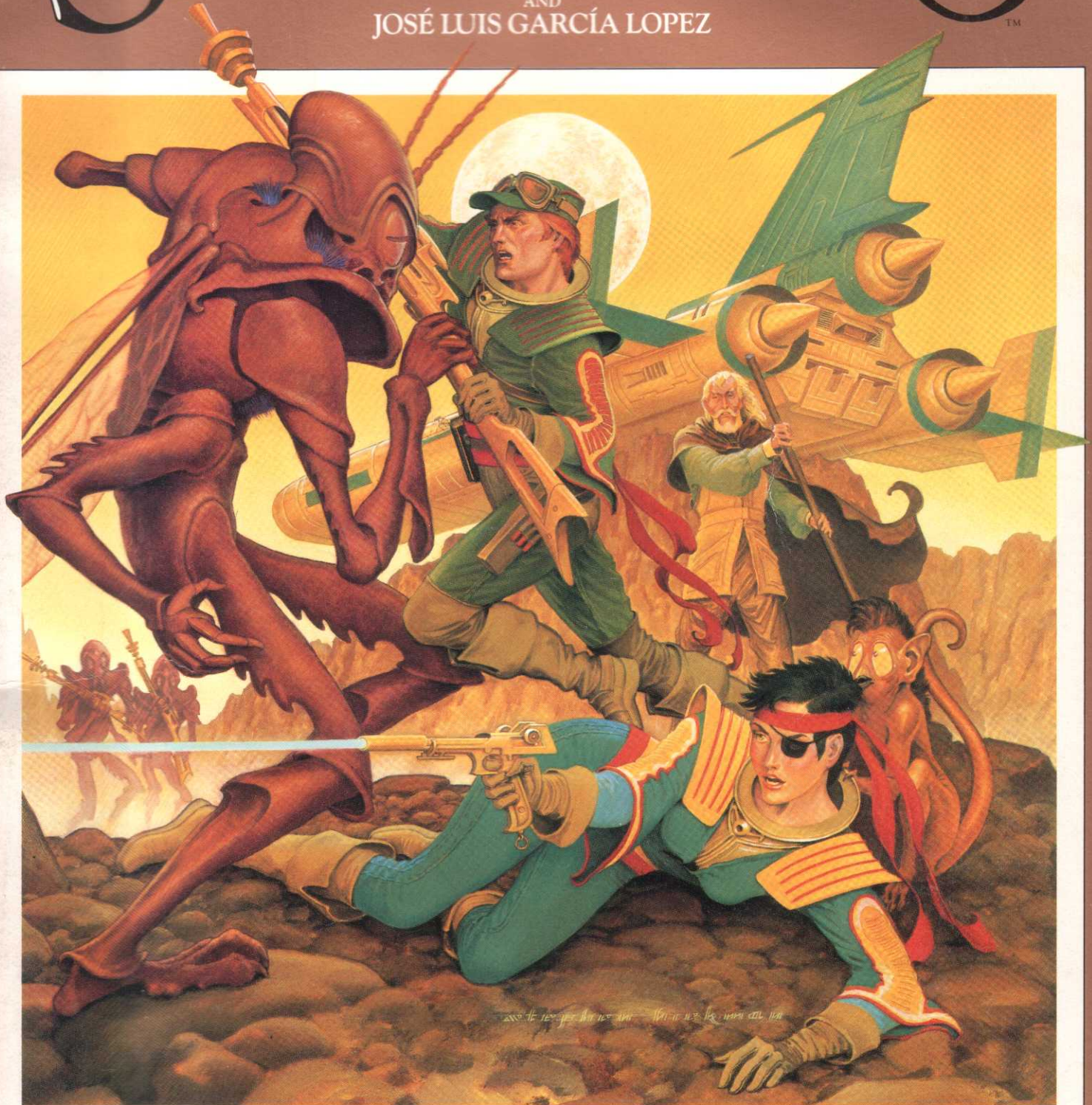




GRAPHIC NOVEL NO. 1
\$5.95

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



STAR RAIDERS is published by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10103. Copyright © 1983 Atari, Inc. All rights reserved. STAR RAIDERS is a trademark of Atari, Inc. used under license. The stories, characters, and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. The DC logo is a registered trademark of DC Comics Inc. Printed in Canada.

DC Comics Inc. and Atari, Inc.: Warner Communications Companies 

Jenette Kahn,
President and Publisher
Joe Orlando,
Vice Pres.—Editorial Director

Andrew Helfer,
Editor
Terri Cunningham,
Special Projects Coordinator

Neal Pozner,
Design Director
Bob Rozakis,
Production Manager

Dick Giordano,
Vice Pres.—Executive Editor
Paul Levitz,
Vice Pres.—Operations

Bruce Bristow,
Marketing Director
Arthur Gutowitz,
Treasurer

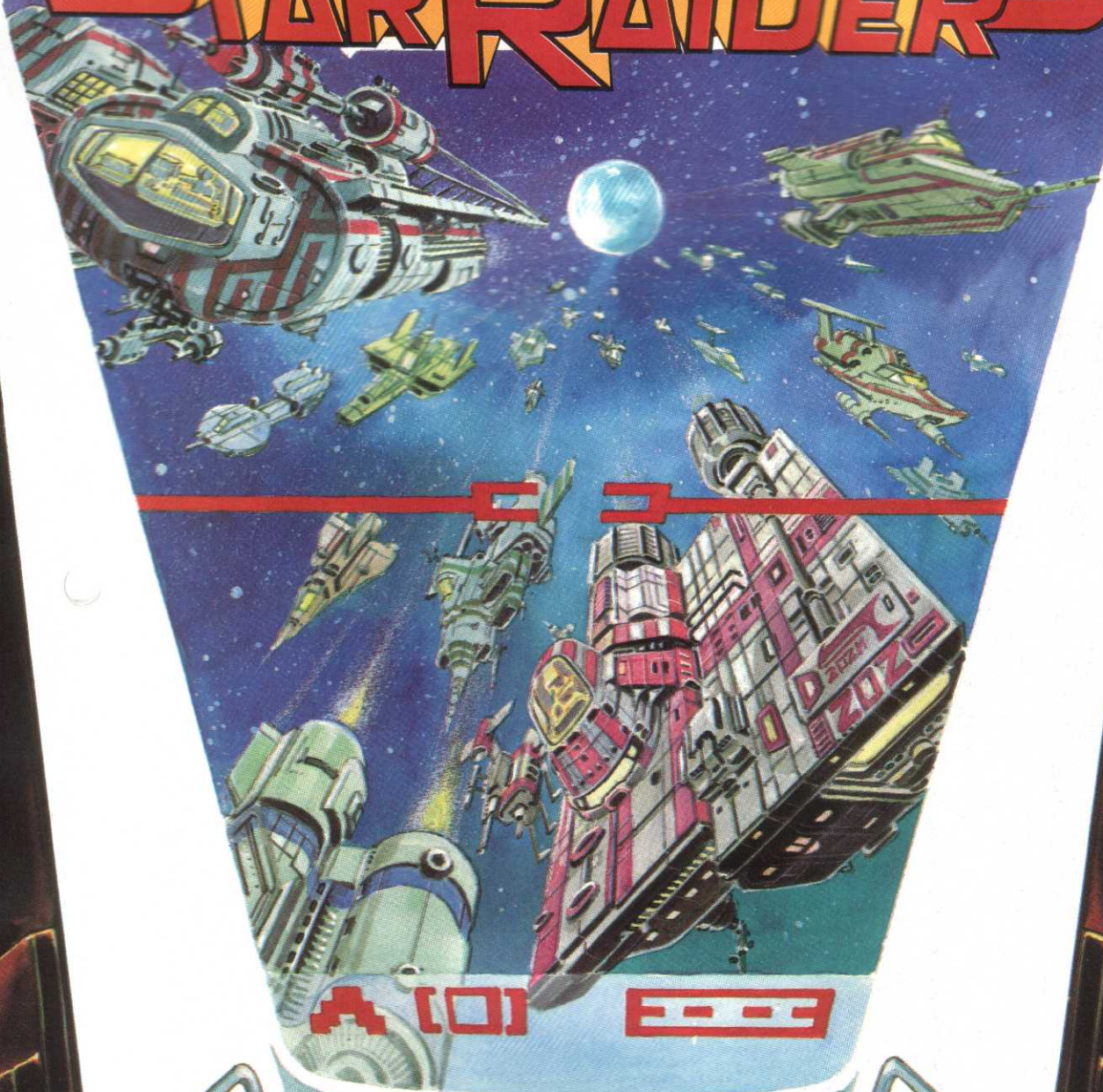
Special Thanks to: Todd Klein, Dave Manak, Lucia Vieira

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

FROM
EVERY CORNER OF AN
OPRESSED 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



A [0] E-E-E

PILOTS IN CHARGE
ELLIOT & 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--

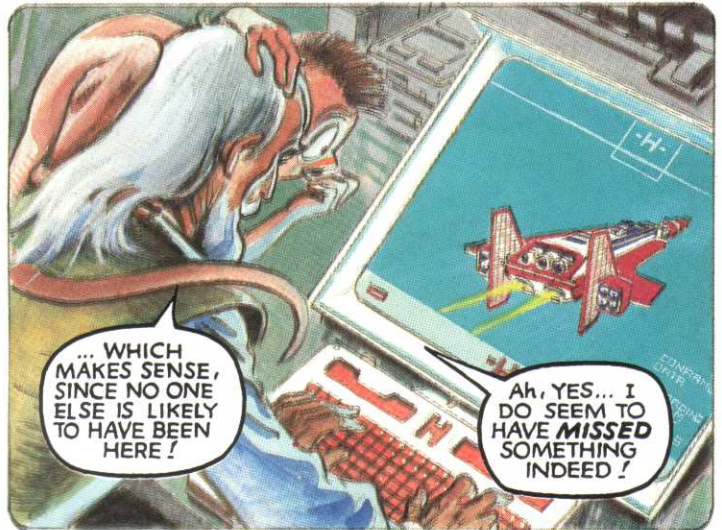
-- A LAST REMAINING FREE MAN LIVES HIS LIFE BY HIS OWN RULES...

... DAY BY DAY!

EZEKIEL D. VICKER
ONLY ONE
LIBRARIAN

ZEEK!

TEL ZEEK!



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?

'FRAD 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?

