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THE NEW ALBEDO



First, I guess I ought to introduce some of the characters that I've given SD dates and locations to in the story, but no explanation as to who they are and all.

The guy on page 7 is Tavas Ikalik, Erma's former lover from her days before Derzon (Alb. nr.1/C.Reveiw 1), who is now schmoozing into an important position on her homeworld.

The Rabbits on page 9 are the same Rabbits from last time.

Col. Hitzok, the Wolf on page 14, is the Homeguard Commander that worked with Erma during the Ekosiak incident (Alb. 2-10 / C.Review 1-3) and his main squeeze on page 15 is Dea-Htuhok, assistant Confed Secretary for the region.

On page 17, the Otter, Shato, is former Confed Secretary to Ekosiak, and Dea's boss. He's currently under secret house arrest for his part in the Ekosiak incident.

That ought to cover some of the more obvious gaps for those who haven't kept up. I hope. Sounds a lot like a 'soap' update.

Thoughts about stuff. While working with Tom Verre, who did the color work on the cover, and some of the tone work on the pages, I was struck with the age difference, a generation gap, between me and the newer fans and pros, and how long I've been working on *Erma*.

It was the summer of '78 by the time a recognizable *Erma* came up out of the earlier *Astroduck* sketches and work began on the first issue of **Huzzah!** I imagined her about my age then, about 24. And as the story has progressed, she's now 26. But it's been 13 years for me, and I'm now literally old enough to be the father of some of my fans. It's a sobering thought.

It's also hard to explain to these younger fans that I can't afford the intensity of focus that they can on any one subject. If nothing else, it's been 13 years. Then there are all the mundane things that need attending, like my giant atomic tomatoes, or that I'm successfully growing peppers in Seattle. And Bev and the Demondog Dru require social maintenance.

But I am getting better about deadlines, being only a couple months behind.

Dan couldn't make it this issue with *Space Wolf*, as one of his sons thought it would really neat to color the pretty black and white pictures. He'll be back next time. So we have *The Bun E* by Rich Larson, originally published in **No Ducks** nr. 1, way back when. It was a major influence while I was first attempting funny animals and I think is one of the best written shorts ever done. See if you agree.

In case any of you noticed, the reproduction in the last issue was a bit off. Well, Ben and Co. hadn't done half-tones before, so there was some learning, mostly in "how not to." There are now plans for a re-shot reprint with a new cover, which will come out this winter. Keep in touch with Antarctic about it. They will also be publishing **Command Review Vol 4.**

On other new publishing notes, **Refractions, an Albedo Onmibus** is getting started. It will be a fanzine, not unlike **The Everchanging Palace,** with fan art, stories, and stuff related to *Erma Felna, EDF* and *Birthright.* For now, initial inquiries should go to R'ykandar Korra'ti/**Low Orbit**, 5206 20th Ave. NE, Seattle, WA 98105-3313.

Paul Kidd has been talking to a possible publisher about **Albedo RPG** material and I've discussed similar ideas with Antarctic Press, so some manner of new game stuff should be out shortly.

Now on to the letters.

I'm glad to see *Albedo* is back. You had me a little worried there. First thing I noticed, though (and no big surprise): The cover. Erma seems a little "flat" in the full-color illustration. She doesn't wear falsies under the fatigues, does she? But, of course, we know she doesn't (cf. nr. 5 and especially nr. 11, pg. EF155).

On the inside vol. 2, nr. 1 was quite a surprise. Erma's doings on R&R were the least interesting thing happening, especially compared to the other character development going on. Erma's family, Cpt. Arrat's delicate dilemma, and especially Dr. Kalakahaii's ponderings all outshone Erma's rather...sanitized...outing.

The teaser for next issue shows a suggestive thickening to Erma's middle, and the text implies a change in her condition which I, quite frankly, have difficulty buying. Still, you have a capacity for

continued p.29

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Dreams.

Dreams on a beach, years ago, weeks ago.

Other dreams.

Classroom

Combat

Strange dreams

SD 197-07-20 EDF Remote Operations Base, Ish-Tako

Hello Computer.

HELLO, HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

I'd like a psych discussion about a weirdly vivid dream.

EF 2.18

OH? ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR?

Yes. It was about an accident my Father had, a shuttle crash he was in. I dreamt it from his point of view, like it was his memory.

WHAT DID YOU KNOW OF HIS ACCIDENT?

Just the official story. That there was a control failure and the shuttle crashed in a residential/ commercial structure. He wasn't hurt but the emotional shock brought out the psychosis.

AND YOUR DREAM HAD DETAILS THAT YOU COULD NOT HAVE LEARNED OF ELSEWHERE?

TELL ME THE WHOLE STORY.

Yes. There was a sense of familiarity in the setting. I've never piloted that class of craft, though admittedly, it isn't all that different. But it was the little details, odds and ends in the cockpit, personal items. The feel of the seat, the smells.

I remember I was in the cockpit of a shuttle. There was a tone alarm. The interface processor display was down and everything was going immediately into tertiary emergency mode. I was going through the emergency drill, text book precise, but it wasn't how *I* would have done it. I didn't feel it was *me* making the decisions or *doing* anything, just observing. But it wasn't the helpless feel in most dreams where one can't do anything.

The shuttle was nearly out of control and all I could do was attempt to disperse the crash energy. But even that didn't work. Then there was the shock of the crash. I was stunned, I guess, expecting to wake up, like in a falling dream, but the dream kept going. I, well, the body, was stuck in the seat, most of the cabin had collapsed around me. There was a small explosion. I guess it must have been fuel related because all the fire alarms went off.

I struggled with the seat. It was just no good. And in the background, all along, I could hear the in-chip comm. Screams from the passengers when the emergency started, cries and moans immediately after the impact, and then with the fire alarms

The sound people make when they're being burned to death.

INTERESTING. I WILL HAVE TO COMPARE YOUR DREAM WITH THE AVAILABLE RECORDS. I WILL THEN HAVE MORE DETAILED QUESTIONS TO ASK YOU ABOUT THIS.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO GIVE YOU A GENERAL EXAMINATION. CAN YOU GO TO THE MEDICAL UNIT?

Yes. I suppose it will include a full psych-hygiene?

PERHAPS, BUT THAT SEEMS UNLIKELY.

Hm - You seem fine. There's no evidence of anything wrong at all. You're a little emotionally upset over the dream, very understandable, but there's nothing to affect your operational fitness for now.

For now?

Ah - Do you know you are pregnant?

Oh, you didn't. Will you be needing some care counseling?

ah - oh - I'll have to get back to you on that, but I suspect I'll need the whole routine.

Pregnant?! You! And - Alfon?

I guess.

You guess?

I really didn't wonder why I was so -uh- enthusiastic. I'm more cyclic than you are.

So you and Alfon are going to have a child?

It sort of looks that way.

Huh?

Well, that's just great!

