The dynamic figure you see below is a re-linked drawing of THE DEFENDER from the cover of COMIC CRUSADER #5. It heralds the fantastic concluding chapter of the Defender saga, "Terror At The Top Of The World!" Now some of you will spot a few swipes in this story. Please don't waste your time writing me nasty letters about them. Instead, enjoy the story and the way I utilized them.

This issue’s second blockbusting strip is by STEVE DITKO. Steve originally did it for a school newspaper. When plans for its printing fell through, Steve asked if I might like to publish it. Since I believe Mr. A to be one of the most thought-provoking characters around today, I jumped at the chance. I hope you enjoy it and I thank Steve for allowing me to print it!

In an era when more and more fanzines sport fantastic covers, there is none more fantastic than the one JIM STERANKO has rendered for this issue! Thanks Jim!

It takes an unusual man to write an unusual article. A "13" article for a "13th" issue is such an article and such a man is TOM FAGAN! I'm sure you'll enjoy his article on 13 oriented comic characters.

This issue, a 75¢ price goes into effect. Higher printing costs and an increase of 3rd class postal rates force this price change. I hope you'll continue to support this top zine for under $1.00!

My thanks to Gil Kane, Bill Black, Wayne Pond, Anthony Kowalk, Joe Staton and Ron Fortier for their help in putting this issue together. Read and enjoy, my friends. More is on the way! Best - MARTIN L. GREIM
The Defender learns from Brown and Queen Jolene that The Ruler is coming to Earth to personally mastermind its conquest.

Using his teleporter, The Defender transports himself and Brown to The Ruler's Himalayan headquarters. They split up, in an attempt to gain entry and after a small battle, The Defender succeeds. Suddenly, he is surprised by The Ruler, who is holding a gun over Brown's unconscious form. The Ruler moves in, as his troops arrive.

SURRETTE!

JIM

SURRETTE!

You came to destroy me, David. But instead...

No! I'm Jim Surrette no longer. For here, I am The Ruler!

I don't destroy easily. Ruler...

The Ruler's men swarm over him so quickly, that The Defender is unable to utilize his weapons belt and is soon felled by a Myphesian war club.

CLUNK!
Searing pain clears The Defender's vision, as he struggles to his feet.

The Ruler's men attacked and took me prisoner, when I came to check on a salt water conversion experiment, being conducted by my scientists off the coast of India.

And you! I recognize you from the papers. You're that alien General Westman's after.

Don't believe everything you read, mister. Westman has a habit of trying to pound square pegs into round holes.

I can answer for myself! I'm C.C. Fagan, head of Fagan Enterprises and a prisoner here, just like you.

I hope you weren't thinking of escape. The bell outside has transmitters emitting a high frequency sound that would destroy your brain before you made good your escape.

Although I was rendered helpless by gas, and couldn't move to aid you, I heard you and The Ruler speak as though you had met before.

Yes, The Ruler and I are acquainted.

Drum, who are we and who's he?
3961, a time when man has reached the stars...a time when new cities of gleaming alloys and crystal glass reach high into the sky.

But, it is also a time when man has become increasingly passive!

Very few explore new worlds; and those that do, are either fortune hunters or adventurers.

Two such men, as these, are DAVID MANNING and JAMES SURRETT; now returning to Earth.

You really get a kick out of this, don't you Manning? Space holds a thrill for you, rather than the lure of wealth that drives me. Well, after a few more trips like this, gathering artifacts for the Galactic Science Center, and I'll have enough credits to give me a start toward great wealth and power!
Is that right? Well, I'll tell you; I like money as well as the next guy, but in a world where every member of a family is trinketized into bland normality, where "hate" and "fight" are the dirtiest words in the language, and where computers run everything, right down to programming sex periods...space is the only answer!

The sub-space radio interrupts the conversation to tell them that Dr. Volta, through the use of his time probe, has brought from the past the find of the ages...THE ADONIS. A sculpture so valuable, that it will reduce by half the artifacts they are carrying.

Scientists in the year 3961, through use of a time probe, are able to bring lost art treasures of the past to the future. There, they reproduce the object and the original is sent back to the exact second in time from which it was taken. In this way, the people of that era never miss the object. Just such an object is THE ADONIS!

Surrette rants that he's been cheated, until they land on Earth.

It's evening before the cargo is unloaded. Now, David heads toward the home of Dr. Volta.

However, as he steps into Dr. Volta's courtyard, it's not world problems that concern him but rather, Volta's beautiful niece...KRISTEN!

Friends for many years, David and Dr. Volta often met to discuss the problems of their tranquil society.

Umm, you're back.

DAVID!
OH, DAVID!
No! Every animal I send into the past undergoes a molecule change that kills them. It seems that the time probe can only transmit inanimate objects.

Tell me, Doc, how've things been, while I've been away? Have people begun to accept Kristen as one of them?

I'm afraid not. David. Biggs of our world, distrust the fact her mother was a Venustan and that she has a sixth sense.
Kristen's screams instantly brings David and Volta to the probe room. David steps forward and throws open the door!

He sees it for only an instant - Then it is fired!

A ray-gun! Outlawed, to all but space explorers, its blast throws them stunned across the room!

Unable to move, David sees Kristen lying on the probe's transmit panel.

He sees a hand turn a dial, then push a button.

The probe is activated and Kristen is gone!

Now the Adonis is mine!

ATTACK!

It was Surrata! Summoning all his strength David gets to his feet to...
Though in agony, David lashes out with uncontrollable fury.

He presses the fight onto the transmit panel. But the ray blast he received finally takes its toll and...

A well placed blow knocks him to the floor.

Recovering his gun, Surrette screams... "I won't waste time sending you back in time. I'll blast you to atoms!"

Unnoticed during the fight, Dr. Volta is now at the time probe's controls.

SURRETTE TURNS, BUT TOO LATE!

YAAAH!
Surrette was gone—
dealt the same horrible
fate as Kristen.
Dr. Volta and Manning
thought them both dead
until about 3 months
later....

Violence came to 3961!

It was soon learned, through
use of the time probe, that
Surrette had survived the
time trip and now, known as
The Ruler, his evil was
changing history and causing
a regression in 3961!

The past was not without its
defenses. Heroes, like
SPACE GUARDIAN, came
forth to fight the
Ruler’s menace.

Dr. Volta discovers that a man
can be sent back in time.
Death is caused, by the stress
of a return trip.

Number One,
President of
Earth, decrees
that Manning
be sent back
to stop the
regression.

Threatened with imprisonment if he
refuses, Manning agrees to go. He is
given a battle suit, designed by Dr.
Volta and
listens closely as
Volta explains its
uses.

Doc, if Surrette survived the time trip,
maybe Kristen did too. Only the past holds
the answer. A changing past that’s causing
a savage future.

And so,
David
Manning is
sent to
fight an
evil centuries before his birth.
It might help, if you offered a few ideas on how we might escape from here!

The Defender's thoughts return to the present, but before he can answer, a figure appears in a flash of energy.

Jolene! How in blazes did you get here?

I beamed down from my spacecraft, after tracing your exact position with its sensors.

Jolene takes a small weapon from her belt and says: "I best remove that map from your belt, David, as I'm sure both I and my spacecraft must be detected by now."

And detected they are, as the Ruler's soldiers mobilize.
Now that my belt is free, I'll get us out of here.

But to use that door means death!

Now really, C.C., who said anything about using a door?!

Hurry! You must return to your ship.

Return to the ship, when we're this close to the Ruler! Not in your life!

One more thing, even if I'm not out in fifteen minutes open up on this place with everything you've got!

Look Braun, I'll take care of the Ruler! Your duty is to your queen. Get her and Pagan to safety. Besides, I'll stand a better chance here alone!
As Jolene, Pagan and Brown beam up to an orbiting spacecraft, the Adler's gun crews prepare for battle!

Hail Sire! There is no sign of the intruder yet!

Well find him! Nothing must interfere with "PROJECT AQUARIUS". At last, with the aid of the rare components we forced our prisoner C.C. Pagan to procure for us, I can now control the oceans of the world!

I'll check on the spacecraft myself!

But why concern yourself with the spacecraft? If it comes within range, our computer-controlled guns will unfailingly look onto it and destroy it.

THE COMPUTER IS DEAD!
Yeah! And this guy isn't in such great shape either!

Right! And I bet you can hazard a guess on what happened to your computer.

Don't be a fool, Manning! Join me. So what if our time is regressing. After all, you were always preaching how passive it was. Now, we two from the future can rule a universe!

Forget it! I want no part of a universe of barbarism. Then too, there's the matter of Kristen to be settled!

Alright then - Die, deem you die!
You'll have to do better than that, to stop me Ruler!

A whole lot better!

You've created chaos in this time - brought about great turmoil in our own - perhaps destroyed the girl I love - and tried to take my life! Now, you maniac, your moment is at hand!
Wait Defender! The final gambit is not yet played!

After my untimely arrival in this era, I stole certain radio parts and created a sub-space transmitter. With this, I contacted the most war-like race of this time, the Nyphestians. They brought me to their planet, where I instructed them to place two discs in my forehead. It was through these discs that I became their ruler. A ruler that led them on a path of conquering destruction, unequaled anywhere in the galaxy! Though it taxes me terribly and I can only use it for short periods of time, the discs give me the power of...

