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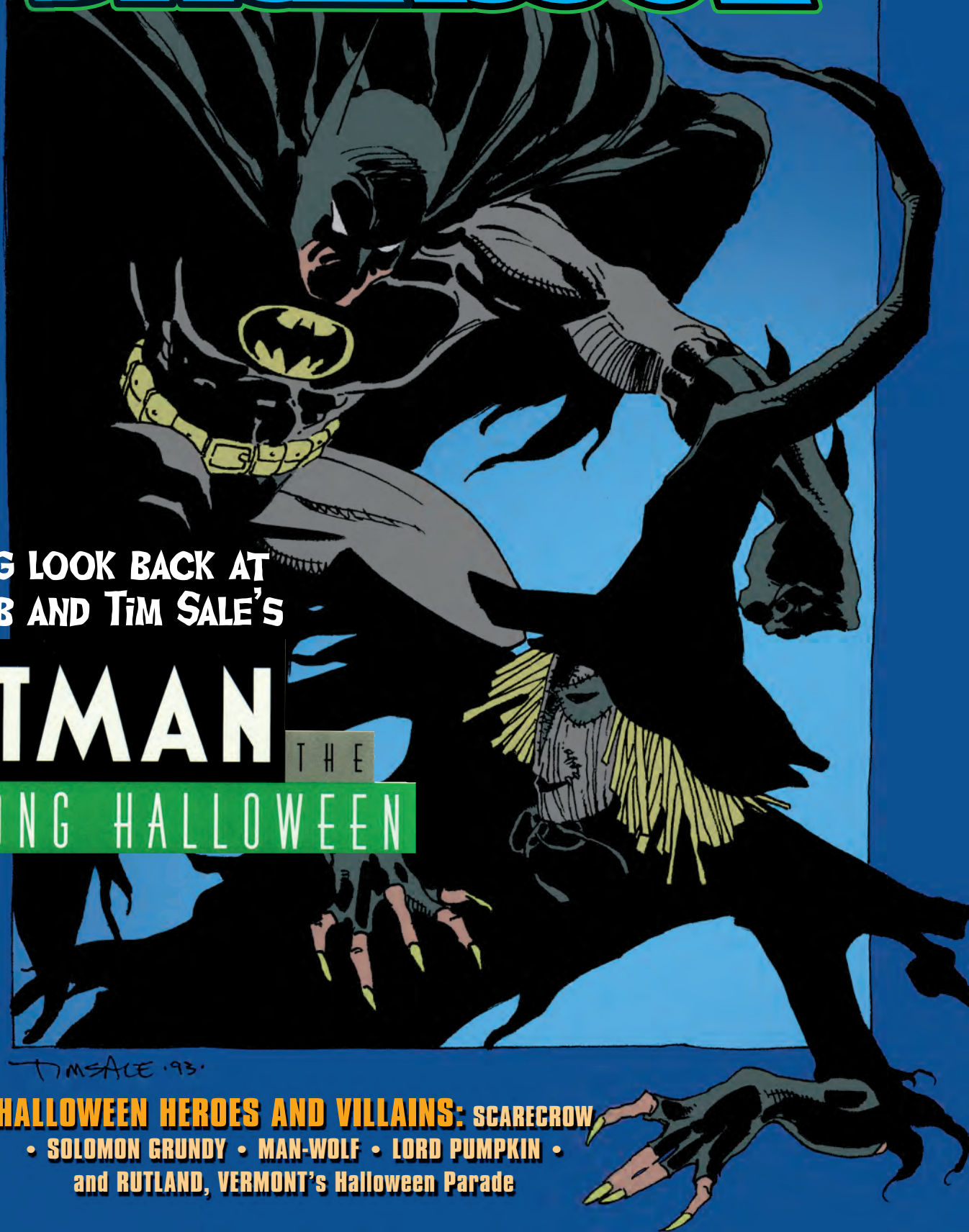

A CHILLING LOOK BACK AT JEPH LOEB AND TIM SALE'S

BATMAN THE LONG HALLOWEEN

HALLOWEEN HEROES AND VILLAINS: SCARECROW • SOLOMON GRUNDY • MAN-WOLF • LORD PUMPKIN • and RUTLAND, VERMONT's Halloween Parade

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Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!

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The Retro Comics Experience!

HALLOWEEN HEROES & VILLAINS!

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LOOKING BACK AT BATMAN THE LONG HALLOWEEN

by Randall C. Wiggins

FlashBack

[***Editor's note:*** *This article, which surveys the 1996–1997 maxiseries issue by issue, contains spoilers regarding its murder-mystery plot.*]

In 1996 DC Comics introduced the maxiseries* Batman: The Long Halloween *by writer Jeph Loeb artist Tim Sale. They had previously worked together on a revival of *Challengers of the Unknown* and had enjoyed the creative process and wanted to work together again. Thus began a series of one-shots produced with editor Archie Goodwin: *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* one-shot Halloween stories *Halloween Special* #1 (Nov. 1993), *Madness* (1994), and *Ghosts* (1995). With each progressing work, Loeb and Sale developed their skill with the mythology of the Dark Knight.

Sales dictated a demand for more and maybe longer work from the pair, so they worked out a scheme with Goodwin that became a maxiseries capped with prestige-format bookends—*Batman: The Long Halloween* (*TLH*).

When the first issue, "Crime" (Oct. 1996), hit the stands, I was reaching the end of a seven-year run as a comic-book store owner, so I wouldn't get to see how well this series would sell or how its influence would impact the world of the Batman—not firsthand, anyway. I do remember that when I was first introduced to the amazing work of the Loeb/Sale team I was skeptical, but interested, and ready to see where things would go.

I came from the generation of comics fans where Batman was drawn by Jim Aparo, Gene Colan, Don Newton, and the other incredible artists from the 1970s and 1980s. Tim Sale's style was an unknown for me and it took a little getting used to, but in time I did just that and he has become one of my all-time favorite Batman artists.

Writer Jeph Loeb is a master of suspense, plotting, and character development, and over the years he has only improved to become a leading writer for both DC and Marvel.

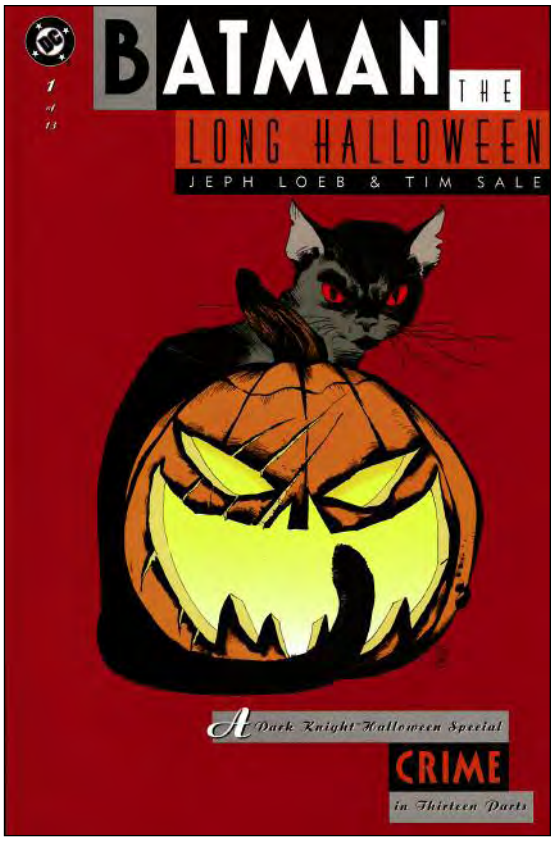
HAUNTING HUES AND HOLIDAY HORRORS

One of the most important, yet often overlooked elements of a comic book is color. We take it for granted as part of the art and just enjoy the story and art as a whole. *Batman: The Long Halloween* changed that for many people, me included.

The Long Halloween, set during the early years of Batman's career as a crimefighter, tells the story of a serial killer who kills crime figures each month on a real or appointed holiday; because of this, he is given the moniker "Holiday." Gotham Police Captain James Gordon, District Attorney Harvey Dent, and the Batman team to identify and capture the killer, while Dent is also working to bring down the Carmine "the Roman" Falcone crime family.

The Usual Suspects

Inside back cover from *TLH* #3, colored for *BI* by designer Rich Fowlks. (All other *Long Halloween* art reproduced herein features Gregory Wright's colors.)



Sketching the Dark Knight

(left) A 1992 sketch of Batman by Tim Sale, illustrated for Frank Balkin, who kindly shares it with *BACK ISSUE*. (right) *TLH* #1 cover.

As the year goes on and the body count rises, various Batman rogues make their appearances in the series, making Batman's job all the harder in tracking Holiday. Nearly every Bat-villain makes an appearance in one or more issues of this series and usually in a highly altered state, as Loeb and Sale took strides in bringing the old alive in new ways.

Gregory Wright brought out the fine detail work of Tim Sale's art with a very basic color design.

Regarding the magnetic appeal of the noir style of his art combined with Gregory's color, Tim Sale says, "it was definitely a conscious choice on all our parts. Jeph and I had worked for years with Greg Wright, and we had a comfortable relationship. Jeph had his own strong opinions, and even though I am color blind, I did as well. I spoke often with Greg about a limited color palette; I just am drawn to noir, and letting the black and white shine."

(Sale and Loeb formed such a successful partnership, they went from Batman to the next obvious candidate, the Man of Steel, with the well-regarded *Superman for All Seasons*.)

JEPH LOEB

"Jeph was a writer/producer in movies and TV, and had a relationship with Jenette Kahn, who was DC's president and publisher in the 1980s," Sale tells *BACK ISSUE*. "Kahn had an interest in expanding DC's properties into those fields, while Jeph also had a desire to write comics, having loved them since being a kid, as many of us do. I had some non-superhero work under my belt that was coming to an end and was looking for work, so I went for the first time to the San Diego Comic-Con—at the time still about comics, primarily—where I met Barbara Randall [Kesel], Jeph's key editorial contact at DC, and she put the two of us together."

Sale's interpretations of the characters that fill the Batman universe are radically different from what might be called a company "house style." According to the artist, "DC has always been generous about allowing me to bend the characters to my own whims and ideas. When we later expanded to *Dark Victory*, I very much enjoyed drawing the character of Janice Porter, and more Two-Face."

Sale's noir style of art seems to have influenced film director Christopher Nolan. I told Tim that I had read that his work had influenced the production design of Nolan's first Bat-film [*Batman Begins*, 2005] and asked if he had any input in its production. "No, I did not," he responds. "But I have read that as well. I suppose we just matched somehow in the images we are drawn to, which is, of course, very flattering to me."

The writing of *The Long Halloween*, according to Sale, was predominantly left to Loeb, whose work as Head of

Television for Marvel made him unavailable for this *BACK ISSUE* interview. In regard to the writing of *TLH*, Sale notes, "It was all Jeph. I had opinions, but it was all Jeph." But Loeb allowed Sale room for interpretation: "He is generous, but I learned very early to give few notes, if I had them, after his scripts, and stay out of the way until he sent me something, as he was so much better at it than me! We would talk about what we thought was fun in general terms, agree on that, and he would, as he called it, 'percolate' and send me a script. Much of Jeph's generosity is how much he respects my ability to visually tell the story he has written. He has always insisted that our credit be as 'storytellers' and not as 'writer' and 'artist.'"

TIM SALE

One of the most important aspects of a comic book is the cover. It is the first thing the prospective buyer sees, and it has to grab that person's attention fast because it is in competition with hundreds of other titles. *Batman: The Long Halloween* did its job every single month with amazing covers; each one simple, yet highly effective in drawing the eye directly to the center, where the image rested amongst a sedate pale color. Each month's cover featured a holiday or an image linked in some way to signify a holiday.

"It is entirely to Jeph's credit, his concept, to have a holiday theme each month, although the images were up to me," Sale says. "That idea—to have a thematic thread running through all the covers—changed the way I think about comic covers that are part of a mini- or maxiseries.

"The color choices were entirely Greg's," Sale continues. "By this point he knew my preference for flat, somewhat muted colors, but the colors themselves are entirely Greg's, and I love them."

Gregory Wright adds, "Tim did the cover design; I colored them with Tim's input. I suggested all the color, but he had very simple graphic color in mind."

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN— ISSUE BY ISSUE

Issue #1: "Crime" (Oct. 1996)

The cover of the first issue features a black cat behind a jack o' lantern with scratches on its face. There is a deep red background with the title border at the top. The cat signifies Catwoman, the pumpkin is for Halloween, and the scratches on its surface would be the scratches on Carmine's face made by Catwoman back in the *Batman: Year One* storyline, written by Frank Miller.

