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JACK KIRBY

VOLUME THREE COLLECTOR



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THE COLLECTED
JACK KIRBY
VOLUME THREE COLLECTOR

CELEBRATING THE LIFE
AND CAREER OF *THE KING!*



THE COLLECTED JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR, VOLUME THREE

A TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE KIRBY ESTATE EDITED BY JOHN MORROW
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THE CONTRIBUTORS FROM TJKC #13-15 & OF COURSE THE KIRBY ESTATE FOR THEIR CONTINUING SUPPORT OF OUR EFFORTS

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Front cover inks: Jack Kirby
(originally done for the *Marvelmania* Thor poster)

Back cover inks: Steve Bissette

Cover color: Tom Ziuko

THE MONSTER OF MORAGGIA

Examining Marvel's revisions to Jack's story for Chamber of Darkness #4, by Jon B. Cooke

(Editor's Note: I suggest you read the penciled story on the following pages BEFORE you read this article, to keep from spoiling Jack's surprise ending!)

What set out to be a standard article — a sidebar, really — on Jack Kirby's pair of stories for *Chamber of Darkness* #4 and #5, an interesting mystery unravelled. During an interview that mostly concerned *Spirit World*, I asked Mark Evanier, longtime Kirby associate, what he knew about those tales. Here the article really begins.

Evanier told a story (one he will elaborate on in his forthcoming biography of the King) that related one of several events that might have led Jack to quit Marvel Comics in 1970. When Evanier and Steve Sherman visited Jack in Irvine, California during the summer of '69, Jack told his guests that "he wrote a story that he was in love with," Evanier said, "that Roz thought was the best story that he had ever done, and he sent this thing off, and he was very proud of it. He got back a call from some editorial assistant, whose name to this day is unknown, that was very rude, telling him how he felt he should rewrite his story. 'We don't like it this way... change this, change this...' and Jack took the eraser and just destroyed this story he loved, and turned it into the version that they wanted."

That version was "The Monster," a seven-page horror short from *Chamber Of Darkness* #4, April, 1970. As printed, it is an unremarkable tale of ugly, misunderstood Andreas Flec (the "Monster"), an arrogant Eastern European nobleman, whose mysterious ways and contemptuous treatment of neighboring villagers provoke the lethal wrath of the townsfolk seeking justice for a perceived abomination.

Kirby historian Greg Theakston was contacted in hopes of tracking down photocopies of the unaltered story, and while they couldn't be found, he remembered seeing copies in the '70s. "This was one of the best horror jobs I had ever seen him do," Theakston said, "and yet completely corrupted in print." In comparing photocopies to the published version, Theakston opined, "It seems remarkable to me that [Marvel] put so much effort into changing what amounted to a perfectly fine story — there's no reason why it couldn't have run as it was." He suggested contacting Marie Severin who worked in the production department at Marvel during the affair, and was cover artist for *COD* #4.

A serendipitous chain of events then took rapid succession: Severin discovered original photocopies, along with her cover designs, and very kindly shared them with *TJKC*, adding pragmatically that "I was and am in awe of Jack Kirby, but even he was subject to changes and re-writes." It was then discovered that Mike Thibodeaux was in possession of four

pages from the published story and he graciously loaned the originals to *TJKC* for examination. The differences in the stories were devastating. The sheer inventiveness was diluted out of Jack's original, its grandiose action reduced to parlor room gunplay, and the finale seemed half-hearted. There was evidence of major revisions, and the final boards showed it. Entire pages were discarded, panels cut and rearranged, and remnants of original pencils could be detected under redrawn panels.

Jack's original submission confirms that Stan Lee was intended to dialogue the story, hopefully with "a touch of less standard pontifical oration" as Jack's margin note requests. (Jack apparently plotted the initial story since he had to explain to Stan that *they* were the witches). After being rejected, Jack got the art back and made changes, erasing most panels and rearranging others, even cutting up his art boards. Stan apparently was responsible for the replotting, since the final art's original — but pasted over — credit box lists Stan Lee as "plotter." But curiously, Jack did do the dialogue on this version, as proven by his handwriting in the balloons, and his erasing the original margin notes.

