

MODERN MASTERS VOLUME SIX:

ARTHUR ADAMS



By George Khoury and Eric Nolen-Weathington

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MODERN MASTERS VOLUME SIX: ARTHUR ADAMS

edited by Eric Nolen-Weathington and George Khoury
designed by Eric Nolen-Weathington
front cover by Arthur Adams
front cover color by Tom Ziuko
all interviews in this book were conducted by George Khoury
transcribed by Steven Tice



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Dedication

*To Caper Glee Nolen-Weathington, born during the making of this book. You were worth the wait.
And to Donna, for bringing you into this world, and to Iain, for being a super big brother.*

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Modern Masters Volume Six:

ARTHUR ADAMS

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Introduction

The man loves Godzilla.

And Gumby.

For me anyway, if you want to know about Art Adams, that's where you have to start, with a character who lays waste to cities and is brought to life by a man wearing a rubber suit, and an animated piece of clay, a classic of stop-motion whose every movement has to be adjusted one frame of film at a time. One is in many ways the ultimate wide-screen spectacle, while the other remains one of the most personal and intimate of creations.

Same holds true for Arthur's art: on the one hand, he can give his writers the most majestic and outrageous of wide-screen spectacles, be they in space or the realms of fabled Asgard. And yet focus in on moments so individual and personal, they can't help but win your heart, or break it.

His first gig teamed him with the woman who was then my editor on *X-Men*, Ann Nocenti, on a book they created called *Longshot*, and within the first few pages it was abundantly clear that we readers were in the hands of a pair of creators whose vision was as wacky as it was idiosyncratic. First of all, the hero only had three-fingered hands, which I couldn't help wondering—then as now—if that wasn't Ann and Art's deliberate, albeit subtle way of telling us the character and his book were derived as much from the world and ethos of animation as much as the more formal and "realistic" environs of the Marvel Universe. Longshot was pure of heart, innocent in a way that was rare then and virtually non-existent today; his power was to be lucky. His adversary was Mojo, a monumental bloat of a being who was so obscenely corpulent (dare we even say, crapulous) that whatever legs he might once have possessed were no longer able to support him. Instead, he was mated to a powered cradle, which allowed him to scurry about on multiple crab-legs. In addition, he had no spine. Literally. Which meant that his body was supported by an external, articulated, bionic frame. He took great pride in this condition. For Mojo, being spineless was the summit of sentient evolution; the only point to him of possessing a backbone was to see it smashed to bits. Mojo's game was what we call these days a "content provider." His world, his people, demanded constant entertainment; he gave it to them. The higher the ratings, the greater the glory, and the raw power that went with it. Longshot was his star, who for some strange and inexplicable reason was determined to develop a mind of his own and some serious free will. He escaped. Mojo wanted him back.

And therein lay the genesis of that wonderful, eight-issue roller-coaster ride.

My chance to work with Art came with what started

out as a *New Mutants Annual* and mutated, quite naturally it seemed at the time, into an opus. I mean, Art has his own memories of this collaboration, which mostly involve lots of sobbing on my end of the phone line, an episode of the original series of *Star Trek* (Boyoboy, I really cannot wait to see that giant optical effect amoeba in High-Def, not to mention the masking tape holding together the set panels), and a shade under a million pages of plot, mainly about the ongoing saga of Loki's (Norse God of Mischief: Arch-enemy of his half-brother Thor, God of Thunder and all-around Marvel good-guy) plain-spoken but spirited Filipino housekeeper Lupe.

Me, I'd just written this really cool story with Paul Smith where the X-Men go head to head with the aforementioned Loki and had ended with him vowing vengeance, and I wanted to see what would happen next. I also wanted to have some fun with this other book I was writing, *The New Mutants* and was figuring the X-Men for once, could take second fiddle. I thought Art would be perfect for the job. He, living in California, had no idea what he was getting into (you think we're kidding about that packet of plot pages?), and what the hell, *Annuals* are only 38 pages, how hard could it be?

I dunno what I was thinking. The more I wrote, the more there was to write, sort of falling under the heading that this was probably the only time the mutants would be able to visit Asgard, be a shame to miss out on any of the really cool sites and characters. And if we're going to showcase the place they're visiting so comprehensively, it's only fair to give the characters their due. And since we're guest-starring Storm, and since she's one of the mainstays of the X-Men—well, she of course would have to dominate the story and somehow make it All-About-Her! (Basically by becoming Loki's Object-of-Ultimate-Desire—which is in fact her true mutant power, to make the Baddest of Bad Guys fall head over heels in Desire for her! But I digress.)

Not much to ask for in a story: sublime characterization of a cast that includes teenagers of all ages, human heroes, Asgardian Gods, demi-gods, demons, critters, elves, dwarves, sorceresses, settings that range from the Greek Isles to all the fabled realms of the Norse mythos, battles, bar scenes, seductions, brutality, heroism, costume changes, lots of meals, an occasional bath, a girl and her (winged) horse, loathsome spells, broken hearts, low drama and high comedy.

Oh yes, and when we got to the end, we'd discover this was only Part 1. There'd have to be a sequel to wrap things up, in the *X-Men Annual*.

(We could do silly things like that in those days.)

So here's Arthur, blithely accepting what he thought

was a light-hearted gig to while away a couple of weeks' quick work...

...only to discover he'd been sucked into the maw of a monster that would ultimately run so many pages it would end up with a (much reprinted) trade paperback all its own.

And damn, if he didn't do it.

That thing about being a writer in this business is that, while we often have to think up this crazy stuff, we really do depend on the visual facility—the talent, the skill, the creative genius—of our artists to bring it to life. What looks spectacular in our heads, what has the potential to rock the world when we finish typing our little fingers to the bone...

...doesn't always see print in quite the same way.

It takes a mind, an imagination, a sensibility that's simpatico with that vision, to finish the job. To look at those words and, after the requisite growls and curses, use them as a springboard to come up with something even better. Art Adams is just such an artist. He does the big things well, he does the little things even better. Demon warriors charging out of a hole in space, a young woman giving up because the fight to go on with her life has become just too damn hard. He does drama, he does funny, he does just about every genre a writer can throw at him.

Best of all, he has that rare and ineffable knack of creating characters who are immediately empathetic, with whom the readers cannot help but bond and care for. I look at these images and I see folks who are imbued with a sense of charm, I really can't help but like them and want to see more of them—even the villains. (Hell, even the monsters.) Within the context of his personal style, which is pretty much unique unto himself (another rarity in our profession), they're very real folks.

I mean, this is a guy who created an entire series about a sentient ape and his gloriously beautiful, not to mention brilliant, gal companion, and after more than a decade I'm still waiting eagerly to see what happens next!

Back last century, I had a brief and shining opportunity to write an arc for the *JLA*. A rare, possibly my only, shot at the Great Big Guns of the DC pantheon. I thought the story was fun but what made the series personally memorable was that the editor, Dan Raspler (my wife's cousin, what can I say?), managed to finagle Art as the cover artist.

Six pages out of 130-plus—but for me they were the encapsulation of everything I was aiming for with my story. Here was a visualization of the movie that unspooled past my mind's-eye when I took pen to paper and started sketching out my ideas. And he even took one of the crazier notions I ever had, the idea of wearing Plastic Man as a survival suit (which, when you really think about it, turns out to be something you probably really don't want to think about), and not only made it work, he made me smile to look at it.



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Art's the kind of artist who makes writers think they really do have a clue. He's the kind of artist whose work doesn't fade with time. His work is very much an extension of himself, the characters come across as nice people because he's nice people. No small achievement, either way.

In fact, these days there are just a couple of things I regret when I think of him: that he always lived on one coast and I on the other (because it would be so much easier to drop those 900K-page plots on his doorstep without the intercession—and, dare I say, expense—of FedEx), that he always liked his Godzilla action figures, and Gumby, and going out for dead-raw-fish, and strolling to the movies (even if it was just to the TV in the next room) and hanging with friends, way more than slaving away at the drawing table. These days, he works for one company, and I for the other, so that means I get to enjoy his work solely as a reader. But writers, especially in comics, are always fools for hope. In the meantime...

...I really can't wait to see what happens next.

Chris Claremont
Brooklyn, New York

Part 1: Comics, Monsters and Dinosaurs

MODERN MASTERS: First things, first: you're not related to Neal Adams, right?

ARTHUR ADAMS: Not to my knowledge, no.

