

TALES OF ARJUNA

Superbly skilled, speedy and strong, Arjuna boasted that he was the world's greatest warrior. But, despite his unquestionable courage, this honourable Pandava prince realised he could not confront Lord Indra's power – or even the wiles of a cheeky monkey – without help. He needed divine weapons, such as the Gandiva bow, with its inexhaustible supply of arrows, and a special war chariot. Most importantly, he needed the blessings of the gods, especially Lord Vishnu.

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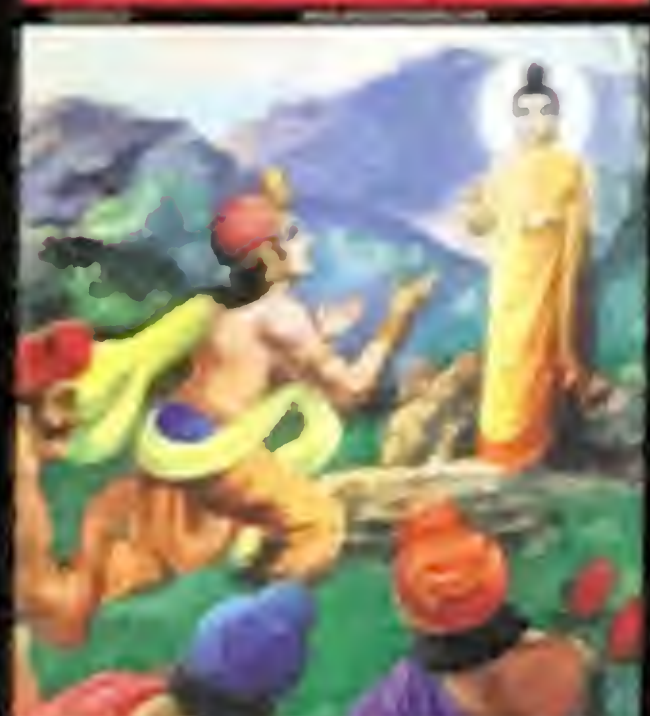


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TALES OF ARJUNA

THE EXPLOITS OF AN EXCEPTIONAL WARRIOR

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ARJUNA, THE MONKEY AND THE BOY



ONCE, WHILE ARJUNA WAS ON A PILGRIMAGE TO VARIOUS HOLY PLACES, HE CAME TO RAMESWARAM.*

AND THAT IS THE BRIDGE RAMA BUILT WITH THE HELP OF THE MONKEYS.

MONKEYS? BUT WHY DID A GREAT ARCHER LIKE HIM NEED THE HELP OF MONKEYS?

HE COULD HAVE BUILT A BRIDGE OF ARROWS! WHY DIDN'T HE?



*IN COASTAL TAMIL NADU

THE BRAHMAN WENT HIS WAY BUT A MONKEY, WHICH WAS FOLLOWING ARJUNA, BURST OUT LAUGHING.



HA! HA! HO!
HO! HA!

SURPRISED, ARJUNA TURNED ROUND—



A BRIDGE OF ARROWS
WOULD HAVE COLLAPSED
UNDER THE WEIGHT
OF THE MONKEYS!

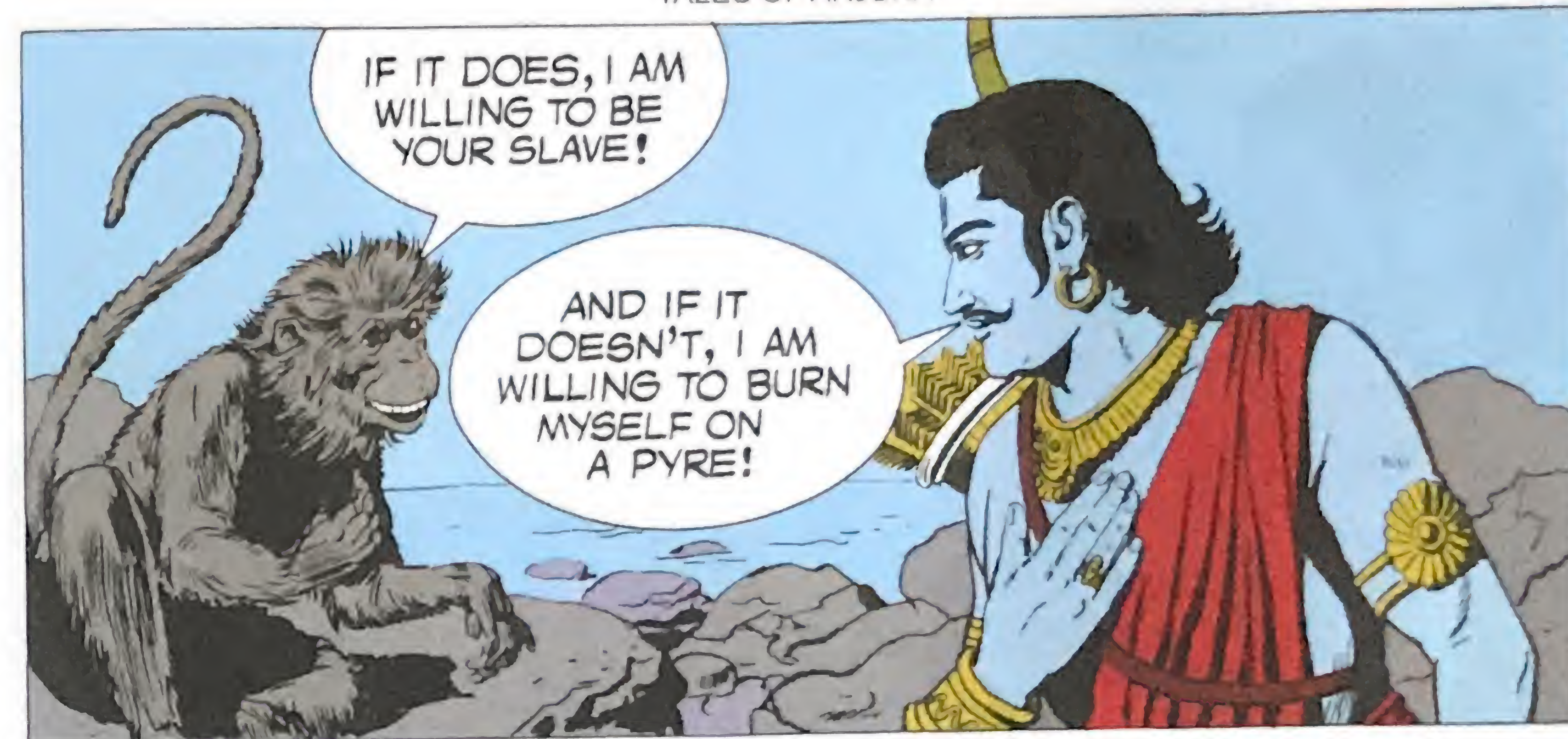
ARJUNA WAS A LITTLE ANNOYED BY THE MONKEY'S AUDACITY.



MERE MONKEYS COULD
BREAK A BRIDGE OF
MIGHTY RAMA'S ARROWS!
IMPOSSIBLE! WHY, NO
MONKEY COULD CRUSH A
BRIDGE OF EVEN MY
ARROWS!



I CHALLENGE THAT!
A BRIDGE MADE WITH
YOUR ARROWS WON'T
WITHSTAND EVEN MY
WEIGHT, PUNY
AS I AM.



IF IT DOES, I AM
WILLING TO BE
YOUR SLAVE!

AND IF IT
DOESN'T, I AM
WILLING TO BURN
MYSELF ON
A PYRE!

SO ARJUNA SET TO WORK AND BEGAN TO BRIDGE THE WATERS BETWEEN LANKA AND THE MAINLAND WITH A SHOWER OF ARROWS.



WITH THE QUIVER OF
INEXHAUSTIBLE ARROWS
THAT LORD AGNI, THE
GOD OF FIRE, GAVE ME,
I SHOULD HAVE NO PRO-
BLEM IN BUILDING A
STRONG BRIDGE.

AS SOON AS THE BRIDGE WAS
READY—



THERE! YOU
CAN TEST IT.

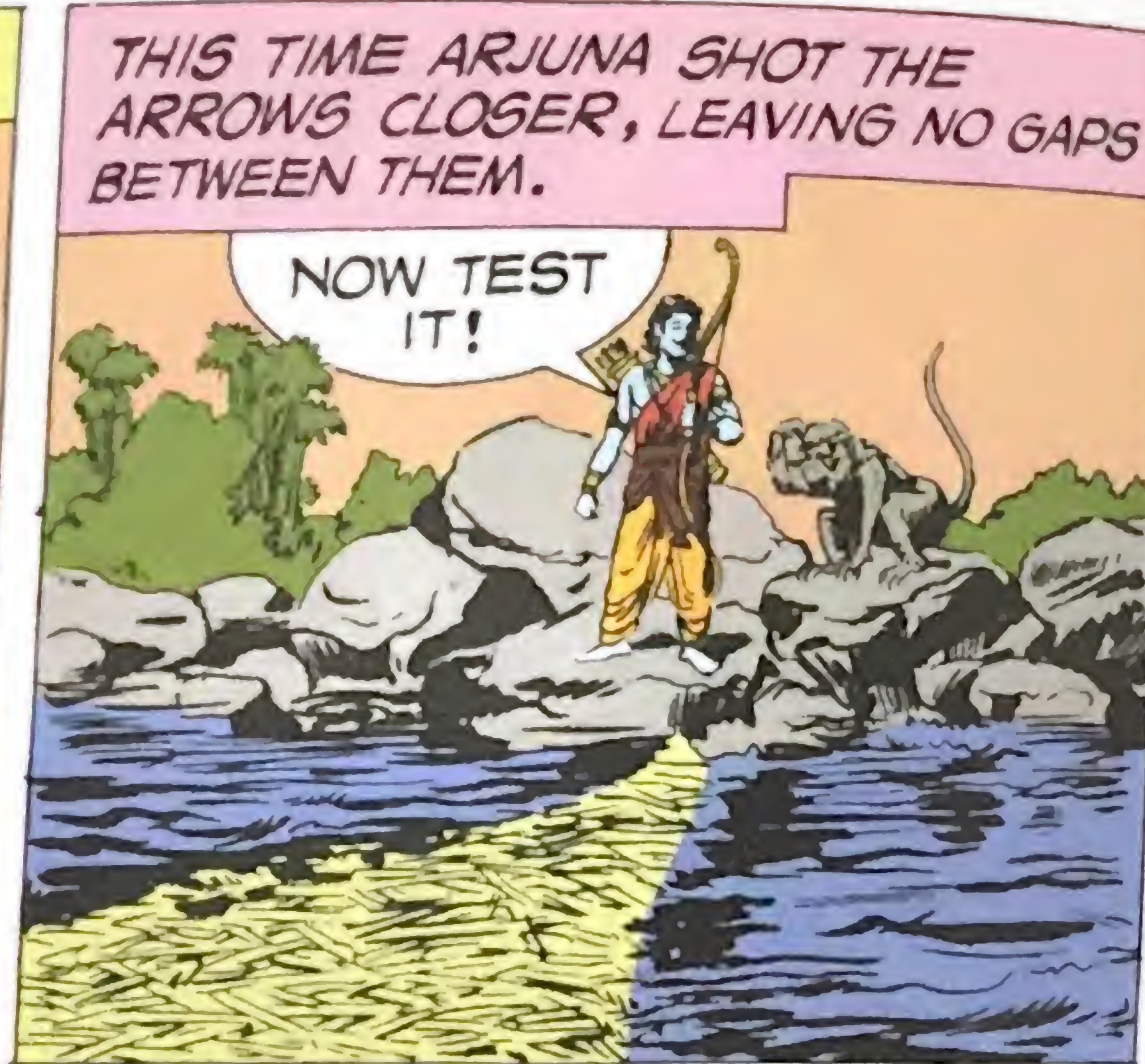
THE MONKEY HAD BARELY TOUCHED
THE BRIDGE...





...WHEN IT COLLAPSED!

NO! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
I'LL TRY AGAIN.



THIS TIME ARJUNA SHOT THE ARROWS CLOSER, LEAVING NO GAPS BETWEEN THEM.

NOW TEST IT!



THIS IS STRONGER THAN I EXPECTED! I'LL WALK A BIT FURTHER.



BUT HE HAD HARDLY TAKEN A FEW MORE STEPS WHEN—



I HAVE LOST!
I SHALL GET THE PYRE READY.

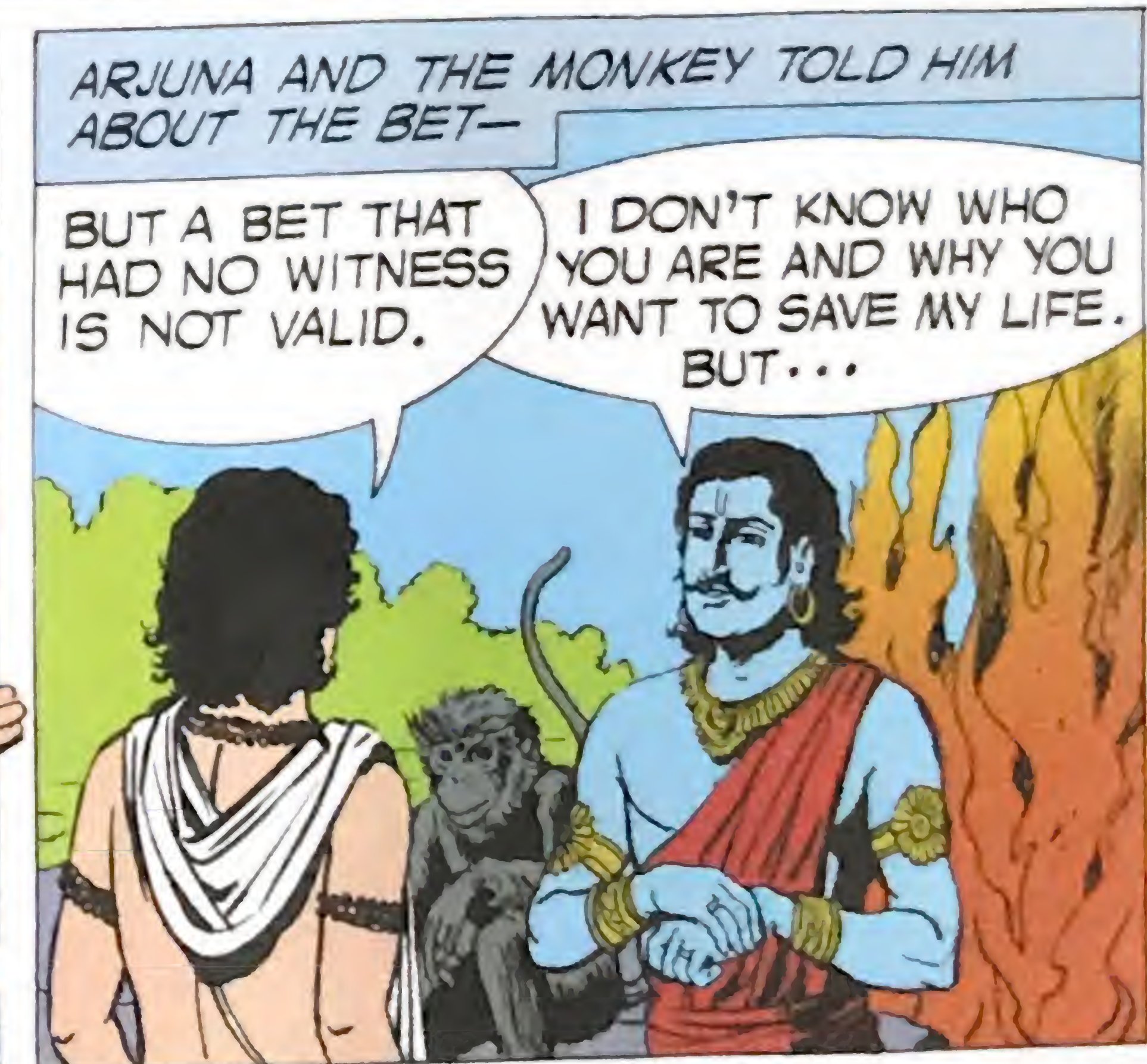


THE PYRE WAS MADE AND ARJUNA WAS ABOUT TO JUMP INTO THE FLAMES—

WAIT!



