



No. 122 Rs. 2.50
U.K. 25p U.S.A. 50¢

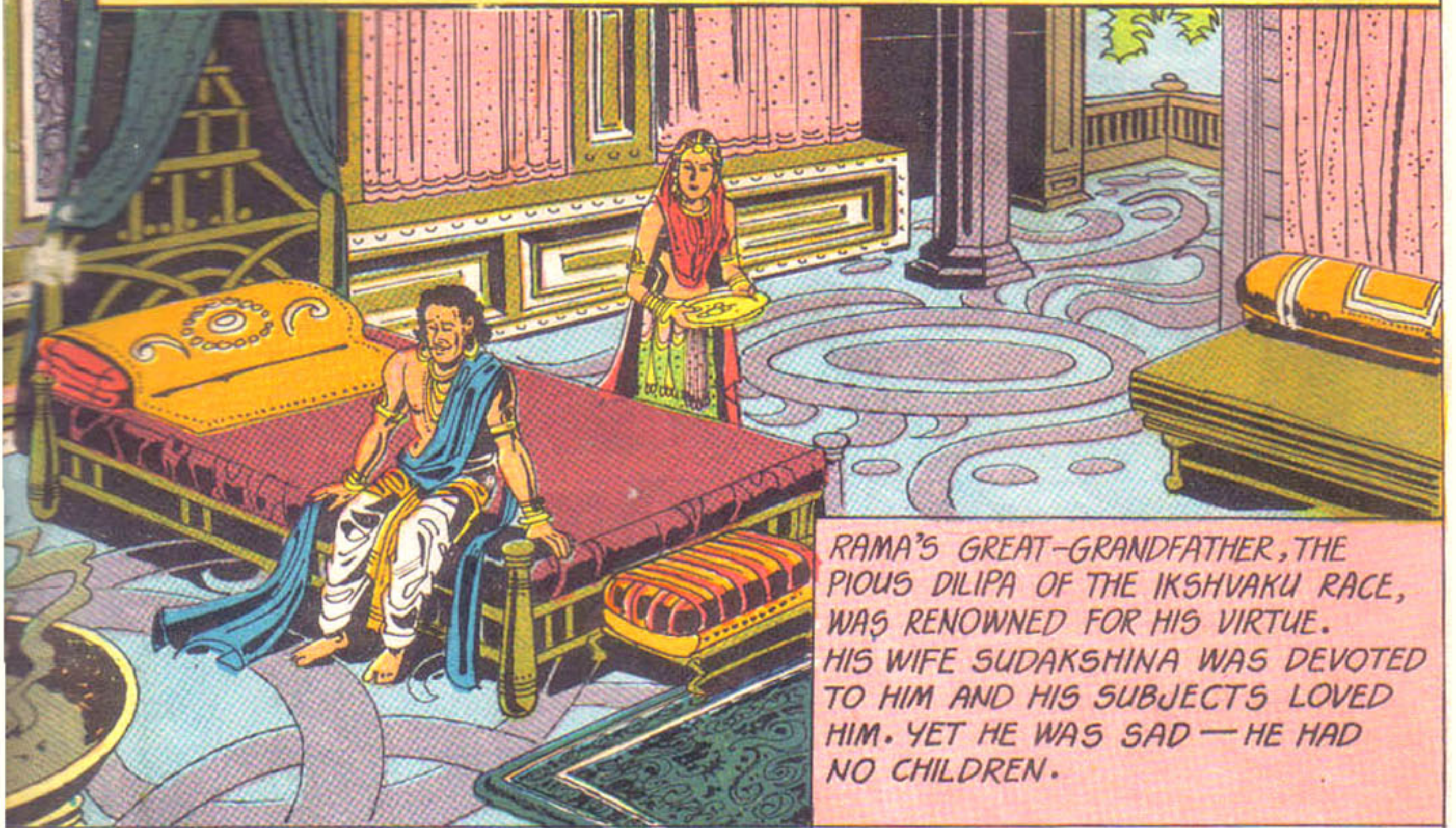
ANCESTORS OF RAMA

ADAPTED FROM KALIDASA'S
SANSKRIT EPIC 'RAGHUVAMSHAM'



APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

ANCESTORS OF RAMA

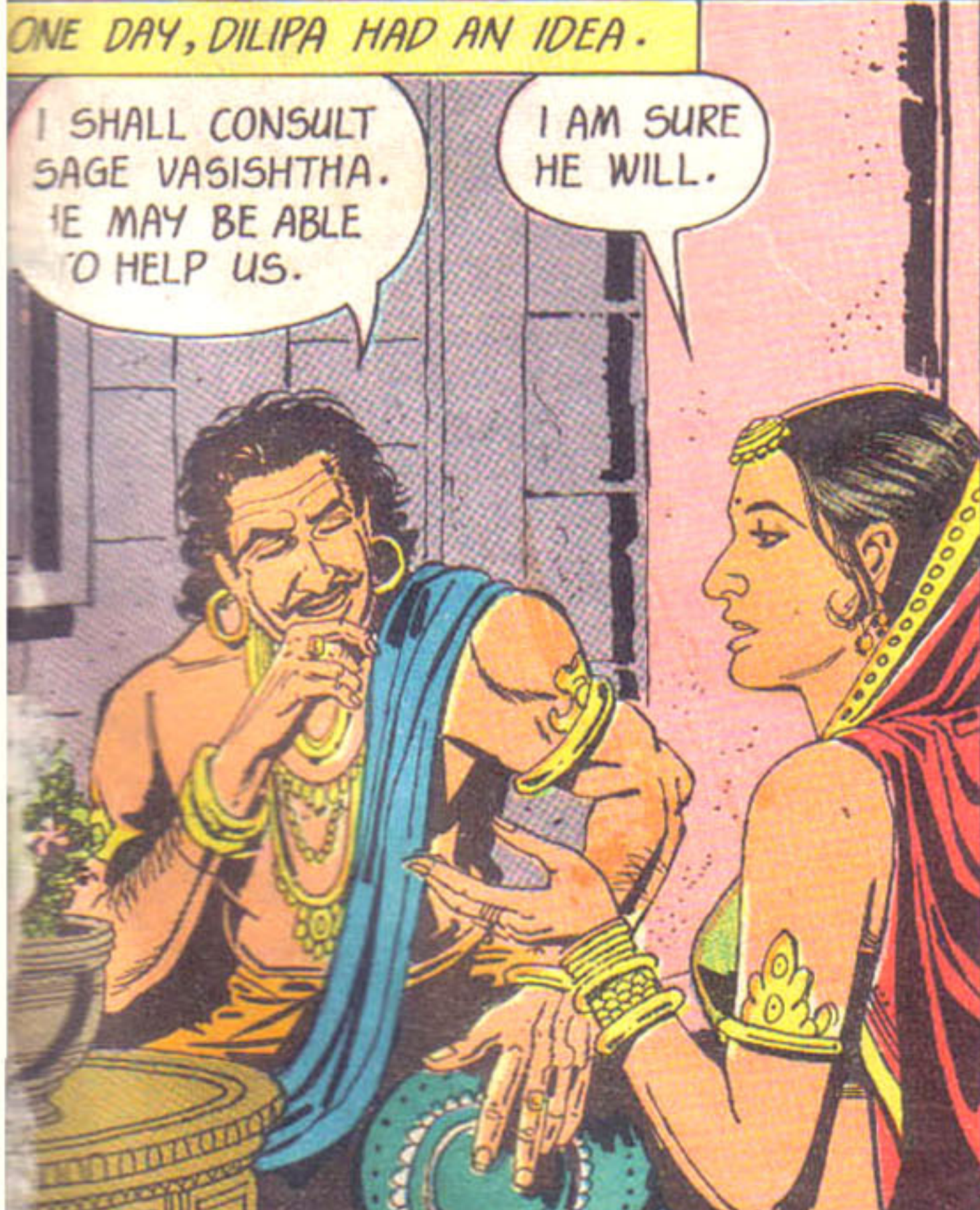


RAMA'S GREAT-GRANDFATHER, THE PIOUS DILIPA OF THE IKSHVAKU RACE, WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS VIRTUE. HIS WIFE SUDAKSHINA WAS DEVOTED TO HIM AND HIS SUBJECTS LOVED HIM. YET HE WAS SAD — HE HAD NO CHILDREN.

ONE DAY, DILIPA HAD AN IDEA.

I SHALL CONSULT SAGE VASISHTHA. HE MAY BE ABLE TO HELP US.

I AM SURE HE WILL.



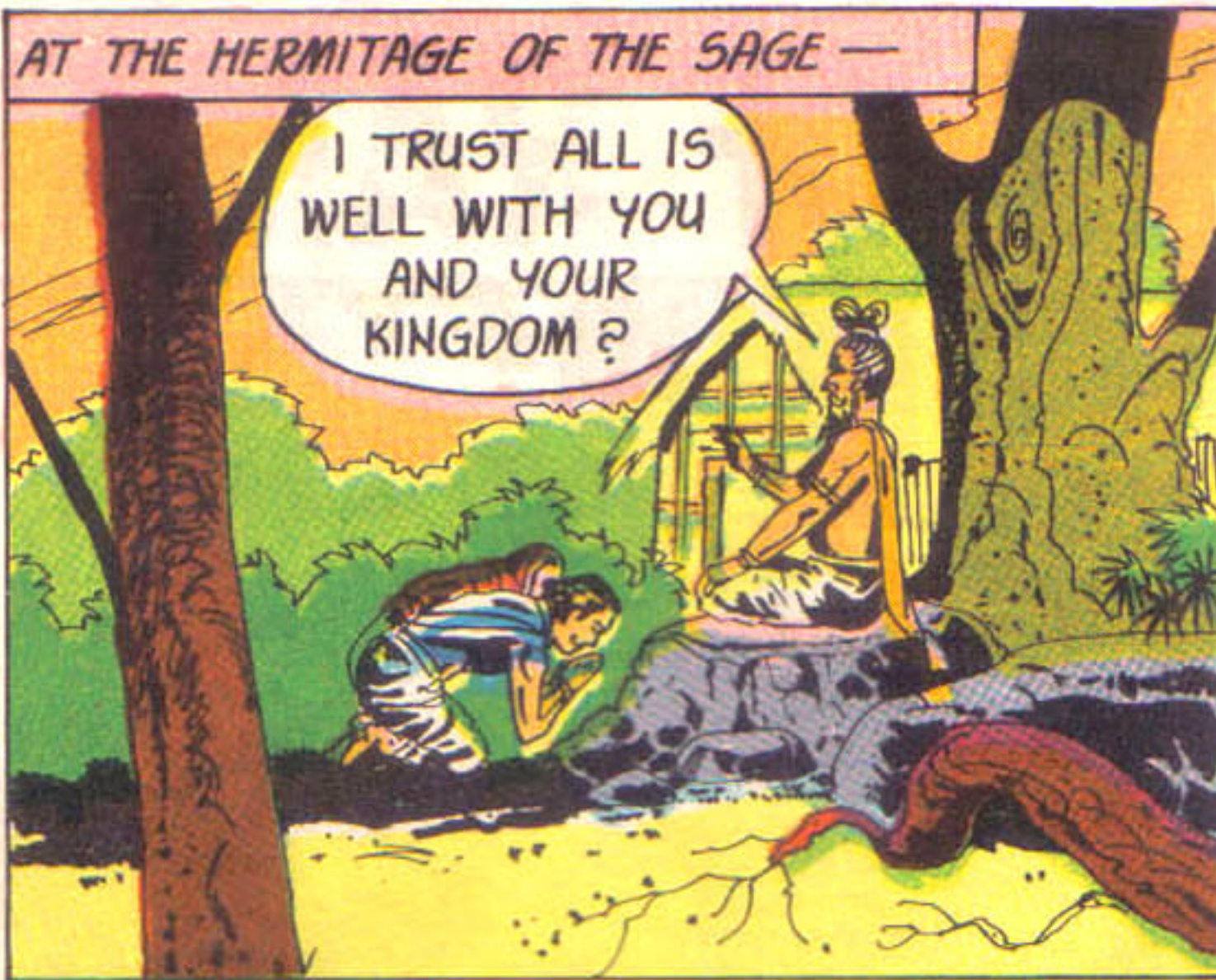
A FEW DAYS LATER —

I HAVE ENTRUSTED THE KINGDOM TO OUR LOYAL MINISTERS. I AM NOW FREE TO VISIT THE SAGE.



AT THE HERMITAGE OF THE SAGE —

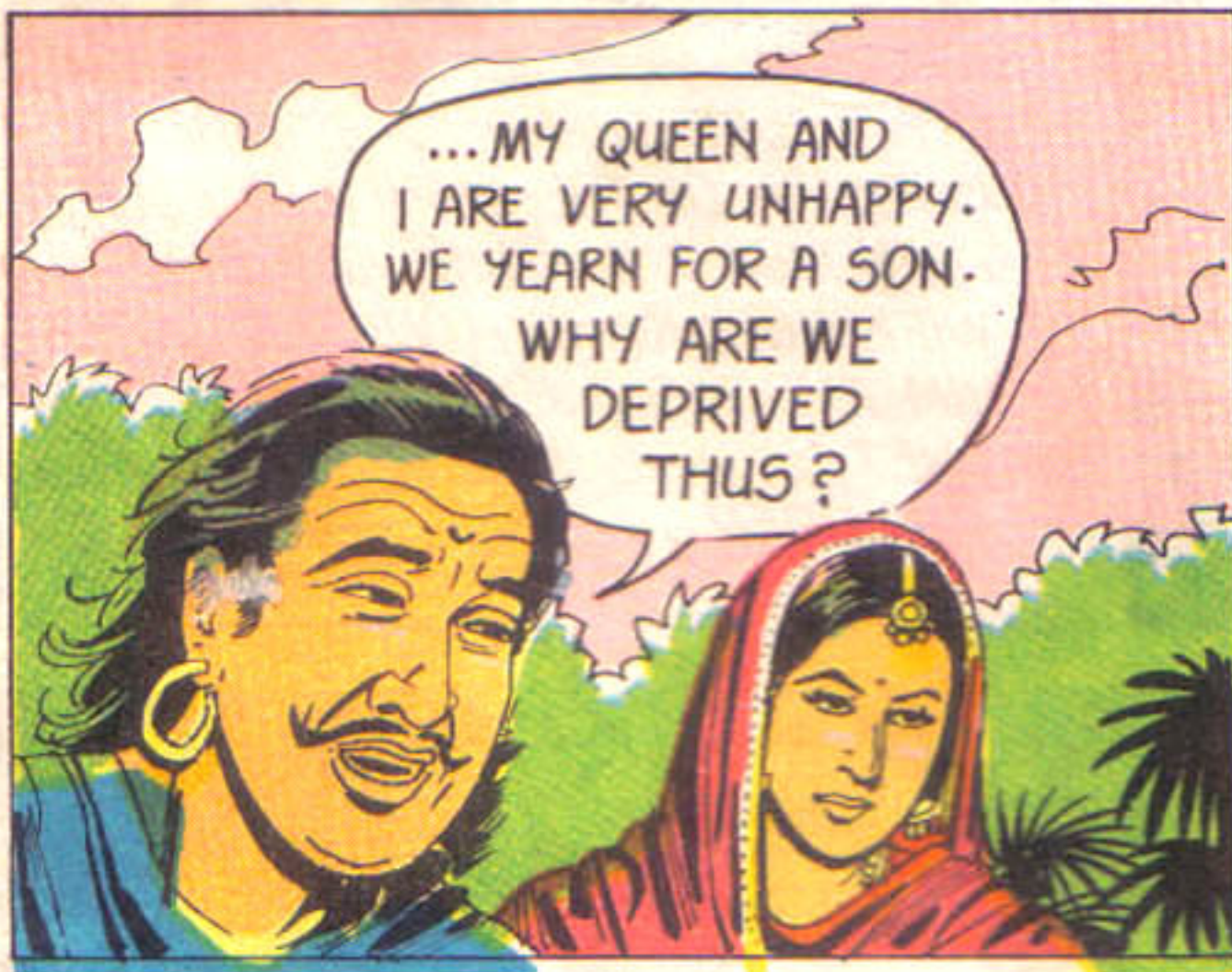
I TRUST ALL IS WELL WITH YOU AND YOUR KINGDOM ?



BY YOUR GRACE, MY KINGDOM COULD NOT BE MORE PROSPEROUS OR MY SUBJECTS HAPPIER. YET ...

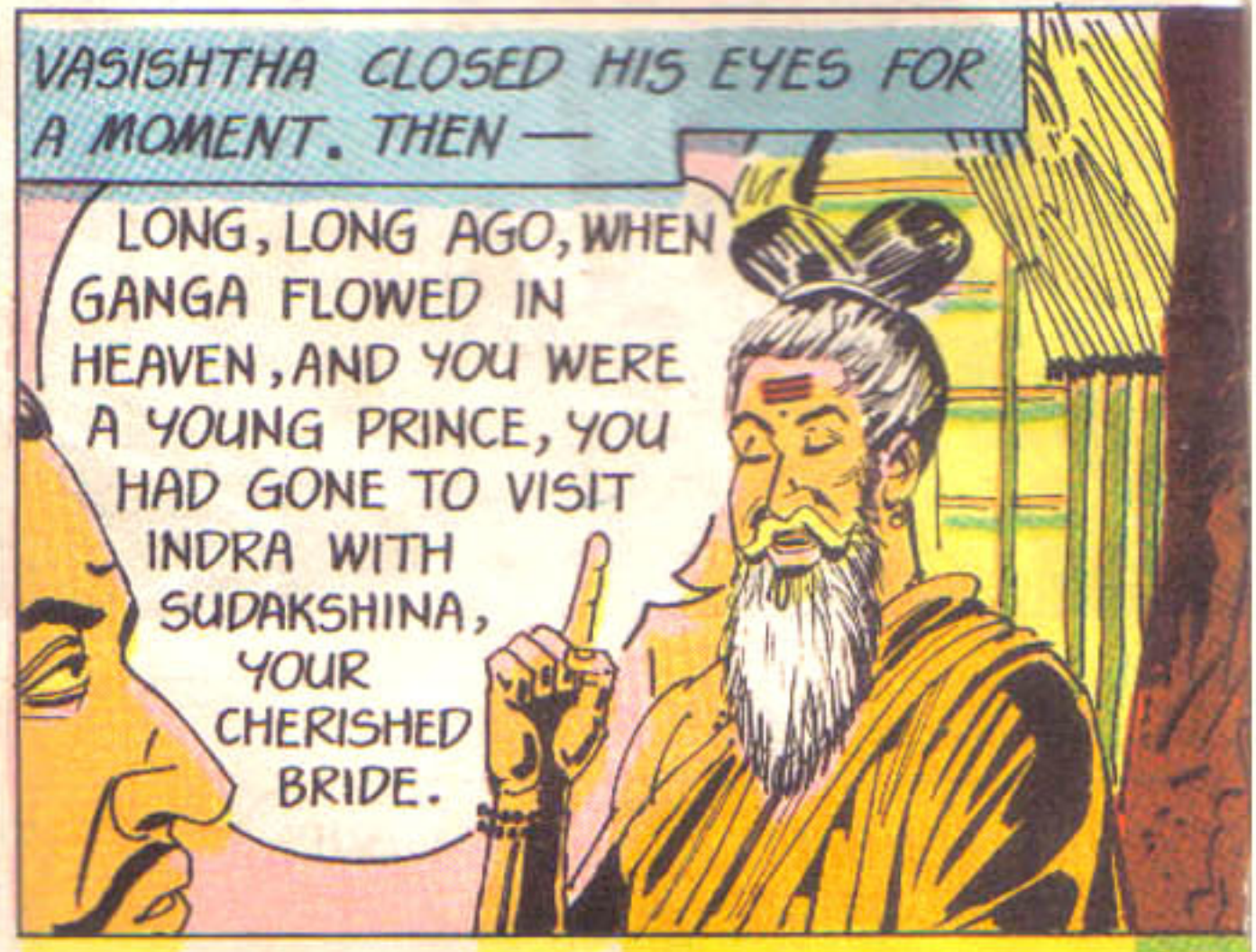


...MY QUEEN AND I ARE VERY UNHAPPY. WE YEARN FOR A SON. WHY ARE WE DEPRIVED THUS ?



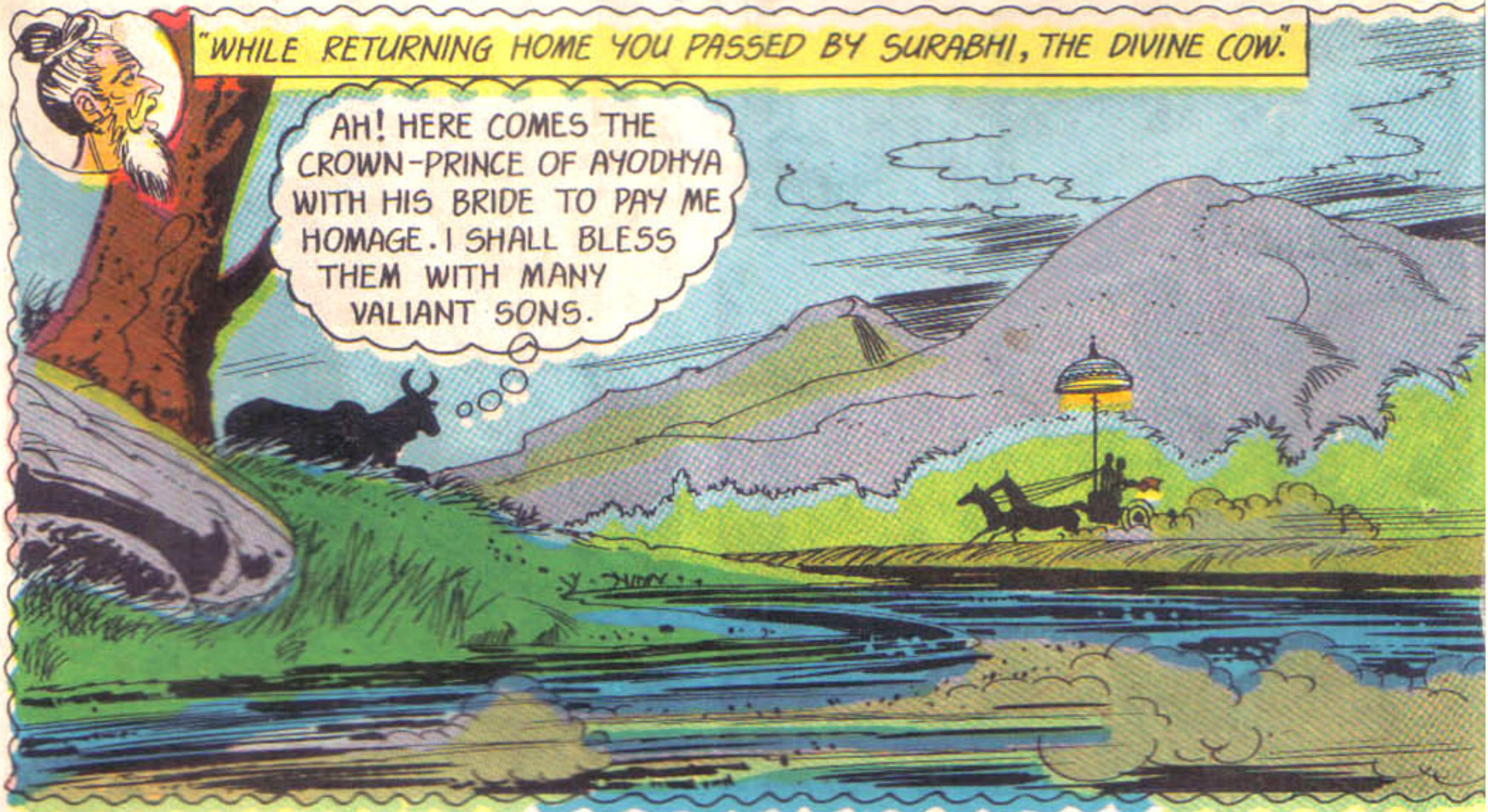
VASISHTHA CLOSED HIS EYES FOR A MOMENT. THEN —

LONG, LONG AGO, WHEN GANGA FLOWED IN HEAVEN, AND YOU WERE A YOUNG PRINCE, YOU HAD GONE TO VISIT INDRA WITH SUDAKSHINA, YOUR CHERISHED BRIDE.



"WHILE RETURNING HOME YOU PASSED BY SURABHI, THE DIVINE COW."

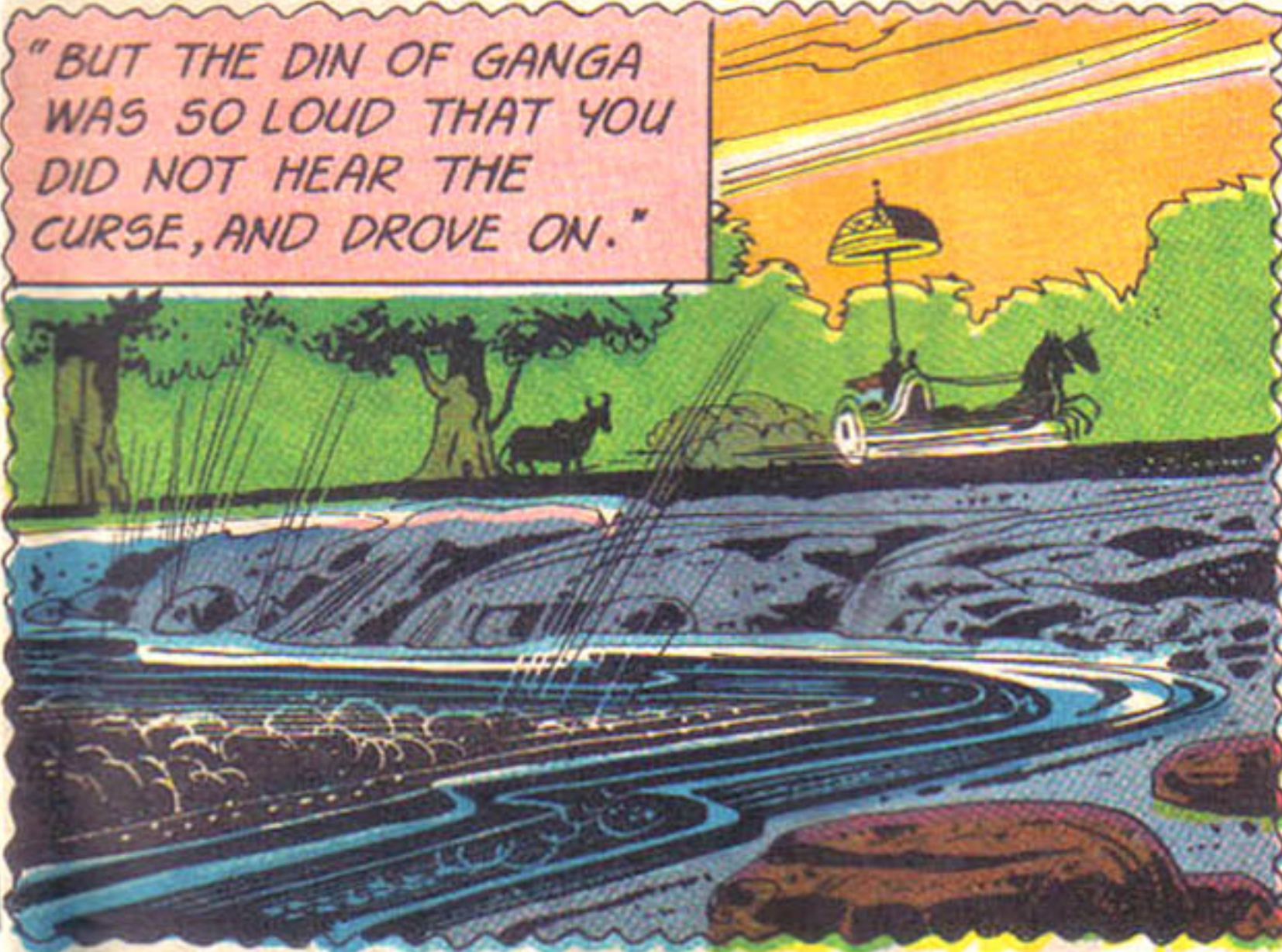
AH! HERE COMES THE CROWN-PRINCE OF AYODHYA WITH HIS BRIDE TO PAY ME HOMAGE. I SHALL BLESS THEM WITH MANY VALIANT SONS.



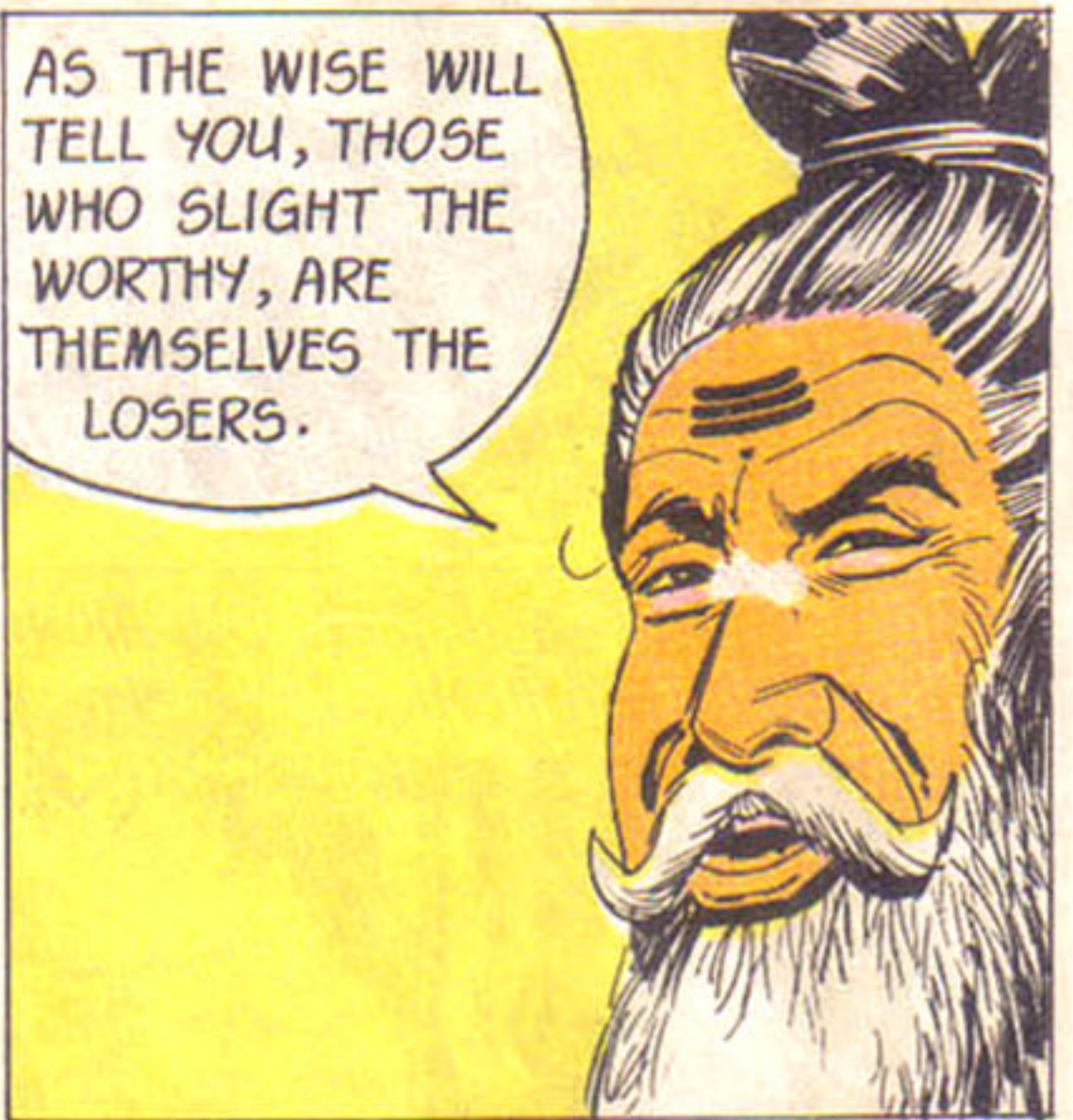
"YOU WERE SO ENGROSSSED IN YOUR YOUNG BRIDE, HOWEVER, THAT YOU HARDLY NOTICED SURABHI. SHE FELT SLIGHTED AND HER INTENDED BLESSING CAME FORTH AS A CURSE."



"BUT THE DIN OF GANGA WAS SO LOUD THAT YOU DID NOT HEAR THE CURSE, AND DROVE ON."



AS THE WISE WILL TELL YOU, THOSE WHO SLIGHT THE WORTHY, ARE THEMSELVES THE LOSERS.



O VENERABLE ONE, IT WAS AN UNINTENDED SLIGHT. HOW CAN I ATONE FOR IT?

LISTEN, ALONG WITH YOUR WIFE, WAIT ON SURABHI'S DAUGHTER, NANDINI, WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION. PLEASED, NANDINI WILL BESTOW ON YOU THE PRICELESS BOON YOU SEEK.



