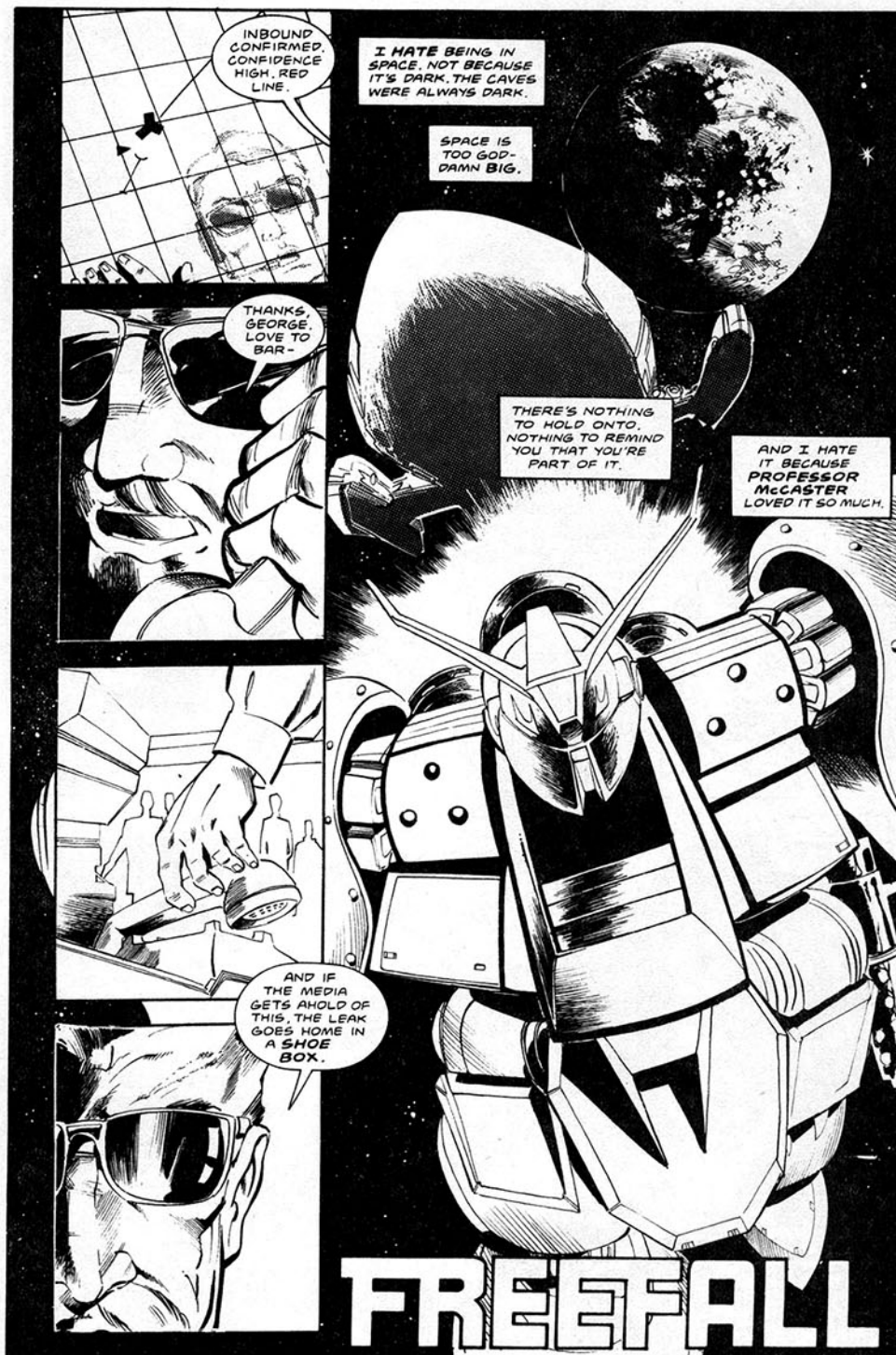


MECHA "FREEFALL"

