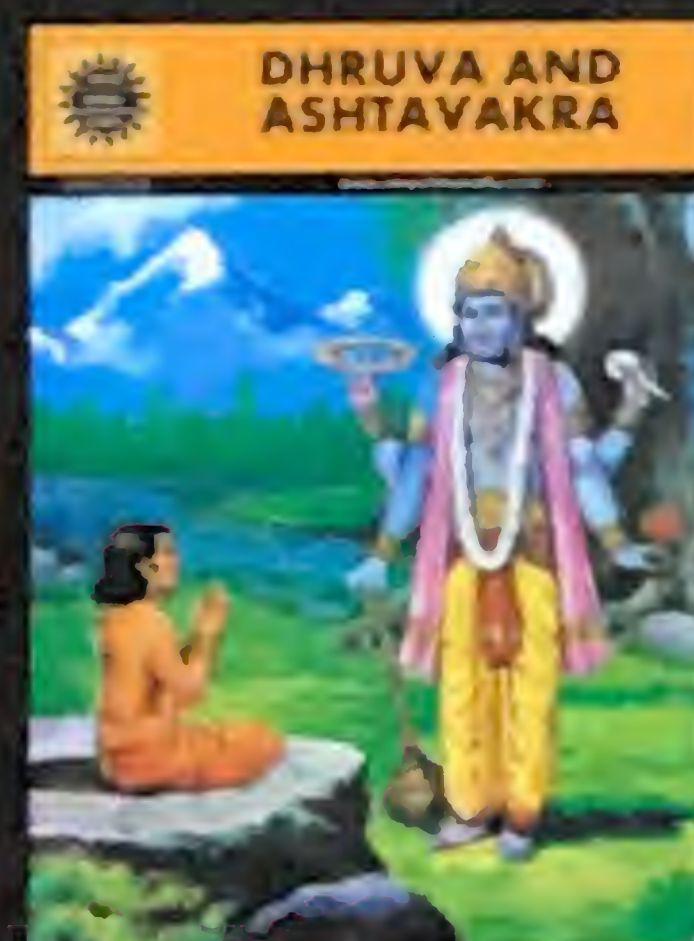


ARUNI AND UTTANKA

Aruni was willing to give up his life for his Guru; Uttanka cast aside his dreams for his teacher. Young or old, their devotion and obedience were almost superhuman. Luckily, as described in the Mahabharata, the gods looked kindly on them. After all, these young men had earned the right to happiness.

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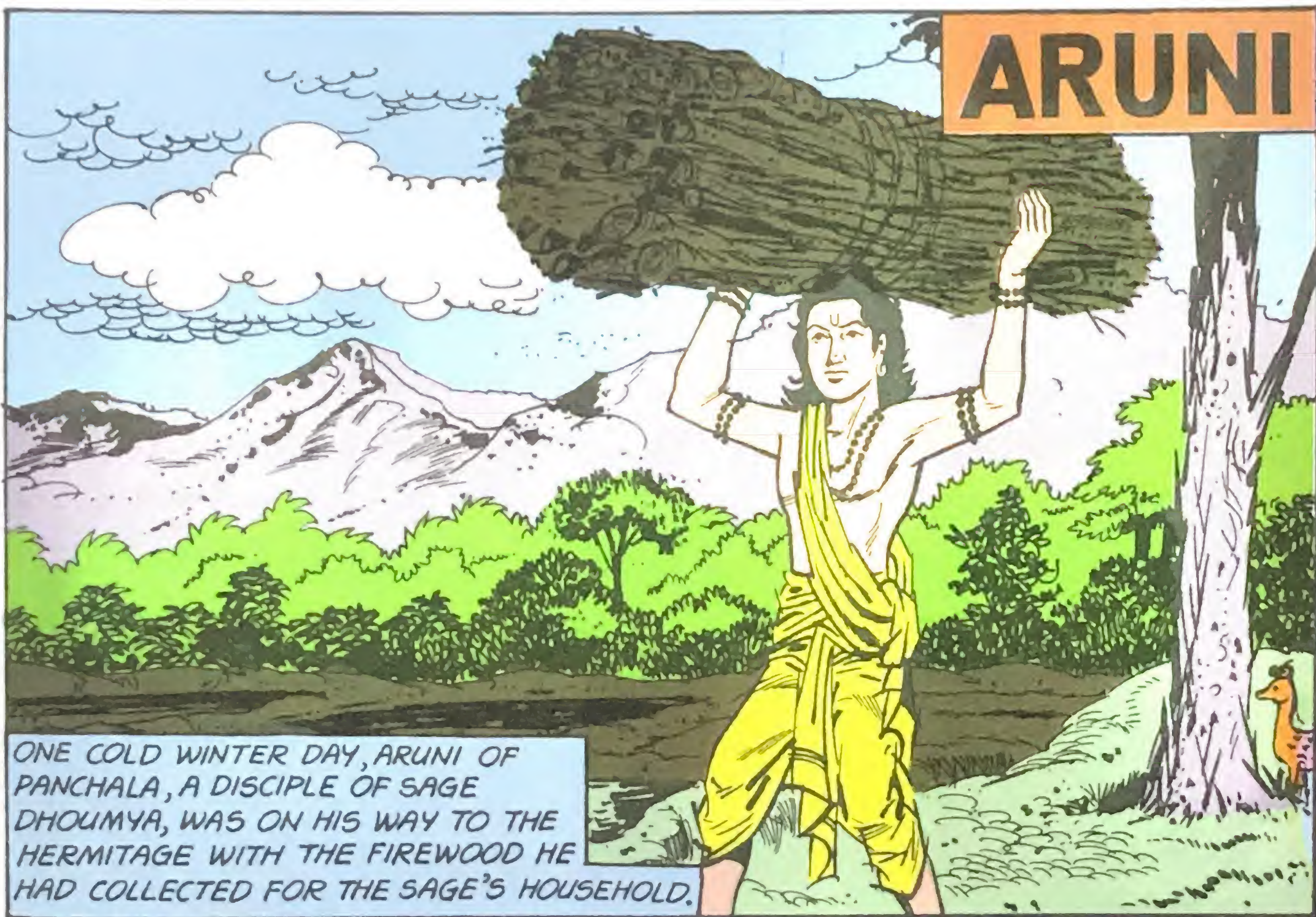


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ARUNI



ONE COLD WINTER DAY, ARUNI OF PANCHALA, A DISCIPLE OF SAGE DHOUMYA, WAS ON HIS WAY TO THE HERMITAGE WITH THE FIREWOOD HE HAD COLLECTED FOR THE SAGE'S HOUSEHOLD.

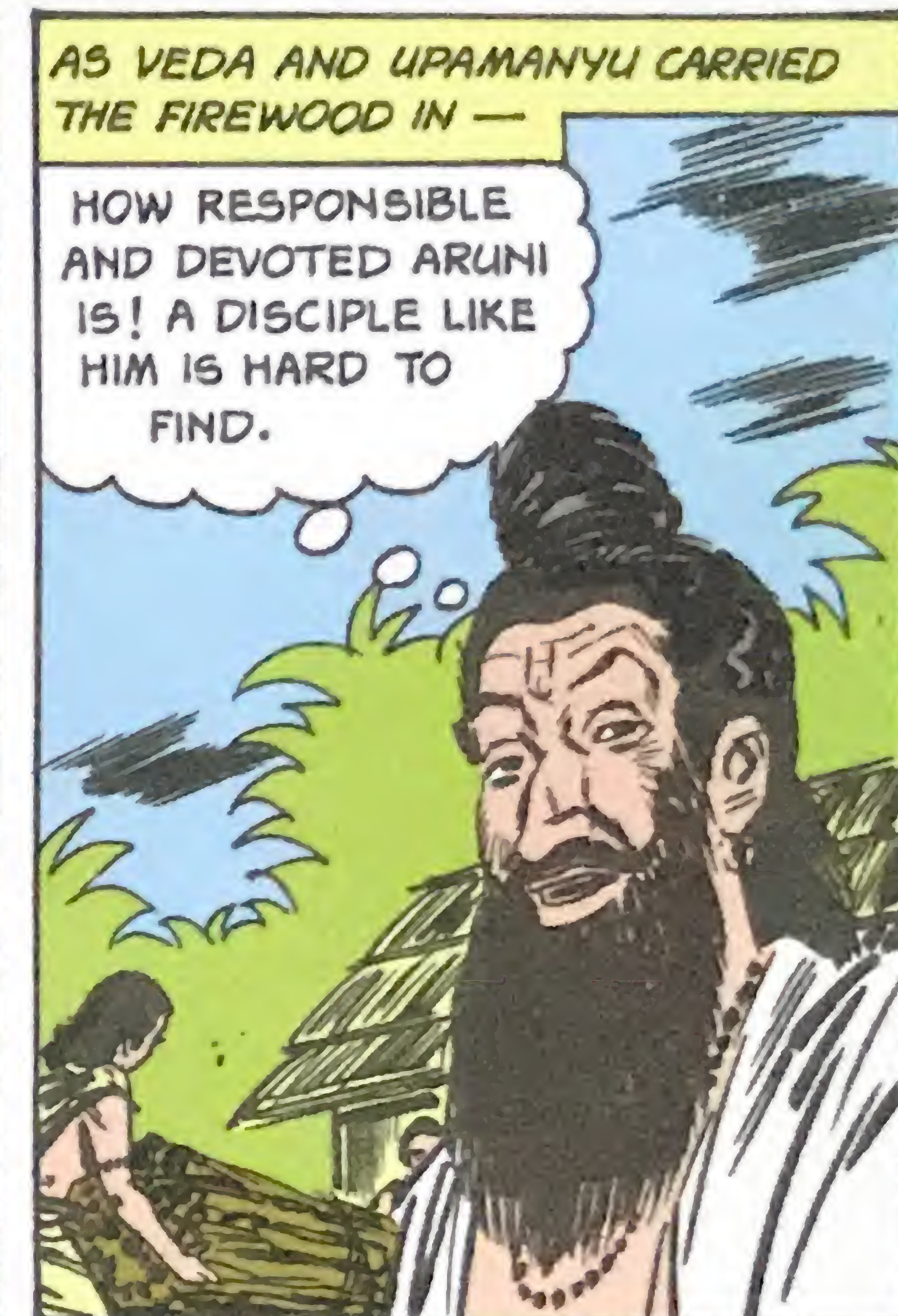
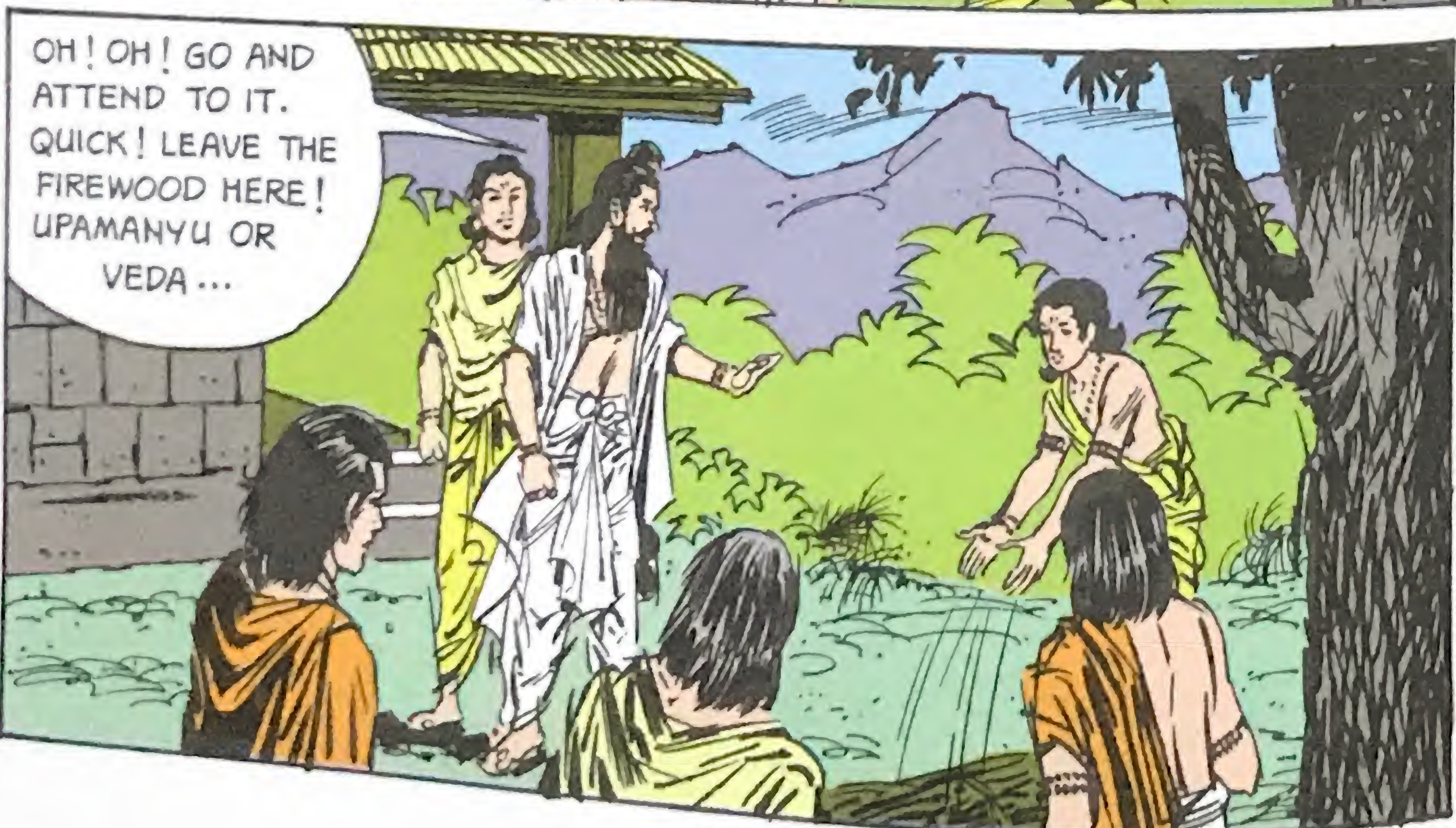
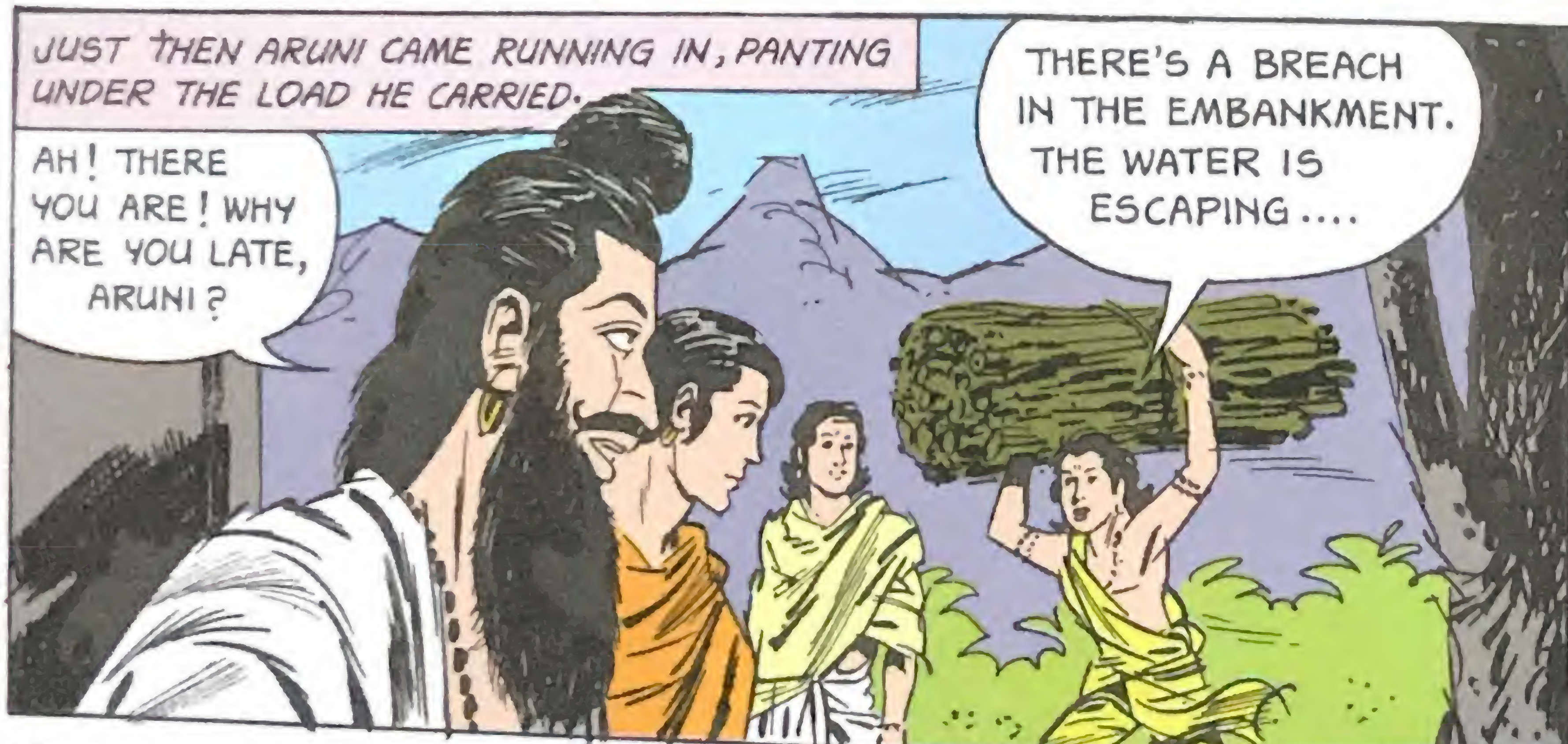
AS HE PASSED BY A FIELD WHICH BELONGED TO THE SAGE —

