

CEREBUS

DAVE SIM CEREBUS



DAVE SIM

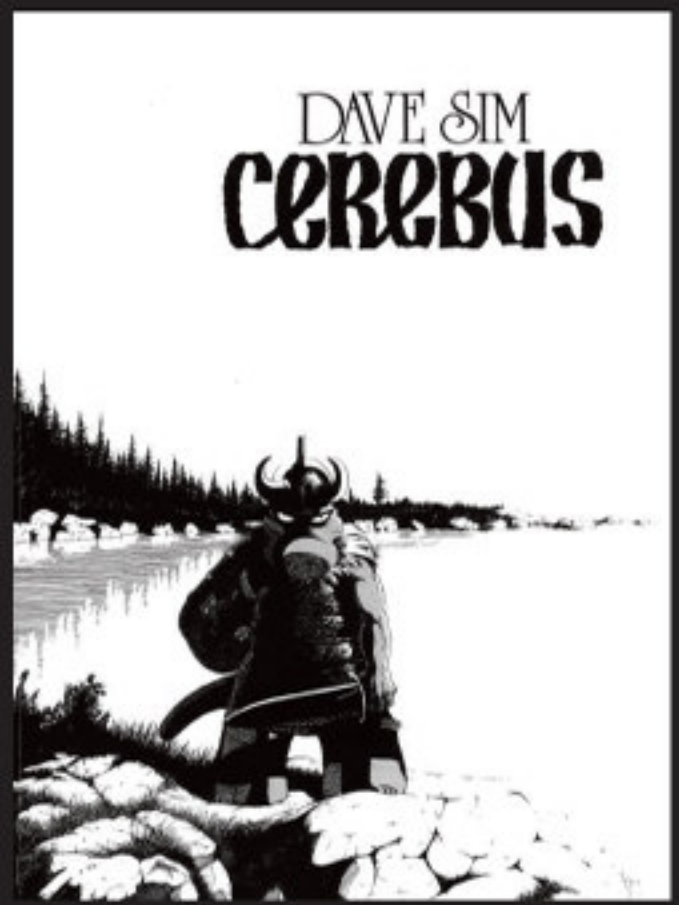
CEREBUS
BOOK
1
AARDVARK
VANAHHEIM
INC.

DAVE SIM
CEREBUS

CEREBUS

Volume

1





aardvark-vanaheim inc

cerebus * cerebus archive * glamourpuss * cerebus tv * simteevee

fax transmission

from Dave Sim at fax no.

to the attention of: Anyone reading
this Digital Edition of a
CEREBUS trade

(I don't have e-mail and can only be contacted
by escargot mail at Box 1674 Stn. C Kitchener
Ontario, CANADA N2G 4R2)

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Sincere thanks to everyone who has devoted that most valuable of human commodities -- their time -- to reading my and Gerhard's work.

Dave Sim, creator, writer, co-artist

Gerhard does prints and commissions and can be contacted at gerhardart.com

CEREBUS

by

Dave Sim

PRINTED IN CANADA

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Dedication:

to the memory of Gene Day
and to Michael, Karen, Deni, Bob
and Eric because they were there
at the beginning.

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Introduction:

These are the first adventures of Cerebus the Aardvark which I began in the pages of his comic book in December of 1977. Although crude, I hope the dedication of a rookie taking his first tentative steps unburdened by editorial interference still shows through. It was a wonderful time. And my hair was much longer.

Dave Sim
Kitchener, Ontario
July 29, 1987

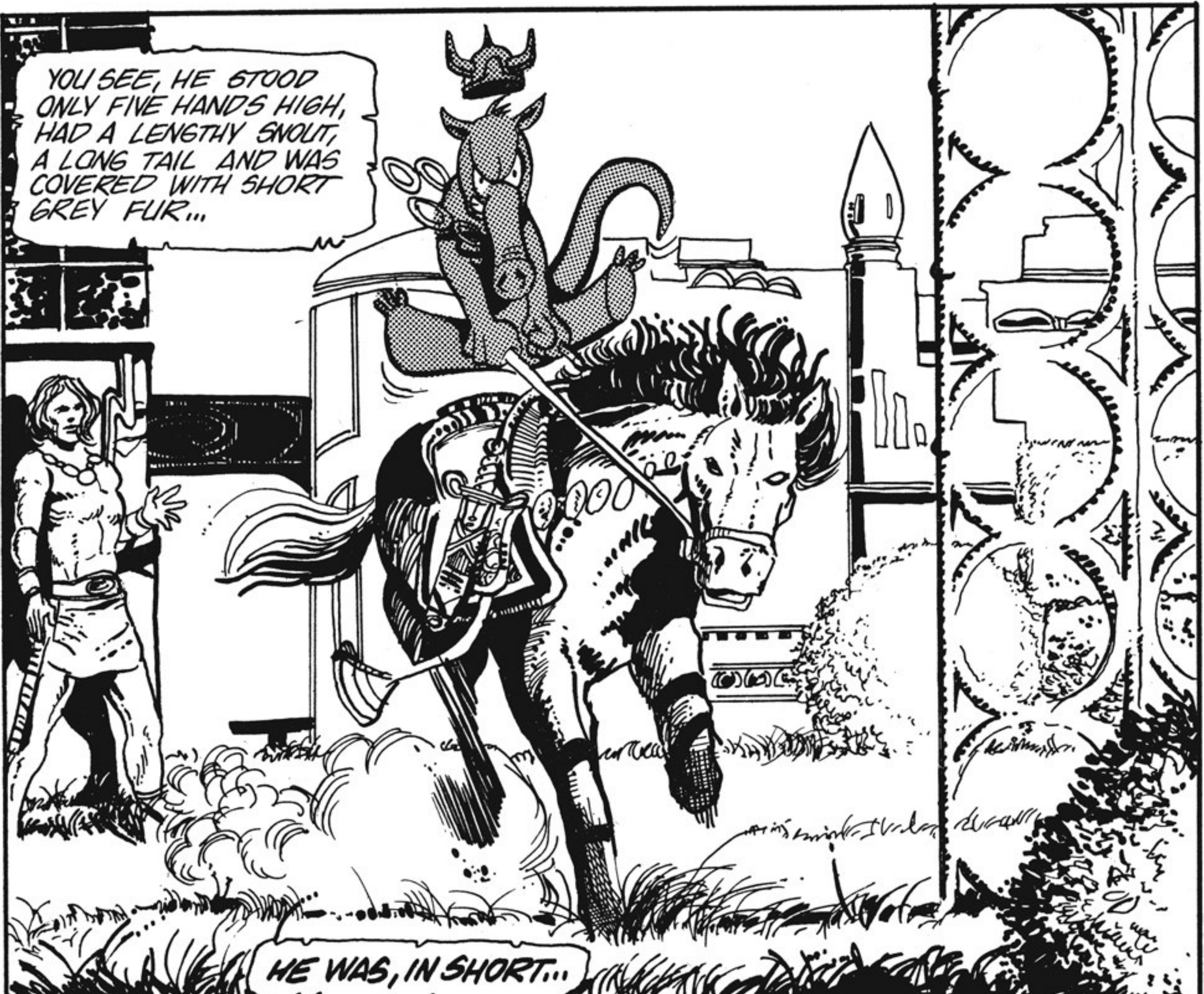
HE CAME TO OUR CITY
IN THE EARLY DAWN...



THOUGH LATER HE WOULD
BE CALLED THE FINEST
WARRIOR TO ENTER OUR
GATES, AT THE TIME, HE
WAS BUT A **CURIOSITY...**



YOU SEE, HE STOOD
ONLY FIVE HANDS HIGH,
HAD A LENGTHY SNOUT,
A LONG TAIL AND WAS
COVERED WITH SHORT
GREY FUR...



HE WAS, IN SHORT...

CEREBZUS

THE AARDVARK

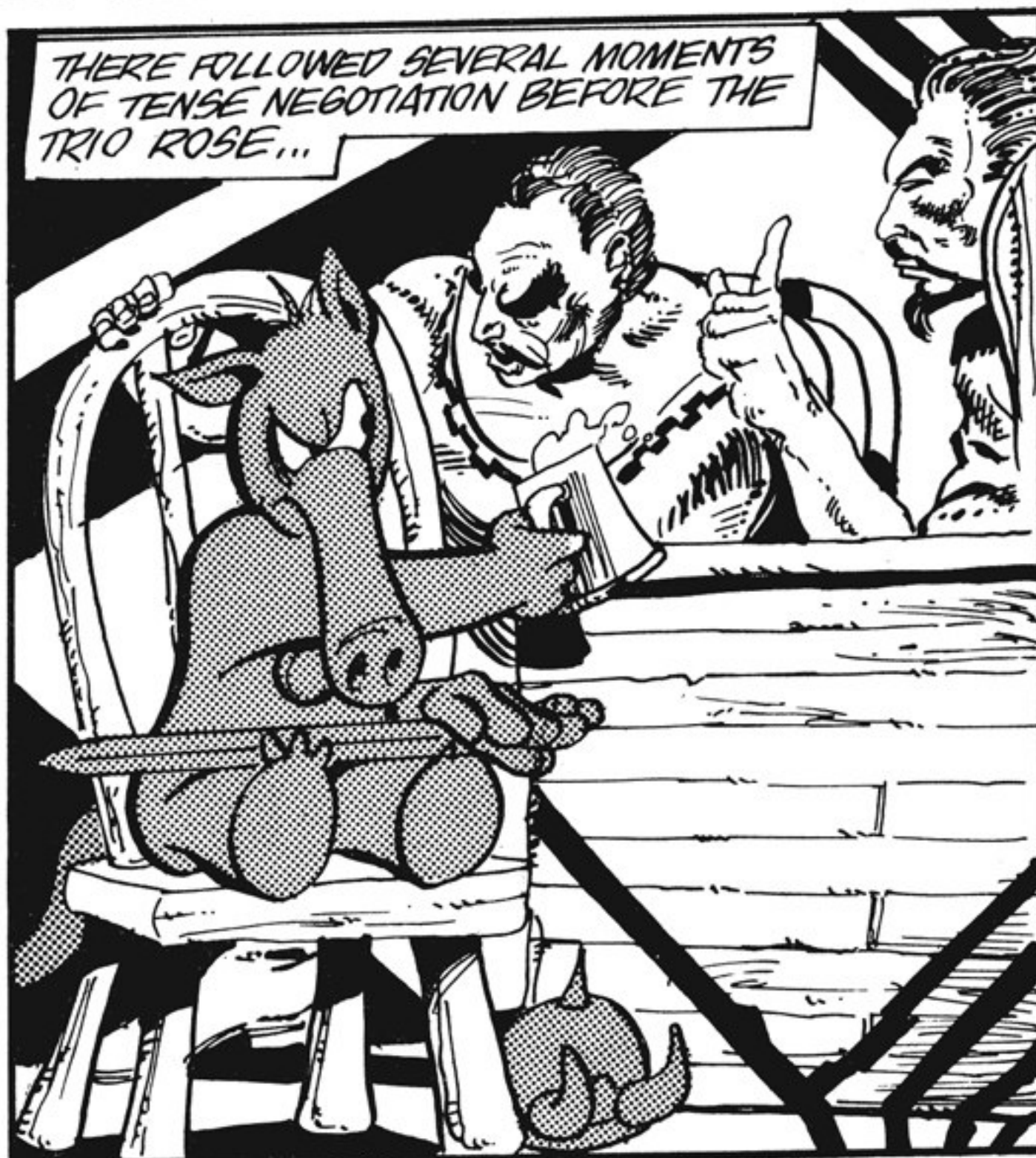
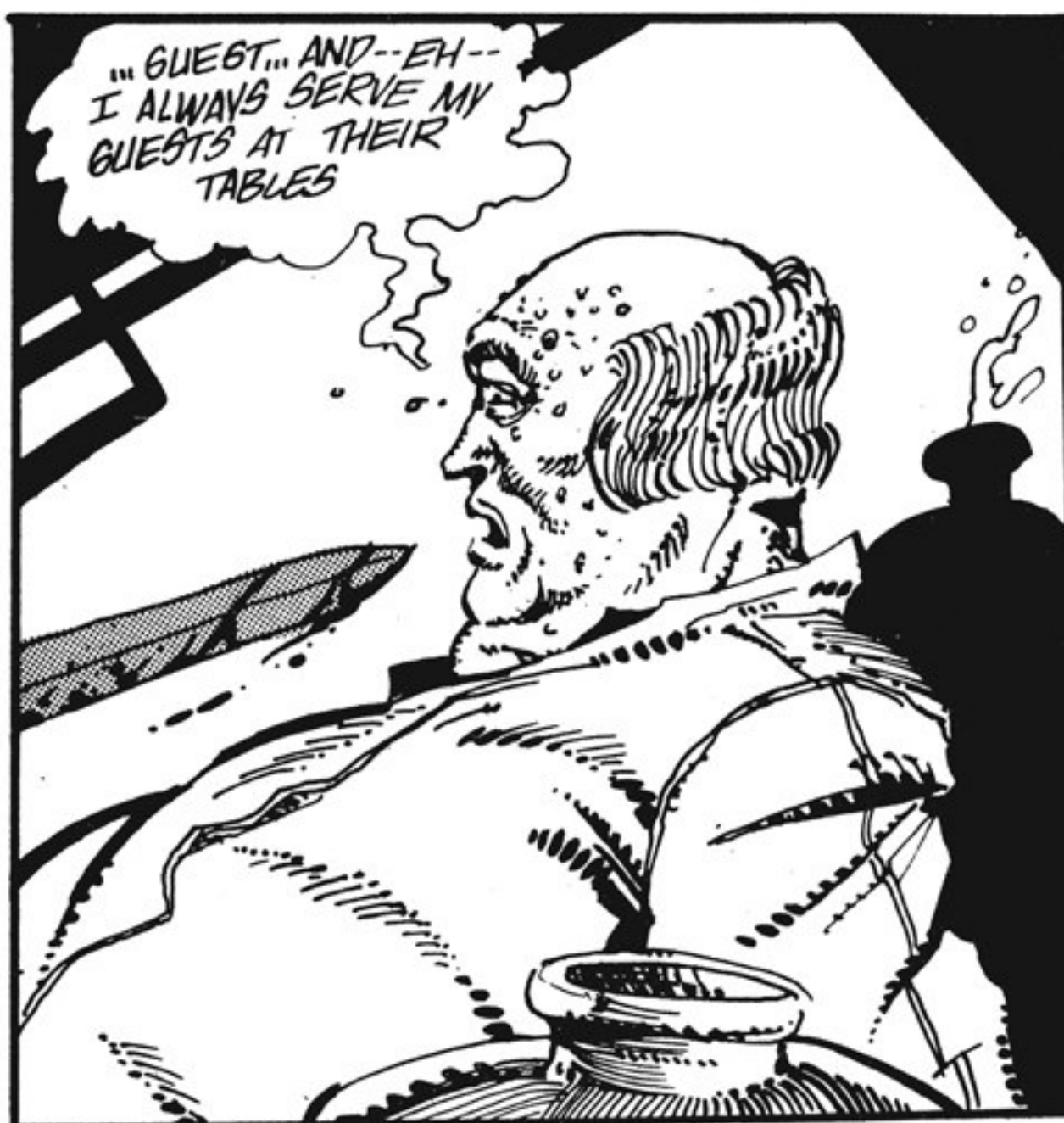


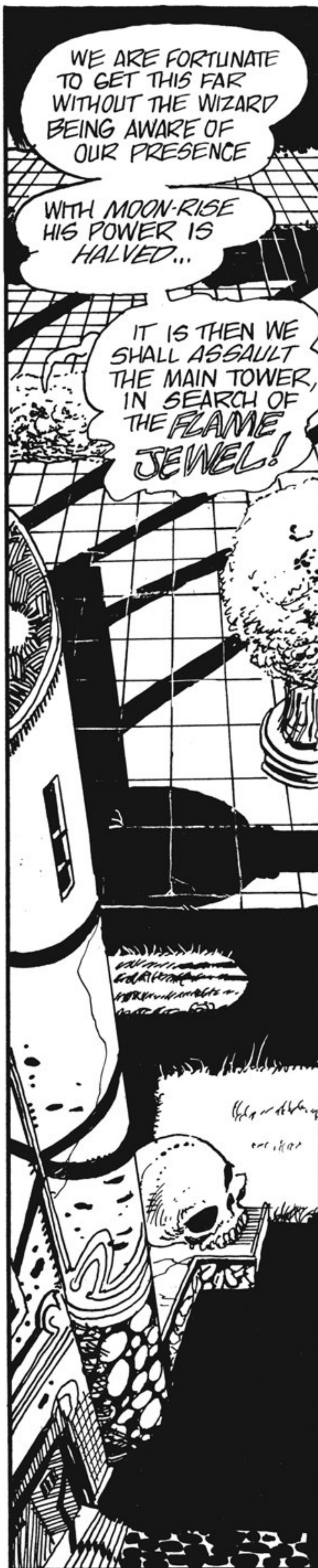
THE TAVERN! WHERE A MAN (OR AARDVARK) IS MEASURED BY HIS ABILITY TO REACH THE BAR **UNSCATHED**...



HACK







WE ARE FORTUNATE
TO GET THIS FAR
WITHOUT THE WIZARD
BEING AWARE OF
OUR PRESENCE

WITH MOON-RISE
HIS POWER IS
HALVED...

IT IS THEN WE
SHALL ASSAULT
THE MAIN TOWER,
IN SEARCH OF
THE **FLAME
JEWEL!**

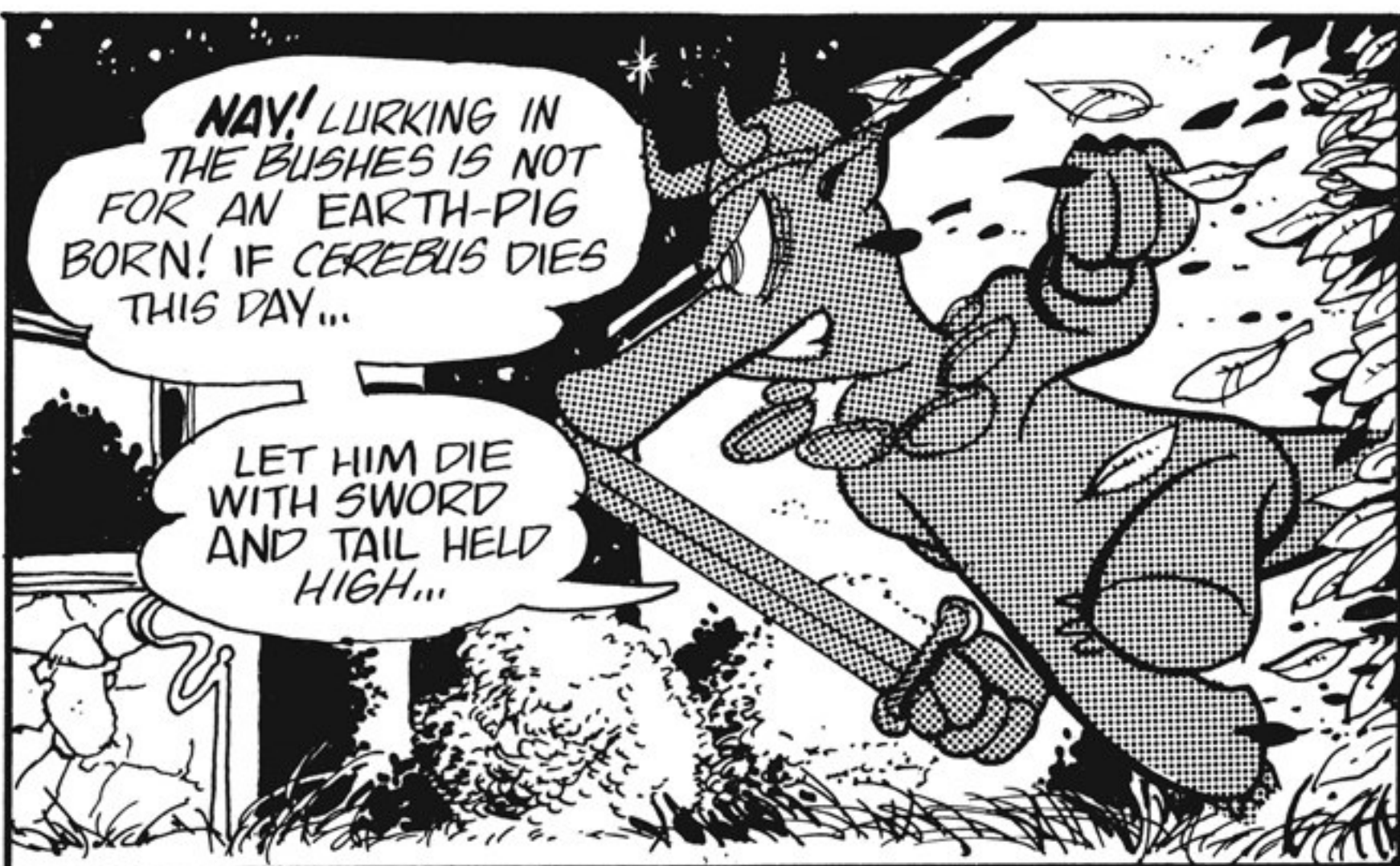


IT IS THE
FLAME JEWEL
YOU SEEK, THEN?



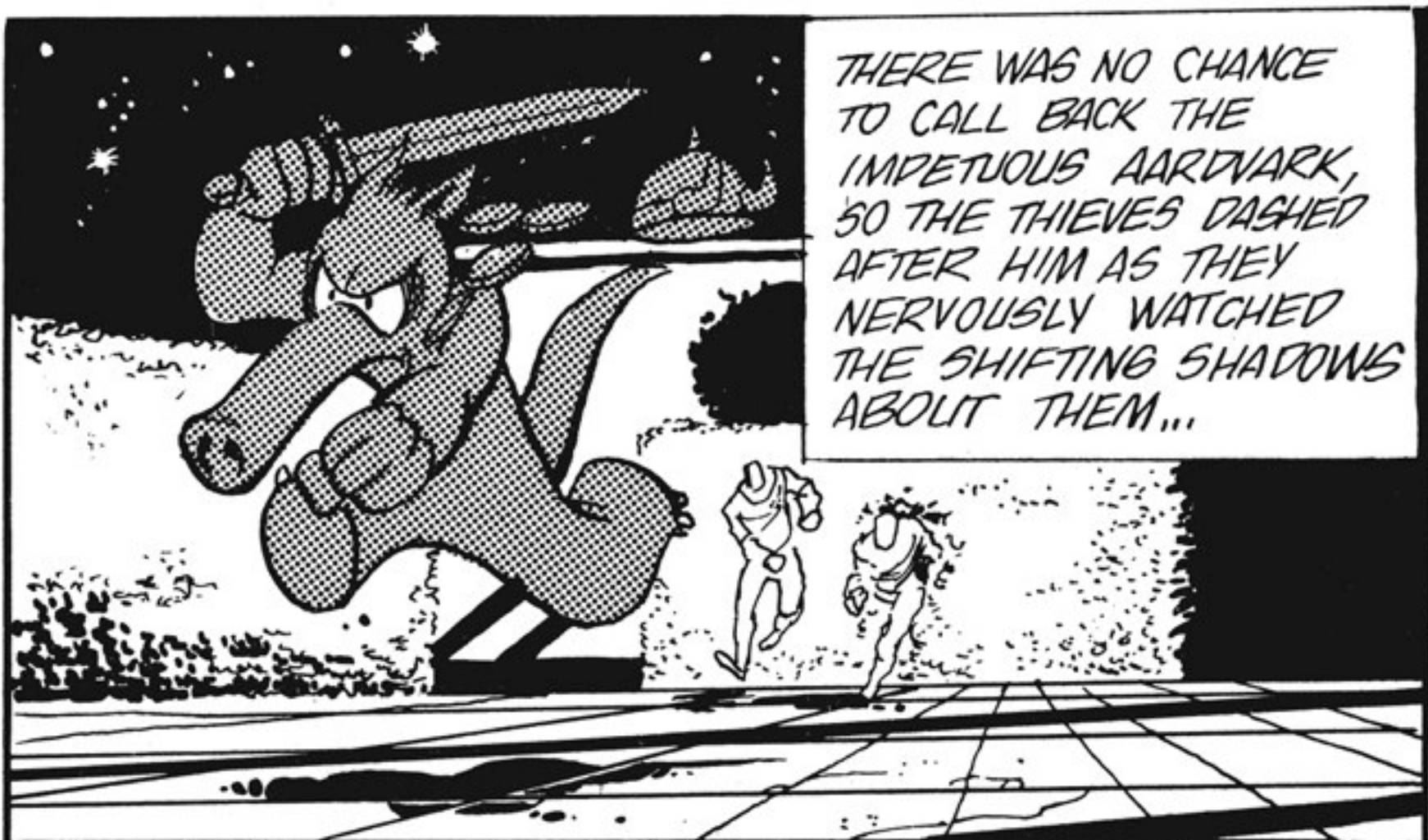
AWE! IT IS
SAID TO BE
FLAWLESS AND
WORTH A KING'S
RANSOM...

WE HIDE
OURSELVES
HERE ANOTHER
HOUR AND...

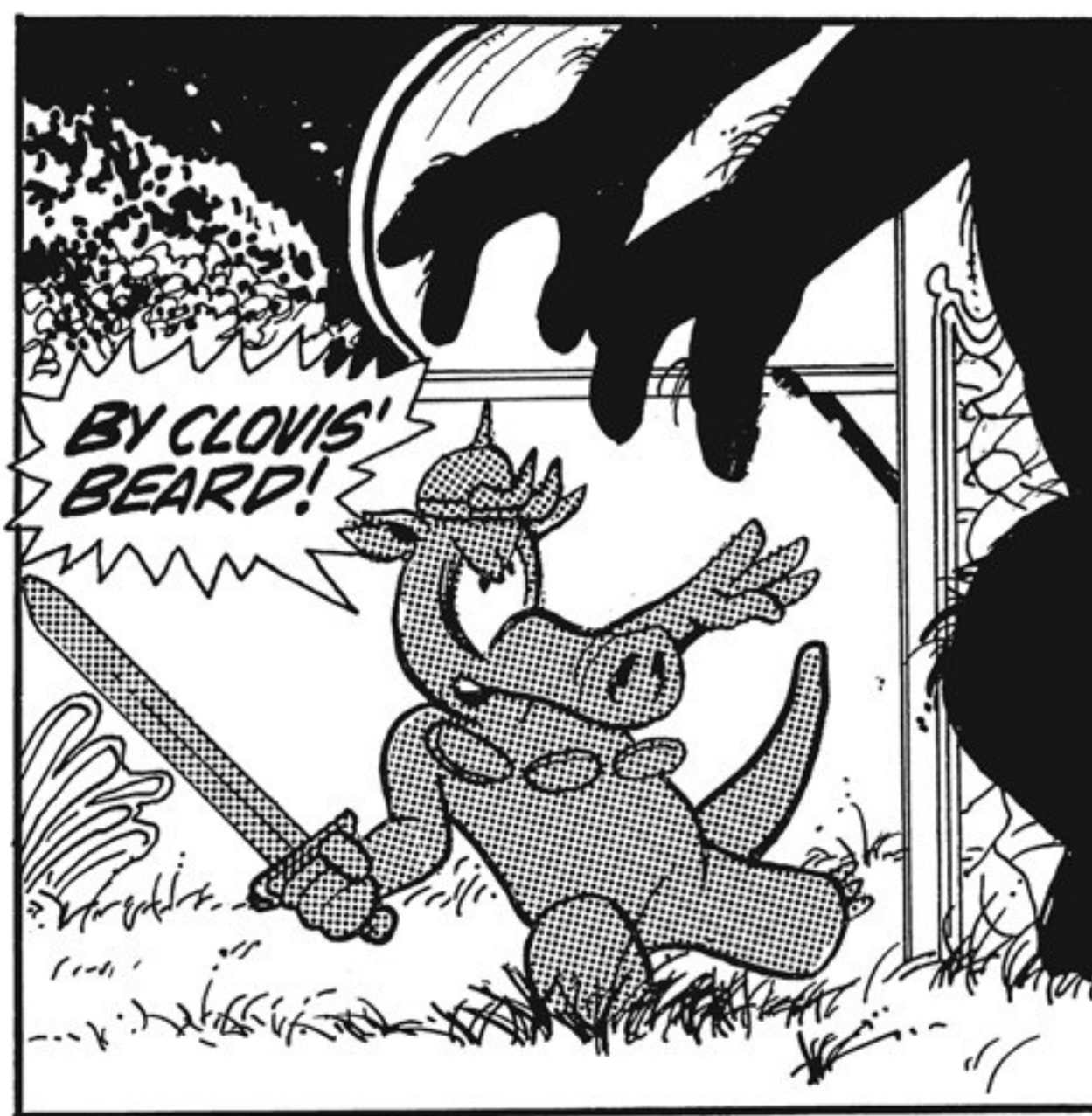


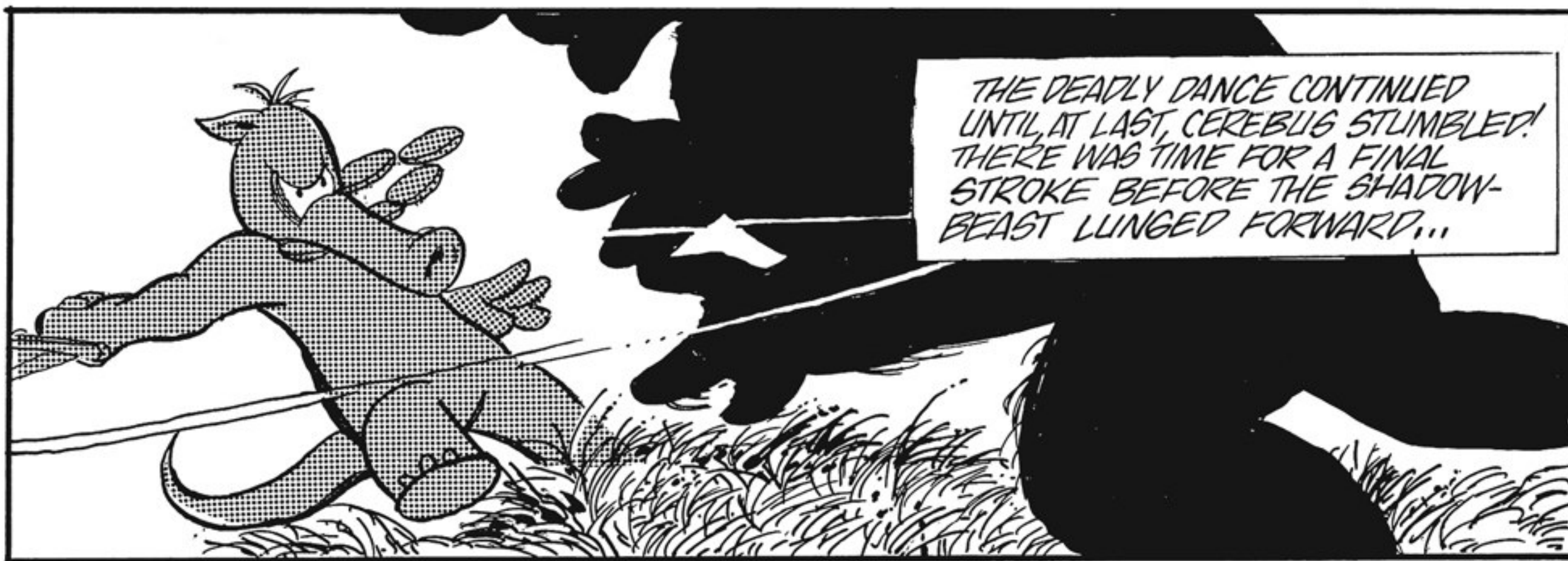
NAV! LURKING IN
THE BUSHES IS NOT
FOR AN EARTH-PIG
BORN! IF CEREBUS DIES
THIS DAY...

LET HIM DIE
WITH SWORD
AND TAIL HELD
HIGH...