story TIM ELDRED
art HARRISON FONG and ROBERT CARACOL
letters PAT BROSSAU

Alien robots of fearsome might are discovered on Earth, activated by and linked to the touch of their discoverers. With such awesome technology in human hands, global tensions explode. As World War looms, the alien machines are needed to face an invasion from the stars. The robots are severely damaged in the first assault and are forced to retreat into space with their human pilots in the immense orbital fortress, *Deephold*. With little hope of repairing the wrecked dreadnaughts, the crew is soon faced with the arrival of another robot from the depths of space piloted by a dying alien who has established mental contact with the youngest of the crew, twelve-year-old Terry Pierce. Terry announces that more robots are hidden on Earth!





THIS TERM PAPER IS UN-ACCEPTABLE ON ITS MOST BASIC LEVEL, MR. HYER.

THE POINT OF THIS PROGRAM IS NOT TO TEACH YOU TO ACCEPT THE OBVIOUS.

SCIENCE FORCASTS, BOY, OUR DESTINY IS NOT TIED TO THIS BALL OF DIRT!

BASTARD.

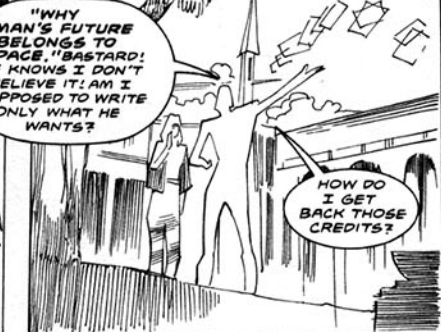
WHY DO YOU LET MCCASTER CONTROL YOU LIKE THAT? HE'S ONLY AN ESTABLISHMENT COG.

LOOK AT THIS, MIL: AN "E"! TWO WEEKS OF ALL-NIGHTERS BLOWN AWAY!

WHO SAYS YOU HAVE TO? THEY'RE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT YOU BELIEVE?

"WHY MAN'S FUTURE BELONGS TO SPACE," BASTARD! HE KNOWS I DON'T BELIEVE IT, AM I SUPPOSED TO WRITE ONLY WHAT HE WANTS?

HOW DO I GET BACK THOSE CREDITS?



MILLIE WAS ALWAYS RIGHT.

FIGURES. SHE FLUNKED.

STILL, IT WAS WORTH THE LOOK ON MCCASTER'S FACE WHEN I TOLD HIM I WAS GOING INTO-



SPELUNKING?

BUT HE APTED YOU FOR FLIGHT TRAINING! YOU CAN'T JUST ABANDON IT!

YOU'RE DOING IT TO PISS HIM OFF, AREN'T YOU? TOSsing AWAY EVERYTHING JUST FOR REVENGE!

YOU COULD'A BROKEN FREE! NOW HE'S CONTROLLING YOUR FUTURE, TOO!

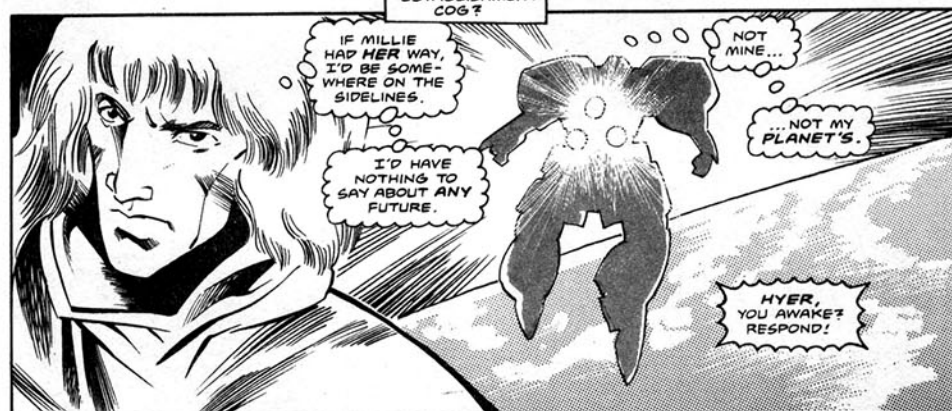


MY FUTURE? WHAT DOES THAT MATTER ANYMORE?

