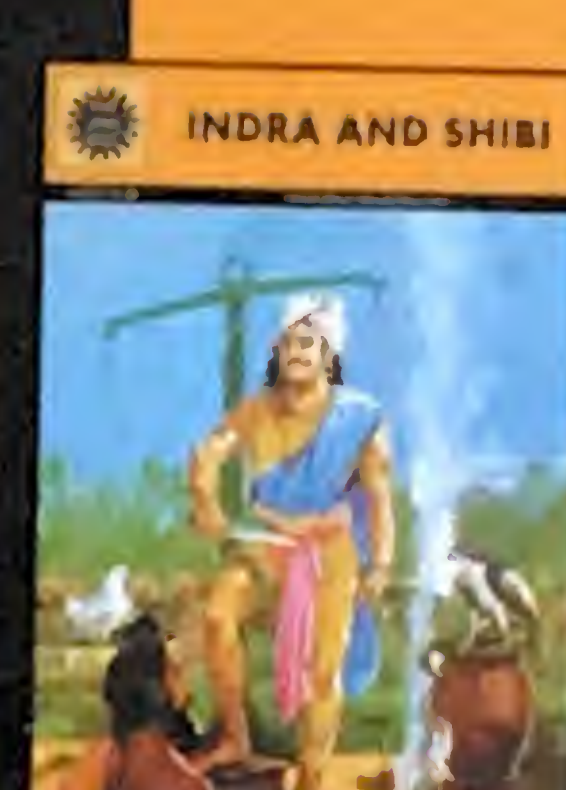


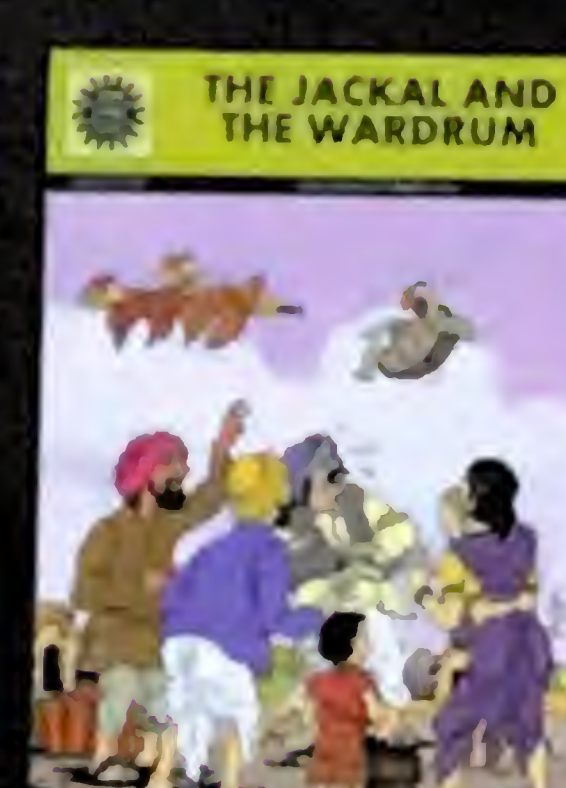
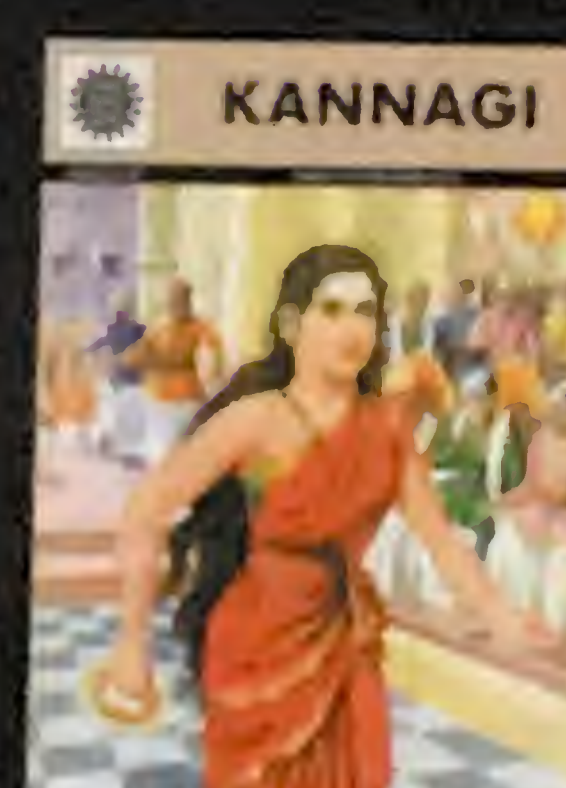
TALES OF VISHNU

Vishnu, they say, is just one of a powerful threesome – the highest lords of the universe. However, though Brahma has created the universe and Shiva can destroy it, it is up to the great god Vishnu to keep all creatures within it well and happy. Always compassionate, he is also the wisest of the trinity. It is he who good-naturedly sorts out the mess the others create. And above all, Vishnu always favours the good and the pure.

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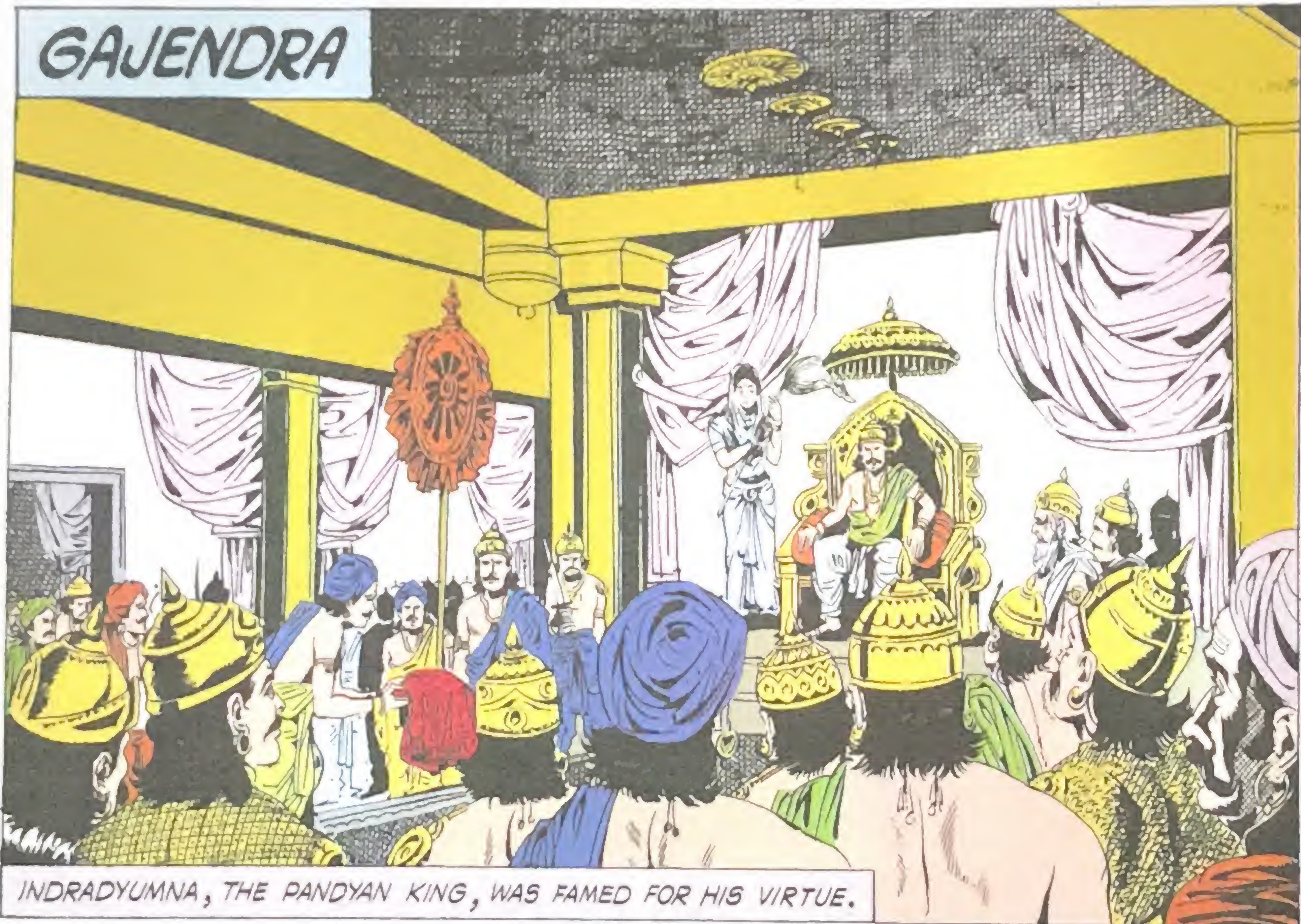


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GAJENDRA



INDRADYUMNA, THE PANDYAN KING, WAS FAMED FOR HIS VIRTUE.

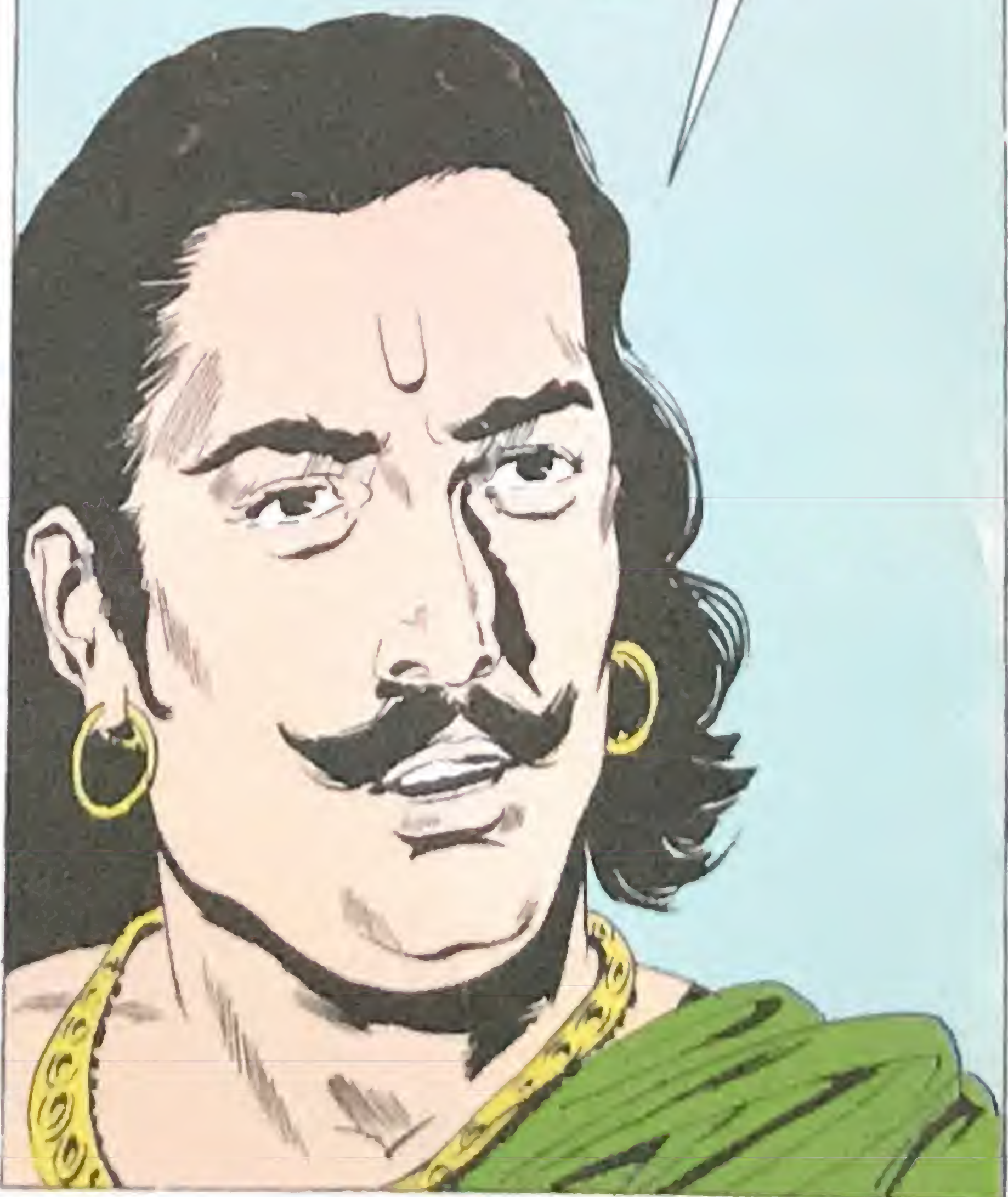
ONE DAY, HE CALLED A MEETING OF HIS COUNSELLORS.

I HAVE DECIDED TO RETIRE TO THE FOREST AND DEVOTE ALL MY TIME TO THE WORSHIP OF THE LORD.

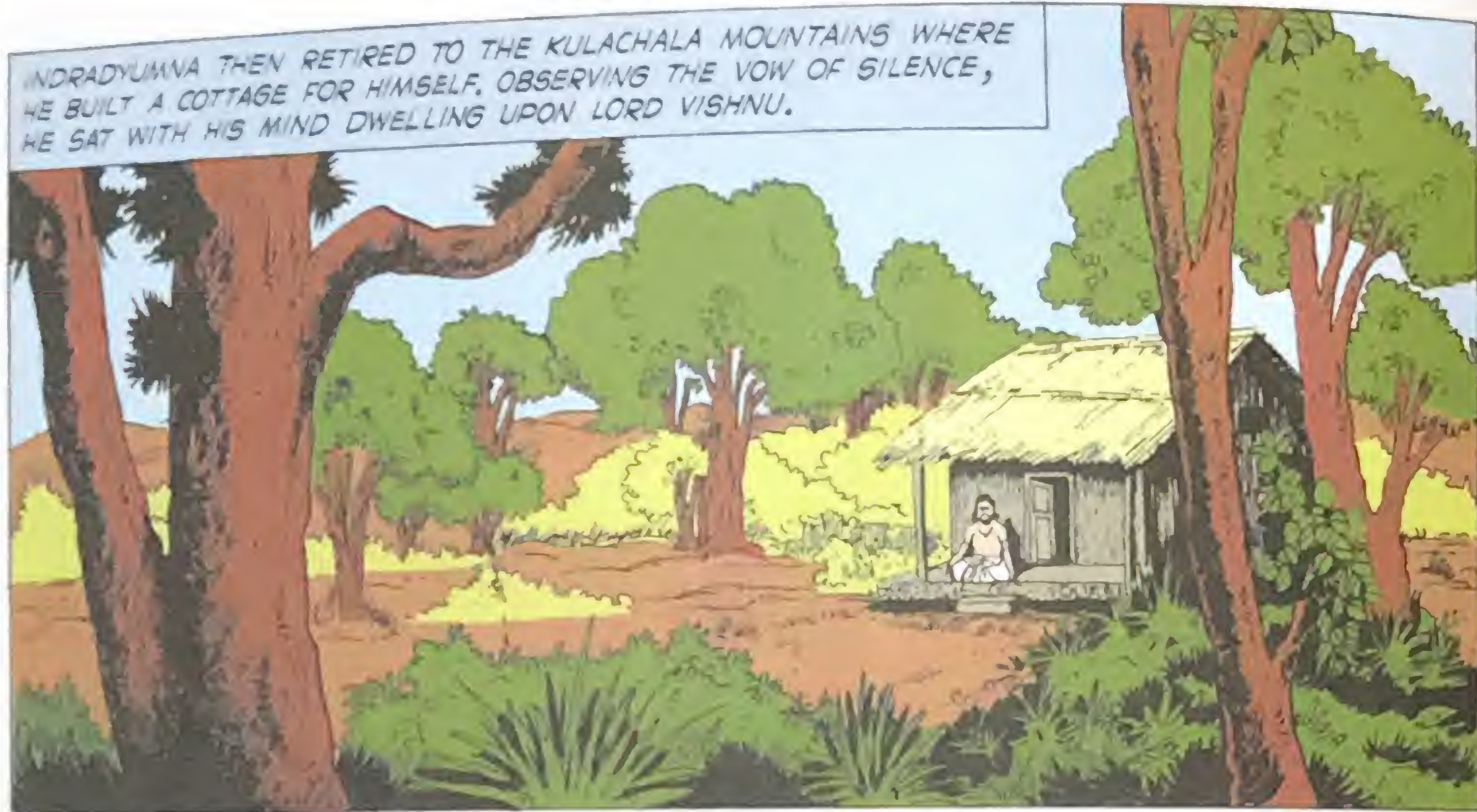
BUT, YOUR MAJESTY... THE KINGDOM...



DON'T TRY TO STOP ME. I AM CONFIDENT THAT YOU CAN AND WILL TAKE CARE OF THE KINGDOM.

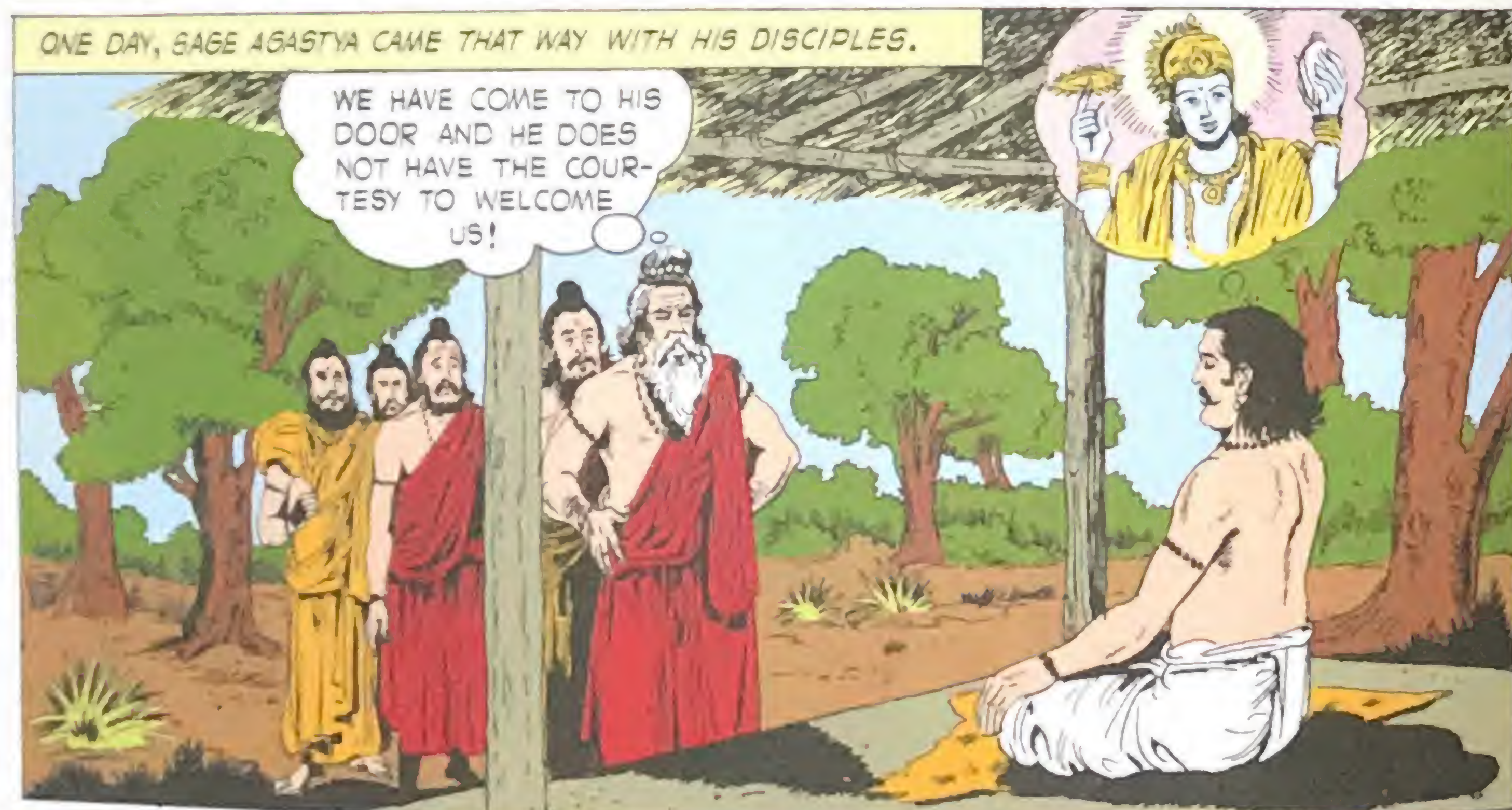


INDRADYUMNA THEN RETIRED TO THE KULACHALA MOUNTAINS WHERE HE BUILT A COTTAGE FOR HIMSELF. OBSERVING THE VOW OF SILENCE, HE SAT WITH HIS MIND DWELLING UPON LORD VISHNU.



ONE DAY, SAGE AGASTYA CAME THAT WAY WITH HIS DISCIPLES.

WE HAVE COME TO HIS DOOR AND HE DOES NOT HAVE THE COURTESY TO WELCOME US!



YOUR ARROGANCE SHALL NOT GO UNPUNISHED! MAY YOU TURN INTO AN ELEPHANT.

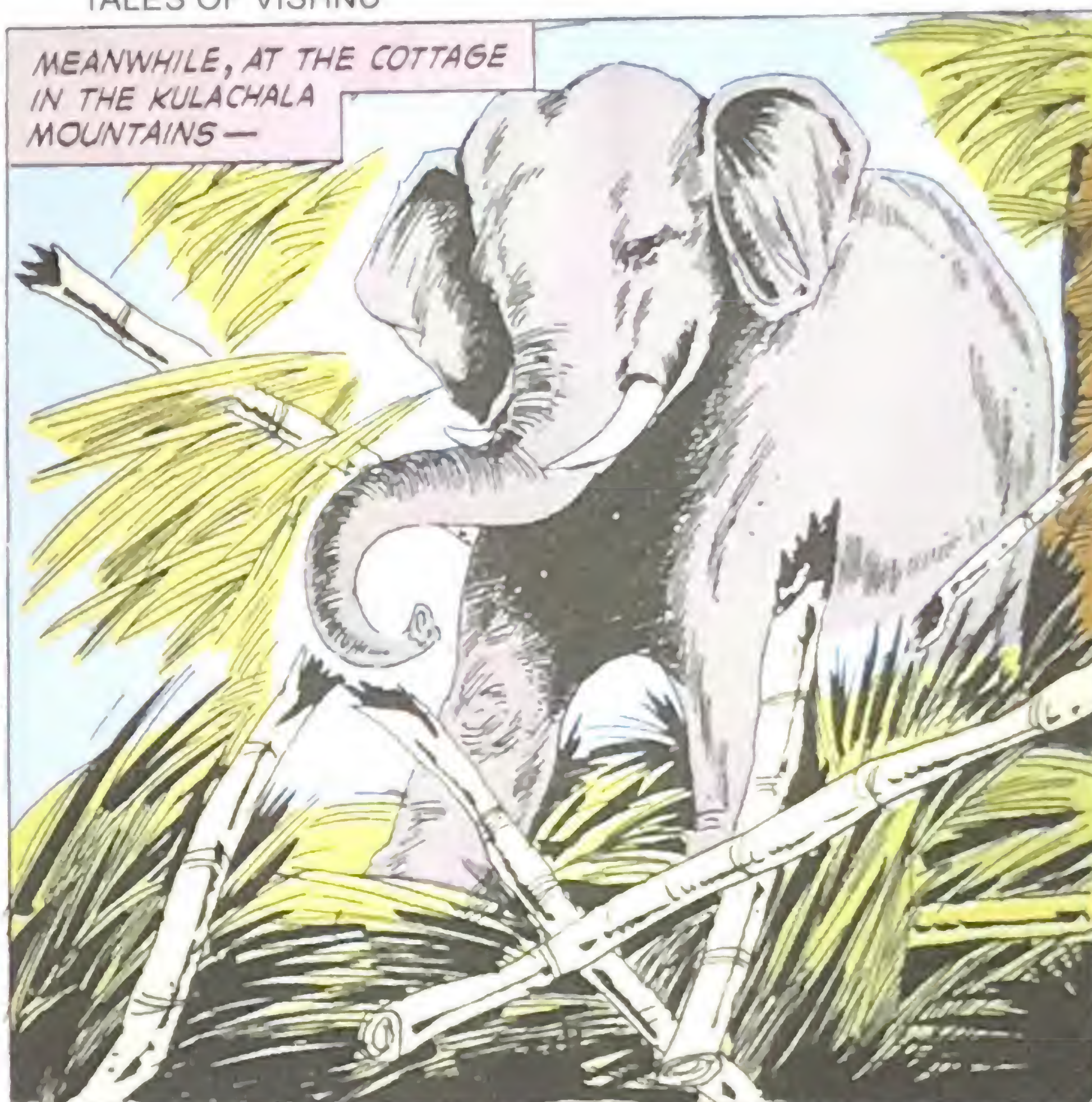


IN HIS CELESTIAL ABODE, LORD VISHNU SMILED WHEN HE HEARD THE CURSE OF AGASTYA.

