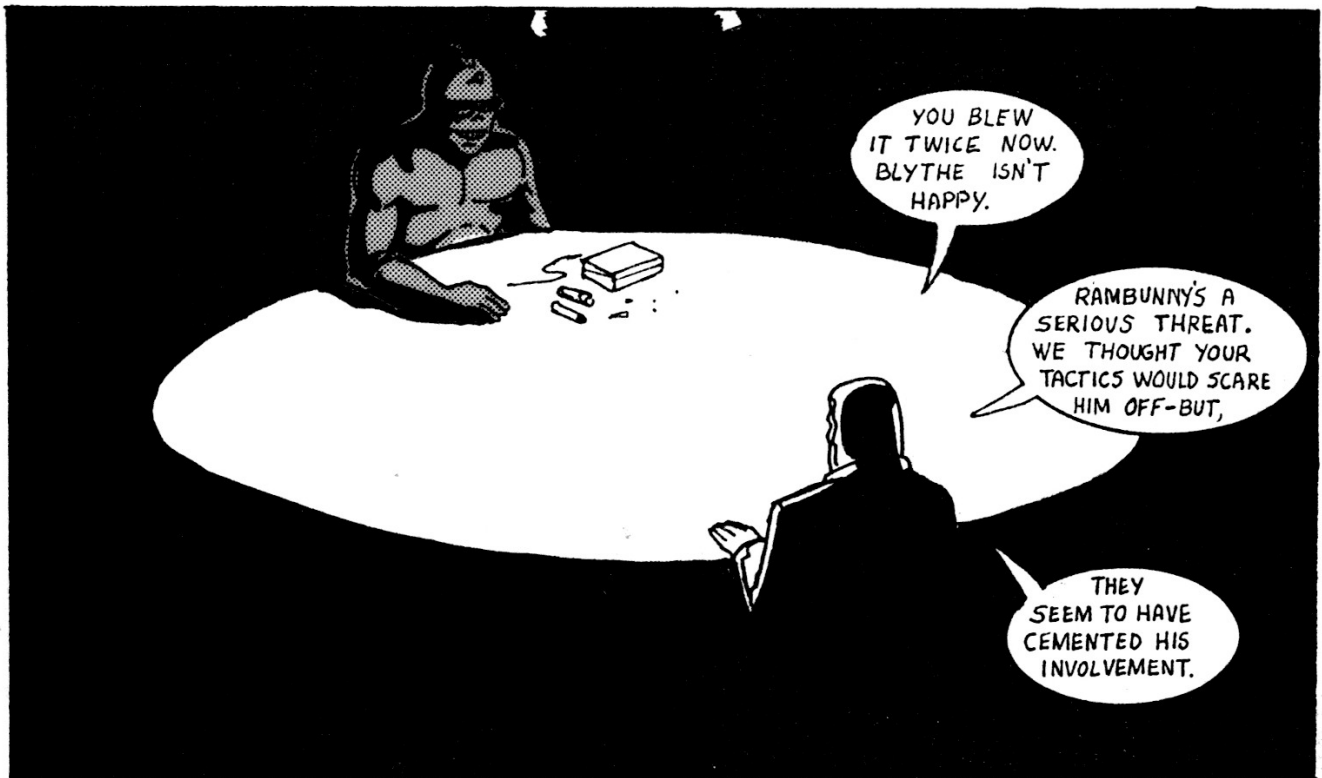
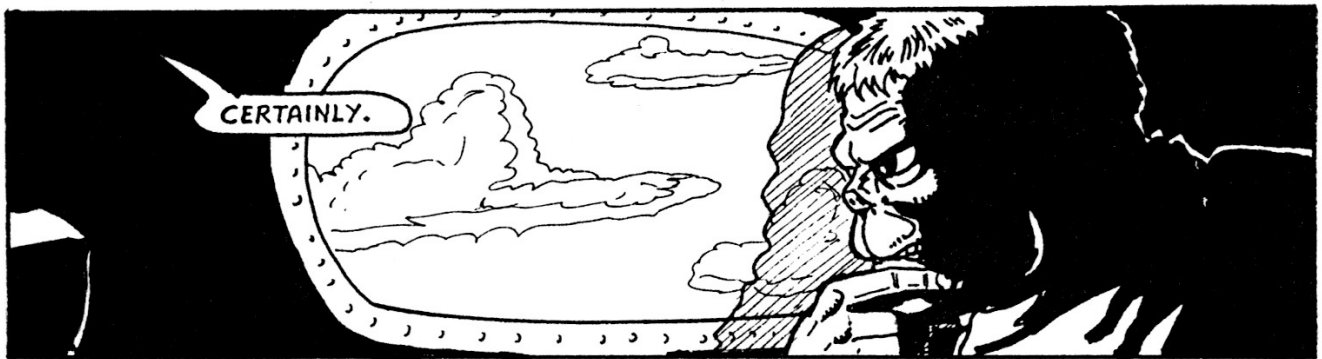
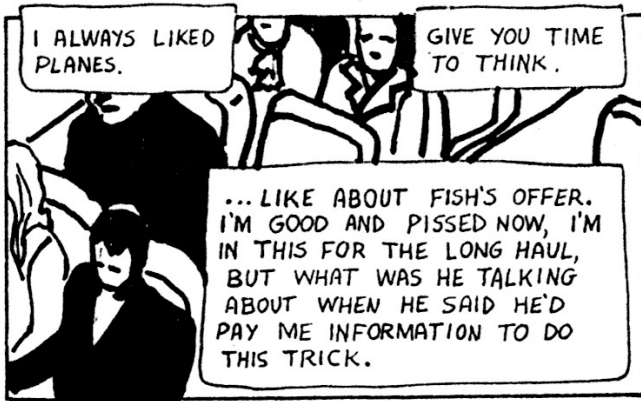
JERK PUT ME IN COACH CLASS.

