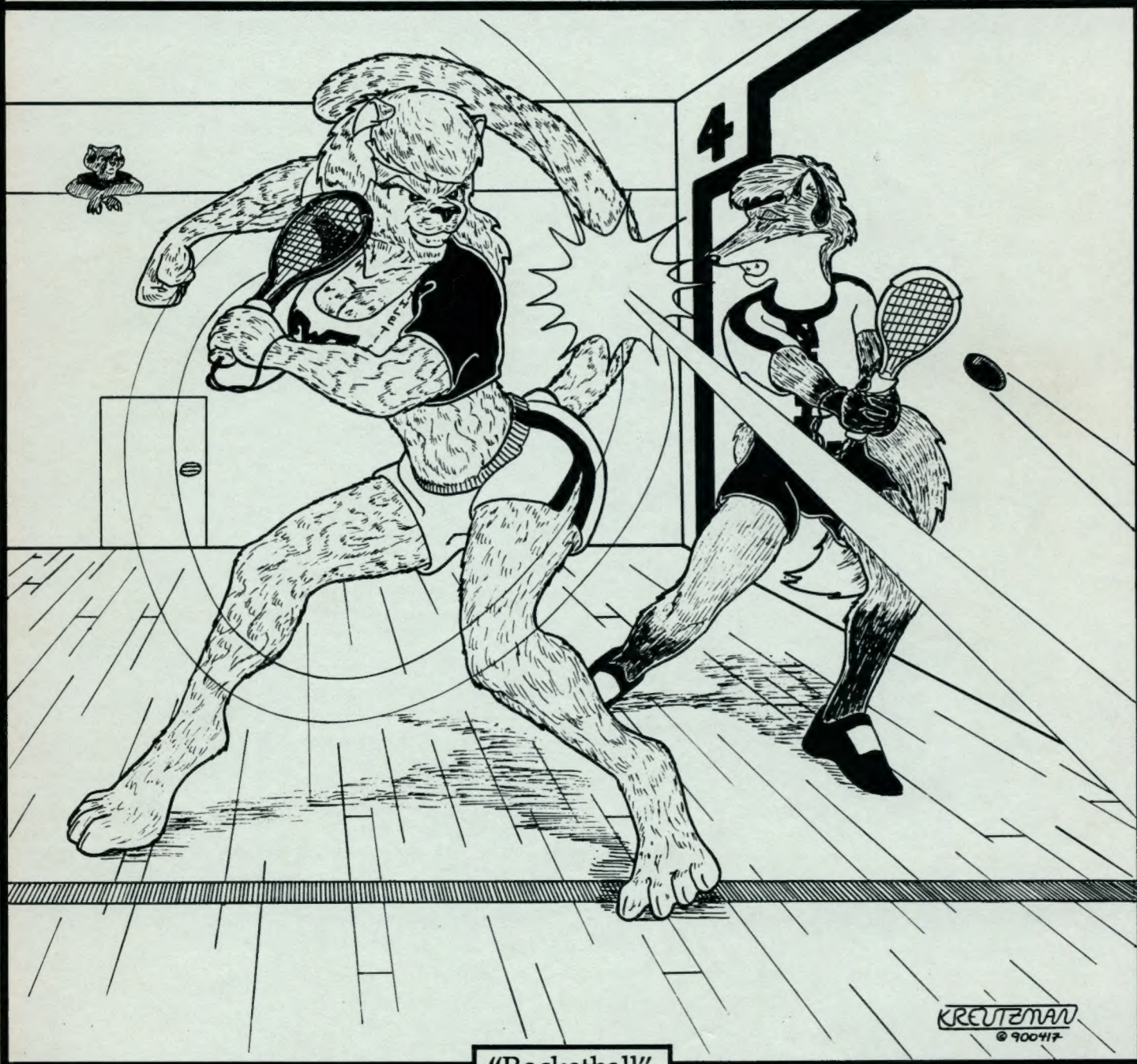


Issue Three

\$3.00

# YARF!

THE • JOURNAL • OF • APPLIED • ANTHROPOMORPHICS



KREUTEMAN  
© 900417

"Rocketball"

# Monika Livingston

## Price List - 1990

### Black & White Character Drawings

	9 x 12	11 x 14
<b>Pencils</b>		
One Character	\$10	\$20
Two Characters	\$15	\$20
<b>Inked</b>		
One Character	\$25	\$35
Two Characters	\$30	\$40

(Larger sizes available, price quotes on request.)

### Color Character Drawings

	9 x 12	11 x 14
<b>Inked, then colored in</b>		
One or Two Characters	\$45	\$55

### Full Color Paintings

#### On illustration board

9 x 12 to 11 x 14	\$75 & up
12 x 15 to 20 x 30	\$100 & up

(Book & game covers, price quotes on request)

### Matting

#### For drawings & paintings

Up to 11 x 14	\$5 - 10
Up to 20 x 30	\$10 - 25



### Name Tags

#### Small (2 x 3) or large (3 x 4)

Color	\$15 - 45
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### Logos

#### Business & stationary

Copyright included	\$75 - 200
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### Air-Brushed T-Shirts & Sweat Shirts

	<u>One Side</u>	<u>Two Sides</u>
<b>T-shirts</b>		
Full Image	\$35 - 45	\$45 - 55
With lettering	add: \$5 - 15	\$10 - 25
Full image on one side, lettering only on other		\$40 - 55
<b>Sweat shirts</b>		
Full Image	\$40 - 50	\$50 - 60
With lettering	add: \$5 - 15	\$10 - 25
Full image on one side, lettering only on other		\$55 - 70

(Price quotes for other wearable items on request)

### NOTES

1. T shirts are American made, 50/50 blend. 100% cotton shirts are available on special request.
2. Romantic images are ok, but X-rated erotica is not accepted.
3. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery, however, time needed for completion may vary depending upon schedule.
4. A deposit of at least 50% is required before any project is started. Balance due upon completion.
5. Mail orders are accepted: add \$3.00 for shipping & handling.



# Flaming Hairballs

Editorial ramblings and letters of comment from us to you and from you to us.

Lo and behold! Issue #3! I think we are beginning to get the hang of publishing a magazine. What do YOU think? Here's a comment from one of our readers:



## DEADLINES...DEADLINES...DEADLINES

Once again for those of you who wish to contribute (Please do, contributions make the `zine) we run once again the upcoming issues deadlines.

Issue 4, May 5, 1990 (*Baycon 90 issue*)

Issue 5, June 16, 1990

Issue 6, July 28, 1990 (*San Diego ComiCon issue*)

Issue 7, September 8, 1990

Issue 8, October 20, 1990

Issue 9, December 1, 1990 (*Christmas/Hanukkah issue*)

# PITT BULL

private eye ...



© pjo/90

# Patten's Pontifications

## Review: Franky Furbo

Reviewed by Fred Patten

Franky Furbo, by William Wharton. Illustrated by the author. New York, Henry Holt & Company, October 1989, 228 Pages. Hardcover \$50.00; ISBN 0-8050-1120-X. Trade paperback \$12.95; ISBN 0-8050-1157-9.

William Wiley is an elderly writer of childrens' stories. His popular character is Franky Furbo, a magical fox who has adventures with humans and with animals on Earth and in outer space. But the fox is not fictional. In 1944, Wiley was a young American soldier participating in the attack on Monte Cassino during the Allied invasion of Italy. He and a German soldier were caught in an artillery barrage, and both were dying when Franky Furbo saved their lives. It took months for the clever fox to nurse them back to health, during which he told them his life story and helped the two to exchange memories to make them all friends. When Wiley returned to the Army, his insistence that he was saved by a talking fox got him a psychiatric discharge. Nobody believed him except for the girl that he later married. To save his own reputation, Wiley stopped insisting that Franky Furbo was real and turned the fox's adventures into a series of childrens' fantasies. So after forty years, Franky Furbo is a popular fictional character throughout the world, but only William Wiley and his family know that he is real.

Except that they don't. This novel begins with Wiley's discovery that his wife has only been humoring him all this time. She loves him but she can't believe in his delusion. Crushed, Wiley begins to doubt his own sanity. He has to admit to himself that he has deliberately simplified Franky Furbo's adventures, because even he could not comprehend all that the fox told him — of being able to teleport around the world in an instate, to read minds, to speak all languages, to transmute himself into any shape or size. The only thing that Franky Furbo could not do was to understand why he was so different from other foxes. He had been

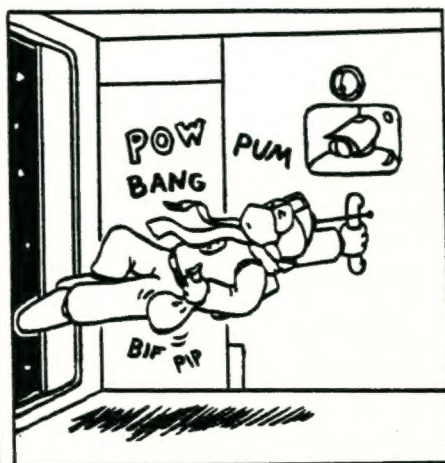
obsessed with solving the mystery of himself. Now Wiley must also find out the answer, or admit to himself that he is crazy. The only source of information would seem to be the German soldier who Franky Furbo also saved — if Wiley can find him after over forty years.

Franky Furbo is an unusual blend of themes. It is partly a pseudo-traditional young childrens' fantasy, partly a novel of psychological self-analysis, partly modern science-fiction, and partly a sophisticated inspirational fantasy (a la Richard Bach's Jonathan Livingston Seagull). The beginning is dangerously weak; a bit too cute and simplistic. But that turns out to be deliberate; the author is downplaying elements that will reappear more seriously later on.

The novel is also a riddle right up to the climax as to whether Franky Furbo is a real or an imaginary character. There are clues throughout the story; for example, consider the author's name, the protagonist's name, and the meaning of the Italian word "furbo". (At the risk of getting too cute myself, I will say that Wharton dares to go where Doc Smith only hinted at.) But most importantly, Franky Furbo and other anthropomorphic characters appear often enough through samples of Wiley's childrens' stories, through Wiley's memories of the "real" Franky, and in other revelations, that the reader will not feel cheated. Don't let the bland opening put you off; Franky Furbo is definitely a novel that anthropomorphic fans (especially fox fans) will enjoy.

A "prepub" announcement in LIBRARY JOURNAL last year stated that, "The story is something of a fairy tale, which may or may not explain why Steven Spielberg is now in the midst of filming it." Nobody else seems to know anything about Spielberg filming Franky Furbo, so maybe the story was only options and then dropped. Or maybe it will still appear on the big screen someday. ☺

## Freefall by Mark Stanley



# Patten's Pontifications

## Review: Catfantastic

Reviewed by Fred Patten

Catfantastic: Nine Lives and Fifteen Tales, edited by Andre Norton and Martin H. Greenberg. New York, DAW Books, July 1989, 320 pages, \$3.95. ISBN: 0-88677-355-5.

This anthology contains fifteen new stories, plus a brief introduction by Norton, written especially for it. All of them deal with cats in S-F or fantastic situations, and all are well written. Other than that, the editors have aimed at a wide variety of moods, styles, and treatments. There are grim dramas and comedies; adventures on distant planets and in wizards' dens; tales told by the cats themselves and stories in which humans observe strange things that happen to cats. Some cats are normal; some stories reveal that humans have no idea what "normal" means when dealing with cats. There are ghostly cats, magically enchanted cats, and scientifically bioengineered cats.

The most anthropomorphized cats are the witches' and wizards' familiars, in Elizabeth H. Boyer's "Borrowing Trouble", Donna Farley's "It Must Be Some Place", P. M. Griffin's "Trouble", and Ardath Mayhar's "From the Diary of Hermione". Cats encounter, and in some cases save Earth from, interstellar or pandimensional vermin in Jaygee Carr's "Wart", C. S. Friedman's "The Dreaming Kind", Mercedes Lackey's "Kitty", Patricia Shaw Mathews' "The Game of Cat and Rabbit", and Ann Miller and Karen Elizabeth Rigley's "It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's ... Supercat!" (One of those is actually an old English folk tale in a S-F setting; see how quickly you recognize it.) There is a shared-world story, William Schneider Belden's "The Gate of the Kittens", which is set in Andre Norton's Witch World universe; although Norton's own story here, "Noble Warrior", is a Victorian thriller with a nod to Kipling's "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi". There are stories in which cats are revealed as benevolent galactic guardians of inferior species (humans), as brave protectors of mistreated children, or as cupids who help their humans find romance.

Technically, not all of the stories in Catfantastic deal with anthropomorphic cats, but enough do to justify a review of it here. Besides, I hope that none of YARF!'s readers will be so narrow-minded as to ignore a good story just because its cats happens to be "normal". And several stories feature more than one anthropomorphized cat — not to mention anthro birds, mice, dogs, and even a sea serpent and a hobgoblin or two. The wide variety in Catfantastic means that not every story may be to your taste, but the majority of them should be. ☺

