

# TALES FROM THE ANIVERSE

ARROW COMICS  
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# The Good Old "Editor's" Page

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In the Editor's Page of *TALES FROM THE ANIVERSE* #1, I wrote about Arrow Comics being the newest independent publisher on the block. Well, after reading Dave Sim's "A Declaration of Independence" (*Executive's Forum*, *THE COMICS JOURNAL* #105), I decided to explain my position as publisher of Arrow Comics.

You may have noted that Art Director Ralph Griffith and myself are credited with "loosely" editing this title. What that really means is that we call up Randy and Sue once or twice a week and ask them how things are going. They tell us and we say, "Gee, that sounds great. Keep up the good work." Then we drive out to Flint every week or three to check out the pages and say, "Boy, they sure look swell. Keep up the good work." Sue and Randy created these characters and know what is best for them.

Freedom enhances creativity. Or, perhaps I should say, *lack* of freedom stifles creativity. I can't imagine why a creative team would want to bother coming up with a great new idea and taking it to its fullest potential if somebody else is standing over their shoulders going, "Naw, that's not the way I'd do it. Scrap it and come up with something I'd like." Creation is taking a part of yourself, not from the surface, mind you, but from way down deep, and making it into something new. If the creator is not allowed to mold that ethereal stuff into the image he sees in his own mind, it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to give it away. He would only be able to give from the surface. Story and art, although "professional," would become lifeless, two-dimensional. And the readers would *know*.

Ideally, a comic book (or any other artform for that matter, be it painting, dancing, music) is a direct communication between the creator and the

reader. The publisher is merely a conduit or messenger. Can you imagine Moses saying, "Lord, this is a great idea, but I've got a problem with number seven. Can you change it?" No, comic book creators are not gods (though some of their fans may feel otherwise), but the principle is the same. The audience ends up with a distorted view of what the creator is trying to show. Take Larry Marder's *BEANWORLD* for example. No one comprehends the whole picture of the Beanworld but Mr. Marder. It is meant to be consumed in its natural state, not after processing.

The old expression that beauty is in the eye of the beholder applies to comic books (I doubt that the non-comic book buying public would classify comics as things of beauty. But that's okay, they're beholders, too). The reader plays as much of a role in a book as the writer or artist. The reader may not even find the exact view the creator put there to be seen. "You see what you want to see." Nowadays, the beholders are looking for something different, a new angle to find new meaning from. This accounts for the fact that books such as *CEREBUS*, *FLAMING CARROT*, *THOSE ANNOYING POST BROTHERS*, and, yes, *TALES FROM THE ANIVERSE* can exist. I don't foresee *FLAMING CARROT* ever outselling *X-MEN*, but it does have an audience, myself included.

To be totally honest, it's not a perfect system with Arrow Comics. Someone has to make necessary decisions. What projects do we publish? Why or why not? What is or isn't acceptable? Based on what criteria? All I can tell you on that score is that I can only use my own moral code and best judgment. I'll do my best, people. And I'm open for suggestions or comments.

Enjoy the issue, take care, and see ya in 90 days.

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# Varcel's Vixens

IT ALL BEGAN IN A RUN-DOWN BAR ON A RUN-DOWN PLANET BETWEEN THE ANIVERSAL FEDERATION AND THE AVIAN EMPIRE, JUST TWO DAYS BEFORE THE AVIAN CONFLICT.

DRAKESTAR TREATS THE FEDERATION AS IT DESERVES - LIKE A TWO-BIT WHORE! I TELL YOU, THIS IS THE START OF AVIAN SUPREMACY!!

AND THEN HE SAID "FIND A FIXATING OBJECT," THEN I SAID, "WHAT'S A FIXATING OBJECT?" THEN HE SAID, "SOMETHING YOU ADMIRE." THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED TO FIND YOU, VARCEL!

LEAPIN' LIZARDOS! THIS IS GREAT! IT REMINDS ME OF THE DAYS BACK AT INSANITY HEIGHTS, WITH THE VIXENS!