THERE WAS NO CHANCE
TO CALL BACK THE
IMPETUOUS AARDVARK,
SO THE THIEVES DASHED
AFTER HIM AS THEY
NERVOUSLY WATCHED
THE SHIFTING SHADOWS
ABOUT THEM...





THE DEADLY DANCE CONTINUED UNTIL, AT LAST, CEREBUG STUMBLER! THERE WAS TIME FOR A FINAL STROKE BEFORE THE SHADOW-BEAST LUNGED FORWARD...



AND **DIED**, BECOMING, IN THE PROCESS, JUST ANOTHER SHADOW...



WE HAVE CHOSEN OUR WARRIOR WELL, MY BROTHER-- HE SEEMS TOTALLY WITHOUT FEAR OF SORCERY...

...OR ANYTHING ELSE!



ARE YOU **INJURED**, MY FRIEND? ...PERHAPS WE SHOULD WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE...



CEREBUG WILL SURVIVE... THE WIZARD AWAITS US, THOUGH, AND OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO ATTACK HIM...

BEFORE HE ATTACKS US!



THEY PASSED THROUGH SEEMINGLY ENDLESS
STONE CORRIDORS IN SEARCH OF THE
WIZARD AND HIS FLAME JEWEL...



I LIKE THIS NOT ONE
BIT! I FEAR, **CEREBUS**,
THAT THESE SKELETONS
ARE A BAD OMEN...!

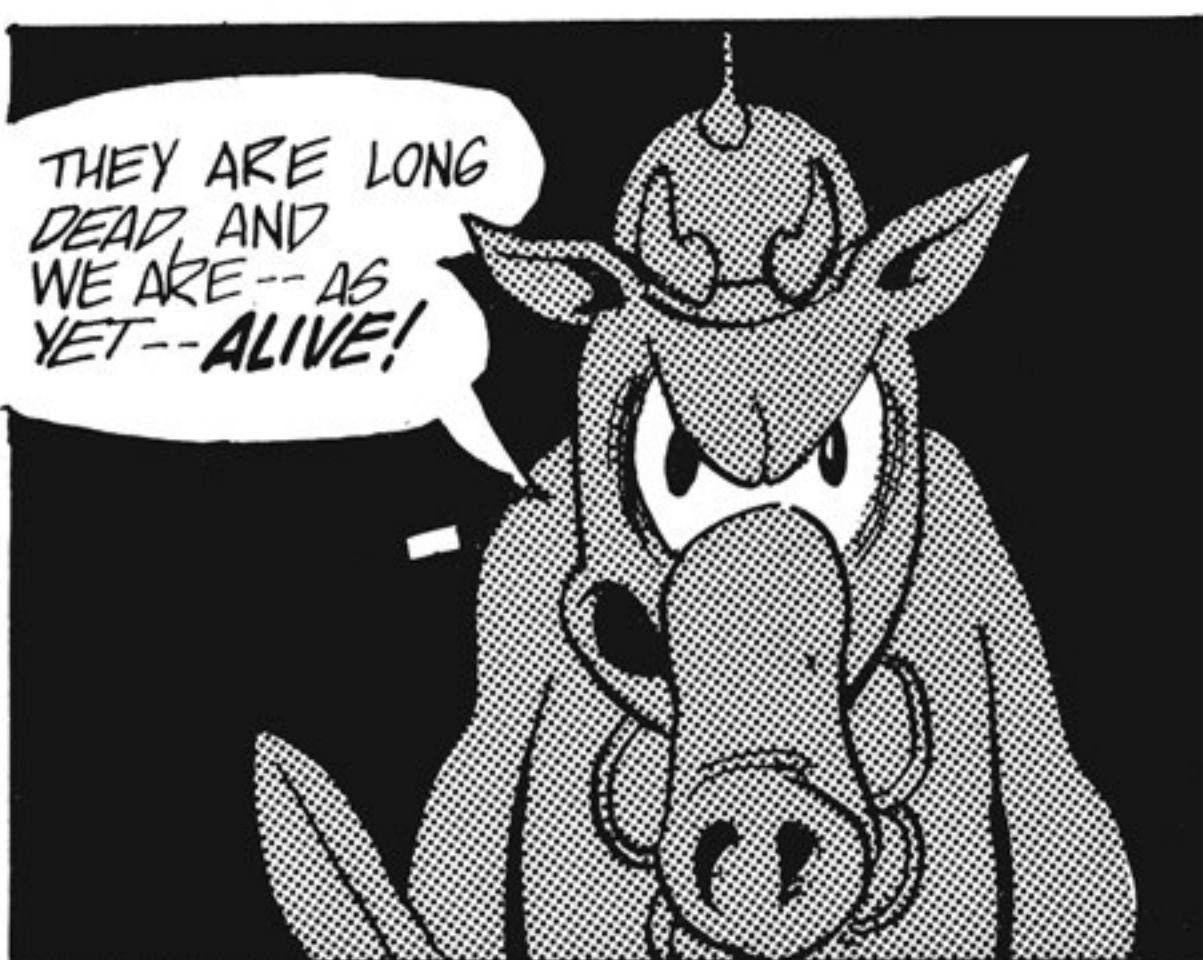


A BAD OMEN?
AYE-- BONES FOUND
STRIPPED OF FLESH
ARE ALWAYS A **BAD**
OMEN...

...FOR THEIR
FORMER
OWNERS...!



THEY ARE LONG
DEAD, AND
WE ARE-- AS
YET-- **ALIVE!**



DON'T CONCERN YOUR-
SELVES WITH OLD **BONES**

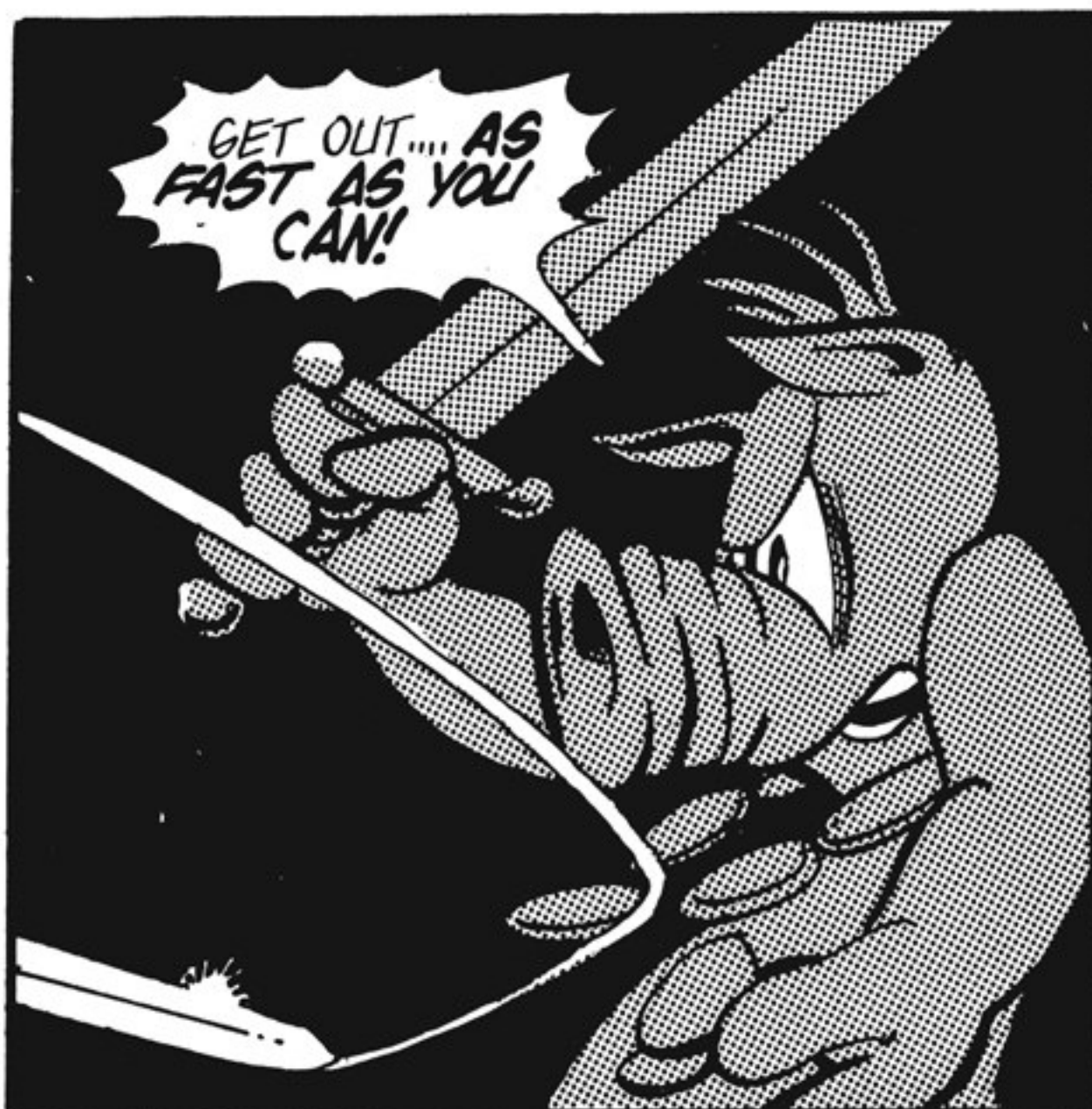




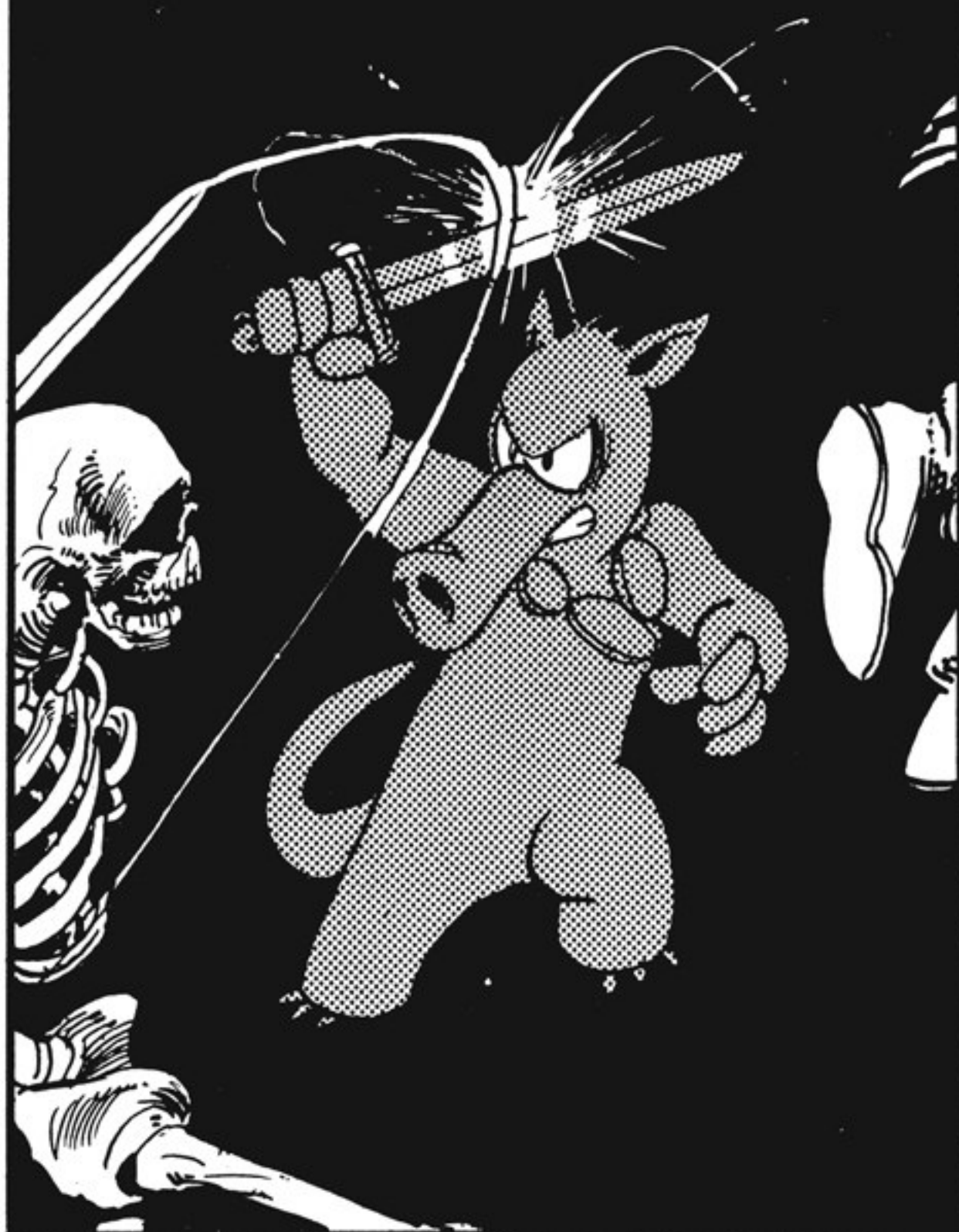
CEREBUS!



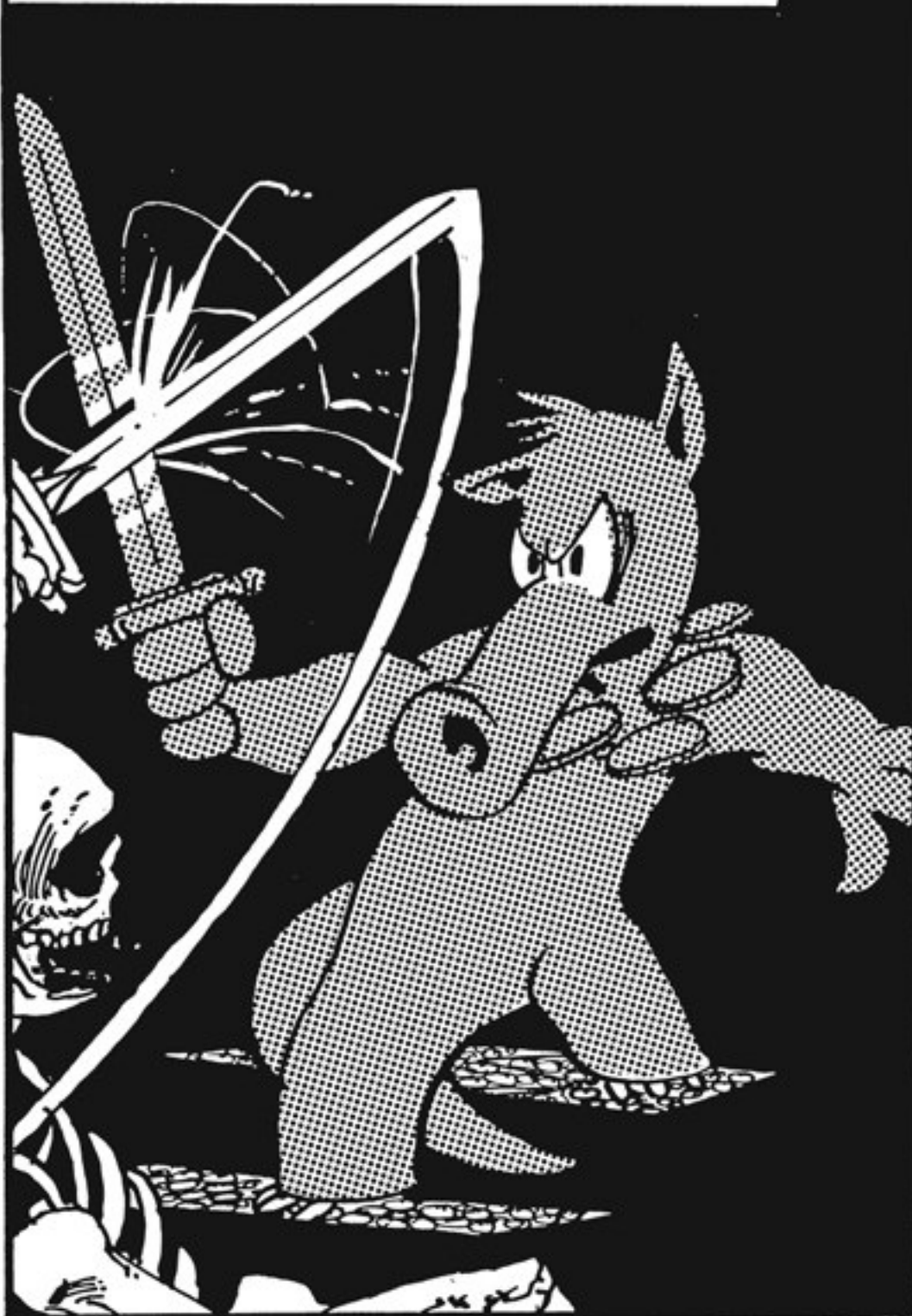
THE SKELETON'S SORCERY-SPAWNED SPEED WAS UNMATCHABLE! THE ARMADILLO REALIZED HIS ONLY HOPE WAS TO STAY OUT OF RANGE AND WAIT FOR AN OPENING...



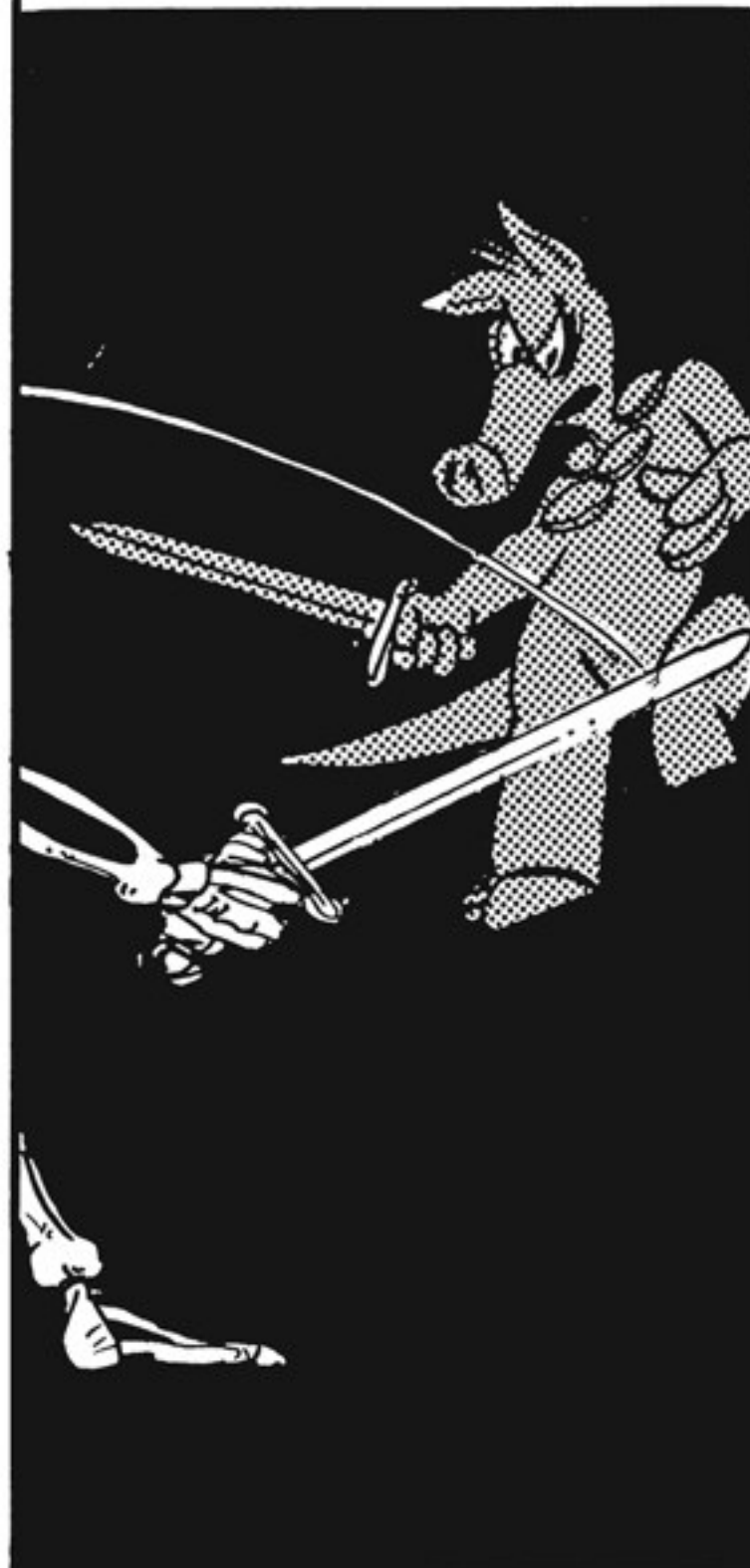
GET OUT... AS FAST AS YOU CAN!



THE HEAVY BLADE SLICED THE GLOOMY AIR AND CRASHED AGAINST THE AARDVARK'S BLADE AS CEREBUS BACKED UP THE SHADOWED STAIRS...



LIKE A BLINDING FLAME, THE STEEL FLICKERED AND SLASHED IN FRONT OF HIM...



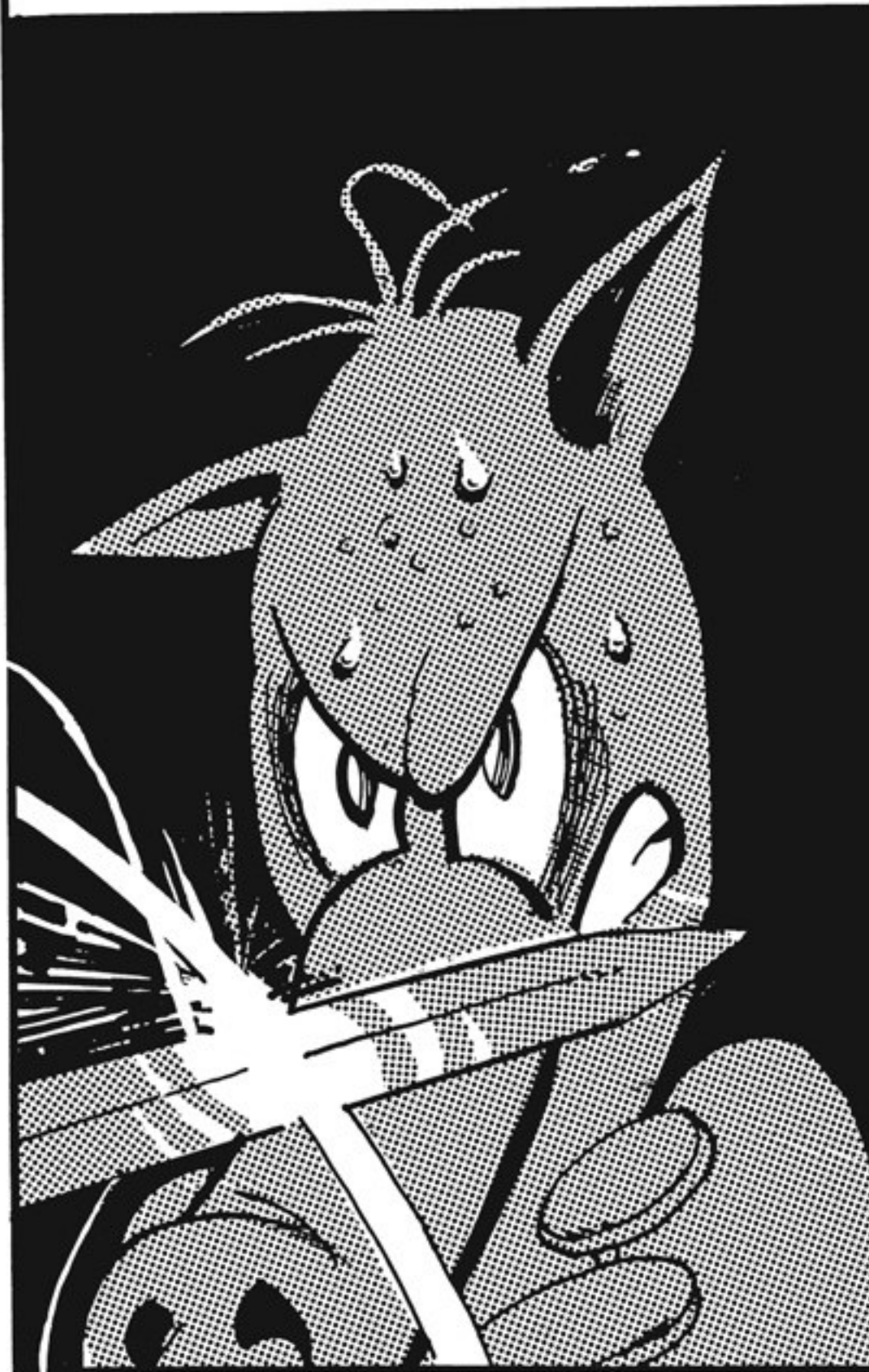
HIS EYES INTENT, CEREBUS WATCHED EACH SUBTLE MOTION OF THE BLADE AND MET IT EACH TIME WITH HIS OWN...



HE MUST ATTACK! WHY DOESN'T HE **ATTACK** LIKE THE OTHERS DID?



INCH BY AGONIZING INCH WAS SURRENDERED AS BEADS OF SWEAT STOOD OUT ON THE EARTH PIG'S FOREHEAD.



BEFORE HIM LOOMED THE UNDEAD FORM! IT'S EYES **BLAZED** COLDLY, LIKE TWIN FIRES IN SOME HELLISH **TOMB**...

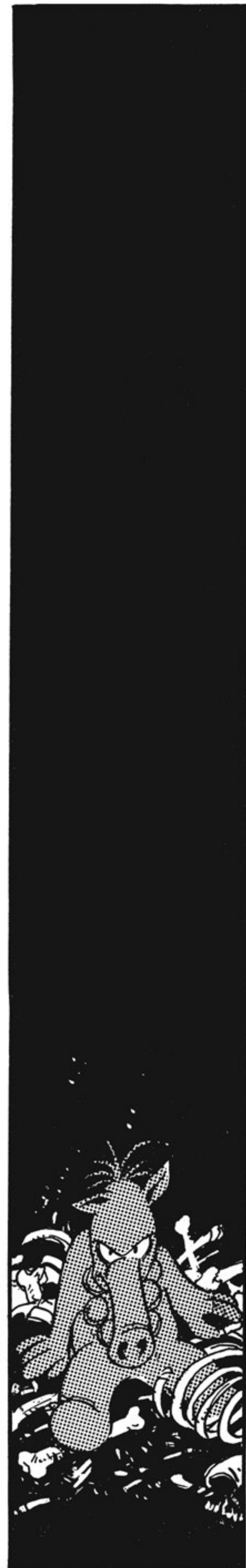


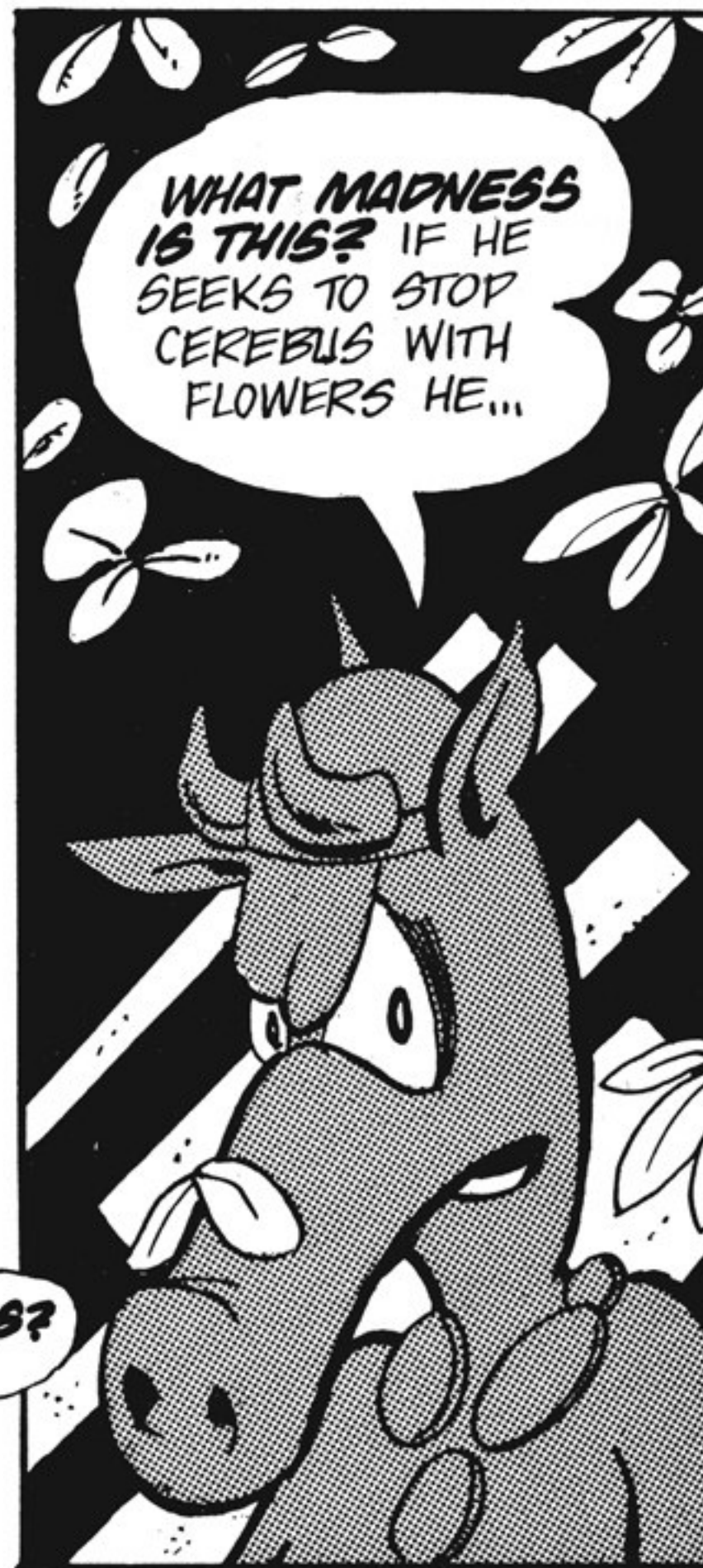


INEXPLICABLY, THE SKELETON HESITATED FOR A SPLIT SECOND! IN THAT SAME INSTANT **CEREBUS** LEAPT UNDER THE OUTSTRETCHED SWORD...

