



MECHA

4

\$1.75
USA
\$2.20
CANADA



First Contact

Mecha No. 4 July 1988

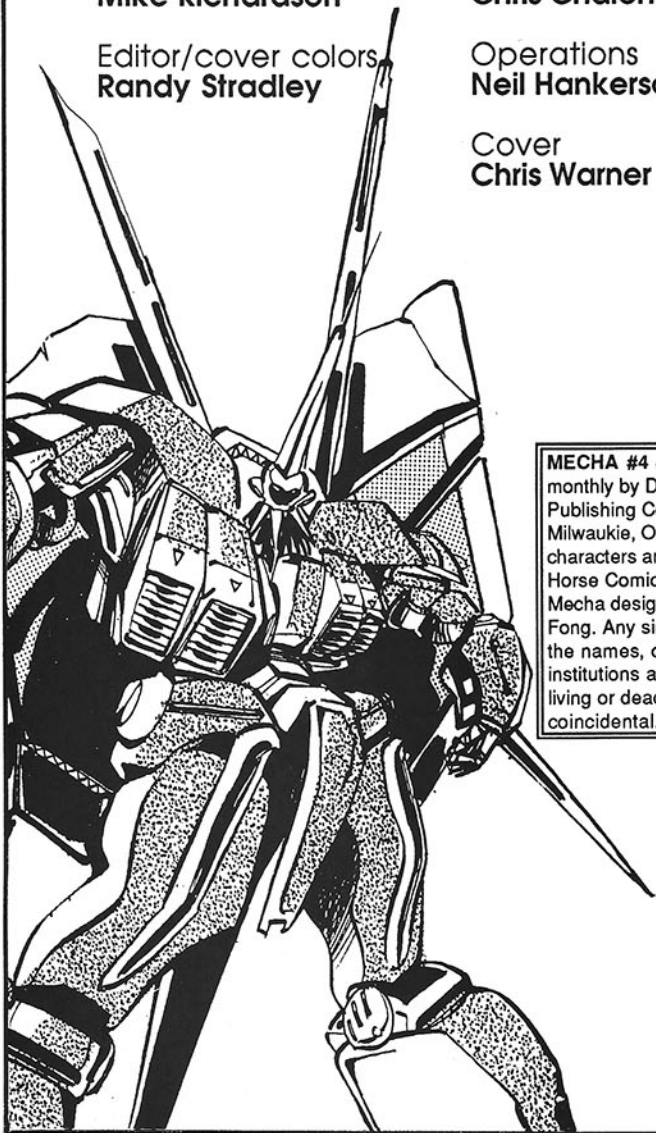
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Production
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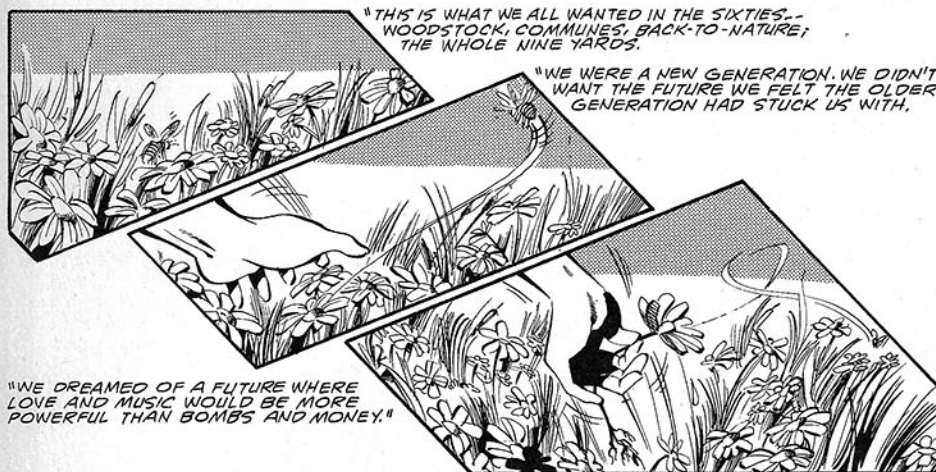
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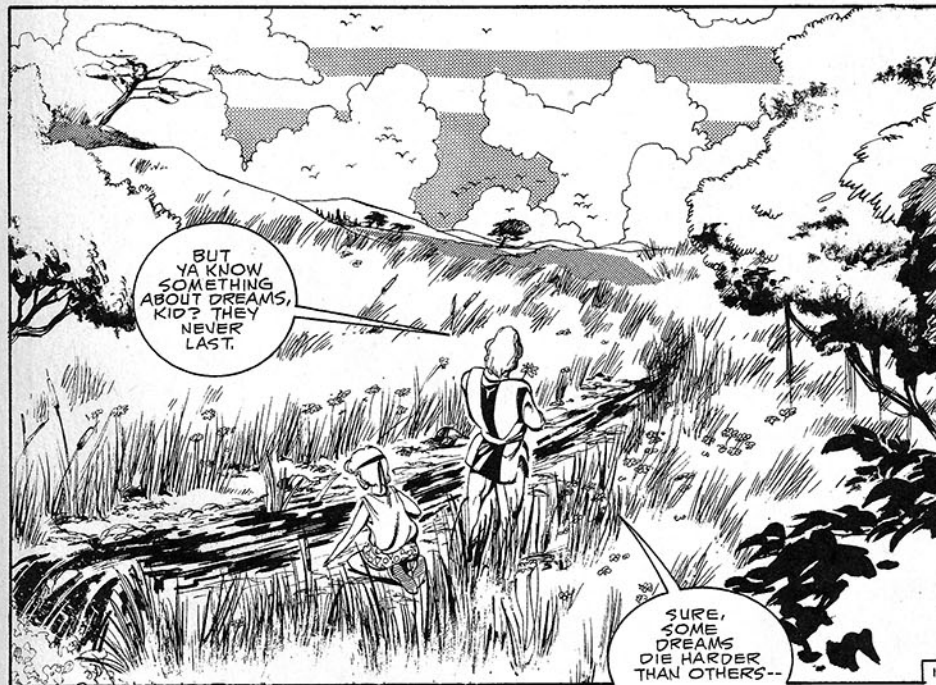
"THIS IS WHAT WE ALL WANTED IN THE SIXTIES--
WOODSTOCK, COMMUNES, BACK-TO-NATURE,
THE WHOLE NINE YARDS."

"WE WERE A NEW GENERATION. WE DIDN'T
WANT THE FUTURE WE FELT THE OLDER
GENERATION HAD STUCK US WITH."

"WE DREAMED OF A FUTURE WHERE
LOVE AND MUSIC WOULD BE MORE
POWERFUL THAN BOMBS AND MONEY."



IT WASN'T
A **BAD** DREAM.
JUST NAIVE.



BUT
YA KNOW
SOMETHING
ABOUT DREAMS,
KID? THEY
NEVER
LAST.

SURE,
SOME
DREAMS
DIE HARDER
THAN OTHERS--



--BUT THEY STILL DIE.

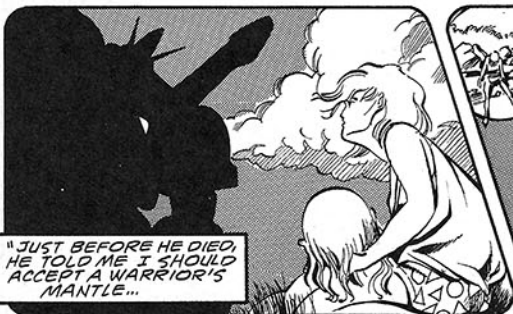


SORRY, TERRY, I REALLY SHOULDN'T BITCH. MY DREAMS SERVED ME PRETTY WELL

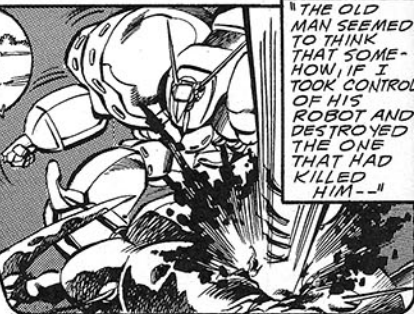


AS LONG AS I STAYED TRUE TO THEM.

THE OLD MAN ON THE ISLAND SAID SOMETHING ABOUT DREAMS...



"JUST BEFORE HE DIED, HE TOLD ME I SHOULD ACCEPT A WARRIOR'S MANTLE..."