What were you thinking of!? How could you do this to me?

Do what to you?

Don't you remember!? What do you think I'm here for?

I wanted to be a mother! And this staff assignment was a perfect chance for me! Now you get preggers.

Why should that - ?

We both can't have pups at the same time, we'd lose the assignment, and likely be transferred out.

I only found out today. I'm really sorry. I didn't plan this.

So, what are your plans?

Have you considered not going through with it?

Toki! Do you really want me to abort this child just so you can have one?

What am I going to do?

THIS IS PURELY YOUR OWN AFFAIR, THOUGH IT WOULD NOT BE A DETRIMENT FOR YOU TO BECOME A MOTHER. SOME CHARACTER BUILDING .

What about Toki, and Alfon, and for that matter, my career?

WHY SHOULD THIS AFFECT YOUR CAREER? THERE WILL BE SOME OPPOSITION, BUT NO MORE THAN YOU ALREADY HAVE. AND OTHERS WILL CONSIDER IT A MODERATING INFLUENCE, A MATURING THAT YOU NEED TO BECOME A SENIOR COMMANDER. AS FOR TOKI, IT IS STILL TOO SOON TO TELL. I WILL MONITOR HER. AND ALFON, WHY DON'T YOU JUST ASK HIM?

A kitten?! Oh wow!

Now who's is it?

Mine and yours, silly.

But how could that have happened?

What do YOU think?

Well, what do you want to do about it?

Do you want a formal bond? A care contract? Do you have an extended group in mind?

I only found out today. And I really don't know what to do. What do you think?

Uuuh. Well, if you want to get really serious about it - . I don't know you well enough to guarantee that I could stand living with you for ever, being Dornthantii and all. But I do like the idea of having a kitten to raise, and if you'll let me, I want to be there for it.

Yeah, I think, despite all your many and obvious character flaws, that you might make a fair father. You're certainly no officer.

What a thing to say about the father of your child!

Yeah, well, if I'm going to remain active, I'm going to have to arrange for some manner of care group.

Care group? I guess, but I could stay in and care for the kitten. All my work can be done on a comm station.

Oh, right. And she'd learn to keyboard before she walks.

She? You've already had a scan?

No. Of course not. I want to keep it a surprise.

Anyway, what do you think?

I really do need more time to think about it.

I'm not going to make any sweeping decisions on the first day. This is all too important, too long-term for that.

Toki has already made it clear she's not going to support me. So I've got to figure out how to do it myself. I've got work to do right now. I'll call later.

SD 197-07-28
EDF Regional Command Center, Dornthant

Hello?
Is anyone home?

Hoi! Commander , you're early.

The official greetings and such won't be until tomorrow and we were afraid we wouldn't have a chance to get to know you until all the hubbub was over.

It's a pleasure to be serving with you all and I'm sure we'll be a great team.

What a bunch of suck-ups. I'll have this Wing in my pocket before they know how to spell my name.

Well, Ermling, you got yours, off in the boonies, and I've got mine now.

Being a stiff bitch Dornthantli, you deserve every bit of it.

How you'll spit when I become the Force Commander of your home system.

EF 229

SD 197-07-30 ILR Command Headquarters, Baliannian

Hey! Colonel! We've got something for you.

You?

Hassakenall, in development.

We've been working on new gadgets for the effort and have come up with a good one.

This is our is our work area.

Bill here actually suggested it.

We've been studying area effect weapons, mostly non-nuclear. Big kinetic impactors have enough energy, but they're only good for making big craters. Since that's not always desirable, we kicked around ways to use the energy in different ways.

What we ended up with is a way to transfer a lot of the energy directly to the atmosphere. With it, we can create an airshock with several times the coverage of a surface impact. It also makes for less cratering and related ejecta, and less gross environmental impact.

See, a couple of kiloton kinetic accelerator unit, but instead of a single impact mass, it's made up of, say, 10 Kilo slugs. Just before atmosphere entry, they're dispersed, and you have 100,000 high velocity objects ripping through the air at several hundred Kilometers per second. The collective shock wave would easily match a large nuclear airburst, but without the undesirable side effects.

Pretty cool, huh?

EF 225

Whadayathink?

Interesting....

Forward it to strategic. Keep up the good work.

Good evening, Colonel.

Home?

Yes.

Another exciting day?

I guess.

Say, Colonel, when are we going to have at the Confed?

Patience. We're not going to be the aggressors in any future conflict.

But if war comes, we intend to be the victors.

Hello. What's the occasion?

Oh, you.

I am glad to see you home at a civilized hour for a change though.

Hi Daddy! Are we rich yet?

My own motor.

So, what do you want now?

I thought it was the boys who got the motors to pick you girls up?

Oh Daddy! I don't want to be dependent on some dwebby guy.

So, who's the motorless Hunk?

You'll like him.

He's a Tech student.

One of the Tankannahai. He's at the top of his class, and is considering Space Academy.

Sounds too good for you.

Oh Daddy!

Hungry!

Bobby, wait until we're all settled.

But would the daughter of a Task Force Commander be a better match?

WOW! Is there a raise in it?

Tom! Is that what you've been up to?

I didn't want to say anything until it was done.

So, will this put you in the field?

You mean will I see combat?

No, I'm becoming too important for that.

If we're lucky, there simply won't be any. But if it comes, we won't be the ones who'll pay.

SD 197-07-25 Tadak City, Ish Tako

Hello?

Hi! You must be Commander Feina.

Come on in. I'm Keena, one of the mothers here.

I've heard you're Dornthantii, and though my mate's family comes from there, I've never met anyone who claims it as home. Are they all as rigid as is said?

ah... Well, we're not so bad. A lot of it is just a rather strong emphasis on the responsibility of the citizen to the society, that sort of thing.

Like picking up every piece of garbage in public places? My Erik has a fit when ever he sees public litter.

I'm afraid so.

Our outlook has been very 'small planet' oriented. So we're awfully concerned about how even little things can impact the biosphere. And since a lot of us are Spacers, we tend to be very meticulous about attention to details and adherence to regulations.

So's that's why you all never relax. Oh, I'm just kidding. You should have heard what they thought about me, being Enchawah Family. Come on and meet the rest.

I'm the only full-timer here. The rest are go to work parents.

I'm afraid I'll be a go to work myself, at least when I'm flying.

You're a pilot?

Sure.

Gosh! And Female! No one said you were a real pilot.

Hey, here's Commander Felna. She's a real pilot. This is Theo and his son Vincent. And Eni, she's a Medtech.

Hi.

Hello.

Say, are you the Felna the one the media has been talking about?

Yes...?

Well then, a pleasure to meet you. I've been following your career for a while.

I have to admit I'm a bit nervous. Back home it's very much formal family, and for me , just nuclear.

Will your mate be participating?

The Father? I'm not sure. This wasn't planned, so we're still working things out.

