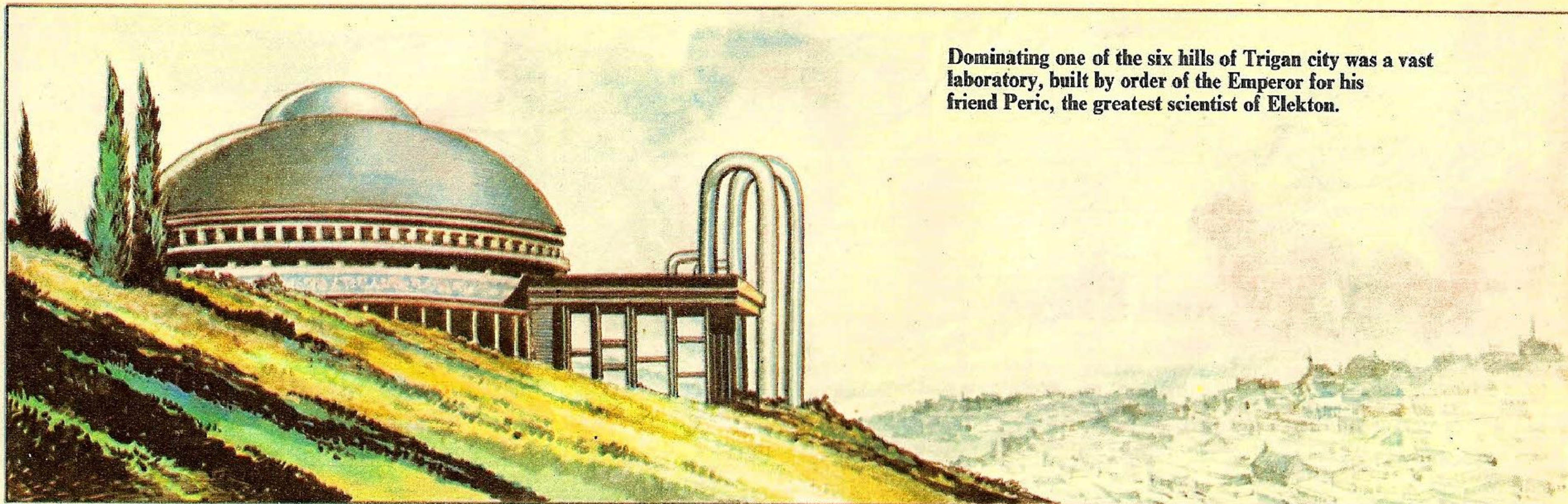


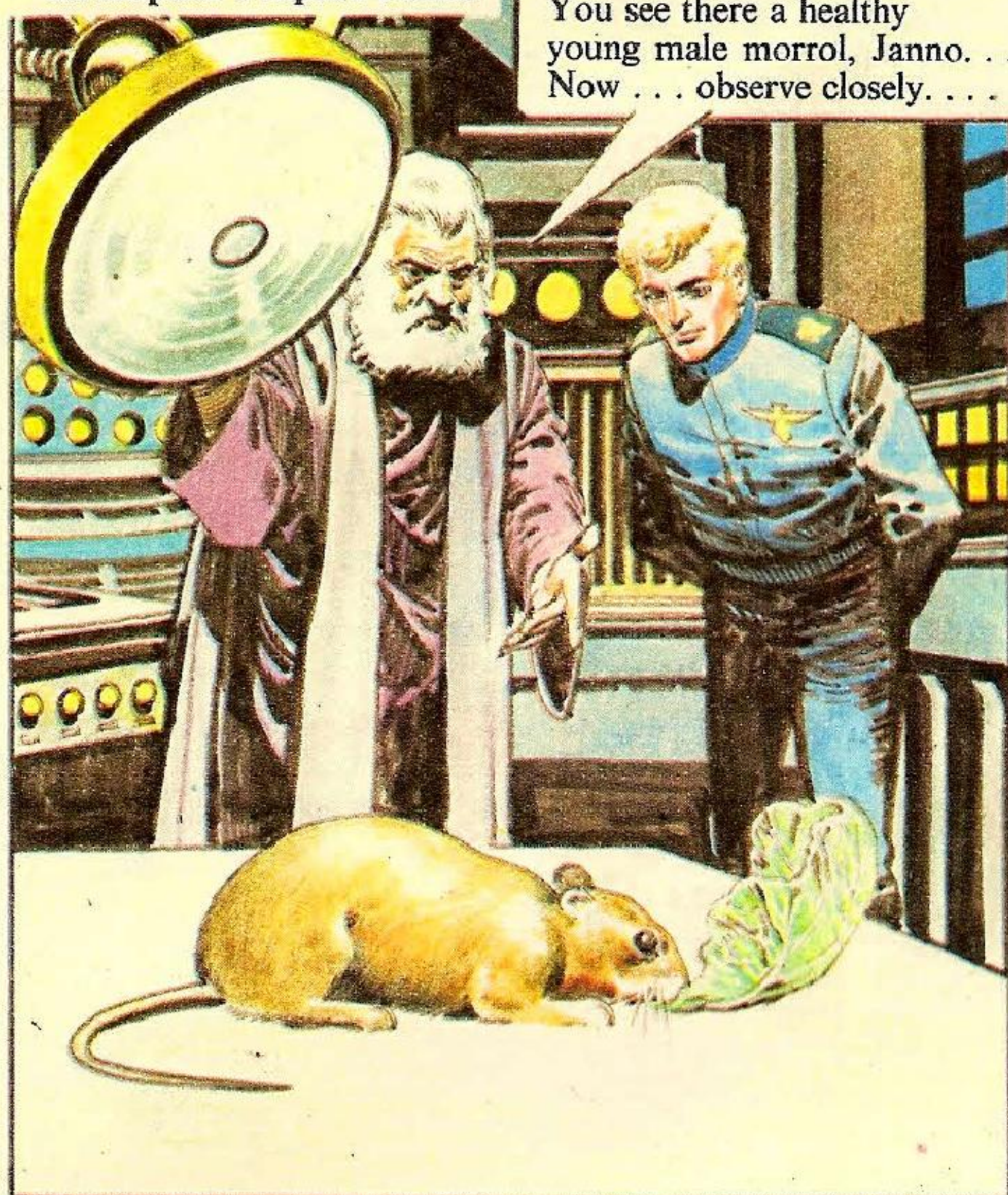
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

The planet Elekton lies in the galaxy of Yarna, and the greatest power on Elekton is the Trigan Empire, ruled over by its founder, the Emperor Trigo.

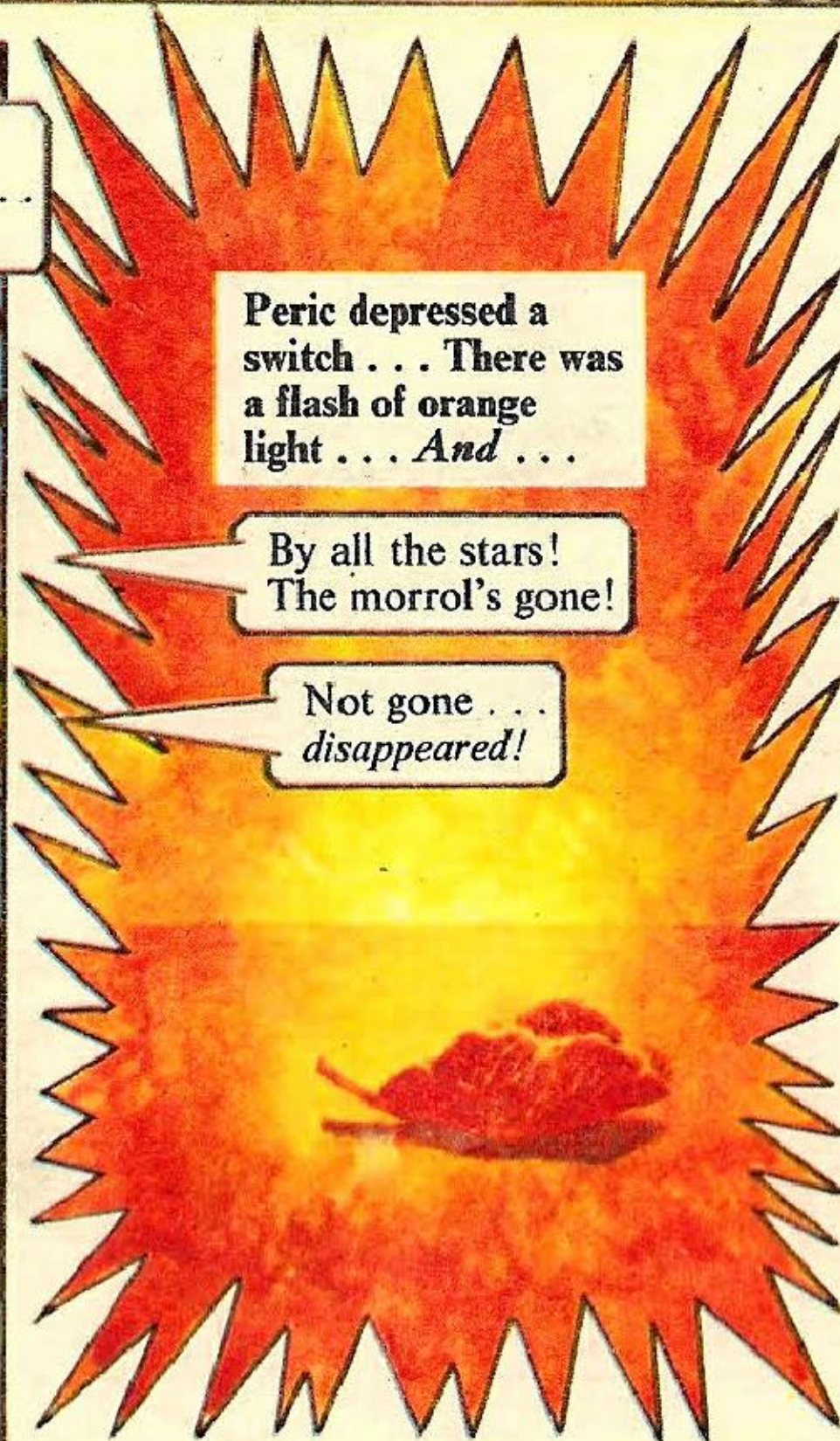


Dominating one of the six hills of Trigan city was a vast laboratory, built by order of the Emperor for his friend Peric, the greatest scientist of Elekton.

One day, old Peric had a visitor—the Emperor's nephew Janno.



You see there a healthy young male morrol, Janno. . . . Now . . . observe closely. . . .

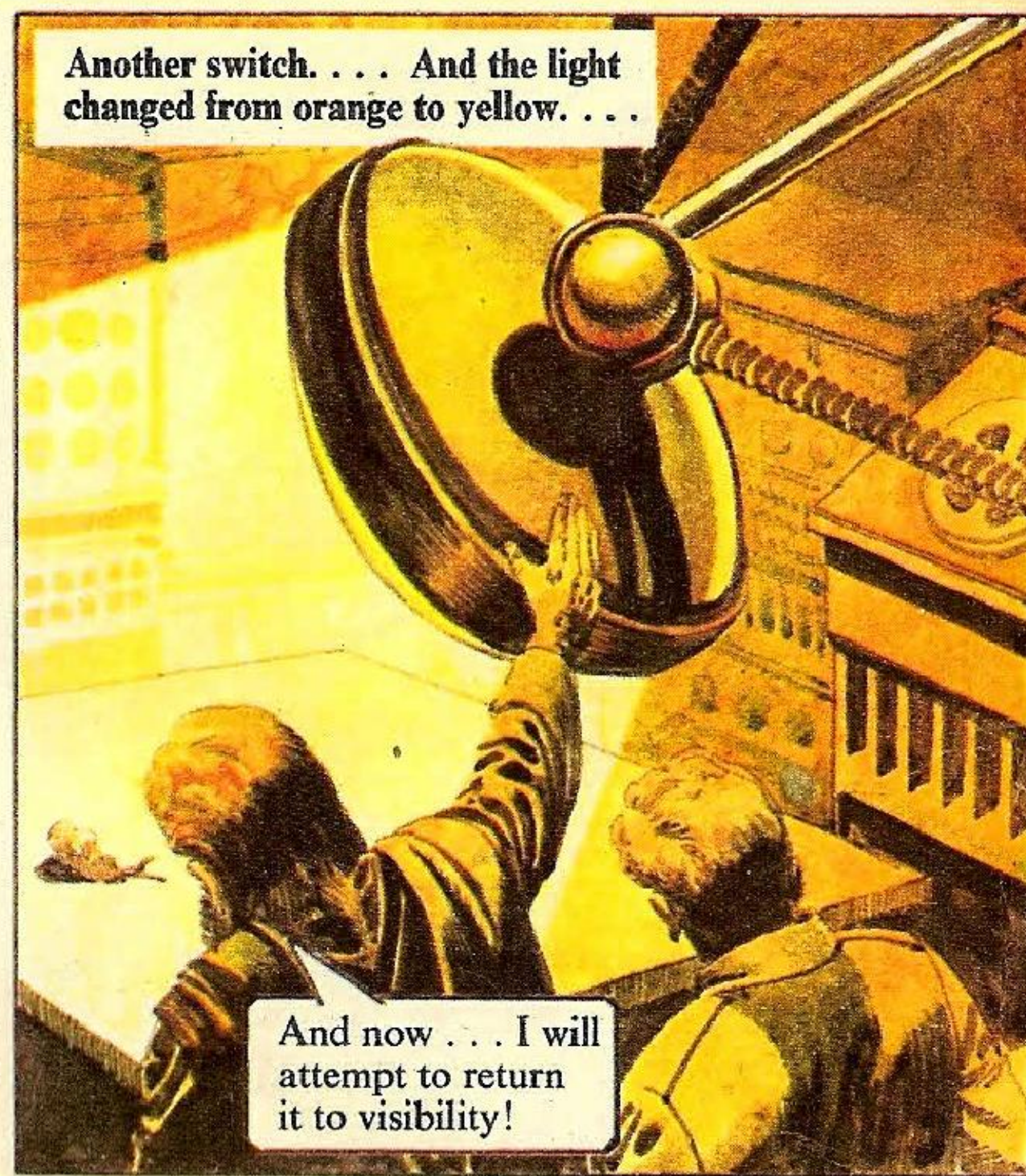


Peric depressed a switch . . . There was a flash of orange light . . . And . . .

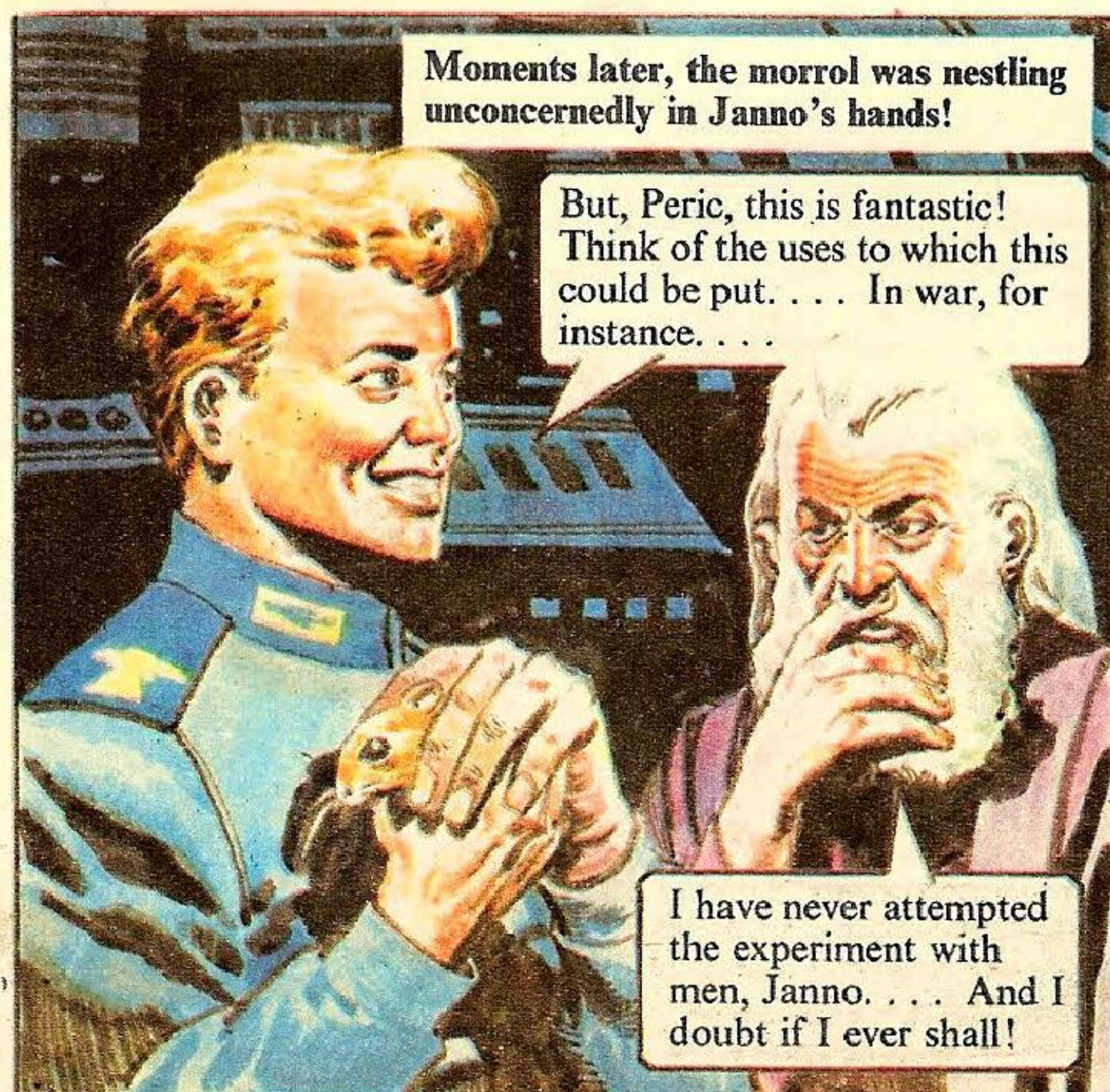
By all the stars! The morrol's gone!

Not gone . . . disappeared!

Another switch. . . . And the light changed from orange to yellow. . . .



And now . . . I will attempt to return it to visibility!

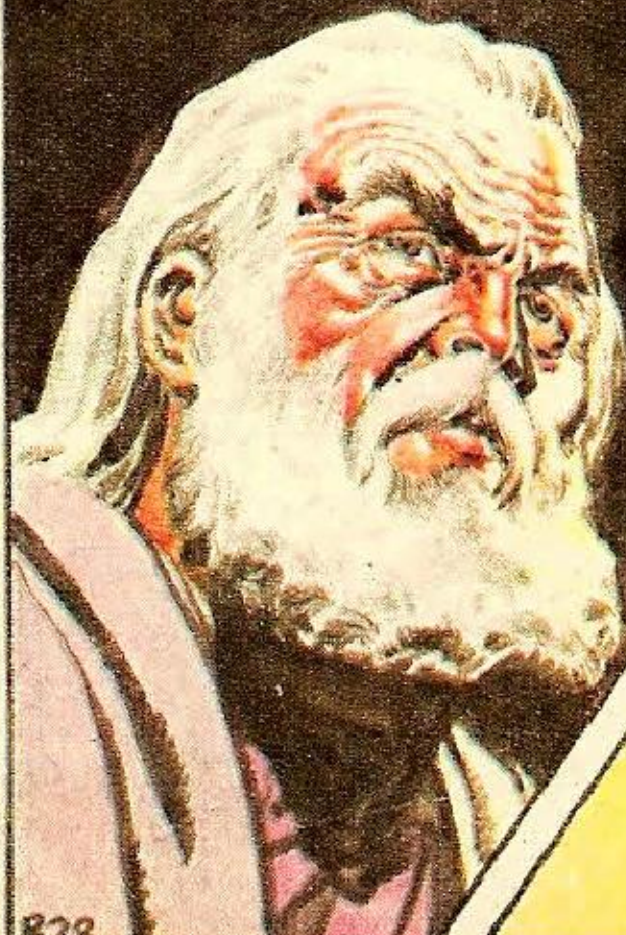


Moments later, the morrol was nestling unconcernedly in Janno's hands!

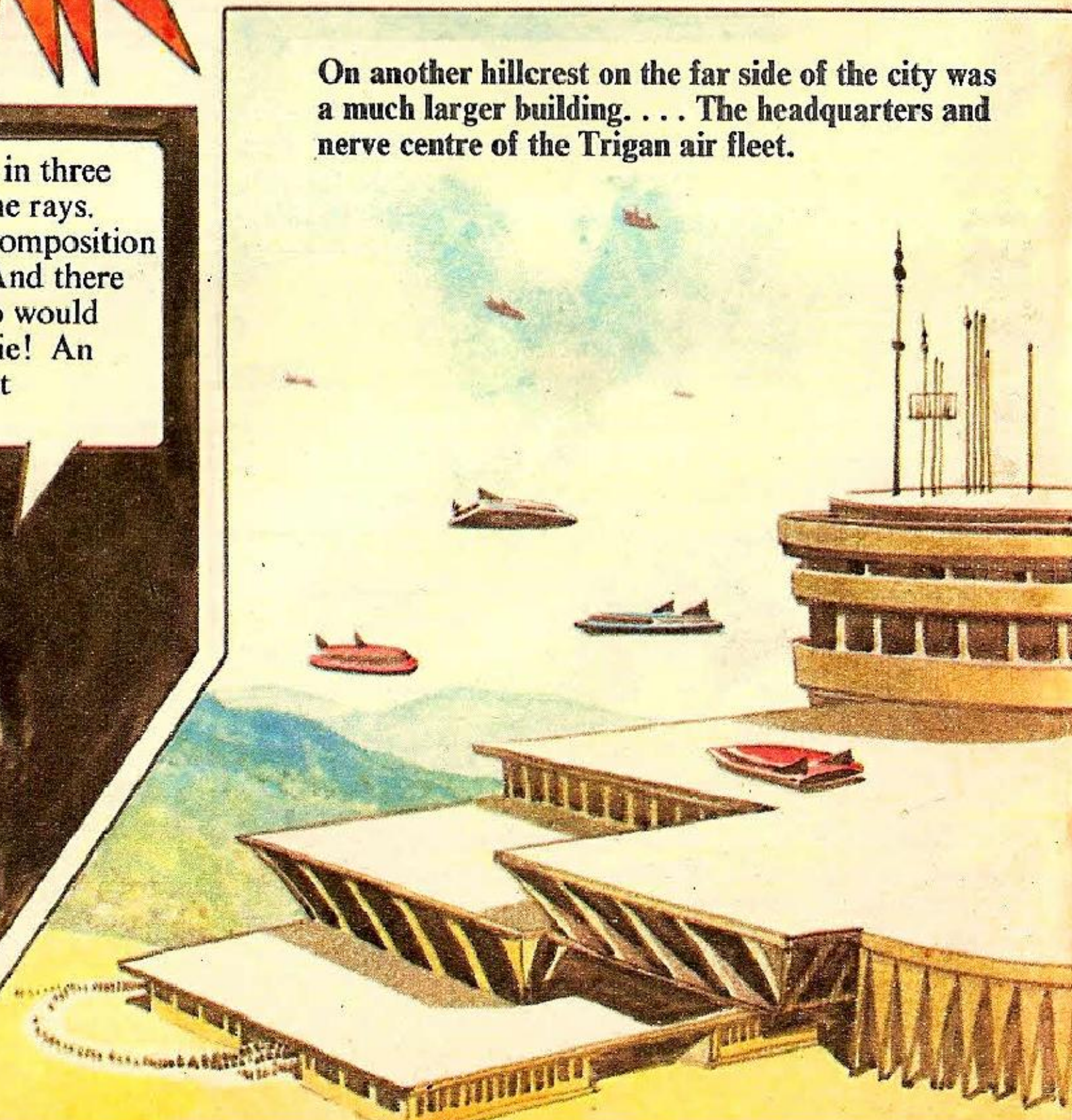
But, Peric, this is fantastic! Think of the uses to which this could be put. . . . In war, for instance. . . .

I have never attempted the experiment with men, Janno. . . . And I doubt if I ever shall!

You see, only one subject in three can survive the effect of the rays. . . . It depends upon the composition of the body tissues. . . . And there is no way of knowing who would survive, and who would die! An interesting experiment, but *completely* impractical!



On another hillcrest on the far side of the city was a much larger building. . . . The headquarters and nerve centre of the Trigan air fleet.



In an armoured chamber beneath the building, Nemon the keeper of the secret archives of the fleet saw a red light flash on his desk.

A properly-authorized officer is requesting admission. . .



Nemon pressed the lever to open the door. . . . But when it opened. . . .

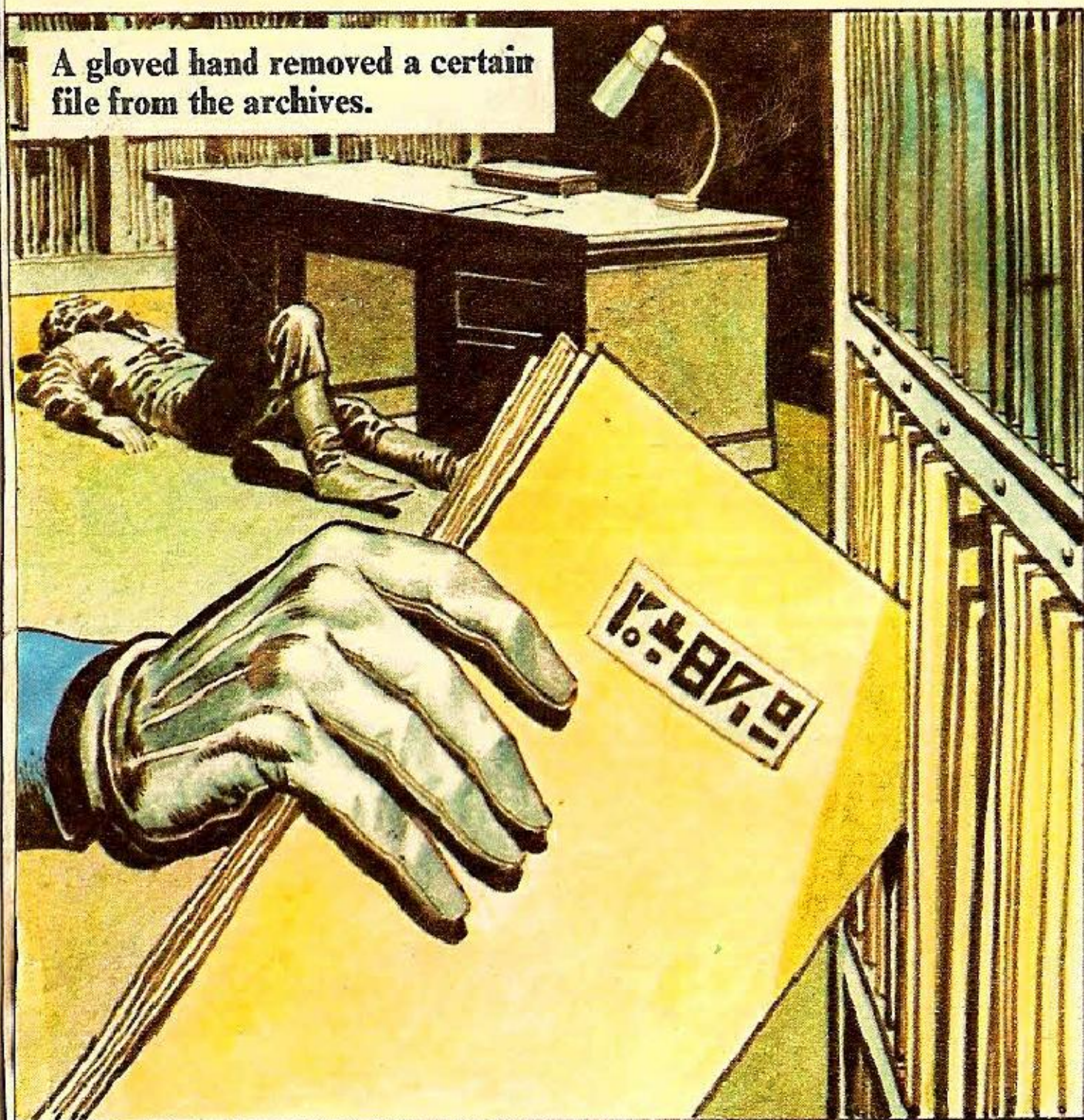
AAAAH! Who are you?