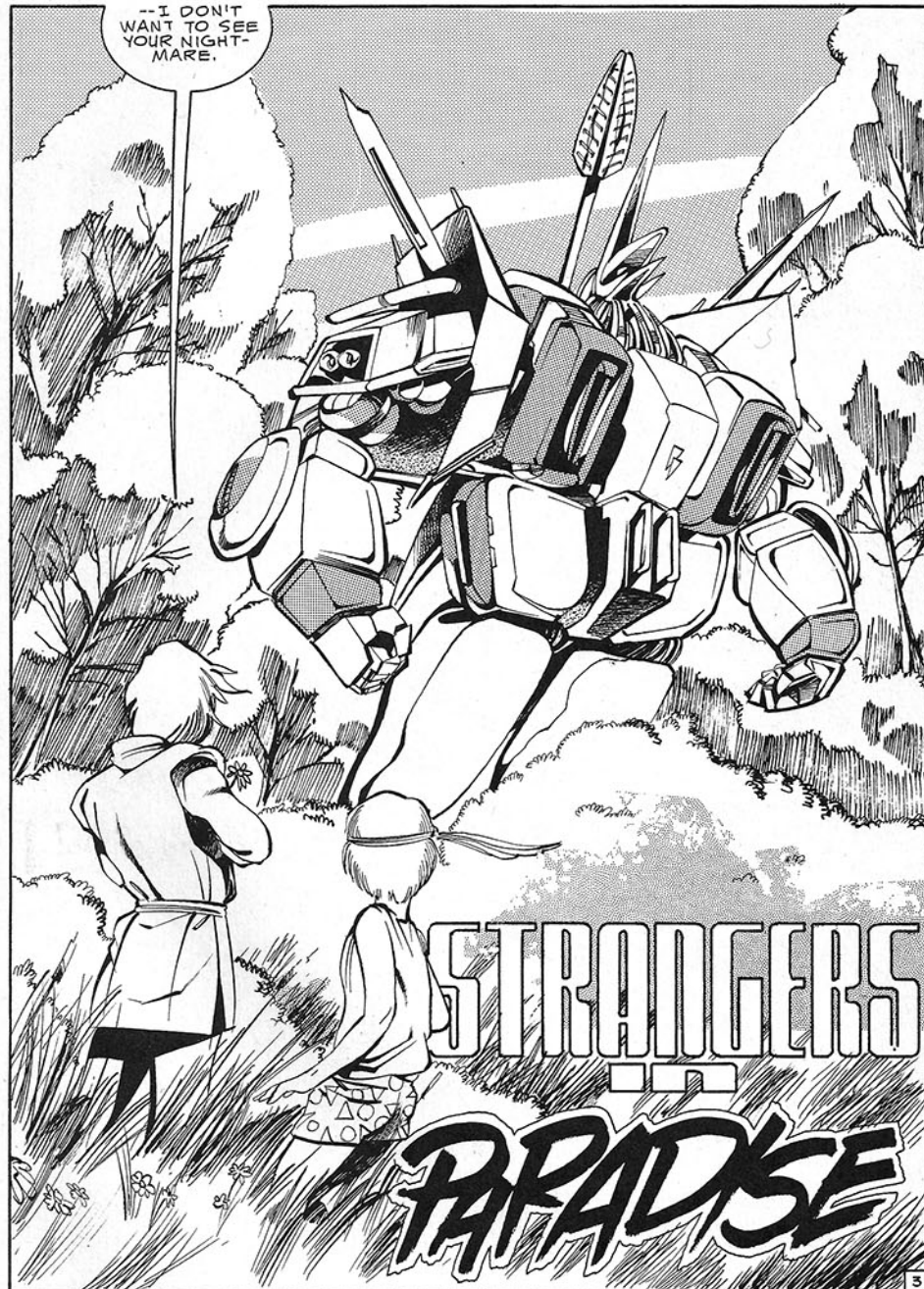


THE OLD MAN SEEMED TO THINK THAT SOMEHOW, IF I TOOK CONTROL OF HIS ROBOT AND DESTROYED THE ONE THAT HAD KILLED HIM--"



--I COULD MAKE MY DREAMS COME TRUE.

I DON'T KNOW, KID. IF THIS IS YOUR DREAM, COME TRUE--"

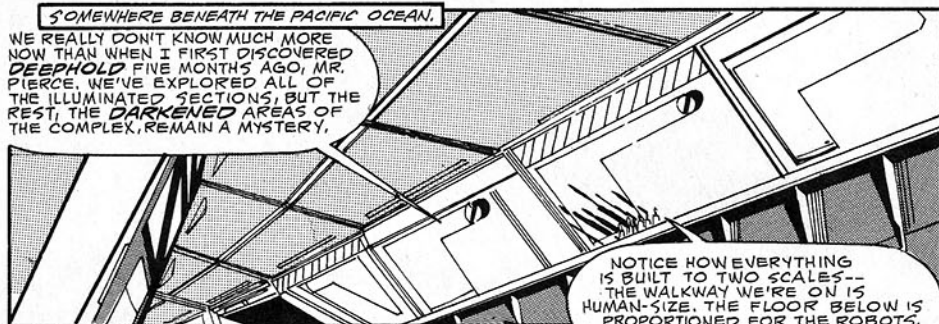


SCRIPT: RANDY STRADLEY PENCILS: HARRISON FONG INKS: ROBERT CARACOL LETTERS: JOHN WORKMAN

SPECIAL THANKS TO MICHAEL EBERT FOR PAGE 2!

SOMEWHERE BENEATH THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

WE REALLY DON'T KNOW MUCH MORE NOW THAN WHEN I FIRST DISCOVERED DEEPHOLD FIVE MONTHS AGO, MR. PIERCE. WE'VE EXPLORED ALL OF THE ILLUMINATED SECTIONS, BUT THE REST, THE DARKENED AREAS OF THE COMPLEX, REMAIN A MYSTERY.



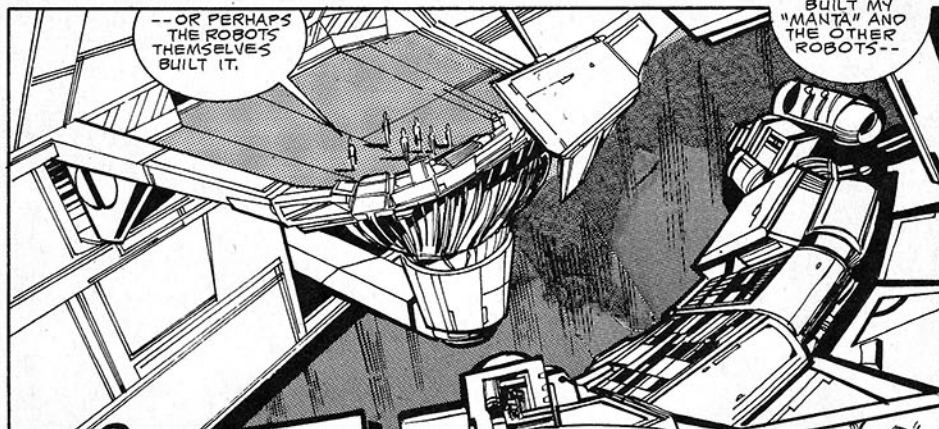
NOTICE HOW EVERYTHING IS BUILT TO TWO SCALES-- THE WALKWAY WE'RE ON IS HUMAN-SIZE. THE FLOOR BELOW IS PROPORTIONED FOR THE ROBOTS.



AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO BUILT THIS?

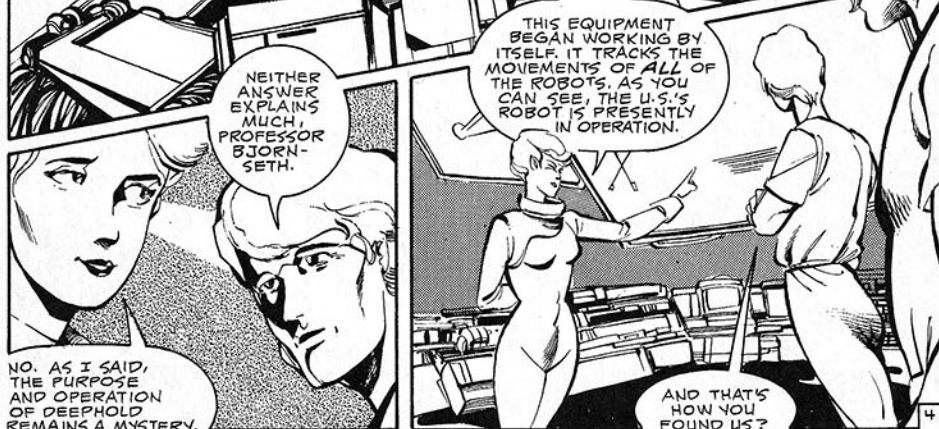
POSSIBLY THE SAME PEOPLE WHO BUILT MY "MANTA" AND THE OTHER ROBOTS--

--OR PERHAPS THE ROBOTS THEMSELVES BUILT IT.