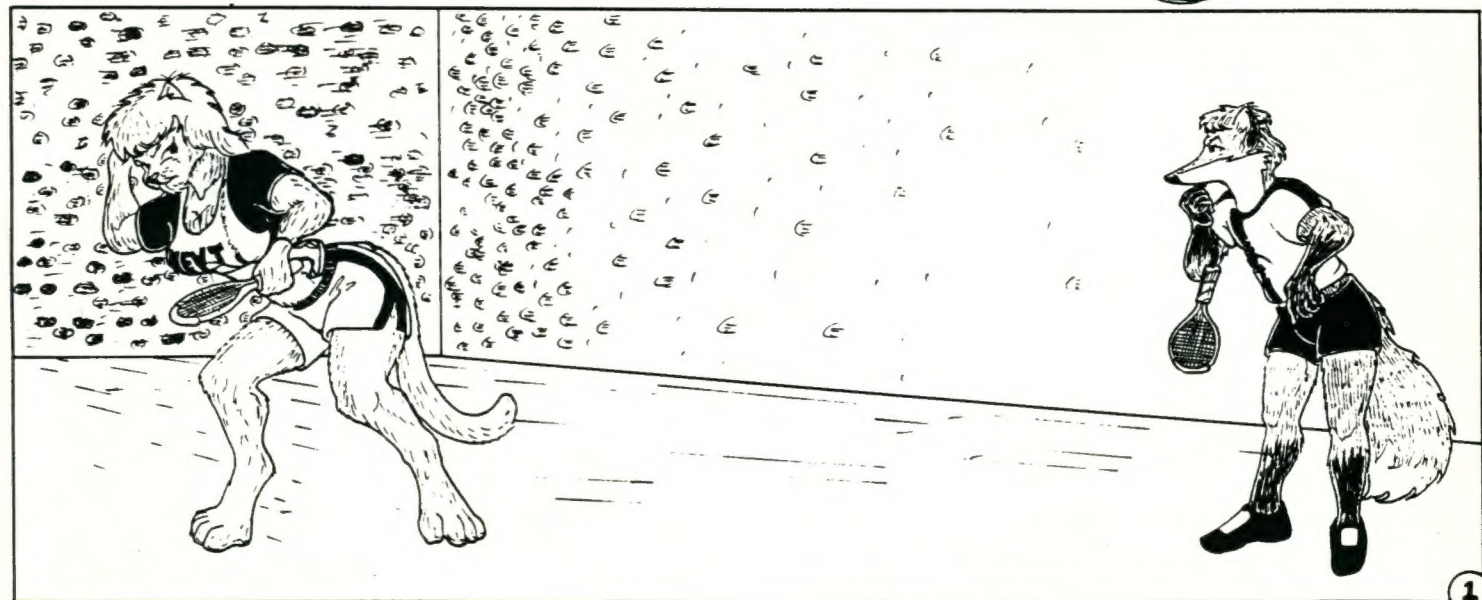
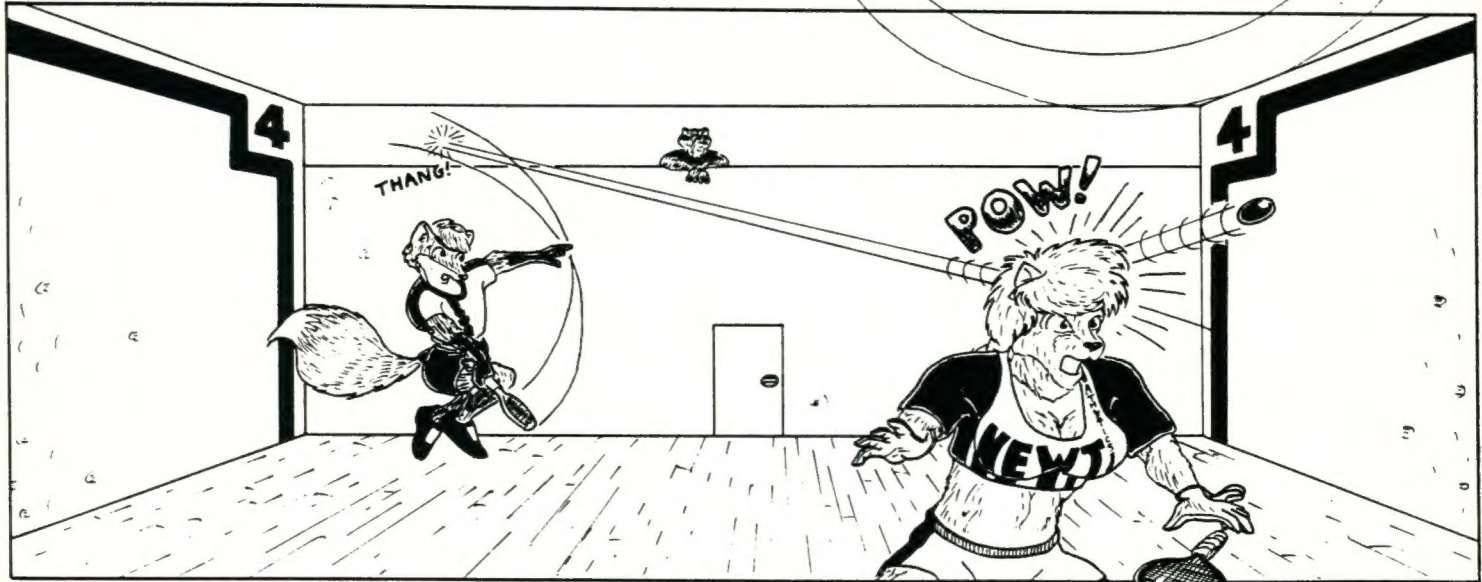
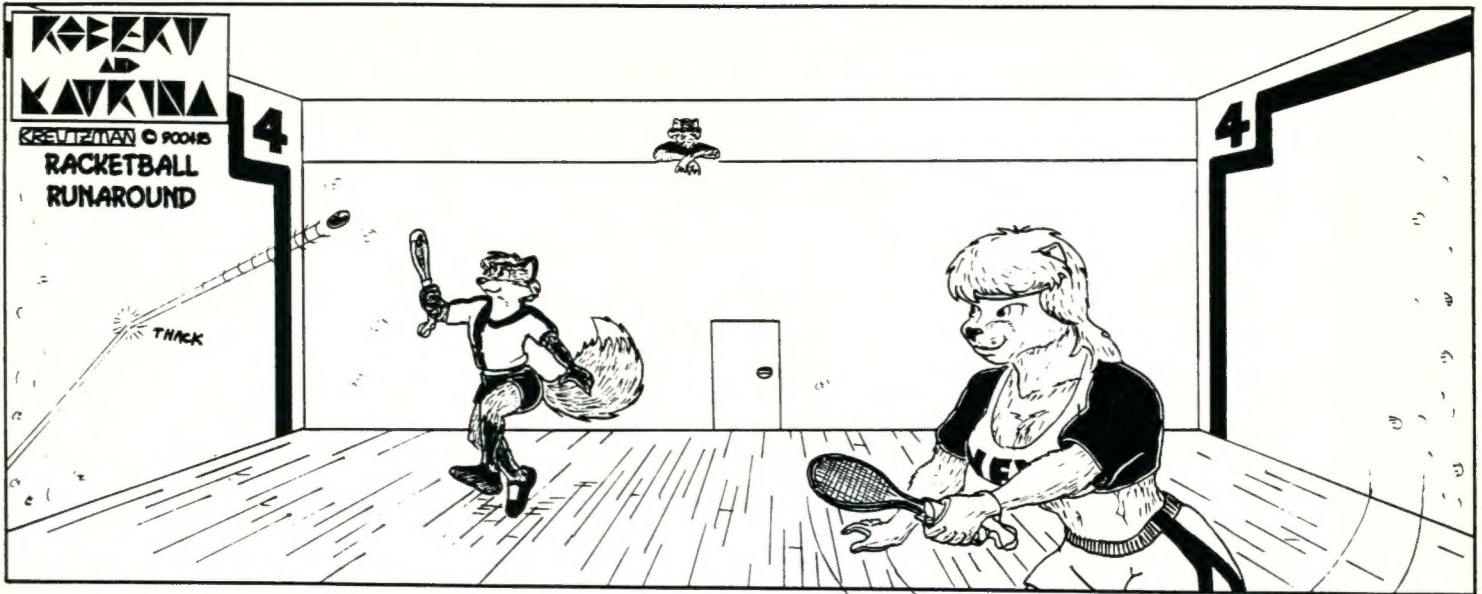


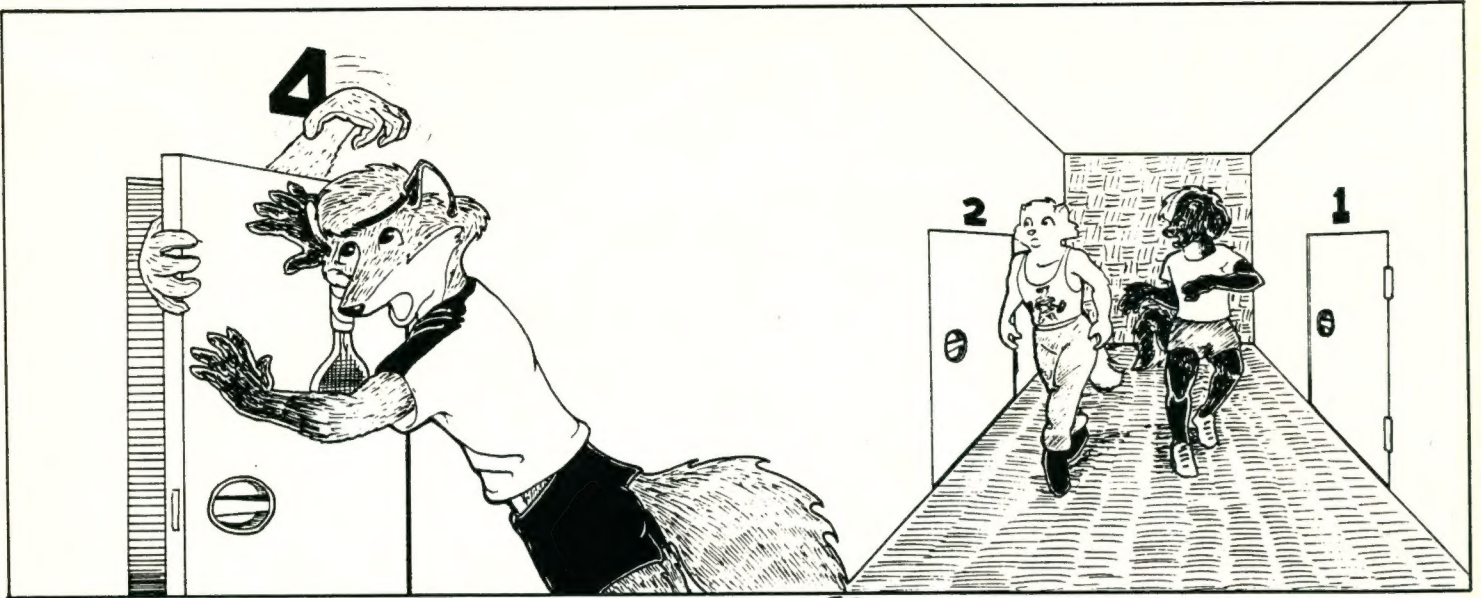
— Monika

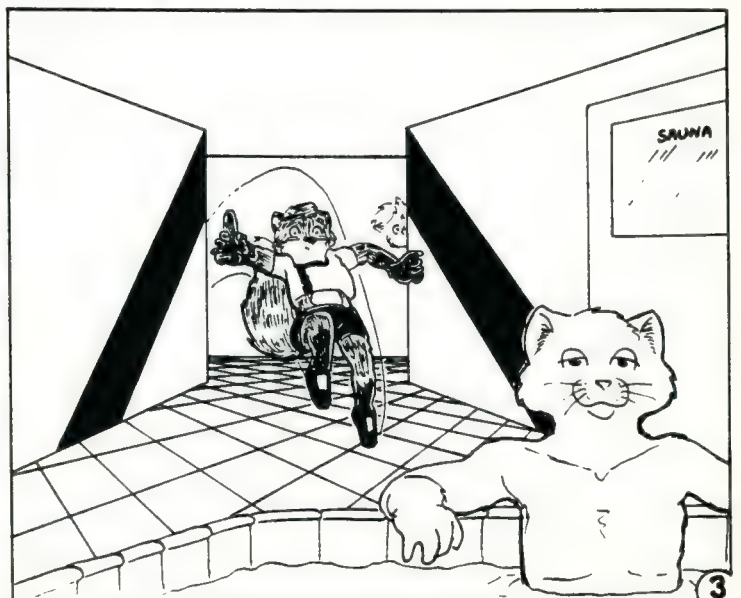
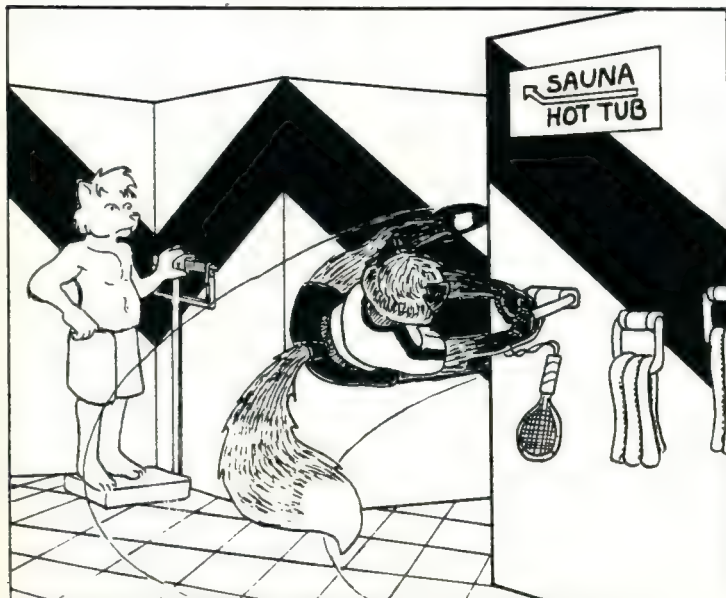
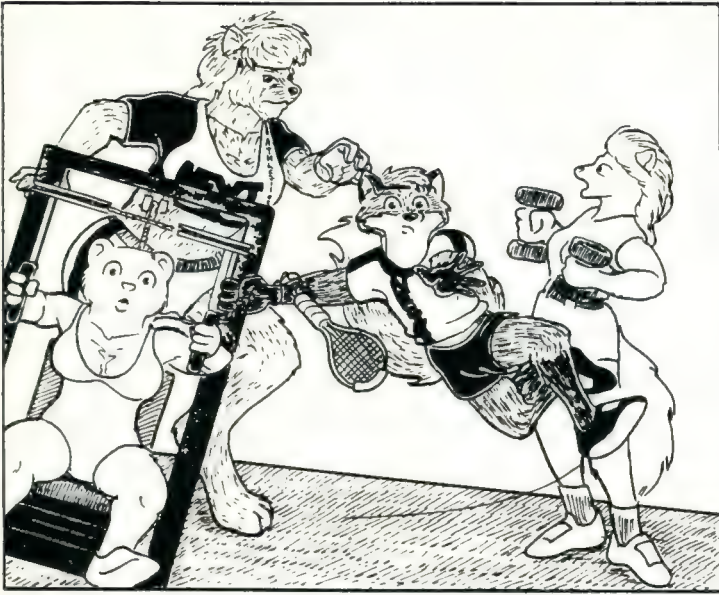


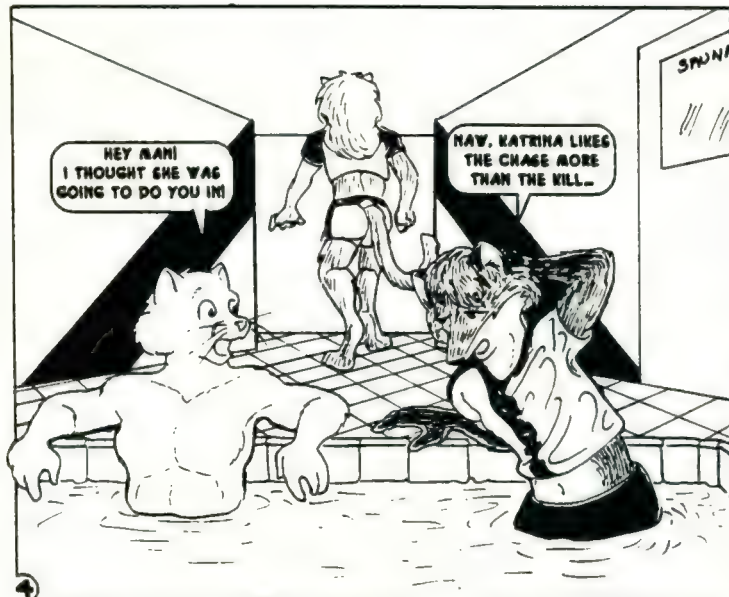
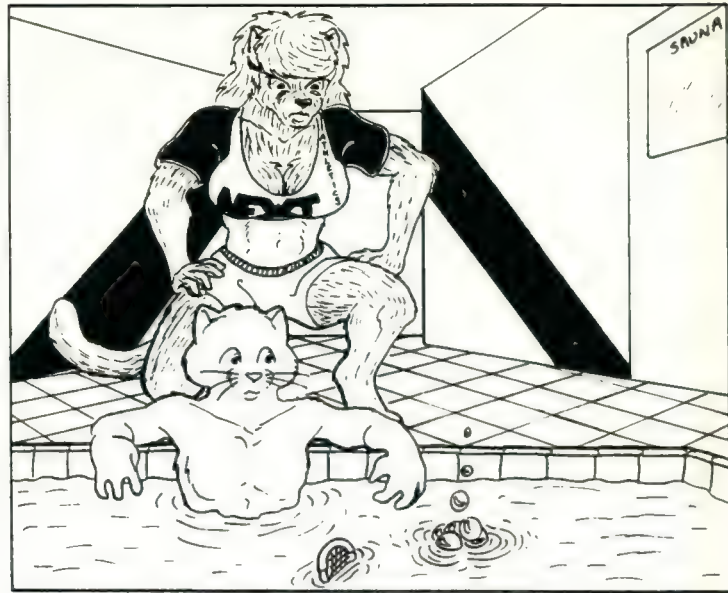
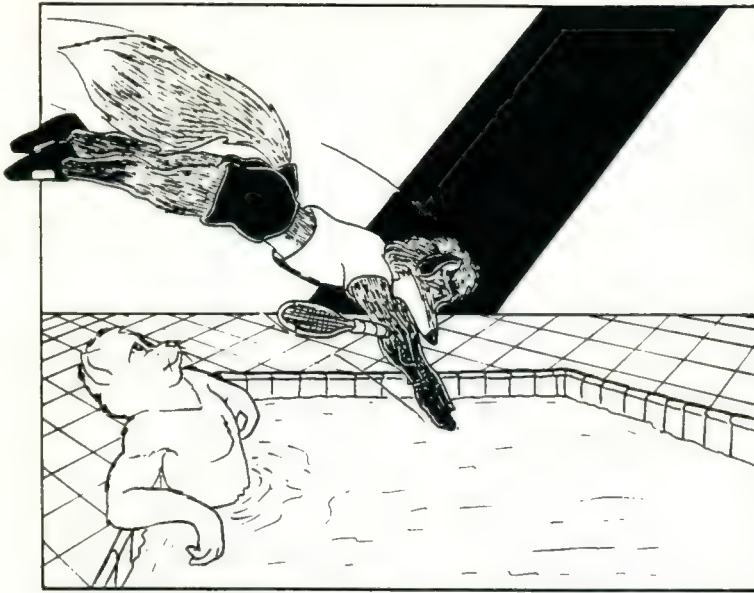
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PICK A CARD... ANY CARD!