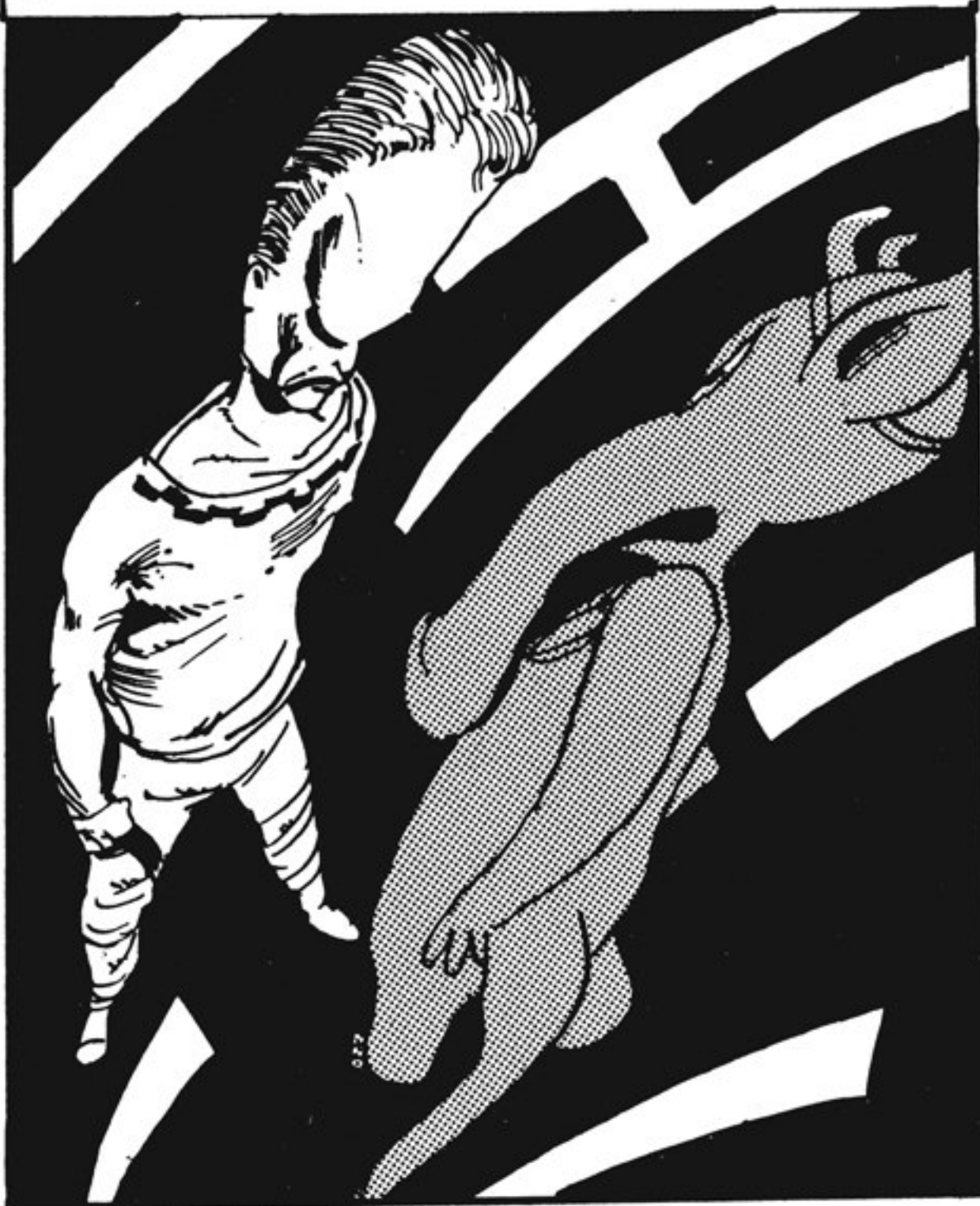


...AND THREW BOTH HIMSELF AND THE ENSORCELLED SKELETON INTO THE YAWNING BLACKNESS...

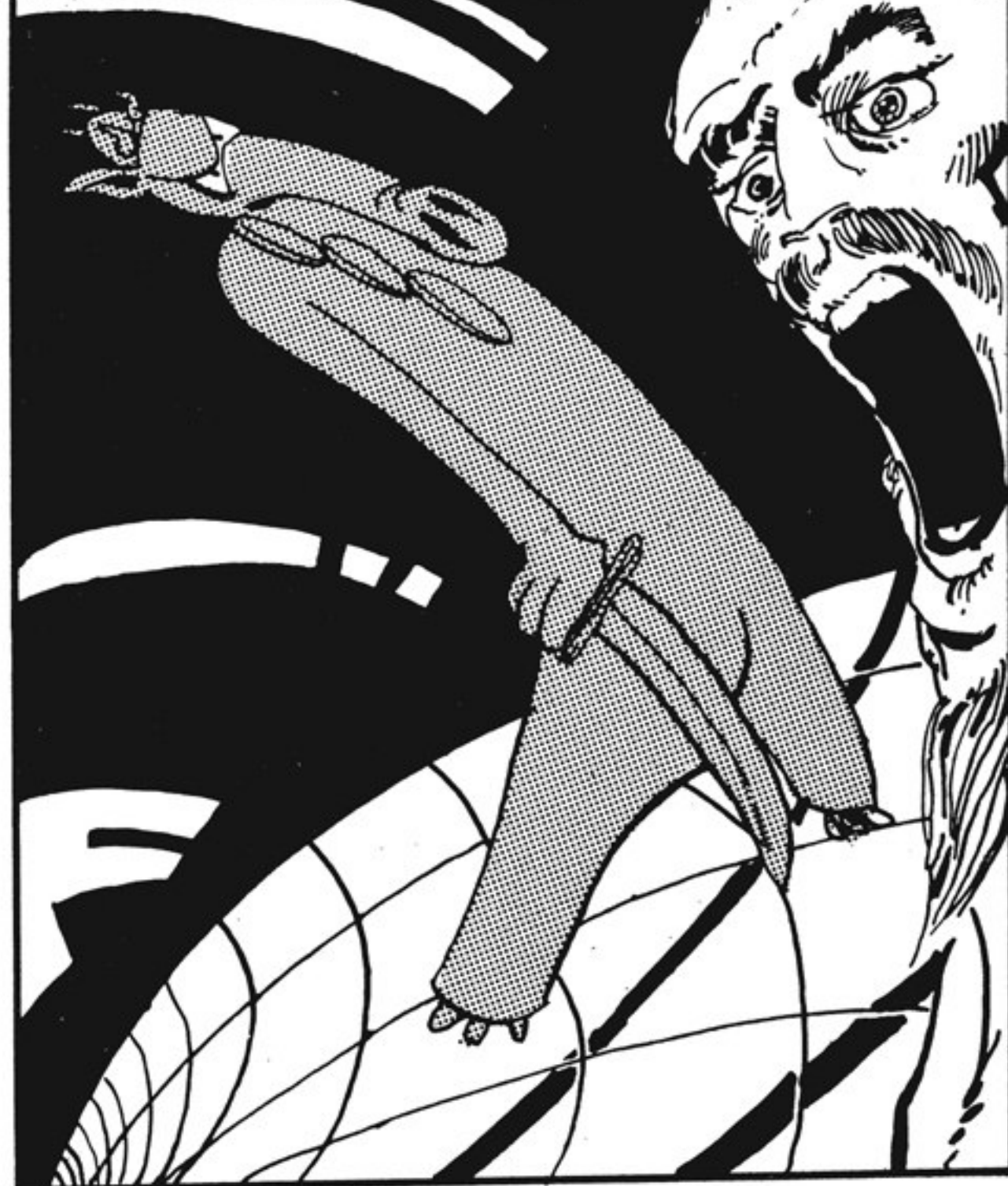




CEREBUS, IGNORANT OF HALUCINOGENS,
WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE BY THE **NAMA**
LOTUS BLOSSOMS...



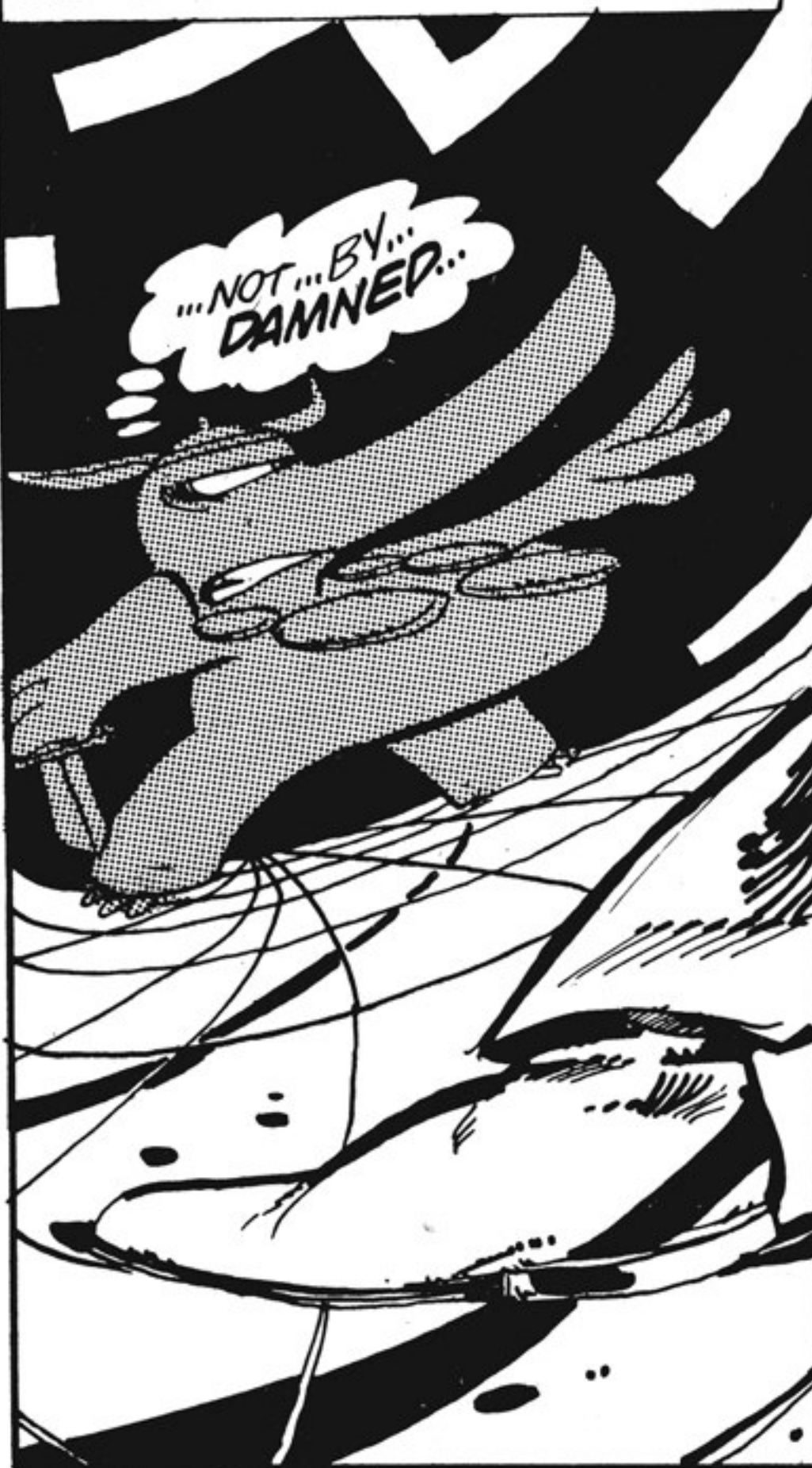
HIS THOUGHTS WERE CONFUSED
AS HE STRAINED TO KEEP
HIS BALANCE...



IF **CEREBUS**
IS TO BE DEFEAT-
ED LET IT BE BY
SWORD OR **NEURONANCY**
...



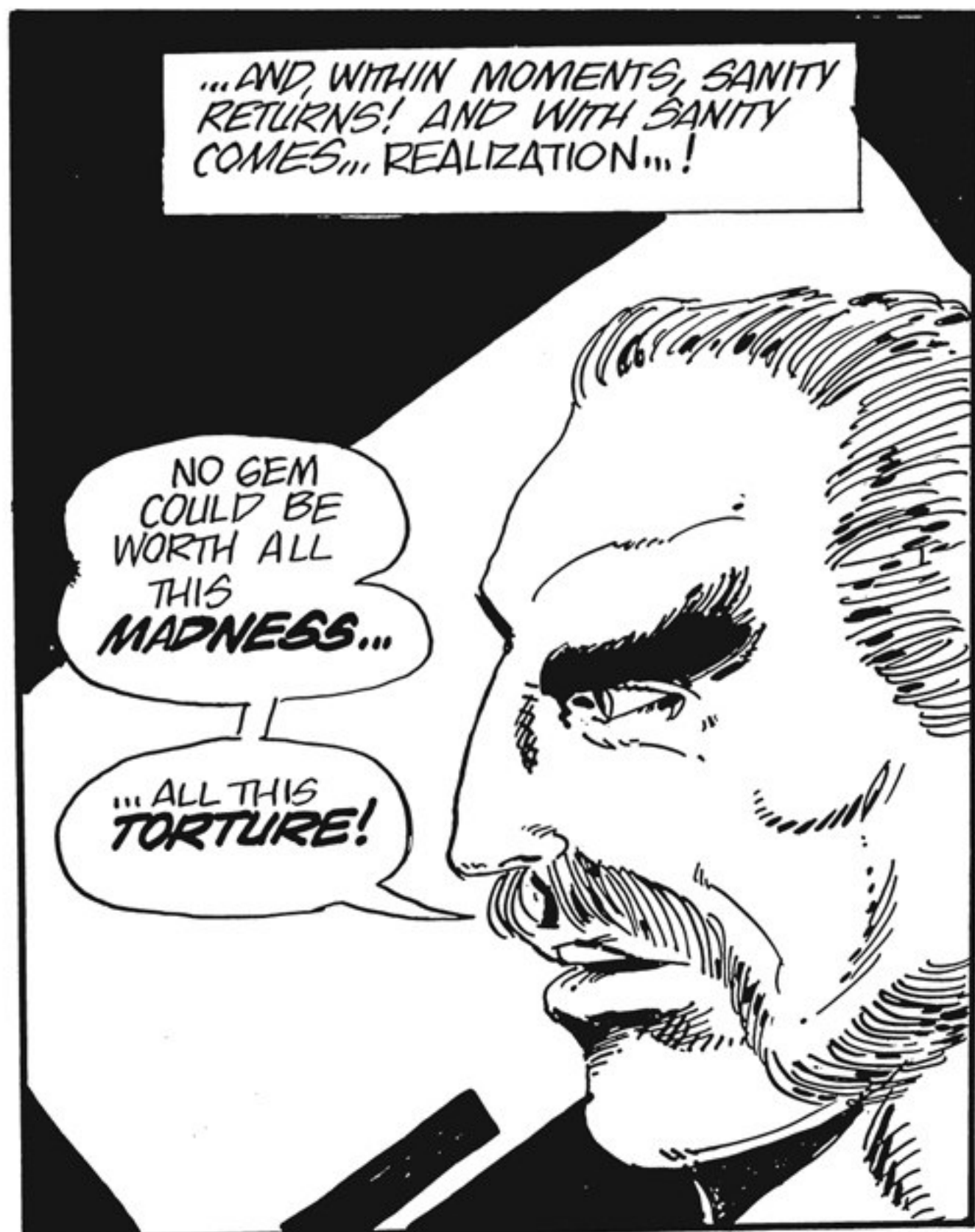
THE AARDVARK STRUGGLED UP FROM
THE MIRE THAT ENFOLDED HIS
MIND... EVERY FIBRE OF HIS BEING
WAS APPLIED TO THE TASK...



...PETUNIAS!



AT LAST, HE HAD FELT THE
GROUND GROW SOLID
BENEATH HIS FEET...







THE TENTACLES SNAKED OUT INCREDIBLY FAST, DRAWING THE SWIRLING SMOKE BEHIND IT IN WISPY TRAILS...



CEREBUS!
ATTACK THIS
THING!

YOUR FRIEND CANNOT
HELP YOU-- NONE
ESCAPE THE MONSTER
FROM TIME'S DAWNING!



HOWEVER, AT THAT MOMENT,
HIS EYES CLOSED, THE
AARDVARK WAS SEARCHING
WITH HAND AND SWORD
EXTENDED...

A HORRIBLE FATE
AWAITS YOU,
MORTALS A
THOUSAND DEATHS
WILL YOU SUFFER
...



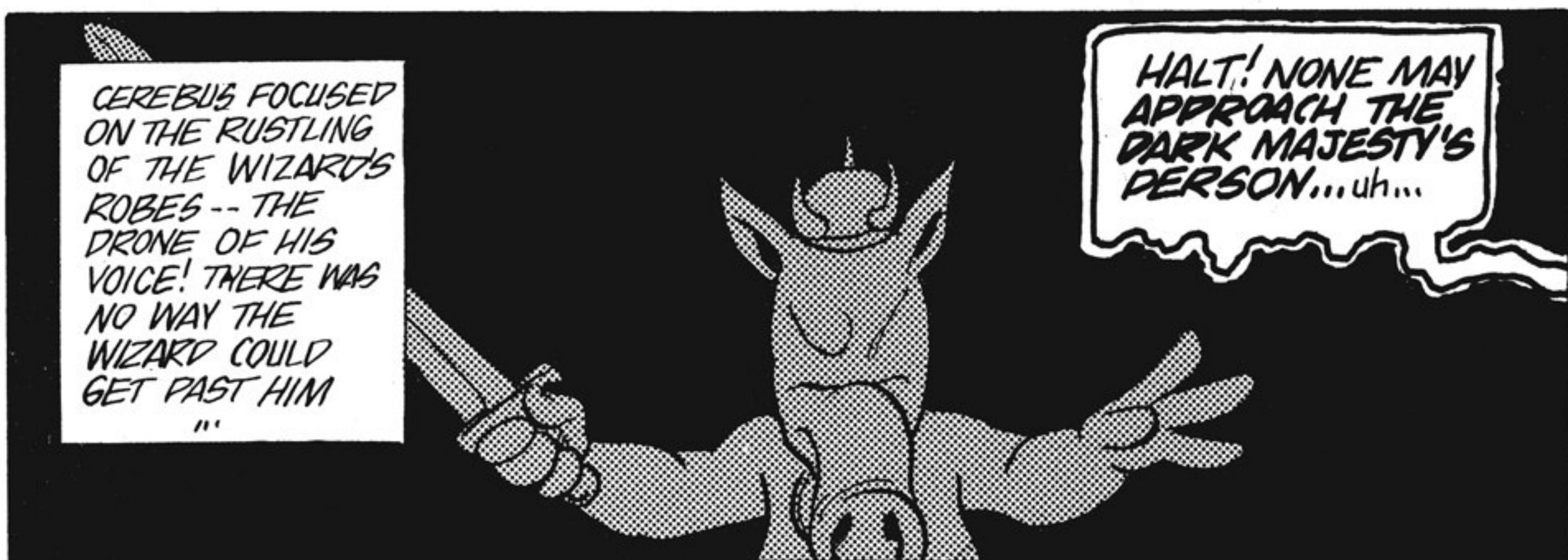
SUBMIT TO ITS
EMBRACE! NONE
CAN ESCAPE THE
DEATH GRASP
OF...



EH? THE GREY
DWARF WITH THE
SWORD-- WHAT'S
HE UP TO?



THEN CAME THE REALIZATION-- IF THE "DWARF" COULDN'T SEE THE CONJURED BEAST, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP HIM...



CEREBUS FOCUSED ON THE RUSTLING OF THE WIZARD'S ROBES-- THE DRONE OF HIS VOICE! THERE WAS NO WAY THE WIZARD COULD GET PAST HIM

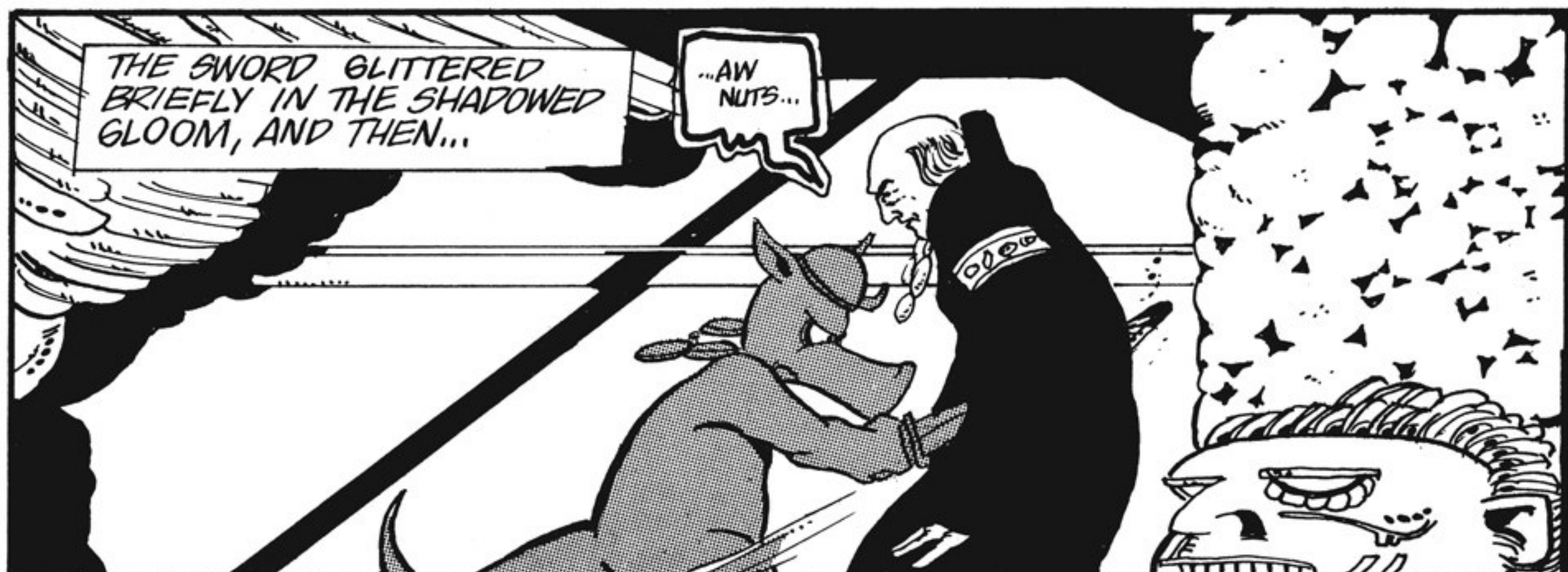
HALT! NONE MAY APPROACH THE DARK MAJESTY'S PERSON...uh...



A MOMENT LATER, HIS FINGER BRUSHED THE WIZARD'S TREMBLING HAND...

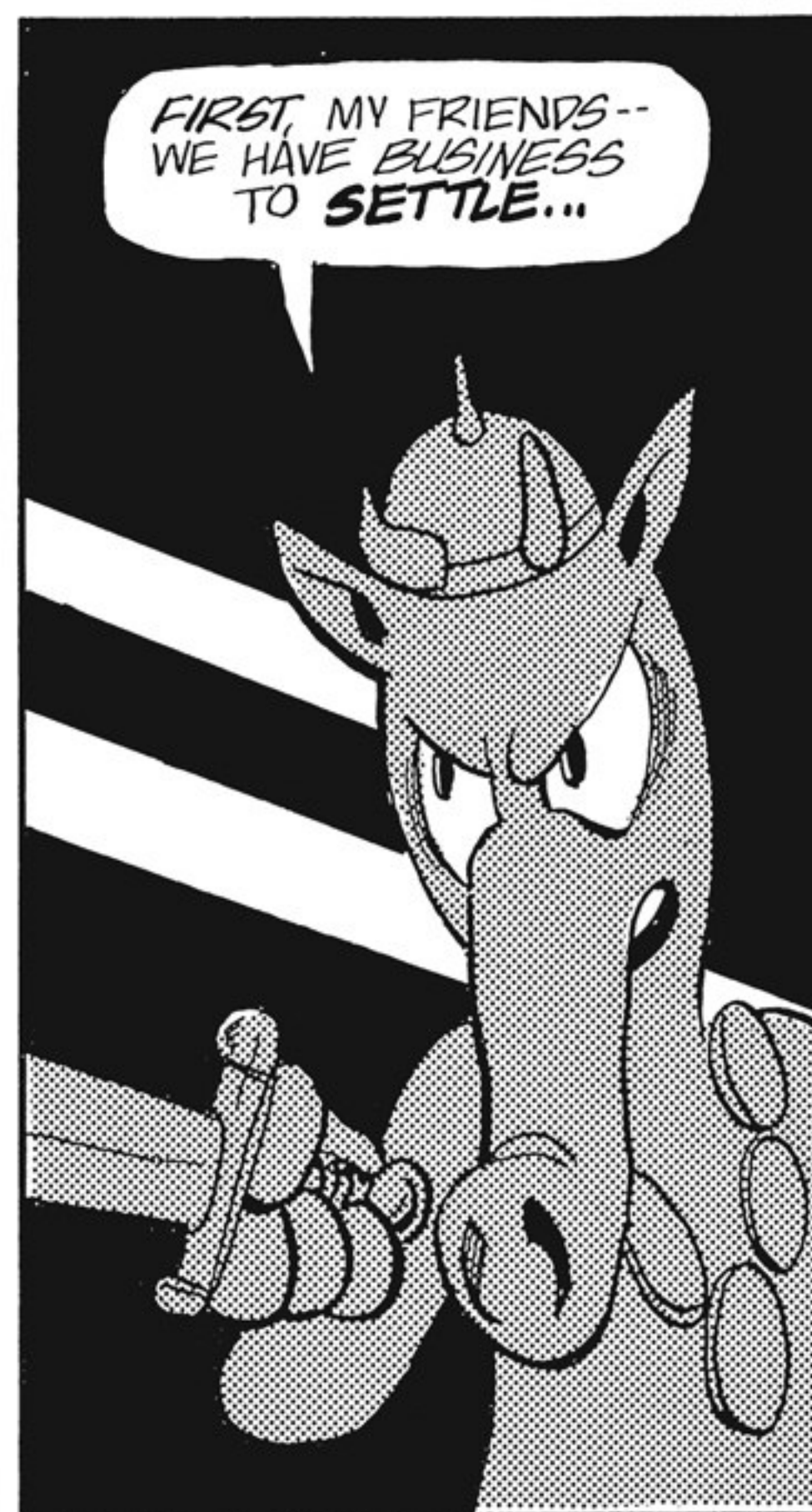
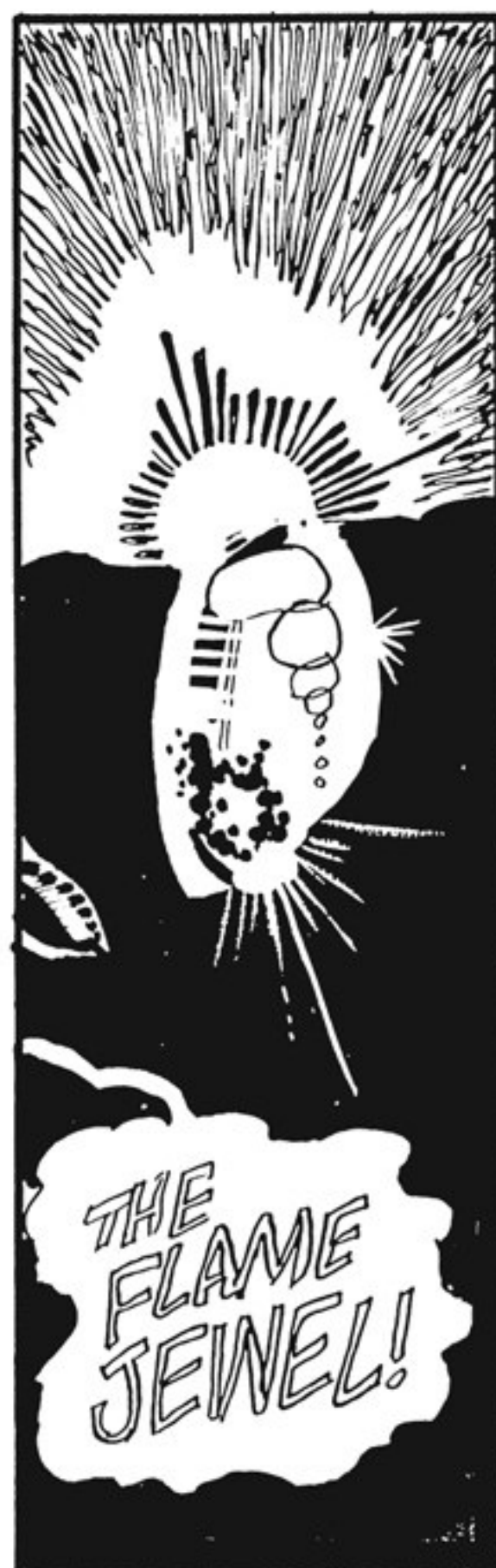
DOOM SHALL BE YOURS IF...

HARK TO MY WORDS! FOR MINE IS THE POWER OF ASHEM, SOGGOT RA, MINE IS...



THE SWORD GLITTERED BRIEFLY IN THE SHADOWED GLOOM, AND THEN...

...AW NUTS...



THE JEWEL WAS WRAPPED CAREFULLY IN A PIECE OF THE WIZARD'S CLOAK AS THEY LEFT THE CENTRAL CHAMBER...

YOU PROMISED ME A POUCH OF GOLD IF I GOT YOU THE JEWEL...

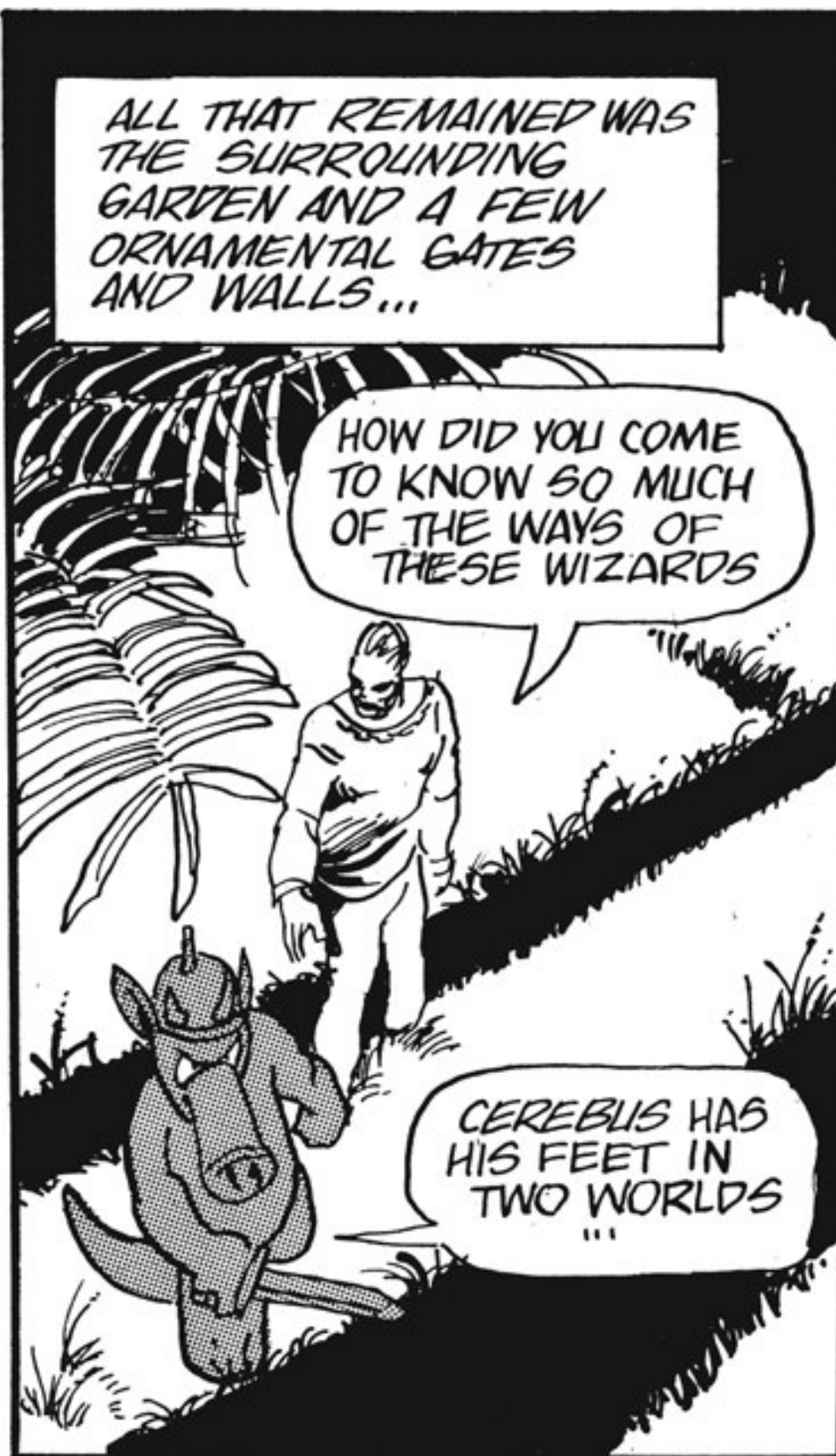
OF COURSE! BUT ONCE WE SELL THE JEWEL YOU SHALL HAVE A THOUSAND--NAY! TEN TIMES A THOUSAND POUCHES OF GOLD!

A NEARBY STATUE BECAME, SLOWLY, LESS SUBSTANTIAL AS THE WIZARD'S SORCERY SLIPPED AWAY, LIKE SANDS IN AN HOUR-GLASS...