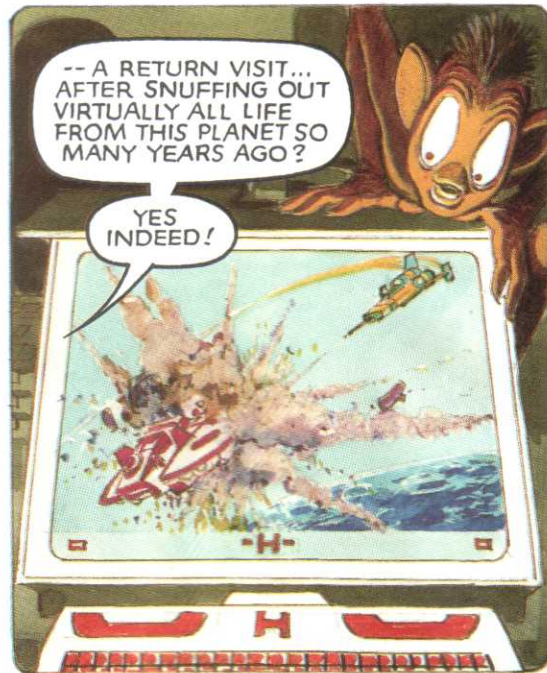
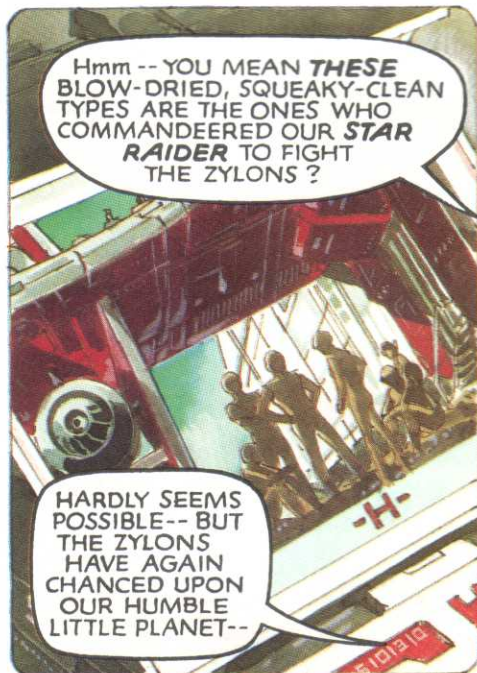
YES INDEED!



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...

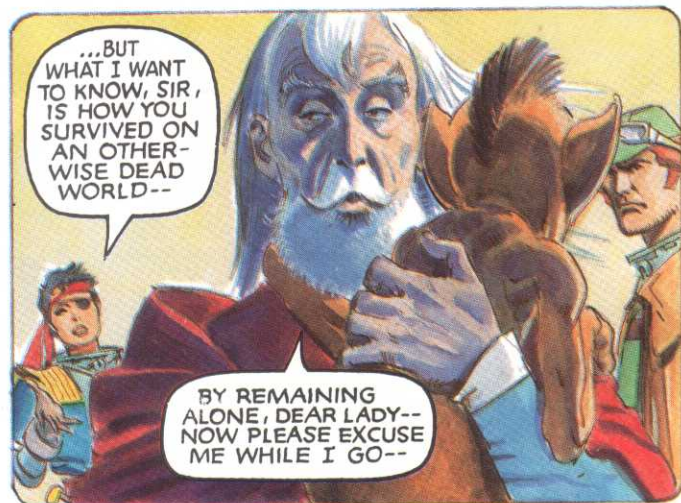
... AND WHILE MY NAME DOESN'T MUCH MATTER ANYMORE, I WISH YOU WOULDN'T CALL ME MACK--



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 OTHERWISE DEAD WORLD--

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



--GO NOWHERE, MACK!

OH MY...!



JED!!

OH PLEASE, SIR, DON'T TAKE OFFENSE -- I'M AFRAID HE HAD A BIT TOO MUCH TO DRINK LAST NIGHT!

I'M TOMORROW HARDTACK -- CALL ME TOMMY!

YES, WELL, I'M EZEKIEL VICKER --



--HE CAN CALL ME SIR!

I JUST HOPE HE DOESN'T GET THE CHANCE TO CALL ME OFTEN!

LISTEN, COMEDIAN ...



... WE CAME HERE BECAUSE WE GOT A READOUT OF A BATTLE GOING ON HERE --

--AND I'M BETTING YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!



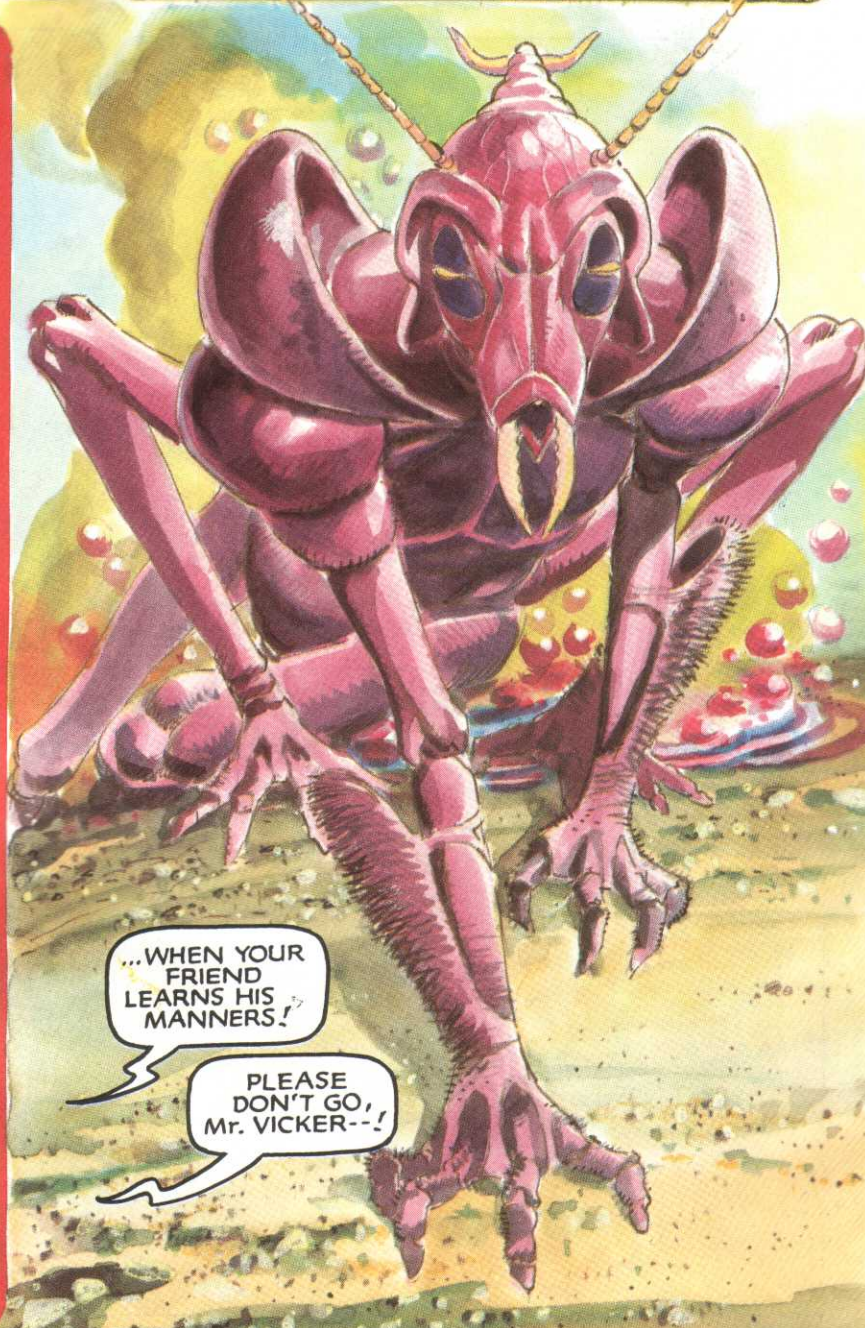
YOU SAY THERE WERE ZYLONS INVOLVED? WHO ELSE?

A GROUP CALLING THEMSELVES THE ATARI FORCE WAS HERE -- FIVE PEOPLE BEAT A TROOP OF ZYLONS!



SURE, MACK, A GROUP OF MYTHICAL TIME TRAVELERS WAS HERE AND YOU SAW THEM, RIGHT?

EXCUSE ME, TOMMY -- MAYBE I'LL BE BACK ...



...WHEN YOUR FRIEND LEARNS HIS MANNERS!

PLEASE DON'T GO, Mr. VICKER--!



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!

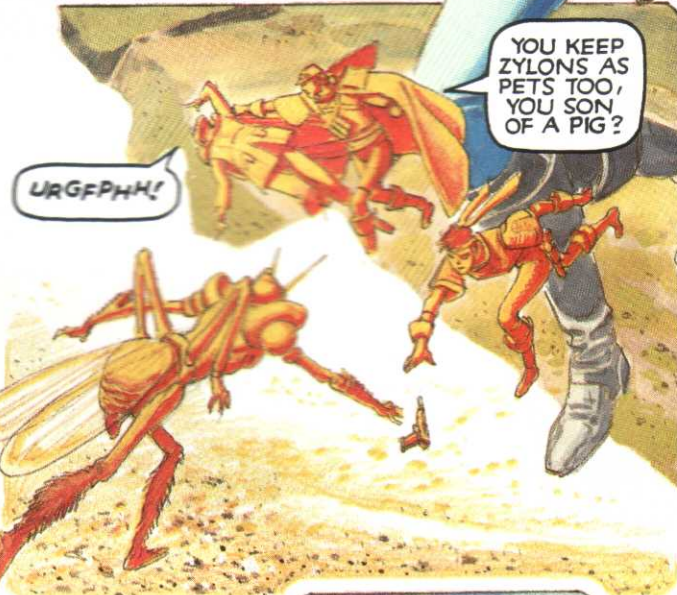
TOMMY-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT--



I'VE NEVER SEEN A ZYLON UP CLOSE--

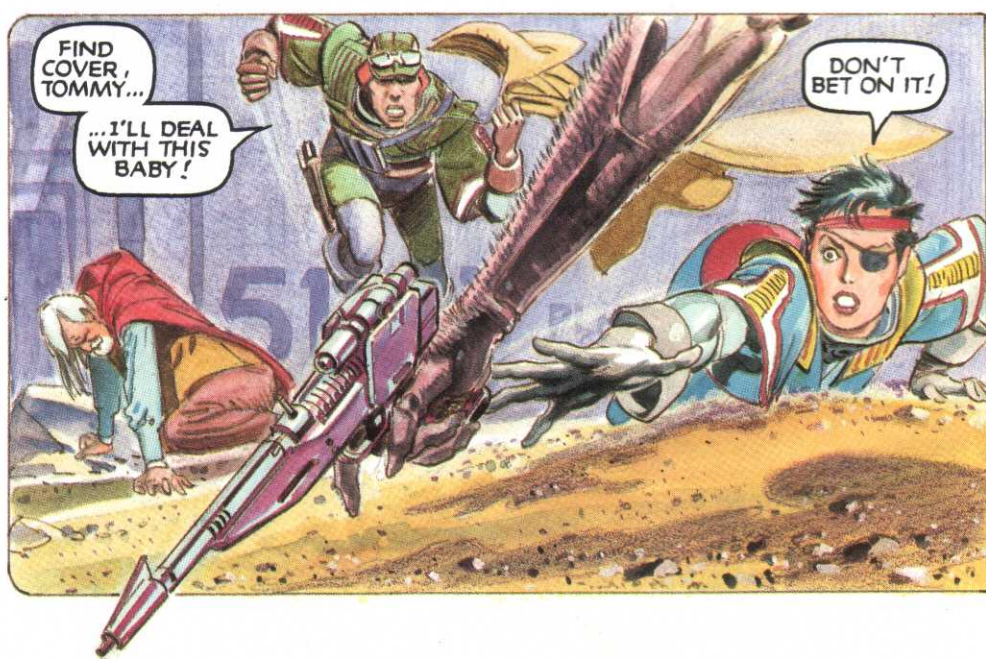
NO--!

