

STAR WARS™

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AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

STAR WARS



ARTOO!
THREEPIO!
INTO THE
SHIP--

MY
BLASTER'S
NOT
STOPPING
THIS THING!

**THIS ISSUE:
THE FATE
OF LUKE
SKYWALKER!**



BUT, MASTER
LUKE--THE
SHIP IS
SINKING!

Long ago in a galaxy far, far away... there exists a state of cosmic civil war. A brave alliance of underground freedom fighters has challenged the tyranny and oppression of the awesome Galactic Empire. This is their story!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

STAR WARS

THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

CONTINUING THE SAGA BEGUN IN THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS RELEASED BY TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

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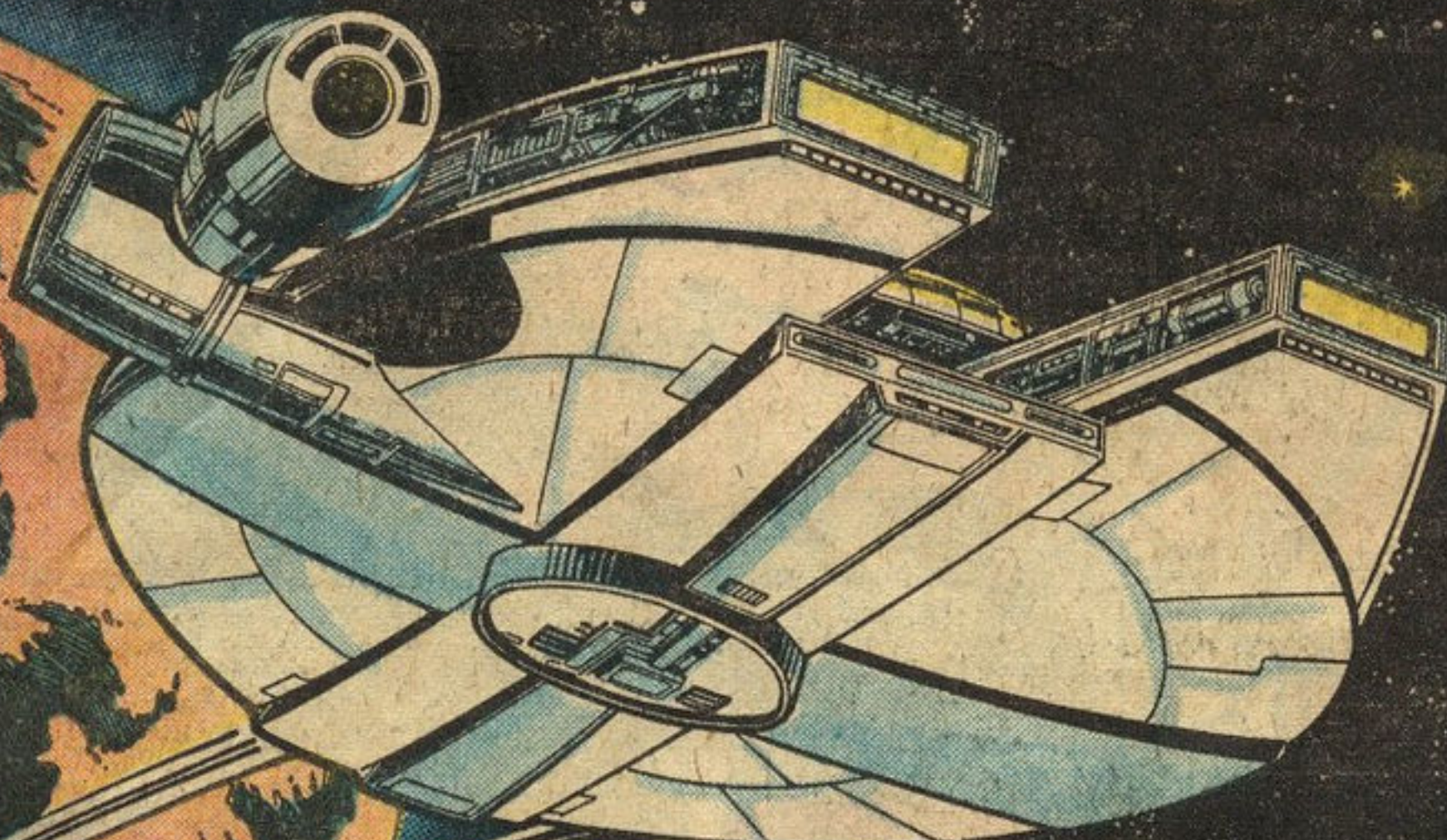
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STAR SEARCH!

THE PLANET IS CALLED ADUBA-3. IT IS A BACKWATER WORLD, ONE OF THE MANY ON THE GALACTIC RIM, TOO POOR, TOO DISTANT FOR THE EMPIRE'S DARK INTEREST...



THE SHIP IS THE MILLENNIUM FALCON. TO SOME IT MIGHT SEEM A BATTERED, ORDINARY FREIGHTER... IF THEY HAD NEVER SMUGGLED SPICE ON THE KESSEL RUN...

...OR CHALLENGED THE TIE FIGHTER OF SITH LORD, DARTH VADER, IN THE BATTLE OF THE DEATH STAR...

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...OR TALKED TO ITS CAPTAIN, HAN SOLO.

BETTER SAY GOOD-BYE WHILE YOU CAN, CHEWIE... I'M COMPUTING FOR THE JUMP TO HYPERSPACE.

THAT HUNK OF ROCK AND SAND WASN'T MUCH--

--BUT IT WAS HOME SWEET HOME FOR A LITTLE WHILE, WHEN YOU'VE A PRICE ON YOUR HEAD LIKE WE DO... THAT'S AS MUCH AS YOU CAN EXPECT OF ANY PLACE!

CROWNK!

YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. WE MADE SOME INTERESTING ACQUAINTANCES THERE, TOO! QUITE A CREW, REALLY... CONSIDERING I FIRST HAD THEM ALL PEGGED AS DOWN AND DEFINITELY OUT STAR-HOPPERS!*

*SEE ISSUE #8--ARCH

"JIMM THE STARKILLER KID... HIS ROBOT, EFFIE... AMAIZA, OUR LADY FRIEND FROM THE BLACK HOLE GANG... JAXXON, WHO LOOKED LIKE A BUNNY AND FOUGHT LIKE A TIGER... DON-WAN KIHOTAY, CRAZY OLD TIMER WHO THOUGHT HE WAS A JEDI KNIGHT... AND HEDJI, THE QUILL-THROWING SPINER..."

"PRETTY MOTLEY ASSORTMENT... EVEN WHEN YOU ADD ONE CORRELLIAN SPACE ACE LIKE ME AND A FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD WOOKIEE LIKE YOURSELF, CHEWBACCA, STILL..."

"...WE CAME THROUGH AS CHAMPIONS FOR THOSE FARMER-TYPES AGAINST THE CLOUD RIDERS... BUT AT A PRICE, AND A DAMN HIGH ONE!"

WHO KNOWS? MAYBE SOMEDAY US SURVIVORS WILL TEAM UP AGAIN, BUT FOR NOW, I FIGURE RATHER THAN RUNNING FROM ONE RIM-WORLD TO THE NEXT--

--WE MIGHT AS WELL TAKE OUR CHANCES REJOINING LUKE SKYWALKER AND PRINCESS LEIA AT THE REBEL BASE.

VORP?

NO, NOT BECAUSE I MISS THEM! DON'T LET A FEW GOOD DEEDS MAKE YOU THINK I'M GOING SOFT... IT'S SHREWD STRATEGY, THAT'S ALL!

I'M NOT ABOUT TO LOSE MY STANDING AS A MERCENARY!

NOW HANG ONTO YOUR FUR... WE'RE GOING TO POP INTO LIGHT SPEED.

HAN SOLO'S FINGERS MOVE OVER THE CONTROLS... AND SUDDENLY THE STARS BECOME DOPPLER-DISTORTED STREAMERS AS THE MILLENNIUM FALCON SURGES INTO HYPERSPACE!

THE VAST GULFS OF INTERGALACTIC SPACE GRADUALLY FALL AWAY...

UNTIL...

DROPPING BACK TO SUB-LIGHT, CHEWIE, WE'RE STILL WELL SHY OF THE YAVIN SYSTEM... BUT IF IMPERIAL FORCES HAVE SHOWN UP THERE AGAIN--*

-- WE WON'T HELP BY POPPING UP RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THEM!

*AS THEY DID WITH THE DEATH STAR IN ISSUES #5 & 6-- ARCH.

BUT FIRST CHECK OF THE SPACEWAYS ABOUT THEM REVEALS NOTHING. THEN...

URROWK!