ONE POUCH WILL SUFFICE...

GRADUALLY, THE HALL SHIMMERED AND FADED AROUND THEM LIKE A BAD DREAM...

... AND THEY WERE OUTSIDE IN THE PRE-DAWN AIR...





...WALNUT.



YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE FOR...

...A POUCH OF GOLD.



THE JEWEL WAS A PRODUCT OF THE WIZARD'S SORCERY, NOT THE SOURCE OF IT... WHEN HE DIED, IT CHANGED TO ITS ORIGINAL FORM...

SO YOU HAVE YOUR "FLAME JEWEL" AND I HAVE MY POUCH OF GOLD...



...WHICH MAY NOT SEEM **EXACTLY** FAIR...



...BUT **CEREBUS** HAS NO CAUSE FOR COMPLAINT.



IT WAS, THE THIEVES WOULD LATER SAY THE FIRST TIME THEY HAD HEARD AN EARTH-PIG **LAUGH...**

cerebus the aardvark

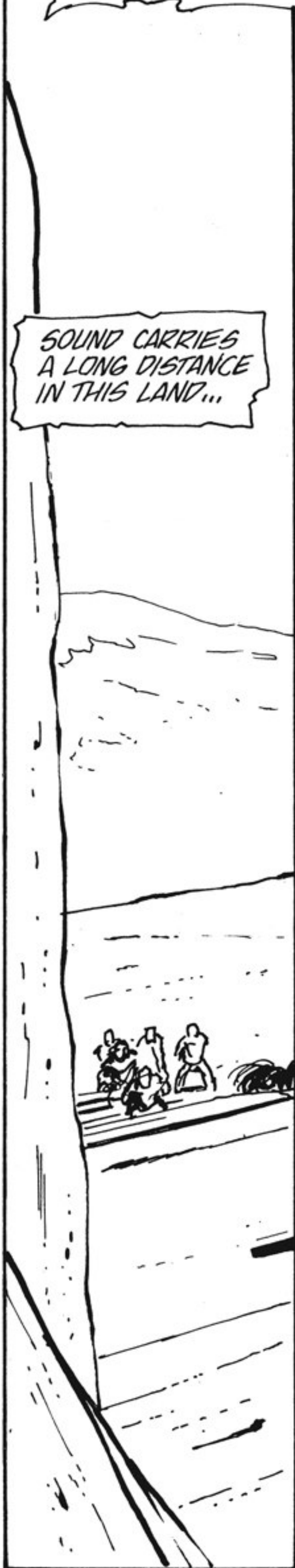
"AFTER HIS BRUSH WITH WIZARDRY AND THE FLAME JEWEL, **CEREBUS** VANISHES FOR A TIME, HIS INTEREST IN THE CITIES OF THE SOUTH OBVIOUSLY ON THE WANE. HE IS NEXT SEEN IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE OF TANSUBAL WHERE, HIS POUCH OF GOLD LONG GONE, HE JOINS A MILITARY EXPEDITION BOUND FOR BOREALA AND THE COUNTRIES NORTH-EAST OF THERE, WHERE IT IS SAID THERE IS A GREAT DEMAND FOR MERCENARIES TO FIGHT IN THE **BLOOD WARS**...."

SOUND CARRIES A LONG DISTANCE IN THIS LAND...

TO SOME, EACH SOUND IS ALIKE, BE IT AVALANCHE OR ECHO...

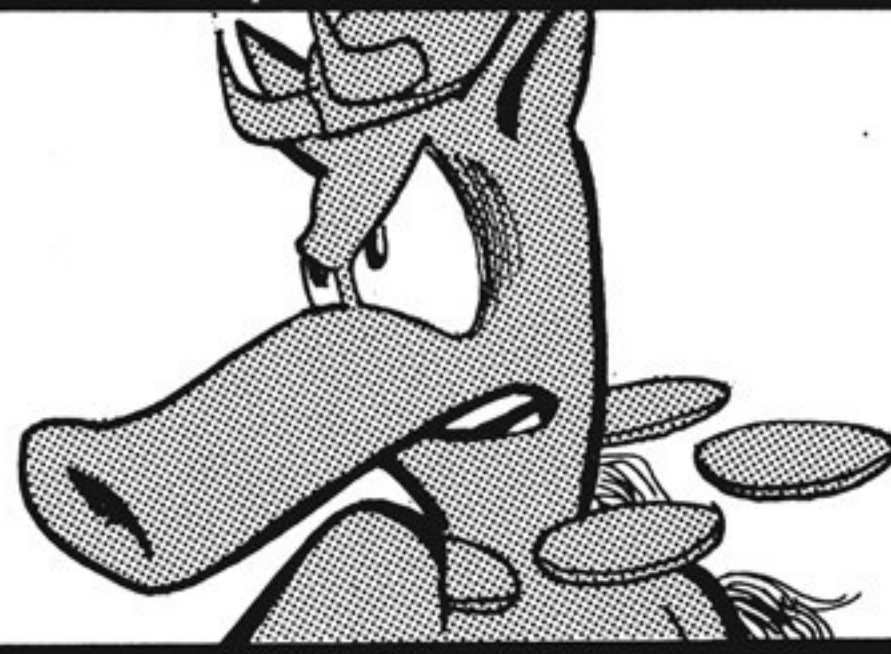
TO THE EARTH-PIG BORN, EACH SOUND BEARS IT'S OWN TALE! SO IT IS, AS HIS COMPANIONS PANT AND WHEEZE AROUND HIM...

...CEREBUS HOLDS HIS BLADE AT THE READY AND WATCHES EACH DARKENED CREVICE OF THE SURROUNDING WALLS OF ICE AND SNOW...



THEY ARE ON THE EXPEDITION IN A MOMENT! FOUR ARE DEAD BEFORE ANY, SAVE CEREBUS, IS EVEN AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF DANGER! THEY ARE **BOREALAN MARAUDERS**, MOST FEARED AND HATED OF THE THIEVING AND NOMADIC NORTHERN TRIBES...

THERE ISN'T EVEN TIME FOR A WARNING SHOUT! CEREBUS TURNS, HIS BLADE READY, AND HE, TOO, IS SWEEPED UP IN THE FRENZIED **BLOOD-LETTING!**...



EVEN AS THE MARAUDERS' HEAVY SWORDS TAKE THEIR TOLL OF THE EXHAUSTED AND NEARLY FROZEN SOUTHLANDERS...



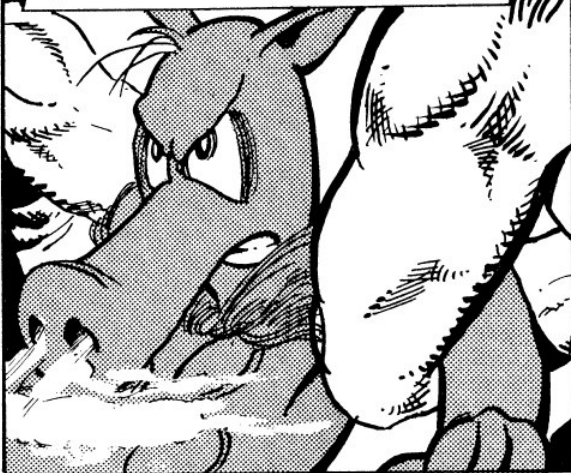
CAPTIVE ⁱⁿ BOREALA

...CEREBUS THE AARDVARK IS AMONG THEM,
HIS BLADE, LIKE A WHIRLWIND, DISPATCHING
THE RAGGED MAKAUDERS WITH
EACH THRUST...!



©1978 Dave Sim

SHEER NUMBERS ARE CEREBUS' UNDOING AND, MOMENTS LATER, DISARMED, HE **GLOWERS** AT HIS CAPTORS....



WHATEVER MANNER OF MAN OR BEAST HE MIGHT BE...

...HE IS A GOOD AND FEARLESS WARRIOR, MY CHIEFTAIN!!!



LET HIM LIVE...

...WE CAN SELL HIM TO A FREAK SHOW IN **GURANN!**

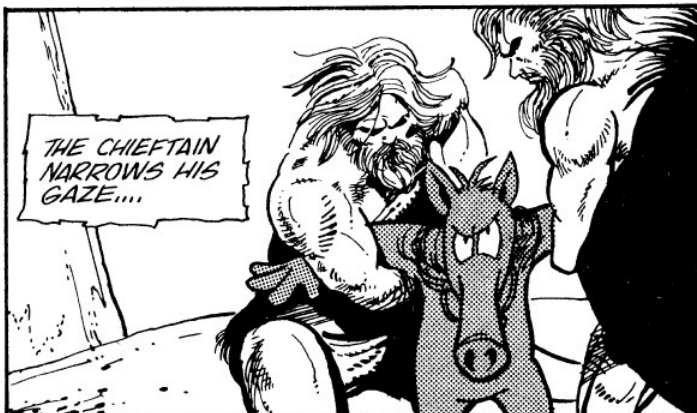


CEREBUS RECOGNIZES THE PARANIAN LILT OF THE CHIEFTAIN'S WORDS AND SPITS A CURSE AT THE TOWERING NORTHLANDER...

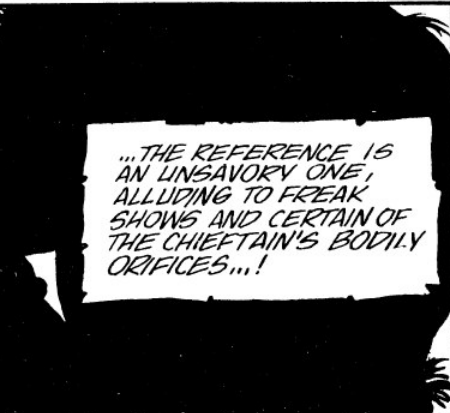
...COMNE YE TAMA STET FEGRIA!



THE CHIEFTAIN NARROWS HIS GAZE....

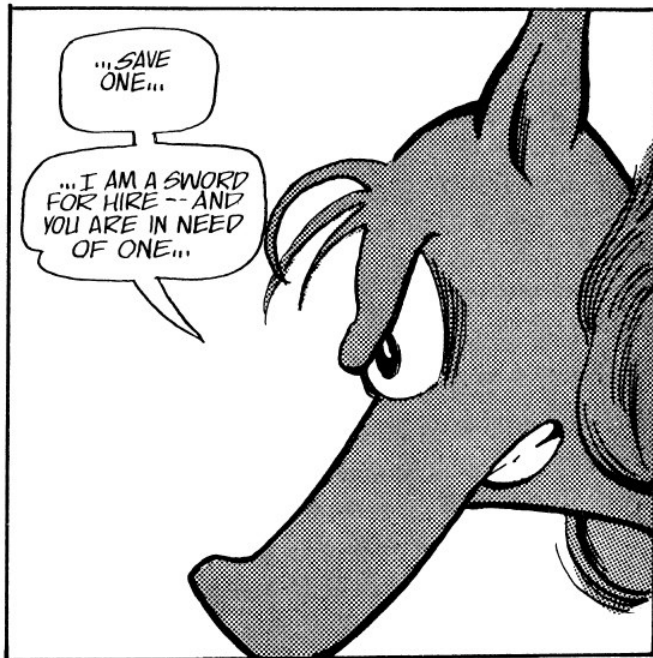


...THE REFERENCE IS AN UNSAVORY ONE, ALLUDING TO FREAK SHOWS AND CERTAIN OF THE CHIEFTAIN'S BODILY ORIFICES...!





YOU HAVE MADE A GRAVE
ERROR, ANIMAL! THERE
IS NO REASON I SHOULDN'T
KILL YOU FOR THAT...



...SAVE
ONE...

...I AM A SWORD
FOR HIRE -- AND
YOU ARE IN NEED
OF ONE...



THE CHIEFTAIN'S BROWS
PLUCKER AND HE FLASHES
A SUDDEN GRIN...

WE HAVE SEEN
YOU IN COMBAT
AGAINST MANY
FOES...

BUT WE KNOW
NOTHING OF YOUR
PROWESS AGAINST
A **SINGLE**
ENEMY...

IT IS UNDENIABLY
A CHALLENGE AND
CEREBUS RETURNS
THE CHIEFTAIN'S STARE
WITH HIS OWN STEELY
GAZE...



PERHAPS YOU
WOULD PERMIT ME
TO **PRACTICE** ON
ONE OF YOUR MEN?!

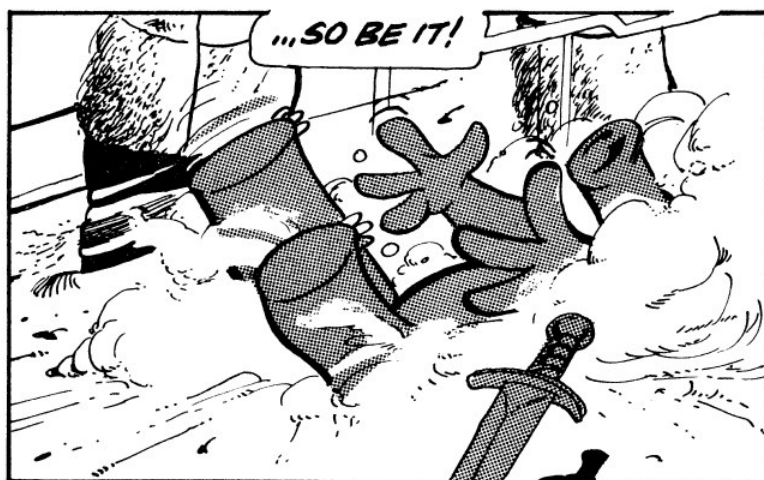
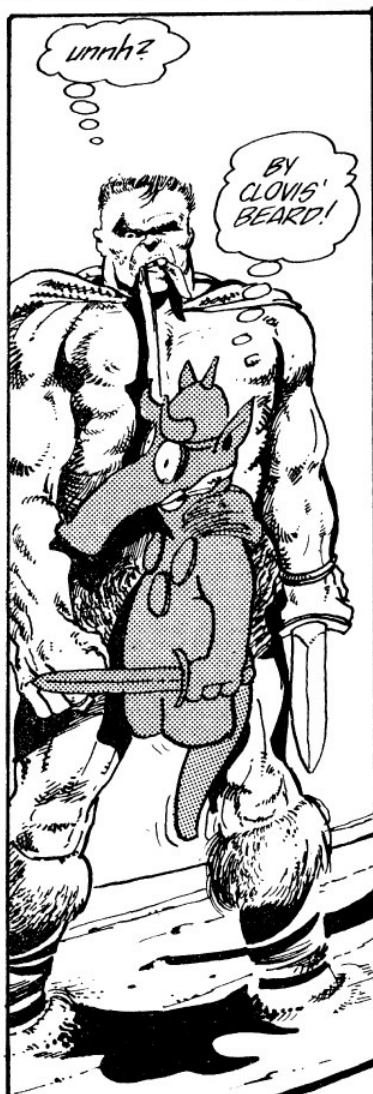
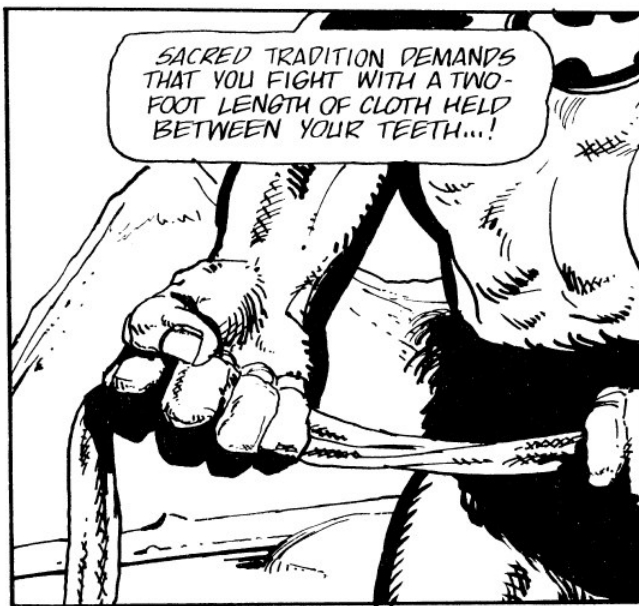
PERHAPS! YOU'D
LIKE TO TEACH OUR
"FRIEND" HOW TO
KNIFE-FIGHT...



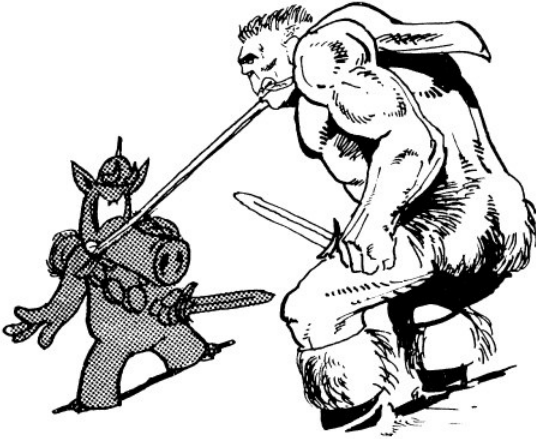
...WOULDN'T YOU,
KLOG?...

umh?
KNIFE
FIGHT?
JA!...

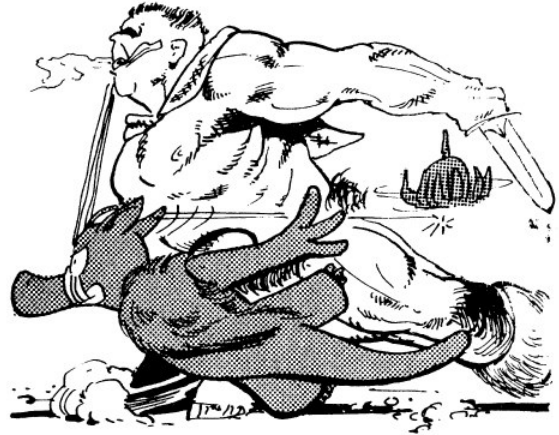
KLOG
TEACH
GOOD!
humh-humh



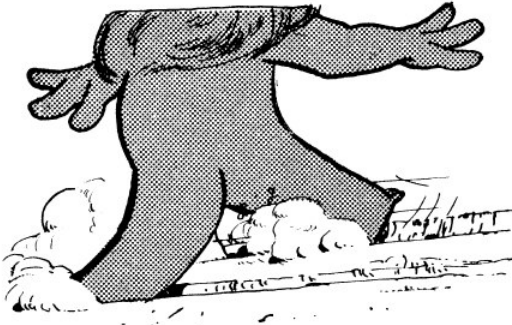
MOMENTS LATER THE TWO ARE JOINED AND THE DEADLY DANCE BEGINS...



ABRUPTLY, KLOG TWISTS AWAY, THROWING CEREBUS FROM HIS FEET -- CEREBUS' KNIFE FLIES SEVERAL FEET AWAY...



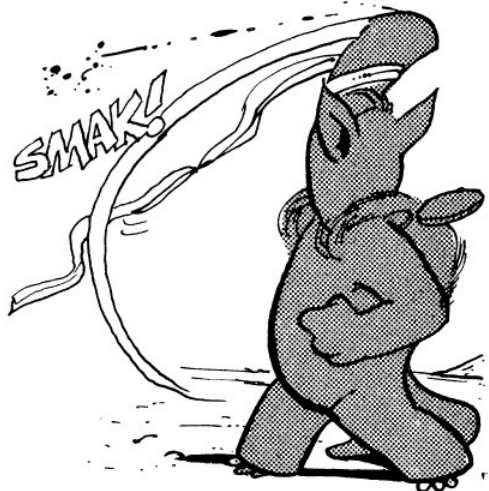
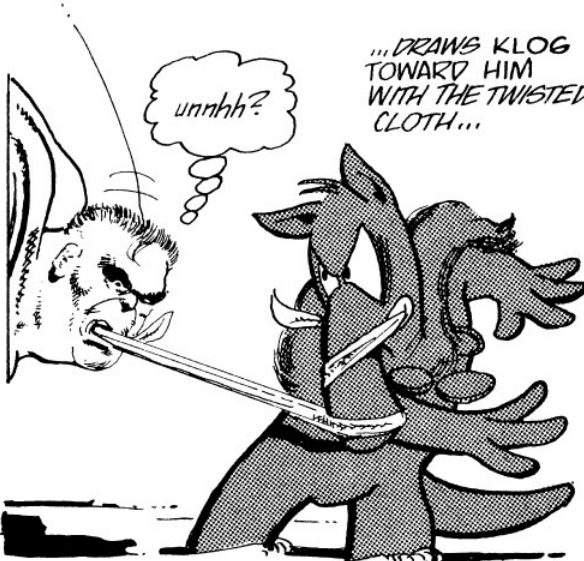
THE AARDVARK'S FEET AND TAIL FIND PURCHASE IN THE POWDERY SNOW AS HE PREPARES TO MEET KLOG'S CHARGE...



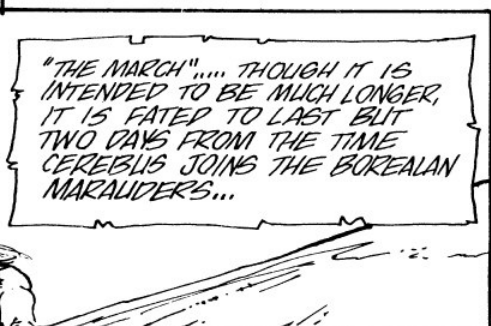
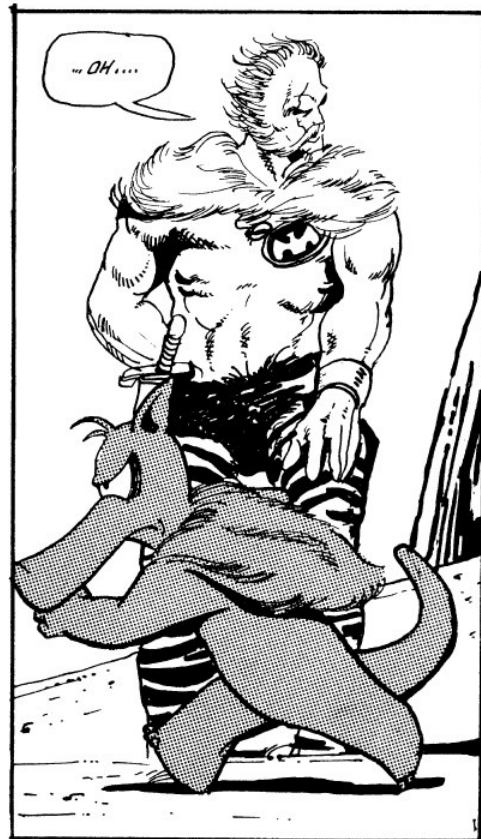
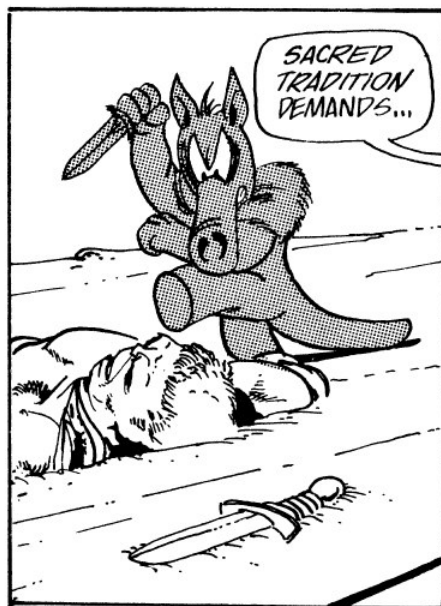
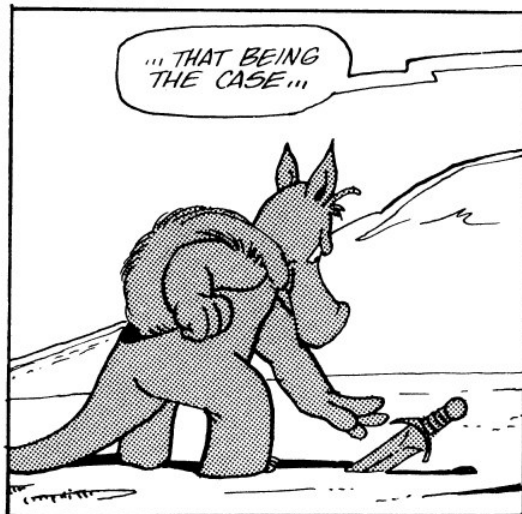
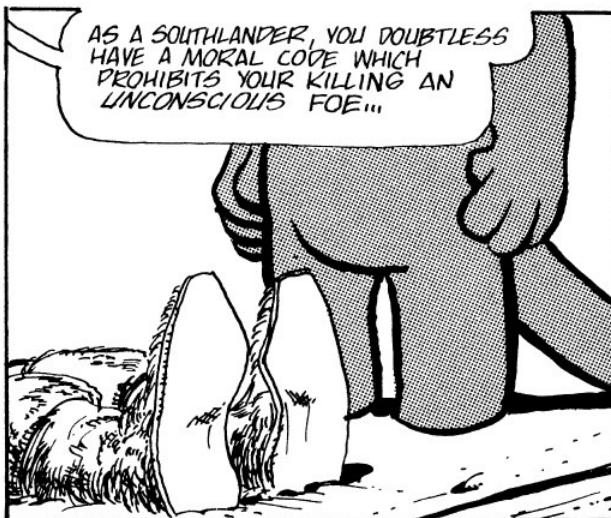
THE THRUST IS AWKWARD AND CEREBUS EASILY DODGES IT...



...DRAWS KLOG TOWARD HIM WITH THE TWISTED CLOTH...



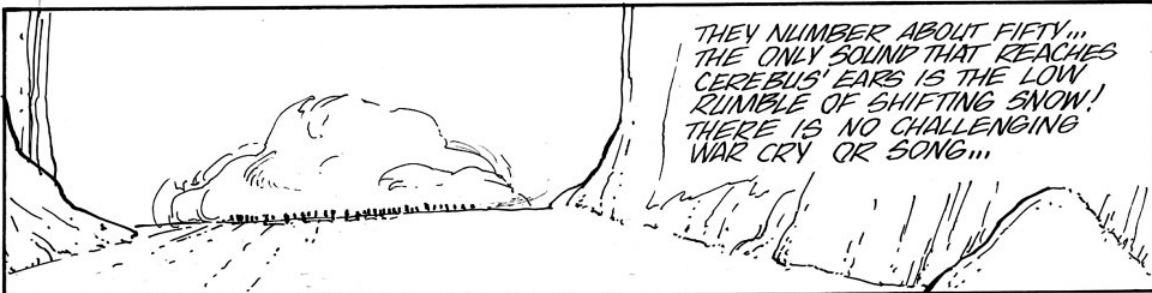
...AND UNLEASHES THE DREADED EARTH-PIG SNOUT PUNCH!



IT IS ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE MARCH THAT THE MARAUDERS FIND THEMSELVES FACING AN ATTACK BETWEEN THE WALLS OF A SNOWY VALLEY! THE AARDVARK IS APPREHENSIVE -- THOUGH THE ATTACKERS ARE ON FOOT THEY ARE ADVANCING INCREDIBLY FAST...



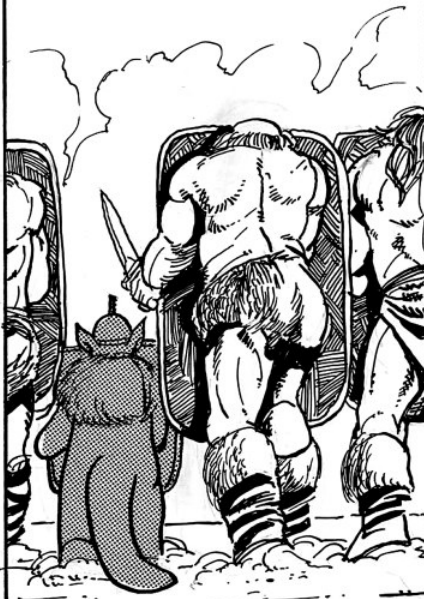
THEY NUMBER ABOUT FIFTY... THE ONLY SOUND THAT REACHES CEREBUS' EARS IS THE LOW RUMBLE OF SHIFTING SNOW! THERE IS NO CHALLENGING WAR CRY OR SONG...



AS THEY DRAW NEARER, CEREBUS CAN SEE THEIR BLADES -- HEAVY AND COMPOSED OF SOME FORM OF BLACK METAL...



"WHAT MANNER OF ARMY IS THIS?" HISSES CEREBUS, AS HE NOTICES THEIR GLOWING WHITE EYES...



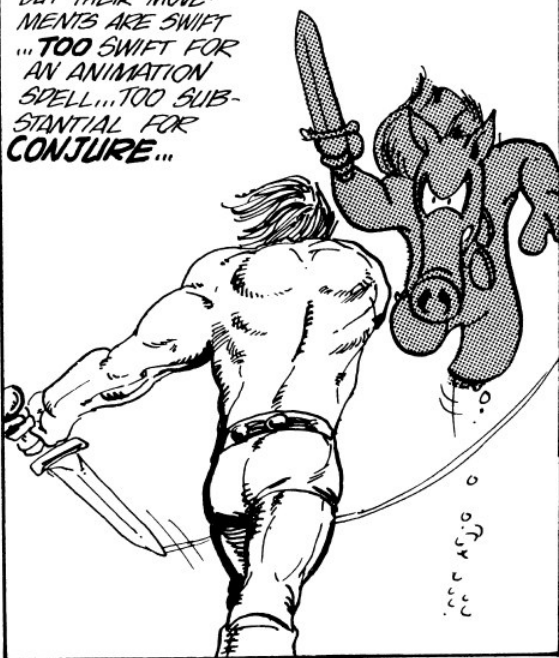
THERE IS TIME FOR ONE STRAY THOUGHT IN THE INSTANT BEFORE THE TWO ARMIES CLASH!...



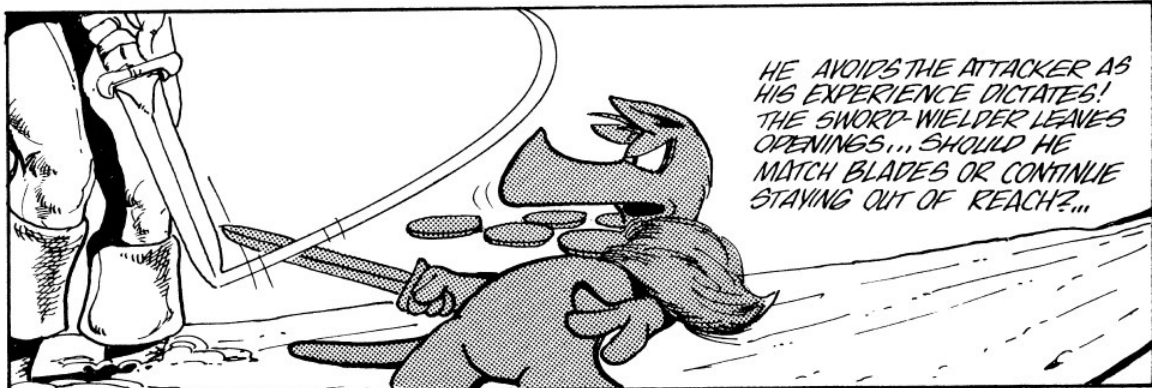
A DECISION MUST BE MADE, CEREBUS REALIZES, EVEN AS A LOOMING FIGURE CUTS HIM OFF FROM THE **BOREALANS!**



ENSORCELLED THE BEINGS ARE... BUT THEIR MOVEMENTS ARE SWIFT... **TOO SWIFT FOR AN ANIMATION SPELL... TOO SUBSTANTIAL FOR CONJURE...**



HE AVOIDS THE ATTACKER AS HIS EXPERIENCE DICTATES! THE SWORD-WIELDER LEAVES OPENINGS... SHOULD HE MATCH BLADES OR CONTINUE STAYING OUT OF REACH?...



AS THE SLOPE BENEATH HIS FEET INCREASES...



HE RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO DECIDE...



...AND SOON!

