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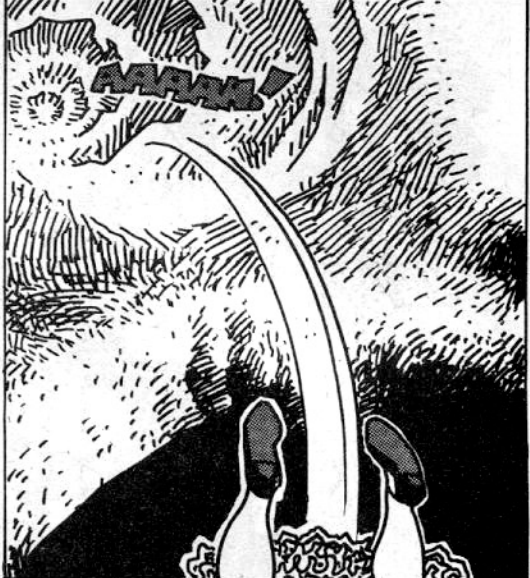
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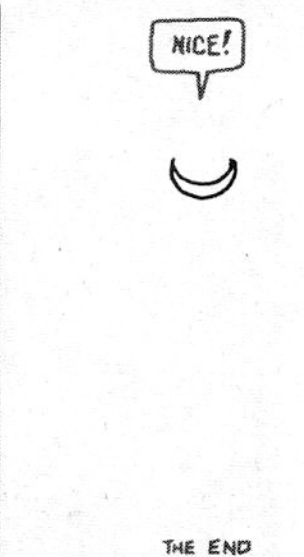
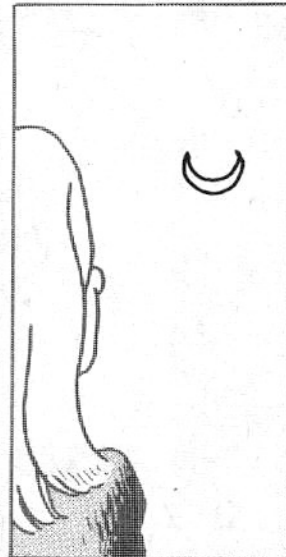
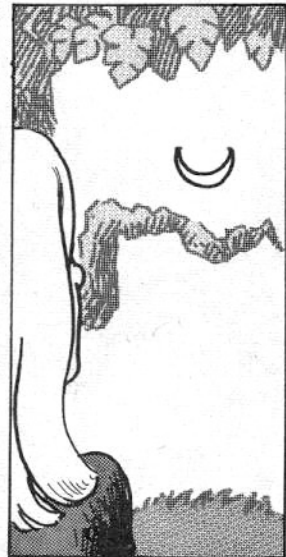
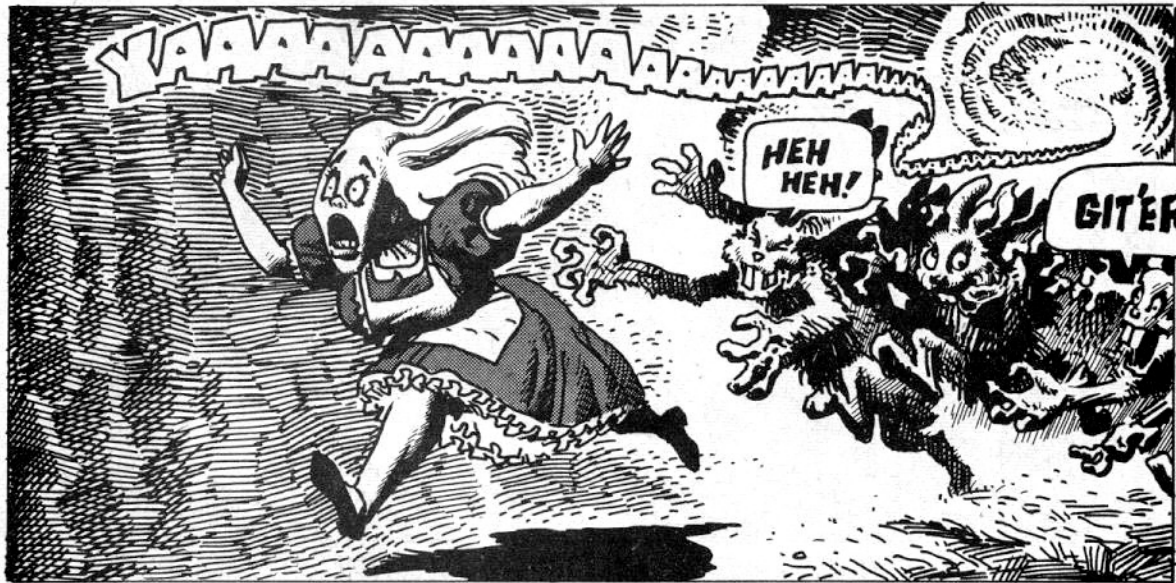
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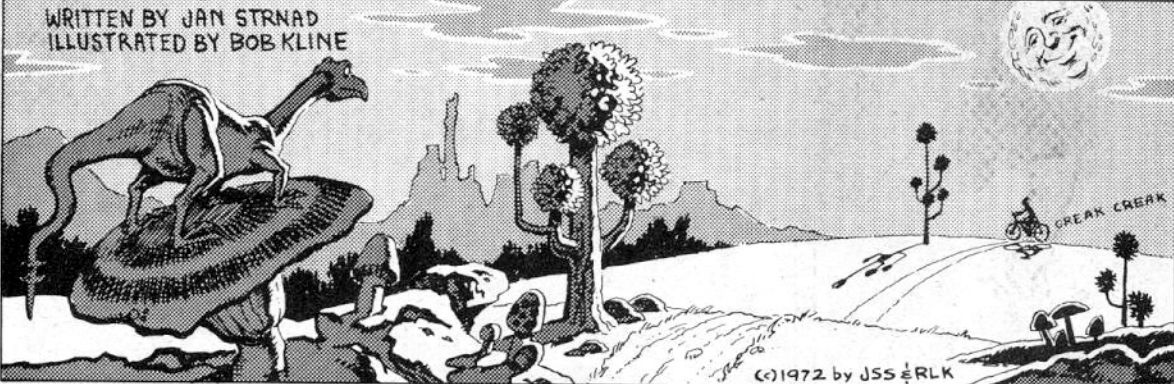


LEANDER and the FAT QUEEN

WRITTEN BY JAN STRNAD
ILLUSTRATED BY BOB KLINE

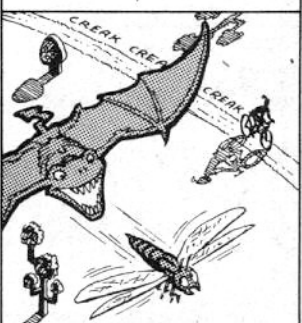
LIKE BIRD DROPPINGS FROM A BRIGHT BLUE SKY, HIGH ADVENTURE IS A CALAMITY THAT CAN BEFALL ANYONE AT ANY TIME, PITCHING HIM FROM

HIS LIFE OF QUIET DESPERATION INTO ONE OF CARD-CARRYING PANIC. WHAT TURNS A TIMMIE INTO A HERO? PURE CHANCE, FRIENDS, PURE CHANCE.



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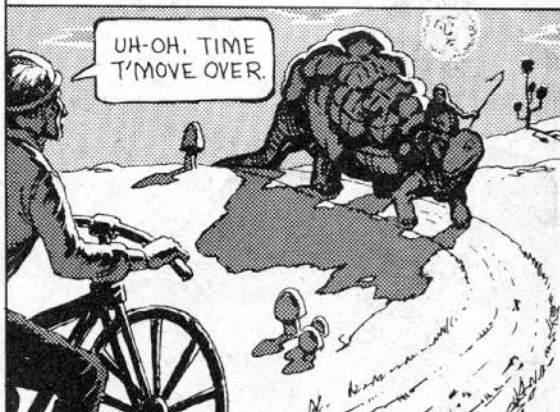
TONIGHT'S VICTIM IS NAMED LEANDER. THAT'S HIM DOWN BELOW, SQUEAKING HIS WAY HOMEWARD AFTER A LONG DAY OF NOTHING IN PARTICULAR.



NOT EXACTLY KRUNCH THE BARBARIAN OR ZAK OF TIMBUKTU, Y'LL ADMIT, BUT THESE DAYS YOU TAKE WHAT YOU CAN GET.

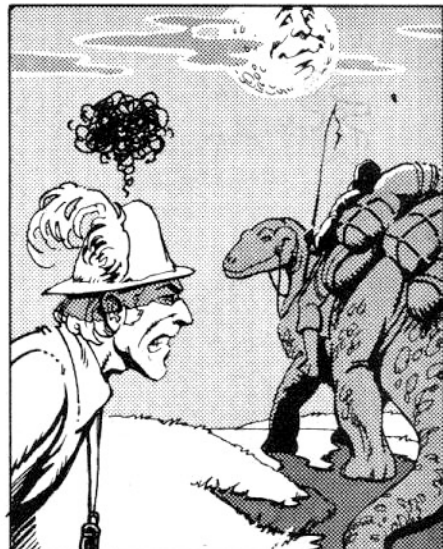


WELL, NOTHING TO DO NOW BUT SIT BACK AND WATCH THE WHEELS OF FATE IN ACTION...





HUH?



HEY! WAIT A MINUTE!



YOU AREN'T THE ONLY ONE USES THIS ROAD Y'KNOW! I GOT **SOME RIGHTS!**



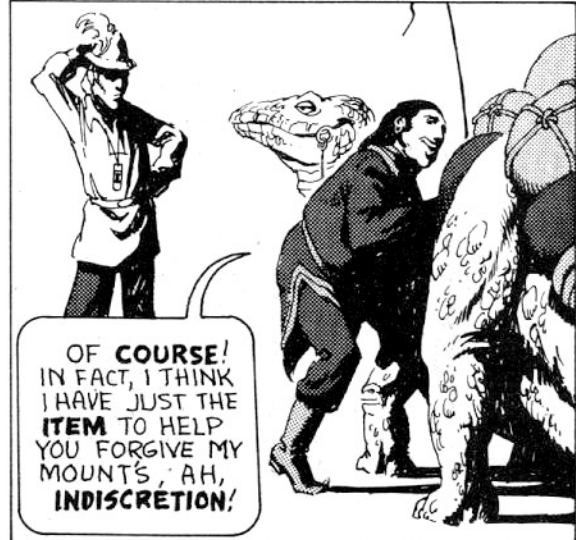
THIS **STAIN'S** GONNA BE HARD TO GET OUT, AND, UH, I WOULDN'T WANTA GET **TOUGH...**!



