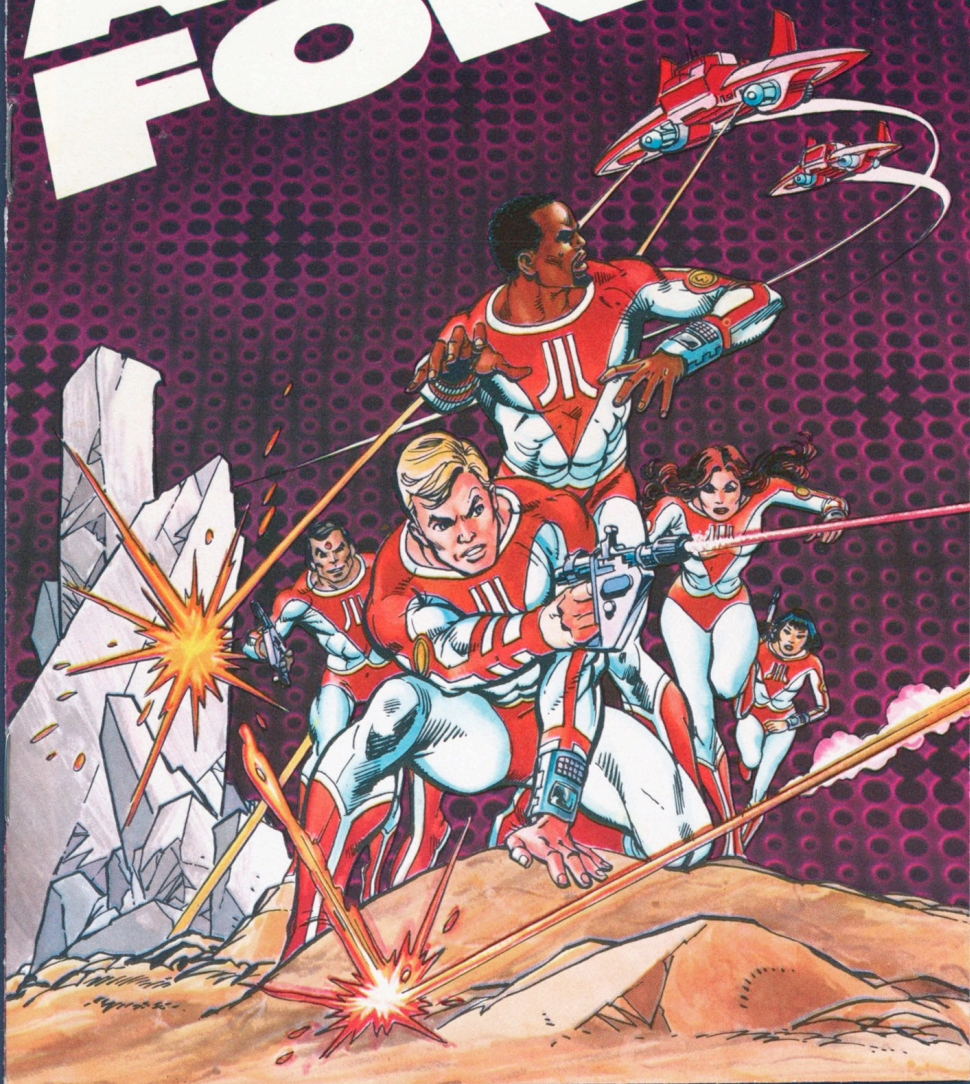




3

ATARI FORCE

TM



ATARI FORCE

CREATED AND WRITTEN BY:
 GERRY CONWAY & ROY THOMAS
 VISUAL CONCEPTS:
 ROSS ANDRU
 ART:
 GIL KANE
 DICK GIORDANO
 MIKE DECARLO
 DESIGN:
 NEAL POZNER
 LETTERING:
 JOHN COSTANZA
 COLORING:
 ADRIENNE ROY
 EDITOR:
 DICK GIORDANO

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 Paul Levitz, Vice President, Operations
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CONSIDER THEM CLOCKWISE, THESE BRAVEST OF A FUTURE EARTH'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS:

MARTIN CHAMPION--MISSION COMMANDER.
 MOHANDAS SINGH--FLIGHT ENGINEER.
 LUCAS ORION--MEDICAL OFFICER.
 LI SAN O'ROURKE--SECURITY OFFICER.
 LYDIA PEREZ--PILOT, EXECUTIVE OFFICER.

ATARI FORCE



I--I GUESS I OUGHT TO BELIEVE IT-- BUT SOMEHOW, I CAN'T!

AND YET THE EVIDENCE IS THERE, DR. ORION-- FOR THE DISCERNING EYE TO SEE!

SURE AND IT'S PINK ELEPHANTS WE'LL BE SPYING NEXT, TO MY WAY OF THINKING!

IN THIS LEAGUE, O'ROURKE, ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN!

STOW THE SCUTTLEBUTT, CREW! IF WE DON'T KEEP ON OUR TOES--

--THINGS COULD GET SLIGHTLY DEADLY!

THE YEAR IS 2005 A.D.--IF, INDEED, TIME ITSELF HAS ANY MEANING ON BOARD THE SHIP CALLED SCANNER ONE--

--THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL WARP-DRIVE CRUISER WHICH PROPELS THESE FIVE SKILLED AND DEDICATED DAREDEVILS THROUGH LAYER UPON LAYER OF ALTERNATE REALITIES.

A BILLION BILLION UNIVERSES, IMPALED LIKE SHINING PEARLS ON AN INVISIBLE STRING, EACH EXISTING AN INFINITESIMAL HEARTBEAT FROM THE NEXT.

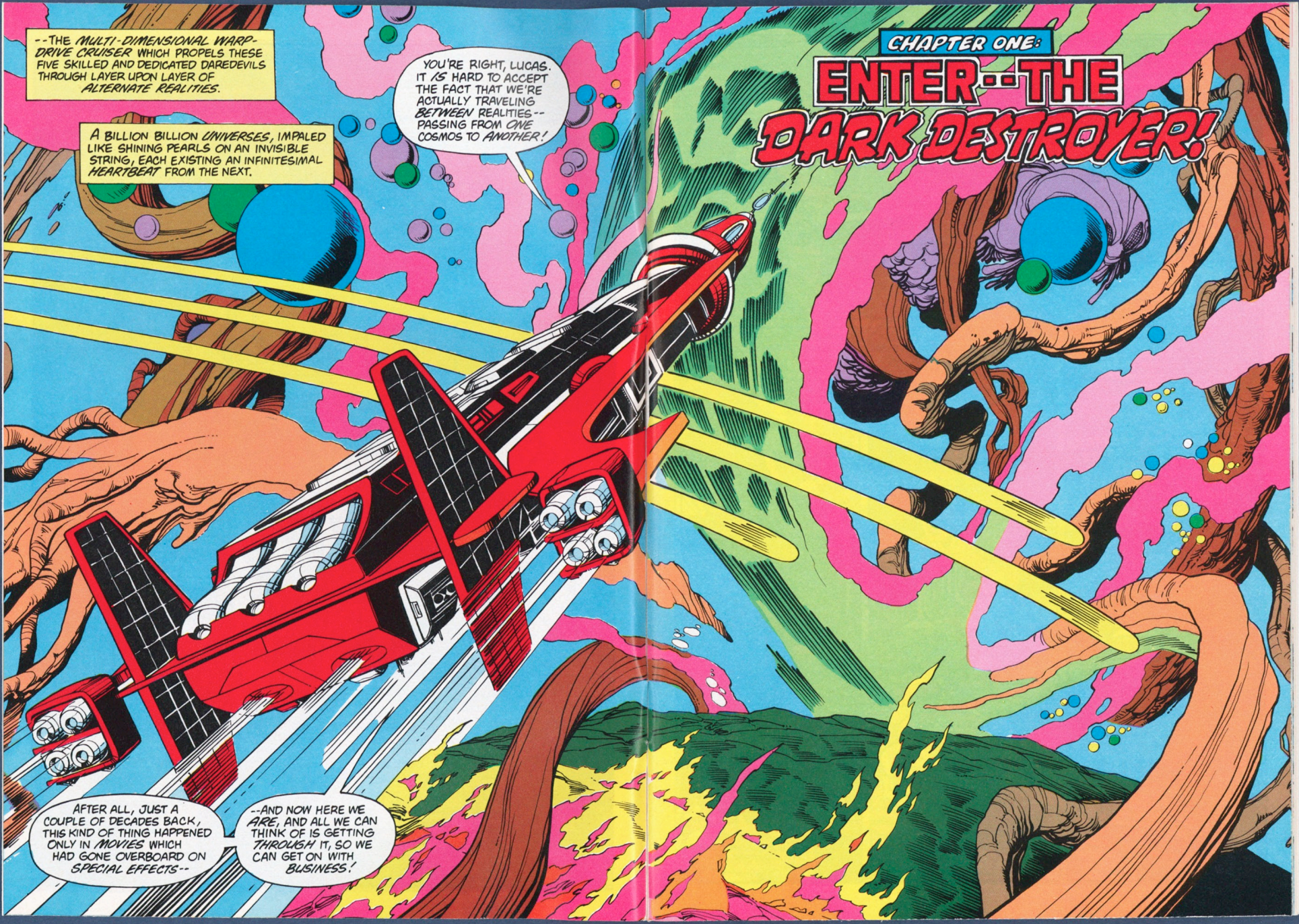
YOU'RE RIGHT, LUCAS. IT IS HARD TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT WE'RE ACTUALLY TRAVELING BETWEEN REALITIES--PASSING FROM ONE COSMOS TO ANOTHER!

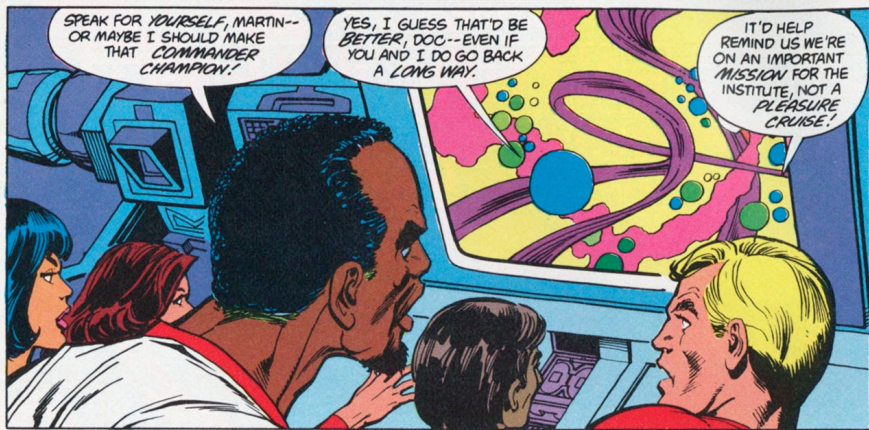
CHAPTER ONE:

ENTER--THE DARK DESTROYER!

AFTER ALL, JUST A COUPLE OF DECADES BACK, THIS KIND OF THING HAPPENED ONLY IN MOVIES WHICH HAD GONE OVERBOARD ON SPECIAL EFFECTS--

--AND NOW HERE WE ARE, AND ALL WE CAN THINK OF IS GETTING THROUGH IT, SO WE CAN GET ON WITH BUSINESS!





SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, MARTIN-- OR MAYBE I SHOULD MAKE THAT **COMMANDER CHAMPION**!

YES, I GUESS THAT'D BE **BETTER, DOC**-- EVEN IF YOU AND I DO GO BACK A **LONG WAY**.

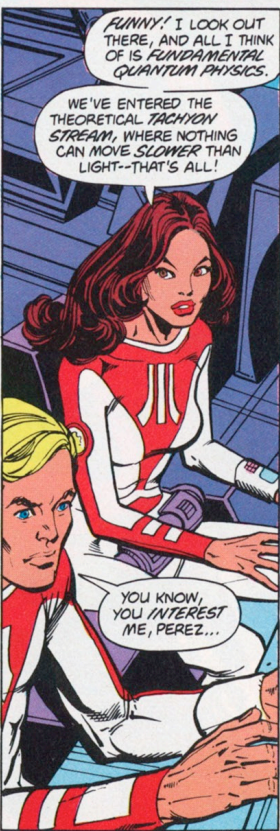
IT'D HELP REMIND US WE'RE ON AN IMPORTANT **MISSION** FOR THE INSTITUTE, NOT A **PLEASURE CRUISE**!



FINE BY **ME**-- BUT ALL THIS STILL GIVES ME THE **WEIRDEST** FEELING I'VE HAD SINCE I WAS A **BOY** BACK IN **DETROIT**.

I DON'T KNOW-- IT'S ALMOST **RELIGIOUS**, SOMEHOW--

-- LIKE SEEING THE **HAND OF GOD**, WITH THE STARS SLIPPING THROUGH HIS FINGERS LIKE SO MUCH **DUST**!



FUNNY! I LOOK OUT THERE, AND ALL I THINK OF IS **FUNDAMENTAL QUANTUM PHYSICS**.

