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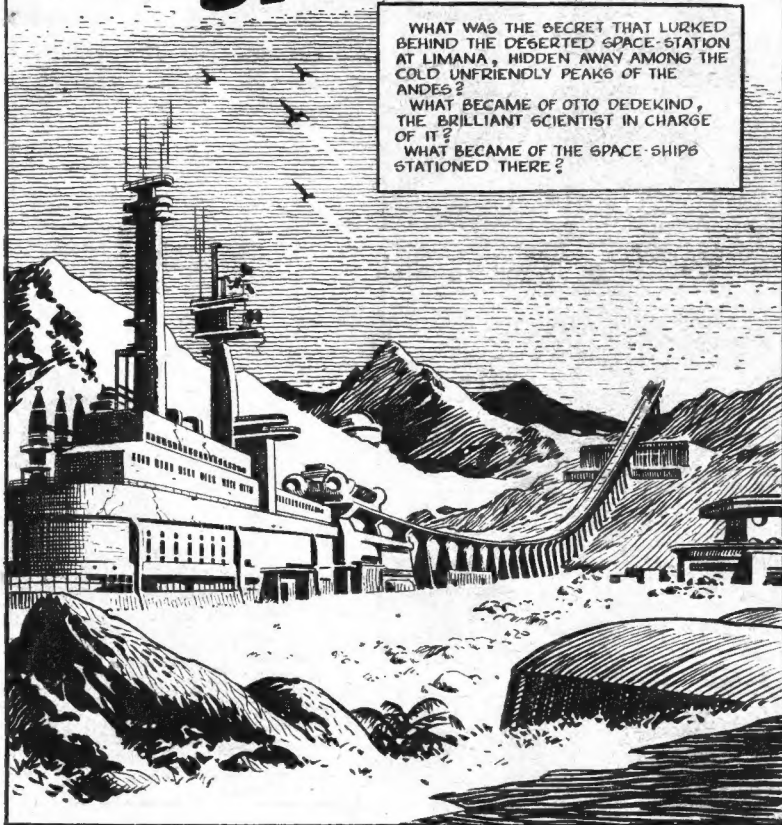
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THE RIDDLE OF THE VANISHING SPACEMEN

WHAT WAS THE SECRET THAT LURKED
BEHIND THE DESERTED SPACE-STATION
AT LIMANA, HIDDEN AWAY AMONG THE
COLD UNFRIENDLY PEAKS OF THE
ANDES?

WHAT BECAME OF OTTO DEDEKIND,
THE BRILLIANT SCIENTIST IN CHARGE
OF IT?

WHAT BECAME OF THE SPACE-SHIP
STATIONED THERE?



IT WAS A STRANGE BEGINNING TO A STRANGE STORY . . .



STRANGE ALSO, BUT NOT SO WELL KNOWN AT THE TIME, WAS THE FACT THAT ABOUT THAT TIME A LOCAL TRIBE OF INDIANS ALSO DISAPPEARED!



TIME PASSED AND DEDEKIND WAS FORGOTTEN . . . BUT THE MYSTERY REMAINED A MYSTERY. IT WAS LEFT TO RICK RANDOM TO SOLVE IT TWENTY YEARS LATER, WHEN HE TACKLED THE CASE OF ANOTHER VANISHING SPACEMAN . . . A CERTAIN JOHN GRANT, SPACE - PHYSICIST.



OH, RICK. BARNES WANTS TO SEE YOU IN HIS OFFICE. IT'S URGENT . . . SOMETHING ABOUT THIS MISSING SPACE-SCIENTIST, JOHN GRANT, I THINK.

O.K.
I'M ON MY WAY. .

SELMER BARNES WAS SCIENCE RESEARCH CHIEF OF THE INTERPLANETARY BOARD. JOHN GRANT WAS ONE OF HIS MEN. HE TOLD RICK WHAT LITTLE WAS KNOWN.



THIS LOOKS HOPELESS, RICK. BUT THE NATURE OF THE WORK GRANT WAS DOING MAKES IT IMPERATIVE THAT WE FIND HIM. GRANT WAS YOUNG - BUT HE WAS ONE OF THE RESEARCHERS TO WHOM WE ALLOWED A FREE HAND . . . I KNOW HE WAS ON TO SOMETHING BIG - THAT MUCH HE TOLD ME - BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS, RANDOM!

GRANT CAME TO ME AND ASKED FOR AUTHORITY TO HAVE A LONG DISTANCE SOLO SPACE-RANGER PLACED AT HIS DISPOSAL . . . HE WOULD NOT TELL ME FOR WHAT, BUT HE ASKED ME TO TRUST HIM . . . HE SAID THAT WHEN HE HAD MADE THIS SECRET TRIP HE MIGHT TELL ME HIS FINDINGS . . . BUT ONLY IF HIS THEORY PROVED TRUE.

HE SAID THE THING WAS SO BIG THAT HE DARED NOT SPEAK, UNTIL HE WAS ABSOLUTELY SURE.



AND NOW HE'S VANISHED. . .

EXACTLY, AND HE'S GOT TO BE FOUND. I KNOW GRANT WELL ENOUGH TO BE SURE THAT HE IS NO FALSE ALARMIST. THERE'S SOMETHING BIG BEHIND THIS, RANDOM, AND WE MUST KNOW WHAT IT IS!



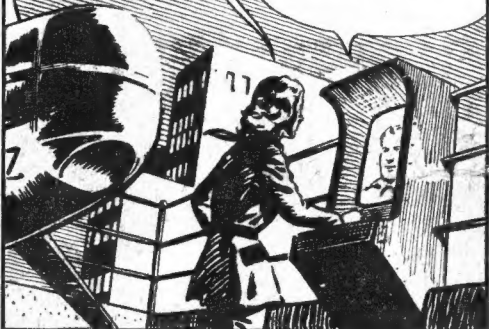
RICK RETURNED TO HIS OWN OFFICE, TO GATHER TOGETHER THE SLENDER CLUES IN THIS STRANGE CASE. AS HE SAT THINKING, HE HEARD THE SOUND OF A HELICOPTER ON HIS LANDING ROOF, AND SWITCHING ON HIS TELEVIEWER HE SAW A GIRL EMERGE.

HMM... SEEMS I'VE GOT A VISITOR. I WONDER WHAT SHE WANTS?



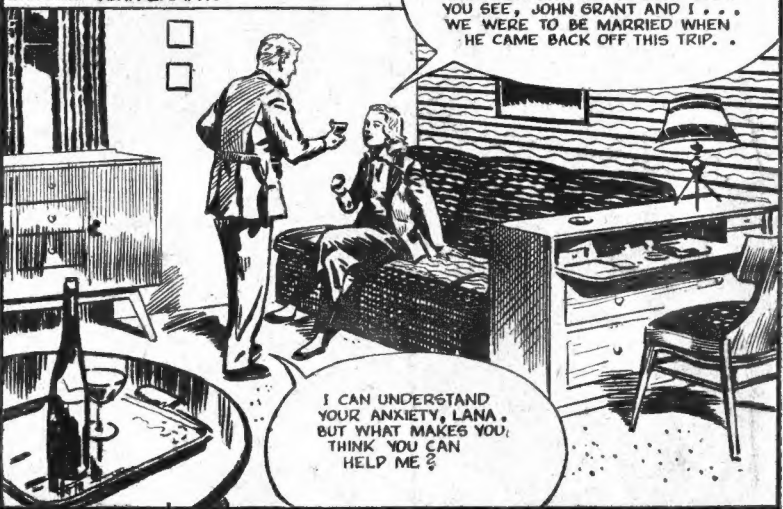
MR. RANDOM?
MAY I SEE YOU AT
ONCE? IT'S EXTREMELY
URGENT..

SURE. THE DOOR
IS OVER ON YOUR
RIGHT. COME
STRAIGHT DOWN.

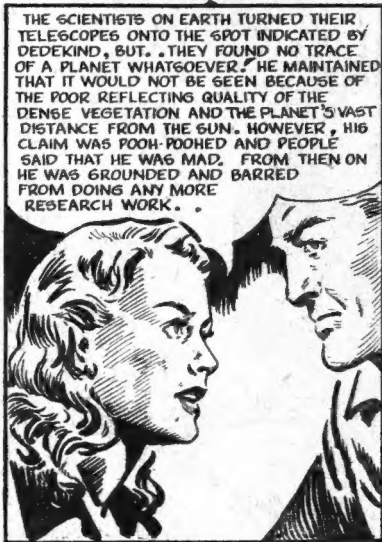
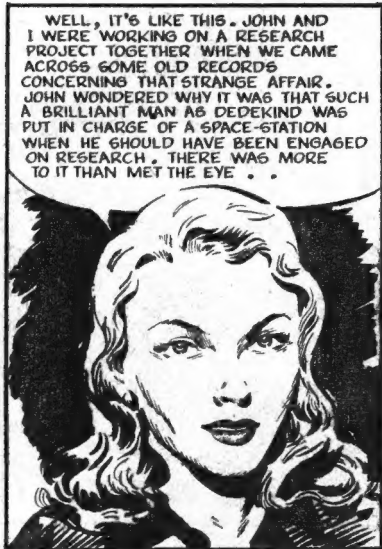
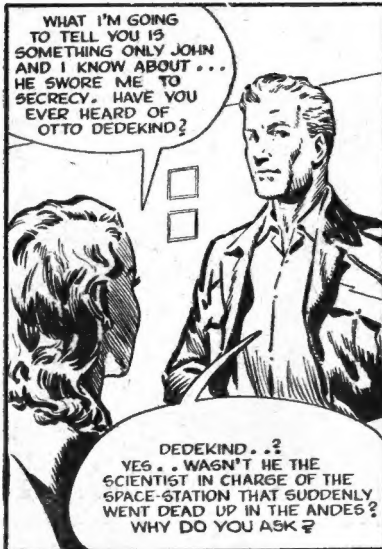


AS SOON AS SHE ENTERED THE FLAT, HE RECOGNIZED HER AS LANA DANE, THE GIRL WHO WAS ENGAGED TO MARRY THE MISSING JOHN GRANT.

THEY TOLD ME YOU'VE BEEN
PUT IN CHARGE OF THIS CASE, RICK.
...I... I THINK I'M THE ONLY ONE
WHO WILL BE ABLE TO HELP YOU.
YOU SEE, JOHN GRANT AND I...
WE WERE TO BE MARRIED WHEN
HE CAME BACK OFF THIS TRIP..



I CAN UNDERSTAND
YOUR ANXIETY, LANA,
BUT WHAT MAKES YOU
THINK YOU CAN
HELP ME?



I THINK I CAN PUT THE REST TOGETHER. JOHN'S SECRET RESEARCH PROJECT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH DEDEKIND'S LOST PLANET. RIGHT?

PERFECTLY. BUT JOHN KNOWS THINGS I DO NOT... HE TOLD ME THAT SOME OF DEDEKIND'S NOTES GAVE HINTS OF OTHER THINGS... EVIL THINGS. BUT HE WOULDN'T TELL ME WHAT THEY WERE...

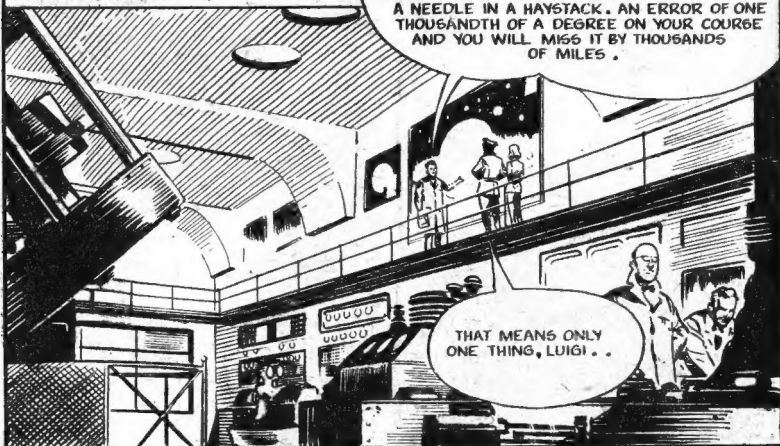


WELL, LANA, YOU'VE BEEN MOST HELPFUL. AT LEAST I'VE NOW GOT SOMETHING TO WORK ON. IF YOU CAN BRING THOSE RECORDS ALONG TO MY OFFICE TOMORROW, I'LL GET THE BOFFINS UP AT SPACE CONTROL TO GO OVER THEM AND SEE WHAT THEY CAN MAKE OF THEM. MY NEXT MOVE LOOKS LIKE A TRIP TO NARM.

