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**ISSUE #24 FEATURING
KIRBY'S GREATEST BATTLES!**

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T H E
JACK KIRBY
C O L L E C T O R

ISSUE #24, APR. 1999



Karnak pin-up pencils from FF Annual #5. These margin notes suggest this may have been an unused story page.

KARNAK DEFUSES DREADED EPSILON-IMPLOSION DEVICE--

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OUR ~~WARS~~ GODS AT WAR

How the combat tactics Kirby learned in World War II might have shaped his super-hero battles, by Robert L. Bryant Jr

Did you ever read the Kirby comic in which a tough sergeant and a raw recruit teamed up to destroy a Nazi terror weapon that had gotten loose behind US lines? Sure you did. It was *New Gods* #6: "The Glory Boat."

Orion as the grizzled noncom and Lightray as the uncertain private? The Deep Six as S.S. officers? A mutated, horned whale as a war machine? Of course—this issue spotlights Kirby's greatest battles, and surely the greatest of them all was his service in World War II's European Theater and the 1944 Normandy invasion. Did Kirby's infantry battles for a world at war influence the super-hero battles he would plot and draw decades later for a world at peace?

Kirby was a PFC in Patton's Army, just a grunt with an American flag patch on one shoulder and an M-1 carbine over the other. He wouldn't have been privy to planning the battles, but Kirby was as much a student of war as of everything else; he knew, the hard way, how men at arms thought and fought; he knew, the hard way, how it felt to be part of the biggest war machine ever formed on Earth. The war stayed in Kirby's nightmares, according to interviews with his wife, Roz, and we can make a pretty good case that it also stayed in his stories of the Fantastic Four, Thor, and *New Gods*. Some cases in point:

NEW GODS #6, "THE GLORY BOAT"

The plot: The Deep Six, finny henchmen of Darkseid, have mutated a whale into a pinkish, horned mountain of death and turned it loose on the seas of Earth. Orion and Lightray, coping with three chatty noncombatants—one of them, like Kirby, a Normandy vet!—find the Deep Six's "control ship" and start improvising. They rework the ship's biological "brain" so it'll lure the big fish back, fight a skirmish with the Six and then blow them all to hell with a mega-bomb reshaped from the control ship itself.

The World War II analogy: A Nazi division has set loose a terror weapon behind our lines—or better yet, a division of super-Panzer tanks. Opposing it are only the lightly armed "Sgt. O'Ryan" and his sidekick, the naive "Pvt. Ray." The sarge knows a frontal assault will fail, especially with three civilians tripping over things. So he seeks out the Nazis' (empty) forward command post, which holds all the equipment he needs to booby-trap the whole complex. O'Ryan finds a way to signal the

tanks back to the post, then kaboom!—more or less what Patton's boys might have done.

(Unresolved issue: In the story, Kirby pointedly makes the rescued businessman, Farley Sheridan, not just one of his contemporaries, not just a fellow Army veteran, but specifically a Normandy vet. Nobody walked away from that piece of French coastline without looking death in the eye, but Kirby depicts Sheridan as a fool and a coward; the son, Richard, is painted as the cool, brave one, even though he's a



Thor enters the Mangog battle in these pencils from *Thor* #157, page 10.

KIRBY ON THE NEW GODS

(This transcription is of a taped recitation by Jack, apparently in answer to some questions he received from a fan—as near as we can tell—sometime in the mid-to-late 1980s. What follows is Jack in the twilight of his career, recounting his thought processes behind the New Gods series.)

My mother and father were immigrants from Austria, and they came to the US during that period of mass migration from Europe. There were people of many origins here, and my parents were among the many who came to New York.

My mother, of course, told me many of the old European folk tales, which she brought with her. From these tales I learned to appreciate the art of storytelling, and you'll find that many of my stories have both mythological and historical elements of truth in their makeup.

I've noticed that throughout the years, each civilization had its own historical facts, its own historical legends, and its own historical ways of storytelling. I began to ask myself the question of, "What were the ingredients of our own storytelling—of the storytelling we see today all about us, in the various material that we read?" With comics as my vehicle for telling a story, I began to set down the kind of thoughts that were common to the period in which I was raised. You'll find that the elements are mixed, but they have validity and they have the potency of truth.

The main characters of the Fourth World series are comprised of people who occupy the various positions in two different families. My conjecture—which is part of good storytelling, I think—still had to do with good and evil, and therefore I contrived an evil world with an evil family, and a good world with a good family. The key element of my story was Orion, who left his evil world to find his true roots, which were embedded in the planet of Highfather. Orion was essentially traded at birth by the evil Darkseid to Highfather, in exchange for a young child who later became Mister Miracle. Despite the fact he had broken the law of Darkseid, Darkseid still considered him his son. And of course, that became an element in the story which was frustrating to the villain, because the villain considered the fact that no father would try to destroy his own son. Considering Orion his own son, Darkseid could not destroy him. But still he had to find ways of stopping him and punishing him for the deeds that he considered objectionable to the evil planet that he ruled.

The evil world Darkseid came from was called

Apokolips—an evil name in itself. Orion went in search of his true origins; Orion went to the place he thought he belonged, and he tried to find the people to whom he really meant something. He tried to find Lightray; he tried to find Highfather, the ruler of New Genesis, a planet as good as Darkseid's planet Apokolips was evil. There on New Genesis were Orion's roots, and friends, and family. He could sense it, and he went in search of them. Engendered in all this is a social pattern, and social thought, and the ever-present contention between good and evil. Good and evil are forever in contention, and each will forever try to cancel out the other. This lies behind the path we all tread. We live our lives out making the decisions that will clear up the dividing line between good and evil.

Of course, an epic tale can't be based solely on two characters; there's got to be a variety of characters in order to make clear and evaluate your own social values. So I had my own cast; I had Metron, who was an observer of all these activities that took place. We have such people; we have people that are unemotionally involved with any kind of situation. I had Lightray; Lightray, of course, is a light-hearted character, and enjoyed life; and we see people like that every day. They cause no harm, and they devise and make use of all the



Late Kirby pencils from the cover of Super Powers #5 (first series), featuring one of Jack's last great battle stories.



As great as Avengers #4 was, it has no single moment as visually exciting as this one from Strange Tales #114.

BATTLE ROYAL!

