

A
STARWARP CONCEPTS
MAGAZINE



HEARTSTOPPER
#1 FREE
NOT FOR
RESALE

BEFORE THE SAGA OF
PANDORA ZWIEBACK, THERE WAS...

HEARTSTOPPER™

THE LEGEND OF LA BELLA TENEBROSA

Collector's
ISSUE!

STEVEN A.
ROMAN

URIEL CATON

ALAN LARSEN

MONSTER
HUNTER
SEBASTIENNE
MAZARIN'S
LONG-LOST
SOLO
COMICS
ADVENTURE!

SUGGESTED
FOR
MATURE
READERS





THINK YOUR JOB IS HARD? TRY BEING SEBASTIENNE MAZARIN FOR A WHILE. FOR OVER FOUR HUNDRED YEARS ANNIE HAS BEEN FIGHTING AN ONGOING BATTLE AGAINST THE MONSTERS THAT THREATEN TO DESTROY THE WORLD. IT'S HARD, DANGEROUS WORK WITH FEW REWARDS, AND DOES ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO HELP PAY HER BILLS. AND WHEN YOU'RE A FREELANCE WRITER WORKING FROM PAYCHECK TO PAYCHECK, SOMETIMES MONSTERS HAVE TO TAKE A BACKSEAT TO KEEPING FOOD ON THE TABLE...

Art by
Uriel Caton.

STEVEN A. ROMAN
WRITER/LETTERER

URIEL CATON
PENCILS

ALAN LARSEN
INKS

DANIEL PETERS
COLORS

SEBASTIENNE MAZARIN CREATED BY
STEVEN A. ROMAN & URIEL CATON

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CENTRAL PARK IS NOT AN AREA FREQUENTED BY VISITORS-- OR EVEN MOST NEW YORKERS-- AFTER DUSK.

ITS TUNNELS ARE TOO DARK, ITS PATHWAYS TOO ISOLATED, ITS SHADOWS TOO MENACING.



AND IN SEARCH OF PREY.

NOW, THE HUNT BEGINS.

TONIGHT, THE SHADOWS ARE ALIVE.





A
LITTLE
CLOSER...



HEY,
SAILOR...

... WANNA
SHOW A
GIRL A
GOOD TIME?

SEBASTIENNE.

SHE'S
SO
UNUSUAL







WHIZZ!

MY, WHAT BIG, STINKY TEETH YOU HAVE, GRANDMA!

NOW, JUST RELAX. I'LL MAKE THIS REAL QUICK.

URK!



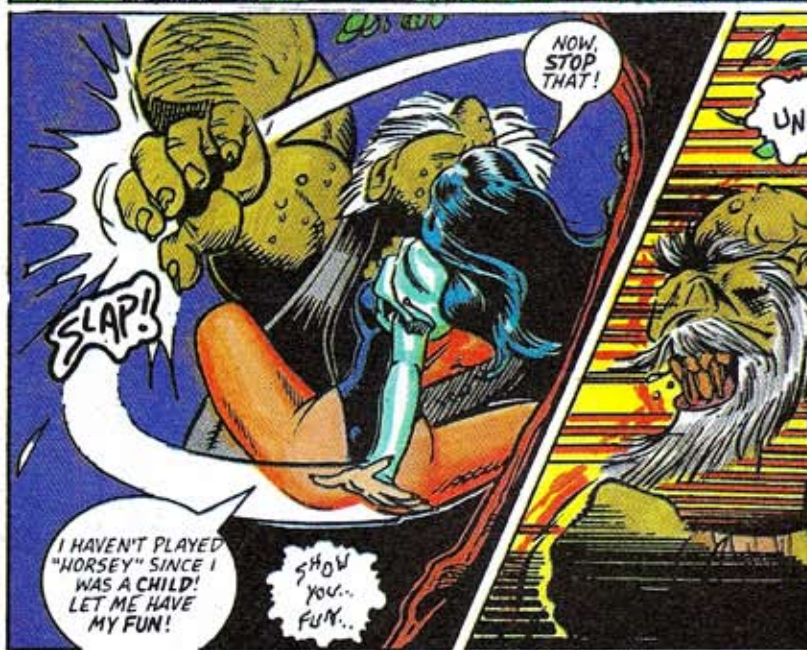
TRUST ME. I'M A PROFESSIONAL.



WHEEE! HI-HO SILVER!

LET GO... I... CAN'T BREATHE...

WHO SAID OGRES WERE STUPID?



NOW STOP THAT!

SLAP!