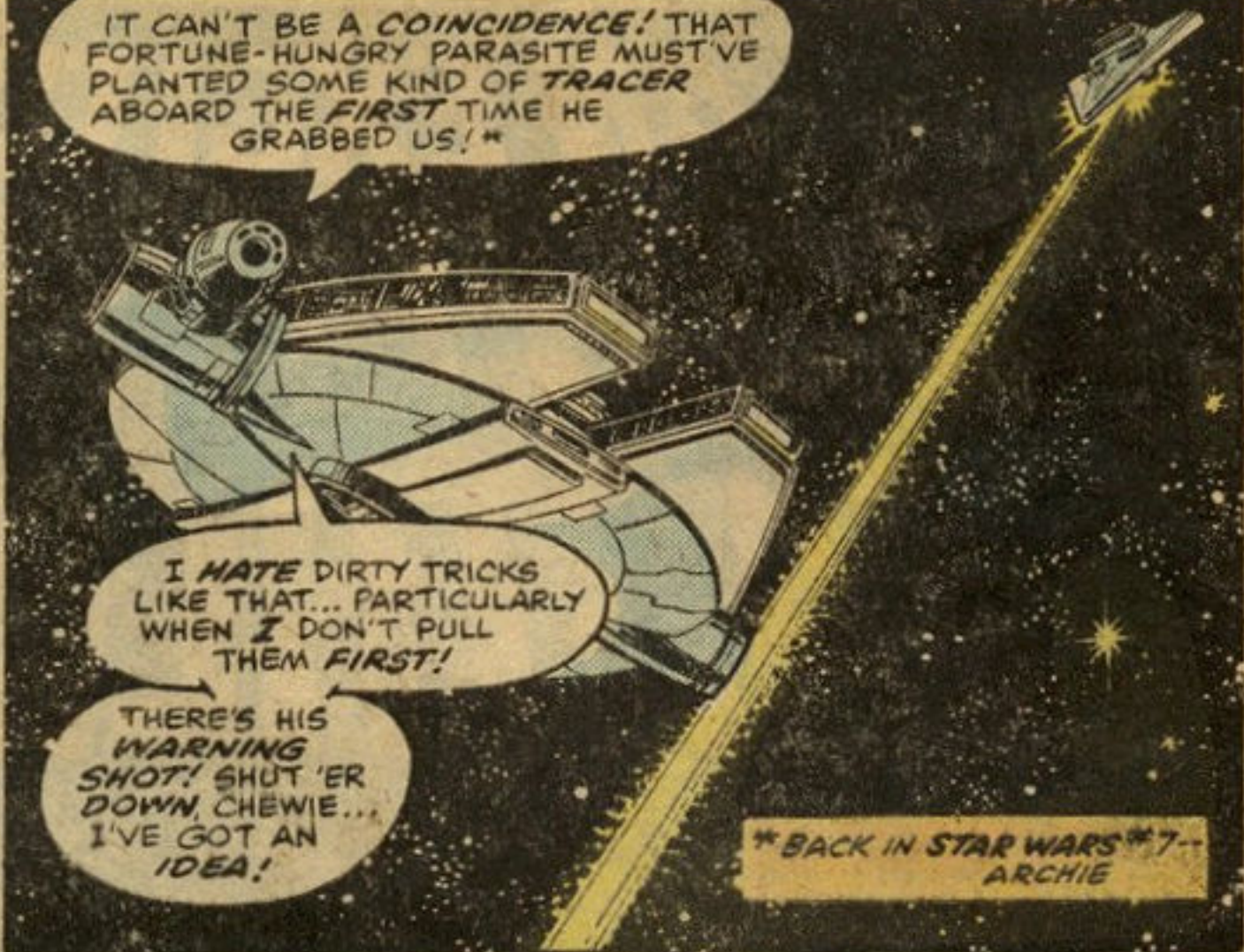
I SEE THE SCOPE, CHEWIE! CRUISER COMING ON US... AT BATTLE SPEED! HIT THE DEFLECTORS AND GET READY TO--

WAIT A MINUTE!



THAT'S NOT ONE OF THE EMPIRE SHIPS! IT'S OUR OLD PIRATE PAL... **CRIMSON JACK!**

THE ONE WHO MADE OFF WITH OUR TREASURE, BIG BUDDY!



IT CAN'T BE A COINCIDENCE! THAT FORTUNE-HUNGRY PARASITE MUST'VE PLANTED SOME KIND OF TRACER ABOARD THE FIRST TIME HE GRABBED US! **

I HATE DIRTY TRICKS LIKE THAT... PARTICULARLY WHEN I DON'T PULL THEM FIRST!

THERE'S HIS WARNING SHOT! SHUT 'ER DOWN, CHEWIE... I'VE GOT AN IDEA!

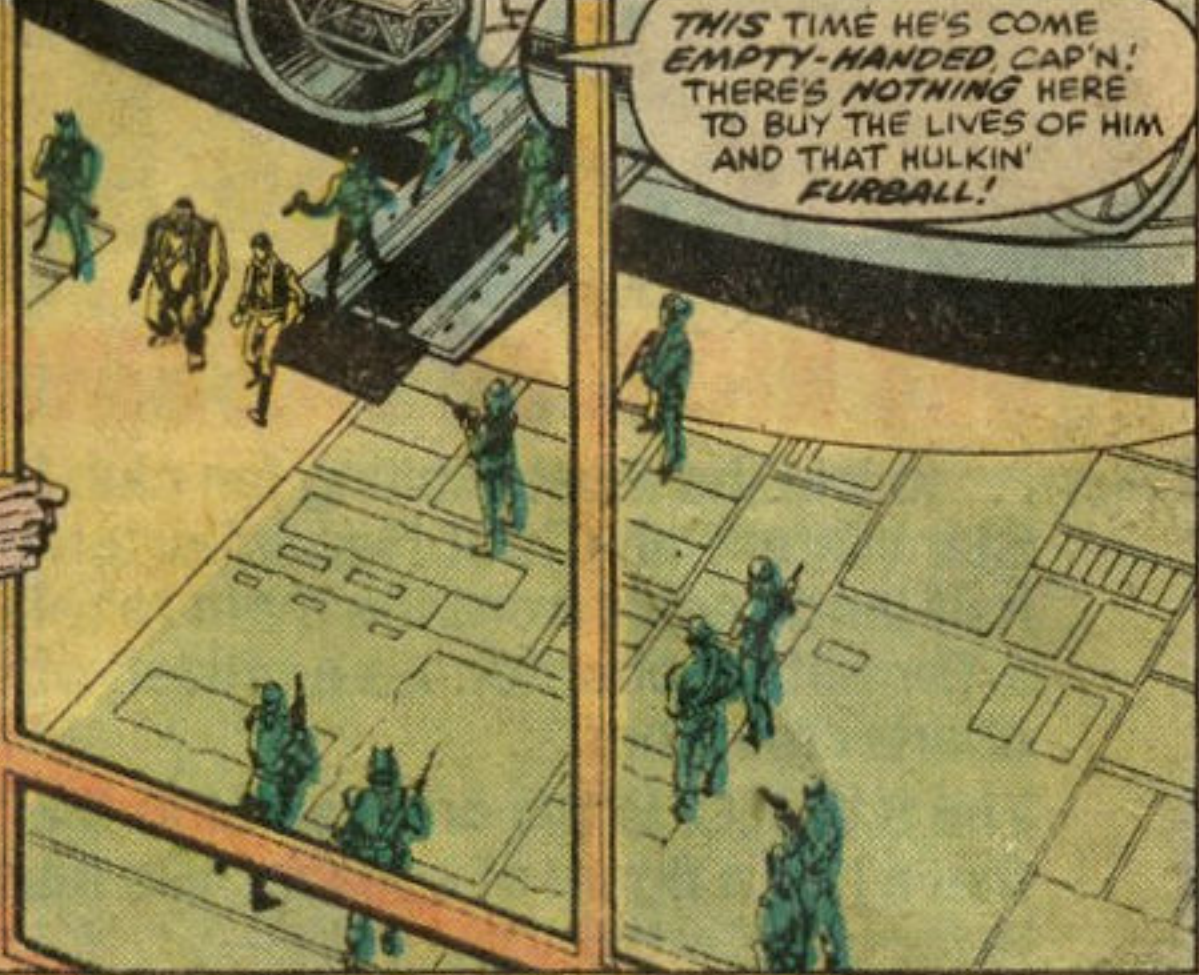
**BACK IN STAR WARS #7-- ARCHIE

AND SHORTLY, TRACTOR BEAMS HAUL THE MILLENNIUM FALCON INTO THE GIANT CRAFT'S HOLD. THERE, A WAITING HORDE SWARMS EAGERLY ABOARD...



WELL, WELL... SOLO! MY LITTLE PLAYMATE, JOLLI, SAID I'D WASTED MY TRACER... SAID YOU'D NEVER BE STUPID ENOUGH TO STRAY INTO MY SECTOR AGAIN!

BUT I PRIDE MYSELF ON RECOGNIZING A STEADY CUSTOMER!



THIS TIME HE'S COME EMPTY-HANDED, CAP'N! THERE'S NOTHING HERE TO BUY THE LIVES OF HIM AND THAT HULKIN' FURBALL!



WURK?

NO PROBLEM, PAL... THE REBELS COULD USE A CRUISER LIKE THIS. I'M GOING TO PLAY ON OL' JACK'S GREED TO BRING HIM RIGHT TO THEM!

WE'LL PROBABLY GET REWARDED ALL OVER AGAIN LIKE WHEN WE RESCUED THE PRINCESS AND--



UH-OH!

I SEE IT... BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT.



WURG!