PLEASE! I UNDERSTAND **PERFECTLY...** AND I'LL BE **GLAD** TO MAKE **AMENDS.**



YOU WILL?



OF **COURSE!** IN FACT, I THINK I HAVE JUST THE **ITEM** TO HELP YOU FORGIVE MY MOUNT'S, AH, **INDISCRETION!**

NOW LET'S SEE, WHERE DID I PUT THAT? I KNOW IT'S IN HERE SOMEWHERE IF I CAN JUST... AH! HERE IT IS!



PLEASE, ACCEPT THIS RING AS A TOKEN OF MY REGRET!



WELL! THANKS!



THAT'S MIGHTY GENEROUS OF YOU! REAL GOLD, TOO!

I'M A FAIR MAN!



...THOUGH PERHAPS I SHOULD MENTION THE CURSE...



OH NO YOU DON'T! - OOF! - I'M NOT GETTING STUCK WITH NO-UGH! - HEXED RING!



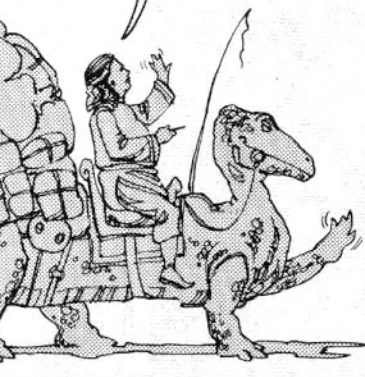
I'M AFRAID YOU HAVEN'T A CHOICE - IT CAN ONLY BE REMOVED BY MARRIAGE TO HEPHZIBAH, QUEEN OF THE LOST ISLAND OF GRZZ, THE LAST RINGBEARER NEVER MADE IT, SAD TO SAY.



WELL? WHAT - OUCH! - WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?



I'M SITTING ON HIM. THE COMPLETE CHANGE TAKES ABOUT A MONTH.



OH LORD...

BUT I'M SURE THAT ONE OF **YOUR** CALIBRE WILL HAVE NO TROUBLE AT ALL, NOT LIKE SOME **ORDINARY** MAN!



TRUE... BUT STILL, IF I JUST HAD SOME **HINT** AS TO WHERE THIS PLACE IS...



OH THAT'S EASILY DONE!

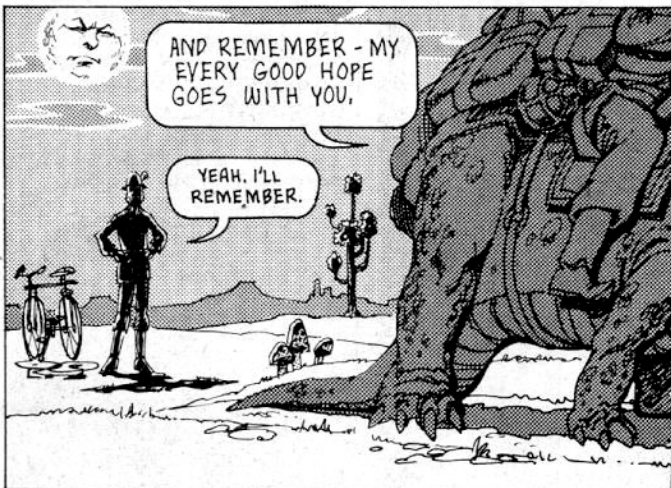
AFTER ALL, YOU KNOW WHERE EVERYPLACE **ELSE** IS! JUST GO WHERE EVERYPLACE **ISN'T**!

THAT MAKES SENSE...



AND REMEMBER - MY EVERY GOOD HOPE GOES WITH YOU.

YEAH, I'LL REMEMBER.



AH, DAMN...



NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A DIRTY TRICK!



THE OLD **CAVEAT EMPTOR** AT IT'S PEAK! DISGUSTING!

NOW YOU BUTT IN! WHERE WAS YOUR **ADVICE** WHEN I **NEEDED** IT?



I DON'T KNOW HOW IT LOOKS FROM DOWN THERE, BUT FROM UP HERE IT SEEMS AS THOUGH YOU COULD USE ALL THE **HELP** YOU CAN GET!

SO WHAT AM I GONNA DO?



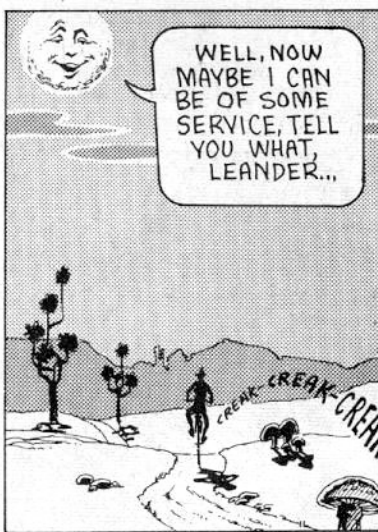
I DON'T KNOW WHERE GRZZ IS, OR EVEN IF THE QUEEN WILL MARRY ME ONCE I **DO** FIND HER! IN FACT, I DON'T KNOW **NOTHING...**



... EXCEPT THAT I'M GONNA TURN INTO A BIG FAT LIZARD IF I DON'T GET RID OF THIS RING!



WELL, NOW MAYBE I CAN BE OF SOME SERVICE, TELL YOU WHAT, LEANDER...



YOU JUST HOP ON A SHIP AND I'LL PULL A FEW STRINGS- SEE IF WE CAN'T GET YOU TO THIS LOST ISLAND!

I DON'T KNOW. DOESN'T SOUND LIKE MUCH OF AN IDEA TO ME.

THINK OF THE ALTERNATIVE!



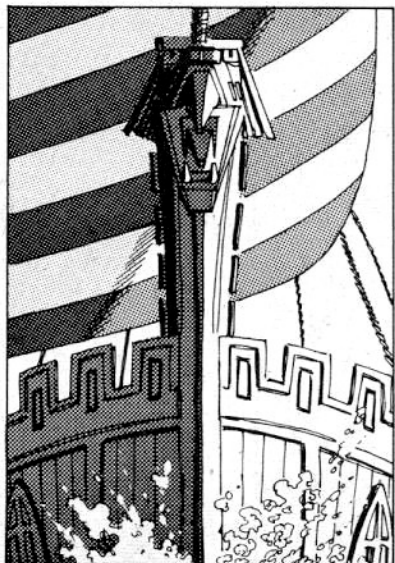
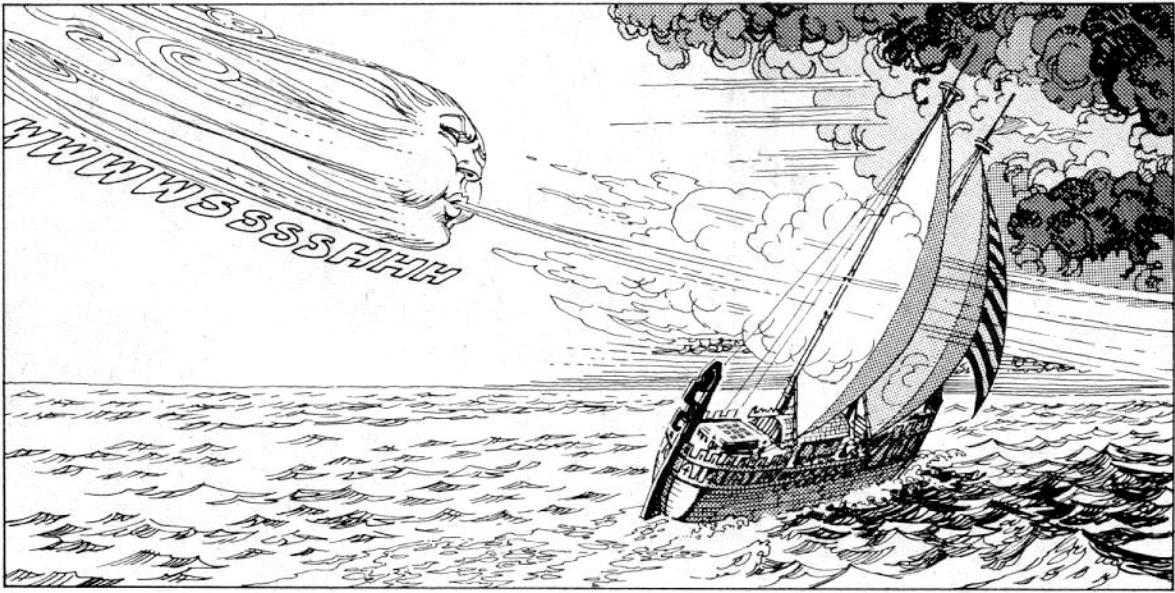
WHEN'S THE NEXT SHIP OUT?