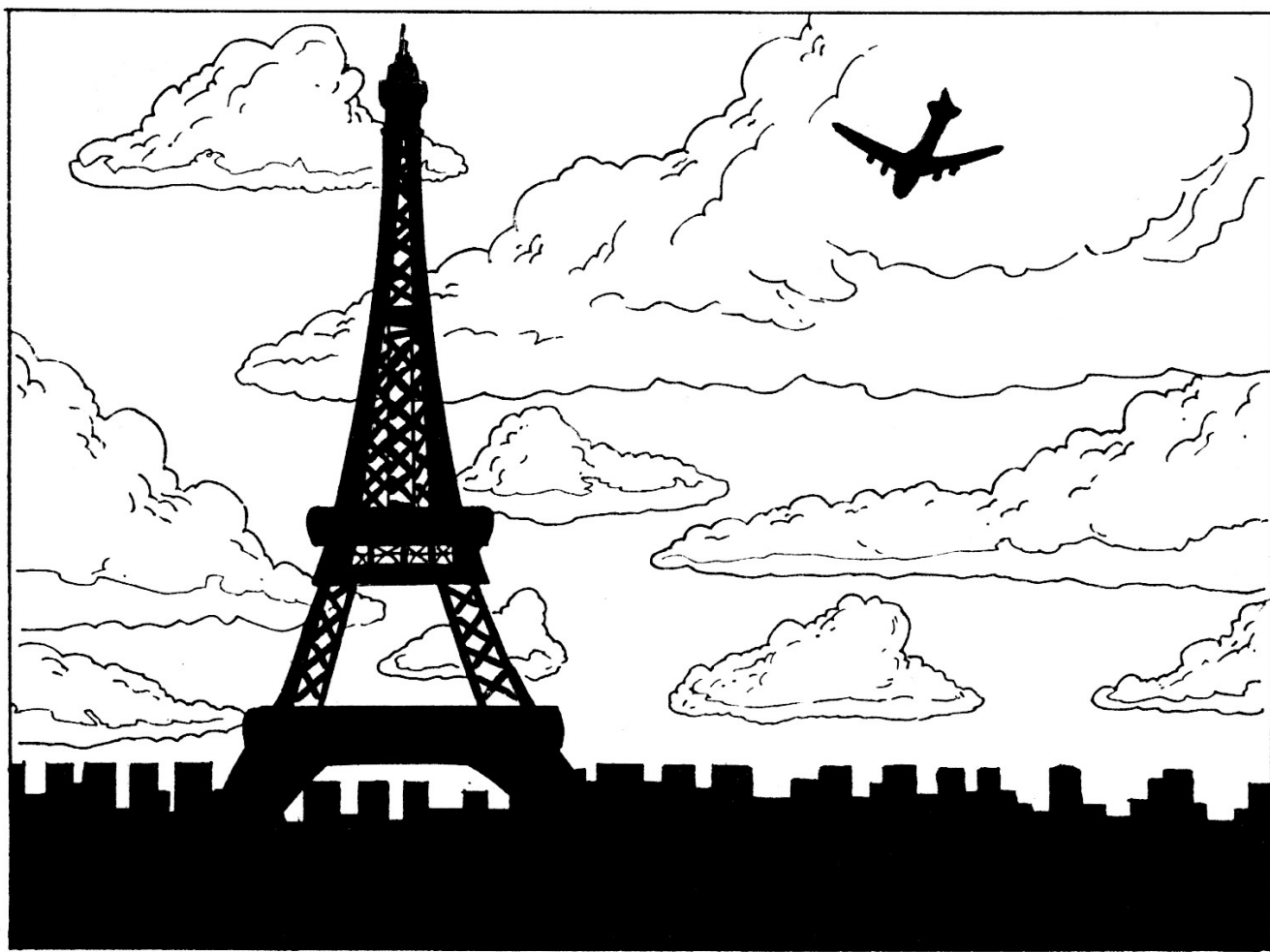
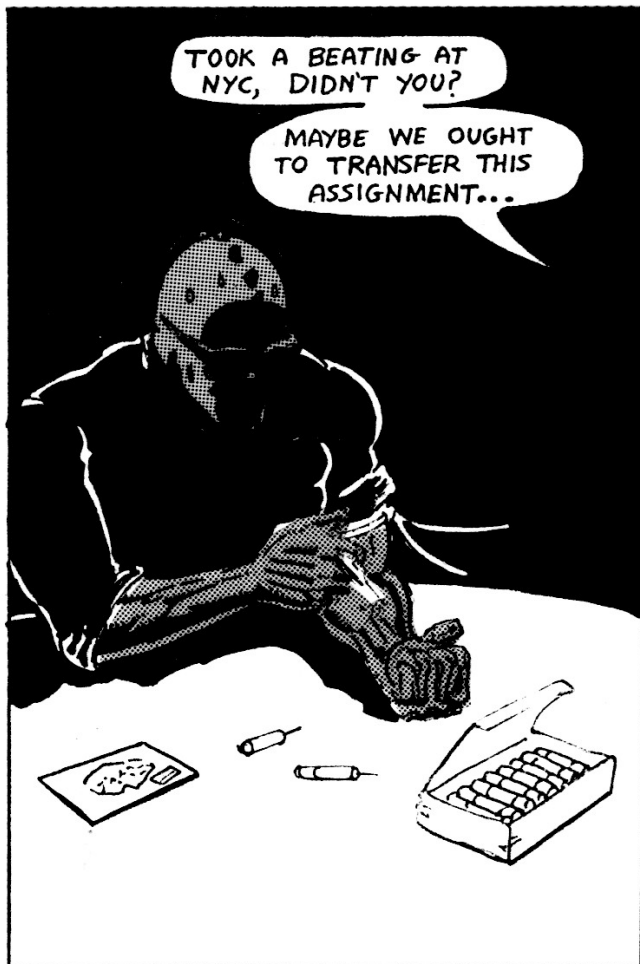




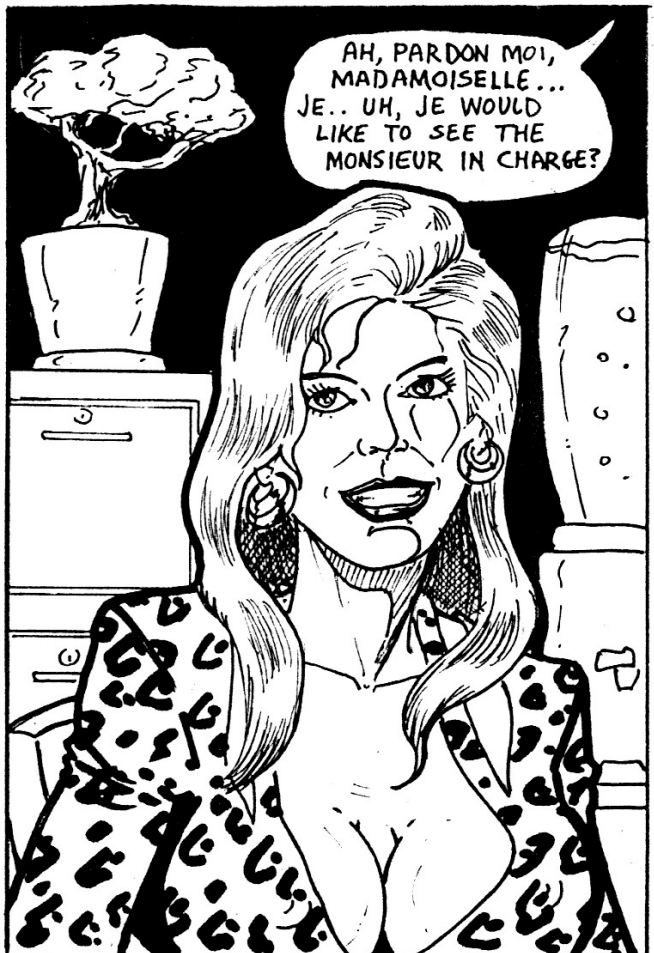














YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A MR. BLYTHE, ARE YOU NOT?

HOW DID YOU--
I MEAN WHAT
MAKES YOU ASSUME
SO, MONSIEUR
LE BAN?

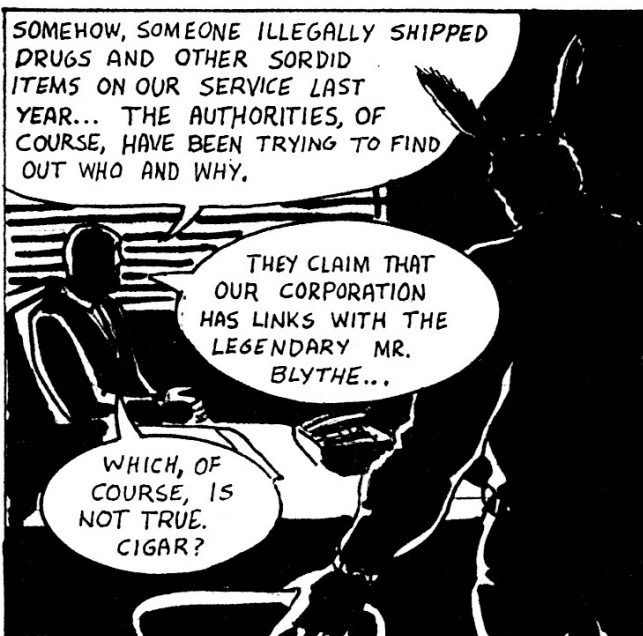
PLEASE, SIR, CALL ME REMI. AND I CAN ONLY ASSUME SO BECAUSE THE AUTHORITIES HAVE ASKED MUCH THE SAME THING SINCE OUR UNFORTUNATE RUN-IN WITH THE LAW HERE AT TRANS-AFRICA.



SOMEHOW, SOMEONE ILLEGALLY SHIPPED DRUGS AND OTHER SORDID ITEMS ON OUR SERVICE LAST YEAR... THE AUTHORITIES, OF COURSE, HAVE BEEN TRYING TO FIND OUT WHO AND WHY.

THEY CLAIM THAT OUR CORPORATION HAS LINKS WITH THE LEGENDARY MR. BLYTHE...

WHICH, OF COURSE, IS NOT TRUE. CIGAR?



SO
TELL ME ABOUT
THIS LEGENDARY
MR. BLYTHE,
THEN.

AH MONSIEUR,
DO NOT PLAY
GAMES WITH
ME!