THIS EQUIPMENT BEGAN WORKING BY ITSELF. IT TRACKS THE MOVEMENTS OF ALL OF THE ROBOTS, AS YOU CAN SEE, THE U.S.'S ROBOT IS PRESENTLY IN OPERATION.

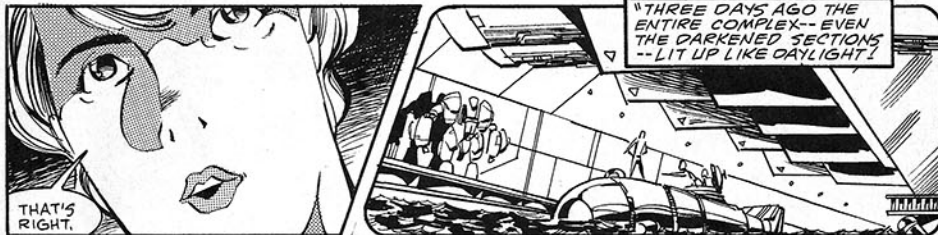
NEITHER ANSWER EXPLAINS MUCH, PROFESSOR BJORN-SETH.



AND THAT'S HOW YOU FOUND US?

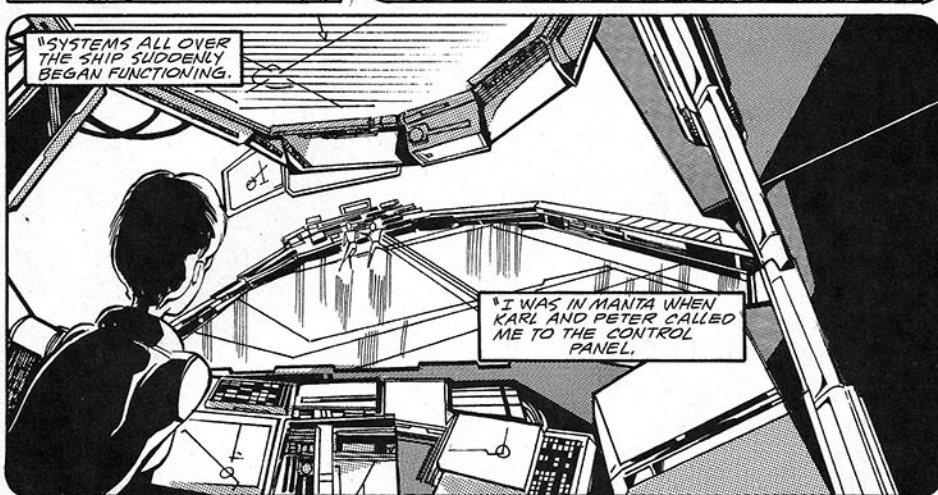
NO. AS I SAID, THE PURPOSE AND OPERATION OF DEEPHOLD REMAINS A MYSTERY.

THREE DAYS AGO THE ENTIRE COMPLEX-- EVEN THE DARKENED SECTIONS --LIT UP LIKE DAYLIGHT!



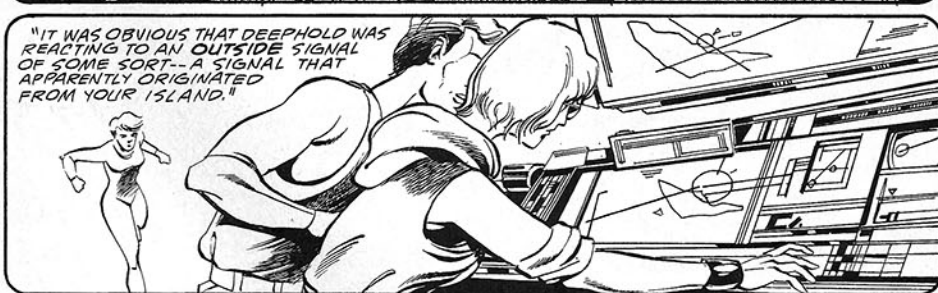
THAT'S RIGHT.

"SYSTEMS ALL OVER THE SHIP SUDDENLY BEGAN FUNCTIONING."



"I WAS IN MANTA WHEN KARL AND PETER CALLED ME TO THE CONTROL PANEL."

"IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT DEEPHOLD WAS REACTING TO AN OUTSIDE SIGNAL OF SOME SORT-- A SIGNAL THAT APPARENTLY ORIGINATED FROM YOUR ISLAND."



FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE WE MOVED INTO DEEPHOLD, I BEGAN TO FEEL AS IF MY CREW AND I WEREN'T ALONE IN THE WORLD--



THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOMEONE ELSE WHO COULD UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF MY DISCOVERY.



I'M SURE WORELY, CHANG, AND I APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEPHOLD, BUT WHY *US*? WHY NOT PRESENT YOUR FINDINGS TO SOMEONE IN POWER--

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, MR. PIERCE.



BY YOUR OWN ACCOUNT, YOU'VE SEEN THE POWER THE ROBOTS POSSESS--

AND YOU KNOW THAT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY CONTROLS TWO OF THEM. YOUR SON IS A PRISONER OF THAT SAME MILITARY. DO YOU THINK I'D TURN THE SECRETS OF DEEPHOLD OVER TO PEOPLE LIKE THAT?

OKAY, YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT.



BUT WHEN YOU GRABBED US UNDERWATER LAST NIGHT, HOW DID YOU KNOW WE WEREN'T NAVY FROGMEN?



DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!

YOU'RE MUCH TOO OLD TO BE NAVY FROGMEN!

SHE'S GOT OUR NUMBER, JACK.



BUT--

NOW WAIT A MINUTE--



IF YOU KNEW WE WEREN'T WITH THE NAVY, YOU MUST HAVE ALSO KNOWN THAT WE WEREN'T THE ONES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SIGNAL THAT SWITCHED THIS PLACE 'ON.'"

YES, IT SEEMS NOW THAT YOUR SON AND THE ROBOT ON THE ISLAND MUST TAKE THE CREDIT FOR THAT.



AND SINCE TERRY'S ROBOT IS THE KEY TO UNRAVELLING THE WHOLE MYSTERY OF DEEPHOLD, AND FROM WHAT YOU TELL ME, TERRY IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN OPERATE THAT ROBOT, YOU'LL USE YOUR ROBOT TO HELP RESCUE HIM-- RIGHT?

I'M SORRY, BUT I CANNOT DO THAT.



WHAT?

I PROMISED MYSELF I WOULD NEVER USE MANTA FOR DESTRUCTIVE PURPOSES. IT IS A PROMISE I INTEND TO KEEP.



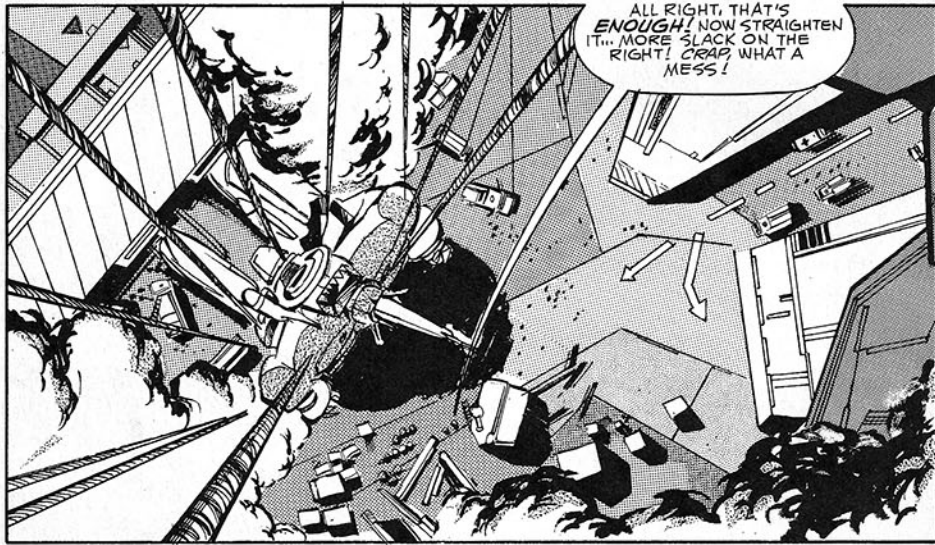
BUT MY SON! IF YOU WON'T HELP US, WE'LL BE FORCED TO--

MY CREW WILL PREVENT YOU FROM DOING ANYTHING TO JEOPARDIZE THE SAFETY OF YOURSELVES OR DEEPHOLD. NOW I MUST CONSIDER WHAT TO DO NEXT. IN THE MEANTIME, YOU WILL FOLLOW MY ORDERS.