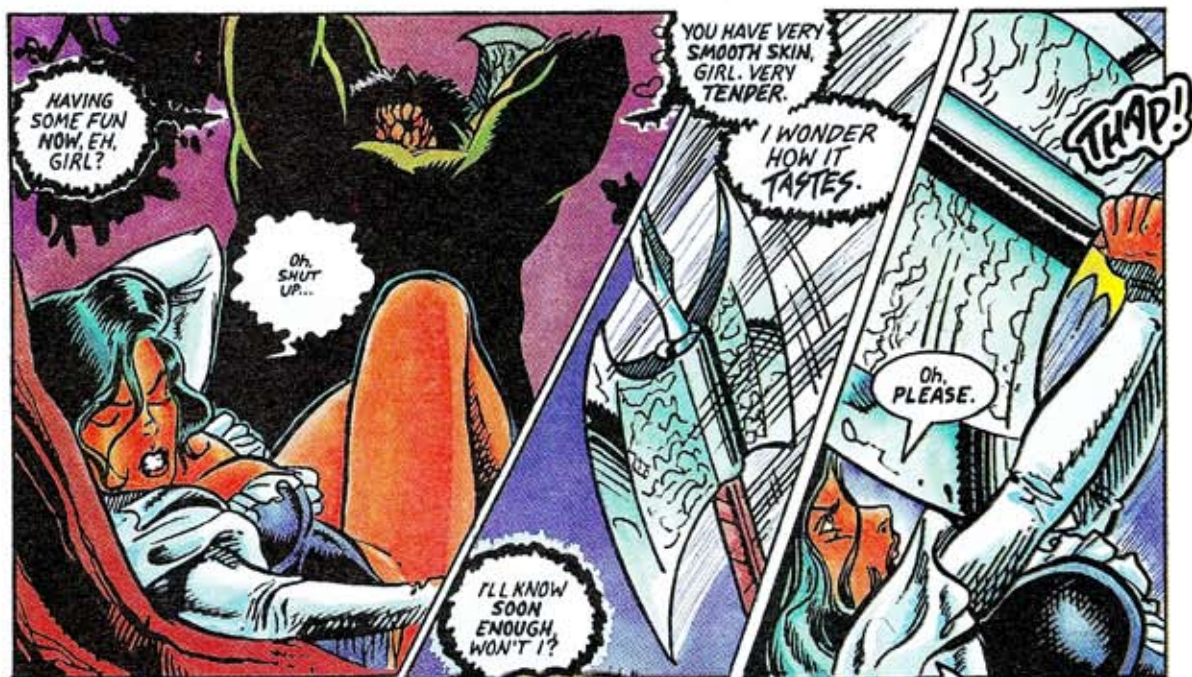
I HAVEN'T PLAYED "HORSEY" SINCE I WAS A CHILD! LET ME HAVE MY FUN!

SHOW YOU... FUN...



UNNH!

WHONK



HAVING SOME FUN NOW, EH, GIRL?

Oh, SHUT UP...

YOU HAVE VERY SMOOTH SKIN, GIRL. VERY TENDER.

I WONDER HOW IT TASTES.

THAP!

Oh, PLEASE.

I'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH, WON'T I?



YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST GUY WHO'S TRIED TO EAT ME.

BUT YOU SURE ARE

NNGG

THE UGLIEST.



JUST RELAX.

I'LL MAKE THIS REAL QUICK.





IN A CITY THE SIZE OF NEW YORK, THERE IS NEVER A SHORTAGE OF DANGERS. SO, AS ONE THREAT IS ENDED--

--ANOTHER RISES TO TAKE ITS PLACE.

"ALL RIGHT, RON, WHAT'S WITH ALL THE GODDAMNED MYSTERY?"

WHO'S THIS GUY YOU'VE GOT US WAITING TO MEET? AND WHAT'S WITH THIS NIGHT-TIME MEETING?

COULDN'T IT HAVE WAITED UNTIL MORNING?

NOW, BILL, YOU KNOW I'D NEVER DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS WITHOUT A REASON, RIGHT?

IF OUR GUEST CAME IN DURING THE DAY, WE'D PROBABLY HAVE A MOB SCENE OUTSIDE.

SO, IF YOU'LL BEAR WITH ME, I'LL BE HAPPY TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING!

BESIDES, YOU ALL KNOW I LIKE TO HAVE MY LITTLE DRAMATIC MOMENTS.

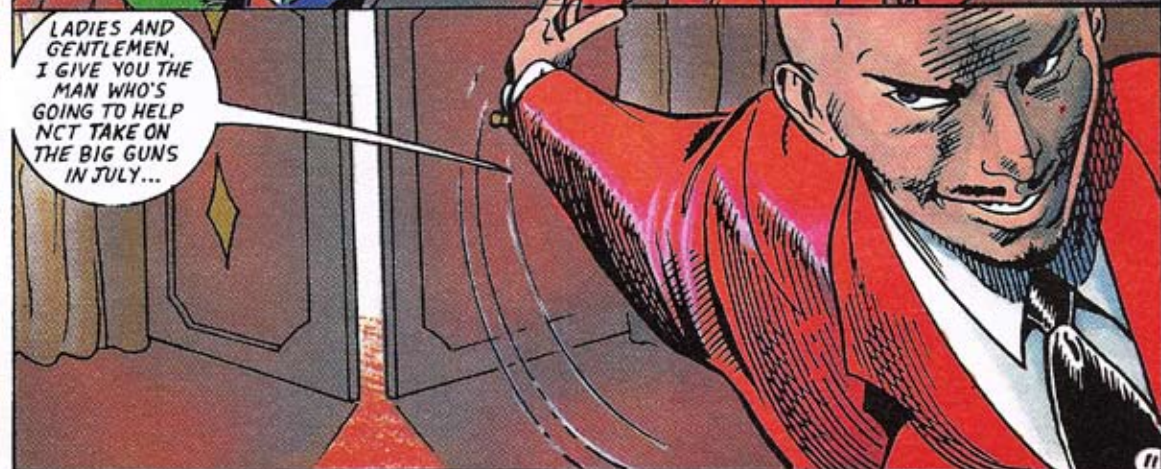
NOW, THE BIG 4th OF JULY WEEK-END IS COMING UP, AND ALL THE OTHER CABLE STATIONS ARE GEARING UP SOME BIG EVENTS.

