

THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Mahajanaka was all set to wage a bloody war. Fate, however, had other plans. It turned his battlefield into a magnificent palace, where he was required to woo and win a beautiful princess. Wit was to be his most valuable weapon. Strong, handsome and yet wise, such a battle was easy for the young man. But for the many others who coveted his throne, it was an insurmountable hurdle.

FABLES & HUMOUR



THE HIDDEN TREASURE

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ISBN 81-8482-166-2



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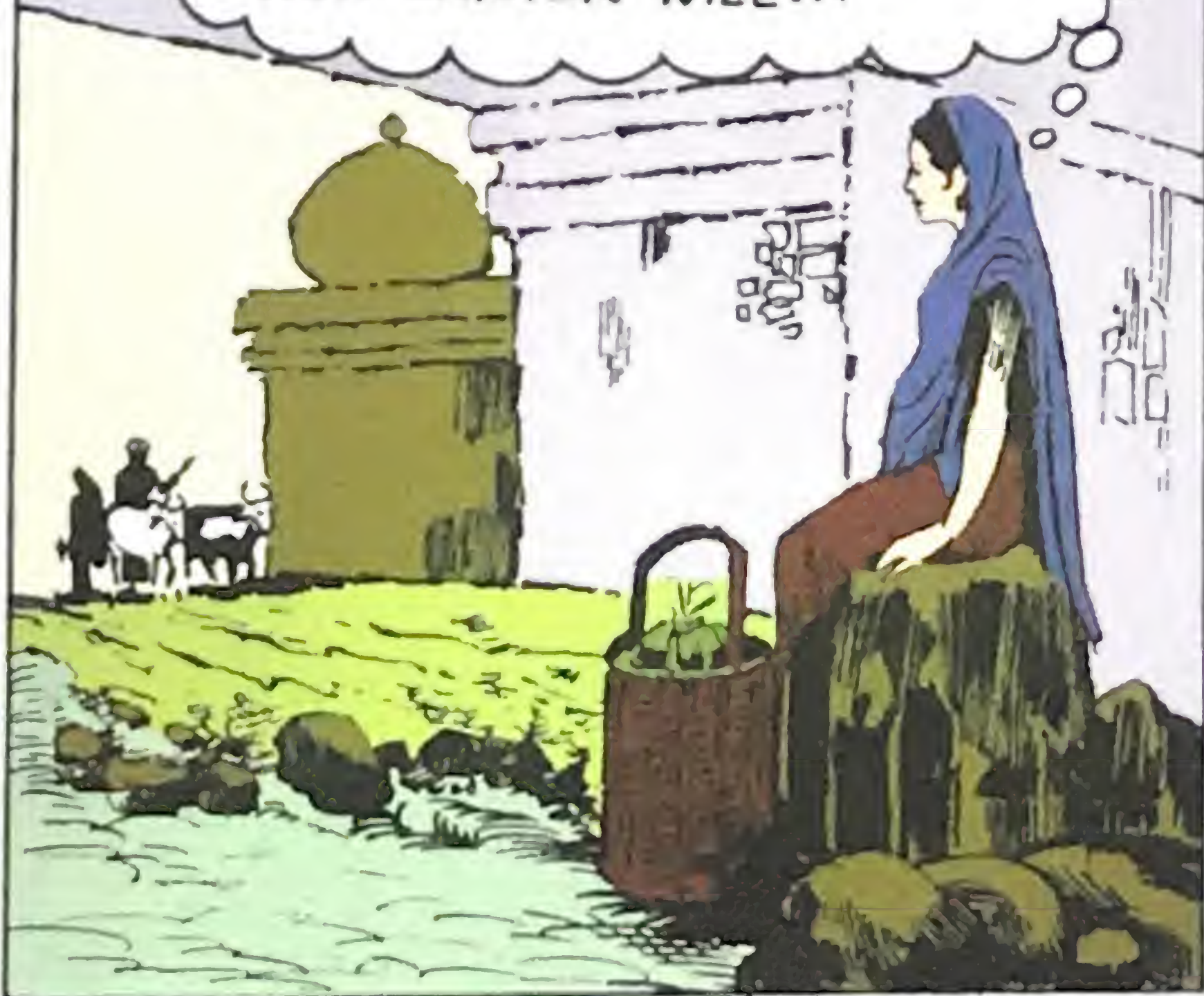
THE HIDDEN TREASURE



ONE DAY, LONG LONG AGO, A WOMAN CAME WALKING DEJECTEDLY DOWN THE ROAD THAT LED AWAY FROM THE CITY OF MITHILA. HER STEPS WERE SLOW AND HER FEET DRAGGED.

SHE WORE THE GARB OF A MAID BUT SEEMED TO BE OF NOBLE BIRTH.

I CANNOT WALK A STEP FARTHER. WHAT SHALL I DO? PERHAPS THAT CARTER WILL...



HOW FAR ARE YOU GOING, SIR? CAN YOU TAKE ME TO KALACHAMPA?

SHE LOOKS TIRED AND MISERABLE, POOR THING.



I'LL TAKE YOU THERE. PLEASE GET INTO MY CART.

YOU ARE VERY KIND, SIR! I... I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU.

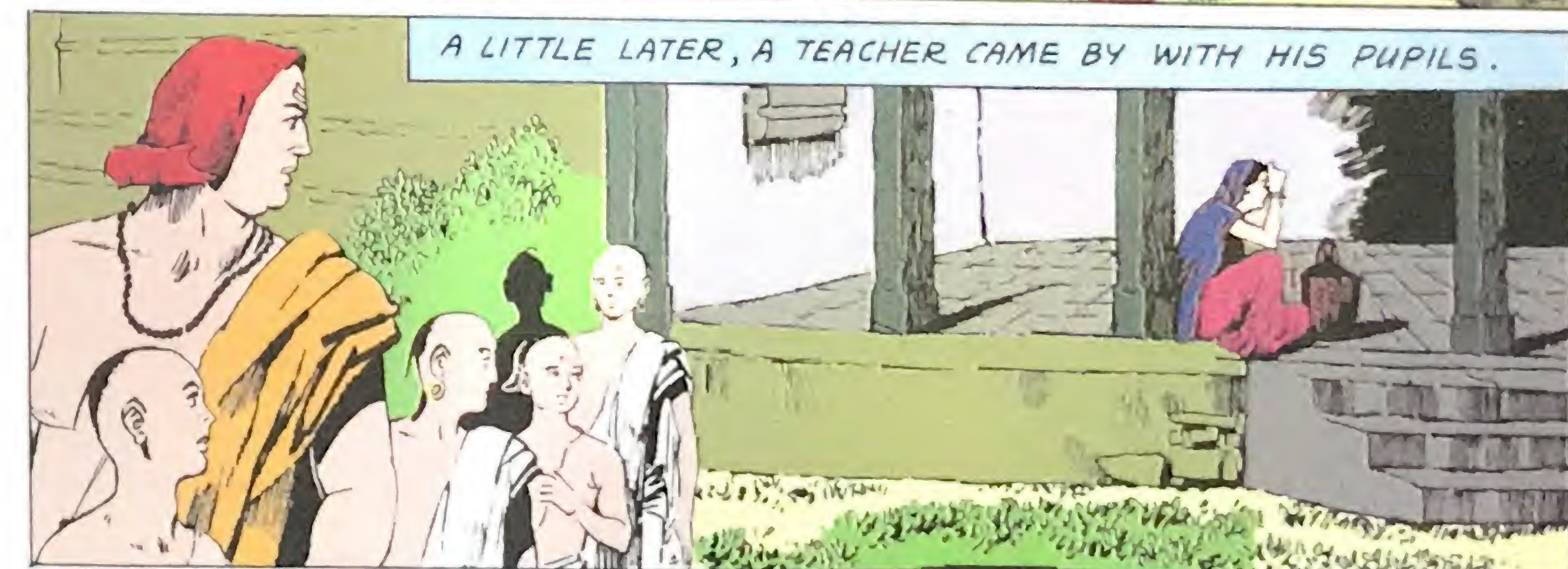
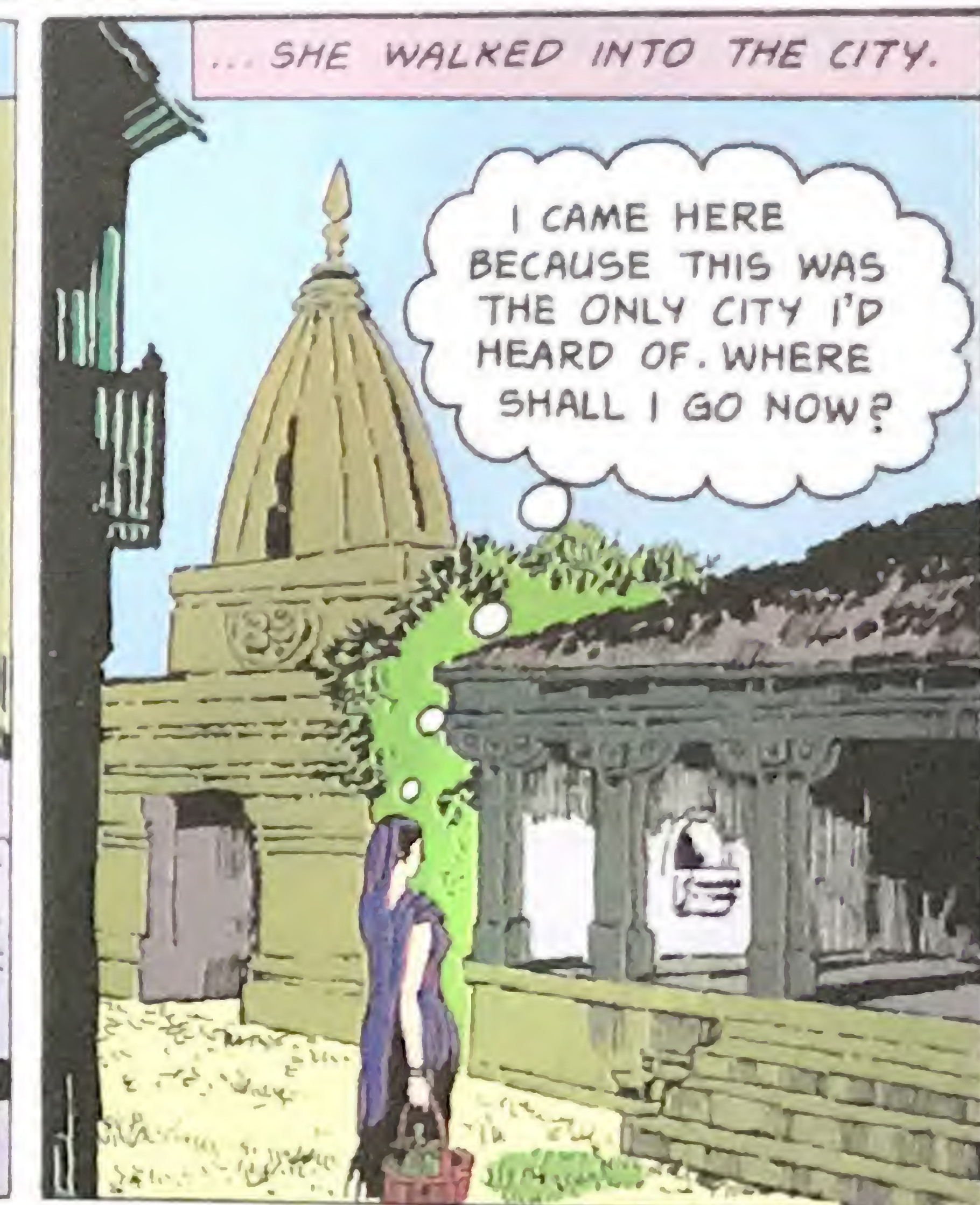




WHEN SHE WOKE UP IT WAS EVENING.

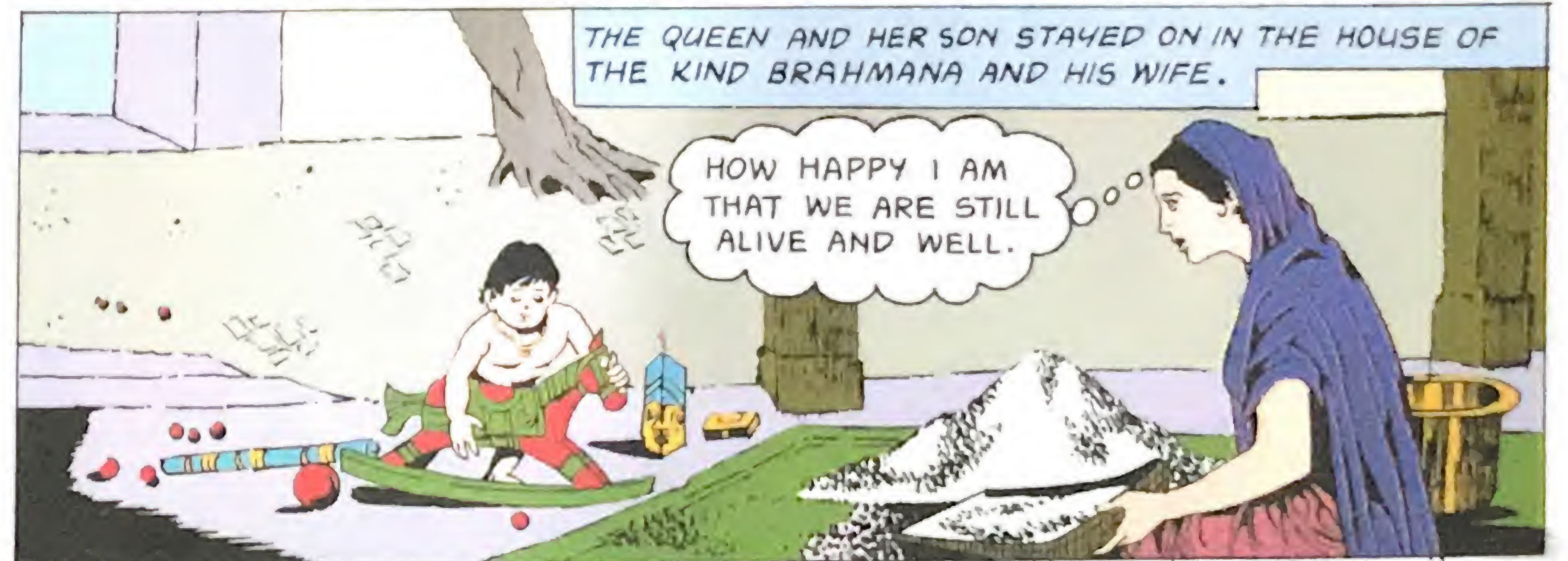


HE BROUGHT HIS CART TO A HALT AT THE SOUTHERN GATE OF THE CITY.



SURPRISED TO SEE A WOMAN SITTING THERE ALONE, HE WALKED UP TO HER.

