

DRUUNA IS BACK IN "THE FORGOTTEN PLANET"!

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THE MATURE ILLUSTRATED
FANTASY MAGAZINE



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a Humberdido! scan
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Publishers Note

Have you ever felt like you've had the same dream over and over again? Drifting in a landscape you can't shake the weird "déjà vu" of, and suddenly you find yourself beginning to question which one was the dream and which one was not? It seems you're lost and all you want to find is home, love and peace...

What kind of hell would that be? (Or is the artist telling us a little bit about what the "real world" offers up to most of us?)

To Druuna, who has been trapped in this run-down, futuristic "nasty" place filled with only sex minded mutants, ex-lovers, and evil sex fiend doctors for nearly 15 (Heavy Metal) years... a nightmare is the only answer for such unpleasantness... or is it?

For loyal Heavy Metal readers and other fans of Druuna, after six graphic novels and four supporting "Art Of" books, this masterpiece is only scratching the surface of some deeper meaning we are all looking for. Each volume continues to regularly sell out, and head back for reprints, again and again and again. It's either that or we all just really like the way Serpieri draws her butt...

As one of the biggest Druuna fans--- and "NO" I'm not really sure why, but I look forward to what might happen next, and most times even when it's nothing new, it is still okay. Druuna rocks...

I once met the creator and artist - Serpieri at a convention in France and he was exactly as I envisioned... When I said hello, introduced myself, (which is funny because he doesn't speak a word of English) and shook his hand, he never once looked at me - he couldn't take his eyes off my wife. Exactly as I envisioned, and I'm thrilled he's part of the Heavy Metal legend.

In addition to the return of our dear Druuna, we have a classic Liberatore story, plus Simon Bisley returns with the first part of an all new series- Fistful Of Blood. To round out this kick ass issue, we welcome back (with the second cover in a year!) my pal Lorenzo on the cover, and new guys Philip Xavier and Langdon Foss tip the hat to the classic styling of old school Heavy Metal with their adventures and much, much more.

Okay folks, that's enough rambling from me for this month - keep those cards and letters coming. I look forward to all your thoughts.



Website: www.heavymetal.com
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Letters to The Editor

Send Letters To: Heavy Metal, 100 Merrick Road, Suite 400, East Building, Rockville Centre, NY 11570

Dear H.M.,

Finally the content is coming back. For well over a year this die-hard fan was troubled. Troubled by the lack of content. The stories seemed to be completely geared for T&A. I was even at moments embarrassed to have this magazine on my table. But over the past year or so I have been surprised by some truly fantastic content. Please, please give me more. You're one of the few magazines I enjoy. One I can get all over the world. I want stories that stimulate my brain and the artwork should seed the mental images that flood into me when a truly wonderful story graces the pages.

Mark

Dear Mark,

Thanks, it's always tough for me to find the right balance, but a challenge I do enjoy. I get a wide variety of material to pick from and I try to incorporate "it" into every issue. If an issue has too much nudity or too much sci-fi or too much of anything, 50% of the fans love it, 50% hate it and I get letters to back it up. All I can say is thanks for caring and keep those letters coming.

Dear H.M.,

I was wondering a few things about Heavy Metal. First, will Frank Frazetta be featured in Heavy Metal in the near future? Second, I've collected Heavy Metal for years now and I have recently noticed that your comics have really mellowed out. In the 70's and 80's there was

more sex and nudity in them, but now they are more like any other comic you can buy off the shelf. Third, I just purchased your 20th anniversary hard cover book and while I was looking through it, I started thinking of another good book that I believe everyone would enjoy seeing from you. How about a hard cover book with all of the magazine covers from the first issue to the most recent issue.

Randa

Dear Randa,

I wish we could see more Frazetta work in or out of Heavy Metal - he's the greatest. But, he's given us all he can, and we'll forever love him for it. As for the magazine, I try to mix up each issue's content - Hang in there, I hope we'll come up with something you'll like (see Druuna this issue!). Great idea about the book of Heavy Metal covers - great minds think alike... it will be out next year.

Dear H.M.,

I just finished reading the Fall 2000 Special and I was VERY impressed. It seems that you guys used to be about great fantasy artwork. Lately your magazine seems like a show of flesh, it just doesn't have the impact it once did. I found the Fall 2000 Special to be a refreshing break from that. I hope that you continue to produce your fine publication but still keep to the tradition of the old ways.

Patrick

Dear Patrick,

Thanks- and if I had one complaint it would be that we have 96 more pages of "A Bit Of Madness" and it will take us another 18 months to get all of it out there! So hang with us... it's as good, if not better than the first installment.

Dear H.M.,

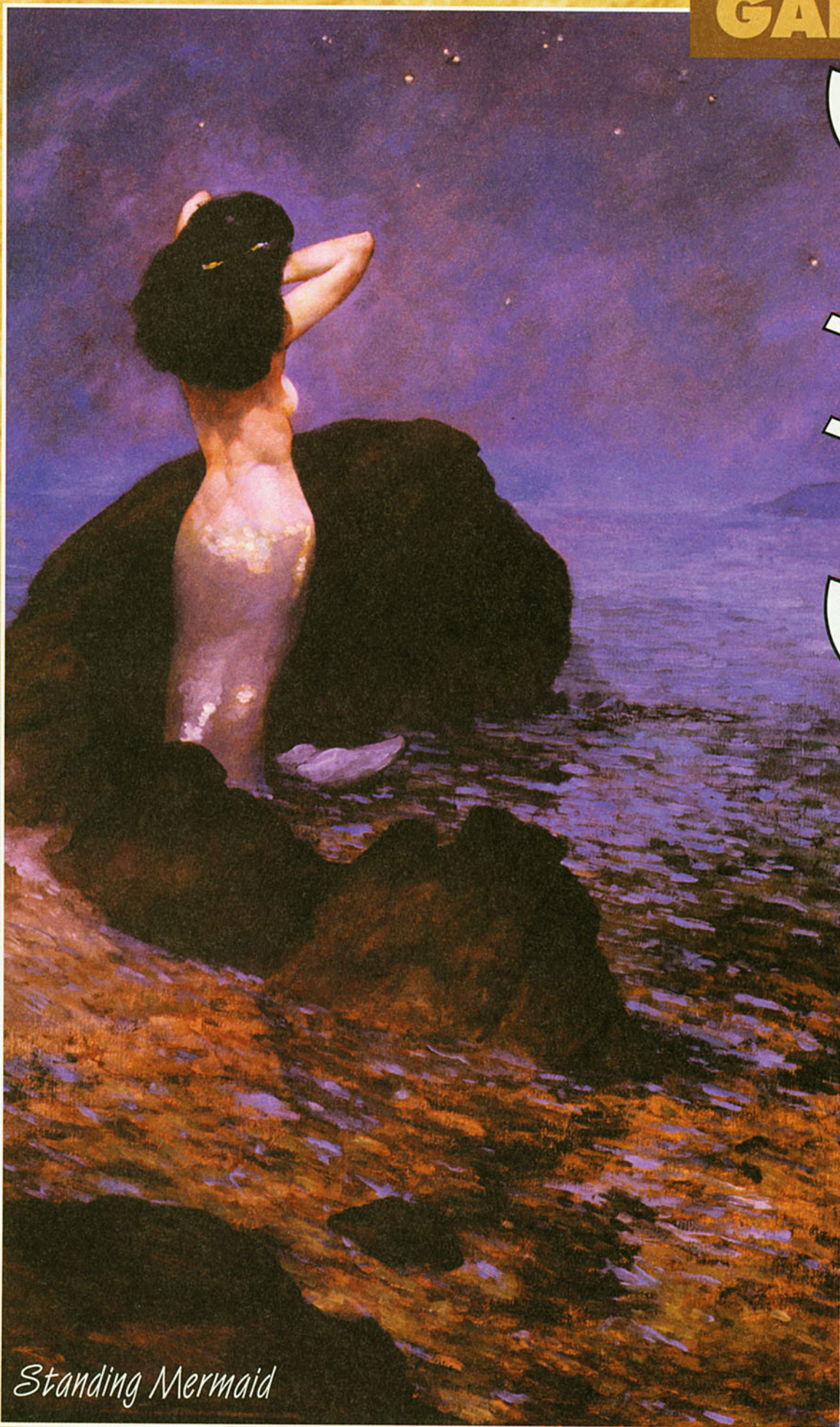
I am a subscriber and a great Serpieri fan. I just received his newest book, "The Sweet Smell Of Woman" from you. I have all his books and like the rest, this is beautifully done and I am glad to add it to my collection. However, the big question is when are we going to see something new. I know DRUUNA is going to be tough to match and exceeding it probably impossible, but we need THE FUTURE ADVENTURES OF... in a different time or place maybe, but we need STORIES!! Short stories or long doesn't matter and more beautiful artwork. Horror of horrors! He hasn't retired, has he? Vagrant

Dear Vagrant,

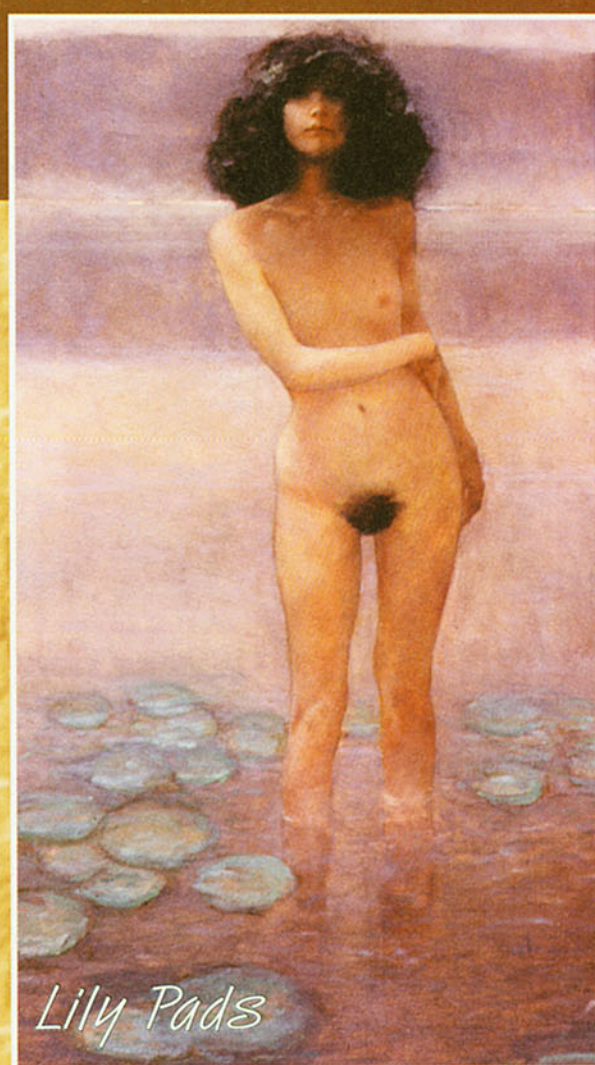
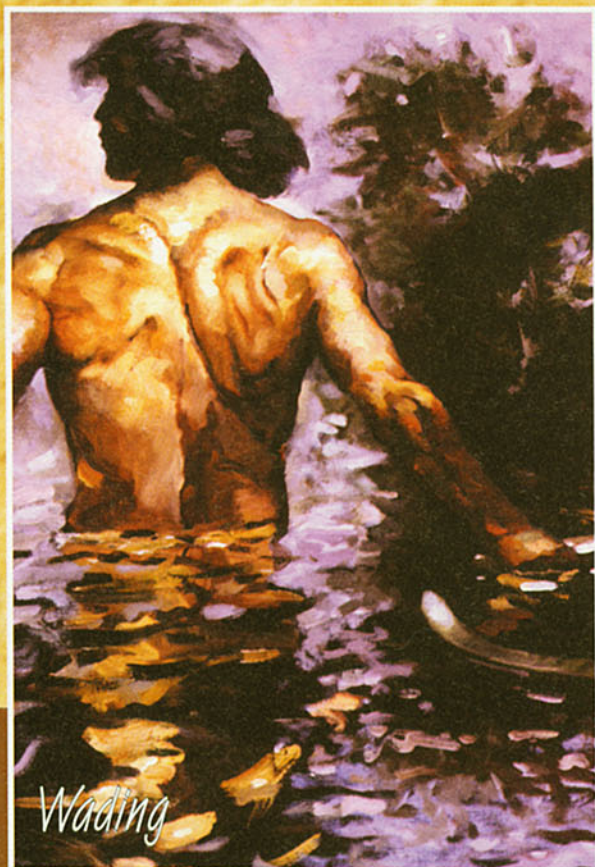
Man, how timely your letter is! I was going through the stack of letters and found your note on Druuna, in an issue where Druuna has returned. So, he hasn't retired, but the adventure continues in the classic sense... if you catch my drift!

GALLERY

Jeff Jones

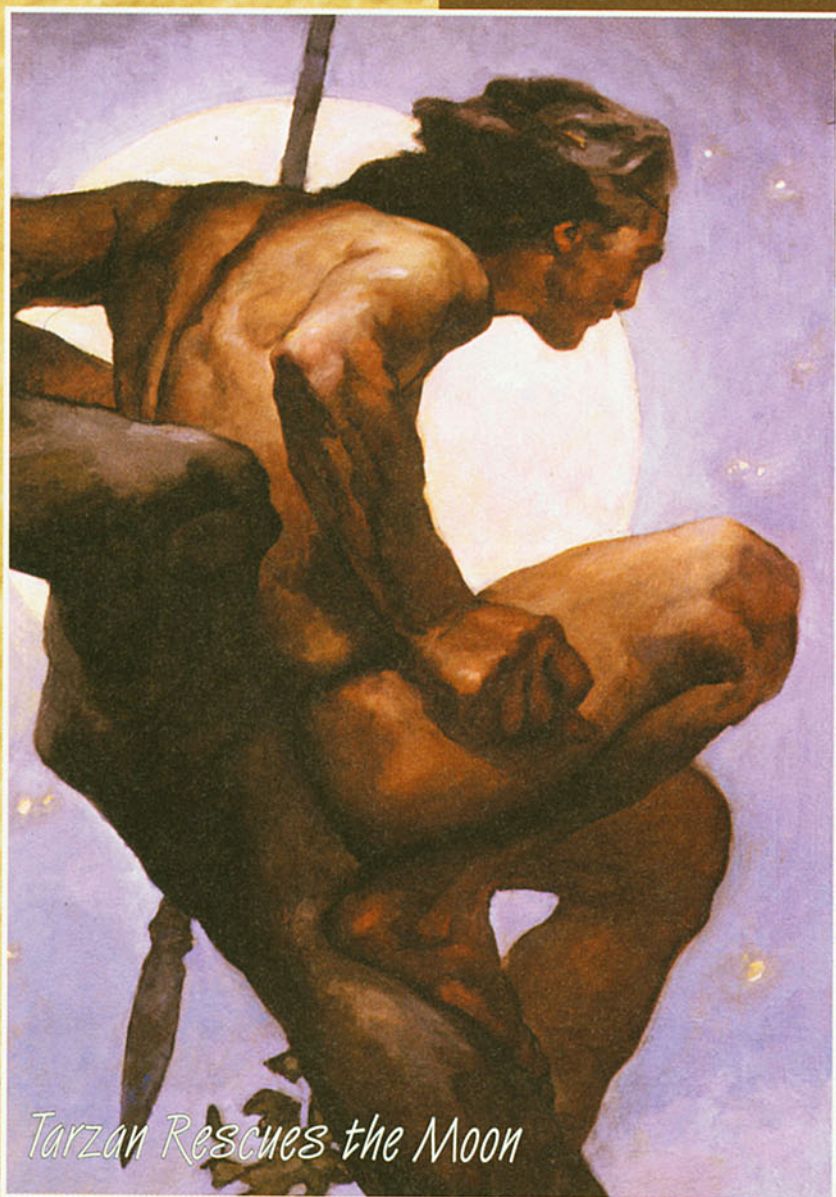


Standing Mermaid

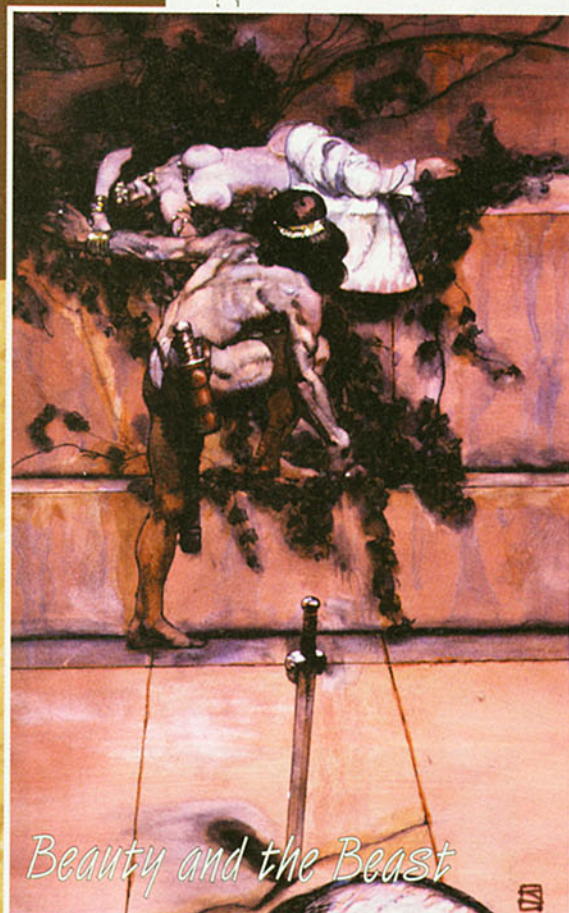




At Rest



Tarzan Rescues the Moon

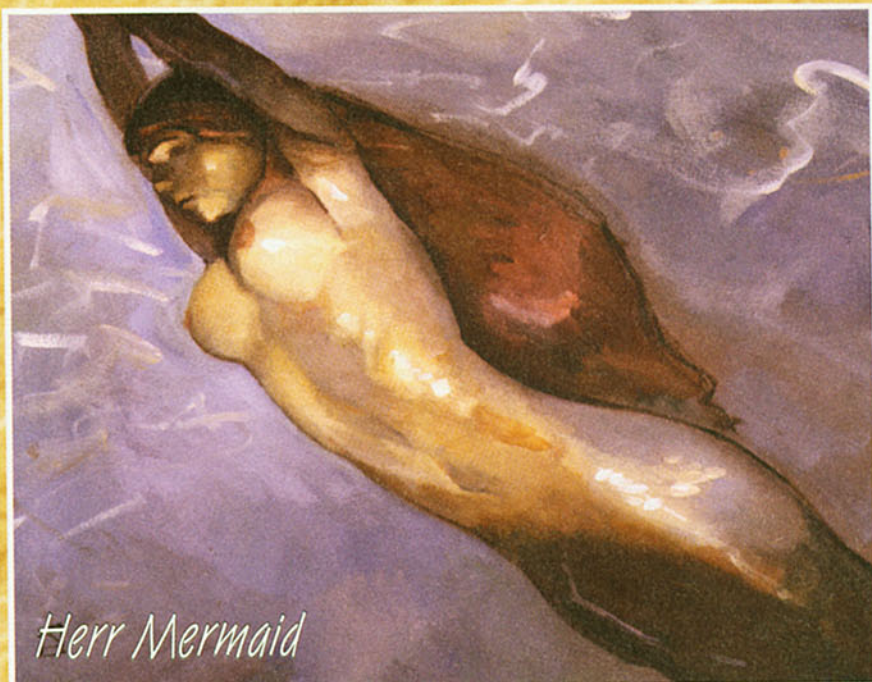


Beauty and the Beast



Bells

To see more of Jeff's work,
check out his website:
www.jeffreyjones.com



Herr Mermaid



Winslow Skull



Roman Charge

Jeff Jones can best be described as the poet laureate of contemporary fantasy painters, although Jones, sensitive artist that he is, assuredly hates being pigeonholed in any way. A prolific and popular paperback cover artist in his early years, he also created illustrations for sci-fi pulps, fanzines, magazines and even occasionally drew comics for mainstream publishers. Old-time *Heavy Metal* readers may have seen his "I'm Age" strips from the 1980's, while *National Lampoon* fans fondly recall Jones' obscure and beautiful "Idyl". As a cover painter, Jones illustrated so many different novels and series that it would take an entire Dossier column to list everything, but to mention only a few: a score of different Robert E. Howard volumes, Lin Carter's Thongor series, Gardner Fox's Kothar, Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, as well as books by Andre Norton,

JEFF JONES TRANSCRIPT

(Interview Conducted 1/2001)

HM: Jeff, let's start by talking about some of your early work, the comic strips *Idyl*, and *I'm Age*, which you did for *National Lampoon* and *Heavy Metal* respectively. What were you trying to do with those strips? Were you trying to say something obscure and profound, or were they just an excuse to draw some beautiful pictures?

JONES: My general intent in both strips was to explore the difference between men and women. The only real difference between *IDYL* and *I'M AGE* is that in the former men were generally represented by animals or objects and in the latter there were no males present. *IDYL* was intended as satire and whimsy. One art director and one editor, who met me each month with puzzled faces, continued to remind me that *NATIONAL LAMPOON* was a humor magazine, "As long as YOU laugh" they finally said. So each month I would go in laughing. I also must admit that also I love to draw nude women.

HM: You also did a smattering of mainstream comics work in the early days for Warren, DC, and Charlton, and for magazines, and underground comics, though not a lot in comparison to contemporaries such as Kaluta and Wrightson. Why didn't you do more sequential art? Is it because you didn't like the comics medium, or because you were more interested in painting?

JONES: I love the comics medium. And I also love single narrative pictures. They both tell a story, though comics also employs words. The use of words and pictures together is a vastly unexplored and exciting realm. I am currently working on a new strip idea, *PEEZEL MEEPS*, which uses "funny animals." I guess making pictures has always been my first love and drawing or painting them is what I am inspired to do. I once did a painted comics story,

HM: On that subject, what was it like in the early days, hanging around with Kaluta, Wrightson, Alan Weiss

Thomas Burnett Swann, Edgar Rice Burroughs and many, many others.

Jones renounced commercial art in 1976, and with his friends, Bernie Wrightson, Michael Kaluta and Barry Windsor-Smith, formed *The Studio*, with the avowed purpose of creating an artistic synergy among these four vibrant young talents. Together the quartet produced *The Studio* (1977) a gorgeous collection of their best work to that date. *The Studio* demonstrated that Jones, et al., had far transcended the comics medium. What Jones produced couldn't be called illustration, and was far too romantic to be called fine art by modernist critics. As always, Jones forged ahead, following his own path.

Jones retreated from New York City to live in Woodstock, and there made his living from portfolios, limited edition prints, and selling off his originals, while continuing to explore and refine his own style. His most recent public offering was last year's *Jeff Jones Sketchbook* published by Vanguard. Co-designed by Jones and fellow painter George Pratt, it's easily the most beautiful of Vanguard's series of sketchbooks*. Dossier caught up with Jones via the Internet to catch up with this visual master craftsman's past, present and future of Jeff Jones' artistic endeavors...

morning. I mean before sunrise, I walked into the Studio I shared at that time with Kaluta, Windsor-Smith, and

I found Michael crouched behind his drawing table, now swung into a vertical position, with a gun. A pistol. "Welcome to 'Desolation Row'", he said as he peered with one eye over the top of the table. I have to back up a month to say what led up to this seeming desperate situation. From the time we moved into the Studio in June of 1976, Michael came some months later, we heard scurrying noises in the quiet hours of the night. Mice. Well, at first some of us thought they were cute and some of us didn't. By the time the mice added chewing on artwork, stacks of posters and electrical cords to their scurrying, (one mouse was discovered stiff and dead with its teeth still clamped to an extension cord) we all decided they weren't cute anymore. But we being peaceful children of the sixties, "death to the mice" was not an immediate option. It was decided that the answer was 'Have a Heart' traps that would capture them alive. Then what? Well, Michael and I acquired an aquarium to house the mice in, sort of like pets. We couldn't find authentic 'Have a Heart' traps but got some pirated copies at the local hardware store. Needless to say, these didn't always work properly. Some mice would get caught, some would get away, and a few we would find dead or almost dead with a trap door pinning their rear ends halfway out into the room. The mice we caught Michael and I would put into the aquarium and feed peanut butter. One midnight when we decided the aquarium was full enough, Michael and I took it down the elevator from our 12th floor aerie to the lobby and out into the night. Across the street we went, feeling for all the world like saviors of mice, to an empty parking lot. Buildings rose tall and dark on all sides of us and I guess we wondered where the mice would end up. But that would be somebody else's problem. As we tipped over the aquarium with a stick, all the mice swarmed out into the night. Yes, swarmed. They moved as a herd, a dark mass, back across the street and back into our building. Michael had been sitting for hours behind his drawing board



and the other young Turks of comics? What are your favorite memories from the early days, of making the transition from fan to pro?

JONES: Oh, there are way too many memories to convey here. Let's just say that to have been among all the young, aspiring and creative energies at the time was like being on a runaway train. One could not not work. Early one

Wrightson. It must have been sometime in 1978, I think, because by that time Michael and I had all but moved into the Studio, visiting our apartments occasionally only to pick up the mail. We would cross paths about this time of day because I slept at night and Michael slept... well in 1978 he was a very important sleeper. On this memorable morning, as I opened the big horizontal steel lock on the big steel door,

with his pistol, a BB gun, watching, as a mouse would creep along the far wall beneath the radiators. "The BBs don't really kill them," he explained. "They just get stunned." "What do you do with them," I asked. "I put them in a paper bag and drop them out the 12th floor window," he smiled.

HM: I know the late Vaughn Bode was a friend of yours, and that you collaborated a few times. Was Vaughn much of an artistic influence, or more of a personal influence?

JONES: Vaughn was an influence in that he was driven and pushed himself to explore himself.

HM: In your early years, you were an amazingly prolific cover artist. Approximately how many paintings do you think you've executed to date? Have you managed to hang on to many of your oils? Are there any that you just couldn't bear to part with? Also, what are your own personal favorites among your paintings and why?

JONES: First, I have no favorites. To have any would be like Sophie's Choice. My "child" is always the one I'm currently working on. I have virtually none of my originals on hand because having them around can stunt my growth as an artist. I want to grow and change as an artist, not plagiarize myself. And there is no way I can say how many paintings I've done; it must be way over a thousand.

HM: There is a definite stylistic evolution apparent in your work. Did your style change because you became aware of different influences, because your technique improved, or because your philosophy about your work changed?

JONES: All of the above.

HM: You said in the interview in your recently published sketchbook that you didn't like doing concept sketches for art directors any more. Does this mean you're not doing any more commercial art commissions? Do you think you will ever do another series of book covers like your Robert E. Howard covers for Zebra Press in the late 70s?

JONES: Well, you never know; though it is my firm opinion that illustration is immoral. Yes, I am a former illustrator and immoralist. I've encountered illustrators who claim to elevate

the text (what egotism!), or even just to add to it. It is a rare case that an author leaves his work incomplete, awaiting illustrations. Most illustrations give us a picture of what the author has written and this inevitably is a theft of the imagination of the reader. This is not to say that many illustrations are not Art, they are just misplaced. I do, however, approve of an artist's interpretation of ideas.

HM: What are you doing with your



work now? Is your focus more fine art-oriented these days? Will you discuss your latest projects and plans for the future?

JONES: I'm not sure what "fine art" is. Each day I get up and paint or draw. I want nothing more than to do just this. My attention seems now to be focused on today and I have no idea about the future. Years ago I had goals (to get to this or that place), and when I did I found that all I wanted to do was art. So I have given up goals. When I was young my passion was art, eventually comic book and fantasy art. I've seen a lot of people lose their childhood passions, not only for art but for life--just getting squeezed. My passion was and is my art. However, there was a time when I became aware that I might be losing it. Having used my ability to draw to buy approval from my childhood peers, I entered the real world with my "cash" in my pocket. I wanted to be published so badly that in the beginning I took on a lot of work that I hated. Ah, but maybe a million people would see it and love me. I lived in fear. What happened? I found that the more I went to the drawing board or the easel to do work I hated, the less I wanted to go there. I was losing my joy, and I found eventually that my joy

was more important than approval. I began to get "difficult to deal with" and began to lose jobs. I became determined to, well, not so much "have it my way," but to do work I loved. It's not so easy to pursue, or even know what your heart's desire may be.

HM: You have a beautiful website up, Jeff. Is that your primary avenue for selling your work? Are you working with a gallery or agent(s)?

JONES: Thank you. That would be <http://www.jeffreyjones.com>. I sell from my site, and by doing private commissions. I continue also to do the occasional work for publication, usually for independent publishers.

HM: Your work frequently depicts beautiful, delicate women in a style reminiscent of the great Romantic painters. Why are you so drawn to



painting women in this style?

JONES: I am a romantic and a painter and I love women. If you go to museums, you'll find there mostly paintings of women, by both men and women. The female form just reflects light so simply and beautifully.

HM: Are you consciously trying to convey certain themes in your work? If so, what themes are you trying to articulate?

JONES: There are no themes that I know of in my work.

HM: Your early work is full of fantasy imagery--barbarians, wizards, etc. Was that because of the books you were assigned to illustrate, or because that was what you were interested in

painting at the time?

JONES: I am interested in human nature and I feel that confining it to "reality" presents a timeliness and not a timelessness.

HM: Can you describe, in however much detail you'd like, how you go from an idea to finished work (painting, drawing, etc.)

JONES: When I paint, I do no preliminaries. I find that the more concrete an idea I have for a painting the more I don't want to paint, it seems already done. My paintings take shape and form as I go along. I have no real idea what the finish will look like. It's like authors who say that at some point the characters take on a life of their own. The painting and I have a kind of "conversation" where control is let go. We "listen" to each other. This is exciting. Drawings are similar.

HM: Please describe how you create a painting, say a large-scale work such as "Blind Narcissus." For instance, would you work with a live model posing for you, or take photos and work from those, or do you do it directly from your imagination?

JONES: I use everything I can get my hands and heart on, models, photography, and a lot of imagination.

HM: In general, do you use photographic reference?

JONES: I used to work from imagination alone but soon found that when I did this I inevitably developed formulas--a knee looks like this and an arm looks like that. When I work from life (or photos when the model has time constraints) I can see that, with subtleties, every foot, every neck, every leg is different.

HM: You mentioned PEEZLE MEEPS, the new comic strip you're working up. If you have enough of it done, how about sharing a sample with us for the gallery section?

JONES: Right now, I am in the creative stages of it.

*(For info on ordering the Jones Sketchbook and others, check out the Vanguard website: <http://www.creativevix.com/vanguard/>)

Historic First Contact

A famous encounter is revisited for our annual issue.

Chosen for the cover of our Annual from all the images in the Galactic Geographic archives, "First Contact" typifies the spirit of our organization; human and extraterrestrial intelligences united in the pursuit of scientific knowledge.

The image, recorded in the year 3000, documents a young Federation's chance encounter with an alien civilization. In the picture three crew members from the sub-light cruiser *Magellan* meet three alien crewmen.

Writes retired Commander John Wysor, former captain of the *Magellan*, "We detected something that we first took to be an asteroid, but we knew that regions of star formation like this one seldom have rocky debris. Of course once we tracked it at fractional light speed we knew it was a ship."

"We sent out a hailing message on the SL wave and the photonics. We even tried radio, but they didn't see us. It took a burn of our G-pulsers for them to notice us."

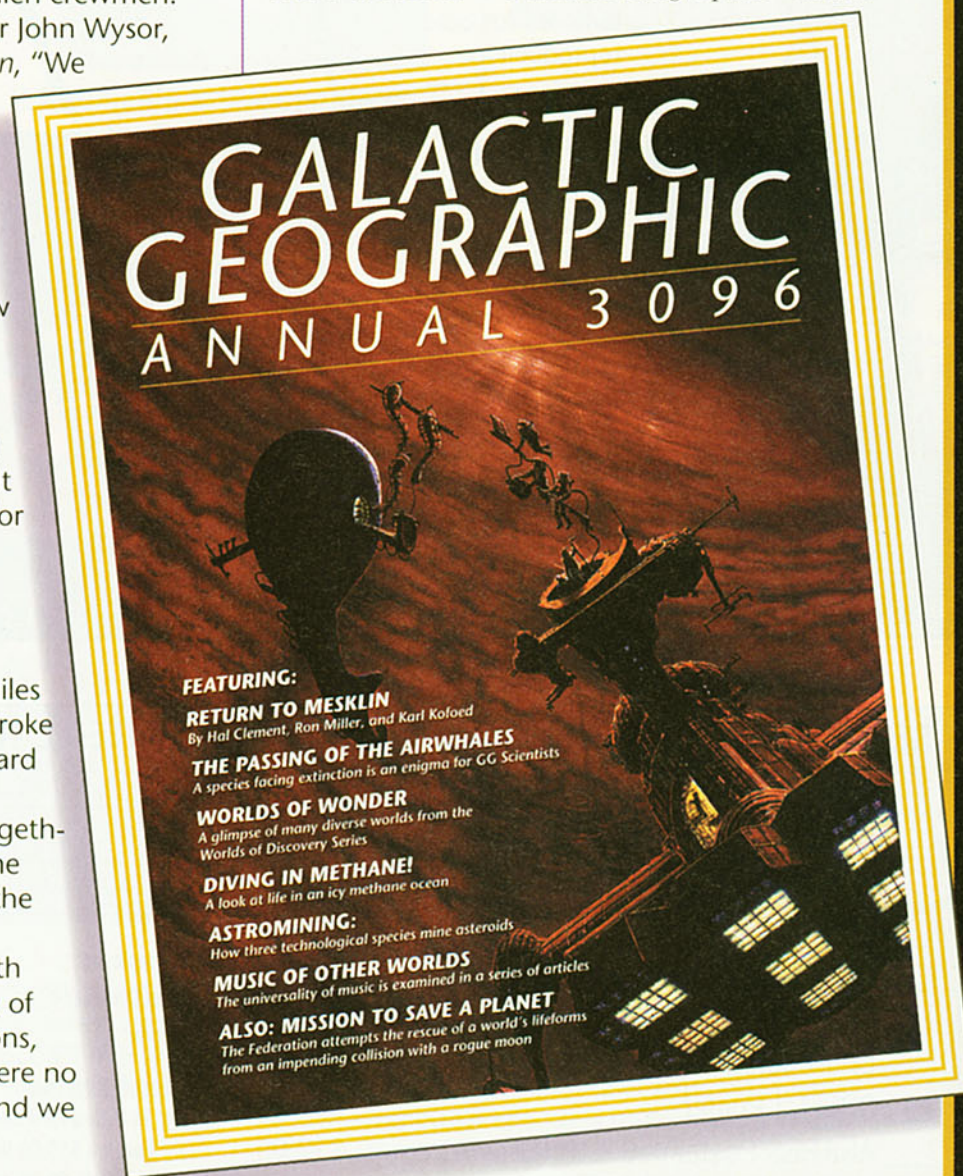
Wysor recalls a cat and mouse game that lasted for days.

"We were thousands of miles apart most of the time. We broke the ice by slowly moving toward them. Eventually our mutual curiosity brought our ships together. We decided an EVA was the best way to meet. We knew the risks, but it was worth it. The strange thing was that we both brought our instruments. Any of them could have been weapons, but somehow we knew we were no threat to each other. In the end we

knew little more then when it started. But one thing was clear to all of us. There IS intelligent life out there."

Today the Federation of Worlds includes more than ten sentient space faring races among its members. Strangely, none of them are the mystery race that met the *Magellan* a hundred years ago and became mankind's long awaited "first contact."

Karl Kofoed Galactic Geographic • Earth





**A BIT
OF
THEORY...**

BEFORE THE
EXPERIMENTAL
STAGE, WHICH
YOU ARE ALL
SO EAGER TO
BEGIN...

WHAT'S LOVEMAKING? WELL, UNLIKE WASHING THE DISHES OR
CLEANING THE HOUSE, LOVEMAKING IS NO CHORE.

OKAY, I'LL TAKE THE
EVEN DAYS AND YOU
TAKE THE ODD ONES.

WHAT
ABOUT LEAP
YEARS?

WHO MAKES LOVE?

IN MOST
CASES,
WOMEN.

MEN WOULD
RATHER
SCREW.

DOES SEX HAVE ANYTHING TO DO
WITH LOVE? NO. YOU CAN HAVE
SEX WITHOUT BEING IN LOVE.

YOU GOT
BEAUTIFUL EYES.

IF THAT'S
ALL YOU'RE
INTERESTED IN,
SAY IT!

HOWEVER, IT'S MOST UNPLEASANT
TO BE IN LOVE AND NOT HAVE SEX.

IS SEX EXPENSIVE?

IS LACK OF SEX A
SERIOUS PROBLEM?

DOCTOR, I'M UGLY,
I'VE GOT BAD BREATH
AND A TINY DICK, SO
I DON'T OFTEN GET
THE CHANCE TO
MAKE LOVE.

WHAT'S
YOUR
ADVICE?

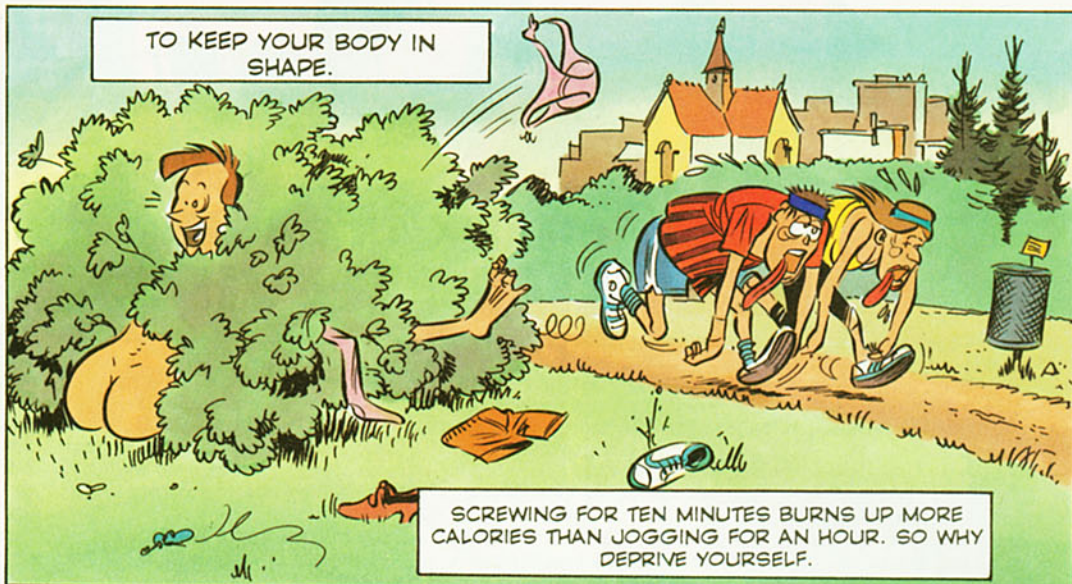
DON'T WORRY, EVERY
PROBLEM HAS A SOLU-
TION.

YOU CAN HAVE GREAT
RELATIONS WITH YOURSELF,
AND IT WON'T COST YOU A
PENNY, WHICH PROVES
THAT SEX IS ACCESSIBLE
EVEN TO THE POOREST.

WHY HAVE SEX?

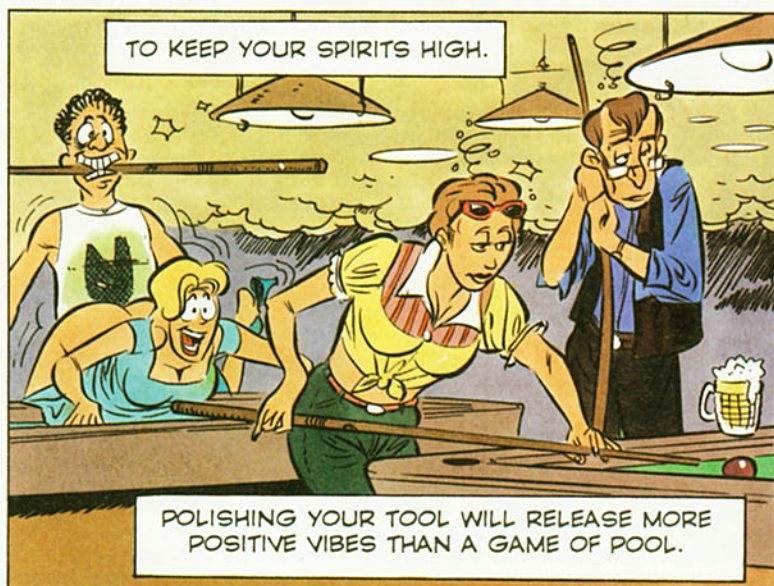
FIVE GOOD REASONS THAT WILL CONVINCE EVEN THE MOST HESITANT.

TO KEEP YOUR BODY IN SHAPE.



SCREWING FOR TEN MINUTES BURNS UP MORE CALORIES THAN JOGGING FOR AN HOUR. SO WHY DEPRIVE YOURSELF.

TO KEEP YOUR SPIRITS HIGH.



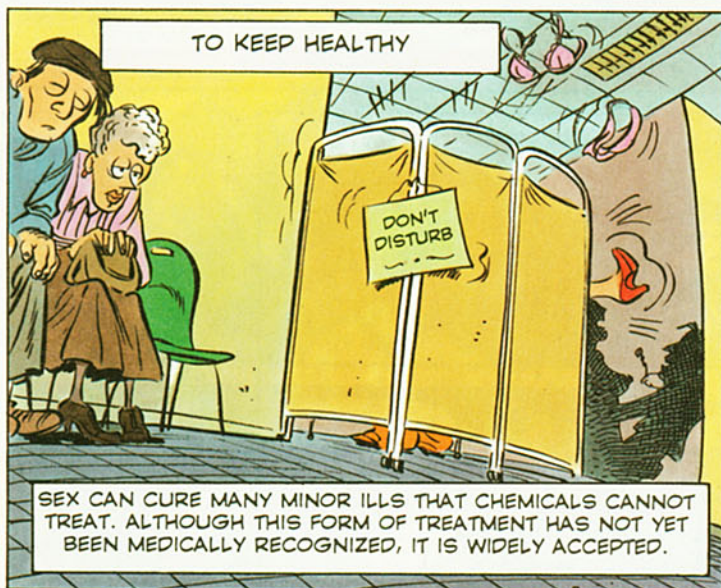
POLISHING YOUR TOOL WILL RELEASE MORE POSITIVE VIBES THAN A GAME OF POOL.

TO KEEP CLEAN.



LOVEMAKING WILL MAKE YOUR SWEAT GLANDS WORK, ELIMINATING TOXINS AND INCITING YOU TO SHOWER.

TO KEEP HEALTHY



SEX CAN CURE MANY MINOR ILLS THAT CHEMICALS CANNOT TREAT. ALTHOUGH THIS FORM OF TREATMENT HAS NOT YET BEEN MEDICALLY RECOGNIZED, IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED.

FOR PLEASURE.



WHY DON'T WE DO SOMETHING NICE FOR OUR BODIES, SPIRITS, HYGIENE, AND HEALTH?

ALL AT ONCE?

YOU'RE SURE IT'S NOT TOO MUCH?

AND THAT'S A GOOD ENOUGH REASON TO ENJOY IT!

THE TREND

BY MEREDITH BOGARD REAL LIFE TELEVISION

Yes, it's trite. Yes, it's unimaginable. And above all...it plain outright humiliating! Your every move, every thought and every word taped for viewing pleasure. Beyond voyeurism. Since it began, I'm wondering how and when it will end!

MTV's 'The Real World' was an experiment in young persons programming choosing 7 strangers to live together while having their lives taped. There were no scripts, no roles, and no rehearsing. It was a video diary of your life with others, cut and edited for commercial use. The result became a fixed special of situations put to music that manipulated the people into stereotyped characters.

The angry black man.
The young naïve outsider.
The flamboyant gay-mate.
The hunk!
The musician...the list goes on.

Since the sensation of the first season taped in New York City, spins have and continued to brew. As we approach the 10th Real World production, MTV has spun off the sister show, Road Rules taking 5 strangers on the road for life-threatening experiences.

Forget skydiving or bungee jumping...these kids have become rodeo clowns, shark tamers, and visited a southwestern corn museum! Talk about your wild nights...

Following formulas, MTV has made it work for them. The after-effects of each life have been explored throughout the entertainment industry. Many have gone on to hosting programs such as The Grind and The View. Others maintain lower profiles by starting up dot coms, charity organiza-

tions, and still 'finding themselves'.

On the off-season, most have chosen to explore their inner selves by opting to join the Real World/Road Rules Challenge. Basically, this guarantees a viewer to keep up with their favorite 'character' and his/her antics. (This runs during sweeps week, right?)

It is safe to say that MTV has started a monogamy of other developments in real life television.

We now can watch various humiliations on Temptation Island, The Mole, Castaway (the film), and even the poorly rated Big Brother. But Survivor holds the record of developing nobodies into icons.

Before guessing how many were originally chosen for the program (which is irrelevant), I think it's important to mention the demographics involved. The ages range from 18-70+ years old! And the last 3 survivors happened to be the 70+ veteran, a young unemployed girl with enormous willpower, and a gay alleged child abuser who had lost over 100 lbs. before taping began.

With survivors like these, who cares about living?

Prizes ranged in monetary value depending on your length of time spent on the deserted island. The winner of course gets \$1 million.

The catch?

Obstacle courses and mind-games for weeks on end! It may be as simple as a relay race, or dynamic like the self-taped Q&A obstacle course.

But would you eat a live larva worm just to help your fellow teammates for whom you will later stab in the back?

I don't think so.

For Survivor, The Outback, I've already been privileged enough to watch 16 strangers get dropped off in the jungle, walk 5 miles with their 50 pound supplies in sweltering heat, and start rumors about 1 member hiding beef jerky. Don't these people have more important things to do?

Now Temptation Island is one to stir things up. Four couples have volunteered to test their relationships by the singles scene on a desert resort by going on dates, hot tubbing, and body shots. One couple recently removed began their pleasure stay in turmoil. Their controversy? They have a child together!

I'm glad FOX TV had enough sense to remove these morons before splitting up a family on national television. The remorse however on love's binding faith has been left in the cold for the others. If they need to test their relationship, they need to call it quits.

And what is The Mole? No, it's not the beauty mark on Cindy Crawford's face.

The Mole is yet another reality based TV show testing trust, value and betrayal amongst even more strangers. And I do mean STRANGERS...it's hard enough to watch this crap let alone learn about the characters background and what drove them to the highest level of stupidity.

The Mole refers to the 'undercover spy' who is supposed to lead the team members into traps, hence hindering their monetary winners per game. Their objective is to try and figure out who is The Mole without being terminated from the show.

Ummm, ok.

Who comes up with this shit, anyway??

Next, we have POP Stars! Yay...or should I say, No!!!!

Since being up on all these boy bands, the producers of The WB have come up with an -oh-so-cute idea. Hold open auditions for females throughout the United States to ultimately choose the 5 best singers/dancers/performers, thus forming POP Stars! The first 'making of' an all girl band that of course, won't amount to shit.

The heartbreak, humiliation, and all around disappointment of tears are completely documented with each person they decided to focus upon.

Reality TV? Yeah, sure...like the overweight mess of a woman who was picked to attend the finals from the original count will make it to the last 5? I don't think so. She may very well have the best voice, and hey - maybe she can even dance. But the truth is, she's fat, unattractive, and unkempt. Why get her hopes up by moving her to the finals?