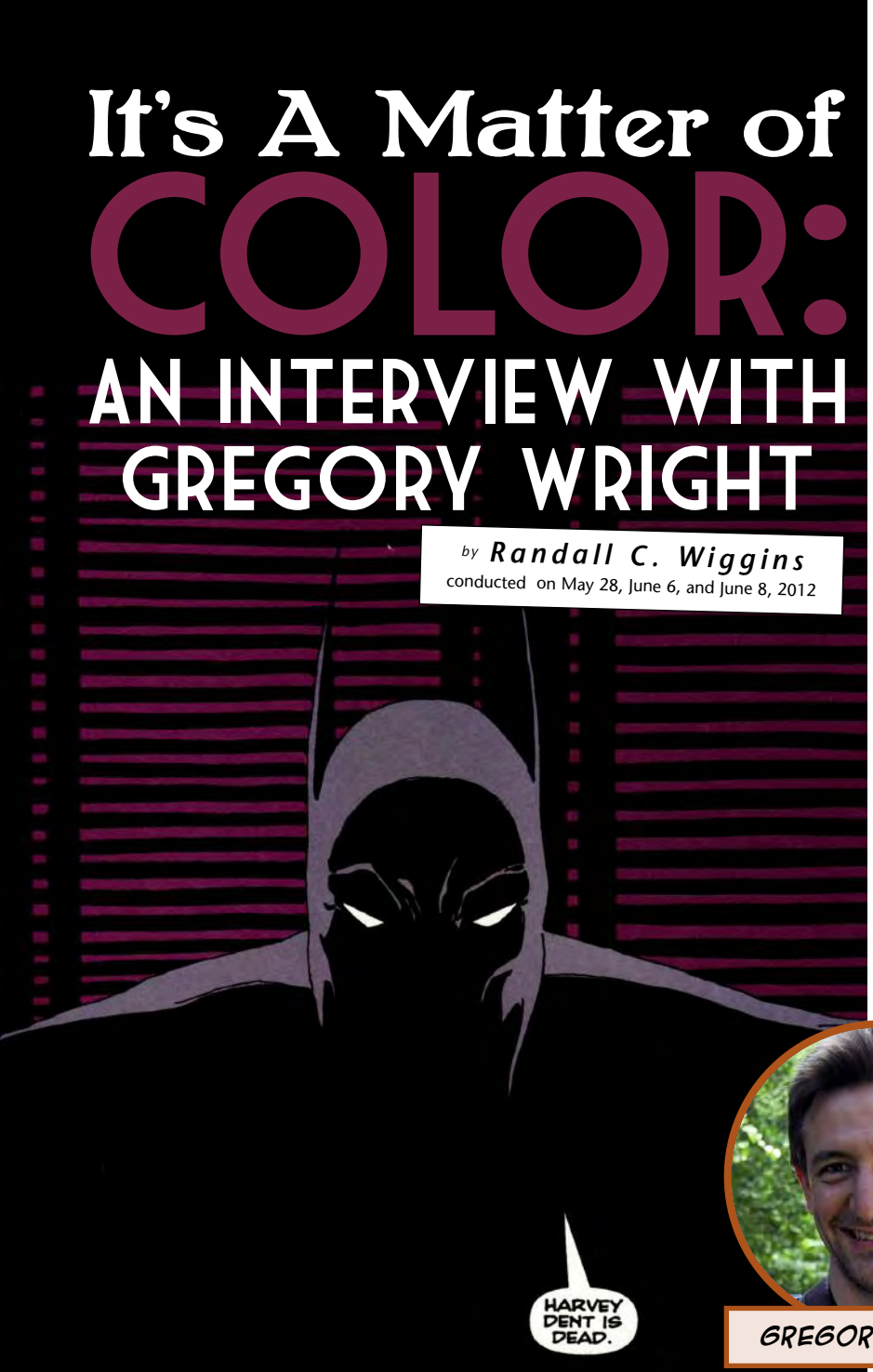
The issue opens with the wedding of Carmine Falcone's nephew, Johnny Vitti. Bruce Wayne and

The Shadows Know

Really, you'd have to search far and wide to find an artist who masters mood better than Tim Sale. Two pages from *TLH* #1: (left) page 15, with a certain cat burglar at work, and (right) page 27, with Batman and his rooftop allies, Gordon and Dent.

It's A Matter of COLOR: AN INTERVIEW WITH GREGORY WRIGHT

by **Randall C. Wiggins**
conducted on May 28, June 6, and June 8, 2012



GREGORY WRIGHT

Gregory Wright is a colorist and writer (and former editor) for various comic-book companies. *His color work includes a number of projects with Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale including* Batman: The Long Halloween *and* Batman: Dark Victory.
– Randall Wiggins

RANDALL WIGGINS: ***When you got the job on* Batman: The Long Halloween *(TLH), did you make the color choices?***

GREGORY WRIGHT: Yes. I made all the color choices. Tim [Sale] and I always discussed the color and how it would look. My style has always been to try and tell the story with the color. Both Tim and Jeph [Loeb] are amazing storytellers, so all the work we did together had a very cohesive fit.

Tim's style was always evolving, so we discussed how to do it better and different each time.

I also felt (as did Tim) that in these series, I should rethink the color for all of the characters in the same way he rethought them in the drawing.

WIGGINS: ***So, you've worked with Tim a good bit over the years?***

WRIGHT: The first work I did with Tim was some Batman/Predator pieces for Dark Horse. We went on to *Madness*, *The Long Halloween*, *Gambit/Wolverine*, and *Dark Victory*.

WIGGINS: ***The combination of his art and your color made* TLH *special. How did you come to make the choices you did for the series?***

WRIGHT: I like simple, bold strokes of color, not *bright* color.

I find that when the art is as good as Tim's, using less color can bring out more of the original line art. For me, it's about showcasing the art and telling the story.

WIGGINS: ***When I think about* TLH *and* Dark Victory *(*DV*), I think of the color scheme as being muted, which is probably not the correct word for it, but the way it worked with the noir style of the stories worked so well.***

WRIGHT: When you're telling stories that take place in the dark, the less color, the more it conveys darkness. With Tim's art I was able to take my style and preferences to more absolute levels. The style I use with Tim doesn't work with most other artists.

And many artists asked for it, but mostly, they didn't have the ability to compose a panel, or a page in the manner Tim can.

WIGGINS: ***He does have a singular style.***

WRIGHT: I wouldn't say it was singular. It has evolved quite a bit, but what remains is his impeccable composition and storytelling.

WIGGINS: ***Even the art and color for the Batman/Predator project was very different than either* LTH *or* DV.**

WRIGHT: True. If you look at *Gambit/Wolverine*, it's very different—more *standard*. I'm not sure that's the right term, maybe it was more Marvel…

Tim and I evolved the style you're talking about with *The Long Halloween*. Even *Madness* looks far more

Less is More

Wright's "simple bold strokes of color" in play on the opening page of *Batman: The Long Halloween* #1.

The Scarecrow

Bring on the Bad Guys!

by Bryan Stroud

Perhaps one of the most important facets to the world of the Batman is his impressive and voluminous rogues' gallery. Arguably, no other hero has such a long list of equally memorable and dangerous villains to vex them.

Before Bane, Ra's al Ghul, and Poison Ivy; before the Riddler, Two-Face, and even the Penguin, there was the Scarecrow.

It was 1941, a little over a year after the Joker and Catwoman were introduced in the pages of *Batman* #1 (Spring 1940) and slightly over two years since the debut of the Caped Crusader himself in *Detective Comics* #27 (May 1939) when this bizarre new nemesis would enter the pantheon of Batman foes in *World's Finest Comics* #3 (Fall 1941).

STRAW MAN IN THE GOLDEN AGE

In "Riddle of the Human Scarecrow," we are introduced to Jonathan Crane (apparently based loosely on Ichabod Crane from Washington Irving's classic short story, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"), who liked to frighten birds as a boy. After that bit of foreshadowing we learn that he later became a professor of psychology at Gotham University, taking a particular interest in fear and using unorthodox teaching methods, such as firing a loaded pistol into a flowerpot during a lecture to make a point.

He later overhears his colleagues on the faculty ridiculing his appearance in his shabby dress, likening him to a scarecrow. Brooding over these remarks, Crane, who spends his money on books rather than at the haberdashery, feels that he'd garner the respect he deserves if he had money. The idea takes root until he conceives a plan: "So I look like a scarecrow—that will be my symbol—a symbol of poverty and fear combined! The perfect symbol—the scarecrow!"

Crane proceeds to act upon his inspiration, donning a ragged brown scarecrow costume with his face concealed by burlap. A large, floppy hat covers his head and his calling cards are the straws that embellish the garb.

He embarks on his new career by offering his services to a businessman. The Scarecrow will frighten the businessman's partner into dropping a lawsuit against him. He utilizes his pistol to emphasize his point, ultimately murdering the partner.

Boo!

Detail from artist Jason Pearson's cover to the 1998 *Scarecrow* one-shot.

TM & © DC Comics.

From that point forward, the Scarecrow's course is set, using his intimidating persona along with smoke bombs and gunplay to incite fear and terror for a price. Batman and Robin put Jonathan Crane behind bars within the constraints of those first 13 pages, but he vowed to return.

Jerry Robinson, who inked that first appearance, in a September 2011 interview recollected with *BACK ISSUE* the creative thought process involved:

"I remember working on the first issue with the Scarecrow where we were developing his visual. I remember working out the problems of how he was going to move and what he'd look like and giving him some human characteristics and still having him carry out the visual of the Scarecrow. It was fun to devise. It was kind of a really out-there character. Of course, at the time we were noted for bizarre characters what with the Joker, the Penguin, and so forth. It was in that same series of bizarre villains."

JERRY ROBINSON

When asked about the story conferences between Bob Kane, Bill Finger, George Roussos, and himself, Robinson shared that "we'd have story conferences where we'd work out the sketches and I would do a layout and bring it in and we met together and discussed the pros and cons of the visual."

From a technical standpoint, Robinson said, "The only thing I can think of with regard to actual rendition is that more of it was done with a brush for the clothing. Batman was first done with pen, but a brush was used to give more of the feeling and darkness on the Scarecrow."

In the early days of comic books, the villains tended to be pretty generic. Street toughs, second-story men, thieves, and hoods were very much the norm in the urban jungle, but then came something new: adversaries worthy of the costumed heroes, equally colorful and one of a kind arrived on the scene. The era of the supervillain had come and comics were forever changed.

Jerry Robinson took some pride in this innovation: "In all the comics in the early days, these are the '30s, you remember. Late '30s, early '40s, and the villains of the day were gangsters and bank robbers: the Pretty Boy Floyds and the Machine Gun Kellys and Dillingers and so forth. Hijackers. And that's where a lot of the villains came from.

"I think we were really the first to introduce the concept of the supervillain, *á la* the Joker, who I think was the first. The stronger the villain, the stronger the hero. Some people thought that making the villain too strong would detract from the hero. We approached it from the other end, trying to make the villain almost the equal or more the equal than the hero. It added to the suspense. I knew from my studies of literature at the time that all great heroes had a protagonist. Everything from Arthur Conan Doyle and Professor Moriarty to David and Goliath."

[***Editor's note:*** Golden Age great Jerry Robinson died December 7, 2011, less than one month shy of his 90th birthday. His conversation with Bryan Stroud for this article is among the last interviews conducted with the artist best known as the co-creator of the Joker.]

The Scarecrow next appeared in the pages of *Detective Comics* #73 (Mar. 1943).

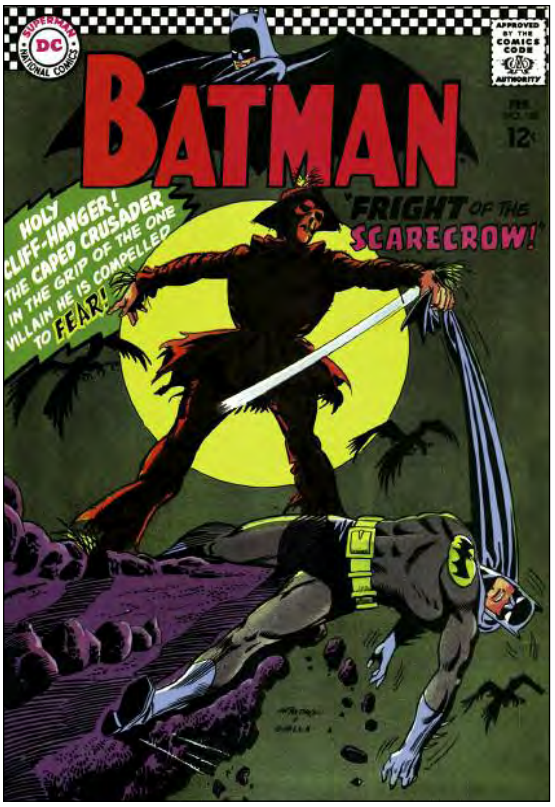
In a tale appropriately titled "The Scarecrow Returns," Jonathan Crane takes on a slightly different M.O. by using a technique that may have been foreshadowing the Riddler. He begins to leave clues as to where he will strike. Additionally, he has some henchmen to assist him.