# DOUBLE HELIXERS

## ESSAYS ON THE FIRST SEMIHUMANS

Compiled by Dave Bryant

A Brief History of Genetic Engineering, 1869-2000

A Description of Double Helixers

A Description of the Institute for the Rehabilitation of Constructs

Peripheral Institutions Surrounding the Double Helixers

Available Types and Breeds of Cosmetic Double Helixers

### A SHORT HISTORY OF GENETIC ENGINEERING, 1869-2000

*"For out of old felde, as men seyth,  
Cometh all this newe corn fro yer to yere;  
And out of old bokes [books], in good feyth,  
Cometh al this newe science that men lere."*

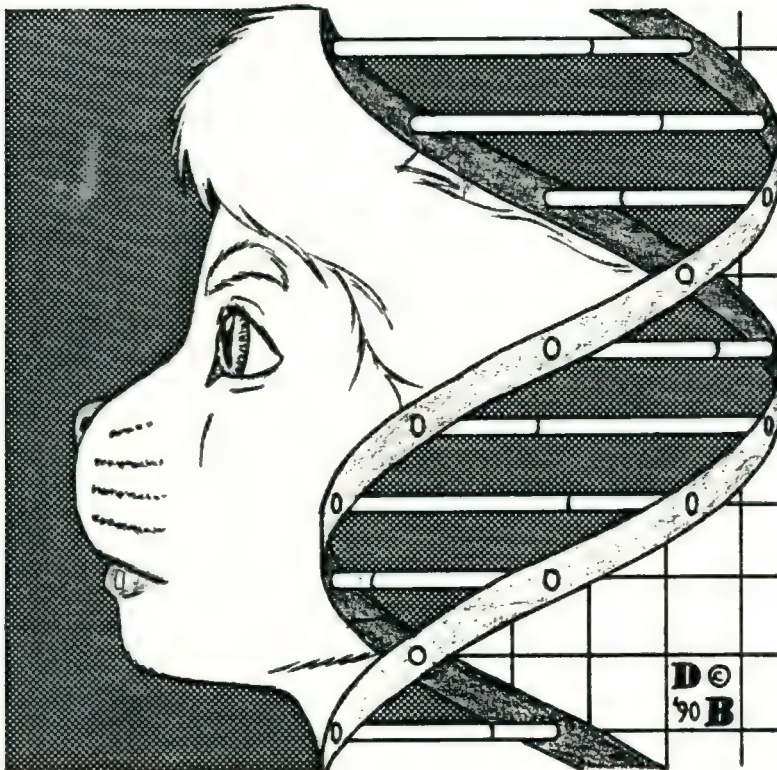
Geoffrey Chaucer  
The Parliament of Fowls  
1380-1386

In 1869, Friedrich Miescher isolated a sugary, slightly acidic substance; because it was found only in the nuclei of living cells, he dubbed it nucleic acid. The name was later modified to deoxyribonucleic acid (better known as DNA), to distinguish it from ribonucleic acid (RNA).

O.T. Avery and his co-workers at the Rokerfeller Institute, in 1943, and Alfred D. Hershey and Martha Chase, in 1952, conducted experiments demonstrating DNA to be the medium through which heredity and genetics work. Just a year later, in 1953, James D. Watson and Francis Crick revealed, with something of a flourish, that the DNA molecule was wound into a twin helical structure. It was a discovery whose time had come: Crick later wrote that if he and Watson had not accomplished it, someone else would have done so within two or three years.

What Humanity has access to, he will — eventually and inevitably — attempt to manipulate for his own purposes. By the 1960's, primitive cloning techniques were in use. In the 1970s, industrial and military genetic engineering were on the rise; in the 1980s, it was big business, and profoundly affected medicine and law. Further refinement in the 1990s, coupled with the perfection of artificial womb technology, made virtually anything possible....Provided that enough time, money, and resources were thrown at the problem.

The field resembled the microcomputer industry of a decade before: a few established giants sitting back and watching the plethora of tiny new companies scrambling for the Great Ideas that would put them on the map long enough to stabilize. The larger corporations would then go into direct competition once the smaller firms had shaken out and once a large market had established.



One of these small companies decided that, in such a sink-or-swim environment, an edge was needed. An islet in the Hawaiian chain, purchased from the US national park system, became the base for an ambitious — and highly illegal — new project. It involved combining human and animal DNA into hybrid genetic structures reminiscent of medieval European or Japanese 'talking animals'. The new creatures stood on two legs and had hands, thumbs, tails, fur, muzzles — and sentience. For the first time, artificial life forms of human complexity and intelligence were designed and grown.

Though the majority of these 'semihumans' were created for and sold to the proverbial rich and powerful to satisfy their taste for the exotic, a more or less separate program concentrated on the production of combat-oriented models. By the time the FBI learned of the affair in AD 2000, some one thousand 'cosmetic' Double Helixers had been grown, and another two thousand were in vitro; about twenty 'utility' Helixers were undergoing trials as soldiers and bodyguards.

## DOUBLE HELIXERS: A DESCRIPTION

*"Bless the beasts and children..."*

The first artificial life forms of human complexity, the Double Helixers — through no fault of their own — stirred world society like a stick. Production began in 1997 and continued until near the end of the century, when the operation was shut down by the US government. The hearings and criminal trials resulting from the Helixer Scandal involved nearly fifty thousand witnesses and defendants, many of them celebrities and VIPs, in North America, Europe, Australia, and Japan.

### Physical Description

Externally, a 'cosmetic' Double Helixer closely adheres to a human physiognomy; only the head, tail, fur, and minor details distinguish the semihuman. The latter include thicker finger- and toenails, a variable number of vestigial nipples running in a double row down the abdomen, and a slight, but occasionally visible, tendency toward the build suggested by the base animal (massive ursines; slim, long-bodied mustelines; medium-build, densely muscled felines and canines; and so on). The pelt bears marking normal for the base animal, but translated to a humanoid body, and does not cover the palms or webs of the hands, soles of the feet, nose pad, lips (such as they are), nipples, or external genitalia. The tail is usually ankle-length when held straight down or, if the base animal is short-tailed, crotch-length or shorter.

page 12

The head is the most obvious departure from the human norm. Under a full head of human-style scalp hair, the skull differs slightly, primarily in jaw and ear canal structure. The face, however, is a Double Helixer's single most distinctive feature. While forehead, brows, and eyes are essentially human, the lower face and outer ears show much more influence from the base animal. The cheeks tend to be full, and the nose and mouth owe more to the base animal's muzzle than to the human design. The ears are shaped like the base animal's ears, but are proportionally smaller and set wider apart and lower on the head. The overall effect is that of a human of the Helixer's biological age wearing a superbly-made, custom-fitted baby-animal theatrical latex prosthesis/mask.

A 'utility' Helixer differs more markedly: the face, claws, legs and general body shape and structure show a good deal more influence from the base animal, and human-style scalp hair is entirely or almost entirely absent (normal pelt fur takes its place). Otherwise, the two types — cosmetic and utility — are nearly identical, inside and out.

Internally, the similarity to a human can vary somewhat, though all Helixers are much closer to human than animal. A Helixer does perspire, for instance, though many will also pant as a result of unusual overheating — for example, after a softball game on a summer afternoon. Even so, some felines are allergic to aspirin, many Helixers of any type are colorblind, and assorted other manifestations of animal metabolism occur. All Helixers have a faint, inflexible accent stemming from the slight differences in larynx, mouth shape, and tongue structure.

One thing to keep in mind is that all of these changes were accomplished through alterations in significantly less than one percent of the total genetic information necessary to define a human being. By comparison, a human has about 98% commonality with other primates and 95% commonality with most other mammals. About 48% seems to be general overhead; it is common to most life forms on earth.

### Psychological Description

Helixers, being largely derived from the human template, are as varied and as intelligent as humans. Beyond this, however, are traits unique to their psychology and circumstances. The most important things to remember are, first, that all Helixers are 'decanted' (removed from their artificial wombs) at a physiological age of sixteen, plus or minus two years; second, that the accelerated growth they underwent prior to decanting required a then-experimental system called a Brain-Interface Device (BID) to pump the developing brain full of important and basic education; and third, that a great many Helixers are abused physically, mentally, and/or sexually, by their Owners.

These three factors are responsible for a rate, range, and severity of mental illness hundreds to thousands of times greater than that of the general populace. Few Helixers can be said to be anything less than 'eccentric', and a significant number committed suicide or were never released from hospitalization. Rather than go into several hundred pages' worth of specifics, a general outline of casual relationships is presented, leaving the reader free to extrapolate.

Brain damage or dysfunction may occur, through birth defects, physical injury or information/sensory overload caused by the BID 'implanting' educational process, or severe or improperly treated injuries incurred prior to Operation MOREAU. Also attributed to the BID 'implantation' process is a frequently encountered lag in apparent psychological age behind apparent physical age. Trauma, which is responsible for the majority of problems, can usually—but not always—be traced to abuse. (The reader is referred to the copious material available on child abuse for further information.) In addition, the typical problems of adolescence (e.g., sense of isolation, mood swings, etc.) are frequently aggravated by the Helixers' media-enhanced reputation and obvious physical differences from other teenagers.

The reader should not get the idea that all Helixers are unstable, however; many are reasonably normal, healthy individuals. While individual personalities can, of course, vary tremendously, some common tendencies have been noted. Many cosmetic Helixers do have enhanced libidos, but are not the sex-maniacs of popular belief. They do, however, have a marked dependence on 'contact comfort'. Healthy cosmetic Helixers are usually cheerful and outgoing, and are often possessed of a fine sense of humor and a peculiar innocence. The latter is thought to be due to a lack of childhood social 'programming' such as most normal humans receive while growing up, since Helixers do not have childhoods *per se*. As a result, Helixers are as a rule less concerned with time (i.e., they tend not to be 'clock watchers') and do not display some anxieties common to adolescents and adults in Western society, such as the oft-cited fear of nuclear war.

## THE INSTITUTE FOR THE REHABILITATION OF CONSTRUCTS (IRC): A DESCRIPTION

*"For all the Helixers who've died  
And all of them who have survived,  
Let us say a prayer or two.  
If any need it, Lord, they do."*

Anonymous; Found written on a bookmark in a forgotten bible on IRC grounds; 2002

Double Helix, Inc.'s semihuman projects were brought to an abrupt end in the summer of 2000, when FBI SWAT

agents and a contingent of US Marines performed a dawn raid, Operation MONREAU, on Nihoa Island, where the manufacturing facility was located. The US government suddenly found itself with a large group of what amounted to highly publicized homeless orphans; obviously, the need to find a publicly acceptable solution was immediate.

Susan Lanier, a San Diego attorney involved with the legal proceedings surrounding the Helixers, proposed one: Camp Pendleton, a major Marine base sandwiched between the creeping suburbia of Orange County and San Diego, was already housing the Helixers in surplus barracks slated for demolition. She suggested that these be refurbished instead, and fitted with classrooms, offices, and medical facilities as well as the existing form rooms; how security would be handled is left as an exercise for the class. The plan was put into effect in less than a year (an amazingly short time, considering the nature of bureaucracies), and Ms. Lanier herself was placed in charge of the new Institute—an honor she was not thrilled to receive.

She muddled through, however, and became quite adept at administering what amounted to a cross between an orphanage, a high school, a hospital, and a zoo. (On her desk was a plaque bearing the legend "Head Zookeeper and Chief Babysitter".) Funding was limited at best, and grants from any individual or organization with even the vaguest connection or association were eagerly sought. The Institute for the Rehabilitation of Constructs (IRC) officially opened on 22 August 2001 and closed its major facilities seven years later, though medical and counseling services continued through 2016, when the exigencies of the Third World War shut down virtually all nonessential organizations.

The IRC's general layout consisted of four areas, Administration, Accommodations, Education, and Infirmary. Each of these was broken down into subsets, such as dormitories, lounge/recreational facilities, and food service in Accommodations, and a fairly typical high school/junior college setup in Education. The Infirmary was similar in capacity to most small hospitals, though more comprehensive in services offered; the psychiatric-care ward was disproportionately large, for example, and a handful of trained veterinarians were on staff or on call. Administration handled day-to-day operations, from running the facilities themselves to public relations to funding.

Helixers brought to the IRC underwent triage: those who could immediately or almost immediately begin classes, those who could do so after medical treatment, and those who, if able to attend classes at all, would require handicapped-student treatment. A Helixer who successfully completed his or her curriculum and was deemed healthy enough to face life on the 'outside' graduated with a high school diploma and 'emancipated minor' status.

Of the one thousand or so Batch One Helixers that were



made, about half managed to make it to the IRC. Of these, about three hundred managed to graduate. The remaining two hundred represent those who were physically or mentally unable to do so and suicide and murder victims.

Operating budget for the IRC amounted to about \$25 million per year in AD 2000 dollars. About half of this came from the federal government, while the remainder was stitched together from grants and contributions. The McColl Fund contributed \$2-3 million per year; the Phoenix Foundation, through various subsidiaries, donated about \$5 million per year.

#### PERIPHERAL INSTITUTIONS SURROUNDING THE DOUBLE HELIXERS

*"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances..."*  
William Shakespeare  
As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII,  
1598-1600

Special Creation was a rock band formed by Janet Bryson in the autumn of 2002. Originally composed of six Double Helixers, it gained a seventh member when Billy Bryson, Janet's human lover and eventual husband, was pardoned and released from jail. Another talented Helixer, Leonelle, often performed with the group as guest vox. Though the group toured the United States, Europe, Japan, and Australia several times during its dozen-year existence, and cut fifteen albums, it tended to perform most often at the Shamrock Club, a rambling night club in San Diego.