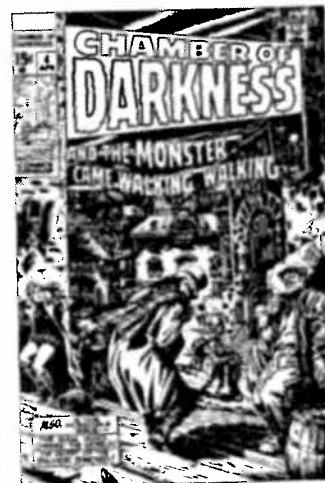
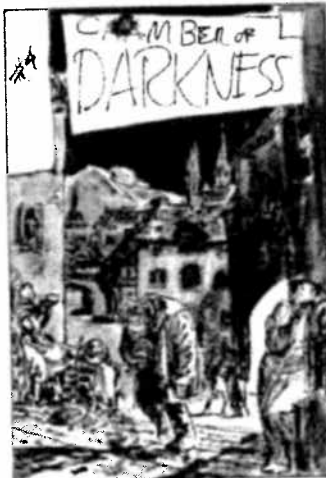
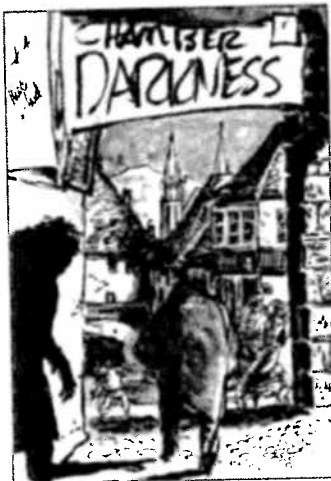
But the meddling didn't end there; someone at Marvel redrew the faces of the Monster and the mannequin. The revised pencils were then inked by John Verpoorten, and lettered with Jack's dialogue. This begs the question: Why were the faces redrawn? According to one of Severin's initial (but rejected) cover designs, the Monster's face is shown as Jack's "Hunchy" version but depicts a scene from the Lee-plotted story of the character walking through the village. (Could the face change have come about in fear of a Comics Code Authority rejection—or was the Monster's face too similar to another Marvel hunchback character, the CCA-approved villain from the *Fantastic Four Annuals*, Quasimodo?)

With the final revision, someone changed Jack's already-lettered dialogue in places, and whited out details on the Monster's face. Changes are not rare in the comics industry. (Severin mentioned one *X-Men* cover that was recolored *five* times.) But what ultimately concerns us, as Evanier said, is that Marvel transformed "a story that Jack was very proud of... into something he thought was lousy." Subjectively, many might agree that Jack's original was better and this chain of events may indicate more about a strained relationship between collaborators, rather than a substandard comics story.

Our investigation, as gratifying as it is to uncover past mysteries of Jack's career, was not without poignancy. In the original's final panel, the narrating "witches" (reminiscent of the EC horror comics

(continued on page 28)

Here are Marie Severin's two attempts at a Chamber of Darkness #4 cover layout based on Jack's story, and her final cover inked by Bill Everett. Marie comments, "There are many stories that have been redrawn, replotted, etc. We made time for these things and Stan was the boss, and he must have been doing something right. So many people have no idea how much there is to produce a comic, and it was possible then for the editor (in this case Stan) to control his product from plot to coloring—and he also was and is a pro."



TWO STRANGE FIGURES STAY INSISTENT THAT
CONVULGE UP THE WEIRD EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF MEN



(Editor's Note: I obscured Jack's bottom margin notes on this page, so they wouldn't spoil the surprise ending. The notes are shown on page 28.)