AT THAT MOMENT, NANDINI CAME BY AND STOOD NEAR THE SAGE.

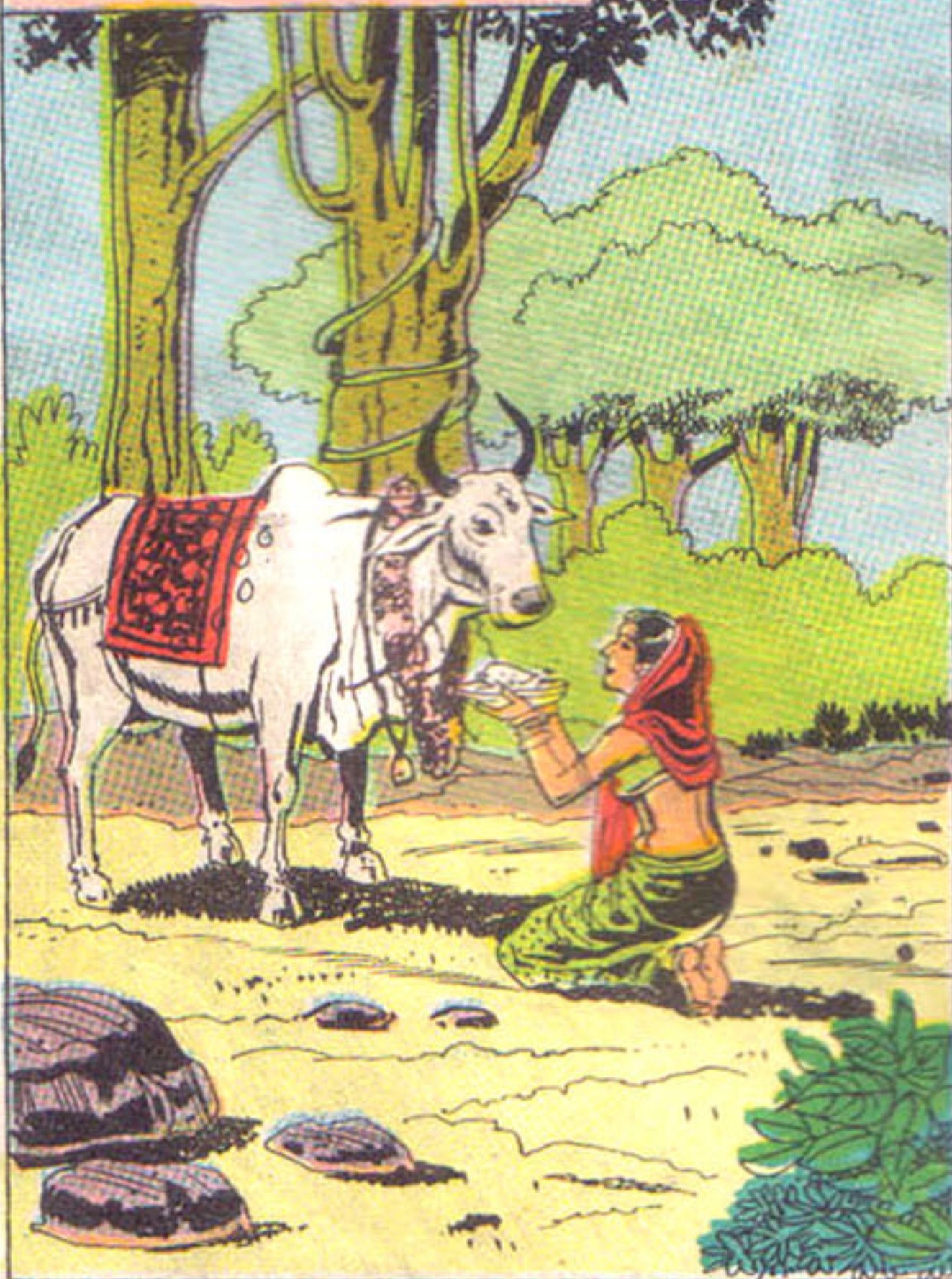
AT DAWN, SUDAKSHINA MUST ESCORT HER TO THE FOREST AND, IN THE EVENING, WAIT TO WELCOME HER. YOU MUST ATTEND UPON HER DURING THE DAY.



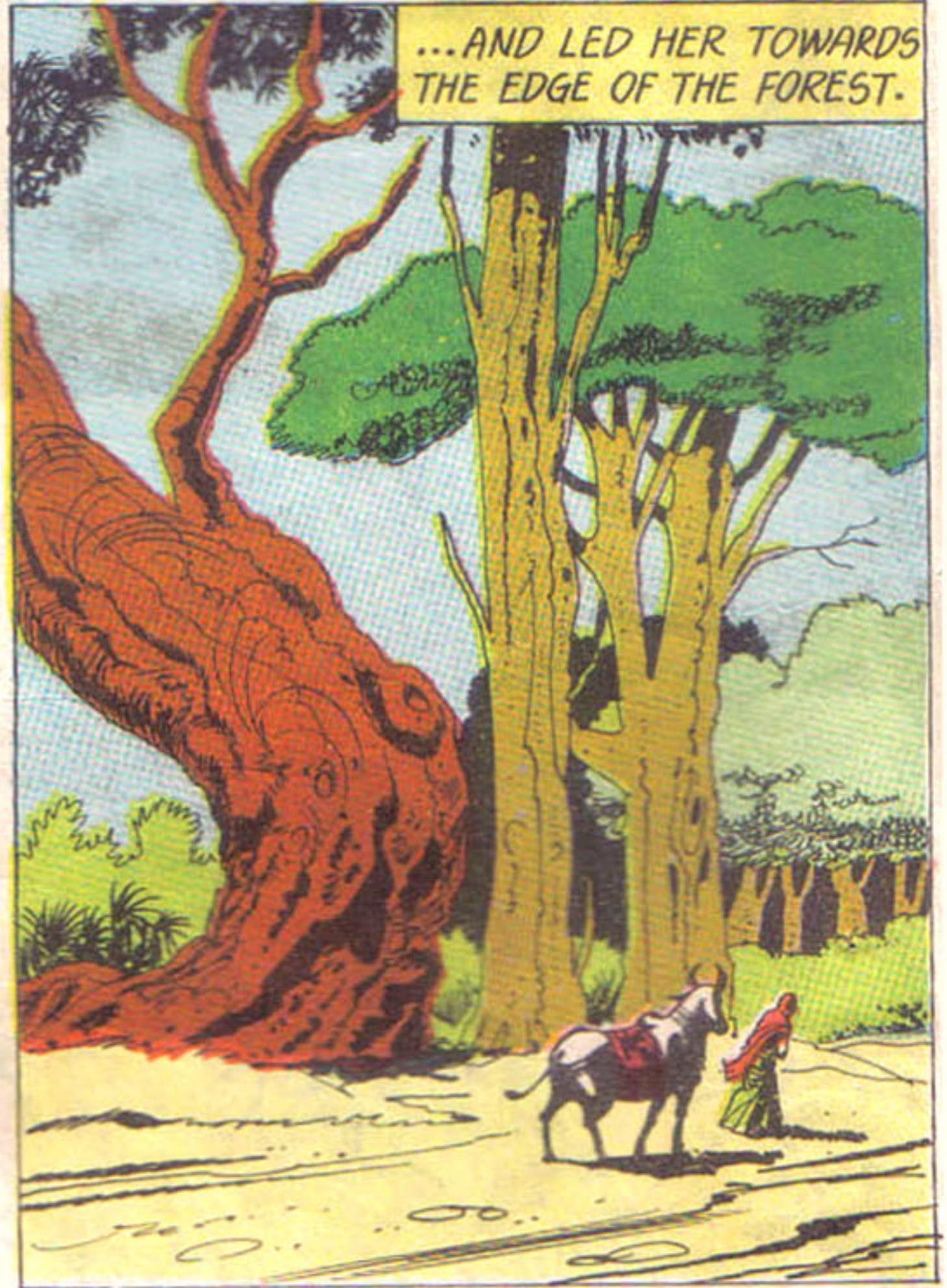
THUS MAY YOU WIN NANDINI'S GRACE AND BECOME THE PROUD FATHER OF MIGHTY SONS.

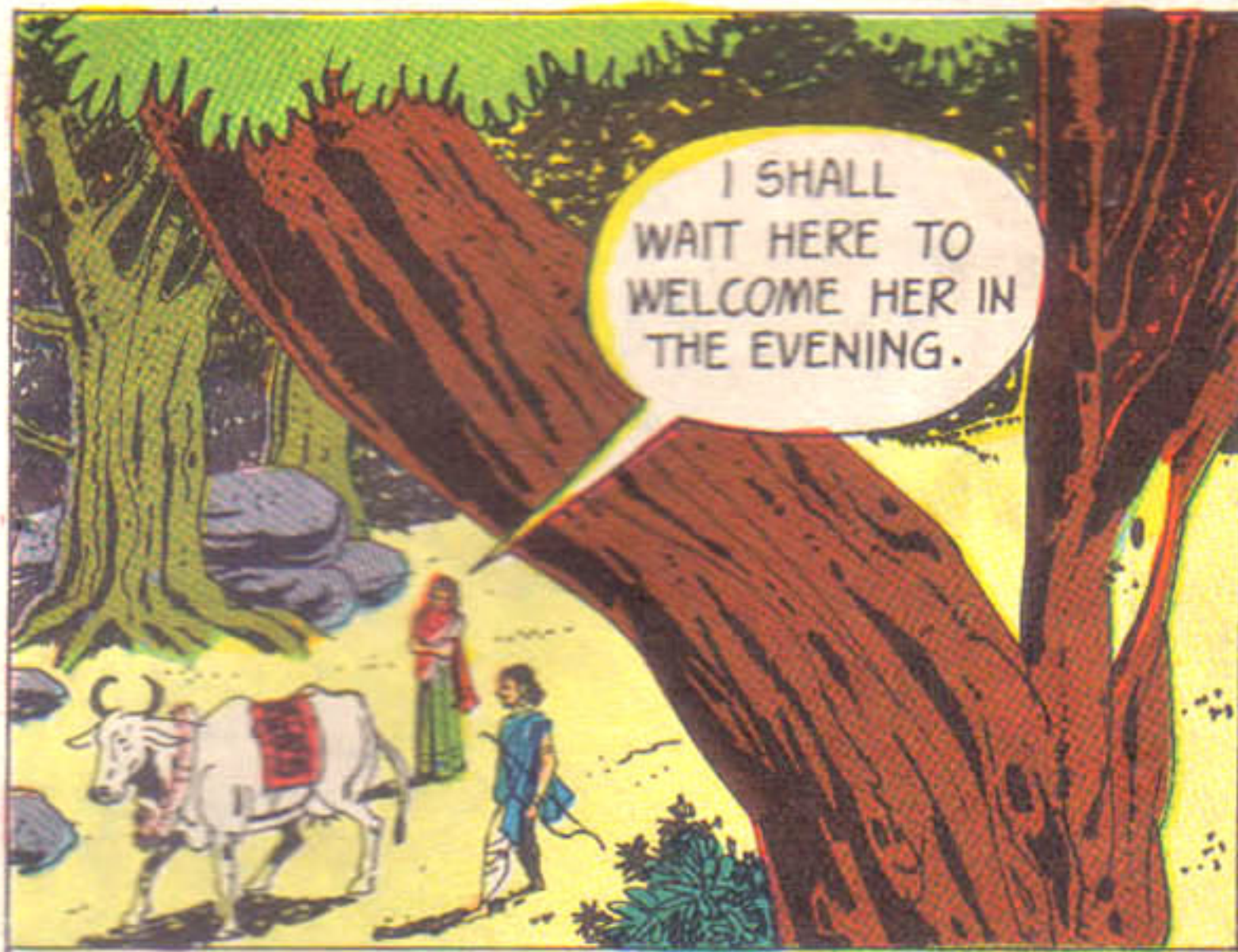


BEFORE DAWN EACH DAY, SUDAKSHINA WORSHIPPED NANDINI ...

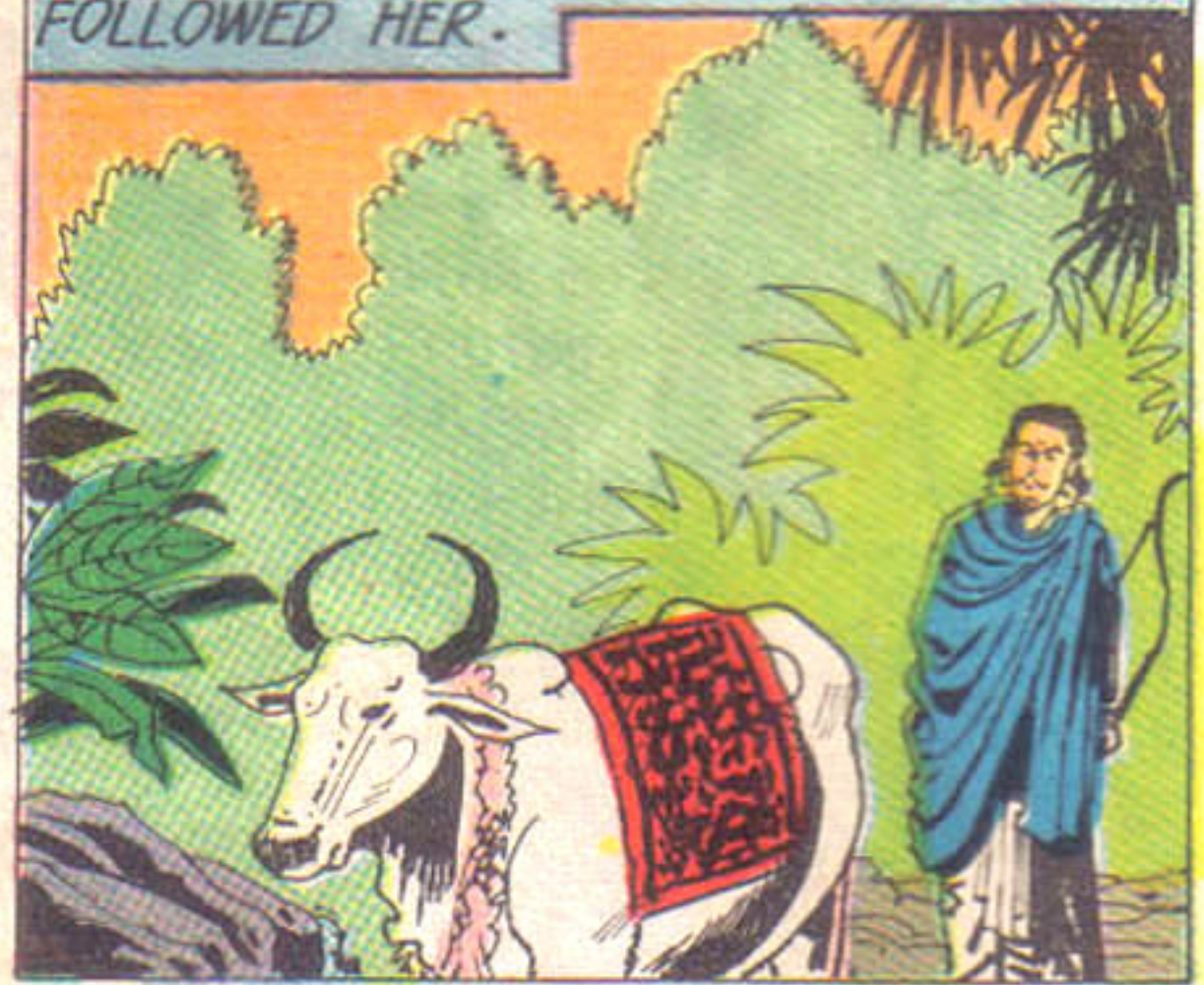


...AND LED HER TOWARDS THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.

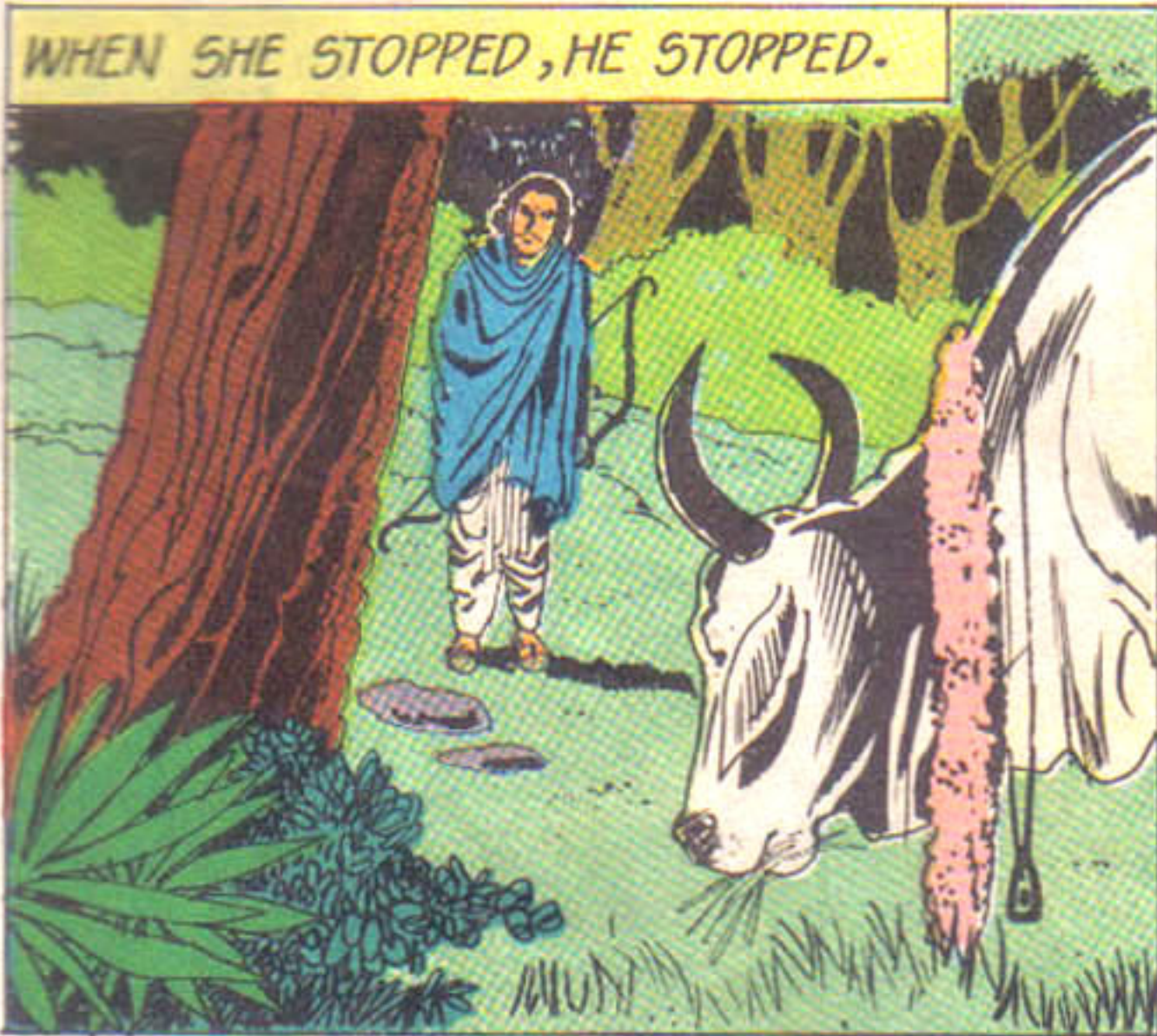




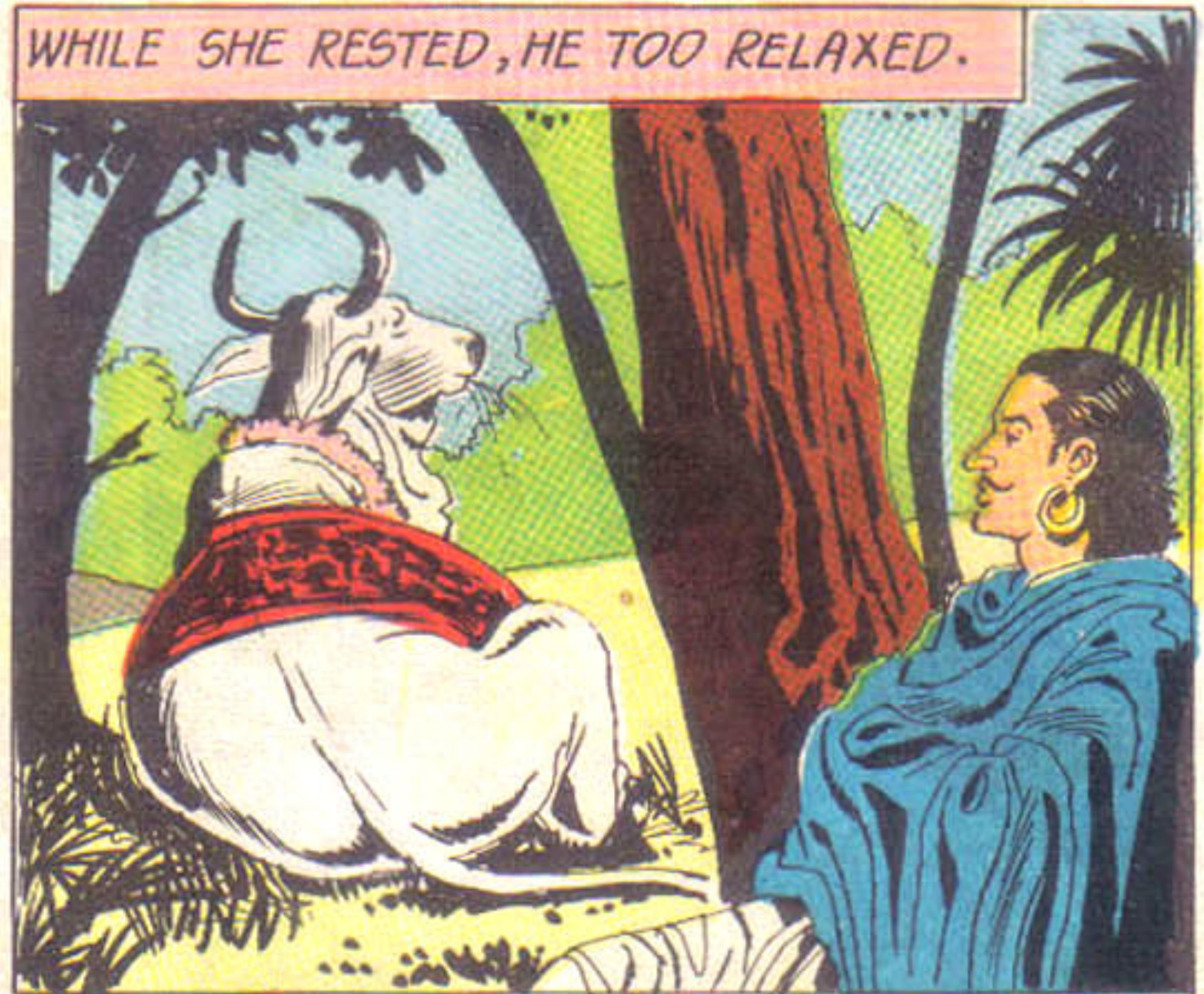
FROM DAWN TO DUSK, DILIPA WAITED UPON NANDINI. AS SHE WALKED HE FOLLOWED HER.



WHEN SHE STOPPED, HE STOPPED.



WHILE SHE RESTED, HE TOO RELAXED.



AT DUSK EACH DAY —



AND SO TWENTY-ONE DAYS ROLLED ON.

ON THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY, NANDINI WANDERED OUT OF THE FOREST.

THE KING IS PATIENT AND ATTENTIVE. NOW I MUST TEST HIS VALOUR.

UP THE GREEN SLOPES OF THE HIMALAYAS SHE VENTURED...

...INTO SHIVA'S OWN GROVE.

LET HER WANDER. HER INNATE SANCTITY WILL PROTECT HER FROM HARM.

AND DILIPA TURNED TO GAZE AT THE NATURAL SPLENDOUR OF THE SURROUNDINGS. SUDDENLY —

IT'S MY CHARGE! WHO HAS DARED HARM HER!

UM-AW-AW

HE RAN INTO THE GROVE TO FIND NANDINI AT THE MERCY OF A LION.

I'LL SHOOT THE LION AND FREE YOU IN A MOMENT, GENTLE ONE.

BUT TO HIS AMAZEMENT, DILIPA FOUND HIS ARM PARALYZED.

EVEN GREATER WAS HIS AMAZEMENT, WHEN THE LION SPOKE TO HIM.

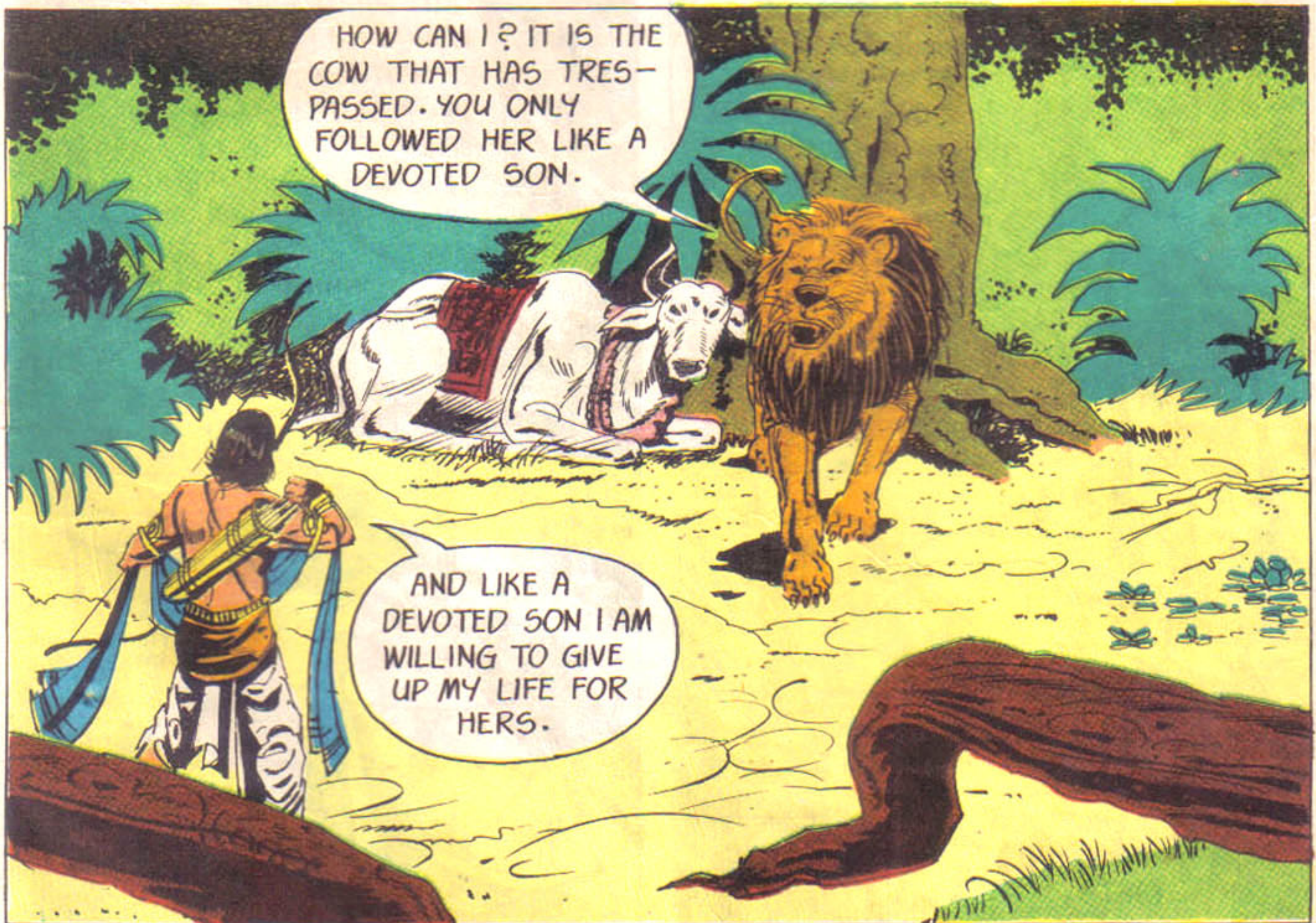
O KING, I HAVE CAST A SPELL ON YOU. SHIVA HAS POSTED ME HERE TO GUARD THIS TREE, WHICH BOTH PARVATI AND HE LOVE AS A SON. THE COW HAS TRESPASSED. SHE MUST DIE.

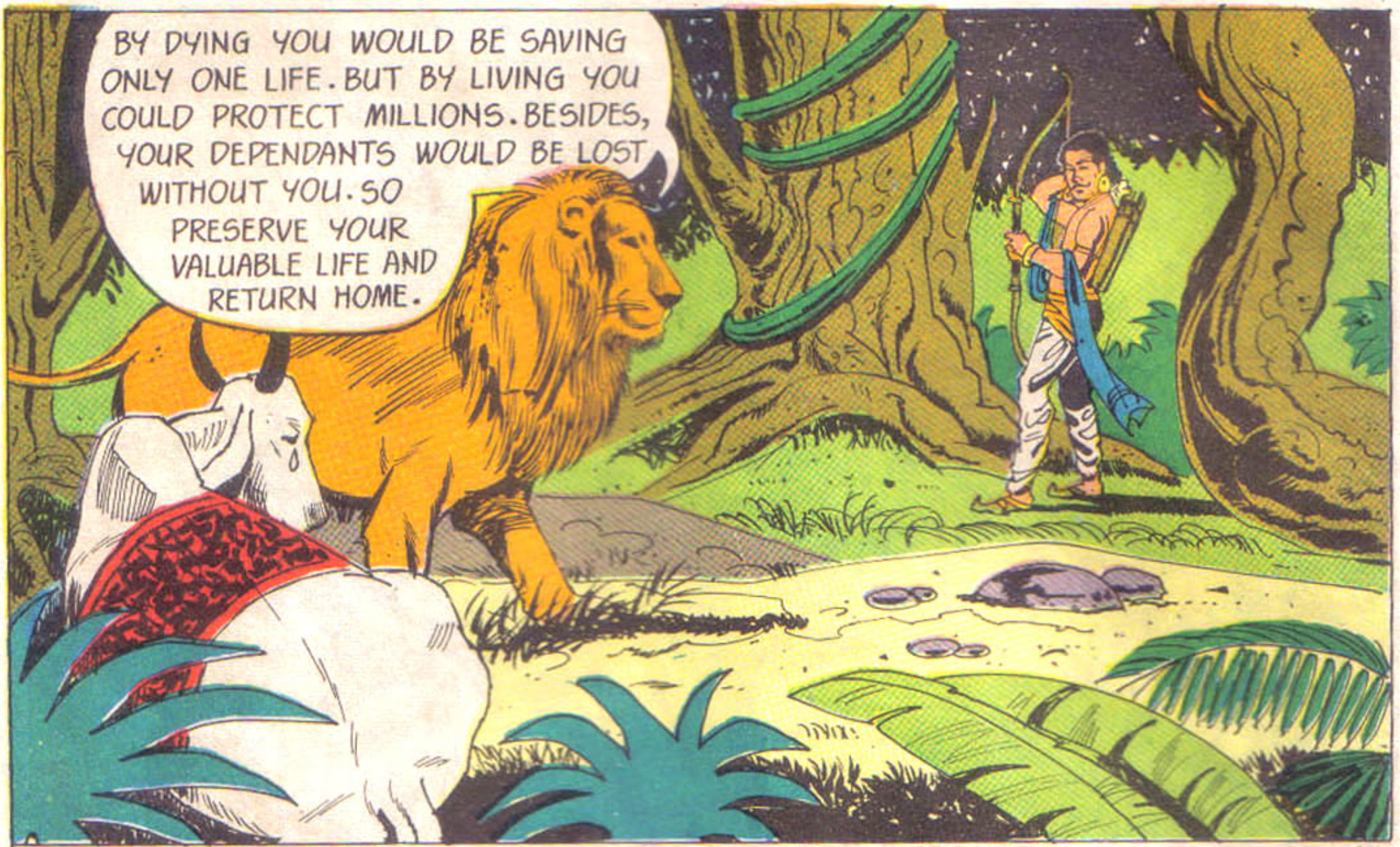
NO! I CANNOT LET YOU KILL MY GURU'S COW. KILL ME INSTEAD.



HOW CAN I? IT IS THE COW THAT HAS TRESPASSED. YOU ONLY FOLLOWED HER LIKE A DEVOTED SON.

AND LIKE A DEVOTED SON I AM WILLING TO GIVE UP MY LIFE FOR HERS.