DON'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS, CHEWIE--

--BUT, YEAH, THIS MAY MEAN A VERY LARGE CRIMP IN MY PLAN!



STILL AN EVER-READY EYE FOR THE LADIES, EH, SOLO? EVEN WITH YOUR TAIL IN A SLING...!

WELL, THIS IS A SPECIAL ONE, ALL RIGHT. PRINCESS AND SENATOR, NO LESS.



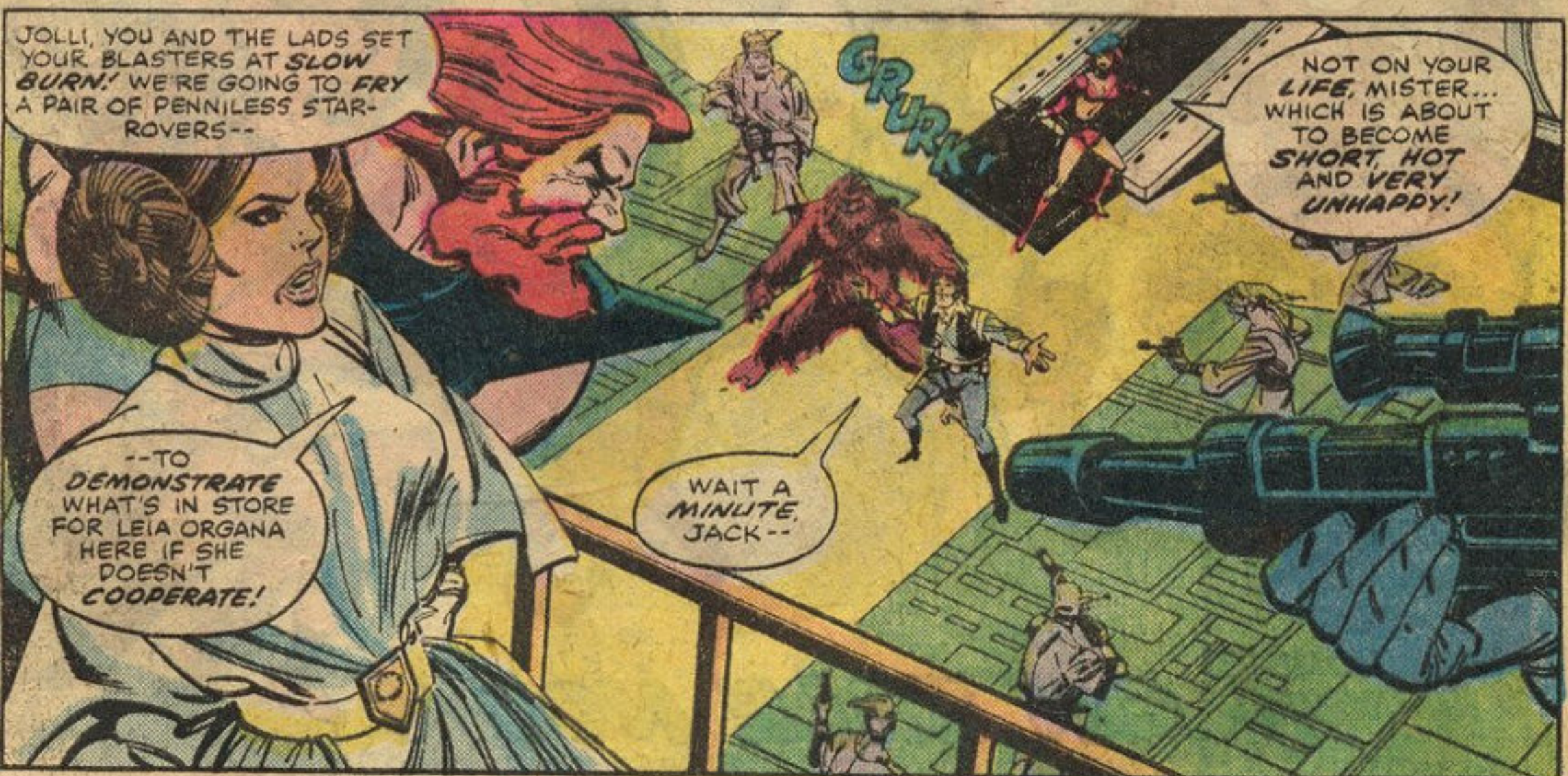
AND REBEL BESIDES! I FIGURE THE ALLIANCE WILL PAY A SMART RANSOM FOR HER... ONLY SHE WON'T TELL ME WHERE THEIR BASE IS!

SO YOU CAN THEN SELL THAT INFORMATION TO THE EMPIRE? THIS CRUISER WILL RUST AROUND YOUR EARS BEFORE I TELL YOU ANYTHING!



SPUNKY, ISN'T SHE, MR. SOLO? WE CAUGHT HER ALL ALONE, HOPPING ACROSS THE VOID... NERVY, BUT FOOLISH.

OF COURSE, THE RIGHT EXAMPLE COULD CURE THE PRINCESS' FOOLISHNESS. THAT'S WHERE YOU AND YOUR WOOKIEE FRIEND COME IN, MY BOY.



JOLLI, YOU AND THE LADS SET YOUR BLASTERS AT SLOW BURN! WE'RE GOING TO FRY A PAIR OF PENNILESS STAR-ROVERS--

--TO DEMONSTRATE WHAT'S IN STORE FOR LEIA ORGANA HERE IF SHE DOESN'T COOPERATE!

WAIT A MINUTE, JACK--

NOT ON YOUR LIFE, MISTER... WHICH IS ABOUT TO BECOME SHORT, HOT AND VERY UNHAPPY!

VRAWK!

DOWN, CHEWIE!

I NEED TIME TO TALK... AND YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO BUY IT FOR ME!

THE GIANT WOOKIEE NEEDS NO FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS! WITH SPEED SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIS GREAT BULK, HE IS UP AGAIN AND MOVING...

...MOVING INTO BLASTS MEANT TO KILL SLOWLY...

ROWRR!

WHURG!

...AND CHEWBACCA HAS NO INTENTION OF STANDING STILL FOR THAT!

CALL OFF THE HOUNDS, JACK! YOU'VE GOT THE MEN AND FIRE-POWER TO TAKE US OUT--

-- BUT IT'LL BE ROUGH GLOATING WITHOUT A HEAD!

GREAT GOING, FIRST MATE!

GOTTA CHANGE THIS SETTING FAST, THEN--

A WORTHWHILE POINT, MR. SOLO... IF MY MEN DON'T PICK YOU OFF FIRST.

YOU CAN PROBABLY GET A FEW MOMENTS DISCUSSION OUT OF IT BEFORE SOMEONE TRIES.



SOME DAY, JACK, WE'RE GOING TO TALK WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MEN--

BUT IF CHEWIE AND I DIE NOW YOU'LL MISS OUT ON THE TREASURE... PLUS A BLOODLESS AND EASY WAY TO GET WHAT YOU WANT FROM THE PRINCESS!

WHAT TREASURE, SOLO...? WE TOOK THAT FROM YOU LAST TIME.

AND I CRIED A LOT ABOUT IT, REDBEARD! THEN I REALIZED THERE WAS A WAY TO GET MORE... BUT IT'D TAKE A CRUISER TO PULL IT OFF! WHY DO YOU THINK I LET YOU GRAB THE MILLENNIUM FALCON--



--WITHOUT EVEN A CHASE, JACK? I WAS COMING TO YOU WITH THIS PROPOSITION ANYWAY!

SOLO, I TRUST YOU ABOUT AS MUCH AS I'D TRUST RIDING A SPICE-KEG THROUGH A METEOR SWARM--

BUT YOU'VE INTRIGUED ME ENOUGH TO GIVE YOU A REPRIEVE... AND A FREE MEAL.

AND SOME TIME LATER IN THE PIRATE MASTER'S QUARTERS, A FEAST IS UNDERWAY... AS IS A GREAT DEAL OF FAST TALKING BY THE SKIPPER OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON.

... REALIZE I'M IN A POOR BARGAINING POSITION, JACK, SO I'M WILLING TO SETTLE FOR A FIFTY-FIFTY SPLIT.

I'LL FILL YOUR FACE WITH THE BUSINESS END OF MY BLASTER, YOU CORRELLIAN CONNIVER!

CAP'N, HOW MUCH LONGER ARE WE GOING TO PUT UP WITH HIS SPACE GAS?!

YOU PROVIDE THE ATTACK FORCE... I PROVIDE THE LOOT'S LOCATION. JOLLI, FILL MY CUP AGAIN, WILL YOU, SWEETHEART?

AH, JOLLI...! WHEN WILL YOU LEARN THAT A MAN CAN ALWAYS BE KILLED LATER... BUT A LOST OPPORTUNITY IS VERY DIFFICULT TO REVIVE.

BRRRF!

YEAH, CHEWIE--

--OUR NEW PARTNER IS SOMETHING! HE THINKS, HE DRINKS, HE PHILOSOPHIZES!

EVEN IF HE WAS A LITTLE QUICK ON THE TRIGGER HIMSELF BACK THERE IN THE HOLD.