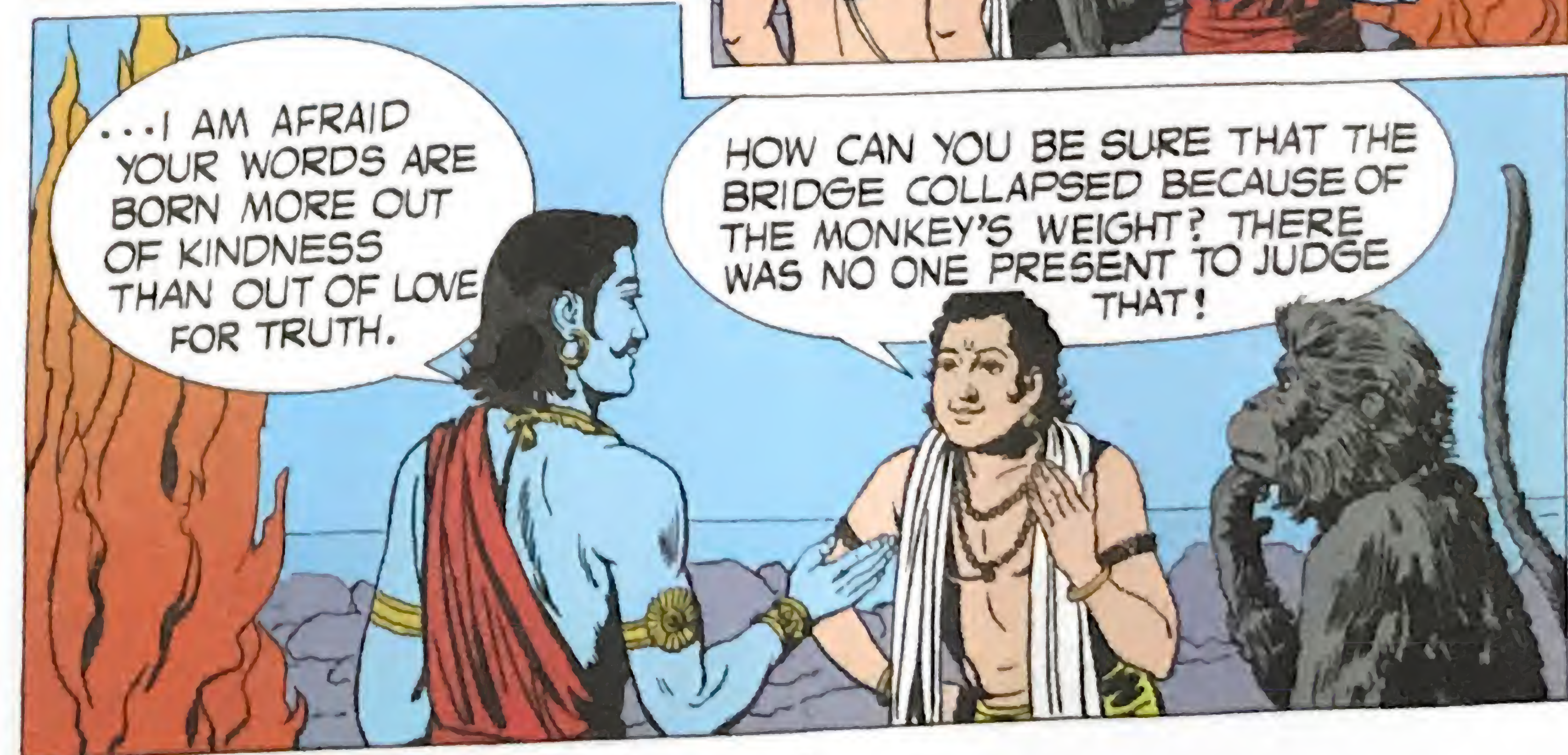
WHY DO YOU WANT TO GIVE UP YOUR LIFE?



ARJUNA AND THE MONKEY TOLD HIM ABOUT THE BET—

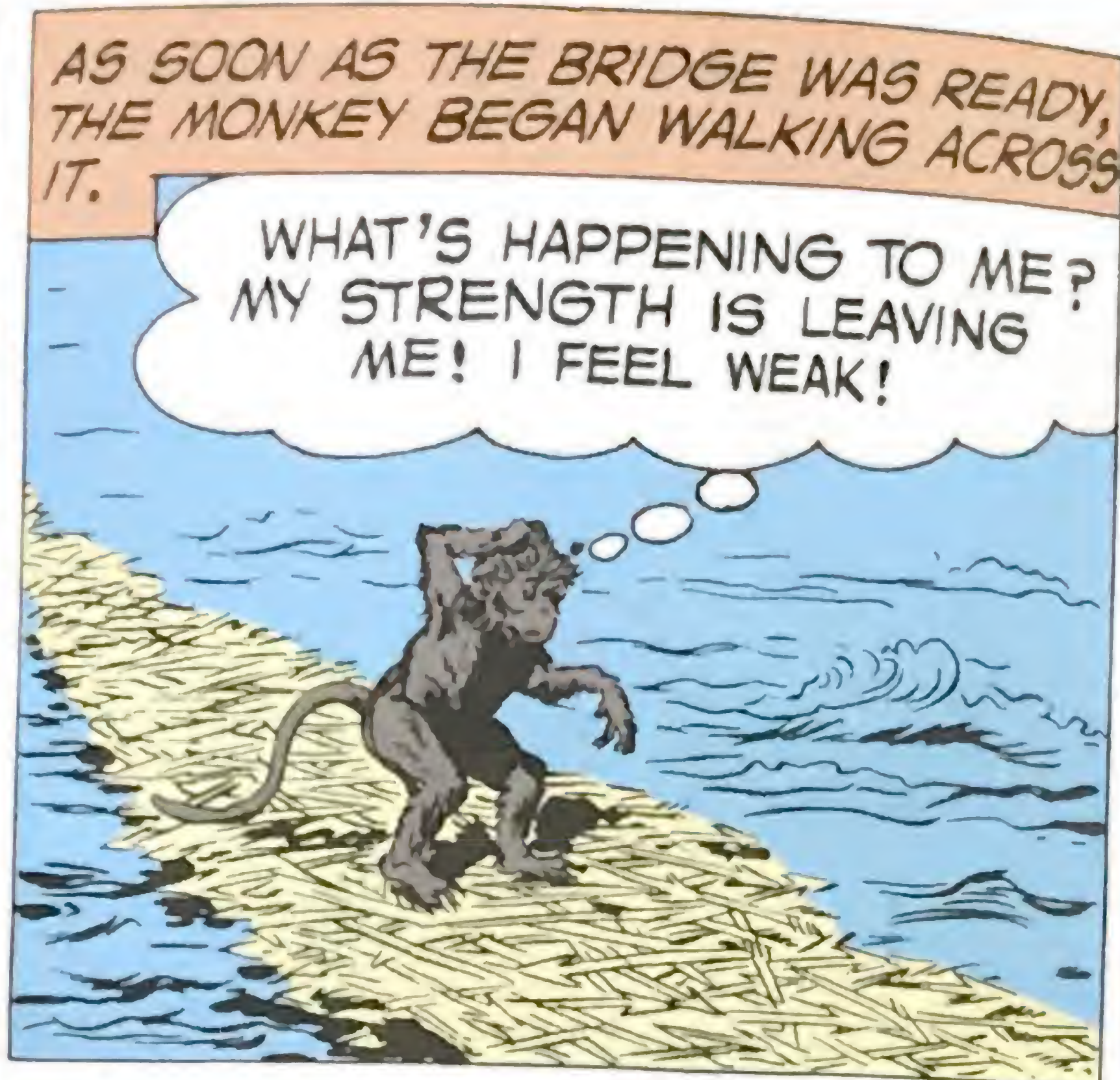
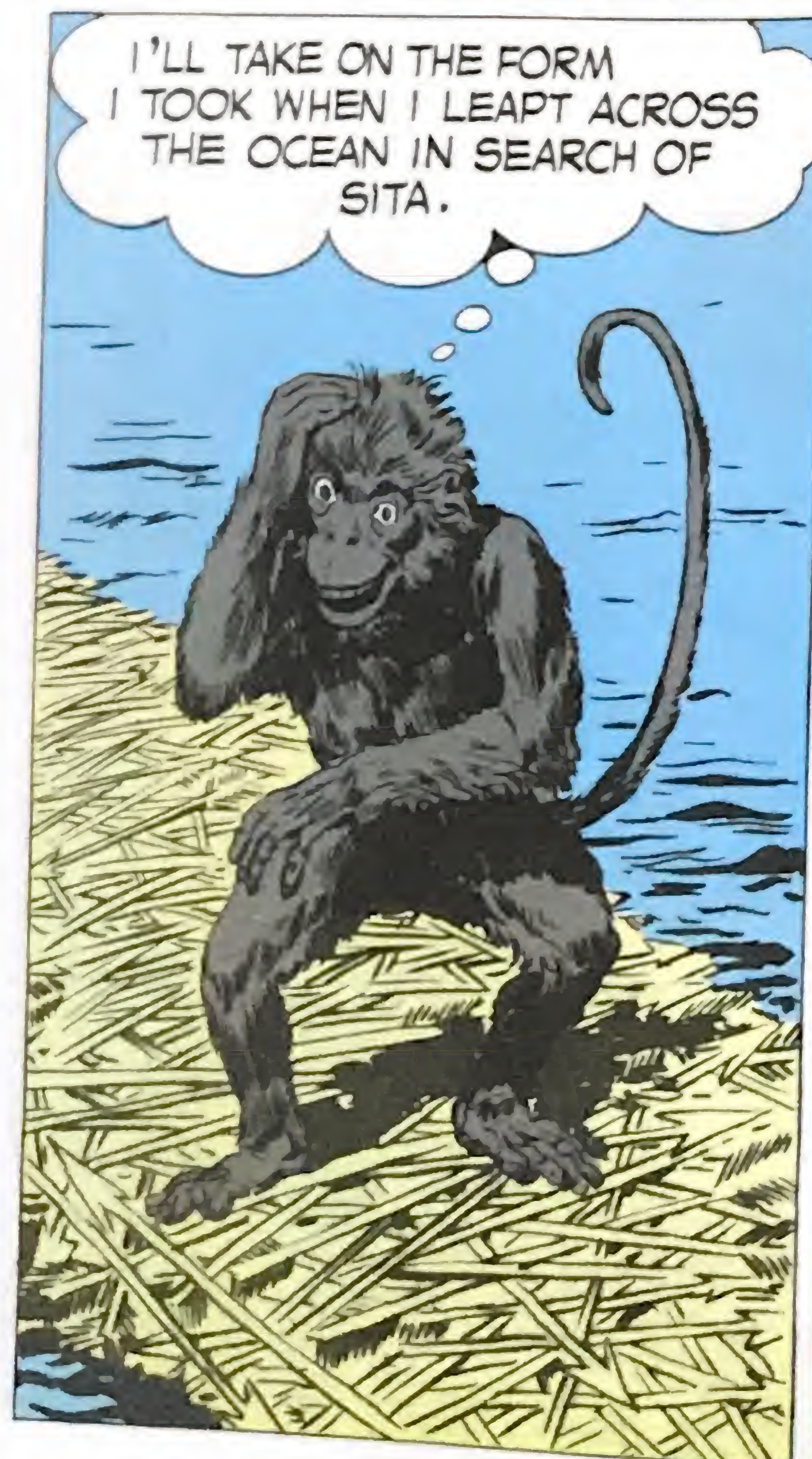
BUT A BET THAT HAD NO WITNESS IS NOT VALID.

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND WHY YOU WANT TO SAVE MY LIFE. BUT...



...I AM AFRAID YOUR WORDS ARE BORN MORE OUT OF KINDNESS THAN OUT OF LOVE FOR TRUTH.