To cover their ass against biased producers of course.

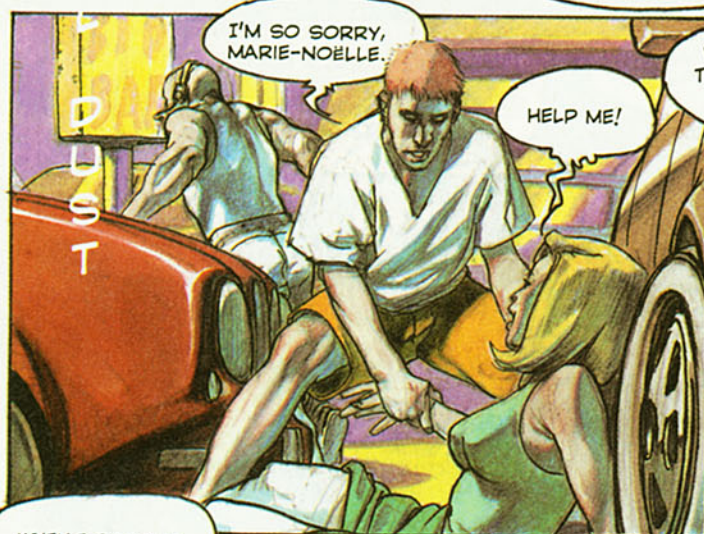
The whole premise is so over the top that I've decided to stop watching even though the research benefits this article. I'd rather eat the live worm from Survivor.

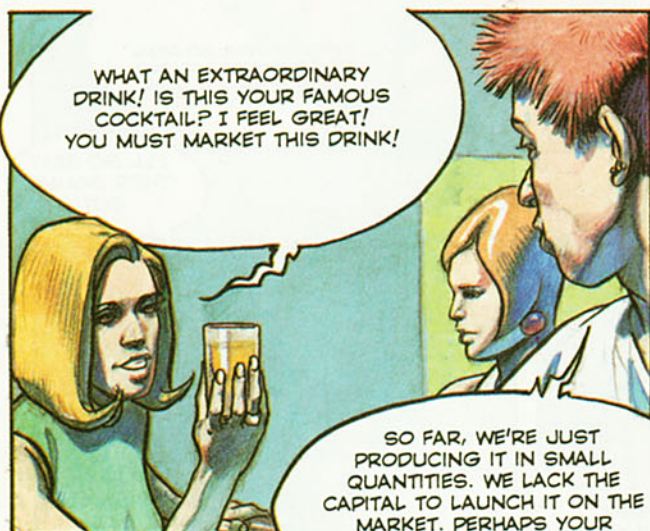
Blind Date, Change of Heart, Fanatic...the list goes on.

This turning point in the 21st Century Broadcasting System is wearing thin. I'm looking forward to a reality-based program of reality TV haters. Cause I think I could definitely make some money off the network then!



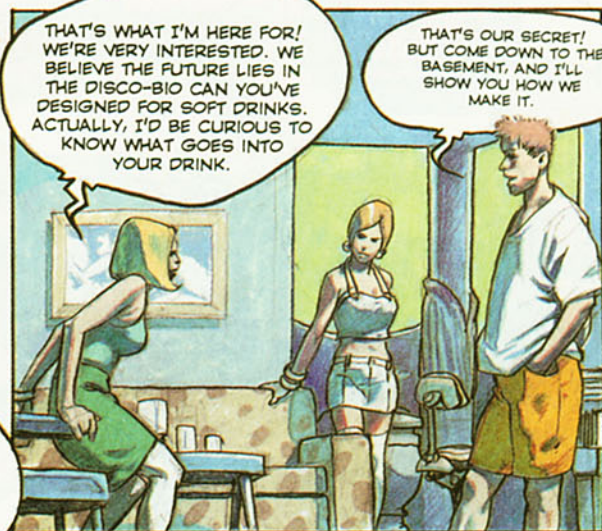
© ALLAN BAKER





WHAT AN EXTRAORDINARY DRINK! IS THIS YOUR FAMOUS COCKTAIL? I FEEL GREAT! YOU MUST MARKET THIS DRINK!

SO FAR, WE'RE JUST PRODUCING IT IN SMALL QUANTITIES. WE LACK THE CAPITAL TO LAUNCH IT ON THE MARKET. PERHAPS YOUR COMPANY COULD HELP US?



THAT'S WHAT I'M HERE FOR! WE'RE VERY INTERESTED. WE BELIEVE THE FUTURE LIES IN THE DISCO-BIO CAN YOU'VE DESIGNED FOR SOFT DRINKS. ACTUALLY, I'D BE CURIOUS TO KNOW WHAT GOES INTO YOUR DRINK.

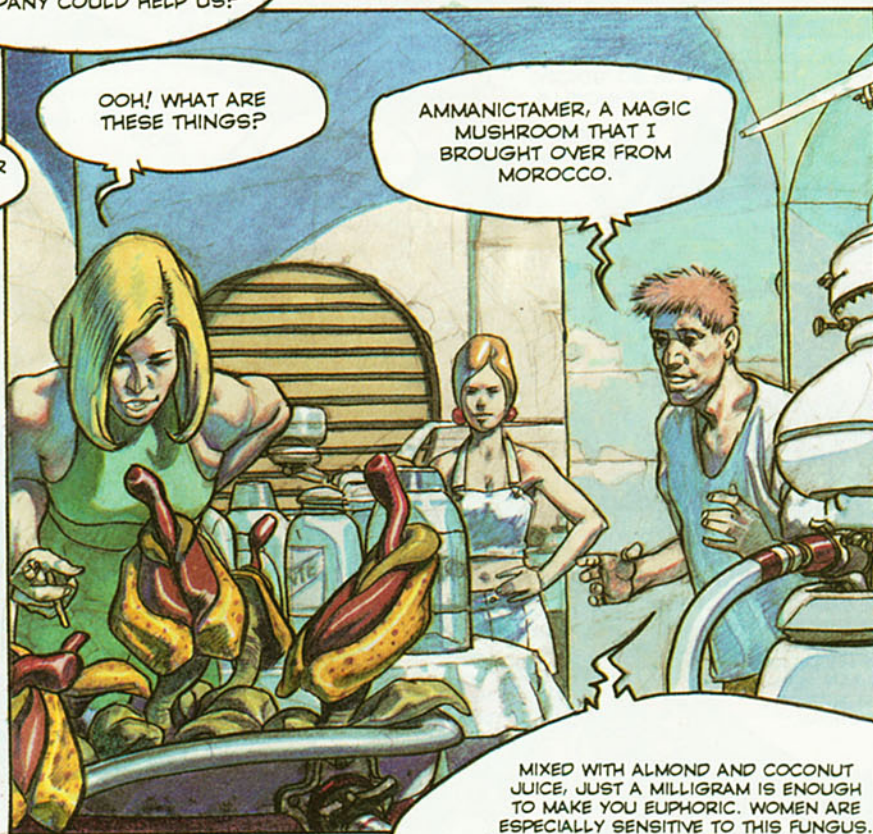
THAT'S OUR SECRET! BUT COME DOWN TO THE BASEMENT, AND I'LL SHOW YOU HOW WE MAKE IT.



WHERE ARE WE?

IN THE BASEMENT.

HUSH, I HEAR VOICES.



OOH! WHAT ARE THESE THINGS?

AMMANICTAMER, A MAGIC MUSHROOM THAT I BROUGHT OVER FROM MOROCCO.

MIXED WITH ALMOND AND COCONUT JUICE, JUST A MILLIGRAM IS ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU EUPHORIC. WOMEN ARE ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE TO THIS FUNGUS. BUT WE CONTROL THE DOSAGE CAREFULLY, OTHERWISE YOU COULD GO FROM EUPHORIC WELL-BEING TO BURNING AGITATION, THEN TO CRAZED FURY, FOLLOWED BY WILD FRENZY, MURDEROUS RAGE, THEN TOTAL APATHY, ENDING IN MAD ANIMAL DESIRE.

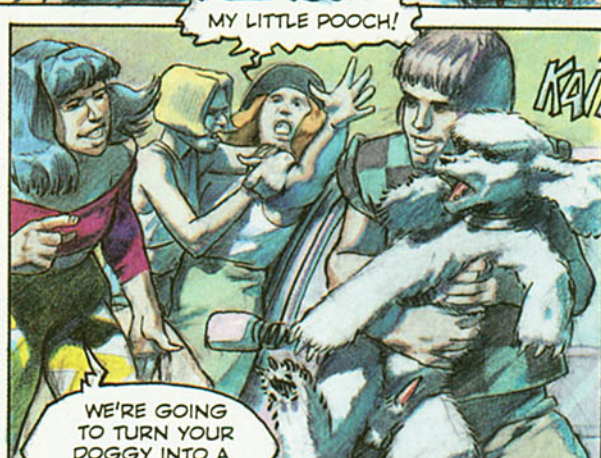
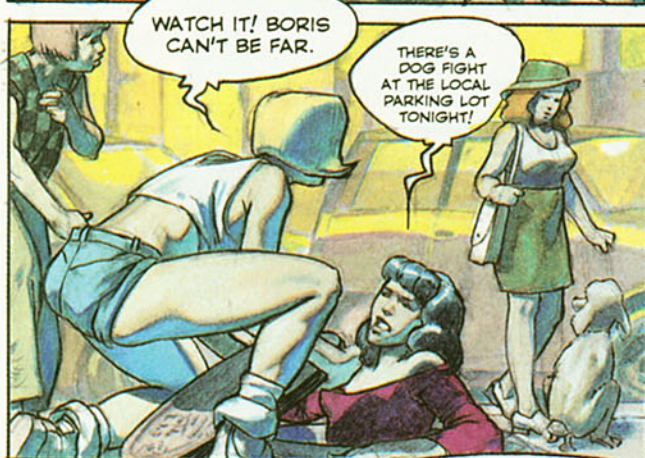
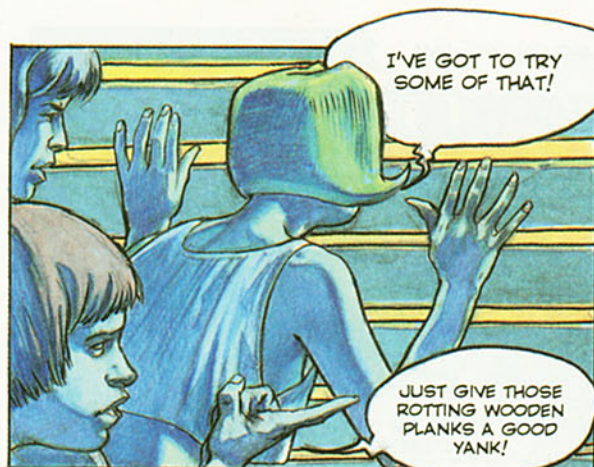


SHIT!

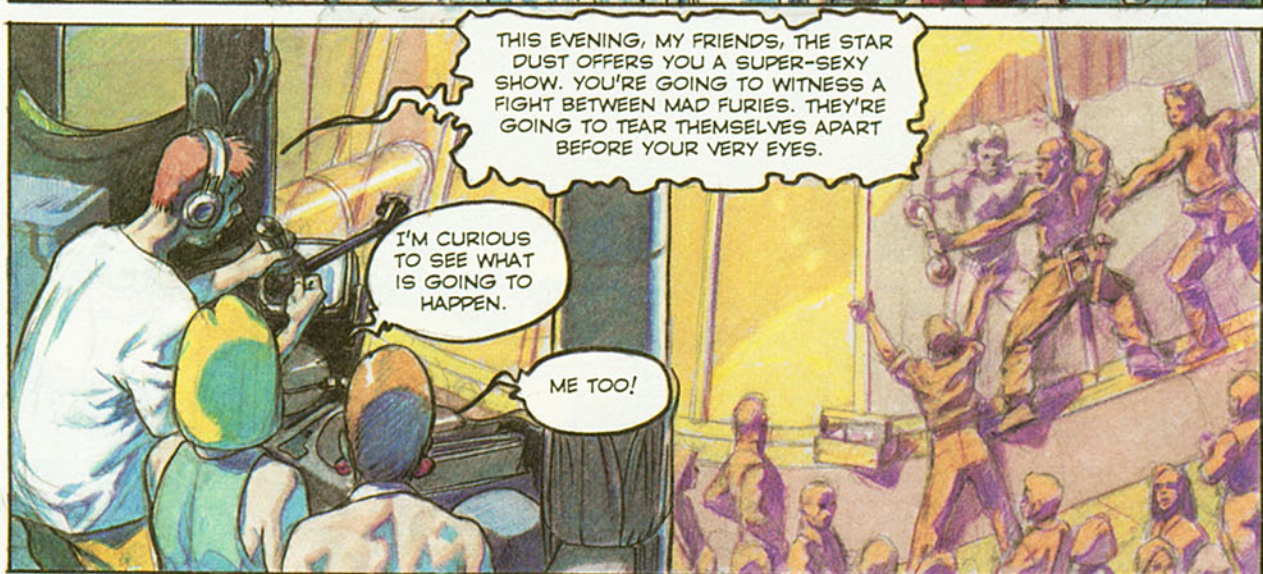
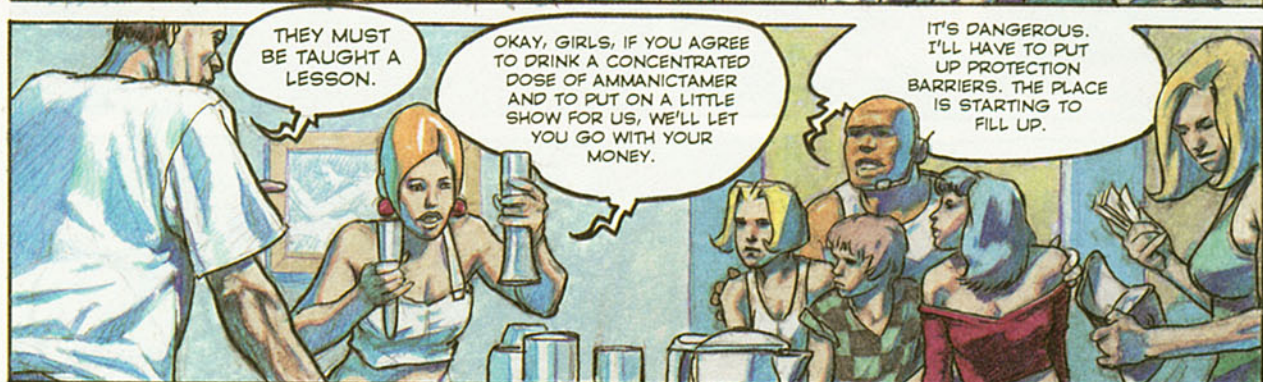
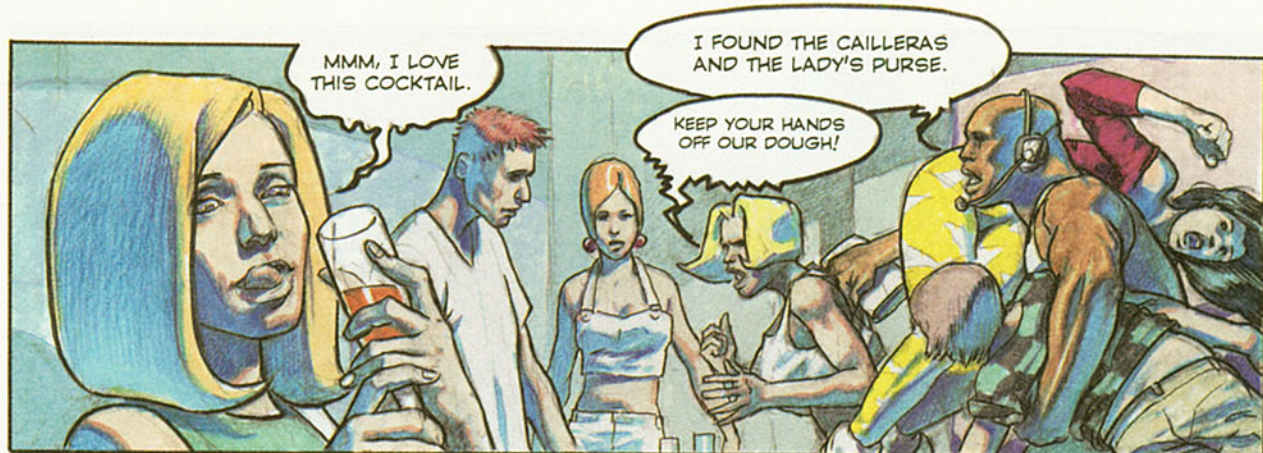
JEEZ!

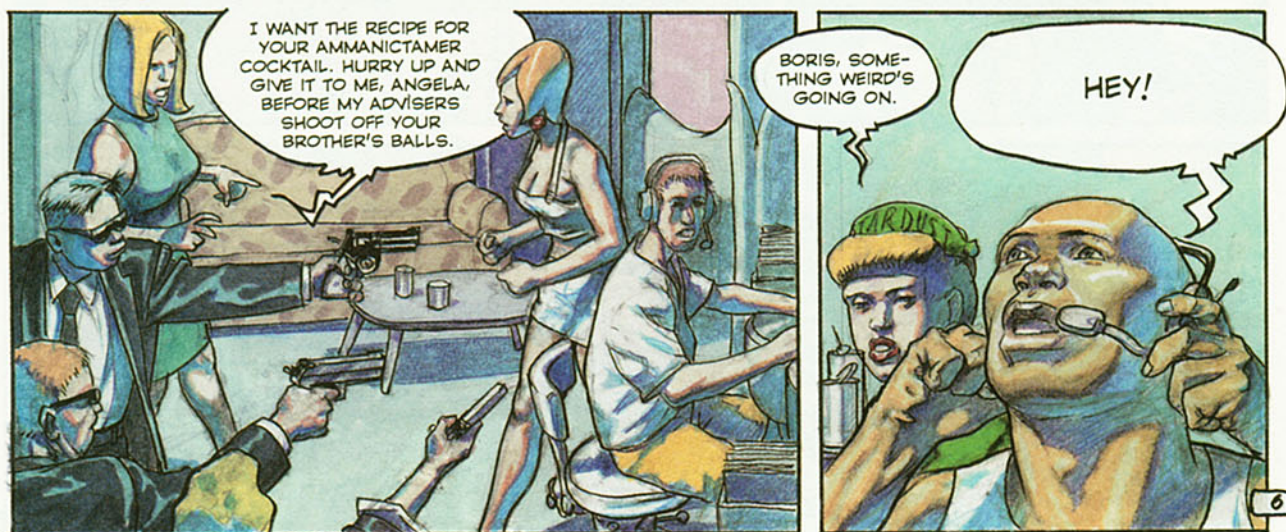
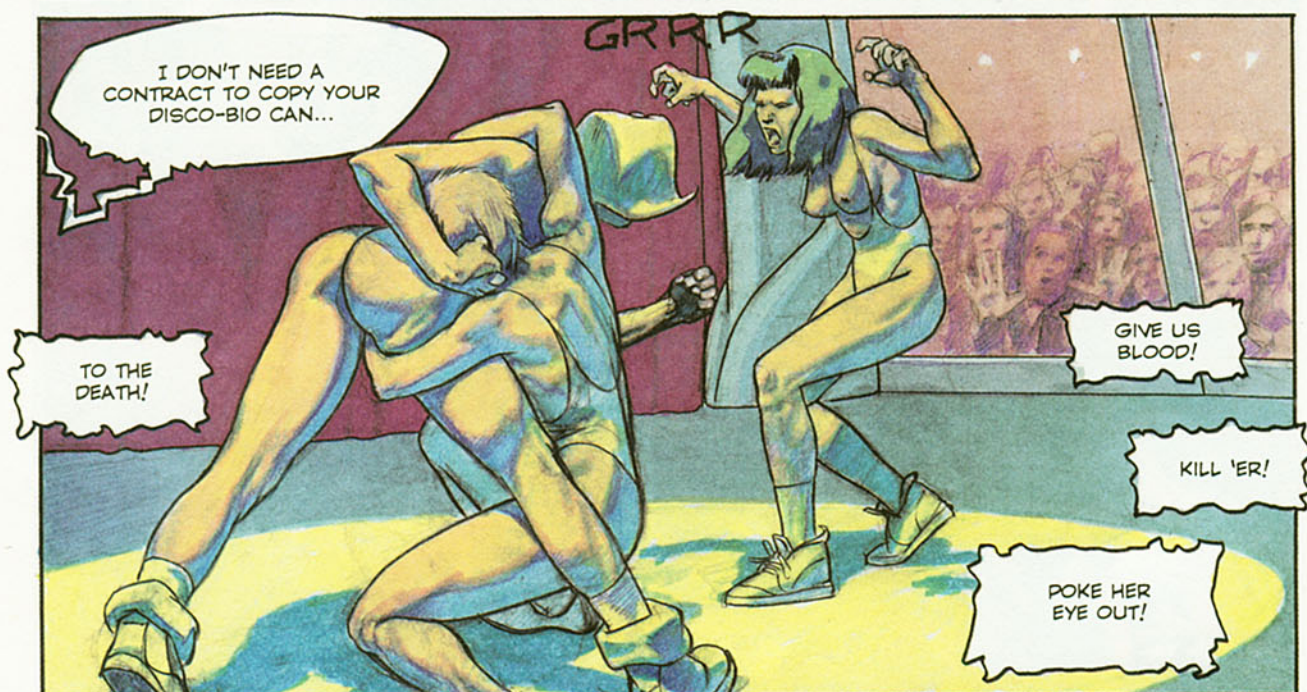
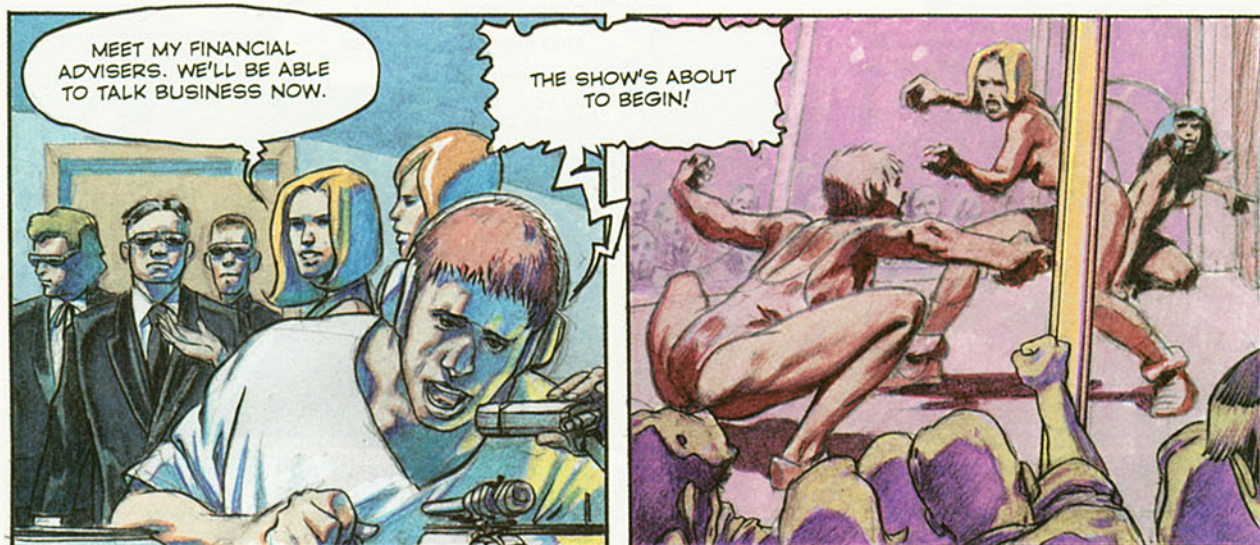
WOW!

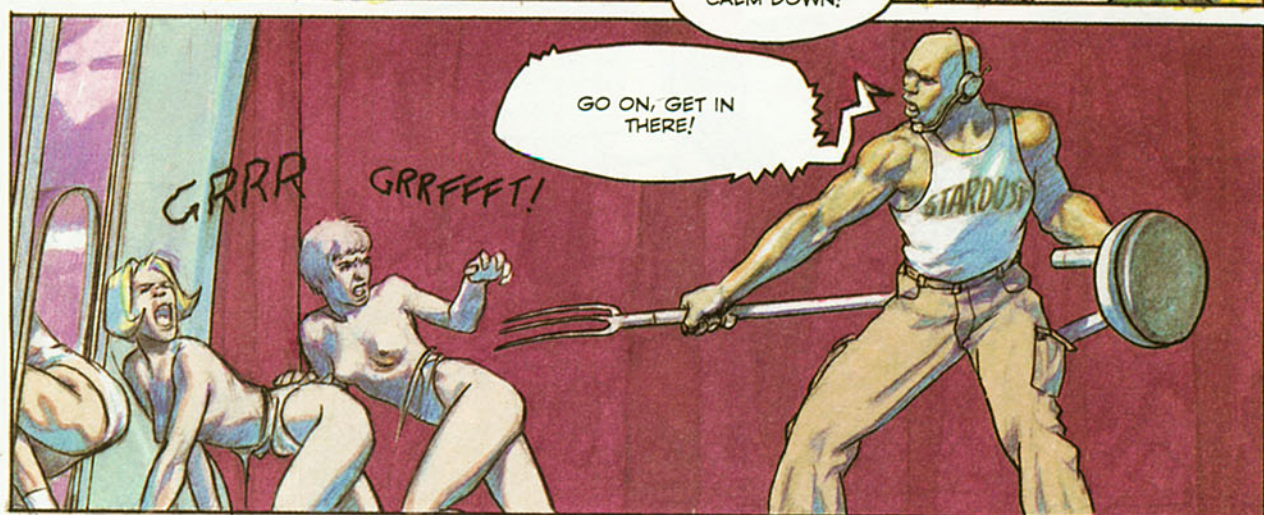
MY POODLE ATE A TINY PIECE AND WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A WILD BEAST. IT HAD TO BE PUT DOWN.







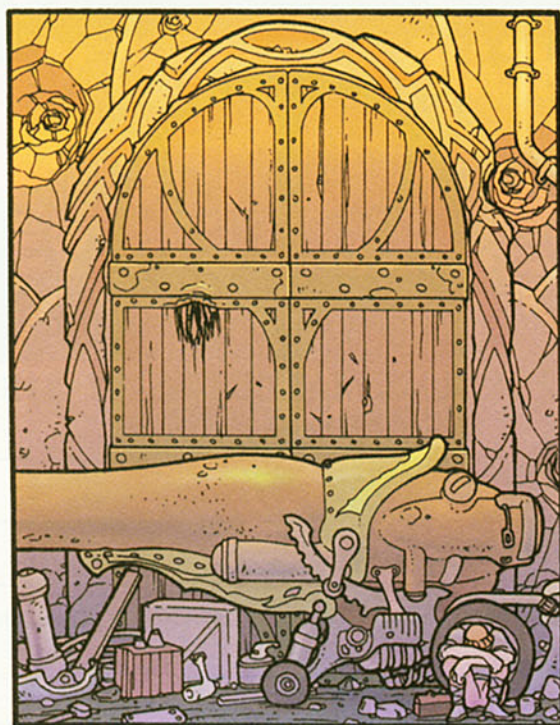
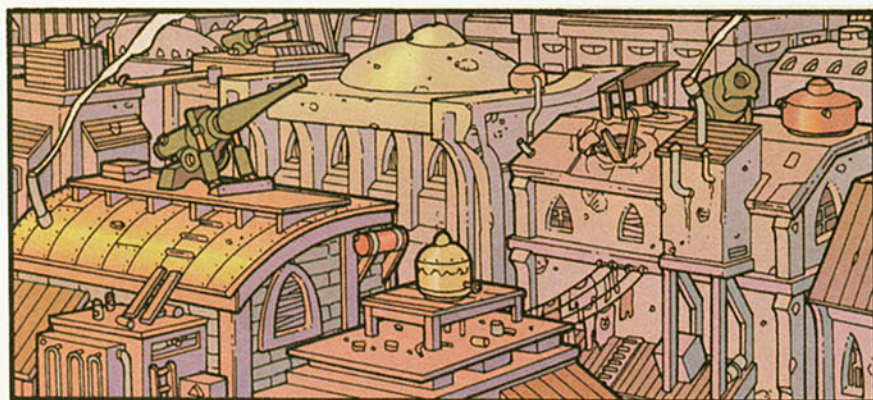
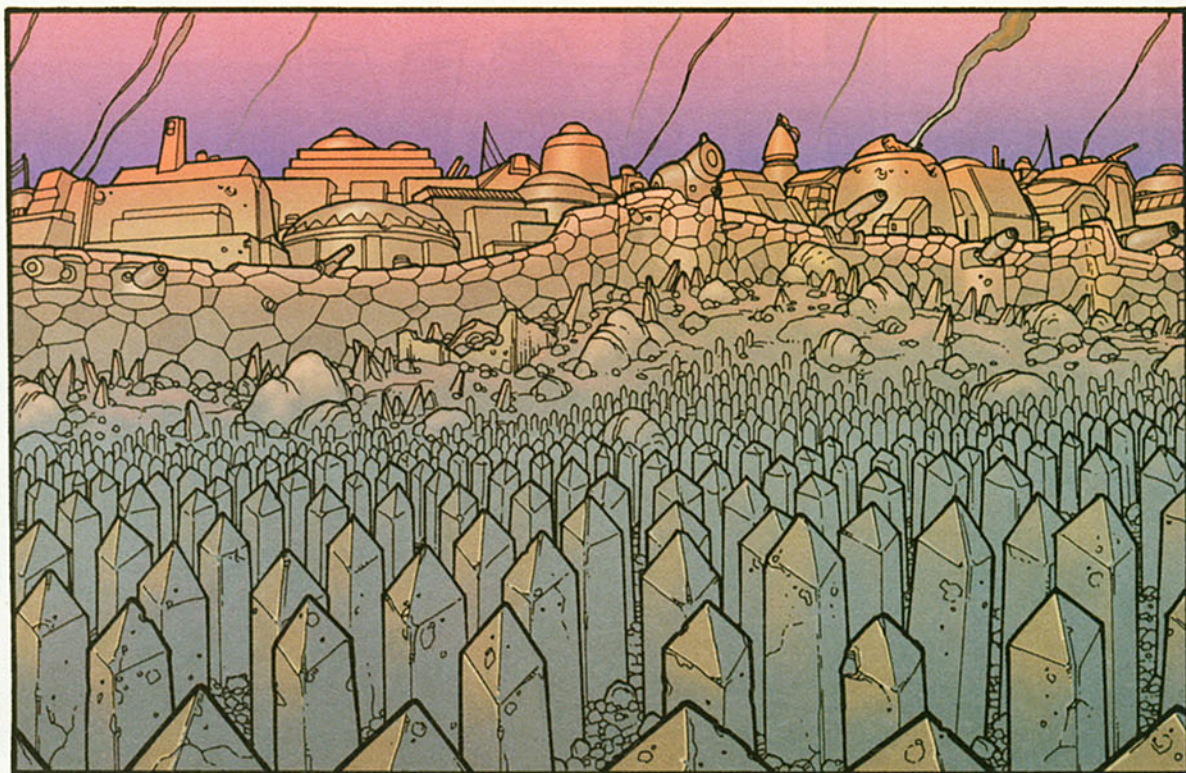


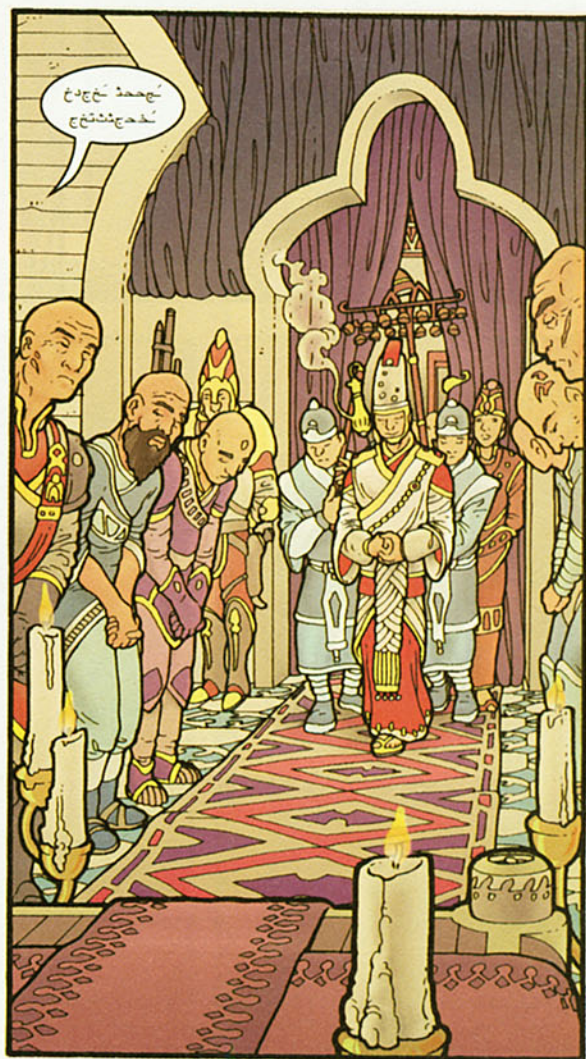
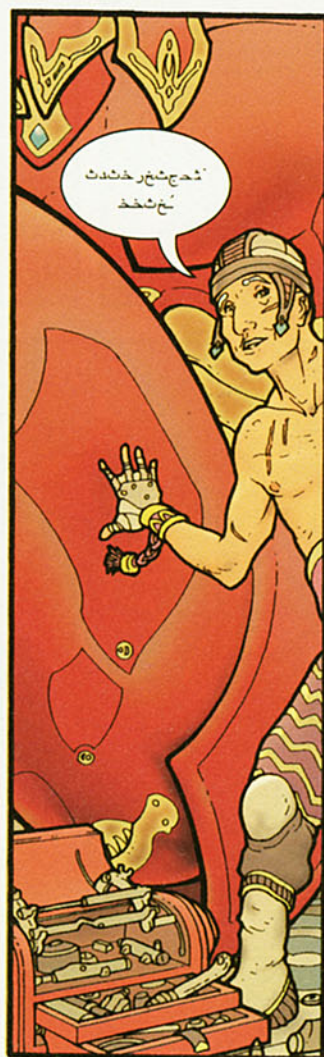
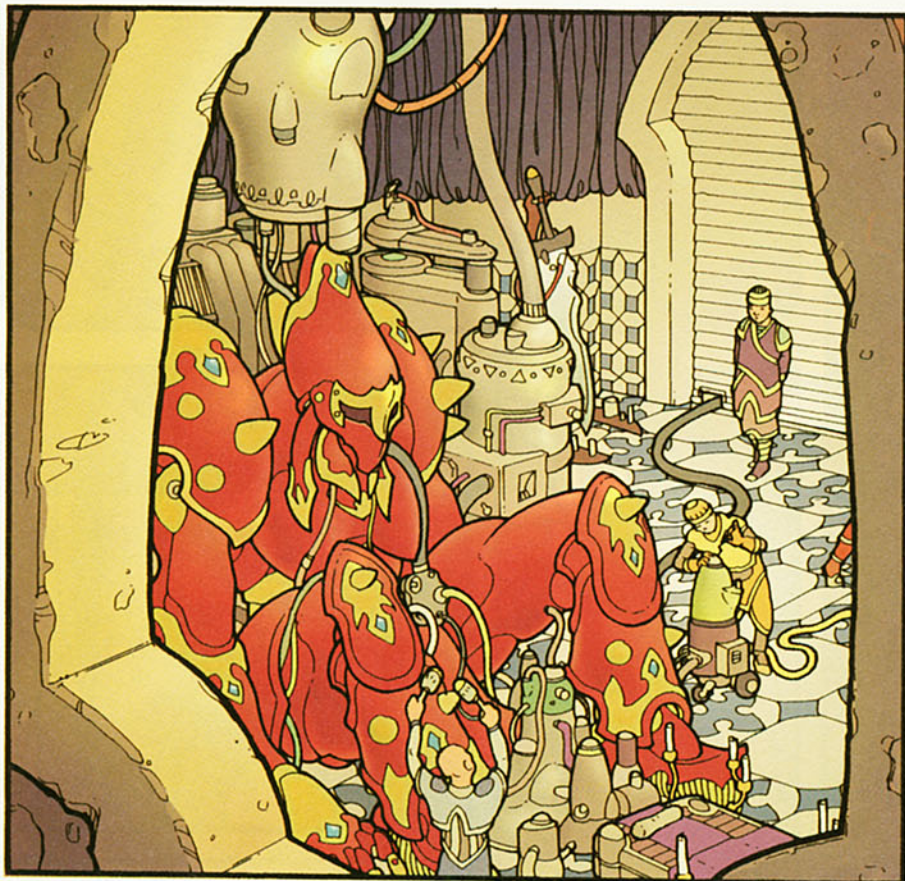


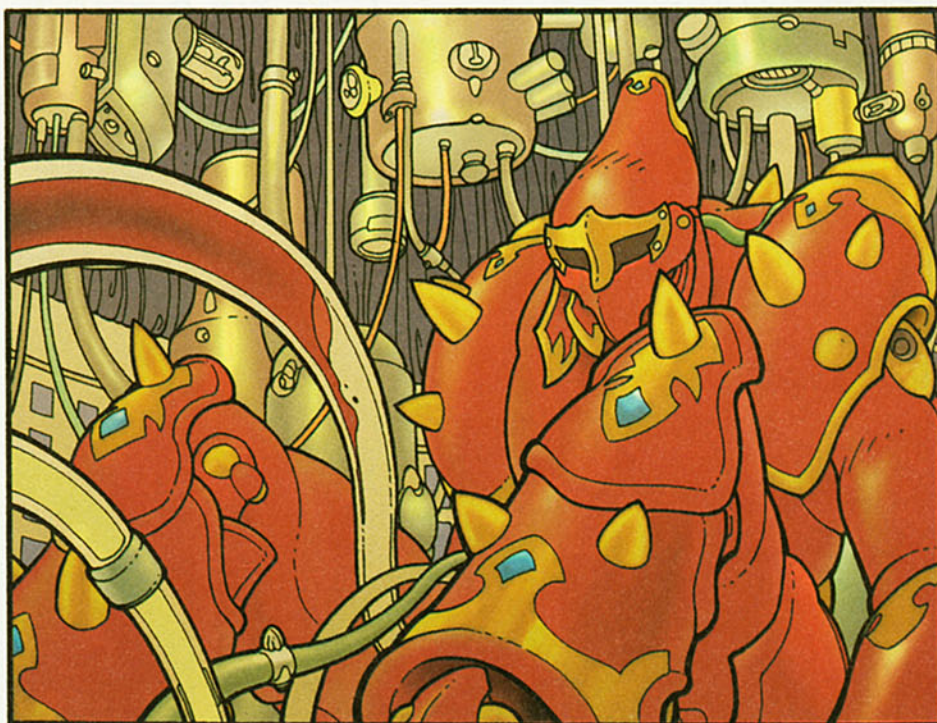
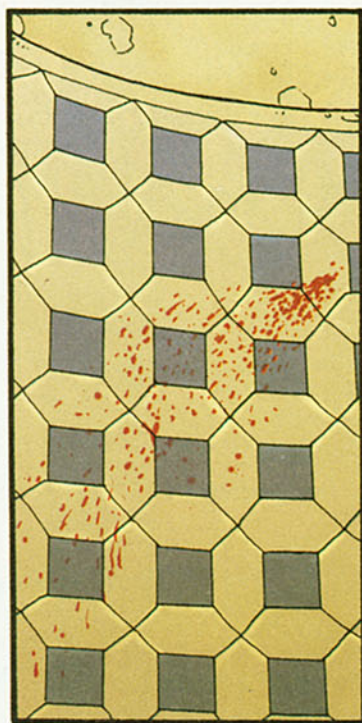
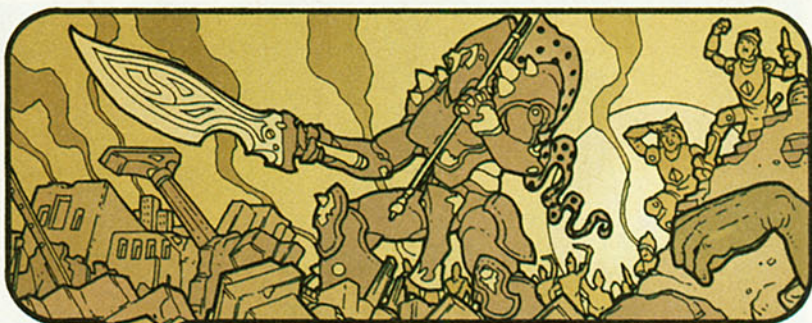
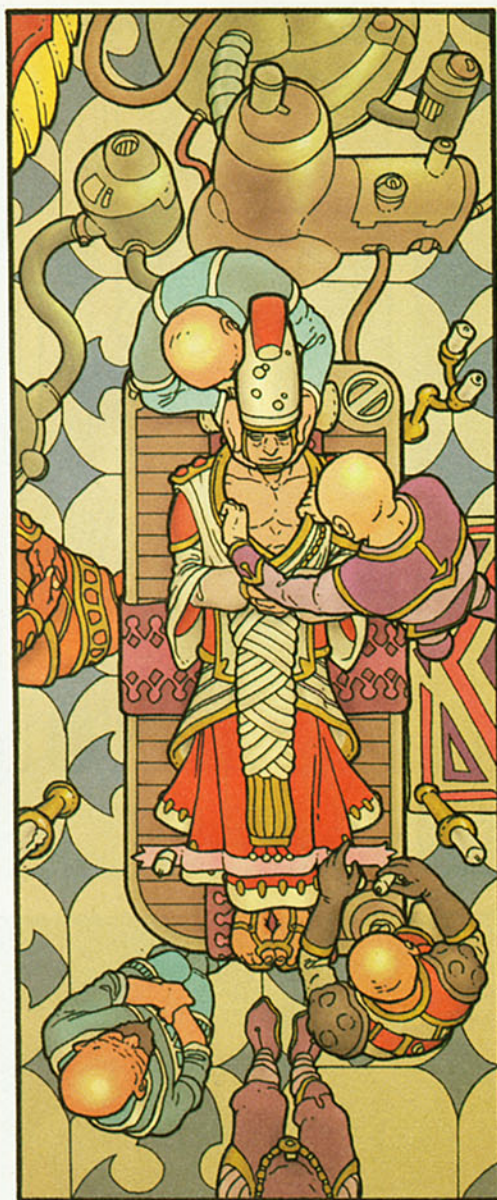


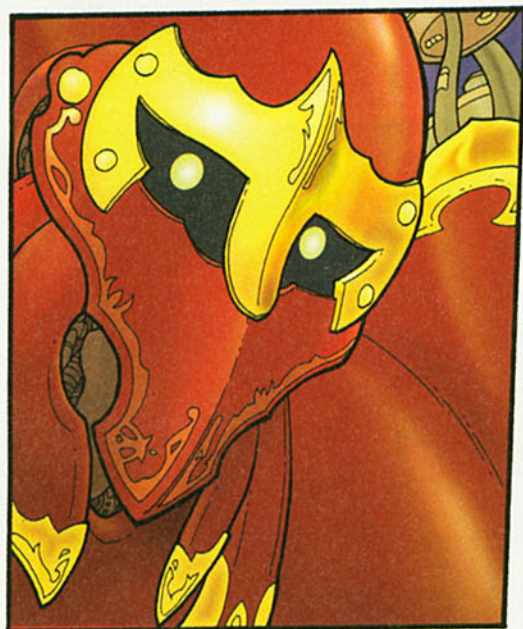
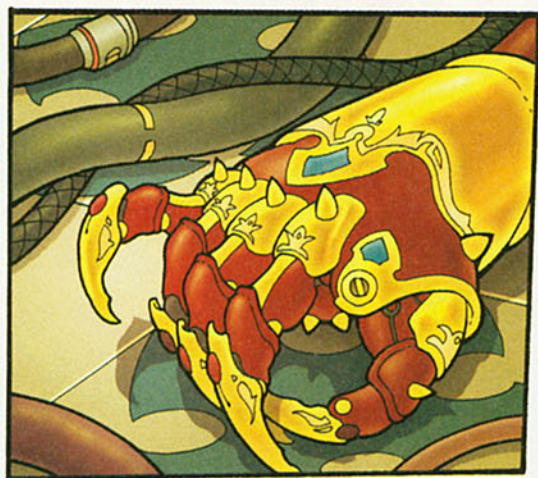


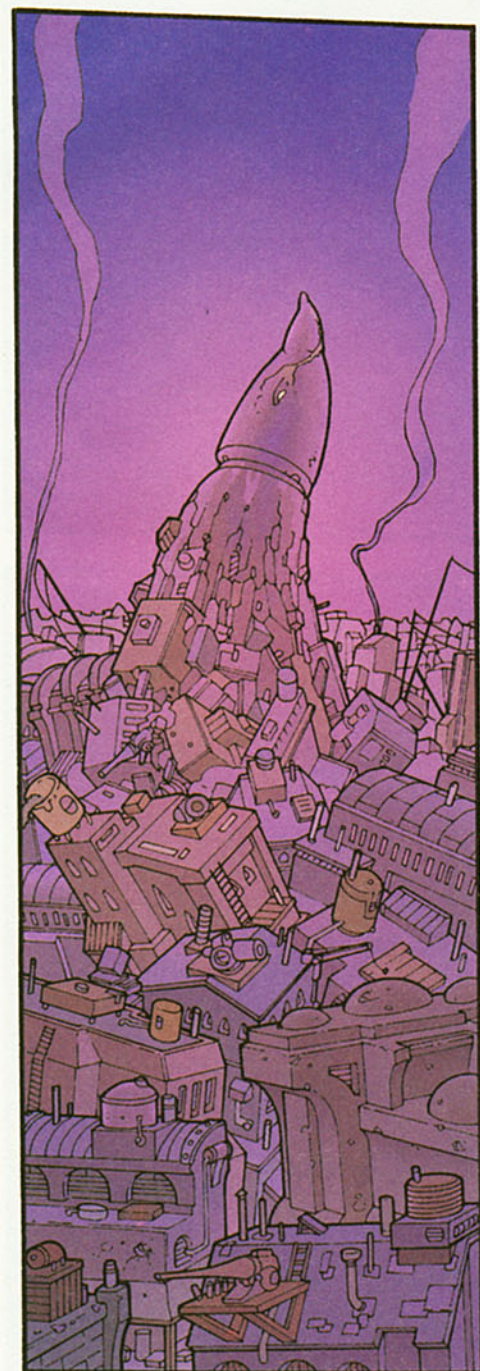
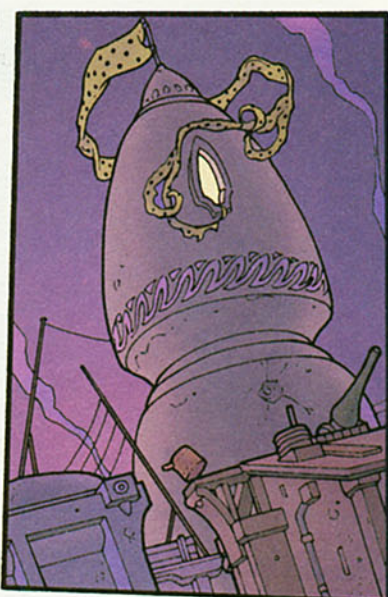
FOSS
1999



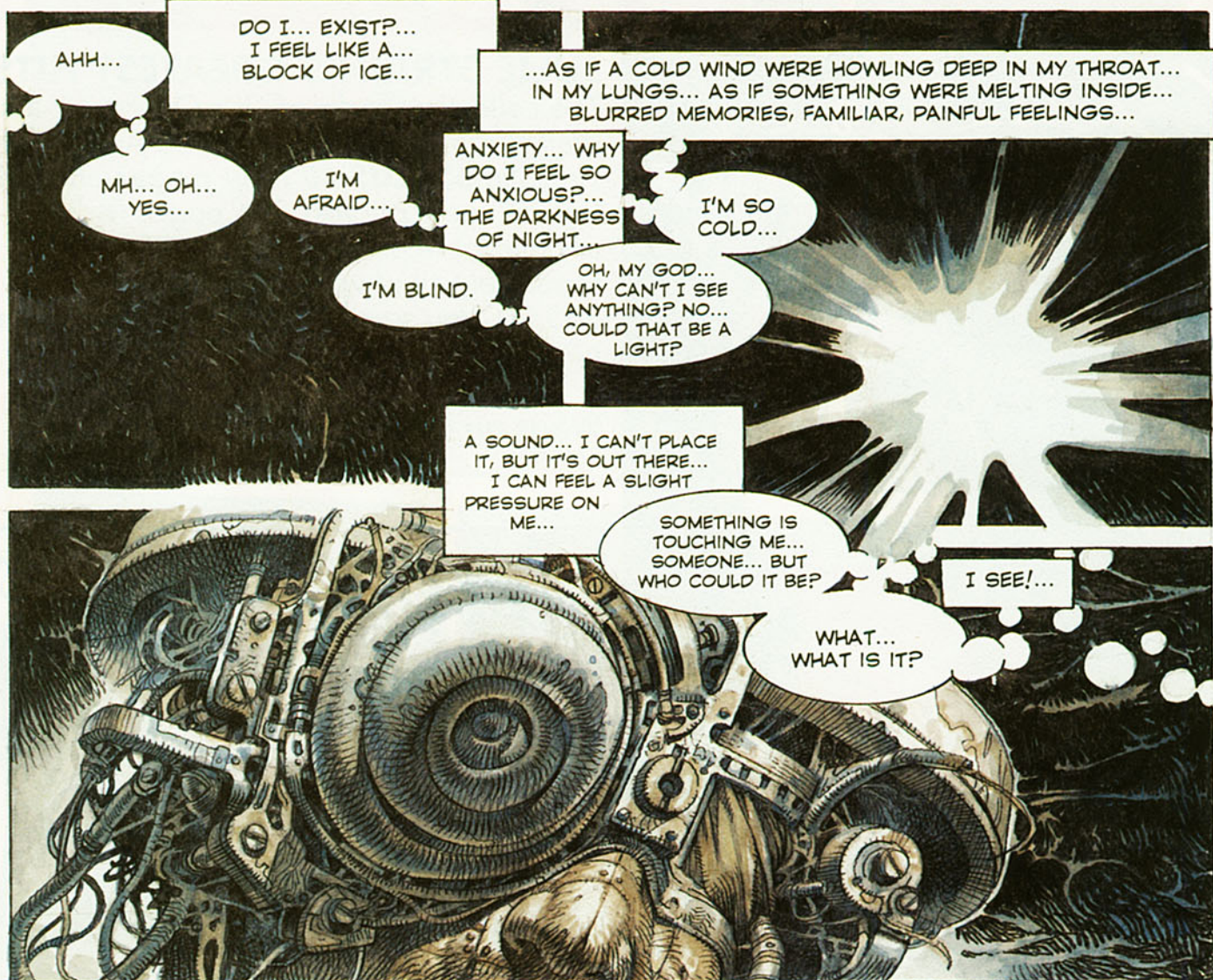








THE FORGOTTEN PLANET



AHH...