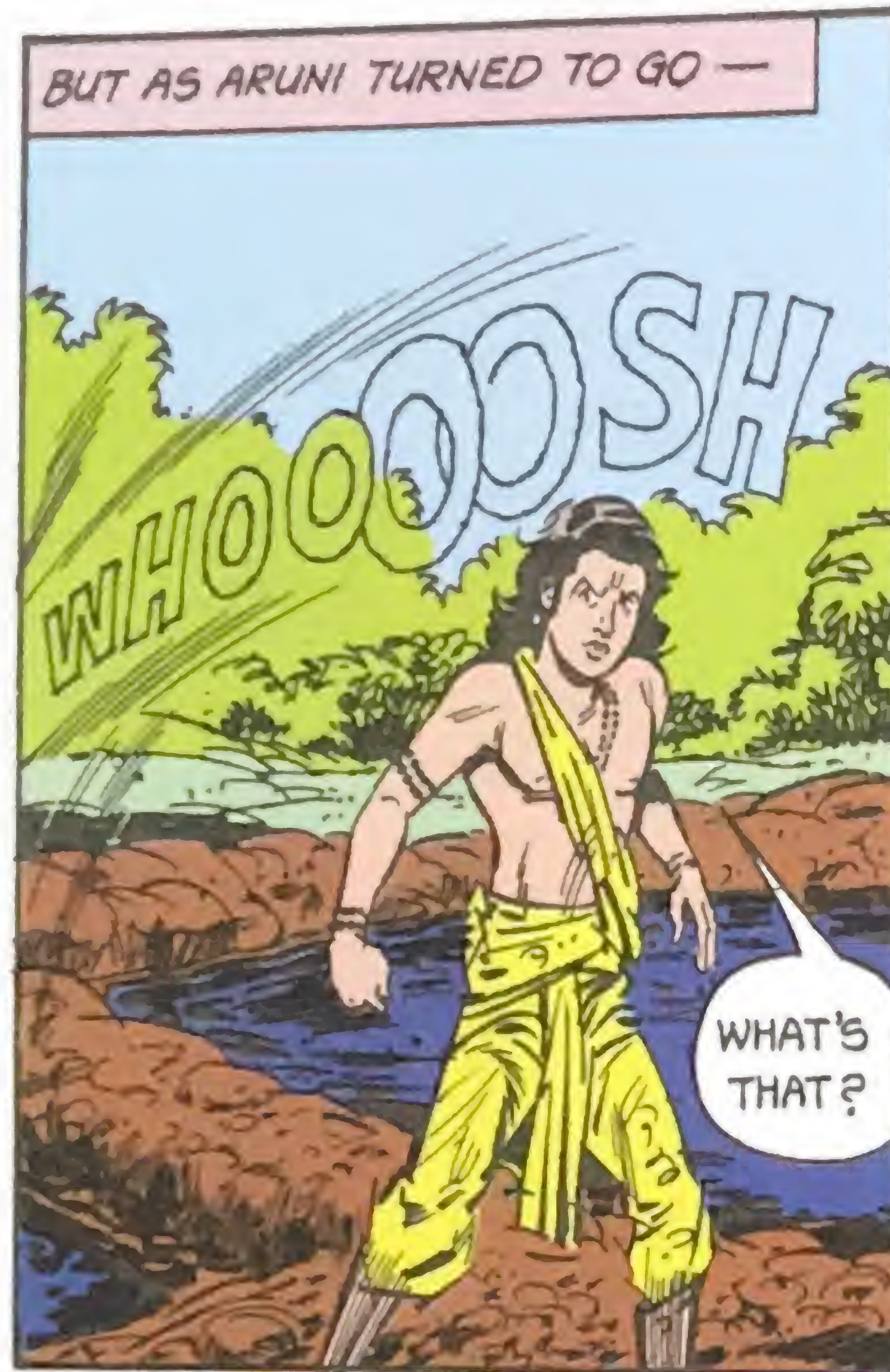


THERE'S A BREACH IN THE EMBANKMENT! THE MASTER'S FIELD WILL DRY UP!

