

DEVIL'S MOON: THE UNSEEN

FALLEN ANGELS

by Allan Harvey

"My name is Roberto DaCosta. I am fourteen years old..."

So opened the first issue of one of the oddest miniseries in Marvel Comics history. *Fallen Angels*, written by Jo Duffy and drawn by Kerry Gammill, was a spin-off from the popular *New Mutants* series. Running for eight issues in 1987, it told of the adventures of the aforementioned DaCosta, aka Sunspot, after he ran away from the X-Mansion following a misuse of his powers. Along the way he became a member of a gang of misfits and rogue mutants called the Fallen Angels who were led by second-string villain, the Vanisher.

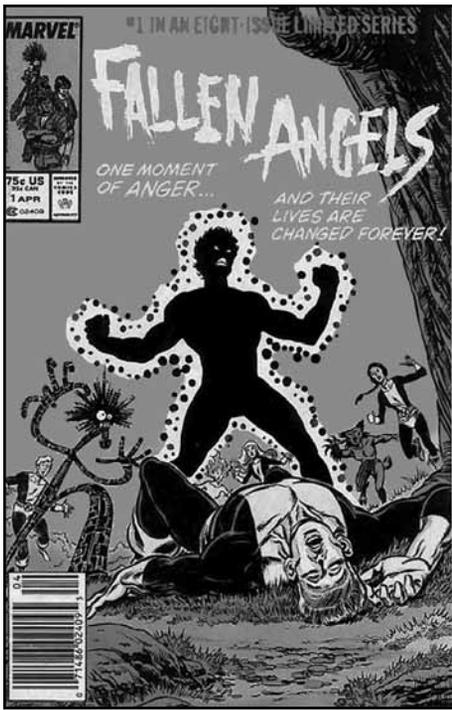
During the series, the Fallen Angels became embroiled in a bizarre alien plot to experiment on their mutant powers. Along the way Sunspot's fellow mutants Jamie Madrox, the Multiple Man, Warlock, and Siryn joined up. In the end, Sunspot realized he'd been a bit hasty in walking out on the New Mutants and returned home. That was that. It was series that was largely played for laughs and concerned itself more with character than plot. It is perhaps most notable today for its inclusion of Devil Dinosaur and Moon Boy [originally Moon-Boy]. Created by Jack "King" Kirby, they'd barely been seen since the demise of their own series in 1978 [Editor's note: See this issue's "What The-?!" for more on Kirby's king-sized dino-hero]. *Fallen Angels* brought the characters firmly into the Marvel Universe for the first time. It also defined them as coming from an alien world rather than prehistoric Earth, and declared them mutants—presumably because of their unusually high intelligence.

Fallen Angels, Broken Hearts

Young lovers Siryn and Jamie Madrox, on the splash page for the first issue of the unpublished Marvel miniseries *Fallen Angels II* (FA2). Art by Colleen Doran and Terry Austin. All original artwork in this article is courtesy of Colleen Doran and Allan Harvey.

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Even though the series was hampered by an inconsistent art team (there were three pencilers in eight issues), and was decidedly off-kilter for a mid-'80s X-book, it proved a success. At the time there were rumors of a second series, but it never materialized and the Fallen Angels became just a dim memory.

So what? you cry, What's that got to do with "The Greatest Stories Never Told"?

A-ha! In actual fact, it was not just a rumor: A six-issue second series was being worked on in 1988. Writer and co-creator Jo Duffy was back, this time working with penciler Colleen Doran (*A Distant Soil, Book of Lost Souls*). Two issues were fully completed, with inks by legendary *X-Men* embellisher, Terry Austin. A third had just been started when the axe fell on the project.

The first issue of *Fallen Angels II* begins with Jamie Madrox bidding a tearful farewell to his girlfriend Siryn as she departs the Fallen Angels. There follows a flashback to the appalling childhood of a new character whom we will come to know as Pan Halehone. He suffered physical, emotional, and sexual abuse at the hands of his father, but has escaped to the big city where he's living rough.

Meanwhile, Fallen Angels' resident goofball, Gomi, and his pet bionic lobster (hey, I said it was an odd series) are saying farewell to an old friend who was killed when Devil Dinosaur stepped on him in series one. Back at the gang's Beat Street den, the T-shirt-wearing Moon Boy has introduced Devil Dinosaur to the dubious delights of MTV.