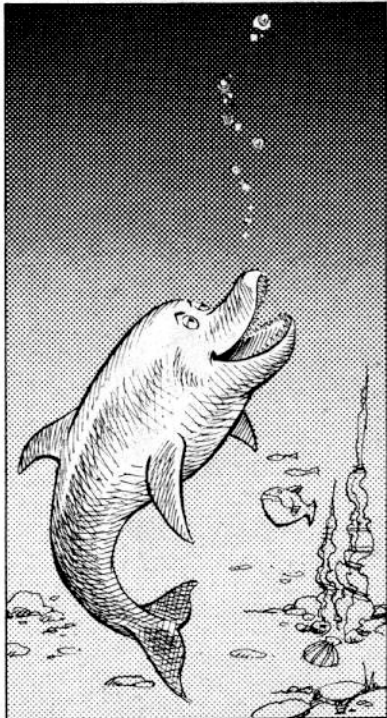
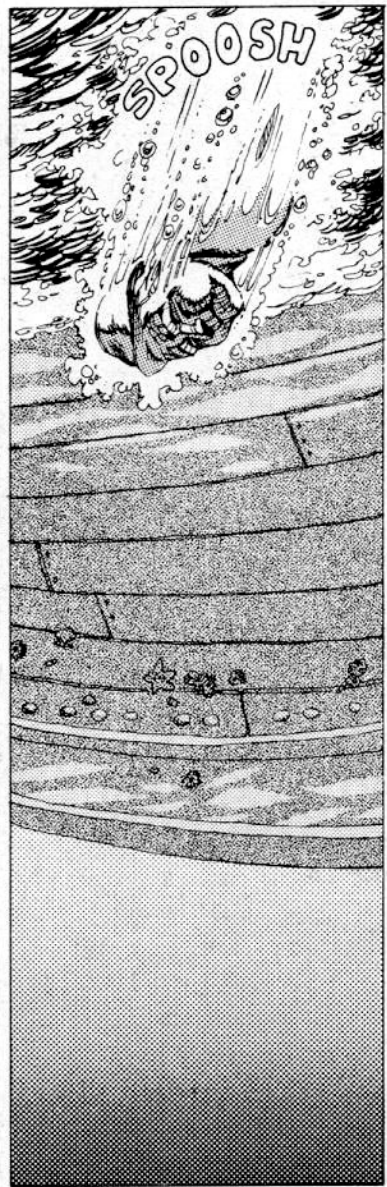
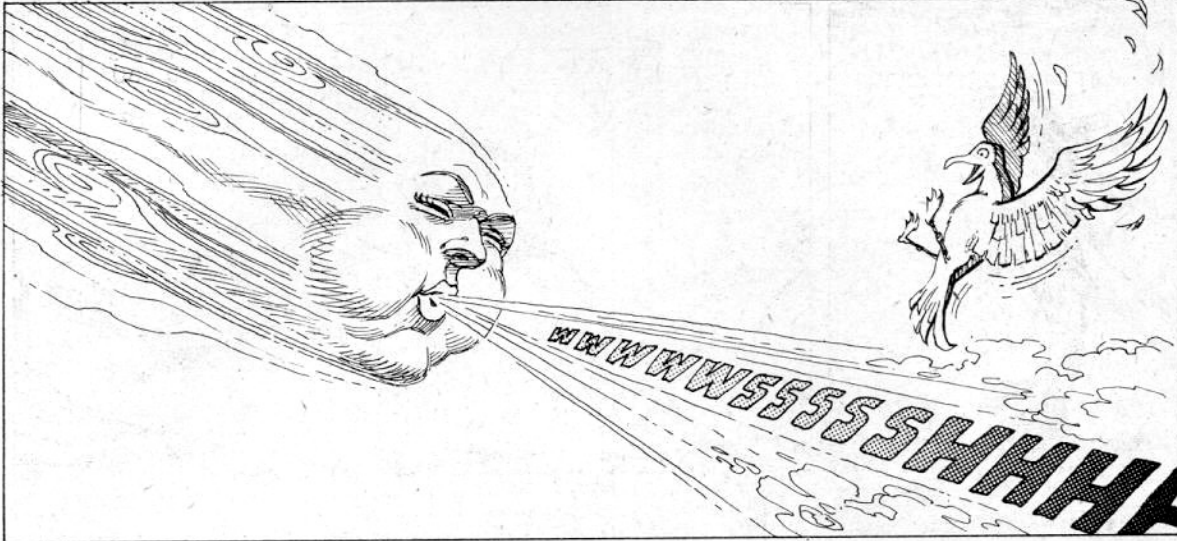


AND SO THE NEXT WEEK FINDS LEANDER KNEE-DEEP IN HIGH ADVENTURE. MIDWAY THRU THE WEEK HE BEGAN TO NOTICE A SLIGHT SCALINESS OVER HIS SKIN, AND A TENDENCY FOR IT TO CHANGE COLOR AND BLEND ITSELF WITH THE BACKGROUND. HIS BODY TEMPERATURE BEGAN TO FLUCTUATE WITH THE WEATHER, AND VAGUELY HE PONDERED THE TASTE OF FLIES. LEANDER WAS BEGINNING TO WORRY.



A WEEK! ONE FOURTH OF MY TIME GONE AND, FOR ALL I KNOW, NOT A FOOT CLOSER TO QUEEN HEPHZIBAH THAN I'VE EVER BEEN! I THOUGHT THAT WIND-BAG MOON WAS GONNA DO SOMETHING, PULL SOME STRINGS!





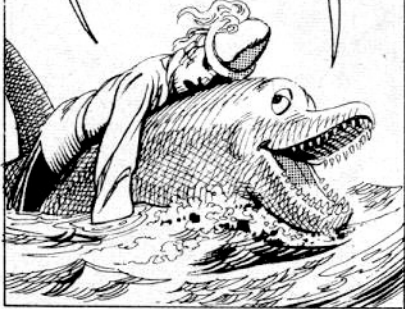


- KOFF KOFF -

HELLO! MY NAME'S COLERIDGE. DO YOU THINK YOU'LL PULL THROUGH?

-KOFF!- I SUPPOSE SO - FOR ALL THE -KOFF- **GOOD** IT'LL DO ME IF I DON'T FIND QUEEN HEPHZIBAH!

HEPHZIBAH? WHY, WE'RE PRACTICALLY THERE! IN FACT...



I'LL JUST HAVE TIME TO RECITE SOME POETRY! I'M SURE YOU'LL LIKE IT- I MAKE IT UP MYSELF!



ACTUALLY I DON'T MUCH CARE FOR...

NONSENSE! EVERYONE LIKES POETRY! LISTEN: "IN XANADU DID KUBLA KAHN A STATELY PLEASURE DOME DECREE:" A RATHER NICE BEGINNING, DON'T YOU THINK?

OH YES -KOFF- VERY NICE, WOULD YOU MIND **SLOWING DOWN** A BIT?

NOT AT ALL! ALL THE MORE TIME FOR POETRY!



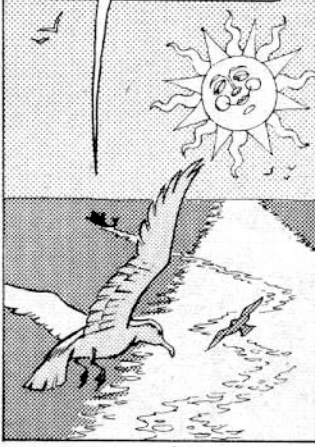
"WHERE ALPH, THE SACRED RIVER RAN THROUGH CAVERNS MEASURELESS TO MAN DOWN TO A SUNLESS SEA." I DO THINK THAT'S WELL PUT! MORE COMFORTABLE NOW?

MUCH BETTER.

THEN I'LL CONTINUE.



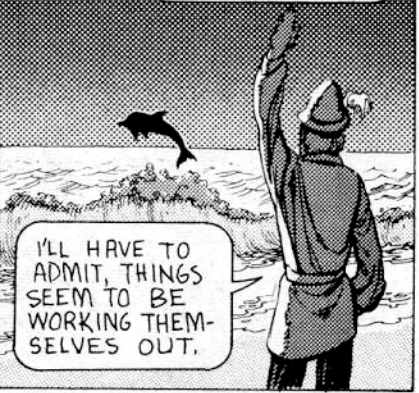
"SO TWICE FIVE MILES OF FERTILE GROUND WITH WALLS AND TOWERS WERE GIRDLED ROUND AND THERE WERE
CHARMERS, BRIGHT LIGHTS
AND THE WINDS OF THE SOUTH
WHICH BLOWED FROM THE SOUTH



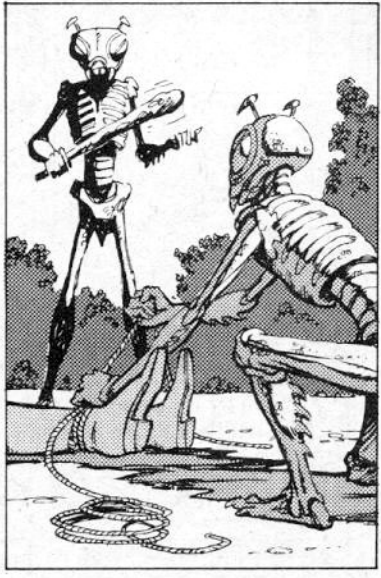
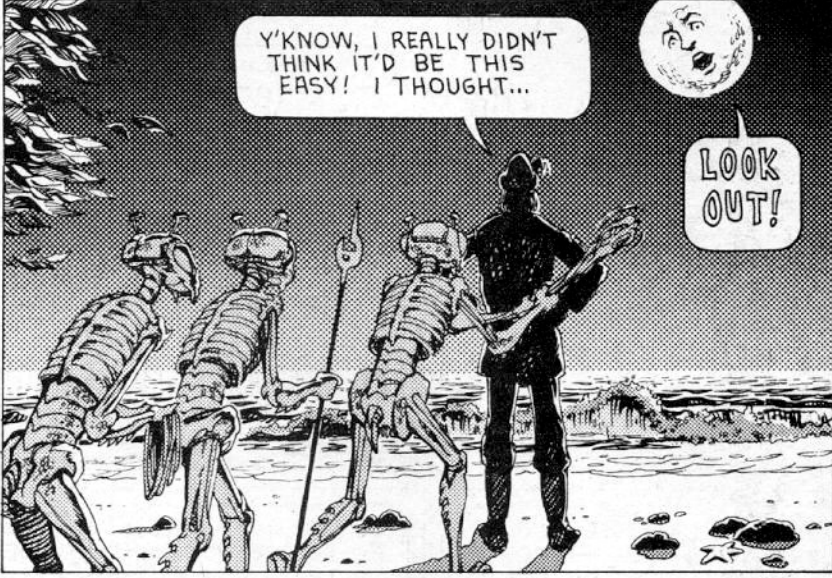
MANY MEANINGLESS LINES LATER...