A DESTRUCTIVE MIND FORCE!
The Defender, unprepared for such an attack, falls to the floor stunned!

But before the Ruler can finish him off...

Jolene screams, "Jrawn, you've opened fire on the Ruler's citadel with David still inside!"

Jrawn replies, "I know, my Queen, but it was at his own request and the Ruler must be destroyed!"

Blast! I forgot about that orbiting spacecraft. With the computer guns inoperable, our shields will soon collapse and this place will be blown to bits! I've got to get out!
Because of that spacecraft, I can't escape into space! I'll have to teleport myself elsewhere on Earth and have my men pick me up later!

Guards! Number 7, go to the control room and destroy the unconscious Defender! Number 5, come with me!

As Number 7 enters the control room, the Ruler's citadel receives another hit. The shock of this is compounded, when he sees that The Defender is anything but unconscious!

With the Ruler's citadel now in flames, his soldiers flee in terror to the rocket room. Hoping to escape into space, they are not yet aware escape this way is impossible!
Having extracted the location of the teleporter, from Number 7, The Defender races through the now deserted corridors in pursuit of The Ruler!

Meanwhile, The Ruler sets the teleporter's controls.

Outside the teleport room, The Ruler's guard mistakes a figure coming out of the smoke as one of his own.

It's his last mistake!

Yes Ruler screams! Scream, as The Defender leaps onto the teleport panel! For you know this action will overload its settings and cause a malfunction!
It's over! The Ruler's citadel is no more!

Our sensors show a teleport machine flared on for a moment, then exploded! Seconds later, their shields failed and the citadel was destroyed! Sensors now show no living being below!

Jolene, I'm sorry!

Brown, return Mr. Fagan to Earth... then take us home.

Victory over evil is often costly! Soon though, the snows of the great Himalayas will come end over the price tag forever!

The End!

Begun Aug. '70... Ended Nov. '71
A TOPSY-TURVY TREATISE ON 13

LADY LUCK 13  BLACK CAT  DR. THIRTEEN
by TOM FAGAN

THIRTEEN...DARK LEGACY OF OUR TIMES!

THIRTEEN...BROODING SYMBOL OF LUCK RUN OUT, DESTINY GONE SORRY, THE WHEEL OF ILL-FORTUNE SPINNING TOWARD AN UNSECONDPANE END, PATE-HIREVERCIBLE, THINGS OUT OF HAND!

Think on Thirteen. Twelve minutes and one will suffice. Thirteen...the rebel number; the nasty numerical misfit. Always, the outsider. For is not the cliche of the platitude and the reproach can be divided into twelfths or components of same but never, no never, into thirteen parts or the odd multiples of the number? Thirteen, then, the adverse life factor the unknown, that which is to be feared, the thing that strikes from without, the chance, the accident, the fluke, the hazard, the hit, the hoo-doo...that which lies waiting just beyond the wind rise, to circle of sanity with proof man's age-old terrors are not mere insurrections of his imagination but rather that which is real in and that which is dead is not truly dead at all, but simply sleeping!

This then is an article about Thirteen. It is a gentle, fan-adormed skimming of the past. My good fortune if it suits you; my bad luck—and yours—if it doesn't. I foresawed though, I akwardly wrote this material is deeply researched. It's not, nor is it intended to be. It is presented as a nostalgic trip revisiting old friends and some new ones that have drifted in and out of memory, the readings of favorite stories, and recollections of the fireside musings and of old grand-dames. If it must be judged, I say it is solely judged on those tenets. People accustomed to do otherwise will be shot...to paraphrase Mark Twain somewhat!

So meet: A man called Thirteen and his boy companion, Jinx! Lucky Lad!...The Thirteen— who believes only what he sees and not at all his
tales who the underworld fears as "The Black Cat,"...a
dark soul in black satin! A clouded individual, his
case is "Mistletoe!" He is a non-existent 13th floor in an old hotel! Two-Face...his
crime comic...Twirling for good or evil. Victim or
terrorist...the dance of the sphinx is a dance of despair and the ultimate reading of..."Heads Or Tails!"

The cold-blooded bête of a man, whose face is an explosive combination of a fiend and a child, his
tales the usual patriotic and the last 13 Club is brought to order!

Out of the four-color future materializes a

Thirteen, his awesome appearance signifying not the
devil of one super-bogeyman, but several!

These capsule highlights commenced on July 13th,
written by yours truly who has 13 letters in his
legal signature, and sent on from Rutland, Vermont,
where zip code numbers total 13. 05701, borrowed
courtesy of the U.S. Mail and Post Office officials,
for the express purpose of titling this article.

Sometimes, the forces so tight a thought about a man he
is in retaliation—perhaps as the last desperate measurement
takes the issue, adopts the guise of a
dragging these psychos and psychotics into a powerful new personality!
Such was the beginning of one costumed crime fighter.

Hardly the hero type was Harold Higgins; even his name
didn't sound right for the romance. It had a ring of a
George Bernard Shaw character, not the instant identity
apparent of the man of justice. Harold's
name was his handicap in more ways than one. Besides
looking sinister, it hung about him, and in itself was meaningful and significant. It was an
appropriate name...one tailor-made and perfectly suit-
ing a man whose luck was of the usual 13th- and
thirteen...All Bad! Without fail some sort of mis-
fortune was sure to hit him on the 13th of every month.
Even worse tragedies would strike his alias the 13th.
Even worse tragedies would strike his alias the 13th.

The tales of Thirteen and his wily sidekick, Jinx, appeared
in Daredevil Comics #7, dated January, 1943.

Since the stories were written during wartime, 13 and
Jinx naturally betrayed their share of spies, saboteurs

13 debuted in Daredevil No. 3 (September, 1941) and
Jinx joined him two issues later. Together they were
a team, until their final story which appeared in
Daredevil 17, dated January, 1943.

Please note: this is a fictional text and does not reflect any real events or individuals.
tasteful green, the color of hope. Her attire was not of red, white and blue, nor was it bracelets of gold and a revealing out of leopard fur. That was not her way. After all, she was a lady loving green! Only in the very first story was another color part of the costume... a red lining for the cape; otherwise, it was all in green. In the beginning, Lady Luck designed a mask of any sort. Only as the series progressed did she favor a facial veil and that of sheerest green and thinnest seethrough transparency!

Lady Luck, in the first canto of her crime-crushing career, was a vigilant virgin operating outside the law. A panel focuses on her gloved hand; the embossed and embossed design is clearly evident on the cap. The compounding caption: "The Four Leaf Clover... A Symbol That Crooks Fear! And Police Spent Frantic Hours Searching For Him in His Devotion to save 2 lives, but Lady Luck (her writer) is updating the old beliefs. Probably, few readers knew or cared the slightest about the roots of the clover as a good luck charm.

(Origin of the superstition is shrouded in antiquity. Wherever there is a belief in superstitious acts that are thought to bring good fortune, the four-leaf clover has been considered a symbol of luck. The two and four-leaf clovers were among the most common and earliest of the clover varieties to be associated with good luck.)

None of this quaint information is given. The clover means more than just a herb and the now only little known "That Elusive Feemle". Lady Luck has attempted to open the door to the man who has been murdered and pol. "This Time, you Won't Get Away!" All this on page one. On page two were Brando's words as Frank Fabray in Popular Debutante Of The Season... (Who)... Puts Her Home With The Cream Of Society! We soon know Brenda Banks is no social-climbing butterfly, for another "The Next Room" changes swiftly to The Mysterious Costume Of Lady Luck! Why was Lady Luck engaging in burglary? Did she kill the man who was shot? The answers... Here! Hold it! A cunning criminal at bay by gunpoint, Lady Luck tells him... "I know Roberts (the murdered man) was the one who killed you. I was going to get you. I am Lady Luck!"

"And I had to know it. But Why did you kill me, Mr. Beach and Mr. Samuels?"

"Why! You were my mother! Sarah Wilson, my nurse. She loves you."

\(\text{I thought I could help you. Turn yourself in.}

Police said...

"Come Out Of The Shadows, Lady! Let's Have A Look At You!"

The reply...

"Sorry, Cooper. But that's Not In The Rules Of My Game! A Look At Lady Luck!"

Shades of the Fantastic Four and the Buster Building and the Man From Nowhere! Lady Luck is known for her green and gold garb, reminding a young... "That Elusive Feemle". The statement is the caption: "A Wall Of Lady Luck's..."

"Sky-Scrapers Roll Back Revealing A Thunderbolt And... a Swift Little Ranger Shoots Across The Towering Skyline!"

The reader is left to wonder what is in this crime drama, in its painted insignias... you guessed it... a green four-leaf clover! However, this kind of senseless nonsense is now all over the place!

Lady Luck leveled off into stories with plausibility and plot.

Faith and you must have had reason to give up the wearisome game, yer Ladyship! But there's such of a thing in all that. Sundays are so quiet now! An IBA toast to you dear Lady! Sure and lots of Lady wherever ye be!

His name is "Terrence." "Thomas" would suit him better. "Doubter" is more apt than "Doctor."

The Plot is Stronger because his using the formal full-name of address, "Terrence." To call him "Ferry Thirteen" might be unsafe. Count the letters; there are up to 10, 12, and 14! XIX luck, isn't it? To August, 1950."

The lady is a winner alright and Klaus Nordling her steady artist for eight years, with a heaping of Reed Crandall thrown in for good measure, way back in the early days.

