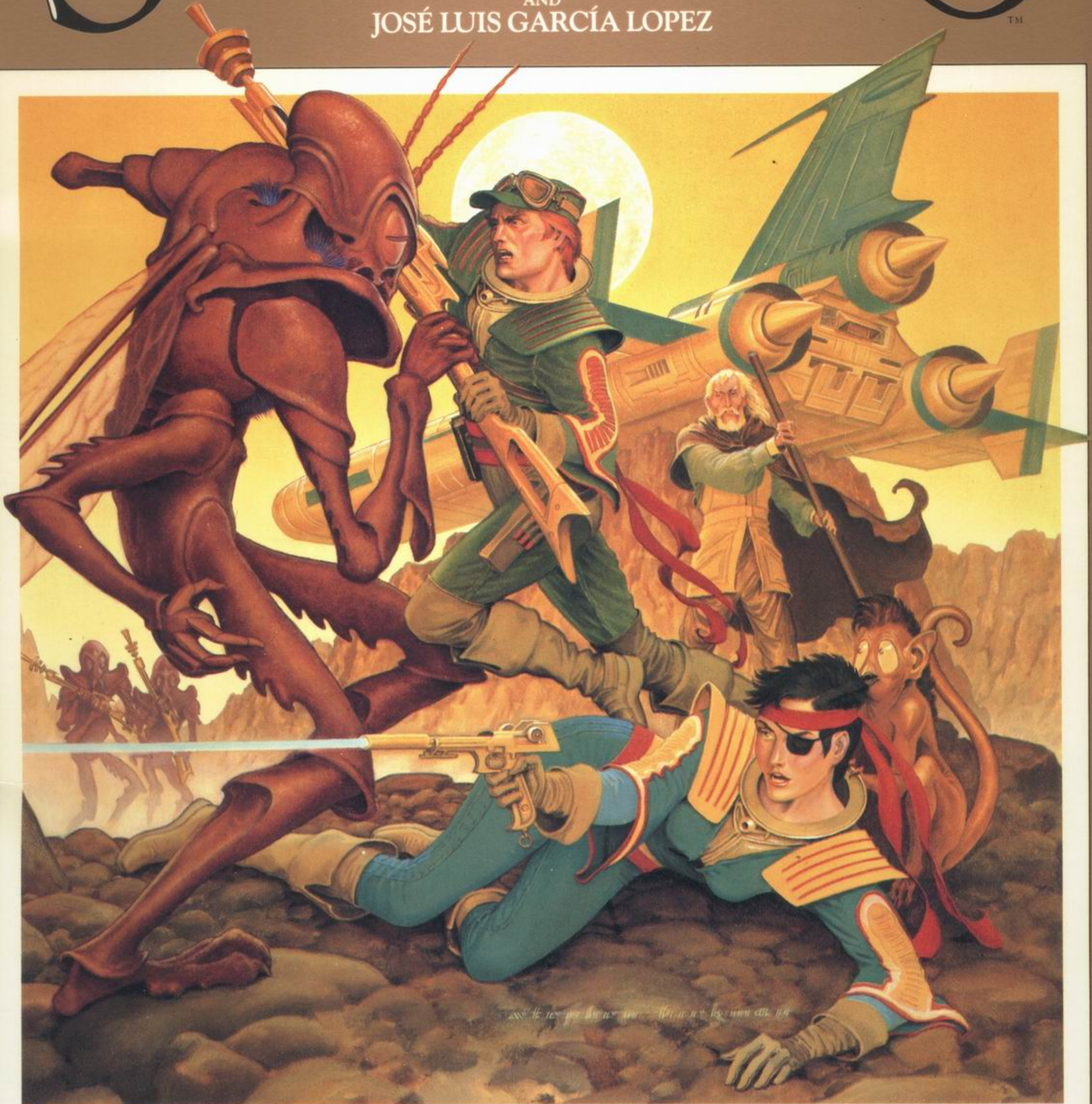




GRAPHIC NOVEL NO. 1  
\$6.95

# STAR RAIDERS

BY  
ELLIOT S! MAGGIN  
AND  
JOSÉ LUIS GARCÍA LOPEZ





# STAR · RAIDERS

ELLIOT S! MAGGIN  
WRITER

JOSÉ LUIS GARCÍA LOPEZ  
ARTIST

ORZECODY  
LETTERER

STEPHEN HICKMAN  
COVER ARTIST

ANDREW HELFER  
EDITOR

NEAL POZNER  
DESIGN

JOE ORLANDO  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

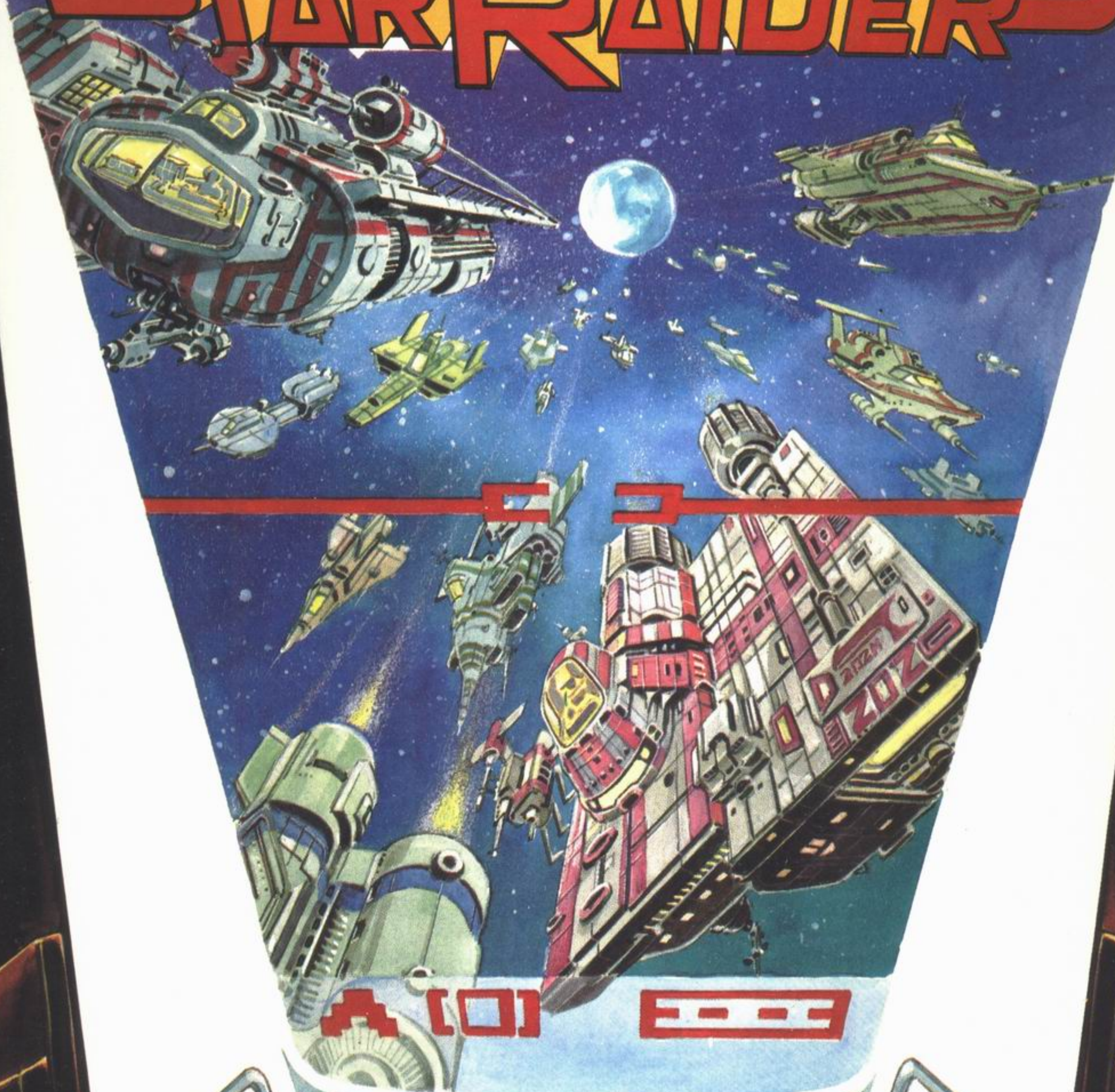




FROM  
EVERY CORNER OF AN  
OPPRESSED GALAXY THEY CAME,  
A MISMATCHED COLLECTION OF REBELS --  
DETERMINED TO OVERTHROW THE TYRANNY  
THAT HAS CRUSHED THEM LIKE ANTS UNDER  
A JACKBOOT'S HEEL...

BEGINNING -- THE SAGA OF THE...

# STAR RAIDERS



PILOTS IN CHARGE  
ELLIOT S! MAGGIN: WRITER  
JOSE LUIS GARCIA-LOPEZ: ARTIST



A MOMENT AGO THERE WAS THUNDER ROLLING ACROSS THIS BARREN PLACE...

... THE ROAR OF A MIGHTY STARSHIP CHARGING OFF FOR DIMENSIONS YET UNKNOWN...

NOW THE ECHO SUBSIDES AND THE NATIVE DENIZENS OF THIS PLACE SLOWLY, WARILY RECLAIM THEIR HOME...

TAR-EE?

...AND WONDER JUST WHAT IT WAS THAT HAPPENED HERE MOMENTS AGO...

TAR-EE!

TAR-EE FORS!

TEL ZEEK!

... MOMENTS AGO, THIS WORLD WAS A BEACH-HEAD IN THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE FORCES OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT--

-- BETWEEN THE FORCES OF TYRANNY AND VALIANT RESISTANCE...

TEL ZEEK!

TAR-EE FORS!

... BUT BENEATH THIS BATTLE-SCARRED PLAIN--

-- A LAST REMAINING FREE MAN LIVES HIS LIFE BY HIS OWN RULES...

... DAY BY DAY!

EZEKIEL C. VICKER  
ONLY CHIEF  
LIBRARIAN

ZEEK!

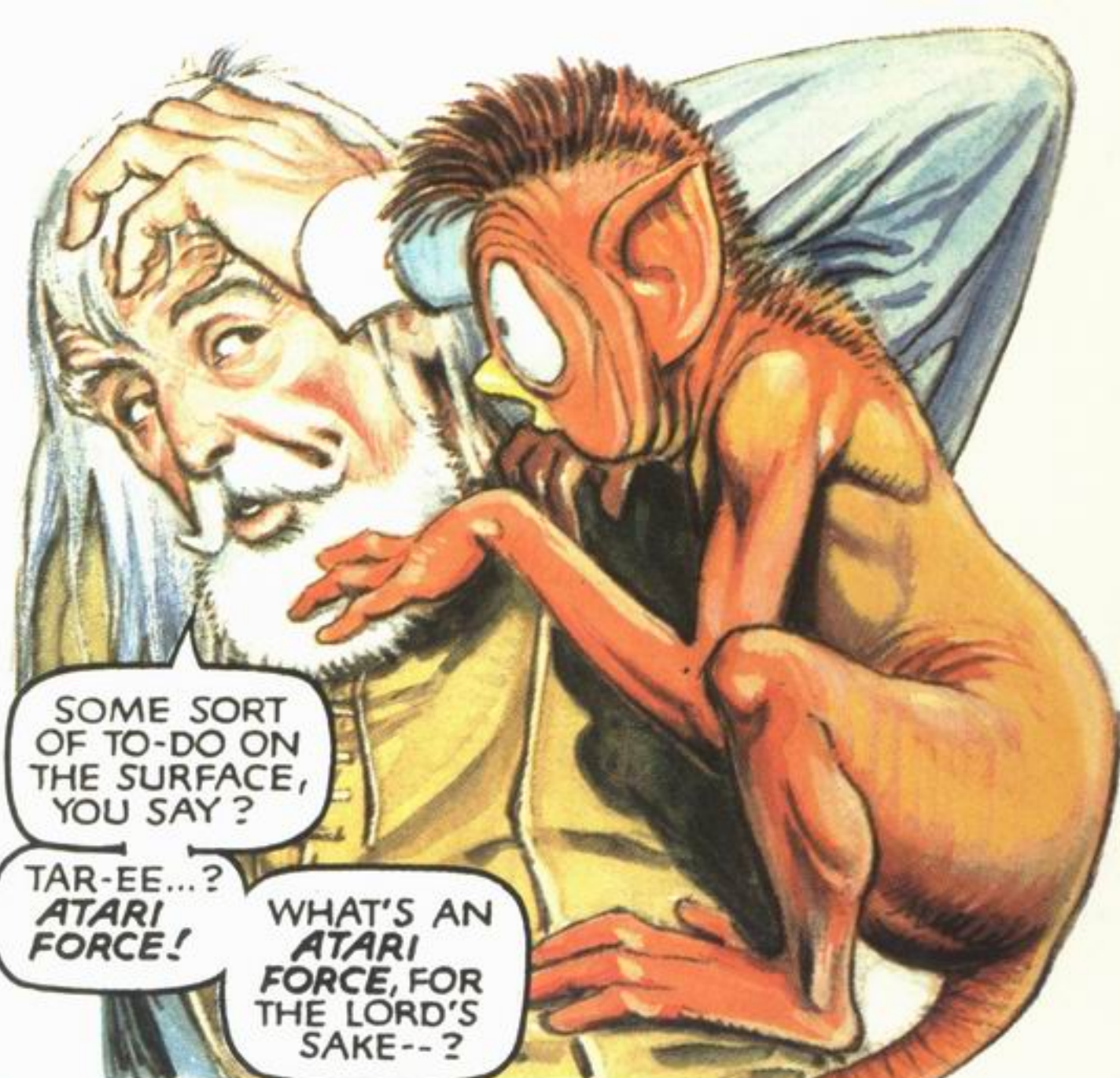
TEL ZEEK!





Tar-ee  
fors, zeek...

zeek...?



SOME SORT  
OF TO-DO ON  
THE SURFACE,  
YOU SAY?

TAR-EE...?  
**ATARI  
FORCE!**

WHAT'S AN  
**ATARI  
FORCE**, FOR  
THE LORD'S  
SAKE--?



I SUPPOSE  
IT'D BE A GOOD  
IDEA TO SEE  
WHAT'S BEEN  
GOING ON  
WHILE I WAS  
NAPPING--

-- BY PLAYING  
BACK MY LITTLE  
**SURFACE  
MONITOR...**



...IF I CAN MANAGE  
TO FIND THE BLESSED  
THING UNDER THIS  
PILE OF--

-- ah, YES  
INDEED! HERE  
IT IS, RIGHT  
WHERE I  
LEFT IT...



... WHICH  
MAKES SENSE,  
SINCE NO ONE  
ELSE IS LIKELY  
TO HAVE BEEN  
HERE!

Ah, YES... I  
DO SEEM TO  
HAVE **MISSED**  
SOMETHING  
INDEED!



MEANWHILE,  
CAREENING  
THROUGH A  
NEIGHBORING  
SECTOR OF  
SPACE AT HYPER-  
WARP SPEED  
IS ANOTHER,  
ALBEIT SMALLER,  
STAR CRUISER...

JED, CAN'T  
THIS CRATE  
MOVE ANY  
FASTER?

ONLY IF YOU  
GET OUT AND  
**PUSH** IT,  
WOMAN!



MY, MY--WE ARE GETTING TOUCHY, AREN'T WE, CAPTAIN?

JUST BUTTON UP AND DO YOUR JOB, NAVIGATOR!

PULLING RANK NOW, ARE WE, CAPTAIN...?

SEEMS LIKE JUST YESTERDAY ON SIGMA SIX THAT **RANK** WAS THE **LAST** THING ON YOUR MIND!

MUST'VE BEEN DRUNK! PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR SCREEN... HOW'S THAT **DISTURBANCE** ON THE THIRD PLANET SHAPING UP?

'FRAID IT'S NOT, MON CAPITAINE-- SEEMS TO HAVE PETERED OUT!

DAMN!

WE'RE LEAVING HYPERSPACE, JED... BRACE FOR FINAL APPROACH!

AND BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE EMBATTLED WORLD THAT THE PAIR IS APPROACHING...

Hmm -- YOU MEAN **THESE** BLOW-DRIED, SQUEAKY-CLEAN TYPES ARE THE ONES WHO COMMANDEERED OUR **STAR RAIDER** TO FIGHT THE ZYLONS?

-- A RETURN VISIT... AFTER SNUFFING OUT VIRTUALLY ALL LIFE FROM THIS PLANET SO MANY YEARS AGO?

YES INDEED!

MY, MY, THOSE ARE INDEED ZYLONS INVOLVED IN THAT BATTLE...

...AND THESE MUST BE THE ONES YOU CALL THE **ATARI FORCE**, YES?