AGASTYA, YOU HAVE UNKNOWNLY DONE MY DEVOTEE A GREAT SERVICE!

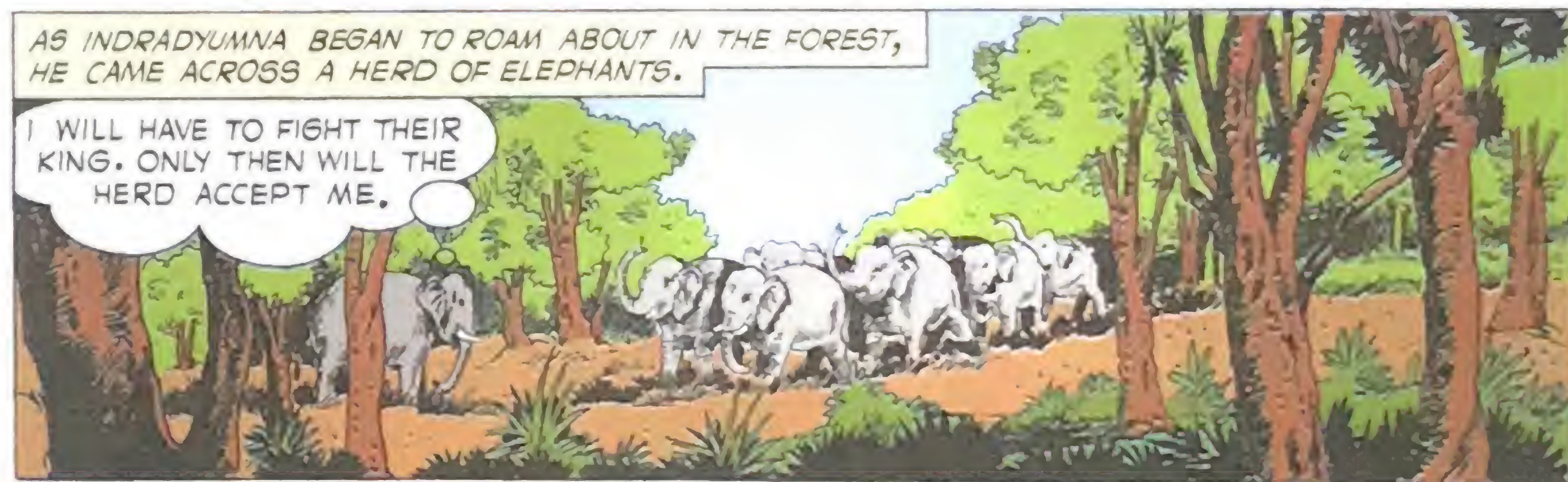


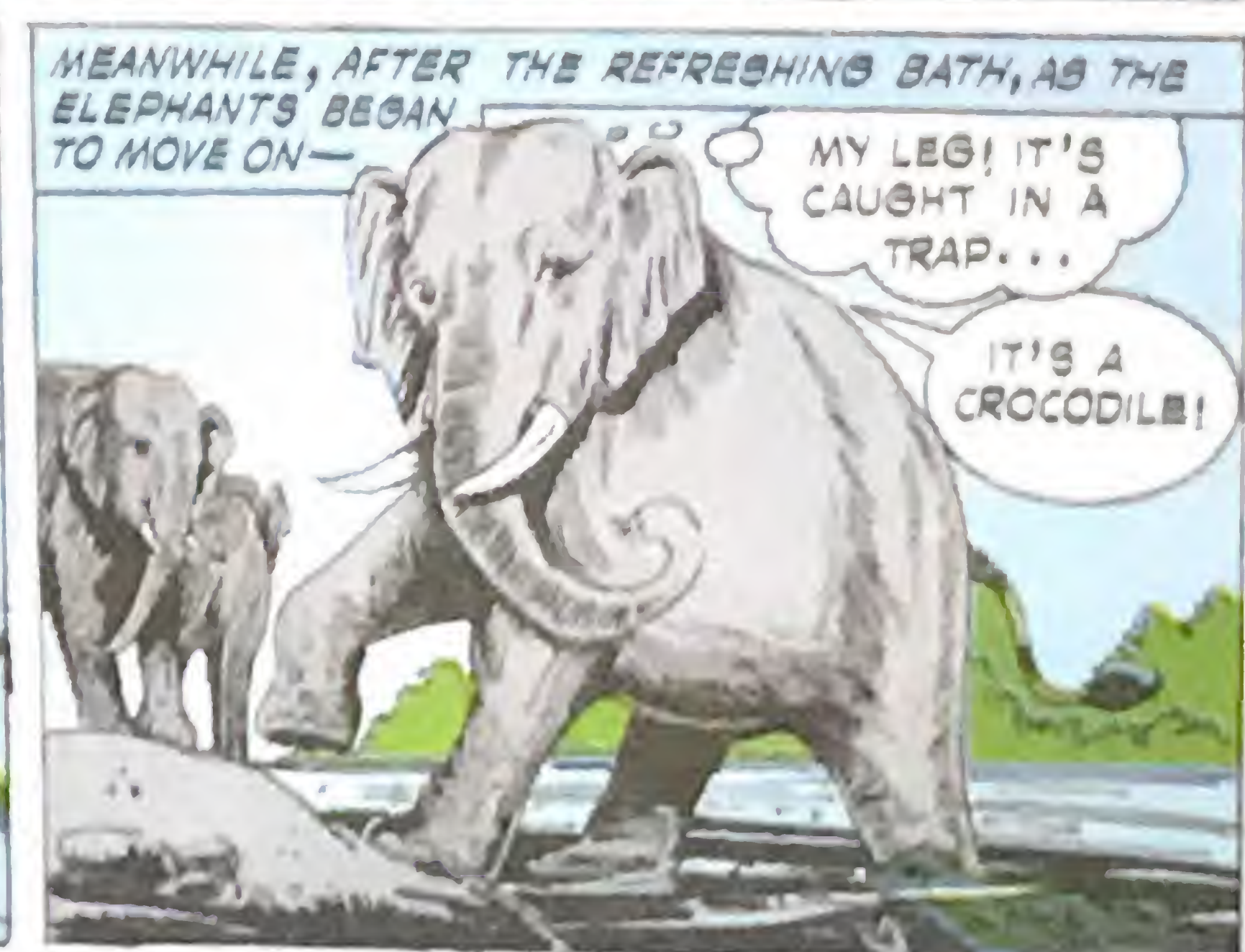
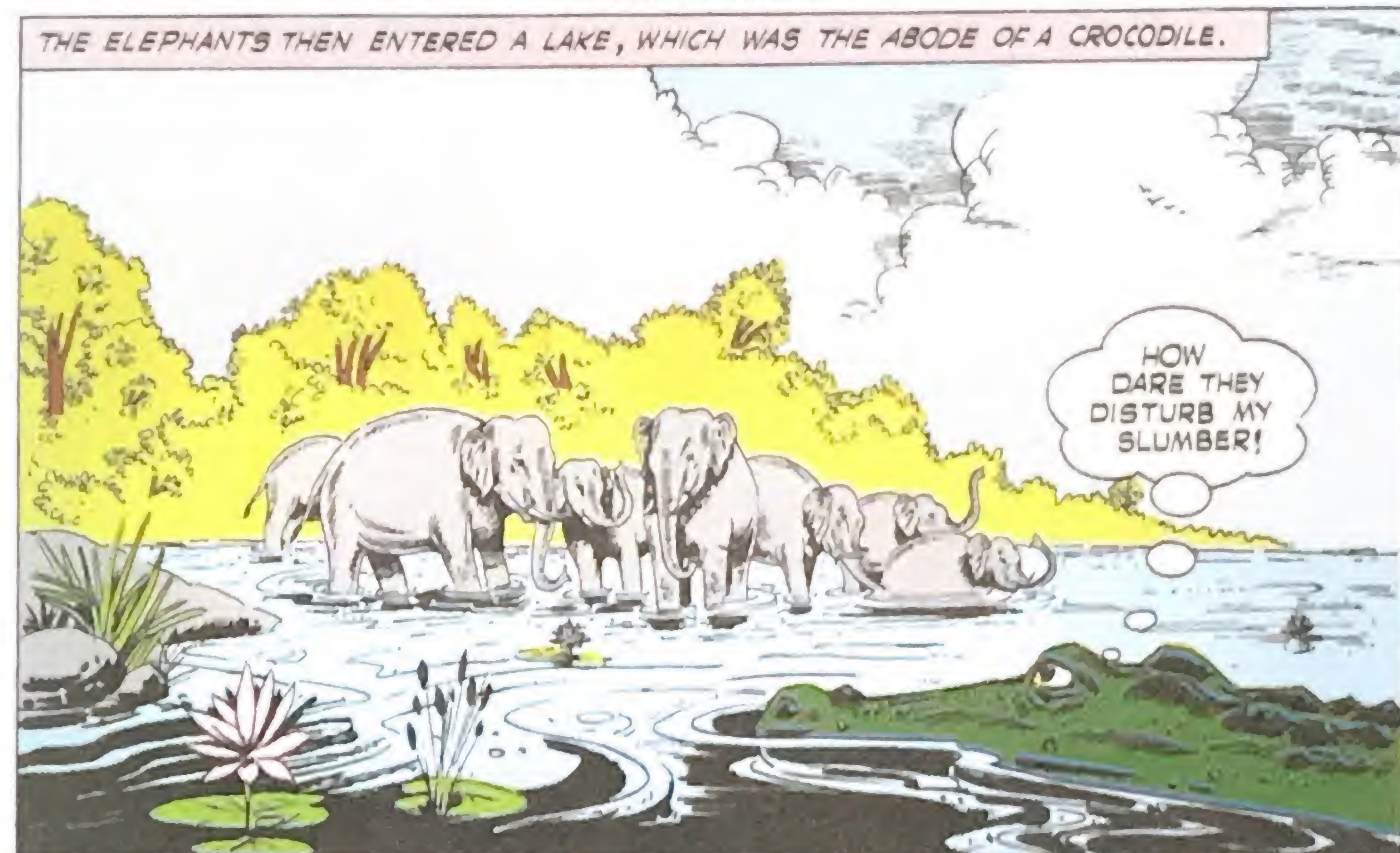
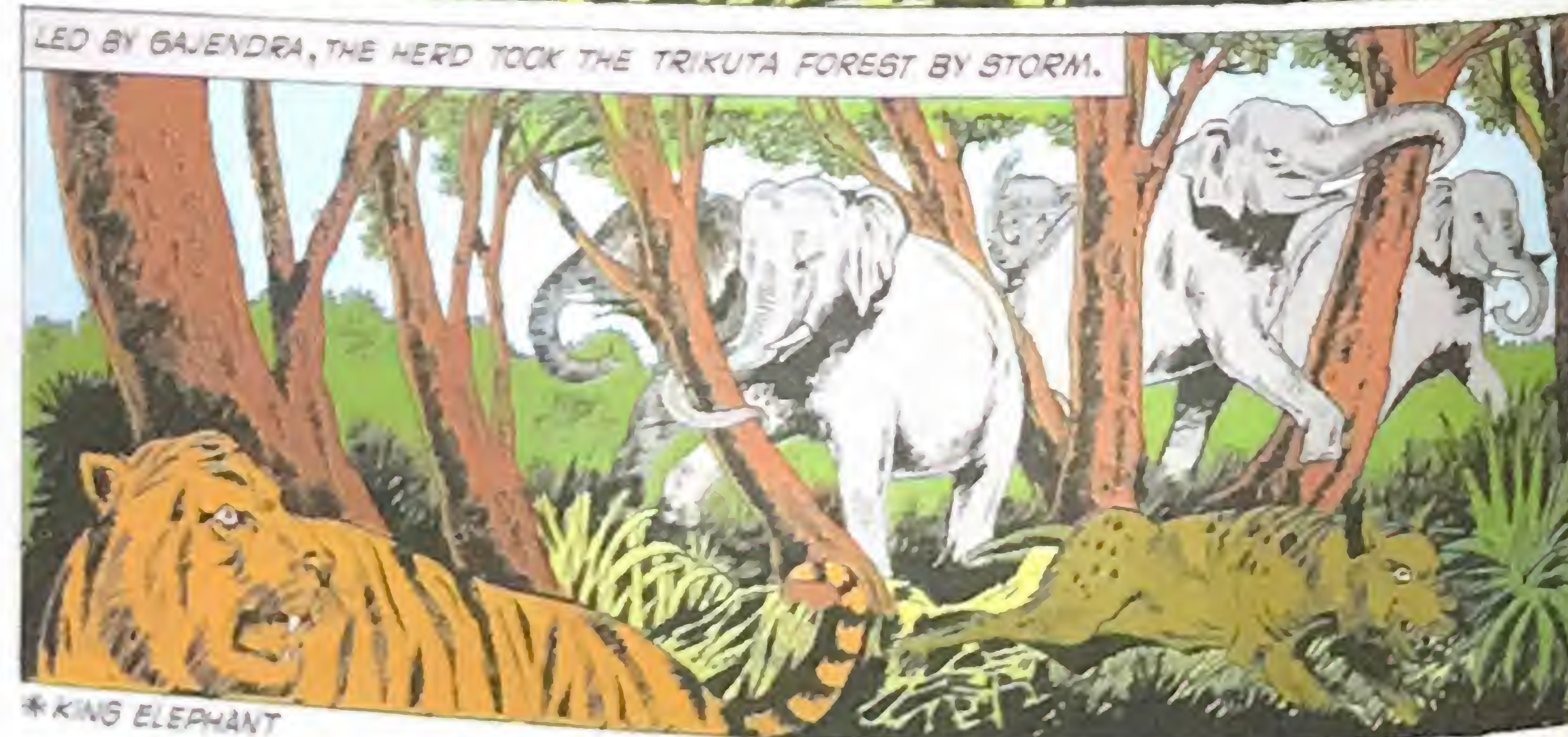
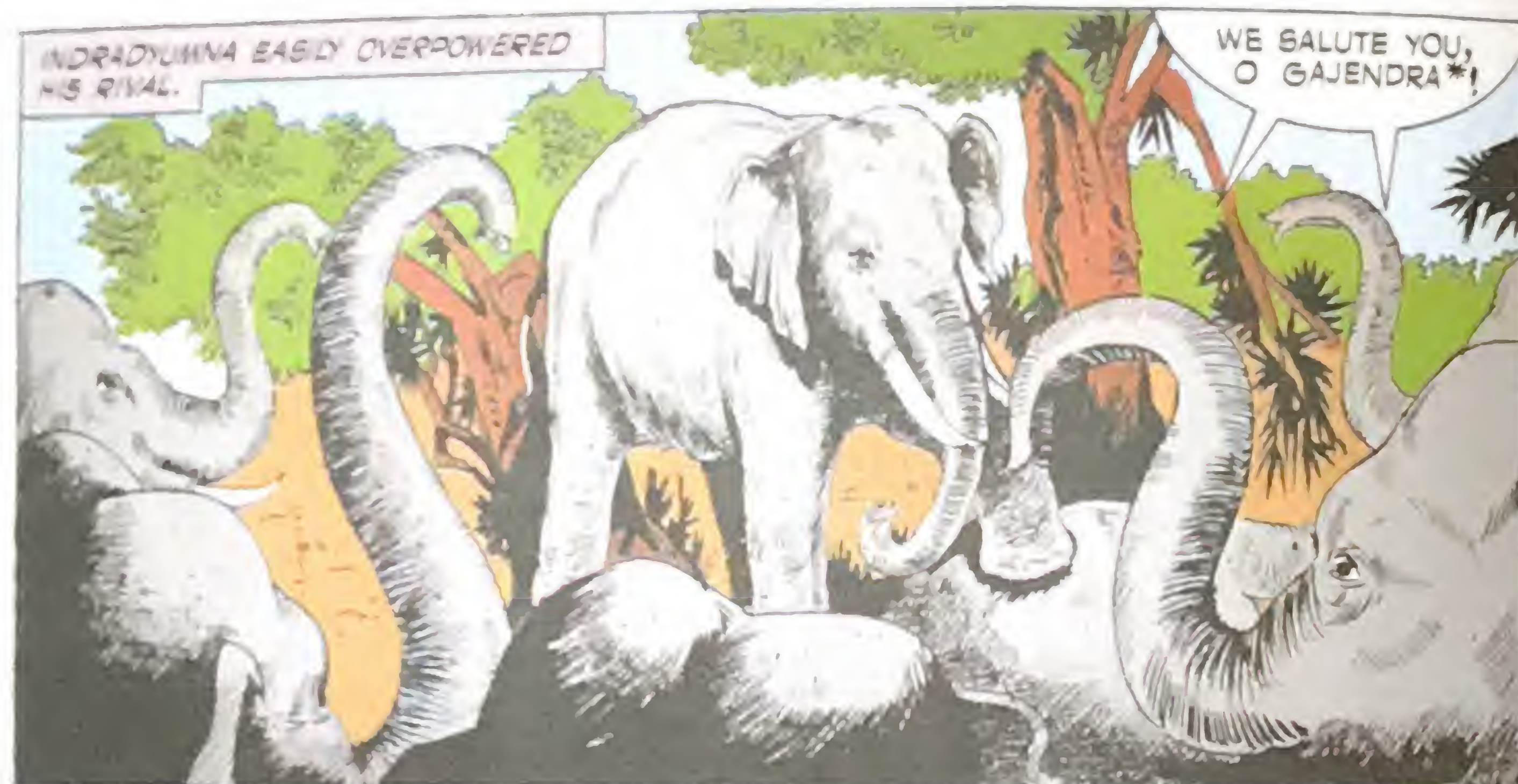
MEANWHILE, AT THE COTTAGE IN THE KULACHALA MOUNTAINS —



AS INDRADYUMNA BEGAN TO ROAM ABOUT IN THE FOREST, HE CAME ACROSS A HERD OF ELEPHANTS.

I WILL HAVE TO FIGHT THEIR KING. ONLY THEN WILL THE HERD ACCEPT ME.





TRUMPETING LOUDLY, HE TRIED TO SHAKE OFF THE CROCODILE.

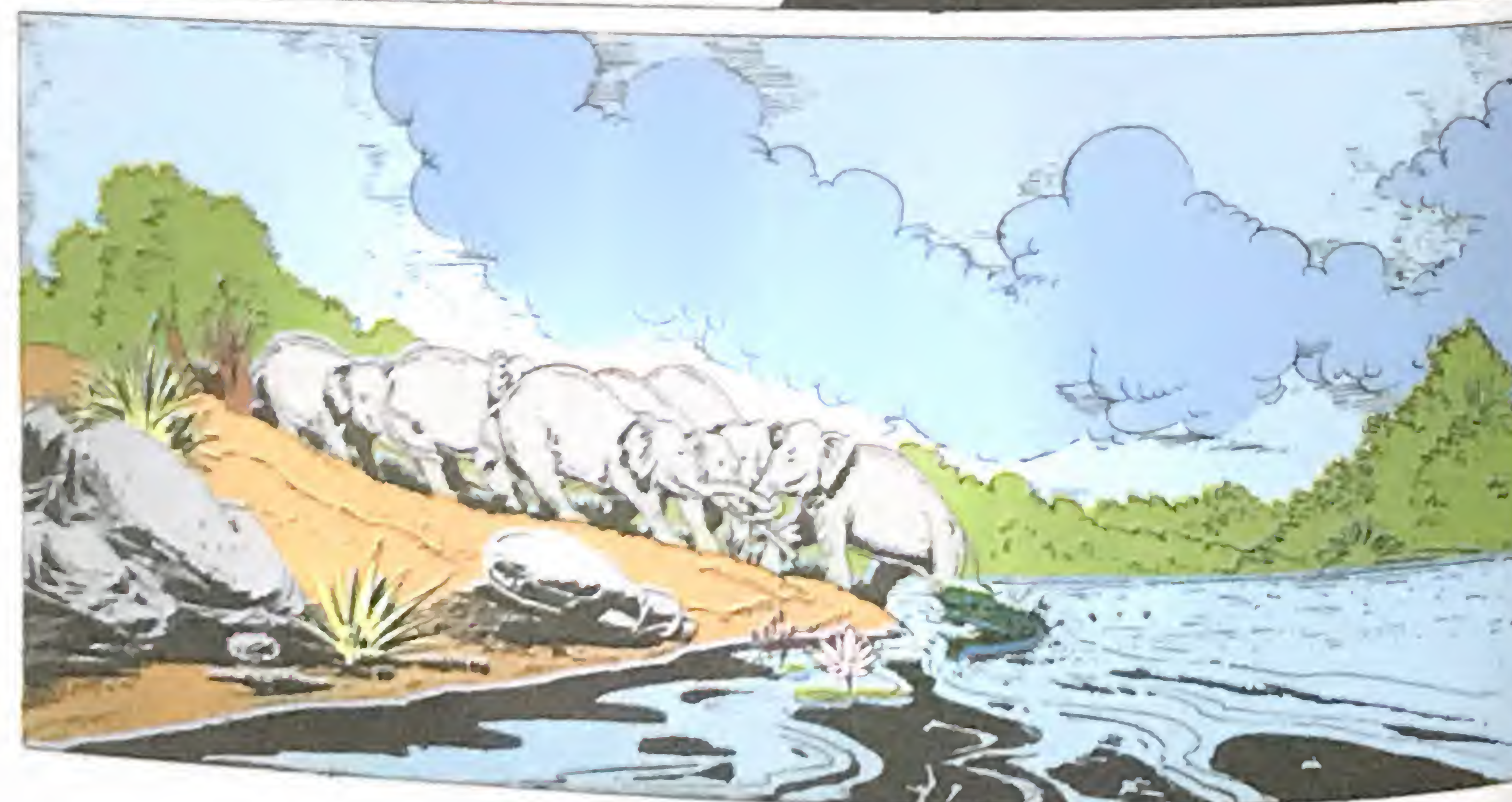


BUT ALL HIS EFFORTS WERE IN VAIN.



IT'S A CROCODILE,
HE'S CAUGHT
MY LEG.

WE'RE COMING,
MY LORD. WE'LL
SAVE YOU.