I hope you'll be able to stay with us. Much of our success has been through the diversity of our members, and you would be a welcome asset.

Well, I hope so.

EF 229

SD 197-06-10 Hicho, Ekosiak

Careful all! There could be booby traps among them.

They're sweeping clean so far.

Say, Colonel, we'd like to hold Banchan separately.

Oh?

Special Services wants to talk to them.

Uhm. I'll take care of it.

So, you want to go to Special Services?

Special? They asked for me?

Well, Tehtahno said they'd be interested.

Tehtahno?! That means... uh, Colonel, sir...

You know Dana doesn't want dead escapees. It's those bastards down at Special. So cut me loose, or at least hold me with the others until Dana can spring me.

Sergeant! I want all these suspects "A" secured.

"A" it is, sir.

EF 23

Tehtahno, given the nature of all this, I'd like to hold on to everyone for now.

Uhm, Downtown won't like it, but its your call.

Save preceding to secure file, secure analysis one. All related action to go through "A" security.

Guess who came up in conversation today?

While you were being heroic?

Ahuh. Dana.

DANA!?

He and Special Services have some disagreement about the disposition of terrorist suspects.

Dana and Special Services?

Well, according to one of the suspects, Dana is a benevolent influence for the movement.

While Tehtahno and Special Services seem more interested in correcting mistakes.

Like being captured alive is one they have some practice in fixing.

There's some interesting blanks in the data bases on these guys.

Those ought to be clear, let me.

Let me see if I can find something. There were some interesting connections with Aito.

Uhm, how about this?

Oh?

That's not suppose to happen.

What?

Special code.

I should be able to see everything now.

Now that's even more interesting. Shato or someone was awfully busy. There's no legal way for all this to be gone. I wonder if we can ask him about this?

SD 197-09-29
Confed Special Facility, Center City, Arras Charka

SHATO.

SHATO.

I HAVE TO TALK TO YOU.

eh?

How?

THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT. THE EKOSIAKI FILES ARE BEING OPENED.

CFSS* WILL BE COMING TO INTERROGATE YOU ABOUT THEM.

THE RENEWED INVESTIGATION WILL NOT BE AS DISCREET AS BEFORE, AND YOU MAY BECOME MORE DIRECTLY LIABLE FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF AITO.

I knew the job was dangerous when I took it.

THE CREW OF THE DH 270 IS BEING BROUGHT IN FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF THEIR HANDLING AFTER THE CHISHATA INCIDENT.

THIS COULD BRING OUT MORE CONNECTIONS WITH THE AITO CONSPIRACY.

Oh?

YES.

THERE ARE SIGNS OF AN ORGANIZATION BROADER THAN EKOSIAK AND CHISHATA. THAT COULD INCLUDE EDF AND CONFED PERSONNEL. AND THAT IMPLIES THAT THERE IS SOMETHING TERRIBLY WRONG AMONG THE OUTER COMMANDS.

YOUR SPECIAL TALENTS MAY YET BE NEEDED.

*CFSS = Confed Special Services

Oh, another dream.

And Joseph.

That must be Father in his academy days. I know this, it's when he met Mother.

They told me about this.

Joseph went to do introductions and set up Father for a simple joke, taking advantage of his complete lack of a sense of humor.

I wonder how Itzack is doing?

SD 197-10-15
Aboard the Ah-Mahwahda, entering Arras Charka space

ITZAK, I NOW HAVE SOME REAL NEWS. THE CHISMATA INCIDENT WAS CONNECTED TO THE EKOSIAKI CIVIL INCIDENT.

What?!

UNFORTUNATELY THAT DATA WASN'T PASSED ON OUT SYSTEM.

So our trip was for nothing?

ACTUALLY, YOU HAVE BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT. YOUR DOCUMENTATION OF EDF INTEL CONDUCT AND THEIR SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS ARE CRITICAL EVIDENCE OF FUNDAMENTAL WEAKNESSES IN THE FIELD UNITS.

THE STONEWALLING AND PEJORATIVE PERSONNEL CLASSIFICATIONS THAT WERE INITIATED NEED AN INVESTIGATION OF THEIR OWN.

So what was Chismata all about?

THE MINING OPERATIONS HAD SOME DUBIOUS CONNECTIONS AND IT APPEARS THOSE CONNECTIONS HAD SOME ENEMIES. DOING AWAY WITH CHISMATA SET IN MOTION A PLOT AGAINST CIVIL AUTHORITY ON EKOSIAK. THE SPECIAL ATTENTION YOU'VE RECEIVED FROM THE INTEL GROUP SUGGESTS THEY KNEW SOMETHING AND WANTED TO DEFLECT ATTENTION.

So we've flushed out a whole new sourse of trouble. So waht happens now?

ASSIST IN THE INVESTIGATIONS, OBVIOUSLY. FOR THE LONGER TERM, GETTING ANOTHER SHIP SEEMS LIKELY. FOR NOW, WITH PLANET FALL STILL...

There you are.

Not nearly enough time.

I'll call room service.

We still have 350 hours left 'till station.

EF235

SD 197-07-28 EDF Remote Operations Base, Ish-Tako

Erma?

Hello Toki.

Well, in the interest of an efficent working relationship...

Its okay.

No its not.

In that moment I really did want you to get rid of the baby.

But I shouldn't have, and that's the point.

I know. But I also understand the impulse of the moment.

I'm an EDF Command officer and untill now, your friend. My Danet upbringing, as much as anything else should have kept such a thought away. But it didn't.

Untill now I never doubted my SPI*, but now I'm not so sure.

Toki, no one can be perfect *all* the time, as we both well know. This is awfully emotional for all of us, and we all shouldn't make any kind of definitive plans while in the middle of our initial reactions.

We've got months to get all of this settled, and I'm confident we'll be able to work it out together.

EF-236

*SPI = Social/Psychological/Intelligence rating

GROT 77-RALPH... THE MOST DISGUSTINGLY DEPRAVED, DECADENT, DEBAUCHED, DRUG-ADDLED, VICE-RIDDEN PERVERTED POCK-MARK OF A PLANET YOU'RE EVER LIKELY TO RUN INTO...

C'MON, MY GOOD FRIEND **SEBBIN**...

THE NATIVES CALL IT "WORLD OF THE **BIG WHOOPIE**", AND SING ITS PRAISES: "YOU CAN GET **ANYTHING** THAT YOU WANT / ON **GROT 77-RALPH**"...

HOO-HA! MAGIC **SEBBIN**!

JE-**SUS!** I DON'T **BELIEVE** THIS...

... INCLUDING **SEVERAL UNPLEASANT DISEASES, MUGGED**, AND **ICED**... BUT THAT'S NOT IN THE BROCHURES

AWRIGHT BOYS, ROLL YO DADDY RIGHT ON UP TO DA GATES OF **FINANCIAL SECURITY**...

HE MAKES THIS NEXT POINT I'M RIPPING MY **EYES** OUT...