MM: But people must've asked you about that in the beginning, right?

ARTHUR: Some people were even irritated that I signed my name Arthur Adams. When I first started, I would just sign my name "Adams," and that would somehow get people very upset, even though Neal had always signed his stuff "Neal Adams."

MM: Have you ever met him?

ARTHUR: I've met him several times. We've never really spent much time together, but we've met several times, and the first couple times he opened his arms wide and said, "My son," much to the confusion of everyone all around. He's been very nice to me the few times we've met.

MM: What year were you born?

ARTHUR: I was born in 1963 in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

MM: When did your family move out of Holyoke?

ARTHUR: I think my dad was in the Air Force when I was first born, and we moved around a little bit. We were in Massachusetts for a little while, and then he got out of the Air Force and we moved to West Virginia. But my mom and dad kept on having more kids, so my dad rejoined the Air Force. It was a good, reliable income. So we ended up moving to Philadelphia for about a year, where we stayed with my grandmother until I was about five. My dad was overseas most of this time. We didn't really see much of my dad, then.

MM: Was your dad a pilot or a mechanic?

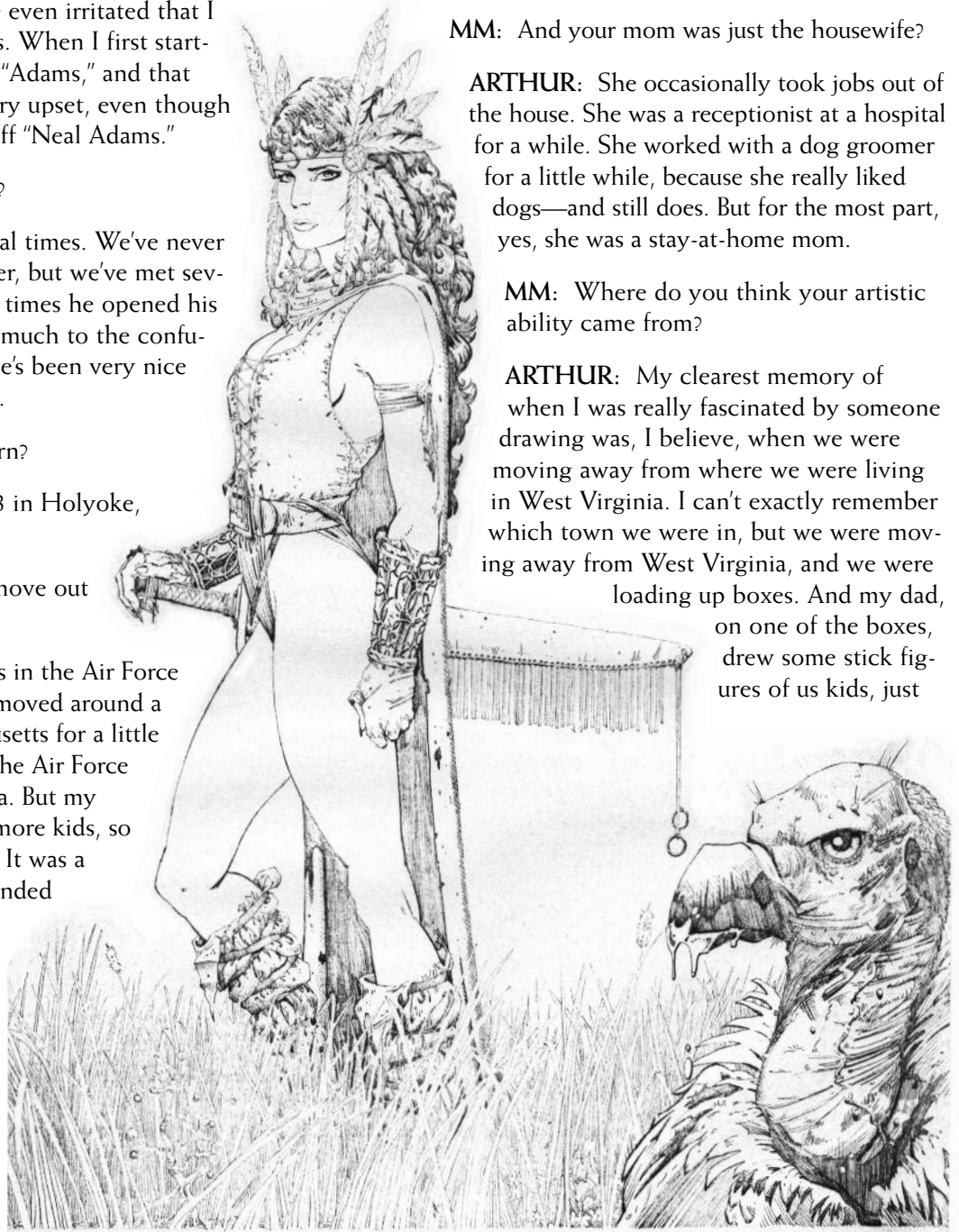
ARTHUR: He was what was called a loadmaster, which nowadays, and now that I'm much older, is filled with all kinds of weird connotations. In the Air Force, what a loadmaster does is make sure the airplanes—because he was mostly doing planes that were shipping massive equipment—are loaded evenly to make sure the plane doesn't snap in two as it's in the air.

MM: And your mom was just the housewife?

ARTHUR: She occasionally took jobs out of the house. She was a receptionist at a hospital for a while. She worked with a dog groomer for a little while, because she really liked dogs—and still does. But for the most part, yes, she was a stay-at-home mom.

MM: Where do you think your artistic ability came from?

ARTHUR: My clearest memory of when I was really fascinated by someone drawing was, I believe, when we were moving away from where we were living in West Virginia. I can't exactly remember which town we were in, but we were moving away from West Virginia, and we were loading up boxes. And my dad, on one of the boxes, drew some stick figures of us kids, just



on the side of a box—just big figures of us loading boxes—and for some reason I found that really fascinating.

MM: Was your dad strict?

ARTHUR: My dad was—especially early on, at least for the first, gosh, maybe even for the first six or seven years of my life—gone a lot, because he was in the Air Force. He would often spend as much as a year away from home. So he would be gone, and then he would come back, y'know, for the month of June, and he'd have to go off again for months on end. When I was about maybe seven or eight, he wasn't traveling quite as much, but he was still in the Air Force, and he worked at the air base every day for eight or ten hours a day. My mom was the disciplinarian.

MM: Are you the eldest?

ARTHUR: I am.

MM: When you were growing up, did you hang out all by yourself since your family moved around so much?

ARTHUR: I was mostly on my own. It's not that we didn't have friends; I played with some kids in the neighborhoods. And there were five of us boys, so we were always playing together.

MM: So you didn't find these moves kind of hard?

ARTHUR: You know, it's just what we did, so it never occurred to me that it was difficult. And because my dad was in the Air Force, we were going to the school on the Air Force base, so everyone I knew was in the exact same situation. You could be hanging out with somebody one year and they just don't come back ever again, or they get shipped off somewhere else.

MM: So you felt like they were shipping you off? Like you were in the Service?

ARTHUR: I guess I never really thought about it like that. I just knew that I didn't want to join the Air Force at that time because I just knew that wasn't for me.

MM: Wasn't that something your dad encouraged?



ARTHUR: For me, no. He did encourage that in some of my brothers, but he knew that I was more—I had an artistic leaning, and he wanted me to pursue that.

MM: When you say that your dad was the first person to give you comics, is that how you discovered comics?

ARTHUR: Well, I'm sure I must have gotten comics before that. I must have, because we had all the usual kids' books, and my mom would go to the thrift shop on the base and buy just stacks of comics for a dollar. It'd be this ten pound pile of comics wrapped in twine or whatever.

Previous Page: An early '80s fantasy drawing.

Above: A 1983 portfolio piece.

Hobgoblin, Spider-Man TM and
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MM: It was for you and your brothers?

ARTHUR: Oh, yeah, for me and my brothers. But I was the oldest, so I was always skimming off the top, if you know what I mean. I was always taking the best stuff. I wasn't necessarily a really good big brother. [laughter] Ah, we all saw 'em. But my dad did bring—because he knew I liked drawing and monsters and all that sort of stuff—on one of his trips overseas, one of the guys had a couple of the old, big Marvel Treasury books. I believe it was the first *Marvel Treasury Holiday Grab-Bag*, and then, I think it was the *Spectacular Spider-Man* one where they reprinted Ditko's Sinister Six story.