IN A SECRET
U.S. AIR FORCE
BASE...



HIGHER!



ALL RIGHT, THAT'S
ENOUGH! NOW STRAIGHTEN
IT... MORE SLACK ON THE
RIGHT! CRAP, WHAT A
MESS!



COLONEL MEREK,
THE ENTIRE COUNTRY IS
ON ALERT, BUT THERE'S
STILL NO SIGN OF
HYER OR THE
BOY.



DON'T WORRY,
WE'LL FIND THEM,
AND WHEN WE DO,
HYER'LL BE SORRY
HIS PARENTS
EVER MET.



CLEAR THE HANGAR!
LAUNCH IS IN
ONE MINUTE!



INITIATING
LAUNCH!

UNIT
TWO
STAND
BY FOR
LAUNCH!



DOCTOR
CONOVER?

YES,
WHAT IS IT,
PRIVATE?

COLONEL MEREK
SAID TO REPORT
TO YOU. THERE
WAS A, UH, CASUALTY
EP, AS A RESULT
OF HYER'S BREAKOUT.



I SEE.

PUT
THE BODY
IN THE
MORGUE.

YOU MEN NEEDN'T WORRY
ABOUT FILLING OUT A REPORT
ON THIS. I'LL SEE THAT
IT'S TAKEN CARE OF.



YES,
MA'AM.



THE SOVIET COUNTERPART TO THE AMERICAN BASE...

ALEKSI AND THE OTHERS ARE EXCELLENT PILOTS, DR. TARNOPFSKY-- THEIR ROBOTS SIMPLY CANNOT MATCH MY TANTSOVSHIK'S SPEED OR MANEUVERABILITY.

HANA IS CORRECT --IT IS A MATTER OF MECHANICAL LIMITATIONS IN THE DUPLICATE ROBOTS RATHER THAN HUMAN WEAKNESS.



IF THERE WERE A WAY TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF POWER AVAILABLE TO EACH ROBOT WITHOUT DRASTICALLY INCREASING THEIR WEIGHT--

THERE IS A WAY, ALEKSEI.



THE ORIGINAL BUILDERS OF CAPTAIN REZKOVA'S ROBOT FOUND THE ANSWER. IF WE COULD TEAR IT APART, PIECE-BY-PIECE...

...IT IS POSSIBLE WE COULD DUPLICATE THE MECHANISM.



HOWEVER, AT THIS POINT...

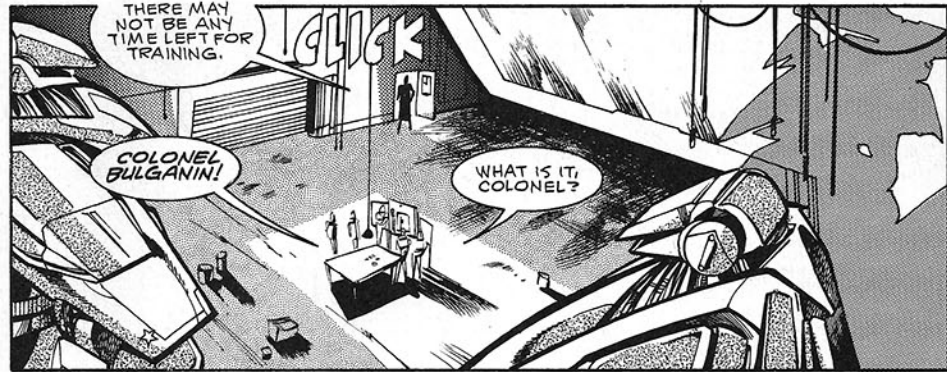
...THAT WOULD BE AKIN TO KILLING THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG.

WHEW!



NO, FOR THE TIME BEING WE MUST WORK WITH THE INADEQUACIES OF THE DUPLICATES...

...AND HOPE THAT INCREASED TRAINING WILL DO FOR NOW.



THERE MAY NOT BE ANY TIME LEFT FOR TRAINING.

COLONEL BULGANIN!

WHAT IS IT, COLONEL?



I'VE RECEIVED ORDERS TO SCRAMBLE THE SQUADRON --CONDITION RED!

WAR!?



I HOPE IT WILL NOT LEAD TO THAT.



INTELLIGENCE HAS LOCATED THE SOURCE OF THE SIGNAL CAPTAIN REZKOVA MONITORED FROM HER ROBOT THREE DAYS AGO. APPARENTLY THE AMERICANS ARE STILL SOMEWHAT AHEAD OF US IN RADAR TECHNOLOGY.



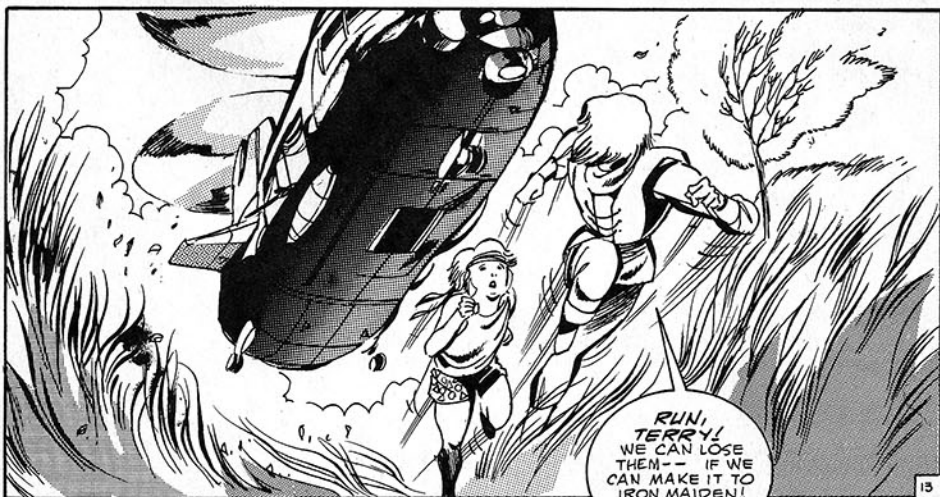
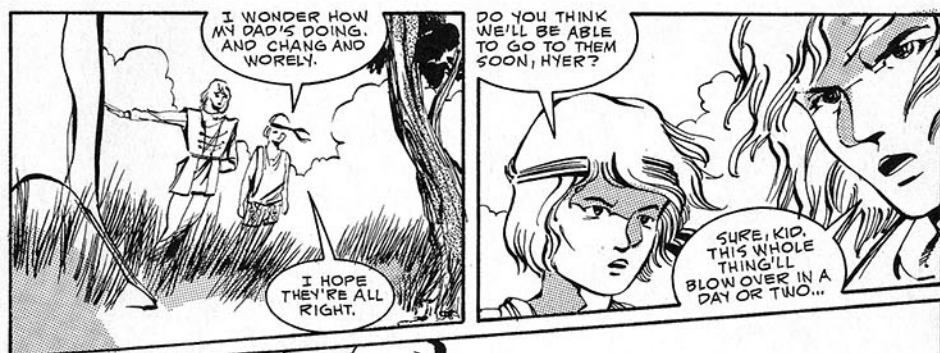
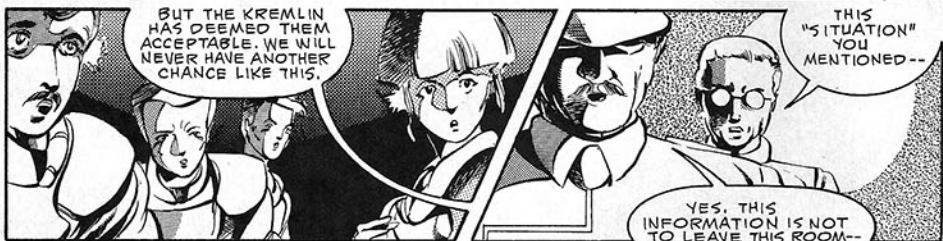
THE AMERICANS?