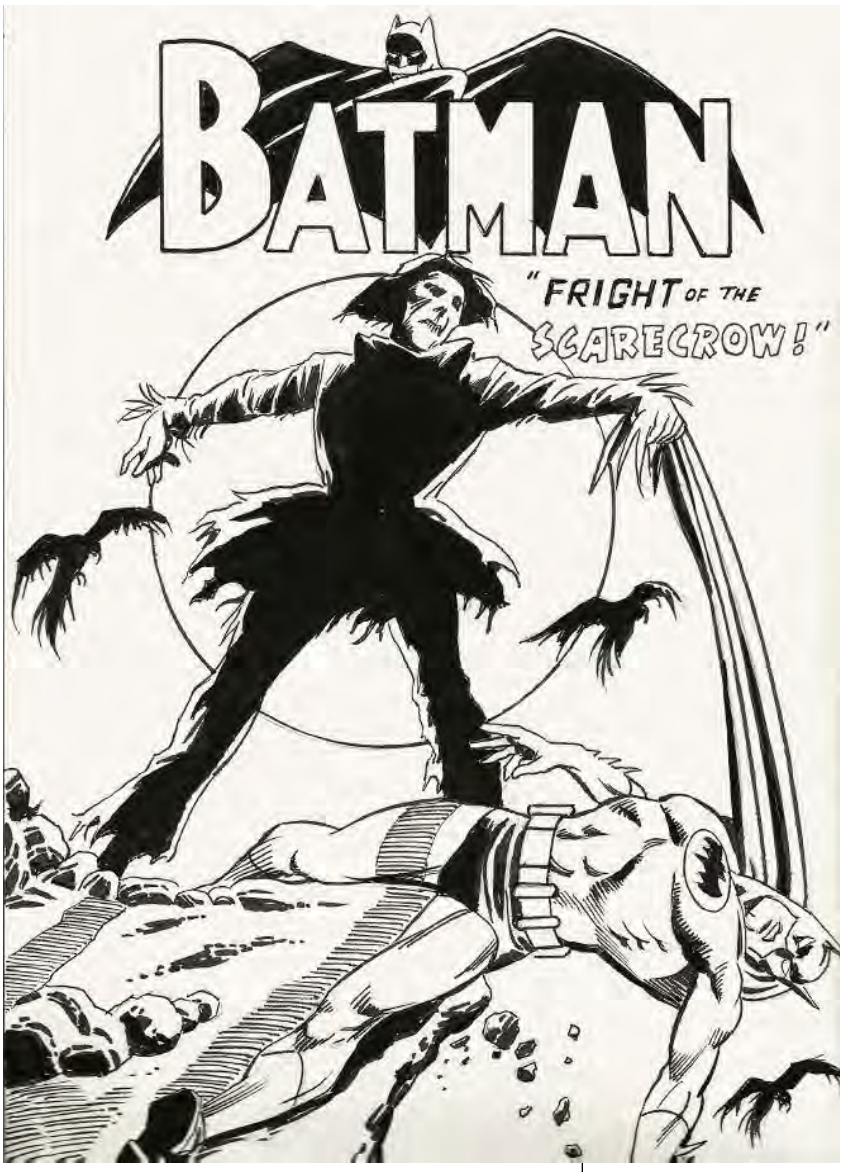
It's all for naught, however, when pitted against the World's Greatest Detective. Despite leading Batman and Robin on a merry chase, the Scarecrow is again apprehended and incarcerated, apparently for the long term because … he isn't seen again for over two decades.

Face Front

World's Finest #3's cover (above) offered no hint of the Scarecrow's debut, but the villain's return in *Detective* #73 (Mar. 1943, left) earned him a cover shot.

TM & © DC Comics.





Silver Age Scarecrow Revisited

Artist Joe Giella, who inked penciler Carmine Infantino's eerie cover to *Batman* #189 (left), confesses he had always "had a problem with Carmine's original pencil job" and argues that "Batman's arm would not fall that way." Bat-editor Julius Schwartz wouldn't allow Giella to fix that arm—so over four decades later, Giella has taken it upon himself to perform some minor "surgery" via this commissioned illo (right).

FEARMONGERING DURING BATMANIA

The first sighting of the Scarecrow in the Silver Age is in the pages of *Batman* #189 (Feb. 1967). Batmania was still in full swing as evidenced by the "Holy cliff-hanger!" on the cover.

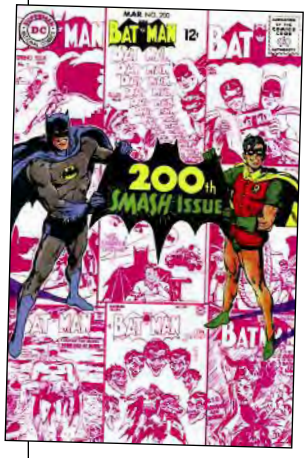
"Fright of the Scarecrow!" begins with a recap of the Scarecrow's origin, taken straight from the panels of his debut, which seems like a good idea considering his long absence. The costume hasn't changed and he is again availing himself of the use of gang members, but more significantly, for the first time, courtesy of writer Gardner Fox, Jonathan Crane uses chemically induced fear via a hallucinogenic derivative to aid him in his crimes. It is a technique that will become part and parcel of the Scarecrow moving forward.

MIKE FRIEDRICH

Following this third published appearance, the Scarecrow started to gain traction in a big way, even being tapped as the villain for the landmark issue #200 of *Batman* (Mar. 1968). "The Man Who Radiated Fear" was written by Mike Friedrich in his professional debut. Friedrich relates his approach to writing a story featuring the Scarecrow:

"At that point in my life I had rapidly accumulated a near-complete collection of *Batman* and *Detective Comics* (I never could afford the first couple of years of *Detective*, but I had almost everything past that), and so would have been familiar with the early '40s Scarecrow. The '40s version would have been my inspiration more than any more recent appearances in the '60s, which I don't recall now.

"I was attracted to the idea of a villain who turned one of Batman's strengths (his supposedly fearsome appearance to criminals) against him. In those days we didn't think much about backstory, so I didn't go any deeper than that surface contrast."



FlashBacks

The Scarecrow. It depends on how old you are as to what image that name first brings to mind. For some, it is Dorothy's companion played by Ray Bolger in the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*. If you are slightly younger, it may be the DC Comics' supervillain who was introduced in the pages of *World's Finest* #3 in 1941.

Or perhaps if you are even younger—and you didn't blink—the name might bring to mind an anti-hero with a frightening visage who sprung forth from the canvas of a painting, as first depicted in Marvel Comics' *Dead of Night* #11 (Aug. 1975). This Scarecrow was the product of writer Scott Edelman's imagination, though he credits the name to Roger Slifer. The character had a straw body but possessed superhuman strength. He was susceptible to fire, but could be regenerated through the painting.

In a 1976 interview from #11 of the newspaper *COMPASS*, Edelman described the background behind the Scarecrow: "There was a dimensional doorway through which [the evil] Kalumai would come to earth to do all the nasty things. There had been a huge magical war and the final act of Kalumai's dying adversary was to produce the painting over the doorway with his life force. Whenever Kalumai tries to break out, that life force reaches out to take over somebody. There's nothing to hold it. When the danger is over, it returns to the painting. So the Scarecrow would only come out when there was a danger from the beings within Kalumai [and] the demons."

Edelman elaborated on the fitful beginnings of the character in the letters page accompanying Scarecrow's first appearance in *Dead of Night*: "Little did Len Wein realize when he finally approved the plot for this first story that there had been twelve separate and distinct 'first' stories written for the character before he had even *heard* of it." Examples of concepts Edelman had considered included an actual scarecrow possessed by a microscopic man from the home world of Psycho-Man; a young man who learns to control the emotions of others and wears a scarecrow costume; a pulp hero killed in the 1940s who was sent back to Earth; and a messenger of God responsible for maintaining the balance between good and evil.

TITLE-HOPPING TATTERDEMALION

The task of finding a home for the Scarecrow was also not an easy one. It was originally planned to be a rotating series with Tigra and Frankenstein in the pages of the black-and-white magazine *Monsters Unleashed*. Before the Scarecrow could make its debut in *Monsters Unleashed*, though, there was a change in editorial direction. Edelman then heard that Len Wein was looking for backup features for the Giant-Size books and it was decided to place the Scarecrow series in *Giant-Size Werewolf by Night*. But then Marvel determined that their reprint books needed a boost in sales, so the

Just Dropping In

Detail from the cover of Scarecrow's solo outing in *Marvel Spotlight* #26 (Feb. 1976). Cover art by Howard Chaykin and Allen Milgrom.

Now That's a Dark Knight!

(left) Scarecrow's debut in *Dead of Night* (a former reprint title) #11 (Aug. 1975). Cover by Gil Kane and Bernie Wrightson. (right) Romita character sketches.

Scarecrow ended up in *Dead of Night*, which was a reprint title for its first ten issues.

The cover of *Dead of Night* #11 was provided by the unusual combination of Gil Kane pencils and Bernie Wrightson inks. The Scarecrow story was illustrated by Filipino artist Rico Rival. Following character designs by John Romita, Sr., Rival did a great job of capturing the elements of horror and mystery and mysticism, setting the tone for the book. Using Rival did require a change in approach, however, as Edelman explains to *BACK ISSUE*: "One fact that might not be obvious is that the two Scarecrow stories were written as full scripts, and not according to the famous Marvel [plot first] method. Because the artists in the Philippines were responsible for all of the art, it didn't go plot-pencils-script-lettering-inking the way it was for books done by US artists."

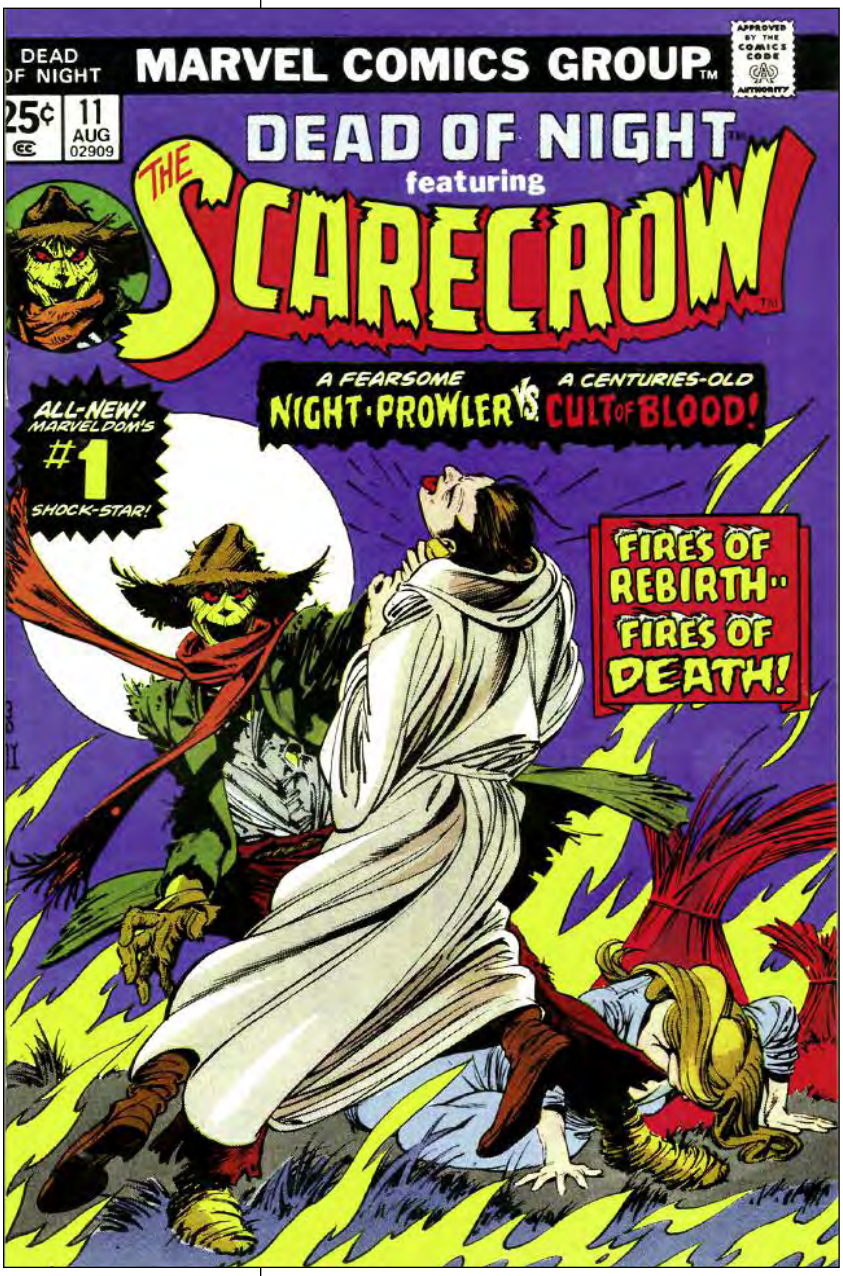
SCOTT EDELMAN

Rival was not the artist originally intended for the first Scarecrow story. However, as Edelman explains, he is not sure who was: "One thing I felt fairly certain of before you set me off doing my Scarecrow research is that the unnamed artist I mentioned in the *Dead of Night* text piece who was first supposed to draw the Scarecrow was Bill Draut, but now that I look at the Grand Comics Database, I see he was doing no work for Marvel during that time." Edelman did have his own preference, though, as he adds, "As for the art of Rico Rival, while he did a decent job, my dream artist from that group at the time—again, this is me remembering what I think I thought in 1975—was Alex Nino."

The series was unabashedly violent, with the Cult of Kalumai riddling the Scarecrow with bullets, which passed harmlessly through his straw body, and the Scarecrow snapping the neck of his adversary, standing over his defeated foes and laughing maniacally. It was reflective of a revised Comics Code that had taken effect in the early 1970s and the growing appeal of vigilante justice, as evident in the popularity of the Punisher, introduced by Marvel the previous year.