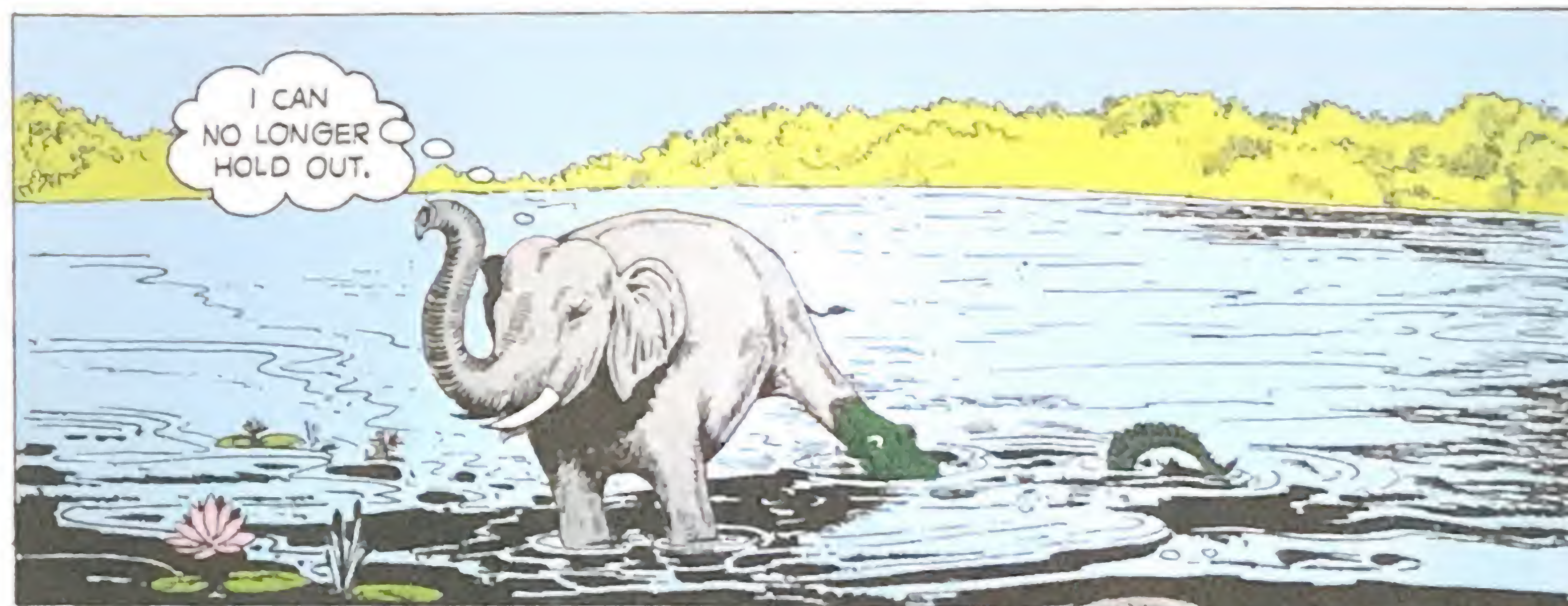


BUT THE HERD SOON HAD TO GIVE UP.



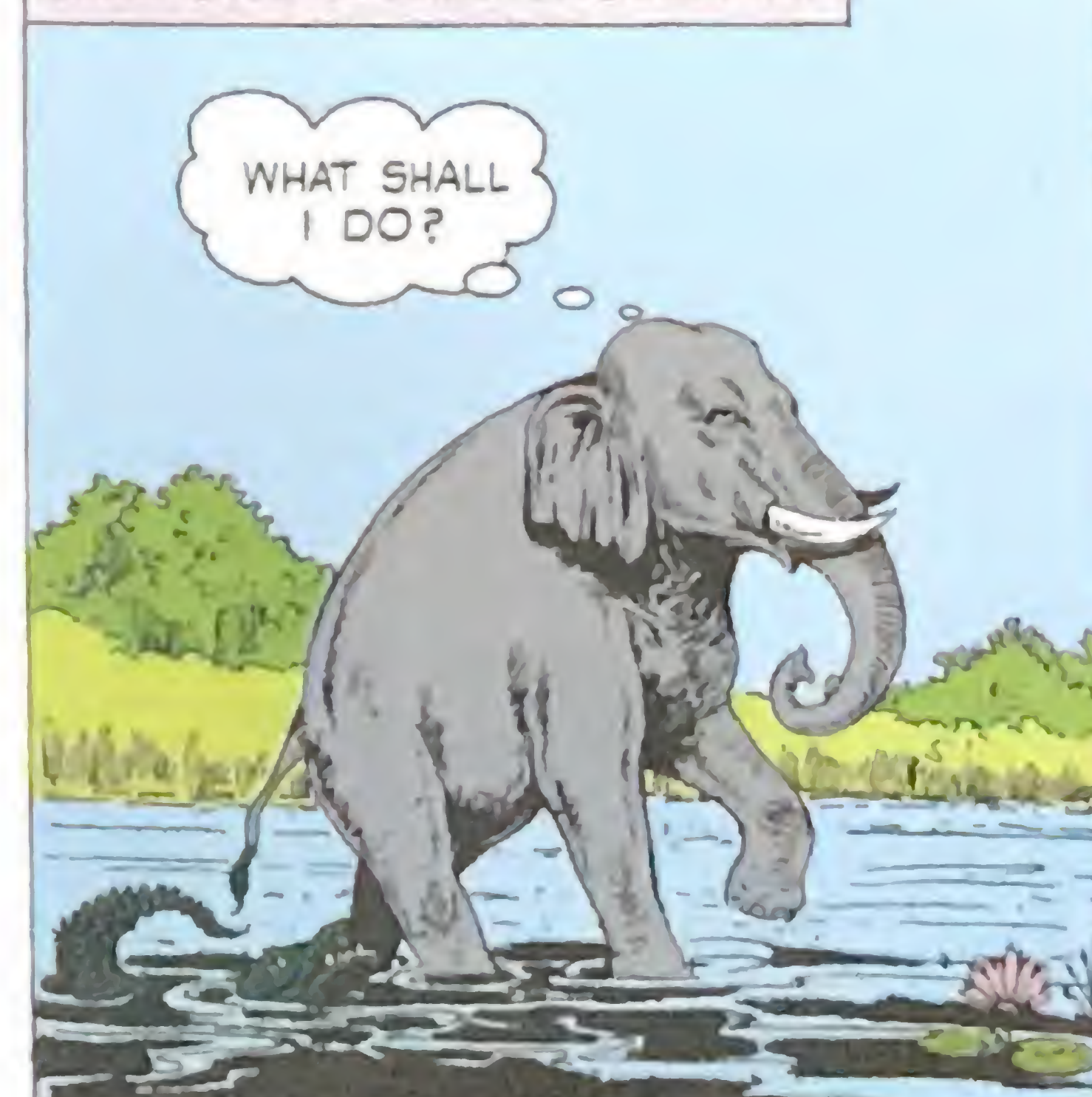
IT'S A PITY, BUT
WE'LL HAVE TO
DESERT OUR
LEADER.

THE CROCODILE
SEEMS TO HAVE
DIVINE
STRENGTH.



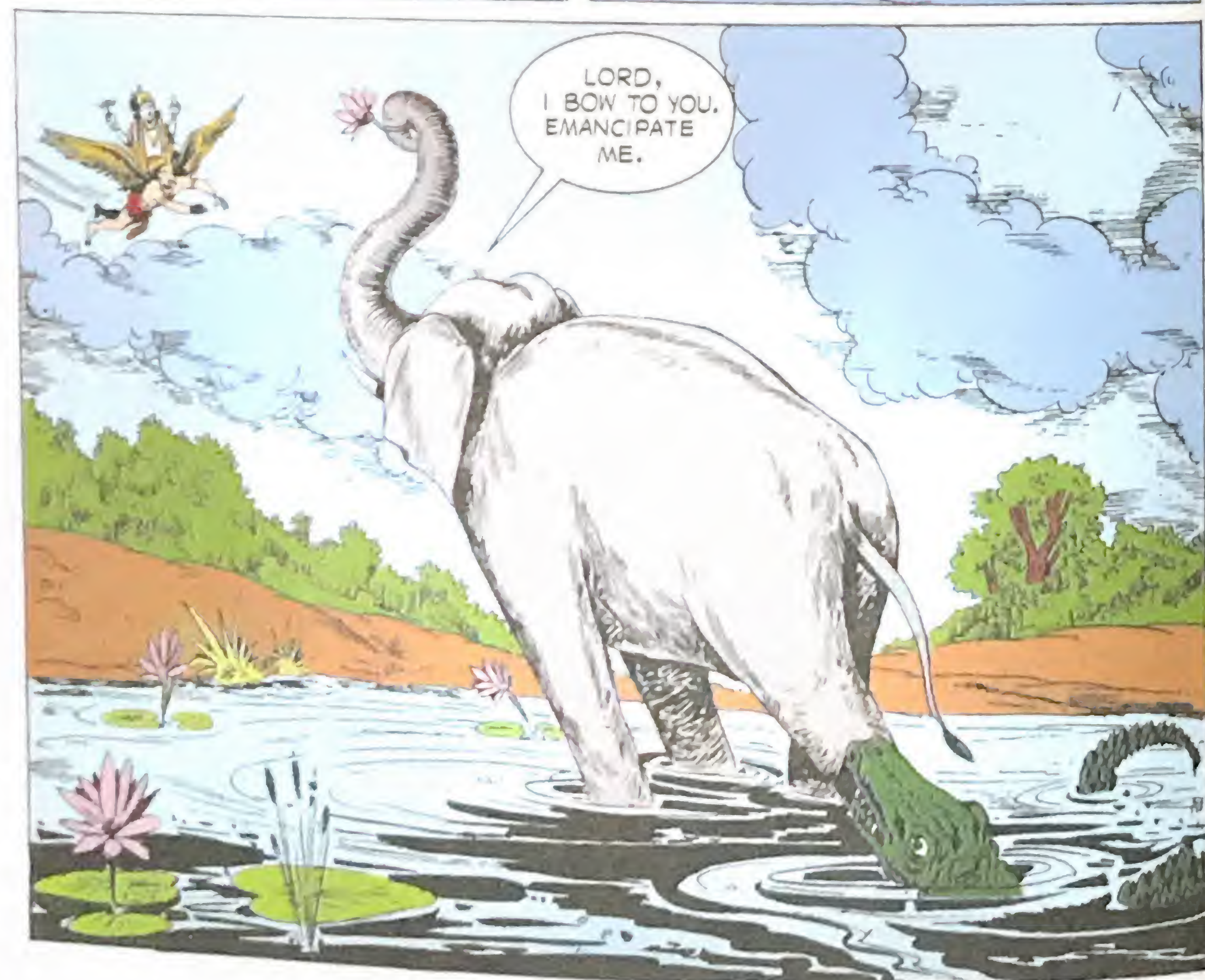
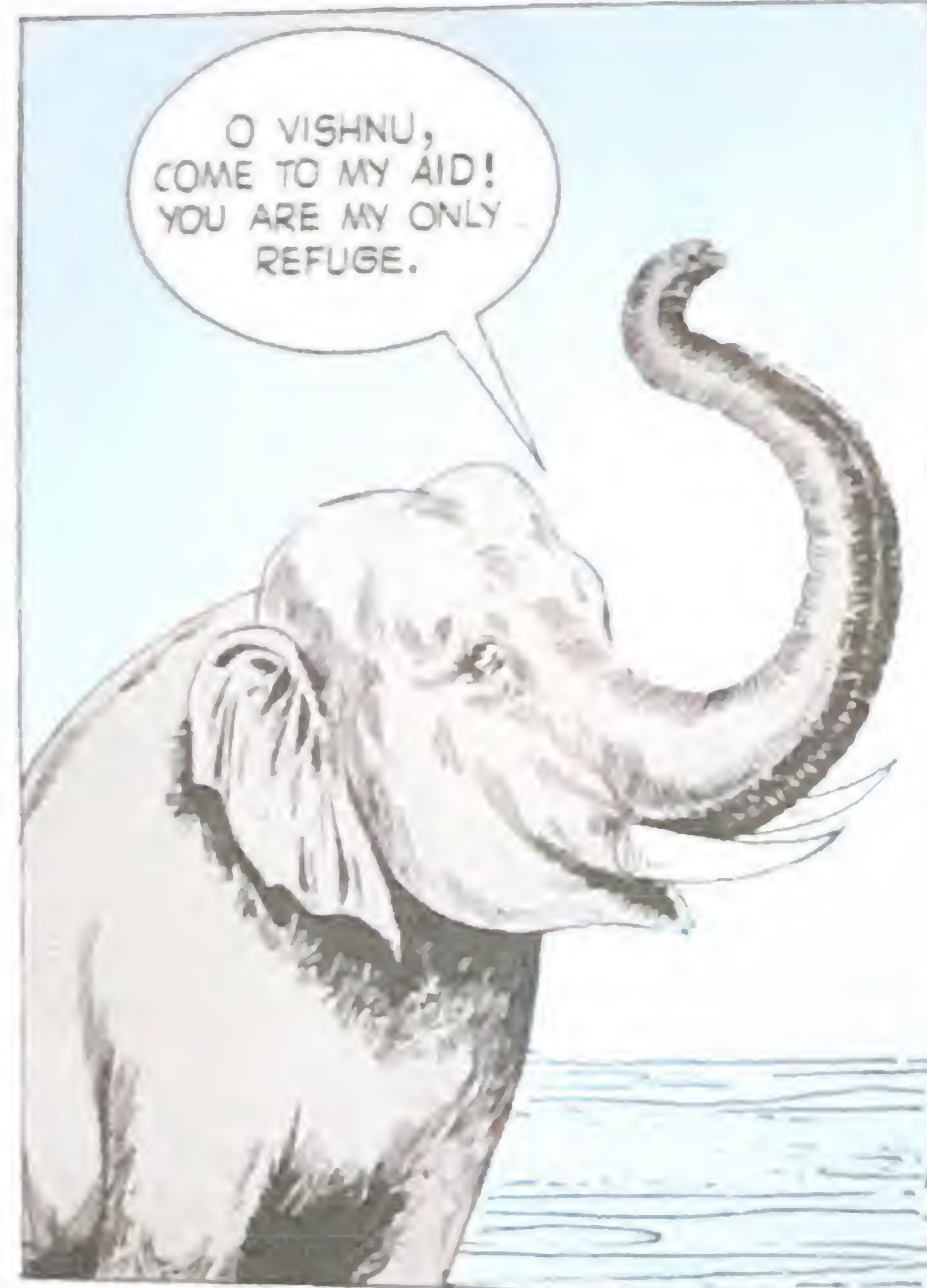
I CAN
NO LONGER
HOLD OUT.

GAJENDRA BECAME DESPERATE.

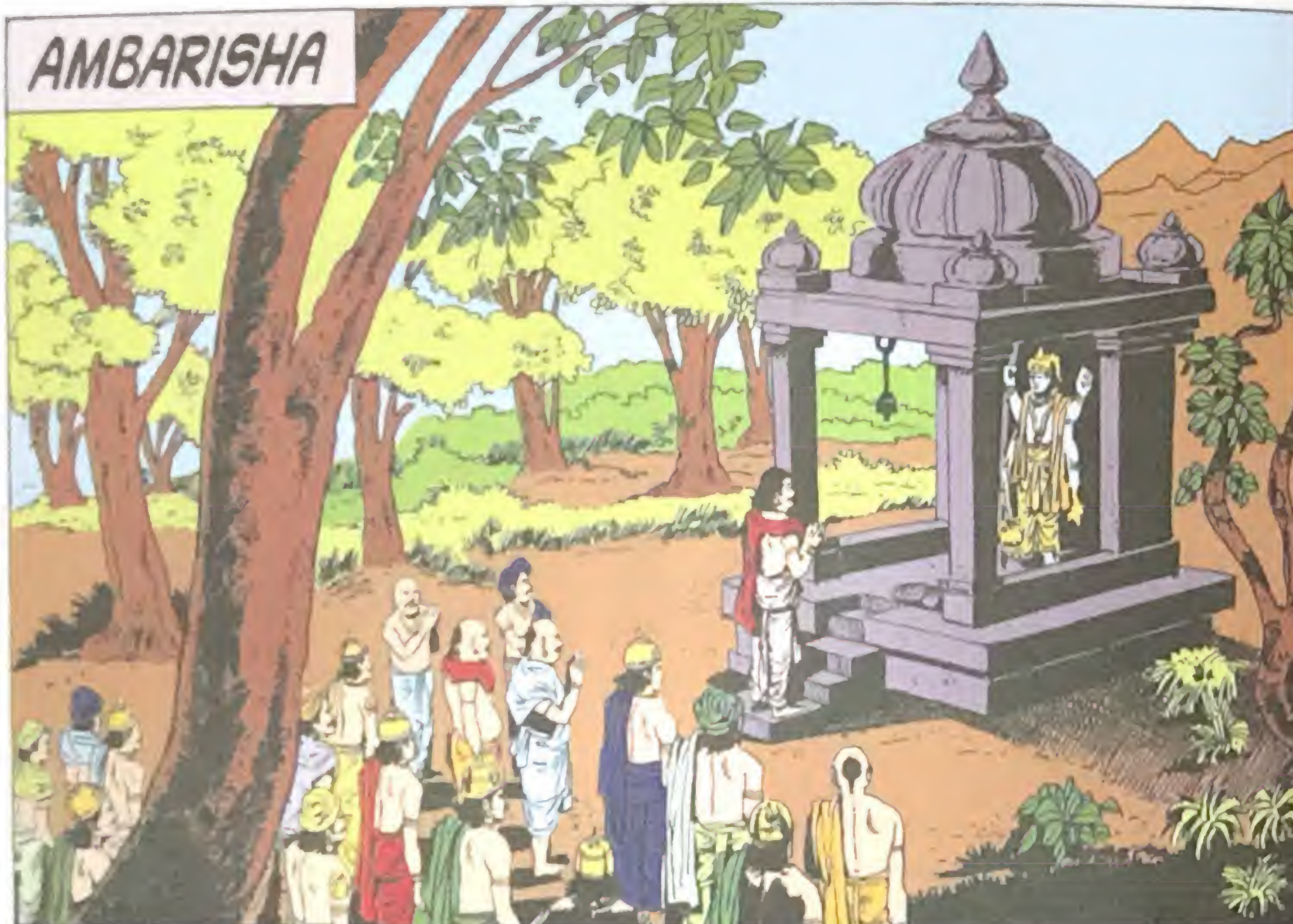


WHAT SHALL
I DO?



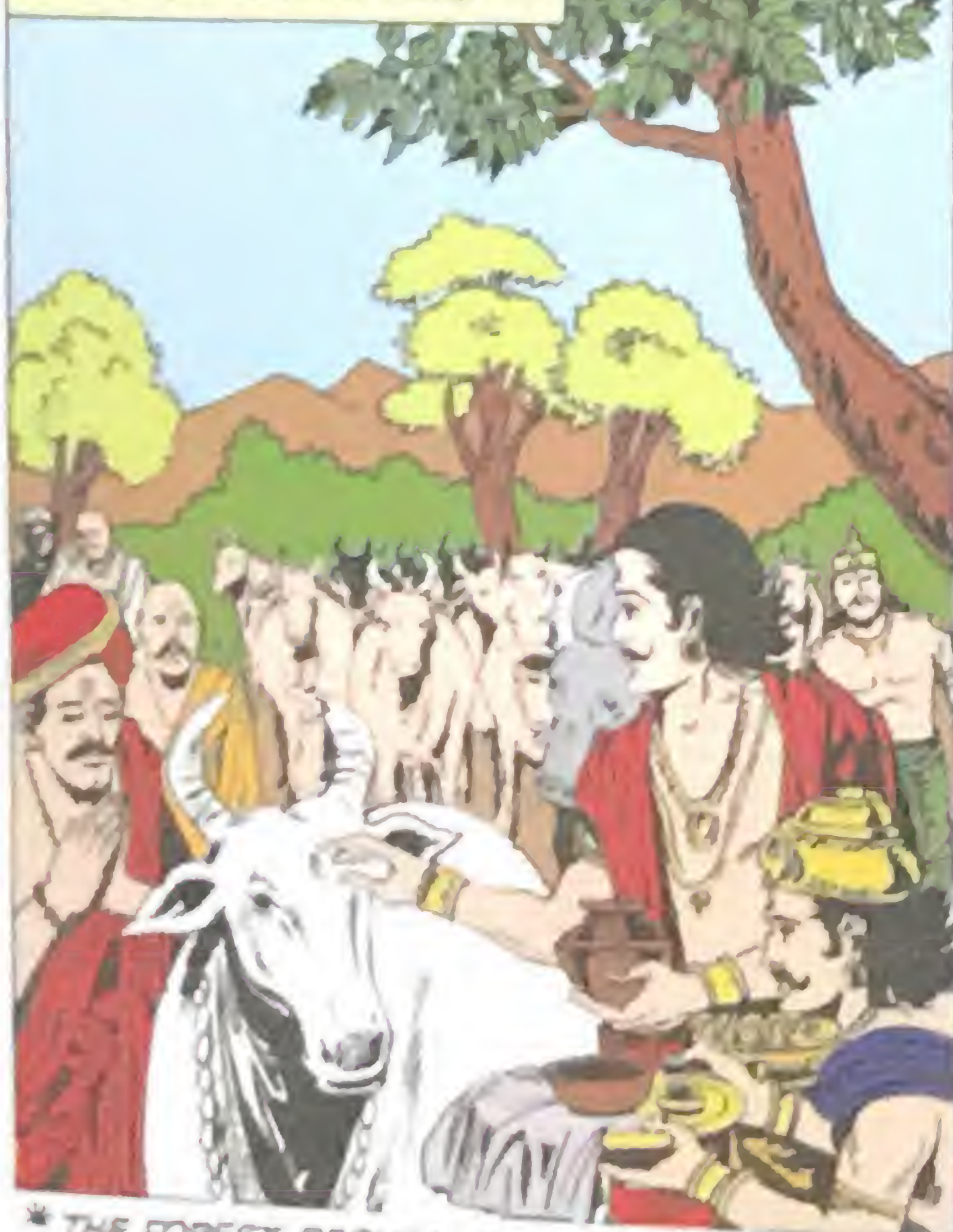


AMBARISHA

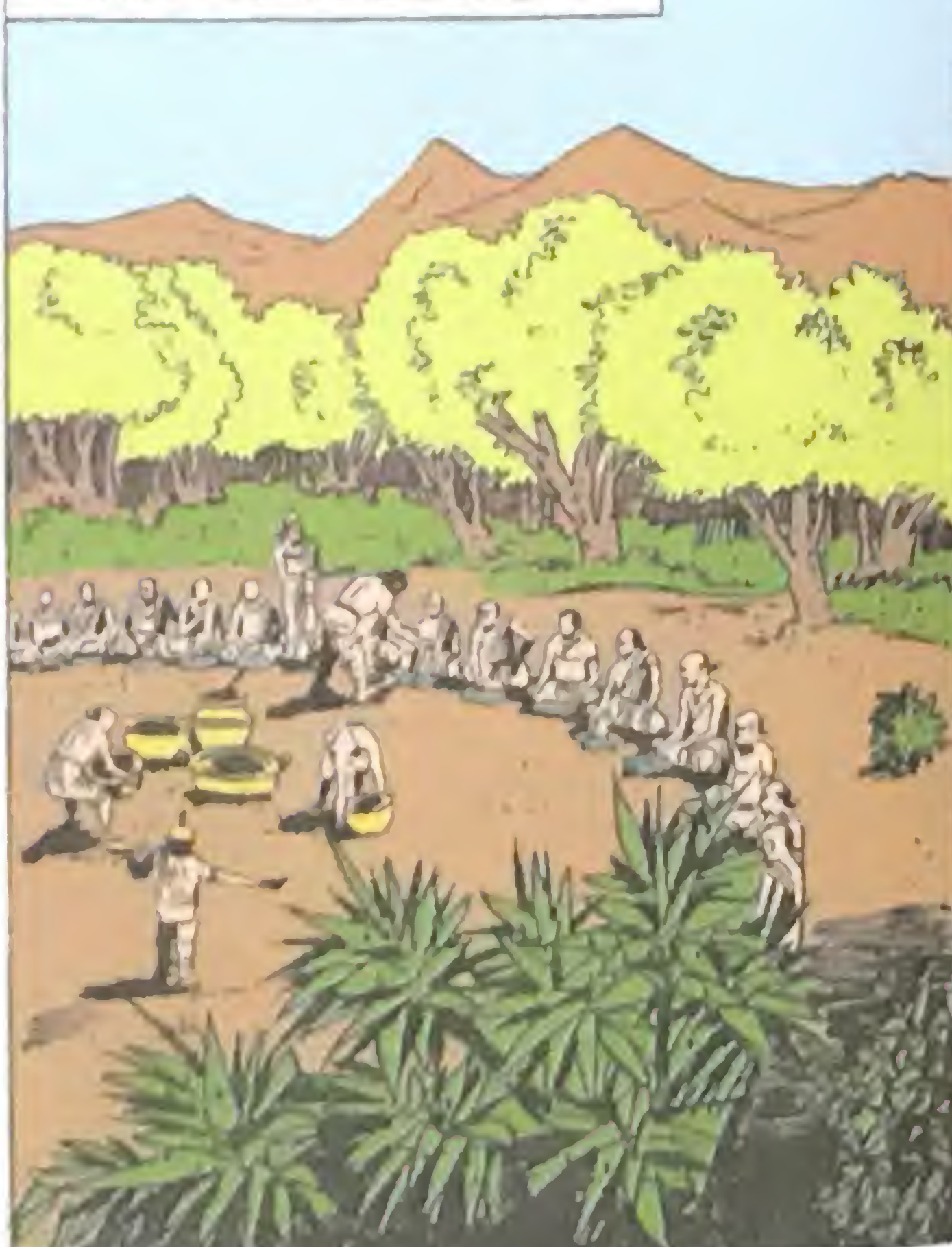


AFTER FASTING FOR THREE DAYS, KING AMBARISHA WORSHIPPED LORD VISHNU IN THE FOREST OF MADHUVANA*. HE WAS TO BREAK HIS FAST ON THE AUSPICIOUS DAY OF DWADASHI.†

HAVING GIVEN AWAY ALMS...



