

ANCIENT TALES FROM THE FUTURE™



A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO NEPTUNE...!

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SPACE - FORCE CHAPLAIN JONAH AMITTAI HAD A COZY JOB. ASSIGNED TO A SMALL OUTPOST ON THE MARTIAN SATELLITE *PHOBOS*, MOST OF JONAH'S TIME WAS SPENT PURSUING HIS FAVORITE HOBBY "GEO-MAGNA QUESTING" OR IN SIMPLER TERMS: ROCK HUNTING. AND THERE WAS CERTAINLY AN ABUNDANCE OF RARE AND EXOTIC SOLIDIFIED MINERALS TO BE "UNEARTHED" HERE ON LONELY PHOBOS. JONAH WAS AS HAPPY AS ANY MAN COULD BE IN HIS CHOSEN PROFESSION, THAT IS UNTIL IT TOOK A STRANGE AND UNEXPECTED "TWIST" ONE AFTERNOON WHILE HE WAS OUT EXPLORING THE PHOBIAN TERRAIN...

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO NEPTUNE...

STORY & ART:
JAMES RUBINO
INKS & LETTERING:
LARRY BLAKE



JONAH!



YEAH--I
READ YOU--
BACK OFF ON
THE VOLUME! YOU
ALMOST BLEW MY
SPEAKERS!

ALL RIGHT,
QUIT GOOFIN' AROUND,
YOU GUYS! WHAT'S UP?

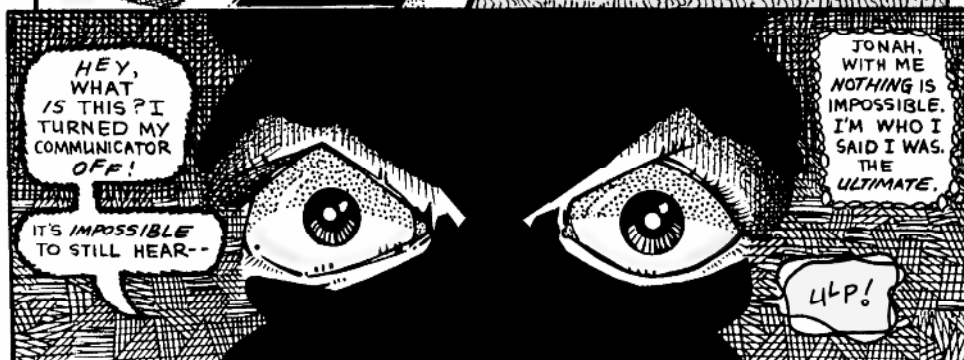
THIS ISN'T YOUR
RADIO RECEIVER,
JONAH.

JONAH, THIS IS THE
VOICE OF THE
ULTIMATE.



THE 4L-- HEY, ONE
OF YOU NUTS HAS A
PRETTY WEIRD SENSE
OF HUMOR! IF YOU'VE GOT
NOTHING IMPORTANT TO
SAY, I'M SHUTTING
OFF MY RECEIVER.

THAT WON'T
SHUT ME OUT,
JONAH.

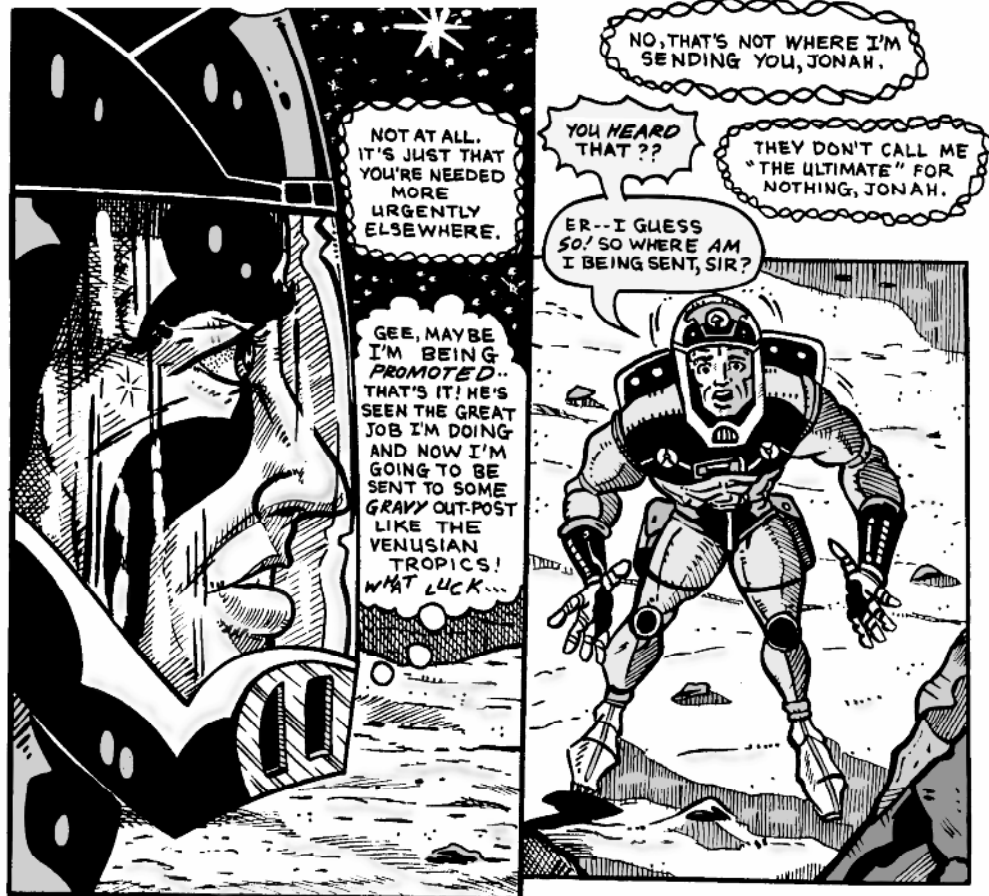


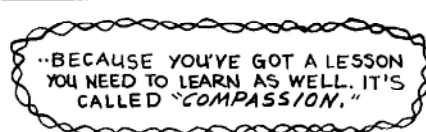
HEY,
WHAT
IS THIS? I
TURNED MY
COMMUNICATOR
OFF!

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
TO STILL HEAR--

JONAH,
WITH ME
NOTHING IS
IMPOSSIBLE.
I'M WHO I WAS.
THE
ULTIMATE.

4LP!







..AND, WHAT IF I
CHOOSE *NOT*
TO GO?

LISTEN, FIFTEEN
YEARS AGO WHEN
YOU ENTERED MY
SERVICE, YOU SAID
YOU WERE WILLING
TO DO *ANYTHING*
FOR ME, RIGHT?

UH--
DID I SAY
THAT?

YOU DID. AND THIS HAPPENS TO
BE PART OF THAT *ANYTHING*.
LOOK, JONAH, IT'S A DIRTY JOB,
BUT SOMEONE'S GOT TO DO IT.
I'D LIKE TO GIVE THE MERCURIANS
ONE LAST CHANCE. I DON'T TAKE
PLEASURE IN WIPING OUT A
RACE OF BEINGS.

YEAH--WELL,
THEN *YOU* TELL
'EM ABOUT IT.
AS FOR ME, I'M
OUTTA HERE!
END OF
CONVERSATION!