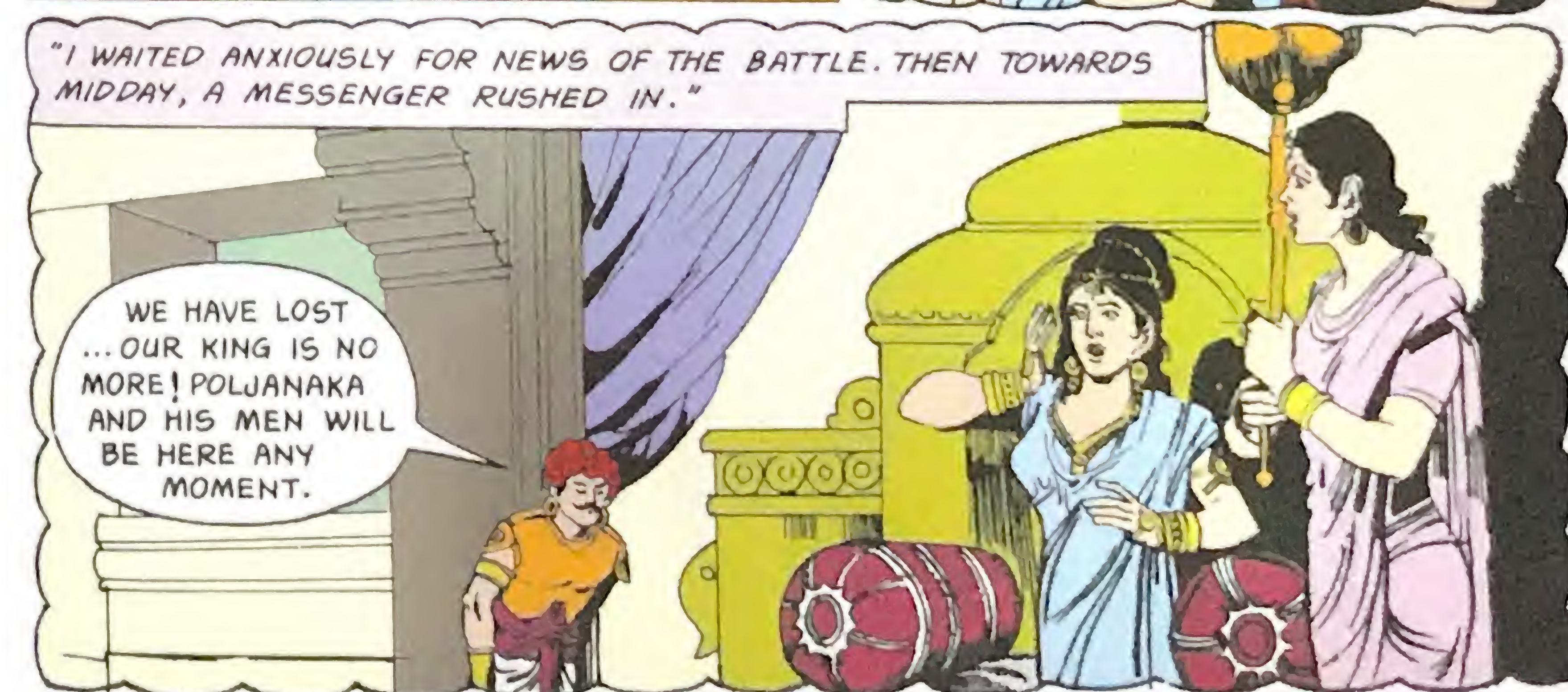


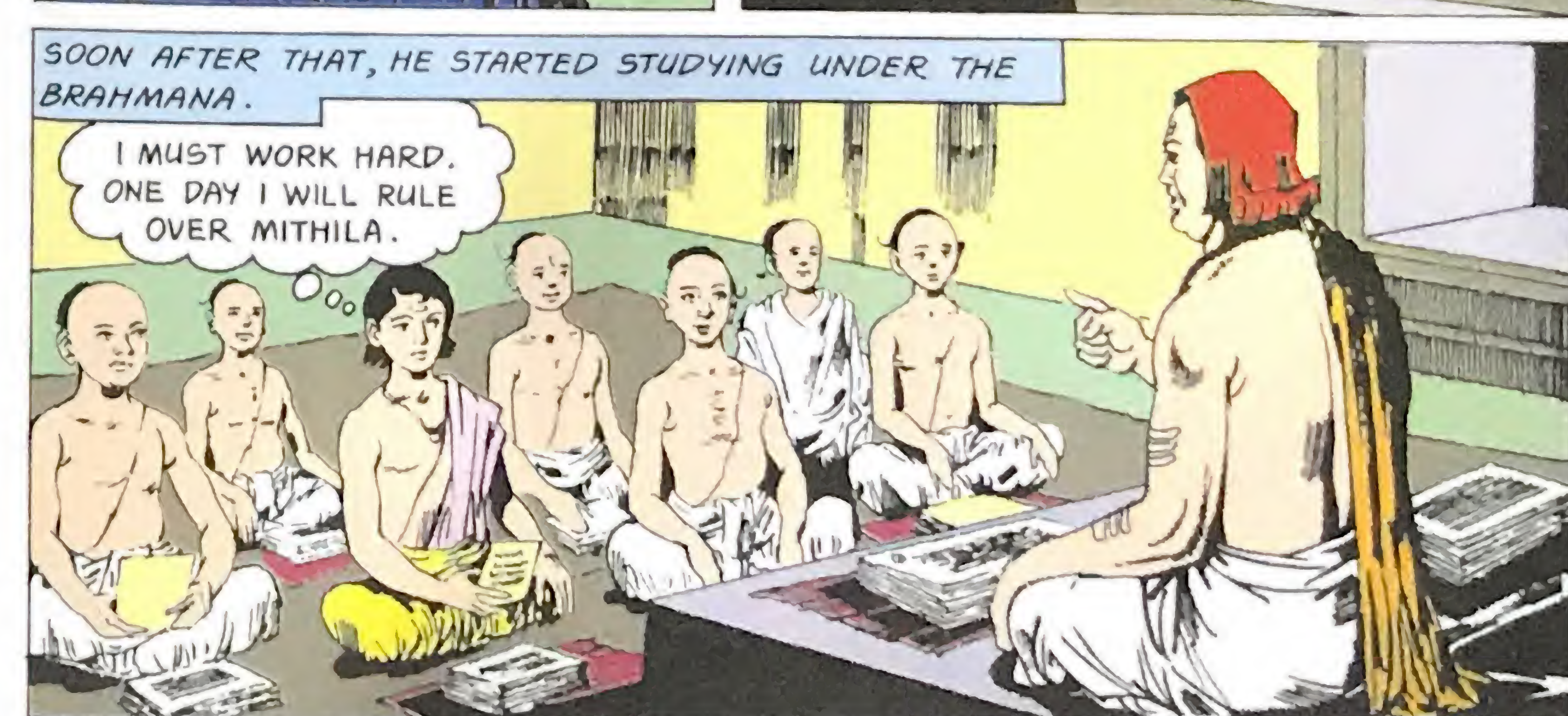
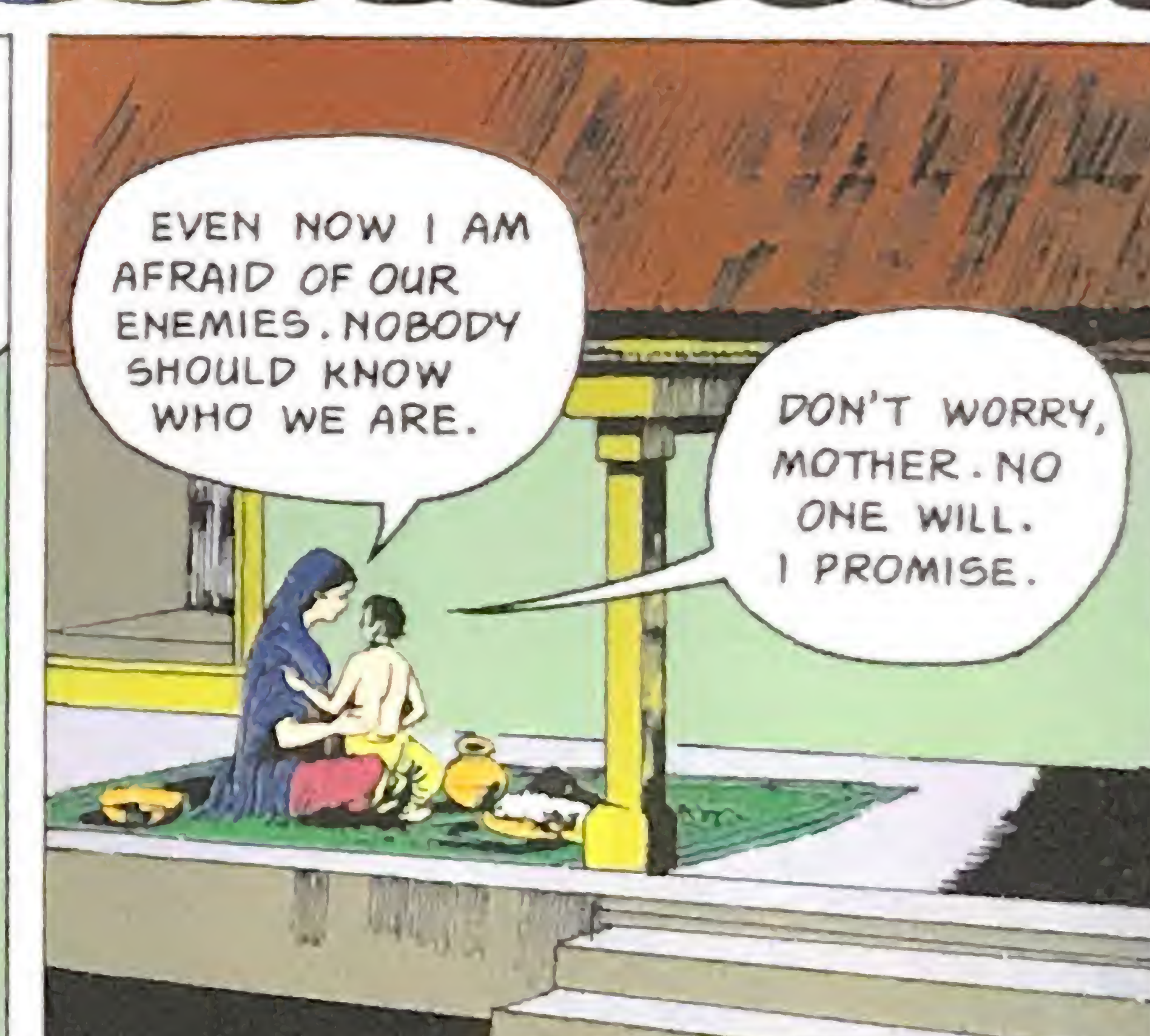
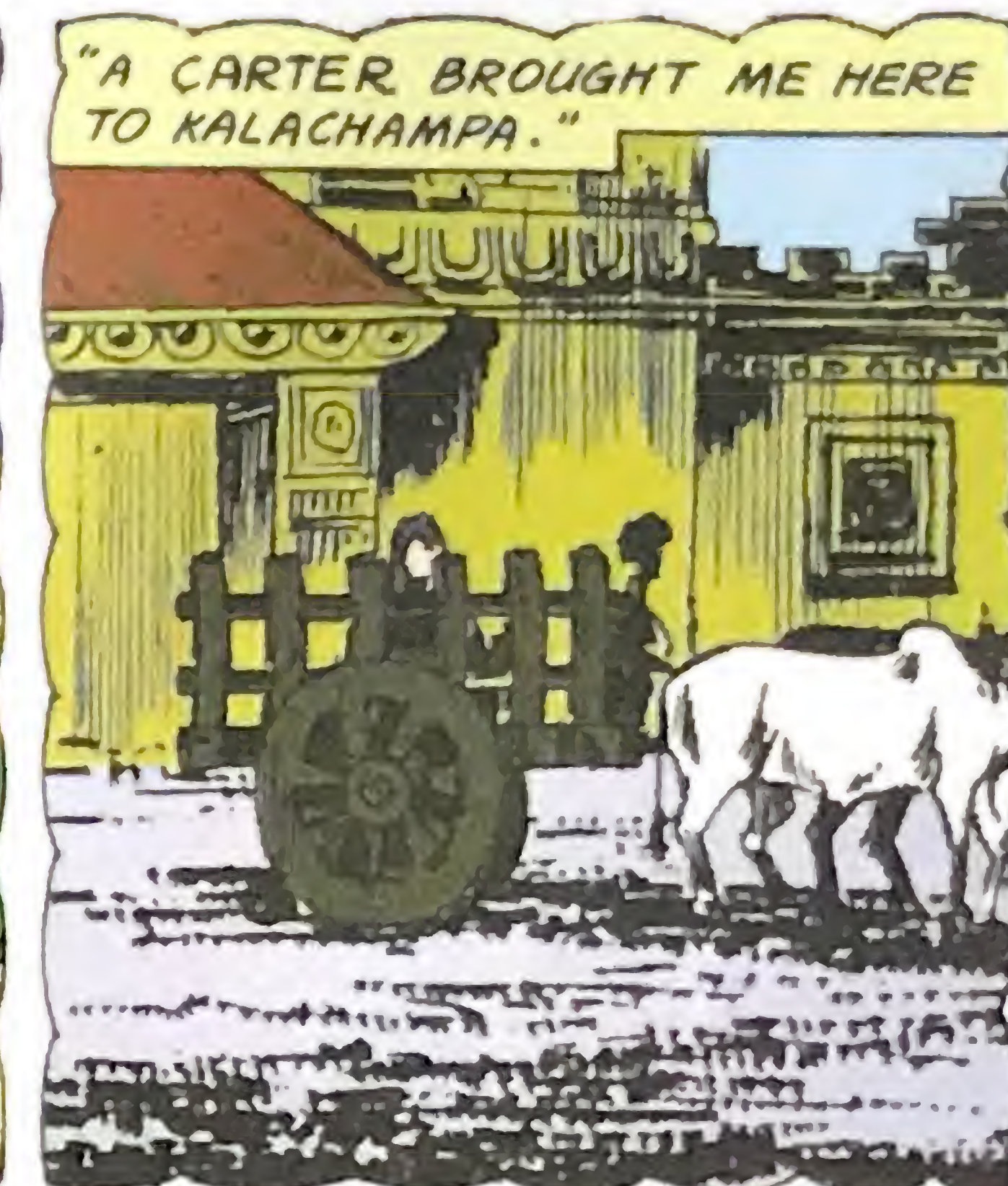
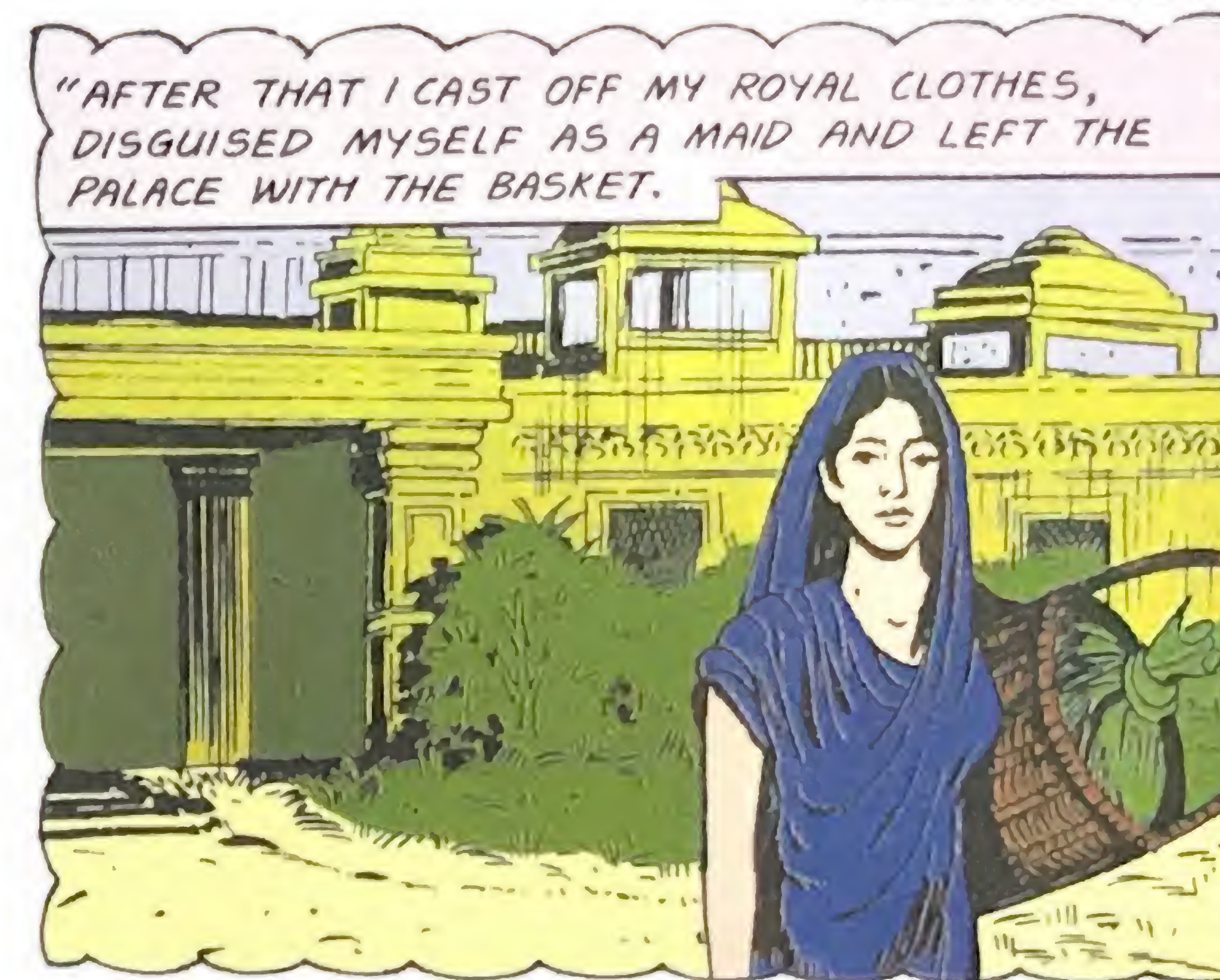
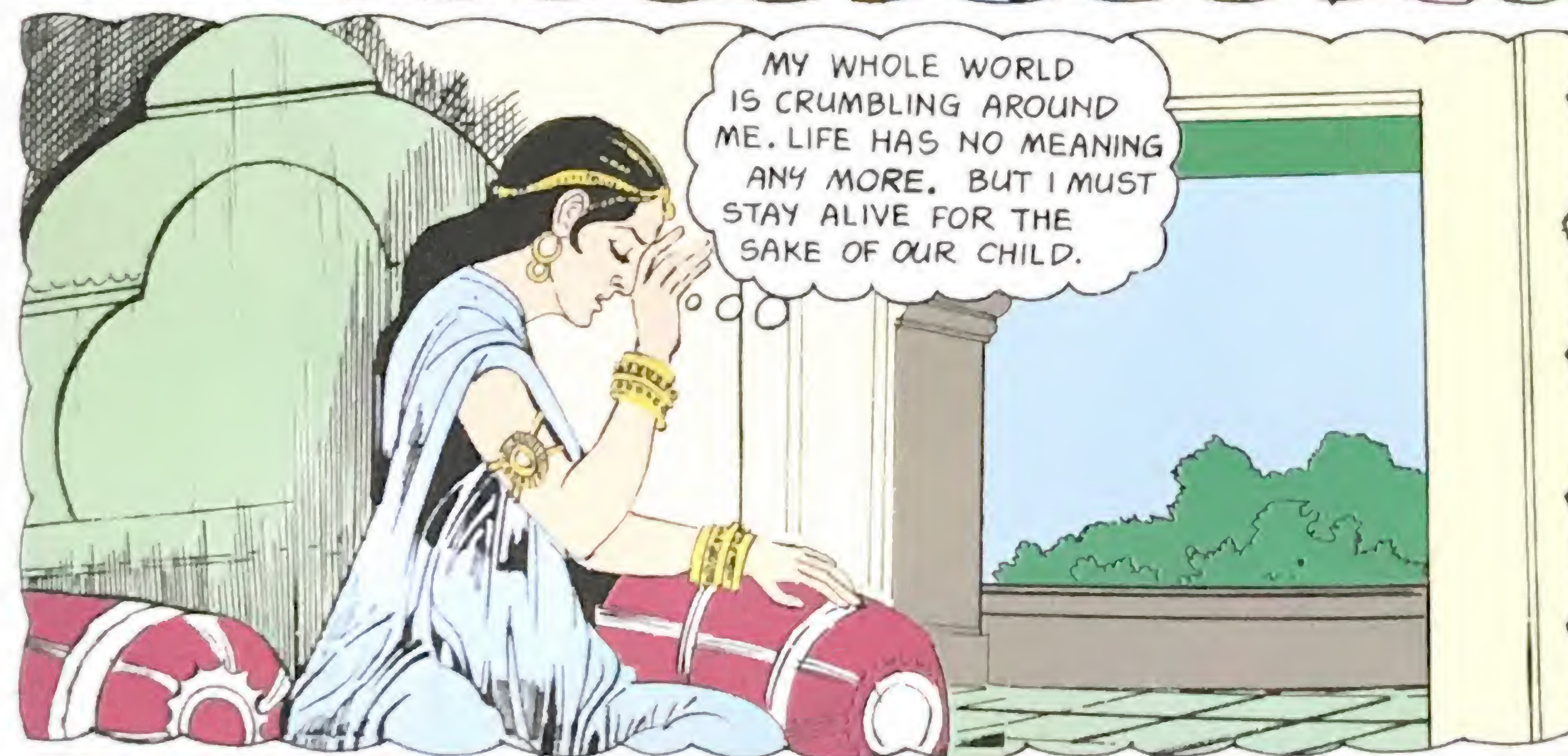
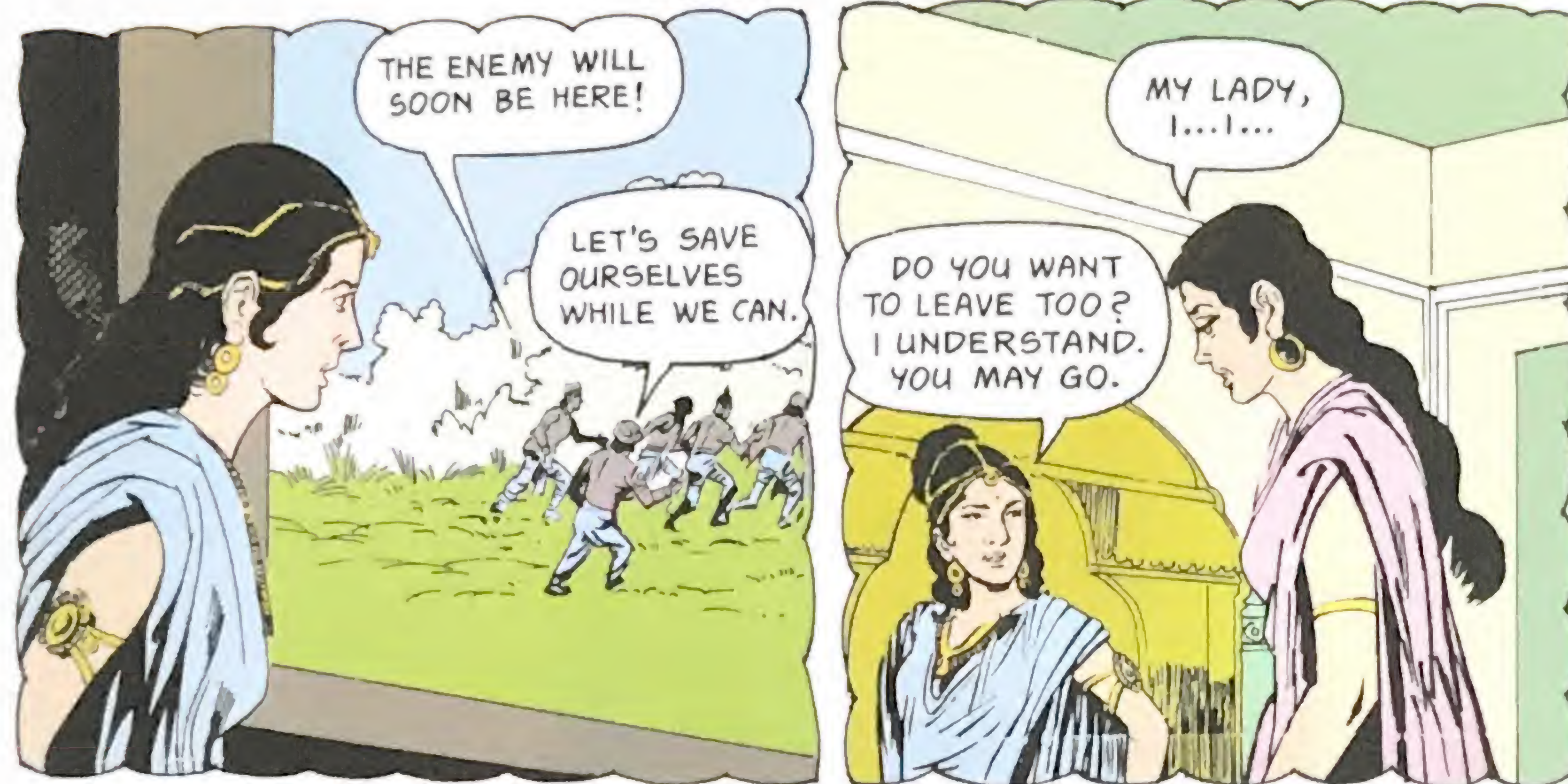


