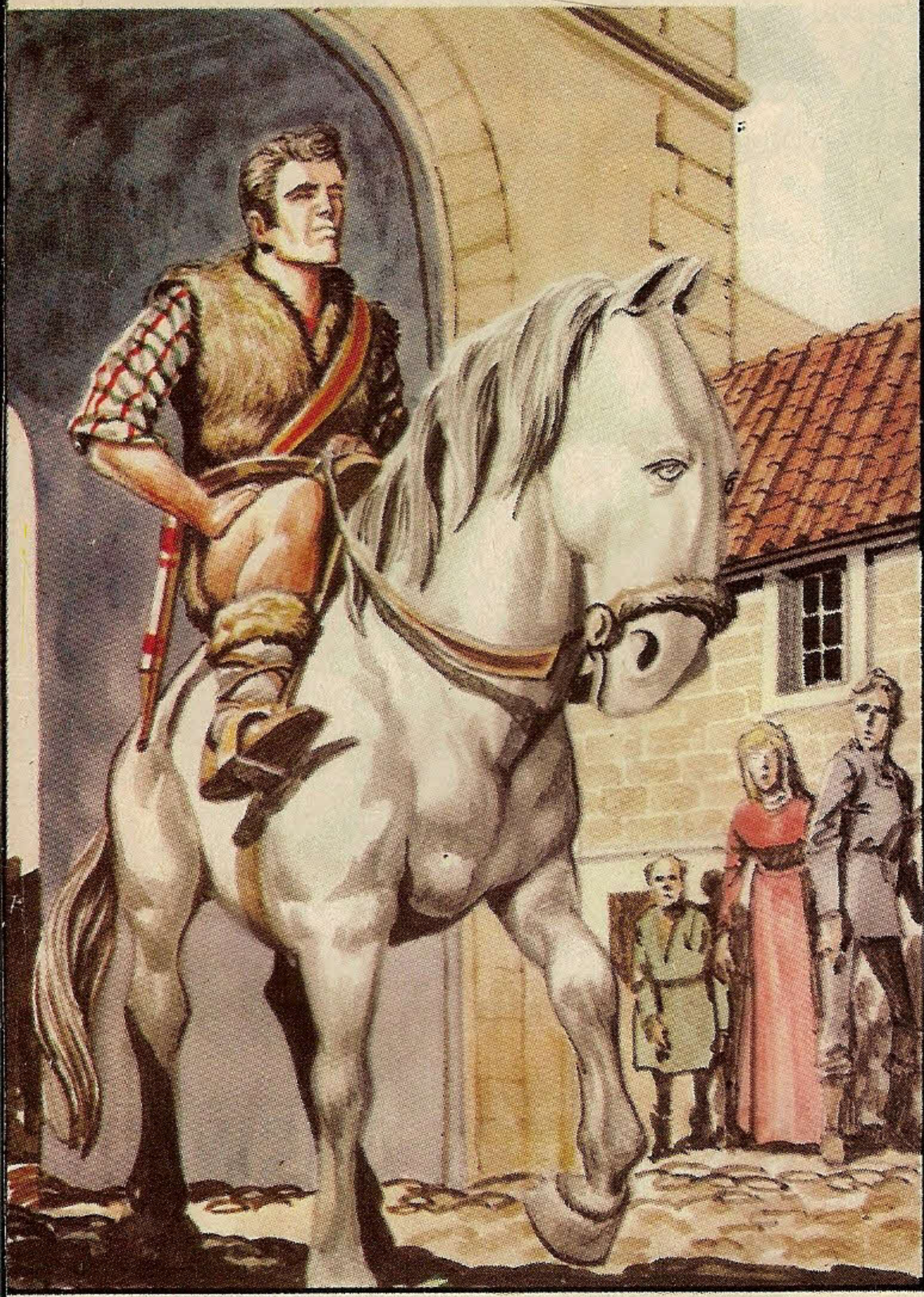


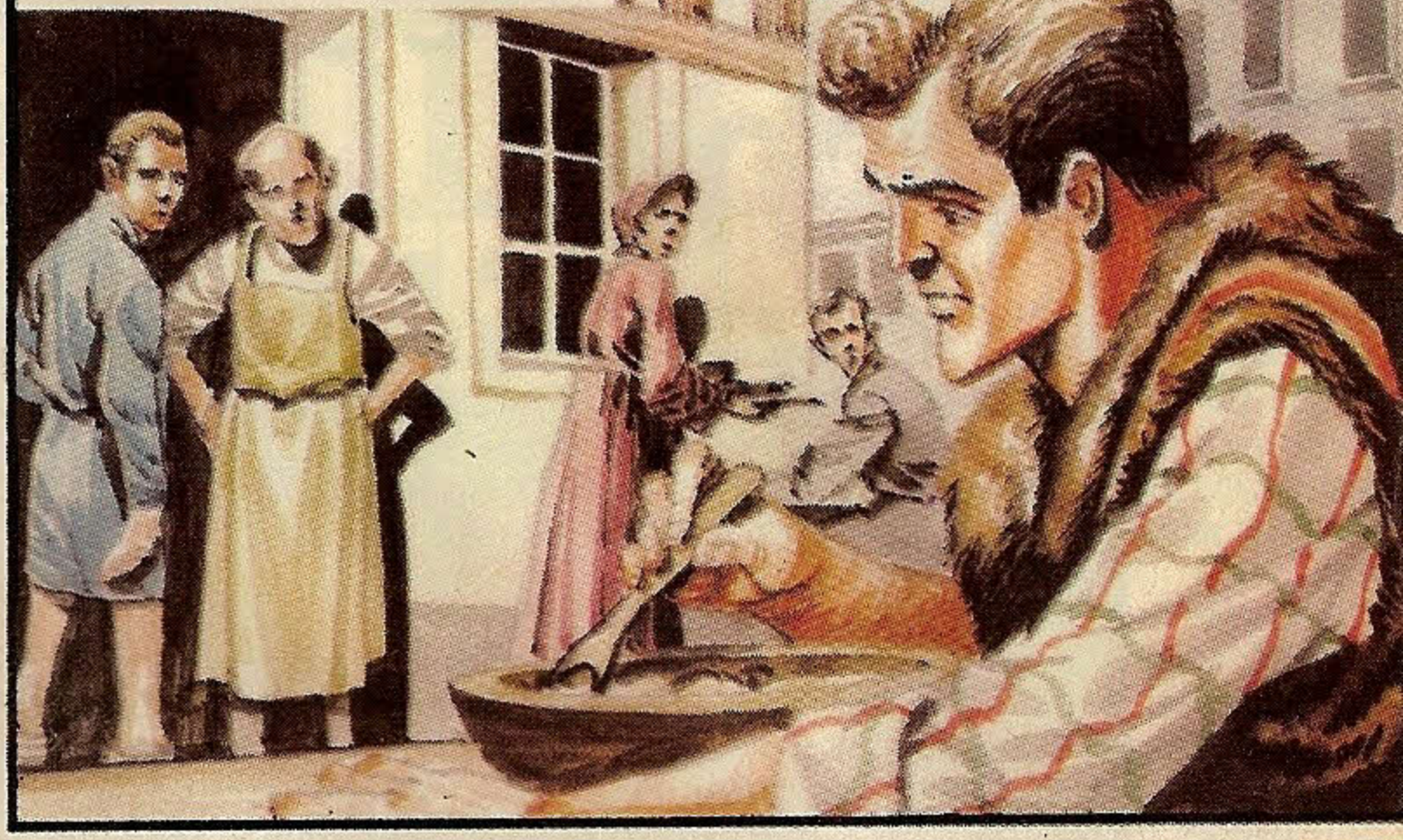
... the planet Elekton, situated in the galaxy of Yarna. The greatest power on the planet is the Trigan Empire, ruled over by its founder, the Emperor Trigo . . .

TRIGAN EMPIRE

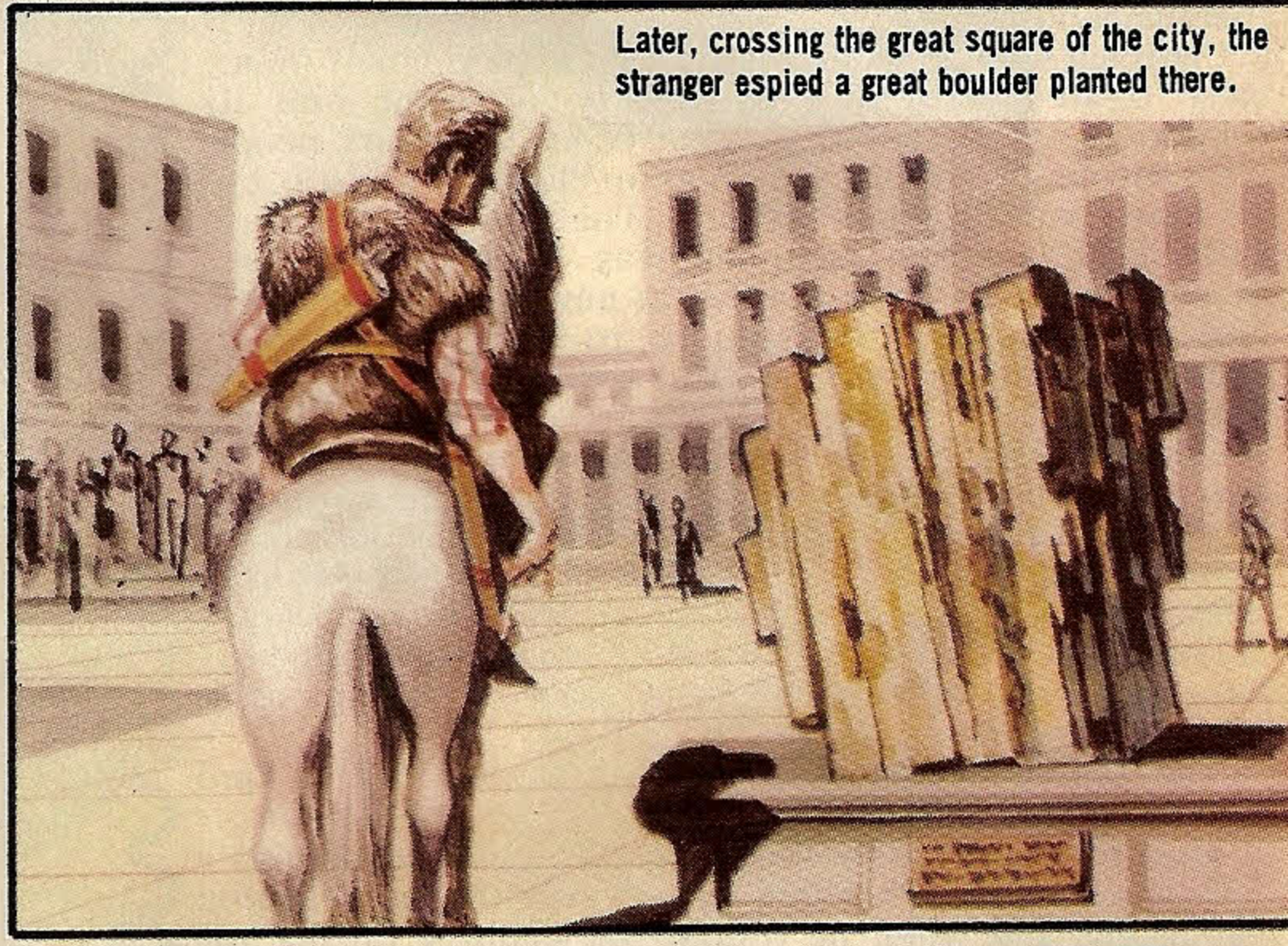
One memorable day, a stranger came out of the wilderness. Although he was simply dressed, he bore himself like a leader of warriors.



He dismounted at a kerbside inn and ate his simple meal in silence.



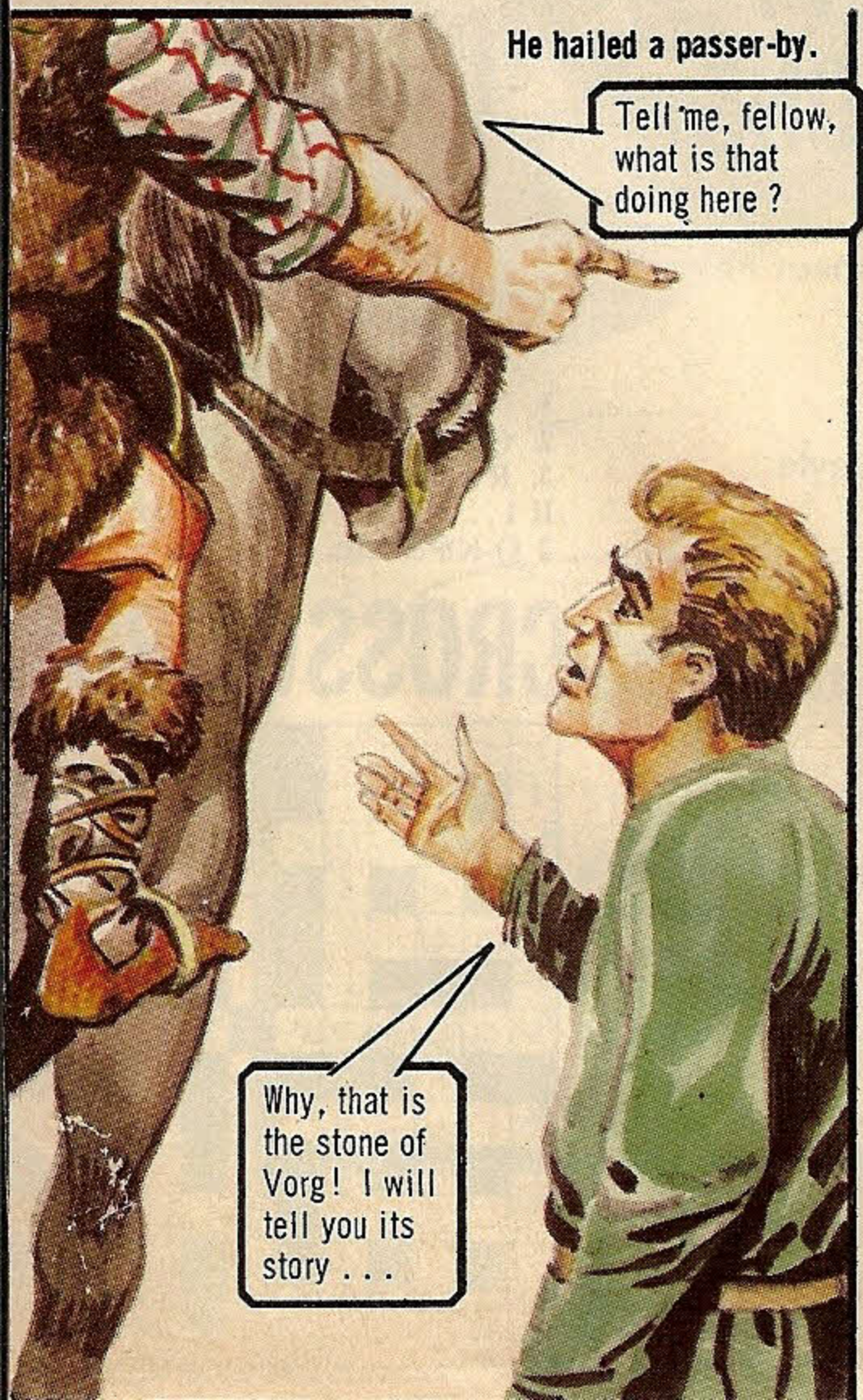
Later, crossing the great square of the city, the stranger espied a great boulder planted there.



He hailed a passer-by.

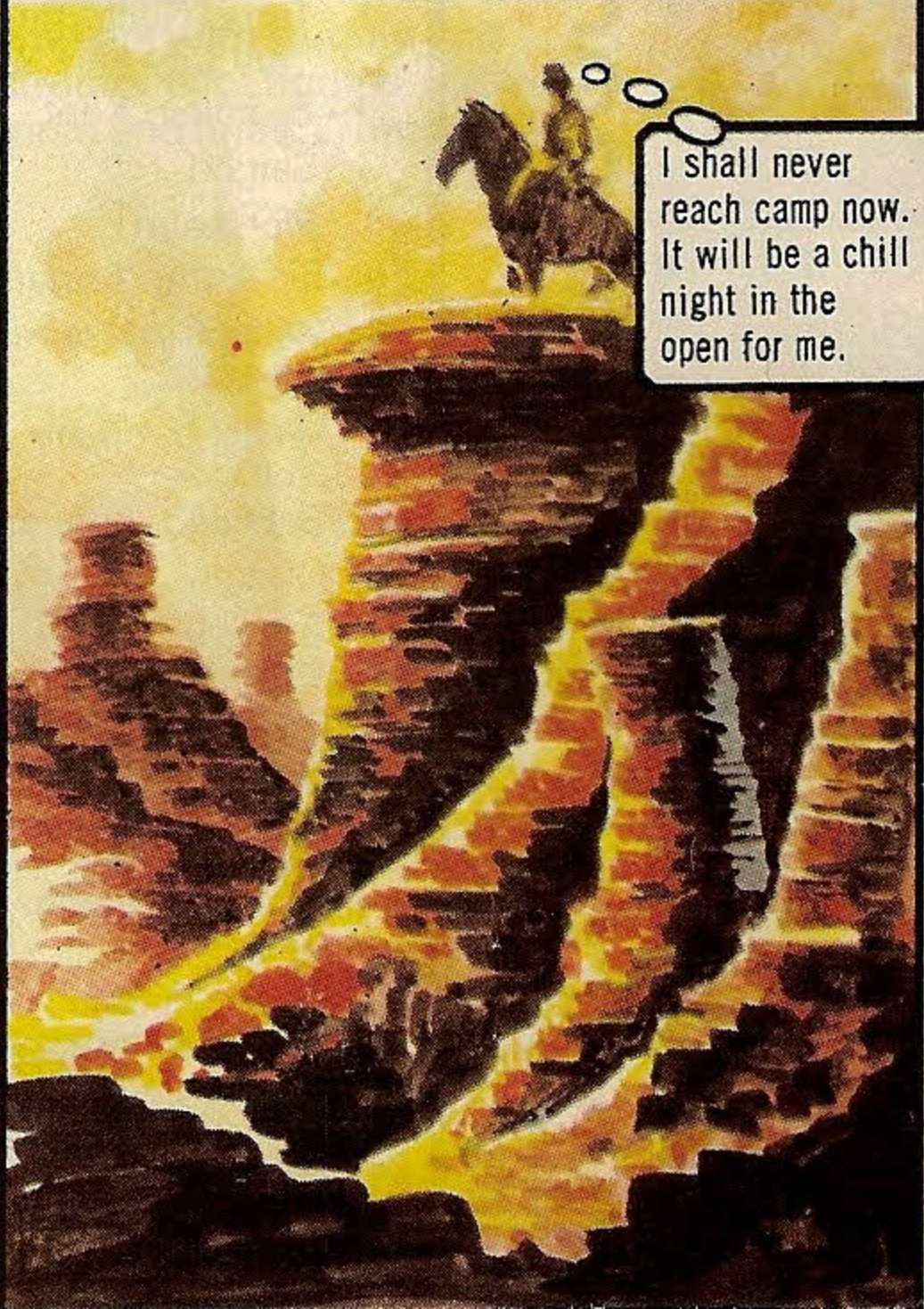
Tell me, fellow, what is that doing here?

Why, that is the stone of Vorg! I will tell you its story . . .



"Many lunar years ago, before the foundation of the empire, Targo, the father of the Emperor Trigo and a great chief among the Vorgs, was lost while hunting in the hills" . . .

I shall never reach camp now. It will be a chill night in the open for me.



"Targo made a fire and prepared some food. Presently . . ."

Who comes? Friend or foe?

I come in peace.



"By his raiment, Targo recognised the newcomer as a sootha, or wandering wise-man."

My son, spare a morsel to eat for a poor wanderer, and you will not regret it.

Be seated, master. Half of what I have is gladly yours.

"The meal over, the sootha made an astounding prediction to the Vorg chief . . ."

You have a son and he will lead your people to an unheard-of greatness. He will become the principal ruler of all the planet Elekton, until . . .

Until when, master?

"The sootha pointed."

Until he who is able to smite that stone asunder with one blow of his fist, comes and takes your son's imperial crown from him!

"It was the Emperor Trigo himself who, many years later, had the stone brought to his own capital city and set up in the great square."

That stone shall stand here, as a reminder to me that I must always rule you justly and well. If I fail in my task, may the prophecy be fulfilled . . . may he who can smite the stone asunder come and take my imperial crown from me!

The story ended, the stranger gazed at the stone of Vorg.

Of course, it would be impossible to break the stone, even with a war-club, let alone with the bare fist.

I wonder . . .

Before the astonished gaze of the passers-by, the stranger raised his fist and brought it down.

Hah!

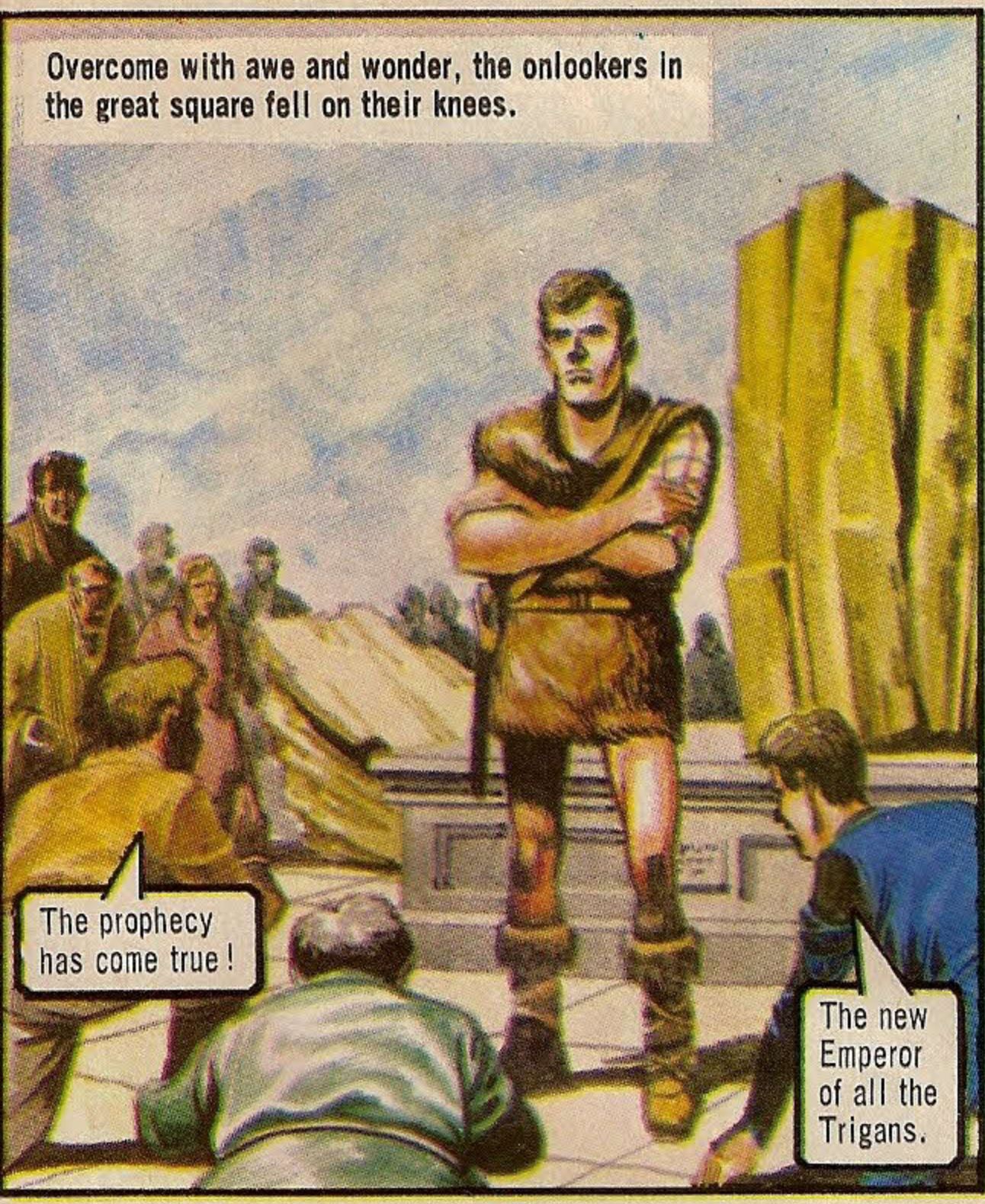
... Huh!

He's done it!

TRIGAN EMPIRE

A stranger has come out of the wilderness and has smashed the Stone of Vorg with his bare fist. The inhabitants of Trigan city are aghast because of an ancient prophecy which says that such a person will take over Trigo's Imperial Crown.

Overcome with awe and wonder, the onlookers in the great square fell on their knees.



The prophecy has come true!

The new Emperor of all the Trigans.

The object of their veneration smiled wryly.



Emperor of the Trigans! That would be quite something.

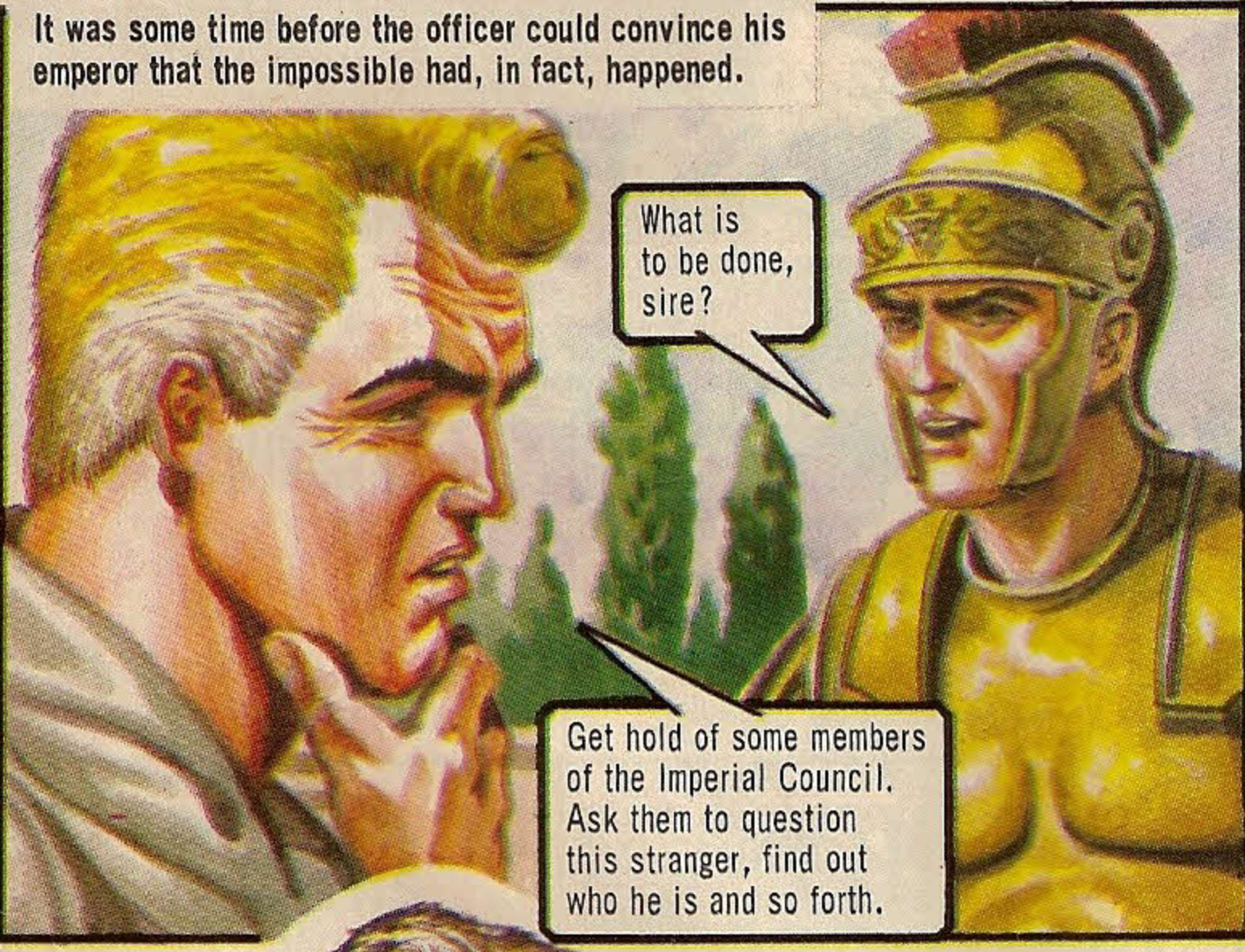
Trigo was at breakfast when the news was brought to him.



Imperial Majesty! Some fellow has smashed the stone of Vorg with his bare fist!

Rubbish!

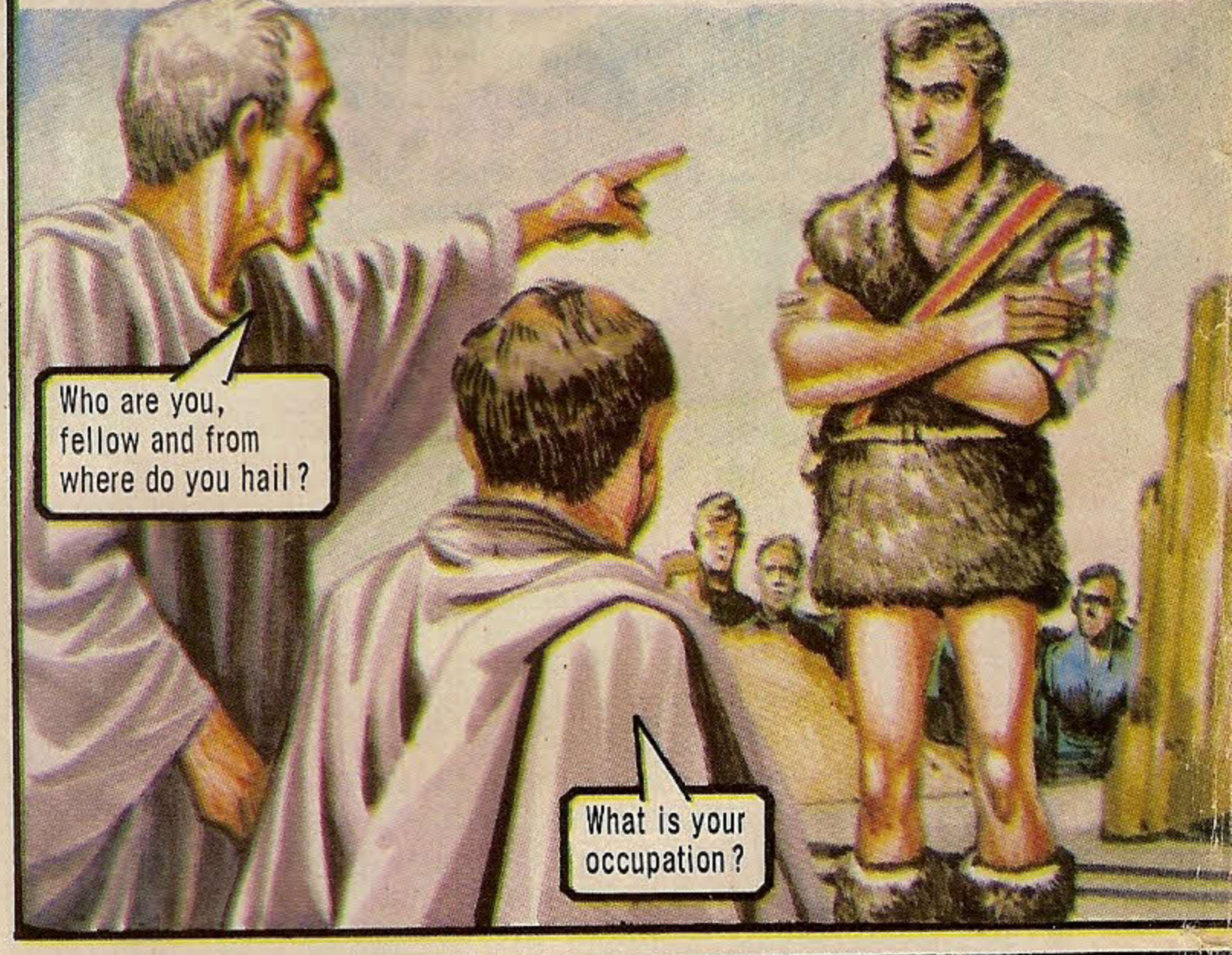
It was some time before the officer could convince his emperor that the impossible had, in fact, happened.