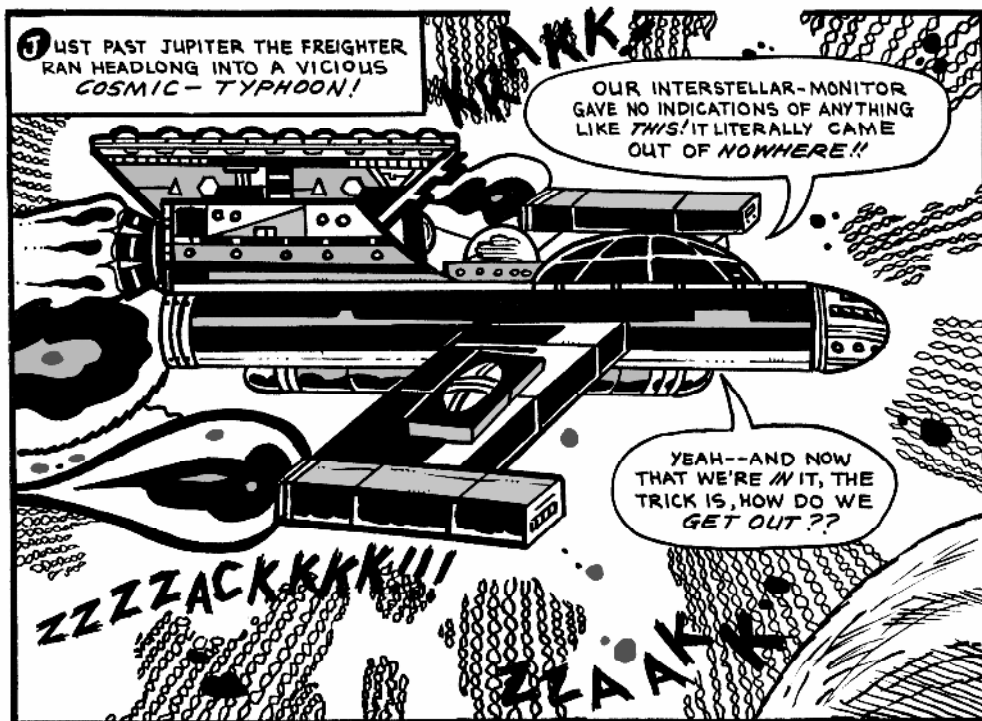
●BVIOUSLY,
JONAH WAS NOT
THE MOST
WILLING
SERVANT THE
ULTIMATE EVER
HAD IN HIS
EMPLOY. BUT,
DEEP DOWN INSIDE,
HE *WAS* GOOD PEOPLE.
HE JUST POSSESSED
A FEW ROUGH EDGES
IN THE CHARACTER
DEPARTMENT WHICH
NEEDED TO BE
"SMOOTHED OVER."

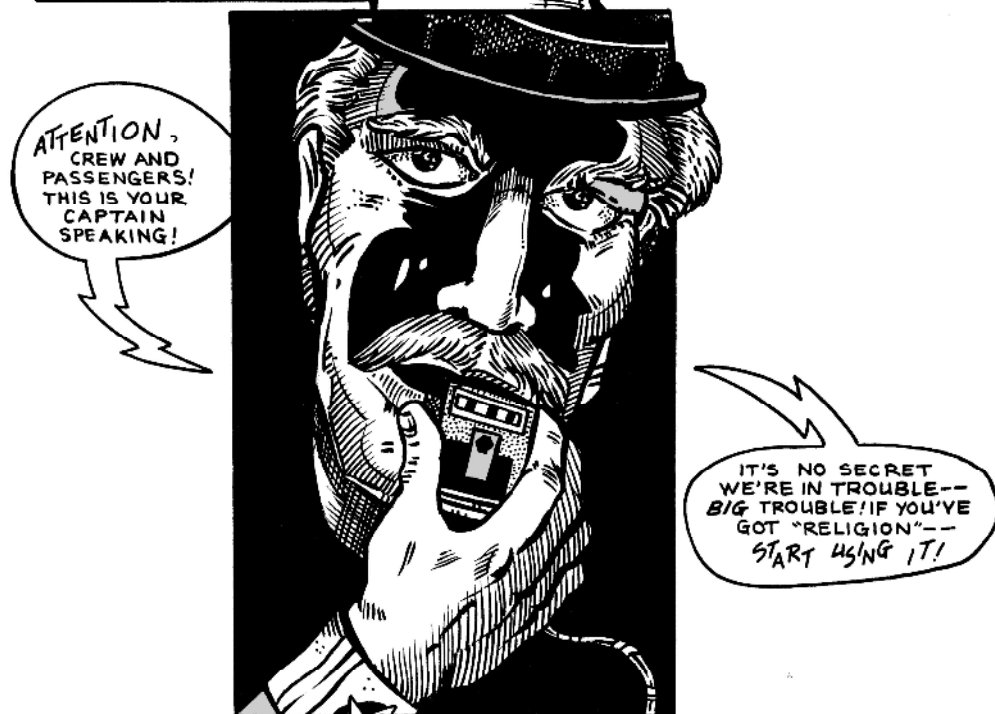
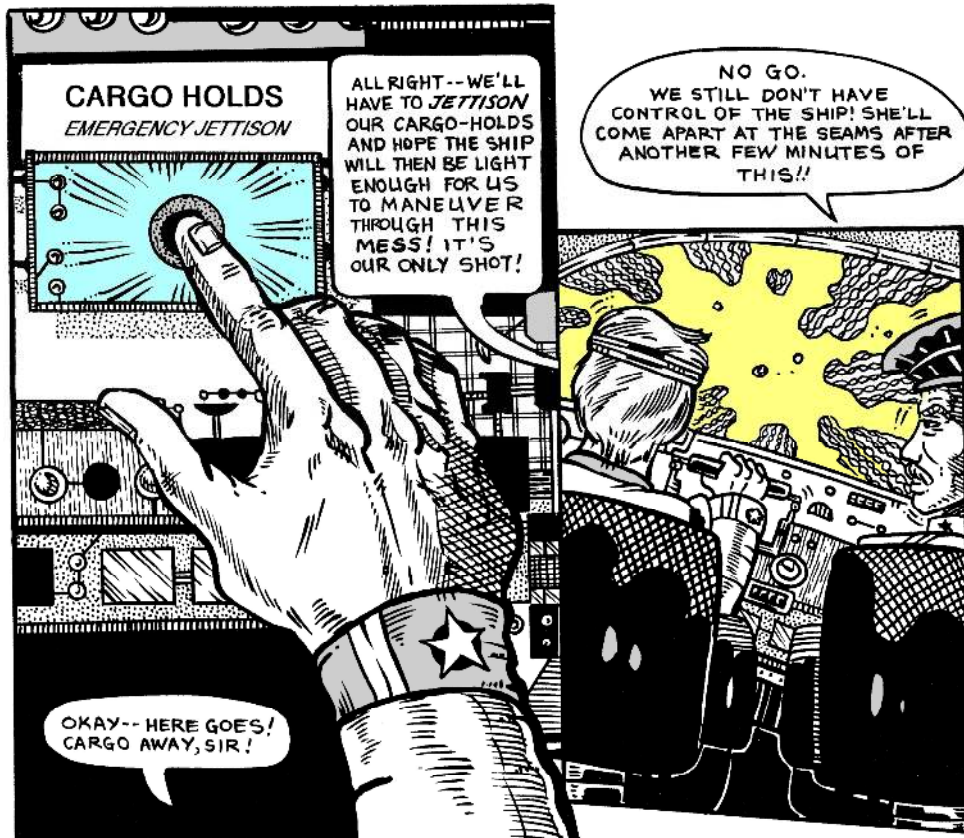
NONETHELESS, JONAH WAS ADAMANT IN HIS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT. IF THE ULTIMATE WANTED HIM TO GO TO MERCURY, THEN HE WOULD HEAD IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. SO HE HOPPED A FREIGHTER EN ROUTE TO NEPTUNE; THAT SHOULD BE FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM HIS ASSIGNMENT TO BE A SECURE HIDING PLACE...