AND I COULD BE AGAIN... 'PARTNER!' WE'RE PAST DESSERT BUT I'M STILL HUNGRY FOR SOLID PROOF OF THIS 'TREASURE' BUSINESS--

--OR YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE PRINCESS LEIA HERE COOPERATE!

HAPPY TO OBLIGE, JACK! YOU SEE, THAT TIDY FORTUNE YOU PRIED FROM ME WAS A REWARD... DIRECT FROM THE TREASURY OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE--

-- FOR RESCUING THIS LADY FROM THE EMPIRE'S CLUTCHES!

BY THE BLACK NEBULA, THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS ABOUT SUCH A RESCUE! BUT--

BUT WHAT NO ONE KNOWS IS THAT DURING THAT RESCUE, THE PRIM AND PROPER PRINCESS--

-- FELL IN LOVE!

PUT SOME FEELING INTO IT, YOUR ROYALNESS... OUR LIVES ARE AT STAKE.

THANKS FOR KEEPING SILENT UP TILL NOW... I KNOW IT GOES AGAINST YOUR NATURE NOT TO BE SCREAMING ABOUT WHAT I'M DOING WRONG.



ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN SPEECHLESS--

--IT'S LONG ENOUGH SINCE ESCAPING THE DEATH STAR THAT I'D FORGOTTEN JUST HOW MUDDLED YOUR RESCUES GET!

JUST WHAT IS THIS SUPPOSED TO ACCOMPLISH...?

I'M NOT SURE, BUT AT LEAST IT'S FUN! AND THE MORE FRIEND JACK HAS TO THINK ABOUT THE LONGER HE'LL KEEP US ALIVE!



THEN ALLOW ME TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION--

HOW DARE YOU, HAN SOLO?! HOW DARE YOU BETRAY MY FEELINGS FOR YOU?!



I CAN'T STOP YOU FROM LEADING THESE VERMIN TO OUR TREASURY IN THE DREXEL SYSTEM... YOU ALREADY KNOW THE APPROACH THROUGH ITS DEFENSE GRID.

BUT LUKE SKYWALKER IS THERE, TOO... THAT MEANS SOME SURPRISES IN STORE FOR YOU!

AND AS THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF THE PLANET ALDERAAN'S RULING HOUSE IS LED AWAY...

I DOUBT YOU'LL EVER CHARM THAT FIRE-BRAND INTO COOPERATION, SOLO... BUT SHE'LL BE A VALUABLE HOSTAGE IF THIS SKYWALKER GIVES US TROUBLE.

CAPTAIN... I'D LIKE TO RETURN TO MY CELL!



TAKE HER BACK, JOLLI.



WHO IS HE ANYWAY?

UH... SORT OF A RIVAL... REALLY GETS AROUND...

...IT SEEMS.



THEN WE'D BEST DO SOME GETTING AROUND OURSELVES! UP TO THE BRIDGE... AND START COMPUTING OUR COURSE TO THE DREXEL SYSTEM!

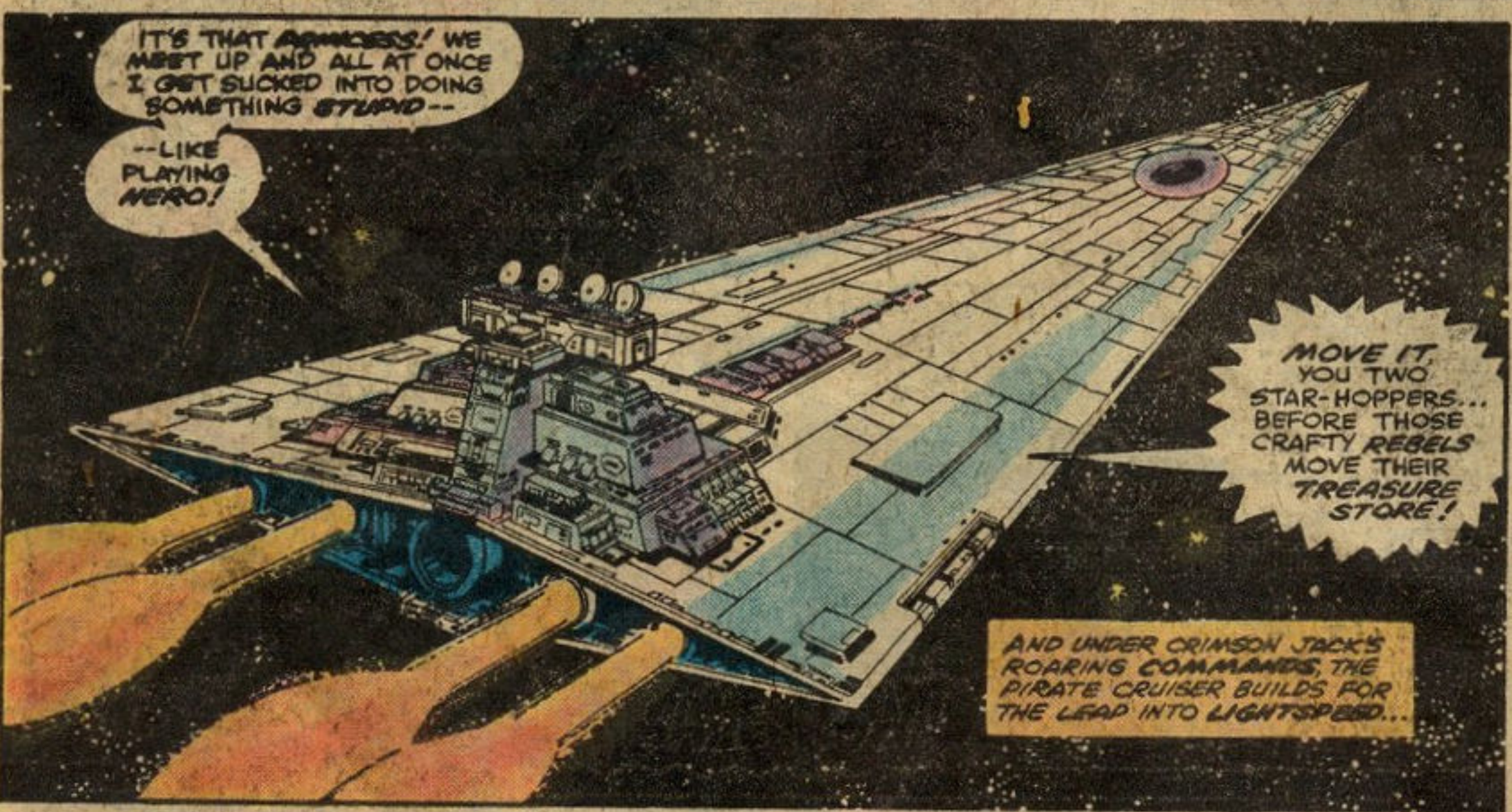
NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE SAYING THIS TO A SPICE-SMUGGLING SHARPIE LIKE YOU, SOLO... BUT YOU ACTUALLY SEEM TO HAVE TOLD THE TRUTH!



GRRLLURK!

SURE, SURE, CHEWIE... SUDDENLY EVERYTHING IS GOING OUR WAY.

SO WHY DO I FEEL LIKE THE ONE WHO'S BEEN MAD?

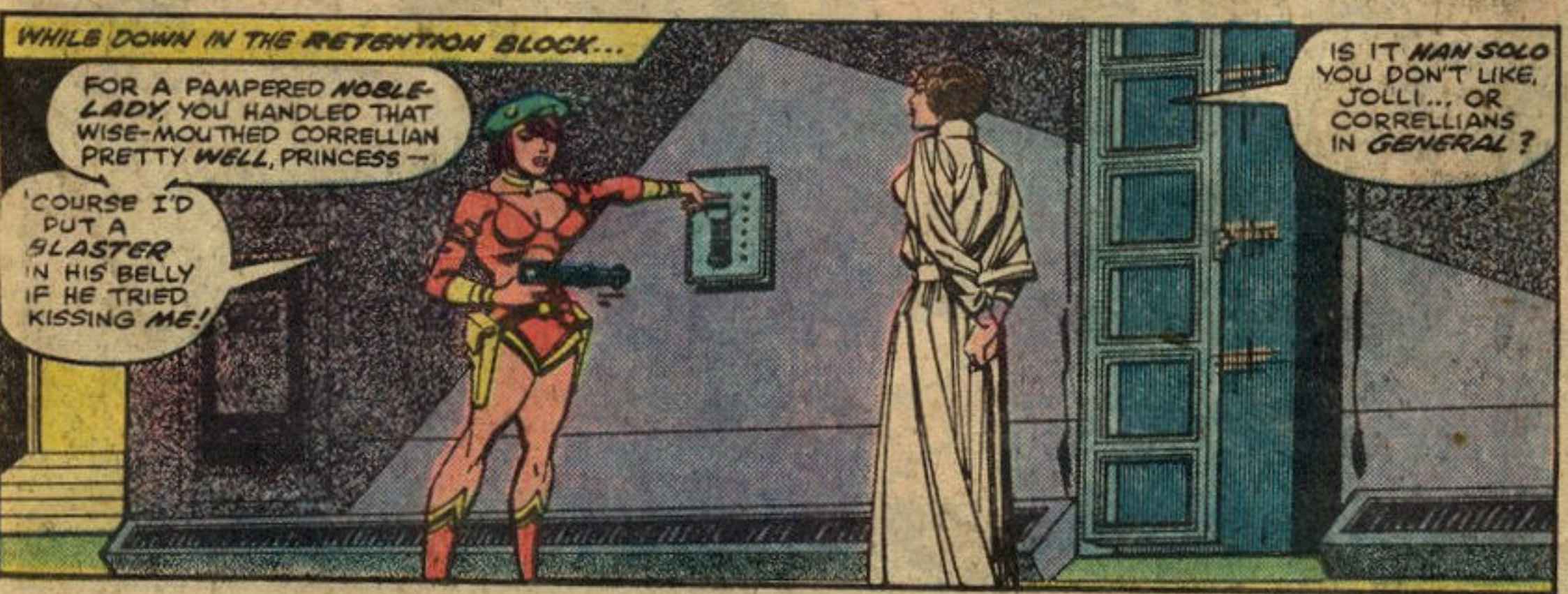


IT'S THAT APOCALYPS! WE MEET UP AND ALL AT ONCE I GET SUCKED INTO DOING SOMETHING STUPID--

--LIKE PLAYING HERO!