HARDLY SEEMS POSSIBLE-- BUT THE ZYLONS HAVE AGAIN CHANCED UPON OUR HUMBLE LITTLE PLANET--





WELL, NOW THAT THE WIND'S DIED DOWN, LITTLE ONE, IT SEEMS WE HAVE SOME "CLEANING UP" TO DO ON THE SURFACE!



UNLESS OUR FRIENDS, THIS **ATARI FORCE**, WERE QUITE AWARE OF THE ZYLONS' **UNIQUE** NATURE...

...WHICH I DOUBT-- WE HAVE MUCH TO WORRY ABOUT!

WURRY ZEEK?



ACTUALLY, YES, LITTLE ONE --

-- OLD ZEKE'S ABOUT AS WORRIED AS AN OLD MAN CAN GET!



SO THE LITTLE HUKKA HANGS ON AS THE LAST SURVIVING MAN OF THIS WORLD CLIMBS TO THE SURFACE...



THE ANIMAL WORRIES BECAUSE THE MAN IS WORRIED--THE MAN WORRIES FOR REASONS OF HIS OWN...



BUT ALL THEIR APPREHENSION COULD HARDLY PREPARE THEM FOR THIS LATEST VISITATION--





TWO PANELS  
SPRING UP  
FROM THE  
COCKPIT OF  
THE COOLING  
CRAFT AND...

TOMMY--  
WHERE'S  
THE  
ACTION--?

WOULD YOU SETTLE FOR  
A GAME OF JACKS?



SAY--  
WHAT'S  
THAT?

I'LL  
FIND OUT--

HEY, MACK!  
YEAH, YOU THERE!...  
FRONT AND CENTER,  
OLD MAN!



WHAT'RE YOU  
LOOKIN' FOR,  
MACK, AND  
WHO THE DEVIL  
ARE YOU?

I'M LOOKING  
FOR ZYLONS,  
IF YOU MUST  
KNOW...

... AND WHILE  
MY NAME DOESN'T  
MUCH MATTER ANY-  
MORE, I WISH YOU  
WOULDN'T CALL  
ME **MACK**--



LISTEN, YOU SKINNY  
GOON, IF YOU DON'T  
GIVE ME A STRAIGHT  
ANSWER I'LL--

DON'T YOU SEE  
THE OLD MAN  
ISN'T IMPRESSED  
BY YOUR  
ARROGANCE, J.P.?

HE'S A RATHER  
CHARMING FELLOW,  
ACTUALLY...



...BUT  
WHAT I WANT  
TO KNOW, SIR,  
IS HOW YOU  
SURVIVED ON  
AN OTHER-  
WISE DEAD  
WORLD--

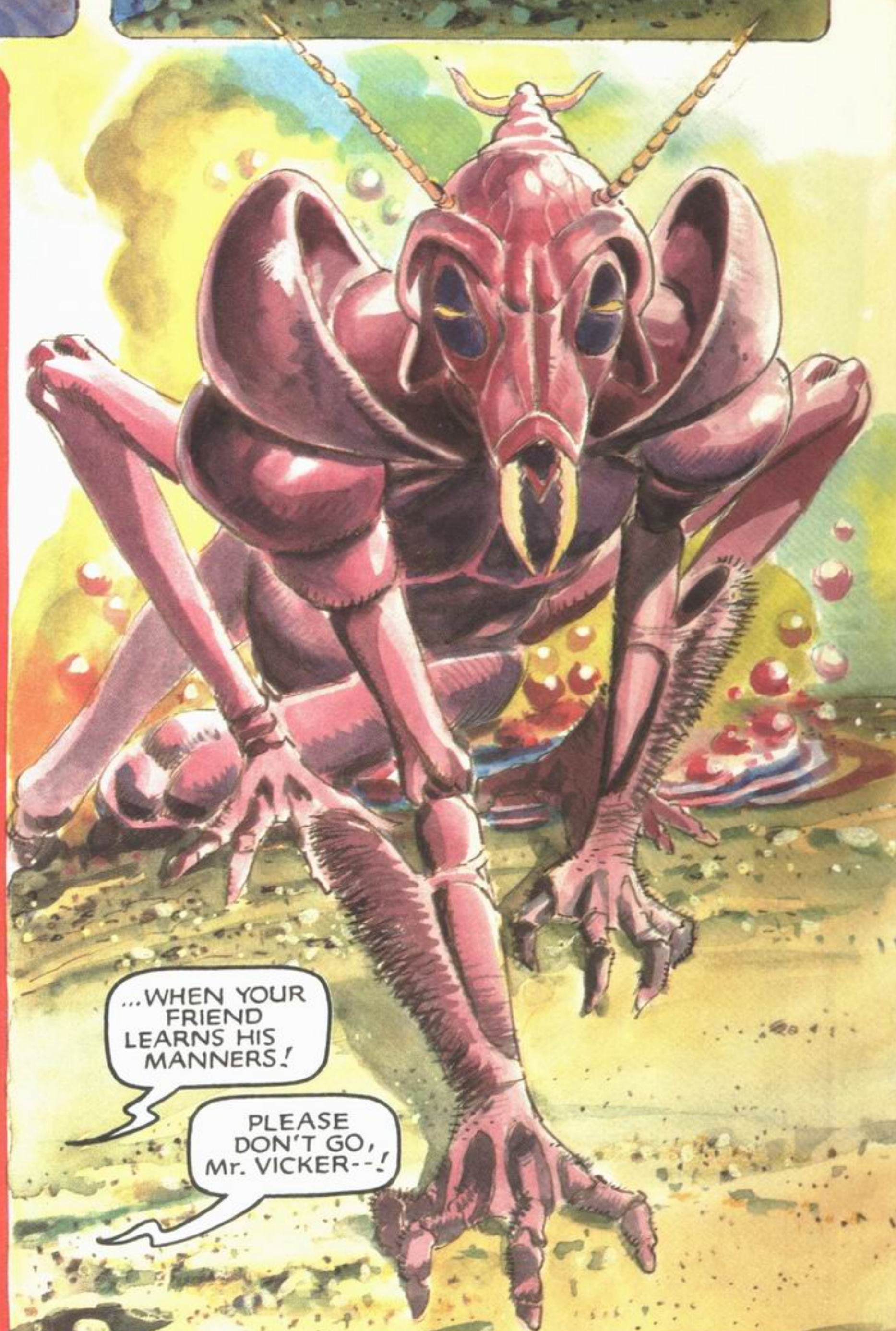
BY REMAINING  
ALONE, DEAR LADY--  
NOW PLEASE EXCUSE  
ME WHILE I GO--



--GO  
**NOWHERE**,  
MACK!

OH MY...!







AND THE RANKLING CONTINUES AS...

... JED'S JUST TRYING TO MAKE LIFE DIFFICULT FOR THE ZYLONS! PLEASE DON'T GO BEFORE--

-- BEFORE HE MAKES LIFE MORE DIFFICULT FOR ME? SORRY--

MUNSTA!

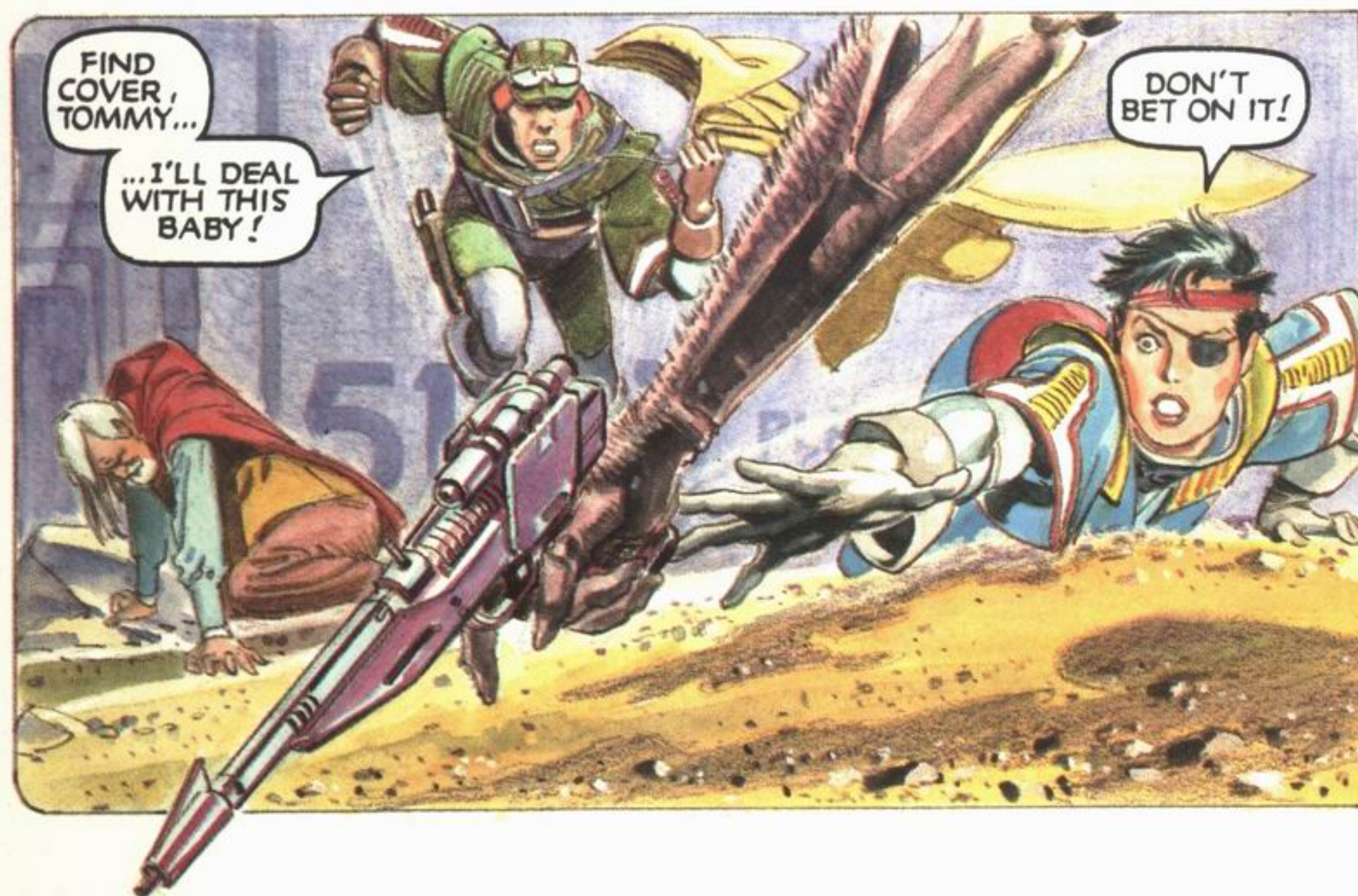
ZEEK!

ZEEK!  
ZEEK!

WHAT THE DEVIL ARE THESE MANGY ANIMALS SO HOT ABOUT?

THESE HUKKAS HAVE A GOOD DEAL TO TEACH YOU ABOUT BEING CIVILIZED!

TOMMY--  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT--





THE ZYLON BEATS THE WOMAN TO HER PISTOL, BUT NOT QUICKLY ENOUGH--

--TO AVOID HAVING JEDEDIAH POOLE KNOCK IT FREE AGAIN...

... AT SOME PAINFUL COST TO THE ANGRY REBEL ...

YEOW!! WHAT HAS THAT MONSTER GOT-- AN EXOSKELETON?

IT'S LIKE HAVING A FIGHT WITH A BOULDER!

THE ZYLON'S TOO FAST--

WATCH YOURSELF, CAPTAIN!

I DON'T NEED ANY HELP...

... AVOIDING BLASTER FIRE!

THANK YOU, HOWEVER...

... FOR GIVING ME AN OPENING!

JED -- I'VE GOT TO RECHARGE THIS VAPORIZER AND DON'T HAVE THE TIME! -- OH...

PLEASANT DREAMS, ZYLON SCUM!



WITH SUCH GUSTO DID THE PAIR FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE THAT ONE CAN ALMOST FEEL THE DIS-APPOINTMENT--



-- WHEN THE PILE OF DEBRIS AND BROKEN BUILDING STOPS THE ZYLON AND THE BATTLE IS APPARENTLY ENDED ...

...AND ONE CAN SENSE THE EXCITED ANTICIPATION AS THE DEBRIS SEEMS FOR A MOMENT TO SHUDDER AND...



HEADS UP, JED--!

JUST KEEP YOUR HANDS FILLED, TOMMY--!



PROTECT YOURSELF, TOMMY--

--AND STAY CLEAR OF THE FLYING RUBBLE!

AS SOON AS YOU GET A GOOD BEAD ON THE THING ...

... THEN FIRE!



GOOD JOB, TOMMY!



THAT'S FIGHTING WITH OUR HEADS!

... AND THINKING WITH YOUR POSTERIOURS!

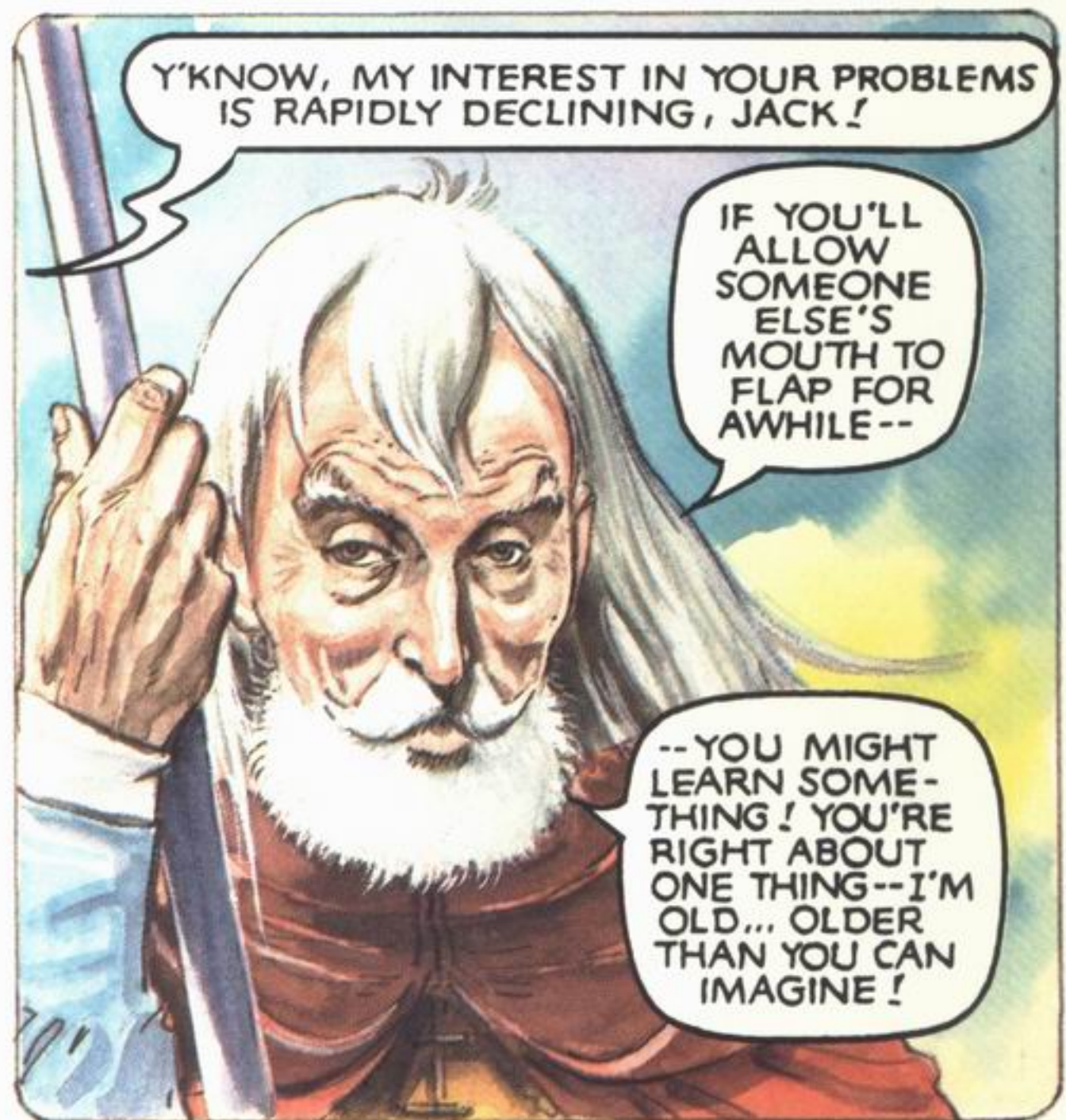




OH...  
EZEKIEL!  
JED DIDN'T  
MEAN TO  
HURT YOU  
BEFORE!  
HE--

I'LL DO MY OWN  
APOLOGIZING,  
NAVIGATOR, WHEN  
I FEEL IT IS  
WARRANTED!