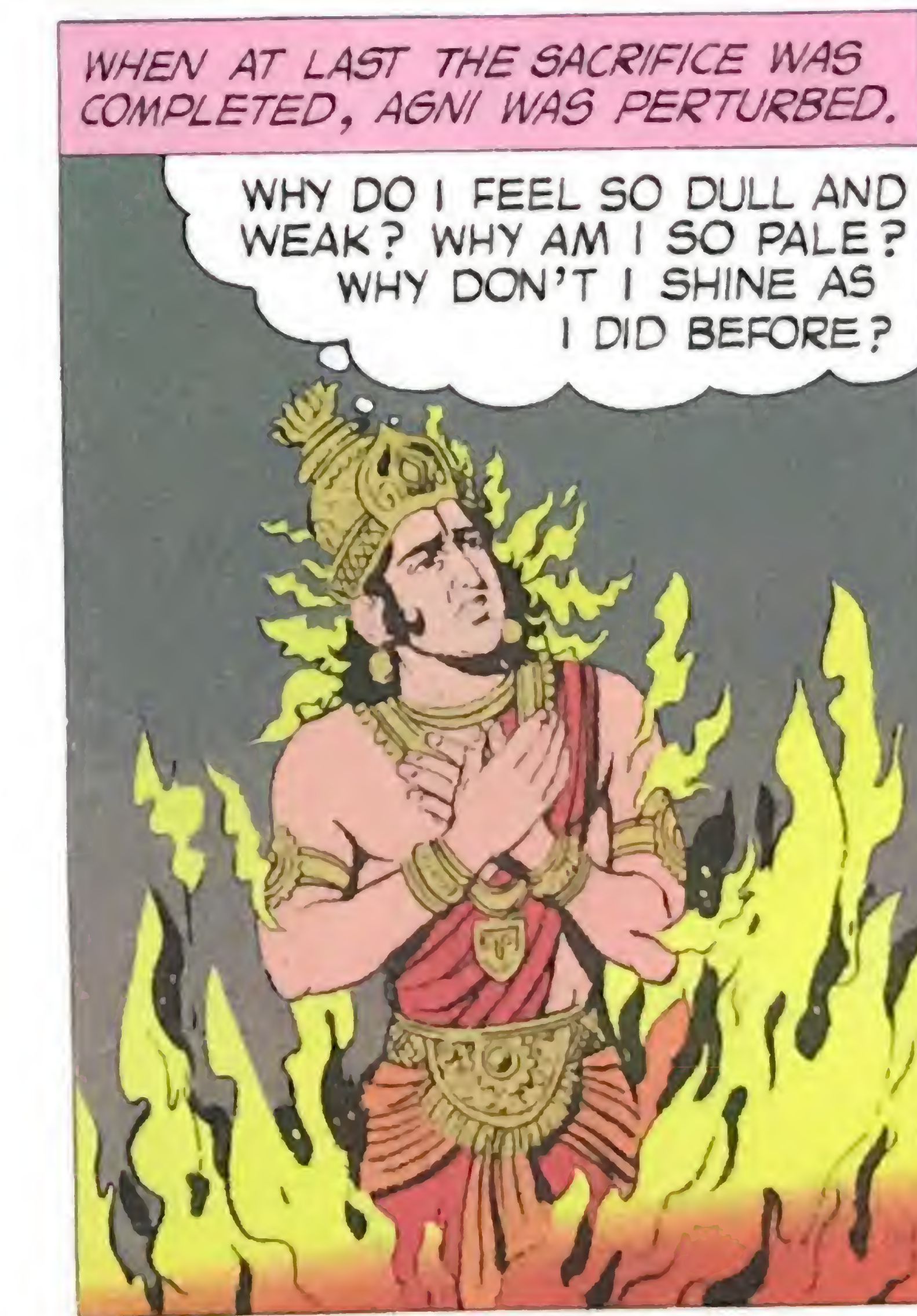
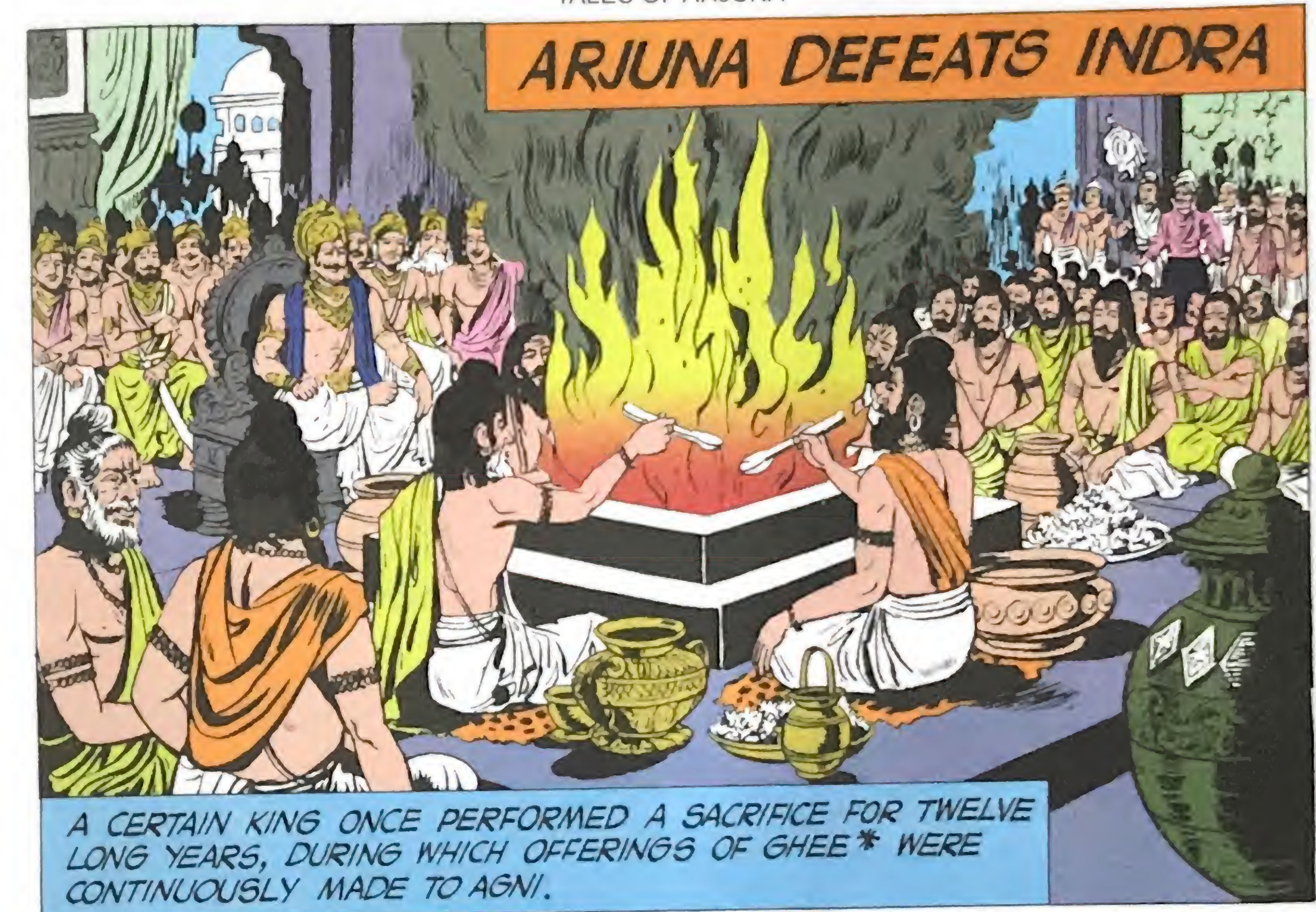
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE THAT THE BRIDGE COLLAPSED BECAUSE OF THE MONKEY'S WEIGHT? THERE WAS NO ONE PRESENT TO JUDGE THAT!



AS SOON AS THE BRIDGE WAS READY, THE MONKEY BEGAN WALKING ACROSS IT.

THE MONKEY MADE HIMSELF AS LARGE AS A MOUNTAIN...







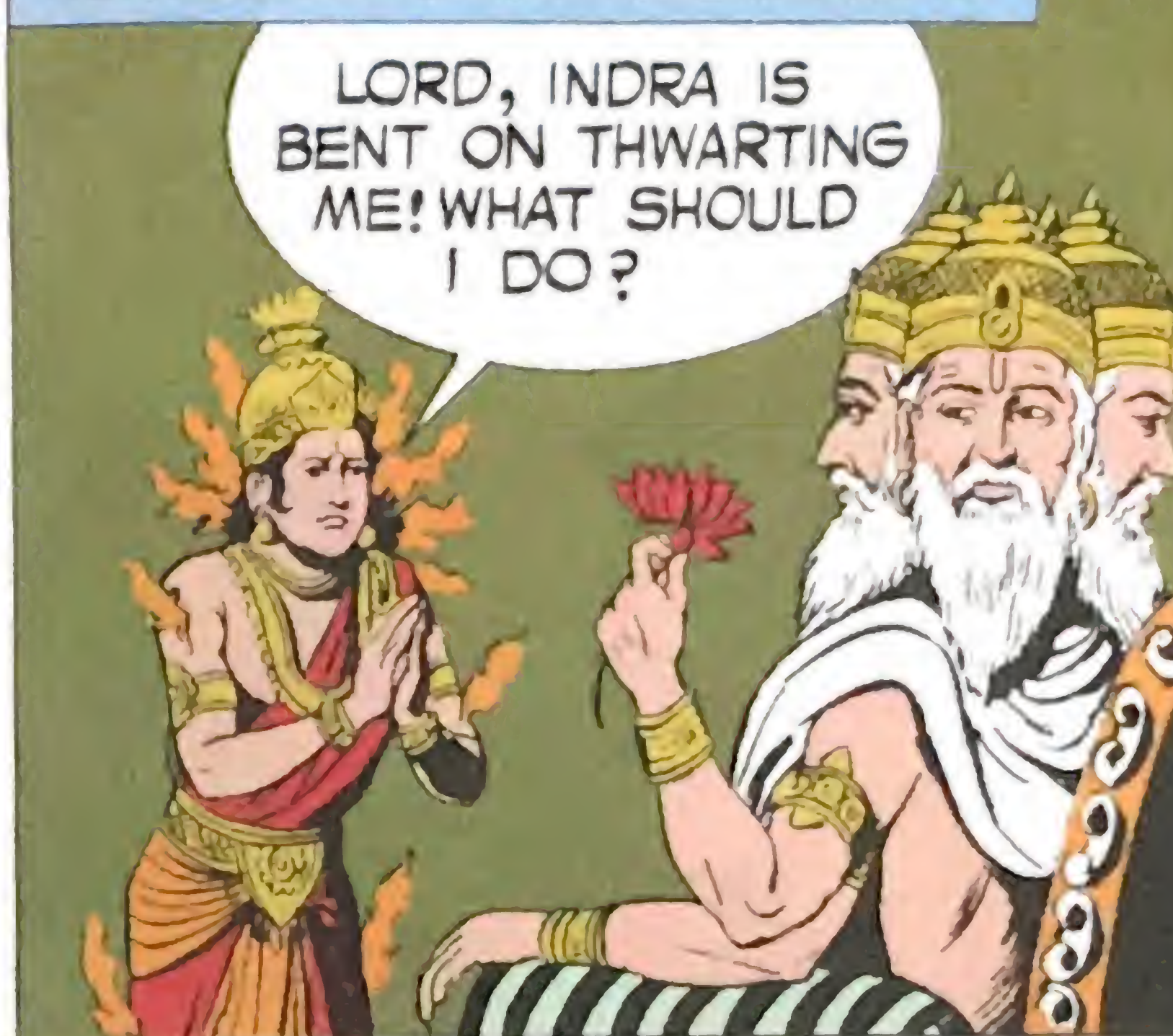
AGNI HASTENED TO THE KHANDAVA FOREST AND BEGAN TO BLAZE, MUCH TO THE DISMAY OF INDRA.



SO INDRA SENT DOWN HEAVY SHOWERS.



AGNI WENT BACK TO BRAHMA.



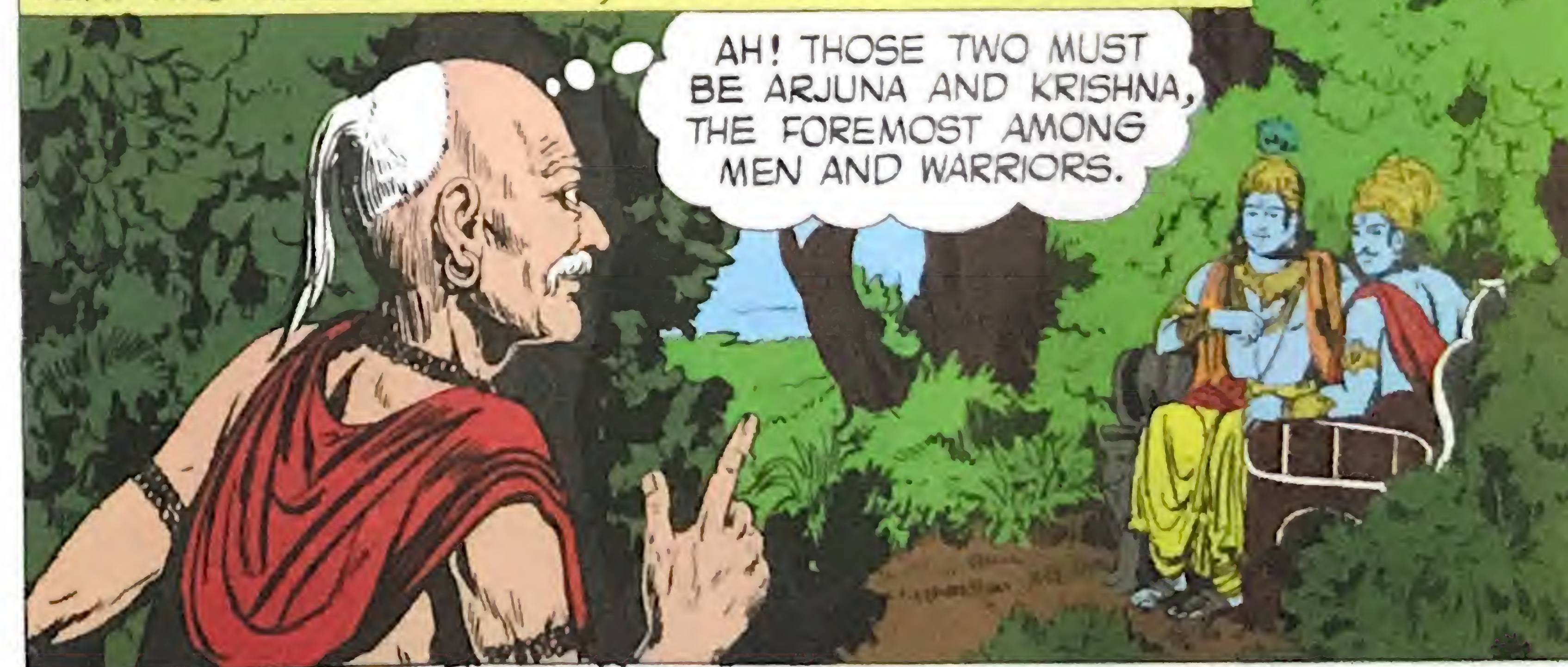
THERE ARE ONLY TWO PERSONS WHO CAN HELP YOU: THE VALIANT HEROES, ARJUNA AND KRISHNA. GO TO THEM. THEY ARE NOW NEAR THE KHANDAVA FOREST.



AT THAT MOMENT, ARJUNA AND KRISHNA WERE RELAXING ON THE BANK OF THE YAMUNA.



AGNI WAS INDEED NEAR BY, IN THE GUISE OF A BRAHMAN.





AGNI TOLD THEM WHO HE WAS AND WHY HE HAD COME TO THEM —

WE CAN TACKLE MANY INDRAS. BUT WE DO NOT HAVE THE WEAPONS TO MATCH OUR SKILL AND SPEED. WE ALSO NEED A GOOD CHARIOT.

THEN I SHALL GIVE YOU ALL THESE.

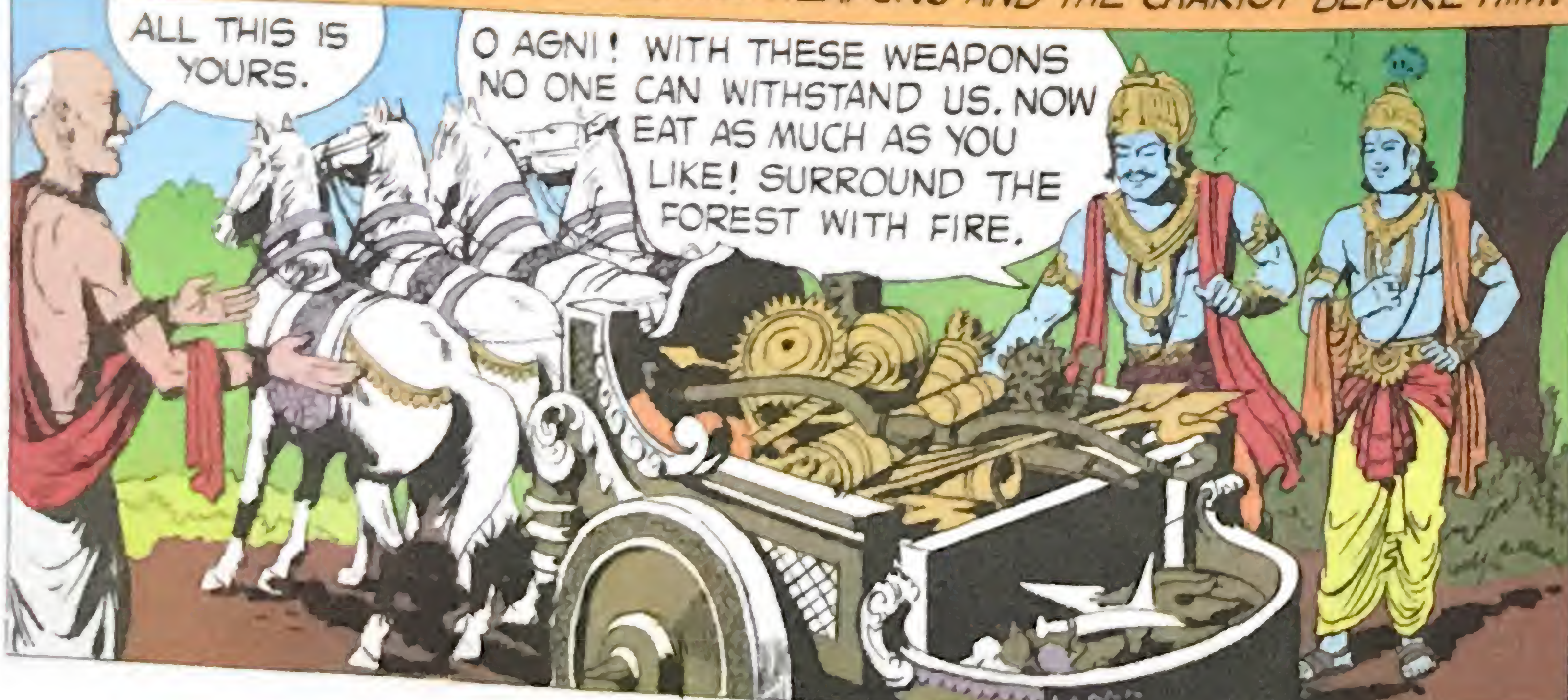


AGNI CLOSED HIS EYES AND THOUGHT OF VARUNA.