Marvel's Greatest Crossover Battles, by Mark Alexander

By the 1960s comic book “crossovers” were commonplace. DC, the leader of the pack, featured them regularly and they were pretty much formulated. The heroes would A) team up, B) defeat the bad guy, then C) smile and shake hands, chummy as could be. It was pretty tame stuff.

Kirby's characters, however, were decidedly different; nearly every time the Marvel super-heroes met it was in *battle royal*. In page after page of brawling, steel-shattering slugfests, they would pummel each other into near oblivion, often tearing up half of New York in the process. Jack's fight scenes were pure power, and they seemed to burst right off the printed page. Fists pounded like jackhammers, walls fell like avalanches, and Kirbysque debris flew everywhere. Of all the things Jack could do well, battle is what he did best. Here are some prime examples.

STRANGE TALES #114: HUMAN TORCH VS. CAPTAIN AMERICA

It didn't matter that the Captain America in this story was bogus. When the star-spangled “Sentinel of Liberty” vaulted forward on page four in that classic Kirby in-your-face splash panel, it was one of the most exciting moments of the entire Silver Age. With the sudden fury of a thunderbolt, Captain America was back, and what followed was an astonishing Kirby/Ayers free-for-all featuring two of Marvel's greatest Golden Age heroes locked in mortal combat. This epic encounter generated so much reader response that the real C.A. was brought back to take his rightful place among Marvel's (then fledgling) galaxy of stars.

STRANGE TALES ANNUAL #2: HUMAN TORCH VS. SPIDER-MAN

This was the first (and best) of many “Spider-Man vs. the Torch” conflicts. After being framed by a rather lackluster villain called The Fox, Spider-Man encounters the Torch, and a sensational seven-page struggle begins. The Torch finally realizes that Spidey is innocent, and they team up to defeat the real perpetrator. The King always did super-

lative work for the Marvel Annuals, and this was no exception, enhanced by Steve Ditko's best-ever inks on a Kirby book.

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #8: SPIDER-MAN VS. HUMAN TORCH

FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #1: THE FF VS. SPIDER-MAN

Both feature Spidey and the FF, both are Kirby/Ditko efforts, and at six pages each, both are too brief to really catch fire; great short stories nevertheless.

AVENGERS #3: HULK & SUB-MARINER VS. THE AVENGERS

This is a prime example of why early *Avengers* stories were so compelling. The Hulk was a wild card; you never knew if he would pop up as a hero, a villain, or perhaps even rejoin the group entirely. (Actually, after issue #5, he pretty much just disappeared.)

In this tale, the Hulk is being pursued by the Avengers, and meets the Sub-Mariner on an isle in the North Atlantic. After a brief battle, the two form an uneasy alliance

and challenge the Avengers to a brawl at Gibraltar. A superb super-hero slugfest ensues, then suddenly the Hulk reverts back to Bruce Banner and runs away to protect his secret identity. Namor, enraged by his partner's seeming betrayal, escapes back to the sea. Despite less-than-inspired inking by Paul Reinman, this is great early Marvel stuff.

FANTASTIC FOUR #12, 25, & 26: THE FF VS. THE HULK

When the Fantastic Four first tackled the Hulk in *FF* #12, it was, surprisingly, a non-event. They didn't meet until page 17, and their ensuing battle lasted a mere three pages. *FF* #25 and 26 made up for it. First, Reed and Johnny are hospitalized due to illness and injury, while Sue finds her invisibility powers far too weak to cope with the Hulk's titanic strength. This enables the action to focus solely on the



The Hulk gloats after walloping the Thing in *Fantastic Four* #25.



X-Men #9, where the mutants took on the Avengers.

Hulk and the Thing, an incredibly canny move by Stan and Jack. (This wasn't the case in *FF* #12, which is precisely why it failed.)

As the entire city watches, Marvel's two misunderstood monsters slug it out on streets, subways, bridges, and skyscrapers, leaving mass destruction strewn in their wake. As mind-boggling as these scenes are, it is the subtleties of the story which make it truly exceptional, such as Reed and Johnny's unwillingness to succumb to their infirmities (knowing that Ben needs them) and the Thing's stubborn refusal to surrender to a more powerful foe.

In issue #26, the FF regroup, the Avengers step in, and all hell breaks loose as an unstoppable, revenge-crazed Hulk lashes out at his former partner Rick Jones for teaming up with Captain America. A prodigious battle unfolds atop a skyscraper construction site, where all the heroes get a shot at the Hulk. Finally, Giant-Man's ants drive the Hulk into the Hudson River where he re-emerges as Bruce Banner. Comics don't get any better than this.

FANTASTIC FOUR #28: THE FF VS. THE X-MEN

In this issue the Mad Thinker and the Puppet Master team up to



defeat the Fantastic Four by pitting them against the X-Men. The Puppet Master assumes mental control over Professor X through a radioactive clay puppet, and when the brainwashed leader of the X-Men orders his students to attack the FF, a cataclysmic clash develops. Chic Stone checks in on inks and gives the book its most appealing look since the Ayers run. It's a good read, but it falls short of *FF* #25 & 26.

X-MEN #9: THE X-MEN VS. THE AVENGERS

Another Kirby/Stone Marvel masterpiece, this story takes place in Europe where Professor X (solo) is fighting a villain called Lucifer. The X-Men sail over to join him, and are confronted by the Avengers who have also detected Lucifer's evil presence. On the orders of their leader, the mutant-teens challenge the Avengers to a "guest-stars galore" battle, and Kirby proves once again how adept he is at choreographing group fight scenes. One assumes the mighty Avengers would have eventually annihilated these kids, but (of course) it never got that far.

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #112: THOR VS. THE HULK

Marvel had been swamped with fan mail asking which one of these two was stronger, and this battle was the result. The story actually occurred during *Avengers* #3, but was not reported at that time. Thor,



(above) Journey Into Mystery #112. (lower left) *FF* #28.

in order to prove that his strength is equal to the Hulk's, has Odin suspend his hammer's power for five minutes, while he tackles the Hulk with his fists alone. A great conflict ensues with lots of large-panel drawings which were a rarity before Marvel switched to smaller-sized art boards a couple of years later. Like most Marvel crossovers, this contest had no decisive outcome, and if the fans found this unsatisfying, at least they couldn't complain about the artwork: With Chic Stone on inks, this book has one of the greatest covers of all time.