HBO'S GOT A DOBBIE BROTHERS REUNION CONCERT, TBS HAS THE SALUTE TO JOHN WAYNE, AND MCI'S RUNNING THE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL BOXING MATCH.

WHAT DOES NCT HAVE?

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT WE HAVE...





CORUM
deSADE!

HOW'S IT
HANGIN',
FOLKS?

I'M THE GUY
YOUR MOTHER
WARNED YOU
ABOUT.

BELOW HER, THE MARQUEES AND BILLBOARDS OF TIMES SQUARE FILL THE NIGHT WITH FLASHING, KALEIDOSCPIC COLORS.

TRUE, THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING WILL ALWAYS HAVE KING KONG, AND YANKEE STADIUM WILL ALWAYS HAVE BABE RUTH...

THERE'S A SIREN-LIKE QUALITY TO THIS PLACE, ONE THAT CALLS TO PEOPLE THE WORLD OVER.

... BUT TIMES SQUARE IS WHERE THE MAGIC IS.

AND A CITY RULED BY MAGIC IS GOING TO ATTRACT CERTAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE.

SHAPESHIFTERS, FOR EXAMPLE.

OF COURSE, NEW YORK BEING WHAT IT IS, THE MORE UNUSUAL SOMETHING IS, THE MORE COMMONPLACE IT BECOMES.

SUCH IS LIFE IN THE BIG CITY.

A BIRD CHANGING INTO A WOMAN HARDLY GETS A SECOND GLANCE.







... HOW CAN I WORK ON MY STRIP CLUB ARTICLE WITH ALL THIS SCREAMING?

LET'S HAVE SOME PROFESSIONALISM AROUND HERE, OKAY?



WHERE THE HELL DID YOU GO?

JOB INTERVIEW. I HEARD THERE'S THIS OLD MAGICIAN LOOKING FOR A NEW ASSISTANT FOR HIS ACT.

CLOTHING'S OPTIONAL. HAVE TO WORK WITH BATS, THOUGH.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!



OH, RELAX, FORRY-- I WAS IN THE SHOWER. I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE LOOKING FOR ME.

YEAH, WELL...

... YOU LET SOMEBODY KNOW WHEN YOU'RE GONNA PULL ONE OF YOUR DISAPPEARING ACTS AGAIN.



AYE, AYE, CAP'N.

"SECURITY."

HAW!

I LIKE HIM.

HE'S SILLY.



HI, SCOTTY.

HEY, ANNIE.

I CHECKED THE SHOWER.

I KNOW.

PRETTY SLICK, HUH?



Y'KNOW, ONE OF THESE DAYS I'M GONNA FIND OUT WHAT YOU'RE UP TO AND THEN YOU'RE GONNA BE IN BIG TROUBLE.

I'M MOIST WITH ANTICIPATION.

BUT YOU BETTER MOVE FAST, SHERLOCK. I'LL BE LEAVING IN A FEW MORE DAYS WHEN MY RESEARCH IS COMPLETED.



HAVE FUN FINDING OUT, THOUGH.

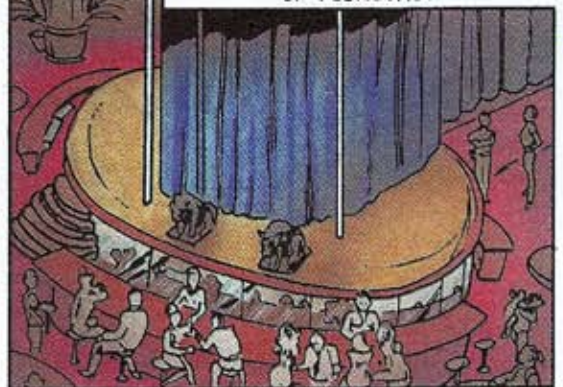
SEE YOU IN FIVE.

NOW, WHERE SHOULD I START LOOKING...?

FRIDAY NIGHTS IN NEW YORK ARE A WONDER TO BEHOLD.

AT THE END OF YET ANOTHER GRUELING WORK WEEK, MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE FLEE THEIR JOBS IN THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE.

THE OVERALL SIGHT IS NOT UNLIKE THAT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN GIVEN RELEASE AT THE BEGINNING OF SUMMER VACATION.

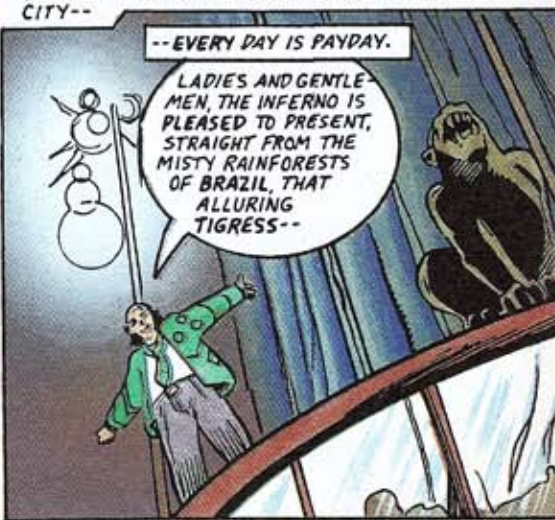


THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT THESE CHILDREN HAVE MONEY TO SPEND.