ZOOOZZZZ

-- OR SO HE THOUGHT --







GUESS NOBODY BACK THERE HAS ANY PULL WITH THE "MAN UPSTAIRS"; SIR. WE'RE *STILL* IN HOT WATER, AND IT'S STARTING TO *BOIL OVER*!

COMMANDER! ONE OF THE PASSENGERS REQUESTS TO SEE YOU! HE SAYS HE CAN GET US OUT OF THIS!

IS THAT SO? WELL, AT THIS POINT I'LL TRY *ANYTHING*! SEND HIM IN!



COMMANDER, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO UNDERSTAND THIS--BUT, THIS STORM YOU'RE IN--IT'S BECAUSE OF ME!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MAN??

KRACKCKK

I'M A SERVANT OF THE ULTIMATE, SIR... A *REBELLIOUS* SERVANT, THAT IS. HE HAS SENT THIS STORM UPON US AND THE ONLY WAY OUT FOR YOU IS TO TOSS ME "OVERBOARD"!

YOU'RE *CRAZY*! WE CAN'T DO THAT!!



I'M AFRAID YOU HAVE *NO CHOICE*. EITHER THROW ME OUT OR WE ALL DIE ANYWAY.

"COMMANDER, IT'S INSANE, BUT HE'S *RIGHT*. WE'RE *ALL* FINISHED IF WE DON'T GET OUT OF THIS *NIGHTMARE* IMMEDIATELY! FRANKLY, WE *HAVE* NO OTHER OPTIONS."

No,
I REFUSE TO
DO IT! WE'LL RIDE
THIS THING OUT--

* COMMANDER, SENSORS
INDICATE STRUCTURAL
DAMAGE IN AFT SECTION--
WE AREN'T GOING TO MAKE
IT, SIR, ANOTHER FEW
SECONDS AND -- *

I KNOW--
I KNOW!

ALL RIGHT. GIVE
HIM A SUIT AND A
COMPRESSED OXY-
PACK--

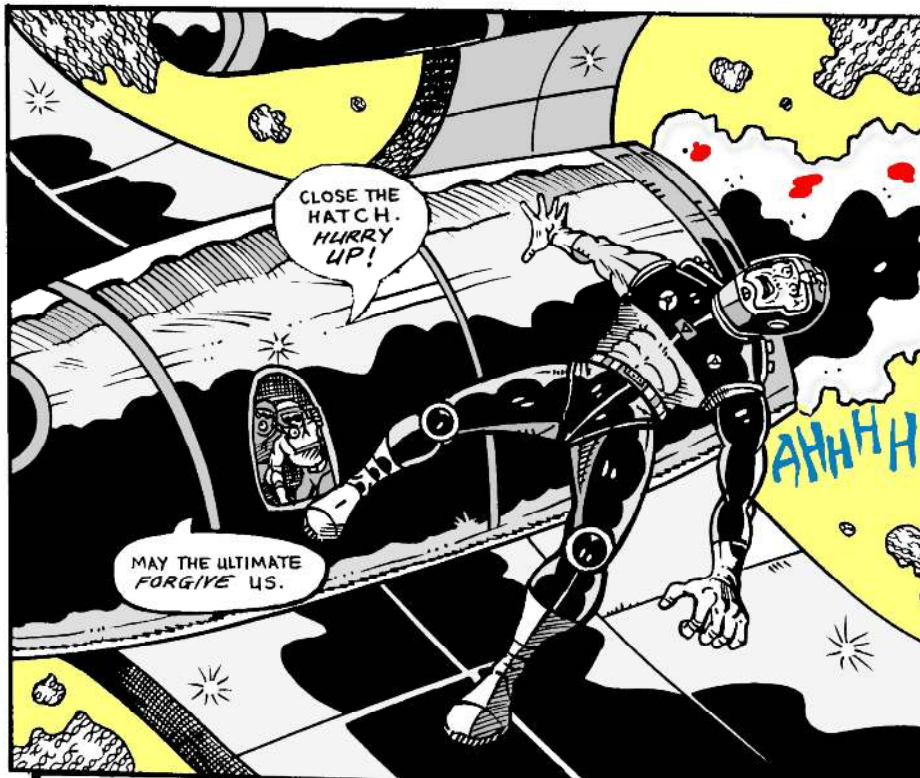


THAT SHOULD LAST
HIM A COUPLE DAYS--
IF HE SURVIVES THE STORM.