What is to be done, sire?

Get hold of some members of the Imperial Council. Ask them to question this stranger, find out who he is and so forth.

So it was that Zacho and Serro, two members of the council, questioned the stranger.



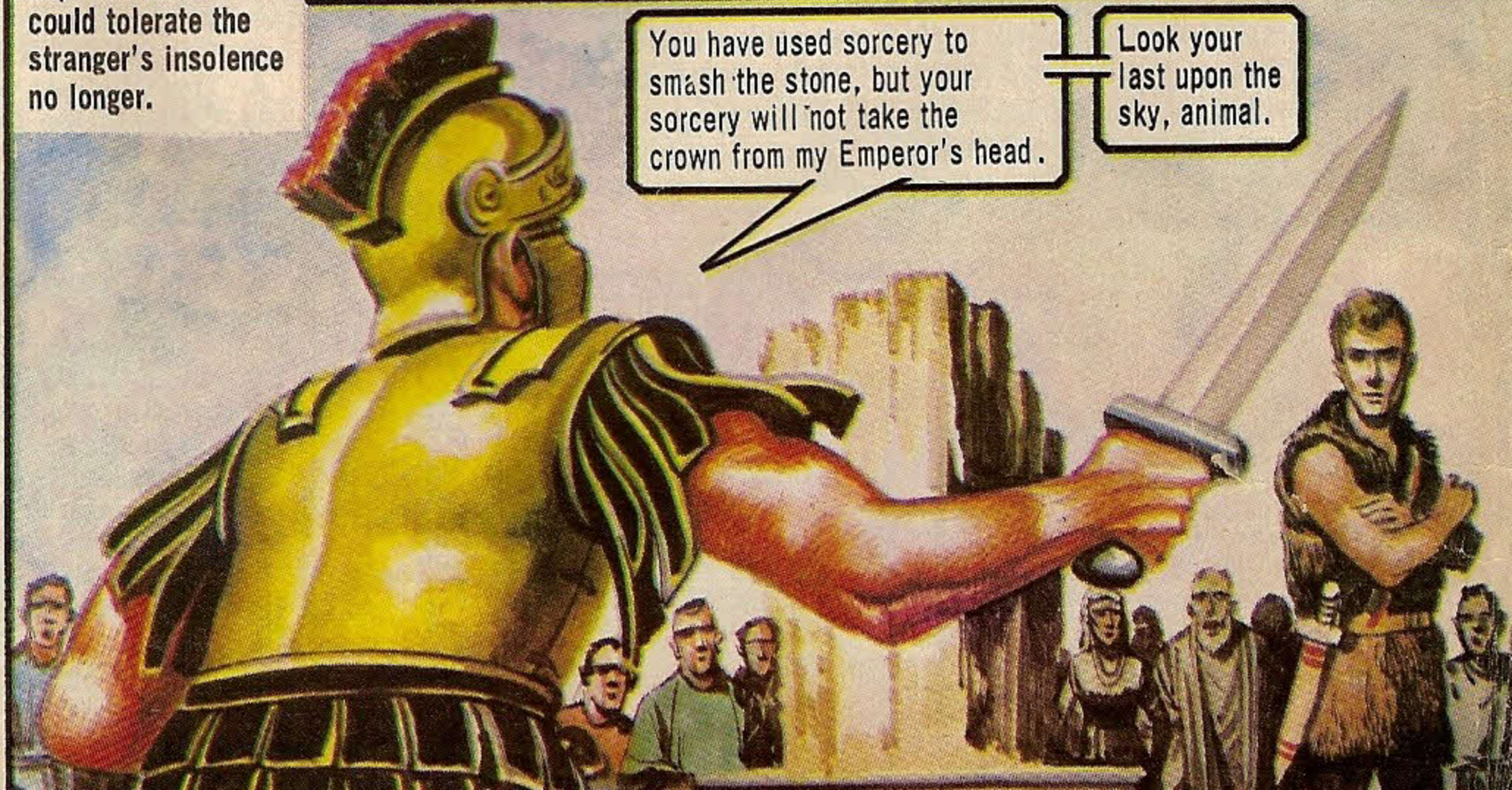
Who are you, fellow and from where do you hail?

What is your occupation?



Call me... Z!

The Captain of the Imperial Guard could tolerate the stranger's insolence no longer.



You have used sorcery to smash the stone, but your sorcery will not take the crown from my Emperor's head.

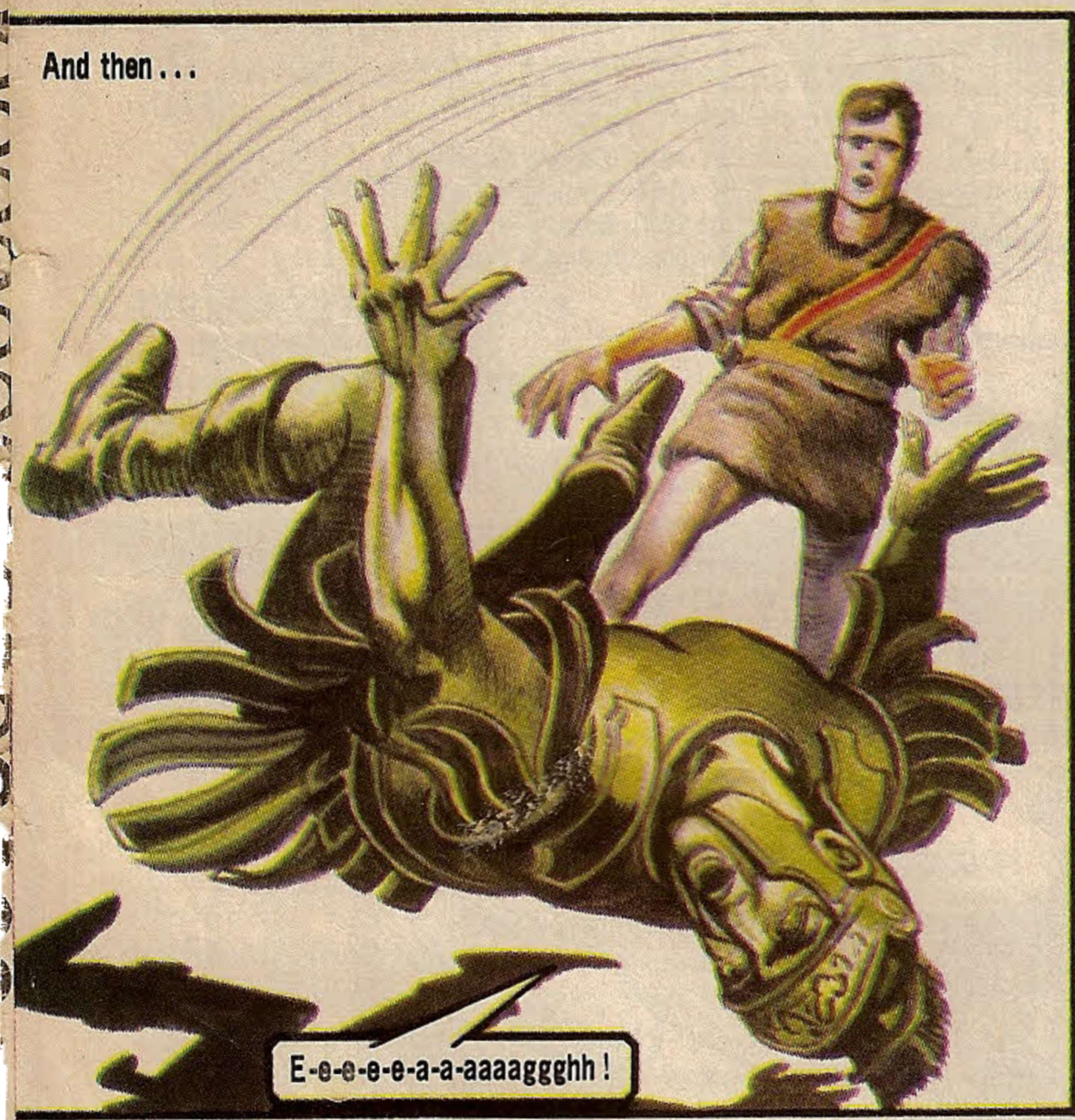
Look your last upon the sky, animal.



Ya-a-a-a-a-a-aaahhhh!!



The sword of he who called himself Z sped to its owner's hand too swiftly for the eye to follow. Blade met blade - SHATTERINGLY.



And then ...

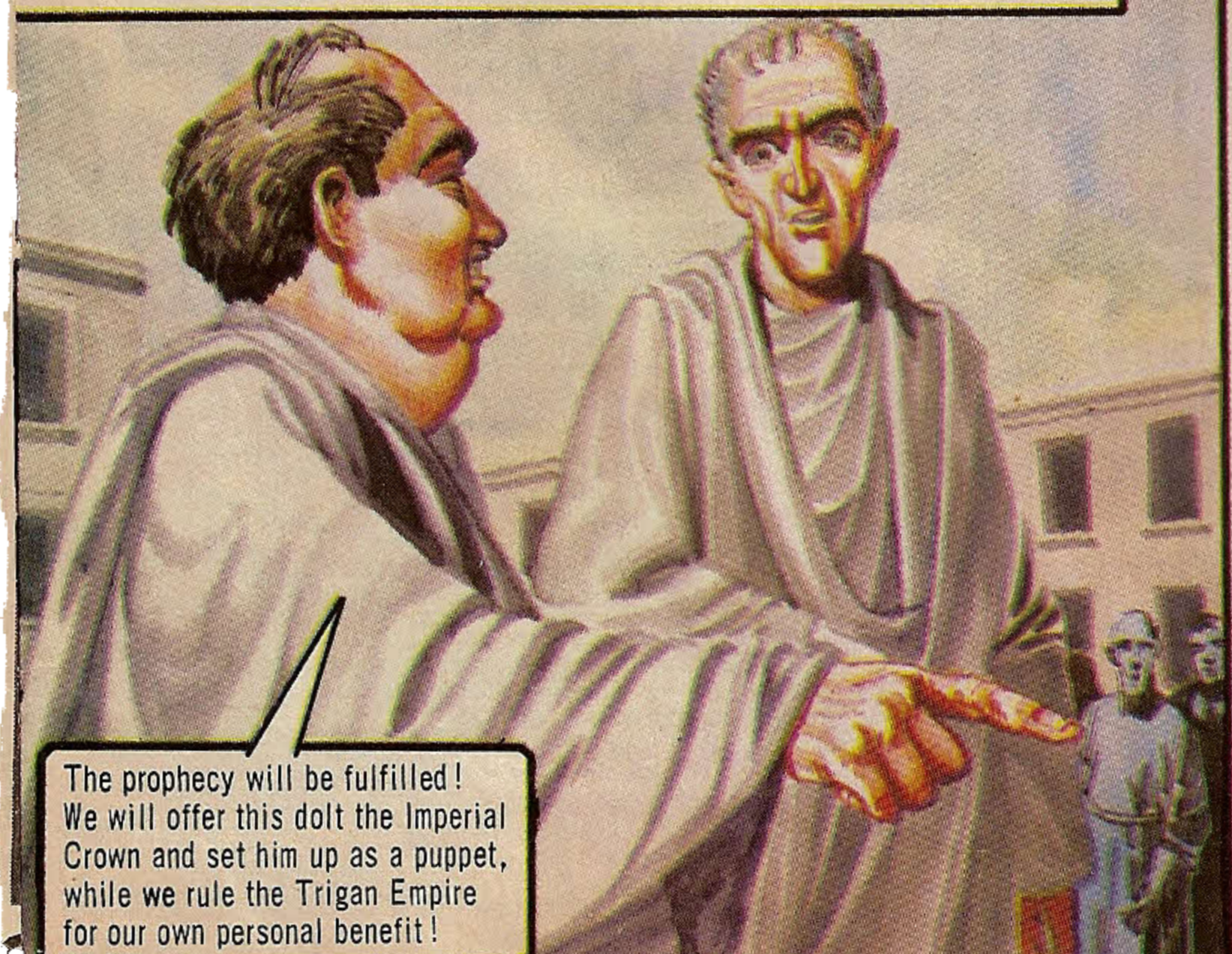
E-e-e-e-a-a-aaaagghh!



Zacho and Serro muttered together.

He is ... impressive!

He is quick and strong, I grant you. But a stupid and illiterate fellow. I think we can handle him, my friend.



The prophecy will be fulfilled! We will offer this dolt the Imperial Crown and set him up as a puppet, while we rule the Trigan Empire for our own personal benefit!



What if Trigo refuses to abdicate in his favour?

Then Trigo will have to be quietly ... eliminated!

TRIGAN EMPIRE

A stranger who calls himself simply "Z" has come out of the wilderness and has smashed the Stone of Vorg with one blow of his bare fist. It has been foretold that such a person will take Trigo's imperial crown. Will the prophecy come true?

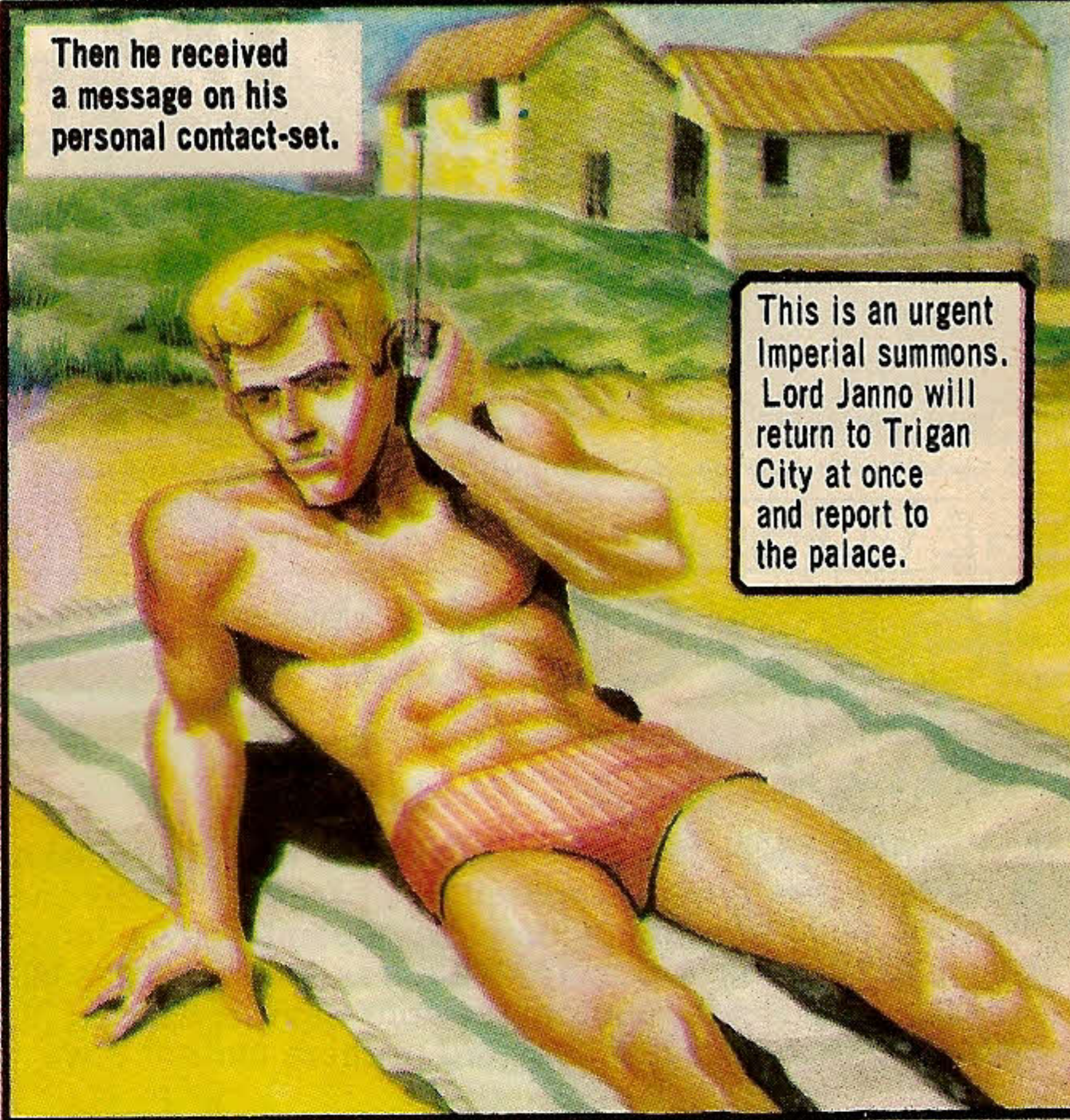
Trigo's nephew, Janno, was enjoying a holiday at a remote part of the Great Ocean coast.

This is the life!



Then he received a message on his personal contact-set.

This is an urgent Imperial summons. Lord Janno will return to Trigan City at once and report to the palace.



Arriving in his uncle's throne room, he found his family and the Imperial Council already assembled.

What's the matter, Father?

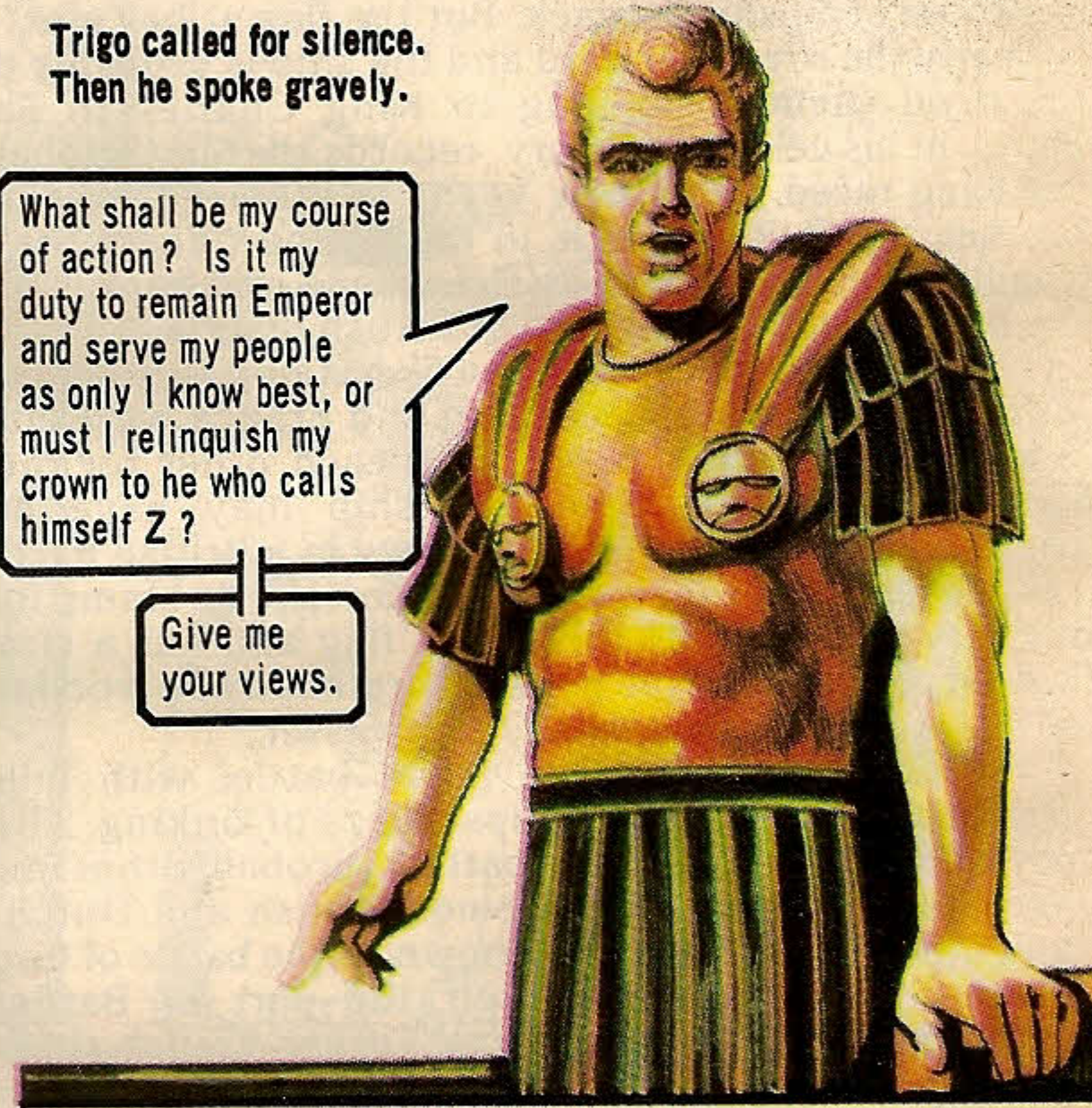
Some fellow has smashed the Stone of Vorg with his bare fist and therefore can lay claim to the throne!



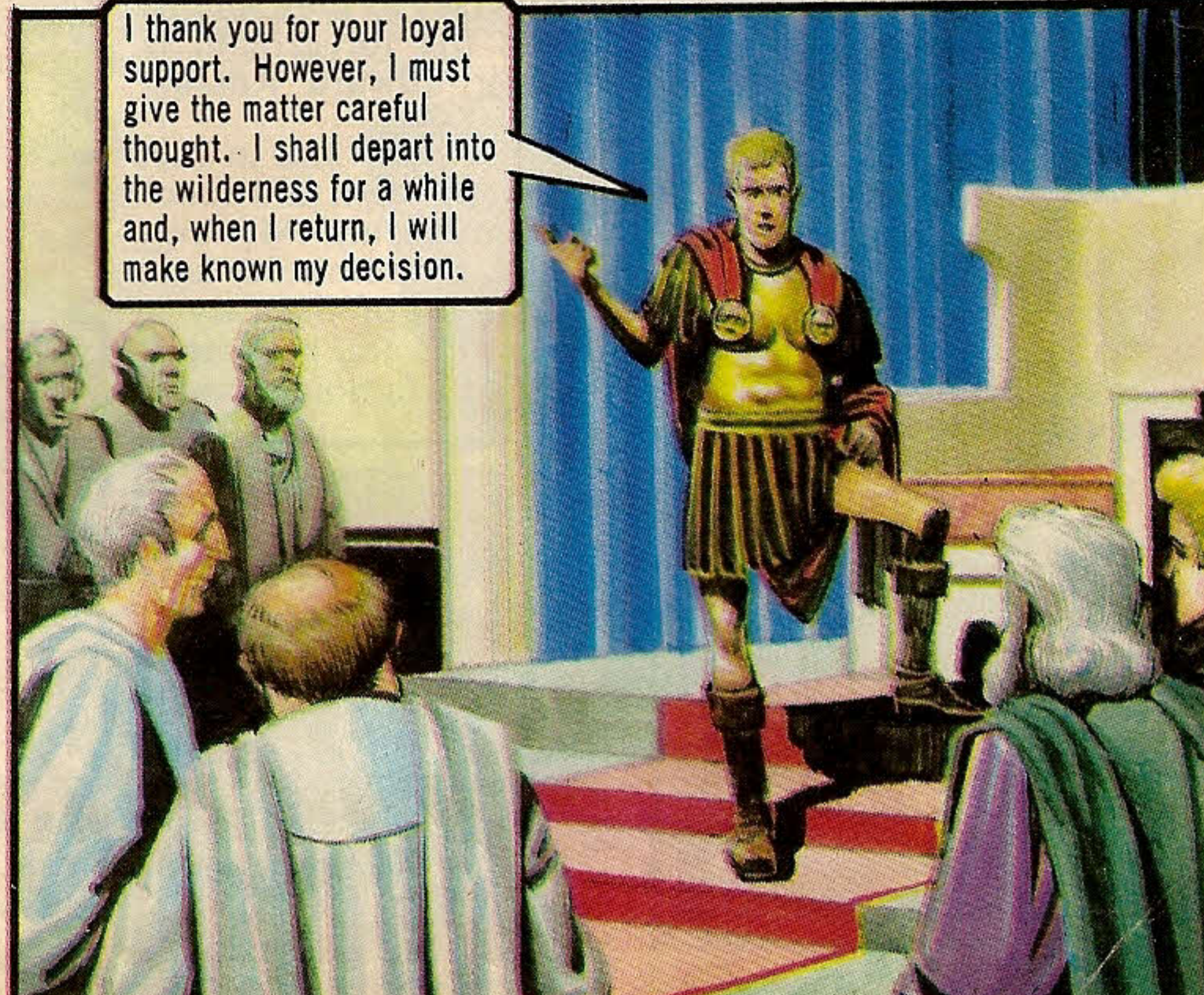
Trigo called for silence. Then he spoke gravely.

What shall be my course of action? Is it my duty to remain Emperor and serve my people as only I know best, or must I relinquish my crown to he who calls himself Z?

Give me your views.



I thank you for your loyal support. However, I must give the matter careful thought. I shall depart into the wilderness for a while and, when I return, I will make known my decision.



To Daveli with Z!

We want no stranger ruling us!

Long live the Emperor

Perish all



The two conspirators, Zacho and Serro, muttered to each other.

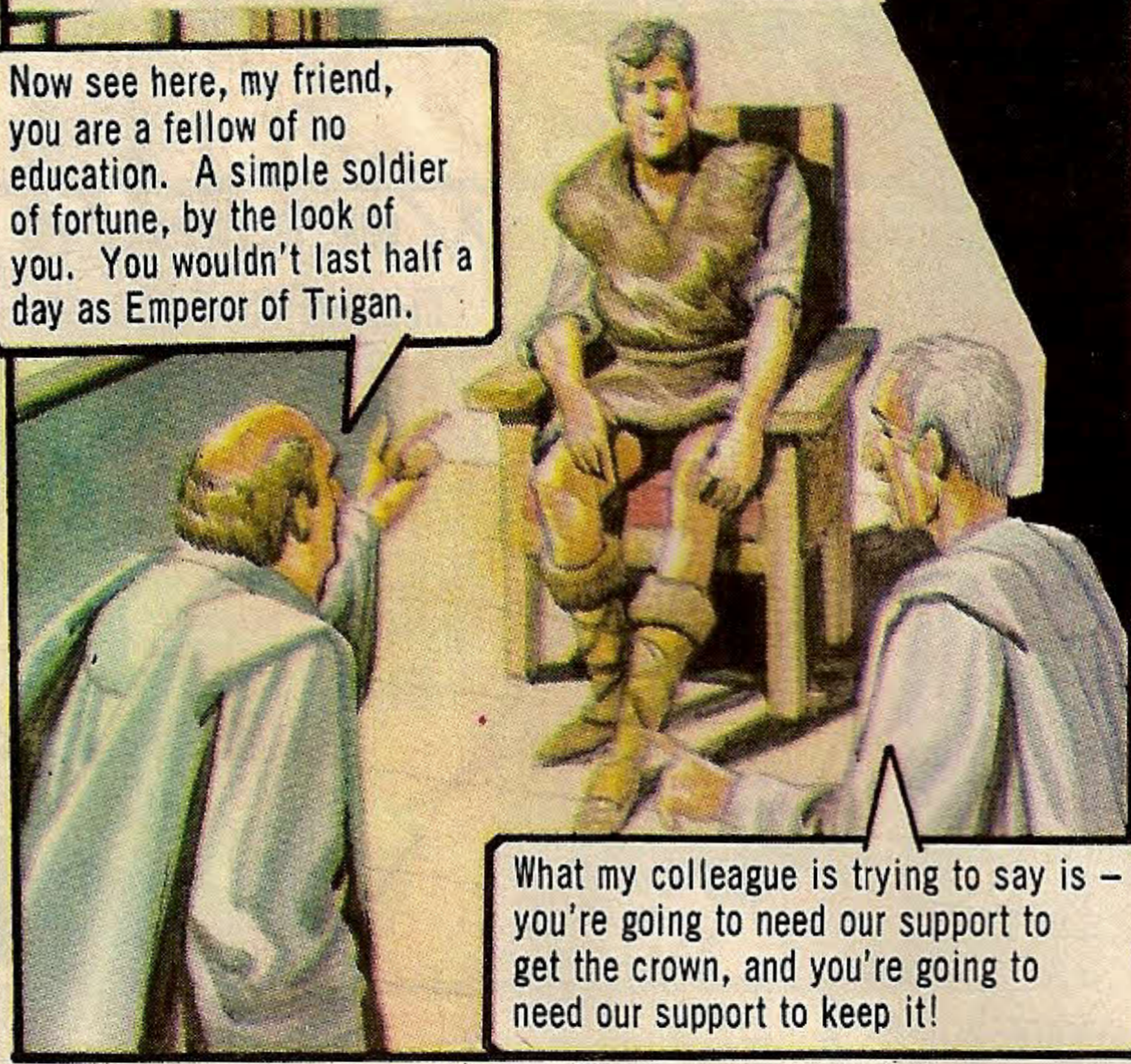
What now?



Before we take the next step, we must assure ourselves that our thick-headed friend is going to co-operate.

The stranger, Z, had been given an apartment in the guards' barracks. Zacho and Serro visited him there.

Now see here, my friend, you are a fellow of no education. A simple soldier of fortune, by the look of you. You wouldn't last half a day as Emperor of Trigan.