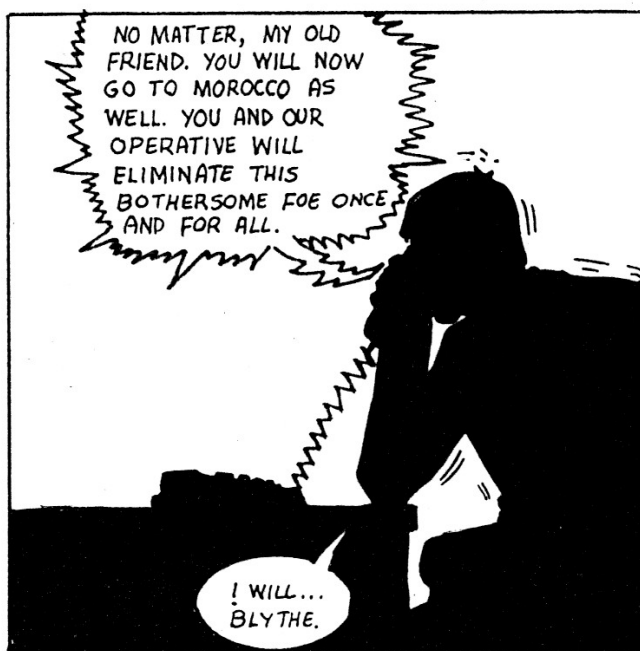
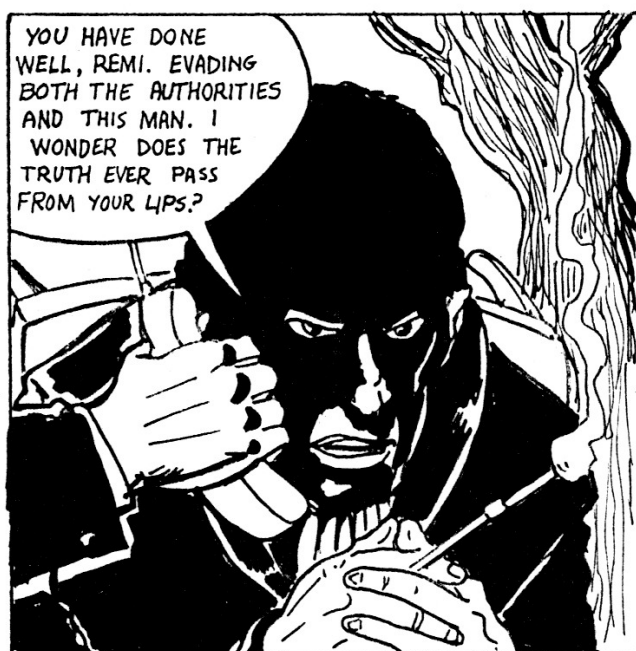
I KNOW
FULL WELL THAT
YOU KNOW AS MUCH,
IF NOT MORE, THAN I
EVER WOULD ABOUT
BLYTHE.

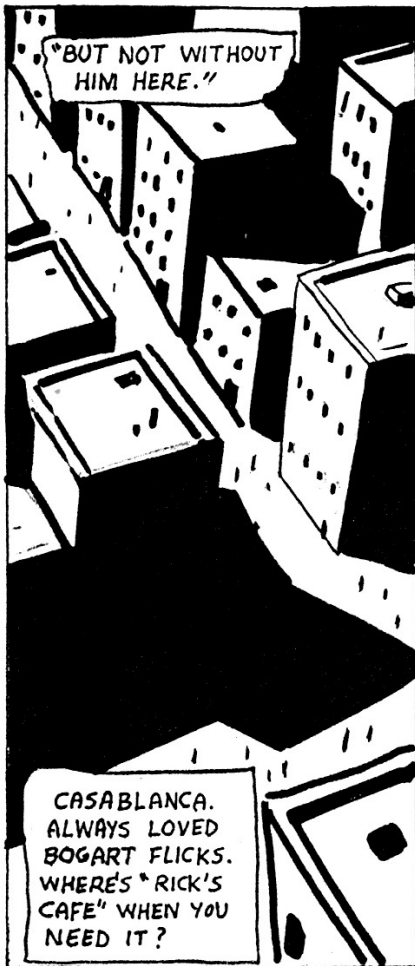
HIS
REPUTATION
SPANS SEVEN
CONTINENTS.

WELL, THEN,
REMI, BASED ON
THE LEGENDS...
WHAT KIND OF
MAN IS HE?

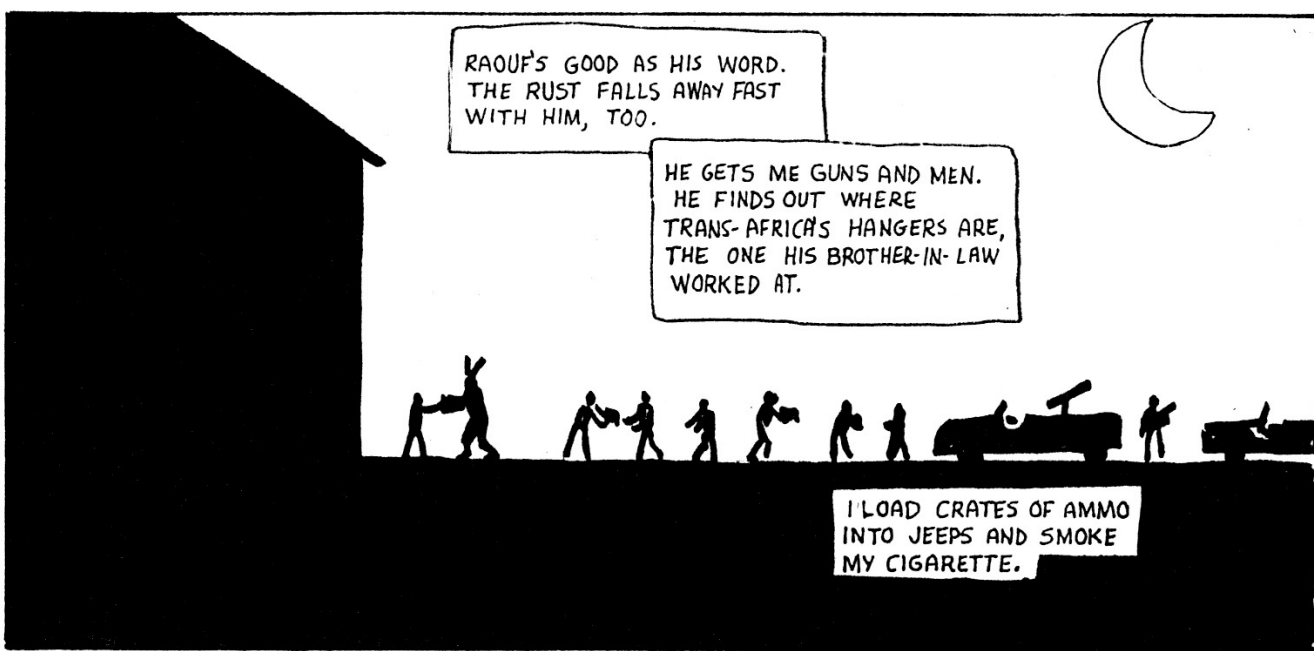
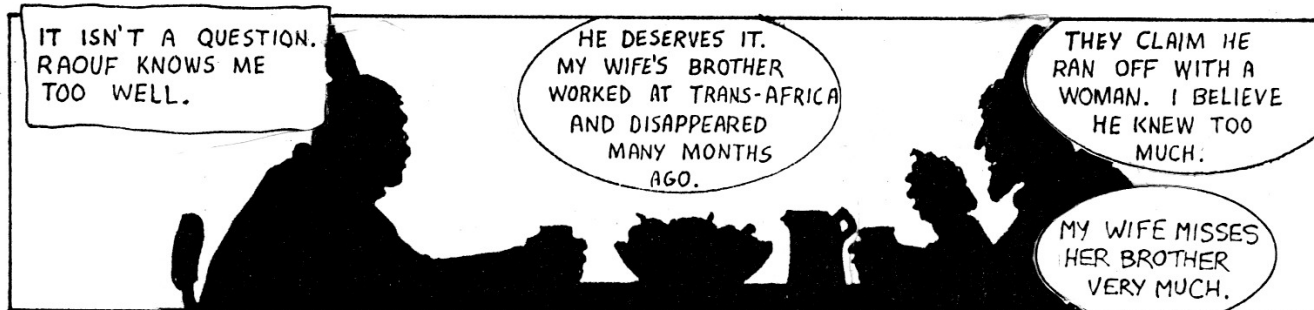
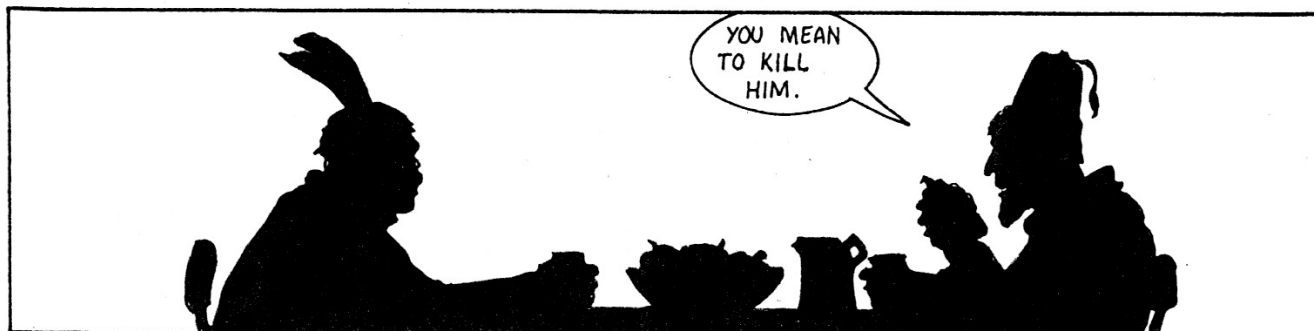
MAN?
HIS KIND IS
NO MAN AT
ALL, MY
FRIEND.