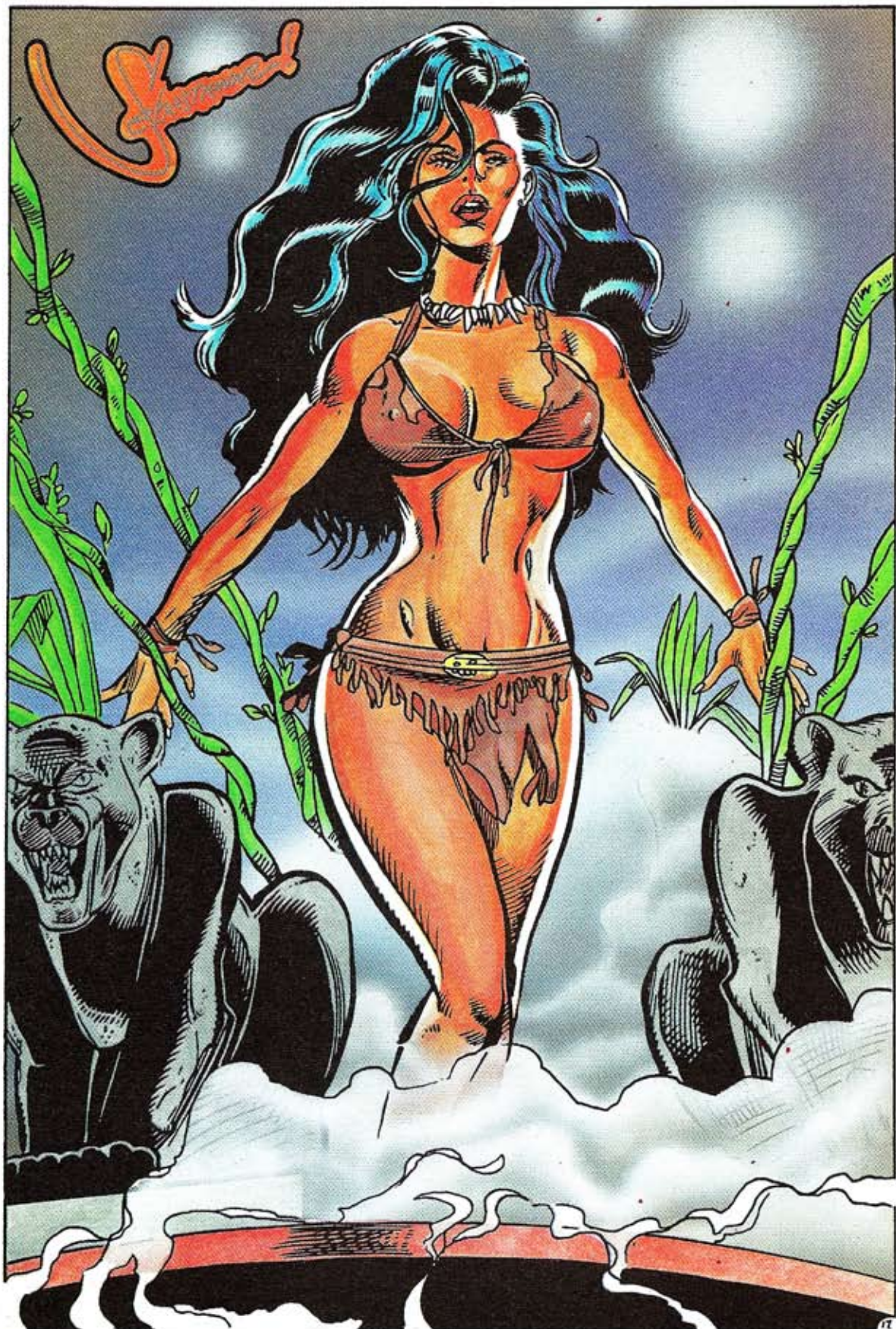
AND FRIDAY ALWAYS MEANS PAYDAY.


BUT, IF YOU'RE THE TYPE OF PANCER THAT POSSESSES THE SAME HYPNOTIC ABILITIES OF THIS MAGICAL CITY--

--EVERY DAY IS PAYDAY.



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE INFERNO IS PLEASED TO PRESENT, STRAIGHT FROM THE MISTY RAINFORESTS OF BRAZIL, THAT ALLURING TIGRESS--





*SHE MOVES WITH THE SUPPLENESS
OF A GREAT JUNGLE CAT, HER
EYES PIERCING AND INTENSE,
HER MANE OF DARK TRESSES
WHIPPING AROUND WILDLY.*



*IT IS THE MUSIC OF AN OLD WORLD,
OF A TIME WHEN MAN TREMBLED
BEFORE THE MIGHT OF THE
ELEMENTS AND EACH DAY WAS A
STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE.*

THE ROOM, THE LUSTFUL STARES
AND STUNNED EXPRESSIONS OF
THE PATRONS--NONE OF THESE
EXIST FOR HER.

ALL THAT MATTERS
IS THE MUSIC.



IT IS PRIMAL MUSIC,
REACHING DEEP INTO
HER SOUL, TOUCHING
THE HEART OF THE
BEAST THAT LURKS
JUST BENEATH THE
BEAUTY.

IT IS THE MUSIC
OF PREDATORS.

AND EVERYONE
HERE IS
HER PREY.

UNFORTUNATELY, SHE IS NOT THE ONLY PREDATOR OUT TONIGHT...



I DON'T THINK THAT JONES WOMAN WAS HAPPY.

WHAT, THE BLACK CHICK? STOP BEING SUCH A WORRYWART, WOULDJA?

LISTEN, THERE'S NO WAY THEY'RE GONNA TURN THIS DOWN.

IT'D BE CORPORATE SUICIDE AND THEY ALL KNOW IT.

