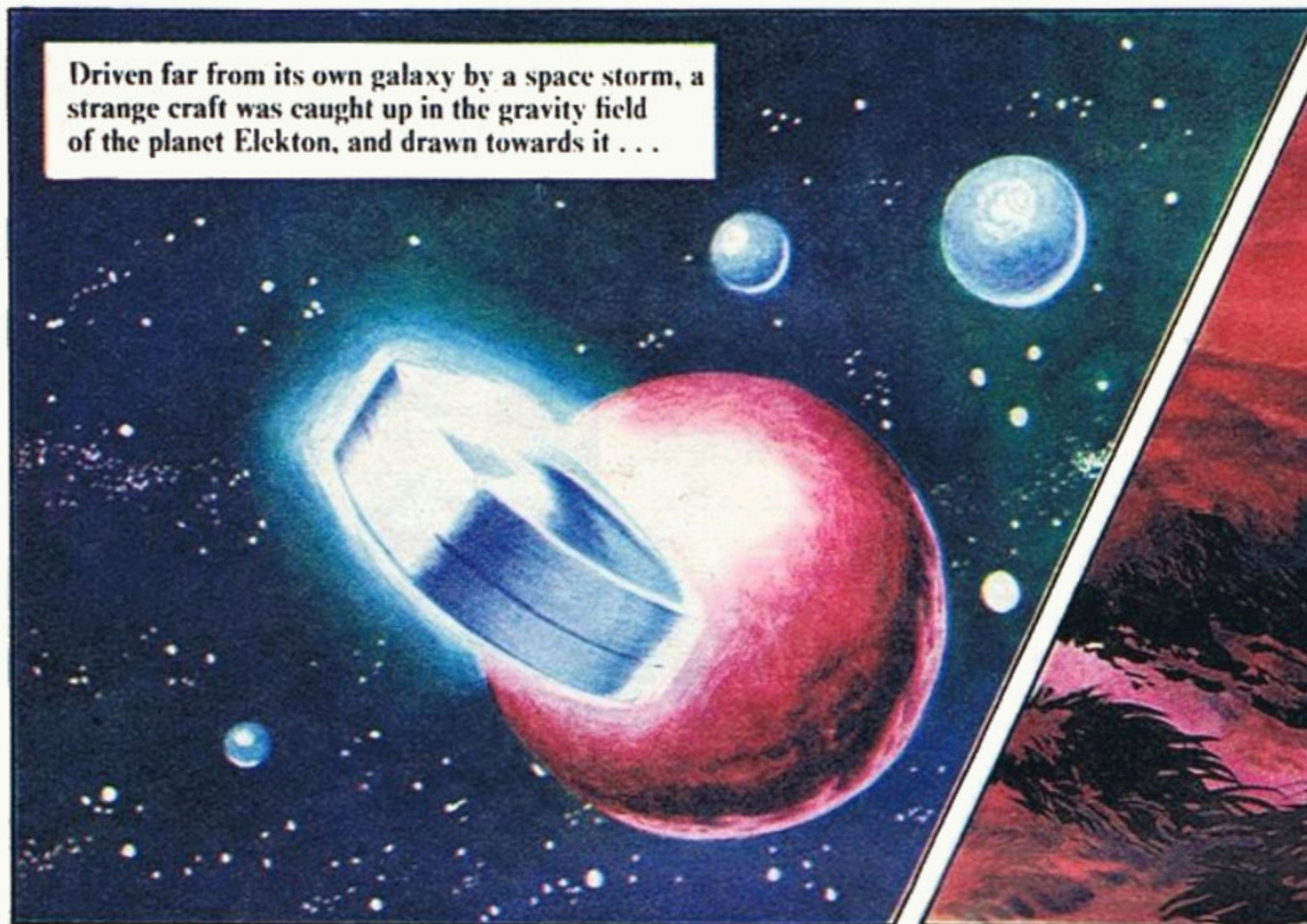
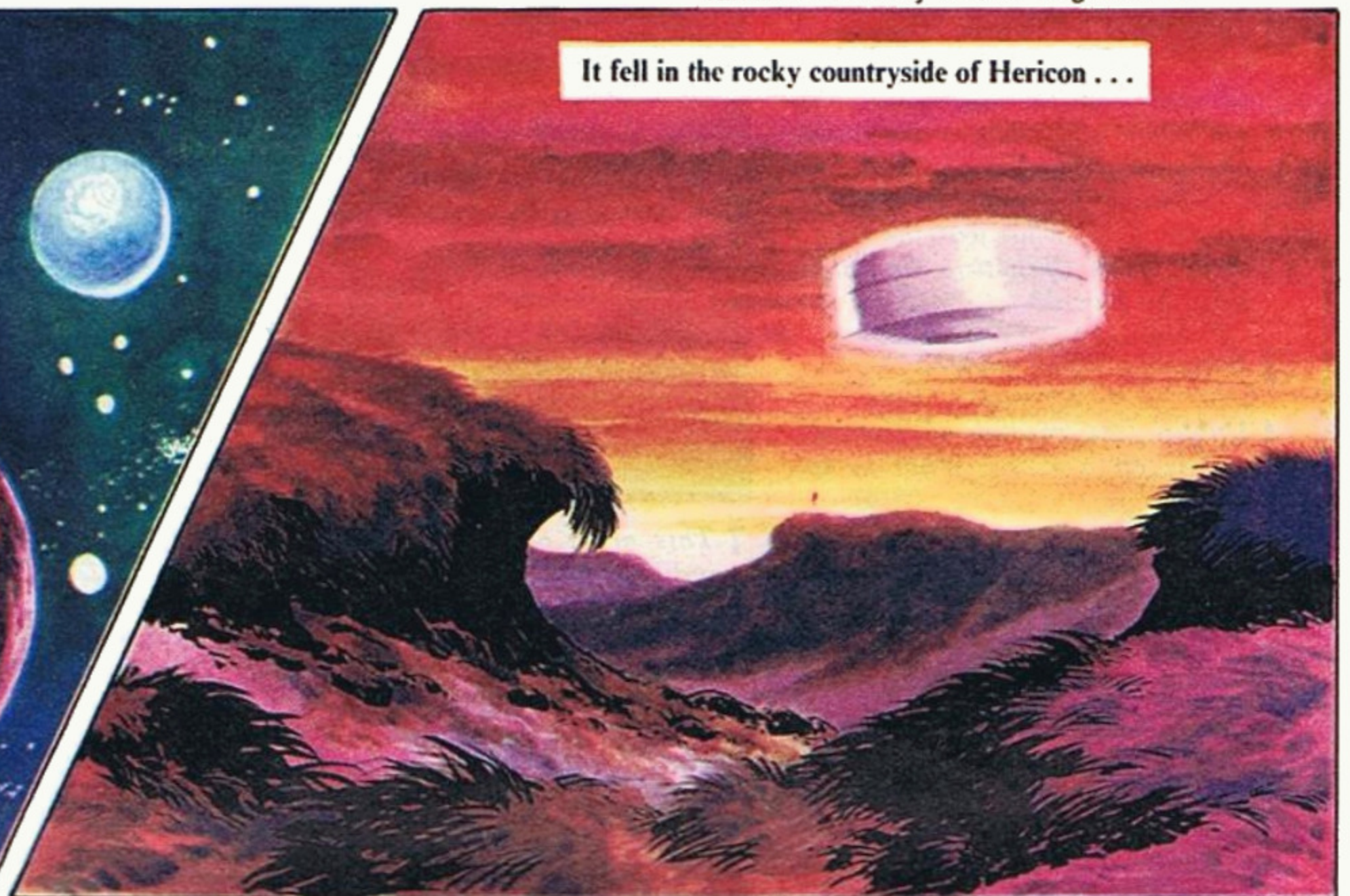


The TRIGAN EMPIRE

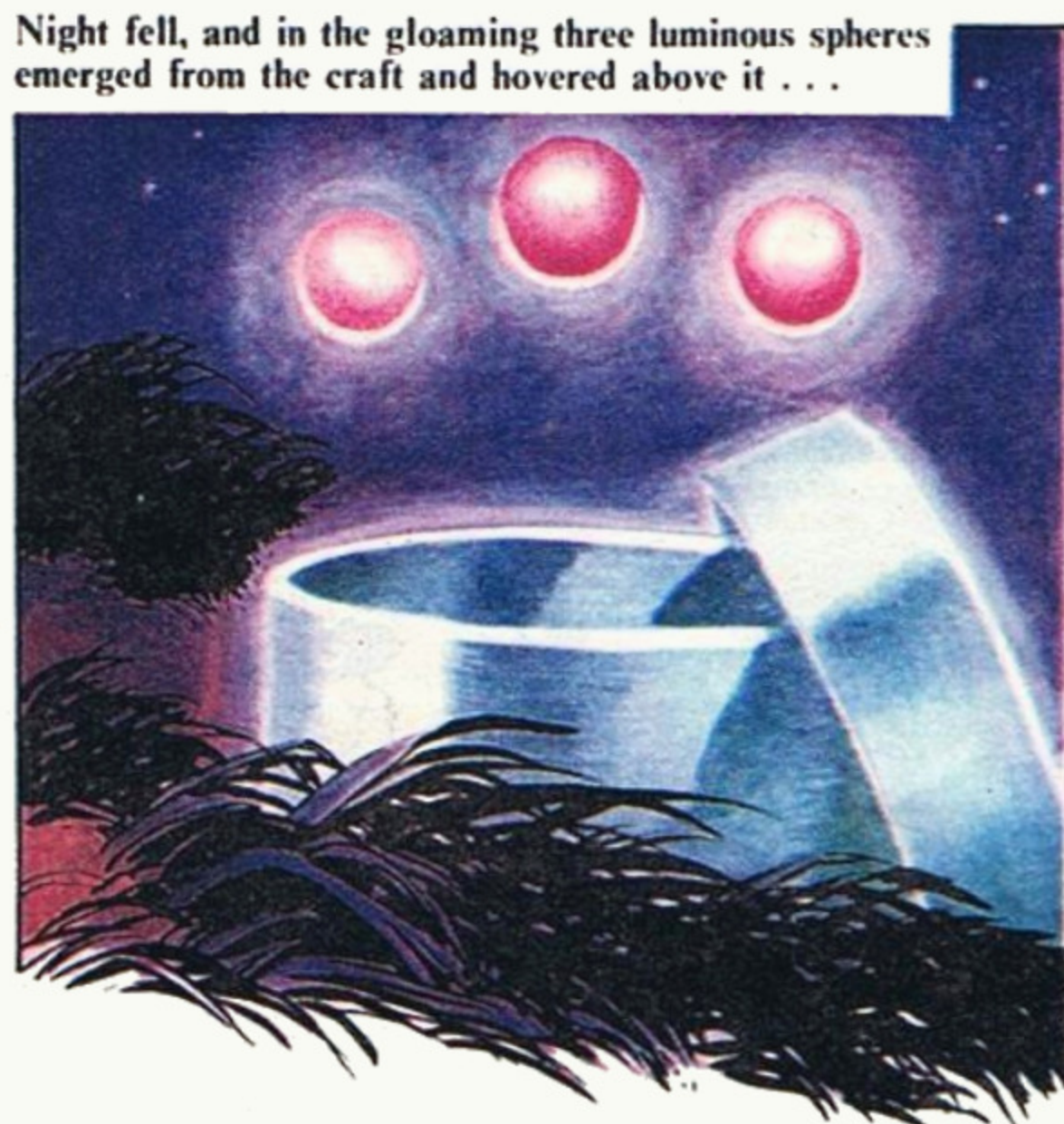
Countless light years away from Earth is the galaxy of Yarna, and in that galaxy is the planet Elekton. Of all the empires on Elekton, that of Trigan was the greatest. Today we begin a new story in the fantastic history of the Trigans . . .



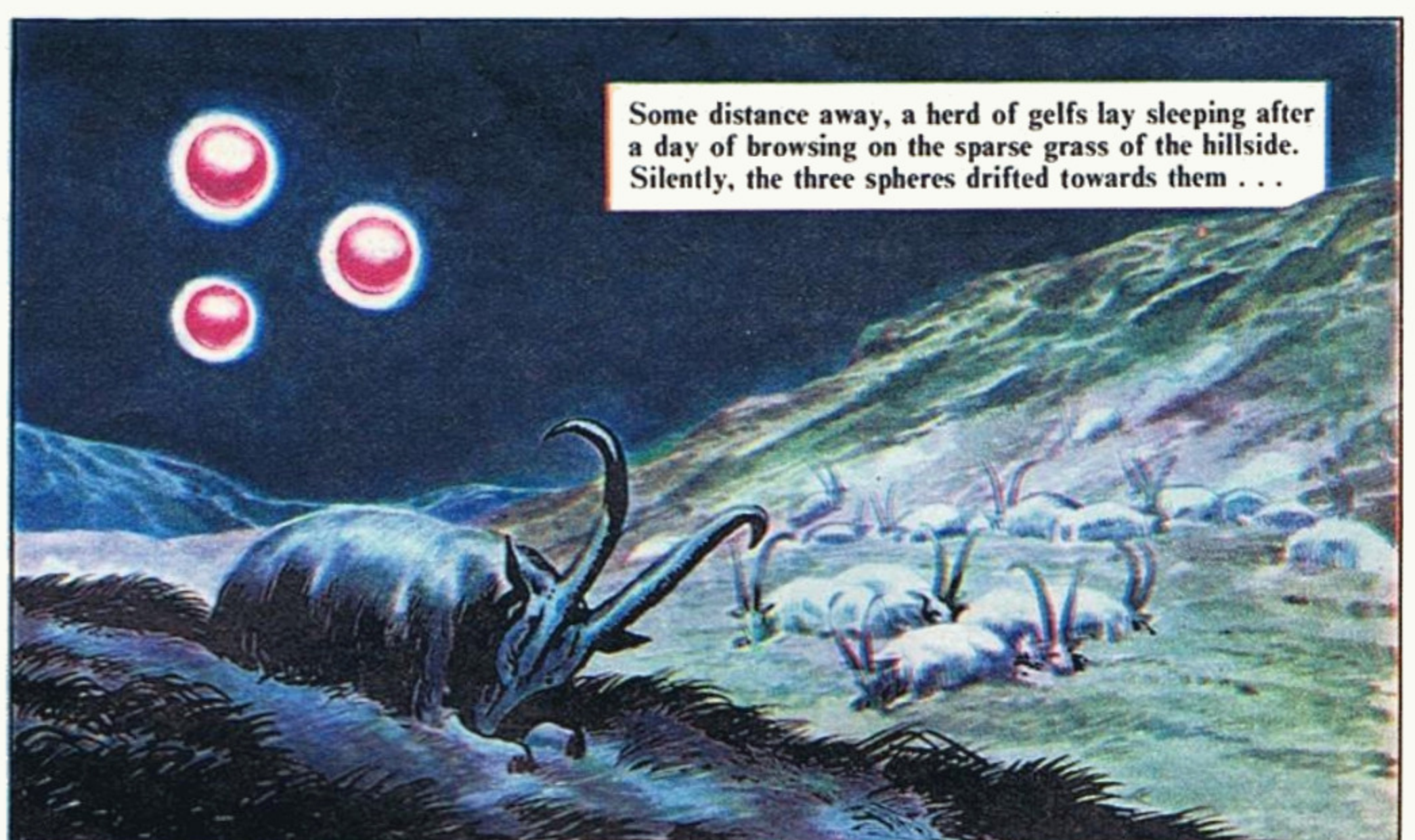
Driven far from its own galaxy by a space storm, a strange craft was caught up in the gravity field of the planet Elekton, and drawn towards it . . .



It fell in the rocky countryside of Hericon . . .