The lady dazzled and delighted her readers, wearing...
kept, knowing over the family line hangs, "The Curse of The Thirteen!"

In SHOWCASE, No. 60 (February, 1969) reprinted from its original rendering in Star Spangled Comics, back in 1951, the story of The Phantom Stranger began with, "Almost fifteen," he discovers: "...he Secret My Father Had Tried So Desperately To Keep... Throughout The Ages, The Thirteen Family Had Always Been Suspected Of Powers Beyond Human Understanding..."

Was he, himself, have inherited these mysterious powers? Is he and his father preordained to die violently? What of the "gaolavale of grim destiny stretching over centuries"... an ancestor crowned because of suspected sorcery, another stoned to death for possessing the "evil eye," and still another burnt at the stake as a Salem witch? will the role of doom continue unbroken?

GHOSTBREAKER

These questions fired his brain; cold fear numbed his spirit. Reassurance returned as he listened to his father: "They Say It Is Our Name... The Unlucky Thirteen! But My Study Of Family History Shows Otherwise! How so? Ahead of their time in such knowledge as the earth revolving about the sun, experimentation with electricity, ideas about anesthesia... the Thirteen were persecuted and murdered because their advanced theories were not understood by the superstitious populace. That is why, Son, My Life Is All About Me!

Dr. 13 deliberately defied superstition to prove that it is groundless!" The boy, Terrence, pledged to do likewise. Yet The Curse of The Thirteen appears to be unbroken. Dr. 13 steadily built his reputation as "ghost breaker" by exposing mediums, showing spirits to be tricks of the imagination, and saving the credulous from charlatanism. Five years later he returned to Doomsbury Hall... to keep another promise to his father.

If communication with the dead was possible, the father would break the silence of the grave. A test had been prearranged years earlier and Dr. 13, alone before his father's portrait, prepared to carry it out. Candelight flickered. The clock marked the hour of midnight. Dr. 13 set the pendulum with the dead man's midnight! Then he heard it: A sound had it in all the misery of the ages... a sound of weeping... a sound of fear... And through all this, the distant but unmistakable voice of his dead father...! Conviction shattered! Belief unshaken! Assuredly tumbled! Faith dissolving! His father speaking... and yet: A hidden tape recorder, tripped off by a timing device, his fiancée, Marie, provided the explanation: "Your Father Planned All This... Made The Recording You Heard Tonight Before His Death... To Prove To You That The Supernatural Can Always Be Traced To Natural Causes!"

Dr. 13 later married Marie. He once confessed before their wedding: "One Thing Still Bothered Me, Marie! The Violent Deaths Which Have Haunted Our Family... Oh, I Too, One Day Fall Victim To THE CURSE OF THE THIRTEEN?"

Dr. 13's path crossed that of The Phantom Stranger, who was actually the star of that Showcase issue, and the stage was set for future encounters. Dr. 13's attitude? "You've Pulled Your Last Trick, Phantom Stranger! I'm Gonna Prove You're A Phony If It Takes The Rest Of My Life!" When The Phantom Stranger was given a second chance, Dr. 13 continued to play second fiddle or fill the role of introducing magic to age back up features dealing with supernatural occurrences. He could explain: "But I Know There Must Be Some Logical Explanation which I cannot understand..."

That he is unable to discredit The Phantom Stranger... that he is to be frequently frustrated by the unknown, the inexplicable... perhaps for Terrence Thirteen, that is THE (Real) CURSE OF THE THIRTEEN!

Beware the Black Cat! a warning handed down over the centuries! Favored form assumed by witches: favorite familiar of those damned souls who have inscribed their names in the Book of Sin. Magic that glows in the darkness as do the eyes of a cat in the blackest night!

Shun the cat. It has nine lives to spend in vendetta! It can see in the dark to stalk its victims without mercy. It is the creator of storms... the beloved of cats will goodness and crossroads! Let not the black cat cross your path! misfortune is sure to follow. Above all, let not the cat jump over or onto the cat as the body inside will not decompose and the deceased kept from entering paradise.

Destroy the cat! Kill it! Avoid it at all costs! Cover your dealings in infancy; take over you souse; beat the black sheep! Yes, run in terror with the rest of the riffraff and rats in human disguise. Out of the night comes The Black Cat, ready to make the ranks of the underworld.

Who is she...this masked mystery-woman? She's a she-demon, with beautiful flowing hair of flaming red. From shoulders to thighs, she's garbed in alluring black satin. Her gloves and buccaneer boots with high heels are of similar color. She has the face of a feline. She's beauty on a rampage; a warrior woman that prows the night seeking out the aura of crime.

Who knows where she may strike next? From what shadowy hideaway will she pounce? Yes, gangland, she's a fighting felina! People want to like to dance but... she's never yet kill or at least avoid. Much as you'd like to, you can't... she seems to have the legendary nine lives of the scorpion. She's quick and elusive too!

By day she's glamorous Linda Turner, movie idol. She plays her role well... that of the "helpless" female. In Hollywood sexy sirens are wanted for the silver screen, a woman independent and free. No man likes to be put down, and she's got a good record of the woman, desirous and dependent, the society butterfly and the darling of the cocktail club. Wouldn't the jax be amazed to see her working out in her super- equipped gym? Linda... athletic? You must be mistaken dear... not "our" Linda.

Nighttime is another matter entirely. Foresaking evening gown for fighting costume, Linda lets her hair down and emerges as the Black Cat. A powerful ebony motorcycle is her steed, a massive machine hurling her down a highway of adventure.

Black Cat first sharpened her claws in 1941 and her stories continued into the early 50's. She was a trend-setter and Black Capri and Batgirl both of whom came much later, copied her style in an arcing number of ways. For Black Cat was a master of using her beauty and charm to lure the man into a tight corner. She could make him fall in love, and then when he was at his deepest, she'd strike. The result was usually a violent end for the man who met her. Black Cat offered no detailed courses in mayhem and maudlin, nonetheless she was an accomplished mistress of the martial arts like her predecessor.

Batgirl borrowed even more from Black Cat. Only Police Commissioner Gordon's daughter, Barbara Gordon, is Batgirl. Likewise, Linda's father, a private detective, knew and condensed her daughter's crimefighting techniques. And Don Horne, Linda's boyfriend, never suspected his sweetheart had a secret life... neither did Jason Bard know of his darling's nocturnal activities as Batgirl. And, of course, the motorcycle was the favored transportation for both of their missives.

Panciers of Black Cat could read her adventures in comic books including POCKET, SPEED, ALL NEW, MORTAL, AND WAVE CAT, DOUBLE UP, STRANGE FANTASY and BLACK CAT WESTERN.

"The Cat" had many artists, but some of the best... like Lee Elias and Joe Kubert. Black Cat was truly a goddess of the Golden Age!
You've heard of people who muddle tiredly through life with a dark cloud over their heads. Nothing seems to go right for them. Misfortune is their constant companion. Bad luck dogs their heels; nips their chances. Fortune quickly turns her back in their presence; Fate gives them the third finger!

Meet such an individual, Joe Btsplk. Joe is the name. When he passes by folk don't howdy-do him: they whisper hoo-doo out of his hearing and cross their fingers hoping nothing too bad will happen.

Bad luck has a habit of rubbing off Joe. He's a walking jinx. Your cabin's liable to collapse; turns and tumbles take over your path; Joe's one man no gal, no matter how desperate she maybe, is, to try to catch come Sadie Hawkins Day.

No one loves Joe Btsplk. No, that's not quite true. One person—oh rather, two. Joe says with resignation: All Mah Life Ah Has Had This Cloud Over Mah Head! It Keeps Comin' Back!

Undertaking. His cloudy cohort hardly ever leaves Joe. They've grown so used to one another, they'd be lost, if separated. Joe's one man no gal, no matter how desperate she maybe, is, to try to catch come Sadie Hawkins Day.

The cloud, a weeping cloud under glass so unmoved, him, he soon uncorked it. The cloud has a personality, even if Joe hasn't much of one to endure his cloud. So it loyally continues to rain down on the head of its friendly little loser. A loser, loved by reader's of Bill Abner, if not the people of Dogpatch, U.S.A.

JOE BTSPLK
THE WORLD'S WORST JINX!

Even today it is not unusual to register at a hotel and find it does not have a thirteenth floor, the floor arrangement maimedly skipping from the twelfth to the fourteenth. Some number 13, too, is usually omitted in any room plan catering to the general public.

An opening panel in a story from THE SECRET FILES OF Dr. Drew reflected this hold-over of an superstition by saying: "The story I'm Going To Tell You Is One Of The Strangest In My Experience! It Concerns An Elusive 13th Floor..."

Many older buildings in this city, as you know, were built with no 13th floor...and the Wainwright Building Was No Exception...For The Late Adam Wainwright Was A Very Superstitious Man!

A distraught young elevator operator tells Dr. Drew of how he let Joseph Wainwright (Adam's brother) and a woman off on a non-existent 13th floor of the Wainwright Building. He had thought the whole incident a dream or imagination until he read in the newspaper that Wainwright had died the night before in prison, after serving 20 years to the murder of his brother Adam. Without wasting time, Dr. Drew and the young man went to the Wainwright Building. As the elevator reached the 13th floor a strange drama unfurled before their eyes. The ghost of Joseph Wainwright recreated the event that caused his brother's death. His brother was actually killed by his wife who wished to inherit his fortune. However, the recreated events go beyond what Wainwright's ghost had planned. There are events still to be played out.