...AND FED MENDICANTS...



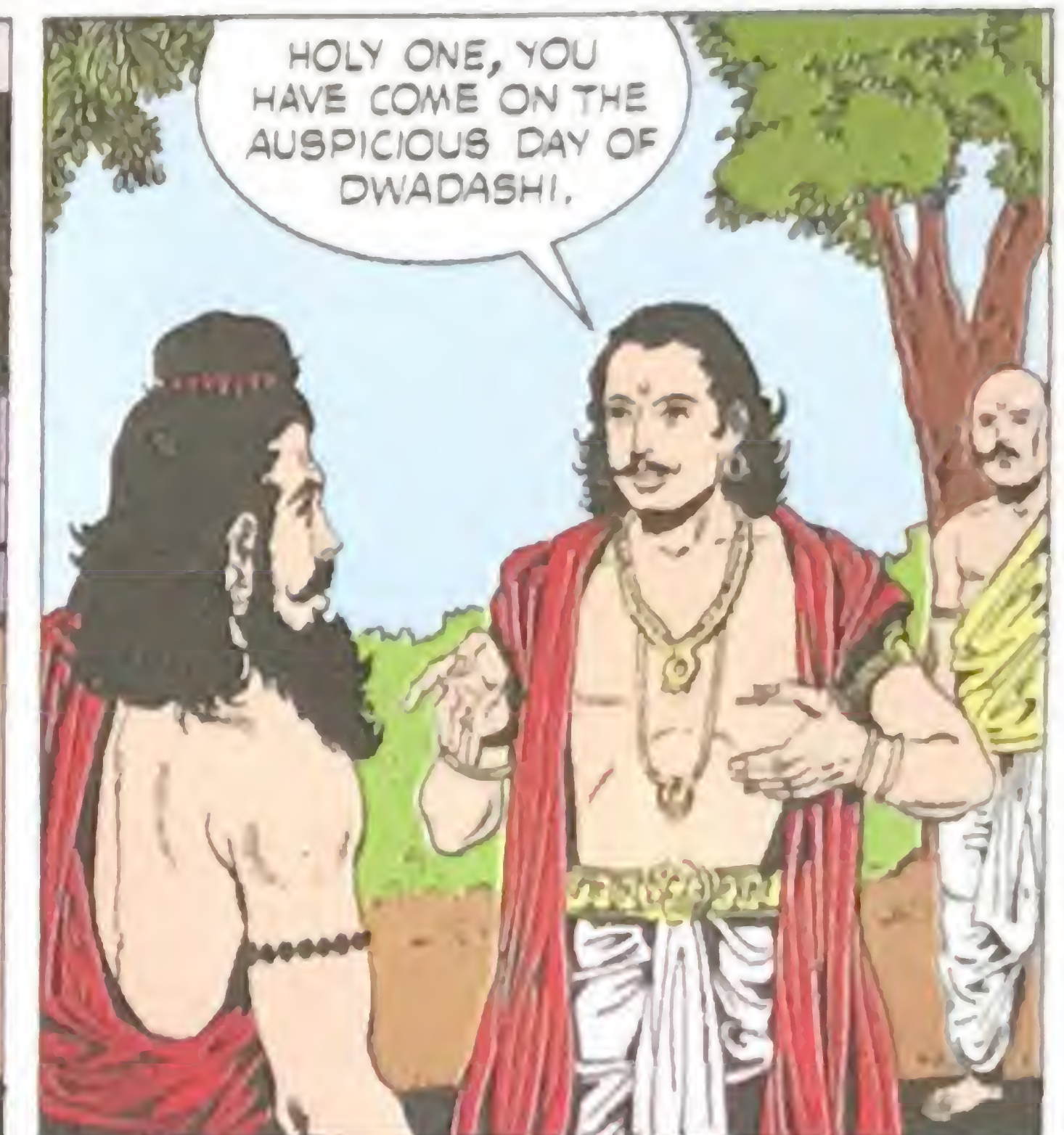
* THE FOREST REGION AROUND MATHURA † THE TWELFTH DAY OF THE FORTNIGHT

... HE HIMSELF WAS ABOUT TO BREAK HIS FAST WHEN SAGE DURVASA CAME BY.



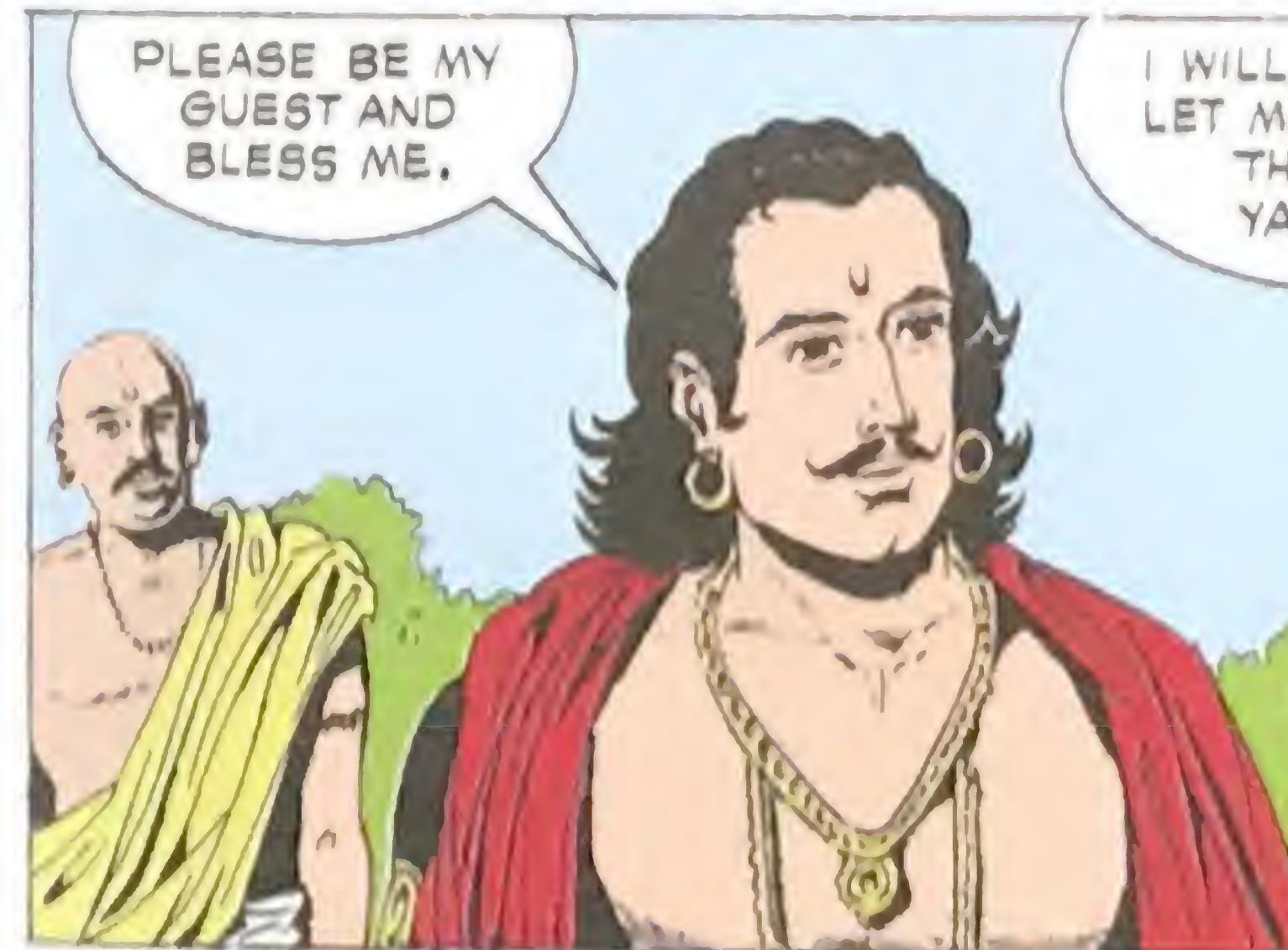
ARISE, O KING.

HOLY ONE, YOU HAVE COME ON THE AUSPICIOUS DAY OF DWADASHI.



PLEASE BE MY GUEST AND BLESS ME.

I WILL. BUT FIRST LET ME BATHE IN THE HOLY YAMUNA.

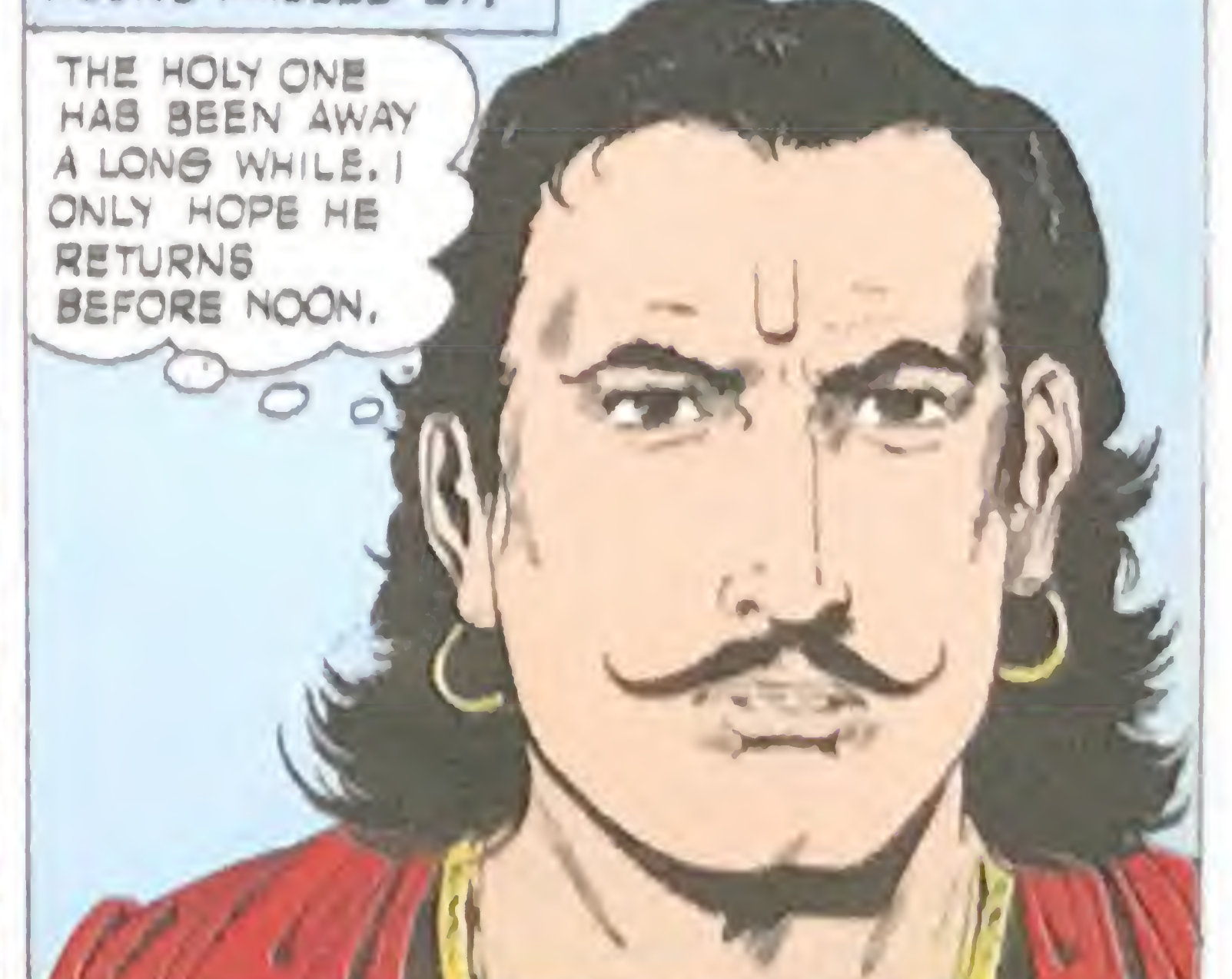


DURVASA LEFT FOR THE RIVER.

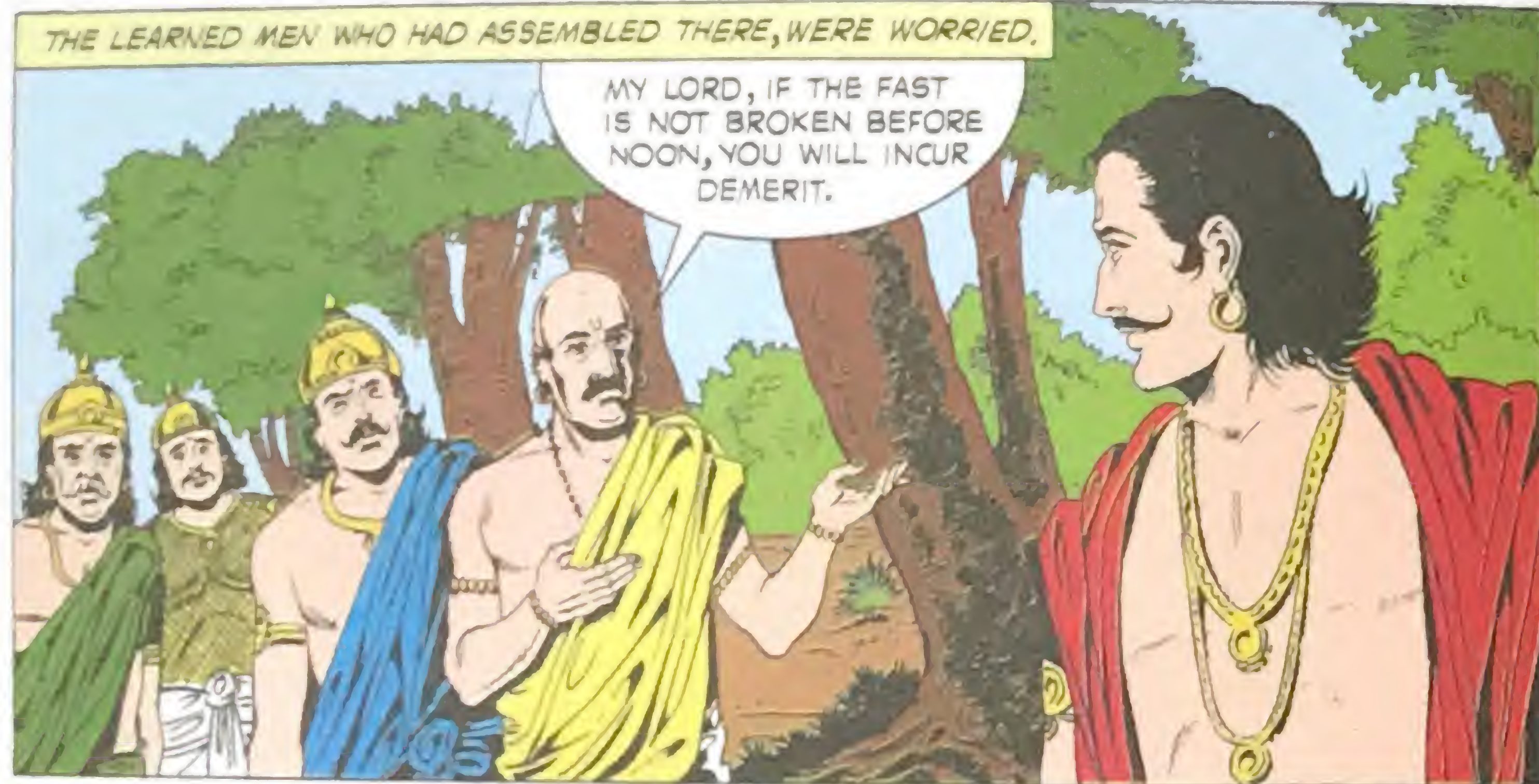


HOURS PASSED BY.

THE HOLY ONE HAS BEEN AWAY A LONG WHILE. I ONLY HOPE HE RETURNS BEFORE NOON.



THE LEARNED MEN WHO HAD ASSEMBLED THERE, WERE WORRIED.



MY LORD, IF THE FAST IS NOT BROKEN BEFORE NOON, YOU WILL INCUR DEMERIT.



AND IF I DON'T WAIT FOR THE SAGE, I'LL INCUR HIS WRATH.



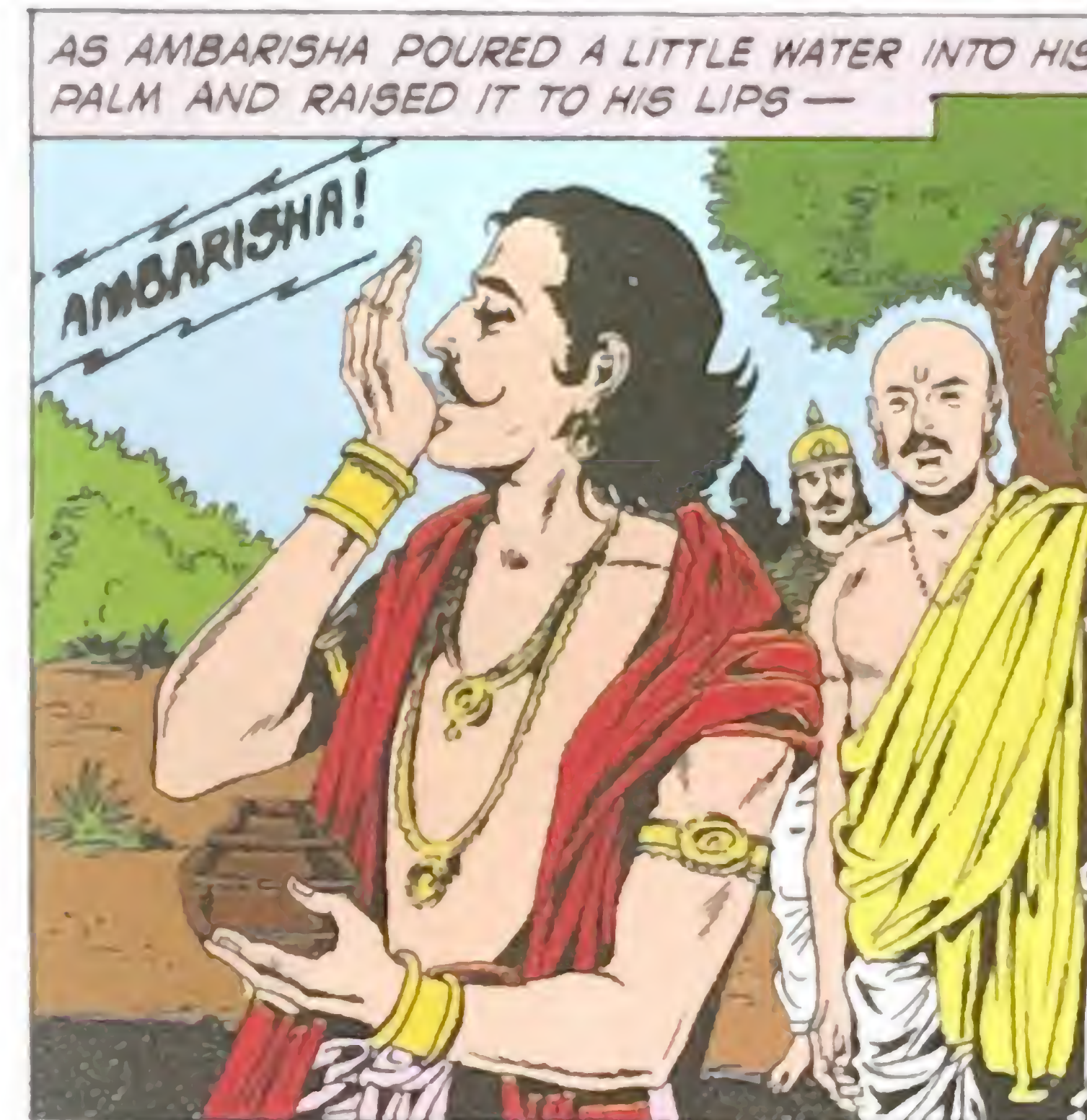
THIS IS A FINE PREDICAMENT, INDEED! WHAT SHALL I DO?



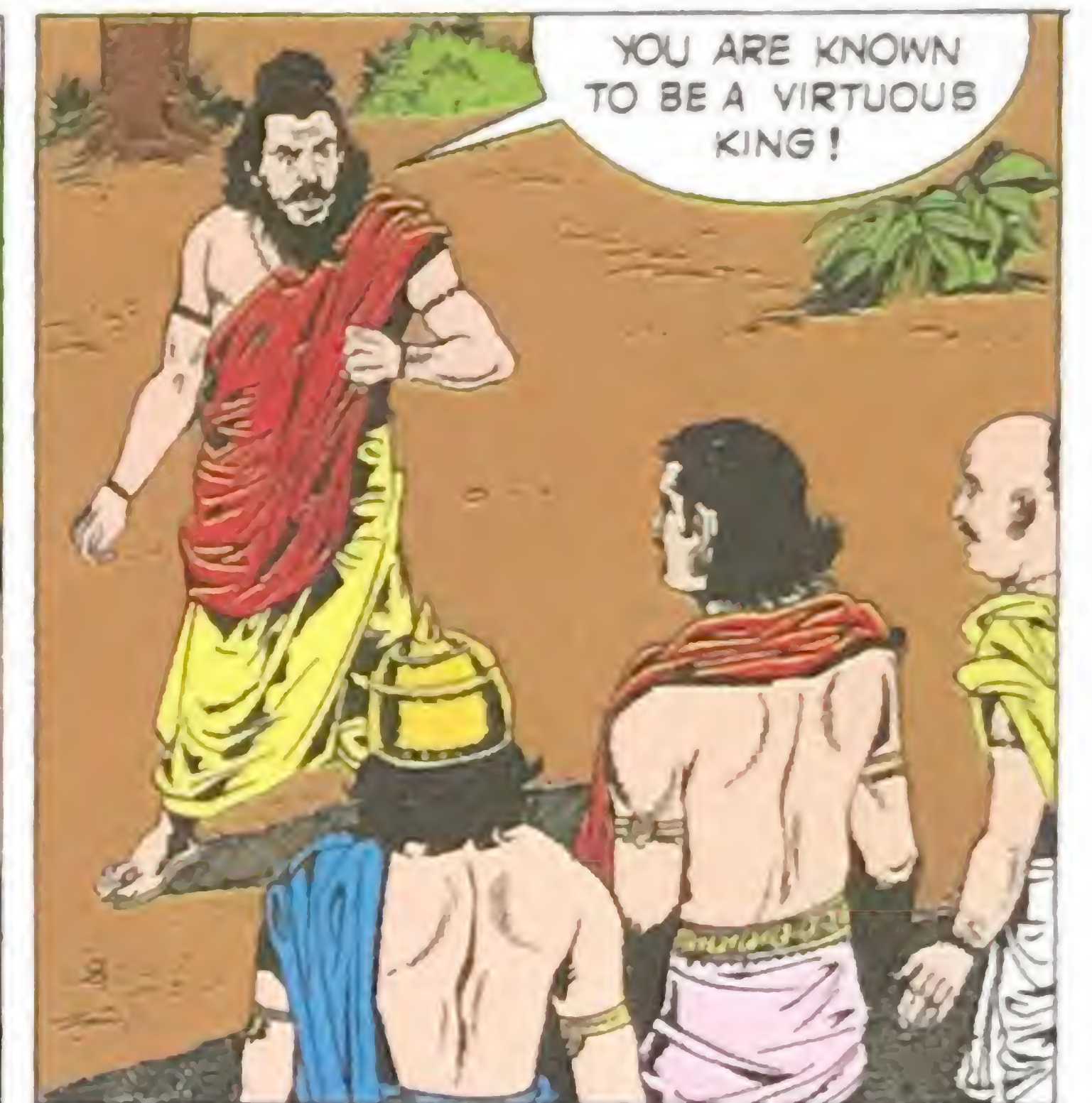
MY LORD, YOU COULD TAKE A SIP OF WATER AND BREAK THE FAST. THE SAGE WILL NOT BE OFFENDED BECAUSE YOU WILL EAT ONLY AFTER SERVING HIM.