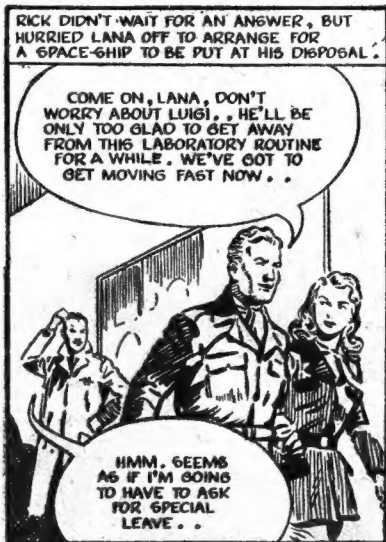


SO, THE FOLLOWING DAY, LANA BROUGHT THE RECORDS OF DEDEKIND'S ORIGINAL EXPLORATION ALONG TO RICK, AND TOGETHER THEY WENT ALONG TO DR. LUIGI FRATENGI, TOP BOFFIN AT THE INVESTIGATION BUREAU, AND AN OLD FRIEND OF RICK'S.

WELL, DEDEKIND'S LOG IS REMARKABLY CLEAR FOR A RECORD THAT IS TWENTY YEARS BEHIND OURS, AND, IF HE IS CORRECT, THE PLANET NARM SHOULD LIE ON AN ORBIT SOMEWHERE OUT HERE. BUT TO GO SEARCHING FOR IT WOULD BE A THOUSAND TIMES HARDER THAN SEARCHING FOR A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK. AN ERROR OF ONE THOUSANDTH OF A DEGREE ON YOUR COURSE AND YOU WILL MISS IT BY THOUSANDS OF MILES.



THAT MEANS ONLY ONE THING, LUIGI...





AS THE TIME FOR DEPARTURE ARRIVED, RICK KEPT A CLOSE WATCH ON THE LOADING OPERATIONS. HE HAD AN IDEA THAT LANA WAS GOING TO TRY AND STOW AWAY, AND HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT SHE DIDN'T.

LUIGI AND THE NAVIGATOR ARE ALREADY ABOARD. I'M GOING UP NOW TO HAVE A LAST-MINUTE CHECK-OVER OF THE CONTROLS. DON'T BE LONG, RICK.

I'LL BE UP AS SOON AS THEY'VE FINISHED LOADING, KEN. I'M JUST MAKING SURE THAT SCATTER-BRAINED KID DOESN'T TRY TO STEAL ABOARD!

WHEN HE WAS SATISFIED THAT NOTHING SUSPICIOUS HAD OCCURRED, RICK BOARDED THE SPACER, CLOSING THE HATCH BEHIND HIM. THEN THE ENTIRE CREW STRAPPED THEMSELVES FOR THE TAKE-OFF AND GROUND CONTROL PREPARED TO SEND THE VESSEL HURTLING OUT INTO SPACE.

CONTROL TO PILOT: CUT-OFF 16 TIMED FOR ONE-TWO-FOUR SECONDS. YOUR SPEED WILL BE FIVE-TWO-FIVE-SIX MILES AN HOUR AT INITIAL ORBIT. ADJUST YOUR STABILIZERS ACCORDINGLY. . . OVER.

PILOT TO CONTROL. STABILIZERS ADJUSTED. READY FOR TAKE-OFF. OVER.

AND SO THE SPACER "DAUNTLESS" WAS SENT FLYING INTO THE UNCHARTED REGIONS OF OUTER SPACE. LITTLE DID ANY OF THE CREW REALISE WHAT STRANGE ADVENTURE WAS TO BEFALL THEM IN THE COLD VOID BEYOND.



ONCE THEY WERE WELL CLEAR OF TAKE-OFF TROUBLES AND DANGERS, RICK MADE HIS WAY TO THE NAVIGATION CABIN WHERE LUIGI FRATENSI AND HIS ASSISTANT WERE NOW BUSY WORKING OUT THE SPACER'S COURSE.



HALLO, LUIGI.
HOW'RE WE
MAKING OUT?

WE INTEND TO TAKE OUR BEARINGS ONCE WE ARE OUTSIDE THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, RICK. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO RISK ANY ERRORS THAT MAY OTHERWISE OCCUR. WE SHALL GET CO-ORDINATES FROM SATELLITES P.Y. AND P.Z. MY ASSISTANT IS PICKING THEM UP ON THE REMOTE-CONTROLLED TELESCOPES RIGHT NOW.



AFTER SEVENTY-ONE HOURS HAD PASSED THE LITTLE SPACER "DAUNTLESS" PASSED BY THE MOON, WHERE A SCIENTIFIC COLONY WERE BUSY CARRYING OUT A RESEARCH-PROJECT.



I WISH I WAS UP THERE ON HER. I'LL BET IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE SHE'S HEADED BACK FOR OLD MOTHER EARTH. .

OLD MOTHER EARTH IS IN THE OTHER DIRECTION, PIERRE, ME BOY. . ANYWAY, I'LL BET IT'S RAINING IN MANCHESTER, RIGHT NOW!

FOR WEEKS THE JOURNEY CONTINUED, AND GRADUALLY, AS THEY APPROACHED THE ESTIMATED POSITION OF NARM, EXCITEMENT BEGAN TO MOUNT INSIDE THE SPACER.



WELL, IT WON'T BE LONG NOW, LANA. WE'LL SOON KNOW WHETHER NARM EXISTS OR NOT.

RICK SWITCHED ON THE AUTOMATIC PILOT AND WENT WITH LANA INTO THE NAVIGATION CABIN.



I'VE GOT BOTH THE PORT SIDE TELESCOPE'S DEAD ON THE TRACK, RICK. OUR FIRST VIEW OF NARM SHOULD APPEAR ON BOTH THOSE SCREENS IN ABOUT A MINUTE FROM NOW.

I CAN'T BEAR THIS SUSPENSE. . I. . LOOK! WHAT'S THAT NOW?

FALSE ALARM, LANA . .
I'M AFRAID THAT'S JUST A SHAL
OF METEORS . AND A PRETTY
NASTY ONE TOO, I HOPE WE
DON'T RUN INTO IT.

RICK AND THE TWO SCIENTISTS WAITED AS
THE SECONDS SLOWLY TICKED BY. NO SIGN
OF A PLANET APPEARED ON EITHER SCREEN.
ONE MINUTE PASSES.. AND THEN ANOTHER ..
STILL NO PLANET CAME INTO VIEW.

LUIGI'S FACE GREW SERIOUS AND THEN
AN EXPRESSION OF DOUBT CROSSED IT .

SEEMS WE'VE DRAWN A BLANK
AFTER ALL WE HAD BETTER
TAKE A CHECK-READING ON OUR RANGE .
WE SHOULD BE CROSSING THE
SUPPOSED PLANET'S ORBIT
RIGHT NOW.

BUT AS LANA WENT TO COMPUTE THE FIGURES FROM THE SPEED
AND DIRECTION INDICATORS LANA SUDDENLY GLANCED AT
THE SCREENS AGAIN . . .

LOOK! LOOK!
THE STARBOARD SCREEN!
WHAT'S THAT?



RICK AND LANA WERE TOO EXCITED TO BOTHER ABOUT STRAPPING THEMSELVES DOWN AS THE 'DAUNTLESS' ALTERED COURSE.

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU TWO? DON'T YOU WANT TO CHANGE COURSE?



AS THE 'DAUNTLESS' ENTERED THE GRAVITATIONAL FIELD OF NARM, ITS MOTORS WERE SWITCHED OFF AND IT WAS ALLOWED TO SPIN FREELY ROUND THE STRANGE PLANET, JUST AS THE EARTH DOES ROUND THE SUN. THIS GAVE RICK AND THE OTHERS A CHANCE TO MAKE A SURVEY OF THE LAND BELOW THEM.

LOOK OVER THERE!
LOOK AT THAT CITY!
A PLACE LIKE THAT MUST
BE INHABITED BY SOME
FORM OF HUMAN
LIFE.



AND LOOK AT THE SEA
OVER THERE! DID YOU EVER
SEE SUCH SEAS BACK ON
EARTH? THOSE WAVES MUST
REACH HUNDREDS OF FEET
IN HEIGHT!

SUDDENLY A CRY OF PANIC SOUNDED FROM KEN WILSON. THE 'DAUNTLESS' WAS HEADING STRAIGHT FOR A COLLISION WITH ONE OF THE SEVEN MOONS THAT CIRCLE NARM.



FEVERISHLY KEN SWITCHED OFF THE AUTOMATIC PILOT AND PUSHED THE ROCKET MOTORS OVER TO FULL BLAST. FOR AN INTERMINABLE MOMENT IN TIME NOTHING SEEMED TO HAPPEN. THEN THE FAMILIAR THROB OF THE MOTORS SLOWLY BEGAN TO PICK UP, AND THE 'DAUNTLESS' BEGAN TO SWERVE AWAY FROM HER COURSE.



THE LITTLE SPACER ALMOST TORE APART AS IT STRAINED TO CURVE SHARPLY AWAY FROM THE DANGER. AND FINALLY IT JUST MANAGED TO SKIM THE SURFACE OF THE DEAD WORLD BELOW, COMING SO NEAR THAT IT LEFT A TRAIL OF SCORCHED SOIL, CHANNELLED BEHIND IT.



KEN TOOK OVER THE CONTROLS AFTER THAT AND STAYED AT THEM. LUIGI AND HE WERE DISCUSSING THE QUESTION OF LANDING SOMEWHERE WHEN, SUDDENLY, STRANGE THINGS BEGAN TO HAPPEN TO THEIR RADIO EQUIPMENT.

THIS IS THE SORT OF THING RADIO-OPERATORS DREAM ABOUT WHEN THEY HAVE NIGHTMARES!

IT MUST BE FROM DOWN BELOW! SOMEBODY'S TRYING TO SIGNAL US!



LANA SWITCHED ON THE LOUDSPEAKER AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER RICK PICKED UP A MESSAGE THAT WAS BEING RADIOED UP FROM BELOW.

SPACE-SHIP. . . SPACE-SHIP. . .
SWITCH ON YOUR RADIO TRANSMITTERS
AND MAKE CONTACT WITH US. . .
SWITCH ON YOUR RADIO TRANSMITTERS
AND MAKE CONTACT WITH US. . .
SPACE-SHIP. . . SPACE-SHIP. . .

WELL, FANCY THAT!
THEY SPEAK GOOD
ENGLISH!



RICK IMMEDIATELY SWITCHED ON THE TWO-WAY RADIO.

I'LL SEE IF I CAN PICK UP ANYTHING ON THE RADIO FREQUENCIES. SWITCH ON THE LOUDSPEAKER CIRCUIT. .



RICK WAS NOT REALLY SURPRISED THAT THEY SPOKE ENGLISH. DEDEKIND CLAIMED TO HAVE VISITED THE PLANET ONCE AND COULD QUITE CONCEIVABLY HAVE RETURNED THERE WHEN HE VANISHED FROM THE EARTH.

SPACE-SHIP TO BASE.
WE WISH TO LAND.
CAN YOU RADIO FURTHER
INSTRUCTIONS?



BUT BEFORE THE PEOPLE ON THE PLANET AGREED TO DO THIS, THEY FIRST INSTRUCTED RICK TO TRANSMIT A PICTURE OF THE CREW ON THE TELEVISION WAVE-LENGTH, SO THAT THEY WOULD HAVE SOME IDEA WHAT THE NEWCOMERS LOOKED LIKE.

YOUR PICTURE BEING RECEIVED CLEARLY. WE SHALL BRING YOU IN ON A BEAM UNTIL YOU ARE RIGHT OVER THE LANDING STATION. ARE YOU READY?

ALL SMILE AT THE BIRDY. . HERE, I NOTICE THAT THEY DON'T RADIO US A PICTURE OF THEMSELVES! I WONDER WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE?