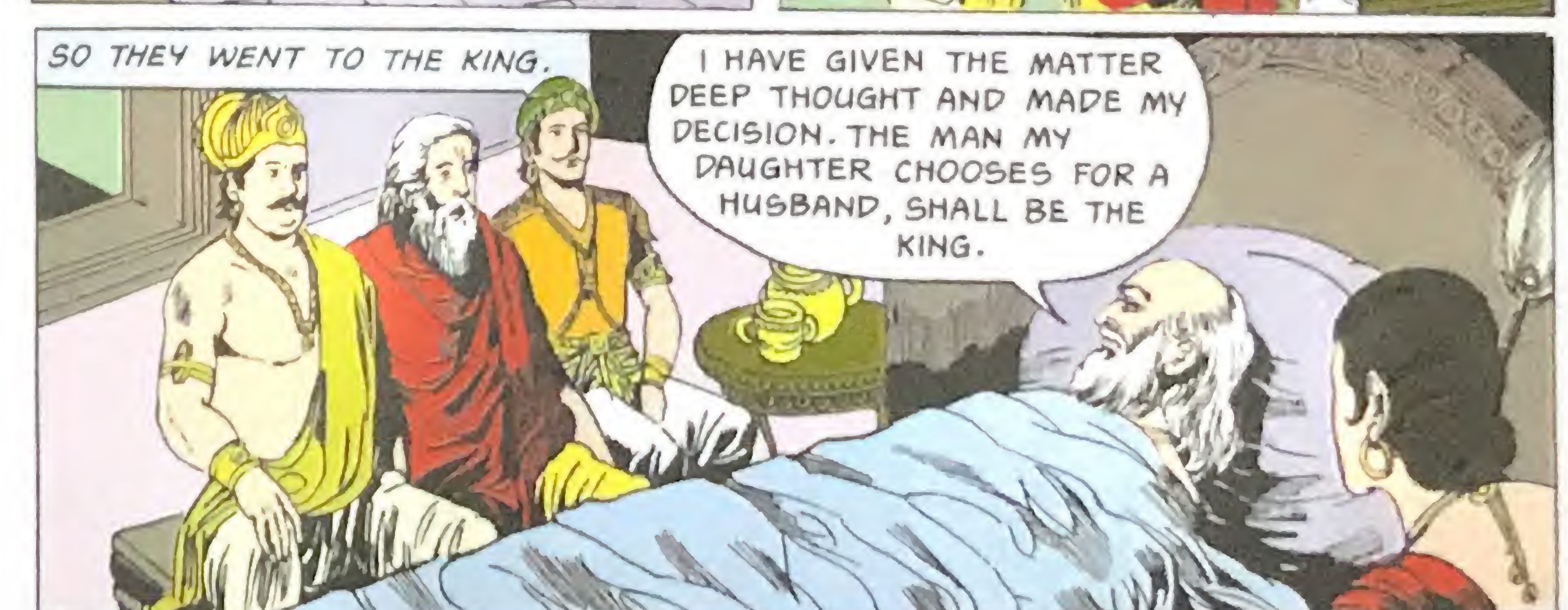
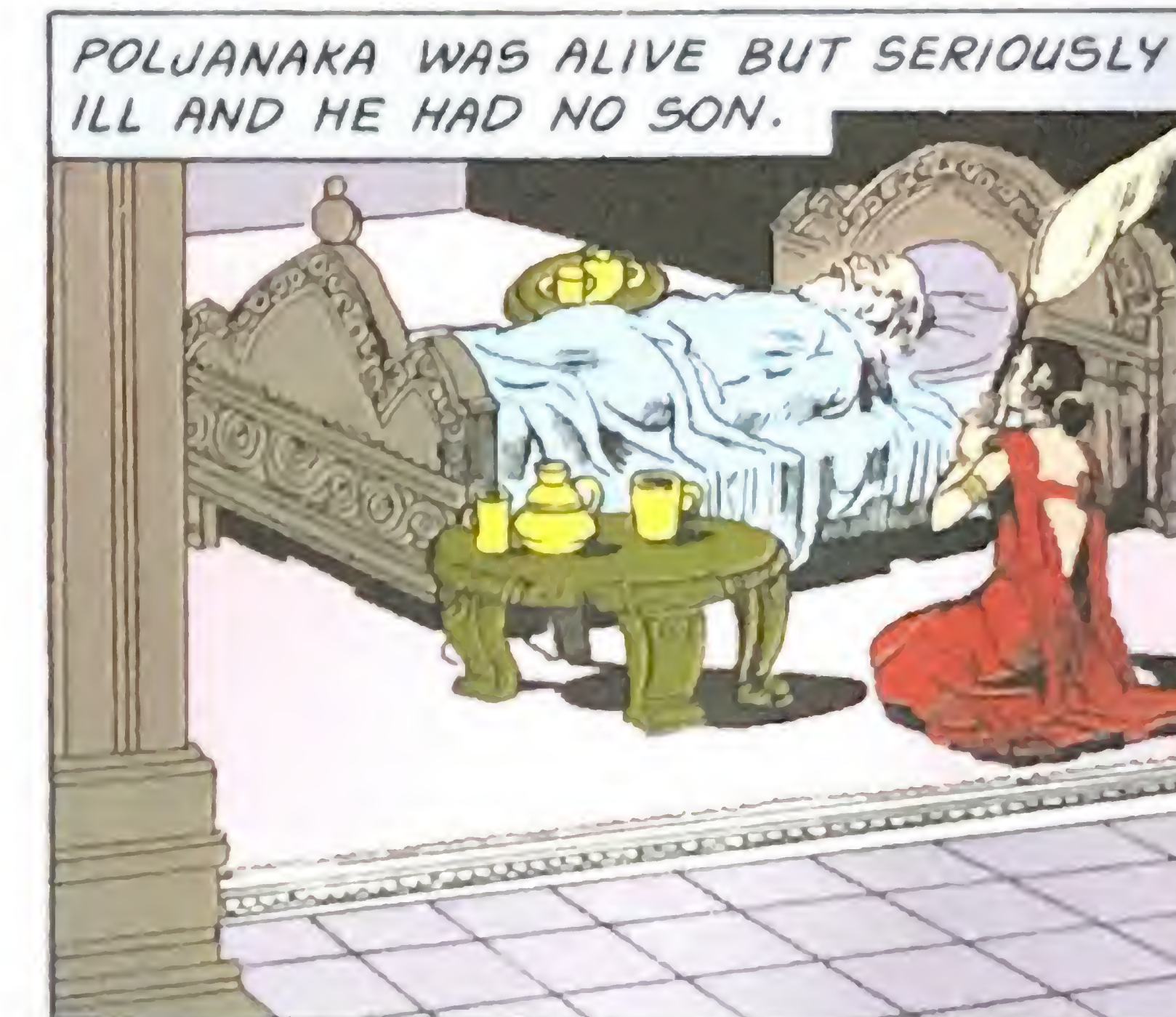
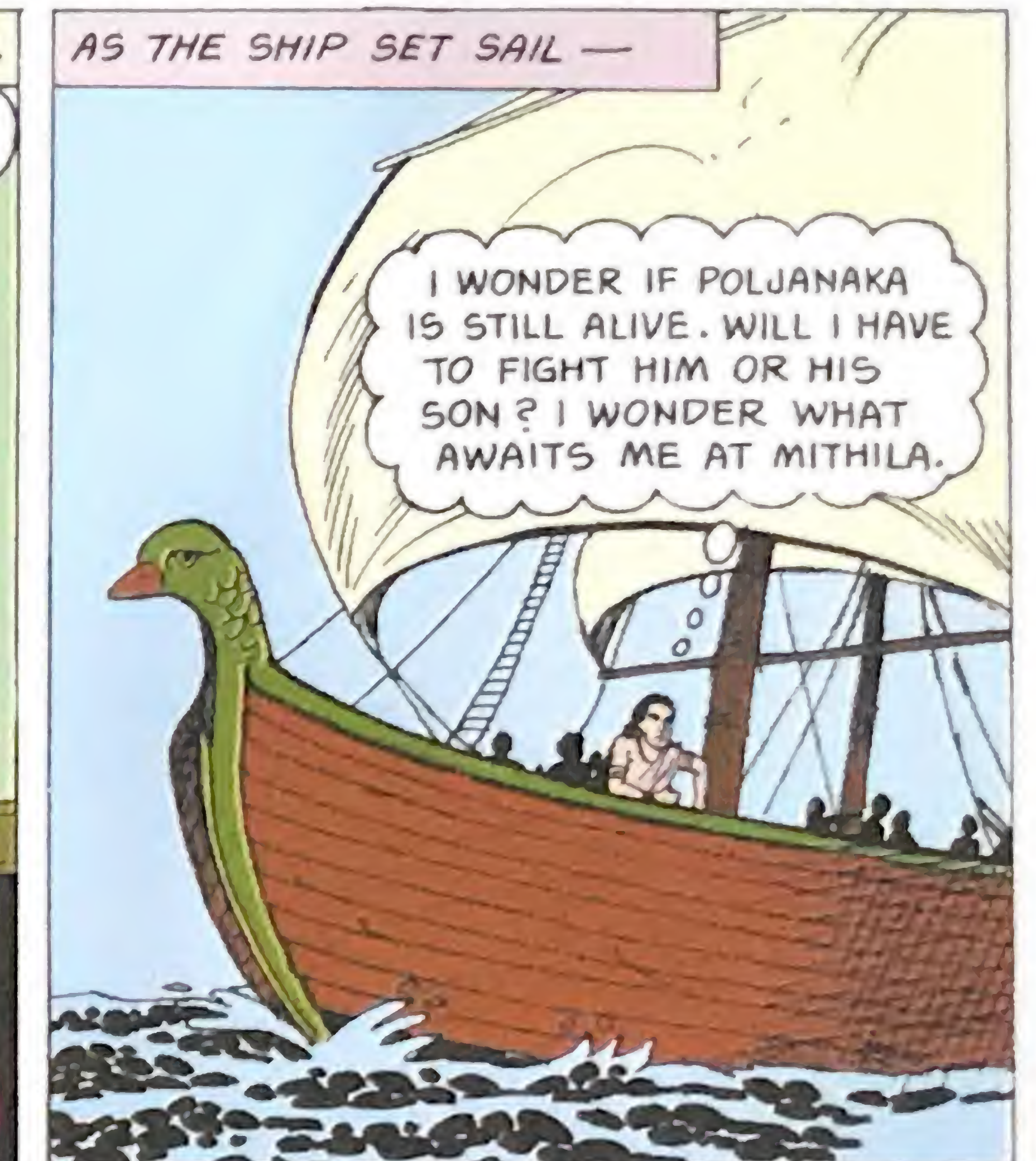
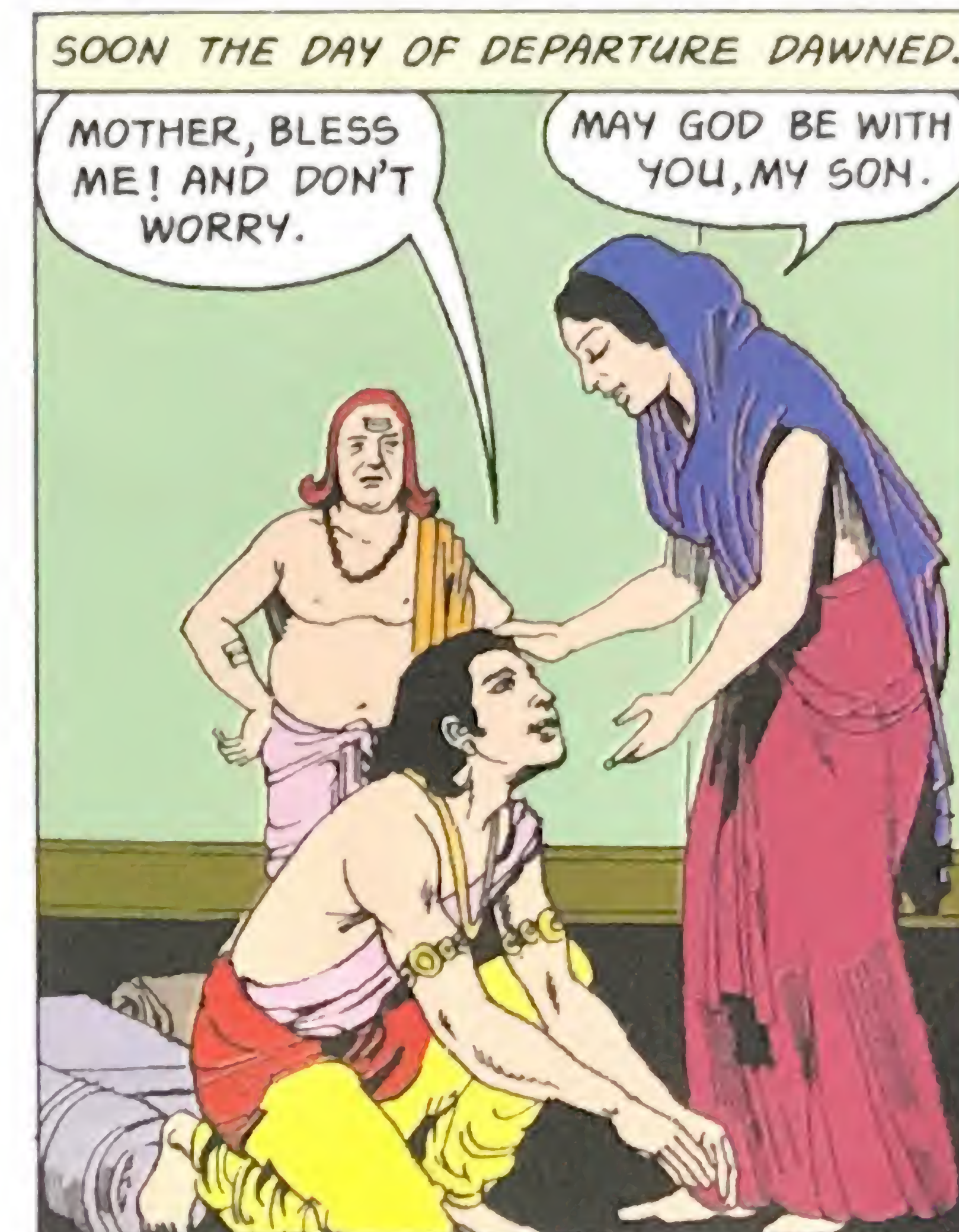
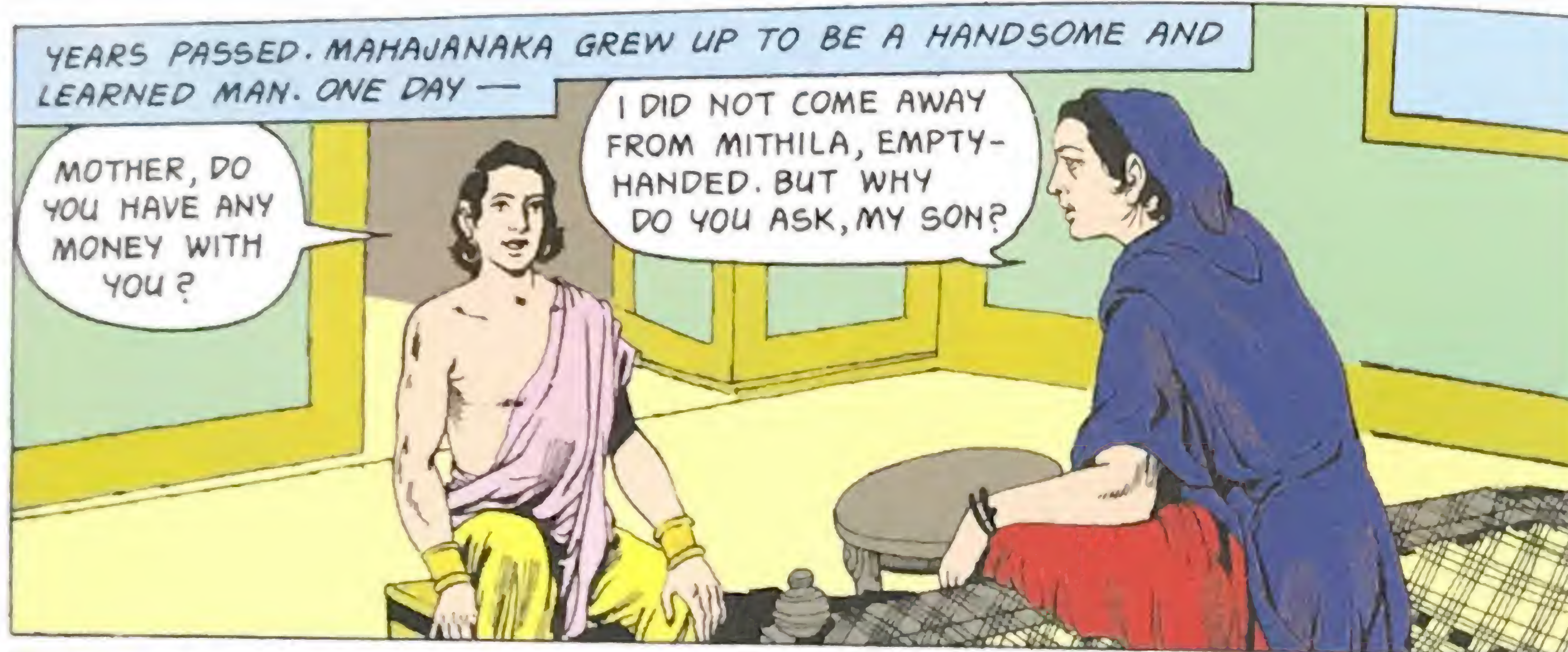
BUT THEY OFTEN QUARRELLED TOO. AND, THEN, MAHAJANAKA WHO WAS THE STRONGEST OF THEM ALL, WOULD BEAT UP THE OTHERS. ONE DAY, AFTER SUCH A QUARREL —

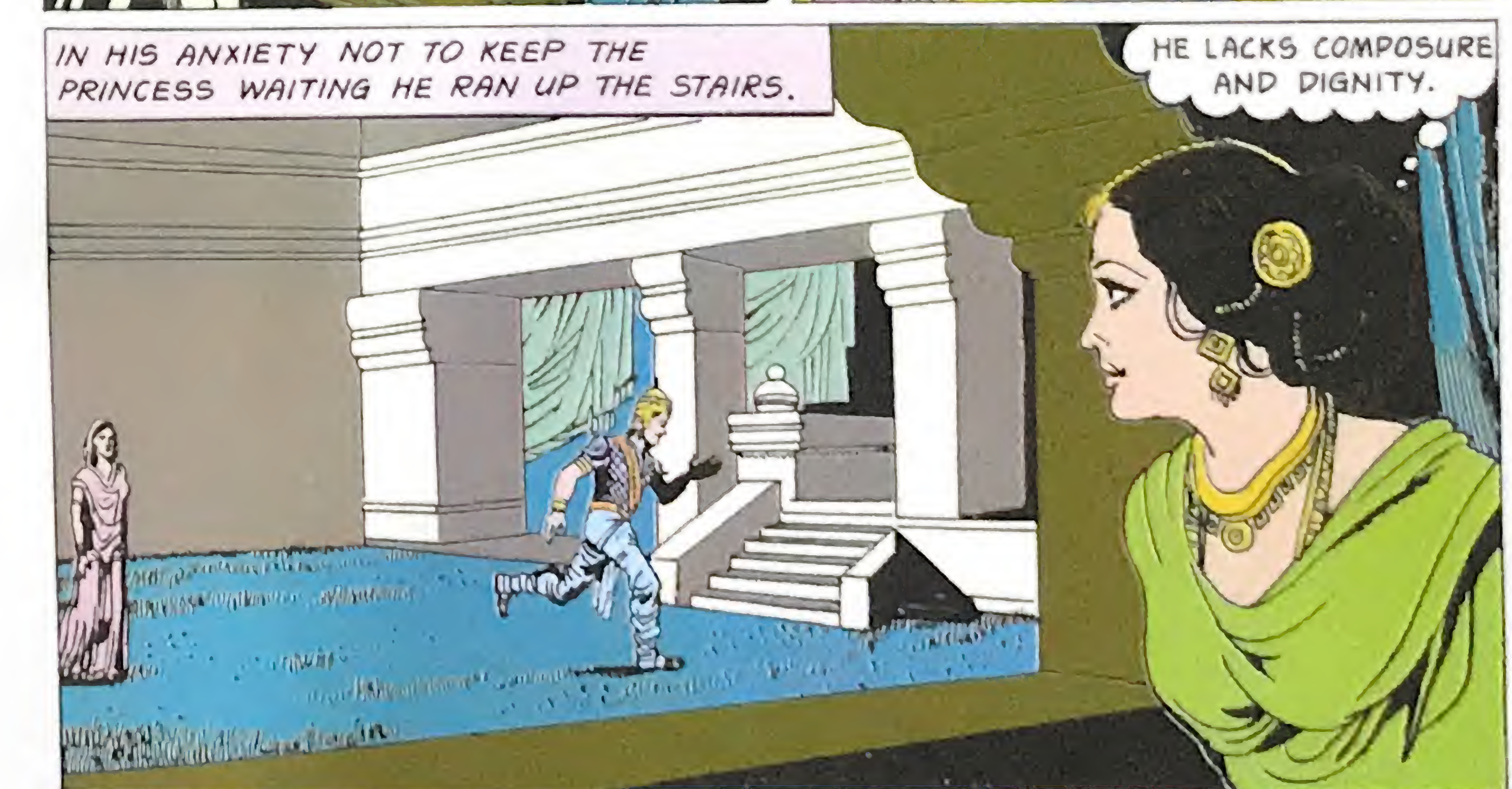
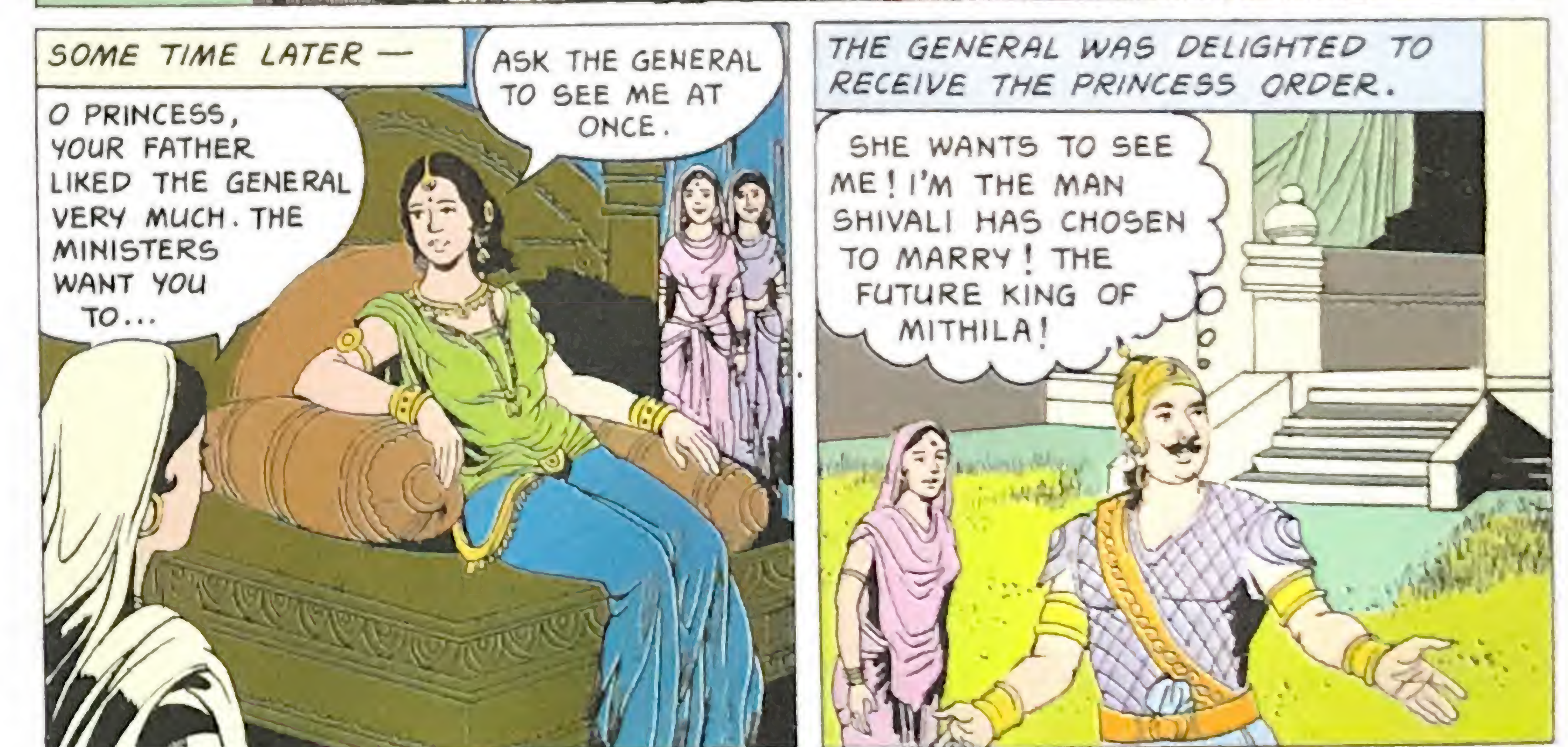
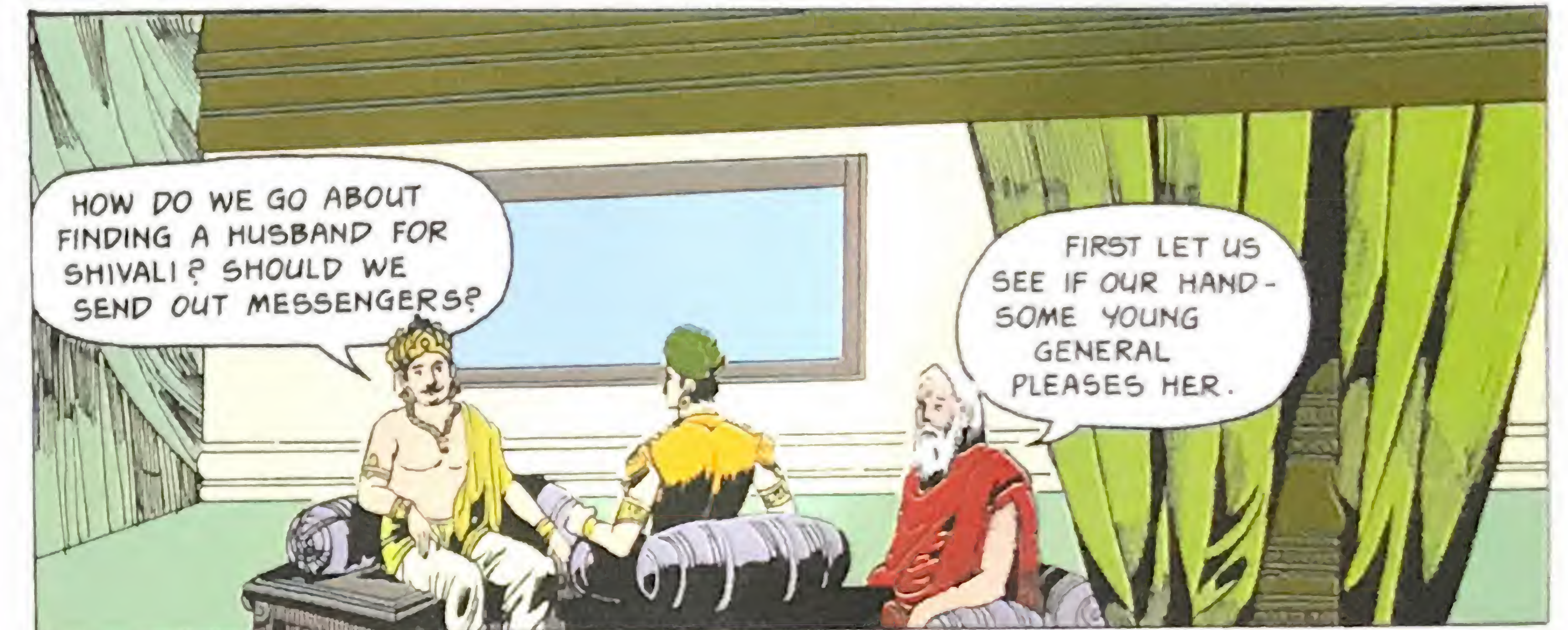