WHAT YOU ADVISE SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY WAY OUT.

AS AMBARISHA POURED A LITTLE WATER INTO HIS PALM AND RAISED IT TO HIS LIPS —



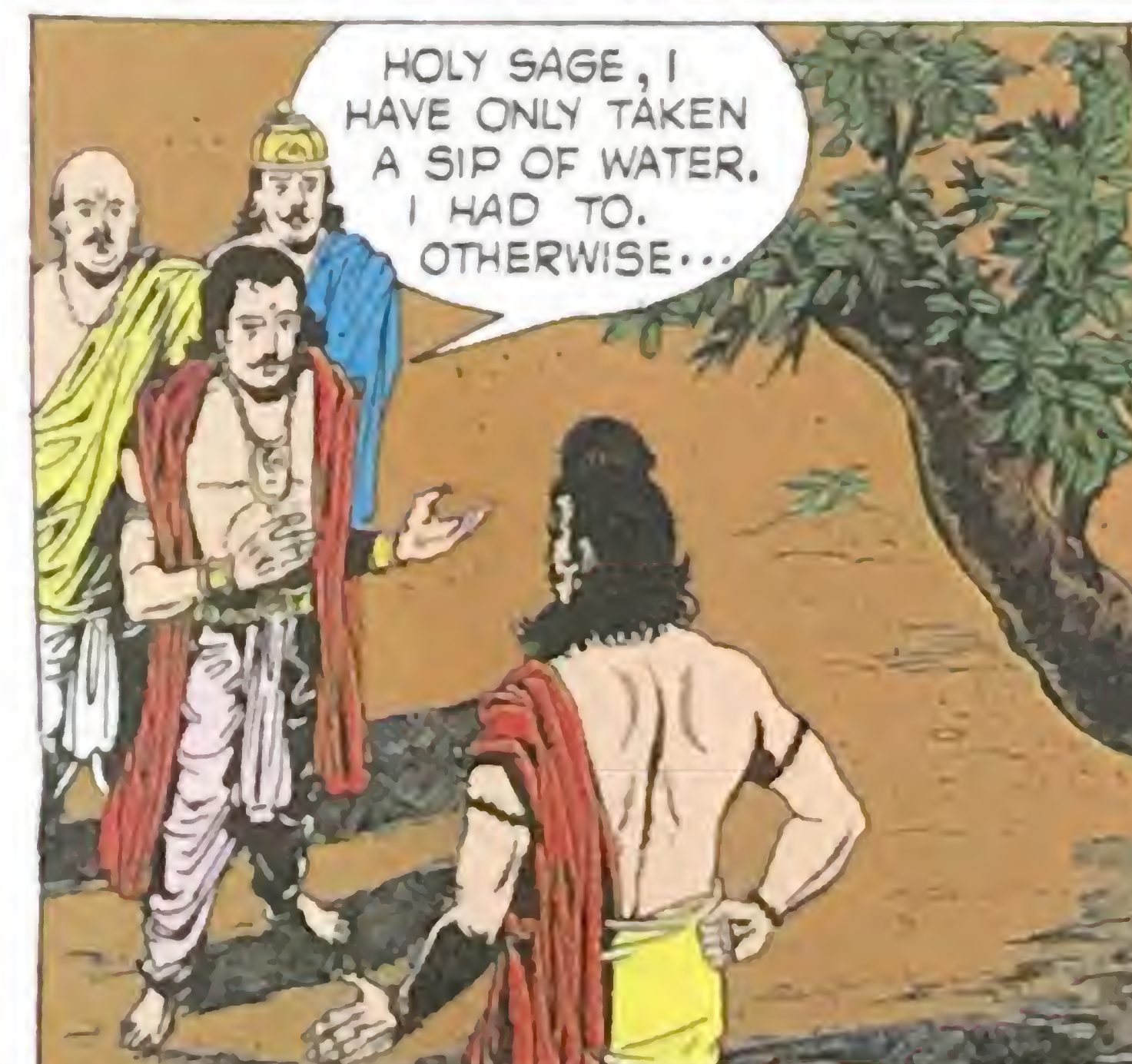
AMBARISHA!



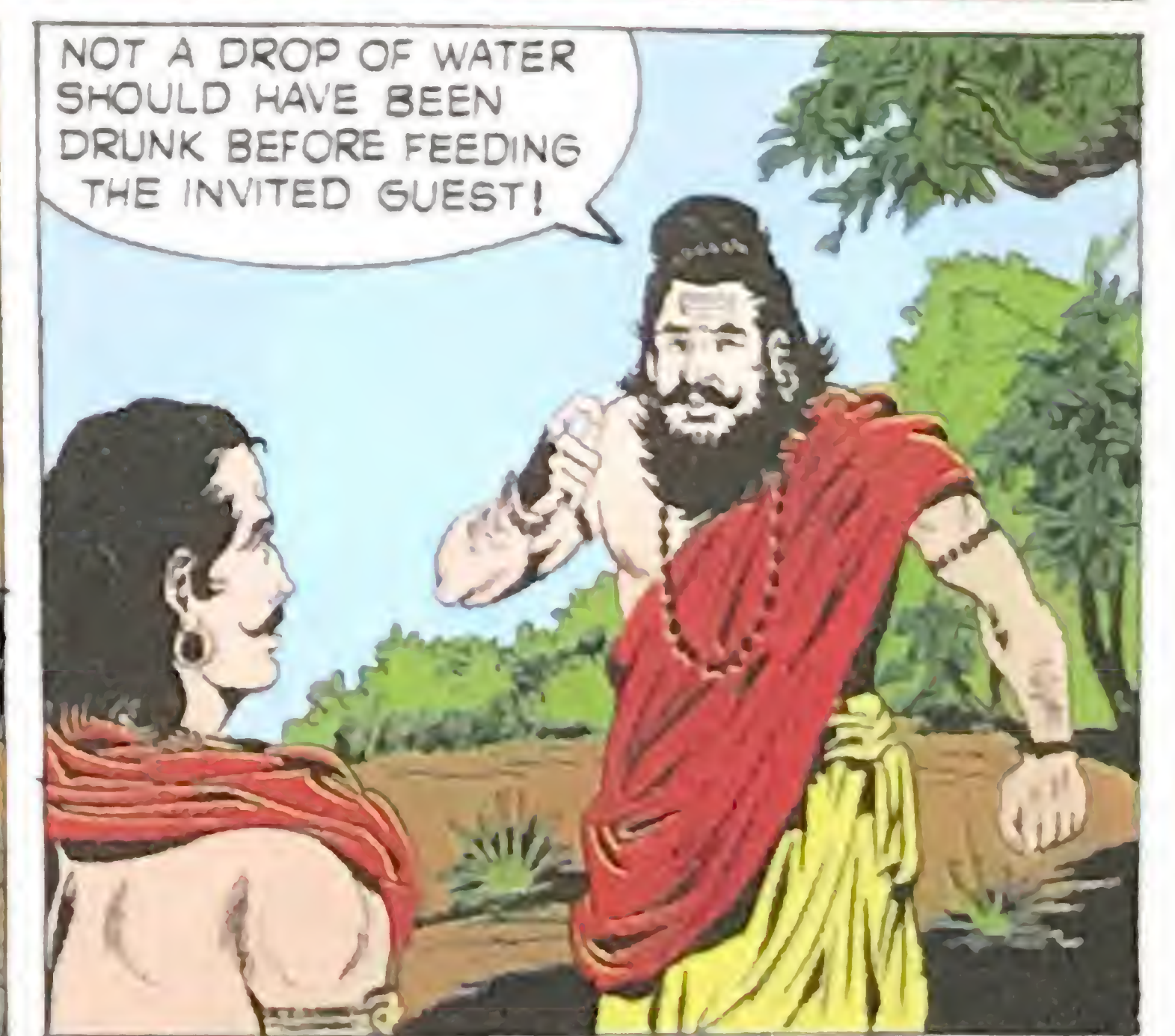
YOU ARE KNOWN TO BE A VIRTUOUS KING!



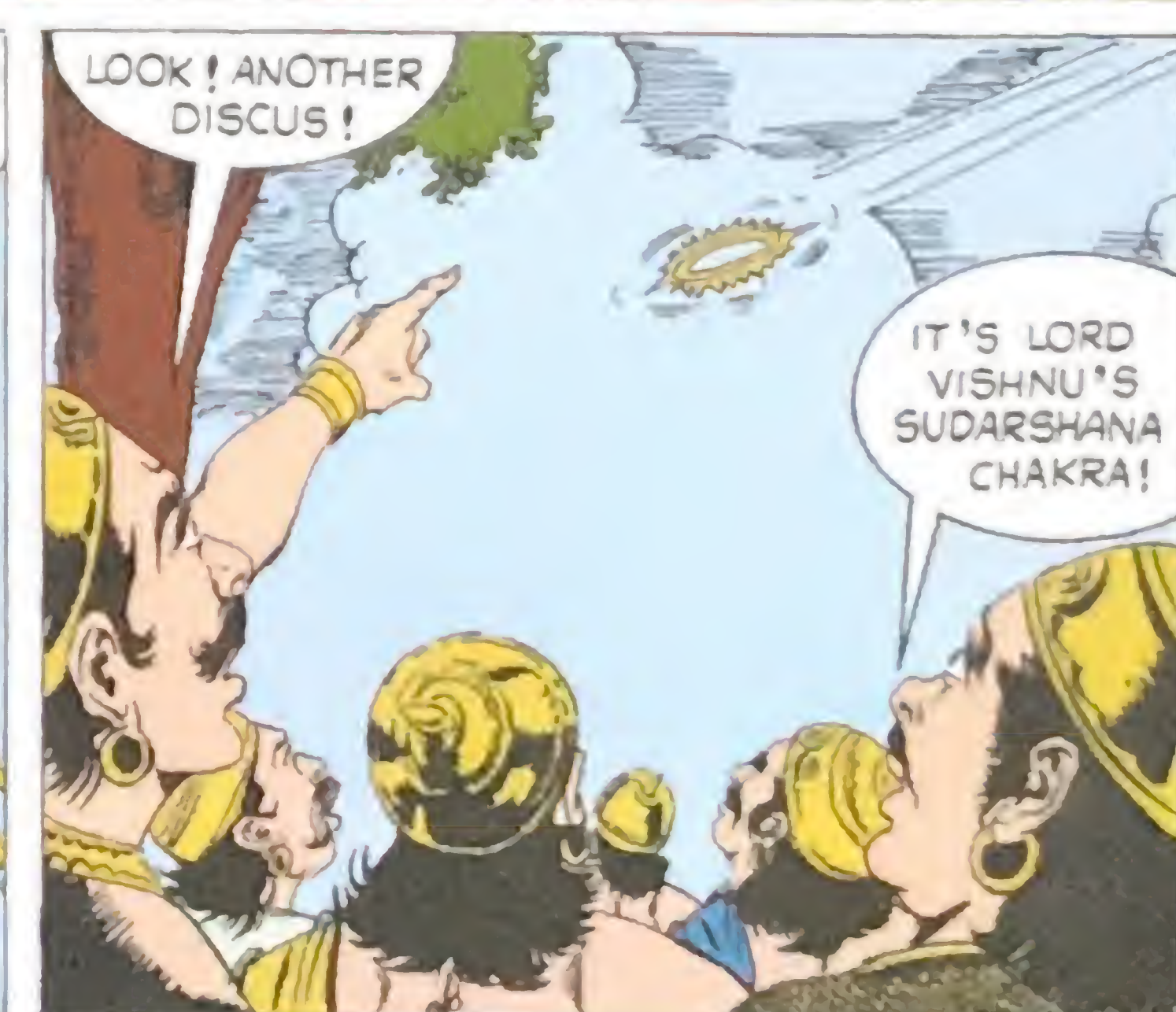
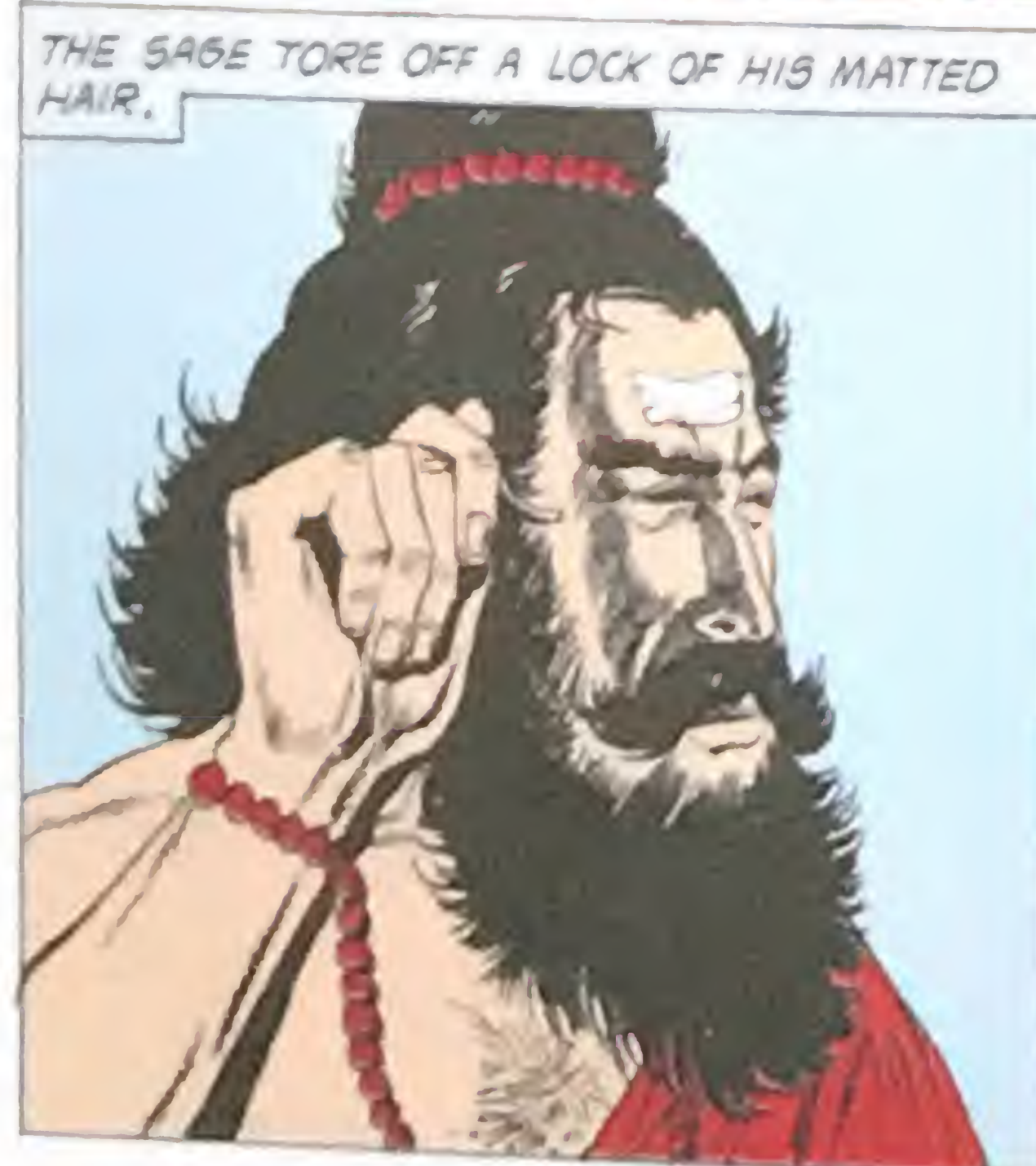
AND YET, YOU COULD NOT WAIT FOR YOUR GUEST!



HOLY SAGE, I HAVE ONLY TAKEN A SIP OF WATER. I HAD TO. OTHERWISE...



NOT A DROP OF WATER SHOULD HAVE BEEN DRUNK BEFORE FEEDING THE INVITED GUEST!



HAVING DESTROYED THE DISCUS WHICH THREATENED AMBARISHA'S LIFE, SUDARSHANA CHAKRA FLEW TOWARDS DURVASA.



IT'S HEADING FOR ME!



THE SAGE BROKE INTO A RUN, PURSUED BY THE CHAKRA.