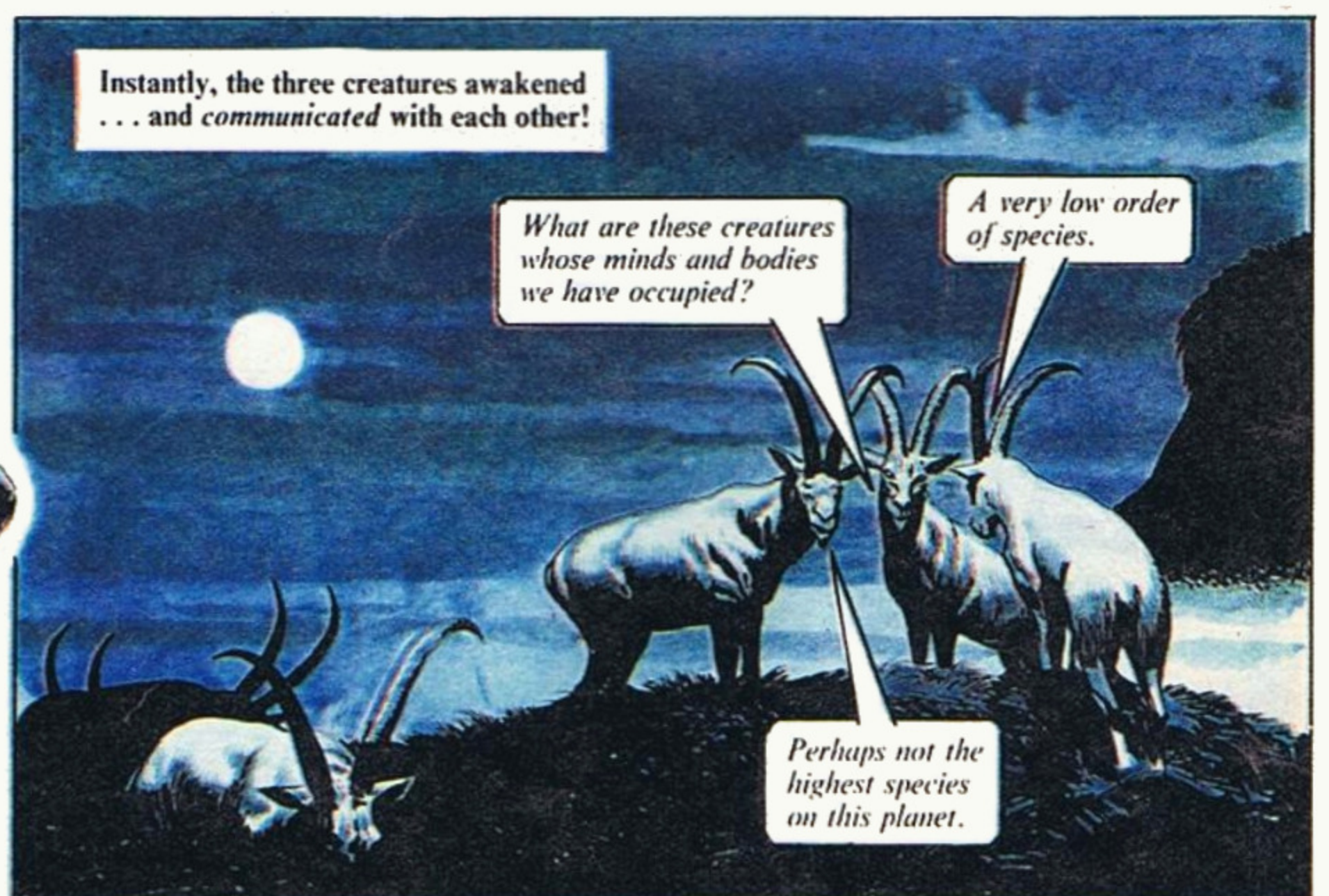
Night fell, and in the gloaming three luminous spheres emerged from the craft and hovered above it . . .



Some distance away, a herd of gelfs lay sleeping after a day of browsing on the sparse grass of the hillside. Silently, the three spheres drifted towards them . . .



The luminous globes hovered over the heads of the three gelfs . . . disintegrated . . . and vanished into the animals' ears!

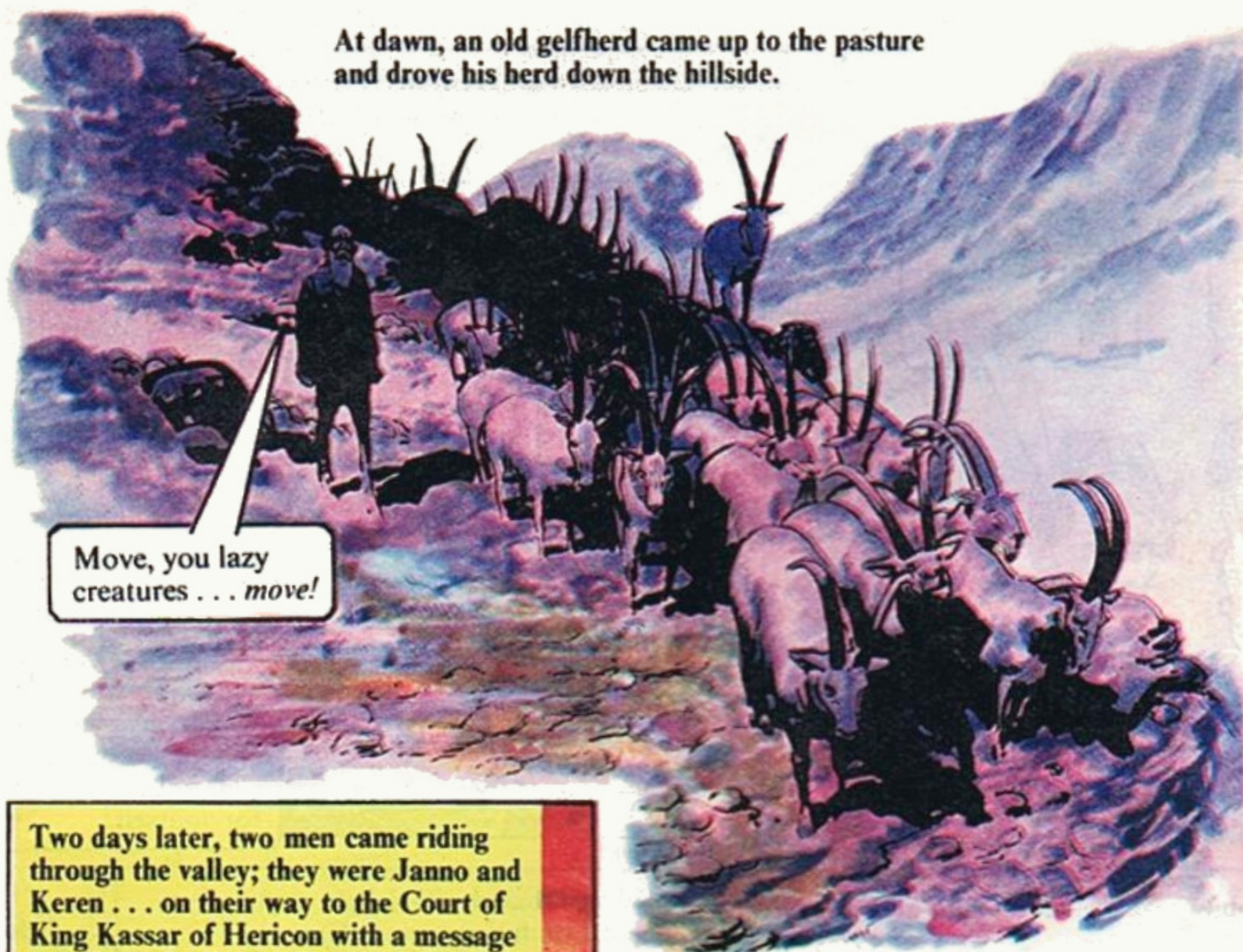


Instantly, the three creatures awakened . . . and communicated with each other!

What are these creatures whose minds and bodies we have occupied?

A very low order of species.

Perhaps not the highest species on this planet.



At dawn, an old gelfherd came up to the pasture and drove his herd down the hillside.

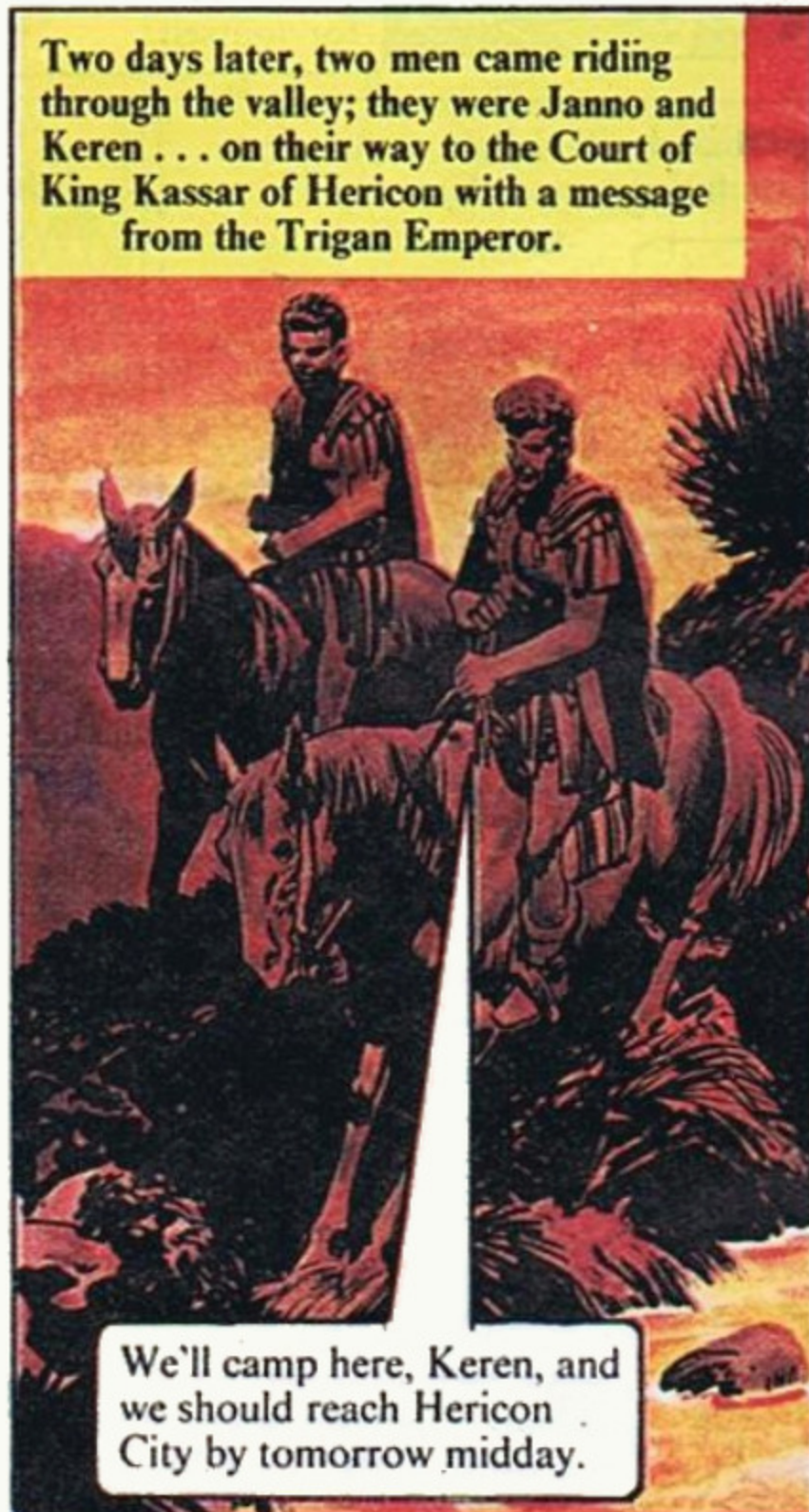
Move, you lazy creatures . . . move!



The old man would have died of shock if he had known the evil intelligence at work in the minds of three of his flock.

He is a higher creature.

When he sleeps, one of us will take him over.



Two days later, two men came riding through the valley; they were Janno and Keren . . . on their way to the Court of King Kassar of Hericon with a message from the Trigan Emperor.

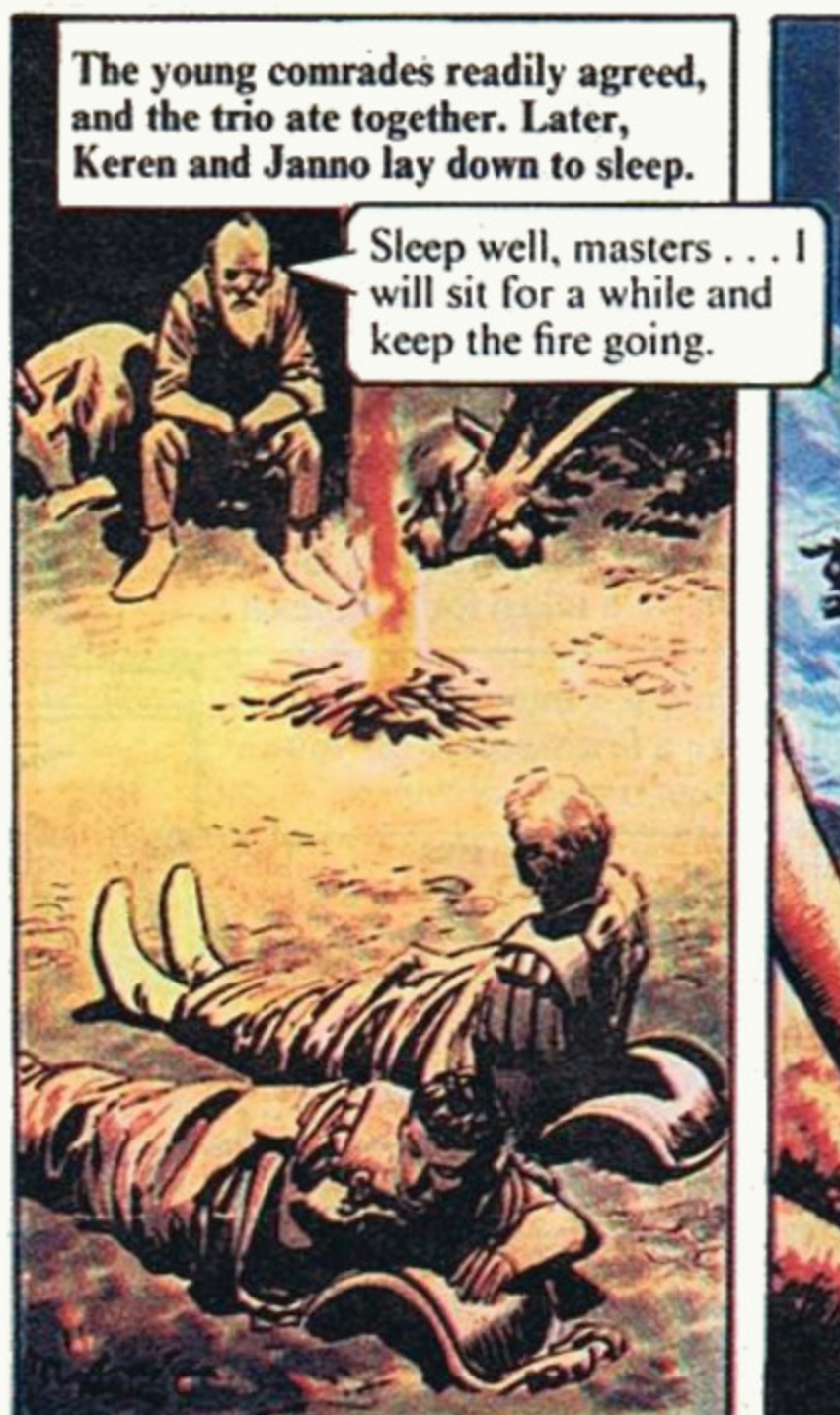
We'll camp here, Keren, and we should reach Hericon City by tomorrow midday.



Nights are chill in the hills of Hericon, so the two friends made a fire. Later, they saw shapes moving in the darkness towards them, and their hands flew to their swords . . .

LOOK!

WHO'S THAT?