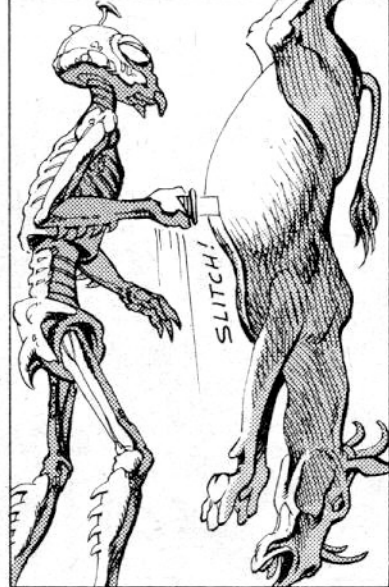
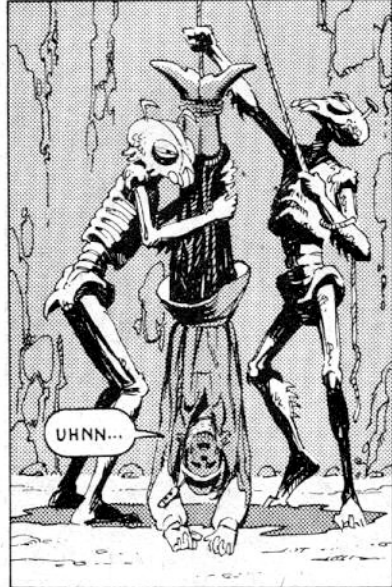
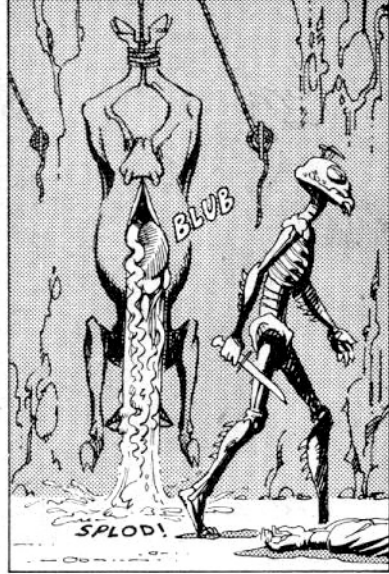
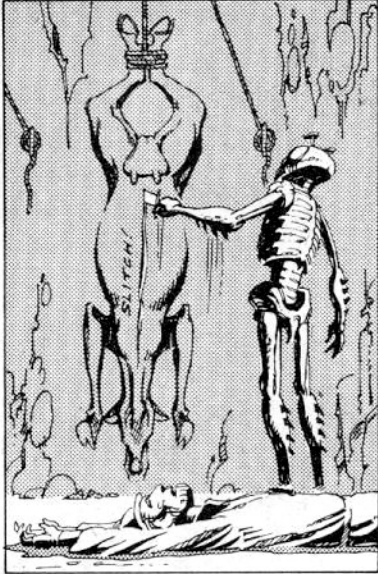
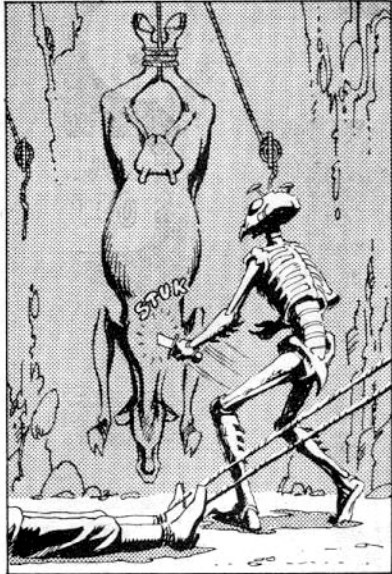


I'D SAY YOU'RE DOING ALL RIGHT! NOW FIND THE QUEEN AND YOUR TROUBLES ARE OVER!



I'LL HAVE TO ADMIT, THINGS SEEM TO BE WORKING THEMSELVES OUT.





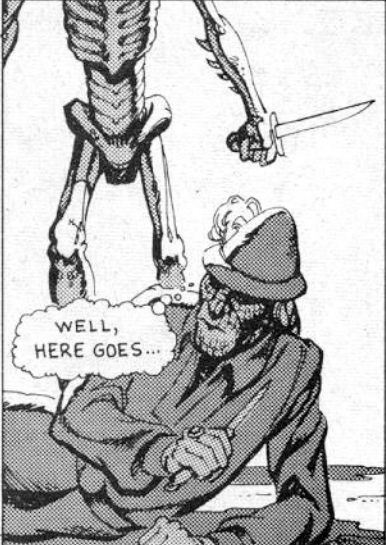


OOF!

FUDD!



CHIG?



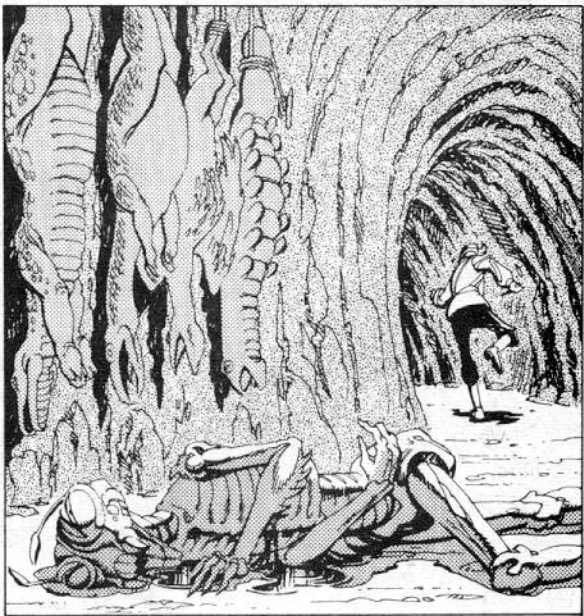
WELL,
HERE GOES...



CHI-IG!

GOTCHA!

STUGH!



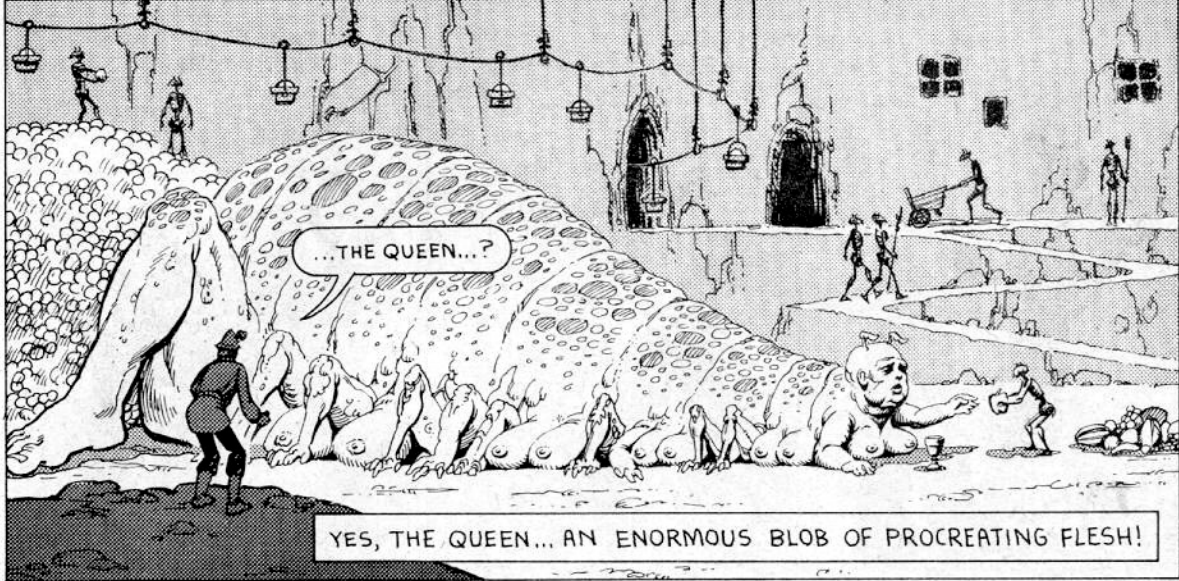
MADE IT! NOW TO FIND
MY WAY OUT OF HERE!



WHOOPS!



WHOOPS!



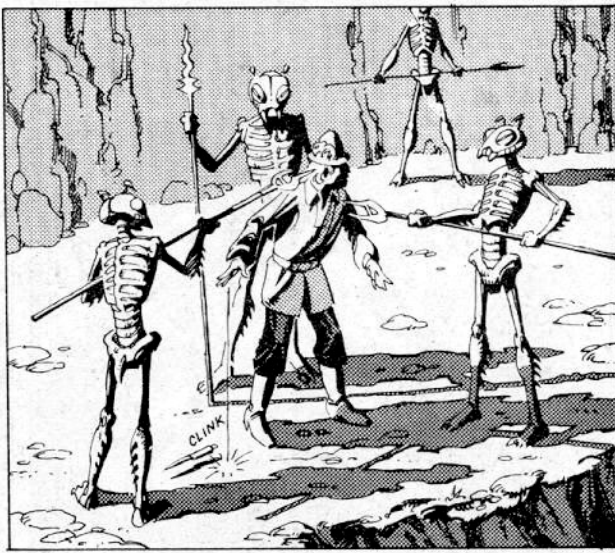
...THE QUEEN...?
YES, THE QUEEN... AN ENORMOUS BLOB OF PROCREATING FLESH!



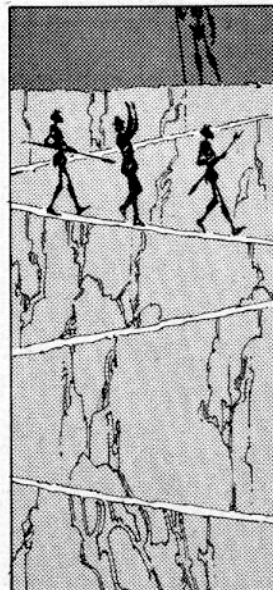
I GOT A VERY BAD FEELING ABOUT ALL THIS...



UH-OH...



CLINK...



IF YOU'LL WAIT JUST A MINUTE I CAN EXPLAIN!
ALL I WANT TO DO IS MARRY THE QUEEN.



DID SOMEONE SAY... MARRY?



YES! I DID!

AND IF I DON'T WANT TO GET MARRIED?



BUT... BUT YOU HAVE TO! OTHERWISE I'LL TURN INTO A LIZARD AND... IT'S YOUR CURSE ISN'T IT?



SO THAT'S IT - THAT OLD RING IS STILL AROUND! WELL STEP FORWARD AND I'LL REMOVE IT FOR YOU!



ABOUT TIME! I'M GETTING PRETTY TIRED OF THIS!

MY PLEASURE!



HEY, WAIT A MINUTE! YOU AREN'T PLANNING SOMETHING DRASTIC ARE YOU?

GRAB

FOR WHOM?



NO! HEY! WAIT A MINUTE!



CHOMP!