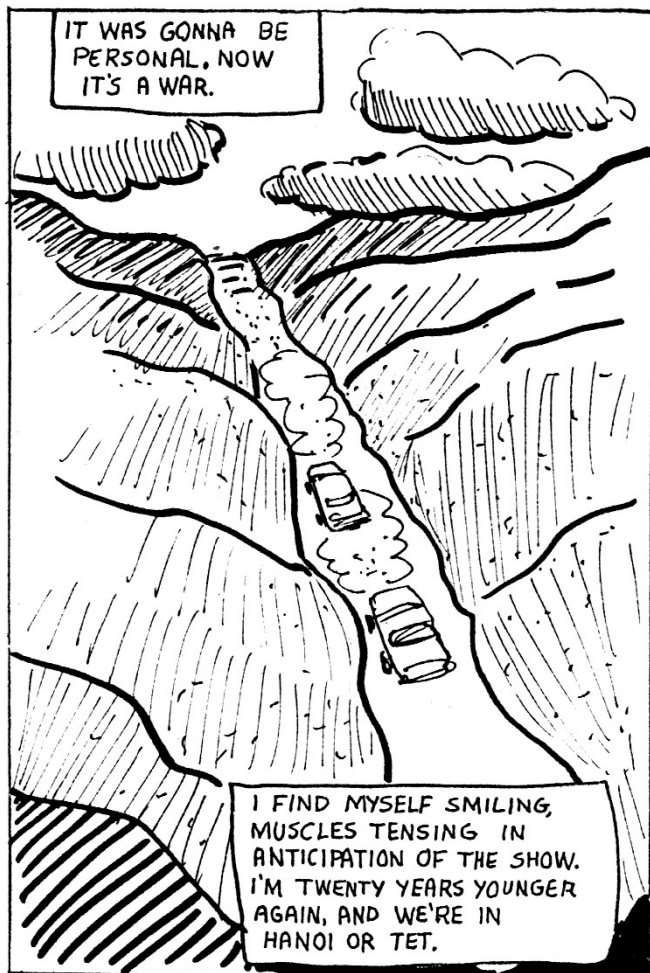




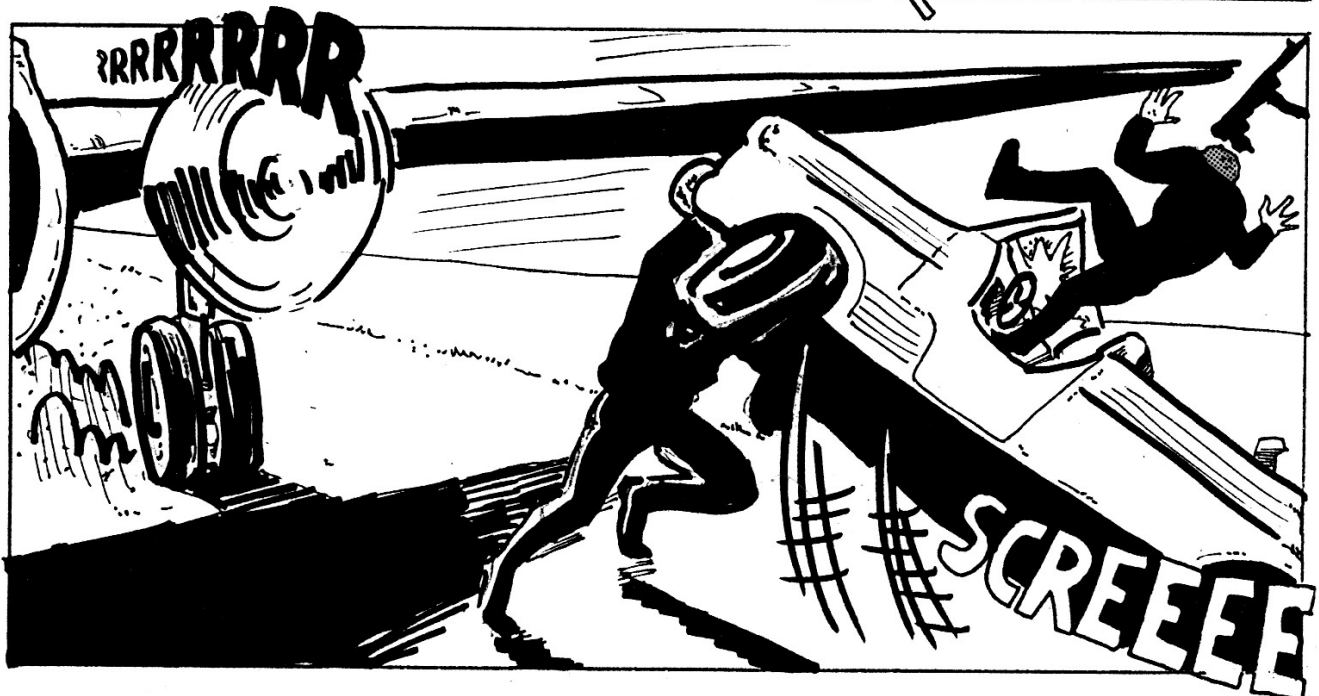
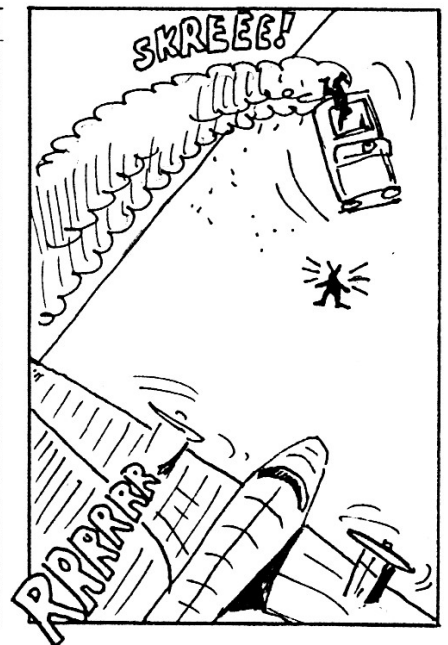
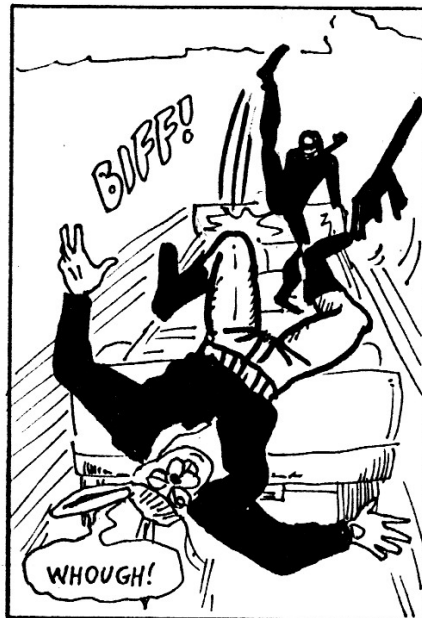