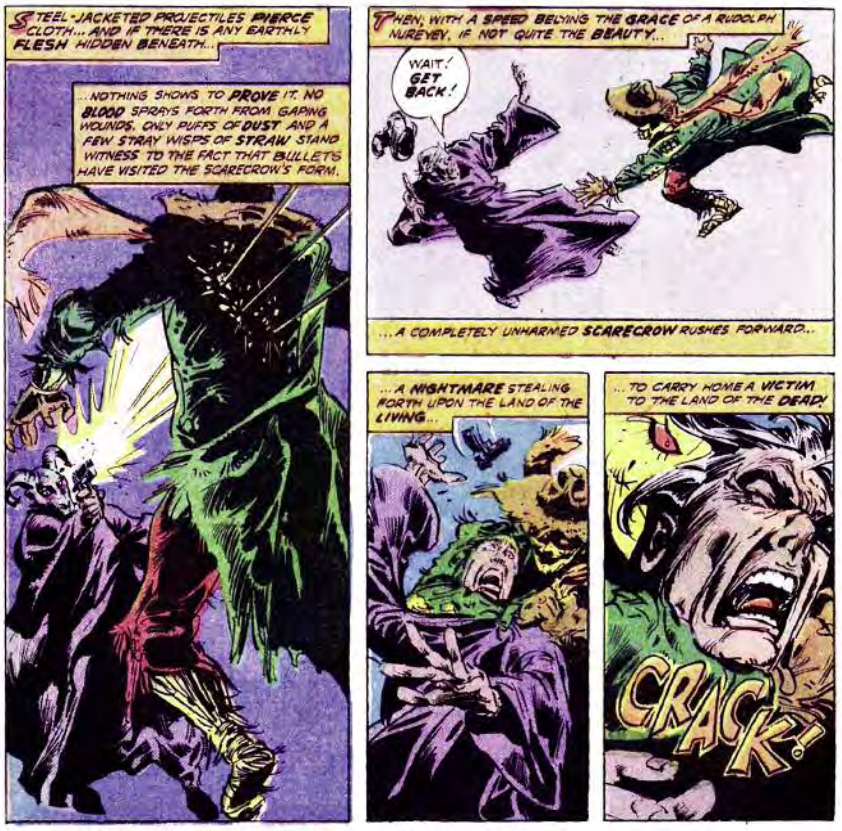
Supporting characters introduced in the first story included Jess Duncan, who purchased the Scarecrow painting at auction and proudly displayed it in his Soho loft before it was stolen by the Cult of Kalumai. His younger brother, Dave Duncan, was a magazine writer. As the series progressed, it was suggested Dave might have some special connection to the Scarecrow. Harmony Maxwell, art critic and love interest, was kidnapped by the Cult of Kalumai, which intended to sacrifice her to set free their exiled deity, but she was rescued by the Scarecrow.

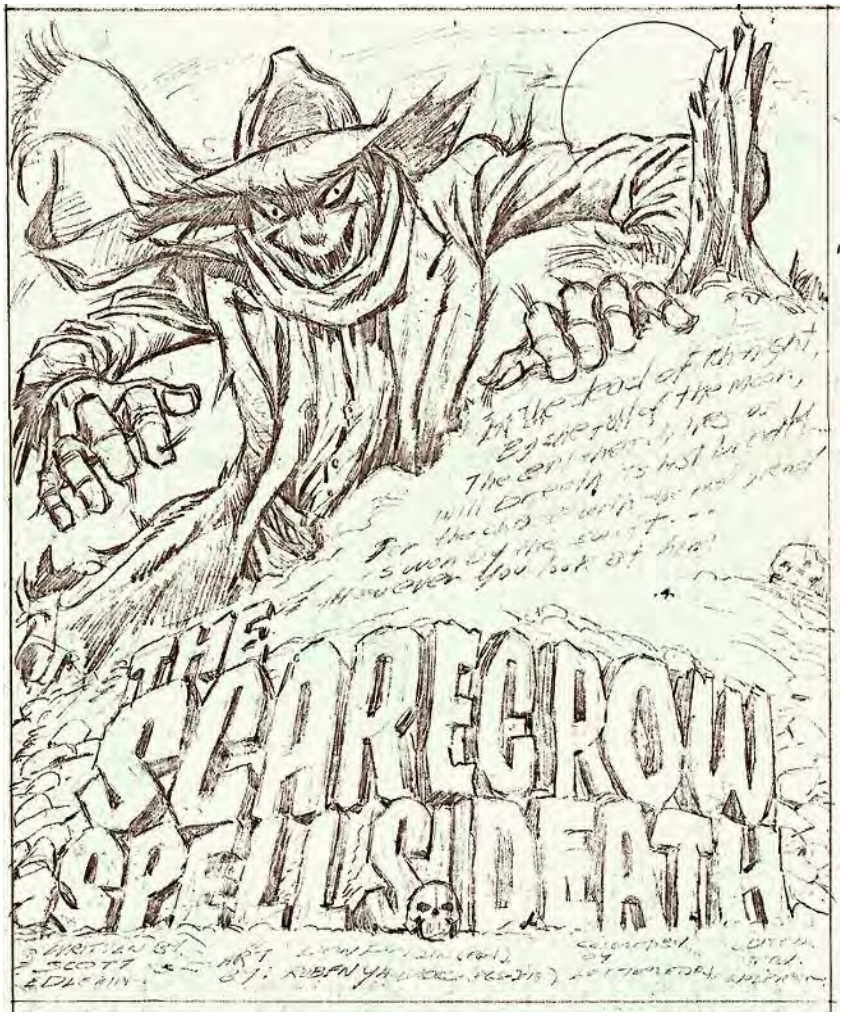
However, *Dead of Night* was canceled, so the Scarecrow had to once again find a new home. The second Scarecrow story ended up appearing six months later in *Marvel Spotlight* #26 (Feb. 1986), once again written by Scott Edelman, but illustrated by another Filipino artist, Ruben Yandoc, who remained largely faithful to the look and feel of the character established by Rival. In the *Marvel*



Fearsome Night-Prowler

(top) The vengeful Scarecrow seems unstoppable in this sequence drawn by Rico Rival, from *Dead of Night* #11. (bottom) Don Perlin's splash page for the unpublished Scarecrow continuation. Courtesy of Scott Edelman.





Spotlight story, the Scarecrow battles a horde of demons in their quest to obtain the Horn of Kalumai. In *Dead of Night*, the Scarecrow demonstrated the ability to control a flock of crows and in *Marvel Spotlight*, he exhibits a similar skill in commanding a giant fish to defeat the demons.

It would be six more months before the Scarecrow appeared again, this time in the pages of *Marvel Two-in-One* #18 (Aug. 1976). The story was co-plotted by Edelman and Bill Mantlo, written by Mantlo, and illustrated by Ron Wilson. In the story, Kalumai manages to possess a man attending an art exhibit and mutates him into a fiery creature. The Thing, who happened to be attending the exhibit with girlfriend Alicia Masters, is joined by the Scarecrow in fighting the creature, which ends up setting fire to the painting.

THE SCARECROW'S FATE

Edelman provides some insight into the fate of the Scarecrow: "As for why the character never took off, some of it must of course be the fault of my own writing—after all, the first Scarecrow story was the first comics script I ever wrote—but there was also the fact that the first appearance was in the last issue of a horror anthology title, and we all know that's never a good sign. Why, who remembers today what was in the final issue of another one of Marvel's horror anthology books, *Amazing Fantasy* #15?"

Availability may have been another contributing factor. Aaron Sultan, longtime fan and collector of the Scarecrow, recalls the difficulty in finding a copy of *Dead of Night* #11, likening its scarcity to that of *Howard the Duck* #1.

Marvel apparently expected the Scarecrow to be a hit. Plans were made to launch a solo title for the character following his debut in *Dead of Night*, as evident from the "Scarecrow #1" written in the upper margin of the original artwork for the story which ended up appearing in *Marvel Spotlight* #26. Marvel also devoted a full-page advertisement to the Scarecrow in the 1975 Marvel Comic Con program, and the title appeared in the subscription ads in Marvel comics. In spite of the vote of confidence, however, the Scarecrow failed to establish a foothold and languished in obscurity after *Marvel Two-in-One*.

Marvel Comics' Scarecrow did not escape the attention of its rival comic-book publisher, DC Comics. When it was announced that the Scarecrow would get his own book, DC reportedly made plans to sue Marvel. However, it was not just the threat of a lawsuit that derailed plans for the Scarecrow. Edelman elaborated in the *COMPASS* interview: "The guy who is president of the [Marvel] corporation says hold off until the lawsuit is over or until we find out what is going on. In the meantime, a new president took over; Al Landau was replaced by Jim Galton. And then Jim Galton says let's cut back on some books … the [two] men had completely different ideas on how to run a company; one wanted

BLACK AND WHITE AND DEAD ALL OVER: THE SOLOMON GRUNDY STORY

Bring on the BAD GUYS!

by John Wells

When one thinks of creatures from the swamp throughout comic-book history, one tends to picture green, plant-like monsters that are accurately described as moss-encrusted. From Hillman Comics' Heap in 1942 to Marvel and DC's Man-Thing and Swamp Thing in 1971, such characters adhered to a strict template that stemmed (pun intended) from Theodore Sturgeon's short story "It!" in the Aug. 1940 issue of the pulp magazine *Unknown*. DC Comics' Solomon Grundy was something different.

GRUNDY'S ROOTS

Rising out of Gotham City's Slaughter Swamp in 1944, Grundy shambled like the monsters that came before and after, but his chalk-white flesh, tattered black clothing, and general lack of chlorophyll distinguished him from the herd. He could also speak and, in his inarticulate way, informed a group of thugs that he had no name but had been "born on Monday." Inspired, one of the crooks named him Solomon Grundy after the old nursery rhyme and the general framework of the story grew from there, spanning a week just as the short verse did.

Adopted by those small-time hoods as their front man, the superhumanly strong Grundy was an almost-unstoppable force to the Golden Age Green Lantern. Hobbled by severe head injuries, GL kept fighting even without his magical power ring and, encouraged by his friend Doiby Dickles, ultimately threw the creature directly into the path of an oncoming train.

GL pieced together the details afterwards, discovering that a rich man named Cyrus Gold had been murdered in Slaughter Swamp in 1894. Decomposing in the bog, Gold's corpse was transformed through unknown means. "Bits of rotten wood and leaves built themselves into the monster of Solomon Grundy," the hero explained. Since his power ring failed to function on wooden objects, the creature was uniquely invulnerable to anything that Green Lantern threw at him other than naked fists.

Published in *All-American Comics* #61 (Oct. 1944), "Fighters Never Quit" was illustrated by Paul Reinman from a script by Alfred Bester, later to gain acclaim for

Born on a Monday…

Gruesome Grundy, as rendered by Scott Kolins for the cover of *Solomon Grundy* #1 (May 2009), a series spanning seven issues followed by a collected edition.

his 1950s science-fiction novels *The Demolished Man* and *The Stars My Destination*. The author recalled to Lou Mougin in *Comics Interview* #32 (1986) that the story had been a rush job for editor Sheldon Mayer that he had to write with a one-day deadline. Bester freely admitted that Sturgeon's short story had been his inspiration.

"I told Ted about it," he revealed. "I said, 'Ted, I'm very grateful to you, and if you want a piece of my check'—it was, like, a hundred and nineteen dollars—I said, 'You're welcome to it. But I want you to know that I did extrapolate what you had done with 'It'—I think that you should have developed 'It' further."

Inevitably, Solomon Grundy returned (in 1945's *Comic Cavalcade* #13), now consumed with hatred toward his nemesis Green Lantern. The feud even carried over into a Gardner Fox-scripted full-length Justice Society of America adventure in 1947's *All-Star Comics* #33, where the character was able to hold his own against the entire team. Six-year-old Roy Thomas encountered the monster here, later writing in *The All-Star Companion* #4 (2009) that Grundy "sent shivers up my young spine."

Imprisoned on the moon in a bubble of Green Lantern's magical energy at the conflict's conclusion, Grundy returned to Earth in 1947's *Comic Cavalcade* #24. Writer John Broome endowed him with a surprising degree of intellect and scientific knowledge and even the ability to shape-shift into normal human form. His obsessive loathing of Green Lantern was gone, too, but the creature was hardly pleased when GL imprisoned him at the Earth's core.