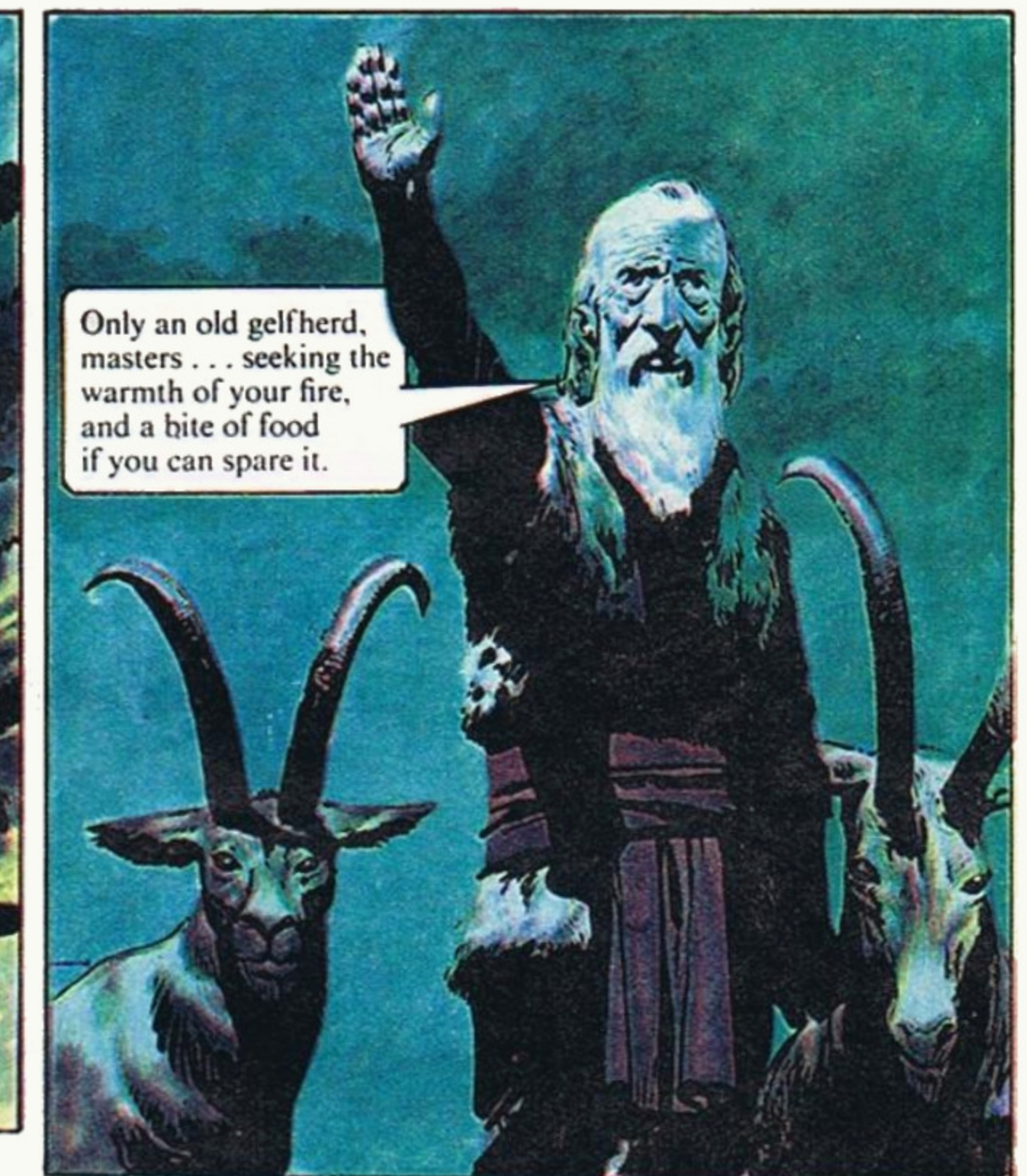
The young comrades readily agreed, and the trio ate together. Later, Keren and Janno lay down to sleep.

Sleep well, masters . . . I will sit for a while and keep the fire going.



Later, when all was silent save for the steady breathing of the two youths, the old man whispered to the two gelfs . . . who also slept . . .

Take them over!



Only an old gelfherd, masters . . . seeking the warmth of your fire, and a bite of food if you can spare it.

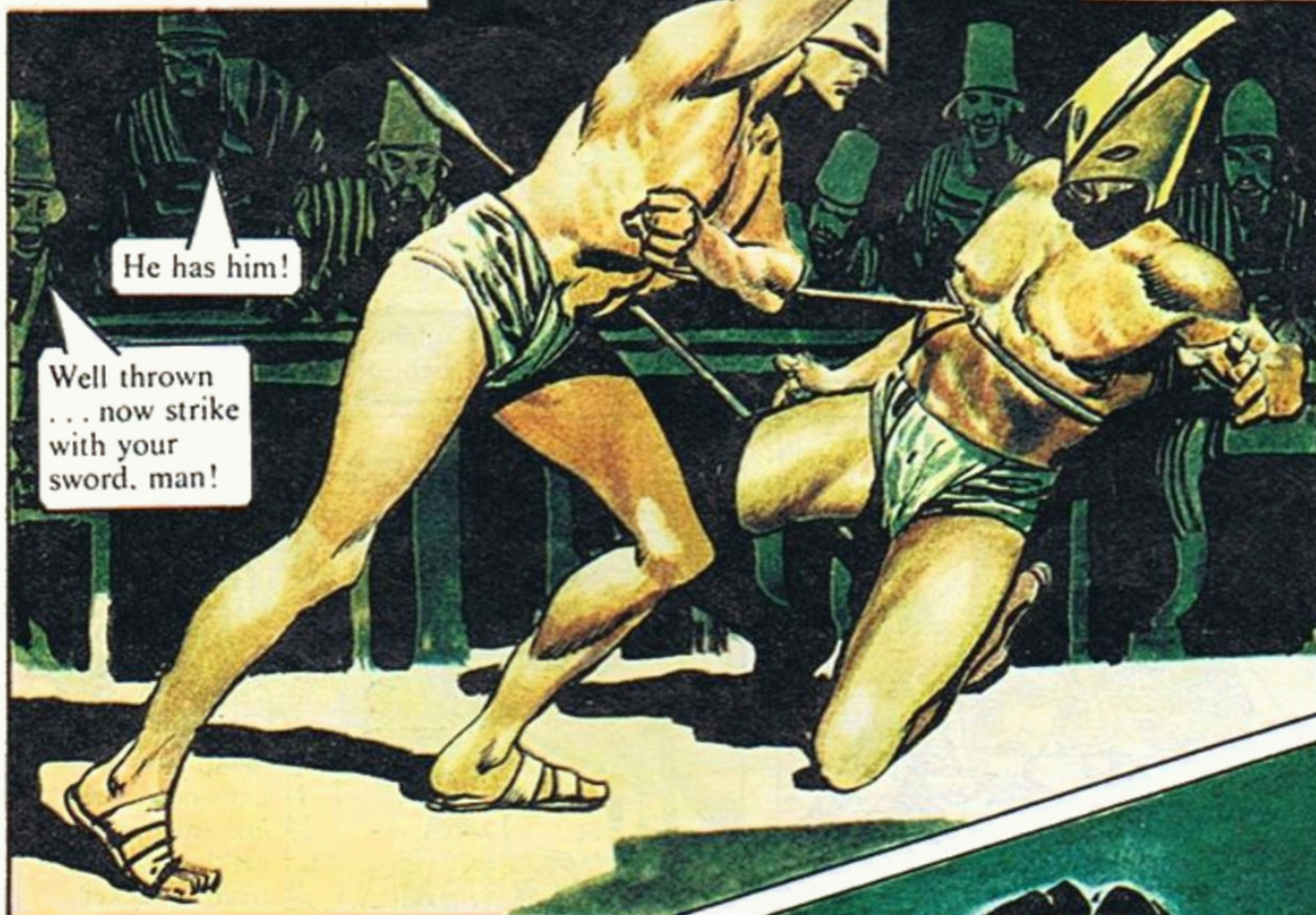


Two spheres rose from the sleeping gelfs and hovered above Janno and Keren!





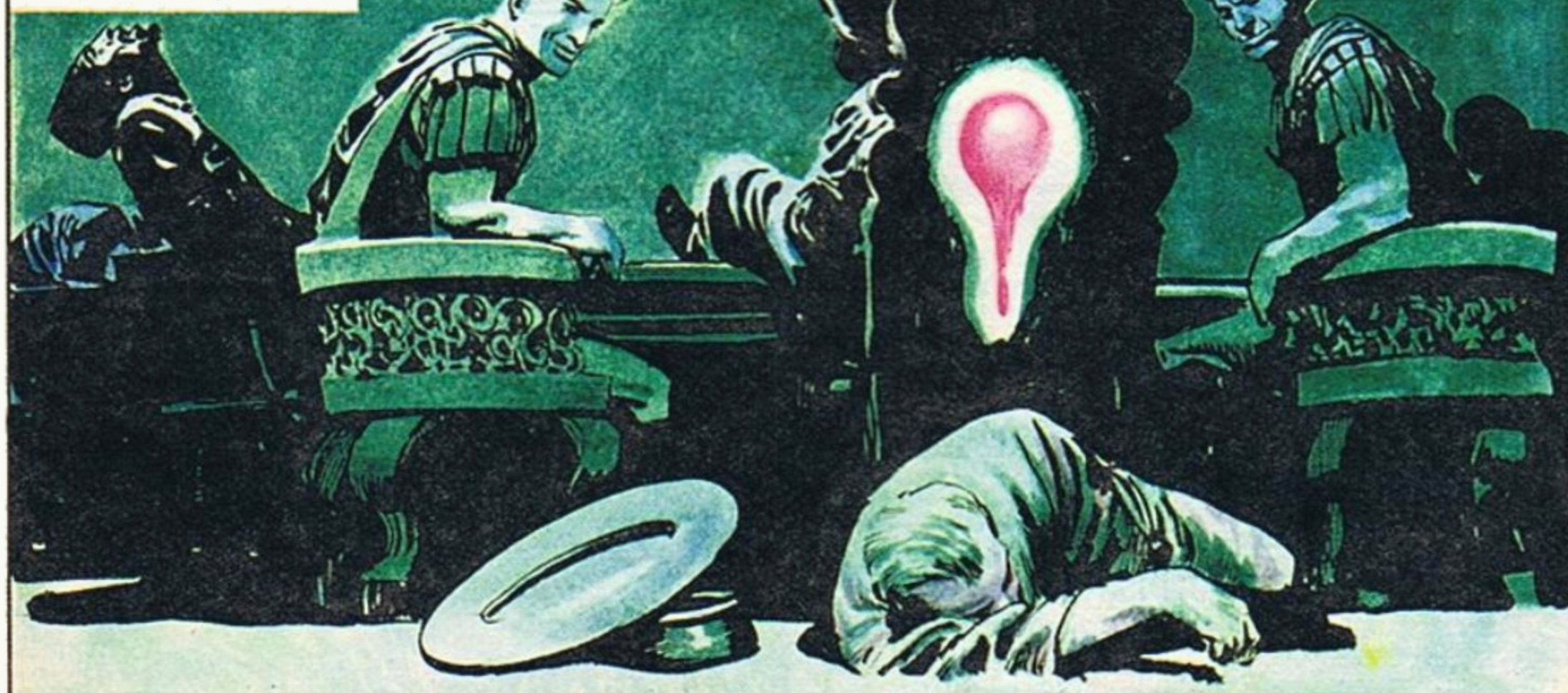
During a pause in the huge meal, matched pairs of Hericon warriors entertained the guests with fights to the death, after the barbaric manner of that country.



Not till the dawn of Elekton's twin suns was there silence in the vast hall, and King Kassar slept where he sat.



From the ear of the sleeping gelf-herd rose the luminous sphere . . .



It hovered for a few moments over the head of the sleeping king . . . and then . . .





Kassar of Hericon awoke . . . but now an alien intelligence controlled his mind and body. He glanced at his two companions.

Good! . . . With every move we improve our position amongst the species of this planet. Soon we will be the masters here!



The three turned to regard the old herdsman, who lay asleep.

He will awaken himself. He will know . . . and tell . . . everything!

Then we will eliminate him at once!

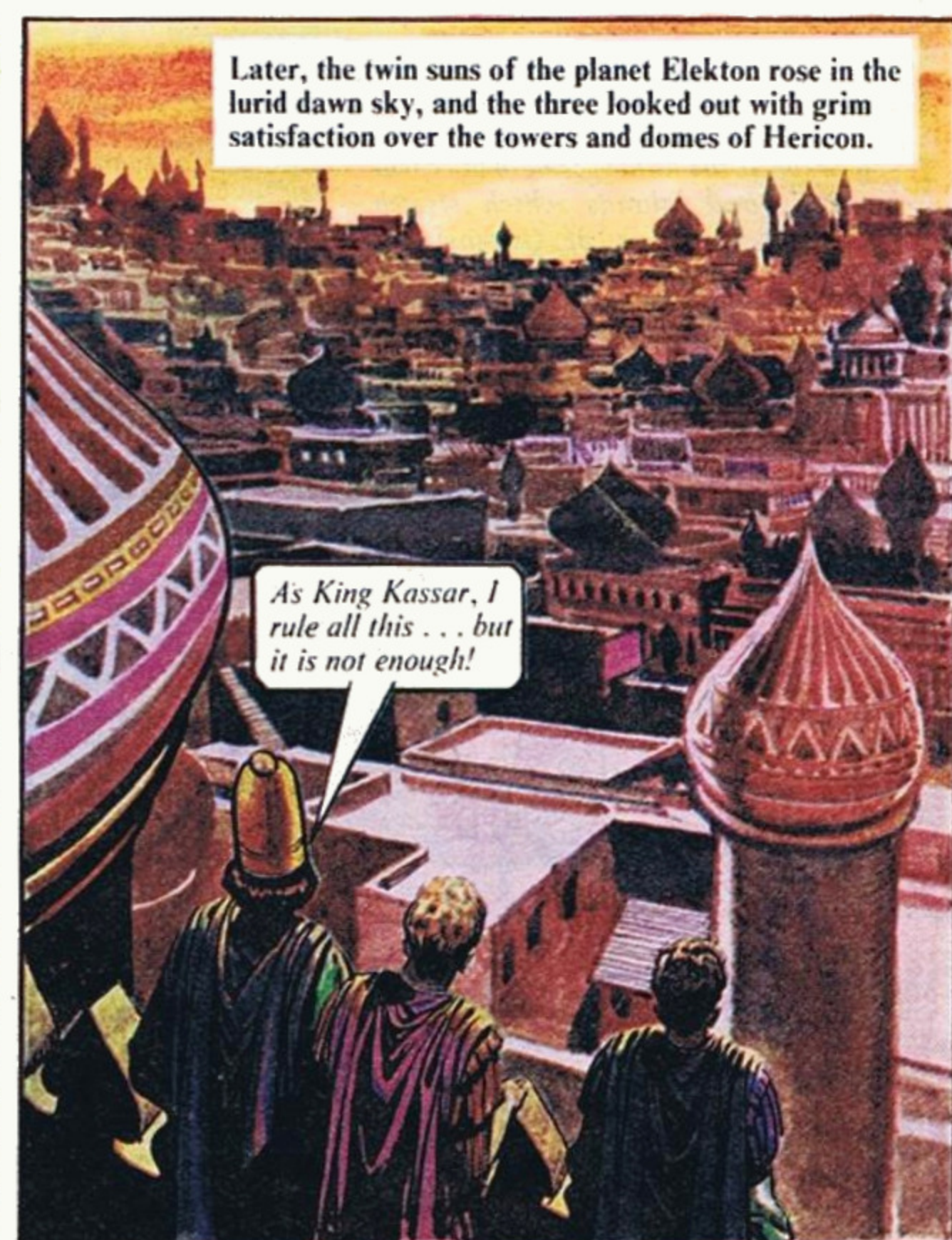


Two of them carried the herdsman from the hall, quelling his frantic struggles and shutting off his cries so that the sleeping feasters were not awakened.



Outside was a sheer drop over the ramparts to the gorge below.

The creature will not be a danger to us now.