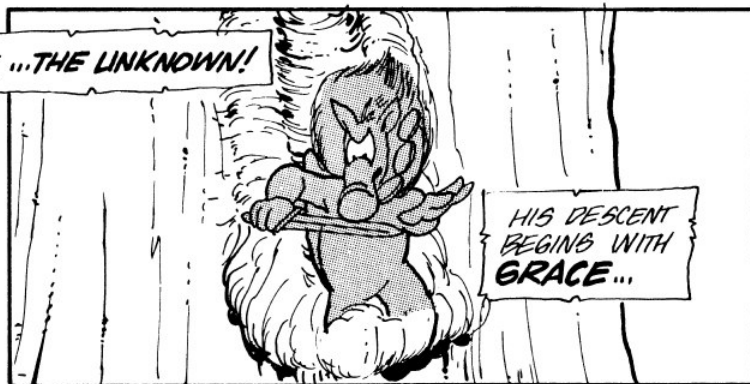
PERHAPS HE IS
BEING HERDED TOWARD
THIS PRECIPICE-- TOWARD
DANGER LINKNOWN AND
INFINITELY GREATER?



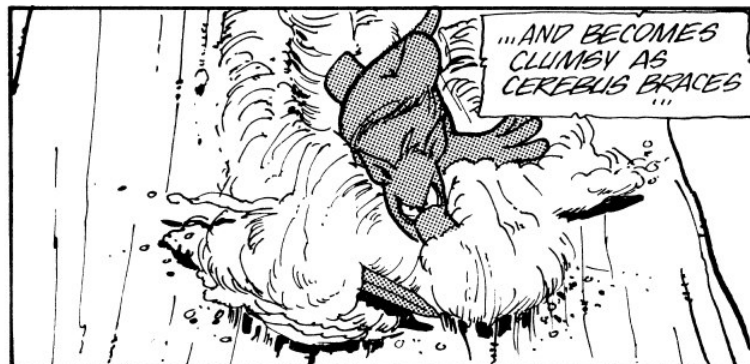
PERHAPS! BUT HE
IS UNABLE TO
FATHOM THE MAGIC
RACING TOWARD HIM!

AND, ALWAYS, GIVEN
THE CHOICE BETWEEN
UNFATHOMABLE
SORCERY AND
LINKNOWN DANGER--
THE EARTH-PIG
BORN WILL OPT
FOR...

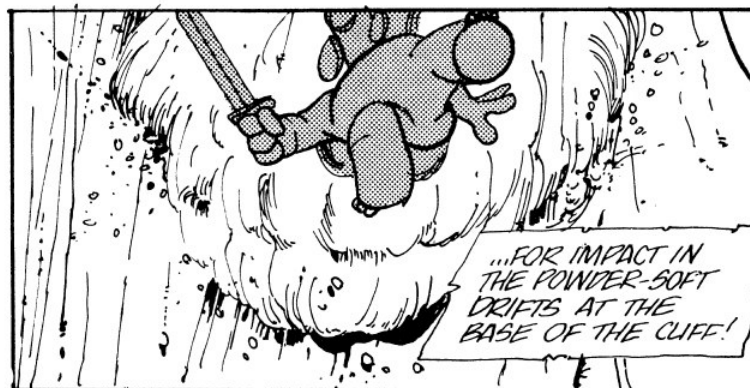
...THE LINKNOWN!



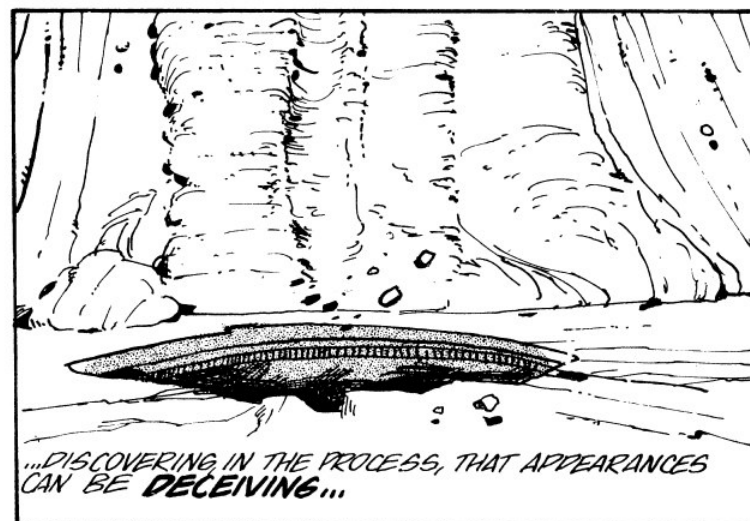
HIS DESCENT
BEGINNS WITH
GRACE...



...AND BECOMES
CLUMBY AS
CEREBELLUS BRACES
...



...FOR IMPACT IN
THE POWDER-SOFT
DRIFTS AT THE
BASE OF THE CLIFF!

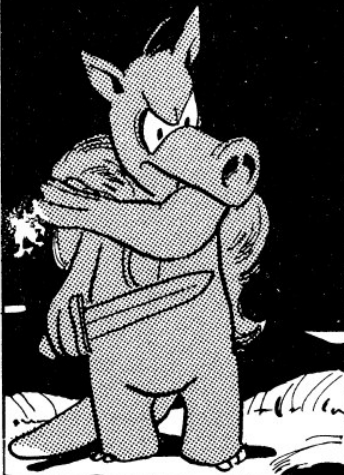


...DISCOVERING, IN THE PROCESS, THAT APPEARANCES
CAN BE **DECEIVING**...



CEREBUS BLINKS IN THE **MURKY** DARKNESS, DISORIENTED MOMENTARILY BY HIS SITUATION-- IN A FEW SECONDS, HE RECOVERS...

THERE IS NO HOPE OF CLIMBING FREE HE CONCLUDES, NOTING FOOTPRINTS IN THE DUST AROUND HIM, THE PRINTS ARE ABOUT A WEEK OLD...



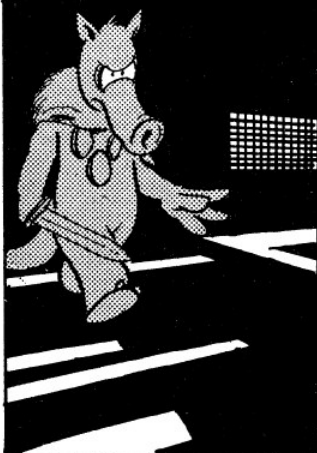
NEARBY, WRITINGS ON THE WALL ATTRACT HIS ATTENTION-- SOMETHING ABOUT TIME AND THE IMMORTALITY OF ALL BEINGS...

THERE IS NO CLUE AS TO ESCAPE ROUTES, AND HE READS NO FURTHER...

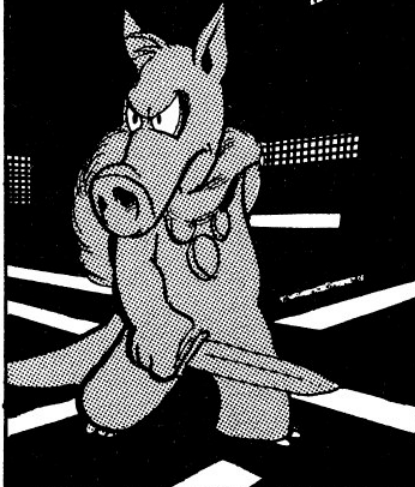


IF ANOTHER EXIT IS TO BE FOUND, IT IS BY INVESTIGATION! CEREBUS SETS OFF INTO THE **SHADOWS**...

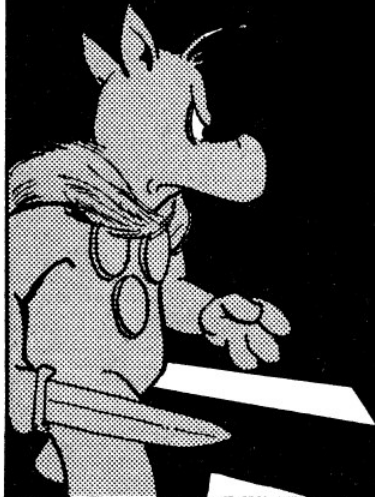
HIS EARS TWITCH AND SWIVEL AS HE WALKS...



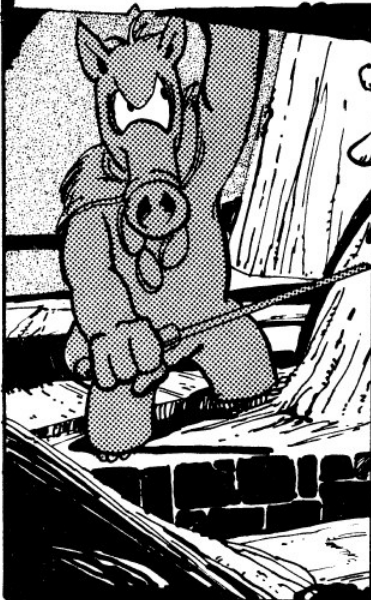
THOUGH NO SOUND BETRAYS THEIR PRESENCE THE AARDVARK IS CERTAIN OTHERS LURK IN THIS GLOOMY HALL...



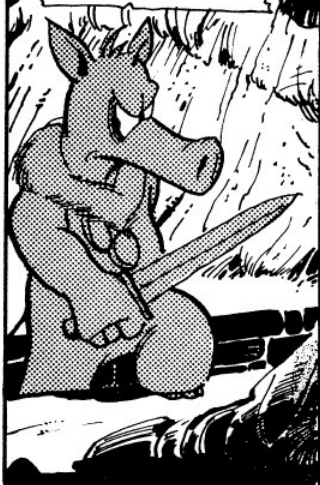
"THEY WILL SHOW THEMSELVES IN GOOD TIME," HE DECIDES, SLAPPING THE SWORD LIGHTLY AGAINST HIS THIGH...



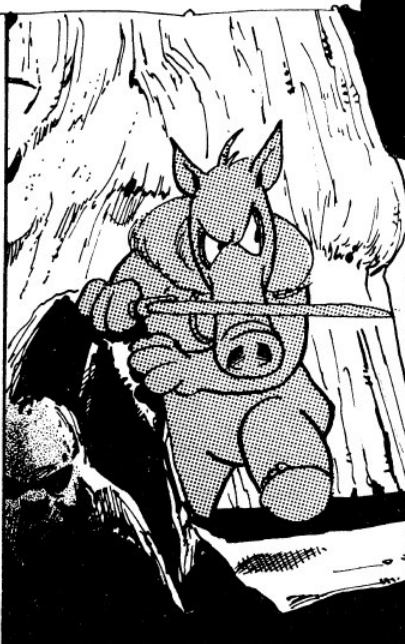
THE GLOOMY HALLWAY GIVES WAY TO EERILY LIT CAVERNS! CRUDE AND WATER SOURED CARVINGS GAZE DOWN ON THE AARDVARK...



THE FLOOR IS UNEVEN...



...BUT CEREBUS HAS THE IMPRESSION OF GRADUAL DESCENT...

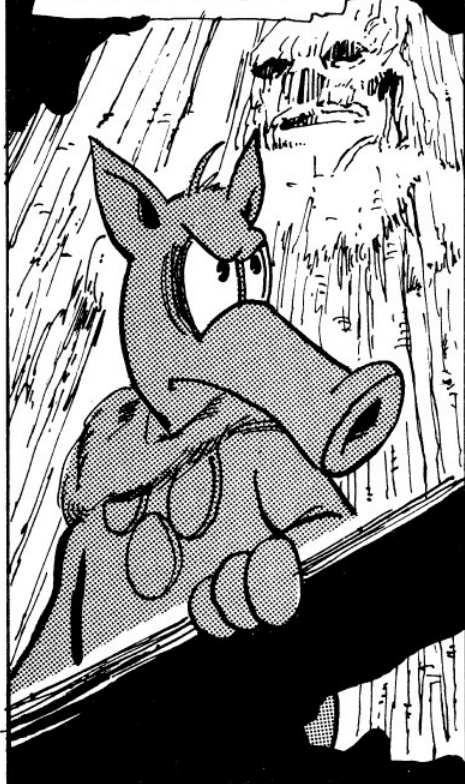


THERE IS THE SOUND OF DRIPPING WATER-- OF HIS OWN ECHOING FOOTSTEPS...



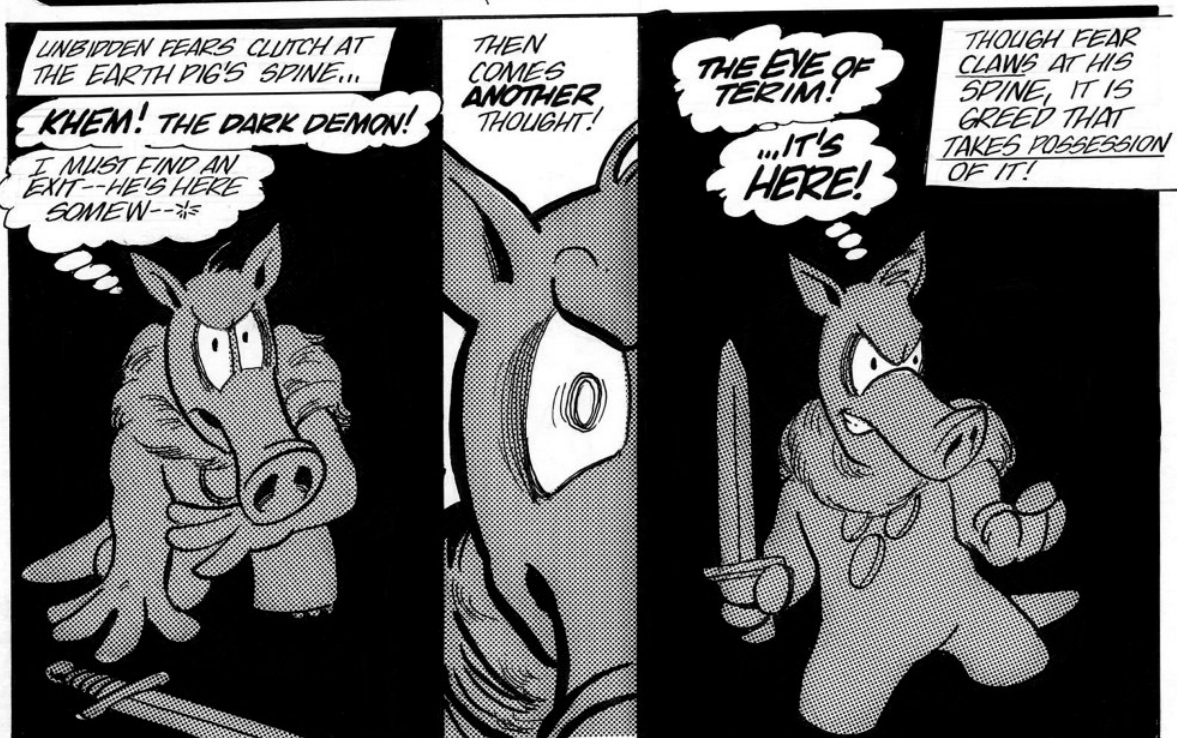
AND ANOTHER SOUND...

A SOUND MUFFLED BY TONS OF ROCK! BUT A SOUND WHICH DOES NOT ESCAPE THE SENSITIVE EARS OF THE EARTH-PIG...



IT IS THE SOUND OF DEEP, SARDONIC LAUGHTER...





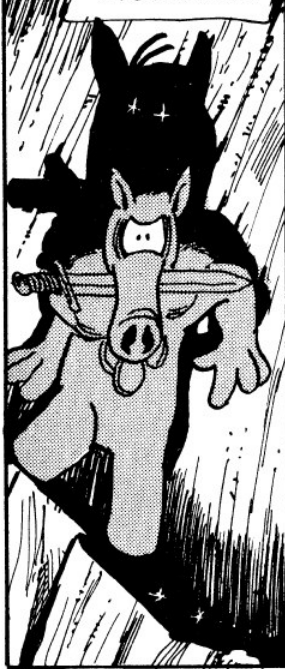
THE PATH THAT
HE TRAVELS
IS WELL WORN
...



...BUT NO LESS TREACHEROUS
FOR ITS AGE! HIS HANDS
PASS OVER **CARVINGS**
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
MANY FACES OF **KHEM...**



WINKING
LIGHTS
FOLLOW HIM,
AS HE GOES,
LIKE SMALL
INSECTS...



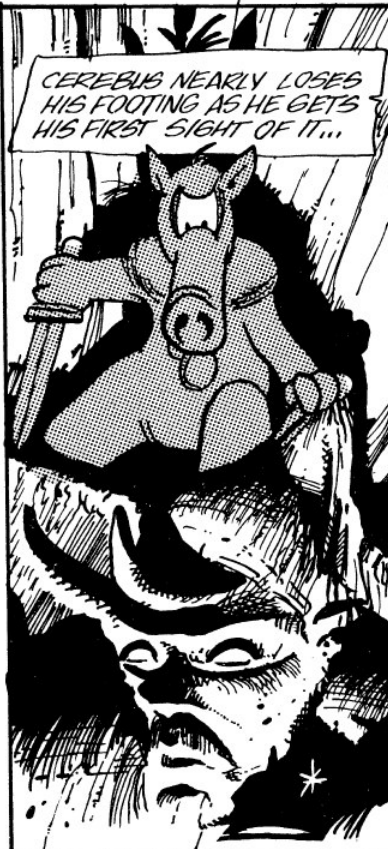
THEY
POSE NO
THREAT,
SO THE
AARDVARK
IGNORES
THEM...



THE LIGHT GROWS
IN INTENSITY AS
HE NEARS THE
BOTTOM...



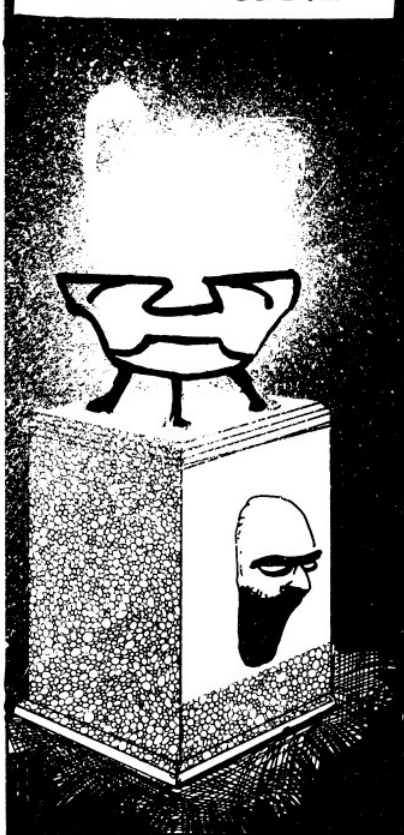
CEREBUS NEARLY LOSES
HIS FOOTING AS HE GETS
HIS FIRST SIGHT OF IT...



THE LEGENDS
HAVE NOT
LIED...



IT IS THE **EVE OF TERIM**,
THE MOST PRECIOUS
OF THE FIVE **SPHERES**
OF THE GODS!...



HIS EYES ARE RIVETED
ON THE BALL OF GOLD
FIRE! IT IS LIKE A
SMALL SUN, BLAZING
IN THE SHADOWS
BELOW HIM!...



HE TRIES TO PICTURE
THE PRICE THAT IT
WOULD FETCH IN THE
GURRANIAN MARKET-
PLACE!...

...AND A SMILE CROSSES
HIS LIPS!...



TARIM!
WHAT A PRIZE!
I'LL BUY A
KINGDOM WITH
THE!...



EH?



PERHAPS A
WIZARD WOULD
PAY MORE
DEARLY FOR
THE KNOWLEDGE
CONTAINED IN
ONE OF THE
FIVE S!...



CLOVIS'
BLOOD!



CEREBUS' MIND
IS PLAYING TRICKS
ON HIM -- BUT NO
TRICKS WILL KEEP
ME FROM THE
GOLDEN EYE!





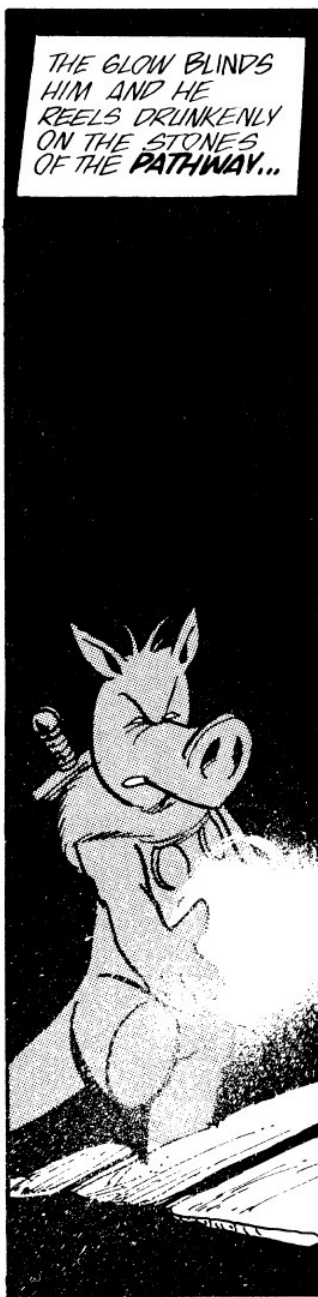
IT IS ONLY
WHEN HE'S
PAST THE ORB
THAT THE
AARDVARK
NOTICES A
DISTANT EXIT...

"KHEM SHALL
HAVE TO FIND
A NEW TREASURE
TO GUARD?" HE
MUSES...

"FOR CEREBUS LAYS CLAIM TO
THE EYE OF TERIM!"

THE AARDVARK
SOON LEARNS
THAT THE
EYE OF A
NORTHERN
GOD IS
WEIGHTY,
INDEED...

CLOVIS'
BEARD!
HOW CAN
SOMETHING
SO SMALL
WEIGH SO
MUCH?



THE GLOW BLINDS
HIM AND HE
REELS DRUNKENLY
ON THE STONES
OF THE **PATHWAY**...



THE GLOWING MOTES WHIM AROUND
HIM LIKE THE INSECTS THEY RESEMBLE,
INCREASING IN NUMBERS WITH EACH
STEP THE EARTH-PIG TAKES...

THE PATH SUDDENLY
DROPS AND THE
AARDVARK STUMBLES
...



...HIS FEET, FOR THE
MOMENT, FINDING
ONLY CRUMBLING
STONES AND AIR!



THE PATH HE HAD SEEN WAS
STRAIGHT! CEREBUS IS
SUDDENLY HESITANT AS HE
RECOVERS HIS BALANCE...



WHAT TRICKERY
IS **AFOOT**
HERE?

AS IF IN ANSWER,
HE'S SUDDENLY
AWARE AGAIN OF
SARDONIC LAUGHTER...

...AND SOMETHING ELSE!

ENERGY! ENERGY LIKE A DARKLING
LATICWORK WOVEN ABOUT HIS
HEAD...



ENERGY-- LIKE FINGERS
WHICH PROBE HIS
MIND; **RENDING--**
SEARCHING...



...CEREBUS WHIRLS

GONE IS THE BLINDING GLOW IN HIS HANDS-- GONE, TOO, IS THE ILLUSION OF PURITY
AND BEAUTY! IN ITS PLACE ALL THAT REMAINS IS MIND-NUMBING, **SPINE-CHILLING...**



...**REALITY!**

BY
CLOVIS'
TEETH!

A SUCCUBUS! EVEN AS IT REACHES, CEREBLUS CURSES HIMSELF FOR A FOOL FOR NOT REALIZING IT EARLIER...

THE TENTACLES REACH OUT-- REACH TO STEAL THE AARDVARK'S VERY SOUL...

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CENTURIES A PREY HAS BROKEN THE SUCCUBUS' SPELL-- HAS **SEEN** IT IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM...

DEFENSELESS, IT SEEKS TO ATTACK CEREBLUS, SHREDDING THE TISSUES OF THE AARDVARK'S MIND... DESPERATION MARKS THE SUCCUBUS' MOVEMENTS...

THE NATURE OF THIS BEAST IS DIFFERENT FROM ITS OTHER VICTIMS-- THE SOUL **MUST** BE FOUND BEFORE... BEFORE...

THE EARTH-PIG STUMBLES AND PLUNGES HEAD-LONG INTO THE UNKNOWN ONCE MORE...

STILL, THE TENTACLES FLIP AND DART ABOUT THE TUMBLING FORM SEEKING... **SEEKING**...

CEREBLUS TWISTS, DISORIENTED... AWARE ONLY OF A PULLING, TEARING SENSATION...

WHERE IS ITS SOUL?

THE AARDVARK BOLINCES, SHRINKING BACK FROM THE TENTACLES! HE SEES THEM TWIST HELPLESSLY...

WHERE?

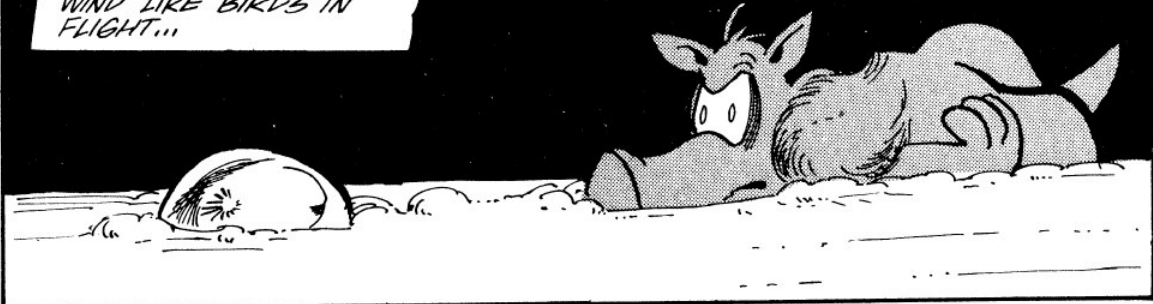
HE SEES THE WINKING LIGHTS RETURN, SURROUNDING HIM, AS HE DROPS INTO SPACE...

A MOMENT LATER, ALL GOES **BLACK!**...

NO! NO! NO!

AN INSTANT--OR AN HOUR--
LATER, CEREBUS AWAKENS
TO THE SOUND OF WHINING
SCREAMS AND A RUSH OF
WIND LIKE BIRDS IN
FLIGHT...

HIS EYES SLOWLY FOCUS ON THE
TARNISHED IRON SPHERE BEFORE
HIM, HALF-BURIED IN THE SNOW



ABOVE HIM, WINKING
LIGHTS SWIRL
UPWARD, MINGLING
WITH THE EVENING
STARS...

THE SOUND IS
UNMISTAKABLE!



IT IS THE SOUND
OF SUDDEN
FREEDOM AFTER
CENTURIES OF
CAPTIVITY...

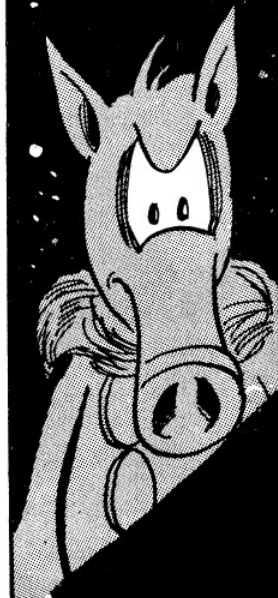


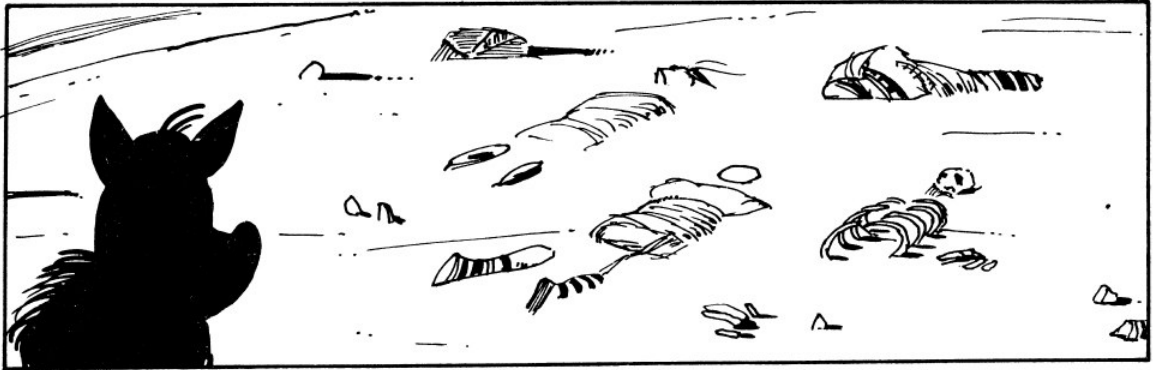
IT IS NOT A SOUND
FOR THE EARS
OF A MORTAL
EARTH-PIG, THOUGH,
AND CEREBUS
TURNS...

WONDERING FOR
THE MOMENT
WHERE HE IS...

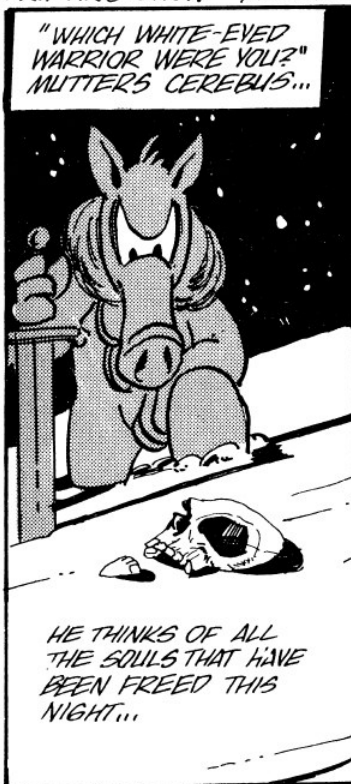


BUT ONLY
FOR A MOMENT
...





IT IS THE SITE OF THE DAY'S BATTLE! CORPSES ARE GRADUALLY BEING COVERED BY DRIFTING SNOW--INCONGRUOUS SKELETONS VISIBLE AMID THE BOREALAN DEAD...



"WHICH WHITE-EYED WARRIOR WERE YOU?" MUTTERS CEREBUS...

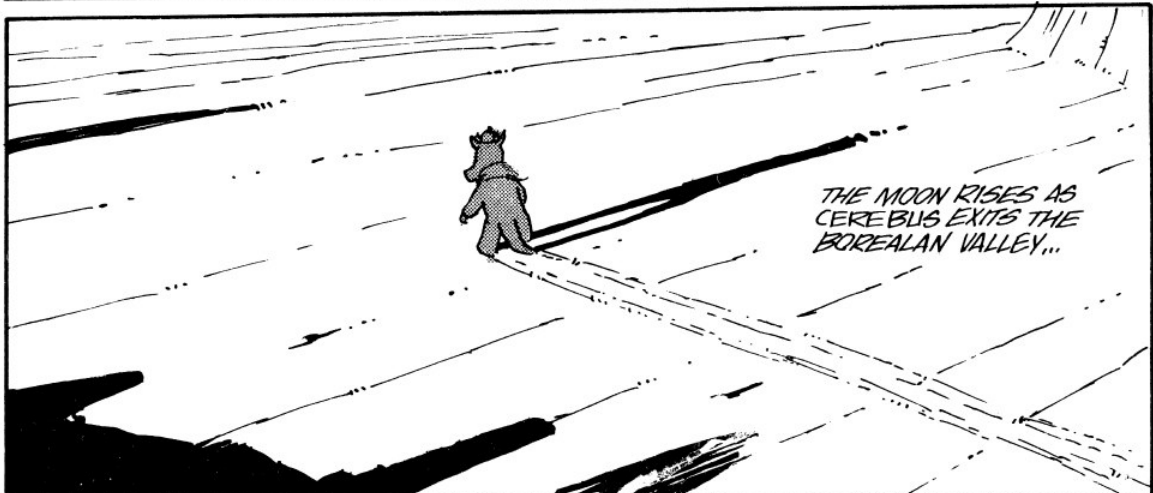
HE THINKS OF ALL THE SOULS THAT HAVE BEEN FREED THIS NIGHT...