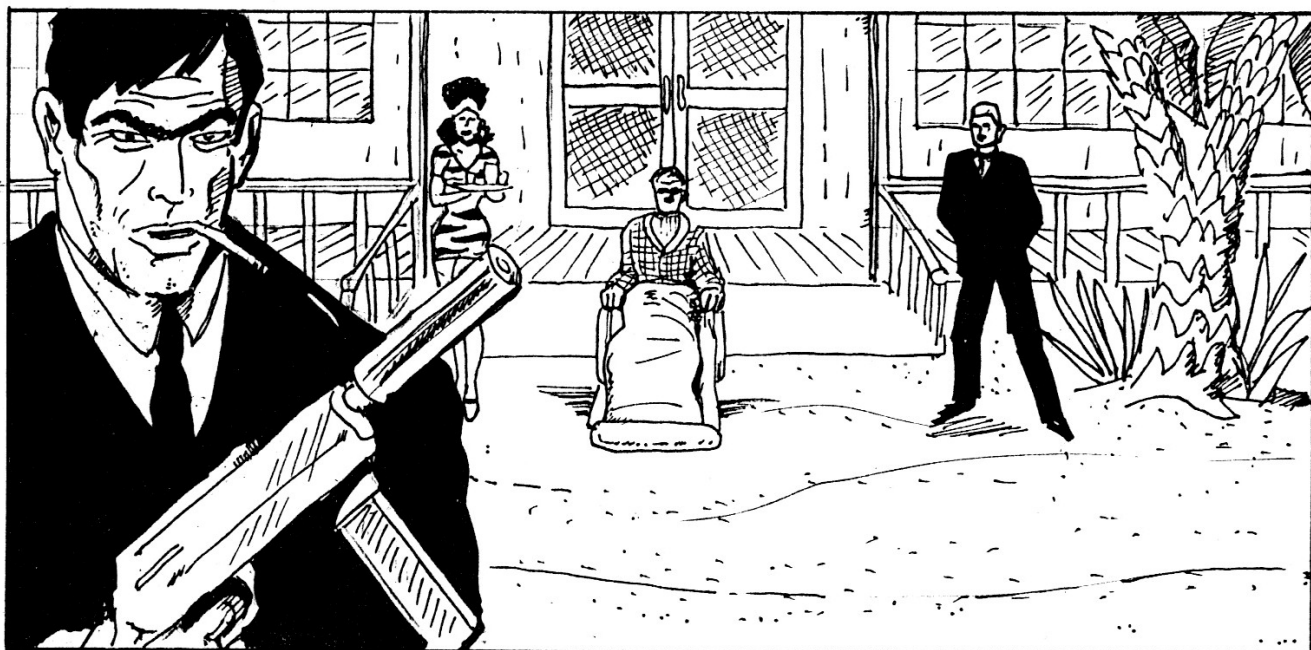










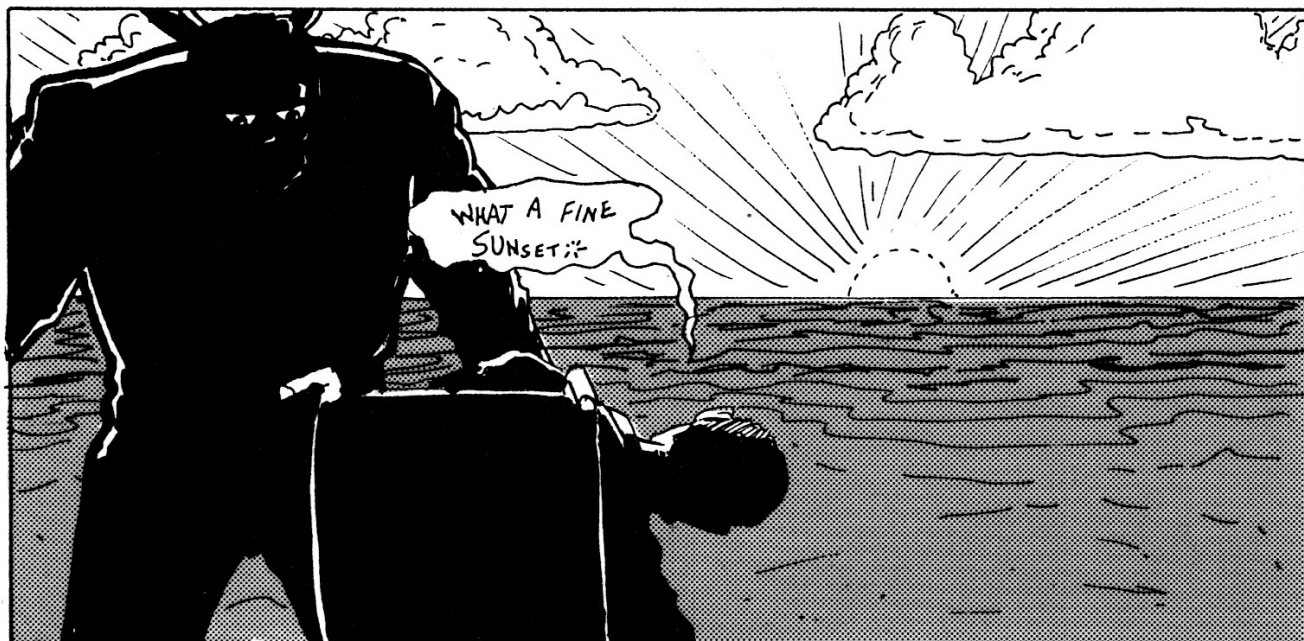
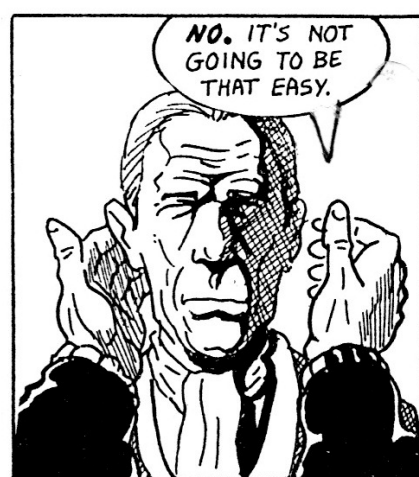


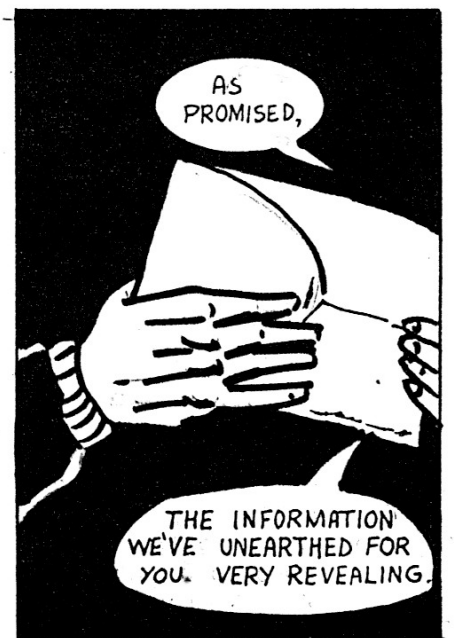
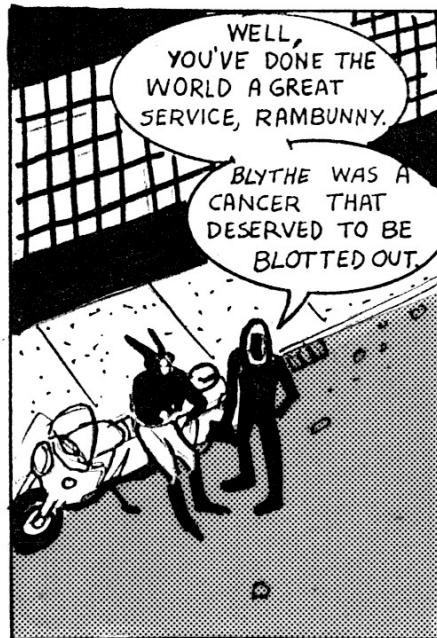
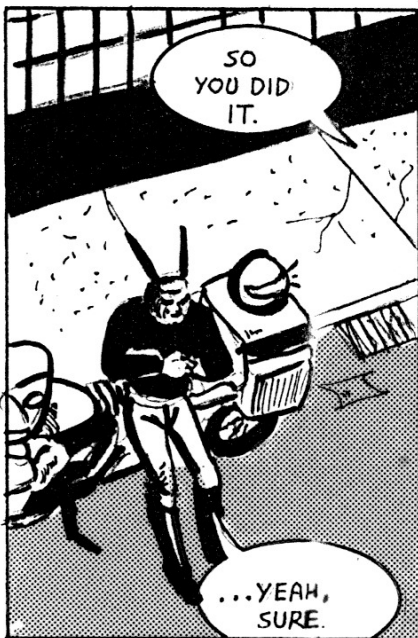
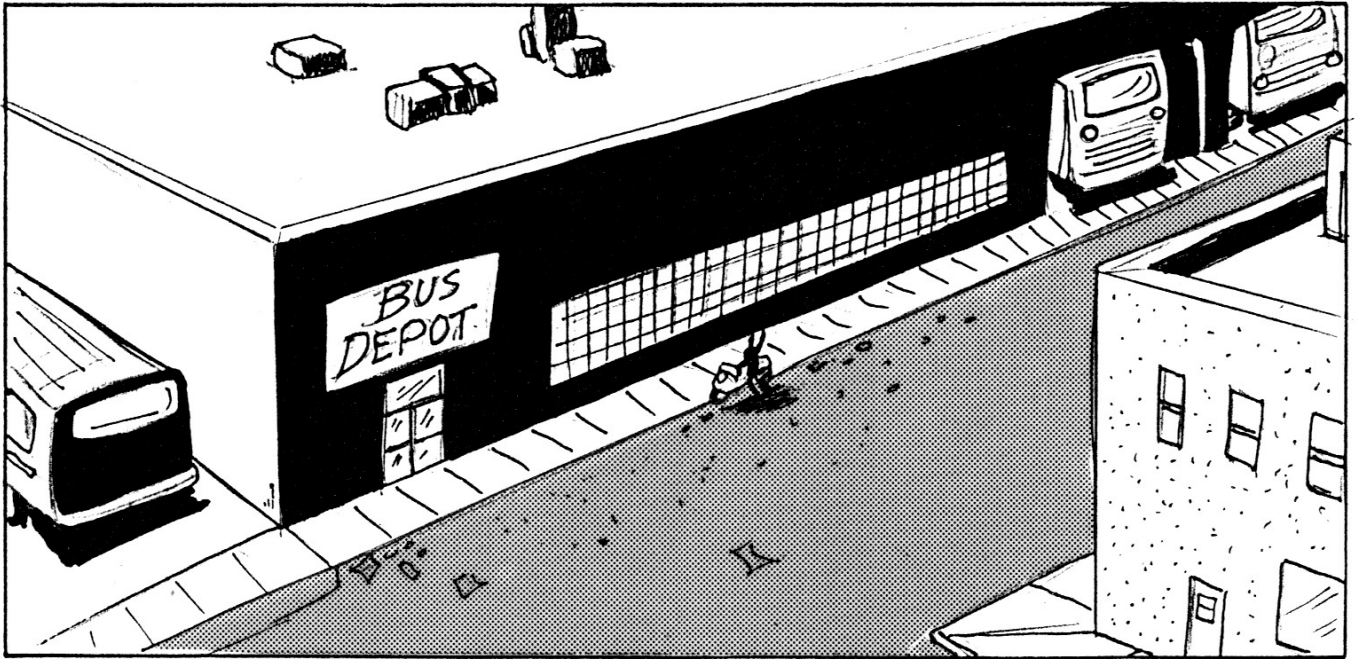