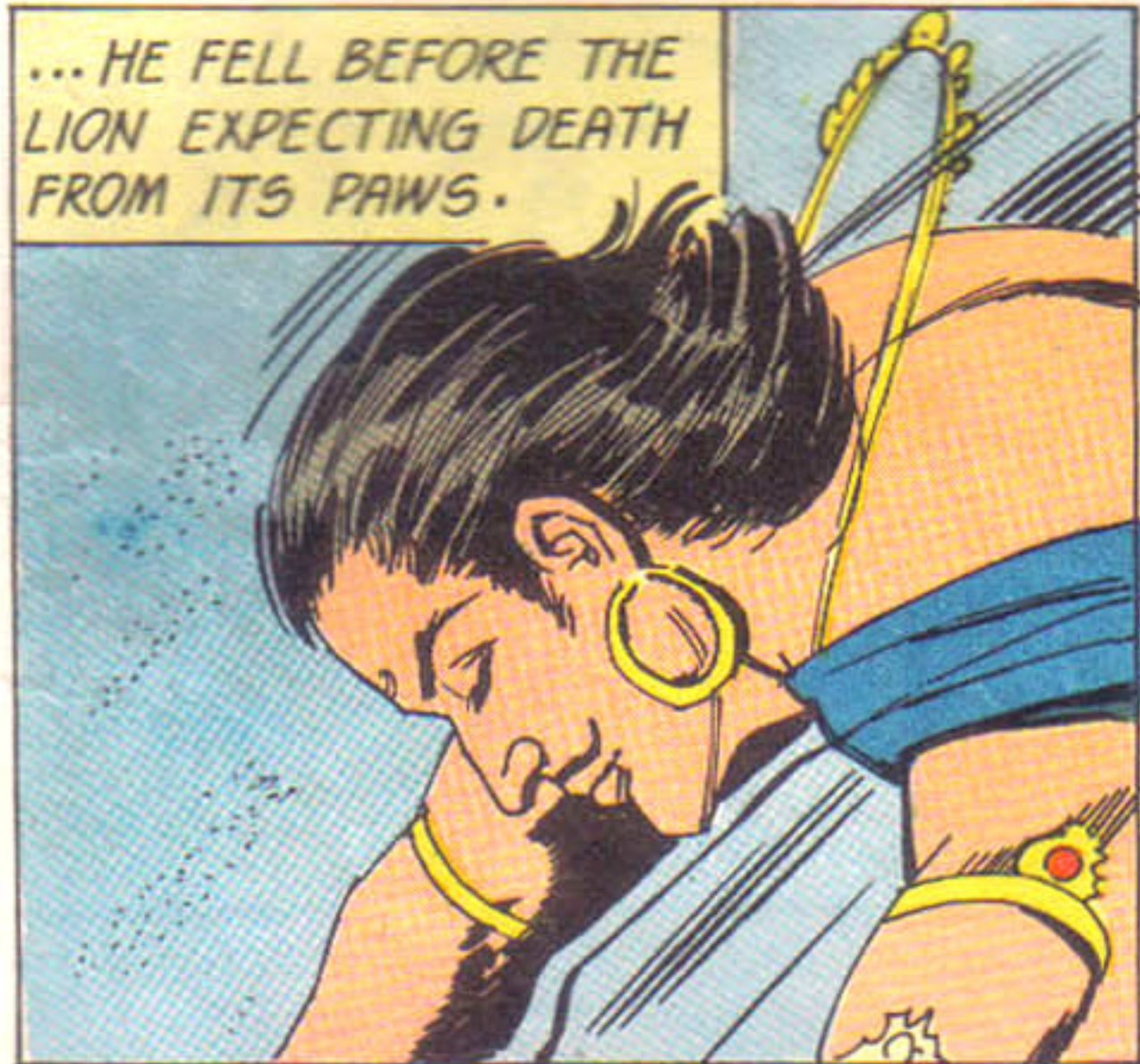
AS SOON AS THE LION AGREED, THE SPELL WAS BROKEN AND DILIPA COULD MOVE.



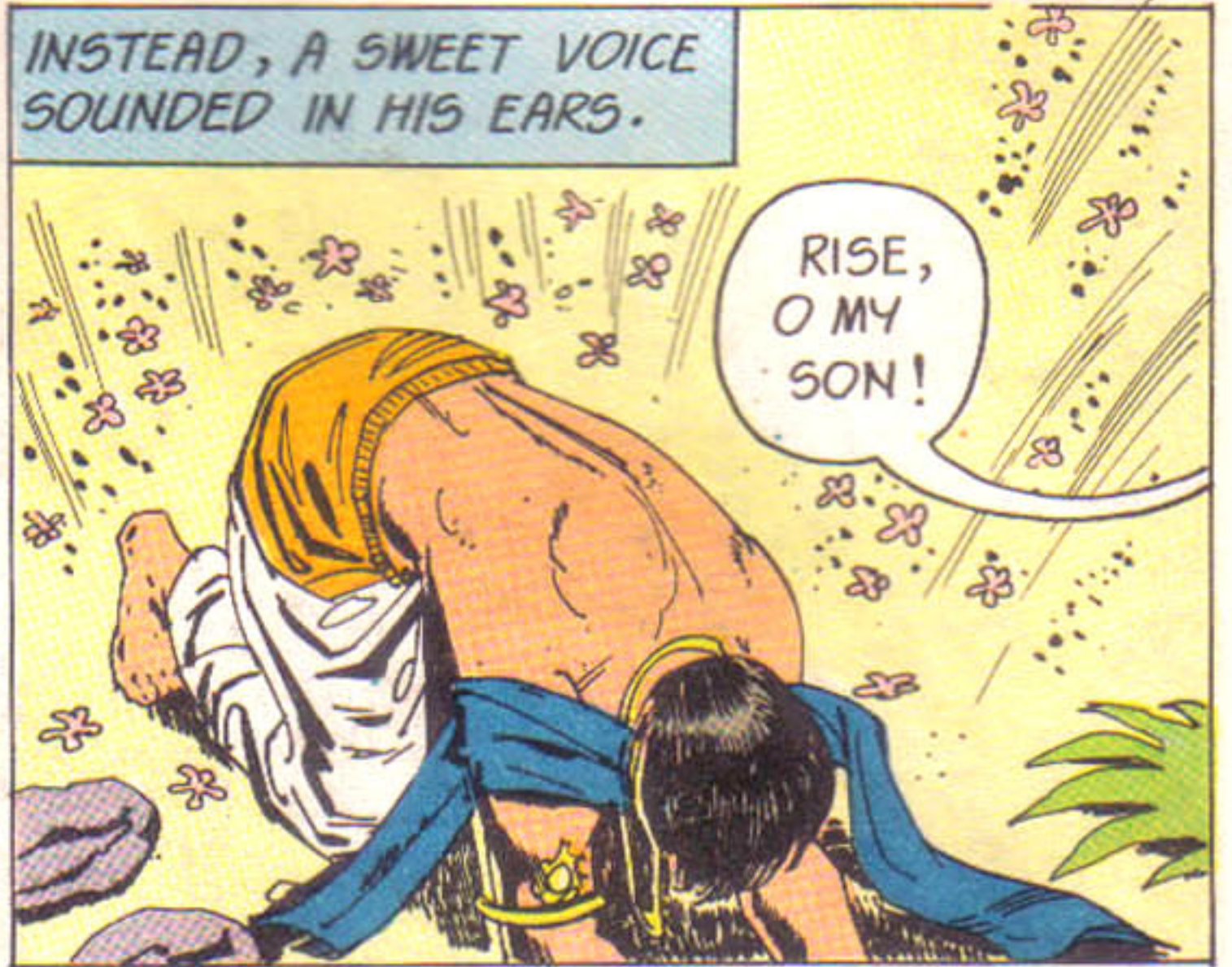
THROWING HIS WEAPONS ASIDE ...



... HE FELL BEFORE THE LION EXPECTING DEATH FROM ITS PAWS.

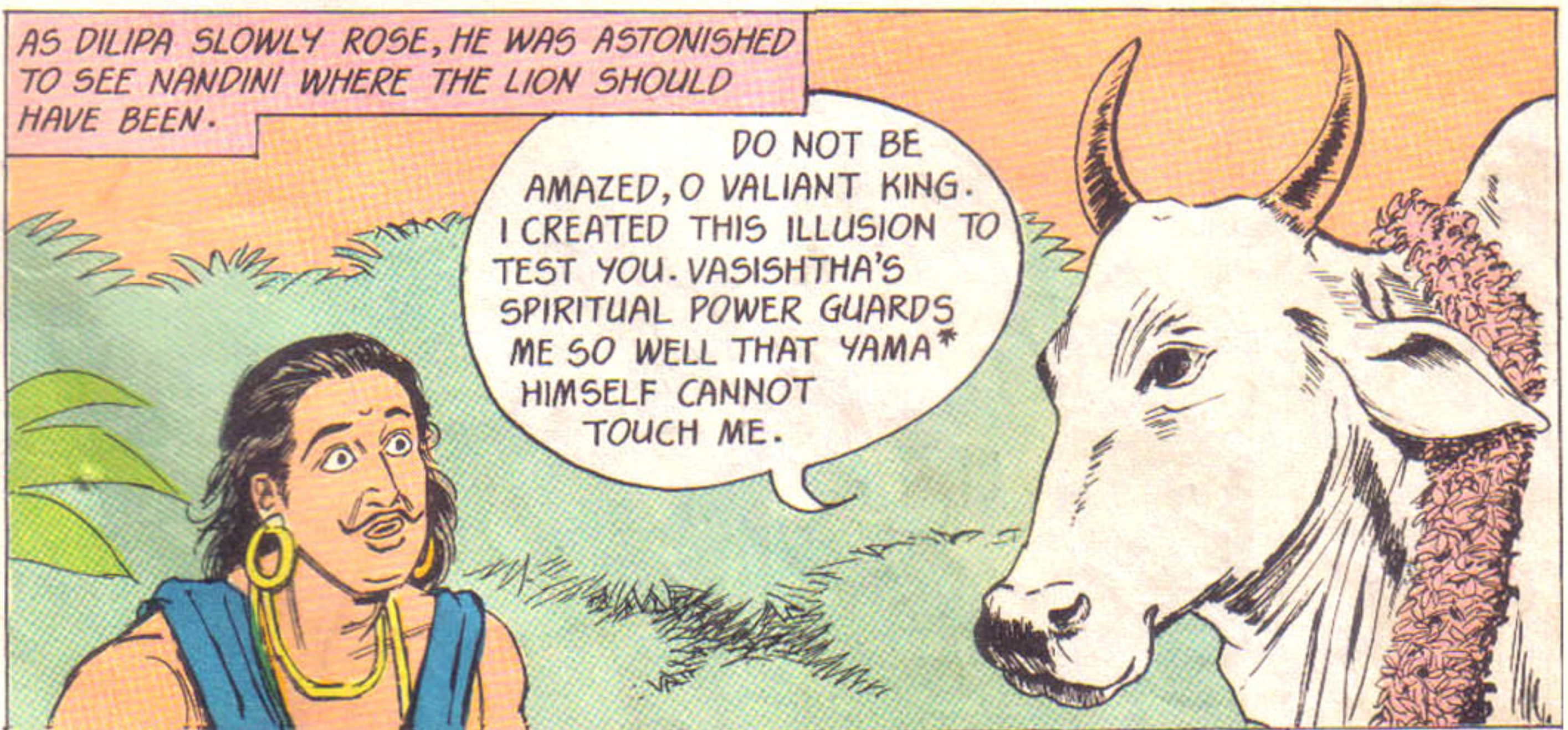


INSTEAD, A SWEET VOICE SOUNDED IN HIS EARS.

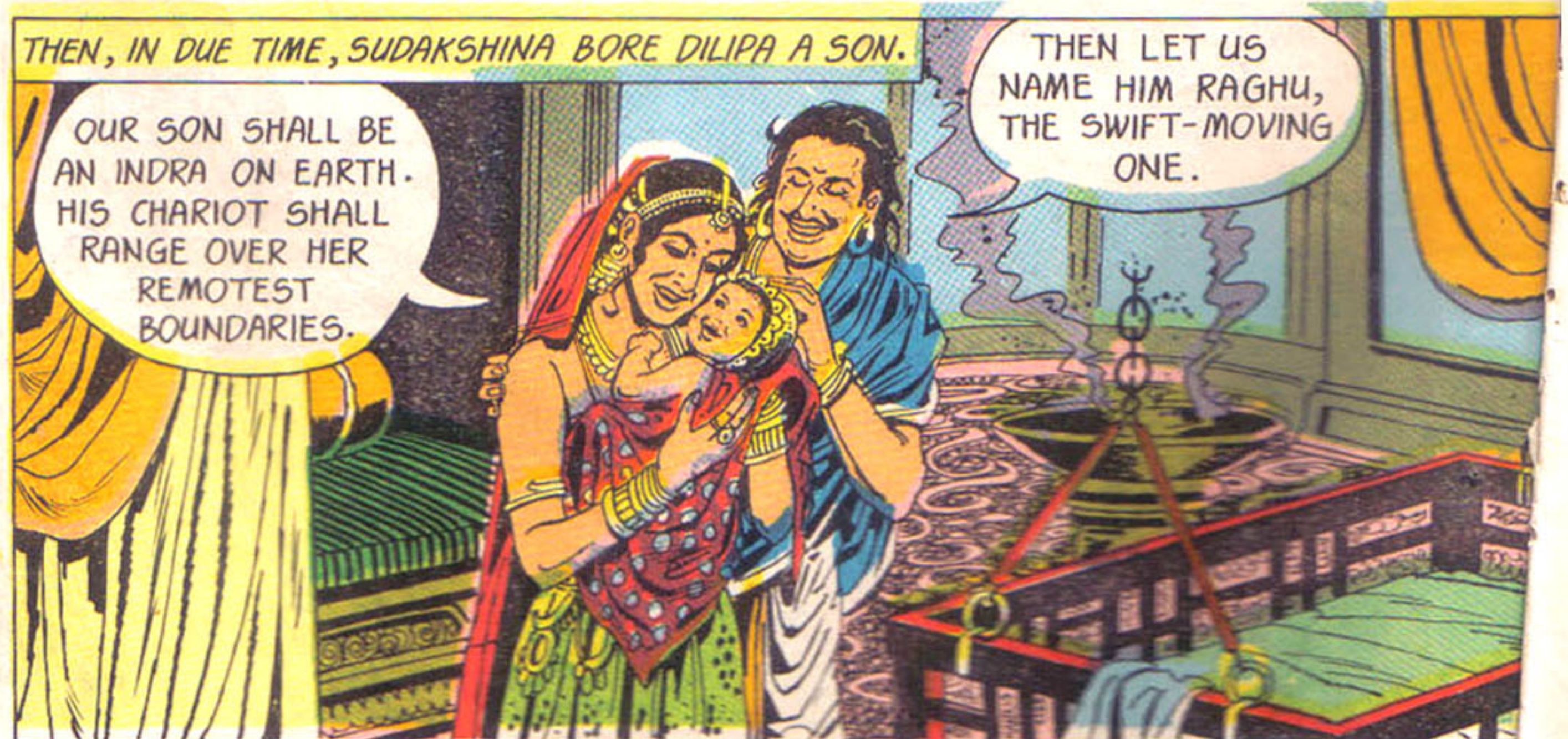
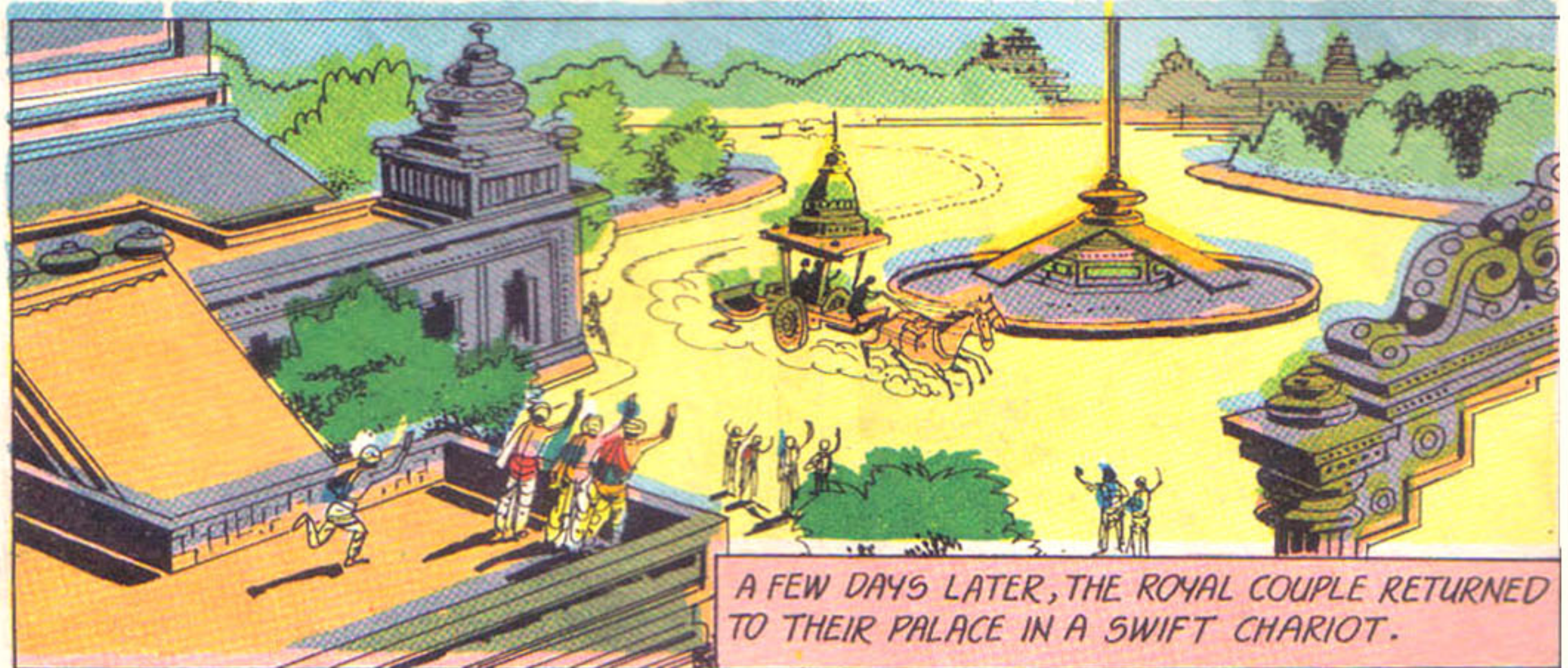


AS DILIPA SLOWLY ROSE, HE WAS ASTONISHED TO SEE NANDINI WHERE THE LION SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

DO NOT BE AMAZED, O VALIANT KING. I CREATED THIS ILLUSION TO TEST YOU. VASISHTHA'S SPIRITUAL POWER GUARDS ME SO WELL THAT YAMA* HIMSELF CANNOT TOUCH ME.



* THE GOD OF DEATH.

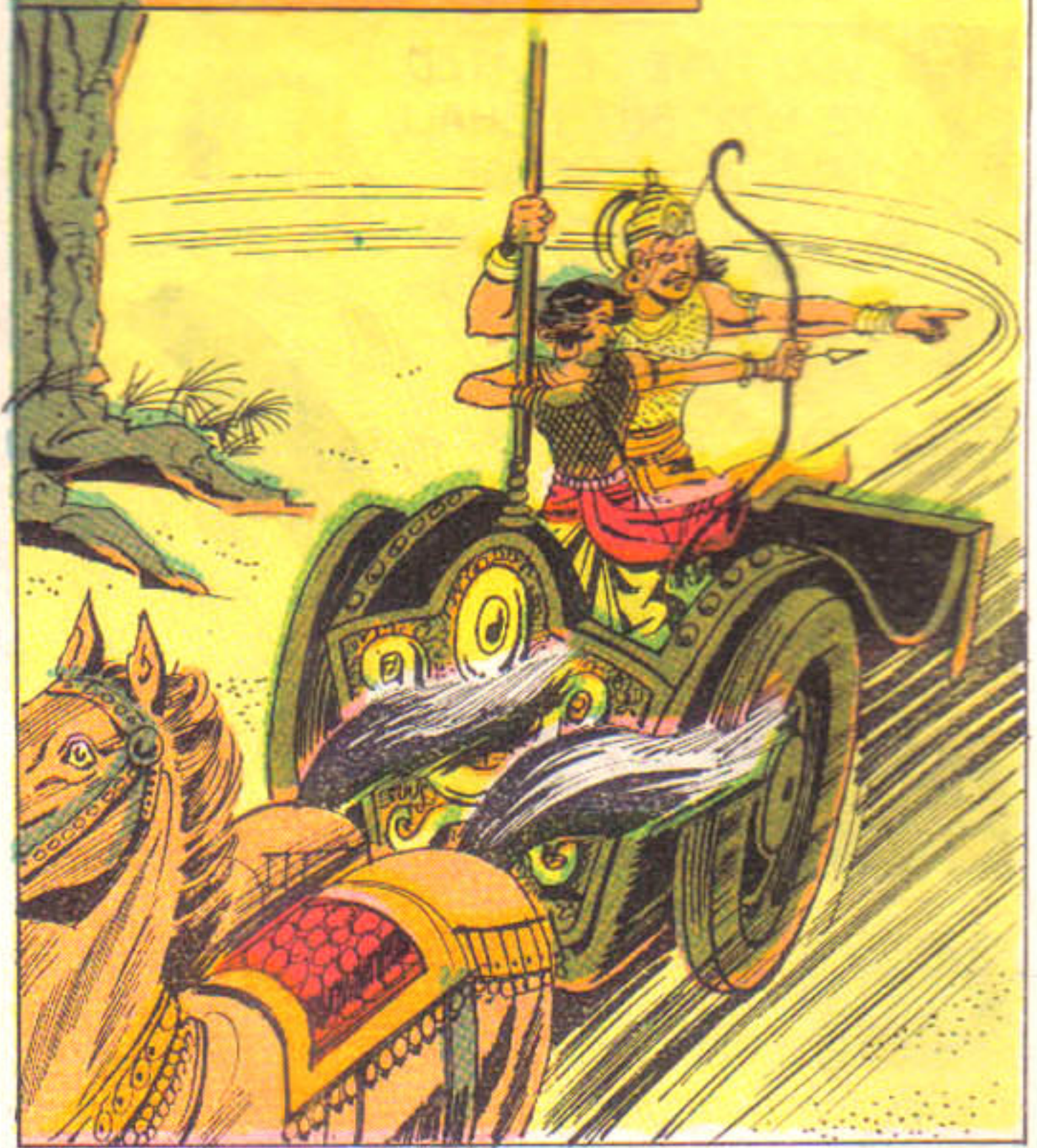


SOON, RAGHU WAS OLD ENOUGH TO BEGIN HIS EDUCATION.

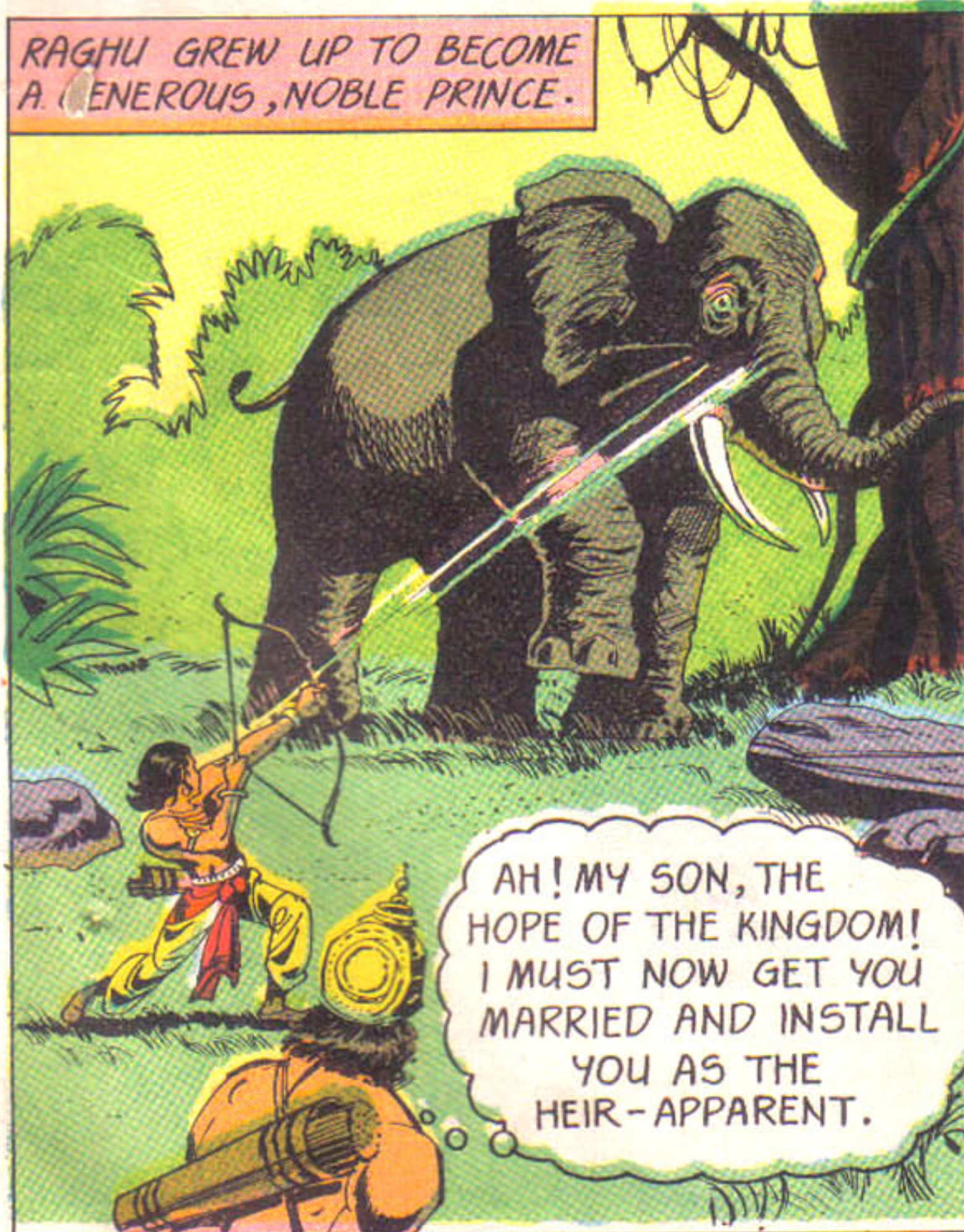
TO YOU, THE WISEST IN THE LAND, I ENTRUST THE SPIRITUAL TRAINING OF MY SON.



DILIPA HIMSELF INSTRUCTED RAGHU IN THE ART OF WAR.



RAGHU GREW UP TO BECOME A GENEROUS, NOBLE PRINCE.



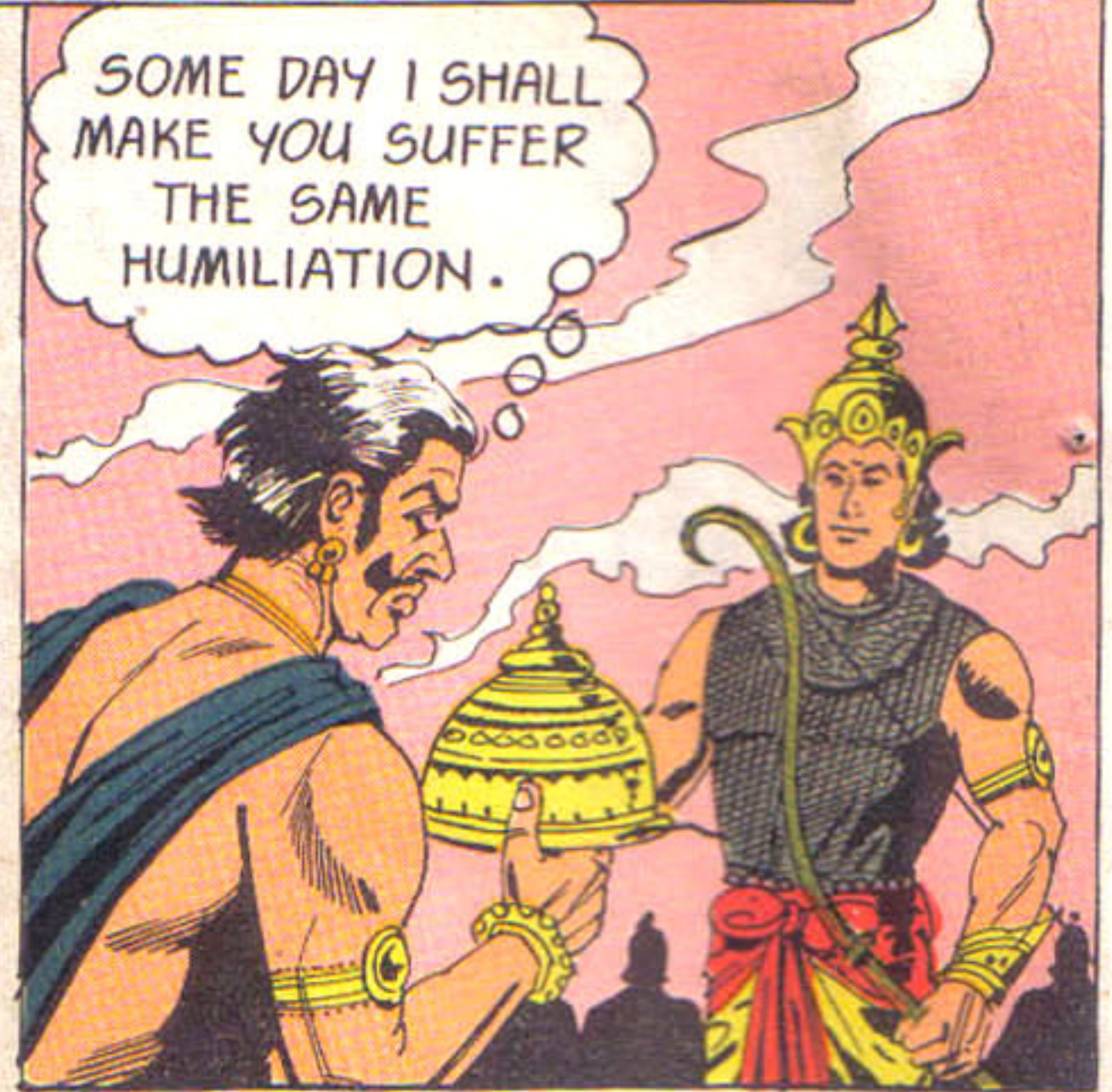
AH! MY SON, THE HOPE OF THE KINGDOM! I MUST NOW GET YOU MARRIED AND INSTALL YOU AS THE HEIR-APPARENT.

A FEW YEARS AFTER RAGHU WAS INSTALLED —

MY SON, I PLAN TO PERFORM MY HUNDREDTH SACRIFICE, THE ASHWA-MEDHA AND EARN THE TITLE—LORD OF A HUNDRED SACRIFICES WHICH INDRA ALONE NOW ENJOYS. YOU SHALL PROTECT THE SACRIFICIAL HORSE AS IT ROAMS THROUGH THE KINGDOMS OF FRIEND AND FOE.



AS RAGHU AND HIS COMRADES FOLLOWED THE HORSE, THEY DEFEATED AND SUBDUED MANY KINGS.



MEANWHILE, INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, WAS PERTURBED.

IF DILIPA PERFORMS THE ASHWAMEDHA, I WILL NO LONGER HAVE SOLE CLAIM OVER THE TITLE—LORD OF A HUNDRED SACRIFICES.