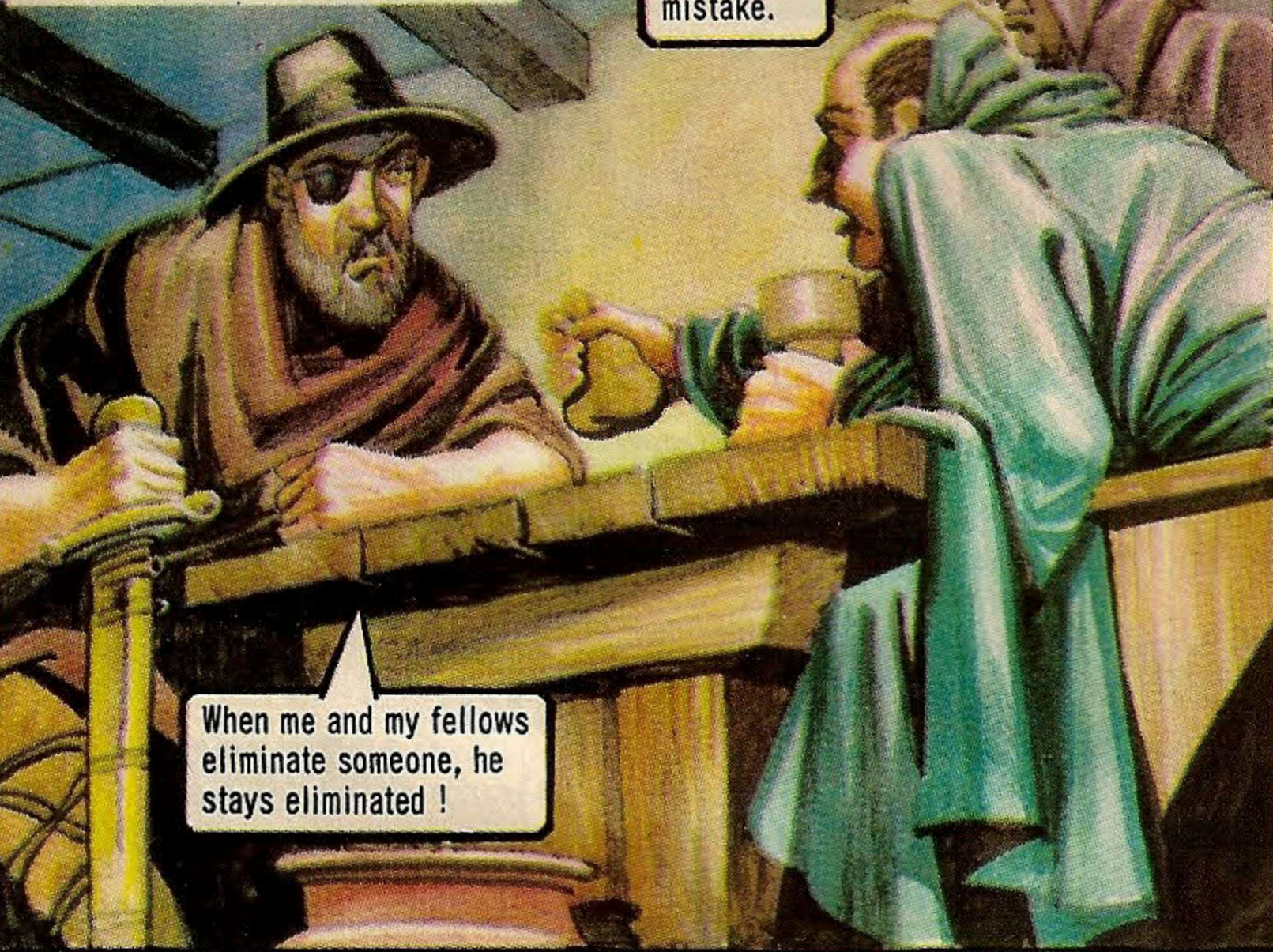
What my colleague is trying to say is - you're going to need our support to get the crown, and you're going to need our support to keep it!



I understand. You have me crowned Emperor, and you will be rewarded.

That night, in a seedy quarter of the city, money changed hands.

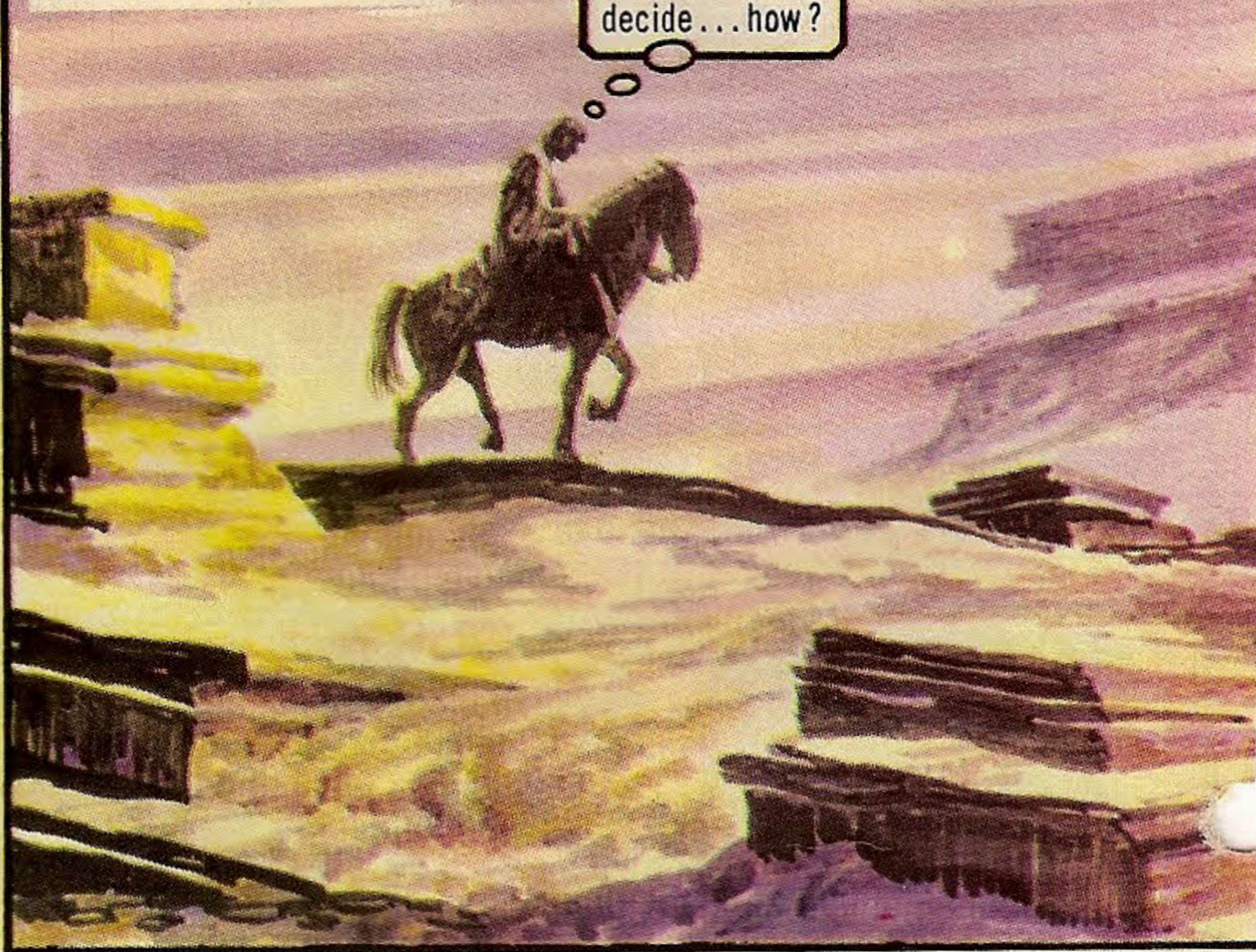
There must be no mistake.



When me and my fellows eliminate someone, he stays eliminated!

At dawn the following day, Trigo was far into the rolling wilderness of Vorg.

How shall I decide... how?



They were upon him before he had time to defend himself.

The Emperor of the Trigans was struck from his mount.



Yaaaaaaa!

Cut him down!



A stranger called Z has smashed the Stone of Vorg with his bare fist. An ancient prophecy says that such a person shall become Emperor of the Trigans, and two unscrupulous politicians scheme to make sure that this comes true.

TRIGAN EMPIRE

At midday, Imperial Guards roughly drove people from their houses and into the great square of the city.

Hey! What's going on?

Why are we being treated like animals?

By order of the Imperial Council, all citizens are to assemble to hear an important proclamation.

Later, one of the conspirators, Zacho, spoke to the people.

It is the will of the Imperial Council that, as Trigo has declared that he would relinquish his Imperial Crown to he who smashed the Stone of Vorg, the stranger called Z be crowned Emperor.

Janno's voice rose in angry protest!

That's not true! My uncle did not say he would give away his crown unconditionally. We must await his return from the wilderness!

Zacho hissed to the guards' commander...

Have him struck down... and earn yourself promotion.

Instantly, my lord!

Janno was silenced... and his father with him!

By all the stars!

Not so fast, Lord Brag!

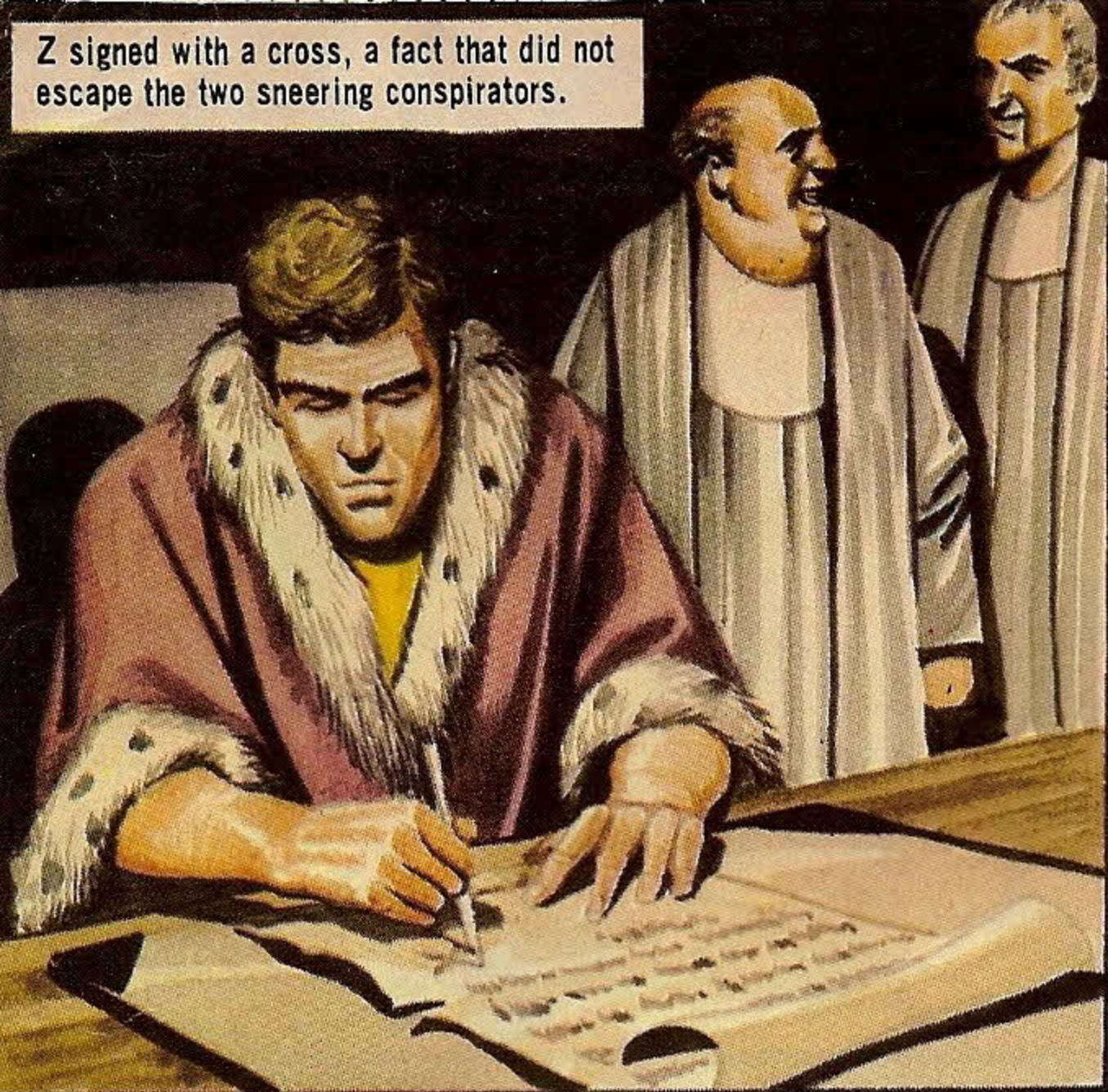
Uuuugh!

There was no further protest. Before the eyes of the assembled multitude, the stranger who had come out of the wilderness was crowned with the Imperial diadem of the Trigan Empire.

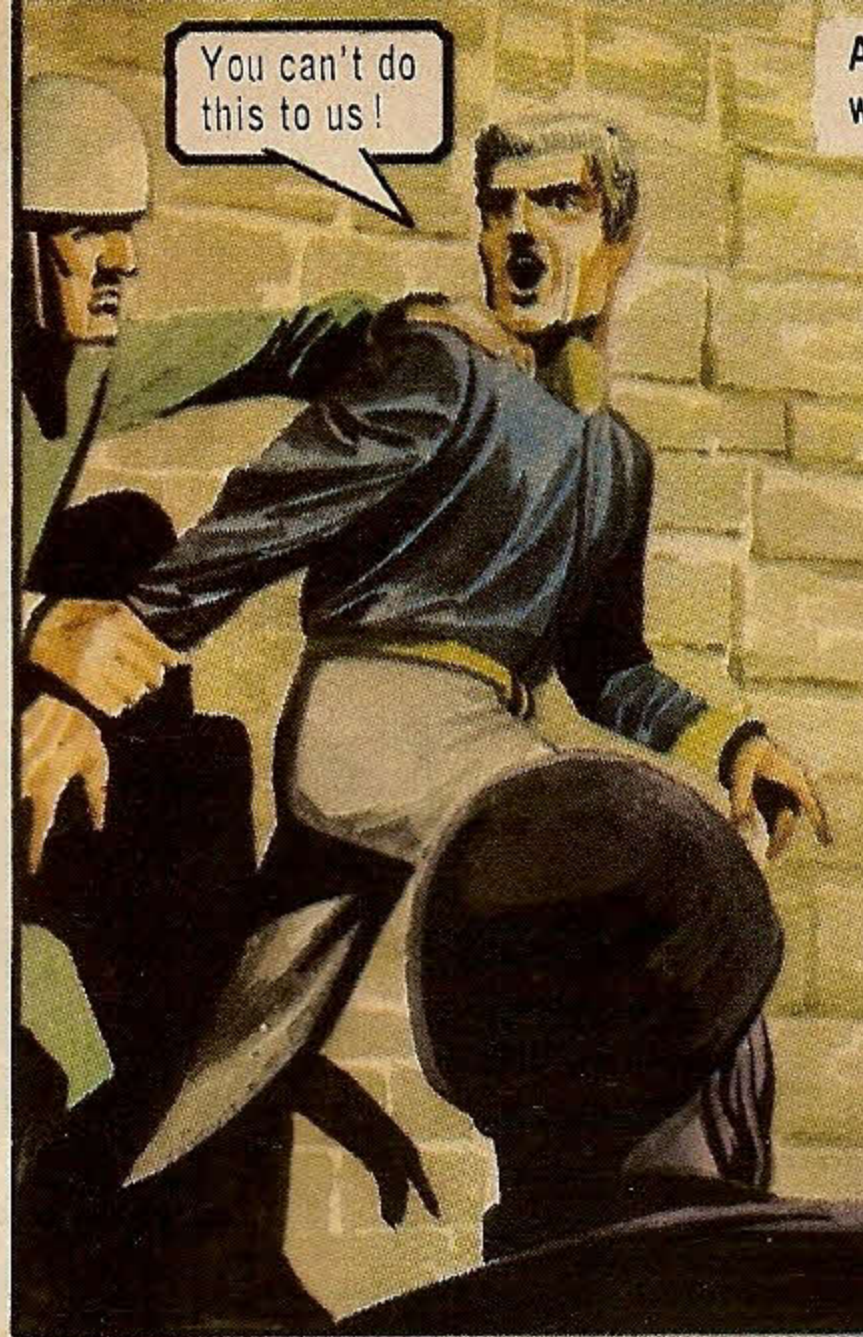
By virtue of the authority of the Imperial Council, I proclaim you Lord of life and death over the peoples of the empire!

Immediately after the ceremony, Zacho and Serro brought their "puppet Emperor" to his study.

We expect no trouble from the rest of the council, but the former Imperial Family must be put under restraint. Here is an order to that effect. If your Majesty will please sign...



Z signed with a cross, a fact that did not escape the two sneering conspirators.



You can't do this to us!



Throw them in here.

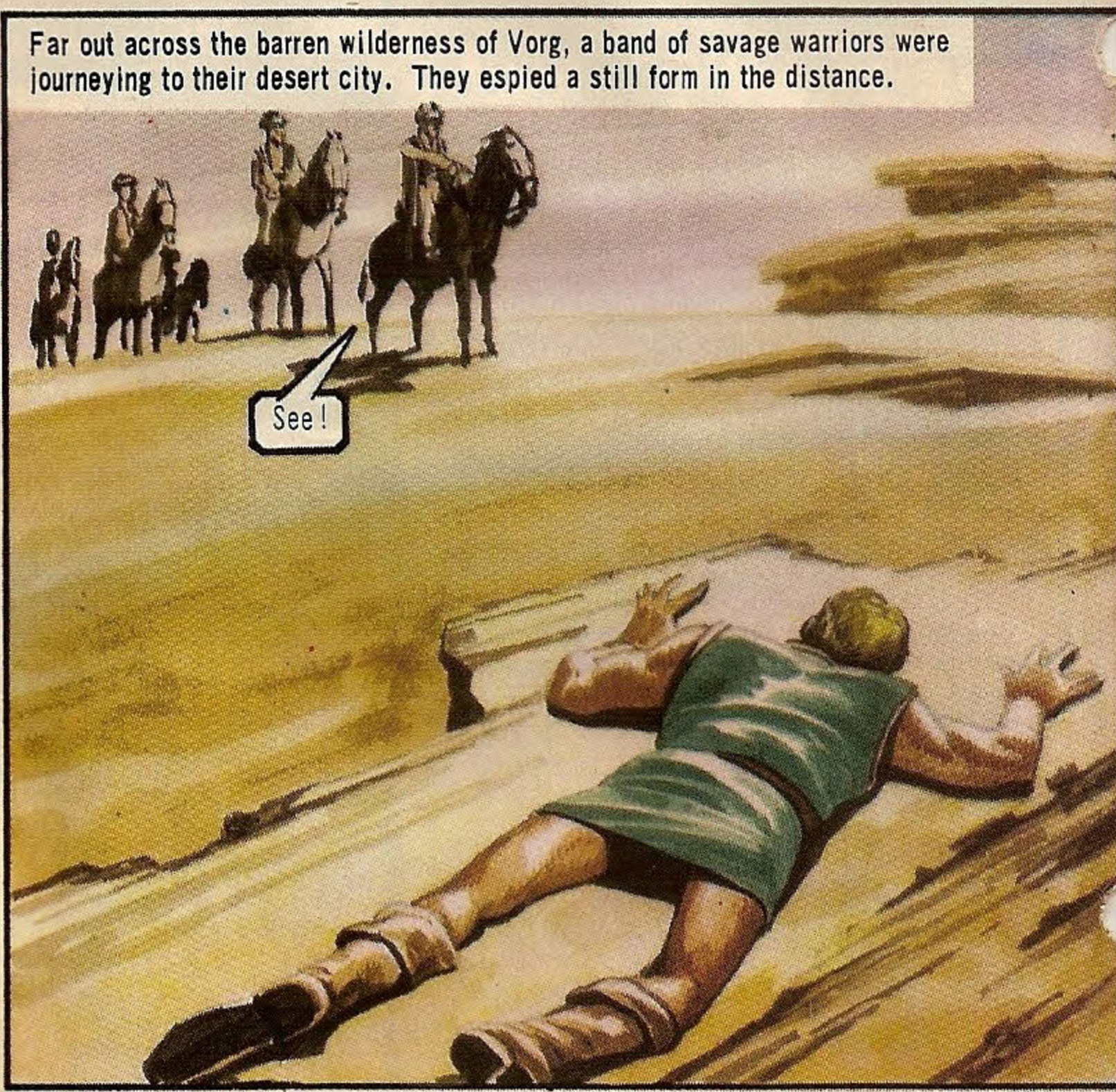
As a result of the Imperial order, Janno and Brag were taken to the dank vaults beneath the palace...



Father and son were hurled into a dark cell, there to brood over the fate of the empire.

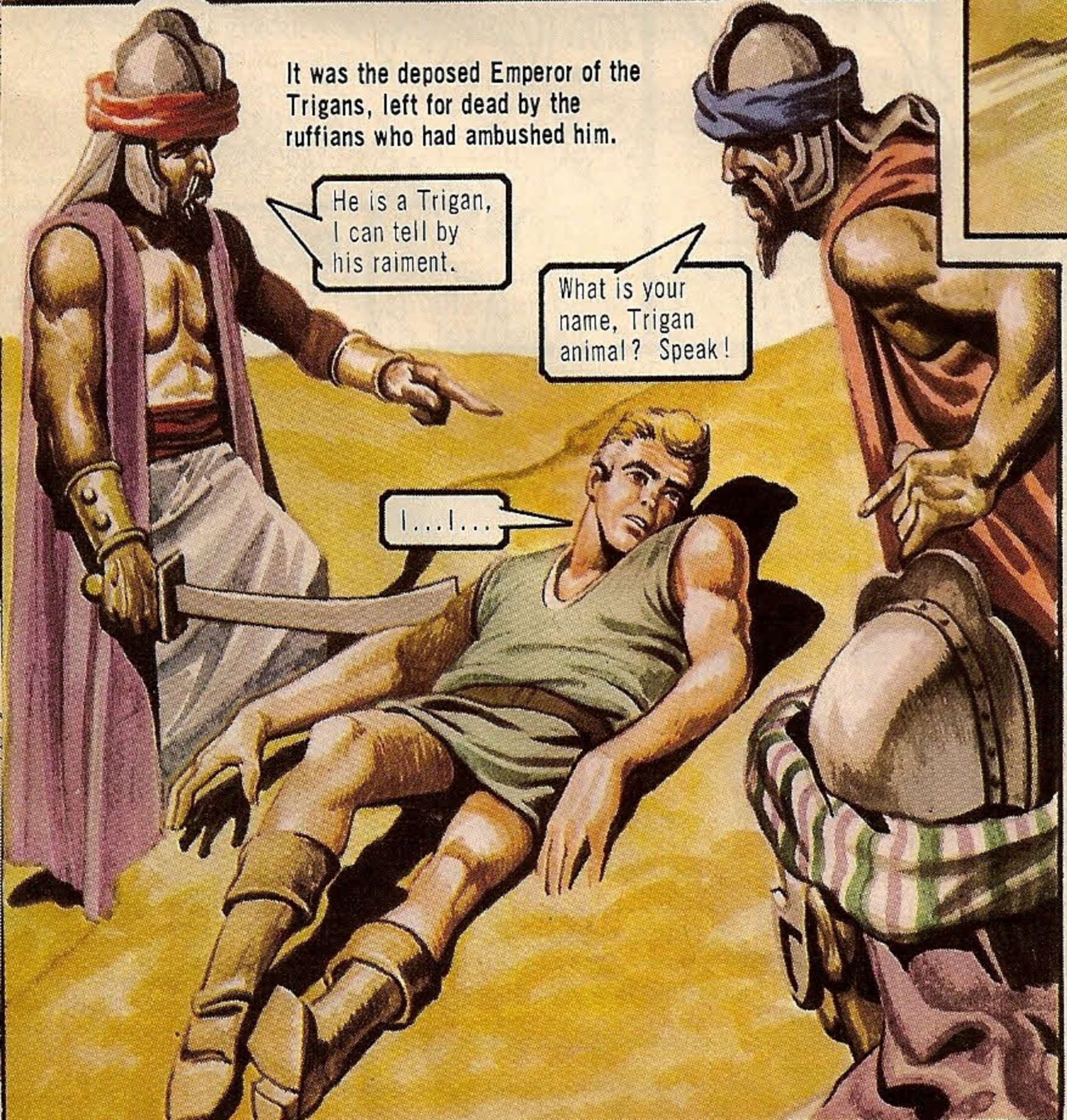
What will happen to Uncle Trigo when he returns?

If he returns. I've a feeling that they've done for him already!



Far out across the barren wilderness of Vorg, a band of savage warriors were journeying to their desert city. They espied a still form in the distance.

See!

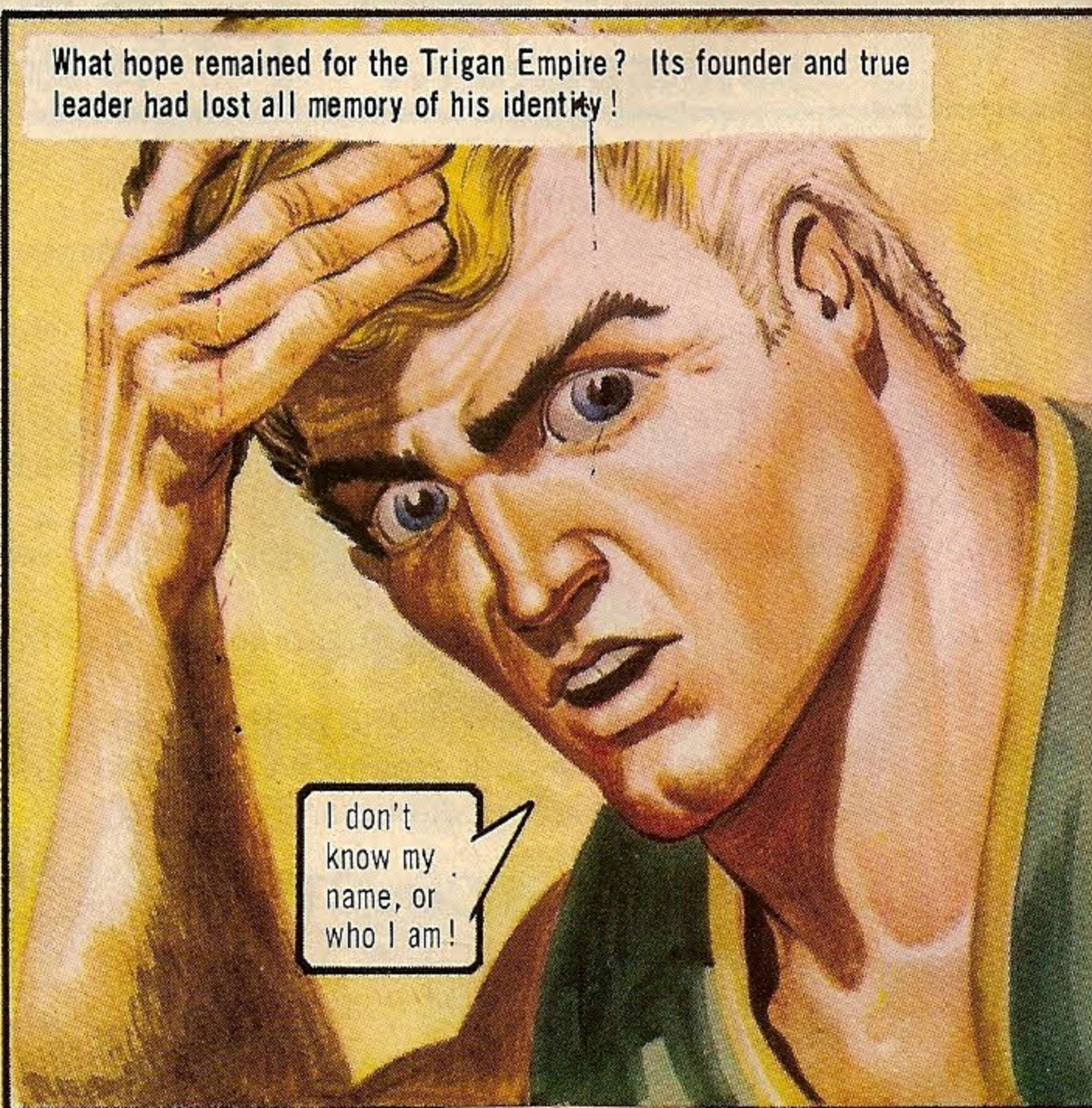


It was the deposed Emperor of the Trigans, left for dead by the ruffians who had ambushed him.

He is a Trigan, I can tell by his raiment.

What is your name, Trigan animal? Speak!

.....



What hope remained for the Trigan Empire? Its founder and true leader had lost all memory of his identity!

I don't know my name, or who I am!

The wild and desert plains of Vorg where he is ambushed by a tribe in the pay of unscrupulous politicians, Zacho and Serro. With their help, the stranger who calls himself simply "Z" has been crowned in Trigo's place.

TRIGAN EMPIRE

The ring of blade on blade resounded through the great courtyard of the Imperial Palace.



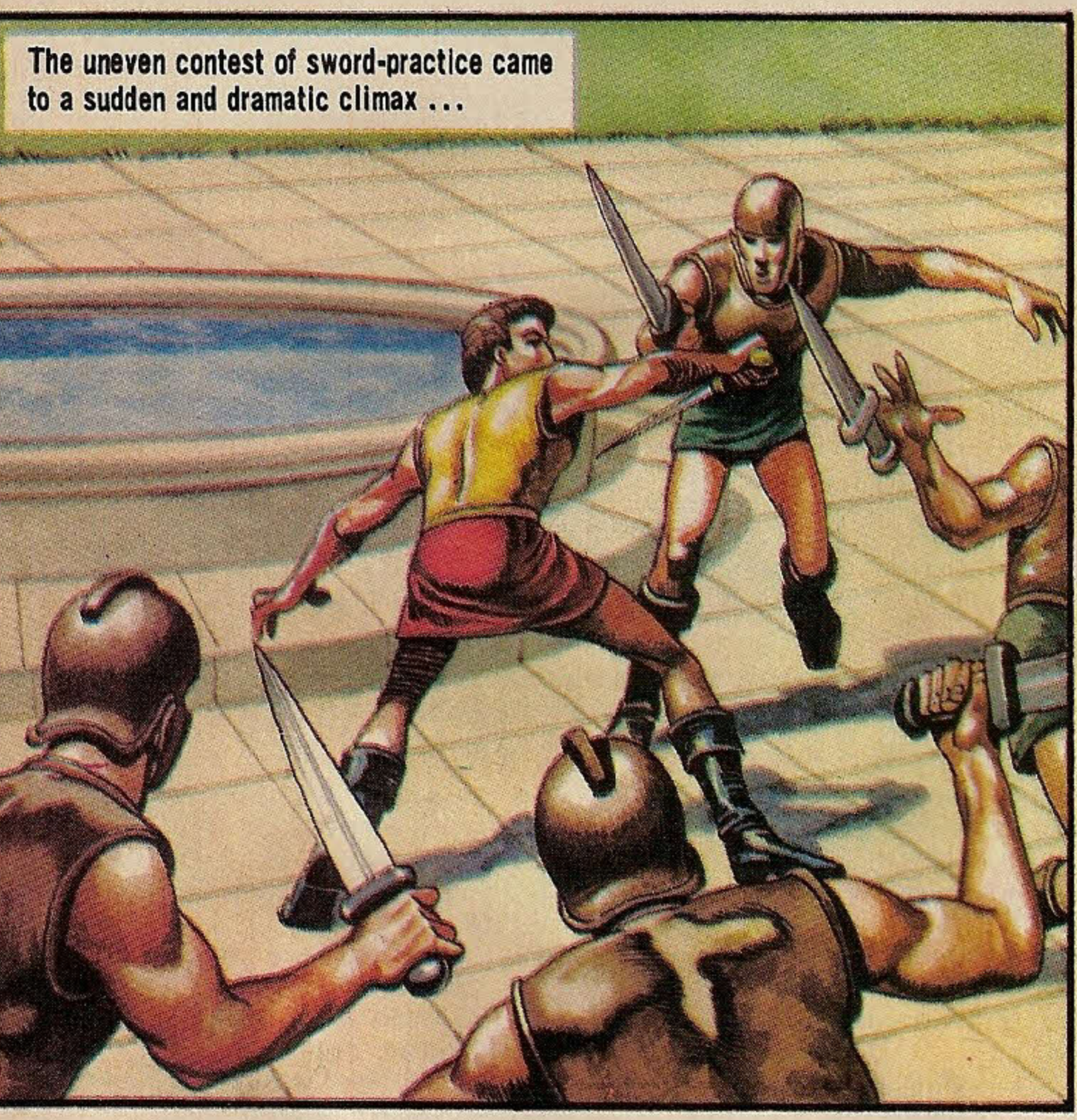
The rascally Zacho and Serro watched from a balcony above.