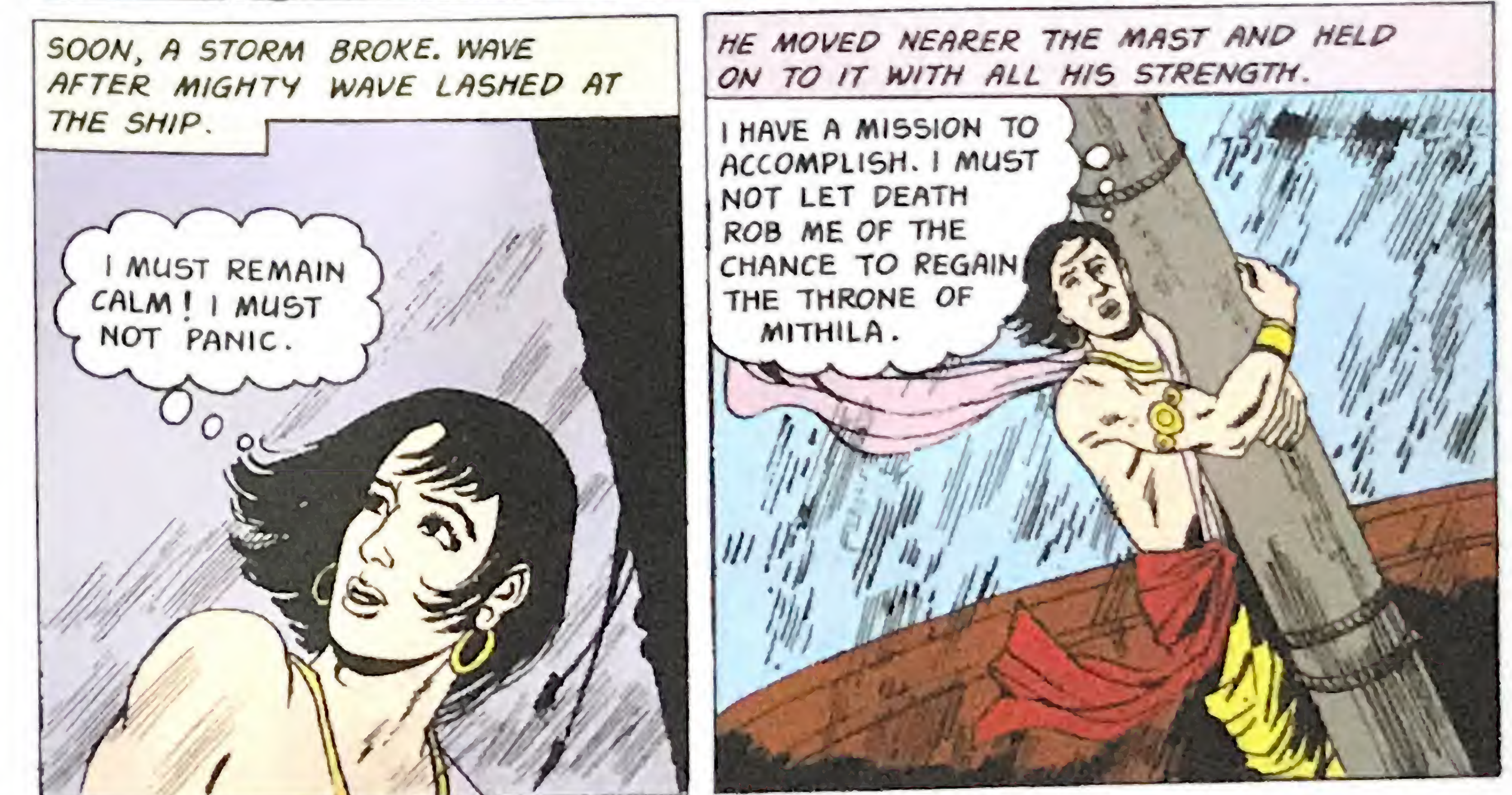
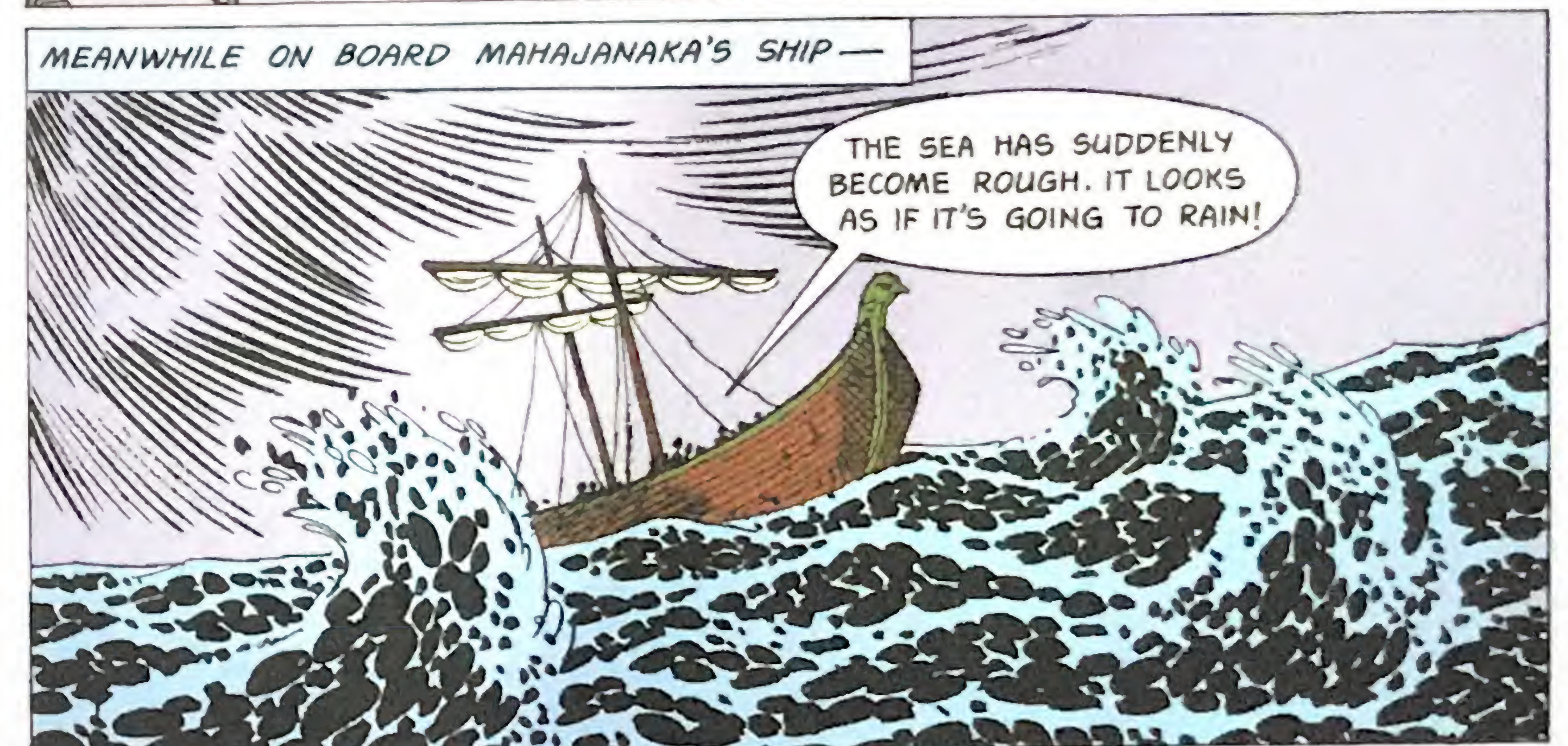
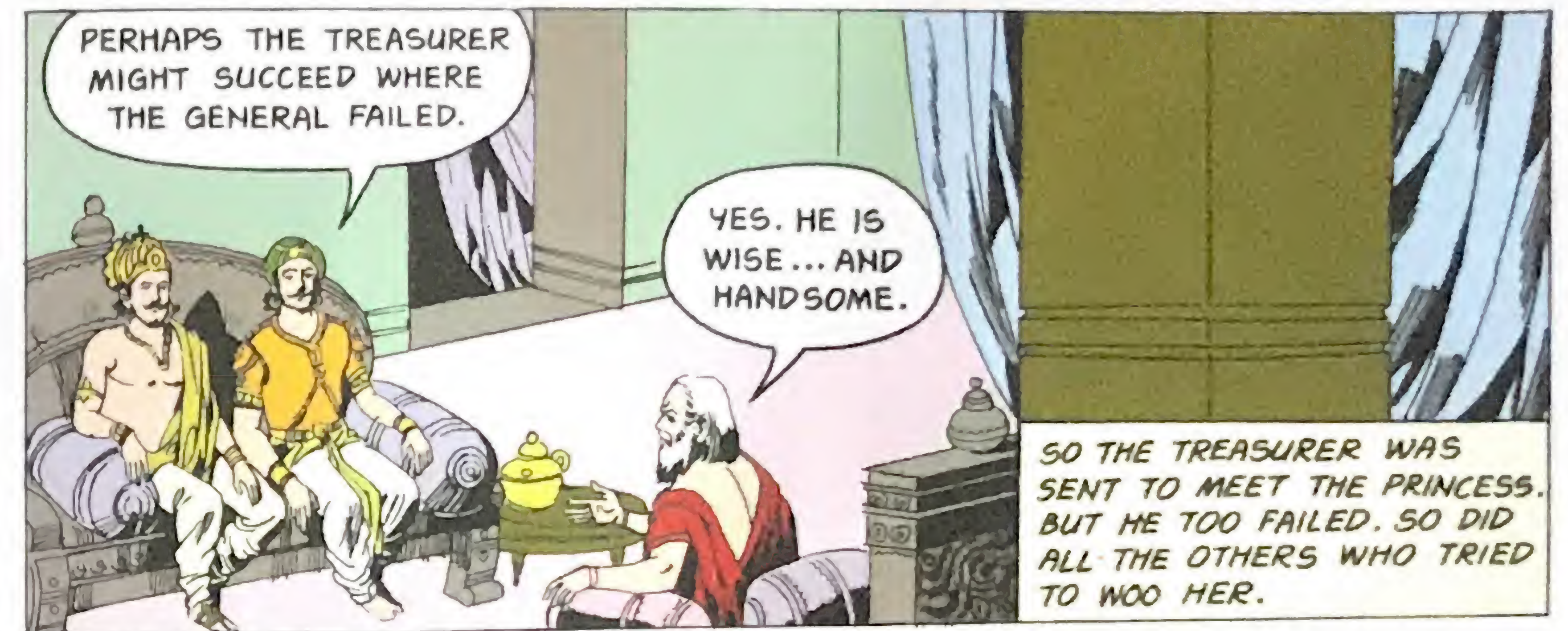
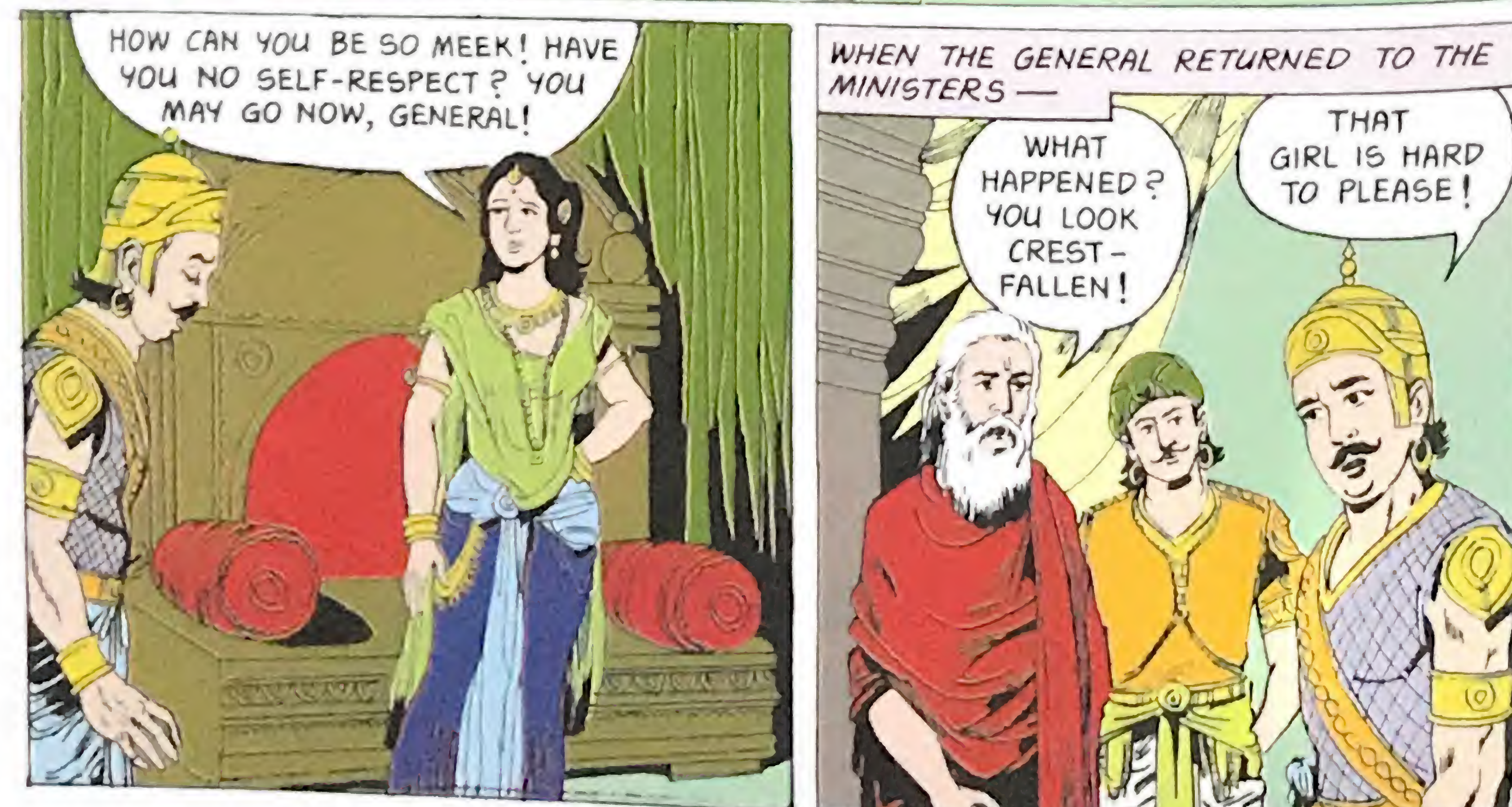
MAHAJANAKA RAN TO HIS MOTHER.



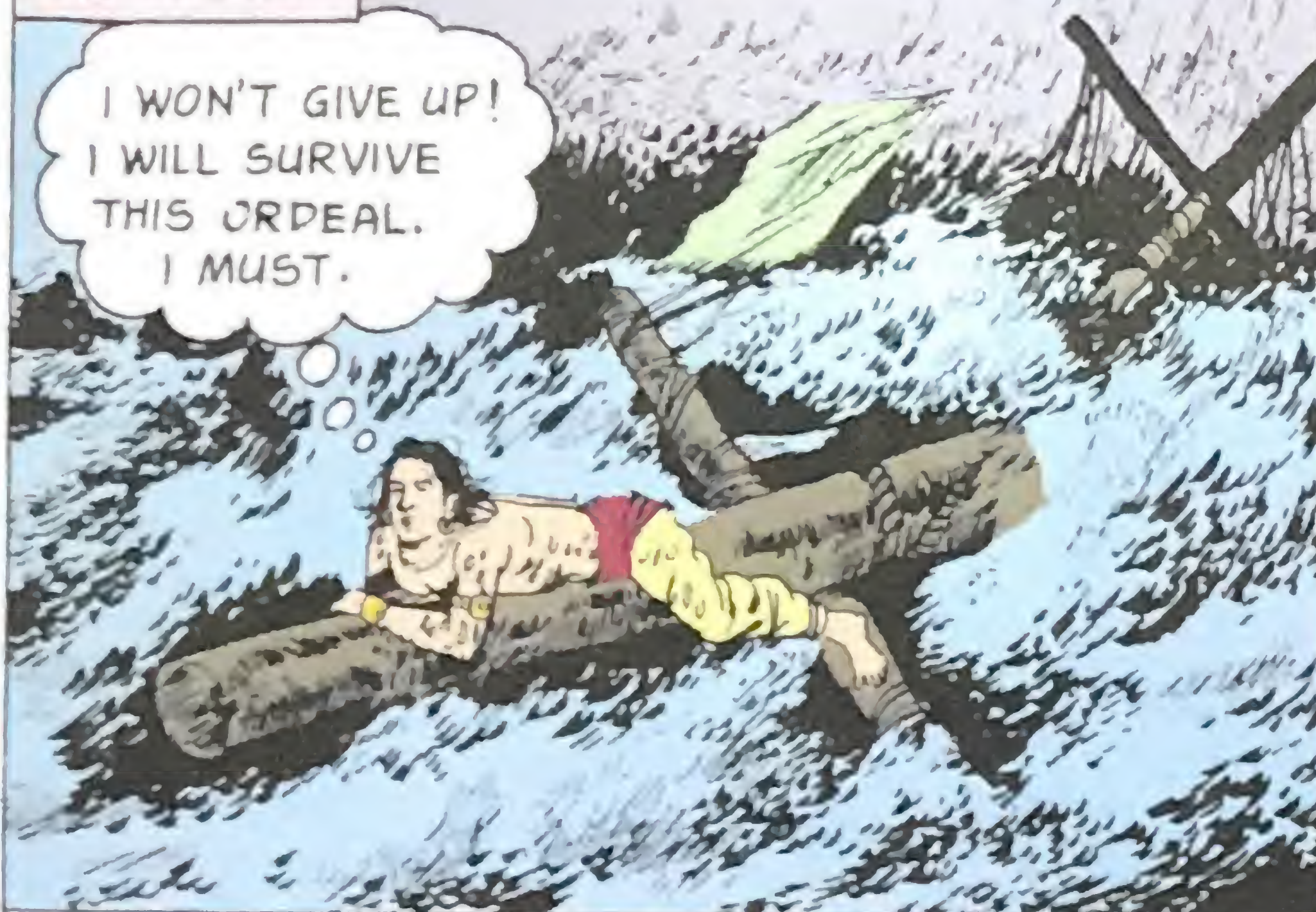




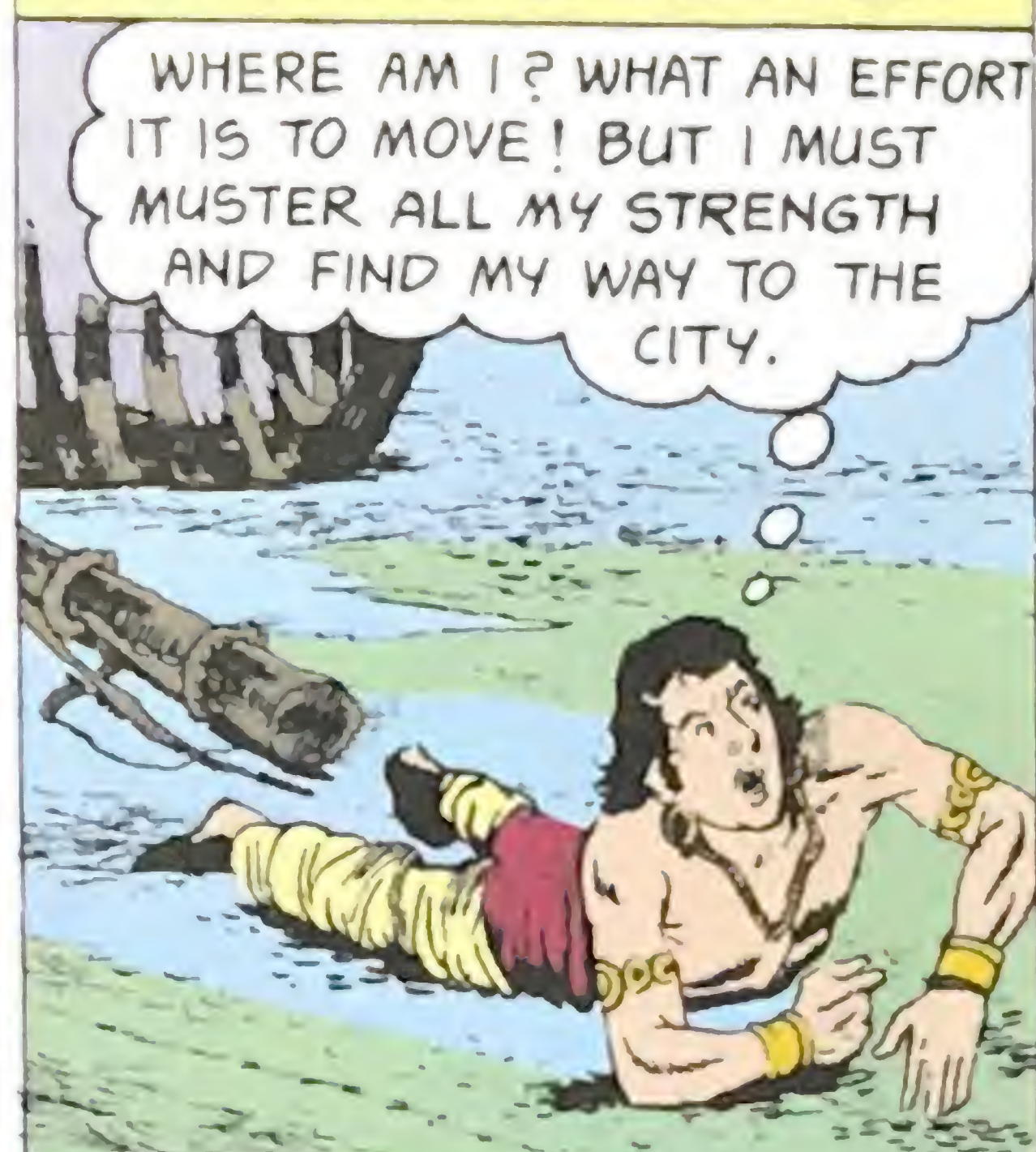




AS THE SHIP SANK UNDER THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE WAVES, MAHAJANAKA TIGHTENED HIS GRIP ON THE MAST.