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY ANNUAL #1: THOR VS. HERCULES

While battling two Storm Giants with Loki in tow, Thor accidentally falls into a time-space continuum which transports him from Asgard to Olympus, the home of the Greek gods. He soon confronts Hercules on a narrow bridge, and when neither will yield to the others' desire to cross first, a battle begins. (Jack obviously got this idea from the legendary first meeting of Robin Hood and Little John.) Again, there's no clear-cut victor in this tale: Zeus appears and declares the contest a draw, and sends Thor back home. It's a great first encounter, but like *FF* #12, it's a precursor to a grander, more apocalyptic struggle.

A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE: PART FOUR

by Mike Gartland

THE LAST STRAW?

It's the Summer of 1967, arguably the height of the '60s. Among some of the things occurring (or "happening" as it was referred to then): Expo '67 was in full swing, *Sgt. Pepper* was the album to ingest and discuss, the Arabs & Israelis experienced a bloody six-day war, there were race riots in Detroit that were just as bloody, and Vietnam kept rolling along, with Summer protests and young people dying. Definitely a time of turmoil for many, which brings us to... Marvel Comics?? Well, some will say turmoil is turmoil; and facts are facts; and A is A; and what has this to do with Kirby & Lee? Well...

During that Summer of '67, on the stands was the latest new adventure of Marvel's then flagship title: *The Fantastic Four*. In June and July issues #66 and 67 premiered "The Mystery of The Human Beehive." By this time, readers were so used to seeing new and inventive creations and situations in the pages of *FF* every month, they were almost becoming jaded. What no one realized at that time was, with this story, readers were taking in what would be the virtual end of an incredibly productive run.

As we have seen in previous articles, during this time at Marvel Jack Kirby was becoming more and more disenchanted with his position with the Company and his working relationship with Stan Lee. Over the previous twelve months Jack witnessed Marvel receive a great deal of publicity; articles in newspapers and magazines hailing Lee for his new and innovative style, and how the readership wondered how Lee "came up" with characters like the Hulk, Thor, and Spider-Man, among others. Jack was also having his share of business battles with Goodman, a man who never understood Kirby's value to the Company (Lee, to his credit, *did*), concerning his contract and his wanting to earn the most he could—and Jack was tired of submitting stories with his margin notes for direction, being either changed or ignored by Lee (by this time Kirby felt in control of the storylines, and felt that Stan should



(above) A new Kirby character about to be born in *FF* #67. (next page) "Him" returns to do battle in *Thor* #166.

be following his margin notations when he dialogued those stories). This latest installment in *FF* #66 and 67 would become yet another dispute that would eventually help contribute to the end of Kirby's creative generosity.

Readers familiar with the storyline will remember that Alicia

COCOON-MAN, TO BE FAIR, OBLIGES -- HE'S
A POWERFUL GUY -- IT'S A CLASH OF GIANTS

MY **MIND-
SHIELD** CAN
DEFEND ME
AGAINST ANY
WEAPON...

BUT I DO NOT
NEED IT AGAINST
A **LIVING BEING**
... FOR I AM FAR
STRONGER
THAN ANY!

SO, WE MEET ON **EQUAL TERMS...**
YOU, WHO CALL YOURSELF **GOD OF
THUNDER...** AGAINST AN ARTIFICIALLY-
CREATED, INDESTRUCTIBLE **SUPER-
BEING...**

THE ONE
CALLED **HIM...**
BORN IN A
COCOON...
BORN TO BE...
INVINCIBLE!



WAH-HOO!!

Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos examined by Mark Alexander

ENTER THE HOWLING COMMANDOS

"There was reality in the stories because of my own war experiences. Sgt. Fury had the essence of military life in it."—Jack Kirby

The story goes like this: One day in late 1962 Stan Lee was trying to convince his skeptical uncle (publisher Martin Goodman) that Marvel's new-found success was due to the fact that he and Jack Kirby had developed a new comic-style which Lee claimed would work in any genre. To prove his point, Stan bet that they could make a hit even with an outdated war-theme and a "horrible title." The result was *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos*, a Kirbyesque trek through the battlefields of World War II that was dubbed "The War Mag for People Who Hate War Mags."

Jack Kirby was the obvious choice to illustrate the series. Having tackled combat themes before

(see *Boy*

Commandos, *Foxhole*, *Warfront*, and *Battle*), he was able to handle the job with ease and enthusiasm. The commandos that Jack created for *Sgt. Fury* were colorful characters, startling for their brazen acknowledgement of ethnicity, whose diverse backgrounds formed a microcosm of America itself.

Among their ranks were: Timothy "Dum-Dum" Dugan, a huge, derby-domed Irish-American; Isadore "Izzy" Cohen, a master-mechanic from Brooklyn and the first-ever Jewish comics hero; Dino Manelli, a handsome Italian-American who was also a Hollywood star back in the states (clearly based on Dean Martin); "Rebel" Ralston, an ex-jockey from Kentucky with a pronounced southern accent; "Junior" Juniper, the Ivy Leaguer and eager beaver of the group; and Gabriel Jones, a trumpet-playing jazzman who was Jack and Stan's first (pre-Panther) Black hero. At a time when civil rights was a hotly-contested issue, Kirby and Lee (without concern for sales in the South) showed exactly where they stood on segregation by including a Black soldier in Fury's squad. They were, of course, taking artistic license with this concept; having both served during World War II they knew that the US Army had been segregated at the time. (Fury's anachronistically-integrated

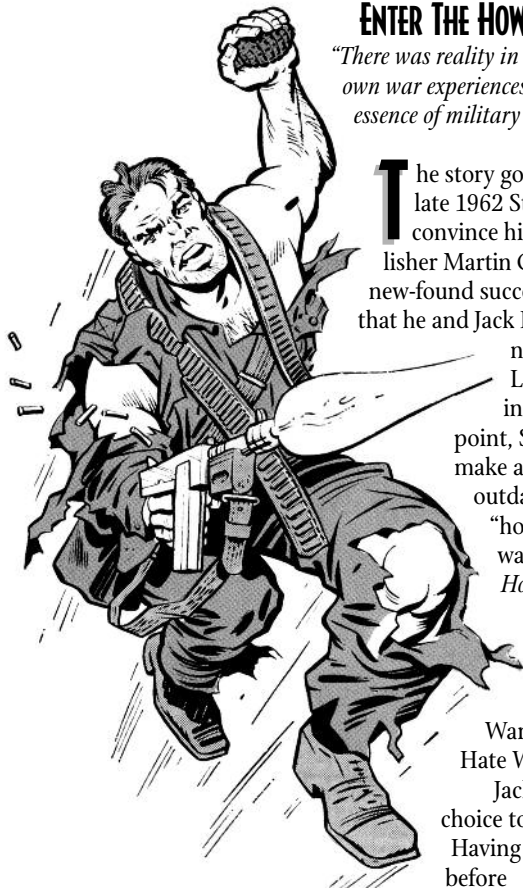
squad was not an entirely unique concept; DC's *Sgt. Rock*, which originated in 1959, featured a Black soldier named Jackie Johnson.) In any event, Gabe's inclusion in the Howlers was a bold move, and when Jones appeared colored pink in the first issue, Lee was obliged to send the color separation company a detailed memo to make it clear that Gabe Jones was a Black man.