## THE VIXENS



VARCEL



SQUAMATA



TALON



L'MING

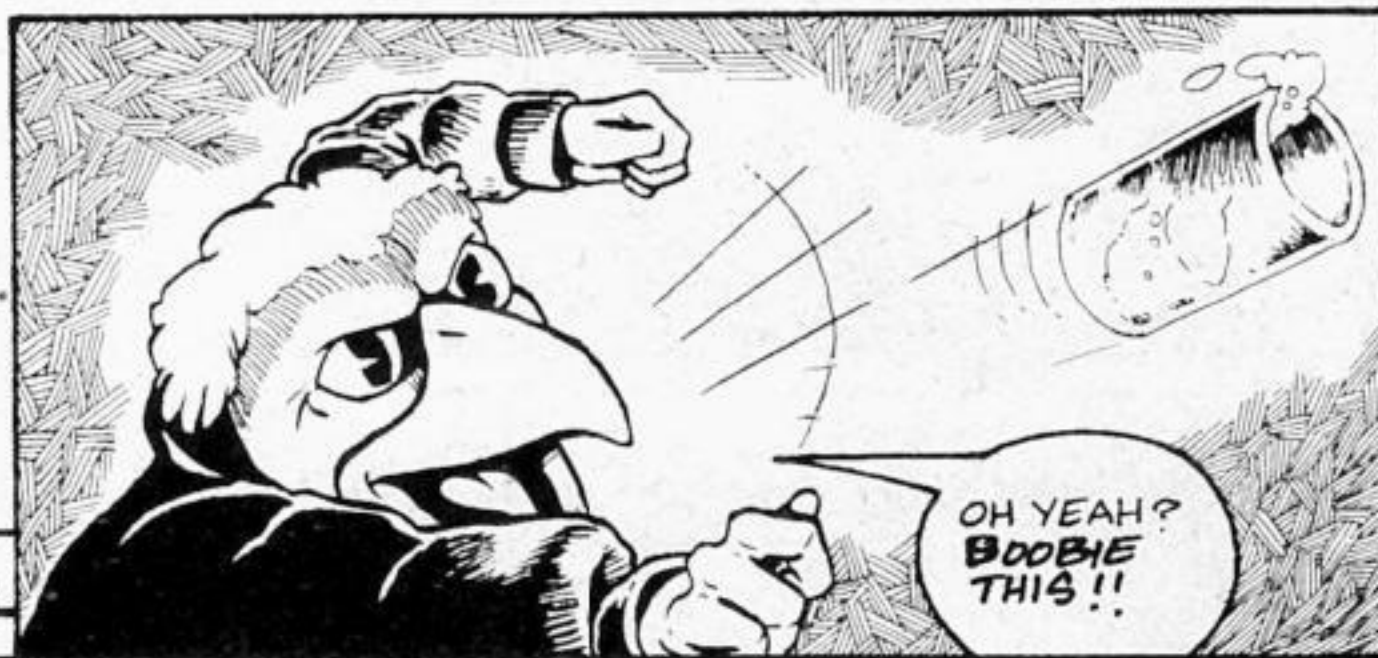


LOLA

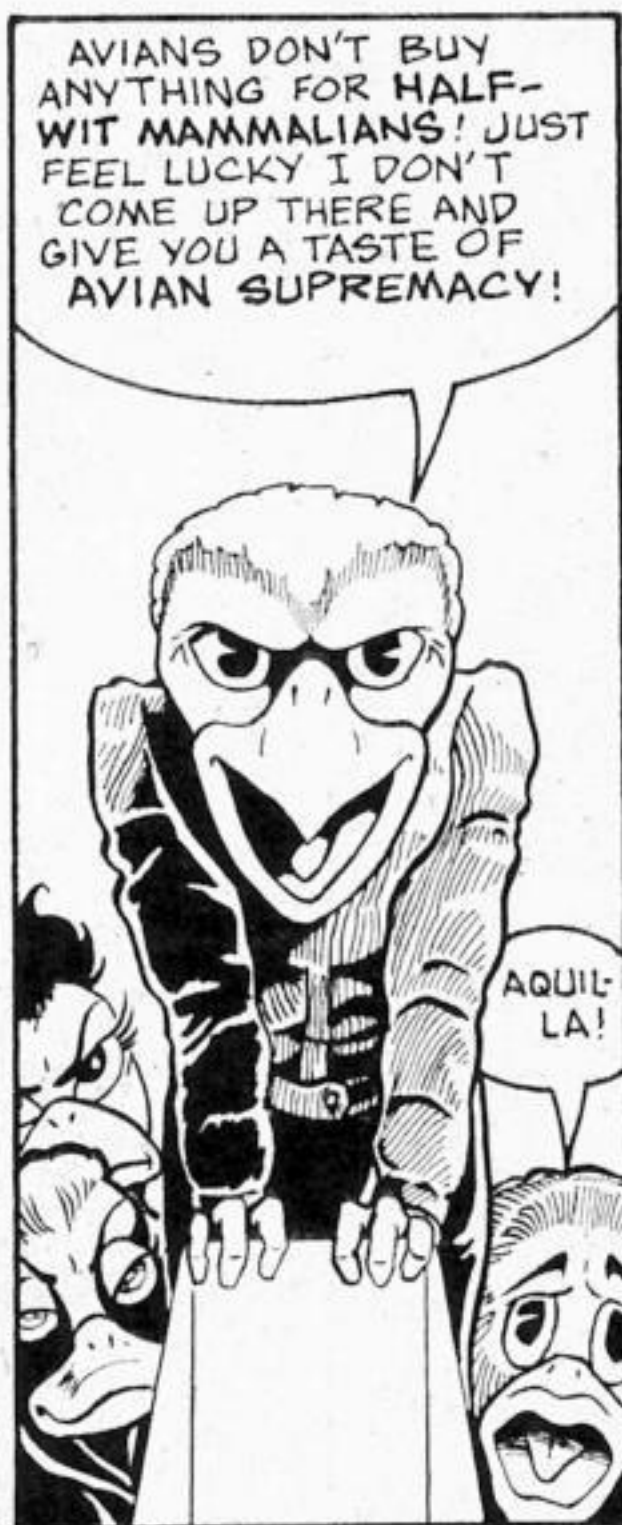
SUSAN VAN CAMP  
AND  
RANDY ZIMMERMAN  
STORY AND ART  
LETTERING-LEX MORRIS

# DRAKESTAR'S GOLD













YOUR MATE? BOY, YOU HAVE ROTTEN TASTE!!

WOP!



STUPID AVIAN.



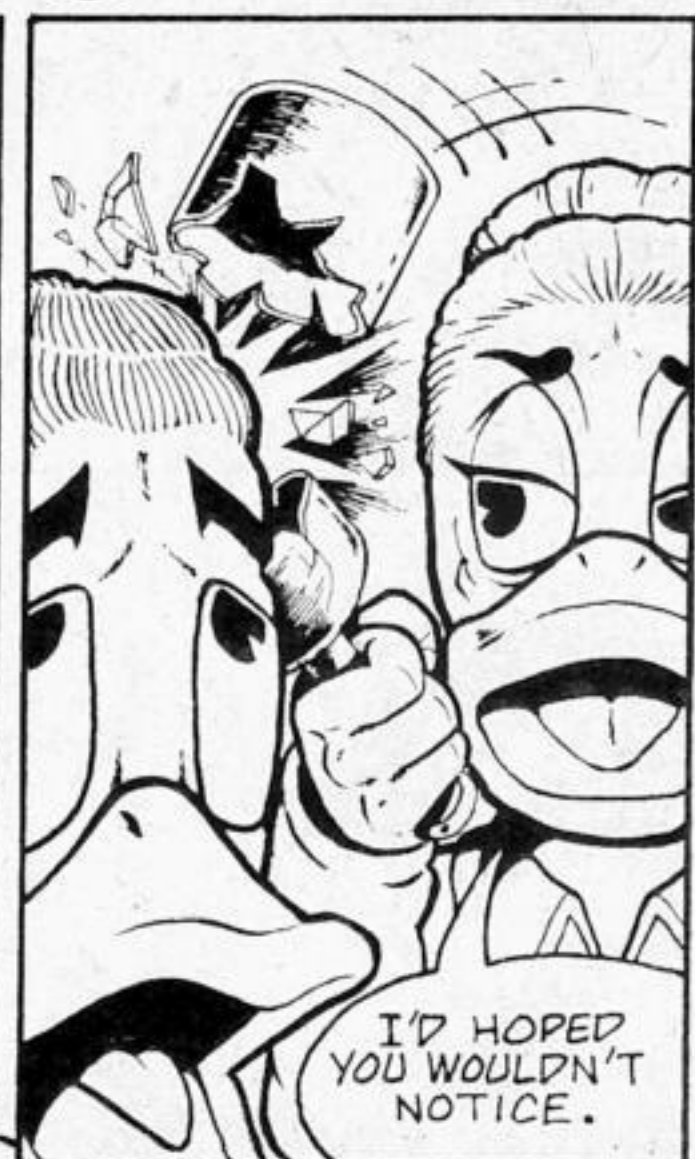
UH, I THINK I'LL BE GOING NOW!

NOT UNTIL YOU'VE CLEANED YOUR ROOM! LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER!

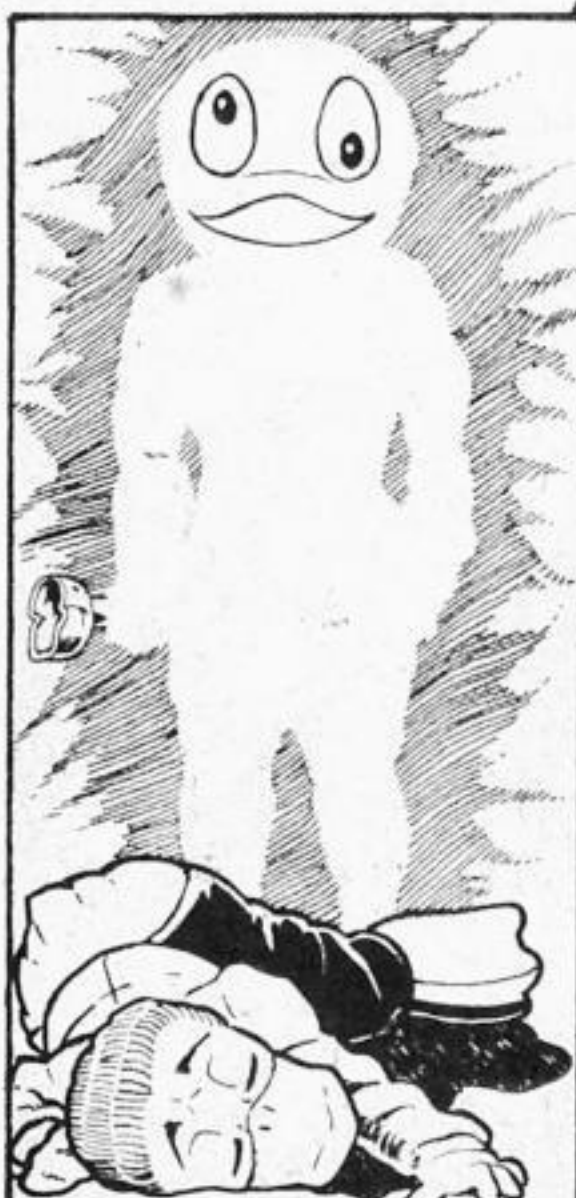


MOM? BUT YOU'RE NOT MY MOTHER!

OH DEAR!



I'D HOPED YOU WOULDN'T NOTICE.



JUSTICE PREVAILS!

JUSTICE?



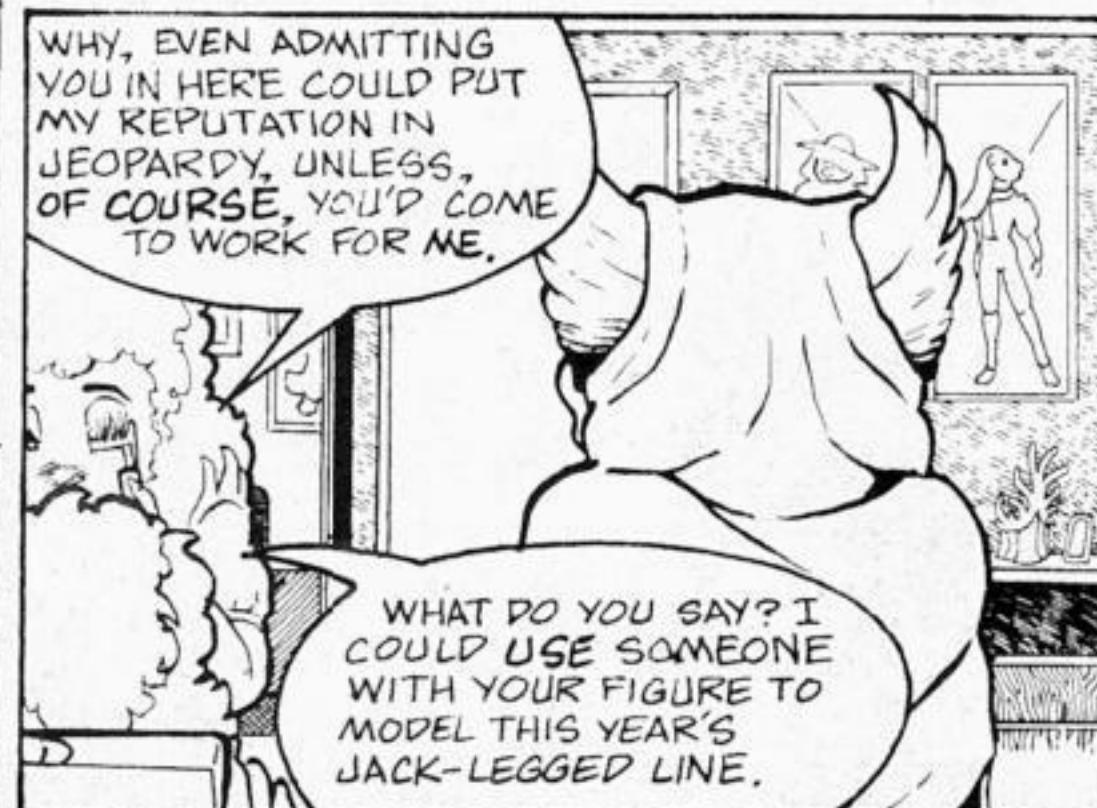
I CAN'T SIT DOWN FOR A QUIET DRINK WITHOUT YOU PICKING A FIGHT! WHERE IS THE JUSTICE IN THAT?