LOOK, WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK TO YOUR HOTEL ROOM, HAVE A DRINK, PUT YOUR FEET UP AND RELAX. LET ME HANDLE THIS, OKAY?

ALL RIGHT, DICK, BUT I FEEL LIKE TAKING A BIT OF A WALK RIGHT NOW. TRY TO WORK OFF SOME ADRENALIN, YOU KNOW.

MICHAEL WILL DRIVE YOU HOME.



BESIDES, I ALWAYS STICK TO THE SHADOWS.



THE MEETING RAN MUCH LONGER THAN SHELLEY JONES HAD EXPECTED.



SHE'S MISSED DINNER. HER CAT'S PROBABLY POKING INTO THE KITCHEN GARBAGE CAN FOR A MEAL, AND HER TEMPLES ARE THROBING FROM THE FULL-BLOWN HEADACHE THAT'S ON ITS WAY.

WHEN HER HEAD HURTS THIS MUCH, IT'S USUALLY A SIGN THAT HER BODY'S REBELLING FOR NOT BEING FED.



AND WHEN SHE HASN'T EATEN AND FEELS A HEADACHE COMING ON, SHELLEY BECOMES EXTREMELY CRANKY.

HAVING SPENT AN HOUR ARGUING WITH HER FELLOW PRODUCERS OVER WHAT A MISTAKE IT WOULD BE TO SIGN HELLFIRE--



-- COMPOUNDED BY THE FACT THAT SHE KNEW *de SADE* WAS MENTALLY UNDRRESSING HER THE WHOLE TIME--

-- HER MOOD IS ESPECIALLY FOUL.

AND THOUGH A CANDY BAR IS ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN BY THE DIET SHE'S ON (OTHERWISE SHE'LL NEVER FIT INTO THAT NEW SWIMSUIT), SHE FIGURES SHE CAN LIVE WITH THE EXTRA CALORIES FOR NOW.



THAT, AS THE SAYING GOES, IS THE LEAST OF HER WORRIES...



SHELLEY..





IT'S RARE THAT
I MEET SOMEONE
SO UNDERSTANDING.

OR SO
APPETIZING.

Letters page
masthead art
by Uriel Caton.



OF SHAPECHANGERS AND METALHEADS

—AN AFTERWORD BY STEVE ROMAN—

In movie terminology, think of this comic as the first chapter of the long-lost prequel to my dark-fantasy/horror novel series *The Saga of Pandora Zwieback*.

Those of you familiar with Pan's adventures may recognize her shape-shifting, monster-hunting mentor Sebastienne Mazarin as the star of this story, but as you can see, the Annie here is a different person from her prose iteration. For one thing, book-Annie wears a lot more clothing...

So where did this story come from? How come you never heard of it before? Well, just step with me into the Wayback Machine and I'll give you all the sordid details...

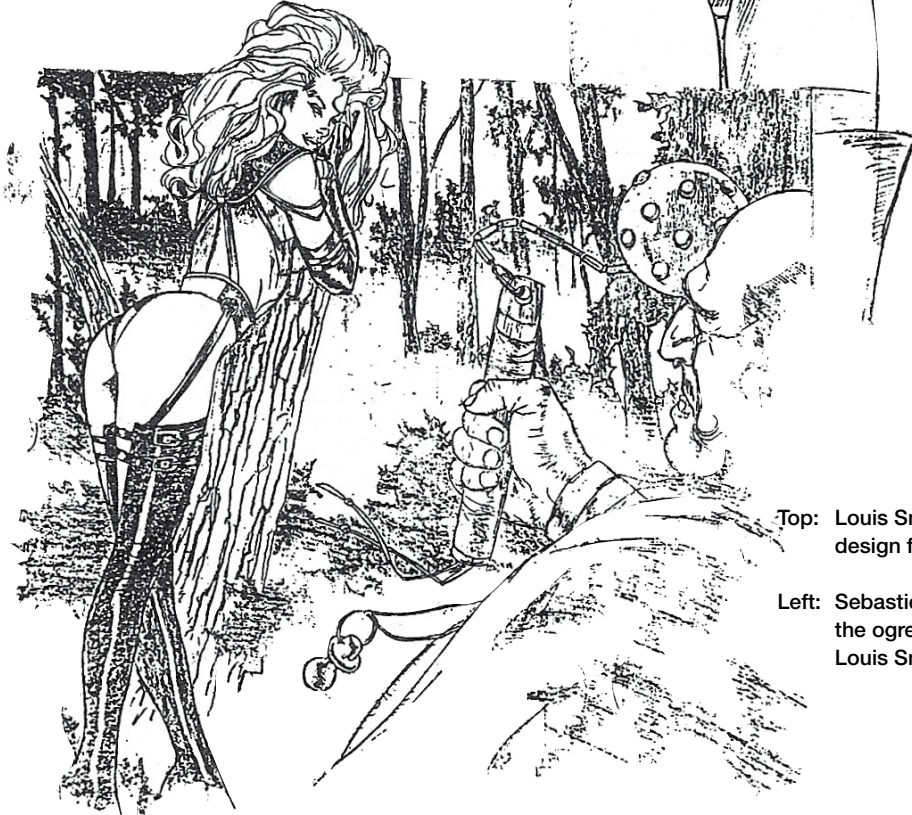
* * *

The year was 1993, and the comics industry was in the midst of what later notoriously became known as The Bad Girl Era—a time in which just about every comic company, both indie and mainstream, was publishing best-selling titles that starred women in little

to no clothing. Vampirella, Catwoman, Shi, Lady Death—if you could squeeze your femme fatale into a g-string and pasties, or spray-paint on a costume with an airbrush, you were pretty much printing money because those things sold like the proverbial hotcakes.