MM: Those are both from the '70s, right?

ARTHUR: The Treasury Editions? Yeah. They're from the earlier '70s, yeah. I must have been, like, eight or nine when I got these. I wasn't really, really young, but I could have been ten; I'm not really sure. So, yeah, he got those,

and I was just really amazed by them. I thought they were really cool, especially the *Holiday Grab-Bag*, because they reprinted those two issues where the Fantastic Four and the Avengers fought the Hulk, and it had a Wally Wood *Daredevil* story, and a Gene Colan and Bill Everett "Black Widow" story. And what else? I think it reprinted the first issue of *Marvel Team-Up*. It was just a really nice collection that had all of Marvel's main super-heroes in it.

MM: Was this book—it wasn't all of a sudden you wanted to become a comic book artist. This happened gradually?

ARTHUR: Well, yeah, I didn't want to become a comic book artist immediately. What I thought originally I was going to be was a paleontologist, because I was really, really into dinosaurs, and I loved drawing dinosaurs. I would just draw them all the time, and I would just drive everyone in school nuts, because I was always keeping up with dinosaur stuff.

Part 2: A Longshot Pays Off

MM: After *High Energy*, that's when you started sending submissions to the other companies, right?

ARTHUR: That's when I started sending out submissions to Marvel and DC. I'm not sure if I was sending out stuff to Pacific or First. I'm not even sure whether they existed at that point.

MM: So how did it work? Who hired you first, was it Marvel or DC? Because I think you had something published in *Captain Carrot*.

ARTHUR: One of the things I sent in was a drawing of a character in *Captain Carrot* called Farrah Foxette, who, as you may guess, was based on Farrah Fawcett. And me being the super-genius that I am, I found the double poster of Farrah Fawcett where she's wearing a one-piece

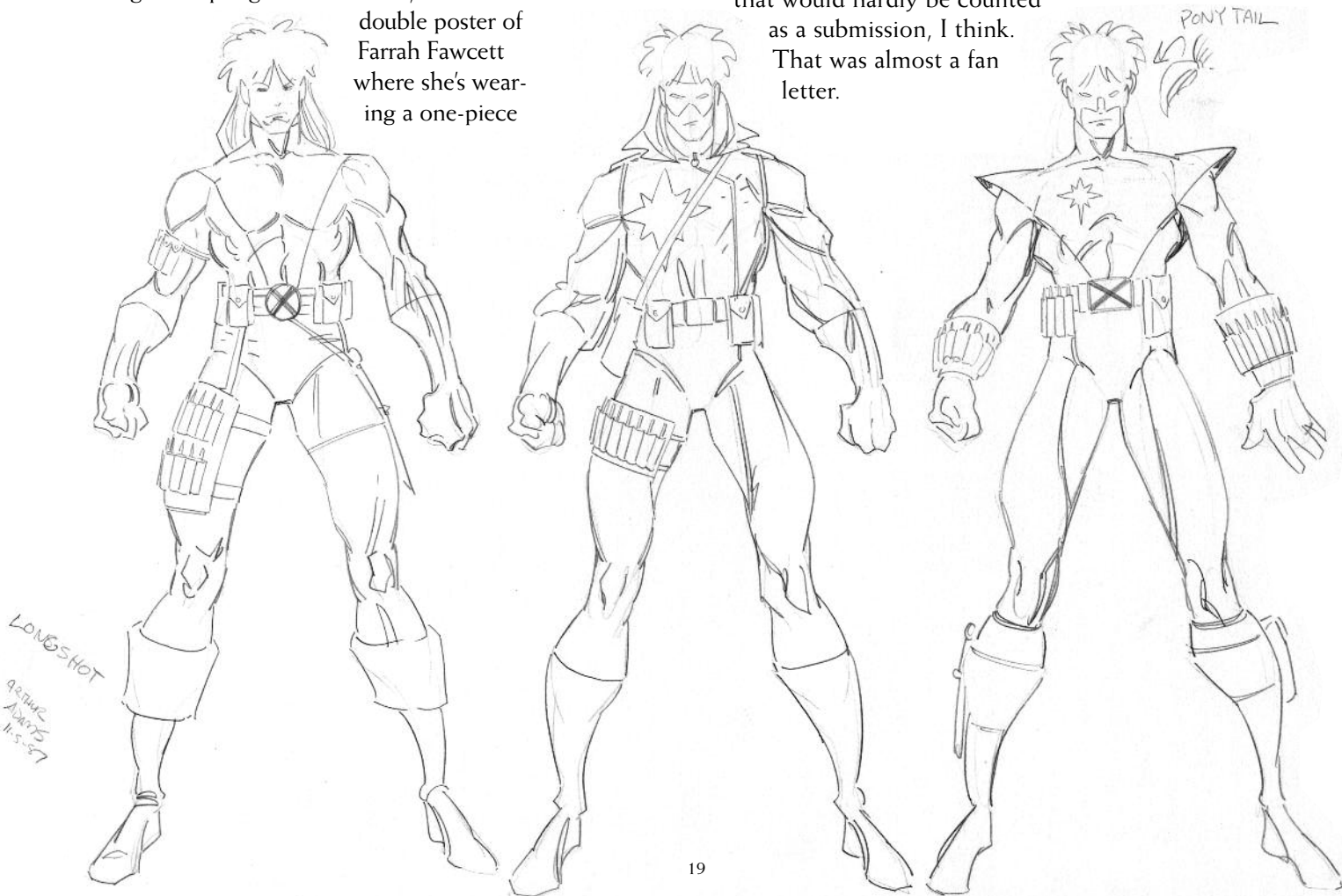
swimsuit and right behind her is a multicolored, striped piece of cloth or something; I'm not sure what it is, just a multicolored, striped background. So me, being a super-genius, I copied that poster and changed her head to Farrah Foxette. I sent that to *Captain Carrot*, and I got a call, like, a week or two later from Roy Thomas—which was pretty exciting, because I'd been reading Roy Thomas *Conan* comics and all sorts of other comics for who knows how long—asking if they could use that for the letters page. And they only had a certain budget for the letters page, but he'd be happy to pay me \$10 for the piece. I said, "Sure, why not?"

MM: This was long before *Longshot*?

ARTHUR: Yes, it was before *Longshot*, but that would hardly be counted as a submission, I think. That was almost a fan letter.

Below: In 1987 Arthur was asked to redesign Longshot for the *X-Men* title. These are some of the samples.

Longshot™ and ©2006 Marvel Characters, Inc.



MM: When that pin-up came out in *Captain Carrot*, did you think you'd made it? Was that a good feeling?

ARTHUR: Ummm, I don't know that I thought I'd made it. I thought it was pretty cool, but I also thought it was pretty silly. I knew that the rest of my career wasn't going to be based on the same \$10 pin-up.

MM: Was it one of those things, where you went out to buy as many copies as you could to show it to your parents and your—

ARTHUR: I must have bought ten or 15 copies, because I like to keep extras for myself, and then I got some for the rest of my family, yeah. But, I wasn't bragging about it too much. It was ten bucks. It's hard to remember now from the beginning of my career, but being published, I don't know if I thought it was as big a deal to me as actually being able to have a career doing it.

MM: So then, as you mentioned before, Joe Rubinstein helped you out a little bit, showing your portfolio all around at Marvel, and somehow it ended up on Ann's lap. That was the story that never got published, right?

ARTHUR: That's the story that never got published.

That was at least a year before I got hired to do *Longshot*. I was still 18 at that time when Joe took my samples and showed them to people at Marvel, and I can't remember now if it was Denny O'Neil or Linda Grant, but they said they'd be happy to have me do a three- or four-page thing. So I did a tight layout for that, and it had a short little script that was just a silly little cruel joke for *Bizarre Adventures*. And they got that, and this, apparently, was going to be published in the issue right after the book got canceled, so.... I'm actually not too sad about that.

MM: You mentioned you weren't happy with that art.

ARTHUR: I just wasn't ready to be a professional artist yet at that time, and as nice as Joe was to get me that job, I just don't know if Joe is actually the inker for me, even then. But the funny thing was that I'd done the script and did the really tight layouts, and I got a call back from Linda Grant asking me who I'd like to have draw the story. So I was kind of surprised, because I had never had any intention of going into comics to write comics—I just wanted to draw. So of course I said, "Me. I want to draw it." And they let me do that, and I sent it in. I can't remember what I got paid. It was probably two or three hundred bucks. That was a pretty good deal. Actually, it probably





wasn't that much, but either way, it was more money than I'd been paid for any one thing at one time, so it was still pretty cool.