Nemon groped for his pistol . . . too late!



A gloved hand removed a certain file from the archives.



That night, Janno was rudely awakened from his bed by armed troopers of the Imperial police!

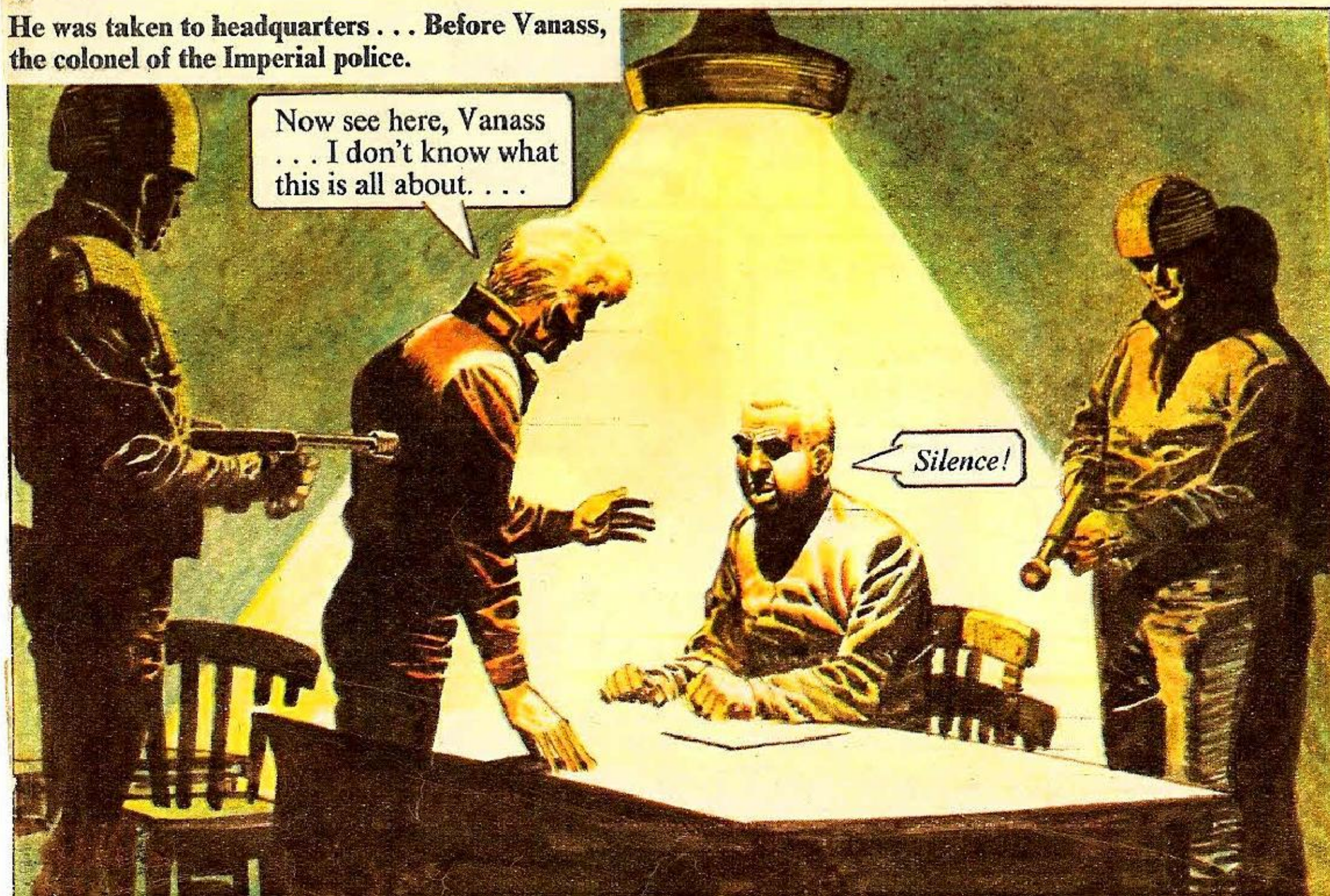
What is it? . . . What's the matter?



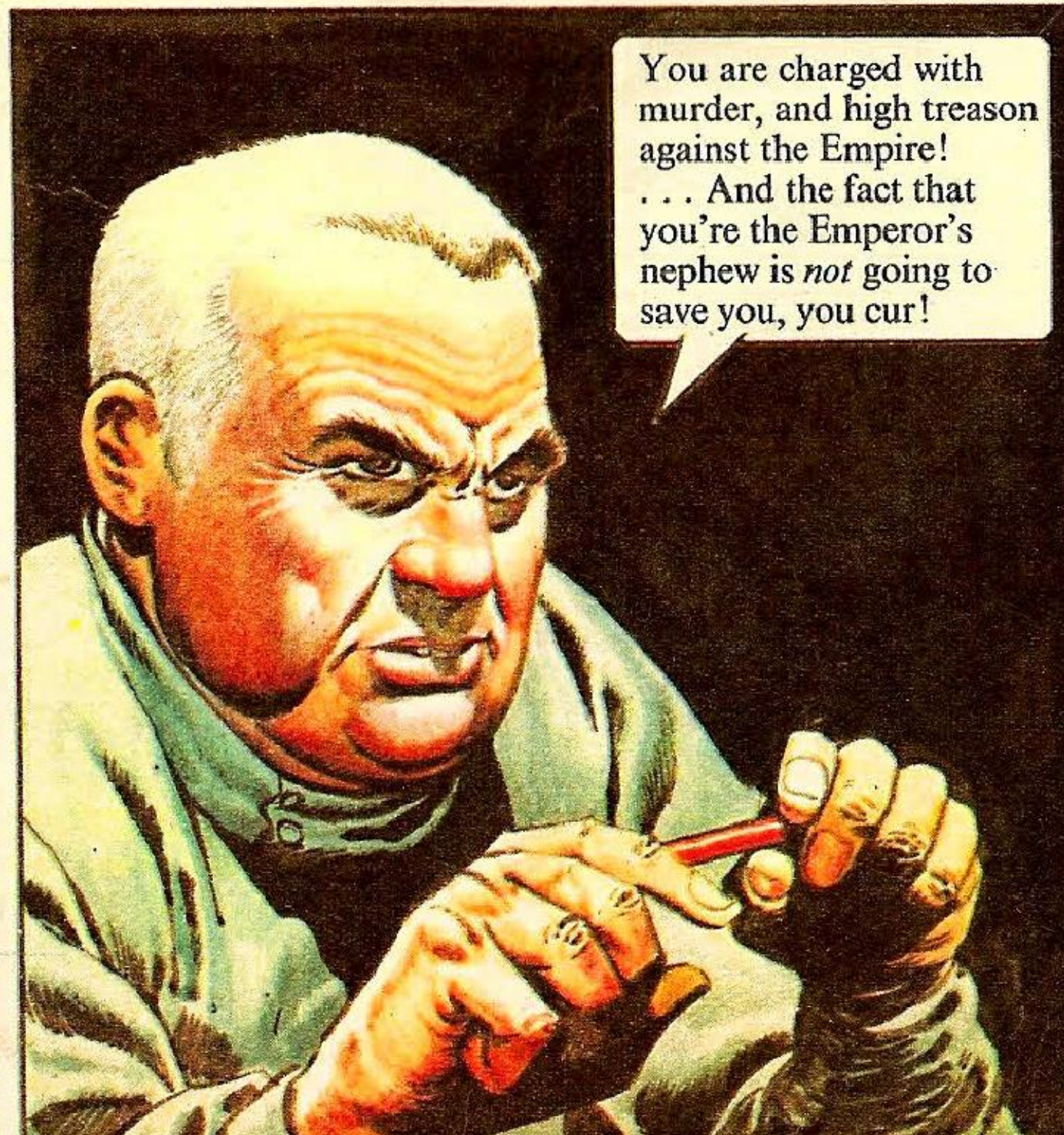
He was taken to headquarters . . . Before Vanass, the colonel of the Imperial police.

Now see here, Vanass . . . I don't know what this is all about. . . .

Silence!



You are charged with murder, and high treason against the Empire! . . . And the fact that you're the Emperor's nephew is *not* going to save you, you cur!



THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

To his alarm and astonishment, young Janno has been charged with murder, and high treason against the Trigan Empire!

Janno's voice rose wildly in protest, but the colonel of the Imperial Police made a brusque gesture to the troopers.



I'm innocent, I tell you... *Innocent!*

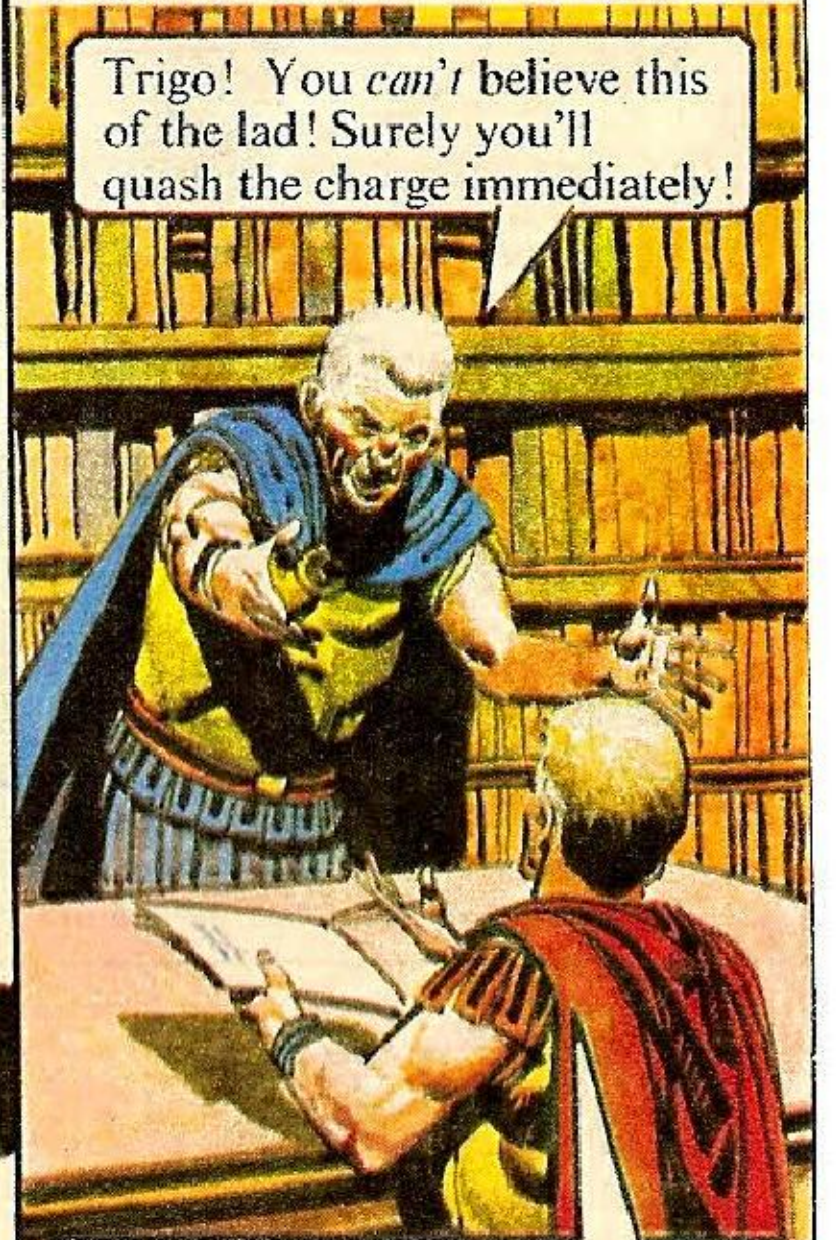
You'll have plenty of opportunity to tell lies at your trial, you young cur!... *Take him away!*

He was dragged, still protesting...



Let go of me! I've done nothing!

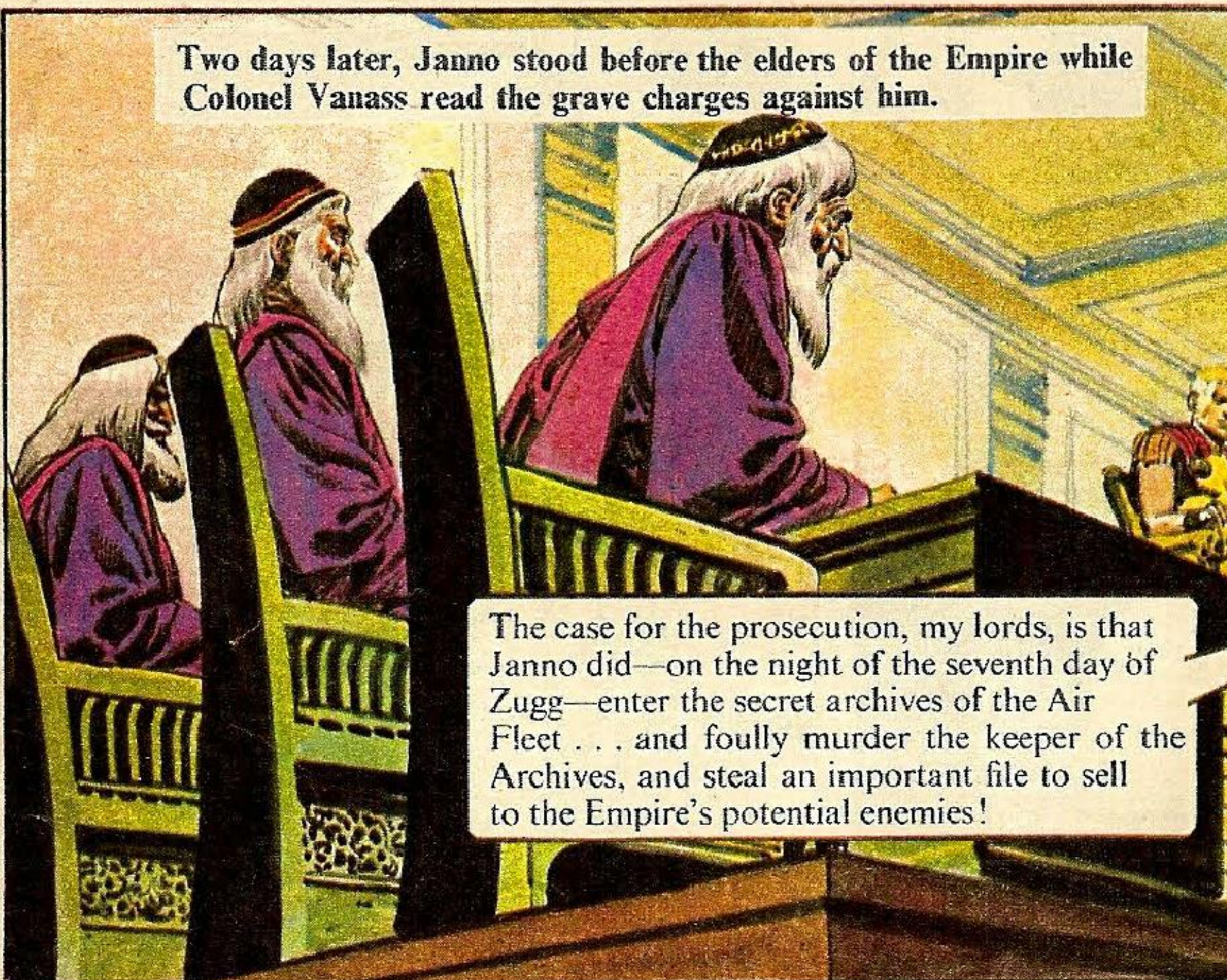
A report on his nephew's arrest was taken to the Emperor first thing next morning. He sent for his brother Brag, who was Janno's father.



Trigo! You *can't* believe this of the lad! Surely you'll quash the charge immediately!

Impossible! The evidence against him is *absolutely* conclusive! Member of the Imperial family or not, he'll *have* to stand trial!

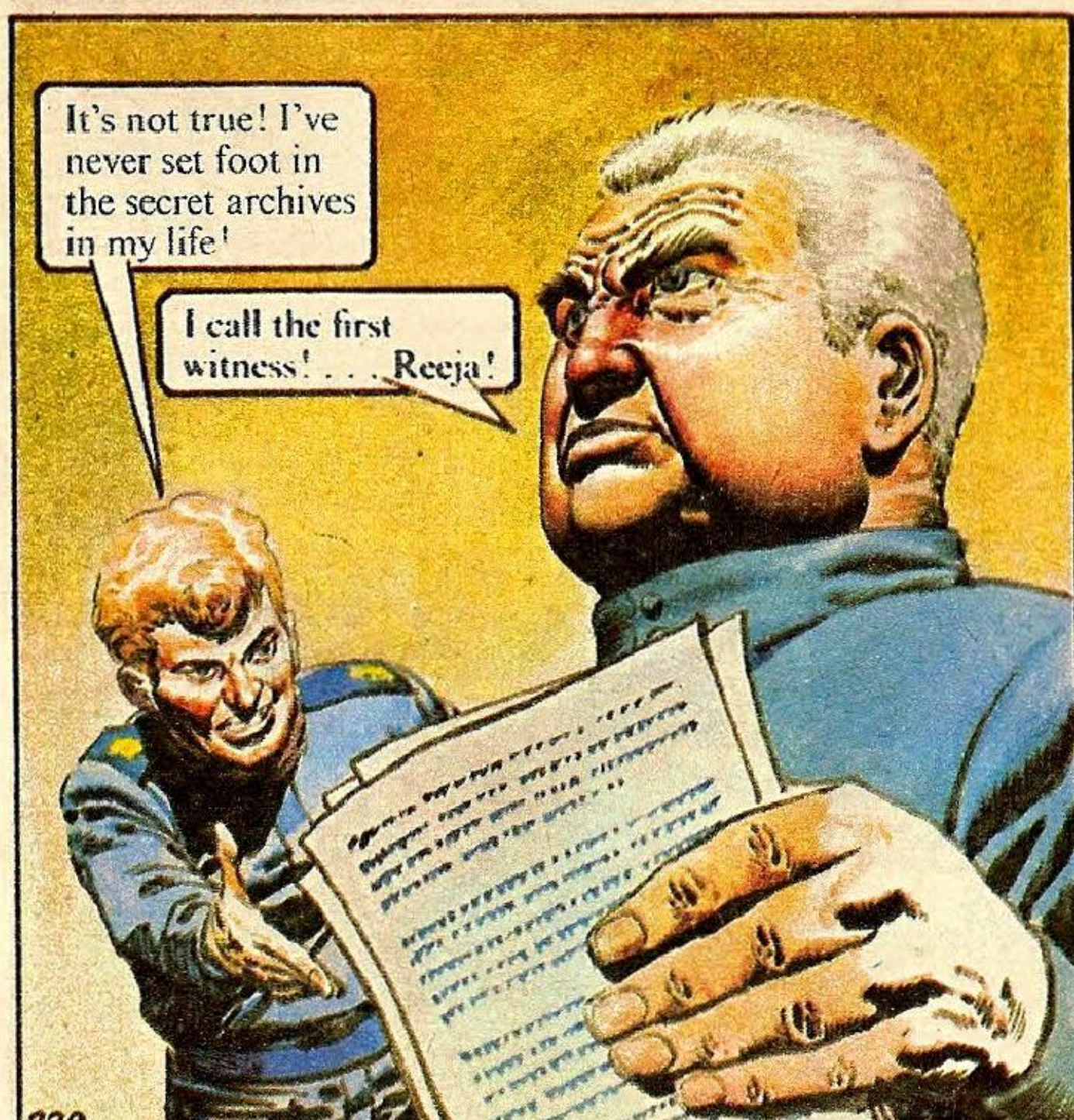
Two days later, Janno stood before the elders of the Empire while Colonel Vanass read the grave charges against him.



The case for the prosecution, my lords, is that Janno did—on the night of the seventh day of Zugg—enter the secret archives of the Air Fleet... and foully murder the keeper of the Archives, and steal an important file to sell to the Empire's potential enemies!

It's not true! I've never set foot in the secret archives in my life!

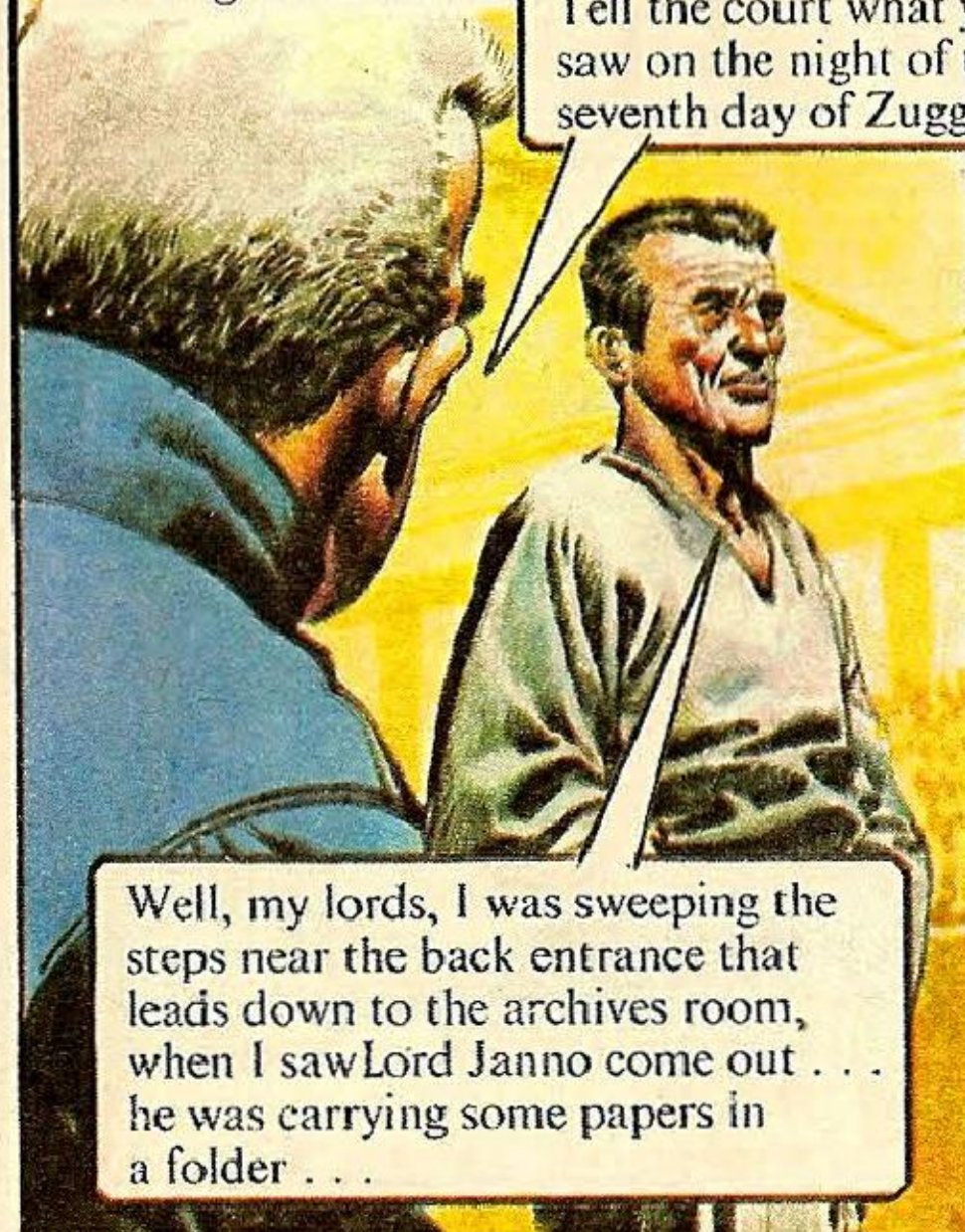
I call the first witness!... *Reeja!*



Reeja described himself as a cleaner and sweeper employed at the headquarters of the Trigan Air Fleet.

Tell the court what you saw on the night of the seventh day of Zugg!