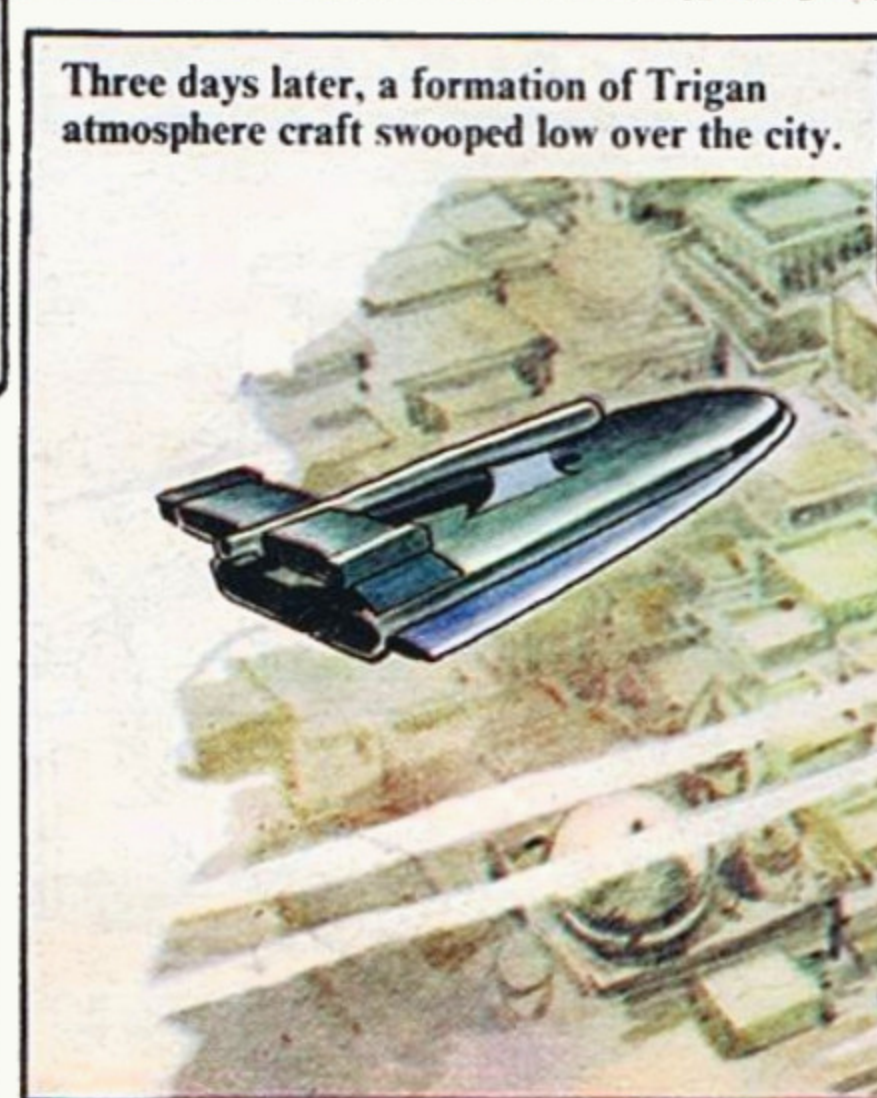
Later, the twin suns of the planet Elekton rose in the lurid dawn sky, and the three looked out with grim satisfaction over the towers and domes of Hericon.

As King Kassar, I rule all this . . . but it is not enough!

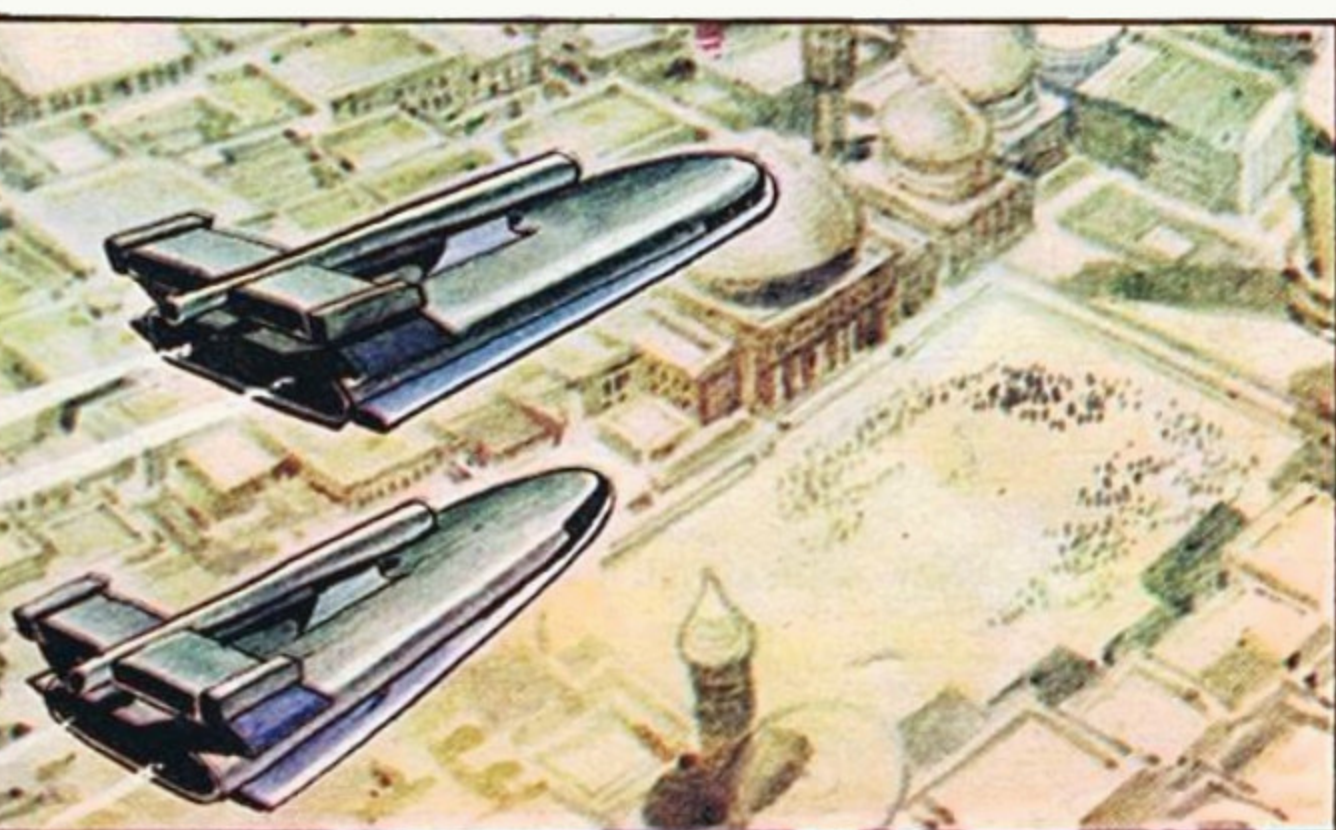


The evil intelligence that controlled Janno answered . . .

The Emperor Trigo is on his way here . . . I will take him over and then we shall be masters of the Trigan Empire also . . . and after that . . . who knows?



Three days later, a formation of Trigan atmosphere craft swooped low over the city.

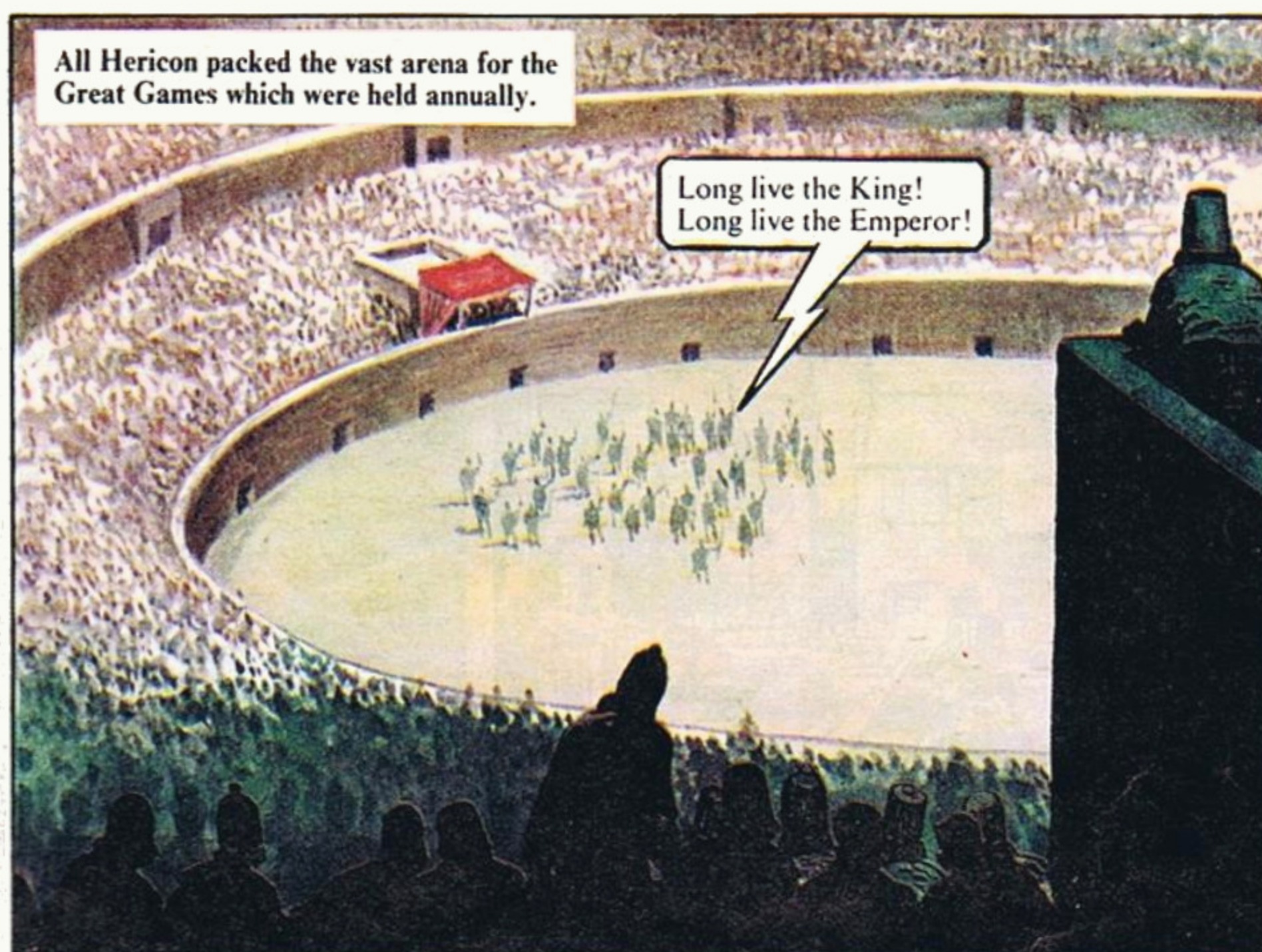




The Trigan Emperor stepped out of his craft and was greeted by 'King Kassar'.

Welcome, Trigo. You do Hericon a great honour by coming here for the Games.

I much look forward to seeing the contests, Kassar.



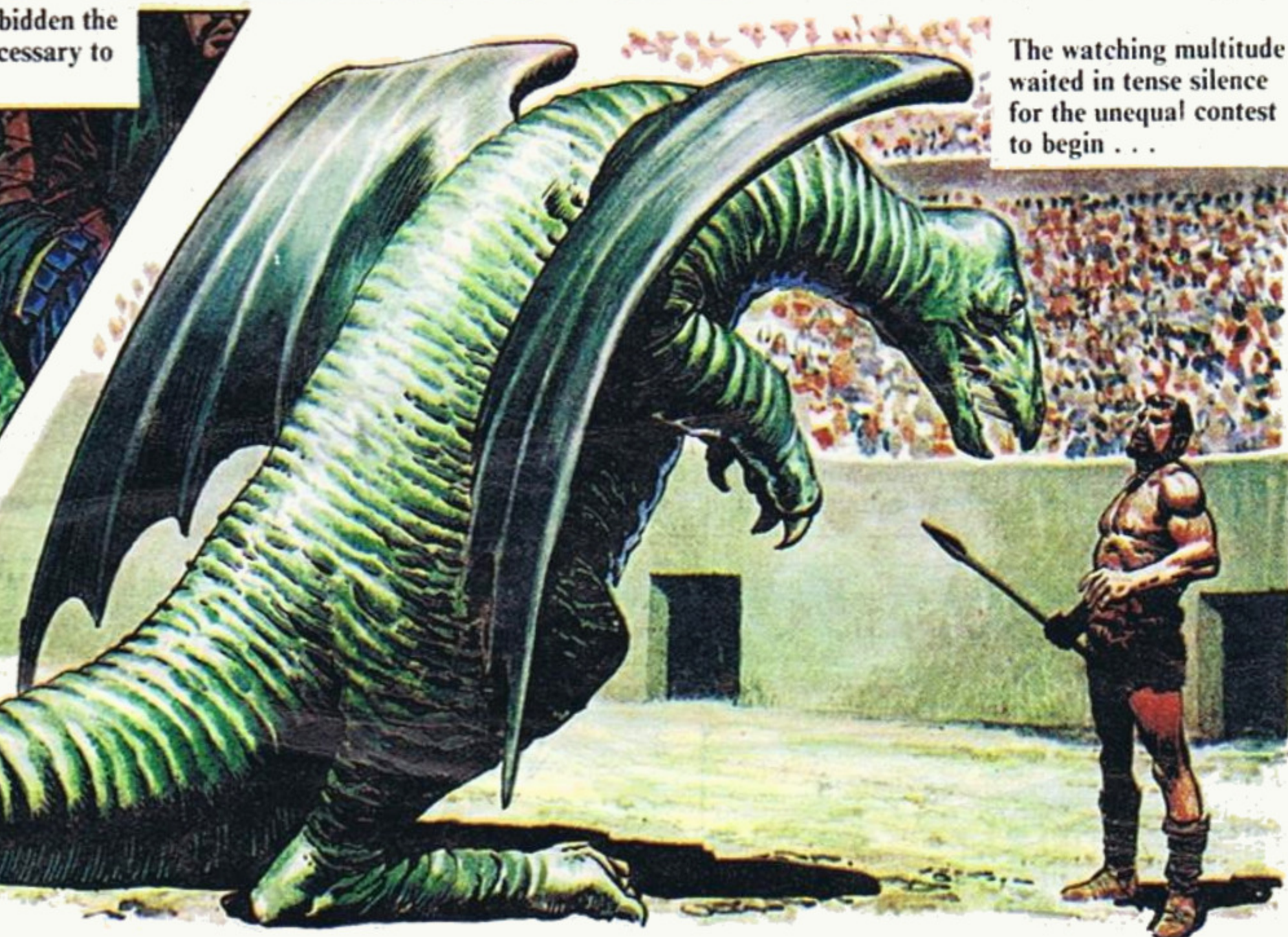
All Hericon packed the vast arena for the Great Games which were held annually.

Long live the King!
Long live the Emperor!