AAVEEE

DAMMIT! I COULD HAVE DONE THAT MYSELF!



ALL THIS HAS BEEN FOR NOTHING!

THUK

PLEASE! CONTROL YOURSELF! YOU ARE PART LIZARD-MAYBE IT WILL GROW BACK!



YOU MEAN I'M GONNA STAY THIS WAY?! IT'S PERMANENT?!

WELL, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT.

AH...HELL! YOU AND YOUR DAMN CURSE!



KUNCH

WHAP!



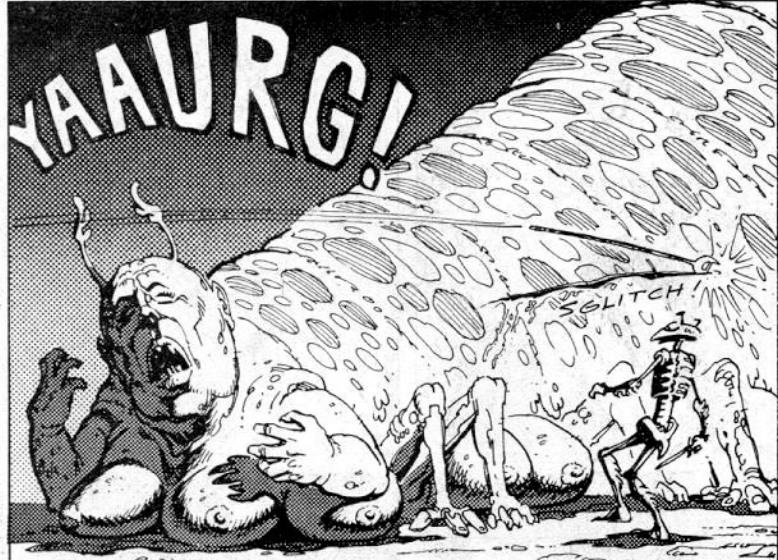
KRUNCH

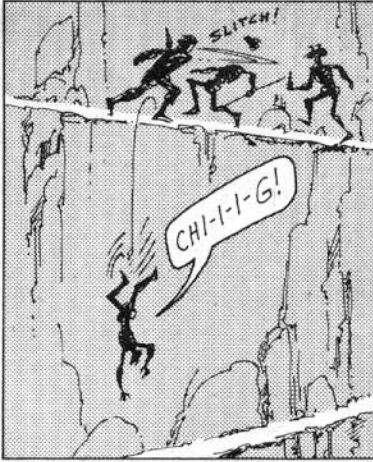
THAT DOES IT...



I THINK I'VE TAKEN ABOUT ENOUGH...







WELCOME BACK, LEANDER!
FOR AN AMATEUR, IT LOOKS
LIKE YOU'RE COMING OUT
ALL RIGHT! **MUCH** BETTER
THAN I **THOUGHT** YOU WOULD!

IN FACT, YOU MAY FIND
CERTAIN ADVANTAGES
TO BEING PART LIZARD!
YOUR HAND FOR INSTANCE...

GLAD YOU MADE IT
LEANDER! NOW I CAN
FINISH THAT POEM...

YEAH - I HEARD
ALREADY.

JUST TAKE ME
HOME, COLERIDGE.

YOU **MAD**,
LEANDER?

FOR
AWHILE.

THANKS...

WHAT NEXT, LEANDER,
WHEN YOU GET HOME?
NOT MANY JOBS FOR
A LIZARD MAN.

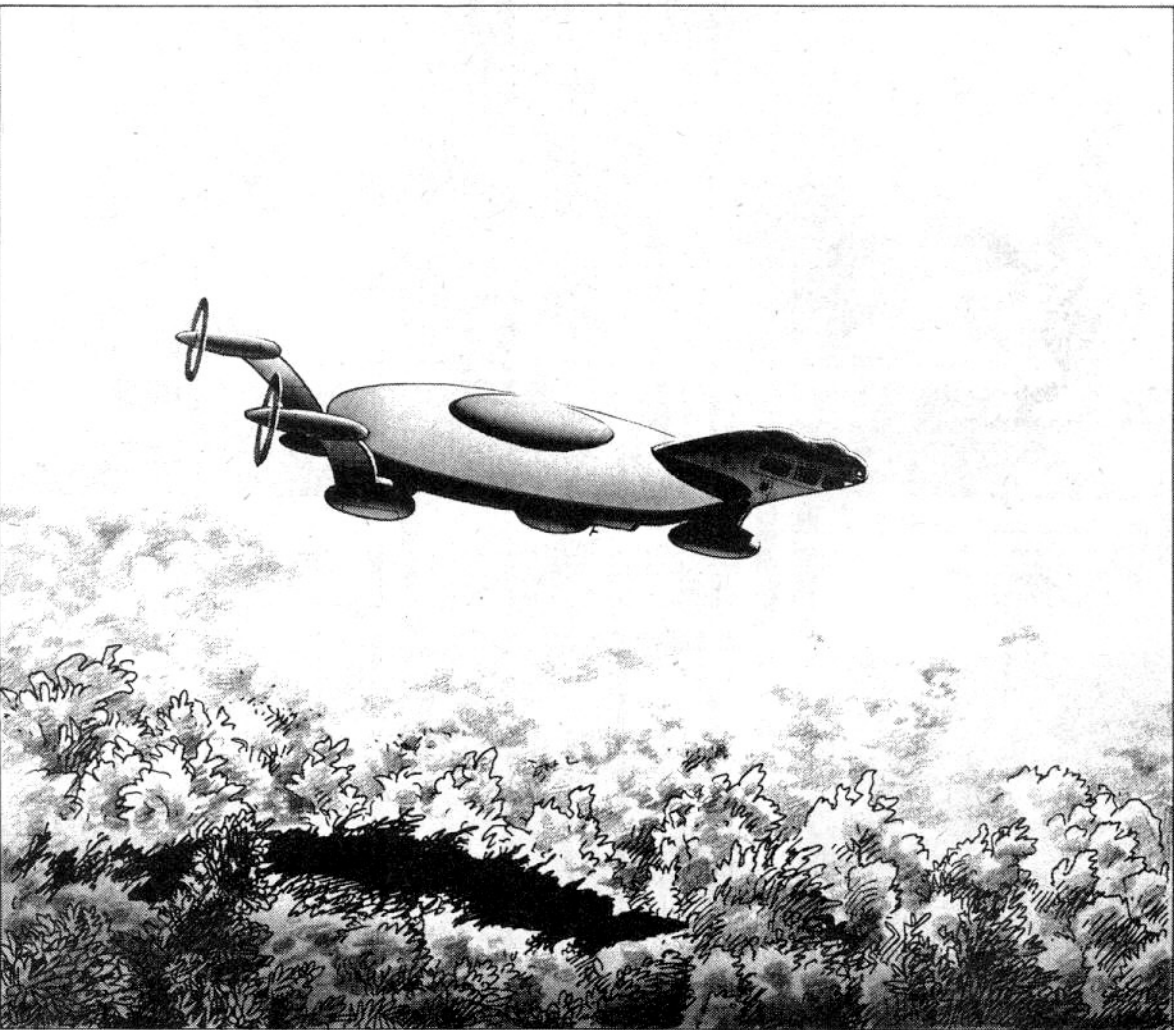
WELL, THE **FIRST**
THING I'M GONNA
DO...

... I'M GONNA
KILL ME A
MERCHANT...

THE END

AND SO WE FIND THE TURNED WORM **ISN'T** THE
SAME ON BOTH ENDS! WHAT'S NEXT? WHO CAN SAY?

ENCOUNTER AT WAR

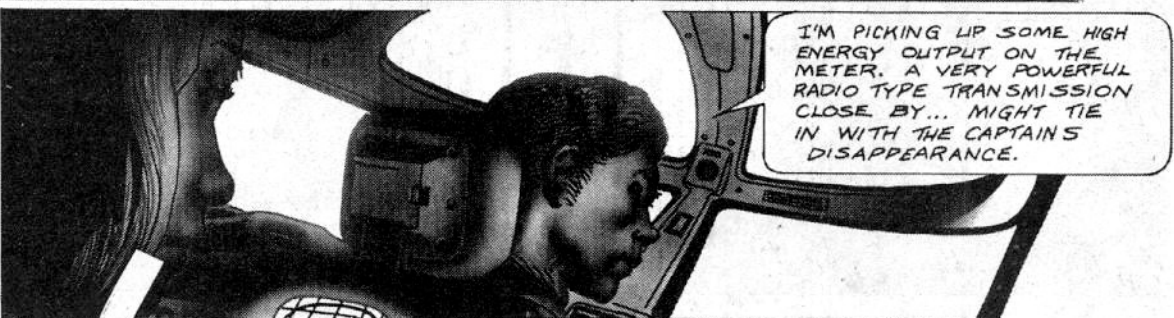


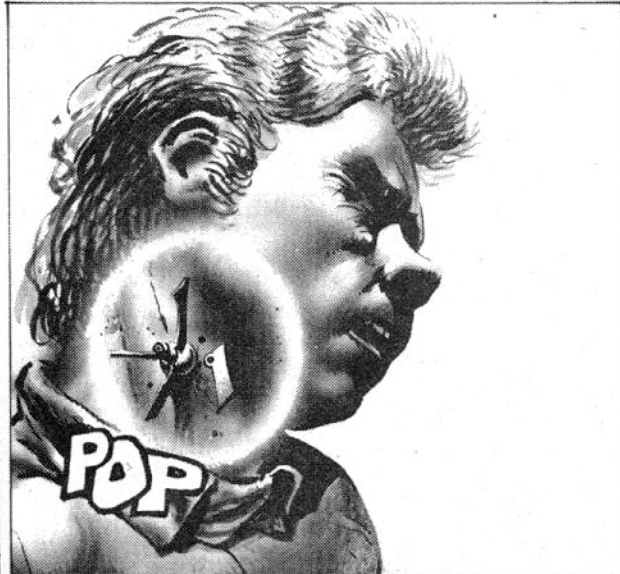
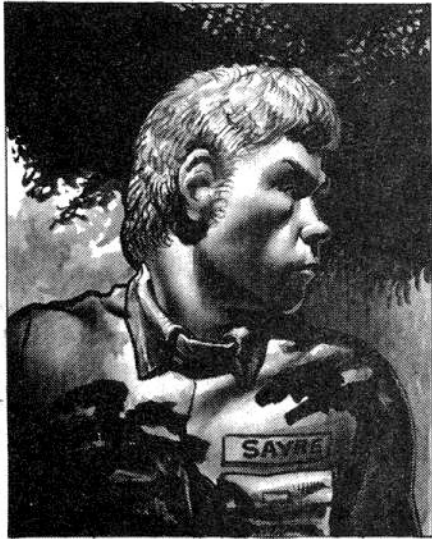
THIS IS WHERE THE CAPTAIN WAS LAST SEEN. THINK THERE'S BEEN TROUBLE?