APOLOGY  
OR NO, WE  
HAVE A  
PROBLEM,  
YOU AND I...



Y'KNOW, MY INTEREST IN YOUR PROBLEMS  
IS RAPIDLY DECLINING, JACK!

IF YOU'LL  
ALLOW  
SOMEONE  
ELSE'S  
MOUTH TO  
FLAP FOR  
AWHILE--

--YOU MIGHT  
LEARN SOME-  
THING! YOU'RE  
RIGHT ABOUT  
ONE THING--I'M  
OLD... OLDER  
THAN YOU CAN  
IMAGINE!



"I'M NOT SURE HOW LONG  
AGO IT WAS--SIX OR EIGHT  
HUNDRED YEARS OR SO--  
WHEN THE ZYLONS LET  
LOOSE THEIR LIFE-KILLING  
HOLOCAUST HERE...

"... BUT I WAS  
UNDERGROUND AT  
THE TIME, IN THE  
DEEPEST VAULT OF  
THE NATIONAL  
LIBRARY WHERE I  
NOW LIVE--PRO-  
TECTED BY LOTS OF  
THE BEST INSULA-  
TOR THERE IS--  
PAPER!"

"Oh, THE HUKKAS SURVIVED-- THEIR GENETIC  
MAKEUP PROTECTED THEM--AND THERE WERE A  
FEW OTHERS SHELTERED AS I WAS...

"THE EXPOSURE MADE ME DELIRIOUS FOR DAYS--  
YEARS FOR ALL I KNOW-- BUT MY NEXT MEMORY  
WAS WAKING UP ON MY COUCH...



"... BUT THE  
DIFFERENCE  
CAME THE DAY  
I GOT TOO STIR-  
CRAZY TO CARE  
WHETHER IT  
WAS ALL RIGHT  
ON THE SURFACE  
OR NOT--

"... AND I HAVEN'T  
BEEN SICK A DAY  
SINCE! THAT WAS  
CENTURIES AGO--  
I'M IMMORTAL AS  
FAR AS I CAN TELL!"

"I'VE BEEN READING  
EVER SINCE--GOT A  
WHOLE NATIONAL  
LIBRARY TO  
CHOOSE FROM!"



SO--YOU'VE MASTERED  
THE ACCUMULATED  
WISDOM OF A DEAD  
WORLD! IS  
THIS RELEVANT?

IT CERTAINLY IS! I'VE READ  
ABOUT CABBAGES AND KINGS,  
GLACIER-SKIING AND INTER-  
PLANETARY GRAMMAR...

...AND ZYLONS!  
LOTS ABOUT  
ZYLONS!





I'VE FOUGHT ZYLONS IN SPACE ALL MY LIFE! WHAT DOES A GUY WHO'S BEEN IN A HOLE FOR CENTURIES KNOW ABOUT ZYLONS?

I KNOW THEY CAN REGENERATE... MACK!

IF YOU BLASTED THAT BRUISER INTO A MILLION PIECES--



--THEN THEY'LL GROW INTO A MILLION ZYLONS! OH MY GOD!

WELL, NOT QUITE A MILLION!

EVIDENTLY THEY NEED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF UN-DAMAGED TISSUE BEFORE THEY CAN REBUILD THE WHOLE BODY...



... AND IT WAS THAT CRITICAL AMOUNT OF TISSUE I WAS LOOKING FOR WHEN I CAME TO THE SURFACE AFTER THE LAST BATTLE ON THE SURFACE ENDED!

UNFORTUNATELY, THE TISSUE CELLS GREW INTO A COMPLETE ZYLON IN TIME TO FIND *US* FIRST!



YOU SEE, THE ZYLONS ARE NOT INDIVIDUALS AT ALL, BUT PART OF A SINGLE MASSIVE INTELLIGENCE!

WHATEVER ONE ZYLON KNOWS, THEY ULTIMATELY ALL KNOW, SO--

WHAT IDIOTRY IS THIS CRACKPOT SPOUTING NOW?

SHUT YOUR TRAP, JED!



THAT'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR LADY... PEOPLE HAVE LABELLED THE UNATTRACTIVE TRUTH IDIOTRY BEFORE!

NOW, UNTIL A TROOP OF ZYLONS COMES TO PICK UP THOSE GROWING FROM THE CELLS OF THE ONE YOU VAPORIZED...

... I'M GOING TO HIDE SHAMELESSLY-- WHICH I ADVISE YOU TO DO AS WELL!



HE IS ABOUT HALFWAY TO HIS PERSONAL LITTLE SANCTUARY WHEN HE HEARS THE NOISE FROM ABOVE...

**KERASH! CRACKK!**

THEY DIDN'T LEAVE AND THE ZYLONS FOUND THEM, THE CRAZY KIDS!

IF I HAD ANY SENSE I'D KEEP WALKING...

... BUT I DON'T!



ON THE SURFACE, THE NOISE IS APPRECIABLY LOUDER --

-- AS IT EMANATES FROM THE SHAKING, SHAKING, SHAKING STAR RAIDERS CRUISER ...

... UNTIL, FROM OVER, UNDER AND AROUND THE CRUISER --

THE ZYLONS--!

HEY, I'VE GOT EYES... I'M A NAVIGATOR, REMEMBER?

YOU'LL NEED MORE THAN JUST EYES TO NAIL THESE CR--

--WHA?

TOMMY -- WHERE IN THE COSMOS HAS YOUR BRAIN GONE?

AT LEAST I KNOW ENOUGH, JEDEDIAH...

... NOT TO BURN MY HAND TWICE ON THE SAME STOVE!

YOUR **FORCE BEAM** WON'T STOP THEM FOR MORE THAN A FEW SECONDS!

YES -- I'VE GOT SOME BETTER USE!

I'M SURE WE CAN PUT THOSE SECONDS TO BETTER USE...

... THAN BLASTING FOUR ZYLONS INTO FORTY!



THAT'LL  
HOLD THEM  
FOR A BIT  
LONGER!

WATCH  
WHERE YOU  
SHOOT THAT  
THING, OKAY?!

YOU AGAIN?!!

ZEKE! YOU  
CAME BACK!

I SHOULD'VE KNOWN!  
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?

RIGGING  
TOGETHER  
A GADGET  
THAT MIGHT  
SAVE ALL OUR  
NECKS!

YEAH, RIGHT... WELL, WE'VE  
GOT A JOB TO DO, OLD MAN!

WHA--

JED -- IT GOT MY  
FORCE-FIELD PISTOL!

CAN'T YOU HOLD  
ONTO THAT DAMN  
THING!?

STAND BACK,  
I'M ON MY WA--

--HEY!!  
THIS ONE'S  
GOT MY  
LEG!

IT'S OKAY... I'LL  
CUSHION YOUR FALL!





WELL, THOSE TWO LOOK EMINENTLY CAPABLE INDEED OF KEEPING THE UGLIES BUSY FOR A TIME...

... BUT THEY'LL THANK US FOR THIS BEFORE THEY TIRE --



-- AS I THANK YOU INDEED, MY FRIEND, OH YES!

I KNEW YOU WOULD FIND ALL WE NEEDED IN THE OLD **STAR RAIDERS** CRUISER TO BUILD THESE!

NOW IF ONLY I KNEW--



-- WHETHER THE BLESSED THINGS WORK!

I THINK WE'VE HIT A STALEMATE! HOW IS IT ON YOUR END?

WE HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE-- UNLESS THESE CHARACTERS LOSE THEIR WIND!



TOMMY!-- TRY OUT A BARREL OF THIS ON IT!

URRGFPHH--!

WHAT IN ALL ENTROPY IS THAT?

AS ZEKE TOSSES HIS CONTRAPTION FROM HIDING, A ZYLON SEIZES THE ADVANTAGE OVER TOMMY'S COMRADE AND...

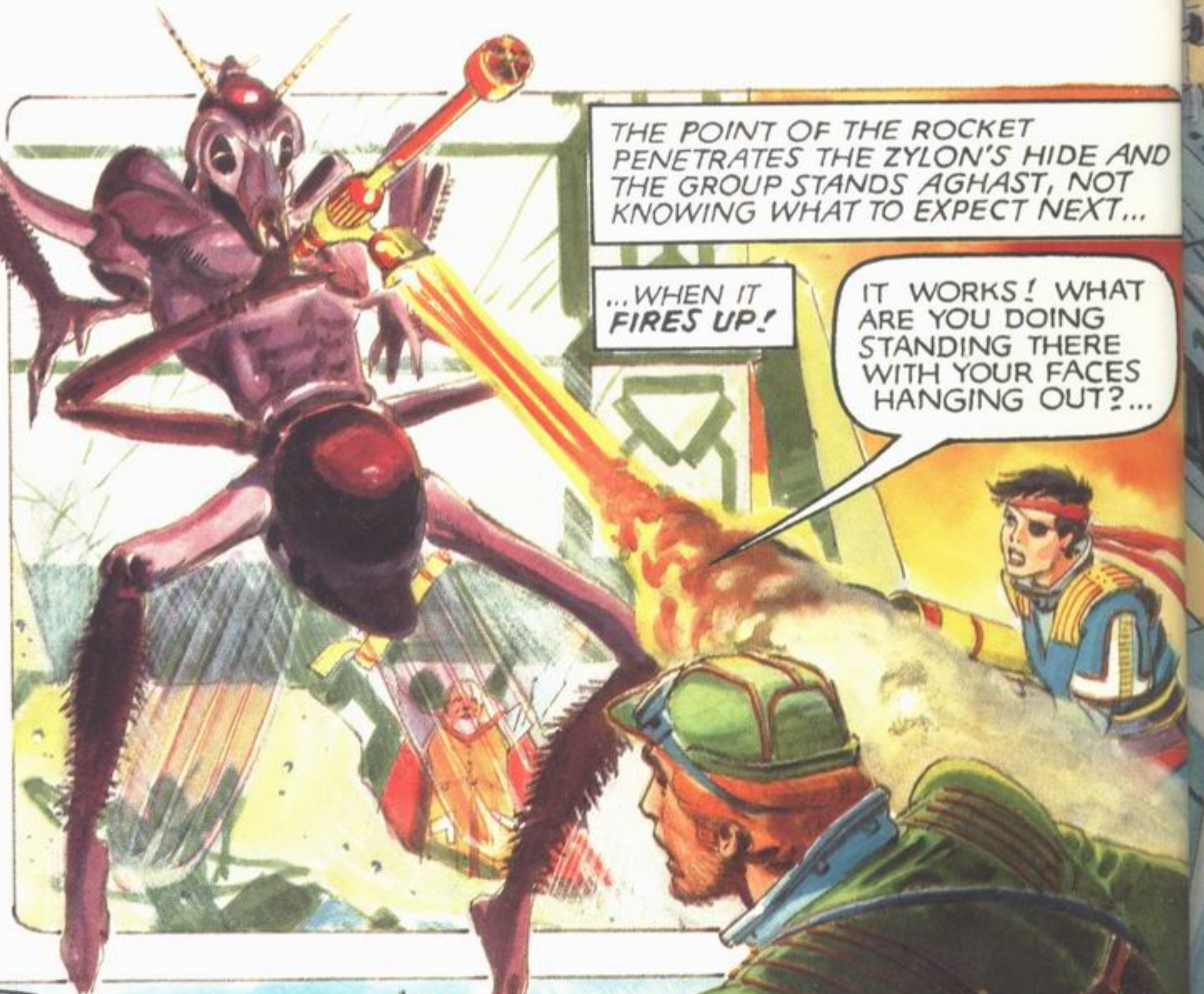
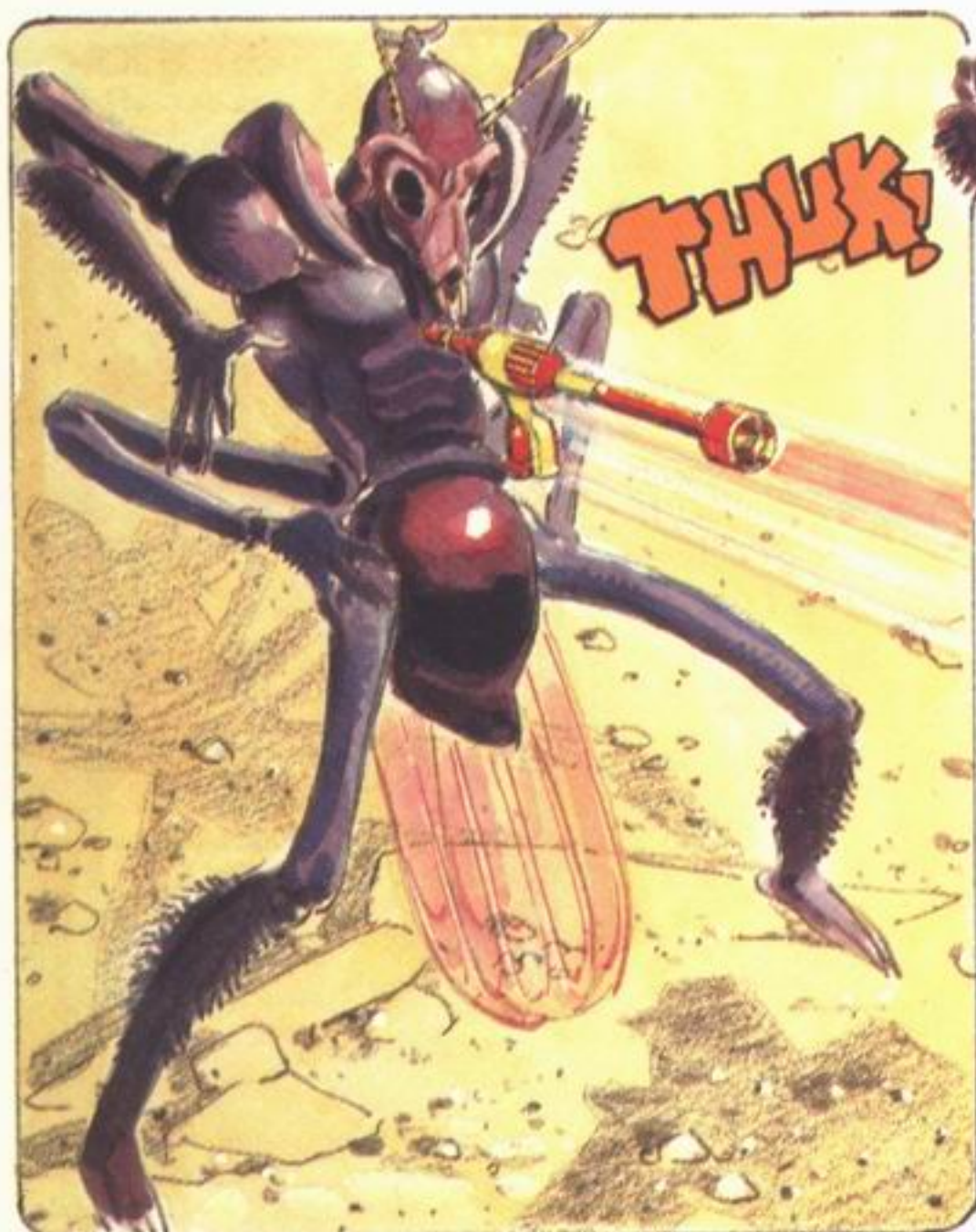


TOMMY-- HELP ME-- I --UHH--



HANG ON, MON CAPITAINE!





THE POINT OF THE ROCKET  
PENETRATES THE ZYLON'S HIDE AND  
THE GROUP STANDS AGHAST, NOT  
KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT...

...WHEN IT  
FIRES UP!

IT WORKS! WHAT  
ARE YOU DOING  
STANDING THERE  
WITH YOUR FACES  
HANGING OUT?...



...GET TO  
WORK,  
CAPTAIN!



IT'LL CARRY  
HIM INTO  
SPACE  
WHERE EVEN  
ZYLON  
LIFE CAN'T  
SURVIVE!

THE  
OLD MAN  
KNOWS HIS  
STUFF...



...LET'S FINISH  
THE JOB!

BATTLE  
STATIONS,  
NAVIGATOR!



AYE, AYE,  
CAPTAIN!





"THE OLD MAN'S SMARTER  
THAN HE LOOKS," JED MUMBLES...

"IT'S THE BEST IDEA  
I'VE SEEN ALL WEEK,"  
TOMMY THINKS...