O VARUNA, BRING THE GANDIVA BOW, WITH ITS INEXHAUSTIBLE QUIVERS, FOR ARJUNA. BRING FOR HIM ALSO A CHARIOT; AND FOR KRISHNA, THE SUDARSHANA DISCUS.



IN A FLASH, VARUNA PLACED ALL THE WEAPONS AND THE CHARIOT BEFORE HIM.



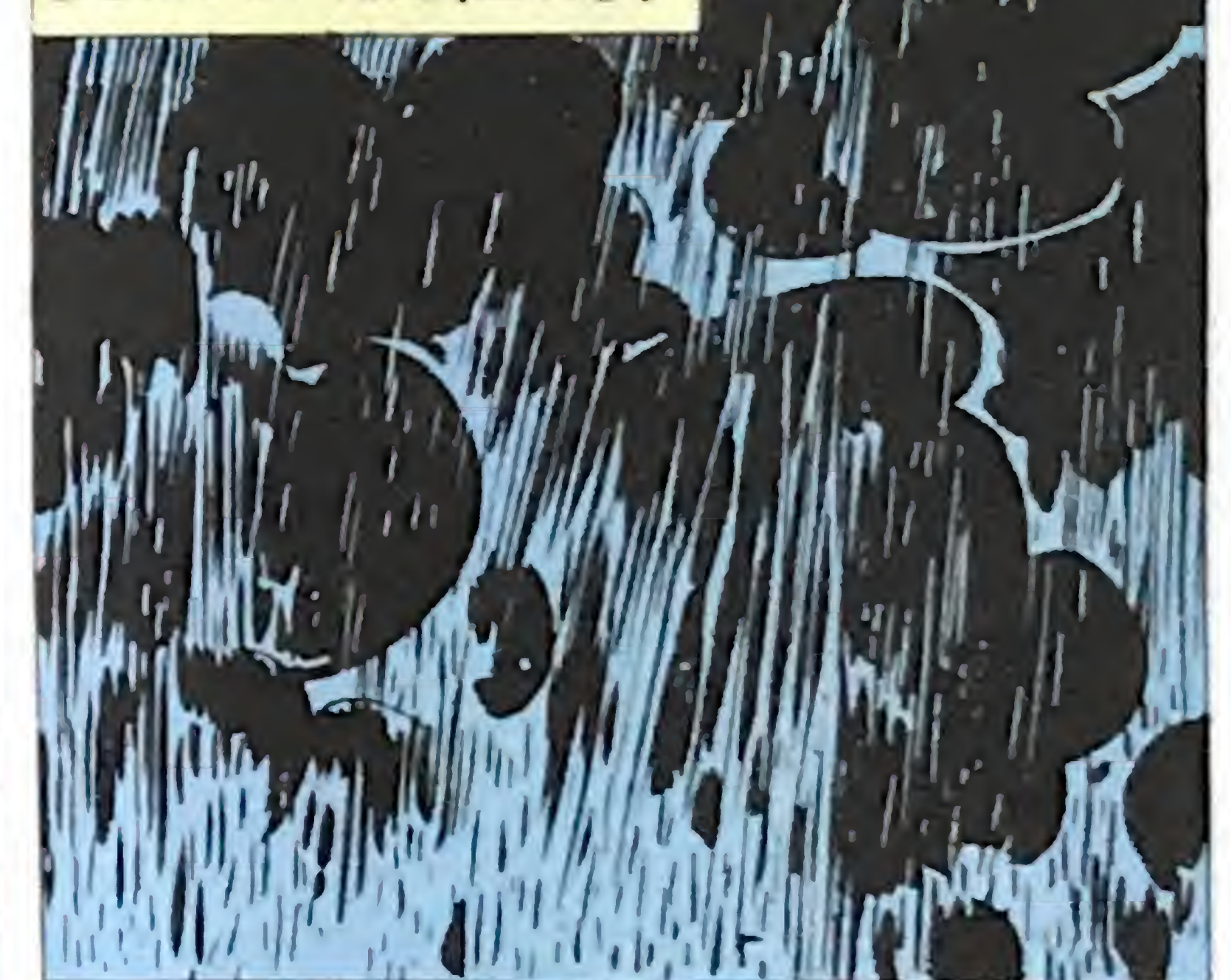
URGED ON BY THEM, AGNI CHANGED HIS FORM. HE THEN BROKE OUT INTO SEVEN FLAMES AND SURROUNDED THE FOREST, SETTING IT ABLAZE ON ALL SIDES. AS THE FLAMES ROSE HIGH, KRISHNA TURNED TO ARJUNA.



AS THEY POSTED THEMSELVES ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE FOREST, THE SKIES SUDDENLY DARKENED.



THE NEXT MOMENT THE RAIN CAME DOWN IN TORRENTS.



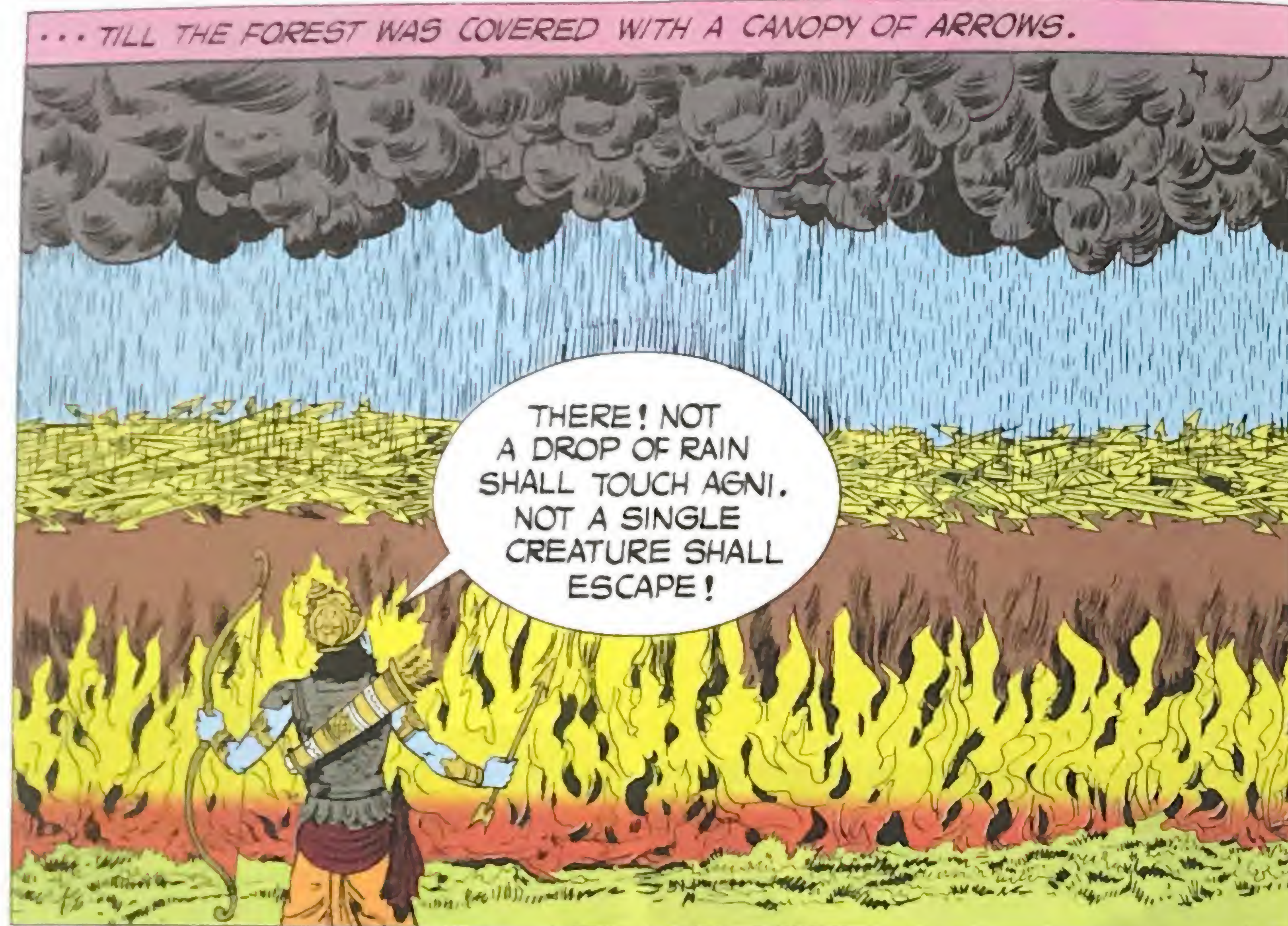
THE FOREST, CHOKED WITH SMOKE AND STRUCK BY LIGHTNING, WAS FEARFUL TO LOOK AT.



ARJUNA STOPPED THE SHOWER WITH A SHOWER OF HIS OWN...



... TILL THE FOREST WAS COVERED WITH A CANOPY OF ARROWS.



BUT, THE NEXT MOMENT, INDRA RAISED A VIOLENT GALE...



... THAT HIT ARJUNA.



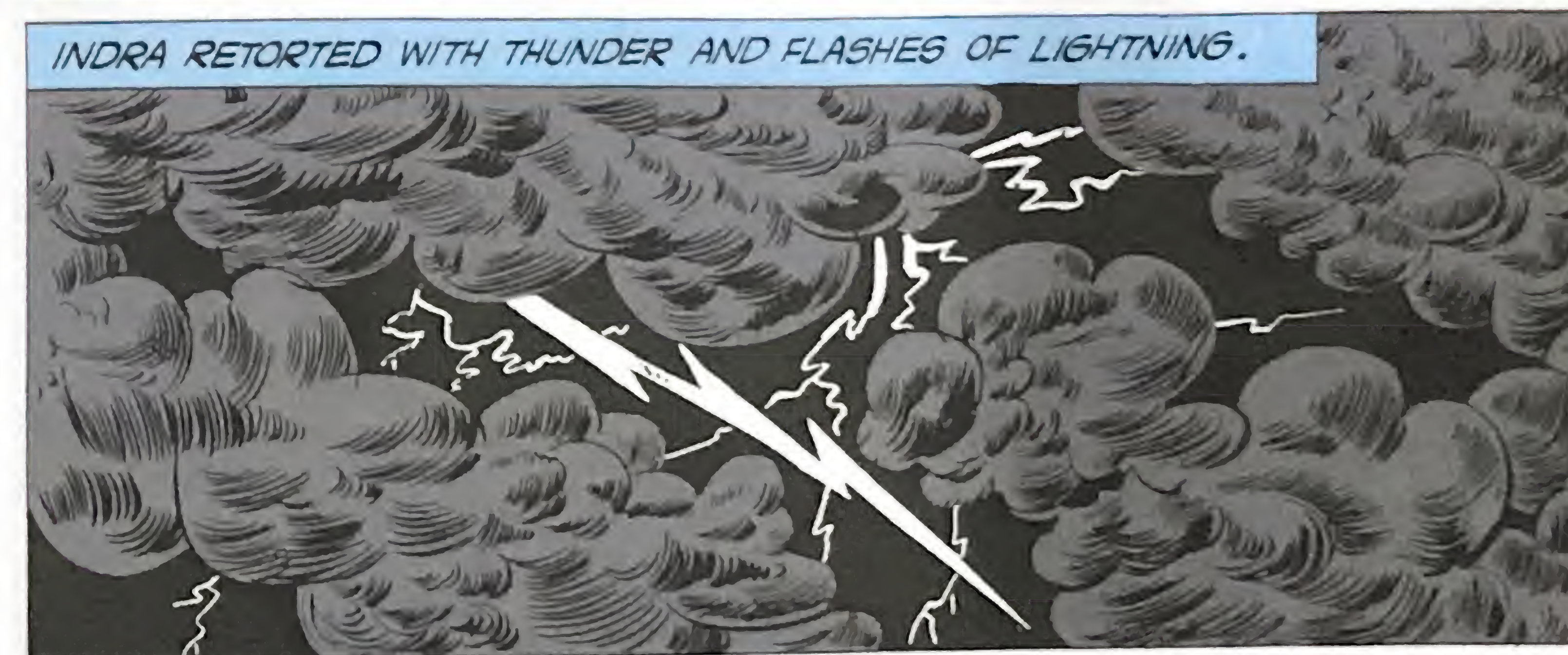
WHEN ARJUNA REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS HE WAS FURIOUS.



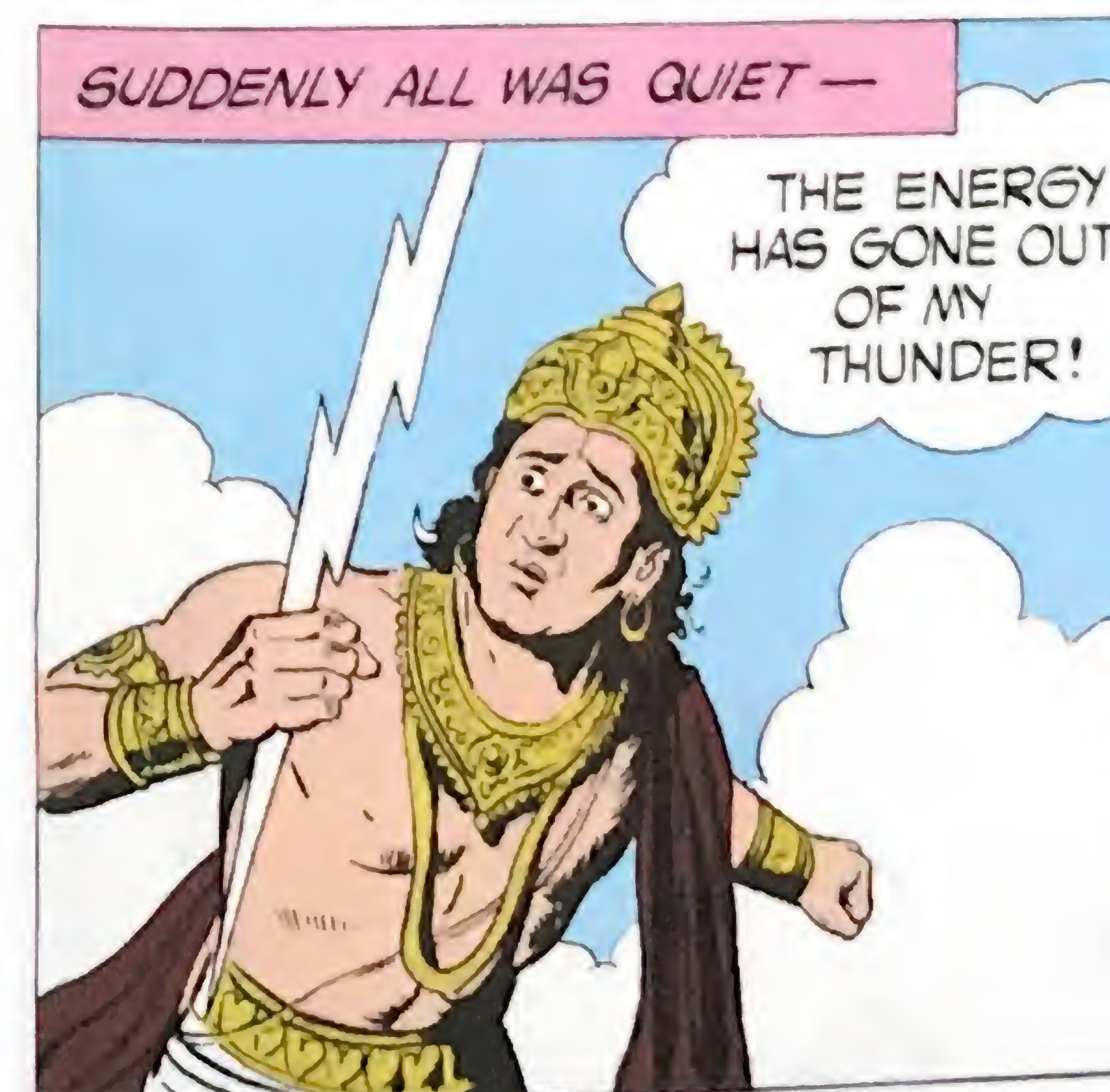
AND HE BEGAN TO AIM HIS ARROWS AT INDRA IN THE SKIES.