YES, THE SIGNAL ORIGINATED FROM A NEWLY DISCOVERED ROBOT. THE AMERICANS WERE ON THE SCENE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY--

BUT WE MAY HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO WREST THE UNIT FROM THEM.



ATTACK AN AMERICAN BASE!?





HANG ON! THIS LIFT IS ONLY MADE FOR ONE.

MAIDEN, TAKE US UP!

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THEY CATCH US, HYER?

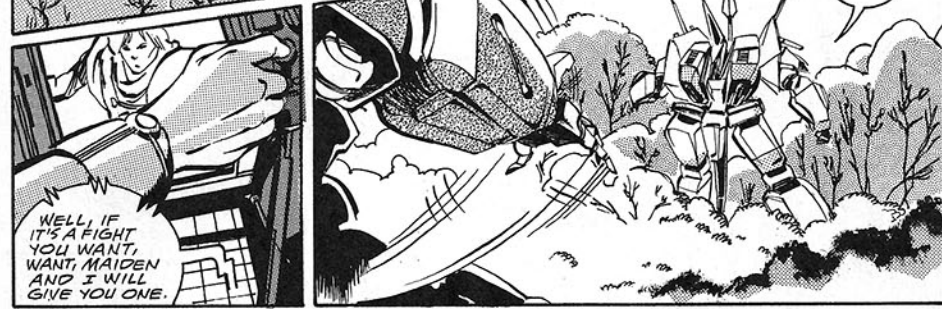


I DON'T THINK CAPTURE IS WHAT THEY HAVE IN MIND, KID.



I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU WANTING TO GET ME, KEENE, BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'D GO ALONG WITH KILLING THE KID!

DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, HUH?



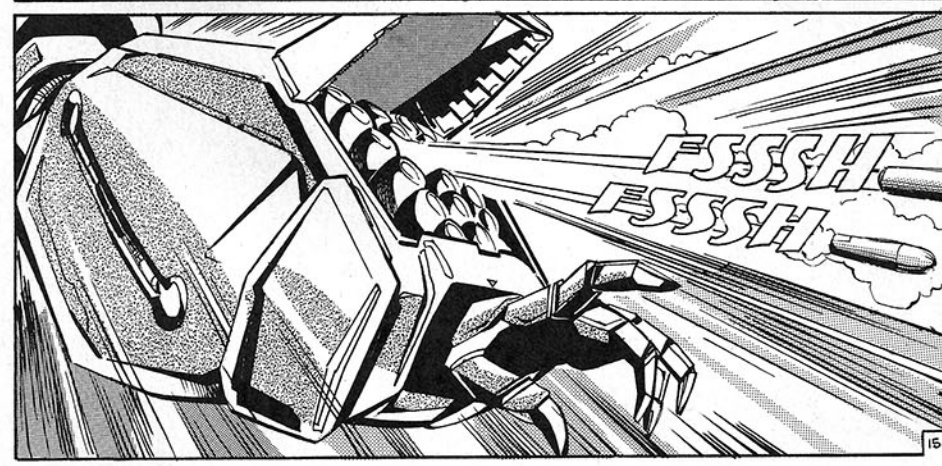
WELL, IF IT'S A FIGHT YOU WANT, WANT, MAIDEN AND I WILL GIVE YOU ONE.

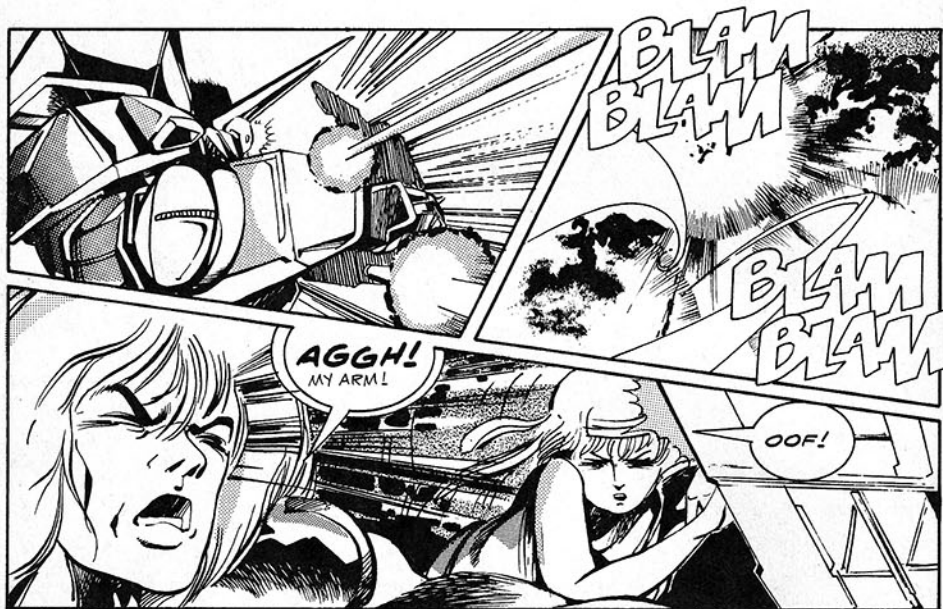
UH... OH...

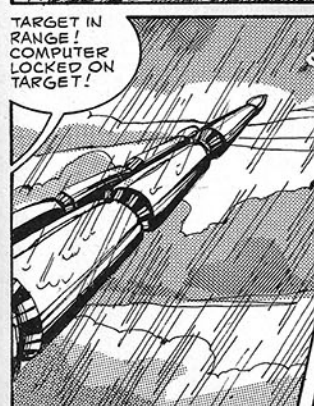
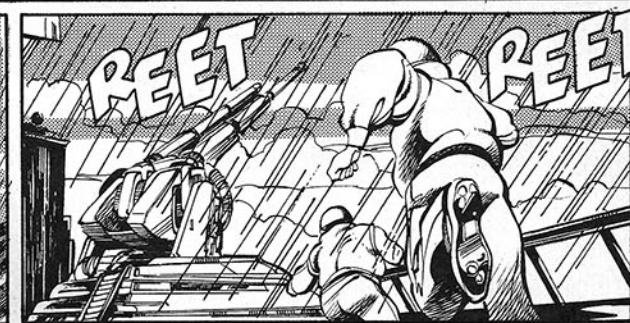
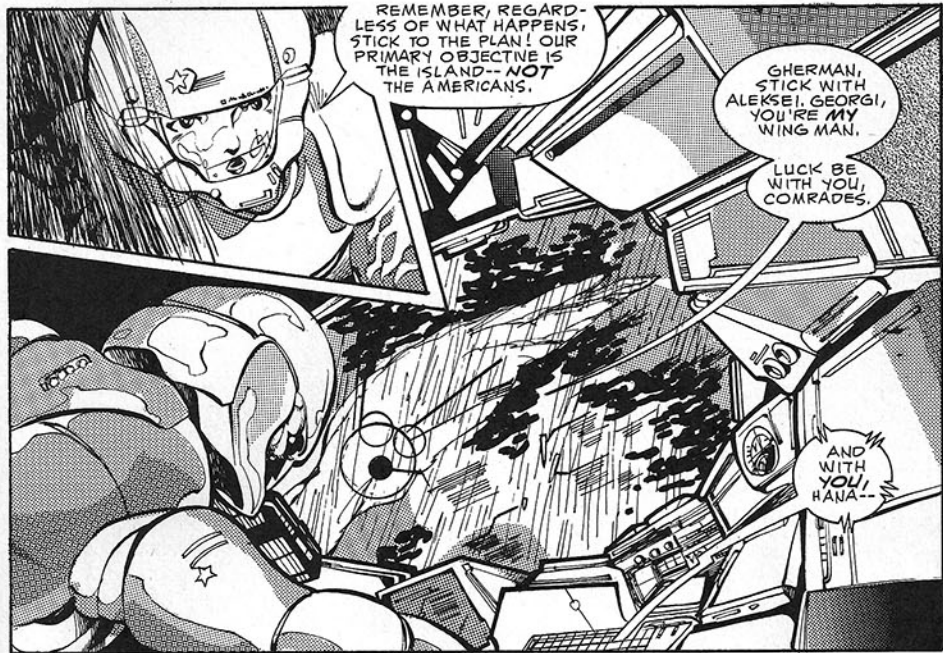


HE LOCKED HIS TARGETING SYSTEMS ON US!