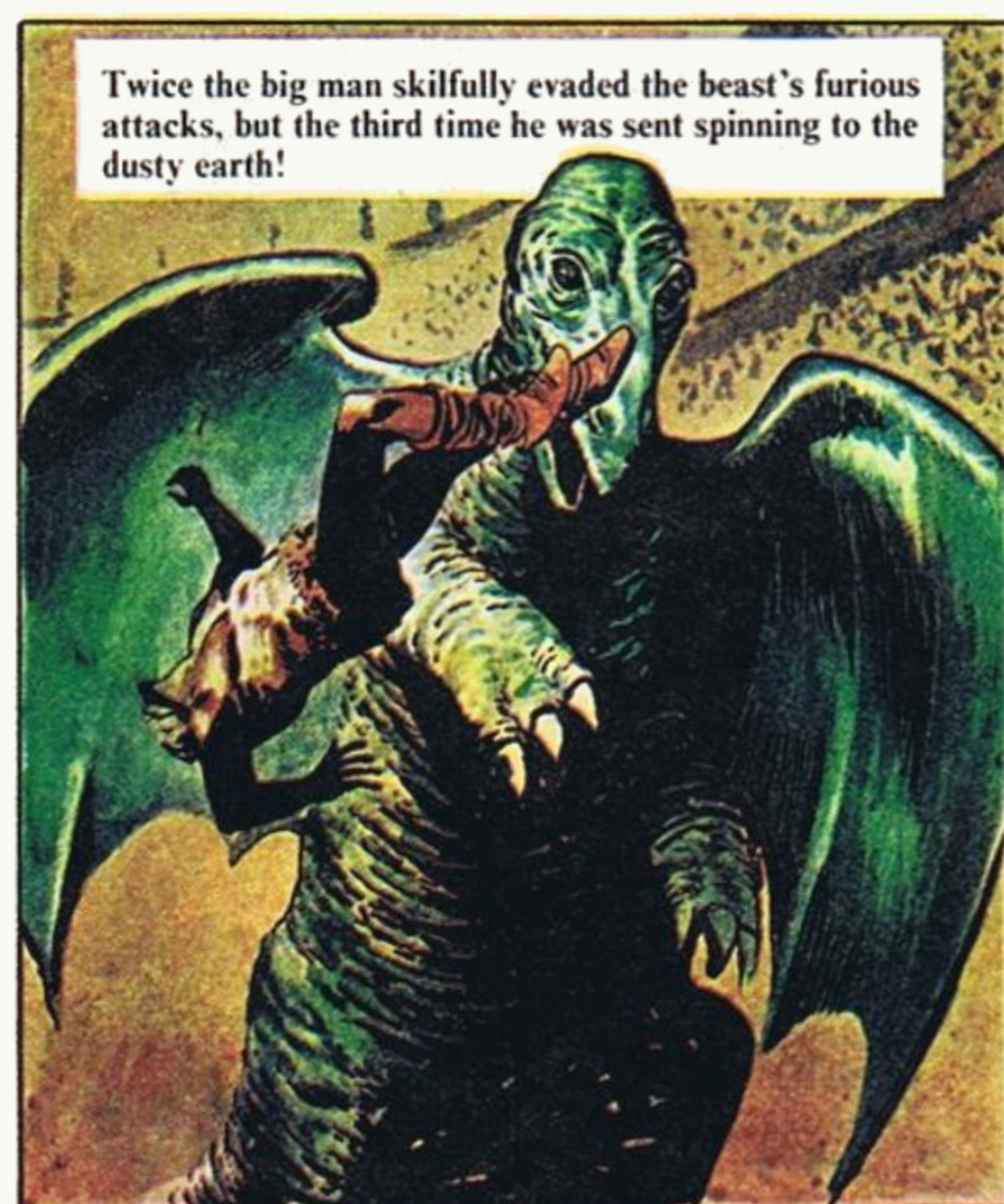
Trigo frowned, but kept his thoughts to himself. He had long ago forbidden the barbaric so-called 'games' in his Empire . . . but it was politically necessary to remain on good terms with the warlike Kassar . . .



You will enjoy the first item, Trigo . . . a contest between a wild Zargot and a giant slave armed only with a short spear!



The watching multitude waited in tense silence for the unequal contest to begin . . .

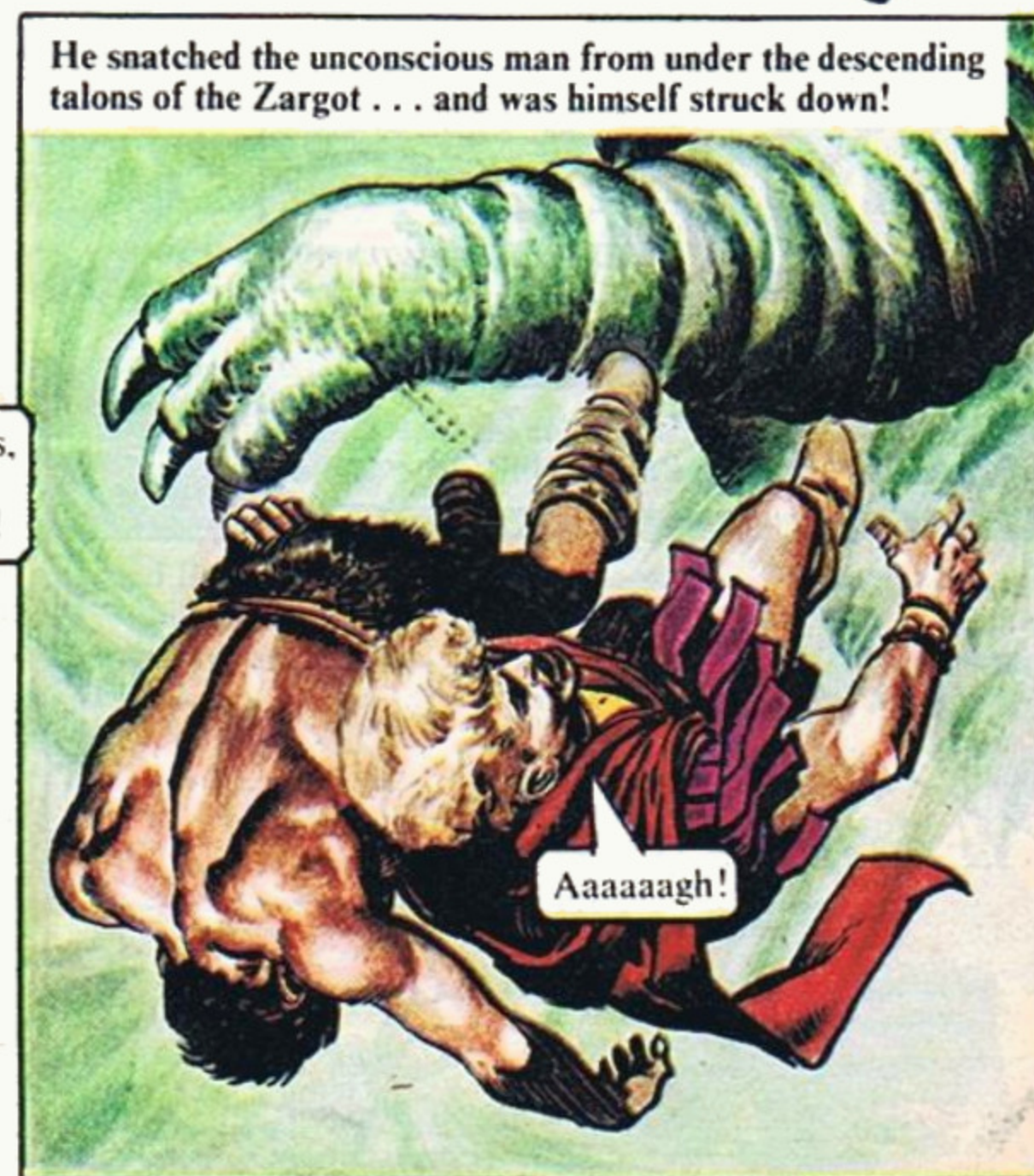


Twice the big man skillfully evaded the beast's furious attacks, but the third time he was sent spinning to the dusty earth!



Trigo had been watching the contest with growing fury and impatience. In a trice he leapt into the arena!

By the stars, I'll not see him perish!



He snatched the unconscious man from under the descending talons of the Zargot . . . and was himself struck down!

Aaaaaagh!

Hericon guards rushed into the arena and beat off the snarling Zargot, while others dragged clear the Trigan Emperor and the man he had saved.



Thank the stars the Emperor is still alive . . . whatever possessed him to do such a foolish thing?

There's no accounting for these soft-hearted Trigans!

The alien intelligence that controlled the mind of the Hericon King saw its opportunity, and gave an order.



Take the Emperor to the Palace and make him comfortable. He will soon recover.

Then, turning to his companions . . .



Naturally!

He will be unconscious for some hours . . . you know what you have to do!

And you know what you must do!



Yes!

Soon he was asleep, and then . . . the luminous sphere arose from out of his ear . . .



. . . drifted into the room, and took over the mind and body of the unconscious Trigo!