But I called up Linda Grant and asked if they had any more work for me, and I got the expected answer, which was, "Don't call us, we'll call you." A couple months after that I realized I wasn't going to get any more work out of them, so I decided to do some more samples.

MM: And that took you another year to prepare these new samples, right?

ARTHUR: Enh, like most of the things in my career, it probably took a week or two, but I ended up taking a year doing them. So I did those samples and I sent them to absolutely everyone I could think of at Marvel Comics and at DC Comics.

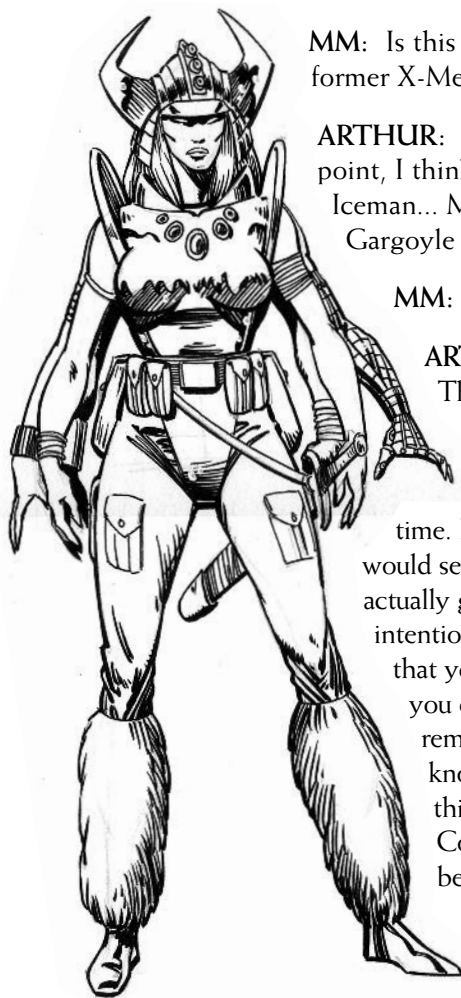
MM: And that's when Ann found the portfolio, right?

ARTHUR: Yeah, what happened was, Al Milgrom was ending his stint as an editor to go freelance, and he was cleaning out his office and he apparently had a stack of submissions that he'd kind of gone through a little bit, but not too much. So as he was cleaning his office, he was quickly going through them, tossing the ones that he thought had some potential to Carl Potts. Ann Nocenti at the time, I think, was just coming on as an assistant editor, and she was going to be Carl Potts' assistant. And so Al was going through these submissions and was tossing the ones he thought had some potential over to Carl, and Carl went through them and thought mine was okay, and called me up and offered me a script for some issue of *The Defenders*—I can't really remember what issue number—and said, "Here, go ahead and do layouts for 15 pages out of this thing—about ten or 15, it's not important—and we'll see what we think about."

Previous Page: Pages 2 and 3 of "The Return of Richard Buzznick," which was intended for an issue of *Bizarre Adventures* before its cancellation. Inks by Joe Rubinstein.

Above: Two of *The Defenders* pages Arthur penciled as samples for Marvel.

Beast, The Defenders, Gargoyle, Richard Buzznick, Scarlet Witch, The Vision TM and ©2006 Marvel Characters, Inc.



MM: Is this when The Defenders was made up of former X-Men members?

ARTHUR: I was just at the beginning of that point, I think. It was Angel and Beast and Iceman... Moondragon, I think, and that Gargoyle character they had.

MM: And this was published?

ARTHUR: No, this was never published. This was from a script for a job that was being worked on at that time. This is just samples, which is apparently something that Marvel did at the time. I don't know if they still do, but they would send you a script for something that was actually going to be used, but not with the intention of ever actually using the artwork that you did. They were just trying to see if you could handle the job. And I can't remember what it paid; it was, I don't know, probably 20 bucks a page, something like that. I honestly can't remember. Could have been a little more, could have been a little less.



MM: How did Ann lure you to *Longshot*?

ARTHUR: I did those pages and, for the most part, they weren't crazy about many of the pages. Most of my action was not very good, and my proportions and anatomy were all a little bit odd, but there were a couple pages where I had some character just washing dishes and just kind of hanging out, and they liked those. I guess they thought that showed that I did have the characters act.

Because comics aren't just people punching each other, they actually have to sometimes look like they're just doing regular stuff.

Apparently, Ann in particular liked these couple pages of the character thing. At that time, I think Marvel had a policy that if you were going to become an editor at Marvel, you had to have written something for them, or possibly even have created a character for them. Don't hold me to that, that's just what I recall. So she'd made up this character, Longshot, apparently about a year before she'd come across my samples. And as I recall her telling me, everyone she'd shown her script to had turned her down. They said they didn't have time, or they just could not possibly understand the character. And so they went in and took a chance on me doing it.

MM: Did you get it right away?

ARTHUR: Longshot is kind of an odd character to me. Believe me, I really liked working on it—it was a lot of fun, and Ann was a lot of fun to work with—but I never quite got the idea of the character, that his super-power was that he was lucky. That seems to be the case with lots of super-heroes and lots of action/adventure characters. But that was his actual power: he was lucky. And there were other little things. He was an alien



Part 3: The Fantastic Voyage

MM: I always felt the *Action Annual* you did with John Byrne was a key moment in your career. I mean, a lot of people don't talk about it, but there was big change in your style from what we'd seen before. Did Giordano have something to do with that, or was that just you—?

ARTHUR: I think it's a combination. This is more story than you actually need, really.

MM: But I always thought that the art was really good. I mean, is it one of those things you don't like talking about?

ARTHUR: No, it's one of those things where real life is kind of influencing what is going on in the page. At the time I was working on the *Action Annual*, I was also, for whatever reason, working on the first *Gumby* special, the first *Summer Fun Special*. And, at that exact same time, my girlfriend broke up with me. So [laughs] I was just miserable for a month, and I was just trying to get this work done. Like, I was working on the *Action* page, Mike Carlin would call up and say, [whining] "Are there any of those pages? I need them now." "But Mike, I can't draw, my girlfriend broke up with me." "Arthur, so your girlfriend broke up with you. I don't care. I need pages." So I was trying to get those done.

I've never been

comfortable drawing Superman—at that time I wasn't even really comfortable drawing Batman—but I think that I was working on that right after Frank's *Dark Knight* came out, so that was probably a big influence on what I was doing.

MM: It shows a lot.

ARTHUR: Sure. And, gee, I was drawing Superman's chin really big; I would get calls from Carlin saying, "Could you please not make his chin so big?" And me, being a jackass, I would—

MM: Make it bigger?

ARTHUR: I would make the chin bigger. [laughs] So somehow we got that one done. And it's not one of my favorites now, but, you know.... You mentioned not a lot of people talk about it, but, you know, a lot of people *do* tell me that it's one of their favorite books.

MM: But consciously, were you trying to change your figure-work? The figures are a lot bulkier in this story.

ARTHUR: Because I was looking at Frank's *Dark Knight* a great deal, so I'm sure that must have been a big influence.

MM: When you were drawing, putting aside the breakup and all that stuff, did you find it fun?





was full script, but I'm not absolutely sure about that. But it was, as I recall, really direct, and it was really easy to draw.

MM: What about the vamp girl? Did they ask you to draw that Mr. Peanut on her shirt for the whole story?

ARTHUR: [laughs] My girlfriend who had just dumped me had that exact T-shirt. [laughter] [whining] I went and drew it because I thought it was cute.

MM: So you didn't have any problem with legal over that?

ARTHUR: Surprisingly enough, no. It's one of those weird pop culture things. There's only been a couple of times where Marvel or DC's lawyers said, "Please don't do that." I think the last one was either the *New Mutants Special* or the *X-Men Annual*, where I drew, like, Hagar the Horrible or something in the back of one panel in Asgard. [laughs] Y'know, it was stupid, because I drew him pretty much like Hagar the Horrible. There's no good reason for that character to be there, but I drew him anyway. I think someone in legal said, "Please don't do that."

MM: This story also has Don Knotts in it, too. That was pretty cool, I thought.