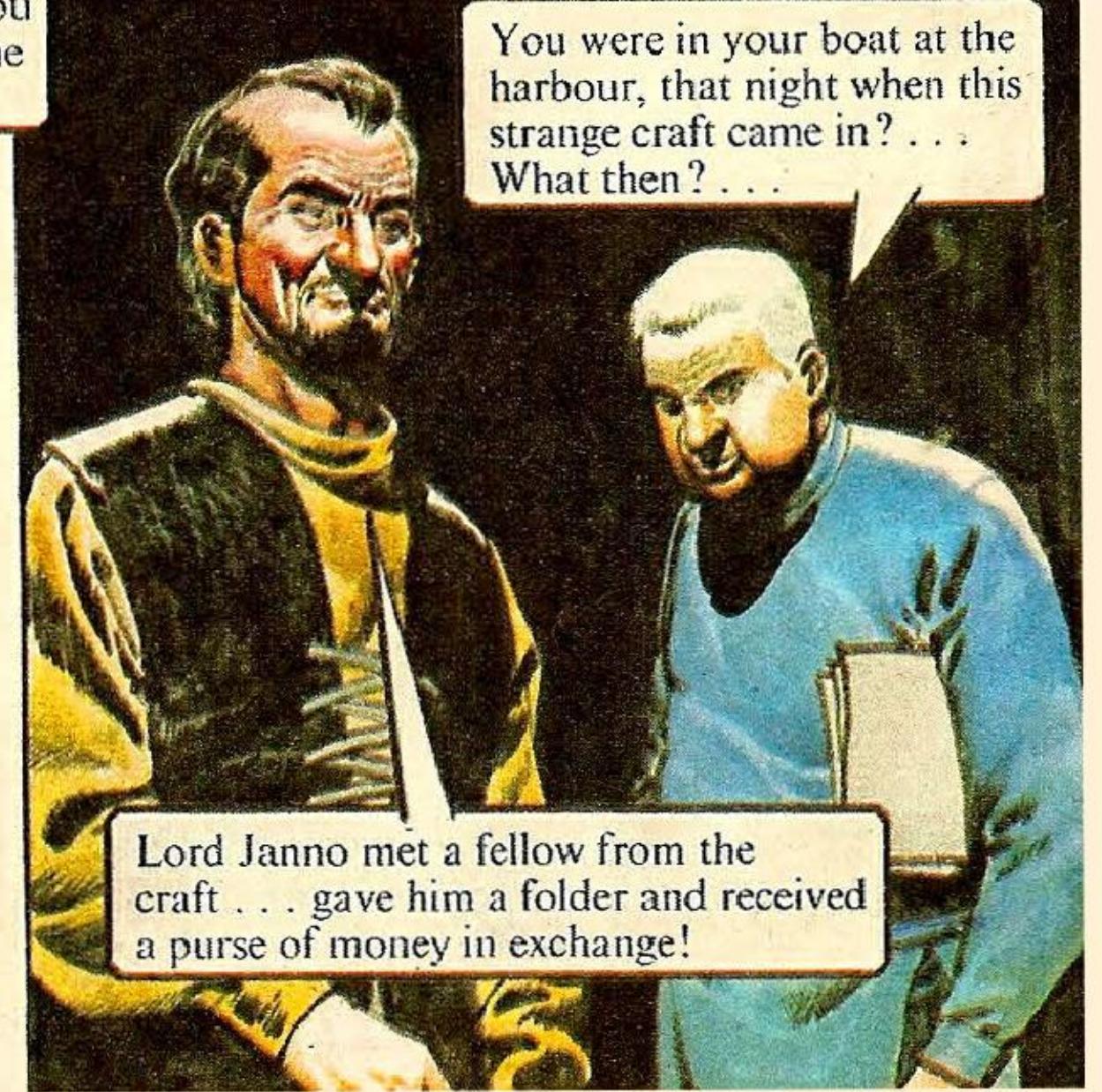
Well, my lords, I was sweeping the steps near the back entrance that leads down to the archives room, when I saw Lord Janno come out... he was carrying some papers in a folder...



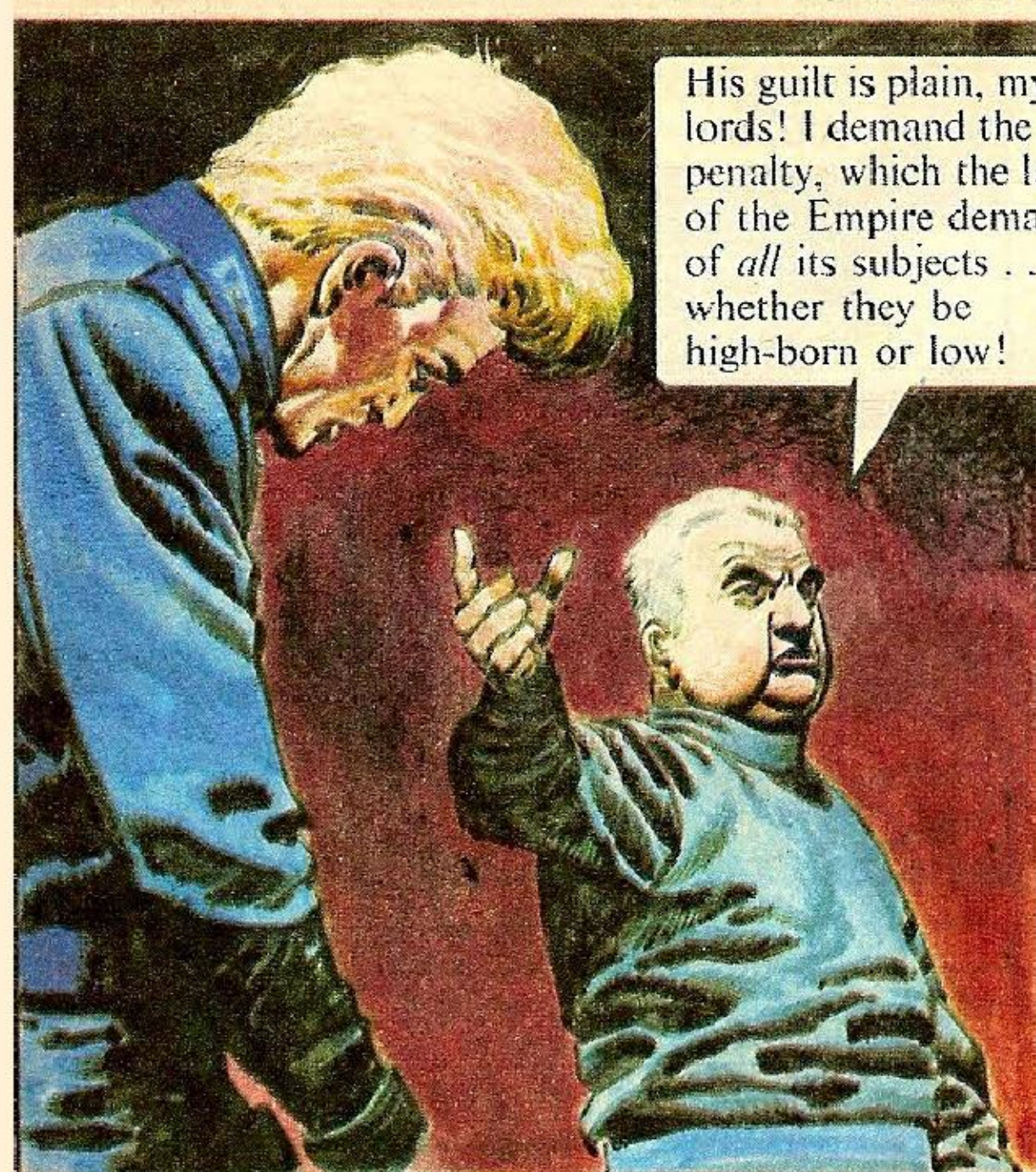
The next witness introduced himself as Gorra, a fisherman...

You were in your boat at the harbour, that night when this strange craft came in?... What then?...

Lord Janno met a fellow from the craft... gave him a folder and received a purse of money in exchange!

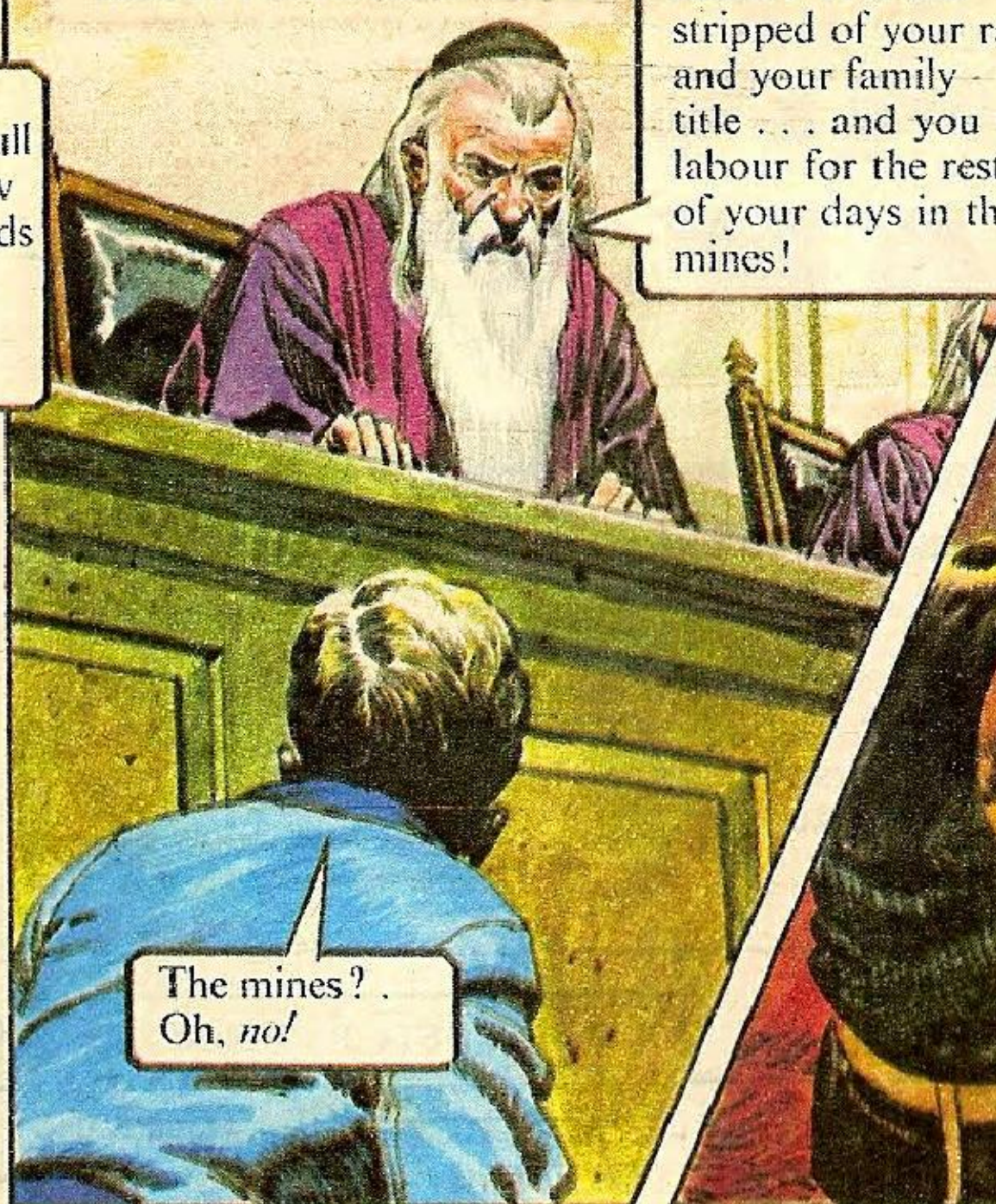


NO OTHER EVIDENCE WAS NEEDED. DESPITE JANNO'S FRANTIC PLEAS, the result of the trial was never in doubt. As Vanass said . . .



His guilt is plain, my lords! I demand the full penalty, which the law of the Empire demands of *all* its subjects . . . whether they be high-born or low!

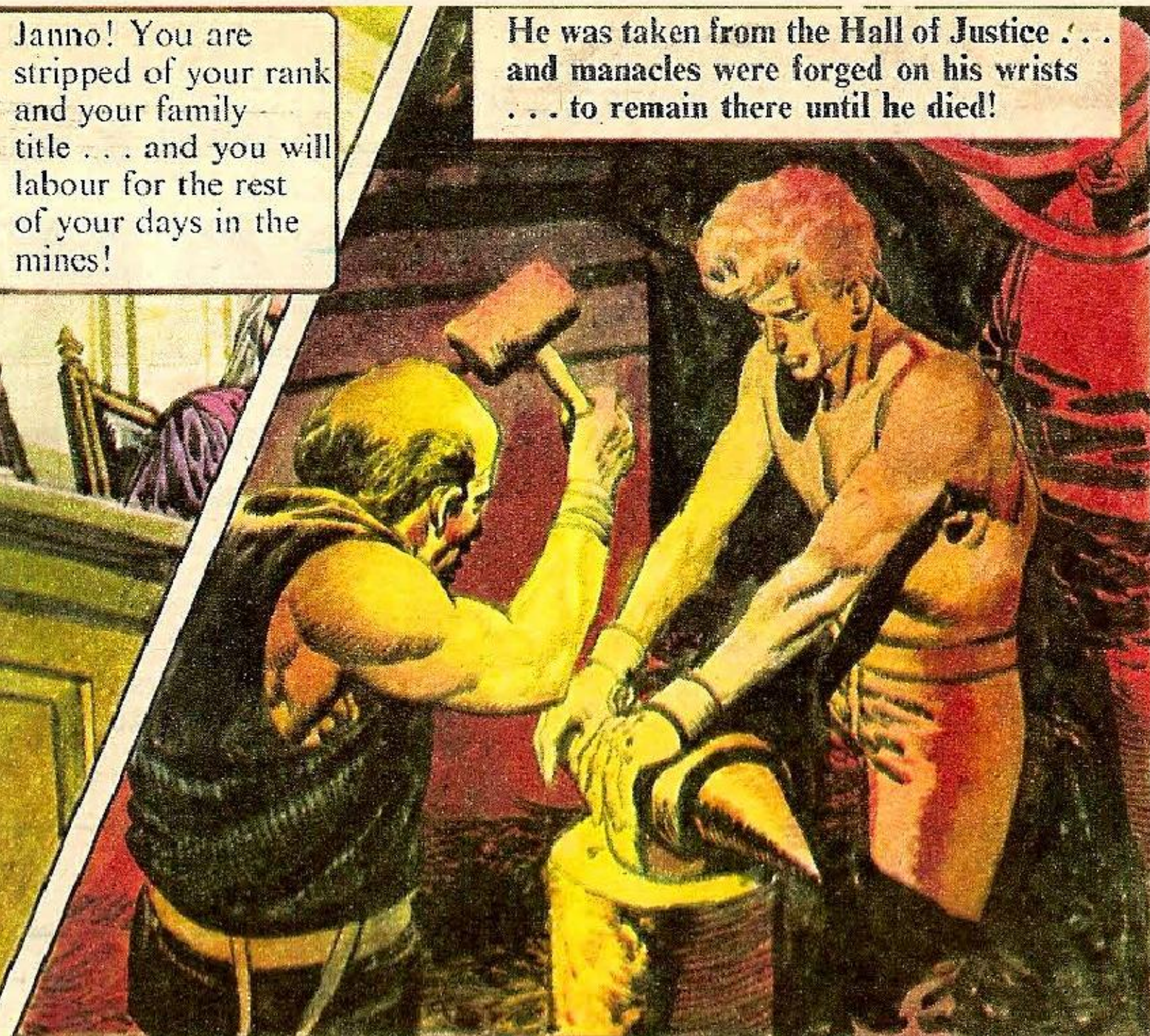
Then . . . the dread sentence!



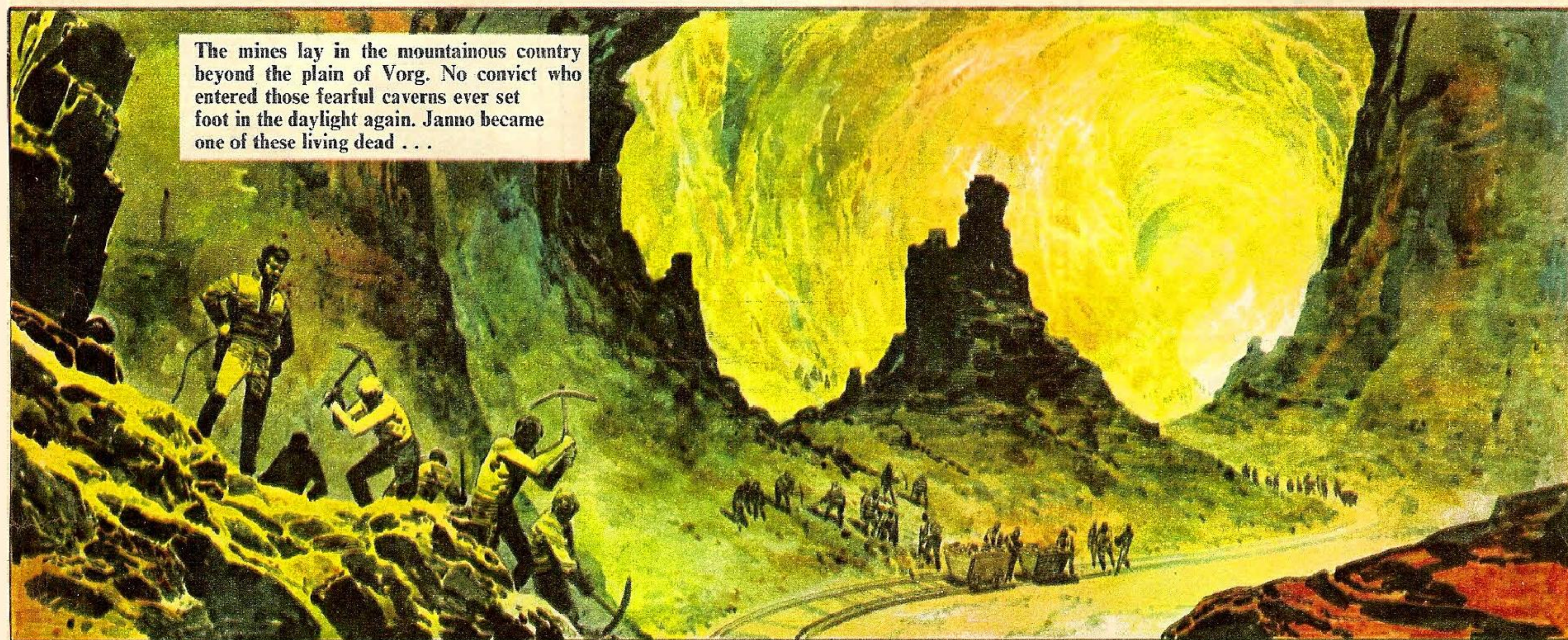
The mines? . . . Oh, *no!*

Janno! You are stripped of your rank and your family title . . . and you will labour for the rest of your days in the mines!

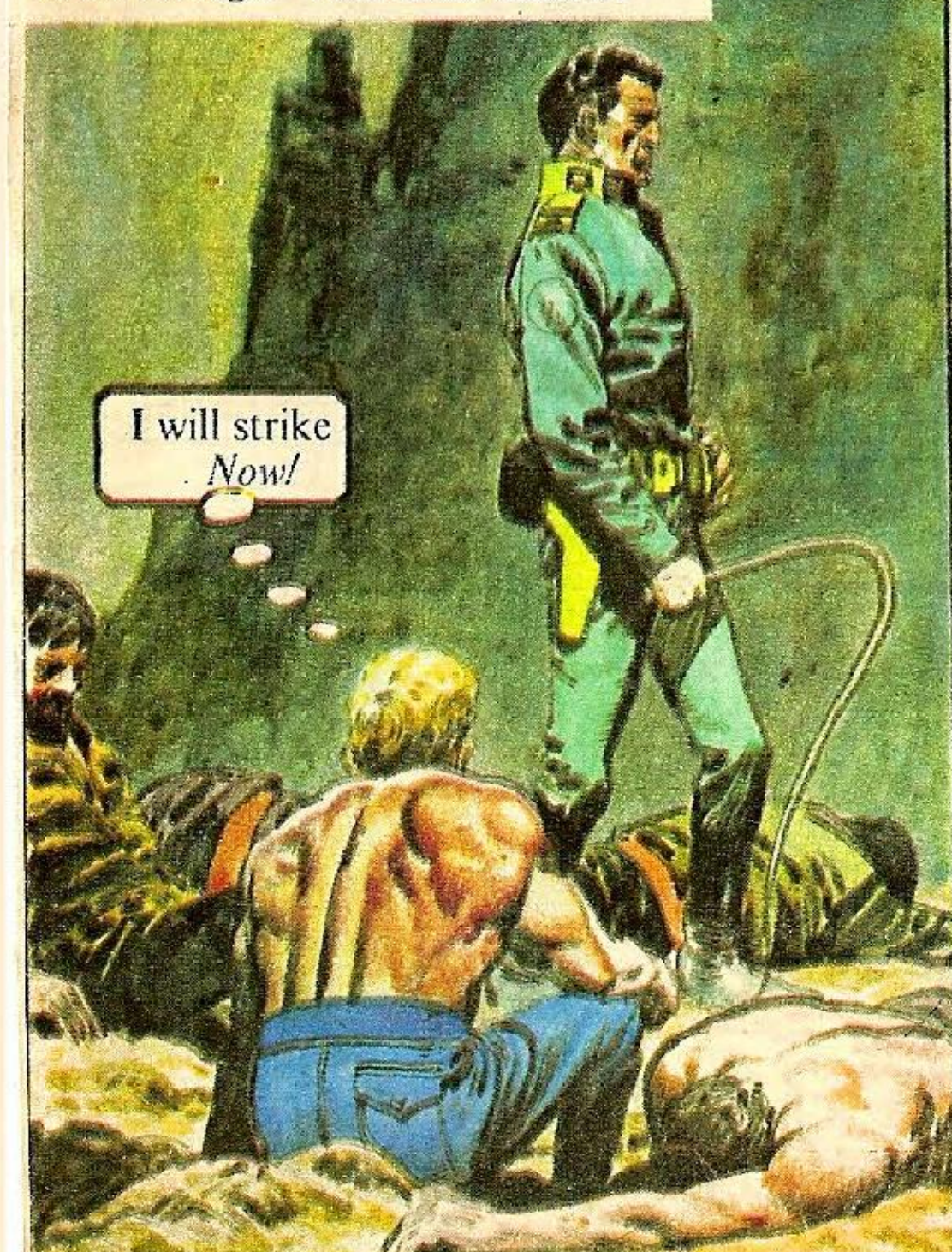
He was taken from the Hall of Justice . . . and manacles were forged on his wrists . . . to remain there until he died!



The mines lay in the mountainous country beyond the plain of Vorg. No convict who entered those fearful caverns ever set foot in the daylight again. Janno became one of these living dead . . .



But in secret, Janno worked on the manacles, trying desperately to slip his hands through. Then came success!



I will strike . . . Now!

He leapt! . . . and wound his chain round the neck of the brutal guard!



Then he was running . . . with projectiles screaming round his bent head!

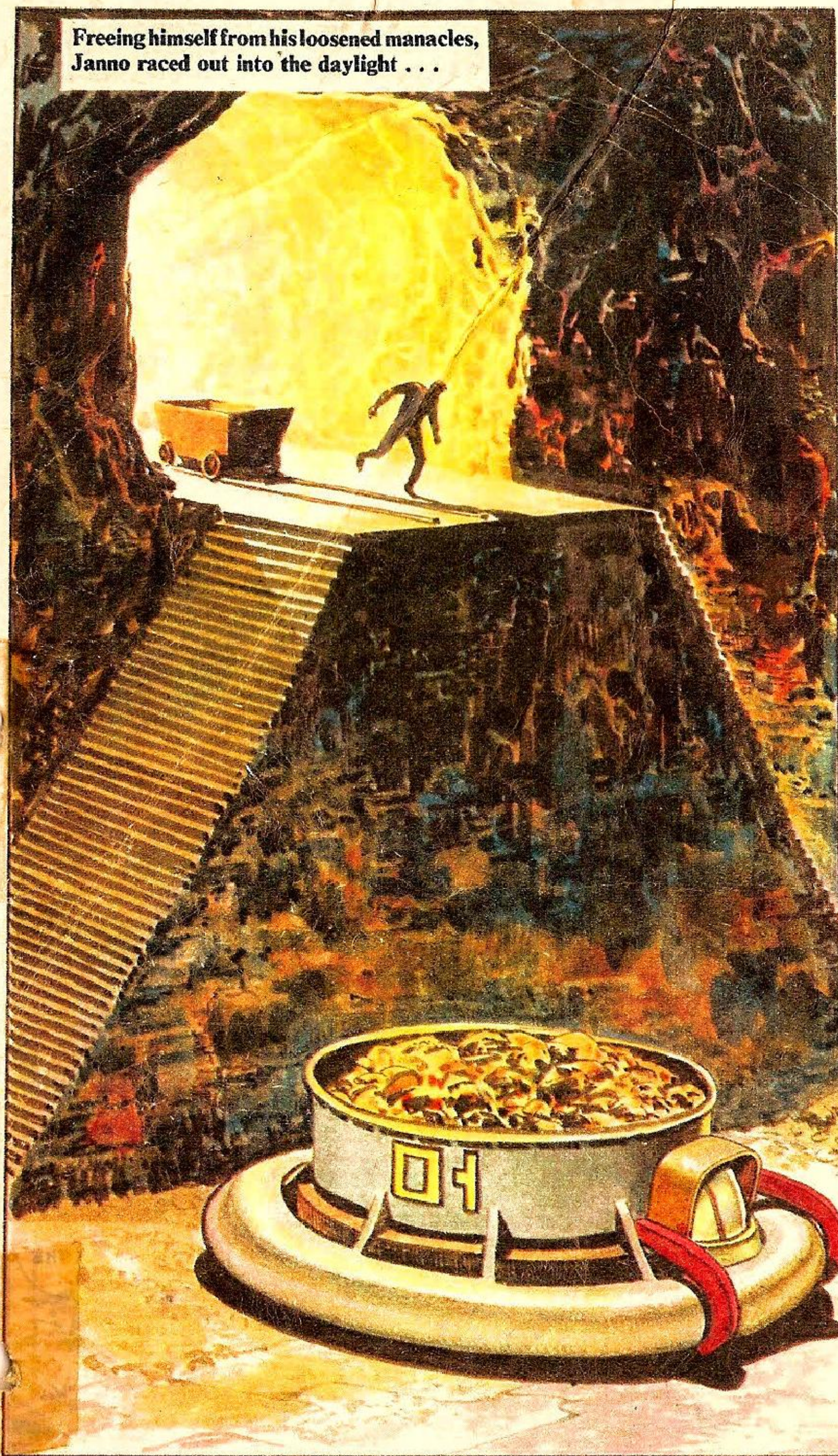


Convict loose! Shoot to kill!