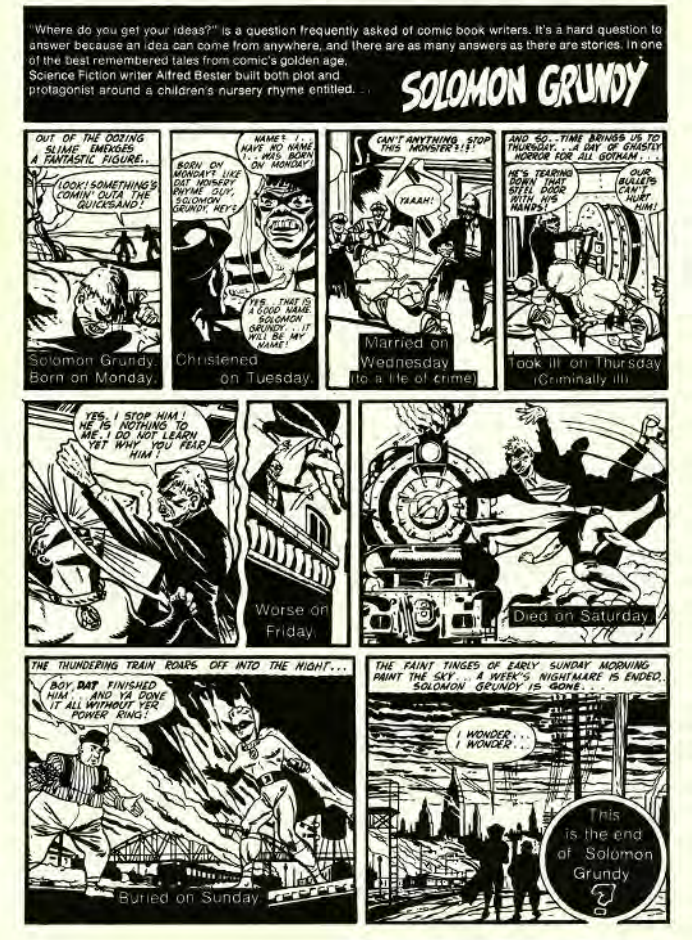
SILVER AGE RETURN

Within a few years, Green Lantern and the entire JSA joined Grundy in limbo. By 1963, though, the heroes had returned in a revival spearheaded by editor Julius Schwartz and writer Gardner Fox. Slowly but surely, the JSA's enemies were coming back, too. For Solomon Grundy, that day came in *Showcase* #55 (Mar.–Apr. 1965) in a tryout for a Dr. Fate/Hourman series written by Fox and illustrated by Murphy Anderson. (Perhaps anticipating an objection from the Comics Code Authority, the script noted that the creature was a manifestation of sunlight interacting with the peculiar Slaughter Swamp but *not* that he was the animated corpse of Cyrus Gold, a detail reminiscent of zombies and strictly forbidden by the CCA.)

Fox simply picked up where he'd left off in *All-Star Comics* #33, unaware of Broome's follow-up. Thus, Grundy escaped from the moon again rather than the center of the Earth and conveyed in his childlike speech patterns that he *still* wanted to kill Green Lantern. Matters weren't helped by the fact that, in this pre–Environmental Protection Agency era, Hourman's Tyler Chemicals was routinely flushing radioactive waste into Slaughter Swamp that only augmented the Marshland Monster's mighty power by giving him telekinetic control of wooden objects. The irradiated water also enabled Grundy to temporarily transform guest-star Green Lantern into a chalk-skinned counterpart of himself before Fate and Hourman halted the rampage. Sticking his foe in a force bubble for the fourth time and sending him into orbit, GL hadn't yet accepted that—even with his power augmented by Dr. Fate's magic—this trick never worked for very long.

The Origin of Solomon Grundy

(left) Ol' chalk-face's first appearance, in *All-American Comics* #61 (Oct. 1944). Cover art by Paul Reinman. (right) Grundy's origin, based upon the nursery rhyme "Solomon Grundy" and culled from the pages of *All-American*, as presented in DC's house 'zine *The Amazing World of DC Comics* #11 (Mar. 1976).



Without This Ring, You Be Dead

(top) The Marshland Menace disables Green Lantern—while Hawkman wings to the rescue—in this undated recreation by Sheldon Moldoff of Solomon Grundy's Golden Age adventures. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (*www.ha.com*). (below) Grundy vs. Dr. Fate and Hourman in Showcase #55 (Mar.–Apr. 1965). Cover art by Murphy Anderson.

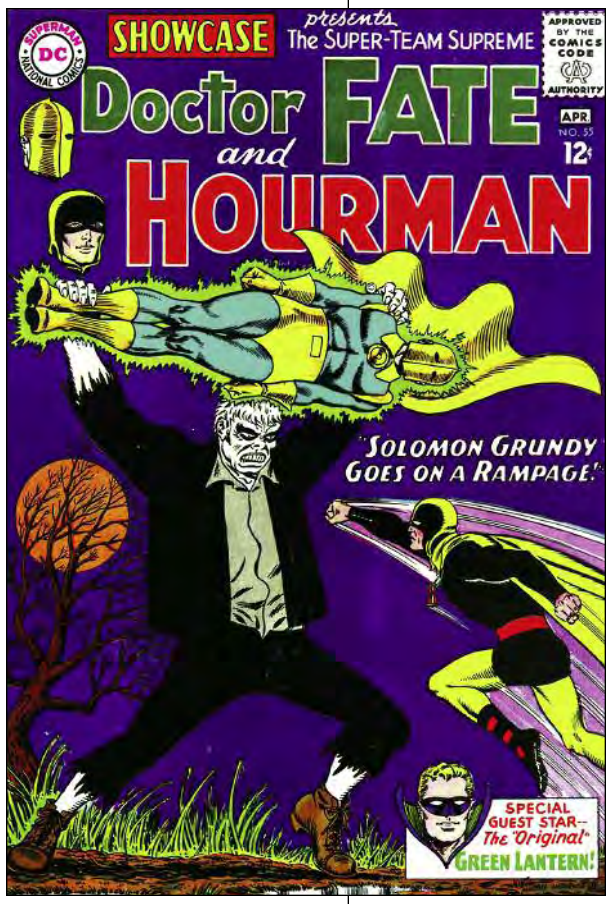
Amidst dozens of supervillains revolving around gimmicks or themes, Solomon Grundy was a comparative rarity as a being of pure, brute force. It was a characteristic he shared with the Blockbuster, a misunderstood monster who'd recently fought Batman in *Detective Comics* #345 and 349. That sort of raw power made them ideally suited to fight the Justice Society and their modern Justice League counterparts in the teams' fourth annual team-up (1966's *Justice League of America* #46–47). Grundy and Blockbuster finally wound up battling each other, but were too evenly matched to achieve anything more than a draw. That in itself was enough to forge a primal mutual respect and the two bruisers closed out the story with big smiles on their faces. They'd virtually "knocked the *hate* out of each other!"

BRONZE AGE BEHEMOTH

Rather than antagonizing Grundy with another prison, the JSA evidently decided to just drop him off at Slaughter Swamp with the expectation that he wouldn't cause trouble as long as no one bothered him. That lasted until *JLA* #91–92 (Aug.–Sept. 1971), when a lost extraterrestrial boy named A-Rym stumbled into the Marshland Monster's domain with the JLA and JSA in hot pursuit. Empathizing with the child's plight, Grundy felt his own feelings of isolation and persecution surge and he went on a new rampage. Issue #91's cliffhanger had the creature standing amidst the unconscious bodies of several heroes with Superman himself hoisted above his head.

The key to victory lay in a detail that Solomon Grundy did not comprehend. The Justice League was from a parallel world called Earth-One while the Justice Society that he was familiar with lived on Earth-Two. The two planets had many similar heroes, however, and the conceit of this particular two-parter was that every JSA guest-star was appearing opposite their JLA counterpart. As the story neared its conclusion, Alan Scott—the Green Lantern who was Grundy's primary foe—pooled his power with that of Hal Jordan—Earth-One's Green Lantern—to defeat the creature and form a force bubble around Slaughter Swamp that would contain him therein.

Scripted by Mike Friedrich, the adventure was part of a new era that saw the fans of DC's Silver Age comics come into their own and revive the characters



RUTLAND Memories

Backstage PASS!

by **Al Bradford**
(with a BIG assist from Bob Cosgrove)

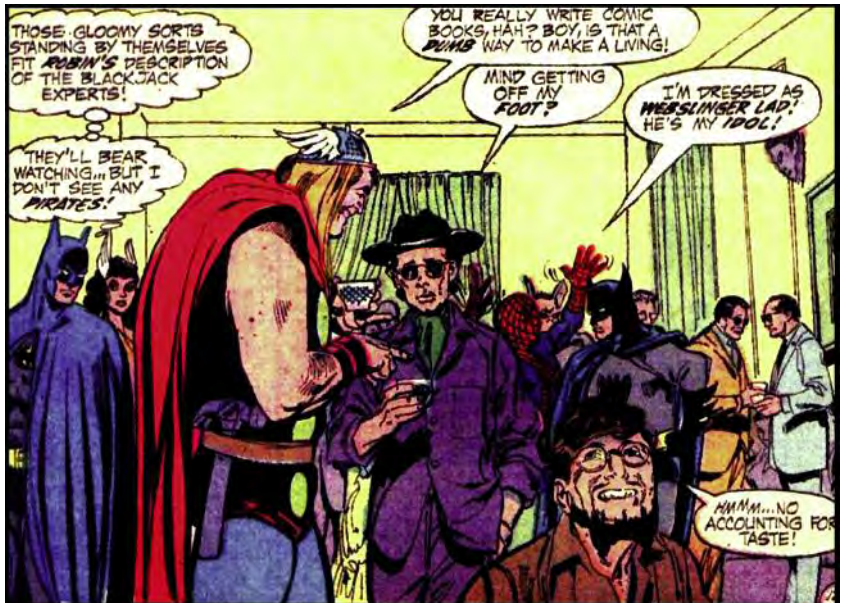
I first met Tom Fagan in 1969 at my friend Marty Greim's apartment. He was in Boston for the Boston Globe Book festival, where he ran a booth for Tuttle Publishing, a Rutland-based company he worked for. Marty and Tom had already known each other for at least a year, and Tom had contributed articles to Marty's fanzine, *Comic Crusader*.

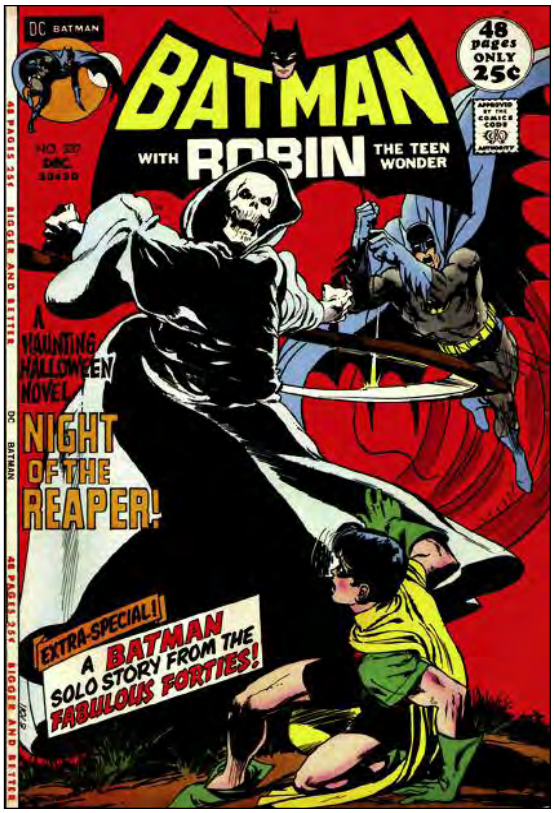
Almost immediately after being introduced, Tom invited me and my girlfriend Sue O'Neil (who would later be my first wife) to the upcoming Rutland Halloween Parade and after-parade party. This was a more naive time—at least I was more naive—and I said that I doubted our parents would allow an overnight trip for the two of us. Right away, Tom exhibited his Puckish nature, and said it would be okay since he was a priest. (How times have changed, eh?) Not only did we believe him, but our parents bought it, too, and agreed to let us stay overnight together at "Father Fagan's"! Even more unbelievable, perhaps, is that though when we arrived Tom confessed that he wasn't a priest (although he nearly became one). He did insist that since our parents let us take the trip believing him to be a reliable chaperone, we stay in separate rooms while at Clement House.

In addition to his day job at Tuttle, Tom had landed a gig as caretaker for the Clement Estate, a large old mansion on spacious grounds. It looked a bit like the Addams Family manse, only much better kept—perfect for a big party, which was exactly what Tom planned.

Rutland is Real!

Bronze Age comics readers saw frequent appearances of annual festivals of costumed crusaders and cosplaying fans (see sidebar), like this one in *Justice League of America* #103 (Dec. 1972)—but awesome Al Bradford's article and photo gallery whisk us out of the four-color pages into the Kodachromed real world of these Vermont shindigs!





Night Owl

(right) *Batman* #237 (Dec. 1971), the most famous Rutland comics appearance, featured (bottom) the Dark Knight crashing the party. (top) Speaking with "Thor" is Denny O'Neil, who wrote this classic. And that's Len Wein as Cain in the foreground. Art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano.

We parked in the large, circular driveway and Tom greeted us at the door, along with wife Mary and daughter Deanna, then, I think, about 13. Deanna's name was a token of Tom's devotion to his film hero, James Dean. It's a pretty name for a girl, though I've sometimes reflected that it's a good thing for his daughter that Tom's tastes didn't run more towards, say, Elvis. Marty Greim, his [then-]wife Ellie, and Bob Cosgrove had already arrived. They had planned insect-themed outfits, as Yellowjacket, the Wasp, and the Fly, respectively, and Tom had created a float backdrop just for them, blowing up a drawing Bob did for the occasion. Sue and I would be riding on the Batman float, since we were dressing as the Joker and Catwoman.

There was a good bit of woods behind the estate, and I recall Tom taking us for a walk, accompanied by "Satan" and "Diablo"—"the boys," as Tom more familiarly called them—his two huge German Shepherds. He showed us the dammed pond, which was later to be featured in the Rutland *Batman* story, "Night of the Reaper." It seemed that every year we went to Rutland someone walking around the edge of that pond would slip on the grass and get their feet wet. That was my year.