SIGN OF DEATH



WANT TO END THROUGHOUT OF MONSIEUR



GETS
GET
HIM
NOW
CAP
HIS
TERR
PARK

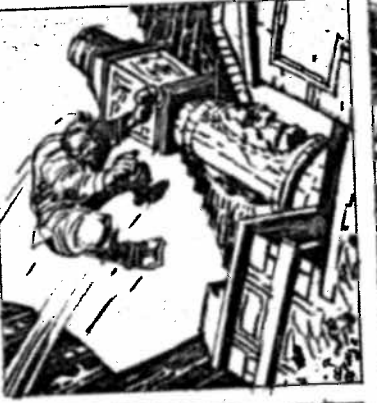


I SAW HIM -- HE HAS ROOM INSIDE
HE THINKS WITH TOOLS OF THE
DEVIL



WHATS MORE HE HOLDS PASSOVER
WAS SERVED HIM AS SLAVES --

WE'VE FOUND A WAY TO GET BY HIS ELECTRIC FENCES--
WE MUST STRIKE TONIGHT



I'LL LIVE HERE AS I ALWAYS
BANG STINGS CHILDHOOD-- I DON'T
NEED THEIR ATTENTION



THEY'LL RUN LIKE THEY
ALWAYS DO --

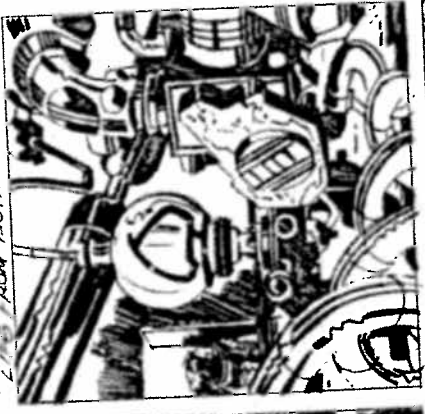
OH IF
ROOF
OF
GAVE
WILL
SEE
LIFE
LIFE
OF
FOR
CHIEF
AT
THE
CHIEF

AM I NOT FROM THE ABILITY--
WITH THE BEST OF EDUCATION FROM
PRIVATE TUTORS



QUICK -- GET THEM -- YOU
MAYBE SO SLOW -- DO I
HAVE TO CORRECT YOU!

NOW I HAVE KNOWLEDGE--
I BUILD THINGS -- TO KEEP MY
FROM BEING EMPTY

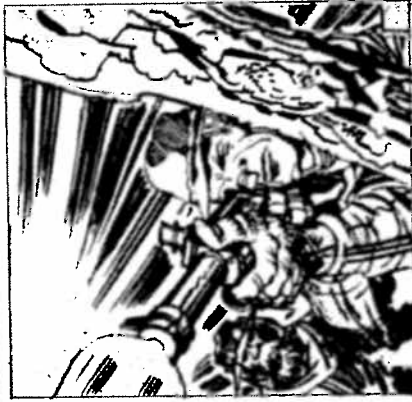


NOW FOR A TASTE OF
BEAUTY-- WIFE CARS ABOUT
OUTSIDE WORLD

NOT VILLAGERS HAVE PUE UNDER-

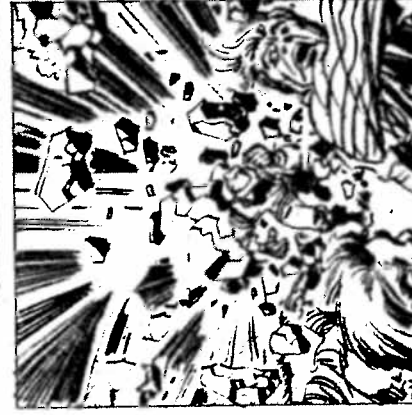
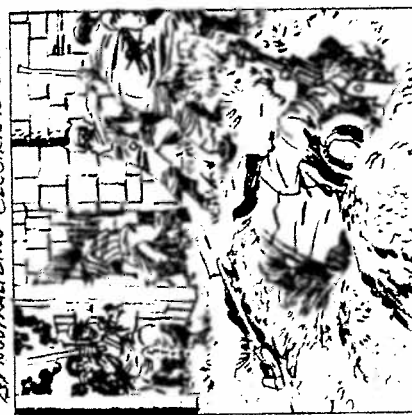
NOW TO BRISK DOWN
FRONT MIND. AND END MONSTER

NOW TO BRISAKE DOWN
FRONT DOOR AND BRAG MOUNTAIN
CARRER



I'LL SETTING THIS--
FOR GOOD--PREPARE
HE GOTTS ONE-OF US-

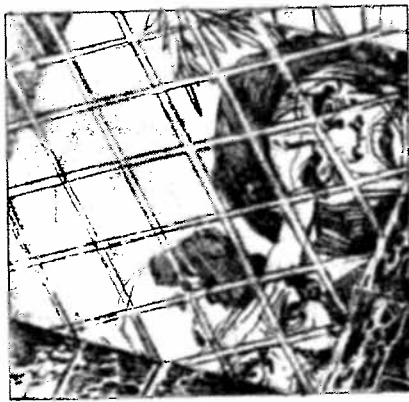
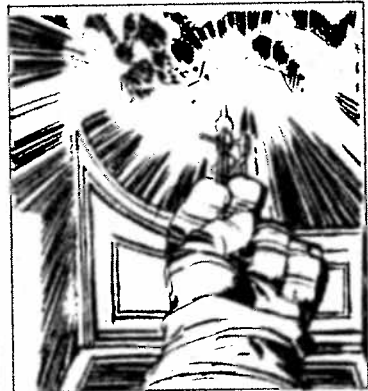
OUT WILLABERS HAVE FOR UNDER
CARRIIDS AND ARE OPENING GATE
BY NEUTRALIZING ELECTRICAL UNITS