Joseph Wainwright laughs as the woman sobs, "You Told Me You Loved Me And If I Got Made Of Your Brother We Could Share The Estate...!" He has no intention of sharing: the woman is thrown to her death down the full length of a ventilating shaft. Dr. Drew steps from the shadows...And Now We Witness The Truth...And That Includes The Way YOU KILLED LUCY...Oh, Joseph? But he's dead, walls the elevator operator. "YES, I DID, But You're Safe, To Prove That I Didn't Kill My Brother! I Meant Only To Clear Myself...But Now You've Seen Too Much...I CREATED THIS WORLD FOR YOUR EYES...AND I CAN DESTROY IT! RUN, FOOLS...RUN!"

With spectral wails crashing down about them, Dr. Drew and the young man barely make the safety of the elevator and descend twelve flights of reality. "What D'Ya Suppose Happened To The Money?" asks the youth. Lighting up a pipe, Dr. Drew comments, "Still Up To The Shaft Somewhere...But Who'd Want $500,000 With A Murderer's Blood On It?" Eyes narrow in avarice. "WON'T WANT $500,000? Are YOU Nuts? Me...I'd Take That Kinda Dough Outta A Dead Man's Flat!" Grinned alone the youth guns the elevator skyward. Or is he alone? As he steps the elevator, a shade is beside him. "But there is no 13th Floor, Boy! Remember, This Building Was Built Without One!...See For Yourself!" A yawning shaft in the last thing the scoreboard, falling body ever sees!

Explosion rocks the Wainwright Building into total collapse. Later it is determined the reverberating destruction occurred between the 12th and 14th floors of the old landmark. Firemen found at the base of the elevator shaft. The body of the building is next elevator boy...clutching $500,000...In Bills...!

The Dr. Drew stories are among the most overlooked better offerings of Golden Age tales. They appeared in SCIENCE FICTION for sheer suspense and imaginative artwork, seldom were they surpassed. Originally, the series was known as "Werewolf Hunter" but the title was soon changed to read, "The Secret Files Of Dr. Drew: Stalker Of The Unknown."

Dr. Drew was drawn with Sherlock Holmes facial features. His dress was distinctive; he favored wigs and the wearing of a voluminous, concealing cape. He was often seen lighting a pipe and the flickering match he held served to highlight the general eeriness of his appearance. If the art appeared Eisnerish, there was good reason. The artist was Jerry Grandenetti, who had served his early apprenticeship under Will Eisner. Outre angle shots, unusual panels and rich shadings, Grandenetti brought all the Eisner tricks and some of his to his art. A session turned to prove, and an idea of the atmosphere customarily provided, here are opening quotes from one story: "It's A Long, Weary Climb To The Old Building Atop Down Hill...On The outskirts Of Town...But Once You Are There If He Favors You, The Famous Doctor Will Dip Into His Piles And Recall For You One Of His Experiences In The Serial World That Lies Somewhere Between Reality And Infinitude. If You Are Made Of Stern Stuff, You Will Reclaim Your Sanity...SOMETHING OR THE GAIA HAVE, YOU KNOW..."

How often has Fortune hinged on the toss of a coin...Decision determined by the outcome of "heads or tails"? To some the coin is a lucky-piece, a means of divining destiny, on which side the lands is the great gamble. An innocent pastime yet grim wealth has been won or lost because of the ever-betting toss. Fate have been sealed by this exercise in probability. Life and death have hung in the balance of a coin's capricious chance.

The simple expedient of predestined predeterminations was favored by one of comic book's most memorable villains, Savage, sullen and soulless as they be, none is as bizarre as...TWO-PACEL Of the dark brood, he is the most terrifying of all.

The world's fascination of Two-Pace is that he represents the dual nature of every man. He is a living
personification of good turned bad...Tele ported tipped from the social to the anti-social. Two-Face is the star-crossed human, a bastard child of Janus.

Now masculo, but once same! Formly handsome, now hideously ugly! Sound thinking has given away to sinister schizophrenia. A promising future carthweeled violently to a bleak future befallen. Two-Face realizes the dichotomy...that he is aware of it, that is the shocking horror of the doublesidedness that has dealt his life a kick in the ass of the coin. One half of his face remains unmarred; the other is twisted and grotesque...the eye drooping, the lip coming unstuck, he scare stand out in front! Even his clothing reflects his two-sideness...One side neatly pressed businessman's attire, the other ragged, unkempt and soiled. Is it any wonder then he changes him in this particular aura of avidity. It is a silver dollar...the mint-mark, 1922. Like his countenance, one side is disfigured, the other unchanged. He determines a crime committed for self-gain. "Tell!" and the decision is that purloined proceeds are to be donated to an orphanage, a poor person or a charitable cause. Despite his ugliness, there is a touch of Pretty Boy Floyd in Two-Face's lifestyle.

Everything in two's, that is Two-Face's code. A flip of the coin is how he selects his henchmen. His crimes have a polarity about them: two always figuring in the master plan. Two banks at the opposite end of town would be a prime target. A two-toned car as the getaway vehicle, that would be doubly appealing!

Two-Faces most hated foes? They number two also. They are the dashing duo...the double-dynasty team of Batman and Robin.

Before adopting his role of duplicity and deceit, Two-Face was Harvey Kent, a district attorney. In bringing "lucky" Morony to trial, Kent introduced a silver dollar as evidence to show that the villain was a part of a scene of a crime. The coin, Kent told the jury, was Morony's lucky piece. Snarling with rage, Morony vowed across the courtroom and viciously hurled the contents of a bottle at Kent's face before being subdued by guards. The acid did more than eat away his skin; it turned the brain also! With half his face lost through the corrosive, the other more brooked imagining himself a living Jekyll Hyde.

"Morony's Silver Dollar! It Has Two Faces...Clean And Discreet As Mine Once Were! I'll Make One Of Its Faces Ugly, Evil Is The Other"...with Two Faces...Like Mine! Which Face Will Turn Up When I Flip The Coin?" Mockingly, the dollar twirled upwards and downwards and derisively the EVIL SIDE WINS! CHIME Wins! From This Day On, This Two-Faced Coin Will Be The Symbol Of Two-FACE!"

Figuring the odds in an uncertain world, Two-Face reasoned calling heads or tails (good or evil) was a fair bet because the coin had two sides. He knew no one expected a coin to fall heads once in every two tosses, but in a large number of tosses, the results do tend to even out. Those were his kind of odds!

Applying Two-Face's reasoning further, one can compute that for a coin to fall heads 50 times consecutively, it would take a million men tossing coins 10 times a minute and 40 hours a week...and then it would happen only once every so many years, when he encountered the coin. As far as he was concerned then, two faced gave even odds. More than once, he gloatingly told a trapped Batman and Robin: "My Lucky Coin Will Decide Your Fate...If It Lands On The GOOD Side, You'll LIVE! If On The Scared Side, You DIE!"

At least "two-face" Two-Faces appeared in the comic books before the original returned. In the Batman newspaper strip (1944-1946) there was a different Two-Face. This "duplicates" was not a lawyer, he was an actor. He masqueraded in harlequin and the wits, a thief who went after the recently unmasked Kent, one named Clark Kent. Destiny had written a double idiocy clause for Kent. His handsome features restored by plastic surgery, he resumed his promising law career. Fortune made certain, however, he was in the wrong place at the wrong time! A safe-making in progress...The explosive charge already lit...Two armed criminals surprised him and Kent, attempting to apprehend the pair on his own, Kent took the full force of the delayed blast as the felons fled

Sergeant's work undone! Face again halved! The tragedy! Impossible now for medical science to reform the features to normal! Kent was a marked man for the rest of his days! The Wheel of Fortune had twice turned! The criminal career of Two-Face begins again! Kent and Robin didn't and Two-Face was imprisoned exactly.

In 1971, Two-Face returned to fluster The Batman once more, but this time seemed singularly uninterested to the reader. Two-Face, who remembered the double-quick Two-Face of old, put aside the swiftsilver dollar was not dated 1922! Double shame be yours for that, Neal Adams--artist; if you had given the previous story another chance, there may have been preserved. As presented in BATMAN COMICS 234, the Adams Two-Face was a duplicitous dupe and a forerunner of the malevolent male we both alternately loathed and liked.

In his soul, every man is a potential Two-Face! Sheer terror lays in that realization. Two-Face is us all and likewise we are Two-Face! That identification alone makes him twice as dreadful as any of the monsters in human form to have haunted the pages of comic books.

"And they said to him: Tell us for what cause this evil is upon us, what is thy business? Or of what country art thou? and whither goest thou? or of what people art thou?"

The Jonah of The Old Testament was asked these questions. And when he answered him out for his not Josiah the face of the Lord and was not the face of Jehovah now turned from the once-favored servant. Might not the Jehovah look with disapproving on any befriending Jonah?

Parted the story of Jonah down through centuries of retelling until the name, Jonah, itself, conjured up the vision of a man nobody wanted...the outcast son of heaven and humanity...the unlucky one...the one who brings ill luck to others...the harbinger of harm!