ADMIT IT. THE BLOOD LUST IS IN YOU, TOO. IT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU COULD'VE MADE IT THIS FAR.







I REMEMBER BLYTHE'S
VOICE, LIKE A DEATH
RATTLE.



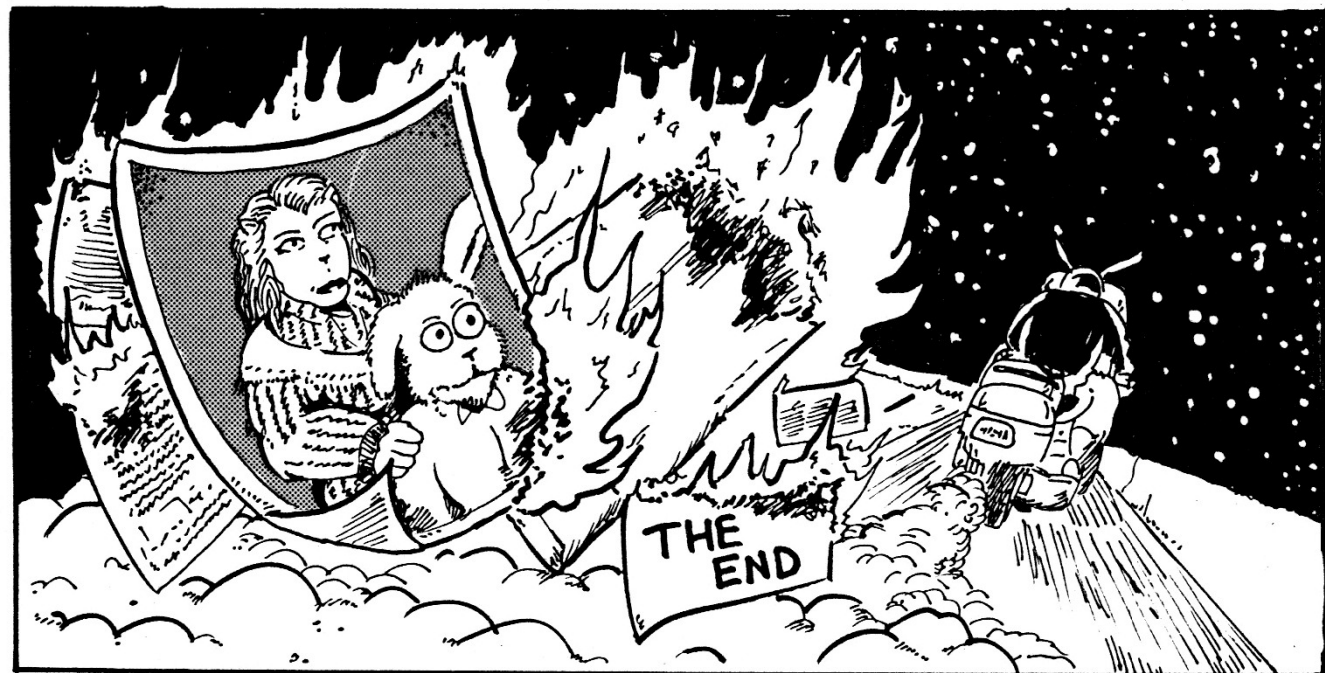
AND I REMEMBER THE
GLEE IN RAOUF'S VOICE
AFTER WE CUT A
DOZEN MEN DOWN.



AND I THINK OF FISH'S
SMUG COOL VOICE,
TELLING ME I'M A
GOOD GUY AFTER ALL.



AND I KNOW
NOTHING IS THIS
VALUABLE.



THE UFO CHECKLIST



Here's a list of the latest releases in Spring 1997 by the members of the United Fanzine Organization, a co-op of self-publishers interested in creating good comics. For more information about the UFO, contact current Chairman John Yeo, Jr. at P.O. Box 2620, E. Peoria IL 61611.



☒ **Amoeba Adventures #24:**

"The Dark Ages" continues as one of the most acclaimed and successful small-press books ever edges closer and closer to its final issue. The Dark One backs up a bit, giving our heroes time to grieve the loss of one of their own. Join Nik Dirga and artist Max Ink as the All-Spongy Squadron regroups for the final conflict ahead! 32 pages, \$2.00 from Nik Dirga, P.O. Box 2230, University MS 38677-2230.

☒ **Axel 'n' Alex #2:** It's the charming tale of a boy and his robot! Alex Robinson gets to know his new best friend... and fortunately, this friend isn't imaginary, because another artificial life form called Peacekeeper is gunning for poor Alex, and he'll gladly tear Axel apart to get to him! 28 pages, \$1.50 from Terry Flippo, 205 Breezewood Court, Mt. Airy MD 21771.

☒ **Futuro Tierra #25:** One of the longest-running books in the UFO comes to a startling conclusion! Steve and his friends set out to rescue Jimi, Jordon and Shaq from the vicious Overlord — but even if he

survives this mission, what amazing revelation is in store for him? Find out by joining Tony Lorenz for this last adventure. 40 pages with color cover, \$2.00 from Tony Lorenz at 8708 Friendship Court, Tampa FL 33634.

☒ **Small Press Feedback #24:** Bob Elinskas's reviewzine extraordinaire is *the* place to be for coverage of all the latest releases in the small press community. This issue includes regular columns by Troy Hickman and Pam Bliss, an in-depth interview with *Amoeba Adventures* creator Nik Dirga, a preview of *Glorianna: The Conscience of the King* and much, much more! 70 pages, \$3.00 from Bob Elinskas, 1805 Girard St., Utica NY 13501.

☒ **Tetragrammaton Fragments #153:** The official newsletter of small press's oldest and most distinguished co-op, with members like J. Kevin Carrier, Bill Mallory, Jerry Smith and more! Full of news, comics and reviews - sample copy \$2 from Chairman John Yeo, address above.