MOVE IT, YOU TWO STAR-HOPPERS... BEFORE THOSE CRAFTY REBELS MOVE THEIR TREASURE STORE!

AND UNDER CRIMSON JACK'S ROARING COMMANDS, THE PIRATE CRUISER BUILDS FOR THE LEAD INTO LIGHTSPEED...



WHILE DOWN IN THE RETENTION BLOCK...

FOR A PAMPERED NOBLE-LADY, YOU HANDLED THAT WISE-MOUTHED CORRELLIAN PRETTY WELL, PRINCESS --

'COURSE I'D PUT A BLASTER IN HIS BELLY IF HE TRIED KISSING ME!

IS IT HAN SOLO YOU DON'T LIKE, JOLLI... OR CORRELLIANS IN GENERAL?

IT'S MEN, LADY... THE WHOLE BLASTED BREED! A SMOOTH-TALKIN' HANDSOME ONE IS NO BETTER THAN ANY OTHER AND MAYBE WORSE!

THERE ARE GOOD MEN JOLLI... A PIRATE VESSEL MAY NOT BE THE BEST PLACE TO FIND THEM

CERTAINLY, I'VE HAD MY PROBLEMS WITH MISTER SOLO. STILL--

... HE DOES KISS WELL

ZISP

WELL, WHAT DOES A HIGH, MUCKETY-MUCK REBEL PRINCESS KNOW ABOUT ANYTHING ANYWAY?!

KLONG

KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS ON MEN AND KISSING TO YOURSELF!

THE LADY PIRATE STORMS FROM THE DETENTION AREA, DISTURBED BY HER OWN ANGER, UNCERTAIN WHY IT SUDDENLY ERUPTED...

...LEAVING PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA ALONE IN THE DARKNESS WITH HER OWN THOUGHTS.

RIGHT NOW SHE HAS MANY, FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF HER HOME WORLD ALDERAAN, TO THE PROBLEMS OF WARRING AGAINST A STILL-STRONG EMPIRE, TO HER OWN IMMEDIATE PERIL. YET MOSTLY, HER MIND FLIES TO VISIONS OF ONE YOUNG MAN...

A FARM-BOY OF THE DESERT... RUO TATOOINE... THE LIVED STAR WARRIOR--

--LUKE SKYWALKER!

"BUT AFTER THE BATTLE OF THE DEATH STAR, THERE WAS NO WAY TO BE CERTAIN WHETHER OR NOT DARTH VADER HAD SUCCEEDED IN REPORTING OUR POSITION TO EMPIRE FORCES..."

OH, LUKE... LUKE!
IF ONLY YOU HADN'T
VOLUNTEERED FOR
THAT SCOUTING
MISSION--

-- THEN WE'D
BOTH BE SAFE
BACK AT OUR
MAIN BASE ON
THE FOURTH MOON
OF YAVIN.



WE HAVE TO SEEK A NEW
HIDING PLACE, YOUR
MAJESTY... AND YOUNG
SKYWALKER HAS PROVEN
HIMSELF ONE OF OUR
BEST STAR-PILOTS.

AND I'M NEEDED
HERE... AS BOTH
SYMBOL AND LEADER
OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE.
I UNDERSTAND,
GENERAL DODONNA--

-- BUT I STILL
WISH I WERE
GOING WITH
HIM!

"AT LEAST I COULD TAKE COMFORT THAT YOU WEREN'T ALONE... THAT YOU HAD COMPANIONS, THE LOYAL DROIDS, ARTOO DETOO AND SEE THREPIO. BUT WHEN AT LAST YOU MADE TRANCEIVER COMMUNICATION..."

I THINK I'VE FOUND
A NEW SAFE HAVEN,
PRINCESS! IT'S A
PLANET IN THE
DREXEL SYSTEM,
THAT--

NO! IT-- IT
ISN'T POSSIBLE!
IT--

WHAT'S
HAPPENING?!
WE'RE LOSING
CONTACT!



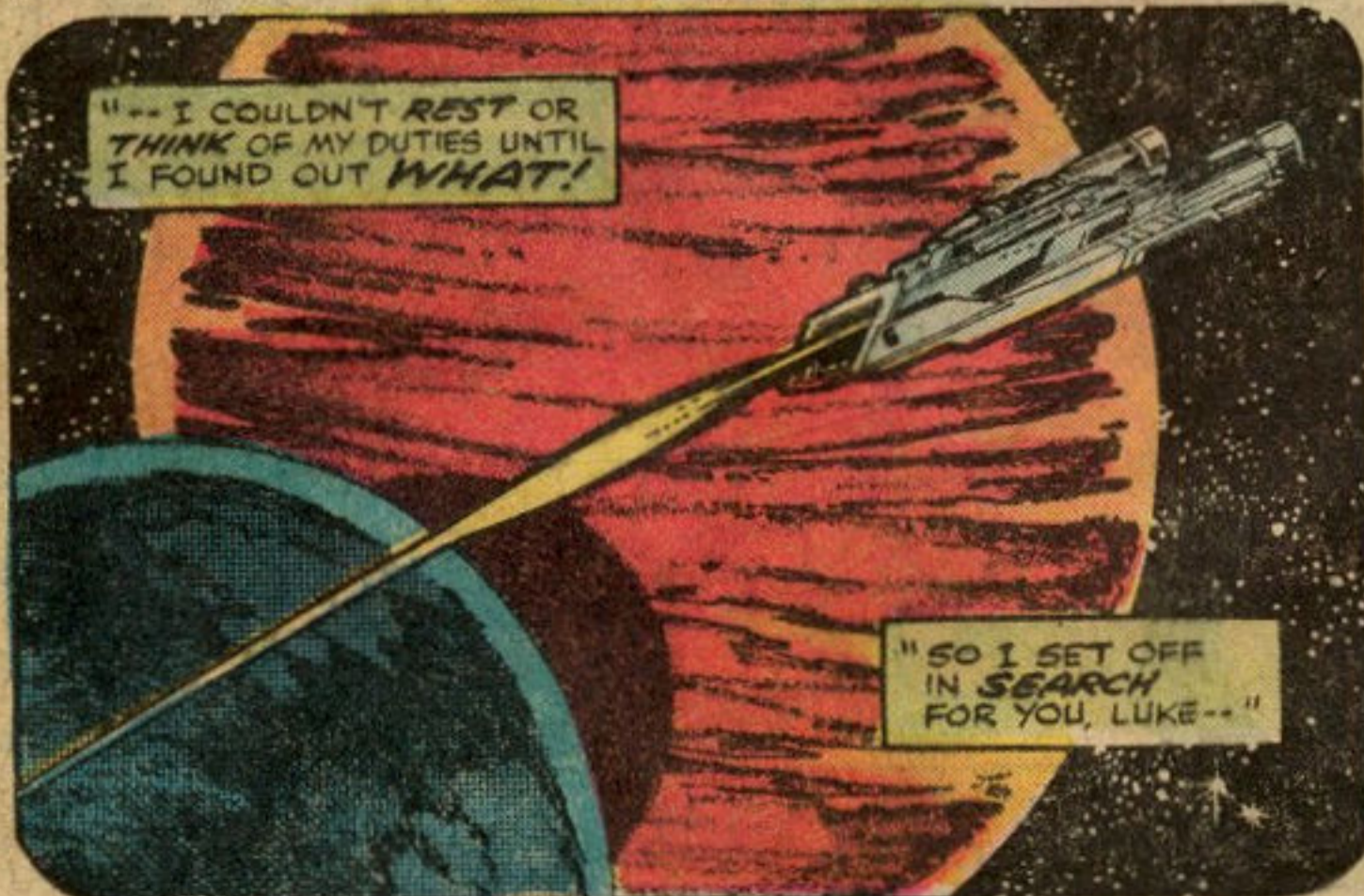
"IT WAS NEVER REGAINED! SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU AND YOUR SHIP WHILE ORBITING AN UNNAMED PLANET THERE IN THE DREXEL STAR SYSTEM! AND I KNEW--

-- AND GOT CAPTURED BY
CRIMSON JACK INSTEAD!