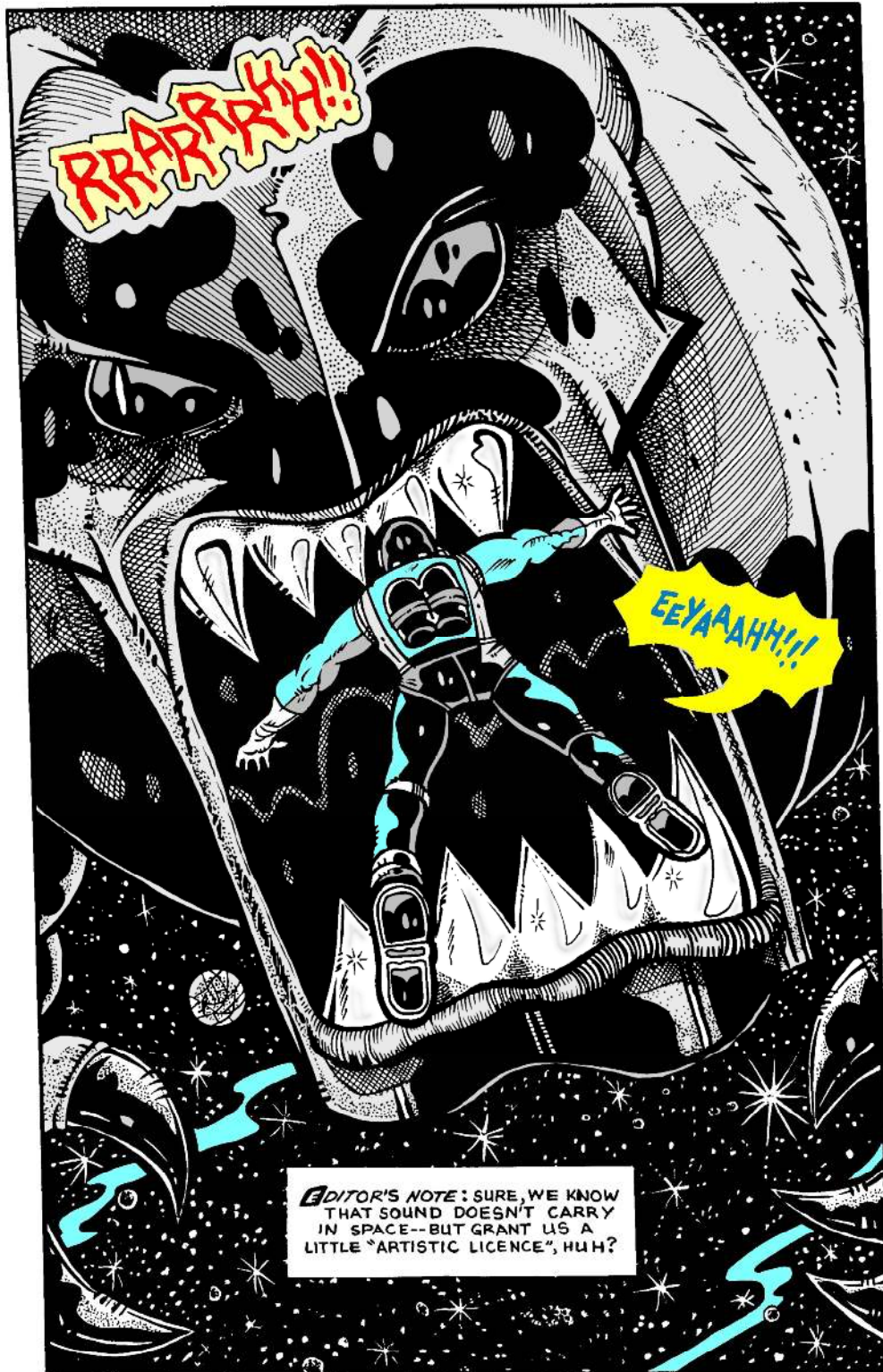
-- BUT, SIR --



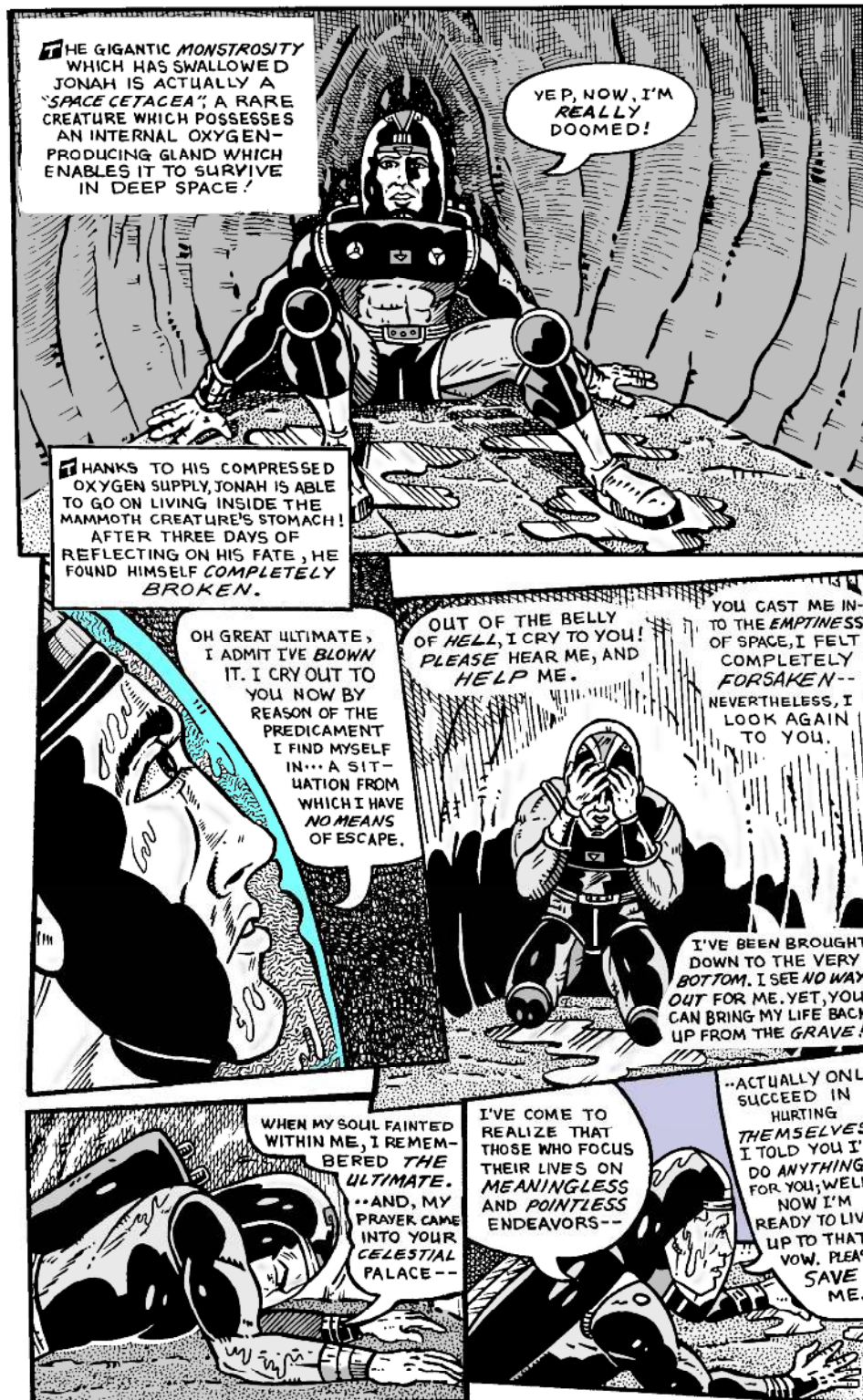
JUST-- DO IT.







EDITOR'S NOTE: SURE, WE KNOW
THAT SOUND DOESN'T CARRY
IN SPACE--BUT GRANT US A
LITTLE "ARTISTIC LICENCE", HUH?



THE GIGANTIC MONSTROSITY WHICH HAS SWALLOWED JONAH IS ACTUALLY A "SPACE CETACEA", A RARE CREATURE WHICH POSSESSES AN INTERNAL OXYGEN-PRODUCING GLAND WHICH ENABLES IT TO SURVIVE IN DEEP SPACE!

YEP, NOW, I'M REALLY DOOMED!

THANKS TO HIS COMPRESSED OXYGEN SUPPLY, JONAH IS ABLE TO GO ON LIVING INSIDE THE MAMMOTH CREATURE'S STOMACH! AFTER THREE DAYS OF REFLECTING ON HIS FATE, HE FOUND HIMSELF COMPLETELY BROKEN.

OH GREAT ULTIMATE, I ADMIT I'VE BLOWN IT. I CRY OUT TO YOU NOW BY REASON OF THE PREDICAMENT I FIND MYSELF IN... A SITUATION FROM WHICH I HAVE NO MEANS OF ESCAPE.

OUT OF THE BELLY OF HELL, I CRY TO YOU! PLEASE HEAR ME, AND HELP ME.

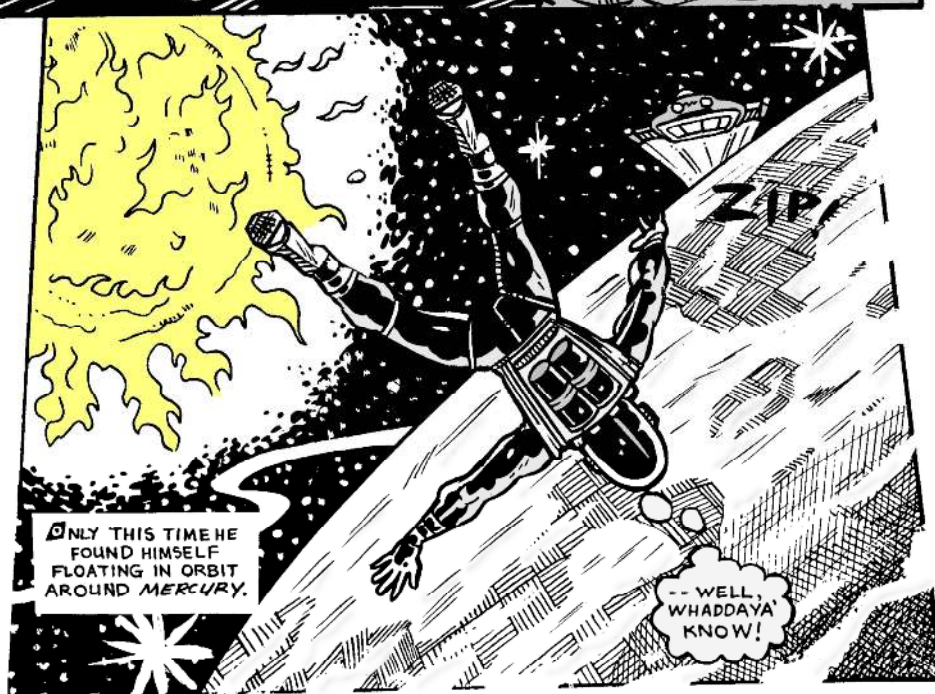
YOU CAST ME INTO THE EMPTINESS OF SPACE, I FELT COMPLETELY FORSAKEN-- NEVERTHELESS, I LOOK AGAIN TO YOU.