#### Special Creation is:

Janet Bryson	Lead Vox*, Electric Guitar
Billy Bryson	Drums
Margie Krauslin	Piano, Classical Strings
Randianne Maripaw	Acoustic Guitar, Strings, Winds
Freddy MacCurry	Excessive Keyboards (Three tiers of three)
George McWarg	Electric Guitar
Angelo Vulpone	Electric Bass

\* While Janet is listed as the group's lead vox, all of the band members alternate at the microphone.

Special Creation's albums are available on CD and DAT from Sunpyre Records.

<u>Good News</u>	Optimism; the group's first album
<u>Chimera</u>	"Funny animal"
<u>Ratio of Reflection</u>	What it's like to be a Helixer
<u>Creation</u>	New age jazz vocal and instrumental music
<u>The System</u>	A cynical look at the complexities of modern society
<u>Millennium</u>	Futurism and science fiction
<u>...A Single Step</u>	Travelling, mostly by ship
<u>Tails of Mettle</u>	The token heavy metal album
<u>Tokyo Worldcon-Live!</u>	A mix of filk, folk, and folk-rock fusion
<u>Fairyland</u>	All-filk music album
<u>Theater in the Round</u>	Concert cuts of old and new music
<u>Tales of Fur and Leather</u>	Erotic songs and music
<u>Fables</u>	Children's songs and music
<u>Pick of the Litter</u>	Selections of the best music from past albums

From the Ashes

An eclectic mix with a message unrevealed until 2062

The Shamrock Club and its owners and primary operators were created by Steve Corbett.

Ratio of Reflection had a cover photograph by Christopher Elario with artwork airbrushed by Steve Gallacci. Tails of Mettel depicted the band as a group of adventurers in a fantasy setting; each member was in a manifestly inappropriate role: Freddy (the eight-foot-tall tiger) as an effeminate mage, Angelo (the small, slender fox boy) as a barbarian swordsman, Randianne (the chunky female 'teddy' bear) as a thief, et cetera.

The list of albums above has not yet been sorted into chronological order.

Special Creation and all its members were created by Mark Parker.

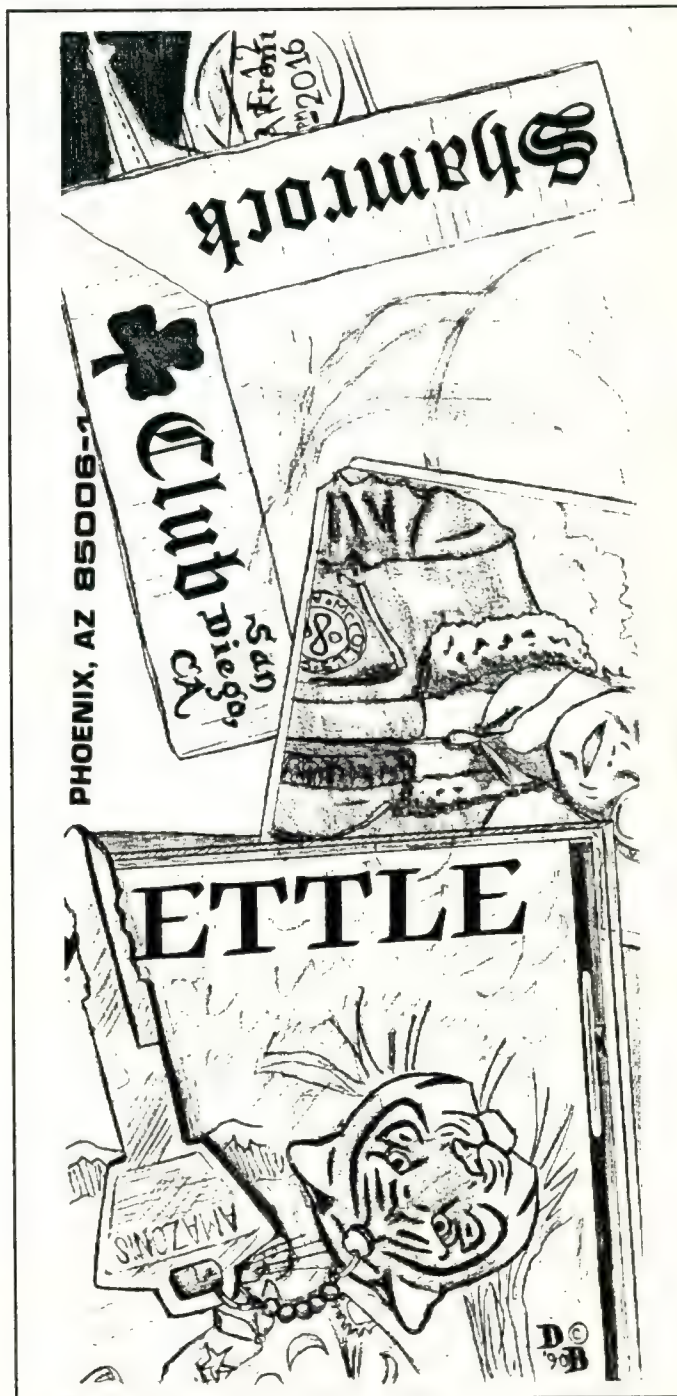


The Shamrock Club was a large nightclub, converted from a refurbished city-block-sized warehouse, located in the city of San Diego. Originally owned by Colonel Patrick McColl, it was inherited by Sean McColl and managed by Maegan McColl. The other three McColl sisters, Heather, Kaetlyn, and Maethe, also worked in the club in different capacities. (Heather was the hostess and floor manager, Kaetlyn was a waitress, and Maethe was the accountant.) Its clientele was a peculiar mix of Helixers, science fiction fans, ex- and current military personnel, and ex- and current mercenary soldiers. The atmosphere was casual and occasionally boisterous, but rarely to the extent of actual brawling. Though it started life as a reasonably traditional Irish-style bar, it accumulated a highly eclectic decor as a result of mementos brought in by regular customers. The latter included Alan and Trona Daniels, Alan's father (occasionally), the Tigerstripe Amazons, many members of McColl's Avengers, and Marines from Camp Pendleton, among others.

The club underwent a nearly continuous construction program from the time it first opened; as each section was completed, it was opened to the public. Eventually, it evolved into a three-level affair, with small apartments on the upper level, dancing on the middle level, and a bar and restaurant on the lower level. There is a band stage on both lower levels. One modification originally installed by Colonel McColl and expanded when the Shamrock Club opened its doors was an extensive security system including roll-back steel shutters and a sizable armory hidden in several nooks and crannies around the premises.

At any given time the club employed about a dozen Helixers, and had a policy of employing any competent Helixer that applied; it also made informal loans to Helixers who were caught short.

The Tigerstripe Amazons were the only Double Helixer motorcycle gang. Its members, six female Indian tiger Helixers, were originally 'crib-sisters' in the same stable of Helixer prostitutes, located in the Bahamas. They were devoted to one another in a sisterly fashion, and went through the IRC's educational process together — most notably Lacan's self-defense classes, which alarmed the Institute administration when word got around. They were sensual and sometimes hyperkinetic, enjoying a good



wrestling match or a case of beer.

After graduation, they obtained beefed-up Amazonis motorcycles and toured the country, performing odd jobs, usually requiring strength or exploiting their exotic looks. Whenever they were tapped out, they would work for a while as roadies for **Special Creation** or as bouncers or waitresses in the **Shamrock Club**. The six women mass 136 to 186 kg (300 to 410 pounds), nearly all of it muscle, and stand 212 to 232 cm (6' 11" to 7' 7") tall.

**The Tigerstripe Amazons** and its members were created by Mark Parker.

□ □ □

**McColl's Avengers** was a mercenary force on retainer to the Phoenix Foundation. It performed two major operations of note, one specifically for the Foundation, the other only peripherally involving it. These were the second raid on Nihoa Island, in which about one thousand Batch Two Helixers in their mat-tanks were quietly removed from the facility and eventually hidden on Phoenix, and the so-called South China Sea raid, in which a lightning strike on a pirate enclave was made to free some three dozen Helixers and incidentally destroy the brigands. A number of minor operations were also performed; these are too numerous to go into detail over in this summary.

Its personnel count was approximately three hundred, including support personnel. In combat, it functioned as a reinforced company when all assets were present. These assets, at various times, included a mixed air formation (mostly ground attack and transport, but occasionally including actual fighters), sea transport (refurbished tramp freighters converted for STOL aircraft operations), and a handful of light tanks and assorted light armored vehicles like APCs and light self-propelled guns, as well as the usual infantry. For Striker players, the unit would be classified as "long-service professional" if considering only combat elements and "conscript" quality if considering all personnel.

**McColl's Avengers** were created by Steve Corbett.

□ □ □

**The Phoenix Foundation** was originally a small group of wealthy industrialists concerned with the gradually worsening they were seeing around them. Their fears became more concrete after examining the results of a series of computer projections, each using different assumptions, which generally agreed that there would probably be a major calamity sometime in the early twenty-first century.

They determined to do something about it. After much debate, the decision was made to construct a small colonizer starship and recruit some ten thousand colonists.

They turned to the science fiction community as a ready-made pool of candidates, as well as quietly tapping trusted personnel in the corporations the individual members were connected to. They also gathered up several entire pods of dolphins and orcas.

During its tenure on Earth, the organization influenced history on a number of occasions: the second Nihoa Island raid, the South China Sea raid, promoting space programs in several countries, making contributions to the IRC through intermediaries, supporting hibernation technology, and so on.

The organization achieved its goal in 2016, departing in its completed colonizer, christened Phoenix, through the wormholes for a world called Camelot. It had covered its tracks well enough that nobody on Earth realized where the mystery ship had disappeared to until 2062.

**The Phoenix Foundation** was created by Dave Bryant.

## COSMETIC DOUBLE HELIXERS: TYPES AND BREEDS AVAILABLE

*"All things bright and beautiful,  
All Creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord God made them all."*

Cecil Frances Alexander

"All Things Bright and Beautiful"  
1848

Double Helix, Inc. grouped cosmetic Helixers by "Batches". Batch One was a three-year pilot program intended to iron out problems with the technology and marketing; it had been completed, resulting in about one thousand Helixers, when Operation MOREAU occurred. The first run of Batch Two, about two thousand Helixers were scattered around the world, undergoing trials in various combat-related capacities. Most of these never surfaced; it was never clear how many of them survived the "night of long knives" that followed in the wake of MOREAU. The only three survivors whose fates are completely known are Lacan Stark, Samantha Potter (Spot), and Angus Brock; only a half-dozen others are confirmed as dead.

Records salvaged from the mess on Nihoa Island were woefully incomplete, but a fair amount of information was pieced together. The company had obtained most of the human DNA used in its semihuman programs from Red Cross Organmobiles making the rounds of college campuses; domestic animal DNA was obtained from a variety of sources, including veterinary offices and research labs using test animals. Wild animal DNA came from zoos and parks, often through the company's legitimate Endan-



gered Species Preservation Program.

The design process itself was performed on a Cray mainframe connected to several IBM PC clones with hard optical disks. Portions of the design software would be downloaded to the desktop, where the designer would perform most of the basic design work, a piece at a time; for instance, facial features. As he finished each part, the design coding would be uploaded to the Cray, where it would be assembled into one design file and translated to DNA coding, checked for viability (a by no means foolproof process), and then sent to the manufacturing area for production.

There, the synthetic genetic code would be matched to existing DNA samples catalogued in the facility's stock and assembled from them via micromanipulator. The completed artificial DNA was injected into an egg and

implanted in a small, self-contained mat-tank nicknamed a "six-pack" from its resemblance to a pack of beer cans. When the fetus reached a certain size, it was moved to a larger mat-tank in the main facility, where it would be grown to final size.

Being a first-generation technology, the genetic engineering entailed in producing the Helixers was frustratingly crude. The failure and culling rate was high, in the neighborhood of 30 percent of attempts for Batch One. What made the program profitable for Double Helix at all were, first, its premium prices and, second, that the success rate improved with time.

All Double Helixers were generated from a fairly limited repertoire of animal species; a list of these 'standard' species is below. If a customer desired a particular type

that was not on the standard list, a large surcharge was levied to pay for obtaining the genetic material not kept on hand: 50% for domestic animal breeds and 100% for wild breeds.

The most popular single type was the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*); the most popular family was that of the big and small cats (*Felidae*). Orders for females outnumbered males by about two to one; some three out of four individual Helixers were ordered for "stables" as opposed to "single-item" orders. (A "stable" was the term for a number of Helixers, usually six to twelve, intended as prostitutes and housed together for the convenience of the owners.)

All Helixers were derived from the kingdom Animalia, the phylum Chordata, the subphylum Vertebrata, the class Mammalia, the subclass Eutheria, and the orders Artiodactyla (even-toed ungulates), Perissodactyla (odd-toed ungulates), Lagomorpha (hares and rabbits), and — in four out of five cases — Carnivora (hunting animals).

#### Artiodactyla

##### Bovidae

Ayrshire  
Shorthorn  
Texas Longhorn

#### Perissodactyla

##### Equidae

##### Equus

Mountain Zebra (*E. zebra*)  
Horse (*E. caballus*)  
Clydesdale  
Shetland  
Morgan  
Appaloosa  
Arabian  
Palomino

#### Lagomorpha

##### Lepidae

##### Lepus

Arctic Hare (*L. arcticus*)

#### Carnivora

##### Canidae

##### Canis

Coyote (*C. latrans*)  
Dog (*C. familiaris*)  
Akita  
Basenji  
Collie  
German Shepherd  
Husky  
Keshond  
Malamute  
Samoyed

#### Canis, continued

##### Wolf (*C. lupus*)

##### Canidae/Vulpes

Red Fox (*V. vulpes*)

Arctic Fox (*Alopex lagopus*)

#### Felidae

##### Felis

Cat (*F. catus*)

Most domestic cat breeds available

Lynx, Canadian (*F. lynx canadensis*)

Red (*F. rufa*)

Ocelot (*F. pardalis*)

Puma (*F. concolor*)

#### Felidae/Big Cats

Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatis*)

Jaguar (*Leo onca*)

Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)

Lion (*Panthera leo*)

Ounce (*Uncia uncia*)

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)

#### Ursidae

Eurasian Bown Bear (*Ursus arctos*)

Kodiak Bear (*Ursus middendorffi*)

Black Bear (*Euarctos a. americanus*)

Polar Bear (*Thalarctos maritimus*)

#### Mustelidae

Pine Marten (*Martes martes*)

Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)

Canadian Otter (*Lutra canadensis*)

#### Mustelidae/Mustela (Weasels)

Ermine (*M. erminea*)

European Ferret (*M. putorius*)

New World Mink (*M. vison*)

#### Procyonidae

Giant Panda (*Ailuropoda*)

Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)

□ □ □

The universe of the Double Helixers, also known as the Wormholes universe, was created by Dave Bryant and Ken Pick (copyright 1990). The Double Helixer concept was created by Ken Pick; the utility Helixer concept was created by Wayne Shaw. Characters and institutions in this universe have been created by Ken Pick, Dave Bryant, Wayne Shaw, Mark Parker, Steve Corbett, and Clint Warlick. Some portions of the preceding material will appear in substantially similar form in the science fiction role-playing game Wormholes; others will appear in altered form in the anthology/novel Twist a Double Helix.