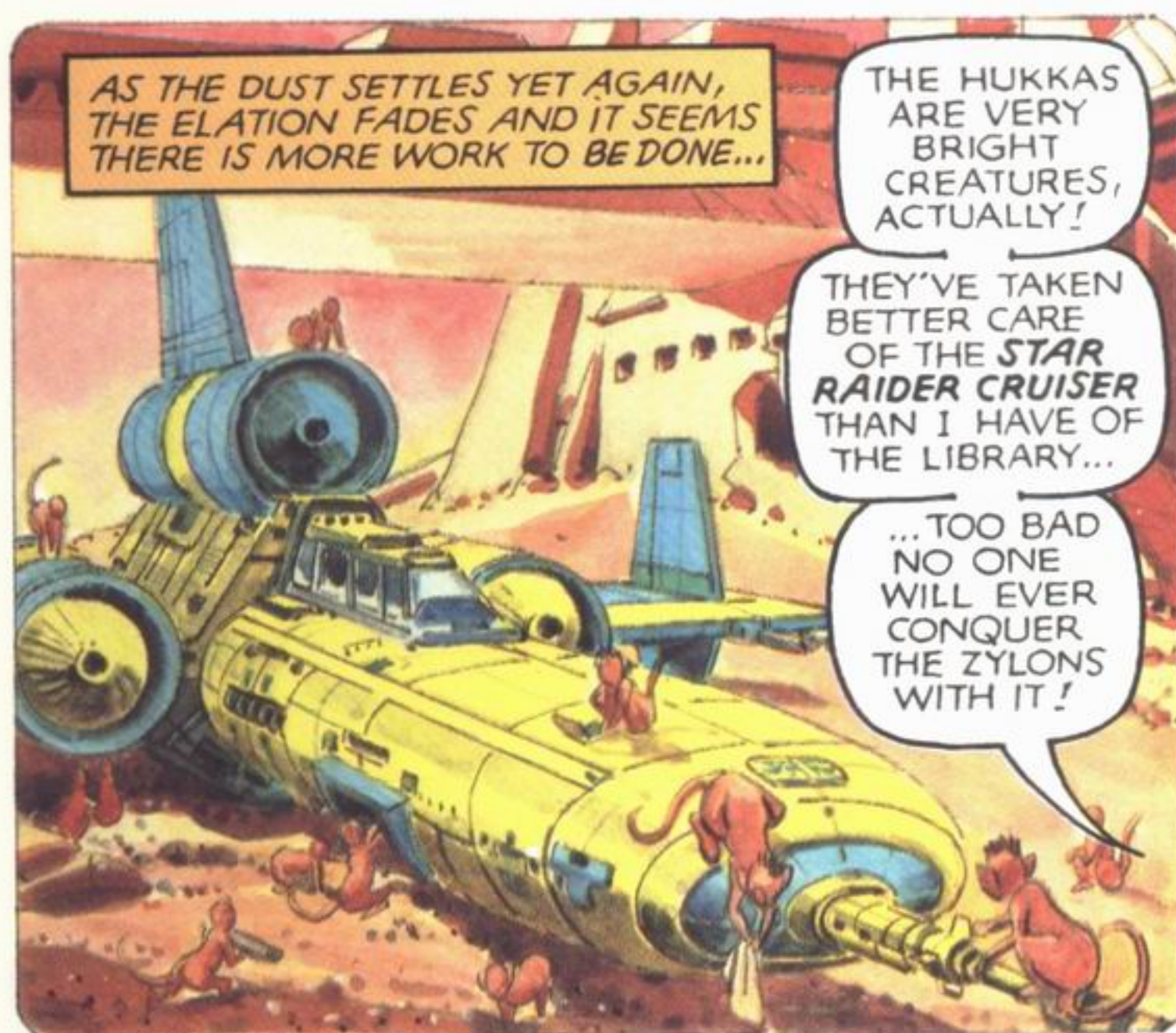
...AND AS THE ROCKET-  
POWERED PROJECTILES MAKE  
CONTACT WITH THE TOUGH  
ZYLON EXOSKELETONS...

... HUMANS SEE FOR THE  
FIRST TIME WHAT **FEAR** LOOKS  
LIKE ON THE FACES OF  
THESE CREATURES--

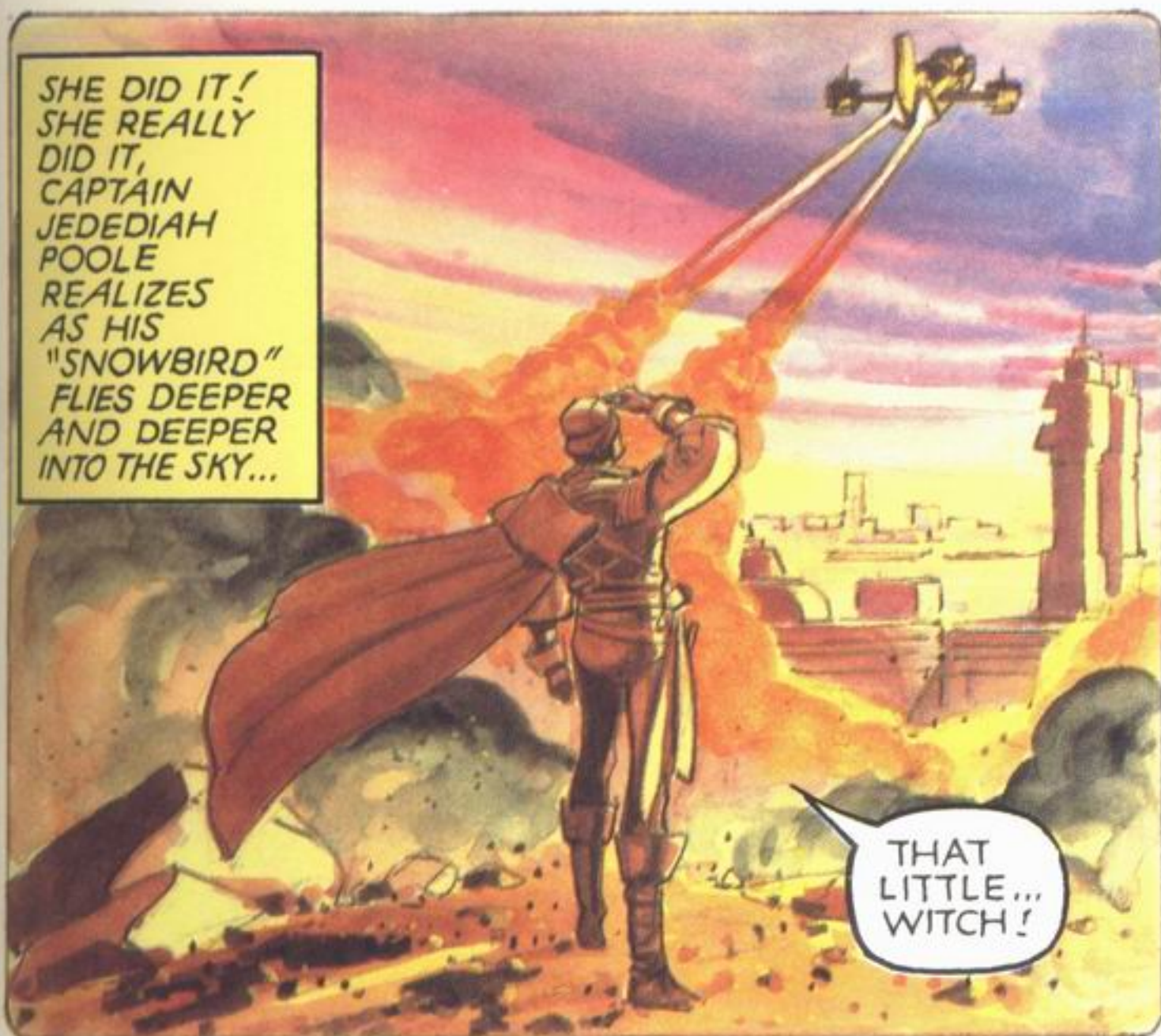
-- THESE MONSTERS  
WHOSE NUMBERS HAVE  
RAINED DESTRUCTION  
AND ENSLAVEMENT  
UPON THE GALAXY FOR  
A THOUSAND YEARS !

LIKE THREE COMETS THEY RISE TOWARD  
SPACE AND... **DISAPPEAR--**











EVEN AS HOPES  
RISE FOR THE FUTURE  
OF THIS UNLIKELY  
TRIO, FAR ACROSS THE  
LONG COLD GALAXY...

... A MASSIVE AND  
POWERFUL CONSCIOUS-  
NESS ARISES-- AS IF  
FROM AN UNWANTED,  
DISCOMFETING DREAM--

-- AND  
RISING, THIS  
CONSCIOUS-  
NESS SEEKS...

... EXERCISE...

THE ONE  
CALLED  
THE **DARK  
DESTROYER** WHO  
KIDNAPPED YOU  
IS GONE, MY  
CHILDREN...

... AND I  
AM HERE  
FOR YOU  
AGAIN!

BE HERE FOR  
ME AGAIN, MY  
CHILDREN--

-- COME HOME  
TO MOTHER...

... AND I WILL  
BE YOUR  
QUEEN ONCE  
MORE--!



SO THE PAIR BIDE THEIR TIME STUDYING SPECIFICATIONS, CHARTS AND FILMS, INCLUDING ONE OF THE **STAR RAIDER CRUISER** MAKING SHORT WORK OF A COMPANY OF ZYLONS...

...MORE THAN **SIX HUNDRED YEARS** AGO--

--AND I REMEMBER IT AS THOUGH IT WERE **YESTERDAY!**

WELL, YOU HAVEN'T EXACTLY BEEN **BUSY** SITTING IN THIS **HOLE** THE PAST FEW CENTURIES!

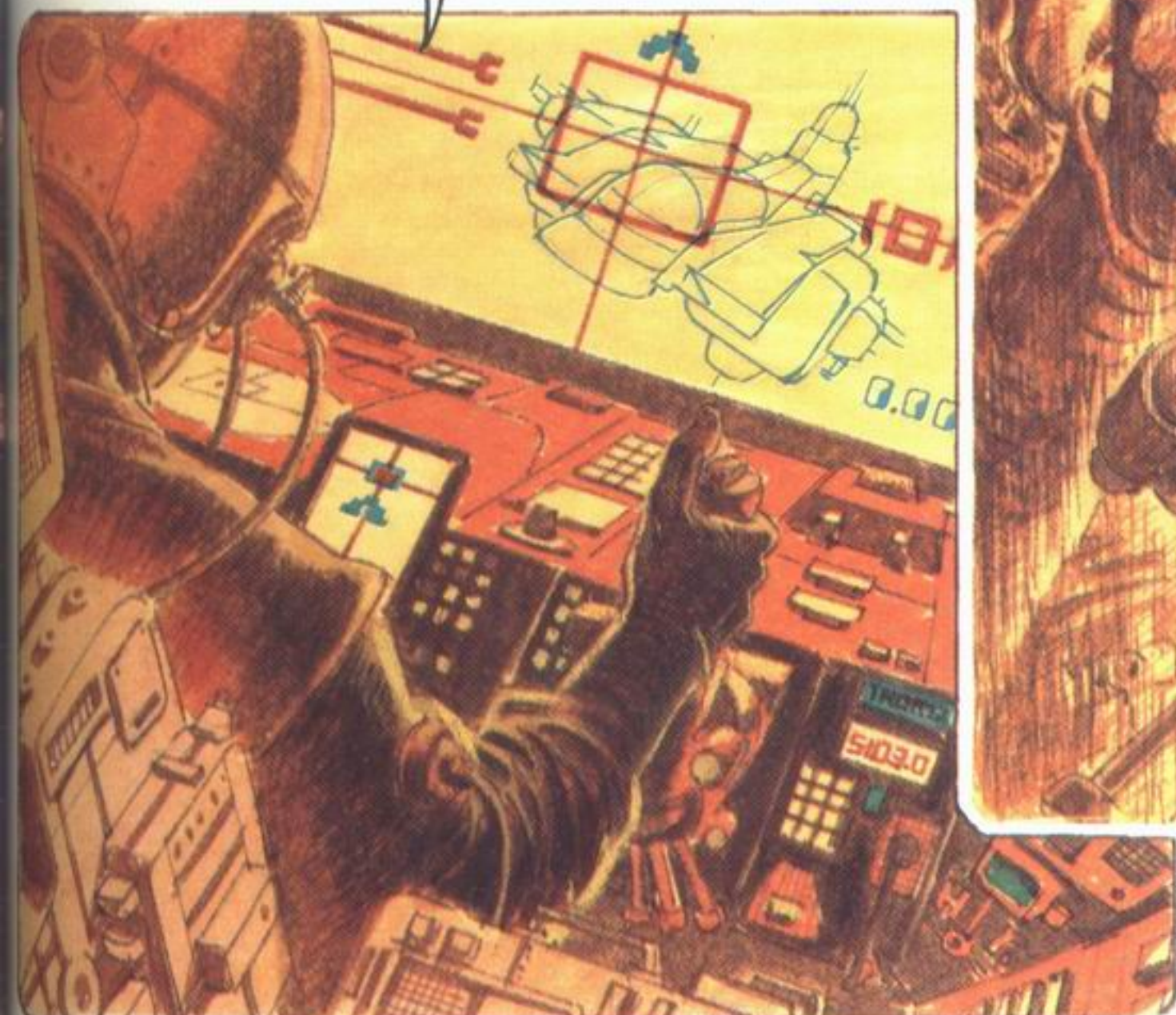


LISTEN...THIS HISTORICAL TAPE HAD SOME **AUDIO!**

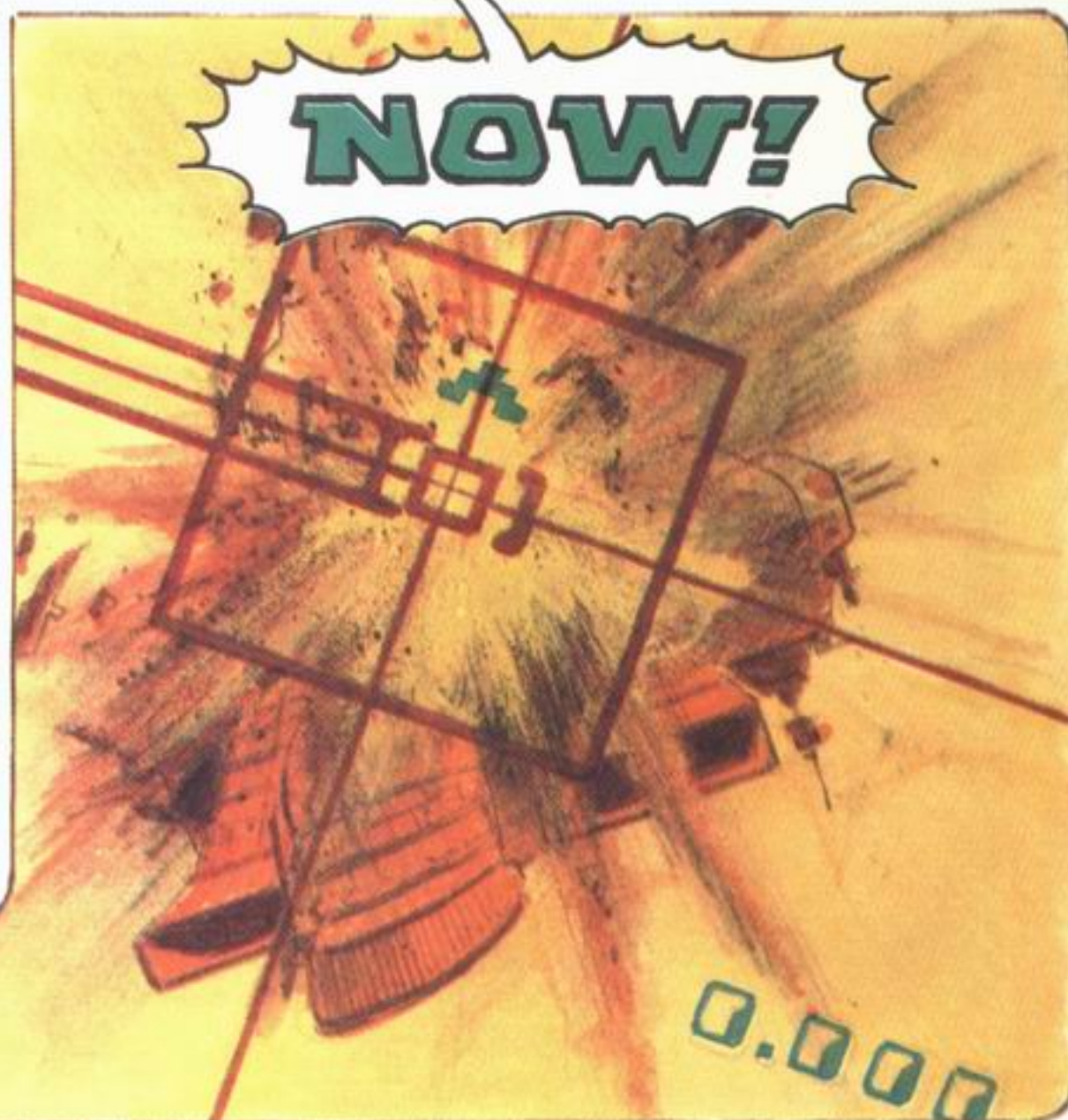


YOU'LL HEAR IT BETTER IF I SWITCH TO **INTERIOR MONITOR!**


ZEROING IN ON ZYLON **BASESTAR--**



--ITS SHIELDS APPEAR TO BE **FLUTTERING...**








WELL, HOW  
DO YOU LIKE  
MY "SCRAP  
HEAD" NOW,  
CAPTAIN--?