ARTHUR: [laughs] Where was Don Knotts?

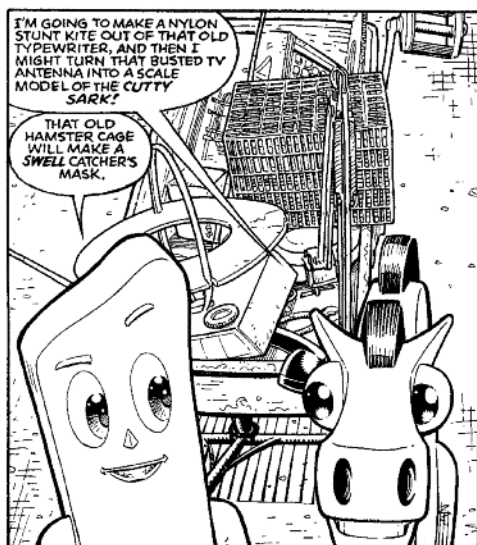
MM: You made him the deputy to the sheriff.

ARTHUR: Oh, yeah, that's right. Oh, yeah. That's one of those things writers are asking for, and if I had done more work, maybe writ-

ers would be onto me by now. He asked for him to be kind of an Andy Griffith—

MM: See, that's one of those things I was telling you before that I thought was charming about your work, because you helped bring Marvel Comics into the 1980s. Those little nuances went a long way.

ARTHUR: Well, I appreciate that. [laughs] I don't know if I would have given myself credit for that, but I will now. So thank you. So yes, I was thinking of an *Andy Griffith Show* sort of vibe for the thing, so there's Don Knotts. Like, in "Jonni Future," the writer, Steve Moore, asked for Jonni Future's house to look kind of like the *Psycho* house. So I was thinking, "How can I draw something like the *Psycho* house? How can I draw something like the *Psycho* house? I know! I'll draw the *Psycho* house!" [laughter] Me being all smart and stuff.



ARTHUR: I'm sure I was trying to do something different. It's kind of a blur now. I think I actually, for all of my complaining about my not getting it done quickly enough, I think, for me, it actually went relatively quickly.

MM: Did Byrne write this just for you? Was that the story you got?

ARTHUR: Yeah. That's one of the few where one of the pages, I guess John and Carlin didn't like my storytelling, so they rearranged some panels on one page, which kind of drove me nuts.

MM: I think your storytelling looked better on this than anything up to that point.

ARTHUR: You know, I think you're probably right. I think it was pretty clear. And John's really direct and really—again, I believe it was a plot; I don't believe it

MM: What did you think of Dick Giordano's inks on your work on that comic?

ARTHUR: I was quite thrilled and honored to have Dick Giordano inking myself, but I think don't know if he had enough time to ink my stuff.

MM: It seemed like he was pretty faithful to whatever you put down on the page.

ARTHUR: As I recall, he was. I think I just wasn't crazy about his line weight.

MM: Okay, because I always thought it was a strange case. I know he can do everything, but it was a strange choice for your style.

ARTHUR: Yeah, I don't think it was a match made in heaven. Again, I was honored and flattered that he was willing to do it. I just don't know if it was really a great combination.

MM: How did you get yourself into the *Gumby* thing? I thought I read that you weren't even a big fan of *Gumby* growing up or anything.

ARTHUR: When I lived in West Virginia there was a little boy down the street named Rusty who one day stole my Gumby and Pokey toys that I was playing with outside. But he was an older kid, this Rusty, and he was running away and I couldn't catch him, and I was crying because I wanted my Gumby and Pokey back. He threw Gumby in a bush where I couldn't get it. So I have bad memories of Gumby and Pokey. [laughs]

I think on the second issue of *Longshot*—for whatever reason—on various *Longshot* pages I was drawing Gumby as various super-heroes. I don't know why I was doing it, I was just doing it. So there was a little Superman Gumby and a Spider-Man Gumby and Thor Gumby and whatever else. Occasionally when I visited Mignola, who lived in the Oakland area, we went to Comics and Comix and visited with Diana Schutz—because she knew about comics and she was a girl, so we could talk to her. For whatever

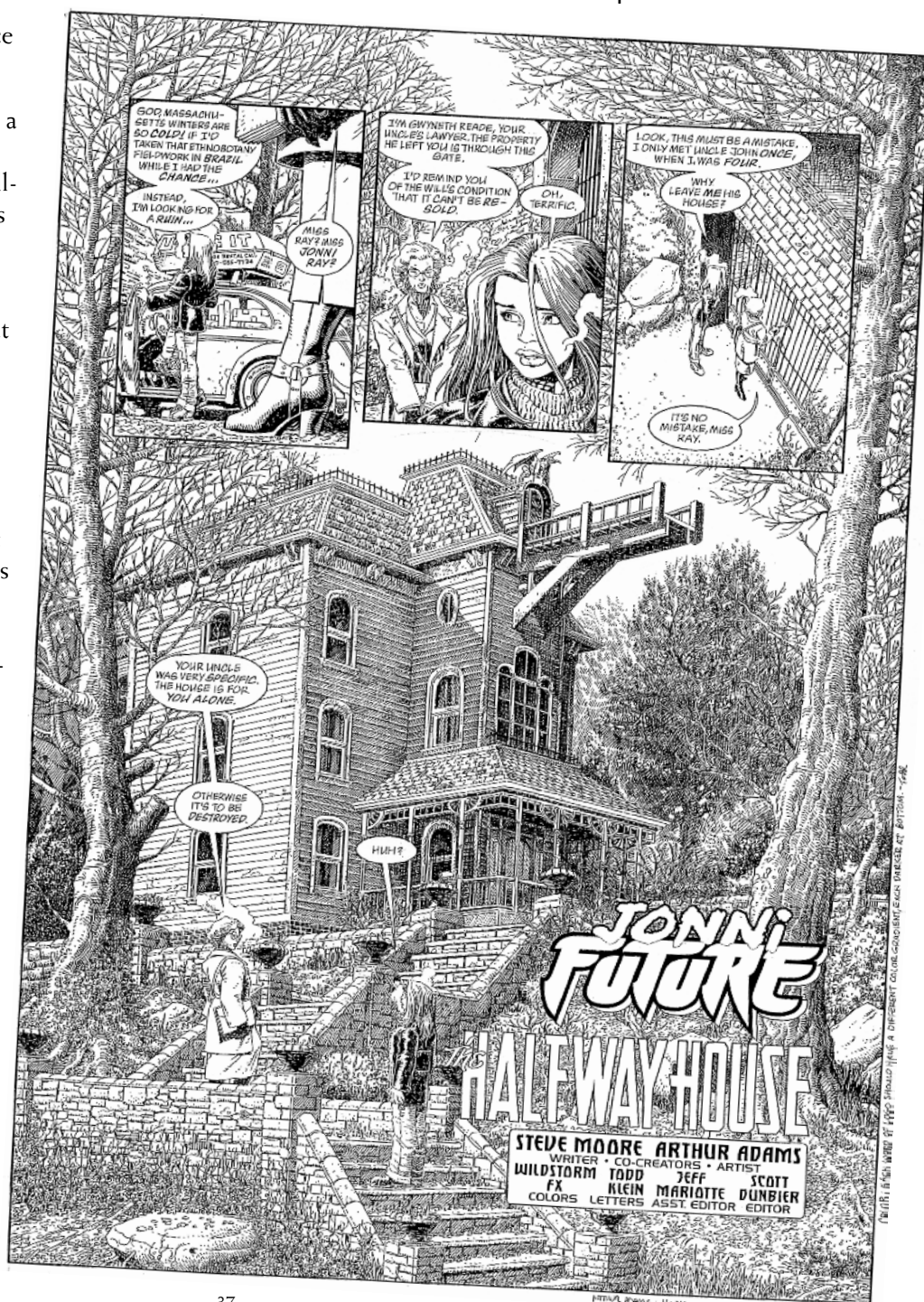
reason, I brought my *Longshot* pages with me—I guess because I was showing off to Mignola and Purcell—to show folk at Comics and Comix. Diana was there and she saw them and got a kick out of the little Gumbys drawn in the corners.

Years and years go by, and she finds herself as an editor at Comico Comics. And when they were looking for stuff to do, she remembers that I had drawn these weird little Gumbys in the corners of this *Longshot* job. "We can get Arthur to draw Gumby comics! That'll be something for Comico to license, and it'll get Arthur Adams working

Previous Page: Page 2 of *Gumby Winter Fun Special* #1.