Starving, Pan tries to steal some hot dogs, but runs away when he recognizes two mysterious characters from his past. He falls in with a group of religious extremists, but soon runs away—straight into the clutches of those he was trying to escape. At Beat Street, Devil Dinosaur becomes aware of his cries for help and the Fallen Angels go to investigate. They quickly overcome Pan's kidnappers and save the day. Pan, whose mutant power is the telepathic control of animals, joins the misfit bunch.

The Original Angels

Covers to three of the eight issues of the original *Fallen Angels*, published from Apr. through Nov. 1987.

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Entitled "Black Sheep," the second issue sees Pan getting used to his place in the Fallen Angels. Meanwhile, across town, a longhaired, black-suited master criminal called the Broker has called a meeting to discuss Pan and his escape. He's not happy. They are keeping a collection of mutant children for some purpose and need Pan back.

At Beat Street, Pan has more flashbacks to his abusive past, suffering indignities at the hands of his monstrous father. We also learn how the Broker originally captured him. He wakes up screaming and is comforted by Jamie Madrox. In the morning, he leaves Beat Street and attempts a solo mission to free the captured children. He's not very successful and is almost recaptured by the Broker's men. Moon Boy leads the Fallen Angels to him and they rescue both Pan and the kids.

The Broker's mood improves none at this news and he calls in Pan's abusive father to help with future attempts at reacquiring the young mutant...

The two issues that exist of *Fallen Angels II* present a much more coherent story than the first series, with a solid plot and direction. The dialogue is crisp and amusing and the characters live on the page. Colleen Doran's art is rock solid, representing an early high for her.



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I worry sometimes about the city authorities. Finding out about us... maybe taking the younger kids away and making them go to school.

But I'm too old... and Chance is an illegal alien anyway...

And Ariel, Devil and Moon Boy are alien aliens...

...and Comi already knows more than most Ph.D.s... so I guess education is the least of our worries.



KIDNAPPED FROM SAFE HAWAII? HOW COULD THAT BE?

DON'T LAUGH AT ME, JERKFACE. I DON'T HAVE TO STAY HERE IF I DON'T WANT TO.

THIS PLACE IS FULL OF WEIRDOS.

COME... COME... SEE

SEE WHAT?



HELLO!

I...

I GUESS... MAYBE I COULD STAY...

FOR A WHILE

AND WE LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

I WISH.

I Want My MTV!

(above left) Devil Dinosaur watches his favorite cable network in this panel from *FA2* #1. (below left) Also, on the final page to issue #1, seen here in its entirety, Moon Boy wears an MTV T-shirt as Pan Halehone is welcomed to the ranks of the Fallen Angels.

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BACK ISSUE spoke to Colleen via transatlantic phone call in the wee, small hours of November 1, 2006.

ALLAN HARVEY: *Fallen Angels II* was your first major job at either of the Big Two?

COLLEEN DORAN: No, I don't think...

HARVEY: As opposed to fill-in work.

DORAN: Yeah, I guess you're right.

HARVEY: So you got an X-book your first time out.

DORAN: They were taking quite a big gamble on someone like me.

HARVEY: How did you get the job?

DORAN: Well, originally, I was asked if I wanted to take over the art on the first *Fallen Angels* series. Kerry Gammill was leaving for some reason, and Marvel called me. I'd done a few small things for [the Marvel imprint] Epic, so I was known to them. They asked if I wanted to do something more visible. At the time I was very nervous of that. Y'know, in my mind the mainstream equaled evil, or something, and doing work for them would be like selling out. So I went instead to the small press and did a graphic novel called *Fortune's Friends*. That turned out to be a mistake, so I thought, "If they ask again—go for it!" When they did approach me again a while later about the second series, I didn't hesitate: "I'll take it!" [laughs]

HARVEY: It's an unusual book to say the least. Not at all like a regular super-hero book. Was the intention to perhaps market it to a female audience?

DORAN: I think the writer was a little envious of the kind of work Frank Miller was doing: the *Elektra* miniseries at Epic, that sort of thing. Super-heroes with a more adult tack. Jo wanted to aim for that same kind of audience. *Fallen Angels* was much more of a soap opera than the average comic; a kind of serial drama. In fact, I think it would go over a lot better today than it did then. Marvel certainly was perplexed by it.

HARVEY: Terry Austin was your inker on the series. Were you happy with his work?