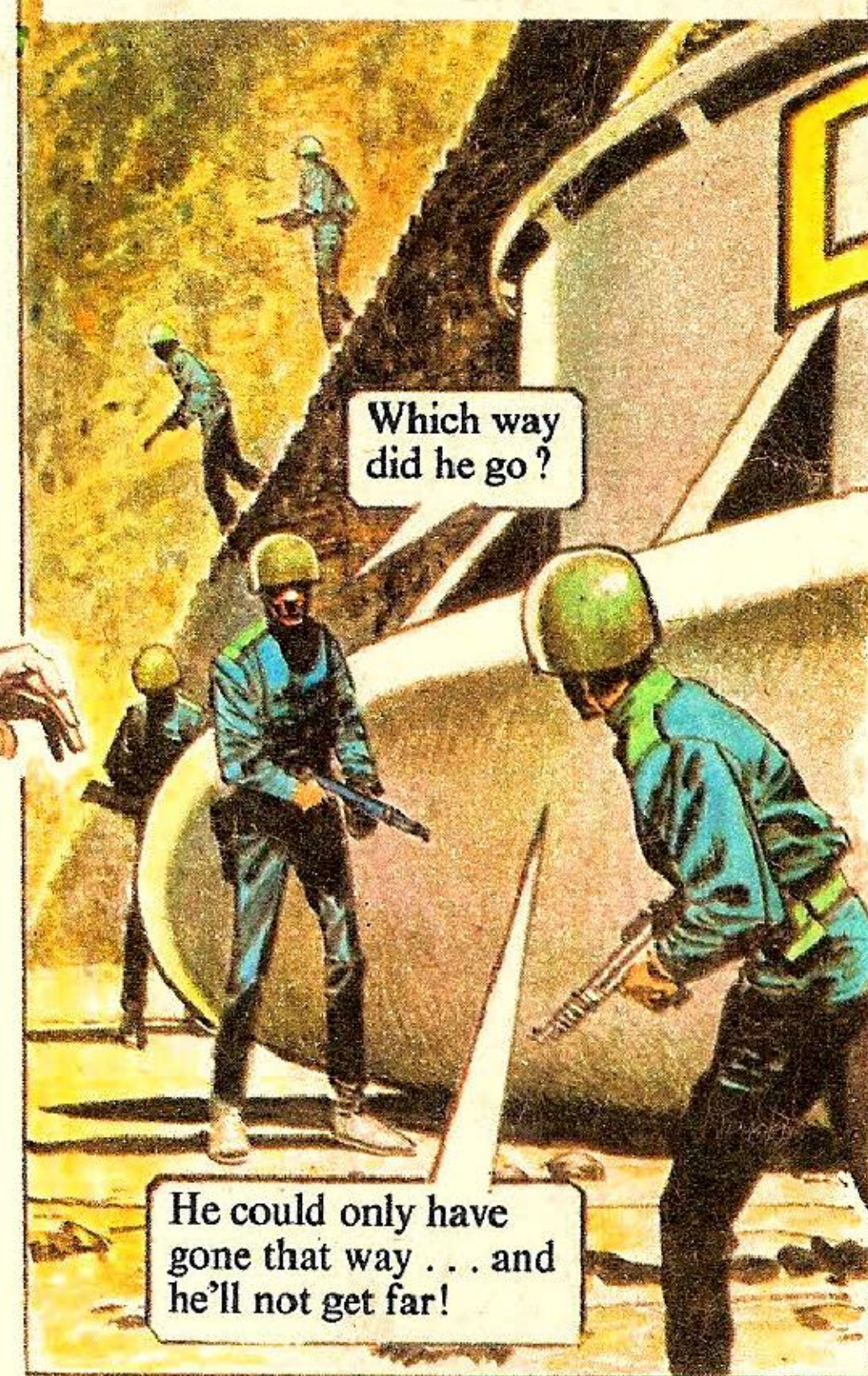
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

Found guilty on false evidence of murder and treason against the Trigan Empire, the Emperor's nephew Janno has been condemned to lifetime labour in the dreaded mines . . . but he is attempting an escape. . . .

Freeing himself from his loosened manacles, Janno raced out into the daylight . . .



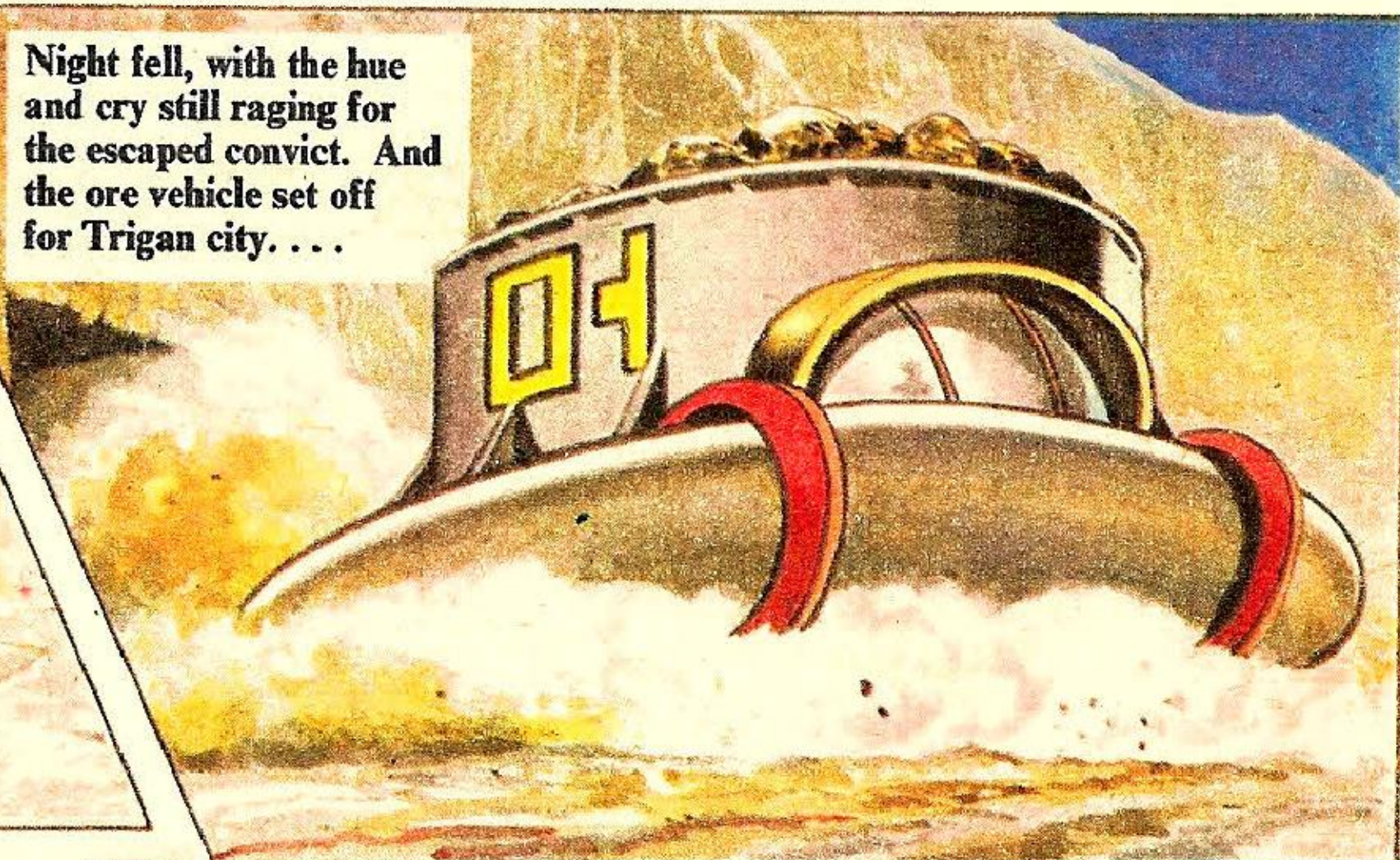
The guards came rushing down both flights of steps, and past the huge vehicle containing the day's output of ore from the mine.



Which way did he go?

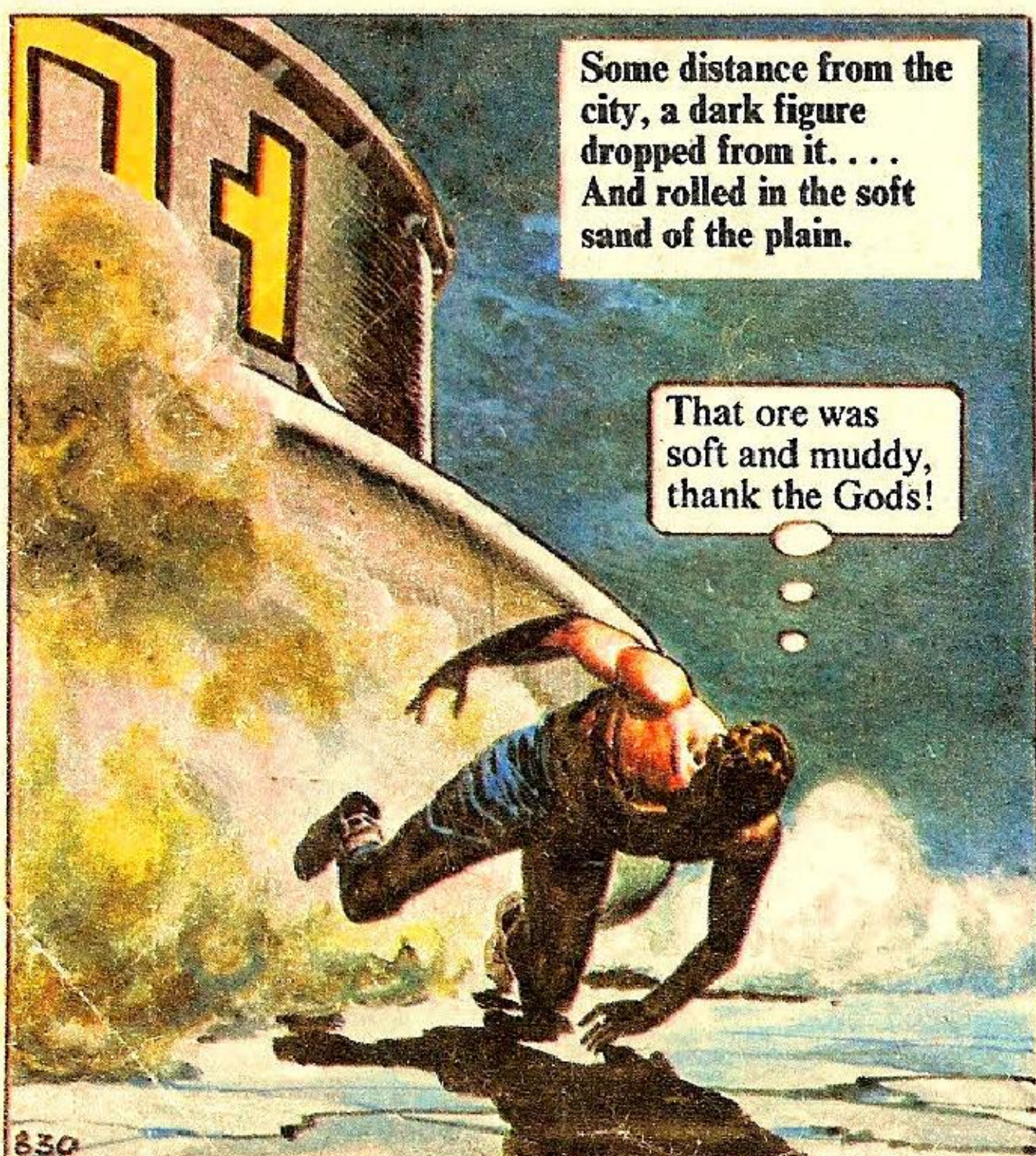
He could only have gone that way . . . and he'll not get far!

Night fell, with the hue and cry still raging for the escaped convict. And the ore vehicle set off for Trigan city. . . .

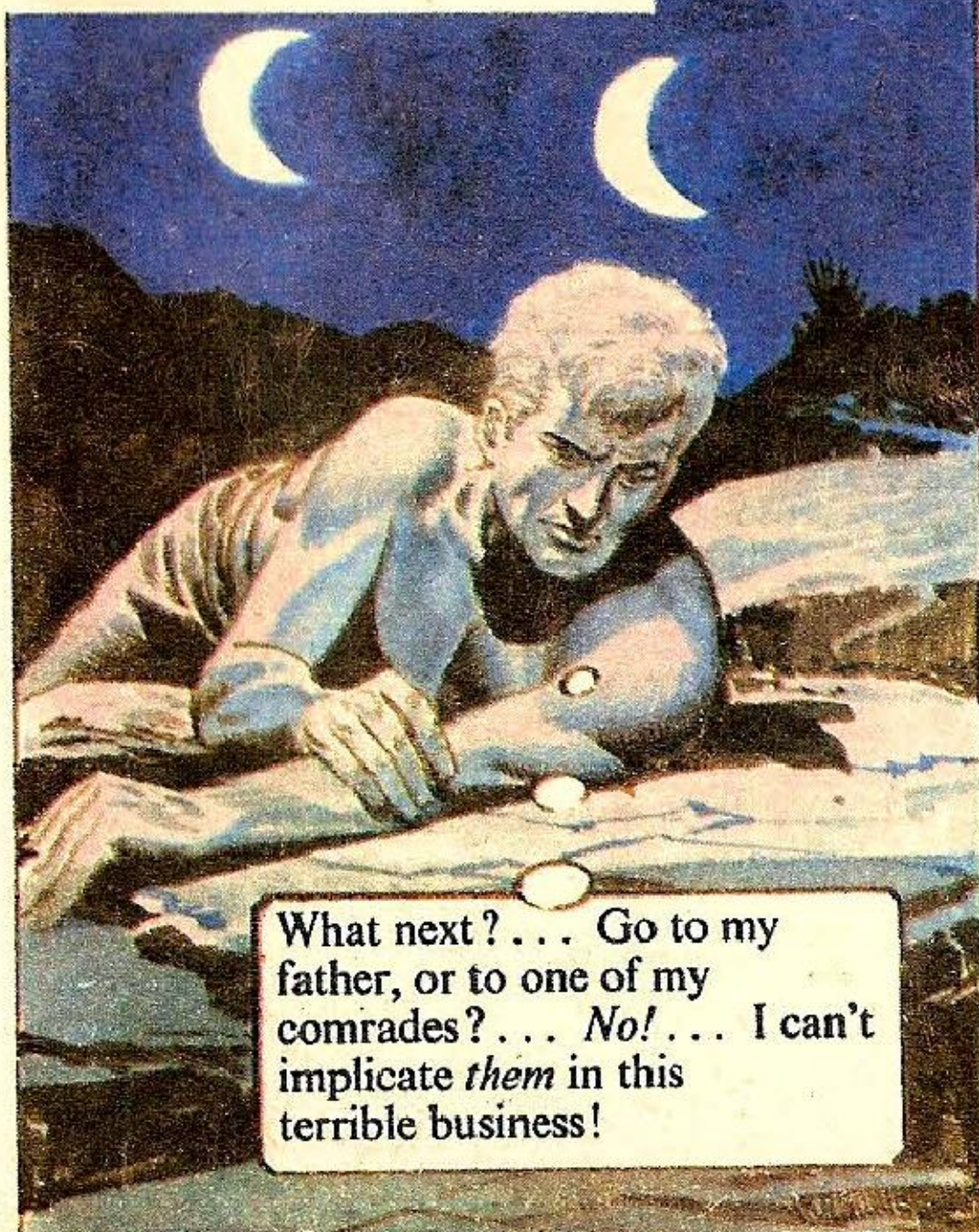


Some distance from the city, a dark figure dropped from it. . . . And rolled in the soft sand of the plain.

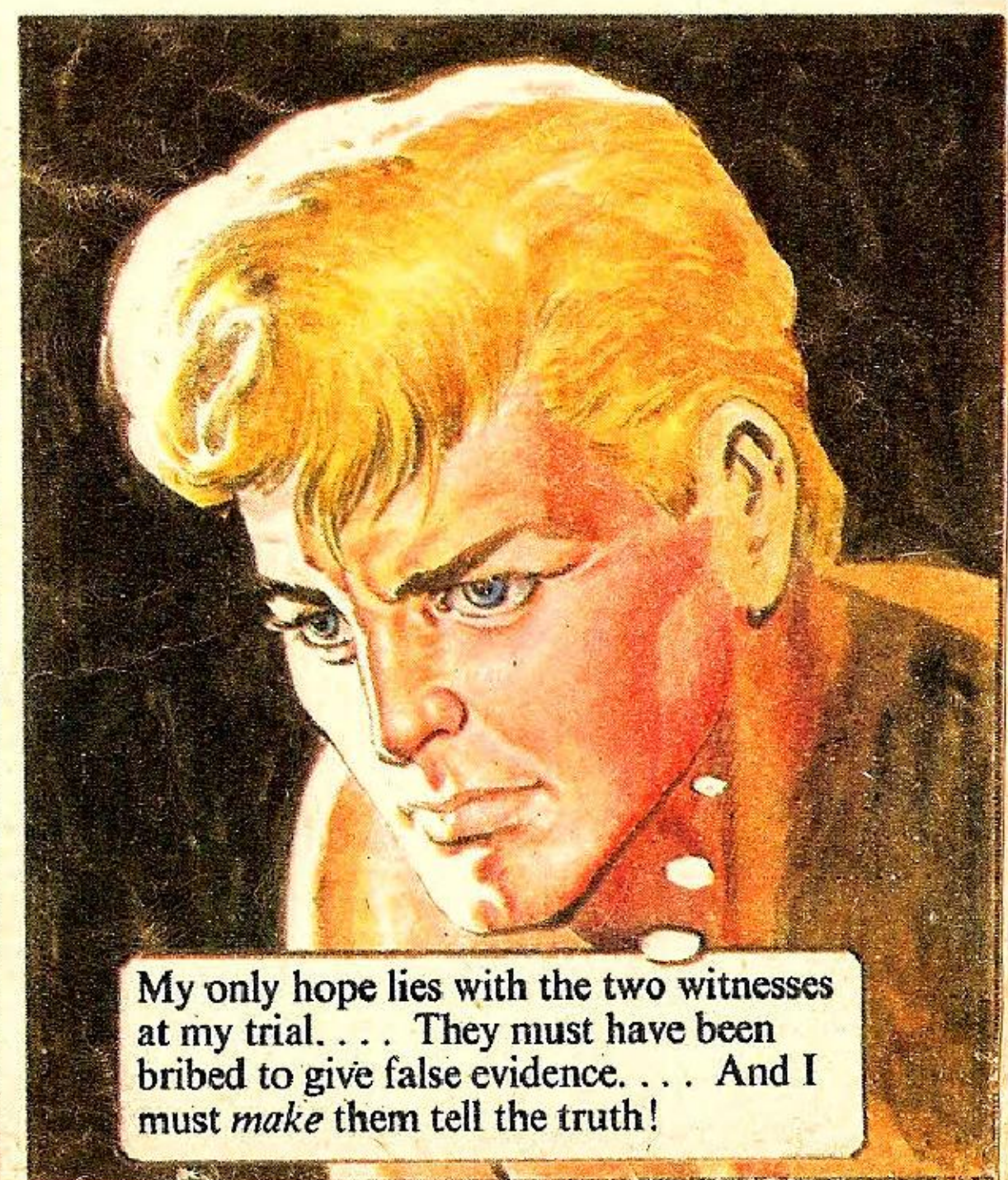
That ore was soft and muddy, thank the Gods!



Janno lay there in the light of Elekton's moons, his mind racing.

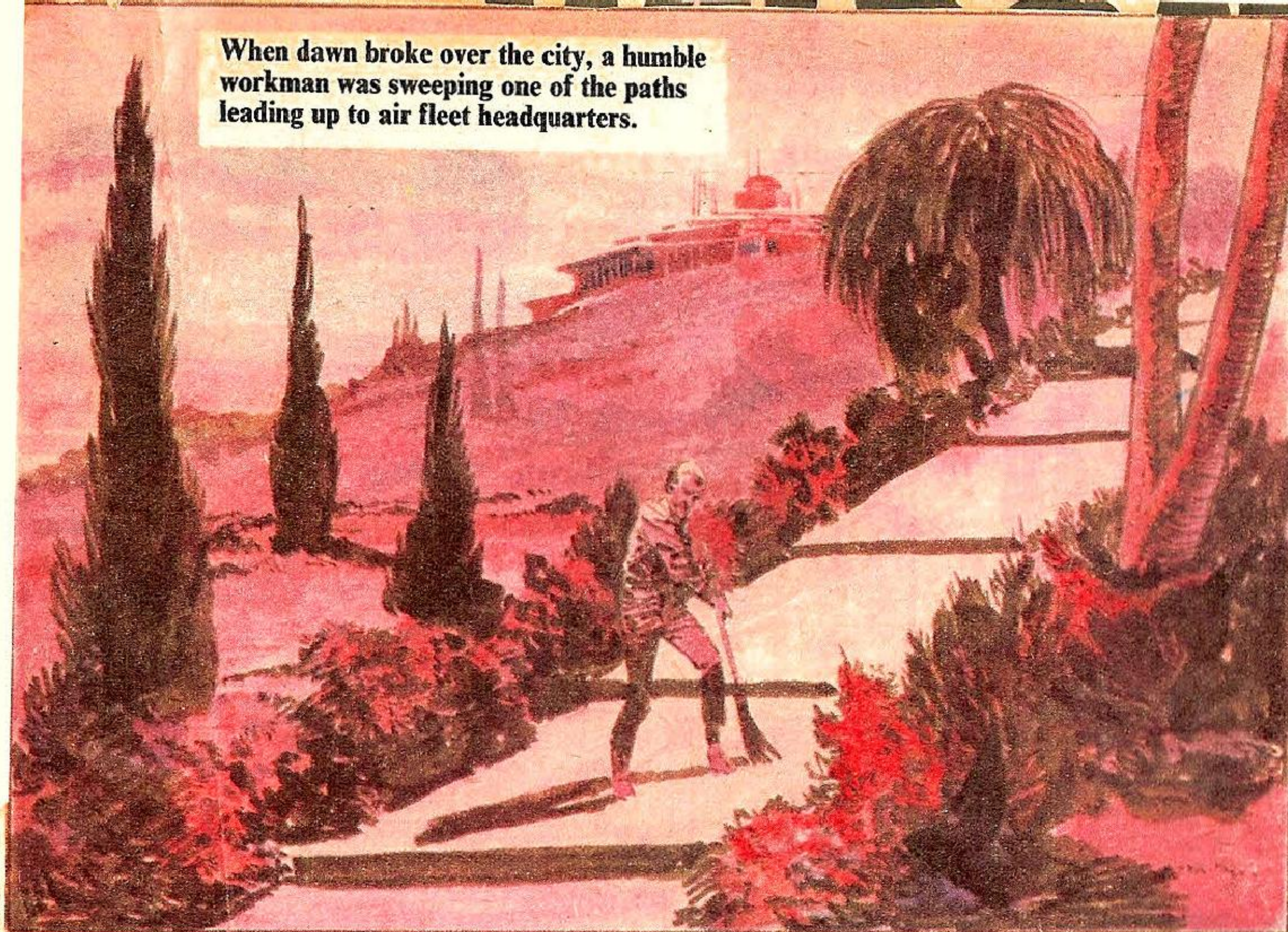


What next? . . . Go to my father, or to one of my comrades? . . . No! . . . I can't implicate *them* in this terrible business!



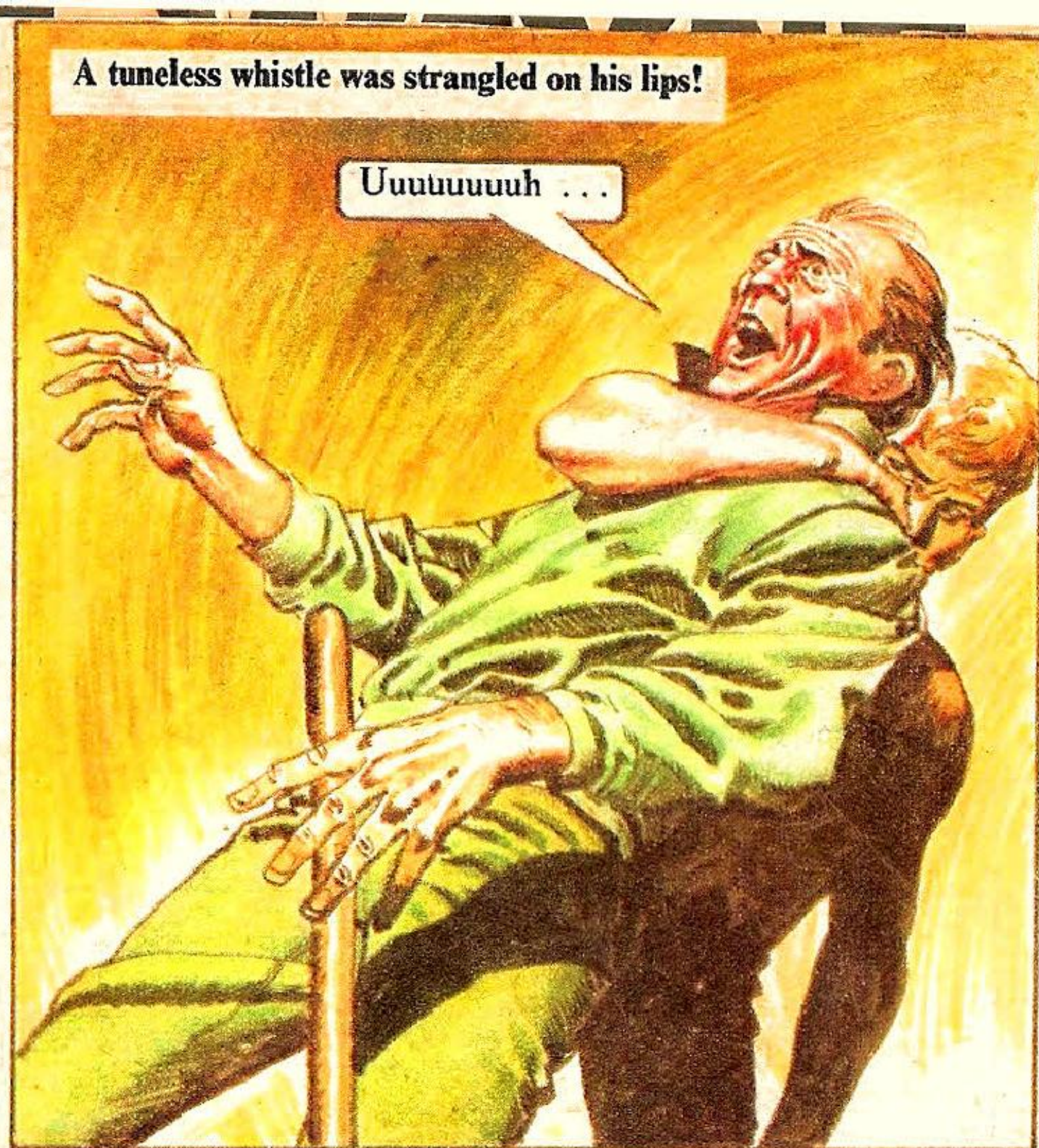
My only hope lies with the two witnesses at my trial. . . . They must have been bribed to give false evidence. . . . And I must *make* them tell the truth!

When dawn broke over the city, a humble workman was sweeping one of the paths leading up to air fleet headquarters.



A tuneless whistle was strangled on his lips!

Uuuuuuuuh ...



He was dragged into the bushes ... and ...