Below: The "Psycho house" makes its first appearance—from the "Jonni Future" story in *Tom Strong's Terrific Tales* #1.

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Part 4: Riding Solo on a Dark Horse

MM: So then how did you get over to Dark Horse? Is that something that you were planning?

ARTHUR: Well, I was certainly not planning, no. Again, "planning" is not a big part of my career. Schreck had just become an editor. I guess both Bob Schreck and Diana Schutz had become editors at Dark Horse, and, of course, I'd already had a long, friendly relationship with both of those people. When I'd been working—I can't remember what job I'd been working on. I was probably working on one of the *X-Men Annuals*. I got a call from Mike Richardson right at the beginning of their days at Dark Horse Comics, asking me to draw one of their *Aliens* books, which I had absolutely no interest in doing. That's not fair; I can't say I had no interest in doing, because I liked the *Aliens* stuff. I just didn't think it was my cup of tea. And I was busy working on whatever the heck I was working on. So I'd been offered work from Dark Horse before they got there, but I just couldn't do it.

Bob was at one of the WonderCon conventions in Oakland, having just come to Dark Horse

Comics, and he was asking what I'd be interested in doing. And he was saying they were getting the license for—because he was always a big monster fan—all the Universal monsters. Would I be interested in doing those? And I said, "Well, yeah! Definitely!" You know, the Universal monsters, I loved those. So I was saying I'd like to do something with the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. He said, "Well, we need someone to do adaptations of all the movies." I said, "Well, I don't really want to do a movie adaptation." I don't know about you, but I've seen plenty of

the Marvel ones—pretty rare for those to be any good. I think Walter's *Alien* for *Heavy Metal* was about the only really good movie/comic book adaptation I could think of at that time.

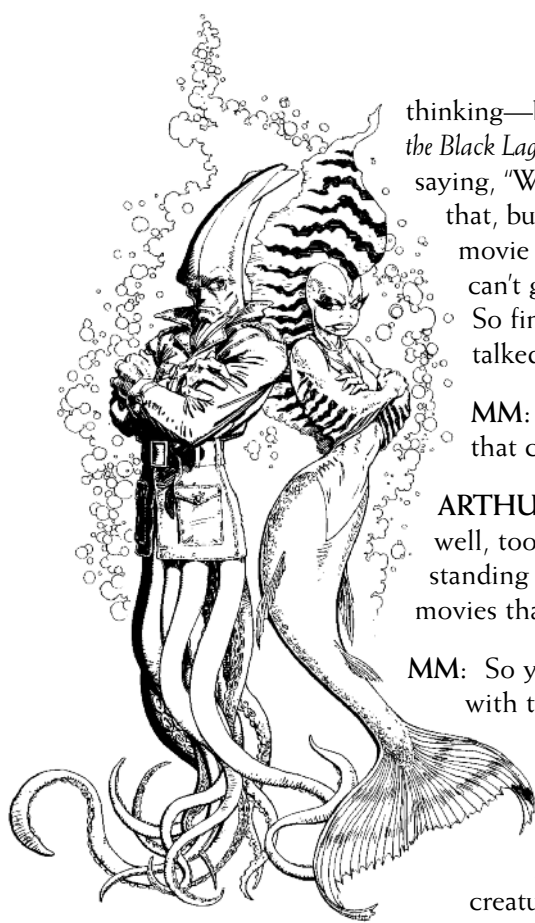
MM: Some of the Williamson *Star Wars* stuff wasn't too bad.

ARTHUR: No, that's true, that's true. That was great. That was absolutely—

MM: Those are the rare exceptions.

ARTHUR: Yeah, I think those are the rare exceptions. So I was not interested in doing a movie adaptation, but I was interested in doing maybe a new, original—I don't know what the hell I was





Above: A 1986 illustration for *Fish Police*, a creation of Steve Moncuse.

Right: The Gill Man stalks the lovely Kay Lawrence. Panel details and page 28 from *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Inks by Terry Austin.

Fish Police™ and ©2006 Steve Moncuse. Creature from the Black Lagoon™ and ©2006 Universal City Studios, Inc.

thinking—but a new, original *Creature from the Black Lagoon* story. And so Schreck was saying, “Well, we’d love to have you do that, but we really need to get the movie adaptation first, or else we just can’t get permission to do the rest.” So finally they wore me down and talked me into doing the adaptation.

MM: You were faithful. I thought that came out really well.

ARTHUR: I thought it came out pretty well, too, which is why I now have a standing policy that I’ll only adapt movies that are at least 50 years old.

MM: So you wanted to do a new story with the Gill Man?

ARTHUR: I did. I had no plans, no plot, no real idea of what I was going to do with the creature. Somehow I was going to come up with some all new, original thing. Again, I have no idea what that would have been.

MM: So doing this adaptation got it out of your system already?

ARTHUR: I’m very happy with the finished product, but it was hard work to do, because this was before DVDs. Universal—which had given us permission to do the various adaptations that Dark Horse was doing—for whatever reason couldn’t find a script for *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, even though there’d been a book printed with the script. Which will get me to the “Walt Simonson Curse” in a moment. We just couldn’t get a script, so I got a

friend of mine, Steve Moncuse—who’s the creator of *Fish Police*, and who was also a big *Creature from the Black Lagoon* fan, so I knew I could con him into doing this job that I didn’t want to do—to watch the film over and over and over again, and to write the script, and to describe what was going on in each scene. I had the videotape and would just watch, like, a minute of it every day and just draw what was happening in that one minute of the movie.

MM: Were you guys still a fan of the film after that?

ARTHUR: I was still a fan of the film, but I could not watch it for, like, four or five years.

MM: What was the “Walt Simonson Curse”?

ARTHUR: Walt early on in my career had described this particular curse for every comic book artist, and probably all artists of every sort. Whenever you need reference for something you can never find it. No matter what it is, you can never find it.

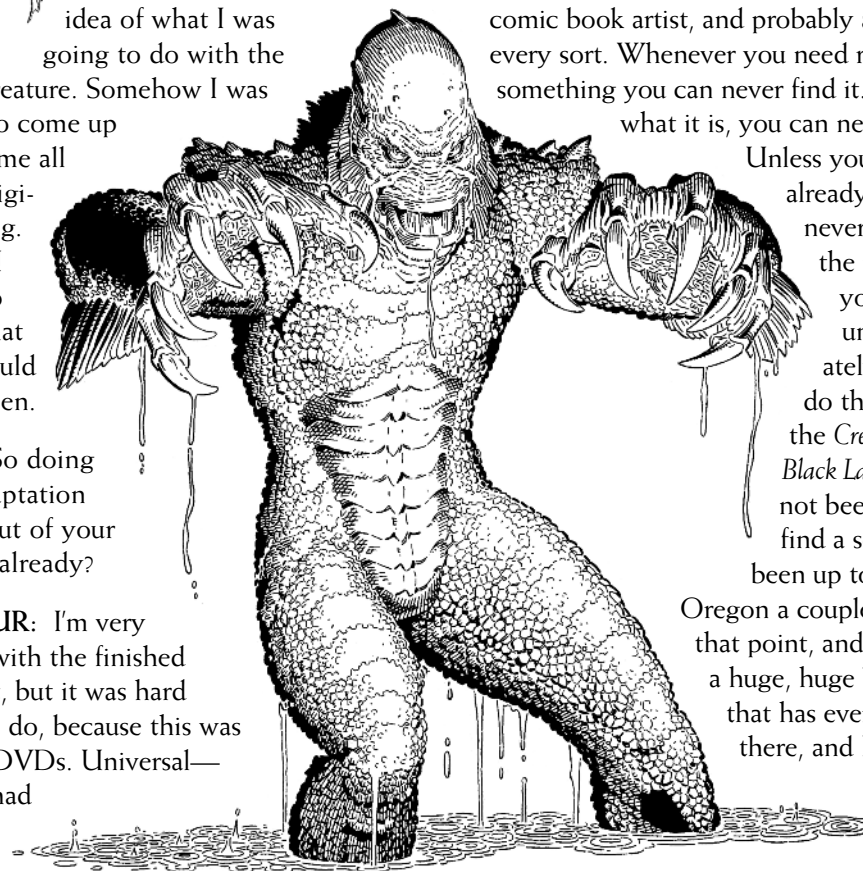
Unless you own it already, you can never find any of the reference you need until immediately after you do the job. With the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, we’d not been able to find a script. I’d

been up to Portland, Oregon a couple times at that point, and they have a huge, huge book store that has everything there, and I knew

Universal had just pub-

lished a bunch of their old

Universal monster film scripts with various other stuff in there. I knew they must have the script there, they must have it. So I was sending people there, I was going there myself, and could not find the script anywhere. Immediately after I finished the job, I went to visit Powell’s Book Store. Not only did they have the script and synopses of



proposed scripts, there was also a novelization of *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. So it would have been everything that I needed early on, and I wouldn't have had to go through all that other stuff.