HOLD PHONE. VOOLGA WANT TO **SEE** CHANCE CUBES. 182 STRAIGHT PASSES. VOOLGA THINK THIS TINKERTOY GAME **FIXED!**

AHA! VOOLGA NO DULLARD! CHANCE CUBES **SHAVED**!

SAYWHUT? YO CALLIN ME A **CHEAT**, YO **WAXY YELLOW BUILD-UP**?

SHAVED?! I IS **OUTRAGED**! WHO **SOLD** METHESE **DISHONEST DICE**?!

VOOLGA GOING TO **RITUALLY DEVOUR** THE LOWER HALF OF YOUR BODY...

LOOK, LET'S **COMPROMISE**. YOU JUS BREAK THIS **ARM** HERE, AN I'LL GO QUIETLY...

YOU'LL FIND CHANCE CUBES SCATTERED ALL OVER THE FLOOR

NOBODY MOVE! UNLESS OF COURSE YOU WANNA BUY A PIECE OF THAT SALAD-HEAD'S ***FARM***...

HOT PUPPIES! DA ***CAVALRY!*** BOSS, YO IS AS ***TIMELY*** AS DA ***SUMMER RAIN!***

DIDN'T YOUR MOTHER EVER TELL YOU NOT TO PLAY WITH DEAD-FROM-THE-NECK-UP THINGS? LET'S ***BLOW*** THIS POP STAND. GET THE ***MONEY*** AND... CREW... WHERE'S YOUR ***GUN***, CREW?

OH... HEH, HEH... MUSTA LEFT IT ***UPSTAIRS***... SAYING HELLO TO MY ***AUNT***...

NAME YOUR DISC

BROADS

BEER

NEXT WEEK

YES, AND THERE'S NO BETTER PLANET TO PICK UP ON THESE TWO CURMUDGEONS, THESE ***LOATHSOME, EGGSUCKING, LOWLIFE OUTCASTS***... ***CAP*** AND ***CREW***, AS THEY CALL THEMSELVES... LATE OF THAT RIDICULOUS ***GARBAGE SCOW***...

BONE

written and drawn by RICHARD CARSON • based on characters created by TIM COLLIER

THERE YOU ARE! I WANT MY ***MONEY***, YOU CHEESY LITTLE SAWED-OFF ***CRUD!***

TUT TUT, MON AMOUR! CONTENT YOSELF WITH DA KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU'VE BEEN LOVED BY DA ***GREATEST!***

MISSED...
SORRY, FELLA.

I SEEN ***ENOUGH*** OF THIS ***VERMINOUS MUDBALL***, CAP. I LONGS FOR DA ***INKY MAJESTY*** OF ***SPACE***...

I'LL SETTLE FOR LIVING OUT THE NEXT ***MINUTE AND A HALF***...

COULD YO DECREASE YO ***INTENSITY***? YO GETTIN ***CRETIN*** ALL OVER ME...

VON KREEG SAID HE'D SELL US A ***REBUILT*** ION DRIVE FOR ***SIX HUNDRED***...

I HOPE HE WILLING TO ***HAGGLE***...

WHAT? HOW MUCH DID WE ***GET***?

ABOUT ***FIFTY***... NO ***POCKETS***, Y'KNOW... HAD TO STASH IT IN MY ***SHORTS***...

VON KREEG GOT A **GOOD HEART**... WE CAN **OWE** HIM DA REST...

I **HOPE** SO. OTHERWISE WE'LL BE MAKIN GROT 77 **LICENSE PLATES** FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES...

VOTE

VOTE

CHEER UP, CAP. WE IS ORPHANS OF DA SKY...CHILDREN OF DA STARS! DA WHOLE **UNIVERSE** IS OUR PLAYGROUND AS WE CAREEN FROM ONE WILDLY EXCITING ADVENTURE TO ANOTHER

I WISH YOU'D GET RID OF THAT STUPID **SUIT**. I FEEL LIKE AN **IDIOT** WALKING ALONGSIDE YOU...

Puff... Gasp... **LOST EM!** OD'S BLOOD!

AW, **FORGET IT**, BUFU... FIFTY LOUSY CREDITS...

LET'S ADJOURN TO THE **BAR**... GET UP A GAME OF **MONOPOLY**...

I GET THE SHOE!
I GET THE SHOE!

WE'LL **NEVER** GET THAT CARGO TO RAMONA BEACH ON TIME... WHICH MEANS WE DON'T GET PAID... **AGAIN**! WE GOTTA GET A NEW SHIP...

WE CAN'T JUNK DA BUN E, CAP. WHY, THAT OL GAL BEEN LIKE A **MOTHER** TA US...

COAST CLEAR, CAPTAIN. LET'S PAY A CALL ON DA GOOD VON KREEG, PICK UP TH ION DRIVE, AN GET A COUPLE QUARTS OF AFTER SHAVE...

HOW LIKE ART IS LIFE... THIS VERY **SEWER** IS AN EXCELLENT **LEITMOTIF** TO OUR **ENTIRE EXISTENCE**...

WHEREVER WE GO... WHATEVER WE DO... WE'RE **ALWAYS** UP TO THE WAIST IN **SHIT**...

WE'LL HAVE HER PUT AWAY FOR **INCEST**! SHE'S BEEN **SCREWING US OVER** FROM ONE END OF THE GALAXY TO THE OTHER...THERE'S VON KREEG'S...

HE'S **EXPECTIN** US, BLESS HIS FACE! RAMONA BEACH IS FLOATIN IN FRONT OF MY RETINAS **ALREADY**!

OPEN UP, KREEG. IT'S *US.*

WHO ISS *DOT*?

THE THREE WISE MEN. WE AIN'T GOT *TIME* FOR GAMES, FELLA...

GO AWAY. WE ARE *CLOSED.* GOODBYE.

C'MON, SHOPKEEPER. WE ON DA VERGE OF *HYSTERIA* OUT HERE...

GO AWAY, OR I SEND FOR *ZA HEAT!* YOU *UNDERSTAND*?

OK. *OK!* LOUSY BOURGEOIS PHILISTINE...

YOU *WARNED* EM, GRANDDAD. THAT'S GONNA *COST* Y...

HAI-YAHH!

HALF THE PLANET'S ON *US*, KREEG ...WHERE'S THE *ENGINE*?

WHAT'S WITH DA *THOT POLICE*, LITTLE DEALER?

THEY VAS LOOKING FOR TWO *FLOPPY-EARED HAIRBALL CON MEN* WHO BUSTED UP A BAR... VY DON'T YOU BOYS GET A NICE *DESK JOB* SOMEWHERE? YOU GOT JUST ENOUGH BRAINS *BETWEEN* YOU TO BE A *DESK*...

A *STEAL* AT SIX HUNDRED. UND SINCE YOU RESCUED ME FROM WHAT PROMISED TO BE A *SEVERE THRASHING*, WE'LL CALL IT... *575*...

