


UNTARNISHED, SILVER-BRIGHT, THE SHIP, AS ALWAYS, FAULTLESSLY APPROACHES THE NEXT STOP IN ITS LONG, LONG JOURNEY.


WITHIN ITS WALLS OF ETERNAL ALLOY, THE MAN, AS ALWAYS, DESPAIRS.

THE HOMECOMING



IT'S *WRONG*, COMPUTER. I CAN TELL ALREADY. THE *TREES*... THE *COLOR* OF THE *SKY*... *ALL WRONG!*

ARE YOU *SURE?* AFTER SO MANY... ARE YOU *REALLY SURE?*




LOOK! HERE SHE COMES... A *BLONDE!* I-I... I'M *POSITIVE* SHE WASN'T A *BLONDE.*

POSITIVE? AFTER A *HUNDRED* WORLDS... MAYBE A *THOUSAND* ... PERHAPS. NOW...? *NEVER.*

TRY IT, IT CAN'T *HURT* TO TRY!

JASON! JASON, DARLING... AT *LAST!* AFTER SO *LONG*...!



LARA...! OH, LORD...

AND FOR THE MOMENT, AS ALWAYS, HE *BELIEVES*...

by ARCHIE GOODWIN
and AL WILLIAMSON

...BECAUSE, AS ALWAYS, HE WANTS TO BELIEVE.

SOMETIMES IT COMES WITH FOOD,
WITH DRINK... A TASTE TOO
ALIEN, A FLAVOR
TOO STRANGE.

LATER, THE DOUBT
WILL BEGIN.

BUT IF NOT THEN...

...ALWAYS IN THE MOMENTS
OF LOVE, OF QUIET
INTIMACY.

THERE FOLLOWS, AS
ALWAYS, THE ATTEMPTS
TO HIDE IT, TO IGNORE
IT, TO HOPE IT WILL GO
AWAY.

NO MATTER HOW NEAR, HOW CLOSE TO
PERFECT, SOMEHOW THE HOLLOWNESS,
THE UNREALITY MAKES ITSELF FELT.

INSTEAD...IT
GROWS.

FINALLY, AS ALWAYS, THE
TIME COMES. HE LOOKS AT
HER. SHE LOOKS AT HIM.
THE TRUTH IS FACED, THE
ADMISSION MADE.

...YOU'RE NOT
MY JASON. BUT
EVEN KNOWING,
I CAN'T HELP
BUT WISH...

BUT WISHING CAN'T
CHANGE THE LIE,
CAN'T MAKE THE
REALITIES MESH.
THE ONLY THING LEFT,
AS ALWAYS, IS THE
LEAVING...

AND, PERHAPS, THE HOPE. NEXT TIME. NEXT TIME...

I'M SORRY, JASON.
TRULY SORRY.

AT LEAST IT WAS CLOSE, COMPUTER.
CLOSER THAN SOME.

THE LONG, LONG JOURNEY CONTINUES...

...UNTIL THE
NEXT WORLD...

...THE NEXT *LANDING*...

...THE NEXT WOMAN
NAMED LARA WHO
WAITS.

THE VARIATIONS ARE ENDLESS.
THE DETAILS MYRIAD AND
CONFUSING. YET FOR ALL
THAT... DEPRESSINGLY
THE SAME.

JASON, IS
SOMETHING
...WRONG?

EVENTS BECOME REPETITIVE,
INEVITABLE, DESPITE A
GLOSS OF DIFFERENCE...

...INEVITABLE AS THE
MOMENT OF DEPARTURE.

WE HAD TO TRY,
JASON. IT NEVER
HURTS TO--

WRONG,
COMPUTER.
IT ALWAYS
HURTS.

THE LONG, LONG JOURNEY GOES ON. SPACE, TIME BECOME CONCEPTS WITHOUT *MEANING*, FOR THE DISTANCES TRAVELLED ARE NOT BETWEEN *STARS*...

...BUT BETWEEN *UNIVERSES*. UNIVERSES CLOSE AS PEARLS STRUNG ON THE SAME STRAND; UNIVERSES FAR APART AS SANITY AND MADNESS.

YOU SHOULD SLEEP NOW, JASON. REST.