INDRA RETORTED WITH THUNDER AND FLASHES OF LIGHTNING.



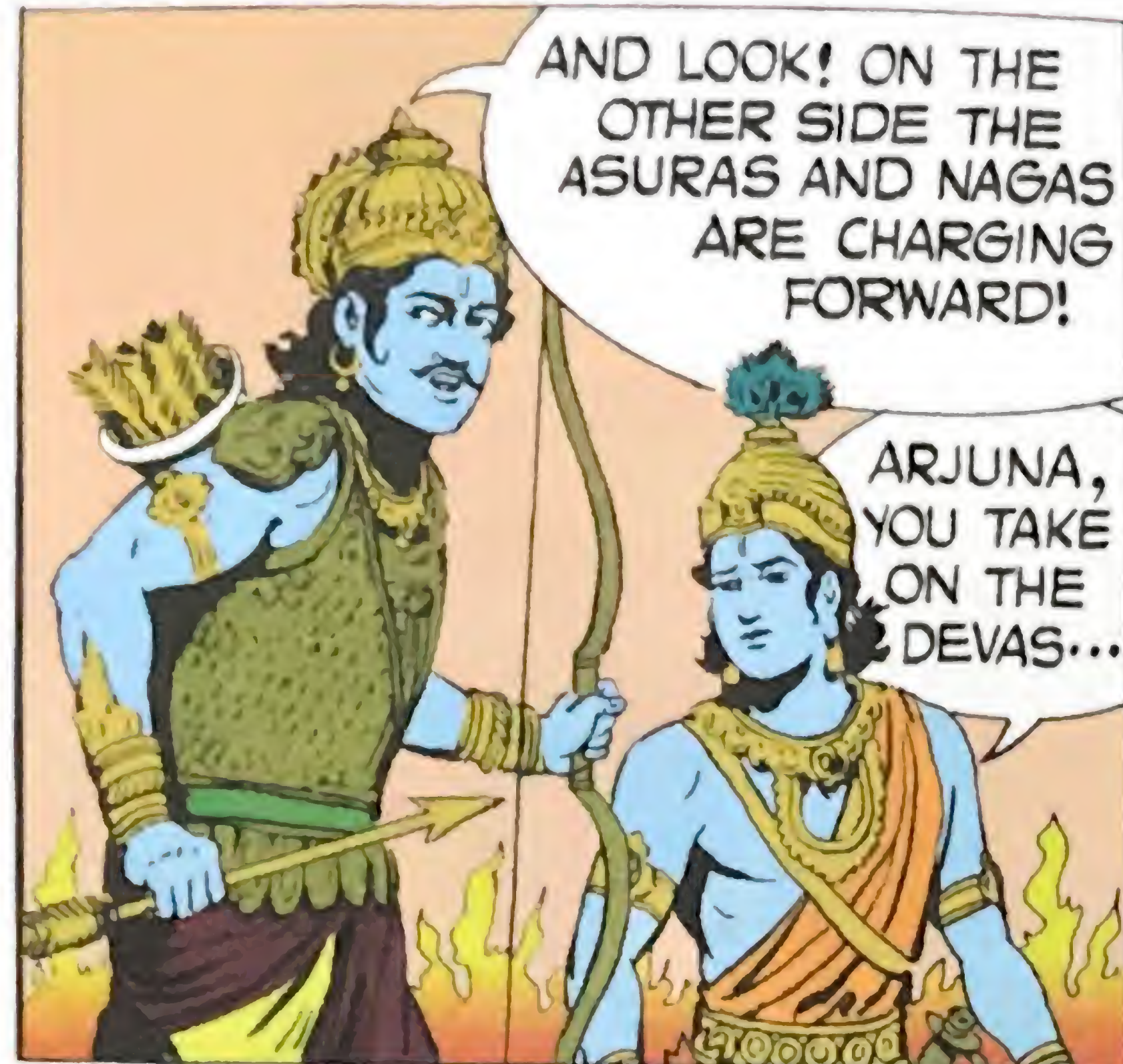
SUDDENLY ALL WAS QUIET —



THE NEXT MOMENT THE SKY WAS CLEAR. THE SUN SHONE BRIGHTLY AND A COOL BREEZE FANNED AGNI AS HE BLAZED AFRESH. SUDDENLY —



KRISHNA! LOOK! IT'S INDRA AND THE DEVAS!



AND LOOK! ON THE OTHER SIDE THE ASURAS AND NAGAS ARE CHARGING FORWARD!

ARJUNA, YOU TAKE ON THE DEVAS...

... AND I'LL DEAL WITH THE ASURAS AND NAGAS.



KRISHNA SENT HIS DISCUS FLYING THROUGH THE AIR, AND THE NAGAS AND ASURAS FLED IN TERROR. MEANWHILE, ARJUNA COUNTERED THE ATTACK OF THE DEVAS SO SKILFULLY...



... THAT THEY RETREATED IN PANIC. INDRA COULD NOT HELP ADMIRING ARJUNA.



MY DEVAS ARE TURNING AWAY IN FEAR! ARJUNA HAS SURPASSED HIMSELF.

BUT, ALL THE SAME, HE SENT DOWN A SHOWER OF STONES.



LET ME SEE THE EXTENT OF YOUR MIGHT.

BUT ARJUNA QUICKLY WARDED OFF THE SHOWER WITH HIS ARROWS.



INDRA THEN TORE UP THE PEAK OF THE MANDARA MOUNTAIN...



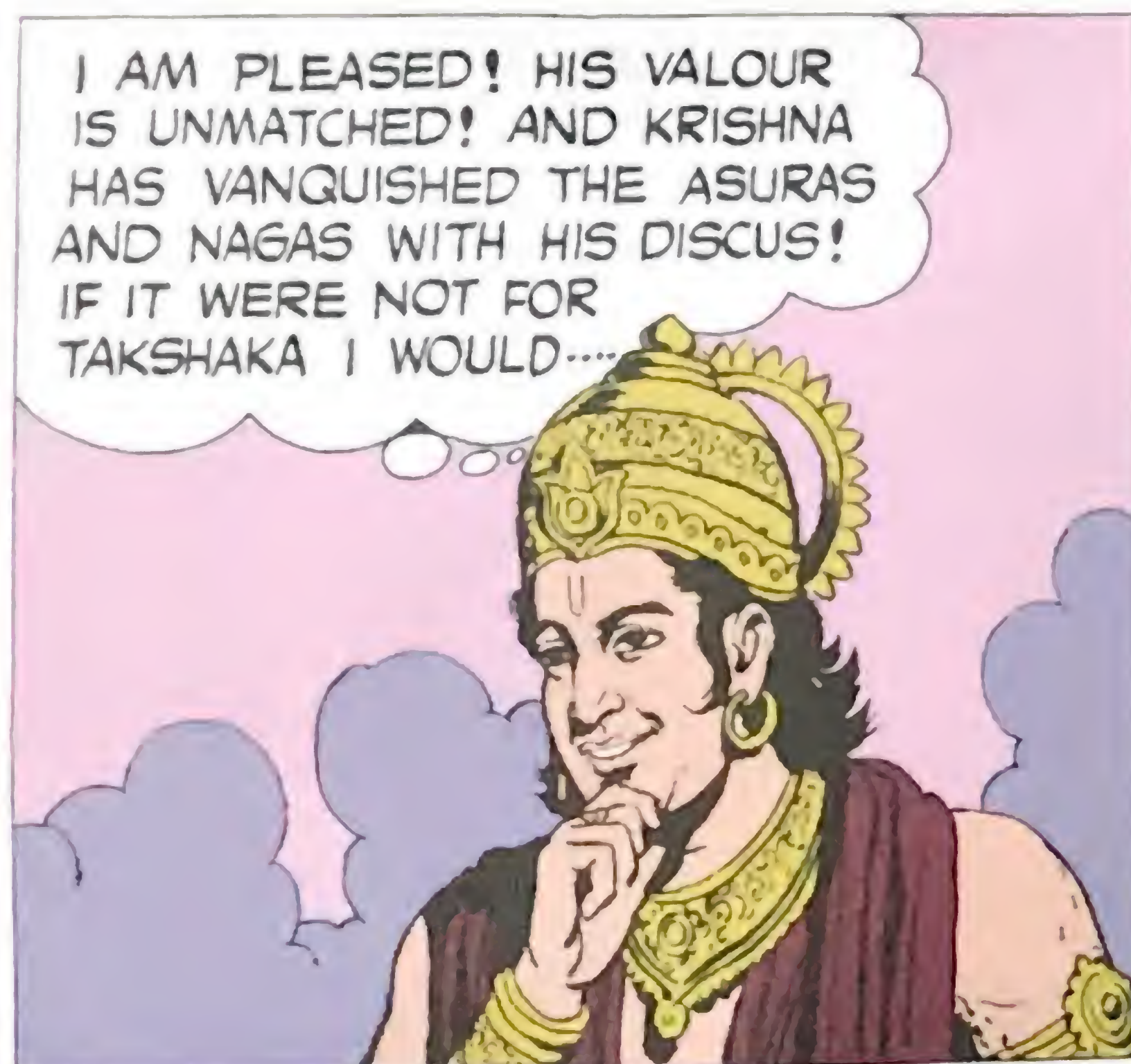
...AND HURLED IT AT ARJUNA.



BUT ARJUNA SMASHED IT WITH HIS ARROWS.



I AM PLEASED! HIS VALOUR IS UNMATCHED! AND KRISHNA HAS VANQUISHED THE ASURAS AND NAGAS WITH HIS DISCUS! IF IT WERE NOT FOR TAKSHAKA I WOULD....



AT THAT MOMENT A VOICE ECHOED FROM THE HEAVENS.

YOUR FRIEND, TAKSHAKA, IS SAFE. WHEN THE FIRE BROKE OUT, HE WAS AT KURUKSHETRA, O INDRA! NO ONE CAN DEFEAT ARJUNA AND KRISHNA. AND THE DESTRUCTION OF KHANDAVA HAS BEEN ORDAINED BY FATE. SO GIVE UP THE FIGHT.

AS THEY SAW INDRA RETREATING, ARJUNA AND KRISHNA LEAPT FOR JOY.



SUDDENLY —



LOOK, IT'S THE ASURA, MAYA! HE WAS HIDING IN THAT CAVE! I'LL GET HIM WITH MY DISCUS.

BUT HE HAD BARELY RAISED HIS DISCUS...



... WHEN THE ASURA FLED TO ARJUNA.



O ARJUNA, PROTECT ME!

SINCE YOU ASK FOR MY PROTECTION, YOU SHALL HAVE IT.

ARJUNA HAS GIVEN HIS WORD. LEAVE HIM ALONE, AGNI.



WHEN QUIET WAS RESTORED, AGNI BLAZED FORTH FOR FIFTEEN DAYS TILL HE REGAINED HIS LOST LUSTRE.



INDRA THEN CAME DOWN—



FOR YOUR VALOUR AND MIGHT, YOU DESERVE A BOON EACH. ASK FOR ONE THAT IS NOT AVAILABLE TO MEN.

BESTOW ALL THE WEAPONS ON ME WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO USE THEM.



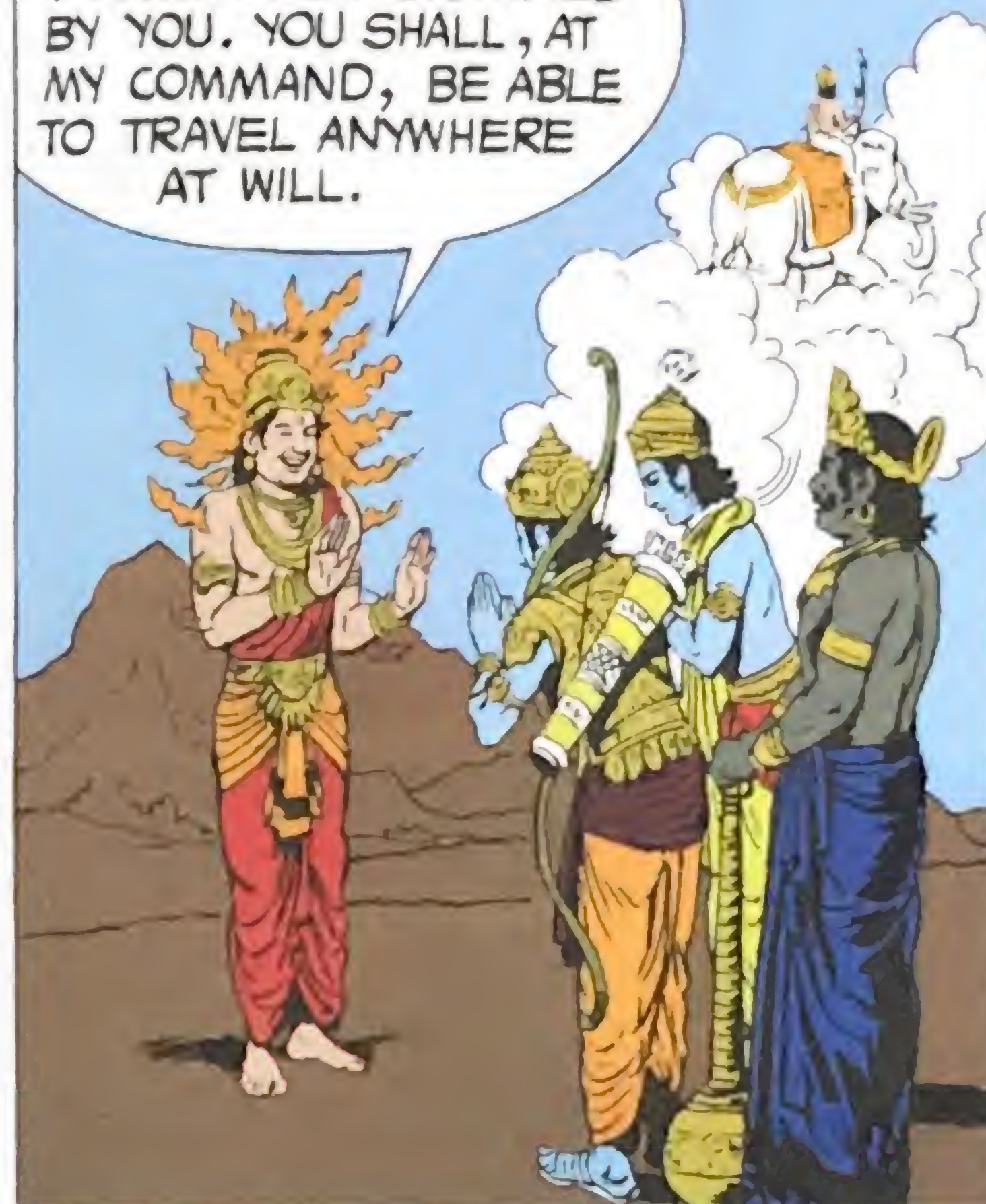
MAY MY FRIENDSHIP WITH ARJUNA LAST FOR EVER.

SO BE IT, KRISHNA. AND YOU ARJUNA, SHALL RECEIVE THE WEAPONS WHEN YOU NEED THEM MOST.