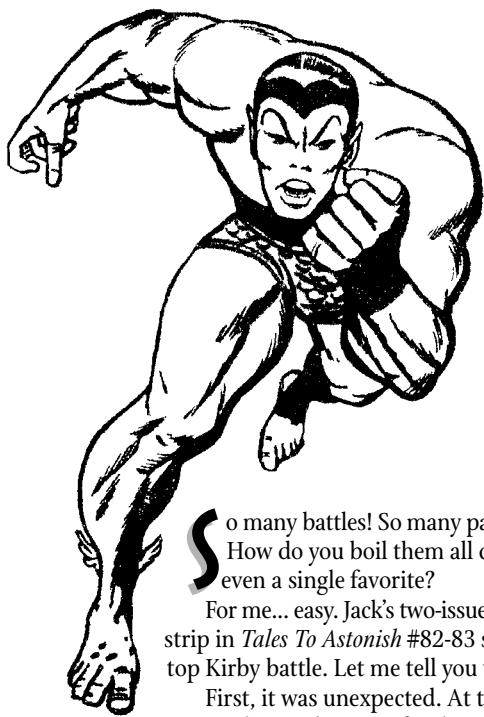
This motley melange of misfits whose ferocious battle cry of "WAH-HOO!!" earned them the title "Howling Commandos" was led by Nicholas Joseph Fury, a cigar-chomping, tough-talking Sergeant whose trademarks were a five-o'clock shadow and a perpetually-ripped shirt. A product of the Great Depression, Fury was raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan known as Hell's Kitchen by his widowed mother, his father (World War I pilot Jack Fury) having died in combat. Fury was a classic Dead-End Kid. He frequented pool halls, got into scrapes, and worked as infrequently as possible. His life turned around when he joined the parish of Chaplain Lewis Hargrove. Fury became best friends with Hargrove's younger brother who was subsequently killed at Pearl Harbor. To avenge his friend's death at the hands of the Axis powers, Fury enlisted in 1941, endured basic training at Fort Dix, and served as a Sergeant in the European Theater of Operations leading the Howlers.

The supporting characters in *SFAHHC* include: Captain "Happy Sam" Sawyer, a bellowing, no-nonsense C.O.; Pam Hawley, Fury's love interest; Baron Strucker, Nick's nefarious Nazi-nemesis; and Sgt. "Bull" McGiveney, Fury's loud-mouthed rival whose squad would tangle with the Howlers (and always lose) at the drop of a hat. In a mere eight issues, Jack and Stan had established a cast potent enough to keep the book rolling for almost two decades.

All the bad guys in *SFAHHC* were (what else?) Nazis; all were named Hans, Fritz, or Otto, and all were ruthless, cold-blooded Teutonic killers. This one-dimensional stereotyping (by Lee) was pointedly at odds with the rich characterization in the rest of the book. Amazingly, Flo Steinberg (Marvel's Gal Friday) recalls that one reader was so incensed by the magazine's anti-Nazi slant that he wrote a letter threatening to kill the entire Bullpen. The FBI was called in, but nothing came of the scare. Clearly, Marvel's progressive attitude didn't delight everyone.

As for the plots, it was mostly Fury leading his men on one





SHELLHEAD, SUBBY, & ME!

How the flu caused my greatest Kirby battle, by R.J. Vitone



So many battles! So many pages of memorable power! How do you boil them all down to a precious few—even a single favorite?

For me... easy. Jack's two-issue fill-in on the Sub-Mariner strip in *Tales To Astonish* #82-83 stands as my personal top Kirby battle. Let me tell you why:

First, it was unexpected. At that particular time, Jack was not the regular artist for the Subby strip. He was thrown the assignment in true last-minute fashion ("Hey! We're stuck! Shoot Jack the plot, fast!!"). Also, the story was unusual for the time—Iron Man comes over from *Tales of Suspense* to clash with Subby in his own strip. Believe it or not, it WAS unusual for heroes to "cross-over" from one book to another in those days! That Jack would come on board just as the battle climaxed was an amazing twist of fate—and another bonus was that Dick Ayers, my own favorite Kirby inker, handled the inks.

In order for you to fully understand just why this is my favorite battle, try to follow this sequence of events. Remember, back then, there were no comic book stores, no *Comic Shop News* to say what was coming. There was no truly organized fandom dissecting every book on the Internet. All there was was just me, the corner drug store, and a handful of 12¢ Marvels each week. This is what lead up to it.

THE LEAD-IN

Tales of Suspense #78: Drawn by Gene Colan, Iron Man defeats the Mandarin and his giant creation Ultimo in China. Upon returning to the US, Tony Stark finds himself in contempt of Congress, and all Stark Industries facilities closed down.



Tales of Suspense #79: Stark agonizes over his troubles, his lack of money, his estrangement from Happy and Pepper, and his drained strength due to the Ultimo fight. Suddenly, evil Warlord Krang launches an electric bolt right out of *TTA* #81's Subby story (also drawn by Colan). Although he manages to fend off the attack, Iron Man is confronted by the fighting-mad

Prince Namor.

Tales of Suspense #80: Namor, angered that Iron Man has driven off Krang just as he was about to catch up with the Warlord, attacks the weakened hero. Iron Man tricks the Atlantean into sealing him into a secured lab, where he recharges his transistors. Namor heads for water, to regain his own power. The two prepare to collide in:

TALES TO ASTONISH #82: THE MAIN EVENT

Enter Jack "King" Kirby—the artist Marvel didn't want to load down with too much work took on more work! The credits to *TTA* #82 list: "Begun by Gallant Gene (Colan), who caught the flu bug



after drawing the first two pages! Finished by King Kirby (who drew the last 10 pages, then asked who the Sub-Mariner was!)"