KEEP TALKING, WITCH!

















LOLA, I'M NOT HERE FOR THE WEDDING. I'VE COME TO ASK FOR A BIG FAVOR CONCERNING THE VIXENS. WE'RE REGROUPING, AND WE'D LIKE YOU TO REJOIN.

I KNOW THIS IS ROTTEN TIMING. I'LL UNDERSTAND IF YOU SAY NO.

OH SURE YOU WILL! THEN YOU'LL WALK OUT THAT DOOR AND I WON'T SEE YOU FOR ANOTHER FIVE YEARS.

DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE ASKING? I'M ABOUT TO MARRY THE RICHEST SUCKER ON FELONIA. YOU HAVE A LOT OF GALL, ASKING ME TO GIVE UP THIS MUCH MONEY.

WHAT AMAZES ME MOST IS THAT YOU BOTHERED TO SHOW UP AT ALL. I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER RETURN TO THIS WORLD.

I WOULDN'T HAVE, IF IT HAD BEEN FOR ANYONE BUT YOU. WE NEED YOU, LOLA. WE WON'T BE THE VIXENS WITHOUT YOU.



LOLA! IT'S TIME!

I'M COMING!



ALL RIGHT, VARCEL. I'M IN, FOR NOW.



AFTER SEVERAL CYCLES, THE VIXENS MEET ON B-NEE-N-3-ZIL, A SPACE STATION IN THE MAIN AVIAN SYSTEM.



THAT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING, TALON. WE'RE NO ARMY, BUT WE'VE LEARNED TO USE LIMITED NUMBERS TO OUR ADVANTAGE.

YEAH, IT TOOK ONLY THREE OF US TO ATOMIZE THE MESS HALL!

VARCEL KIDNAPPED THE DEAN ALL BY HERSELF.



ALL RIGHT, HERE'S WHAT I HAVE IN MIND. ON THE PLANET AVIA IS THE CASTLE OF DRAKESTAR, KING OF AVIANS. HE HAS A VAULT FULL OF TREASURE, THE LIKES OF WHICH YOU'VE NEVER SEEN.

I KNOW OF A SECRET ROUTE INTO THAT VAULT. I'LL LEAD YOU THERE. YOU MAY HELP YOURSELF TO ALL THE GOLD YOU CAN CARRY, IF YOU AGREE TO HELP ME DESTROY THE REMAINING TREASURE.



DESTROY? TREASURE? ISN'T THAT LIKE "MILITARY INTELLIGENCE" OR "GOOD FAST FOOD"?

I SHOULD HAVE MARRIED MY SUCKER.

I'M WILLING TO TAKE THAT GAMBLE PROVIDED YOU UNDERSTAND THE PRICE OF MY TRUST. IF YOU BETRAY US,

I'LL KILL YOU!

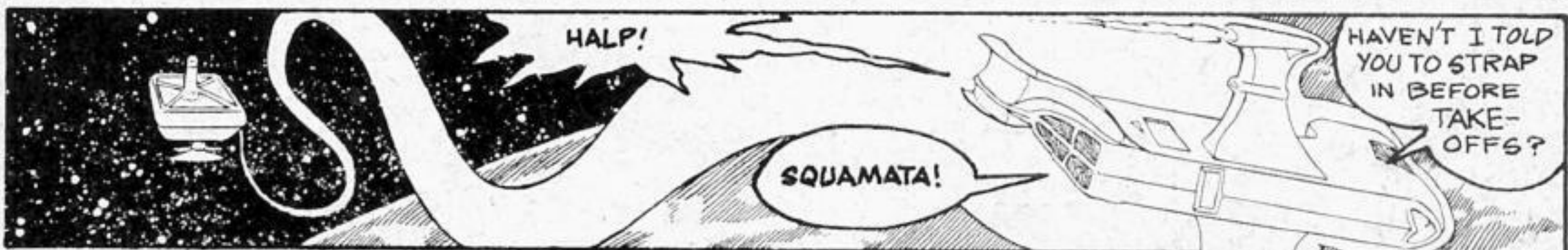
NOW, LET'S HEAR YOUR PLAN.

I KNEW THIS WAS GONNA BE FUN!

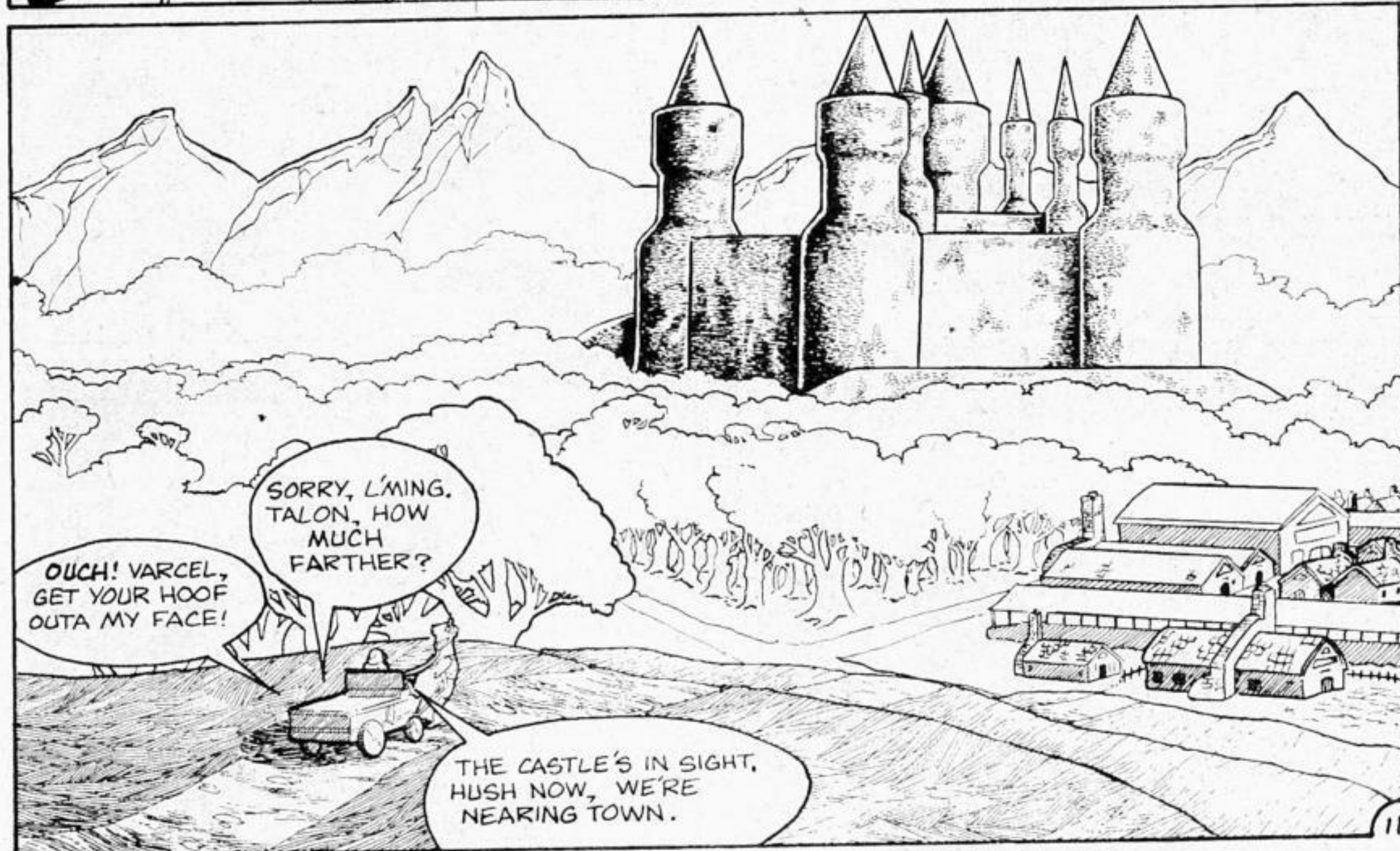
I SEE THE RISK NOW, TALON. YOU WANT US TO BET OUR LIVES ON SOME POLITICAL GAMBIT OF YOURS.