THE FREEZE GAS BEGINS TO SEEP INTO THE LIFE-SUPPORT BUBBLE, ODORLESS. COLORLESS. NUMBING. QUICK.

I NEED THE SLEEP, COMPUTER... BUT NOT THE AWAKENING. I'M SICK OF IT... SICK OF IT ALL.

YOU ALWAYS SAY THAT WHEN YOU'RE *TIRED*, JASON. SLEEP. REST...

...I'M HERE TO *PROTECT* YOU. *NEXT TIME* COULD BE IT.

NEXT TIME...

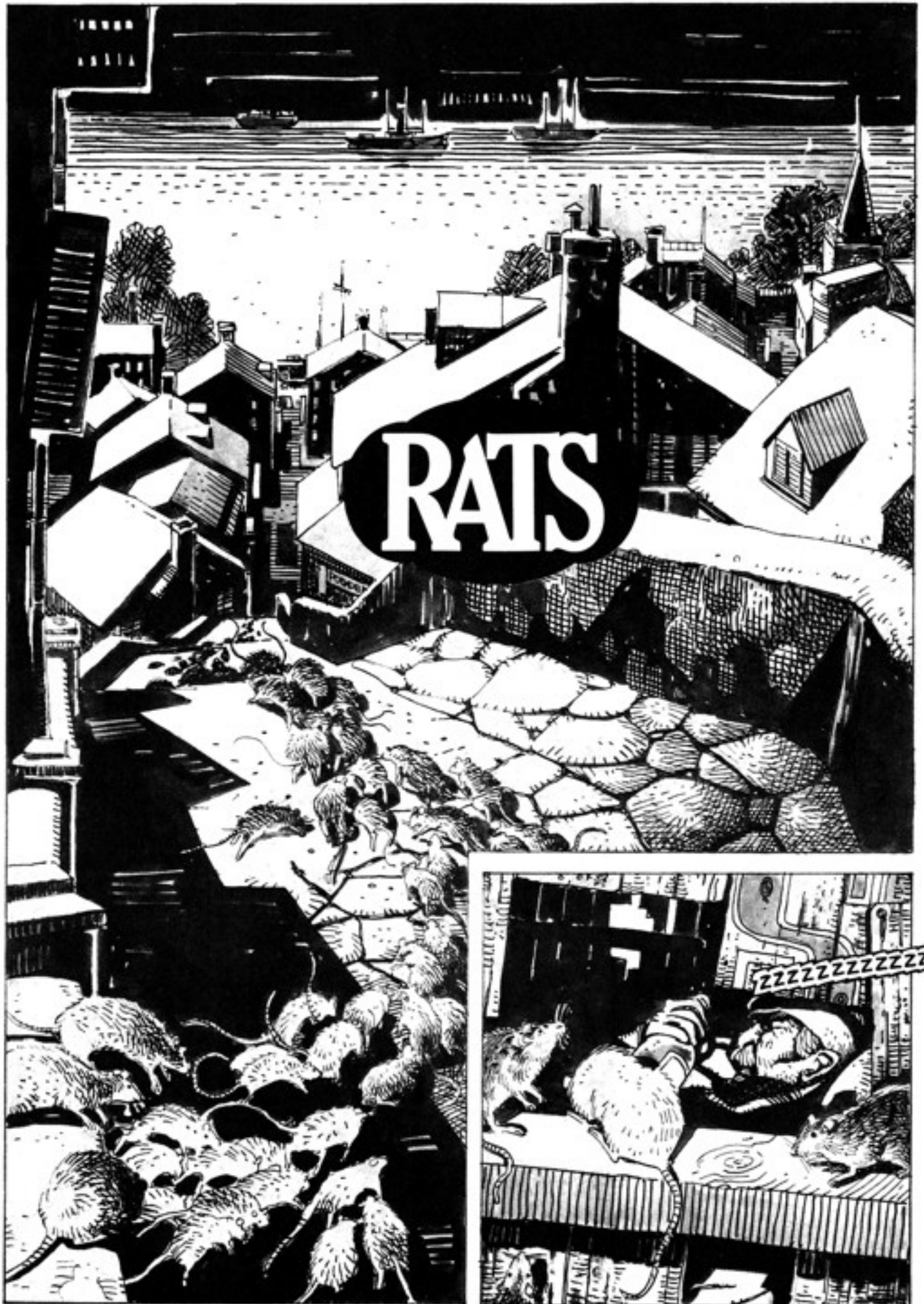
HOW OLD AM I, COMPUTER?