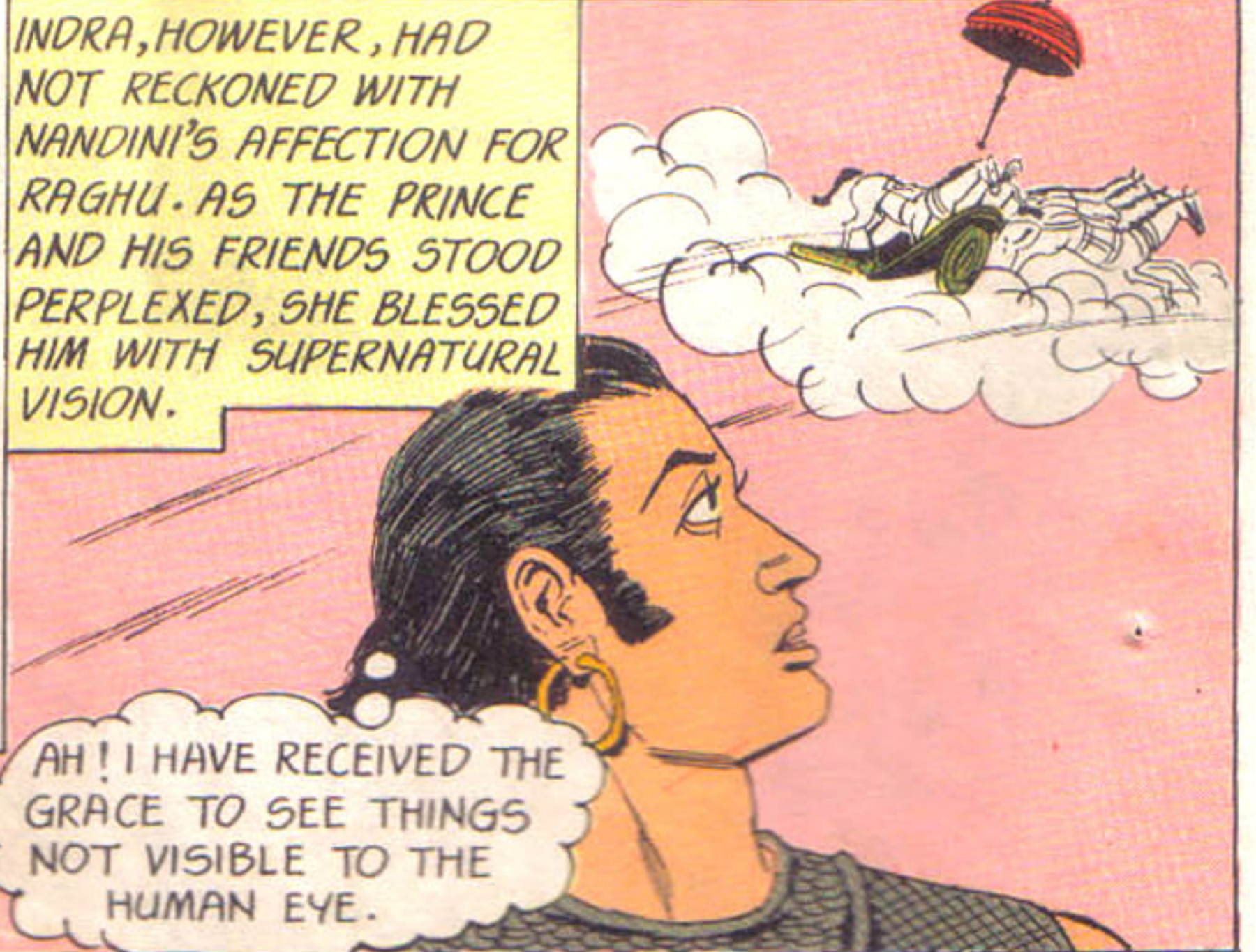


SO, MAKING HIMSELF INVISIBLE, INDRA DROVE OFF THE HORSE.

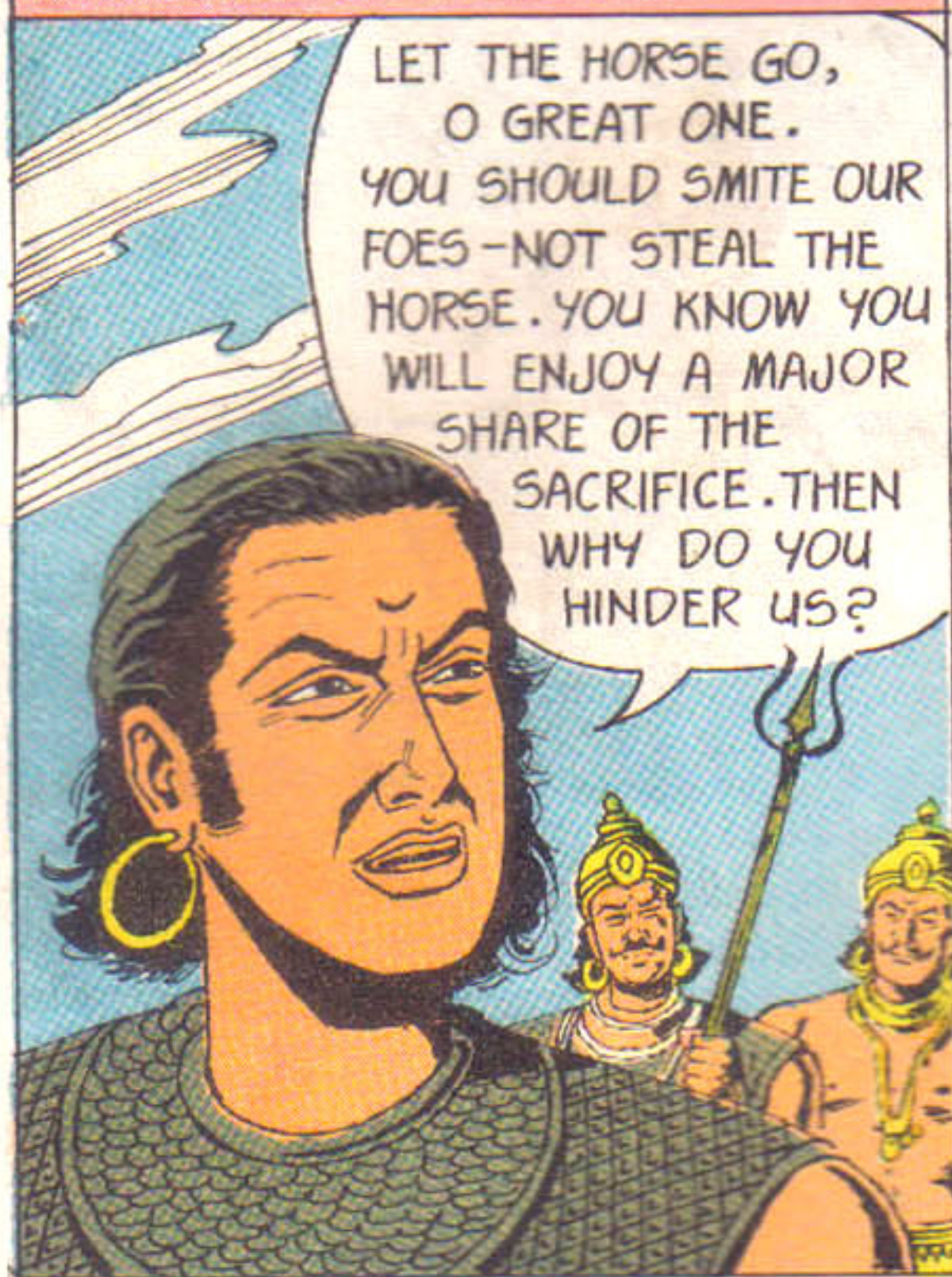
THE HORSE! IT'S BEING STOLEN.



INDRA, HOWEVER, HAD NOT RECKONED WITH NANDINI'S AFFECTION FOR RAGHU. AS THE PRINCE AND HIS FRIENDS STOOD PERPLEXED, SHE BLESSED HIM WITH SUPERNATURAL VISION.

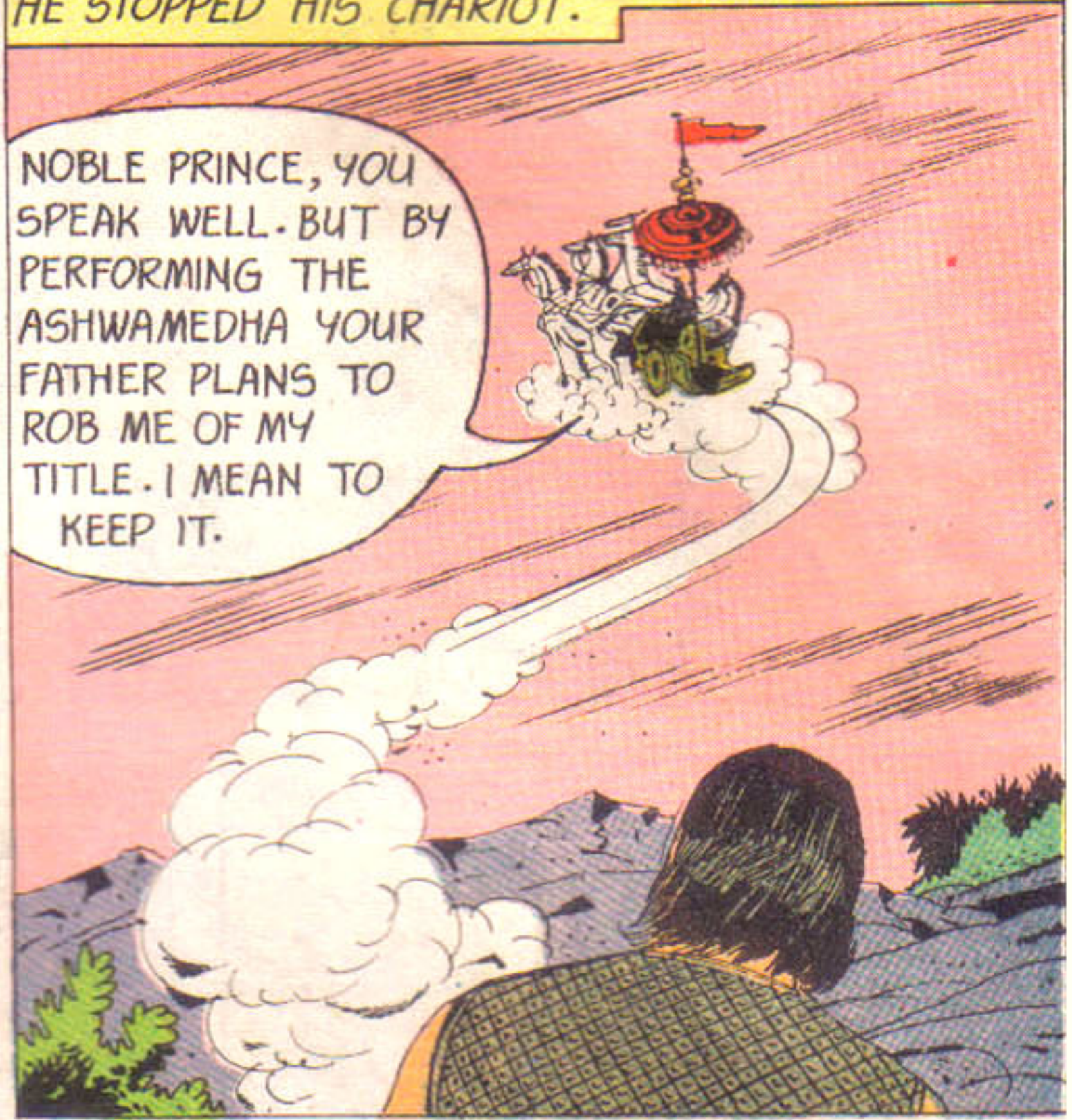


AND HE SAW THAT THE THIEF WAS INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS.



INDRA WAS AMAZED BY RAGHU'S BOLD WORDS. HE STOPPED HIS CHARIOT.

NOBLE PRINCE, YOU SPEAK WELL. BUT BY PERFORMING THE ASHWAMEDHA YOUR FATHER PLANS TO ROB ME OF MY TITLE. I MEAN TO KEEP IT.



IN REPLY RAGHU RAISED HIS BOW AND TOOK AIM.



THE ARROW FOUND ITS MARK.



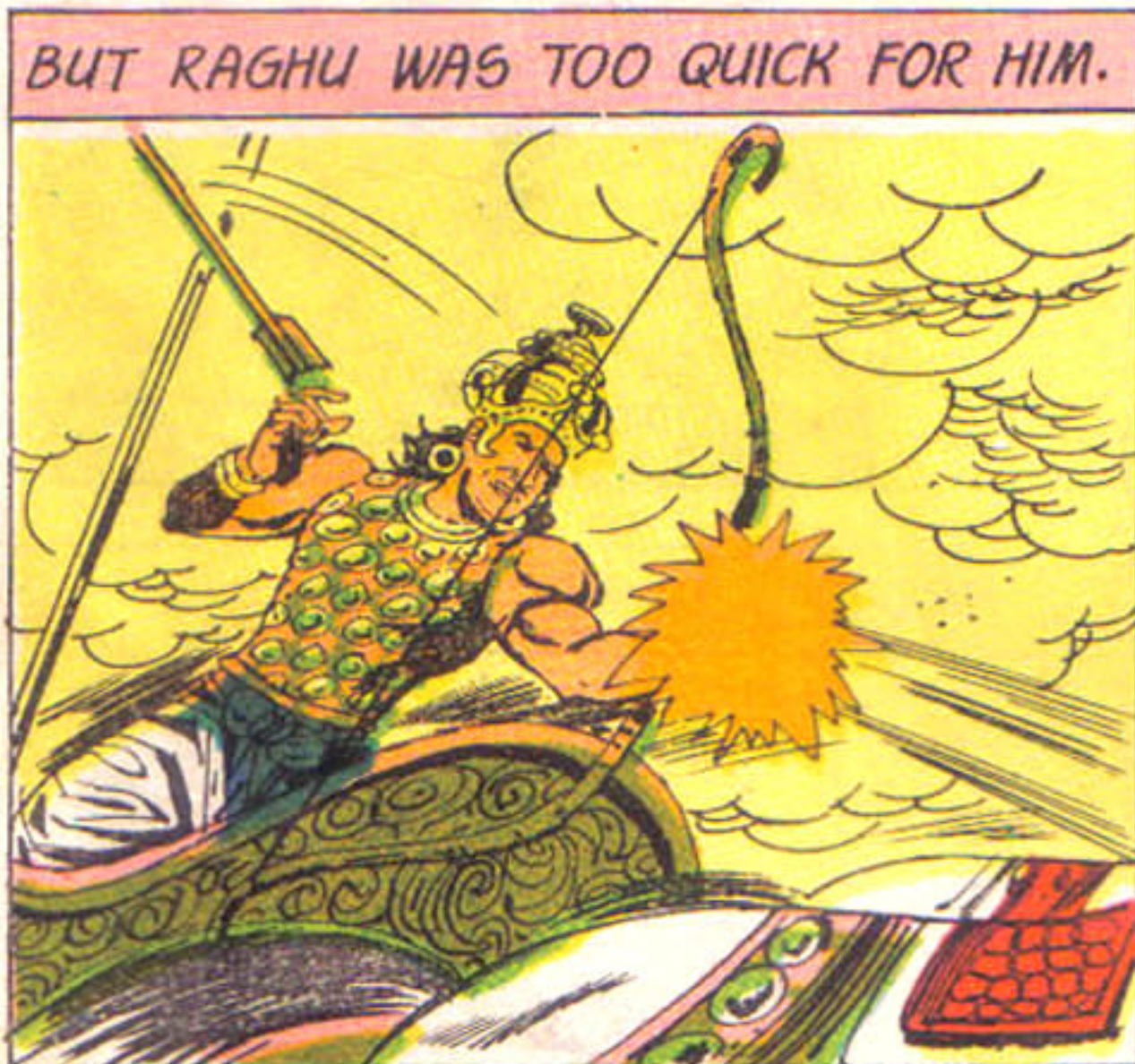
INDRA WAS FURIOUS.



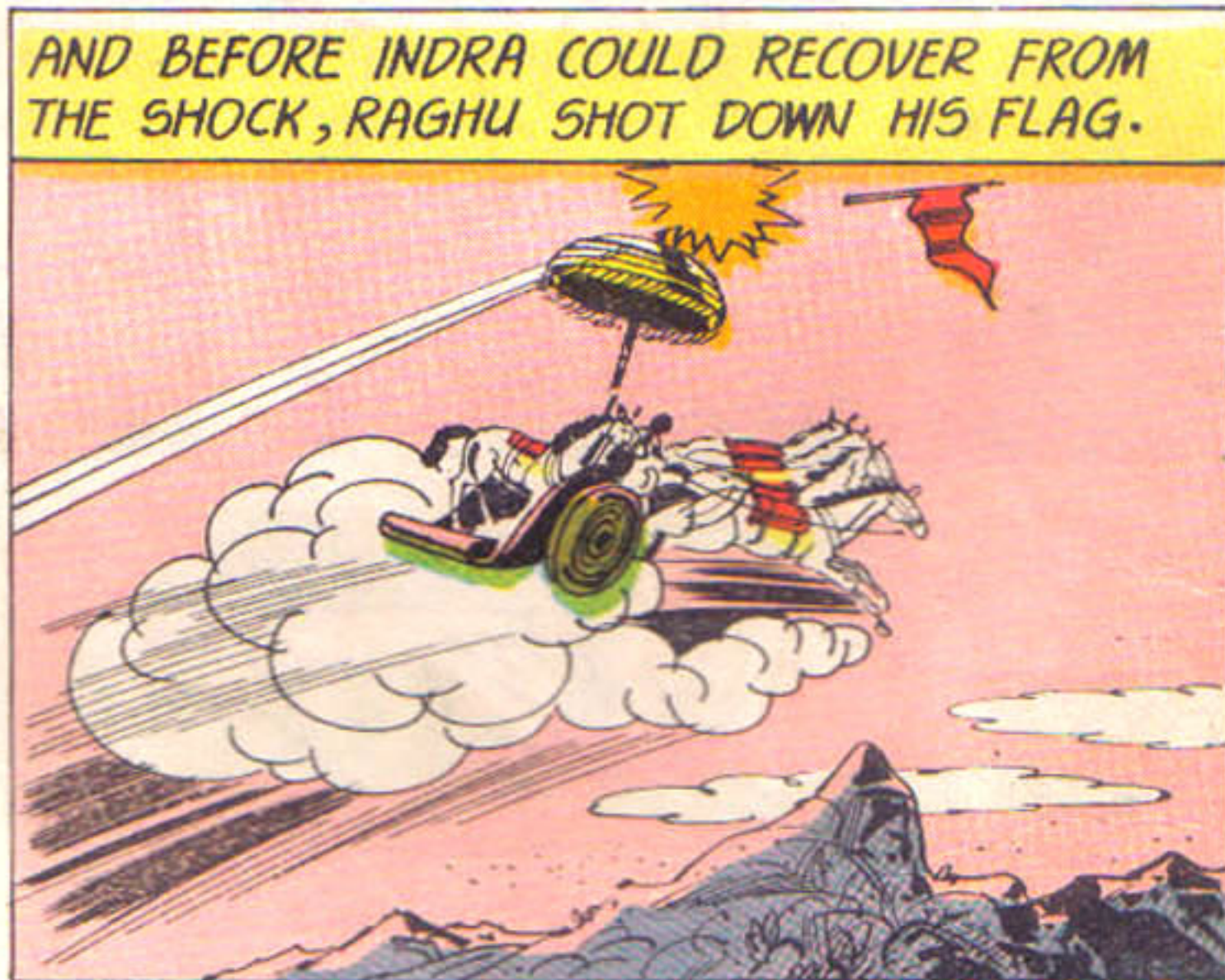
HE PLACED A DEADLY ARROW ON HIS BOW AND TOOK AIM.



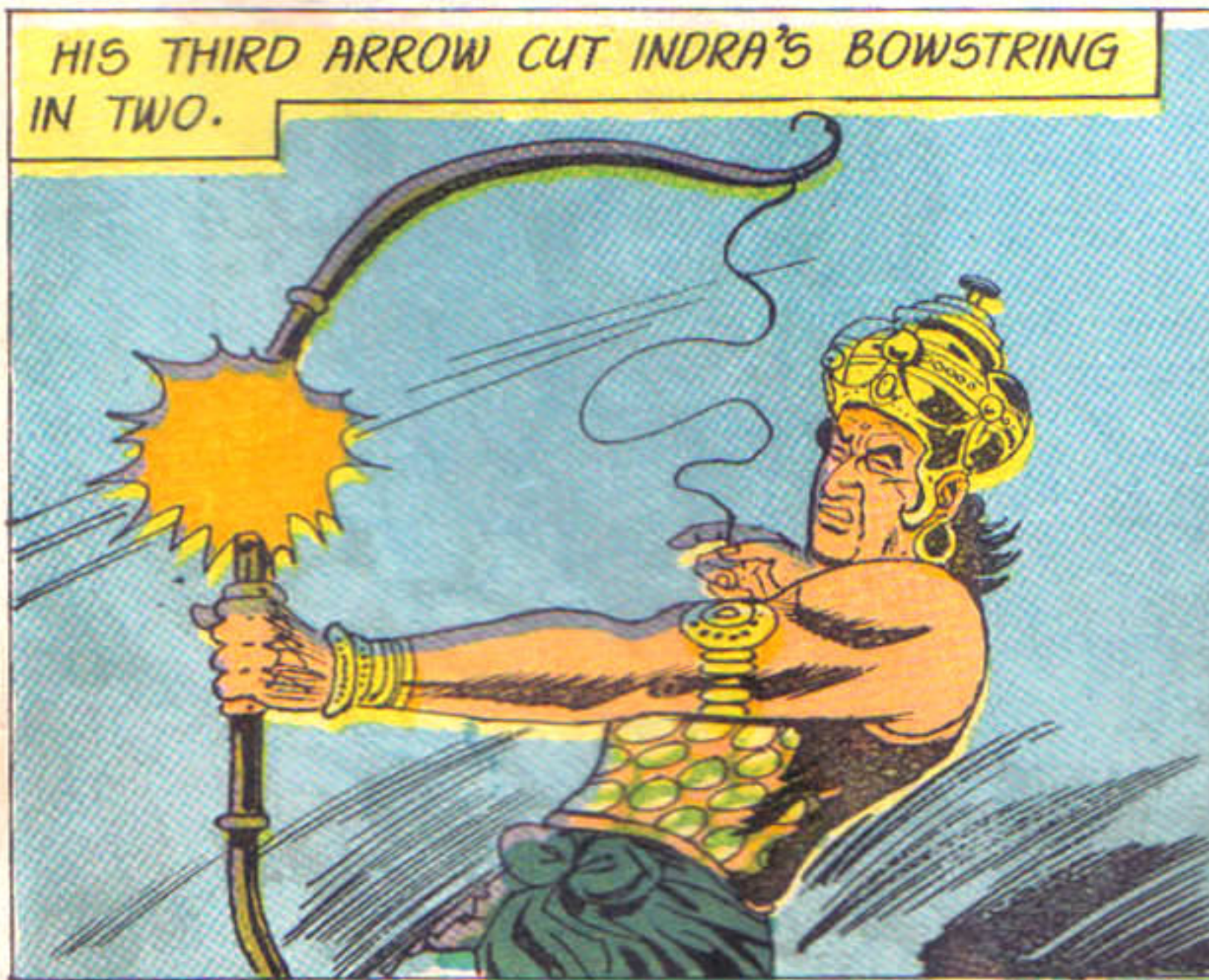
BUT RAGHU WAS TOO QUICK FOR HIM.



AND BEFORE INDRA COULD RECOVER FROM THE SHOCK, RAGHU SHOT DOWN HIS FLAG.



HIS THIRD ARROW CUT INDRA'S BOWSTRING IN TWO.



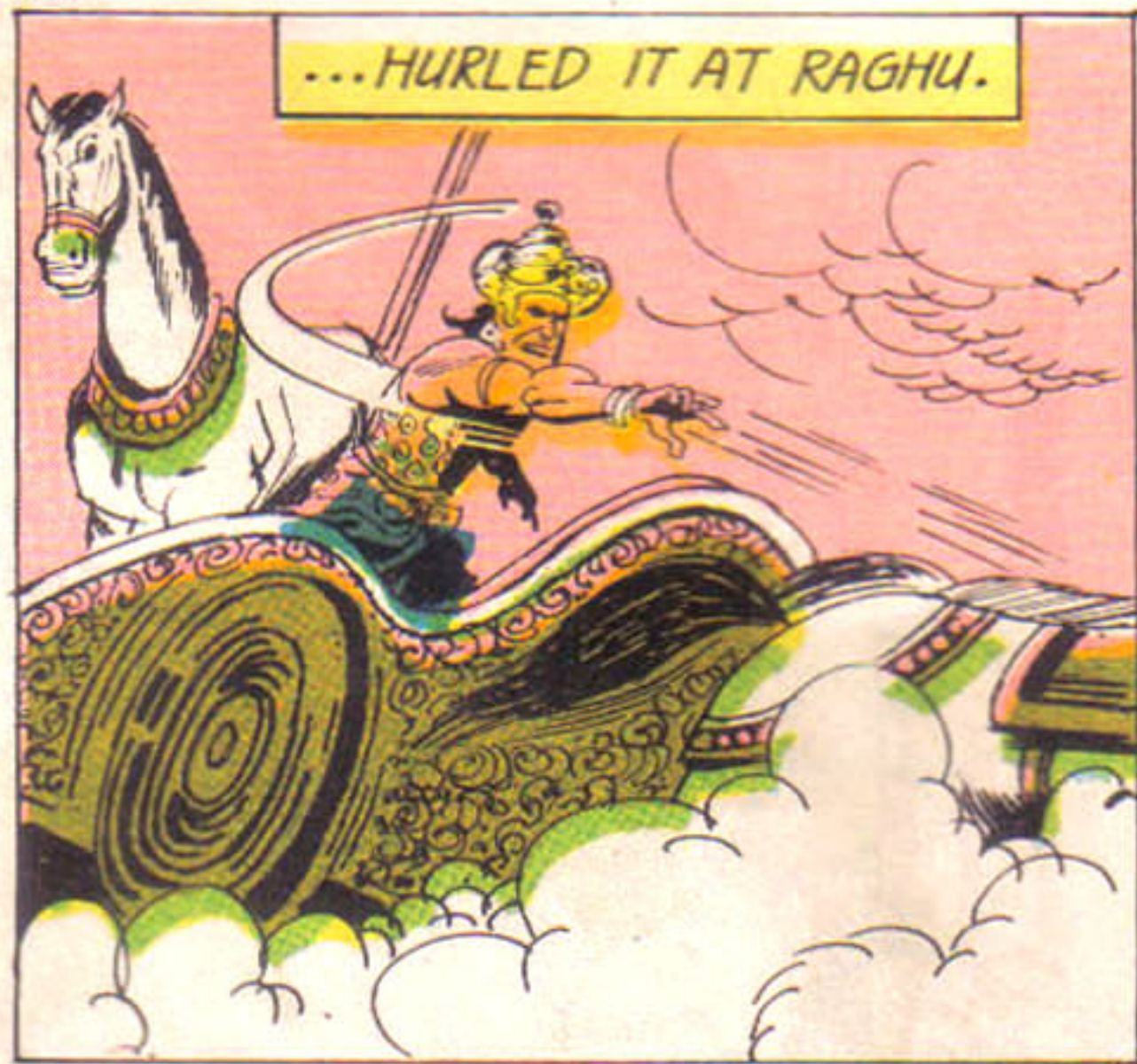
ENRAGED, INDRA FLUNG HIS BOW AWAY AND...



...SEIZING HIS LETHAL
WEAPON, VAJRA...

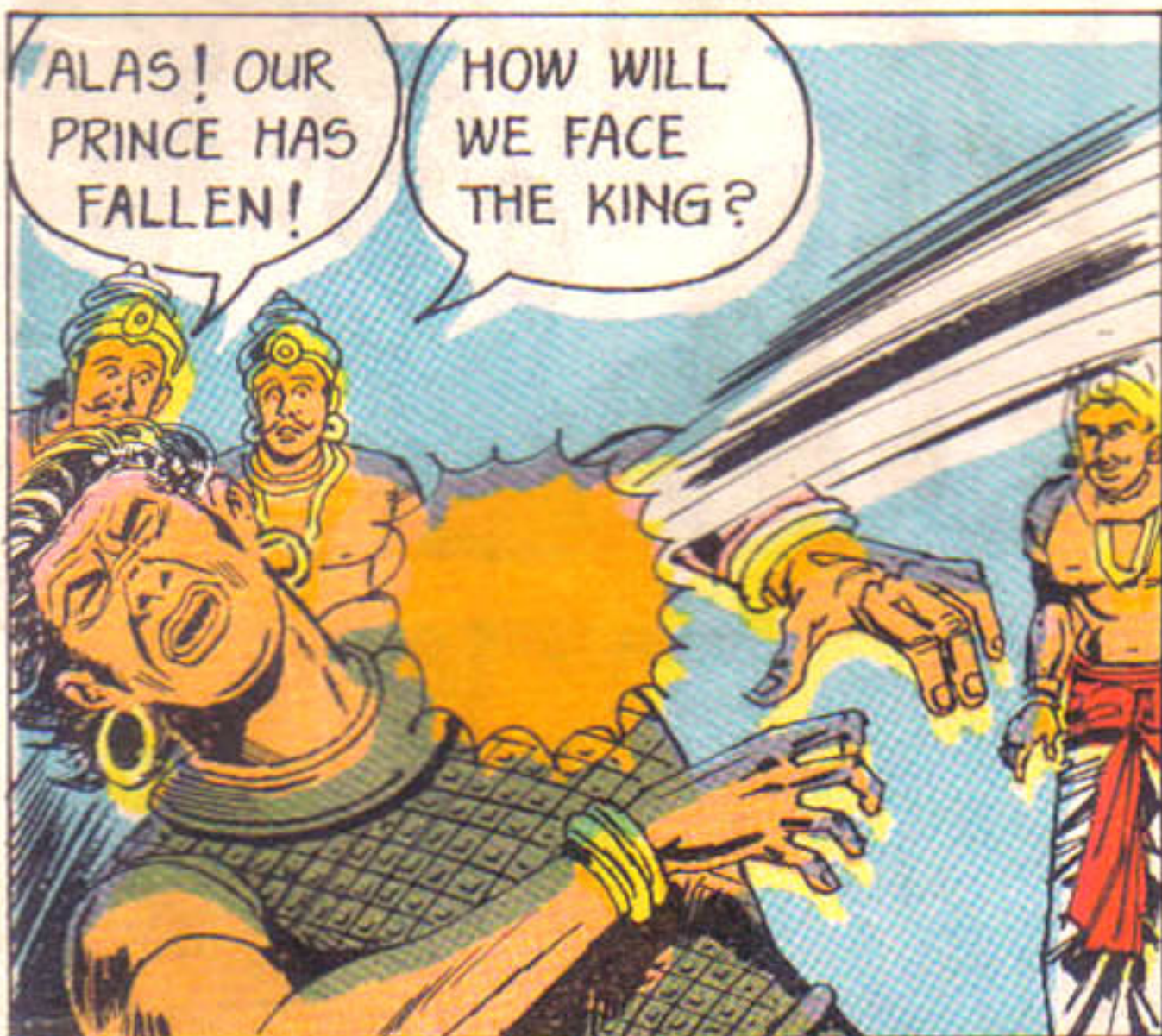


...HURLED IT AT RAGHU.

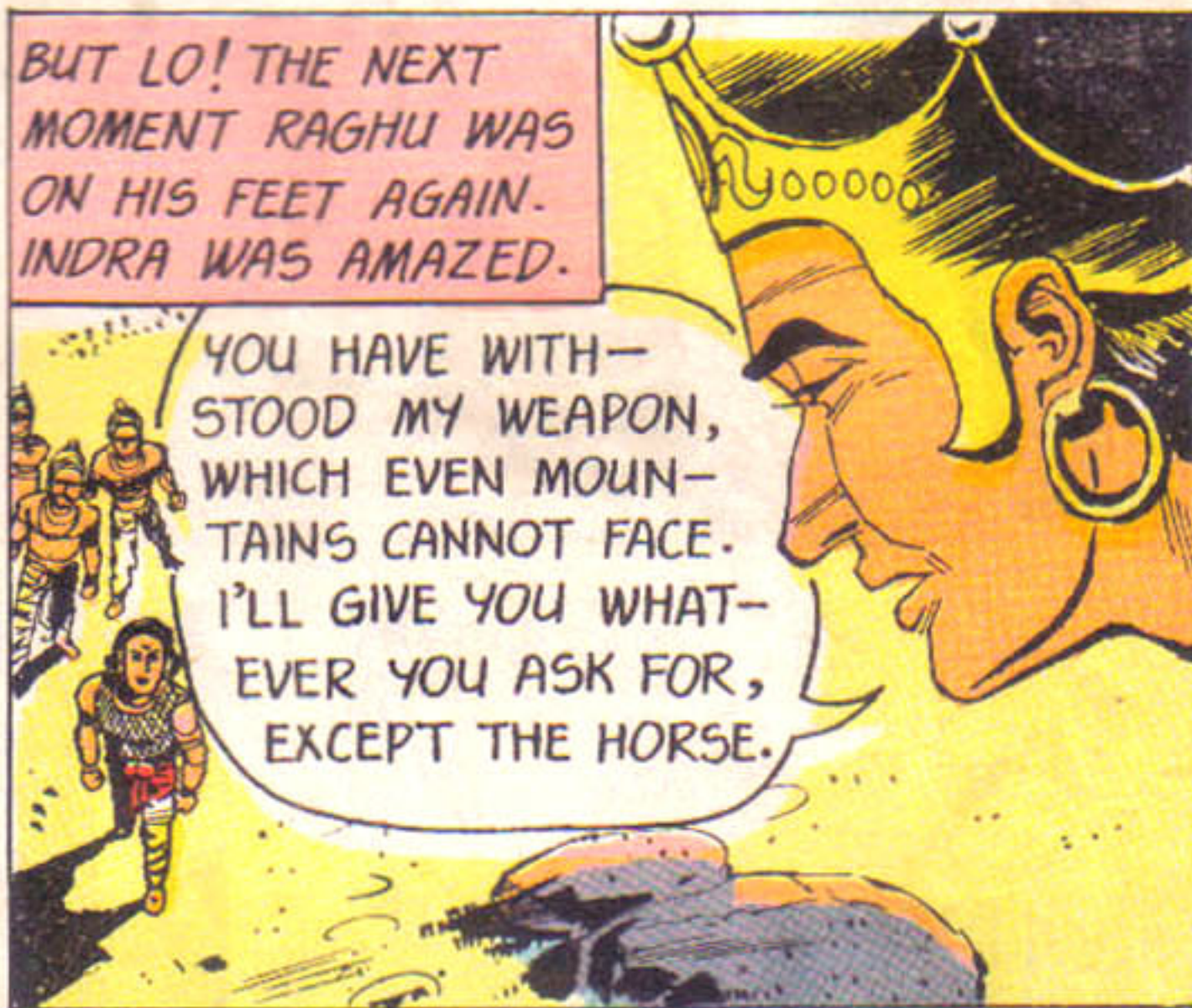


ALAS! OUR
PRINCE HAS
FALLEN!