DORAN: I was very happy. I've always been well served by Terry. And, as far as I recall, he was very faithful to the pencils—believe me, that wasn't always the case with some other inkers I had. The style I used on *Fallen Angels* was different to expectations. As usual for every series I do, I developed a different style. In fact, I debuted that style in an issue of *Marvel Fanfare*. It's a harder-edged style. If you notice, there are very few pure curves in there: It's all intersecting lines. I was reading Ayn Rand at the time and was influenced by some of her ideas. I thought it was more kinetic, more conducive to an action-oriented book. Marvel was ecstatic. They were very happy with the work I was doing.

HARVEY: *What was the connection between that issue of Marvel Fanfare [#38] and Fallen Angels II?*

DORAN: It was a prequel. The PJ James character was due to appear later on when the Angels went to a rock concert, he was going to be revealed as a mutant musician or something.

HARVEY: *That's strongly implied in the Fanfare issue.*

DORAN: Right. Actually there was another *Marvel Fanfare* story that was intended to tie into our book. I think it was drawn by Joe Staton. In fact, the main *Fallen Angels* villain, the Broker, showed up in a lot of books at that time. It was intended to be like a big crossover, all leading from and feeding back into our book. And then our book never appeared. It was crazy. You know, it's like having, I don't know, *Zero Hour*—without *Zero Hour*! [laughs]

HARVEY: *So the Broker was created for Fallen Angels II?*

DORAN: Yes, he was created for *Fallen Angels II*. And then there was no *Fallen Angels II*.

HARVEY: *How much of the series did you complete?*

DORAN: Two issues. And a third was started.

HARVEY: *And the format?*

DORAN: 48-pages. Double-sized issues.

HARVEY: *It was due to have painted covers too, right?*

DORAN: Yeah. I'd done a few of those. I don't know what happened to them.

HARVEY: *While working on it, were you aware of the potentially controversial nature of the story? There was a mixture of comedy characters with a child-abuse subplot.*

DORAN: Oh, yeah. I thought it was very creepy. Very weird. I kept wondering, "What's this script getting at?" After a while it became clear that Marvel was not happy. They called me and asked if I would be willing to work with someone else. I didn't think it was right to sell out the writer, and so I said "No" out of loyalty. She felt that the script had been approved, and she didn't think it was right to be asked to change it.

You know, I was just stuck in the middle of all this; it was really nothing to do with me. I just wanted to do my job penciling the book. But, in the end, I felt it wouldn't be fair to the writer for me to continue. And so Marvel killed the project. In fact, I was never contacted about it. No one told me. I was asked to stop work on issue three while some problems were ironed out, and that was the last I heard.

Marvel just got cold feet. I actually can't believe how it was ever approved. There was the child-abuse subplot, and there was a strong suggestion that Pan's father was hot for animals.

HARVEY: *Yeah, I couldn't quite believe what I was seeing when I saw that panel!*

DORAN: I think the editor just didn't get it. It makes your skin crawl to think about it. You know, it's one thing to read the words, but quite another to see pictures. The editor just didn't get it from the script.

HARVEY: *Many of the characters that made the transition from the first Fallen Angels series had quite a different look. Did you have a free hand in redesigning them?*

DORAN: Oh, yeah, a totally free hand. I was asked to redo their looks, as Marvel hadn't been happy with how they'd looked in the first series. It was an easy job overall. I was only ever asked to make one specific change, and that was to lengthen a robe Jamie Madrox was wearing at one point. I think the editor was a little tired of all the flesh on display! [laughs]

HARVEY: *Who was the editor?*



Meet the Broker

Doran's eye for architecture and fashion is evident on page 4 from *FA2 #2*, introducing the bad guy, the Broker.

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DORAN: Bob Harras. He was very easy to deal with. Very patient. It was a long-term project with no deadline. The idea was to have the whole thing completed before we printed.

HARVEY: *It's a shame they don't do that a bit more often these days.*

DORAN: Yeah. Back then, they were kind of building up an inventory of material. There was something like two years between me starting work on the first issue and finishing up what I had of the third. That gave me a lot of time to do my best work. I'd rarely had a



Seeing Spots

Pan goes into action on story page 34 of FA2 #2.

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situation where I could do my best. Without the pressure of a deadline you get much better quality.

HARVEY: The art is a lot stronger than the Fortune's Friends graphic novel you did at around the same time.

DORAN: Much stronger. That book was a mistake.

HARVEY: I was particularly impressed by the sweater Jamie Madrox is wearing in one scene. It's very intricate; far more detail that you'd get from most comic art.