WHAT'S HE GONNA DO?





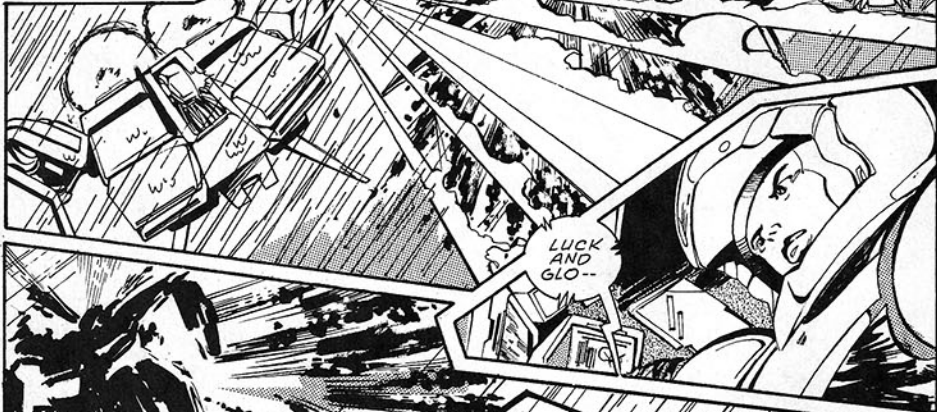


БАМБАМБАМ
БАМБАМ



GEORGI!
EVASIVE!

IT'S NO
USE, HANA--
I HAVE
NOT YOUR
SPEED.



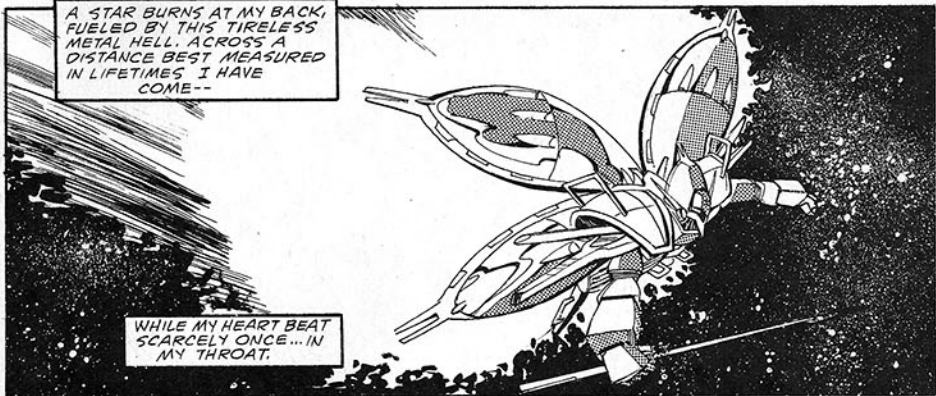
LUCK
AND
GLO--



GEORGI!

LUCK AND
GLORY...

A STAR BURNS AT MY BACK,
FUELED BY THIS TIRELESS
METAL HELL. ACROSS A
DISTANCE BEST MEASURED
IN LIFETIMES I HAVE
COME--



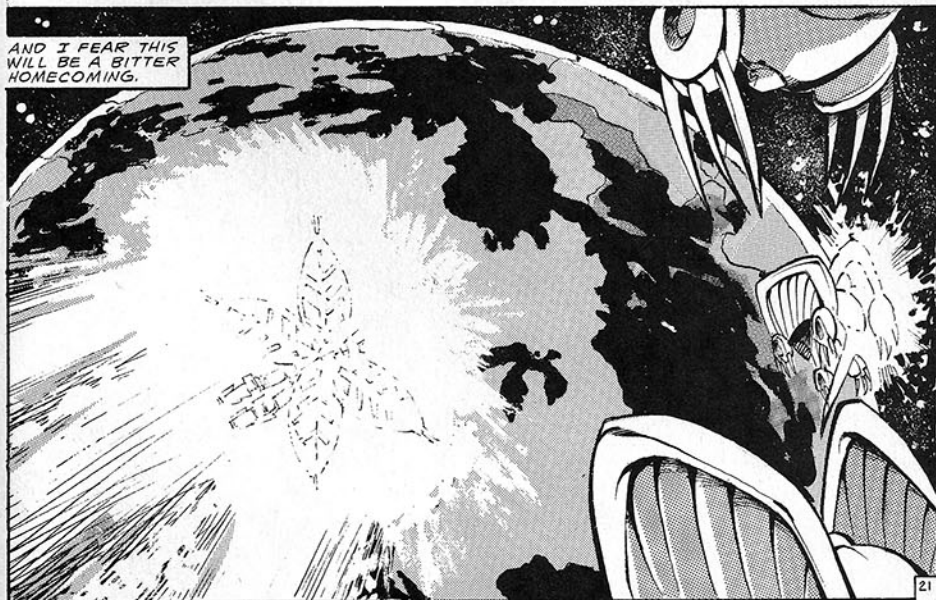
WHILE MY HEART BEAT
SCARCELY ONCE...IN
MY THROAT.



AND I AM
TOO LATE.



MY TORMENTORS ARE
ALREADY HERE--



AND I FEAR THIS
WILL BE A BITTER
HOMECOMING.

SAN FRANCISCO.

ARE WE SAFE NOW, HYER?

I WOULDN'T COUNT ON IT!

BOOM!

KEENE'S UNIT IS FASTER THAN MAIDEN ANYWAY, AND NOW THAT HE'S WINGED ME--

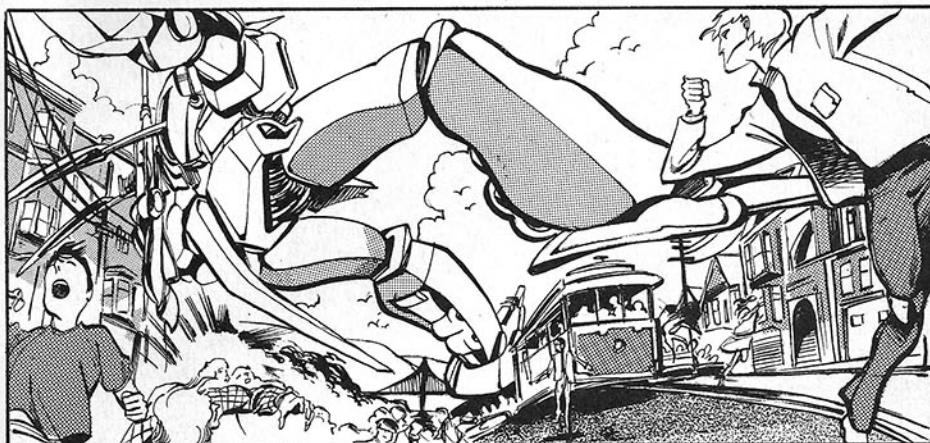
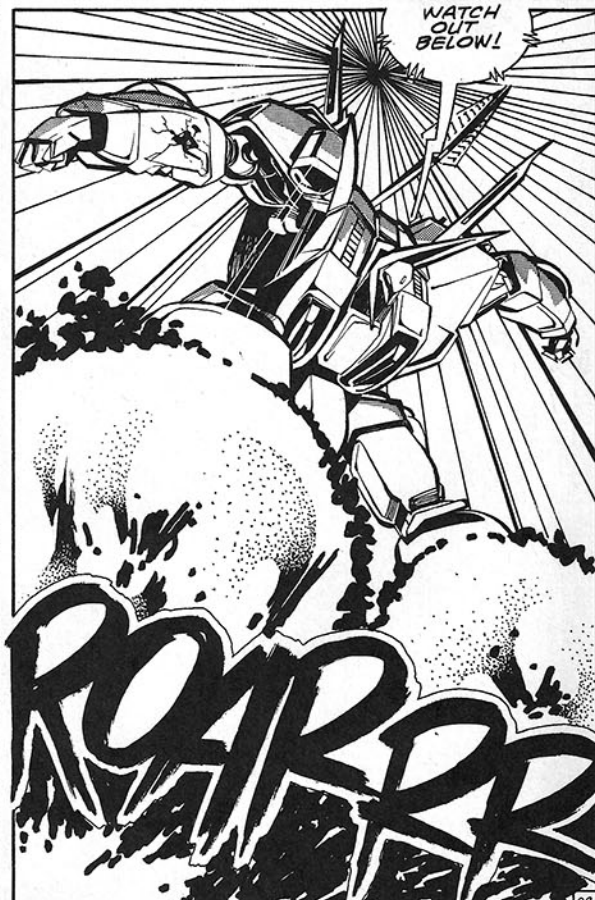
UHH!