DO I... EXIST?...
I FEEL LIKE A...
BLOCK OF ICE...

...AS IF A COLD WIND WERE HOWLING DEEP IN MY THROAT...
IN MY LUNGS... AS IF SOMETHING WERE MELTING INSIDE...
BLURRED MEMORIES, FAMILIAR, PAINFUL FEELINGS...

MH... OH...
YES...

I'M
AFRAID...

ANXIETY... WHY
DO I FEEL SO
ANXIOUS?...
THE DARKNESS
OF NIGHT...

I'M SO
COLD...

I'M BLIND.

OH, MY GOD...
WHY CAN'T I SEE
ANYTHING? NO...
COULD THAT BE A
LIGHT?

A SOUND... I CAN'T PLACE
IT, BUT IT'S OUT THERE...
I CAN FEEL A SLIGHT
PRESSURE ON
ME...

SOMETHING IS
TOUCHING ME...
SOMEONE... BUT
WHO COULD IT BE?

I SEE!...

WHAT...
WHAT IS IT?



NO, NO...
MONSTERS,
NIGHTMARES... I'M
SO TIRED... I DON'T
WANT TO...

YES... YES, IT
WOULD BE BET-
TER TO FORGET,
TO FALL INTO A
DEEP DREAM-
LESS SLEEP...
TO RETURN TO
THE ICE BLOCK
WHERE MEMORY
IS NO MORE...
MEMORY, WHAT
MEMORIES?...
A TERRIBLE
FEELING OF
EMPTINESS
DESCENDS ON
ME... I'M
AFRAID!

BUT... WHO
AM I? I CAN'T
REMEMBER ANY-
THING. WHAT HAP-
PENED?... WHERE
AM I?



PERHAPS THE MIND DOESN'T
WAKE UP AS QUICKLY AS THE
BODY...

I CAN'T MOVE...
OH! MY ARMS... NOW
I CAN MOVE THEM!

I FEEL SLUGGISH... BUT I CAN
FEEL THE BLOOD COURSEING
THROUGH MY VEINS... AH, THE
ICE IS GRADUALLY BEGINNING
TO MELT!

I MUST REACT!
REACT! I CAN FEEL
MY LEGS NOW...

I'D BETTER MOVE... GET UP AND CHASE
THIS FROZEN DREAM AWAY... THIS DREAM
WHICH IS TOO CLOSE TO DEATH!...

AH...
MMHH...

OH GOD... I'M
ACHING ALL OVER...
HOW LONG HAVE
I BEEN ASLEEP?

GOD! MY BRAIN FEELS
FOGGY!... HOW COME
I REALLY CAN'T
REMEMBER ANYTHING?

WHERE AM I?... WHAT
AM I DOING SLEEPING IN THIS
ABSURD PLACE?... I SEEM TO BE
SURROUNDED BY WRECKS...
WRECKS OF MACHINES... OF
THINGS THAT RESEMBLE
MACHINES. HMM...

IS ANYONE
THERE?

WHAT SHOULD
I DO?... I'D BETTER
KEEP A LOW PROFILE...
IT COULD BE DANGEROUS
AROUND HERE...
BUT WHAT SORT OF
DANGER, I
WONDER?...

HUH!... THERE WAS SOMEONE
HERE! I SAW HIM WHEN I WOKE
UP... HIS FACE WAS COVERED
WITH A WEIRD CONTRAPTION...
AND HE WAS STARING AT ME
OUT OF ONE HORRIBLE EYE...
AND THEN HE TOUCHED ME,
MY BREASTS, MY HIPS...
ALL OVER...
AND MAYBE...

...WHAT IF IT WAS
A DREAM?... IT'S
ALL VERY HAZY.

2

I REALLY HAVE TO
MOVE AROUND... I'LL
BEGIN BY STANDING
UP. MHHH... THAT
FEELS BETTER... IT WILL
BE GOOD FOR ME TO
WALK A BIT...



THERE ARE OTHER
SMALL COTS LIKE
MINE, BUT THEY ARE
ALL EMPTY...



EXCEPT FOR THIS
ONE... THERE'S
SOMEONE LYING IN
IT... UNLESS...



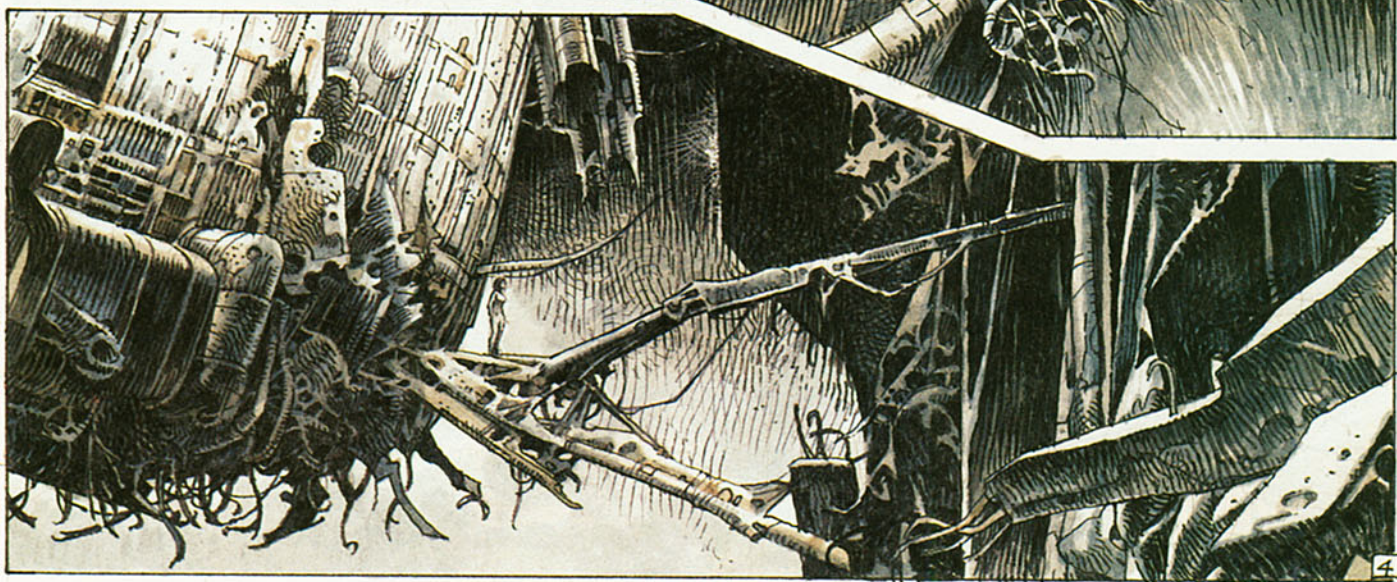
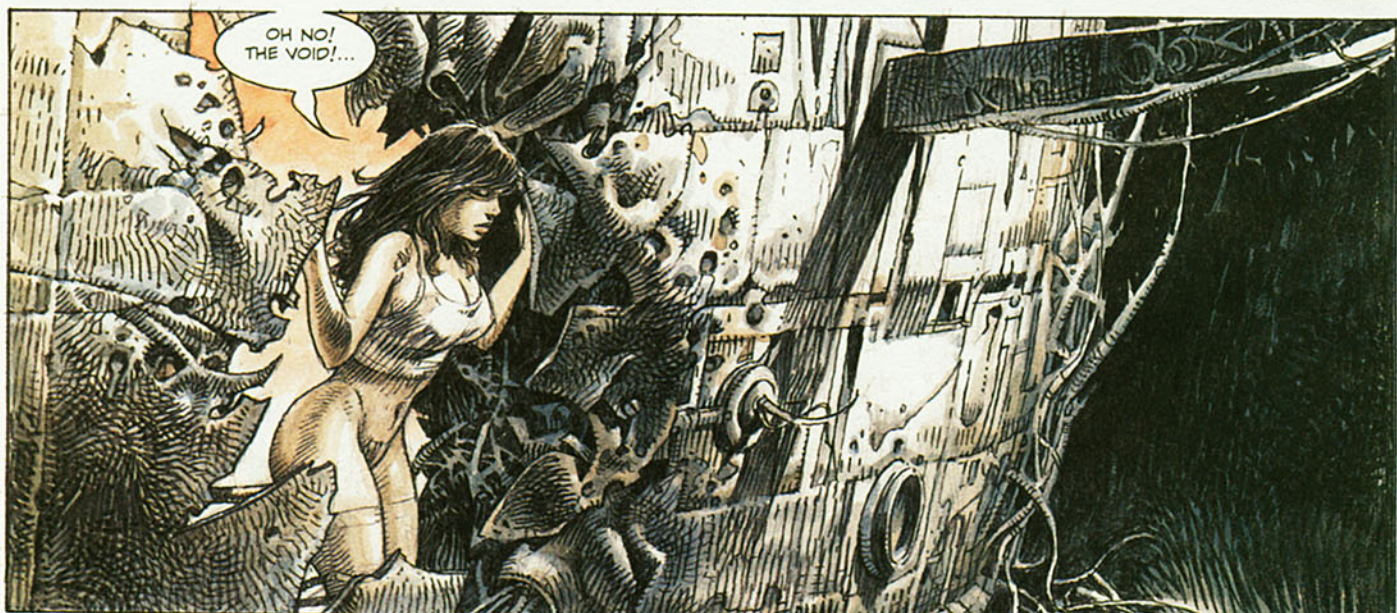
MY GOD!

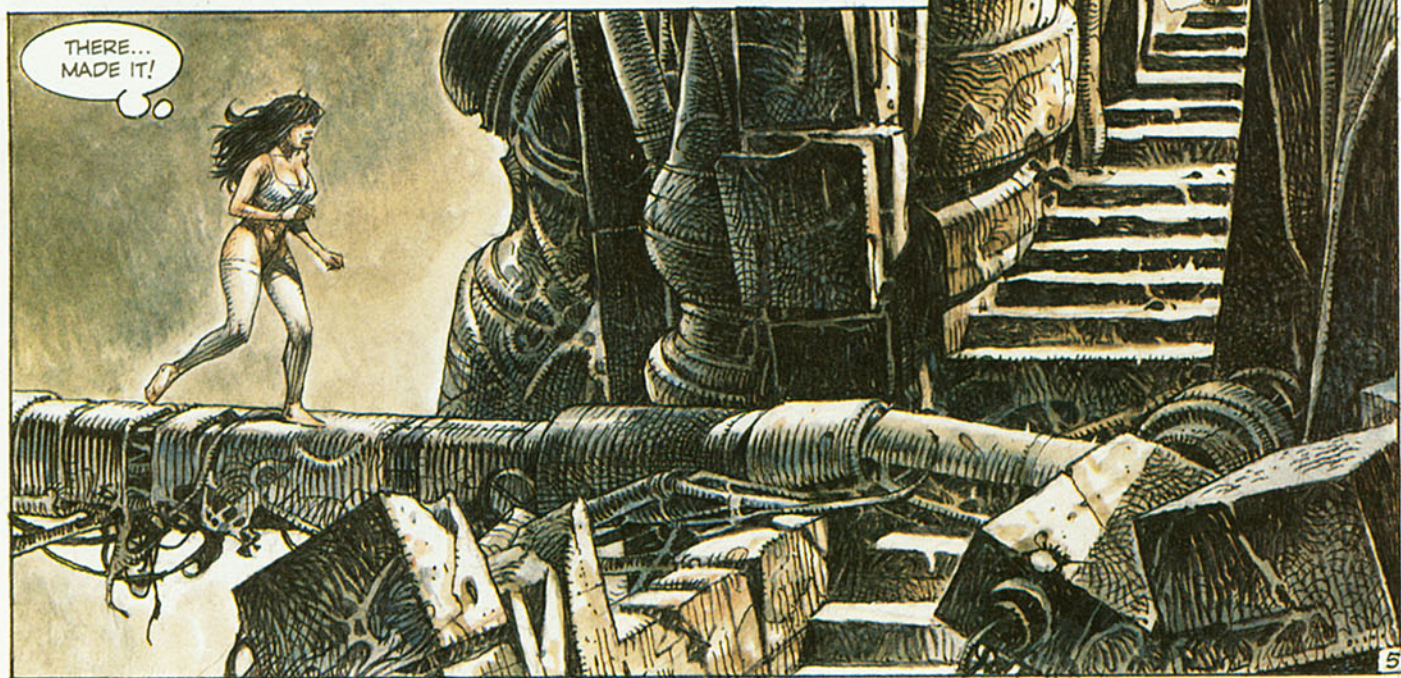
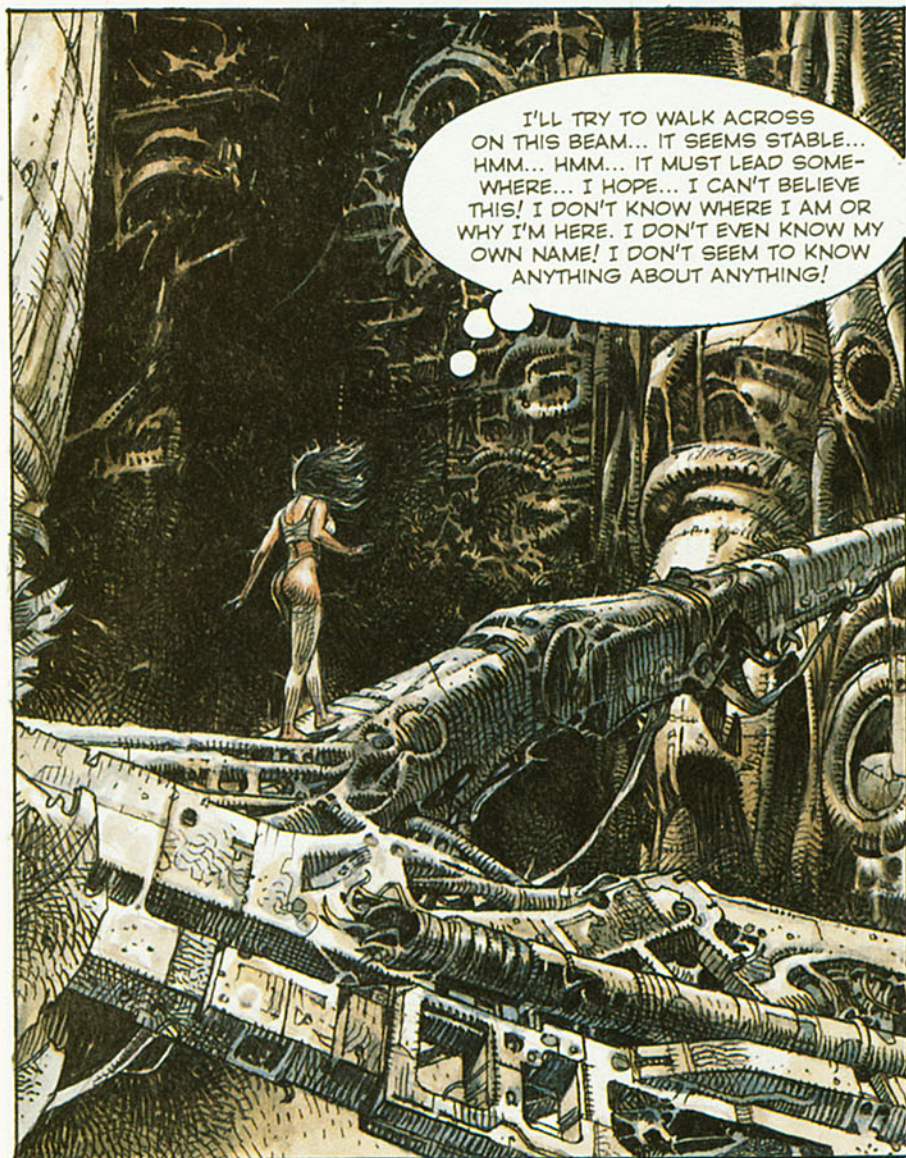


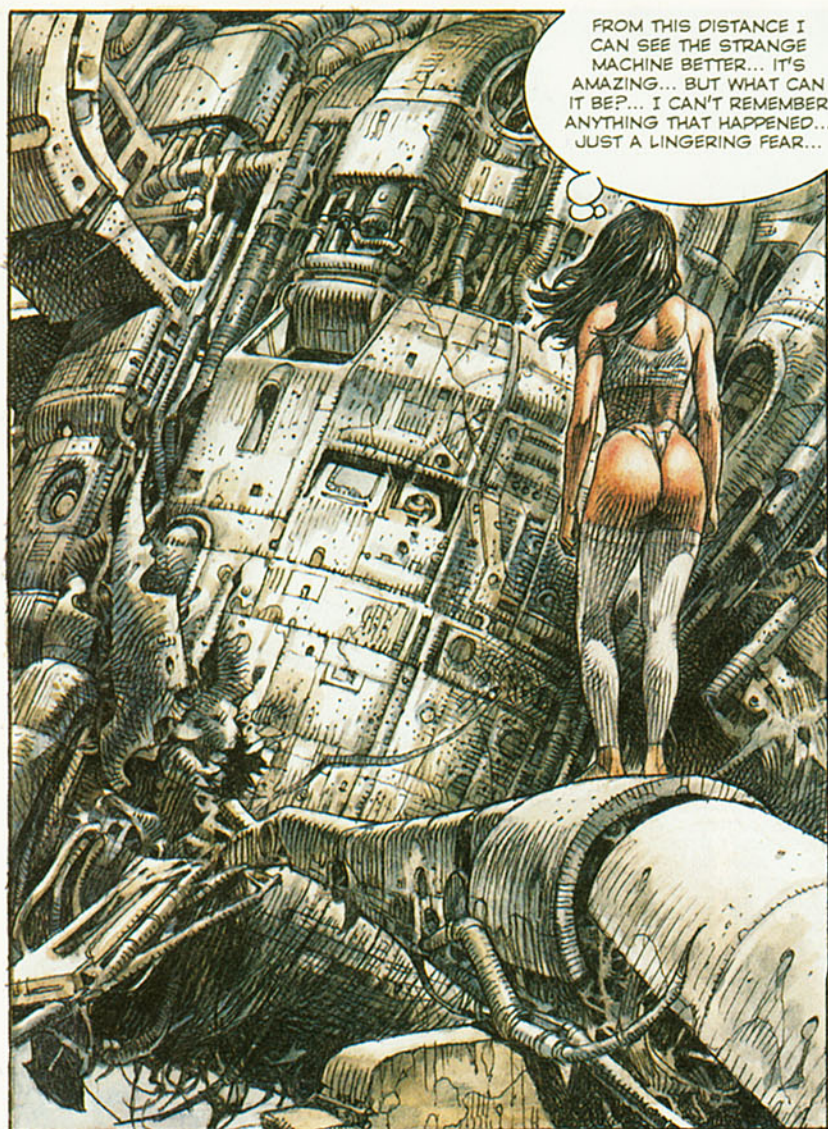
WHO COULD THAT
BE? HE'S DEAD AND
MUMMIFIED! AND
WHO KNOWS HOW
LONG FOR!...

THE SAME THING
COULD HAVE
HAPPENED TO ME!
MAYBE I EVEN
KNEW HIM!... BUT
HE NEVER WOKE
UP!









FROM THIS DISTANCE I CAN SEE THE STRANGE MACHINE BETTER... IT'S AMAZING... BUT WHAT CAN IT BE?... I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING THAT HAPPENED... JUST A LINGERING FEAR...

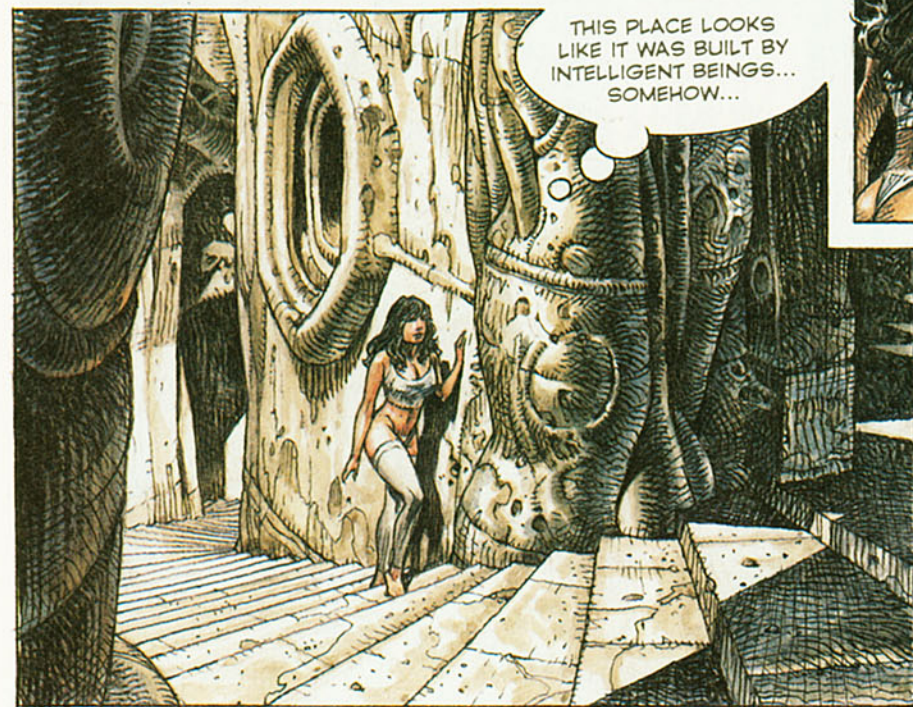


MY GOD! WHAT INCREDIBLE SILENCE! I WASN'T FULLY CONSCIOUS OF IT BEFORE... TOTAL SILENCE, EXCEPT FOR THE WIND... COULD IT BE A LIFELESS WORLD? A WORLD WITH NO MEMORIES? I FEEL I'M PART OF IT... AS IF I'D BEEN EMPTIED FROM THE INSIDE... AS IF I DIDN'T EXIST AND HAD NEVER EVEN BEEN BORN.



I HAVE TO FIND OUT WHERE I AM... MAYBE THAT WILL HELP ME REMEMBER WHO I AM... YES, I MUST EXPLORE...

SOMETHING TELLS ME I SHOULD GO UP THESE STAIRS...

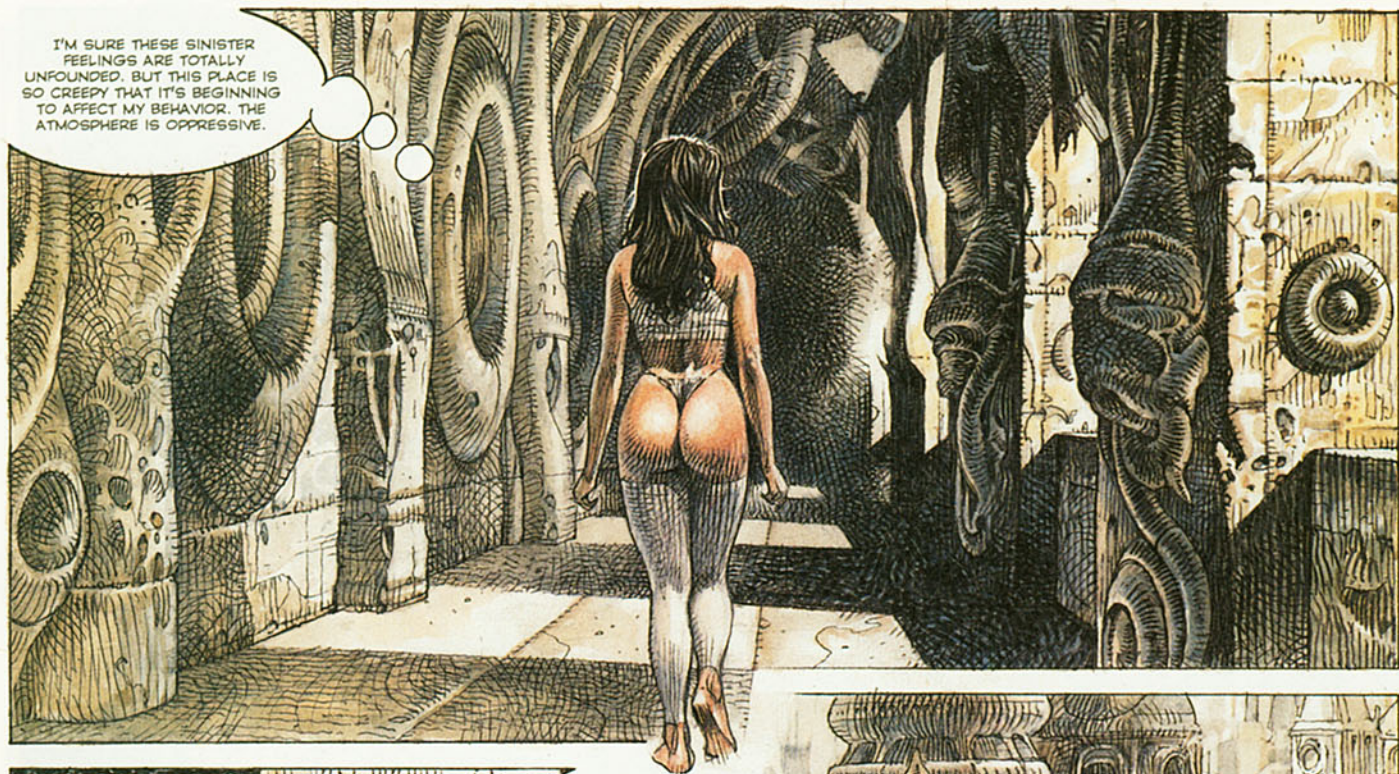


THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE IT WAS BUILT BY INTELLIGENT BEINGS... SOMEHOW...

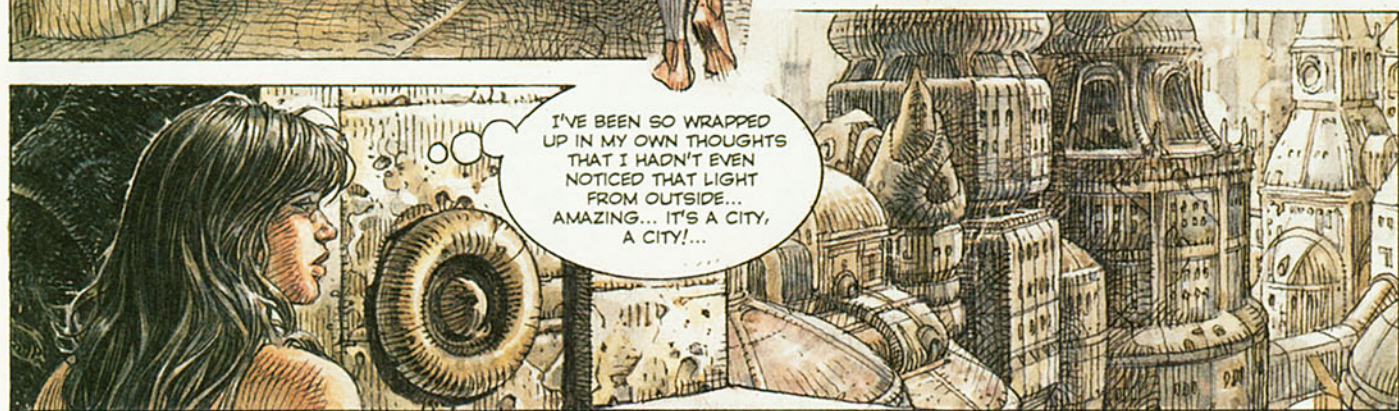


...I HAVE A STRANGE FEELING OF DÉJÀ-VU... AND THAT TERRIFIES ME!... AS IF ALL MY NIGHTMARES AND FEARS HAD SUDDENLY RISEN TO THE SURFACE.

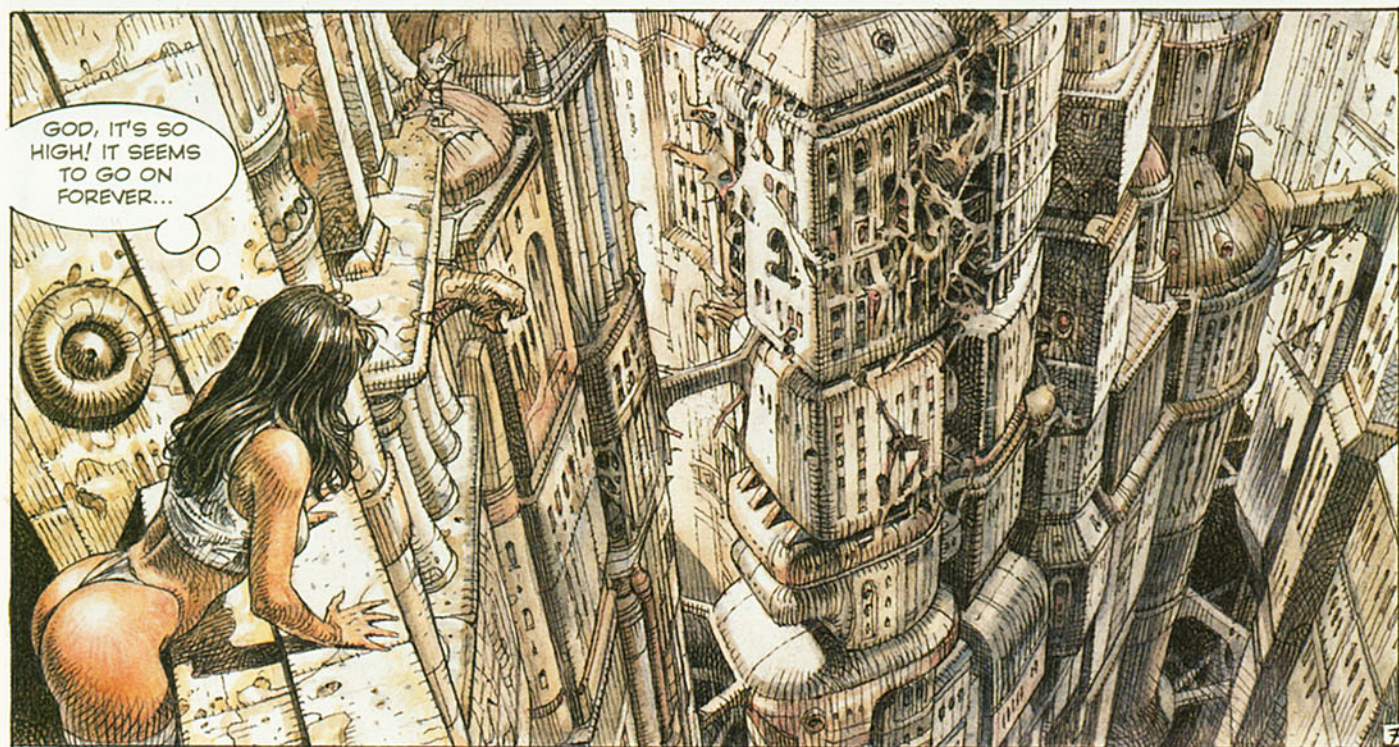
I'M SURE THESE SINISTER FEELINGS ARE TOTALLY UNFOUNDED. BUT THIS PLACE IS SO CREEPY THAT IT'S BEGINNING TO AFFECT MY BEHAVIOR. THE ATMOSPHERE IS OPPRESSIVE.



I'VE BEEN SO WRAPPED UP IN MY OWN THOUGHTS THAT I HADN'T EVEN NOTICED THAT LIGHT FROM OUTSIDE... AMAZING... IT'S A CITY, A CITY!...



GOD, IT'S SO HIGH! IT SEEMS TO GO ON FOREVER...





THERE'S SOMETHING BEHIND ME!... I HEARD A SOUND... PROBABLY FOOTSTEPS!



I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING, BUT I CAN HEAR SOMEONE COMING THIS WAY... I'D BETTER HIDE AND FIND OUT WHO IT IS...



THIS DARK CORNER WILL HAVE TO DO...



THE FOOTSTEPS SEEM FASTER... AND THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER AND CLOSER... HAS SOMEONE SEEN ME?



OH!...



OH MY GOD! LOOK AT THAT... OH... NO!





HEY! TAKE IT EASY! HAVE YOU NEVER SEEN A WOMAN?... OKAY, GENTLY NOW. OUCH!... MY HAIR!...

هيا! خذها برفق! هل لم تر قط امرأة?... حسنا، بلطف الآن. أوه!... شعري!...



HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

هيا! خذها برفق! هل لم تر قط امرأة?... حسنا، بلطف الآن. أوه!... شعري!...

THEY'RE REALLY INTERESTED IN MY BACK!... MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT IT... WHO KNOWS? BRRR... WHAT ROUGH, COLD HANDS!...

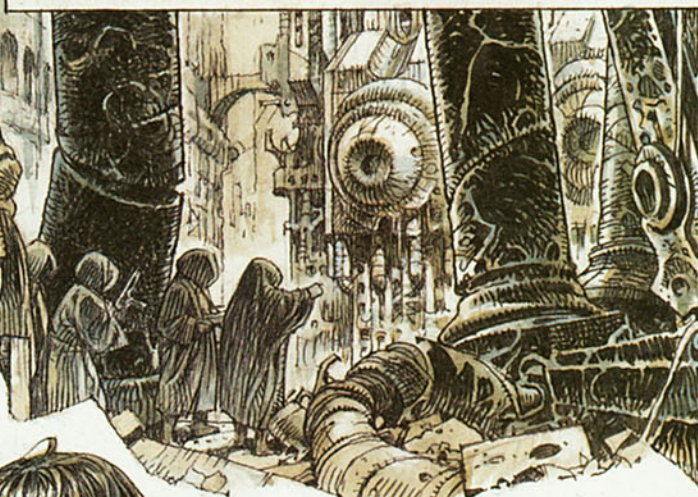


THAT'S ENOUGH NOW!... YOU'VE HAD A GOOD LOOK... HEY, I'M TALKING TO YOU!... LET GO OF MY HAIR!...

هيا! خذها برفق! هل لم تر قط امرأة?... حسنا، بلطف الآن. أوه!... شعري!...

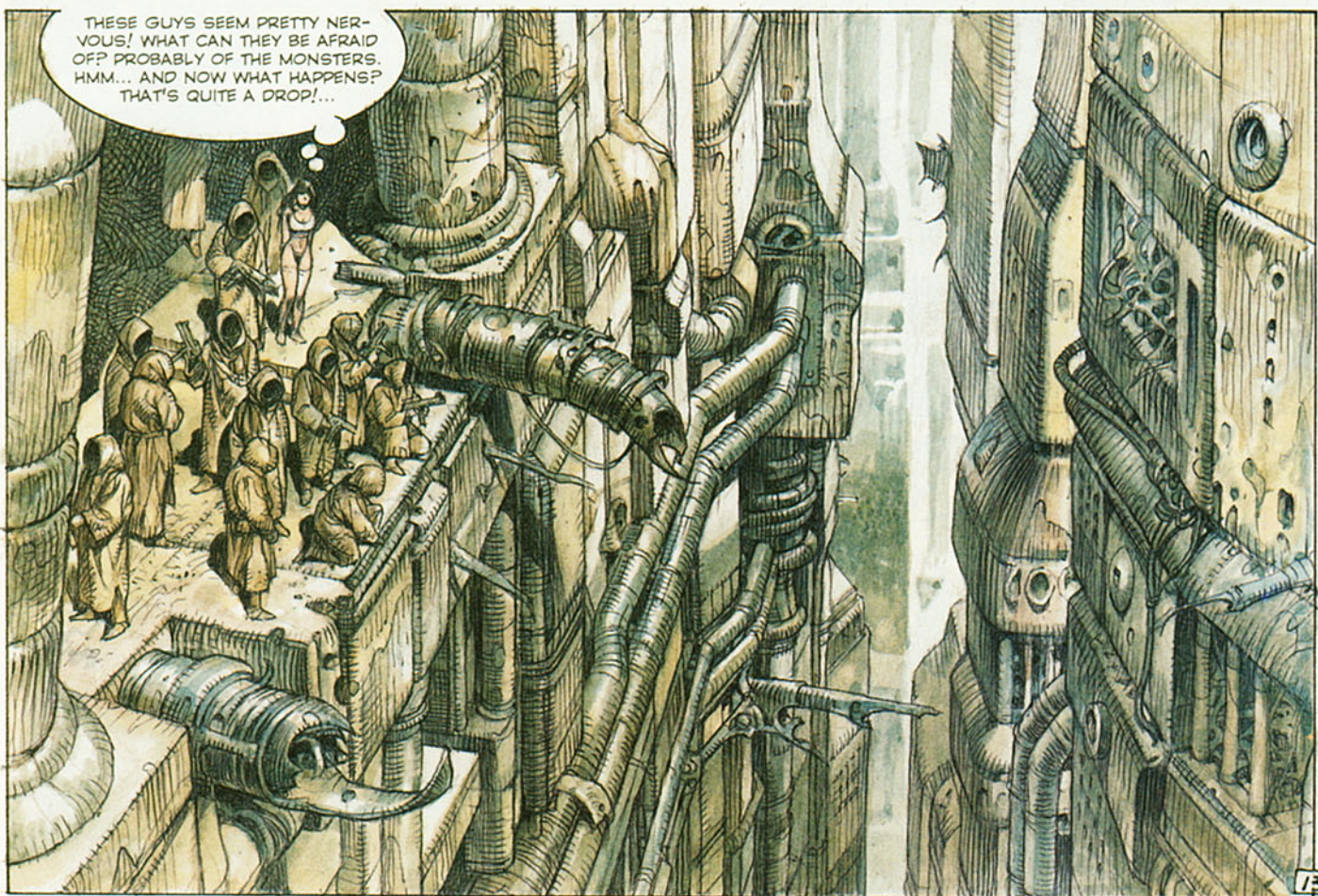


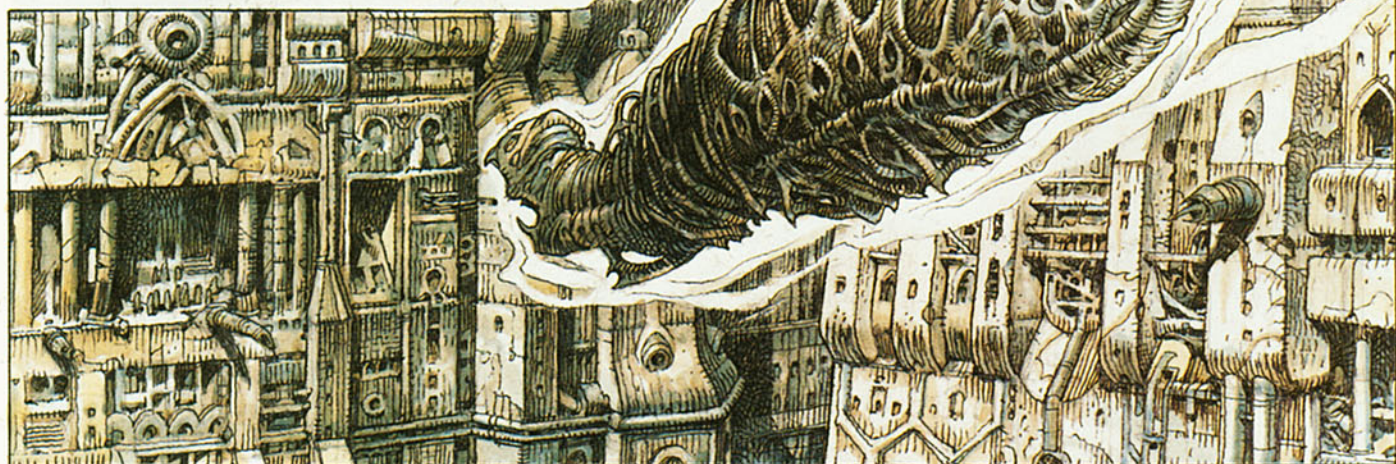
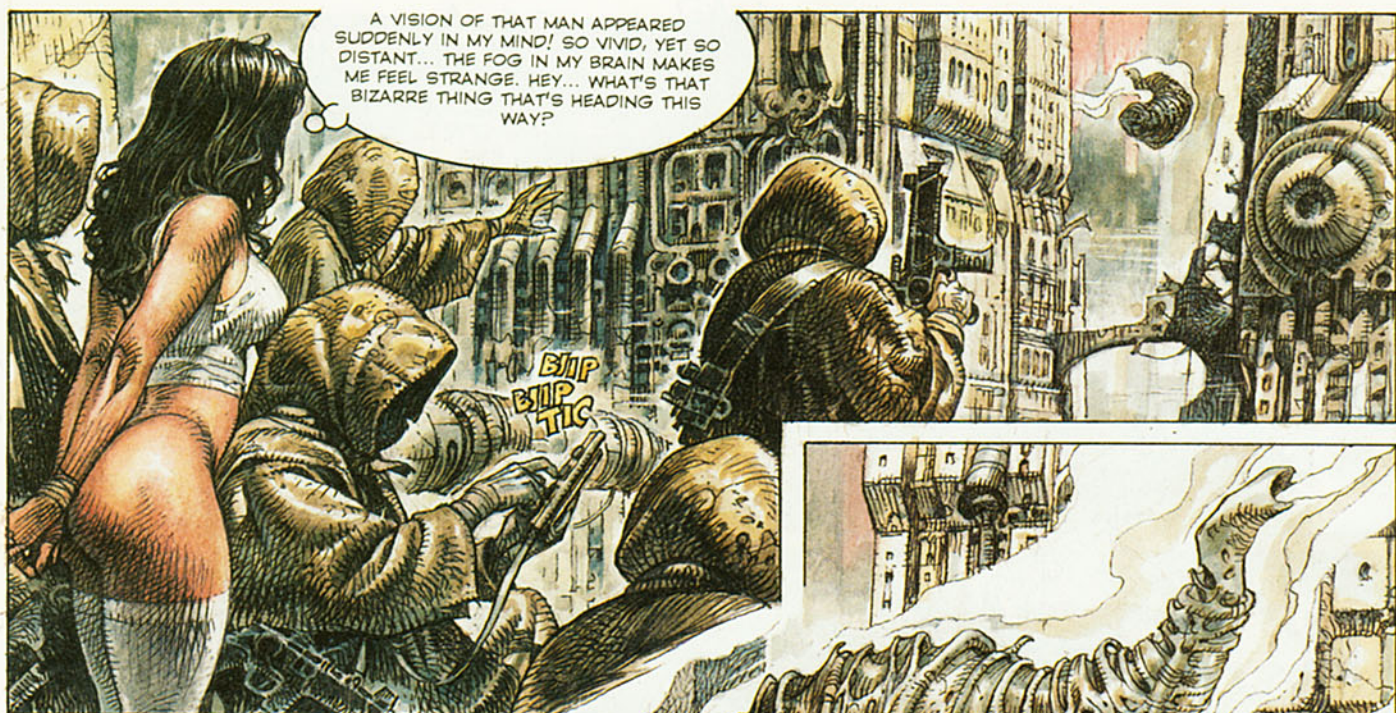
هيا! خذها برفق! هل لم تر قط امرأة?... حسنا، بلطف الآن. أوه!... شعري!...