Next another word of ancient meaning, also steeped in superstition! Witchcraft...the evil eye...the curse...this evil eye left in your eyes...Summation all are words that are the emblem of abhorrence and disgust. Join them and you have JONAH HEX! A cold-unfeeling killer, or was he? Or rather was he the embodiment in human form of the old prohibition of using witchcraft.

ALL-STAR WESTERN No. 10 (Feb.-March) first introduced Jonah Hex to DC readers in 1972. John Albano scripts, Tony DeZuniga art, Joe Orlando editing...three strung together since..."Johon Hex pictured as half ugly, somebody seen and made of all kinds of things."

With issue 12 (June-July, '72) National Periodical Publications, quick on the draw to capitalize on the morphing interest in the supernatural, changed the title logo to the more alluring WEIRD WESTERN TALES! Jonah's character remained as laden with violence as ever...the emphasis on the arcane, the strange and inexplicable, the mystical...that would follow appropriately enough in issue THIRTEEN! An opening quote from that issue: "In the great event, the Doctor...Is He the Recipient Of Some Strange Premonition?...Is He the Possessor OF SOME Sixth Sense That Permits Him To See That Which Is Invisible To Any Living Mortal?...Or Is This Man..." It Lands In The Danger Of THIS AMBUSH...Is He the Recipient Of Some Strange Premonition?..."

An outlaw's shrewd thought: "...What They Say 'Bout That Jonah!..He Having Some Kind's IMMORTALITY...And Being Able To CAST SPELLS Over His Enemies...You Think..."

A killer on the run after murdering his own father, the DC..."Who First Showed You (Hex) How To USE Those Blasted Irons?..." thinks: "Wish Ah Could Git Rid Of This Old Johnson That's Beating Me. The Last Couple Hours...Keep Thinking That's Someone Or Some-Thing Watching Me...Out of the shadows comes that somone...Confrontation with a full moon and a tamed wolf to know...Now, Yore Gun Has Sent To A One-Way Trip TO HELL, But..." Cut The Speeches All! Draw! is Hex's ominous command. Words that are little known, the father's death has been avenged...the friend of Jonah's past may now rest in peace...

The ways of a Jonah are lonely. Declared the Jonah of old:..."I cried out of my affliction to the Lord, and he heard me out of the belly of the hell...and Thou hast heard my voice."

Jonah Hex cries out in a different manner...he does
it with the shout of six-guns. His personal hell is his pretense he has no feelings, yet his actions belie his words. Jonah Hex is no ghost on the inside, no one may suspect. Maybe the Lord hears him, maybe not. Jonah doesn't look up; he looks straight ahead. He begs no favors,divine or other! He travels alone in this hell on earth.

Alone? Not quite. One E. R. man Dollars, 21st Century, stallion nickers gently; it is General. The bear is out but reassuring from Iron Jaw, the wolf. Where you are, Jonah Hex, we will look for the Horse in easy canter...Man hummed against the wind, his face half concealed by shadow. Against a lingering mist they are silhouetted only as canine, human and beast of burden. Who knows who passes this twilight hour!

Thirteen men sneered at superstition and The Joker was wild. The serenity of the bank buffered his eerie stock of the deck in favor of supernatural questions and fortune-telling. Well might the Jackknives of grim jocularity want to part the unsavory reputation of the ill-fated number. With a sense of his number...the 13th card. Twelve pasteboards in a suit with the Joker as its illegitimate offspring!

Television and 13 maps of the gavel introduced the 13 Days to Gotham City in time-invited adversity: A black cat crossed the path of the club president; salt was spilled; three on a match; the breaking of a mirror; walking under a ladder; an umbrella opened indoors; shoes placed on a table...and so on until the presentation of the 13th member.

Interruption. A package brought on stage. Opened for public view, the parcel contained an 8-Ball and a note reading: "Since You Can't Be Laid Off, You Can't Write Me. And Old Superstition Says That To Be Behind An 8-Ball Means Black Years...So, I Send The Thirteen Club Their Own!" No name was signed; the bejeweled jester symbol served as counter-signature. No name had to be written, Consternation. The 13th member was to cut out, "I, Regan, I'm Not Superstitious--But I'm The Joker's In This One--I'm GUTS!" In desperation, the club president appealed to the sense studio audience..."Who Among You Will Become Member Number 13? Surely Someone...?"

A silence of spellbinding seconds..."Then A Firm Voice Speaks! Will I Do?" A heroic costumed figure arose on the stage. He walks with a step faster in admiration of the man who has chosen the winged creature of the night as his own symbol of good!

Batman set The Joker head-on, as he fought to prevent a series of "bad lucks" aimed at the 13 Club members. Finally Batman and Robin escaped a high voltage electrical trap by the use of a common pin. (To see how-read Batman No. 40, April-May, 1949 when the 13 Club story originally appeared - "BA, HA" rasped the Bat-man's Rumble! The Joker is finally brought to justice, when Batman scores a "ringer" with a hundred horse shoes. It's the start of one's 13 Hundred Hours, Army Time!

Another hodgepodge of hoosie-cups stop up in CAPTAIN ATOM, No. 89. Dated December, 1967, the Ditko/Kalbhoffer cover literally howled its bewitching warning: "THE DATE SETS AS CAPTAIN ATOM FACES THE MENACE OF THIRTEEN!

In scripting the superstitious sage, David A. Kalbhoffer proffered a profusion of paranormal paraphernalia.

Leaping Leroy! There was: A white-helmeted figure from the future, Luke Sivors, the numbers One and Three identifying him as "Thirteen!" His boot worn jumpsuit was belted in brown at the waist. Voluminous white hair sprang out from his ears like huge moth-wings. Master of the Clock Three Thirteen had his time-traveling companion, the "Fellow Friend Faustus!" Need you be told Faustus was a black cat?

Then there was The Ghost, the familiar faceless foe of the "Atomic Ace." Returned from the outer-dimensional world of the "golden women," The Ghost has two priorities: Robbery and the will to seek suspicion of Captain Atom! And Captain Atom, himself. Having forsaken a splendid costume of gold and scarlet some time ago, he was now dressed in the more acceptable (and mundane) red and blue. No dear to the hearts of superheroes everywhere. Captain Atom should have done two things. He kept to his original colors and perhaps continued on as Charlton Comics' golden boy indefinitely. That and restore clarity of Thirteen. Only he had, but...

Concern of all three was a missile that had materialized out of a space warp. Employed you knew were weapons and secrets that could destroy all mankind. Thirteen and The Ghost were both aware of this! Captain Atom was not. However, he did know tests disclosed "It Is Ages Old But More Advanced Than All Our Missiles!" The battlelines were drawn. Supernatural strategies were supernumerary. In order of progression they were: Thirteen appearing in a crystal ball warning The Ghost not to interfere! Writing on a wall, in fire, declaring, "Nothing Can Stop Us!" Magical arrows binding Captain Atom! Flipped Coins, "So Little; Yet Heavy Beyond Belief!" stopping pursuit by the Captain! An angered Ghost finding his feet filled with flowers frustrating his attempt to teleport Captain Atom out of this world! Faustus using the "Indian Rope Trick," with the magical fibers holding Captain Atom powerless!

A broken mirror, a giant umbrella, a Houdini chain-wrapping for Captain Atom, and finally flowers in the place of atomic fire balls, courtesy of Thirteen, who in leaving calls back: "There's Really No Need To Stop Us! We Are Leaving!" Faustus' departing yowl is the promise, "We Won't Be Troubling You Ever Again!" There is really no need of Thirteen and his cat companion returning. They have sent the missile ahead of them into the future, where they themselves arrive shortly. In here we find that Thirteen and Faustus are Planetary Agents who timed in the underside of a solar planet, to the site of one's 13 Hundred Hours, Army Time!

What followed calls for a double-take, a revaluation of Fortune. A second encounter with The Ghost was promised in the very next story. It was even titled, THE SHOWDOWN IN SUNFOUR! In no never saw print! The Captain Atom magazine folded! In short order, Charlton also closed out the magazines of their other action-heroes!

Thirteen, good or bad as he may have been, certainly left his brand on Charlton Comics. After his unlucky arrival, the company's entire line shifted to a preponderance of comics dealing with the supernatural and lore steeped in superstition. Juggly, most unjust!

Jackhammer away the concrete of civilization; see the covering clay of humanity beneath. If science doesn't have the answers, superstition does. There is little difference between Trooplyte and two-thousand century Man when it comes to facing and explaining the unknown. Thirteen is still very much with us! And people continue on and on, believing Thirteen stands for Evil or Good...Misfortune or Fortune...The choice is yours...Or is the choice...That Of Thirteen!
The Man Behind the First Man of the Sea

by Ron Fortier

Last winter Charlton Publications launched a new comic entitled Primus and it was based on the television series of the same name. Like the TV version, the comic dealt with the sea-going adventures of Carter Primus, a Lloyd Bridges-James Bond hero.

Now the magazine's initial appearance did little to excite the average comic fan. The cover was plastered with publicity photos of actor Robert Brown in a wet suit and had the appearance of a movie mag rather than a comic. Very unimaginative to say the least.

Fortunately, some die-hard readers were not put off by this front mess and had the daring to look inside. It would be an understatement to say what they discovered was a surprise. The interior illustrations were clean, dramatic and highly original. In short the artwork was excellent.

Perhaps more puzzling was the name of the artist, Joe Staton. Who is he?