SWITCH THE  
MONITOR TO  
**EXTERNAL**  
AGAIN FOR  
A SECOND,  
WOULD YOU,  
ZEKE...

...SO I CAN  
WATCH THIS  
BABY MOVE!


GRADUALLY THE  
HARD-NOSED FLIER  
JEDEDIAH POOLE  
BECOMES ENTHRAL-  
LED BY THE FLUID  
MOTION OF THE  
ANCIENT CRUISER  
THROUGH THE  
SPACEWAYS --

--FASCINATED BY THE UN-  
ASSAILABLE SKILL OF A  
PILOT IN A RECORDING  
MADE IN A DISTANT CENTURY--




--POSITIVELY ENCHANTED BY THE  
FRESHNESS, THE GRACE, THE THRILL  
OF PASSING AMONG THE VERY  
JAWS OF AN ANCIENT ENEMY TO  
EMERGE NOT ONLY UNSCATHED,  
BUT VICTORIOUS!






JED'S DETACHED SCOWL SLOWLY MELTS LIKE THE FACE OF A SNOWMAN AS OLD EZEKIEL VICKER'S TAPE RUNS ITS SPECTACULAR COURSE...



... AND FOR THE FIRST TIME THE GRITTY STAR PILOT REALIZES THAT SOMEWHERE IN THE BURIED TECHNOLOGY OF MERE MORTALS--IN THE COLLECTIVE MIND OF HUMANITY-- LIE THE POWER AND THE HONOR TO WREST A GALAXY FROM THE HANDS OF THE ZYLON DEVILS...




LOOK! THE PILOT TOOK OUT THE MOTHER SHIP AND THE OTHER ONE'S FALTERING!

HE'S NOT LETTING UP FOR A MOMENT, THAT PILOT-- GOING AFTER THE ZYLON THAT'S DIS-ORIENTED...

...YES, I KNOW-- LIKE AN ORPHANED BEE LOOKING FOR ITS HIVE!

I SAW THIS SHOW WITH ITS ORIGINAL CAST!



"THAT PILOT'S INCREDIBLE! WHO IS THAT GUY--?"

"HE WAS JUST ... SOMEONE WHO LIVED HERE --BEFORE THE HOLOCAUST!"



BUT HALFWAY ACROSS  
THE GALAXY, ON THE  
DARK WORLD OF THE  
ZYLONS' ORIGIN...

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE  
THREE *INSURGENTS*--THE  
FEMALE ONE, IF MY INSTINCTS  
SERVE ME WELL...

...AND MY  
INSTINCTS  
ALWAYS  
SERVE ME  
WELL!

THERE WILL BE NO  
MORE *NONSENSE*  
REGARDING THESE  
THREE! THEY MUST  
BE *DESTROYED*--

--BEFORE  
THEY POSE  
A REAL  
*THREAT*!

THEIR TYPE  
CANNOT BE  
*TOLERATED*  
IN THIS  
GALAXY--

--FOR THEY  
SEEK COMPUTERS...  
RECORDS...  
INFORMATION--!

INFORMATION IS  
POWER, AND IN MY  
GALAXY, EVEN THE  
SMALLEST SHRED  
OF POWER MUST  
RESIDE WITH ME--

--THE *QUEEN*  
MOTHER OF  
THE ZYLONS!

IS THAT  
CLEAR, MY  
CHILDREN?

AND LIGHT YEARS AWAY...



...A ONCE STATIONARY SQUAD OF ZYLON FIGHTERS BEGINS A SLOW DESCENT TO THE PLANET ORIC, A HUB OF COMMUNICATION AND COMMERCE IN A BESIEGED GALAXY...

... WHERE HALF A MILLION MORTALS OF NEARLY AS MANY RACES PURSUE A SEMBLANCE OF A LIVELIHOOD ON THE MARKETPLACE PLANET...

...SOME PRAISE THEIR GURUS OR PROMOTE THEMSELVES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE...

...SOME HONE A SKILL, LIKE CHARMING THE VICIOUS SNAPPING EGGS OF PERCOM...

...BUT ONLY ONE HAS CHOSEN THIS PLACE, IN THIS AGE WITHOUT DIGNITY OR INTEGRITY, TO EXHORT HER FELLOW MORTALS TO DEFEND THEIR HONOR...

...AND THERE ARE THOSE WHO LISTEN...

IT'S FEAR I'M TALKING ABOUT...

... NAMELESS, UNREASONING, UNJUSTIFIED TERROR WHICH PARALYZES NEEDED EFFORTS TO CONVERT RETREAT INTO ADVANCE!

OUR FEAR OF THE ZYLONS IS A STATE OF MIND, AND WE CAN OVERCOME IT--



-- BUT WE'LL HAVE TO PUT  
OUR **BODIES** AND OUR **HONOR**  
ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK  
TO DO IT!

WE'RE A  
SMALL GROUP  
OF **FREEDOM**  
**FIGHTERS**  
BUT WE DON'T  
PLAN TO STAY  
**SMALL** FOR  
LONG!

YOU  
THERE...  
WHO  
ARE  
YOU?

M-ME...? I'M  
CALLED **SKRIMSH**...  
ER-- WHAT'S  
UP THERE?

BREAKING TOMMY'S RHYTHM  
AS IF IT WERE PLANNED THAT  
WAY, A SCREAMING COMES  
ACROSS THE SKY...

...FROM THE  
EDGE OF A  
NIGHTMARE  
THERE APPEARS  
A **ZYLON**  
CRUISER...

YOUR ATTENTION!  
ATTENTION ALL  
CREATURES OF  
**ORIC!**

... AND WHATEVER THEIR  
STATION OR THEIR  
PECULIAR STORY, THEY  
PAY ATTENTION--

THE **ZYLON IMPERIAL**  
ORDER IS SEEKING ONE OF  
A NUMBER OF CRIMINAL  
INSURGENTS BELIEVED TO  
BE ON THIS PLANET--

--A **HUMANOID**  
FEMALE WITH THESE  
FACIAL FEATURES!

IF YOU SEE OR HAVE  
CONTACT WITH THIS  
HUMANOID, NOTIFY  
YOUR NEAREST  
ELECTED OFFICIAL  
IMMEDIATELY--

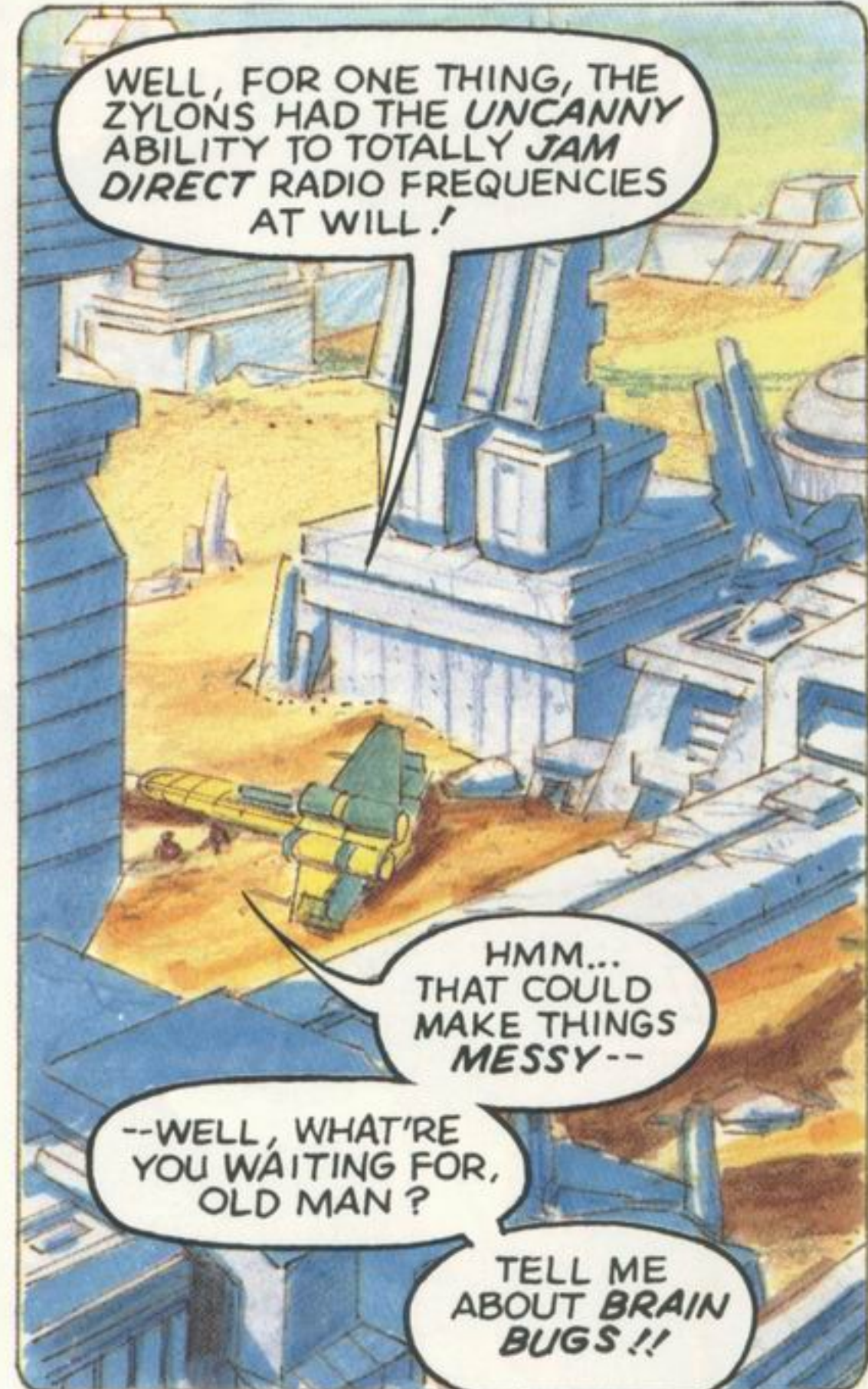
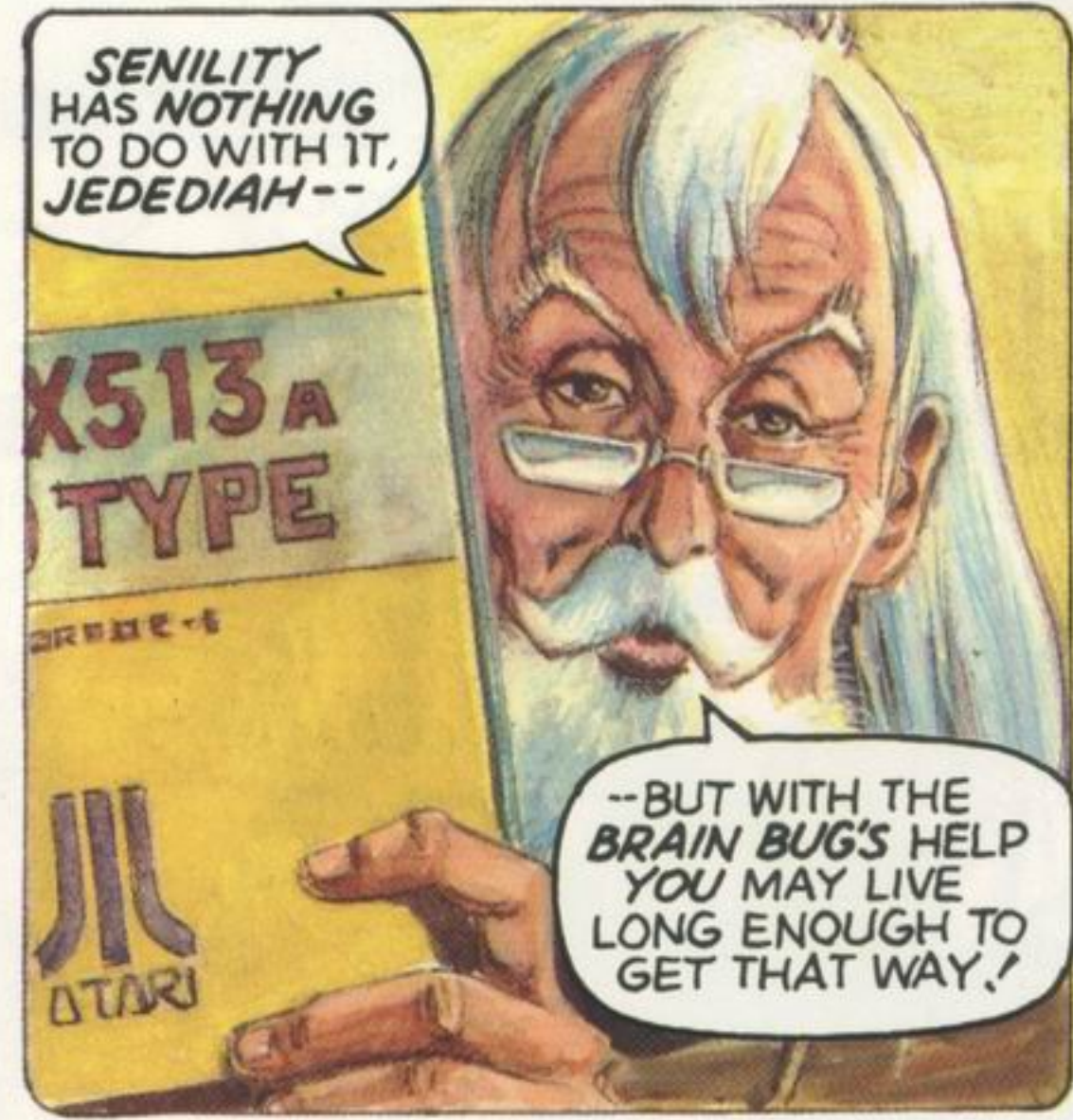
--AND YOU WILL  
BE PERMITTED TO  
ENJOY THE CONTIN-  
UED EXISTENCE OF  
YOUR PLANET!

METHINKS  
I SHOULD  
EXIT THIS  
WANTON  
WORLD AS  
GRACEFULLY  
AS I CAN  
MANAGE IT!

NOW **HERE'S**  
SOMETHING TO PUT  
ME IN A **FINE**  
POSITION WITH THE  
**ZYLON OVERLORDS!**

I'LL  
DO  
IT!









SO DOES THE OLD SCHOLAR ONCE AGAIN CONVINCE THE YOUNG FIREBRAND THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW EVERYTHING, AS ...

REMOVE THE **BRAIN BUG** CONTROL UNIT FROM THE PILOT'S CONSOLE CAVITY--



NOW I KNOW HOW YOU'VE LIVED SO LONG!...

YOU GET SOME YOUNG PATSY TO DO YOUR HEAVY LABOR!

HERE IT IS! NOW WHAT?

HANDLE IT GENTLY! IT'S **VERY** DELICATE!



TIGHTEN THE **SYNAPSE** PEGS MARKED IN BLUE!

I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU, OLD MAN!



THIS HAS THE SAME KIND OF CIRCUITRY AS A **UNIVERSAL TRANSLA-TOR**--

--I COULD PUT THIS BACK TOGETHER WITH MY EYES CLOSED!



I WOULDN'T TRY THAT!-- IF YOU AREN'T CAREFUL TO CLOSE DOWN THE **CEREBELLUM** CIRCUIT FIRST, IT MIGHT--

oh dear!

**ALIEEE!!**







**FIRE,  
TOMMY!**





ON THE ORANGE  
WORLD OF ORIC...

JED?...  
IS THAT YOU,  
JED--OR AM I  
LOSING MY  
SENSES?

SHE KNOWS HE WILL  
IGNORE CAUTION--AND  
PRECAUTION--TO HELP  
HER: HE'S DONE SO  
BEFORE!



BUT IT IS A DESPERATE NEED  
TO **ESCAPE** AND SURVIVE TO  
BATTLE AGAIN THAT COMPELS  
TOMORROW HARDTACK TO  
RAISE THE SNOWBIRD OFF  
THE SURFACE OF ORIC INTO  
ZYLON-INFESTED SKIES--

AND ON THE BLUE  
WORLD OF THE  
ZYLONS' HOLOCAUST...

HANG ON,  
TOMMY--I'LL GET  
YOU OUT OF THIS  
PICKLE!

JED!  
YOU HAVEN'T  
TEST-FLOWN  
THE CRUISER  
YET!