HOW WILL
WE FACE
THE KING?

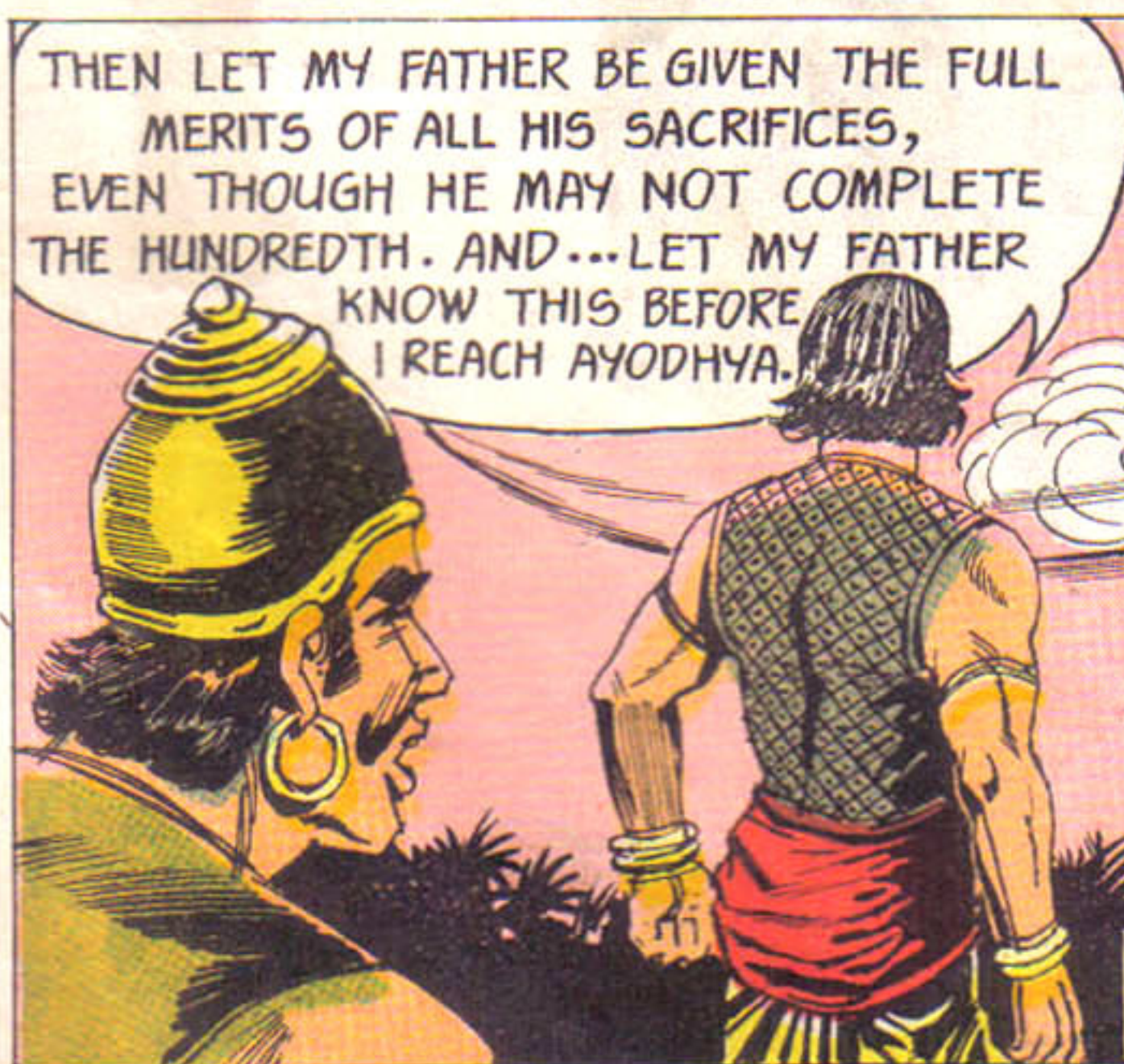


BUT LO! THE NEXT
MOMENT RAGHU WAS
ON HIS FEET AGAIN.
INDRA WAS AMAZED.

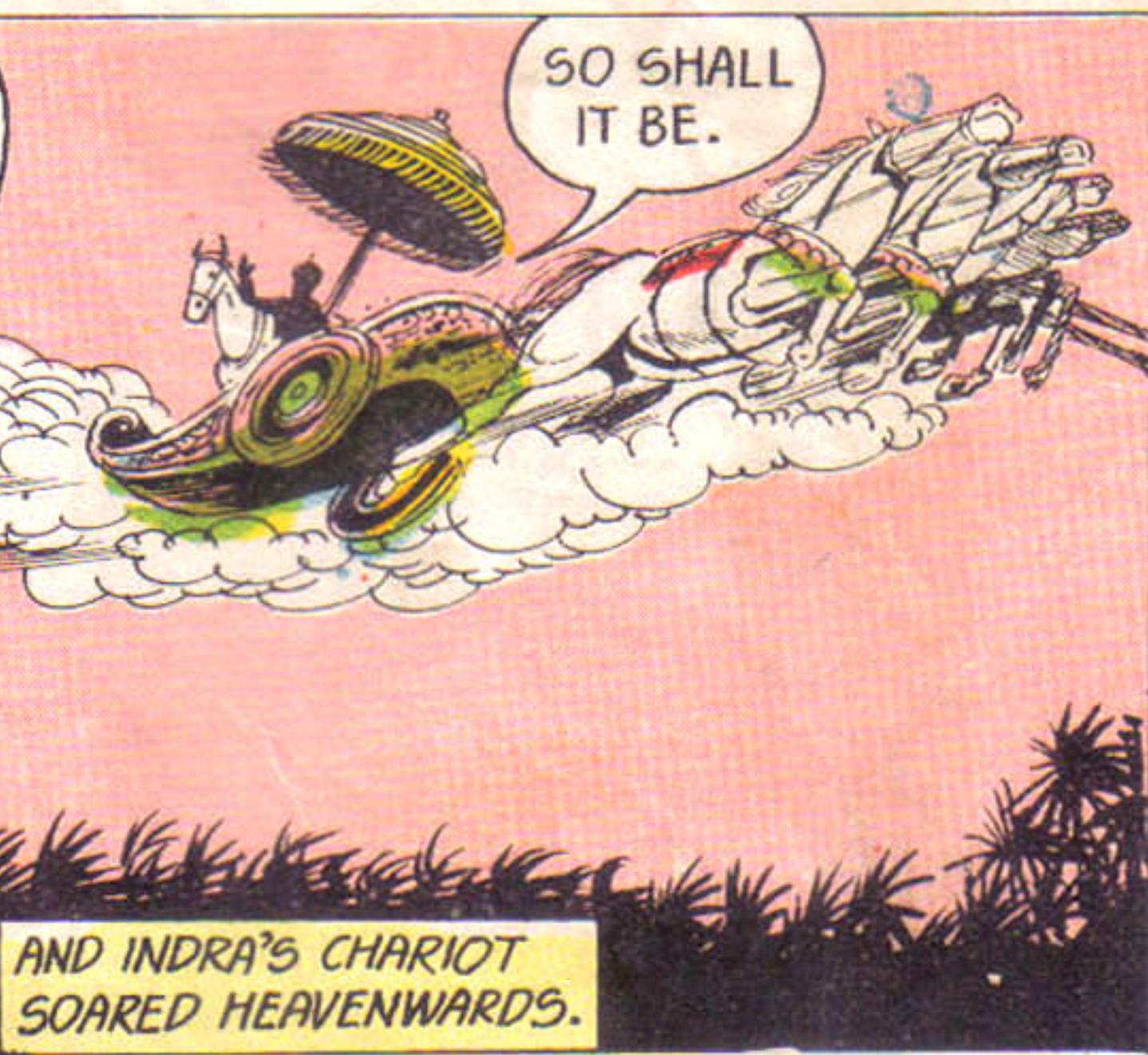


YOU HAVE WITH-
STOOD MY WEAPON,
WHICH EVEN MOUN-
TAINS CANNOT FACE.
I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT-
EVER YOU ASK FOR,
EXCEPT THE HORSE.

THEN LET MY FATHER BE GIVEN THE FULL
MERITS OF ALL HIS SACRIFICES,
EVEN THOUGH HE MAY NOT COMPLETE
THE HUNDREDTH. AND...LET MY FATHER
KNOW THIS BEFORE
I REACH AYODHYA.



SO SHALL
IT BE.



AND INDRA'S CHARIOT
SOARED HEAVENWARDS.

INDRA KEPT HIS PROMISE. A PROUD DILIPA STOOD WAITING TO WELCOME THE HERO, AS HE ENTERED AYODHYA IN TRIUMPH.

DEAR SON, INDRA'S MESSENGER SPOKE OF YOUR VALOUR TOO BUT YOUR SCARRED HANDS ARE MORE ELOQUENT.

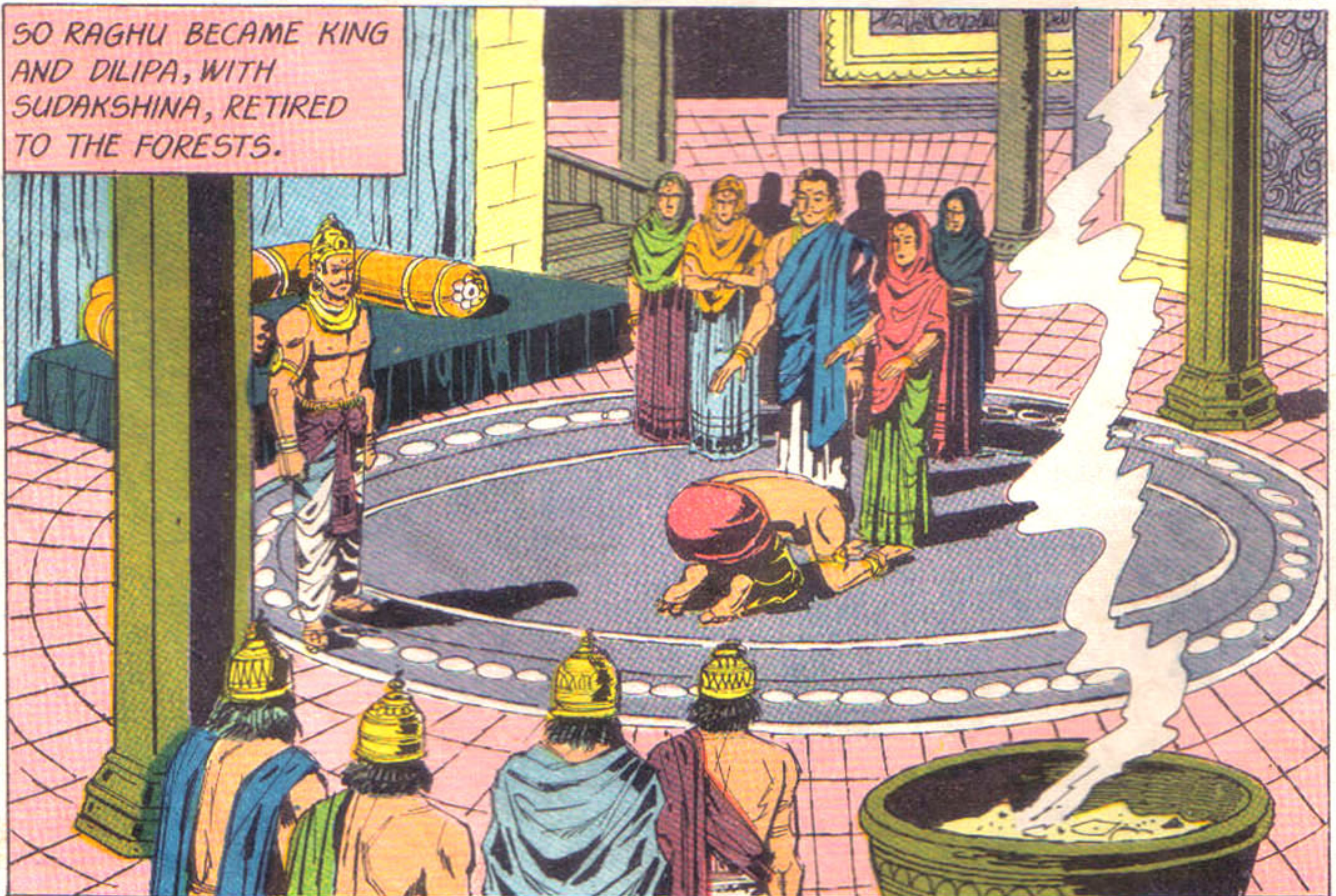


LATER —

I NOW WISH TO ENTRUST THE KINGDOM TO YOU AND LEAD AN ASCETIC LIFE WITH YOUR MOTHER.

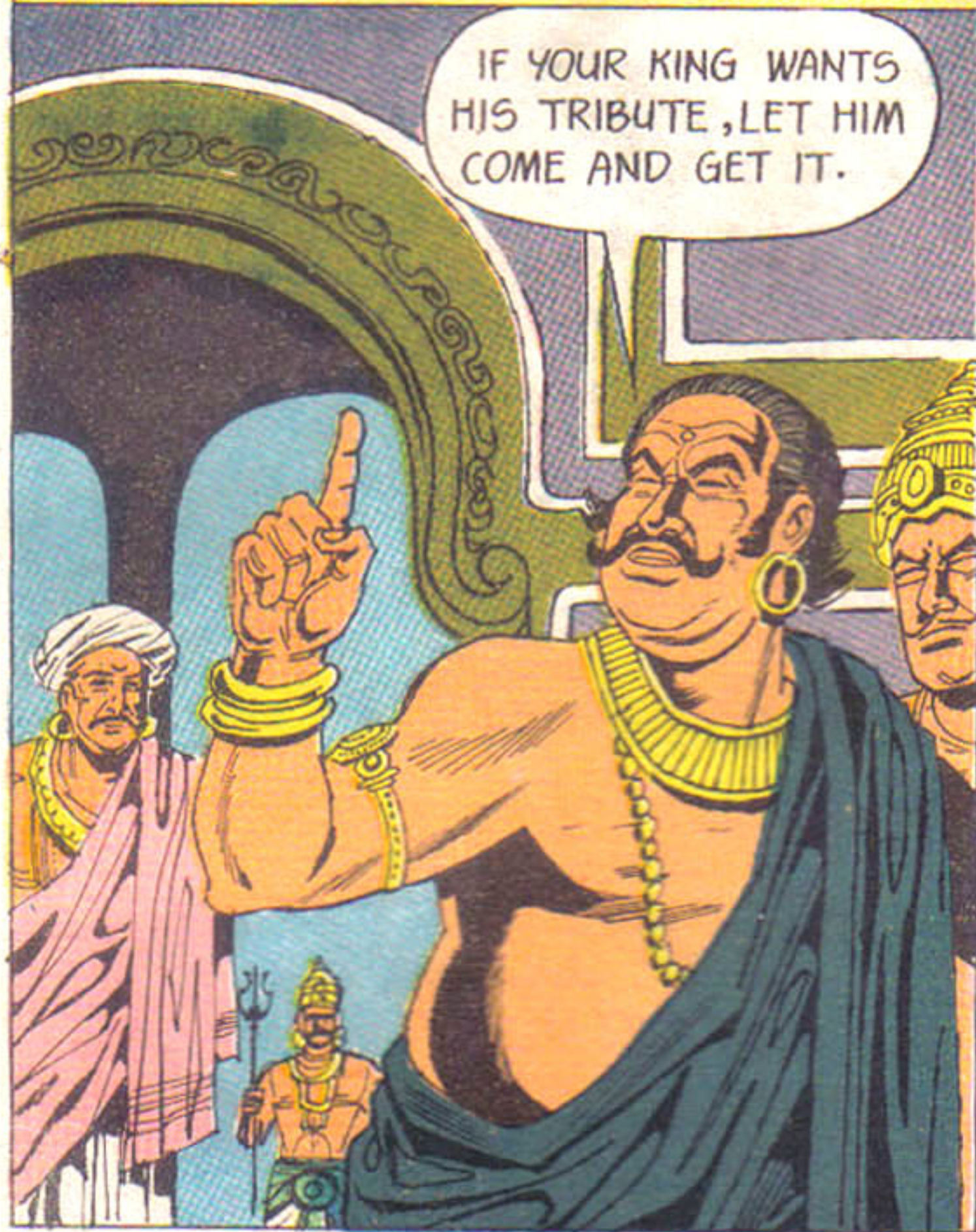


SO RAGHU BECAME KING AND DILIPA, WITH SUDAKSHINA, RETIRED TO THE FORESTS.



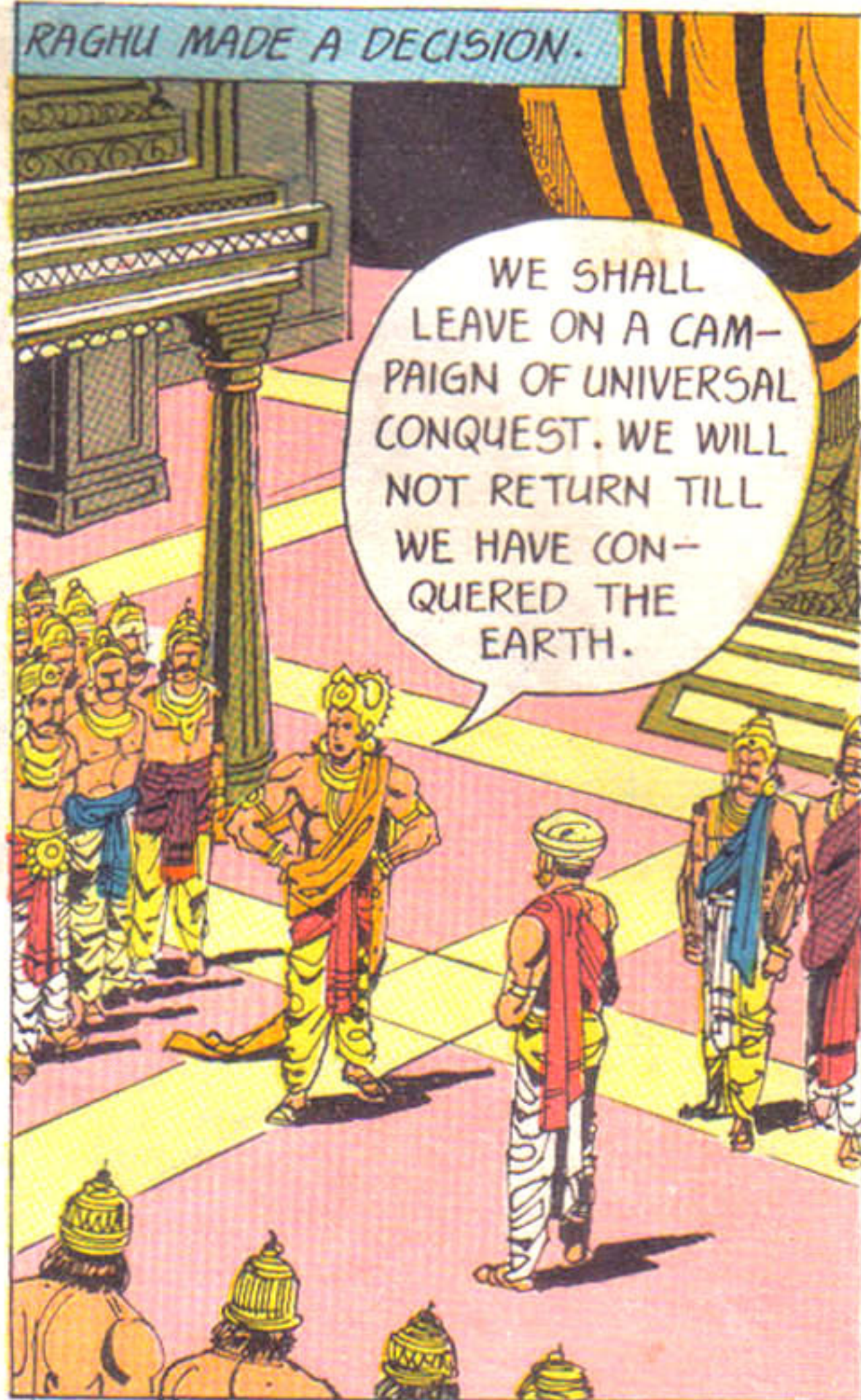
MEANWHILE, THE VASSAL KINGS, WHOM RAGHU HAD SUBDUED, NOW ROSE IN REVOLT.

IF YOUR KING WANTS HIS TRIBUTE, LET HIM COME AND GET IT.

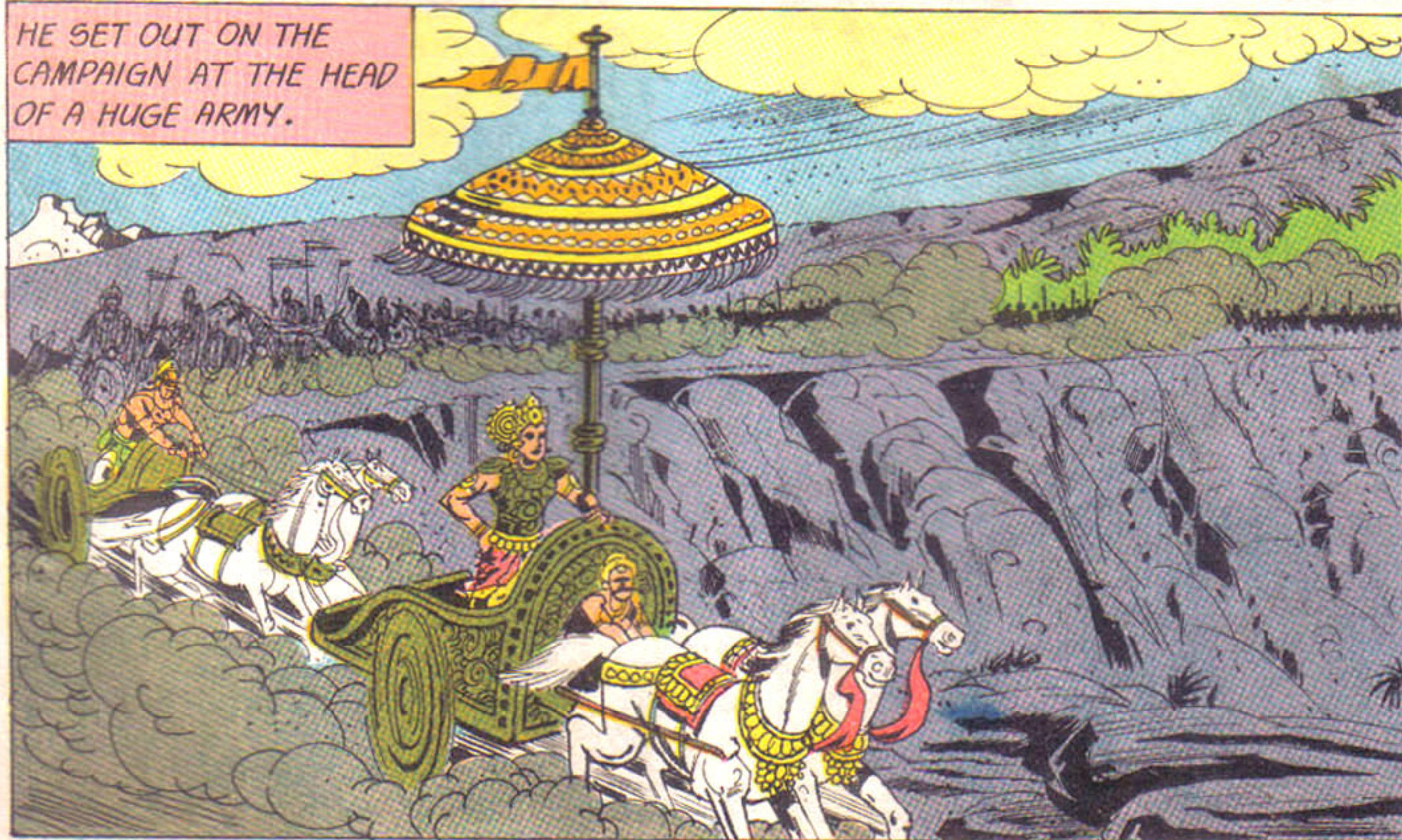


RAGHU MADE A DECISION.

WE SHALL LEAVE ON A CAMPAIGN OF UNIVERSAL CONQUEST. WE WILL NOT RETURN TILL WE HAVE CONQUERED THE EARTH.



HE SET OUT ON THE CAMPAIGN AT THE HEAD OF A HUGE ARMY.



A FEW YEARS LATER, HIS MIGHTY MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, A TRIUMPHANT RAGHU MARCHED HOMEWARDS TO AYODHYA.



A HERALD ANNOUNCED HIS ARRIVAL IN THE CITY.

...AND INSTEAD OF THEIR CROWNS THE DUST OF HIS CHARIOT COVERS THEIR HUMBLER HEADS. OUR KING RETURNS WITH UNTOLD WEALTH.



HIS POWER ESTABLISHED, RAGHU NOW DECIDED TO GIVE AWAY ALL HIS WEALTH.

ENOUGH WEALTH SHOULD FIRST BE GIVEN TO ALL THOSE KINGS WHOM I HAVE CONQUERED. THE REST SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED AMONG MY SUBJECTS.



AS THE LAST LOT OF TREASURES WAS GIVEN AWAY, A YOUNG SAGE STOOD BEFORE RAGHU.

ALAS!
THERE IS
NOTHING
LEFT.

WELCOME,
O SAGE! HOW
IS YOUR GURU?
WHAT CAN I DO
FOR YOU?

ALL IS WELL WITH US,
O KING. I HAD COME FOR
THE FEE WHICH I HAVE TO
PAY TO MY TEACHER. BUT
I SEE THAT I HAVE COME
TOO LATE. I WILL
HAVE TO GO
AND TRY
ELSEWHERE.