Joe T. Staton is a talented young man with a gracious attitude towards inquisitive fans. He kindly submitted himself to our parade of questions, without hesitation and his answers were both amusing and informative.

Thus, without further rambling, we happily present Joe T. Staton, the man behind the first man of the sea.

CC - Joe, before getting started, we would like to say congratulations on your fine Primus work.

Staton - Thanks, I always welcome comment -- especially favorable comment, and, alas, especially as comfort for a title that has just been dropped.

CC - No more Primus?

Staton - Primus will unfortunately cease with the seventh issue, in which Hubert Humphrey kidnaps Richard Nixon and Primus has to prevent W.W. III again.
CC - Do you know the reason behind the cancellation?

STATON - It seems that everyone who was watching the program was buying the comic -- but Robert Brown and my mother just weren't enough to keep either the comic or the show afloat.

CC - Don't underestimate the number of your readers, Joe. Now that Prizm is gone, what will you be working on?

STATON - I've dropped back into the horror and girlie romance comics until another adventure series comes in to Charlton. I'm also doing some of the horror comic's covers now.

CC - Joe, in case the FBI gets a hold of this, how about some basic statistics such as where and when you were born?

STATON - I was born January 19, 1938, at the Army hospital at Ft. Bragg, N.C.; thus making me, in no particular order, a Capricorn (on the cusps of Aquarius -- a classically ambiguous combination of signs), a service brat, and a loner at the moment. My father was an Air Force career man and we bounced about from base to base during most of my early years, during which I picked up a love of airplanes and a dislike for staying in one place very long. After my father's death, we moved back to my mother's home in Tennessee, where I spent a rather constipated adolescence.

CC - What kind of formal education did you acquire?

STATON - I went to college in Murray, Kentucky, where I more or less majored in fine arts and wound up with my bachelor's degree in art. During that time I wound up with a scholarship to Chapman College in California, to their World Campus Afloat program (the program that was recently going to convert to the Queen Elizabeth as its campus) and so spent about four months aboard ship studying in Europe, Africa and South America.

CC - Sounds like fun.

STATON - During the course of those four months, I encountered most of the major art collections in the hemisphere, a lot of water, and a weird California girl who had told me to spend her life doing Behavior Modification on children with minimal Brain Dysfunction -- remember, she'll return to the chart as later, though at this point she just disappeared and eventually moved to California, while I remained in Kentucky to finish school.

CC - When did you first become involved with comics?

STATON - All during high school and to a lesser degree during college, I had been involved in science-fiction fandom and had done a few articles for various fanzines. I had encountered comics fandoms a couple of times, but had been put off by the atmosphere of twelve-year-old steeling and whatnot.

CC - Sorry to hear that. Hopefully we can change that for you. Are there any comic zines you do like?

STATON - Sure -- I've been fascinated by anything that comes from Don and Maggie Thompson, or from Bill Springer, in fact, the only zine -- sf or comics -- that I subscribe to currently, is Springer's GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE.

CC - Back to the comics question itself. What encouraged you to try comics?

STATON - I had encountered Danny Atkins through the sf fanzines and had, for a short time, corresponded with him, finding out what he was doing and trying to get into comics. Danny had a pronounced influence on most of my earlier drawings. At any rate, after I got my degree, I looked for New York with an eye toward landing comic work.

CC - What happened when you arrived in Metropolis?

STATON - Danny had moved back to Ohio and Richard Nixon's economics were coming down hard on the art field, as I tried to find work -- of any kind.

STATON - For example?

STATON - I finally found a job designing rubber ducks, well actually vinyl ducks; inflatable beach toys and P.O. Box advertising, too. I was happily in that job for six months, in the course of which I encountered entirely too many J. Water Thompson people and so developed a lasting contempt for the field of advertising and for Bill Springer. I finally walked out on that one, and eventually drifted into a strictly survival job with a photographer's agent. That one didn't last long at all. Then for a few months I pasted together an offset newspaper in Brooklyn -- a job which I actually liked quite a bit -- until I was fired so the newspaper could hire two Puerto Ricans.

CC - A ghostly fate indeed. You certainly had your share of knockers. Are there any bright moments in all this struggling?

STATON - Remember the girl from the ship? Well she had re-surfaced some time later, having gotten a teaching job in Long Island. She furnished all kinds of moral support during the struggling and the suffering. Jack Gaughan once told me that if you want to make a living as a free-lance artist, you need either a hell of a nerve or a hell of a wife. She turned out that I had the wife, since she decided to go ahead and marry an out-of-work, out-of-fashion artist. Also along the way, I'd gotten my very first comic assignment -- a short, badly written Steve Skeats story for Warren in CHEEBY. (The Amazing Money-Making Machine/Creepy 42 Nov. 71)

CC - How did you get along with the notorious Mr. W?

STATON - Warren turned out to be a great deal more trouble than he was worth. I wanted to do comic books and he thought comics should be filled with slick advertising illustrations. So I eventually got tired of Hassling with him and mailed in the story with a bill. He paid me, ran the story and I never went back there.

CC - How did you finally hook-up with Charlton?

STATON - During an abbreviated honeymoon, we stopped in at Charlton to get a ghost story to do and Sal Gentile, Charlton's editor at the time, and a very nice man, was sufficiently pleased to send me another. Before any of the ghost work had actually been printed, Sal offered me PRIMUS. Things have been pretty solid since then.

CC - What other artists, beside Don Atkins, do you admire?

STATON - To be perfectly honest with you, it would be a lot easier to come up with a list of people that I don't like. Home will try mail skin as a favorite. Gil Kane is in a basic style to respect; especially his early Green Lantern work as done by Andy Application. I can't say that I'm unduly impressed with the faces they use. Each of his characters fits his part perfectly. Lou Fine and Jack Davis for the golden age. Russ Manning for his authenticity (his old SEA HUNTS covers, for example, are the only ones I've ever seen with any kind of meaningful figure-ground relationships. I told you this would get out of hand...why not just say that I don't like Don Beck and Herb Trimpe, incompetent, but feel I enjoy just about everybody else? Oh, one other fellow who has been remarkably helpful to me is Mike Hopps. (Mike draws a lot of covers for AMAZING and FANTASTIC, covers for Lancer and even EC covers lately.) Mike is a great source of information about tax laws, mailing procedures, publishers, shocks -- all the nitty-gritty that keep a head above water, the things that the arts schools don't have to know.

CC - If you had the opportunity to work for either DC or Marvel five years ago.

STATON - DC ten years ago, or Marvel five years ago. My real live is the kind of space operas that Julius Schwartz used to do at DC, but nobody is doing that sort of thing today. At the moment, the stuff coming out from DC interests me the most -- especially their weird titles, like WITCHING HOUR and Apeño's PHANTOM STRANGER, which I'm sure I'd be my favorite of the current crop of comics. But I'm realizing that I'd work for anybody who'd pay me -- with the exception of Warren...aye unpleasant things happen to them in an alley.

CC - Joe, your Fangs are showing. On the kinder side, what advice would you offer aspiring young artists?

STATON - I don't think I'm the one to ask. My own experience isn't all that extensive. But the initial advice Atkins gave me seems to remain valid -- (1) Forget about the whole terminal illness or something, and (2) if you're persistent and work hard, you might forget about it, remember that drawing comics, illustrating magazines, doing pin-ups, pasting together Revel ads or whatever it is, is a job and that you can make a very good living at it, both physically and emotionally, by doing 5 pages overnight to hit a deadline, or having an editor refuse to see you, or both.

CC - Joe, you might have boils down to: Learn to work like a machine and learn to cope with total rejection.

CC - Joe, thank you for this truly enjoyable and informative talk. We're betting you'll wind up top
A stolen car...a hit and run add up to...a victim...

...and the GUILTY.

I'll be in the clear if I can get away without being recognized.

STOP HIM! Let me through.

...Not our concern. RUDE!

They all saw the hit but only one person let himself know and judge what he saw.

Is he the one?

He's young! I...I...I dunno...

Why ask me?

Must we tell?

They don't want to uphold the truth. They'd rather evade the issue or lie.

THAT'S HIM! THAT'S THE DRIVER OF THE HIT AND RUN CAR!

Okay, Graine, now we can book him.

It's not Ken's fault. He's an innocent victim of his environment, of society. Don't take a heartless vengeance...don't give punishment...give MERCY to one of GOD'S children.

Society has failed you but the jury and this court grant you MERCY. Forgive us for not making you a decent human being.

Yeh, I'm innocent of my crimes. Everyone else should feel guilty and take the blame for what I did.

He wouldn't lie for me...let me get away with what I did.

HA! HA! They let me get away with it. They're all showing how forgiving they can be to the GUILTY. They act like it's normal not to care about JUSTICE. They don't give a care for the VICTIM, it's the GUILTY they're anxious to protect.

The cruelest INJUSTICE was caused, NOT by the GUILTY but by our DECENT citizens. When the GUILTY are NOT to be treated as GUILTY, the VICTIMS CANNOT be treated as VICTIMS. Our loss and pain is ignored in favor of pampering and rewarding the guilty.

JUSTICE recognizes a man for what he is and treats him accordingly. MERCY treats the guilty better than he deserves, therefore the victim less than he deserves. The GUILTY cry for MERCY; the VICTIM asks for JUSTICE. MERCY can only be granted to the GUILTY at the expense of the VICTIM.
Mr. A.

