

THIS ISSUE: EIGHTIES LADIES!

# BACKISSUE



TWO WORLDS  
SMASH  
August 2016  
**No. 90**  
\$8.95



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**Elektra Assassin • Dazzler • Captain Marvel • Wonder Woman**  
**Lady Quark • Dakota North • Somerset Holmes • Jezebel Jade**  
featuring Kubert, Mishkin, Romita Jr., Sienkiewicz, Stern, Thomases & more



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# EIGHTIES Ladies

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Dazzler print by Frank Crocco (1987, First Team Press). Courtesy of Heritage (www.ha.com). TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



My heart pounds shamefully—how long have they held me?  
Unimportant.

The guards and fence below will give way before me like  
a thicket in a hurricane.

Of course I should not leave just yet.

Leave nothing alive. It is the first order.

But the wind is hot and wet and ripe with spring.

And I jump.

*Elektra thinks all of these things as she breaks out of an  
asylum at the conclusion of Elektra: Assassin's first issue.*

The initial 32-page salvo of this story takes place entirely within Elektra's mind as she considers what she knows about her life so far and what she *thinks* might be true about it. She learns of a horrible evil and realizes that she needs to stop it. The comic is a bold beginning to a bold miniseries, a contemporary to stories like *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*. Like these other series, *Elektra: Assassin* is a signpost of where comics were in 1986 and a display of just what could be accomplished within the medium. Despite this, *Elektra: Assassin* is sometimes forgotten in the shadow of the many significant works that came out of this era in comics history.

The story in *Elektra: Assassin* might be summarized all too quickly by saying that it involves Elektra's quest to defeat the Beast, an evil force aiming to bring about worldwide destruction. Along the way, Elektra crosses paths with an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. named John Garrett, faces a cyborg named Perry, and attempts to halt the plans of Ken Wind, the human face of the Beast. Because of its thick stew of imaginative elements, *Elektra: Assassin* has to be viewed in terms of exactly how it all came together as a result of the collaboration between writer Frank Miller and artist Bill Sienkiewicz.

*Elektra: Assassin* was not the first project that Miller and Sienkiewicz planned to work on. The miniseries' origin lies wrapped up in the process that got another collaboration by the same team off the ground (the graphic novel *Daredevil: Love and War*). "Frank and I had wanted to work on *Daredevil* together," reports Bill Sienkiewicz. "I was going to be the guest artist on some of Frank's run. That's what I was doing. I was drawing *Love and War* as several issues of the main series. I was bringing in pages to the editor, Ralph Macchio, and people were blown away by what was being done with the Kingpin. These things were kept secret from Jim Shooter, editor-in-chief of Marvel. We were all in Ralph's office with Chris Claremont one day and Jim Shooter walked in. Chris said, 'Oh, Jim, have you seen these pages that Bill has done?' without knowing what kind of secrets he was spilling. Ralph and I thought we were in big trouble.

"Ignoring the twisted logic of our thinking for a second, we all knew Shooter was going to see the final result regardless, but we just hoped to delay him seeing it until it was too late to pull from the printer. Jim was actually far less upset than he had any right to be; I think he recognized our passion to try things, but in the end he felt it was too far from the continuity. My Kingpin was *not* 'Marvel's Kingpin.' Readers would have kittens. So Shooter suggested that we turn these pages into a graphic novel, following the success of Jim Starlin's *Death of Captain Marvel* graphic novel. When it got shifted to that format, and I realized I was going to be

# ELEKTRA

## Assassin

by Christopher Larochelle



**BILL SIENKIEWICZ**

© Luigi Novi/Wikimedia Commons.

### *Not the Kind of Girl You Take Home to Mother*

Detail from the controversial cover of Marvel/Epic's *Elektra: Assassin* #1 (Aug. 1986).

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spending a lot of time painting, Frank Miller said, "Hey, why don't we do an *Elektra* miniseries for our bread-and-butter money?" So *Love and War* and *Elektra: Assassin* ended up being salt and pepper, companion pieces, completely unintentionally. Simultaneously."

When asked about how he and Miller first came to decide to get some projects going together, Sienkiewicz replies, "Frank had been on board for several months at Marvel when I got started. We would see each other at the offices. We became friends. I think he saw what I was trying to do with my work. We talked about our growth and our ideas and ideals. We were both trying to push beyond our influences but we both really loved the medium and wanted to leave our marks, so to speak, in mainstream comics. So we thought we would attempt that in *Elektra: Assassin* and *Love and War*, with the aim of keeping things in the wheelhouse of superhero stuff while going in a direction that nobody had gone."

One of *Elektra: Assassin*'s standout characters is John Garrett. Garrett is introduced as a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent tasked with hunting down Elektra; he later becomes infatuated with her. Garrett's arc fills much of the storyline in *Elektra: Assassin*. In *Elektra: Assassin* #2 (Sept. 1986), Garrett's internal monologue reveals how perplexed he is by what he learns when he searches a S.H.I.E.L.D. computer for information about his next case: "...seems a patient in one of those hellhole asylums down by the border went a little wild. Shoved her hand through a guard—punched holes in a surgical team—left a doctor with two scalpels in his eyes—where'd she come from?" He soon becomes intrigued by his quarry, learning many details about her life: how she is the daughter of a Greek diplomat, a student of martial arts who obtained a black belt by age 12, a girl left behind when her father was killed by gunfire.

When their paths cross, John Garrett finds himself completely outmaneuvered by Elektra and caught in an exploding building. Garrett doesn't even get the chance to die after this encounter and instead wakes up plugged into a wide variety of life-sustaining equipment. Even though he has been destroyed, S.H.I.E.L.D. has plans for Agent Garrett.

Elektra silently slinks into the room where Garrett is being kept. "They won't let me die, you know," thinks Garrett. "The research boys started drooling when what was left of me came in. They're hot to trot. But you don't know. You look at the hunk of meat and tubes in front of you—and all you can tell is that I so dearly want to die ... maybe I should thank you, honey. You've given me a reason to go on."

"Garrett was supposed to be killed at the end of issue two," says Bill Sienkiewicz. "I would pick up the scripts at the office and read them on the train back to Westport, Connecticut. The looks I got from passengers were priceless. I was grinning and laughing like a loon. So essentially the floodgates of possibilities opened, I started to run with it in a whole bunch of different

directions. I would change what was written but tried to stay true to the spirit of what Frank was writing. His writing inspired me to add twists, backstories, mechanics, and psychological bits to create a credible world in which these characters and this story could exist."

This kind of give-and-take collaboration helped to ensure that Garrett survived his near-death experience in *Elektra: Assassin* #2. Sienkiewicz's visual approach and connection to Garrett played a role in developing the character into being a focal point for the entire miniseries rather than an adversary who lived and died entirely within the span of a single comic book.

"Garrett was the big surprise," Frank Miller told *Amazing Heroes* #99 (Fantagraphics, July 15, 1986). "Garrett exploded as Bill and I tossed the character back and forth. It's entirely normal for me to be changing things constantly. This is the way I like to work, with a lot of surprises along the way. If I could see everything mapped out in front of me, there wouldn't be any reason to do the piece" (pg. 31).



FRANK MILLER

Beao/Wikimedia Commons.



## Under My Skin

John Garrett and Elektra share a "quiet moment" on page 30 of *Elektra: Assassin* #6. (inset) Sienkiewicz's Valentine pastiche cover for *EA* #4 (Nov. 1986).

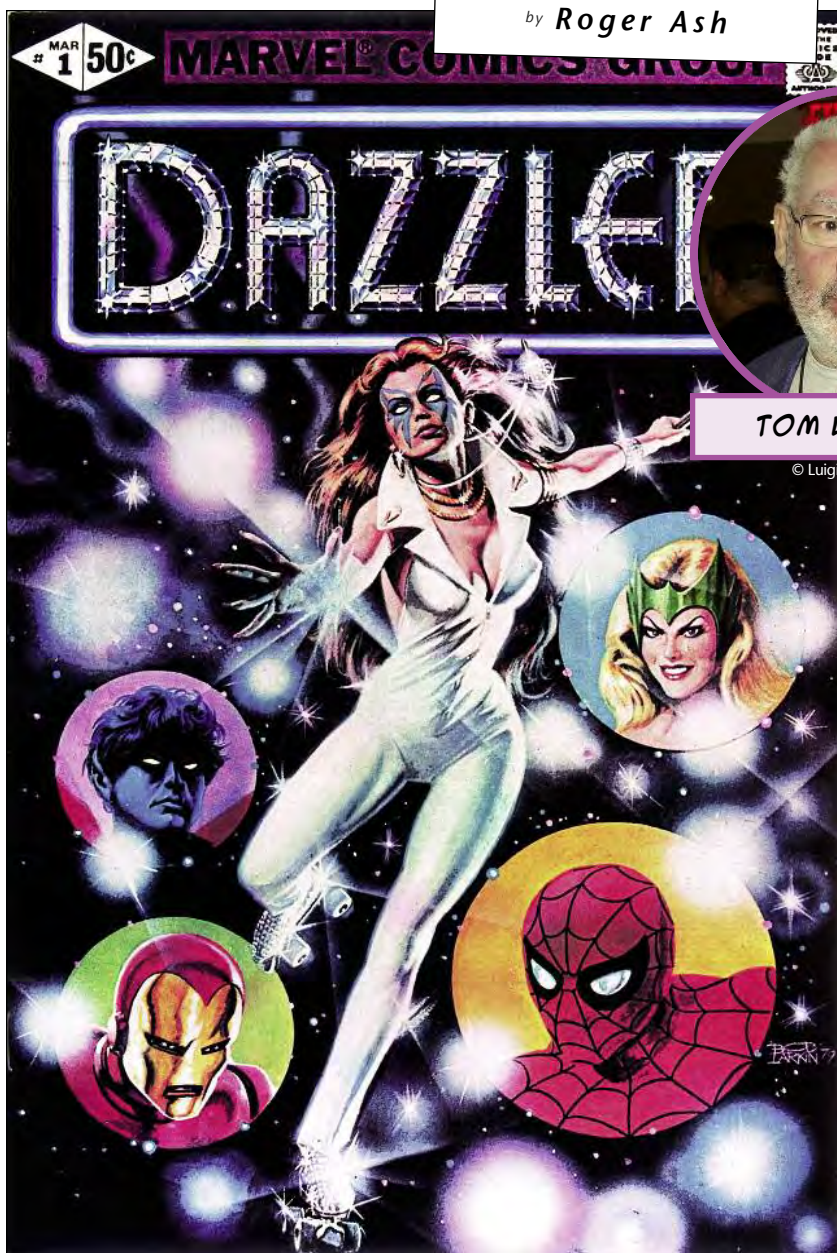
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# DAZZLER™

## LIGHTS UP MARVEL

by Roger Ash



TOM DEFALCO

© Luigi Novi/Wikimedia Commons.