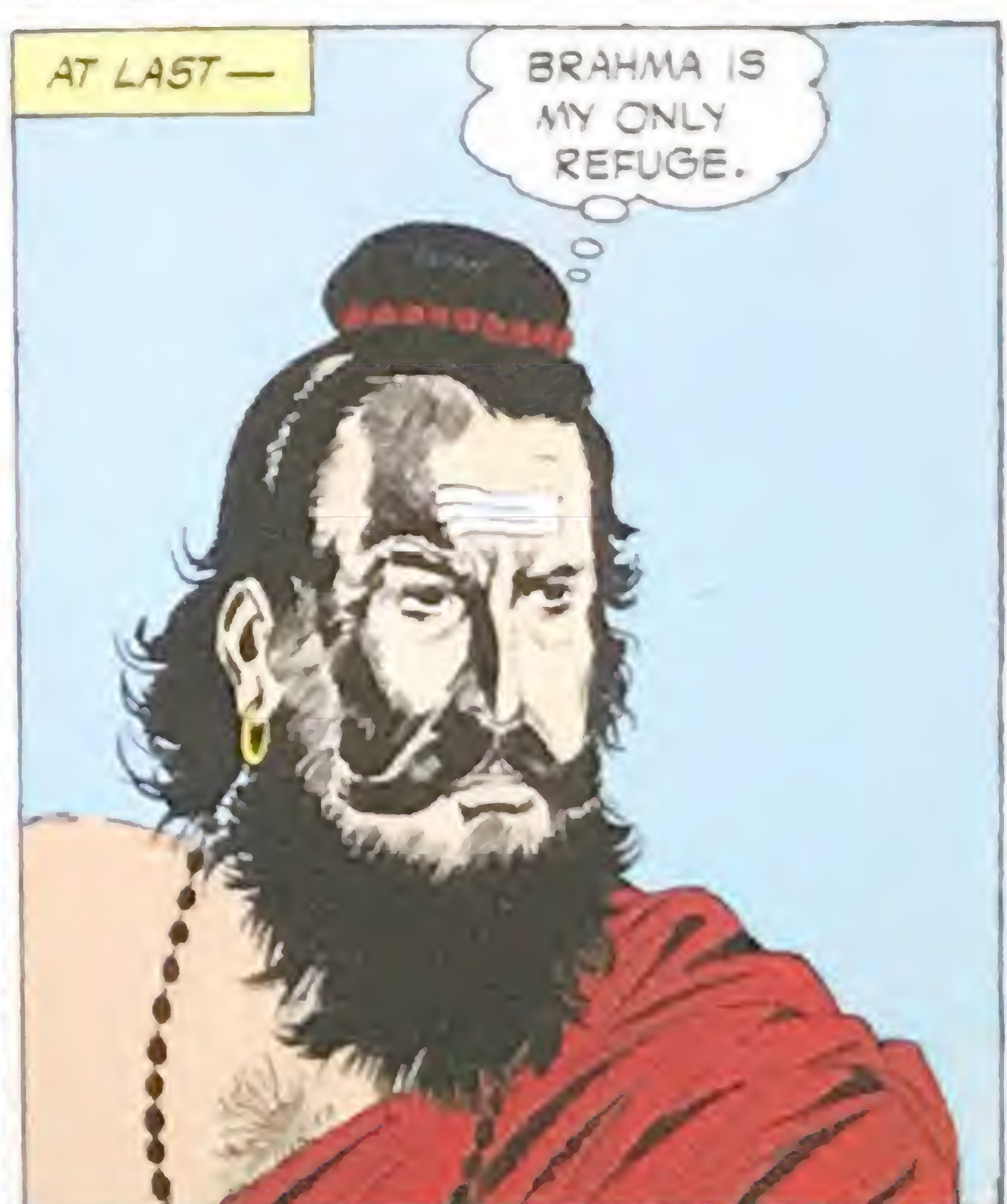


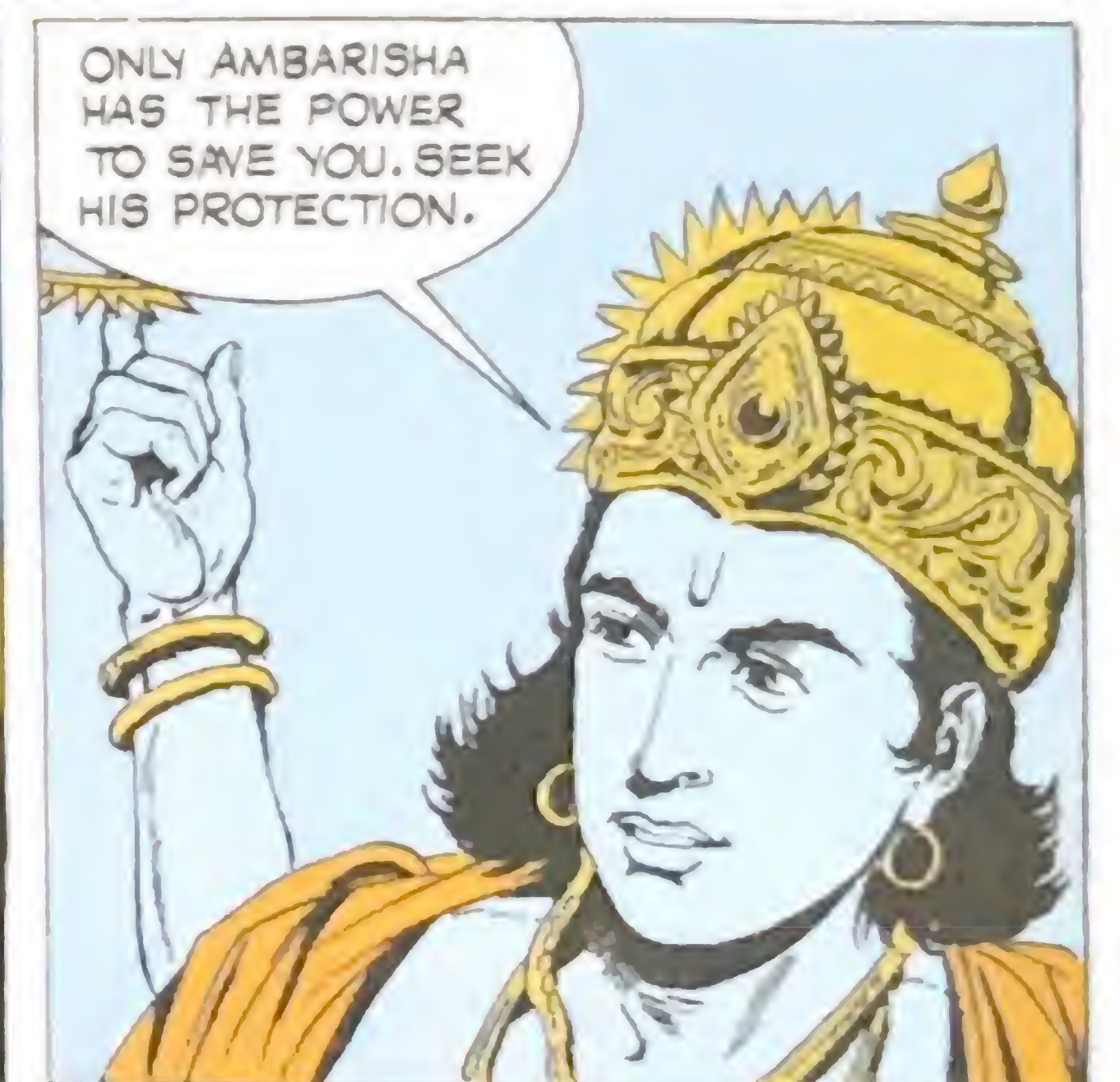
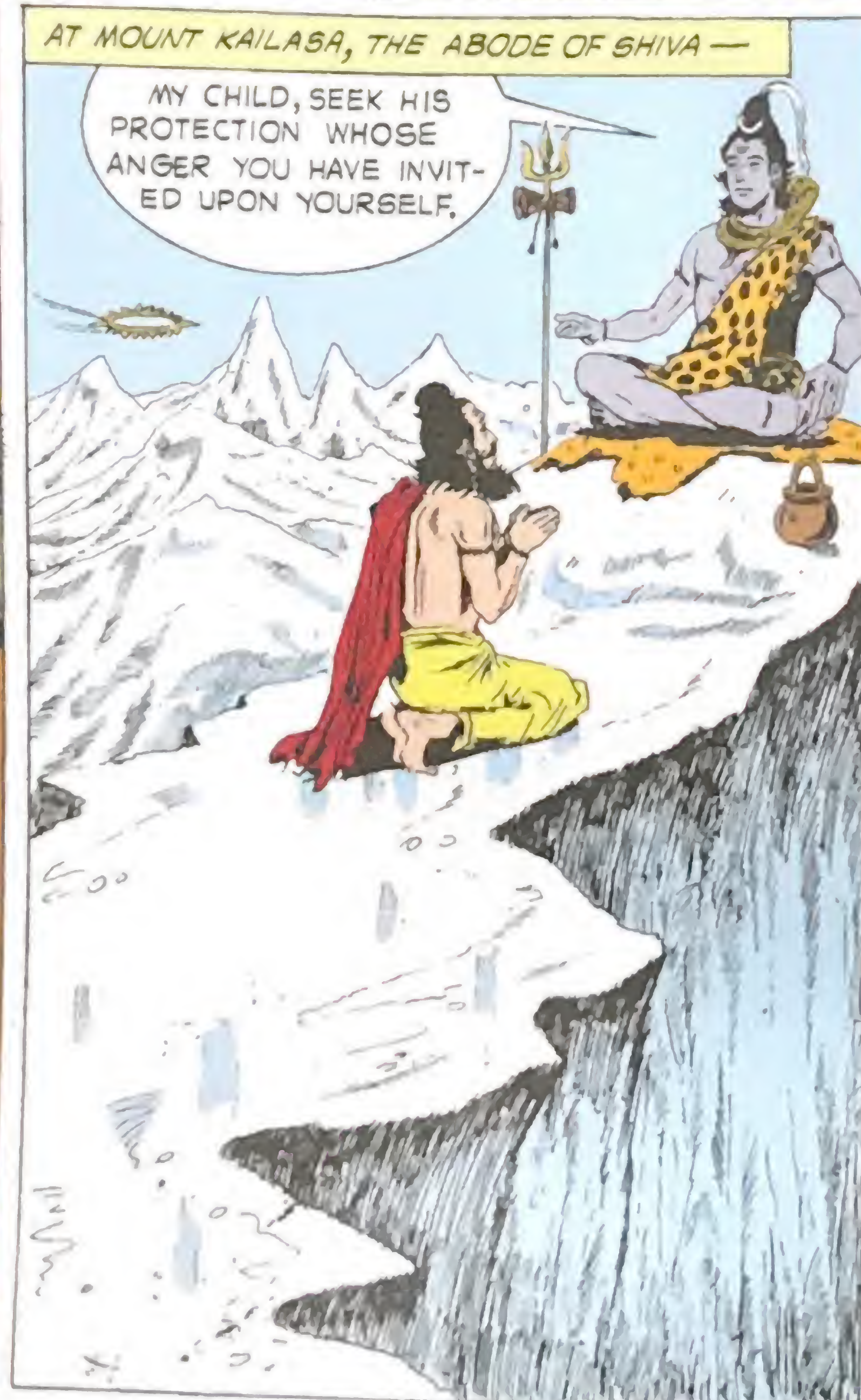
I AM BEING SCORCHED. I CANNOT BEAR IT.



AT LAST—

BRAHMA IS MY ONLY REFUGE.



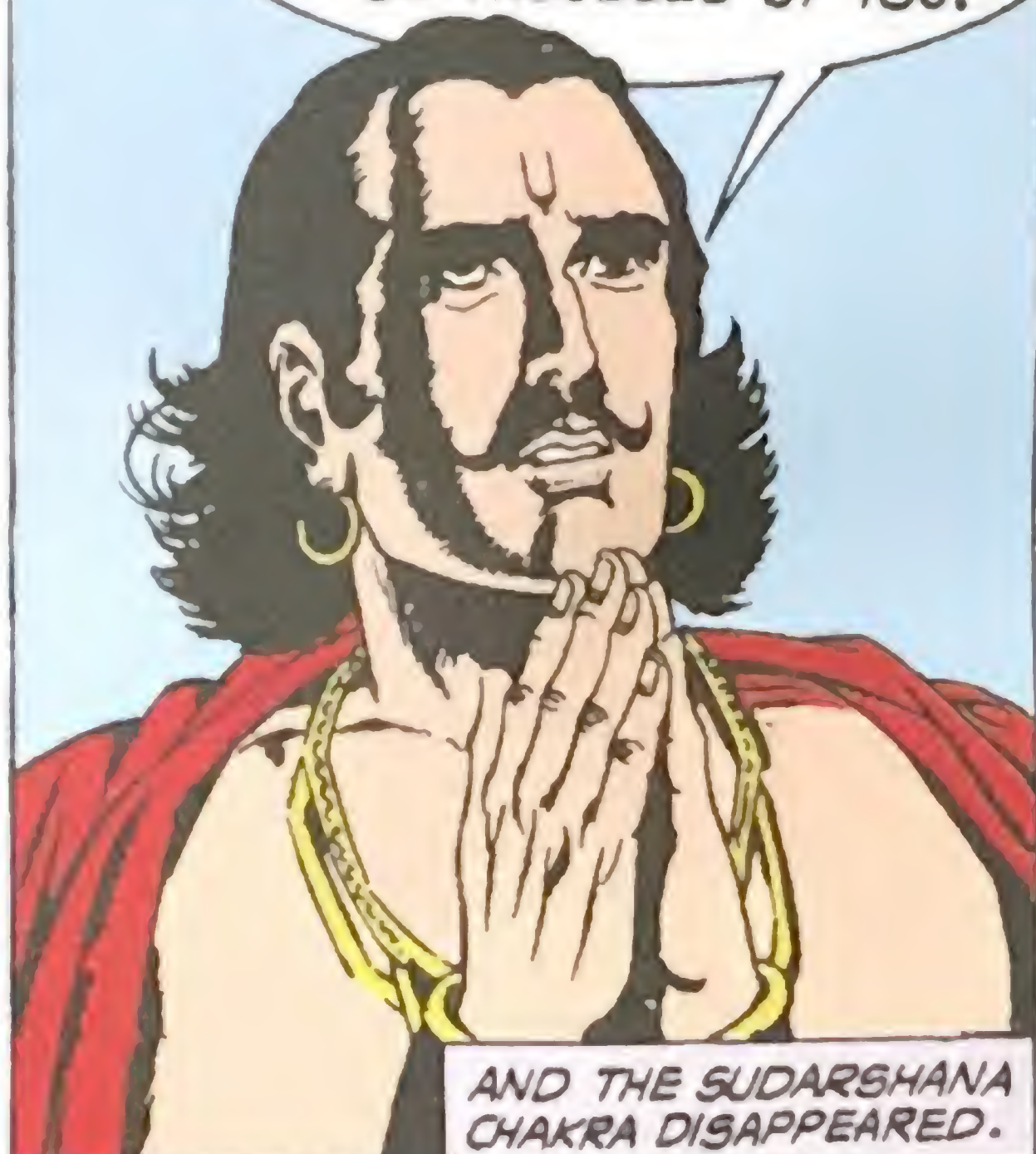


AMBARISHA WAS MOVED BY DURVASA'S FLIGHT.



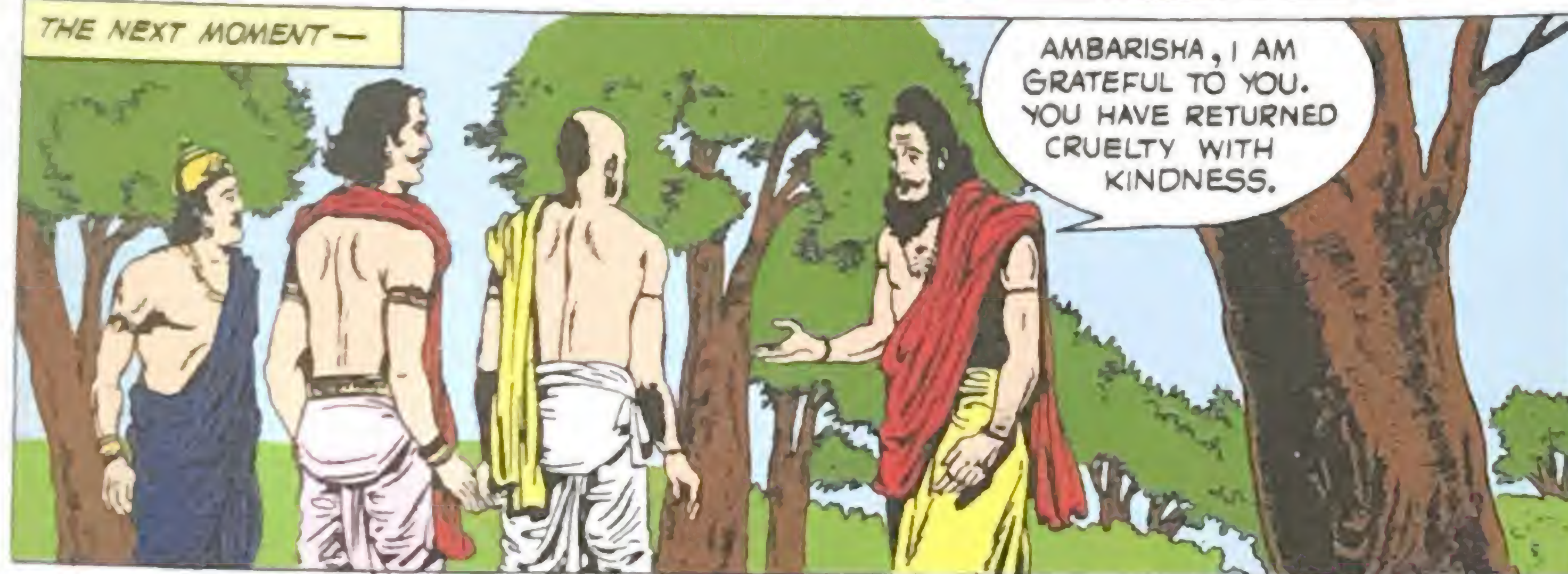
HE APPEALED TO SUDARSHANA CHAKRA.

IF LORD VISHNU HAS BEEN PLEASED WITH MY DEVOTION, LET SAGE DURVASA NO LONGER BE TROUBLED BY YOU.

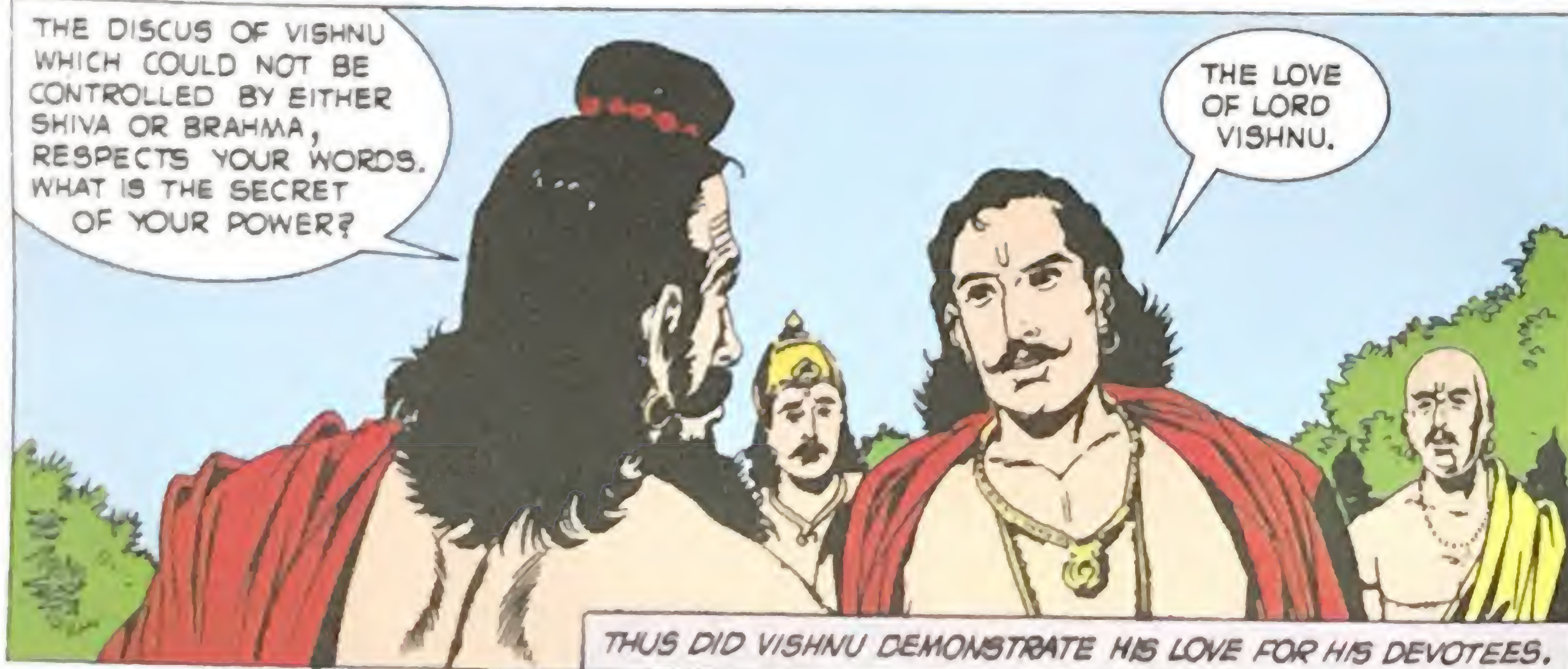


AND THE SUDARSHANA CHAKRA DISAPPEARED.

THE NEXT MOMENT —

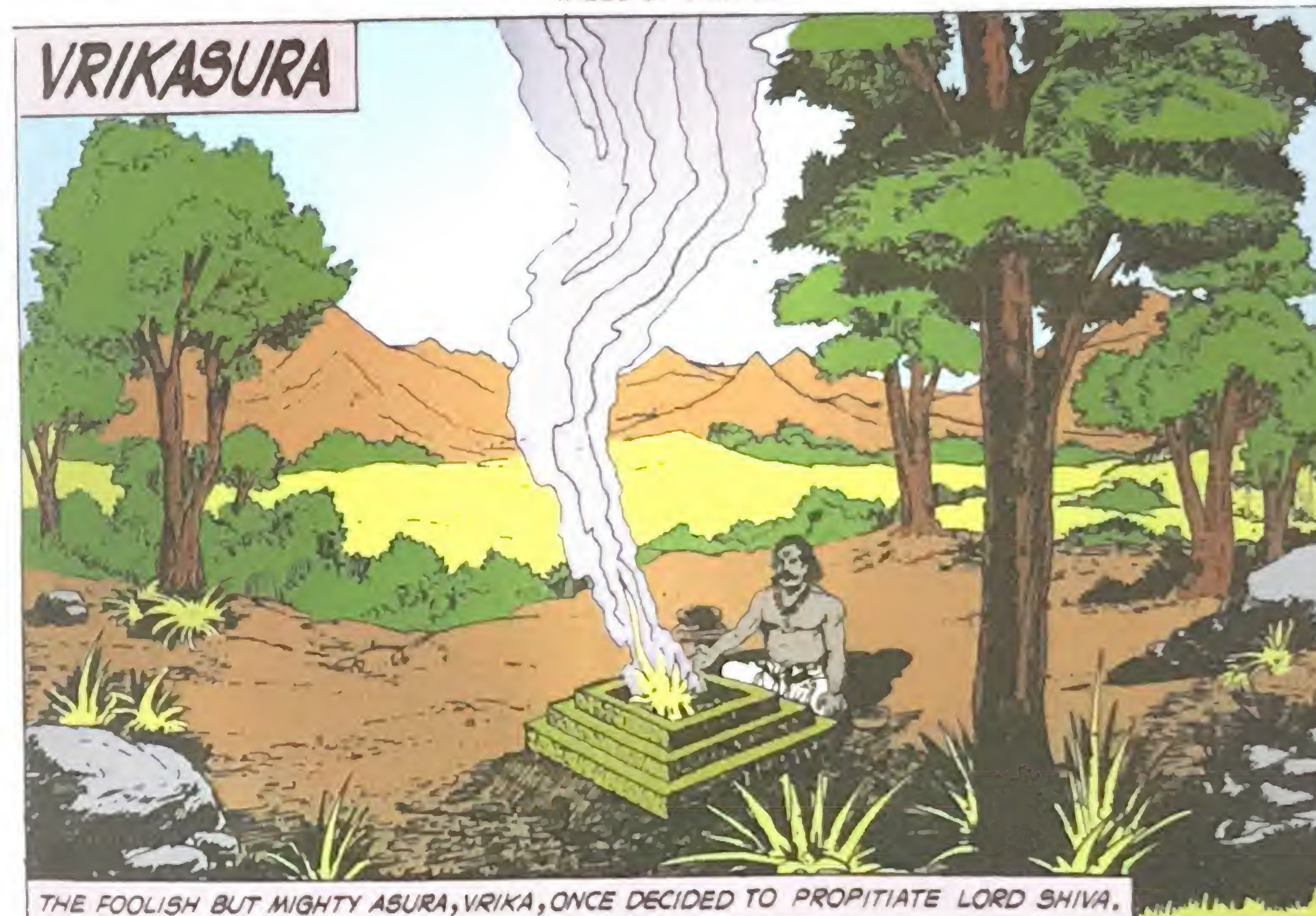


THE DISCUS OF VISHNU WHICH COULD NOT BE CONTROLLED BY EITHER SHIVA OR BRAHMA, RESPECTS YOUR WORDS. WHAT IS THE SECRET OF YOUR POWER?



THUS DID VISHNU DEMONSTRATE HIS LOVE FOR HIS DEVOTEES.

VRIKASURA



HE CUT OFF HIS FLESH AND OFFERED IT TO THE LORD.

LORD, WITH THIS OFFERING, MAY YOU APPEAR BEFORE ME.

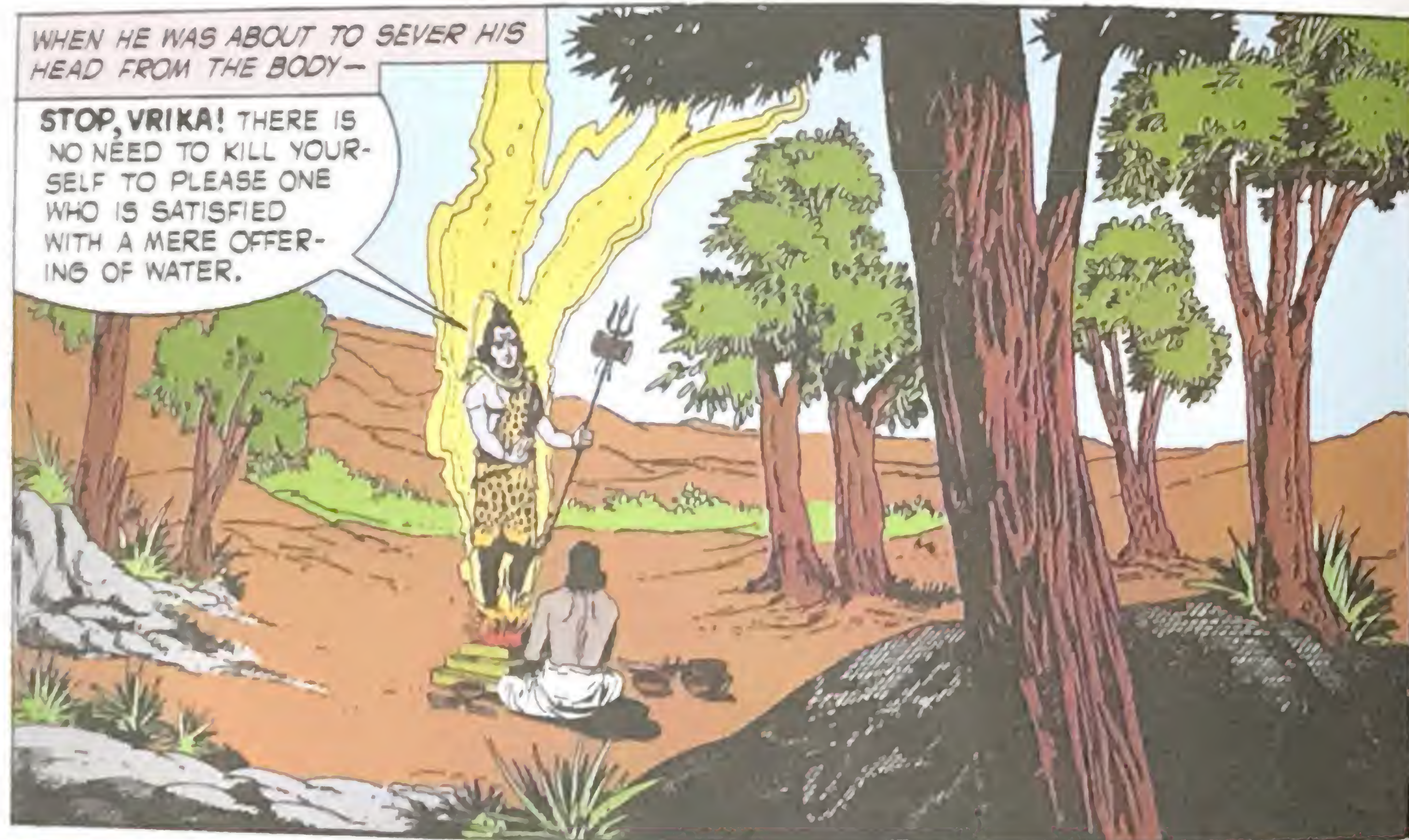


HE DOES NOT APPEAR, PERHAPS IT IS ONLY THE OFFERING OF MY HEAD THAT WILL PROPITIATE THE LORD.