WE'VE ENTERED THE **THEORETICAL TACHYON STREAM**, WHERE NOTHING CAN MOVE **SLOWER** THAN LIGHT-- THAT'S ALL!

YOU KNOW, YOU **INTEREST** ME, PEREZ...



SOMEWHERE **BENEATH** THAT **COLD EXTERIOR**, I'M ALMOST **POSITIVE**. THERE'S WHAT THEY USED TO CALL A **WARM AND WONDERFUL HUMAN BEING**.

I'VE GOT TO REMEMBER TO **THERMO-BLAST** FOR IT. WHEN WE GET **BACK HOME**.

IF WE GET **HOME, COMMANDER**-- REPEAT, **IF**--



--AND RIGHT NOW, WITH ALL THE **STRESS FACTORS** OUR SHIP IS UNDERGOING IN OUR **LITTLE HYPER-SPACE HOP**--

--I'D SAY THAT WAS **SHAPING UP** AS A **MIGHTY SIZABLE CONJUNCTION!**

PERHAPS, MS. PEREZ! STILL, MY **OBSERVATIONS** CONVINC ME THE SHIP'S **STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING** IS **QUITE SOUND**.

ELSE, WE WOULD **HARDLY** HAVE BEEN SENT UPON THIS **QUEST FOR PARALLEL WORLDS** WITH **NATURAL RESOURCES** TO **AUGMENT** OUR OWN.

THAT'S **QUITE A MOUTHFUL**, LADDIE...



... **THOUGH I NOTICED** THAT **YOU** WERE AFTER DOING A **BIT OF STARING**, AS WELL!

I WAS **MUSING** ON HOW THIS **SUPPORTS MY VEDIC PHILOSOPHY**... OF A **SUCCESSION OF WORLDS** AND **COUNTLESS REINCARNATIONS**.

MAYBE WE'LL FIND **MORE** ON THIS **JAUNT** THAN THE **ANSWER** TO A FEW **SHORTAGES** **BACK HOME**.



THAT WOULD BE QUITE ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY--
--UNNNH--

CHAMPION! WHAT'S HAPPENING??

I-- I DON'T KNOW, LYDIA! ALL OF A SUDDEN, I'M HAVING TO FIGHT THE CONTROLS.

IT'S AS IF SCANNER ONE WAS BEING SLAMMED-- BY SOMETHING OUTSIDE THE SHIP!

OUTSIDE!? BUT WHAT COULD POSSIBLY--?



LIKE I SAID-- I DON'T KNOW!

BUT I DO DISTINCTLY RECALL ASKING THE REST OF YOU GLORY-HOUNDS TO STRAP YOURSELVES IN WHEN WE ENTERED HYPERSPACE!

I FEAR, COMMANDER, THAT OUR CURIOSITY FAR EXCEEDED OUR PRUDENCE!



O'Rourke! YOU'RE THE OLYMPIC ATHLETE OF THIS LITTLE GROUPING.

THINK YOU CAN STRAP MOHANDAS, BEFORE HE GOES SPLAT ALL OVER OUR NICE SHINY COMPUTER COMPONENTS?

SURE AND WHAT KIND OF SECURITY OFFICER WOULD I BE NOW IF I COULDN'T?

BUT-- DOCTOR ORION--

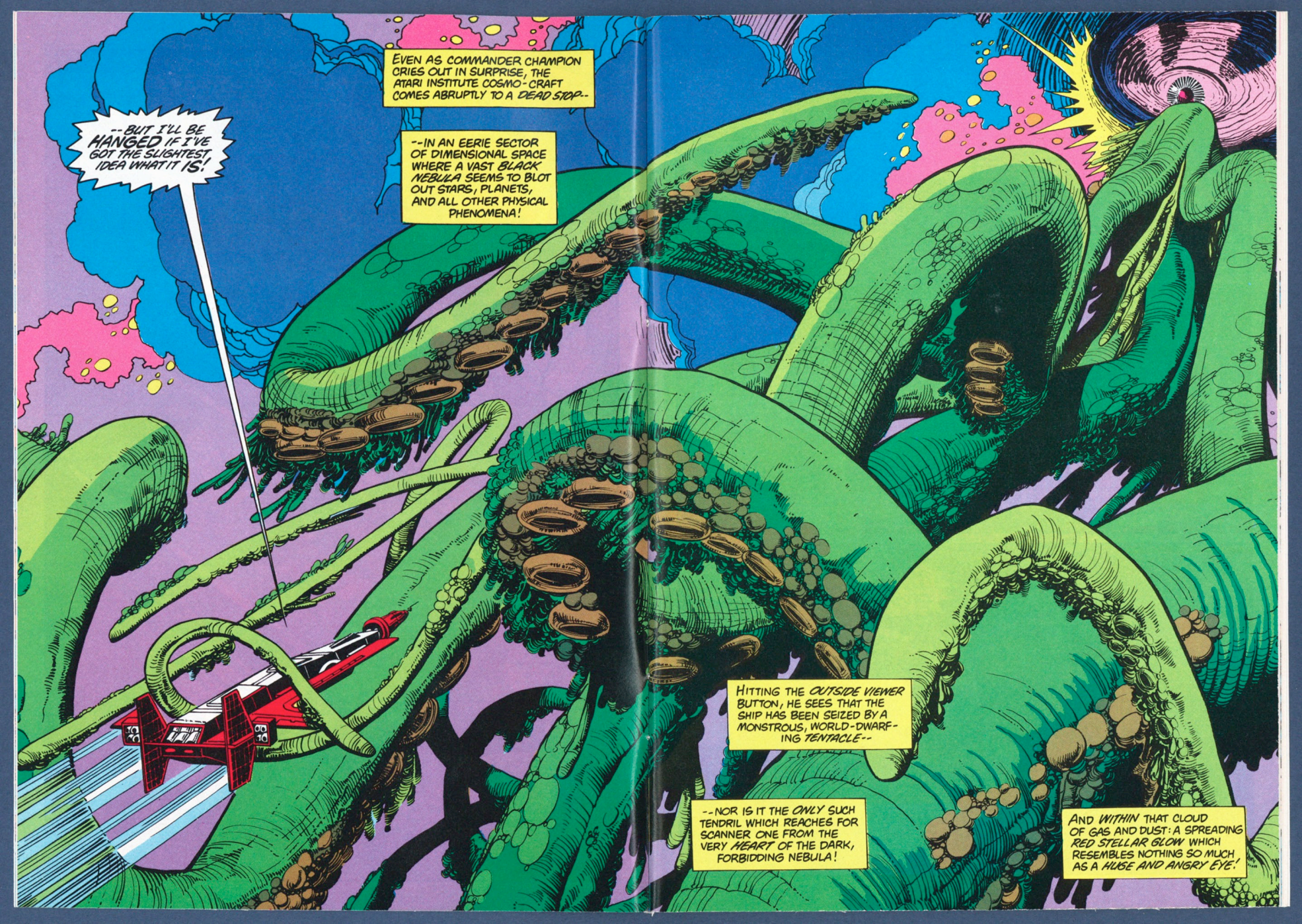
--LUCKED OUT ON HIS OWN, THANKS!

BUT, MARTIN-- COMMANDER-- WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE?

THAT'S JUST IT, DOC!

SOMETHING DID--

IT FELT AS IF SOMETHING JUST REACHED OUT AND GRABBED SCANNER ONE!



-- BUT I'LL BE HANGED IF I'VE GOT THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT IT IS!

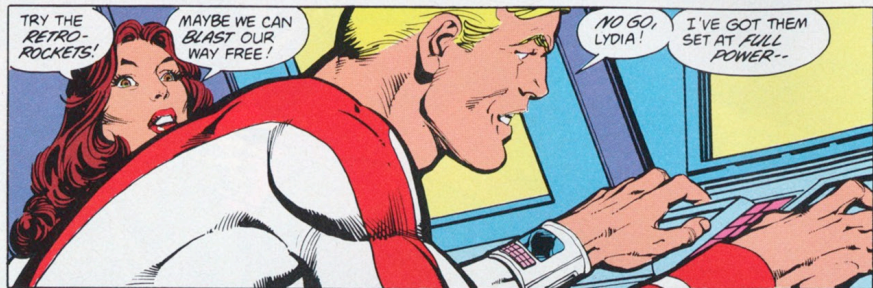
EVEN AS COMMANDER CHAMPION CRIES OUT IN SURPRISE, THE ATARI INSTITUTE COSMO-CRAFT COMES ABRUPTLY TO A DEAD STOP--

--IN AN EERIE SECTOR OF DIMENSIONAL SPACE WHERE A VAST BLACK NEBULA SEEMS TO BLOT OUT STARS, PLANETS, AND ALL OTHER PHYSICAL PHENOMENA!

HITTING THE *OUTSIDE VIEWER* BUTTON, HE SEES THAT THE SHIP HAS BEEN SEIZED BY A MONSTROUS, WORLD-DWARFING TENTACLE--

--NOR IS IT THE ONLY SUCH TENDRIL WHICH REACHES FOR SCANNER ONE FROM THE VERY *HEART OF THE DARK*, FORBIDDING NEBULA!

AND WITHIN THAT CLOUD OF GAS AND DUST: A SPREADING *RED STELLAR GLOW* WHICH RESEMBLES NOTHING SO MUCH AS A *HUGE AND ANGRY EYE!*



TRY THE RETRO-ROCKETS!

MAYBE WE CAN BLAST OUR WAY FREE!

NO GO, LYDIA!

I'VE GOT THEM SET AT FULL POWER--



--AND THAT THING OUT THERE STILL HAS US IN A GRIP AS TIGHT AS A BANKER'S FIST!

LOOK AT IT--!

IT'S LIKE SOME ENORMOUS OCTOPUS-- THE SIZE OF A SMALL PLANET!

UH-OH! OUTSIDE SENSORS SHOW AN INCREASE IN EXTERNAL PRESSURE!



THIS THING'S TRYING TO CRUSH US!

WE'LL POP LIKE AN EGGSHELL!



ONLY ONE SLIM CHANCE-- AND IF IT BACKFIRES, THE ENERGY RELEASE COULD FRY US!

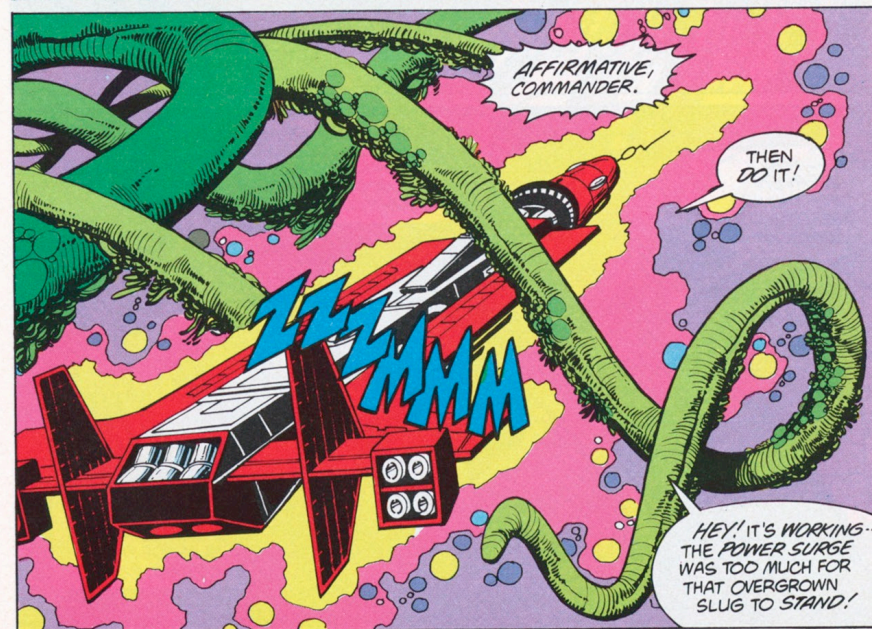
I'M ACTIVATING OUR ATARI 8000 CONTROL COMPUTER!

GREETINGS, COMMANDER. TROUBLE?

COMPUTER, YOU'RE THE 'MIND' OF SCANNER ONE--

--YOU KNOW WE'RE IN TROUBLE!

CAN WE THROW IN OUR DIMENSIONAL WARP ENGINES WITHOUT OVERLOADING OUR POWER SYSTEM?



AFFIRMATIVE, COMMANDER.

THEN DO IT!

HEY! IT'S WORKING-- THE POWER SURGE WAS TOO MUCH FOR THAT OVERGROWN SLUG TO STAND!

CHAMPION,
WE'VE BROKEN
FREE!

THERE'S JUST
ONE SMALL
PROBLEM!

WITH THE *DIMENSIONAL*
WARP ENGINE
RUNNING AT FULL
POWER, WE CAN'T CONTROL
OUR FLIGHT THROUGH
THE MULTIVERSE!