-- BUT I'M BETTING THAT'S WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE!



YOU KEEP ZYLONS AS PETS TOO, YOU SON OF A PIG?

URGFPHH!



FIND COVER, TOMMY...

...I'LL DEAL WITH THIS BABY!

DON'T BET ON IT!

THOSE TWO KIDS WILL GET THEMSELVES TORN APART--

-- AND TAKE THIS WHOLE BLASTED PLANET WITH THEM!

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...

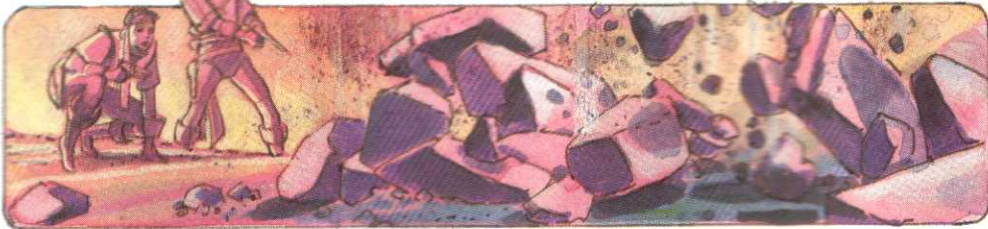
... FOR GIVING ME AN OPENING!

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--



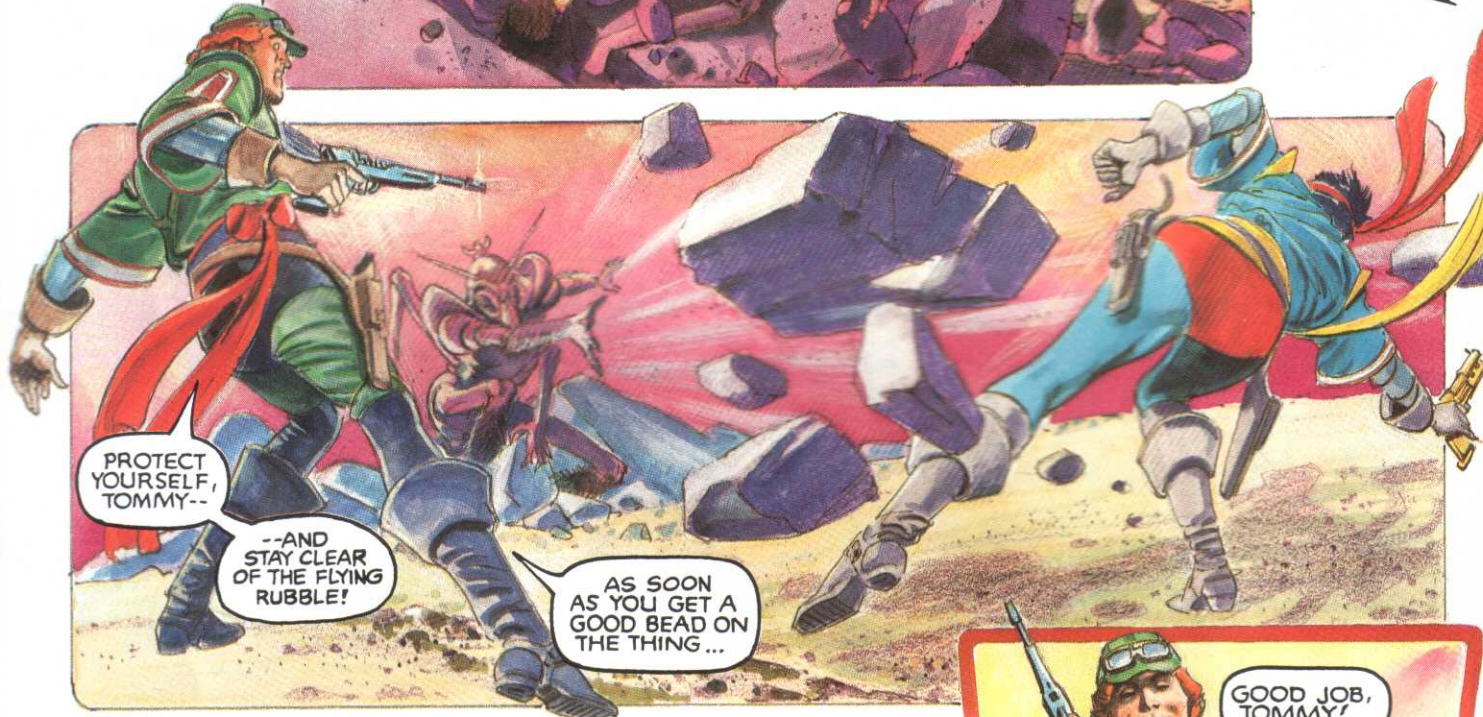
-- WHEN THE PILE OF DEBRIS AND BROKEN BUILDING STOPS THE ZYLON AND THE TZYLO AND THE BATTLE IS APPARENTLY ENDED...

...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!

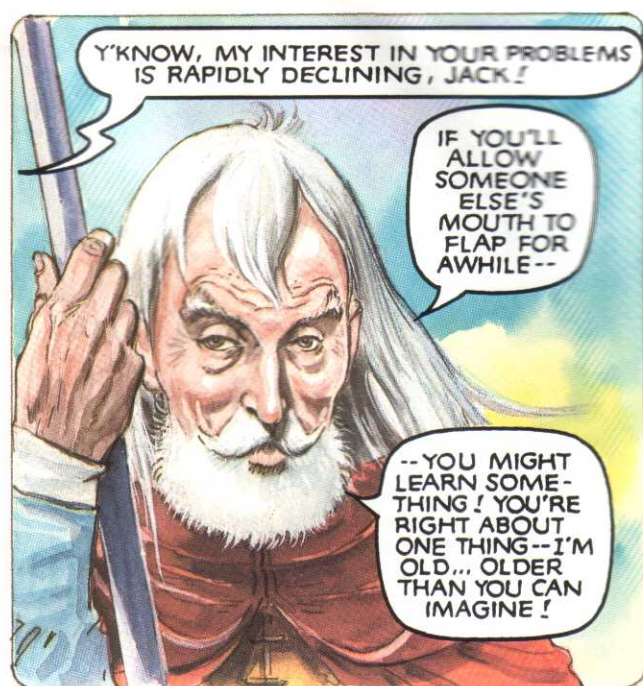
... AND THINKING WITH YOUR POSTERIOBS!



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 SOMETHING! 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-- PROTECTED BY LOTS OF THE BEST INSULATOR 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--



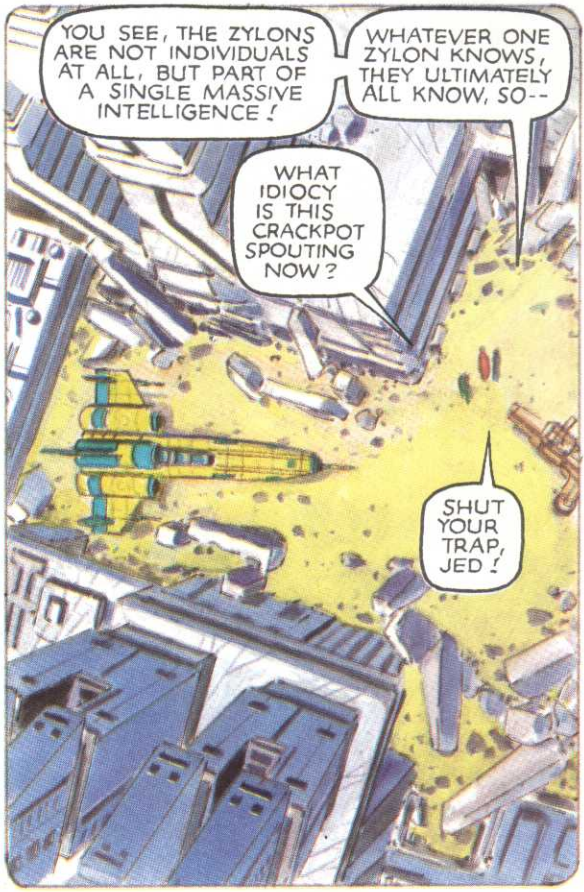
--THEN THEY'LL GROW INTO A MILLION ZYLONS! OH MY GOD!

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 IDIOCY IS THIS CRACKPOT SPOUTING NOW?

SHUT YOUR TRAP, JED!



THAT'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR LADY... PEOPLE HAVE LABELLED THE UNATTRACTIVE TRUTH IDIOCY 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 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--

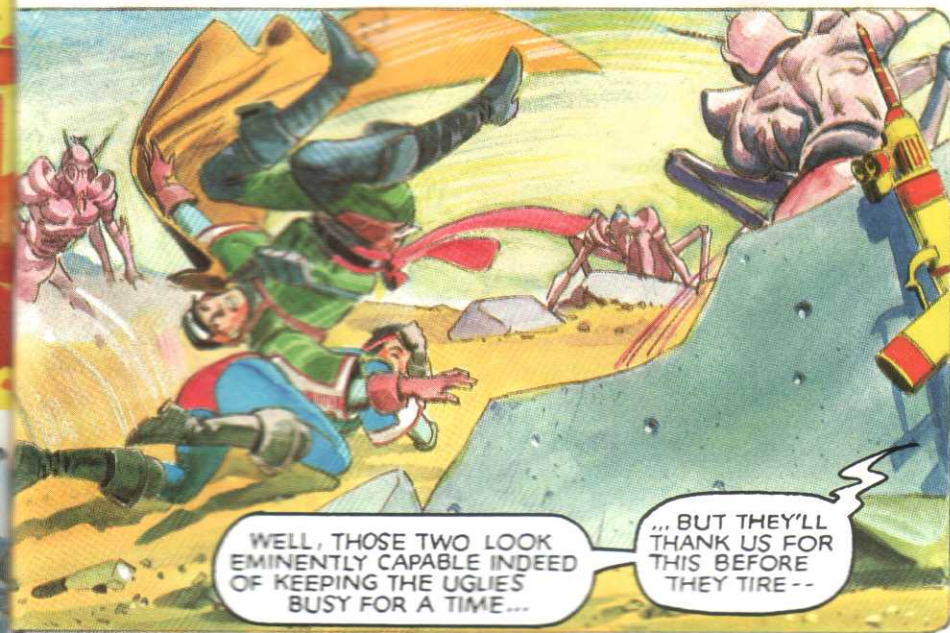
JED -- IT GOT MY FORCE-FIELD PISTOL!

CAN'T YOU HOLD ONTO THAT DAMN THING!?