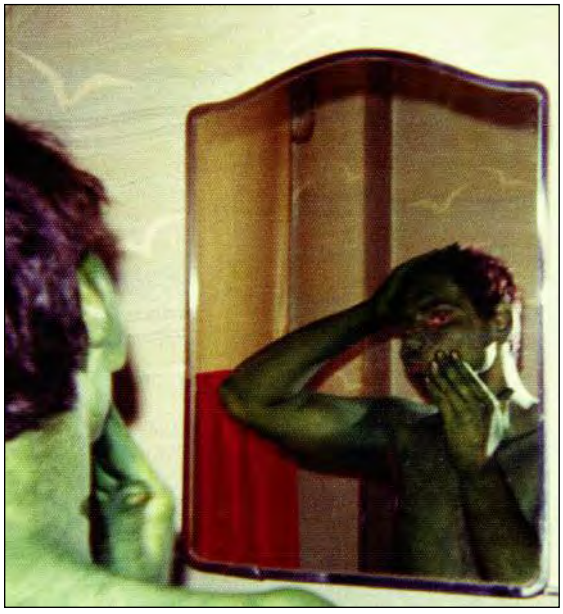
Other fans started to arrive, among them many of New York's TISOS crowd. At the time, the meaning of "TISOS" was secret, but it's now common knowledge that it stood for "The Illegitimate Sons of Superman." I've seen most of the TISOS crowd on other occasions, so it's hard now for me to sort out just which members were present. Rich Rubenfeld was there. Rich dressed as the Flash (Barry Allen). Andy Yanchus was present, with a dead-on Phantom Stranger costume. Two other TISOS members were there: one, Len Wein, in his pre–Swamp Thing days, portraying Cain, the horror host of DC's *House of Mystery* book, and the other, Mark Hanerfeld, made up as Abel, host of *House of Secrets*. Both presented dead-on likenesses of their characters—not surprisingly, since Joe Orlando had designed the characters based on Len and Mark.

Arriving with Len was his pal, Marv Wolfman. Len and Marv were just knocking on the doors of pro-dom in those days. I knew both from their fanzine work. Marv had published *Stories of Suspense*, hosted by—surprise—a wolfman. Copies of that little treasure—reproduced by ditto machine—will today set you back a small fortune, particularly the issue where Marv had the foresight to publish the first appearance of author Stephen King, who, I think, went on to write one or two other horror things. Marv himself would later do distinguished work not with a wolfman but with another horror icon, Dracula.

Most of my conversations with Tom's other guests I remember about as well as I do any other conversation that happened 40 years ago—that is to say, not at all or hardly at all. For some reason, though, I still recall a few. Marv was excited that DC had acquired the rights to Tarzan, and that Kubert—I say "Kubert" because at that point, the only one in the business was Joe—would be doing the books. Marv was dismissive of the Gold Key Tarzan adaptations by writer Gaylord Dubois, observing that Dubois was a "70-something-year-old man." Marv and I were then both young enough to fit

RUTLAND PHOTO GALLERY

All photos by Al Bradford, unless otherwise noted. Photo captions by Al Bradford.



(top left) Sue O'Neil (Bradford) is the Barda on the left, and the late Cara Sherman Tereno is the Barda on the right. Although dissimilar, both costumes were accurate. Jack Kirby was one of the most (if not *the* most) creative comic artists ever, but consistency wasn't his strong suit. His costumes for the same character could vary from issue to issue, sometimes from page to page. By the way, Cara sewed on each individual scale, while Sue's were drawn in magic marker. Not sure about Cara's Mega-Rod, but Sue's was hand-painted on a length of wooden stair rail. (1973) (top right) I don't know who this was wearing the Loki costume Sue originally made for me in 1971, nor do I know who the hot pink gorilla was, although I do remember it being a girl. (1973) (center left) The Hulk and his mate, Jarella. Participants unknown. (1974) (center right) A simple yet effective outfit: torn pants and green food coloring, an unknown Lou Ferrigno predecessor applies his makeup. (1974) (bottom left) The only year my brother Pete attended, in my borrowed Thor outfit that I'd worn the year before. Captain America unknown. (1971) (bottom right) The late Rich Morrisey as the Spectre, freezing in his costume, which consisted mostly of white house paint! (1974)

That's Not a Man, That's a MAN-WOLF, Baby!

by John Schwirian

BEYOND Capes!

When I suggested writing an article on John Jameson—Man-Wolf—I thought it would be an easy assignment. After all, you only need to look at a handful of battles with Spider-Man and his brief run in *Creatures on the Loose*, right? Well, once again, my memory had deceived me and I soon found myself ascending the slippery slope that is Man-Wolf's history—a history filled with confusion and contradiction.

REAL MEN OF VALOR

The character of John Jameson is almost as old as Spider-Man himself, with John making his debut in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 (Mar. 1963). On the fourth page of this classic tale, J. Jonah Jameson holds up a photo of his son as he rants: "The youth of this nation must learn to respect *real* heroes—men such as my son, John Jameson, the test pilot! Not selfish freaks such as Spider-Man!" Later, a despondent Peter Parker finds himself at the airfield to watch John Jameson's launch into orbit around the Earth. However, part of the guidance equipment breaks free from the capsule, leaving John no way to steer his spacecraft. Enter Spider-Man with a plan. He grabs a replacement guidance unit, convinces a pilot to fly him up where he intercepts the wayward capsule, leaps on, and installs the module. Back in control, John Jameson opens the safety parachute and Spidey rides along gently to Earth. Of course, J. Jonah blames Spider-Man for the whole thing, but John remains grateful for the save.

Several years later, Colonel John Jameson returns in *Amazing Spider-Man* #42 (Nov. 1966). At Kennedy Airport, we watch as John suffers a dizzy spell as spores contracted during his last space walk begin to transform him into a man capable of functioning under the extreme gravitational pull of Jupiter. Stark Industries quickly whips up a suit to help John control his new powers while J. Jonah convinces his son to go after that "crook" Spider-Man (who now looks guilty of having robbed a bank when in fact he was "stealing" a bank bag filled with explosives). Of course, a fight ensues, and Spidey deduces that whatever gave John these powers is also affecting his sanity. So, the wily Spider-Man lures his opponent into a power station, where he knocks John into a generator. The ensuing power overload in the suit suffices to burn out the spores and returns John to normal—for now.

"JAMESON! THAT THING … WHAT IS IT?" "IT'S … MY SON!"

To fully understand the inspiration for John Jameson's transformation into the Man-Wolf, one has to look back to 1973. Gerry Conway, writer on *Amazing Spider-Man*,

That's My Boy!

J. Jonah Jameson's "skeleton in the closet" was his astronaut son's penchant for sprouting hair and fangs under a full moon. (And you think *your* kids cause you problems!) Detail from the cover of *Amazing Spider-Man* #124 (Sept. 1973). Cover art by John Romita, Sr.

had just written the deaths of Gwen Stacy and the Green Goblin. Rather than rest on his laurels, Conway felt that more change in the series was necessary. "I was trying to create new, fun villains for Spidey to battle," Conway clarifies, "and find a way to make them personally involved with the cast. It felt to me as if Spidey hadn't had any good new villains since the Kingpin entered the scene. I also liked the idea of a truly physical menace, rather than another twisted-scientist-in-a-suit."

To Conway, "a werewolf seemed like the perfect candidate to trade blows with Spider-Man. The next step was to make the character interesting on a level beyond just being a physical foe. Enter John Jameson. I wanted a personal involvement with the cast, and I felt the relationship between Jameson and his son had been underplayed. I remember being very affected by the first John Jameson story when we learned what motivated Jonah's intense dislike of Spider-Man—his feeling that Spidey's grandstanding diminished the public's appreciation for 'real' heroes like his son, the astronaut. Thinking about werewolves and the moon and wanting to involve a personal angle just led me to John Jameson in a fairly organic way."

Conway reintroduced John Jameson to readers in *Amazing Spider-Man* #124–125 (Sept. –Oct. 1973). As J. Jonah bellows about Spider-Man having murdered Norman Osborn, John arrives to take his dad to dinner to meet his fiancée Kristine Saunders. Artist Gil Kane clearly illustrates a strange, red stone on a cord around John's neck upon his appearance, a stone that sharp-eyed readers will recognize at the climax of this issue's action. Jonah explains that John just retired from astronautics after having made one of the last moonwalks. Thus, the scene is set for the drama to follow. Later that night, a mysterious young man changes into a werewolf and attacks J. Jonah Jameson. Spider-Man tries to intervene but is overpowered. It is then that Jonah spots the stone necklace worn by the werewolf and he realizes the truth as the Man-Wolf flees.

The next issue, Jonah visits John during the day and learns the origin of John's misfortune. It seems that on his last visit to the moon, John discovered a stone different from all the other moon rocks. Feeling that the stone was calling to him, John became obsessed with possessing it. He convinced a friend in quarantine to "borrow" the stone for him under the supposition that all the moon rocks were pretty much the same and no one would miss it. John had the stone made into a pendant and wore it with no worries—until one night, under a full moon, he changed into … a Man-Wolf! That was six months earlier, and he has changed with every full moon since. He tried to discard the pendant, but the stone had grafted itself to his skin. Friends made a radiation suit for him to block out the lunar rays, but it came apart the first night he wore it. As father and son spoke, the full moon rose and John changed again. Once more, Spidey came to the rescue—this time tearing the pendant, and a chunk of fur and skin, away from the Man-Wolf. John Jameson was restored and Spider-Man tossed the stone into the river.

But some people never learn! After the space spores, you'd think Jameson would be more cautious with extraterrestrial artifacts. And what about the scientist who so readily handed a glowing, red moon rock over to John Jameson? "Hey, it was the 1970s!" laughs Conway. "People were a lot less reality-conscious then. Besides, if you can accept that a moon rock can turn an astronaut into a werewolf, where's the problem with a little sloppy procedure by a NASA official? But seriously, 'comic-book reality' in the '70s was very different from 'comic-book reality' in the 21st century. Our science was mostly pseudo, and we were proud of it."

MORBIUS, THE LIVING PLOT DEVICE

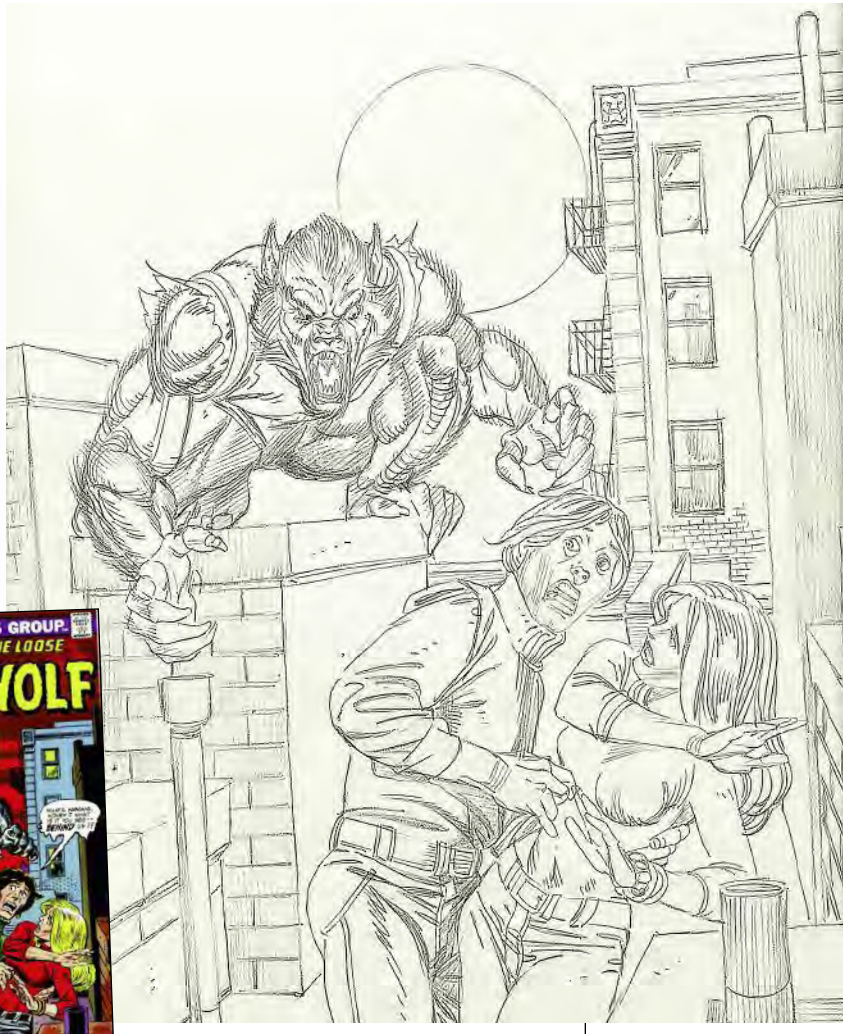
The Man-Wolf saga returned nearly a year later in *Giant-Size Super-Heroes* #1 (June 1974). In the months that followed his battle with Spider-Man, John Jameson continued to feel ill, and eventually became the Man-Wolf once more—but how could this be possible without the moon pendant? The responsibility lay with another Halloween refugee—Michael Morbius, the Living Vampire. Morbius retrieved the stone from the East River and stayed near Jameson, letting the stone's energies slowly reclaim the astronaut. Morbius claimed that he needed the Man-Wolf in order to cure his vampirism, but all he did was use Man-Wolf to keep Spider-Man busy while he pursued his true goal. Strange, there were plenty of superpowered thugs out there that would give their eye teeth to trade blows with Spidey, so did Morbius really need Man-Wolf? The truth is that writer Gerry Conway felt that teaming Morbius and Man-Wolf was a great story device, and Morbius provided a handy way to restore the Man-Wolf curse. When asked why he brought Man-Wolf back so soon, Conway simply replies, "He was popular."