WE'RE
VANISHING
INTO THE
SPACE-TIME
STREAM--

AND IN THE HEART OF THE
DARK NEBULA, A SEETHING
MASS OF INHUMAN FLESH
SEEMS ALMOST TO SHIVER
WITH DISAPPOINTMENT--

-- AND
HEAVEN
ONLY KNOWS
WHERE WE'LL
COME OUT--!!

-- AS ITS PREY
DISAPPEARS IN A
BLINK OF THE
COSMIC EYE!

CHAPTER TWO!

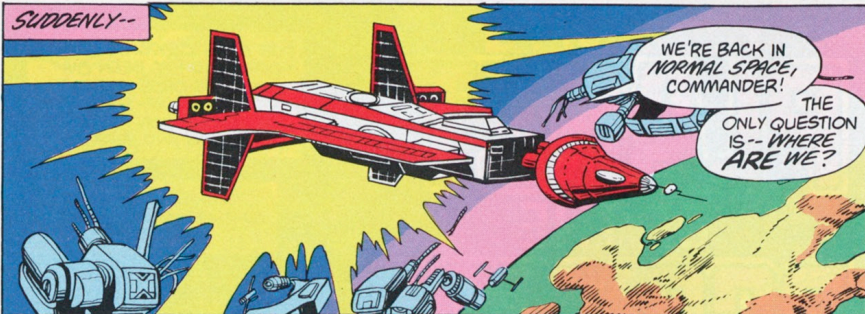
PLANET OF THE DOOMED!

FOR MORE CENTURIES THAN
HUMANKIND HAS BEEN CIVI-
LIZED, THIS ONCE-FERTILE
WORLD IN A STAR-SYSTEM NOT
UNLIKE OUR OWN HAS LAIN
FALLOW AND BARREN...

...ITS SKIES A JUNKYARD
OF ANCIENT, CRUMBLING
SATELLITES...

...A SARGASSO
SEA OF BROKEN
DREAMS!

SUDDENLY--



WE'RE BACK IN NORMAL SPACE, COMMANDER!

THE ONLY QUESTION IS-- WHERE ARE WE?

WE APPEAR TO BE IN LOW ORBIT OVER AN EARTH-TYPE WORLD IN A DIMENSIONAL SYSTEM PARALLEL TO OUR OWN.

JUDGING BY THE SCATTERED DEBRIS-- MUCH OF IT HEAVILY PITTED BY METEORITE IMPACT-- I WOULD SAY WE ARE THE FIRST VISITORS TO THIS SYSTEM IN MORE THAN TWO MILLENNIA!



DOES THAT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, MASTER PILOT PEREZ?

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT HER QUESTIONS, COMPUTER--

COMMANDER, WITTICISMS ASIDE--

--BUT IT CERTAINLY ANSWERS MINE!



--YOU SHOULD KNOW WE'RE STILL IN DEEP TROUBLE!

OUR DIMENSIONAL WARP ENGINES ARE CLOSE TO A BURN-OUT!

WE HAVE TO LAND FOR REPAIRS SOON -- IN THE NEXT FIVE MINUTES--

--OR WE FACE TOTAL DISASTER!

YOU'RE THE PILOT, LYDIA.

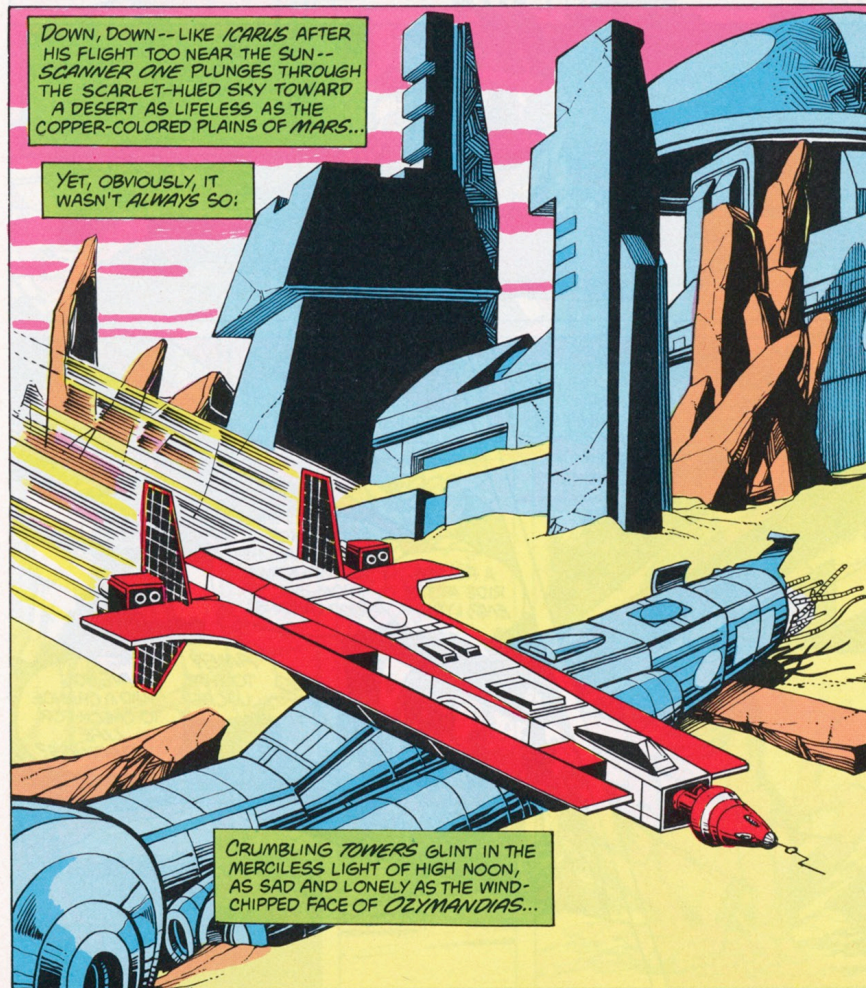
TAKE US DOWN-- SHE'S ALL YOURS!

AYE-AYE, COMMANDER. LANDING SEQUENCE INITIATED.



DOWN, DOWN-- LIKE ICARUS AFTER HIS FLIGHT TOO NEAR THE SUN-- SCANNER ONE PLUNGES THROUGH THE SCARLET-HUED SKY TOWARD A DESERT AS LIFELESS AS THE COPPER-COLORED PLAINS OF MARS...

YET, OBVIOUSLY, IT WASN'T ALWAYS SO:



CRUMBLING TOWERS GLINT IN THE MERCILESS LIGHT OF HIGH NOON, AS SAD AND LONELY AS THE WIND-CHIPPED FACE OF OZYMANDIAS...



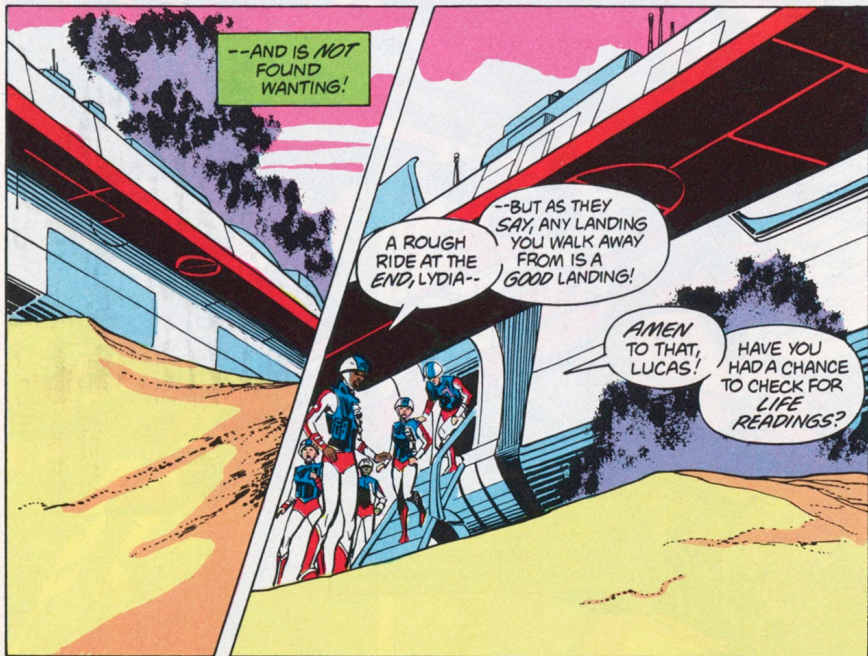
BUT THE CREW OF SCANNER ONE HAS NO TIME FOR SIGHT-SEEING JUST NOW--

BWHIMP!



SHKRASH!

--AS THEIR SHIP, BUILT TO WITHSTAND THE RIGORS OF INTER-SPATIAL TRAVEL, TESTS ITSELF AGAINST THE SOMEWHAT MORE IMMEDIATE DIFFICULTIES OF A DESERT LANDING--



--AND IS NOT FOUND WANTING!

A ROUGH RIDE AT THE END, LYDIA--

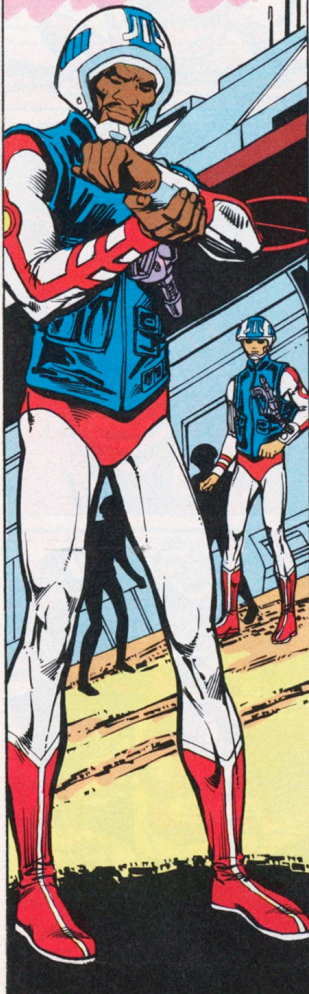
--BUT AS THEY SAY, ANY LANDING YOU WALK AWAY FROM IS A GOOD LANDING!

AMEN TO THAT, LUCAS!

HAVE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO CHECK FOR LIFE READINGS?

I'VE DONE NOTHING BUT CHECK SINCE WE ARRIVED, MARTIN.

USING THE WRIST-COMP COMMUNICATIONS LINK TO OUR ATARI 8000 COMPUTER BACK ON BOARD SCANNER ONE, I'VE ORDERED OUR MAIN SENSORS TO SWEEP THIS ENTIRE HEMISPHERE--



--BUT I'M AFRAID THESE RUINS ALREADY TELL THE TALE:

THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO SIGN OF LIFE ON THE SURFACE OF THIS WORLD!



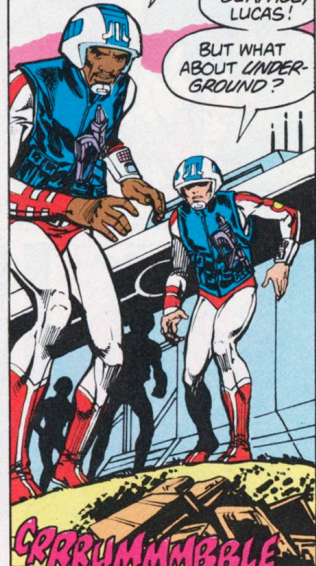
WHAT A TRAGEDY--TO COME SO FAR, ACROSS SO MANY DIMENSIONS--

--ONLY TO FIND A GRAVEYARD AT OUR FIRST--

EH?

YOU SAID THERE WAS NO LIFE ON THE SURFACE, LUCAS!

BUT WHAT ABOUT UNDERGROUND?



GRRRUMMMBLE



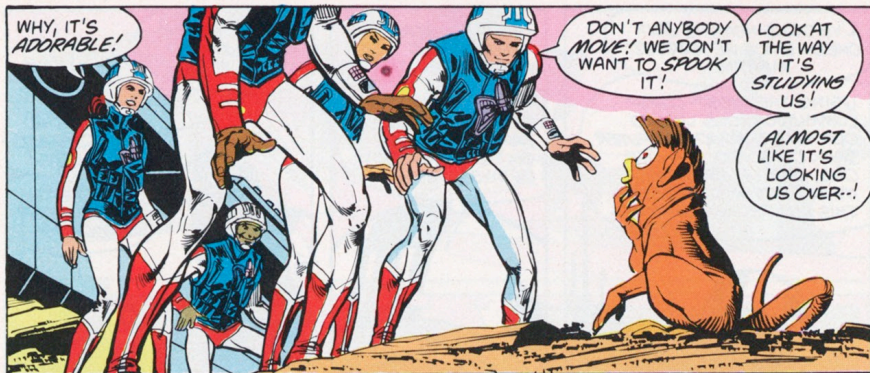
GOOD LORD! WHAT'S THAT?

POK!



HUKKA?

HUKKA-HUKKA?



WHY, IT'S ADORABLE!

DON'T ANYBODY MOVE! WE DON'T WANT TO SPOOK IT!

LOOK AT THE WAY IT'S STUDYING US!