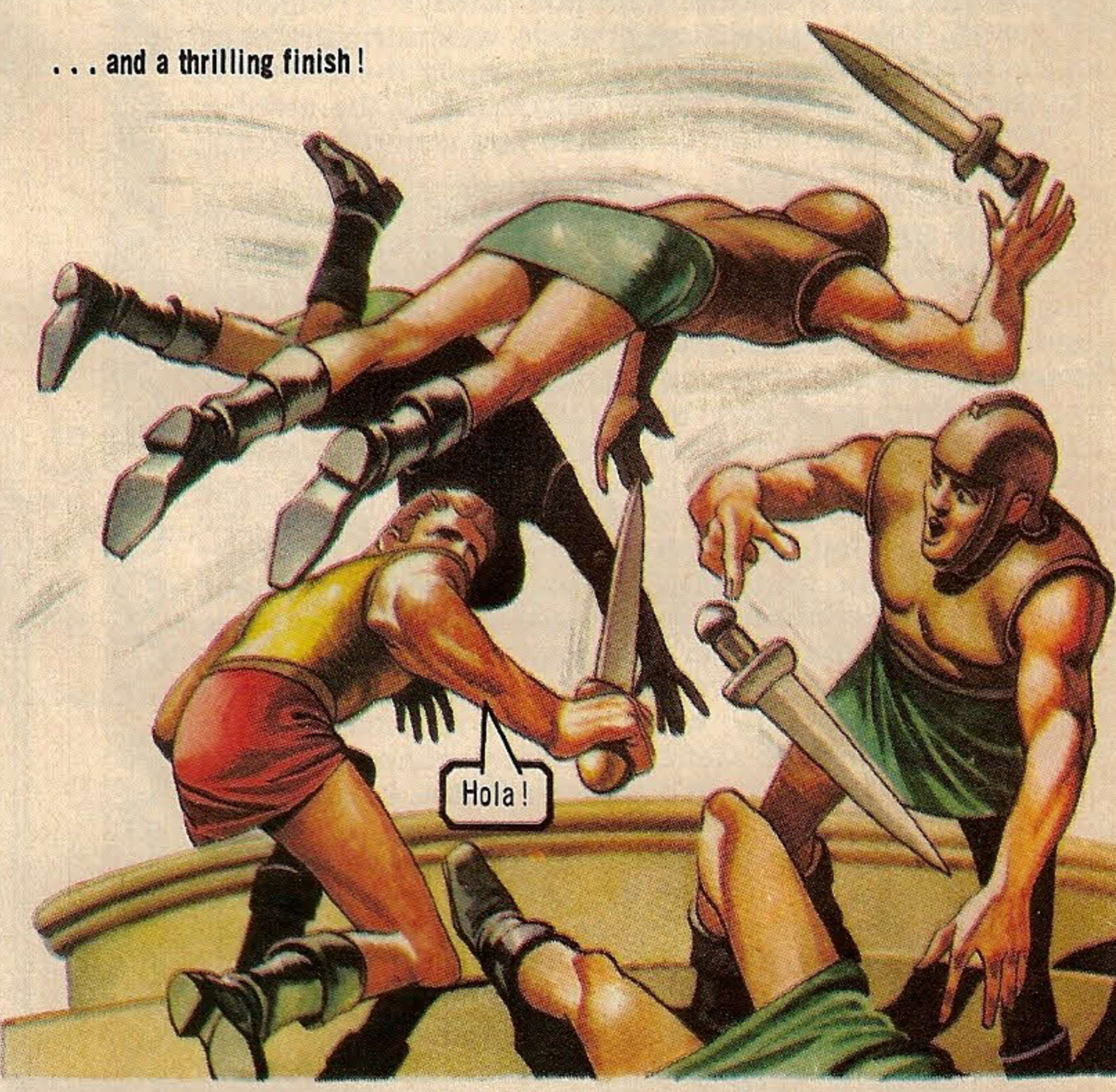
Our fine new Emperor knows how to defend himself.

He is all brawn and no intelligence. The fellow can neither read nor write, and he will put his signature to anything.

The uneven contest of sword-practice came to a sudden and dramatic climax ...



... and a thrilling finish!



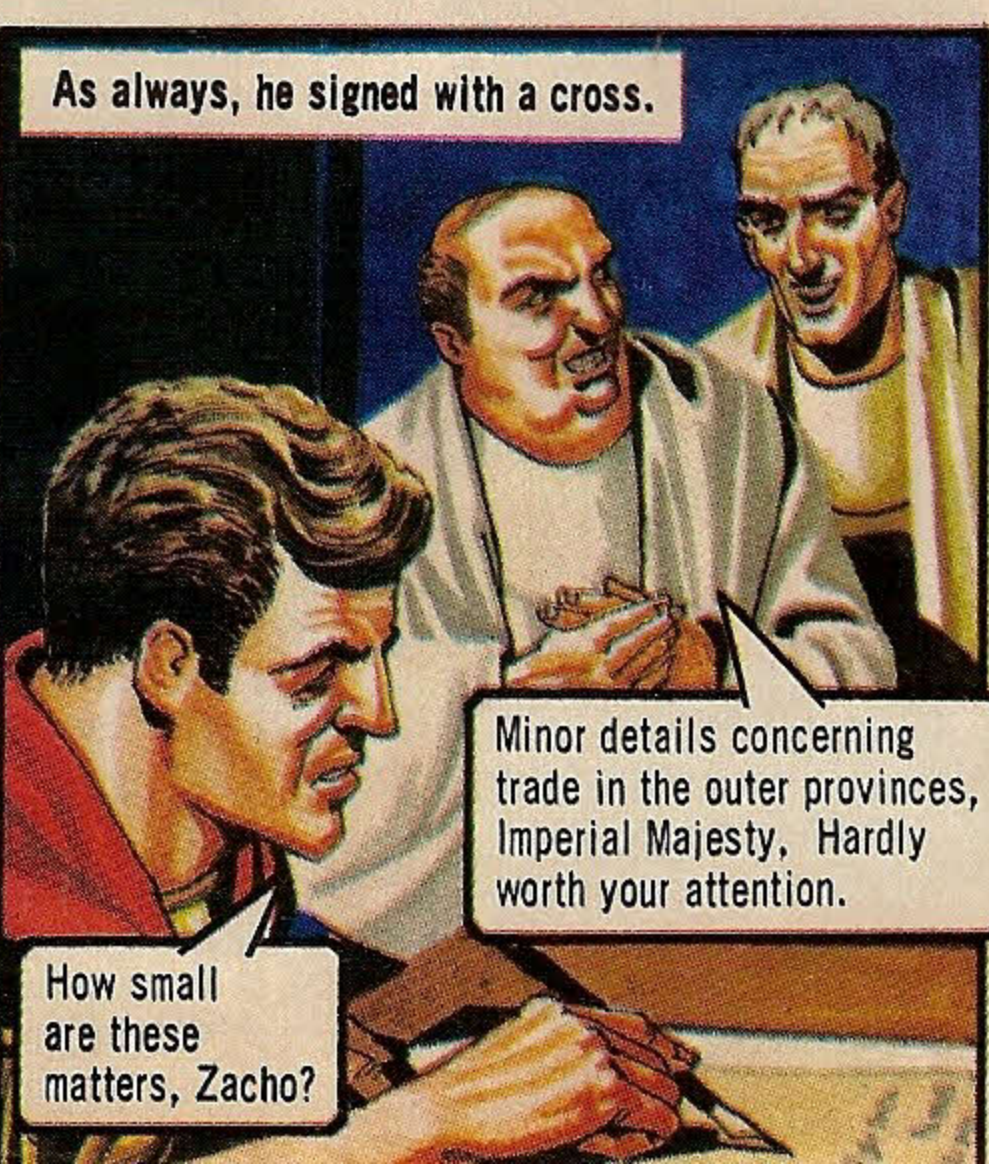
After sword-practice, the new Emperor attended to business of state.



Two small matters requiring your signature, Imperial Majesty.

Oh, yes...

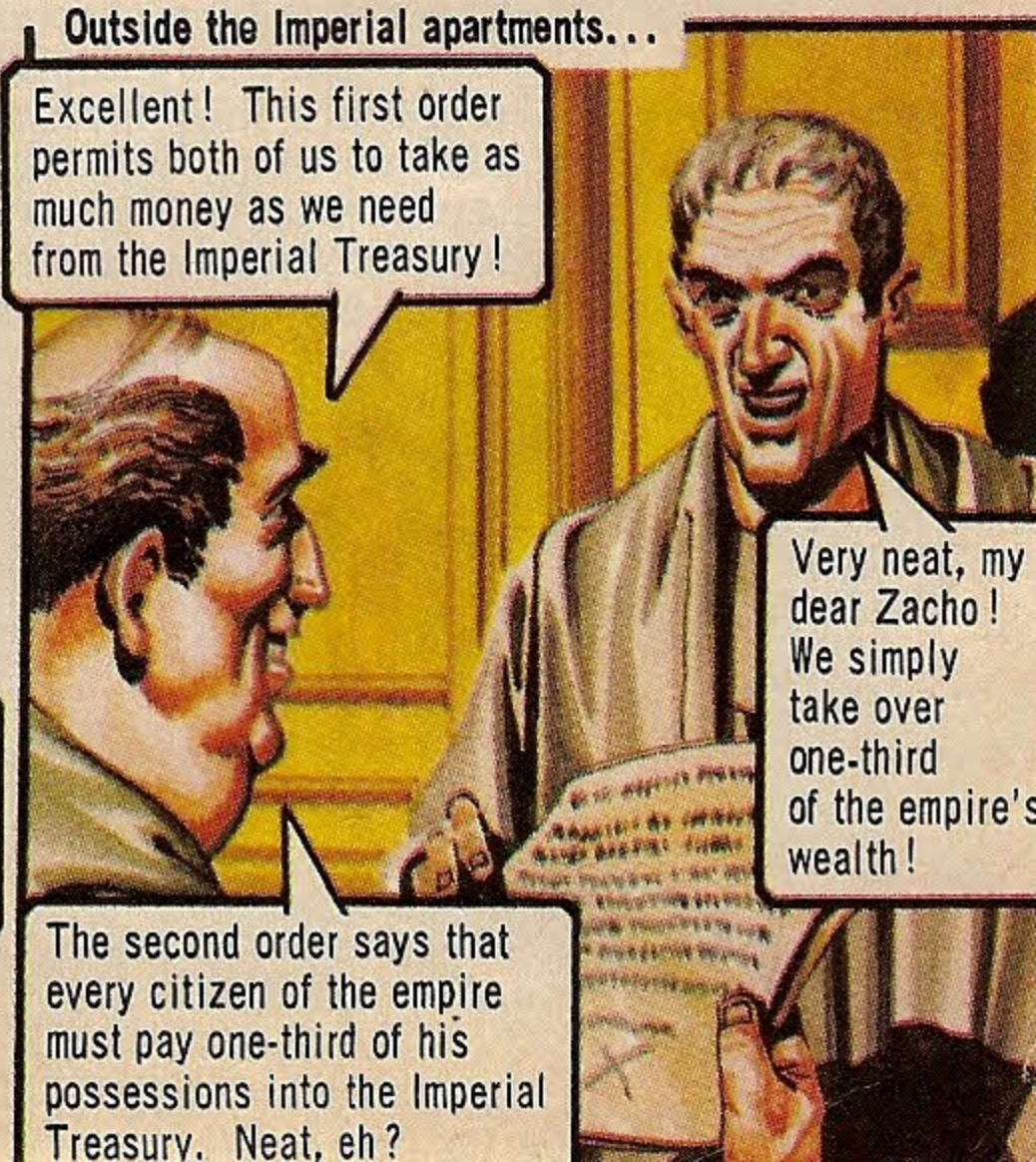
As always, he signed with a cross.



Minor details concerning trade in the outer provinces, Imperial Majesty, Hardly worth your attention.

How small are these matters, Zacho?

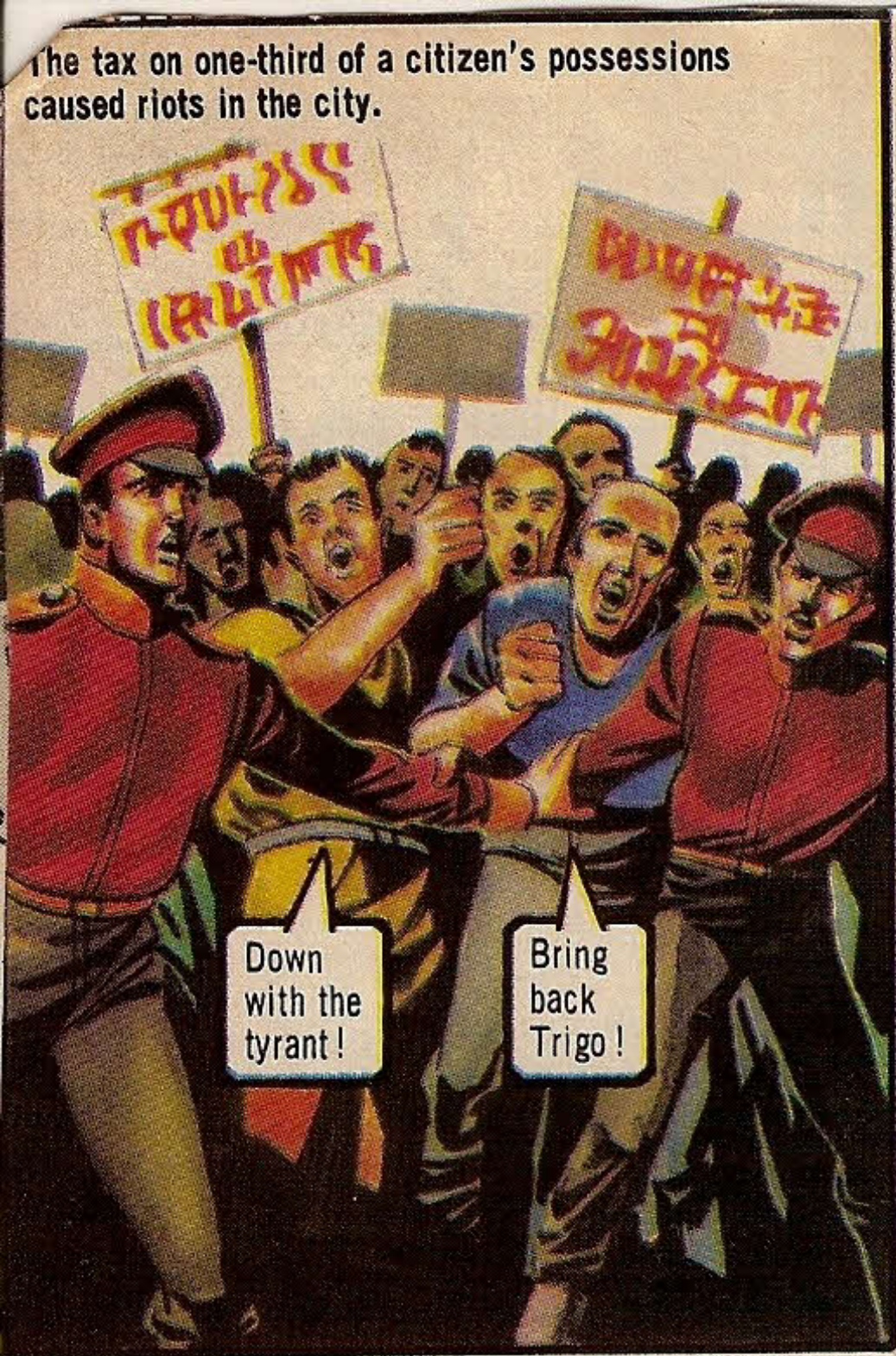
Outside the Imperial apartments...



Excellent! This first order permits both of us to take as much money as we need from the Imperial Treasury!

Very neat, my dear Zacho! We simply take over one-third of the empire's wealth!

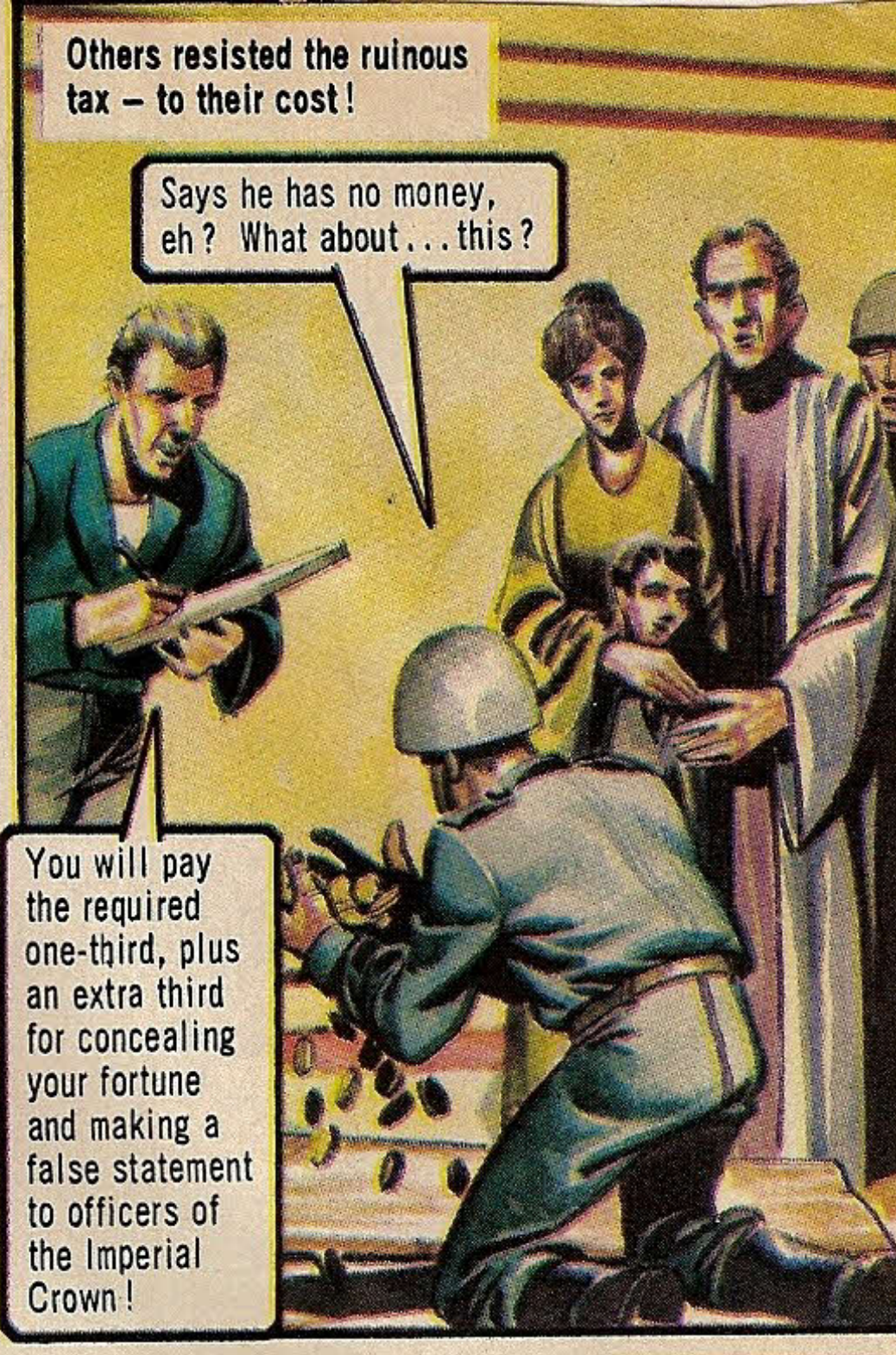
The second order says that every citizen of the empire must pay one-third of his possessions into the Imperial Treasury. Neat, eh?



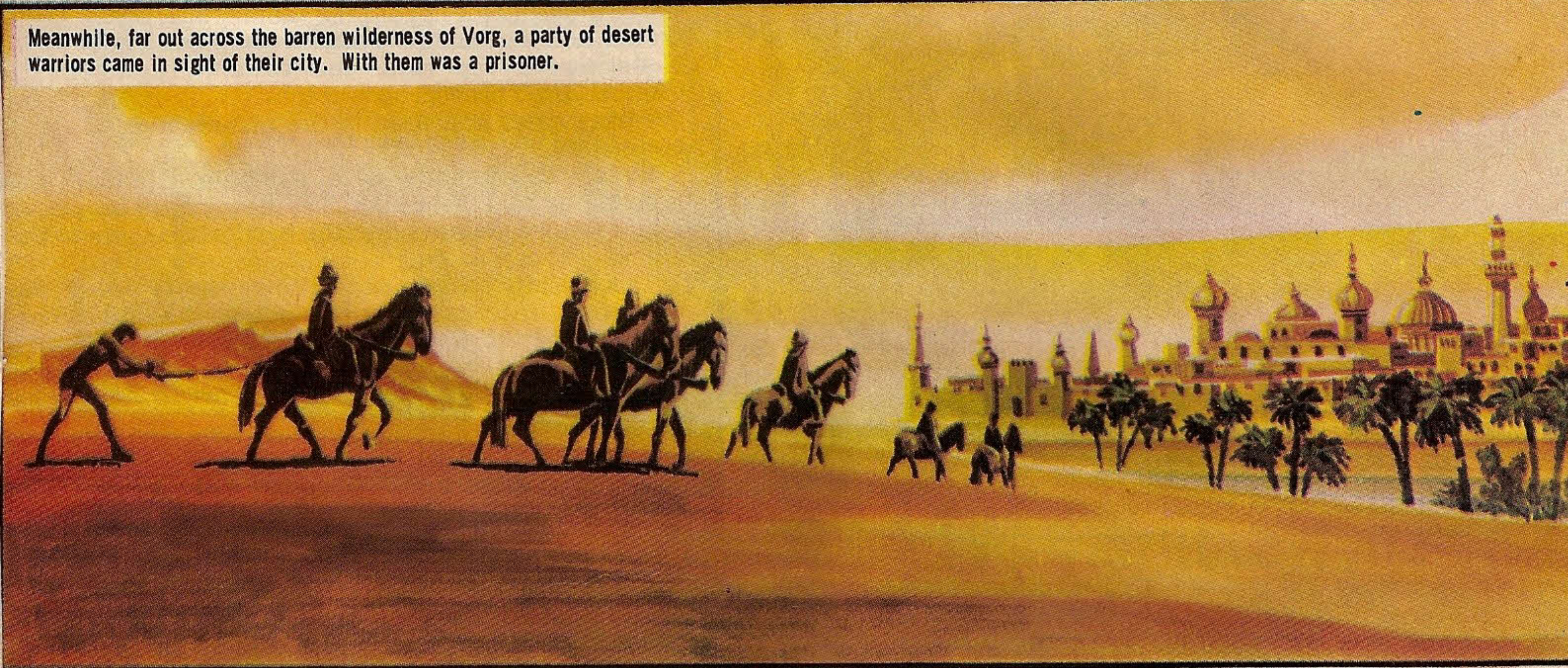
The tax on one-third of a citizen's possessions caused riots in the city.



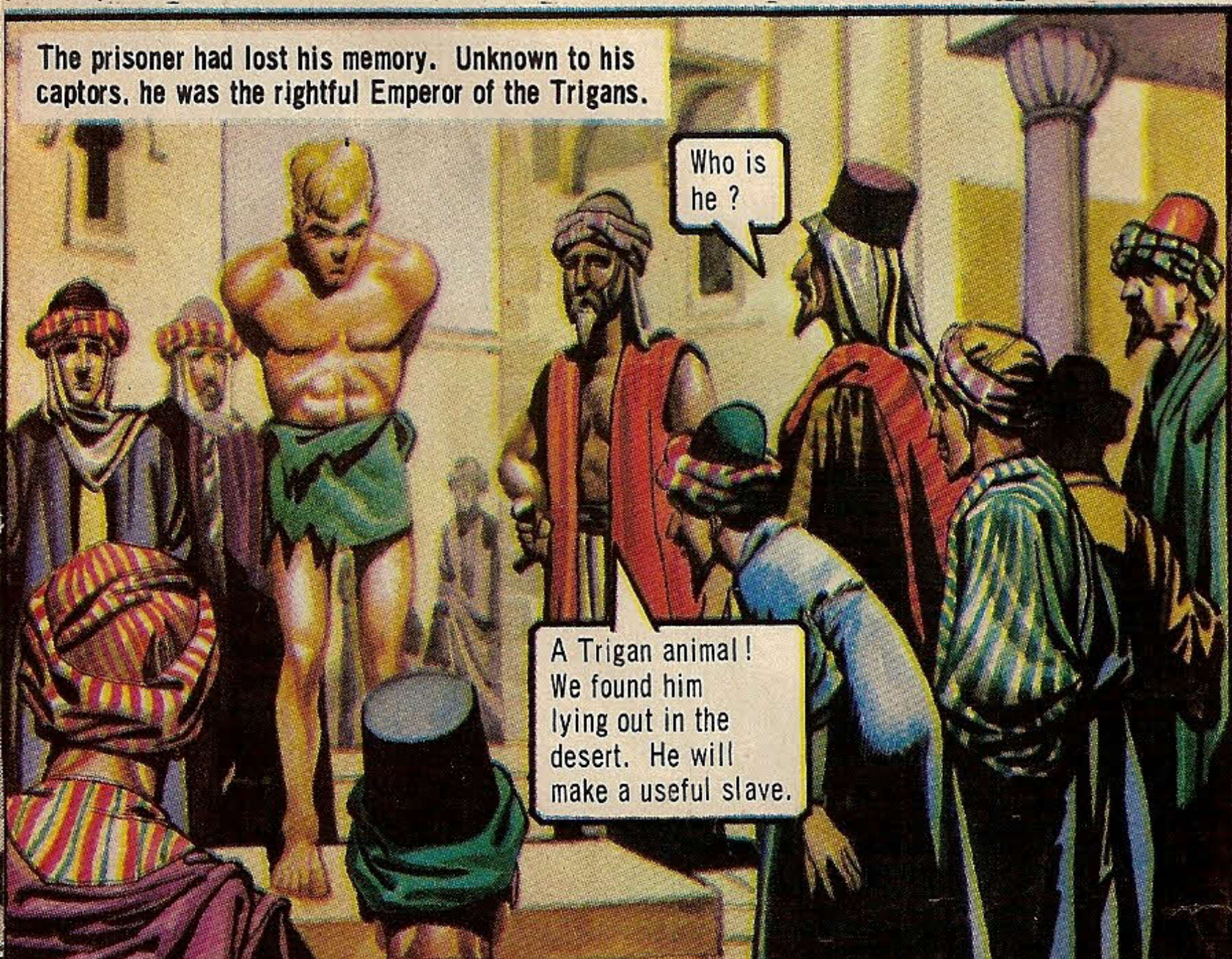
In the end, everybody paid. Some paid peacefully, but with reluctance.



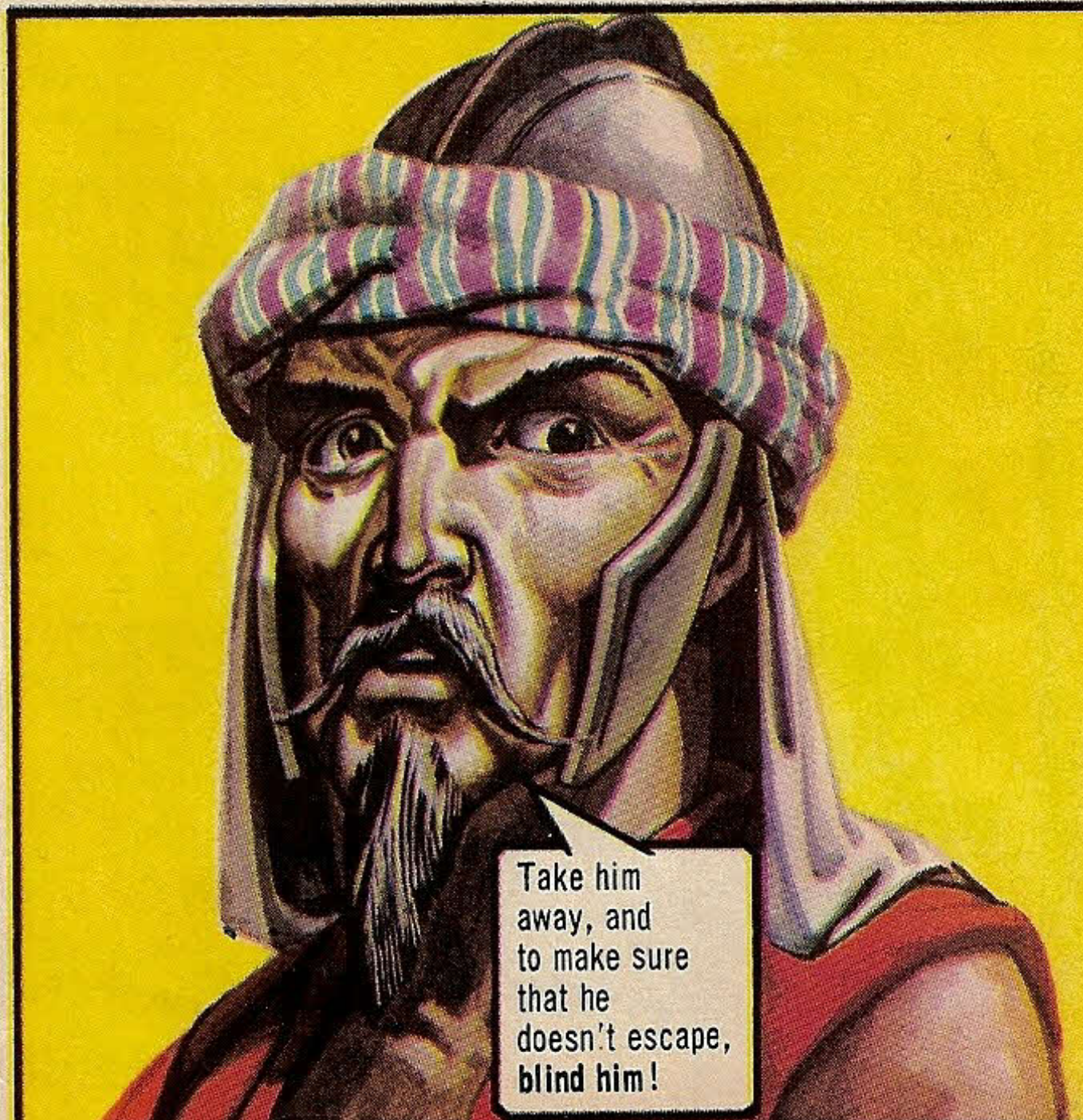
Others resisted the ruinous tax - to their cost!



Meanwhile, far out across the barren wilderness of Vorg, a party of desert warriors came in sight of their city. With them was a prisoner.



The prisoner had lost his memory. Unknown to his captors, he was the rightful Emperor of the Trigans.