BUT IF HAN SOLO
JUST PICKS UP ON THE
HINTS I GAVE... THE
SEARCH WILL STILL GO
ON, LUKE! IT MUST!

"-- I COULDN'T REST OR
THINK OF MY DUTIES UNTIL
I FOUND OUT WHAT!

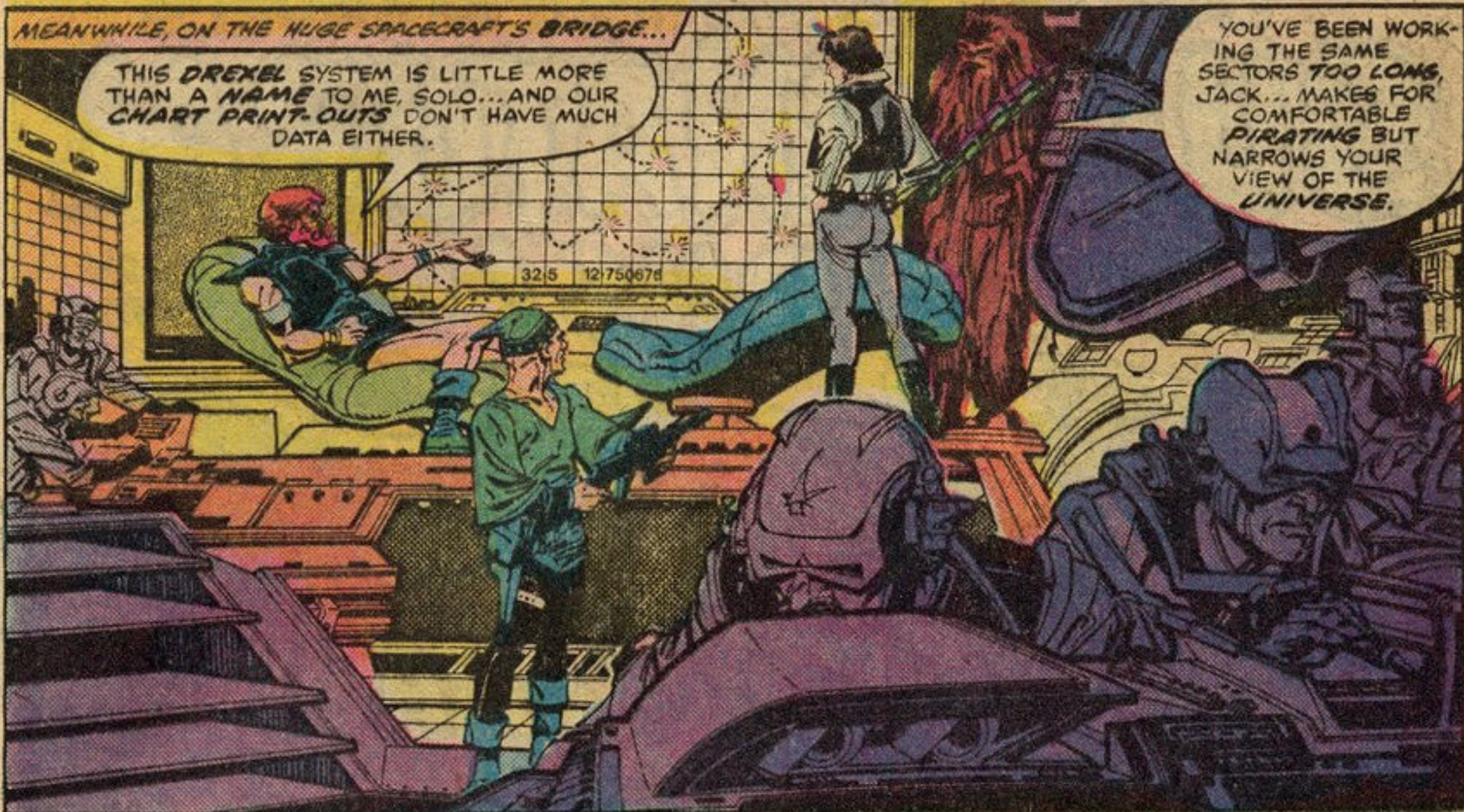
"SO I SET OFF
IN SEARCH
FOR YOU, LUKE--"



MEANWHILE, ON THE HUGE SPACECRAFT'S BRIDGE...

THIS DREXEL SYSTEM IS LITTLE MORE THAN A NAME TO ME, SOLO... AND OUR CHART PRINT-OUTS DON'T HAVE MUCH DATA EITHER.

YOU'VE BEEN WORKING THE SAME SECTORS TOO LONG, JACK... MAKES FOR COMFORTABLE PIRATING BUT NARROWS YOUR VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE.



SPACE-HOPPING FORCES US TO KEEP A MUCH MORE DETAILED SET OF CHARTS ABOARD THE FALCON.

WURFLE

OKAY TO HAVE CHEWIE TAP IN OUR COMPUTER-SYSTEM WITH YOURS SO WE CAN DRAW ON THEM?



SO LONG AS YOUR HIRSUTE FIRST MATE DOESN'T MIND AN ESCORT... OR THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING SLAIN BY THEM IF HE TRIES ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS!

GROWF!

NO PROBLEM, JACK. AS CHEWIE SAYS--



-- WHAT'S THE FUN IN BEING PARTNERS IF YOU CAN'T TRUST ONE ANOTHER?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE WOOKIEE, JACK... HE'LL ONLY DO WHAT HE'S SUPPOSED TO.

MEANTIME, LET ME GET STARTED ON THE PRELIMINARY COMPUTATIONS. IT'S A LONG HOP TO THE DREXEL SYSTEM--





--AND IT'S ONE OF THE FEW PLACES IN THIS GALAXY I'VE NEVER BEEN BEFORE! BUT WHY UPSET MY RED-BEARDED BUDDY WITH THAT TIDBIT OF INFORMATION?

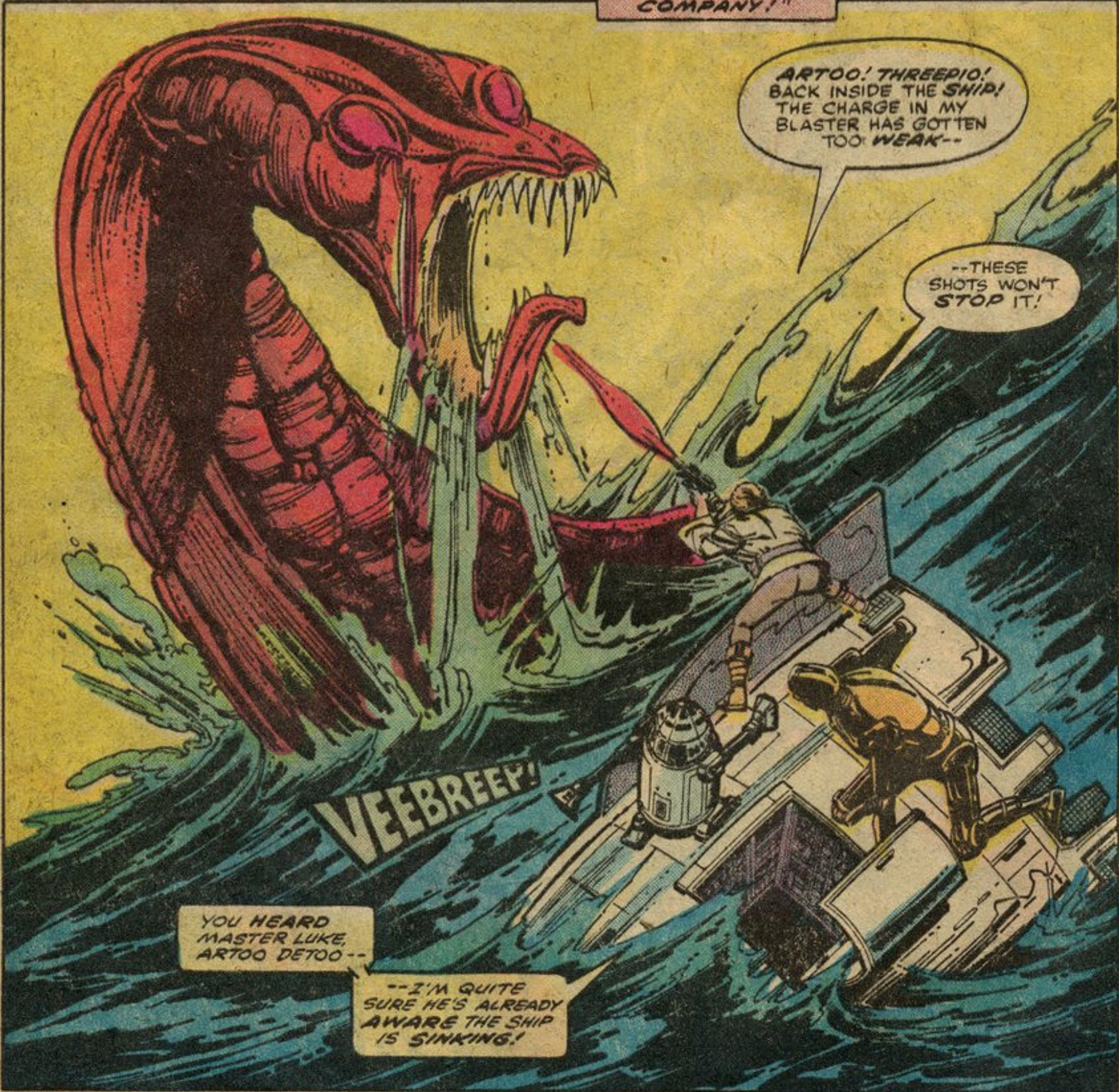
OR THE FACT THAT ANY STAR-FARING OLD-TIMER I EVER TALKED TO SAID IT'S A SPOT TO BE AVOIDED LIKE A BLACK HOLE!