AS INDRA WENT AWAY, IT WAS AGNI'S TURN TO BESTOW A REWARD—

I HAVE BEEN GRATIFIED BY YOU. YOU SHALL, AT MY COMMAND, BE ABLE TO TRAVEL ANYWHERE AT WILL.



WHEN AGNI LEFT, ARJUNA, KRISHNA AND MAYA RELAXED ON THE BANK OF A RIVER.

O ARJUNA, YOU PROTECTED ME FROM THE WRATH OF KRISHNA AND AGNI. TELL ME WHAT I CAN DO FOR YOU.

BE EVER WELL-DISPOSED TO US, MAYA, AS WE ARE TO YOU.



BUT I MUST DO SOMETHING FOR YOU.

WELL, KRISHNA, WHAT CAN WE ASK OF OUR FRIEND?



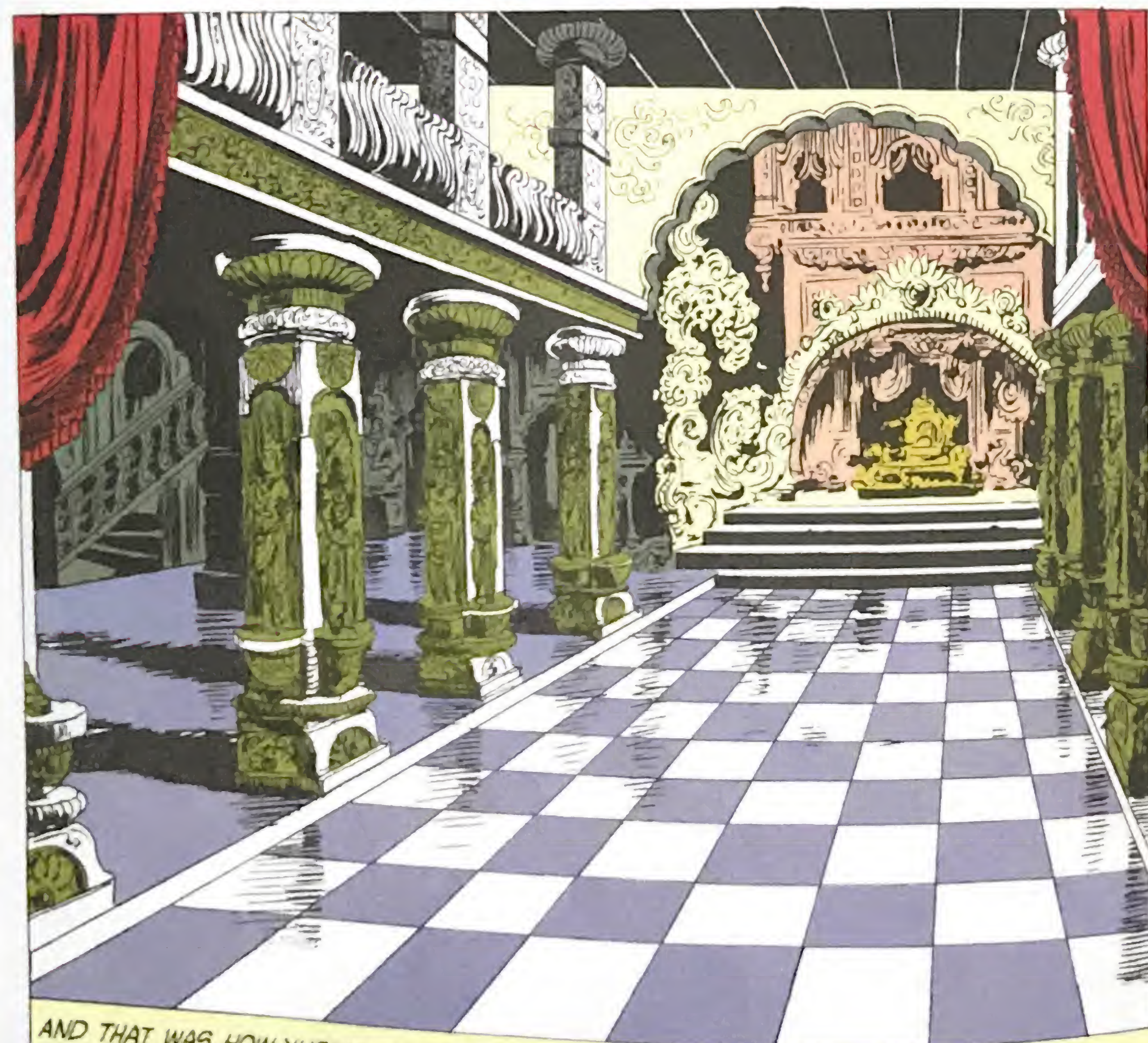
MAYA, YOU ARE THE GREAT ARCHITECT OF THE ASURAS. WHY DON'T YOU BUILD A SABHA* FOR YUDHISHTHIRA? BUILD ONE THAT WILL BE UNSURPASSED IN SPLENDOUR.





IT SHALL BE DONE.

THEN, COME, LET US CONSULT YUDHISHTHIRA.



AND THAT WAS HOW YUDHISHTHIRA ACQUIRED THE MAGNIFICENT HALL THAT BECAME THE LAST STRAW FOR HIS ALREADY ENVOUS COUSINS, THE KAURAVAS, AND INDUCED THEM TO DECEITFULLY DEPRIVE YUDHISHTHIRA OF HIS KINGDOM.

ARJUNA HUMBLLED



AH! KRISHNA, NOW THAT THE GANDIVA BOW IS MINE, NO ONE CAN DEFEAT ME. EVEN INDRA WAS HELPLESS AGAINST MY ARROWS!

ARJUNA, THE PANDAVA, HAD COME TO VISIT KRISHNA AT DWARKA.

SUDDENLY, THEY HEARD A LOUD CRY.



WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

SEEING A BRAHMAN OUTSIDE, THEY WENT TO HIM —

WHAT IS TROUBLE-
ING YOU,
FRIEND?

EIGHT TIMES HAVE
I APPEALED TO OUR
KING TO SAVE MY
DEAD SONS AND EIGHT
TIMES HAS HE IGNORED
ME! NOW I HAVE LOST MY
NINTH SON!



THOUGH HE IS A WARRIOR,
HE IS FOND OF PLEASURE.
IF HE HAD CONTROL OVER
HIMSELF, WOULD HE BE
SO CALLOUS?



A KING SHOULD PROTECT
HIS SUBJECTS FROM EVERY
CALAMITY INCLUDING DEATH.
RESTORE MY SON TO ME,
I IMPORE YOU!



WHY DOESN'T
KRISHNA RESPOND?
HAS HE LOST ALL
COMPASSION?



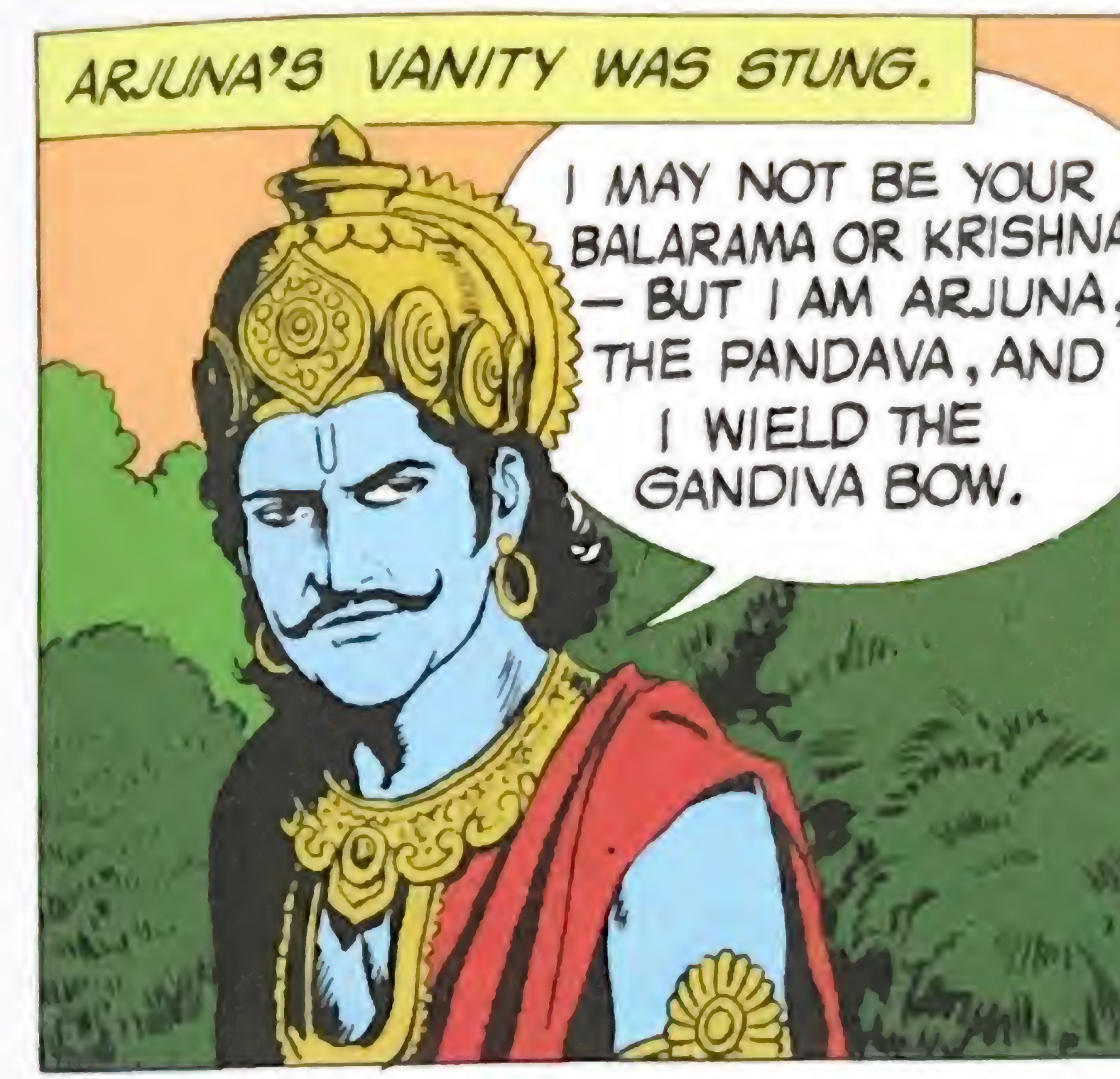
WHEN THE BRAHMAN CONTINUED TO LAMENT,
ARJUNA COULD NO LONGER BEAR IT.

DON'T GRIEVE, MY FRIEND.
I WILL PROTECT THE NEXT SON
BORN TO YOU. IF I FAIL, I WILL
BURN MYSELF ON A PYRE
FOR MAKING A FALSE
PROMISE.



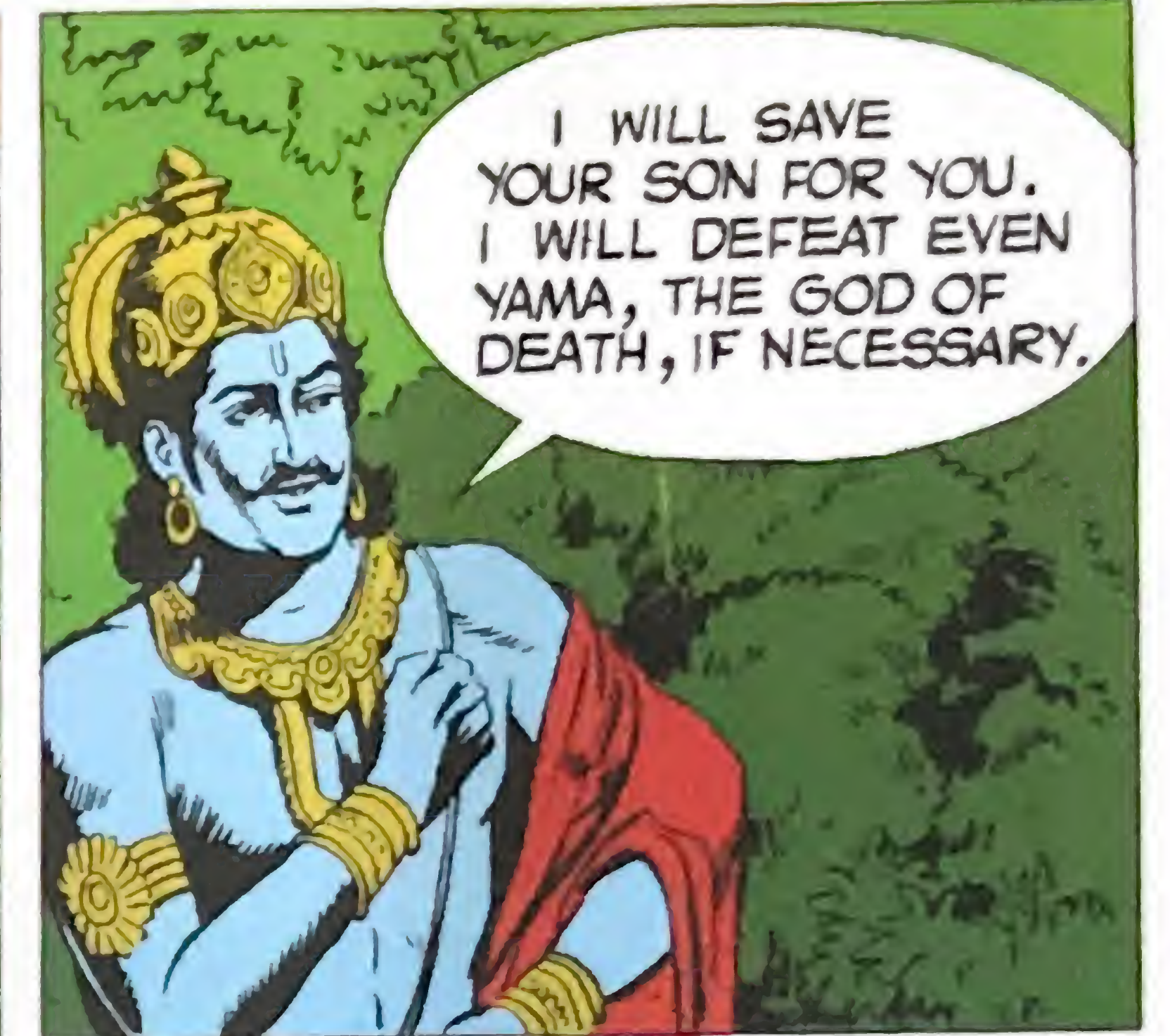
THE BRAHMAN LOOKED SCEPTICALLY AT HIM.

WHEN BALARAMA,
PRADYUMNA AND
ANIRUDDHA — ALL
MIGHTY WARRIORS —
COULD NOT PROTECT
MY SONS, HOW
CAN YOU?



ARJUNA'S VANITY WAS STUNG.