A FEW DAYS LATER, MAHA-JANAKA WAS WASHED ASHORE. WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES —



LATER, IN A GARDEN OUTSIDE THE EASTERN GATE OF THE CITY, HE OVERHEARD TWO MEN TALKING.



AT THE PALACE, MEANWHILE —



WHEN THEY CONSULTED THE ROYAL PRIEST —



THE NEWS OF THE CHARIOT BEING SENT OUT SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE. EXCITED CITIZENS THROGGED THE STREETS.

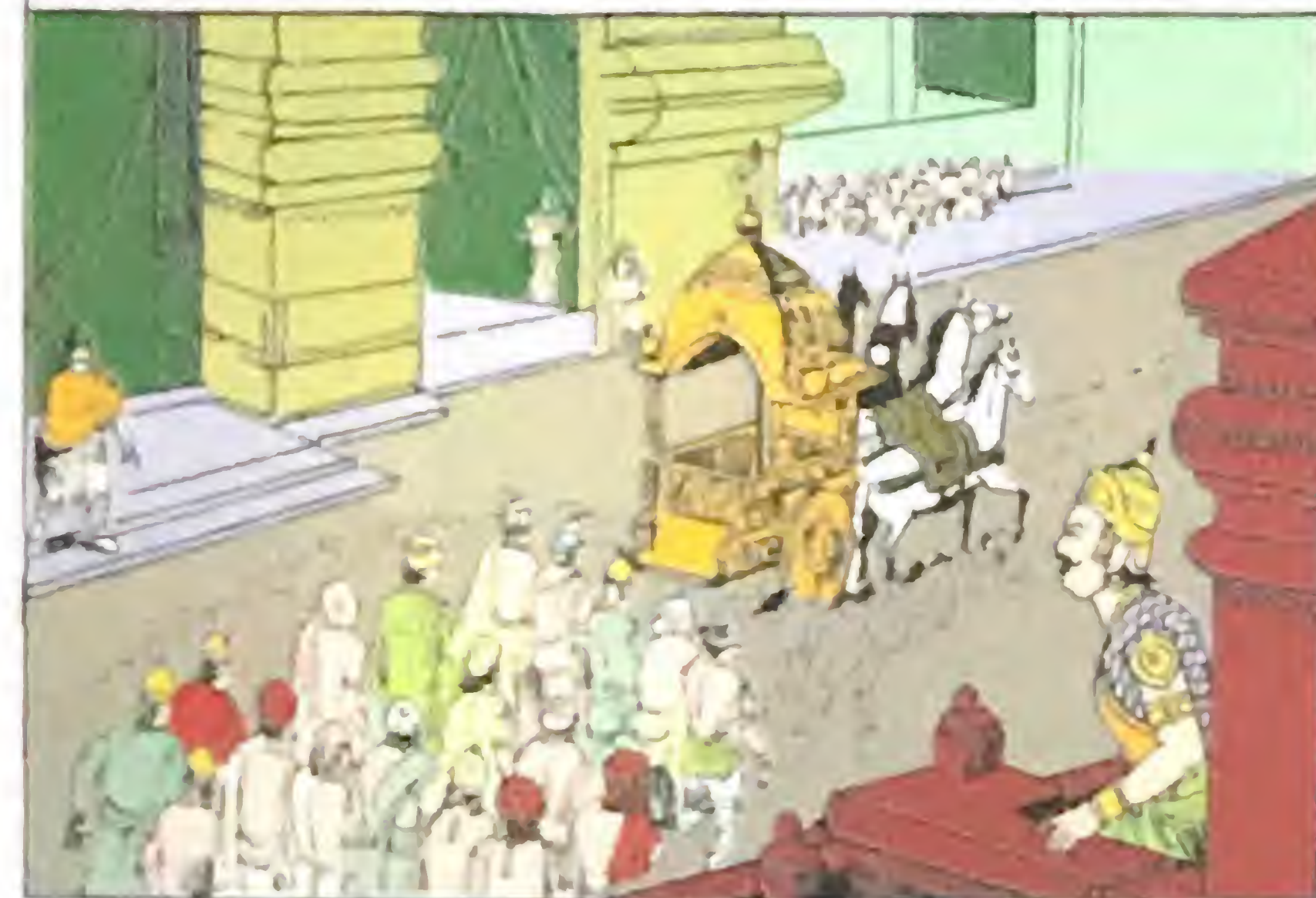


AT THE AUSPICIOUS HOUR THE ROYAL PRIEST STOOD BEFORE THE CHARIOT.

LEAD US TO HIM WHO WILL PLEASE SHIVALI AND WHO IS FIT TO RULE A KINGDOM.

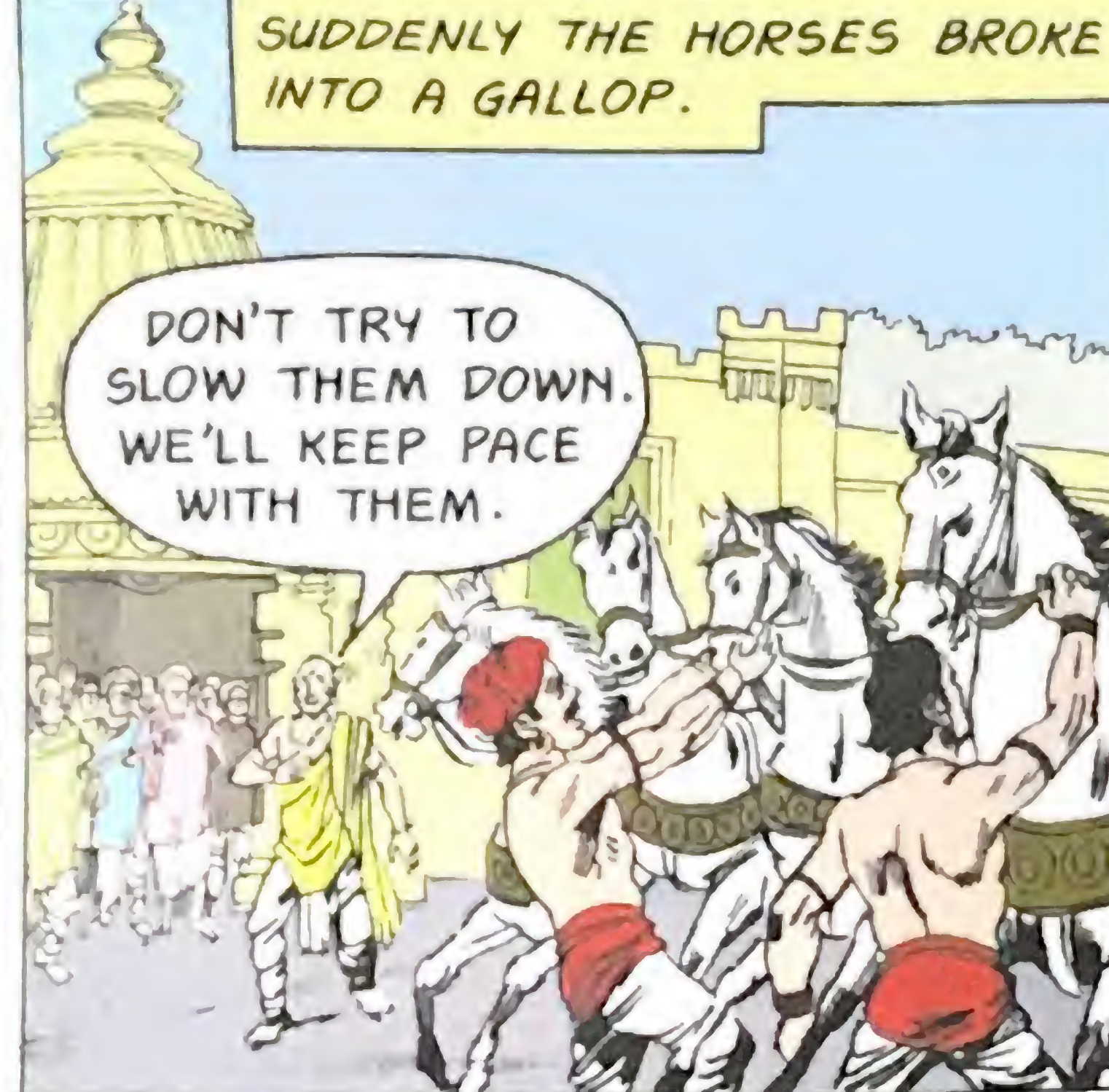


THE ROYAL PRIEST WITH THE MINISTERS WALKED BEHIND THE CHARIOT AS IT ROLLED PAST THE HOUSES OF THE GENERAL, THE TREASURER, AND ALL THE OTHER SUITORS.

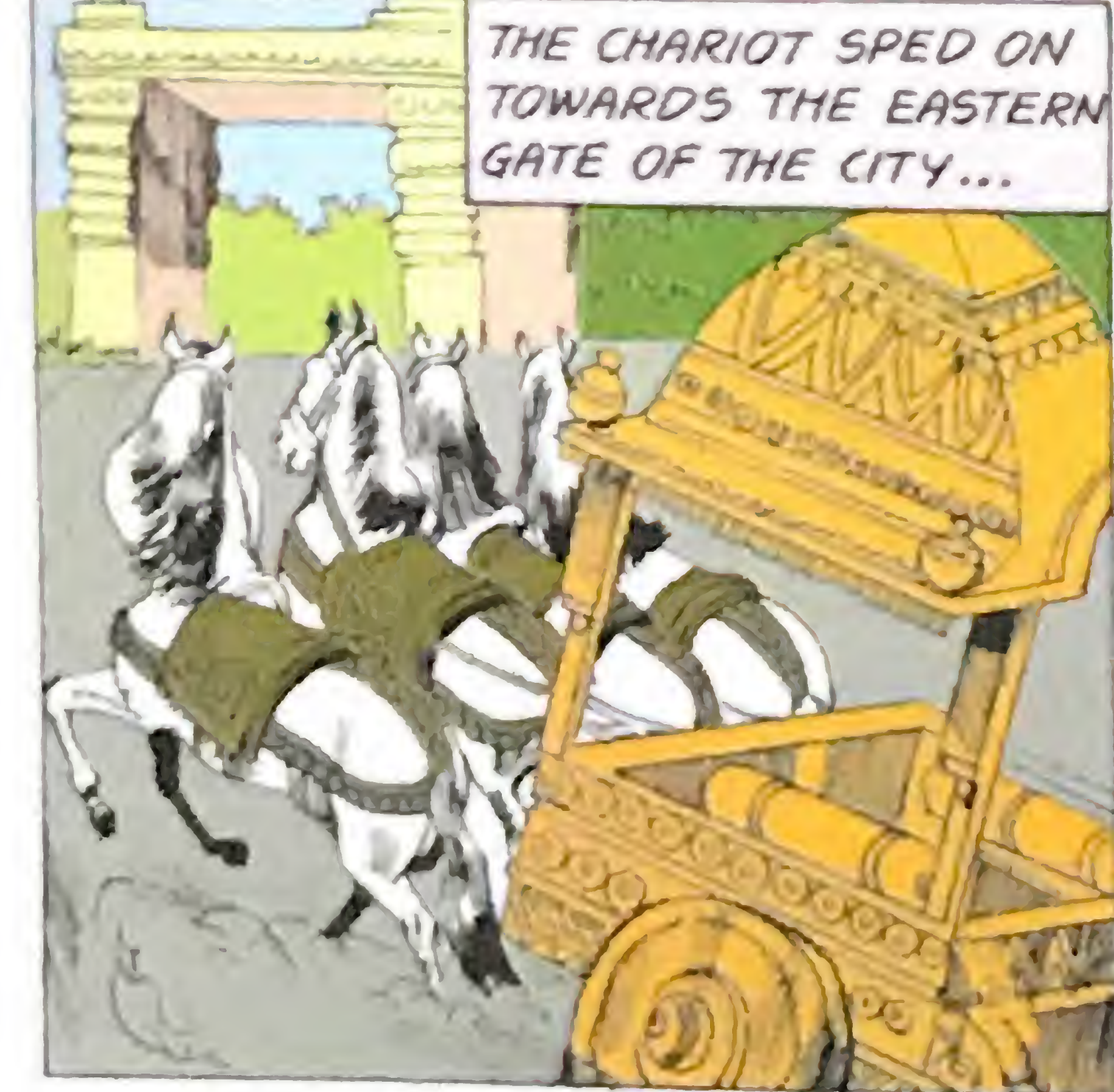


SUDDENLY THE HORSES BROKE INTO A GALLOP.

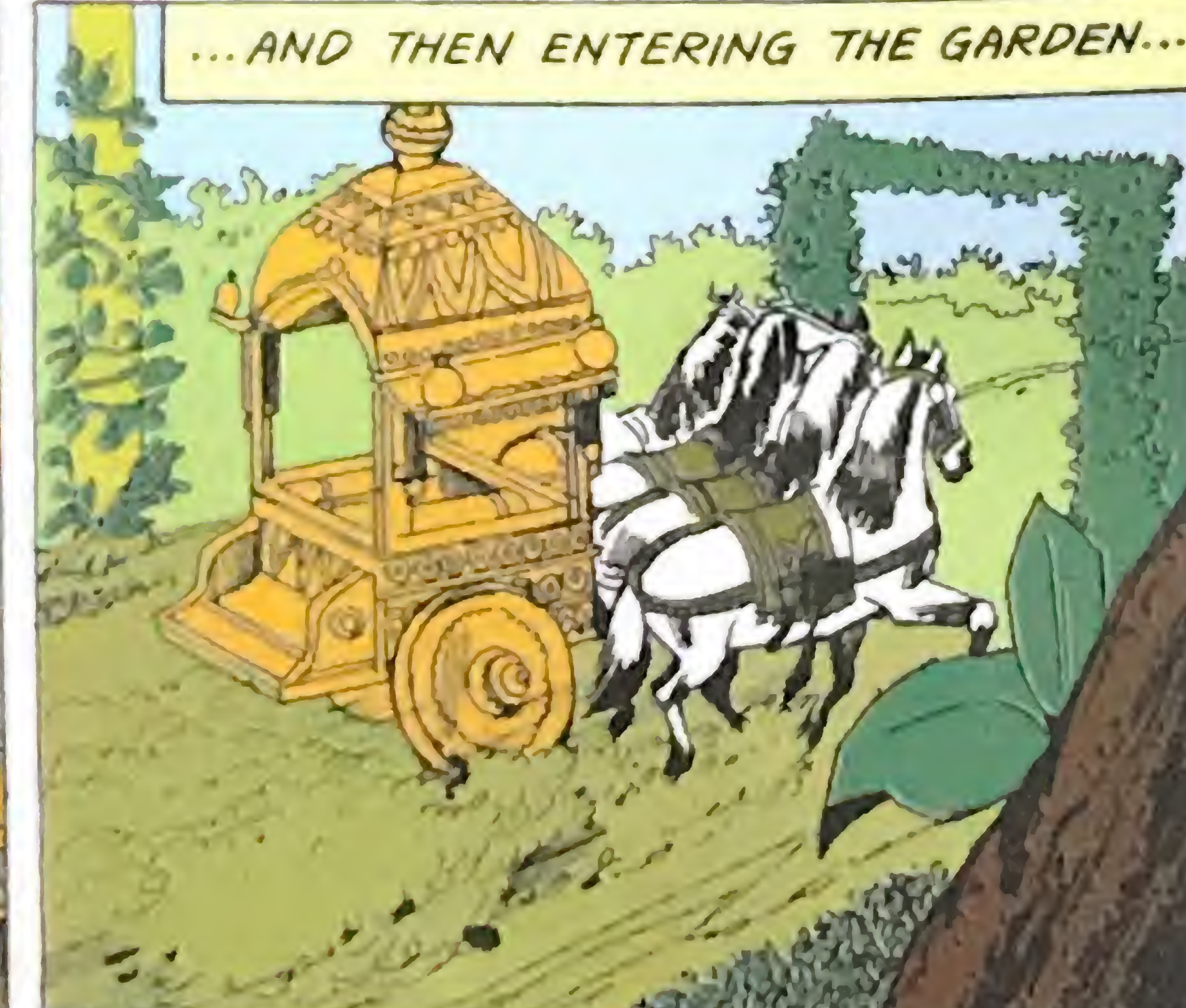
DON'T TRY TO SLOW THEM DOWN. WE'LL KEEP PACE WITH THEM.



THE CHARIOT SPED ON TOWARDS THE EASTERN GATE OF THE CITY...

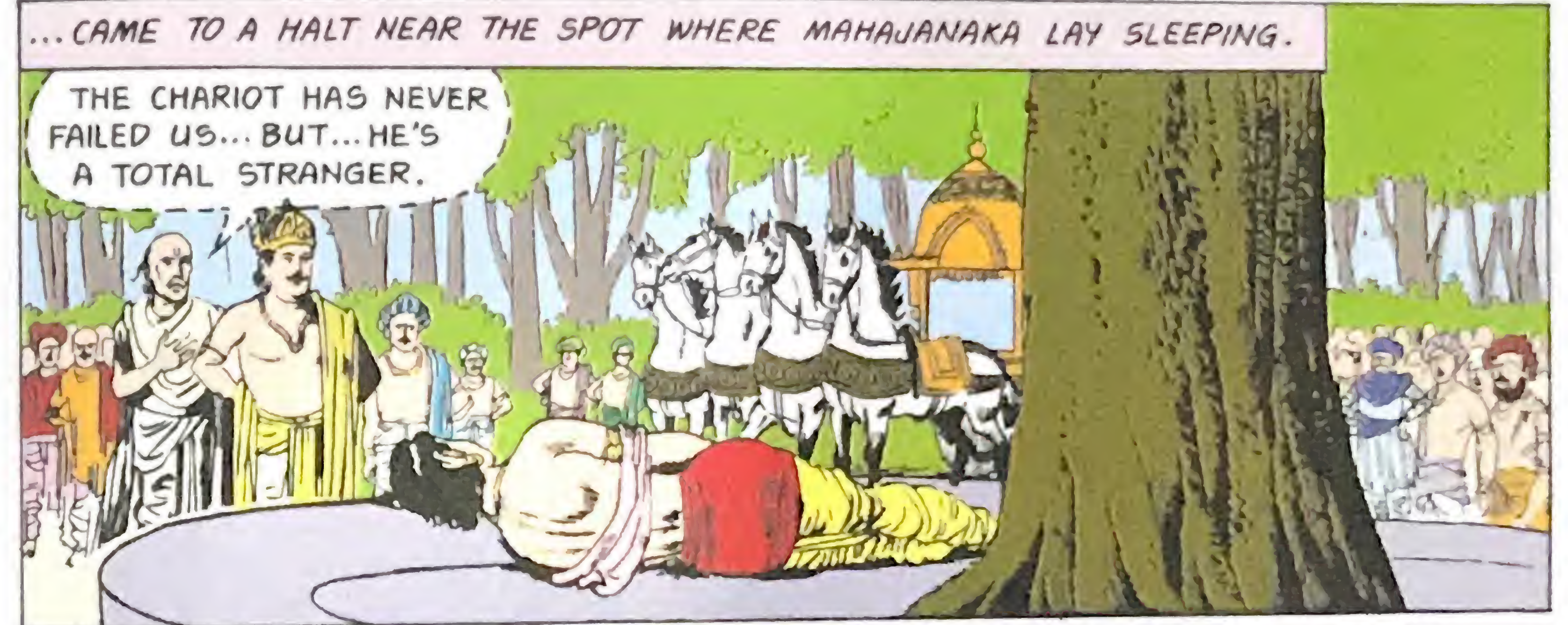


...AND THEN ENTERING THE GARDEN...



...CAME TO A HALT NEAR THE SPOT WHERE MAHAJANAKA LAY SLEEPING.

THE CHARIOT HAS NEVER FAILED US... BUT... HE'S A TOTAL STRANGER.



I HAVE AN IDEA. LET THE DRUMS BE BEATEN AND THE HORNS BE BLOWN. LET THERE BE A DEAFENING UPROAR.



HOW HE WAKES UP, WHAT HE DOES AND SAYS, WILL TELL US MUCH ABOUT HIM. HE'S STIRRING!