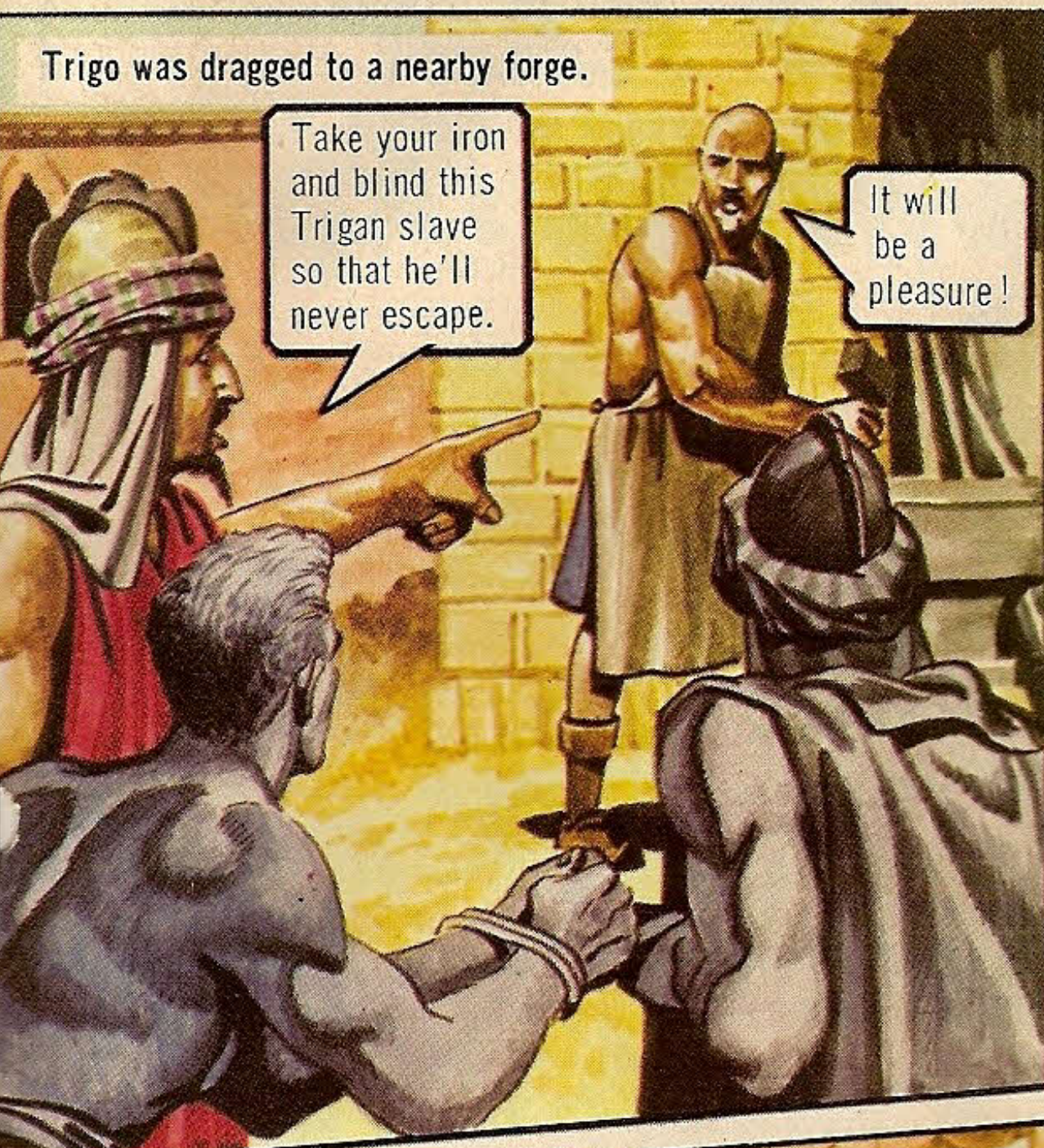


Take him away, and to make sure that he doesn't escape, blind him!

With the aid of a pair of unscrupulous politicians, the stranger who calls himself Z has been crowned Emperor of the Trigans. Meanwhile, the true Emperor, Trigo, has lost his memory and is a prisoner of the desert warriors in their far-off city...

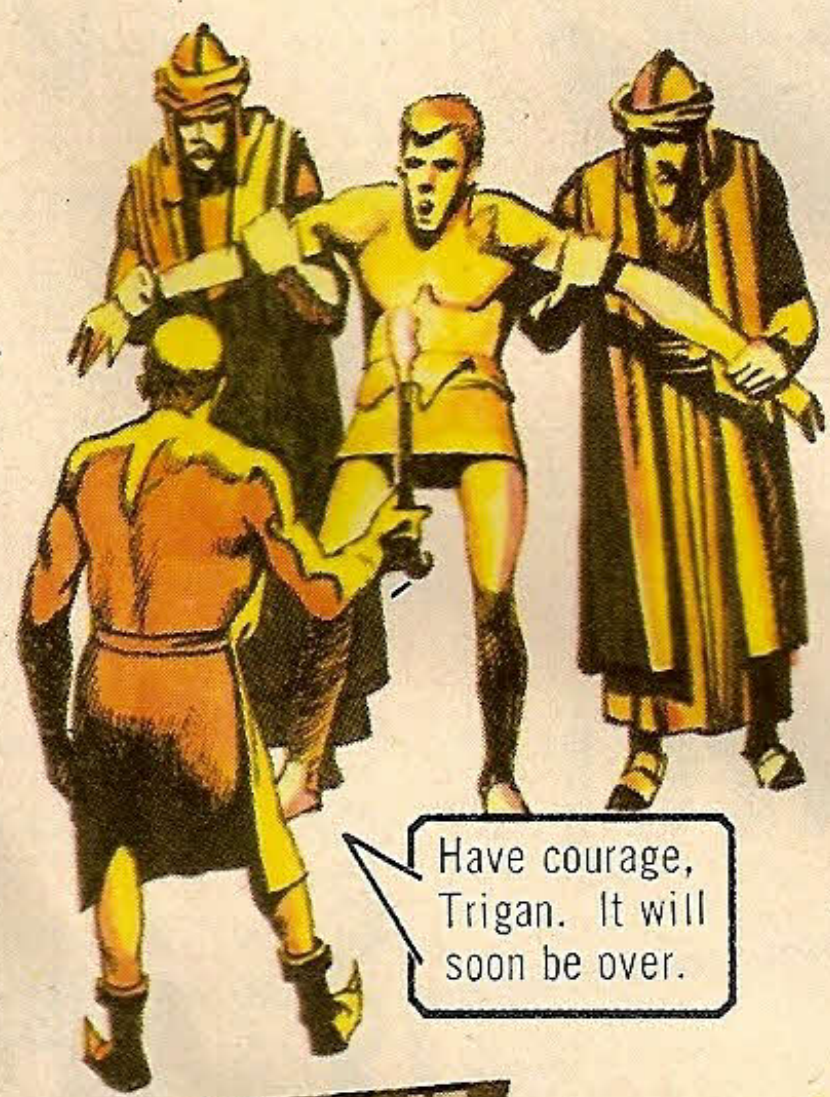
MORE ADVENTURES OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

Trigo was dragged to a nearby forge.



Take your iron and blind this Trigan slave so that he'll never escape.

It will be a pleasure!



Have courage, Trigo. It will soon be over.

And then



Look out!... over there!... the child!

The smith's child was playing among the ashes at the far end of the forge.



The nobra's going to bite the boy!



May my aim be true!

Ha! It is!

Having saved his child from a hideous death, the smith made a bargain with Trigo's captors.



This slave can be useful to me in the forge, with his sight. I'll give you twenty dannars for him.

Twenty dannars? Done! He's yours!

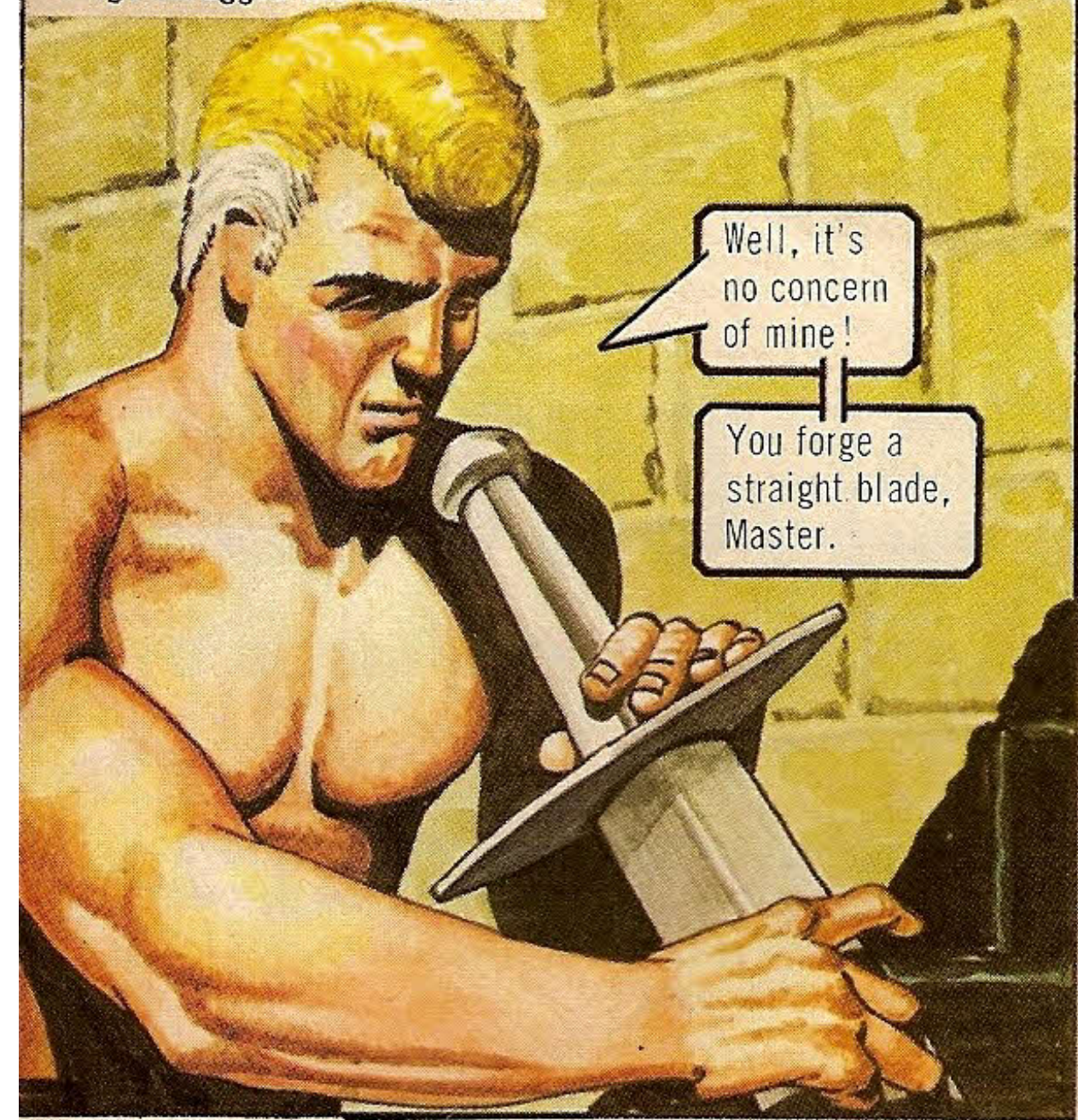
So it was that the Emperor who had lost his memory came to work for an armorer who was forging weapons to be used against his own subjects.



Are your people preparing for war?

Aye! Our leaders plan to invade the provinces of the Trigan Empire.

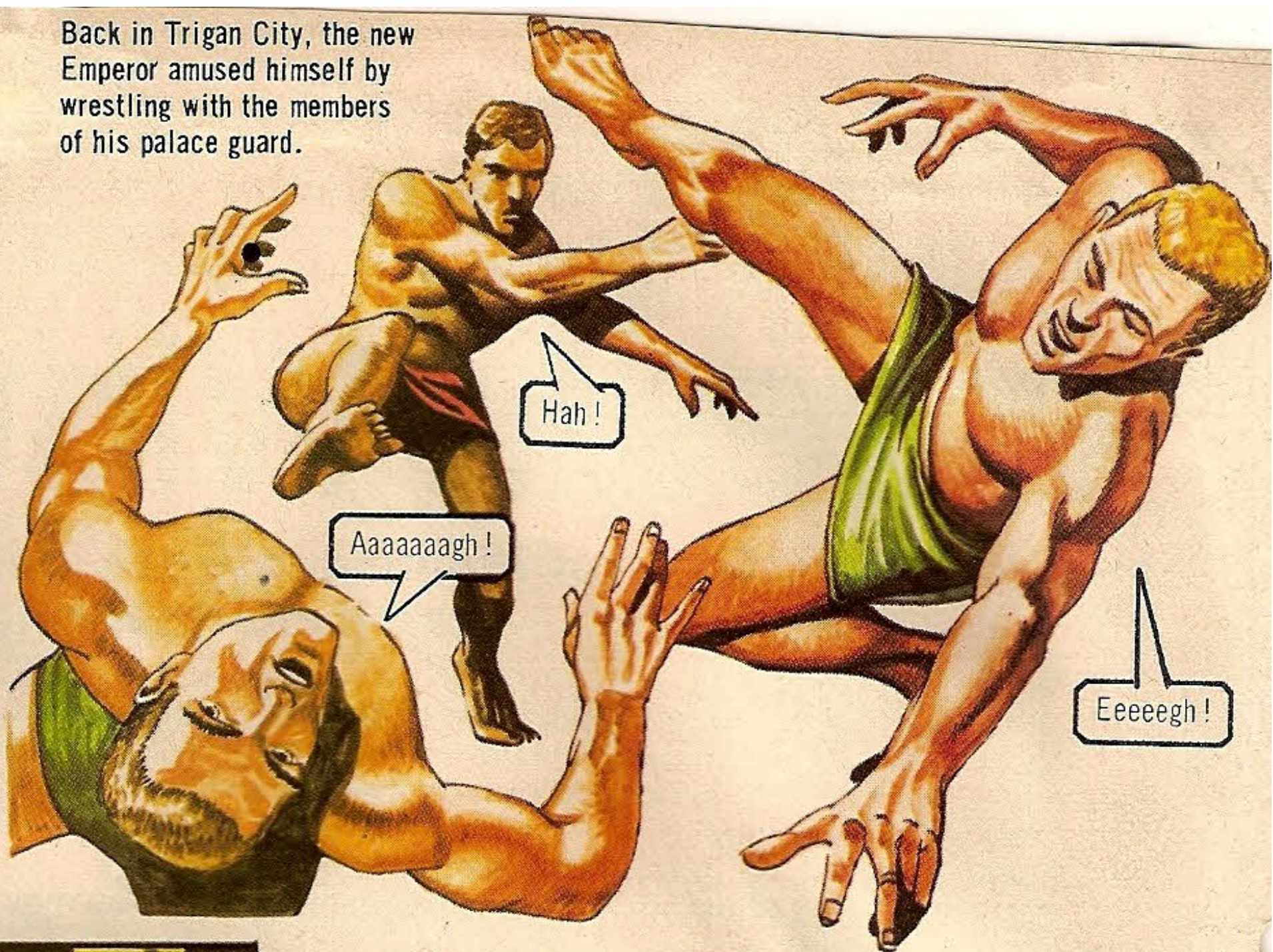
Trigo shrugged his shoulders.



Well, it's no concern of mine!

You forge a straight blade, Master.

Back in Trigan City, the new Emperor amused himself by wrestling with the members of his palace guard.



Hah!

Aaaaaagh!

Eeeeegh!

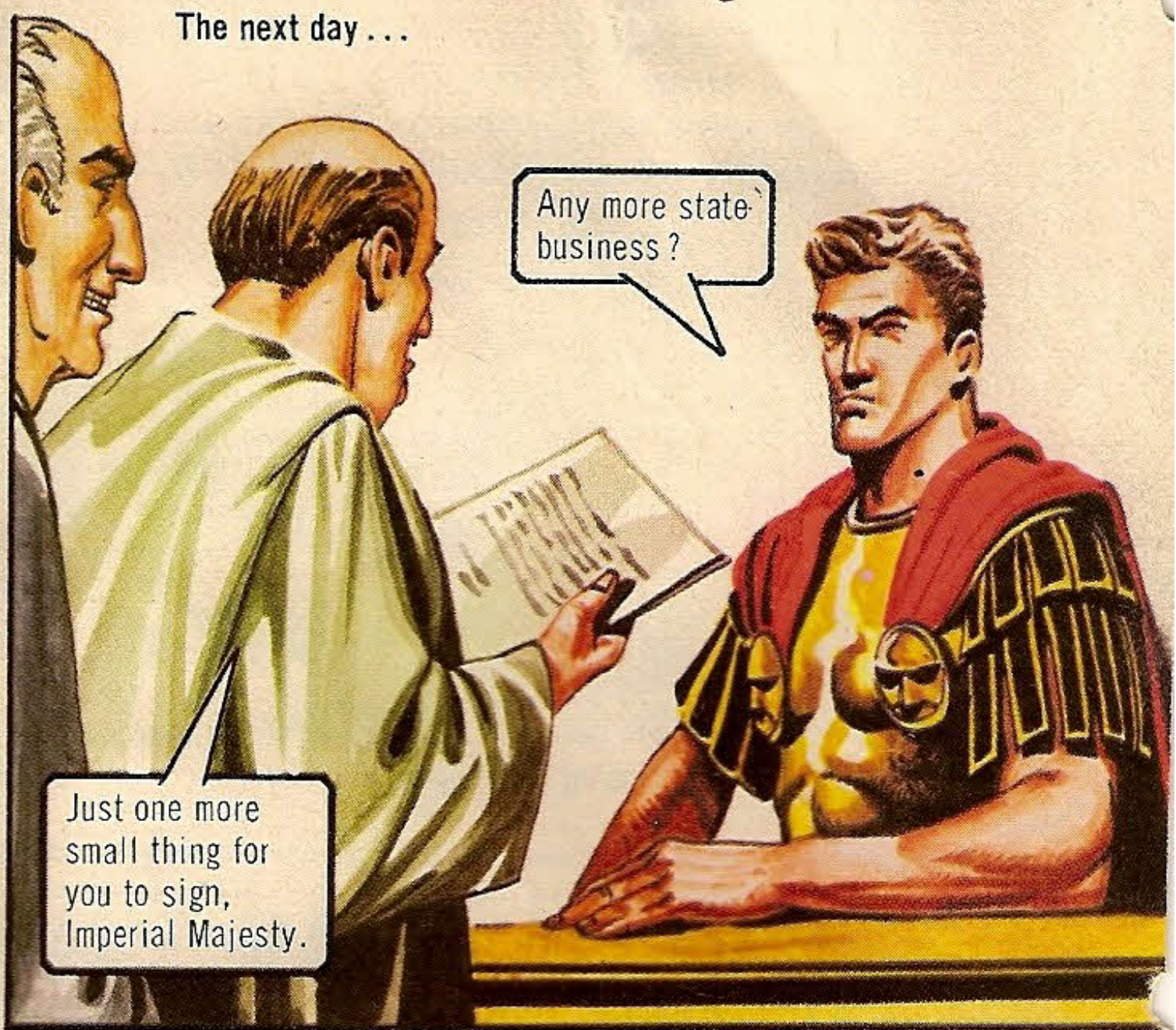
... While the scoundrelly Zacho and Serro continued to feather their nests.



I should like my nephew to become a nobleman of the empire.

Nothing simpler, my dear Serro. Make out the order, and our tame Emperor will sign it without question.

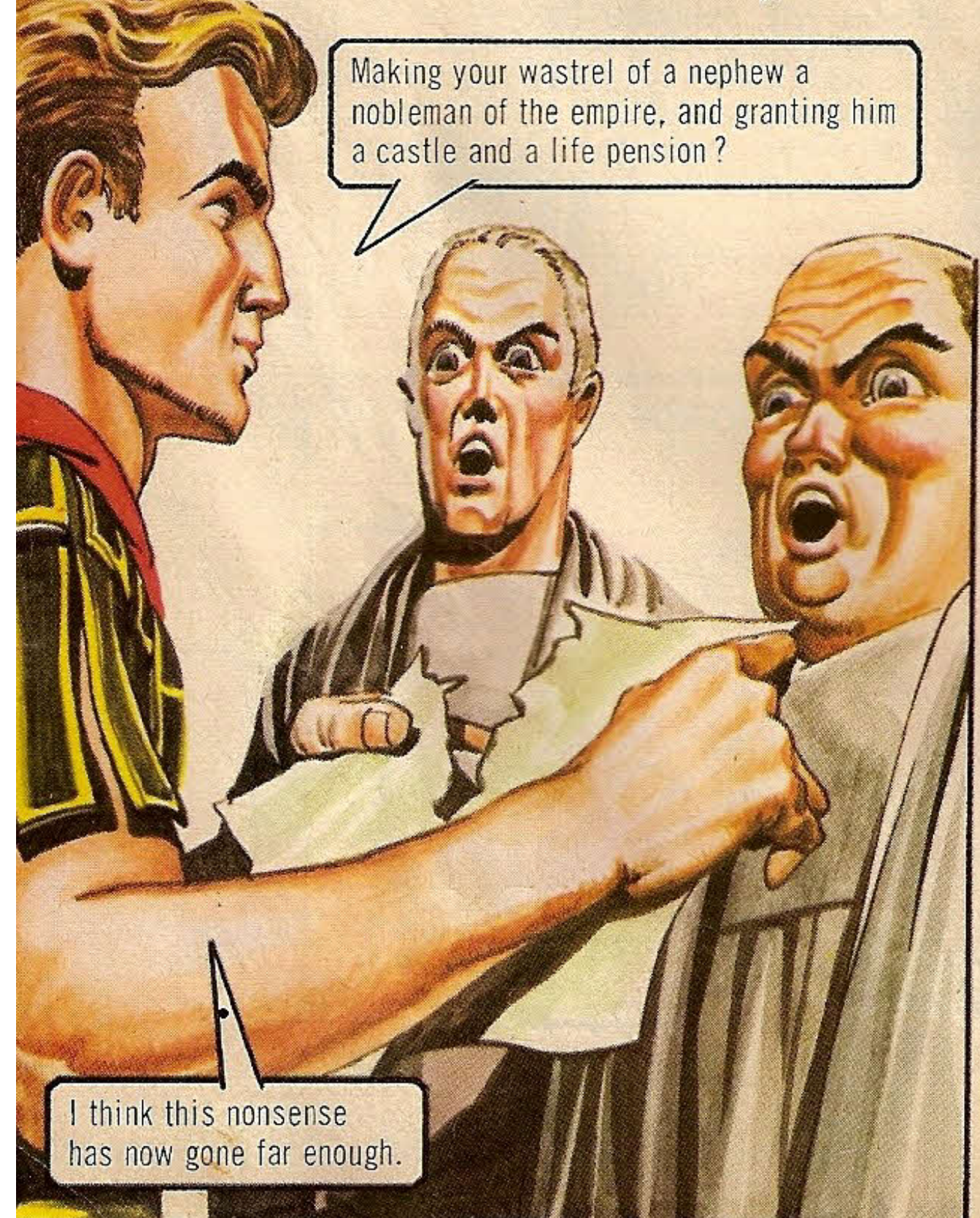
The next day ...



Any more state business?

Just one more small thing for you to sign, Imperial Majesty.

Z scanned the document briefly, and then...



Making your wastrel of a nephew a nobleman of the empire, and granting him a castle and a life pension?

I think this nonsense has now gone far enough.

The Emperor clapped his hands, and a guard came running.



You... you can read!

Of course I can read, you half-wits.

Put these two scoundrels in chains!

While the Emperor works as a slave without a memory in a far-off desert city, the stranger who calls himself Z has been crowned Emperor of the Trigans. Now, surprisingly, he has turned against the crooked politicians who connived at making him ruler of the Trigans.

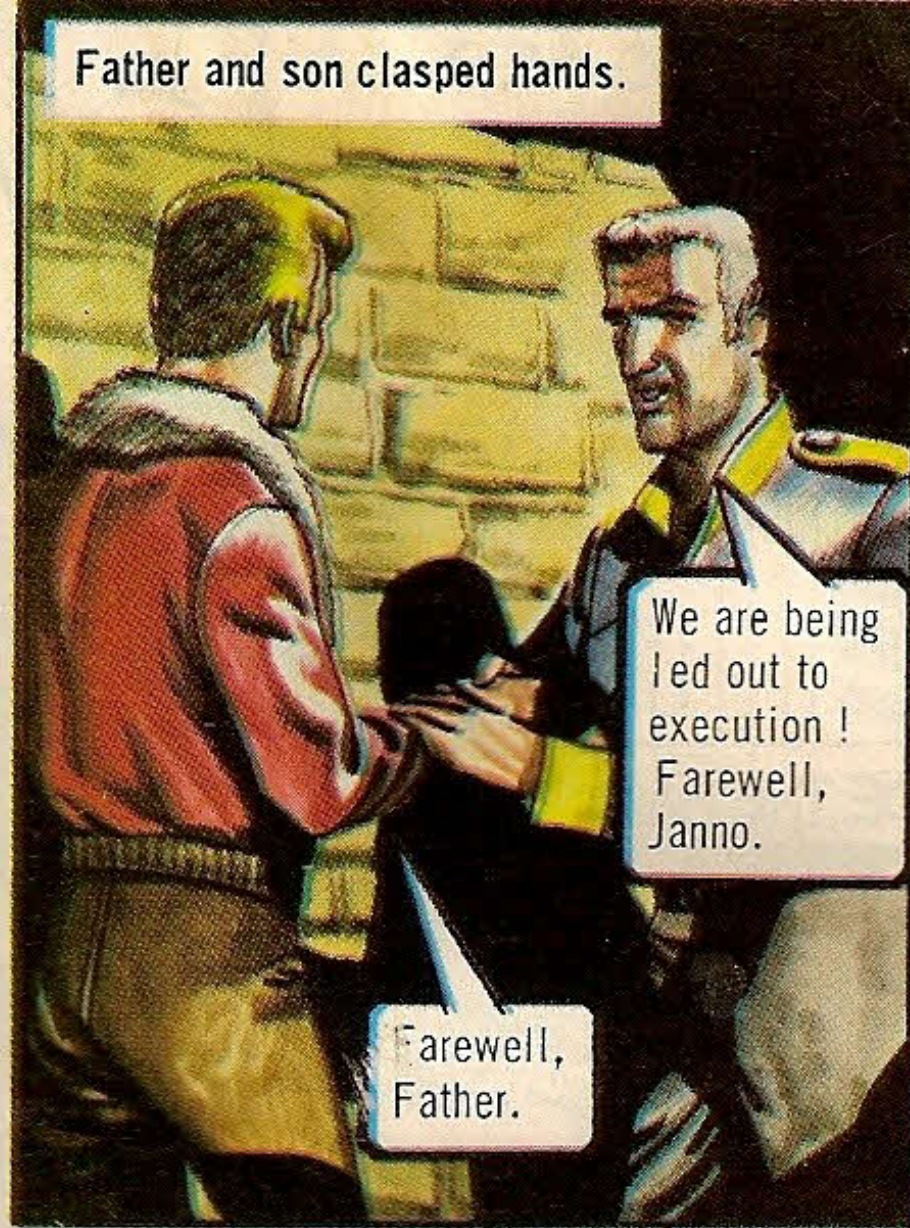
MORE ADVENTURES OF THE

TRIGAN EMPIRE



The door of the dank cell creaked open, and a harsh voice summoned two wretched prisoners.

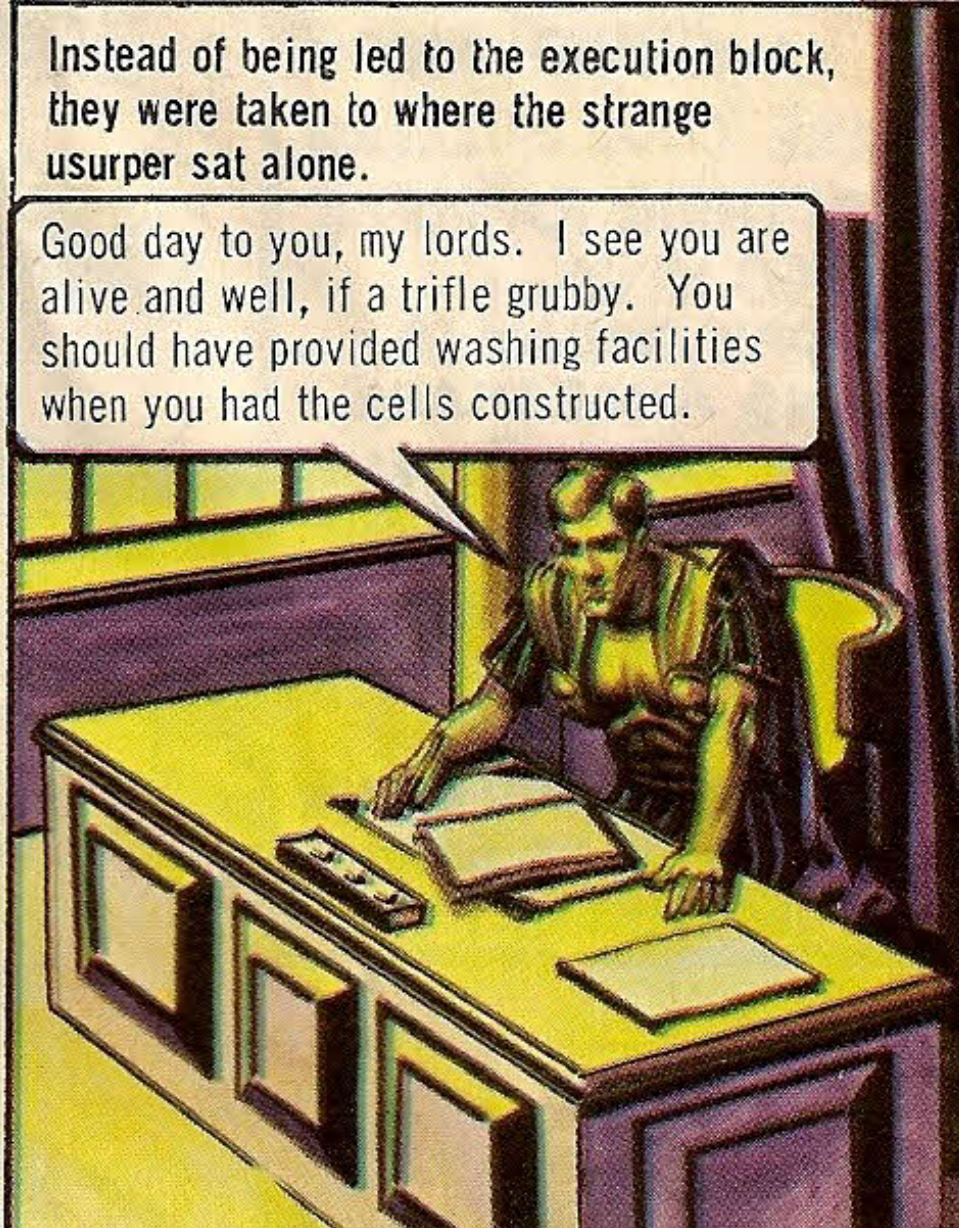
On your feet, Lord Brag and Lord Janno. Your time has come!



Father and son clasped hands.