STAND BACK, I'M ON MY WA--

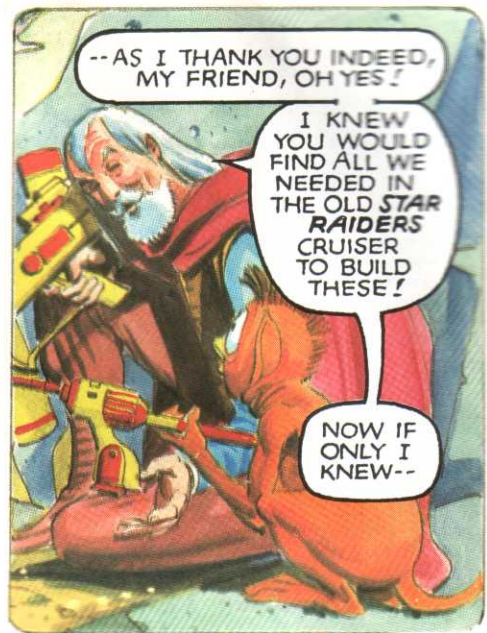
--HEY!! THIS ONE'S GOT MY LEG!

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!

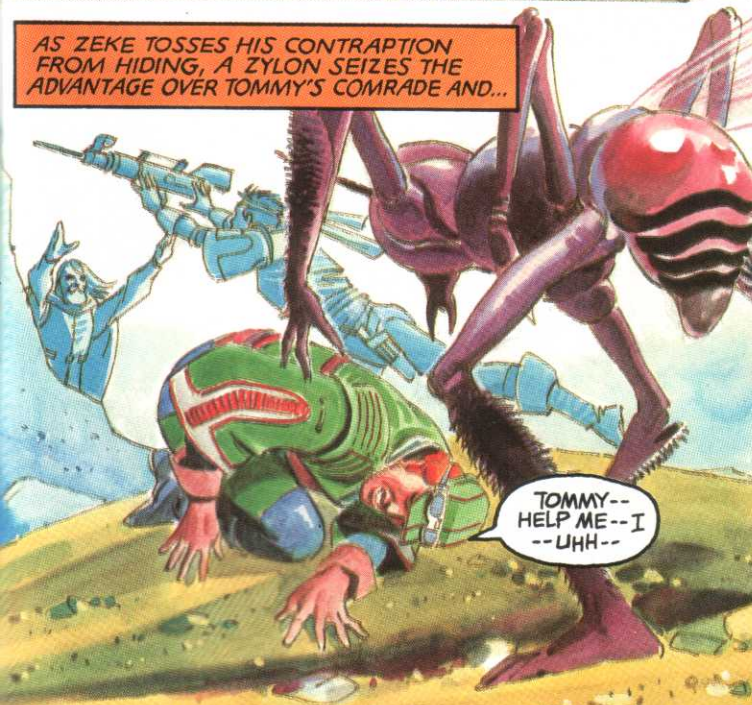


TOMMY!-- TRY OUT A BARREL OF THIS ON IT!

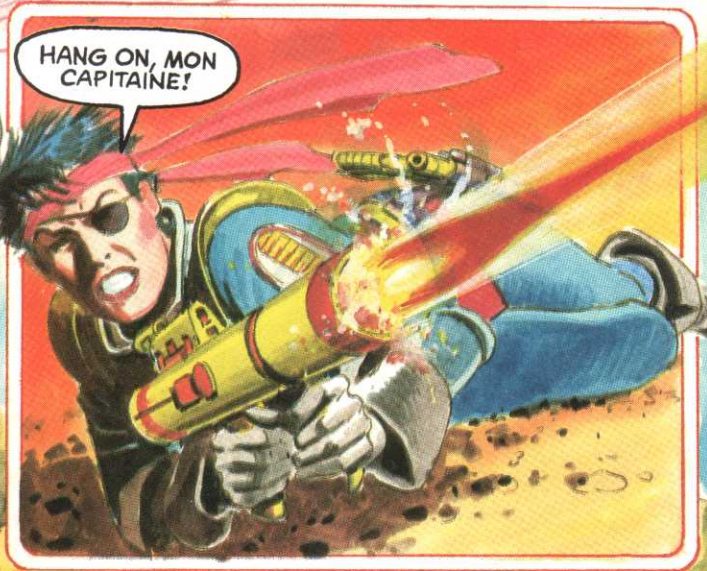
URRGFPHH--!

WHAT IN ALL ENTROPY IS THAT?

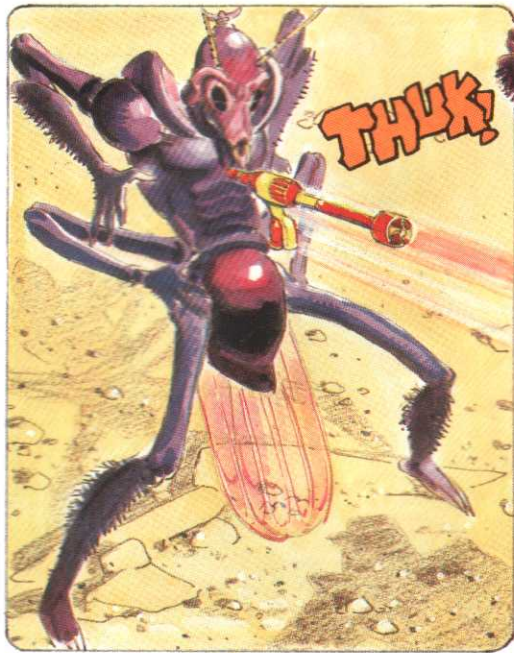
AS ZEKE TOSSES HIS CONTRAPTION FROM HIDING, A ZYLON SEIZES THE ADVANTAGE OVER TOMMY'S COMRADE AND...



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...

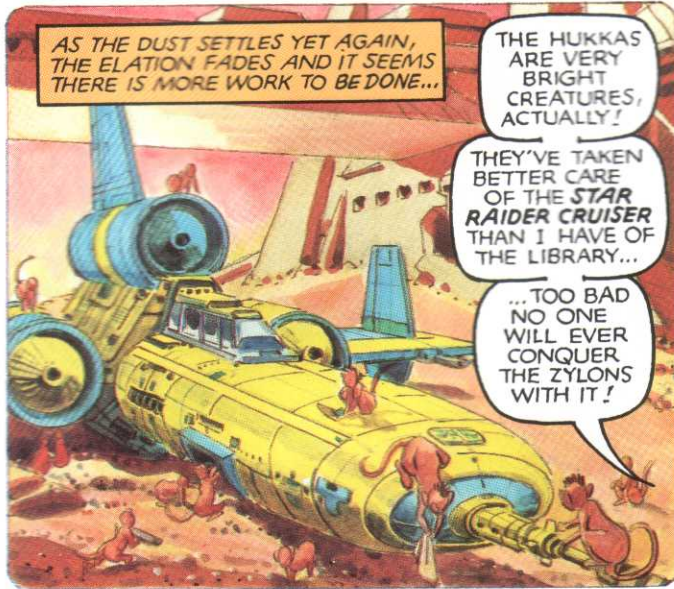
"IT'S THE BEST IDEA I'VE SEEN ALL WEEK," TOMMY THINKS...

...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--

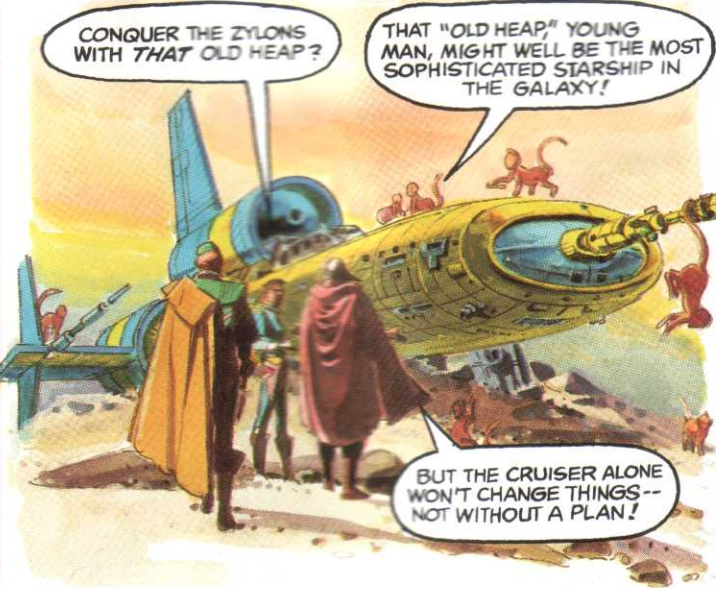


AS THE DUST SETTLES YET AGAIN, THE ELATION FADES AND IT SEEMS THERE IS MORE WORK TO BE DONE...

THE HUKKAS ARE VERY BRIGHT CREATURES, ACTUALLY!

THEY'VE TAKEN BETTER CARE OF THE STAR RAIDER CRUISER THAN I HAVE OF THE LIBRARY...

... TOO BAD NO ONE WILL EVER CONQUER THE ZYLONS WITH IT!



CONQUER THE ZYLONS WITH THAT OLD HEAP?

THAT "OLD HEAP," YOUNG MAN, MIGHT WELL BE THE MOST SOPHISTICATED STARSHIP IN THE GALAXY!

BUT THE CRUISER ALONE WON'T CHANGE THINGS-- NOT WITHOUT A PLAN!



AND I SUPPOSE YOU'VE GOT ONE OF THOSE STORED AWAY IN THAT FUZZY OLD BRAIN OF YOURS, RIGHT? OKAY--

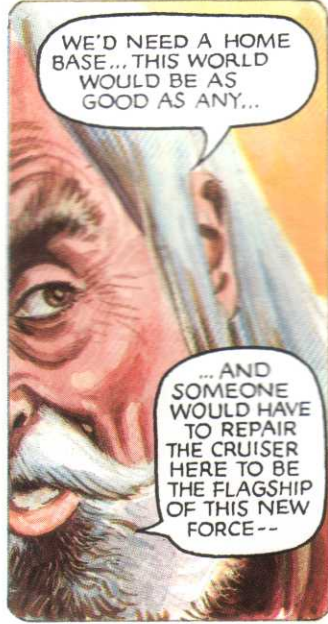
--START TALKING!

WELL, IT'S ALL THEORETICAL, YES, INDEED...



WE WOULD NEED SOMEONE TO SPREAD THE WORD AMONG THE YOUNG SURVIVORS OF CONQUERED PLANETS--

--RECRUITING THEM TO BE TRAINED INTO A STRIKE FORCE... A NEW STAR RAIDERS FORCE!



WE'D NEED A HOME BASE... THIS WORLD WOULD BE AS GOOD AS ANY...

... AND SOMEONE WOULD HAVE TO REPAIR THE CRUISER HERE TO BE THE FLAGSHIP OF THIS NEW FORCE--



--THEORETICALLY, OF COURSE!

NO THEORIES ABOUT IT! WE NEED YOUR EXPERTISE, ZEKE, AND WE'RE GOING TO DO IT FOR REAL!

JED AND I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A CHANCE LIKE THIS SINCE WE MET!