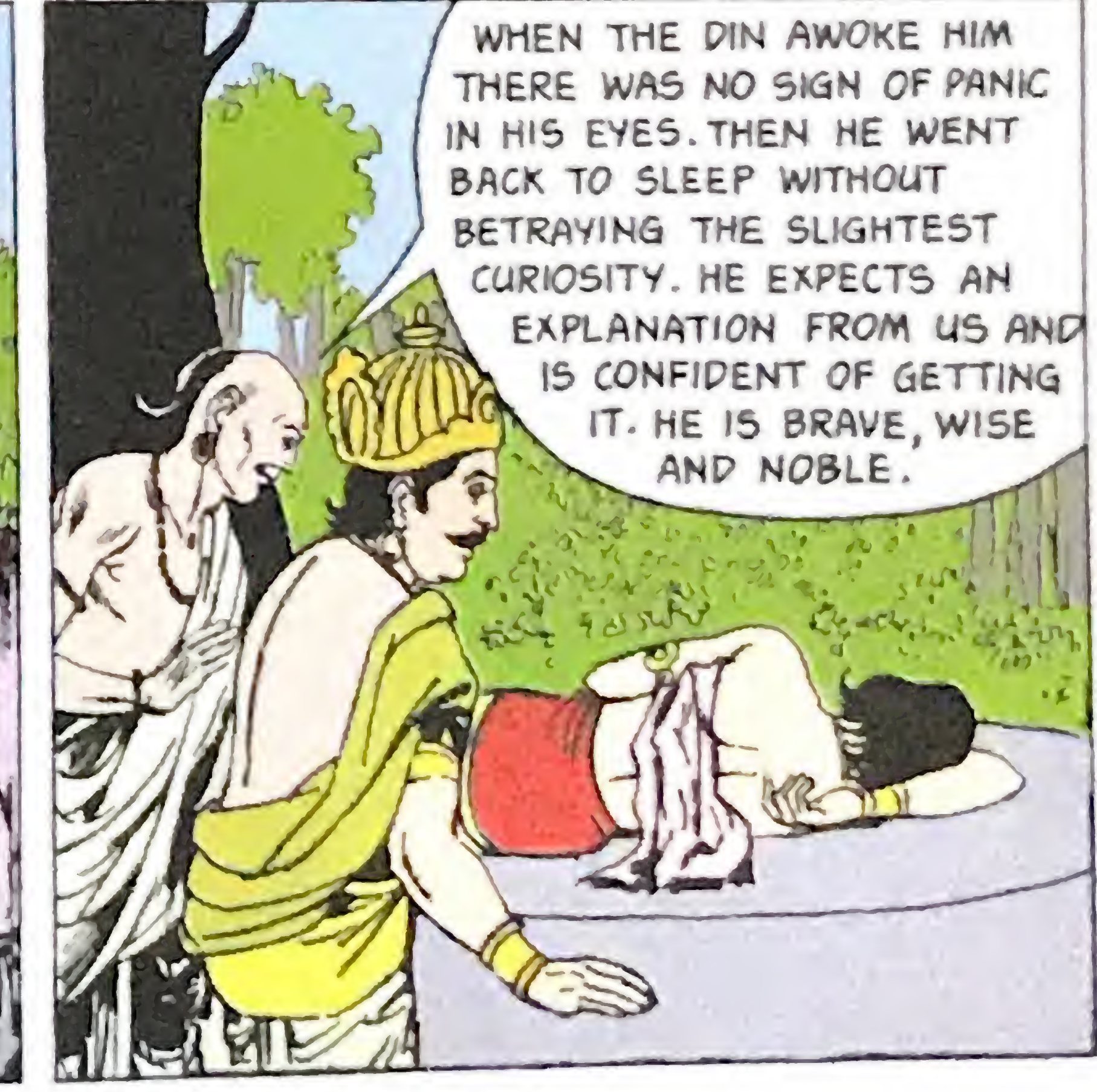


THE NOISE AROUND HIM AWOK MAHAJANAKA.

WHAT A TERRIBLE DIN! WHY ARE ALL THESE PEOPLE HERE? HM.M.M. I'LL KNOW SOONER OR LATER.



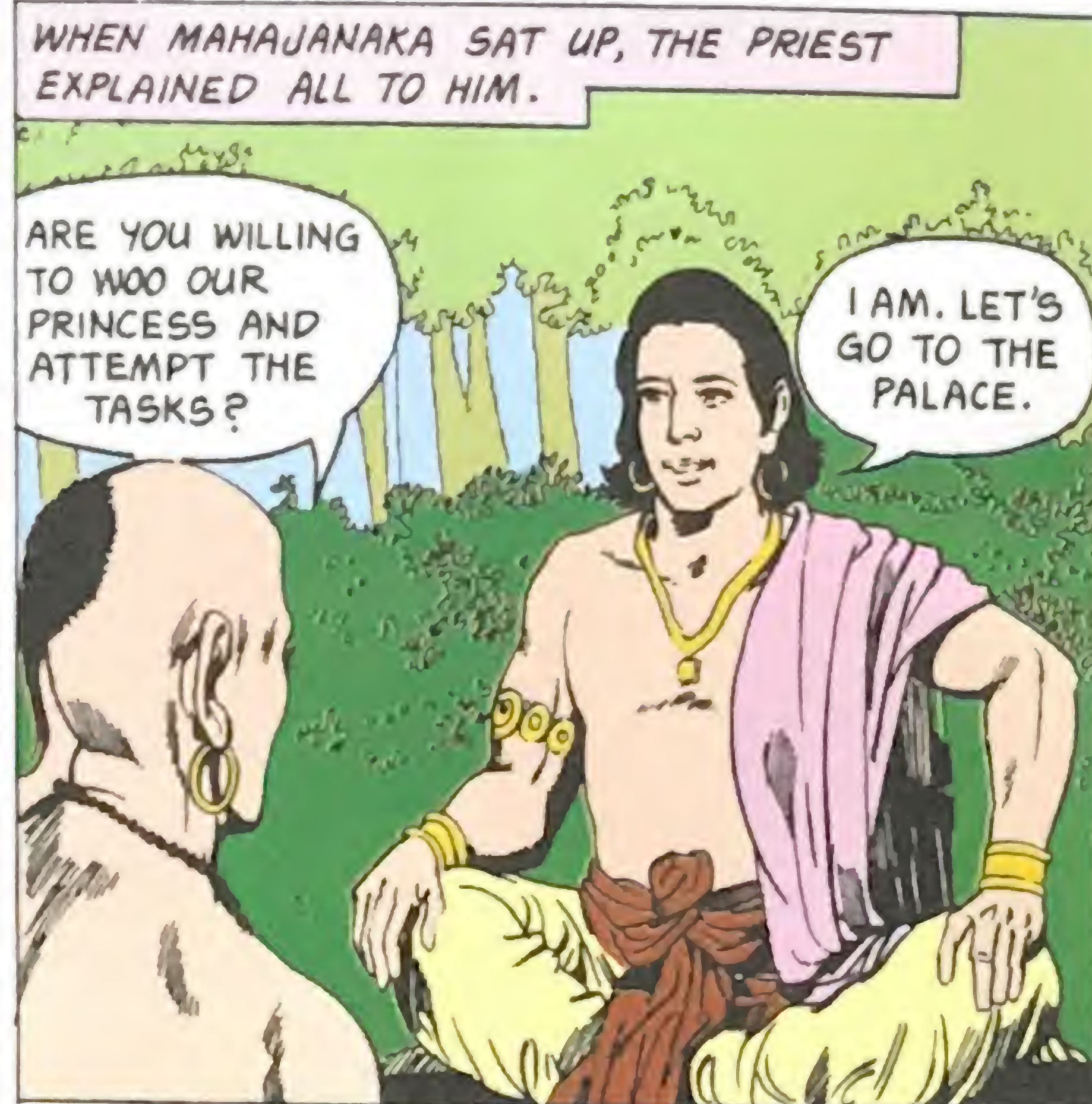
WHEN THE DIN AWOK HIM THERE WAS NO SIGN OF PANIC IN HIS EYES. THEN HE WENT BACK TO SLEEP WITHOUT BETRAYING THE SLIGHTEST CURIOSITY. HE EXPECTS AN EXPLANATION FROM US AND IS CONFIDENT OF GETTING IT. HE IS BRAVE, WISE AND NOBLE.





THE PRIEST CAME FORWARD.

RISE, O NOBLE ONE. THE KINGDOM AWAITS YOU!



WHEN MAHAJANAKA SAT UP, THE PRIEST EXPLAINED ALL TO HIM.

ARE YOU WILLING TO WOO OUR PRINCESS AND ATTEMPT THE TASKS?

I AM. LET'S GO TO THE PALACE.

LED BY MAHAJANAKA WHO WAS SEATED IN THE CHARIOT, THE PROCESSION WENDED ITS WAY TO THE PALACE.

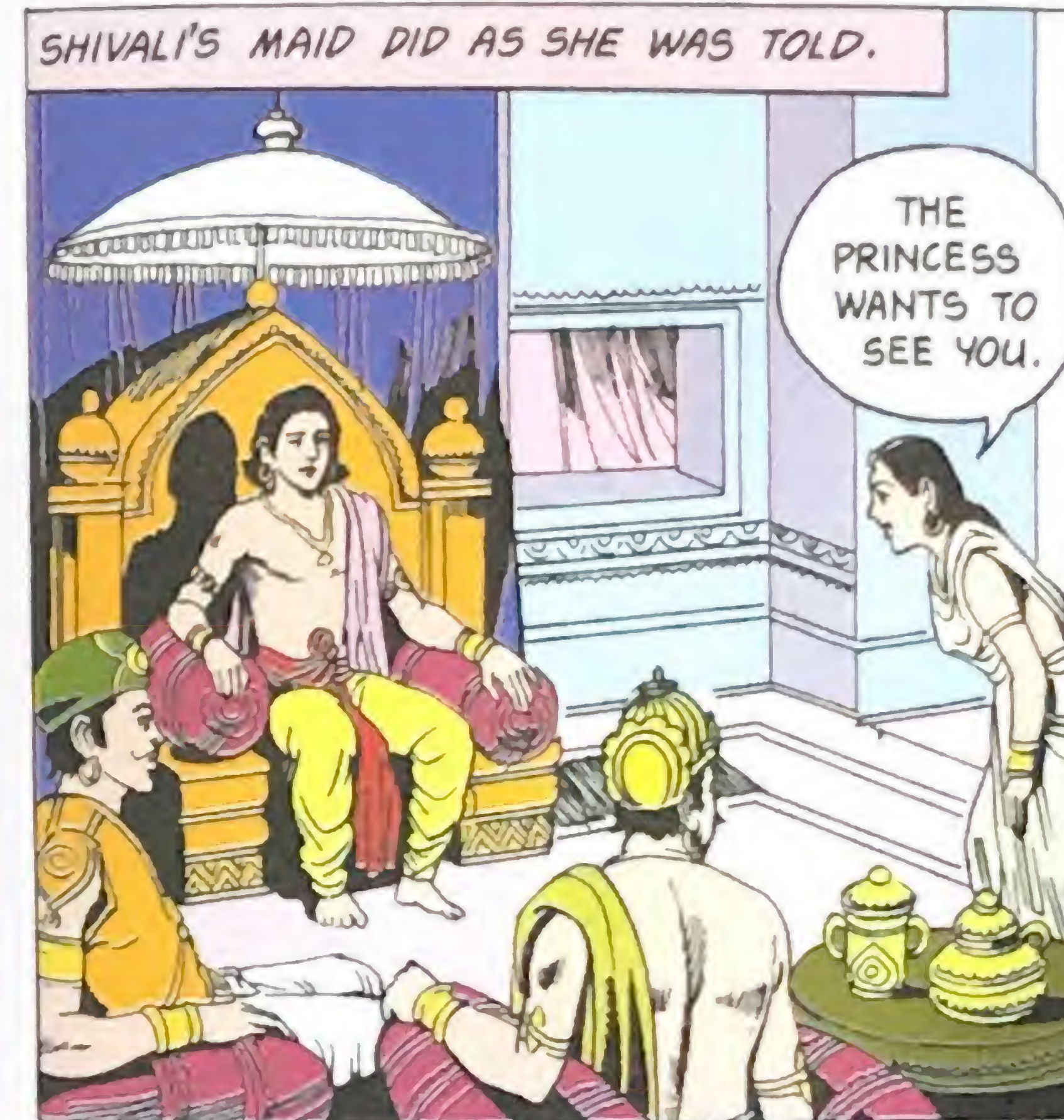


LONG LIVE THE KING!

WHEN PRINCESS SHIVALI WAS TOLD ABOUT MAHAJANAKA —

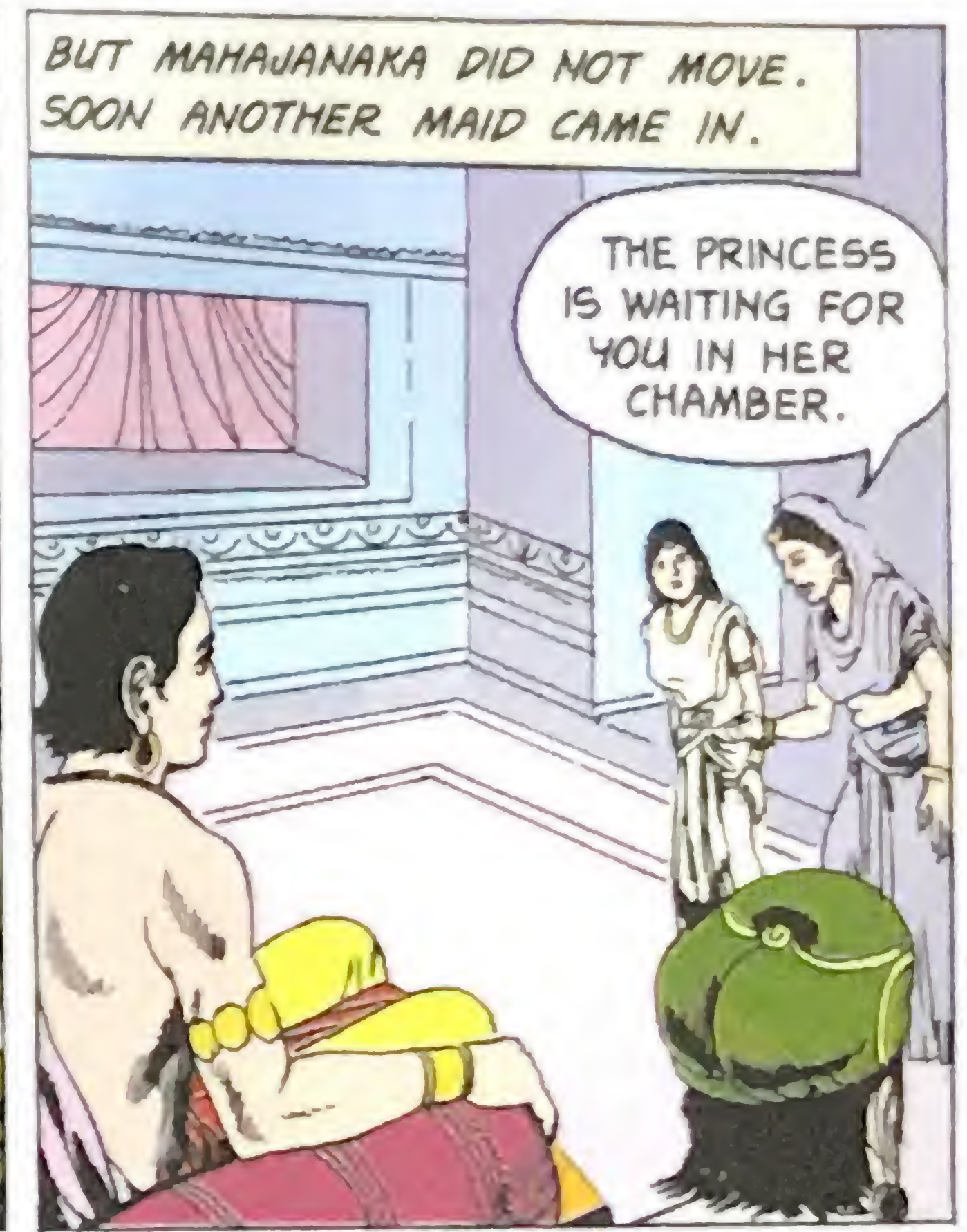


A TOTAL STRANGER? THE CHARIOT MAY HAVE FOUND HIM TO BE THE RIGHT MAN. BUT WILL I? ASK HIM TO SEE ME AT ONCE.



SHIVALI'S MAID DID AS SHE WAS TOLD.

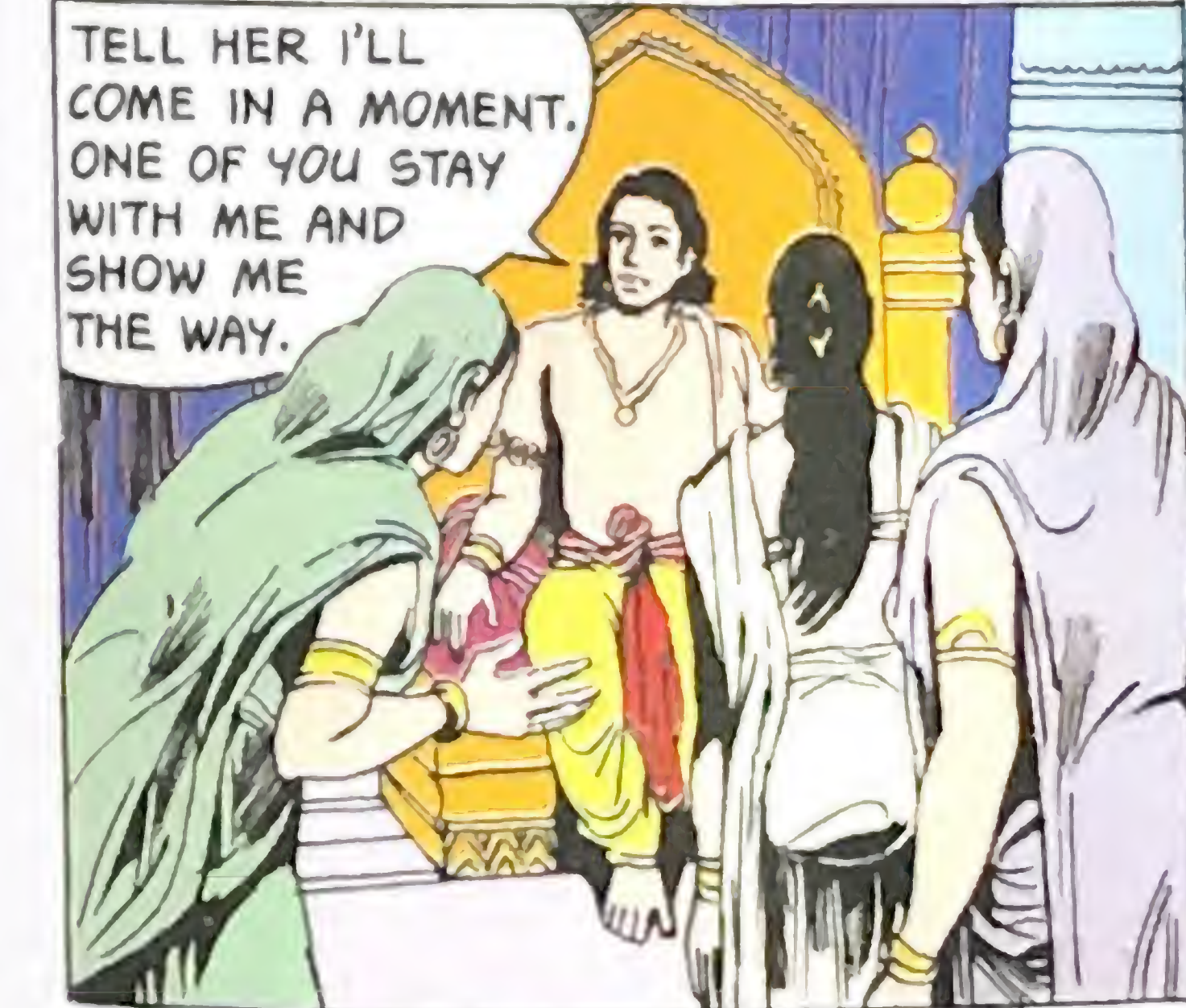
THE PRINCESS WANTS TO SEE YOU.



BUT MAHAJANAKA DID NOT MOVE. SOON ANOTHER MAID CAME IN.

THE PRINCESS IS WAITING FOR YOU IN HER CHAMBER.

ONLY WHEN A THIRD MAID BROUGHT THE SAME MESSAGE DID HE RESPOND.



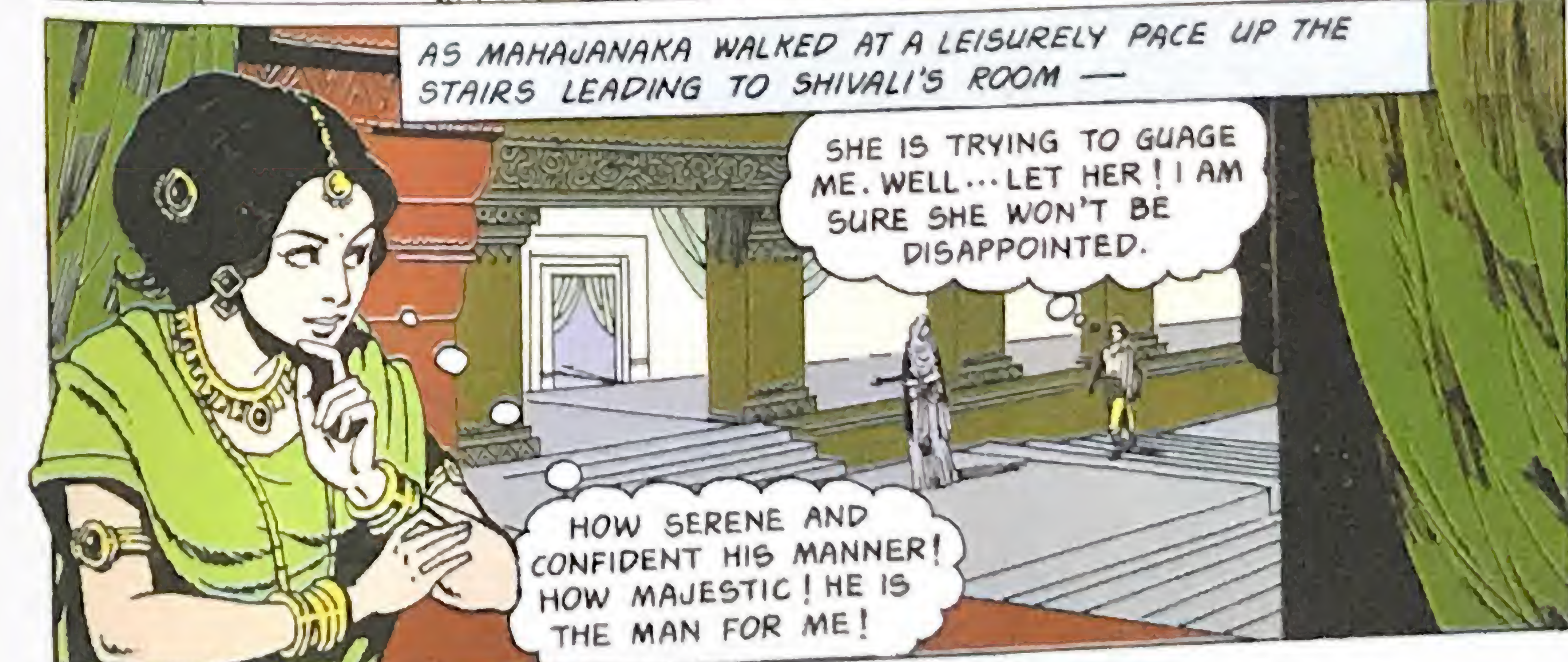
TELL HER I'LL COME IN A MOMENT. ONE OF YOU STAY WITH ME AND SHOW ME THE WAY.