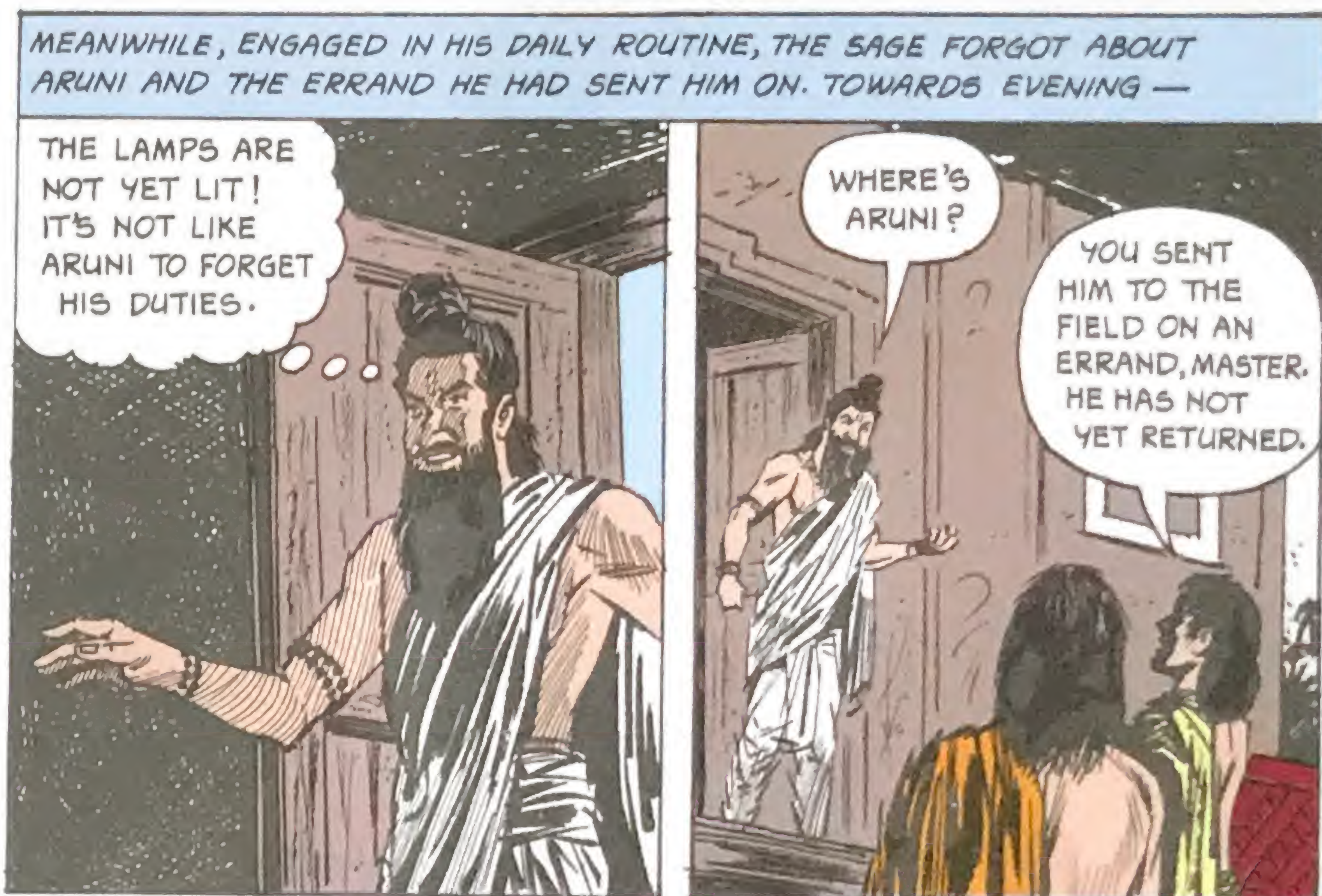


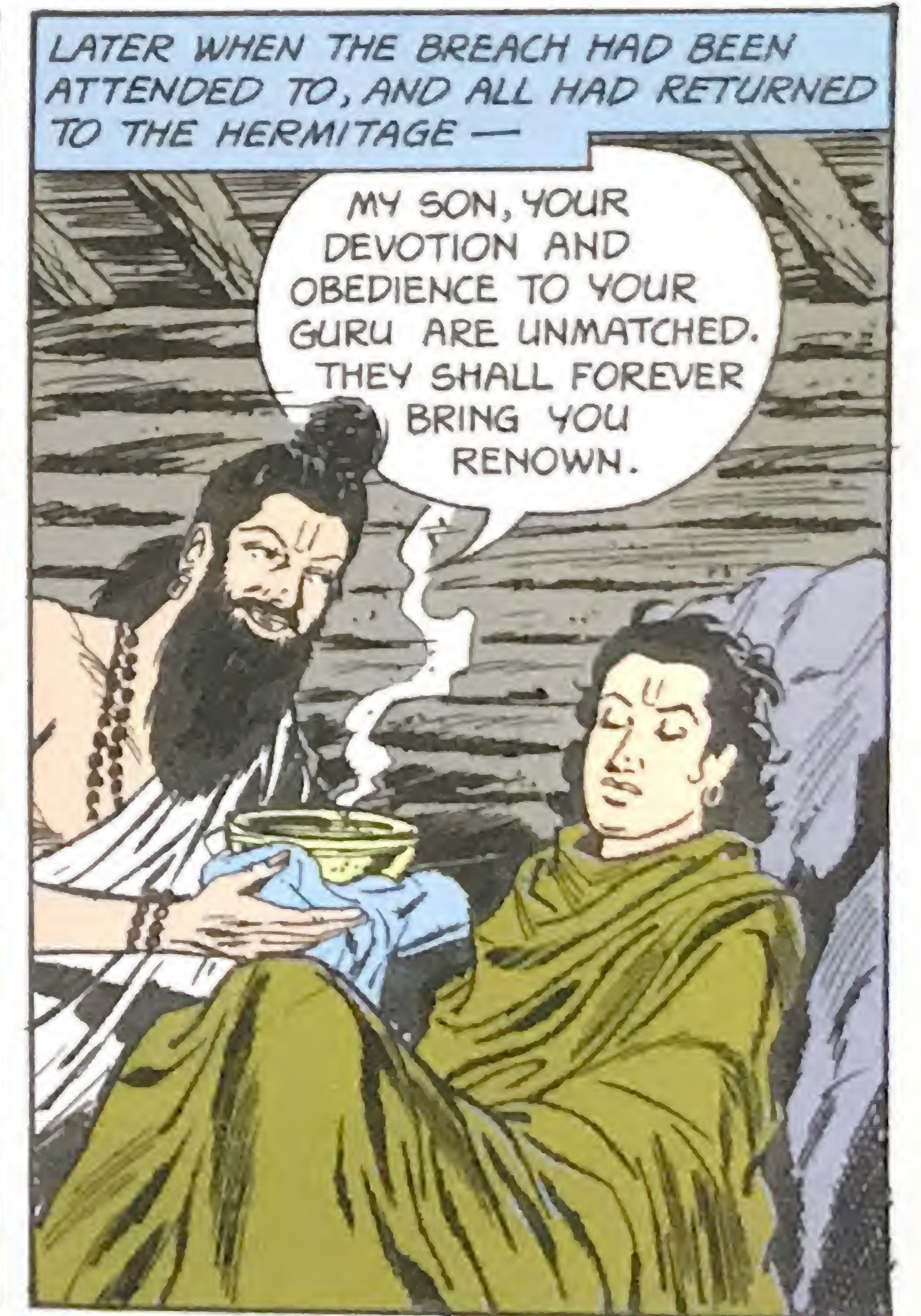
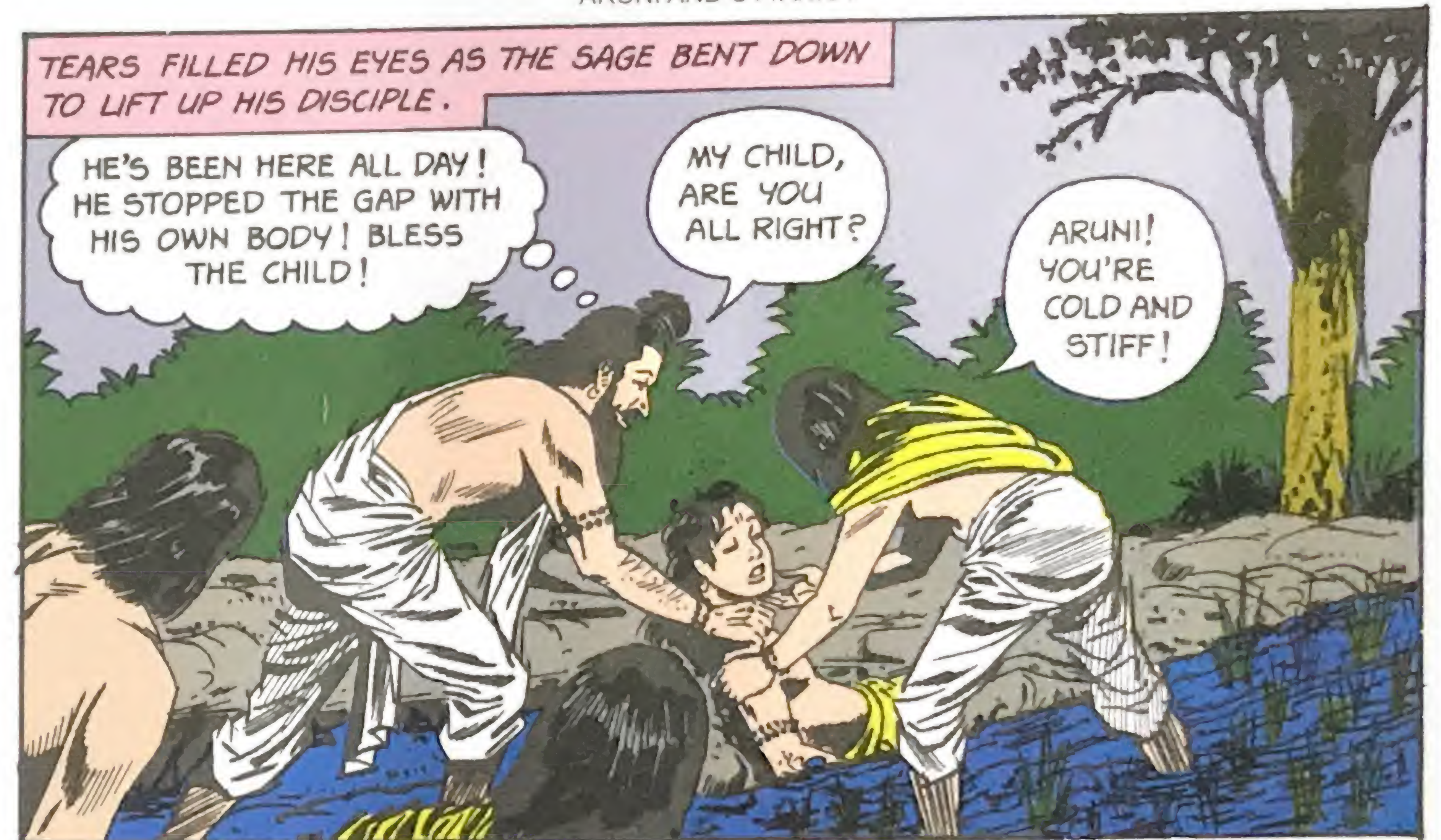
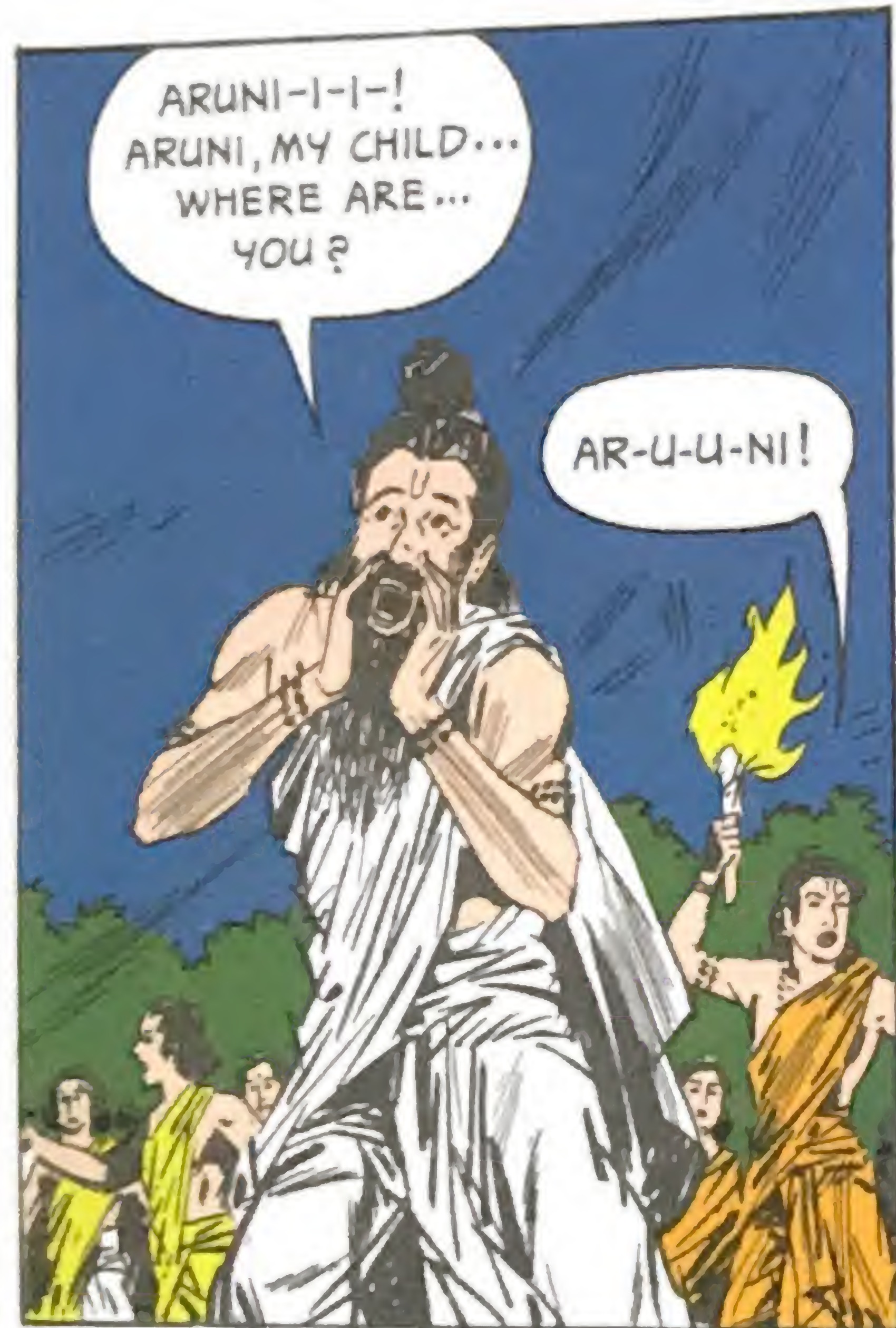
IF I WAIT HERE TO TRY AND STOP IT, I'LL BE DELAYED. AND THERE'S NOT A BIT OF FIREWOOD AT THE HERMITAGE!