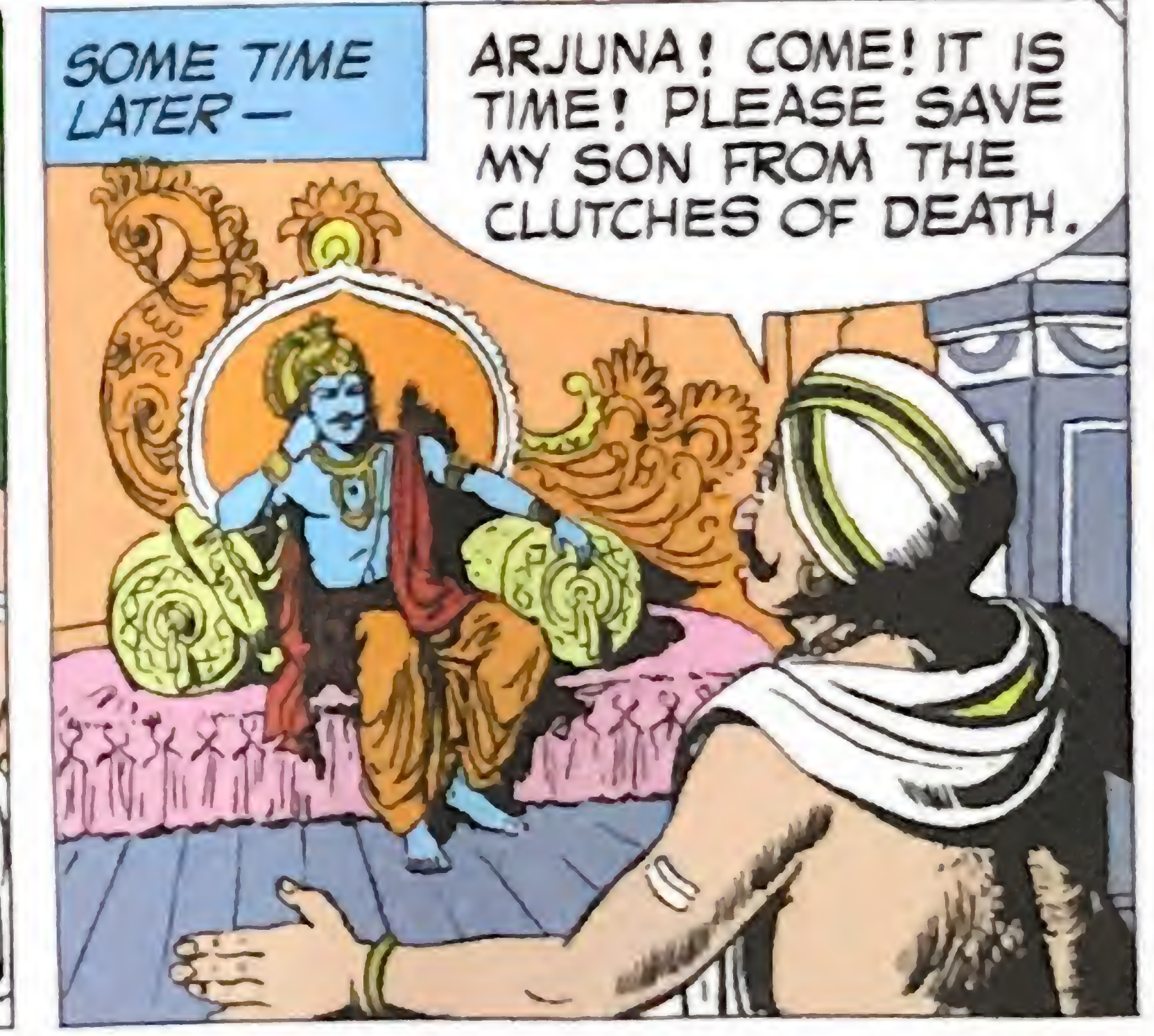
I MAY NOT BE YOUR
BALARAMA OR KRISHNA
— BUT I AM ARJUNA,
THE PANDAVA, AND
I WIELD THE
GANDIVA BOW.



I WILL SAVE
YOUR SON FOR YOU.
I WILL DEFEAT EVEN
YAMA, THE GOD OF
DEATH, IF NECESSARY.



NOW GO HOME AND LET ME
KNOW WHEN YOUR WIFE IS
ABOUT TO DELIVER HER
TENTH CHILD. I WILL
WAIT IN DWARKA
TILL THEN.



SOME TIME
LATER —

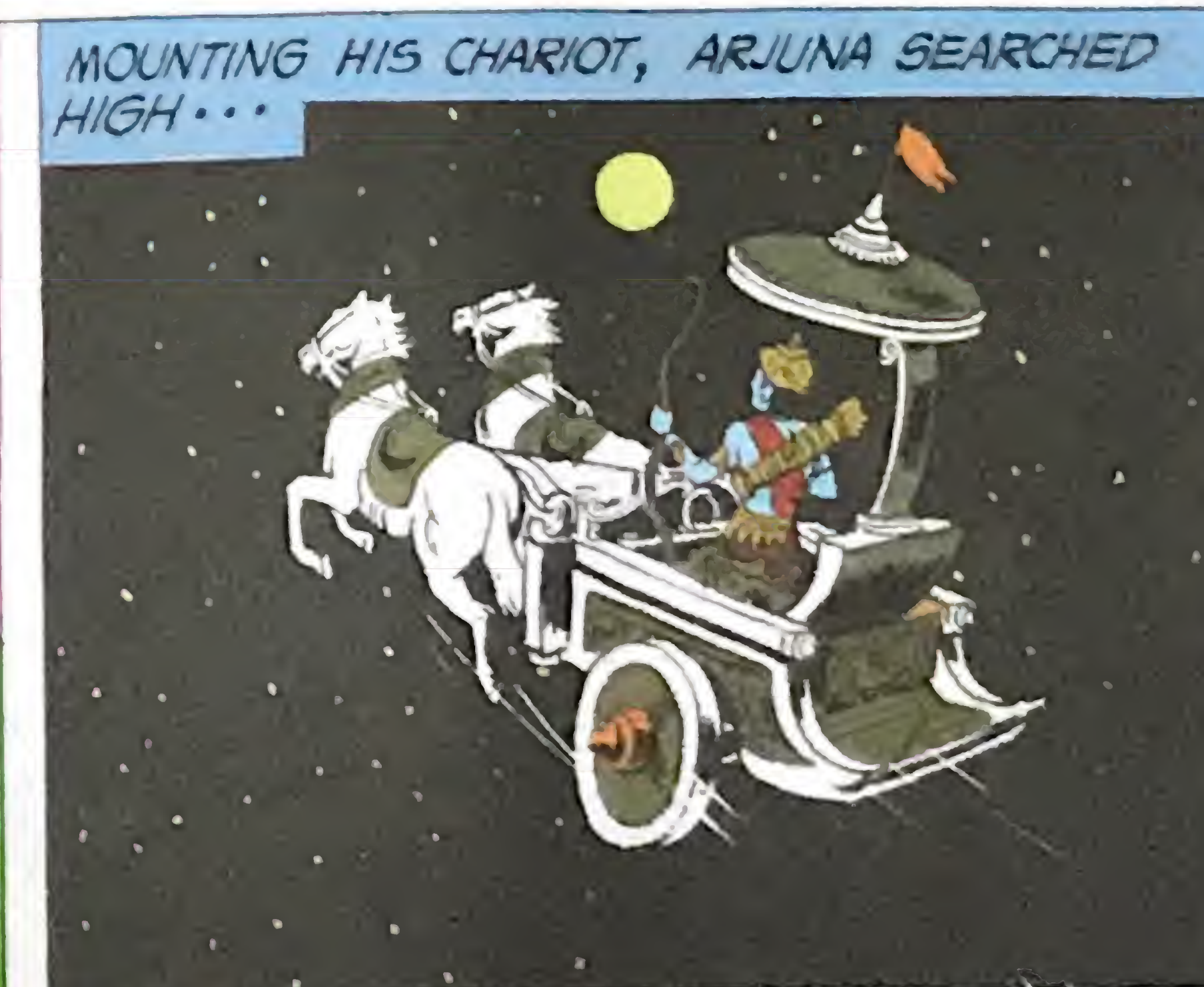
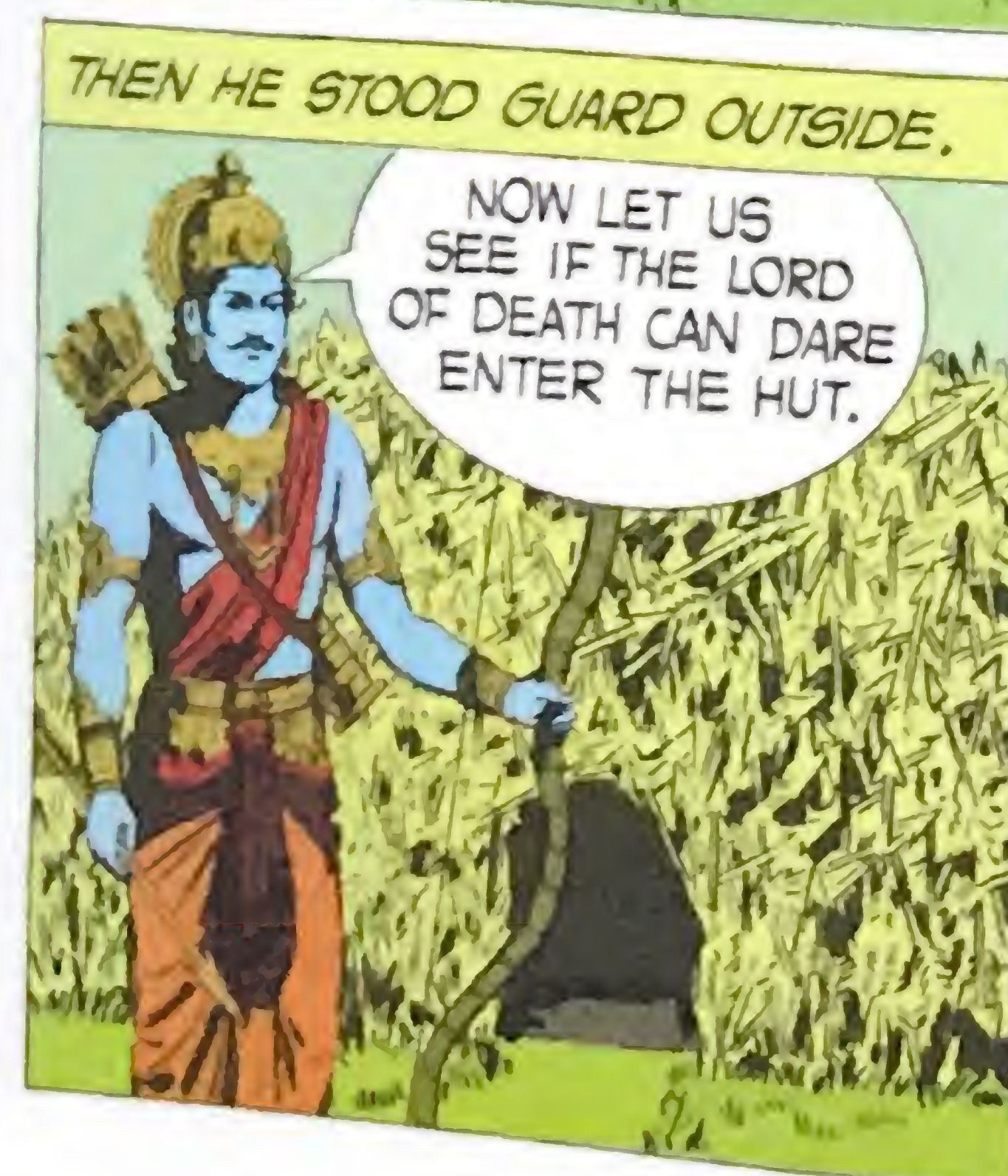
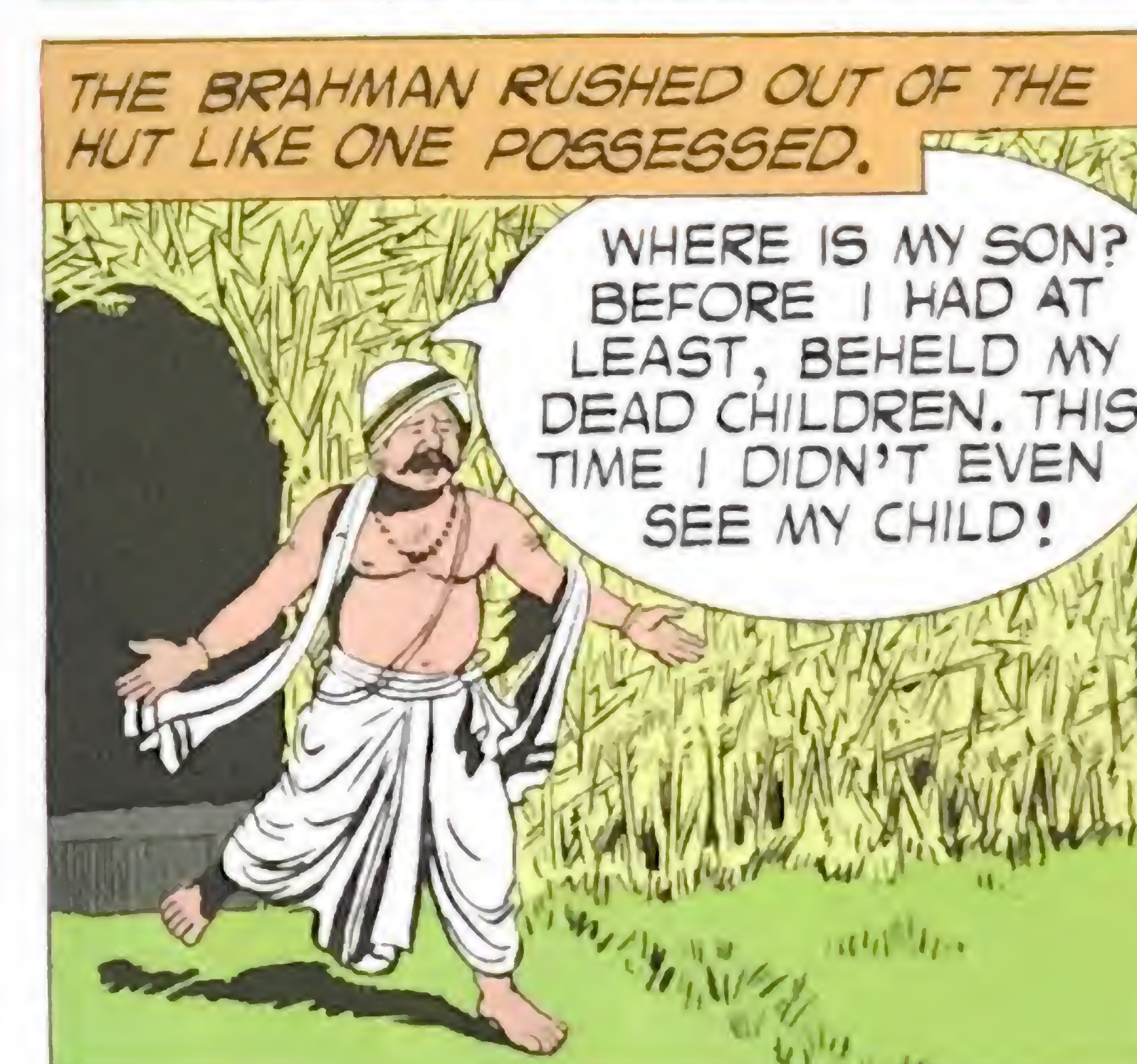
ARJUNA! COME! IT IS
TIME! PLEASE SAVE
MY SON FROM THE
CLUTCHES OF DEATH.



ARJUNA SNATCHED
THE GANDIVA BOW...



... AND WENT WITH THE BRAHMAN.