Our many thanks to the many who've shown interest in and support for what has become, more or less by accident, a shared universe. ☺



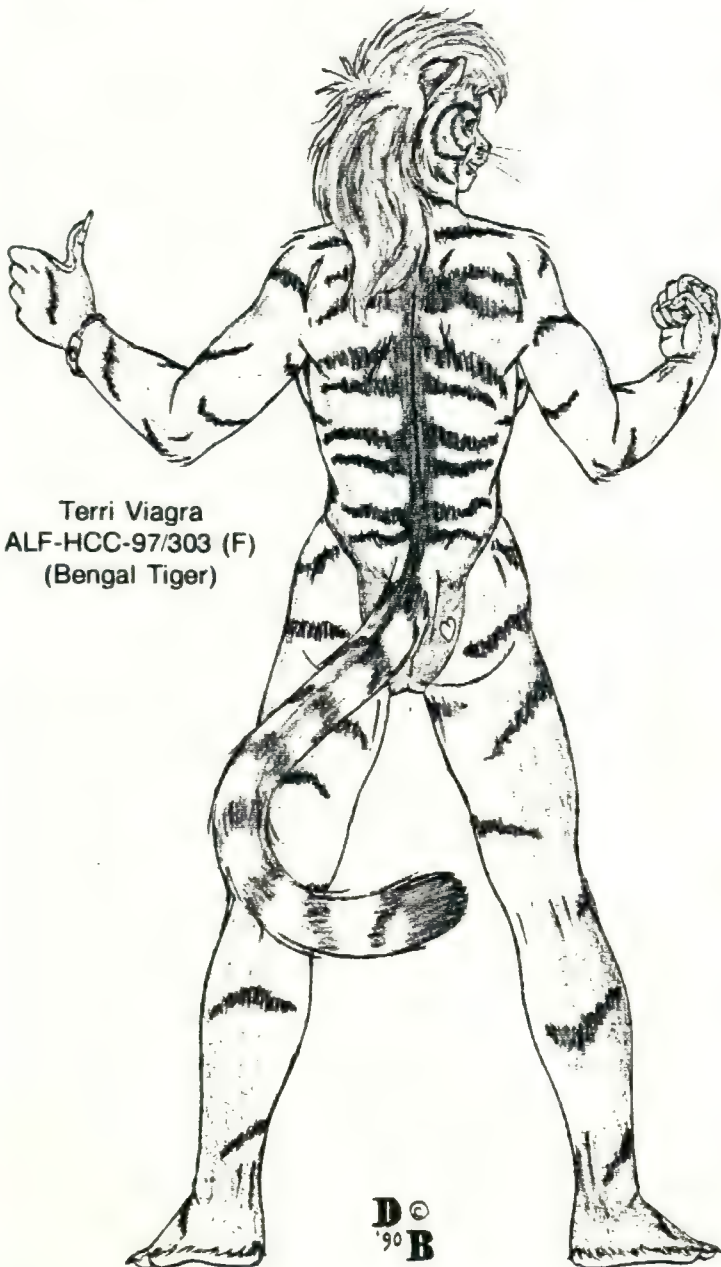
Tanya Viagra  
ALF-HCC-97/294 (F)  
(Bengal Tiger)



Josh McCabe  
ALF-PCC-98/327 (M)  
(Thoroughbred)



Robert Jaeger  
ALF-HCC-99/086 (M)  
(German Shepherd)



Terri Viagra  
ALF-HCC-97/303 (F)  
(Bengal Tiger)

Typical  
Double  
Helixers



Lacan Stark  
ALF-CU-97/273 (M)  
(Black Leopard)

D ©  
'90 B

# FAY



FAY

KATANA MEESHA

PON-PON

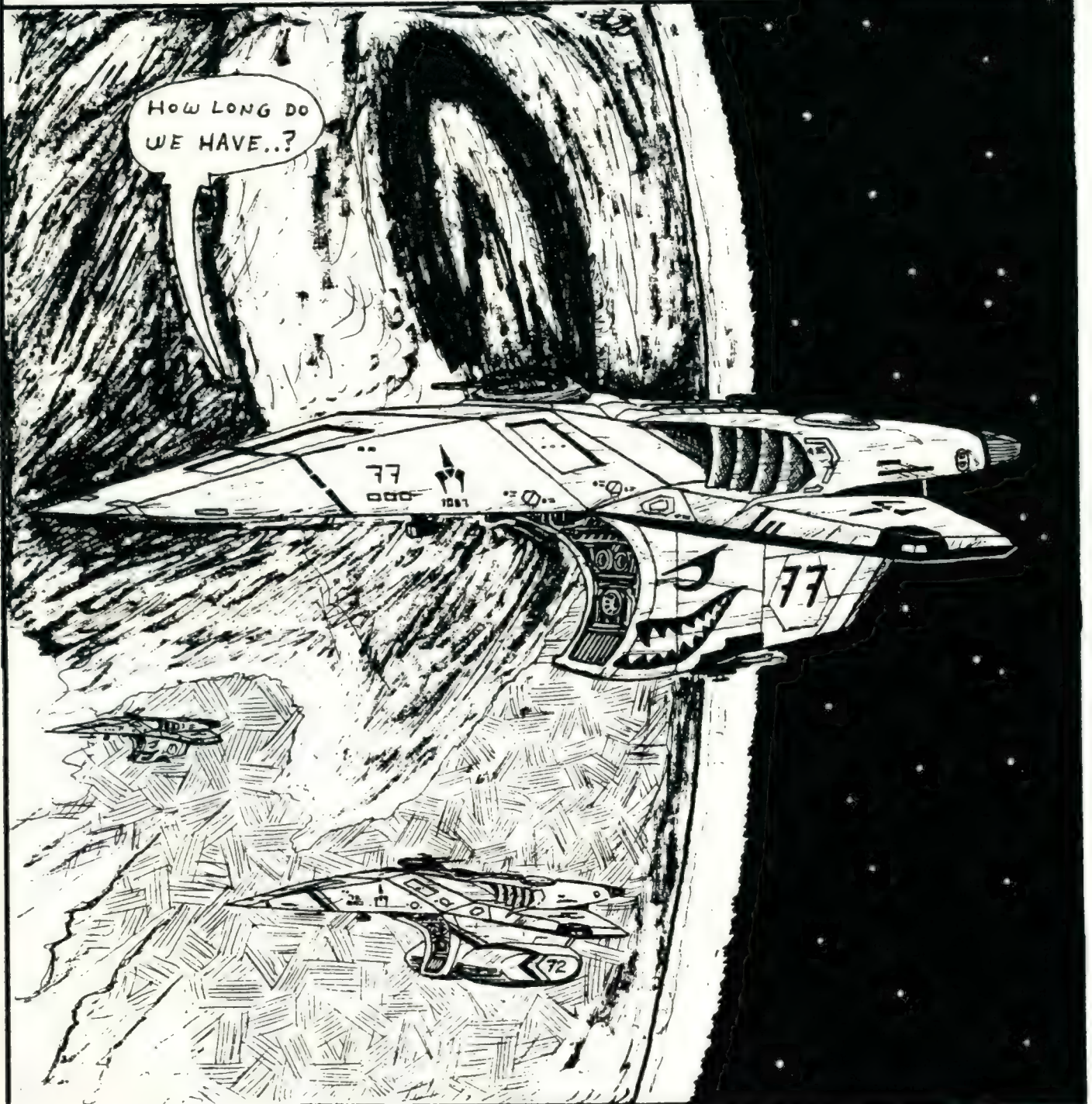
BODE  
FITS 90

# EMPIRES

Story, Art, Layout, Inks, Lettering and Concept by Chris Grant

©

IT IS EIGHT HOURS AFTER THE IRAYKANO I ASSAULT. A PAIR OF AVENGER-CLASS TORPEDO BOMBERS ESCORT A CORSAIR-CLASS ELINT SHIP IN LOW ORBIT TO SURVEY THE DAMAGE...





YOU MEAN, 'TILL WE CAN EXPECT THE 'KONNYS TO COME BY AND SEE WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT? I DUNNO. DEPENDS ON ALL KINDS OF THINGS.

LIKE WHAT?

TIK  
TIK  
TIK



WELL...IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME THEY'VE SHIFTED THEIR FLEET SINCE THE ATTACK...

YEAH...  
MAKES  
SENSE...

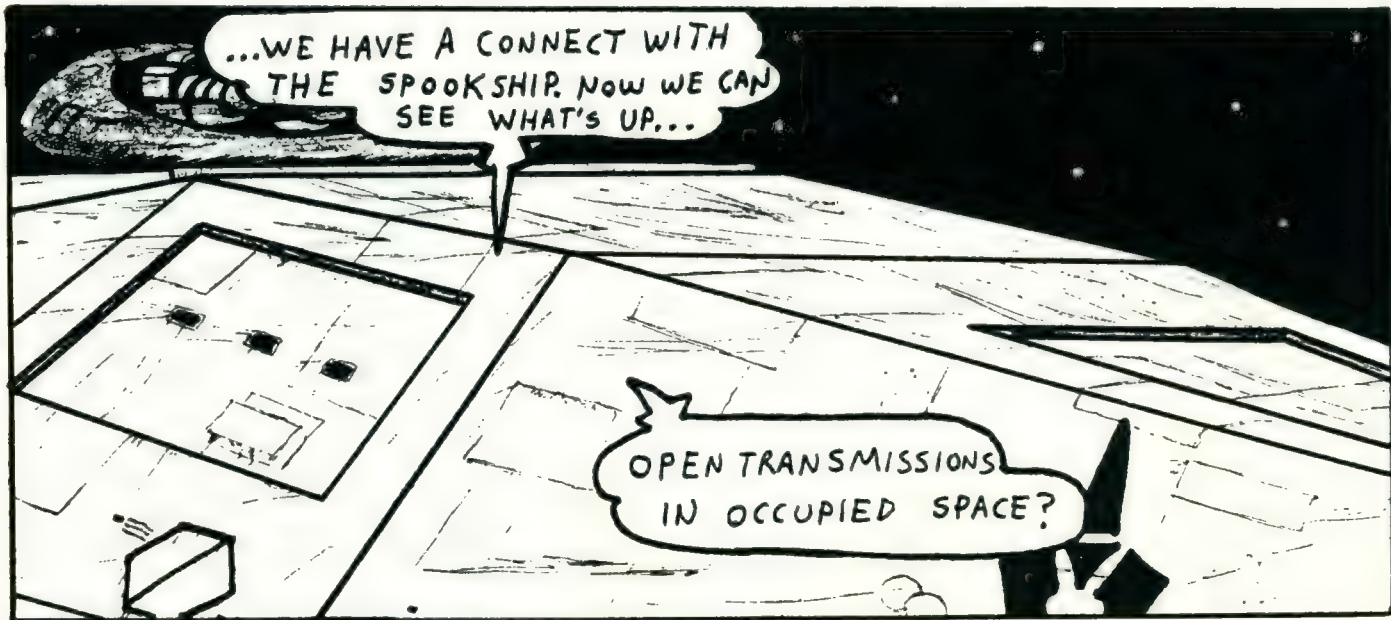
CLICK



... ANY INTERCEPTORS WOULD PROB'LY BE FROM DIRTSIDE. ABOUT FOUR MINUTES.

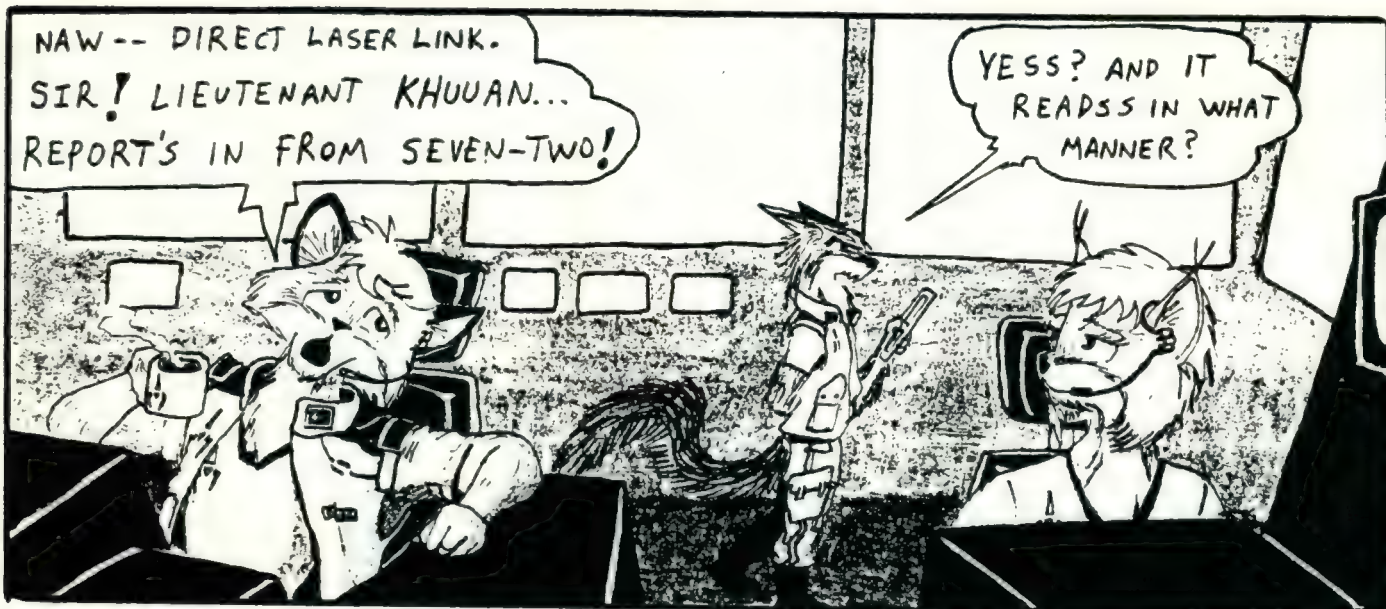
AHA!

BEEP  
BEEP



...WE HAVE A CONNECT WITH THE SPOOKSHIP. NOW WE CAN SEE WHAT'S UP...

OPEN TRANSMISSIONS IN OCCUPIED SPACE?



THE IMPERIAL DRIVE WAS FINALLY STOPPED BY THE REINFORCED 121ST RAPID ASSAULT TEAM AT 0830 THIS MORNING...



...THIS ACTION NULLIFIES, OF COURSE, THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT MADE TWO MONTHS PRIOR.



SSOO, CAUGHT ON OUR ASSES WERE WE...  
...THINKING THAT THE 'KONS WOULD ACTUALLY HONOR A CEASSE-FIRE.



AHH, YESS... AND M.I.A.'SSS WE HAVE, ASSS WELL...

YESSIR. TOTAL TALLIES SHOW FOR THIRTEEN UNACCOUNTABLES.



HMM... THIRTEEN MISSING...



...I WONDER WHO THEY ARE...

...AND WHAT THEY'RE DOING...

# The Ace of Spades



THESE CO-ORDS ARE THE BEST ESTIMATE I CAN SAY, SIR...

....CONSIDERING WE LOST SATCOM AND SATNAV ALONG WITH EVERYTHING ELSE...



SO YOU'RE SAYING, IF WE GO FIVE DEGREES PORT, WE SHOULD FIND AL-MADINAA OASIS?!

YESSIR! WE SHOULD, ANYWAY...



WE... "SHOULD"...