I'LL DO THE RECRUITING--

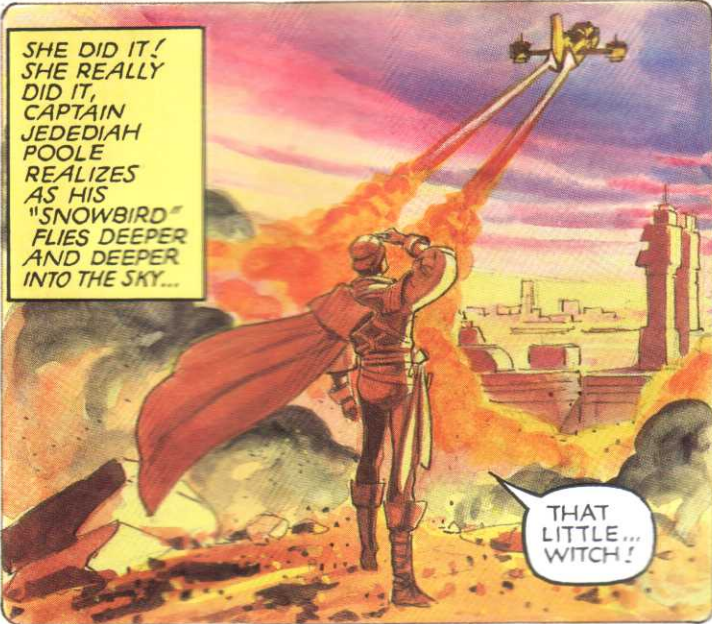
JED WILL DO THE REPAIRING-- I SHALL RETURN!

RETURN? WHEN? FROM WHERE--



YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE MY SHIP AND--

BE OF GOOD COURAGE, MON CAPITAINE!



SHE DID IT!
SHE REALLY
DID IT,
CAPTAIN
JEDEDIAH
POOLE
REALIZES
AS HIS
"SNOWBIRD"
FLIES DEEPER
AND DEEPER
INTO THE SKY...

THAT
LITTLE...
WITCH!



NOW I'LL
HAVE TO
REPAIR THAT
STAR RAIDER
THING-- OR
WHATEVER
IT IS--

--OR ELSE
ALL I'VE GOT
TO HANG OUT
WITH IS
HUKKAS AND...

...URGH!



YOU *DO* KNOW WHAT
NEEDS TO BE FIXED ON
THAT CRUISER DOWN
THERE, RIGHT?

OF COURSE I DO... AND
I'LL TELL *YOU*, TOO!

LET'S DO IT,
AND I
DON'T WANT
ANY OF
YOUR LIP,
VICKER!



I HAVEN'T TALKED FACE TO FACE WITH ANOTHER
LIVING HUMAN FOR... oh, IT'S GOT TO BE MORE
THAN A HUNDRED YEARS!

AND YOU KNOW,
CAPTAIN, YOU'VE GOT
TO BE THE MEANEST SON
OF A SHE-DOG I'VE MET
IN ALL MY BORN
CENTURIES!



JEDEDIAH, THIS
COULD BE THE
START OF A
BEAUTIFUL
FRIENDSHIP!

THAT'S PRETTY
GOOD... YOU
MAKE THAT UP
YOURSELF?

I THINK I READ IT
SOMEWHERE, ACTUALLY--

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,
DISCOMFORTING 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...

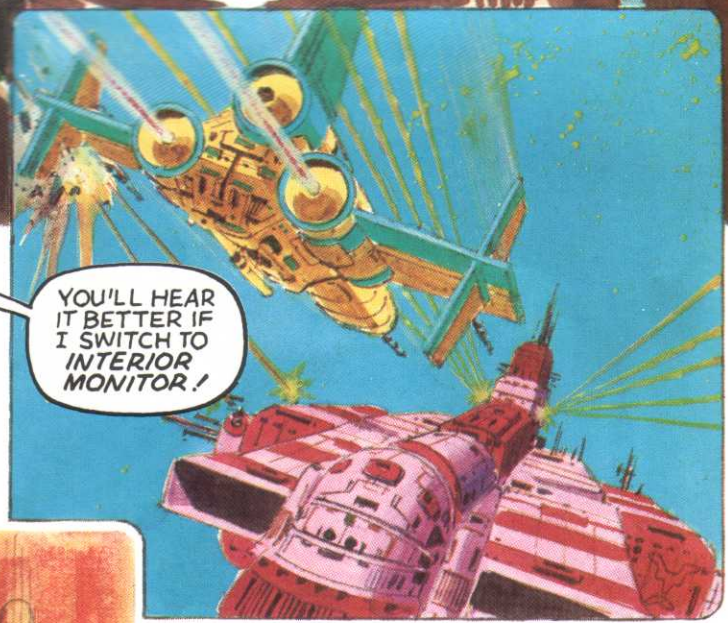
...MORE THAN SIX HUNDRED YEARS AGO--

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

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

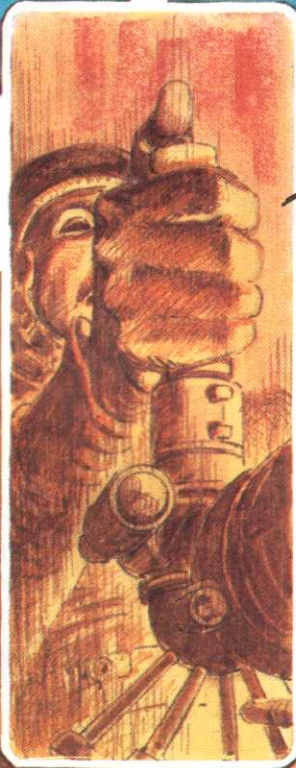
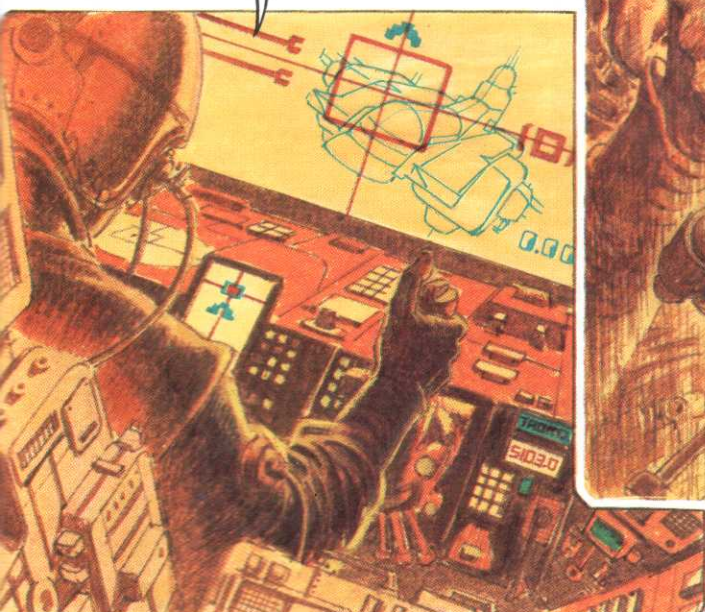


LISTEN...THIS HISTORICAL TAPE HAD SOME AUDIO!



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

ZEROING IN ON ZYLON BASESTAR--



--ITS SHIELDS APPEAR TO BE FLUTTERING...





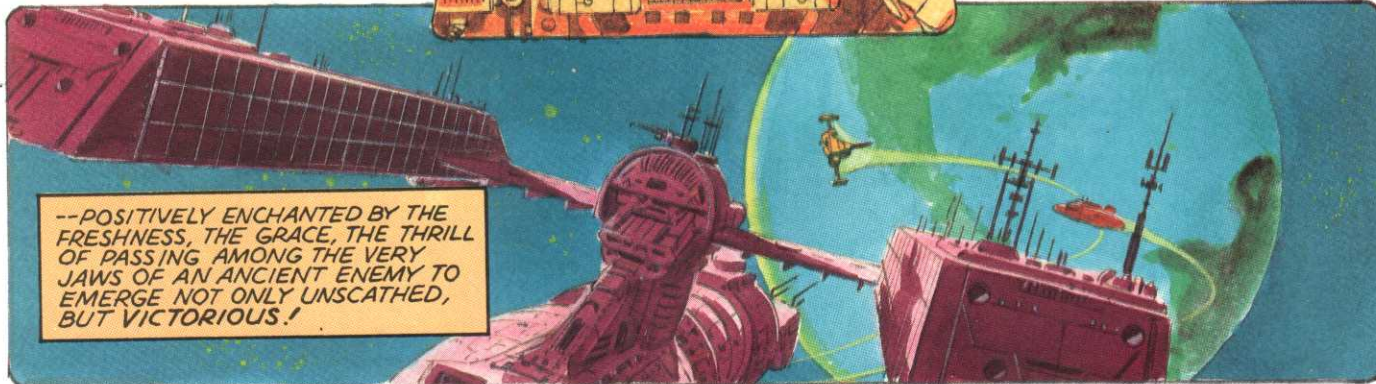
WELL, HOW DO YOU LIKE MY "SCRAP HEAD" NOW, CAPTAIN--?

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 ENTHRALLED 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...

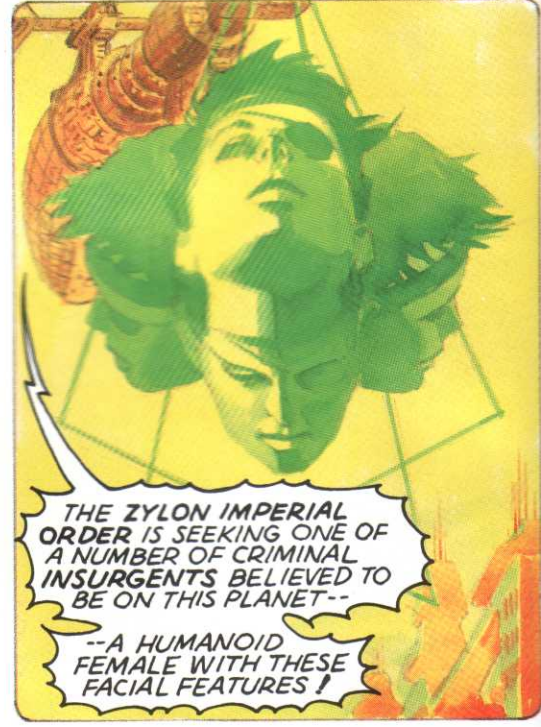


...FROM THE EDGE OF A NIGHTMARE THERE APPEARS A ZYLON CRUISER...



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--

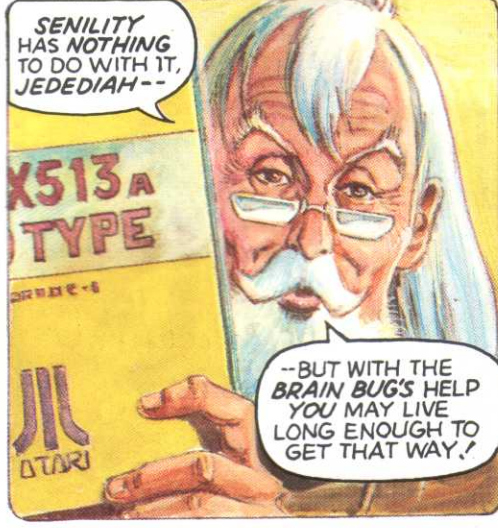
--AND YOU WILL BE PERMITTED TO ENJOY THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF YOUR PLANET!

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!



--AND A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD MAN SPOUTING COSMIC MUMBO-JUMBO HE PASSES OFF AS WISDOM!

--OR SLIPPING INTO SENILITY EVEN AS WE SPEAK?