FlashBack!

"Sometime in early 1979, Marvel's in-house counsel and V.P. of business affairs Alice Donenfeld proposed that we create a super-heroine/singer character," wrote Jim Shooter on his blog [JimShooter.com](http://JimShooter.com) ([www.jimshooter.com/2011/07/debut-of-dazzler.html](http://www.jimshooter.com/2011/07/debut-of-dazzler.html)). "She was hoping to set up a joint venture with a record company—we'd produce comics featuring the character and they'd produce and market music using studio musicians, as was done with the Archies."

That record company was Casablanca and the character was the Disco Dazzler, Alison Blaire! Disco was huge at the time, so it made sense that Marvel would go in the direction of something already big in popular culture. During the development, the Disco part of her name was dropped.

### DAZZLING DEVELOPMENT

Popular artist John Romita, Jr. was assigned the task of designing the Dazzler. "They asked me to pick something that would be fashionable," Romita, Jr. told interviewer Alex Dueben at [Comic Book Resources](http://Comic Book Resources) ([www.comic-book-resources.com/?page=article&id=51427](http://www.comic-book-resources.com/?page=article&id=51427)). "Back at the time, going to nightclubs, women were wearing clothes that left nothing to the imagination."

Skintight outfits—it was easy enough to draw and design a costume or a character like that ... roller skates and skin-tight outfits and makeup."

Writer Tom DeFalco was brought in to help develop the character. "I was brought in and I think they showed me an image and they said, 'Okay, you just have to develop it as a comic book,'" recalls DeFalco to *BACK ISSUE*. "I said, 'Okay.' I was paired with a woman by the name of Roberta Mackenzie. I remember the first meeting. I said, 'What are Dazzler's powers?' They said, 'She has the power to make people tell

the truth.' And I said, 'Tell the truth? That's not very interesting for a comic book.' Somebody said, 'Well, what do you think her power should be?' I said 'Her name's Dazzler. It should have something to do with light. Y'know, dazzling people.' Everybody sat around for a second and said 'Yeah. That might be more visual. Why don't you go in that direction.' I said, 'Okay! Terrific!' I remember starting to walk out of the office with Roberta and somebody said to me, 'Oh, by the way. She may be black.' I said, 'That's gonna really affect how we develop this character. So as soon as you know, let us know.' Roberta and I went back to work on it. I don't remember why, but at some point Roberta had to drop out of the development. The way her powers worked, changing sound into light, I know that was mine. The origin story that appeared in the comic books was mine."

Shooter related on his blog that Neil Bogart of Casablanca Record and Filmworks also wanted to do an animated special and Shooter wrote the pitch for it. It was so big that it was more suited to a film. However, the project never happened.

### All That Glitters

Marvel's singing superhero skates into her own series. Cover to *Dazzler* #1 (Mar. 1981) by Bob Larkin.

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According to DeFalco, "I know that at one point the movie people made a deal with John Derek and Bo Derek to do the movie. There was a treatment done with the idea of Bo Derek being the Dazzler. They went back to the original premise that her powers were to make people tell the truth. This was going to be the movie that John Derek did right after *Tarzan*, *the Ape Man*. After that movie came out, there was no more talk of John and Bo Derek or a Dazzler movie."

So we never got an album or a movie, but what about the comic? According to DeFalco, that got off to a rough start as well.

"The first appearance of Dazzler was supposed to be in a *Marvel Super Special*. We did the first issue. The *Marvel Super Specials* weren't selling that well or whatever and they ended up putting it in a drawer for a couple of years."

Dazzler finally made her comic-book debut in *Uncanny X-Men* #130 (Feb. 1980) by Chris Claremont, John Byrne, and Terry Austin. Cyclops, Phoenix, and Nightcrawler go to find a mutant that Cerebro has discovered in New York. In an underground disco, they find Dazzler who can dazzle opponents with light. Things

## You Light Up My Life

(top left) Courtesy of John Romita, Jr. a Grace Jones-looking Dazzler, with the X-Men, from 1979. (bottom right) Dazzler's debut in *X-Men* #130 (Feb. 1980). Cover by John Romita, Jr. (bottom left) Dazzler cuts loose on page 14 of that issue. Original John Byrne/Terry Austin art courtesy of Heritage ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

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# DAZZLER™

Dazzler's popularity was not quite what Marvel had hoped for. Plans for a Dazzler film, etc. never really materialized, and it wouldn't be until the end of the decade of the 1980s that the character appeared in the all-important medium of animation.

By end of the 1980s, the X-Men had appeared sparingly in animation: once in the *Sub-Mariner* cartoons of Grantray-Lawrence Animation (part of *The Marvel Super Heroes* series), and a few times in *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*. However, on September 16, 1989, the X-Men finally had an animated adventure to call their own—*Pryde of the X-Men*—and Dazzler was there with her teammates.

Dazzler's role in the episode is limited. Voiced by Alexandra Stoddart, Dazzler's backstory—like those of most of the characters—is never truly explored in the 22-minute cartoon. Still, she does get in a couple of memorable lines, including, "Wolverine may not be Mr. Sunshine, but he is not your enemy."

Meanwhile, an X-Men arcade game produced by Konami hit arcades in 1992. The game maintained the roster and overall style of the *Pryde of the X-Men* special—with the episode's focal point, Kitty Pryde serving as a supporting character—using Dazzler as a playable character. Dazzler also appears in the DOS games *X-Men: Madness in Murderworld* (in which her powers include the ability to illuminate a dark room) and *X-Men II: The Fall of the Mutants*, released in 1989 and 1990, respectively. While the former game did feature the same roster as the show and the arcade game, the differences in Dazzler and Wolverine's costumes suggest that it was not affiliated with them.

Even though *Pryde of the X-Men* did not lead to an animated series, Saban Entertainment stewarded the team into the world of Saturday morning animation in the fall of 1992, taking the X-Men to heights in the mainstream. The *X-Men* animated series' character designs reflected Jim Lee's redesigns of the characters in the comics and the plots dealt with the themes of prejudice and relationships that made the characters so popular with readers. Dazzler, however, appeared in only two episodes.

In the Season Two episode "Mojovision," Dazzler appears only briefly alongside Longshot, the focal point of the episode. Her subsequent appearance in "Dark Phoenix Saga Part 1: Dazzled" shows her performing at a local club, enduring multiple kidnapping attempts at the hands of the Hellfire Club. Her role in the episode is similar to her appearance in the "Dark Phoenix Saga" of the comics, except that she's never offered a role in the X-Men and doesn't join the team in the final battle.

In 2009, Dazzler appeared in two episodes of *Wolverine and the X-Men*, an animated series produced by Nickelodeon. As in the earlier series, the character's first appearance—episode six, "Xcalibur"—finds her relegated

## IN THE MEDIA (AND BEYOND)

by Frank Addiego



PRYDE of the X-MEN!





**Wonder. Woman.** Two words that combine to make the name of one of the world's most well-known and beloved icons, an Amazon Princess imbued with the strength of the Greek Gods and armed with magical weapons, sent from hidden Paradise Island to help resolve warring Man's World's constant conflicts. One might expect that a superheroine with such a dramatic background would have a never-ending track record of success in comic books. Unfortunately, that hasn't always been the case.

Wonder Woman made her debut in All Star Comics #8 (Dec. 1941), receiving her own title in 1942, with its popularity waxing and waning over the years. In 1975, The New Original Wonder Woman premiered on ABC. The hit television series, starring actress/singer Lynda Carter, moved to NBC and continued to air until 1979. Without an added boost from TV, the Wonder Woman comic book struggled to maintain footing as it entered the 1980s. In August 1980, with issue #269, Princess Diana and her cast of supporting characters went through a reboot, only to undergo another soft reboot two years later in Wonder Woman #288 (Feb. 1982) by comic-book superstars writer Roy Thomas and artists Gene Colan and Romeo Tanghal. With "Look out, World! The sensational new Wonder Woman is bustin' loose!" emblazoned on its cover, the Amazing Amazon seemed like she was finally ready to take on the new decade in style. Unfortunately, this was not to last, not completely. With issue #291, Thomas would plot a story, leaving dialogue to fan-favorite Paul Levitz, and later with new talent **Dan Mishkin** in issue #295. Mishkin would officially take over the reins of Wonder Woman with issue #297 and would immediately begin one of the most applauded runs in the series' 75-year existence.