HE KNOWS THAT HE HAS  
NO CHOICE BUT TO SAVE  
HER--HE HAS A REPUTA-  
TION TO MAINTAIN!



--AND THE ANCIENT, INBRED  
CALL TO A FRIEND'S DEFENSE  
THAT HURTTLES JEDEDIAH  
POOLE ACROSS THE STARS  
THAT ARE HIS HOME IN AN  
ANTIQUE STAR RAIDER  
CRUISER THAT HAS SEEN  
BATTLE JUST ONCE IN THE  
PAST FIVE CENTURIES...

...IT IS A CALL THAT  
NEITHER WOULD EVER  
FAIL TO ANSWER--






THE PLANET IS  
GIRDLED BY THE  
SLAVE/CHILDREN  
OF THE ZYLON  
QUEEN MOTHER...

...AND FOR THE  
WOMAN, THE  
BATTLE CON-  
SISTS OF JUST  
ONE SUDDEN  
BLOW--


-- SHE KEEPS HER  
WITS ABOUT HER...




...LOWERS CABIN  
PRESSURE GRADUALLY...

...ORDERS THE  
CRAFT INTO  
AERODYNAMIC  
MODE...


...BUTTRESSES  
SHIELDING OVER  
THE VOLATILE  
FUEL MIX...



... SHE LIVES  
THROUGH THE  
GLIDER-STYLE  
LANDING AND  
REMAINS CON-  
SCIOUS...



...WHICH MEANS SHE WILL  
HAVE TO DEAL WITH WHAT  
IS TO COME NEXT--



SHE'S OUT  
THERE  
SOMEWHERE!

WHATEVER  
ZAP I GOT FROM  
THAT **BRAIN BUG**  
MACHINE IS  
**FADING**, BUT I  
KNOW SHE'S OUT  
THERE SOMEWHERE...



...AND WITH THIS BABY'S  
**GALACTIC CHART** AND  
**SECTOR SCAN** I CAN  
FIND HER!

JUST MOVE THE INDICATOR  
TO THE SECTOR WHERE  
**ZYLONS** ARE MASSING ON  
A NEUTRAL OUTPOST--

--AND  
**HYPERDRIVE!**

WARP ENERGY: 8904  
TARGETS: 4 00: PESSER  
STAR DATE: 08.14



TIME STOPS FLOWING, AND VAST EXPANSES OF SPACE FOLD AWAY AGAINST THE SUPERORIC SPEED OF THE STAR RAIDERS CRUISER...

...WHICH EMERGES FROM THE SPACE WARP IN A POCKET JUST A FEW MILLION KILOMETERS FROM ORIC--

--QUITE CLOSE ENOUGH TO ATTRACT COMPANY...

MEANWHILE, ON THE SURFACE OF THE ORANGE PLANET--

I THOUGHT JED WAS TALKING TO ME BEFORE! ...AM I MAD?

NO MATTER NOW! ...IT'S TIME TO TAKE MY MEDICINE!

YOU ARE UNDER ARREST! ...COME DOWN AND BE DISARMED IMMEDIATELY!

ONLY IF YOU STOP YELLING AT ME!

THE ONLY THING WORSE THAN A ZYLON IS A LOUD ZYLON LACKEY!

BUT NOTWITHSTANDING TOMMY'S TROUBLES, ON THE EDGE OF ORIC'S ATMOSPHERE, JED IS HAVING THE TIME OF HIS LIFE!

THIS CRUISER'S TAKEN TWO DIRECT HITS WITH MINIMAL DAMAGE!

IMAGINE IF I HAD EXPERIENCE WITH HER!

BATTEN THE HATCHES, ZYLON SCUM...

...I'M GOING TO OPEN HER UP!







HEE-YAAHH!

I WISH THIS CONTROL CONSOLE HAD SOUND EFFECTS!



SECTOR SCANNING...  
TRACKING COMPUTER...  
SUBSPACE COMMUNICATION...  
DYNAMITE!

THIS IS ABOUT THE HOTTEST PIECE OF HARDWARE I'VE EVER WRAPPED MY GREASY LITTLE HANDS AROUND!



AND WITH A LITTLE MORE PRACTICE I BET I COULD TAKE ON THE ENTIRE ZYLON EMPIRE SINGLE-HANDEDLY!

BUT LIFE DOWN BELOW IS NOT SO MERRY...

DISPERSE!--BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE ZYLON IMPERIAL ORDER!

THAT'S A FREEDOM FIGHTER YOU'RE ROUGHING UP, FRIEND...

...AND THAT MAKES YOU PART OF THE PROBLEM!

WISE-MOUTHED WHELP!...







WHAT HAPPENED?  
ONE MINUTE I'M  
IN BIG TROUBLE ...

...THE NEXT,  
IT'S PARTY  
TIME ON ORIC!!

WHAT'S  
THAT?--UP  
IN THE  
SKY...!



MOTHER OF STARS!  
IT LOOKS LIKE ZEKE'S  
CRUISER...

...GIVING  
SOME ZYLON  
BLOODSUCKER  
A RUN FOR IT!



LAND-BOUND  
MORTALS HOLD  
THEIR BREATH--

--THOSE THAT HAVE  
BREATH TO TAKE--



--AS ONE OF THE RULING RACE CHASES  
AN UNFAMILIAR STAR CRUISER...

...DESPERATELY CLOSE TO  
A HIGH ROCK OUTCROP--UNTIL IT LOOKS  
CERTAIN THAT THE  
QUARRY HAS CHOSEN  
DEATH OVER DEFEAT--

--BUT THE CRUISER TWISTS  
AT AN IMPOSSIBLE ANGLE  
AND...



NOBODY  
FLIES LIKE  
THAT BUT MY  
PARTNER!

HEY, CAPTAIN!  
TAKE ME HOME!





BEAMING  
UP,  
KIDDO!

WHEW!  
YOU  
CERTAINLY  
DON'T BELIEVE  
IN EARLY  
ARRIVALS,  
DO YOU?



EARLY ENOUGH, NAVIGATOR! NOW LET'S  
TOW THE SNOWBIRD HOME BEFORE THOSE  
ORIC SCAVENGERS GET TO IT!



FOR A MOMENT, NO ONE MOVES  
ON THE PLANET BELOW, AND  
THERE ARE THOSE WHO STILL HAVE  
NOT TAKEN A BREATH...



IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE  
FOR THE REMAINING  
ZYLON PATROLS TO  
TRACK THE PAIR, BUT  
THEY MUST ANSWER  
AN URGENT SUMMONS  
FROM HOME...



NOW, CHILDREN, WHY ARE WE  
HAVING SUCH TROUBLE WITH  
THIS PROBLEM...?



ARE THESE NOT SIMPLE *HUMANS* WITH  
WHOM WE ARE DEALING...? DO THEY  
NOT HAVE SINGLE *MINDS* AND  
DISORDERLY NATURES...?



WHAT WILL BE  
THE FURTHER PROBLEM,  
*COMMANDER*, WITH  
TRACKING DOWN,  
DIVIDING AND  
DESTROYING THEM?

THERE  
WILL BE NO  
FURTHER  
PROBLEM,  
MOTHER!

THAT'S  
A GOOD  
BOY...







THE LIGHT YEARS PEEL OFF  
BEHIND THE NEW STAR  
RAIDERS LIKE THE SKINS OF  
AN ONION, AND SOON...

THUS DO THE  
PRODIGALS RETURN...!

STOW THE  
POETRY, ZEKE...  
TOMMY'S HURT!

I'M FINE...  
JUST A LITTLE  
SHAKEN.

AND WHAT OF THE  
PRODIGALS' FRIENDS?

FRIENDS?...  
WHA--

RECRUITS!  
I'LL BET THEY  
TRACKED US AS  
WE ENTERED  
HYPERDRIVE!

CADET SKRIMSH  
AND COMPANY  
REPORTING FOR  
TRAINING, SIRSI!...

WELCOME!  
WELCOME!  
WELCOME!

WE WANT  
TO CLOBBER  
ZYLONS JUST  
LIKE YOU!

WELL, IT  
SEEMS WE'RE  
ON OUR  
WAY!





SO...

WHEN DO WE  
GO ON OUR  
FIRST MISSION?



YEAH, I KNOW...  
YOU GUYS WANT  
TO MEET ME AND  
MY FRIENDS FIRST,  
RIGHT...?

WELL, THAT  
WOULD BE  
GOOD FOR  
STARTERS--

ALL RIGHT. I'M  
*SKRIMSH* AND  
THESE FOUR  
ARE--

WHOA, YOUNG-  
STER-- WHY NOT LET  
THEM SPEAK FOR  
THEMSELVES!



THANK YOU, SIR.  
I AM *QABIRON*,  
ARCHER AND  
NATURALIST OF  
THE EPSILON-  
MINOTAURI  
SYSTEM!

I AM *RUSHERTOM*, POET AND  
SINGER! MY HOME WORLD WAS  
CONQUERED AND MINED FOR  
PLUTONIUM BY THE ZYLONS!

THE ZYLONS  
SLAUGHTERED  
MY MASTER,  
A TRADER IN  
GEMSTONES!  
I AM *SULI  
KHOLIYYAM*,  
UNEMPLOYED  
BONDSERVANT!

MY NAME  
IS TOO COM-  
PLICATED TO  
PRONOUNCE,  
BUT YOU CAN  
CALL ME  
*SMILEY*! I'M  
A MAGICIAN...  
HONEST!



SWELL BUNCH  
OF GUYS, EH?

WE WOULD BE  
FOOLS TO THINK  
OTHERWISE! OUR  
HOME IS YOURS!



AS FOR YOUR *MISSIONS*--  
WELL, THERE ARE SOME  
PRELIMINARIES...

DAMN STRAIGHT  
THERE ARE... AND  
THEY BEGIN AT  
THE CRACK OF  
DAWN!



INDEED, FROM THAT DAWN AND THROUGH DOZENS OF DAWNS THEREAFTER, THE THREE LEADERS ATTEMPT TO TEACH THEIR RECRUITS ALL THEY KNOW...

MOVE WITH GRACE LIKE A MANTIS, QABIRON... NOT LIKE A FROG!

THIS IS A PHOTON PISTOL-- AND IF ANY OF YOU TOUCHES IT BEFORE YOU KNOW WHAT IT CAN DO...

...I'LL CHEERFULLY TWIST IT AROUND YOUR THROAT!

... AND IF THEY DAMAGE OR DESTROY YOUR SHIELDS, PUNCH THE HYPERDRIVE BUTTON BEFORE YOU EVEN THINK--!

SEKKA-KAN!  
SEKKA-KAN!

SEKKA...?  
OH, I SEE-- THAT'S THE SECTOR SCAN!







THEY WORK AND STUDY HARD BY DAY, THIS RAGTAG CORPS OF WILLFUL DREAMERS... AND BY NIGHT THEY EAT HEARTILY--

...THEN FOR A TIME WHILE MY PEOPLE WERE BEING SHIPPED TO THE SLAVE CAMPS, I HID IN THE WILDERNESS--

--UNTIL I COULD STOW AWAY ON A TRADE SHIP TO **ORIC** WHERE I FOUND TOMMY!

WE'VE NEVER HEARD *YOUR* LIFE STORY, **SKRIMSH**... HOW ABOUT IT?



YES, I DON'T THINK I'VE COME ACROSS YOUR RACE IN ALL MY TRAVELS! WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

OH, NOWHERE... REALLY!



I GREW UP IN THE ALLEYS OF **ORIC'S** MARKETPLACE!

I NEVER KNEW MY PARENTS-- JUST ...

... JUST TRADERS AND **VAGABONDS**, LIKE ME!



COME ON... YOU HAVE **NO IDEA** WHO YOU ARE?-- THERE MUST BE A REASON YOU'RE HERE!

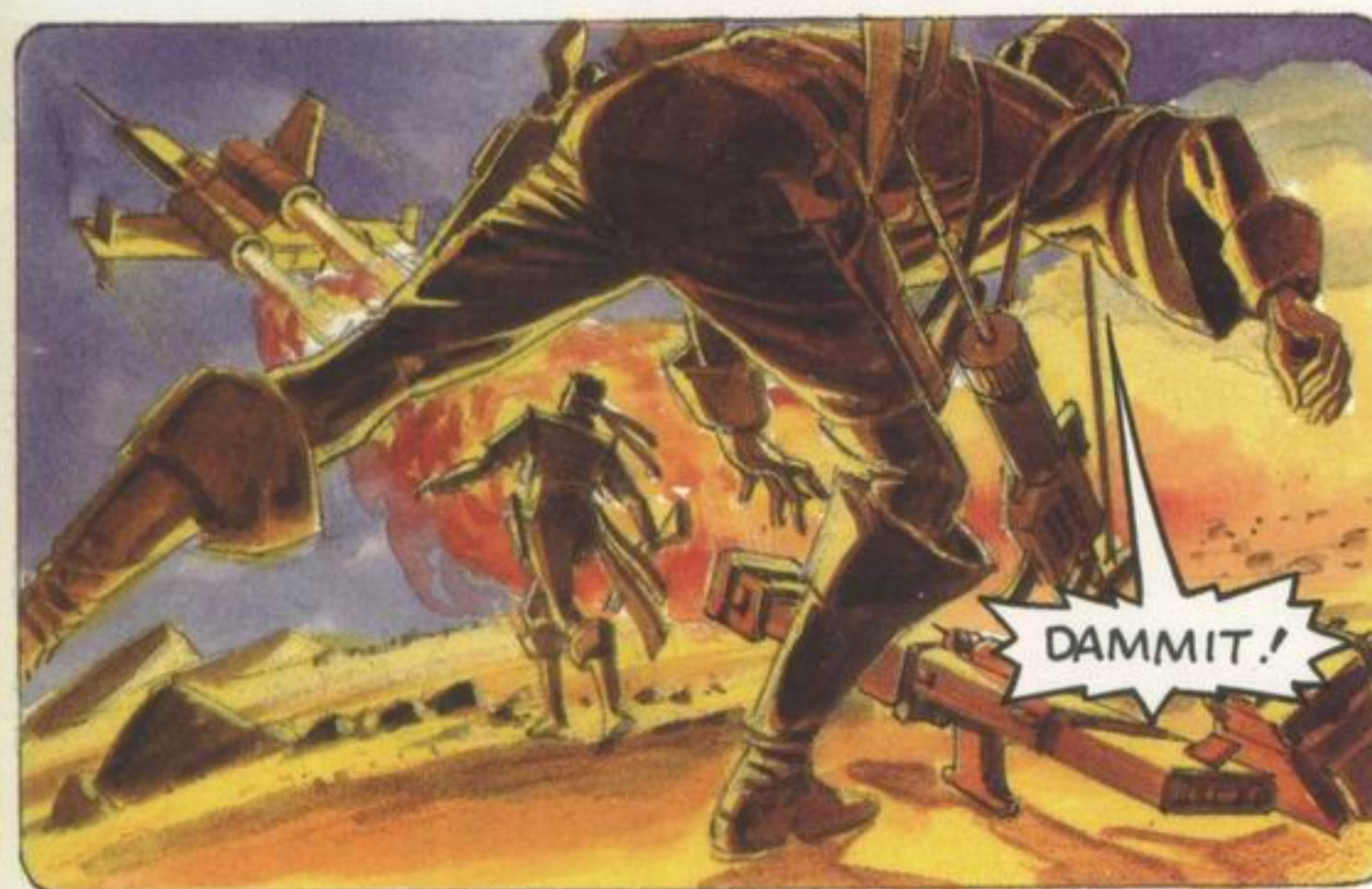
I'M HERE ... TO GO ON **MISSIONS**... FOR THE **ADVENTURE**... THAT'S ALL--



...A LITTLE BIT MORE--

--AND MAYBE...









YOU'RE GONNA REGRET IT, TOMMY!

I MAY ALREADY!



BUT, MOMENTS BEFORE SKRIMSH BEGINS HIS IMPULSIVE JOURNEY, ON THE ZYLONS' HIVE-WORLD HALF A UNIVERSE AWAY, THE MOST POWERFUL BEING IN THAT GALAXY MAKES HER PLANS...

IT HAS HAPPENED AS I FEARED IT MIGHT SOMEDAY, MY CHILDREN--

--SO IT IS NOW NECESSARY TO INITIATE THE PREEMPTIVE REMOVAL OF A PLANET!

IT IS *THIS* WORLD... AT THE COORDINATES SPECIFIED HERE...

WHERE A **REBELLION** FESTERS LIKE A MINOR **TUMOR**--

--HOLDING THE POTENTIAL TO SPAWN AN EMPIRE--  
THREATENING **MENACE**...

...UNLESS WE MOUNT A PRUDENT **SURGICAL STRIKE**!

IT IS BUT A **SMALL** OPERATION, TURNING ONE PLANET TO **DUST** TO REMOVE SUCH A **THREAT**! SO MAKE HASTE!