MY FUTURE WAS DECIDED THE DAY THEY ARRIVED. SPACE HELD MAN'S DESTINY, ALL RIGHT. SPACE SENT IT'S WORST DEMONS TO FINISH US.

OR WAS MY FUTURE DECIDED THAT DAY IN THE TENNESSEE CAVERN WHERE I FOUND THE FIRST ROBOT?

OR THE DAY I TURNED REBEL AGAINST AN ESTABLISHMENT COG?



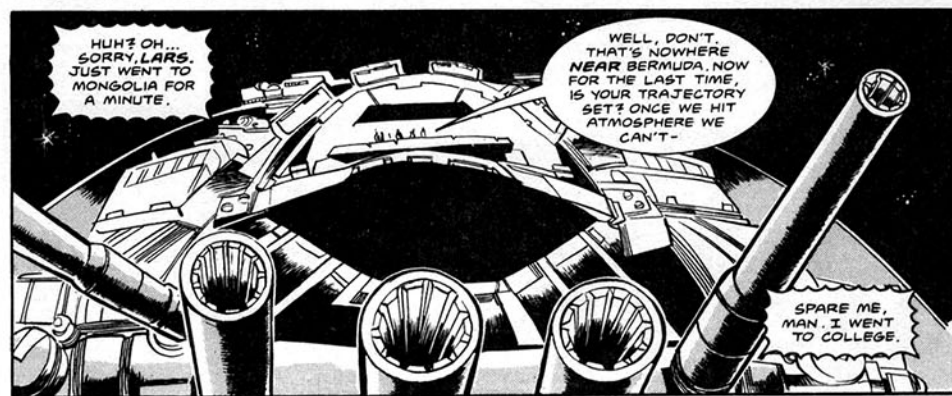
IF MILLIE HAD HER WAY, I'D BE SOMEWHERE ON THE SIDELINES.

I'D HAVE NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT ANY FUTURE.

NOT MINE...

...NOT MY PLANET'S.

HYER, YOU AWAKE? RESPOND!



HUH? OH... SORRY, LARS. JUST WENT TO MONGOLIA FOR A MINUTE.

WELL, DON'T. THAT'S NOWHERE NEAR BERMUDA, NOW FOR THE LAST TIME IS YOUR TRAJECTORY SET? ONCE WE HIT ATMOSPHERE WE CAN'T-

SPARE ME, MAN. I WENT TO COLLEGE.



FINE. EVER BEEN TESTED FOR G'S? WE CAN'T HAVE YOU INCAPACITATED WHEN SAC SPOTS US!

DON'T WORRY, I WON'T MAKE A MESS.

WE'VE AVOIDED THE ALIEN PATROL ROUTES, BUT KEEP AN EYE PEELED.

WILL DO, SEE YOU IN THE SUN!

HMPH!

I'VE HAD NO CALL TO QUESTION YOUR JUDGEMENT, MASTER TERRY, BUT WOULD IT NOT HAVE BEEN MORE PRUDENT TO SELECT ONE OF GREATER DISCIPLINE FOR SUCH A DELICATE STAGE?

I'M NOT WORRIED, HANA.

LOOK AT THEM... ALL FOLLOWING MY SON'S ORDERS, AND INTO A WAR ZONE!

TERRY'S BECOME SO... SEASONED, SO CONFIDENT.

JACK, C'MON. THIS IS NO PLACE TO SIT THROUGH RE-ENTRY, MATE.

COMING, WORELY.



I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT FATE. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ON HYER'S SIDE.



HE'S HIT ATMOSPHERE!

TERRY? WANT TO SIT THROUGH IT WITH US?

NO, YOU GO AHEAD, DAD. I'M NEEDED HERE.



TEN SECONDS IN AND THIS JUGGERNAUT IS STANDING TOUGH.

IT'S NOT HOT IN THE COCKPIT, BUT I STILL BREAK A SWEAT.