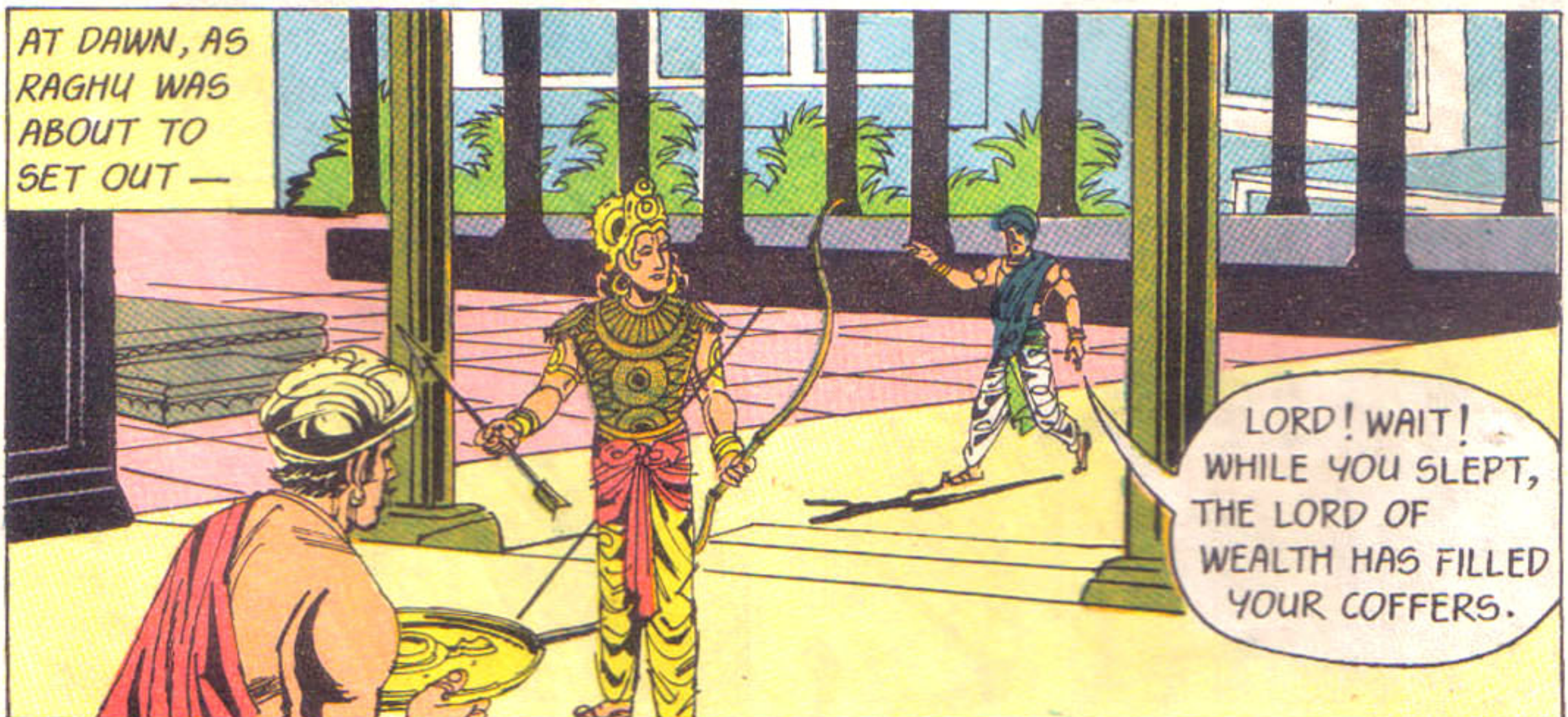
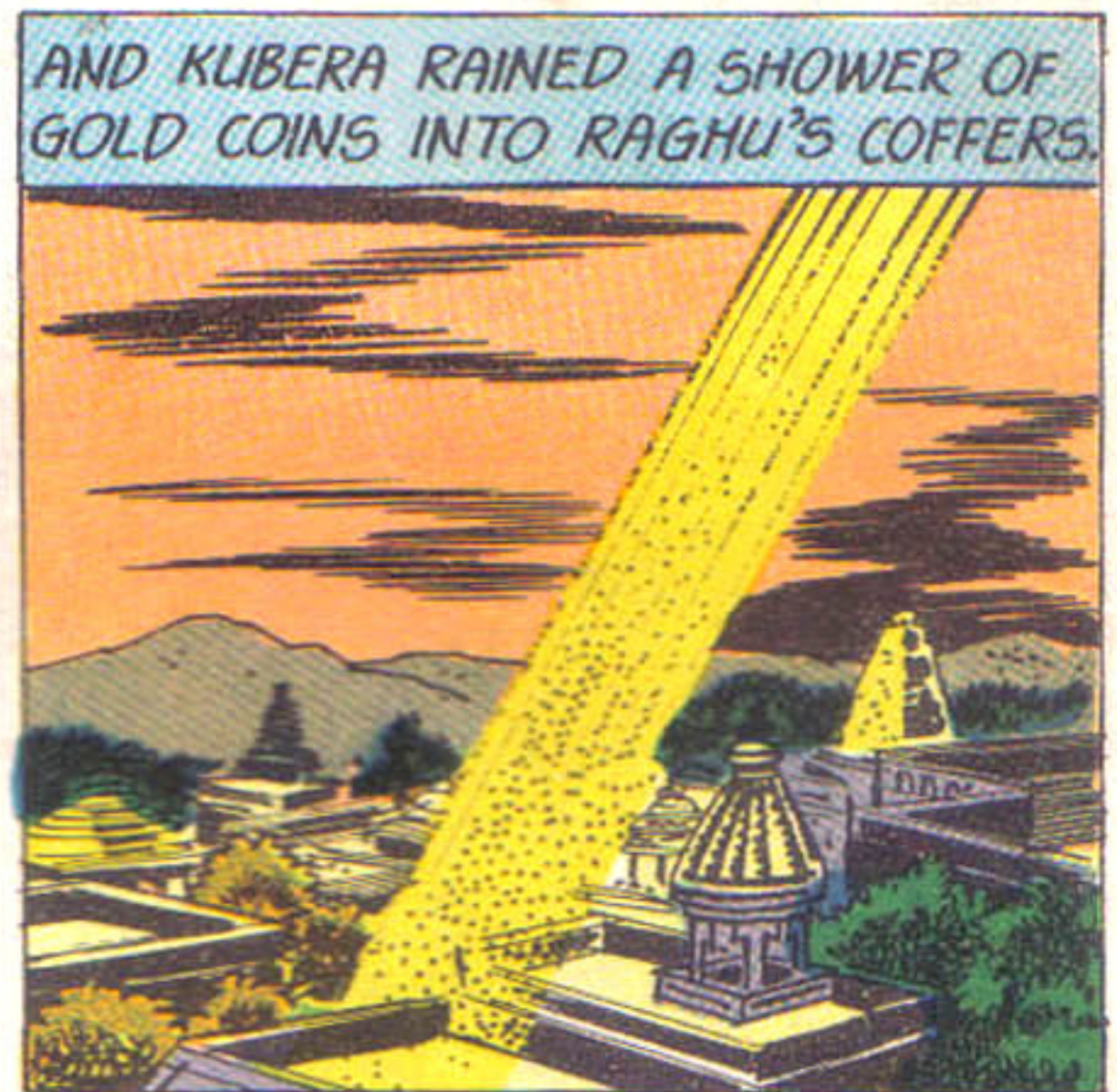
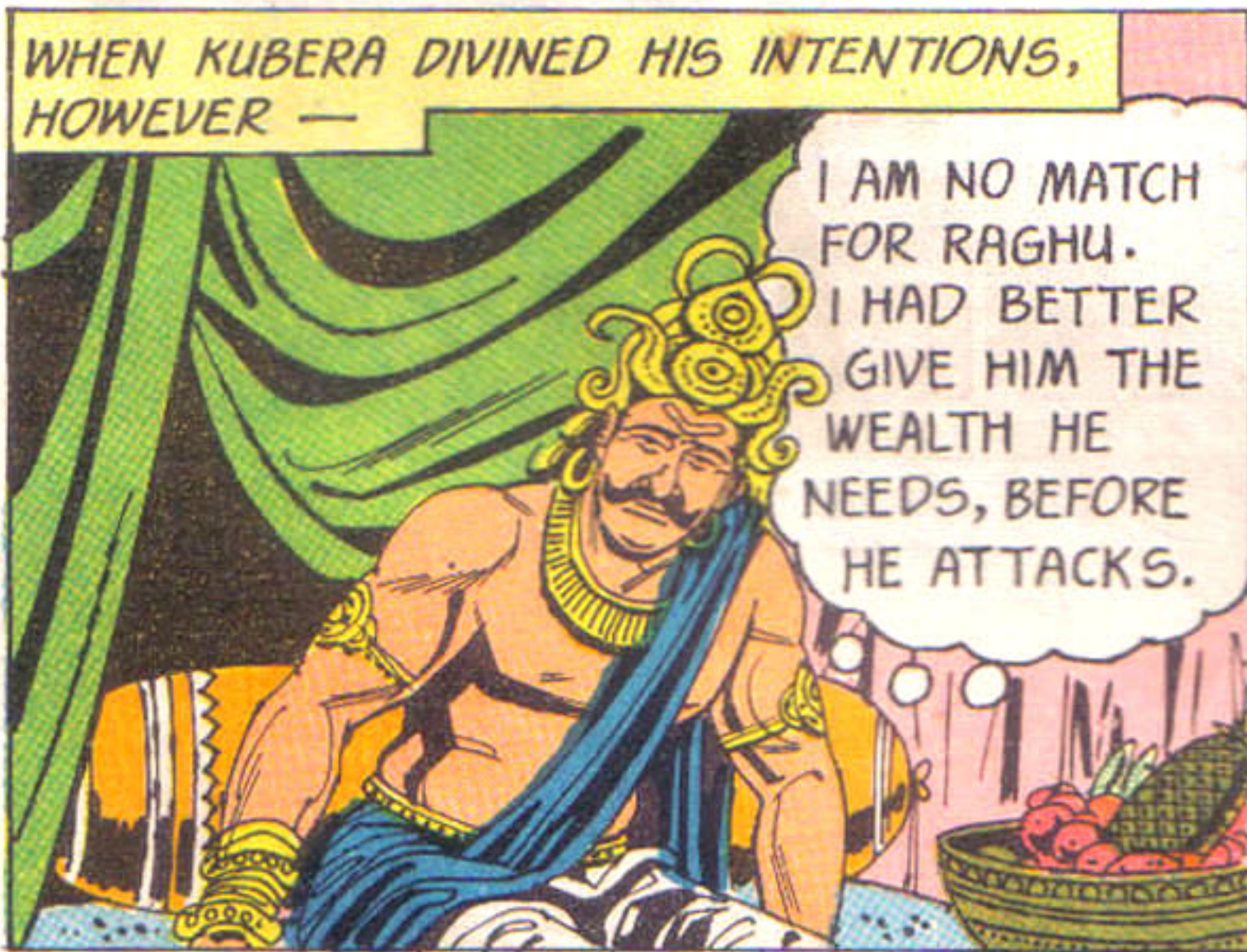
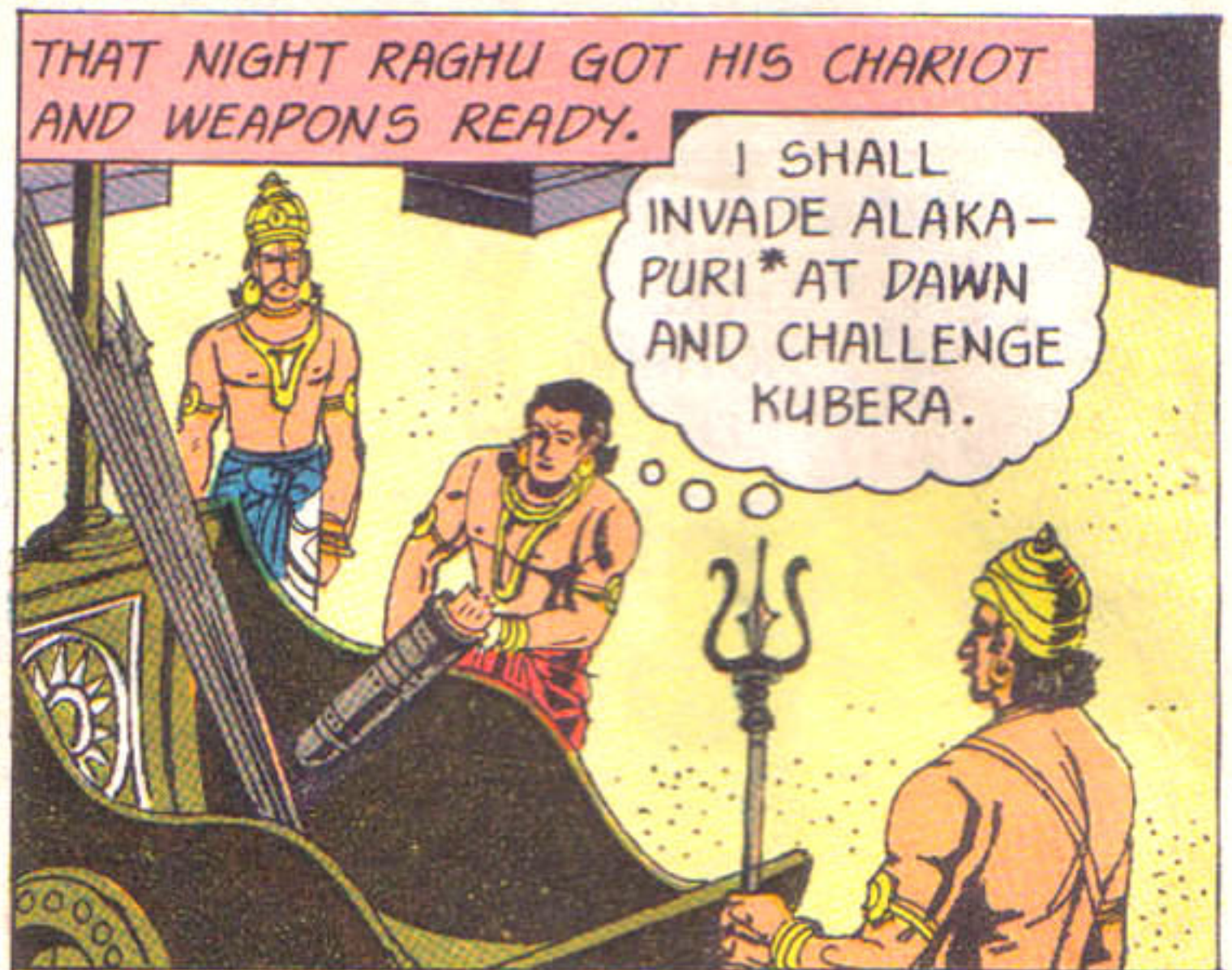
AS THE SAGE TURNED TO GO —

WAIT,
O VIRTUOUS ONE.
I CANNOT LET YOU
DO THAT. WHAT IS
YOUR GURU'S
DEMAND?

THE SAGE MENTIONED THE AMOUNT.

KUBERA* ALONE
NOW POSSESSES
SUCH WEALTH.
I WILL HAVE TO
TAKE IT FROM
HIM.

* THE GOD OF WEALTH.



WHEN RAGHU TOLD THE SAGE ABOUT IT, HE WAS AMAZED.



TO ALL GREAT KINGS
EARTH GLADLY YIELDS
HER WEALTH. HOW
GREAT MUST HE BE
WHEN HEAVEN ITSELF
SHOWERS HIM WITH
WEALTH.



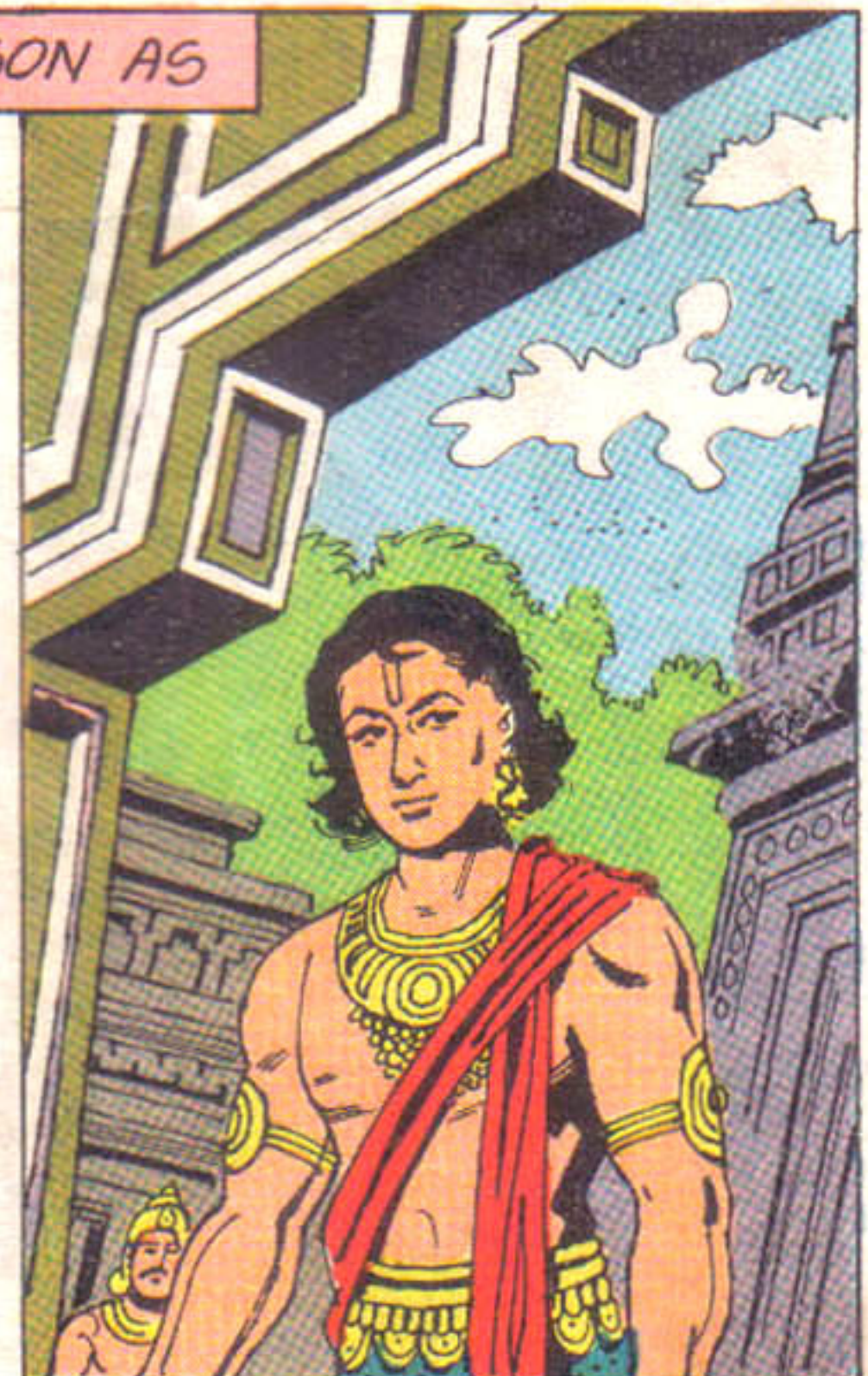
O KING, MAY
YOU BE BLESSED
WITH A SON AS
GREAT AS YOU.

AND SO THE PROMISED SON WAS BORN.



HE SHALL BE CALLED
AJA, THE UNBORN
ONE—ARISEN FROM
THE SUPREME SOUL.

AJA GREW UP TO BE AS VIRTUOUS AND VALIANT A SON AS RAGHU WAS TO HIS PARENTS.



MEANWHILE, AT VIDARBHA, INDUMATI, THE SISTER OF KING BHOJA, HAD COME OF AGE.

INDUMATI MUST SOON BE MARRIED. I SHALL HOLD A SWAYAMVARA FOR HER TO WHICH I SHALL INVITE MANY A NOBLE KING AND CHIEF.

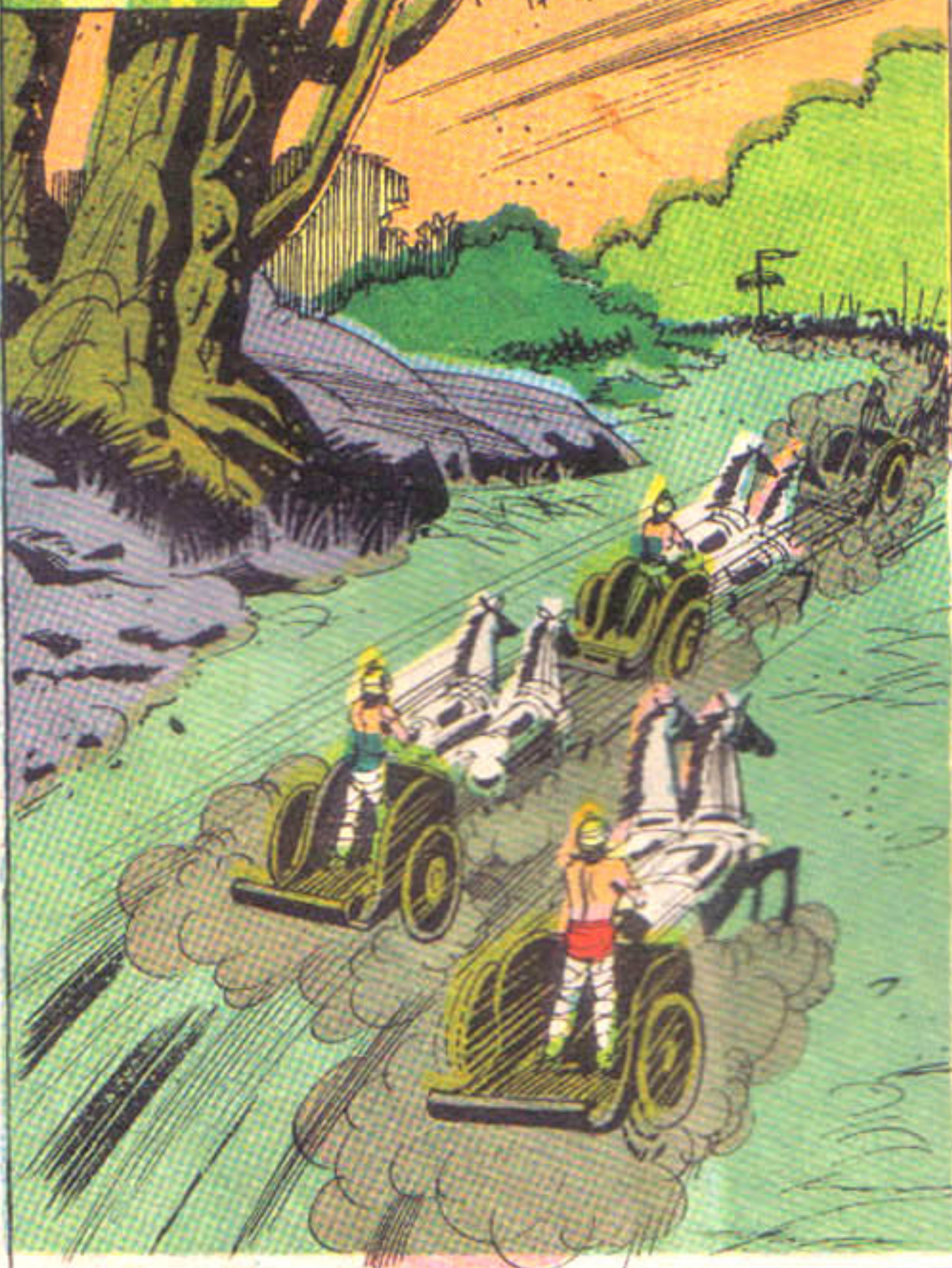


THE INVITATION REACHED THE COURT OF RAGHU. HE SENT FOR AJA.

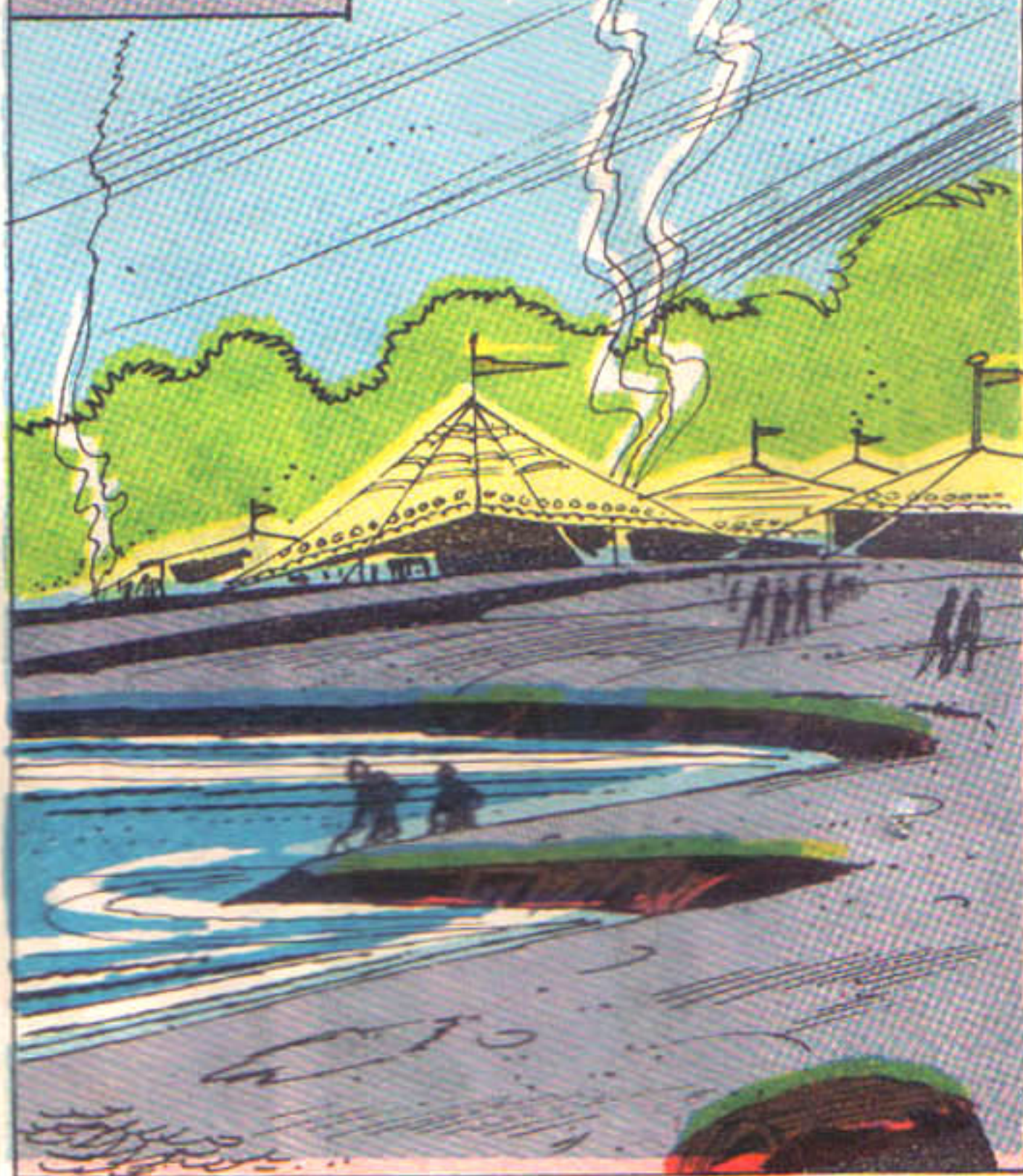
INDUMATI WOULD MAKE A PEERLESS BRIDE. GO TO VIDARBHA AND WIN HER, MY SON.



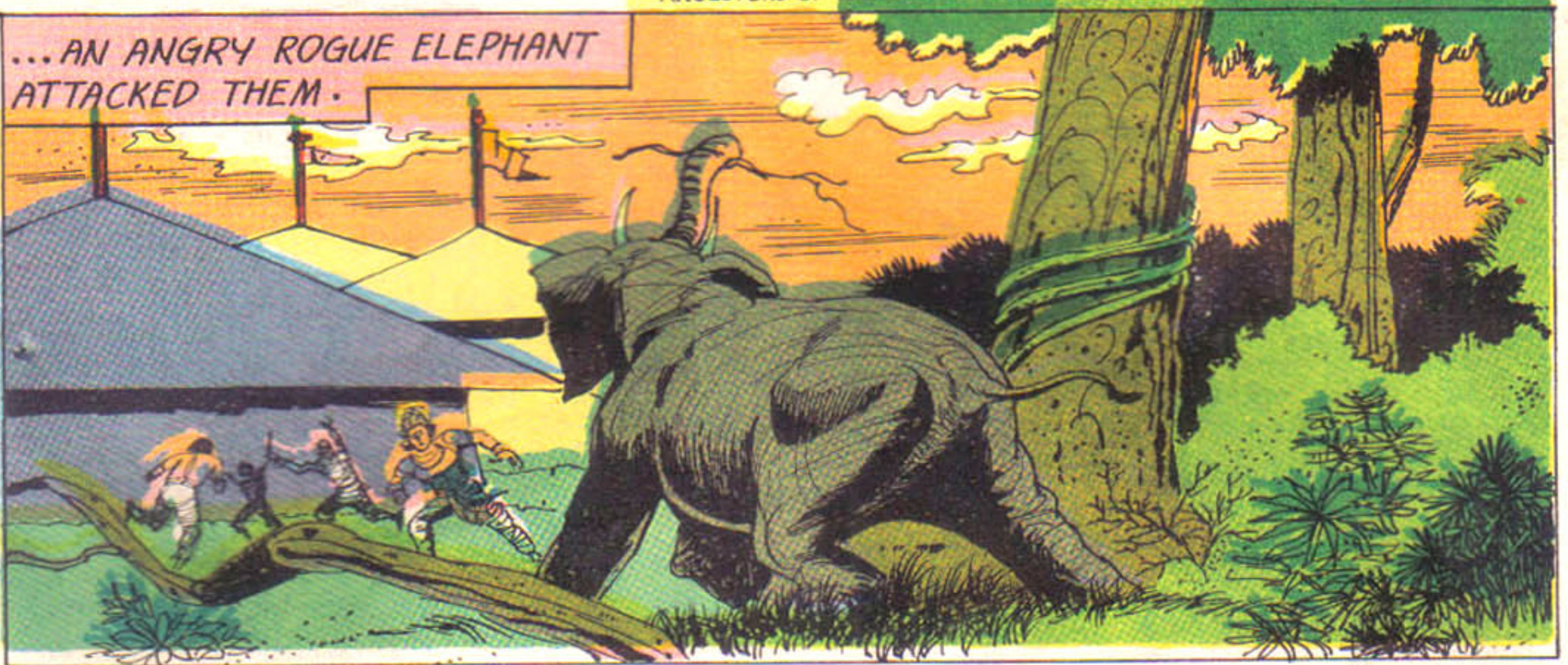
SO AJA SET OUT WITH A VAST RETINUE.



TOWARDS THE END OF THEIR JOURNEY, AS THEY SET UP CAMP ON THE BANKS OF THE NARMADA...



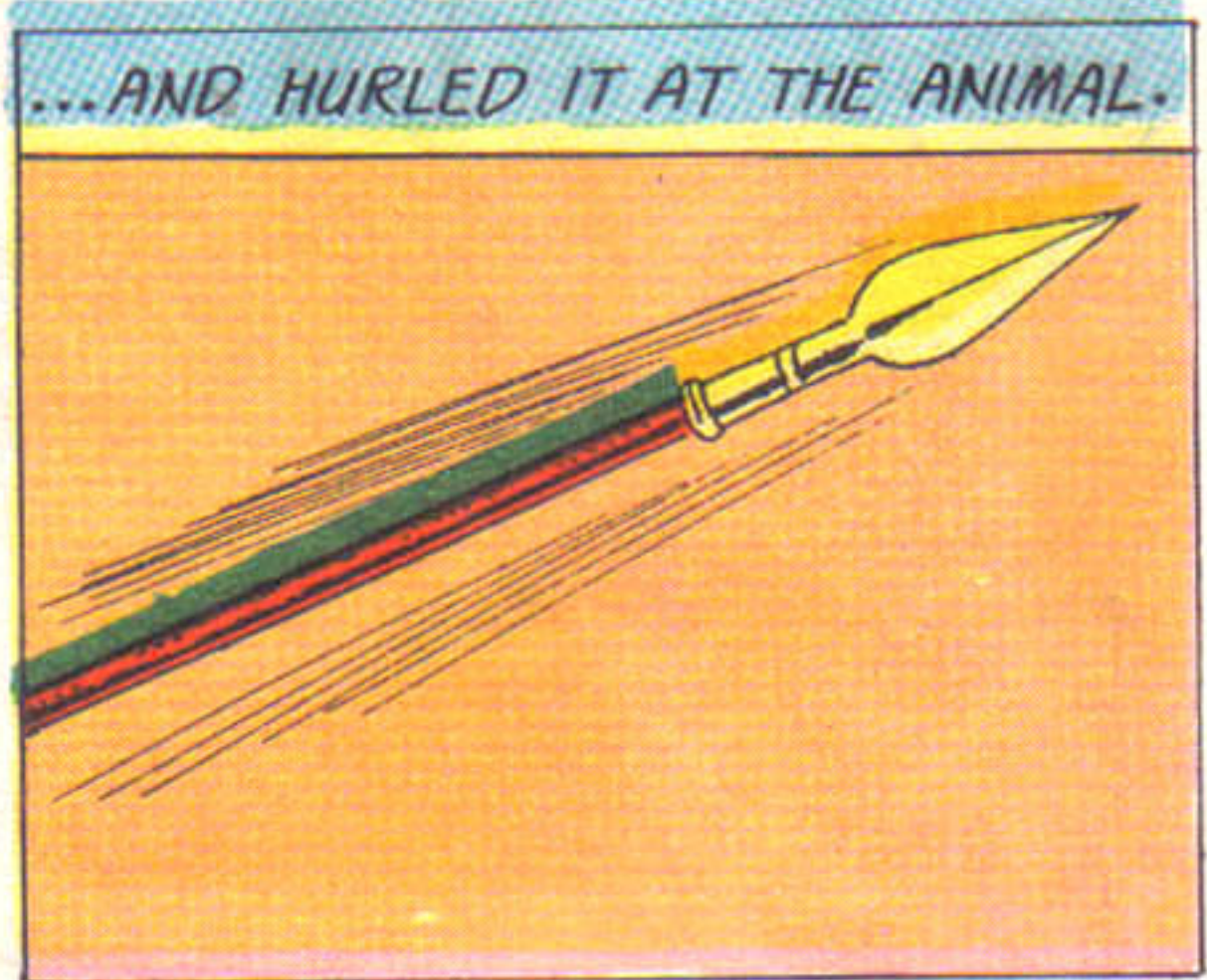
...AN ANGRY ROGUE ELEPHANT
ATTACKED THEM.



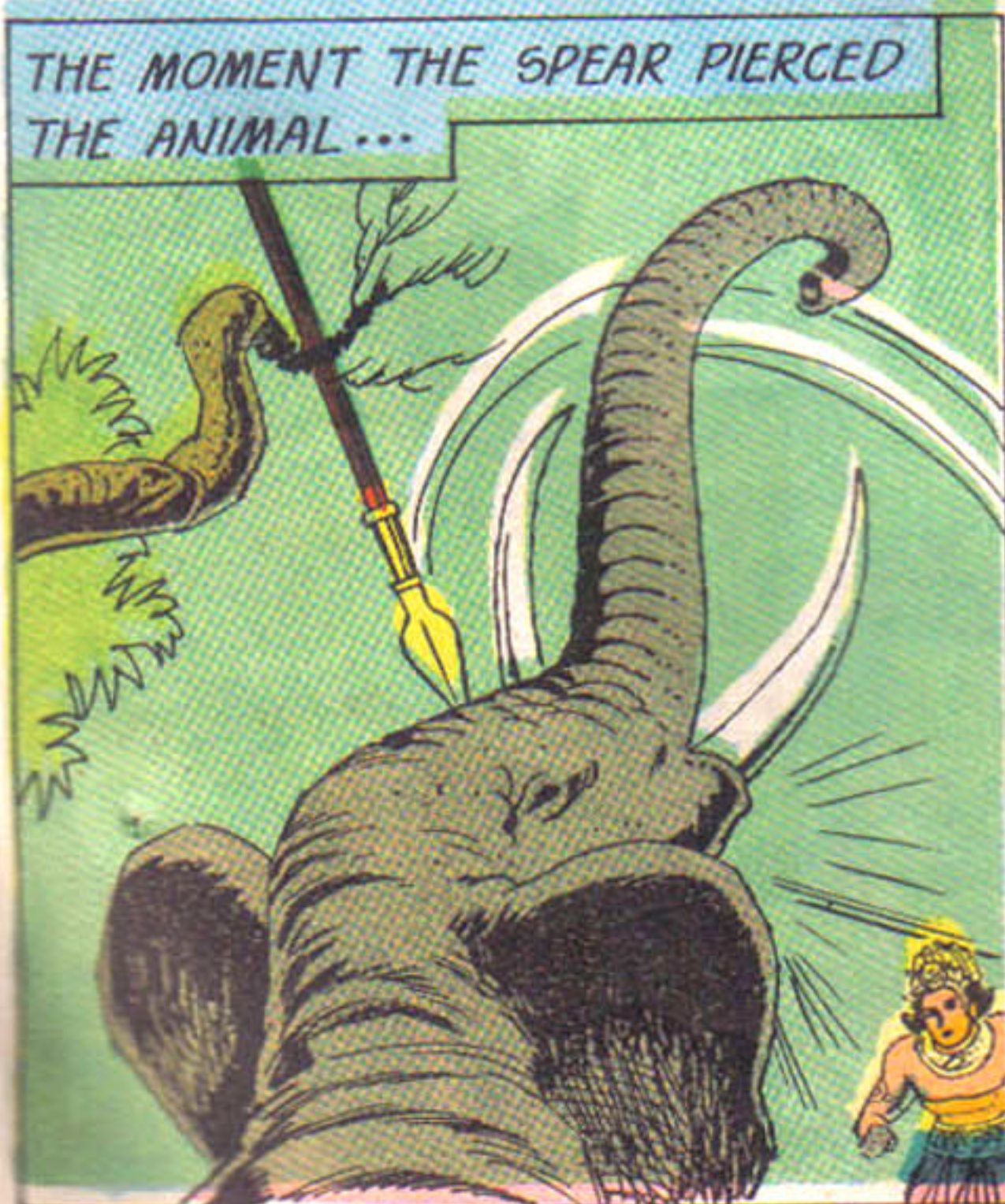
AJA RAISED HIS SPEAR...



...AND HURLED IT AT THE ANIMAL.