Following New York Comic Con 2015, BACK ISSUE was able to sit with Mr. Mishkin and talk with him at length about writing the Princess of Power. Go back with us, as we talk about the Wonder Woman of the early '80s, an era where the Cold War and a severe nationwide recession continued to impact life in the States. When songs like Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" and Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" were playing on the radio. Popular shows Knight Rider and Fame were first airing across America's television screens, the EPCOT Center opened, Chariots of Fire won four Academy Awards, and Batman adopted a second Robin in Jason Todd.

— Steven Wilber

**STEVEN WILBER:** You scripted over Roy Thomas' plot in Wonder Woman #295 before officially taking over the book two issues later. How did you initially become involved with the series?

**DAN MISHKIN:** Marv Wolfman was the editor, and I was in a pretty nice position at the time because I'd

### **New Man on Paradise Island!**

After scripting a couple of issues over Roy Thomas' plots, Dan Mishkin took over the writing chores of Wonder Woman with issue #297 (Nov. 1982)—and this astounding Michael Wm. Kaluta cover launched his run in a big way! This issue is also noteworthy for its *Masters of the Universe* preview insert.

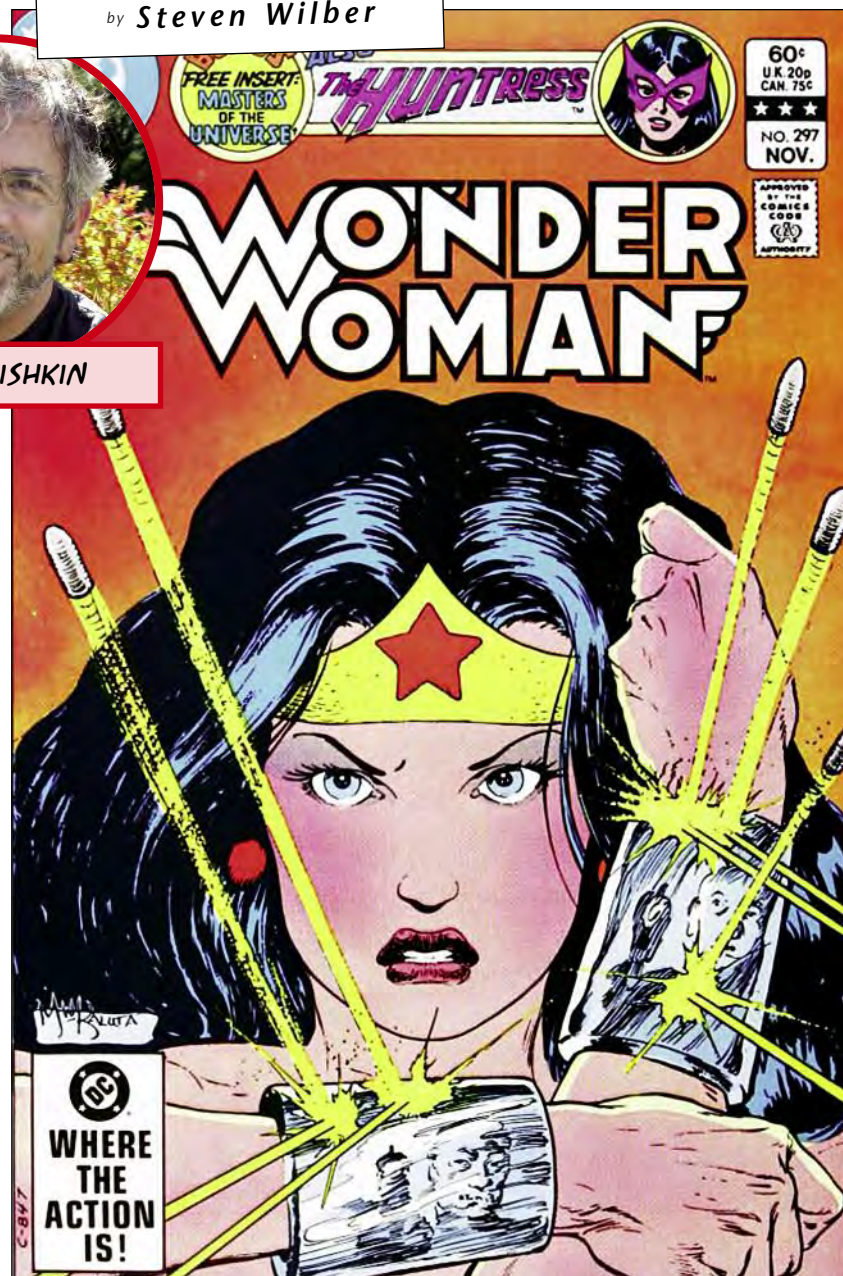
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# WONDER WOMAN'S WORLD OF THE (EARLY) 1980s AN INTERVIEW WITH DAN MISHKIN

by Steven Wilber



**DAN MISHKIN**





done some work at DC Comics, and I'd shown my derring-do, my facility, my agility, whatever. I'd written some anthology stories, *House of Mystery* things, and co-created Amethyst, and I was present in people's minds. If not *the* go-to guy, I was a go-to guy. And so, Marv needed somebody to dialogue and probably knew at that point he needed somebody to take over the full scripting, and so he asked me if I would do it, and I said, "Sure." I was 26 years old, I was doing new characters I'd created, [and] I'd already been writing Superman stories.

**WILBER:** *The tone of Wonder Woman seemed to change slightly when you took over. Was there a direction you wanted to you wanted to take the Amazon Princess in?*

**MISHKIN:** Sometimes you surprise yourself, and you *should* surprise yourself, but I can't really reconstruct the thought process. But I must've been confident with the notion, especially coming off of Amethyst (*Princess of Gemworld*), that this is something that a 12-year-old girl should enjoy reading.

**WILBER:** *So you had free rein?*

**MISHKIN:** This was a very different time; even just the fact that you could have Amethyst, you could have Blue Devil, you could have Booster Gold, you could have Arion, all these things. And [executive editor] Dick Giordano was a guy who wanted people to be their best selves as writers and artists and make it happen, and have fun!

**WILBER:** *You started your run by introducing three new foes: Nikos Aegeus, Bellerophon, and Sofia Constantinas, the latter who defected from her terrorist cell, befriended the Amazon Princess, and was eventually adopted by the Amazons. On top of this, you also introduced the ancient city of the Amazons, Themyscira, and revealed Princess Diana had not been the first Wonder Woman (issue #298, Feb. 1982).*

**MISHKIN:** Oh, yeah, that was because I had an idea for an ancient Wonder Woman who was going to come back. I don't remember how far along I was in my thinking. At that time, I remember Len Wein was talking about the "black box" version of subplotting, where he'd have a gift delivered to somebody's house, and the next issue, they'd open it, and there would be a black box inside, and he might not know where it was going. I don't think I wasn't that freewheeling, but ... the idea that she [Sofia] becomes someone who was doing bad and can become someone who is good. That's why Sofia is there, but then she does get mixed up with all these other subplots, which again, I'm surprised I was as deft as I was, because I didn't remember being nearly that skilled when I was writing that.

**WILBER:** *Greek mythology is the cornerstone of Wonder Woman, and it was no more evident in your stories. Aegeus, Bellerophon, and Sofia all had ties to the Greek gods, plus you created the*

### ***Be All That You Can Be***

(inset) The Ed Hannigan/Dick Giordano cover to WW #301 (Mar. 1983), featuring Diana's first clash with Artemis. Cover signed by Dan Mishkin.  
(right) Sofia gets good advice on this beautiful Gene Colan/Frank McLaughlin page from that issue.  
(Check out *BACK ISSUE* #41 for a "Pro2Pro" interview between Roy Thomas and Gene Colan, discussing their Wonder Woman collaboration.)