HOW MANY HAD FALLEN PREY TO THE SUCCLIBUS' DECEPTION?



HOW MANY OTHER SOUL-LESS WARRIORS HAVE CRUMBLLED TO SKELETONS? HOW MANY OTHERS ARE AT LAST **RESTING** IN THE NEW FALLEN SNOW?-- NO LONGER IN MINDLESS FLIGHT -- NO LONGER DESTROYING ALL IN THEIR PATH?...



THE MOON RISES AS CEREBUS EXITS THE BOREALAN VALLEY...

HE BREATHES DEEPLY... AND CONSIDERS HIS FATE; SAVED BY VIRTUE OF HIS UNUSUAL NATURE...

...ELSE HE MIGHT BE LANGLISHING NOW, IN THAT GLOOMY CAVERN WITH THE OTHER TRAPPED SOULS...

...AWAITING A SAVIOUR TO BREAK THE SUCCUBUS' CONTROL!

EVEN NOW, THE SUCCUBUS MUST BE ATTRACTING NEW VICTIMS, HE MUSES...

...AND THEN TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO MORE **URGENT** CONCERNS!

...FOR HIS BELLY AND PURSE ARE EMPTY...

THE NEAREST COAST IS TWELVE MILES...

THE NEAREST PORT AT LEAST TWICE THAT DISTANCE!

...AND THE EARTH-PIG INTENDS TO QUAFF A DOZEN ALES AND START AS MANY BRAWLS BEFORE ANOTHER MOON HAS RISEN!



FIN

SONG RED SOPHIA

זיין
און

BELOVED,
PERHAPS WE COULD
SLIP INTO THOSE
BLUSHES FOR A FEW
MINUTES AND...

TARIM'S BLOOD!
DOES THIS WENCH
THINK OF NAUGHT
ELSE?

CEREBUS SHIFTS LINEARLY,
STRAINING TO SEE PAST
THE CONCEALING FOLIAGE
--TO CATCH SIGHT OF
HIS QUIARKY...

AS HE DOES SO, HE
THINKS BACK TO HIS
MEETING WITH HENROT
NOT SO LONG AGO...

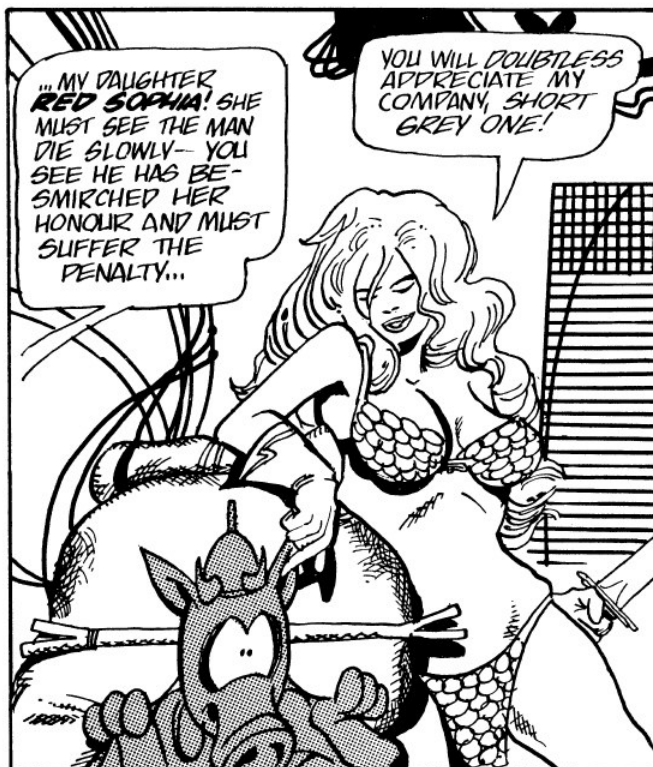
... NOT SO VERY
LONG AGO AT
ALL!

"TRUE TO HIS VOW, CEREBUS REACHES THE COASTAL PORT OF TEMZA BEFORE DARKNESS FALLS AGAIN! THERE IS BAD NEWS IN THE TAVERNS, THOUGH! THE BOREALAN GOLD MINES ARE SAID TO BE FAILING AND THE NEARLY BANKRUPT GOVERNMENT IS PRESSING MERCENARIES INTO SERVICE ON PAIN OF DEATH! DESPERATION HAS DRIVEN THE AARDVARK TO FIND A QUICK SOURCE OF INCOME TO BUY HIM SAFE PASSAGE EAST. AGAINST HIS BETTER JUDGEMENT HE GOES BACK TO TANSUBAL, THERE TO MEET WITH HENROT, A VERY POWERFUL WIZARD, SAID TO DRAW HIS POWER FROM, NOT ONE, BUT **TWO** OF THE FIVE SPHERES OF THE GODS..."



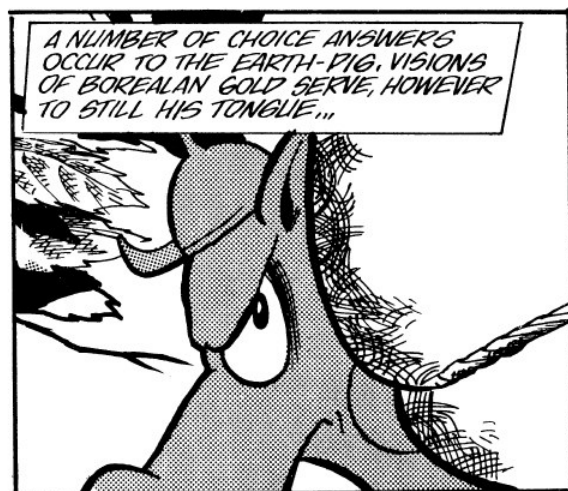


LOOKS LIKE YOU
HAVE EVERYTHING!
THERE'S ONE
MORE THING I
FORGOT TO
MENTION...



...MY DAUGHTER
RED SOPHIA! SHE
MUST SEE THE MAN
DIE SLOWLY-- YOU
SEE HE HAS BE-
SMIRCHED HER
HONOUR AND MUST
SUFFER THE
PENALTY...

YOU WILL DOUBTLESS
APPRECIATE MY
COMPANY, **SHORT
GREY ONE!**



A NUMBER OF CHOICE ANSWERS
OCCUR TO THE EARTH-PIG. VISIONS
OF BOREALAN GOLD SERVE, HOWEVER
TO STILL HIS TONGUE...



YOU NEEDN'T
WORRY ABOUT HER
...SHE'S QUITE
HANDY WITH THAT
SWORD...

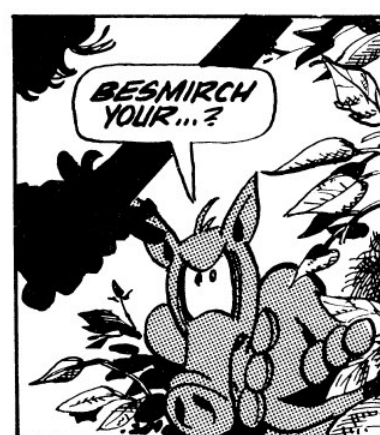
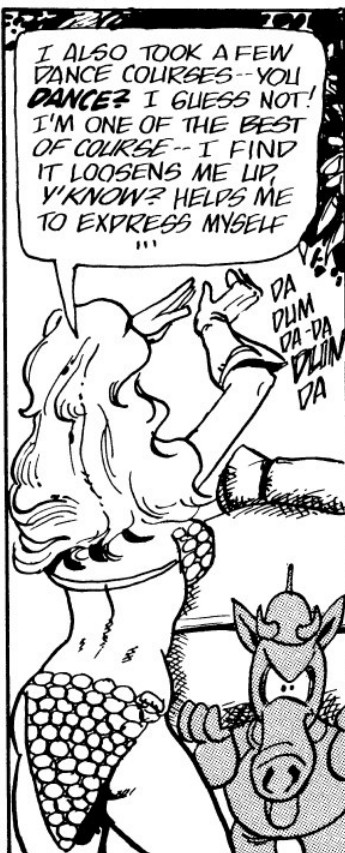


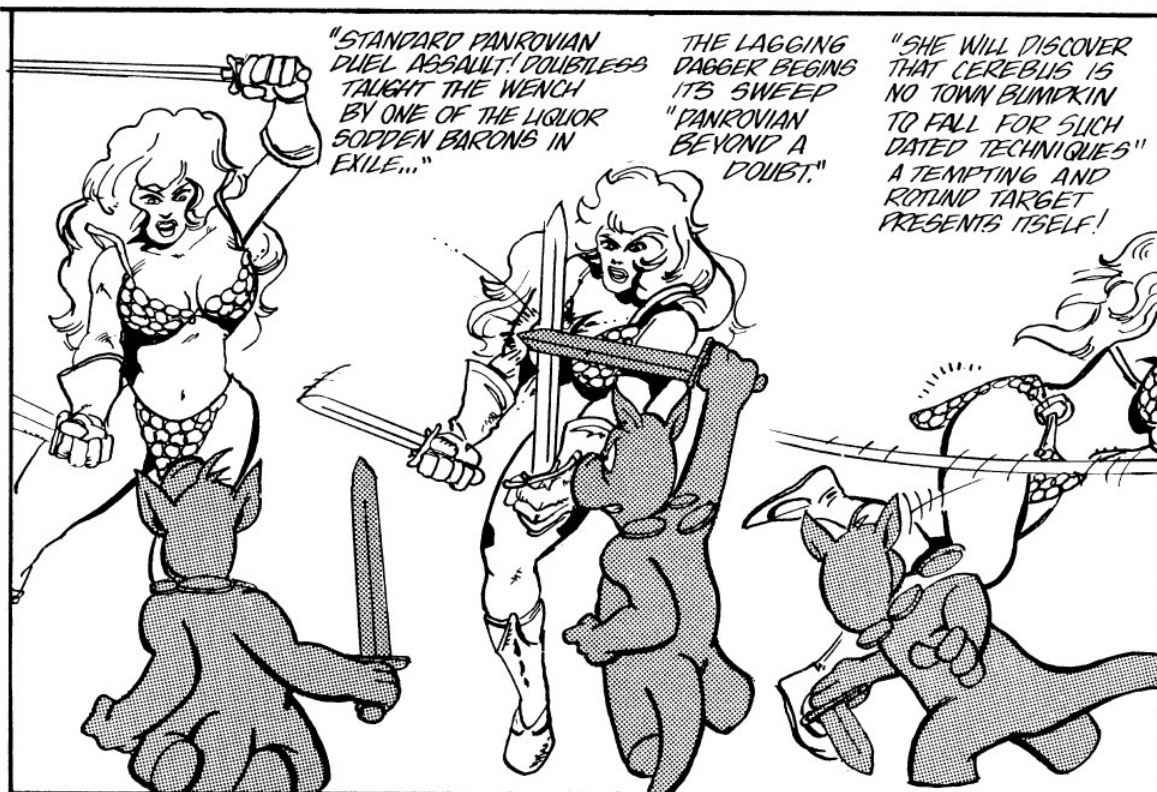
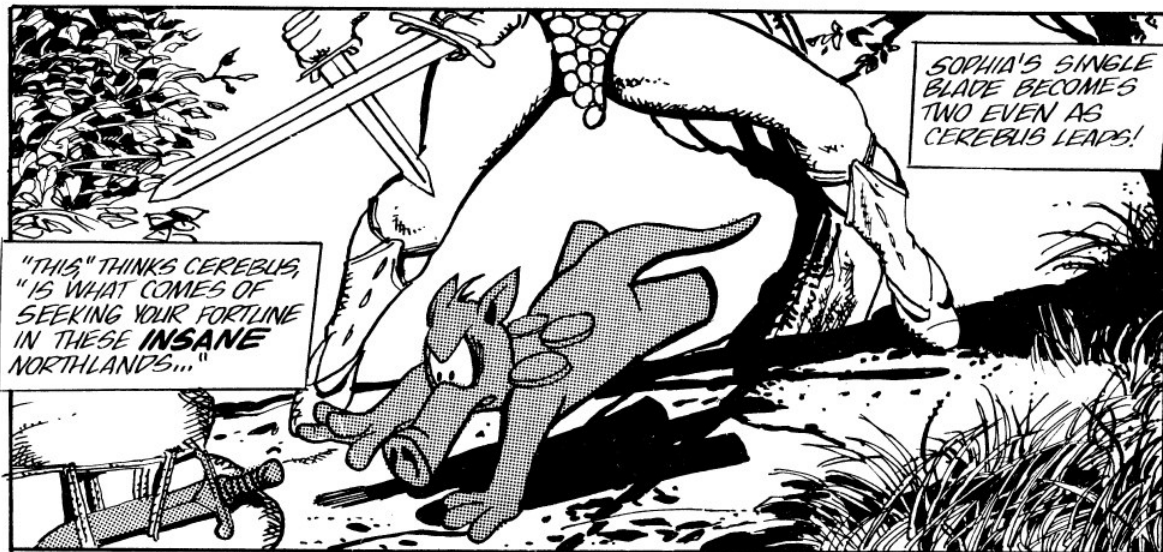
GOODBYE,
FATHER!

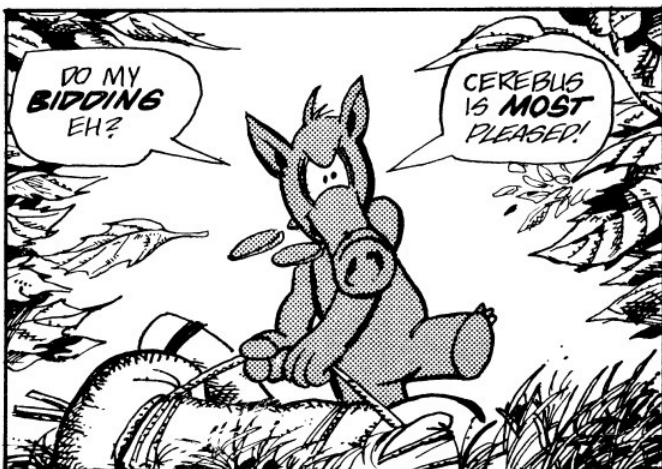
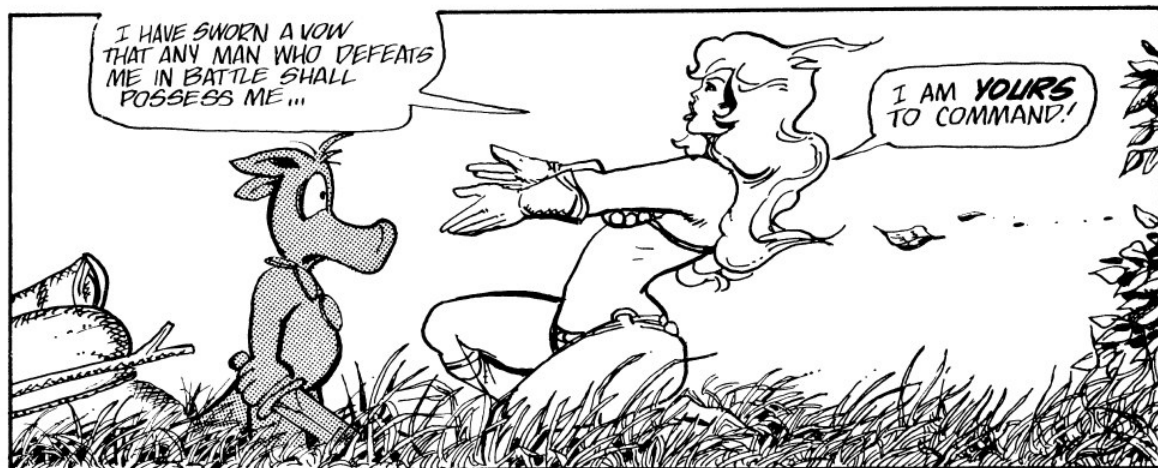
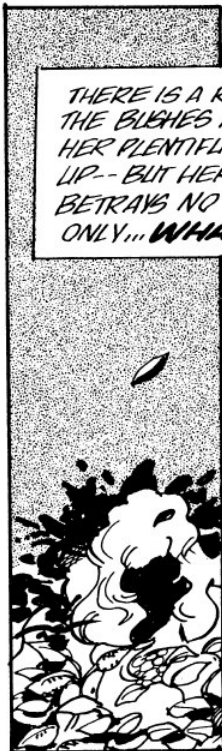
GOODBYE, **SOPHIA!**
TAK'IM BE WITH YOU,
CEREBUS...

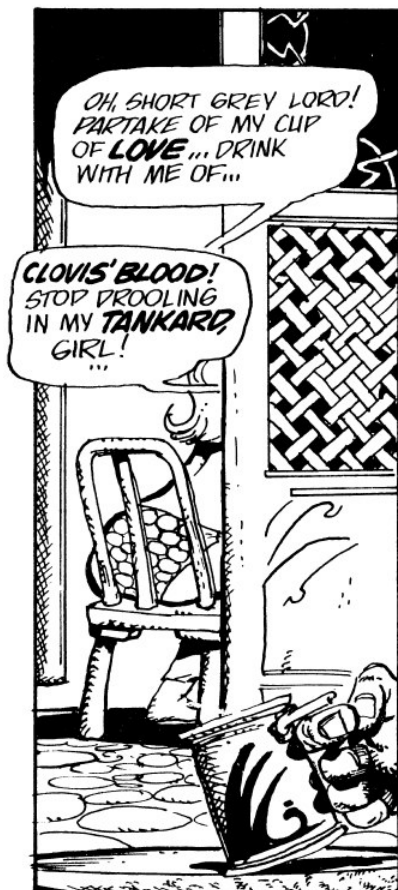
GRUMBLE-
GRUMBLE- NO
GIVING

FOR THE EARTH-PIG, THE ENSUING YARDS PASS LIKE MILES AS SOPHIA BEGINS TO RELATE HER LIFE STORY...

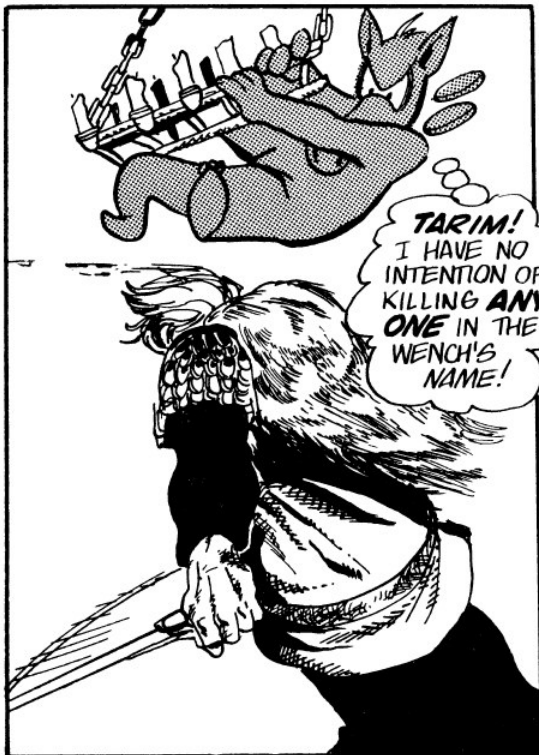


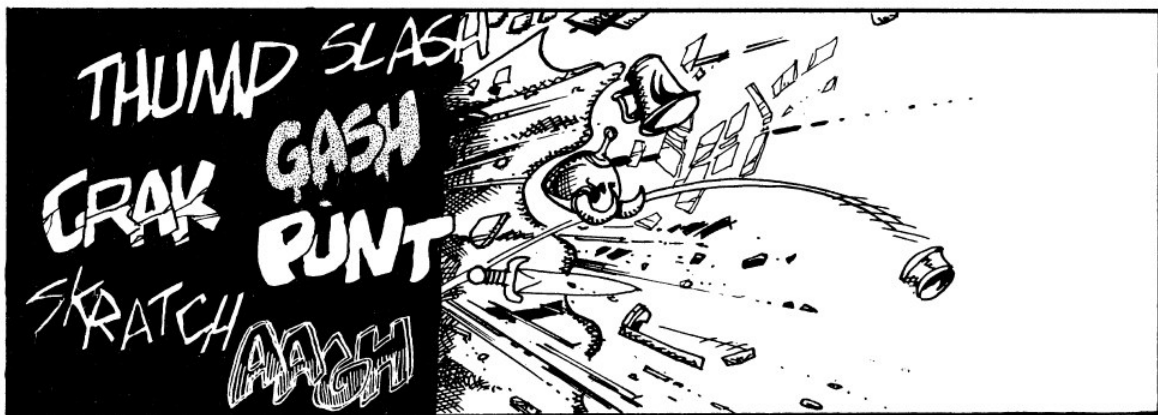


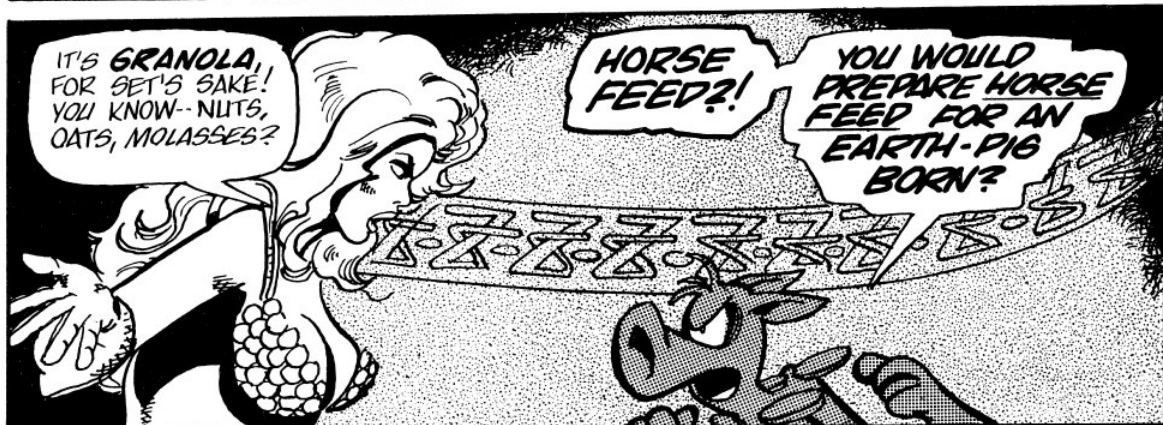


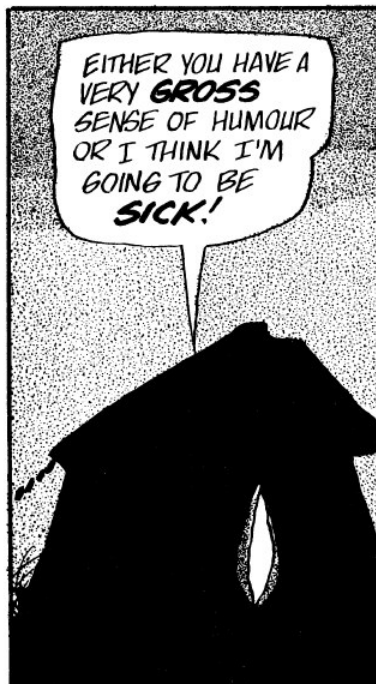
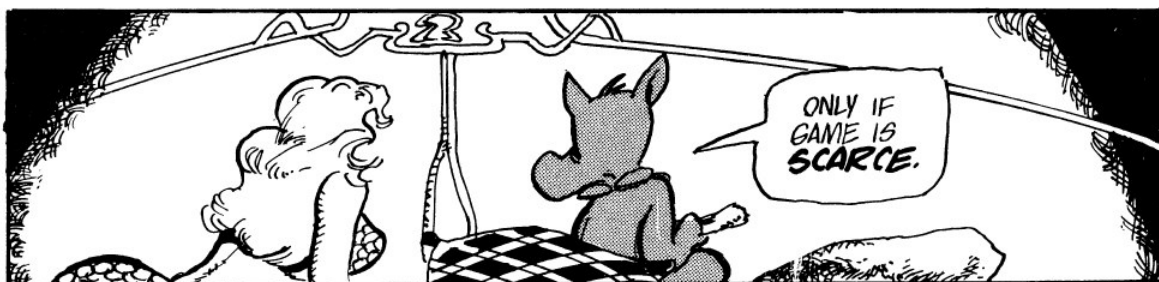


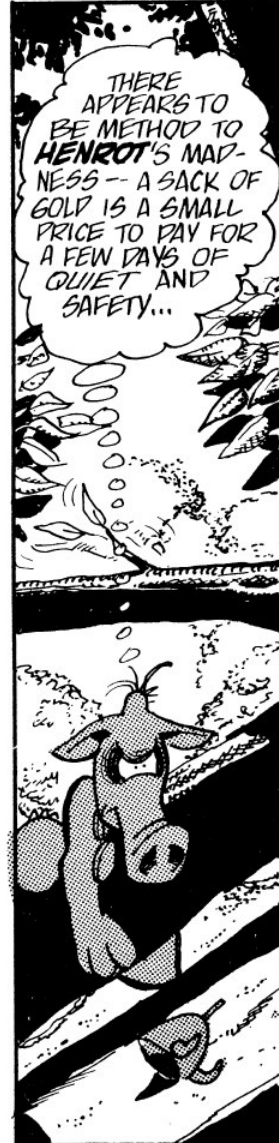
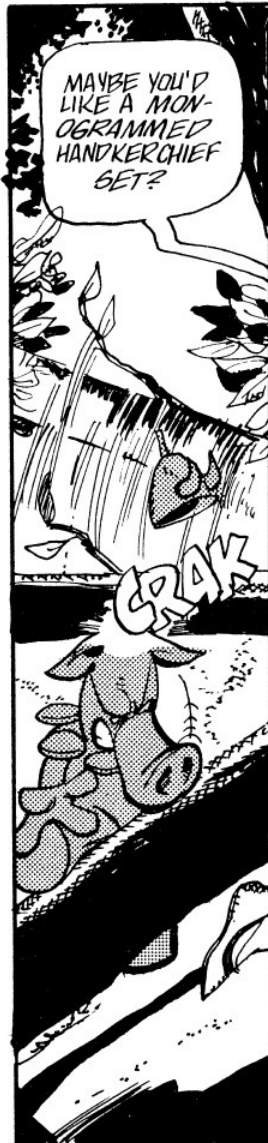
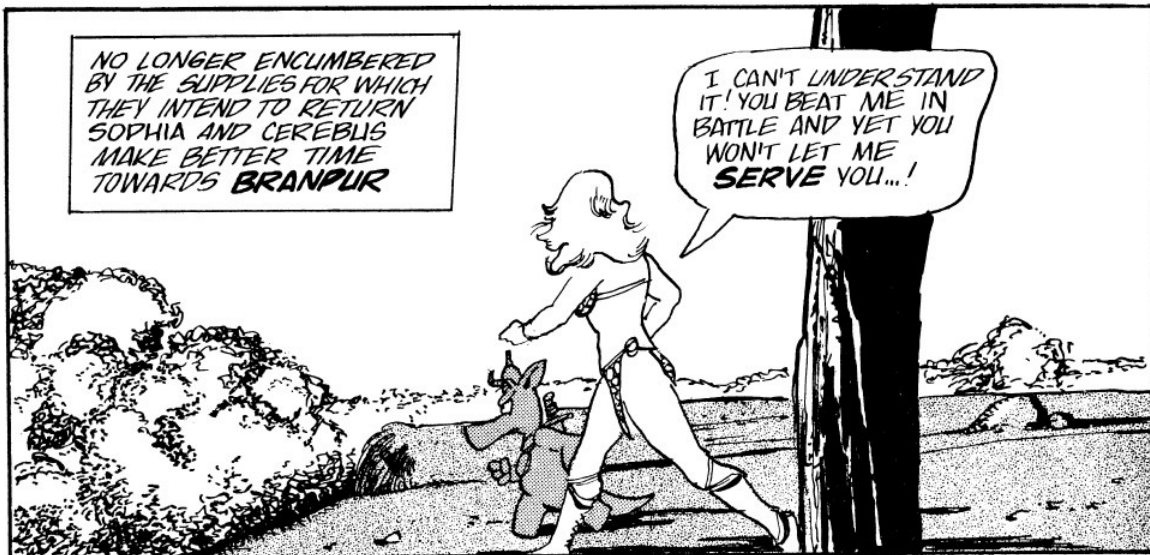


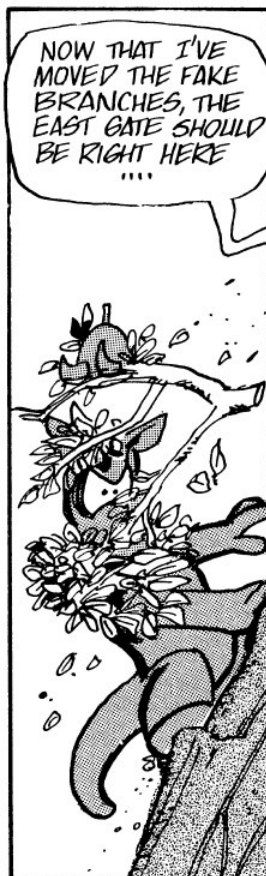
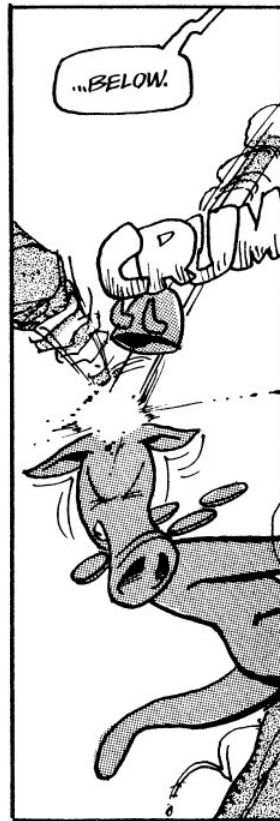


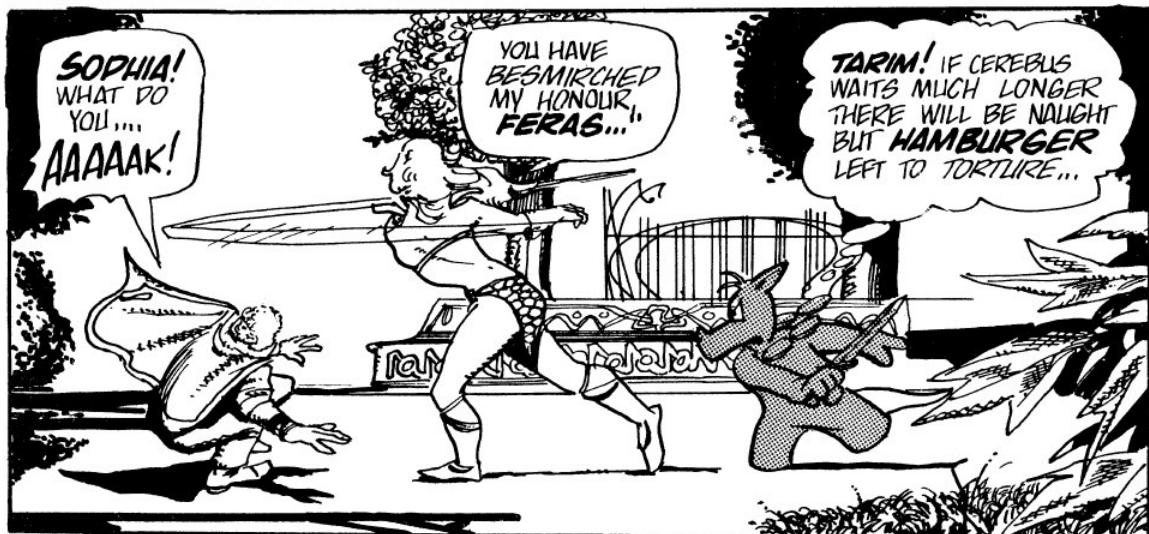
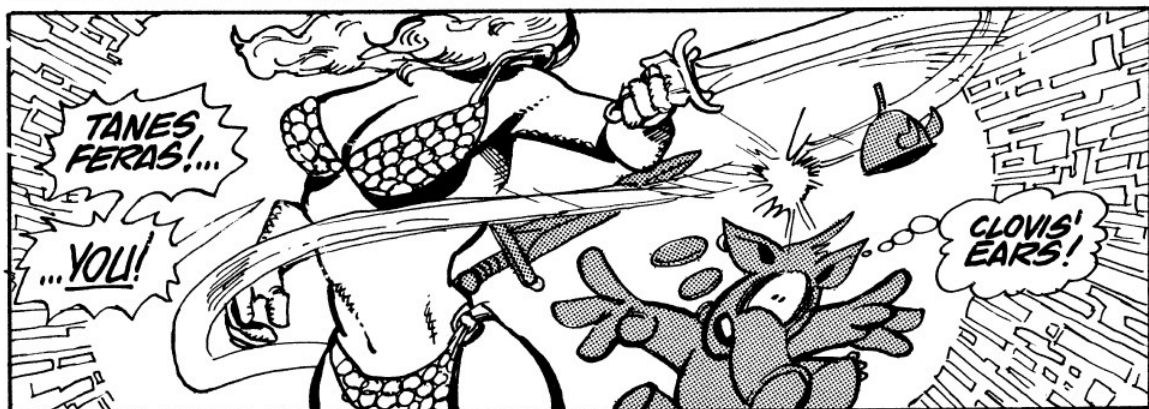
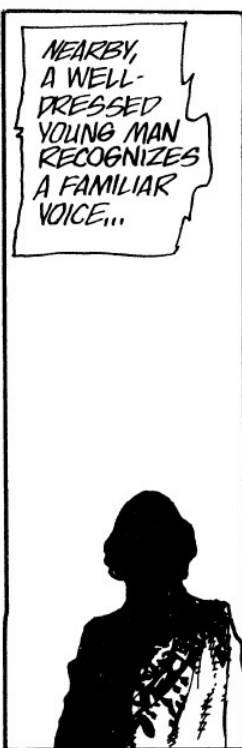