THE CONTROLS ARE SO SLUGGISH... COME ON, MAIDEN!

BRACE FOR IMPACT!

HOLD ON, KID!

WATCH OUT BELOW!





WELCOME TO SAN FRANCISCO... BROTHER, WHAT A LANDING.



AT LEAST IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ANY CIVILIANS WERE HURT.



YET...

WE'VE GOT COMPANY, KEENE'S HERE.



OKAY, TERRY, OUT YOU GO!

HUH?

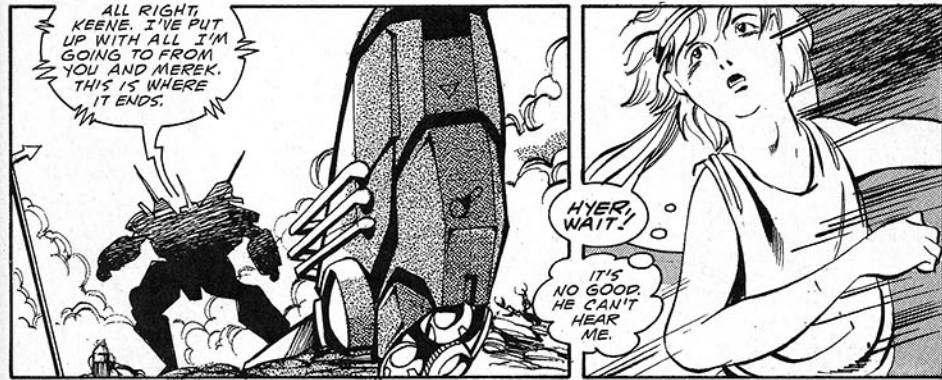


OUT!

GET TO SAFETY, SORRY ABOUT THIS MESS -- SORRY I COULDN'T DO MORE FOR YOU!

WISH ME LUCK.

BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU?



ALL RIGHT, KEENE, I'VE PUT UP WITH ALL I'M GOING TO FROM YOU AND MERK. THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS.



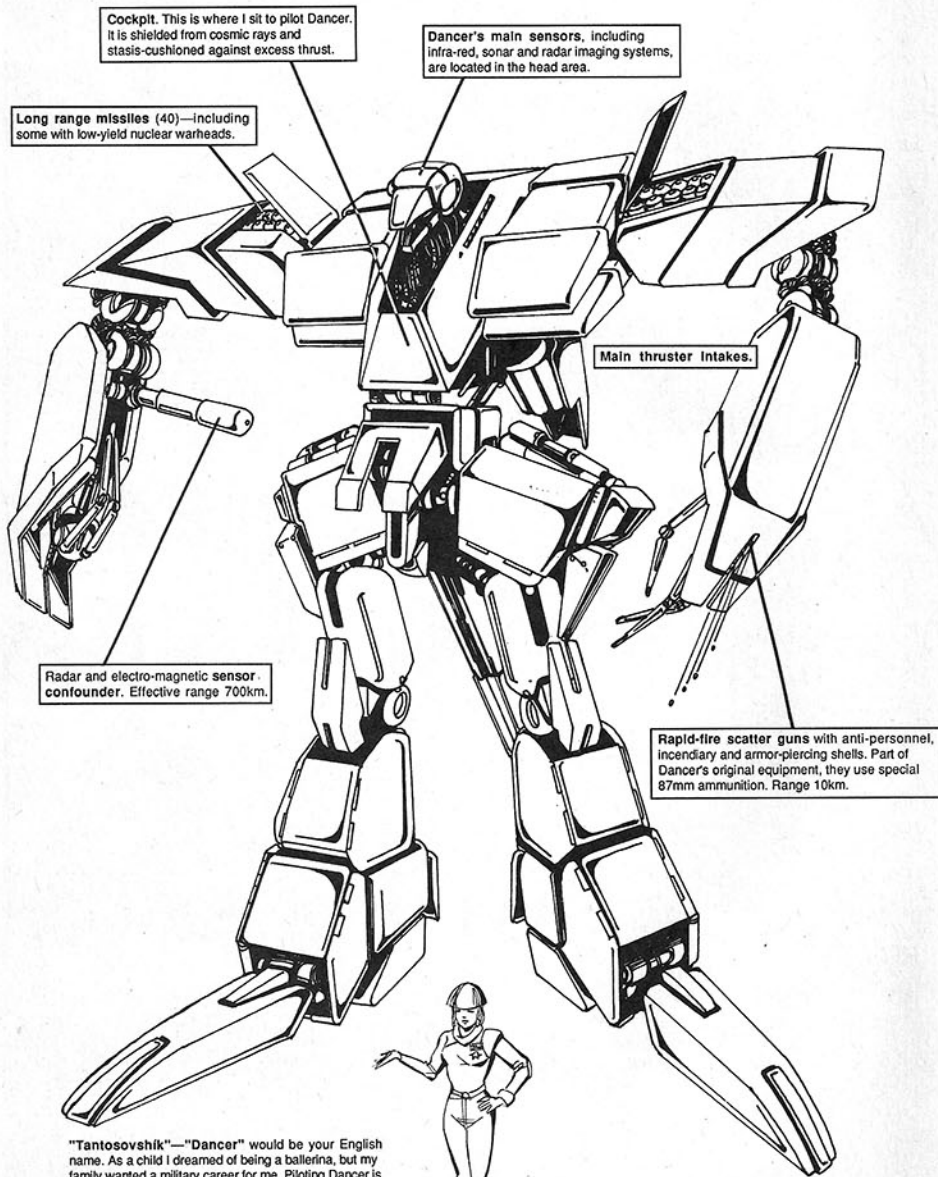
HYER, WAIT!

IT'S NO GOOD, HE CAN'T HEAR ME.



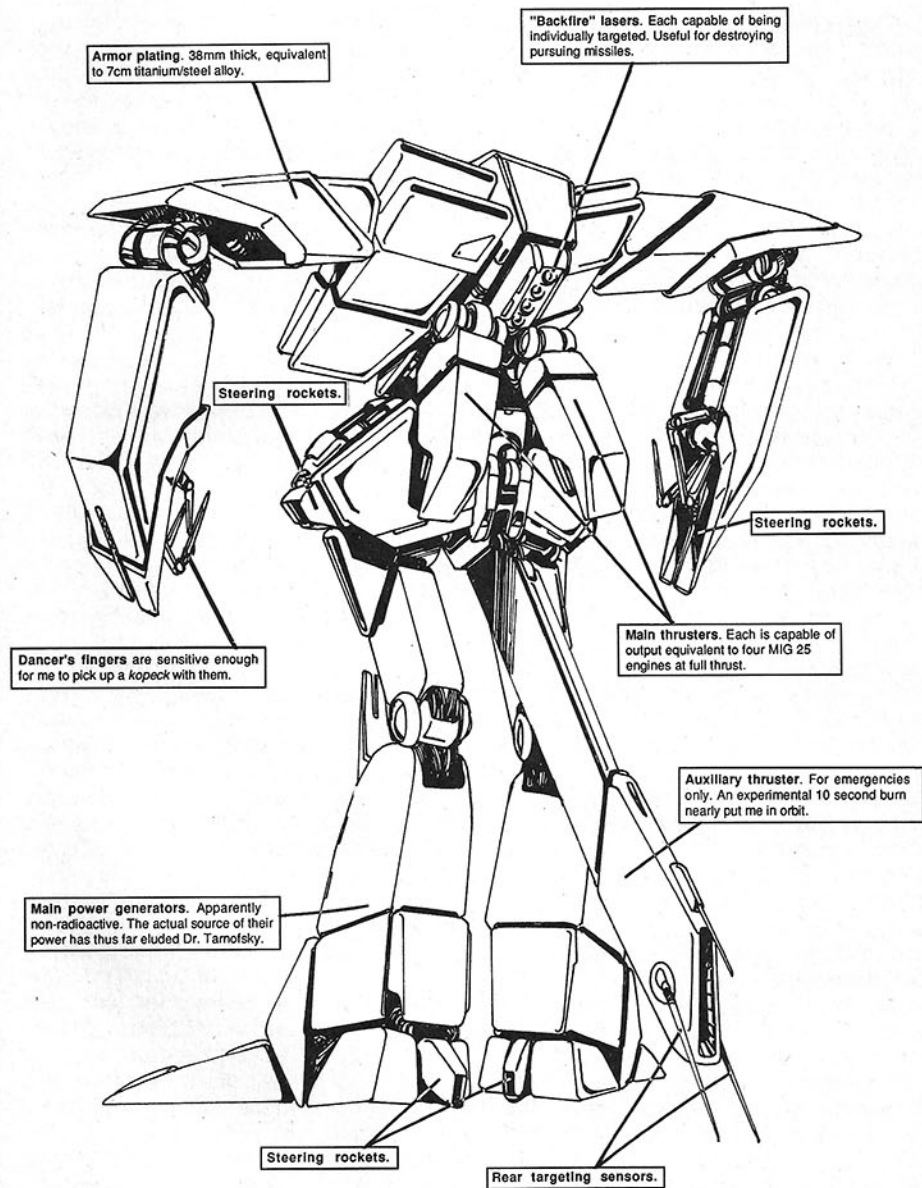
COME ON, KEENE -- LET'S SETTLE THIS!