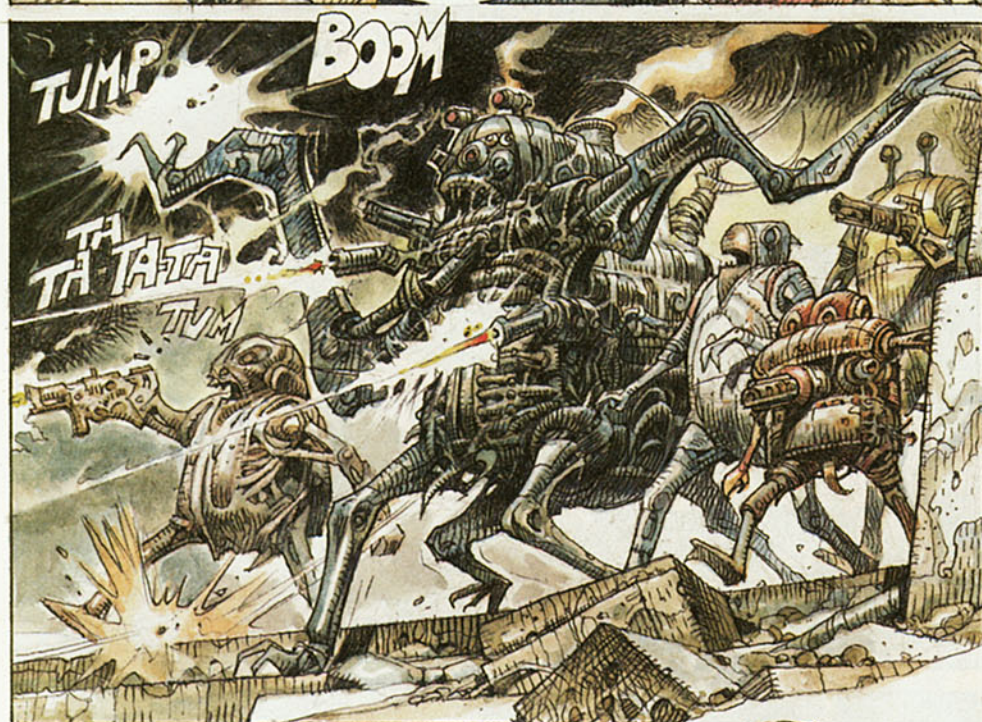
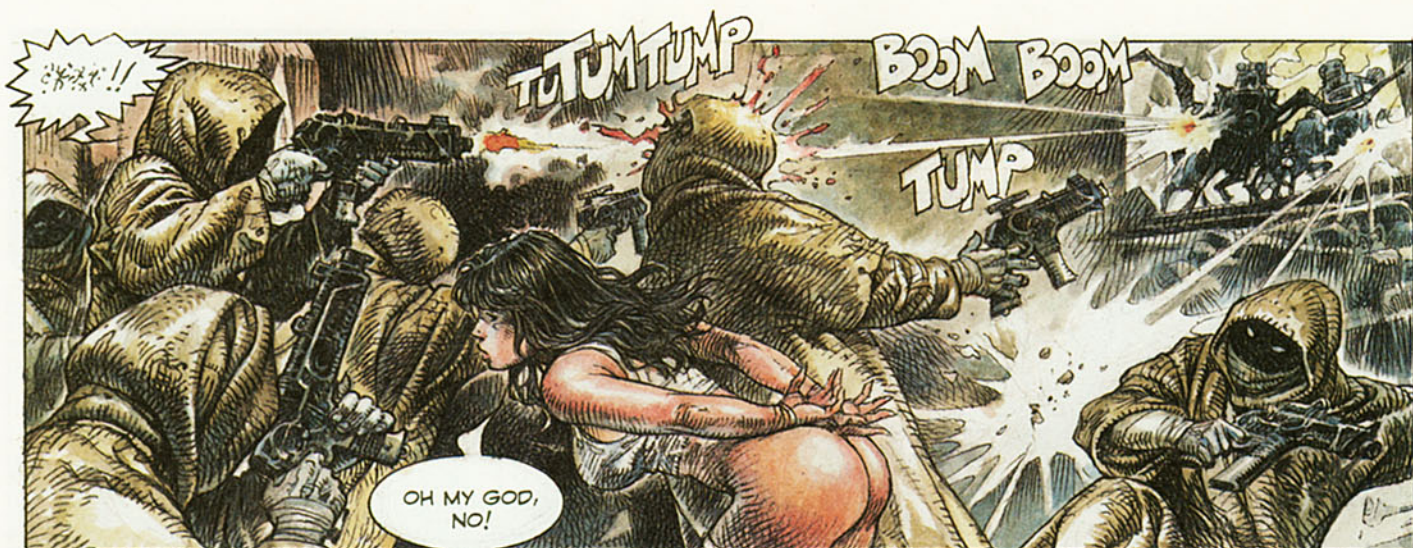


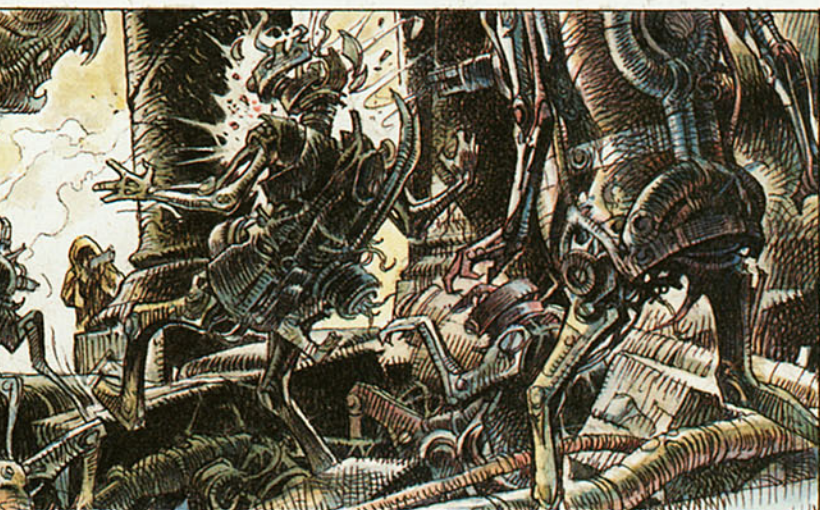
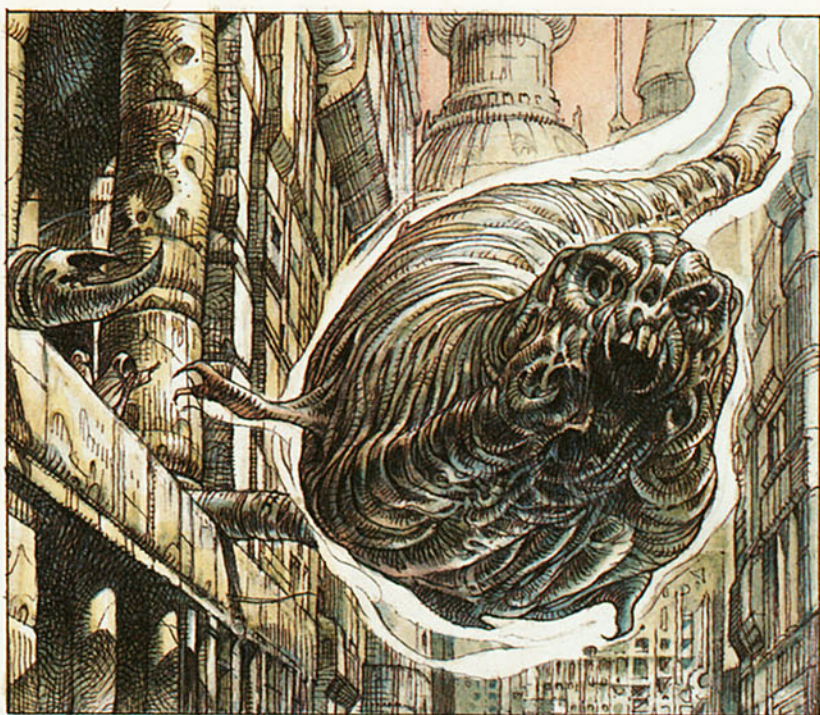
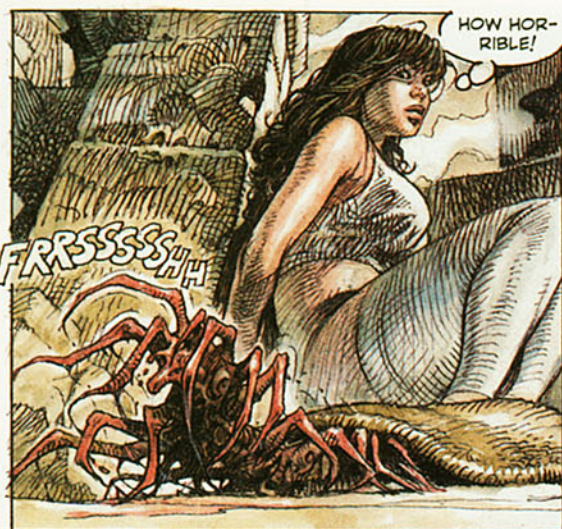
IT SHOULDN'T BE SO DIFFICULT FOR ME TO RECOGNIZE HUMANS! I'M A WOMAN, AND I AM HERE... BUT AM I REALLY OF THIS WORLD? OR, IF NOT, WHERE AM I FROM?...

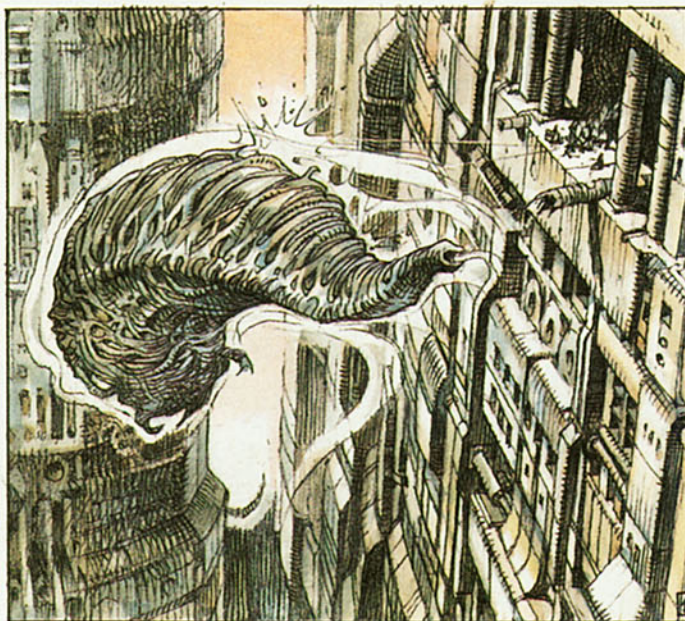
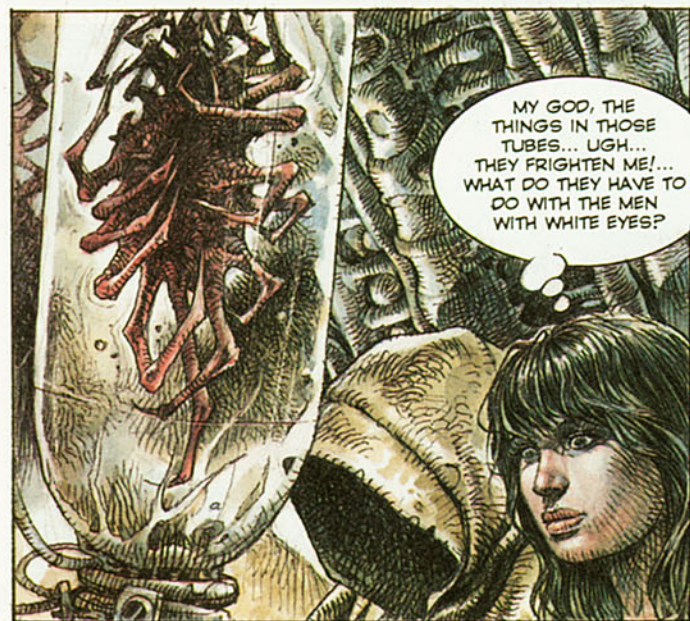
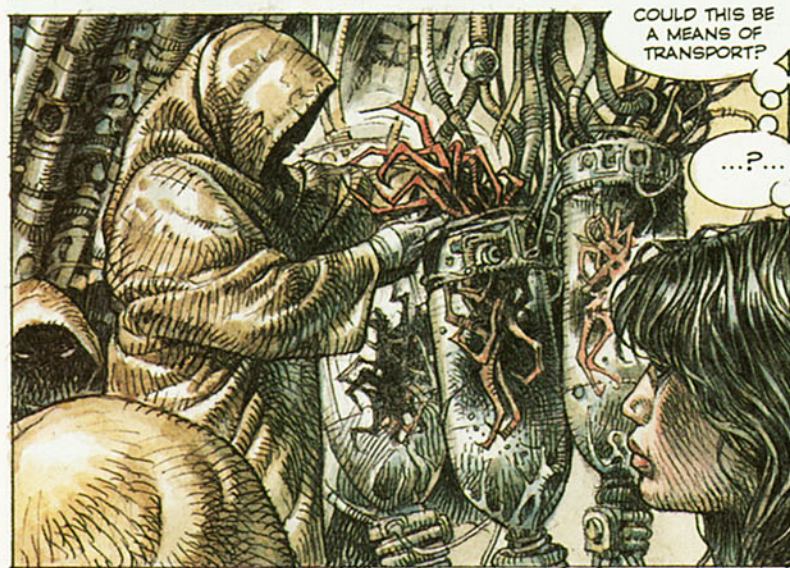


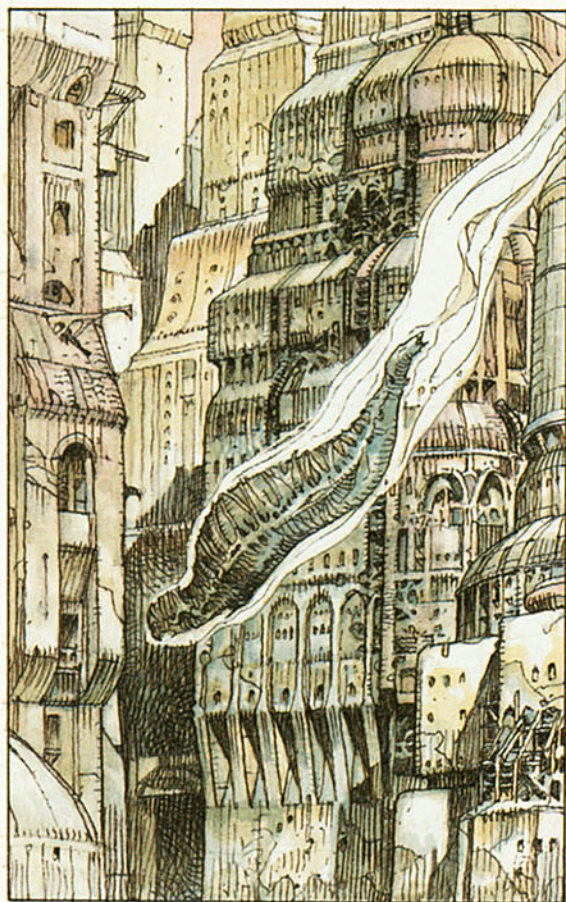




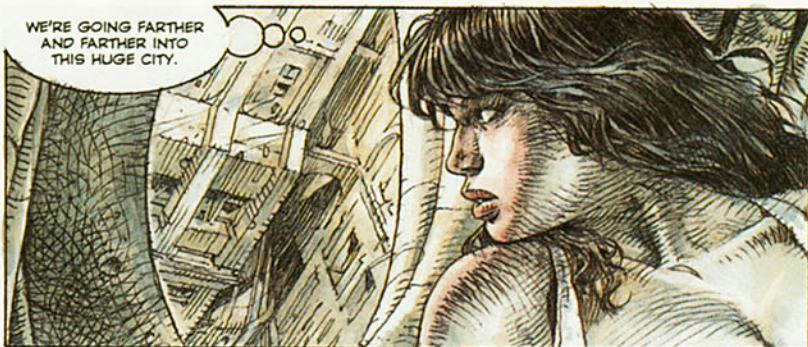








WE'RE GOING FARTHER
AND FARTHER INTO
THIS HUGE CITY.



BUT WHERE ARE WE GOING?
WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO
TO ME? WHAT'S GOING TO
HAPPEN TO ME? I'M AFRAID...
I MUST THINK... I MUST TRY TO
REMEMBER... I CAN FEEL THAT I
DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME!

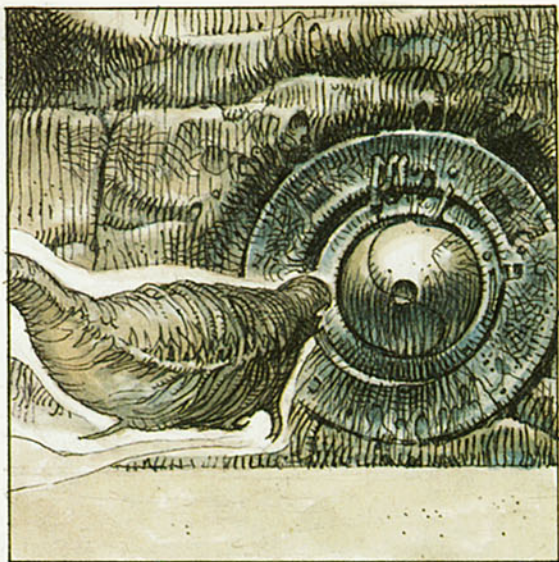
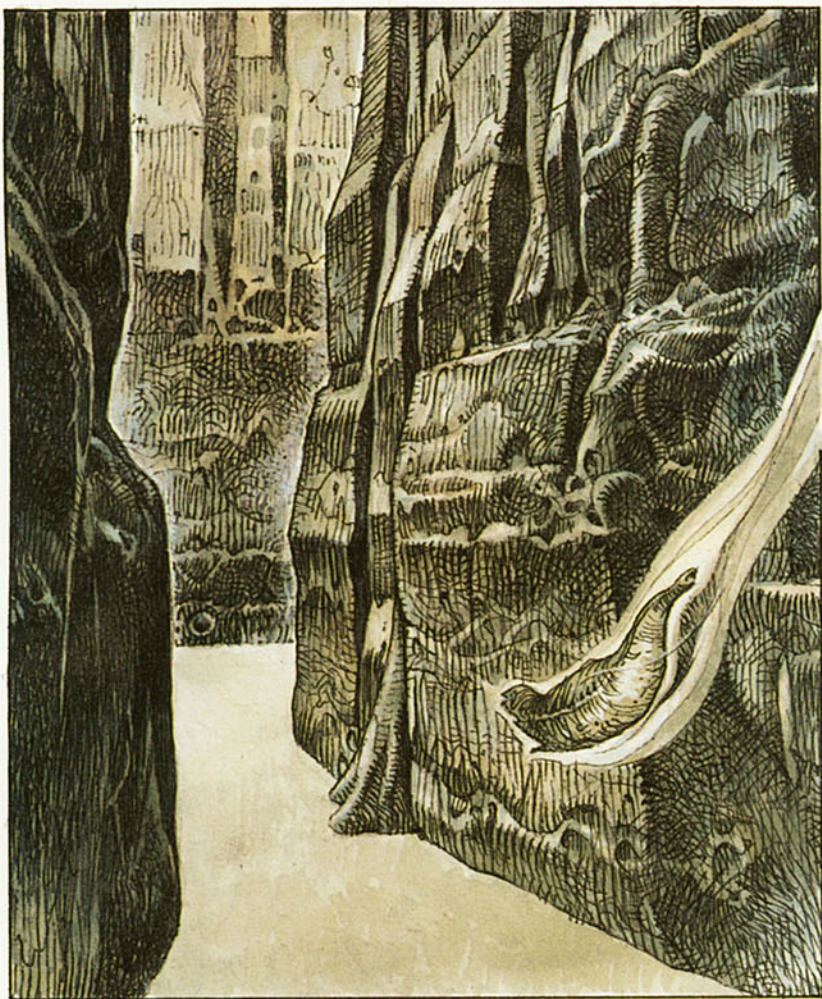


...?!..

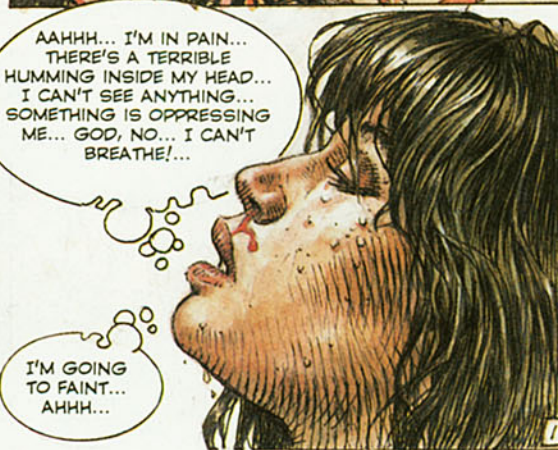


BUT WHO ARE
THEY?! WHO CAN
THEY BE?





THAT DISGUSTING THING
WITH ONE EYE!... I KNOW
IT'S STARING AT ME. I FEEL
SICK... IT MUST BE THE
STIFLING HEAT... THE AWFUL
STENCH...



AAHHH... I'M IN PAIN...
THERE'S A TERRIBLE
HUMMING INSIDE MY HEAD...
I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING...
SOMETHING IS OPPRESSING
ME... GOD, NO... I CAN'T
BREATHE!...

I'M GOING
TO FAINT...
AAHHH...



AHHH!

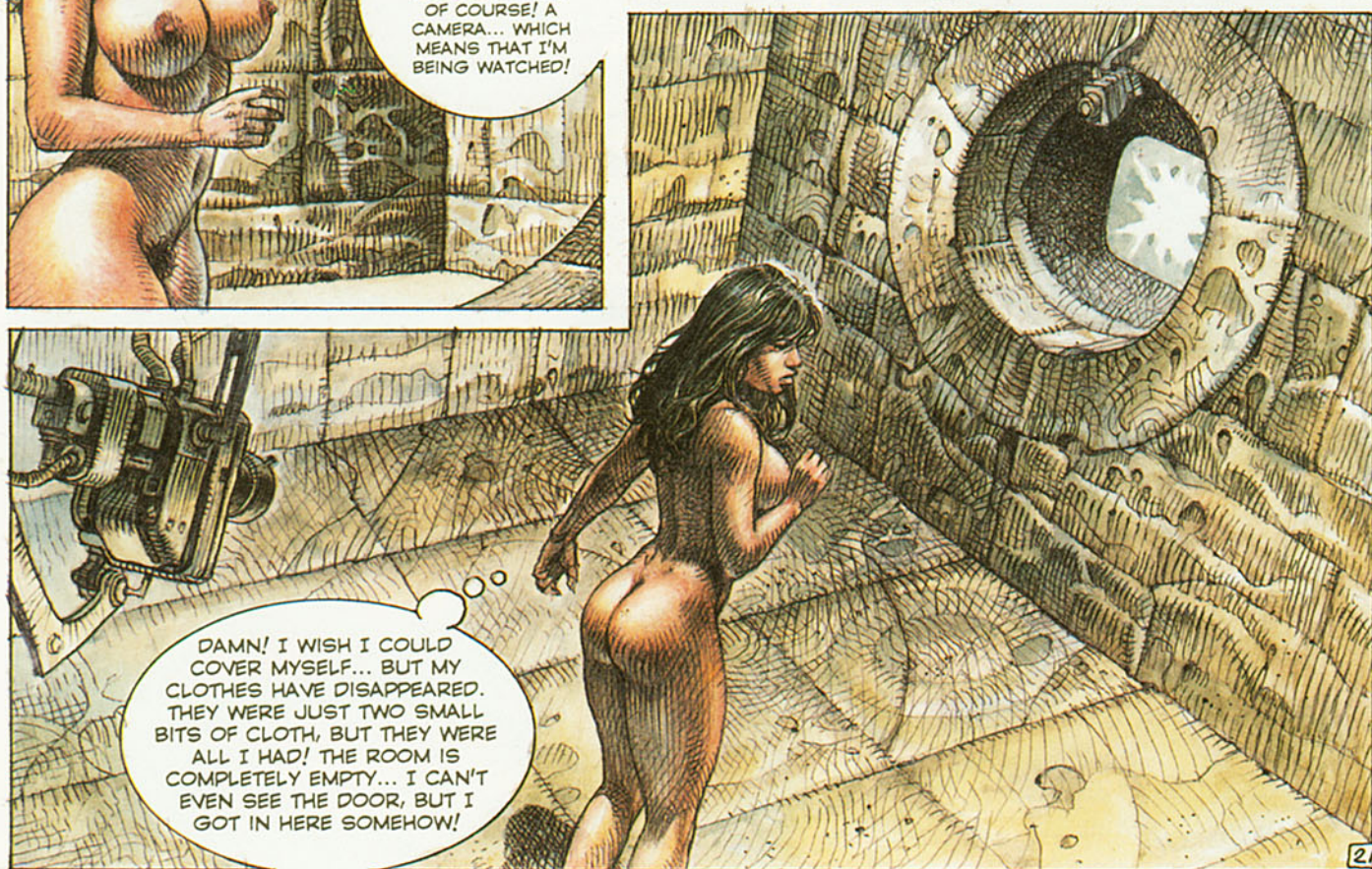
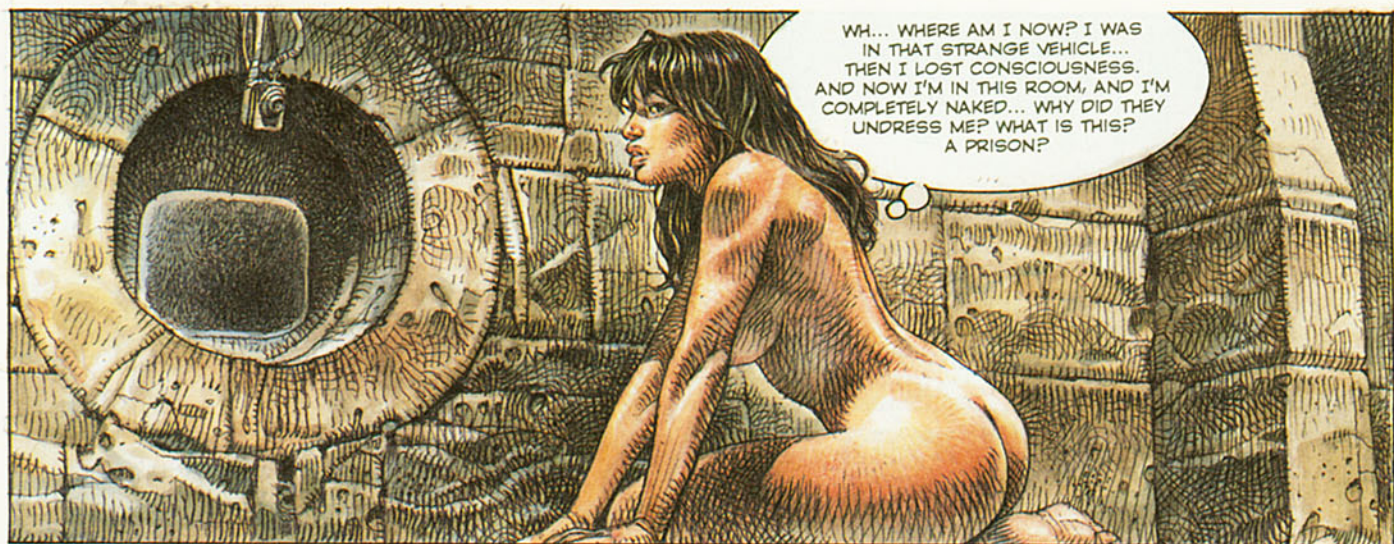


AHHH!... NOW I REALLY FEEL SICK TO MY STOMACH. BUT MY HEAD'S STOPPED HURTING. I GUESS I FAINTED. THE COLD FLOOR AGAINST MY BODY FEELS GOOD. IT'S DARK. MY EYELIDS ARE HEAVY. I CAN'T OPEN MY EYES.

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?...



I'M EXHAUSTED! BUT IT'S A GOOD FEELING... LANGUOROUS... THE SORT OF EXHAUSTION THAT FOLLOWS LOVEMAKING... AN INTENSE PLEASURE... SEX? BUT IT COULDN'T BE! WHEN AND HOW COULD I HAVE HAD SEX?





OH... SO IT WAS
A SCREEN... AN IMAGE
IS APPEARING ON IT!
MAYBE THEY'RE TRYING
TO COMMUNICATE WITH
ME.



WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?...
BEFORE I CAME TO... BUT I DON'T
REMEMBER ANYTHING. THEY
MUST'VE DRUGGED ME... YES...
THAT HAS TO BE IT... THE AWFUL
PENETRATING STENCH THAT MADE
ME SICK... HMM... IT TURNED MY
INSTINCTS LOOSE... THAT
FACELESS MAN... WHAT
IS HE DOING TO
ME?



WHAT IS
GOING
ON?



WHAT! IT'S ME!
THEY FILMED
ME... BUT
WHEN?!

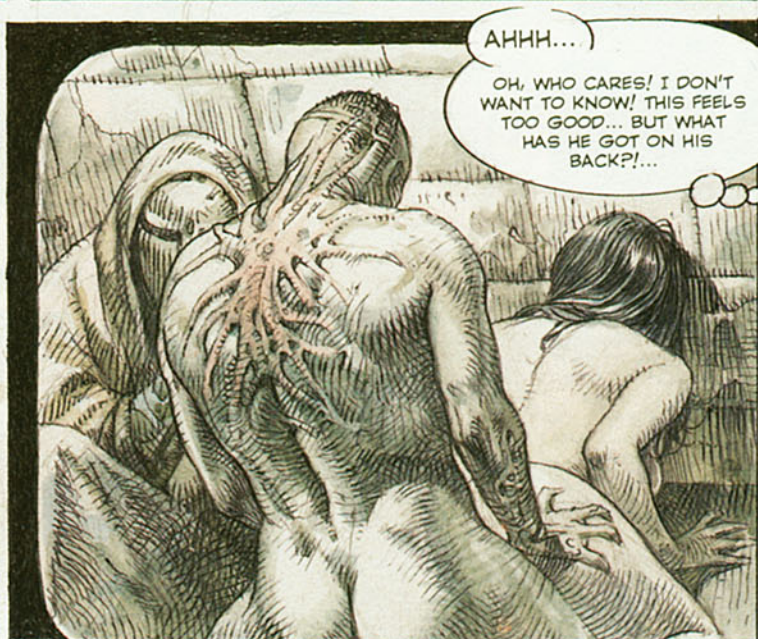


THOSE ARE A
MAN'S HANDS!...
THEY ARE
TOUCHING ME,
FEELING ME...



AH, THERE ARE TWO OF THEM...
BUT WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO ME?...
IT'S TERRIBLE TO FEEL SO AROUSED!
DAMN! I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING
ABOUT MY PAST, BUT I KNOW I'VE
ALWAYS LIKED THIS! IT'S CRAZY!

I LOVE
THIS
FEELING!





NO, NO... WHAT AN
ABSURD NIGHTMARE!...
WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?
WHAT WAS I THINKING
OF?... I LET MYSELF BE
INFLUENCED! I DON'T WANT
TO LOOK AT THAT THING
ANYMORE... GODDAMN
MONSTERS! WHAT DO THEY
WANT FROM ME?



I MUST THINK... AND FIND A
WAY OUT OF HERE... OH, THE
LIGHTS HAVE GONE OUT...
I'M IN TOTAL DARKNESS.



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
THE PRISON WALLS
HAVE DISAPPEARED!
BUT HOW?



I CAN SEE SOME-
THING... OH MY
GOD! THEY'RE ALL
AROUND ME!



??? ?



おはようございます！

OH, NO, GUYS!... SORRY, BUT WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM... I CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOU. I DON'T SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE...

おはようございます！

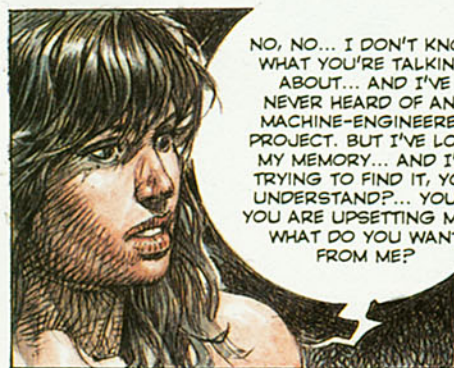


MHR... NOW WE SPEAK IN PRIMITIVE HUMAN TONGUE... YOU ANSWER... YES?... YOU ARE PARADOX, YOU NOT EXIST. YOU COME FROM OUTSIDE CITY? YOU FEMALE... ORGANIC SPECIES... YOU LIVE OUTSIDE?

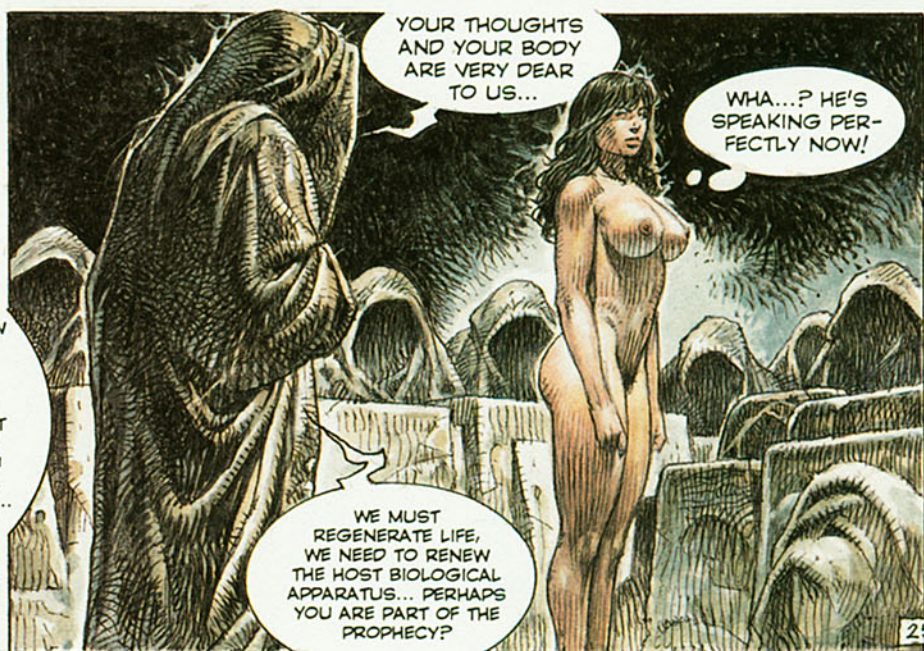
AHEM... I'M NOT AN ANIMAL. I AM A HUMAN BEING, OF THE FEMALE GENDER. I POSSESS ALL THE FEMALE ATTRIBUTES, IN THEIR RIGHT PLACES!... OUTSIDE? I DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM FROM, DAMN IT. I CAN'T REMEMBER... BUT I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT, JUST AS I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT WHO YOU ARE!



YES, YOU HUMAN, LIVING... DANGEROUS SPECIES THAT DISAPPEARED AFTER THE COMING OF THE "GREAT MOTHER"... YOU DARK FOG IN HEAD... SO YOU PART OF PROJECT ORGANIZED BY MACHINES?



NO, NO... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT... AND I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANY MACHINE-ENGINEERED PROJECT. BUT I'VE LOST MY MEMORY... AND I'M TRYING TO FIND IT, YOU UNDERSTAND?... YOU... YOU ARE UPSETTING ME... WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?



YOUR THOUGHTS AND YOUR BODY ARE VERY DEAR TO US...

WHA...? HE'S SPEAKING PERFECTLY NOW!

WE MUST REGENERATE LIFE, WE NEED TO RENEW THE HOST BIOLOGICAL APPARATUS... PERHAPS YOU ARE PART OF THE PROPHECY?

WHAT PROPHECY? I DON'T KNOW... OH, MY GOD!... YOU... THAT MASK... I SAW YOU ON THE SCREEN... YOU WERE THE ONE THAT I...

THE HOST THAT STANDS IN FRONT OF YOU IS HUMAN JUST LIKE YOU... A LIVING, BIOLOGICAL CREATURE, IF IMPERFECT. WE TRIED COUPLING ONCE, BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG...

THIS GUY'S WEIRD. HE TALKS ABOUT HIMSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON... HE SAYS THINGS THAT... OH... HE'S GONE. DARKNESS HAS DESCENDED AGAIN...

COME! THERE'S NO POINT RESISTING. IT'S TIME TO UNITE WITH THE "GREAT MOTHER". YOU MUST FOLLOW THE HOST.

UNITE... THE "GREAT MOTHER"... I'M WORRIED... I MUST FIND A WAY OF ESCAPING!...

OKAY, I'M COMING!

HEY, CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MEN WHO WERE SURROUNDING ME? HOW DID THEY SUDDENLY DISAPPEAR?

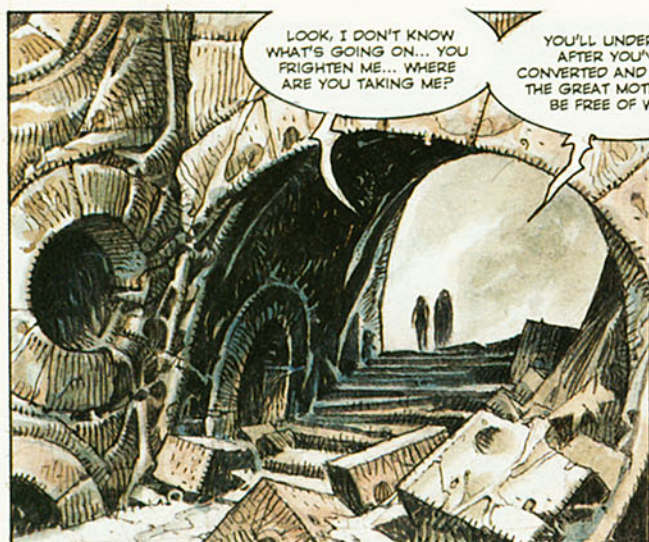
NOT MEN... WE BELONG TO THE ADVENTIST CASTE. WE ARE THE SONS OF THE FIRST ERA. WE ARE NOT HERE. WE ARE VERY FAR AWAY. WHAT STANDS BEFORE YOU IS A HOLOGRAM.

HOLOGRAM? UNBELIEVABLE! YOUR TECHNOLOGY IS HIGHLY ADVANCED... BUT, TELL ME, HOW COME YOU SPEAK SO WELL?

WE USE TECHNOLOGY BUT WE'D RATHER NOT. IT BELONGS TO THE MACHINES. BEFORE IT USED TO BELONG TO HUMANS. RIGHT NOW YOU ARE COMMUNICATING WITH US, BUT IT'S THE HOST THAT STANDS BEFORE YOU THAT IS EXPRESSING HIMSELF...

THIS NATURAL CAPACITY FOR EXPRESSION EXISTS IN HIS MIND. LIKE YOU, HE IS AN EXTRAORDINARY SPECIMEN. BOTH HIS REPRODUCTIVE APPARATUS AND HIS BRAIN ARE BEING CAREFULLY STUDIED.

AND THOSE THINGS OVER THERE ARE ELECTRONIC EYES... SO WE ARE BEING WATCHED!



LOOK, I DON'T KNOW
WHAT'S GOING ON... YOU
FRIGHTEN ME... WHERE
ARE YOU TAKING ME?

YOU'LL UNDERSTAND...
AFTER YOU'VE BEEN
CONVERTED AND UNITED WITH
THE GREAT MOTHER. YOU'LL
BE FREE OF WORRIES.



CONVERTED?!...
WHAT DO YOU
MEAN?

BUT...
WHAT...
OH, GOD!



IT WAS HERE IN THIS CORNER
THAT I SAW THEM... SPIDER-
SHAPED MONSTERS WRIGGLING
ABOUT IN THOSE STRANGE
COCOONS... WHAT IS THAT?...
OH GOD, HORRORS! I'VE... I'VE
GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE,
FAR AWAY FROM THAT
CREATURE BEFORE IT'S
TOO LATE!



WHAT'S THE
MATTER WITH HIM
NOW? WHY IS HE
LOOKING AT ME
LIKE THAT?... OH...
IT'S A HUMAN EYE...
AND IT'S
BLEEDING...



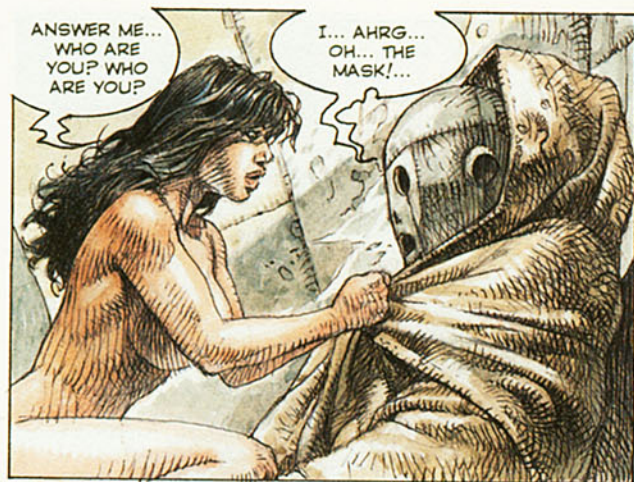
AHRG... AH... GO AWAY...
GO... FAR FROM HERE...
DRU... DRUUNA...

WHAT'S HE
MUTTERING?...
DRUUNA?...
OH!...

OH MY GOD!
HE'S CALLING ME...
MY NAME IS DRUUNA...
I'M DRUUNA!...

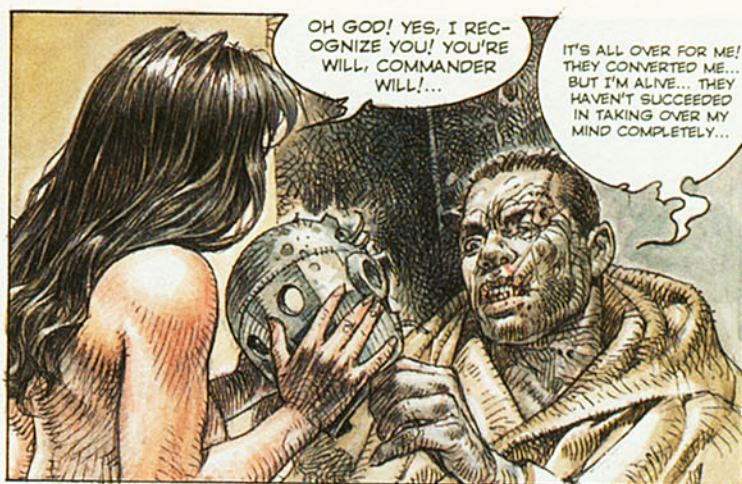


HURRY... AHRG...
THE MACHINES,
DRUUNA... GET AWAY
BEFORE IT'S TOO
LATE!... OHHH!...



ANSWER ME...
WHO ARE
YOU? WHO
ARE YOU?

I... AHRG...
OH... THE
MASK!...



OH GOD! YES, I RECOGNIZE YOU! YOU'RE WILL, COMMANDER WILL!...

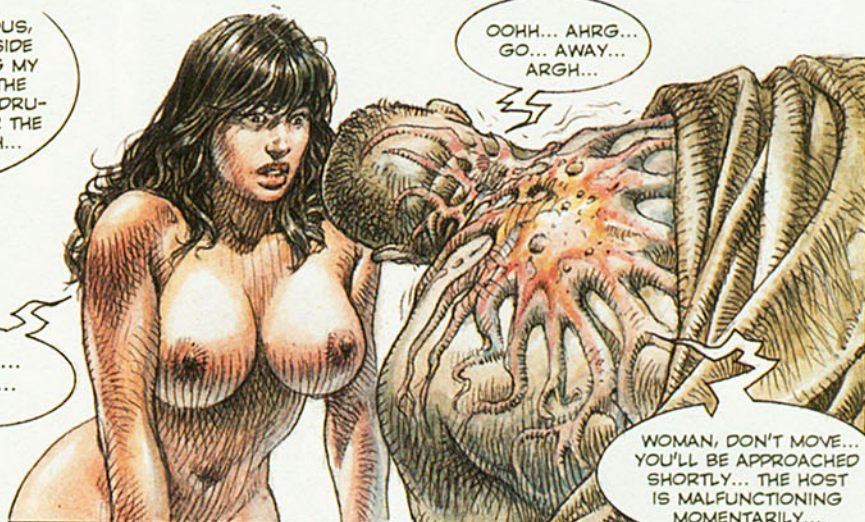
IT'S ALL OVER FOR ME! THEY CONVERTED ME... BUT I'M ALIVE... THEY HAVEN'T SUCCEEDED IN TAKING OVER MY MIND COMPLETELY...



THERE'S A MONSTROUS, EVIL CREATURE... INSIDE ME... IT'S DEVOURING MY BRAIN. THEY'LL DO THE SAME THING TO YOU, DRU-UNA... GO! LOOK FOR THE MACHINES... OOOHHH...

WHAT MACHINES? I DON'T GET IT!

WILL... WILL...



OOHH... AHRG...
GO... AWAY...
ARGH...

WOMAN, DON'T MOVE... YOU'LL BE APPROACHED SHORTLY... THE HOST IS MALFUNCTIONING MOMENTARILY...