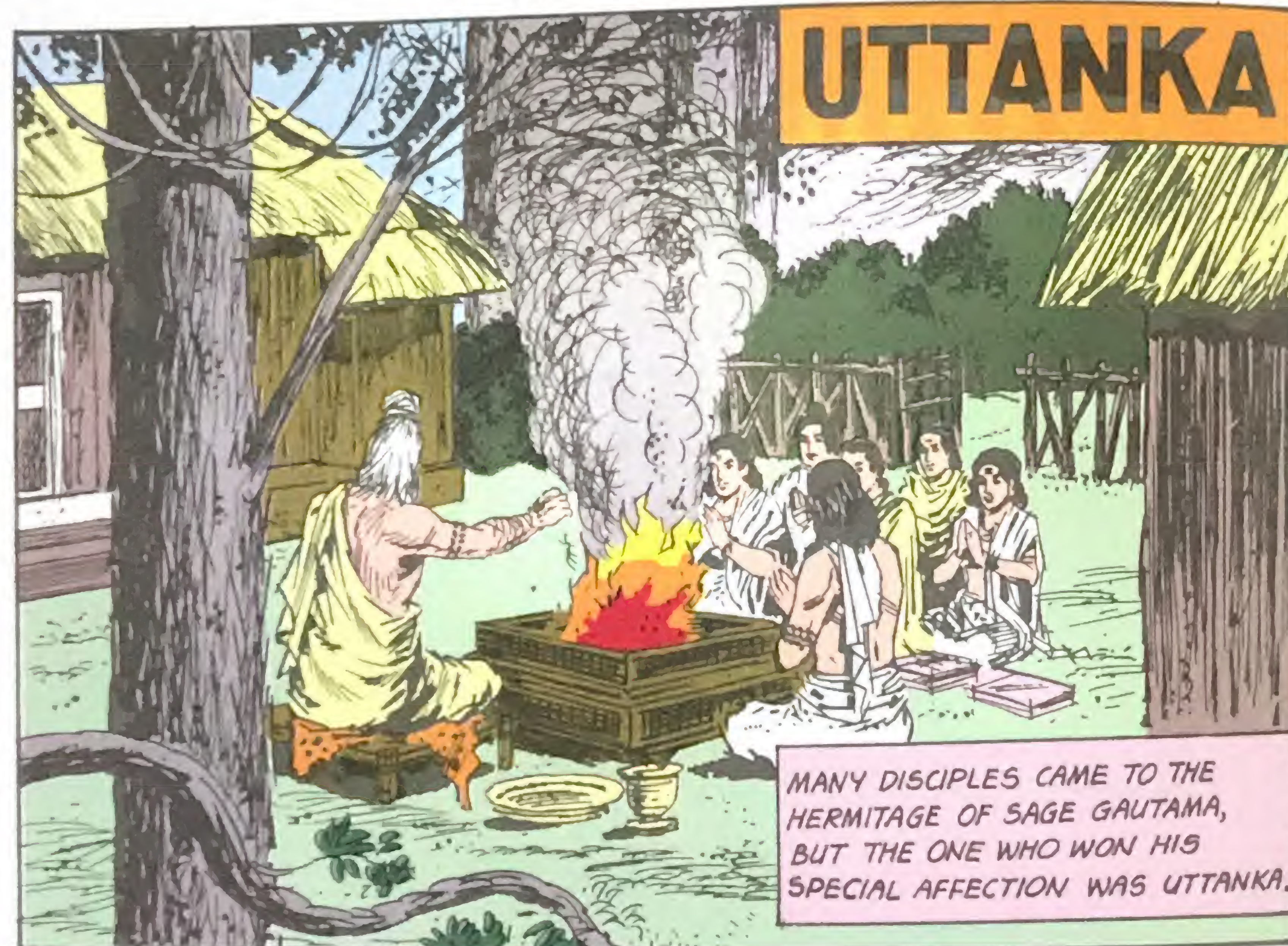




AS HE STOOD GAZING HELPLESSLY AT THE BREACH, AN IDEA OCCURRED TO HIM. FOR A MOMENT HE WAVERED —







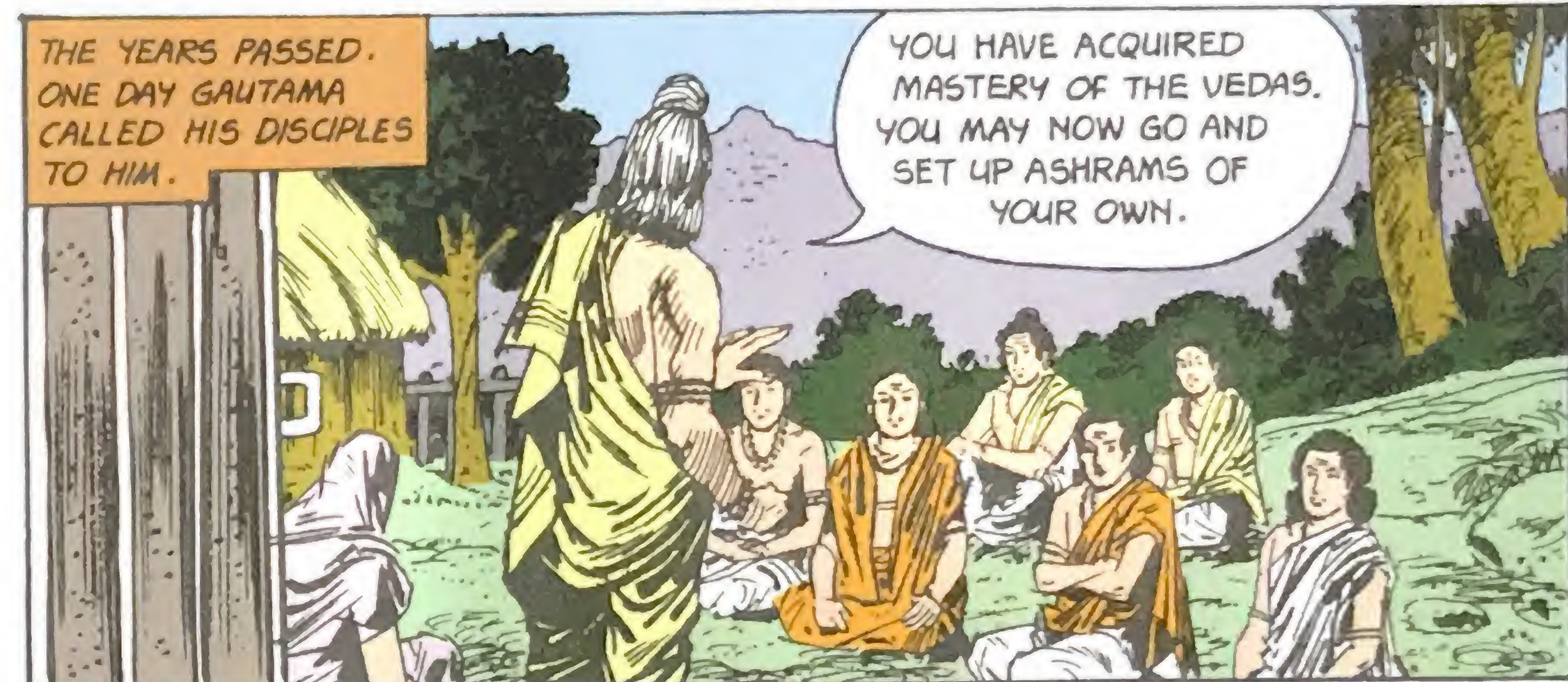
MANY DISCIPLES CAME TO THE HERMITAGE OF SAGE GAUTAMA, BUT THE ONE WHO WON HIS SPECIAL AFFECTION WAS UTTANKA.

WHEN GAUTAMA WORSHIPPED AGNI, THE GOD OF FIRE, HE ALWAYS CHOSE UTTANKA TO ASSIST HIM.



O AGNI, I WORSHIP YOU FOR THE SAKE OF MY GURU, WHO IS MY ONLY GOD.

MY DEAR UTTANKA, I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE THINKING. MAY THE DIVINE AGNI COME TO YOUR AID WHEN YOU NEED HIM MOST.



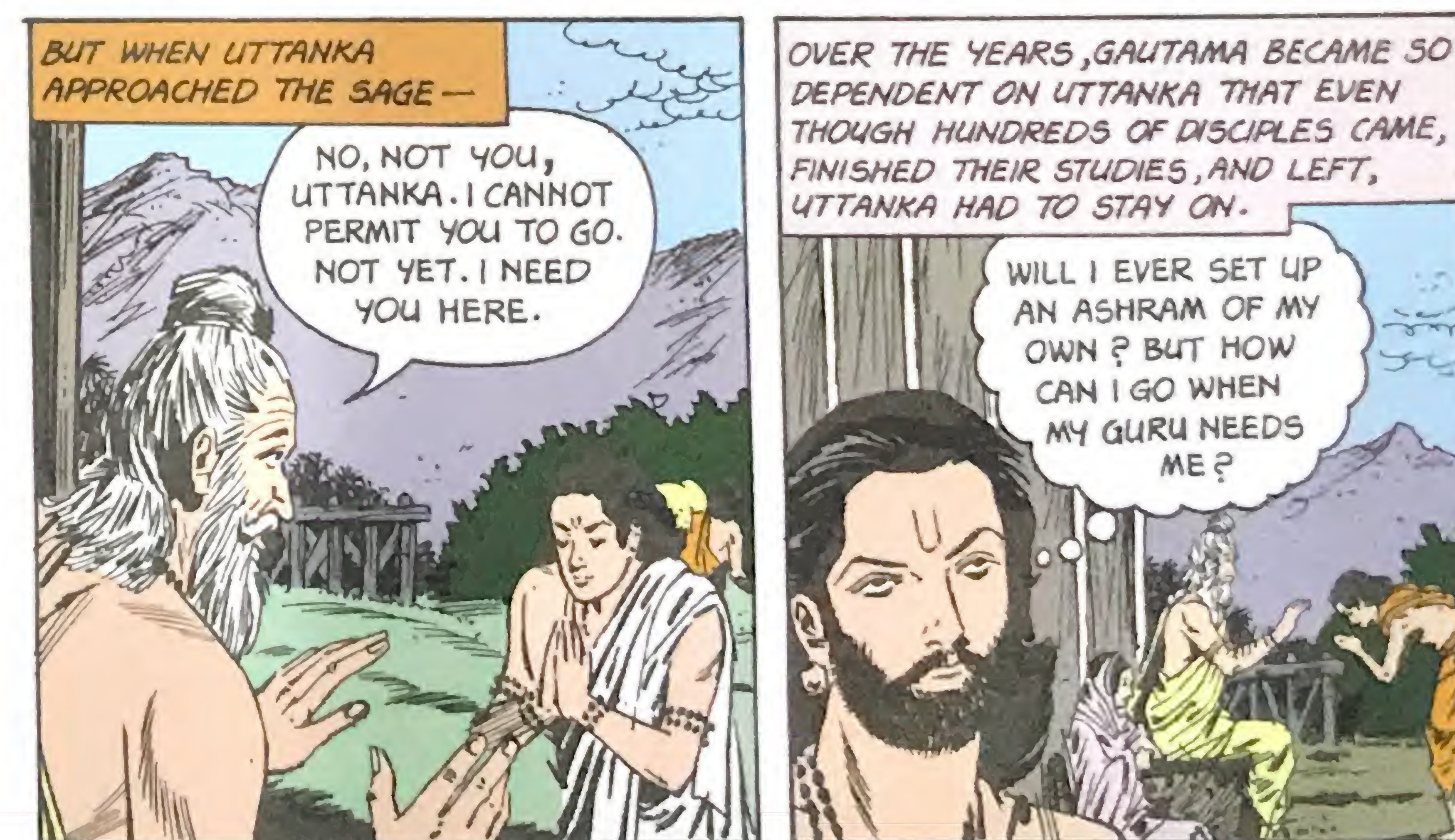
THE YEARS PASSED. ONE DAY GAUTAMA CALLED HIS DISCIPLES TO HIM.

YOU HAVE ACQUIRED MASTERY OF THE VEDAS. YOU MAY NOW GO AND SET UP ASHRAMS OF YOUR OWN.



ONE BY ONE, THEY CAME TO GAUTAMA TO BE BLESSED BEFORE DEPARTING.

AH! NOW IT IS MY TURN. WHAT DAKSHINA* SHOULD I OFFER MY GURU? I'LL LEAVE IT TO HIM TO DECIDE.