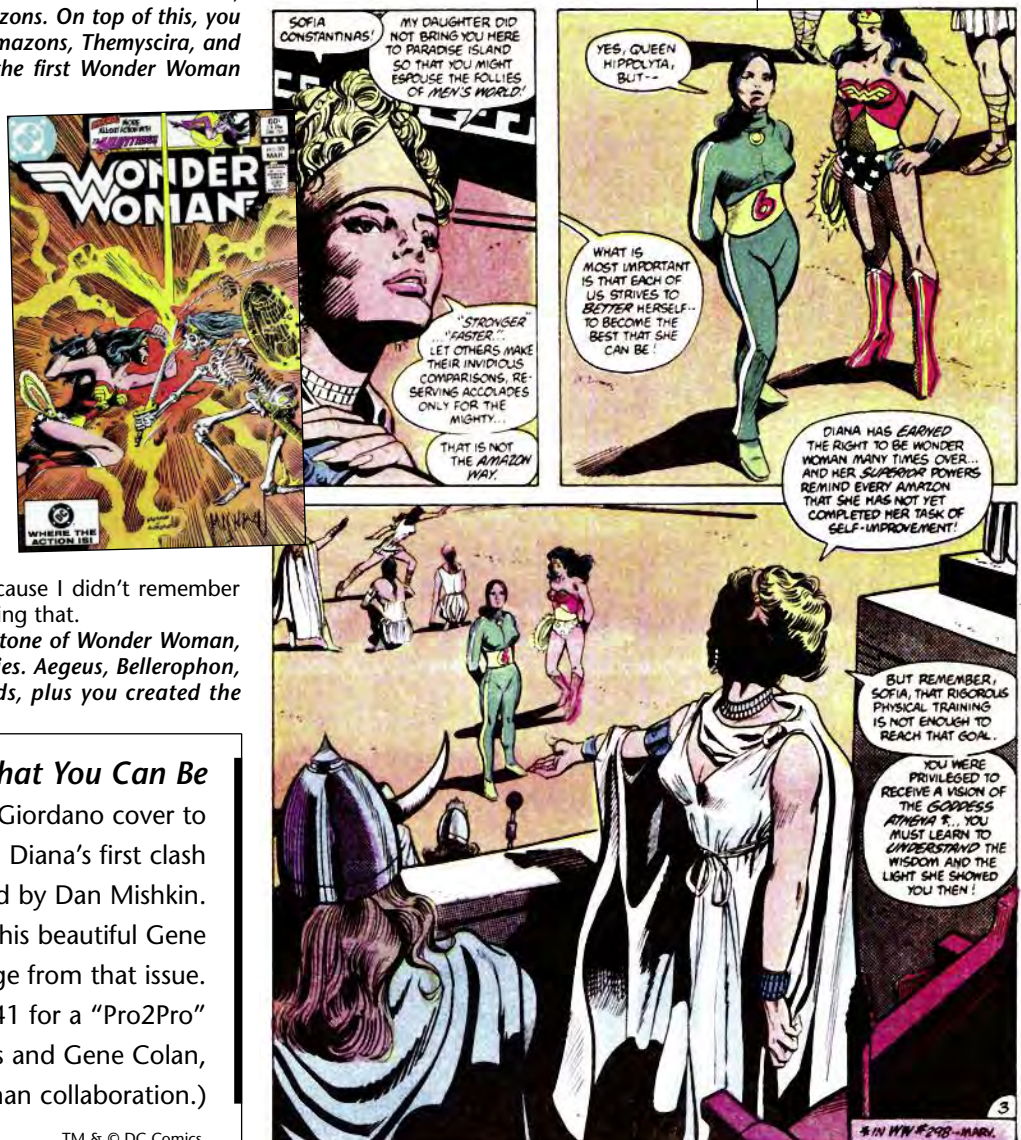
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### ***Magnetic Personality***

Gil Kane's generic (but cool) cover to *Wonder Woman* #303 (May 1983) offers no hint that a villain he once drew in *Green Lantern*, Dr. Polaris, appears inside to plague the Amazing Amazon.

TM & © DC Comics.





"Who's that lady?" was asked on the first page of *Monica Rambeau's first appearance in 1982*. That question never fit a character more than Monica Rambeau. Being named the new Captain Marvel after the death of the original catapulted Monica to the forefront of Marvel's stories. She was a fresh face as an African-American woman given as much power as any of Marvel's heroes. But as time went on, Marvel forgot just who this lady was. She was moved from the A-List to the B-List and then the C-list, frequently changing names before she found new life 30 years after her debut. *BACK ISSUE* catches up with the creators behind Monica's adventures to find out the story of this hero of the 1980s.

#### WANTED: A NEW CAPTAIN MARVEL

Jim Starlin was going to kill Marvel's original Captain Marvel. The Kree-born Mar-Vell had a spotty history, having undergone many changes in hopes of sparking interest in the character. Starlin's stories built a cult following, which made it easier for Marvel to continue to publish the adventures of Captain Marvel, but it was not until *Marvel Graphic Novel #1: The Death of Captain Marvel* (1982) that the character had a poignant story ... but this was the end of Captain Marvel.

The name Captain Marvel was important, though. Marvel did not want that trademark to lapse. Instead, Marvel had to find the right character to carry on the name of the company. "It was always planned that we'd have a new Captain Marvel to succeed Mar-Vell," Roger Stern tells *BACK ISSUE*. "If Marvel was going to maintain the rights to the name, they needed to periodically publish a *Captain Marvel* of some sort.

"After Jim Starlin produced *The Death of Captain Marvel* graphic novel, a number of us started thinking ahead about introducing a new Captain Marvel.

"The idea was for this Captain to be a new and very different character—and someone who would be easier to explain than Mar-Vell, who had had something like three different origin stories in a six-year period," Stern continues. "Someone submitted a proposal to give Rick Jones [Mar-Vell's sidekick] powers and make him the new Captain Marvel, but even that was thought to be too derivative.

"While I was in the process of developing my ideas for the character, my wife Carmela pointed out that Captain Marvel was a gender-neutral name. So, why couldn't Captain Marvel be a woman?

"That tweaked my memory of a standup routine I'd heard in the 1960s, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement... The heart of the story was about a life-long bigot who had an epiphany after a near-death experience. As he sat wide-eyed in his hospital bed, he told his friends, 'I saw God!' And when one of his friends asked what God was like, he replied, 'Well, for one thing, she's black.' And I thought, why not.

"I was writing *Amazing Spider-Man* at the time, and I was looking for a big story that would be worthy of an Annual. Introducing a major new character seemed to fill the bill.

"Once I figured out who Captain Marvel was—and outlined her powers—everything just fell into place. My editors liked the idea. And since I was writing



ROGER STERN



CALL HER  
**CAPTAIN MARVEL!**

by David Suiter

... OR PHOTON  
... OR PULSAR  
... OR SPECTRUM!



*Spider-Man* at the time, it was decided that we'd introduce her in the next *Amazing Spider-Man Annual*."

Stern's collaborator on *Amazing Spider-Man* was John Romita, Jr., who designed the look of the all-new, all-different Captain Marvel. Romita said in *Modern Masters* vol. 18: *John Romita, Jr.* (2008) that his influence for the look of Captain Marvel's secret identity had come from the actress Pam Grier, but as the artist tells *BACK ISSUE*, "I incorrectly made that statement. My father reminded me later that we were sitting at a restaurant where there was a stunningly good-looking waitress with 'the hair' and my father said she had to be a hero."

John Romita, Sr. was the inker for the Annual. When asked about the woman the hero was based on, he said, "Both of us felt this about the waitress—she was tall and beautiful and very friendly. She was working at a restaurant in the building where Marvel Comics was headquartered at the time. We had been talking about the new Captain Marvel and this waitress had this amazing, beautiful Afro, and we both remarked how impressive she was."

The younger Romita would design an elegant costume to go with his elegant heroine as she readied for her debut (see sidebar). The character just lacked an interesting backstory that Stern was happy to provide.

"I always wanted Monica to be a hero in the classic Marvel tradition—a normal person who suddenly had incredible powers thrust upon her—not unlike Spider-Man before her," Stern says. "At the time I was developing Captain Marvel, a lot of the newer superheroes didn't seem very heroic. A lot of them were seriously messed up. I wanted to give the world a new character who was ... let's say, better adjusted ... someone from a strong, stable, and supportive family, a family with a background of service."

Monica was serving as a lieutenant in the New Orleans Harbor Patrol when she was introduced. While she excelled at her duties, she continued to be passed over for the rank of captain. "That was the glass ceiling aspect of the story," Stern says. "Monica was good at her job with the Harbor Patrol, skilled and conscientious, and by rights she should have been captain. But the harbormaster had kept her from achieving the rank she deserved. Basically, he was a sexist jerk and a bad boss, something a lot of people can identify and sympathize with."

#### LIGHTNING STRIKES: AN AMAZING DEBUT

Captain Marvel II was introduced in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #16 (Apr. 1982) alongside Marvel's web-slinging hero. The issue featured a full-length origin story, going into detail about who Monica Rambeau was. "I structured the Annual so that the *Origin of Captain Marvel* could be reprinted separately, on its own [without the Spider-Man part of the plot]," Stern says. During the events of the story, in addition to meeting Spider-Man, Monica met the Avengers. The story saw the former lieutenant finally reach the rank of captain outside of the New Orleans Harbor Patrol. Her race and gender never mattered to Spider-Man and the Avengers.

"I hope it was a big deal," Stern says in regard to introducing Captain Marvel alongside the company's most popular character. "Spider-Man had pretty good visibility in the marketplace, and I know that the Annual sold over 160,000 copies, so a lot of people saw her debut and learned her origin."

"The response was very good," Stern continues. "All my readers seemed to like her. *Spider-Man* and *The Avengers* got a lot of letters from readers who were in college, and the more science-savvy of them seemed to delight in hypothesizing as to how Monica's powers would work. They had all sorts of ideas about how she could fly at sub-light

speed, and exactly how she transformed back and forth. It was great that they got so involved."

"I had already come up with the premise of a hero with energy powers, and I couldn't tell you how I came up with that. Looking back, I can see that my Captain Marvel is sort of E-Man [a comical character published by Charlton Comics in the 1970s] in reverse; E-Man was a packet of sentient energy that could transform into a human, whereas Captain Marvel is a human who can transform into energy. And, of course, my Captain Marvel wasn't played for laughs. I had been a fan of Nick Cuti and Joe Staton's early *E-Man* series, but I don't think I was consciously thinking of that. Maybe it was an influence, but I can't say for certain."

It was Stern's science background that allowed him to develop Captain Marvel's power set. "Monica can transform her mass into any form of electromagnetic energy," he explains. "As Professor LeClare [the scientist responsible for Monica receiving superpowers] said, she can become 'a sentient packet of radio waves, light, even electricity!' Now, of course, electricity involves the transfer of charge, not electromagnetic radiation. But having Monica become an electrical discharge was big and dramatic, and it was also my sneaky nod to Fawcett's Captain Marvel, of the 1940s. As you may recall, Billy Batson was transformed by a lightning bolt into Captain Marvel, whereas Monica is the lightning bolt."