We are being led out to execution! Farewell, Janno.

Farewell, Father.



Instead of being led to the execution block, they were taken to where the strange usurper sat alone.

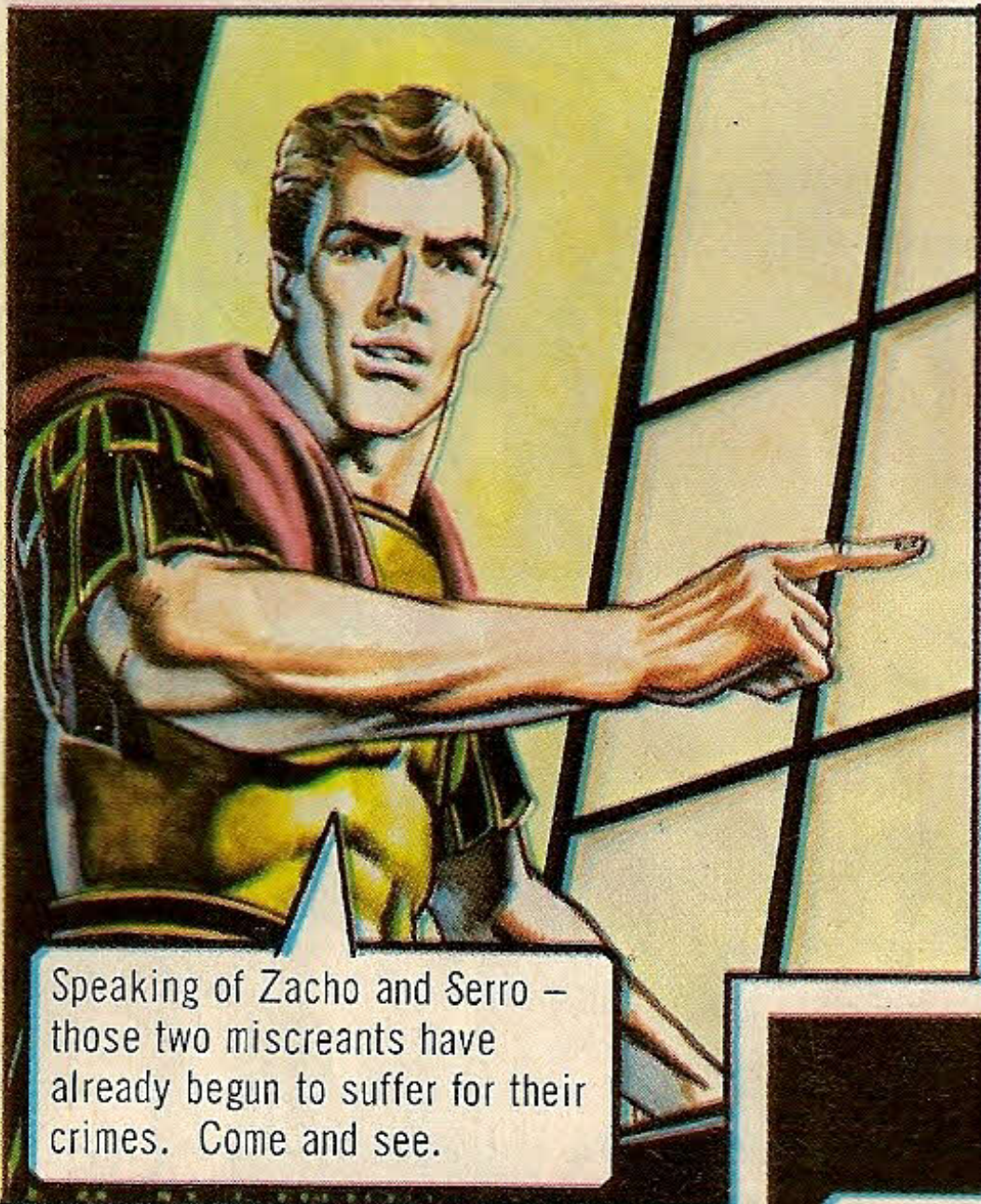
Good day to you, my lords. I see you are alive and well, if a trifle grubby. You should have provided washing facilities when you had the cells constructed.



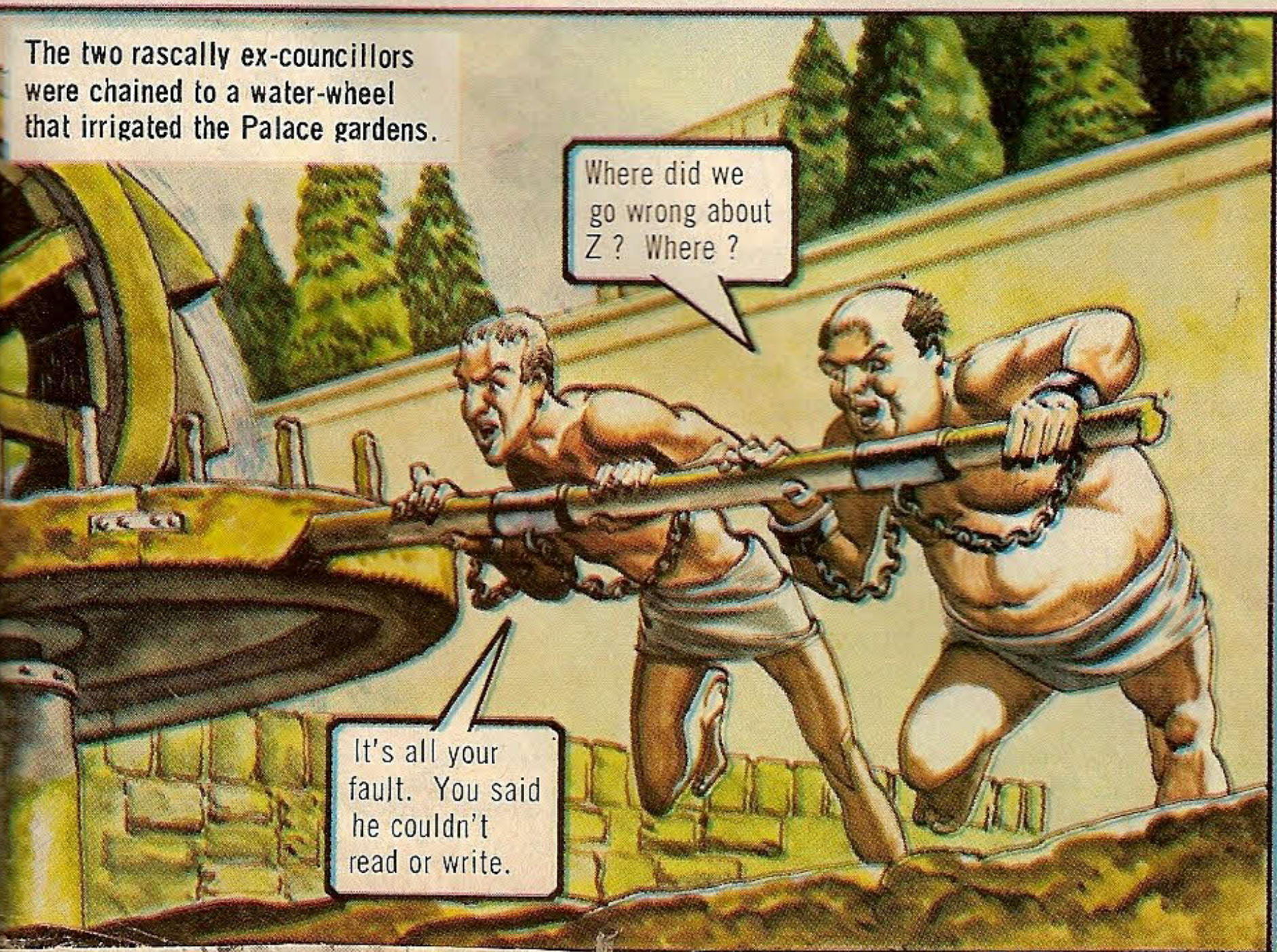
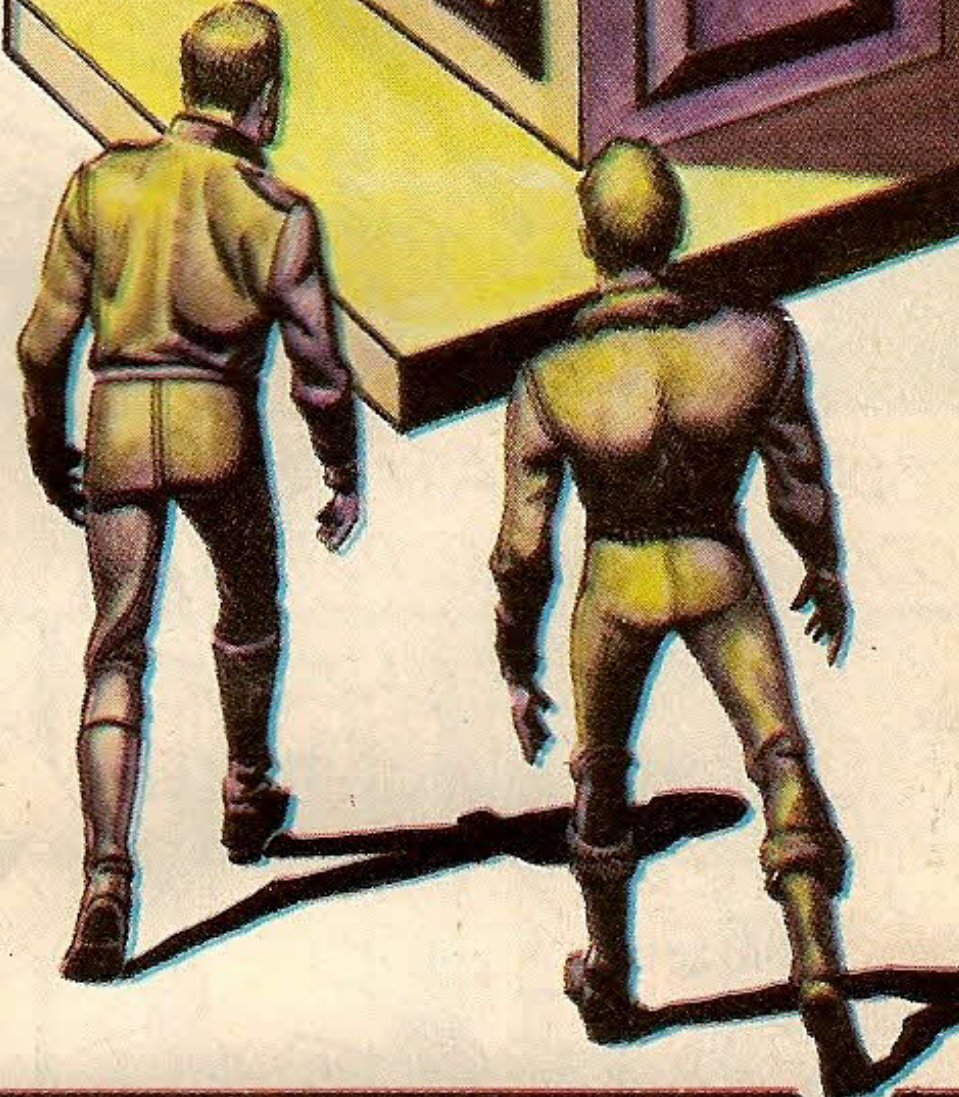
Brag found his voice.

I take it that we are to be executed?

It was to save your lives that I let Zacho and Serro lock you. Otherwise they would have destroyed you, as I fear, they have already destroyed Trigo.



Speaking of Zacho and Serro - those two miscreants have already begun to suffer for their crimes. Come and see.



The two rascally ex-councillors were chained to a water-wheel that irrigated the Palace gardens.

Where did we go wrong about Z? Where?

It's all your fault. You said he couldn't read or write.



Who are you and what are you trying to do?

I am Z...
And I am going to save the Trigan Empire!

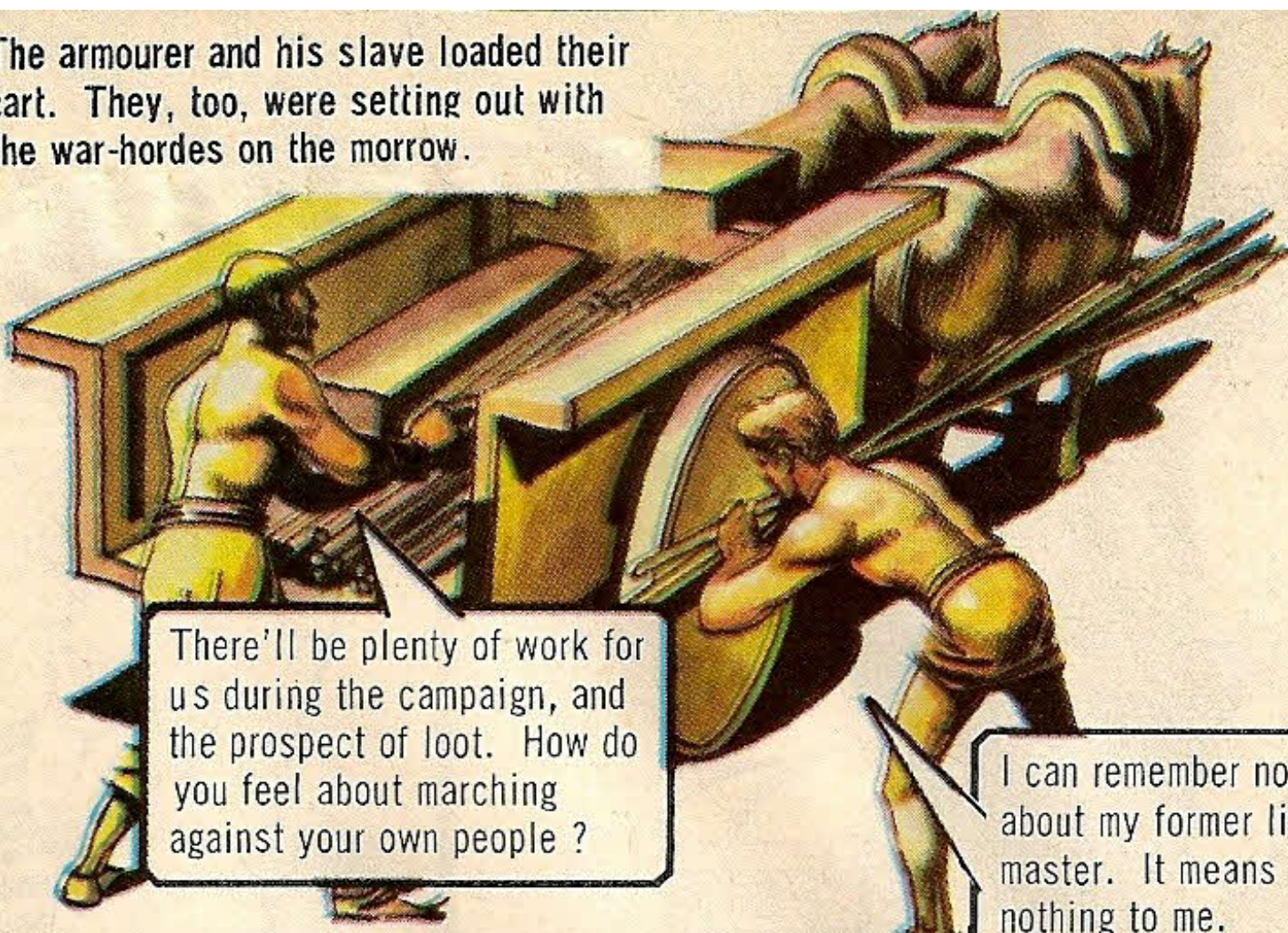
Meanwhile, far across the barren wilderness, in the desert city of the warrior-people.



With tomorrow's dawn, we march against the provinces of the Trigan Empire.

Ayeeeeeee !
Let the Trigans beware !

The armourer and his slave loaded their cart. They, too, were setting out with the war-hordes on the morrow.

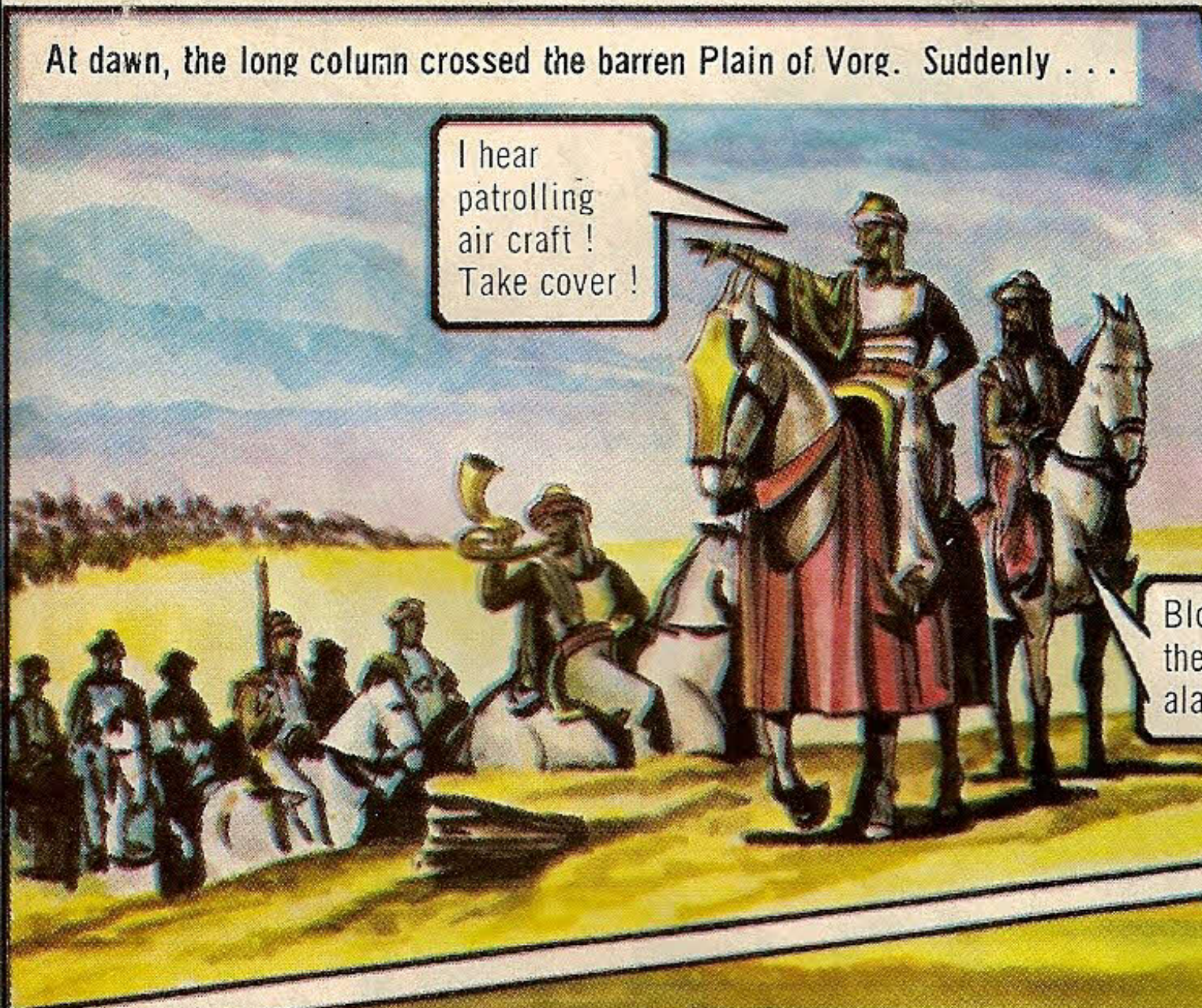


There'll be plenty of work for us during the campaign, and the prospect of loot. How do you feel about marching against your own people ?

I can remember nothing about my former life, master. It means nothing to me.

Thus spoke the rightful Emperor of the Trigans.

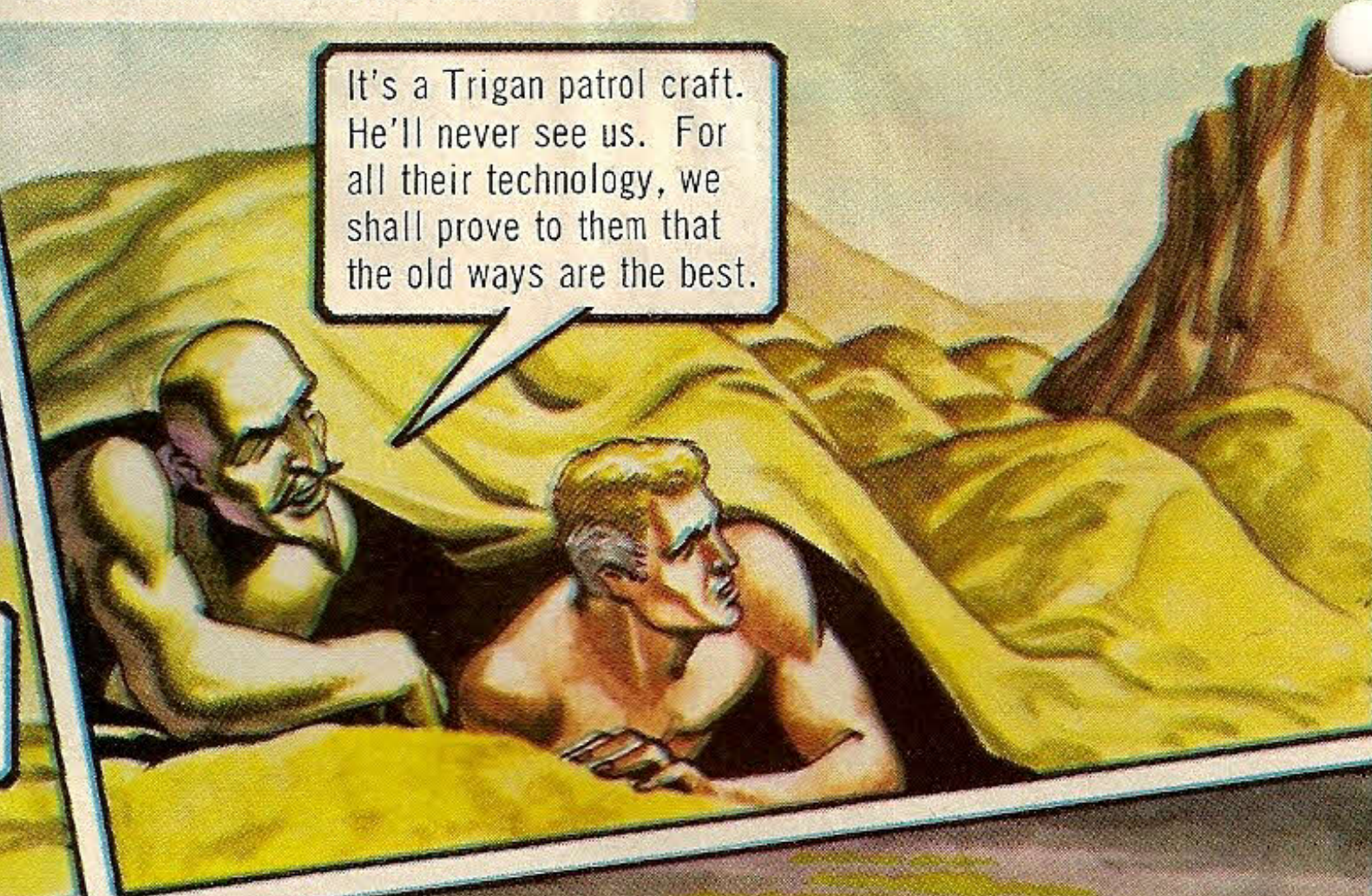
At the sound of the trumpet, every warrior dismounted and covered himself and his kreed with his sand-coloured cloak. The wheeled transport did likewise.



At dawn, the long column crossed the barren Plain of Vore. Suddenly . . .

I hear patrolling air craft !
Take cover !

Blow the alarm !



It's a Trigan patrol craft. He'll never see us. For all their technology, we shall prove to them that the old ways are the best.

When night began to fall, the invaders came to the shores of the great ocean. Below, the lights of a prosperous seaport burned brightly.



Our first objective !

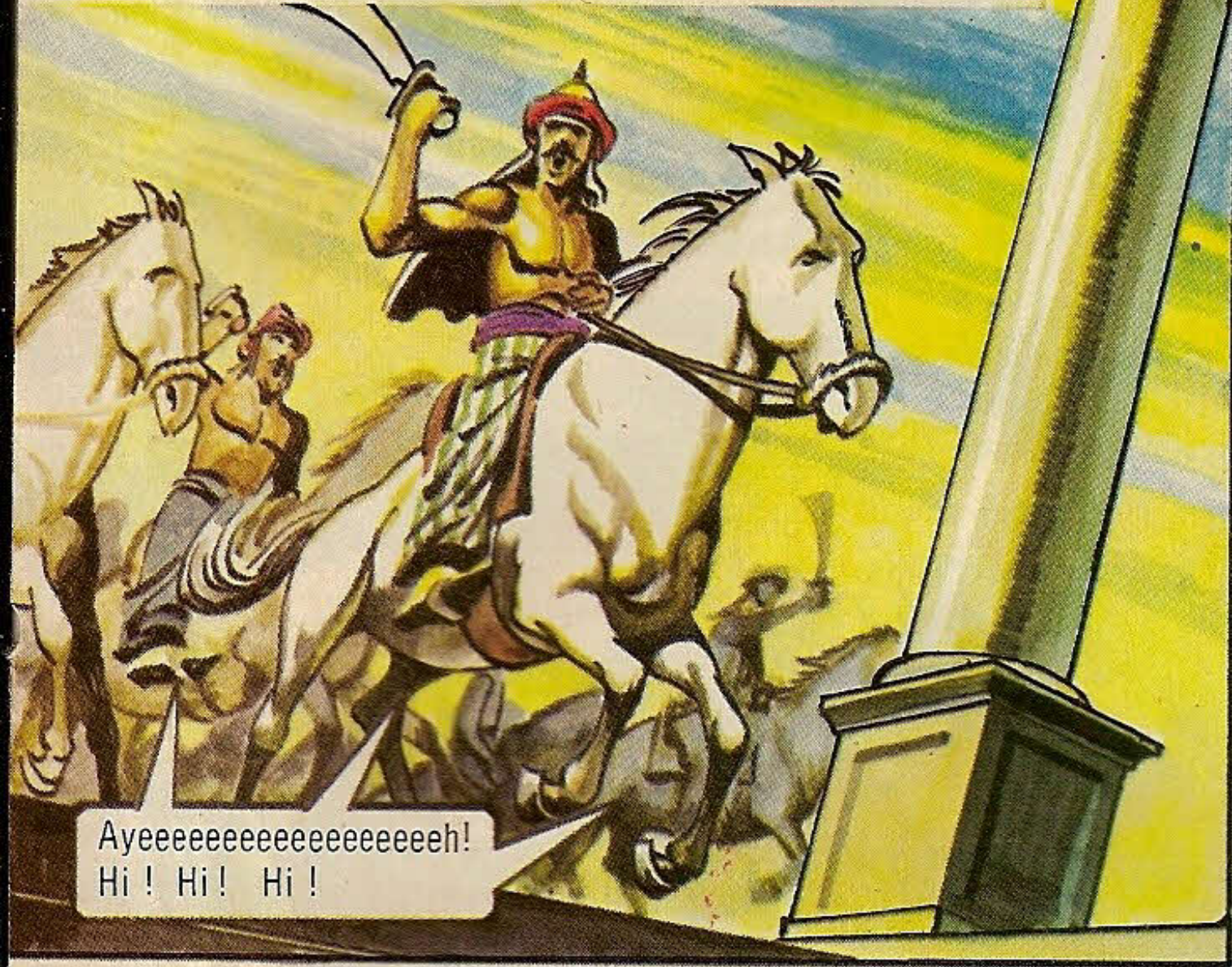


With the dawn's light, we will descend upon that town with fire and sword ! When the suns are in the Zenith, it will be ours !

TRIGAN EMPIRE

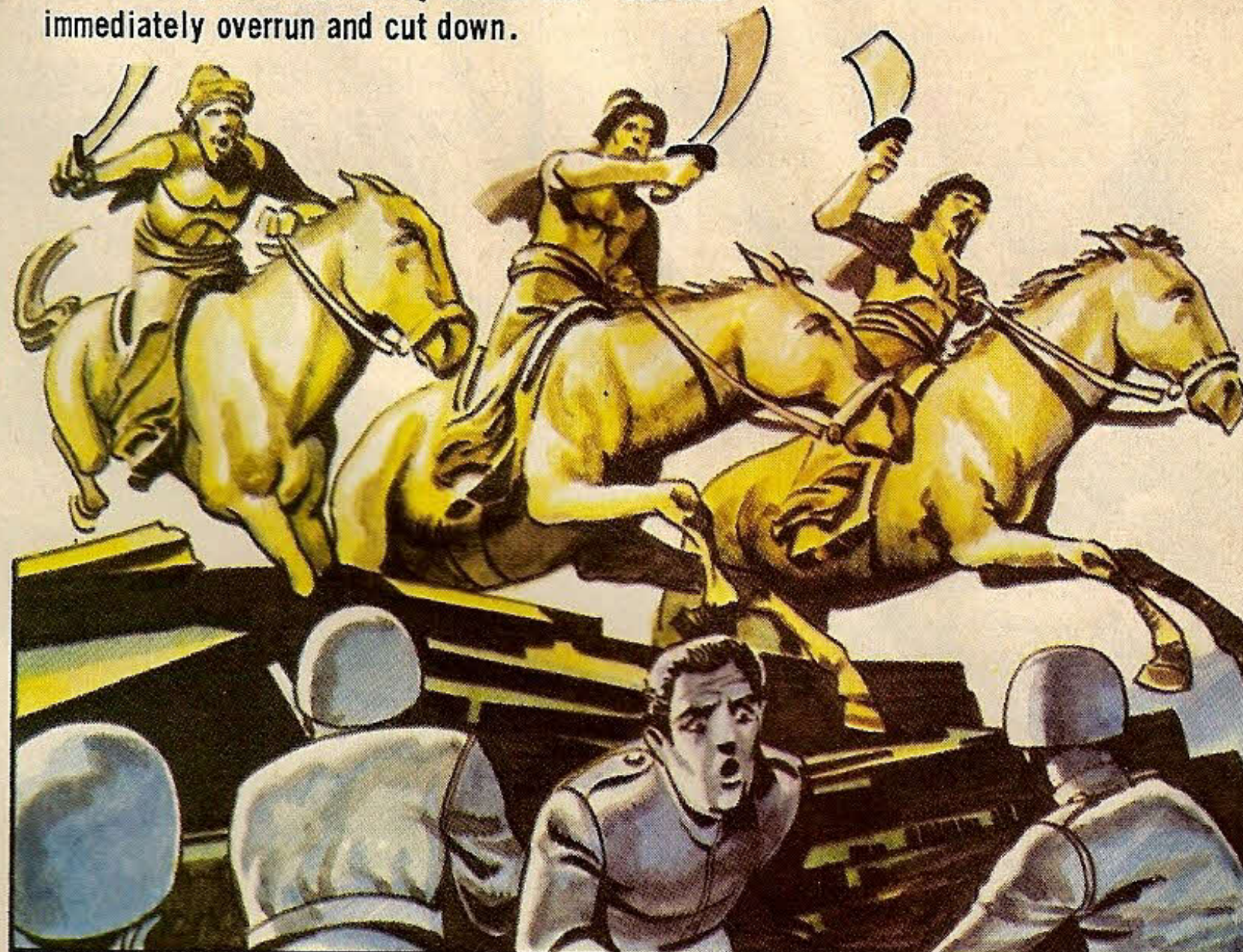
The Emperor Trigo has lost his memory and is working as a slave for the horde of desert warriors who are raiding the Trigan provinces. Meanwhile, the stranger — Z — who has had himself crowned emperor in Trigo's place, continues to amaze his new subjects.