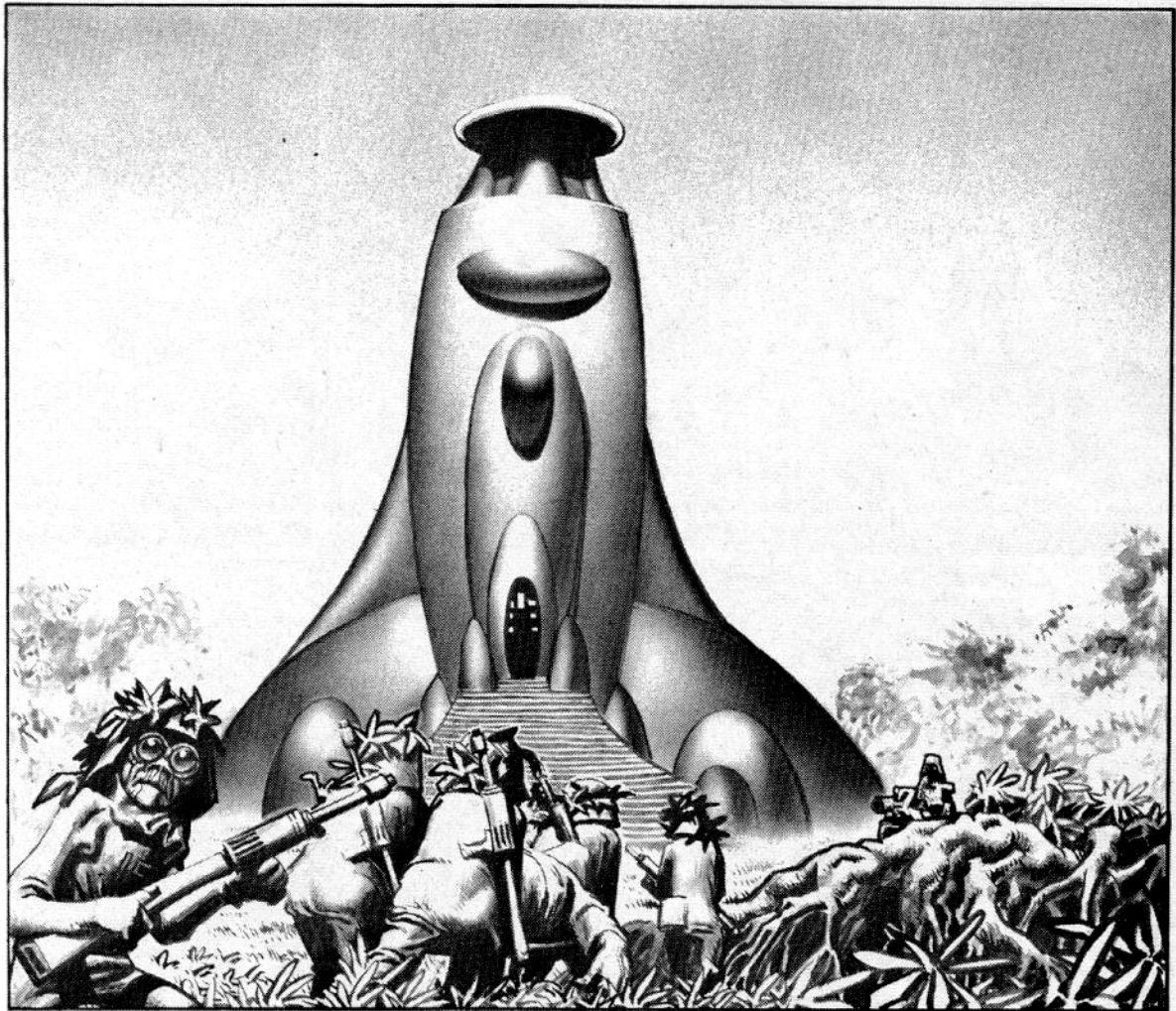
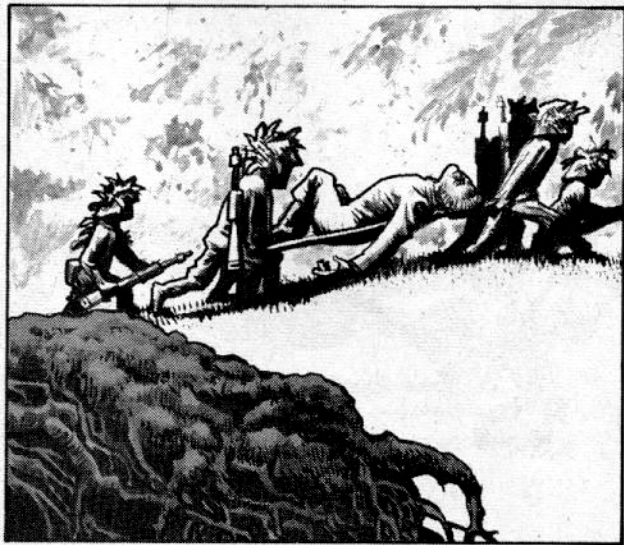
COULD BE. WE'LL KNOW WHEN — WAIT A MINUTE!

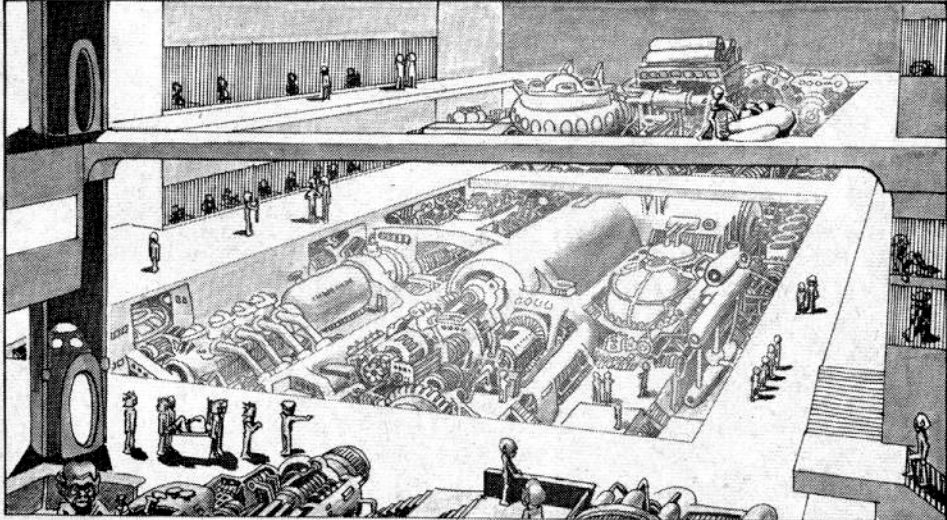
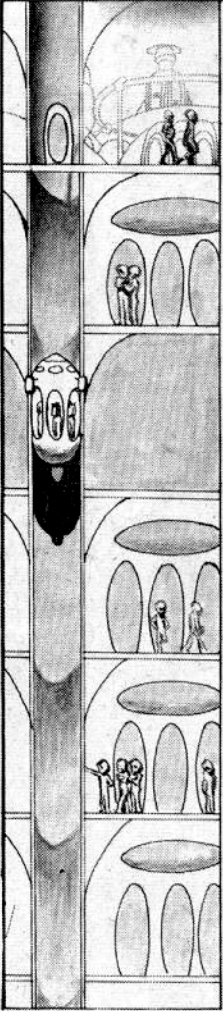
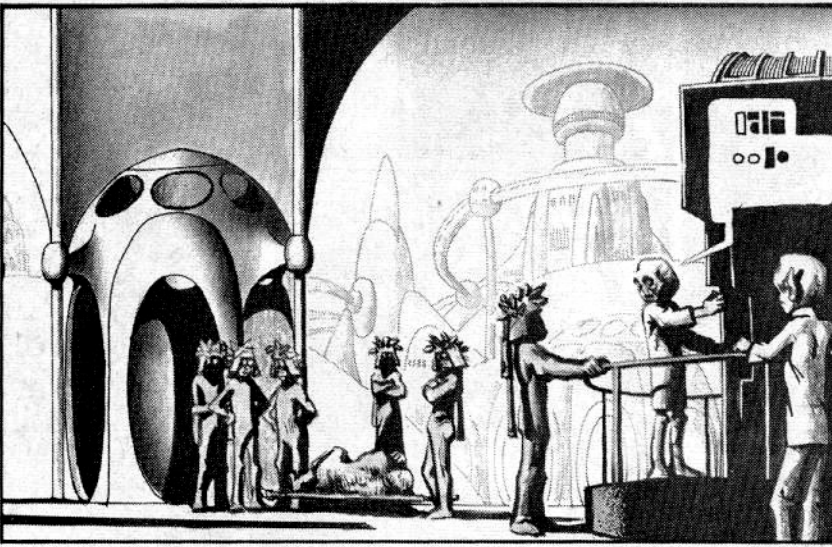


I'M PICKING UP SOME HIGH ENERGY OUTPUT ON THE METER. A VERY POWERFUL RADIO TYPE TRANSMISSION CLOSE BY... MIGHT TIE IN WITH THE CAPTAIN'S DISAPPEARANCE.