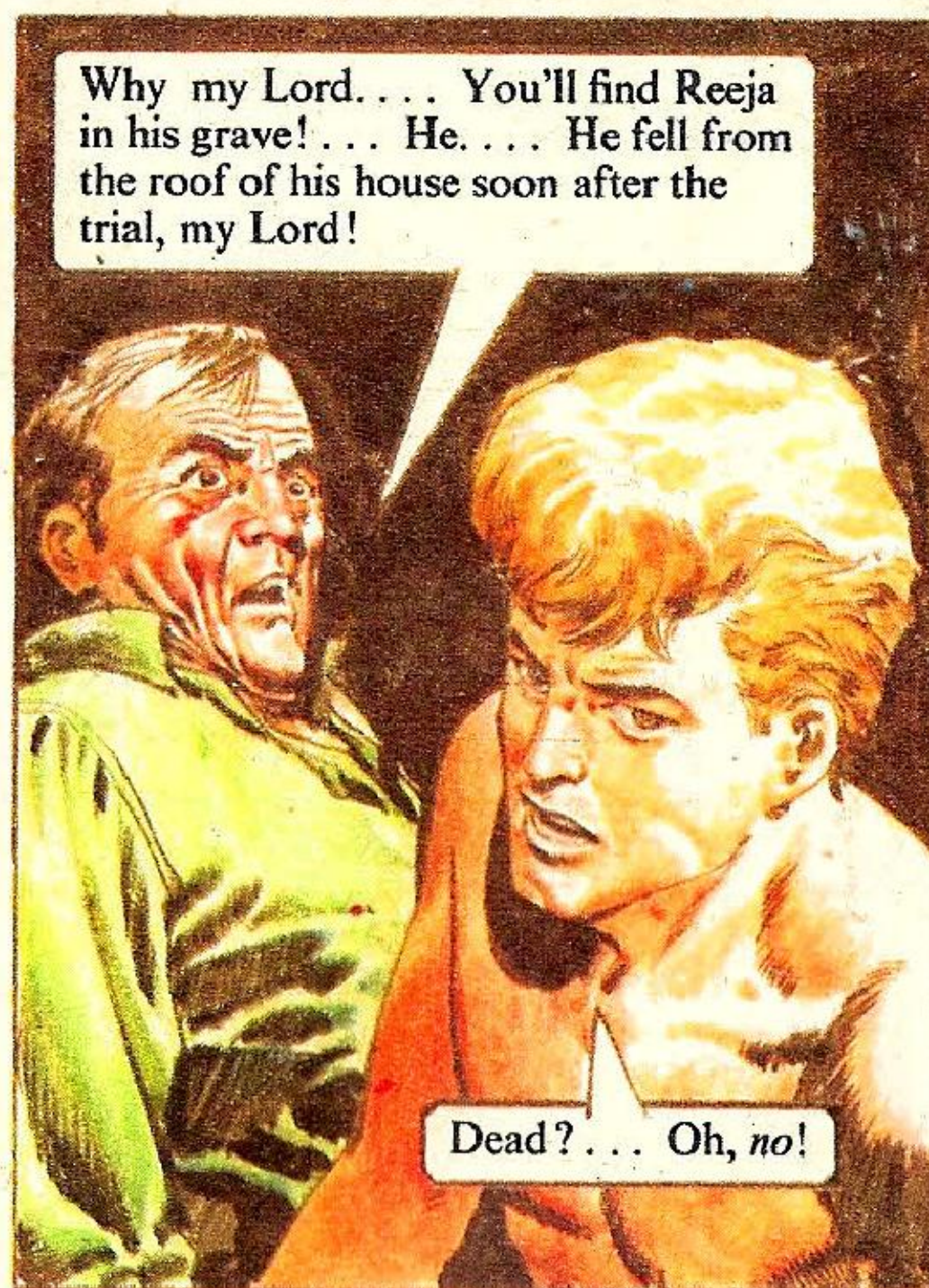
Why! You...
You're Lord
Janno!

Listen to me, wretch, if you want
to live! I want to speak to the
sweeper named Reeja. ...
Where can I find him?



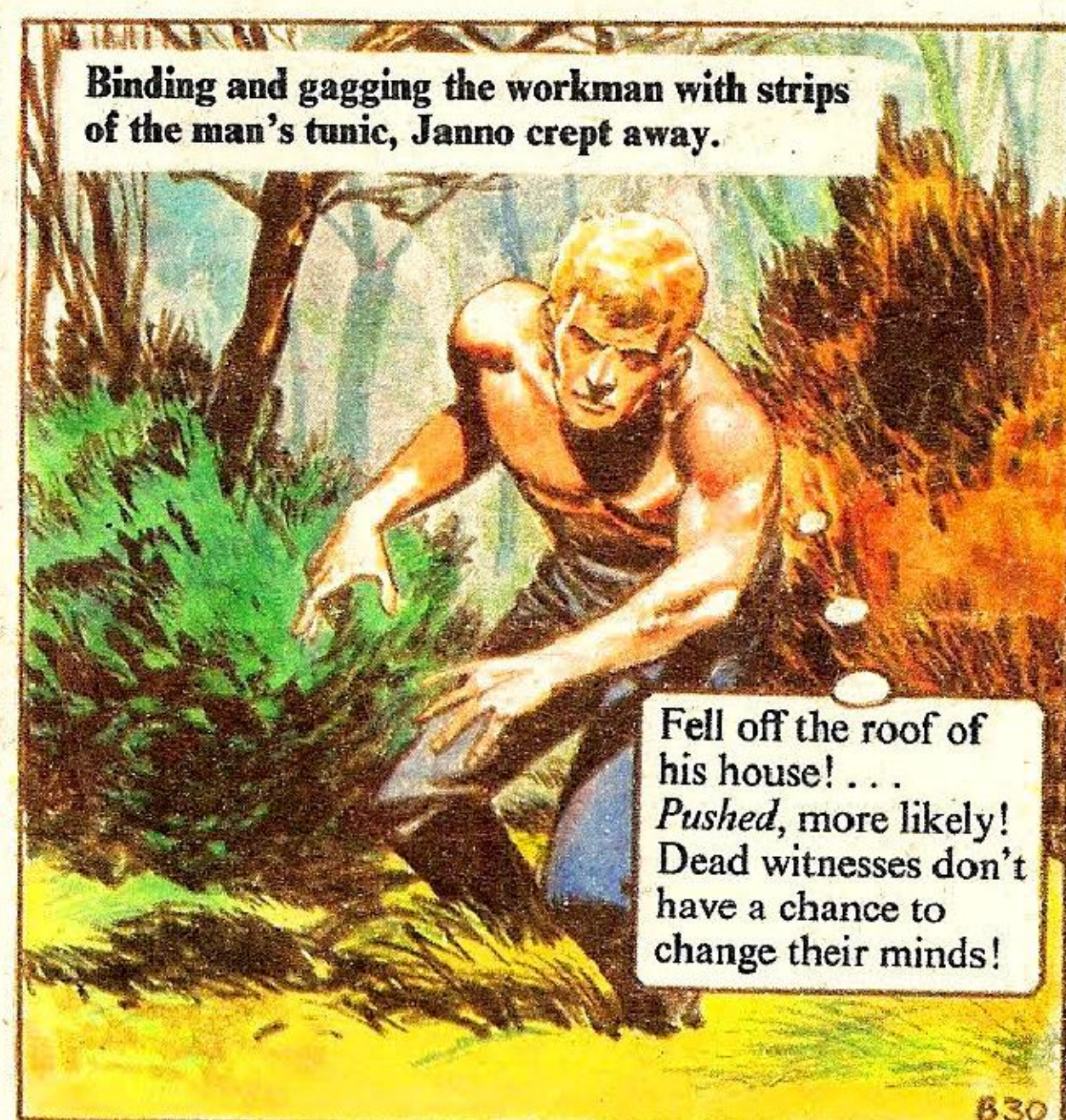
Why my Lord... You'll find Reeja
in his grave! ... He... He fell from
the roof of his house soon after the
trial, my Lord!

Dead? ... Oh, no!



Binding and gagging the workman with strips
of the man's tunic, Janno crept away.

Fell off the roof of
his house! ...
Pushed, more likely!
Dead witnesses don't
have a chance to
change their minds!



Suddenly, he came face to face with a
young officer in air fleet uniform.
The other's hand went for his gun!

By all the stars!
... Janno!

It was Roffa. ... His friend and comrade.
But Roffa knew his duty!

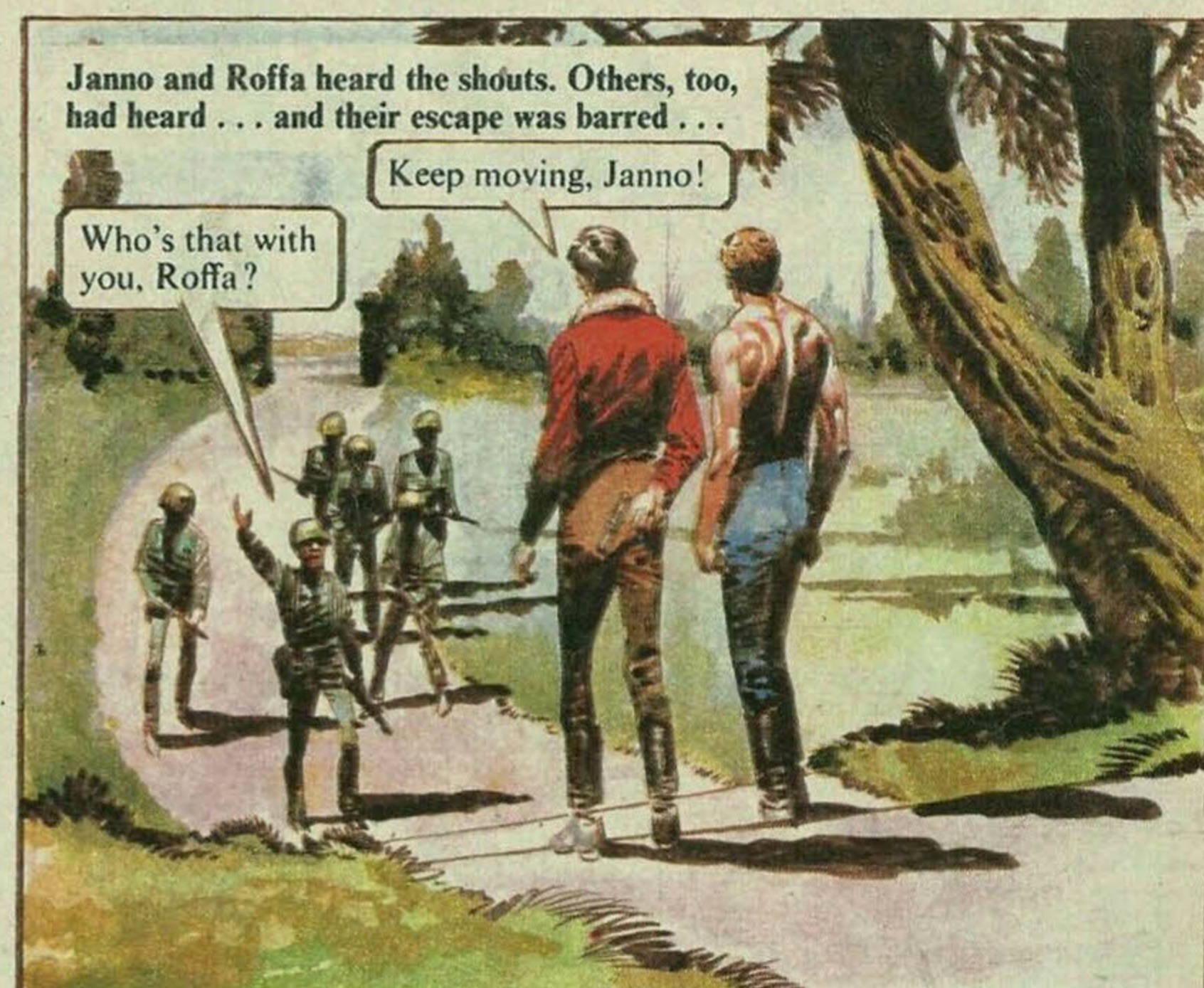
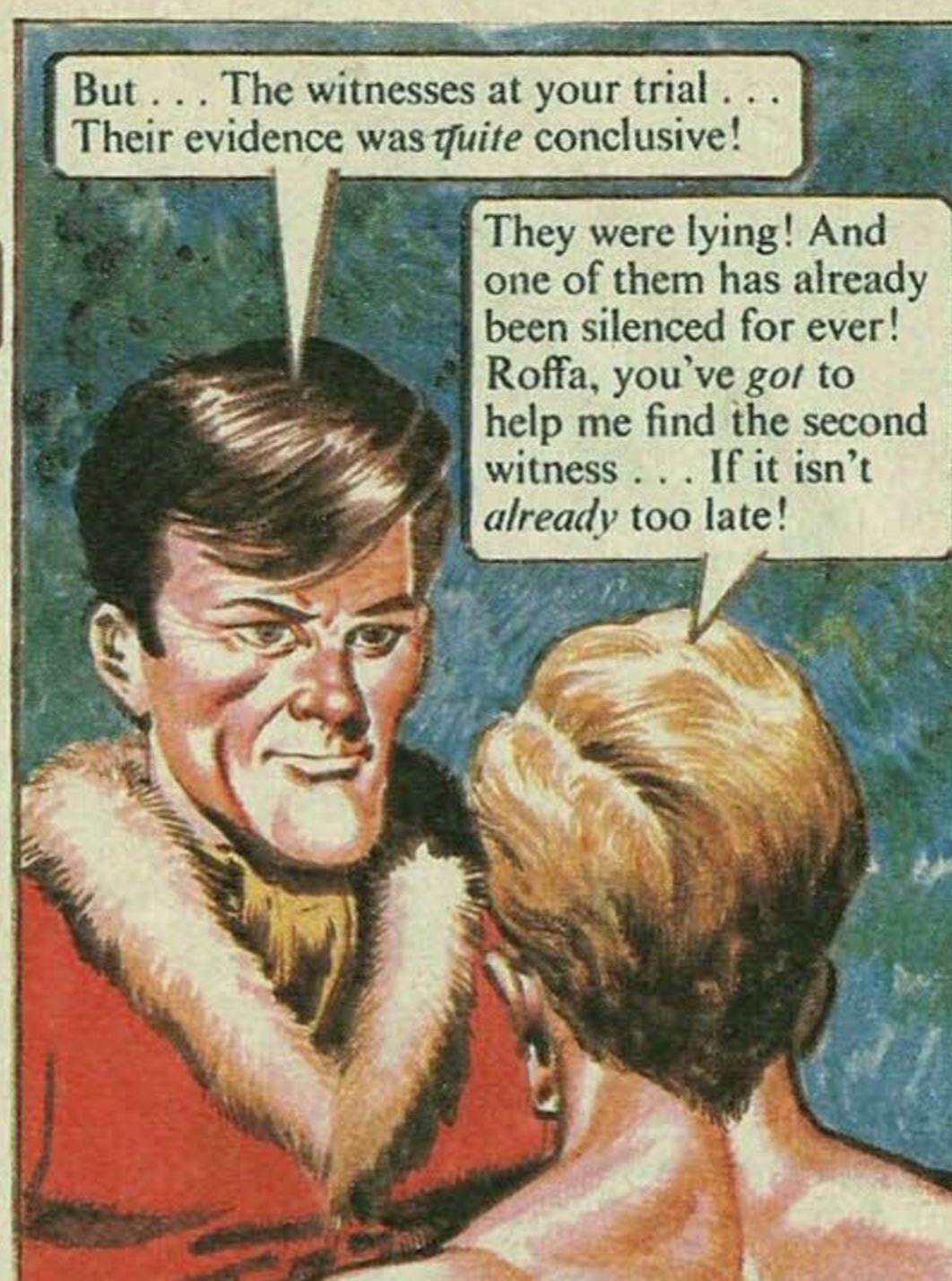
Don't come
any nearer!

Why? ... Will you shoot
me? ... Do you really
think you can, Roffa?



THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

Janno has escaped from lifetime labour in the dreaded mines, where he had been sent on a false charge of murder and high treason against the Trigan Empire. While trying to clear his name, he meets his old comrade Roffa . . .



Janno, meanwhile, was dodging from shadow to shadow in the narrow streets of the old part of the city. Alarm bells were ringing from every tower, and search craft were sweeping overhead.

There's only one chance for me . . . one desperate chance!

Taking cover whenever the craft came close, he made his way towards the looming bulk of Peric's laboratory.

Soon he was inside . . .

Dare I do what has to be done?

He looked up at Peric's strange apparatus . . . and he seemed to hear the old scientist's grim words dinning in his ears.

. . . Only one subject in three can survive the effect of the rays . . . There is no way of knowing who would survive, and who would die! . . .

And then his mind was made up!

It's either this . . . Or a living death in the mines!

He pressed the lever as he had seen Peric do. . . Next instant, he was bathed in an eerie orange light!

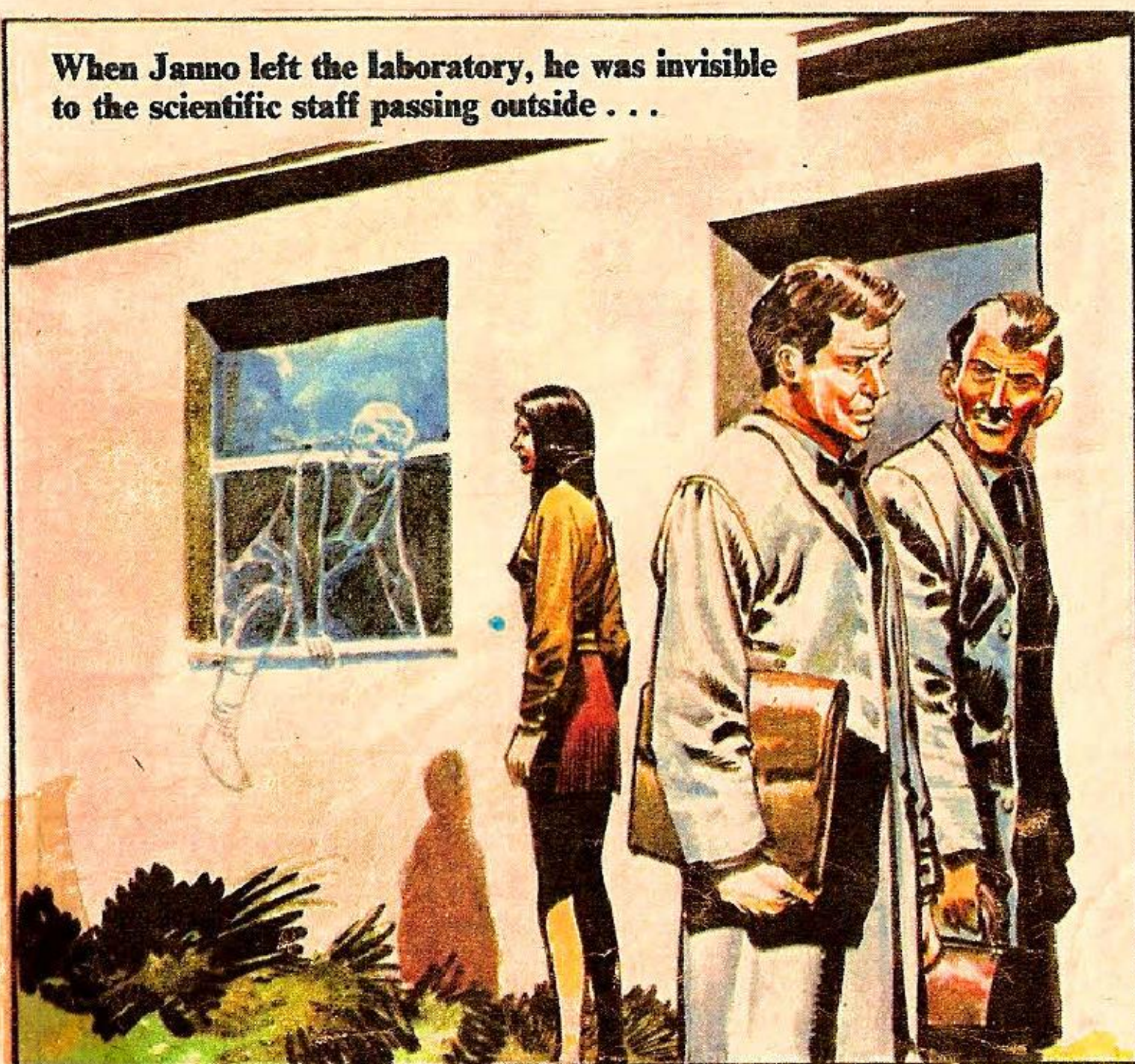
EEEEAAAAAGH!

When the light faded, the laboratory was empty . . . Janno had vanished!

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

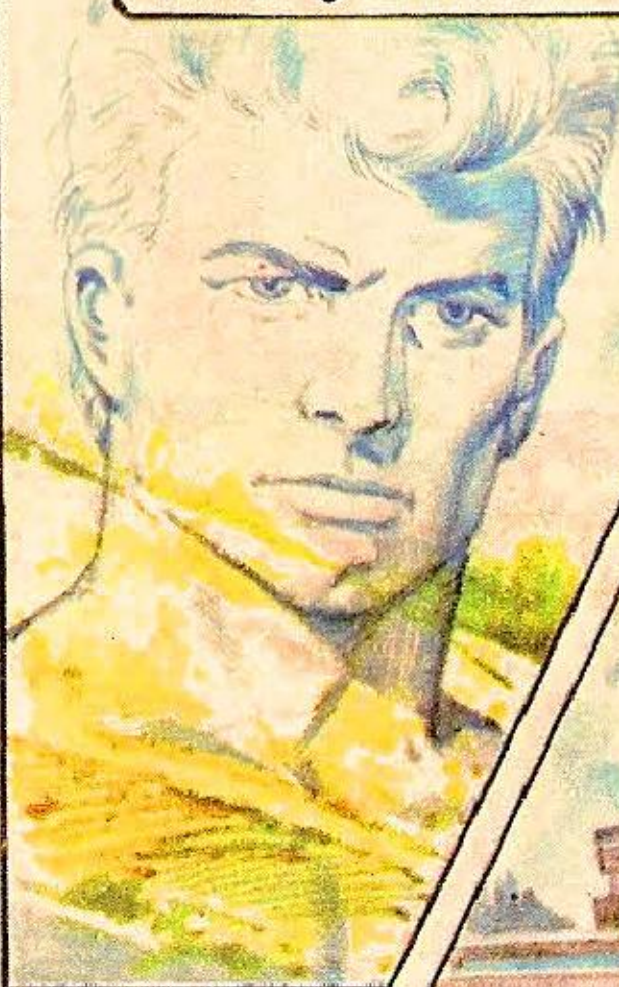
Janno has escaped from lifetime labour in the dreaded mines, where he had been sent on a false charge of murder and high treason against the Trigan Empire. To avoid the hue and cry which has been raised for him, he makes himself *invisible* with the aid of a device in Peric's laboratory . . .

When Janno left the laboratory, he was invisible to the scientific staff passing outside . . .

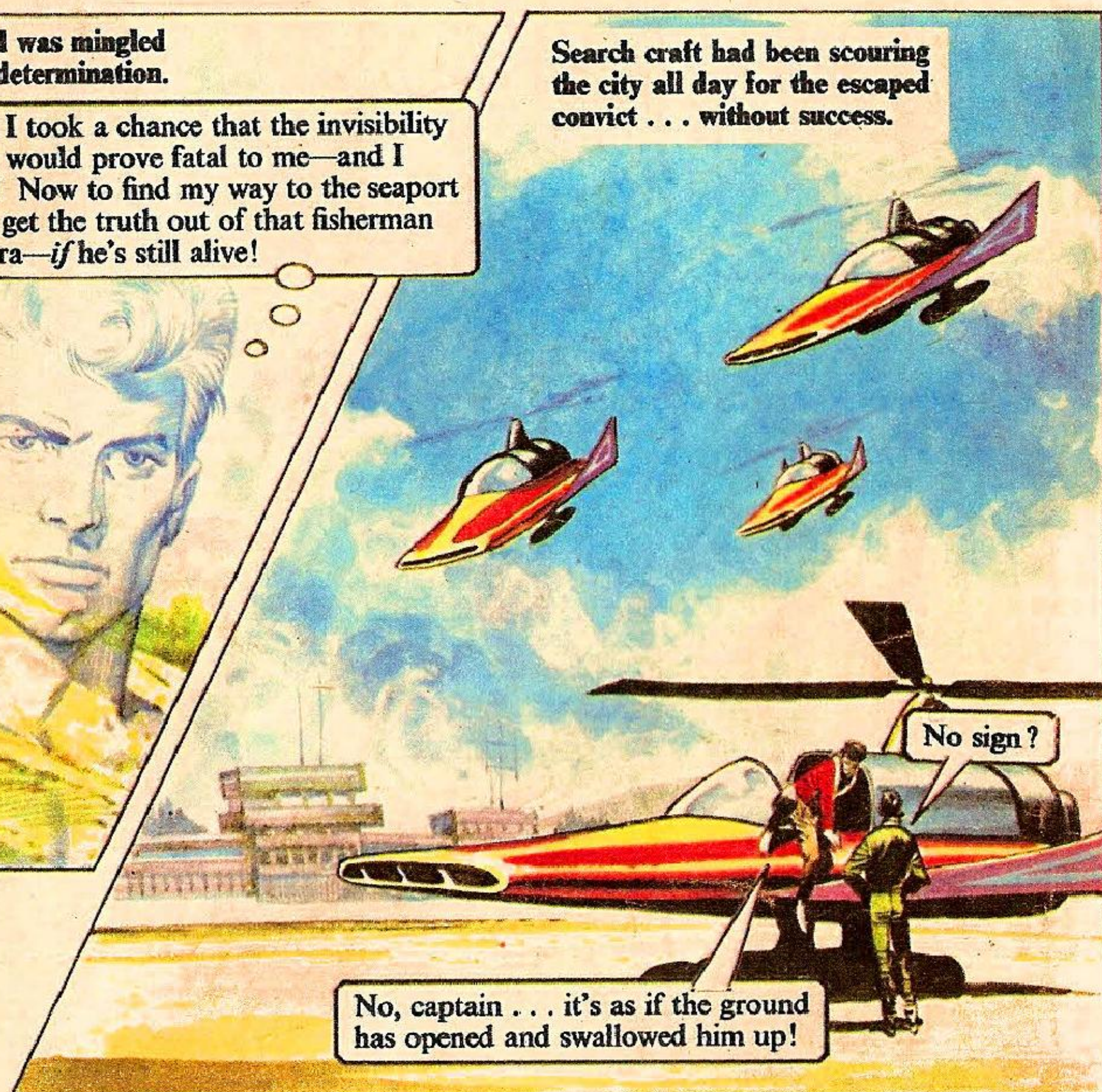


In his mind was mingled relief and determination.

So! I took a chance that the invisibility rays would prove fatal to me—and I live! Now to find my way to the seaport and get the truth out of that fisherman Gorra—if he's still alive!



Search craft had been scouring the city all day for the escaped convict . . . without success.