IN THIRTY DAYS: THE ENEMY ARRIVES, AND THE ACTION REALLY BEGINS!



"Tantosovshik"—"Dancer" would be your English name. As a child I dreamed of being a ballerina, but my family wanted a military career for me. Piloting Dancer is perhaps as close as I'll ever come to my dream. Someday I would like to be free of the military—particularly the violence, but for now I have my orders.

Height: 5.5 meters (approx. 18 ft.)
 Weight: 38 metric tons (42 U.S. tons)
 Land speed: 72 kph (45 mph)
 Air speed (without auxiliary thruster): mach 10
 With auxiliary thruster: (estimate) mach 20



Feedback

Send your comments c/o Dark Horse Comics, 2008 Monroe, Milwaukie, OR 97222

I knew when the time came to write this column that **Mecha** #3 would still be at the printers, and I was resigned to the fact that I'd once again be dipping into the stack of letters we received in response to issue #2. Though the stack was certainly sizable enough to supply the needs of this column (actually, it's big enough to fill four or five of these columns!), I regretted that most of the letters were months old. Then came a surprise: two new letters! You don't know how gratifying it is to know that a book that hasn't had a new issue on the stands in six months (and was never very timely to begin with!) hasn't been forgotten by its readers. Not only are **Mecha** fans a vocal bunch, but they're loyal to boot! Thanks for sticking with us. However, because folks still haven't had a chance to respond to the extended "Name the Letter Column" contest, we'll delay the announcement of the winner one (but only one) more issue. Now to the mail:

Dear Randy,

I would just like you to know that **Mecha** is simply First Class. I think Harrison, Nichols, John, Steve and yourself make a great team—judging from the outstanding quality of **Mecha**. The

artwork in both #1 and #2 was vary captivating, especially the fight sequences between Terry and the "monster" in issue #1, and the "lone Mecha rider" and the demons in space scenes in #2. Do maintain the high standards of your comic!

However, there is a problem: your comic is just too good. After buying the first two issues, I spent weeks looking for issue #3 in every major comic shop in Singapore (our country is only 616 square kilometers). But my efforts proved futile, and it's so very exasperating—to put it mildly. One of the shop owners told me that **Mecha** had been discontinued! Boy, I really felt like screaming then; all my efforts hunting high and low wasted.

Please write back to me and tell me **Mecha** is still around, pleeeeeease. Tell me also how I can subscribe to this fantastic comic; do I use bank draft? money order? who do I send my subscription to? If I do subscribe, is it possible to start with **Mecha** #3, since I already have #1 and #2? Goodness! I need to know so much, how much to pay, how long to wait...aarrgh! The waiting, it takes years off my life!

So reply soon, for a big fan right across the Pacific.

Yours truly,

Hwee Jack Goh
Republic of Singapore
P.S.—I truly envy **Mecha** fans in America. They're so close to what they love to read.

*Relax, Hwee. I'll personally see to it that you get a copy of issue #3. After all, how can I disappoint such a dedicated fan? The delays are over, Harrison's wrist is mended (did I mention last issue that Harrison had broken his wrist late last year in a motorcycle accident—shortly after issue #2 hit the stands? Well, I should have, but don't worry, he's doing fine) and we should have the new, improved, black and white **Mecha** coming to you monthly!*

Dear Randy & Harrison,

I really liked **Mecha** #1 and #2. They were the best! I thought the art was great and the story even better!

Though I am a great **Robotech** fan, I must admit **Mecha** was much better. At first I didn't quite understand the story, but once I understood it, I felt it was extraordinary! I like the idea of putting the layout of Iron Maiden in issue #2, too.

Finally, I have some questions: Are you planning to have layouts of the other mecha like Jolly Green and Terry's? Are the people who first

touch the mecha the only ones who can pilot them? Last, will future stories deal more with the individual characters?

Well, thanks, and keep up the great work, huh?

Scott Baker
North Las Vegas, NV

Thanks for your support, Scott. Some of the events (and the reasons behind them) in the first two issues were left intentionally vague. I've never been one that believed in talking down to an audience, and we knew some readers might be a bit confused at first, but Harrison and I felt that if they were given the chance to arrive at the answers to their questions themselves they'd be more interested in discovering more about the characters and the series than if we spelled everything out for everyone right at the beginning. I hope we were correct.

In answer to your questions: Yes, as you can see by the preceding pages, we are continuing with the "layouts" of the various mecha. And, yes, only the first person to touch a mecha can pilot it. The initial touch initiates a "linking mechanism" within the mecha that "personalizes" that particular unit to a specific pilot. During this linking sequence, the mecha absorbs what it needs to know about the pilot's language, thought patterns, and understanding of the situation. In the

case of the old aborigine in issue #1, the onboard computers in the mecha "realized" that because of the man's belief that the mecha was part of a dream, he was a less than ideal choice for a pilot. So, instead of pursuing its original purpose (which will become clear as the series progresses), the mecha prepared the man for the arrival of a more suitable pilot (who, as chance would have it, turned out to be young Terry Pierce), "implanting" an understanding of English (and perhaps other languages) directly into the man's mind.

Lastly, whether or not future stories deal with individual characters is largely dependent on how well the series sells, and how long we can keep it going...

Dear Dark Horse Comics,

I first saw **Mecha** #1 when a pen-friend photocopied the entire issue and sent it to me. I loved it, and wasn't disappointed with issue #2. I'm a dedicated Japanimation fan, and in particular like giant robots and combat suits—and I'd like to thank Harrison Fong for his excellent designs and concepts which rival the best.

Mecha also has an interesting and intriguing story as well as great art—but you've already heard that. I'm glad someone finally decided to do what you have done without having to "take" Japanese crea-

tions and mutilate them (i.e. **Robotech**), or having a line of toys lurking around the corner, ready to pounce.

I look forward to reading **Mecha** monthly. I also look forward to **Mecha** merchandise, and I just plain look forward to **Mecha!** Thanks Harrison, Randy and the crew behind **Mecha!**

Yours sincerely,
Nigel Rawson
Melbourne, Australia

*I appreciate the sentiments behind your "no toys lurking around the corner" comment, Nigel, but I must admit that it wouldn't bother me to have a line of **Mecha** "action figures," or a TV series, or any of the hundred-and-one other merchandising deals that are common these days. In lieu of that, however, we're more than content to keep producing **Mecha** as "just a comic" as long as we have dedicated fans like you.*

Well, that will wrap it up for this issue. I'm sure Robert Caracol would appreciate any comments readers might have on his inking debut. I think Robert's going to go a long way in this business.

Next issue: Harrison takes over the inks as well as the pencils as things go from bad to worse for Terry, Hyer and San Francisco!

See you then!

—Randy