WHEN HE WAS ABOUT TO SEVER HIS HEAD FROM THE BODY—

STOP, VRIKA! THERE IS NO NEED TO KILL YOURSELF TO PLEASE ONE WHO IS SATISFIED WITH A MERE OFFERING OF WATER.



WHAT IS THE BOON YOU SEEK?

I WISH TO CONQUER THE WORLD. MAY ANYONE ON WHOSE HEAD I LAY MY PALM, DIE,

SO BE IT.



THE NEXT MOMENT, VRIKA TRIED TO REACH FOR SHIVA.

NO!



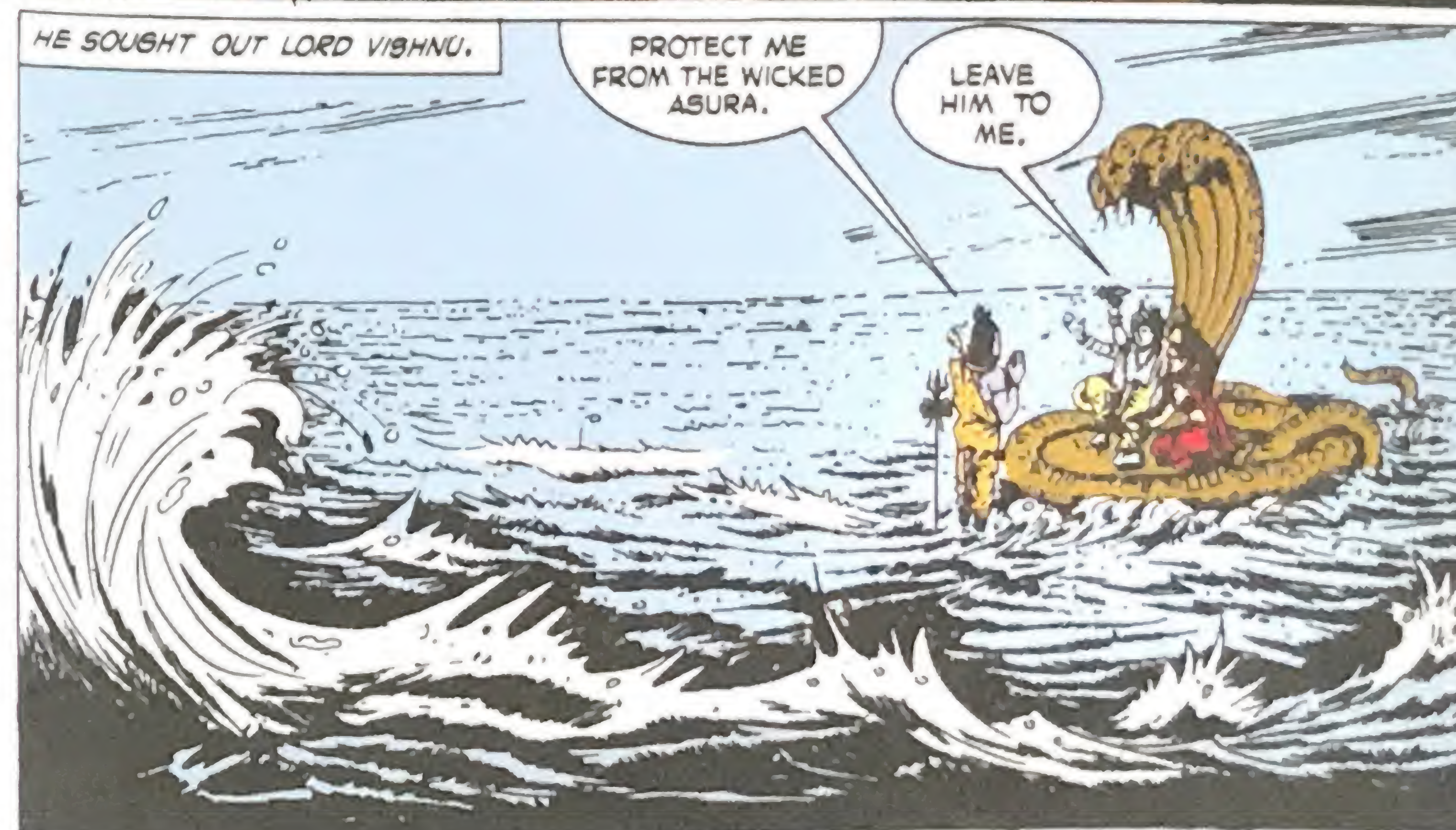
SHIVA BROKE INTO A RUN.



HE SOUGHT OUT LORD VISHNU.

PROTECT ME FROM THE WICKED ASURA.

LEAVE HIM TO ME.



MEANWHILE, AS VRIKA RAN IN SEARCH OF SHIVA, A YOUNG BRAHMACHARI *MET HIM.



WHERE ARE YOU RUNNING TO? WHOM ARE YOU SEEKING? REST FOR A WHILE. YOU SEEM TIRED.

VRIKA TOLD HIM OF SHIVA'S BOON.



WHEN I WANTED TO TRY IT ON HIM, HE RAN AWAY.

THAT'S BECAUSE THE MOMENT YOU PLACED YOUR PALM ON HIS HEAD, YOU WOULD REALISE THAT HE HAD DUPED YOU.



WHAT! SHIVA DURING A DEVOTEE! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

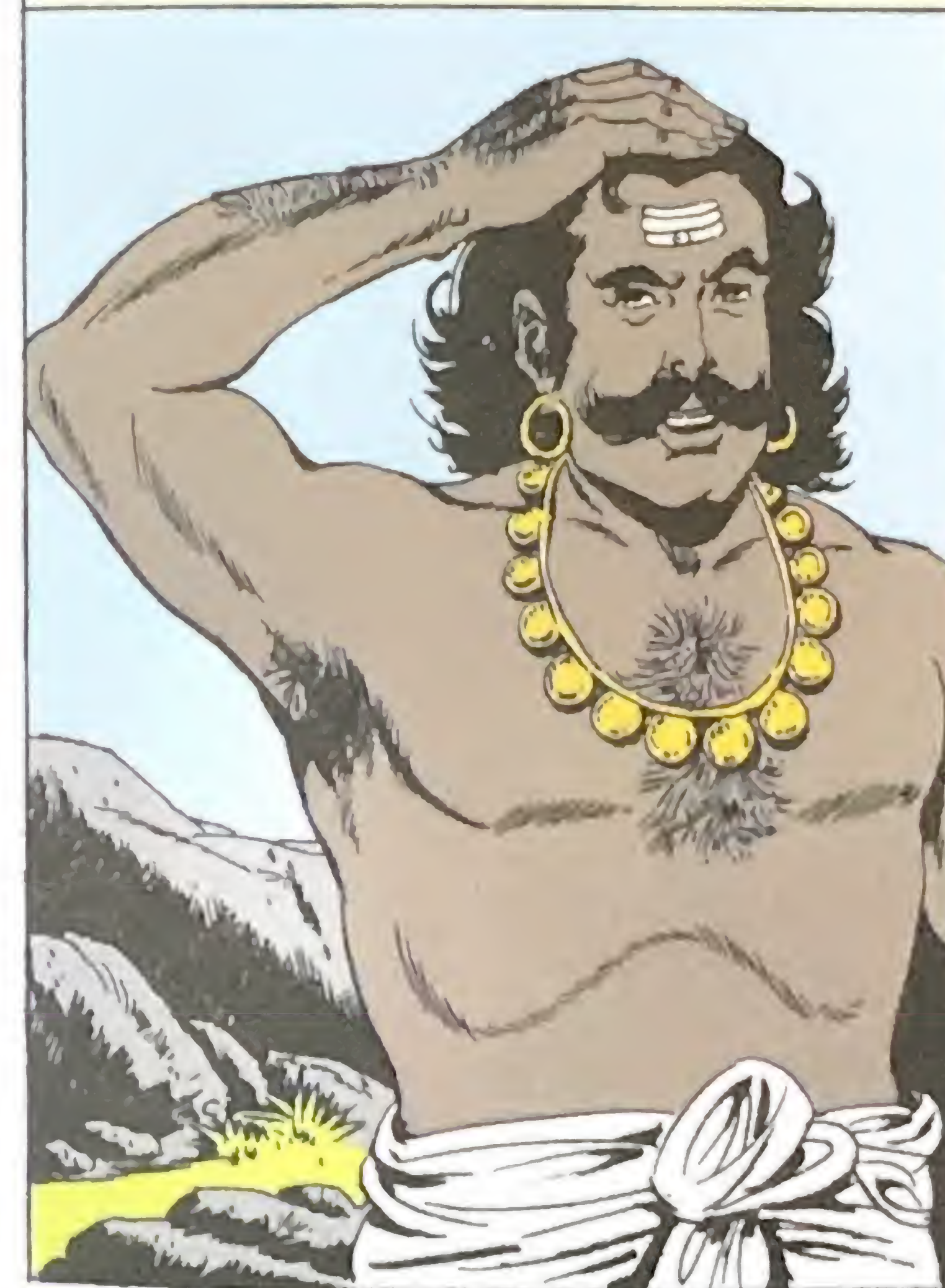


THEN WHY DON'T YOU PLACE YOUR PALM ON YOUR OWN HEAD AND SEE?

A GOOD IDEA!

*CELIBATE

WITHOUT STOPPING TO THINK, THE FOOLISH ASURA PLACED HIS PALM ON HIS HEAD.



THE NEXT MOMENT, HE FELL DEAD. THE CLEVER BRAHMACHARI WAS NONE OTHER THAN VISHNU.



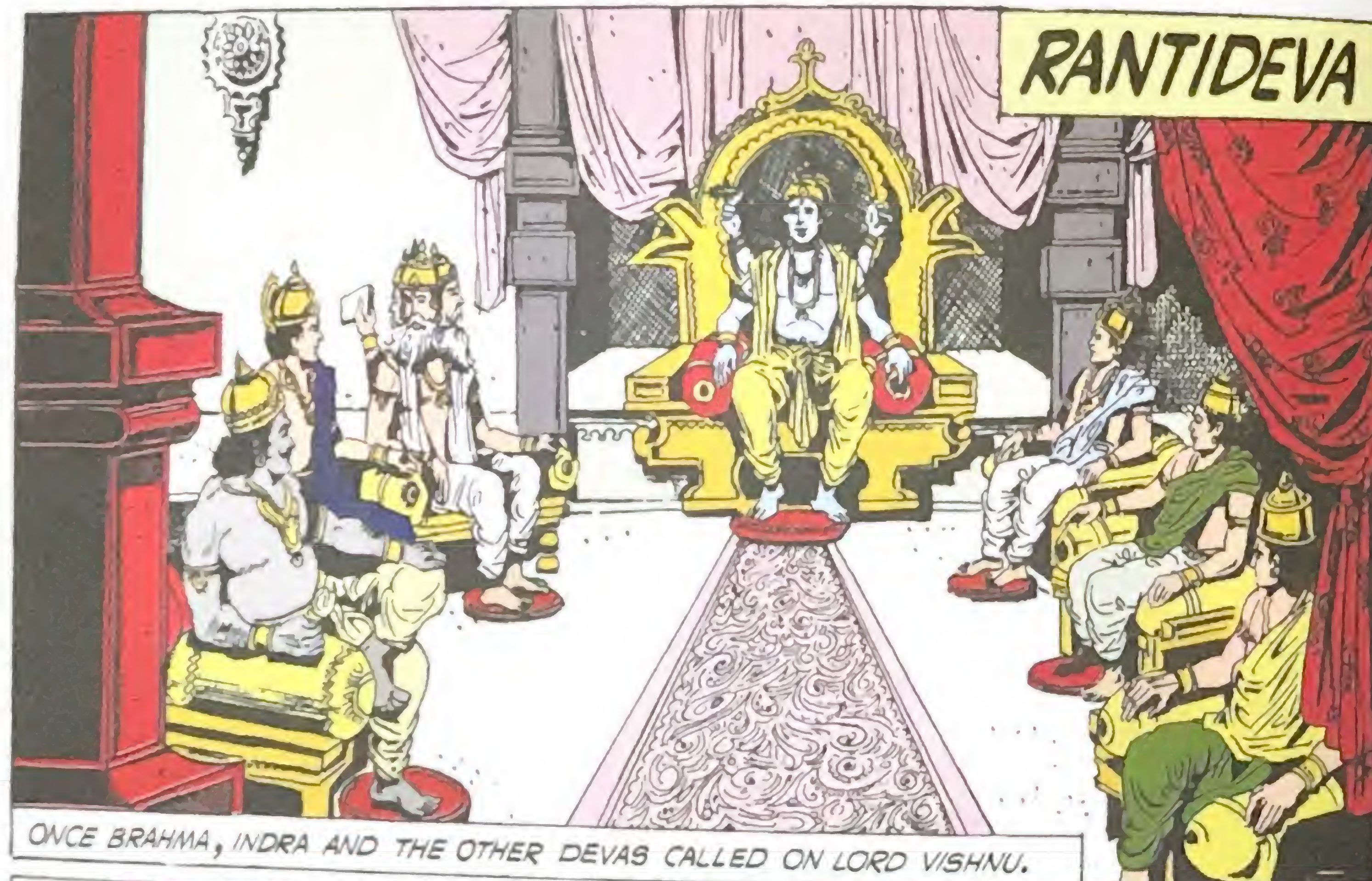
JUST THEN, SHIVA APPEARED.

I AM SORRY THAT THE UNFORTUNATE ASURA HAD TO DIE.

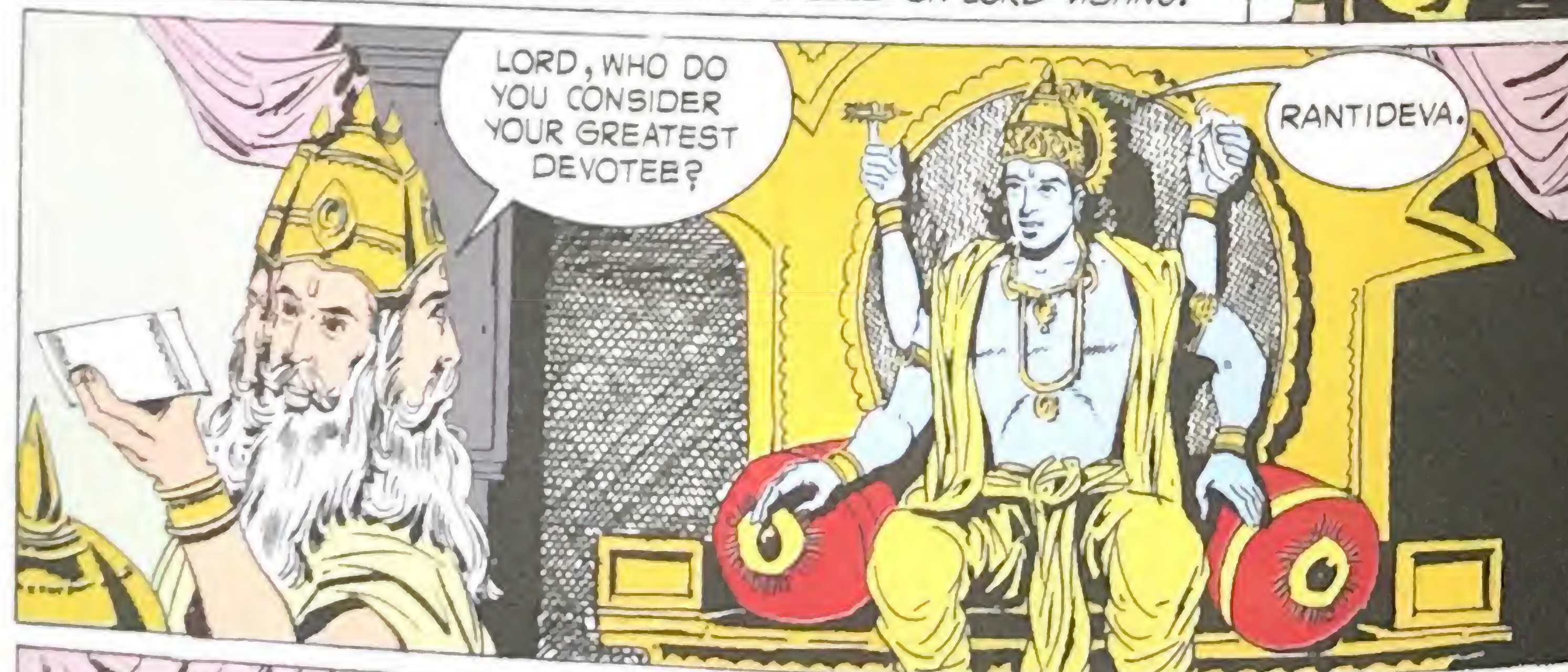


IT WAS INEVITABLE. HE WHO SECURES A BOON TO DESTROY OTHERS SEEKS HIS OWN DESTRUCTION.

RANTIDEVA



ONCE BRAHMA, INDRA AND THE OTHER DEVAS CALLED ON LORD VISHNU.

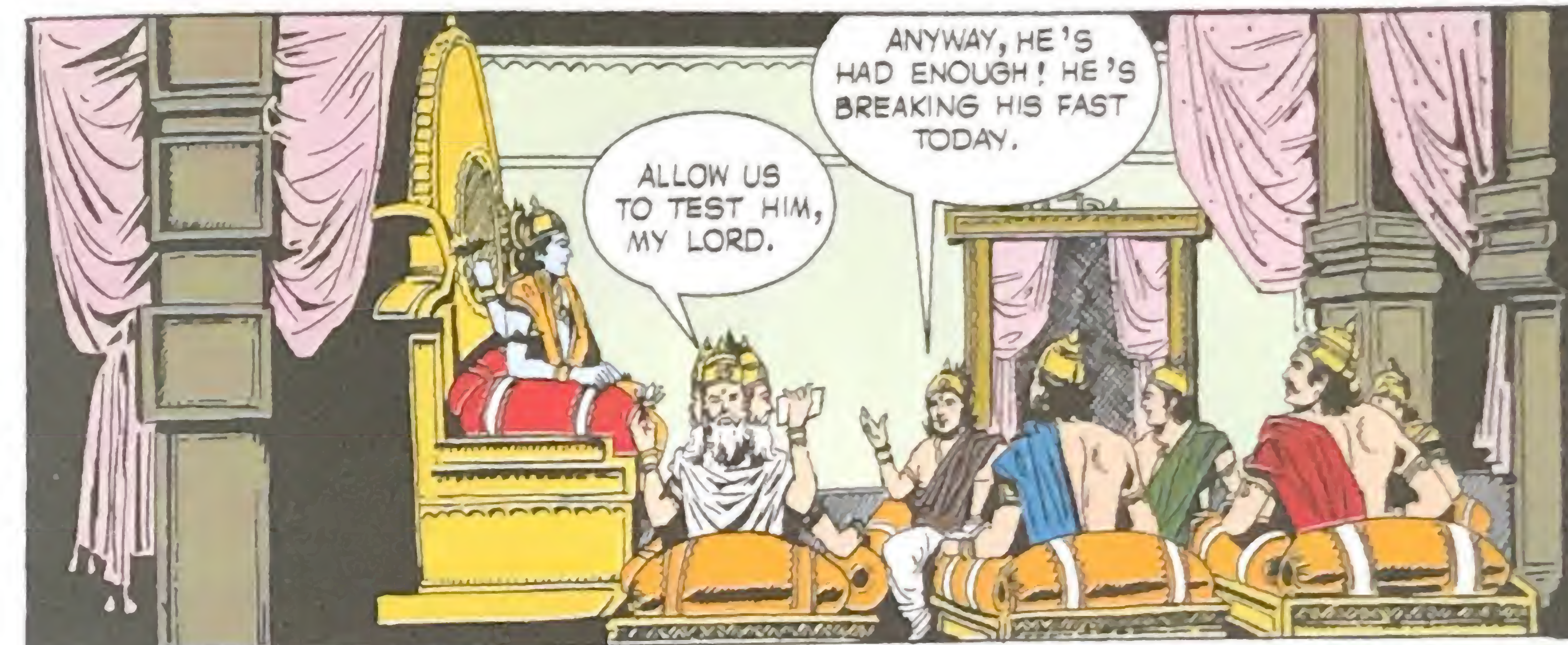


LORD, WHO DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST DEVOTE?

RANTIDEVA.



THAT KING? JUST BECAUSE HE HAS GIVEN UP HIS KINGDOM AND FASTED FOR FORTY-EIGHT DAYS?



ALLOW US TO TEST HIM, MY LORD.

ANYWAY, HE'S HAD ENOUGH! HE'S BREAKING HIS FAST TODAY.



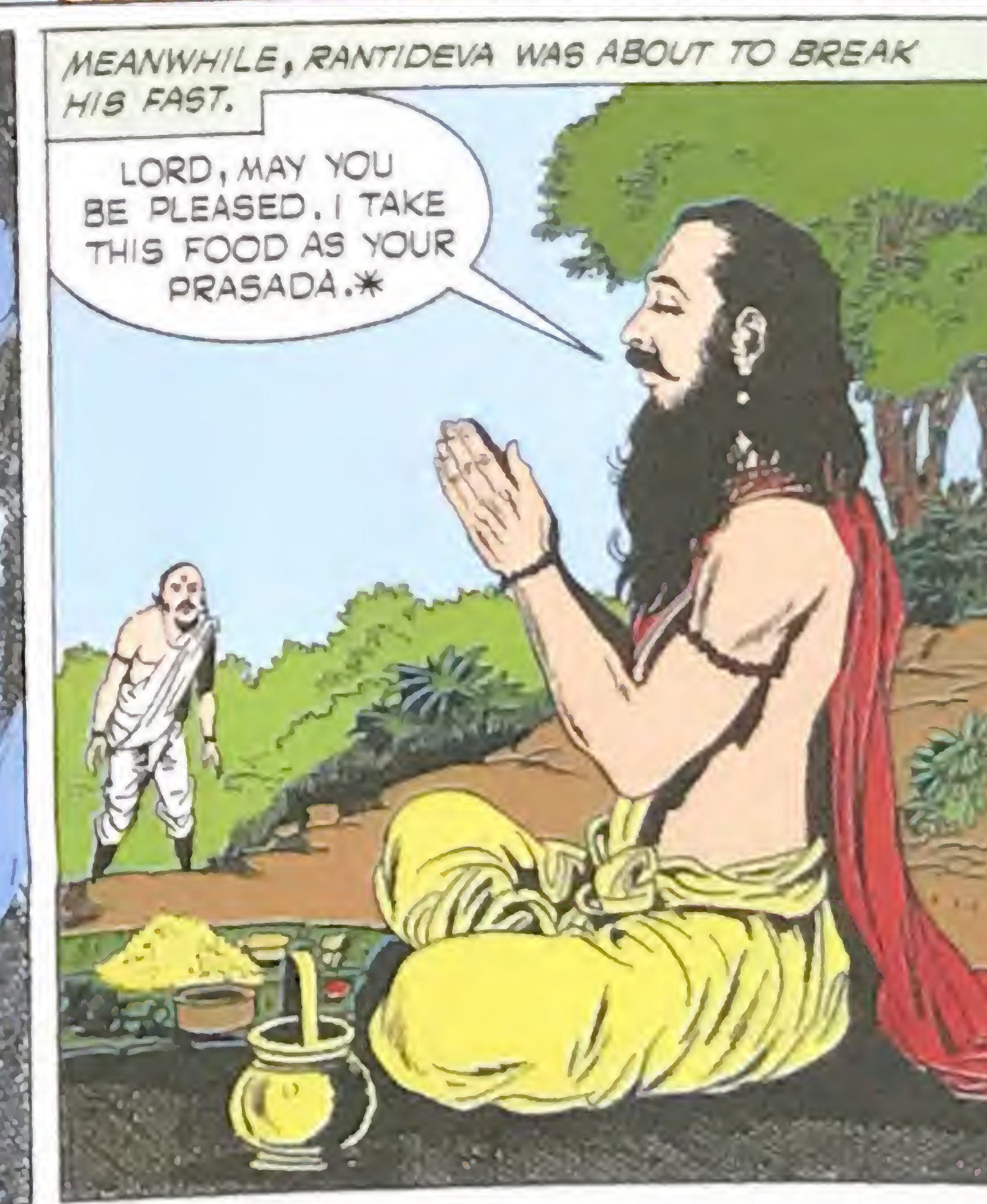
DO SO. IN THE PROCESS YOU'LL LEARN WHY I CONSIDER HIM A GREAT DEVOTE.