At the time, I was an indie comics publisher with a recently launched series called *Lorelei*, about a red-headed succubus who enticed men to give up their souls but otherwise wore far more clothing than most heroines—although, since I started the series with a multi-issue origin story, the only time you saw her in costume was on the cover. (Unabashed plug: You can check out her adventures in the graphic novel *Lorelei: Sects and the City*, available from StarWarp Concepts.)

The first two issues of *Lorelei* sported kick-ass cover art by Louis Small Jr., a guy who'd just exploded on the scene as the penciler of Harris Comics' new *Vampirella* series. Unfortunately, Louis wasn't feeling



Top: Louis Small Jr.'s original design for Sebastienne.

Left: Sebastienne confronts the ogre. Pencils by Louis Small Jr.

the love from Harris, which had a habit at convention booth signings of displaying *other* artists' work while he was there, in addition to not having copies of his issues available.

More than a little frustrated, Louis mentioned to me at that year's Great Eastern Convention (held in New York) that he'd love to have his own vampire character to show what he could really do, and that he wanted to work with me on it. After thinking about it, I came back the next day and pitched him this thing called *Heartstopper*, starring a monster hunter with the singsongy name of Sebastienne Mazarin. Much to Louis's surprise she wasn't the vampiress he was hoping for, but a Brazilian-born, immortal shape-shifter. As I explained to him, if he did another female vampire character people would accuse him of being a one-trick pony with no range—sure, Annie would be another half-naked heroine, but for him to do a straight-out Vampirella knockoff right out of the gate? Yipes.

Louis saw the logic in my argument and got down to designing Annie. The result? A stunningly beautiful and—yes—half-naked woman who dressed like a stripper but who could undoubtedly plant her stiletto-heeled boot firmly up your ass.

A stripper? Hey, there's an idea...

After a great deal of punching away at the keyboard, I came up with the idea of Annie being a freelance writer when she's not decapitating ogres and the like, and that her first story line, a four-issue miniseries, would center around her researching a magazine article on "gentlemen's clubs"—which would give Louis plenty of beautiful women to draw—that ultimately led to her run-in with

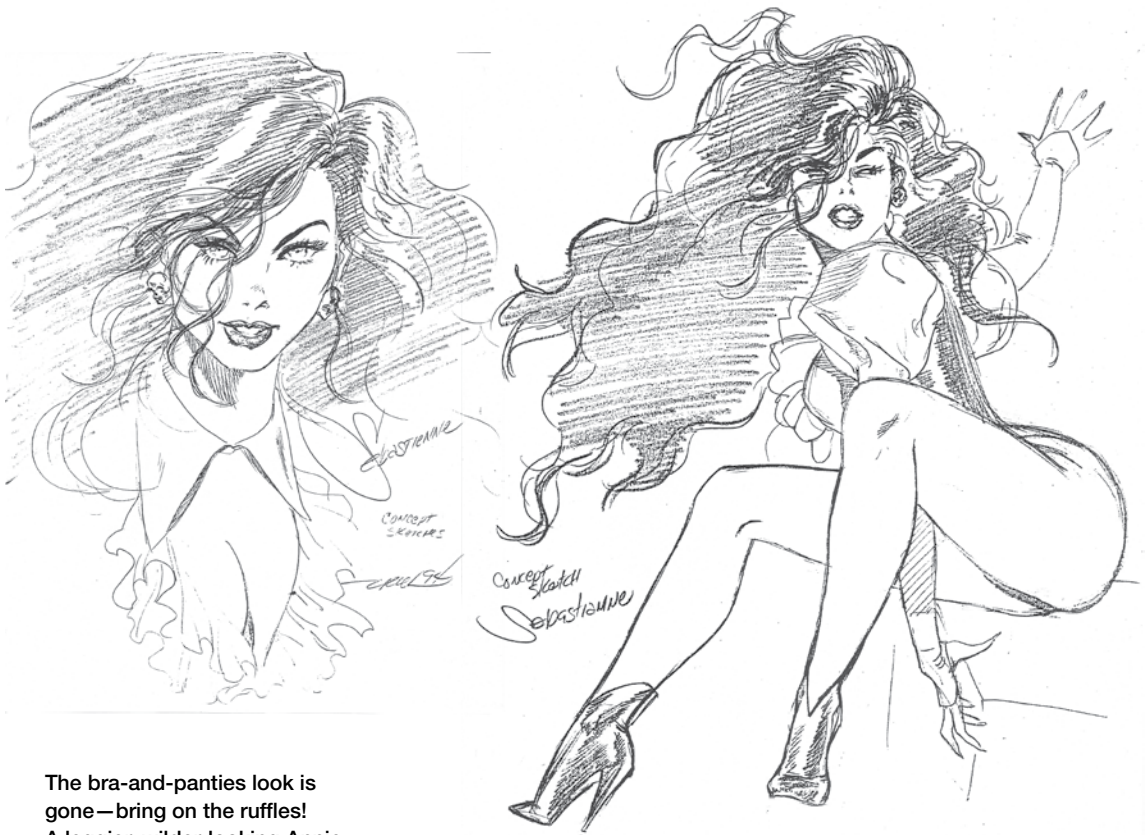
a demonic rock band. (Here's a tip for novice comics writers: always try to play to your artist's strengths.) Louis loved it, and we pitched the idea to Joe Monks, owner of comics publisher CFD Productions (and former business partner of *Dawn* artist/creator Joe Linsner). He also loved it and was eager to publish the miniseries, but first he wanted us to provide an eight-page introductory story for the comics anthology he was editing: *NightCry* #1. I thought the Annie/ogre fight scene I'd written to open *Heartstopper* #1 would meet that requirement, Joe agreed, and Louis went off to draw it.