HE TOOK HIS OWN TIME TO GET UP AND WALKED SLOWLY, REGALLY TOWARDS THE PRINCESS' ROOM.



HE DELIBERATELY KEPT THE PRINCESS WAITING.

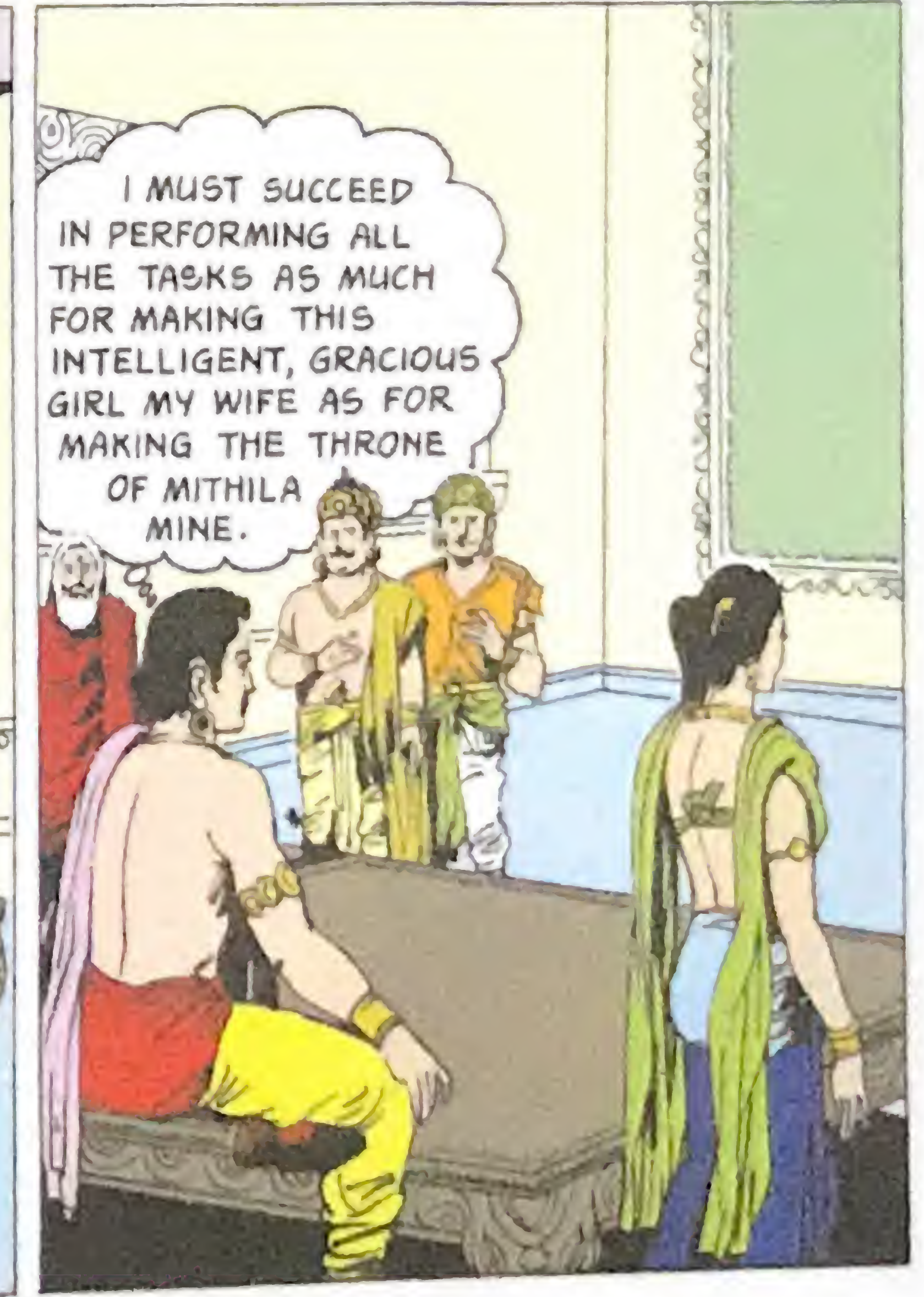
PERHAPS, THAT'S WHAT THE PRINCESS EXPECTED OF A SUITOR!



AS MAHAJANAKA WALKED AT A LEISURELY PACE UP THE STAIRS LEADING TO SHIVALI'S ROOM —

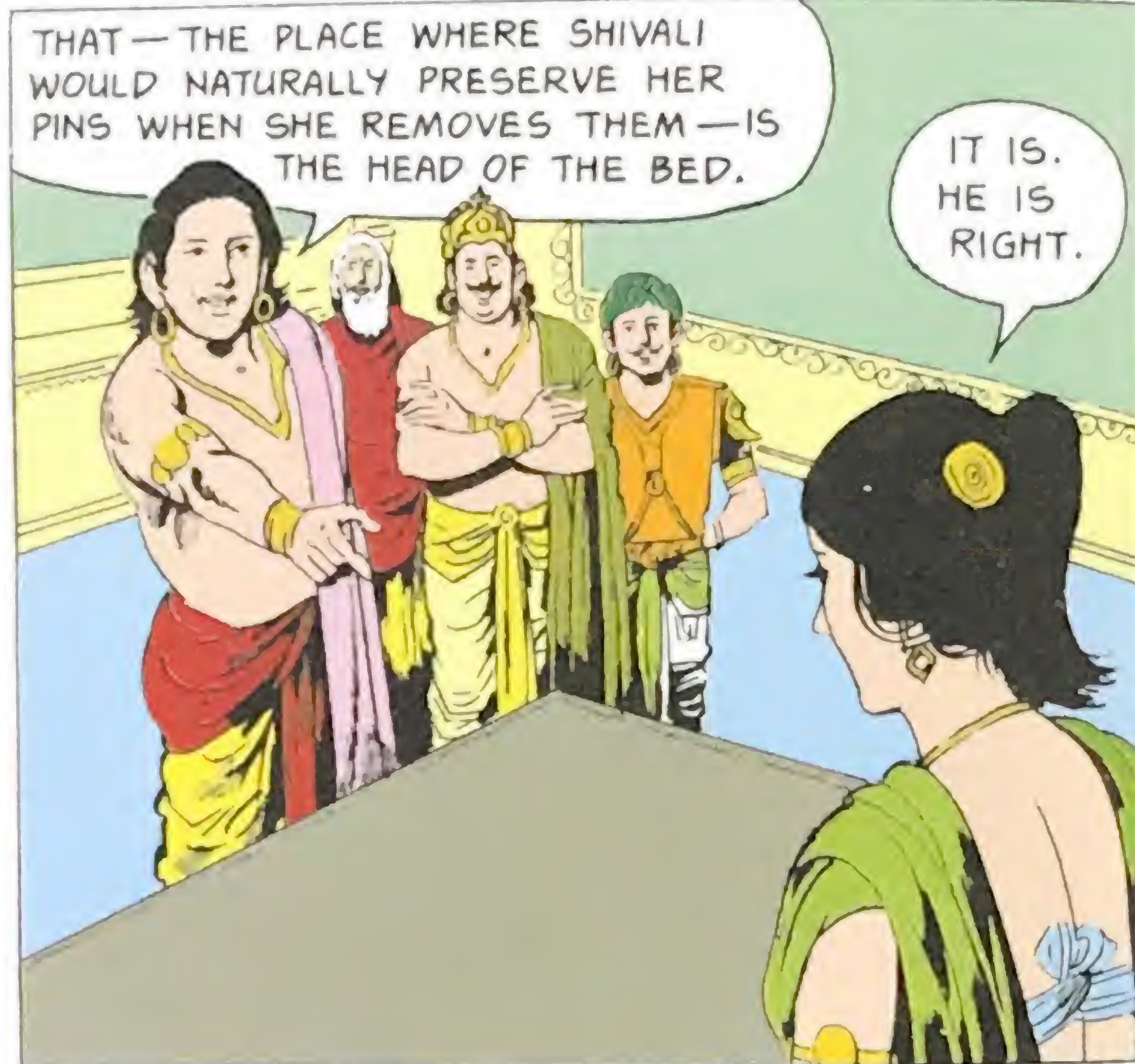
SHE IS TRYING TO GAUGE ME. WELL... LET HER! I AM SURE SHE WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED.

HOW SERENE AND CONFIDENT HIS MANNER! HOW MAJESTIC! HE IS THE MAN FOR ME!





SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT HE'S GOING TO SUCCEED. AND I HOPE WITH ALL MY HEART THAT HE DOES.



THAT—THE PLACE WHERE SHIVALI WOULD NATURALLY PRESERVE HER PINS WHEN SHE REMOVES THEM—IS THE HEAD OF THE BED.

IT IS. HE IS RIGHT.

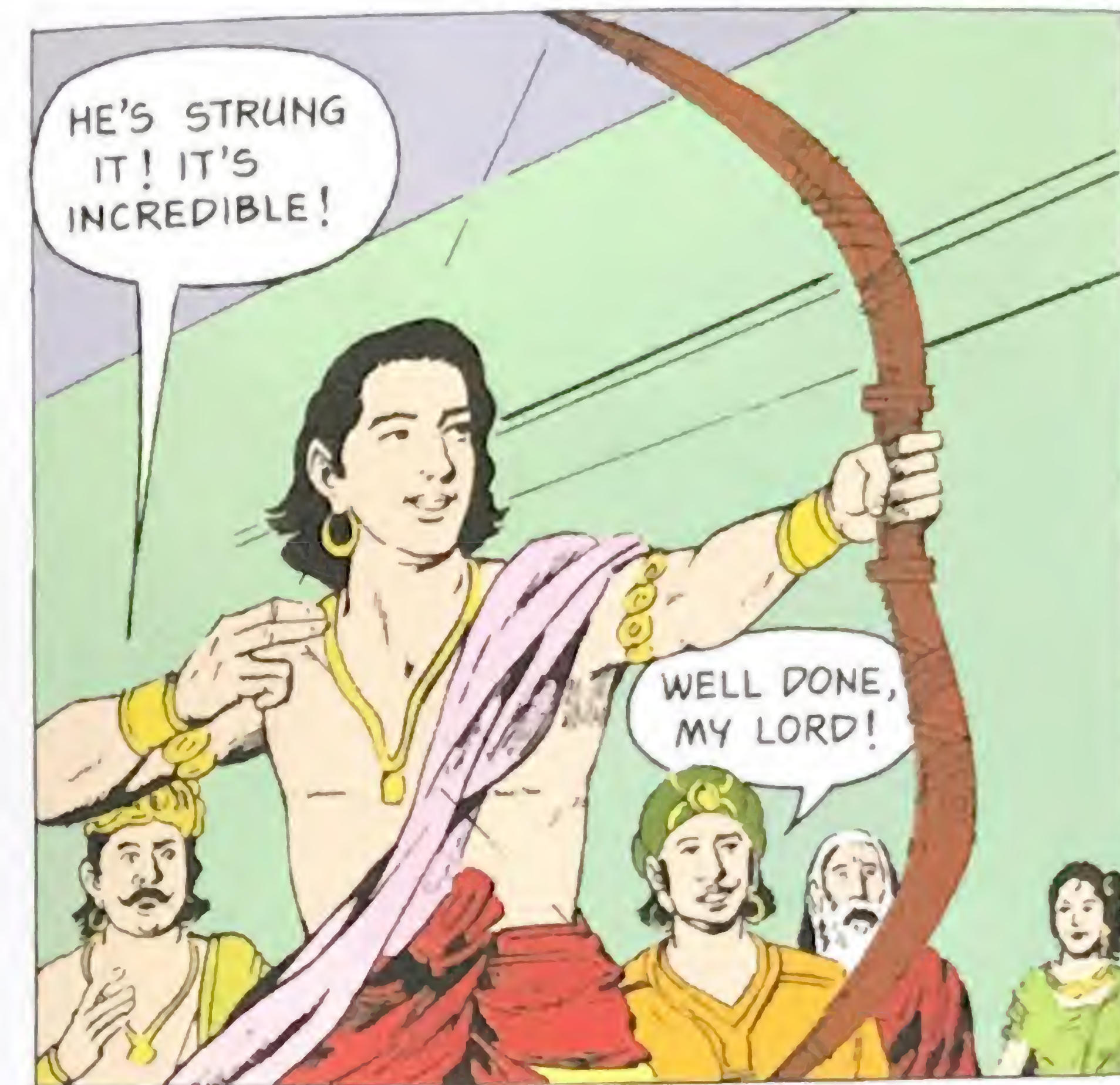


I HOPE THE NEXT TASK IS A MORE CHALLENGING ONE.

YOU'LL HAVE TO STRING THE GREAT BOW.



THEY WENT TO THE ARMOURY. THERE MAHAJANAKA WAS SHOWN THE BOW. HE LIFTED IT UP WITH EASE.



HE'S STRUNG IT! IT'S INCREDIBLE!

WELL DONE, MY LORD!



AND NOW?

THE LAST TEST. YOU HAVE TO FIND THE SIXTEEN POTS OF GOLD HIDDEN IN AND AROUND THE PALACE.



ARE THERE ANY CLUES?

YES, THERE ARE. YOU WILL FIND THE FIRST POT...