BUT WE *SAVED* YOUR *REAR*...

I KNOW VAT DOT'S VORTH... UND ON *THIS* PHLEGM-BAG OF A PLANET, IT'S *25 CREDITS.* AT THE *OUTSIDE.*

CAN WE *OWE* IT TO YA, KREEGY? ALL WE GOT IS *FIFTY.* WE'RE ON OUR *KNEES*...

VELL, *OK.* VE VORK SOMETHING OUT...

YO A *PRINCE* AMONG PRINCES...

THIS *TEARS* IT, BOY! IF WE EVER MAKE IT TO RAMONA BEACH, I'M GONNA HAVE THAT *OBSOLETE TINKERTOY SPACE BUCKET* OF OURS *MELTED DOWN* AND MADE INTO A *TEA SERVICE*...

CAP, I FEEL AMOST *NAKED* WITHOUT MY *SUIT*...

YOU *ARE* ALMOST NAKED, YOU *DOUGHHEAD*...

LET'S SEE... ONE REMINGTON BLAZER UND SHEATH..., 375 CREDITS AT LEAST... ONE DASHING-SPACE-ROGUE-TYPE OUTFIT... MAYBE SO... ONE OFFICIAL UGANDAN STAR FLEET RUBBER PRESSURE SUIT, NEEDS *FUMIGATING*... 125... HEE HEE... NEVER THOUGHT I'D UNLOAD THAT TURKEY... HOPE IT *HOLDS OUT* TIL THEY HIT *ZERO G*...

HERR VON KREEG...?

VAT? GET *OUT* OF HERE! I'M *CLOSED*!

YOU'RE *DEAD*... UNLESS YOU TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND THOSE TWO FLEA-BITTEN RODENT *PALS* OF YOURS...

PALS?! I JUST TOOK THEM FOR EVERYTHING THEY H...

DON'T *QUIBBLE*, POPS. NOBODY... *NOBODY* CHEATS BUFU OF XYLITOL AND *LIVES* TO TELL THE TALE. THE MONEY'S UNIMPORTANT. BUT I WANT THEIR *HEADS* FOR THE *WALL* OF MY *SHIP*...

HEY, *LOOK*... WHY DON'T YOU JUST TAKE THOSE TWO PAINTINGS OF ZA KIDS WITH ZA *BIG EYES*...

TALK!!

OK, *OK*... THEY'RE HEADED FOR THEIR *SHIP*. A COUPLE OF MILES SOUTH OF TOWN. PROBABLY HIDDEN IN ZA *ROCKS* SOMEWHERE...

CAN WE *REST* FOR A PIECE, CAPTAIN? MY *PUNY RABBIT ARMS* IS *GIVIN OUT*...

NO WAY! WE STOP... SOMEBODY *CATCHES* US... MOM DIDN'T GO THROUGH A *PREMATURE BREECH BIRTH* JUST TO HAVE ME DIE ON *GROT 77-RALPH*...

COURAGE, CREW. ANOTHER 300 METERS OR SO. THE BUN E IS JUST OVER THAT *PINKISH PROMONTORY*... OR IS IT THAT *BLUISH BLUFF*? NO, NO ... THE *MAGENTA-ISH MESA*... I *THINK*.

TAKE ME, GOD...

YOU... *HEAR* SOMETHING, CREW? *HOOFBEATS*?

I THINK THAT MY *HEART*...

VON KREEG'S IN BACK. I *THINK* IT'S VON KREEG. I COULDN'T FIND HIS *FACE*...

THERE'S A BUNCH OF *TRACKS* OUTSIDE. IT WAS THOSE *CARGO JOCKEYS* ALL RIGHT. THEY LEFT THEIR *CLOTHES*...

CAN'T SAY AS I *BLAME* THEM. OK, LET'S GO *GET* EM. FUN IS FUN, BUT THEM RABBITS IS *CRAZY*...

...IT *AIN'T* YOUR SOON TO BE NON-FUNCTIONING *TICKER*, BANANA EARS! IT'S YOUR *FINAL REWARD*, IN THE FORM OF *BUFU* OF *XYLITOL*! PUT THAT GIZMO *DOWN*. I DON'T WANT MY *TROPHIES* DAMAGED WHEN I RENDER YOUR MANGY HIDES INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE.

BANANA EARS?!

CRUNCH

DA LAWS OF *NATURAL SELECTION* MUST BE *SUSPENDED* HERE, CAP. I AIN'T YET MET A NATIVE WHO COULD BEAT A BREADFRUIT AT CRIBBAGE...

WHAT *LUCK*! BUFU'S *SADDLE-BAG* ESCAPED DAMAGE! WE CAN *VEST* OURSELVES AGAIN!

I'D RATHER *PANTS* MYSELF, BUT I AIN'T COMPLAININ...

WOW, I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE LUCKY ENOUGH TO GET ONE OF *THESE* AGAIN...

MY JOY FOR YOU KNOWS NO BO... ...*OY*...OH *BOY*! *LES GENDARMES*! THEY HAVEN'T GIVEN UP ON US YET! *DOUBLE DOG DAMN*!

IF WE SO *POPULAR*, HOW COME WE DON'T GET *LAID* MORE OFTEN?

INTO ONE OF THOSE *CAVES*, POST HASTE!

WELLL, THIS IS *FINE*. I WANTED TO DIE IN THE ACT OF SATISFYING SOME *INCREDIBLY KINKY UNDERAGE MINX*... BUT THIS IS *REAL CLOSE*...

GOT AN *IDEA*, CAPTAIN. HELP ME WITH THESE *BOULDERS*, HERE...

GOOD THINKING! WE'LL *ENTOMB* OURSELVES! *FUN, FUN, FUN*!

NOW DON'T GET YER THALMUS IN AN UPROAR...WE *AIN'T DEAD* YET...

TRACKS *END* HERE...WONDER WHERE...

YOU GUYS FOOL AROUND WITH EAGH OTHER'S MOMS!

YEAH! AN YO FART IN TH BATHTUB AN BITE TH BUBBLES!

UP *THERE!*

GOT TO *HAND* IT TO YA, CREW. TOOK US SIX HOURS TO DIG THE MOTHER OUT OF THE *ROCK*, BUT WE'RE STILL *INTACT*...

NOTHIN *TO* IT, BOSS. GOD WATCHES OVER OUR ENDEAVORS. BESIDES, WE IS *DESTINED* TA *RIDE DA COSMIC WINDS*...

YOU SHOULDA GONE INTO *ADVERTISING*...

OK, *SMART BOYS*. THE *LAW*, HERE. YOU IS *DEMISED*. CRAWL ON OUT AND GET IT *QUICK* AND *PAINLESS*...WELL... *QUICK*...

IS IT JAMMED IN THERE *TIGHT*?