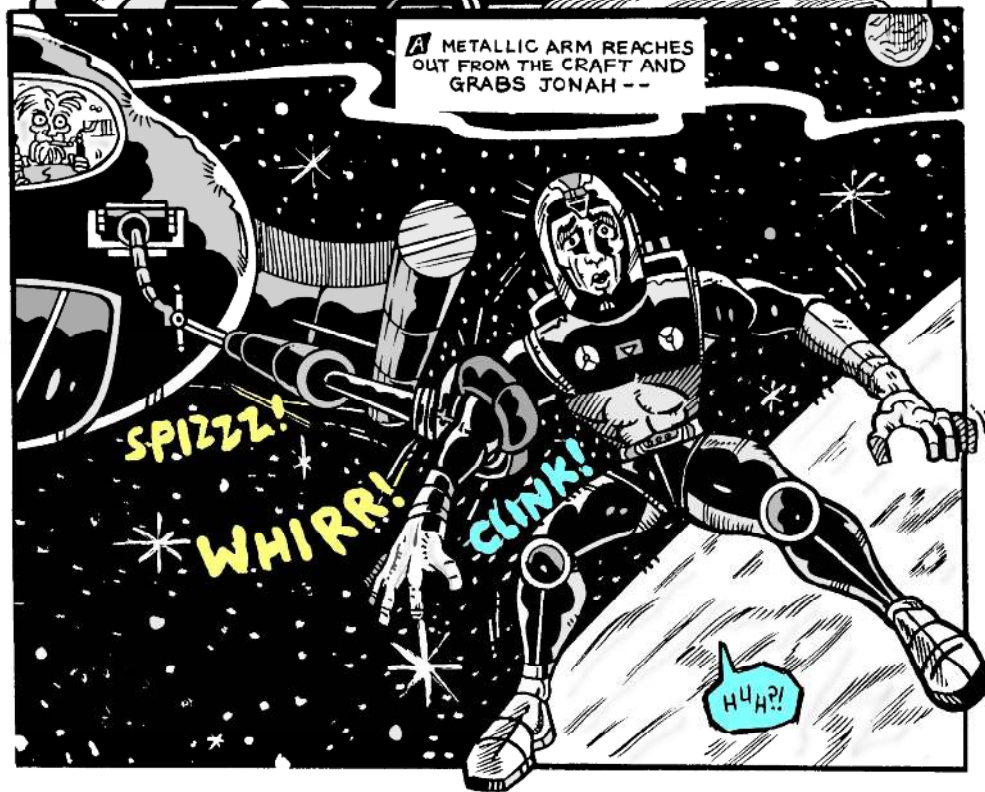
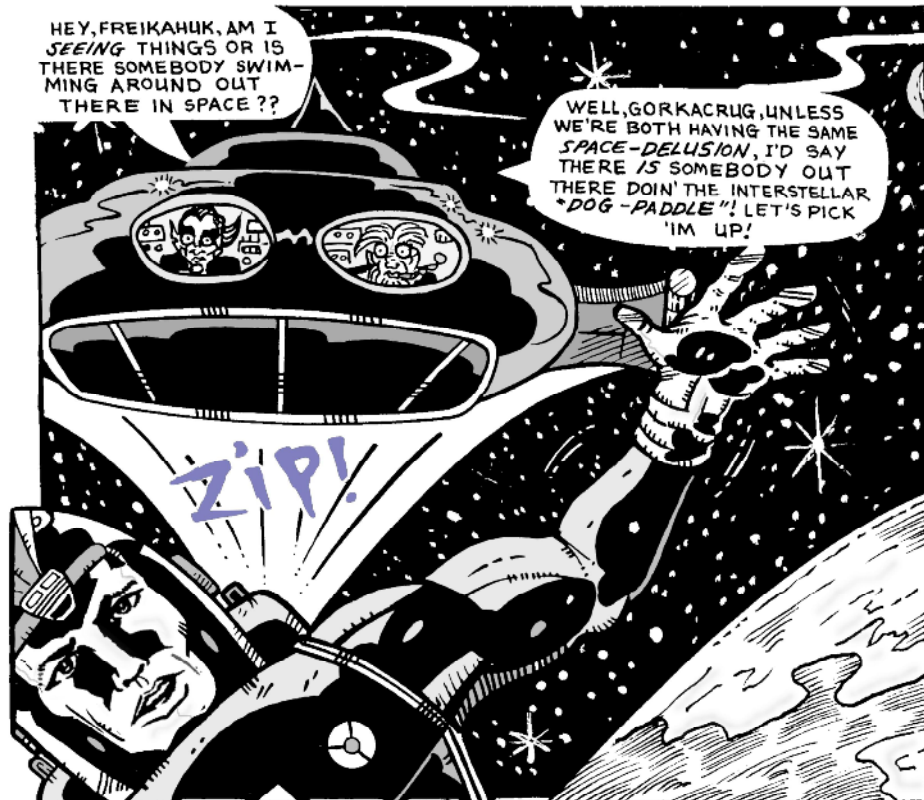
I'VE BEEN BROUGHT DOWN TO THE VERY BOTTOM. I SEE NO WAY OUT FOR ME. YET, YOU CAN BRING MY LIFE BACK UP FROM THE GRAVE!

WHEN MY SOUL FAINTED WITHIN ME, I REMEMBERED THE ULTIMATE. --AND, MY PRAYER CAME INTO YOUR CELESTIAL PALACE--

I'VE COME TO REALIZE THAT THOSE WHO FOCUS THEIR LIVES ON MEANINGLESS AND POINTLESS ENDEAVORS--

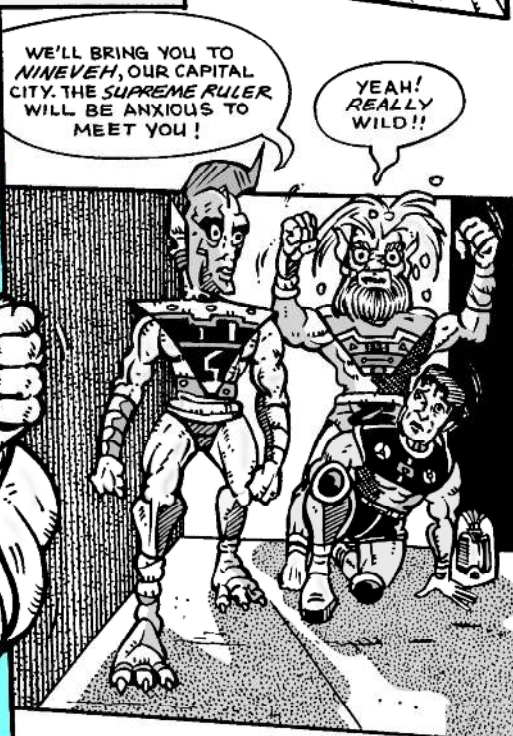
--ACTUALLY ONLY SUCCEED IN HURTING THEMSELVES. I TOLD YOU I'D DO ANYTHING FOR YOU; WELL, NOW I'M READY TO LIVE UP TO THAT VOW. PLEASE SAVE ME.