I DON'T KNOW WHAT LUKE SKYWALKER IS DOING THERE... BUT THE PRINCESS CERTAINLY SET THINGS UP SO WE'RE ALL ABOUT TO FIND OUT!

YEAH, KID! WHEREVER YOU ARE AND WHATEVER MESS YOU'RE IN--

"--YOU'RE ABOUT TO HAVE LOTS OF COMPANY!"



ARTOO! THREPIO! BACK INSIDE THE SHIP! THE CHARGE IN MY BLASTER HAS GOTTEN TOO WEAK--

--THESE SHOTS WON'T STOP IT!

YOU HEARD MASTER LUKE, ARTOO DETOO--

--I'M QUITE SURE HE'S ALREADY AWARE THE SHIP IS SINKING!

IT'LL BE AFLOAT LONGER THAN WE WILL IF THAT MONSTER STRIKES! MOVE YOU TWO--

THAT THING'S GETTING LESS SHY WITH EVERY BLAST AND--

THAT'S IT! THE CHARGE HAS RUN OUT!

QUICKLY, MASTER LUKE! THE UGLY CREATURE IS MAKING ITS--

--MOVE!

WHA-LOM!

GOT THAT EMERGENCY HATCH FASTENED JUST IN TIME--!

BUT IF THAT BLOW DIDN'T CRACK THE SHIP IN TWO, THE NEXT ONE WILL!

FUWEET!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN 'THIS WAY,' ARTOO? IS YOUR INTEGRATED LOGIC TERMINAL SCREWED ON BACKWARDS?

OBVIOUSLY THE WATER IS DEEPER IN THAT DIRECTION! IF THERE'S ONE THING I HATE MORE THAN SPACE TRAVEL--

--IT'S SWIMMING!

MARVEL BULLPEN BULLETINS

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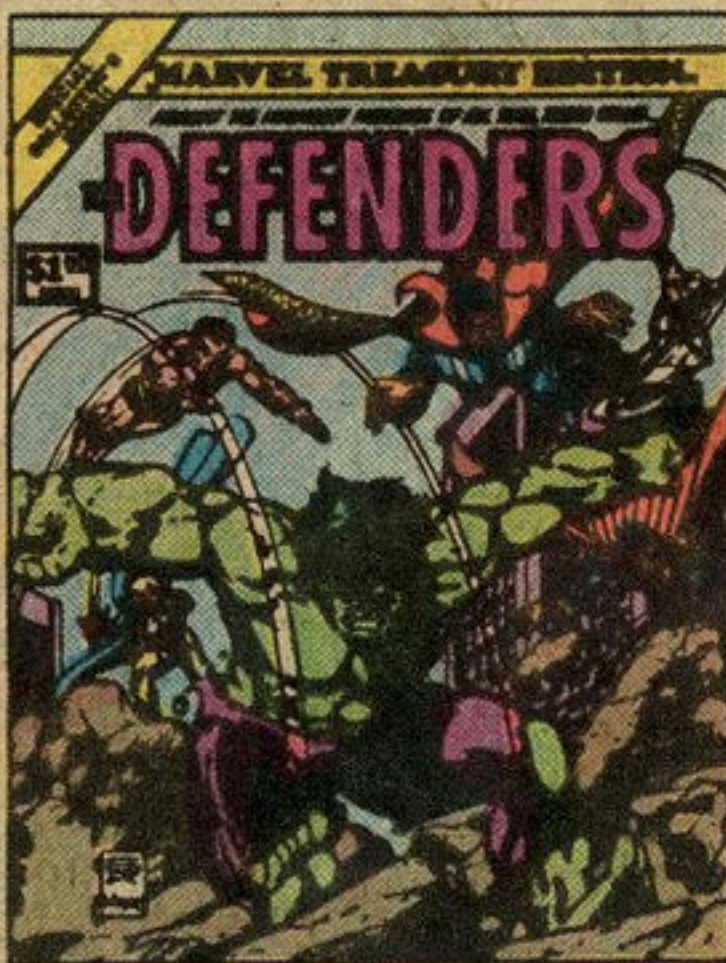
STAN'S SOAPBOX

Well, there's been a few weeks here, and I've had a few things to say. I've been a heavy staff member, we stood around jawin' for a while, and that's when it happened! A young prof walked up and asked me why I've changed the ol' Soapbox. I didn't know what he meant. "I never changed my column," I told him. "I've always used it to keep in touch with my bosses—the mighty minions of Marveldom." "Untrue" said he! "The Soapbox used to be a place where you really levelled with us, where we'd discuss the philosophy of comics, movies, or whatever grabbed us. It was a place to get together, let our hair down, and get to know each other better. But now, it's like a tv commercial—you're always selling something!" He shook his head and sighed. "I miss the old-time Soapboxes. But I guess they'll never come back." Wow! After he left, I really plopped down and thought about what he'd said. And, y'know something? He was dead right! I realized I was huckstering our books, tv shows, and assorted products and paraphernalia right here in my column. But, where is it written that a fella can't see the light? I promised myself that, from now on, the Soapbox'll be a place where we can yak about anything that comes to mind, with emphasis on comical! I'll leave the hard-sell to the ad pages, where it belongs. So, let me now abjectly apologize to one and all for any excess of exuberance that may have made me pitch too many wares. Starting next lah, we're just gonna swap stories, gossip, and points of view—and you won't even need your wallet! (Even if it means less bread for us, at least we'll starve with class!)

Excelsior!

ITEM! If there are some puffed-out chests and beaming faces around the Bullpen of late, it's due to recent news from the comics fans of Great Britain about the results of their first annual, nationally-organized awards poll for the best material of 1976. To our pardonable pleasure and pride, a number of mighty Marvel efforts were singled out for top honors. HOWARD THE DUCK won as Favorite New Comic, Favorite Humor Comic, and netted honors for STEVE GERBER and JOHN BUSCEMA as writer and artist of the Favorite Single Comic Book Story. CONAN THE BARBARIAN fared almost equally well. He was voted Favorite Comic Book Character, and SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN was

declared Favorite Dramatic Comics Magazine. CHRIS CLAREMONT was voted Favorite British Comics Writer (for CAPT. BRITAIN, and the hell with some of his books: X-MEN, and the like). And, the National Writers Guild has named the comic book industry as the most successful in America. But that's not all! In the future, we'll strive to produce even better work in the future. Let's also tip our hats to Richard Burton and Michael Conroy, the two stalwarts who labored long and hard organizing and running the awards (which are called Eagle Awards, by the way, after a famous British weekly comic). Well done, fellas. We're looking forward to seeing how the awards for '77 come out.



ITEM! February may be a short month, but we've managed to cram a fair number of extra goodies into it just to help ease you through that mid-winter gloom. For starters, there's the SPIDER-MAN POCKET BOOK #2, which features issues 7 through 13 of the amazing one's adventures, all in full color, complete and unabridged. With the price of back issues these days, these Pocket Book paperbacks have to be one of the biggest bargains around and a nifty way to have your own bound library of Marvel's greatest hits. They're at your favorite bookstore now. Grab 'em before these become Collector's Items too! Also on tap this month is our latest MARVEL TREASURY EDITION, spotlighting everybody's favorite non-team, the dynamic DEFENDERS in three of their classic action sagas, including their very first, and displaying the art and writing talents of such luminaries as ROY THOMAS, ROSS ANDRU, BILL EVERETT, SAL BUSCEMA, LEN WEIN, STEVE ENGLEHART, KLAUS JANSON, and DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT. Seek it out, you won't be sorry. Last, but not necessarily least, we have CRAZY Magazine's "Annual Idiot Issue," which won't make spring come any faster but may keep you too busy chuckling to notice the wait.

ITEM! Let's have a hearty "welcome aboard," for Dazzling DICKIE MCKENZIE, recently arrived from the hills of Kentucky to seek fame, fortune, and spelling errors in service of our editorial department. Glad to have you with us, Mr. McKenzie. We can always use help with our proofreading.

ITEM! You may have heard that New York has gone sort of Dracula-happy. There are currently two hit stage plays about the incredible Count thriving simultaneously. What you may not know is that one of them, "The Passion of Dracula," is the work of Marvel contributor, BOB HALL. Bob's probably familiar to you as penciler of THE CHAMPIONS, SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP, and several other epics including an up-coming MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE which teams Bashful Ben Grimm with Hercules, but for the play, Mr. Hall not only shares co-credit for the set designs, he co-wrote the production, and, in addition, did the art for the ads. Talk about your Renaissance men! Everyone that's seen the play tells us it makes for a really fun evening of theater, so if you're in the area, you might want to check it out. Tell 'em Doc Doom sent you.