The story is simple. The water-recharged Namor battles the full-strength Iron Man in a 12-page epic. (In time-honored comic tradition, there is no "winner," as the story splits off in different directions.) But the Kirby involvement is much more interesting! Called on apparently at the last moment, Jack produced a professional, top-notch 10-page mini-masterpiece.

First, Iron Man opens with full-power repulsor rays, rendered in striking Kirby perspective and power. Namor uses his ankle-wings to fly back to attack. His first blow, a great half-page punch, floors Iron Man, who decides that his best course of action is to keep Namor away from water, to drain his strength. Four panels of furious evasion, then... a shattering half-page collision, followed by a sly judo toss. The effort has drained Iron Man, but he's conveniently near a handy "energo-grip" that can provide fast, highly-concentrated recharging. A

ART VS. COMMERCE

*Kirby's battles with Marvel Comics over original art and copyrights,
by John Morrow*

(with thanks to Jon B. Cooke and Jim Shooter for their invaluable input)

Perhaps Kirby's greatest personal battle in comics was his fight with Marvel Comics over the return of original art pages from the 1960s. While we will probably never be privy to all the behind-the-scenes negotiations that went on, this chronological accounting of the major events involved will hopefully help put the controversy into perspective. In addition to working from news accounts, we attempted to get more insight into Marvel's side of things from former Editor-In-Chief Jim Shooter, who graciously accepted our request for an interview and provided us with some relevant documents.

COPYRIGHTS ON CAP

The story really begins in 1969, when the copyright on *Captain America* came up for renewal. Someone at Marvel must've been asleep at the wheel, because co-creator Joe Simon was able to step in and file for the copyright on *Captain America* #1-10 (as reported in Simon's book *The Comic Book Makers*). This sent Marvel scrambling for a way to shore up their claim to Cap, and they eventually settled with Simon. Since Kirby was co-creator of *Captain America*, Magazine Management Co. (Marvel's parent company) made him an offer: If he would sign a document supporting Marvel's claim to the character, Jack would receive the same amount Simon got in their settlement with him. Kirby agreed, and signed their document in June 1970.

What Jack didn't know was that Magazine Management Co. arranged to pay most of Simon's settlement to his attorney—which was then passed on confidentially to Simon—so they would end up paying Jack considerably less than Simon. Around 1972, Simon and Kirby ran into each other. Jack complained to Joe that he still hadn't gotten his promised *Captain America* settlement, but the terms of Simon's agreement kept Simon from revealing how Kirby had been shortchanged in the deal.

In 1972, a decision was made to spin Marvel Comics off as a separate entity from Magazine Management Co. To do this, Jack's signature was needed on a document affirming Marvel's copyrights on all the characters Kirby had been involved on. Jack was well-entrenched over at DC by now, and still hadn't received his payment for the *Captain America* settlement. It appears he used his signature as leverage to get the money owed him; he signed on May 30, 1972, and by the end of June 1972, he'd finally gotten the promised payments from the *Captain America* settlement (although still much less than what Simon ultimately got). Marvel would later claim that Kirby was paid for signing this 1972 document, which Kirby would deny. The payments he received were already owed him for the earlier *Captain America* settlement, so Kirby's claim that he wasn't paid for signing the 1972 agreement was accurate.

BACK AT MARVEL

Kirby's stay at DC didn't work out quite as he'd hoped, so on March 24, 1975, Jack signed a three-year contract (for May 1, 1975 – April 30, 1978) with Marvel Comics. This standard Marvel contract called for Jack to “render services” to Marvel, delivering thirteen pages a week, written and penciled. It also contained a section stating that the artist gave Marvel the exclusive right to secure copyrights and other rights on anything he produced for them. No mention was made in the contract of ownership of the original artwork by either party.

Jim Shooter was on-staff at the time, and had amicable dealings with Jack during his 1970s contract. “Jack would actually write [the stories] on the boards, and everything would have six exclamation points and all kinds of imaginary punctuation. I would gently edit

them; if what he said in a balloon made sense at all, I left it alone, except for punctuation. If I figured out what he was trying to say, and he wasn't really saying that, I would suggest that maybe he change it—and he always did. He didn't have a problem with it. He was a joy.”

In 1976, Marvel began a policy of returning original art on current work. Kirby signed the standard artwork release and received his current artwork back like all the other artists (the penciler only got a percentage of the finished pages, with inkers getting some as well). Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress was ratifying a change to Copyright Law that would have far-reaching effects on the comics industry, and Kirby's future as well.

1978: A YEAR OF CHANGE

After being second-in-command to a string of Marvel Editors-In-Chief, Jim Shooter finally ascended to the position himself on January 1, 1978, bringing some long-needed stability to the company. Shooter perceived there was an opportunity there to make sense of the chaos. “It seemed like there was tremendous talent and energy there, and no organization. When Stan and Sol were this little two-man tag team, and the company was eight books, it worked. When it was 45 books, it didn't work. Nobody'd bothered to install an organization.”

The copyright law revision of 1976 also went into effect January 1, granting creators ownership of their creations unless a Work For Hire agreement had been signed. In essence, Work For Hire is where any work done for a company is considered the work of the company, not the individual creator. Shooter explains that for something to be Work For Hire, “the parties had to agree to it in writing. So here we are churning out 45 color comics a month with nary a shred of paper between us and the creators. That's why the Marvel agreement is a comprehensive agreement. When you sign the Marvel agreement, you say, “The work I have done and am doing for Marvel is Work For Hire, unless otherwise stated,” to cover the gap.”

Of Jack's work during that period, Shooter recalls, “It wasn't selling. We had single-digit sales figures for *Captain America*, and at that time the Marvel line average was up near 50%. Newsstand readers had a lot of turnover, and new readers coming in weren't buying it. However, older readers bought it. It was one of the things that made the direct market click for me. When I became Editor-In-Chief in 1978, Jack was still under contract, and for the first time I saw print orders. At the bottom of the print order was a little line item called “Seagate.” I found out our circulation director was selling comics to [Phil] Seuling on almost a cost-plus basis, and Seuling was distributing them around the country to a lot of flea market operators and guys who had these little comics shops—a new innovation. While Jack's numbers on the newsstands were the lowest, they were far and away the highest in the comics shops! Shortly into my tenure there, I saw that those numbers were growing rapidly. By the time Jack left there, his books were selling something like 30,000 copies direct, while other Marvel comics were lucky to be selling 7,000 or 8,000. That's almost enough to sustain a book exclusively! That kind of awakened me to the idea that Marvel should get in on this direct market thing. Of course, then Jack was gone.”