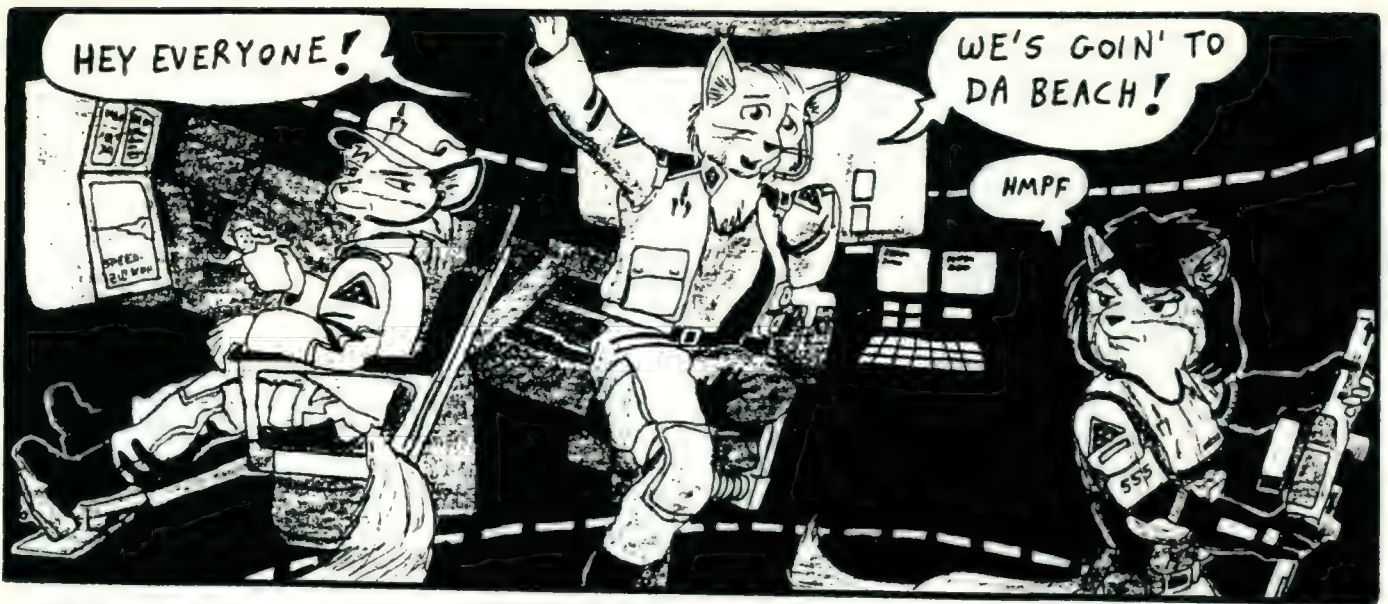


SHOULD, SIR. YES.



WONDERFUL. BARONA! FIVE DEGREES PORT, AND LETS HAUL SOME ASS!

I WANNA SEE AL-MADINAA OASIS BY NIGHTFALL!





MUST BE "EVERYONE STOMP ON TOMAC DAY" OR SOMETHING...

"FOR A SMART GUY, TOMAC, YOU SURE ACT STUPID..."

BARONA?



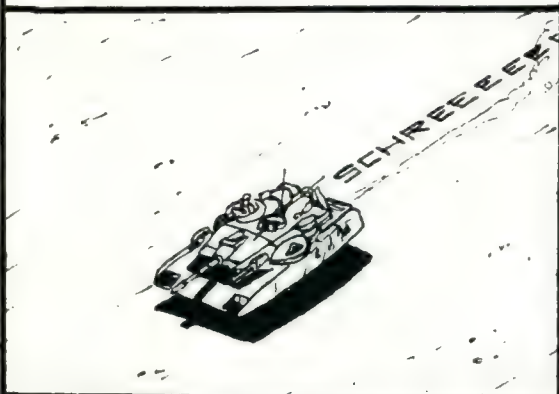
BARONA HABITUALLY MONITORS. THE INTERCOM, BUT RARELY DOES SHE SPEAK UP...

"I THOUGHT YOU HATED ME, TOO."

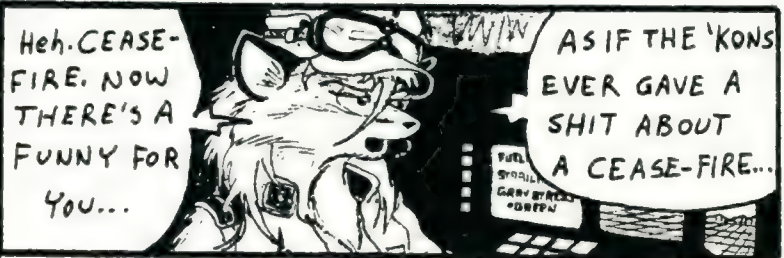
I ONLY BIT YOUR HEAD OFF, I DIDNT TELL YOU TO SLASH YOUR WRISTS OR SOMETHING THAT STUPID.

"WELL, THAT'S A RELIEF."

"DUMP THE PITY TRIP, OR I CLAM UP, TOMAC. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?"



"ON KALINDAA? TWO MONTHS. WHEN I GOT OUT OF INITIAL TRAINING. BEEN HERE SINCE THE CEASE-FIRE."



Heh. CEASE-FIRE. NOW THERE'S A FUNNY FOR YOU...

AS IF THE 'KONS EVER GAVE A SHIT ABOUT A CEASE-FIRE...



"YOU HAVENT HAD TIME TO SETTLE IN. YOU GOT TO US FOUR WEEKS AGO, WE'VE BEEN HERE ABOUT A YEAR. WE'RE FAMILY."

WELL, YEAH, BUT HOW DOES THAT...

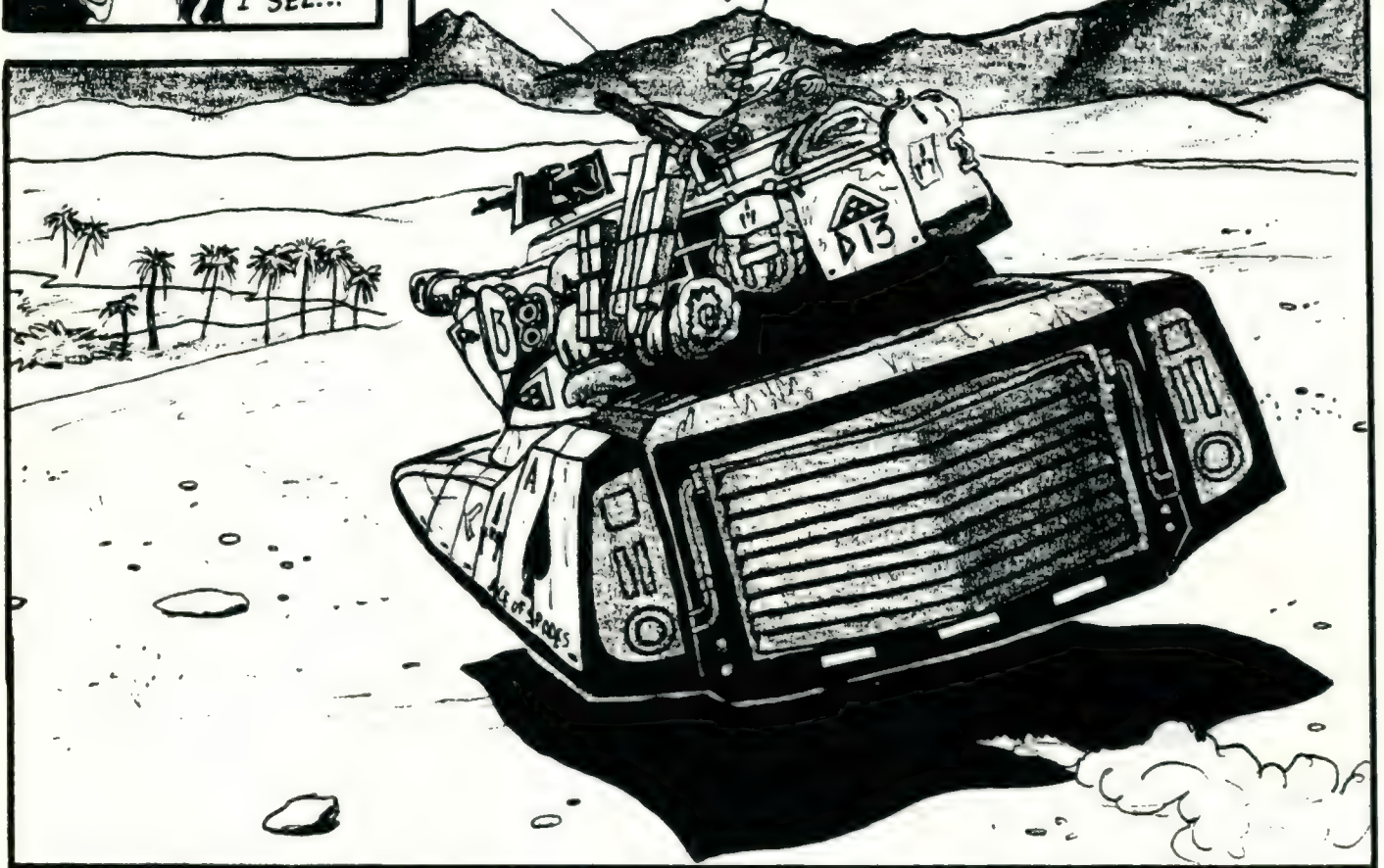
"-- I'M GETTING TO THAT. THINK OF IT THIS WAY, TOMAC... WE KNOW DELTA COMPANY'S GONE. WE DONT KNOW WHO ELSE IS OUT HERE. WE JUST LOST OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS BACK THERE."



VHREEE--



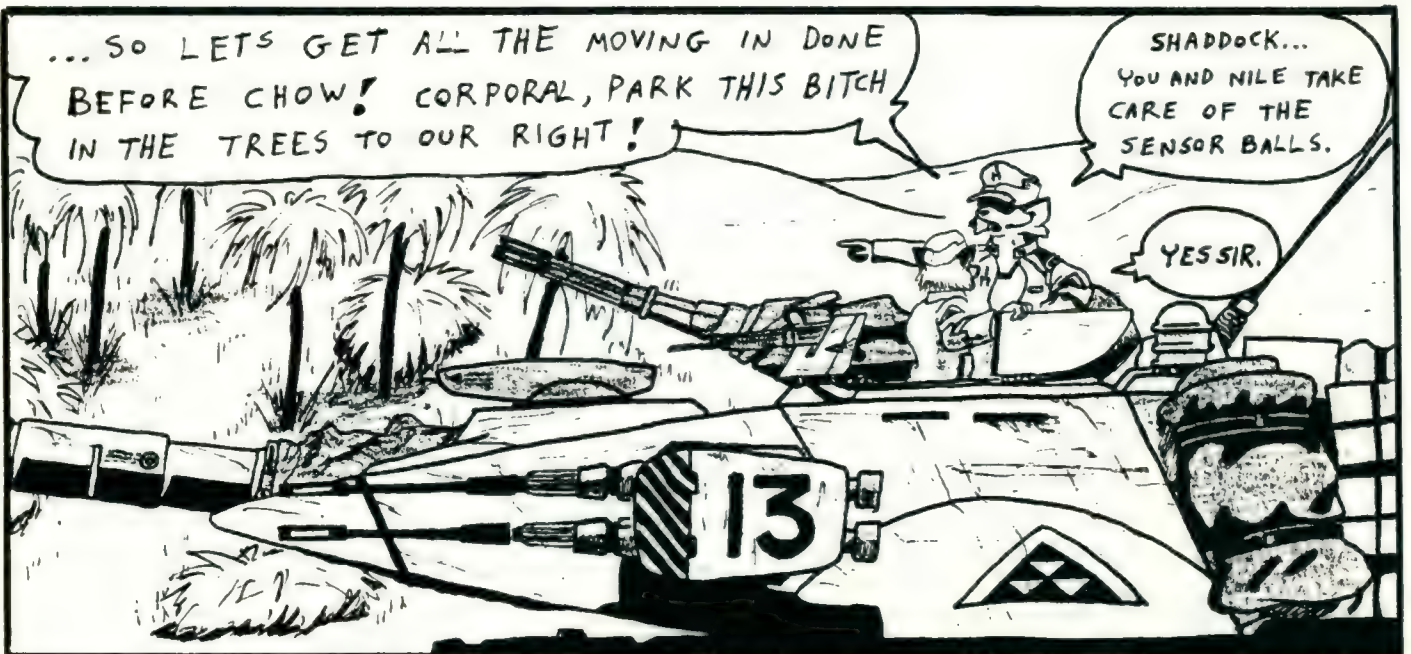
ALLRIGHT EVERYONE! AL-MADINAA OASIS AHEAD! WE GOT A COUPLE HOURS OF DAYLIGHT LEFT...



... SO LETS GET ALL THE MOVING IN DONE BEFORE CHOW! CORPORAL, PARK THIS BITCH IN THE TREES TO OUR RIGHT!

SHADDOCK... YOU AND NILE TAKE CARE OF THE SENSOR BALLS.

YESSIR.



LIEUTENANT KOTLIN GIVES A QUICK BRIEFING BEFORE EVERYONE GETS BUSY...

OKAY, HERE'S THE DEAL. UNTIL WE KNOW BETTER, ASSUME ANYONE THAT ISN'T US IS AN ENEMY. CARRY WEAPONS EVERYWHERE, EVEN TO TAKE A LEAK. BE READY TO MOVE IN A SECOND. YOU KNOW WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, SO MOVE TO IT!



BARONA AND TOMAC SET UP THE HOLOFLAGE PROJECTOR, AND RUN A SENSOR CHECK...



...WHILE SHADDOCK AND NILE SET OUT THE SENSOR BALLS THAT WILL RUN CONSTANT SCANNER CHECKS ON THE PERIMETER, AND REPORT ANY ACTIVITY TO TOMAC'S BOARD.



HOW MANY OF THOSE GOTTA GO OUT?

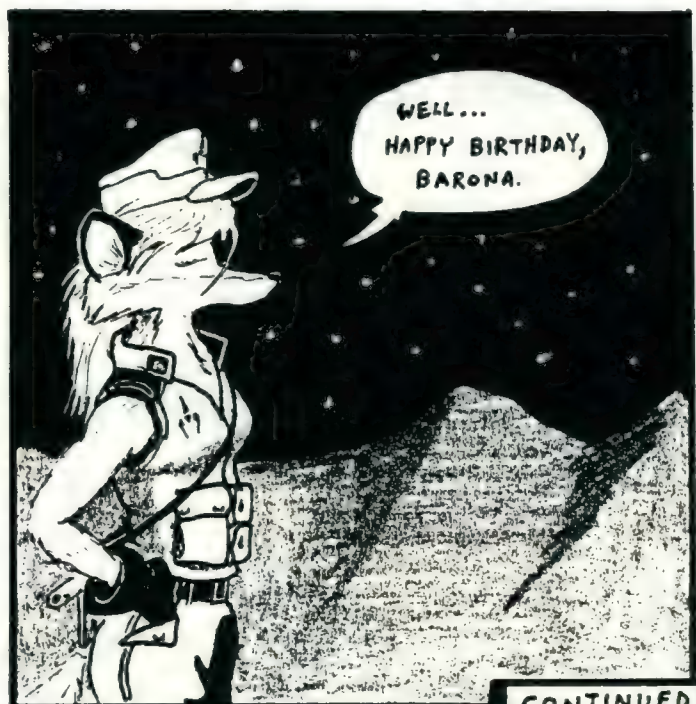
FOUR TOTAL. WE'RE ALMOST DONE.