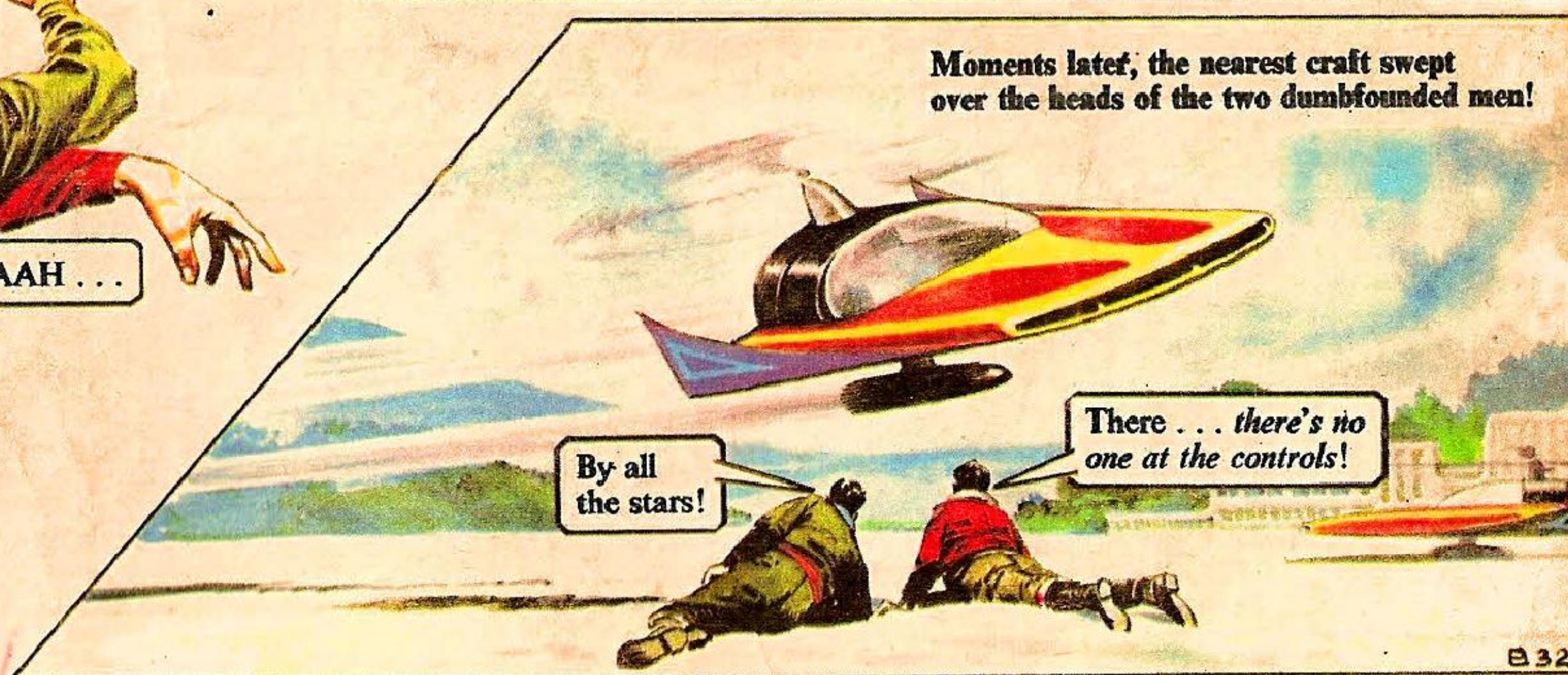


No, captain . . . it's as if the ground has opened and swallowed him up!

And then . . .



Moments later, the nearest craft swept over the heads of the two dumbfounded men!

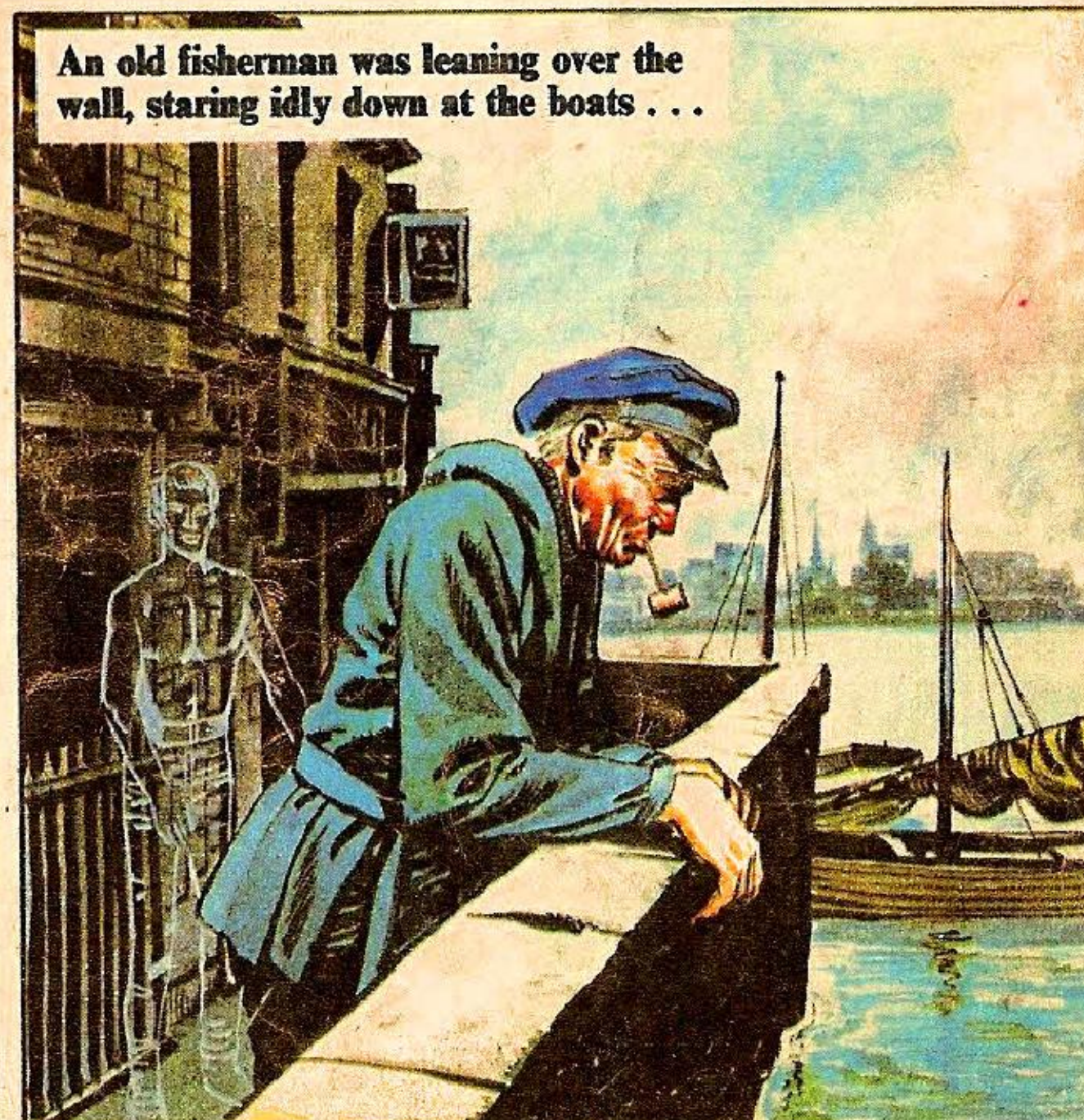


B 32

With an invisible pilot in the cockpit, the craft swept over the plain of Vorg, and was soon circling over Trigan's seaport.



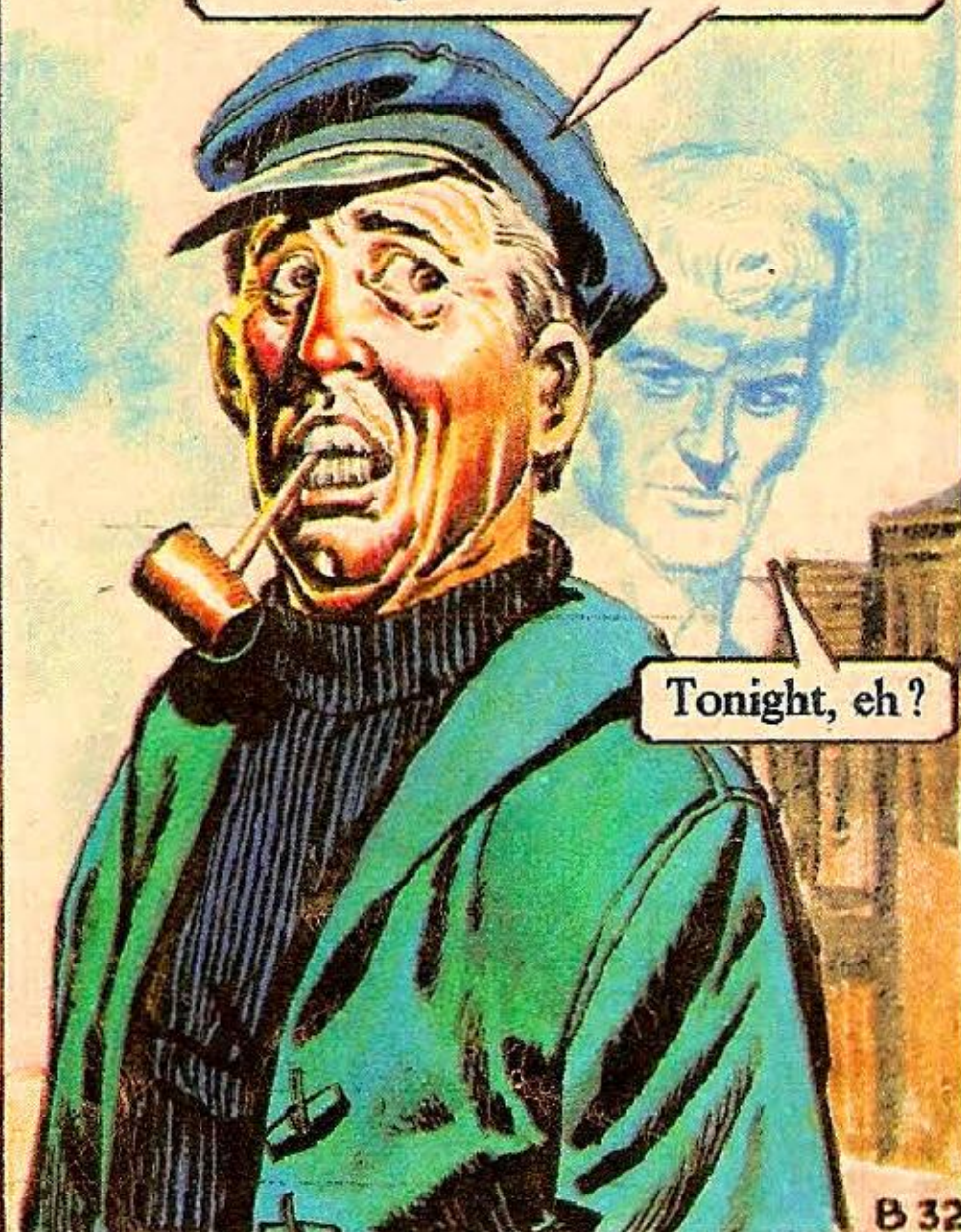
An old fisherman was leaning over the wall, staring idly down at the boats . . .



... When the tip of Janno's finger was rammed hard against his back ... and a harsh whisper chilled his blood!



Don't hurt me, master ... I'll tell! Gorra's been at sea these last two lunar months ... And he's expected back with the evening tide tonight!

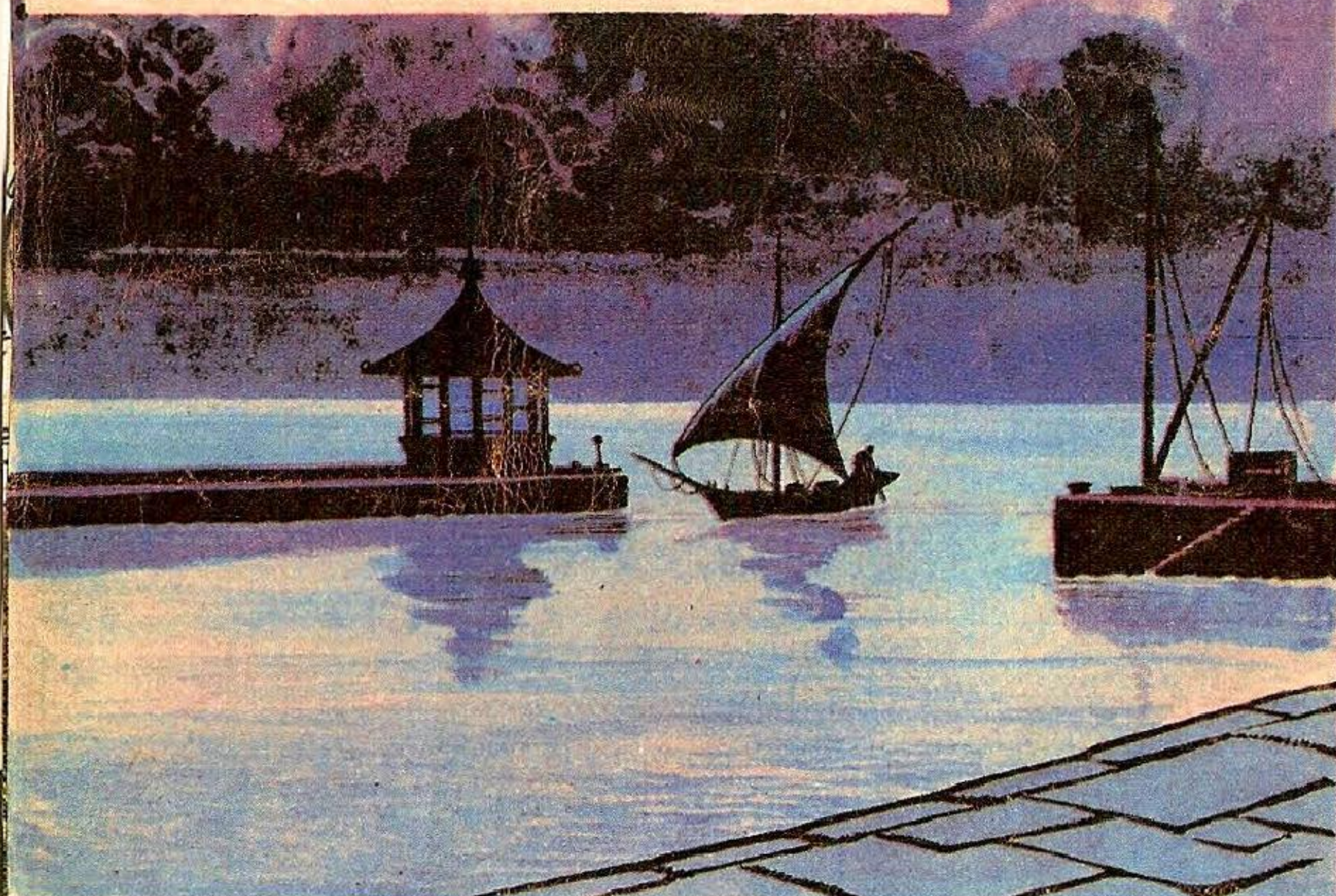


Night was falling, and the tide was beginning to turn, when Janno went to the end of the breakwater and looked out to sea.

So he's been at sea two lunar months. Only that has saved his life so far; I'd guess!



It was quite dark when a small sailing-boat laden down with fish swept in on the tide. At the steering oar was Gorra, the man who had given false evidence at Janno's trial.



As the craft came alongside the jetty, two dark figures stepped out of the shadows.



A silent weapon felled the fisherman!



Working swiftly, the two assassins wrapped heavy chains around the unconscious form ... and ...



THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

... sent on a false charge of murder and high treason. Having made himself invisible by means of a device in Peric's laboratory, he travels to Trigan Seaport to question Gorra a fisherman who was a witness at his trial. But Gorra is in deadly peril ...

Another instant, and Gorra would have been consigned to the bottom of the harbour for ever ... but an invisible form streaked out of the darkness. ...

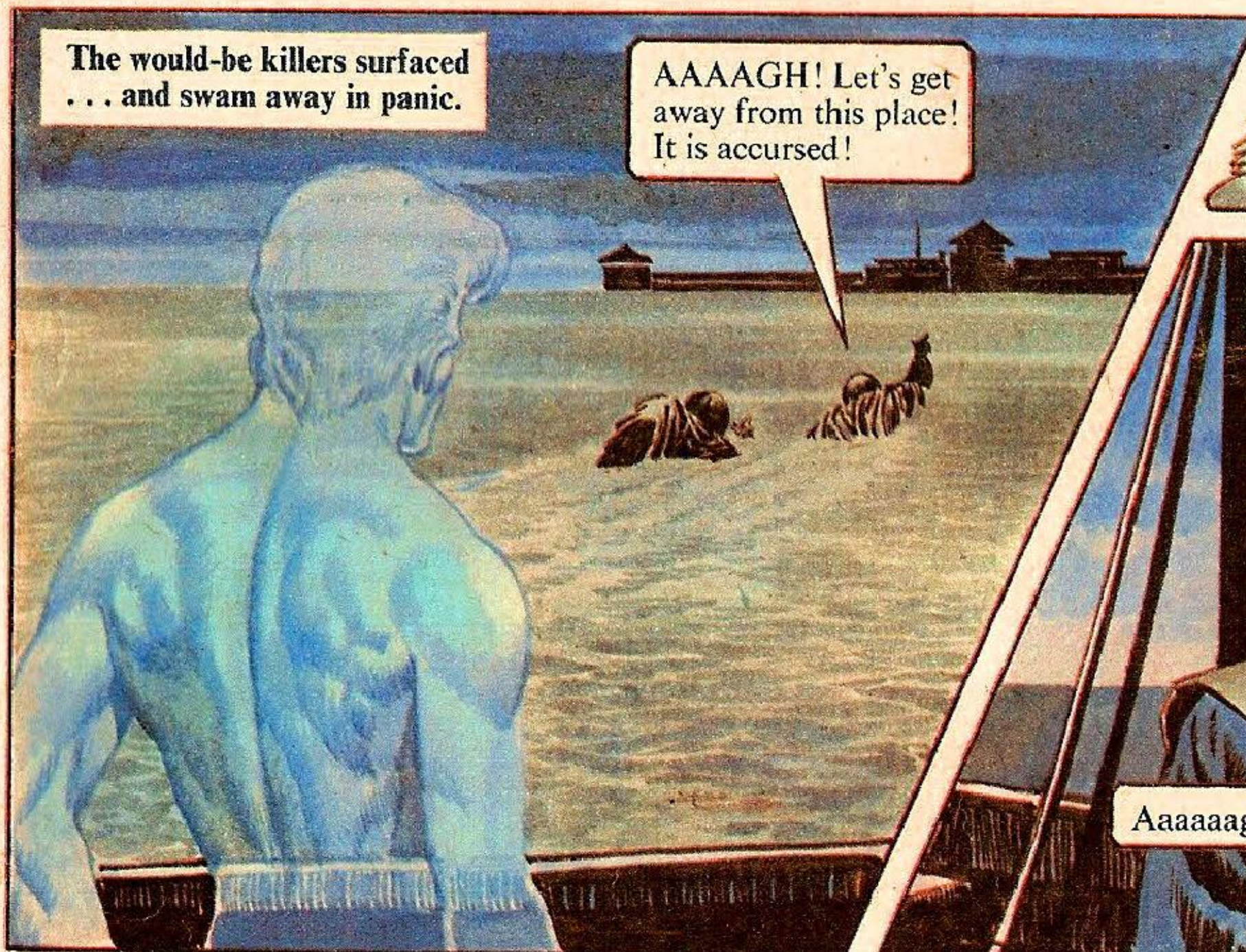


The unconscious fisherman was wrenched from the assassins' grasp. ...



The would-be killers surfaced ... and swam away in panic.

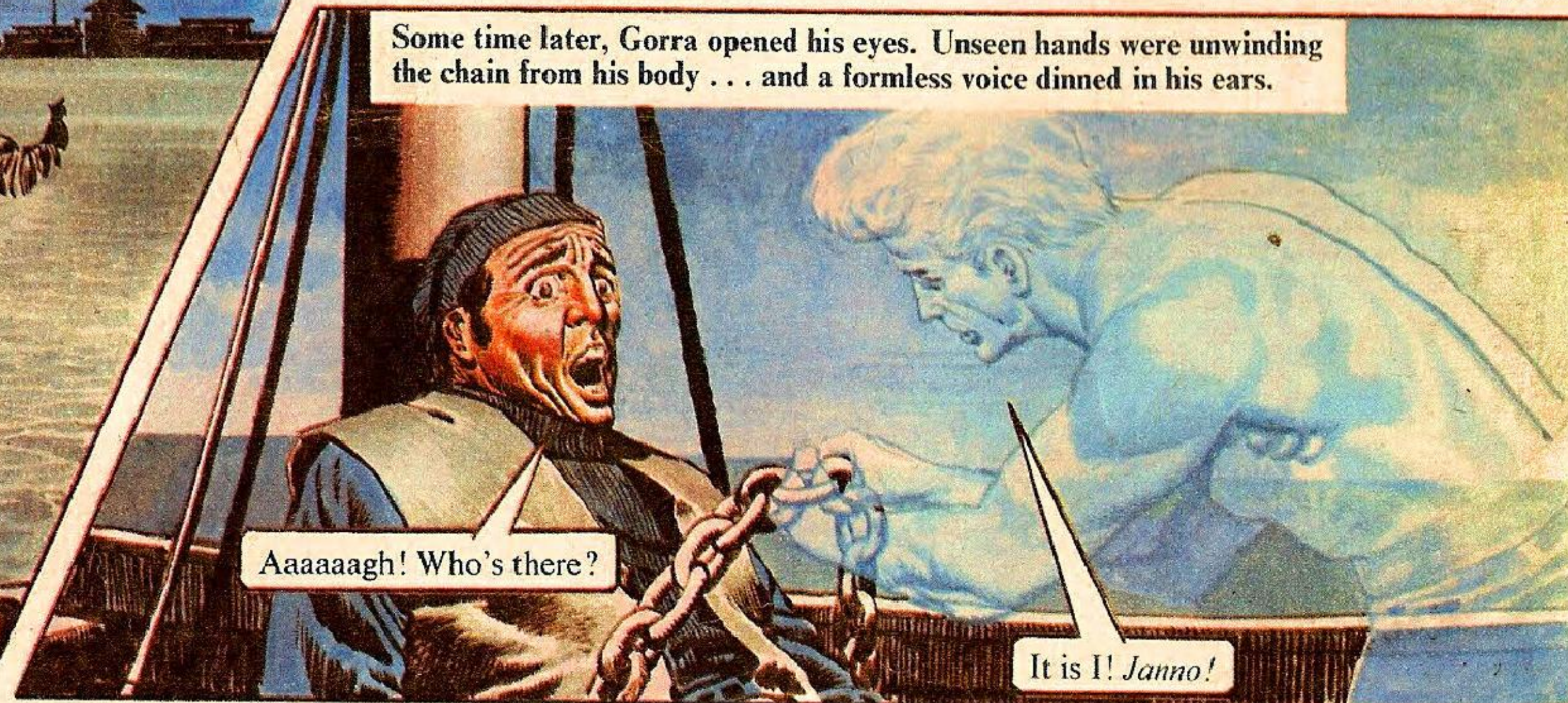
AAAAGH! Let's get away from this place! It is accursed!



Some time later, Gorra opened his eyes. Unseen hands were unwinding the chain from his body ... and a formless voice dinned in his ears.

Aaaaaagh! Who's there?

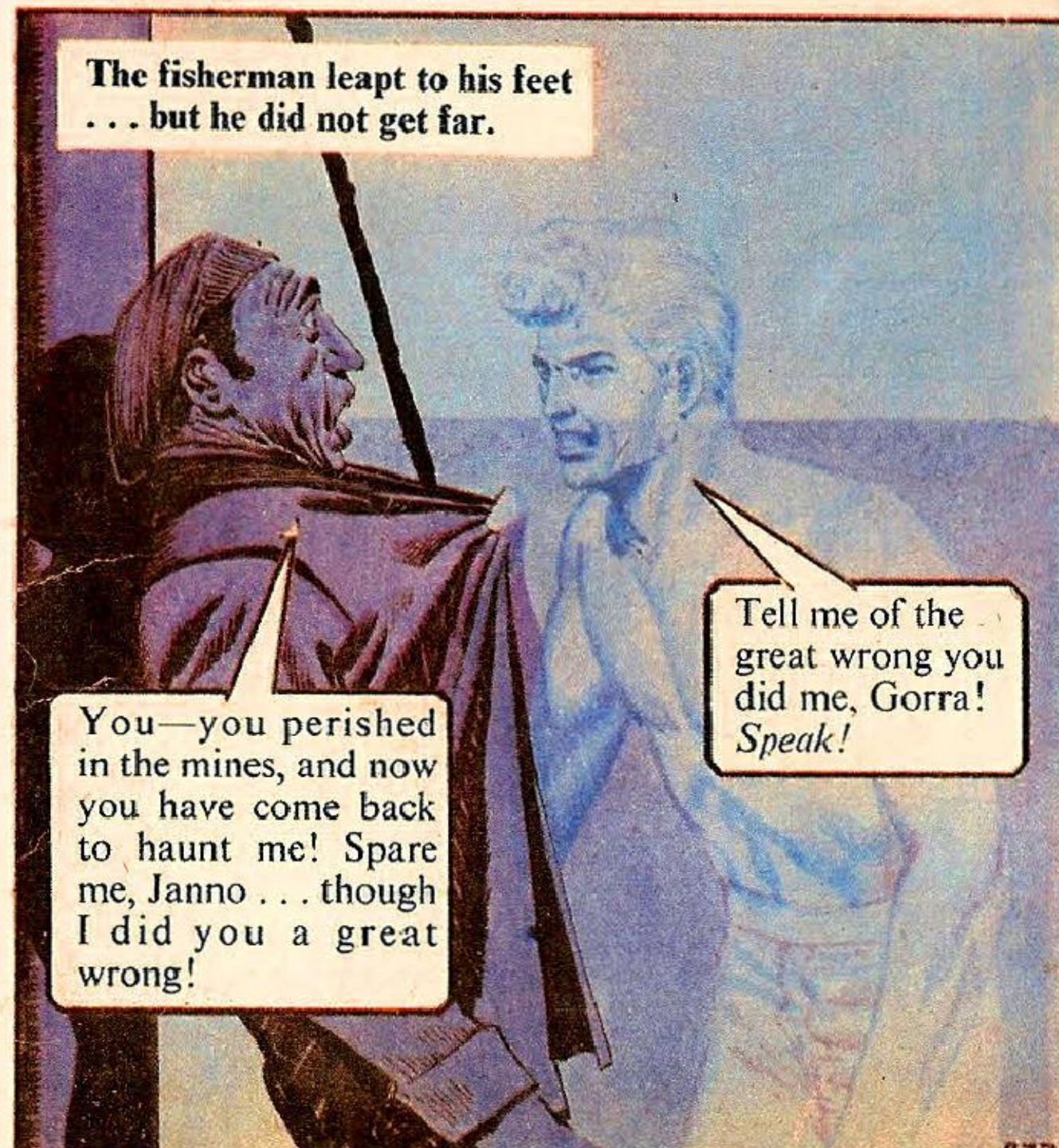
It is I! Janno!



The fisherman leapt to his feet ... but he did not get far.

Tell me of the great wrong you did me, Gorra! Speak!