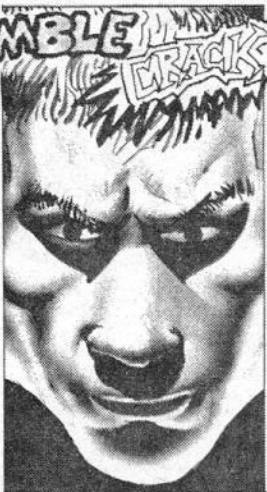
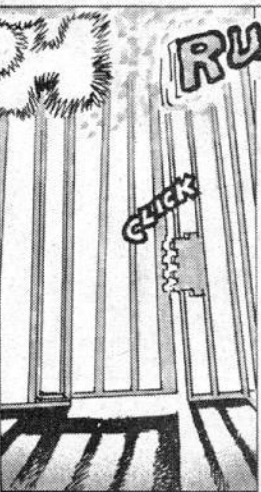
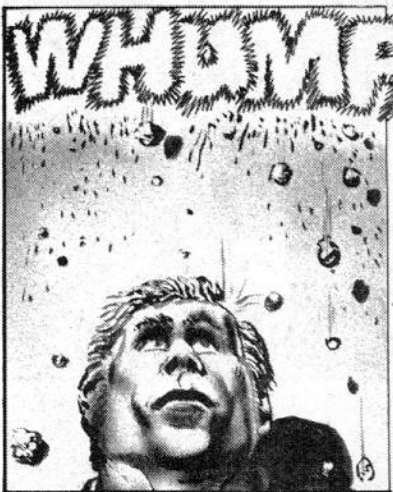
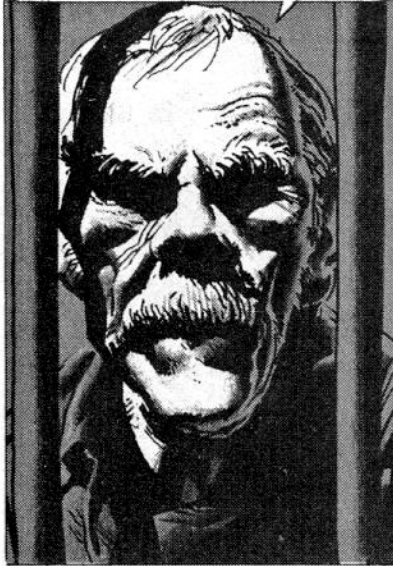


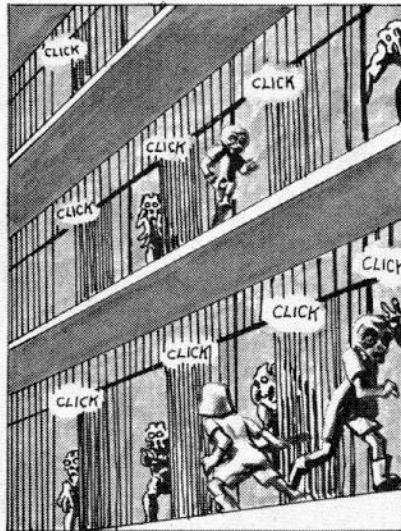
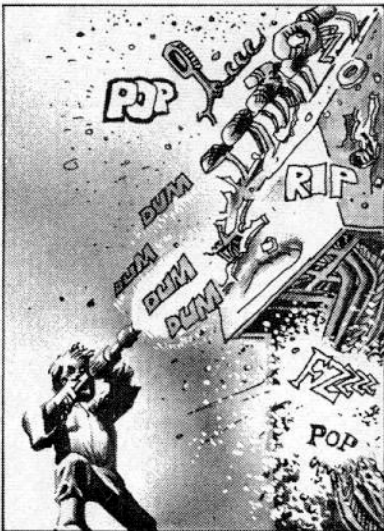
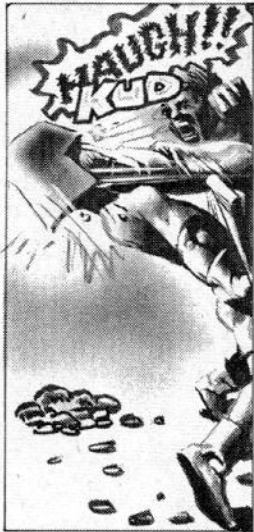
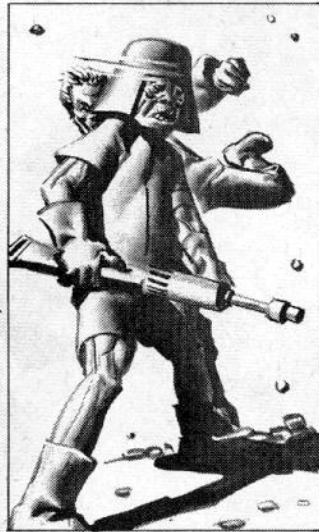
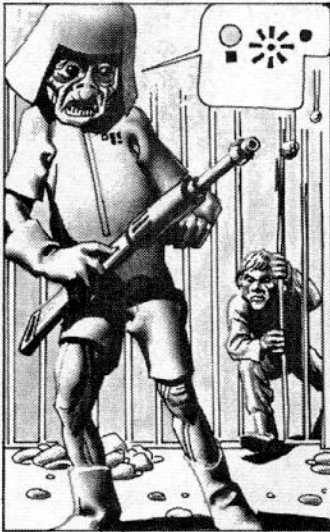


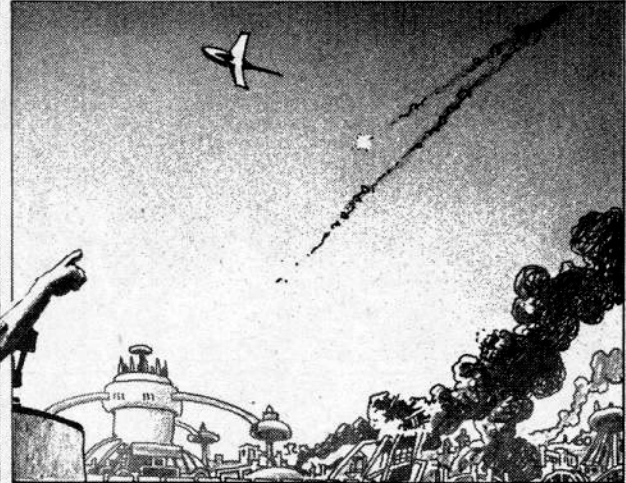
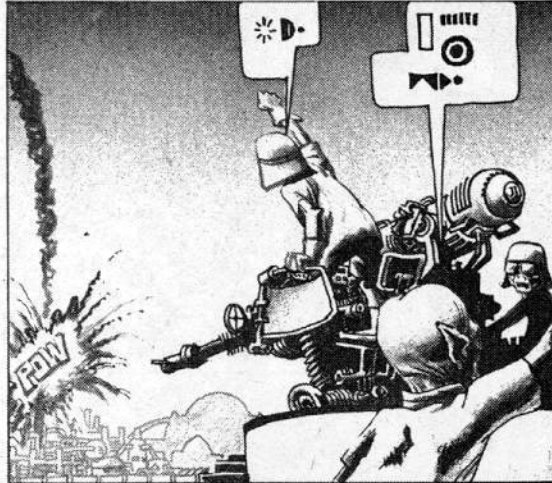
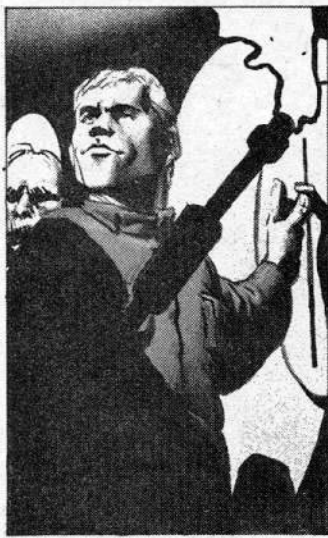
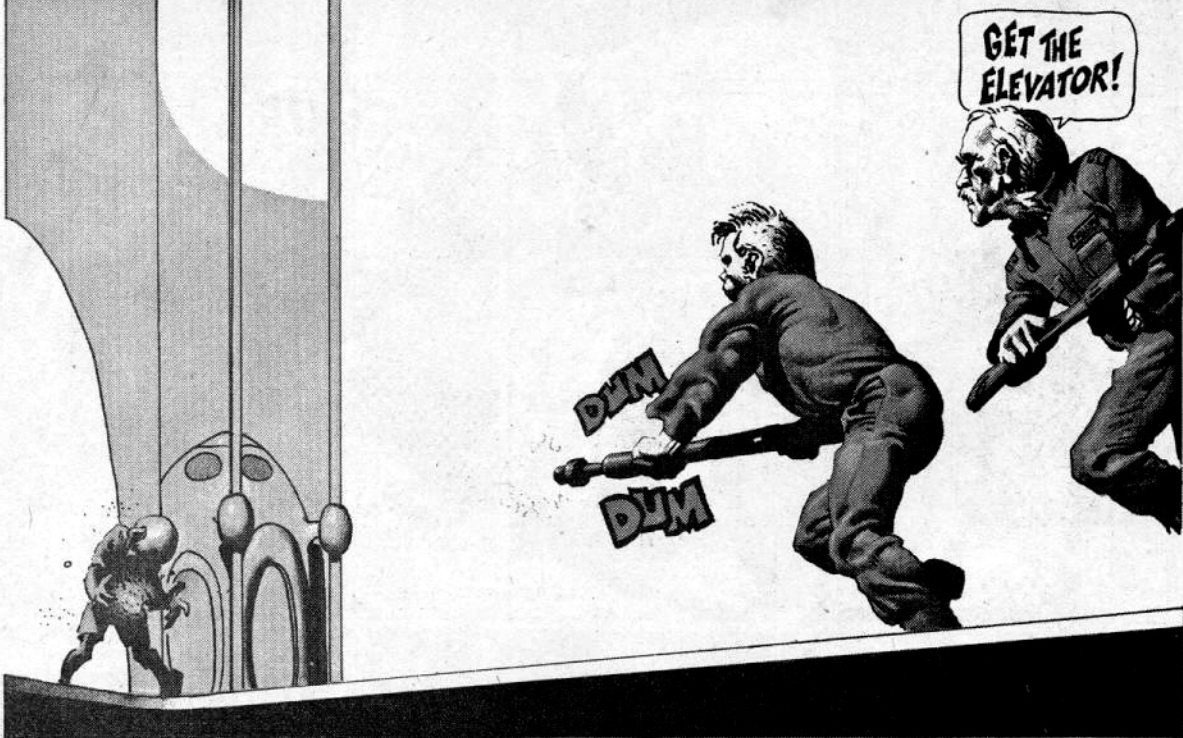
YOU'VE COME AT A BAD TIME, SAYRE - THE GNOMES WERE PREPARING AN ATTACK ON EARTH WHEN THEIR OWN PLANET WAS ATTACKED..