WHAT WAS SO BAD ABOUT USING A RADIO?

--WELL, WHAT'RE YOU WAITING FOR, OLD MAN?

TELL ME ABOUT BRAIN BUGS !!



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!



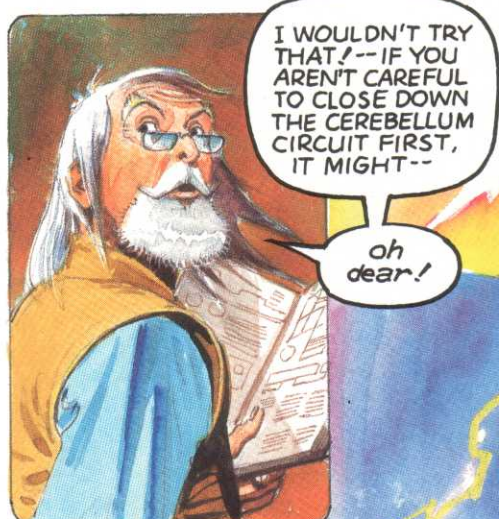
TIGHTEN THE **SYNAPSE PEGS** MARKED IN BLUE!

I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU, OLD MAN!



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

--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--

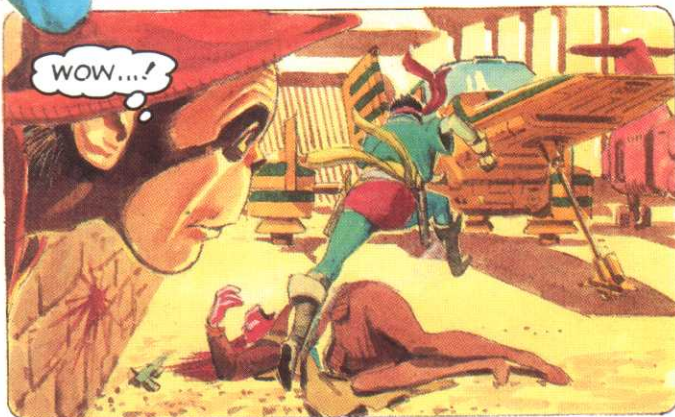
oh dear!



AIEEE!!



FIRE, TOMMY!





ON THE ORANGE WORLD OF ORIC...

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



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!

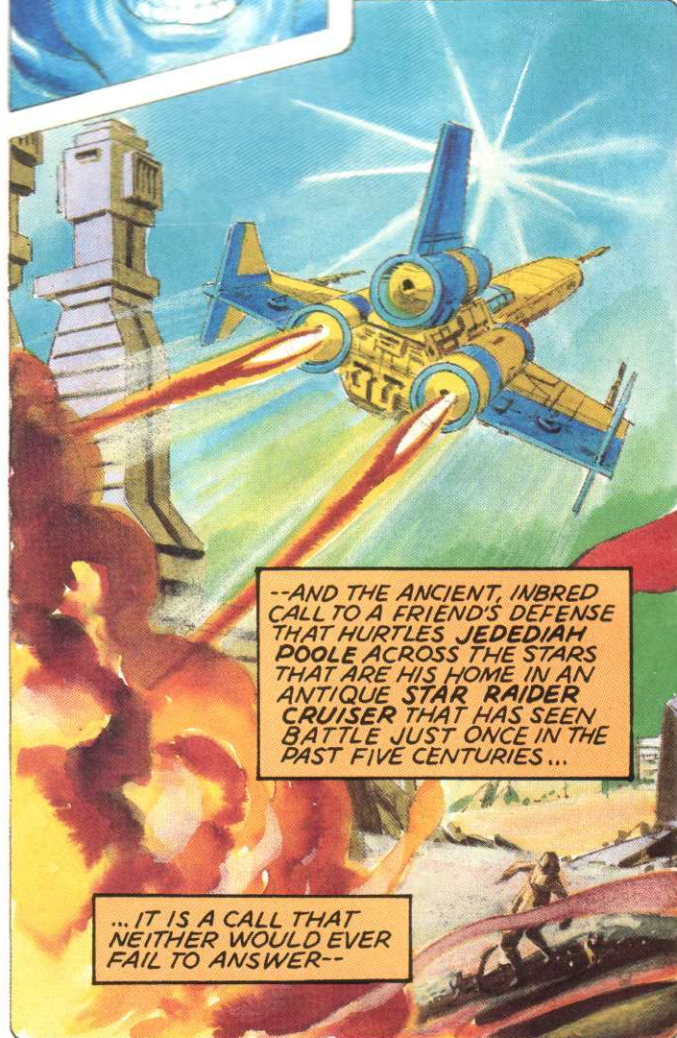
SHE KNOWS HE WILL IGNORE CAUTION--AND PRECAUTION--TO HELP HER: HE'S DONE SO BEFORE!



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



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 THE ANCIENT, INBRED CALL TO A FRIEND'S DEFENSE THAT HURTLER 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 CONSISTS OF JUST ONE SUDDEN BLOW--


-- SHE KEEPS HER WITS ABOUT HER...




...LOWERS CABIN PRESSURE GRADUALLY...

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

...BUTRESSES SHIELDING OVER THE VOLATILE FUEL MIX...



...SHE LIVES THROUGH THE GLIDER-STYLE LANDING AND REMAINS CONSCIOUS...



... 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: 9904
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...



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

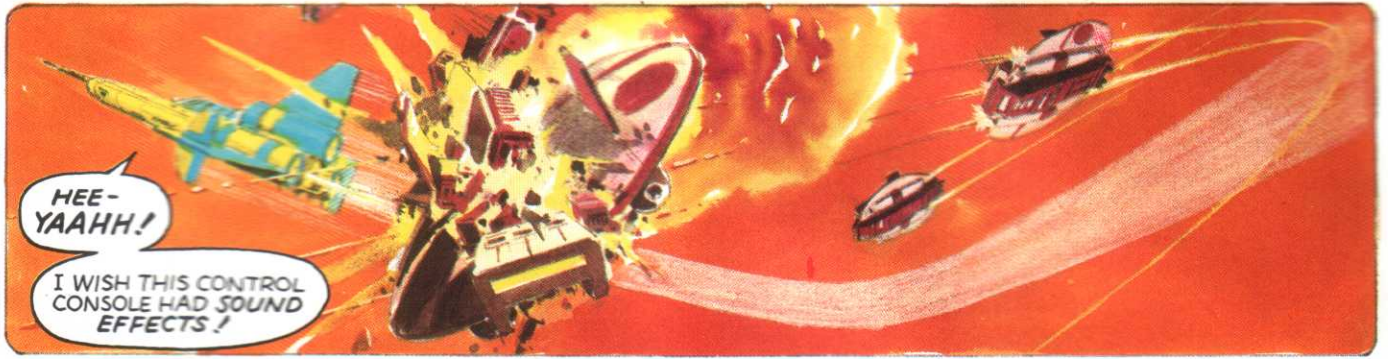
THIS CRUISER'S TAKEN TWO DIRECT HITS WITH MINIMAL DAMAGE!

IMAGINE IF I HAD EXPERIENCE WITH HER!

BATTEN THE HATCHES, ZYLON SCUM...

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





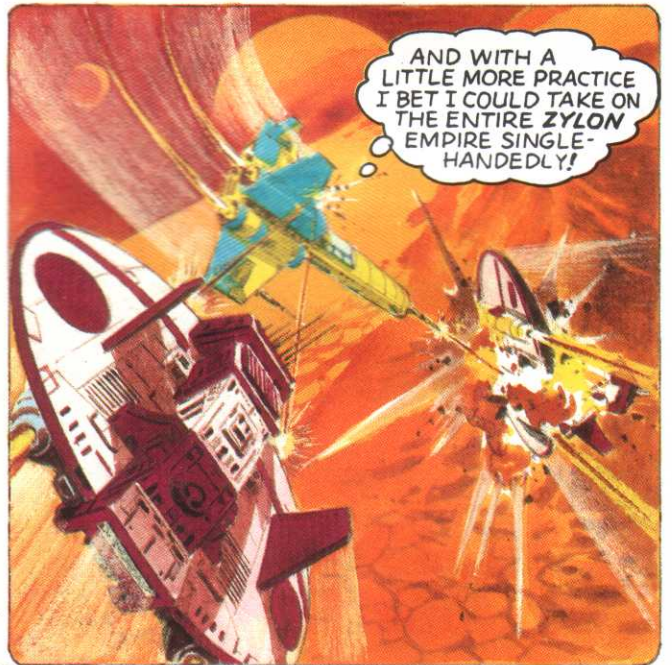
HEE-YAAHH!

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...!



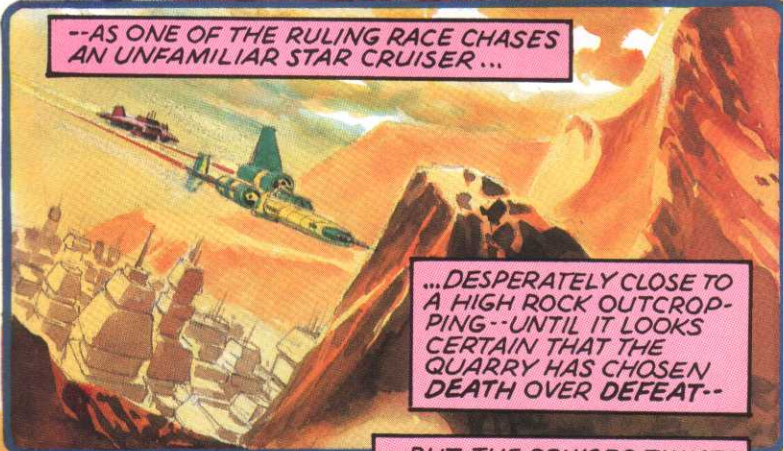
MOTHER OF STARS!
IT LOOKS LIKE ZEKE'S
CRUISER...

...GIVING
SOME
BLOODSUCKER
A RUN FOR IT!