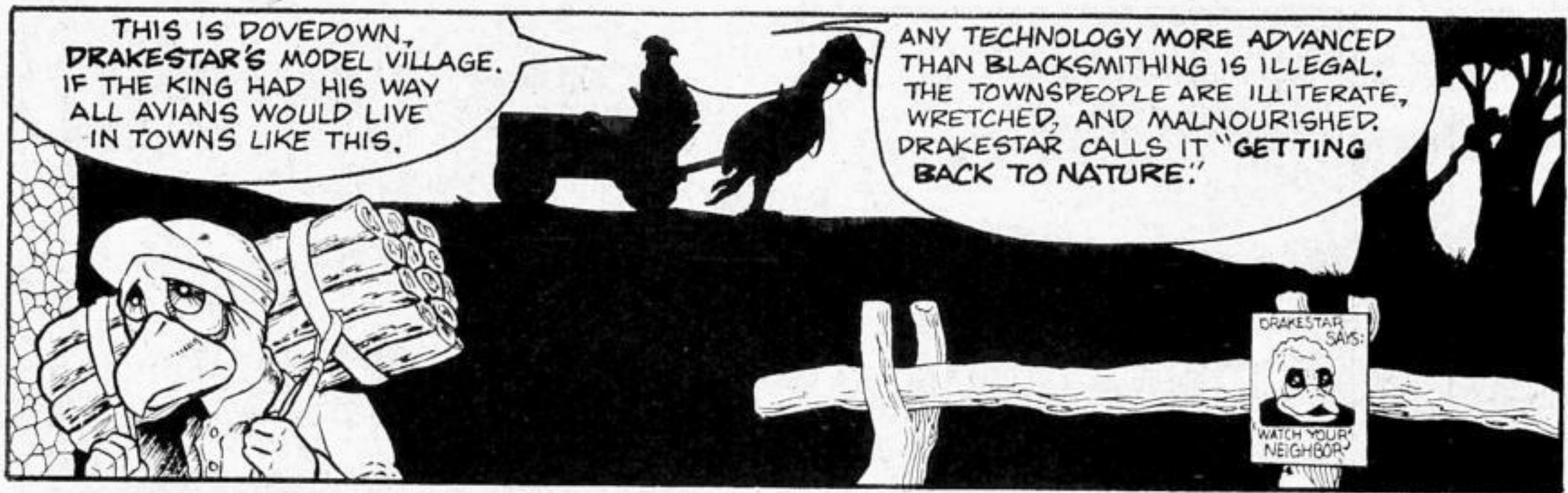












THIS IS DOVEDOWN, DRAKESTAR'S MODEL VILLAGE. IF THE KING HAD HIS WAY ALL AVIANS WOULD LIVE IN TOWNS LIKE THIS.

ANY TECHNOLOGY MORE ADVANCED THAN BLACKSMITHING IS ILLEGAL. THE TOWNSPEOPLE ARE ILLITERATE, WRETCHED, AND MALNOURISHED. DRAKESTAR CALLS IT "GETTING BACK TO NATURE!"

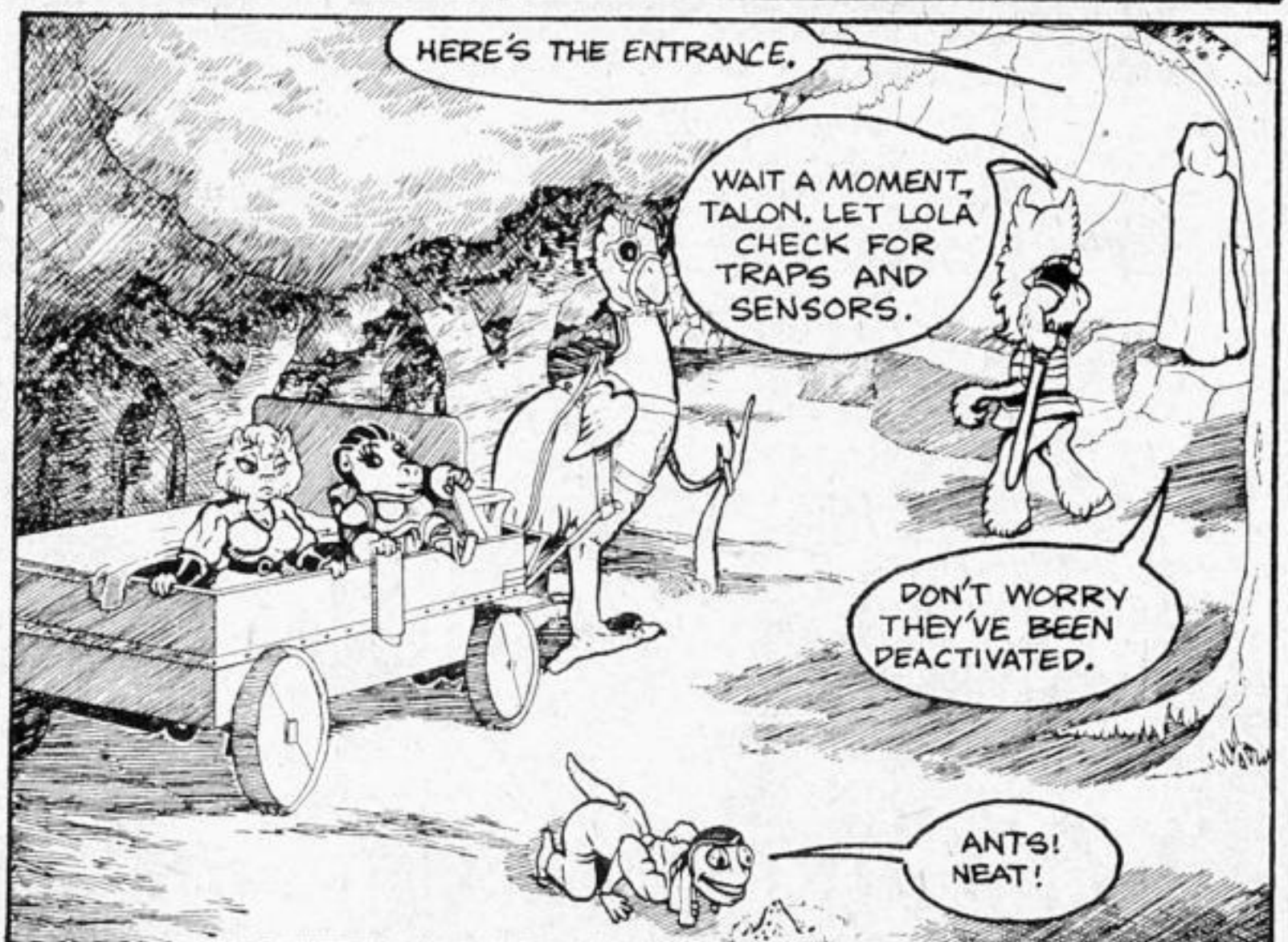
DRAKESTAR SAYS:  
WATCH YOUR NEIGHBOR!



MEANWHILE, HE AND HIS CRONIES LIVE IN GRAND STYLE, WITH EVERY MODERN CONVENIENCE AT THEIR DISPOSAL.

WHY TALON, YOU SOUND POSITIVELY POLITICAL.

LOLA, WITH DRAKESTAR IN POWER, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO NOT BE POLITICAL.



HERE'S THE ENTRANCE.

WAIT A MOMENT, TALON. LET LOLA CHECK FOR TRAPS AND SENSORS.

DON'T WORRY THEY'VE BEEN DEACTIVATED.

ANTS! NEAT!



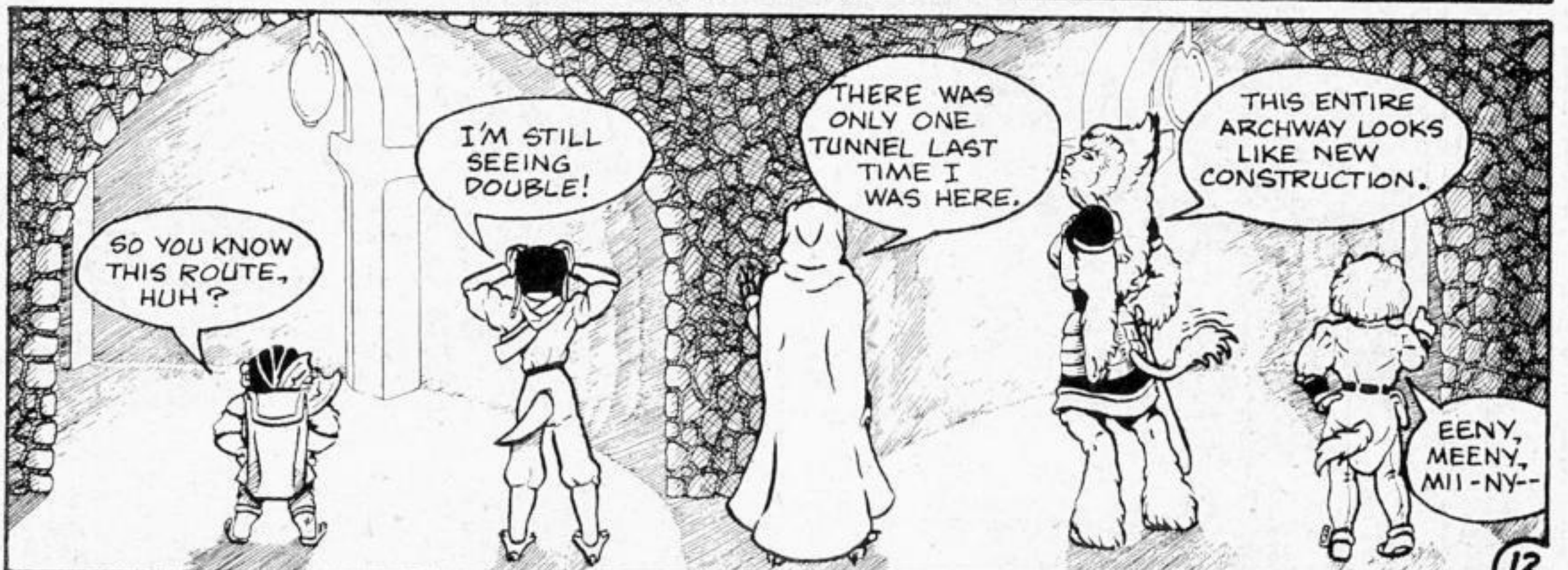
DEACTIVATED? BY WHO?