Indeed, in May 1978, Kirby's contract with Marvel was over, and he left for a new career in the animation field, having never signed Marvel's Work For Hire contract. Also in 1978, Steve Gerber was removed from the *Howard the Duck* newspaper strip—a move which he felt violated his contract with Marvel. Gerber created Howard in 1975 as—like Kirby—an independent contractor for Marvel. When he then threatened to sue for ownership of the character, Marvel fired him from the comic book as well. Gerber would make good on the threat two years later by filing suit over ownership of the character.

Just when Kirby began haggling with Marvel over the return of his artwork from the 1960s is an area of dispute. Kirby would later publicly claim that copyrights were not at issue, and that he never sued Marvel. Shooter has a different recollection: “I guess his contract ended in the Summer. Shortly thereafter, I was called into meetings

GLORY BE!

New Gods #6 tag-team examined by Charles Hatfield, Richard Kyle, and Adam McGovern

(Editor's Note: I vividly remember being eleven years old when my aunt came to visit with a paper grocery sack full of comics her boyfriend was getting rid of. Of the 50 or so books in it, one really stood out: New Gods #6. Something about that cover, with the mummified figure standing dead center, drew me in. I was totally blown away by the nonstop action in it, and even cut out Kirby figures to create my own collages (pages 13 and 18 feature my all-time favorite poses). So for this issue, I self-indulgently selected my favorite Kirby battle story—"The Glory Boat"—and asked three of TJKC's most literate regular contributors to analyze it, without knowing what the other would write. Here are the results, assembled "tag-team" style, and accompanied by the Jack's pencils, from photocopies he made before they were inked. Since all three analyses flow throughout this article, I suggest you read each straight through, one at a time, to avoid confusion.)



INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD KYLE

When Jack began the story of the Fourth World, he

began without a plan. The first three issues of *Forever People*, *New Gods*, and *Mister Miracle* show him finding his way—he had an idea of the story he wanted to tell, but not of the actual narrative and characters that would tell it. Those early stories were frequently forced and artificial.

Then, as he moved into the fourth issues, the dialogue sharpened, the stock characters and situations began to drop away. Intergang was phased out, "O'Ryan" effectively disappeared, the stereotypical supporting characters vanished, Infinity Man faded away—and Big Barda and Sonny Sumo appeared, Orion found himself in deep waters, and the Fourth World began to take real shape. "The Pact" was just over the horizon.

Why didn't Jack simply start here in the first place?

Well, he may have written about that...

In *Mister Miracle* #5, Oberon, the dwarf assistant of Scott Free—Jack's surrogate and the voice of caution in the strip—says to Scott while they are preparing a new escape test, "You may call this a rehearsal, but I call it 'constant jeopardy' when I fire this cannon. Why must you wait until I ignite the charge? Why can't you start working before that and give yourself more of a chance?" But Scott Free couldn't do it any other way—and I suspect neither could Jack's creative mind. That's the way it worked at its best: In real time and in front of an audience, letting the story emerge from his unconscious while you and I and Jack sat watching.

The storyline that culminates in "Glory Boat" in *New Gods* #6 has its beginnings in the fourth issue, in one of the most telling sequences in the series. In the prologue, Metron of New Genesis, a manifestation of science and intellect, has taken young Esak in the Mobius Chair to a primitive world of savages. He says to Esak, "One day, when their bellies are full, they will look up and see us. Then they will think and dream!"

Esak says, "Tell me, Metron! Are we truly beyond time? Are we beyond death?" And Metron replies, "My sensors indicate there is an answer in New Genesis." There, Highfather tells them, "The war to keep Apokolips from Earth goes badly. One of us has fallen!"

It is Seagrin, an oceanic god, who has died. Orion says of him, "He was a gentle warrior. He loved the deeps and all life in it. It was his element. Within it, he found harmony in living. And this is the end of it. Somewhere in these waters he fought and died!"—slain by the Deep Six. (Curiously, Bill Everett, creator of the Sub-Mariner and identified with water and the sea in so many stories, died unexpectedly at the very time Jack must have been conceiving this story. It would be interesting to know if it was before or after Everett's death, for Everett was the first among the Immortals of comic books to die and he was someone whose work Jack respected. The *New Gods* stories are frequently autobiograph-

ical, like much of Jack's later work, and this sequence may be among the first.)

The fifth issue begins with another prologue featuring Metron. He has gone beyond the stars, to (as Metron explains) "the Promethean Galaxy, the place of Giants! Alive, chained to the fragments of the devices they used in their attempts to smash the final barrier!" And Jack tells us, speaking of a colossal agonized figure floating in space before us, "There were others with Metron's boldness and hunger. This one tried to engulf the barrier by enlarging his own atomic structure. What happened is not known. He failed. He drifts endlessly—larger than a star cluster—fused, living! Taking a billion Earth years to feel one heartbeat!"

And Metron says of the Giants, "I can feel them invading my thoughts, crying out in eternal humiliation!"

Loss of face was a theme of the whole Fourth World narrative. From Orion's bestial "Apokolips face" in the beginning to Esak's at the end, it motivated the series. The loss of face—the loss of the social mask, the exposure of the inner self, the humiliation of failure before others—was the entire story's preoccupation. It may have been Jack's, as well, for this was the first time in his career that he was wholly on his own, completely exposed, for good or ill. (The loss of face theme begins with Steel Hand, an Intergang boss, in *Mister Miracle* #1, who says somewhat artificially, "Soon it will be over—and I can forget Mister Miracle [the original, the Great Thaddeus]. Before I lose face, he'll lose his life!" Then, in *New Gods* #3, there is the first revelation of Orion's "Apokolips face"—and when Orion's normal appearance is restored by the Mother Box, the device causes a gun to blow up in the face of the criminal Sugar-Man, seriously damaging his features. Soon, of course, Sonny Sumo and Funky Flashman—who hid his true face from the world—will come on the scene.)