AS THE DEVAS SET OUT—

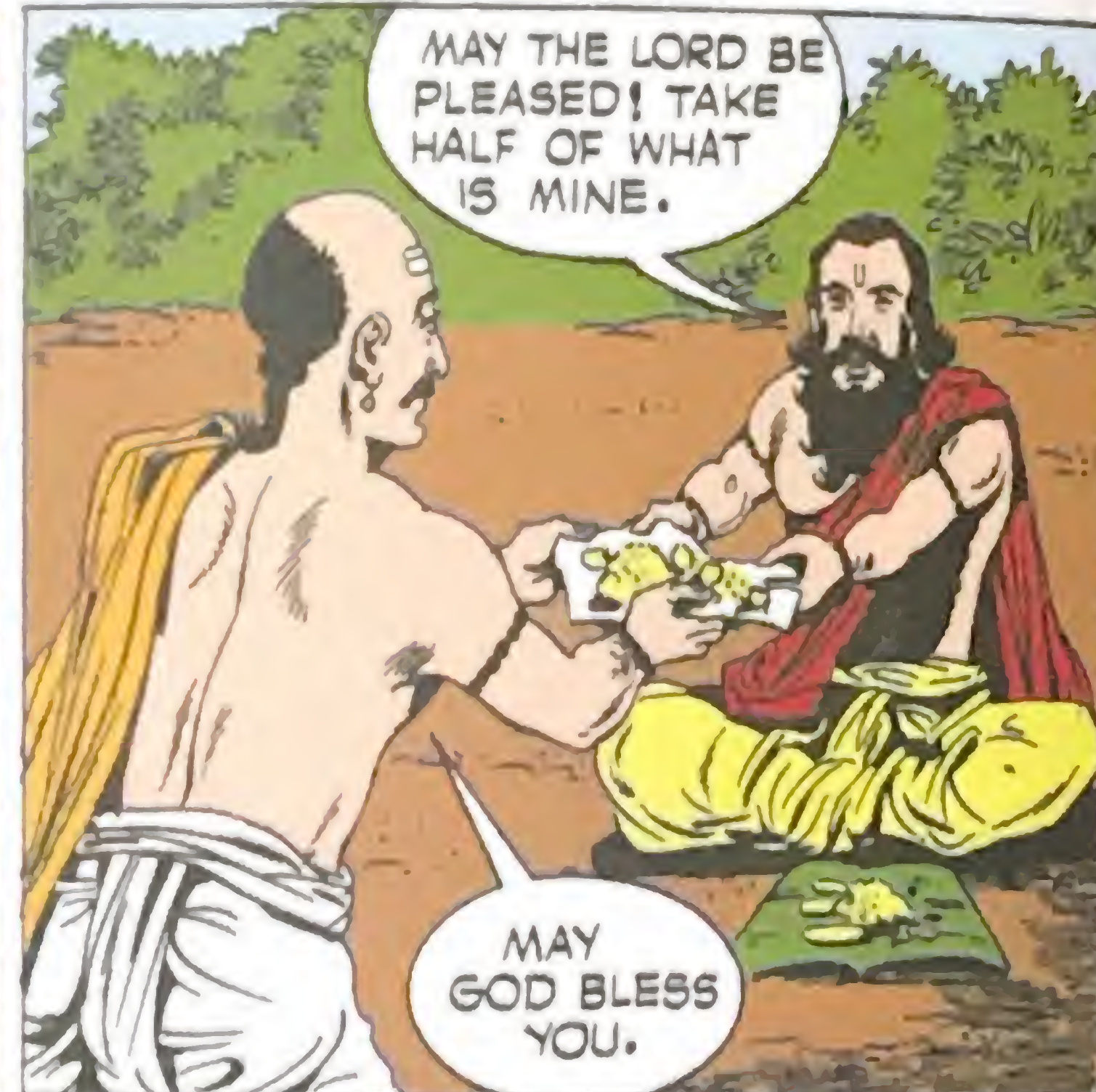
IT IS HARD TO PRACTISE CHARITY WHEN ONE IS HUNGRY. LET'S SEE HOW RANTIDEVA REACTS.

A GOOD TEST.



MEANWHILE, RANTIDEVA WAS ABOUT TO BREAK HIS FAST.

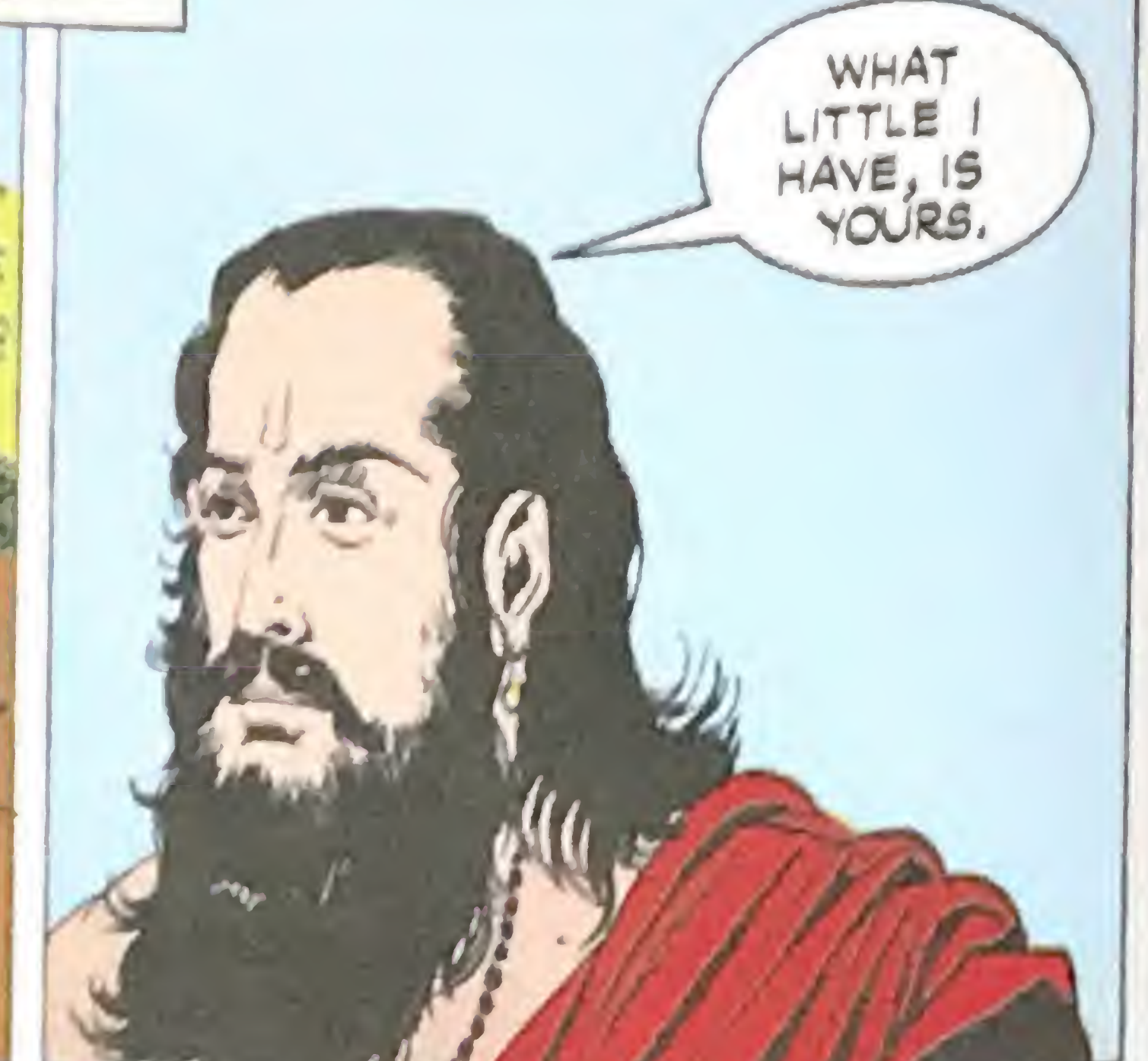
LORD, MAY YOU BE PLEASED. I TAKE THIS FOOD AS YOUR PRASADA.*



AS THE BRAHMAN WENT AWAY, A FARMER CAME ALONG.



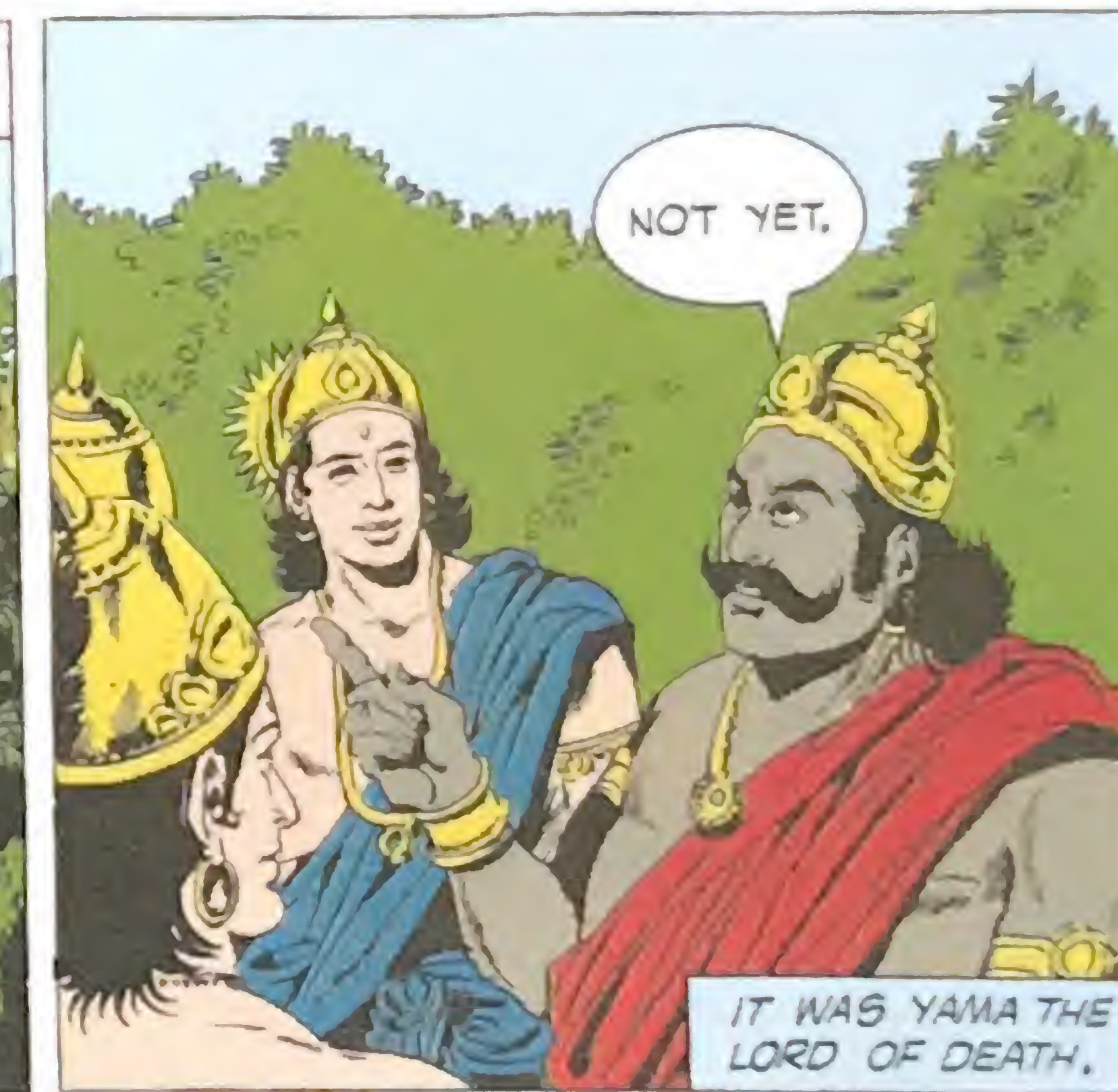
AS RANTIDEVA WAS ABOUT TO EAT WHAT WAS LEFT —



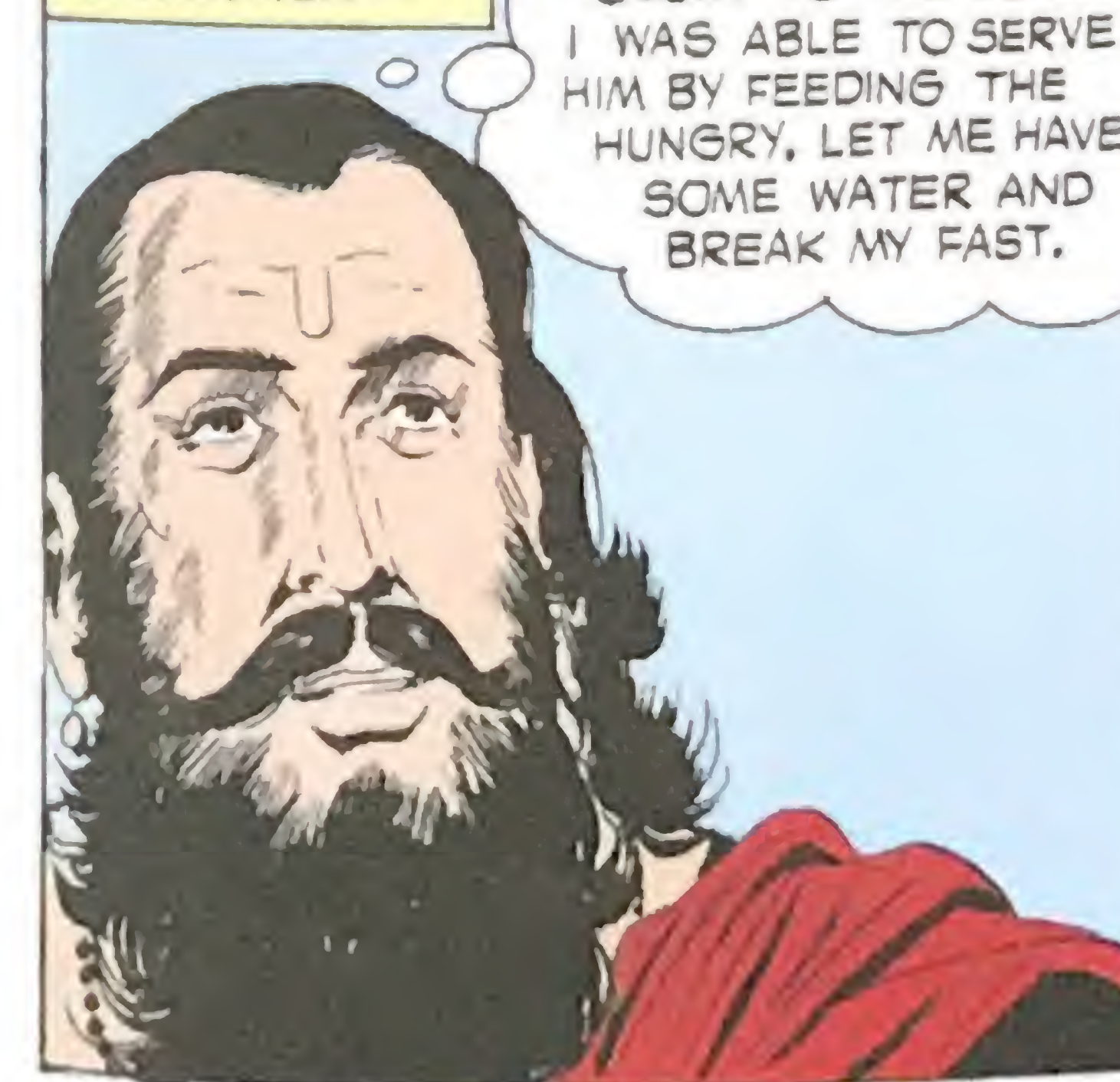
WHILE THE BEGGAR AND HIS DOGS ATE —

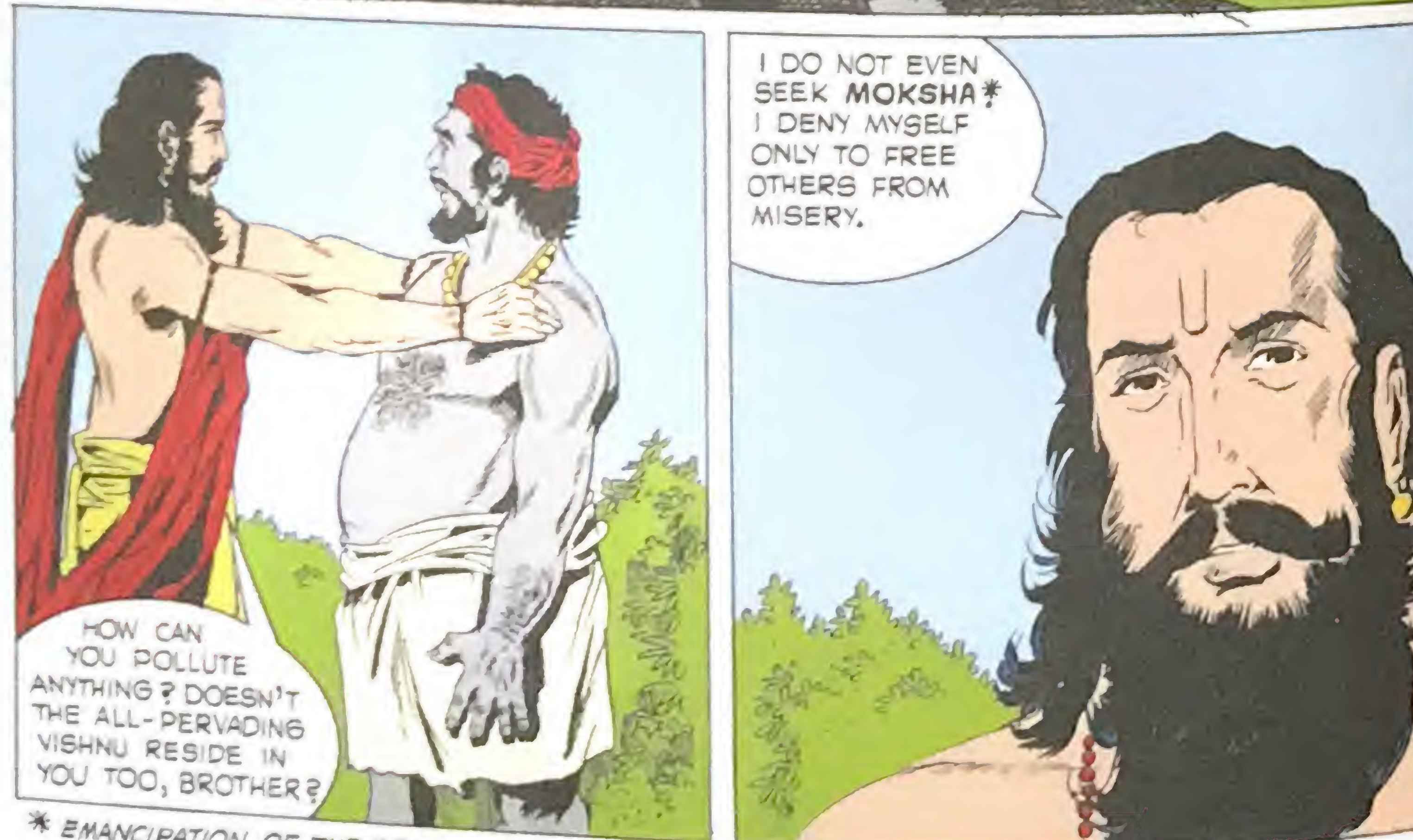
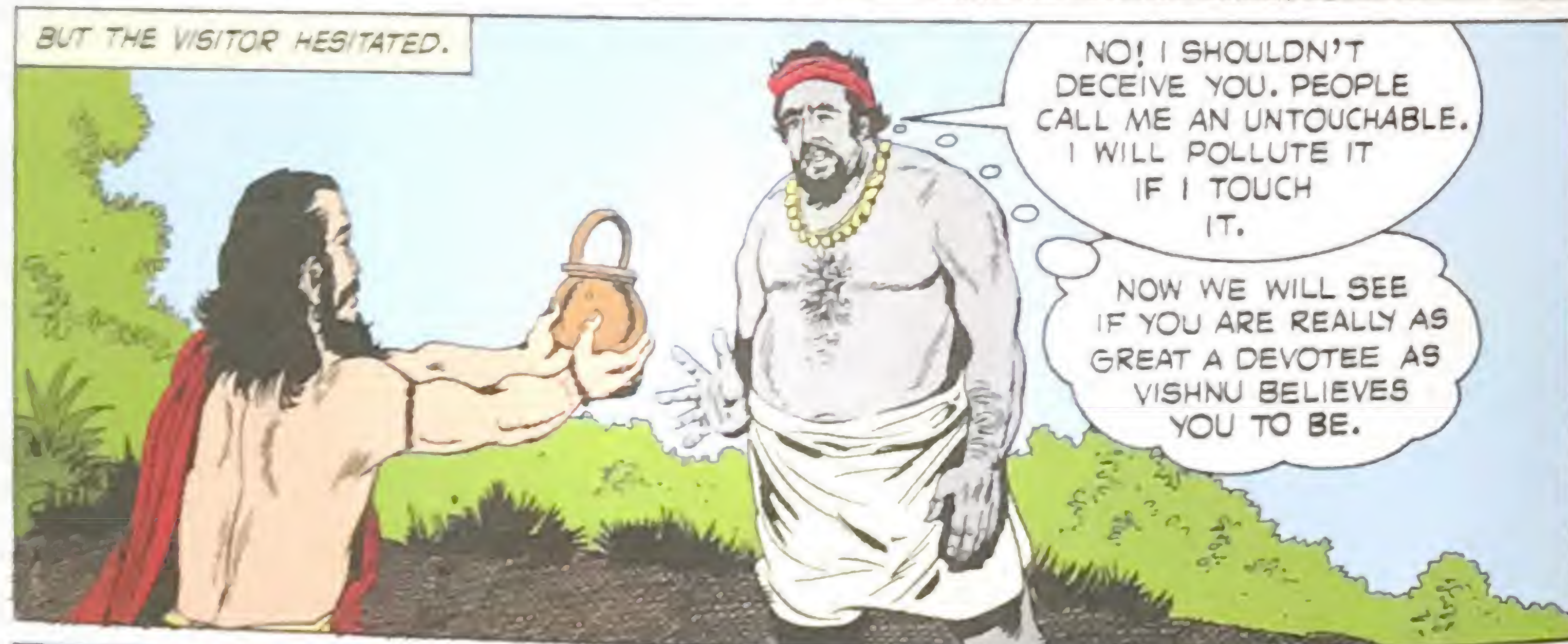


LATER, THE DEVA* WHO HAD CALLED ON RANTIDEVA IN THE GUISE OF THE BEGGAR, JOINED THE OTHERS.



MEANWHILE —





* EMANCIPATION OF THE SOUL



THE NEXT MOMENT, VISHNU AND THE OTHER DEVAS APPEARED BEFORE RANTIDEVA.