THE RADAR SIGNALS FROM BELOW EVENTUALLY BROUGHT THE 'DAUNTLESS' OVER A LANDING GROUND AND THE CREW BEGAN TO STRAP THEMSELVES IN FOR THE VERTICAL ASCENT PRIOR TO LANDING.

'UNLOCK YOUR SEAT-CLUTCH, KEN. .

OH, RICK! I SUDDENLY FEEL SCARED! I DON'T LIKE IT! THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT ALL THIS.

RICK NURSED THE SPACER DOWN GENTLY TO MAKE A PERFECT LANDING. PERFECT, HOWEVER, FOR EVERYONE EXCEPT KEN, WHO HAD FORGOTTEN TO UNLOCK HIS SEAT-CLUTCH!

WHOOOAA!
HOLD ME SOMEONE!
I'M STUCK!

A FINE TIME YOU PICK TO PLAY GAMES! I OUGHT TO LET YOU BOUNCE ON YOUR HEAD. IT COULDN'T DO YOU ANYTHING BUT GOOD. .

BUT ALL LAUGHTER DISAPPEARED
FROM RICK'S FACE THE MOMENT
HE OPENED THE DOOR.

WHAT THE - -

IT'S . . . IT'S
UNBELIEVABLE . .

AND SO RICK AND HIS FRIENDS MADE THEIR FIRST
ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE STRANGE PLANET, NARM!

WHAT IS THIS?
SOME SORT OF
NIGHTMARE?

NO SIGN OF LIFE GREETED THEM AS THEY CLAMBERED DOWN. A DEATHLY SILENCE REIGNED OVER THE VAST PLAIN ADDING TO IT 6 ATMOSPHERE OF UNREALITY.

BLIMEY! THEY'RE 6OME
GORT OF TOTEM POLES.
WE'LL BE RUNNING INTO
INDIAN6 NEXT!

IF MY HUNCH IS
CORRECT YOU'VE HIT
THE NAIL RIGHT ON
THE HEAD, KEN.

BUT STILL THEY SAW NO SIGN OF ANY
LIVING BEING. THEN SUDDENLY THEY
FELT THE GROUND BENEATH THEM
BEGINNING TO MOVE. BEFORE THEY
REALISED WHAT WAS HAPPENING
THEY FOUND THEMSELVES SINKING
DOWN INTO THE BOWEL6 OF THAT
STRANGE EARTH.

WHAT. . WHAT'S
HAPPENING ?

WHAT SAY WE ALL
CARVE OUR INITIAL6 ON
THIS ONE, EH? IT LOOK6
A BIT LIKE MY AUNT
ADA. .

AS KEN HEARD LANA'S CRY AND TURNED TO SEE HIS FRIENDS ALL DISAPPEARING, HE FLED BACK TO THEM PANIC-STRICKEN AT THE THOUGHT OF BEING LEFT ALONE ON THAT DESERTED PLAIN.

HEY, WAIT FOR ME!
I DON'T KNOW WHERE
YOU'RE GOING BUT I'M
GOING THAT WAY, TOO!

WE GOON
WILL KNOW...



AS THE SECTION BEARING THE SPACER
AND ITS CREW GRADUALLY SANK DOWN,
ANOTHER STRANGE VISTA OPENED UP
BEFORE THEIR EYES.

WHERE IS EVERYBODY?
IT MUST BE THEIR LUNCH
HOUR.



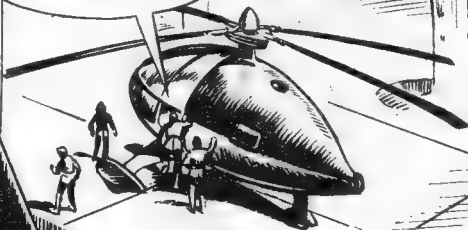
BUT, JUST AS THEY REACHED FLOOR-LEVEL, THEY HEARD A WHIRRING ABOVE, AND, LOOKING UP, SAW A HELICOPTER COMING DOWN TOWARD6 THEM.

SOMEONE'S COMING AT LAST. THANK HEAVEN FOR THAT. . I CAN'T STAND THIS MUCH LONGER!



BUT WHEN THE HELICOPTER LANDED, TO THEIR SURPRISE THEY FOUND NO-ONE INSIDE IT. THE DOOR OPENED AS IF BY INVISIBLE HANDS AND A VOICE CAME OVER THE LOUDSPEAKER WITHIN COMMANDING THEM TO GET IN.

RADIO-CONTROLLED. . I SUPPOSE WE'D BETTER GET IN AND SEE WHERE IT TAKES US.



AS SOON AS THEY WERE ALL SEATED INSIDE, RICK GAVE THE 'OKAY' OVER IT'S RADIO. THE DOORS CLOSED AUTOMATICALLY, THE PROP BEGAN TO WHIRR AND THEN THEY TOOK OFF.

LOOK, THE SPACER'S STILL GOING DOWN. THIS PLACE IS DEEPER THAN THE CRO66 CHANNEL TUBE!

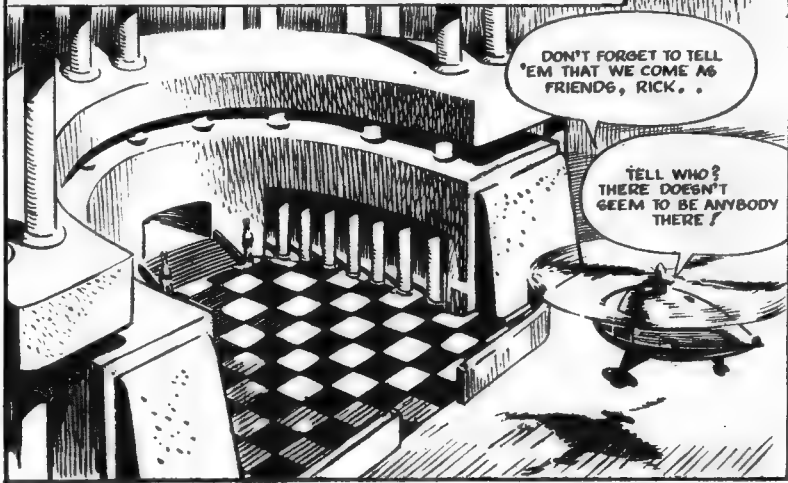
SEEMS TO BE SOME SORT OF HANGAR6 OR WORKSHOPS DOWN THERE TOO. THEY'RE MOST LIKELY GOING TO PARK THE 'DAUNTLESS' AND THEN REPLACE THE PLATFORM AT ITS PREVIOUS LEVEL.



AFTER TRAVELLING FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES THROUGH THE HUGE CAVERN, THEY EMERGED FROM THE FOREST OF TALL PILLARS AND THE HELICOPTER BEGAN TO DESCEND..

DON'T FORGET TO TELL 'EM THAT WE COME AS FRIEND6, RICK..

TELL WHO? THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANYBODY THERE!



AS THE HELICOPTER LANDED IN THE CHEQUERED COURTYARD, A BRIGHT SPOTLIGHT SUDDENLY SHOT DOWN UPON THEM. FOR A MOMENT THEY WERE HARDLY ABLE TO SEE ANYTHING, AND THEN, LOOKING TOWARDS THE STEPS, THEY WERE ABLE TO PICK OUT THE SOLITARY FIGURE OF A MAN.

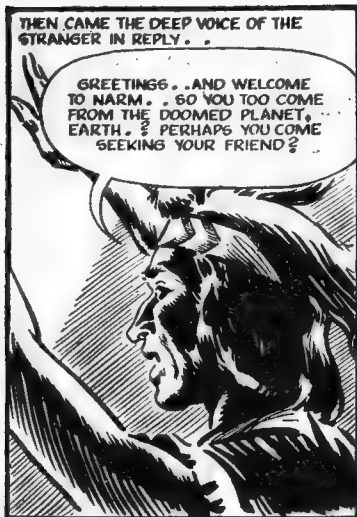
LOOK! THERE'S SOMEBODY UP THERE!



THE TALL FIGURE SNAPPED HIS FINGERS. THE DOOR OF THE HELICOPTER CLOSED BEHIND THEM AND IT TOOK OFF ONCE AGAIN. THEY WERE NOW LEFT ALONE WITH THE LONE FIGURE GAZING STERNLY DOWN UPON THEM.

GREETINGS FROM EARTH. . WE COME TO YOUR PLANET AS FRIENDS. WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE CONTACT WITH YOUR LEADERS AS WE HAVE AN URGENT MISSION TO PERFORM. .





THE FIGURE THEN CLAPPED HIS HANDS, AND SUDDENLY, AS IF BY MAGIC, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE APPEARED FROM BETWEEN THE COLONNADES.



AT THE MENTION OF THE "DEDE" THE FIGURE TURNED AND MADE A SALUTATION TOWARDS THE EMPTY NICHE BEHIND HIM. AND THE CROWD ALL DID LIKE-WISE.



DEDE...?
THAT SOUNDS FAMILIAR!
I WONDER IF...?



THEY WERE THEN TAKEN THROUGH AN ENORMOUS BUILDING WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE BURIED IN THE HEART OF A MOUNTAIN.

GOOH!
A HOLLOW MOUNTAIN!
THIS IS ALMOST
UNBELIEVABLE!

AND THE WHOLE THING
IS MAN-MADE! WHAT
A FANTASTIC FEAT
OF ENGINEERING!



THIS IS REALLY
AMAZING! IN TECHNICAL
SKILL THESE PEOPLE ARE
HUNDREDS OF YEARS
AHEAD OF US. AND YET...
AND YET...

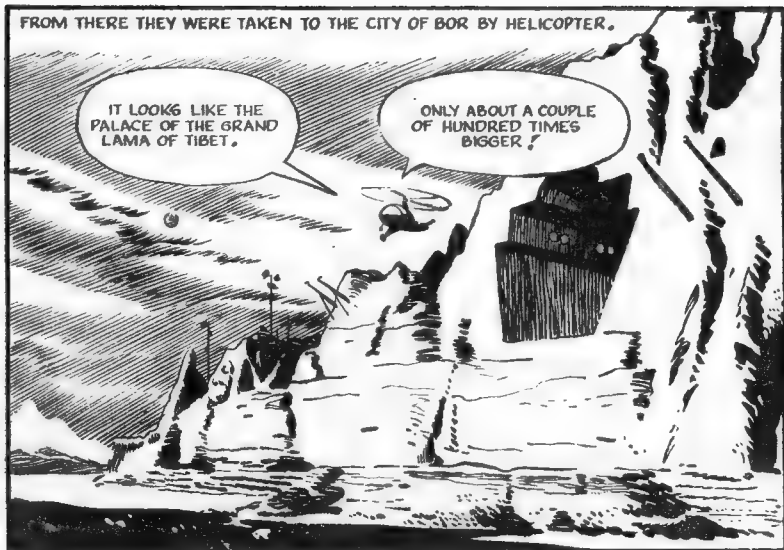
AND YET THEY SEEM TO BE NO
MORE THAN A TRIBE OF SUPERSTITIOUS
SAVAGES, EH, LUIGI? I CAN'T QUITE
PUT IT ALL TOGETHER JUST YET,
BUT I THINK WE'LL SOON FIND THE
EXPLANATION TO IT ALL!



FROM THERE THEY WERE TAKEN TO THE CITY OF BOR BY HELICOPTER.

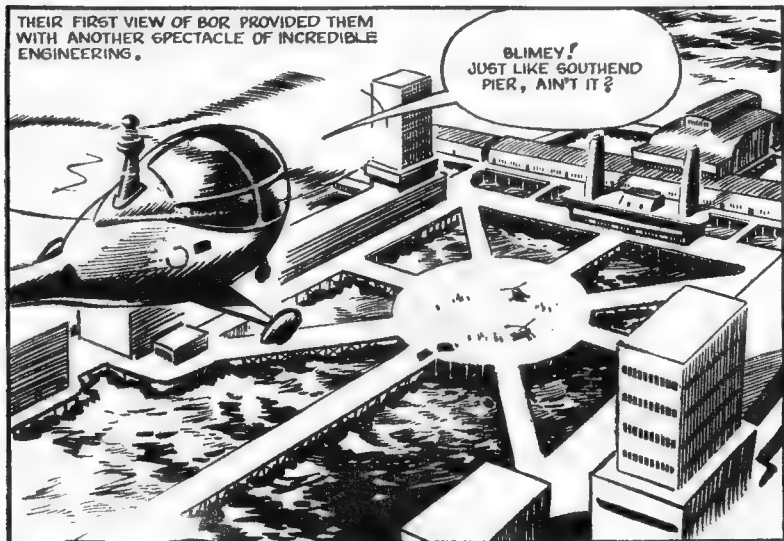
IT LOOKS LIKE THE
PALACE OF THE GRAND
LAMA OF TIBET.