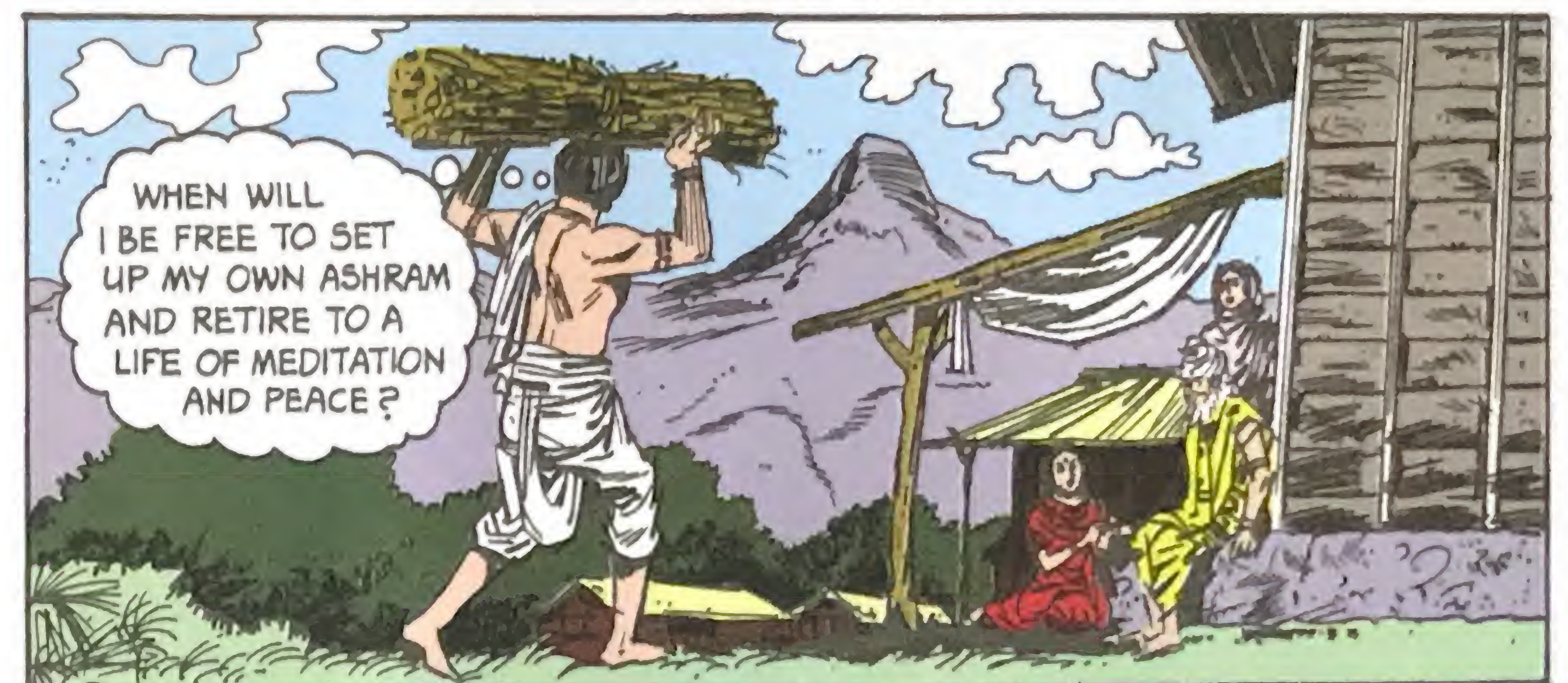
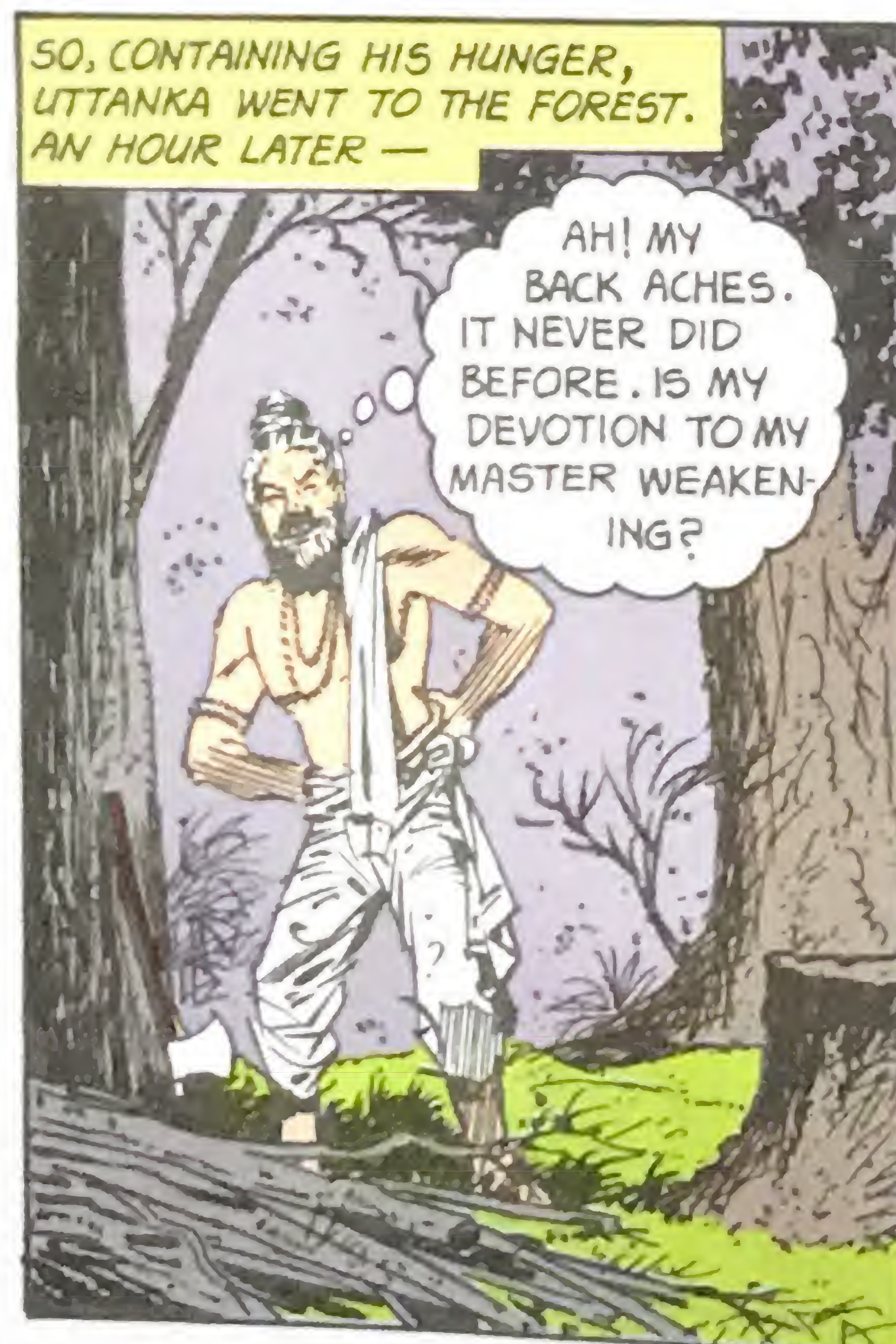


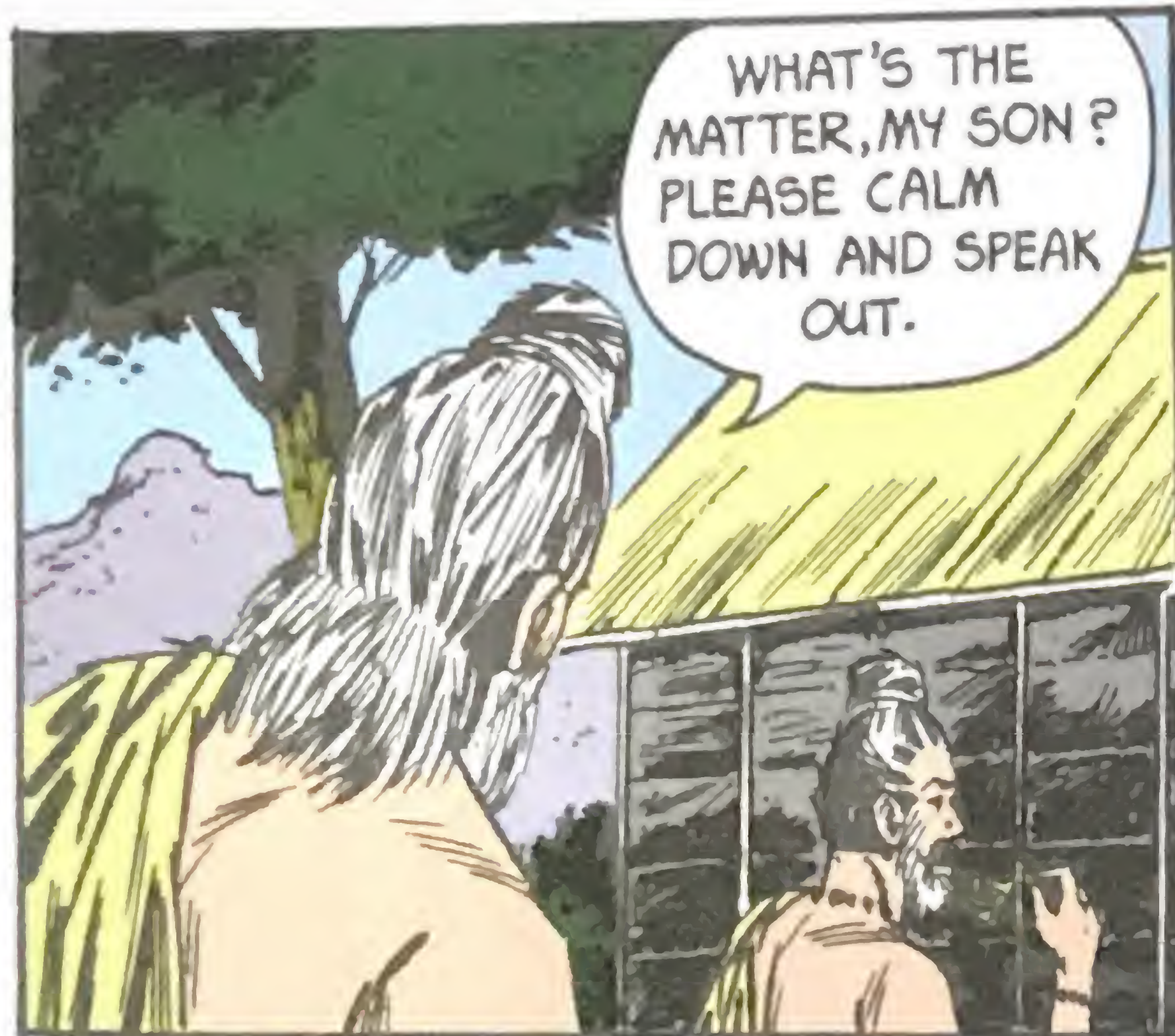
BUT WHEN UTTANKA APPROACHED THE SAGE —

NO, NOT YOU, UTTANKA. I CANNOT PERMIT YOU TO GO. NOT YET. I NEED YOU HERE.

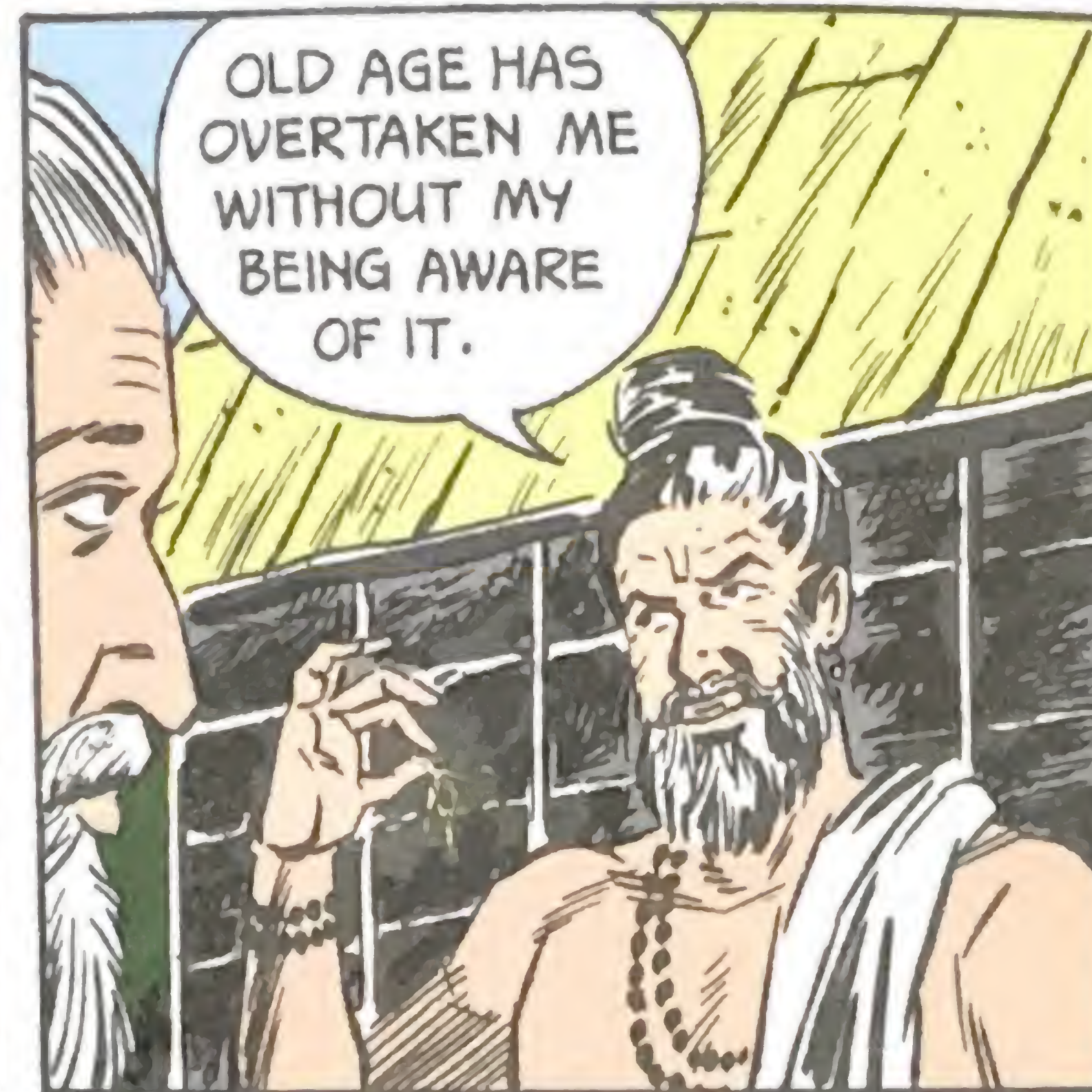
OVER THE YEARS, GAUTAMA BECAME SO DEPENDENT ON UTTANKA THAT EVEN THOUGH HUNDREDS OF DISCIPLES CAME, FINISHED THEIR STUDIES, AND LEFT, UTTANKA HAD TO STAY ON.

WILL I EVER SET UP AN ASHRAM OF MY OWN? BUT HOW CAN I GO WHEN MY GURU NEEDS ME?





WHAT'S THE MATTER, MY SON? PLEASE CALM DOWN AND SPEAK OUT.