Following her debut in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #16, Captain Marvel showed up in *Avengers* #227 (Jan. 1983), written by Stern, where she became an Avenger-in-training. "The idea from the beginning [was] I would introduce her in the *Spider-Man Annual*, and she would next go on to become an Avenger," Stern explains. "I just didn't suspect that I would be the one to write her adventures with the group."



#### "Who's that lady?"

She's Captain Marvel—at least for the time being.

Cover to Monica Rambeau's coming out party, *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #16 (1982). Cover art by John Romita, Jr. and John Romita, Sr.

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.





In the 1982 film *Blade Runner*, it is said that the light that burns twice as bright burns half as long. With that philosophy in mind, from time to time there is a short-lived burst of excellence, still fondly remembered decades after its initial debut. *Somerset Holmes* is not only a comic-book story, but represents a moment in time when three comic-book creators—Bruce Jones, April Campbell, and Brent Anderson—managed to capture lightning in a bottle.

#### PACIFIC THEATER

The six-issue miniseries was initially published by Pacific Comics, which Steve and Bill Schanes had launched in the 1970s first as a retail outlet, then as a distributor. In 1981, as the direct market solidified, the brothers chose to dip the company's toes into publishing. Several high-profile comic-book creators, such as Jack Kirby and Mike Grell, signed with Pacific, contributing to the growing "creator-owned" business model.

David Scroggy, who had helped launch Pacific's publishing business, approached Bruce Jones, who was writing Marvel Comics' *Ka-Zar* series with April Campbell. "I guess he liked my writing," Bruce says, referring to creepy horror stories he'd written for Warren Publishing. "I think the anthology stuff and the episodic stuff was the stuff I did the best. I didn't have a lot of interest in superheroes. I just thought that's what I did well; it's what I read as a kid."

Scroggy asked Bruce if he'd be interested. "I said that I would if I could do the sort of stuff I wanted to do. And to my amazement, he agreed."

As Bruce Jones Associates, Bruce and wife April Campbell wrote and packaged such titles as *Twisted Tales* and *Alien Worlds* for Pacific, which Bruce describes as one of the easiest and most fun companies to work for: "Part of that had to do with our proximity, I guess. We were living in San Diego. There was a lot of excitement that year, a lot of electricity, a lot of willingness to try something crazy and fun, and we had a good time with it. We were all young, and there was that corporate haze that hangs over the bigger publishers, and editorial interference."

Such creative liberty opened the door to the development of *Somerset Holmes*, which evolved from Bruce and April's interest in the mystery/thriller genre. "We were also trying to make a comic that was Hitchcockian in the way it unfolded," says April Campbell. "It seemed like an interesting idea to try to do that. We hadn't seen that done in comics before, so we were basically writing a Hitchcock film when working on *Somerset*. That's where the mystery and suspense comes in."

*Somerset Holmes* is a story of a woman suffering from amnesia. Unable to recall her own name, she christens

#### Who's That Girl?

The amnesiac heroine's adventures begin.

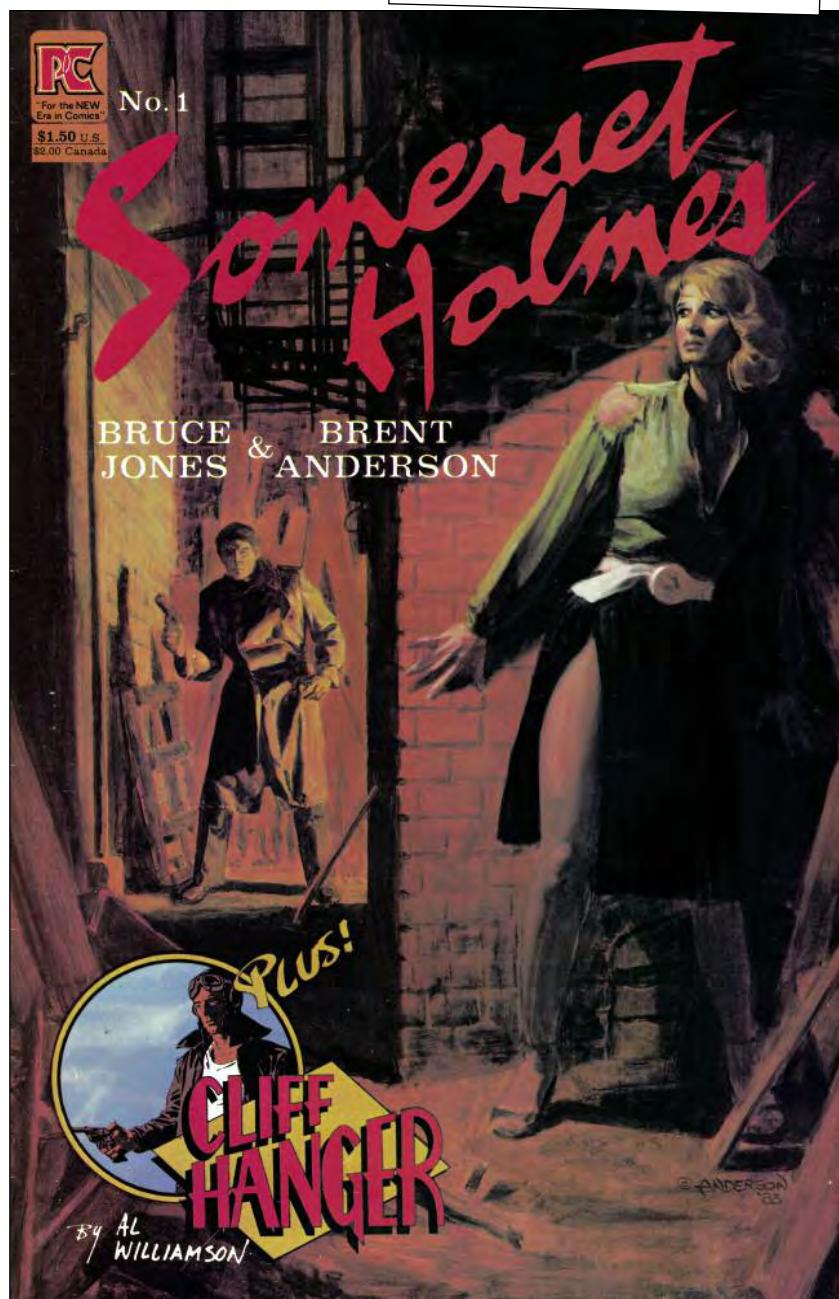
Cover to *Somerset Holmes* #1 (Sept. 1983).

Cover art by Brent Anderson (and Al Williamson, on the "Cliff Hanger" backup feature).

*Somerset Holmes* © Bruce Jones and Brent Anderson.

# Somerset Holmes™

by Philip Schweier







## Putting It All Together

a behind-the-scenes visit with  
america's premier independent  
comic company and our  
hot new baby



It all begins at the Pacific Comics publishing offices in sunny San Diego (above), where Art Director Steve Schanes, President Bill Schanes, and Packager Bruce Jones meet to discuss the new project. Soon after, artist Brent Anderson (above left) is signed and the deal is on! Editor April Campbell (left) poses apprehensively for Anderson's camera. Somerset lives! As the first pages roll in, Bill and Steve (below left) check the progress. Inspired by Somerset's real-life counterpart, Anderson (below middle) pours on steam, Editor/co-plotter Campbell, meanwhile, prays wistfully for a longer deadline.

herself after a housing development advertised on a billboard. As she begins to piece together the few sparse clues to her past, her investigation leads her down a dangerous path, but somehow, she possesses the skill set to defend herself more than adequately.

April says, "We just tried to write something we would be interested in reading. We weren't really targeting any one audience. We just thought if we loved it, then they'd love it."

However, Bruce regards the process as a two-edged sword. "We wanted to do something different, but we were also under the gun because, you know, it could've backfired. Luckily for us it didn't, but that's always a risk you take."

Joining Bruce and April on the project was Brent Anderson, with whom they had previously worked on *Ka-Zar*. "We had a good working relationship and liked him as a friend, and he was available at the time, so it was kind of a no-brainer," explains Bruce.

Bruce and Brent were introduced by Marvel editor Louise Simonson—affectionately known as "Weezie"—who had worked with Bruce at Warren Publishing. She had also seen Brent's work on some fill-ins, and offered him *Ka-Zar*. Despite initial hesitation, he accepted the assignment. According to Brent, Weezie had a feeling he and Bruce would have a lot in common, and when talking over ideas for *Ka-Zar*, they hit it off. It was this relationship that led to his participation in *Somerset Holmes*.

Though Brent admits his memory may be a bit off, he remembers visiting Bruce in Kansas, where Bruce and April were living before moving out to southern California. "Bruce invited me to Kansas to stay at his house," Anderson says. "As I recall, we started talking about our mutual interest in the comic strip *Modesty Blaise* by Peter O'Donnell."

In the course of these discussions, Bruce showed him a vampire nourish photo novel he and April had been working on entitled *Dime Novel*. It was a graphic novel *fotoromanzi*, as photo comics are called in Italy. Bruce and April modeled for characters in the story.

"So we started talking about these different projects, like maybe I could do a graphic-novel version of *Dime Novel*," says Brent. "One thing led to another and we decided we wanted to continue the conversation when I got back to New York. We did, talking off and on about what we'd like to do."