DO IT FOR ME, MY LITTLE ONES....





"...AND THEN COME BACK HOME TO MOTHER--!"

I KNOW WHAT THAT FIEND IS UP TO AND I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO DOES...

...AND I CAN'T LET TOMMY OR JED OR ANYBODY STOP ME!



OMIGOSH! THEY'RE SO FAST!

THEY'RE ALREADY PREPARING TO ENTER THE SECTOR CONTAINING ZEKE'S PLANET!

MY ONLY CHANCE IS TO MEET 'EM HALFWAY--



--BY WARPING OUT OF HEEEE.....

AS THE POWERFUL CRUISER ENTERS HYPERDRIVE, THE MOMENT APPROACHES INFINITE TIME...



...AND MASS, MOTION-- EVEN THOUGHT-- ARE SUSPENDED IN THAT MOMENT, UNTIL--

DRAT!

HE BEAT ME INTO WARP SPEED!



I JUST HOPE HE DIDN'T BEAT ME BY SO MUCH...

...THAT I CAN'T TRACK HIM! WAIT! HE'S BEAMING ME A COMMUNICATION!

I'LL FOLLOW THE LINE OF ITS TRANSMISSION!

THE SNOWBIRD CRASHES THROUGH THE BARRIERS OF DIMENSION ITSELF AFTER THE RUNAWAY CRUISER...



...AND WHEN TOMORROW HARD-TACK FINALLY GETS A CHANCE TO SEE SKRIMSH'S MESSAGE, SHE DISCOVERS--

HE WANTS TO REASSURE ME! TERRIFIC!

DON'T WORRY I'LL BRING HER BACK ALIVE SKRIMSH

NOW AT LEAST I KNOW THAT HE'S A CONSIDERATE THIEF!



WHILE, BENEATH HIS HOME  
PLANET'S SURFACE, EZEKIEL  
CRANSTON VICKER HAS A  
RUDE AWAKENING...

ZEEK!

...OF THE  
SORT, HE HAS  
DECIDED, HE  
MAY AS WELL  
GET USED TO--

WHA--  
UHH...?

TOM-MEE!  
TOM-MEE!

WHAT  
ABOUT  
TOMMY?

SOUN!  
SOUN!

SOUND?  
THE SOUND'S  
OFF ON THE  
MONITOR!

GOOD EVENING,  
DEAR! WHAT'S  
THE BAD NEWS...?

JED WILL EXPLAIN HOW  
THIS HAPPENED... BUT  
I'M CALLING FROM  
DEEP SPACE--

SKRIMSH HAS THE CRUISER  
AND I'M IN THE SNOWBIRD  
AND WE'RE BEING TRACKED  
BY I-DON'T-KNOW-HOW-  
MANY ZYLONS!

MY...  
LORD!

I'M SWITCHING ON  
THE GALACTIC CHART  
HERE! IT'S COMING  
IN... YES!

I'M WITH BOTH OF  
YOU, TOMMY! I CAN  
SEE THE SITUATION  
NOW--

--AND IT APPEARS TO  
BE VERGING ON THE  
DESPERATE!

BUT FAR AHEAD OF  
THE SNOWBIRD  
HURTLES THE STAR  
RAIDERS CRUISER  
WITH THE YOUNG  
CADET AT THE HELM...





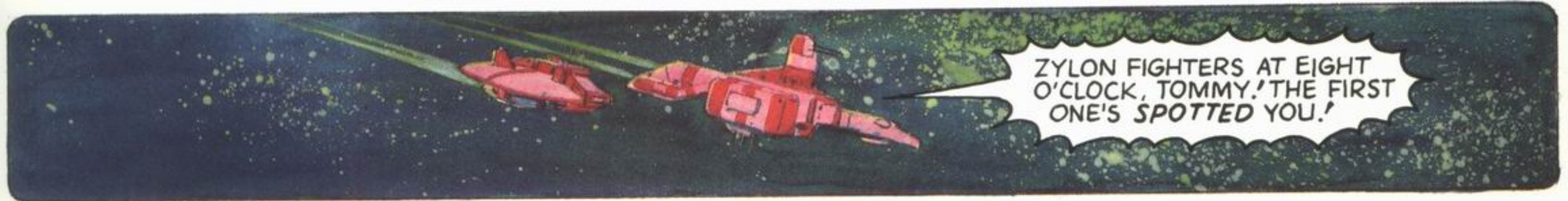
...AND LIGHT SECONDS BEHIND, THE SNOWBIRD'S SUBSPACE COMMUNICATOR BARKS OUT ZEKE VICKER'S WARNING TO HIS LEVEL-HEADED COMPATRIOT--

"BEARING SIX DEGREES, TOMMY... THEY'RE RIGHT AHEAD NOW -- "

BUT AHEAD, TUMBLING INTO A STORM OF ZYLON WARSHIPS WITH CENTURIES-OLD TECHNOLOGY IN HIS HANDS AND THE IMPETUOUS DETERMINATION OF YOUTH IN HIS SOUL --

THE URCHIN FROM THE ALLEYS OF THE WORLD OF ORIC DOES HIS BEST TO SHOW THE ZYLON MASTERS OF A GALAXY THE FURY OF AN UNWILLING SLAVE !





ZYLON FIGHTERS AT EIGHT O'CLOCK, TOMMY. THE FIRST ONE'S SPOTTED YOU!



THANKS, ZEKE...

...AND I'M COMMENCING EVASIVE MANEUVERS! MAYBE THEY'LL LEAD ME TO THEIR COMMAND CENTER!

DON'T RISK PLAYING WITH THEM, TOMMY!--



THERE'S ANOTHER ZYLON BIRD BEHIND YOU NOW!

GOT THE MESSAGE...



I'M ACTIVATING MY PHOTON CANNON NOW--

TO THE GOOD FORTUNE OF BOTH OF US!



ZYLON FIGHTER NUMBER ONE IN MY SIGHTS...CLOSER...CLOSER...

...AND THE CANNON IS ARMED--





**--FIRE!**

IN THAT MOMENT, AND  
FOR THE BRIEF DURATION  
OF THE BATTLE--

--THE SPACEFARING WOMAN  
BECOMES ONE WITH HER  
SHIP AND WEAPONRY... A  
SINGLE DEADLY, INTELLI-  
GENT ORGANISM STAND-  
ING AGAINST THE PAIR  
OF ZYLON INSURGENTS...



...THE FIRST OF WHOM  
NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT IT!

AS FOR THE  
SECOND--

WANNA RACE,  
ZYLON PIG?

CATCH ME...

...IF YOU...

...CAN!

AND THE SNOW-  
BIRD SLICES  
THROUGH THE  
FOLDS OF SPACE  
INTO A MOMENT  
OF DECEPTIVE  
QUIET IN SEARCH  
OF THE VICIOUS  
BATTLE AHEAD...

HANG ON,  
SKRIMSH!  
HELP IS  
ON THE  
WAY!





MERE LIGHT-SECONDS AWAY  
THE ANCIENT STAR RAIDERS  
CRUISER FRANTICALLY WINDS,  
ROLLS, WEAVES AND BELCHES  
THE FURY OF ITS PHOTON  
TORPEDOES--

-- ITS INEXPERIENCED  
PILOT OBLIVIOUS TO  
THE FACT THAT THE  
CAVALRY HAS JUST  
ARRIVED!

SKRIMSH!  
LET'S GET  
OUTTA HERE!

BUT THE  
YOUNG  
ALIEN  
DOES NOT  
HEED  
THE CALL--

AM I BE-  
COMING...  
A KILLER?...

...OR IS IT  
REALLY  
KILLING TO  
RID THE UNI-  
VERSE OF  
THESE OVER-  
SIZED IN-  
SECTS?

THE  
TRUTH  
IS...

IT  
DOESN'T  
MATTER--

--AS LONG  
AS NO ONE  
CAN STOP ME  
FROM PLOW-  
ING THROUGH  
THESE MUR-  
DERERS ON  
MY WAY TO...

THE LITTLE  
GUY'S A MANIAC!  
HE'S IGNORING MY  
RADIO TRANSMIS-  
SION-- TIME FOR ME  
TO TAKE SOME  
MORE--

--DECISIVE  
ACTION!

SKILLFULLY, LIKE A FIBRE THROUGH A FABRIC,  
TOMMY WEAVES THROUGH THE PATTERN OF  
THE BATTLE AND CLAMPS A BEAM ONTO THE  
CRUISER...





HOURS LATER, AFTER A  
TEDIOUS PIGGY-BACK  
TREK THROUGH HYPER-  
SPACE...

AHH... THE  
PRODIGALS  
RETURN!

ABOUT  
TIME...



...AND ONCE  
SHE **UNCUFFS**  
THE CRUISER  
FROM HER  
TRACTOR  
BEAM--

--I'M GOING TO  
HAVE SOME  
CHOICE WORDS  
FOR MY NAVI-  
GATOR AS **WELL**  
AS SKRIMSH!



ENTHUSIASM'S  
ONE THING, BUT  
**STUPIDITY'S**  
ANOTHER!

DON'T BE TOO  
HARD ON  
**EITHER** OF  
THEM, JEDE-  
DIÁH...

... AFTER ALL,  
YOU **PUT** THE  
ENTHUSIASM  
THERE **YOUR-  
SELF!**



--LISTEN, KID... I'M GOING  
TO LET GO AND ASK YOU  
TO **LAND** HER...



... GIVE YOU A  
CHANCE TO **RE-  
DEEM** YOURSELF!  
DON'T **BLOW** IT!

OH... **I**  
WON'T BLOW  
IT!



AND I **WILL**  
REDEEM MYSELF!  
BUT TO DO THAT--

I'M  
SORRY, GUYS...  
REALLY!

AGAIN, YOUNG SKRIMSH BLASTS AWAY  
IN THE STAR RAIDERS CRUISER...



THIS TIME TOMMY LOSES NO TIME BEATING AFTER HIM, BUT NOW...

I'M NOT SITTING OUT THIS ONE!... SMILEY, IS YOUR CRAFT SPACE-WORTHY?

IT IS MANEUVERABLE ENOUGH, BUT--

GREAT! I'M BUYING IT!... HOPE MY CREDIT'S GOOD!

OH LORD... I HOPE I CAN GET UNDERGROUND TO MY CONTROL CONSOLES--

--BEFORE THEY CAN WARP INTO A ZYLON SWARM LIGHT-YEARS AWAY!

AS ON THE HIVE-WORLD, ANOTHER MIND WATCHES...

THE SHIP APPROACHES US, MY CHILDREN -- FOLLOWED BY TWO OTHERS!

IT WILL BE UNNECESSARY TO DESTROY THE PLANET ONCE WE DISPOSE OF THE SHIP'S PILOT--

...ONE WHOSE PRESENCE I HAVE SENSED FOR THE GENERATION SINCE WE DEALT WITH THE GUAT-TIANS!

SURROUND AND ENGULF LIKE GOOD LITTLE BOYS...

LOOK AT THAT GALACTIC CHART... ALL OF A SUDDEN CRAWLING WITH ZYLON WARSHIPS!

NO MATTER!... WHAT MORE HAVE I GOT TO LOSE--?

BUT JUST WHAT WAS IT THAT THIS SECRETIVE YOUNG CADET HAD LOST? -- WHAT PAIN TEARS AT HIS MEMORIES...?



HIS EARLIEST MEMORIES  
OF WATCHING ETTO, THE  
BLIND EGG-CHARMER  
OF THE MARKETPLACE  
ON ORIC...

...OF WATCHING  
EGGS DANCE  
LIKE SPOTS BE-  
FORE HIM--  
AND OF WRENCH-  
ING HUNGER!

WOW... THEY SAY  
THE BLIND ONE  
IS SOMEHOW  
LINKED MENTAL-  
LY WITH THE  
EGGS! I WON-  
DER HOW HE  
DOES THAT!

I WONDER...

...IF WITH  
ALL THOSE  
TOKENS  
IN HIS COL-  
LECTION  
PLATE--

...IT'D BE  
SUCH A  
TERRIBLE  
THING TO  
GIVE HIM  
A ROCK  
TO PUT  
OFF HIS  
CONCENTRATION--

-- LONG ENOUGH  
TO GATHER UP  
SOME DINNER!

PAIN AND GUILT  
ARE AN AWFUL  
MIXTURE...

...AND THE GUILT  
OF HAVING TO  
STEAL FROM A  
BLIND BEGGAR--

-- ALMOST CANCELS  
THE PAIN OF AN EM-  
PTY GUT...

... ALMOST--

-- BUT NOT WHEN THERE  
IS STILL ANOTHER  
STOMACH TO FILL ...

LUCID! I...  
BOUGHT SOME  
EGGS!

MIRACLE  
OF  
MIRACLES...!

ETTO HAD  
SOME EXTRAS  
TODAY, AND--

YOU GOT THE  
CHARMER TO  
PART WITH  
SOME PRECIOUS  
EGGS? HARDLY!...

YOU'RE A GOOD  
BOY, SKRIMSH,  
AND I DON'T KNOW  
WHAT AN OLD  
CRIPPLED VAGRANT  
CAN DO TO THANK  
YOU!--

HOW ABOUT  
A STORY?





THERE IS A STORY THAT I HAVE BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU, BOY-- OF THE LOST WORLD OF *GUAT*...

...HOME OF A HAPPY, MUSICAL PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL POWERS OF *EMPATHY*-- THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND EMOTIONS INTUITIVELY--

--A RACE, I BELIEVE, OF WHICH YOU ARE A MEMBER-- MAYBE THE LAST SURVIVOR!

"THE *GUATTIAN* PEOPLE HAD LEARNED TO LIVE, THEY HAD THOUGHT, WITH THE *OVERLORDSHIP* OF THE *ZYLONS*-- BUT FOR REASONS KNOWN ONLY TO THE OVERLORDS, THESE GENTLE PEOPLE HAD BECOME A *THREAT*...

"ON THAT DAY, THE *ZYLON* SHIPS APPEARED IN THE SKY--AND SOON A SILENT SCREAM OF ANTICIPATED PAIN STREAMED ACROSS THE SURFACE OF THE DOOMED WORLD...



"FOR WHEN SUCH A PSYCHICALLY-POWERFUL RACE ANTICIPATED THEIR IMPENDING END, A RIPPLE OF *MENTAL ENERGY* TORE THROUGH SURROUNDING SPACE LIKE A GREAT *ETHER WIND*, INSINUATING ITSELF INTO THE *ZYLONS'* MINDS, SO THAT, RATHER THAN *BLASTING* THE PLANET APART--

--THE ENCROACHING *ZYLON SWARM* WERE ALL FORCED TO CRASH TOGETHER TO ITS SURFACE, DESTROYING THEMSELVES AS WELL...



"THE PEOPLE OF *GUAT* WERE INDEED *MURDERED* BY THE *ZYLONS*--BUT THEY TOOK MANY OF THEIR EXECUTIONERS ALONG WITH THEM AS THEY DIED!"



OLD LUCID'S STORY STRUCK A CHORD IN YOUNG SKRIMSH'S SOUL, AND IT BECAME AN OBSESSION... BUT NOW THE FIRST ZYLON WARSHIP EDGES INTO HIS SIGHTS--

YES... I'M SURE NOW! I KNOW WHAT... WHO IS COMMANDING THE ZYLONS!

AND OLD STORIES GIVE WAY TO THE REALITY OF THE APPROACHING ZYLON FLOTILLA--

--AND FOR JED POOLE, THE REALITY IS DEADLY!

MAYDAY!  
... MAYDAY ALREADY FOR PITY'S SALES!

I'VE JUST BEEN RAMMED BY A ZYLON WARSHIP!  
...HEAVY DAMAGE!

THIS IS TOMMY!  
IS THAT YOU, JED...?

THIS IS SKRIMSH!  
YOU GUYS ARE AS NUTS AS I AM!

SAVE THE PSYCHO-ANALYSIS, TROOPS... MY SHIELDS AND CANNON ARE OUT AND THERE'S A ZYLON BIRD AT NINE O'CLOCK--

--THAT'S MOVING LIKE A BIRD OF PREY!