AFTER A BRIEF MEAL, THE CREW OF THE "SPADE" PREPARES ITSELF FOR THE NIGHT...



SOON, THE OTHERS ARE ASLEEP... AND BARONA IS ALONE



CONTINUED



TRINA ©

FLA  
90



SPRING STROLL

AND MORE  
COPYRIGHT 1990  
Monica Livingston



Monika © 89



## Betazoid Bambioid

*editor's note: Our title, not Melody's. This is what happens when you send us art without titles... nyah ha ha! Apologies to Jerry Collins. None to Paramount.*

# ...But Can You Do This?

by Waverly Pierre III  
illustrated by Ken Pick

WebFed universe and its inhabitants created by Kurt Miller  
and chronicled by Ken Pick

"You Thalendri do like your fantasies, don't you, Aleks?" Chris Watson said in awe at the sight looming before him in the moonlight and luminaries.

"What good is a play without the proper staging?" asked Aleks in softly accented WebFed Interlingual. Nudging Chris lightly with one elbow, Aleks noted his human friend's expression with the ears-forward expression of interest. "Chris, you've been on Evergreen for almost a year; you should be used to this by now."

Used to it? "Aleks Haiut, I am a human from Camarra, a backwoods Freehold colony world, on one of the most flamboyant worlds in the WebFed. Give me a few moments of surprise at the sights before me."

"But of course." Aleks bowed low to his friend, his replica Inverness cape sweeping the pavements of a sub-plaza that branched inland from Degaas City's lakefront esplanade. "You're so much a part of the family that sometimes I forget. Come, slickskin, the *klesch* awaits."

Aleks looked into his human friend's properly almond-shaped eyes and gave him an open-mouthed, human-style grin. Chris the human, with medium brown exposed skin and eyes and thick black hair — so different from a Thalendri like Aleks, with his slim build and fox's brush of a tail, deep grey fur trimmed with white at the throat, chest and tailtip, and blue cat's eyes set in a long-muzzled vulpine face. So different, yet getting along so well; what was the human adage — opposites attract?

"Excellent." Chris used his favorite catchword as he looked up at the *klesch* — Thalendri bar — before him. Between low colonnaded shop fronts, a full-scale, three-masted schooner floated in the pavement of the sub-plaza. At least Chris *thought* the replica wet-ship was a schooner — old human history had never held much interest for him.

The schooner stretched thirty meters from stem to stern and appeared to be made of some old, dark-finished wood — definitely not Cathurian bronzewood like the trees towering over its masts. The bow of the ship sported the *klesch*'s name — "The High Seas" — and a carved figurehead of a swashbuckler from local remakes of ancient Errol Flynn movies — a large, vermillion-furred Thalendri male with off-white throat and tail tip, clothed in flowing white shirt and purple breeches, complete with exaggerated boots, huge magenta-plumed hat, and impossibly long gold rapier. Holographic sails and banners strained in a

nonexistent wind amid the colonnaded shops and pine-like *tressierdrai* of Old Town.

Slowly, Chris followed Aleks up the gangplank to The High Seas' main deck — and felt the deck sink imperceptibly under their weight, as if the ship actually rested on water. He stopped short and looked down the *klesch*-ship's side; in the cool Evergreen night, he could see the hull continuing below ground level, probably buoyed up by repulsors. Such an incredibly elaborate illusion — what other effects had been added?

"Salt air," Aleks wondered aloud, tongue-wetting his nosepad for better smell. "They've put in salt air since last time."

Of course, Chris thought, taking a deep breath and shaking his head, you couldn't spoil the illusion with such an obvious thing, never mind that the only open water in 500 clicks was freshwater Lake Telsai. Releasing the breath, his nose found proof positive of Thalendri occupancy; the musky scent of Thalendri pheromones mixed with traces of benga smoke — aromatic taste-blends, from the cinnamon-clove odor.

"Aleks," Chris remarked at the two made their way aft through the empty open-air seating of the main deck, "I hope whoever built this is getting his WebCred's worth. It would be a shame to think some poor soul sunk their entire life savings into this elaborate setting and then didn't have anybody come to appreciate it."

"No fear of that," said Aleks. "Being so close to both Academy and Old Town, this place does sellout business every night."

The two stopped before an entryway to what would have been the main cabin under the quarterdeck, looking up at the only break in the carefully-made illusion: a holosign, proclaiming "The High Seas" in five gaudily-glowing WebFed languages, including Davvashi — Thalendri Lowspeech — and Freehold English, floating atop the quarterdeck railing.

"Mr. Watson," Aleks said in his best approximation of a British accent, "welcome to The High Seas." Bowing, he gestured for Chris to enter first.

Chris hesitated. "Aleks? Are you sure we're properly dressed for the place?" He'd suddenly remembered his

own Threemar jacket, worn coree pants, well-used floppy hat, and scuffed bushboots contrasted with Aleks's rich grey cape, blue-and-gold paisley blouse, Victorian slacks with electric-blue codpiece, and long, polished bronzedwood cane with blue carbuncle tip.

"Chris, we're here to relax, not work. It's perfectly acceptable if we come as ourselves, even if you do dress as drab as a human." Aleks's ears twitched forward. "You really need to get out more, acquire some sort of social life. Meet people, not chits."

"And who would you suggest I socialize with?"

"Anielia."

"Since when does socializing involve self-inflicted torture?"

"She isn't that bad — for a sister." Aleks's ears were full-forward with amusement.

"No, but she's very trying," Chris sighed. "Come on, let's socialize; if we're lucky, we may find a willing wench or two to serve our needs." He nodded graciously towards Aleks, then entered in a regal fashion marred only by the wide grin on his face.

"Now that's a suggestion I can get behind," Aleks said as he stepped through the doorway, his eyes tracking the swiftly moving form of a silver-black vixen stepping into a simulation game alcove. "Come, let us mingle."

The cabin under the quarterdeck continued the illusion of a sailing ship's interior which had been refitted into game-alcoves in a nautical Art Deco. Except for the bright game-alcove signs, the cabin was lit for Thalendri eyes; Chris could only dimly make out the stairway in the center of the quarterdeck cabin, leading down into the sounds and smells of people below.

Aleks led the way down the steps into the *klesch* proper — what should have been a ship's hold, now a spacious common area with a mezzanine gallery extending completely around, lit by neon-like holosigns, hanging ceiling lanterns, and oil candles on the mostly-empty tables. Only a few serving-vixens populated the gallery; most looked bored, some sat at unused tables yipping to each other in Davvashi, and at least one with smartcase open and hardcopy spread over an entire table appeared busy at work on a homework assignment. Must be a slow night, Chris thought as they continued downstairs to the main "hold".

At the forward end of the hold deck, a long curved bar filled the entire width of the hull. Fronted by swivel stools, and backed by a mirror flanked with row after row of shelves stocked with every sort of drink imaginable, this bar had the look of an archaic movie-western bar, though the bartender, another silver-black Thalendri vixen, could in no way be mistaken for a cowboy. Neither could the

clientele — elven-slim, fancy-dressed foxes and vixens lapping fruit wines and brandies from wide-mouthed goblets, a few with bengasticks burning in the long cigarette holders that were a Thalendri fashion.

Red and grey-furred serving-vixens circulated among the tables, in the High Seas uniform of frilly white blouse and purple Thalendri-style skirt — cut high in the back to clear the tail root and in doing so expose furry buttocks, tapering down to a knee-length point in front that said "Lift me! Lift me!"

As Chris and Aleks reached the foot of the stairs, Chris did a double-take at the sight of a human barmaid, a small tray under her arm, walk up to the bar to place an order with the vixen tending bar. He only caught a glimpse of her walnut-dark skin, long space black hair, and human style skirt before Aleks pulled him aft, through the portside archway of the two flanking stairs.

The aft barroom beyond was lit to human brightness and decorated in the style of a Victorian London pub, though probably far cleaner and better smelling than the original. Incongruous as the mixture was, the styles seemed to fit and flow into each other despite, or because of, the Thalendri sense of the eclectic.

"Tonight is either a slow night, or a poor one," said Aleks, gesturing toward a grouping of tables near the straight aft bar. "Only Academy students, and not many of them at that."

"I think I know most of them, the humans anyway..."

Aleks nodded his head in agreement as they approached. Not difficult with less than a hundred and fifty humans on-campus at Koalara Academy, and most of them foreign exchange students like Chris, most every human knew every other of their species by name, sight, and probably personal history.

Like the humans here tonight: Jennifer Kagen, the redhead, Evergreen-born daughter of the Terran Imperial Consul, who dressed and acted more Thalendri than the Thalendri; Min Li Quon, alias "Min Le Bomb", terror of the chemlabs, whose fair hair contrasted with her Sino-human name; Ali Ben Hausser, the middle-aged Impie-human with even darker skin than Chris and obvious cyborging who spun war stories about his days in the Terran Rangers; and the other two—Antonio Jessup and Crystal Hamilton, little more than names and faces to Chris.

"...and two of them Thalendri," Chris continued, "the two across from Jenny and Ali." Marta Tymai, the near-scarlet furred vixen in crimson quietly sipping benga smoke across from her "human-sister" Jenny; and Diaus Paal, the sharp-muzzled silver-black male in a smocklike smesarra yapping away at the group in general. "I don't know the other Thalendri."

"I do," Aleks said absently as he focused on Marta's tall red

form; clearly he meant to get to know her well.

None of the particulars spared a glance at Chris and Aleks as the two took seats at the opposite ends of the table, close enough to follow the main conversation—actually, what appeared to be a lecture by Diaus to all comers, probably on the decay of traditional Thalendri ways—but far enough to be out of ground zero if the latent tension in the group erupted. Things seemed loose and friendly enough, but both newcomers caught the feel of an underlying storm.

Diaus was speaking in WebFed Interlingual—odd as he usually insisted on speaking only Davvashi around humans; since he'd found a patron in Baron Nimvanth-Kasha, the silver-black had become insufferable. "...you have to admit that humans are somewhat on the ungainly side," he continued, leaning forward as he addressed Min Li in particular and the group in general. "With so much body mass and muscle, and such a slow nervous system, any form of graceful movement from a human is next to impossible."

With a smirk at Chris, Aleks pulled his calabash style pipe from within his cape and proceeded to fill it with benga. This looked like it would be interesting. Chris hailed a barmaid—a short red haired human—as Min Li's voice came from the background. "...obviously, Diaus, you have never seen any of the human dance troupes at the Academy, or in the city proper."

"Um...two...umm, cherry tarts, please." Chris ordered the first thing that came to mind, a sweet-and-sour cherry wine drink; the barmaids low-cut bodice blouse and "fore-and-aft" skirt was leaving little to his imagination.

The barmaid caught Chris' look and responded with a coy smile before leaving. Chris swallowed hard; his imagination had started into overtime before Aleks interrupted it with a nudge. "Chris—listen to this."

Chris turned his attention back to the group. Min Li ran delicate fingers through her long auburn hair and turned her almond eyes to Diaus. They looked tired and hurt, but



some fire lurked within; most Freehold humans had some Irish genes, and Min Li's looked about to surface .

"I admit that humans have a high muscle-to-weight ratio," she started. "Considering that humans seem to descend from tree dwelling primates, it's likely that the muscle ratio was needed to support a large body climbing rapidly in an arboreal environment. We retain that muscle because it's still useful. Just as the Thalendri nervous system and reflexes are still useful to your people." She paused for a moment, noting some of the Thalendri nod grudgingly at this. It was nice to make an accepted point.

"Humans as a race are hardly done evolving, Diaus. Who knows how we may eventually end up. Even at this point, we hardly lack for grace. It's only Thalendri reflexes that have us beat."

"Excellent," Chris said softly. Beside him, Aleks' pipe added to the benga being put into the room by both parties involved.

"I concede the point about the necessity for human muscle overdevelopment. I still stand by my claim that humans lack grace." Diaus's ears began to lower; the tips of his canines appeared from under his lips. "And yes, I have seen human dance troupes, who do possess a certain exotic style, and even they have the same problems with over-muscled awkwardness."

"I'm afraid," Marta interrupted softly, "that no human dance can match Thalendri dance."

The human at the table raised their hackles as Marta in an awkward moment of silence — all except for Jennifer the human-vixen, who shot a "don't do this to me" glance at Marta and concentrated on her bengastick.

Marta took no notice of the sullen looks directed at her. Instead, she stood up slowly from her seat, setting her cigarette holder in a nearby ashtray while giving all present a view of her tall, scarlet-furred form. For the first time that night, Chris got a good look at her clothing — a sleeveless, v-necked bodice ending just below her ribcage, exposing white belly fur over a crimson-and-white Thalendri-style skirt whose point ended just between her knees, the whole decorated with pseudo-Celtic interlacing and topped off with silver-and-jasper jewelry. She stepped out of her sandals and stood still for a moment, eyes closed, her breathing deep and relaxed as if preparing for some monumental task.

The moment passed; her eyes opened, her delicately-clawed hands rose slowly over her head, and with a gentle swaying of hips, she moved away from the table into the middle of the open floor before the bar itself. Closing her eyes again, she completely ignored everyone present as her body began to move to the rhythm of some inner music. From somewhere Chris remembered her nickname of mikallai — sacred dancer — then she began.

From the first move, the desire to lift that skirt increased tenfold. Every eye, human and Thalendri, locked on the oblivious Marta, following every twist, turn, pirou-

ette, and dip of the gracefully moving vixen. A few males held their breath through a risqué move involving Marta's tail hugged close in front of her body, its white tip teasing the belly button on her bare midriff. One male whined like a sick pup when a quick dip exposed scarlet-furred tail and bottom to the mesmerized audience; women and vixens twitched in envy through a series of hip sways that came dangerously close to a bump-and-grind striptease. After nearly two minutes of this wonderful torture, Marta came to a slow graceful stop that left her on her knees before an open-mouthed Min Li.

"Almost any Thalendri can do that," Marta said softly, looking up at Min Li in wide-eyed innocence.

Leaning against a painting Aleks, Chris breathed heavily

CHRIS



as the *klesh's* temperature dropped back to a bearable level. He looked at the still-kneeling Marta, wondering if Anielia could do the same thing; and if so, whether he could survive watching it.

Not one of the humans from the original argument said a word; all sat back and tried to make themselves as small as possible; except for Jennifer, her outfit a kelly-green and gold twin to Marta's, who looked daggers at her Thalendri "twin".

"I wonder," Diaus said out loud in a speculative tone, "if a human could do as well."

"You win, Diaus." Min Li's voice was barely audible, even by Thalendri ears.

"You're welcome to try, of course." Diaus's, his ears forward, was obviously enjoying this. "Any display—any display at all—would help."

"You win, Diaus." Now Min Li's voice was audible to humans, if a bit tight.

"We Thalendri are quite good at what we do."

Now the human side was really cold; even Chris found himself annoyed. With the point proven, it was hardly necessary for Diaus to continue beating a dead horse—or a whipped human. At least Ali looked normal, neither too calm or too agitated—officially, the Imperials had demilled his cyborging when he mustered out, but Chris had never been completely sure. He checked the Thalendri side.

Marta, now back in her seat opposite Jenny, seemed to be trying to disappear as she edged away from Diaus, casting occasional, apologetic glances at Jenny and Min Li.