In early development, Bruce and Brent discussed a concept similar to *Modesty Blaise*, featuring a strong female lead caught up in a world of deceit and intrigue. Brent recalls it was Bruce who wanted to call the series *Somerset*, maybe in tribute to Somerset Maugham. "The word 'Somerset' had a soap-operatic quality to it. There was something universal in the title both Bruce and I liked. It was romantic and intriguing and gauzy, dreamlike.

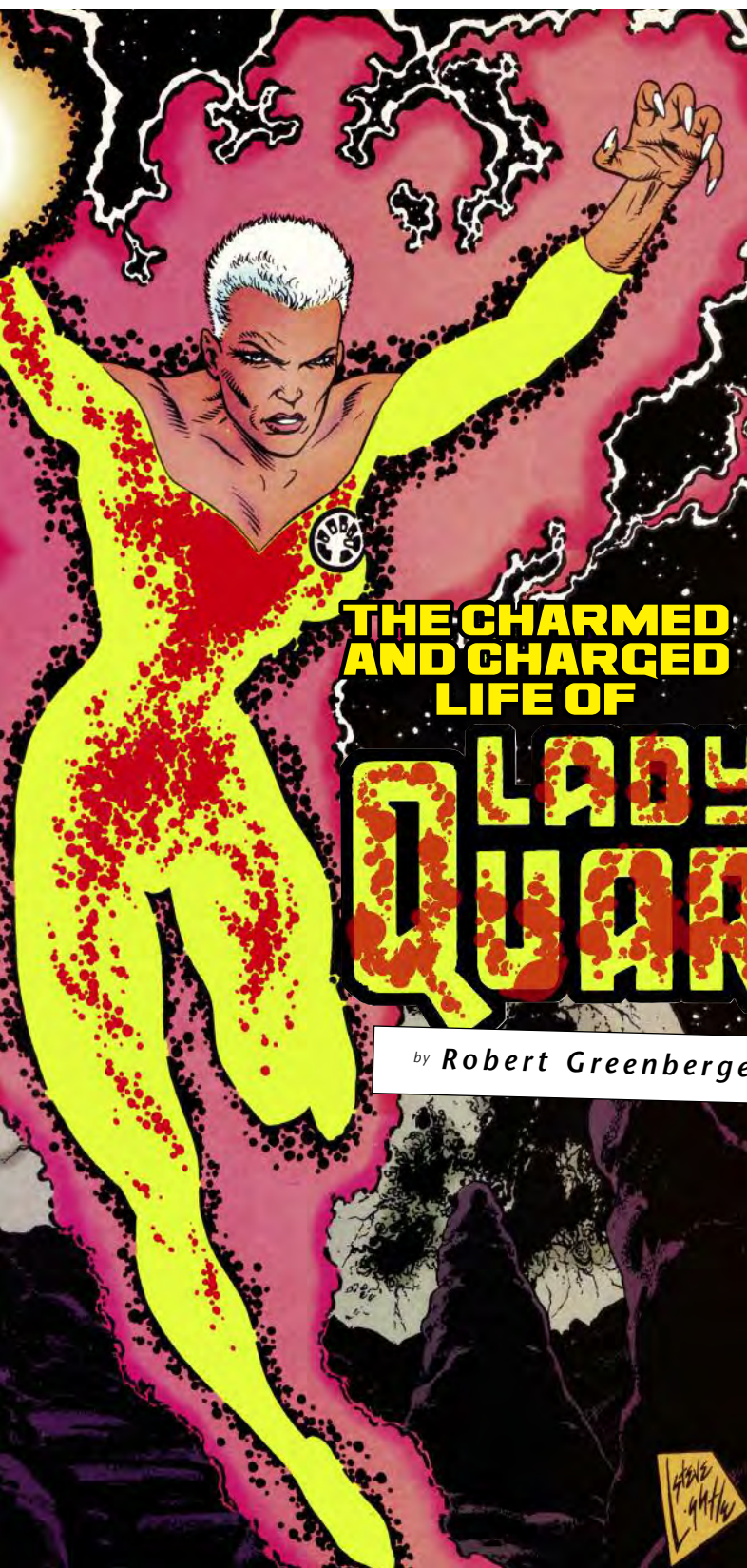
"I think it was my suggestion to have her name herself after the billboard," recalls Brent, "which was not a particularly original idea, having been done many times in literature and film before I thought of using the trope."

## Coming Soon

(left) Anderson's cinematic storytelling is clearly on view in this Pacific Comics house ad for the *Somerset Holmes* miniseries. (right) Behind the scenes of the new series, from this Pacific text page.

*Somerset Holmes* © Bruce Jones and Brent Anderson.





## THE CHARMED AND CHARGED LIFE OF

# LADY QUARK

by **Robert Greenberger**

### Queen with No Kingdom

The L.E.G.I.O.N.-era Lady Quark, as illustrated by Steve Lightle for *Who's Who in the DC Universe* #14 (Nov. 1991).

TM & © DC Comics.

### Worlds will live. Worlds will die.

From those words came the Crisis on Infinite Earths, DC Comics' 50th anniversary event that intended to merge DC's multiverse into a singular positive-matter universe, streamlining 50 years of continuity and offering a fresh start. As a result, as Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, and I sat down in 1984 to figure out how to actually achieve that goal, we knew we'd be visiting all of DC's best-known Earths in addition to introducing a brand-new parallel world, Earth-Five, home to the recently acquired Charlton Action Heroes.

As the story took shape, we instinctively knew that new heroes needed to arise and become fixtures in the revamped DC Universe. The story evolved and changed over 1984, but as we moved to the close of the first act, we knew one of those new players needed to be introduced, and that is when Earth-Six, home of Lady Quark, was conceived.

### AN ELECTRIFYING DEBUT

By the time the actual issue of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* was being plotted, Len moved on to focus more on *Who's Who* and George Pérez stepped in to begin bringing his considerable storytelling skills to the loose structure. If memory serves, it was George who visualized in his mind Lady Quark's world of Electropolis, while Marv decided to go less for archetypes of Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman but wanted an entirely fresh world, bringing us to the king and queen of the land. Karak (Lord Volt) and Tashana (Lady Quark) were the world's rulers, swinging into action to save lives as the Crisis' anti-matter wave wreaked havoc. It is suggested this is a world that saw England prevail in the Revolutionary War.

We were given the briefest glimpse of Earth-Six, but Pérez delivered a promising, high-tech world, unlike any parallel Earth visited by that time. Continuing the visual variety, Pérez opted for something involved for Lord Volt, but then went streamlined for his consort. At the time, Annie Lennox was just gaining fame as one half of the rock duo the Eurythmics, and her buzz-cut hairstyle and angular face served as his inspiration for Lady Quark. Her yellow unitard seemed awfully plain as a battlesuit, but once she engaged her power, it crackled with coruscating red energies—a different look for a heroine and a color scheme that would differentiate her in the crowd of heroes to come. Their daughter, Liana (Princess Fern), was in a more flowing, younger style in natural colors befitting her own gifts.

Karak/Lord Volt spotted Pariah, the alien cursed to be present as a universe was in its death throes. While Karak controlled electrical energies, his spouse harnessed nuclear power, and their daughter, Liana, was gifted with control over nature. None of those admirable skills prevented wholesale destruction and the princess was the first of the royal family to lose her life. As he mourned, Lord Volt followed and Pariah managed to envelop the grief-stricken Tashana in his cloak, whisking her to another reality as her universe vanished.

Unlike the New Teen Titans' Kole, who Marv created specifically to die in the Crisis, the powerful Lady Quark was always intended to survive the event, adding her to the new roster of champions. And power she had. Lady Quark could harness nuclear energies, released in controlled bursts. This enabled her to fly and, as later learned, survive the vacuum of space.

Unfortunately, with so many plot threads going on, her adjustment to the multiverse-wide calamity and agreement to work with other champions happened off-panel. After her brief introduction in *Crisis* #4, she doesn't play a role again until the opening pages of issue #7, chatting with Fireman Farrell, acknowledged as an Earth-One stalwart from the pages of *Showcase* #1, a fitting juxtaposition.

She is therefore present, a representative of a now-dead universe, to hear the origins of the Monitor and Anti-Monitor and Pariah's role in the cosmic events. Upon learning that her savior was also the inadvertent architect of the Crisis, she seethed, ready to kill him to avenge her family and world. Instead, she became part of the most powerful task force ever assembled to take down the Anti-Monitor.

Sometime later, a calmer although no less bitter queen discusses Pariah with Diana Prince. She admits, "...though I may someday forgive



## Earth-Six Deep-Sixed

(top) Lady Quark and Pariah witness the death of Lord Volt in this sequence from *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #4. By Wolfman/Pérez/DeCarlo. (bottom) Can you find Tashana in George Pérez's character-packed cover to *Crisis*' climactic 12th issue?

TM & © DC Comics.

might fit the bill. Lady Quark goes on a Phoenix television show to announce her desire to meet him. When that fails, she creates a visual mark sure to catch his attention.

Starman knows nothing of her, gaining his powers after the Crisis, which allows Roger to recap for newer readers. She then throws her arms around him and says, "Your world's society is tragically, destructively fragmented. If it is to survive, it must be unified under a single absolute monarchy. Starman, I can save this world from itself—but I cannot do it alone. Join me ... rule with me! You and I can found a new dynasty on Earth!"

While flattered, this is far more than Starman bargained for, but Lady Quark hangs around, belittling his efforts to help the common man without meting out harsh justice. When he finally reminds her this is Earth, not her world. He gets past her veneer and the sad, lonely woman appears. Preferring to stay strong, she flies off, saying, "If I am to make this world mine—I must do so without you!" At that, Starman ponders what their next meeting might be like.