At dawn, the sleepy quiet of the Trigan seaport town of Rilli was split by the war-shrieks of the desert marauders.



Ayeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!
Hi! Hi! Hi!

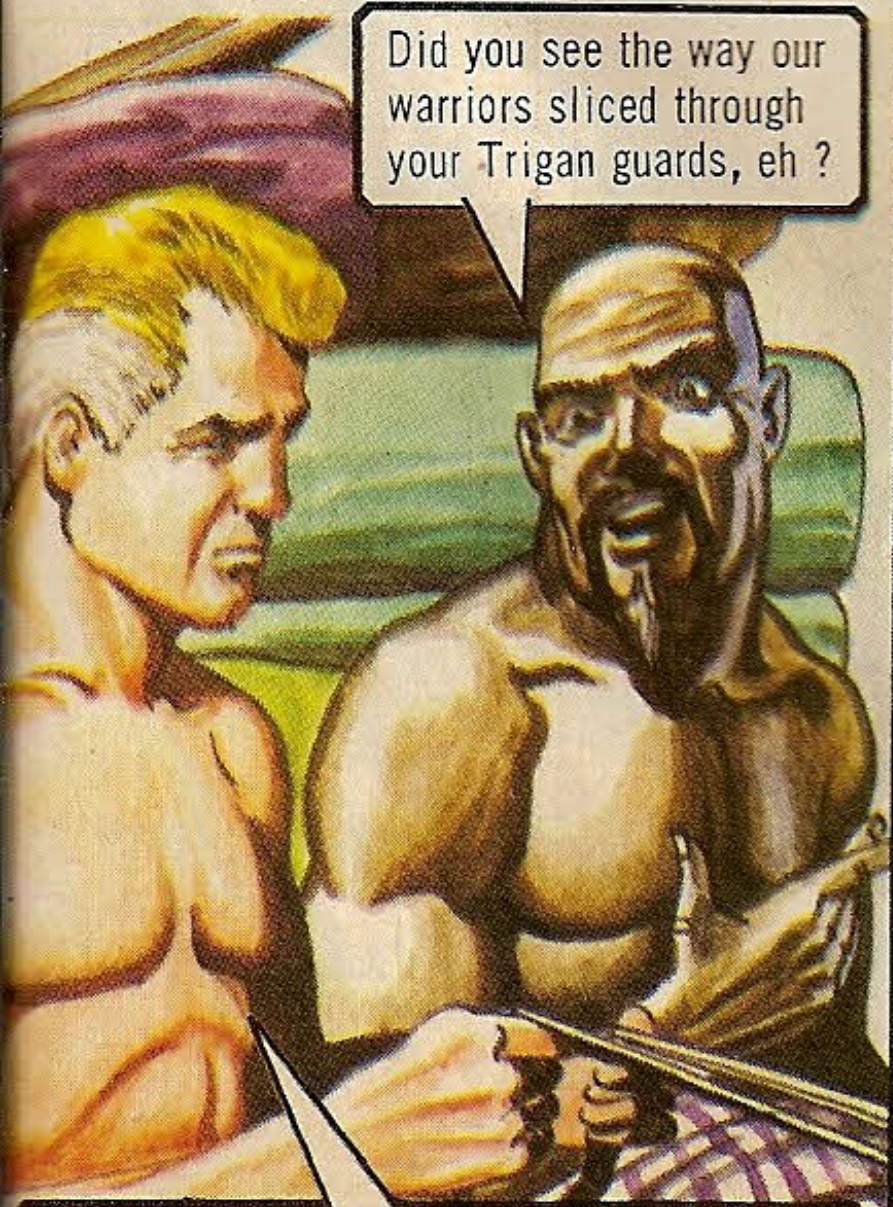
The small garrison gallantly turned out — but was immediately overrun and cut down.



By noon, Rilli was a blazing mass, and the war-horde was on its way back to the desert, loaded down with loot.



The armourer and his slave — who was none other than the Emperor Trigo, who had lost his memory — were carrying loot in plenty.



Did you see the way our warriors sliced through your Trigan guards, eh?

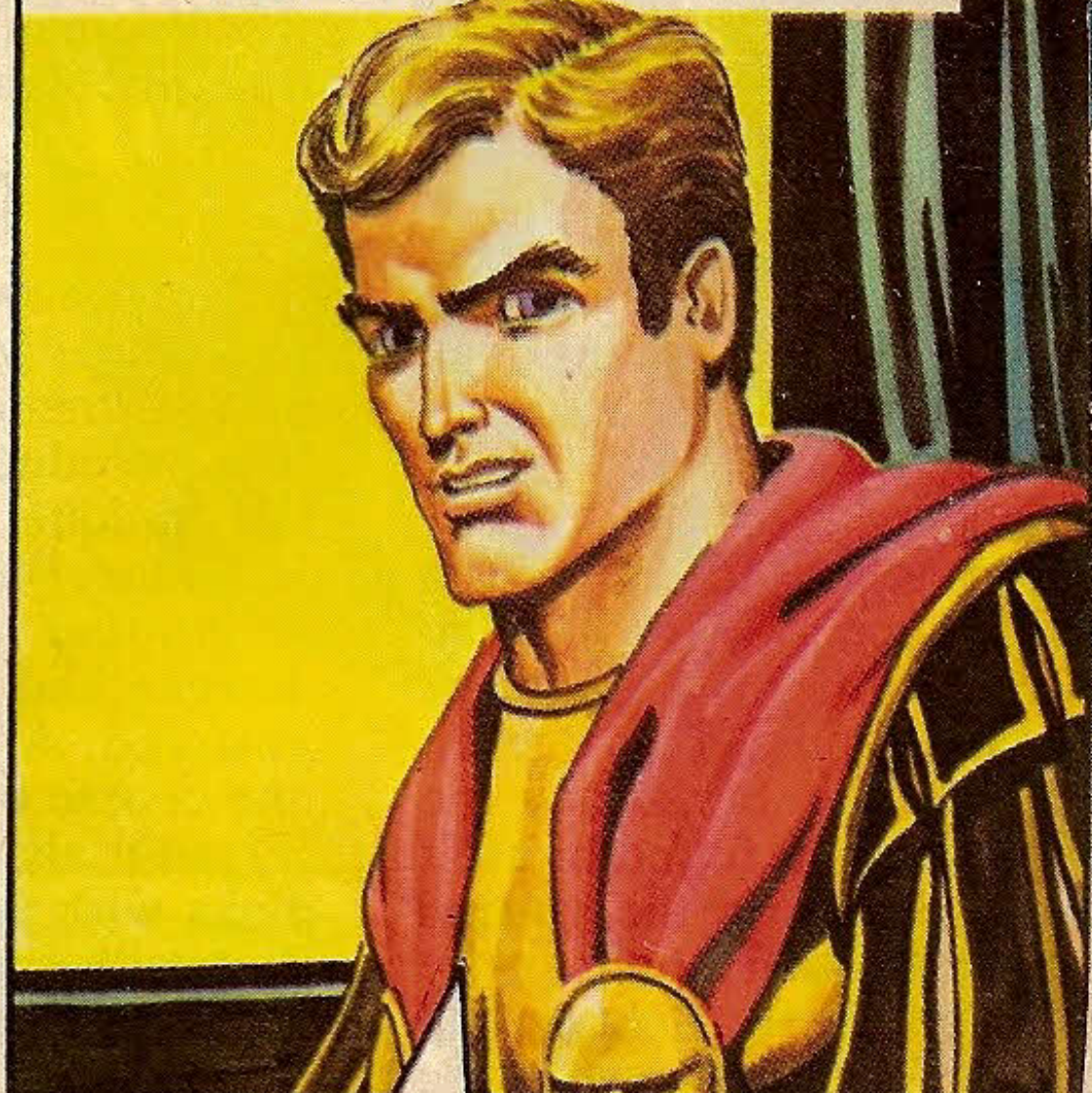
They are not my Trigan guards, master. My former life is meaningless to me!

Meanwhile, back in Trigan City, Brag and Janno were listening to the amazing new Emperor addressing the council.



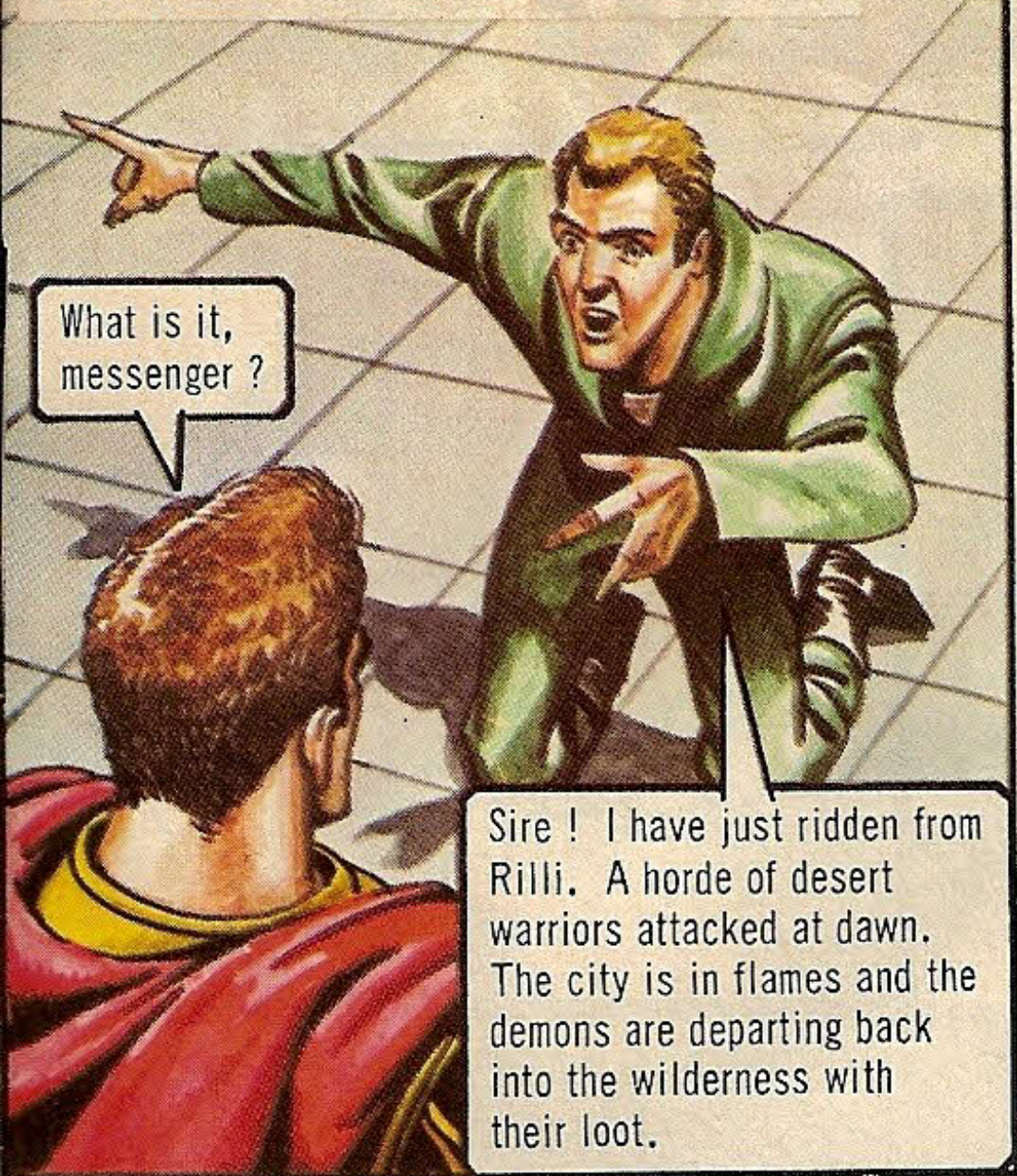
I have found much that is wrong with the Trigan Empire. Firstly, I have found great inequality between the very rich and the very poor which was why I permitted Zacho and Serro to impose the one-third tax on all citizens . . .

The council listened with respect and awe to the stranger who had ridden in from the wilderness and taken the Imperial Crown for himself.



Those scoundrels planned to put the money to their own use. I shall see that it is employed to feed and house the poor people of our Empire. Trigans must learn to stand together and help each other.

At that moment, there came an interruption . . .



What is it, messenger?

Sire! I have just ridden from Rilli. A horde of desert warriors attacked at dawn. The city is in flames and the demons are departing back into the wilderness with their loot.

There was an immediate uproar in the council chamber.

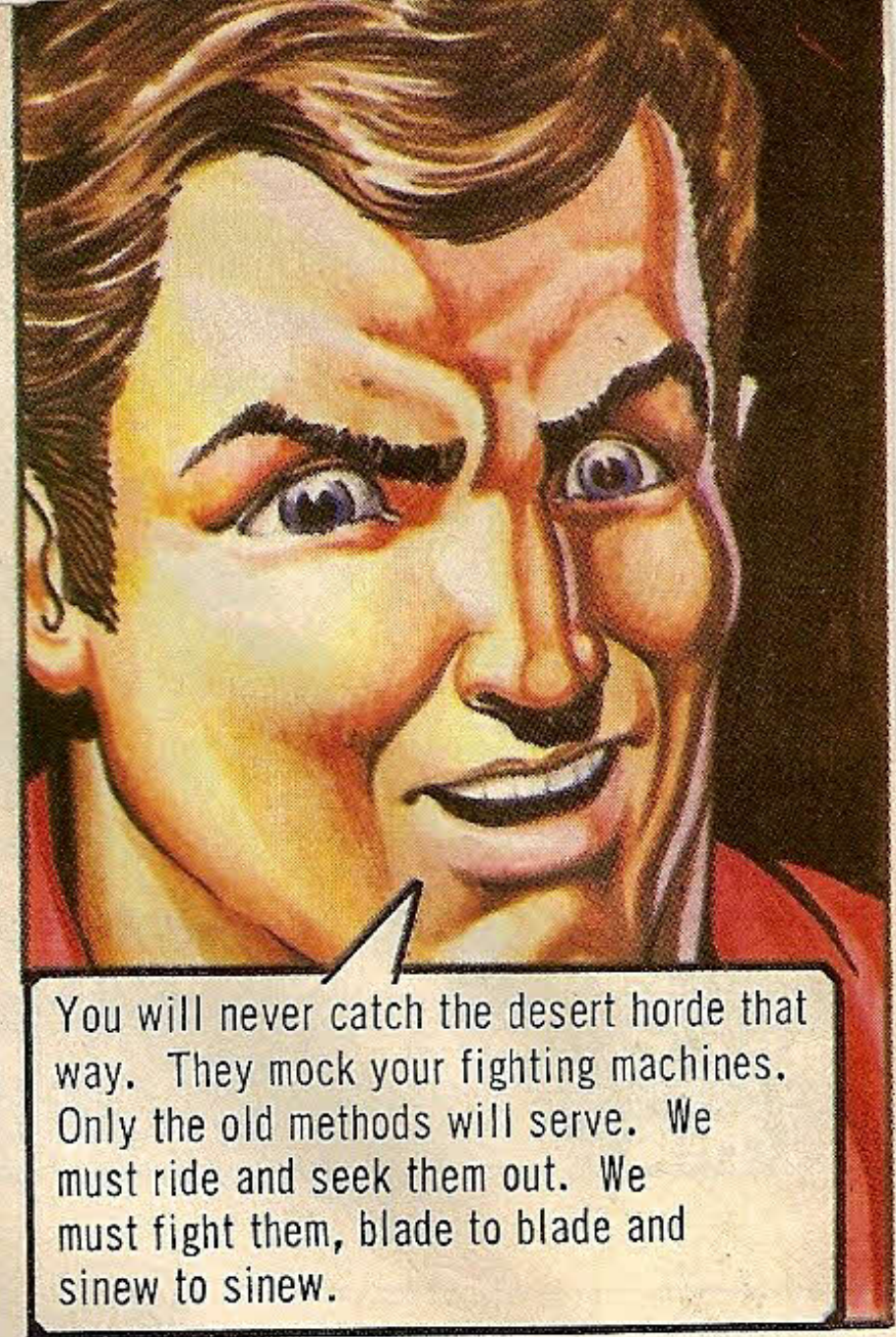


Let us send the air fleet to blast them.

No!

Those barbarians must be taught a sharp lesson.

A squadron of armoured fighting-vehicles will do the trick.



You will never catch the desert horde that way. They mock your fighting machines. Only the old methods will serve. We must ride and seek them out. We must fight them, blade to blade and sinew to sinew.



Will you ride at my side, Brag? And you, Janno?

I will!

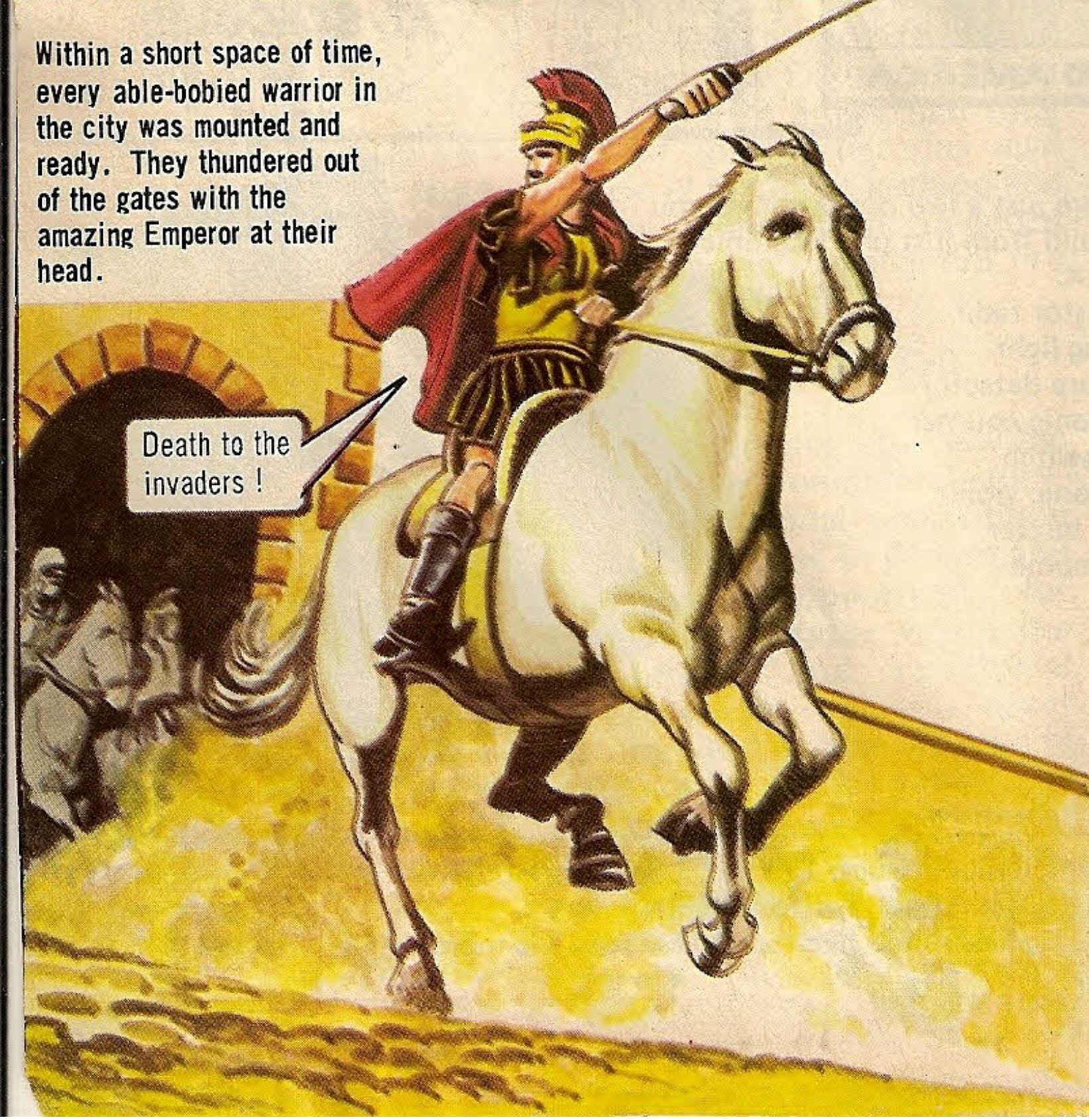
And!!

I knew I could rely on you!

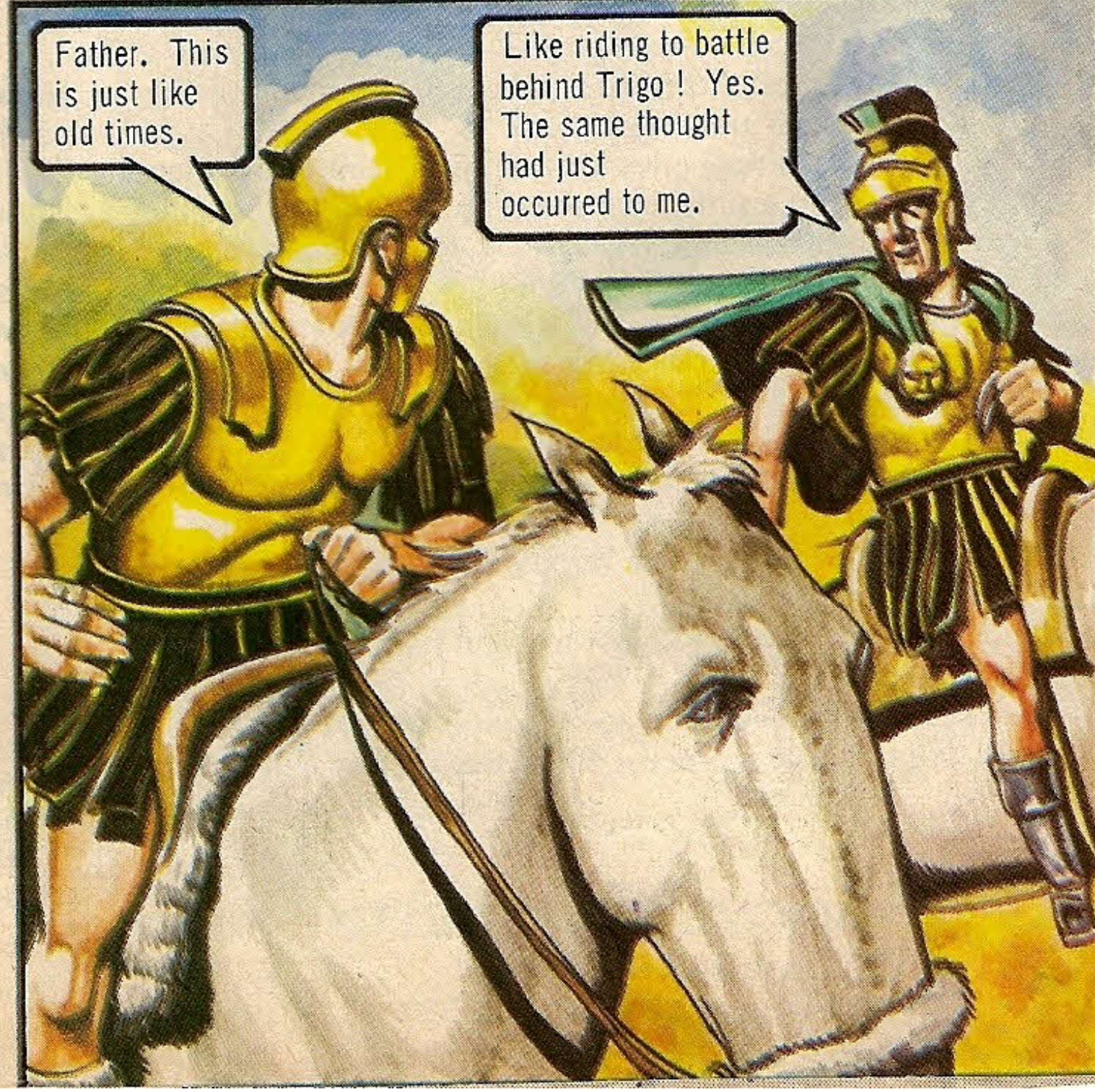
Catch, Brag.



Within a short space of time, every able-bodied warrior in the city was mounted and ready. They thundered out of the gates with the amazing Emperor at their head.



Death to the invaders!



Father. This is just like old times.

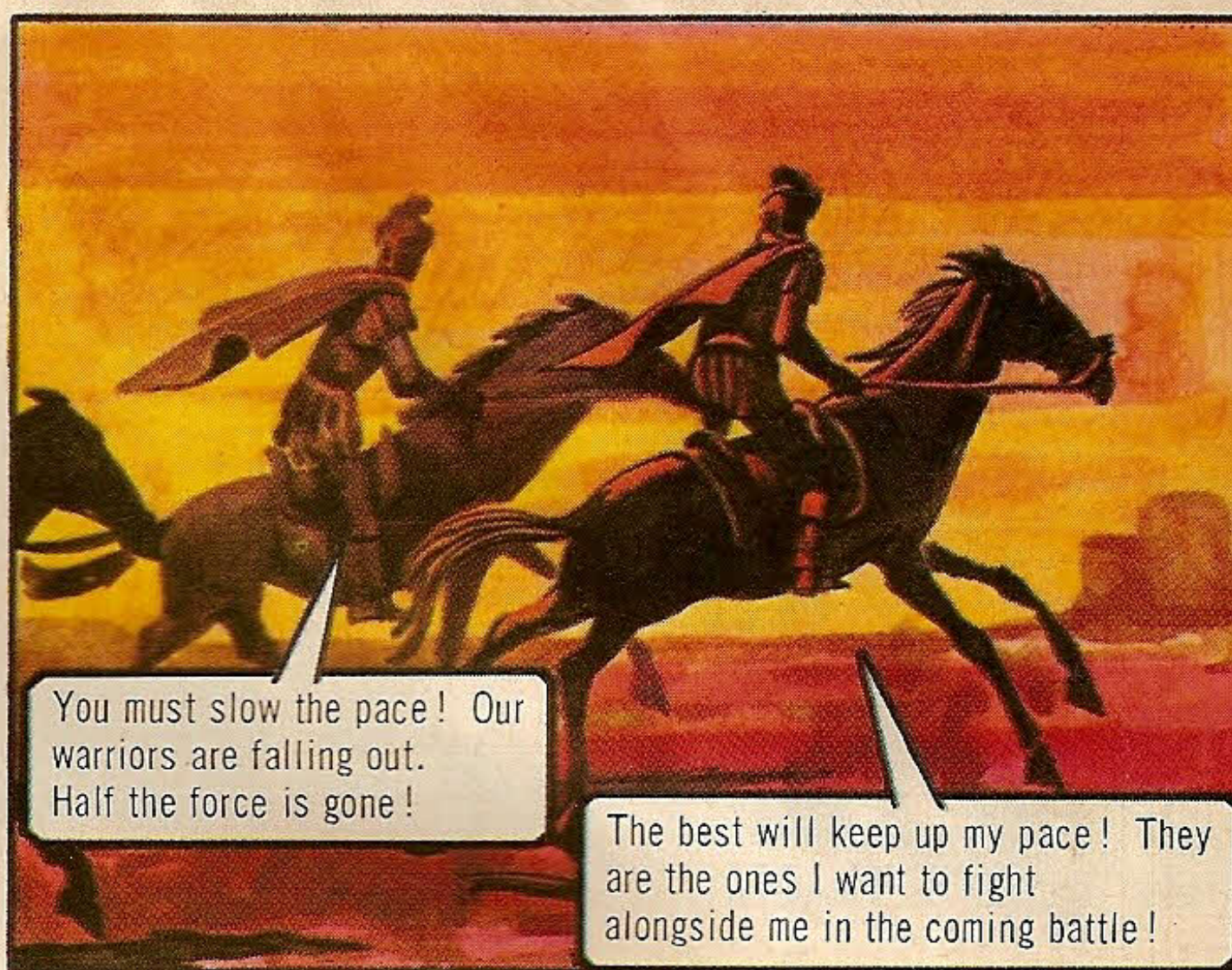
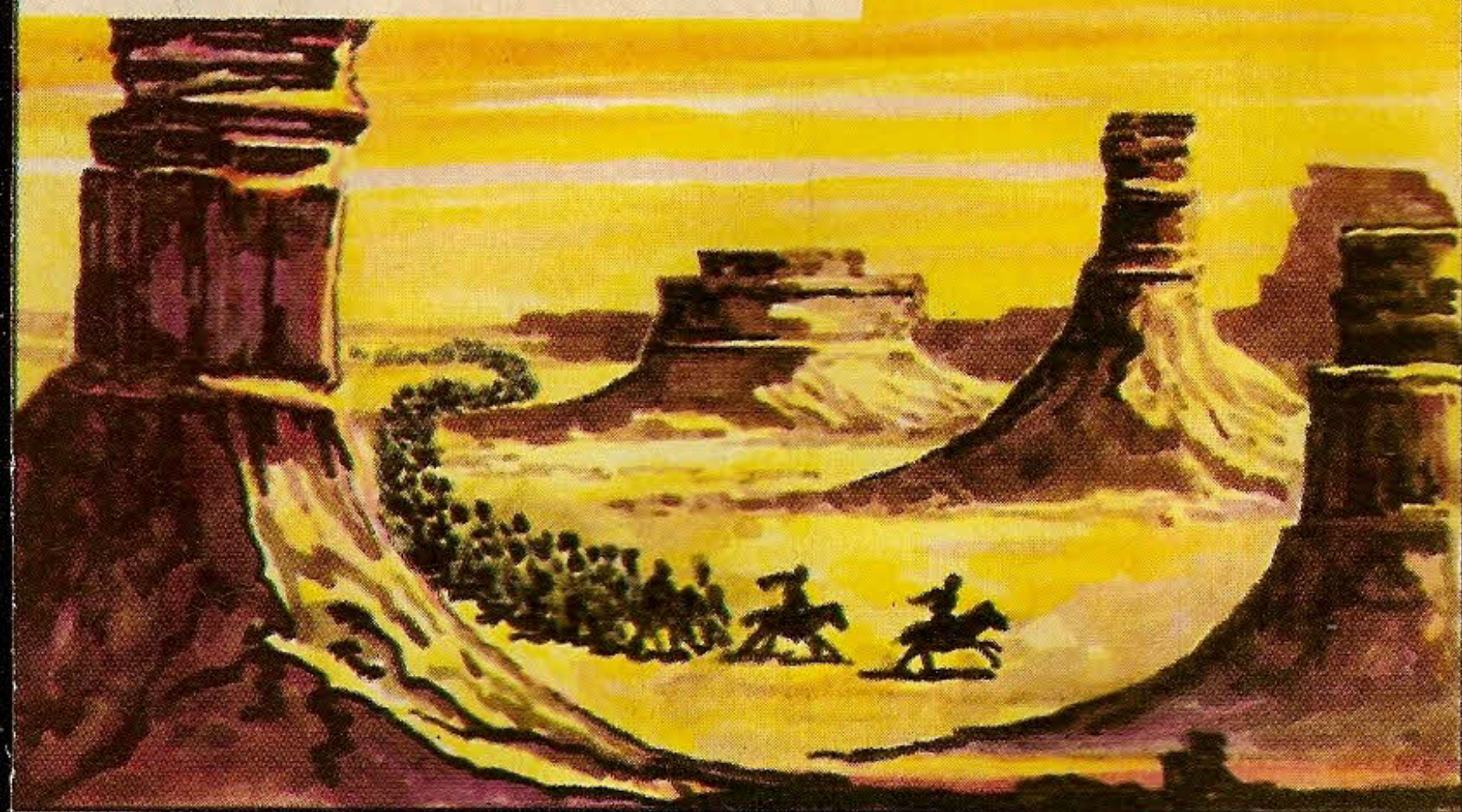
Like riding to battle behind Trigo! Yes. The same thought had just occurred to me.