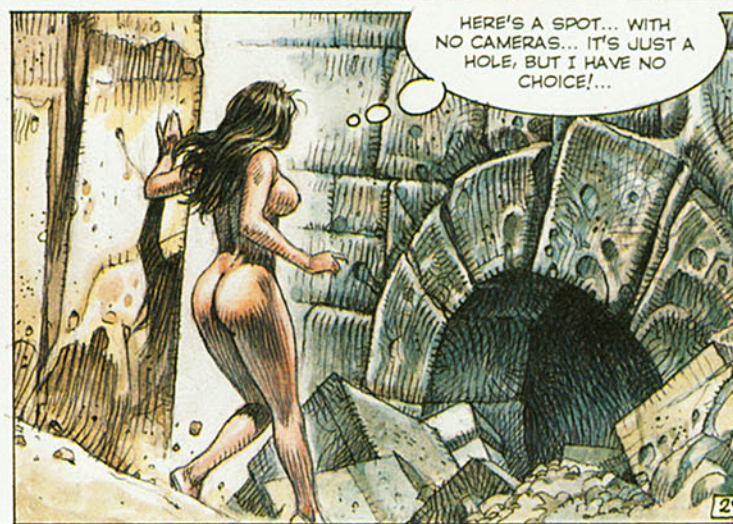
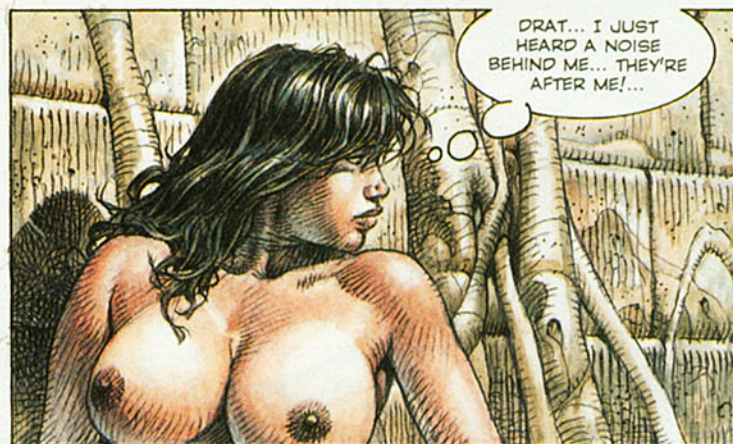
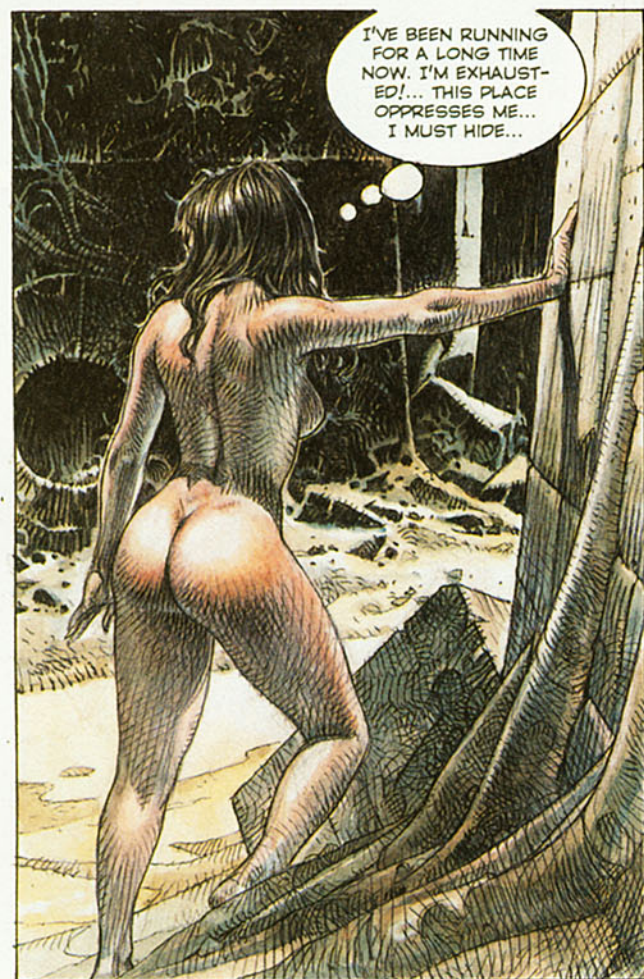
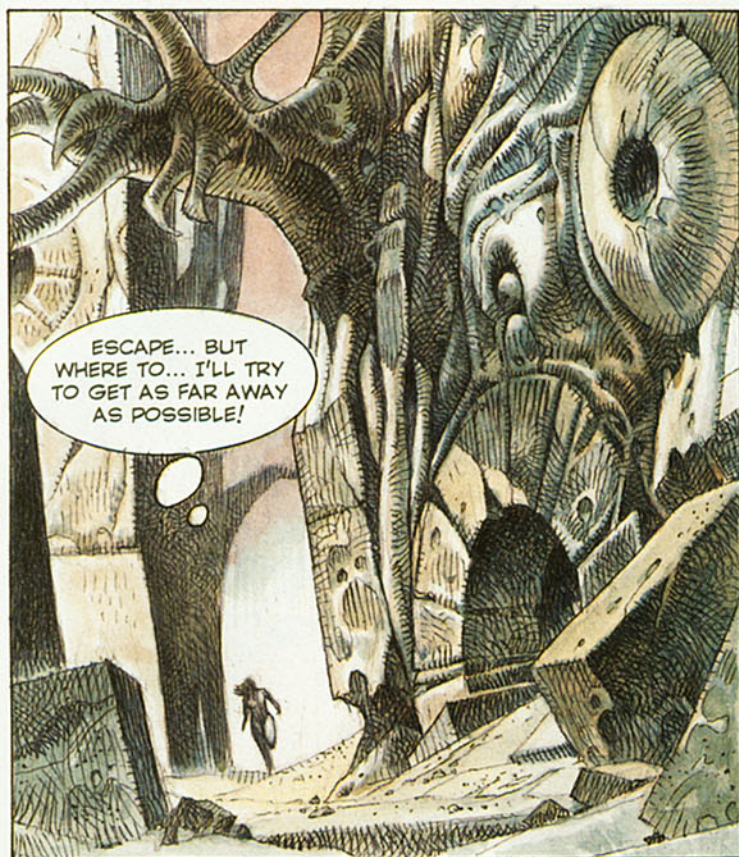


YOUR PRIMITIVE HUMAN INSTINCT WILL MAKE YOU WANT TO RUN AWAY. BUT THAT'S PURELY IRRATIONAL. THE UNAVOIDABLE MEETING WITH THE GREAT MOTHER IS NEAR. IT WILL BE A MOMENT OF SUBLIME GRACE FOR YOU ...

GO FUCK YOURSELF!...

AHRG...
OOOHHH...







I HOPE I'LL BE
SAFE HERE. I MUST
REST... THEN I'LL
TRY TO FIND A
WAY OUT...



MMH... I CAN HARDLY
SEE. I DON'T LIKE THAT.
THE DARKNESS MAKES ME FEEL
ANXIOUS. THERE'S SOMETHING
THREATENING IN THE AIR...
I KNOW SOMEONE OR
SOMETHING IS SILENTLY
WATCHING ME.



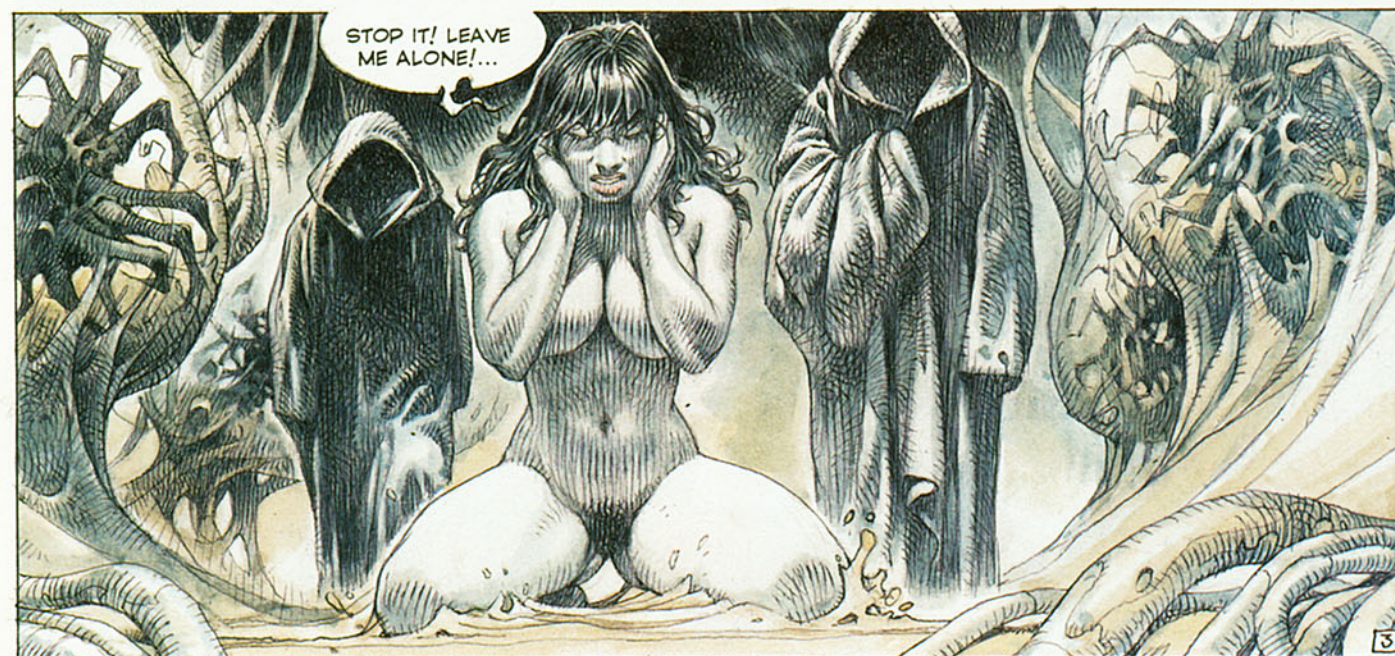
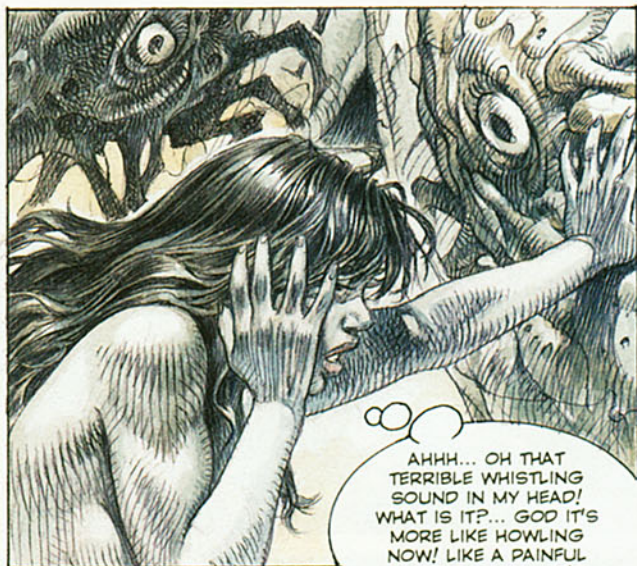
OH MY GOD! IT'S THEM!
THE DAMN MONSTERS!
I SHOULD HAVE
KNOWN...



AH!... THEY'VE
SEEN ME... I'M
FINISHED...



NOOO...
GO TO HELL!



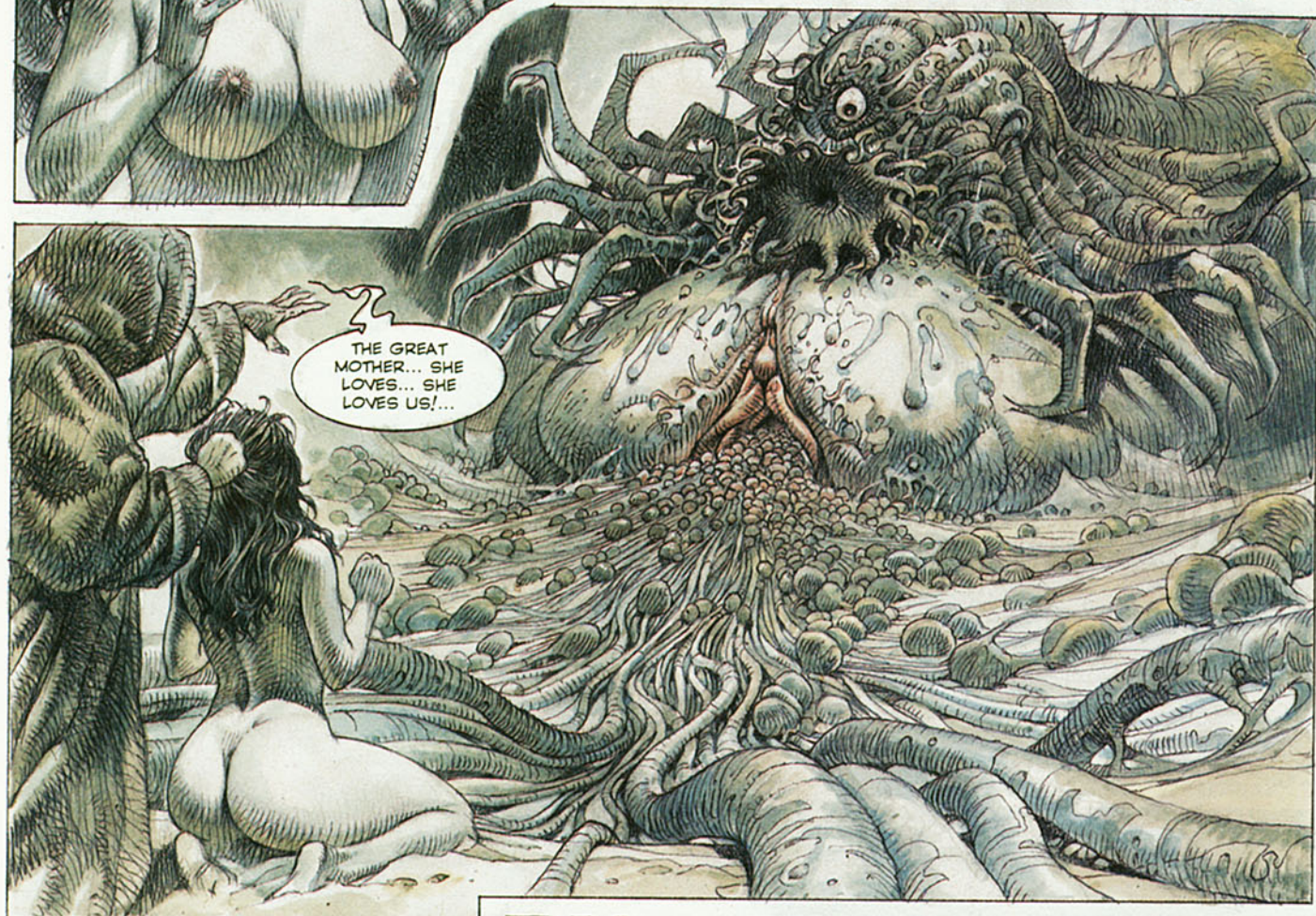


YOU!
LOOK!

AH...
AHHHH!...



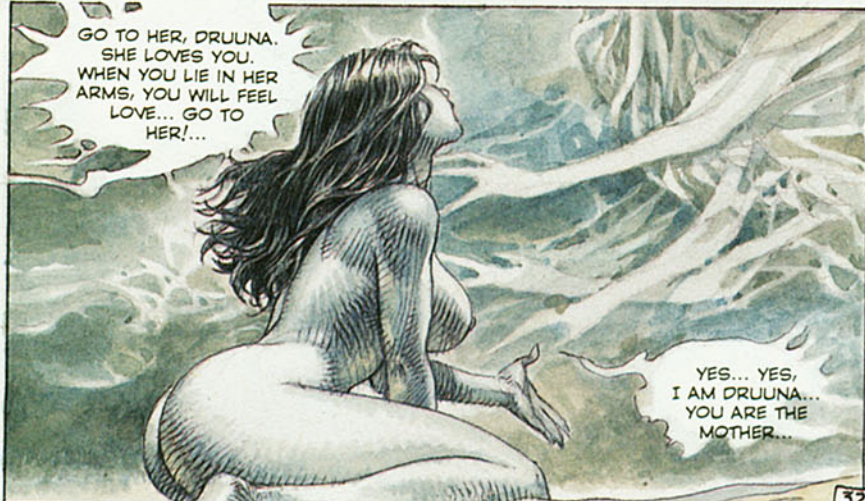
OH! GOD!...
NO, OH NO.
HOW AWFUL!



THE GREAT
MOTHER... SHE
LOVES... SHE
LOVES US!...

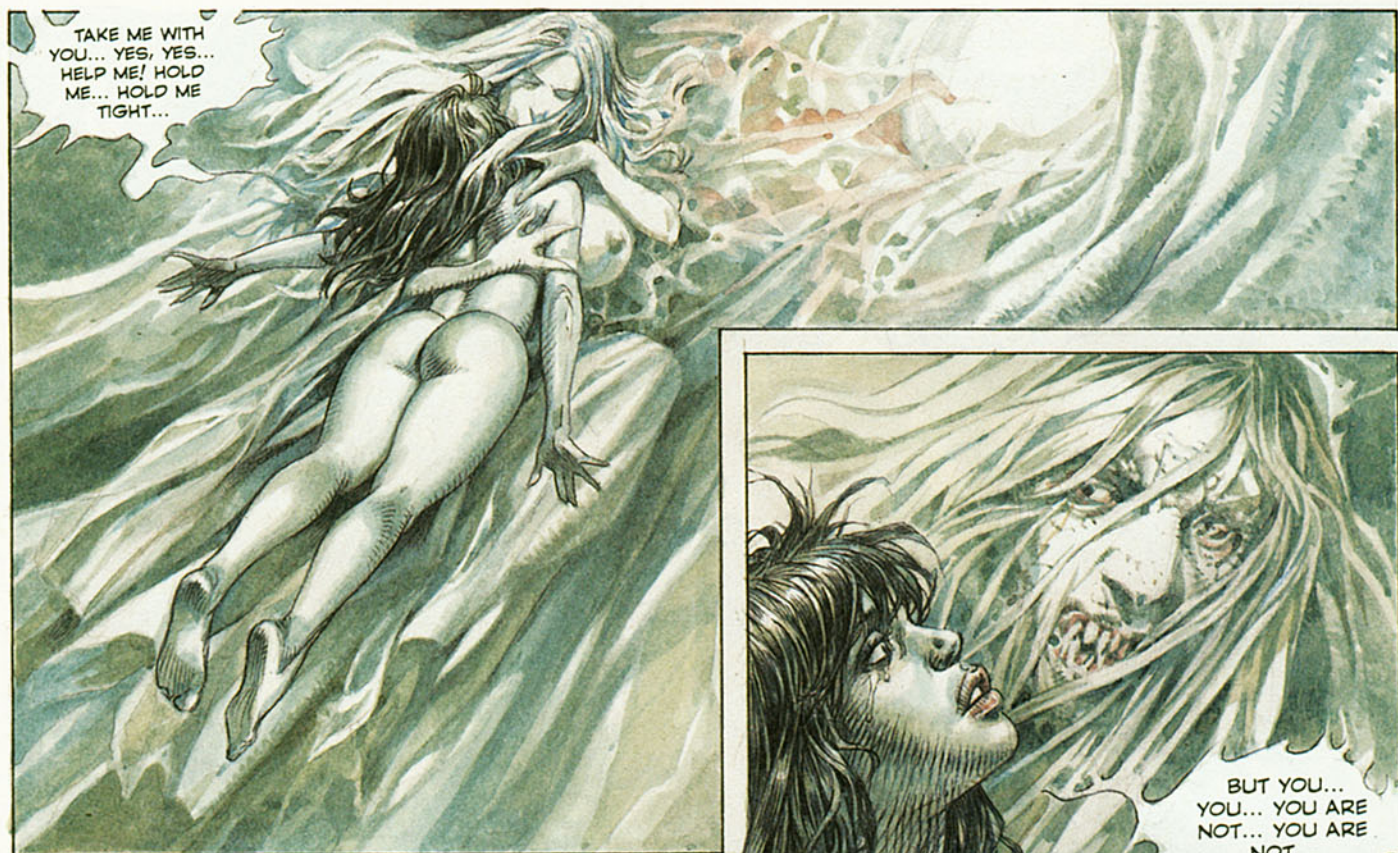


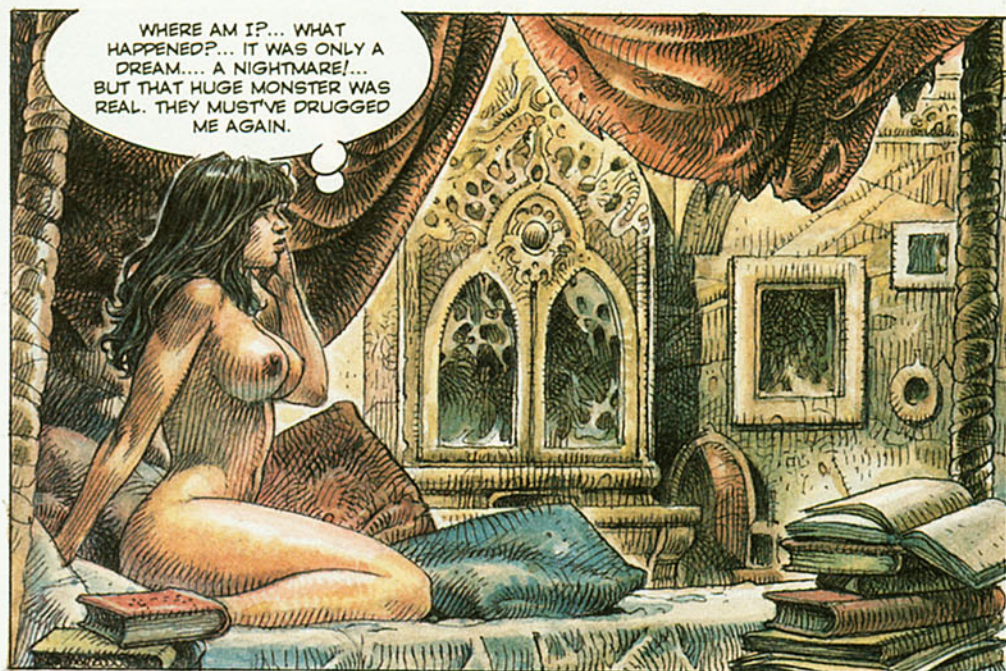
SHE LOVES
YOU, TOO!



GO TO HER, DRUUNA.
SHE LOVES YOU.
WHEN YOU LIE IN HER
ARMS, YOU WILL FEEL
LOVE... GO TO
HER!...

YES... YES,
I AM DRUUNA...
YOU ARE THE
MOTHER...





WHERE AM I?... WHAT HAPPENED?... IT WAS ONLY A DREAM.... A NIGHTMARE!... BUT THAT HUGE MONSTER WAS REAL. THEY MUST'VE DRUGGED ME AGAIN.



SO WHAT DID I SEE? REALITY OR A HALLUCINATION?... AND NOW THIS STRANGE PLACE... IT REMINDS ME OF MY PAST, SOMETHING I READ IN BOOKS... IN BOOKS LIKE THOSE... Hmm... LET'S SEE...



BUT THERE'S NO WRITING!...



THE PAGES ARE BLANK! THEY'RE ALL LIKE THAT... THEY AREN'T REAL BOOKS... NOTHING MAKES ANY SENSE!...

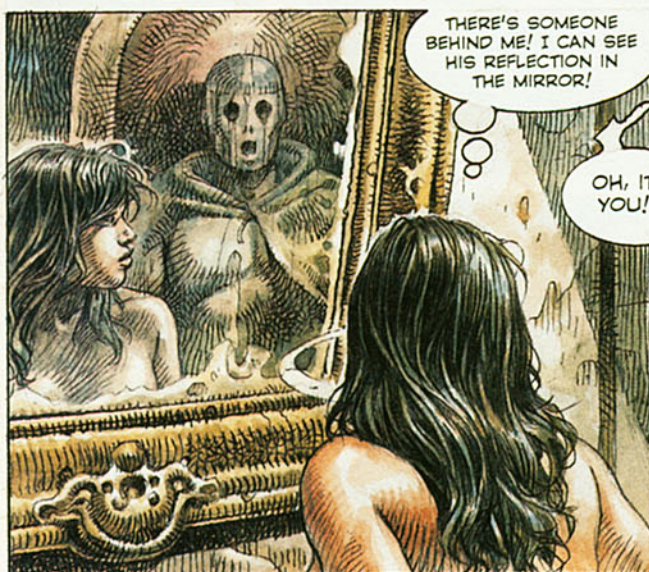


NOTHING LOOKS REAL. IT'S ALL FAKE... LIKE A THEATER SET... A REASSURING ENVIRONMENT, CAREFULLY DESIGNED TO MAKE ME FEEL AT HOME... BUT SOMETHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN... OH, I MUST CALM DOWN. MHH... BUT IT'S ALL SO PRETTY!...



SON OF A BITCH!...
NOW I GET IT! I KNOW
WHAT YOU WANT FROM
ME! I'M NOT THAT DUMB!
YOU WANT TO USE MY
BODY TO BREED MORE
HUMANS, SO YOU'LL HAVE
MORE HOSTS!

WHERE ARE YOU?
I KNOW YOU'RE WATCH-
ING ME... COME OUT OF
YOUR HIDING PLACES,
AND SHOW YOUR FACES!



THERE'S SOMEONE
BEHIND ME! I CAN SEE
HIS REFLECTION IN
THE MIRROR!

OH, IT'S
YOU!...



WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HIM?...
HE'S BEEN STARING AT ME,
WITHOUT MOVING, FOR A LONG
TIME... BUT IT'S CLEAR... IT'S ONLY
A QUESTION OF TIME. I'M GOING
TO HAVE SEX WITH HIM!...

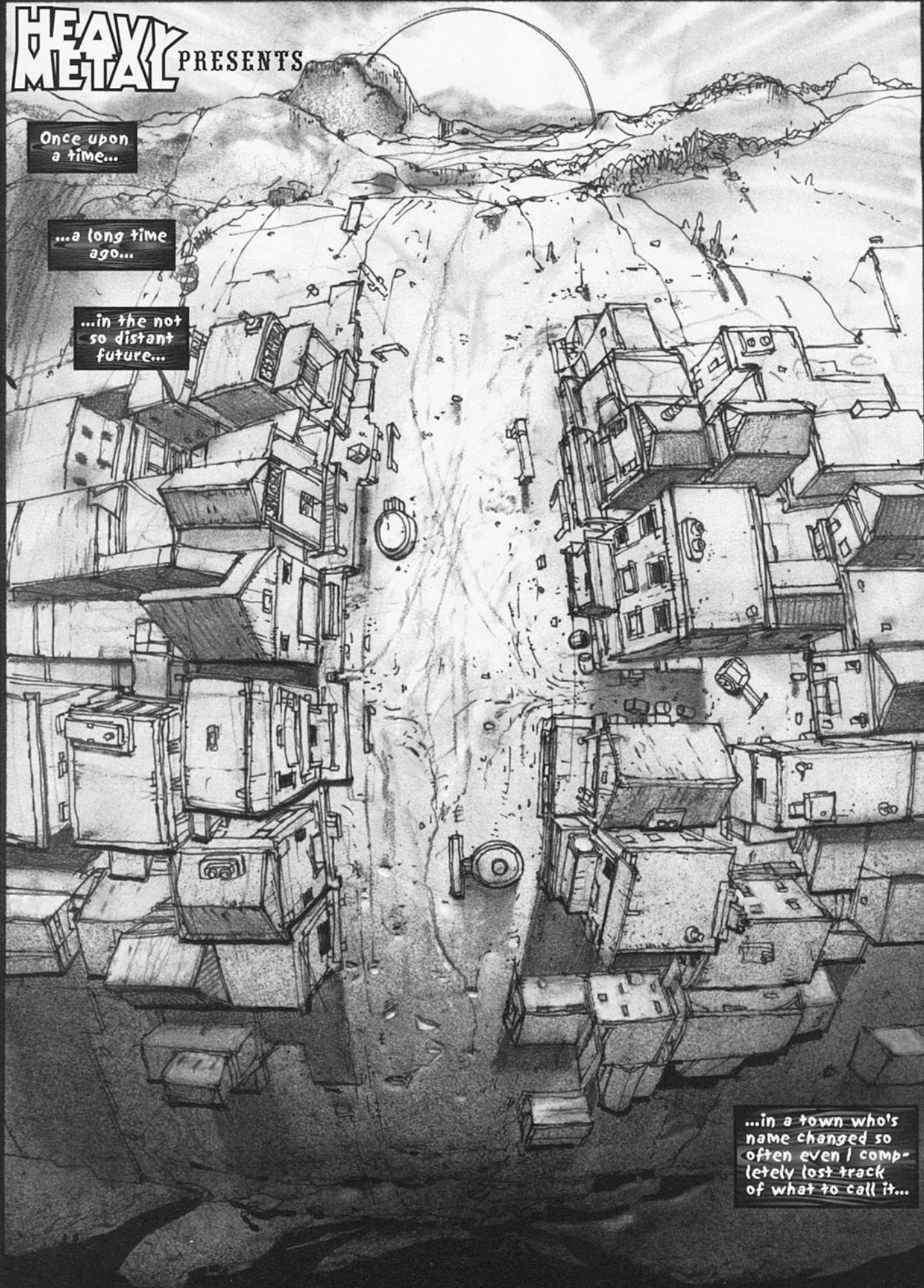
HEAVY PRESENTS

Once upon
a time...

...a long time
ago...

...in the not
so distant
future...

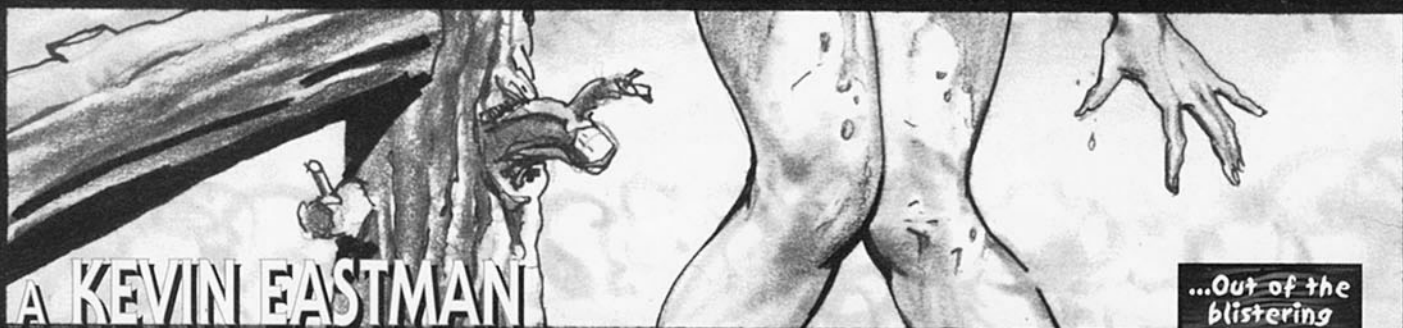
...in a town who's
name changed so
often even I com-
pletely lost track
of what to call it...



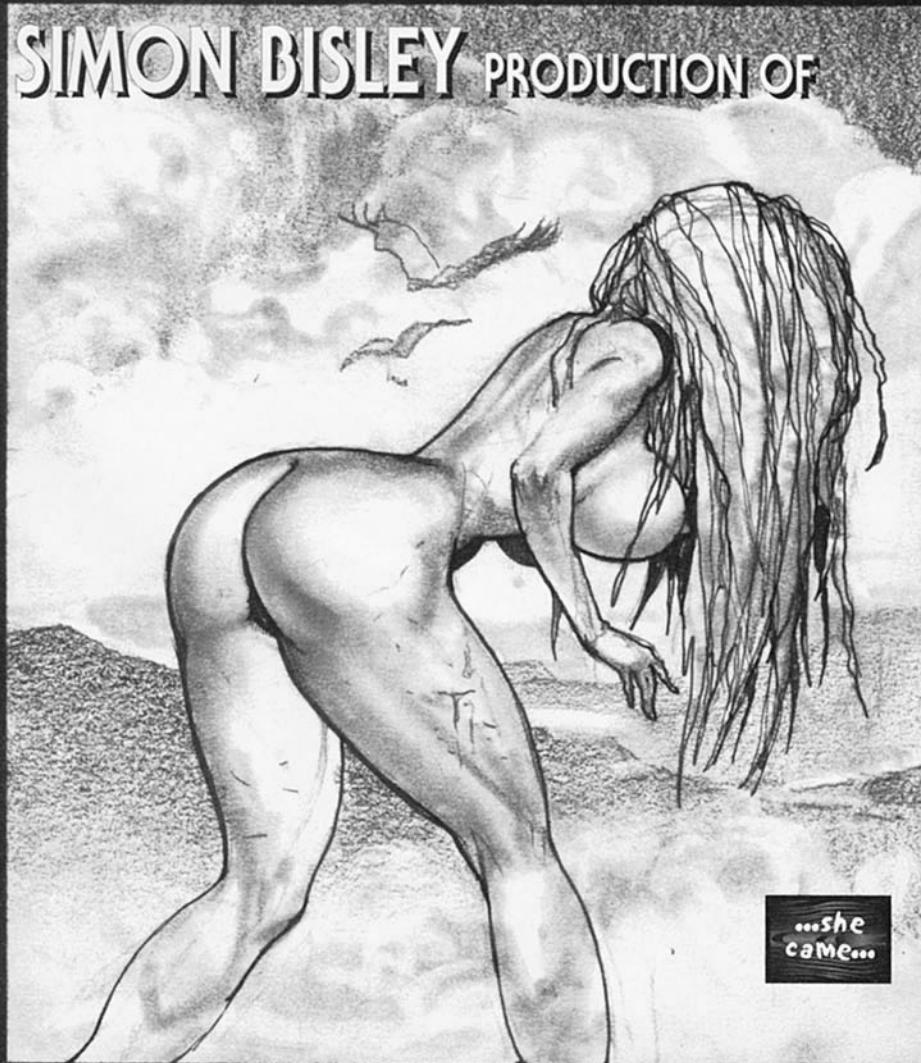
...when life
couldn't
have
sucked
more...



...The
craziest
thing
happened...



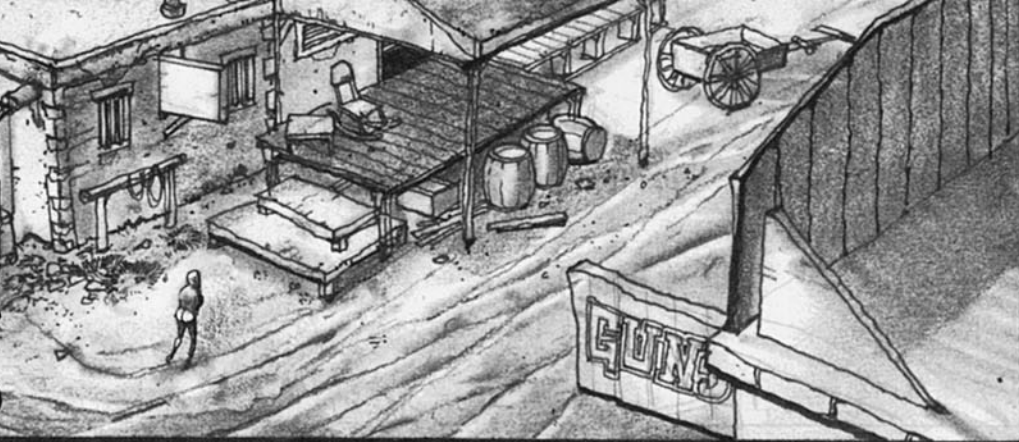
...Out of the
blistering
heat of
the
desert...



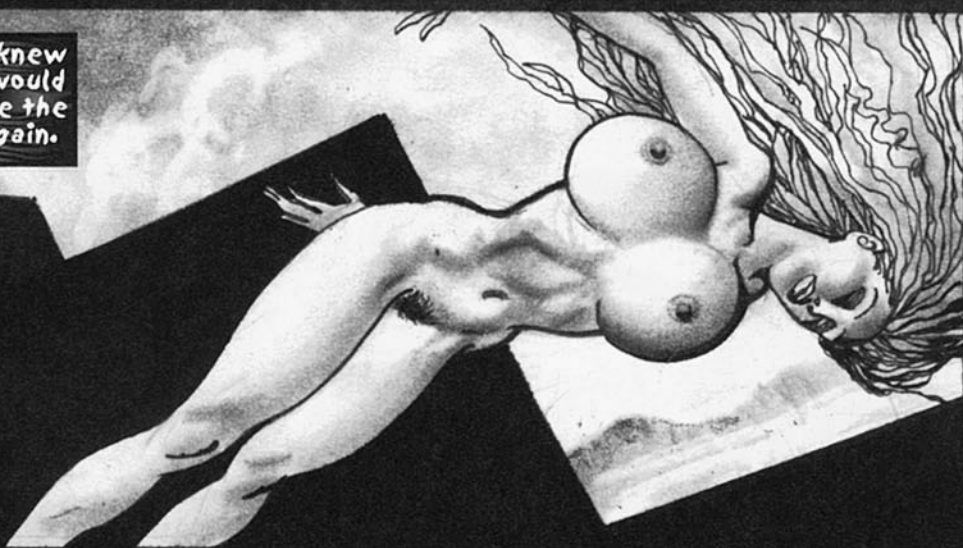
...she
came...



FISTFUL OF BLOOD



...And I knew
things would
never be the
same again.



PLEASE
TELL ME
"THAT'S"
REAL!!



UGH!
UGH! UGH!



HEH!



YUM!

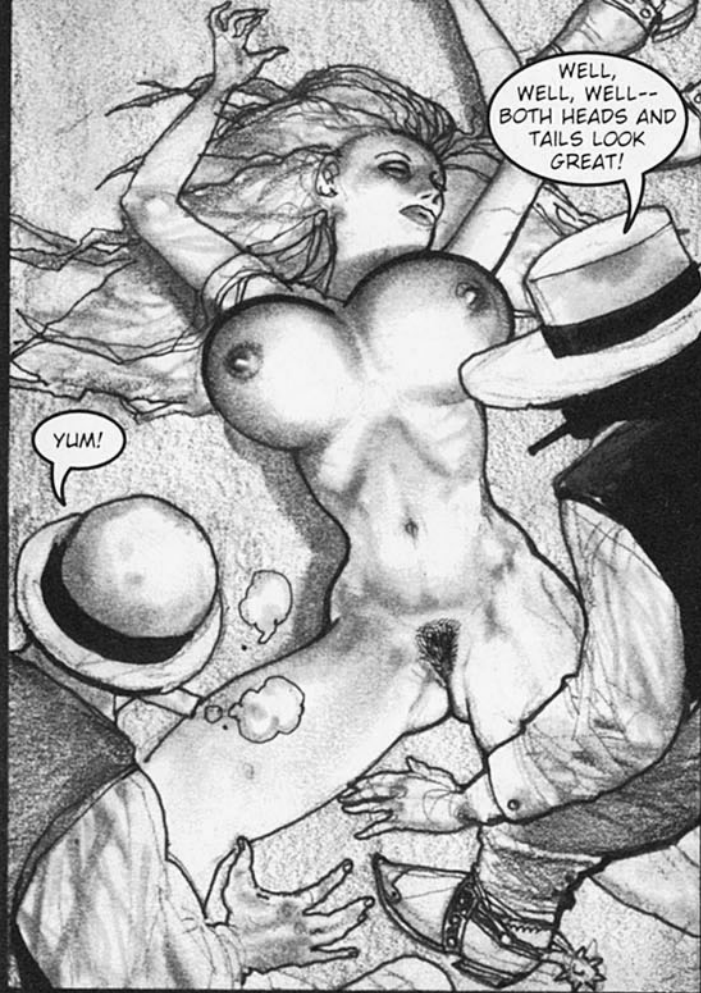


NOW
THIS IS EXTRA
SPECIAL--



--AND IT'S
NOT EVEN MY
BIRTHDAY!

YUM!



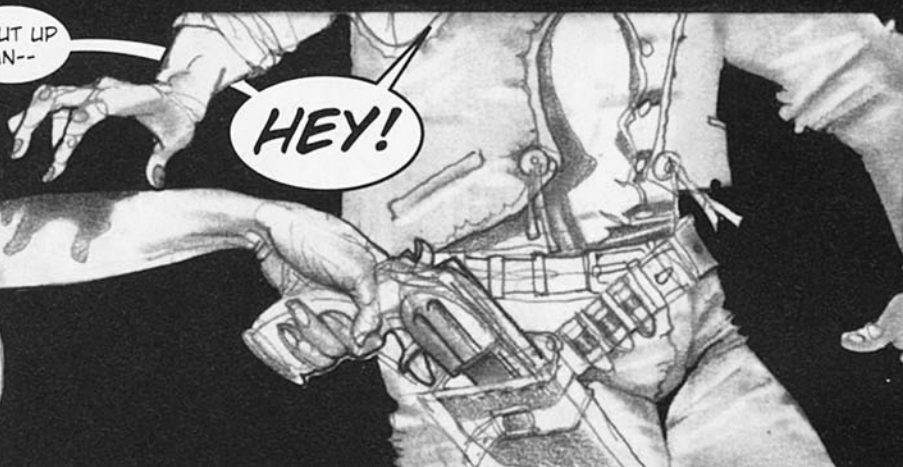


HEY--

--SHE SMELLS
A LITTLE
DIFFERENT--



SHUT UP
AN--



HEY!



BLAM

OW!

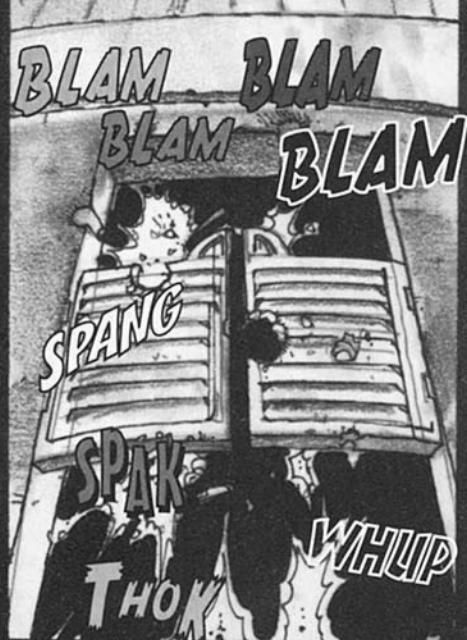


NOW
HOLD ON,
MISSY--

BLAM

!





Change always
has to start
somewhere...

...That day--I just
prayed it wouldn't
start in my place!

SHIT!!

SHE'S
COMING THIS
WAY!!

I KNEW IT!
I KNEW IT!
I KNEW IT!
DAMN--I--

CLICK

HEY--
WHOA--GEEZ--NO--
NO PROBLEMS
HERE YOUNG LADY
--I'M COOL! LOOK, I'M
REALLY FOND OF
BREATHING, OKAY?
FRIENDS?

WHEW--
NOW THEN--
NOT THAT I DON'T
LOVE YOUR "STYLE" BUT
DO YOU WANT SOME
CLOTHES?

HMM?

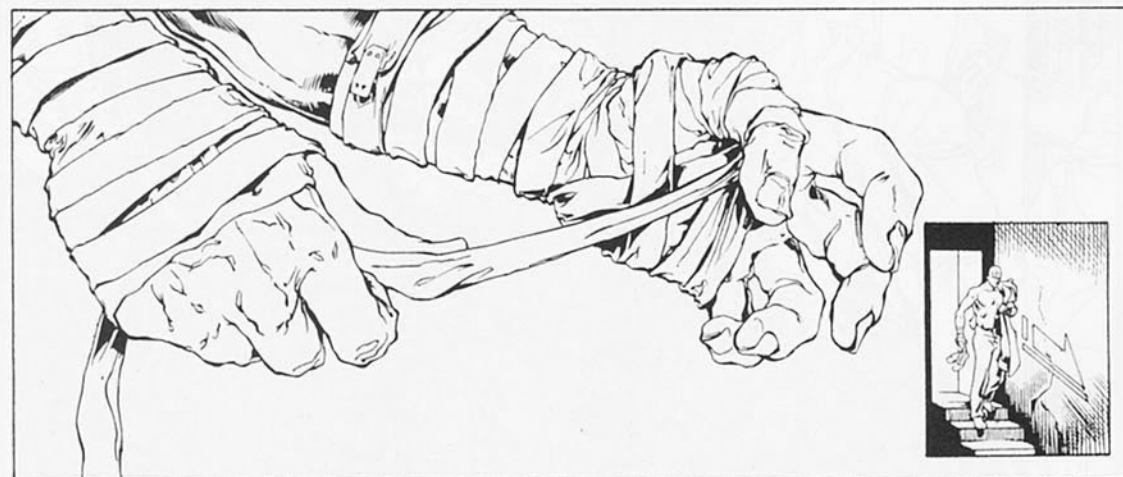
TO BE CONTINUED...

the Pugilist

CREATED WRITTEN & DRAWN BY
GREG-MICHAEL FOLLENDER
INKS BY RICK J. BRYANT

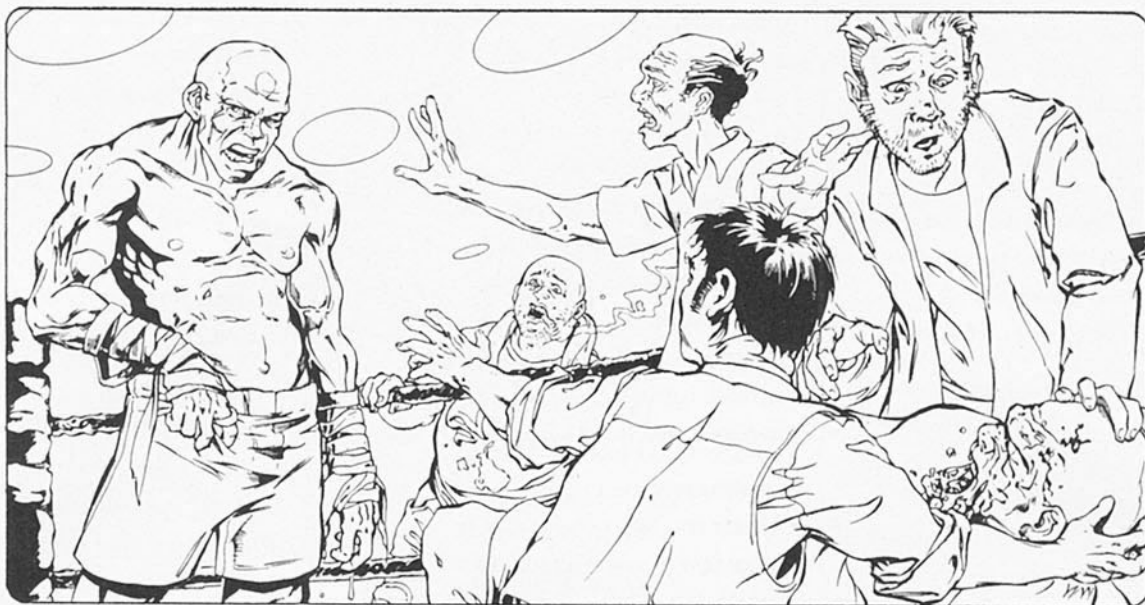












Domain transport RF-927J.
Destination: Classified.

Star-Crossed

story art: Philip Xavier
writer: Kevin Tucker
colors: BenBK

Passengers: Sealed Agents of the Prime.

Crew: Very nervous.

HURRY UP, GY-NAR.
OUR VISITORS ARE
ARRIVING.

WHISTLE WHILE
YOU WORK ...

They were nervous because they knew
the stories about she who lived
in the place that officially didn't exist.

They were very nervous because they knew
the stories about what happened to those
who disappointed the Prime.

**transport docked.
passengers disembarking.**

OPEN SECURITY
FROM PERIMETER
TO INNER CHAMBER.
LET THEM STRAIGHT
THROUGH.

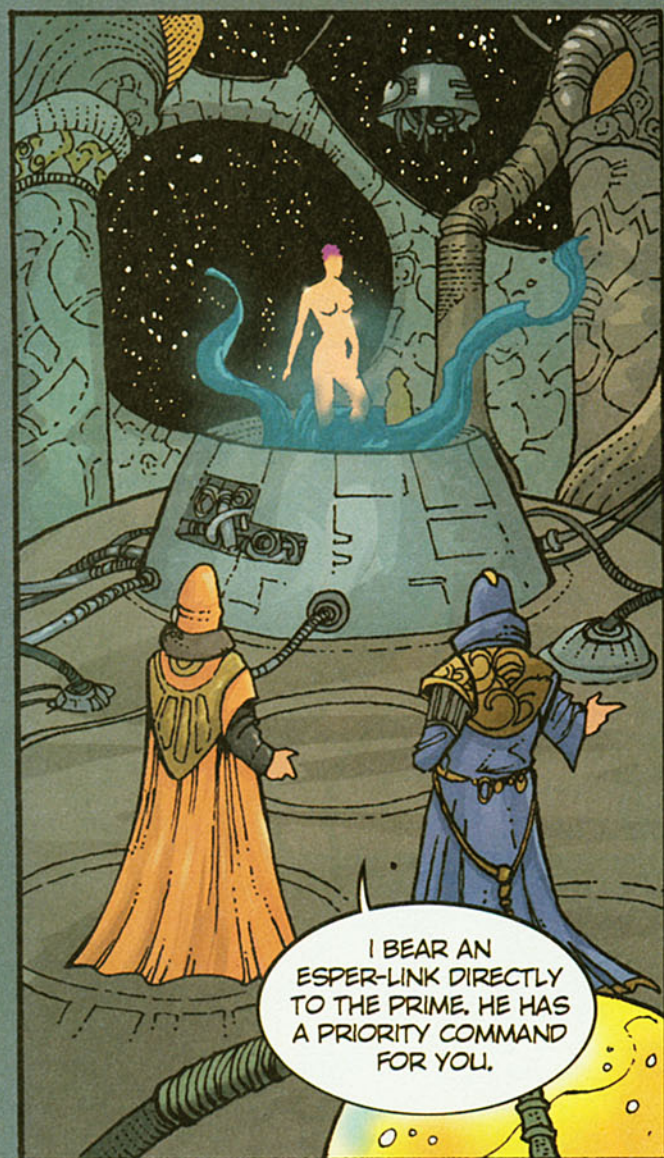
**SEALED AGENTS 472 AND 359
NOW ENTERING INNER CHAMBER.
NO WEAPONS DETECTED.**





GREETINGS, ASTRA.
WE ARE SORRY FOR
DISTURBING YOU IN
YOUR PRIVATE SANCTUM.