Unfortunately, when you're faced with a choice between paying the bills and working on a comic story for free, it's the paying gigs that are gonna get your attention, and that's the problem Louis ran into. An understandable situation, but it meant he was only able to complete three pages of pencils in time for *NightCry*'s publication date and had to bow out of the project. The story did see print in *NightCry* #1, but by that point it was pretty clear *Heartstopper* was dead as a CFD project.

* * *

Jump ahead a year—1994—and now I've met Uriel Caton, a guy who, under the moniker "Uriel Antonio," was drawing the damn-cutest good girls for b&w comics publisher Eternity Comics on titles like *Starlight* and *Ex-Mutants*. I pitched Uriel the *Heartstopper* idea and he jumped at the chance to work on it—starting with a redesign of Annie that put a little more material on her shapely frame.

Just in time, too, because I'd finally found a publisher interested in handling



The bra-and-panties look is gone—bring on the ruffles! A leggier, wilder-looking Annie, redesigned by Uriel Caton.

the miniseries: Millennium Publications, which had been doing full-color comics based on properties like *Doc Savage* and *The Wild, Wild West* (the TV series, not that awful Will Smith movie). Negotiations began, contracts flew back and forth, and suddenly Uriel and I had a deal for a *Heartstopper* mini—in color!

Sadly, though, things didn't work out the way we'd planned them, when the second issue came out and Millennium informed me that no one was getting paid for their work.

Seems that, despite issue one selling 10–15,000 copies (a pretty good number for an indie comic in those days) there wasn't enough profit, in Millennium's opinion, for them to consider making *any* sort of payment. I explained that the creative team I'd assembled, y'know, liked me as a person, but business was

business and they all expected some kind of remuneration. The publisher said it would all work out in the end, once the miniseries was completed. All we needed to do was just keep plowing ahead and eventually the money would start coming in. I said nobody was working for free, especially not for another two issues. He said he couldn't do anything about the situation.

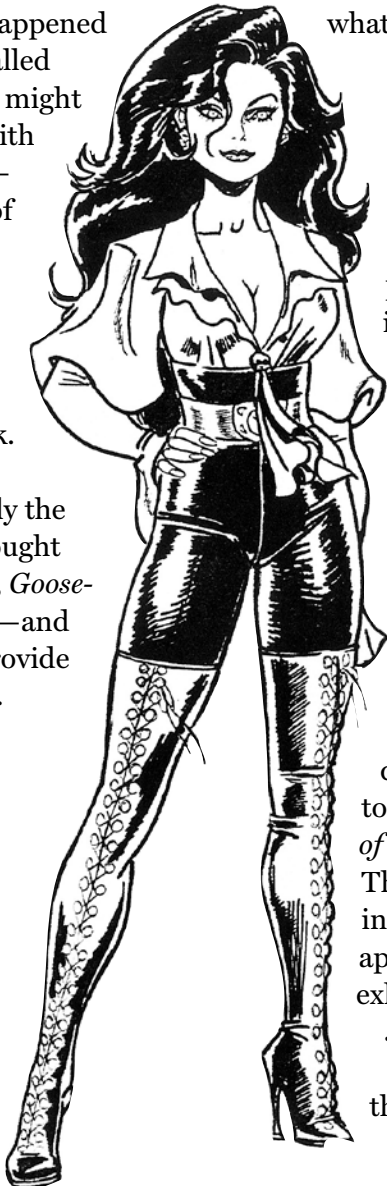
So I cancelled the project.

Thus ended the *Heartstopper* comic series. Not a great loss in cosmic terms—most comic-shop retailers who knew me from *Lorelei* weren't even aware I had a four-color book being published because Millennium never advertised it, and the Bad Girl Era was already nearing its (ahem) climax—but it always grated on me that I never got to finish the miniseries.

However, I wasn't quite done yet with writing Annie's adventures, even after her comic was tossed into limbo. In 1998, an acquaintance named Michael Z. Hobson, then-president of book-packaging company Parachute Press—which to this day continues to produce R. L. Stine's numerous *Goosebumps* novels and tie-ins—told me Parachute had plans to expand beyond Stine's titles and introduce a whole line of creator-owned books. And then he asked if I had anything that might appeal to young and/or teenaged readers.

Well it just so happened I had this thing called *Heartstopper* that might work as a series with a bit of tweaking—like the addition of another character I pulled from my projects-in-limbo files: a teenaged Goth-girl named Pandora Zwieback. Mike liked what I pitched—especially the title, which he thought had a nice, catchy, *Goosebumps*-y feel to it—and asked if I could provide a formal proposal.

A more practical costume design for today's on-the-go monster huntress (and by "practical" I mean now she wears pants). Art by Uriel Caton.



So I gave Uriel a call, he put even more clothes on Annie . . . and the result was a stylish, shape-shifting monster hunter ready to act as mentor for the star of a young adult book series called *The Saga of Pandora Zwieback*, ultimately published by StarWarp Concepts—and on sale right now!