I REMEMBER THIS FEELING...

HYER! OH, MAN...! DON'T MOVE!

YOU GOT OFF LUCKY, SON, LEGS'LL BE BACK TO NORMAL IN ABOUT A YEAR.

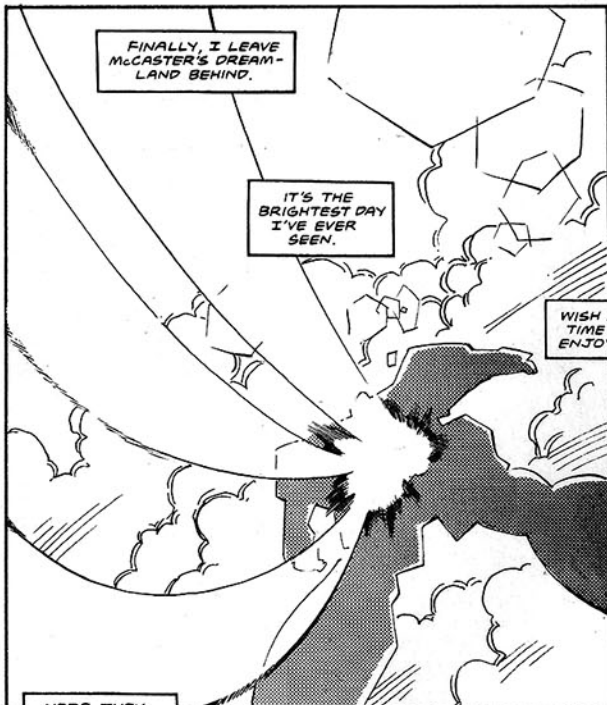
DAMN, THAT WAS A SWEET ROD, DUDE! HEY, DIG THE MOP! C.O. SAYS I'M SHIPPIN' OUT TO 'NAM NEXT WEEK!



I'LL WRITE YOU, MAN!

My-Nam's the coolest! Too bad you leg got busted up or you'd probably be going out in the bush with me and the guys. Good on the U of H acceptance tho. Least you can scam the babes over there. Drill Serge is finally taking my guys out.

WAS THAT THE DAY MY FUTURE WAS DECIDED?



FINALLY, I LEAVE McCASTER'S DREAM-LAND BEHIND.

IT'S THE BRIGHTEST DAY I'VE EVER SEEN.

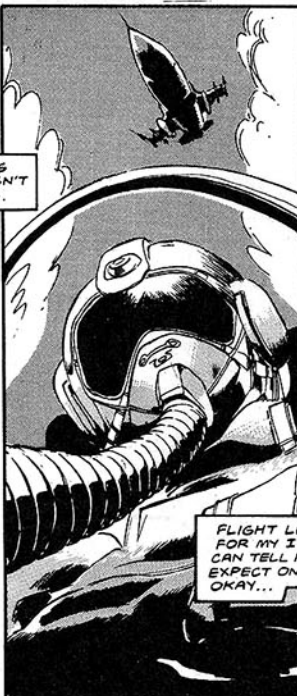
WISH I HAD TIME TO ENJOY IT.

RIGHT ON TIME.

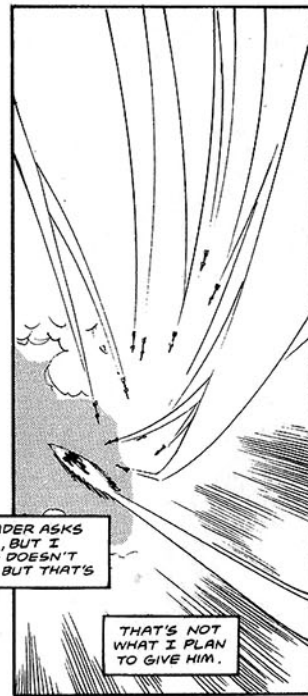


HERE THEY COME. JACK SAID THAT AMERICA HAD GONE TO DEFCON 2.