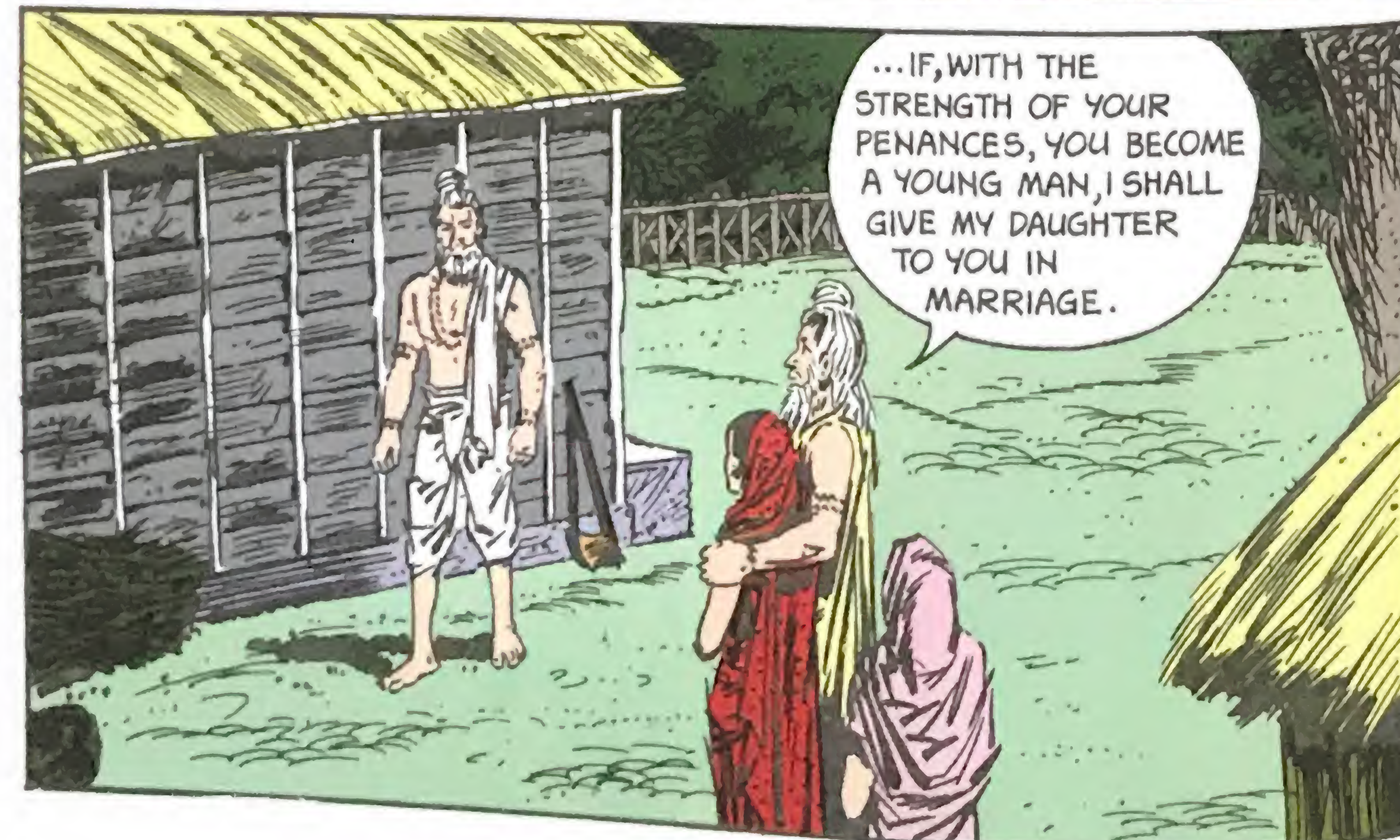
OLD AGE HAS OVERTAKEN ME WITHOUT MY BEING AWARE OF IT.



WHILE GAUTAMA PATIENTLY LISTENED, UTTANKA POURED OUT HIS WOES.

AND I HAVE NOT YET TASTED WORLDLY HAPPINESS. THOUGH I HAVE LOVINGLY SERVED YOU FOR MANY YEARS, YOU HAVE NOT YET PERMITTED ME TO GO.

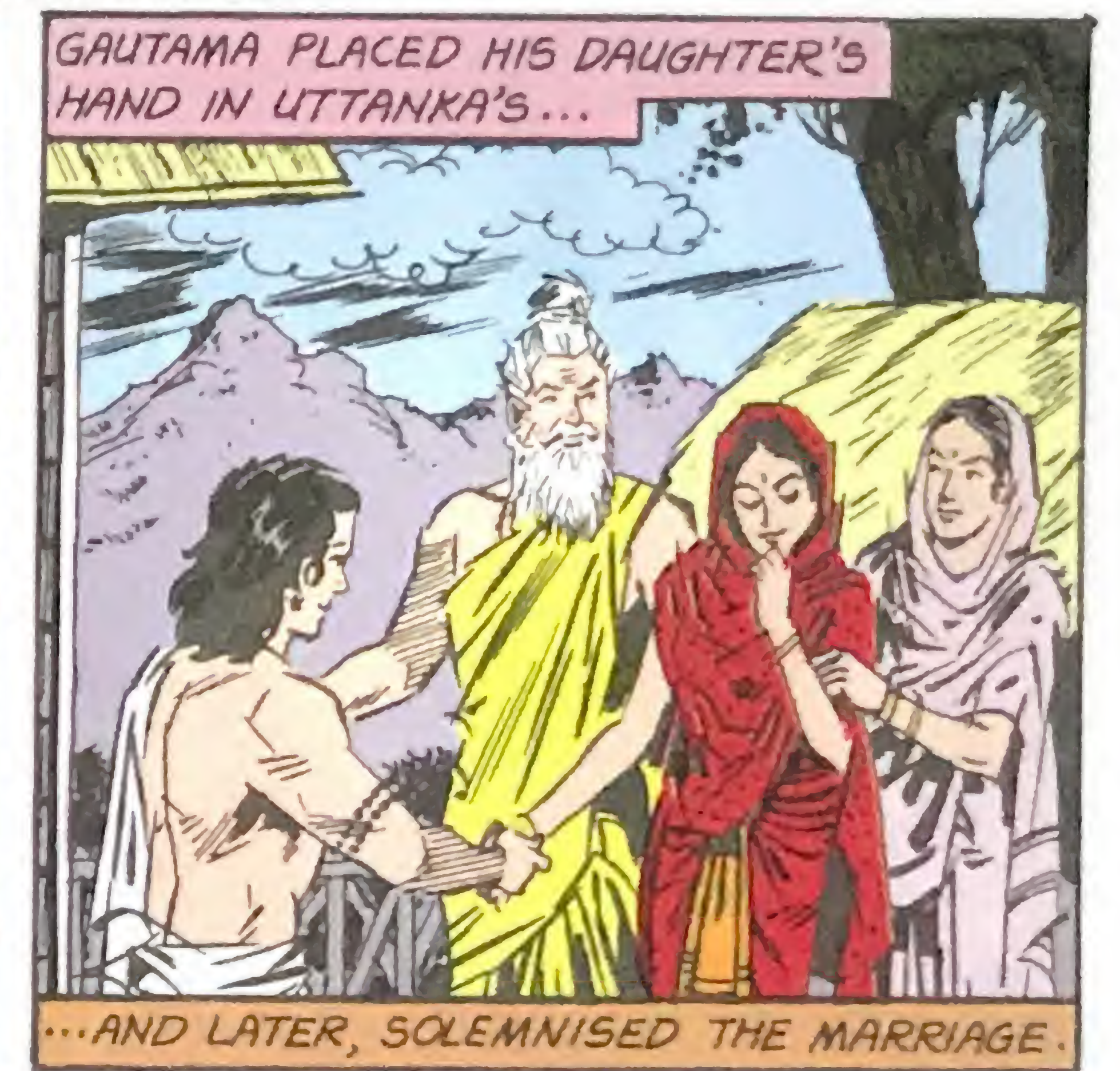
MY SON, I KEPT YOU HERE BECAUSE OF MY LOVE FOR YOU. BUT IF YOU WISH TO GO, YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION AND MY BLESSINGS. AND ...



...IF, WITH THE STRENGTH OF YOUR PENANCES, YOU BECOME A YOUNG MAN, I SHALL GIVE MY DAUGHTER TO YOU IN MARRIAGE.

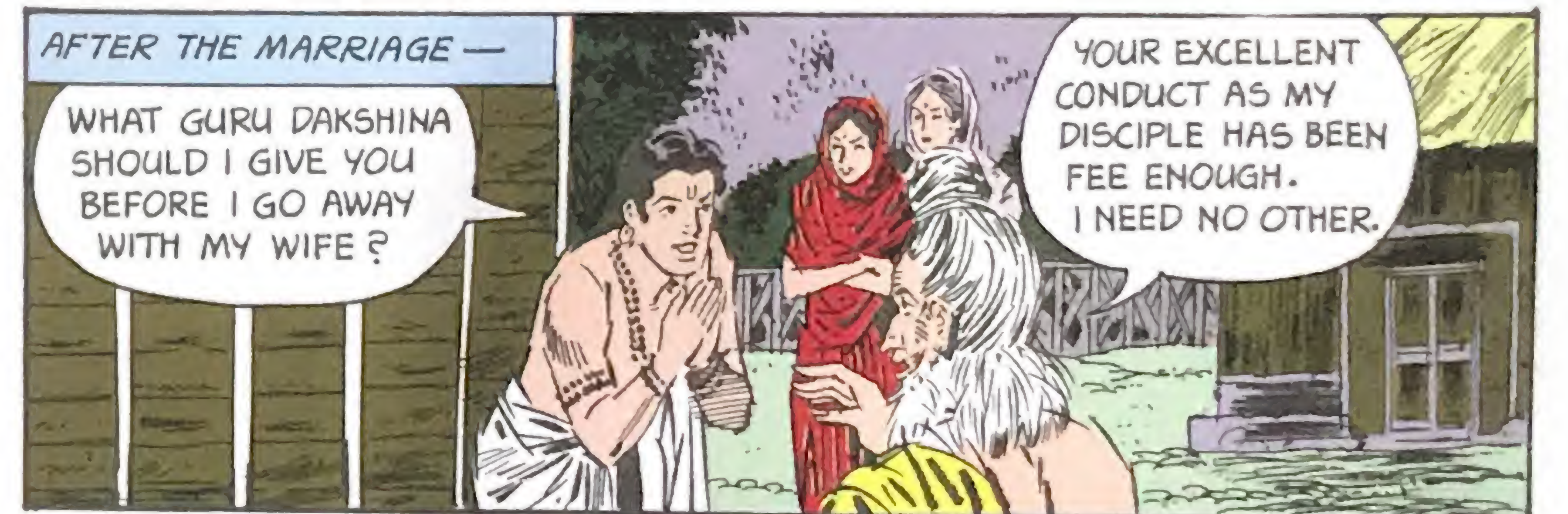


AND, LO! THE VERY NEXT MOMENT UTTANKA REGAINED HIS LOST YOUTH.



GAUTAMA PLACED HIS DAUGHTER'S HAND IN UTTANKA'S...

...AND LATER, SOLEMNISED THE MARRIAGE.