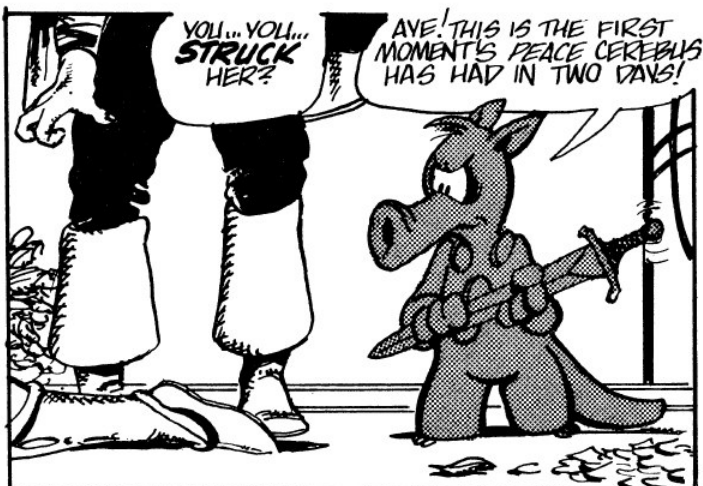




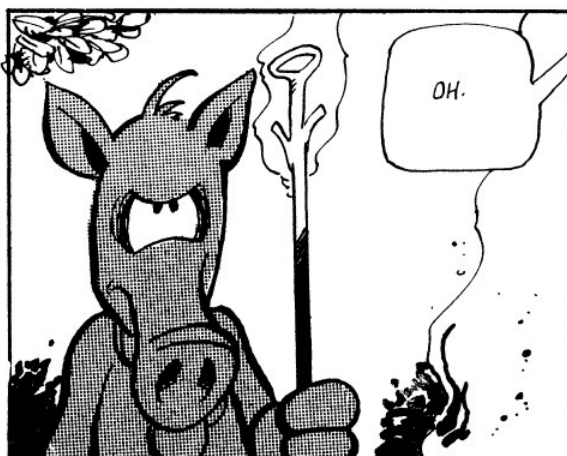
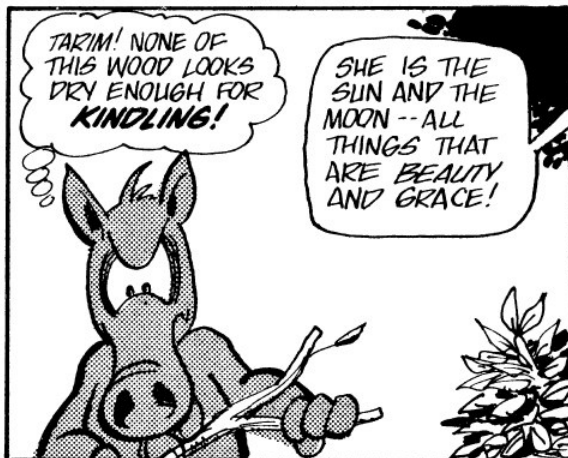


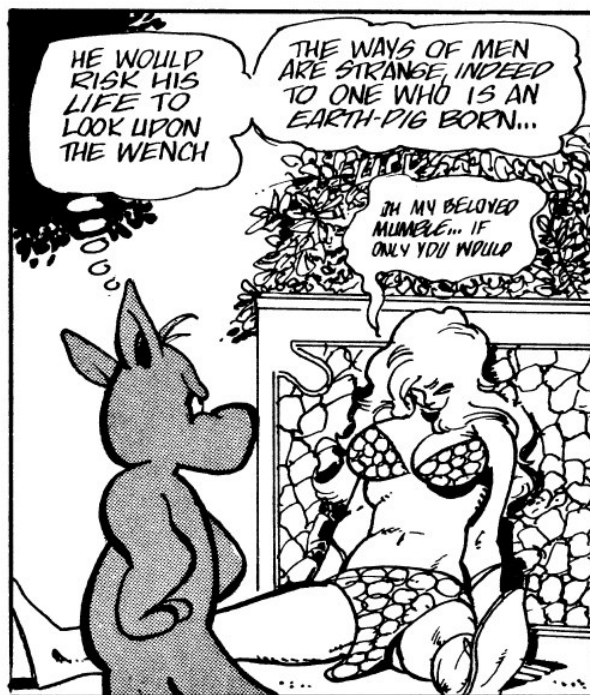












EPILOGUE

SO IT IS THAT THE
NEXT DAY FINDS
HENROT ENJOYING
THE NOON SUN AND
ALTERING THE ATOMIC
STRUCTURE OF THE
OCCASIONAL INSECT...

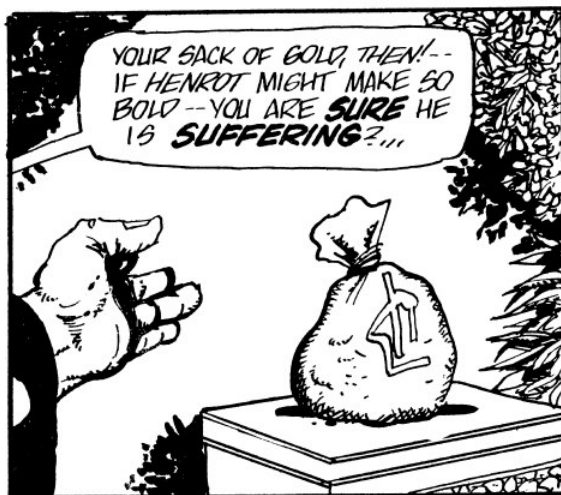
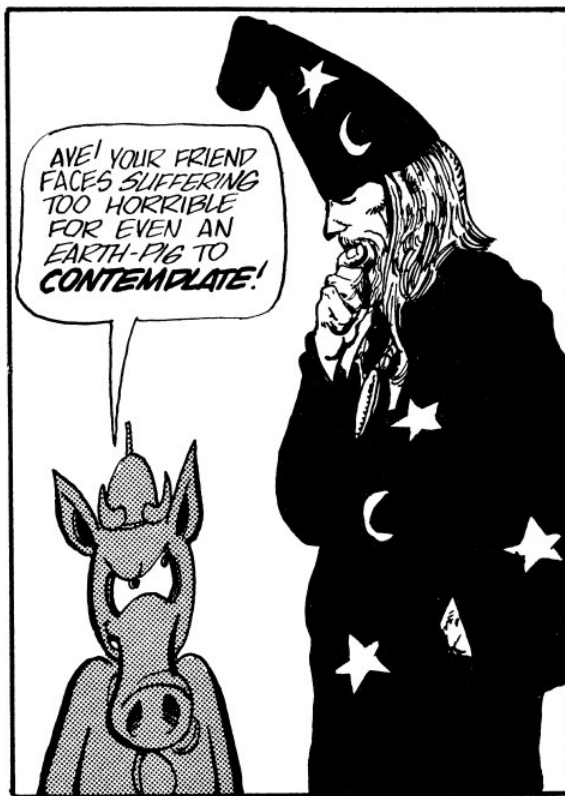
THERE IS SOMETHING
AMISS -- SOMETHING
HE HAS TROUBLE
PLUTTING A WIZARDLY
FINGER ON...

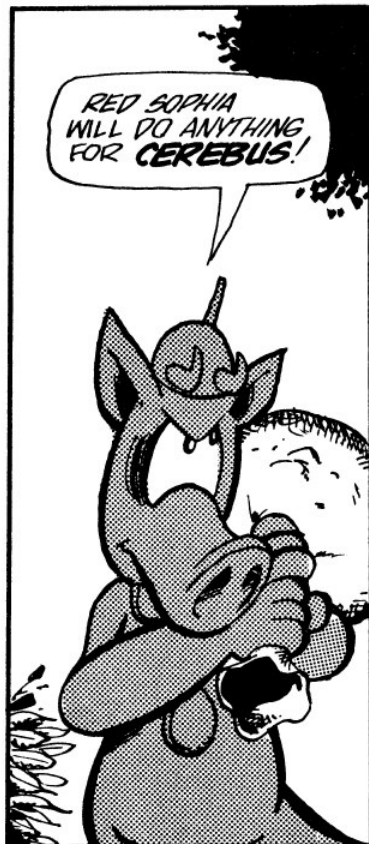
A SMALL SOUND
ATTRACTS HIS
ATTENTION....

EH? THE EARTH-PIG
...BUT NO SOPHIA? CAN
IT BE THAT....NO--THE
INDICATORS WERE
TOO **STRONG**...

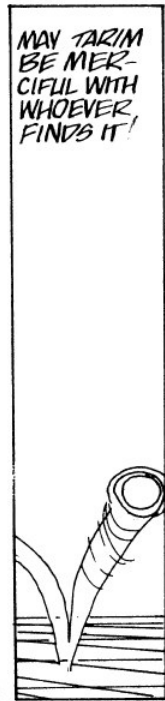
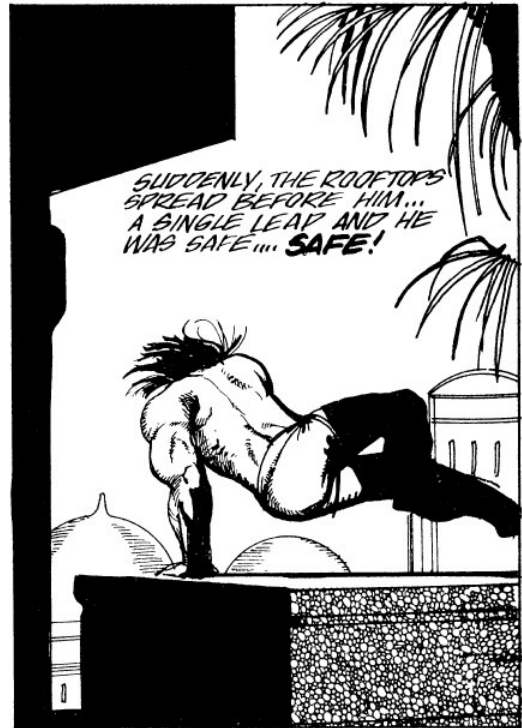
IF HE AGREED TO
BRING **SUFFERING**
TO FERAS HE HAS
DONE SO!







cerebus the aardvark



DEATH'S DARK TREAD

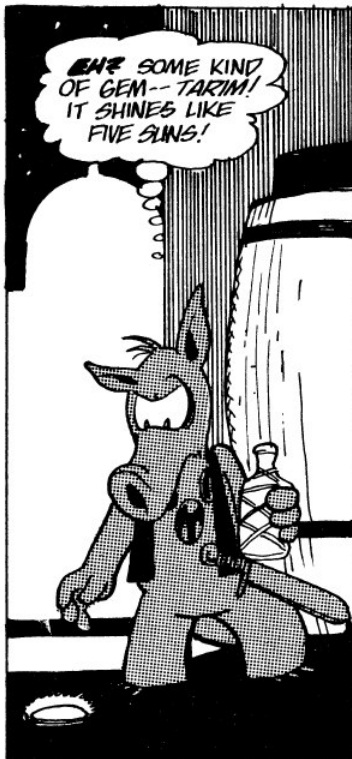
USING HENROT'S GOLD, CEREBUS BRIBES HIS WAY ONTO A MERCHANT VESSEL ON THE SOFIM RIVER. A WEEK LATER, HE IS WITHIN THE SEPRAN EMPIRE'S BOUNDARIES, POSING AS A TRADER IN TEXTILES! AT SERREA, THE INFORMAL CAPITAL OF THE LOOSELY-KNIT AND MILITANT EMPIRE, THE EARTH-PIG SEES HIS CHANCE FOR A MUCH-NEEDED VACATION! HE LOSES HIMSELF AMID THE BUSTLING CROWDS AND, WITH THE LAST OF HIS BOREALAN GOLD, SETS ABOUT THE SERIOUS BUSINESS OF DRINKING, EATING AND GAMBLING...

THE EYE,
BY ITS
NATURE, IS
ATTRACTED
TO BRIGHT
OBJECTS.

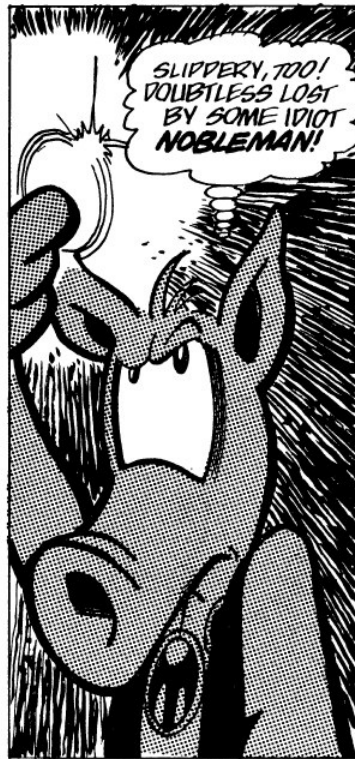
THIS EFFECT, AIDED BY
THE BETTER HALF OF
A PINT BOTTLE OF
APRICOT BRANDY...

...TENDS TO BE
SOMEWHAT...
ENHANCED!





END SOME KIND
OF GEM-- TARIM!
IT SHINES LIKE
FIVE SUNS!

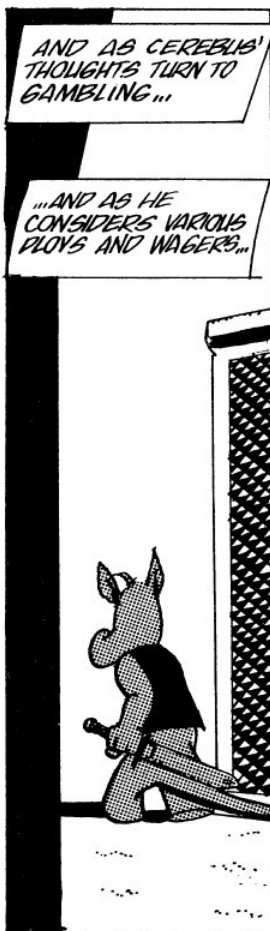


SLIPPERY, TOO!
DOUBTLESS LOST
BY SOME IDIOT
NOBLEMAN!



AH, WELL,
NOBILITY'S
LOSS IS AN
EARTH-PIG'S
GAIN...

MAYHAP I CAN
USE IT AS A
STAKE IN
DIAMONDBACK
THIS NIGHT...



AND AS CEREBUS'
THOUGHTS TURN TO
GAMBLING...

...AND AS HE
CONSIDERS VARIOUS
PLAYS AND WAGERS...



...HE
FAILS
TO
SEE...

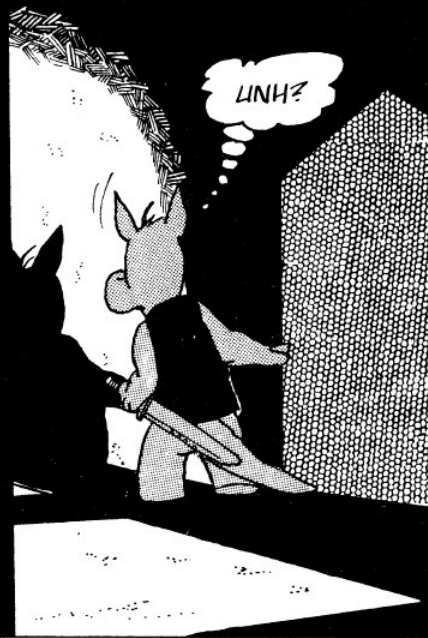


...THAT THE
VERY ACT OF
PICKING UP
THE GEM...



...IS PROBABLY THE BIGGEST
GAMBLE HE WILL TAKE
THIS NIGHT...

THE EARTH-PIG TURNS A CORNER, COMING **ABRUPTLY** FACE-TO-FACE WITH A WITH ONE OF COUNTLESS **DEAD ENDS** IN THIS SOUTHERN METROPOLIS...



FROM NOW ON, CEREBIUS WILL SLAKE HIS THIRST WITH ALES AND MEADS!



THESE CITY WINES MAY TASTE LIKE FRUIT JUICE, BUT THEY WREAK HAVOC WITH MY...#



CLOVIS' TEETH AND TANKARD!



THE SHORT BLADE GLITTERS PULLY IN THE HALF-LIGHT...

THOUGH THERE IS A MERCILESS THROBBING BEHIND THE EARTH-PIG'S WINE-BLURRED EYES...

...INGRAINED SKILLS INSTANTLY DICTATE HIS ACTIONS...



"SOON", MURMURS **DEATH**, "SOON THE GEM WILL BE **MINE!**"

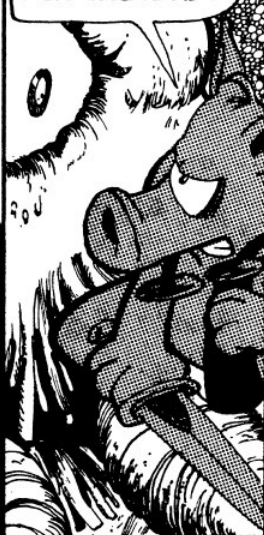


"ONCE THE CRAWLER HERDS THIS PREY TO-
WARD ME, IT
WILL BE CHILD'S
PLAY TO GET
THE GEM IN
MY HANDS..."



CEREBUS SENSES
YOU WISH HIM TO
RUN, **DEVIL SPAWN!**

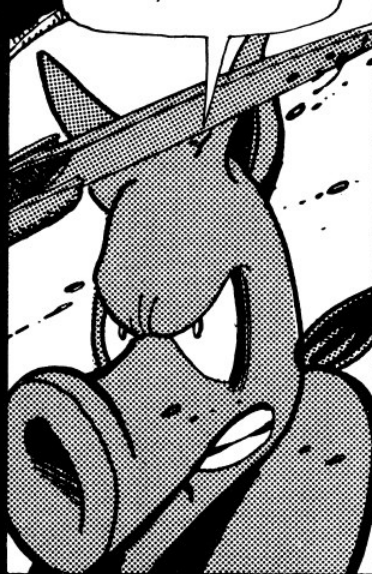
...BUT WHAT IF
I CHOOSE TO
FIGHT **INSTEAD?**



"A MOST 'VALIANT'
WORM," CHUCKLES
DEATH, "IF HE RE-
FUSES TO RUN, THEN
THE CRAWLER WILL
REMOVE THE GEM
AND LEAVE IT
FOR ANOTHER
TO FIND!"



I AM NO CITY-
BRED MORSEL-FOR-
THE-TAKING! ... YOU
FACE AN EARTH PIG
BORN, **DEMON!**



"**AMAZING!** BUT
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE
FOR HIM TO
DEFEAT THE
CRAWLER! NO
MATTER HOW..."



WOLINDER, EH,
MONSTER? YOUR
MAW GAPES TO
DEVOUR ME...

MAYHAP
INSTEAD...



"BY THE FIVE
SPHERES," **DEATH**
HISSES, ONE BROW
ARCHING SLIGHTLY...



...YOU SHALL
**FEED ON
THIS!...**



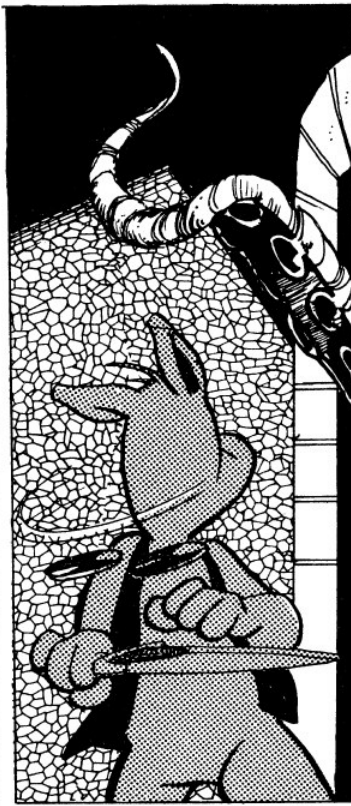
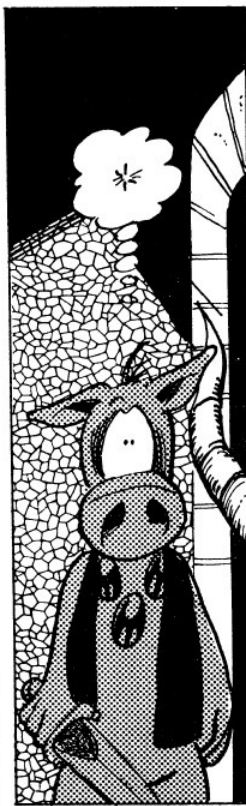
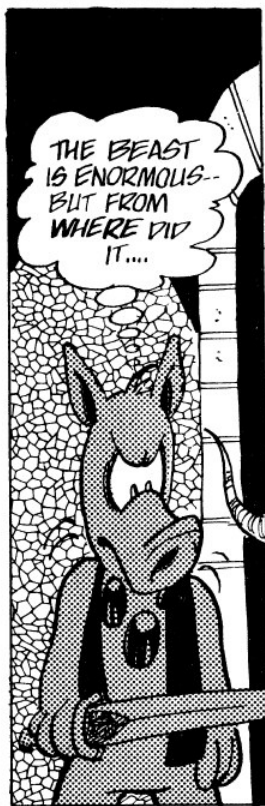
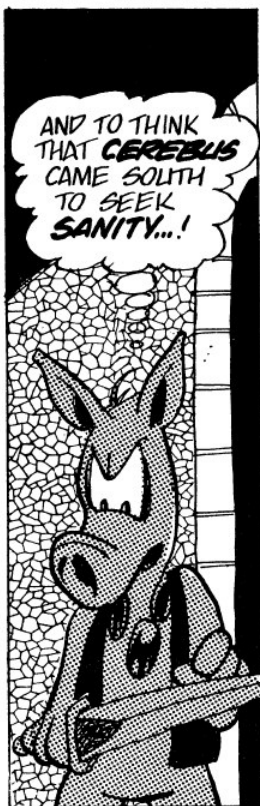
"A CREATURE FROM THE
DAWN OF TIME, A
CREATURE OF SORCERY
... BREATHING ITS
LAST..."

"DEFEATED BY MERE
FLESH AND BLOOD AND
IRON..."

"...AND STILL, I DO NOT
POSSESS THE GEM..."

AND TO THINK
THAT **CEREBUS**
CAME SOLITH
TO SEEK
SANITY...!

THE BEAST
IS ENORMOUS--
BUT FROM
WHERE DID
IT....

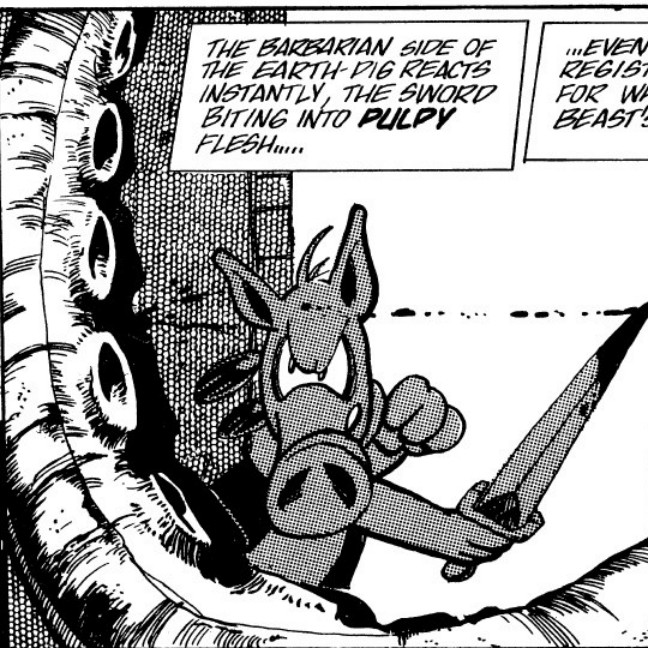


"MY FOE SEEMS
MORE CEREBRAL
THAN THE
AVERAGE
BARBARIAN,"
MUSES DEATH.

THE BARBARIAN SIDE OF
THE EARTH-DIG REACTS
INSTANTLY, THE SWORD
BITING INTO **PULPY**
FLESH....

...EVEN AS HIS BRAIN
REGISTERS THE NOTION
FOR WHAT IT IS -- THE
BEAST'S DEATH THROES
..."

KNOWLEDGEABLE
IN SORCERERS'
WAYS, HE IS
MOVED TO
WONDERMENT
AT THE POWER
OF THE BEAST'S
MASTER...



"THE BARBARIAN IS
TOO HEADSTRONG
-- TOO **INTELLIGENT**
TO CONTROL! THE
GEM MUST BE BROUGHT
WILLINGLY TO ME --
I NEED A MORE
MALLEABLE PERSONALITY
TO BRING THE GEM
TO ME...."

THE EARTH-
PIG HEAVES
A SIGH AND
TURNING BACK
ONTO THE
MAIN
AVENUE...

HE REMOVES THE
GLOWING GEM FROM
AN INNER POCKET...

... AND STUDIES IT
BRIEFLY BEFORE...

...HOOKING IT
ONTO HIS
NECK CHAIN...

HE CONSIDERS,
AGAIN, HIS
CHANCES AT
DIAMONDBACK...

"SOMEONE NEAR-
BY--A PERSONALITY
CAPABLE OF
WRESTING THE
GEM FROM THE
BARBARIAN..."

"A PERSONALITY
WITH NO SUBTLETY
-- AN **EASY**
VICTIM OF....."

A SATISFIED
CHUCKLE ISSUES
FROM DEEP IN
DEATH'S THROAT..

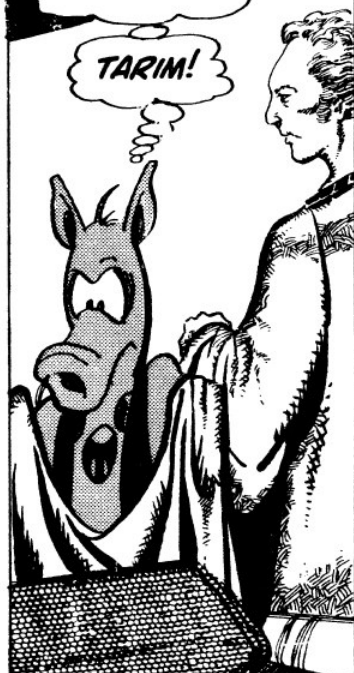
CEREBUS REFLECTS THAT THERE ARE DRAWBACKS TO POSING AS A MERCHANT -- ONE HAS TO ASSOCIATE WITH HIS KIND UNDER THE **CITY GUARD'S** WATCHFUL GAZE!

THE MERCHANTS AND TRADERS IN SERREA ARE CONSERVATIVE GAMBLERS AND FAVOUR SHIPPING WINE TO GULPING ALE...



NEARLY DAWN! NO MERCHANT WILL BE THINKING OF ALE OR **DIAMONDBACK** 'TIL SUNSET...

TARIM!



MAYHAP I SHOULD RISK CONSORTING WITH SOME OF THE **DEHRSION** MERCENARIES...

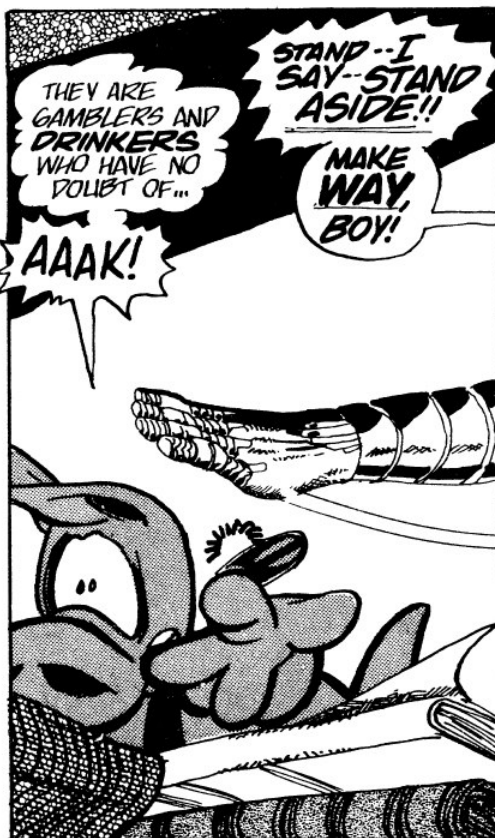


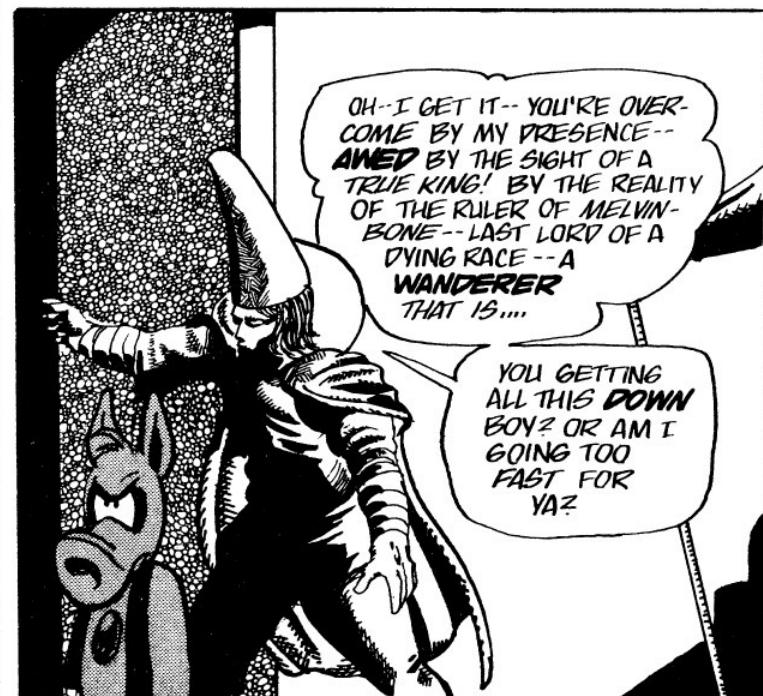
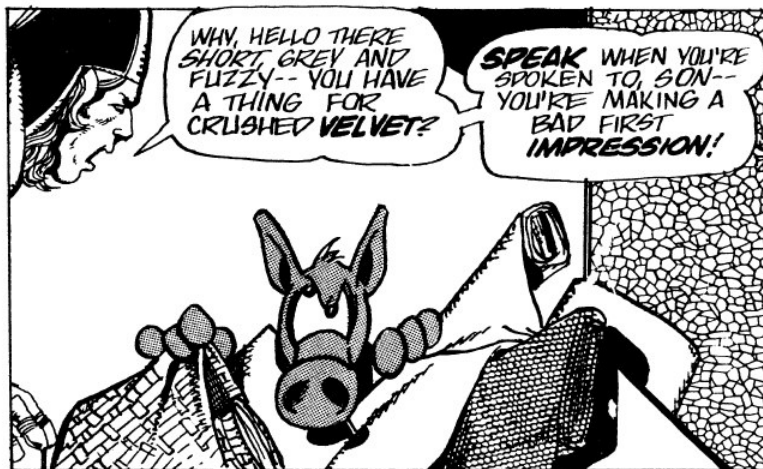
THEY ARE GAMBLERS AND DRINKERS WHO HAVE NO DOUBT OF...