"If he doesn't stop that," Aleks commented in a voice low enough for only Chris, "he's going to be in some real trouble from his former friends."

"He already is." An idea began to form in Chris's mind. "Aleks, have you ever heard of a dish called humble pie?"

"No," Aleks said quizzically, "Why? How does it taste?" Now he was starting to sound suspicious.

"Well," Chris said as he stood up, "let's just say it's more enjoyable to serve than to eat." He winked and grinned at Aleks, then started toward the group.

Aleks nursed his pipe and watched whatever was about to happen; from what he knew of Chris, it was going to be good.

"Hello, Marta," Chris began as he walked up to her, "that was quite a display. Might I say, vixen, that your grace and beauty left me breathless." As he said this, he bowed low, gently grasped Marta's right hand and brought it to his lips

for a soft kiss; the obviously pleased vixen looked at him with intense interest. Chris reluctantly broke the contact and turned to Diaus, a smile on his face that escaped the notice of all the Thalendri except Aleks, who joined the humans in taking active interest of the events before them.

"Diaus, I was...completely entranced by the marvelously fluid motion which I witnessed. I have to say...that you're right. No human could possibly match what we saw; and yet, for the honor of humanity, I have to try. Is the offer still open?"

"Yes, of course," Diaus said magnanimously, with a hit of suspicion; this human was laying it on like one of Baron Nimvanth-Kasha's court. "Please, you should all have the chance to try."

"Thank you, Chris said with the same smile as before. "I think I'll try something simple, but I'm going to need some help. Marta?"

He took her hands in his and pulled her up before him, almost face to face and a bit too close, as her liquid grey eyes were now aimed directly into his. This, and the heady cinnamon-close-incense smell of Benga on her breath and the pheromone aura from her fur caused Chris to lick suddenly dry lips. For a moment, he forgot exactly what he was doing.

"Wa...wait here a moment...Marta," he stuttered as he released her hands, "there's something I need to get."

Chris started toward the bar, speaking over his shoulder to the now totally-interested group.

"I think we can all agree that Thalendri and humans define grace in much the same manner; that is, the esthetic blending of balance and coordination in a pleasing form—Marta's display for instance." He reached the bar. "May I have two bottles of beer, please—bottles, not bulbs—and leave the caps on them."

The vixen tending the bar produced two small, narrow-necked plastic bottles, placing them on the bar in front of Chris, who looked at them for a moment.

"Um, do you have anything a little bigger and firmer?"

The vixen's ears tilted forward; Chris felt his face flushed as her amused expression registered. Silently, she reached under the bar and pulled out two squat malium liter bottles of what Chris knew to be an awful human-student homebrew.

"Okay, we're getting warm." He didn't appreciate this vixen's sense of humor. "Now, let's try something in-between. Not quite so big, and a little taller. Preferably something in silica-glass."

The vixen's ears twitched as she set down two more bottles, this time exactly to Chris's description.

"Thank you," he said with a nod of his head and picked up the bottles. As he turned away, the now-interested barmaids/barvixens followed behind him. What an audience, he thought as he walked back to the group.

"Marta, would you hold this please?" He handed her one of the unopened bottles. "Now, Marta, as you've said before, your display was common to most Thalendri. So with that thought in mind, I will do something that humans can do."

Chris led the vixen to the same open space she'd danced in earlier. After looking it over for a moment, he seemed satisfied with its size and turned to Marta.

"All right, Marta. If you'll just stand right where you are for a moment, I'll get right back to you." As he said this, Chris stepped back from the vixen and removed his jacket, tossing it over the nearest empty table. He flipped the bottle in his hands and examined it. The beer was Steinhauser, imported for the Freehold; mildly auspicious. Symbol-coded for human consumption; moderately important, especially for his planned finale. And the bottle was thick silica-glass, with a wide base, short knurled neck, and a moderate-sized top; more than adequate for his purpose. He looked up at his audience and began.

"Okay, now what I'm about to do is something that humans can do, and is both simple and complex at the same time. Now, this particular maneuver requires two bottles, one of which Marta has —" Marta waved at her cue "- and which I'll be getting from her shortly, and the other of which I am holding in my hand." He held up the bottle for all to see. "Now, the one I'm holding is for the simple part of the maneuver. Nothing at all to it; it's as simple as this:"

With one swift motion Chris bent over, set the bottle on the floor in front of him. Hesitating a moment as if making a mental calculation, he leaped into the air; with one hand still grasping the neck of the bottle, he pitched forward into a perfect one-handed handstand atop the Steinhauser.

The silence in the klesch deafened him.

Chris waited a couple of beats for the sight to sink in, then he continued. "Now, you're probably saying to yourself, 'This is easy, humans cans do this.' and, of course you're right. Because of this, I think I should try something a little harder. Marta," he said gesturing at her with his free hand, "could you hand me the other bottle, please?"

Marta stepped forward mechanically, her long-muzzle face totally blank as she placed the Steinhauser in Chris's free hand. As soon as he took it, she stepped back, face still blank.

"What I'm doing now is easy," Chris continued as if everything were completely normal. "What I do next is hard."

He stood the other bottle on its base at arm's reach in front

of him, paused again for a moment, then brought his right foot down on it, crooking his left leg slightly in the process. He hesitated a moment in this awkward position, then with a thrust of his hand balanced himself on the second bottle with only his right foot for support.

"See," Chris waved his hands, gesturing down. "That was hard." He reversed the process, going back to the bottle in his hand. "This is easy." Back onto one foot. "Hard." Back to one hand. "Easy." Chris continued to seesaw like this for about thirty seconds until he finally stopped upright with his foot on the bottle and a far too innocent smile on his face.

The silence roared. Except for Aleks, the Thalendri seemed in shock. Ears drooped and muzzled mouths hung open in disbelief as they stared up at him and then back and forth at each other.

"I didn't know humans could do that," a Thalendri broke the silence, looking over at Diaus.

The human contingent heard this and reacted; first tiny crinkled smiles, growing swiftly to wide toothy grins, then into not-quite-successfully muffled laughter as the Thalendri expressions registered on them. They were, for the moment at least, as poor winners as the Thalendri.

Aleks was practically under the table, hands clamped around his muzzle trying to control escaping laughter. After almost falling off the bottle, Chris grinned broadly at the sight.

"So, Diaus," Chris said as he casually pivoted to face the silver-black, "would you like to try? Or any of you, for that matter?"

"Urrr...no," Diaus whispered.

Chris swung his free left foot in a casual arc. "Oh, come on; anyone with grace and style can do it."

"I...don't think so."

"Oh, well," Chris sighed, then turned to Aleks. "And that, Aleks, is humble pie." With these words, Chris took the bottle in his hand, flicked the cap off, and took a swig of the best-tasting beer he'd had all year.

"Excellent." He bowed to the assembled group. And the bottle didn't even wobble.

*- Two Evergreen days later -*

"Chris, can humans really do that," Aleks asked, staring across at him.

"Aleks..." Chris looked up from his picket reader in exasperation. "It's been two days since I did that trick. Will you stop orbiting that incident?"



"Well, yes, but I'm no longer sure you're human. Not completely human, after that display." Aleks had a hard time keeping the amusement from his ears as he let his friend do a slow burn over the back-handed comment.

"Aleks, my mother can do the same thing; so can my father, though mom is better at it — she's the one who taught me. And none of us are cyborged — at least not enhanced in any way that could help."

"How?"

"Eight months — half an FSC year — of intensive training before I got it right. Aleks, any human can do what I did — and more — if they train and exercise long enough. Come to think of it, I could probably teach you how."

"No, thank you, Chris," Aleks said, shaking his head human-style. "one individual with your current problem is enough."

Chris looked up from his pocket reader at Aleks. "What current problem?"

"Do you know that what you've done is now all over Academy?"

"So?"

Aleks pointed aft, to the stairway. Chris followed his finger; a crowd of about forty — Thalendri, humans, even a couple of otter-like Rylis — was coming up from the lower hold deck.

Aleks sat back in his chair with a look hovering between amusement and exasperation. It was late afternoon, and the two of them were relaxing on the mezzanine deck of the High Seas after a grueling day of audiovisuals, CID-sets, and labs. After the bottle incident, Chris had clammed up tight about any details on how he'd done it. After two days of fruitless haranguing, Aleks had dragged him back to the scene of the crime in an effort to make him talk — either from memory of the event or too many cherry tarts. So far, neither had worked.

"Chris..." Aleks started.

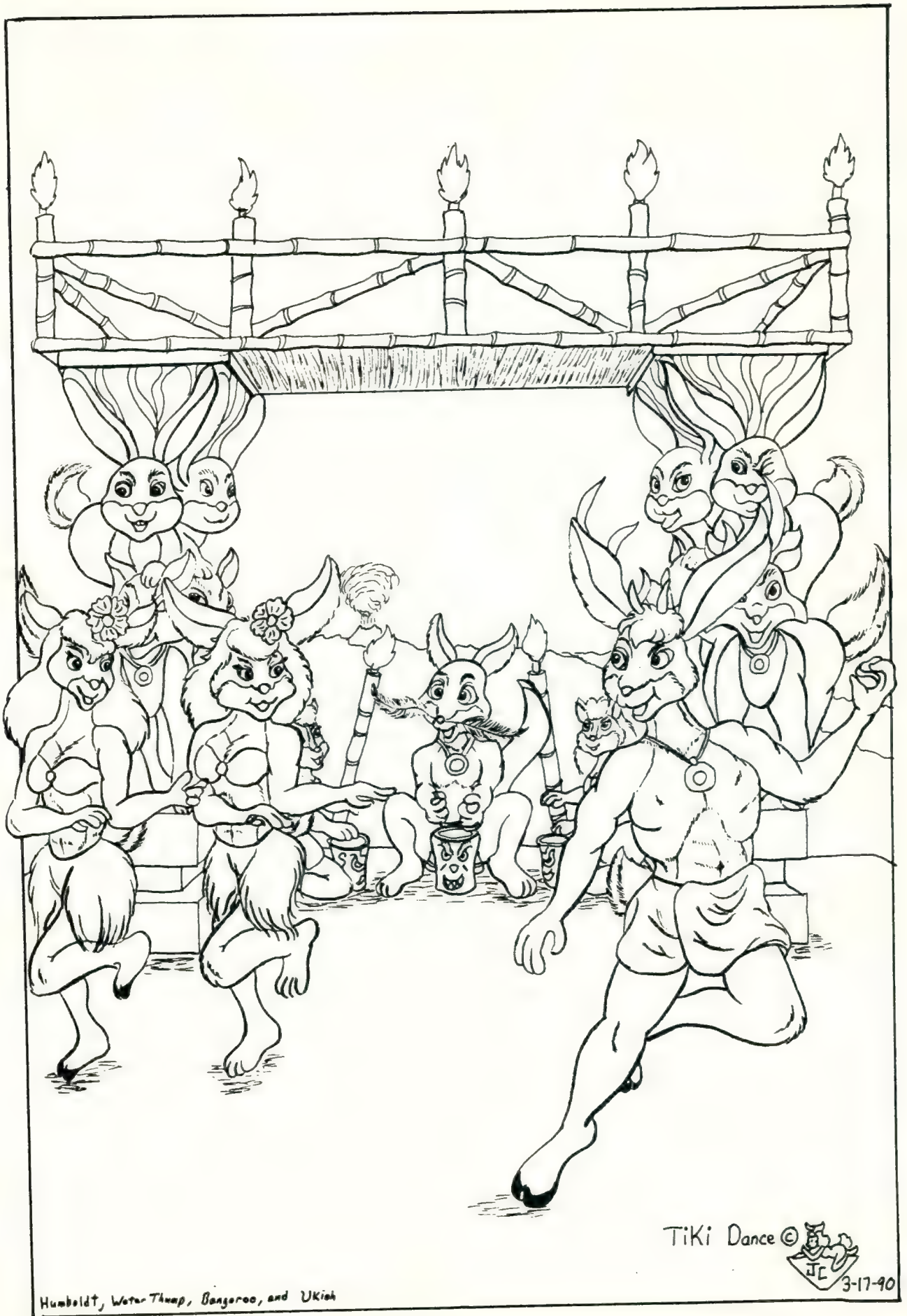
"Yes, Aleks, humans can do it. You were there; you saw me do it."

"Think of it, Chris," Aleks started, "You pulled a stunt that almost no human has ever done before a Thalendri audience; at least, no one to the best of my knowledge."

"Chris...Chris-to-fer Watson." It was Marta Tymai, leading the procession from the stairway around the mezzanine to the two's table, carrying a bottle of Steinhauser in each scarlet-furred hand. The rest of the crowd moved to surround the table as Chris realized what was happening.

"Do you — do you need — a manager?" Aleks managed to get out before breaking down into helpless yips of laughter.

Chris merely groaned and started sliding under the table. ☹



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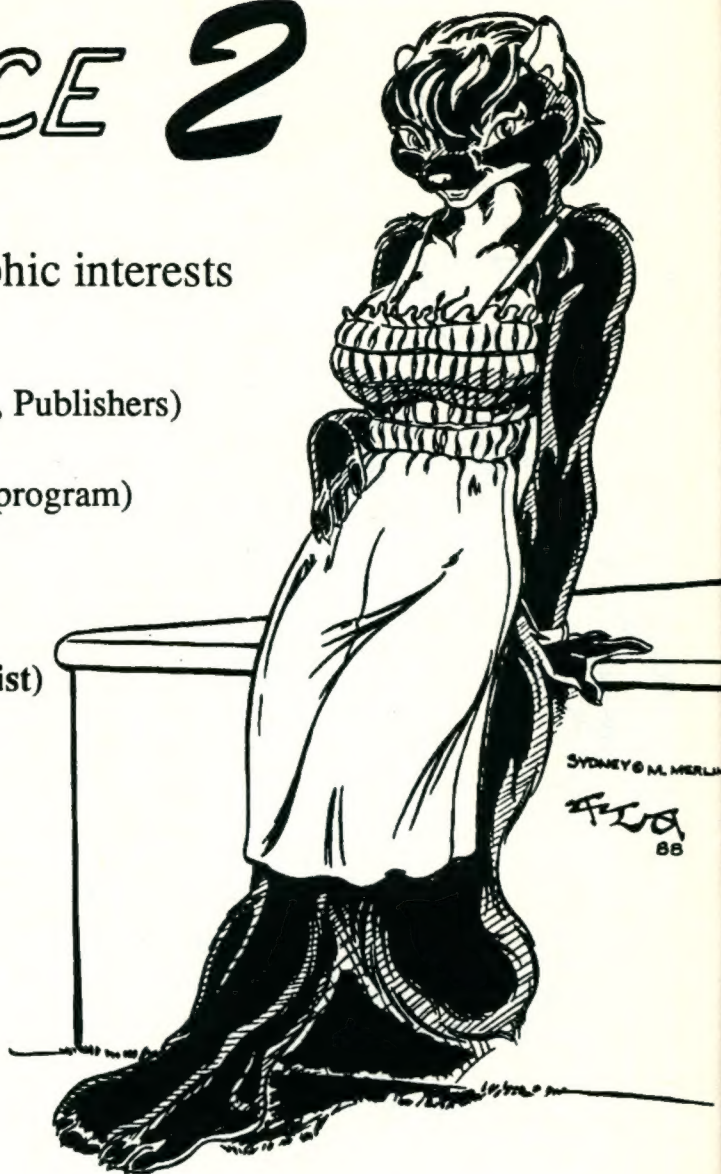
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