I'M NOT!
WHAT A HONEY!

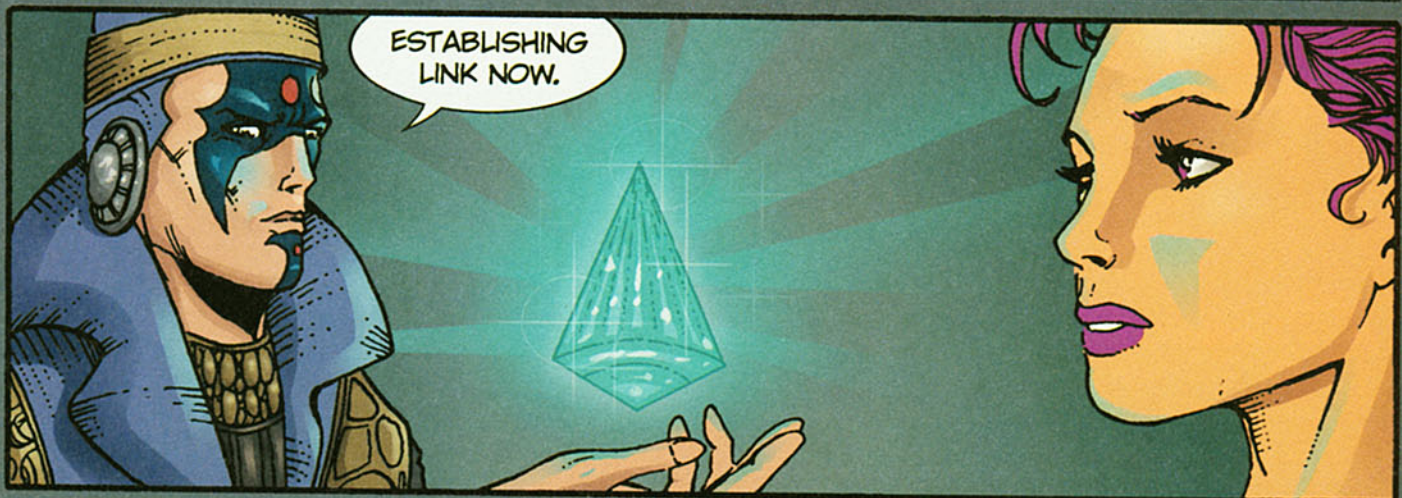


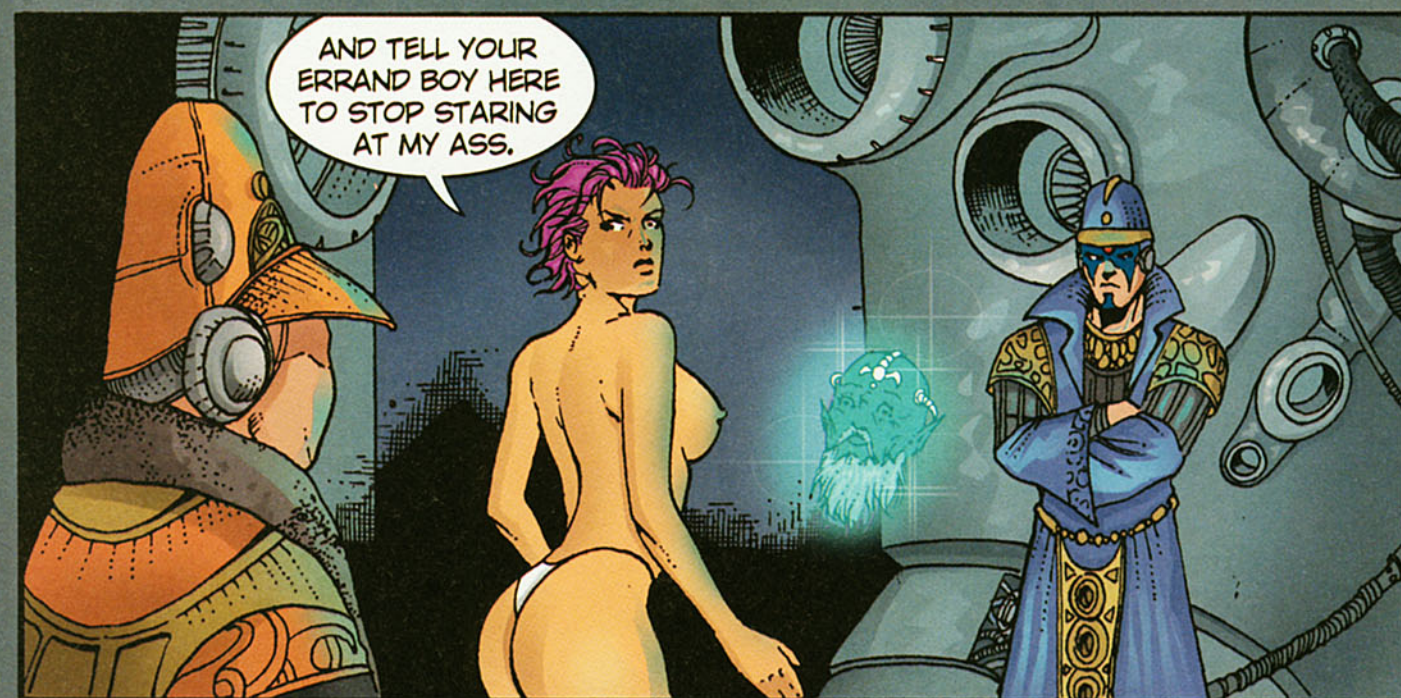
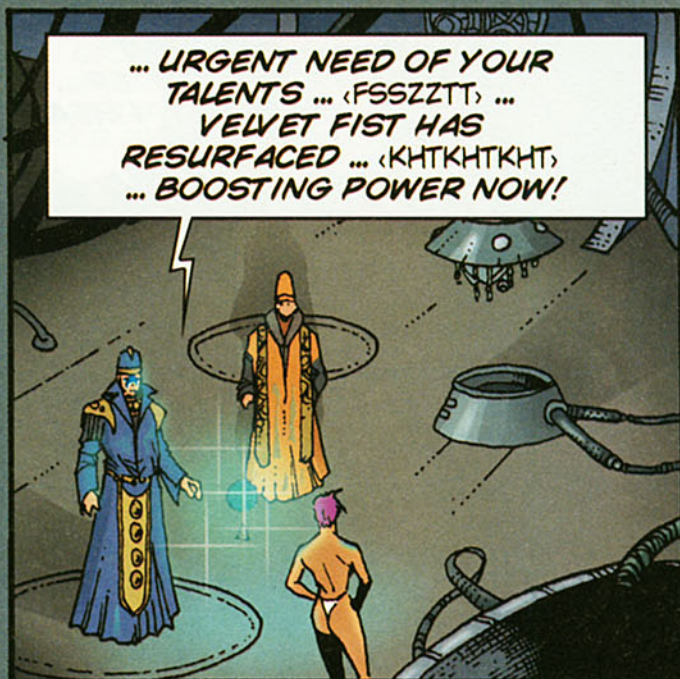
I BEAR AN
ESPER-LINK DIRECTLY
TO THE PRIME. HE HAS
A PRIORITY COMMAND
FOR YOU.



I WON'T DO
ANYTHING, FOR YOU
OR THE PRIME, UNTIL
YOUR FRIEND STOPS
BUGGING HIS EYES
OUT AT ME.


OR SHOULD I
REMOVE THEM
FOR HIM?









DID I HEAR YOU MENTION THE VELVET FIST ?




YES. THE TERRORIST HAS STRUCK AGAIN. CLOSE TO CORESPACE, THIS TIME.



IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT ?




WE THOUGHT THE ATTACKS HAD STOPPED... (FSSZZTT)... AFTER WE PURGED SOKAGI-3.



LOT OF CIVILIANS DIED THERE, DIDN'T THEY ?



NOT CIVILIANS, MY DEAR. SYMPATHIZERS AIDING AN ENEMY OF THE DOMAIN.




"WE WERE MORE FORTUNATE THIS TIME, HOWEVER. OUR FORCES RESPONDED QUICKLY ENOUGH TO GET A VECTOR-TRACE ON ONE OF THE FIST'S SHIPS BEFORE IT TRANSITED. "

"THE TRACE LED US TO A REGION IN THE CANCERIAN SECTOR BEFORE IT FADED. "



"I COULD SEND IN A FLEET, BUT CHANCES ARE THE TERRORISTS WOULD BE WARNED OF ITS APPROACH. "

"A SINGLE SHIP, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL PROBABLY NOT AROUSE ANY SUSPICIONS. "



"SO, ASTRA, YOUR MISSION IS TO INFILTRATE THE CANCERIAN SECTOR, FIND THE VELVET FIST, AND TERMINATE THE TRAITOR. NO RESTRICTIONS THIS TIME!"

"OF COURSE, YOU'LL BE WELL COMPENSATED IF ... WHEN YOU RETURN. "

Location: Hellesk, capital city
of Phaaren-7, Cancerian Sector

Time: Mission Day 0133

Astra: Wary

The last breaths of a dying
revolutionary brought Astra here.
She knew, as he had, that her
search would end in this city.

She was wary because
it had taken an effort
to get to this point ...

... but not as much of an
effort as she'd expected.

Then again, she was
the best, wasn't she?



Time to prove it.
Again.



On the way up, she
wondered what the
First looked like.
No one had ever gotten
close enough to tell.



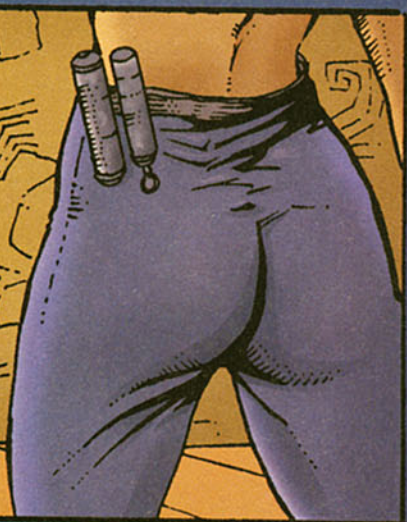
That was about
to change.

Not that it really
mattered.



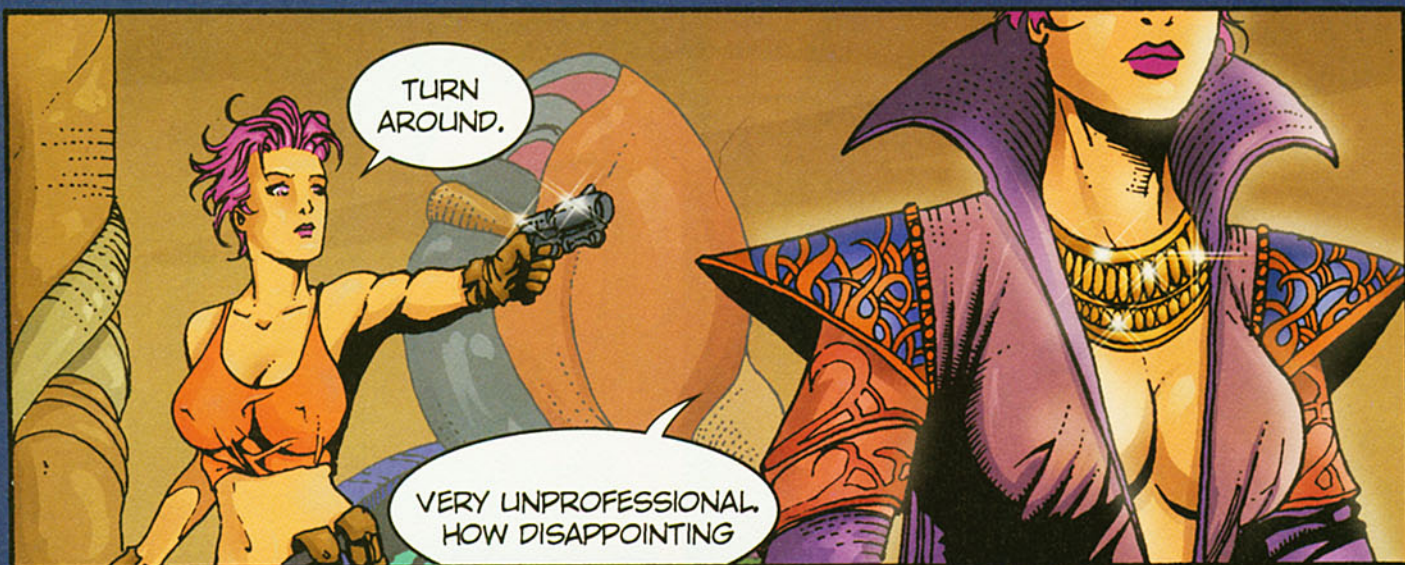
When it was over,
they all looked
much the same.

HELLO, ASTA. I'VE BEEN
EXPECTING YOU. YOU MADE
VERY GOOD TIME.



ARE YOU
GOING TO KILL
ME NOW ?





<beep> secure channel open.

ASTRA!

THIS IS A
PLESANT
SURPRISE.

I TRUST YOU WERE
SUCCESSFUL ?

COMPLETELY.
I'LL BE RETURNING
SOON. HAVE MY
CREDITS READY.

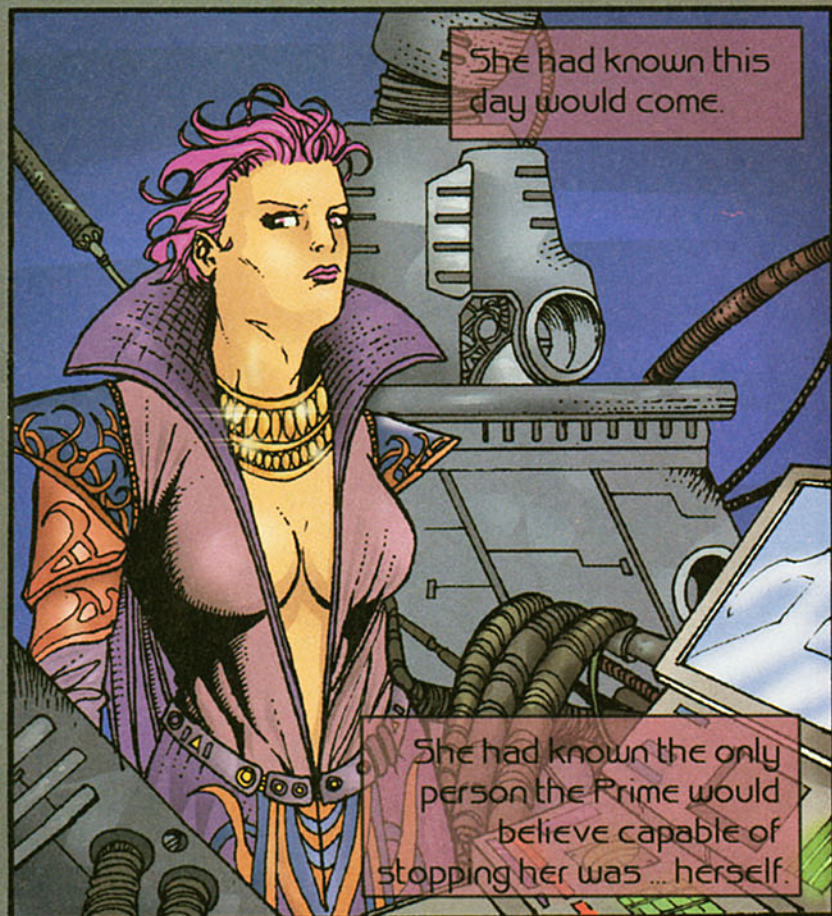
END TRANSMISSION.

FOOLS !

GOOD. SHE HANDLED
THAT MORE QUICKLY
THAN I'D HOPE.

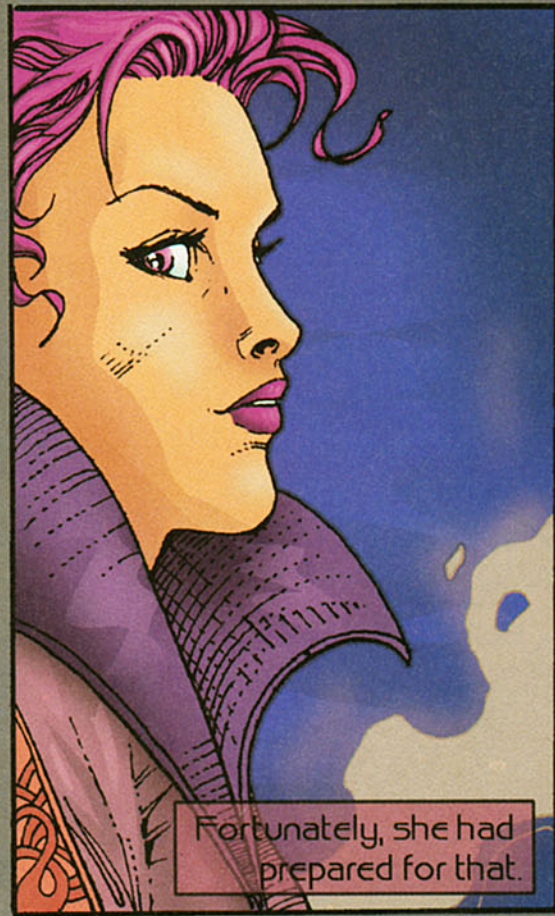
NOW THAT THIS
TROUBLESOME
AFFAIR IS BEHIND
US, WE CAN GET
BACK ON SCHEDULE.
THE DOMAIN
SHALL ENDURE.

THE DOMAIN
SHALL ENDURE.

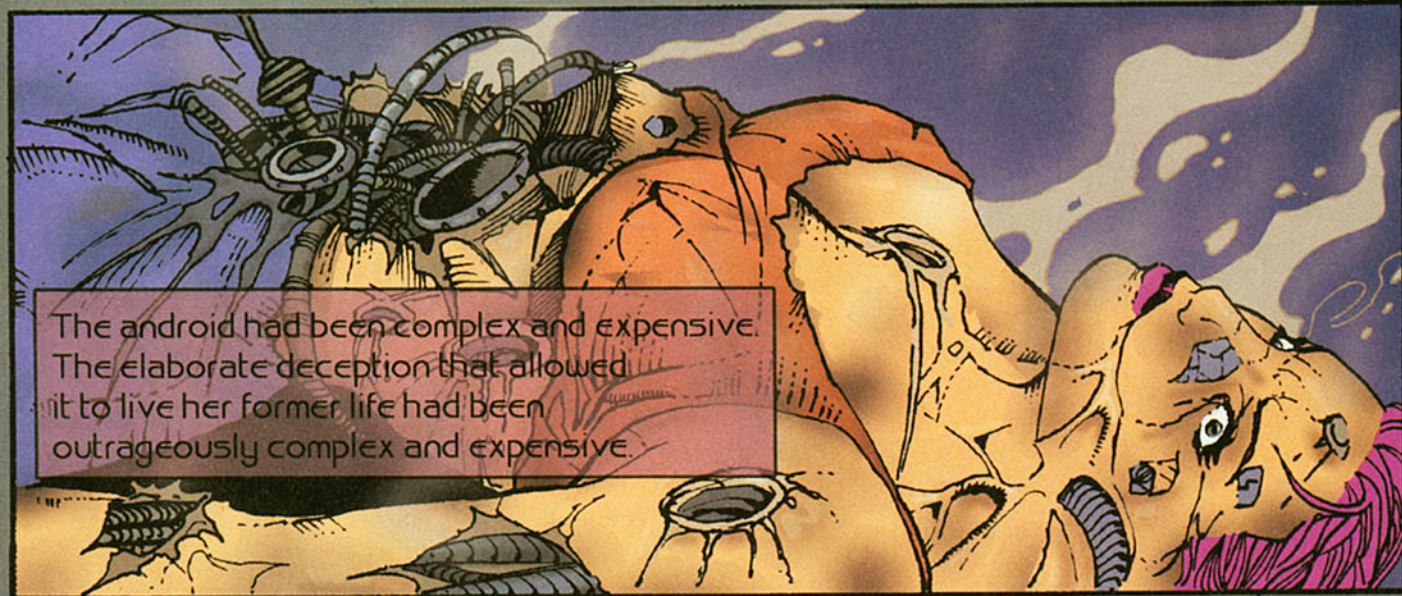


She had known this day would come.

She had known the only person the Prime would believe capable of stopping her was ... herself.



Fortunately, she had prepared for that.



The android had been complex and expensive. The elaborate deception that allowed it to live her former life had been outrageously complex and expensive.



But it had been the only way Astra could gain the freedom to become the Velvet Fist, a person capable of bringing down the Domain.

Now the Prime thought the last threat to his power was removed. That would make him less cautious.

Now the final phase could begin...



I WONDER IF THERE'S ANYTHING HUMAN LEFT IN THAT CREATURE... HE USED TO BE WILL... HE COULD HAVE HELPED ME!... BUT WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE HIM BECOME HIMSELF AGAIN?... THEY STILL HAVEN'T GOT COMPLETE CONTROL OF HIS MIND...



WHO KNOWS?... IF I COULD AWAKEN SOME STRONG EMOTION IN HIM, MAYBE AN ORGASM... MHH... THAT MAY BE THE ANSWER... I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO AROUSE STRONG FEELINGS!

THAT WILL BE EASY... WILL WAS A VERY ATTRACTIVE MAN AND HIS BODY HASN'T CHANGED... I FEEL LIKE TOUCHING HIM, KISSING HIM... MHH... HE'S DRIVING ME CRAZY... AND I KEEP THINKING OF OBSCENITIES...



I WANT HIM...



BUT I MUST BE CAREFUL... I MUSTN'T LET HIM PENETRATE ME... IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!... EVEN IF I'M MAD WITH DESIRE!...

I HAVE TO STAY CALM!

MHH... HE'S SO WARM, SO ALIVE, SO BEAUTIFUL... AND HE RESPONDS SO WELL TO MY CARESSES!... BUT HIS BODY IS ICY COLD... AS COLD AS A CORPSE. IT'S STRANGE...



... VERY STRANGE ...

I'M A BIT WORRIED BY HIS CLAWS... I HOPE HE ISN'T GOING TO SCRATCH ME WITH THOSE THINGS!...



OOHH...
AHRG...

YES, THAT'S IT! HE CAN
FEEL ME! I CAN FEEL HIS
BLOOD BEATING INSIDE
MY MOUTH... SO HE IS
ALIVE, WILL IS ALIVE!

WILL, HELP ME!...
CAN YOU HEAR ME?...
IT'S ME, DRUUNA...
THESE ARE MY
HANDS... THIS IS MY
MOUTH... CAN YOU
FEEL THEM?... HELP
ME, WILL!

AH!... OHHH!... DRUUNA... I CAN FEEL YOUR
MOUTH... IT IS SOFT AND HOT... OH, PLEASE,
GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE LIFE... ALTHOUGH IT
WILL BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO DIE NOW...
HE'S SLOWLY KILLING ME... I... I CAN'T HELP
YOU ANYMORE... THE MACHINE... ONLY THE
MACHINE, DRUUNA... LOOK FOR THE MACHINES.
NOTHING ELSE CAN HELP YOU... IT'S ALL
OVER FOR ME... DRUUNA!...



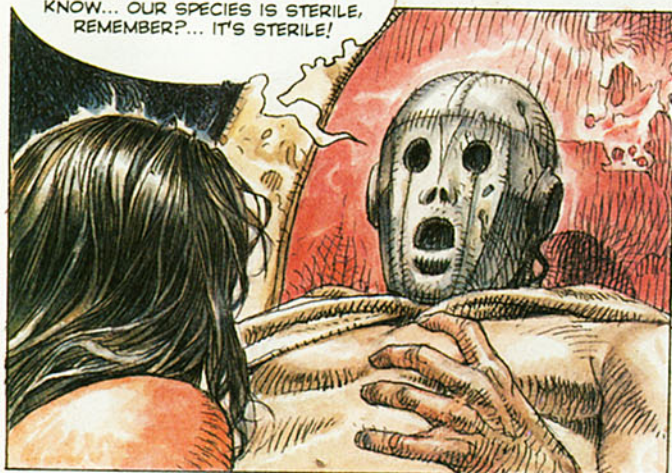
OH, WILL, MY LOVE,
I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
WHERE ARE THE MACHINES
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?
TELL ME!

YOU... ARE LIFE...
THEY WANT LIFE...
AAAHHH... COME...
COME...

YES, WILL, I'D LIKE
TO... I WANT SO MUCH
TO GIVE YOU PLEA-
SURE... BUT... I'M
AFRAID OF THEM!...

...I'M
SCARED...

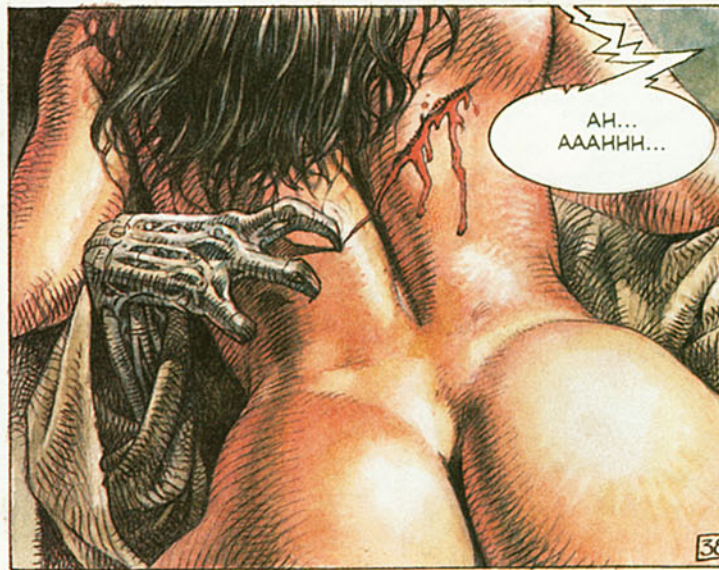
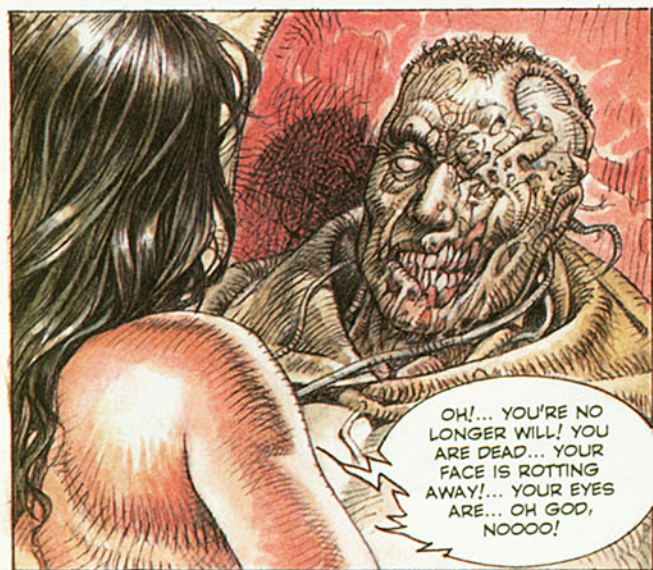
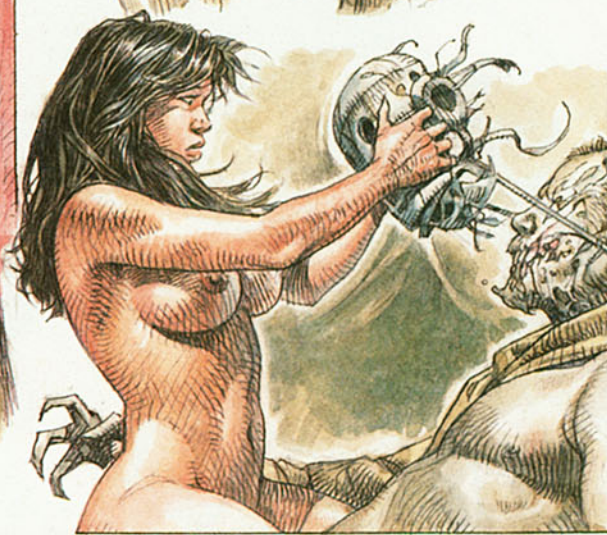
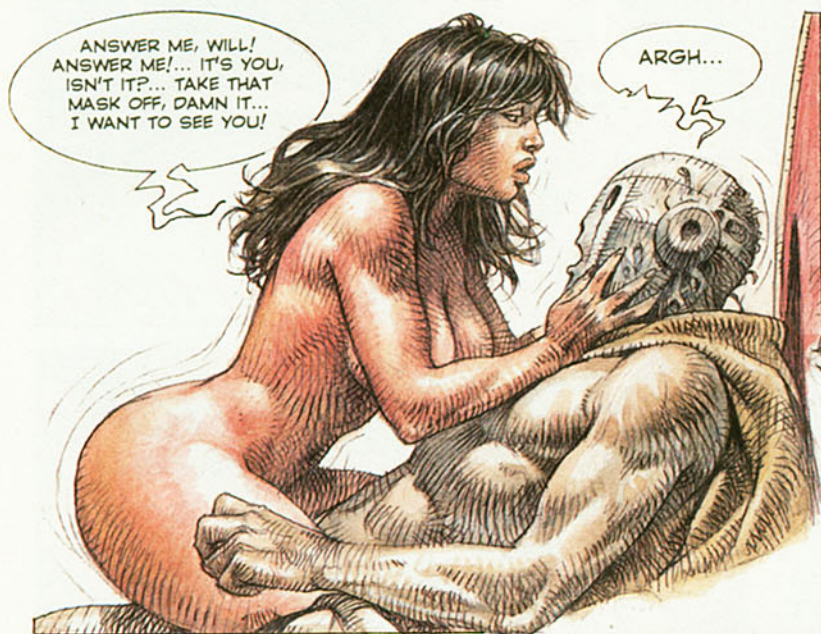
LOVE ME, DRUUNA... FOR
THE VERY LAST TIME... PLEASE...
YOU MUSTN'T BE AFRAID OF
"THEM", THE MONSTERS DON'T
KNOW... OUR SPECIES IS STERILE,
REMEMBER?... IT'S STERILE!

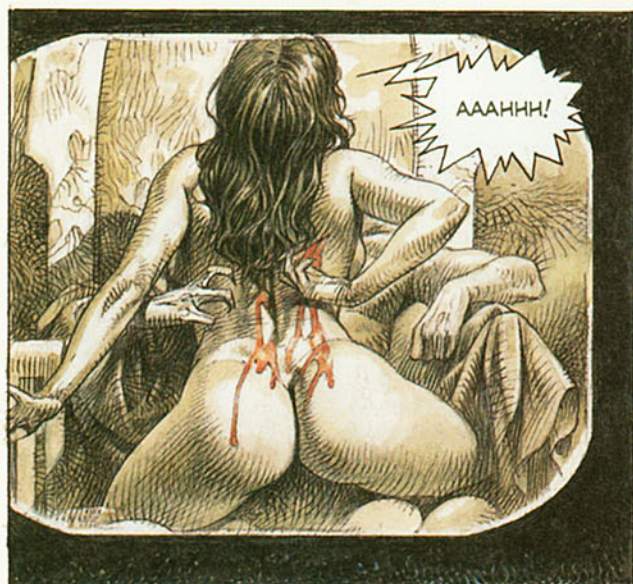


STERILE?... OH GOD...
I'M OVERCOME WITH
ANXIETY... WHAT IF
THIS MAN WERE JUST
A HALLUCINATION?

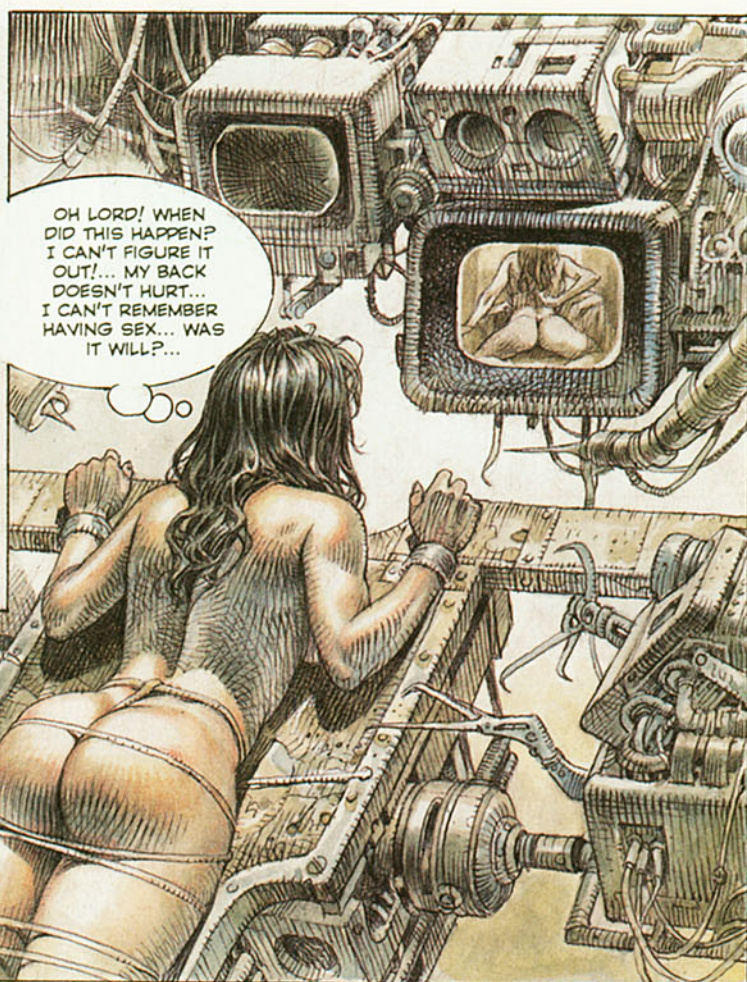


YES, WILL, I WILL
MAKE YOU COME.
I WANT IT AS
MUCH AS YOU.





AAAAHHH!

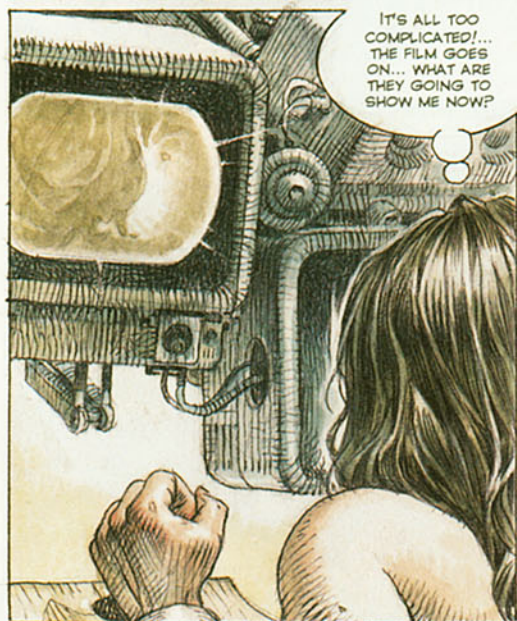


OH LORD! WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN? I CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT!... MY BACK DOESN'T HURT... I CAN'T REMEMBER HAVING SEX... WAS IT WILL?...

I MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN SOMETHING... I'M GOING CRAZY!... I CAN'T REMEMBER ANY OF THE THINGS THEY'RE SHOWING ME... WHAT IF NONE OF IT EVER HAPPENED... OH SHIT, WHAT DO I CARE?!



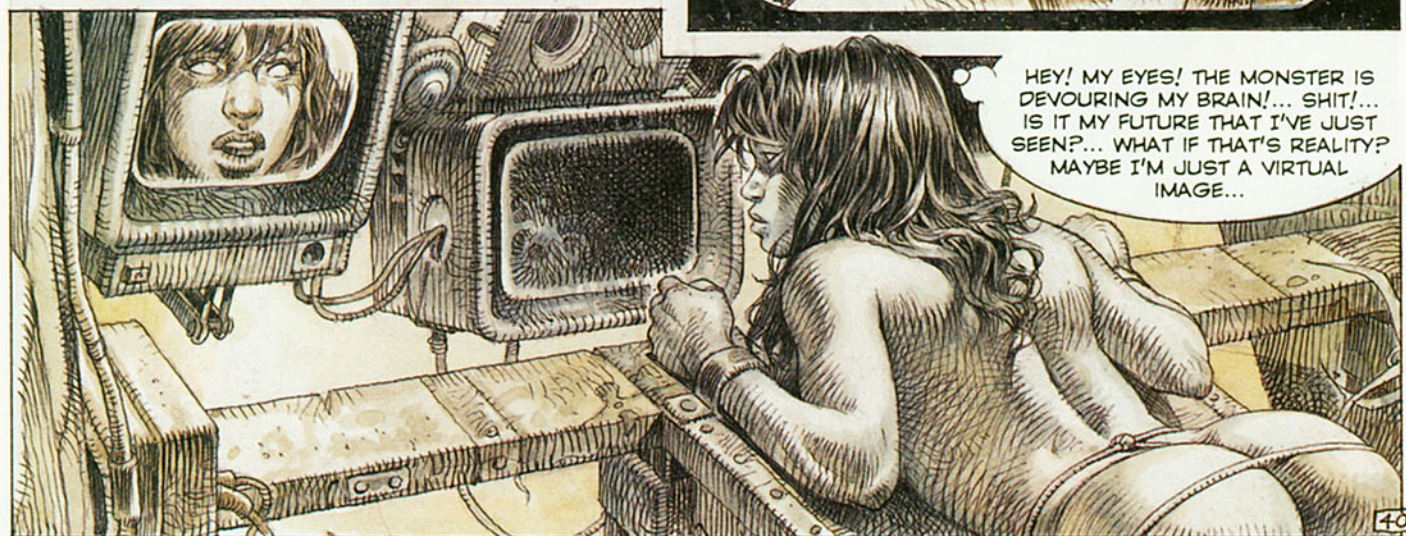
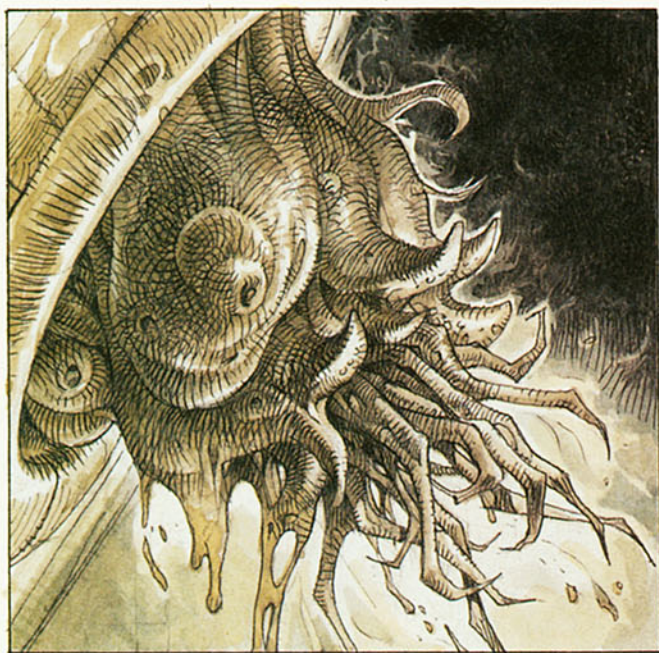
WHY AM I TIED UP LIKE THIS?... AM I REAL OR AM I JUST A SIMULATION?... MAYBE I'M SOMEWHERE ELSE AND... I'M WATCHING MYSELF...

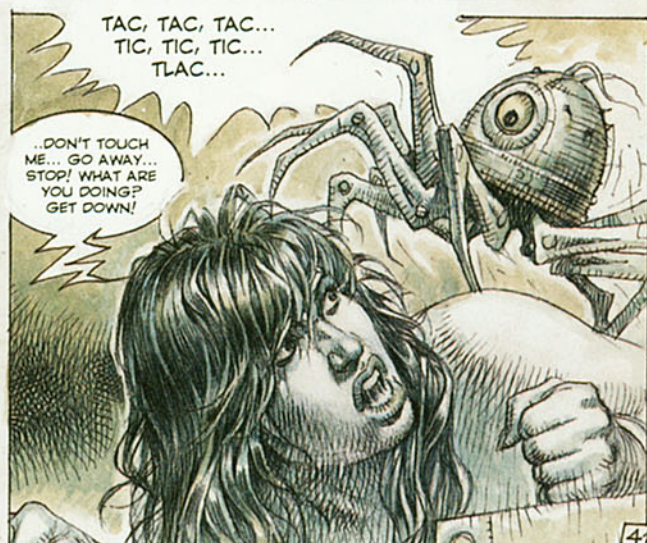
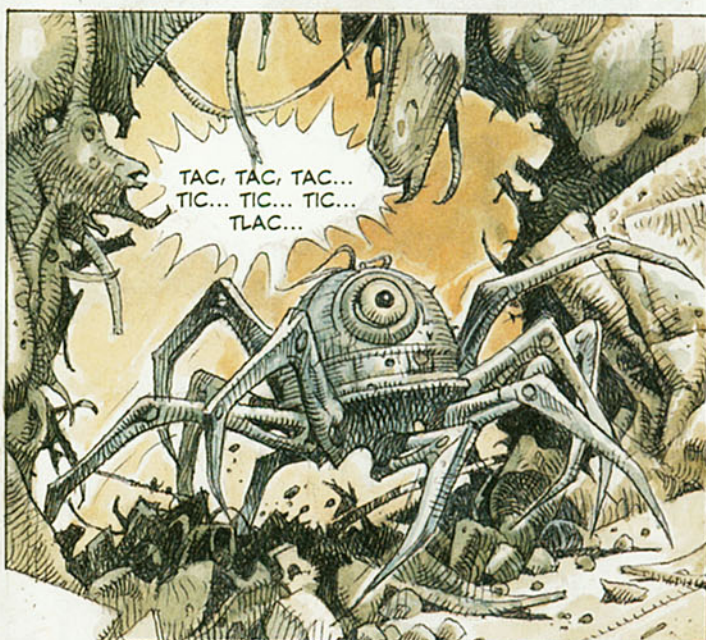
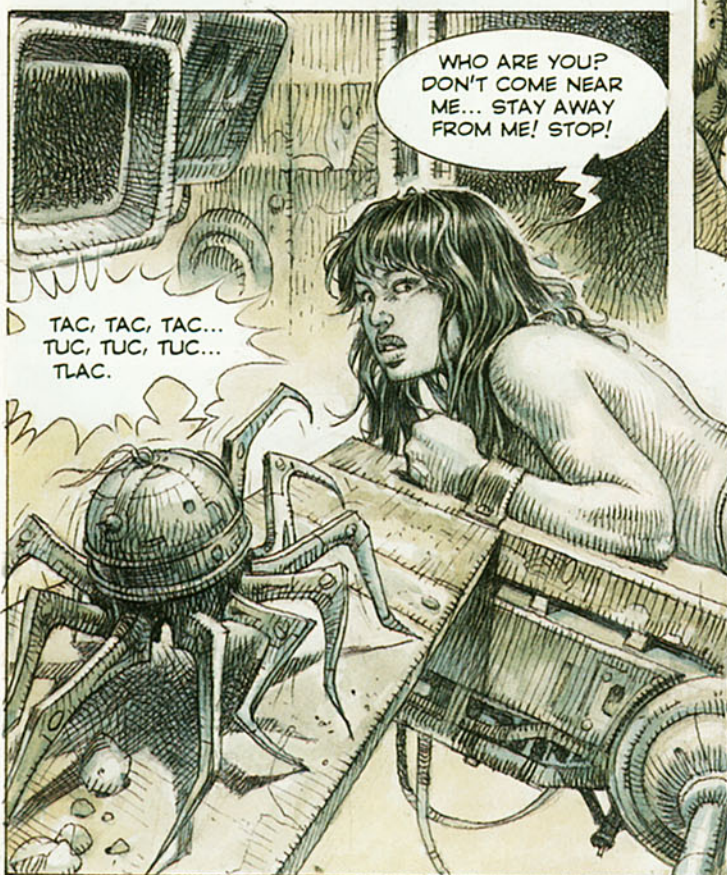
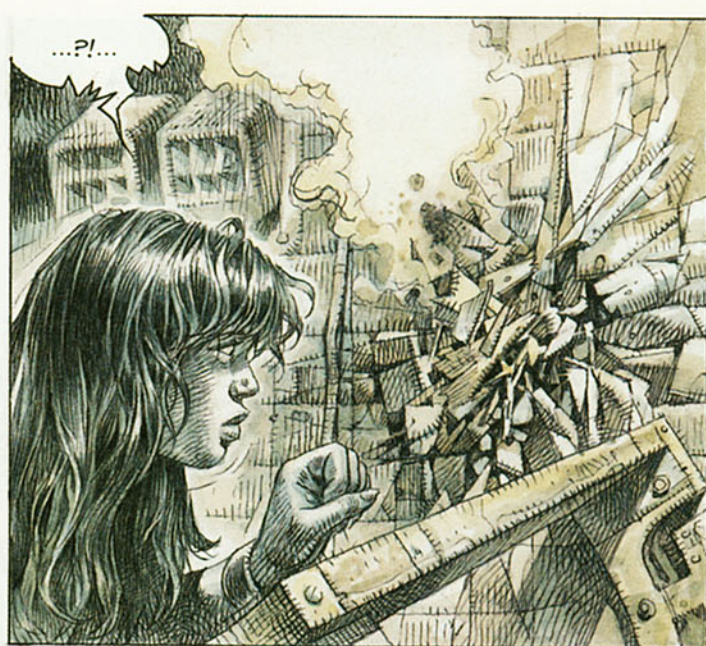


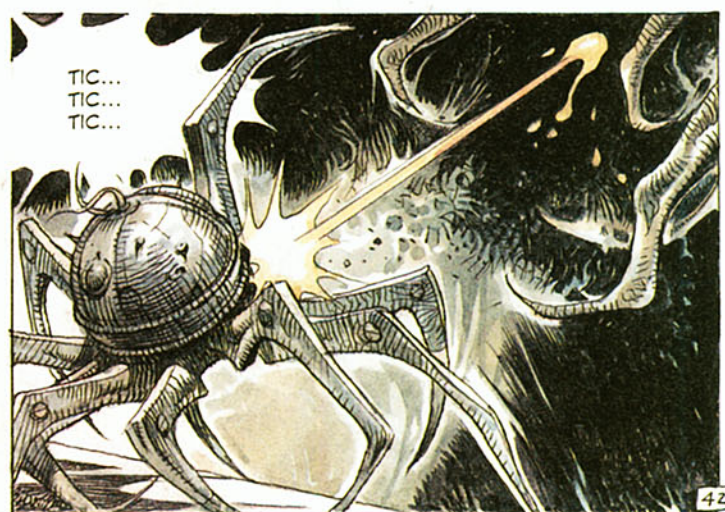
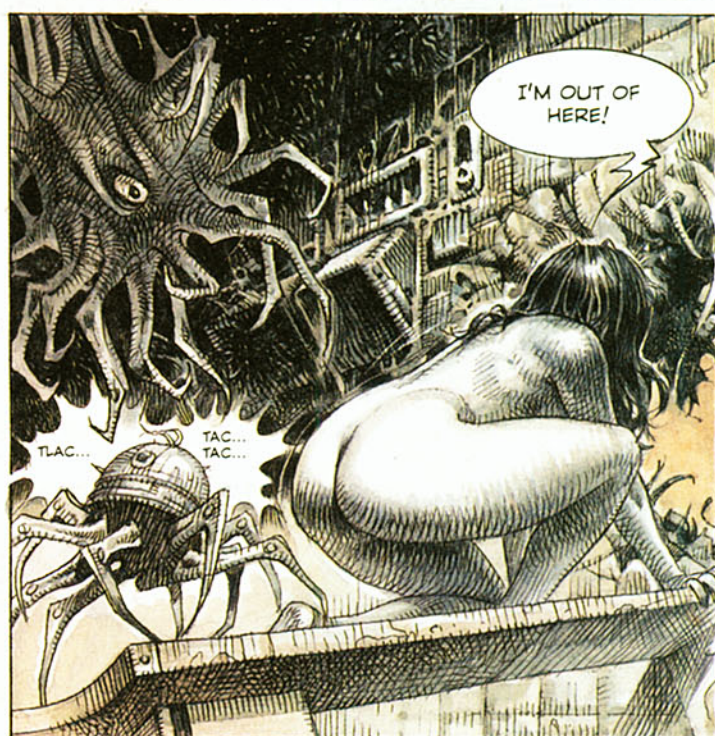
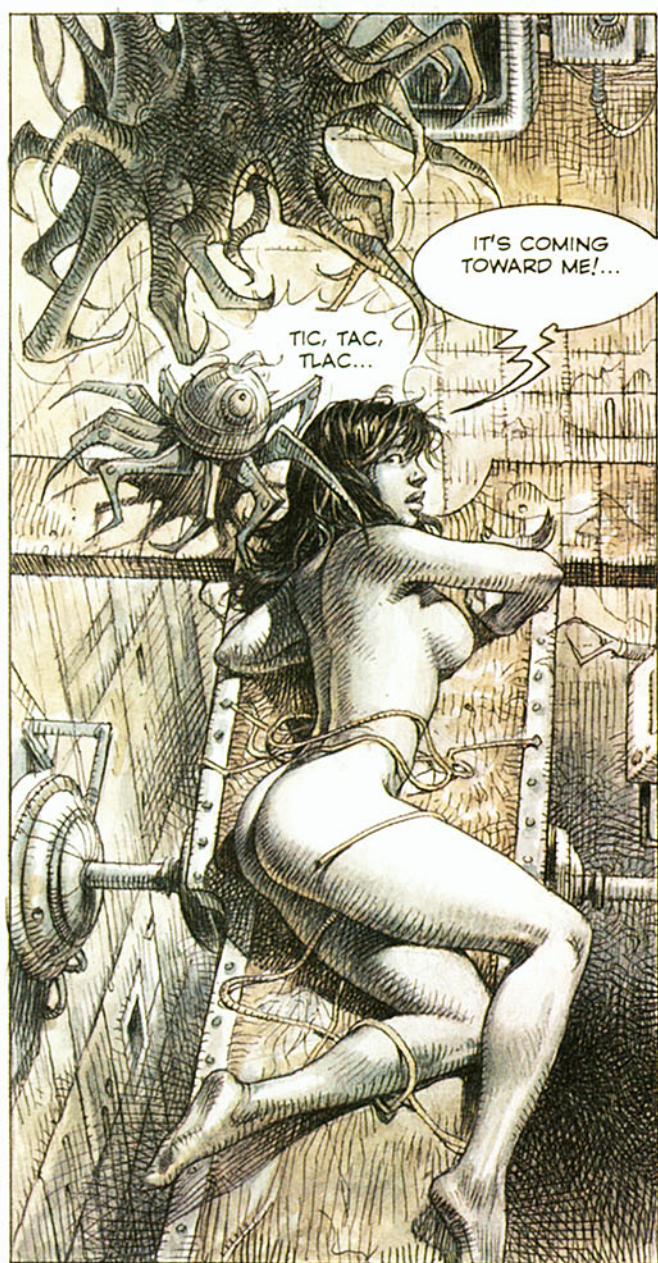
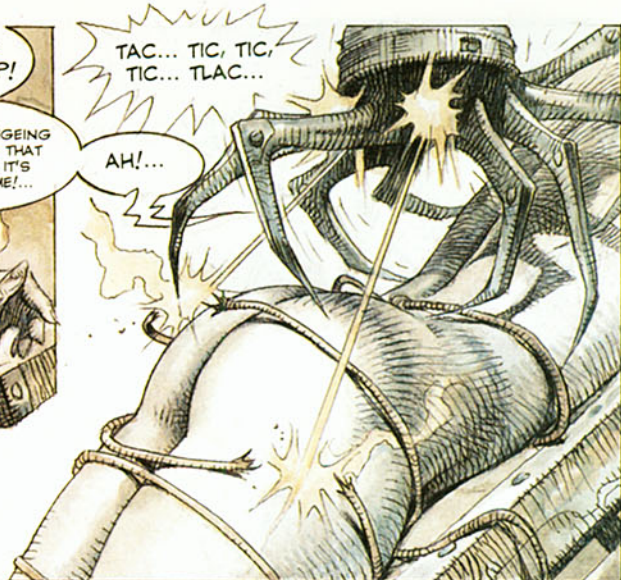
IT'S ALL TOO COMPLICATED!... THE FILM GOES ON... WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO SHOW ME NOW?