FRIENDS.



ALL WE NEED DO IS FOLLOW THIS TUNNEL.

WHICH ONE?



SO YOU KNOW THIS ROUTE, HUH?

I'M STILL SEEING DOUBLE!

THERE WAS ONLY ONE TUNNEL LAST TIME I WAS HERE.

THIS ENTIRE ARCHWAY LOOKS LIKE NEW CONSTRUCTION.

EENY, MEENY, MII-NY--



WHAT A FIX! RETRO WILL BE HERE TOMORROW, BUT DRAKESTAR IS BOUND TO MAKE HIS MOVE TONIGHT. HOW SHALL I FEND HIM OFF THIS TIME?



I NEED A DISTRACTION TO KEEP HIM BUSY.



WHO?

HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?



LOLA MEE-NIED WHEN SHE SHOULD HAVE MII-NIED OR MOE-NIED!



WELL, "LOLA", YOU CAN TELL DRAKESTAR THAT I'M FED UP WITH HIS MIND GAMES.



NO DICE, EARS. WE'RE THIEVES NOT MESSENGERS.

YOU'D BEST FORGET YOU EVER SAW US.



FORGET? WHO? I DON'T SEE ANYONE.

BY THE WAY, I HOPE YOU ROB HIM BLIND.



GO AHEAD WITHOUT ME, VARCEL. I NEED TO BE SURE THIS DOOR IS LOCKED.

DON'T TAKE LONG, TALON.



THAT BIRD'S UP TO SOMETHING. I MAY HAVE TO BLOW HER UP LATER.



NOW SHALL WE MII-NY OR MOE-NY?

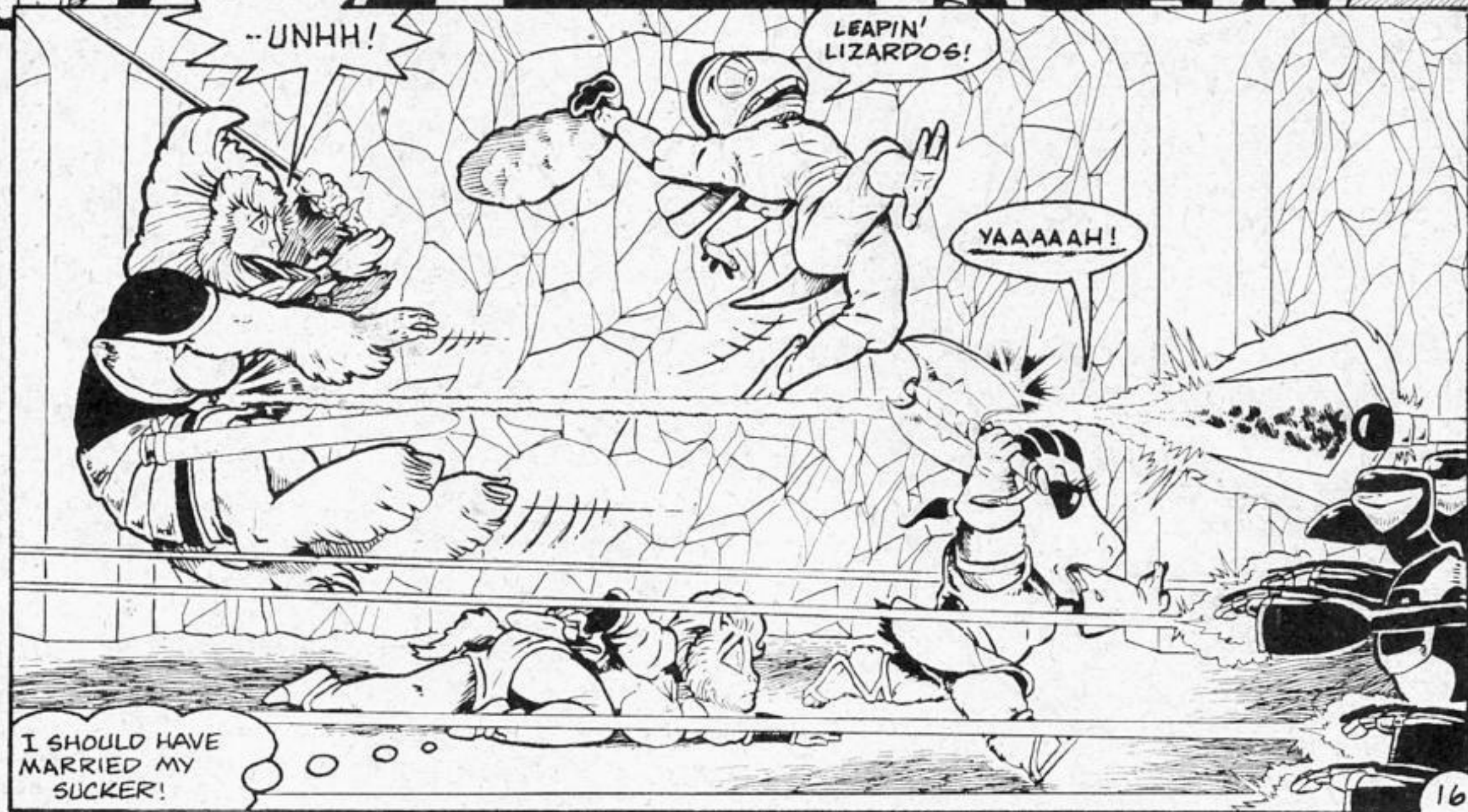
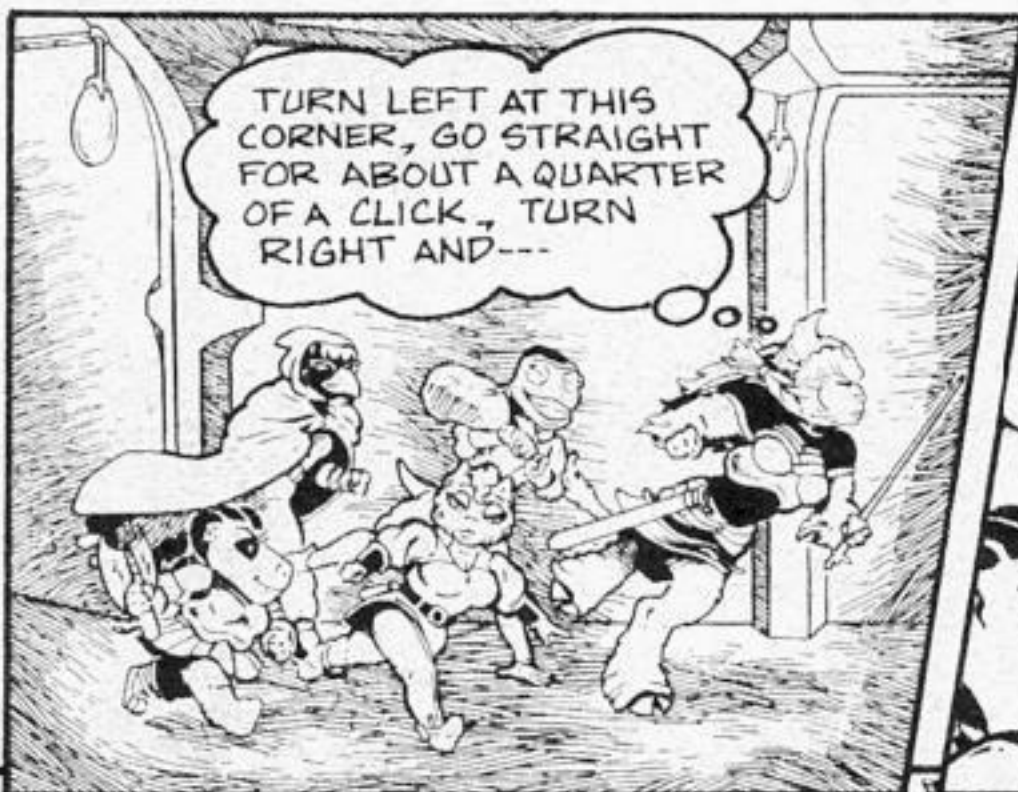