ITEM! We couldn't mention Dracula without laying a few words on you about a certain color comic called TOMB OF DRACULA. Just when we think writer/editor MARV WOLFMAN and artist GENE (The Dean) COLAN have worked every possible variation on the subject of vampires and their kith and kin, these guys pull another surprise out of their bag of tricks. Lately, aided and abetted by ace embellisher TOM PALMER, they've come up with one of the wildest concepts yet: The Lord of the Vampires has lost his vampiric powers! He's suddenly human and vulnerable, but all his many enemies are still as hard on his heels with stakes in hand as ever. We don't know how Marv, Gene, and Tom are going to wrap this whole thing up, but we sure don't intend to miss an issue until we find out! As a team, these three guys have been putting the Count through his paces since 1973; it seems like they're only getting better. If you believe you've seen everything in a weird book, catch their latest act... and be surprised.

COMING SOON!



I THINK I KNOW WHAT HE'S UP TO, THREEPIO. FOLLOW HIM!

EXACTLY AS I WAS ABOUT TO SUGGEST, SIR! MAY AS WELL HUMOR THE STUBBORN LITTLE DROID--

--MAKE HIS LAST MOMENTS BEFORE SHORT-CIRCUITING HAPPY ONES AND--

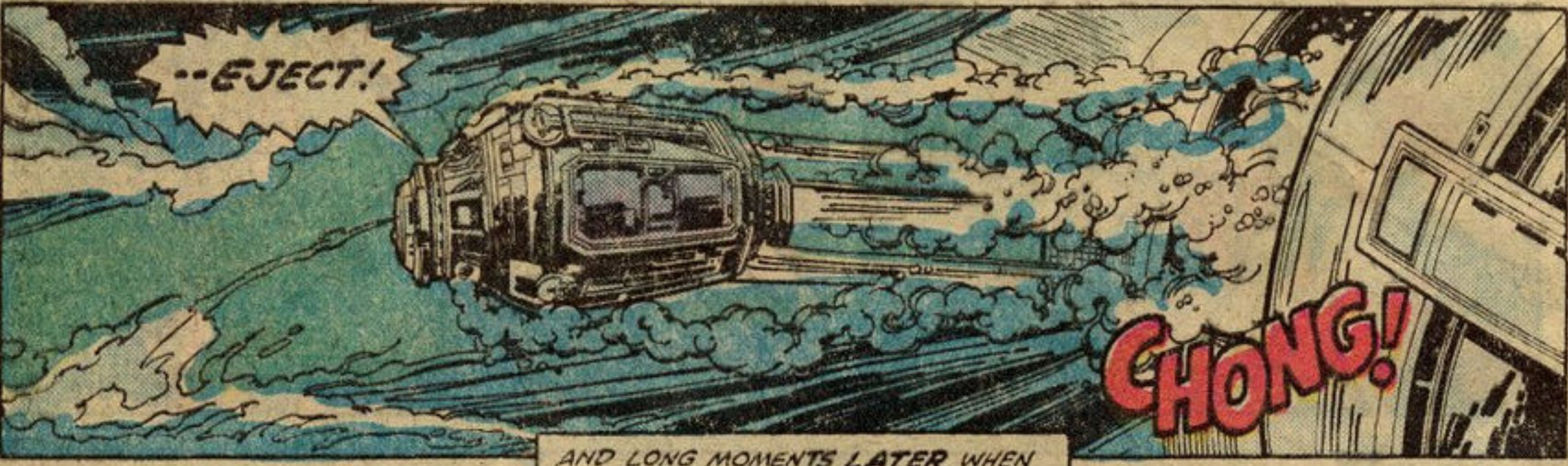
THINGS ARE HAPPENING ENTIRELY TOO FAST FOR MY COMPREHENSION REACTORS!

ONE MOMENT WE'RE SAFELY ORBITING THIS PLANET... THE NEXT, ALL SYSTEMS GO DEAD AND WE CRASH-GLIDE INTO SEEMINGLY ENDLESS OCEAN...! THEN THAT CREATURE--

ARTOO! NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

HE'S OPENING THE LIFE POD CHAMBER! INSIDE... BEFORE IT FLOODS!

SEAL THE SAFETY DOOR, ARTOO! AND PRAY THIS POD CAN STILL--



--EJECT!

AND LONG MOMENTS LATER, WHEN THE POD HAS BOBBED TO THE SURFACE...

CAN YOU SEE ANYTHING, MASTER LUKE?

THE END OF OUR SPACECRAFT, THREEPIO! THAT KING-SIZE WATERWORM IS ABOUT TO APPLY THE FINISHING TOUCHES!

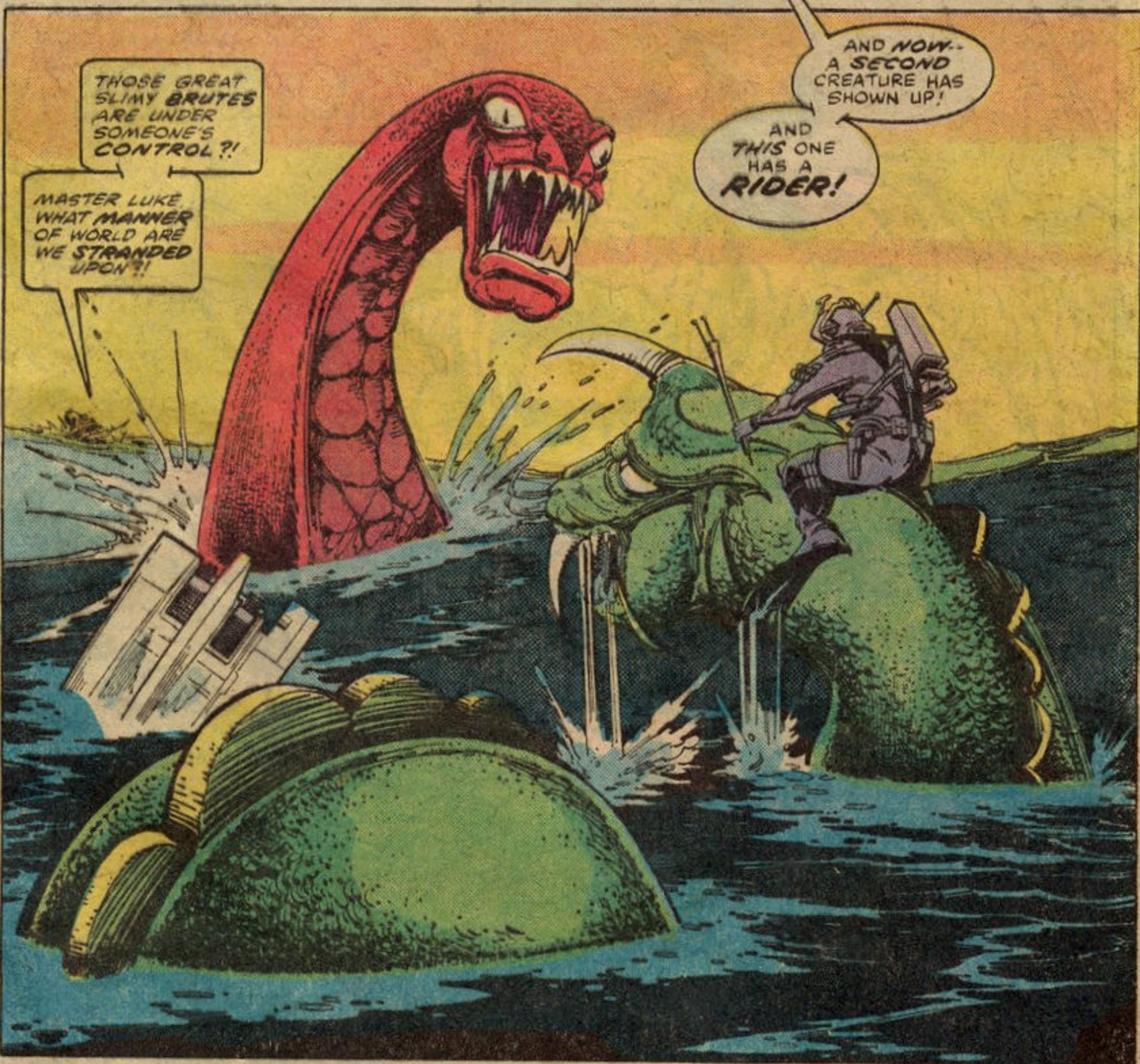
AT LEAST WE PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN US SO THAT-- WAIT A MINUTE!



OH, DEAR! DON'T TELL ME THERE'S NEW DANGER, SIR!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK.

THE THING STOPPED... LOOKED AROUND AS THOUGH IT HAD HEARD SOME SOUND... OR SIGNAL...



THOSE GREAT SLIMY BRUTES ARE UNDER SOMEONE'S CONTROL?!

MASTER LUKE, WHAT MANNER OF WORLD ARE WE STRANDED UPON?!

AND NOW... A SECOND CREATURE HAS SHOWN UP!

AND THIS ONE HAS A RIDER!

NEXT ISSUE: DOOMNORLD!