LAND-BOUND
MORTALS HOLD
THEIR BREATH--

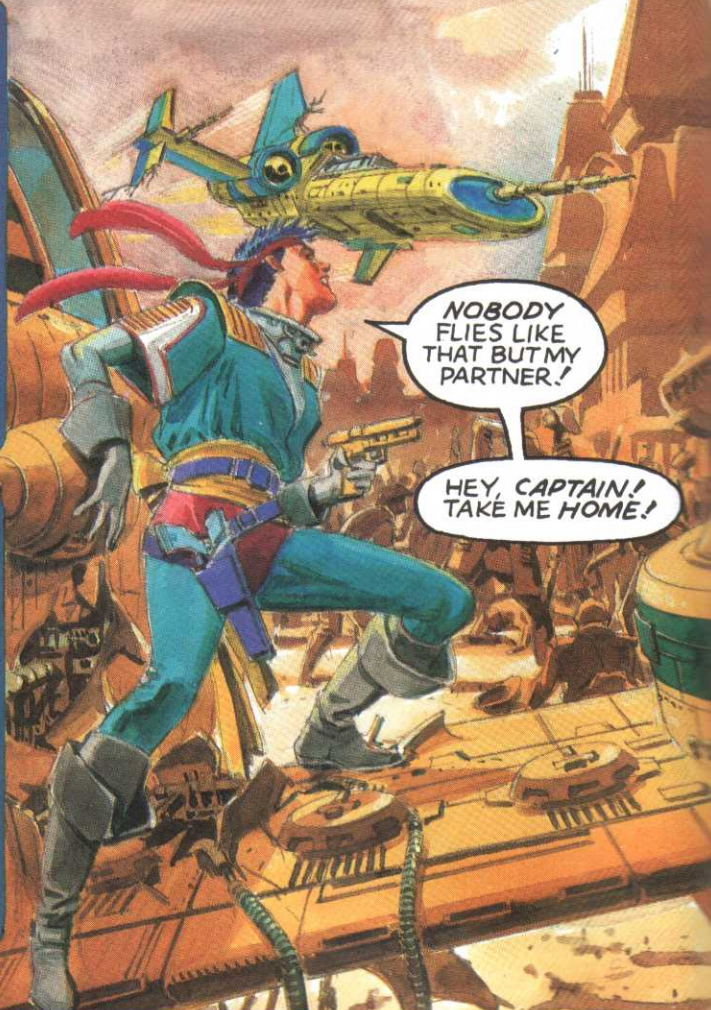
--THOSE THAT HAVE
BREATH TO TAKE--



--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!



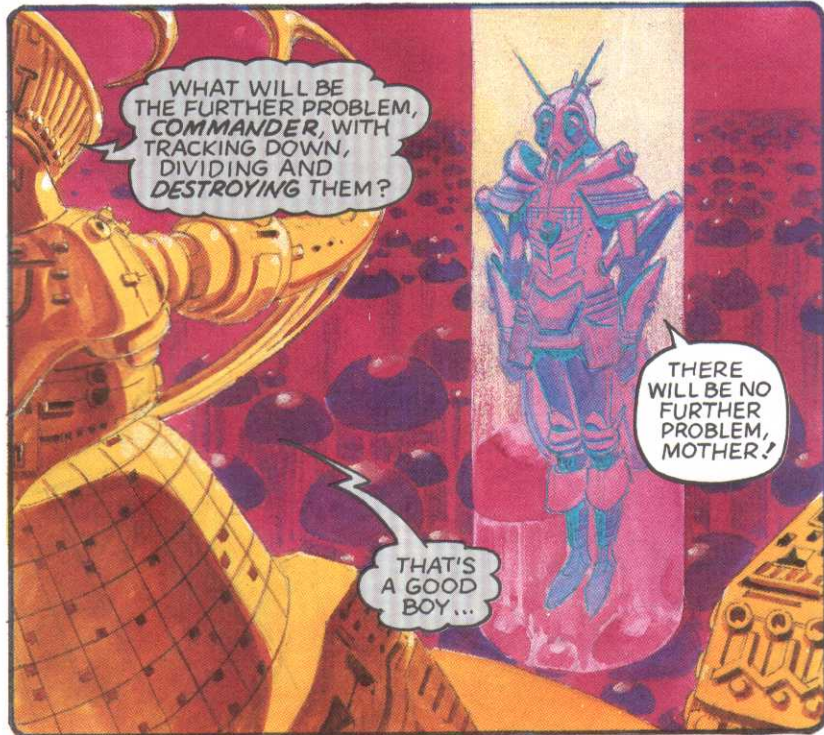
FOR A MOMENT, NO ONE MOVES ON THE PLANET BELOW, AND THERE ARE THOSE WHO STILL HAVE NOT TAKEN A BREATH...



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...?



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...



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



...AND NOW,
IF YOU DON'T
MIND--

--I SHALL
DISPOSE OF YOU
RATHER UN-
CEREMONIOUSLY,
DEAR...

...SO THAT I
MIGHT EFFICIENTLY
DO THE SAME WITH
YOUR BUNGLING
BROTHERS IN ORBIT
AROUND ORIC!



"YES, THAT WILL
DO NICELY..."



OH, MY WHITE HOT
SUNS! THE ZYLON
SHIP SELF-DESTRUCTED--

--OR DID IT?

NO MATTER...
I HAVE TO TRACK THAT
FREEDOM FIGHTER'S
HYPERSPACE COURSE--!

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!



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!

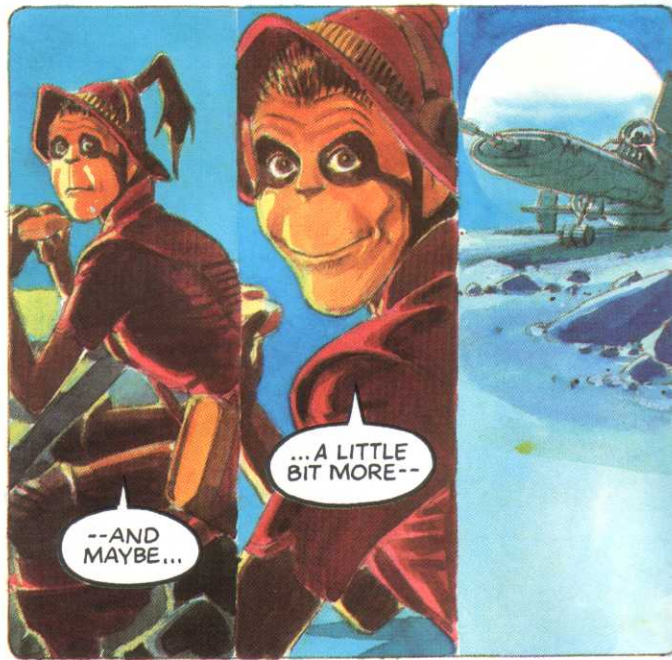
I NEVER KNEW MY PARENTS-- JUST...

... JUST TRADERS AND VAGABONDS, LIKE ME!



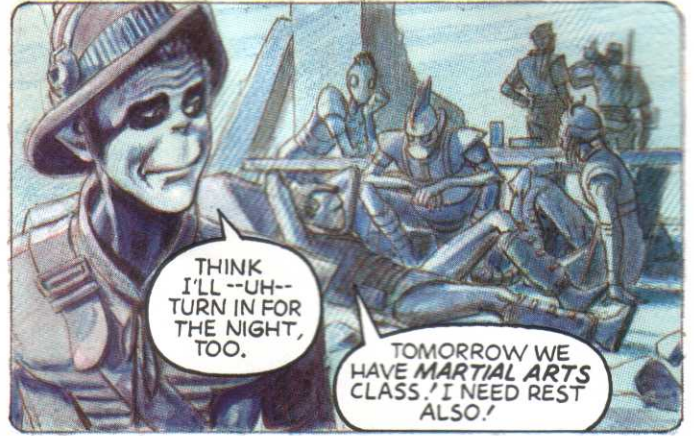
COME ON... YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU ARE?-- THERE MUST BE A REASON YOU'RE HERE!?

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



... A LITTLE BIT MORE--

--AND MAYBE...





YAAHH--

HOOEY!



THAT LITTLE SON OF A MUTANT IS GONNA SCRAP THAT CRUISER!

NOW YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE WATCHING YOU FLY, JEDEDIAH...



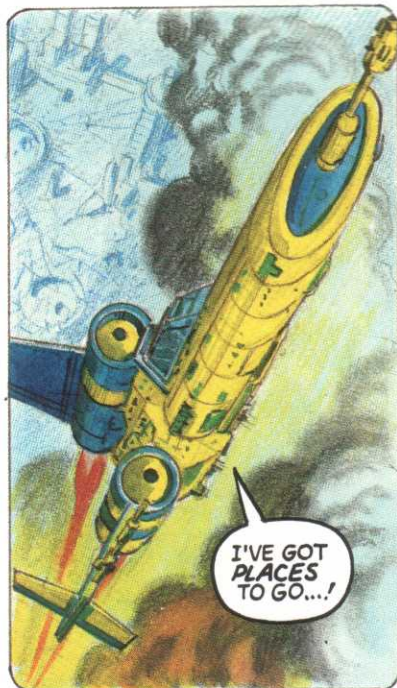
... BESIDES, HE KNOWS HE'S AS HOT A PILOT AS THERE IS IN THE GALAXY NOW--

SINCE HE HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE OF HAVING YOU FOR A TEACHER!



WOW! IT'S JUST THE WAY JED TOLD ME...

THE WILDEST SHIP IN THE STARS!



I'VE GOT PLACES TO GO...!



YOU'LL EXCUSE MY TAKING LIBERTIES, OH CAPTAIN, YOUR MAJESTY, SIR--

URGFPHH--!



--BUT I BROUGHT HIM HERE AND I'LL BRING HIM BACK!

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, INTELLIGENT ORGANISM STANDING 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 UN-
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 TEDIIOUS 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 NAVIGATOR AS WELL AS SKRIMSH!



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

DON'T BE TOO HARD ON EITHER OF THEM, JEDEDIAH...

... AFTER ALL, YOU PUT THE ENTHUSIASM THERE YOURSELF!

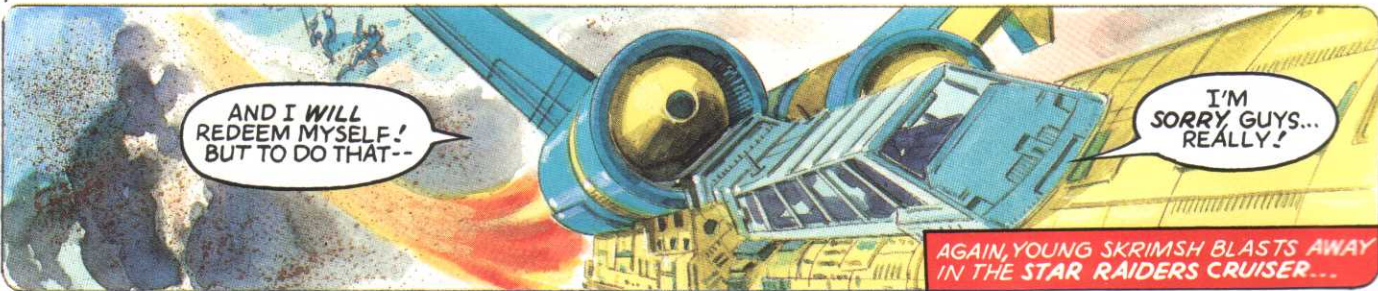


--LISTEN, KID... I'M GOING TO LET GO AND ASK YOU TO LAND HER...



... GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO REDEEM 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...