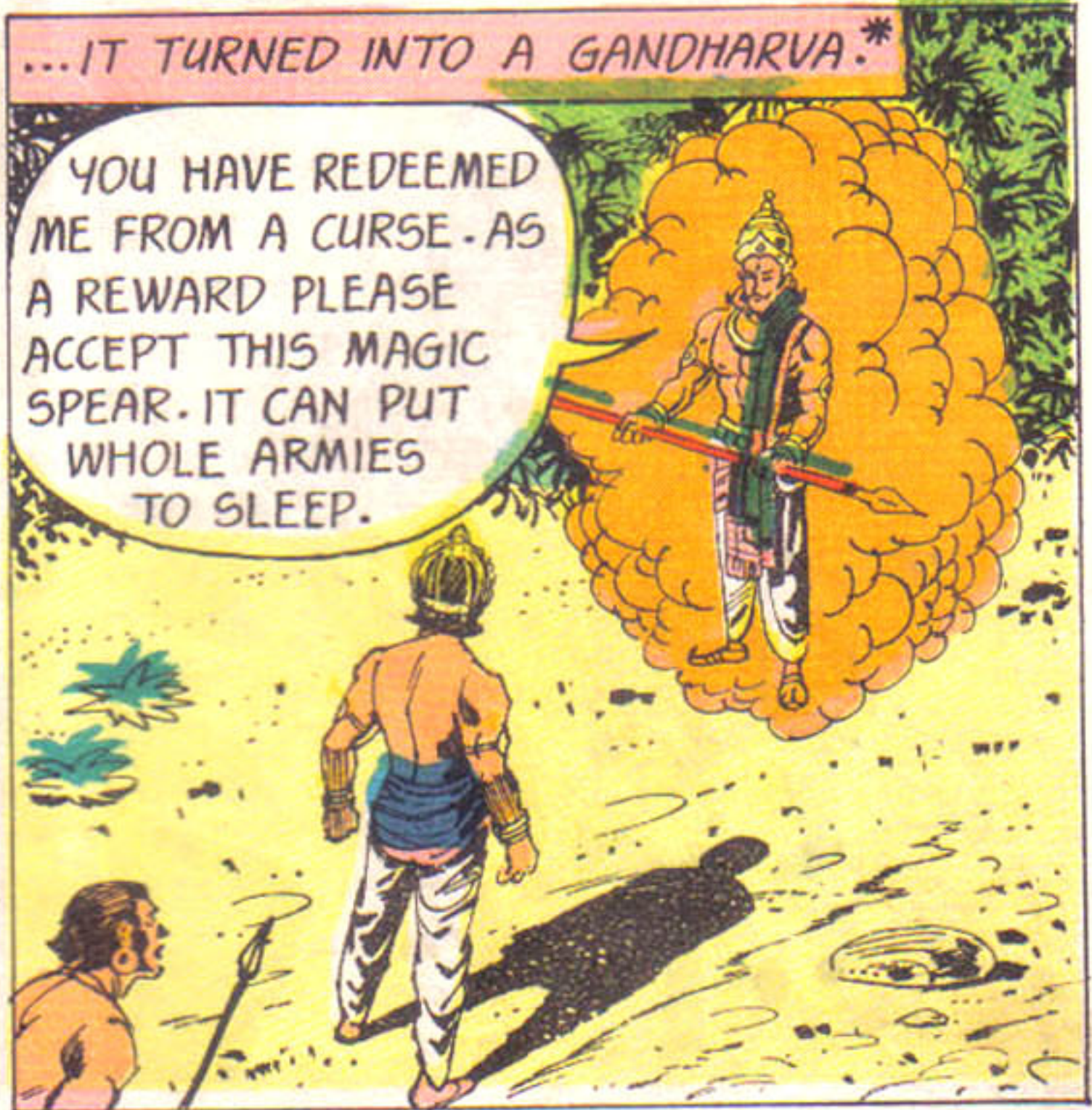


THE MOMENT THE SPEAR PIERCED
THE ANIMAL...

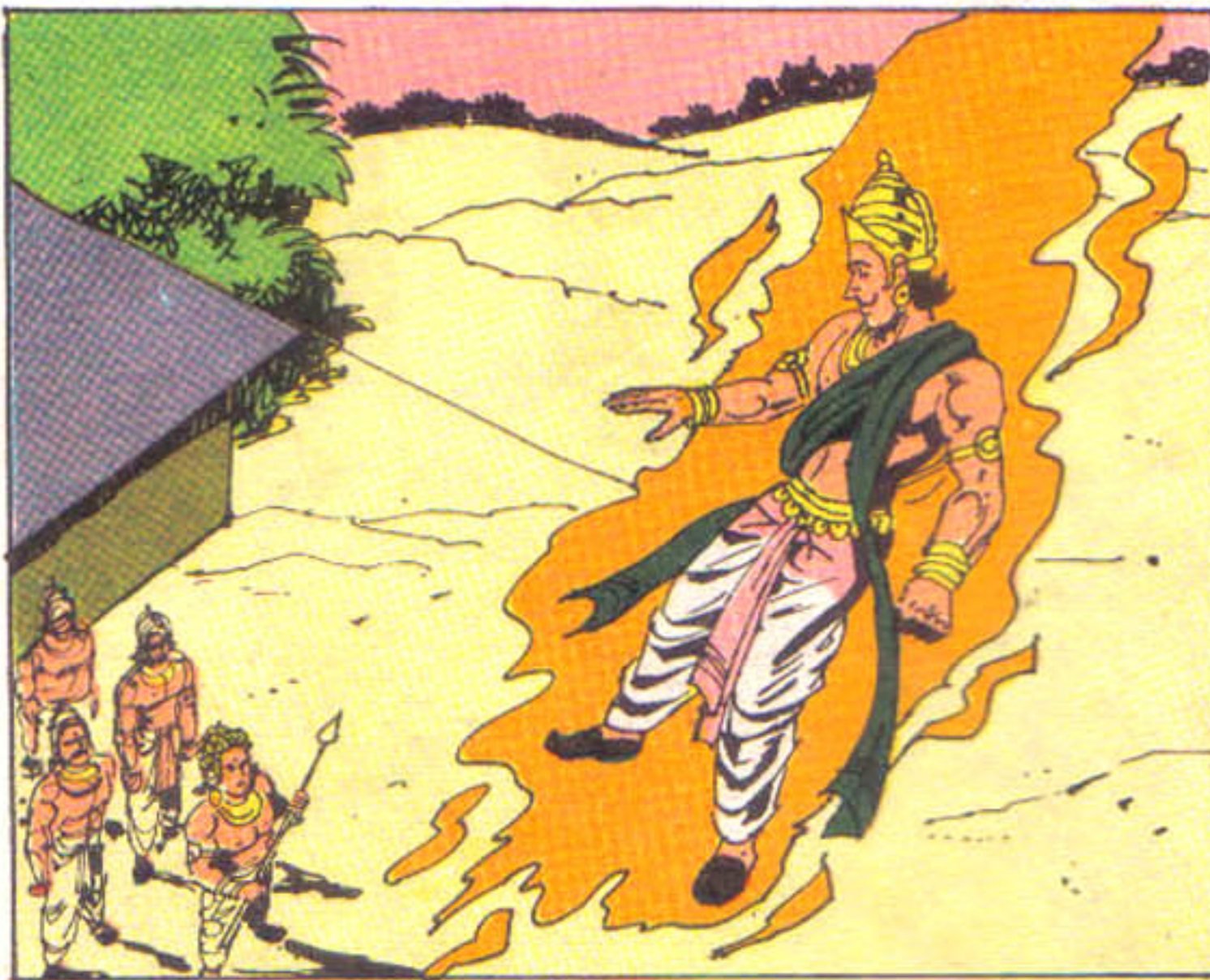


...IT TURNED INTO A GANDHARVA.*

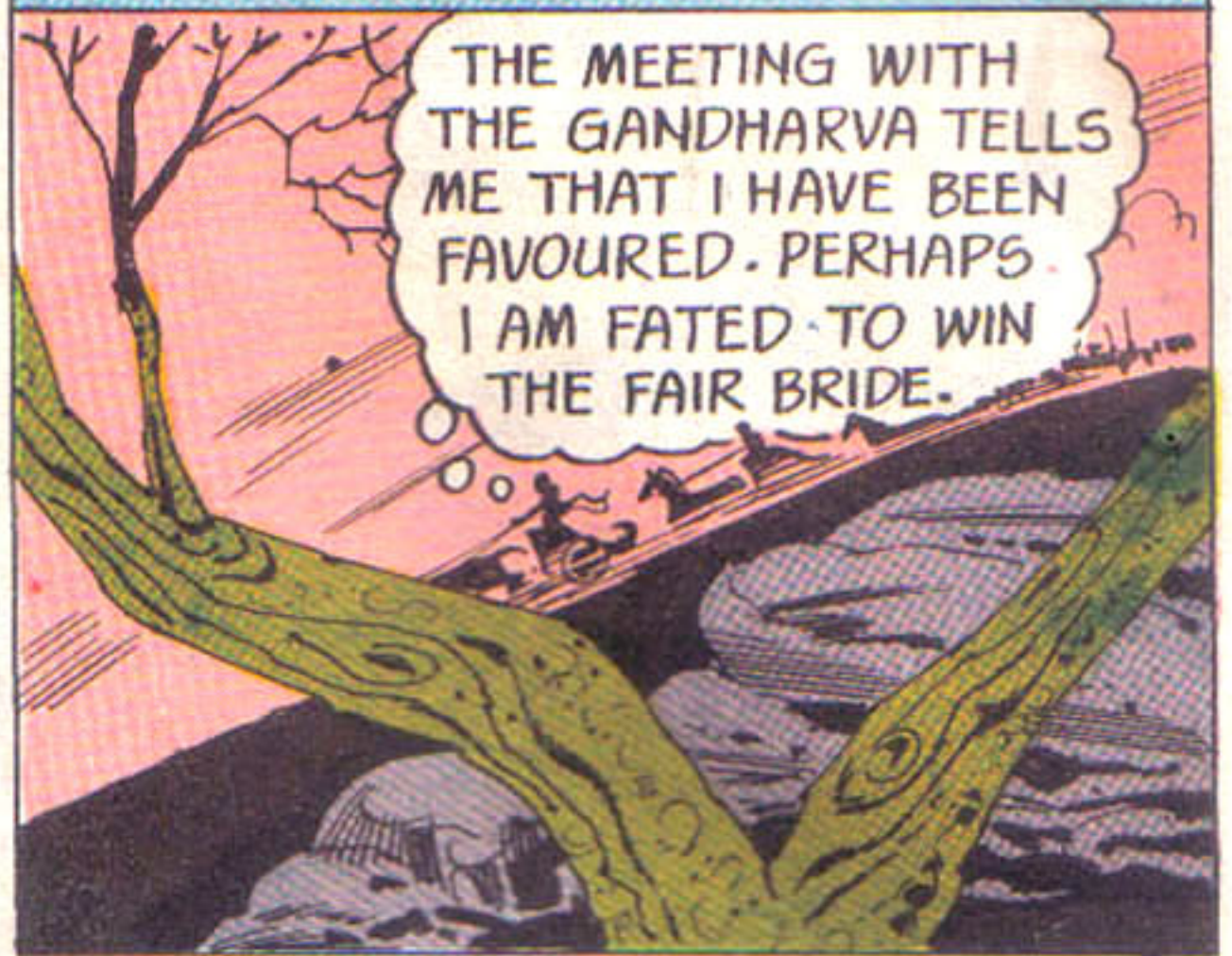
YOU HAVE REDEEMED
ME FROM A CURSE. AS
A REWARD PLEASE
ACCEPT THIS MAGIC
SPEAR. IT CAN PUT
WHOLE ARMIES
TO SLEEP.



* A CELESTIAL BEING.



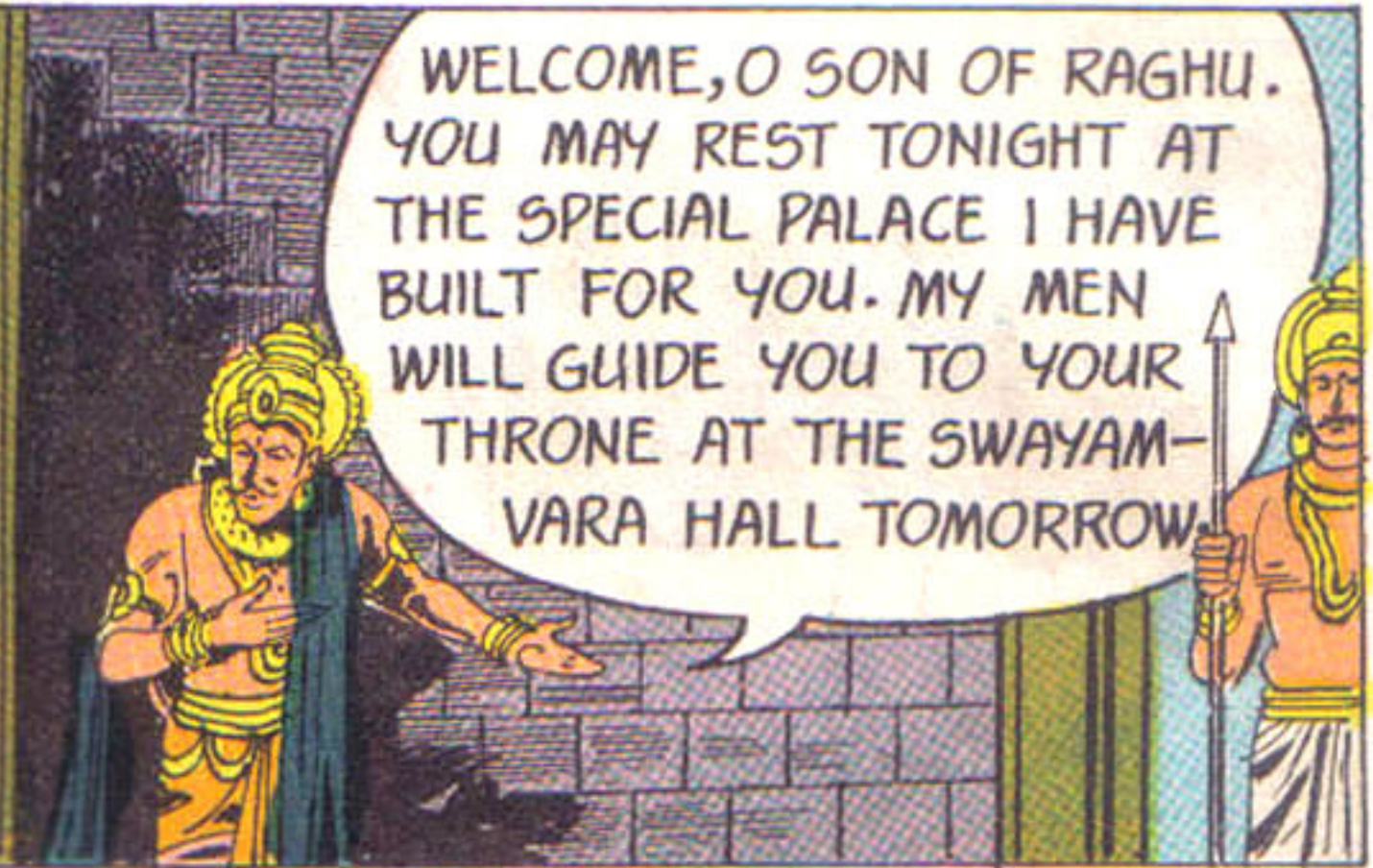
THE NEXT MORNING, AJA AND HIS RETINUE RESUMED THEIR JOURNEY.



AT VIDARBHA, BHOJA HIMSELF CAME OUT TO RECEIVE AJA.



WELCOME, O SON OF RAGHU. YOU MAY REST TONIGHT AT THE SPECIAL PALACE I HAVE BUILT FOR YOU. MY MEN WILL GUIDE YOU TO YOUR THRONE AT THE SWAYAM-VARA HALL TOMORROW.



THE NEXT MORNING, AS AJA ENTERED THE HALL —



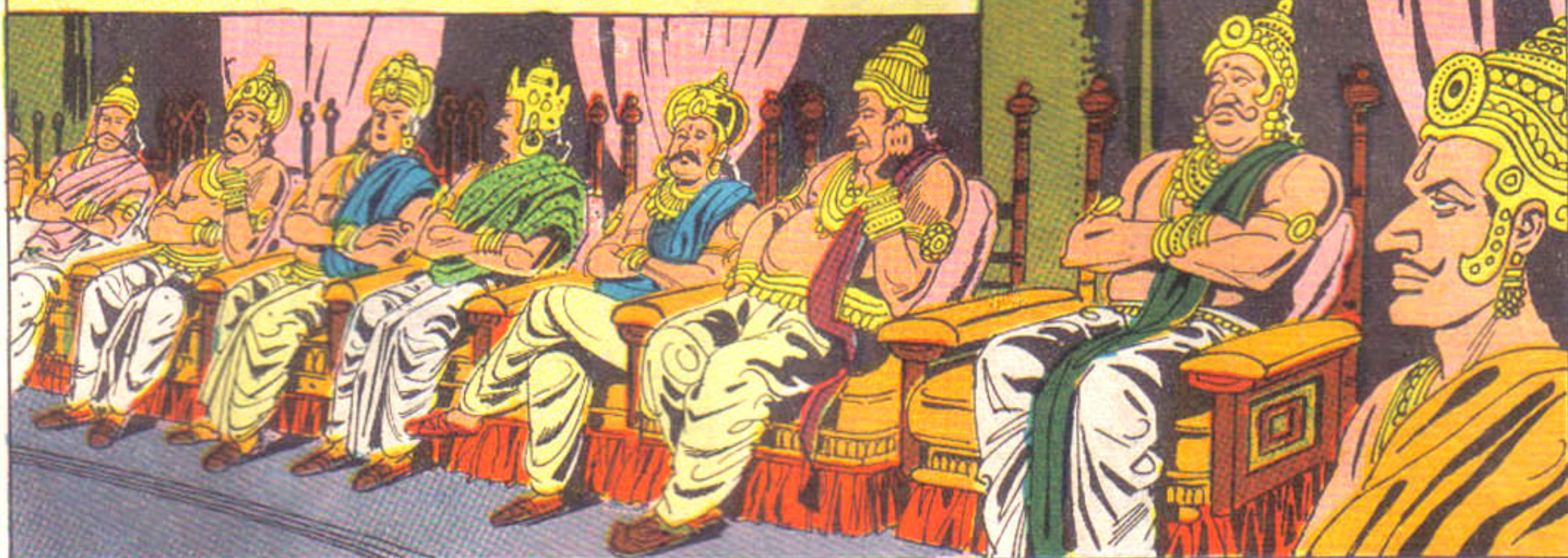
THE SON OF RAGHU!

WHAT HOPE DO WE HAVE NOW OF WINNING THE FAIR BRIDE?

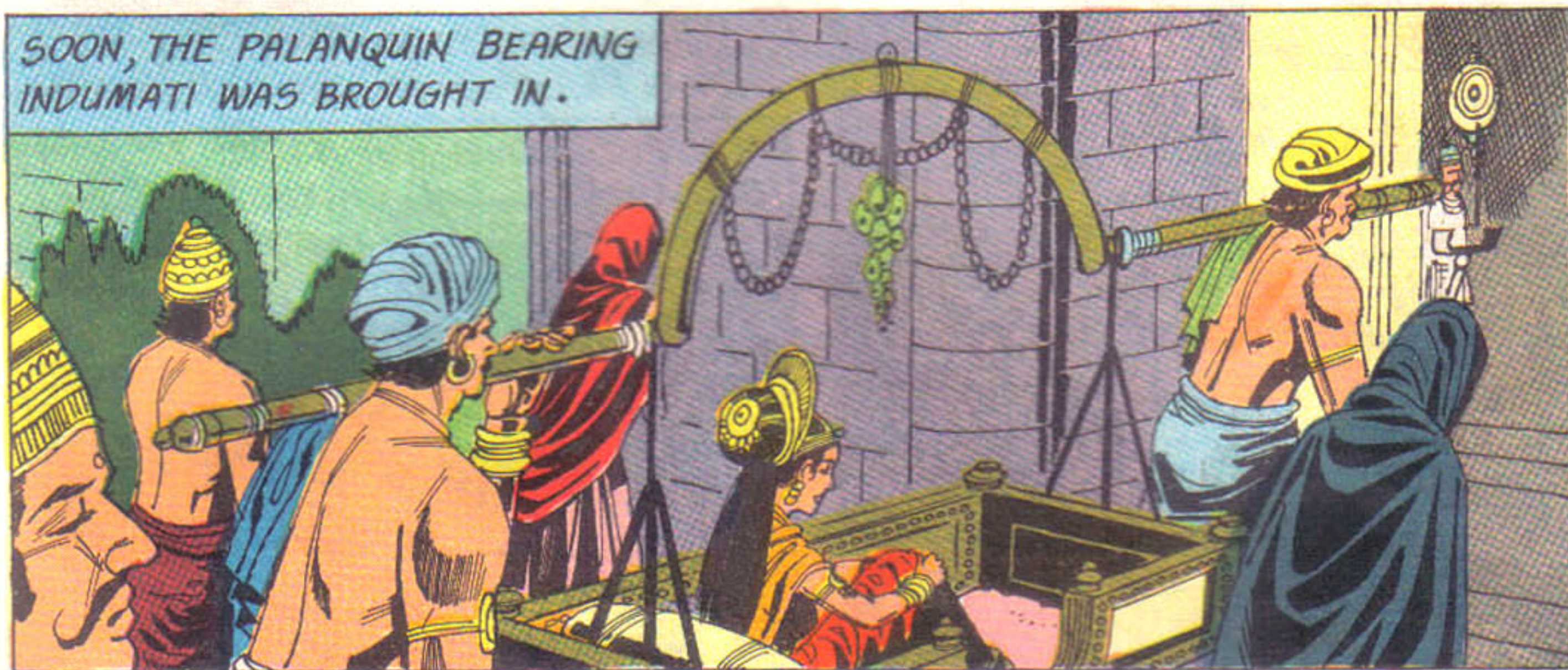
OH, THAT HE WERE NOT HERE!



THE AIR WAS TENSE AS THE MIGHTY KINGS AWAITED HER ENTRY—EACH WITH THE HOPE THAT HE WOULD BE THE CHOSEN LORD.



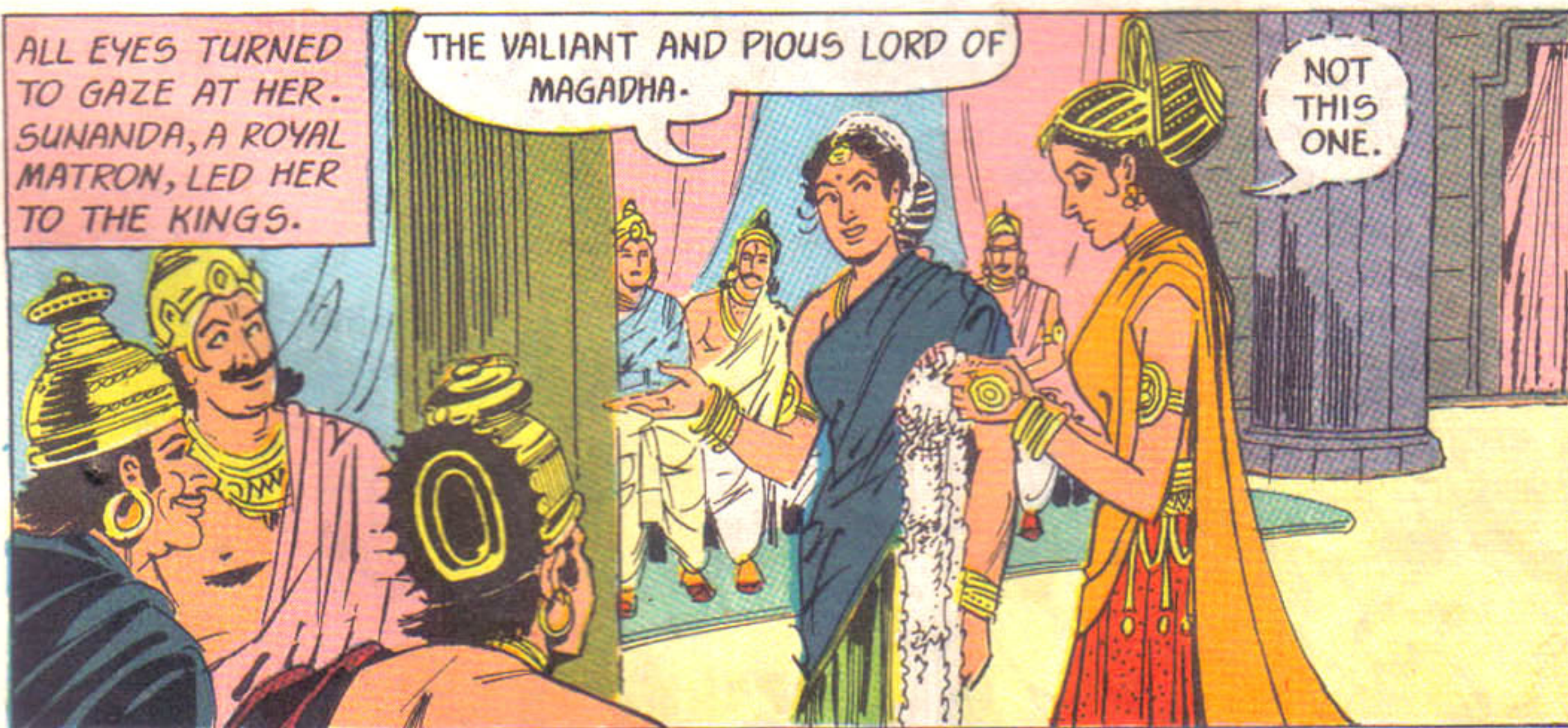
SOON, THE PALANQUIN BEARING INDUMATI WAS BROUGHT IN.



ALL EYES TURNED TO GAZE AT HER. SUNANDA, A ROYAL MATRON, LED HER TO THE KINGS.

THE VALIANT AND PIOUS LORD OF MAGADHA.

NOT THIS ONE.

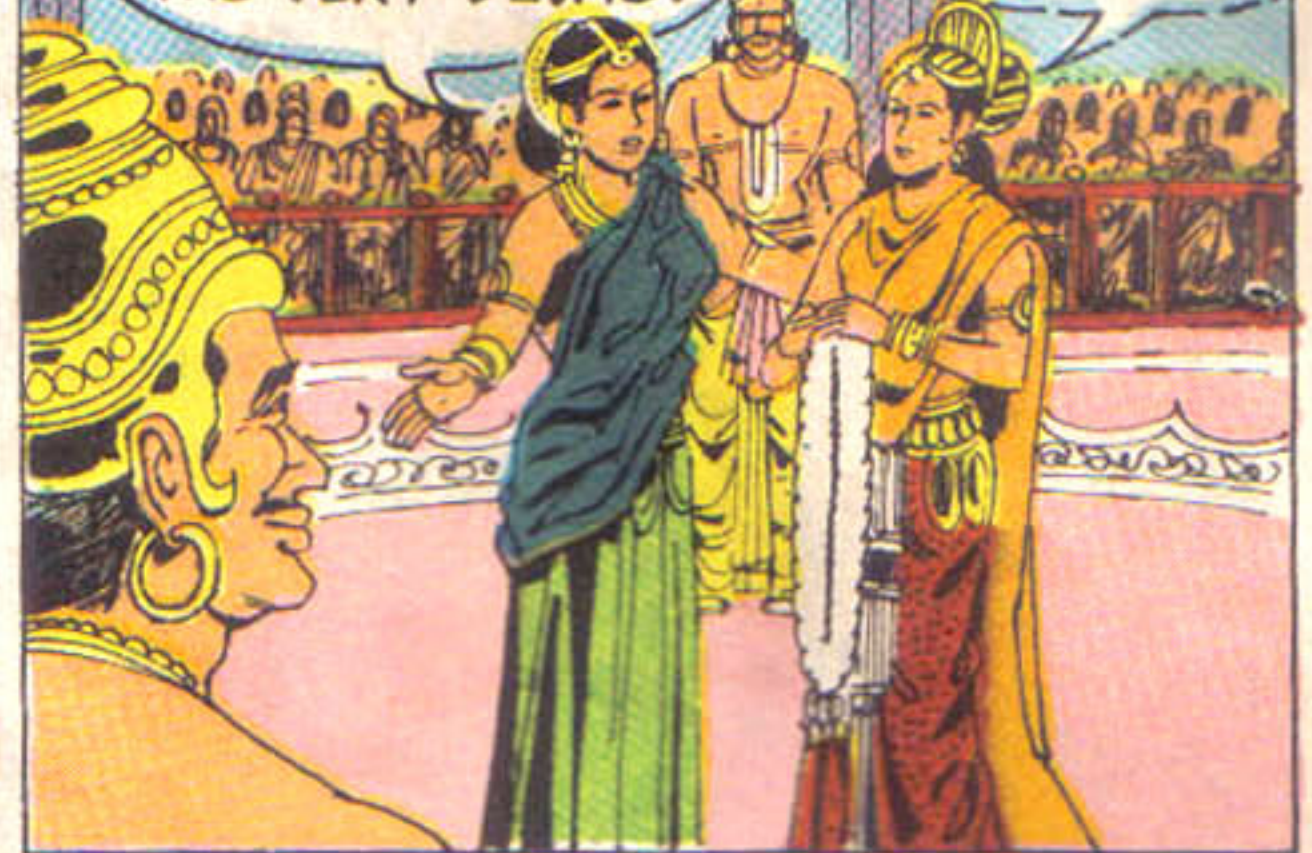


THUS INDUMATI PASSED EACH HOPEFUL KING BY.



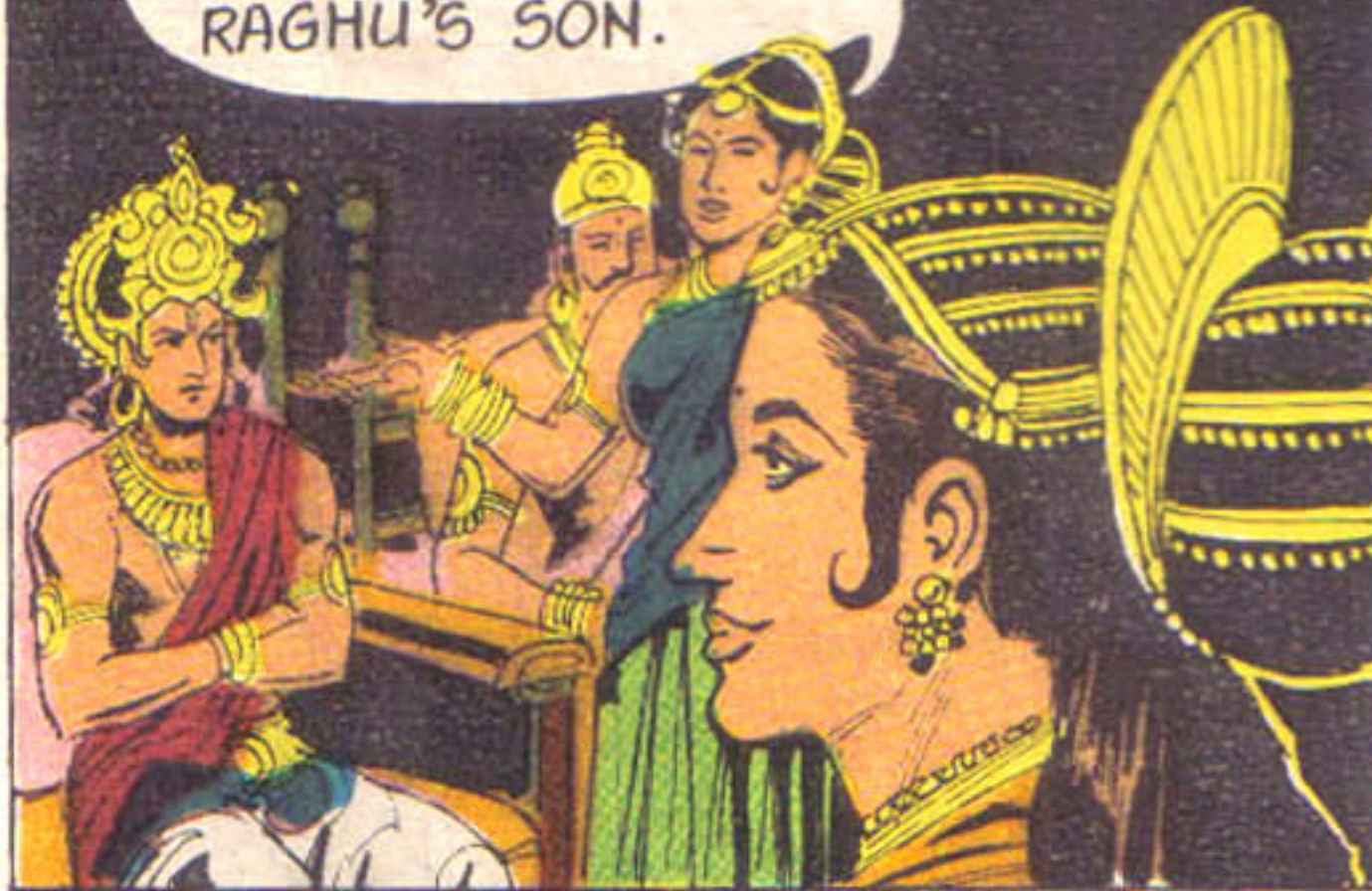
THE DEVOUT KING OF AVANTI, WHO IN LOOKS AND VALOUR RIVALS THE VERY DEVAS.

NOT IN MY EYES. LET US MOVE ON.



AT LAST, SHE STOOD BEFORE AJA.

AJA, THE CROWN PRINCE OF AYODHYA, MIGHTY RAGHU'S SON.