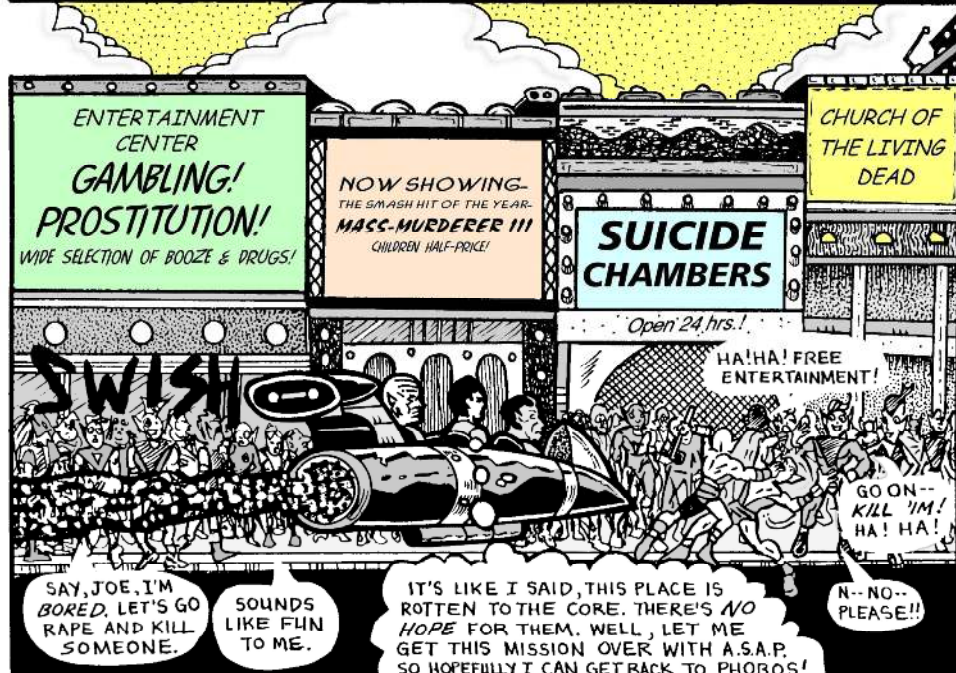






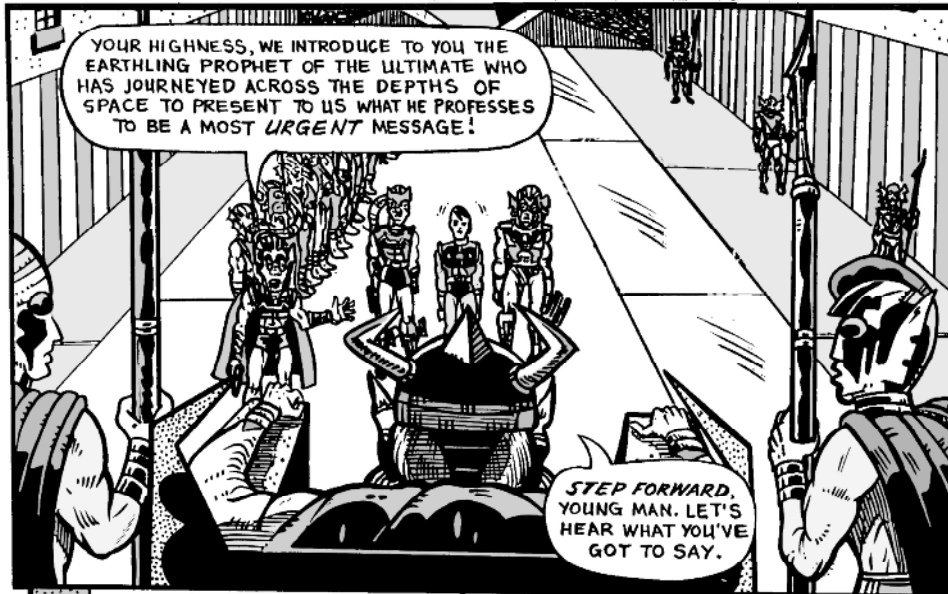
MONAH THEN RELATES TO THE TWO BEMUSED ALIEN PILOTS THE INCREDIBLE ACCOUNT OF HIS GALACTIC ADVENTURE...





UPON ENTERING THE IMPERIAL FORTRESS OF THE SUPREME RULER OF MERCURY, JONAH ONCE AGAIN HEARS THE VOICE OF THE ULTIMATE-- A VOICE WHICH HE ALONE CAN HEAR--

JONAH, I WANT YOU TO TELL THE PEOPLE OF MERCURY THAT I'M GIVING THEM *FORTY DAYS* TO MAKE A COMPLETE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL "TURN-AROUND." IF BY THEN THEY HAVE NOT COMPLIED WITH MY DEMANDS, THEIR CIVILIZATION WILL BE OVERTHROWN AND DESTROYED.



JONAH IS FRANKLY INTIMIDATED BY THE MAJESTIC PALATIAL SURROUNDINGS, AND HE'S MORE THAN A BIT APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE SUPREME RULER'S RESPONSE TO HIS ADMITTEDLY APOCALYPTIC PRONOUNCEMENT.

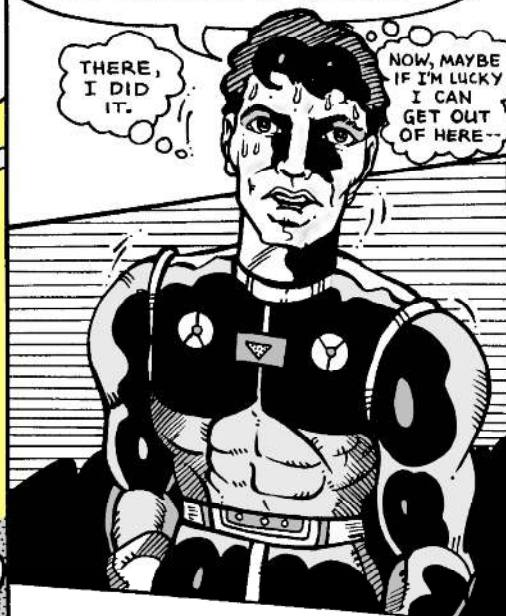
YOUR MAJESTY, I COME HERE ON A MISSION OF WARNING. I BRING YOU GRIM TIDINGS FROM THE ULTIMATE.