MAN-WOLF ON THE LOOSE

That self-same popularity explains why, after only two appearances, Man-Wolf was granted the lead feature in *Creatures on the Loose* with issue #30 (July 1974). "I suspect it was mostly my idea," says Roy Thomas, who edited *Creatures* at the time. "We had Morbius (a sort of science-fiction vampire) as well as Dracula, so I figured, why not put Man-Wolf, who already existed (and might bring over a *Spider-Man* reader or two,

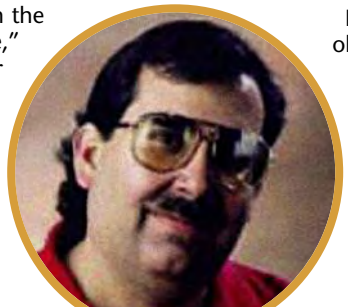
Hairy Situation

Man-Wolf's return, in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #125 (Oct. 1973). Cover by Romita and Mike Esposito.



since he was JJJ's son) in a second werewolf series? I'd helped create him (the idea of the moon rock, I believe), so I always liked the concept."

Initially, Doug Moench crafted the story while George Tuska handled the art. The setup was the standard werewolf fare: make John into a fugitive, a protagonist on the run. After two issues of Man-Wolf on a rampage, Doug Moench stepped aside, which brought Tony Isabella up to the plate for the next issue, and he brought another classic Spidey villain with him—Kraven the Hunter. "It seemed like a natural to me," says Isabella. Of course! Who better to capture a werewolf than the greatest hunter in the world? And Kraven not only succeeds in trapping the Man-Wolf, but is also able to transform him back into John Jameson.



TONY ISABELLA

The story ends on a cliffhanger, with the next issue arriving with yet another new writer. According to Tony Isabella, "I think the deal was that I would write at least one issue and stay on the series if I had time. I didn't have time between my other assignments and my editing work." Isabella plotted part of the follow-up tale, while new scripter David Anthony Kraft brought a fresh perspective with him—one that would be gorgeously illustrated by artist George Pérez.

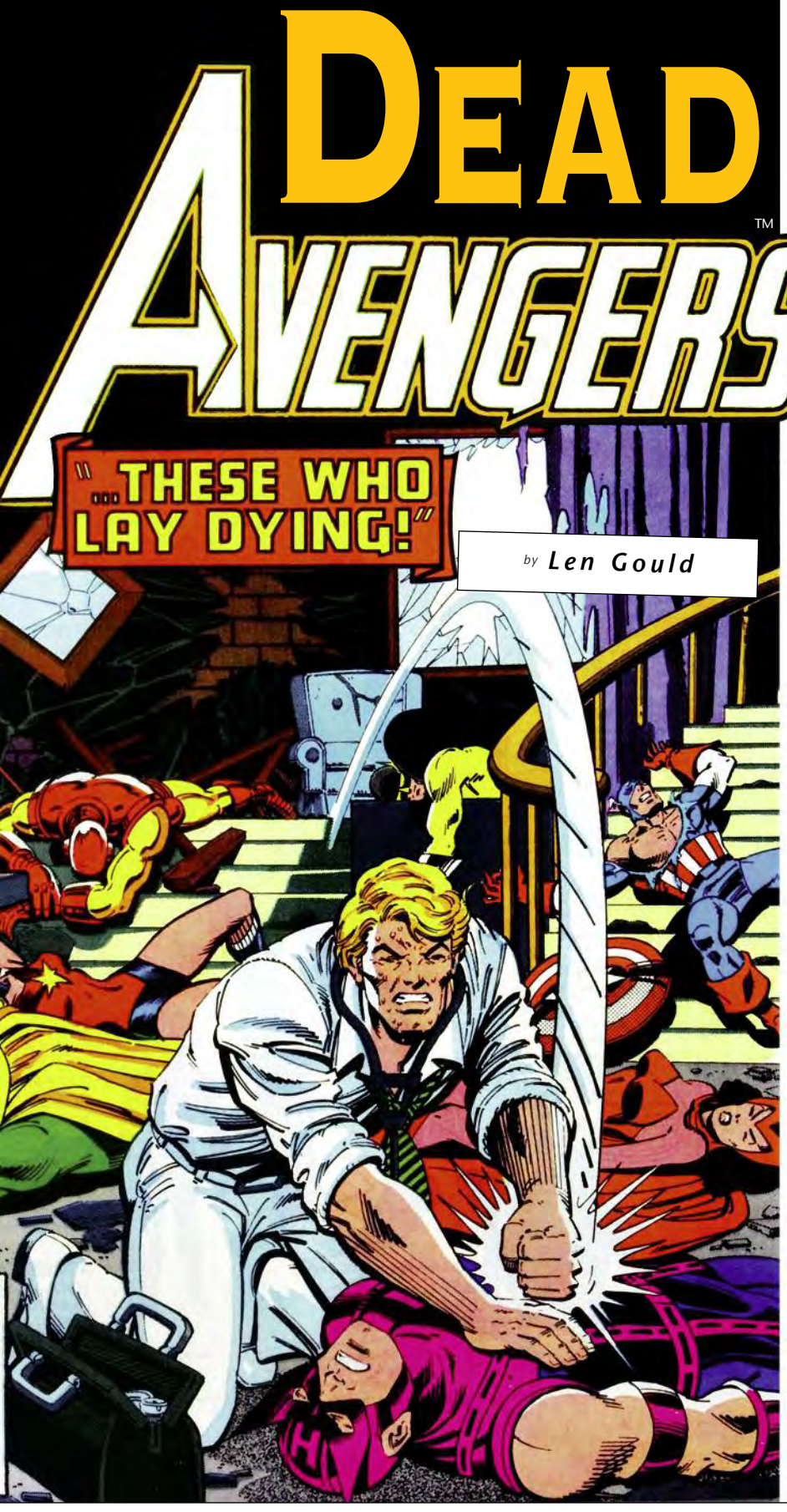
Kraft and Pérez's first job was to wrap up the dangling plot lines left by Moench and Isabella. Their first issue (*Creatures* #33) concluded the Kraven problem, but never resolved who Kraven's associate was that wanted the Man-Wolf to kill J. Jonah Jameson. *Creatures* #34–35 sees Jameson declared AWOL by the military, a plot twist that leads Man-Wolf into conflict with the Hate-Monger and eventually to be captured by Nick Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D. Kraft could now embark on a new, radical direction, departing from the horror and super-hero format and delving into space fantasy.

Kraft explains that "Man-Wolf is, obviously, a favorite character of mine," but that came after careful work on the series. When he first inherited the series, Kraft was not happy with where the story was going. "He's like, a third-rate werewolf," Kraft says. "He runs around and he menaces people. He acts like every generic werewolf. Marvel already had *Werewolf by Night*, which was really just [Marvel's version of the Universal Monster] the Wolf Man, so why do you need a copy of a copy of a copy? I'm not throwing off on the work they did on *Werewolf*, but it's like, let's do a spin-off of a spin-off. That is a tough series to write—where do you go with it? Just more stories about he runs around at night. Where's the future in that?"

Kraft continues, "I wanted a real Marvel character. When you think about Marvel characters, a lot of them are monsters, like the Thing. He's a nice guy, but he's a monster. So I thought, 'Man-Wolf needs to be a legitimate Marvel character.' I remember going to Roy

Creature Feature

(left) Detail from Romita's cover to *Giant-Size Super-Heroes* #1. (right) Man-Wolf spins out of Spidey-dom into his own series! Gil Kane's cover pencils to *Creatures on the Loose* #30 (July 1974), courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (*www.ha.com*). Note in the inset some cosmetic changes made by inker John Romita.



Comics have always had a fascination with the cycle of death and rebirth. Today's shelves are so clogged with derivatives of this premise that it no longer resonates with the veteran reader. Heroes die and heroes return. Villains die and villains return. Knowing this, the ultimate endgame means there is little suspense as these cardboard deaths are meaningless.

Thirty years ago these story arcs were rare, and substantially more meaningful. Sure, Wonder Man came back from the dead, but it took him 141 issues to do so! Bit players may have come and gone, but the big guys—well, you knew they would always return next month. They would only die in "What If?" scenarios, which, while fun reads, were never really relevant.

All of this changed with "The Korvac Saga" in *The Avengers*. Not only did heroes die, they were annihilated in a way that had the reader wondering just what the heck was going on.

"The Korvac Saga" is usually among the all-time favorite yarns for fans of Earth's Mightiest Heroes. The yearlong tale culminated in a blistering story entitled "The Hope … and the Slaughter," in *Avengers* #177 (Nov. 1978). It is one of the most fondly remembered adventures of the Bronze Age.

David Wenzel, the penciler for the final four issues of the tale, recalls, "I have a lot of memories from doing those issues. I was very honored to be following up on a story that George Pérez had started. Developing the stories was an interesting task, as up until that comic I had always had the writer present me with a script, but Jim Shooter was head editor in those days and decided to give me the story breakdowns over the phone. So each issue I would have to take copious notes as to how Jim wanted the plot to be developed. It was difficult, but it was also great because as Jim evolved the various plot threads, I had input and was able to witness how his thought process worked. His proposal to essentially 'kill' all of the Avengers was pretty heady for comics in those days."

Korvac was a god amongst gods. To summarize the entire saga would be an article unto itself. For the sake of this piece, let's just assume that the Avengers take a bus (seriously!) to Long Island to confront "Michael" and his love, the Collector's daughter, Carina. Korvac was very upset when the Avengers arrived with tagalongs Captain Marvel and Starhawk.

Now Korvac, tired of being pestered by the Avengers and the Guardians of the Galaxy over the past few months, goes off the deep end. How impactful is this? Well, after the obligatory full-splash recap page, on page two, the following denizens of the Marvel Universe feel the impact:

The first to notice is the ever-vigilant Hemidall on the Rainbow Bridge to Asgard. And he knows,

In the Days Before Revolving-Door Superhero Deaths…

…the now-classic *Avengers* #177 (Nov. 1978) startled fans. Cover art by Dave Cockrum and Terry Austin.

Bronze Age Shocker

The splash from the end of *Avengers* #177, depicting its horrific aftermath. Story by Jim Shooter, art by David Wenzel and Pablo Marcos. From the collection of Len Gould, who adds that this is "both the single most dramatic *Avengers* page of the 1970s and certainly the worst colored page when printed." Thanks for sharing it and the art on the next page, Len!

"Soon word will reach the ear of Mighty Odin!" The next to notice is Uatu, the Watcher, and he is considering breaking his oath to not interfere.

Ratcheting things up a notch, Eternity himself decides to "resist" fighting Korvac as one would fight a virus. The final panel shows a united Mephisto, Odin, and Zeus leading an unending army, their differences set aside to fight the common threat.

This is page two.

Korvac was preparing to lead the universe into a new golden age of peace, but the Avengers' persistent hounding has forced him to reconsider. "Perhaps you are proud of finding me," he tells them, "[but now,] there will be war—and it may well wreck all of this continuum."

The scene returns to the present with the Guardians of the Galaxy landing their spaceship out front. Charlie-27 smashes through the door, and you can guess how well this goes over with "Michael." You knew something ominous would happen, just not exactly what.

The "exactly what" became apparent by the bottom of the page as Korvac looked skyward at the orbiting space station Drydock … and obliterated it. The accompanying text box in the bottom panel chillingly read, "On the 784th deck of the huge command sphere, in a corridor only meters from the teleport chamber he was racing toward, Guardian Vance Astro dies screaming." From this point, the pacing accelerates to full speed as the combined allies launch a desperate attack.

The next to die is Vance Astro's love, Nikki, who jumps onto Korvac and is swatted away like a fly. She slams into the far wall upside-down. Indeed, Jim Shooter's caption notes that "Her death buys little." But is does buy enough time for Quicksilver to attack from behind at full speed. He is blasted away by Korvac and dies in full reverse, his costume shredding off of his body.

DAVID WENZEL

Next, the allies begin their initial coordinated attack. Charlie-27, the Vision, Wonder Man, and Iron Man begin to grapple with Korvac. Thor and Hercules join in to help. Tossed aside like children, Charlie-27 and Hercules fall victim to his power blasts as the others struggle to restrain him.

Meanwhile, the less powerful heroes choose a different tactic and go for Korvac's love Carina. This doesn't work at all as within two pages, Yellowjacket is brutally murdered; the two archers, Hawkeye and Yondu, die together; Ms. Marvel is "shot down in full flight"; and Martinex's crystal body is blown apart. Korvac is dispensing heroes with ease, methodically going from one to the next.