**LOOKING FOR MORE GREAT SMALL PRESS COMICS?
CHECK OUT THE LATEST FROM THE UFO!**

IT



ALL

ENDS



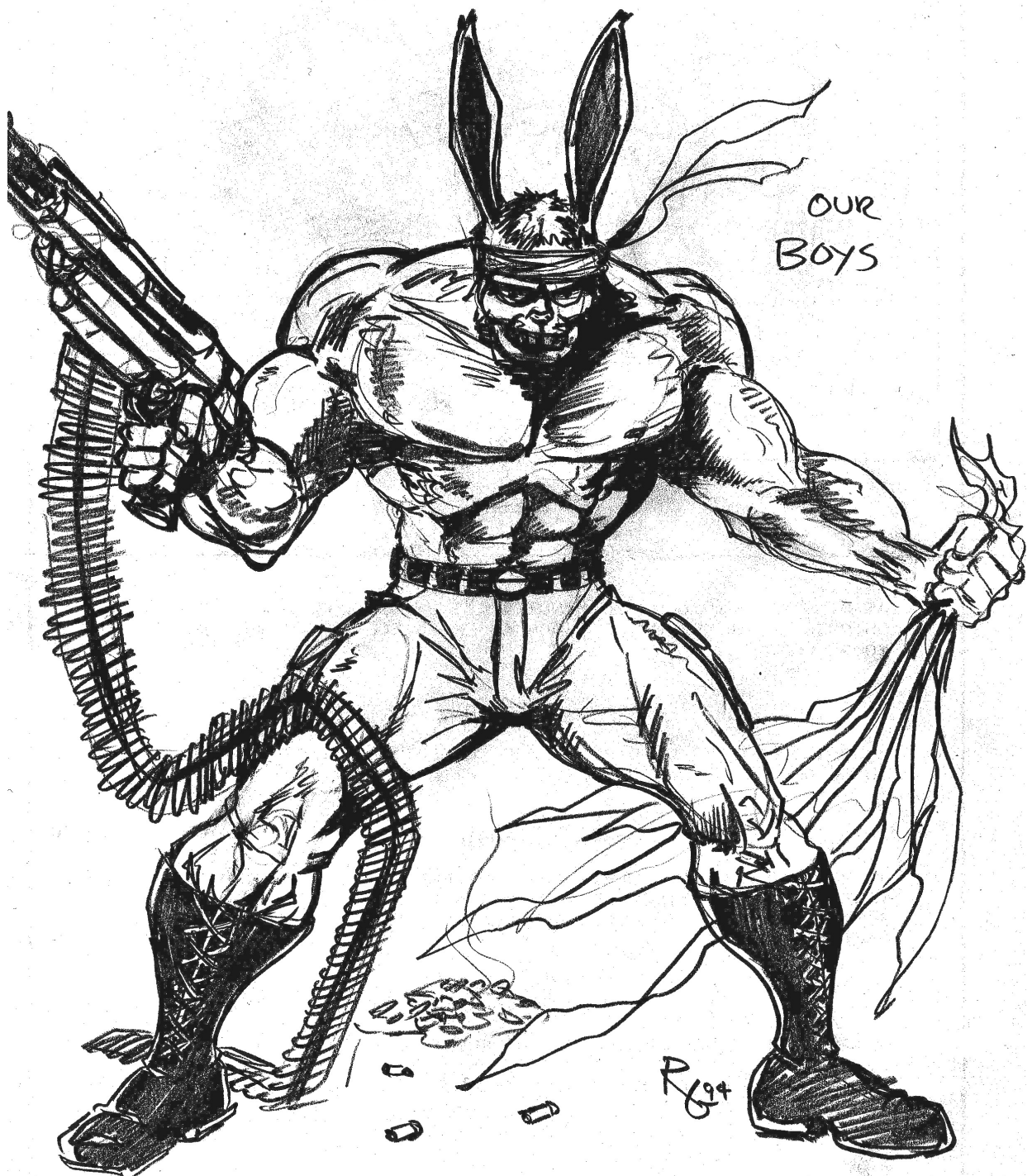
***Amoeba
Adventures
#25 — the
64-page
climax to
"The Dark
Ages."
Coming in
May from
Protoplasm
Press.***

HERE.