ONLY ABOUT A COUPLE
OF HUNDRED TIMES
BIGGER!



THEIR FIRST VIEW OF BOR PROVIDED THEM
WITH ANOTHER SPECTACLE OF INCREDIBLE
ENGINEERING.

BLIMEY!
JUST LIKE SOUTHBEND
PIER, AIN'T IT?



ON LANDING, THE LITTLE BAND WERE CONDUCTED THROUGH THE STREETS TO THE PALACE OF THE ELDERS.

WE SHALL SOON BE AT THE PALACE OF THE ELDERS. IT IS NOT A MILE FROM HERE.

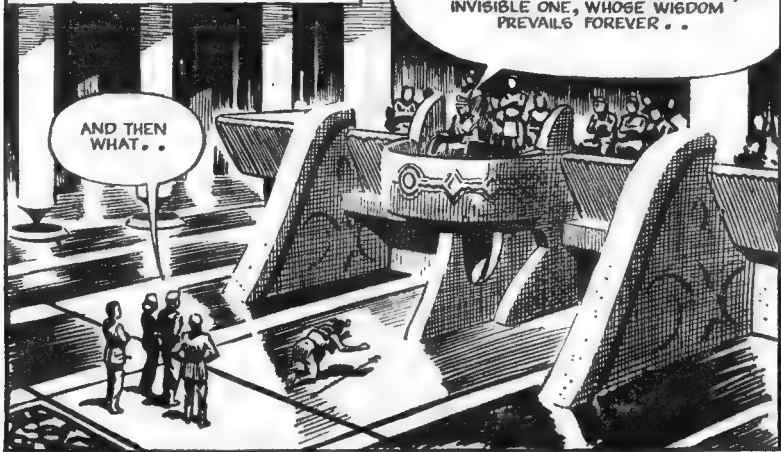
BLIMEY! CAN'T WE CATCH A BUG OR SOMETHING?



EVENTUALLY THEY WERE LED INTO A CHAMBER IN A LARGE BUILDING THAT LOOKED LIKE A MUSEUM. HERE SAT THE ELDERS WAITING TO DECIDE THE FATE OF THE LITTLE BAND.

.. YOU HAVE COME FROM THE DOOMED PLANET EARTH UNTO NARM, THE HOME OF THE GODS. HERE, MY FRIENDS, YOU WILL BE MADE WELCOME, UNTIL WE HAVE PRAYED UNTO DEDE, THE INVISIBLE ONE, WHOSE WISDOM PREVAILS FOREVER ..

AND THEN WHAT ..





WHATSOEVER DEDE DECIDES, SO SHALL BE DONE UNTO YOU. IF YOU ARE TRUE FRIENDS OF NARM YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR; THE GODS WILL PROTECT YOU. BUT IF YOU ARE ENEMIES OF THE GODS, DEDE, WHO CAN SEE INTO THE HEARTS OF MEN, WILL CALL FOR A CEREMONIAL SACRIFICE..



ASK THEM ABOUT JOHN, RICK. WE MUST FIND OUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.

CEREMONIAL SACRIFICE...?
I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.
I HOPE THIS DEDE BLOKE RECKONS
WE'RE ON HIS SIDE.

ALMOST AS IF HE HAD HEARD LANA'S WHISPERED MESSAGE TO RICK, THE LEADER OF THE ELDERS THEN TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO JOHN GRANT.

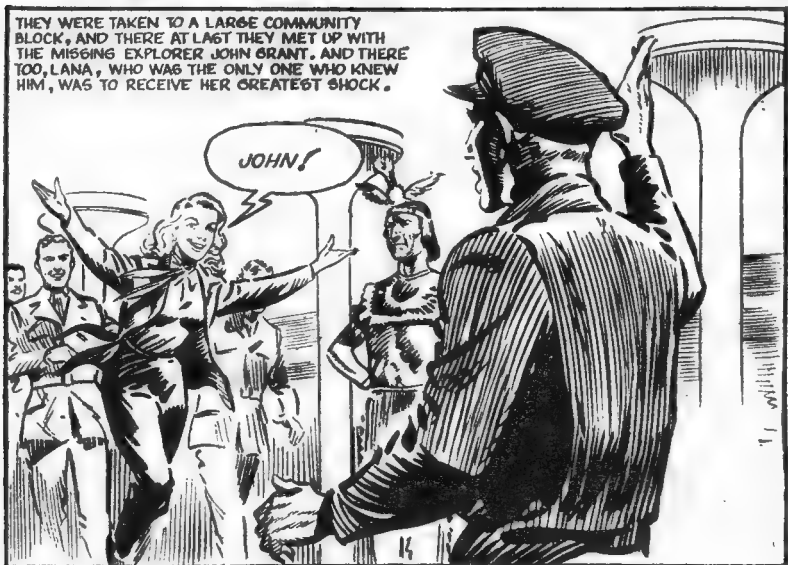
NO DOUBT YOU HAVE COME HERE TO SEEK AFTER YOUR FELLOW EARTH-FRIEND. HE INCURRED THE WRATH OF THE GOD VARGAN BY LANDING ON HIS MOON, AND NOW HE AWAITS THE ECLIPSE OF VARGAN, WHEN HE SHALL BE SACRIFICED. THUS SPOKE DEDE, THE LIVING GOD AND THE VOICE OF ALL WISDOM.. IF YOU WISH TO VISIT YOUR FRIEND, YOU WILL BE FREE TO DO SO. YOUR GUIDE WILL CONDUCT YOU TO HIM NOW.



ON FINISHING HIS SPEECH, THE LEADER OF THE ELDERS TURNED AND OFFERED UP A PRAYER TO THE IDOLS BEHIND HIM AND THEN CAME THE CEREMONY OF THE WINE. IN THIS A BOWL WAS PASSED ALONG AND EACH ELDER DRANK FROM IT IN TURN, WHILST THE VARIOUS NARMIANS WITHIN THE CHAMBER INTONED A LOW CHANT.



THEY WERE TAKEN TO A LARGE COMMUNITY BLOCK, AND THERE AT LAST THEY MET UP WITH THE MISSING EXPLORER JOHN GRANT. AND THERE TOO, LANA, WHO WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW HIM, WAS TO RECEIVE HER GREATEST SHOCK.





LANA. ?
WHAT IS THIS
ALL ABOUT?

THERE'S SOMETHING
STRANGE HERE, LUIGI.
I THOUGHT HE WAS SUPPOSED
TO BE A CAPTIVE. . HE SEEMS
TO BE FREE TO GO AROUND
JUST AS HE PLEASES. .



LANA WAS TOO EXCITED AND HAPPY TO
NOTICE THE QUEER CHANGE THAT HAD
COME OVER JOHN. BUT SOON AFTER SHE
HAD INTRODUCED HIM TO THE OTHERS SHE
BEGAN TO NOTICE ODD THINGS ABOUT HIS
BEHAVIOUR. .

I-ER-YES-ER.
RICK RANDOM? WHAT ARE. .
I MEAN, HOW DO YOU DO?
I'M-ER- PLEASED TO
MEET YOU.

I SUPPOSE
I SHOULD SAY
"OR LIVINGSTONE,"
I PRESUME?



A MEAL WAS THEN PREPARED FOR THE PARTY,
AND WHEN IT WAS OVER, AND THERE WERE NO
NARMANS WITHIN EARSHOT, LANA BROUGHT
UP THE SUBJECT OF PLANNING AN ESCAPE WITH
JOHN.

JOHN, YOU'VE GOT TO
TELL US EVERYTHING YOU'VE
FOUND OUT ABOUT THESE
PEOPLE. SOMEHOW WE'VE
GOT TO PLAN A WAY OF
ESCAPE. .

ESCAPE? DID YOU SAY ESCAPE?
ESCAPE FROM WHAT? THE PLANET
OF NARM, THE HOME OF THE GODS?
HOW CAN YOU EVEN THINK OF
GOING BACK TO THE DOOMED PLANET,
EARTH! . MAY DEDE, THE
INVIGIBLE ONE, HAVE MERCY
UPON YOU?

I DON'T GO MUCH ON THIS WINE.
I DON'T SEE HOW YOU PEOPLE CAN
DRINK IT. IT TASTES LIKE NOTHING ON
EARTH. . COME TO THINK OF IT, THAT'S
JUST WHAT IT IS. ISN'T IT? ANYWAY,
YOU CAN GIVE ME A GOOD OLD-
FASHIONED GLASS OF BEER ANY TIME!

KEN LITTLE THOUGHT HOW IMPORTANT THAT GLASS OF WINE WAS TO PROVE. .

LANA PAID NO ATTENTION TO KEN. SHE WAS JUST ABOUT TO GIVE VENT TO HER ASTONISHMENT AT JOHN'S OUTBURST, WHEN RICK SILENCED HER WITH A WARNING GLANCE. RICK MADE OUT THAT LANA WAS MERELY JOKING AND THEN MANAGED TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT. BUT AS SOON AS THEY WERE SEPARATED FROM JOHN, HE SUDDENLY GREW SERIOUS.



I THINK I'M BEGINNING TO FIT THE PIECES TOGETHER. THIS GOD DEDE. . . HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A GOD WITH A VOICE. . . IF MY GUESS IS CORRECT HE'S GOT A BODY TOO, AND HE'S NONE OTHER THAN OUR OLD FRIEND DEDEKIND. THESE PEOPLE HERE ARE THE DESCENDANTS OF THE ORIGINAL INDIAN TRIBE THAT DISAPPEARED FROM THE ANDES SPACE STATION. HE BROUGHT THEM HERE AND NOW HE RULES OVER THEM LIKE A GOD. IN FACT HE'S SET HIMSELF UP AS A GOD!

BUT THERE'S A LOT OF QUESTIONS WE'VE GOT TO ANSWER YET. HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT THEY ALL SEEM TO WALK ABOUT AS IF THEY WERE ALMOST IN A TRANCE? IT SEEMS AS IF THEY ARE REMOTELY CONTROLLED LIKE THEIR HELICOPTERS ARE. IT'S AS IF THEY WERE A COLONY OF ANTS. AND LOOK AT THE QUEER WAY JOHN IS BEHAVING ~ ~



JUST THEN THEY WERE INTERRUPTED BY KEN.

LISTEN. I THINK I'VE DISCOVERED SOMETHING. YOU SEE THESE PICTURES ROUND THE WALLS? WELL, THEY DEPICT THE HISTORY OF THE NARMIANIS FROM THE TIME THEY LEFT EARTH! D'YOU KNOW SOMETHING? THEY'RE BLINKIN' INCAS! APPARENTLY SOME TIME AGO A GOD NAMED DEDE CAME DOWN TO EARTH AND TOLD THEM THAT THEY HAD BEEN SENT FOR TO LIVE AMONG THE GODS THEMSELVES!

SEEMS YOU'RE RIGHT, RICK!



AND THEN FOR THE FIRST TIME THEY HEARD
THE VOICE OF DEDE HIMSELF.

PEOPLE OF NARM . .
THE SHADOWS ARE CAST . . THE GODS
ARE STIRRING IN THE GKIES . . THE HOUR
OF PRAYER IS COME . PREPARE TO DO
HOMAGE UNTO VARGAN, THE GOD OF
SCIENCE, MARCEN THE GOD OF THE SEAG,
AND UNTO DEDE THE INVISIBLE,
THE VOICE OF THE MOON.

WHAT THE . .
WHERE IS THAT
COMING FROM ?

AS THE DEEP VOICE DRONED ON, THE NARMIANS
BEGAN TO MAKE THEIR WAY OUT OF THE BUILDING.
BUT A STRANGE THING HAPPENED TO LANA AND
KEN. THEY BOTH BEGAN TO SWAY AS IF THEY
HAD SUDDENLY BECOME DIZZY.