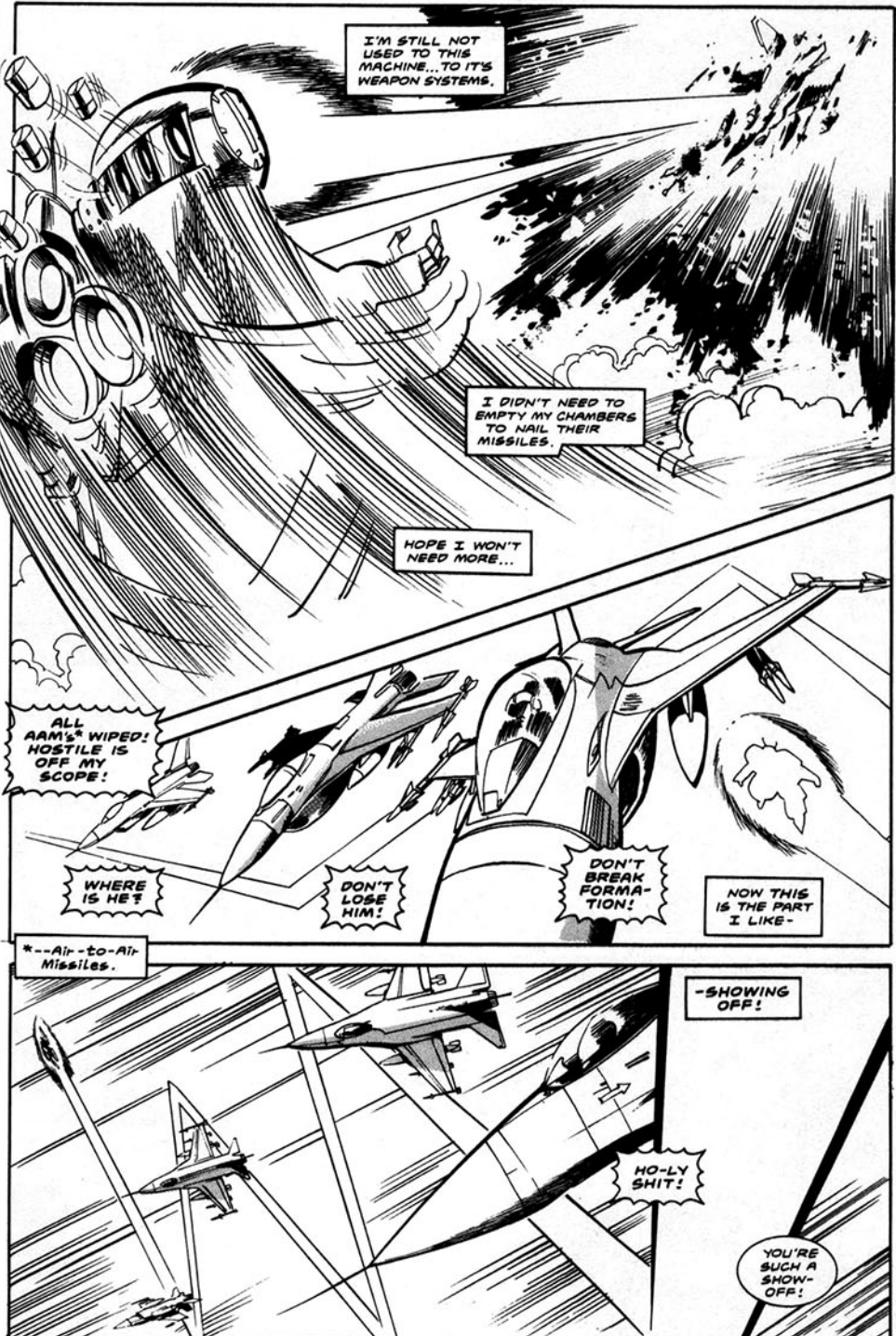
GUESS HE WASN'T LYING.



FLIGHT LEADER ASKS FOR MY I.P., BUT I CAN TELL HE DOESN'T EXPECT ONE. BUT THAT'S OKAY...