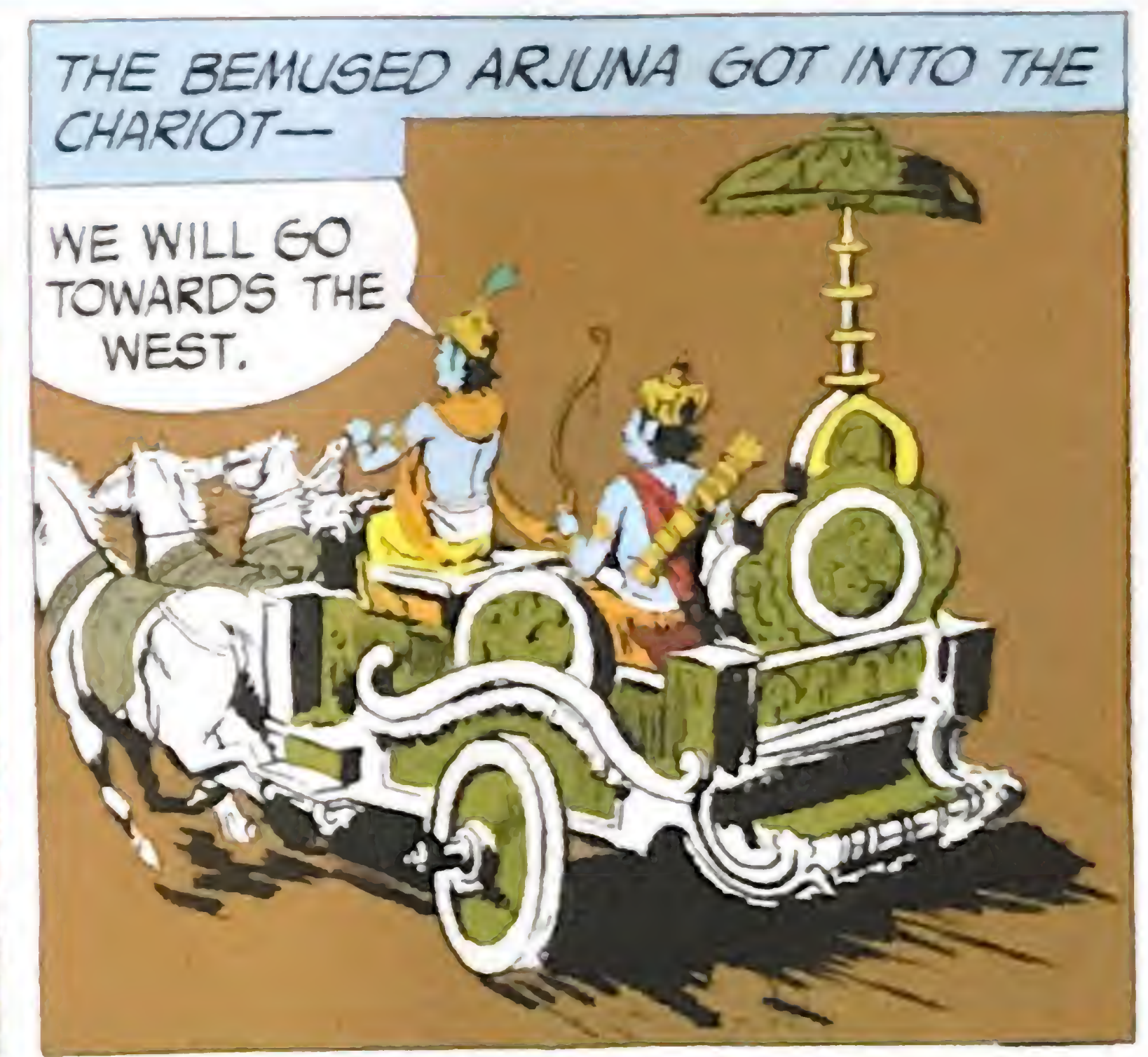
... AND LOW. BUT NOWHERE COULD HE FIND THE BRAHMAN'S SON.



ARJUNA SOON HAD A PYRE PREPARED.

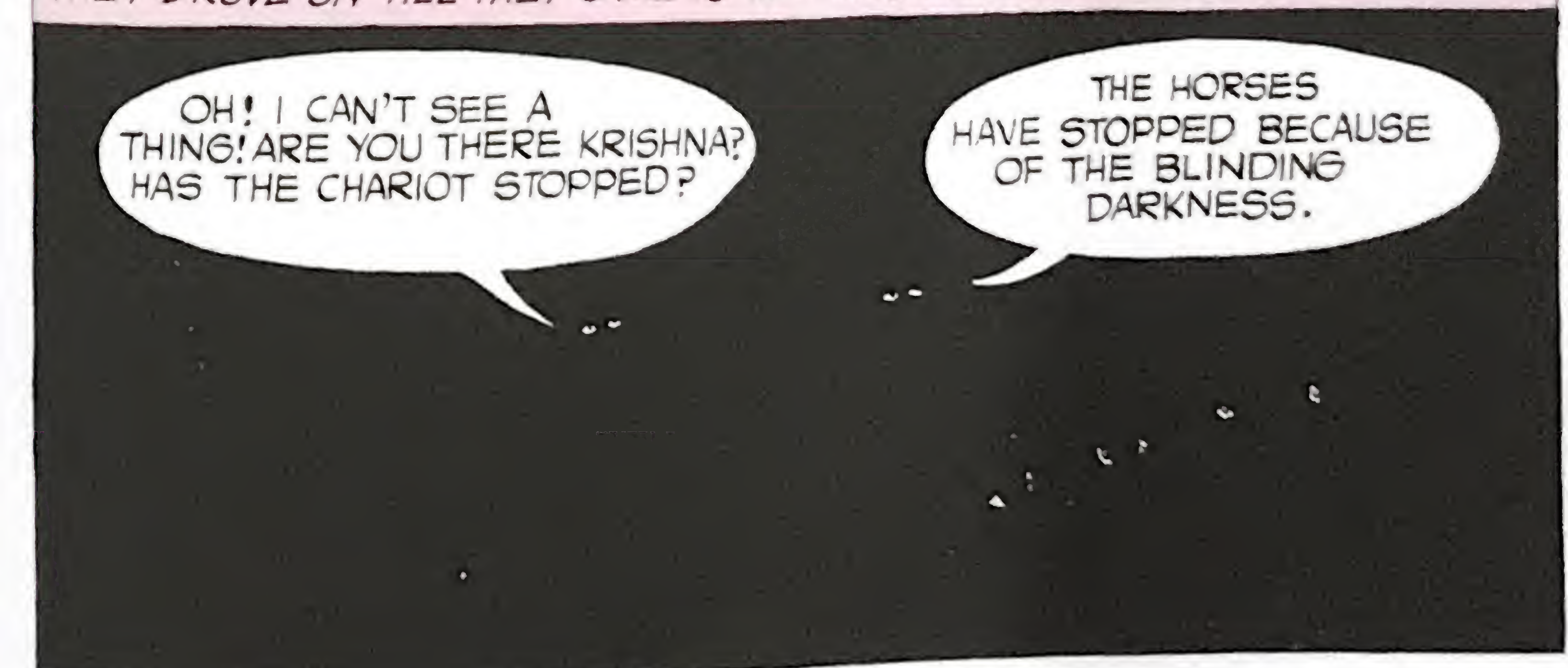


AS HE WAS ABOUT TO JUMP INTO IT—



WE WILL GO TOWARDS THE WEST.

THEY DROVE ON TILL THEY CAME TO THE REGIONS OF THE NIGHT.

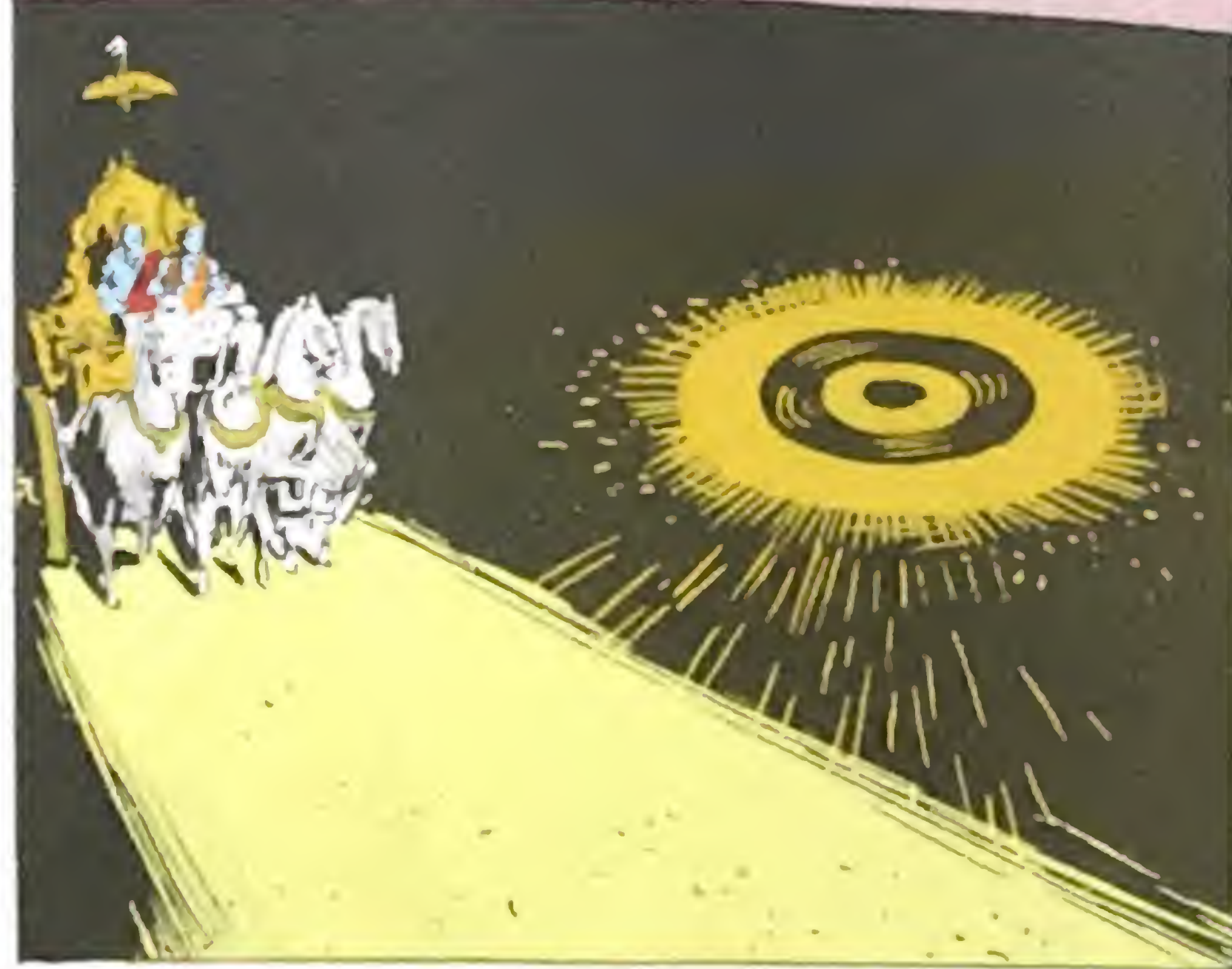


KRISHNA RAISED HIS DISCUS—



GO, SUDARSHANA!
LIGHT OUR PATH.

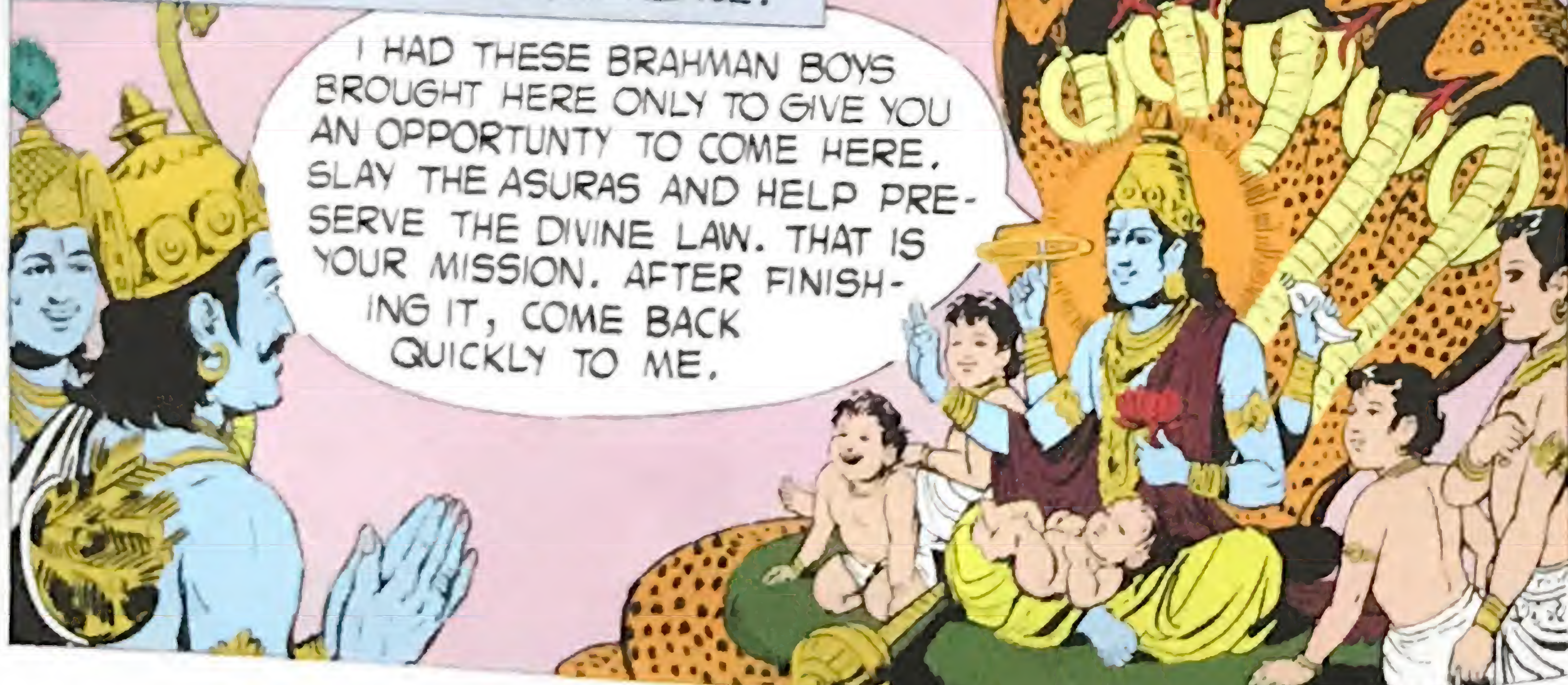
KRISHNA'S DISCUS WHIRLED ON AHEAD
CUTTING WITH ITS OWN LUSTRE A
BRIGHT PATH THROUGH THE DARKNESS.



SOON THEY REACHED
THE OCEAN OF MILK,
THE ABODE OF VISHNU.
KRISHNA BOWED TO THE
LORD, OF WHOM HE
WAS BUT A PART.



ARJUNA STOOD DAZED FOR A MOMENT.
THEN HE, TOO, BOWED IN REVERENCE.



I HAD THESE BRAHMAN BOYS
BROUGHT HERE ONLY TO GIVE YOU
AN OPPORTUNITY TO COME HERE.
SLAY THE ASURAS AND HELP PRE-
SERVE THE DIVINE LAW. THAT IS
YOUR MISSION. AFTER FINISH-
ING IT, COME BACK
QUICKLY TO ME.

AH! KRISHNA, YOU KNEW
ALL ALONG THAT THEY WERE
HERE! NO WONDER YOU
WERE SILENT AND
UNMOVED.



AND THEN ARJUNA REALISED WHY
THIS WHOLE DRAMA HAD BEEN PLAYED.

O KRISHNA, I NOW UNDERSTAND.
WHATEVER MANLINESS AND
POWERS A MAN MAY HAVE, IT IS
ALL THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD.
FORGIVE ME MY VANITY.



TAKING THEIR LEAVE OF VISHNU, KRISHNA AND ARJUNA PUT THE TEN SONS
OF THE BRAHMAN IN THE CHARIOT AND LEFT FOR DWARAKA.



IT IS FAITH IN GOD
AND HUMILITY THAT
ULTIMATELY WINS OUR
BATTLES FOR US, ARJUNA,
NOT VANITY OR SKILL
ALONE.