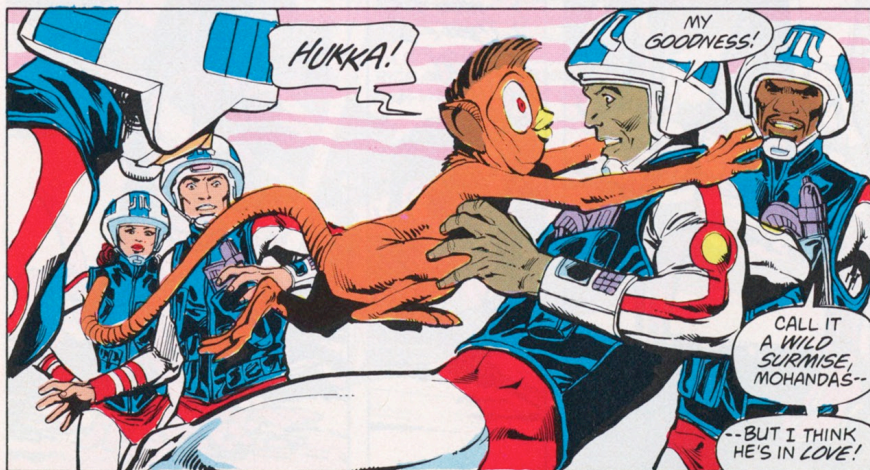
ALMOST LIKE IT'S LOOKING US OVER--!



HUKKA?



HUKKA-HUKKA?



HUKKA!

MY GOODNESS!

CALL IT A WILD SURMISE, MOHANDAS--

--BUT I THINK HE'S IN LOVE!



WHETHER YOU WANT ONE OR NOT, MOHANDAS, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A PET.

OR, MAYBE HE'S GOT YOU.

LAUGH IF YOU MUST, MY COMMANDER.

I AGREE WITH PEREZ--HE'S ADORABLE.



THAT TOWER IN THE RUINS--

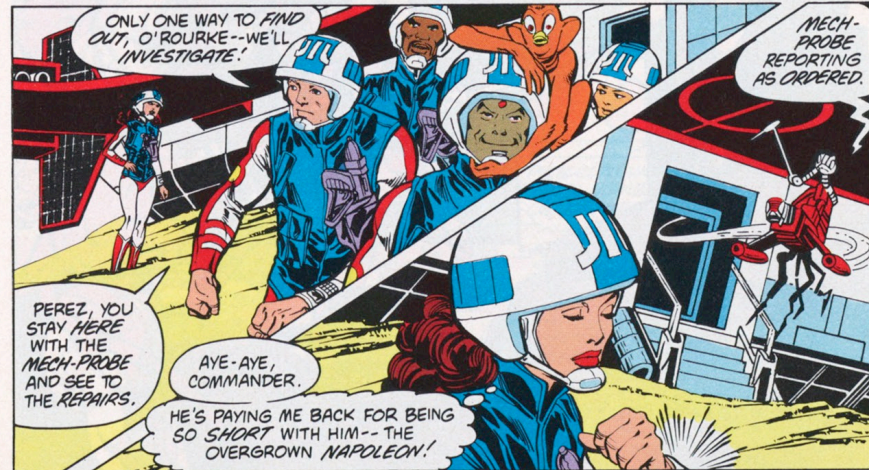
SURE AND HE'S A DARLING CREATURE--

--BUT HAS ANYONE BUT MESELF NOTICED SOMETHING ELSE SURPRISING?



-- 'TIS STARTING TO GLOW, AND I FOR ONE AM WONDERING WHY!

CAN IT BE THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE ON THIS BENTIGHT PLANET, AFTER ALL?



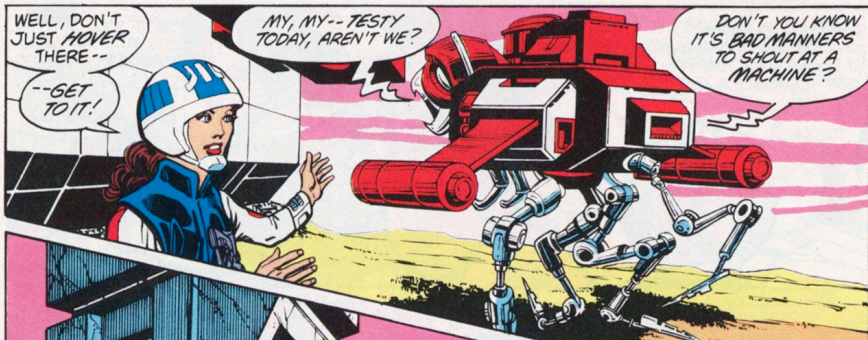
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT, O'ROURKE--WE'LL INVESTIGATE!

MECH-PROBE REPORTING AS ORDERED.

PEREZ, YOU STAY HERE WITH THE MECH-PROBE AND SEE TO THE REPAIRS.

AYE-AYE, COMMANDER.

HE'S PAYING ME BACK FOR BEING SO SHORT WITH HIM--THE OVERGROWN NAPOLEON!



WELL, DON'T JUST HOVER THERE--

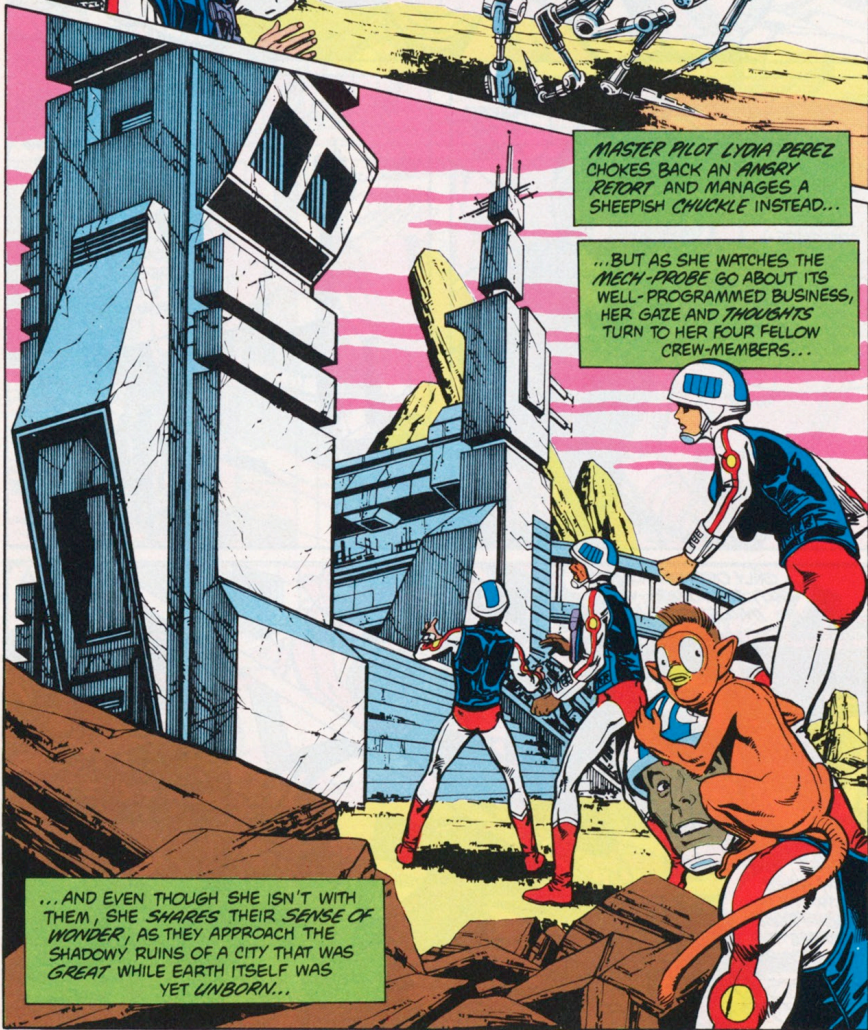
--GET TO IT!

MY, MY-- TESTY TODAY, AREN'T WE?

DON'T YOU KNOW IT'S BAD MANNERS TO SHOUT AT A MACHINE?

MASTER PILOT LYDIA PEREZ CHOKES BACK AN ANGRY RETORT AND MANAGES A SHEEPISH CHUCKLE INSTEAD...

... BUT AS SHE WATCHES THE MECH-PROBE GO ABOUT ITS WELL-PROGRAMMED BUSINESS, HER GAZE AND THOUGHTS TURN TO HER FOUR FELLOW CREW-MEMBERS...



... AND EVEN THOUGH SHE ISN'T WITH THEM, SHE SHARES THEIR SENSE OF WONDER, AS THEY APPROACH THE SHADY RUINS OF A CITY THAT WAS GREAT WHILE EARTH ITSELF WAS YET UNBORN...



THE ATARI 8000 HAS SCANNED THESE STRUCTURES, MARTIN--

-- AND ESTIMATES THEIR AGE AT WELL OVER 15 BILLION YEARS!



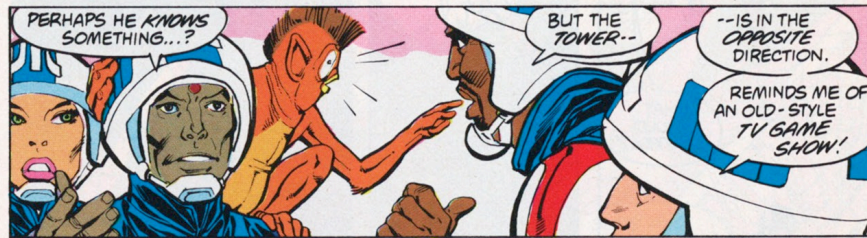
YOU'RE JOKING!

NOTHING'S THAT OLD-- IT'S INCREDIBLE!

HUKKA!

HUKKA-HUKKA!

MY LITTLE FRIEND WANTS US TO GO THAT WAY, MY COMMANDER.



PERHAPS HE KNOWS SOMETHING...?

BUT THE TOWER--

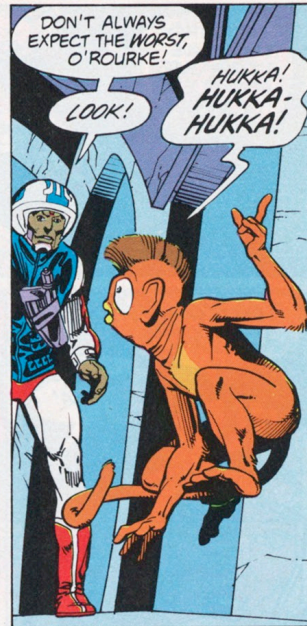
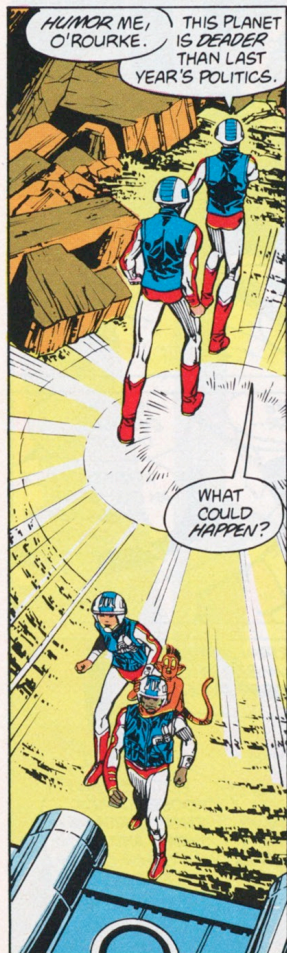
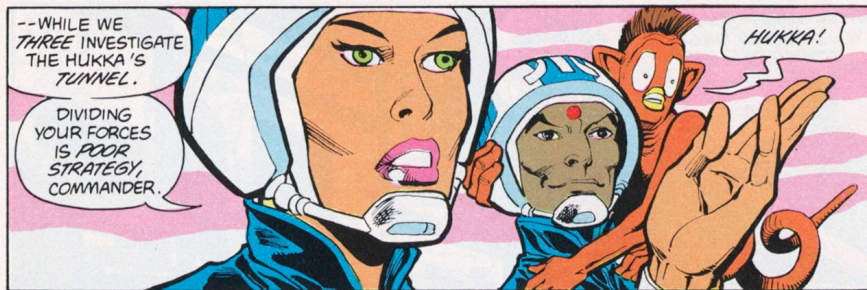
-- IS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

REMINDS ME OF AN OLD-STYLE TV GAME SHOW!



"PICK CURTAIN NUMBER ONE, NUMBER TWO, OR NUMBER THREE!"

BUT WE CAN CHOOSE TO PICK TWO "CURTAINS"-- LUCAS AND I WILL CHECK OUT THE TOWER--





--AND THEN, LET'S HAVE A LOOK-SEE AT WHAT'S ON T'OTHER SIDE!



SWEET SAINTS OF OLD EIRE!

HUKKA-HUKKA!



MEANWHILE, TOPSIDE...

THERE'S THE TOWER, LUCAS.

FUNNY, BUT FROM UP CLOSE, IT DOESN'T LOOK QUITE AS IMPOSING AS I'D--

WHAT ON EARTH?!