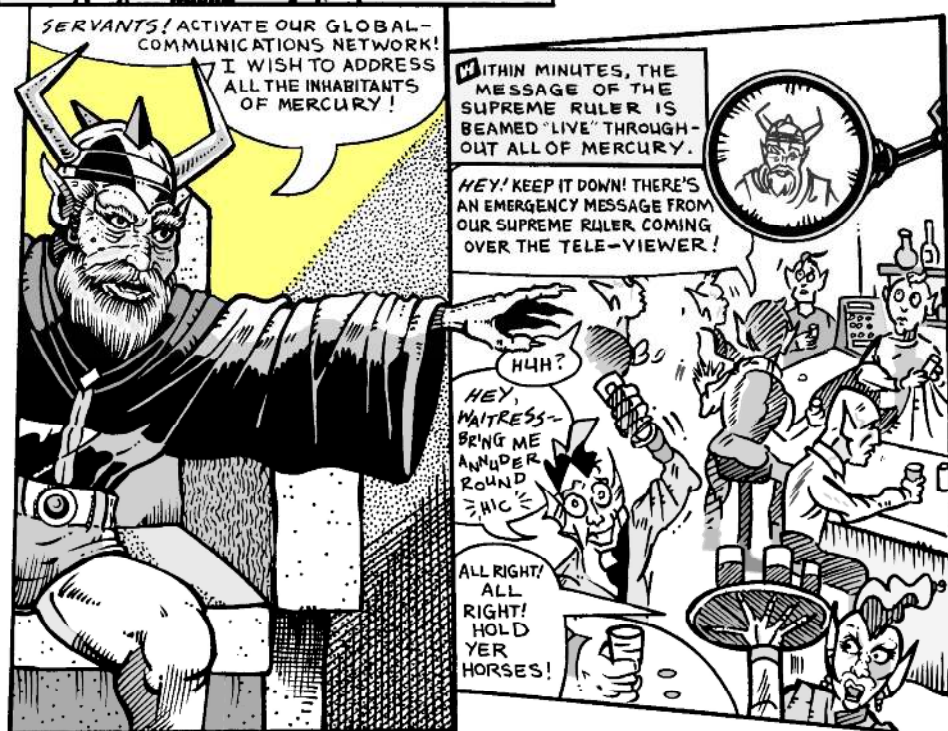
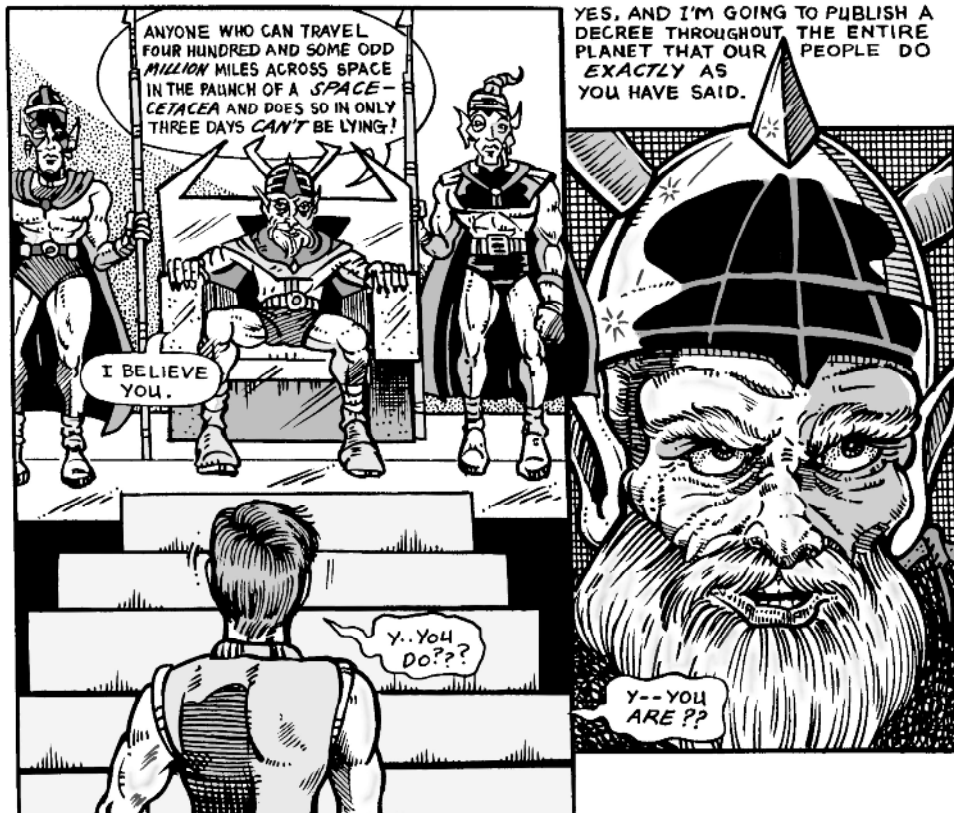
GO ON--

THE WICKEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF MERCURY IS SO GREAT THAT THE ULTIMATE CAN NO LONGER BEAR IT. HE GIVES YOU ONLY FORTY DAYS IN WHICH TO CHANGE YOUR WAYS. IF YOU REFUSE TO DO SO, HE WILL HAVE YOU COMPLETELY WIPED OUT.

THERE, I DID IT.

NOW, MAYBE IF I'M LUCKY I CAN GET OUT OF HERE--





PEOPLE OF MERCURY, WE HAVE CHOSEN THE *WRONG* ROAD. AS YOUR LEADER, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE MADE SOME VERY BAD DECISIONS...



I HAVE TOLERATED THE PRESENCE OF *EVIL* IN OUR SOCIETY... AND NOW IT HAS GROWN TO *EPIDEMIC* PROPORTIONS.

--SADLY, I'VE BEEN *NUMB* TO JUST HOW FAR GONE THE SITUATION HERE HAS BECOME... BUT, THIS CANNOT GO ON FOREVER. WE'VE REACHED THE *END* OF THE ROAD. AND, BEFORE US STANDS A GREAT GALACTIC "*DEAD END*" SIGN.



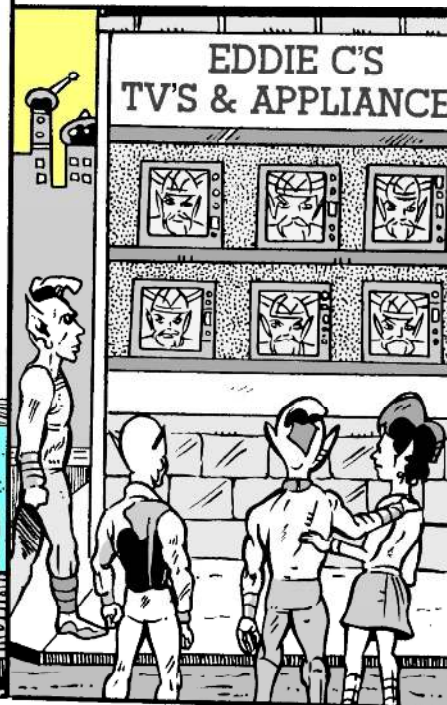
..IN SHORT, WE HAVE RECEIVED AN *ULTIMATUM* FROM THE ALMIGHTY, DELIVERED TO US BY THE NOW FAMOUS EARTH-MAN FOUND EARLIER, TODAY FLOATING IN ORBIT AROUND OUR PLANET. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD TO *CLEAN UP* OUR ACT; AND, THAT'S JUST WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO.



HEY, MOM-- IS THIS FOR REAL??