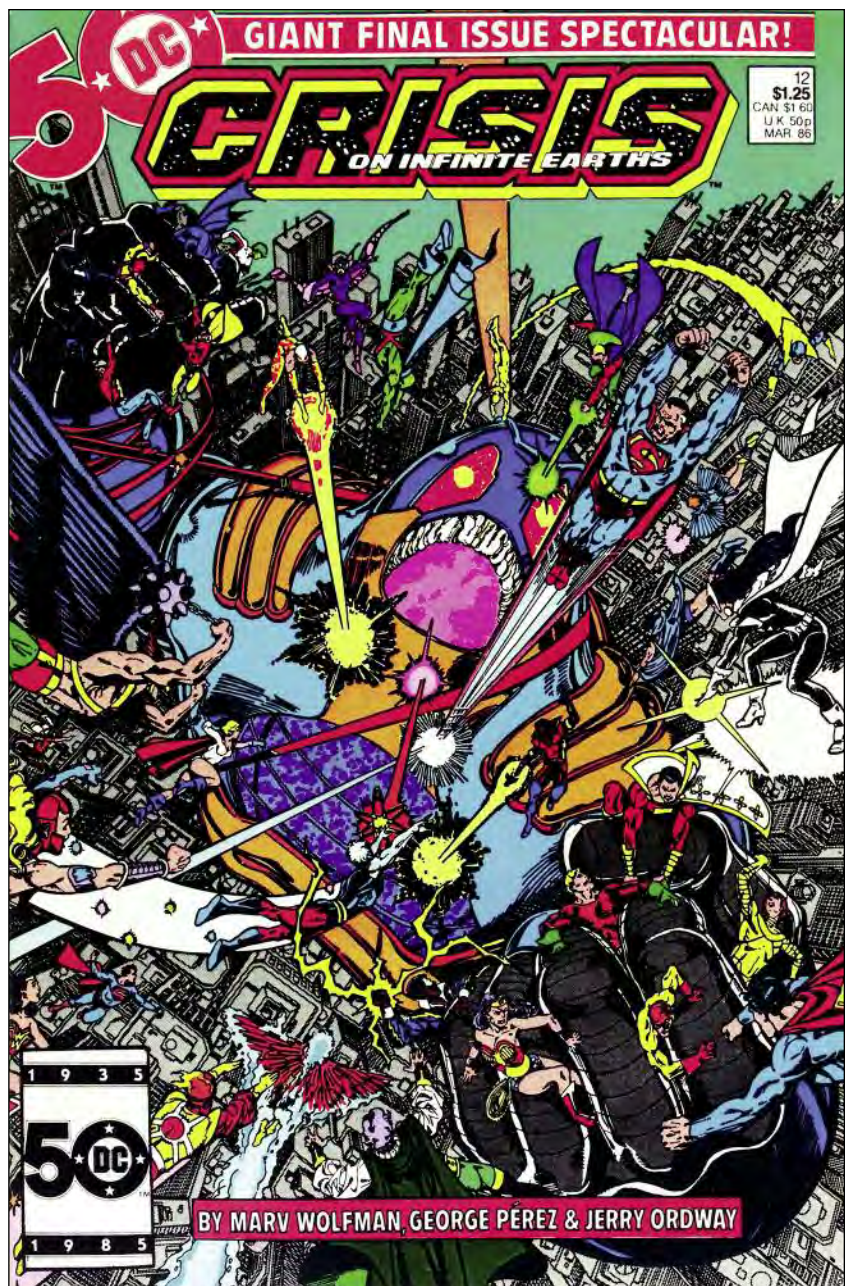
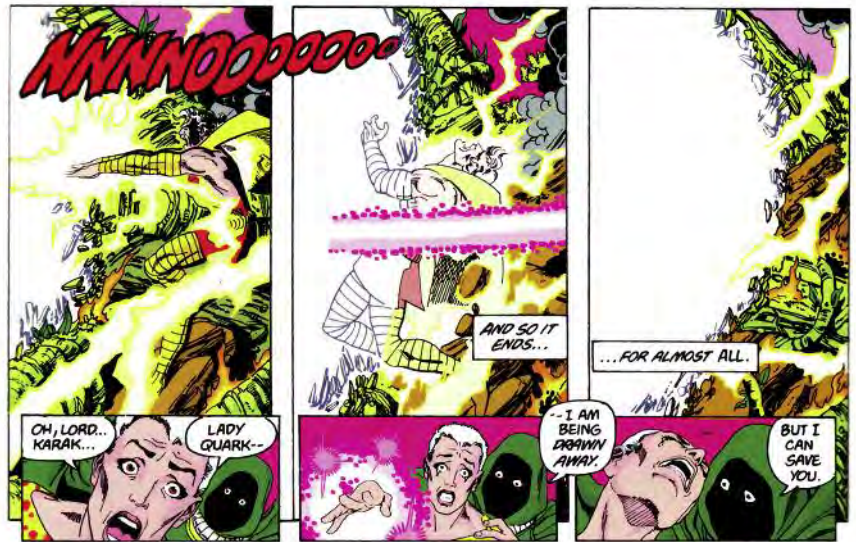
Her desire to rule Earth and a second meeting between the two was not to be. What Roger set up—Lady Quark being a potential anti-hero in the Sub-Mariner mode—was never touched upon by others. Likely this had more to do with benign neglect than an overt rejection of the approach.

More than a year passes before LQ resurfaces, and then she's no longer on Earth. Instead, she is out in space and winds up being targeted by Vril Dox, who covets her immense power for use with L.E.G.I.O.N. (Licensed Extra-Governmental Interstellar Operatives Network). The team was a result of the events from *Invasion!* and their series debuted as *L.E.G.I.O.N.* '89, running 70 issues and ending its run as *L.E.G.I.O.N.* '94. While creator credits goes to *Invasion!*'s Bill Mantlo, Keith Giffen, and Todd McFarlane for introducing us to the motley aliens imprisoned on Starlag by the coalition of aliens attempting to attack Earth, the real work on turning them into a team of interesting characters fell to *L.E.G.I.O.N.*'s Giffen, Alan Grant, and Barry Kitson. Giffen bowed out fairly quickly, leaving Grant and Kitson to chart the team's course.

### QUARKY LOVES DOXY

Once Vril Dox, ancestor of the Legion of Super-Heroes' Brainiac 5, uses his newfound allies to rid Colu of the computer tyrants, he sees profit in their work. They form a for-hire law-enforcement operation, signing up client worlds and becoming a direct competitor of sorts to the Green Lantern Corps.

With 1990's issue #16, Vril Dox has chosen to focus his efforts on recruiting Lady Quark to the team. She is seen out in space, exploring and having adventures, putting Earth and memories of her losses firmly behind her. Somehow, she has fallen prey to intergalactic outlaw Dagon-Ra and is imprisoned for some time. When L.E.G.I.O.N.'s Lobo goes undercover to scope out







*I have Daddy issues.*

A lot.

This isn't to say that I don't also have Mommy issues. I'm Jewish and I'm breathing, so of course I do. In my case, however, my mother died 31 years before my father, so I had a lot more time to worry about pleasing him.

What does this have to do with Dakota North? Everything, although I didn't know it at the time.

Like a lot of other comic-book professionals at the time, I got into comics through journalism. I met Denny O'Neil when I was writing about comics for *High Times* magazine. Since he was the first writer whose credit I had noticed, way back when writer and artist credits were fairly new, I was completely awed. And, as a freelance writer, I did my best to exploit him.

It turned out that Denny lived down the street from me, and after I begged him a lot, he let me water his plants when he was out of town. This gave me access to his library, and an excuse to call him. I could even drop by his office at Marvel (where he was then an editor) on the excuse that I needed his keys.

At the same time, in late 1979 and through 1980, my husband and I were starting *Comedy* magazine, in which we aspired to do for humor what *Rolling Stone* had done for music—demonstrate that it was something to take seriously, worthy of critical analysis. We never made it past the second issue, but we did manage to hire some amazing writers, including Mr. O'Neil, Mark Evanier, Leonard Maltin, and Larry Hama.

Because I knew Denny, we would go to the Marvel offices to use their photocopiers and free long-distance (this was the dark ages before the Internet or even fax machines). When I couldn't use Denny's office, I'd find another editor who wasn't on the phone. This was the way we met Archie Goodwin, who offered us a column in his new magazine, *Epic Illustrated*. And it was how I saw Larry Hama in action.

Larry and I shared more than a love of comics. We shared a desire to bring the medium we loved to a larger audience. We would have long conversations about *Help!* magazine and Harvey Kurtzman (about whom Larry had written for *Comedy*) and whether *Wonder Woman* could be written to appeal to the millions who watched *Charlie's Angels*. We knew that *fotonovelas* sold millions of copies in the Spanish-speaking world, and they were essentially soap operas as comics, with photographs instead of drawings.

At first, we wanted to make illustrated *fotonovelas* for an English-speaking audience. With Mary Wilshire, we started to sketch out a format with one panel per page, a book that would be perfect-bound and sold at supermarket checkouts.

That idea got shot down. It's just as well, because I didn't have a good idea for a story.