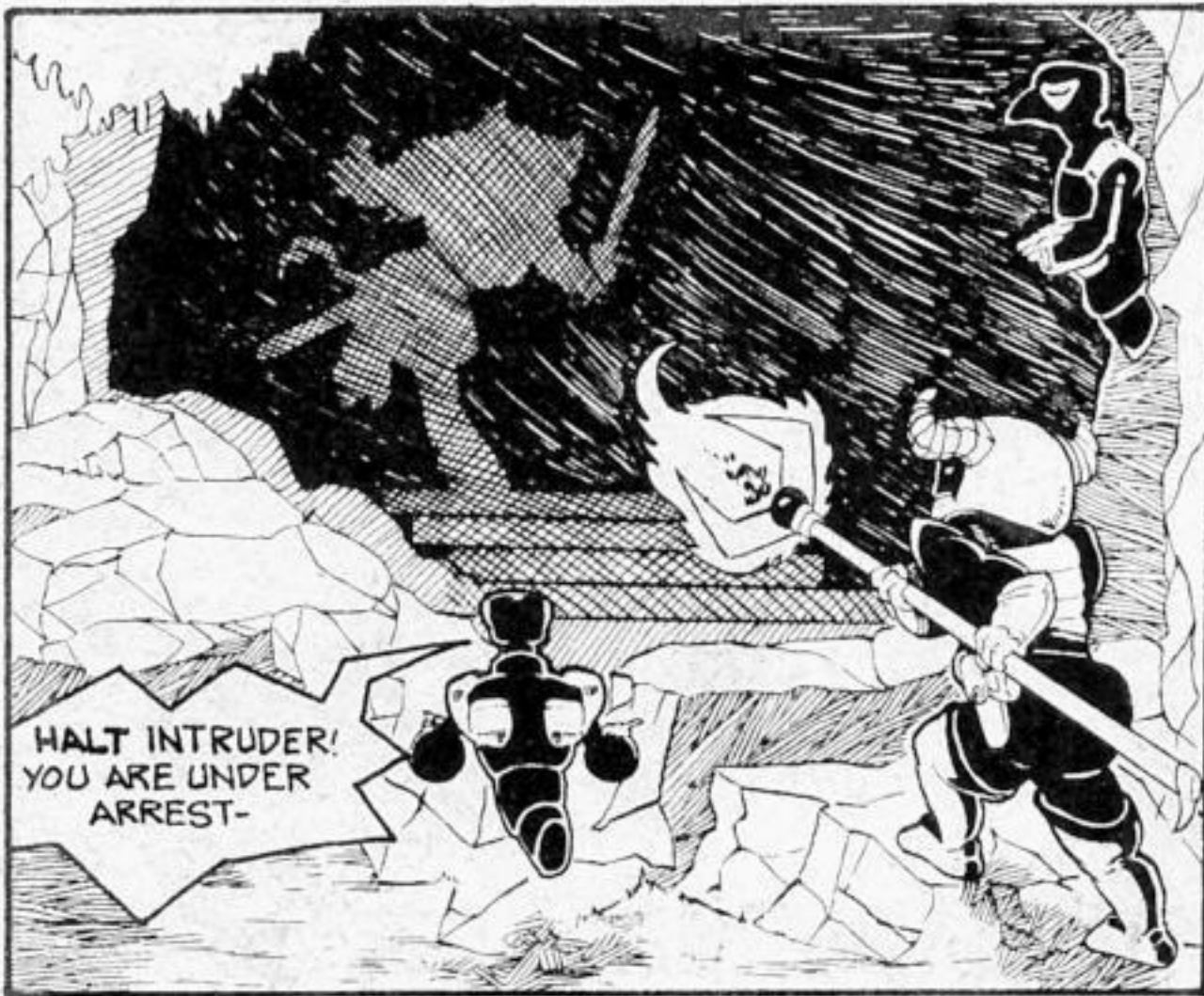








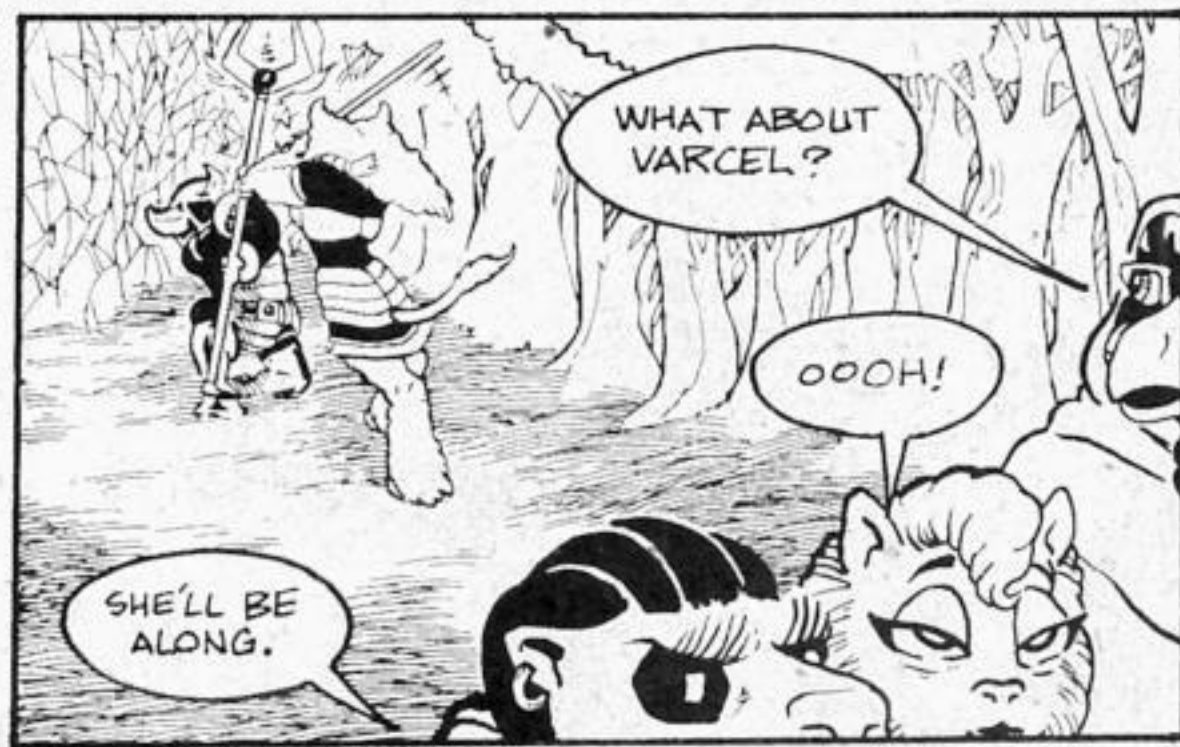
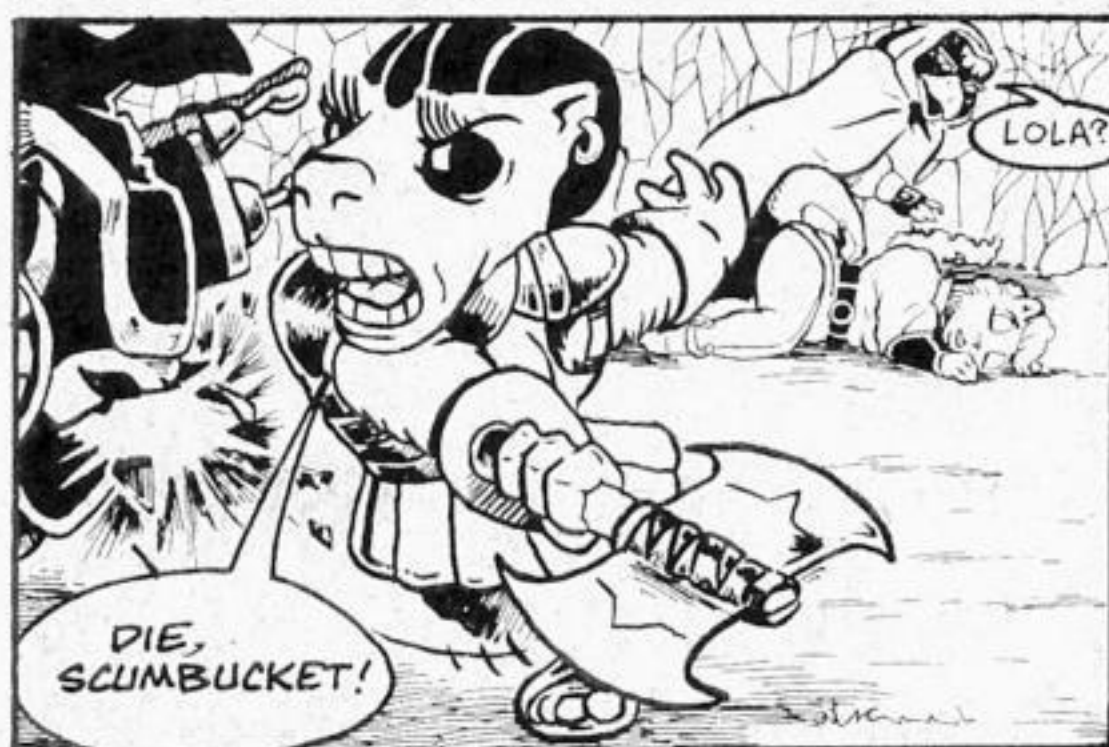