DORAN: Aarrgghh! [laughs] I cannot believe I put Jamie Madrox in a patterned sweater! I mean... he multiplies! And I had to draw it. There were no computers then. No 3-D modeling. I had to draw it over and over and over. I was cursing. [laughs]

HARVEY: Devil Dinosaur, of course, played a part in the story. Are you a fan of Jack Kirby?

DORAN: Oh, yeah, a big fan. Of course. I don't think you can be around this industry for long without being a fan.

HARVEY: So, you were familiar with Devil Dinosaur before you worked on Fallen Angels?

DORAN: Yes. I'd read Kamandi, The Eternals, Devil Dinosaur, etc.

HARVEY: Did you do any research into how real dinosaurs looked?

DORAN: You know, Devil Dinosaur does not look like a real dinosaur. [laughs] I could never quite pull it off. Kirby drew him with a great big square head and I could never get that right. Just couldn't get that big ol' head. [laughs]

HARVEY: And there was the bionic lobster.

DORAN: I hated drawing that lobster! It was silly. Actually, I got the impression Jo was trying to ditch some of the sillier characters.

HARVEY: Devil Dinosaur and Moon Boy don't seem to do a lot. They spend all their time in the garage watching MTV.

DORAN: Yeah, that's right. I think the lobster was due to do something later on, but Devil Dinosaur ... I'm not sure.

HARVEY: Was it full script or plot first?

DORAN: Full script.

HARVEY: Did you get all the scripts in advance?

DORAN: No. I got pages in batches and would work on those. Then I'd get another batch. I think that was customary for that particular writer. I never saw any script for later issues.

HARVEY: Silyn leaves the group in the first few pages, and yet she was a major component in the first series. Any idea why she was dropped? Was she needed elsewhere?

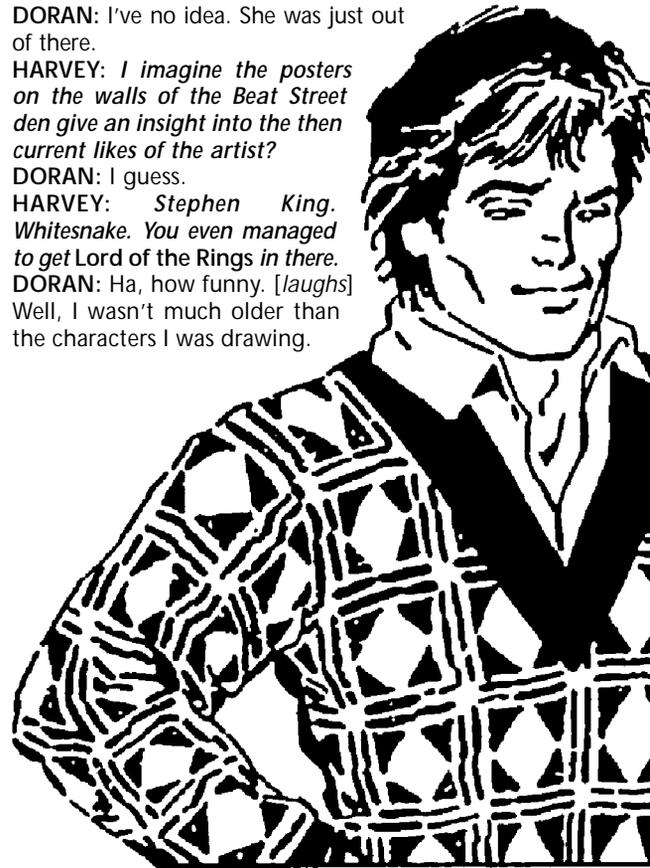
DORAN: I've no idea. She was just out of there.

HARVEY: I imagine the posters on the walls of the Beat Street den give an insight into the then current likes of the artist?

DORAN: I guess.

HARVEY: Stephen King. Whitesnake. You even managed to get Lord of the Rings in there.

DORAN: Ha, how funny. [laughs] Well, I wasn't much older than the characters I was drawing.



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I was a huge Led Zeppelin fan. Unbelievable. "PJ James" was really Jimmy Page, of course.

HARVEY: I'd guessed that. [laughs]

DORAN: There are Led Zep references all over my work at that time.

HARVEY: The book was killed. Were you paid?

DORAN: Absolutely. Marvel was very good about that. I got paid everything I was owed for everything I'd done.

HARVEY: So from a financial viewpoint it was fine, but was it a disappointment to you that the book never appeared?