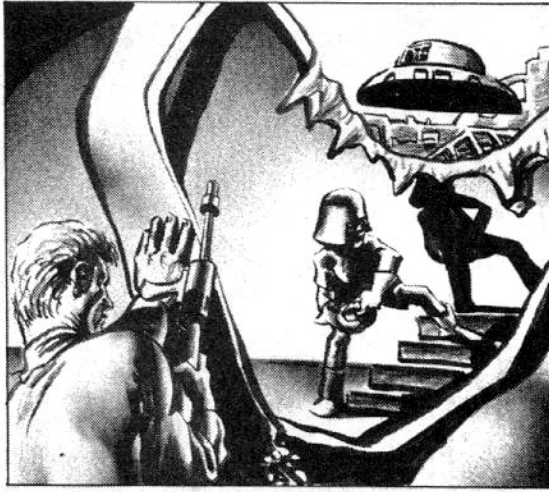
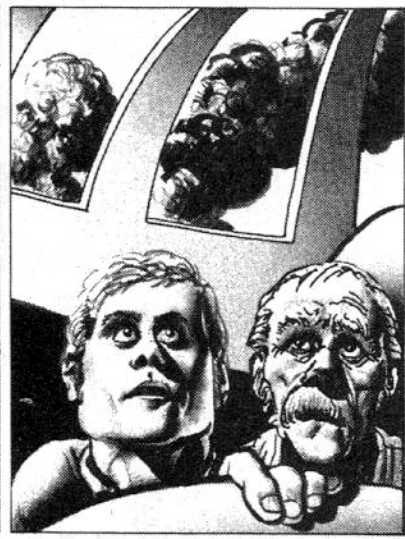
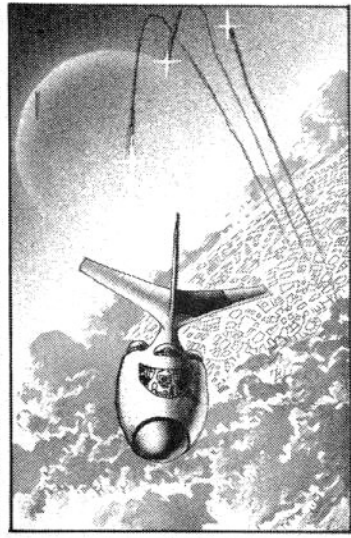
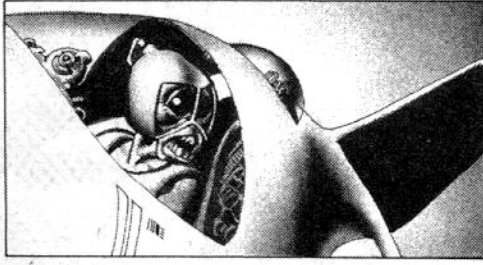
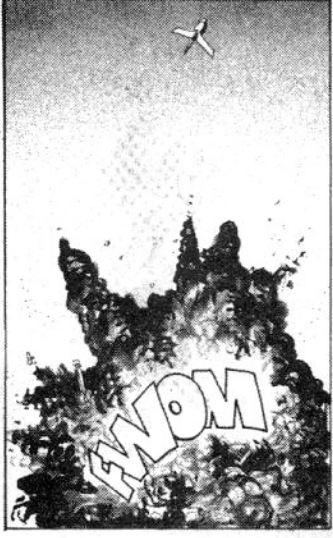
NOW AS SOON AS THEY'VE GOT BACK ALL THE TROOPS THEY'D TRANSPORTED TO EARTH, OUR ONLY LINK WITH HOME WILL BE SEVERED!

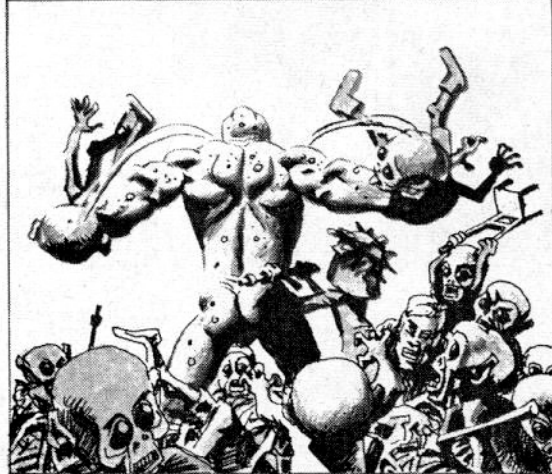
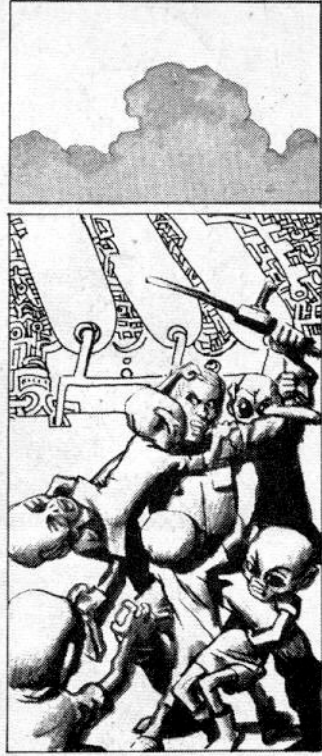
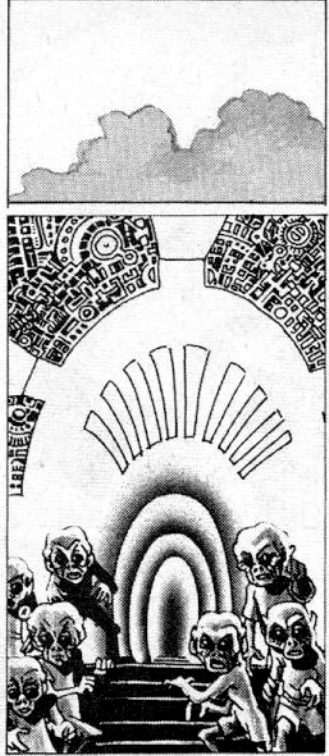
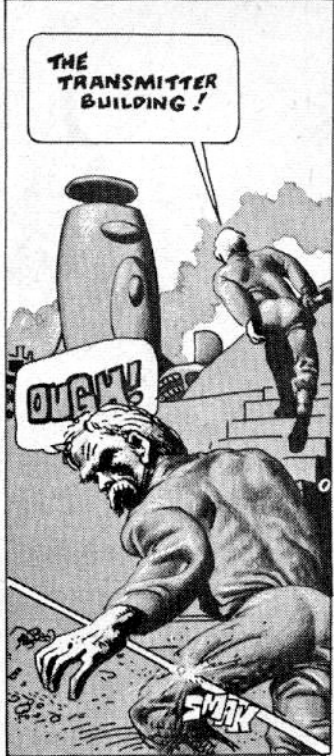
RIGHT - UNTIL THIS WHOLE PLACE CRUMBLES DOWN AROUND US DURING THE FIGHT ON THE SURFACE.







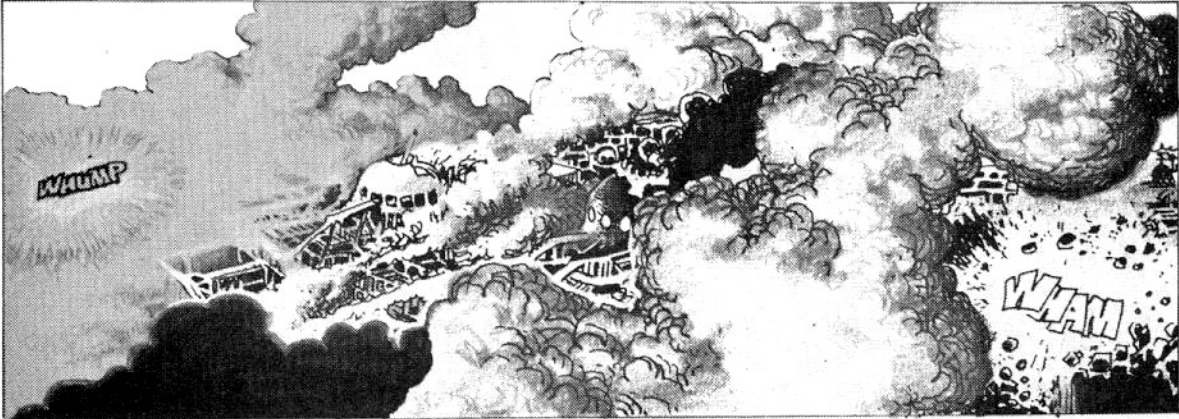
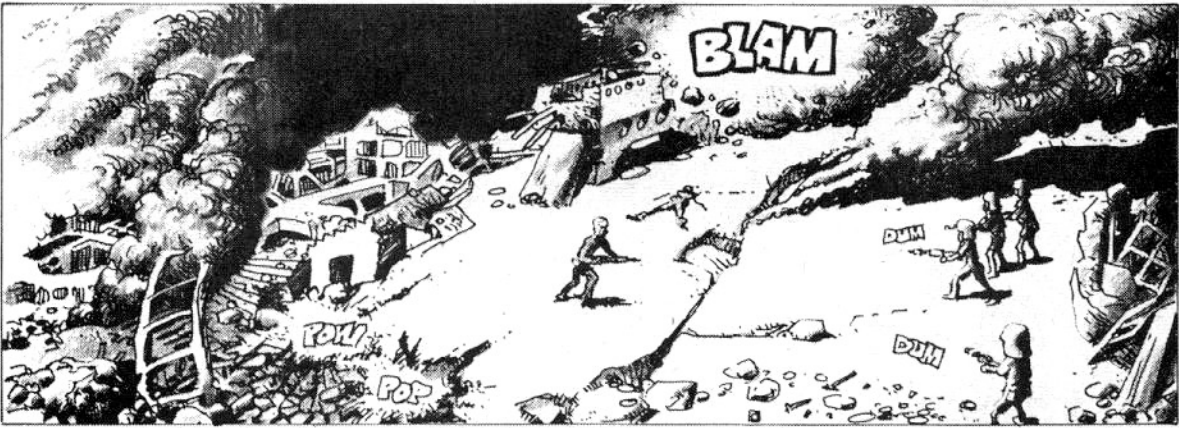




YOU BASTARD!

YOU COULD'VE WAITED!

HE'S DEAD!



THE END



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