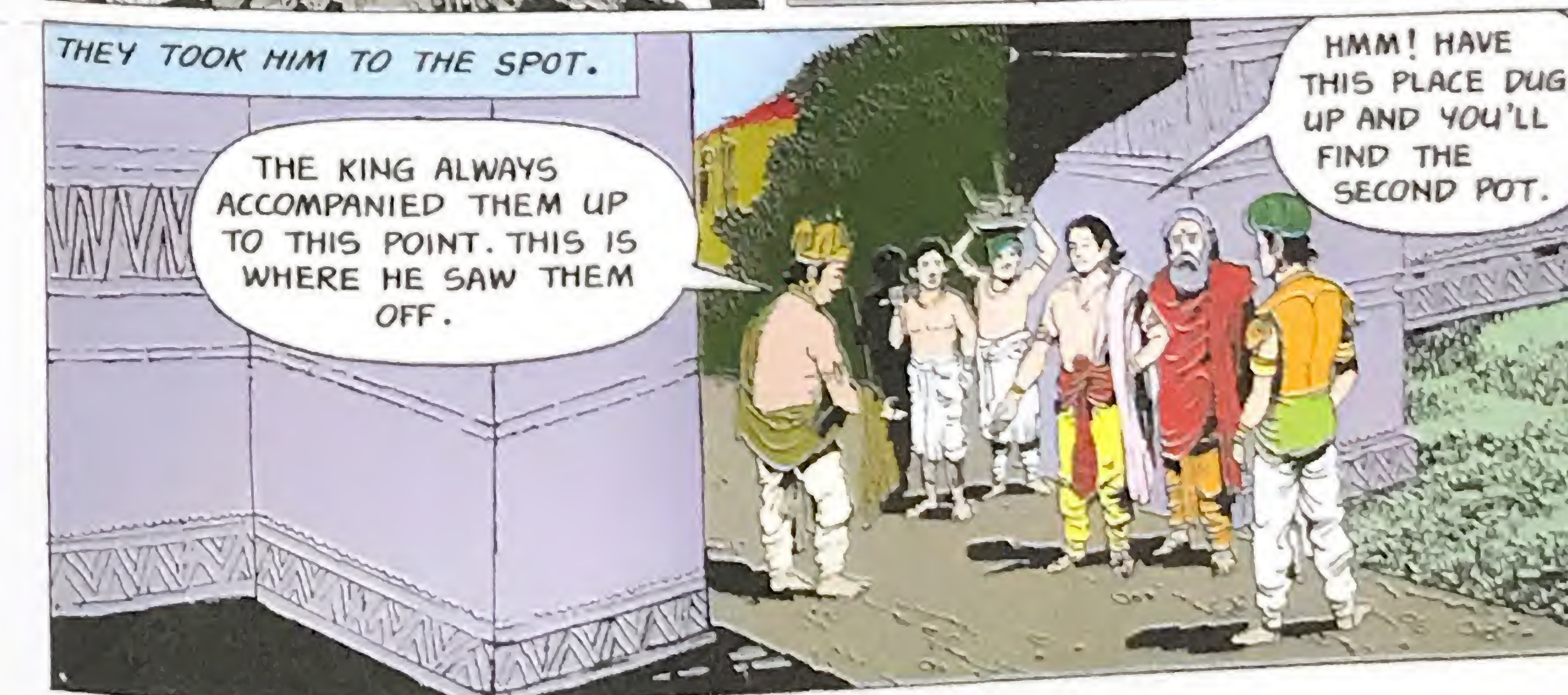
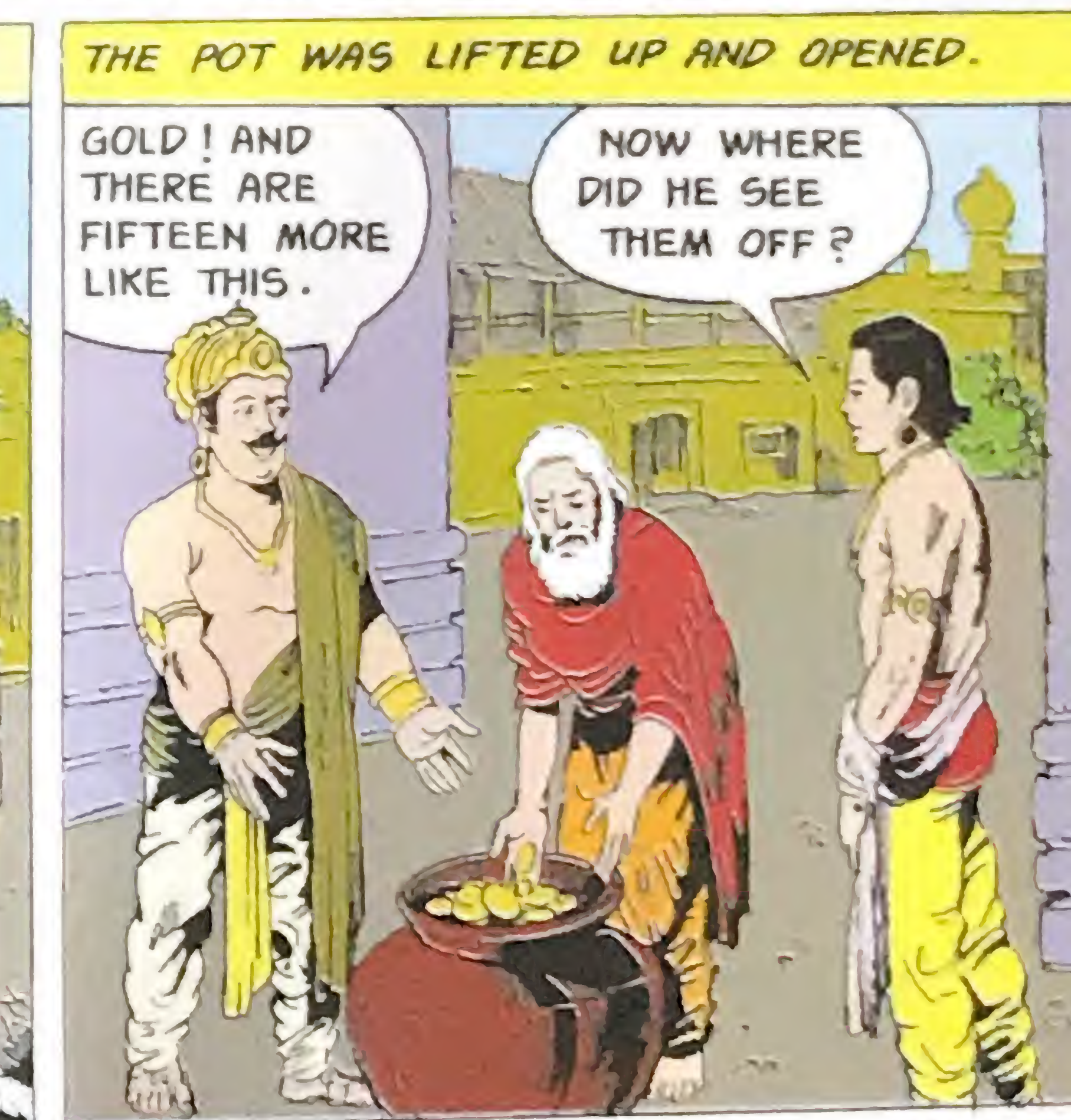
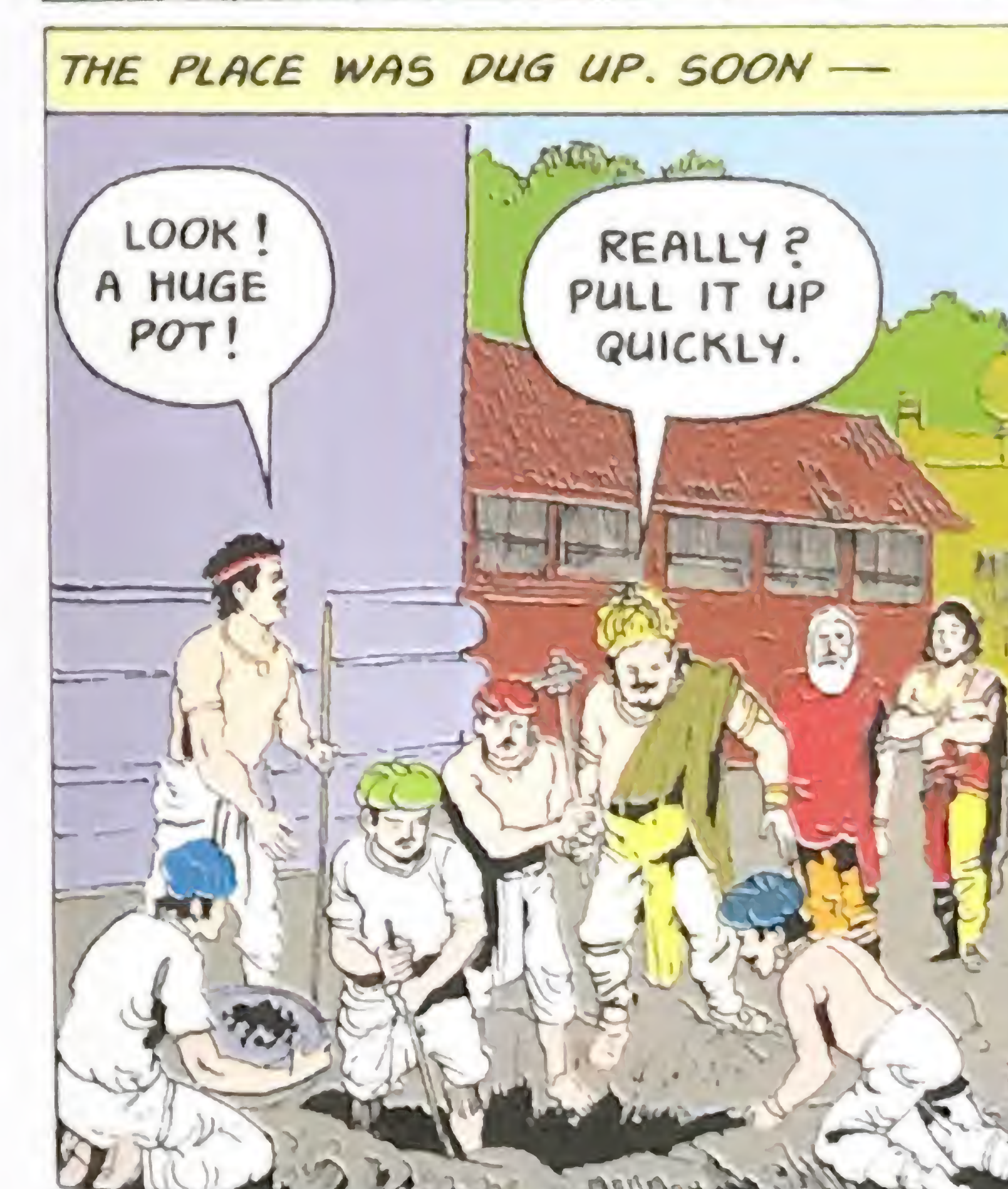
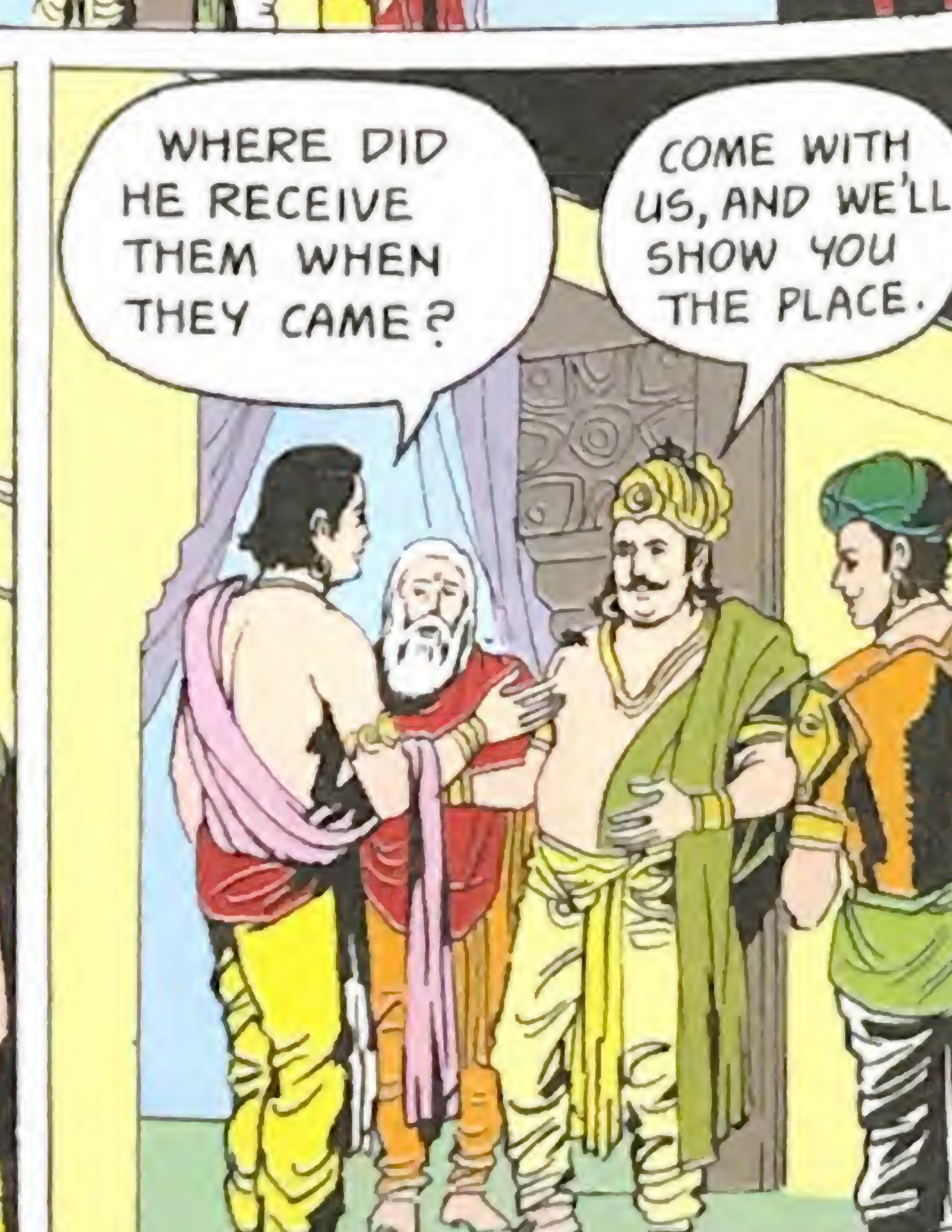
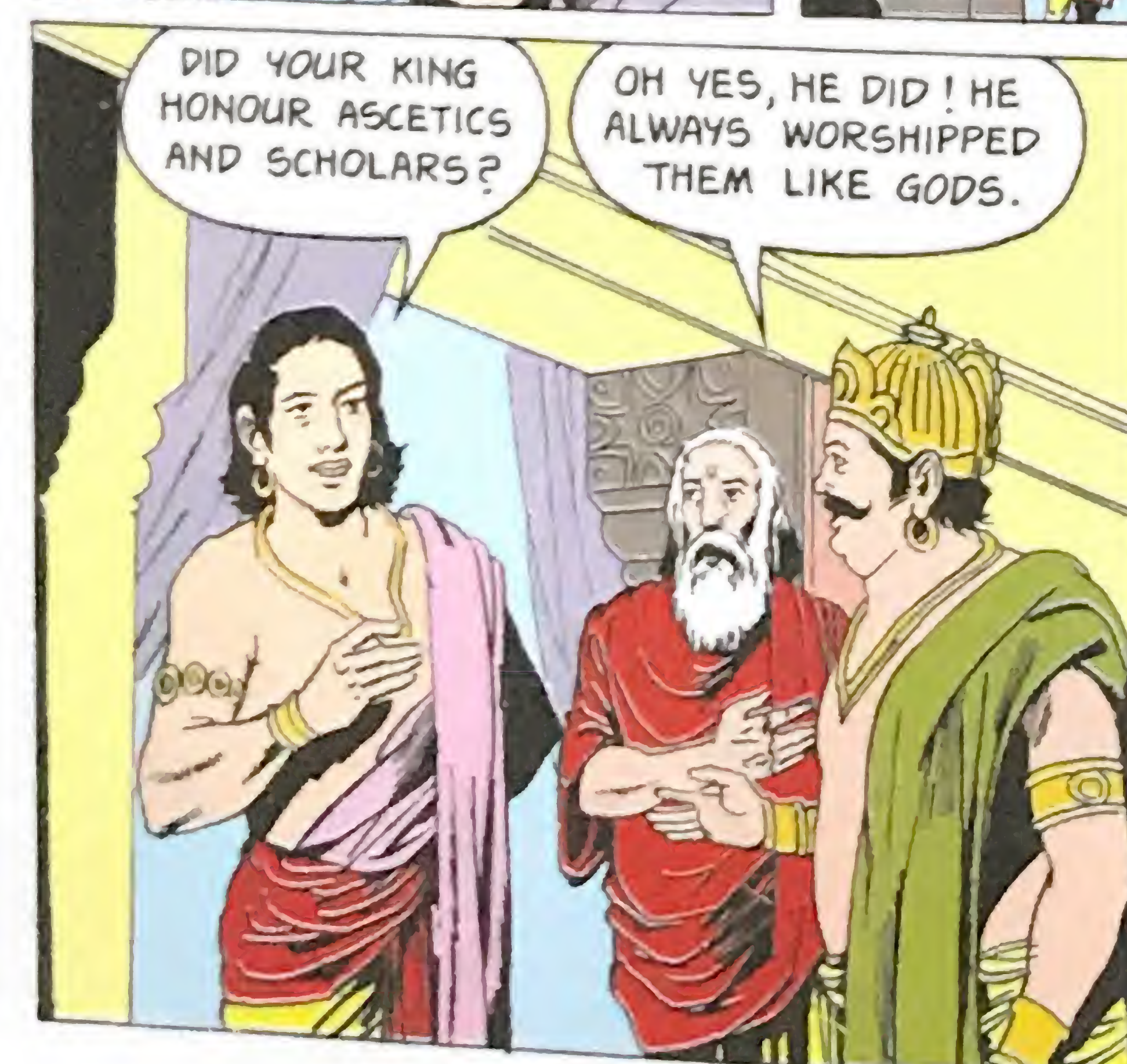
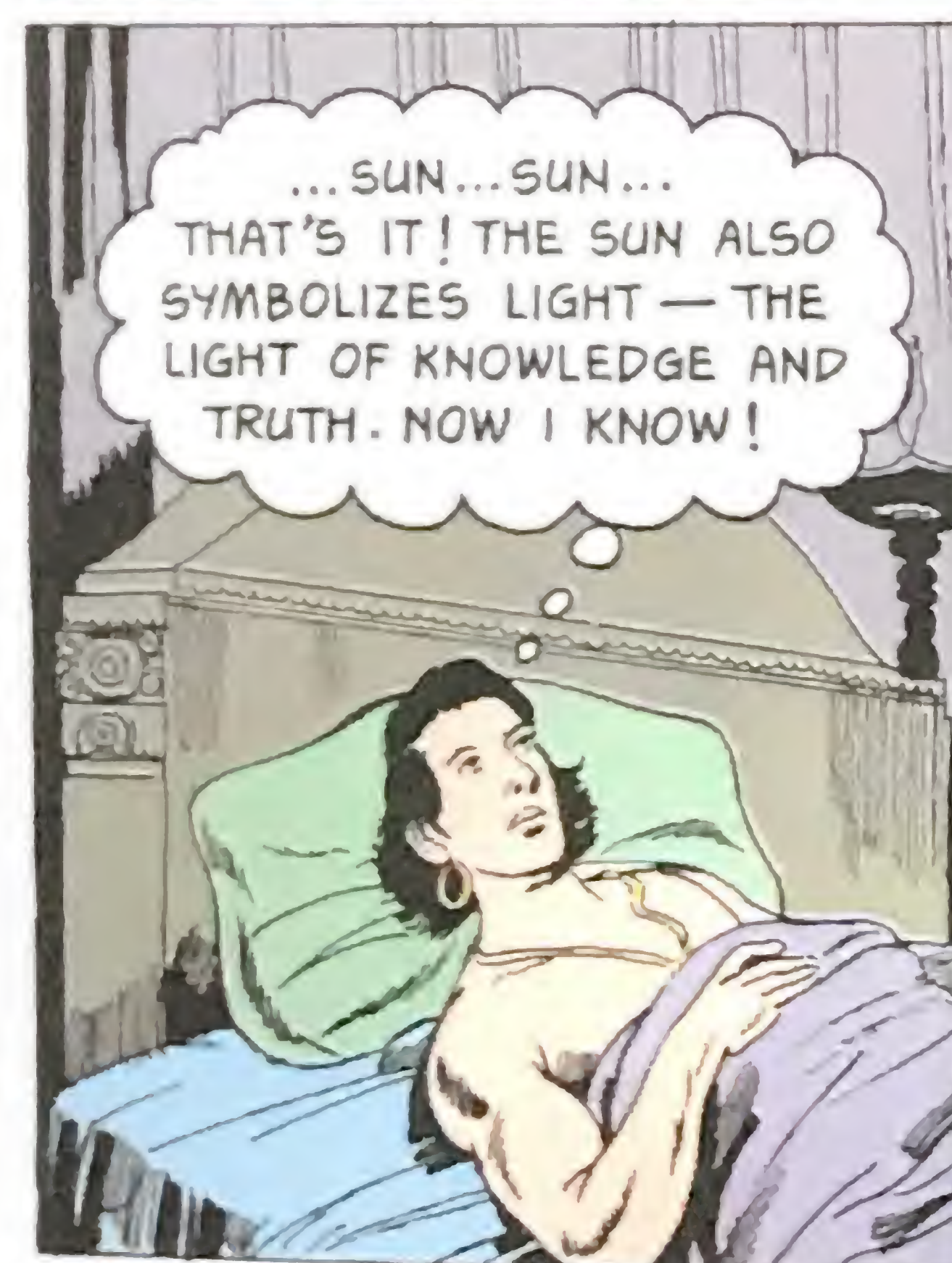
...WHERE THE SUN RISES; AND THE SECOND WHERE THE SUN SETS. THE THIRD...



THE MINISTER GAVE HIM THE REST OF THE CLUES. THEN —

FOR THIS TASK, I'LL NEED SOME TIME. BUT I'M SURE I'LL FIND ALL SIXTEEN POTS.

WE SINCERELY HOPE YOU DO.





AND TRUE ENOUGH THEY DID.

HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT THESE WERE THE SPOTS, MY LORD?

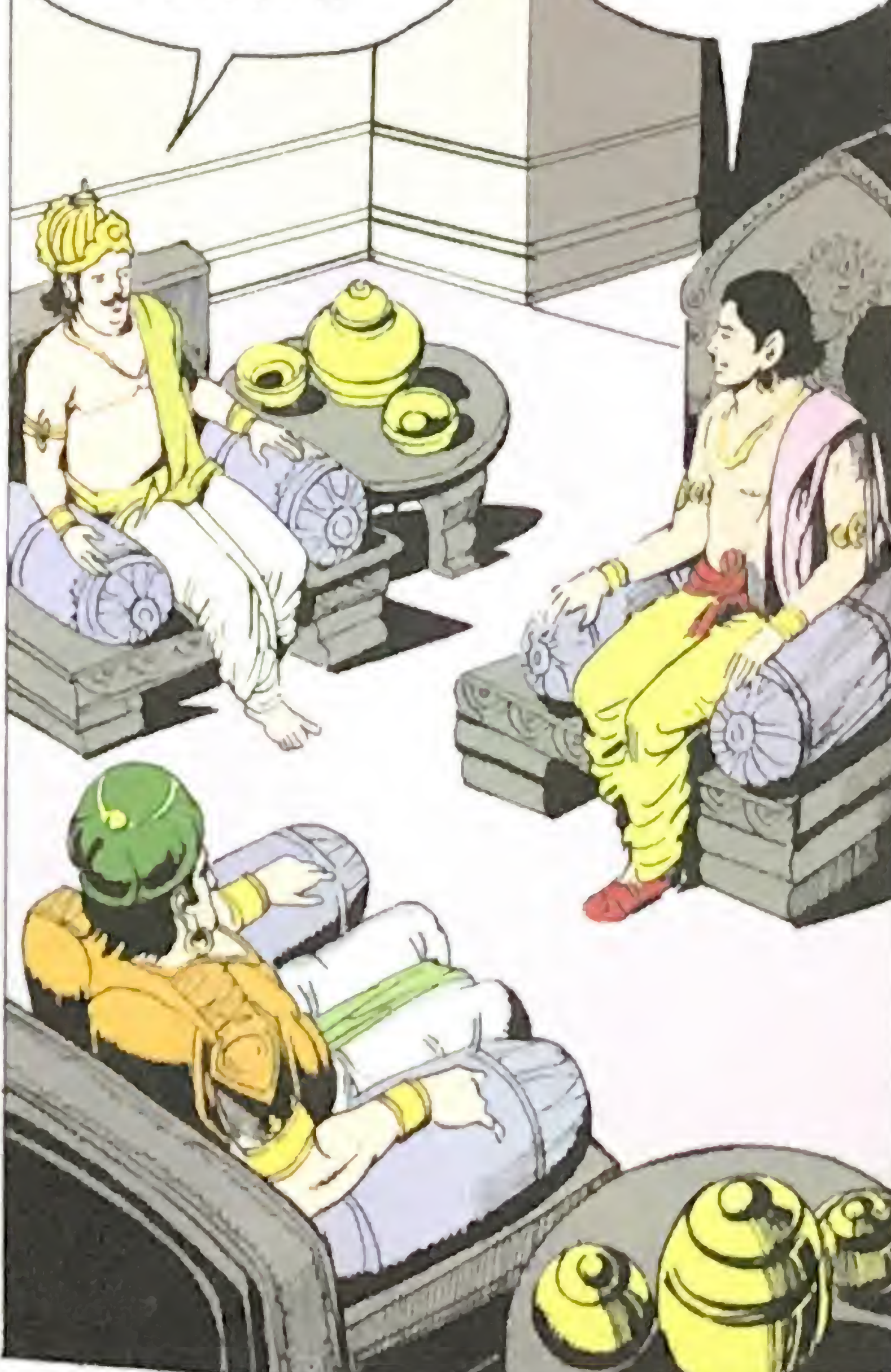
THE SUN MENTIONED BY THE KING IS NOT THE SUN WE KNOW. HE MEANT THE SUN OF KNOWLEDGE WITH WHICH SCHOLARS SHINE.

AFTER THIS MAHAJANAKA DECIPHERED THE REMAINING CLUES ONE AFTER THE OTHER AND ALL THE SIXTEEN POTS WERE FOUND.



YOU HAVE PROVED YOURSELF ON EVERY SCORE, MY LORD. YOU MUST NOW MARRY THE PRINCESS, AND MAKE US HAPPY.

THAT WILL HAVE TO WAIT FOR A WHILE.



FIRST, I WANT MY MOTHER AND MY UNCLE TO BE BROUGHT HERE FROM KALACHAMPA. PLEASE SEND SOMEONE TO FETCH THEM.

IT SHALL BE DONE AT ONCE.

AFTER A FEW WEEKS THE BRAHMANA ARRIVED WITH MAHAJANAKA'S MOTHER.



I AM SO HAPPY, SON. YOU HAVE DONE IT!

MOTHER!

MAHAJANAKA TURNED TO SHIVALI —

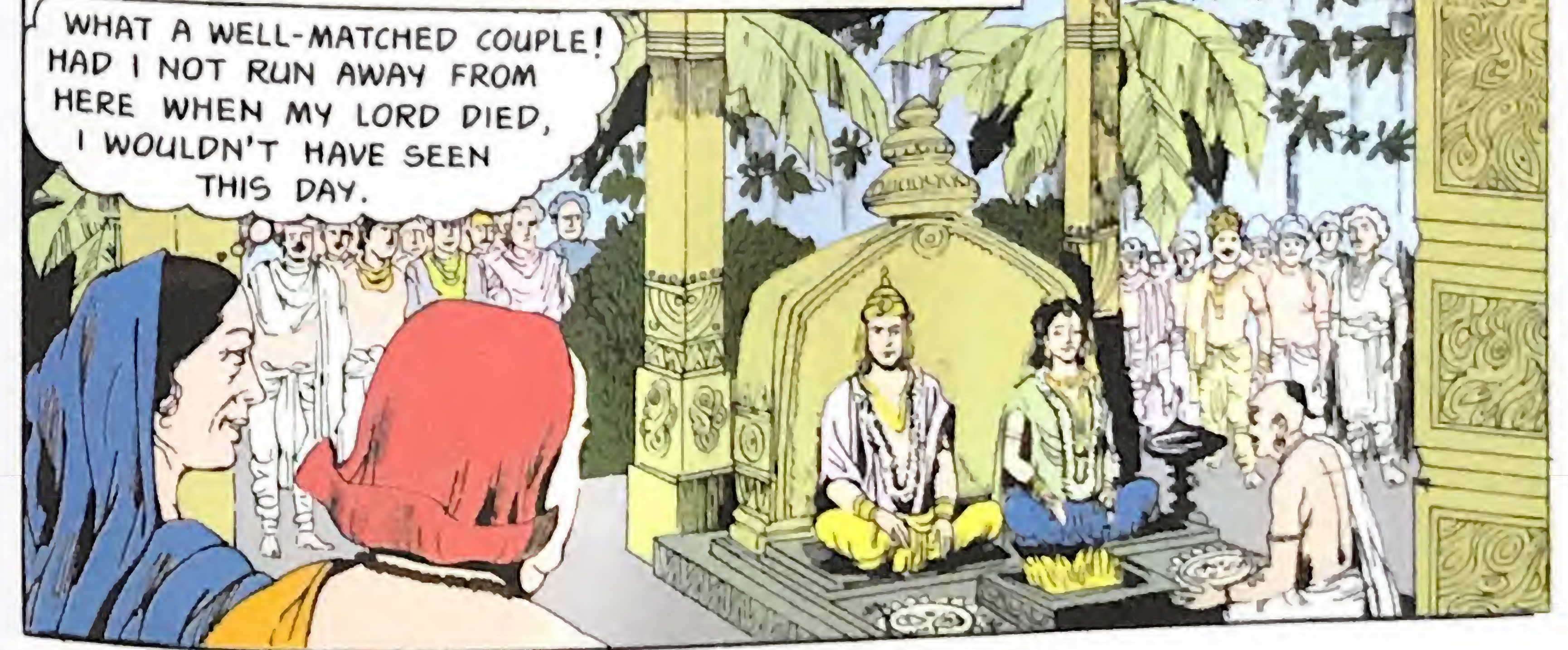


SHIVALI, MOTHER HAS COME HOME TODAY. SHE WAS THE QUEEN OF MITHILA ONCE.

WELCOME, MOTHER.

HE IS THE SON OF A KING! NO WONDER!

LATER, MAHAJANAKA AND SHIVALI WERE MARRIED.



WHAT A WELL-MATCHED COUPLE! HAD I NOT RUN AWAY FROM HERE WHEN MY LORD DIED, I WOULDN'T HAVE SEEN THIS DAY.

WHEN MAHAJANAKA WAS CROWNED KING OF MITHILA, HE MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT—



THE DECLARATION WAS RECEIVED WITH GREAT JOY.



LATER —



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