ZAM!
ZAM!

SOMEONE'S SHOOTING AT US!



BLAM!

IS THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE MAD?

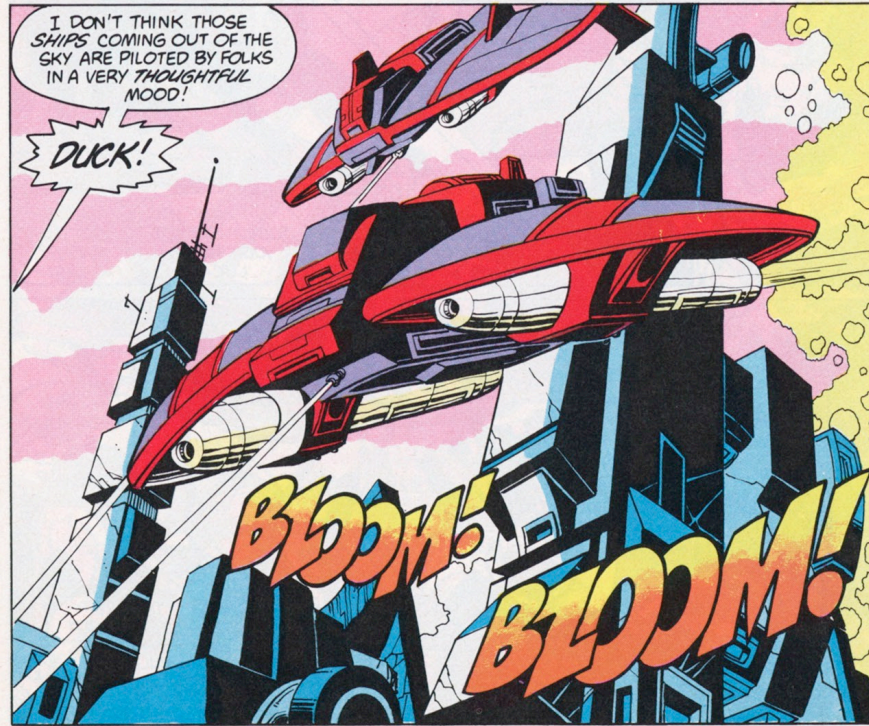
KRAK
KRAK



WE COME IN PEACE-- WITHOUT INTENDING HARM TO ANYONE--

--YET WHEREVER WE GO, WE ENCOUNTER VIOLENCE!

LET'S SAVE THE PHILOSOPHY, LUCAS!



I DON'T THINK THOSE SHIPS COMING OUT OF THE SKY ARE PILOTED BY FOLKS IN A VERY THOUGHTFUL MOOD!

DUCK!

BLOOM!
BLOOM!



WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY COULD SURE USE A FEW LESSONS IN FRIENDLINESS!

WHAT SAY WE GIVE THEM A FEW POINTERS, EH, LUCAS?

USE VIOLENCE TO FIGHT VIOLENCE?

NO, MARTIN-- I SAW TOO MUCH OF THAT ON EARTH WHEN I SERVED WITH A LIMITED NATIONS "PEACE-KEEPING FORCE"!!



WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT TAKING SIDES IN AN UGLY LITTLE THIRD WORLD CIVIL WAR, LUCAS--

--THIS IS A MATTER OF SURVIVAL!

MARTIN, MY FRIEND, I'M SORRY...

...BUT I'D RATHER DIE THAN FIGHT!

ZAM!

UH-HUH! YOU JUST MIGHT GET YOUR WISH, LUCAS! THEY'VE GOT OUR RANGE, AT LAST--



SHWOOSH!
WHOOOSH!

--AND THEIR NEXT BLAST SHOULD-- HUH?

THEY'RE FLEEING! BUT WHY? WHAT COULD HAVE--



FOR ONE SPLIT SECOND HIS HEART STANDS STILL, AND MARTIN CHAMPION IS STRUCK SPEECHLESS.

THEN HE FEELS IT, EVEN AS HIS EYES REGISTER THE SCENE BEFORE HIM:

AND HE SHARES THE TERROR OF THE UNSEEN PILOTS IN THE ATTACKING STARSHIPS, AS A VOICE CRIES OUT, A VOICE THAT HE KNOWS IS HIS OWN:

THERE'S SOMETHING COMING UP OUT OF THE GROUND!

DEAR LORD, IT'S A SPACESHIP!

AND WHAT A
SPACESHIP!

MARTIN CHAMPION
HAS SPENT MOST OF
HIS ADULT LIFE
AROUND THE SPACE-
CRAFT OF HIS HOME
WORLD, EARTH,
AND IN ALL THOSE
YEARS, HE NEVER
SAW ANYTHING LIKE
THIS!

THIS IS A STAR FIGHTER--
A WEAPON OF SUCH SHEER
DESTRUCTIVE POWER THAT
WORDS CANNOT DESCRIBE IT.

BLAAM!

KRAM

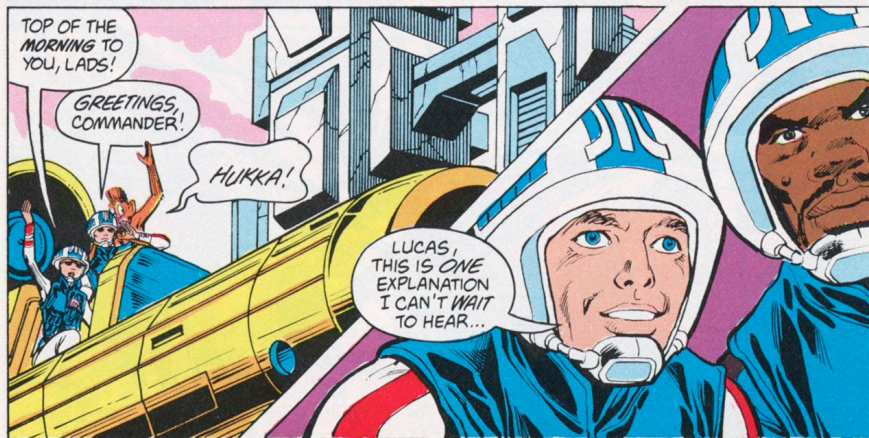
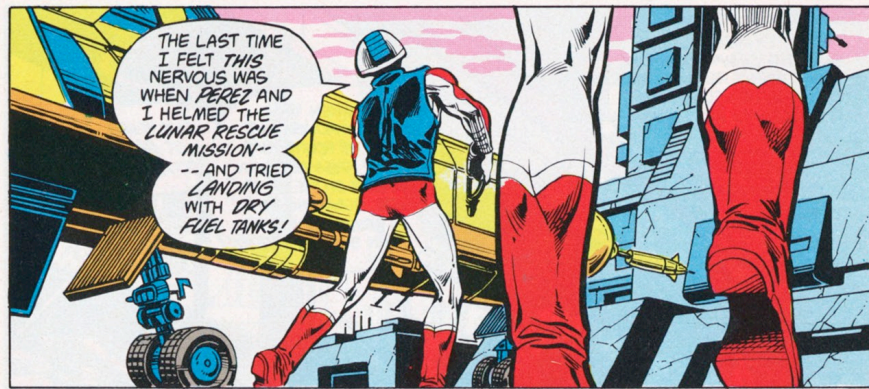
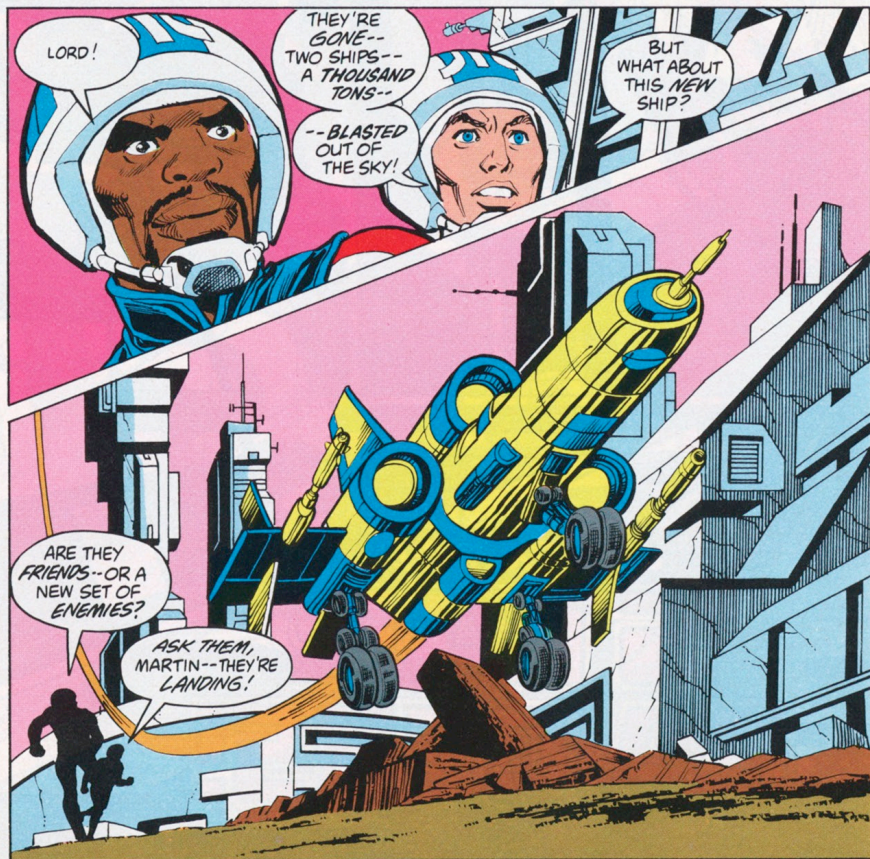
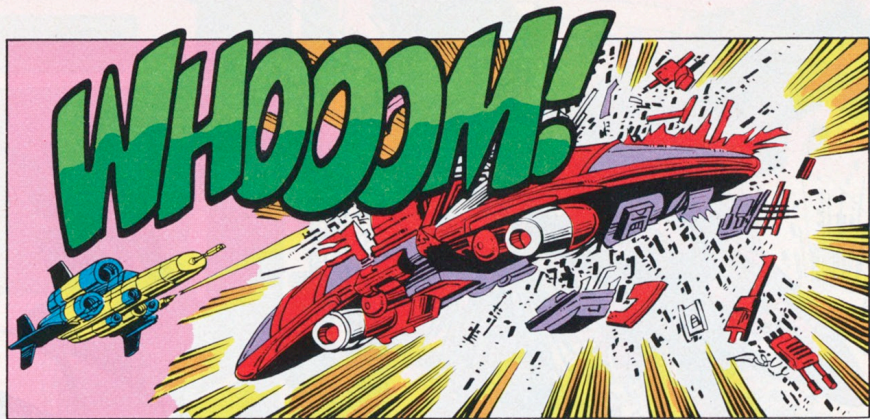
KOOOM!

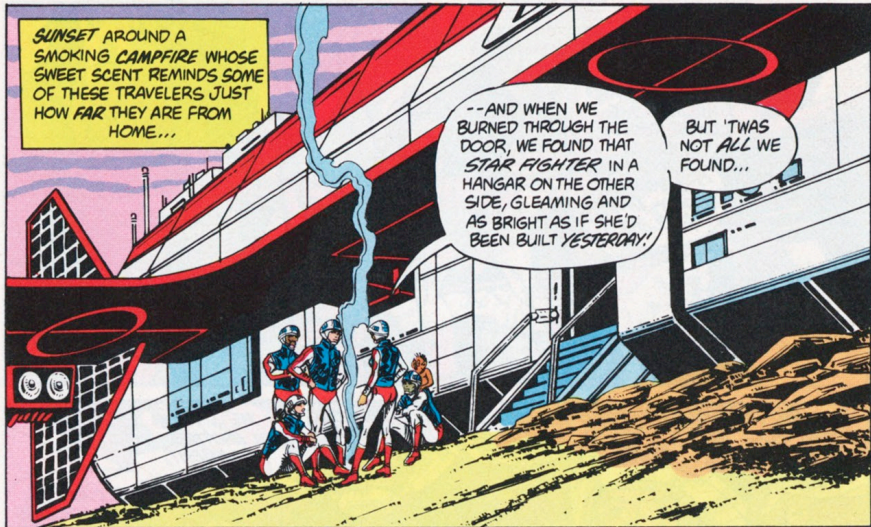
LIKE SOME ENORMOUS
EAGLE TAKING FLIGHT
AGAINST ITS PREY, THE STAR
FIGHTER SHOOTS SKYWARD
FROM THE SHATTERED
DESERT FLOOR.

CHAMPION ALMOST
FEELS SORRY FOR
HIS ENEMIES.

ALMOST.

CHAPTER THREE:
**STAR
RAIDERS!**





SUNSET AROUND A SMOKING CAMPFIRE WHOSE SWEET SCENT REMINDS SOME OF THESE TRAVELERS JUST HOW FAR THEY ARE FROM HOME...