So now in the sixth issue of *New Gods*, in profoundly deep waters, Jack comes to the biggest test of his creative life. In the next issue he is going to attempt the most ambitious story he has ever written and drawn—that anyone in comic books to that moment has ever attempted—"The Pact." Jack may have been speaking to himself as well as to us when he wrote and drew "Glory Boat."

THE GLORY BOAT

"Glory Boat" can be seen as a parable of the Vietnam War. It is also more: The creature may be called Leviathan, but it's the Great White Whale as well. Jack created many of his strongest stories by dividing a psychological conflict into opposing physical forces, then dramatizing its resolution in those same concrete terms. Although Melville's *Moby Dick* has been given countless interpretations, its symbolic structure quite remarkably anticipates Freud's theories, and much of the Fourth World (which was synthesized from many sources) is based on Jack's interpretation of these ideas, and—rightly or wrongly—I believe they are especially visible in "Glory Boat." In it, Jack also carries his method one step further—for what happens to the

(see KYLE on page 39)

CHARLES HATFIELD

Page 1:

“The Glory Boat” deals with the artificial manipulation of life forms. The antagonists, the Deep Six, possess “mutative” powers which allow them to adapt other living beings, as well as their own bodies, to suit specific purposes. These “mutations” are immediate and often radical, distorting the creatures beyond recognition. The “Leviathan” which approaches here (page 1) is such a mutation. It is not a whale, but a monstrous parody of one, sporting enormous curved spikes on its back. The creature’s impossible shape contributes to the dramatic composition of this page, which reverses Kirby’s trademark use of what I call the Looming Effect: Rather than coming at us, the monster is moving away, toward a small and vulnerable-looking target. The looming flukes in the foreground, hinting at the monster’s gigantic mass, sweep the reader’s eye forward, through the curving spikes, toward the helpless ship. (In the published version, Royer’s felicitous inks perfectly capture the sinuous sweep of the tail.)

Against the Deep Six and their Leviathan, Kirby will pose the regenerative powers of Lightray, who also has the ability to shape life. Tellingly, these contrasting forces are played out against the backdrop of the sea, which both science and myth recognize as the well-spring of all living things. Refinements in the script between penciling and publishing suggest one possible inspiration for this setting: Whereas the penciled version speaks simply of the creature being “spawned” by the Deep Six, the published version calls the monster a “resurrection” of an ancient symbol, alluding to the Leviathan of the *Old Testament*. (The ending of the previous issue’s story, “Spawn,” also strikes this note, promising to “revive the dreaded myths” of ages past.) The penciled version shown here may be more strictly accurate—the beast has been created, not brought back to life—but lacks the Biblical resonance. The final version, invoking religion and myth, adds symbolic heft to the script and alerts us to ancient mysteries of the sea as the source of life.

Pages 2-3:

Look at the battering ram smashing through the ship: It seems to be made of stone. Despite the fluid sweep of the creature’s tail on page 1, the Leviathan appears more inorganic than organic. (Check out pages 4 and 24: The beast is like a machine with tusks, replete with
(see HATFIELD on page 38)

ADAM MCGOVERN

For me, Kirby’s Greatest Battle was not confined to the spectacular clash recounted in this story — it was the conflict he perceived between our longing for peace and our tendency toward battle itself. That conflict was central to Kirby’s quest as a modern myth-maker. His childhood on the mean streets of early-20th century ghetto New York and his adolescence in WWII had schooled him only too well in it, and the divided, Cold War America in which he produced his best work gave him a passion to see it resolved. Here’s how he attempted it in this great battle story — at once his most realistic and most fantastic treatment of the theme.

Page 1:

A marvelously cinematic establishing shot as subtle as it is tense — this starts a four-page
(see McGOVERN on page 39)



THIS IS A SEA BEAST WHICH DWARFS ANYTHING SEEN IN THE OCEANS SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME!! BENEATH ITS THROAT IS A GIANT RAM!—WHICH CRASHES THROUGH THE SHIP, AS ITS GARGANTUAN TUSKS FOLLOW TO RIP APART THE REMAINING TONNAGE OF STEEL!!



CHARLES HATFIELD

absurdly small pectoral fins.) This blurring of organic and inorganic forms—a hallmark of Kirby—has everything to do with what “The Glory Boat” is about. Oddly enough, it is the more organic (or at least earthy) forms which will come to be associated with Apokolips, while the cool, metallic shine of machines will be associated with New Genesis. This spectacular spread, a beautiful example of deep composition and suspended motion, reintroduces the threat of the Leviathan without actually giving us a clear view of it. (The view at the end of the previous issue is much more complete.) I’m especially entranced by the arrested figures of the men in freefall—in deep and middle distances, and in close-up too. Like most good Kirby spreads, this twofer captures an entire sequence rather than a single interrupted motion: We witness the ramming *and* its consequences.

Page 4:

From the tableau on pages 2-3 we move to a divided surface, a classic Kirby 2x2 which succeeds in telling a story even when subjected to the Squint Test. Try it: Hold the page at arm’s length and squint, until the captions blur and you cannot read the narration. Watch the Leviathan rise in the first panel, top left, then sink in the second, top right, describing an arc across the page. Look for the Leviathan in the third panel, lower left, swimming away—it’s not quite as easy here, because the optic center of the image is a swirl of bubbles, describing the creature’s wake. Yet the lines curl to the upper right, toward the Leviathan’s tail—once again moving away from us, into the distance, on its way to further prey.

Throughout most of this page, the carnage is vacant of the human element. But as we move to the fourth and final panel, a close-up shows a lost life preserver which symbolizes that human element—which is

about to be reintroduced to the story with a vengeance. The life preserver anticipates the raft which bears the Sheridans, whose familial in-fighting, no less than the war of the New Gods, will drive the story to come. The caption fits the image, telling us that our tale will center on a few survivors left in the beast’s wake. Even without that caption (the Squint Test, remember?) the progression is telling, from the remote, spectacular carnage in the first three panels, to a single piece of flotsam in the fourth, a piece dedicated to the preservation of life. The name written on that piece? The name of the Sheridans’ yacht, the *Aurora*, meaning *light*.