VARGAN . ? DEDE . ?
THE HOUR OF PRAYER ?
YES, IT'S THE HOUR OF PRAYER . .
WE MUST PAY HOMAGE . .

LANA !
WHAT'S HAPPENING
TO YOU ?



HAD RICK NOT RESTRAINED HER, LANA WOULD HAVE FOLLOWED THE INDIANS OUT OF THE BUILDING. SEEING THAT KEN HAD RECOVERED, RICK TOLD HIM TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE GIRL WHILE HE WENT OUT AND INVESTIGATED.

HERE, WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, LANA? YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'VE BEEN FRIGHTENED.

QUICK, LUIGI, FOLLOW ME!

RICK AND LUIGI THEN FOLLOWED THE CROWDS TOWARDS A BUILDING ON ONE OF THE ADJOINING PLATFORMS.

LOOK BELOW, RICK!
AN UNDERWATER GENERATING
PLANT OPERATED BY THE
TIDES!

NEVER MIND
ABOUT THAT RIGHT
NOW, LUIGI.
COME ON!



RICK HAD FELT SOMETHING COMPELLING ABOUT THE STRANGE VOICE EVER SINCE HE HAD FIRST HEARD IT, AND ONLY BY A GREAT EFFORT OF WILL HAD HE MANAGED TO KEEP HIS HEAD CLEAR. HE MOTIONED TO LUIGI TO KEEP QUIET AS THEY WITNESSED THE STRANGE RITUALS THAT WERE TAKING PLACE BELOW. EVENTUALLY THE LEADER OF THE ELDERS STEPPED FORWARD AND, IN A CLEAR VOICE, ADDRESSED THE GOD.

O DEDE, GOD OF MIGHT, GRANT US WISDOM. DIRECT US IN THY WAYS. MAKE KNOWN UNTO US THY WILL SO THAT WE MAY ACT ACCORDING TO THY LAWS. MAKE KNOWN UNTO US THY JUDGEMENT ON THE STRANGERS WHO HAVE COME TO DWELL UPON OUR PLANET. HOW SAY THE GODS OF THE MOONS ? SPEAK UNTO US O VOICE OF THE GODS.

RICK AND LUIGI WAITED TENSELY TO HEAR WHAT WAS TO BE THEIR FATE. FOR SOME TIME THERE WAS SILENCE. AND THEN THE VOICE SPOKE. .

THUS SPEAK THE GODS. .
THESE STRANGERS HAVE OFFENDED US.
YOU CAN ONLY LET THEM DWELL AMONG
YOU AT YOUR OWN PERIL. THEY MUST
BE SACRIFICED AT THE RITUAL OF THE
FULL MOONS, IN THE SACRED LIGHT
OF VARGAN. THE GODS
HAVE SPOKEN!



RICK AND LUIGI HURRIED BACK TO THE COMMUNITY-BLOCK AND TOLD THE OTHERS WHAT THEY HAD HEARD.

SO THEY'VE DECIDED TO PUT US ON THE OLD CHOPPING BLOCK, HAVE THEY? WELL, NOW'S THE TIME WE START GOING IN FOR SOME ACTION. THE ONLY HOPE WE'VE GOT IS TO FIGHT OUR WAY OUT!

I DON'T THINK SO, KEN. . . HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT THESE PEOPLE CARRY NO ARMS AND THAT THEY'VE NEVER TRIED TO USE FORCE IN ANY WAY? I'VE GOT A HUNCH THAT THEY DON'T EXPECT US TO PUT UP A STRUGGLE. AND THEY'RE MOST LIKELY RIGHT, TOO. THEY KNOW THAT WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO JOHN WILL BE HAPPENING TO US SOON. WE'VE GOT ONLY OURSELVES TO BE AFRAID OF. . . AND THE VOICE OF DEDE!



THAT'S PRECISELY WHAT I DO MEAN. LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO LANA AND KEN. . . I FELT AS IF THE VOICE WAS AFFECTING ME, TOO. DIDN'T YOU?



EH. ? YOU DON'T THINK WE'RE ALL GOING TO BE HYPNOTIZED OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, DO YOU? WHY, THAT'S UNBELIEVABLE!



I MUST ADMIT I FELT AS IF I WAS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF A STRONG SUGGESTIVE IMPULSE. I ONCE DID SOME EXPERIMENTS WITH SOME OF MY SCIENTIFIC COLLEAGUES TO TEST WHETHER CERTAIN DRUGS WERE ABLE TO MAKE A PERSON EASILY SUSCEPTIBLE TO HYPNOSIS. IT WAS MUCH THE SAME SORT OF EXPERIENCE. .



JUST AS RICK GURMISED, THE NARMIANs MADE NO EFFORT WHATSOEVER TO USE FORCE. IT WAS JUST AS IF THEY EXPECTED RICK AND HIS FRIENDS TO ACCEPT THEIR FATE UNCOMPLAININGLY.

THEY WERE SHOWN TO THEIR ROOM, WHICH WAS NOT LOCKED IN ANY WAY, AS IF THEY WERE HONOURED GUESTS.

DON'T GIVE ME ANY OF THAT MUCK, LUIGI. IT'S THE SAME WINE WE HAD AT DINNER. I'VE HAD A SNIFF OF IT.

THANKS FOR THE DRINKS, FELLOWS. YOU TWO GO AHEAD AND TURN IN. I'M GOING WITH LANA TO SEE IF WE CAN FIND WHAT'S HAPPENED TO JOHN.

ON ENQUIRING JOHN'S WHEREABOUTS FROM ONE OF THE NARMIANs, RICK AND LANA WERE DIRECTED TO A ROOM AT THE OTHER END OF THE BUILDING.

THE END DOOR. ?
THANKS. . . COME ON,
LANA, THIS WAY.

BUT WHEN THEY REACHED THE ROOM THEY FOUND THAT JOHN WASN'T THERE. THEY WERE WONDERING WHETHER OR NOT TO WAIT WHEN THEY HEARD THE VOICE AGAIN. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, IT SPOKE IN A QUIET INSIDIOUS WHISPER.

THE PEOPLE OF NARM ARE THE PEOPLE CHOSEN TO LEAVE EARTH AND LIVE AMONG THE GODS. THEY ARE THE ONES CHOSEN TO HEAR THE VOICE OF THE MOON. DEDE IS THE GREAT ONE. THE UNSEEN ONE WHO SEES ALL. UNTO DEDE MUST BE PAID HOMAGE. UNTO DEDE MUST SACRIFICE BE MADE.

..UNTO..UNTO DEDE..
SACRIFICE..YES. UNTO
DEDE MUST SACRIFICE
BE MADE.

RICK COULD FEEL THE VOICE SWAYING HIM TOO, AS IF IT WERE STIRRING UP SOME BLIND IMPULSE WITHIN HIM THAT HAD TO BE OBEYED. BUT AT THE SIGHT OF LANA GOING INTO A TRANCE, HE REALISED WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO HIM.

QUICK, LANA. WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE. AWAY FROM THAT VOICE!

HOMAGE UNTO DEDE. .

WHEN THEY GOT BACK TO THE OTHERS, THEY FOUND THAT KEN HAD BEEN HAVING MUCH THE SAME TROUBLE WITH LUIGI.

THAT VOICE STARTED UP AND THEN LUIGI STARTED GOING OFF HIS ROCKER. BUT I SOON PUT A STOP TO IT. I FOUND OUT IT WAS COMING FROM THIS LOUDSPEAKER FIXED INTO THE WALL. I SORT OF UNFIXED IT.

I KNOW. WE HEARD IT TOO. WEREN'T YOU AFFECTED?

WHO, ME? NOT ON YOUR LIFE! IT JUST GOUNDED LIKE A LOAD OF OLD EYE-WASH TO ME. BUT WE WENT INTO A PROPER STUPOR. I THOUGHT HE'D DRUNK TOO MUCH OF THAT STINKING WINE AT FIRST.

THE WINE! THAT'S IT, KEN. THE STUFF'S LOADED! DON'T YOU SEE? YOU HAVEN'T DRUNK ANY MORE AND YOU HAVEN'T BEEN AFFECTED. IT MOST LIKELY CONTAINS SOME DRUG THAT REDUCES YOUR RESISTANCE TO HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION. THAT'S HOW DEDE RULES THIS WHOLE PLANET! NO WONDER EVERYBODY HERE LOOKS AS IF THEY'RE WALKING ABOUT IN A DREAM!

YOU MEAN TO SAY THIS WINE IS THEIR SORT OF NATIONAL DRINK, AND THAT EVERYBODY HERE IS DRUGGED SO THAT DEDE CAN TELL THEM JUST WHAT HE WANTS THEM TO DO?

THAT'S IT, RICK. IT'S VERY SIMILAR TO WHAT USED TO BE CALLED THE TRUTH DRUG IN THE OLD DAYS. ONLY INSTEAD OF MAKING YOU TELL THE TRUTH IT MAKES YOU BELIEVE ANYTHING YOU ARE TOLD IT TAKES AWAY YOUR WILL, AS IT WERE.



ONCE RICK HAD DISCOVERED THE NATURE OF THE WEAPON THEY WERE FIGHTING AGAINST HE WAS ABLE TO MAKE HIS PLANS ACCORDINGLY.

OKAY THEN. THIS IS OUR PLAN. WE'VE GOT TO STOP THE TRANSMITTING SYSTEM GIVING OUT MESSAGES. AND WE'VE GOT TO COME FACE TO FACE WITH OTTO DEDEKING HIMSELF. IF WE CAN SHOW HIM TO THE PEOPLE OF NARM AS JUST ANOTHER MORTAL LIKE THEMSELVES WE'RE ON THE WAY TO STOPPING ALL HIS HOCUS-FOCUS.



HERE'S WHAT WE DO FIRST. TOMORROW WE SEE IF WE CAN GET A LOOK ROUND THE PLANET. WE LOOK FOR SOME SORT OF A TRANSMITTING STATION. THAT SHOULD LEAD US TO HIM. ONCE WE'VE LOCATED HIM, WE'LL HAVE TO SEE HOW WE CAN DEAL WITH HIM ACCORDING TO WHAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THERE. AND NOBODY TOUCHES ANY WINE. OR DON'T I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT?



EARLY THE FOLLOWING MORNING THE THREE MEN MADE THEIR WAY DOWN AND ENQUIRED WHETHER THEY COULD SEE THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRYSIDE.

A HELICOPTER WILL BE PLACED AT YOUR DISPOSAL. ZUNA HERE WILL CONDUCT YOU ROUND AND SHOW YOU ALL YOU WISH TO SEE.



AND SO THEY SET OUT ON THEIR QUEST. THE ONLY HOPE THEY HAD OF ESCAPING FROM WHAT WAS CERTAIN DEATH TO THEM ALL.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIEND, THE EARTH-WOMAN. DOES SHE NOT WISH TO JOIN YOU?

ER...NO. WE THINK SHE'LL BE WANTING A REST THIS MORNING.

ALL ABOARD THE SKY-LARK AND TWICE ROUND THE PLANET FOR A TANNER!

AS THEY CIRCLED ROUND THE STRANGE PLANET, THEY WERE TREATED TO A SPECTACLE OF ONE MAGNIFICENT FEAT OF ENGINEERING AFTER ANOTHER. BUT THEY HAD LITTLE TIME TO TAKE MUCH NOTICE OF THESE THINGS. THEY WERE TOO BUSY LOOKING FOR SOME SIGN THAT WOULD LEAD THEM TO DEDEKIND.