--AND WHEN WE BURNED THROUGH THE DOOR, WE FOUND THAT STAR FIGHTER IN A HANGAR ON THE OTHER SIDE, GLEAMING AND AS BRIGHT AS IF SHE'D BEEN BUILT YESTERDAY!

BUT 'T WAS NOT ALL WE FOUND...



... AND IN TRUTH, IT'S THIS LITTLE GEM WHICH IS THE MORE IMPORTANT FIND OF THE TWO, I'M THINKING.

THE HUKKA LED SINGH TO IT, AS SOON AS WE BREACHED THE DOOR.



A JEWEL?

WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT--

TOUCH IT TO YOUR BROW, COMMANDER--

-- AND YOU'LL SEE WHAT I SAW WHEN I PUT IT TO MINE!

VISIONS...



I SEE THIS PLANET, THE WAY IT WAS 15 BILLION YEARS AGO!

MAGNIFICENT... A RACE REACHING FOR THE STARS!

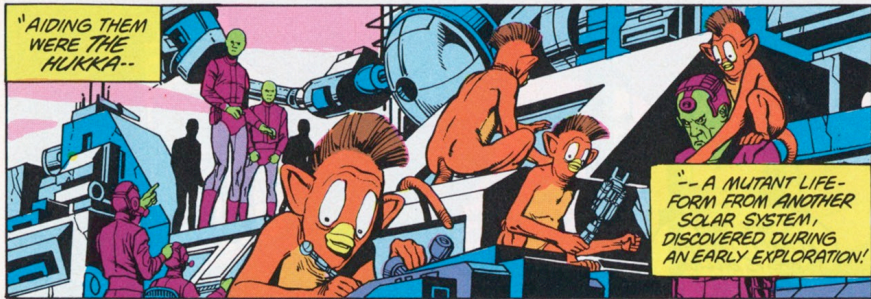
THEY'D JUST TAKEN THEIR FIRST TENTATIVE STEPS OUT OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM-- INTO INTER-STELLAR SPACE--

--WHEN THEY MET ANOTHER HOSTILE RACE-- OUT OF A DARK NEBULA--

--THE ZYLONS!

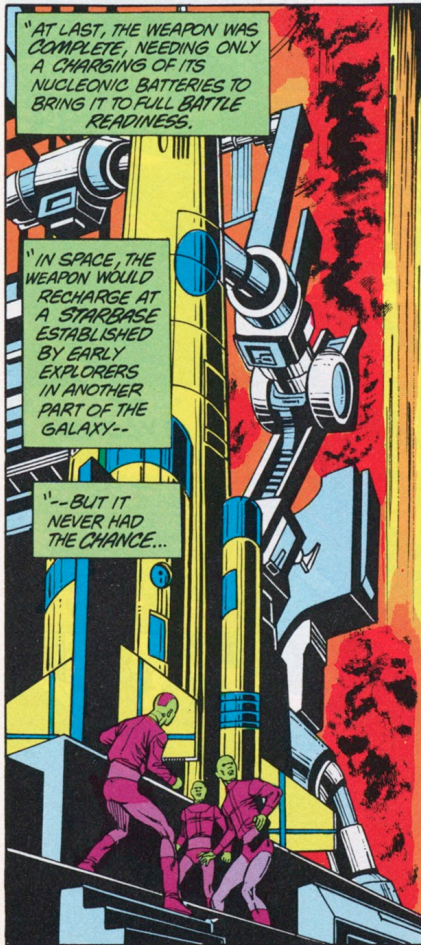
"THESE PEOPLE WERE PEACEFUL; THEY HAD ABANDONED WAR CENTURIES BEFORE AND WERE DEFENSELESS BEFORE THE ZYLONS' FIRST ATTACK!"

AS THE ZYLONS PULLED BACK TO REGROUP FOR A FINAL, DEVASTATING ASSAULT, THE GREATEST MINDS OF THE PLANET ASSEMBLED TO BUILD A WEAPON...



"AIDING THEM WERE THE HUKKA--"

-- A MUTANT LIFE-FORM FROM ANOTHER SOLAR SYSTEM, DISCOVERED DURING AN EARLY EXPLORATION!



"AT LAST, THE WEAPON WAS COMPLETE, NEEDING ONLY A CHARGING OF ITS NUCLEONIC BATTERIES TO BRING IT TO FULL BATTLE READINESS."

"IN SPACE, THE WEAPON WOULD RECHARGE AT A STARBASE ESTABLISHED BY EARLY EXPLORERS IN ANOTHER PART OF THE GALAXY--"

"-- BUT IT NEVER HAD THE CHANCE..."



"... FOR, IN THOSE CRUCIAL HOURS BEFORE THE WEAPON WAS FULLY CHARGED--"

-- THE ZYLONS ATTACKED!

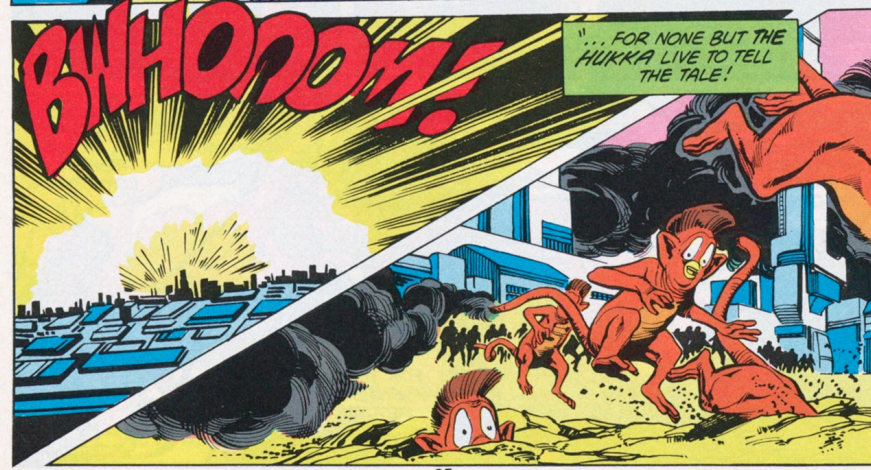


"IN ONE INSTANT, THE EFFORT OF MILLENNIA-- THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EONS-- WAS WIPE OUT!"

WHOOOM! WHOOOM!

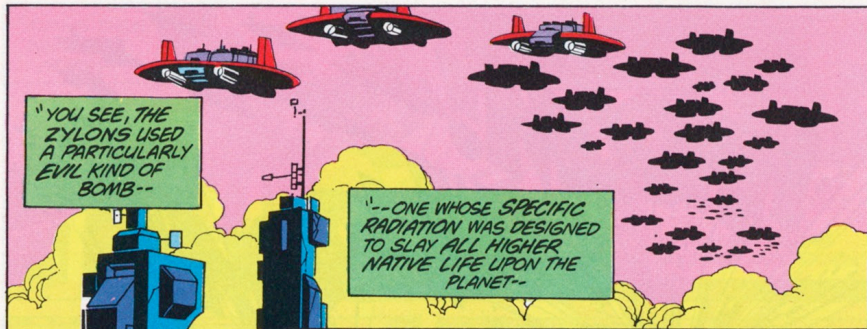
WHOOOM!

"WHY THE ZYLONS DID WHAT THEY DID, NONE CAN SAY..."



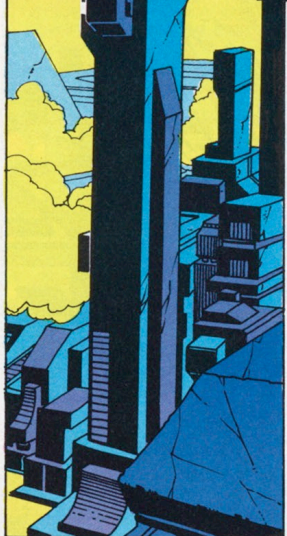
"... FOR NONE BUT THE HUKKA LIVE TO TELL THE TALE!"

BWHOOOM!



"YOU SEE, THE ZYLONS USED A PARTICULARLY EVIL KIND OF BOMB--

--ONE WHOSE SPECIFIC RADIATION WAS DESIGNED TO SLAY ALL HIGHER NATIVE LIFE UPON THE PLANET--



--LEAVING IT A WASTELAND FOR ALL ETERNITY.



"AND SO IT'S REMAINED, FOR ALL THESE BILLIONS OF YEARS... A DEAD WORLD, WITH ONLY THE HUKKA LEFT TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE LOST GLORY OF A LOST RACE..."



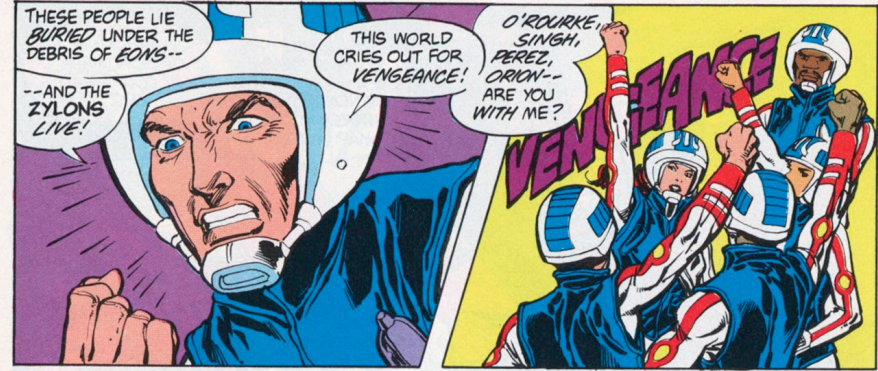
ALL THESE YEARS-- THEY'VE KEPT THE WEAPON--THE STAR RAIDER-- IN PERFECT WORKING CONDITION.

THEY'VE BEEN WAITING--

--WAITING FOR THEIR FRIENDS TO RETURN...

...YET KNOWING THEY NEVER WOULD.

THE HUKKA LED US RIGHT TO IT, COMMANDER.



THESE PEOPLE LIE BURIED UNDER THE DEBRIS OF EONS--

--AND THE ZYLONS LIVE!

THIS WORLD CRIES OUT FOR VENGEANCE!

O'ROURKE, SINGH, PEREZ, ORION-- ARE YOU WITH ME?

VENGEANCE!



AND, IN THE RESULTING RUSH OF ACTIVITY, NONE NOTICES THAT ONE AMONG THEM HAS NOT SEALED HIMSELF TO THEIR PACT...

...BUT, RATHER, STANDS BEWILDERED, AS IF SUDDENLY FINDING HIMSELF LOST AMONG STRANGERS.



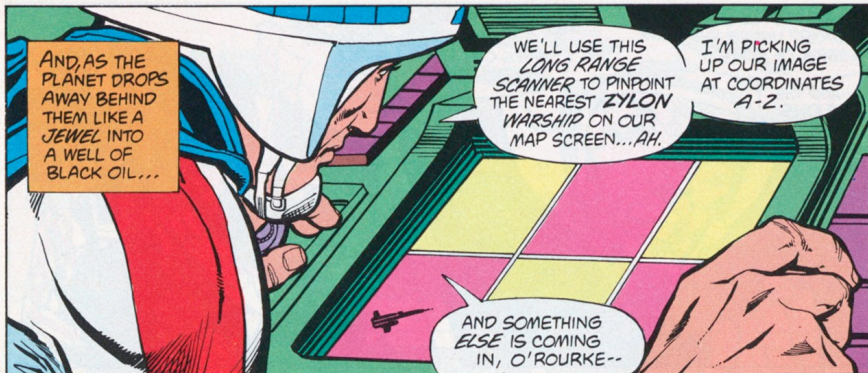
FORTY MINUTES LATER--

ALL RIGHT, LYDIA, THAT'S A LIFT-OFF!

WE'LL REMAIN IN CONTACT WITH THE REST OF YOU ABOARD SCANNER ONE VIA THE ATARI 8000--

--BUT RIGHT NOW, WE'RE PREPARING TO JUMP INTO HYPERDRIVE!

ROGER, COMMANDER. GOOD HUNTING!



AND, AS THE PLANET DROPS AWAY BEHIND THEM LIKE A JEWEL INTO A WELL OF BLACK OIL...

WE'LL USE THIS LONG RANGE SCANNER TO PINPOINT THE NEAREST ZYLON WARSHIP ON OUR MAP SCREEN... AH.

I'M PICKING UP OUR IMAGE AT COORDINATES A-2.

AND SOMETHING ELSE IS COMING IN, O'ROURKE--



--THE ZYLONS, AT COORDINATES B-1!