HE'LL MURDER THE LOT
OF US

THAT'S
THE
IS!
HE
KNOWS
KNIFE
WAVE
GOT
WHEN
THIS
TIME

AREN'T YOU JUST BEAUTIFUL-- GOT THEM MOVING A BIT TOO
SLOW-- AND THE PAPER MOVE-- IT'S STILL A LITTLE OFF KEY



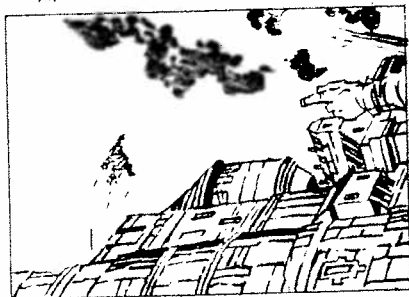
MENT ALREADY AT WINDOW--
HARRIED AT SIGHT-- BUT
GLASS IS TOO THICK TO PIERCE
WITH COLLS



HOW OFTEN MUST I USE THIS ON
YOU-- CAN'T YOU EVER LEARN TO
PLEASE ME

FASTER
FASTER
YOU
HEARD
ME
I'LL
TELL
YOU
WHEN
TO
STOP

LUNCH IS HIT... HE FALLS--



NOW TO FREE HIS SLINGS FROM HIS BULL



THIS IS FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS WHO OUTSIDERS HAVE COME HERE



TOO LATE LOOK HE KILLED HIS PALS ONUP 54



HURRY WAS JUST A LONELY GUY AND ANG F TO AM HIM



AND THIS IS NOT TORTURE INSTRUMENT IT'S REGULATED THERE



MYSTERY IS RECOVERED SHALL WE UNMAKE NOW?



OUR TALE IS TOLD--

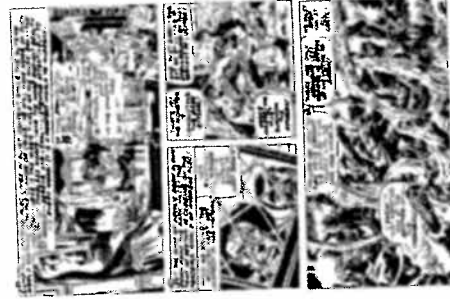
hosts and the then-current trend to have artists narrate tales of terror — all the rage in *COD* and its sister comic, *Tower of Shadows*, are unhooded to reveal—surprise!—a cigar-chomping Kirby and his partner, Stan Lee. The team's appearance hearkens back to happier days of their visits in the pages of *Fantastic Four*, etc. and shows equal collaborators sharing a story of inspired horror. Obliterated from the final version, what remains in the final panel is an empty, steaming pot on a barren hill.

And, after all, wasn't the true essence of Jack's original story about a creator, however misshapen, who reveled in his art and simply wanted to be left alone, to create things "to keep my life from being empty," but who tragically would not be left in solitude by outside, ignorant forces?

There is little doubt it took more than Marvel's gerrymandering of this single story to force Jack to quit the House of Ideas. "It was," Evanier said, "an example of one of the many fights he had." Combined with his reluctance to share new characters, and evidence of similar, arbitrary interference with other Marvel stories, there appears a pattern that might prompt anyone, at the peak of their artistic abilities, to seek another outlet that just might be more appreciative. ①②



FROM PINE RISES PAGES OF THE MONSTER OF MORAGGA (THE TWO WITCHES ARE IN SCENE) THE CLIMAX IN SURPRISE ENDING. THIS MAY BE THE STORY OF THE SURPRISE ENDING. STAN LEE'S POSITIONING CHARTER--



(top) The left panel shows published dialogue, and the right shows Jack's original wording, which was whited-out and reticulated.

(middle) Jack's margin notes from page 1 which were obscured. (bottom) The original art for page 5 of the published version contained a surprise. Two of Jack's original pencil panels were preserved under the bottom, pasted-down panel!