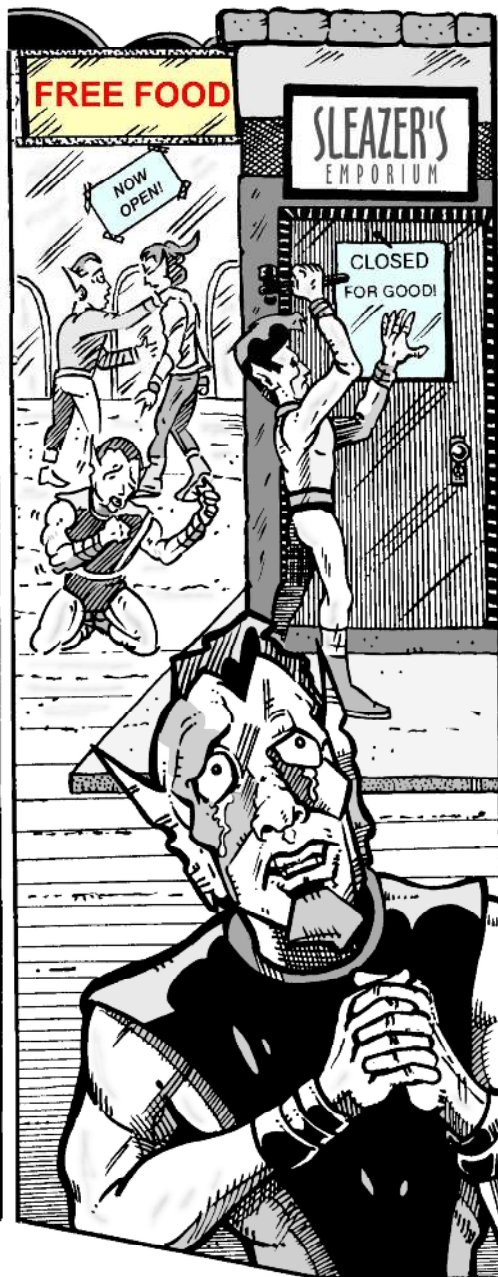
SHHH! QUIET, SON!

I'M DECLARING A WORLD-WIDE "STATE OF EMERGENCY." ALL BUSINESSES ARE TO BE TEMPORARILY SHUT DOWN. ALL TELE-PROGRAMMING IS TO BE *SUSPENDED* UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. NO FOOD OR DRINK IS TO BE SOLD OR CONSUMED. I WANT ALL OF YOU TO CRY *MIGHTILY* TO THE ULTIMATE, IMPLOING HIS *MERCY* AND *FORGIVENESS*.





AMAZINGLY, THE PEOPLE LISTENED AND OBEYED THE VOICE OF THE RULER. THE "MARKET" FOR EVIL DRIED UP VIRTUALLY OVER-NIGHT. AND, AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, LAWS WERE CHANGED TO REFLECT THE WISHES OF THE ULTIMATE. THE MERCURIAN SOCIETY DID A 180-DEGREE TURN-AROUND. AND, AS A RESULT, THE ULTIMATE DECIDED TO SPARE THEM.



ODDLY ENOUGH, HOWEVER, JONAH WASN'T VERY PLEASED WITH THIS TURN OF EVENTS. ON A HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING THE CITY, HE "VENTILATED" HIS DISSATISFACTION--

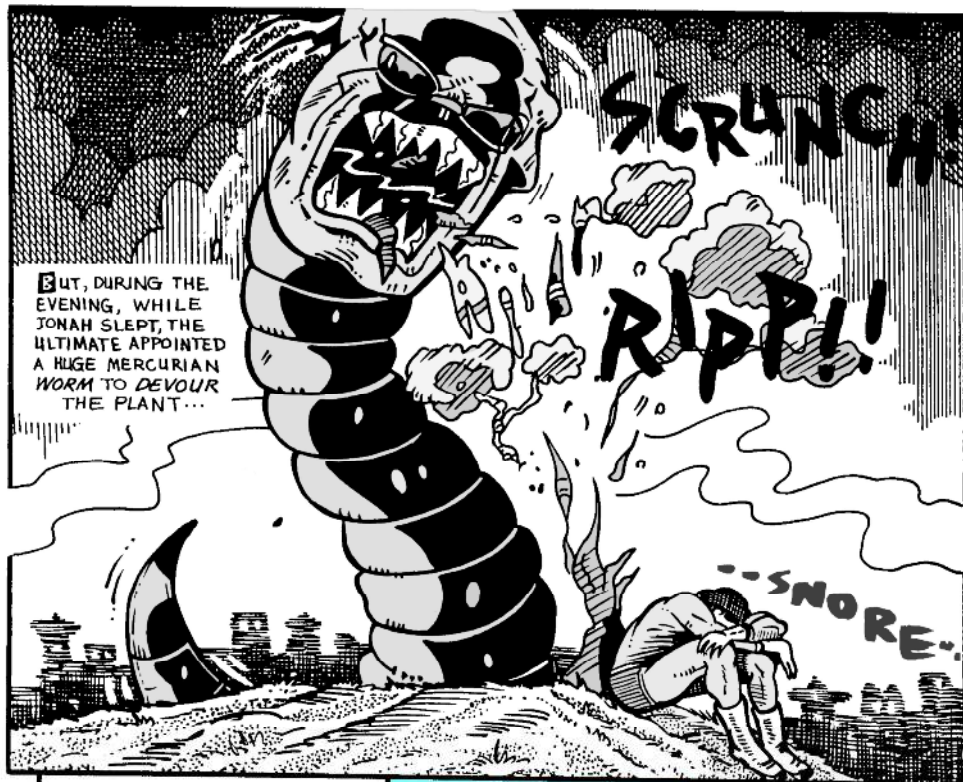
DIDN'T I SAY THIS WHEN I WAS BACK ON PHOBOS, MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS? ALL ALONG I KNEW THAT YOU WERE A GRACIOUS BEING, SLOW TO GET ANGRY, AND FULL OF KINDNESS! I KNEW THAT IN THE END YOU'D RELENT TO WIPE THESE PEOPLE OUT!

SO WHY DID I WASTE MY TIME AND GO THROUGH ALL OF THIS SUFFERING?? -- AND, NOW, O GREAT ULTIMATE, I BEG YOU TO TAKE MY LIFE FROM ME! I'D RATHER BE DEAD THAN ALIVE !!

JONAH, DO YOU DO WELL TO BE ANGRY?

THEN, THE ULTIMATE CAUSED A GREAT PLANT TO GROW UP OVER JONAH TO PROVIDE SOME SHADE FOR HIS HEAD AND TO GIVE HIM SOME RELIEF FROM HIS GRIEF. THIS MADE JONAH VERY GLAD.

-- AHH, NOW, THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!



BUT, DURING THE EVENING, WHILE JONAH SLEPT, THE ULTIMATE APPOINTED A HUGE MERCURIAN WORM TO DEVOUR THE PLANT...

SCRUNCH!

RIP!!

...SNORE...

AND, COME MORNING, THE ULTIMATE SENT A FIERCE WIND AND THE BLASTING RAYS OF THE SUN TO BEAT DOWN ON THE HEAD OF JONAH SO THAT HE WAS READY TO FAINT AND HE WISHED IN HIMSELF TO DIE.

DO YOU DO WELL TO BE ANGRY OVER THE PLANT?

JONAH, YOU HAD PITY ON A PLANT, WHICH YOU DIDN'T CULTIVATE OR MAKE GROW, WHICH CAME UP IN A NIGHT AND VANISHED IN A NIGHT. -- AND SHOULDN'T I SPARE MERCURY, A PLANET WHICH HAS MILLIONS OF LIVING INHABITANTS--



IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR ME TO DIE THAN TO GO ON LIVING.



YES, I "DO WELL" TO BE ANGRY! EVEN TO DEATH!



-- WHO ARE IN SUCH MORAL DARKNESS THAT THEY CAN'T TELL THEIR RIGHT HAND FROM THEIR LEFT?

OFTEN I WONDER IF SOME OF THE "DISEASES" KIDS HAVE TODAY REALLY
STEM FROM ONE UNDERLYING ILLNESS:

L.P.L.D.

LACK OF PARENTAL LOVE DISORDER