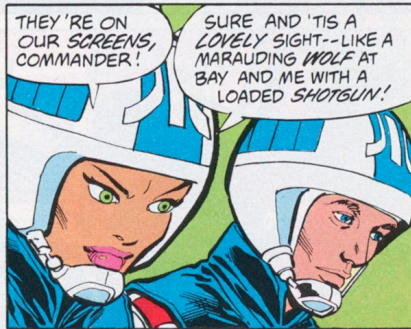


SET THE WARP CONTROLS AT WARP FACTOR ONE--



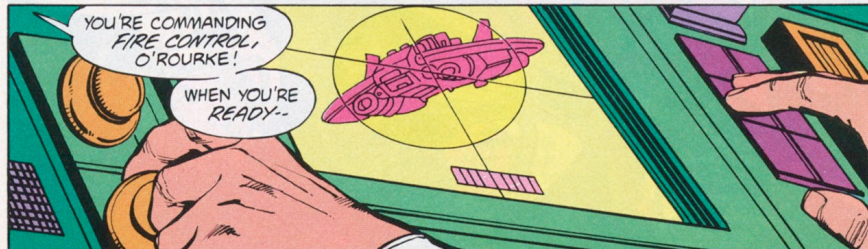
WARP!

TWAZOOM



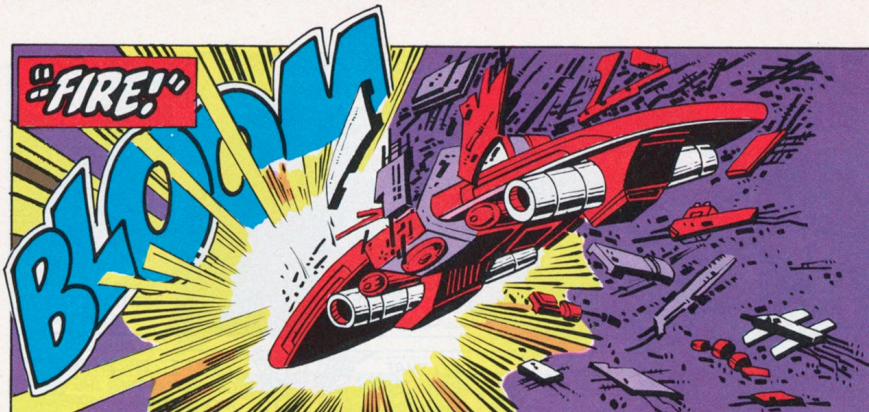
THEY'RE ON OUR SCREENS, COMMANDER!

SURE AND 'TIS A LOVELY SIGHT-- LIKE A MARAUDING WOLF AT BAY AND ME WITH A LOADED SHOTGUN!



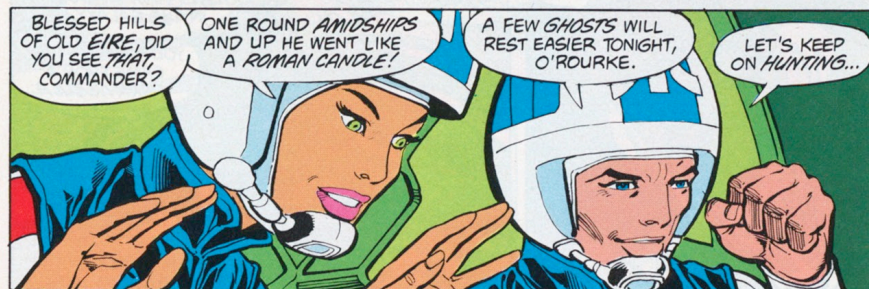
YOU'RE COMMANDING FIRE CONTROL, O'ROURKE!

WHEN YOU'RE READY--



"FIRE!"

BLOW



BLESSED HILLS OF OLD EIRE, DID YOU SEE THAT, COMMANDER?

ONE ROUND AMIDSHIPS AND UP HE WENT LIKE A ROMAN CANDLE!

A FEW GHOSTS WILL REST EASIER TONIGHT, O'ROURKE.

LET'S KEEP ON HUNTING...



MEANWHILE, BACK ABOARD SCANNER ONE...

PEREZ, SINGH-- I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.

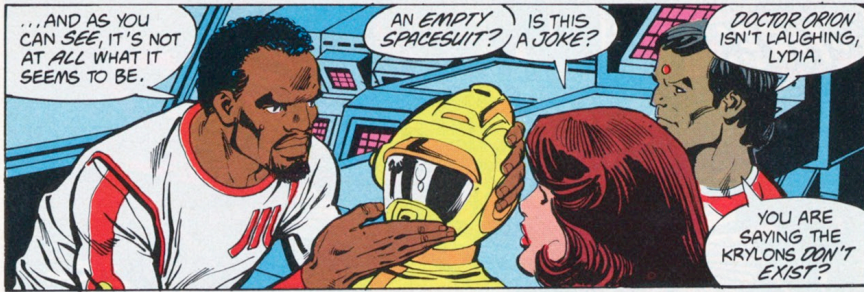
DOCTOR, I'M NOT EASILY SHOCKED-- ...BUT YOU SHOCK ME!

IS THAT-- A DEAD BODY?

HUKKA!

SO IT WOULD APPEAR.

I FOUND IT IN THE WRECKAGE OF ONE OF THE ZYLON WARSHIPS...



... AND AS YOU CAN SEE, IT'S NOT AT ALL WHAT IT SEEMS TO BE.

AN EMPTY SPACESUIT? IS THIS A JOKE?

DOCTOR ORION ISN'T LAUGHING, LYDIA.

YOU ARE SAYING THE KRYLONS DON'T EXIST?



NOT QUITE.

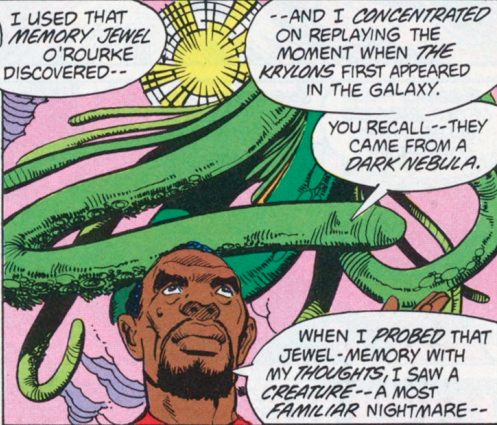
LET ME EXPLAIN FURTHER.

I USED THAT MEMORY JEWEL O'ROURKE DISCOVERED--

--AND I CONCENTRATED ON REPLAYING THE MOMENT WHEN THE KRYLONS FIRST APPEARED IN THE GALAXY.

YOU RECALL--THEY CAME FROM A DARK NEBULA.

WHEN I PROBED THAT JEWEL-MEMORY WITH MY THOUGHTS, I SAW A CREATURE--A MOST FAMILIAR NIGHTMARE--



--THE SAME CREATURE WHICH ATTACKED US IN INTER-DIMENSIONAL SPACE!

OF COURSE!

THE KRYLONS ARE CREATURES--

--MENTALLY CONTROLLED BY THAT MONSTROSITY BEYOND THE STARS! THAT MEANS MARTIN AND LI SAN ARE FIGHTING A HIDDEN ENEMY!

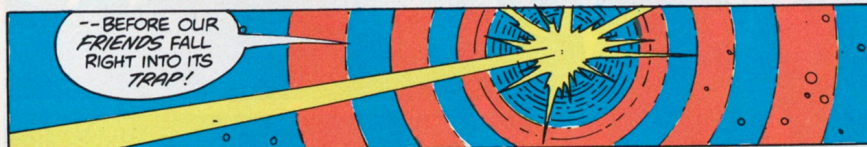
ORION, SING--STRAP DOWN--

HUKKA-HUKKA!



--WE'VE GOT TO WARP INTO INTERDIMENSIONAL SPACE AND TRACK DOWN THAT DARK DESTROYER--

VROOM!



--BEFORE OUR FRIENDS FALL RIGHT INTO ITS TRAP!



ONLY ONE QUESTION, MASTER PILOT...

IF WE FIND THIS CREATURE AGAIN--WHAT THEN?

MOHANDAS, I WISH I KNEW...

INTERSTELLAR SPACE, A DOZEN LIGHT-YEARS FROM GALAXY QUADRANT A-2...



STARBASE AHEAD, O'ROURKE...



...A PLACE TO RE-ENERGIZE BEFORE WE ENGAGE ANOTHER--EH?

THE ZYLONS, COMMANDER!

THEY'VE FOUND US--THREE OF THEM!

NO TIME TO WONDER HOW--!

BRACE YOURSELF--



-- WE'RE TAKING EVASIVE ACTION!

BLAM

WHAM!

NO GOOD, COMMANDER! WE'RE HIT!

THE WAY THEY MANEUVERED-- IN TOTAL COORDINATION!

IT'S AS IF ONE MIND WERE CONTROLLING ALL THREE WARSHIPS!

NOW THEY'RE CLOSING IN--

--AND IF THEY HIT US THAT WAY AGAIN--

--WE WON'T STAND A CHANCE!

KZAM



SPACE OUTSIDE SPACE, TIME OUTSIDE TIME:

THIS IS THE INTERDIMENSIONAL LIMBO KNOWN AS THE MULTIVERSE AND THROUGH THIS UN-REALITY SCANNER ONE PLUNGES LIKE A DOLPHIN THROUGH TROUBLED WATERS...

I'VE RECHECKED THE PLAN TWICE WITH OUR ATARI 8000 COMPUTER, SINGH.

YOU HEARD THE DOCTOR, MOHANDAS.

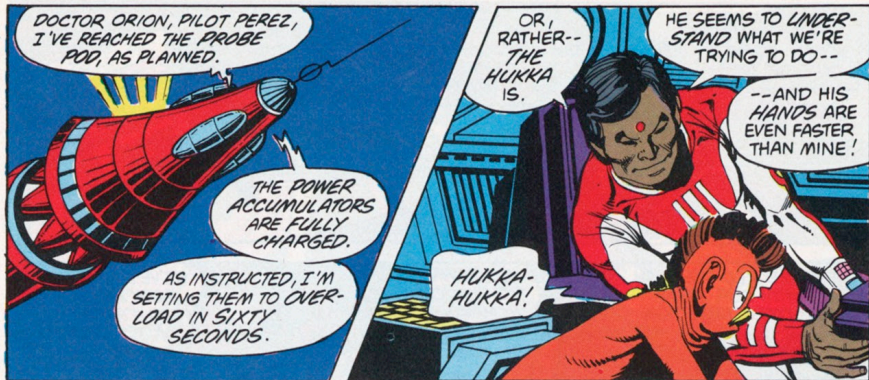
HURRY.

IT'S OUR ONLY HOPE.

WE'VE FOUND THE DARK DESTROYER, AND IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME--

-- BEFORE IT FINDS US!

LORD HELP US THEN!



DOCTOR ORION, PILOT PEREZ,
I'VE REACHED THE PROBE
POD, AS PLANNED.

THE POWER
ACCUMULATORS
ARE FULLY
CHARGED.

AS INSTRUCTED, I'M
SETTING THEM TO OVER-
LOAD IN SIXTY
SECONDS.

OR,
RATHER--
THE
HUKKA
IS.

HE SEEMS TO UNDER-
STAND WHAT WE'RE
TRYING TO DO--

-- AND HIS
HANDS ARE
EVEN FASTER
THAN MINE!

HUKKA-
HUKKA!



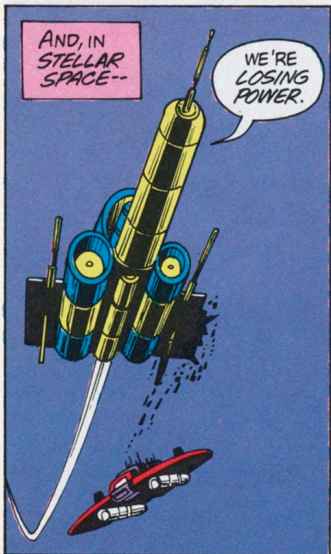
THAT CREATURE--
SO FANTASTIC--
SO EVIL!

THIS CLOSE, IT'S
LIKE LOOKING
INTO THE EYE OF
SATAN HIMSELF!

IF THIS MONSTER IS
CONTROLLING THE
ZYLONS-- THEN IT
DESTROYED AN ENTIRE
RACE FOR NO REASON!

HOW ELSE
WOULD YOU
DEFINE EVIL,
DOCTOR?

SINGH
HERE.
READY AT
THIS END--
GO!



AND, IN
STELLAR
SPACE--

WE'RE
LOSING
POWER.



THEY'RE
PLAYING
WITH US,
COMMANDER--

-- A COSMIC
GAME OF
CAT AND
MOUSE!

IT'LL BE
FINISHED
SOON,
O'ROURKE!

BLAM

ANOTHER
SHOT LIKE
THAT AND
WE'RE
DEAD!



SCANNER ONE: TEN SECONDS
TO OVERLOAD, AND COUNTING...