When Joyce, my wife, was working on some tryouts for a book called *Nevada*, there was some character in it that was supposed to be an ostrich. I have all sorts of wildlife reference here in various books and stuff. And, of course, we're living in San Francisco—there're bookstores everywhere. We could not find a good photograph of an ostrich anywhere to save our lives.

When she was working on a book called Wynnona Earp, someone was supposed to be in a Hum-V right when the Hum-Vs were getting popular. And, you know, I'd seen toys and all sorts of stuff with the Hum-V. But as soon as she had to draw it, we went looking in toy stores all over the city and could not find a Hum-V toy. That's the "Walt Simonson Curse." Whenever you need reference, you cannot find it.

MM: You were a little tight on some of the pages. Did you feel like you couldn't do all the splash pages and semi-splashes?

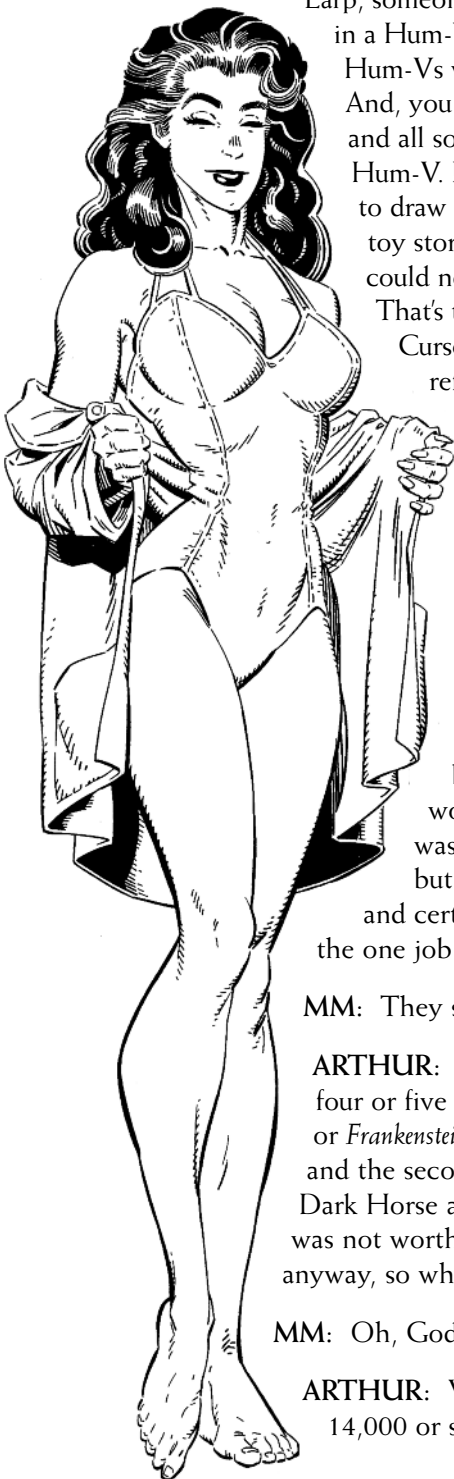
ARTHUR: Oh, definitely not. I would have preferred—because it was a 48-page book—I would have been much happier with what would be the next increment up. Even 52 pages would have been better. Yeah, I really needed breathing space on that thing. But I was able to get in almost everything in the movie. I only had to cut one small scene, but somehow I was able to get everything else in. And I think it worked out all right, and certainly a lot of people seem to like that one. But that's, as I'm always telling people, the one job I've done that I know lost money for the company, at least initially.

MM: They said that?

ARTHUR: Oh, yeah. There was a good reason why it lost a lot of money. They were doing four or five adaptations of the old Universal monster movies. I think they put out *Dracula* first, or *Frankenstein*? I'm not really sure, but either way, the first one did not sell particularly well, and the second one sold marginally worse, so the lady who was in charge of advertising for Dark Horse at the time for solicitations and buying ad space and all that stuff, decided that it was not worth advertising the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* because it wasn't going to make money anyway, so why bother advertising it?

MM: Oh, God. [laughs]

ARTHUR: When it came out, people were just surprised. Initially I think they only printed 14,000 or something like that, and somehow that didn't cover things for the book, because it





Above: Cover art for *Classic Star Wars: A New Hope #1*.

Right: King Kong—as he appeared in *King Kong vs. Godzilla*, gorilla suit and all—from 1998's *The Official Godzilla Compendium*, published by Random House.

Next Page: Final art and thumbnail script for *Monkeyman & O'Brien #3*, page 30.

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movie. It had lots of stuff that I really liked in it, and I wanted to find some way to get it all in one piece. I got quite a lot of it in there, I guess. [laughs]

MM: I always thought that was a great piece. You even won an award from it.

ARTHUR: Somehow I have an award here from some guys in Spain that run a convention out there. It's a really nice one. It's this big, brass guy on a block of marble. I could probably kill a bunch of people before the cops took me out, with this thing. It's big and scary.

But, yeah, I just wanted to get as much stuff on the cover as I could, and somehow it seemed to work okay. But what was funny about that one is in my initial layouts for it—because Dark Horse needed to see a couple of

was a—I don't know as much about the numbers on the books as I should. It had a pretty good cover price. It seemed like that would have covered 14,000, but to my understanding it didn't.

MM: Did you ever have a shot to do *King Kong* as a part of that deal?

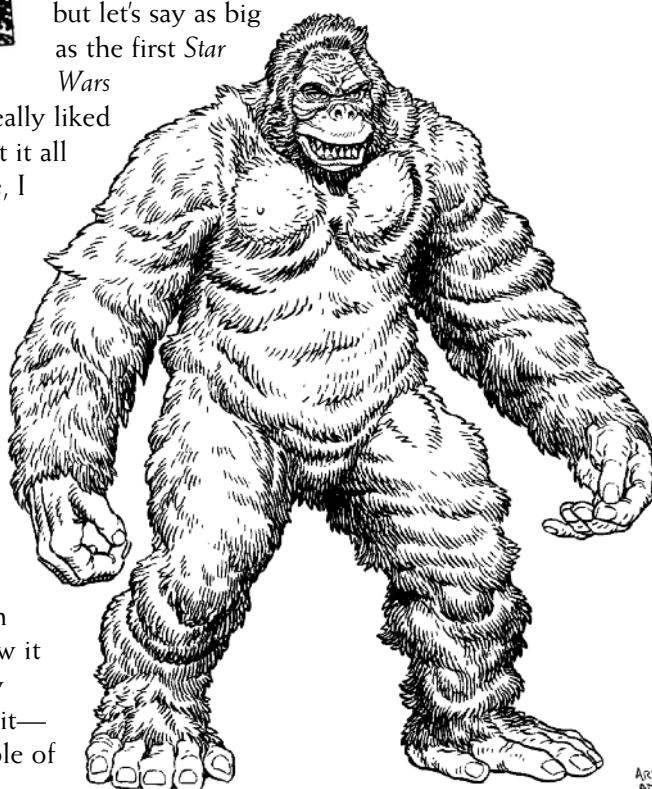
ARTHUR: At that time, no. Because I was asking them about the rights to that, but at the time, the rights were all confused. I guess the rights have been sorted out to whatever degree now, but I imagine there's going to be so many *Kong*-related things coming out, I don't know if now would be the time I'd want to do a *Kong* thing.

MM: I think the first thing you did for Dark Horse—I'm not sure if it's the first thing, but I think it was the first thing that came out—was that *Star Wars* cover you did.

ARTHUR: That could be, could be.

MM: What was the story behind that? You were just to put everything you could put into it? Has that always been your motto since the beginning?