THAT'S NOT WHAT I PLAN TO GIVE HIM.



I'M STILL NOT USED TO THIS MACHINE... TO ITS WEAPON SYSTEMS.

I DIDN'T NEED TO EMPTY MY CHAMBERS TO NAIL THEIR MISSILES.

HOPE I WON'T NEED MORE...

ALL AAM'S WIPED! HOSTILE IS OFF MY SCOPE!

WHERE IS HE?

DON'T LOSE HIM!

DON'T BREAK FORMATION!

NOW THIS IS THE PART I LIKE-

*--Air-to-Air Missiles.

-SHOWING OFF!

HO-LY SHIT!

YOU'RE SUCH A SHOW-OFF!



YOUR FATHER DIDN'T LEAVE YOU ALL THAT MONEY TO SPEND ON TOYS! YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING MEANINGFUL WITH IT!

TERRIFIC. MORE MISSILES. AND I'M FRESH OUT OF MY OWN.

THERE'S PLENTY LEFT! WHAT'S WRONG WITH ENJOYING SOME OF IT MYSELF?

GUESS IT'S TIME TO GET IMAGINATIVE.

THAT'S NOT THE POINT!

WELL, AUNTIE, THEN HE SHOULDN'T HAVE TRUSTED ME WITH IT.

MY BROTHER BUILT HIS WHOLE BUSINESS OUT OF CAREFUL CHOICES AND SACRIFICE! HE WOULD NEVER HAVE ALLOWED YOU TO WASTE IT LIKE THAT!

GET OUT OF MY SIGHT! TAKE THAT... THING, AND LET ME RUN THE SHOP MYSELF.

I NEVER WANT TO SEE EITHER OF YOU AGAIN!

NICE.



HERE HE COMES! BREAK FORMATION!

GUESS I'D BETTER GO ON THE OFFENSIVE FOR A BIT--

STICK TO YOUR WING!

HE'S GONE, JACKSON! PULL OUT! OUT!!

-OR THIS MAY NOT LOOK CONVINCING ENOUGH.

HE'S GOOD. DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO PULL THE PUNCH.

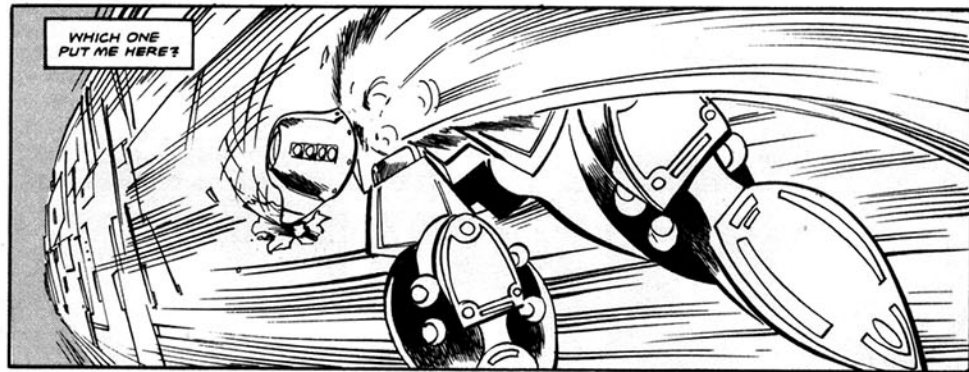
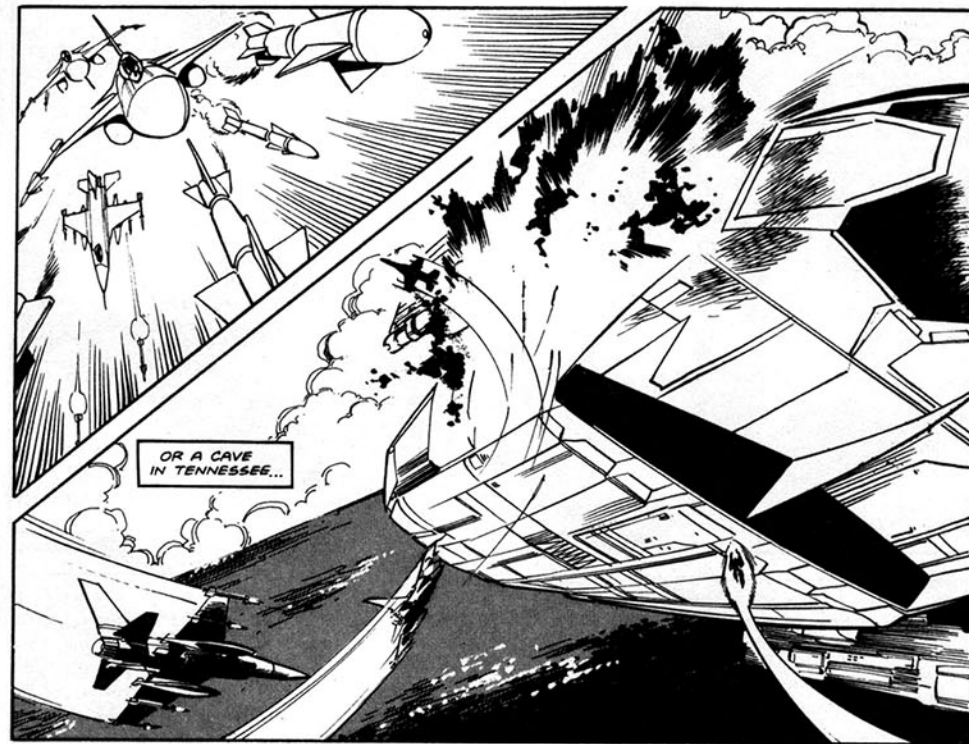
... BUT I WON'T LET HIM GET AWAY WITH IT.