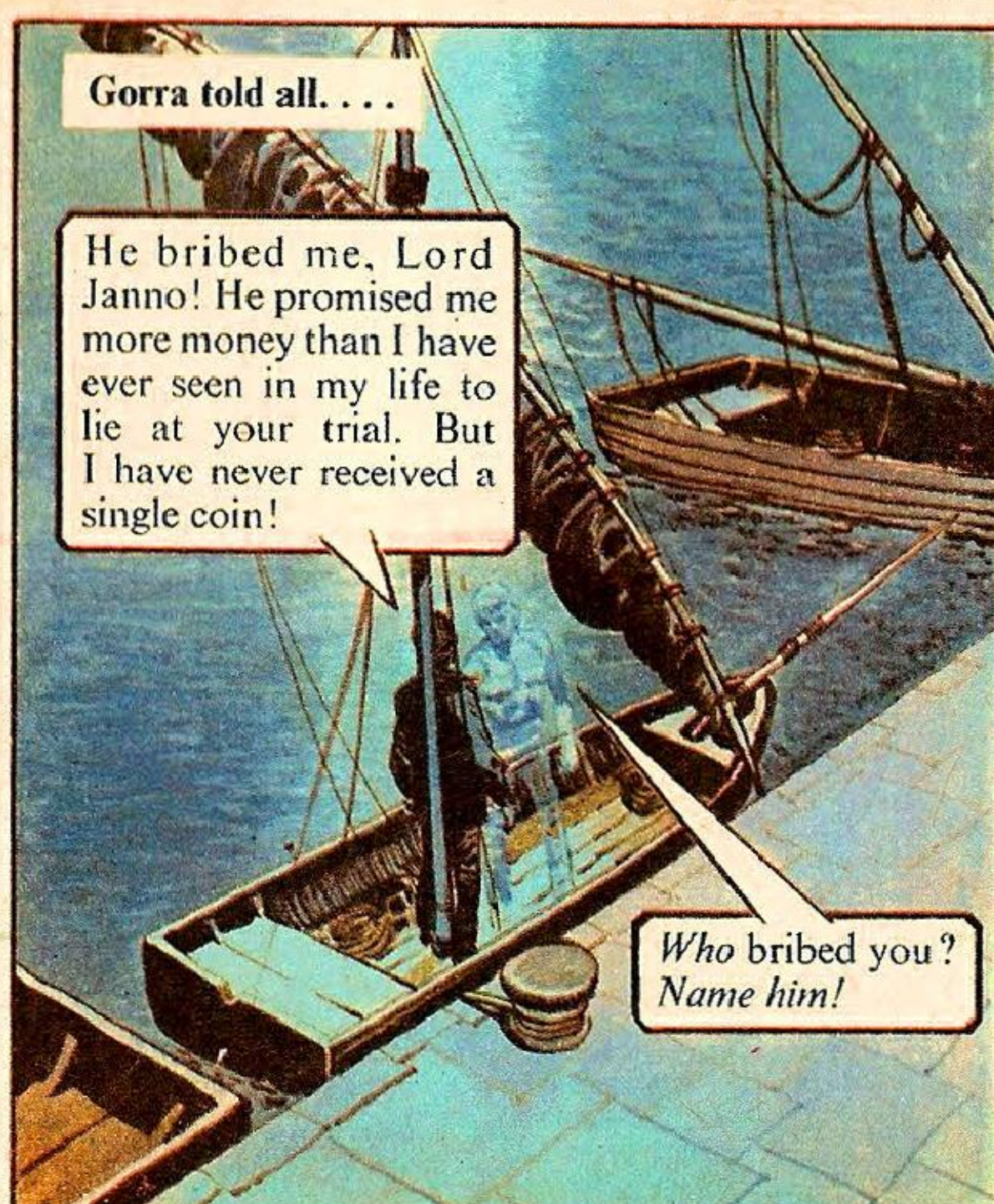
You—you perished in the mines, and now you have come back to haunt me! Spare me, Janno ... though I did you a great wrong!



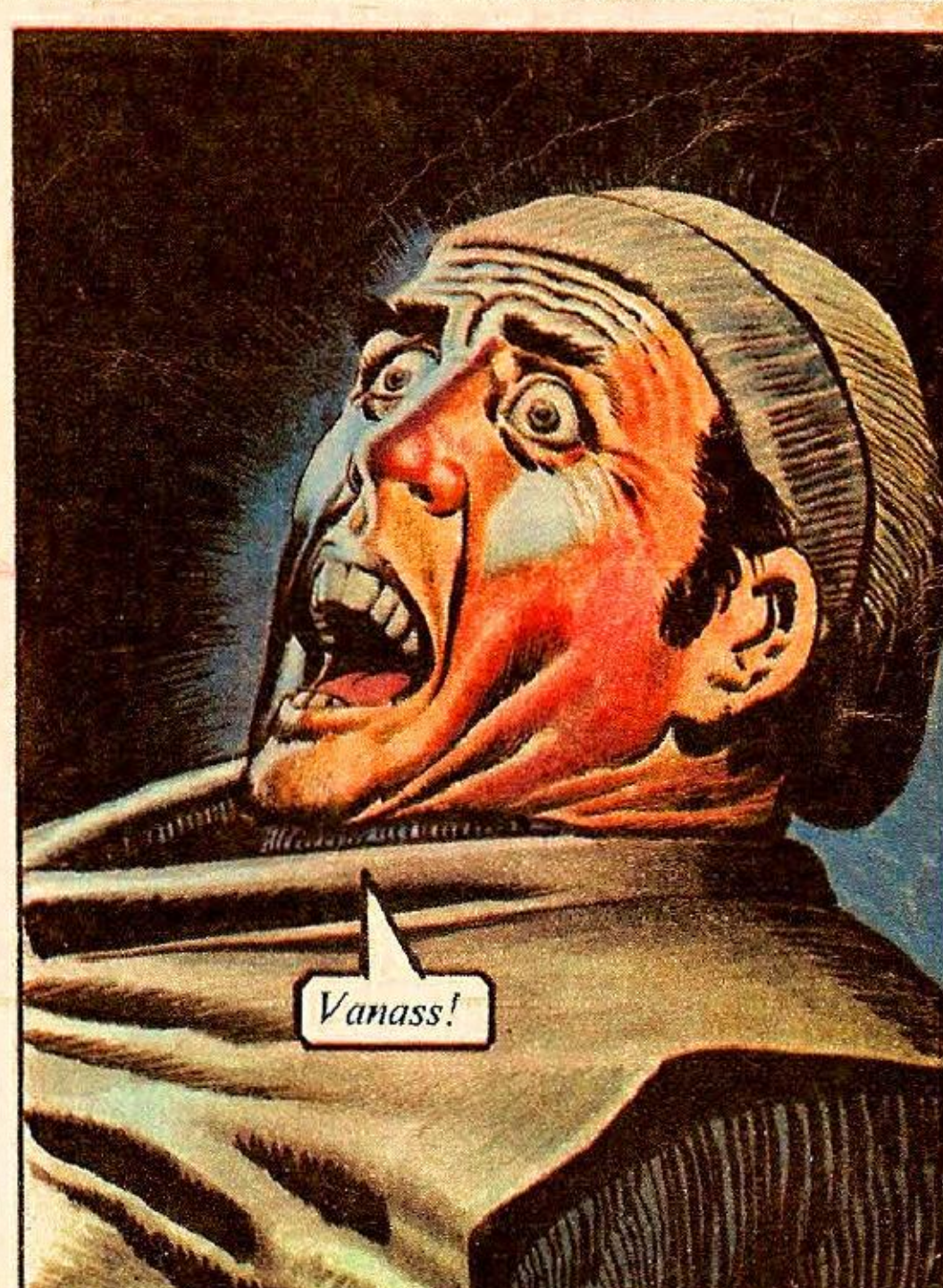
Gorra told all. ...

He bribed me, Lord Janno! He promised me more money than I have ever seen in my life to lie at your trial. But I have never received a single coin!

Who bribed you? Name him!



Vanass!



That night Vanass, the Colonel of the Imperial Police, had two terrified callers.

You obeyed my instructions and silenced the fisherman for ever?

When *something* smashed into us!

We . . . we were about to throw him into the harbour, Colonel . . . when . . .

You are telling me that you failed? . . . That Gorra is free to betray me with his wagging tongue?

We are not to blame, Colonel!

This *thing* came at us . . . an evil spirit!

Vanass's fury was terrible to behold.

Fools! Bunglers! How dare you speak to me of evil spirits!

Eeeeeegh!

And then . . . *the light went out!*

Aaaah!

The Colonel of the Imperial Police sensed a *presence* in the room!

Who's there? Speak, curse you!

The reply came back!

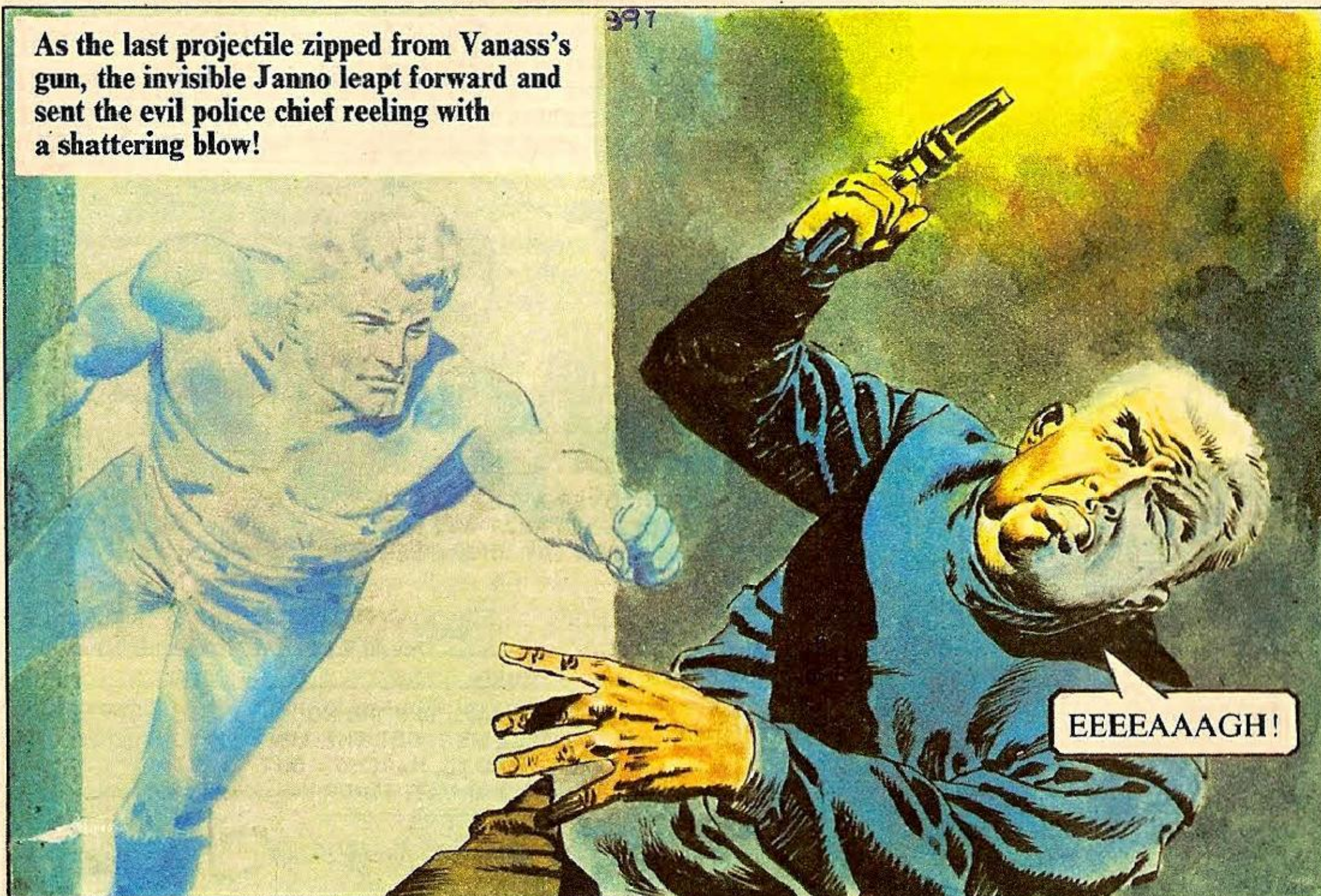
Remember me, Vanass? *Janno!* I have come for my vengeance!

Janno? Aaaaaaah!

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

dreaded mines, Janno has made himself invisible by means of a device in Peric's laboratory, and has found Colonel Vanass to have been the perpetrator of the crimes for which he himself was unjustly tried and sentenced. . . .

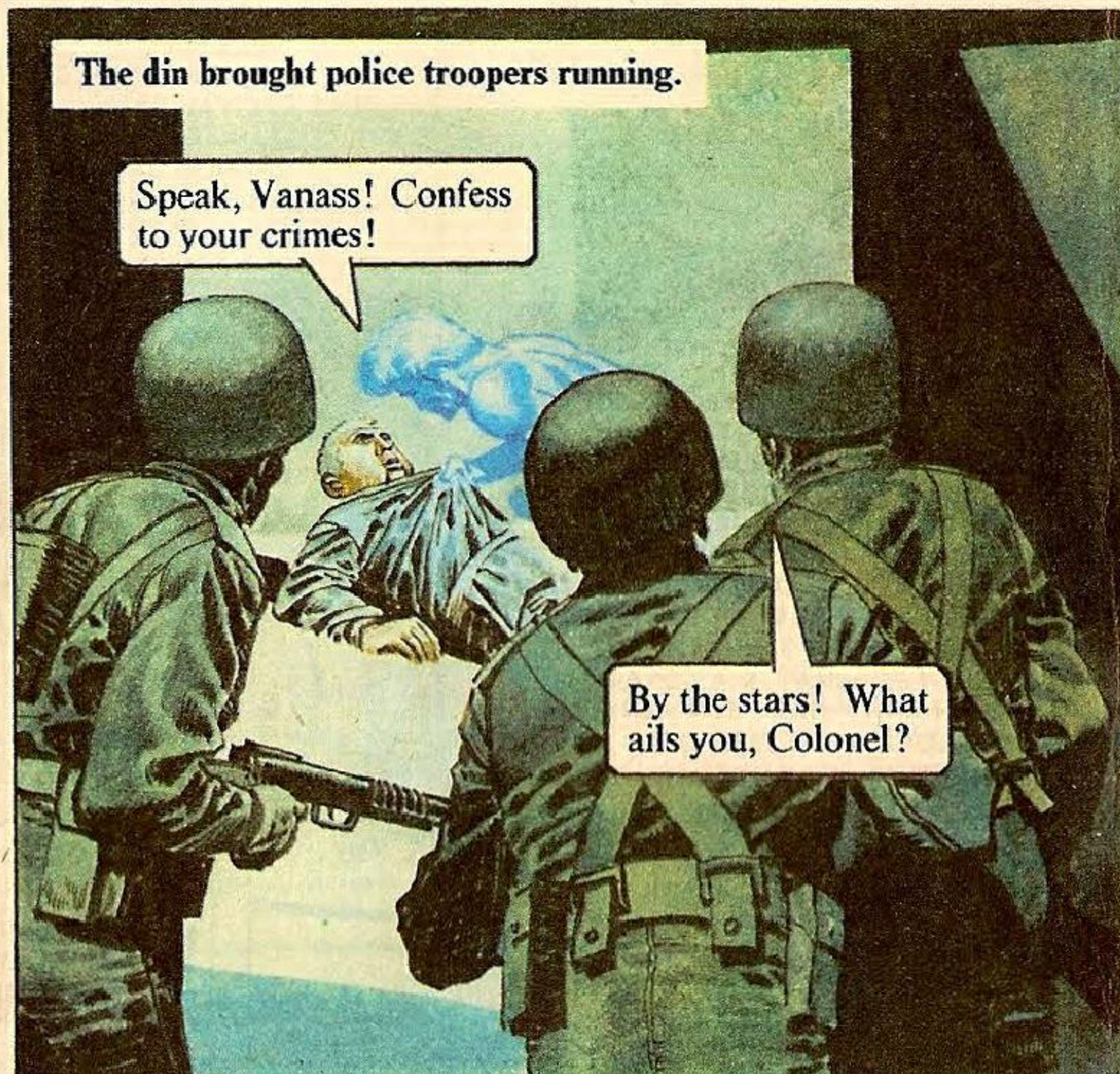
As the last projectile zipped from Vanass's gun, the invisible Janno leapt forward and sent the evil police chief reeling with a shattering blow!



The din brought police troopers running.

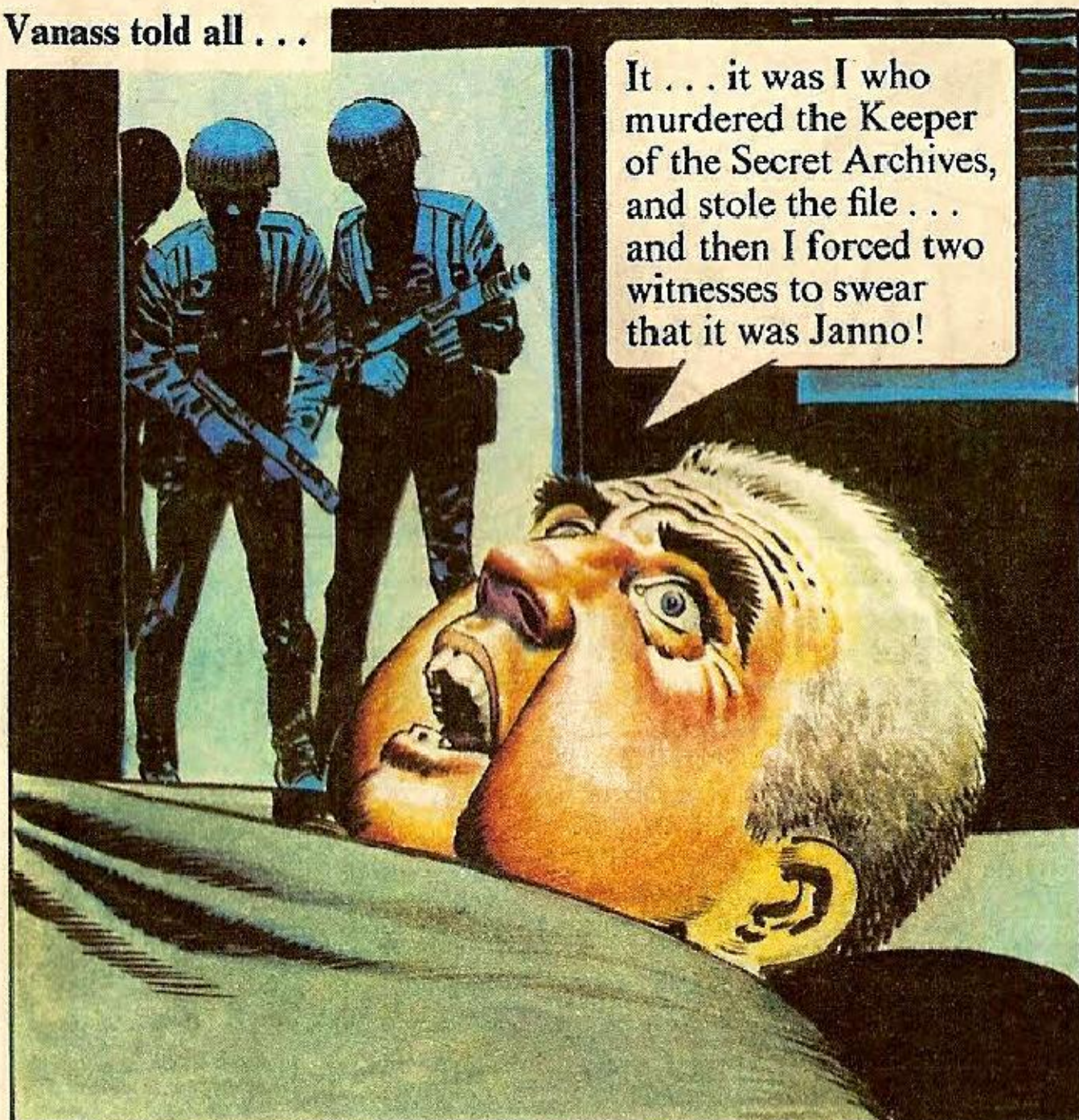
Speak, Vanass! Confess to your crimes!

By the stars! What ails you, Colonel?



Vanass told all . . .

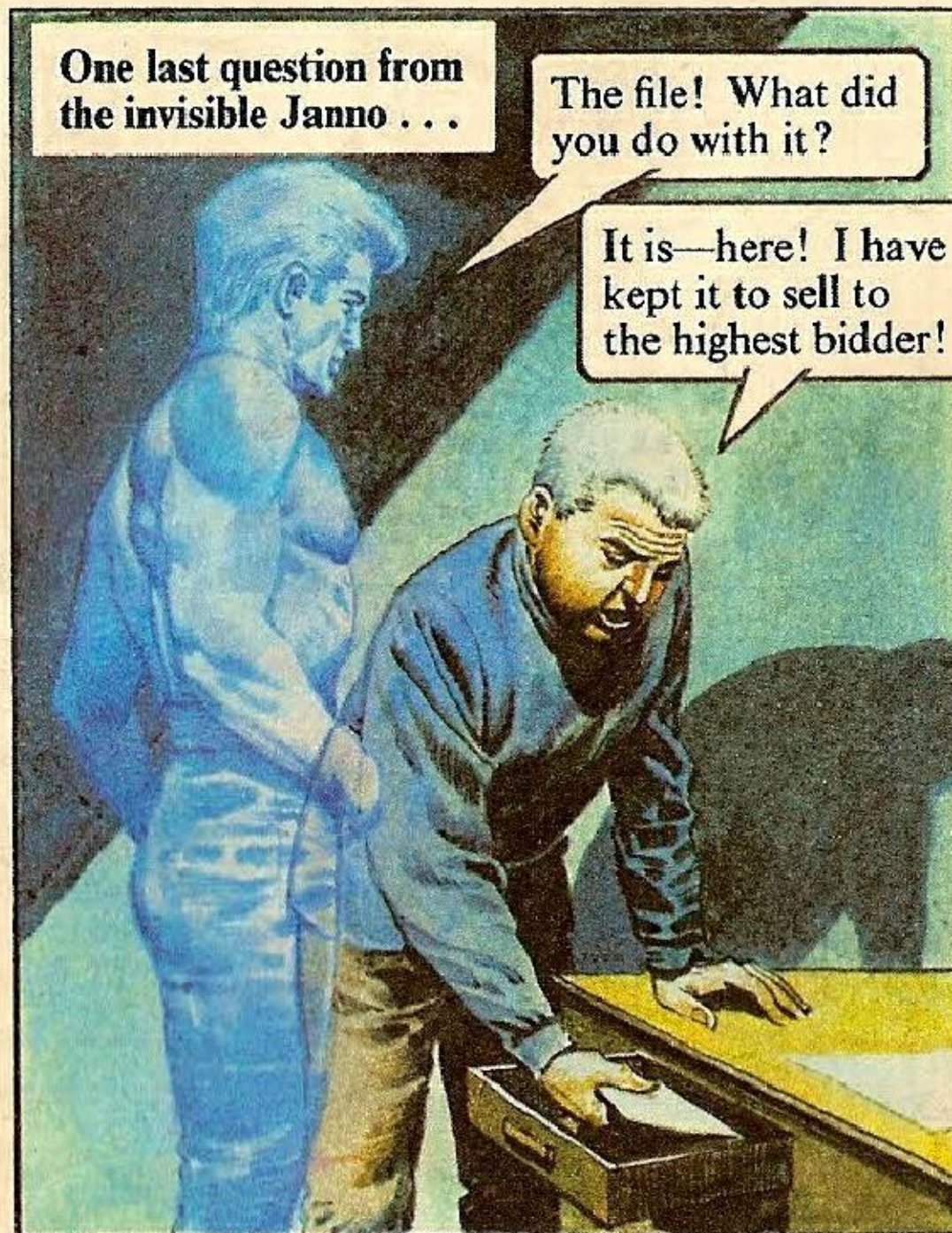
It . . . it was I who murdered the Keeper of the Secret Archives, and stole the file . . . and then I forced two witnesses to swear that it was Janno!



One last question from the invisible Janno . . .

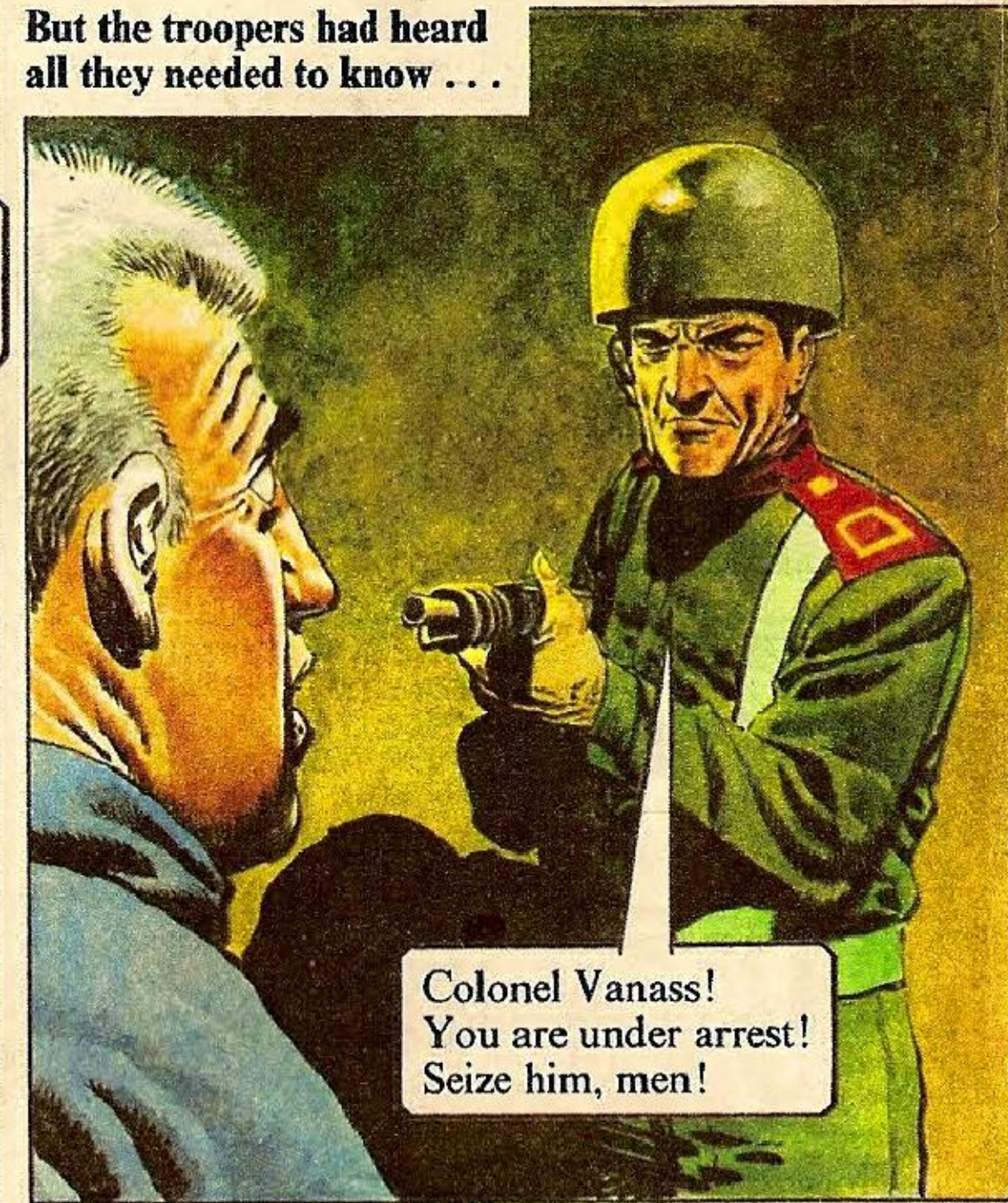
The file! What did you do with it?