Emperor Trigo has lost his memory and is working as a slave for a horde of warriors who have raided the Trigan provinces. The stranger who calls himself "Z" and has been crowned Emperor in Trigo's place, is in pursuit of the invaders.

MORE ADVENTURES OF THE

TRIGAN EMPIRE

All that day and the following night, Z led his warriors at breakneck pace through the wilderness.



You must slow the pace! Our warriors are falling out. Half the force is gone!

The best will keep up my pace! They are the ones I want to fight alongside me in the coming battle!

At dawn on the next day, Z halted on a hillcrest and looked down at the horde encamped in a valley below.



We have overtaken them!

And now we will destroy them!

The desert warriors, convinced that they were safe from pursuit, were feasting upon the rich food and drink that they had looted.



It was Trigo – the slave-Emperor with the lost memory – who raised the alarm!

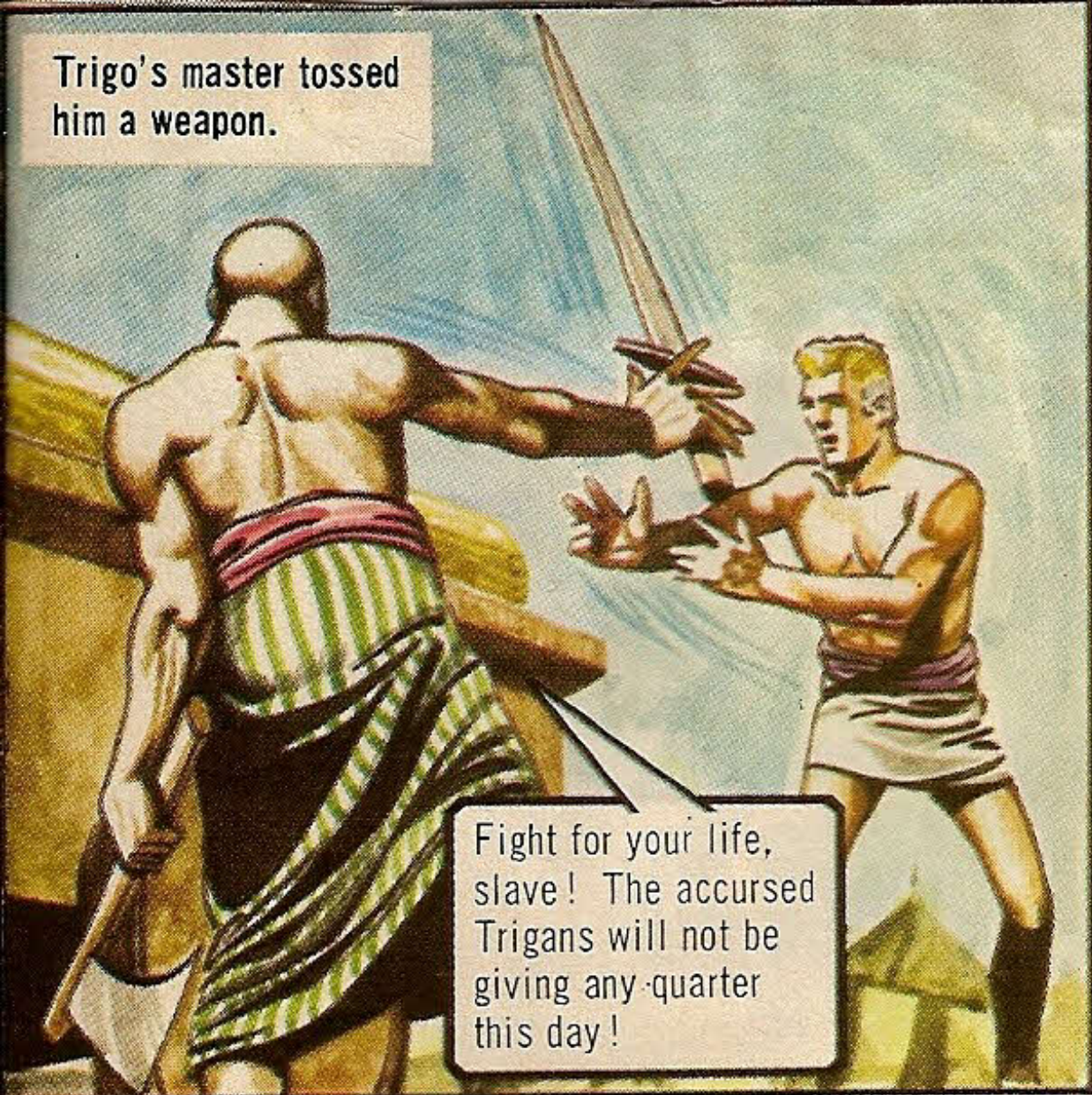


We are being attacked!

The Trigans rode through the encampment with fire and sword.



Trigo's master tossed him a weapon.



Fight for your life, slave! The accursed Trigans will not be giving any quarter this day!

Brag spurred forward as he saw a tall figure swinging a long blade. The figure turned to face him ... and he was looking into the countenance of his own brother!



By all the stars! ... Trigo!

There was no answering cry of recognition. Instead Brag's world dissolved in a sea of pain, as his sword arm was beaten down and he fell from his careering kreed with stunning force.



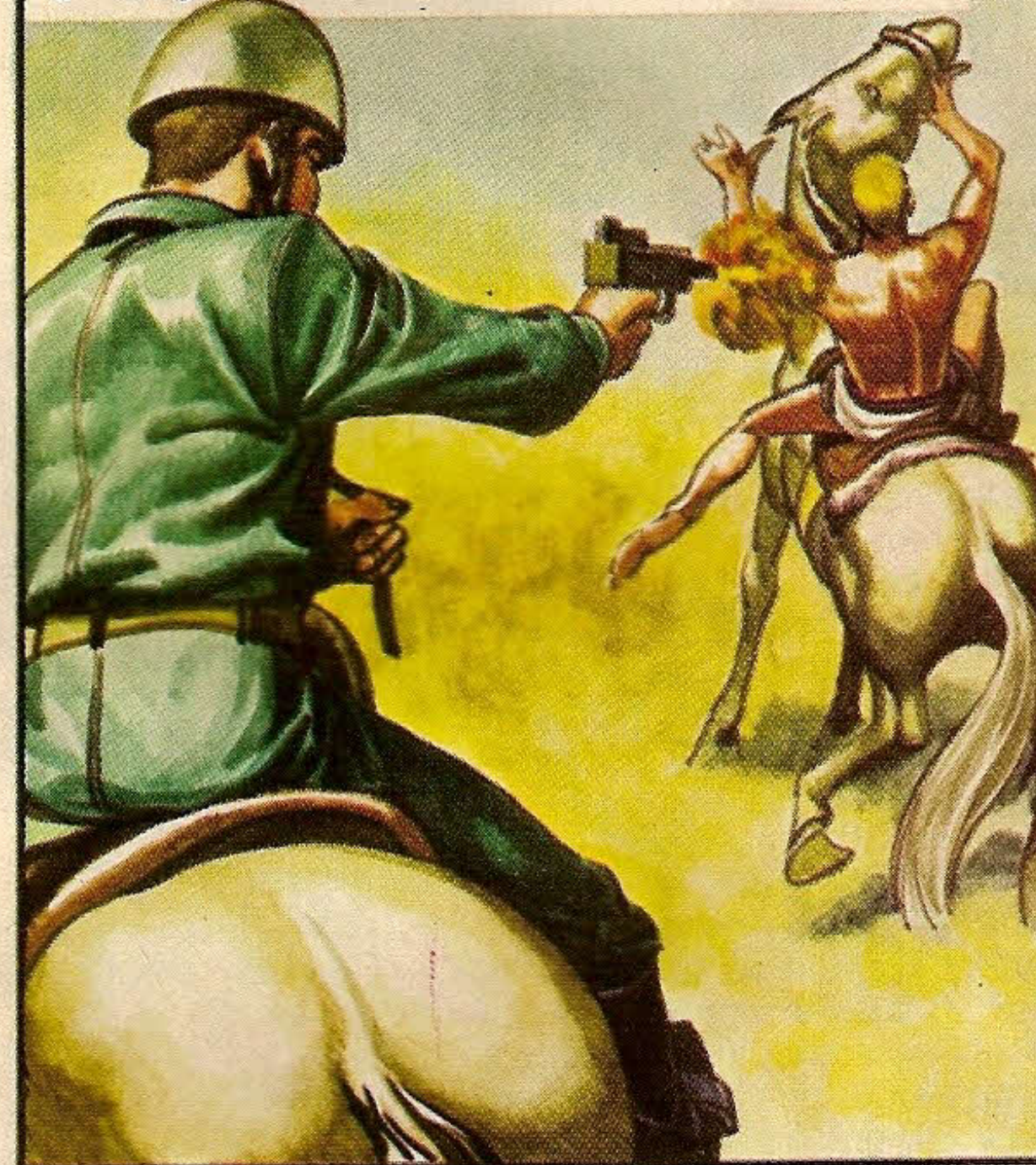
Aaaaaagh!

Trigo vaulted astride the riderless mount ...

I've no part of this quarrel! - I'm getting out of here!



He was nearly clear of the scene of battle, when a Trigan guardsman took aim and fired at the figure on the galloping kreed.



Soon after, the last of the desert horde were overpowered, and the fighting ceased. Z looked about him.

What of the prisoners, Imperial Majesty?



They are to be spared. Send them back home on foot, without their kreds. They will never raid Trigan territory again!

Meanwhile, Janno was tending his father. Brag tried to rise, and he called out frantically.

Trigo! Trigo was here! What happened to him?



Calm yourself, Father ...

He's wandering in his mind!

The Emperor Trigo, who lost his memory and was working as a slave for a horde of desert warriors, has been struck down during an attack by vengeful Trigans, led by their new emperor, the mysterious stranger called Z.

MORE ADVENTURES OF THE

TRIGAN EMPIRE

There was a sharp cry from two Trigan guards who were tending the fallen.



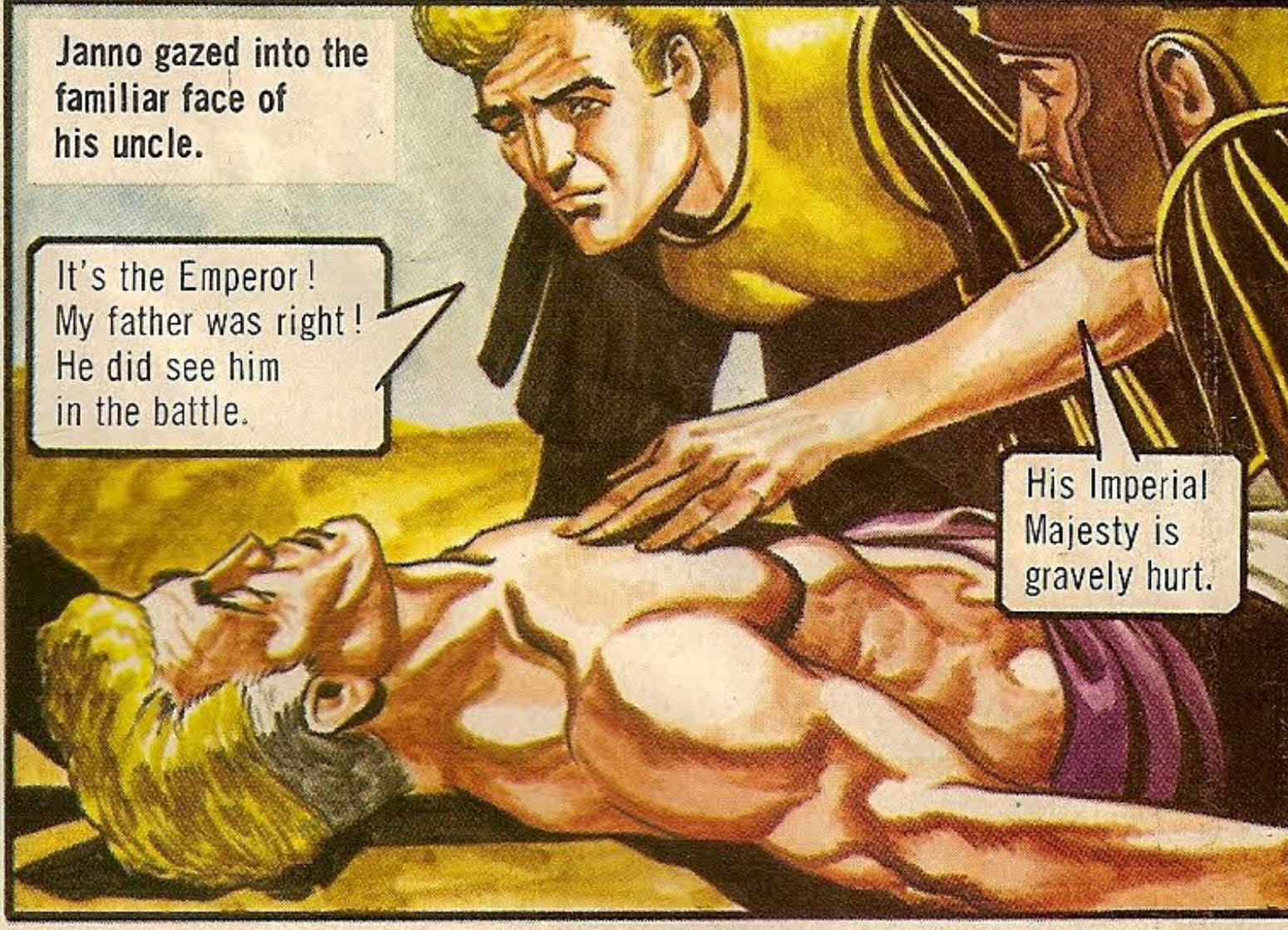
Come quickly!

See who we've found!

Janno gazed into the familiar face of his uncle.

It's the Emperor! My father was right! He did see him in the battle.

His Imperial Majesty is gravely hurt.



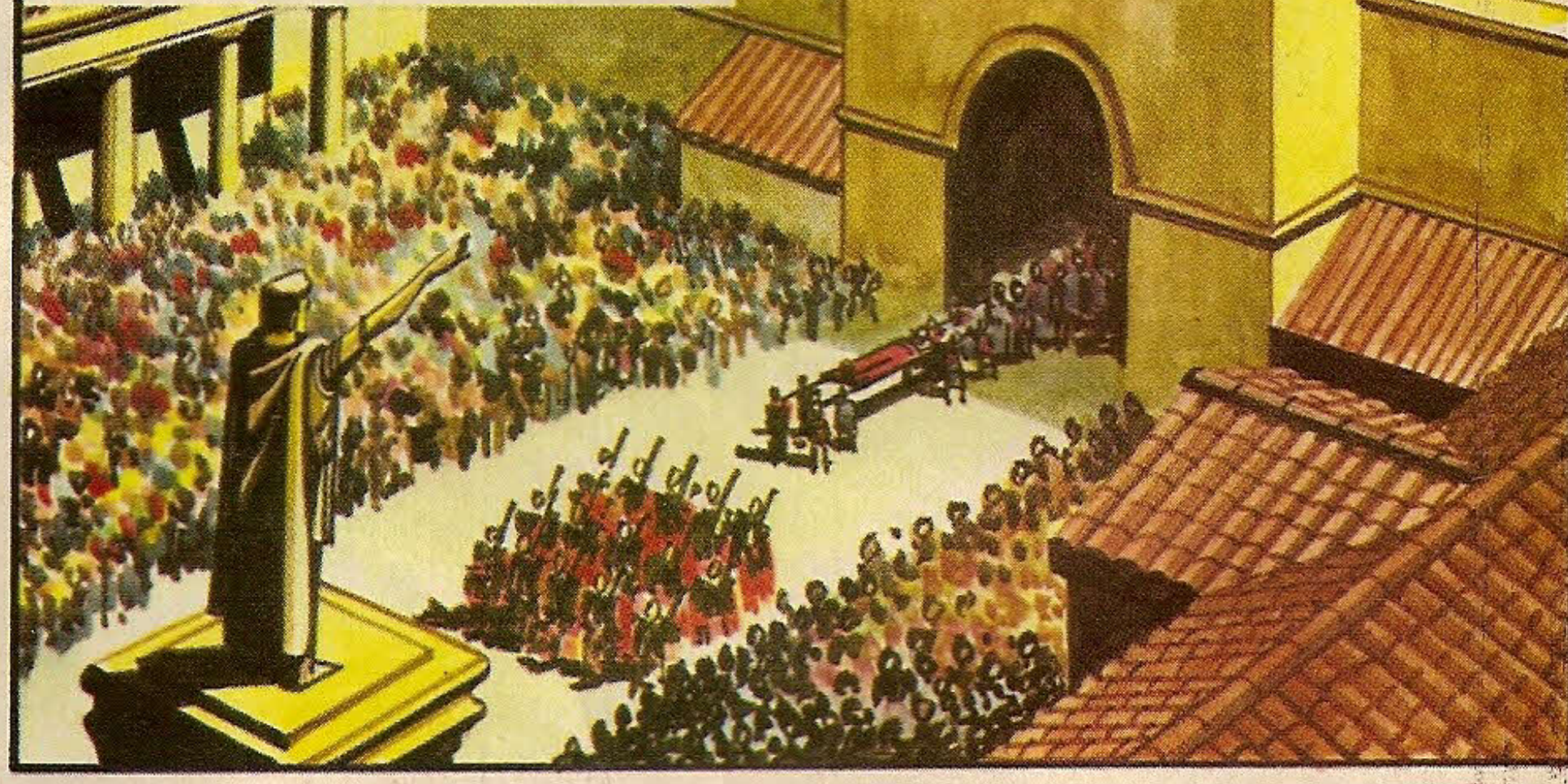
All eyes were turned to Z, who gazed expressionlessly down upon the man whose crown he had usurped.



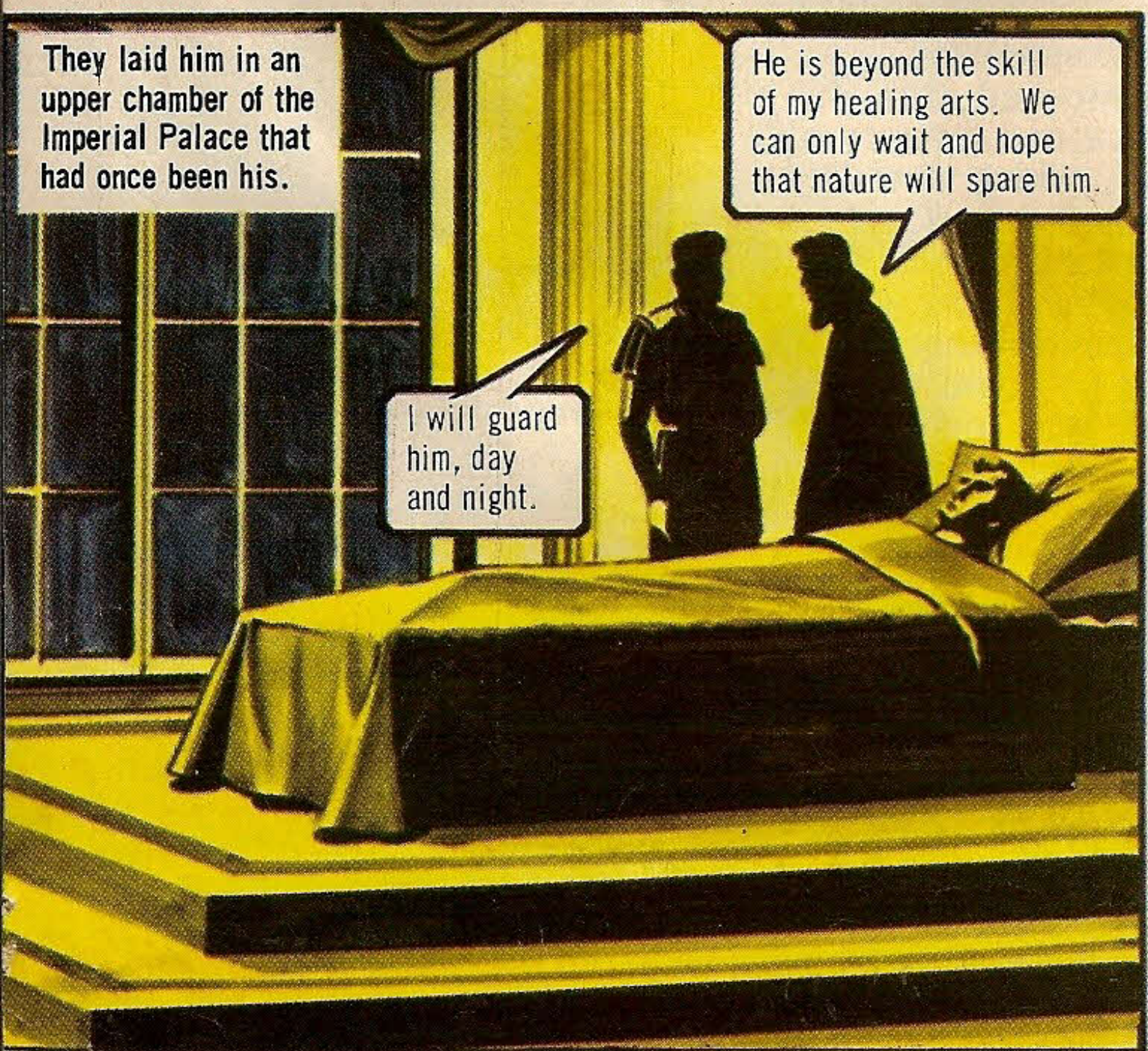
What's he going to do? Order Uncle Trigo to be slain?

Bear the former Emperor back to the city. See that he is given every attention, and ask Peric to keep me informed of his progress.

News of the survival of Trigo preceded their return to the capital. As the procession bearing the wounded ex-Emperor entered the gates of Trigan City, a multitude was gathered to pay silent tribute.



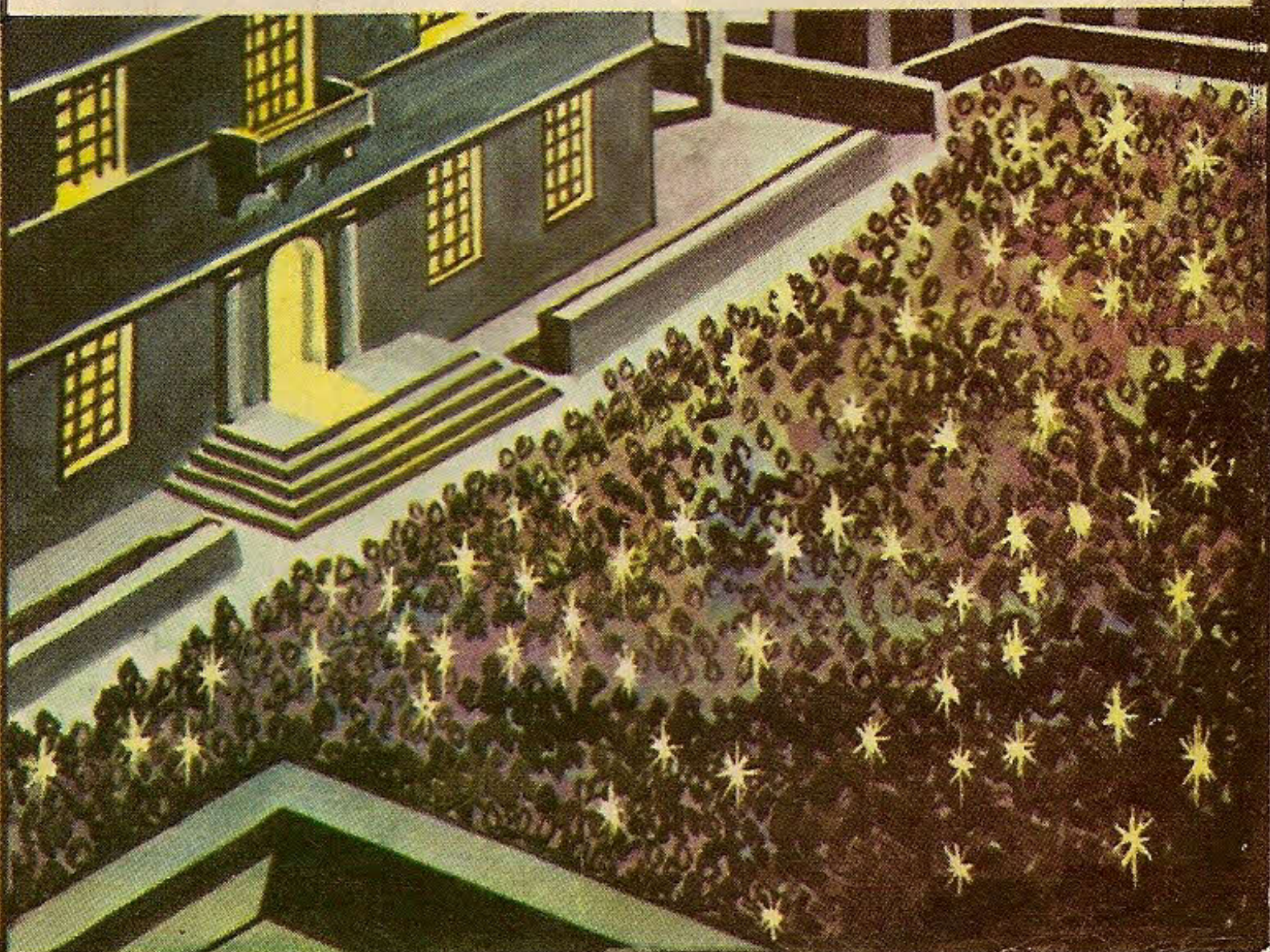
They laid him in an upper chamber of the Imperial Palace that had once been his.



He is beyond the skill of my healing arts. We can only wait and hope that nature will spare him.

I will guard him, day and night.

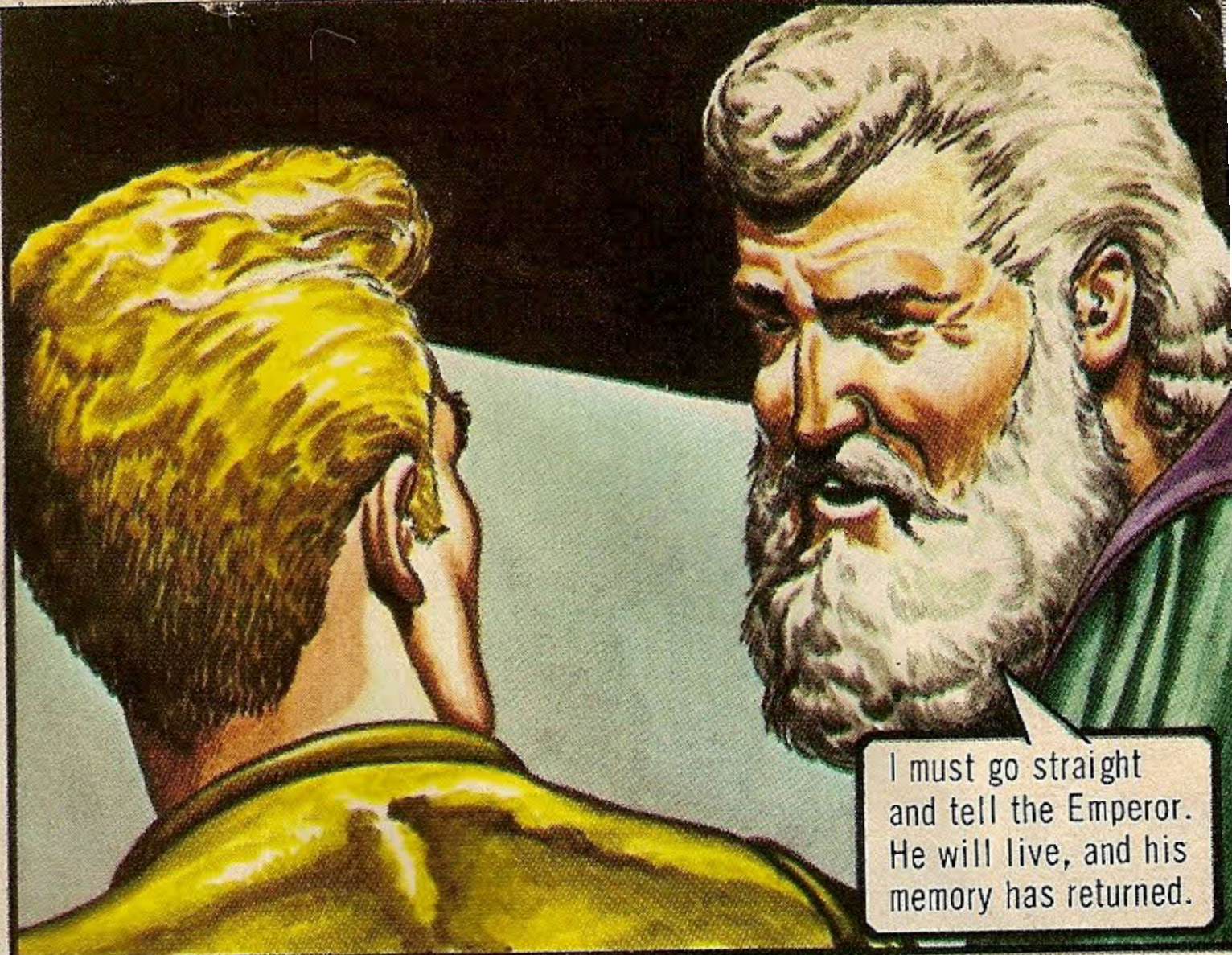
That night, the population of the city was swollen by countless others who came in from the surrounding countryside and the far-flung provinces. The great square below the Imperial Palace was a sea of winking lights, each carried by a silent onlooker.



Towards the dawn, Peric was examining his patient, when Trigo's eyes briefly flickered open.

Peric ... old friend.

Imperial Majesty!



I must go straight and tell the Emperor. He will live, and his memory has returned.

In the darkness just before the dawn of Elekton's twin suns, Janno saw a figure flit across the chamber and approach the unconscious form.

Hey!

Janno swung his blade, but the blow never landed. Next instant, the young Trigan was violently overturned.



Aaaaaaagh!

He looked up into the face of ... Z!

Did you think I had come to slay your Emperor?

Not so. I had merely come to look upon his face, by way of farewell, before I depart.

Z gazed out across the watching multitude below. His voice was wistful.

I could have been a good Emperor. I had even begun to win their respect ...

... but not their affection. Only Trigo has that. He is their true Emperor. I wish him a long life!

In the dawn light, the stranger who had come out of the wilderness and briefly reigned as the Emperor of the Trigans, rode back the way he had come.