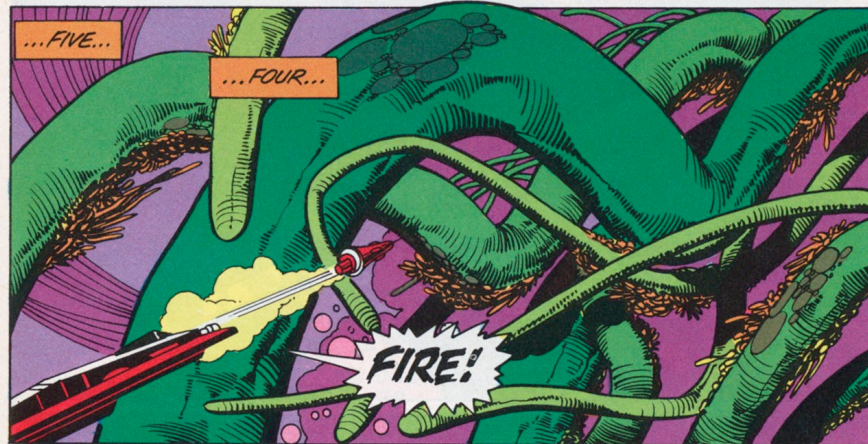
WHAT ARE YOU
WAITING FOR,
PEREZ?

FIRE THE
PROBE POD!
FIRE!

SEVEN...
SIX...

STEADY...
STEADY. I'M
AIMING FOR
THE "EYE..."

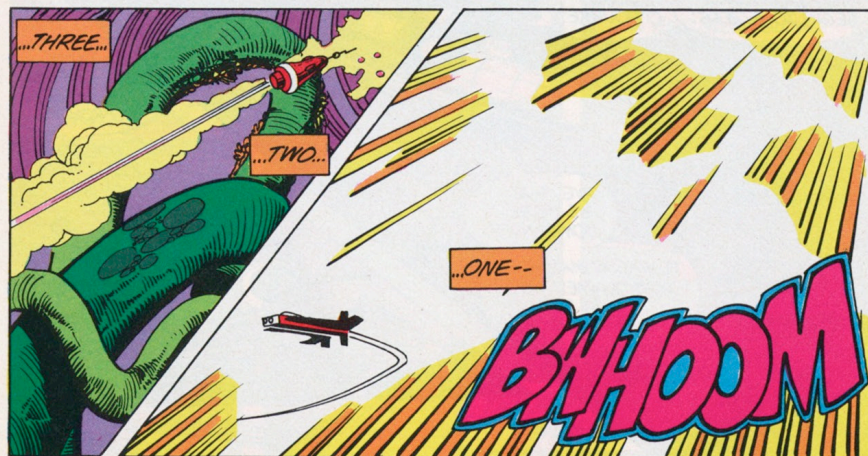
... LOCKED ON
TARGET!



... FIVE...

... FOUR...

FIRE!

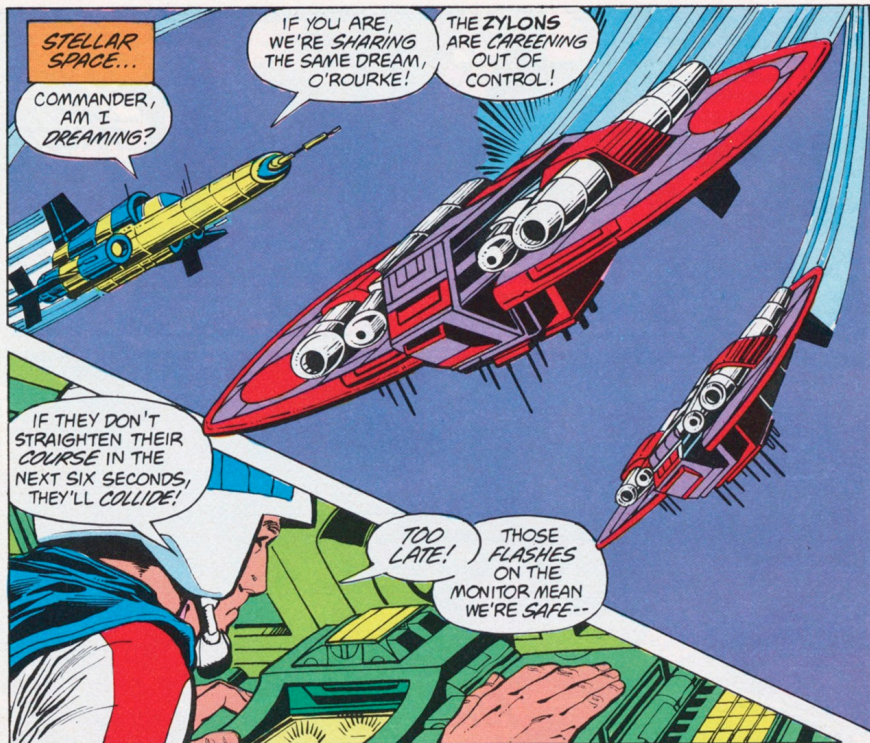


... THREE...

... TWO...

... ONE--

BLHOOOM



STELLAR SPACE...

COMMANDER, AM I DREAMING?

IF YOU ARE, WE'RE SHARING THE SAME DREAM, O'ROURKE!

THE ZYLONS ARE CAREENING OUT OF CONTROL!

IF THEY DON'T STRAIGHTEN THEIR COURSE IN THE NEXT SIX SECONDS, THEY'LL COLLIDE!

TOO LATE!

THOSE FLASHES ON THE MONITOR MEAN WE'RE SAFE--

--BUT HOW AND WHY, I COULDN'T BEGIN TO GUESS!

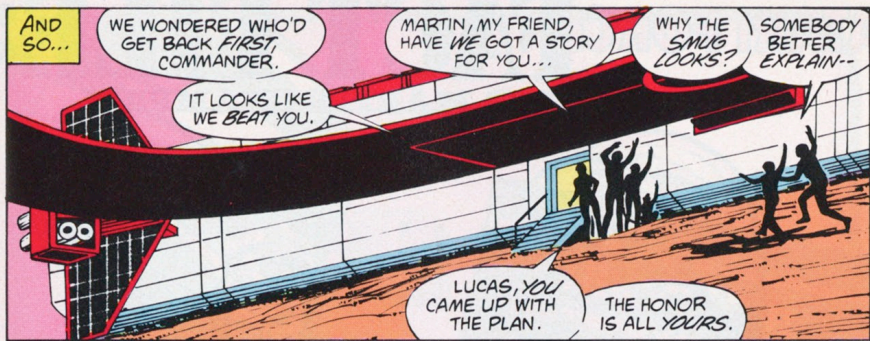
WE WERE LUCKY, O'ROURKE.

AYE, THAT WE WERE, COMMANDER.

IT WAS A MADNESS THAT CLAIMED US, A LUST FOR VENGEANCE!

I THINK WE'VE LEARNED OUR LESSON, O'ROURKE.

NOBODY EVER WINS AT WAR.



AND SO...

WE WONDERED WHO'D GET BACK FIRST, COMMANDER.

MARTIN, MY FRIEND, HAVE WE GOT A STORY FOR YOU...

WHY THE SMUG LOOKS?

SOMEBODY BETTER EXPLAIN--

IT LOOKS LIKE WE BEAT YOU.

LUCAS, YOU CAME UP WITH THE PLAN.

THE HONOR IS ALL YOURS.



ONE BRIEF EXPLANATION LATER...

SO, WHEN THE DARK DESTROYER WAS BLASTED--

--THE ZYLONS JUST COLLAPSED!

IF YOU SAY SO, LUCAS. I SAY, IT'S TIME TO GO.



AH, COMMANDER -- THE HUKKA--?



IF YOU TWO ARE SO ATTACHED TO EACH OTHER, SINGH--

--WELL, HE MIGHT AS WELL TAG ALONG!

HUKKA-HUKKA!

AS IF WE HAD A CHOICE!

AND, AS THE CREW OF SCANNER ONE JOINS TOGETHER IN HEART-FELT LAUGHTER, SOMEWHERE IN THE MULTIVERSE...



...WHERE A DARK NEBULA CHURNS LIKE A CLOUD TORN FROM THE HEART OF NIGHT...



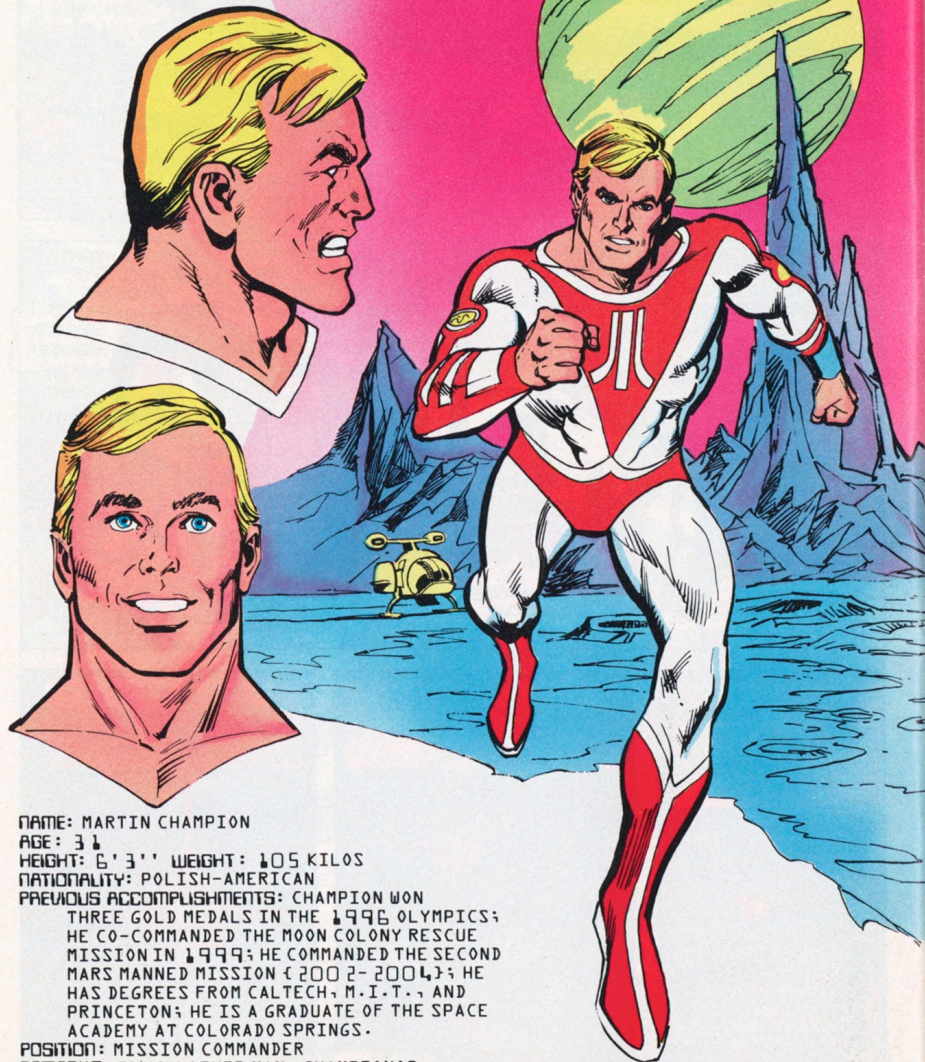
...A RED GLOW SLOWLY BRIGHTENS, LIKE THE GRADUAL OPENING OF AN ANGRY EYE...



THE ATARI FORCE WILL RETURN-- IN "PHOENIX," COMING THIS FALL!

ATARI FORCE **FACT FILE:**

#1 COMMANDER MARTIN CHAMPION



NAME: MARTIN CHAMPION

AGE: 31

HEIGHT: 6'3" WEIGHT: 105 KILOS

NATIONALITY: POLISH-AMERICAN

PREVIOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS: CHAMPION WON THREE GOLD MEDALS IN THE 1996 OLYMPICS; HE CO-COMMANDED THE MOON COLONY RESCUE MISSION IN 1999; HE COMMANDED THE SECOND MARS MANNED MISSION (2002-2004); HE HAS DEGREES FROM CALTECH, M.I.T., AND PRINCETON; HE IS A GRADUATE OF THE SPACE ACADEMY AT COLORADO SPRINGS.

POSITION: MISSION COMMANDER

REMARKS: IN ANY OTHER MAN, CHAMPION'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS MIGHT HAVE RESULTED IN THE CREATION OF AN OVERBEARING EGO; CHAMPION REMAINS REMARKABLY UNAFFECTED, AND AT TIMES SEEMS ALMOST BOYISH; YET HIS COOL, CONFIDENT MANNER MAKES HIM A PERFECT LEADER, AND INSPIRES THE LOYALTY OF HIS FELLOW EXPLORERS...

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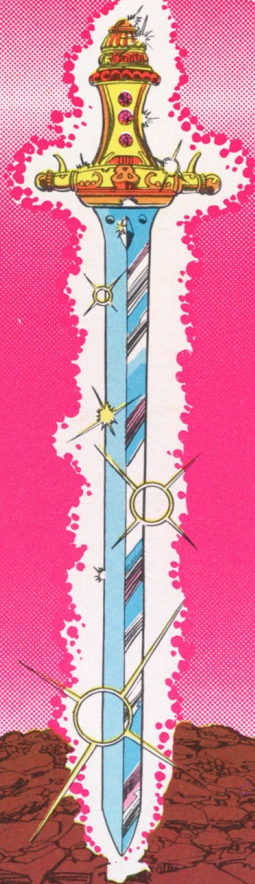


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