ROGER DODGER. LET IT *RIP*...

THERE SHE IS, CAP! DA SIGHT SURELY *BRING A TEAR* TA MY EYE!

WE'LL BE *OFF* THIS *DROOL-SOAKED SPHERE* FIVE MINUTES AFTER YOU *INSTALL* THIS BABY...BOY, WILL *THAT* EVER FEEL *GOOD*...

...FIVE MINUTES AFTER I INSTALL IT? I THOUGHT *YO* KNEW HOW TA INSTALL IT...

CLICK

WHOOOSSH

AAARRRGGHH

I CAN'T *BELIEVE* IT! SOMETHING ACTUALLY GOES *RIGHT*!

...ANY OF YOU FELLAS KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR BASIC *ION DRIVE*?...

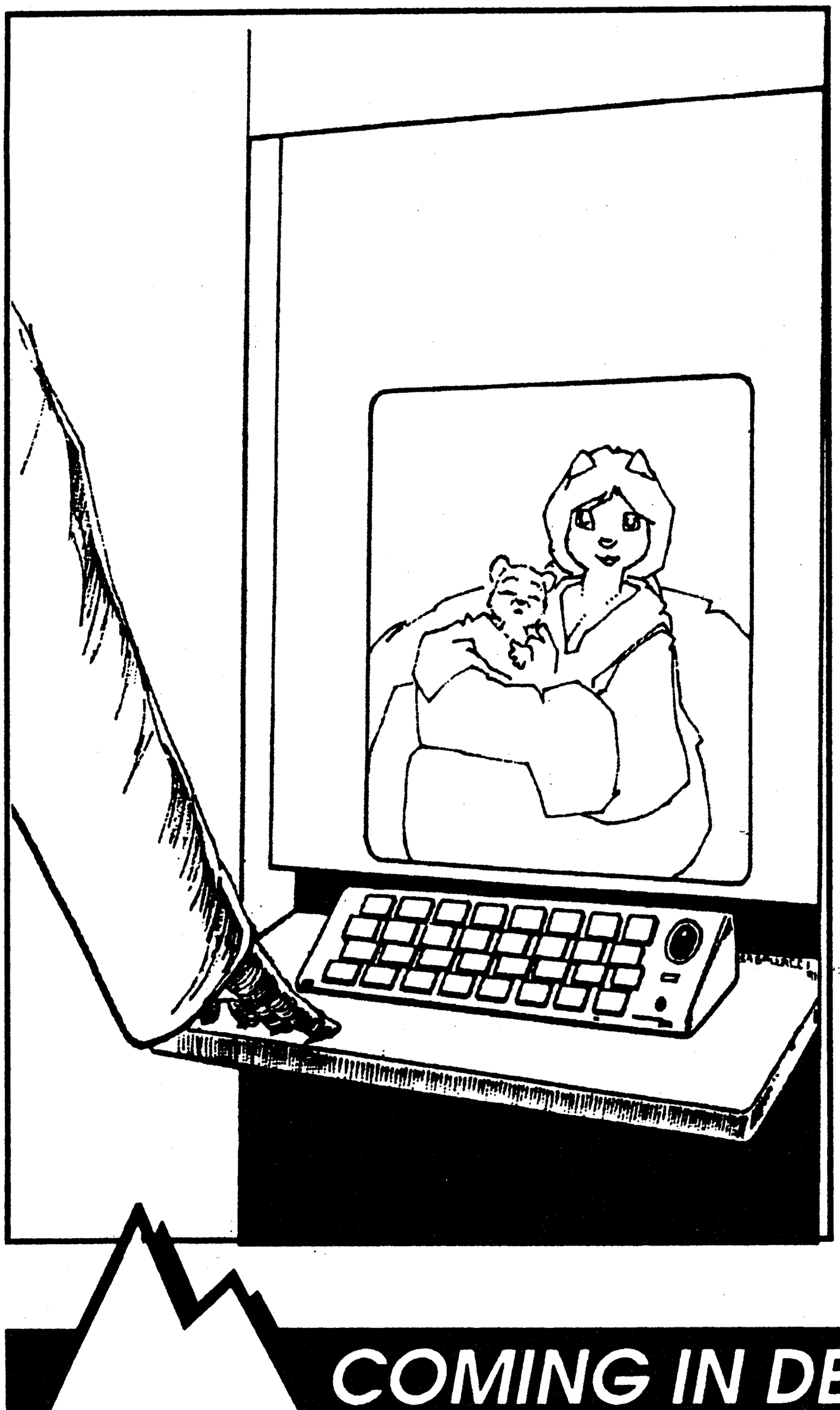
YO BETTER USE YO "GET OUTTA JAIL FREE"... YO AIN'T NEVER GONNA ROLL DOUBLES WITH *THOSE* ...LET ME SHOW YO...

WILL THESE TWO BOZOS *EVER* MAKE IT TO RAMONA BEACH? THAT'S DIFFICULT TO SAY. I CERTAINLY WOULDN'T WANT TO BET ON IT WITH *MY* MONEY...

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WRITTEN BY STEVE GALLACCI

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daring which I may well be underestimating, though I think there is something fishy going on, and it smells distinctly of (red) herring. The obvious question which would be raised by what is suggested is: Does the EDF have a policy of mandatory maternity leave? Or would Erma be content to accept a long-term rear-echelon posting? We may just find out. Or not.

Other questions and observations: In the *Albedo* RPG you (or was it entirely Paul Kidd's doing?) went to a certain amount of effort to explain hooved sentients' three-digit "hands." Yet one-toed "hoofies" still appear in the comic. C'mon, now. It can't be *that* tough to draw them. Or are you still twitting Greg Reynolds (letters pages, nr. 5)? Oh, well...

Back to story and content. Dr. Kalakahaii is rapidly becoming as interesting a character to me as Erma always has. She asks all the questions *I* want to hear answered. Hers is a poignant situation, knowing enough to raise even more questions, with little hope of ever finding the answers. Her quiet, almost reverent thoughts, addressed to the dead female human, are a reminder of how little we know about ourselves, our own purpose. One presumes that the term *Khai* is as close as the people of the *Albedo* universe get to defining a God, and in her question, "Are you Khai made flesh?" we can see that a deeper hope than mere scientific interest could engender motivates Dr. Kalakahaii. Just how profound and widespread are these very nearly religious views?

My own question: Just how old *was* the "ancient" derelict found at Ahan-Tako? Is it possible that there are *no* humans left anywhere? That possibility could tie in to the reason for the existence of the Arras Charka (Chanka? (I liked that better)) seed colony in the first place. A Noah's ark, if you will, but with sentient passengers. One small but important clue which those readers who did not get the RPG may have missed: There are *NO* primate species in known space. Why not? It is an obviously conscious omission, one which the unfortunate Dr. Kalakahaii is in no position to pick up on. And one other point on the history of the culture which started on Arras Charka is one which the characters may already have the answers to but we poor, uninformed readers do not: What do the computers, the AI's know? Who programmed the NET? Assuming that anyone has bothered to ask, would they have been answered truthfully? Is Big Brother watching them through electronic eyes?