INDUMATI MADE NO COMMENT BUT ONLY BLUSHED IN CONFUSION.

HE IS THE CHOSEN ONE. I SHALL TEASE HER.

SHALL WE PASS ON, MY PRINCESS?

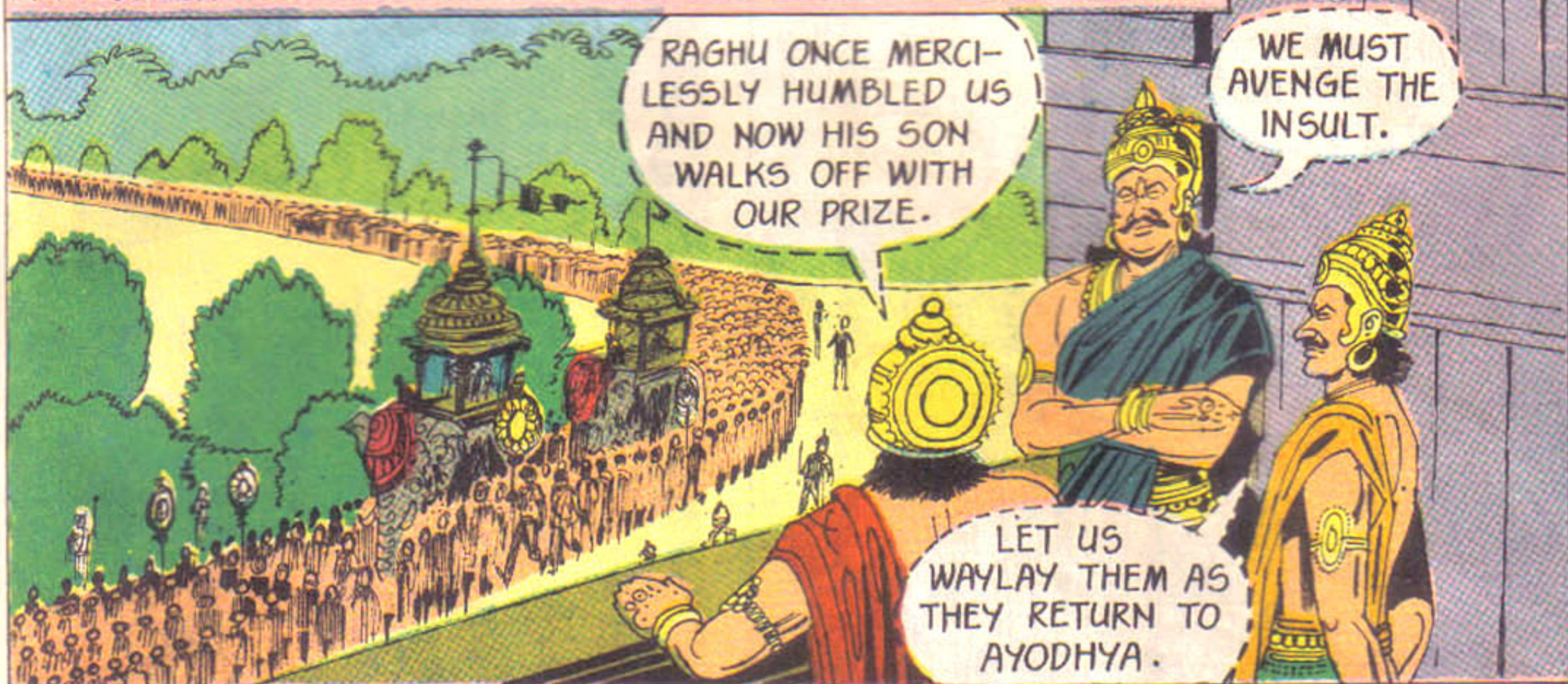


INDUMATI HARDLY HEARD HER. WITH HER GAZE STILL LOCKED IN HIS, SHE PLACED THE GARLAND AROUND AJA'S NECK. THERE WAS A ROAR OF APPROVAL FROM THE ASSEMBLY.

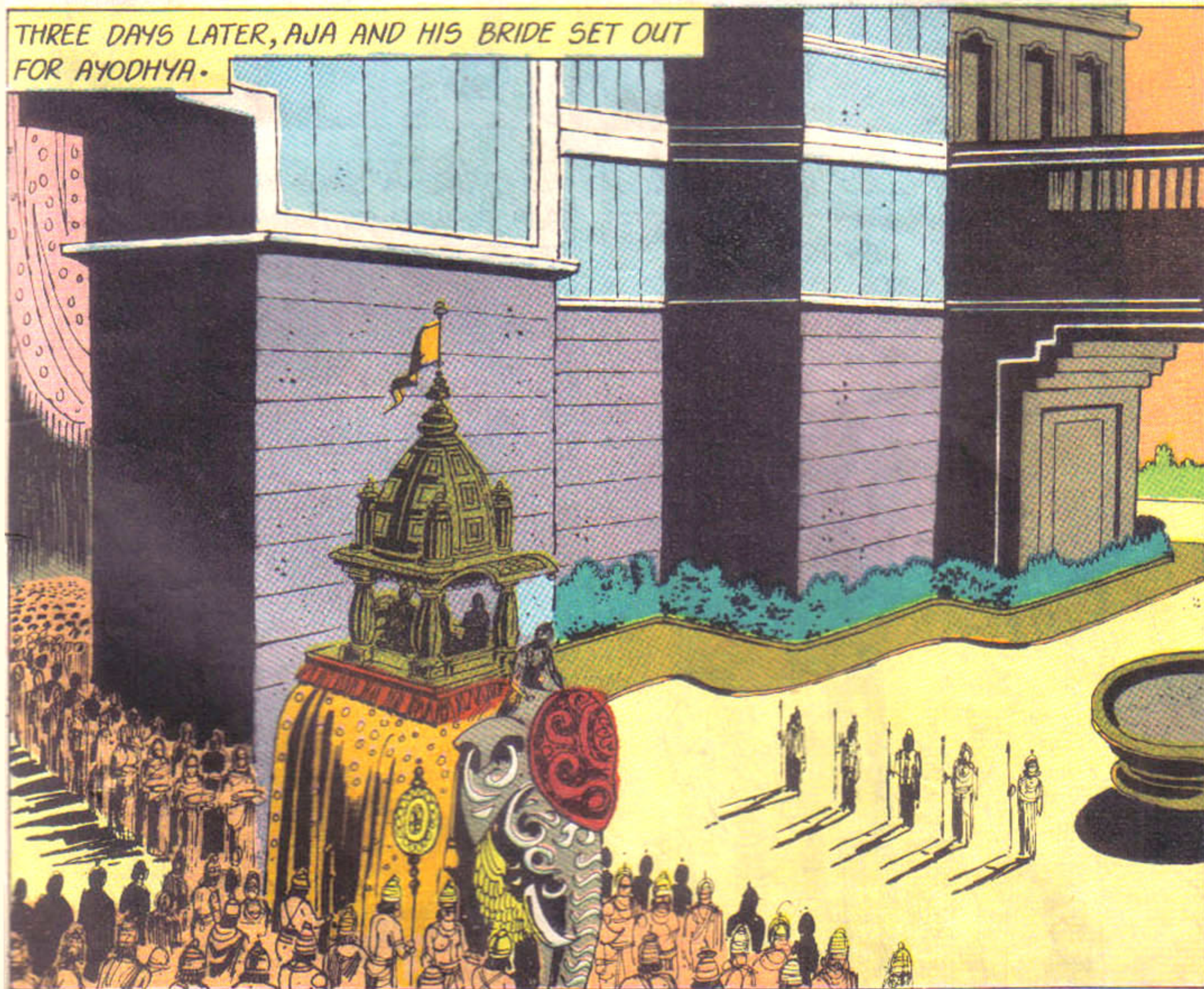
GANGA HAS BECOME ONE WITH HER FIT MATE, THE OCEAN.



WHILE THE RIVAL SUITORS LOOKED WITH HOSTILITY AT THE PAIR, KING BHOJA LED INDUMATI AND AJA THROUGH THE FESTIVE CITY.



THREE DAYS LATER, AJA AND HIS BRIDE SET OUT FOR AYODHYA.



SUDDENLY —

AN ARROW!
IT'S AN AMBUSH!
THE DISAPPOINTED
SUITORS!

LORD!

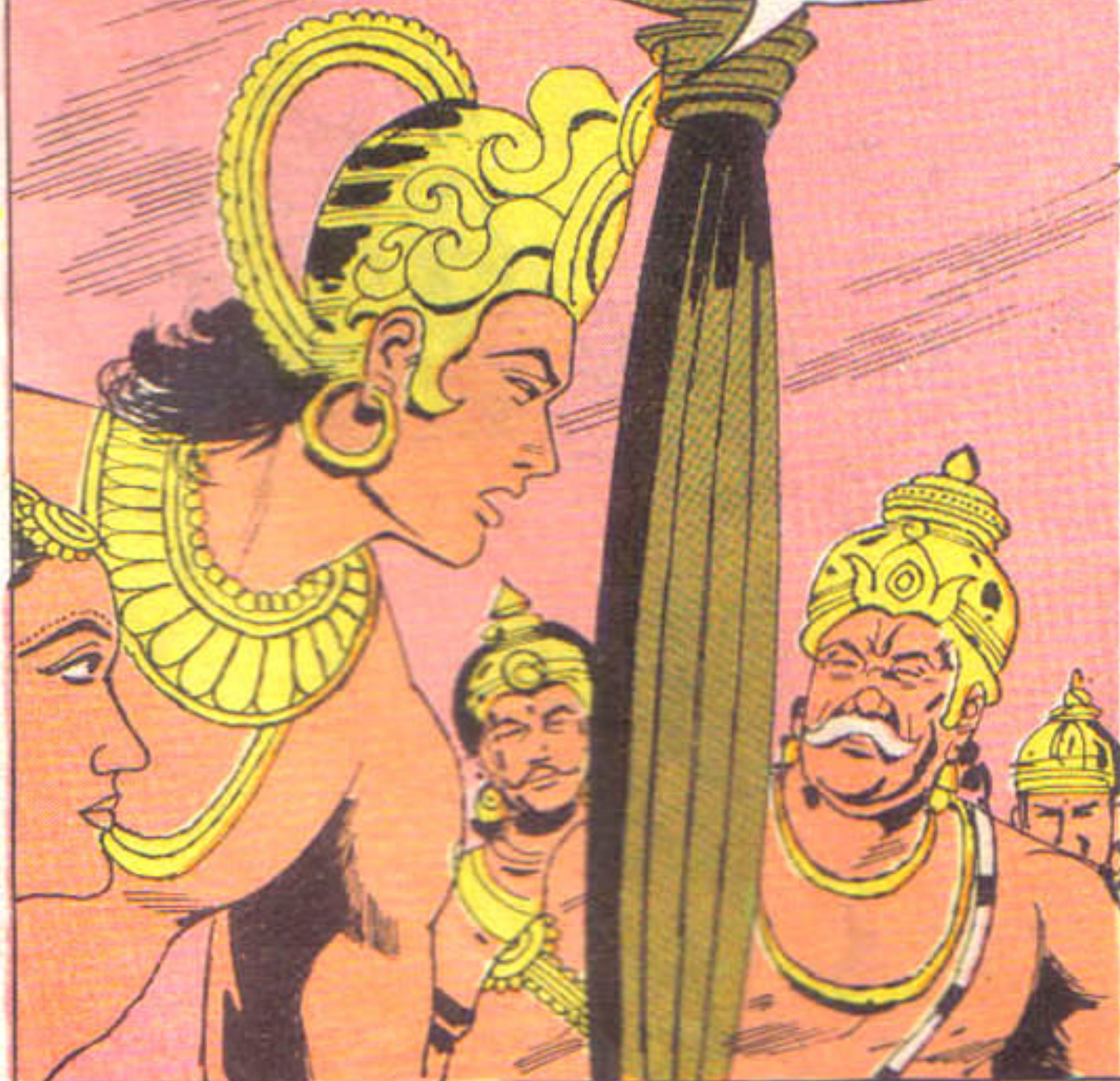


TAKE COURAGE,
TIMID ONE. AJA
SHALL NOT LOSE
YOU, HIS VERY
LIFE.



HE TURNED TO AN OLD AND EXPERIENCED
COURTIER.

I ENTRUST MY
BRIDE TO YOU. GUARD
HER WHILE WE MOUNT
THE COUNTER-ATTACK.



HIS BRIDE IN SAFE HANDS,
AJA TURNED ON HIS FOES.

CHARGE!



FOR A WHILE HE LET THE BATTLE RAGE ON.

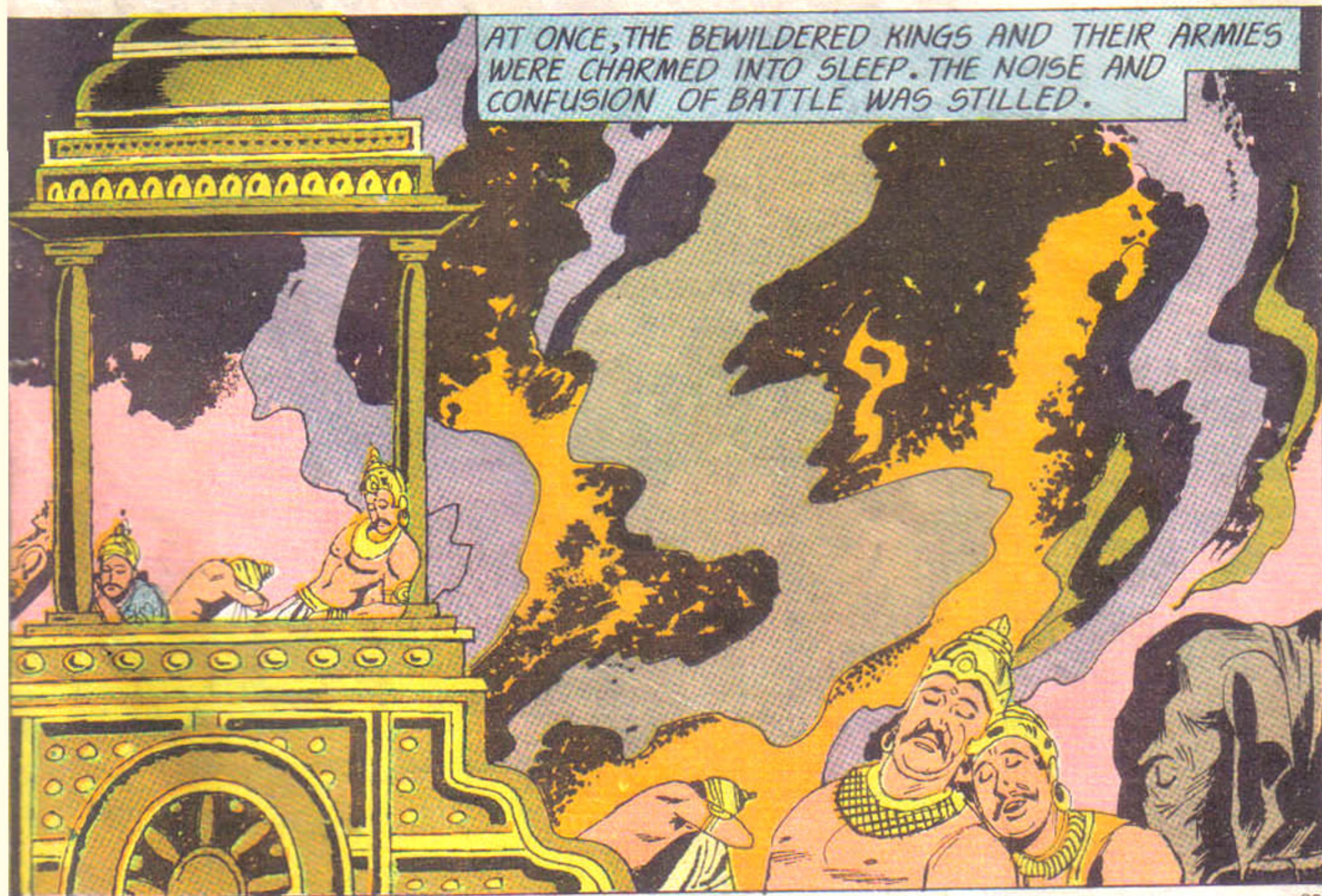


THEN, WEARY OF BLOODSHED AND SLAUGHTER, AJA MADE A DECISION.

I SHALL NOW
USE MY MAGIC
SPEAR.



AT ONCE, THE BEWILDERED KINGS AND THEIR ARMIES
WERE CHARMED INTO SLEEP. THE NOISE AND
CONFUSION OF BATTLE WAS STILLED.



AJA BLEW HIS CONCH TO ANNOUNCE HIS VICTORY.



THEN HE WENT TO INDUMATI.



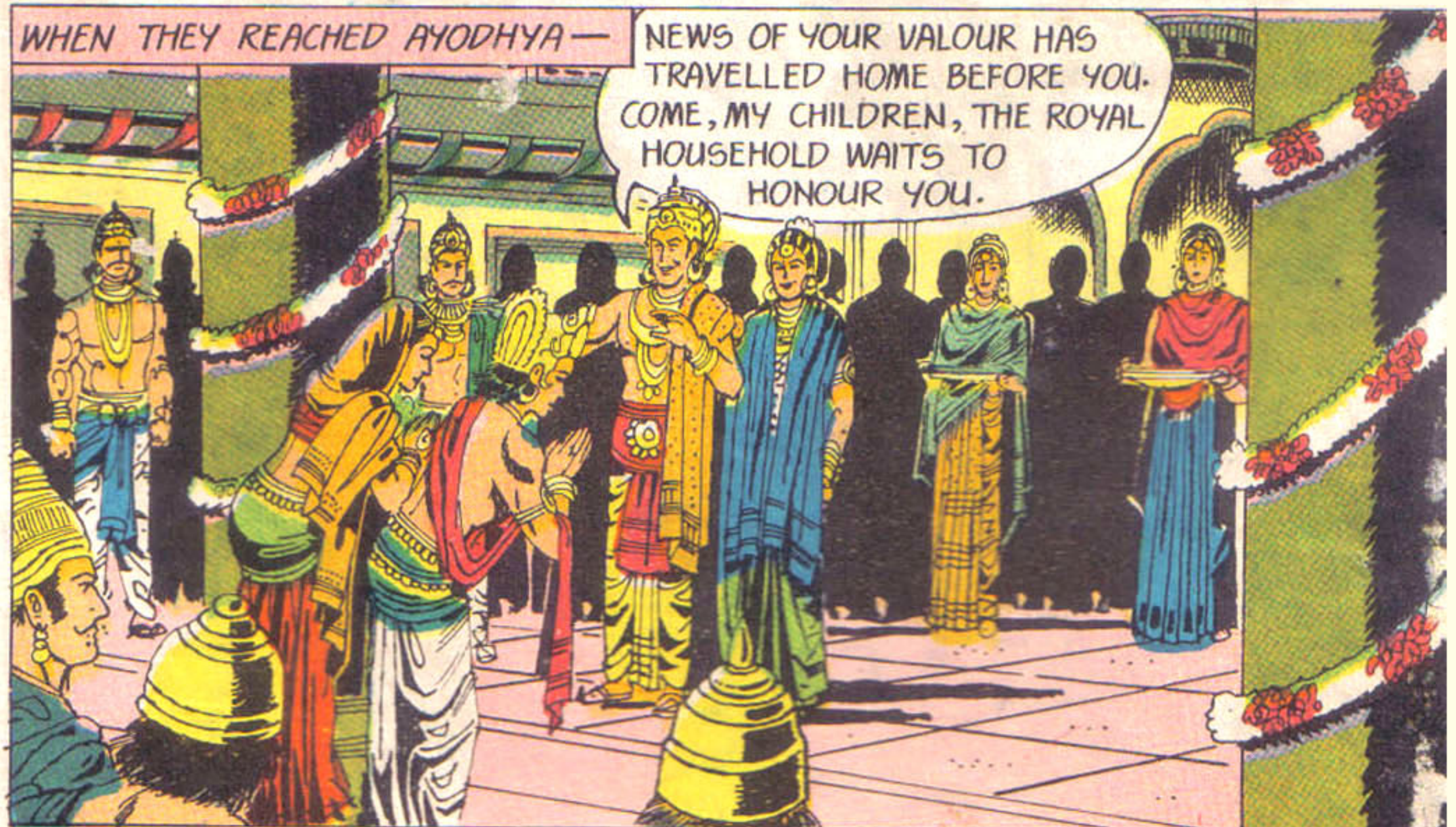
AND THEY RESUMED THEIR JOURNEY TO AYODHYA.

THE MIGHTY KING, MY FATHER WILL REJOICE WHEN HE HEARS OF OUR VICTORY OVER HIS MOST POWERFUL VASSALS.



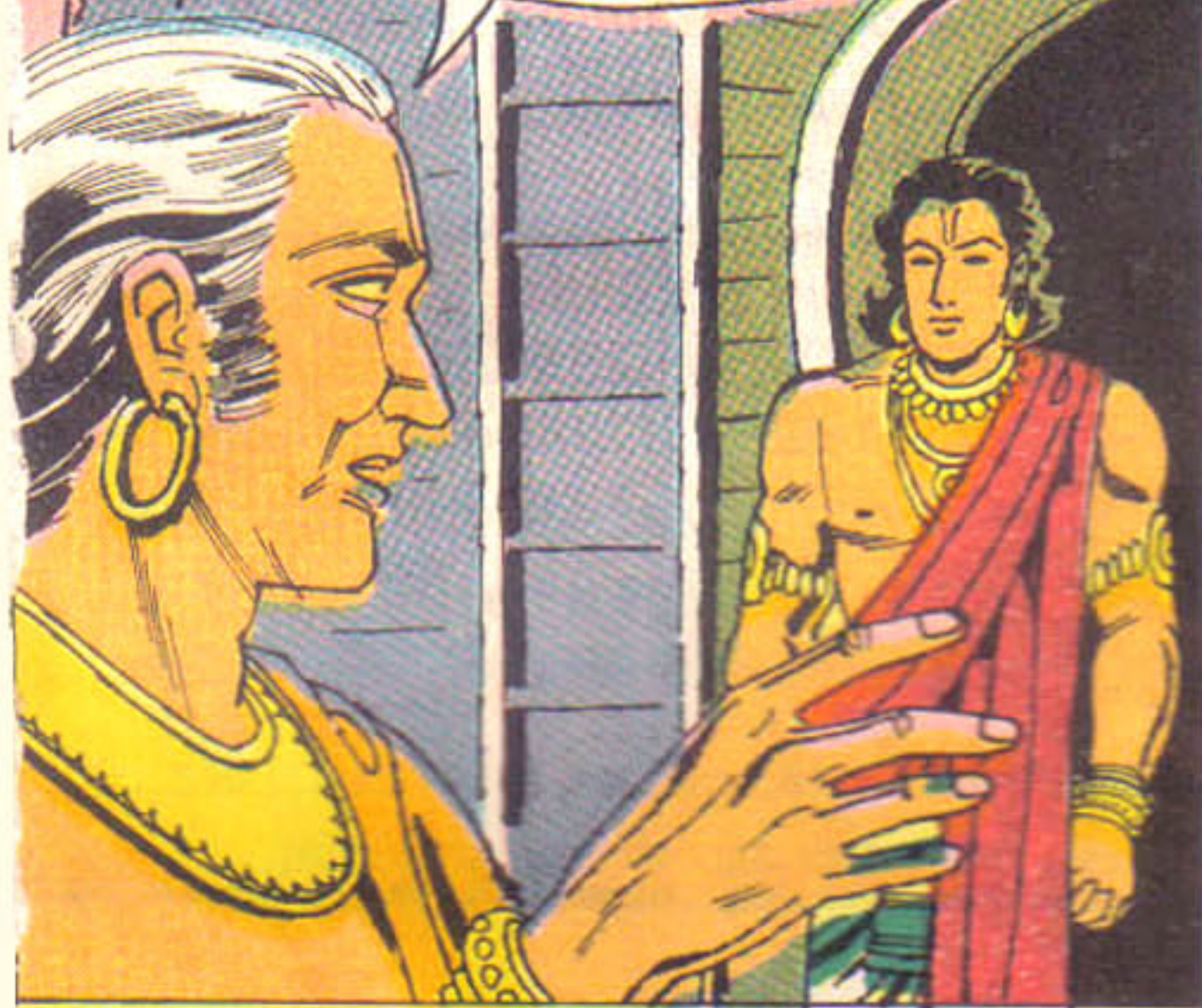
WHEN THEY REACHED AYODHYA —

NEWS OF YOUR VALOUR HAS TRAVELLED HOME BEFORE YOU. COME, MY CHILDREN, THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD WAITS TO HONOUR YOU.



LATER—

MY SON, I AM OLD NOW AND WOULD LIKE TO RENOUNCE THE WORLD. BECOME THE SOVEREIGN AND RULE THE COUNTRY IN THE TRADITION OF YOUR ANCESTORS.

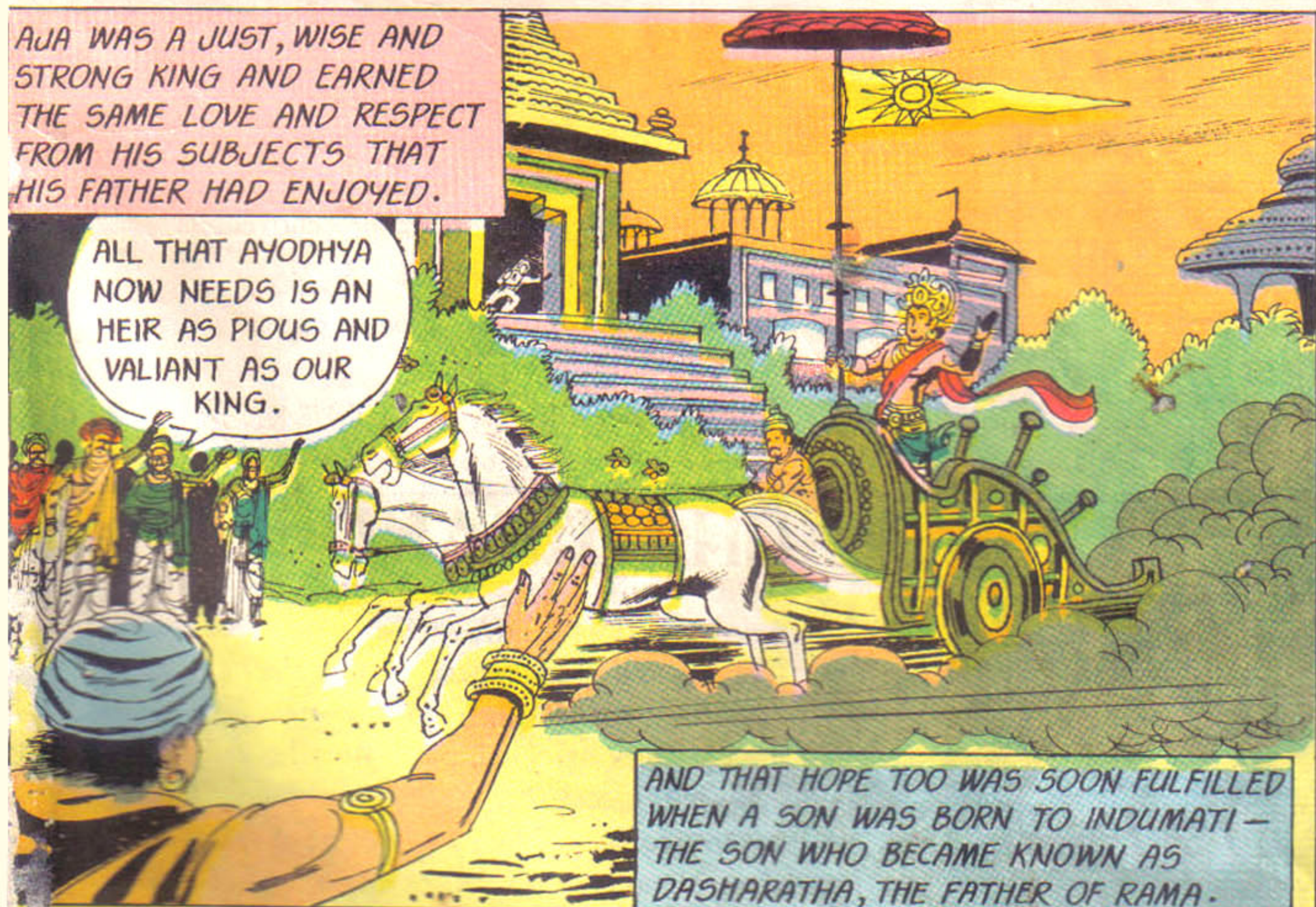


AND RAGHU TOOK TO A LIFE OF AUSTERITY AND MEDITATION.



AJA WAS A JUST, WISE AND STRONG KING AND EARNED THE SAME LOVE AND RESPECT FROM HIS SUBJECTS THAT HIS FATHER HAD ENJOYED.

ALL THAT AYODHYA NOW NEEDS IS AN HEIR AS PIOUS AND VALIANT AS OUR KING.



AND THAT HOPE TOO WAS SOON FULFILLED WHEN A SON WAS BORN TO INDUMATI—THE SON WHO BECAME KNOWN AS DASHARATHA, THE FATHER OF RAMA.



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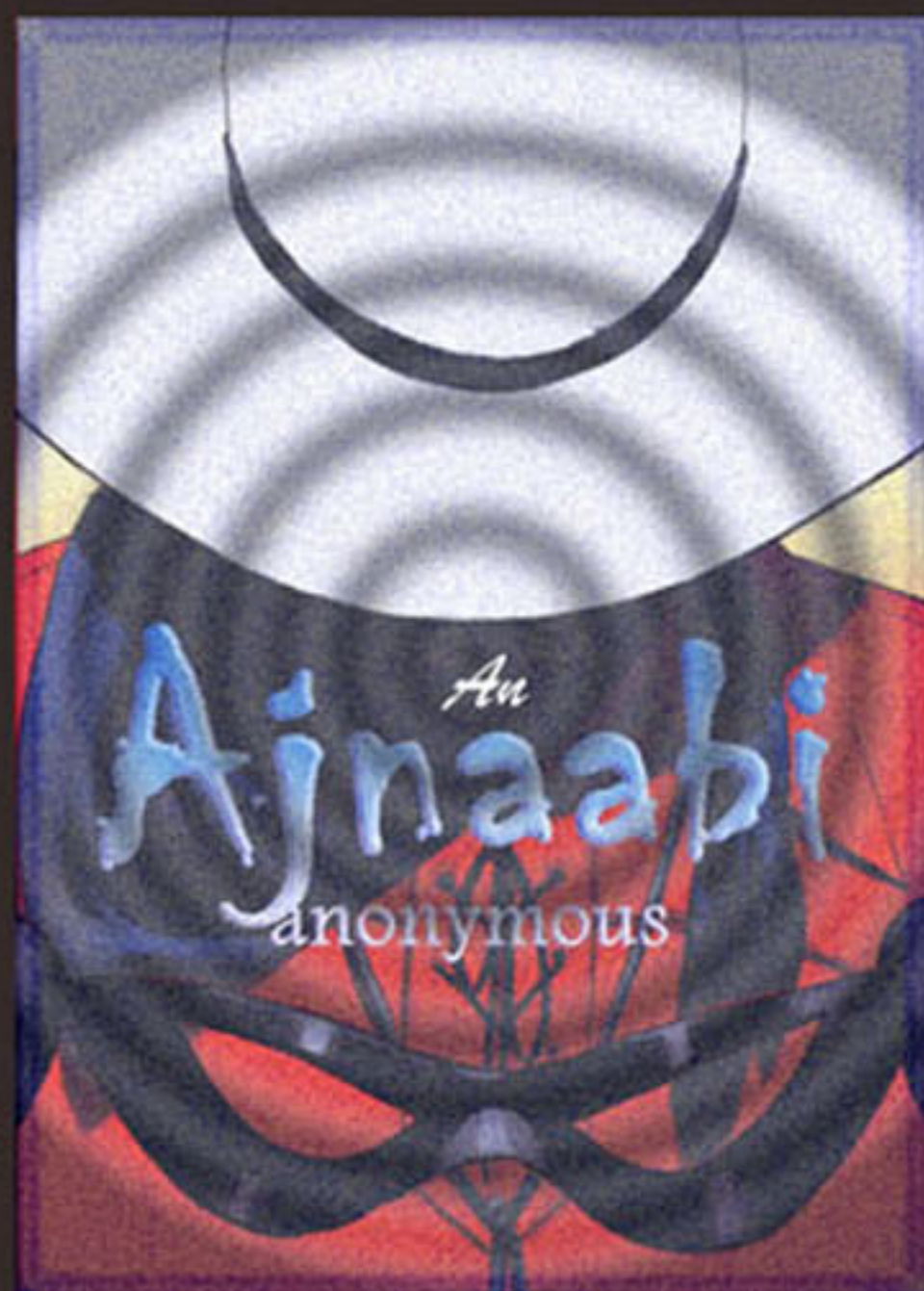
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