YOU *KNOW* THAT'S RELATIVE, JASON. ALMOST MEANINGLESS. PHYSICALLY... ? A FEW YEARS OLDER THAN WHEN WE LEFT.

A FEW YEARS...! A FEW THOUSAND EONS... A FEW BILLION WORLDS! IT'S SO LONG, COMPUTER... SO LONG.

RELATIVE, JASON... ALL RELATIVE.

CRYOGENIC SLEEP COMES TO THE MAN, CAPTURING A TEARDROP IN ITS WAKE, TRANSFORMING IT INTO A LONELY, SPARKLING STAR.

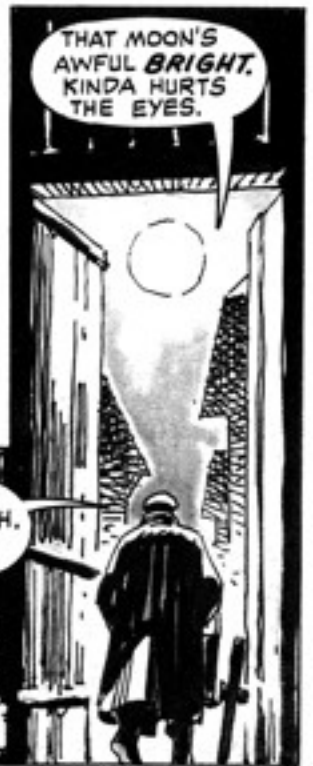


Story: Bob Toomey/Art: Pepe Moreno Casares

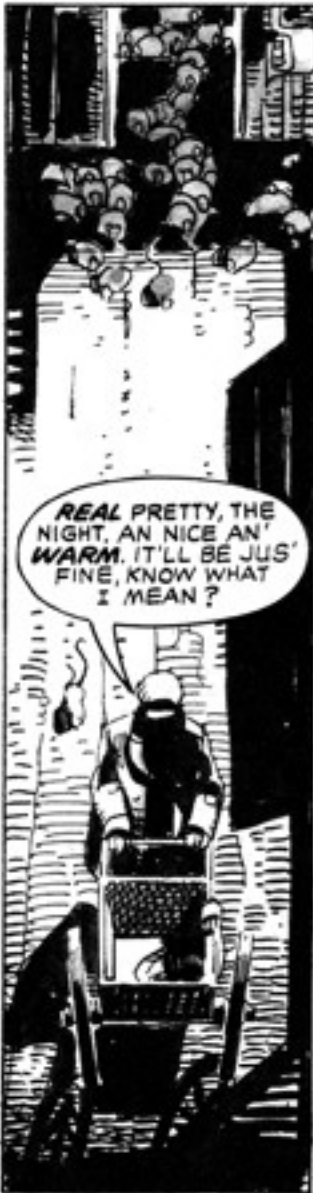




OL' OLLIE TAKES CARE OF HIS FRIENDS. ASK ANYBODY. SURE ENOUGH. OL' OLLIE'S TRUE BLUE.



THAT MOON'S AWFUL BRIGHT. KINDA HURTS THE EYES.



REAL PRETTY, THE NIGHT, AN NICE AN' WARM. IT'LL BE JUS' FINE, KNOW WHAT I MEAN?



MAKES EVERYTHIN' REAL PRETTY THOUGH. ALL SILVER AN' SHADOW.



JUS' FINE.



LATER.

EVENIN' MR. HOGAN. HOW YOU DOIN'? WANNA DRINK?

I WOULDN'T MIND. IT'S DRY WORK. LIGHTIN' THESE LAMPS.



JUS' HELP YOURSELF!

THANKS, OLLIE. I'D DO THE SAME FOR YOU. US OL' FOLKS GOTTA STICK TOGETHER, NO ONE ELSE CARES.