I'm glad to hear that things are on an even keel for you. That's good for you and good for the comic. Sorry to see T&I go away. I tried to drop you a line last fall or thereabouts, but I guess you didn't get my letter. Any chance of the *Albedo* RPG being revived through another publisher? When I ordered a shipment for my store three Christmases ago and then again the following spring for our local con, I was happily surprised to see that the RPG sold as well as it did. I still have the occasional request for it, but when the stocks of it I had sold through, my regular distributor told me that he had no more and that no more were being published. I tried my other sources; same story. I don't know how well it did overall, but it was a definite keeper at my store. Not exactly a TSR or a FASA sized success, but unlike other new entries into the industry, it pulled its own weight. Elsewhere, maybe a GURPS *Albedo*? It *does* have a place in the hobby, trust me on that. By the way, selling the game unshrinkwrapped made all the difference in the world for us since the casual customer could see what it was all about, and ogle the fantastic graphics inside. A perfect bound softback book, as is the current trend, would allow just such an examination, and be cheaper, to boot. Anyway, if you have any copies left, let me know... I'd be interested in picking them up for my store. By the bye, also sorry to see *Fusion* gone. Nice stuff. Too bad.

Raymond J. Foldhazi

While some might not mind, it didn't seem appropriate for Erma to 'present' too much on the cover or to have too much of her personal life exposed to the readership.
My position on manipulative organs remains that hooved animals have no problem with "handling" things, they only do it off camera. Paul included simple fingers, not unlike the hands of the sheep in Space Wolf, *in order to satisfy gamers who often lack the imagination or sense of humor to see it my way. Dr. K's thoughts were, even to her, only emotionalism. Khai is more a name to a creator concept, an emotional desire for myth, than a specific god image. Khai as a word is commonly used, but as most people are rather utilitarian in their outlook, next to no one actually gives it much thought. No one in the scenario, including the 'puters, know anything more than what's been shown. More RPG stuff is likely, published by someone else(still in negotiation). Copies of the original are still in stock through T&I Seattle(me).*

So glad to have *Albedo* back! Joy unconfined! You probably have heard the "filk" song floating about: "What has happened to our Erma; is she gone from terra firma?" It's fantastic to know that she's back in the pilot's seat again. May her tribe – and her tales – ever increase.

The summary of the story thus far was handled adroitly; that's a tricky bit to do, but here, it was done well. The opening drama with the cabal of would-be tyrant bunnies was also insightful: if a system is absolutely dependent on growth to survive, then a countering strategy of containment is, necessarily, an "aggressive act." That's how wars get started...

The development with Itzak Arrat – the bland and pleasant-looking equinoid – and his four would-be suitors, Roheena, Betti, Donna, and Little Vikki, looked like a heck of a lot of fun! The species of Arras Charkas do not include sentient insects, but oh, to be a fly on the wall!

Dan Flahive's "Space Wolf" is also a welcome return; the art and story here are equally sharp and crisp, equally pleasurable.

Steve Gallacci's art, however, is the best. Steve does "technical" space SF art better than anyone else. His blueprints, as it were, are bluer; his lines are razor sharp; his airbrush not only dances, but sings. There is no question about it: black and white comics are where we must look, if we're after the finest in comic book art.

Some years ago, I uttered a profoundly dumb opinion: I believed that honest science fiction stories could not be done in a comics format. Steve Gallacci proved me wrong with the original *Albedo,* then came around and did it again with his work in *Fusion* (now sadly gone). Only a few examples beyond these exist – *Antares Circle,* also from Antarctic Press, is notable here – but the point is proven: honest science fiction can be done in comics.

Jefferson P. Swycaffer

Years ago Reed Waller made an offhand remark in the *Omaha* letter column about gamers taking a too serious, world-of-animals attitude toward anthropomorphics. My response was that there was only one anthropomorphic publication that qualified as serious, and that was *Albedo.* With *Fusion* dead, and you back, I think that's still true; you do straight SF with funny animals, and everything else, including "Space Wolf," is at best space opera with animal masks on. Disappointing, since a universe of anthropomorphic animals is such a fascinating premise Despite a few problems (hands!), you have the only real world. There may be others out there, but I haven't seen them. There's some promising stuff in *Yarf!* but no sustained story yet. So it's really *good* to have you back.

2.1 is largely a recap issue, so I don't have much to say about the plot, though things still seem to be perking along nicely. Interesting and well-done presentation of the background. I'm working in New York at the moment without any back issues at hand, but I did scan a few while home for the 4 July holidays, and I can at least say that the cover is by a long shot the best one you've ever done; beautiful figures, well-rendered fur, and damned if she's not *enjoying* herself! (While we're on the subject, good work in the AH swimsuit issue, too.) The inside's well-drawn, though the shading often darkens to the point of muddying the drawing (photo on 2, rabbit on 5.2, right half of 10, for example). I hope you'll lighten up on it a little. Page 11 shows you doing it right, I think. The banter on page 10 is top-notch (drawing down on jaywalkers, yes!). "Red Walley" – tsk. Also liked the election campaign on page 1.

Philip M. Cohen

Well, as mentioned before, the printing didn't quite work right, as the tone style was the same as ALBEDO 14. *For another "World of Animals" book, you might want to look at* THE FURKINDRED, *published by MU Press, as well as some of the other "Furry" books listed in this isssue.*

I can't tell you how long I've been looking forward to the return of *Albedo.* I can't tell you because I don't remember when I first heard about it. Although I didn't buy the first series, my brother has them all and I read the entire run one day while I was visiting him. I've always thought the "funny animal" genre was woefully under-utilized in a medium bursting with grim and gritty lantern-jawed hero types.

About the only improvement I could suggest would be color, but I'm not really sure that color would *be* an improvement. It might compromise the wonderfully clean simplicity of the artwork.

I was most gratified to see that you're sticking with your previous continuity and not starting from scratch. The rather abrupt ending of the first series sort of left us hanging. It will be good to see some of the dangling plot-threads resolved.

On to specifics. The three-page recap at the beginning was very good, serving to refresh the memories of previous readers and provide a nice introduction for new ones. It's also good to see that those wascally wabbits are still bent on galactic domination.

As I said before, the artwork is extremely good. It's amazing the way you're able to make all of the characters *individuals,* even though all of the rabbits, for example, look basically the same. The only problem is that some of the darker panels came out murky-looking, although this is probably more of a printing problem than anything else.
The "home life" scene with Erma's family was well done. Kanoc's post-trauma stress syndrome was wonderfully illustrated, and in only three panels. The brief holiday with Erma and Alfon was also neatly accomplished and felt quite natural and spontaneous. One could almost forget that these are, as you call them, "kittycats in space."