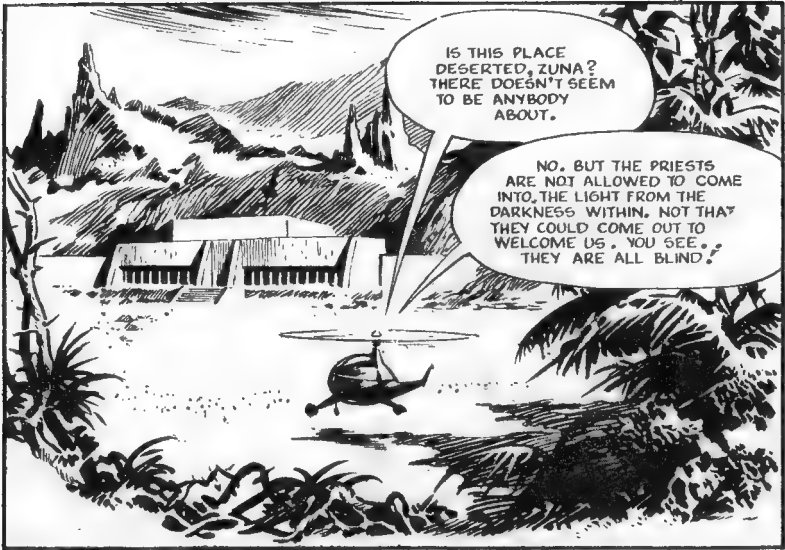
AFTER SOME TIME THEY CAME ACROSS A LITTLE CLEARING AMONG SOME DENSE FOLIAGE AND HERE THEY SAW WHAT APPEARED TO BE A WIRELESS POST BUILT INTO THE MOUNTAINSIDE.



RICK AND LUIGI EXCHANGED SIGNIFICANT GLANCES AT THIS OFFER, HARDLY DARING TO HOPE THAT THEY WOULD FIND WHAT THEY WERE SEEKING. RICK TOLD ZUNA, THEIR GUIDE, THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO AND SO THEY DESCENDED.

DEDE IS THE ONLY GOD WHO HAS A TEMPLE DEVOTED TO HIMSELF ALONE. THE INNER SANCTUM IS COMPLETELY TABOO TO ALL BUT THE HIGH PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES. NEVERTHELESS I WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE YOU IN AS FAR AS THE HALL OF WORSHIP.





IS THIS PLACE
DESERTED, ZUNA?
THERE DOESN'T SEEM
TO BE ANYBODY
ABOUT.

NO, BUT THE PRIESTS
ARE NOT ALLOWED TO COME
INTO, THE LIGHT FROM THE
DARKNESS WITHIN. NOT THAT
THEY COULD COME OUT TO
WELCOME US, YOU SEE.
THEY ARE ALL BLIND.



THIS LOOKS AS IF WE'RE ON THE
RIGHT TRACK, RICK. SOMEWHERE INSIDE
THAT MOUNTAIN WE'RE GOING TO FIND
MR. DEDEKIND SENDING OUT HIS
MESSAGES TO THE DOPED POPULATION
OF NARM.

YES, I THINK SO TOO, LUIGI.
HE'S GOT IT WELL-ORGANISED
ALL RIGHT. THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO
ARE ALLOWED INTO THE INNER
SANCTUM ARE ALL BLIND. HE
SEEMS TO HAVE THOUGHT
OF EVERYTHING!



SUDDENLY A GREAT BLAZE OF LIGHT BURST OUT. RICK AND HIS FRIENDS BLINKED AS THEY PEERED UP AT A FIGURE SEATED ON A THRONE AT THE FAR END OF THE HALL. THEN, WHEN THEY SAW WHO IT WAS THEY GASPED WITH INCREDULOUS AMAZEMENT!

IT... IT
CAN'T BE!

LANA!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT.
IT'S A TRICK!

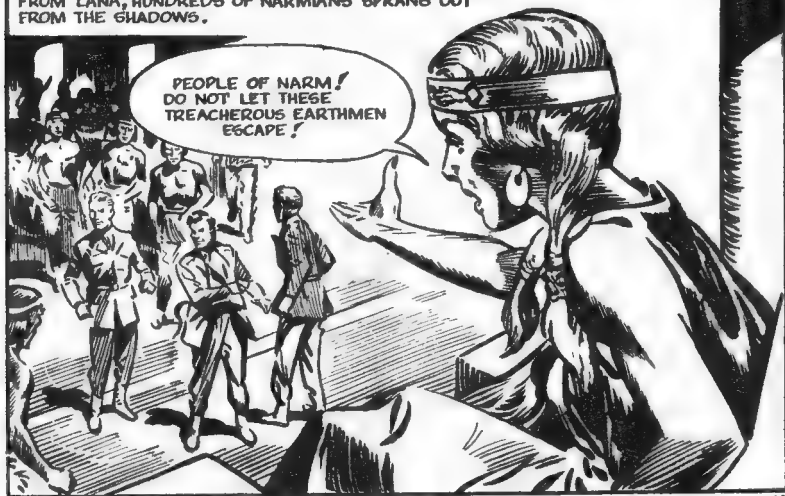


TRACHEROUS EARTHMEN! GO YOU THOUGHT TO OVERTHROW THE MIGHTY DEDE, DEDE, THE GOD OF GODS WHO CAN SEE INTO THE HEARTS OF MEN. FOOLS! DID YOU THINK FOR ONE MOMENT THAT YOU COULD OUTWIT THE POWER THAT LED THE PEOPLE OF NARM TO THE HOME OF THE GODS?



RICK, THE FIRST ONE TO RECOVER FROM THIS SHOCK, WENT TO RUN FORWARD, BUT AT A SIGNAL FROM LANA, HUNDREDS OF NARMIAN SPRANG OUT FROM THE SHADOWS.

PEOPLE OF NARM!
DO NOT LET THESE
TRACHEROUS EARTHMEN
ESCAPE!



THE LITTLE GROUP OF EARTHMEN IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO TRY AND FIGHT THEIR WAY OUT, BUT THEY WERE SOON OVERCOME BY THE ATHLETIC NARMIANS.

TAKE THAT!



TAKE THEM AWAY TO THE PENANCE CELL. THEY MUST NOW BE KEPT THERE UNTIL THE TIME FOR THEIR SACRIFICE ARRIVES.



JUST AS THEY WERE BEING DRAGGED AWAY,
THE VOICE OF DEDE WAS HEARD ONCE MORE.

PEOPLE OF NARM, HEarken UNTO THE
VOICE OF DEDE. I HAVE DECREED THAT
THE EARTH-WOMAN WHO HAS COME
FROM OUTER SPACE TO DELIVER UNTO US
A MORTAL SACRIFICE, SHALL BE APPOINTED
AS THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE SACRIFICIAL
RITES. WHEN THE LIGHT OF VARGAN
STRIKES THE SACRED ALTAR TOMORROW
NIGHT SHE SHALL BE THE APPOINTED ONE
WHO WILL DELIVER THEIR BODIES UP
TO THE GODS. THUS SPEAKS DEDE.



THE LITTLE PARTY WERE THEN LED AWAY
AND THROWN INTO A NARROW CELL.

THERE'S NO CHANCE OF
ESCAPE THIS WAY. IT'S
MUCH TOO SMALL.

AND TO THINK THAT
YOUNG LANA WAS WORKING
WITH THEM ALL THE TIME. IT AIN'T
CREDITABLE, AND THAT GIRL ZUNA
... SHE LOOKS SUCH A NICE GIRL
TOO. ... WHY? I HAD HER ALL
LINED UP FOR A DATE AT
THE FLICKS.



LATER ON THAT DAY RICK NOTICED
SOMETHING STRANGE GOING ON IN THE
PASSAGEWAY OUTSIDE THEIR CELL. HE
SAW SOME OF THE BLIND PRIESTS TAKING
FOOD ALONG AND LEAVING IT OUTSIDE
A LARGE DOOR.

THAT'S TWICE THAT'S HAPPENED. HE
JUST COMES ALONG WITH A TRAY OF FOOD
AND LEAVES IT OUTSIDE SOME SORT OF
A DOOR DOWN THERE. LATER HE COMES
BACK AND RETURNS WITH AN EMPTY
TRAY. ... I'VE GOT A HUNCH THAT
SOMEWHERE DOWN THERE WE'LL FIND
OUR FRIEND DEDEKIND.



FOR HOURS ON END THE TRAPPED MEN RACKED THEIR BRAINS FOR SOME PLAN OF ESCAPE, BUT THE MORE THEY THOUGHT ABOUT IT THE MORE HOPELESS IT SEEMED.

WHAT SORT OF MAN CAN THIS DEDEKIND BE? HE LIVES ALONE IN THE HEART OF A MOUNTAIN WITH MAYBE JUST A FEW OF THE ORIGINAL TECHNICIANS HE BROUGHT HERE FROM EARTH TWENTY YEARS AGO. AND JUST WITH HIS VOICE ALONE HE CONTROLS THIS WHOLE POPULATION.



AS I SEE IT, IT'S THE OLD STORY OF THE GENIUS WHO DIDN'T RECEIVE THE RECOGNITION THAT WAS HIS DUE AND THEN BECAME EMBITTERED. NOW HE LIVES IN A WORLD OF HIS OWN CREATING, WHERE HE REIGNS AS A GOD. I'VE NO DOUBT THAT HE REALLY BELIEVES HE IS SOME SORT OF A GOD. THE MAN'S OBVIOUSLY A DANGEROUS LUNATIC. . . MAYBE WHEN HE DISCOVERED THIS PLANET THE MOON'S GOT HIM!

BUT THAT'S NOT SO REMARKABLE REALLY WHEN YOU REMEMBER THAT HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO KEEP THE WHOLE POPULATION DOPED WITH SOME SORT OF DRUG!

OH, YES IT IS. REMEMBER TOO, THAT HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO HYPNOTIZE THEM BY VOICE ALONE. THE USUAL AND EASIEST METHOD OF HYPNOTISM IS TO GET THE SUBJECT TO STARE AT SOME BRIGHT OBJECT UNTIL IT FILLS THEIR WHOLE CONSCIOUSNESS. THE HYPNOTIST'S JOB IS THEN QUITE SIMPLE. I KNOW, BECAUSE IN MY STUDENT DAYS I DID QUITE A BIT OF IT MYSELF. .



DO YOU REALISE TOO THAT ALL THESE WONDERFUL FEATS OF ENGINEERING HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY HIS METHODS OF MASS HYPNOSIS! THE INDIAN TRIBE THAT DISAPPEARED WAS NOT IN THE LEAST CIVILISED. HE MUST HAVE CARRIED OUT ALL HIS PLANS FOR BUILDING THESE CITIES BY USING THEM AS SORT OF LIVING AUTOMATONS.



IT SEEMS TO ME, LUIGI, THAT DEDEKIND MUST HAVE SOME REASON FOR NOT LETTING THE PEOPLE SEE HIM. MAYBE HE'S TERRIBLY DEFORMED OR A WIZENED LITTLE RUNT OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.



WHAT DID YOU SAY? DID YOU SAY THAT YOU COULD HYPNOTIZE ANYBODY QUITE EASILY?

ER... WELL, YES. PROVIDED THEY WERE DRUGGED FIRST AND THAT I HAD SOMETHING LIKE A WATCH-CHAIN OR DIAMOND RING. AND PROVIDED, OF COURSE, THE SUBJECT WAS ESPECIALLY OPEN TO SUGGESTION..



A GLEAM CAME INTO RICK'S EYES. HE HAD SEEN A WAY OUT AT LAST! IT WAS A MILLION TO ONE CHANCE, BUT IT WAS THEIR ONLY HOPE. AFRAID THAT THERE MIGHT BE A DICTAPHONE CONCEALED IN THE CELL, HE LOWERED HIS VOICE AND WHISPERED HIS PLAN TO THE OTHER TWO.

WELL, IT'S LIKE THIS. HAVING NO WILLS OF THEIR OWN, THESE NARMIAN'S CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE ACT THE WAY WE DO. IF ONE OF THEM WAS TOLD THAT HE WAS TO BE SACRIFICED, HE'D THINK IT WAS QUITE NATURAL. LOOK AT THE WAY JOHN GRANT BEHAVED. WHAT WE DO IS THIS..



THAT EVENING WHEN THE GUARD CAME TO BRING THEM THEIR SUPPER, HE FOUND RICK AND HIS FRIENDS ALL DOWN ON THEIR KNEES OFFERING UP PRAYERS TO THE GREAT GOD DEDE.

ALL HOMAGE TO DEDE, THE WISE ONE. UNTO DEDE LET SACRIFICE BE MADE.

YER... GOOD OLD DEDE... PRAISE HIM AND ALL THAT..