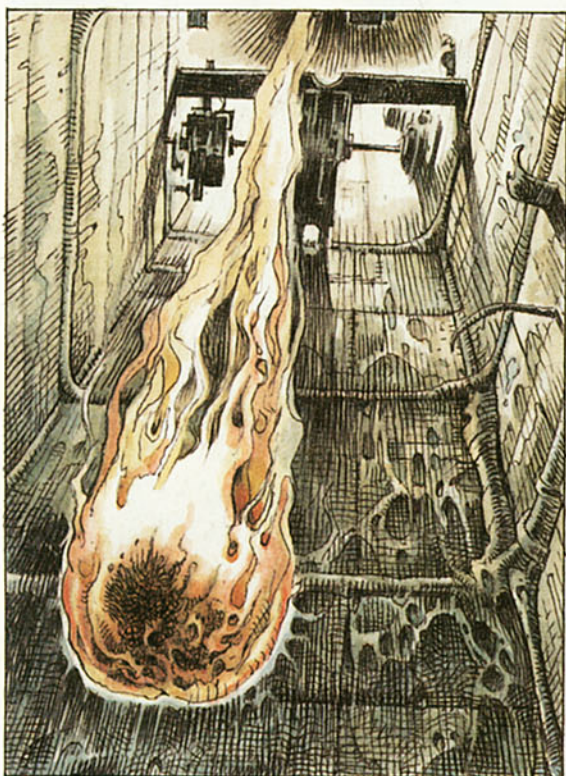


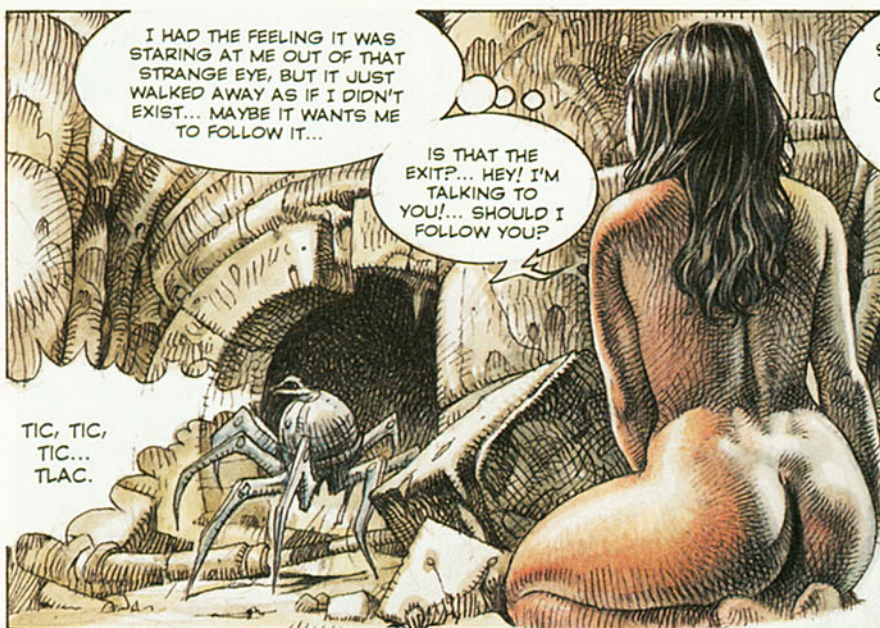
UGH! WHAT ARE THEY? THEY LOOK LIKE COCOONS!...











I HAD THE FEELING IT WAS STARING AT ME OUT OF THAT STRANGE EYE, BUT IT JUST WALKED AWAY AS IF I DIDN'T EXIST... MAYBE IT WANTS ME TO FOLLOW IT...

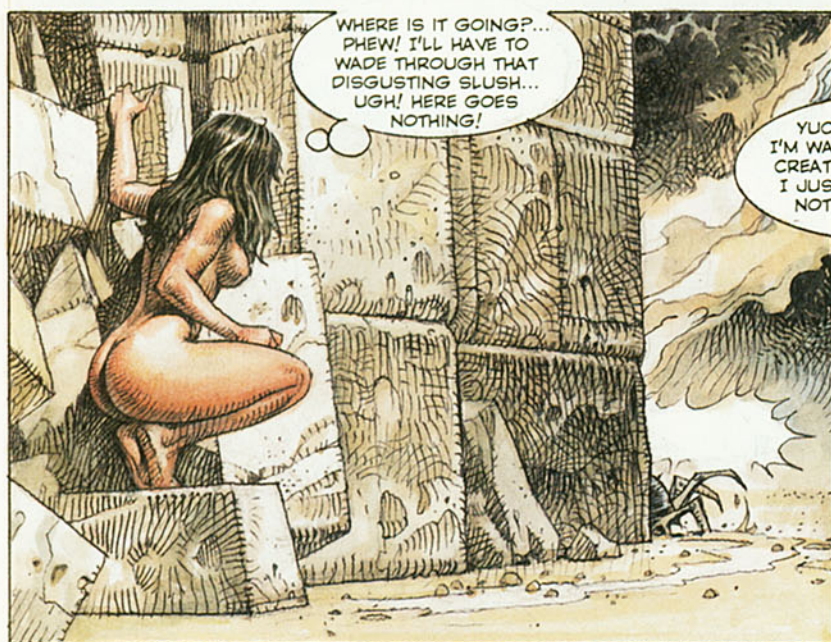
IS THAT THE EXIT?... HEY! I'M TALKING TO YOU!... SHOULD I FOLLOW YOU?

TIC, TIC,
TIC...
TLAC.

SO NOW I'M BLABBERING AWAY TO AN IRON CRAB... I'M GOING NUTS! ANYWAY, I HAVE NO CHOICE... I MUST FOLLOW IT.

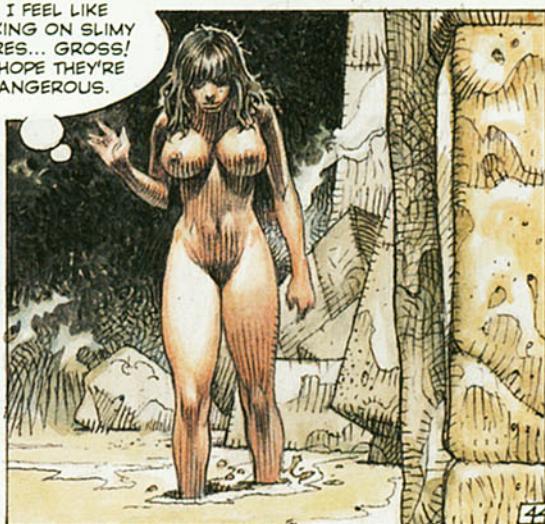


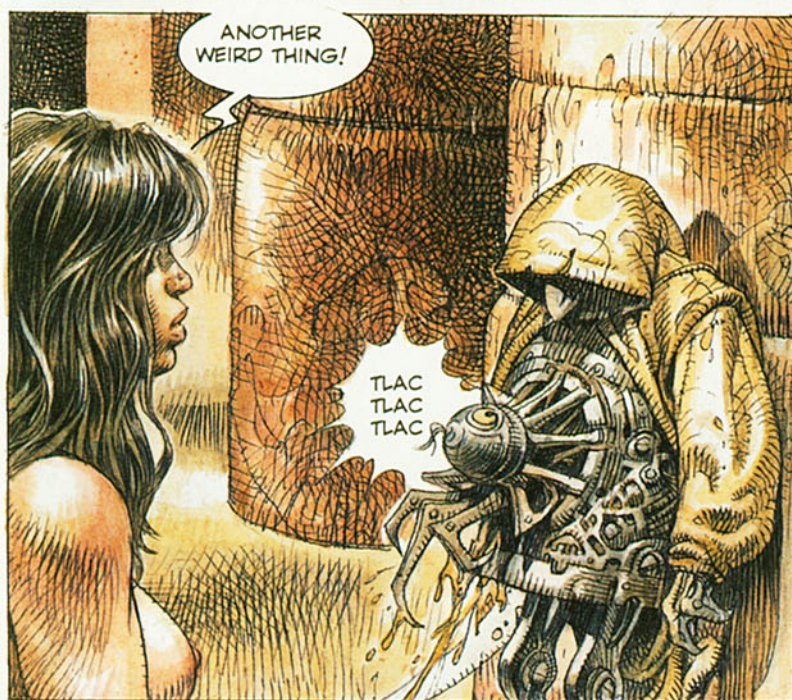
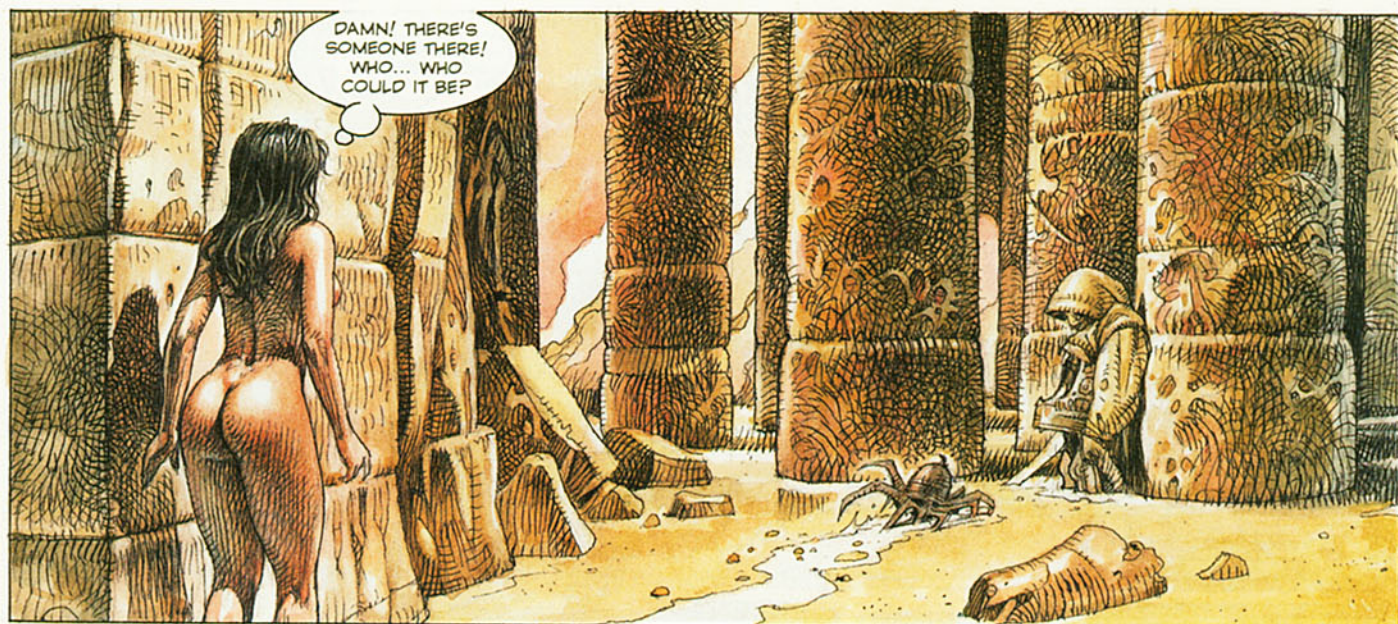
TAC,
TAC,
TAC...
TLAC.

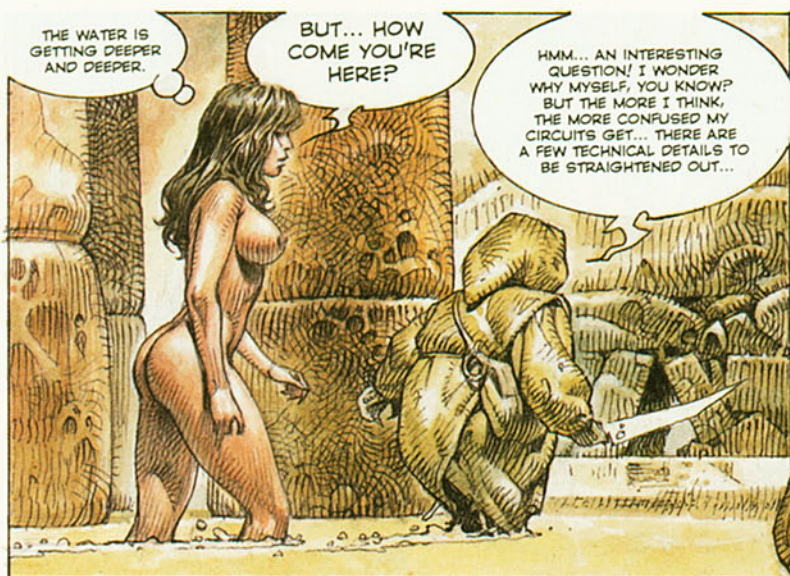


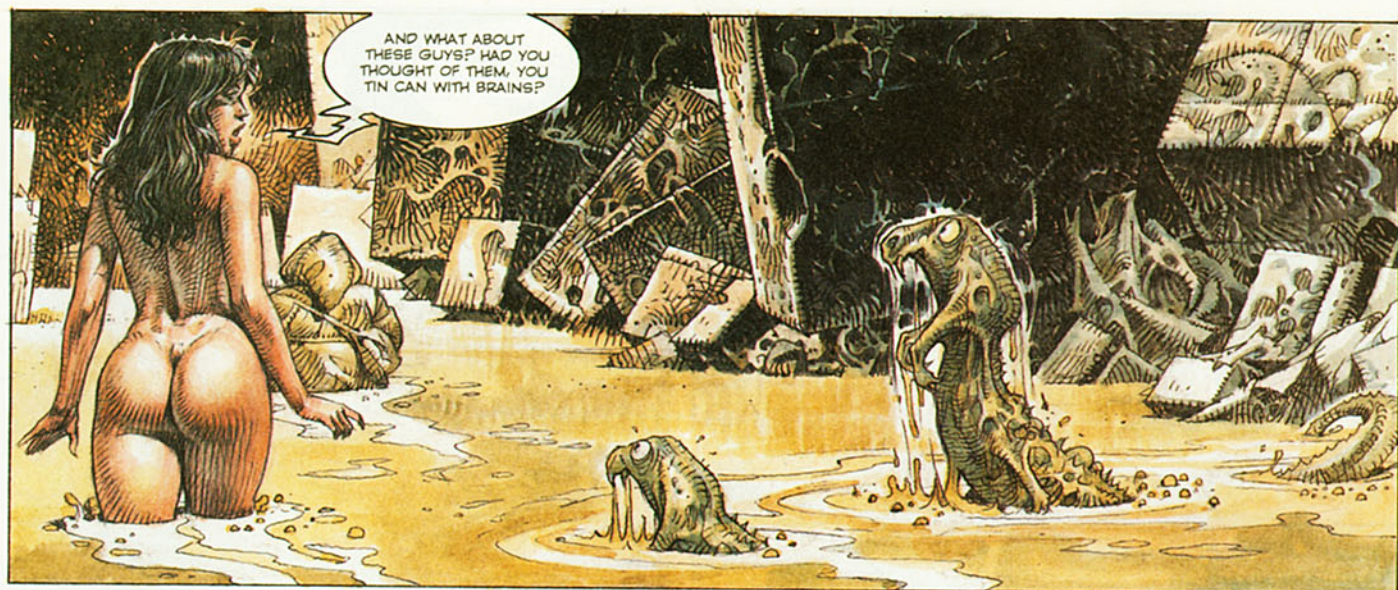
WHERE IS IT GOING?...
PHEW! I'LL HAVE TO WADE THROUGH THAT DISGUSTING SLUSH...
UGH! HERE GOES NOTHING!

YUCK! I FEEL LIKE I'M WALKING ON SLIMY CREATURES... GROSS! I JUST HOPE THEY'RE NOT DANGEROUS.









AND WHAT ABOUT THESE GUYS? HAD YOU THOUGHT OF THEM, YOU TIN CAN WITH BRAINS?



NO, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM. THEY WON'T HARM YOU... YOU'RE ALIVE! YOU'RE FRESH YOUNG FLESH! THEY HAVE SPECIAL EATING HABITS... THEY ONLY LIKE DEAD MEAT...

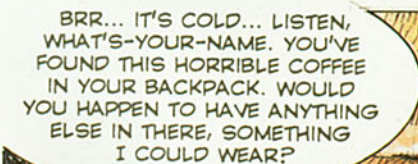
DEAD MEAT?... I HOPE THEY DON'T CHANGE THEIR EATING HABITS TODAY!

YOU'LL BE ABLE TO REST WHEN WE GET TO THE TOP. WE'LL BE SAFE THERE.



WE'VE BEEN WADING IN SLUSH FOR AN HOUR! I'M EXHAUSTED.

UP THERE???!!!

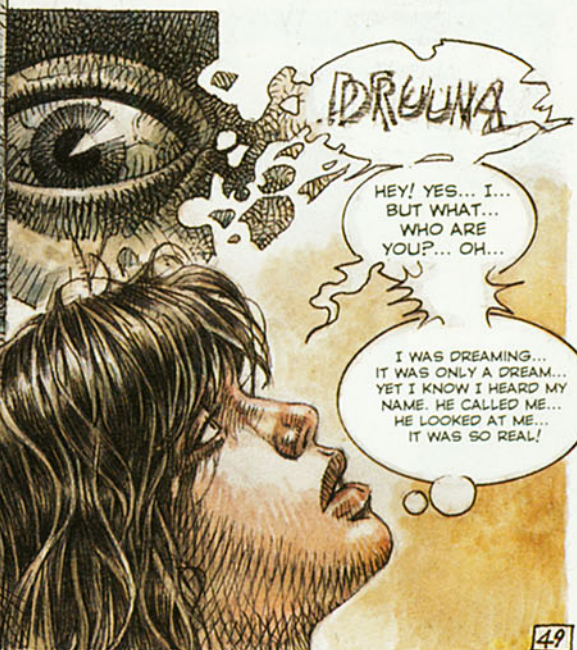
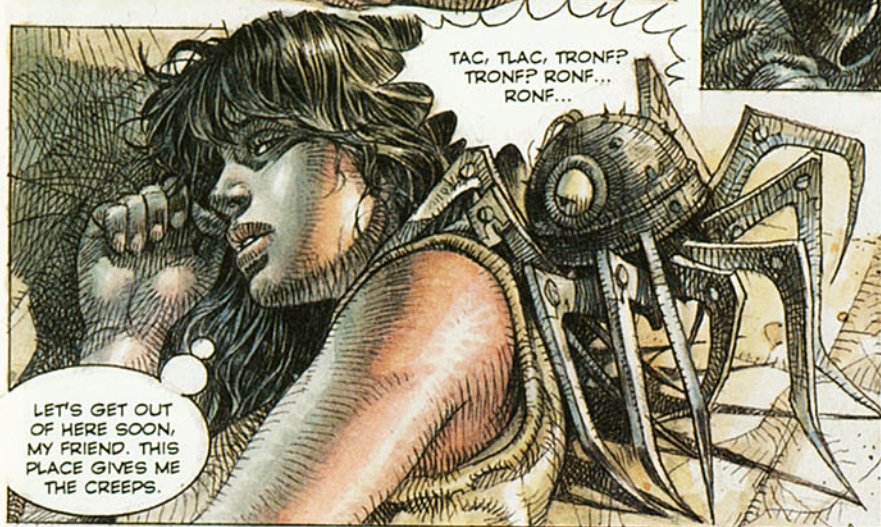
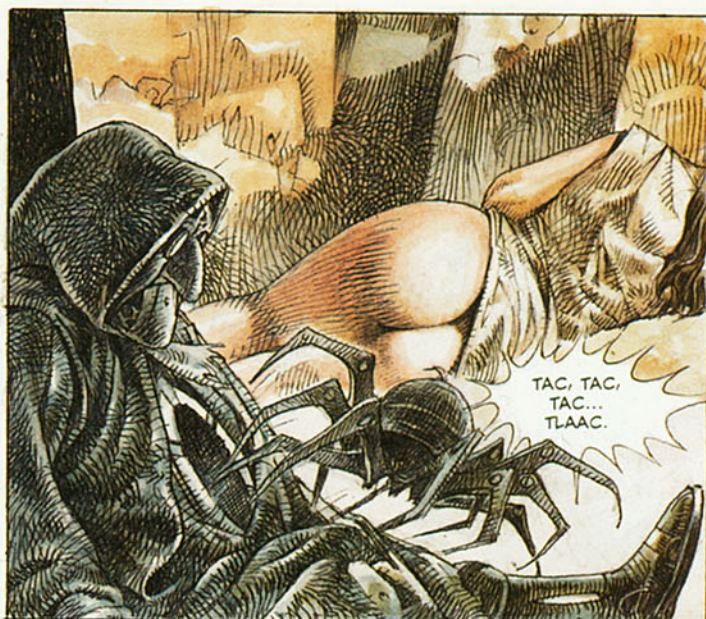
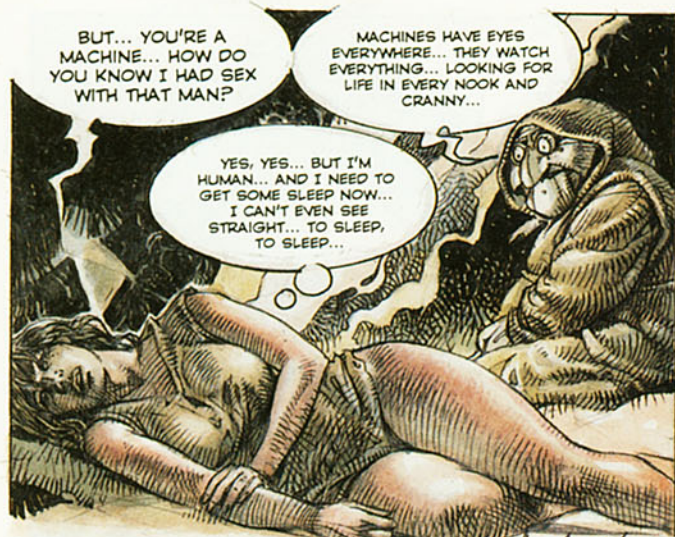


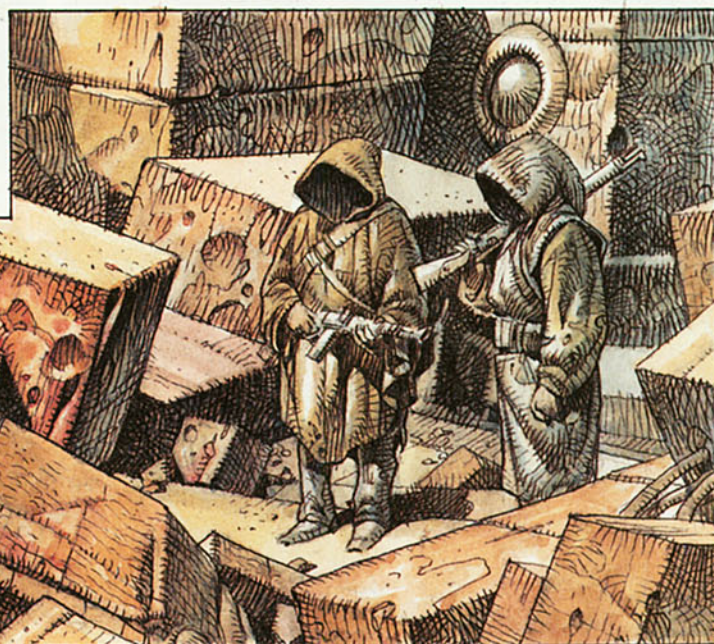
BRR... IT'S COLD... LISTEN, WHAT'S-YOUR-NAME. YOU'VE FOUND THIS HORRIBLE COFFEE IN YOUR BACKPACK. WOULD YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE ANYTHING ELSE IN THERE, SOMETHING I COULD WEAR?

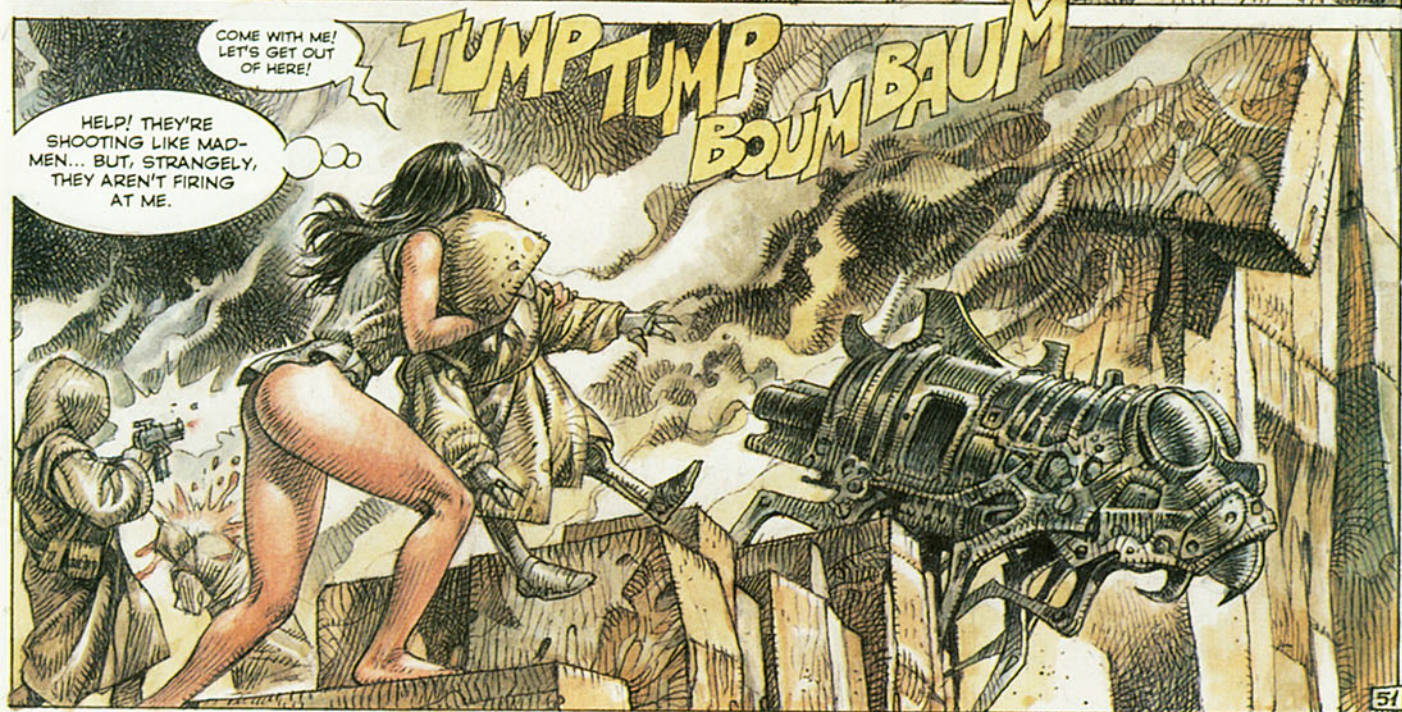
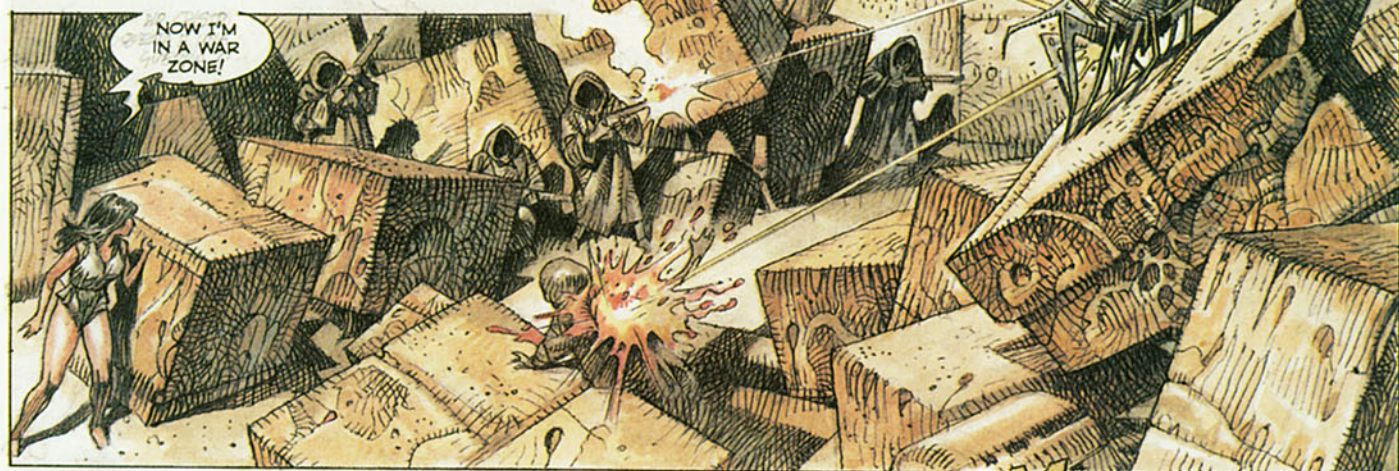
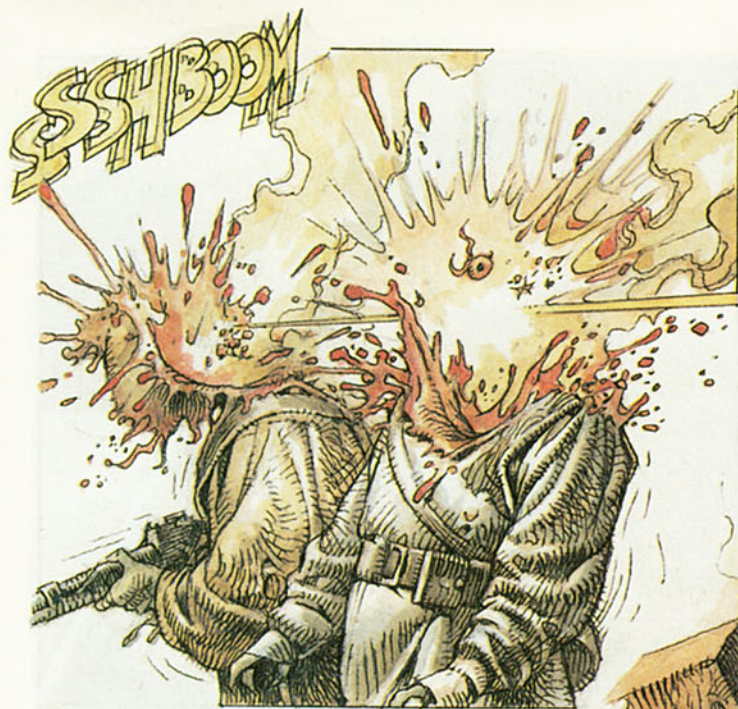
AS SOON AS WE LEAVE, YOU'LL BE SAFE... THEY DON'T DARE COME HERE... HMM, CLOTHES? YES... I THINK SO... I MUST HAVE SOMETHING... HERE!

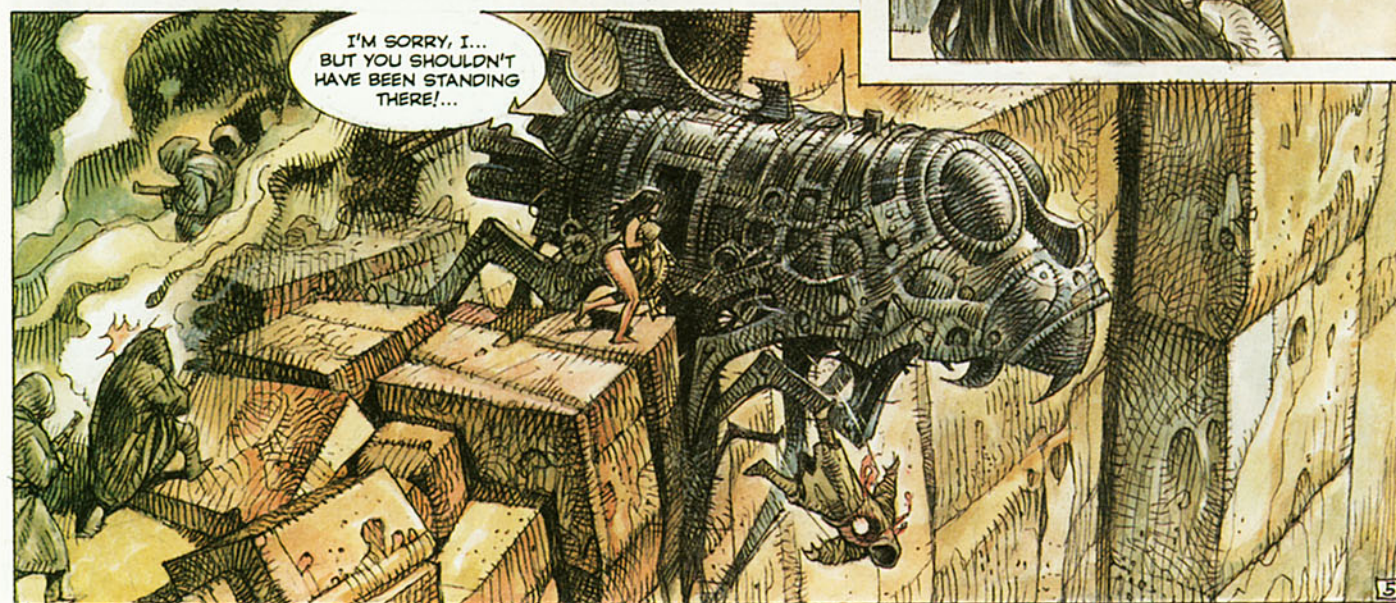
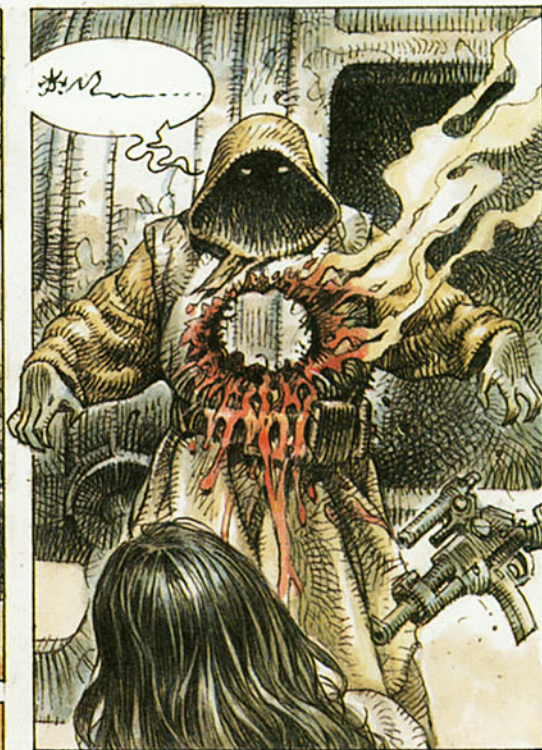
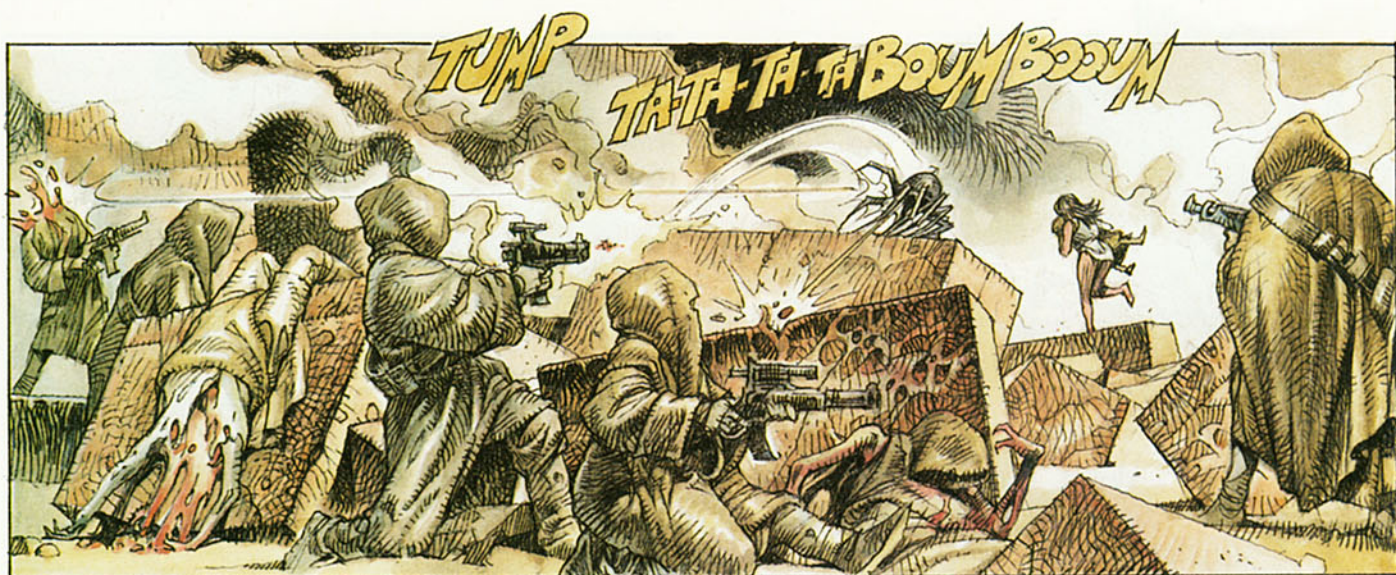




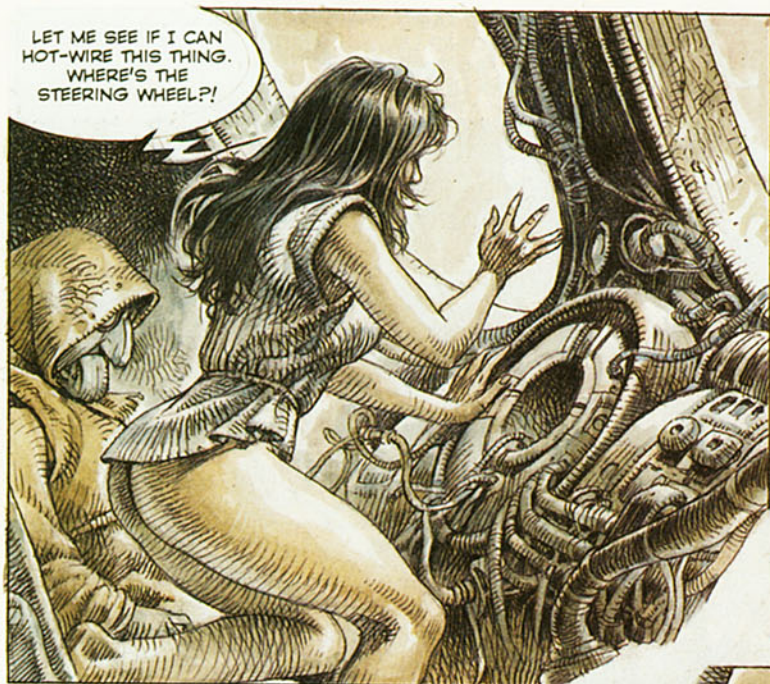




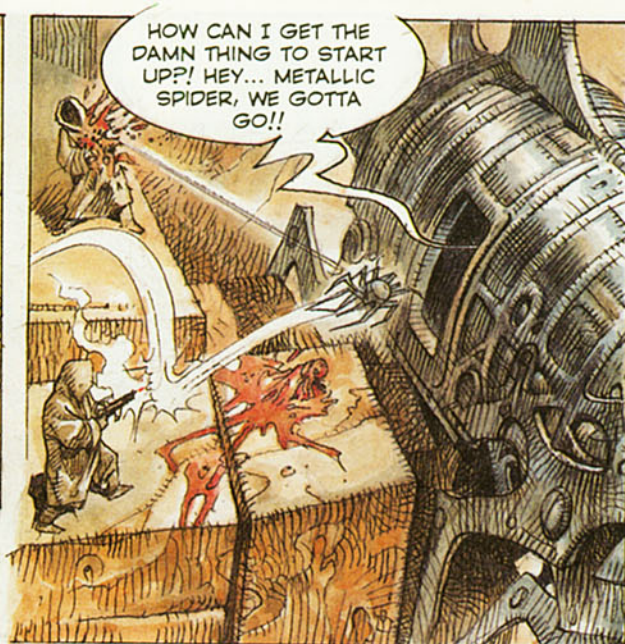




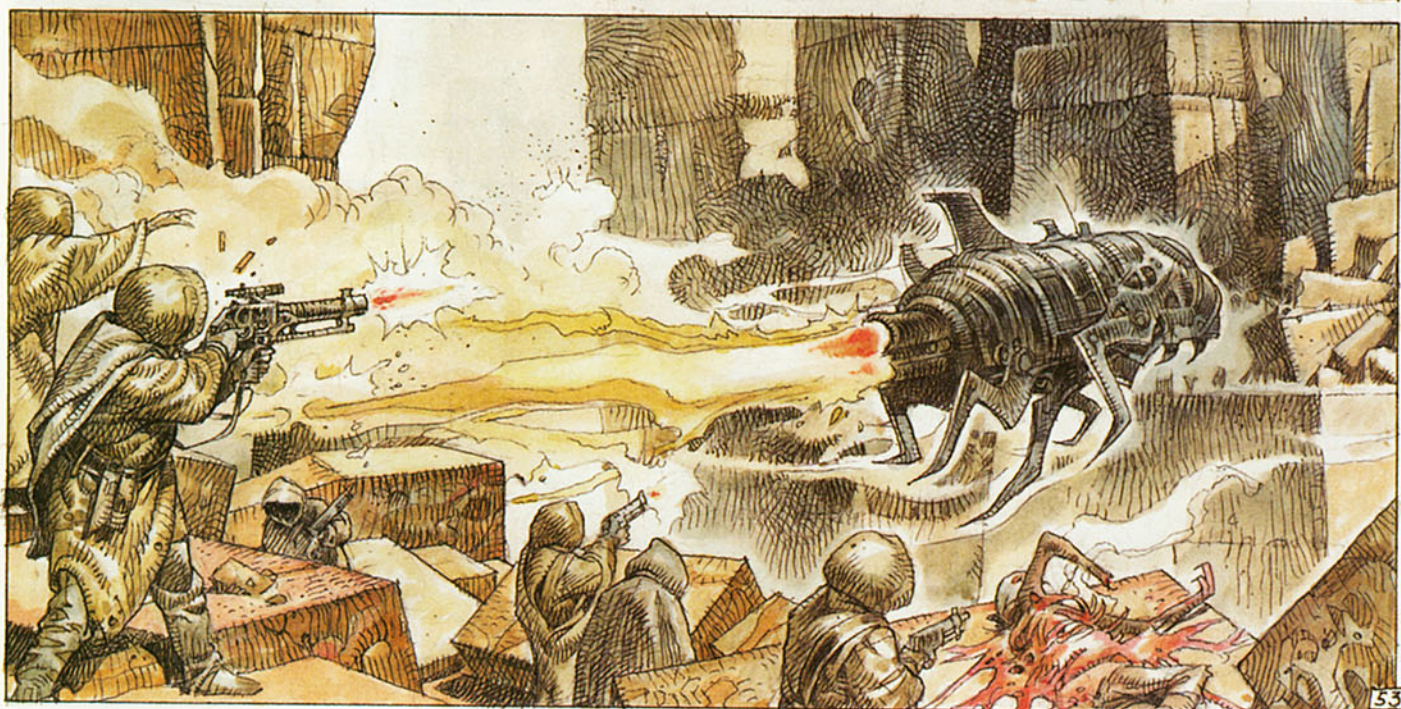
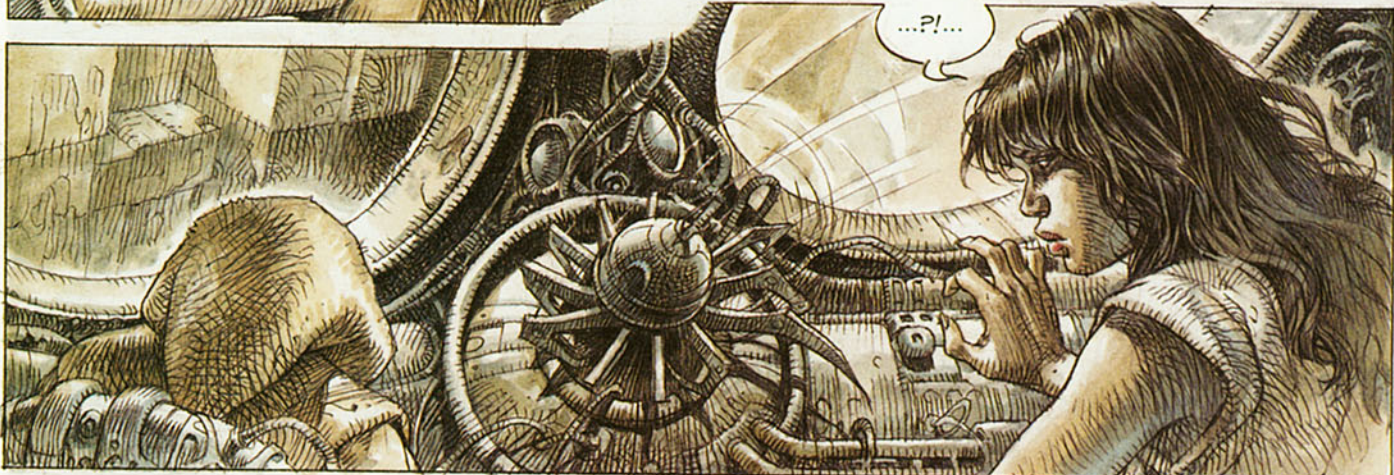
LET ME SEE IF I CAN
HOT-WIRE THIS THING.
WHERE'S THE
STEERING WHEEL?!