CHAPTER 3

Earned

It's the moral way, making those who earn provide for someone else. It works with welfare, foreign aid, do-gooder programs the world over. The DOERS are always forced to provide the GOODS for the NON-GOOD and the NON-DOERS. Yet it is the unearned and the undeserving who set the terms... legalized banditry.

So why be a jerk EARNER and be FORCED... FORCED to provide to a mooching world who cries they have a right to what you earn. We'll also demand and take by force only we admit it's stealing.

Besides, no one protects the honest. Too many give a little when they have to and grab as much as they can as often as they can any way they can. The honest don't demand more than they've earned. The rest of us choose to be economic vampires, existing only by feeding on the earned.

Ken earned his freedom. Stop being a heartless snoop.

Ken got the unearned. He's free at the expense of his victim. For that Lyner, you earned the contempt of the decent.

I got political pull. I can play dirty so lay off us.

You have been playing dirty with justice. You'll find out what you really 'earned'.

Whatever you claim as yours, how did you obtain it... HONESTLY... or DISHONESTLY by deceit and fraud?

Yeh, Sling, let's get our share of what others earn or own.

You haven't earned and you don't OWN a thing that's worth anything... your life included.

You could be earning a short life.

To be like you is to have nothing.

It's not how you get it but that you have it.

CHAPTER 3

EARNED UNEARNED

RIGHTS & MUTUAL PRIVILEGES CONSENT FORCE
Who cares about your CONSENT or your RIGHTS? We're TAKING what we have NO right to take because we have the means... FORCE!

FORCE is "law" protecting the 'special privileged'. The NON-privileged deserve to suffer, the resisters of force deserve to be punished. It is only fair that YOUR fate be decided by the "privileged". FORCE IS RIGHT!

FORCE works for bad governments, dictators. They pass "laws" giving certain people RIGHTS no one else is permitted. It doesn't work for local criminals. It is "LEGAL" only when the victim is the nation's population.

Hypocrites! It's legal to take by FORCE when it's for some phoney "good for everyone", but illegal when I want to ROB for MY OWN good. WHY? Either way the guys getting robbed don't have any choice about 'giving', even if their property is going to be used against their own beliefs or good. At least I don't claim I'm ROB-BING for "everyone's good".

I got RIGHTS! You got to treat me like I'm a decent human being. You want to abuse me.

Stop FORCING your insulting questions! By what RIGHT...!

I want you to get what you rightly deserve, no MORE and no LESS. Are you mixed up with Stilng?

No one is forced to listen or answer. Ask Ken yourself! If you're not afraid of the responsibility of learning and upholding the truth.

You can't FORCE me to give Ken any THIRD-DEGREE and I won't let you grill him.

So you're right, Graine, SO WHAT! There's no protection from FORCE especially when used by people with political pull. SPECIAL PRIVILEGES MEANS SPECIAL PROTECTION! Don't look for trouble... just report it, when and like it happened... unless it involves the "PRIVILEGED"... then JUST FORGET IT. I'm a publisher, not a defender of the RIGHT... of hopeless causes.

If some men have MORE "rights", other men must have LESS and MUTUAL CONSENT is not required in dealings between men. Then there is no limit to the demands and the suffering that the "more" will force on the "less" as their "privileged RIGHT.

Accepting injustice instead of DEFENDING justice is responsible for making causes "hopeless".

I wouldn't force anyone to save himself. I'll help the deserving, the rest of you are on your own.
We're TAKING over the country, SILENCE all who RESIST.

Confiscate private property, wealth. They stole it from those who never owned anything. Whatever belonged to someone in particular now belongs to everybody, to no one in particular.

Dictatorship, recognized by FREE world, now a U.N. member, pledges to join in struggle for human rights and freedom for all mankind.

Humanitarians claim: internal affairs of dictatorships a private matter; opponents of dictator are "war-mongers," defenders of individual rights a threat to world peace.

Your property RIGHTFULLY belongs to us.

STOP! Go to HELL, FASCIST PIG!

It's UNFAIR! "Innocent" VIO-LATORS of other's rights and "harmless" INITIATORS of FORCE are the "victims of BRUTALITY and VIOLENCE" by the country's legally licensed law enforcement agency, the POLICE.

The police have NO "right" to do their sworn duty to uphold the laws of the land, but any man has the "RIGHT" to break laws without being treated like a lawbreaker.

Hold him! You talked to Graeme. The only way to make a guy stay in line when he thinks he's FREE to act on his own without someone's PERMISSION... lay down the "law", USE FORCE!

You ASKED for this violence. FORCE decides rights. It GIVES them and it TAKES them away.

The INITIATORS of FORCE are the only ones who ASK for and DESERVE violence.

You invite retaliation by your starting the use of FORCE, you're answered by your own chosen method of PERSUASION.

LET ME GO! I got my RIGHTS!

I don't have to, you'll do it to yourself by continuing your corrupt policies.

I'm still in the clear. You can't pin anything on me.

No force, NO retaliation. Refuse to deal by consent and you wind up with violence. Force is NOT a right, self-defense IS.

INITIATORS of FORCE have abandoned their minds, reason and rights. Since they choose to act like wild beasts, they should be treated like beasts.

SEEKING THE TRUTH EVASION
Ken, you LIED to me. These watches I found in your room were STOLEN!

I wouldn't lie to the only man who's been good to me. Ya know Graine out to get me... and YOU. He's Jealous of your social prestige and HATES your decency and compassion. If he can turn you against me, HE'S FIXED BOTH OF US.

WHY NOT? Is Graine ALL pure, me and you ALL rotten? You didn't believe his testimony at my trial or his views on your humanitarian efforts, how can now believe he's not capable of playing dirty, of doing ANYTHING to get the UPPER-HAND over YOU. And could YOU expect any MERCY from Graine?

NO! I SWEAR IT! GRAINE... HE PLANTED them to FRAME me.

But would Graine stoop to a frame?

Graine IS heartless! He always makes me feel UNCLEAN for helping society's victims. Who WOULD help me if Graine...

I CAN'T be wrong about Ken's basic good. He wouldn't betray my trust but Graine is without pity. He wants to see me... US suffer... so he's capable of anything. Graine's kind are the cause of society's infamy. He MUST NOT be allowed to poison my feelings and weaken my faith.

Graine's tactics won't turn me against you, Ken, just keep on being a good boy.

There's proof Ken's mixed up with SL...

That weaseling, self-blinding FOOL won't allow himself to face up to the REAL truth about me, Graine, society or himself. He closes his mind to everything that threatens his illusion. My word becomes his proof, his truth. It enables him to escape facing up to whether it's true that I stole. But he has to blindly accept Graine's guilt and my innocence, to denounce him and praise me on FAITH.

HAVE PITY! STOP PERSECUTING ME... LEAVE EVERYTHING BE... DON'T LOOK FOR FLAWS... DON'T CONDEMN... WHY CAN'T YOU FORGIVE... HELP... WHY MUST YOU INSIST ON PROVING ANYTHING?... IT CAN ONLY HURT...

I... I... WE'VE done NO wrong. WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT? If society is good. EVERYONE will be good. Society IS to blame, it's BAD.

...if an environment is good... people will be good... but first we need a good environment...

HOW does a society that is just a collection of individuals GET to be bad? HOW does a society GET the power to make you KNOW and ACCEPT the truth, to KNOW and REJECT lies?

Are you pleading for YOU or Ken? Saving begins when you face up to the truth, NO EVASIONS, then acting accordingly.

REFUSING to see or to know the truth does not make the truth non-existent. You cannot prevent a disaster by refusing to identify the signs of danger. YOU ONLY INVITE DESTRUCTION.
Mr. A.

Chapter... 6

S. Ditko

GOOD
CORRUPT
EVIL

Lynner had me COLD, but he was only too glad to believe Graine is the villain. We're in the clear.

Before that can happen, you're going to FIX Lynner for good.

ME--KILL--! NO! I CAN'T... OWWW

No one will suspect YOU, Lynner's prize example of a "good" kid SAVED from the clutches of an evil environment.

You idiot! Lynner's unstable. Graine is bound to shake him up enough to foul us up somehow.

But MURDER! I... I don't want to go THAT far. PLEASE Slung, don't ask me to k... k...

You got a choice... he dies or YOU die. You're both weak links to me. You'll never be able to rat on me if I'm holding a murder rap over you.

Go ahead, let him have it. It's NOT MY fault... WHY did society FAIL me!?

PLEASE, I saved you, I had FAITH in you... it's UNJUST.

You got a choice... he dies or YOU die. You're both weak links to me. You'll never be able to rat on me if I'm holding a murder rap over you.

Go ahead, let him have it. It's NOT MY fault... WHY did society FAIL me!?

PLEASE, I saved you, I had FAITH in you... it's UNJUST.

Quito STALLING! Shut off his whining.

Oh, God, WHY me? HOW did I ever get into this?

My God, NO, Ken! THINK of what you're DOING... what it MEANS... what the CONSEQUENCES will be! THINK... THINK.

HOLD IT, BOTH of you! WHO'S gonna give me the BEST deal if I let him LIVE?

I'll eat you in... a PARTNERSHIP!

You DOUBLE-CROSSER!

HE'LL double cross you, KILL you the first chance he gets. ONLY I CAN PROTECT YOU!... K. KILL Slung!