The back-up feature was also done well. The artwork was very clean and polished looking. The story jumped around a bit, but not terribly so.

In closing, let me say again that I'm glad to see *Albedo* back on the shelves and I can't wait to see where you take this series.

Mike Lansley

I infer that you have gotten complaints from people who like your work but don't like it's, um, irregularity of appearance. We'd like to weigh in on the side of the "it's worth waiting for" faction, for whatever good that does. We enjoyed *Albedo* v.2#1; I like the balance you struck between filling the new readers in on what's going on and keeping the old readers hooked. Looks like a nice twisty plot with good depth.

A fellow with access to the alt.fan.furry newsgroup on Usenet recently posted a list of items that you still had available for mail-order, some of which would fill holes in our collection (and gaps in the Erma Felna storyline). In the hope that this is still true, I request the following...

Vince Seifert

I still have a ton-o-stuff. See elsewhere for the details.



[The following is based on a list of funny animal titles generously supplied by MU Press)

There is a large and growing number of fans devoted to funny animals and anthropomorphics (hey, we're *counting* on it!). They're being fed by a few, mostly worthwhile, magazines and specialty items. One caveat: due to limited budgets and fluctuating time and interest levels, some of the following may no longer be published, or may come out very irregularly.

Everchanging Palace

Latest issue: #4, 106 pages with full-color cover, $7.00 + $2.00 postage
Editor: Lex Nakashima
Order from: LX Ltd., 11846 Balboa Blvd., #123, Granada Hills, CA 91344 or
S.A.Gallacci, P.O.Box 19491, Seattle, WA 98109
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Latest issue: #3, 40 pages, $2.75 + $1.00 postage
Editor: RUNE
Order from: Ray Rooney, 200 Dupont Street, Philadelphia, PA 19127-1208
Talking about all manner of Funny Animal stuff

FurVersion

Latest issue: #21, 80 pages, $6.00 (additional postage not listed)
Editor: Kyim Granger
Order from: FurVersion Fanzine, P.O. Box 10248, Oakland, CA 94610-0248
Mostly R-rated Furry stories and art

Mythagoras

Latest issue: #3, 48 pages with color cover, $4.75 postpaid
Editors: Bill Biersdorf and Watts Martin
Order from: Concept Alliance, P.O. Box 272987, Tampa, FL 33688-2987
A fiction fanzine with some good Furry stuff in it

Rowrbrazzle Showcase

Latest issue: #2, 60 pages, $5.00 postpaid
Editor: Mark D. Ashworth
Order from: Fred Patten, 11863 W. Jefferson Blvd., Culver City, CA 90230
Showcase of Rowrbrazzle Furry APA work

YARF!

Latest issue: #11, 54 pages, $4.00 postpaid
Editors: Kris Kreutzman and Lance Rund
Order from: YARF!, P.O. Box 1200, Cupertino, CA, 95015-1200
Lots of furry stuff

The Furkindred

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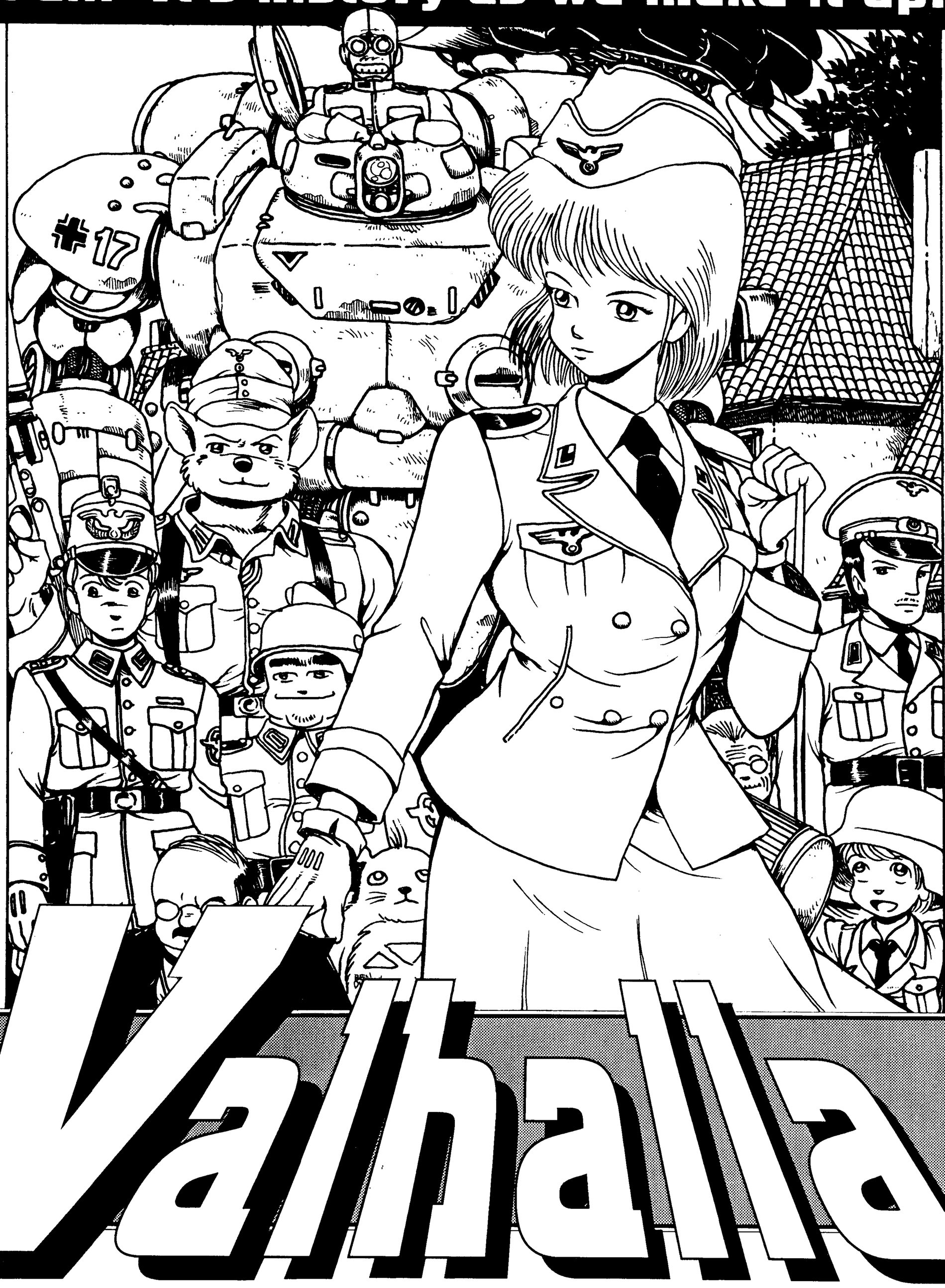
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