DORAN: A great disappointment. Devastating. A real blow. Don't get me wrong: Marvel had the right to not publish it. It was there in the contract. If you don't like the contract, don't sign it. Ultimately, they weren't happy with the content of the book and chose not to publish.

The problem was, it took me out of the marketplace. I was "off radar" for the two years I was doing that book, and no one saw my work. Editors would call and ask if I was available for a job and I had to turn them down because I was working on *Fallen Angels*. After a while, the phone stops ringing. You disappear. No one saw any of my work for years. This was good work. Really good—a big leap forward for me. And no one saw it.

Had it come out, it would have been life-changing—I'm sure of that. The fact that it didn't, made me invisible. It put me in the wilderness for a decade. Clients had the wrong idea about my work—they were only going by my old stuff, and there's a big difference between fill-ins and a major series. I spent a lot of time on this project and there was no pay off [in an increased profile] at the end. Disaster. It was like being kneecapped.

I wonder about it now: Should I have agreed to work with another writer? It's a moral dilemma. No one benefited from the work that was done. At the time I felt I'd made the right choice. I'm not so sure now.

HARVEY: Does this sort of thing happen a lot in the industry? Books being killed?

DORAN: *Fallen Angels* wasn't my only series to get shelved. It happened to me quite a lot. Generally, in the industry as a whole, I don't know how often it happens.

It's strange. I've no idea why it wasn't published. All right, I'd said I wouldn't work with a different writer, but they could've turned around and got another artist easily. On a book like that, an X-book, at that time, they couldn't lose. It would have sold six figures.

HARVEY: There currently seems to be a mini trend for reviving dead projects. There was Roy Thomas and Dick Giordano's *Dracula* book, recently finished up after being abandoned in the '70s. And George Pérez and Marv Wolfman are revisiting an unfinished *Teen Titans* project [the graphic novel *Games*]. Is there any chance that *Fallen Angels II* might one day see print?

DORAN: At one point we did try to bring it back. Keith Giffen had a great idea and wanted to do a rewrite. We went to see [Marvel editor-in-chief] Joe

Quesada as we thought he'd be interested, but

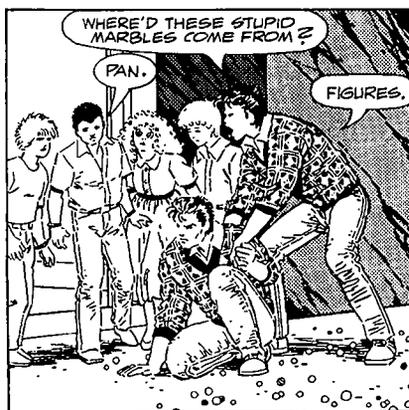
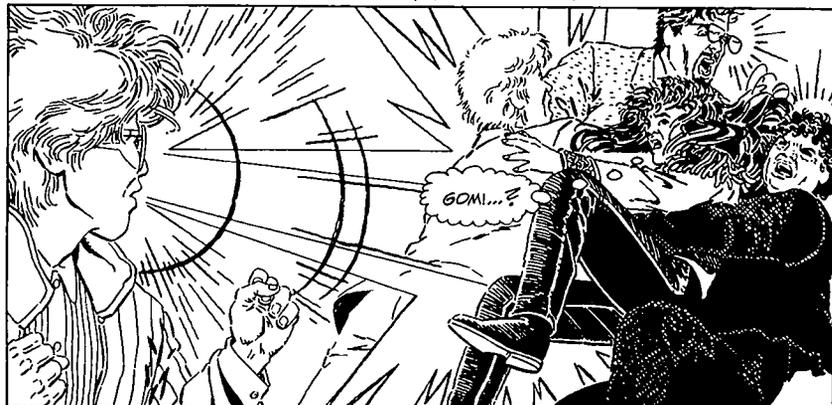
no. Of course, that was a few years ago. Keith walks on water now, so they might want to give it a shot. It could happen.

HARVEY: That'd be nice.

DORAN: Yeah. *Fallen Angels* was a quirky series. That's my primary memory of it. That, and I think it's the only time in my career that I've ever had to draw a man looking lustfully at a horse's ass! [laughs]

ALLAN HARVEY is a London-based writer and artist. He maintains *Gorilla Daze*, a blog that appreciates wacky comics. It can be found at www.thefifthbranch.com/gorilladaze.

Issue: *FALLEN ANGELS* Issue# 2 PG.# 37



Multiple Man's Multiplying Sweater

From FA2 #2. Artist Colleen Doran's curses censored.

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