Notes penciler David Wenzel, "Jim Shooter had very specific ways. He wanted me to draw the demise of all of the heroes. Korvac was an incredibly powerful 'godlike' villain and he wanted his power to be beyond comprehension. So as each Avenger made their attack on him he was to knock them aside with a cosmic show of incredible power."

Indeed, the next page saw Captain Marvel, Black Panther, Black Widow, Scarlet Witch, the Wasp, and Jocasta taken out one at a time. Pieces of the Wasp's wings and Jocasta's body parts fly through the air along with fragments of costumes. The room is now littered with bodies.

Captain America manages to break through Korvac's defense and valiantly gets a few punches in. This angers Korvac, which results in Cap being cruelly punched through a wall, instantly killing him.

An enraged Wonder Man is the next to attack, and within a few panels is dead as well. He dies screaming. The last few heroes left standing gather themselves for a final assault. Iron Man, Starhawk, Thor, and the Vision attack as one, staggering Korvac to his knees. He looks to his love Carina for help, and she hesitates for the briefest of moments. Korvac, stunned by this, literally dies of a broken heart before the reader's eyes. The Avengers are wondering what has happened when a despondent Carina takes up the fight.

She slays Starhawk, obliterates Iron Man, and annihilates the Vision. Only Thor is left. She wills a blast from mighty hammer of Thor, Mjolnir, and she falls. Thor is stunned: "Odin's Beard! My hammer did strike 'gainst my will!" He is struggling to comprehend the scene before him, when out from the shadows steps Moondragon. She tells Thor that Carina "wished to die." But with their last bit of energy—you guessed it—Korvac and Moondragon put life back into those who were slain.

The full-page splash of this scene is truly one of the great moments of *Avengers* history, arguably one of the most iconic moments for a group with decades of iconic moments. Thor and Moondragon stand surrounded by death of a most chaotic kind. Thor transforms into Dr. Blake and gets to work while Moondragon laments that no one but her will remember this day.

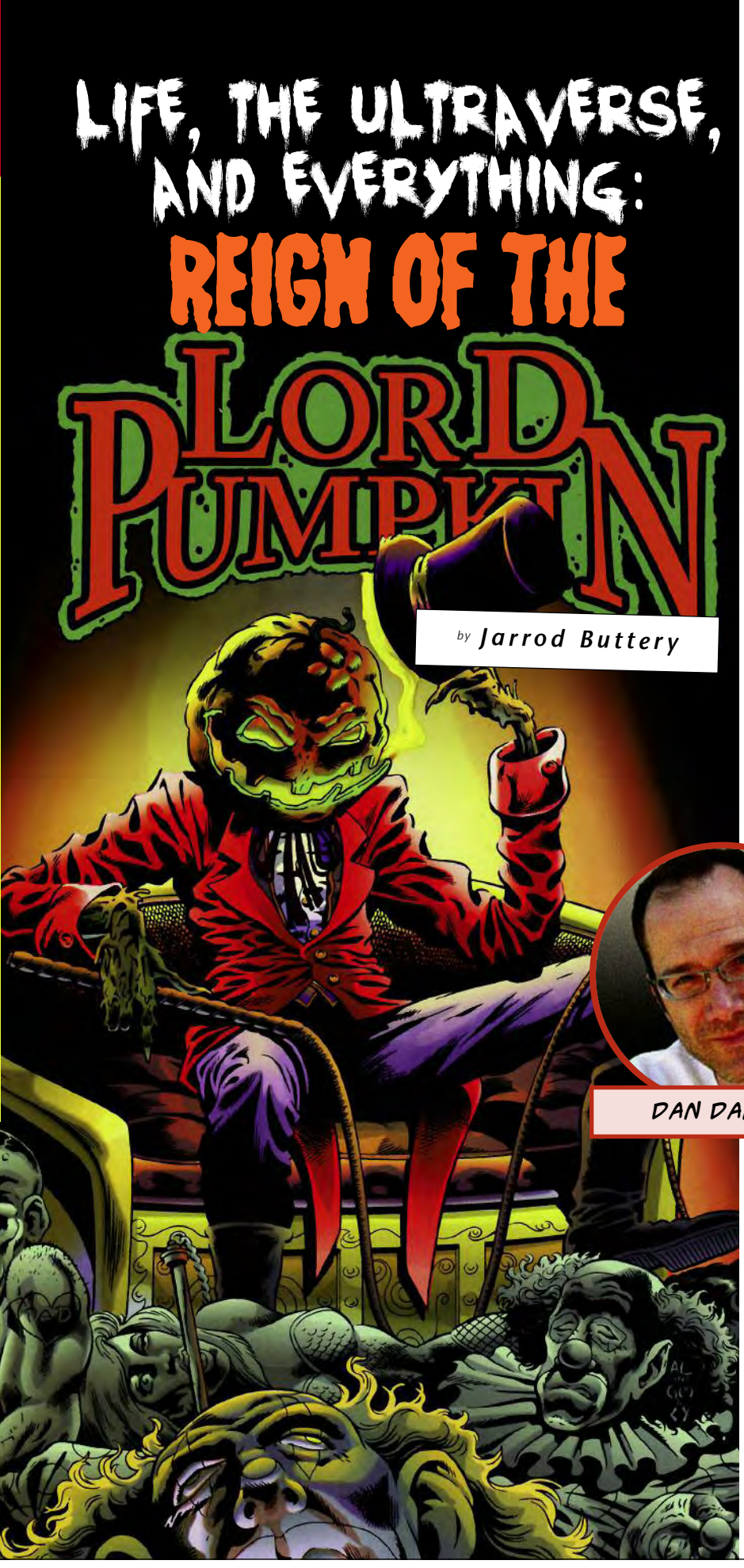
No one but her—and generations of *Avengers* fans.

David Wenzel's portrait appears courtesy of DavidWenzel.com.

***LEN GOULD has been a devotee and collector of comics and original comic art for over 30 years. In addition to* BACK ISSUE*, his writings have appeared in* Rough Stuff *magazine, the CFA-APA, and online at* www.comicartfans.com.**

LIFE, THE ULTRAVERSE, AND EVERYTHING: REIGN OF THE LORD PUMPKIN

by Jarrod Buttery



DAN DANKO

Bring on the BAD GUYS!

"Once, long ago in a land far away, there existed the most beautiful of kingdoms known to man. The region was ruled by a wise and kind King who brought a prosperity to the people they had never known before. The beautiful Queen was loved by all as well. And one day the entire kingdom would fall to its heir … the gentle young Prince. One day the gentle young Prince accidentally blinded one of the servants with which he was playing. This greatly disturbed the kind King. So he went to his court magician and bade him that he create a playmate for the young Prince.

"So the magician created a friend for the young Prince. And he gave the friend arms to hug the young Prince. A brain to teach him … a mouth to sing to him … but most importantly, the magician gave the friend an eternally burning magic candle, to guide the young Prince when all was dark … to keep him warm from the winter chill … and give him hopes in the depths of night.

"The gentle young Prince was quite pleased with his new friend. He named him Lord Pumpkin, and together the two played all kinds of games.

"And played…

"And played…

"And played…

"Until one day…

"Lord Pumpkin played no more."

PORTENTOUS BEGINNINGS

Malibu Comics operated out of Calabasas, California. Apparently, the city's name is derived from the Spanish *calabaza*, meaning "pumpkin" or "squash." In the late '80s, Malibu published original titles such as *Ex-Mutants* and *Dinosaurs for Hire*, as well as licensed properties like *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Robotech*. In 1988, Dan Danko was a college graduate looking for an internship. "I was a huge comics fan, but up until the time I started work there I didn't know Malibu existed," admits Danko. "Malibu was Tom Mason, Dave Olbrich, Chris Ulm, and Scott Rosenberg, plus the accountant, the receptionist, and a guy in shipping. We later bought a library of characters that became our line of comics called *Protectors*. We updated and redesigned the characters and attempted to launch a unified universe with the limitations of the company budget.

"And about that time—this is what changed everything—Image Comics was formed. And those guys wanted to form their own imprint. Apparently, Marvel wasn't interested and so we approached the Image guys with a 90/10 cut, and even that 10% alone turned out to be a phenomenal amount of money. The Image guys were selling millions of comics per

Send in the Clowns

Detail from the cover of *Lord Pumpkin* #0 (Oct. 1994). Cover art by Aaron Lopresti and Gary Martin.

month. As a result Malibu was suddenly flush with cash and Chris wanted to take that and redo what we had tried to do with *Protectors*, but now we had the ability to do it from the bottom up."

Danko continues, "Chris Ulm came up with the brainchild of creating a coherent universe that harkened back to the early days of Marvel: a limited amount of books with a continuity that ran between them. The original concept was that it was a character- and creator-driven universe—Malibu owned everything, though. That's a common misunderstanding that pops up on the Internet: that the creators owned the characters, which was not the case at all. But Chris wanted to be able to give the writers the freedom that, as long as they were playing within boundaries set by Malibu, they could do whatever they wanted.

AARON LOPRESTI

BIRTH OF AN ULTRAVERSE

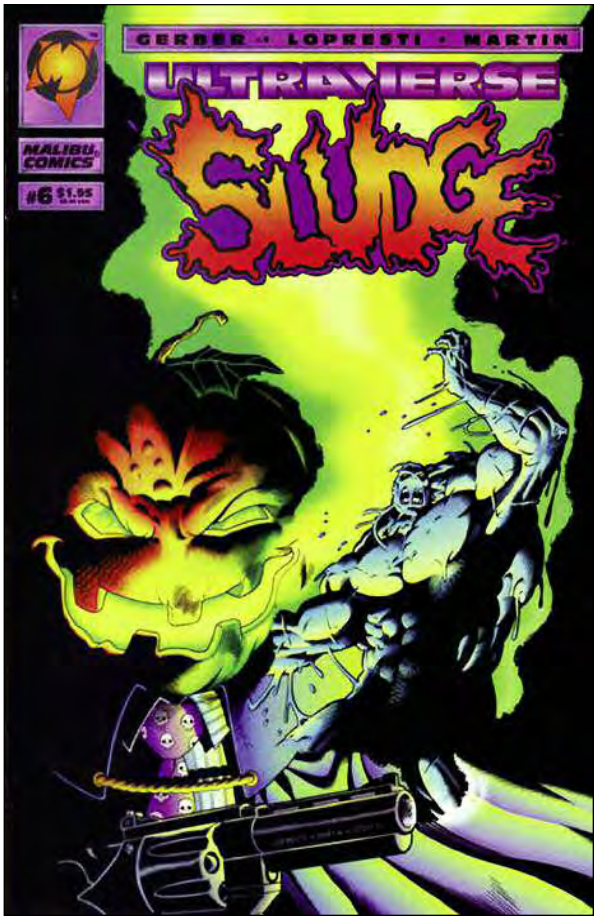
"When the 'Ultraverse' (UV) founders met in Scottsdale, Arizona, to create this new universe, I was there as Malibu senior editor to develop the ideas of the writers whom we had brought on board," recalls Danko. "After we returned from Arizona, I was asked to help populate the UV bible with supporting characters. We filled out the UV with a wealth of characters whose existence was pretty much a 1/4–1/2 page in the UV bible.

"One of those characters was Lord Pumpkin. I tried to create characters that would spark the imagination, characters that may not be able to carry their own book *per se*, but hopefully felt like they were more unique than your standard superhero. Many of them were based on some type of fantasy element and had some darkness at their core that drove them as characters. Lord Pumpkin was a mixture of fantasy and supervillain, and he sort of originated with the idea of a magic candle. So to answer the age-old question, 'What came first, the pumpkin or the candle,' it was definitely the candle.

"The Ultraverse bible was sent to the writers and the artists as a means to create continuity within the universe," Danko details. "It was their playground. So one day, out of nowhere, Aaron Lopresti sent me a brilliant drawing he did of Lord Pumpkin. He had read the description and loved the character. While the UV bible did have a character description, the Lord Pumpkin design was pretty much Aaron's. (Coincidentally, another artist also read the description and had worked up a design.) So I gave Aaron some feedback—I think it was to make his hands more gnarled and plant–like, if I recall—and he ran with it. He wanted to use the character as a villain in *Sludge*. Steve Gerber had some reservations. I honestly don't recall the specifics of his concerns, but I do remember Steve neither wanted me to be looking over his shoulder nor did he want to violate my vision of Lord Pumpkin. I assured him that he could run with the character as a villain and Aaron was eager to develop Lord Pumpkin. Gerber did a great job, but definitely took LP in a direction I had not envisioned!

"Aaron was the one who picked Lord Pumpkin out of the UV bible and was responsible for getting him into *Sludge* with Gerber's eventual blessing. Although LP did attract the attention of other artists, I think Aaron's support (and later Gerber's) and his fantastic design transitioned LP from my idea to Ultraverse rea

Aaron Lopresti remembe
Olbrich and Tom Mason appr
talked to me very cryptically a
coming up at Malibu, but it
I was drawing some Spider-M
spending a good two years wr
for Marvel's *What The--?!* It wa
like I was finally going to get n



LP wasn't one of Gerber's babies…

…but the Ultraverse baddie got his start in Steve Gerber's *Sludge* series. Cover to and excerpt from *Sludge* #6 (Mar. 1994). Art by Lopresti and Martin.