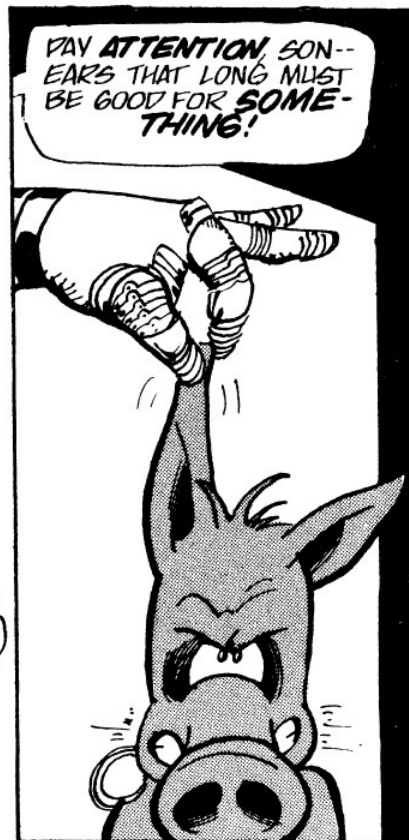
AAAK!

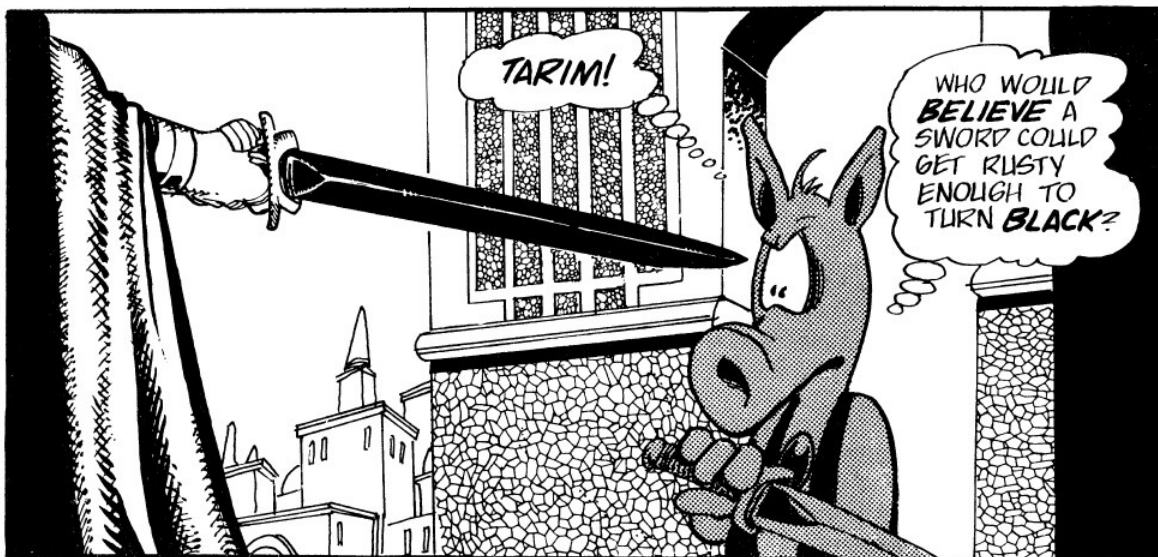
STAND -- I SAY -- STAND ASIDE!!

MAKE WAY, BOY!







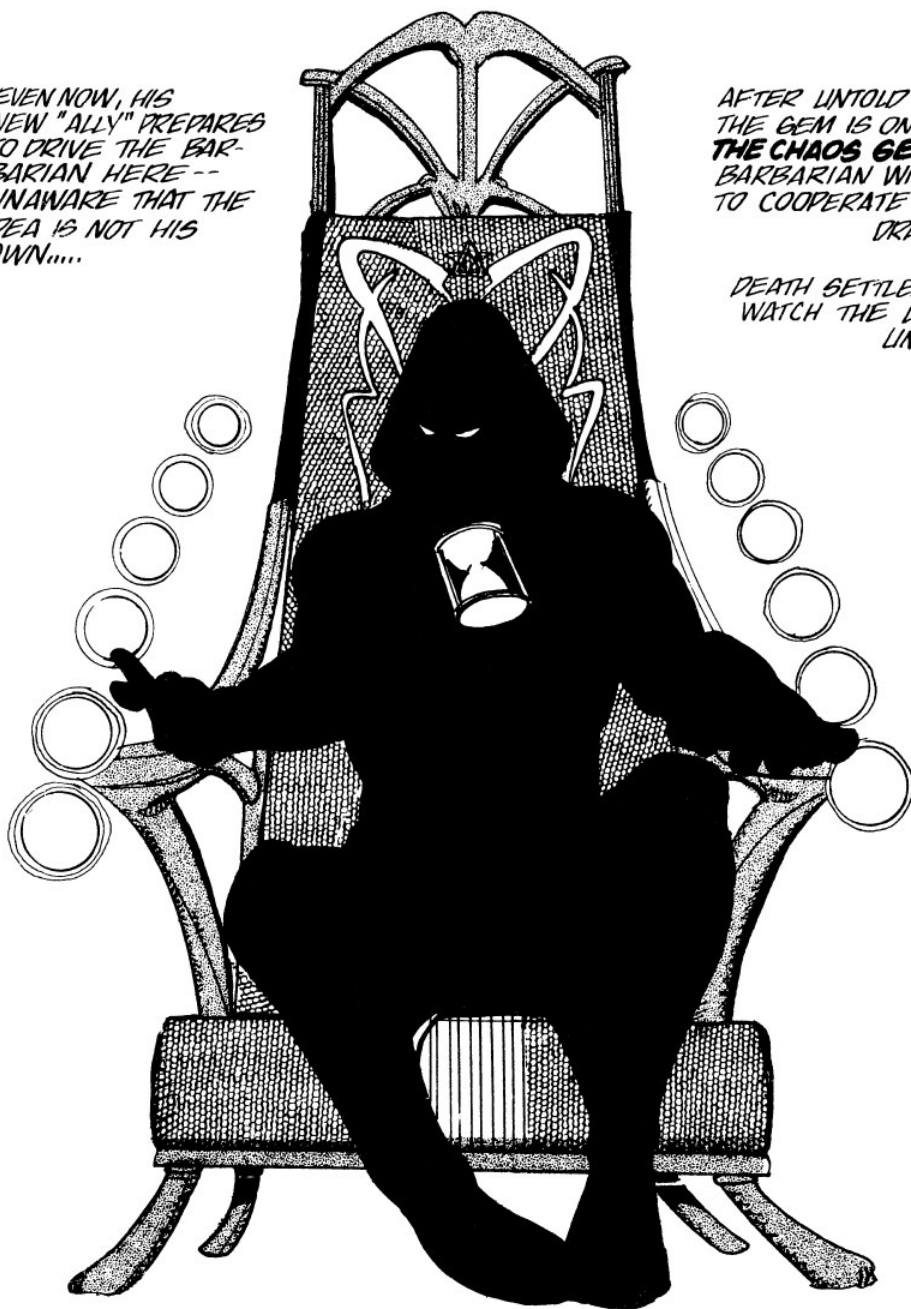


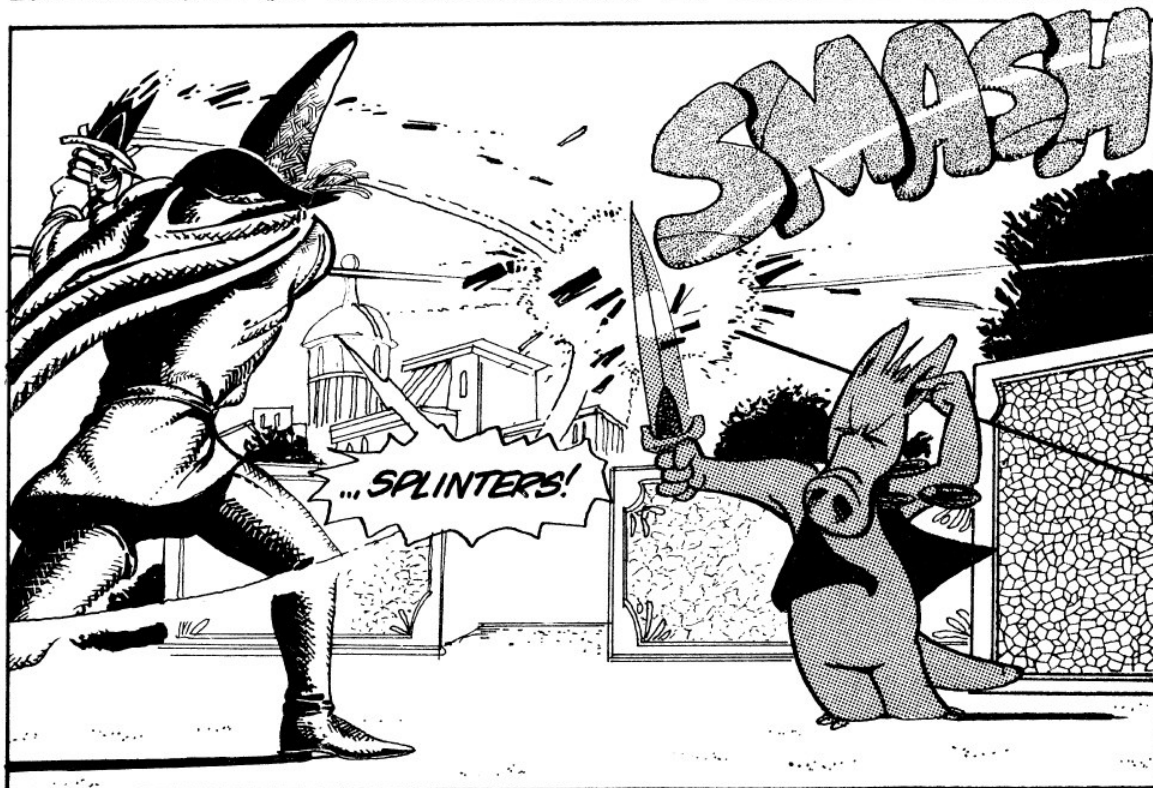
DEATH ABSENTLY CARESSES ONE OF THE HOVERING GEMS. "AN EVEN DOZEN," HE MUSES, "A SOURCE OF GREAT POWER, YES! **BUT**, CONSIDER THE THIRTEENTH GEM-- NOW SO CLOSE AT HAND." WITH THAT GEM WOULD COME A NEW GOLDEN AGE FOR **DEATH** DISEASES, FAMINE--WHOLE POPULATIONS WIPE OUT IN MERE DAYS! THE THOUGHT, AS ALWAYS, REINFORCES HIS GRIM DETERMINATION!

EVEN NOW, HIS NEW "ALLY" PREPARES TO DRIVE THE BARBARIAN HERE-- UN-AWARE THAT THE IDEA IS NOT HIS OWN....

AFTER UNTOLD CENTURIES, THE GEM IS ON ITS WAY. **THE CHAOS GEM**, THE BARBARIAN WILL BE MADE TO COOPERATE ONCE HE DRAWS NEAR!

DEATH SETTLES BACK TO WATCH THE DRAMA UNFOLD!











WATCH THIS, SON!
WITH BUT A SINGLE
BLOW, **ELROD**
DEFEATS THE
≡LIMPH≡



WITH ONLY TWO
≡LIMPH≡ OR ≡LIMPH≡
THREE PUNCHES
ELROD DEF....



WITH BARELY
≡LIMPH≡ ≡LIMPH≡
A HALF
DOZEN
PUNCHES,
ELR...



OH HELL!
WHERE'S
A BIG
ROCK
I CAN
HIT HIM
WITH?



HEY
CEREBUS!
-- YOU
GOT ANY
BIG ROCKS
OVER...



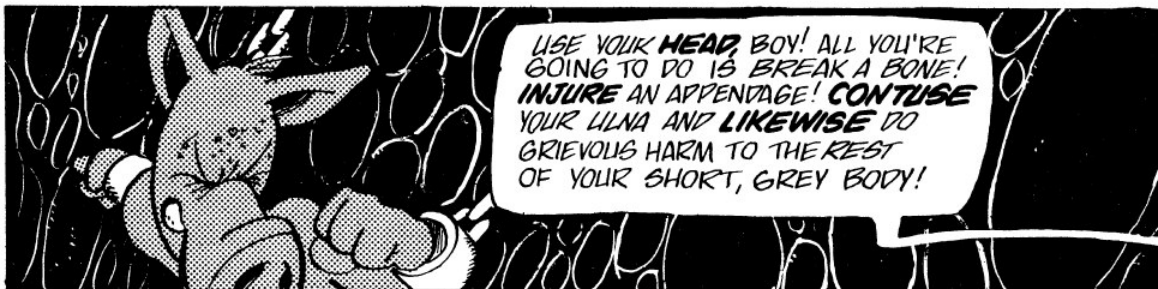
...THERE?



NOT MUCH
OF A
SCRAPPER,
ARE YOU,
BOY?

WE'LL LET
THEM ROT
IN THE
SOUTHGATE
PRISON....





USE YOUR **HEAD**, BOY! ALL YOU'RE GOING TO DO IS **BREAK A BONE!** **INJURE AN APPENDAGE!** **CONTUSE YOUR LLNA** AND **LIKEWISE DO GRIEVOUS HARM TO THE REST OF YOUR SHORT, GREY BODY!**



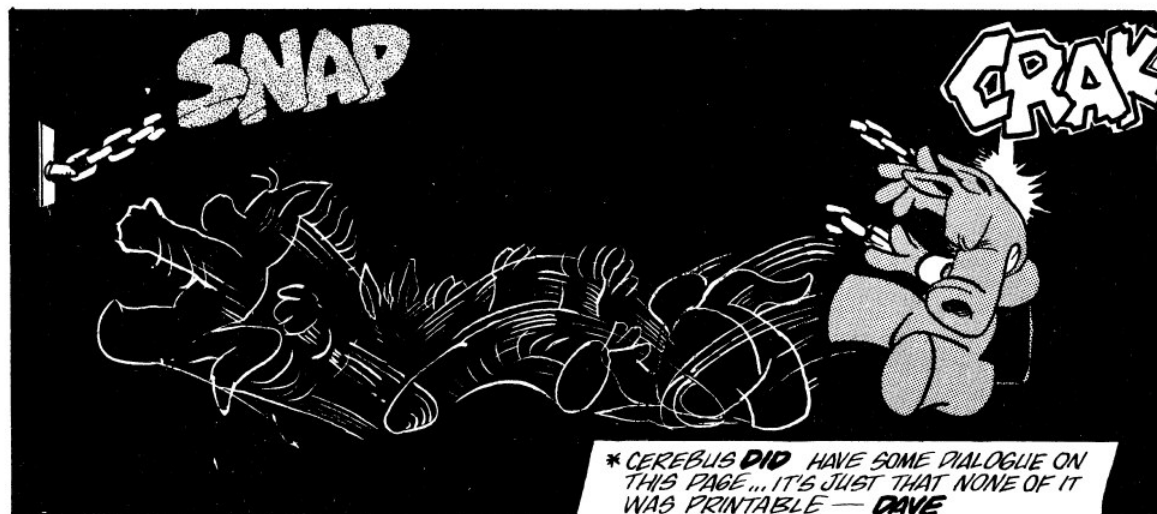
SNAP



THAT'S JUST **TERRIFIC** SON-- NOW, YOU CAN PICK YOUR NOSE IF YOU WANT TO...



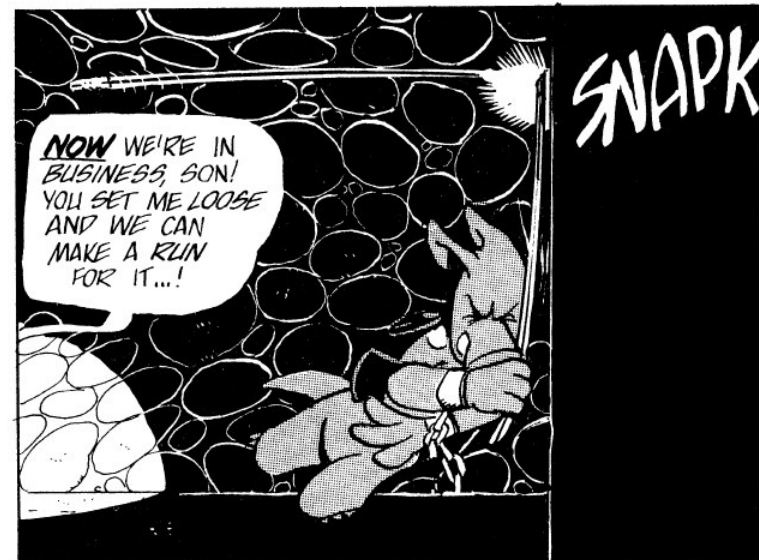
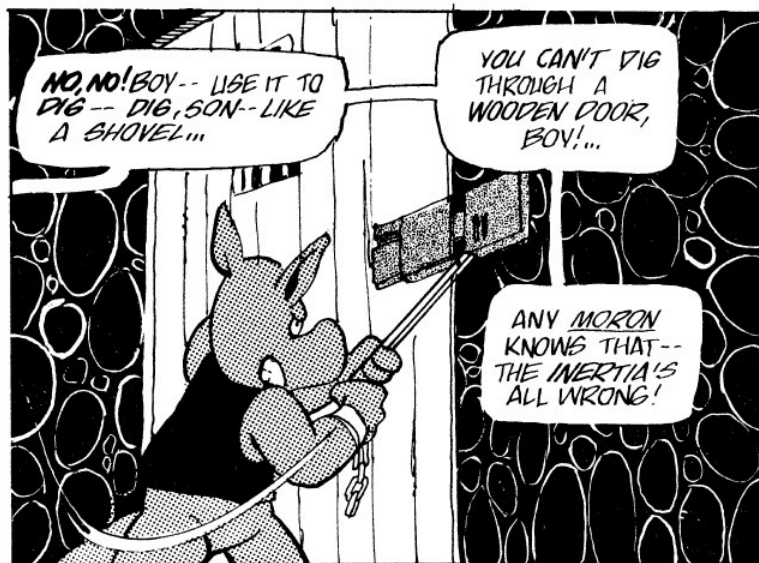
OH, COME ON NOW, BOY! JUST BECAUSE YOU FOUND A WEAK LINK IN ONE **CHAIN**, DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN **POSSIBLY...**

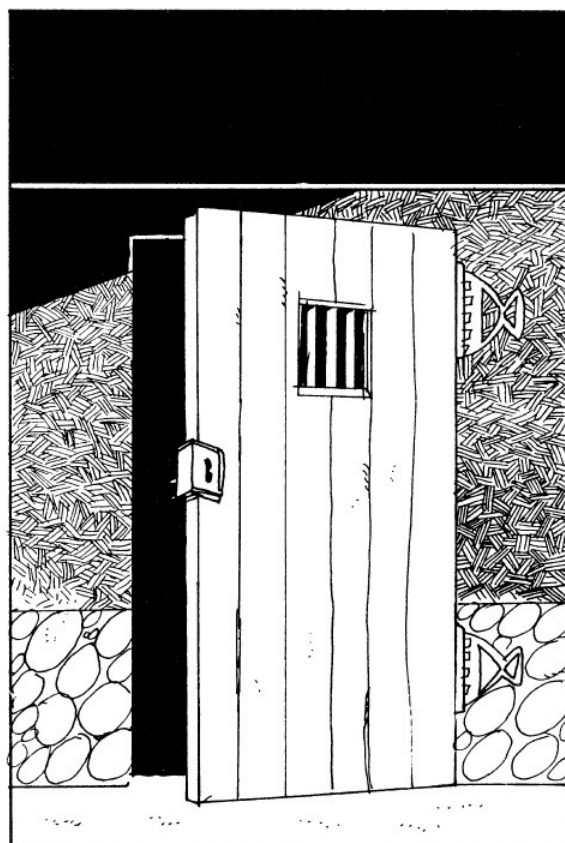
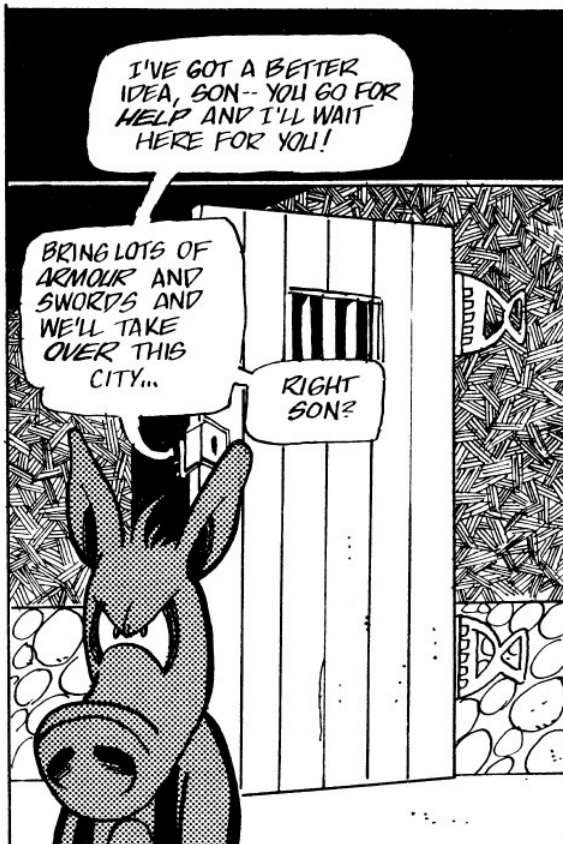
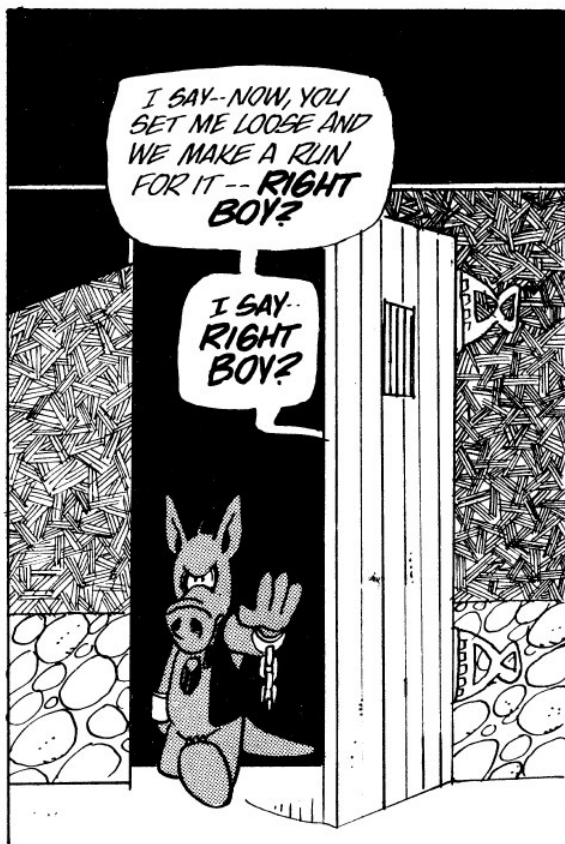


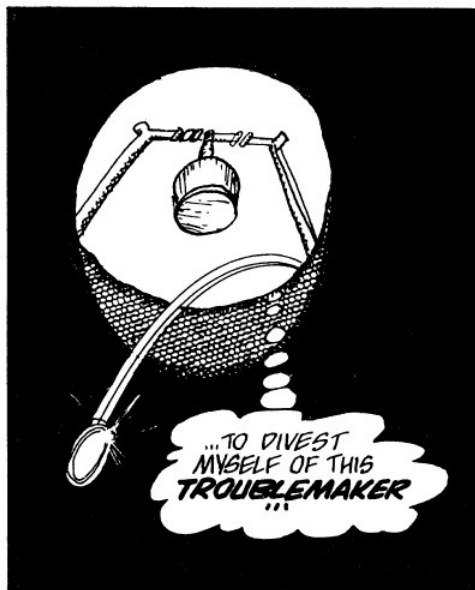
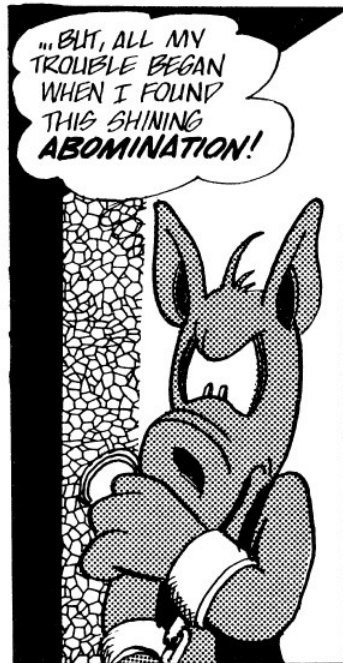
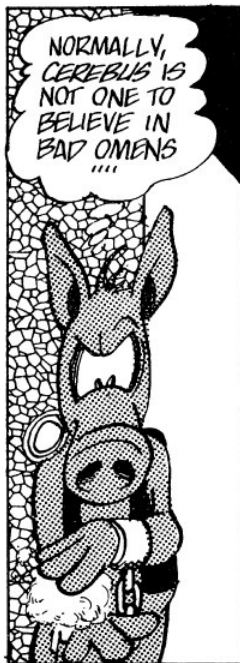
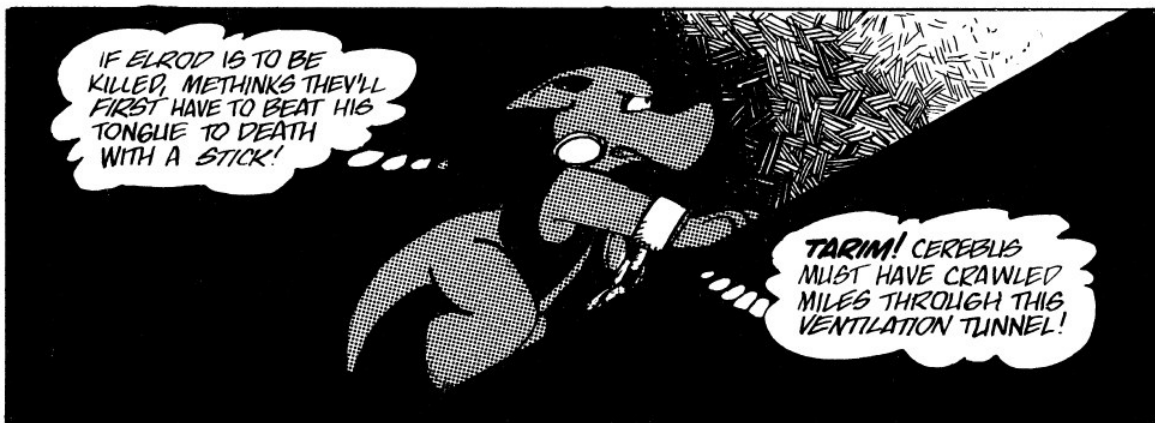
SNAP

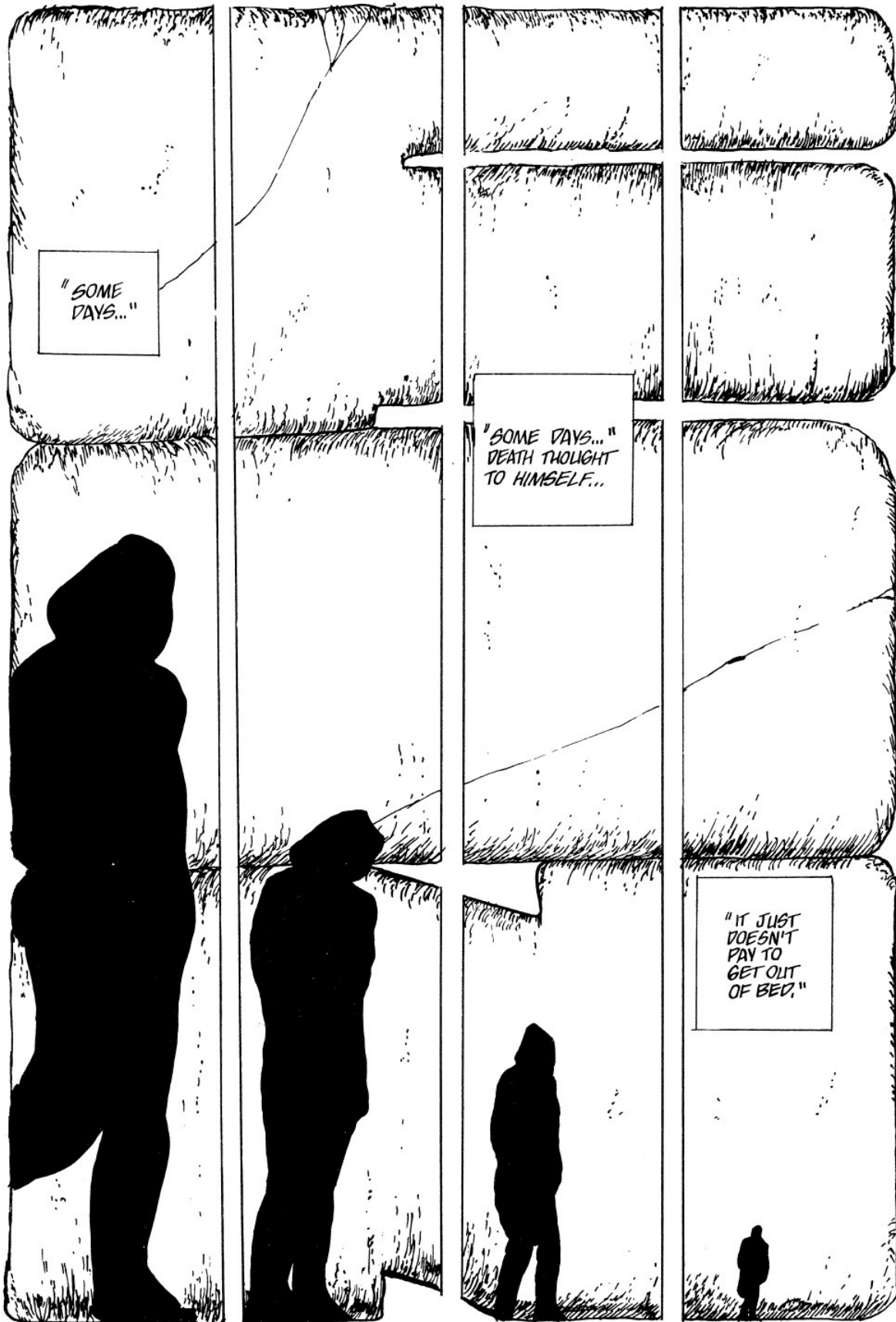
CRACK

* CEREBUS **DID** HAVE SOME DIALOGUE ON THIS PAGE... IT'S JUST THAT NONE OF IT WAS PRINTABLE — **DAVE**









"SOME
DAYS..."

"SOME DAYS..."
DEATH THOUGHT
TO HIMSELF..."

"IT JUST
DOESN'T
PAY TO
GET OUT
OF BED,"