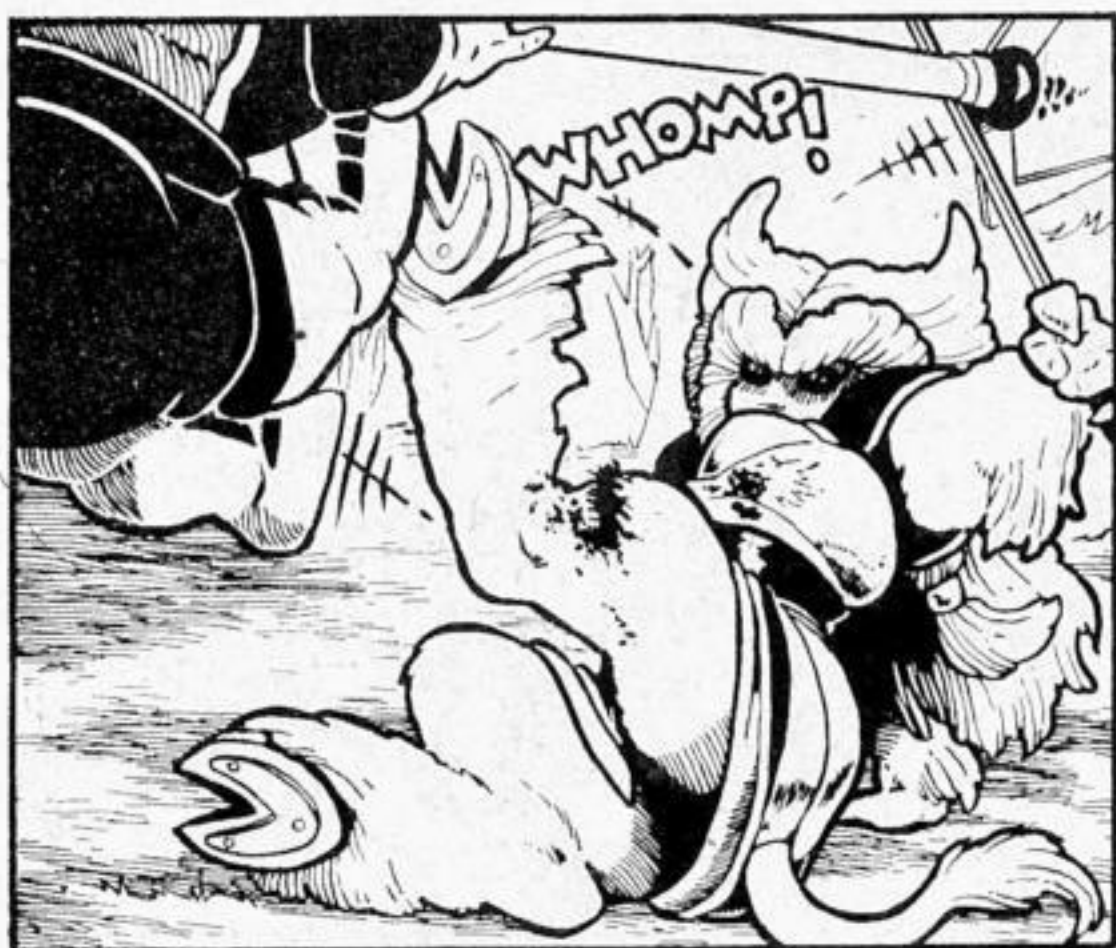
NOW IT'S  
YOUR CHOICE,  
HORNS.  
EITHER  
SHOW ME  
YOU CAN FIGHT  
WITH THAT  
POP GUN-

















# Varcel's Vixens

# EPILLOG

VARCEL'S OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. THE DOCTORS WERE AMAZED BY THE SPEED OF HER RECOVERY, BUT I WAS UNSUPRISED. THE WINGED ONES FORSAW HER ENDURANCE.



THE FIRST THING SHE DID WAS BUY A HOUSE ON THE COLONY WORLD, FRINGE. WE NEST HERE AT HER INVITATION, FOR AS LONG AS WE CARE TO STAY. ALTHOUGH SHE HAS NOT SAID AS MUCH, IT IS EVIDENT SHE WANTS TO KEEP THE VIXENS TOGETHER. THAT IS AS IT SHOULD BE.



AS BEARER OF THE DRAGON SWORD, XAIES, SHE HAS AN ARDUOUS TASK AHEAD OF HER, THOUGH SHE KNOWS IT NOT.



SHE WILL NEED THE AID OF THESE VIXENS, AS WELL AS MYSELF, IF WE ARE TO EFFECT THE DOWNFALL OF DRAKESTAR. I AM CONFIDENT OF VICTORY. THE WINGED ONES HAVE PREDICTED IT.





# MAILS TO THE ANIVERSE

## ANNIVERSAL AWARENESS TWO



Well the first book is out, and here's the second. Looking back, there's a lot that would have been done differently. We would like to thank a few people who, without whose help this, and the first book, would not have been possible.

Well, here's Aniverse Two (wheeze, gasp). Now that we've completed it and we're somewhere close to back on schedule, we've had a chance to take a good look at Aniverse one. There's a couple of things we left out; we'd like to give credit to some of the folks who made this book possible.

We'd like to thank Cindy Nelson for her opinions and the character Grizzy, Mark Harmon for his opinions and persistence, Pete Follo for his support and objective critique of issue one, Bill and Nadine Loeb, without whom none of this would have come about, and Ralph Griffith and Stuart Kerr for believing in the concept of the aniverse enough to give us this opportunity to entertain. Most importantly, we'd like to thank you, the reader, for looking at us, and supporting us. We promise "YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET!" We'd also like to express our gratitude to the managements of Front Page and Hamady Brothers, for reasons best known to them. You made it possible, people!

Gratitude aside, there is something we'd like to mention; writing essays is NOT our favorite pastime! We'd rather be printing LETTERS, positive, negative or indifferent, than boring you with sentiment like this. So, WRITE. RIGHT? WRITE.

... and now the letters.

Dear Randy & Susan,

As an amateur/hobbyist in cartooning, there is only one thing to say: you make me jealous. On my own I have been creating a different series, also using "funny animals" in a space opera (anyone out there hear of an independent apa/zine "ROWRBRAZZLE" by M.R. Schirmeister? No? Ah well...), and I have not yet come near your quality — it's so tantalizingly close! Any advice you care to share with us hopefuls? **Please?**

Mark "Th' Mole" D. Ashworth  
6410 East Calle Castor  
Tucson, AZ 85710

Well Mark, here's some advice we can share with you.

1) DARE TO BE DIFFERENT.

2) ALWAYS TELL A STORY.

3) ALWAYS TELL A STORY WORTH TELLING.

4) NEVER GIVE UP.

5) ALL THINGS IN COMICS TAKE AT LEAST SIX MONTHS.

The only thing that separates us from you, if you follow 1 through 4, are lucky breaks, and number 5.

Also, if you are interested, we would enjoy seeing other interpretations of our characters, like the illustration of Talon inked by Marcus L. Rollie, and the drawing of Squamatta given to us by Brent Alan Richardson, which can be found elsewhere in this letter column (Thanks Brent!).

Brent is the creator of the book SALAMANDER, due out sometime soon in comic shops everywhere.

Dear Sirs,

*I don't really buy so called "funny-animal" comics, but my fiance said "go ahead since it's a #1". She doesn't know a whole lot about comics naturally.*

*I liked the story pretty well, I wasn't turning cart-wheels or anything, but it was fun to read.*

*It's always nice to see a well done independent comic, especially one that is readable, unlike a lot that has been coming out lately.*

*About my favorite character right now is JB Space. I don't know my reason for this yet, but he's got that Han Solo appeal.*

*Besides, any book with a pig in it can't be all bad. Thanks,*

Dennis "Warpig" Heaton  
402 Valley Brook Crossing  
Decatur, GA 30033

Thank you Dennis, we are glad you decided to give us a chance. We hope to attract a few more readers like yourself who don't normally read "Funny Animals". Also we're glad you found us to be a fun read, because that's exactly what we are aiming to do. Please let us know how you liked this issue.