AFTER THE MARRIAGE —

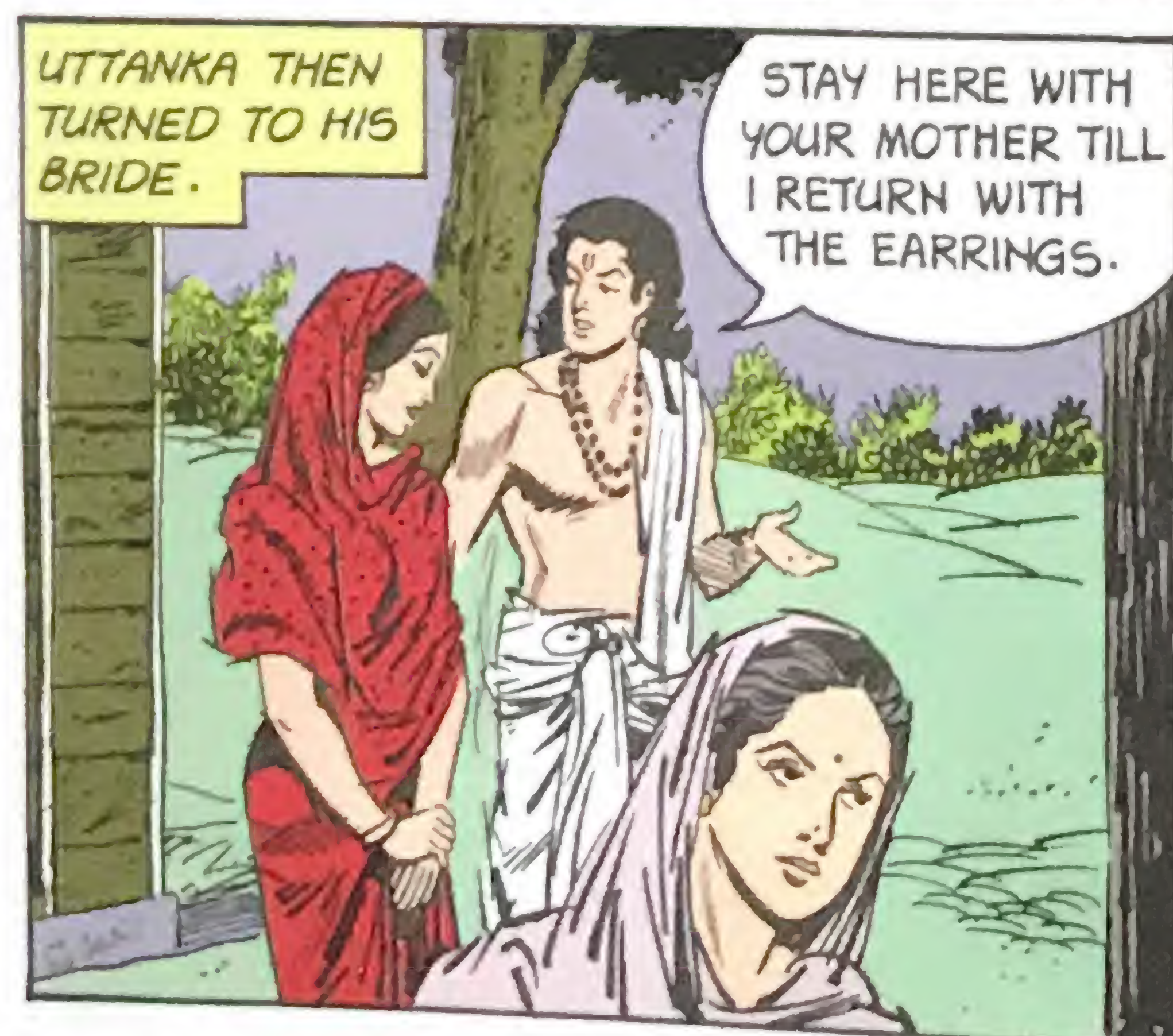
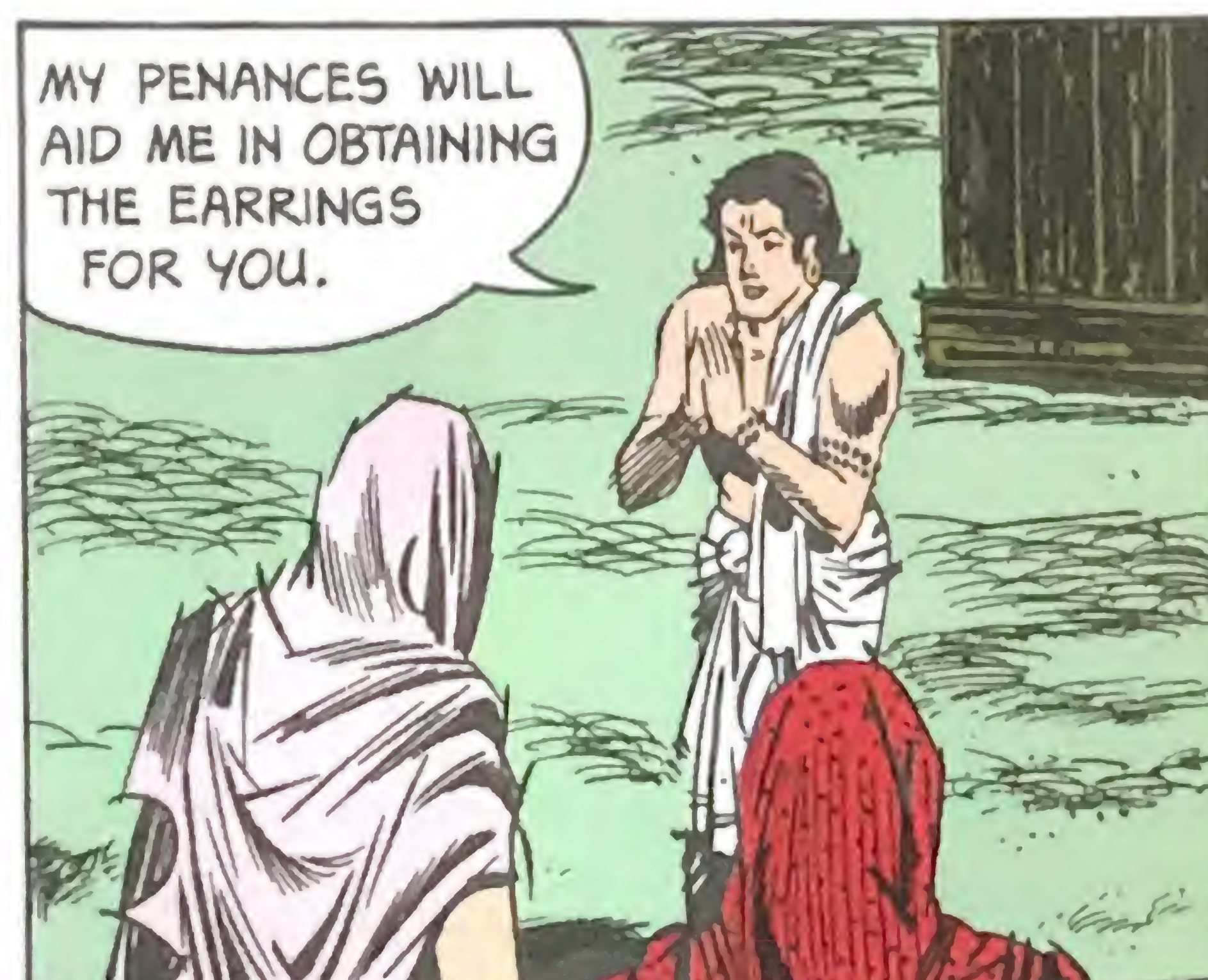
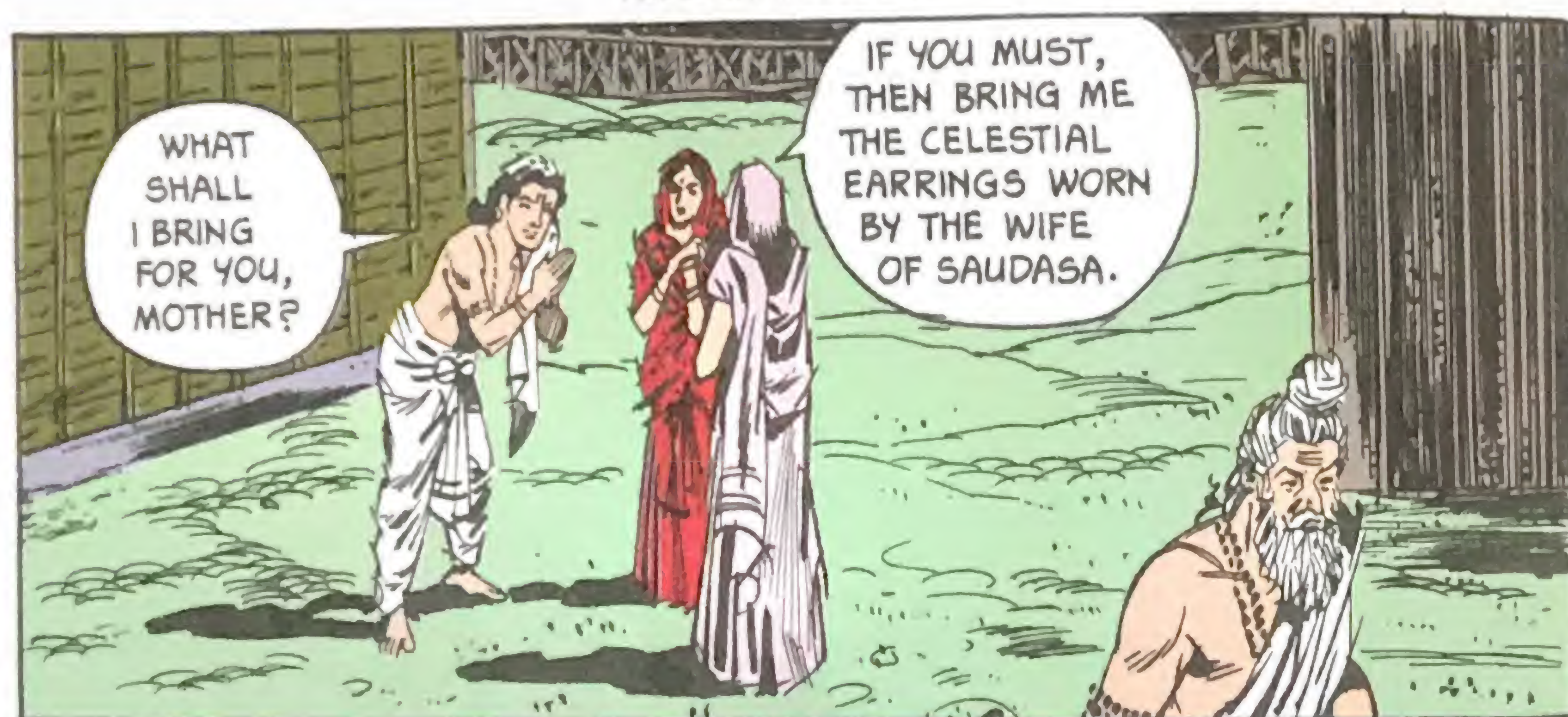
WHAT GURU DAKSHINA SHOULD I GIVE YOU BEFORE I GO AWAY WITH MY WIFE?

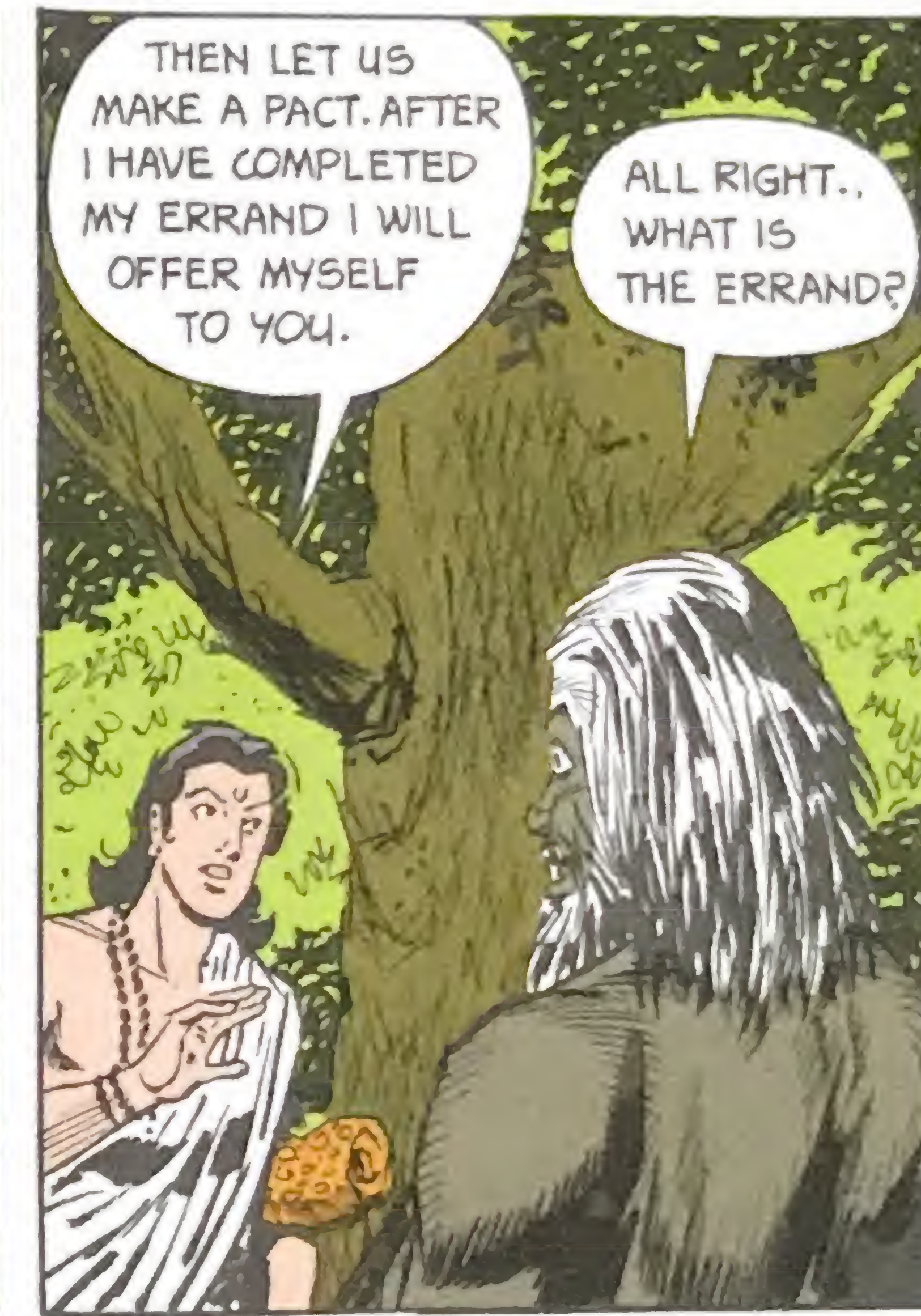
YOUR EXCELLENT CONDUCT AS MY DISCIPLE HAS BEEN FEE ENOUGH. I NEED NO OTHER.