(And if you aren't already reading the monster-bashing adventures of Goth adventuress Pandora Zwieback and a fully clothed Sebastienne Mazarin—well, what're you waiting for? Check out www.pandorazwieback.com and see what all the excitement is about.)

* * *

So now, if you're a longtime comics fan, you're probably wondering if this comic is part of Pandora Zwieback continuity. (Hey, what fan of *any* franchise doesn't wonder that about spin-off projects?)

Well, actually . . . yes. As I read over this issue, I realized it could be an event in Annie's long history (she *has* been around for over four hundred years, after all) since it now kinda works as a period piece—there are certainly enough references to 1990s celebrities and heavy-metal bands for it to qualify. But honestly, you don't have to read the comic to enjoy *The Saga of Pandora Zwieback*, and vice versa. This is just a neat little adventure set in Annie's pre-Pan days—back when, apparently, she was something of an exhibitionist.

Jeez.

The Bad Girl Era. Every time I think I'm out, it pulls me back in....

Heartstopper/Trollords: the crossover/shotgun wedding that never happened! Meant to be a follow-up to Annie's miniseries, it would have involved Death courting his favorite monster killer with the "help" of Harry, Larry, and Jerry—trolls patterned after the Three Stooges (and the stars of their own 1990s comic series)

Sebastienne pencils by Holly Golightly (aka Fauve). Trollords pencils by co-creator Scott Baderstadt. Inks by Bill Lavin.





Annie and her monster-hunting protégé Pandora Zwieback, on the cover of **Stalkers: The Saga of Pandora Zwieback, Book 3**. Painting by Bob Larkin.

AVAILABLE NOW FOR DOWNLOAD



THE SAGA
BEGINS AT

WWW.PANDORAZWIEBACK.COM



ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

STEVEN A. ROMAN is the author of the dark-fantasy novel series *The Saga of Pandora Zwieback*, as well as *X-Men: The Chaos Engine Trilogy* and *Final Destination: Dead Man's Hand*. He has also written the graphic novel *Lorelei: Sects and the City*. His current writing projects include the science fiction novel *Doctor Omega and the Megiddo Factor*, the two-volume graphic novel *Lorelei: Building the Perfect Beast*, and the short-story collection *Night's Children*.

URIEL CATON began his artistic career as a penciler for Eternity/Malibu Comics with *Starlight* #1, then moved on to *Ex-Mutants Annual* #1 and its related titles. In the years since, he has provided pencil art for such comics as *JSA Annual*, *Vampirella*, and *The Outer Space Babes*. Currently, he works as the head of the Control Art and Figure Design division of toy manufacturer Art Asylum.

The late **ALAN LARSEN** was the writer/artist of the indie comics *Bella Donna*, *Goon Patrol*, *Jim Nastics* and *Messiah*, and an inker for *Femforce*, *The Armageddon Factor*, *Keith Laumer's Retief*, and *Creepy Tales*.

DANIEL PETERS got his start in comics as the artist of the supernatural superhero team *Troubleshooters, Inc.*, before moving out to Hollywood, where he became a CGI animator on the *Roughnecks: Starship Troopers Chronicles* syndicated series. Still busily working as an animator (and occasional actor), his most recent film projects include *Almighty Thor* and *Dragon Crusaders*.

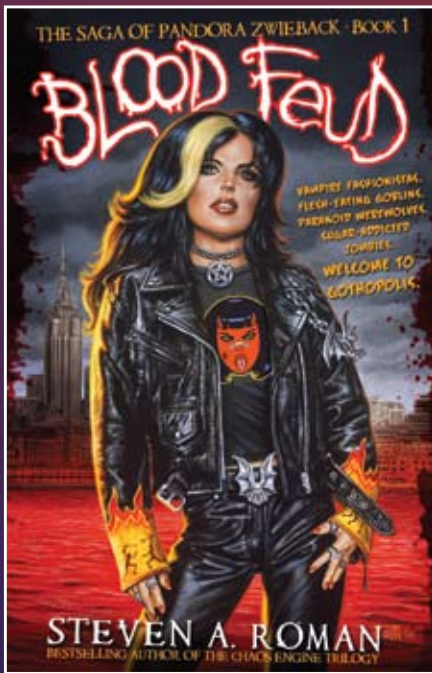
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NOVELS

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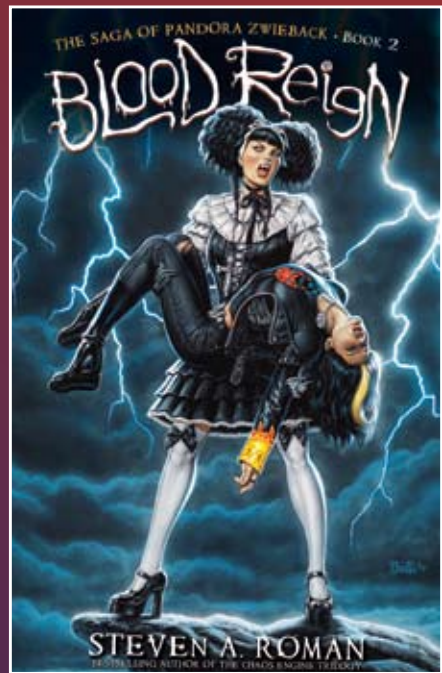
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *X-MEN: THE CHAOS ENGINE TRILOGY*
AND *FINAL DESTINATION: DEAD MAN'S HAND*



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