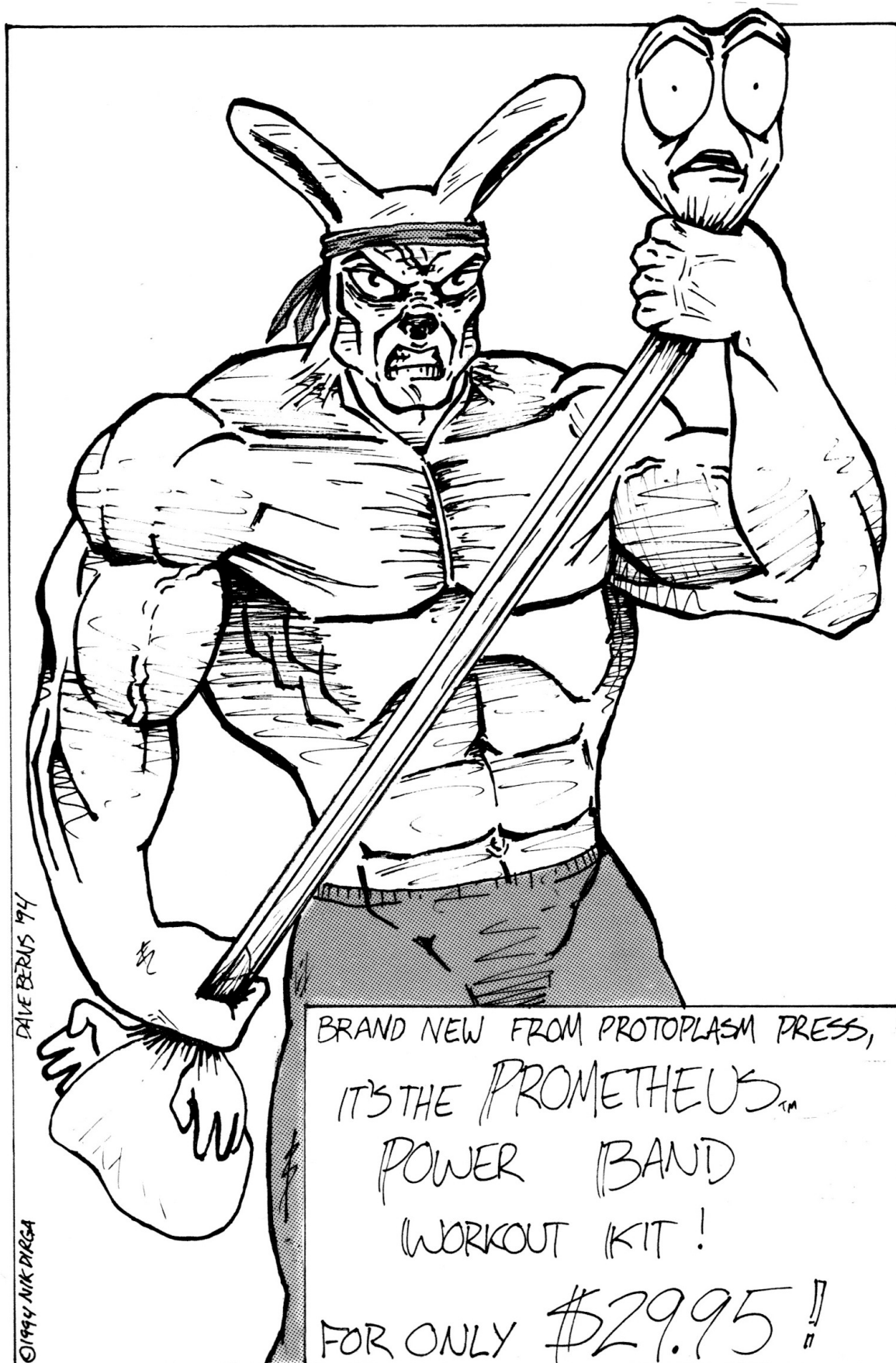
SPECIAL 2020 BONUS SECTION

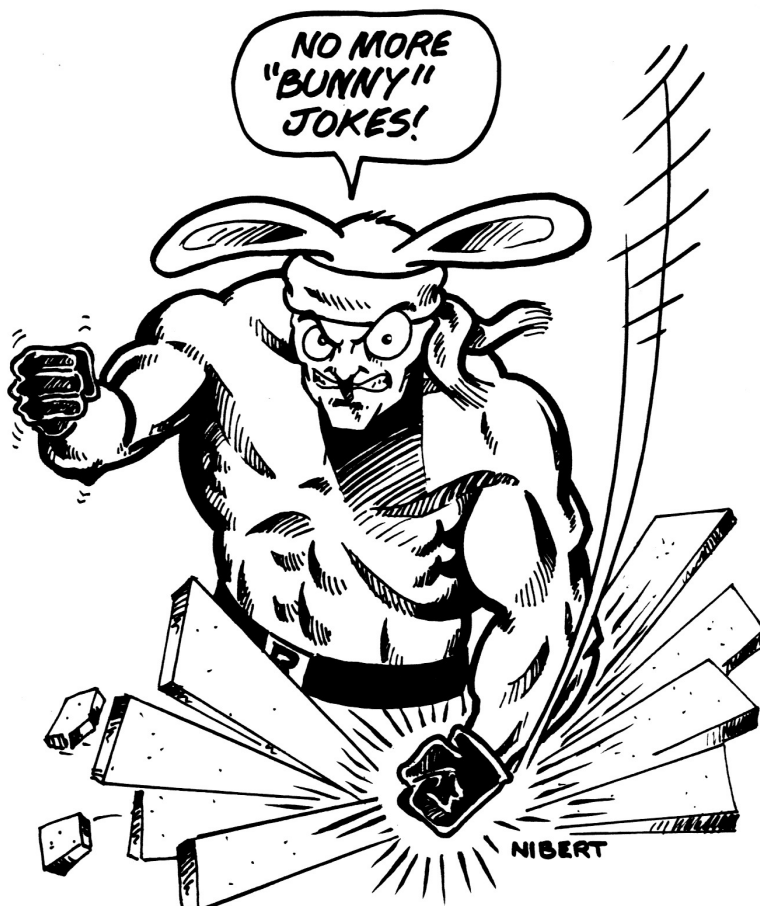
"Rambunny: Unacceptable Losses" was very different than most other **Amoeba Adventures** stories - a gritty, grim tribute to Frank Miller and James Bond/Indiana Jones globetrotting action flicks. I had fun trying to write a straightforward action yarn. It's dark and sometimes a bit dreary but, given the tortured genesis as described in this issue's introduction, it would be hard for it not to be.

Ron Gravelle's terrific art on the finished book really captured the "Sin City"-with-a-rabbit vibe I was going for, heavy on the blacks and actually making a 6'6" rabbit look pretty intimidating.



...And of course, the tragic 1995 murder of **Eric Hampton** hung over this story. Originally, **Dave Berns** pencilled about half the book which Eric was going to ink. One of the final letters I got from Eric was about his working on this story. Those pages were sadly lost in the aftermath of his death, but this great pin-up by Dave shows what his bunny would've looked like. (More on Eric Hampton is included in the bonus pages to **Amoeba Adventures** #17.)





Rambunny was a popular character for friends and fans of Amoeba Adventures to draw, as these pin-ups by Bill Mallory (above) and the late Larry Nibert (left) show.



THE ORIGIN OF THE RAMBUNNY.
NEXT ISSUE.

IN 1967 A RABBIT NAMED PETER SPENT 15 MONTHS IN VIETNAM AS A SOLIDER IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY. HE WAS WOUNDED TWICE AND RECIEVED A BRONZE STAR FOR BRAVERY IN COMBAT. HE ALSO BECAME THE INVULNERABLE HERO NAMED RAMBUNNY.

OVER TWENTY YEARS LATER RAMBUNNY IS NOW A FAMOUS SUPER-HERO, CRUSADING FOR JUSTICE. HE IS ALSO THE ONLY SUPER-HERO WHO HAS EVER RECIEVED THE PURPLE HEART.

RAMBUNNY HAS COME A LONG WAY FROM VIETNAM. BUT HE HAS NOT LEFT IT BEHIND.

THERE WERE THE MEN HE KNEW AND FOUGHT WITH IN A WAR THEY COULD NOT WIN THE FEELINGS OF FEAR, COMRADESHIP, RAGE, AND LOVE THAT WON'T GO AWAY FOR ALOT OF PEOPLE. ESPECIALLY THE ONES WHO LOST PIECES OF THEIR LIVES OR THEIR BODIES THERE.

RAMBUNNY WAS, AND IS A SOLIDER. AND HE FOUGHT IN A WAR THAT HAS LEFT A SCAR ON HIS SOUL FOREVER

HE FIGHTS ON.

FOR WHAT. HE DOES NOT KNOW.

As far back as 1987 or so when I started drawing "Prometheus" comics, I liked the idea of an Rambunny solo adventure.

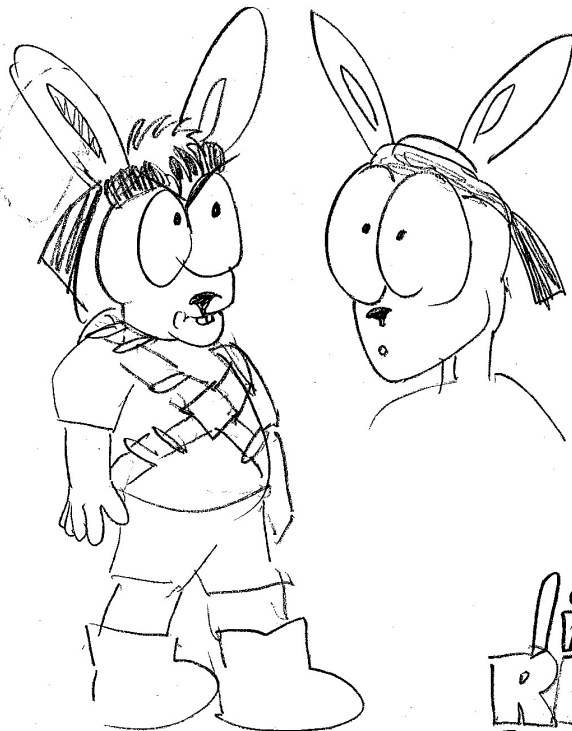
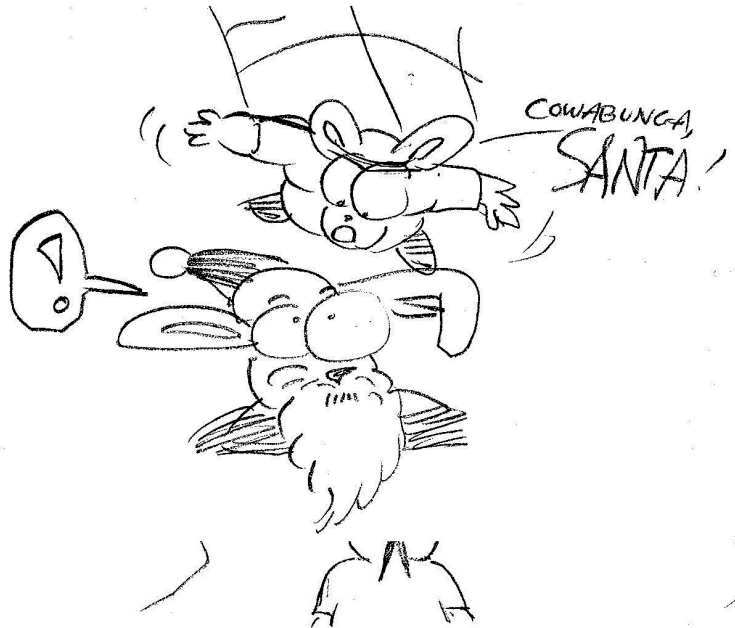
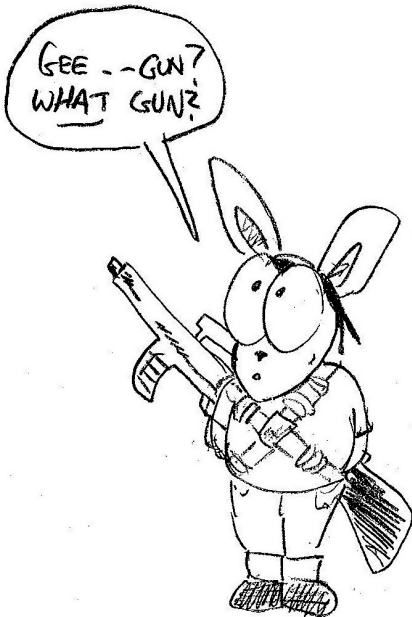
Here are some very early, raw scribbles and sketches from that era imagining that. (Yes, the Rambunny drawing below is a direct homage to Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Returns*.)



RAMBUNNY



Lil' RAMBUNNY



"Lil' Rambunny" is an idea that never got past the drawing board.

But still, it might've been fun. Calvin and Hobbes, with guns?

Lil' RAM BUNNY