It is—here! I have kept it to sell to the highest bidder!



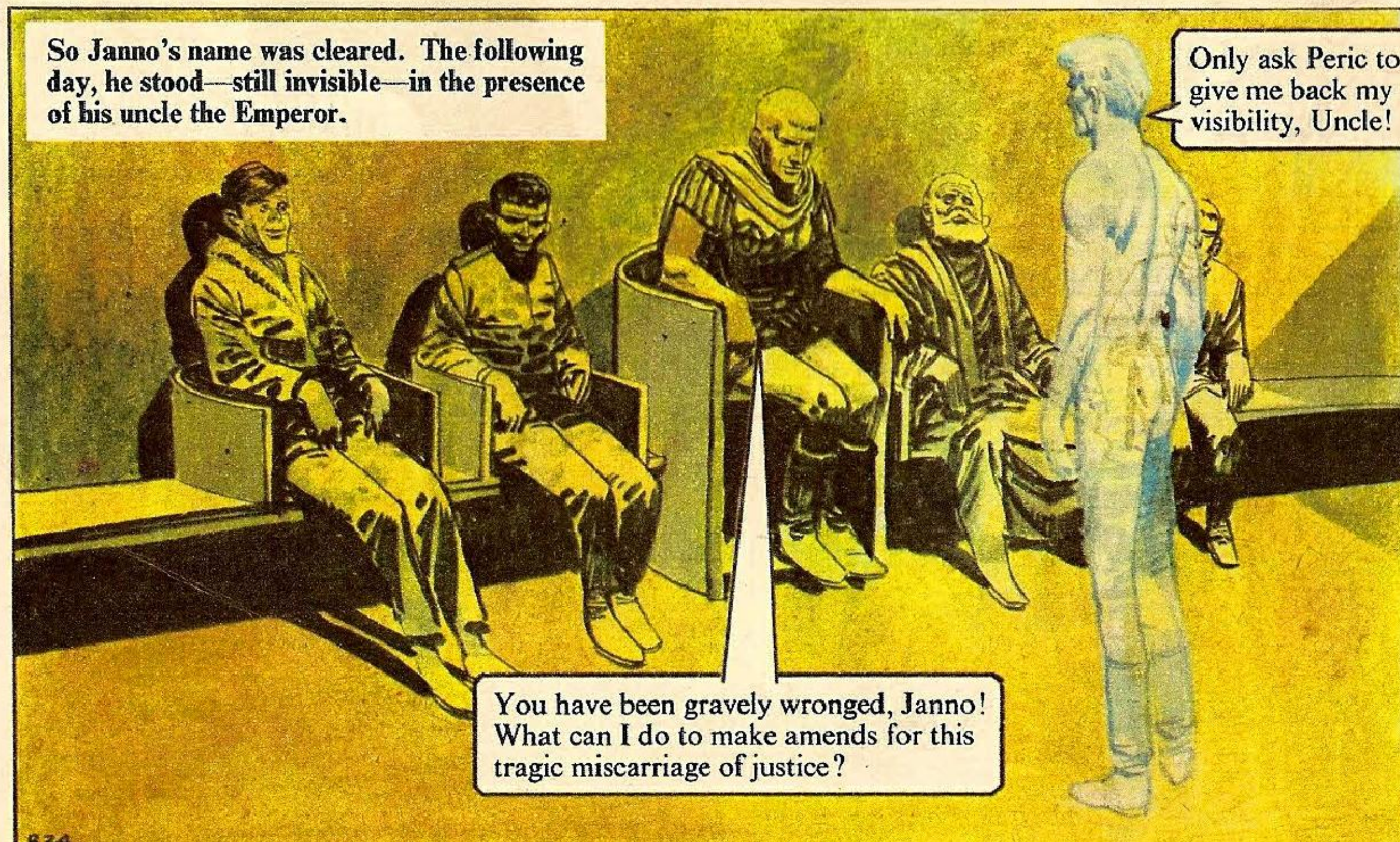
But the troopers had heard all they needed to know . . .

Colonel Vanass! You are under arrest! Seize him, men!



So Janno's name was cleared. The following day, he stood—still invisible—in the presence of his uncle the Emperor.

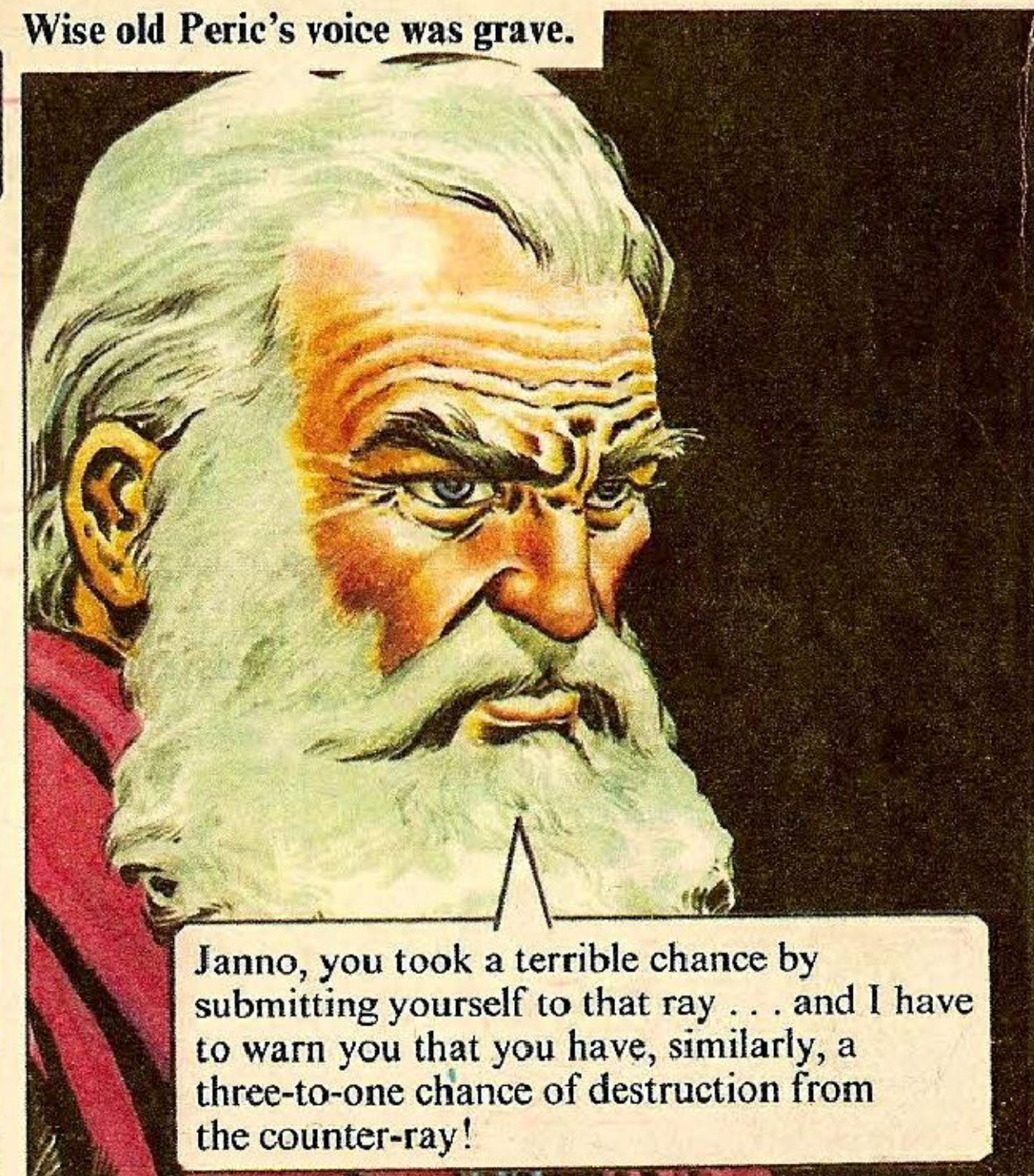
Only ask Peric to give me back my visibility, Uncle!



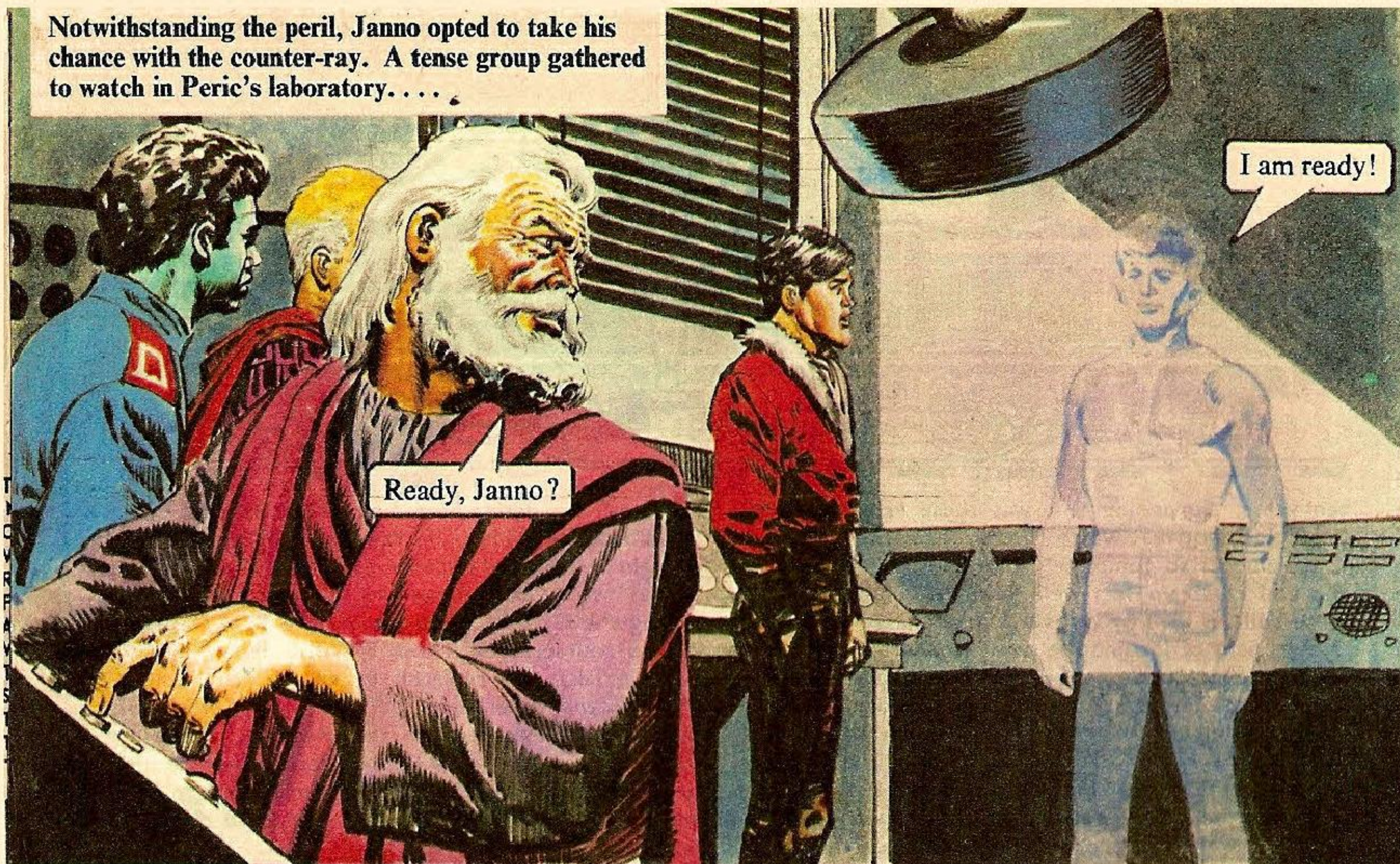
You have been gravely wronged, Janno! What can I do to make amends for this tragic miscarriage of justice?

Wise old Peric's voice was grave.

Janno, you took a terrible chance by submitting yourself to that ray . . . and I have to warn you that you have, similarly, a three-to-one chance of destruction from the counter-ray!



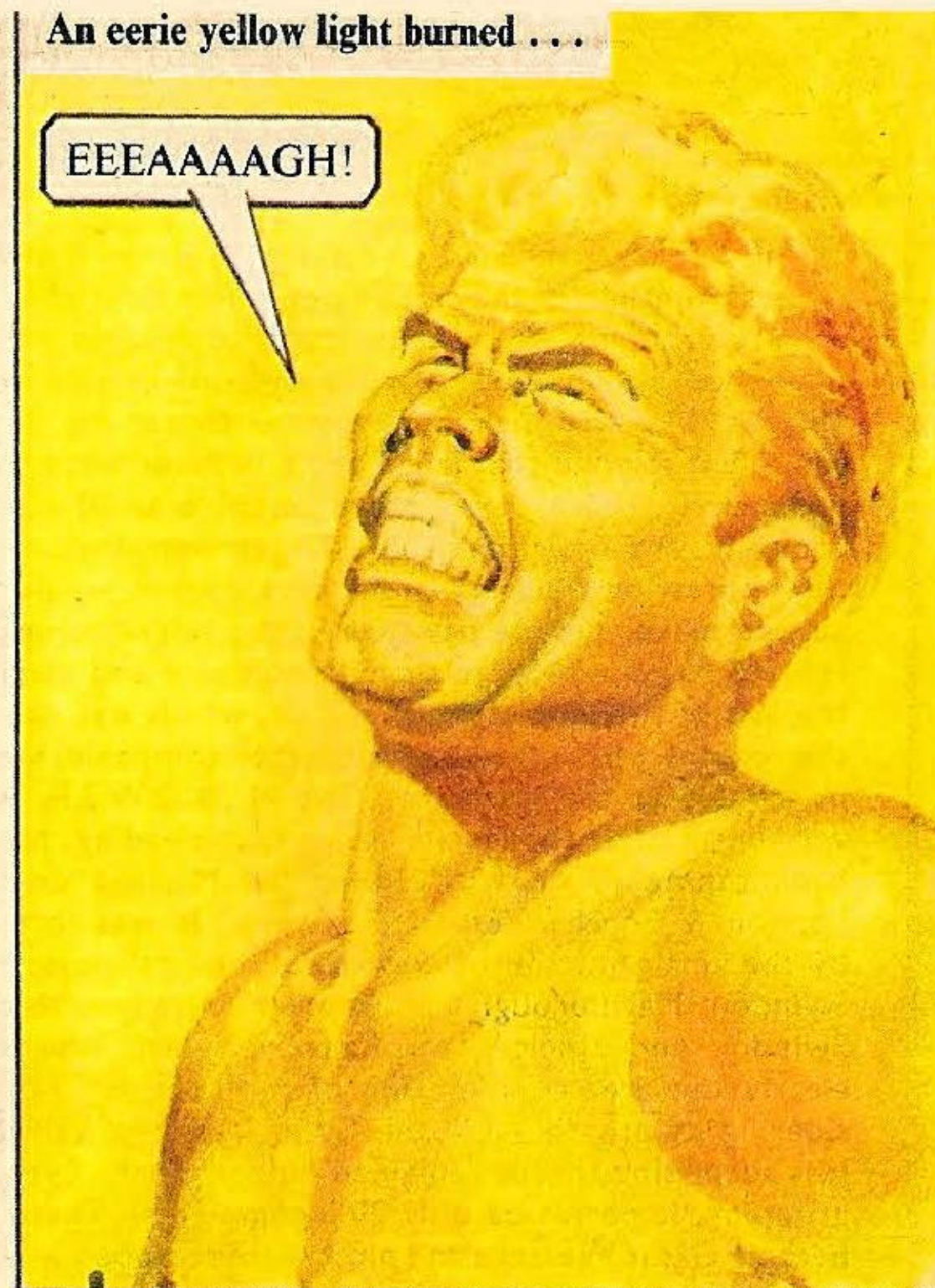
Notwithstanding the peril, Janno opted to take his chance with the counter-ray. A tense group gathered to watch in Peric's laboratory. . . .



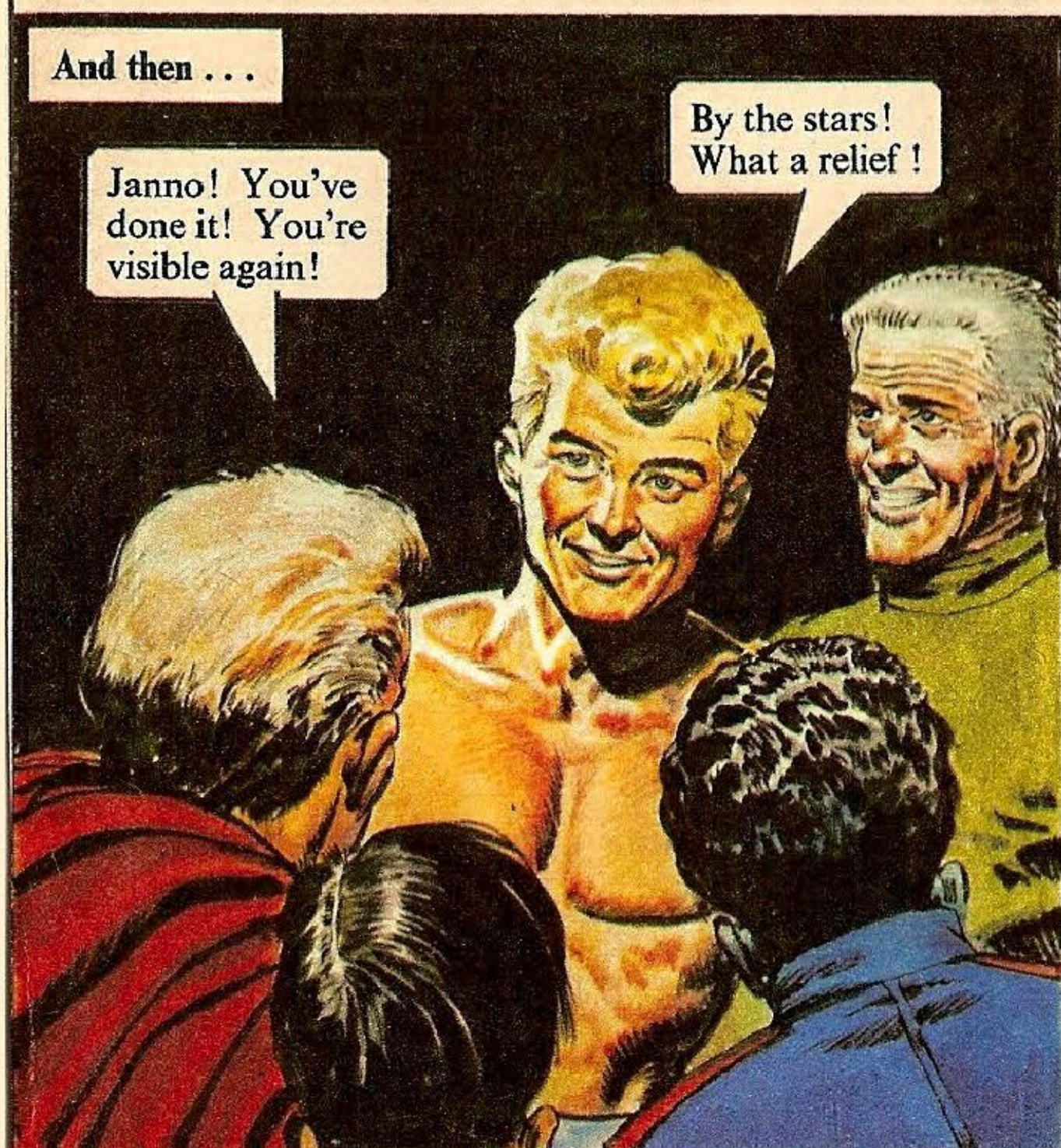
I am ready!

An eerie yellow light burned . . .

EEEEAAAGH!

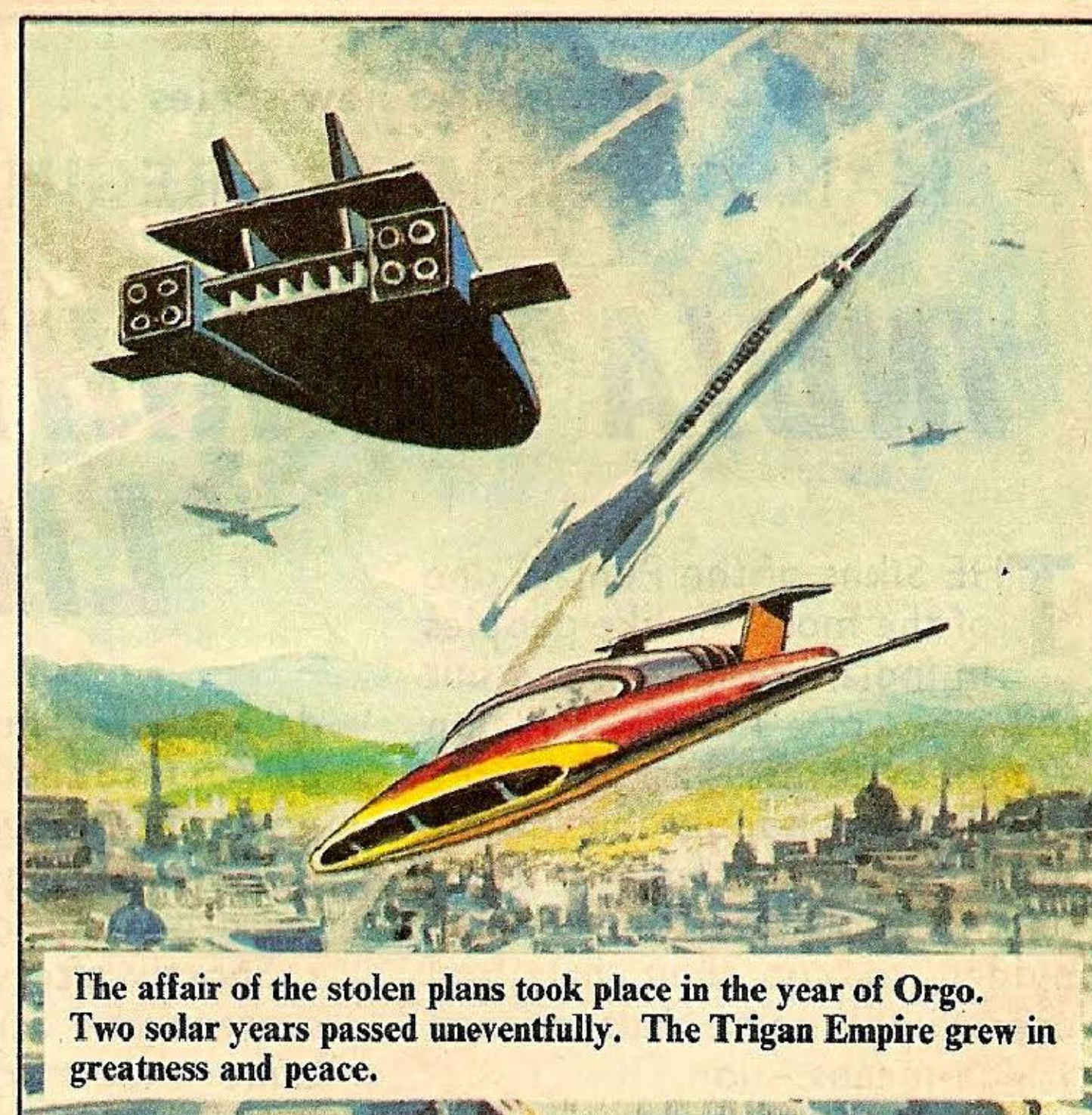
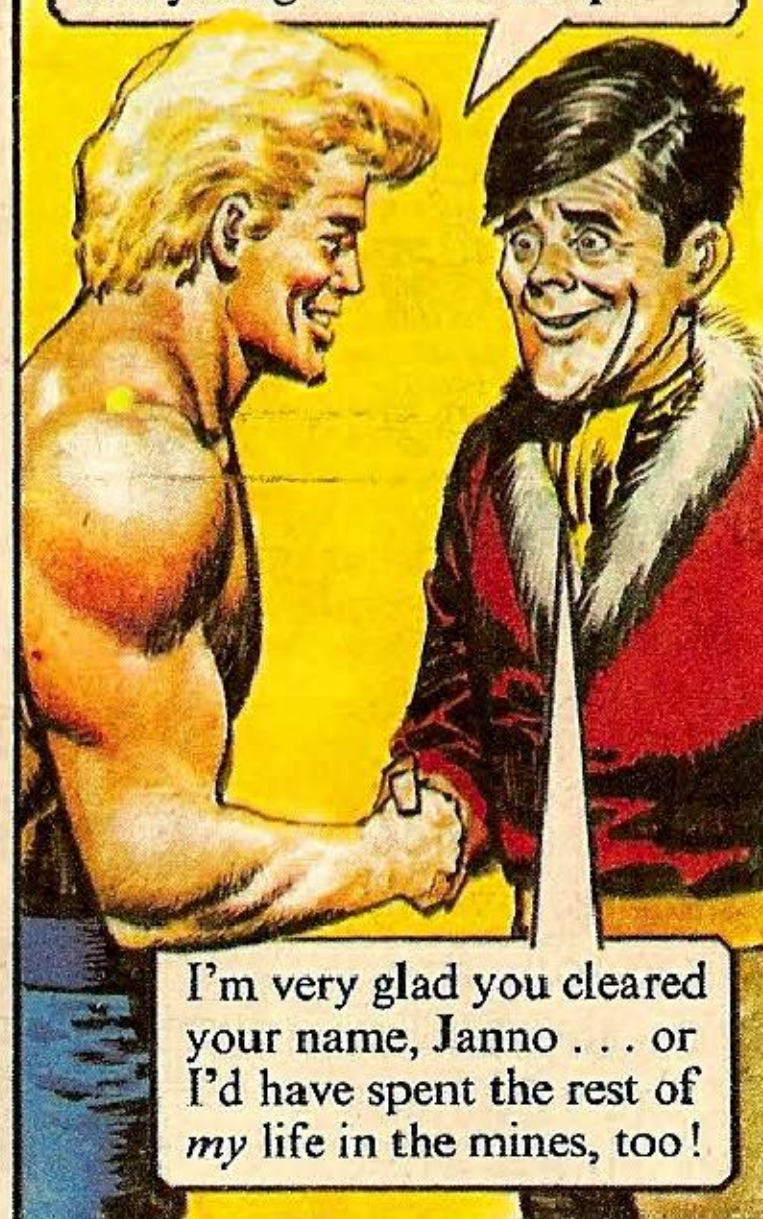


And then . . .



He clasped hands with his friend Roffa.

I owe it all to you. You risked everything to let me escape!



The reason for the Empire's solidarity lay in Trigo's firm, just rule. He regularly summoned the leaders of the many nations who made up the sprawling Empire.



But, as the Emperor murmured to his brother Brag . . .