FORGIVE US, O DEDE, FOR ERRING FROM THY WAYS. WE THAT HAVE DONE PENANCE NOW PRAY UNTO YOU FOR THY MERCY. GRANT US THE BLESSING OF WORSHIPPING YOU IN THE TEMPLE OF WORSHIP SO THAT WE MAY DEDICATE OUR LIVES TO THE EVERLASTING GODS..



THE NARMIAN GUARDS WERE MUCH IMPRESSED BY THE SHOW THAT RICK AND THE OTHERS PUT ON. AND FINALLY RICK WAS ABLE TO PERSUADE THEM TO LET HIM SEE THE HIGH PRIESTESS, LANA.

OKAY, LUIGI, THIS IS IT. WE'LL KEEP THE GUARDS OCCUPIED WHILE YOU GET TO WORK ON LANA. IF THIS FAILS WE'RE SUNK!



AS LANA ENTERED, RICK AND KEN FELL ON THEIR KNEES AND BEGAN BOWING TO LUIGI. THE SUPERSTITIOUS GUARDS FELL BACK SURPRISED, WONDERING WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT. RICK DIDN'T KEEP THEM IN SUSPENSE TOO LONG.

THE VOICE OF DEDE HAS SPOKEN TO US HERE IN THIS CELL. HE HAS HEARD OUR PRAYERS AND HAS ANSWERED THEM. AND UNTO OUR FRIEND HERE HE HAS DELIVERED A SECRET MESSAGE WHICH MUST BE CONVEYED TO THE HIGH PRIESTESS AT ONCE!



THE NARMIANS WERE ALL CONFUSED BY THIS. HAVING VERY LITTLE WILL-POWER OF THEIR OWN, THEY COULD HARDLY FACE UP TO IT WHEN IT CAME TO MAKING SUDDEN DECISIONS. BUT LUIGI'S PENETRATING EYES FIXED UPON THEM, AND BY HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION, HE SOON MADE UP THEIR MINDS FOR THEM. ALMOST IN A DAZE, THEY DID AS THEY WERE ORDERED.

TAKE THESE TWO EARTH-TRAITORS OUT AND LEAVE ME HERE ALONE WITH THE HIGH PRIESTESS. SUCH IS THE WILL OF DEDE!



FEELING IN SOME WAY THAT EVERYTHING WAS ALL RIGHT AS LONG AS THEY KEPT HOLD OF THE OTHER TWO, THE GUARDS HURRIED OUT AND WAITED IN THE TEMPLE BEYOND UNTIL THEIR PRIESTESS WOULD CALL FOR THEM.

I HOPE THAT KEY-RING OF MINE DOES THE TRICK. I'LL NEVER BE WANTING TO LET MYSELF IN LATE AT NIGHT IF IT DOESN'T!

DEDE HAS THE POWER TO STRIKE HIS SERVANTS DOWN AT ONE STROKE. HE IS THE MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE. LET THOSE THAT FEAR HIM BEWARE OF HIS MIGHT.



MEANWHILE, LUIGI IMMEDIATELY SET ABOUT INDUCING LANA INTO A STATE OF HYPNOTIC COMA.

THE GODS HAVE TOLD ME THAT YOU ARE TIRED, O PRIESTESS... TIRED... TIRED... YOU LONG TO SLEEP... A DEEP DEEP SLEEP... YOU LONG FOR PEACE AND REST... YOUR MIND IS TROUBLED AND YOU ARE CRYING FOR SLEEP TO COME UPON YOU...



YOU ARE WEARY... WEARY... YOUR EYES ARE HEAVY... YOUR EYELIDS LONG TO CLOSE GENTLY, GENTLY UPON THEM... YOUR LIMBS ARE BEGINNING TO FEEL LIKE LEAD... YOUR SHOULDERS WANT TO SAG... THE WEIGHT IS BECOMING GREATER AND GREATER... YOU WANT TO SINK DOWN... DOWN, DOWN AND DOWN INTO A DEEP, PEACEFUL SLEEP...



GRADUALLY LUIGI SAW THAT HE WAS GOING TO SUCCEED. LANA BEGAN TO SWAY ON HER FEET. STILL KEEPING THE CHAIN SWINGING STEADILY BEFORE HER EYES HE LED HER ACROSS TO THE BUNK AND FINALLY MANAGED TO INDUCE IN HER A DEEP HYPNOTIC SLEEP.

YOU MUST REST... RELAX... YOU ARE TIRED... SO TRY THAT YOU CAN HARDLY STAND UP...

YES... TIRED... I WANT TO SLEEP... SLEEP...



ONCE HE HAD HER UNDER DEEP HYPNOSIS, LUIGI HAD TO TRY AND REMOVE THE DEEP-ROOTED BELIEFS THAT THE POWER-MAD DEDEKIND HAD INDUCED IN HER... AND SO, IN THAT GLOOMY LITTLE CELL, A BATTLE TOOK PLACE BETWEEN TWO BRILLIANT SCIENTISTS FOR THE MIND OF ANOTHER HUMAN BEING!

YOU HAVE BEEN LIVING IN A BAD DREAM, YOU HAVE BEEN MADE TO DO THINGS THAT WERE AGAINST YOUR VERY NATURE... TO BETRAY YOUR FRIENDS AND HELP YOUR ENEMIES... YOU MUST STIR OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE... YOUR FRIENDS NEED YOUR HELP...

NO! NO! DEDE... HE IS A GOD... DEDE MUST BE OBEYED... SLEEP... I WANT TO SLEEP...





LUIGI BEGAN TO DESPAIR, WONDERING HOW
MUCH LONGER IT WOULD BE BEFORE THE
GUARDS GOT SUSPICIOUS AND CAME BACK
IN. THEN SUDDENLY HE HAD AN IDEA!



LUIGI BREATHED A DEEP SIGH OF RELIEF. HE REALISED AT LAST THAT THE BATTLE HAD BEEN WON! DEDEKIND'S DEMONIACAL HOLD ON THE GIRL HAD BEEN BROKEN AT LAST!

YOU ARE GOING TO BE VERY HAPPY TOGETHER. . . JUST YOU AND JOHN. BUT YOU MUST DO AS I SAY. . . IN A MOMENT YOU WILL WAKE UP FEELING REFRESHED. YOU WILL NO LONGER FEEL THAT DEDE IS A GOD. YOU WILL KNOW THAT HE IS JUST A MANIACAL IMPOSTER. YOU WILL BE YOUR NORMAL SELF ONCE MORE. . . YOU WILL REMEMBER EVERYTHING AS IT ONCE WAS, WHEN YOU LOVED JOHN AND YOU CAME IN SEARCH OF HIM WITH YOUR FRIENDS. . . I WILL COUNT FIVE AND THEN YOU WILL WAKE UP. . .



AFTER SOME TIME LANA EMERGED FROM THE CELL AND ORDERED THE GUARD TO TAKE RICK AND KEN BACK TO THEIR COMRADE.

IT'S ALL RIGHT. IT WORKED. SHE'S GOING TO SEE THAT JOHN IS BROUGHT HERE AND THAT HE DOESN'T DRINK ANY MORE WINE. NEXT SHE'S GOING TO TRY AND FIND OUT WHERE DEDE'S INNER CHAMBER IS. ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS TO WAIT UNTIL THE SACRIFICE TAKES PLACE.



AS 600N AS SHE CAME OUT OF THE HYPNOTIC SLEEP, LANA'S FIRST REACTION WAS TO WONDER WHAT EVERYTHING WAS ALL ABOUT. THEN SUDDENLY WITH A WORD OR TWO FROM LUIGI, THE TRUTH CAME TO HER IN A FLASH.

BUT THIS IS DREADFUL! I'VE BETRAYED YOU ALL! I REMEMBER NOW, BEING TAKEN TO THE ELDERS AND BEING FORCED TO DRINK SOME OF THAT AWFUL WINE ON THE NIGHT YOU PLANNED TO GO SEARCHING FOR DEDEKIND'S HIDING PLACE.

NEVER MIND ABOUT ALL THAT NOW, LANA. THE IMPORTANT POINT IS THAT JOHN IS SUFFERING FROM IT AS WELL, AND YOU'VE GOT TO SEE THAT HE DOESN'T GET ANY MORE OF IT! AS FOR THE REST.. LISTEN CAREFULLY. I'LL TELL YOU RICK'S PLAN...



BLIMEY! WHAT A LOVELY THOUGHT! IF EVER WE GET BACK TO EARTH AGAIN I WON'T EVEN SACRIFICE MY SEAT TO AN OLD LADY IN AN AEROBUS AFTER THIS!



A FEW HOURS LATER JOHN GRANT WAS BROUGHT ALONG AND PUT INTO THE CELL WITH THE OTHERS BY ORDER OF THE HIGH PRIESTESS, LANA. LUIGI IMMEDIATELY GOT TO WORK ON HIM AND SOON HE TOO HAD RETURNED TO HIS NORMAL STATE OF MIND.

HEAVENS! WHAT SORT OF NIGHTMARE HAVE I BEEN LIVING IN?

DON'T WORRY, JOHN! EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY NOW. WE'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT WHEN WE'RE SURE THAT WINE IS HAVING NO MORE EFFECT ON YOU. WE CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL THIS TIME.

AND SO THE HOURS DRAGGED ON. TWENTY-FOUR GLOW TORTUROUS HOURS WITH NOTHING TO DO BUT WAIT AND HOPE. . . WAIT AND HOPE. . . THEN, A LITTLE TIME BEFORE THE SACRIFICIAL RITES WERE TO TAKE PLACE, LANA PAID THEM A VISIT. .

GO! I WOULD SPEAK WITH THE EARTHMEN ALONE. THEY MUST BE PREPARED FOR THEIR DESTINY.

BUT THE MOMENT THE GUARDS WERE GONE, LANA AND JOHN WERE IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS.

COR! AIN'T LOVE GRAND? . . . EVEN AT A TIME LIKE THIS!

THEN LANA QUICKLY OUTLINED TO THEM ALL SHE HAD FOUND OUT.

I'VE FOUND THE WAY INTO DEDE'S INNER CHAMBER ALL RIGHT. THERE'S A DOOR AT THE END OF THIS PASSAGE. EVERY DAY FOOD IS TAKEN DOWN THERE BUT HERE'S THE STRANGE THING... ONCE A WEEK THERE'S ENOUGH SUPPLIES TAKEN DOWN THERE FOR TWELVE OR THIRTEEN PEOPLE!

IT SEEMS THEN, THAT DEDE HAS GOT A LITTLE CLIQUE OF HAND-PICKED DISCIPLES GATHERED ROUND HIM.

AND WHOEVER IT IS DOWN THE END OF THE PASSAGE MUST BE SOME SORT OF A GUARD WHO DOES DUTY FOR A DAY.

WHAT ABOUT THE LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM IN THE SACRIFICIAL TEMPLE?

I'VE LOCATED THAT. THE LOUD-SPEAKER LEADS COMES UP THROUGH A TUBE BEHIND THE IDOLS. I'VE MANAGED TO BARE A COUPLE OF WIRES... ENOUGH TO SHORT CIRCUIT THE SYSTEM... JUST LIKE YOU SAID, RICK.



AT THAT LANA HAD TO LEAVE THEM. AN HOUR OR SO LATER THE LITTLE PARTY BEGAN TO HEAR THE WAILING OF THE NARMIAN6 AS THEY GATHERED IN THE TEMPLE OUTSIDE. EVENTUALLY, AFTER AN INTERMINABLE WAIT, THE GUARD6 CAME AND THEY WERE LED OUT TO THE SACRIFICIAL ALTAR.

SPEAK UNTO THY PEOPLE, O DEDE! WHEN THE LIGHT OF VARGAN STRIKES THE ALTAR GUIDE MY HAND THAT I MAY DO THY BIDDING. TELL ME WHEN TO STRIKE.



THEN AS RICK AND THE OTHERS WERE BEING TIED DOWN ONTO THE SLAB, LANA, PRETENDING TO PRAY AT THE SHRINE OF DEDE, WAITED UNTIL DEDEKIND HAD REPLIED AND THEN STRUCK THE BLADE BETWEEN THE BARED WIRE6.

PEOPLE OF NARM, HEAR ME! THE PRIESTESS FROM THE WORLD6 AFAR IS THE INSTRUMENT OF MY WILL. THE VOICE OF THE GOD6 WILL DIRECT HER. THUS SPEAK6 DEDE.