I...I WILL, Ken, I SWEAR TO GOD I WILL!

CORRUPTION is the act of choosing EVIL over GOOD... of deliberately defiling oneself!
Yeh, you gotta die Slung, first chance you got YOU’D WIPE ME OUT!

YOU PUSHED me into this, it’s all YOUR fault! And you, Lyner, do as I say OR ELSE...

S. Sure Ken, I’m still on YOUR SIDE! YOU STILL CAN’T help what you are doing...

NO, I SWEAR I WON’T!

NOW we’ll PROTECT each other, RIGHT. You see that I’m provided for and I’ll see that you keep a spotless social image. I need some dough, you killed off my means of support.

S. Sure Ken, I’m still on YOUR SIDE! YOU STILL CAN’T help what you are doing...

Without victims, the evil MUST devour ONE ANOTHER.

Mr. A! He SAW it ALL!

It’s NOT our fault, Slung gave us NO CHOICE! Slung was a viscous criminal, rotten... EVIL!

WILL NEVER be free of his BLEEDING GRIP... untill... he’s... d... DEAD...

I’VE GOT TO KILL HIM...

HAHAHA! You cannot run away from your IDENTITY. Wherever you are, you will be what you are and YOU WILL KNOW IT!

You’ll NEVER escape from the TRUTH...

... he’ll never let us get away...

Why didn’t SOMEONE save me from this...

Sooner or later the corrupt find, for them, there is NO TURNING BACK. They are trapped in evil, being dragged toward the ONLY end possible... DESTRUCTION!

why did I ever get mixed up with you.

or from PAYING for your BETRAYAL of the good.

why didn’t someone save me from this...

the environment... society DID THIS to me...

Soon or later the corrupt find, for them, there is NO TURNING BACK. They are trapped in evil, being dragged toward the ONLY end possible... DESTRUCTION!

Life

Death
PLEASE stay away... leave LEAVE ME ALONE....

Have MERCY... OVERLOOK the evil I do... be BLIND to WHAT I AM... treat me as GOOD no matter HOW EVIL I AM...

I DON'T want to be JUDGED by what is right....

AAAAAEE! HELP! HELP!... Somebody... save me from JUSTICE... PROTECT me from the TRUTH... WHY can't I have MY WAY....

... can't escape... MR. A. is a CURSE!... I know I've done evil... I DESERVE justice... I... SHOULDN'T expect forgiveness... mercy... but I WANT IT!... I WANT to FEEL and to be HELD as good... GOOD... good... good...!

IT'S UNFAIR! WHY should my evil matter? I still believe in the good... rotten Ken... Slung... environment... I... I didn't have a chance... DOOMED... I'm doomed...

I tried to do good, TO BE good. Everything's against me, the evil world, sick society, sinful men... a social conscience man doesn't have a chance. Why didn't SOMEONE look out for me, protect me, save me? Life is so CRUEL....

... NOBODY cares what happens to me... now.

A man can only live HIS OWN life. When he refuses to know what is TRUE or FALSE, he is refusing to support and defend his life. When he ACTS on what he knows in true, he acts for his SURVIVAL. When he EVADES or ACTS on what he KNOWS is false, he acts toward his SELF-DESTRUCTION. A man's actions are life-serv ing or death serving. MAKE YOUR CHOICE!
From the Circular File

JAMES BRANDON
3213 S. 5th St.
Springfield, Ill. 62703

At first I didn't like the cover of Comic Crusader #12, but the more I looked at it the better it looked. It was really appropriate for the issue. The inside front cover was liked the first time I saw it. Dave Cockrum is a fantastic artist. The art on the editorial page, by Stillwell, may have been a little slow, but the art on the rest of the issue was good. More fantastic art from Jim Steranko. Hey, he draws fine looking women! Tom Fagan's article was very well received. Your illos were very good, too. I have yet to read an article by Fagan that I haven't liked, but this is the best he has written since Airboy. I don't usually like satirical strips, but "Nolan" had me laughing before I got halfway through. Dennis's art was superb. I liked the outfit he gave to Cookie. Wrightson's art was only fair. It didn't seem as good as some of his other work. The only thing the writer with "Conan" by Tony Isabella was that he made Conan act more like a child than a man. "A Happy Accident" by Bob Goffro is was good if you were a really big fan of the character. I'm not! I think ESBR's best creation is John Carter. I didn't like the Foreign Fan-Pare. The reason is because I don't know anything about the artist mentioned. I think if you put a lot of the artists who work in the same medium, it would help. I read your article on The Eclipse in Issue #6, but he didn't sound all that great and I don't like Foss' recent work, so I didn't think I would like the story. Boy was I wrong! His art was better than it was on his other character, Excel. The art didn't look quite as rushed as it usually does. The story was superb. I wish he would concentrate more on Eclipse than Excel. Foss was brought in to publish his views on the world. Unfortunately, this takes away from the entertainment. Try to get more stories about Eclipse. Maybe as a regular strip to alternate with The Defender. I didn't care for the Buscema-Simott art. I'm glad to see the letter column back to normal. The back cover was only fair. I don't like Dan's style.

I HAVE TO AGREE WITH YOU ON YOUR OPINION OF JOHN CARTER! HE'S MY FAVORITE ERB CHARACTER TOO! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE ARTIST FEATURED IN FOREIGN FAN-PARE! DID YOU READ THE ARTICLES? THE PURPOSE OF PFP IS TO GIVE READERS INFO ON THE MERITORIOUS TALENT OF THE FOREIGN ARTISTS. THE ARTIST PAINTED WAS VERY REPRESENTATIVE OF CARLOS GONZALEZ'S WORK. I LOVE TO HAVE MORE ECLIPSE STORIES, BUT I'M NOT SO WILD ABOUT DOING LONG UNHERALDED CHARACTERS, AS HE CALLS THEM. JIM GARRISON WAS THE BACK COVER ARTIST LAST ISSUE. MOST OF THE FANS WHO WROTE IN LIKED HIS RATHER DIFFERENT STYLE.

DAVID DONOVAN
1704 Terrace Drive
Carroll, Iowa. 51401

Comic Crusader #12 was B-A-D, especially The Eclipse! Maybe some people like that perverted crap, but not me! One thing really puzzled me, though. That article by Tom Fagan -- What's this about his "yet unsolved disappearance?" I've never heard anything about it!

BRAT! BECAUSE OF YOU, I LOST A BET I HAD WITH TON. HE SAID SOME FAN WAS GOING TO WRITE IN, NOT KNOWING HE WAS COMBINING A "FICION PIECE" WITH A FACTUAL ARTICLE, AND ASK ABOUT HIS MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE. I SAID "NO" NO ONE COULD BE THAT NAIVE. OH WELL, YOU WIN SOME - YOU LOSE SOME!

LAURINE WHITE
9658 Leader Ave.
Sacramento, Calif. 95841

I didn't think you could top issue #11, but you sure tried. The picture by Stillwell is the best by him I've seen so far. Kato is the only recognizable character in it. The Steranko is magnificent! Tom Fagan's article is much more informative than the one

In All In Color For A Lime about the Lost World.
Your illustrations were very good, but the one with Hunt, Lyssa and the Volta soldiers would have been better without Lyssa bouncing through the picture. Pujita's strip on "Nolan" was really cute. The artwork for Conan and the Burroughs article was good. I almost thought Gogart did that Taran. Thank you for including the comic in Spanish; I never can read the French ones in Phoenix. Eclipse wasn't as good as the rest of the contents.

MANY OF THE THINGS PRINTED IN "ALL IN COLOR FOR A LIME" ARE INACCURATE. BOTH TOM AND I PUT A LOT OF TIME AND MONEY INTO RESEARCHING THAT ARTICLE. LYSSA WASN'T BOUNCING - SHE WAS TURNING TO PLEER FROM THE VOLTA SOLDIER CLUTCHING AT HER.

JAMES HANLEY
167 Myrtle Ave
Richmond, N.J. 10310

I just got Comic Crusader #12. Artistically it is much improved from the last issue, and that issue was really superb! Offbeat is the only word to describe Tom Fagan's Lost World piece. "Nolan" suffers by comparison with National Lampoon's recent "Norman." It does touch on some nice points. The guy Qun really psyched me. Isabella's article was, as always, good and eminently readable. I would have preferred to see him do a Wandering Fan article though. "A Happy Accident" was good, even if it didn't rehash a lot of articles I've seen before. The Eclipse was actually totally new to me. The concept is sound, but Foss' art leaves something to be desired. The Thornie interview was far too short. The Foreign article read nicely, but was not my cup of tea. I can't get involved with an artist on the basis of six illustrations.

I CAN'T COMMENT ON "HORNAN" SINCE I HAVEN'T SEEN THE PIECE. A WANDERING FAN ARTICLE WOULD HAVE BEEN OUT OF PLACE IN ISSUE #12. THE THORNE INTERVIEW MAY HAVE BEEN SHORT, BUT IT WAS ON TIME INFORMATION.

COMING NEXT ISSUE!

Presenting... Prince Iblis! An in-depth look at Pawett's man of magic by RAYMOND MILLER! Plus... Interviews and a special pro strip. Tremendous art...GREAT Writing! For 75c, a better buy just doesn't exist!

Reserve your copy now from:

MARTIN L. GEHRK
BOX 112
DEDHAM, MASS. 02026

COMIC CRUSADER 14