### *From Marvel, with Style*

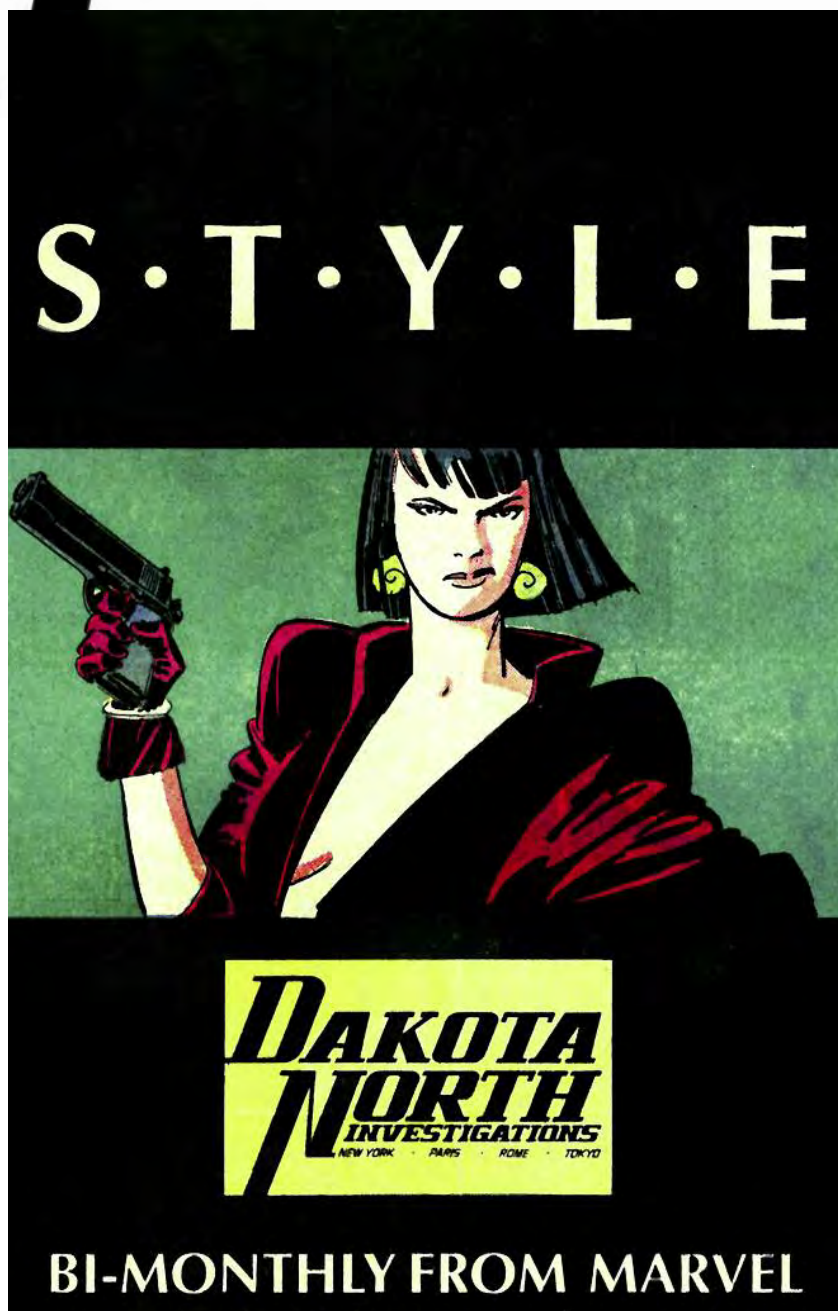
House ad for *Dakota North*. Art by

Tony Salmons.

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

# DAKOTA NORTH™

by *Martha Thomases*





Okay, so a soap opera comic wasn't going to fly. That kind of setback is not enough to shut me up. This was the mid-1980s, and I was writing about fashion at the time for *The Village Voice*. I would often complain that women in comics—even those who are supposed to be stylish, like Mary Jane Watson—dressed in ridiculous ways. Their skirts were too short and their heels were too high to run, or even walk down a New York street (we have lots of grates and cobblestones). None of the artists seemed to know the work of the cool designers—people like Betsey Johnson and Norma Kamali and Thierry Mugler and Azzedine Alaïa and Anna Sui.

No wonder girls didn't read comics, I argued. They don't see themselves or their experiences represented accurately. Not that comics are supposed to be real life. A bite from a radioactive spider is more likely to kill you than give you superpowers. Still, Spider-Man was popular because he lived in a world that was recognizable in its details, if not its scientific facts. He rode the subway. He had trouble with his boss.

Women in comics were there as girlfriends, widowed mothers, or damsels in distress. Sometimes, if they were evil, they would wear low-cut outfits and lots of eye makeup. All of them were obsessed with men, to the exclusion of any other relationship (except, sometimes, mother or daughter to a weak dependent). None of them had lives that looked like mine, or any woman I knew. People went to discos, instead of to the cool clubs, like CBGBs or the Mudd Club. None of them wore smooth geometric dresses with gigantic shoulder pads (my then-favorite outfit). None of them talked about music or movies or the horrible boss who was making life a living hell.

None of them had jobs that were a big part of their lives.

So I started to think about a woman her with whom I could truly identify. Dakota North would be a wish-fulfillment fantasy character, better-looking and better-trained than me, but she would live in my New York. She would know weapons and martial arts because her father, a widowed CIA agent, made sure she could take care of herself. Discovered by a modeling agent in high school, she had walked runways and graced magazine covers, but she was bored with that life. Instead, she took her savings and started her own security/investigation business.

Her friends would reflect this circle. She had a friend, a police detective. I named the cop Amos Culhane in honor of the Disney animator, Shamus Culhane. In my mind, he looked like a more blue-collar version of Gene Barry in the television show *Burke's Law*.

The only professional fashion model I knew personally was Norris Church Mailer, who was under contract to the Wilhemina Agency. She was six feet tall and a redhead, and therefore it made perfect sense to me that Dakota would also be six feet tall and redheaded. Since she was married to author Norman Mailer, she had a very glamorous life, and I would have been consumed with jealousy if she hadn't also been a sweet and funny person.

I knew a few fashion designers, but my favorite (and one of my best friends) was David Freeland. He was tall, with shoulder-length hair, and his mother had challenged him, when he started his business, to make dresses for women with hips. Luke Jacobson (named

# DAKOTA NORTH



after another friend, Mark Jacobson), Dakota's designer friend and client, was modeled on him.

Mad Dog was named after a nebbish character on *The Bob Newhart Show*, played by Oliver Clark, who confessed in a group therapy session that he always wanted that nickname. I loved that so much that I used it as a pet name for my husband. Who better to have as an assistant?

Don't those sound like wonderful, exciting, supportive, and glamorous friends to have? They were certainly people with whom I wanted to spend time. However, there is no drama in such a satisfying life. I needed to throw some kind of wrench into the proceedings.

Hence, the Daddy issues.

At the time, the media loved stories about the group of people dubbed "The Sandwich Generation." This wasn't a cabal of mayonnaise fetishists, but people who found themselves trying to live their lives while their parents were getting old and their children needed help at school. Mostly, these people were women. By the mid-1980s, most women had jobs, but were also expected to take care of their kids and their own parents (and, usually, their in-laws).

Dakota didn't have kids or in-laws, but I could give her a version of these problems. Her father, S. J. North (named after my grandfather, Samuel James Lasser), wasn't ill, but he could be taken out of the picture for other, more world-threatening reasons. And he could leave Dakota's younger

## Fashionable First Issue

(inset) Cover to *Dakota North* #1 (June 1986).

(right) Splash page to issue #1, showing the cast.

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



Pro 2 Pro

WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS AND ADAM KUBERT DISCUSS

# JEZEBEL JADE™

by Bryan D. Stroud

COMICO

## JEZEBEL JADE™

1  
U.S.A.  
\$2.00  
CAN  
\$2.50



### Quest for Excellence

Adam Kubert's wraparound cover to Comico the Comic Company's *Jezebel Jade* #1 (Oct. 1988).

TM & © Hanna-Barbera Productions.

Back in 1986, the late, great publisher Comico produced a series of *Jonny Quest* adventures, scripted by William Messner-Loebs. In 1988, a three-issue miniseries featuring the mysterious supporting character and love interest of Race Bannon, *Jezebel Jade*, was produced, also written by Messner-Loebs. But rather than *Jonny Quest* creator Doug Wildeck, a new artist by the name of Adam Kubert was brought in. And the rest is history, recounted here, during an interview from October 2, 2015.

— Bryan D. Stroud

**BRYAN D. STROUD:** What was the inspiration behind the *Jezebel Jade* storyline?

**BILL MESSNER-LOEBS:** Well, I'm trying to remember that myself. It seems to me it was probably Diana Schutz who originally came up with the idea.

**STROUD:** She was the editor?

**MESSNER-LOEBS:** She was the editor of all things *Jonny Quest*. If I recall correctly, sometime during the process she said something like, "Here's *Jezebel Jade*, and I've got

Adam Kubert to draw it." And then everything sort of went dark. [chuckle] Then I started desperately to write.

I don't know how Adam feels about it, but basically when you're a freelancer and someone says, "Oh, well, you can double your output by doing something else," it usually seems like a good idea.

**ADAM KUBERT:** I only wish I could double my output. [mutual laughter]

**STROUD:** I've got to say, based on the workload that you took on for this project, Adam, from the full art chores to lettering, it must have been a tremendous effort. Were the deadlines killing you?

**KUBERT:** Actually, this was a long time ago. [chuckle] I can't remember the deadlines killing me, but based on past experience, they all kill me. I don't recall that it was terrible. They probably gave me enough time to do the whole job. As you said, I penciled, inked, colored, and lettered it. And working with Bill, I'm sure, was a good part of the reason that I took it on. Probably also because I had nothing else. [mutual laughter]



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