ARTHUR: It's my motto, because it kind of goes with what I was telling you a little while ago, that I have trouble saying no to jobs. But also I sometimes have trouble deciding what to draw in a single scene, especially when it's something as—I don't if big is the right word, but let's say as big as the first *Star Wars*



Part 6: Storytelling and the Creative Process

MM: What's a typical day? Where do you start?

ARTHUR: A typical day. Umm....

MM: What's your schedule?

ARTHUR: I generally try to be at my drawing board—Joyce will laugh at this, but I try to be at my drawing table by between nine and ten in the morning. I would get more work done if I got down here a little bit earlier, but unfortunately I'm kind of a night owl. That doesn't mean I'm necessarily working late at night, or, if I am working, I'm working much more slowly later at night. So I try to be at my table at about ten o'clock, and I generally work till four or five, with a couple of little snack breaks, and maybe spending too much time looking at the computer. And, because I'm getting older, I've been trying to exercise a little bit, so every other day I may go out and walk around for two or three hours.

MM: But you no longer burn the midnight oil?

ARTHUR: Oh, it depends, it depends. I sometimes do, and I'm often working pretty late. Lately, because I'm feeling way behind on my current project, I'm generally starting work at about ten o'clock, and have a break for lunch

or whatever little snack, and then I'll make dinner at around five or six. I'm a slow cooker. It usually ends up taking two or three hours for me to make dinner. [laughs] And then, after dinner, I'll sometimes come downstairs and work for another two or three hours.

MM: Do you have to get yourself in the mood to do the work? Does everything have to be right?

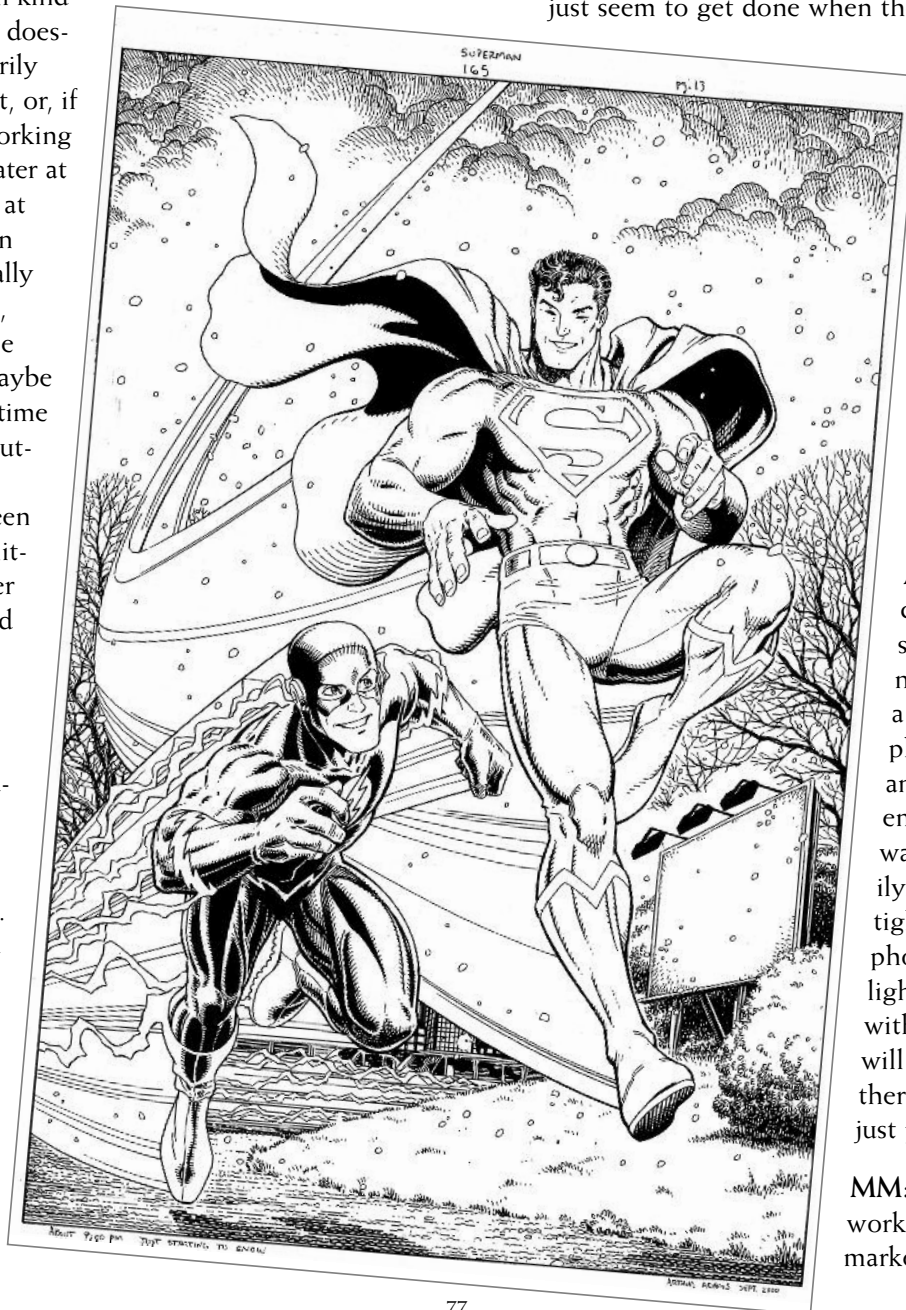
ARTHUR: You know, I don't think so. Somehow things just seem to get done when they need to get done.

But it's not really a mood thing. What I find is that if I don't work, I kind of get more grouchy if I don't do at least a little bit of work every day.

MM: What type of equipment do you usually use? Do you have a favorite pen or a pencil?

ARTHUR: For pencils, well, I usually start out a page using a non-photo blue pencil, a Prismacolor non-photo blue pencil with an eraser on the back end, because it's not too waxy, it erases fairly easily. And then I'll usually tighten up those non-photo blue pencils with a light blue pencil, also with an eraser. And then I will tighten those up further with a Ticonderoga, just plain old #2 pencil.

MM: When you ink your work, do you usually use a marker, or do you use—





Above: Layout and self-rejected finished pencils for the cover of *Classic X-Men #1*.

Next Page: Cover thumbnails for *Armageddon: Inferno #1* and *Vampirella Summer Nights #1*. Both were drawn at 1/4-size on the same board (along with two *Godzilla* splash page thumbnails).

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ARTHUR: For almost the last decade or so, I've been using the Staedtler Pigment Liner, which comes in a variety of sizes. It's permanent ink, but it's in a felt-tip pen, yes.

MM: You don't use a brush?

ARTHUR: No. I learned how to use a brush fairly early on in my career, and I like that just fine, it's just I feel a little looser when I'm using the pen. It feels a little bit less like a real job. Which may explain my career. [laughs]

MM: But you can get those thinner lines, I guess, with that pen?

ARTHUR: Well, I can do that with a crow quill or even with a brush just as well, it just takes a little more concentration. With these particular pens, here, these big permanent markers, they're just really easy to have around. And sometimes I'll take work upstairs and just sit on the couch with my lapboard and just ink away.

MM: Do you watch television while you work?

ARTHUR: Sadly, I do too much of that, which is one of the reasons I don't have cable TV here in my studio. But I have a fairly large selection of DVDs.

MM: Do you usually work on a lapboard instead of an art board?

ARTHUR: I have a nice big old drawing board that I work on here in my studio. I only use the lapboard when I'm upstairs.

MM: You find it uncomfortable after a while, working at the drawing board?

ARTHUR: Oh, no, no, no. I've been doing it for so long that I find it more uncomfortable if I don't do it every once in a while.

MM: Because I thought that's why you were using the lapboard, to just move around the house more, or watch television—

ARTHUR: For some reason, my wife insists on seeing me occasionally every day.

Arthur Adams

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Art Gallery

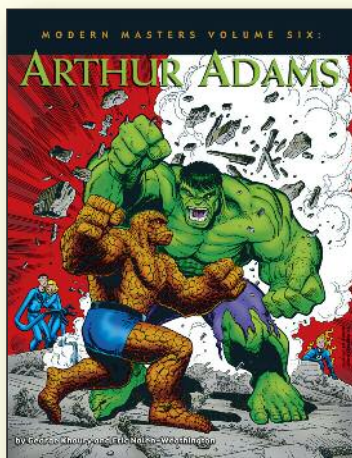


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