Page 5:

Orion bursts from the sea and into the lives of the Sheridans, a family “at war with themselves.” They are turned away from us, toward the rising figure of the god, who gusts skyward in a column of spray. This tantalizing image—deliberately impersonal?—jibes with the emphasis of the story itself, which is not precisely about the Sheridans or the gods, but rather about the “rendezvous” between the two (and, more specifically, about irreconcilable points of view). Orion faces us, but distantly (contrast this to the title page in *New Gods* #1); the Sheridans, new to us, face away. The splash forces us to see Orion impersonally—as an enigma, an affront—yet gives the Sheridans no faces, no distinctive likenesses, with which we can identify. The result? Suspense, in a literal sense: Suspension of judgment. (*Faces* will come to mean much over the next twenty-one pages, especially near the end, as Kirby turns the logic of this splash on its head.)

Father Farley is in the foreground, and has the last word, but it is son Richard who stands, shielding his eyes, to take in the sight. Is Farley’s thrusting arm meant to signal Orion, or to ward him off? Daughter Lynn sits behind; like all of them, she is in a defensive posture,

(see HATFIELD on page 41)

ADAM MCGOVERN

demonstration of how restrained the ultimate action artist could actually be, building to a fever pitch of suspense without a super-hero longjohn in sight. (Incidentally, somewhere between this story's penciled and published versions, page 1 acquired a caption which was at once a punchier intro and a more effective recap: "Bring Apokolips to Earth!!" This terrible command has been done!!

The Deep Six — Mystic Mutators of the Deep — have resurrected 'Leviathan,' symbol of ancient disasters!! — which can only be stopped by The Glory Boat!!" It still sounds like Kirby's writing ["command has been done"?], though after decades as a perceived sidekick Kirby didn't take kindly to being rethought. I wonder whose idea the change was?)

Pages 2-3:

A prime example of how Kirby didn't compose for 4-color, but for 70mm — look at the spectacle he achieves with none of today's comics' glossy gimmickry.

Page 4:

If Frank Miller is comics' greatest filmmaker, then Kirby is comics' greatest storyboardist — consider how disjunctive each of these images is from the other, and yet how lucid and propulsive the narrative remains. (In an unrelated note, check out how Kirby hits the exact midpoint between his venerable notions of Biblical retribution and his more modern class-consciousness with the line, "Not even the private yachts of the rich are spared!!")

Page 5:

A family "at war" with itself — in these characters we get the most literal representation of the generationally and ideologically-rent early-'70s America that Kirby allegorizes everywhere else in the series. (Of course, he situates them in a still thoroughly allegorical setting of drift and uncertainty — a neat elemental inversion of *Waiting for Godot's* desert, if I may!) P.S. Why say the "final" war between the New Gods? That makes it sound like we're reading the series finale. I'm sorry, but Kirby *did* need an editor.

Page 6:

Since we're participating in what may be comics' first rabbinic commentary, it's fitting to note the
(see MCGOVERN on page 43)

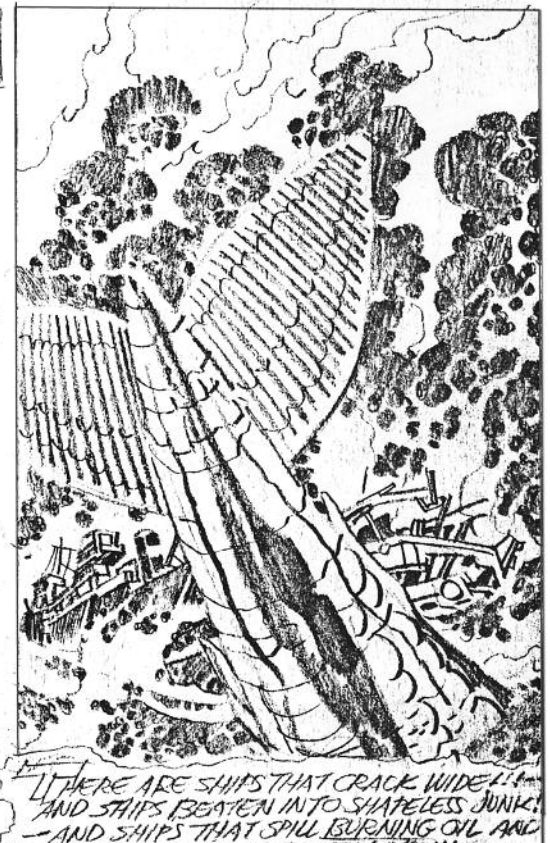
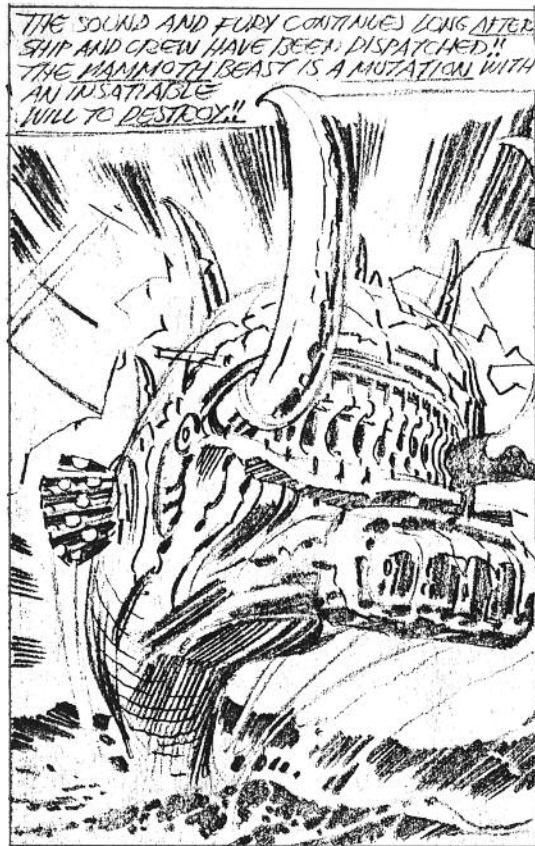
RICHARD KYLE

opposing humans also happens on a larger scale to the New Gods—and perhaps on an even larger scale.

Pages 1-4:

The Leviathan, created by Apokolips' Deep Six, is a dark Moby Dick, the black side of Nature. The final vessel it destroys is the yacht *Aurora*— the Dawn—leaving three survivors adrift. The two men, father and son, figures representing generational conflict, are also two sides of a deeply conflicted superego. The girl, nominally, represents the world.

(see KYLE on page 43)



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