GRADUALLY THE MOONLIGHT CREPT ROUND, THE CROWDS BEGAN TO WAIL. THE MOONLIGHT CREPT ON, ON UP THE SIDES OF THE ALTAR, UP UNTIL IT FELL ON THE BREASTS OF THE MEN WAITING FOR THE SWIFT STROKE OF THE KNIFE.

SPEAK,
O DEDE!
SPEAK.

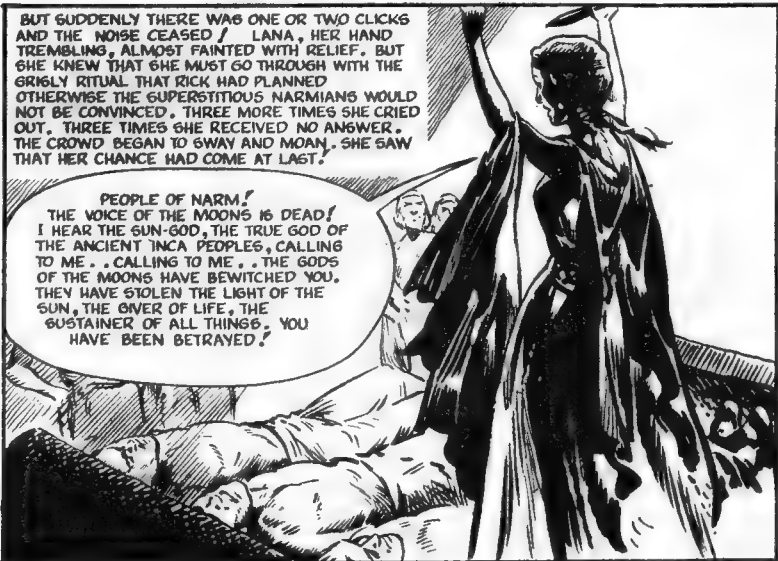


AS THE LOUDSPEAKER BEGAN TO CRACKLE, LANA THOUGHT FOR AN AWFUL MOMENT THAT SHE HAD FAILED TO SHORT-CIRCUIT IT AFTER ALL.



BUT SUDDENLY THERE WAS ONE OR TWO CLICKS AND THE NOISE CEASED! LANA, HER HAND TREMBLING, ALMOST FAINTED WITH RELIEF. BUT SHE KNEW THAT SHE MUST GO THROUGH WITH THE GRISLY RITUAL THAT RICK HAD PLANNED OTHERWISE THE SUPERSTITIOUS NARMIANs WOULD NOT BE CONVINCED. THREE MORE TIMES SHE CRIED OUT, THREE TIMES SHE RECEIVED NO ANSWER. THE CROWD BEGAN TO SWAY AND MOAN. SHE SAW THAT HER CHANCE HAD COME AT LAST.

PEOPLE OF NARM!
THE VOICE OF THE MOONS IS DEAD!
I HEAR THE SUN-GOD, THE TRUE GOD OF
THE ANCIENT INCA PEOPLES, CALLING
TO ME. . . CALLING TO ME. . . THE GODS
OF THE MOONS HAVE BEWITCHED YOU.
THEY HAVE STOLEN THE LIGHT OF THE
SUN, THE GIVER OF LIFE, THE
SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS. YOU
HAVE BEEN BETRAYED.



THE CROWDS DREW BACK WITH A GASP. SUDDENLY A WOMAN'S HIGH-PITCHED VOICE BEGAN TO WAIL AND THEN PANIC BROKE LOOSE.

THE TEMPLE IS DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION! THE SUN-GOD WILL RAZE IT TO THE GROUND! THE PEOPLE OF NARM WILL BE DESTROYED AS THEIR FALSE GODS HAVE BEEN.

QUICK!
WE MUST
FLEE!

THE WRATH OF
THE SUN-GOD IS
UPON US!

AS THE NARMIANs FOUGHT TO GET OUT OF THE TEMPLE, LANA TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO CUT HER FRIENDS FREE.

GO CAREFUL,
LANA. I'M
TICKLISH.

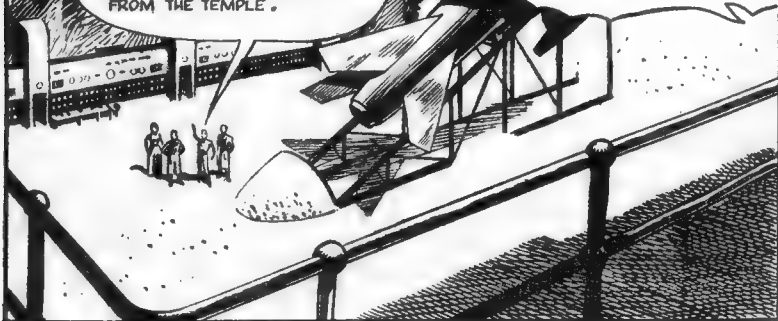
HURRY! WE'VE GOT
TO ROUT OUT DEDE AS QUICK
AS WE CAN. THE BROADCASTING
SYSTEM WILL STILL BE OKAY
THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE
BUILDING AND HE'LL SOON
HAVE THEM UNDER HIS SWAY
AGAIN.



FROM HIS VAST CAVERN, DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN, THE MAD SCIENTIST DEDEKIND BEGAN TO REALISE WHAT WAS HAPPENING. BUT HE STILL HAD AROUND HIM A LITTLE BAND OF FAITHFUL DEVOTEES WHO HAD BEEN HIS TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS BACK ON EARTH TWENTY YEARS AGO.

YOU, KARL, GO AND SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING. MAKE SURE THE BLIND PRIESTS ARE KEEPING GUARD. YOU, GREGOR, MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING IS READY ON THE SPACE-SHIP IN CASE ANYTHING GOES WRONG. TANYA, AS SOON AS KARL HAS CROSSED THE PATH OF THE ELECTRIC EYE SWITCH ON THE DEATH BEAM, NO-ONE MUST EVER REACH THIS CHAMBER AND LIVE TO TELL WHAT HE HAS SEEN! GO, ALL OF YOU. AT ONCE!

THE TRANSMITTING SYSTEM HAS BEEN SHORT-CIRCUITED, MASTER. I CAN SEE THE CROWDS ON THE TELEVISION SCREENS AND THEY ARE ALL FLEEING FROM THE TEMPLE.



MEANWHILE, RICK AND HIS BAND HAD MET UP WITH THE GUARDS. THE TUNNEL THAT LED TO DEDEKIND'S SECRET CHAMBER WAS PITCH DARK AND THE GUARDS WERE ABLE TO MOVE AROUND IT FREELY, WITH A FAMILIARITY BORN OF YEARS SPENT IN DARKNESS THERE. AGAINST THEM RICK AND HIS COMPANY WERE HELPLESS, AS THEY STRUGGLED AND GROPED THEIR WAY AROUND IN THE INKY BLACKNESS. AND THEN SUDDENLY, WHEN EVERYTHING SEEMED HOPELESS, A DOOR OPENED AND THE PASSAGE WAS FLOODED WITH LIGHT.

LOOK! THERE'S DEDEKIND OR ONE OF HIS CLIQUE!

NOW WE CAN SEE WHAT WE'RE DOING. WE'LL SOON HAVE THEM BEATEN!



WHILE THE REST TOOK CARE OF THE GUARDS, RICK LEAPT AFTER THE SCIENTIST THAT DEDEKIND HAD SENT TO SEE WHAT WAS HAPPENING. SO, BY A TWIST OF FATE, DEDEKIND HIMSELF HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LITTLE BAND'S ESCAPE FROM THE BLIND PRIESTS.

OH, NO,
YOU DON'T!



RICK MANAGED TO GRAB KARL BEFORE HE COULD RETURN TO THE INNER CHAMBER.

AAAAOOW!



HUH! YOU'LL
NEVER GET DEDEKIND!
HE'LL DEFEAT YOU YET!

WE'LL SEE ABOUT
THAT. RIGHT NOW
YOU'RE GOING TO LEAD
US TO HIM.



DEDEKIND, WHO HAD BEEN WATCHING EVERYTHING THAT HAD HAPPENED SINCE RICK AND COMPANY HAD BURST THROUGH THE DOOR, NOW ORDERED THAT THE DEATH BEAM BE SWITCHED ON.

BUT IF I SWITCH THE DEATH BEAM
ON NOW, KARL, TOO, WILL BE KILLED AS
SOON AS HE CROSSES THE ENTRANCE,
O MASTER!

DO AS I SAY,
TANYA. HE MUST DIE
TO SAVE ME. IT IS OF
NO CONSEQUENCE!



AS RICK APPROACHED THE ENTRANCE HE DREW BACK AMAZED AT THE GHOST THAT MET HIS EYES. THAT FRACTION OF A SECOND WAS ALL THAT DEDEKIND'S DISCIPLE NEEDED TO FREE HIMSELF. TEARING HIMSELF LOOSE HE MADE A SUDDEN DASH FORWARD. THEN, JUST AS SUDDENLY, HE STOPPED AND STOOD TRANSFIXED, AS IF PARALYZED BY AN UNSEEN FORCE.



RICK JUST MANAGED TO STOP HIMSELF IN TIME. AS SOON AS HE SAW THE GHOSTLY FEATURES OF THE MAN SLOWLY TURNING ROUND, HIS BODY SHAKING AS HE TRIED TO FIGHT AGAINST THE PETRIFYING RAYS STRIKING HIM, RICK REALISED WHAT WAS HAPPENING.



AS RICK DREW BACK INTO SAFETY, THEY SUDDENLY HEARD THE DEEP WHIRR OF A ROCKET MOTOR STARTING UP. THEN THE INITIAL STUTTER AND FINALLY THE HOWLING WHOOOSH OF A SPACE-SHIP TAKING OFF. GREAT CLOUDS OF EXHAUST GASES BEGAN TO BLOW OUT INTO THE PASSAGE AND BEHIND THIS THEY COULD HEAR THE RUMBLE OF FALLING MASONRY.



SO DEDEKIND, THE RUTHLESS MANIACAL SCIENTIST, MANAGED TO ESCAPE INTO THE VASTNESS OF SPACE ITSELF.



IT WAS A FEW MINUTES BEFORE RICK COULD MAKE HIS WAY INTO DEDEKIND'S SECRET CAVERN. BY THAT TIME THE FLEEING SPACE-SHIP WAS A THOUSAND MILES AWAY.

RICK KNEW THAT EVERYTHING WOULD NOW BE ALL RIGHT ON THE PLANET NARM. WHATEVER WEIRD FRUIT WAS BEING USED TO MAKE THE WINE WOULD BE DESTROYED AND THE PEOPLE COULD ONCE AGAIN LEAD NORMAL LIVES.





NOW WE CAN FIND
OUR SPACESHIP AND
GET BACK TO GOOD
OLD EARTH AND A
NICE CUP OF TEA.

SO HE'S GONE!
ISN'T IT WONDERFUL, JOHN?
WE'RE ALL SAFE AT LAST.
THANKS TO RICK. THAT'S THE
LAST THE WORLD WILL HEAR
OF DEDEKIND.



I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, LANA. AFTER WHAT WE HAVE
DONE, HE WILL BE MORE BITTER THAN EVER... HE
BUILT A WORLD UP HERE ON NARM... BUILT IT WITH THE
AID OF HIS TREMENDOUS HYPNOTIC POWERS, WHICH HE
USED FOR EVIL ENDS... HE WAS POWER MAD, AND IN
HIS MIND, THE EARTH WAS ALREADY DOOMED TO HIS
HYPNOTIC RULE, IN THE SAME WAY AS THESE POOR INDIANS
... AS TO WHY HE WAS NEVER SEEN, I BELIEVE IT WAS
BECAUSE HE WAS SUCH A PITIABLE OBJECT... REMEMBER,
HE WAS NEARLY A CENTURY OLD. WELL, WE
HAVE BROKEN HIS POWER NOW, AND WE CAN
LEAVE IT TO NATURE TO DO THE REST...
OTTO DEDEKIND IS TOO OLD AND FRAIL A
MAN TO BUILD AGAIN THE EVIL
THING THAT WE HAVE JUST
DESTROYED...

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