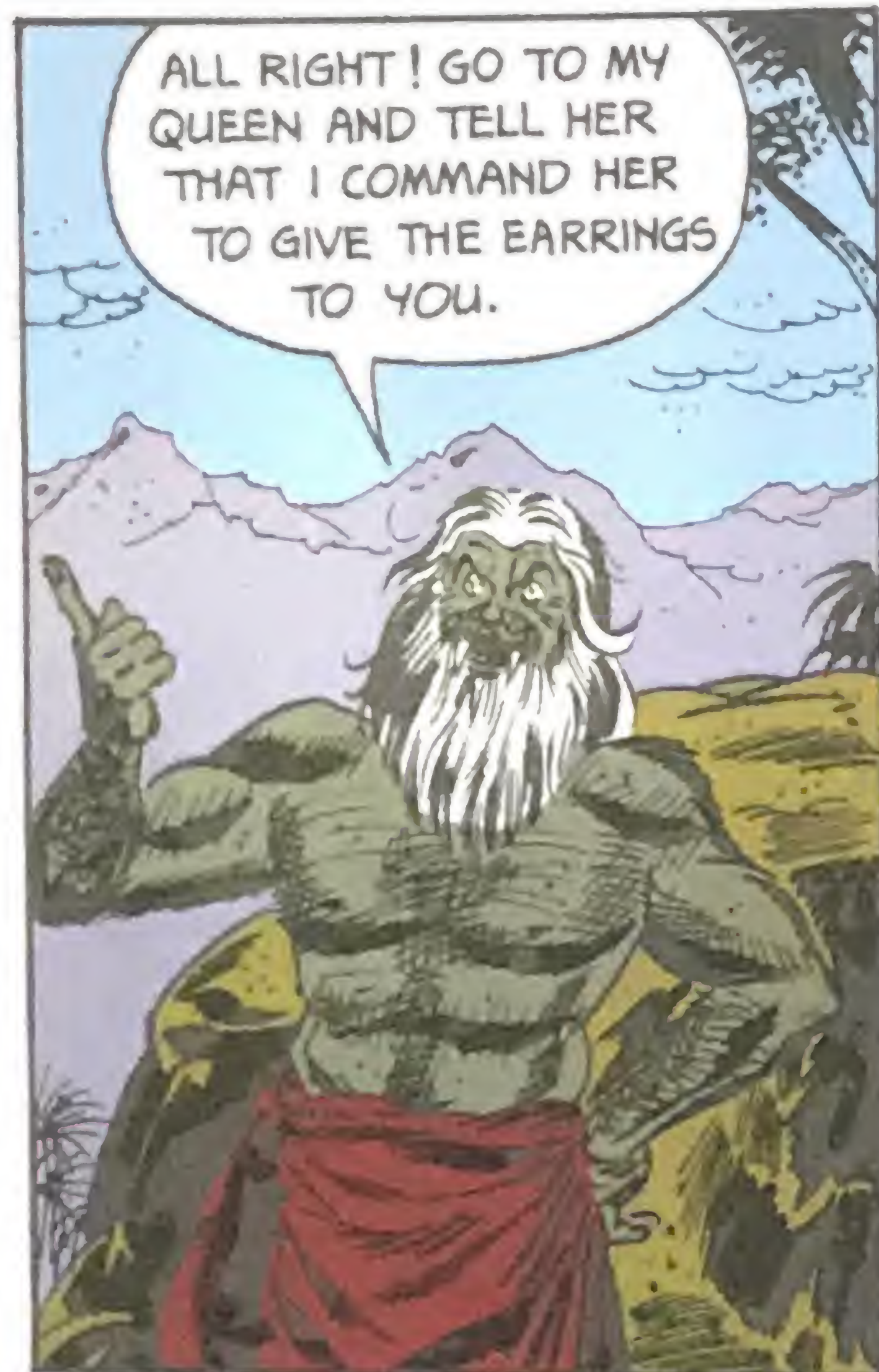


THEN, WITH YOUR PERMISSION, MAY I BRING SOMETHING FOR MOTHER?

IF IT PLEASES YOU, YOU MAY DO SO.







ALL RIGHT! GO TO MY QUEEN AND TELL HER THAT I COMMAND HER TO GIVE THE EARRINGS TO YOU.



UTTANKA WENT TO THE QUEEN WITH SAUDASA'S MESSAGE —

IF IT IS THE COMMAND OF MY HUSBAND, AND FOR HIS GOOD, I WILL OBEY. FOR NO OTHER REASON WOULD I PART WITH THESE EARRINGS.



IN WHAT WAY ARE THESE EARRINGS DIFFERENT?

THESE EARRINGS FREE THE WEARER FROM HUNGER AND THIRST AND FEAR OF ANY KIND. THEY PROTECT THE ONE THEY ADORN FROM POISON, FIRE OR ANY OTHER DANGER.



THE NAGAS* ARE WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO STEAL THEM. SO TAKE CARE OF THEM. HIDE THEM IN THE FOLDS OF YOUR DEERSKIN.

* SNAKE GODS



I SHALL CERTAINLY TAKE CARE OF THEM.



UTTANKA THEN RETURNED TO SAUDASA.

AH! MY FRIEND, YOU HAVE RETURNED!

I HAVE GOT THE EARRINGS. I WILL GIVE THEM TO MY GURU'S WIFE AND THEN RETURN TO YOU, AS I PROMISED.



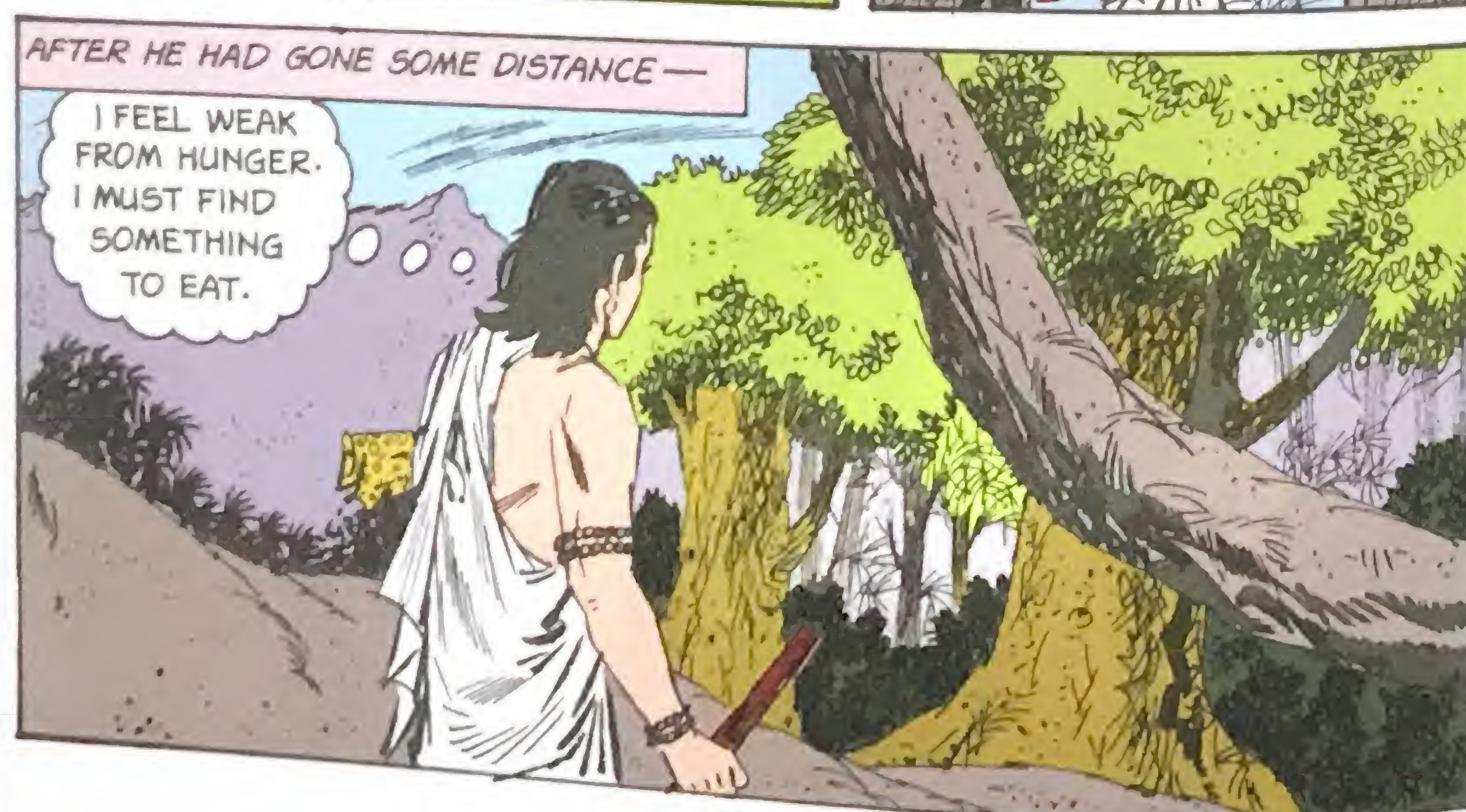
THERE IS, HOWEVER, ONE QUESTION I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU BEFORE I GO.

WHAT IS IT, MY FRIEND?



THE LEARNED SAY THAT ONE WHO DOES NOT TAKE THE ADVICE OF A FRIEND IS A FOOL. AND ONE WHO WRONGS A FRIEND IS A VILLAIN. AND YOU, O KING, HAVE BECOME MY FRIEND TODAY.

THAT IS TRUE.



AS HE CLIMBED THE BILVA TREE, SOME OF THE FRUIT FELL ON THE DEERSKIN.



WHAT WAS THAT?

UTTANKA LOOKED DOWN.

MY DEERSKIN! IT'S FALLEN OFF THE BRANCH!



THE EARRINGS!

AH! THE CELESTIAL EARRINGS! I MUST BE QUICK.



IT'S A NAGA! HE'S GOT THE EARRINGS!

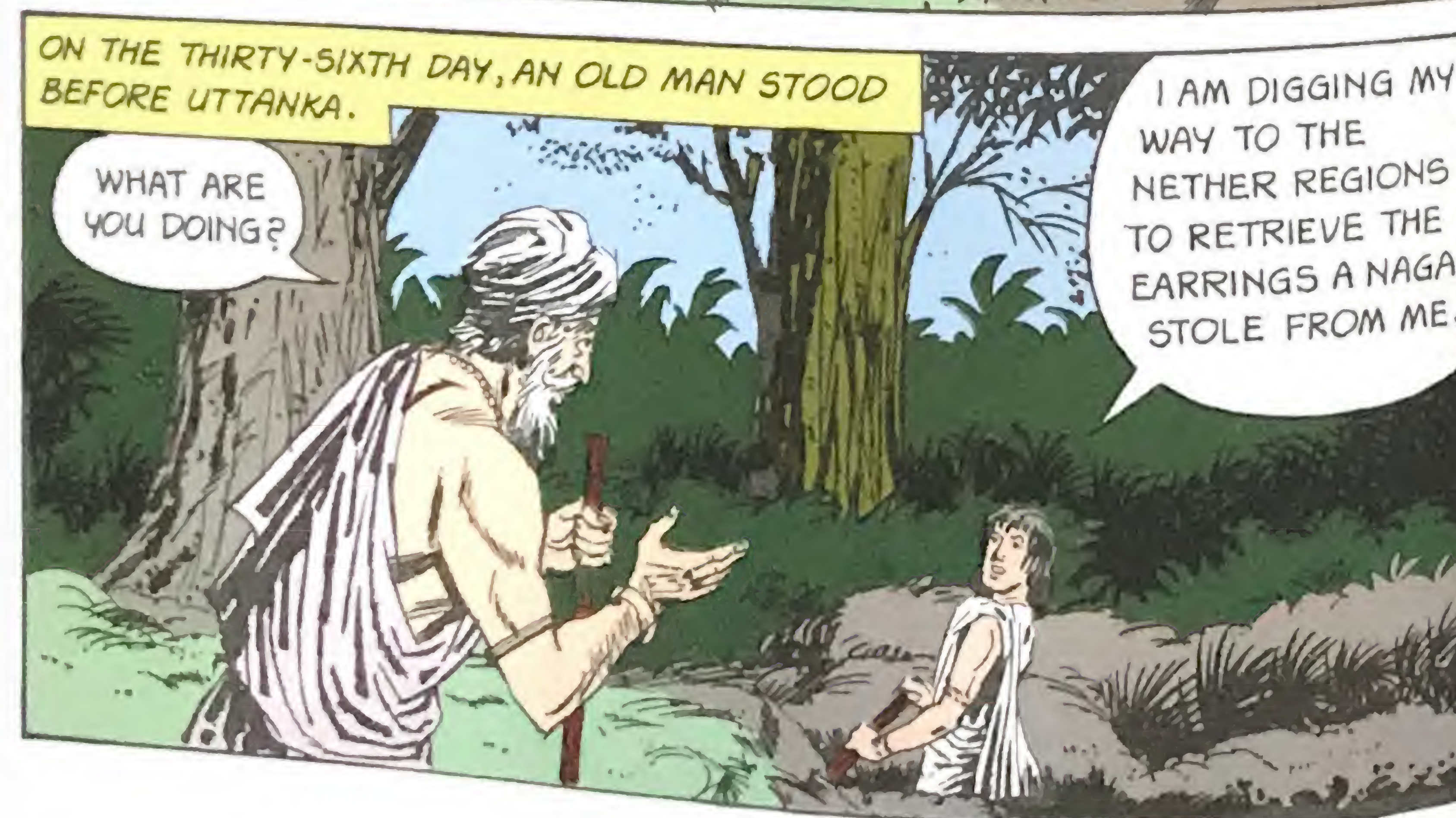
UTTANKA CHASED THE NAGA...



...BUT BEFORE HE COULD CATCH UP WITH IT...



...IT HAD SLID INTO AN ANTHILL.



* ONE YOJANA IS EQUAL TO THIRTEEN KILOMETRES.