Dear Ralph-n-Stu and Randy and Susan:

Congrats on putting together a great comic book! The artwork alone would've made "Tales From the Aniverse" worth the money, but the characters were interesting and the story was entertaining as well. Now the "helpful" criticism (opinionated subjective blather!

First — the pain... J.B. Space is a visually unexciting character, and it will be an extreme challenge to





you to make him more than a shallow cliché conceptually. Falterous has more depth and originality, but also is in danger of becoming a standard comic T.V. villain. Don't (please) let this happen to him.

Now the strokes . . . the white-on-black approach used on Ms. Chevious and Falterous is VERY dramatic. I loved it. F's (Falterous') JAVA habit is a creative touch. I enjoyed him a lot. So dangerous, so macho, such a jerk!

Ms. Chevious has a lot of charm and potential. Ganda looks like she's going to be lots of fun. The rhinoceri and elephant on pages 2 and 3 gave me a charge. Your anthology framework works better than I'd have predicted.

Could you give me some clues as to where to find FANTASTIC FANZINE?

I'll be looking forward to seeing TFTA #2, and the

ad for "The Realm" has me practically drooling. Have fun!

Sincerely,  
Dave Burns  
1720 Deerfield  
Austin, TX. 78741

P.S. How did Falterous end up with cloven hooves AND wicked canines? Is he a tasmanian devil or what?

A tasmanian devil, huh? Now, that's one that hadn't occurred to us. Kinda neat! (By the way, if you think Falterous is built weird, check out Varcel's Vixens in this issue.)

Not to dodge the subject, there is actually a logical reason for Falterous' anatomy. We're not going to tell you what it is, but there is an Aniversal reason. We'd LOVE to spill the beans, but then we wouldn't have a way to hook you into buying the next issue . . .

# ANIVERSAL FACT FIVES

## KEYSTONE

Keystone IS security upon the S.S. HEEP, and has been for as long as anyone can remember. Though on first impression he doesn't seem to be capable of handling such a job, Keystone has proven himself again and again.

## CHAROLETTE

Charolette is the secretary to the administrator on the S.S. HEEP. She goes out of her way to be the most well-informed person upon the station. Charolette is also not afraid to speak her mind to anyone.

Charolette is also an excessive chain smoker. She has threatened to quit a number of times, much to the dismay of all who know her. The last time she quit she didn't touch a cigarette for three days, and was unbearable the entire time.





THE PLACE: THE S.S. HEEP, MAIN SPACE PORT FOR FIVE SYSTEMS. THE TIME: JUST A FEW HOURS AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF JERBOA JOHNSON, THE HEEP'S NEW ADMINISTRATOR. HER FRIENDS CALL HER "TAILS".

TAILS IS CURRENTLY LOOKING OVER HER NEW POSITION AND THAT MEANS-

RRR--

# TAILS GOES TO BARKY'S



RANDY ZIMMERMAN AND SUSAN VAN CAMP  
STORY AND ART

LEX MORRIS  
LETTERING



WHAT'S A MATTER, KID? COFFEE GOT YOU TENSE?

\*SOB\* NO, IT'S THE PAPERWORK.

WELL, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY I KNOW OF TO HANDLE PAPERWORK-

AND THAT'S LATER.

WHAT SAY YOU AND I SKIP OFF TO BARKY'S AND HAVE A DRINK? IT'S CLOSE ENOUGH TO QUITTING TIME TO DO THAT, ISN'T IT?

NO, BUT I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT IT.

WELL, HERE IT IS-

-SO KILDA PULLED A FEW POLITICAL STRINGS AND GOT HIM HIS OWN RANGER TROOP. THEY SHIP OUT TOMORROW MORN.

SAY, HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO BARKY'S KID?

BARKY'S SPIRITS AND SWILL, THE FINEST WATERING HOLE THIS SIDE OF THE ANIVERSE.





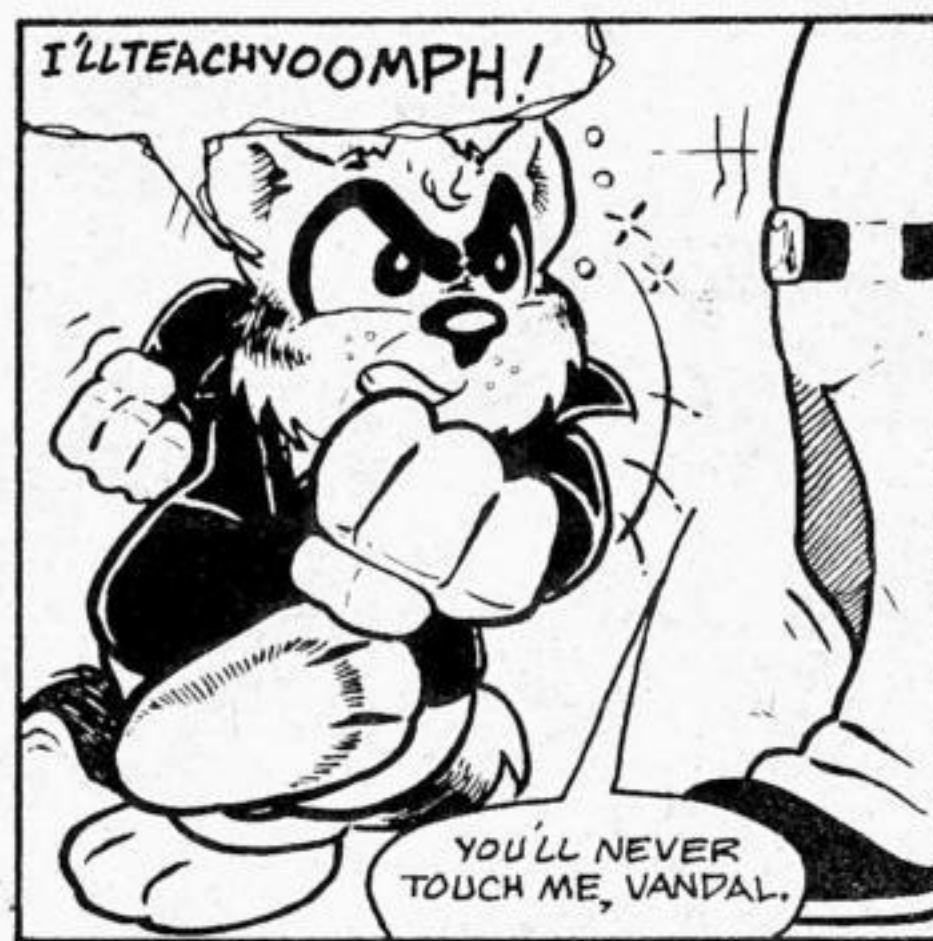
























COMING NEXT ISSUE

FALTEROUS

and

RETRO  
RAM

AND HIS ROCKET RANGERS!



# the Realm



The journey to Castle Darkoth is a dangerous one as our party of adventurers discover when they set out to rescue Sandy from the clutches of the evil Dark Lord. But not before Alex and Dominic take time out to sample the nightlife in the slave city of Drakhol. They find out that spending an evening at the Grinning Gargoyle is anything but dull.

THE REALM's cast expands as you are introduced to Diggoruss Gorey, the most boastful dwarf in all the continent of Azoth. He and his trusty battle ax are more than willing to back up the stories.

You'll also meet Zarkon, Darkoth's right hand man and Wizard Supreme, as plots and counterplots begin to tie our adventurers inextricably to the fate of their new world.

THE REALM #2 is written by Ralph Griffith and Stuart Kerr, pencilled by Guy Davis and inked by Tim Dzon, with painted cover by Sandy Schreiber. 32 pages, B&W with full-color covers for \$1.50. Published quarterly by Arrow Comics.



*"Our Target is  
Entertainment  
Our Aim  
Is Quality"*





# ANIVERSAX FACT FIVES



RANDY  
ZIMMERMAN  
1/11

## BARKY

### BARKY

BARKY is sole owner of "BARKY'S SPIRITS AND SWILL," a popular watering hole on the S.S. HEEP. Barky runs his bar with the help of Spicket, his mobile droid bartender. Barky's stays open for the normal business cycle, though he is entertaining the thought of staying open all hours due to the popularity of his establishment, and the odd drinking hours of the inhabitants on the Heep.

Barky himself is a bit of a mystery. He seems to be content running his establishment and not having an outside social life. All that is known about him is that he served a normal draft in the Aniversal Rangers which ended near the resolution of the Reptillian war.

## MALLARDIUS

### MALLARDIUS

MALLARDIUS is the bodyguard and chief assassin of Drakestar, King of the Avian Empire. He is the only person Drakestar would ever trust with his life.

Mallardius is much taller, and stronger, than an average Avian. He is also mute, and apparently has been since birth. Little else is known about him, except his reputation as an unstoppable force.

Mallardius served under Drakestar through the Avian conflict, until the exiled King of the Avian empire was captured. Mallardius quickly disappeared. His current whereabouts are unknown, though rumor has it that someone matching his description is rallying support for Drakestar under the banner of Avian supremacy.



RANDY  
ZIMMERMAN  
2/2/85