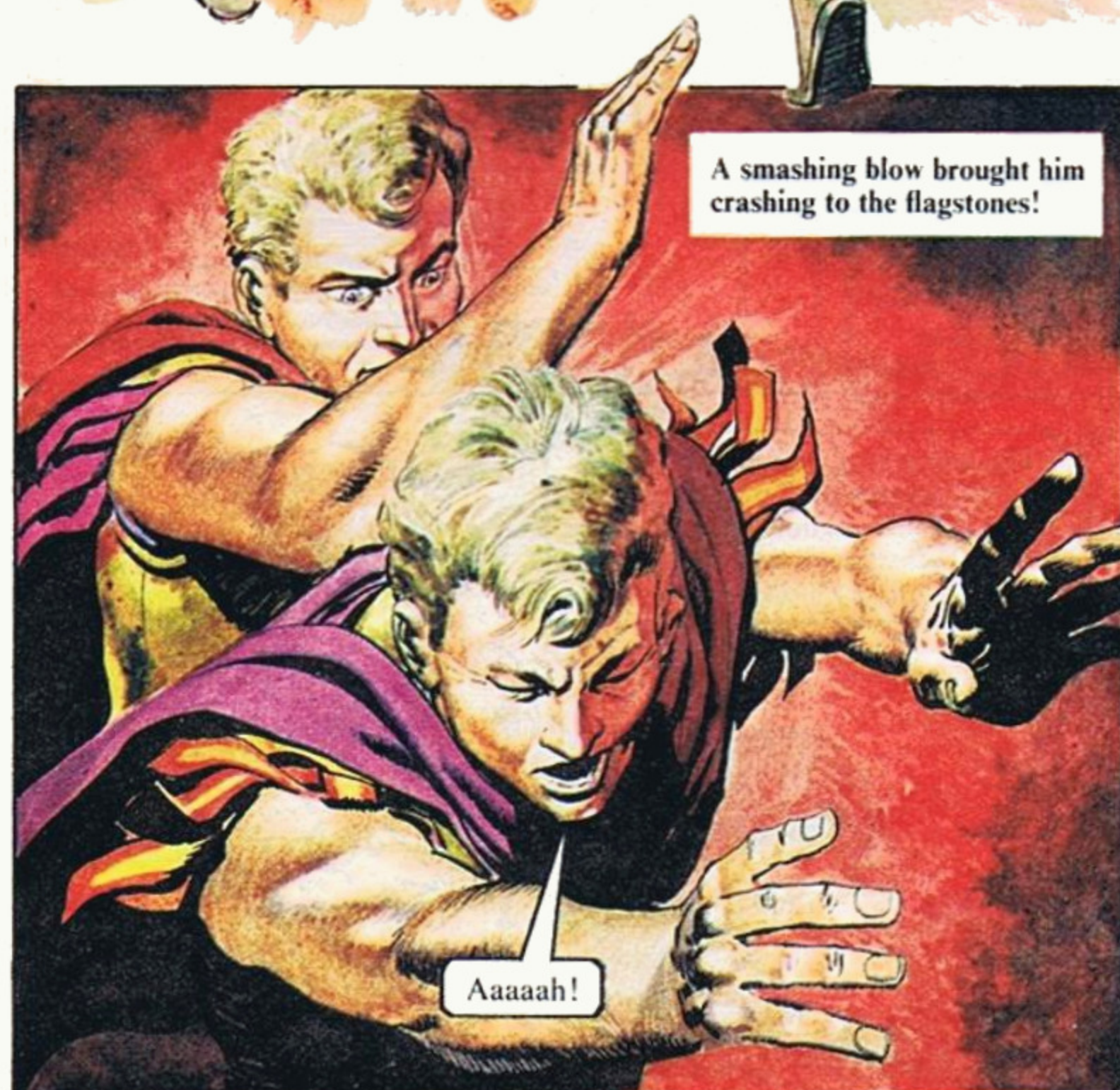


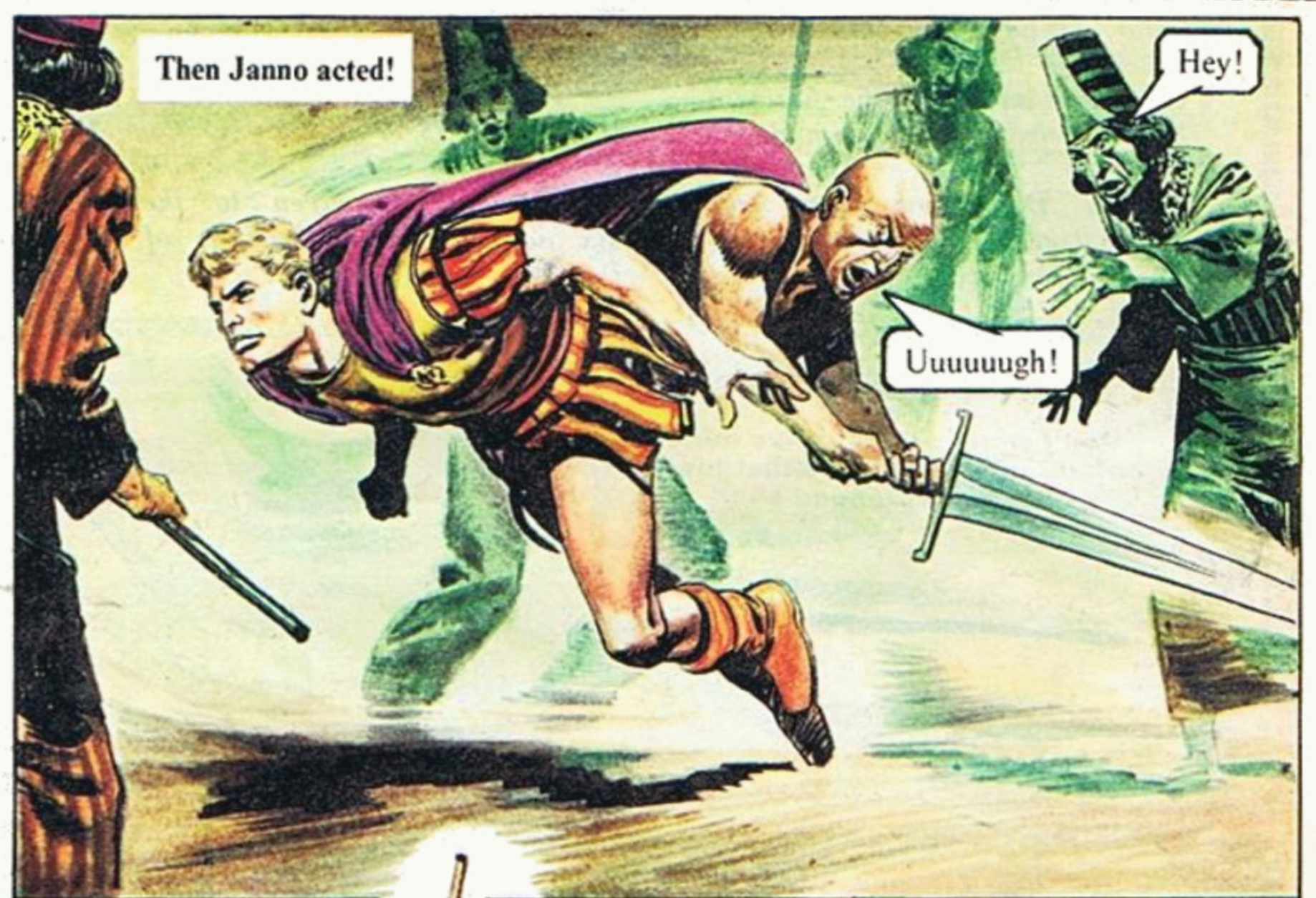
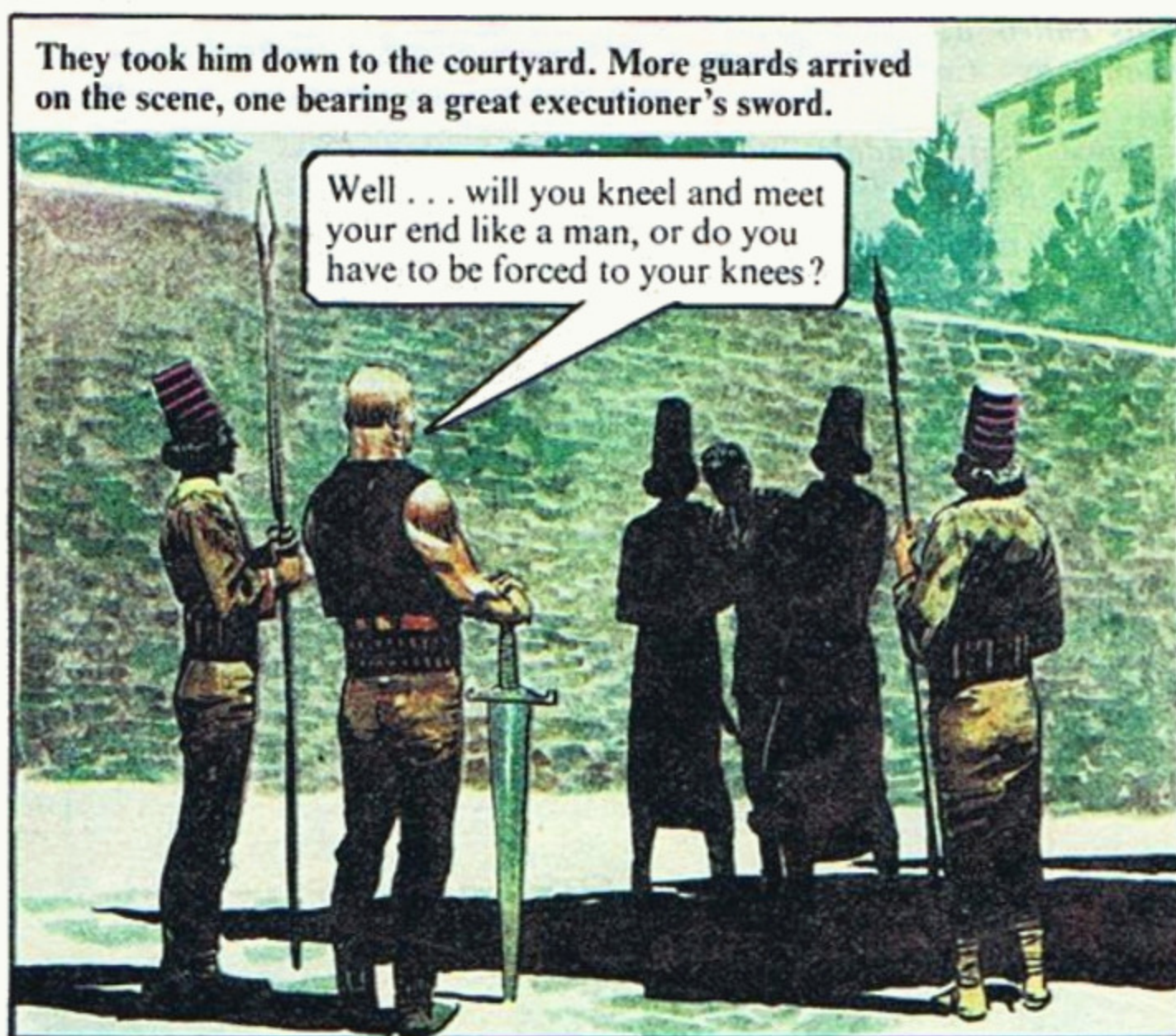
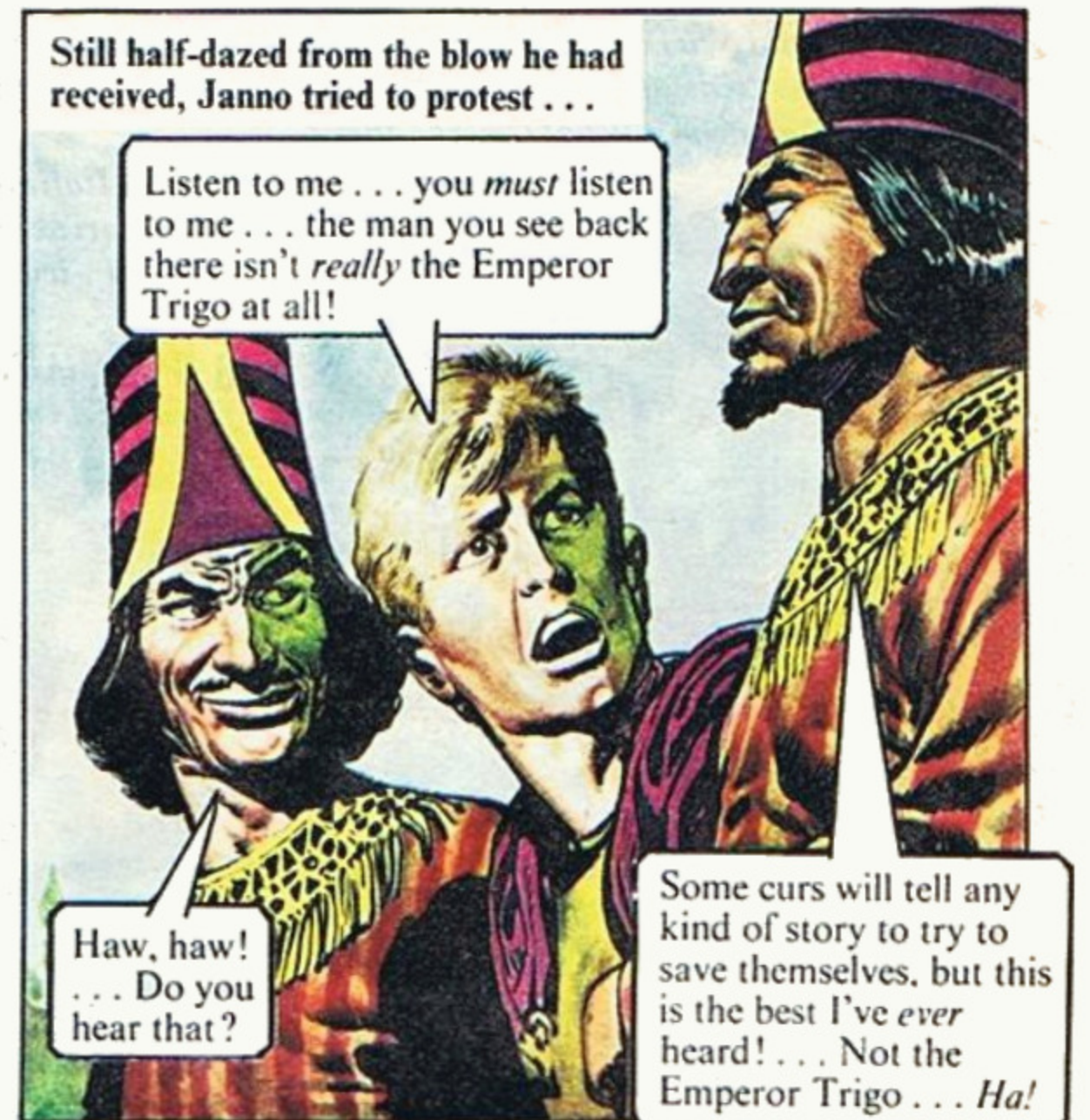
Presently, the thing that controlled Janno's mind and body directed him to lie down on the balcony outside the room where Trigo lay unconscious.



In a short space of time I shall be the emperor of the Trigans!

A short while later, Janno awoke with a start. He was himself again . . . and he remembered everything!





The news was brought to the royal apartments in the palace.

Imperial Majesty, I regret to inform you that the condemned Janno has escaped, and is at large in the city!

Find him! . . . Cut him down on sight!

Alone again, the three alien intelligences who controlled the minds and bodies of Trigo, Kassar and Keren pondered on this new problem.

Janno knows . . . everything!

And he will talk!

So? . . . Who will believe him? . . . By telling the truth, everyone will simply believe that he is mad!

Forget Janno! Back to our plan, which is this . . . the conquest of the planet Elekton!

The Trigan Empire and the Kingdom of Hericon will march against the other inhabitants of this planet . . . there will be no declaration of war . . .

We will strike without warning . . . bomb all airfields . . .

Destroy their sea-fleets in harbour . . .

Meanwhile, having shaken off pursuit, Janno was creeping cautiously through the great gardens surrounding the palace.

If I could only find someone I could trust . . . someone who knows me well, like one of Trigo's staff who accompanied him here to Hericon . . .

Then, peering in through an open doorway, a wave of joy and relief swept over him. There was old Peric, the wisest man in the Trigan Empire. Peric looked up from his scientific work to see the young man.

Janno! . . . Why, my dear young friend, you're torn and bruised. What's happened to you?

Peric . . . there's something I must tell you . . . something you must believe, fantastic though it may sound . . .

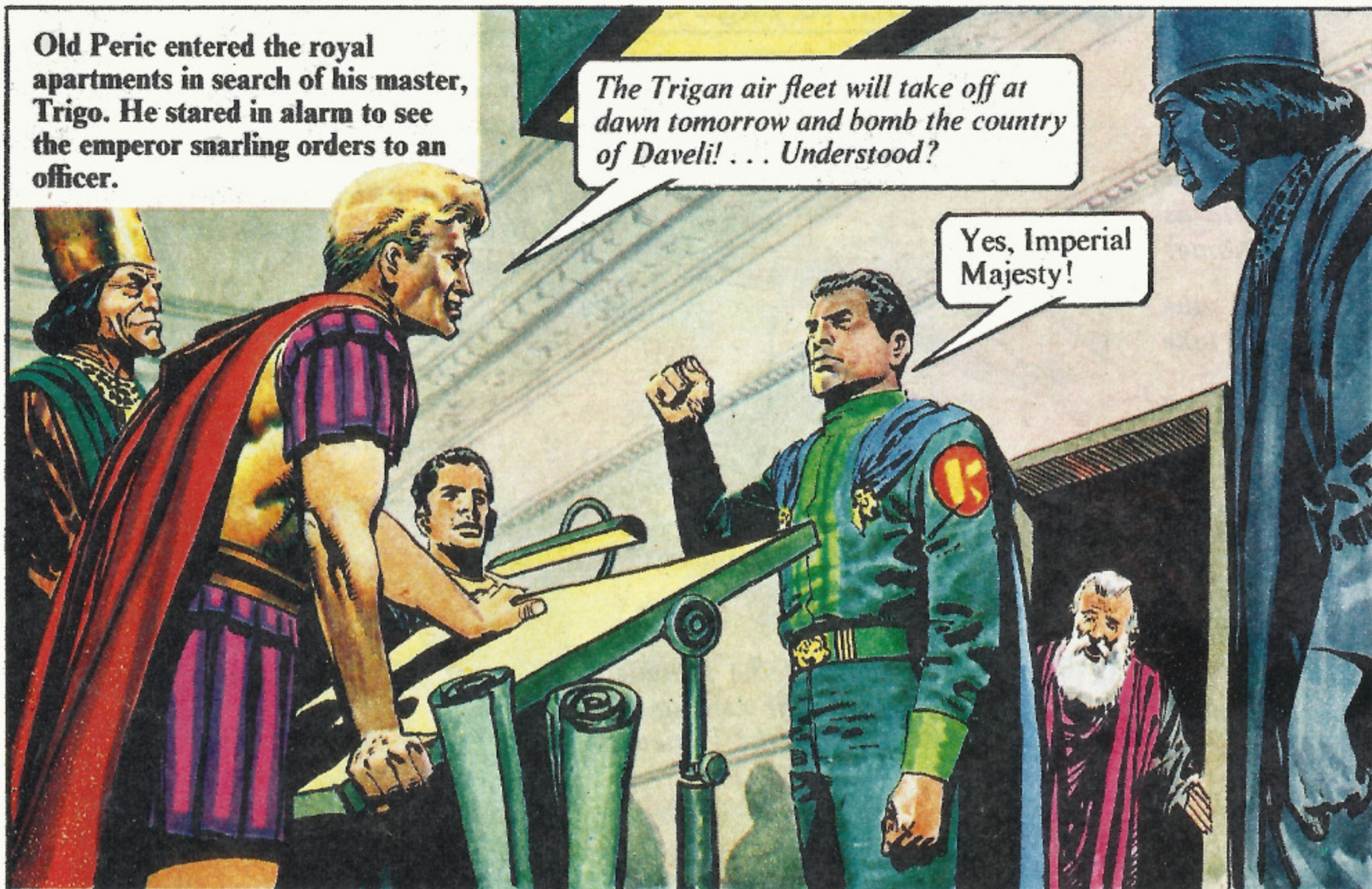
He told Peric . . . everything!

You . . . you don't believe me, do you?

Don't believe that alien intelligences from another galaxy could come and take over our minds and bodies? . . . Why, yes, I think it perfectly possible scientifically . . . we'll talk more of it . . . meanwhile, drink this . . . it will steady your nerves after your terrible experiences.

Janno drank the potion . . . and instantly crashed to the floor!

Poor young fellow, his mind is completely deranged. I will leave him here to sleep for a while while I inform Trigo . . .



Old Peric entered the royal apartments in search of his master, Trigo. He stared in alarm to see the emperor snarling orders to an officer.

The Trigan air fleet will take off at dawn tomorrow and bomb the country of Daveli! . . . Understood?

Yes, Imperial Majesty!



King Kassar of Hericon also gave his orders.

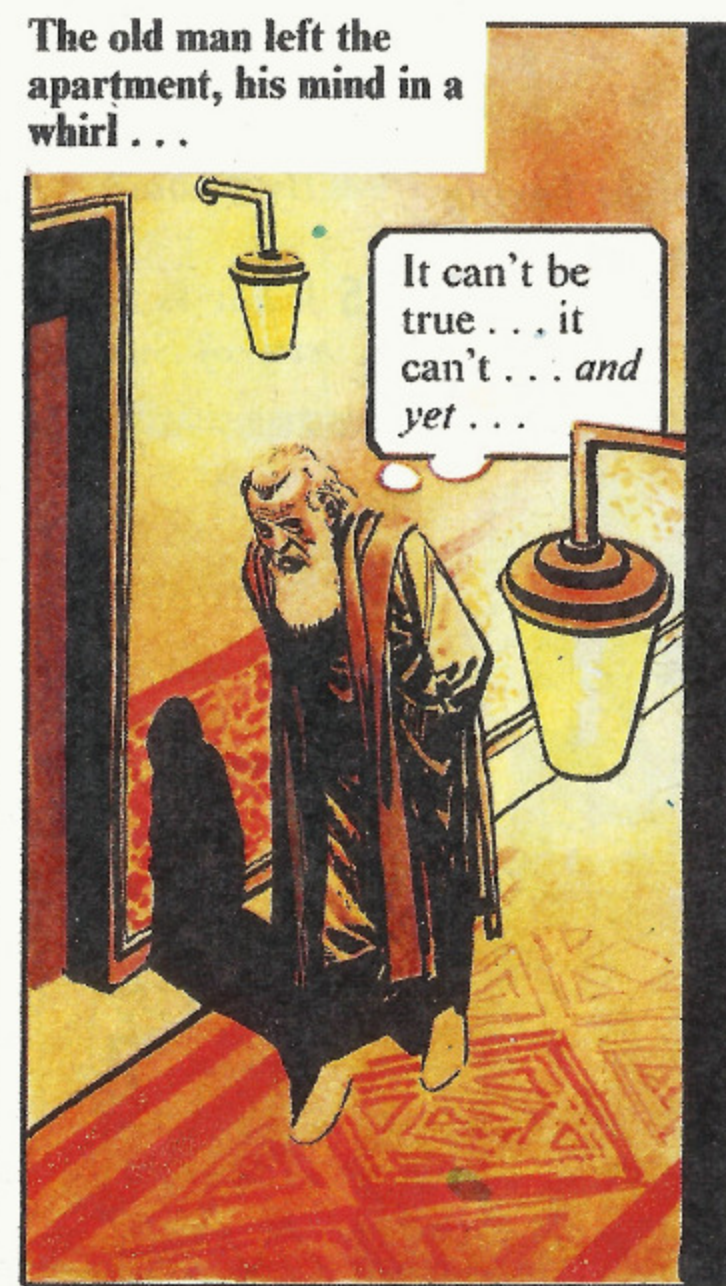
Admiral! . . . You will take the Hericon sea fleet to sea at sunset and bombard the cities on the southern coastline of Victris!



Peric met the wild eyes of the man he believed to be the Emperor of the Trigans.

Trigo . . . my emperor . . . old friend . . . what does this mean?

It means, Peric, that Kassar and I will be masters of the planet Elekton within a very few days!



The old man left the apartment, his mind in a whirl . . .

It can't be true . . . it can't . . . and yet . . .



Returning to his study, Peric found Janno raising himself, dizzily, to his feet.