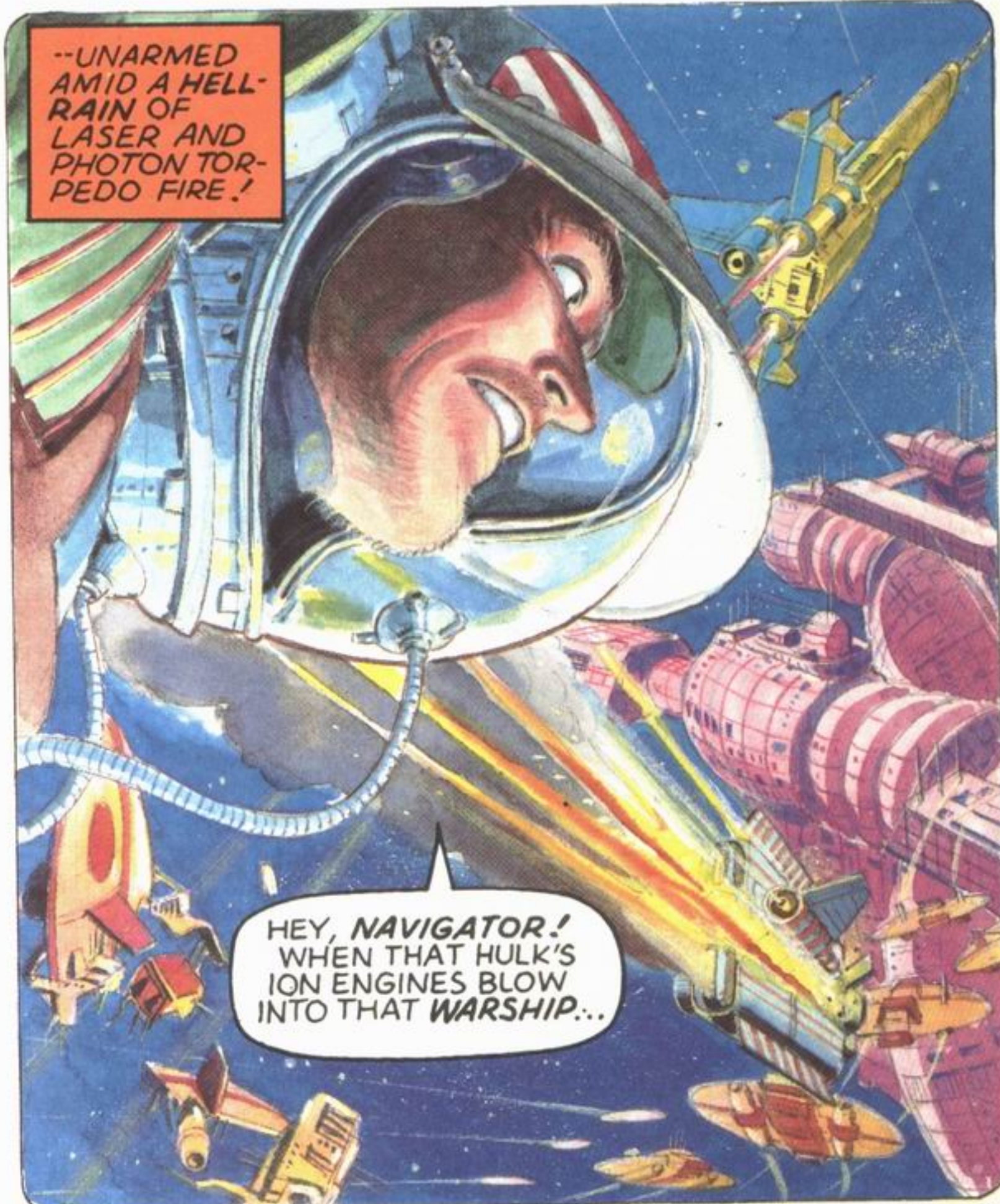
I'VE GOT A FIX ON YOU, CAPTAIN!

JUST LET HER DRIFT FOR A MOMENT--!

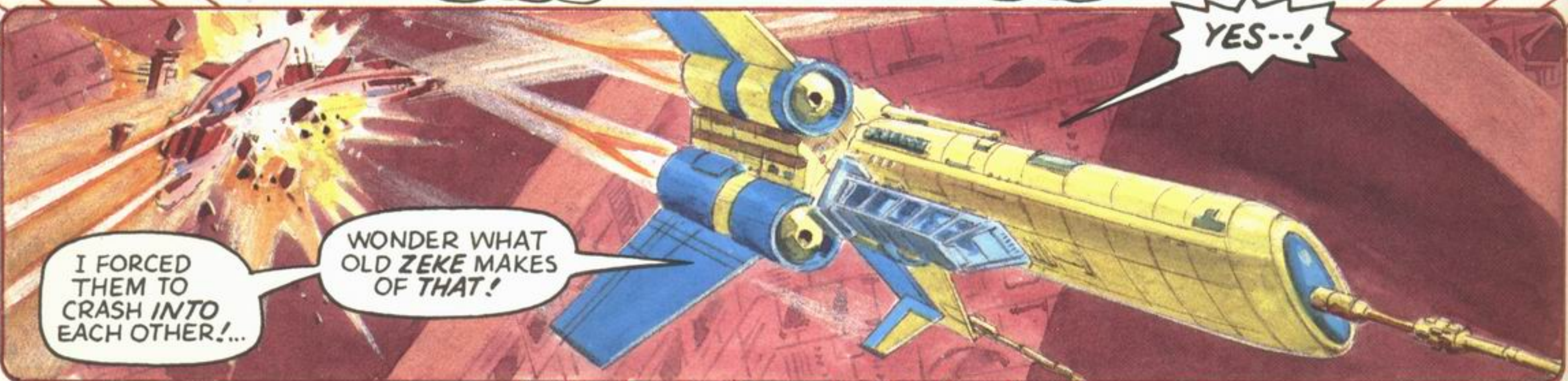
NO TIME!

BESIDES... I'VE GOT A BETTER USE FOR THIS WORTHLESS CRATE!

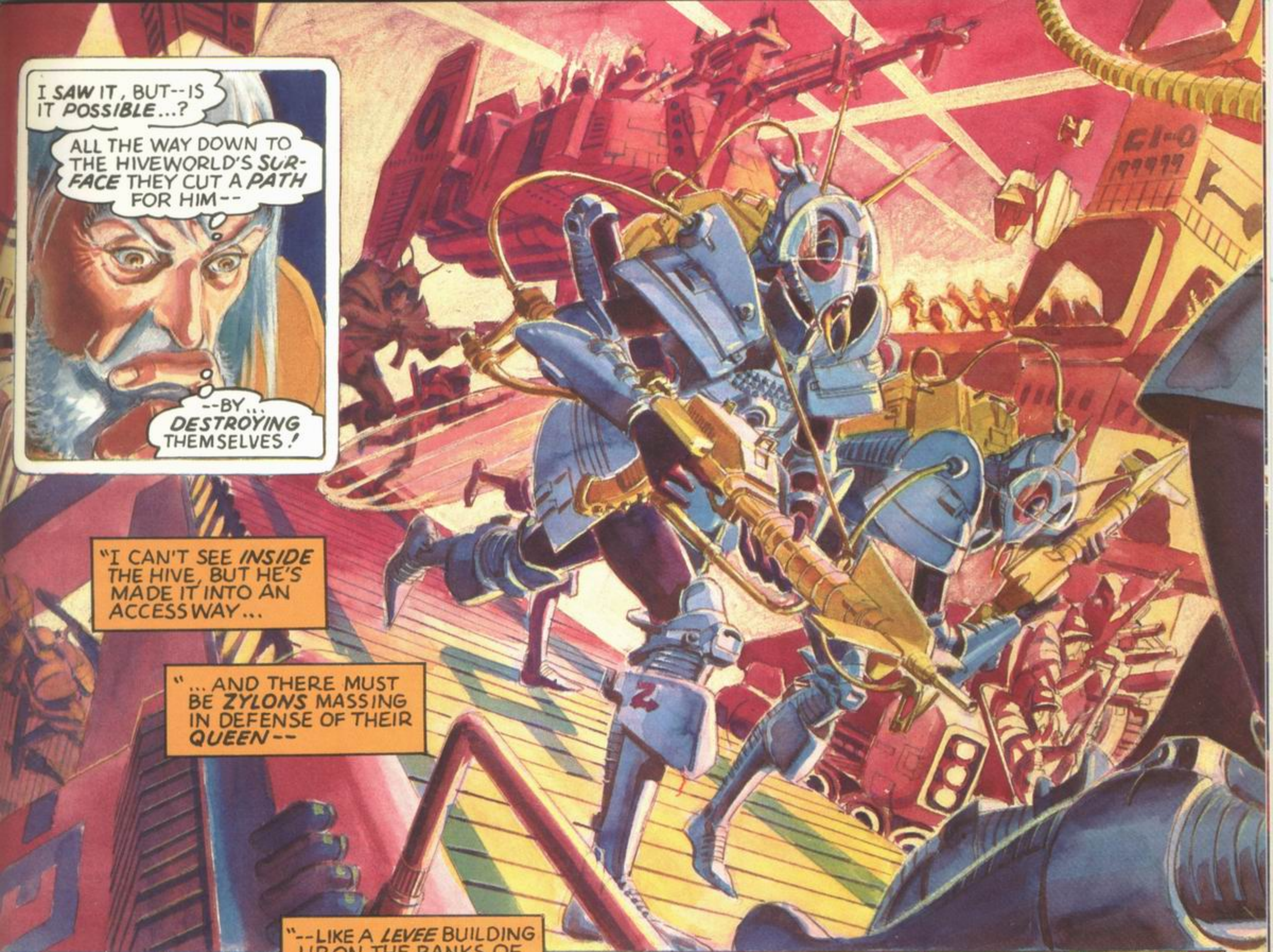












I SAW IT, BUT--IS  
IT POSSIBLE...?


ALL THE WAY DOWN TO  
THE HIVEWORLD'S SUR-  
FACE THEY CUT A PATH  
FOR HIM--

--BY...  
**DESTROYING  
THEMSELVES!**

"I CAN'T SEE *INSIDE*  
THE HIVE, BUT HE'S  
MADE IT INTO AN  
ACCESSWAY...

"...AND THERE MUST  
BE **ZYLONS** MASSING  
IN DEFENSE OF THEIR  
**QUEEN**--

"--LIKE A *LEVEE* BUILDING  
UP ON THE BANKS OF  
A RIVER."



HERE HE COMES, MY  
CHILDREN... BE READY--



AND NOT FAR FROM  
THIS WORLD OF GATH-  
ERING DARKNESS...

THEY'RE ALL  
**RETREATING**,  
ZEKE-- AND  
THERE'S NO  
SIGN OF  
**SKRIMSH!**

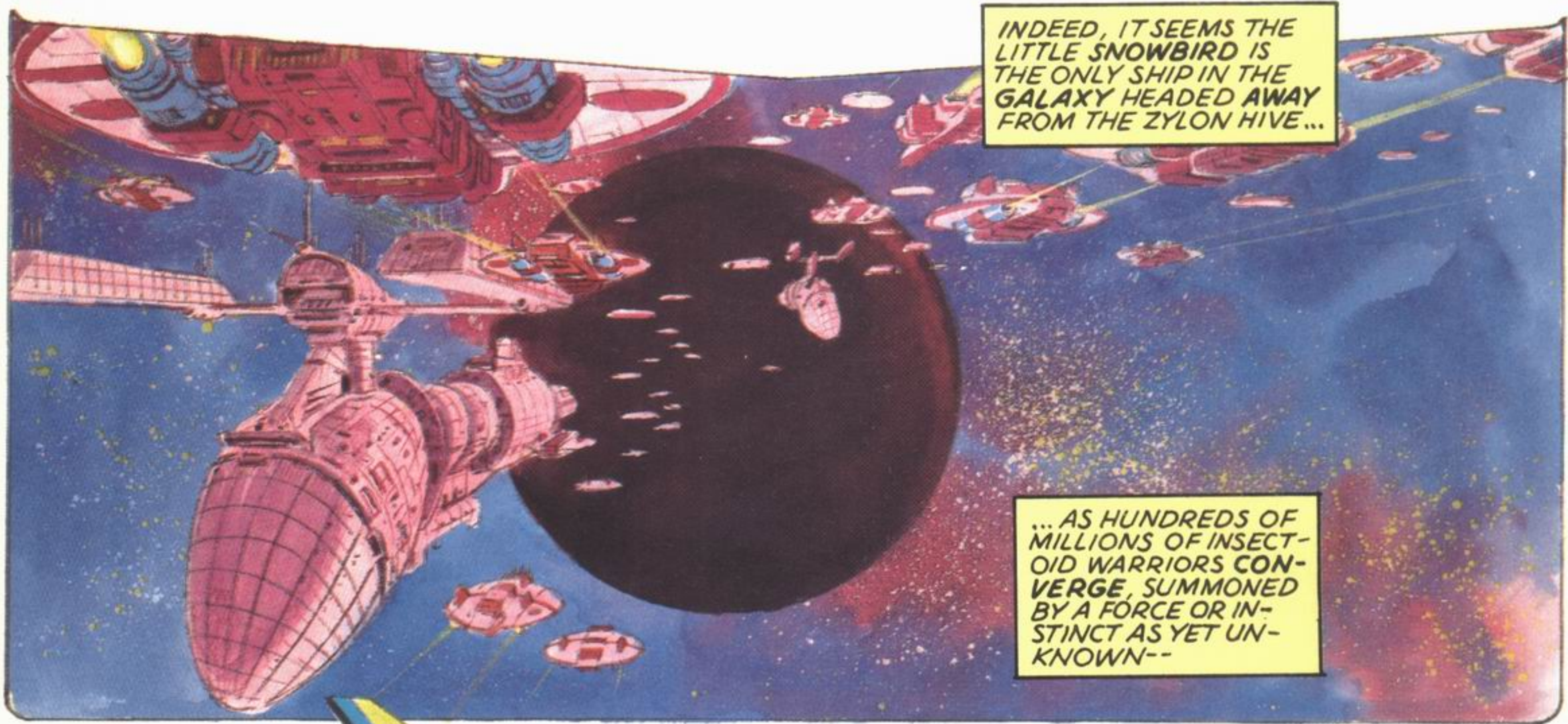
I DON'T KNOW  
WHETHER TO  
**FOLLOW** THEM  
OR **WHICH** WAY  
TO GO!



**HOME, JED!**  
COME BACK  
AND **LEAVE**  
HIM THERE!...

I THINK I  
**UNDERSTAND**  
WHAT'S GOING  
ON NOW!





INDEED, IT SEEMS THE LITTLE SNOWBIRD IS THE ONLY SHIP IN THE GALAXY HEADED AWAY FROM THE ZYLON HIVE...

... AS HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF INSECT-OID WARRIORS CONVERGE, SUMMONED BY A FORCE OR INSTINCT AS YET UNKNOWN--



-- AND THE ANCIENT, REFURBISHED STAR RAIDERS CRUISER FINALLY TOUCHES GROUND FAR BELOW THE OUTER SURFACE OF THE HIVEWORLD...

WELCOME, MY CHILD...!



YOU HAVE NO RIGHT...



... TO CALL ME...



...YOUR CHILD!



I'VE CALLED YOUR REAL CHILDREN HOME!

ALL OF THEM! ALL AT ONCE!





YOU KILLED MY PEOPLE... AND NOW I KNOW I WAS RIGHT--

THAT ONCE THEY WERE YOUR PEOPLE AS WELL! HOW... COULD THIS HAPPEN--?

I WAS A **BIOLOGIST!** I DISCOVERED THE WEAK-WILLED ZYLONS, AND BY BECOMING THEIR **MOTHER**, I MADE THEM GREAT!

BUT I BECAME OLD... AND THE **GUATTIANS** BECAME A THREAT! TOGETHER, THEY COULD HAVE **OVER-THROWN** ME... BUT YOU ALONE CANNOT!

I CAN!



I HAVE LONG SUSPECTED THAT THE **QUEEN MOTHER** OF THE ZYLONS WAS OF ANOTHER RACE...


...**SKRIMSH'S** RACE AS IT MAY TURN OUT, AND--

--PLEASE COME BACK AND **GET ME!** WE MAY HAVE ONE MORE JOB TO DO!









STILL, THEY COME,  
SUMMONED BY THE  
VOICE OF AN UN-  
FAMILIAR MIND...

...BUT PROCEEDING NONE-  
THELESS, LIKE MACHINES  
THEMSELVES, UNCARING  
OF WHO DRIVES THEM,  
AS LONG AS THEY HAVE  
DIRECTIONS TO FOLLOW...

AND IF, IN WHAT  
PASSES IN ZYLONS  
FOR A MIND, THE  
THOUGHT OCCURS  
TO SOME THAT THIS  
IS WRONG... THAT  
THIS COURSE OF  
ACTION LEADS IN-  
EVITABLY TO DIS-  
ASTER--

--THEN THE  
THOUGHT  
OCCURS TO  
NO RESULT...





AND THEN...

...THERE WAS  
ONE--

... SOME KIND OF  
LIFE-SUPPORT  
SYSTEM--

--AND HE'S  
IN IT, ALL  
RIGHT!

IT'S ALL RIGHT...  
YOU'RE SAFE  
WITH US--

--WE THINK WE  
UNDERSTAND...

...AND WE'RE  
GOING HOME  
NOW--

--MY  
CHILD...