GOOD, HE'LL MAKE IT.

PUNCH

PATOOOOM

I'M SORRY, SON. THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. YOUR FATHER'S NOT GOING TO MAKE IT.

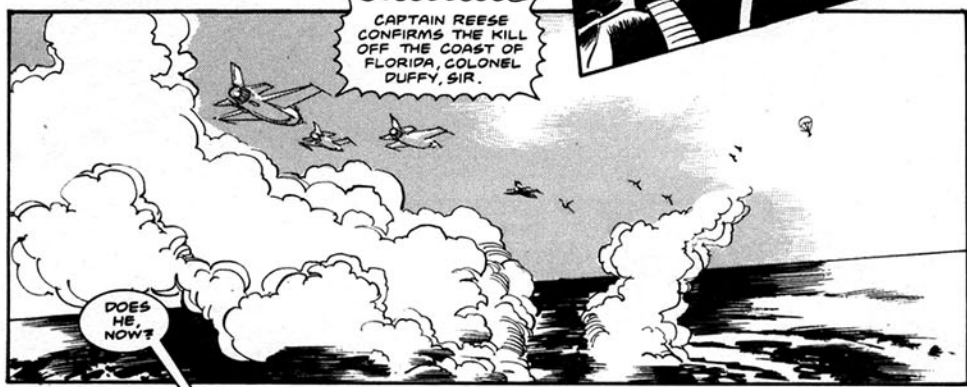




YOU
EARNED
YOUR PAY,
BOYS!

ONLY THE EARTH
KNOWS, AS SHE
KNOWS EVERYTHING
ABOUT ME.

AND I'LL
DIE TO
PROTECT
HER.



CAPTAIN REESE
CONFIRMS THE KILL
OFF THE COAST OF
FLORIDA, COLONEL
DUFFY, SIR.

DOES
HE
NOW?



THE
SQUADRON
FLEW RECONNAIS-
SANCE OVER THE
AREA AND REPORT-
ED NO FURTHER
ACTIVITY FROM
THE HOSTILE.

IF YOU
WISH, WE CAN
SEND NAVAL
FORCES AND
COAST GUARD
UNITS TO
CONTINUE
MONITORING,
SIR.



PLEASE
DO.



I'M NOT
TAKING ANY
MORE CHANCES
ON THIS ONE.