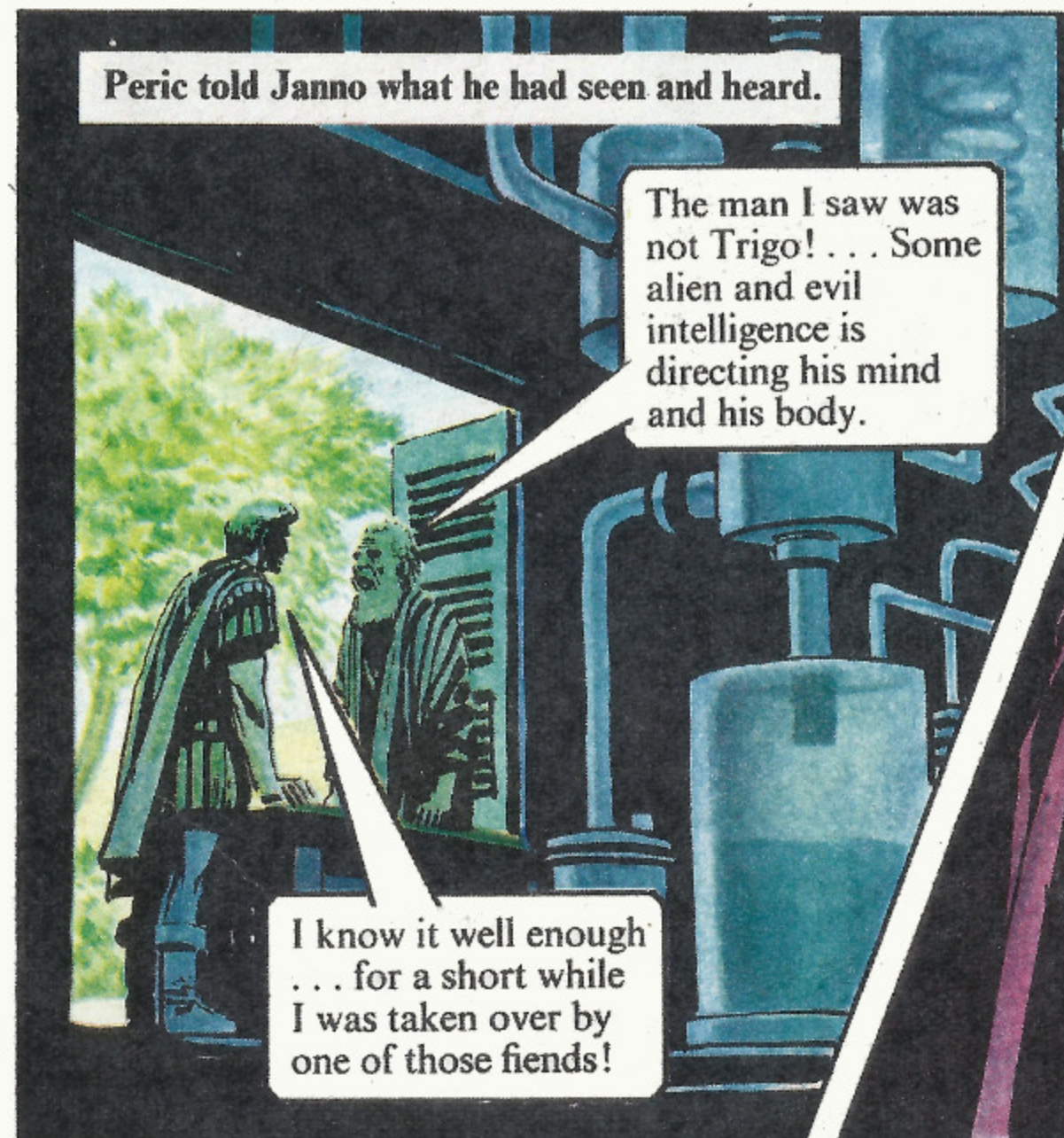
That drink you gave me . . . it was . . . drugged . . .

Yes, my young friend . . .



I thought you were deranged in your mind . . . but now . . .

You mean . . . you believe me now . . . about Trigo and the other two?



Peric told Janno what he had seen and heard.

The man I saw was not Trigo! . . . Some alien and evil intelligence is directing his mind and his body.

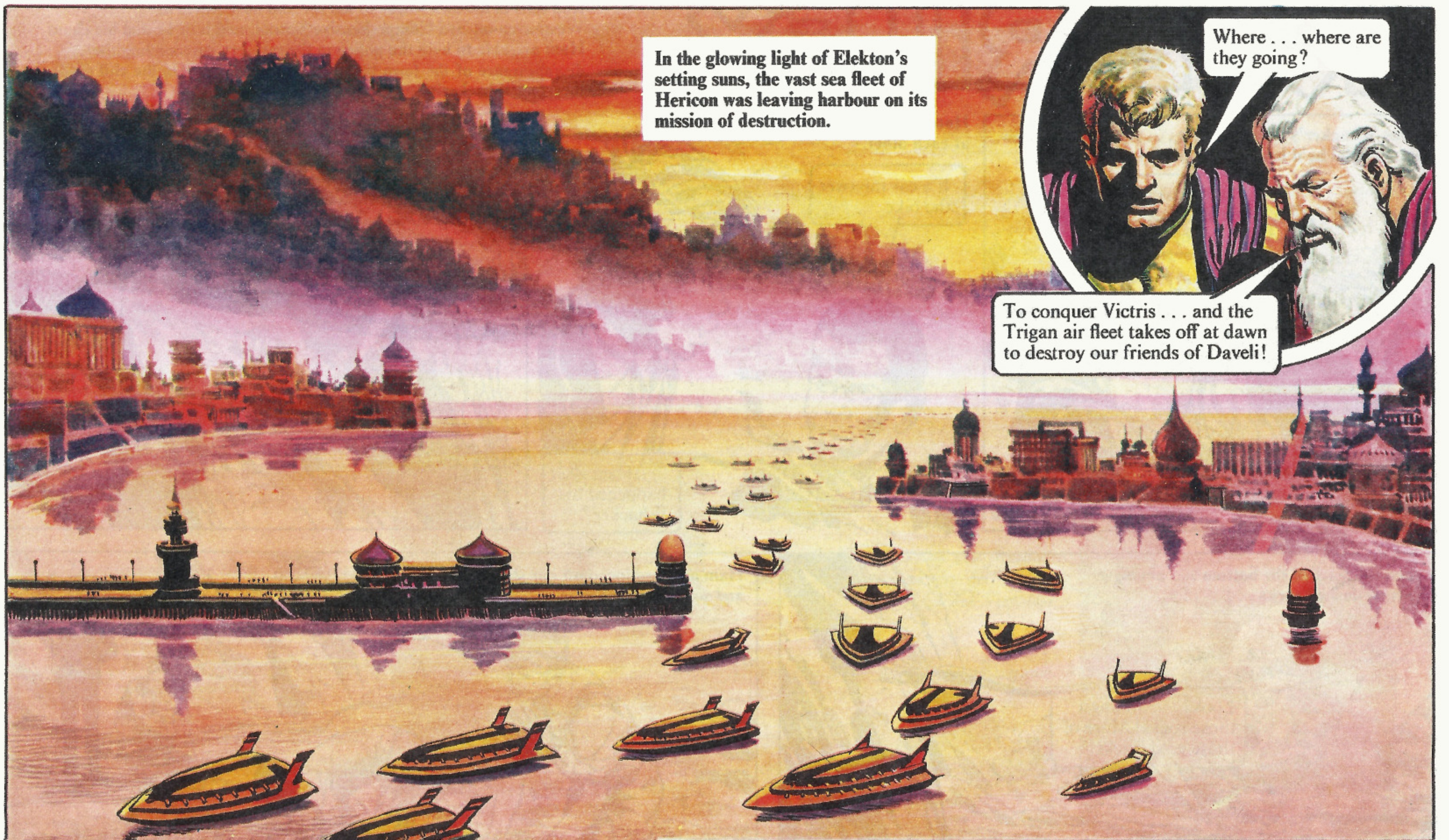
I know it well enough . . . for a short while I was taken over by one of those fiends!



Peric crossed to a window which commanded a view of the harbour.

What are we going to do?

What can we do? . . . It is already too late . . . look!



In the glowing light of Elekton's setting suns, the vast sea fleet of Hericon was leaving harbour on its mission of destruction.



Where . . . where are they going?

To conquer Victris . . . and the Trigan air fleet takes off at dawn to destroy our friends of Daveli!



And then Peric and Janno heard the tramp of booted feet in the garden outside.

That's the door!



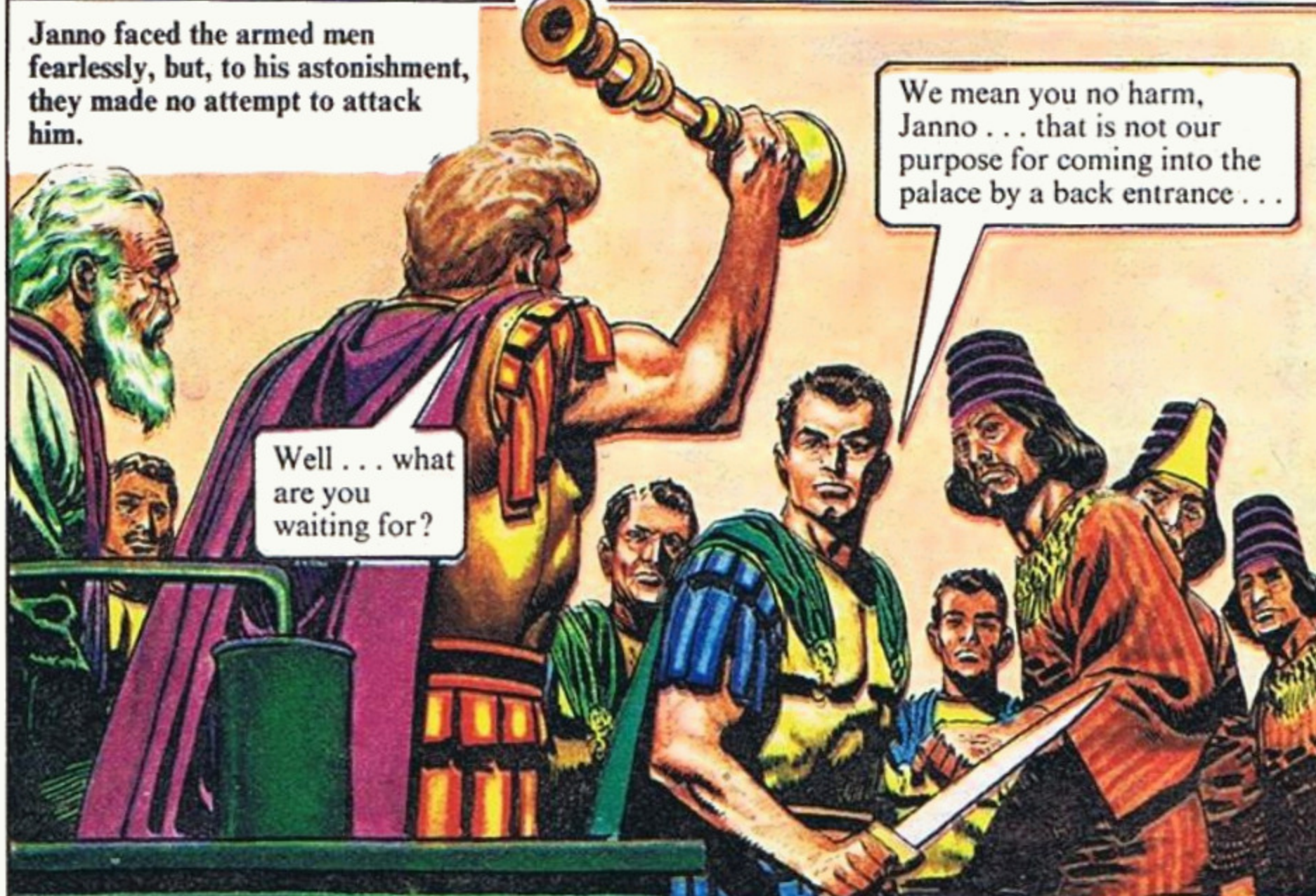
Janno felt a sudden shock of fear, which he instantly quenched.

They're looking for me! . . . Give me a sword, old friend . . . let me die fighting, like a Trigan!



But Peric had no sword . . . and it was with a heavy candlestick in his hand that young Janno faced the armed men.

Right! . . . Come and get me!



Janno faced the armed men fearlessly, but, to his astonishment, they made no attempt to attack him.

Well . . . what are you waiting for?

We mean you no harm, Janno . . . that is not our purpose for coming into the palace by a back entrance . . .



Three were Trigan officers whom Janno knew well, and three wore the trappings of the Hericon army.

We are making a desperate attempt to save the whole planet from disaster . . . by overthrowing the Emperor and the King!



Old Peric's eyes burned with hope.

Do you hear that, Janno? . . . we have allies against those evil creatures!

We must act swiftly, and ruthlessly. There's not much time!



They made their way to the royal apartments. There was a brief, but furious fight with the guards who tried to bar their way . . .

Aaaaaaah!



When they burst into the room where the sinister trio stood, the evil intelligence that directed the mind of Trigo saw Janno . . . and knew that something was amiss . . .

What does this mean? . . . Aaaaaaah!

Yes, it is I! . . . Make a move and you are dead!



Orders were immediately sent to the Trigan and Hericon fleets, in the names of Trigo and Kassar, to return to their bases. Then the sinister trio were taken to a remote part of the palace gardens . . . to a cage which had once contained wild beasts . . .

In with you!



Janno aimed his pistol through the bars, and spoke with grim determination.

I give you the space of ten breaths . . . in that time you must agree to leave the minds and bodies you occupy, or I will kill Trigo, Kassar and my best friend Keren . . . and you fiends . . . I presume . . . will perish with them!



The alien intelligences panicked . . .

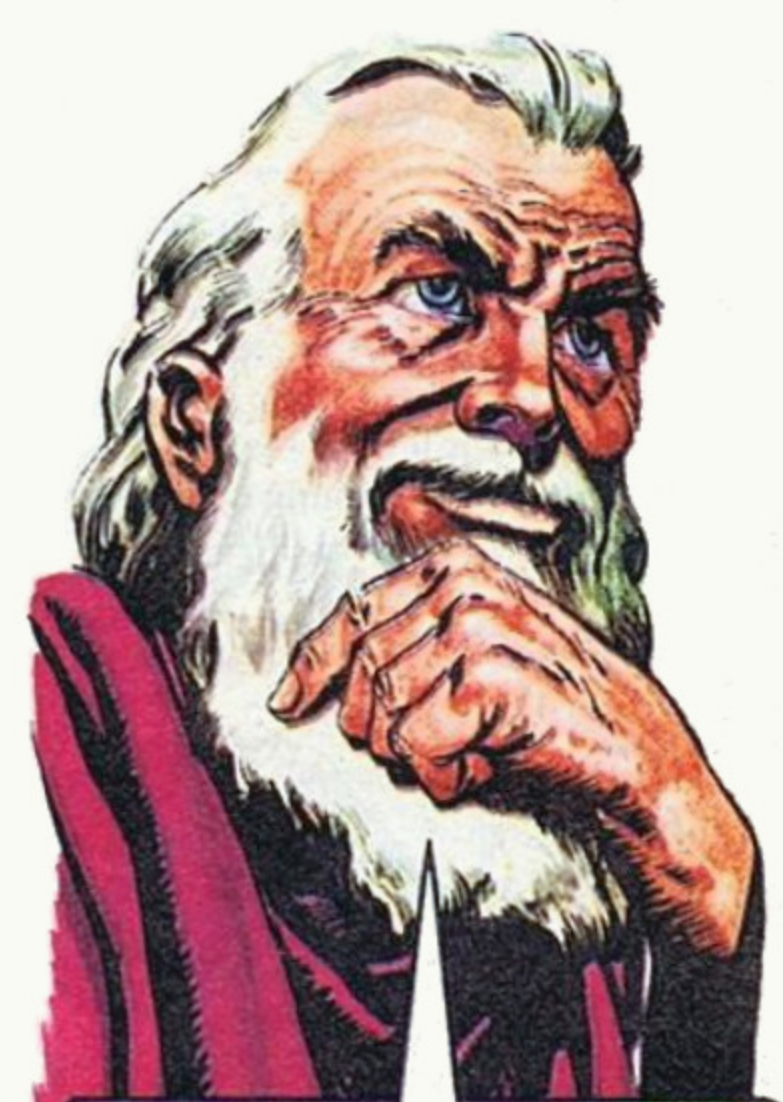
As luminous spheres, we are only able to survive for a few moments in the atmosphere of your planet!