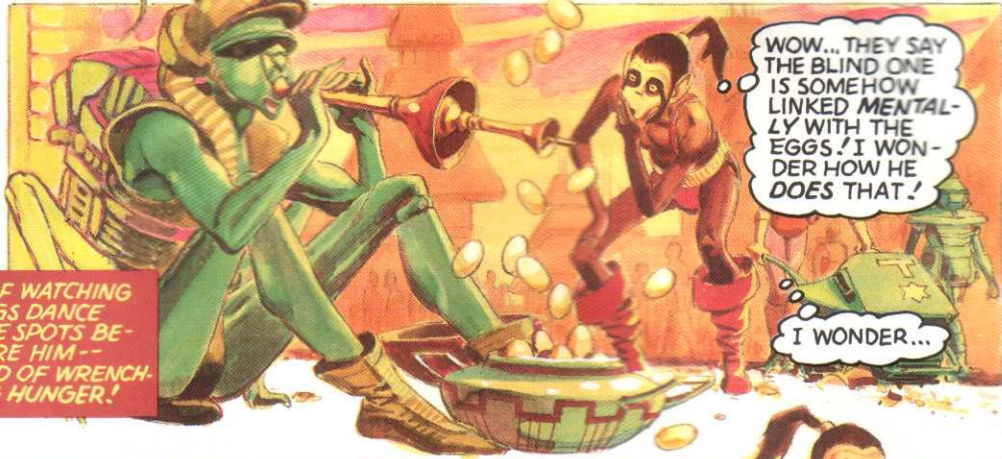


LOOK AT THAT GALACTIC CHART... ALL OF A SUDDEN CRAWLING WITH ZYLON WARSHIPS!

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...



WOW... THEY SAY THE BLIND ONE IS SOMEHOW LINKED MENTALLY WITH THE EGGS! I WONDER HOW HE DOES THAT!

I WONDER...

...OF WATCHING EGGS DANCE LIKE SPOTS BEFORE HIM -- AND OF WRENCHING HUNGER!



...IF WITH ALL THOSE TOKENS IN HIS COLLECTION PLATE--

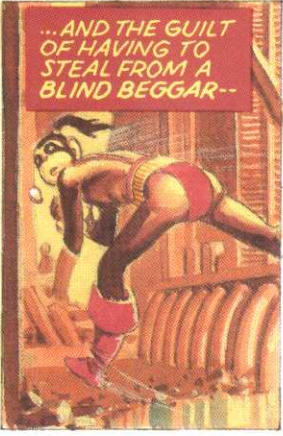


...IT'D BE SUCH A TERRIBLE THING TO GIVE HIM A ROCK TO PUT OFF HIS CONCENTRATION--

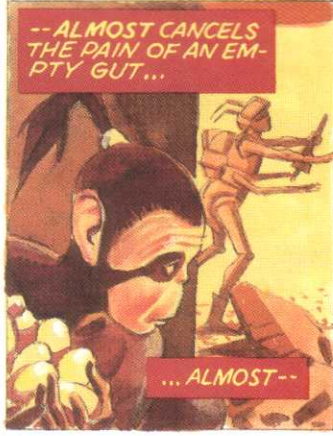


-- LONG ENOUGH TO GATHER UP SOME DINNER!

PAIN AND GUILT ARE AN AWFUL MIXTURE...



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



-- ALMOST CANCELS THE PAIN OF AN EMPTY 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!**

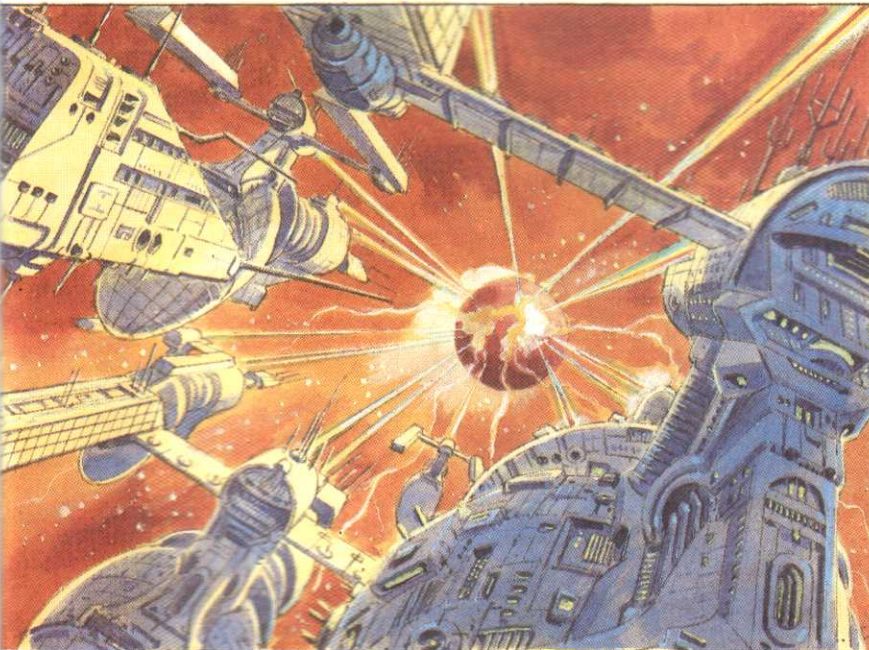
"THE **GUATTIAN** PEOPLE HAD LEARNED TO LIVE, THEY HAD THOUGHT, WITH THE **OVERLORDSHIP** OF THE **ZYLONS**--BUT FOR REASONS KNOWN ONLY TO THE **OVERLORDS**, THESE GENTLE PEOPLE HAD BECOME A **THREAT**...

"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!

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

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

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

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!



WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT, JED POOLE LOCKS A COURSE DEAD-ON AT A HUGE ZYLON WARSHIP--

--AND EJECTS INTO COLD SPACE -- DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF ANOTHER ONCOMING WARSHIP--

GOOD BLOODY SHOOTING, SKRIMSH!



--UNARMED AMID A HELL-RAIN OF LASER AND PHOTON TORPEDO FIRE.!

HEY, NAVIGATOR! WHEN THAT HULK'S ION ENGINES BLOW INTO THAT WARSHIP...



...I'D JUST AS SOON BE OUT OF THE WAY, IF WE COULD ARRANGE IT.!

WILL COMPLY, MON CAPITAINE!



AND FROM AN UNDERGROUND OUTPOST LIGHT YEARS DISTANT...

BASE TO SNOWBIRD! DID JED...

I'M FINE, OLD GEEZER! ... ABOARD MY SHIP-- AND IT'S ABOUT TIME!



CAPTAIN! THE BOY'S BOUND FOR THE ZYLON'S HOME SPACE--



-- ON A SUICIDE RUN!

YES, WE'VE GOT YOUR SUBSPACE PROJECTION OF HIM, ZEKE--

--AND LORD HELP US, WE'RE FOLLOWING HIM IN!



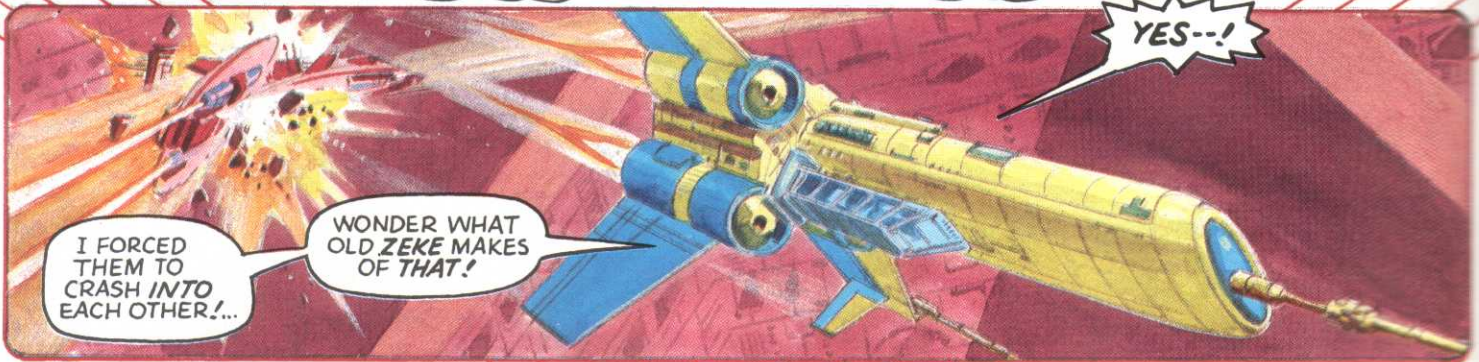
BUT, ALREADY WITHIN THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE ZYLON HIVEWORLD THE STAR RAIDERS CRUISER BRAZENLY APPROACHES TWO ZYLON BASESTARS, AND...

I'LL TRY IT--



I FEEL YOU OUT THERE, BOYS... AND YOU FEEL ME, DON'T YOU...?

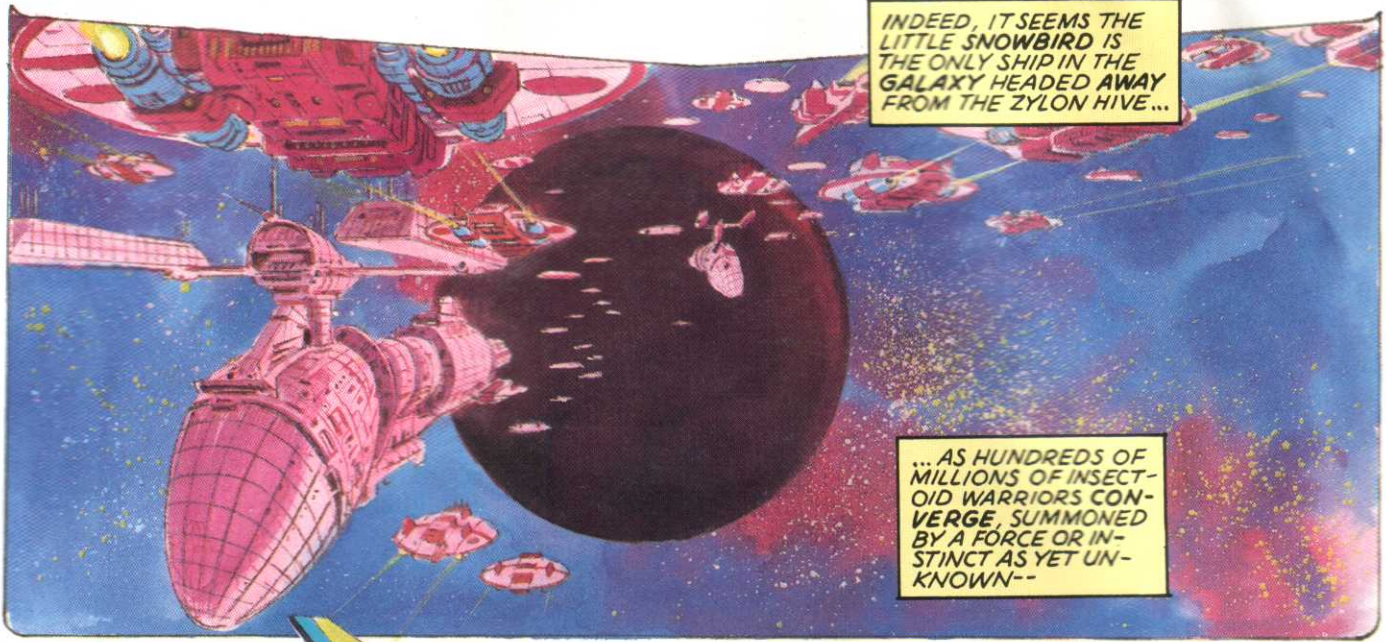
NOW STEER YOUR SHIPS JUST SO... MANEUVER THEM... THAT'S THE WAY...



YES--!

I FORCED THEM TO CRASH INTO EACH OTHER!...

WONDER WHAT OLD ZEKE MAKES OF THAT!



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...