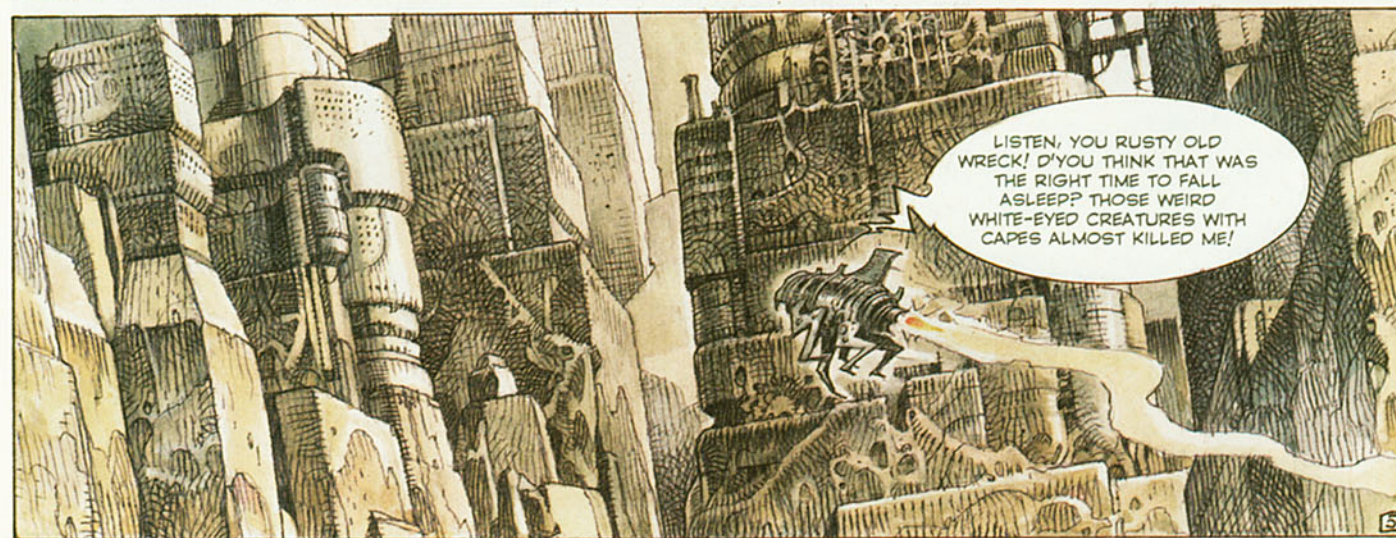
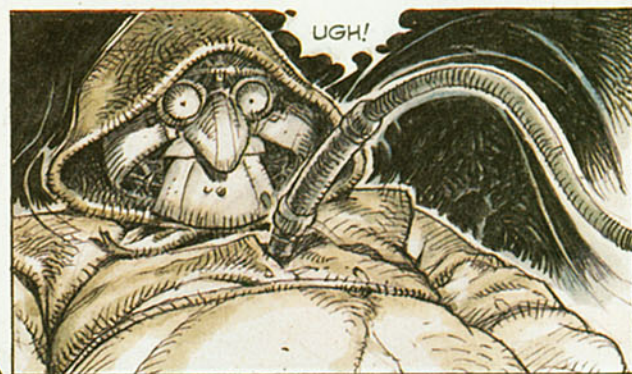


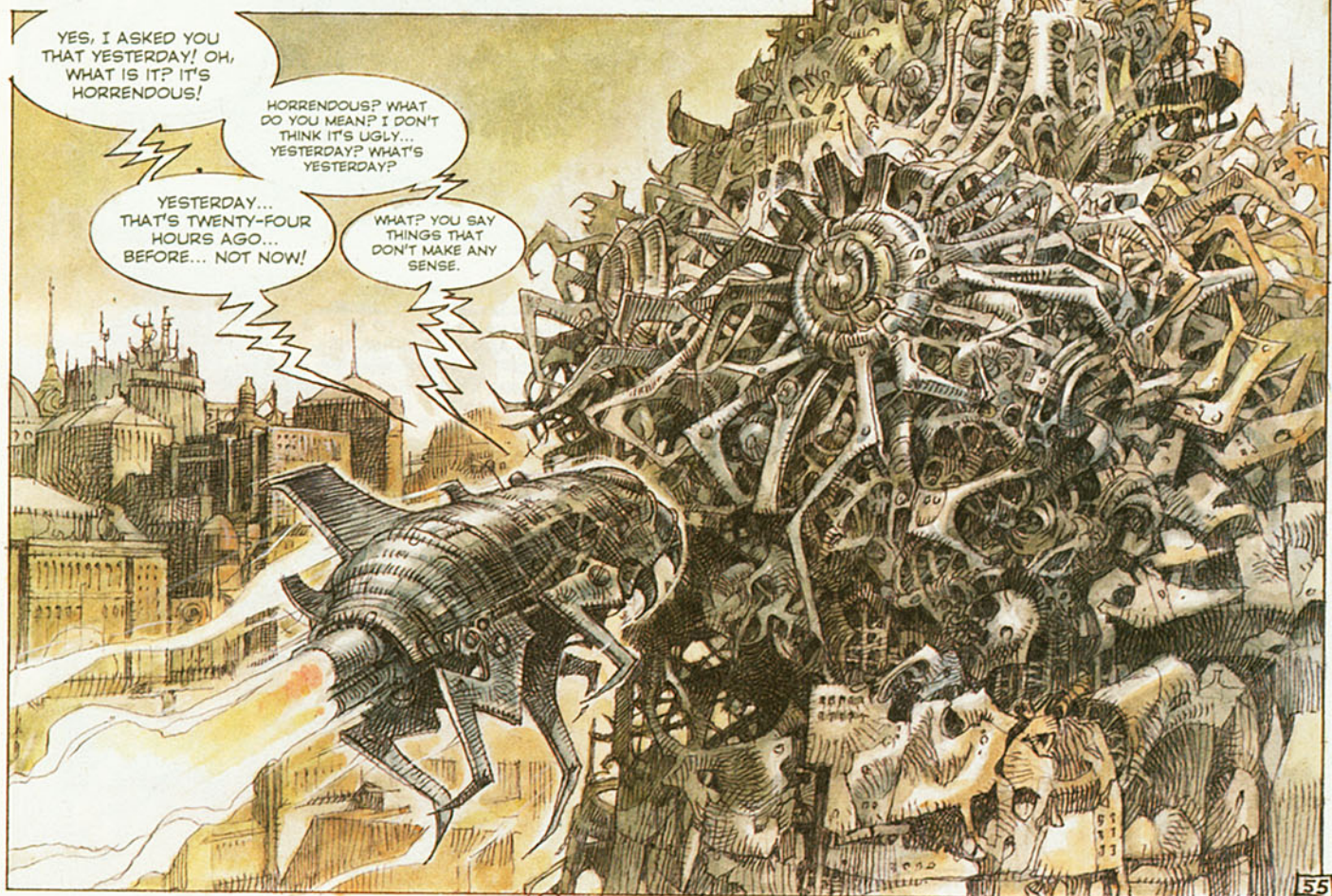
HOW CAN I GET THE
DAMN THING TO START
UP?! HEY... METALLIC
SPIDER, WE GOTTA
GO!!



...?!...



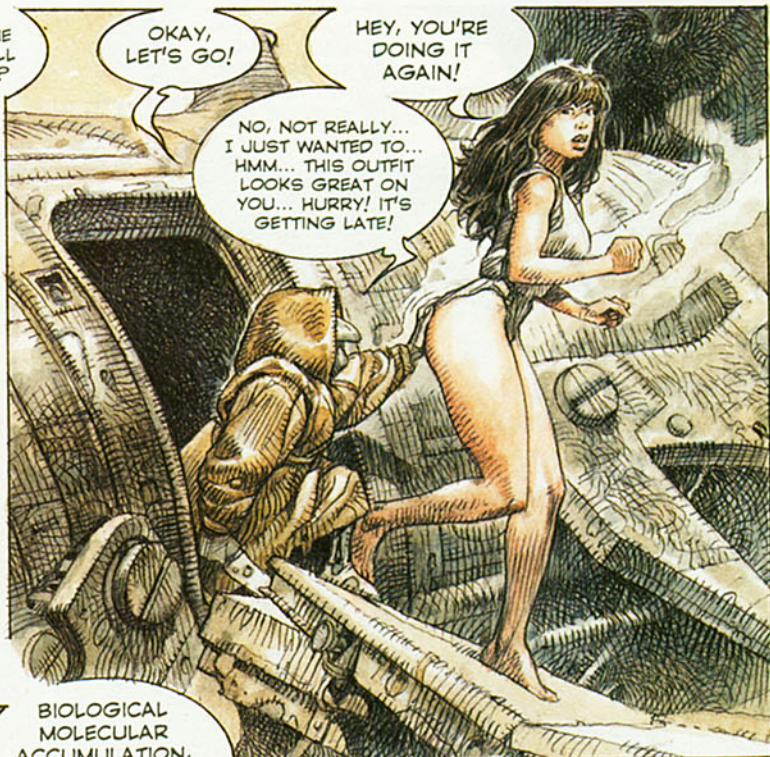






THERE! SMOOTH LANDINGS ARE MY SPECIALTY! DID YOU SEE THAT? AS LIGHT AS A FEATHER!

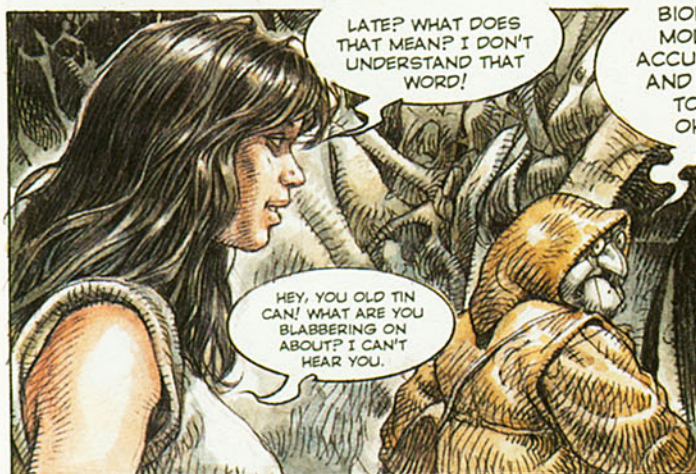
YEAH, SURE. SOME FEATHER! YOU CALL THAT A LANDING?



OKAY, LET'S GO!

HEY, YOU'RE DOING IT AGAIN!

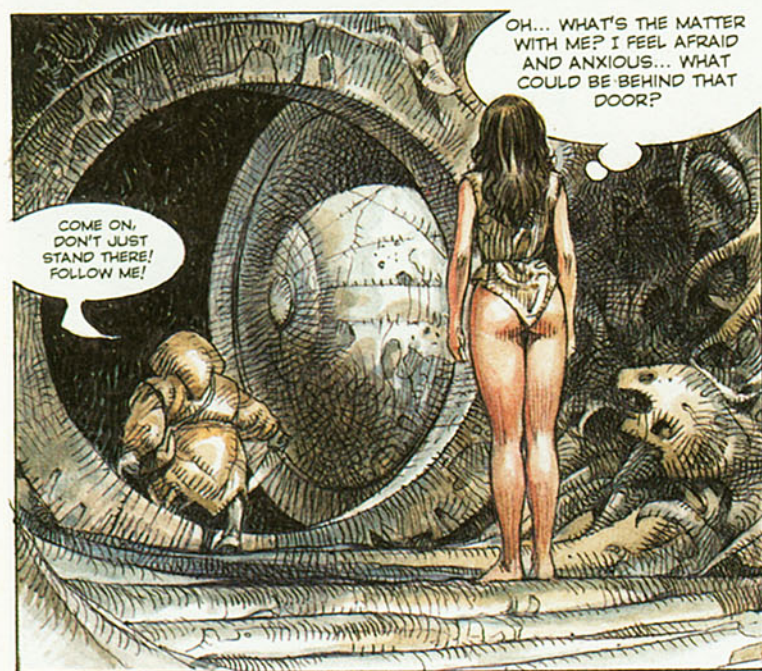
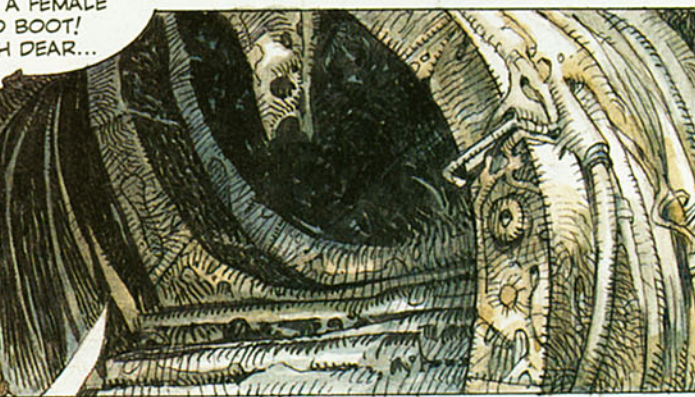
NO, NOT REALLY... I JUST WANTED TO... HMM... THIS OUTFIT LOOKS GREAT ON YOU... HURRY! IT'S GETTING LATE!



LATE? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? I DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT WORD!

BIOLOGICAL MOLECULAR ACCUMULATION, AND A FEMALE TO BOOT! OH DEAR...

HEY, YOU OLD TIN CAN! WHAT ARE YOU BLABBERING ON ABOUT? I CAN'T HEAR YOU.

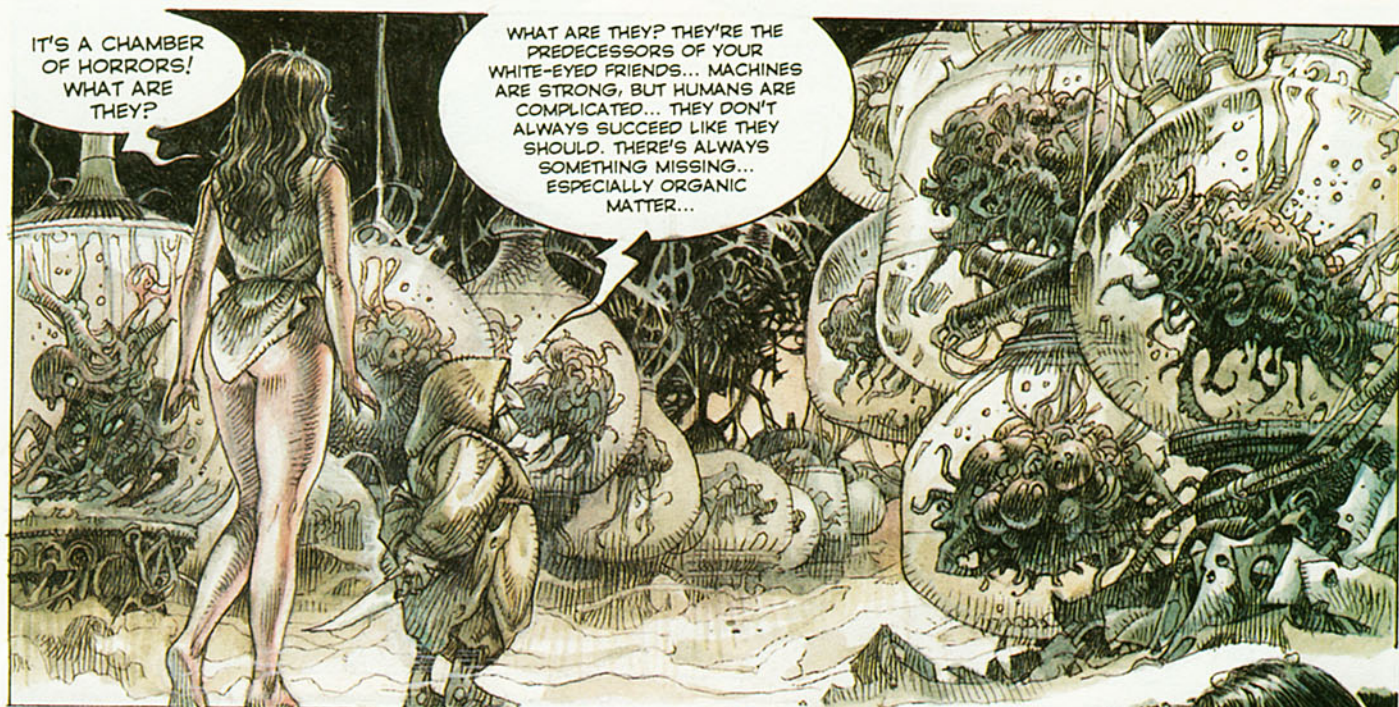


OH... WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH ME? I FEEL AFRAID AND ANXIOUS... WHAT COULD BE BEHIND THAT DOOR?

COME ON, DON'T JUST STAND THERE! FOLLOW ME!

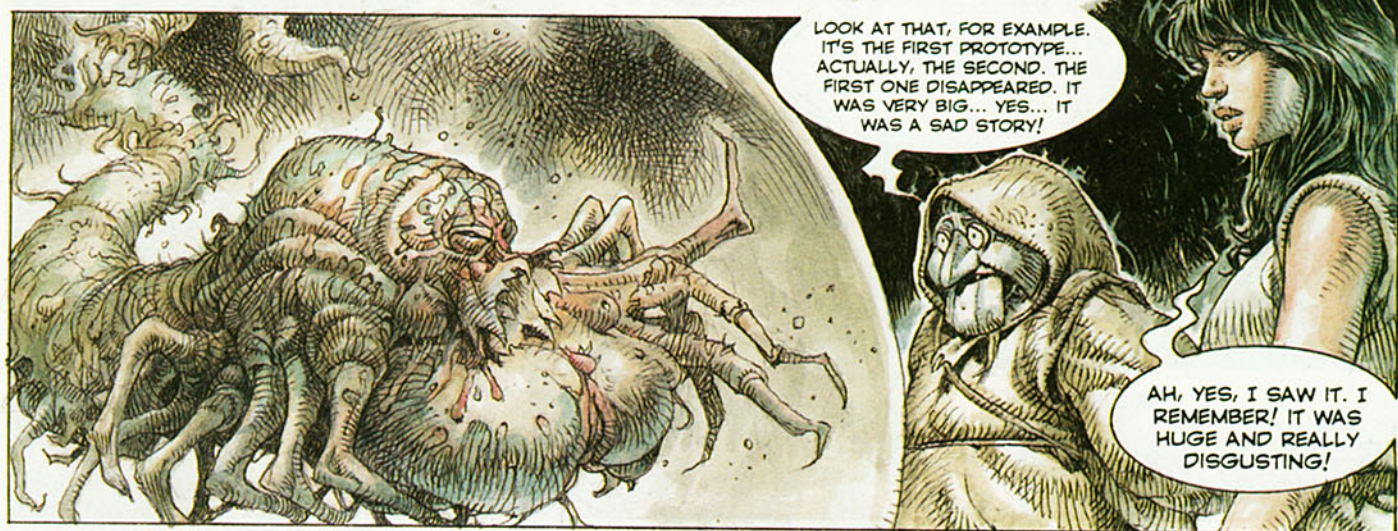


A STRANGE BUZZING INSIDE MY HEAD... I ONCE KNEW WHAT USED TO BE HERE... AND THAT SOMEONE OR SOMETHING WAS WAITING FOR ME.



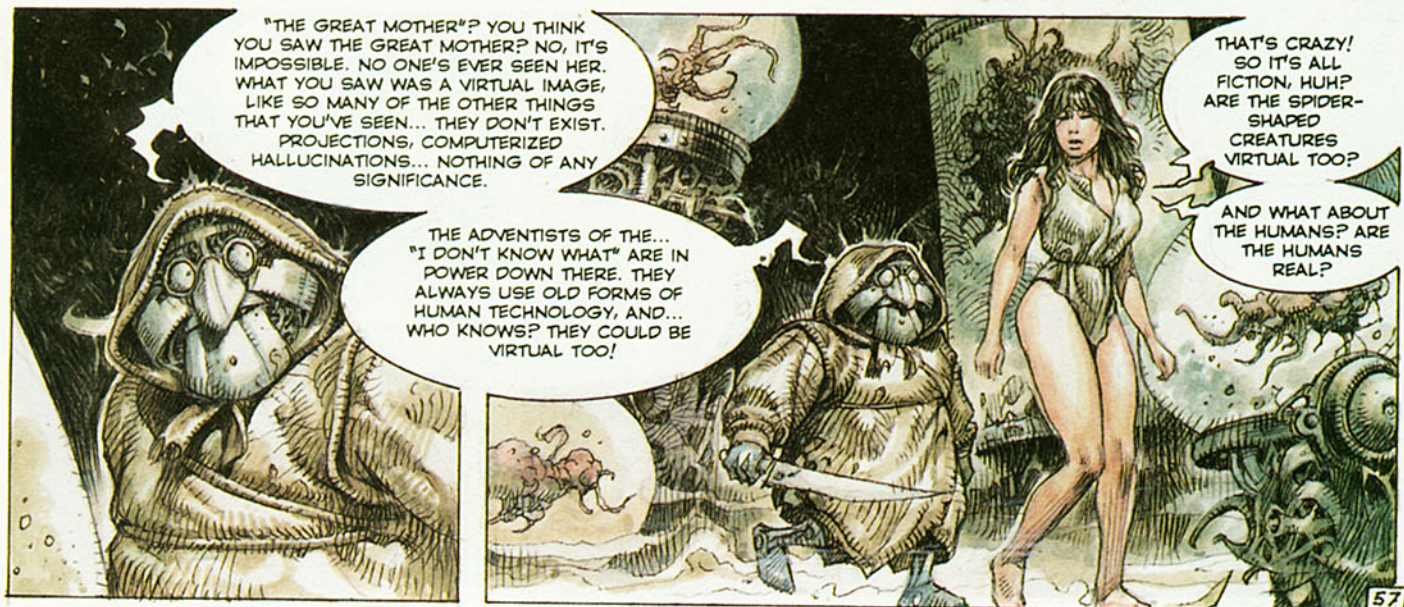
IT'S A CHAMBER OF HORRORS!
WHAT ARE THEY?

WHAT ARE THEY? THEY'RE THE
PREDECESSORS OF YOUR
WHITE-EYED FRIENDS... MACHINES
ARE STRONG, BUT HUMANS ARE
COMPLICATED... THEY DON'T
ALWAYS SUCCEED LIKE THEY
SHOULD. THERE'S ALWAYS
SOMETHING MISSING...
ESPECIALLY ORGANIC
MATTER...



LOOK AT THAT, FOR EXAMPLE.
IT'S THE FIRST PROTOTYPE...
ACTUALLY, THE SECOND. THE
FIRST ONE DISAPPEARED. IT
WAS VERY BIG... YES... IT
WAS A SAD STORY!

AH, YES, I SAW IT. I
REMEMBER! IT WAS
HUGE AND REALLY
DISGUSTING!



"THE GREAT MOTHER"? YOU THINK
YOU SAW THE GREAT MOTHER? NO, IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE. NO ONE'S EVER SEEN HER.
WHAT YOU SAW WAS A VIRTUAL IMAGE,
LIKE SO MANY OF THE OTHER THINGS
THAT YOU'VE SEEN... THEY DON'T EXIST.
PROJECTIONS, COMPUTERIZED
HALLUCINATIONS... NOTHING OF ANY
SIGNIFICANCE.

THE ADVENTISTS OF THE...
"I DON'T KNOW WHAT" ARE IN
POWER DOWN THERE. THEY
ALWAYS USE OLD FORMS OF
HUMAN TECHNOLOGY, AND...
WHO KNOWS? THEY COULD BE
VIRTUAL TOO!

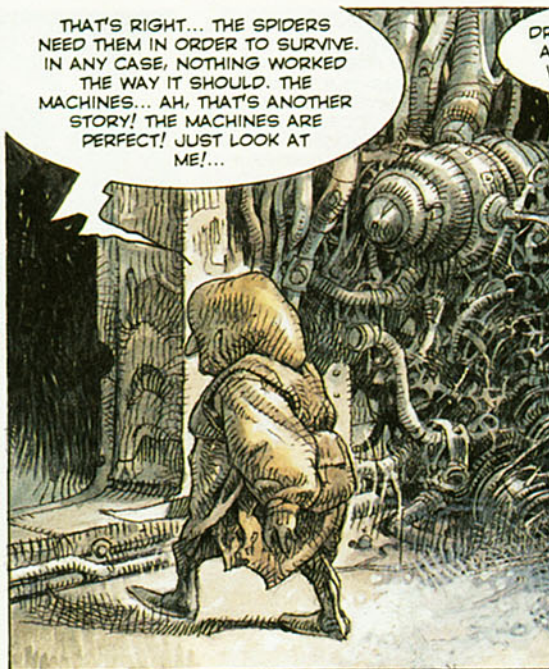
THAT'S CRAZY!
SO IT'S ALL
FICTION, HUH?
ARE THE SPIDER-
SHAPED
CREATURES
VIRTUAL TOO?

AND WHAT ABOUT
THE HUMANS? ARE
THE HUMANS
REAL?



THE SPIDER-SHAPED CREATURES ARE REAL... THE WHITE EYES ARE REAL TOO, AND I'M REAL... AND HANDSOME, AS YOU CAN SEE!... AND IF THERE WERE ANY MEN... THEY WOULD BE REAL TOO, BUT NOT FOR LONG.

NOT FOR LONG?



THAT'S RIGHT... THE SPIDERS NEED THEM IN ORDER TO SURVIVE. IN ANY CASE, NOTHING WORKED THE WAY IT SHOULD. THE MACHINES... AH, THAT'S ANOTHER STORY! THE MACHINES ARE PERFECT! JUST LOOK AT ME!...

DRUUNA, YOU ARE HERE... WITH ME...

WHAT? THAT VOICE INSIDE MY HEAD AGAIN! SO YOU'RE... IS IT YOU? OH, MY GOD, IS IT YOU?



COME...

OH, HOW COULD I... HOW COULD I FORGET?... YOU DIDN'T FORGET ME... YOU ARE ALIVE... SO MANY MEMORIES... THEY HURT ME...



THE MACHINES ARE INDESTRUCTIBLE!... EVEN IF SOMETHING BREAKS, THEY CAN ALWAYS BE REPAIRED. NOT SO WITH HUMANS. THE PERFECT HUMAN HAS TO BE MECHANICAL SO AS TO LIMIT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THE PASSING OF TIME...

...P...



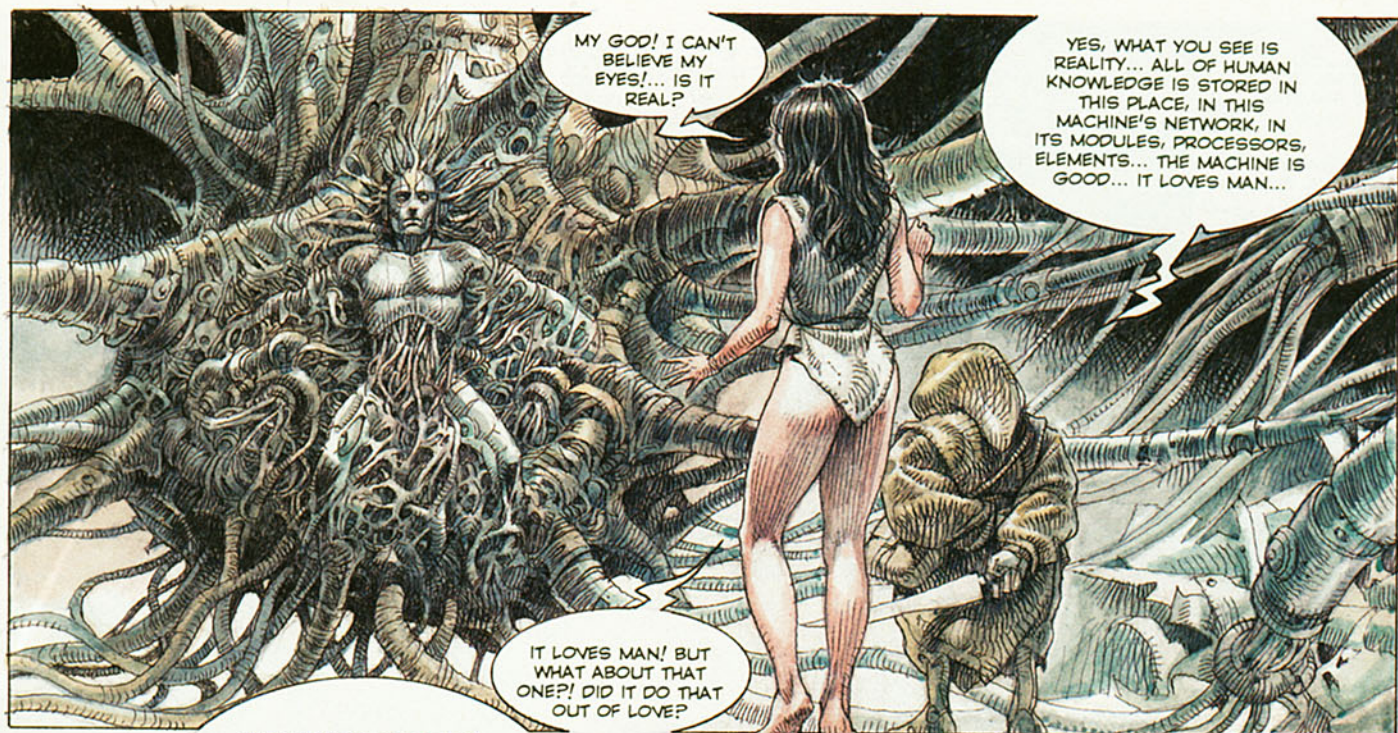
MAN IS MORE THAN THAT, YOU BAG OF NUTS AND BOLTS! HUMANS ARE KNOWLEDGE, LOVE, REASONING!...

YEAH SURE!...

DON'T GET ANGRY. I'M GETTING THERE. SO ACCORDING TO YOU, MACHINES DON'T THINK?... HOW COULD THEY BUILD WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE?...



WHAT IS THAT OVER THERE?



MY GOD! I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EYES!... IS IT REAL?

YES, WHAT YOU SEE IS REALITY... ALL OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE IS STORED IN THIS PLACE, IN THIS MACHINE'S NETWORK, IN ITS MODULES, PROCESSORS, ELEMENTS... THE MACHINE IS GOOD... IT LOVES MAN...

IT LOVES MAN! BUT WHAT ABOUT THAT ONE? DID IT DO THAT OUT OF LOVE?

THE MACHINE LOVES MAN, BECAUSE WITHOUT MAN IT WOULD HAVE NO REASON FOR BEING!... FATHERS NEED THEIR SONS, AND THAT'S WHY IT HAS MADE ME IN MAN'S IMAGE... MAN WHO WAS THE CREATOR OF THE FIRST MACHINE.

OH DRUUNA, MY DEAR, YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL... I'M STANDING BEFORE YOU... THEY ARE REGENERATING ME... IT'S PAINFUL AND MARVELOUS AT THE SAME TIME...

OH, SHASTAR, MY LOVE... I'M GOING CRAZY. IT'S YOU, YOU ARE ALIVE!... YOU ARE COMMUNICATING WITH ME THROUGH THOUGHT...



BUT SOMETHING'S MISSING... SOMETHING THE MACHINE HAS NOT SUCCEEDED IN CREATING: LIFE... BUT NOW WE ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH...

CARESS ME... I NEED YOU. DON'T BE AFRAID...

YES, YES... YOU'RE SO COLD!...

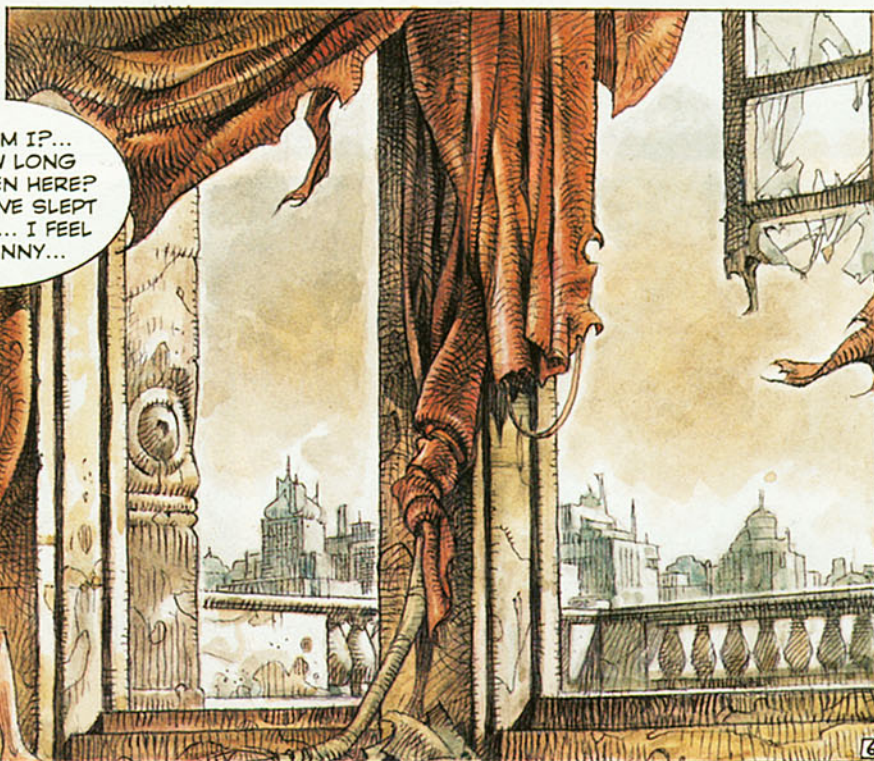
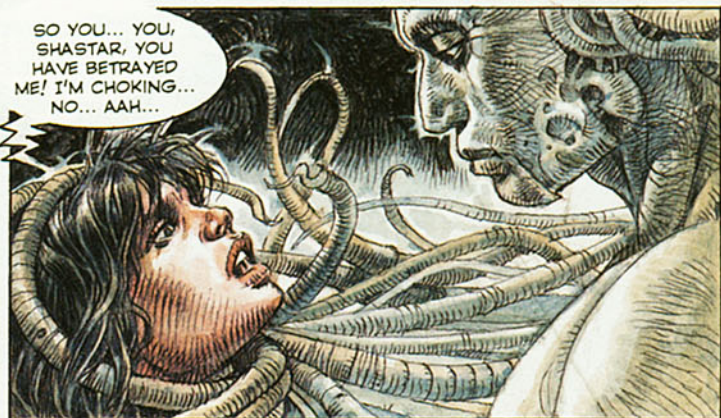
THAT'S WHY I NEED YOUR WARMTH...

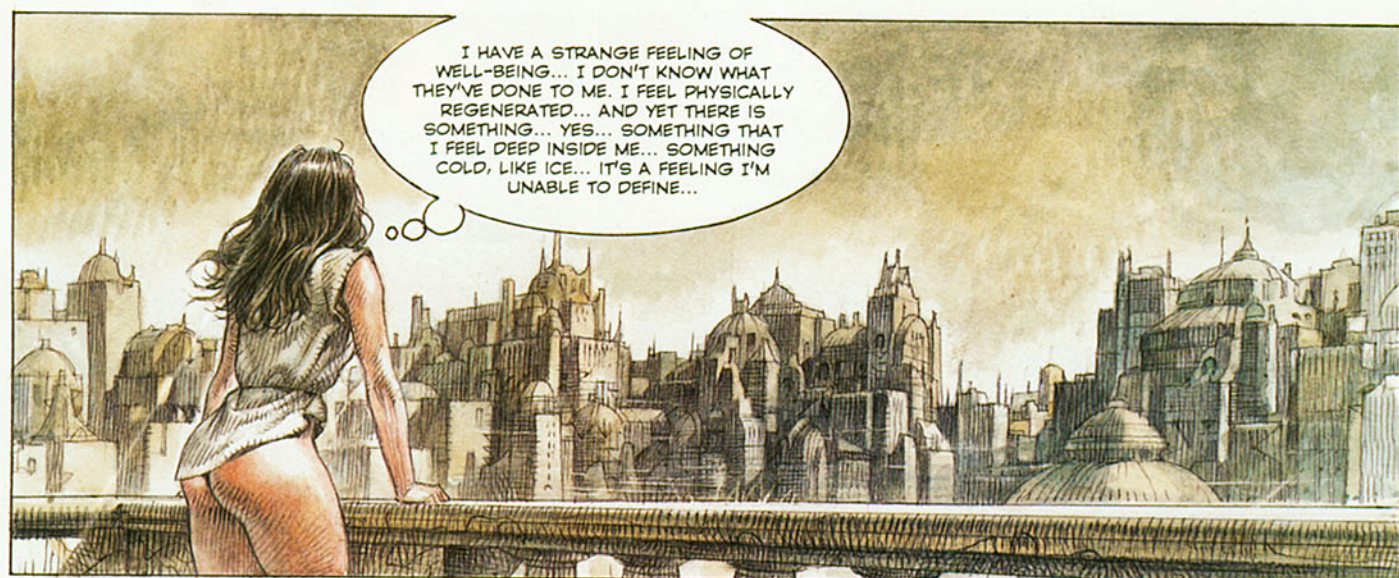
SHASTAR, I DON'T UNDERSTAND... WHERE ARE YOU? THE CREATURE BEFORE ME SPEAKS IN AN OBSCURE MANNER. WHAT MUST I DO? I'M AFRAID!...

I'M INSIDE THIS CREATURE, DRUUNA. THE MACHINE CAN'T USE TELEPATHY... I CAN, SO I AM COMMUNICATING WITH YOU. PLEASE COME CLOSER, IF YOU WANT TO HELP ME... PLEASE TOUCH ME...



...?...





I HAVE A STRANGE FEELING OF WELL-BEING... I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO ME. I FEEL PHYSICALLY REGENERATED... AND YET THERE IS SOMETHING... YES... SOMETHING THAT I FEEL DEEP INSIDE ME... SOMETHING COLD, LIKE ICE... IT'S A FEELING I'M UNABLE TO DEFINE...



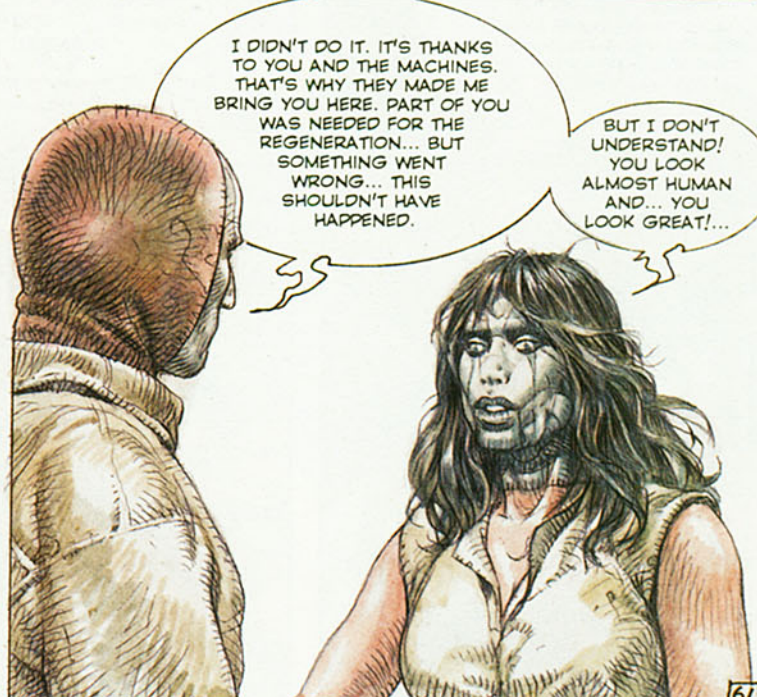
OH, GOD! IT CAN'T BE! THE CITY HAS DISAPPEARED! WHERE DID IT GO TO?

I SWITCHED THE CITY OFF! IT WAS ONLY AN ILLUSION. HUMANS ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW... REALITY IS ELSEWHERE... BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS.



EVERYTHING IS AN ILLUSION, AND IT'S BEEN SO FOR A LONG TIME... SINCE THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN EXISTENCE...

SHASTAR! OH SHASTAR! IT'S YOU, IT'S REALLY YOU! I KNEW IT! YOU WOULDN'T HAVE ABANDONED ME!... OH MY DEAR, YOU ARE ALIVE!... BUT HOW DID YOU MANAGE IT?



I DIDN'T DO IT. IT'S THANKS TO YOU AND THE MACHINES. THAT'S WHY THEY MADE ME BRING YOU HERE. PART OF YOU WAS NEEDED FOR THE REGENERATION... BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG... THIS SHOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED.

BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND! YOU LOOK ALMOST HUMAN AND... YOU LOOK GREAT!...



OUR THOUGHTS, OUR FEELINGS... OUR MEMORIES... ARE HUMAN, BUT OUR BODIES AREN'T ANYMORE!

SHASTAR!... WHAT HAPPENED TO MY FACE?!



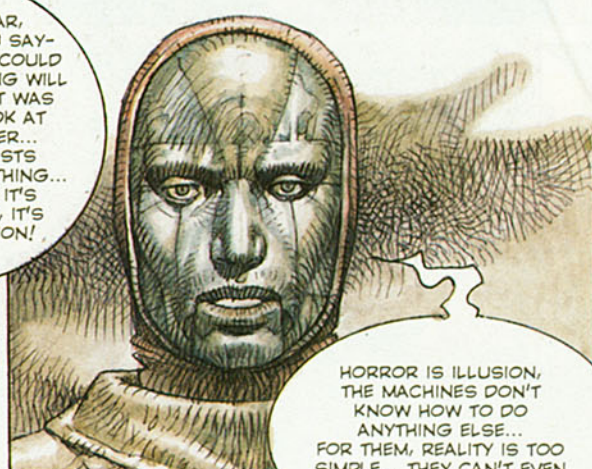
MY GOD, OH MY GOD!... NO... NO... NO... IT'S METAL! WHERE'S MY FACE?... MY FACE?!



WITH OUR BODIES!...

WE WILL GO AND GET THEM... I PROMISE, DRUUNA!... AND THEN YOU'LL SEE... WE'LL MANAGE TO ESCAPE FROM HERE...

OH, SHASTAR, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?... WHERE COULD WE GO? NOTHING WILL EVER BE LIKE IT WAS BEFORE... LOOK AT ME... IT'S OVER... NOTHING EXISTS ANYMORE... NOTHING... YOU SAID IT, IT'S ALL FALSE, IT'S ALL ILLUSION!



HORROR IS ILLUSION, THE MACHINES DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO ANYTHING ELSE... FOR THEM, REALITY IS TOO SIMPLE... THEY CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE IT...



BUT, OUR THOUGHTS ARE HUMAN... AND SO IS OUR THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE... LOOK, I KNOW THAT OVER THERE, BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS, THERE EXISTS SOMETHING, SOMETHING SO DIFFERENT... DIFFERENT FROM ALL THIS...



THERE EXISTS A PLANET WHERE IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO LIVE, THINK, LOVE... AN ANCIENT PLANET... A FORGOTTEN PLANET...