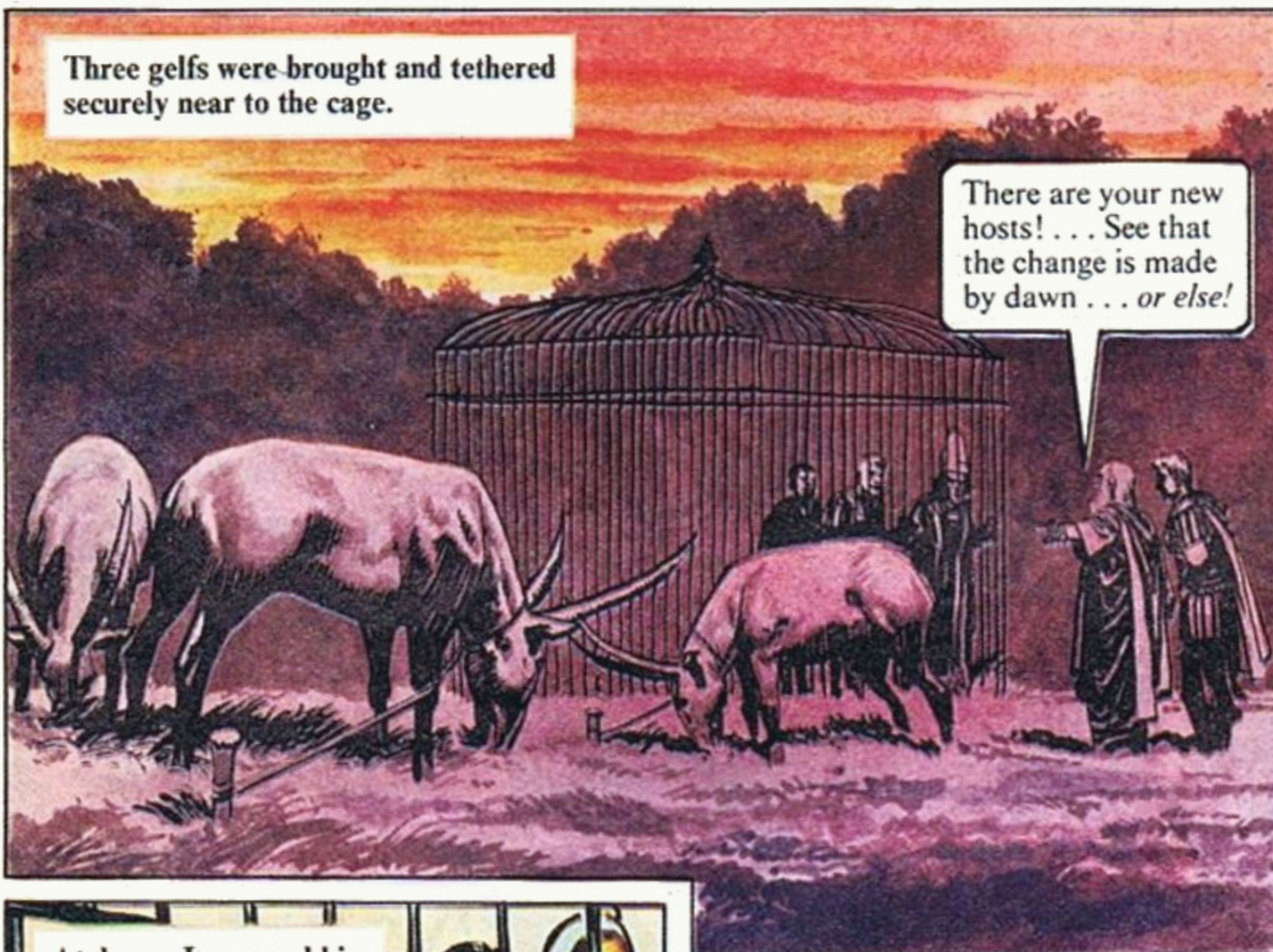
We cannot leave these bodies!

We need to take over some other creature!

Then wise old Peric smiled grimly.

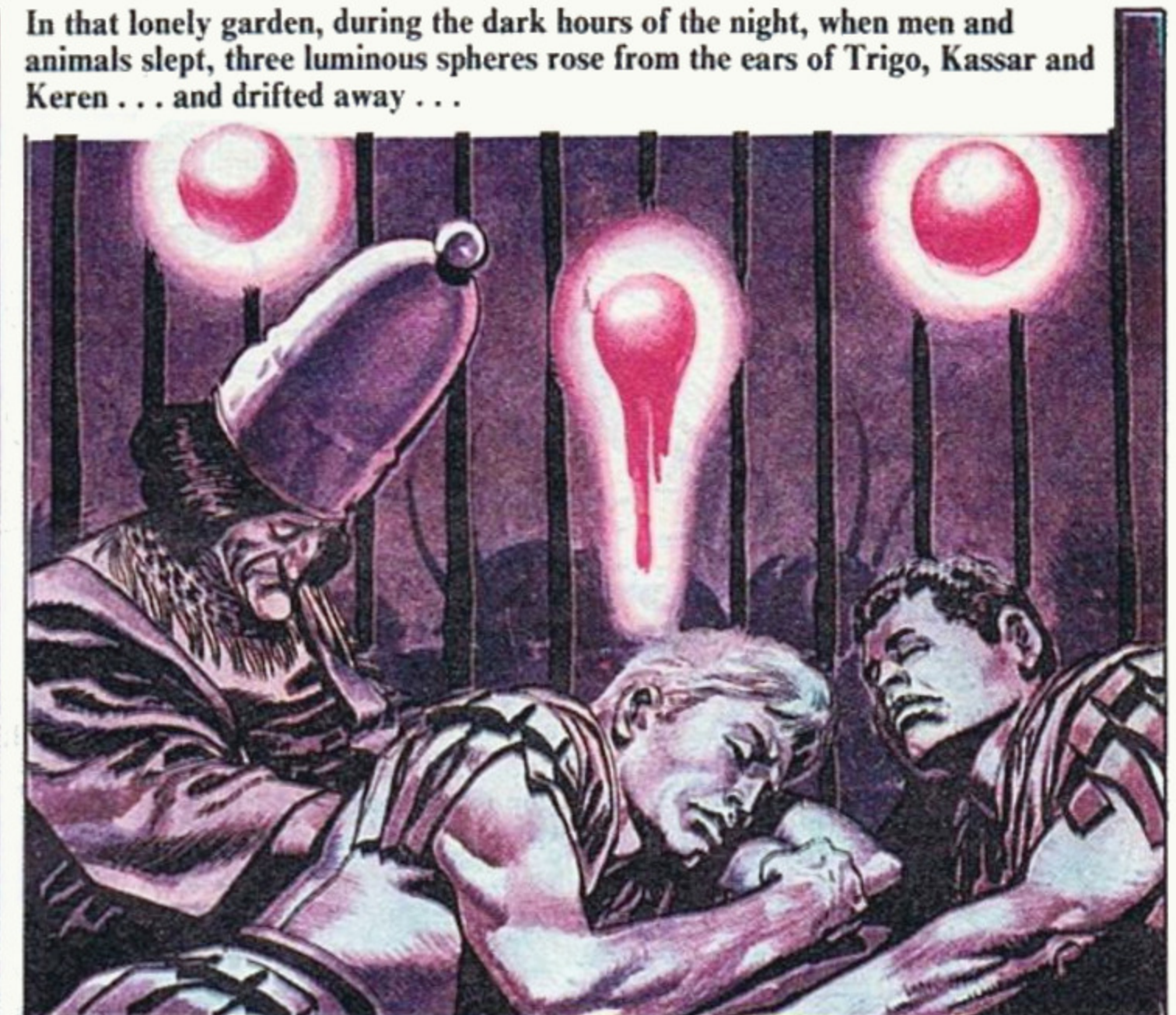


So you need to take over some other creature . . . well . . . I think that can be arranged!

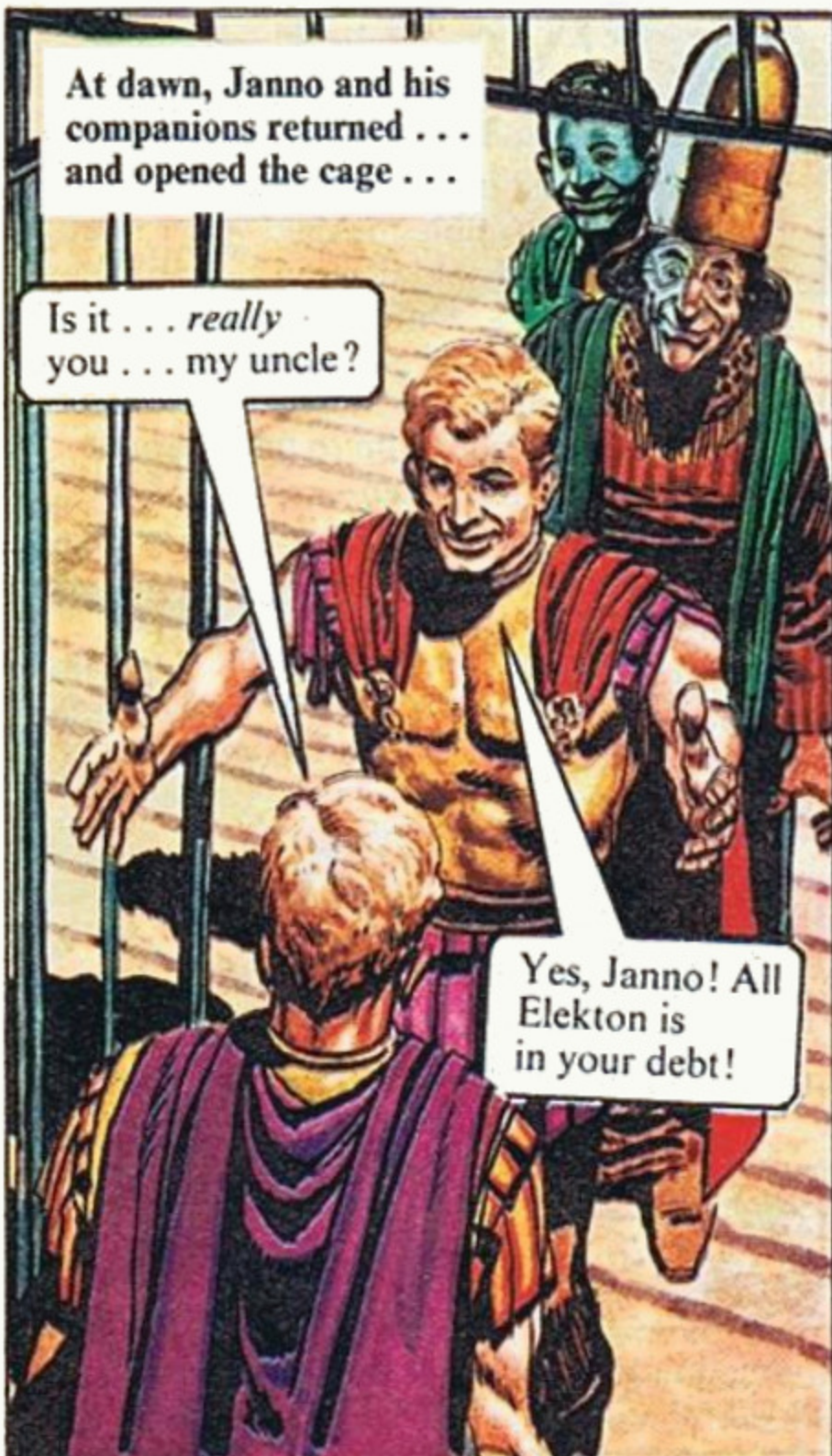


Three gelfs were brought and tethered securely near to the cage.

There are your new hosts! . . . See that the change is made by dawn . . . or else!



In that lonely garden, during the dark hours of the night, when men and animals slept, three luminous spheres rose from the ears of Trigo, Kassar and Keren . . . and drifted away . . .



At dawn, Janno and his companions returned . . . and opened the cage . . .

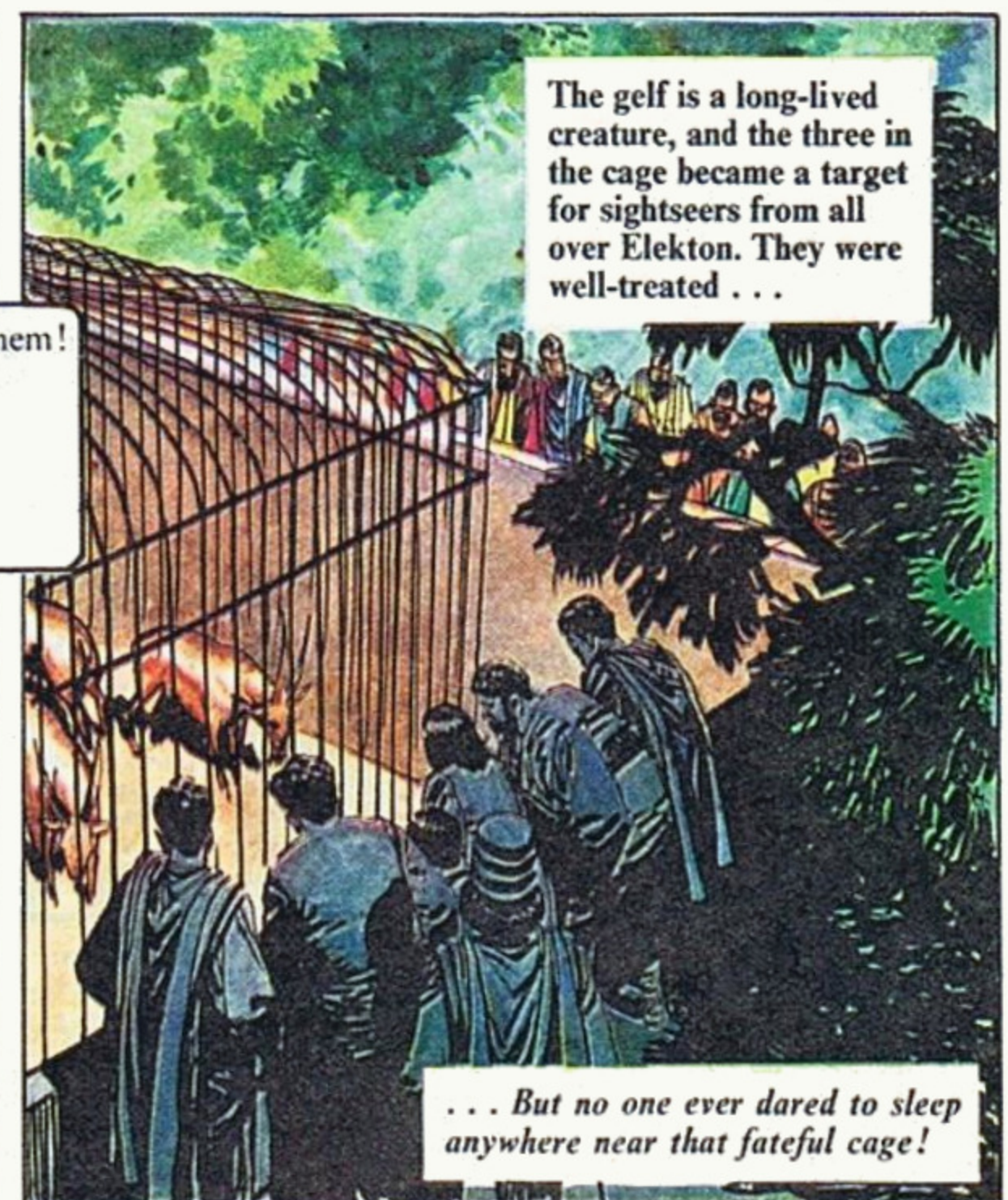
Is it . . . really you . . . my uncle?

Yes, Janno! All Elekton is in your debt!



A Trigan officer raised his sword above the shrinking gelfs . . .

No! . . . Spare them! . . . They don't deserve it, but they shall live out their life span as gelfs!



The gelf is a long-lived creature, and the three in the cage became a target for sightseers from all over Elekton. They were well-treated . . .

. . . But no one ever dared to sleep anywhere near that fateful cage!