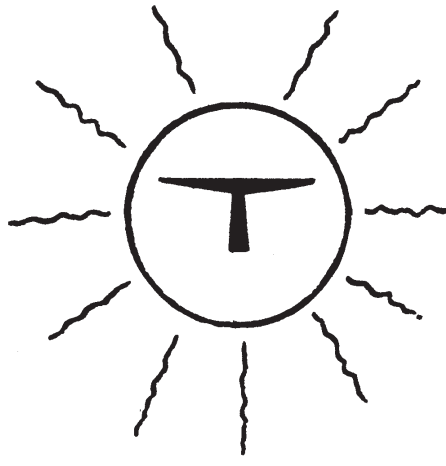


THE GONDWANA SHRINE

Script: Yves Sente

Drawing: André Juillard

Colour work: Madeleine DeMille



Based on the characters of
EDGAR P. JACOBS

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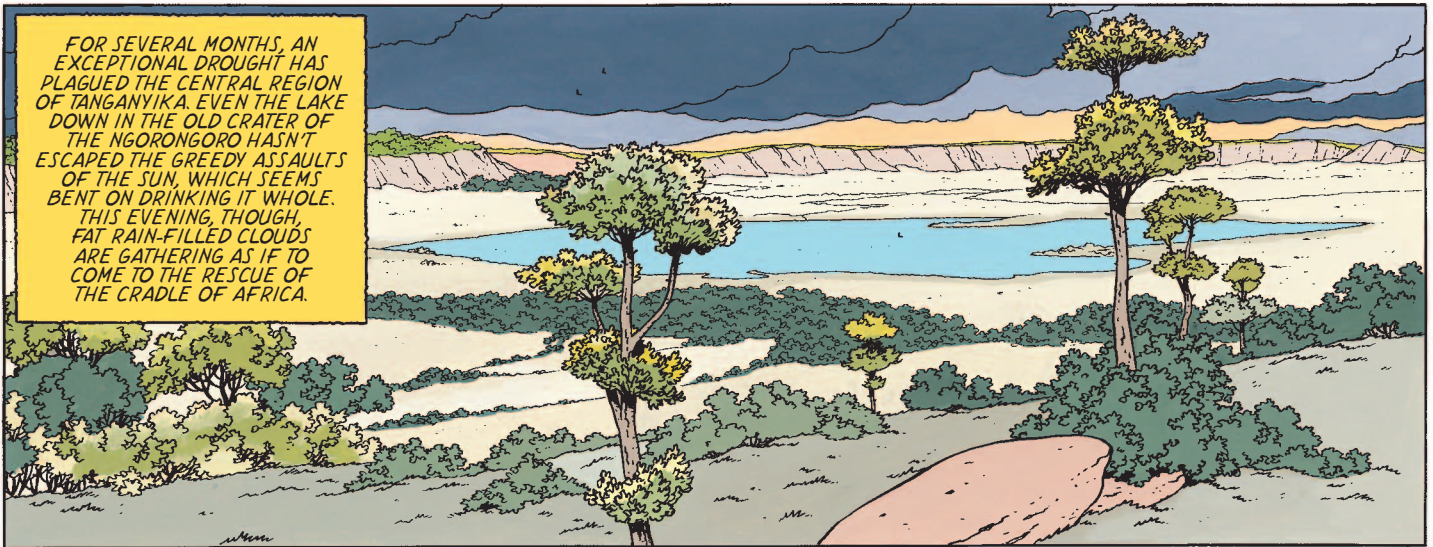
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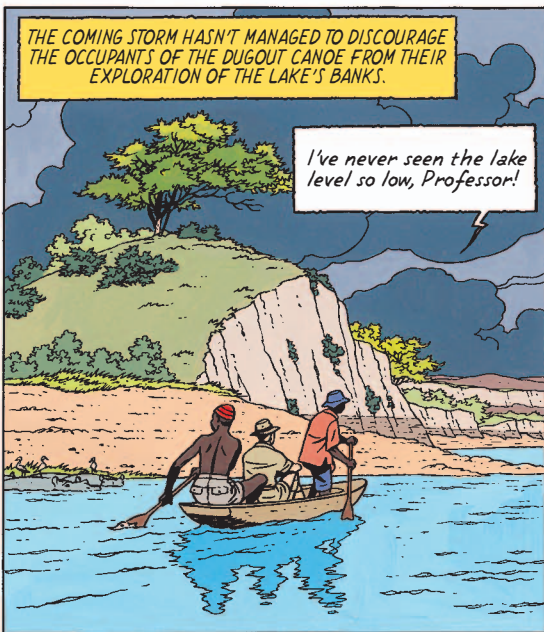
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FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, AN EXCEPTIONAL DROUGHT HAS PLAGUED THE CENTRAL REGION OF TANGANYIKA. EVEN THE LAKE DOWN IN THE OLD CRATER OF THE NGORONGORO HASN'T ESCAPED THE GREEDY ASSAULTS OF THE SUN, WHICH SEEMS BENT ON DRINKING IT WHOLE. THIS EVENING, THOUGH, FAT RAIN-FILLED CLOUDS ARE GATHERING AS IF TO COME TO THE RESCUE OF THE CRADLE OF AFRICA.



THE COMING STORM HASN'T MANAGED TO DISCOURAGE THE OCCUPANTS OF THE DUGOUT CANOE FROM THEIR EXPLORATION OF THE LAKE'S BANKS.

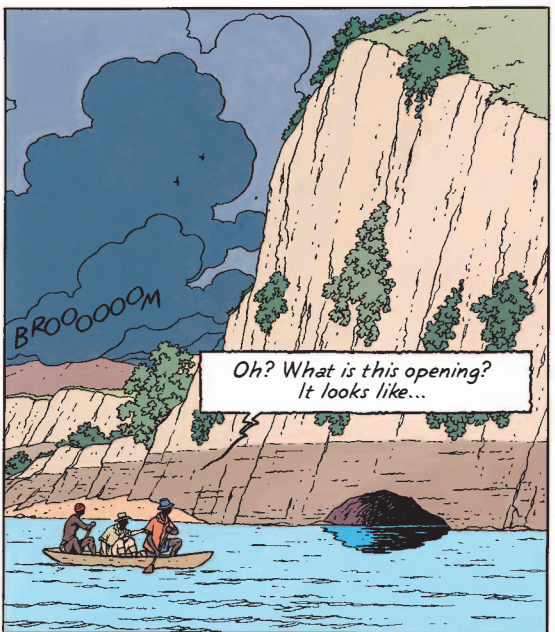


I've never seen the lake level so low, Professor!

We'll have to watch out for hippopotamuses. They can be aggressive when they have calves.



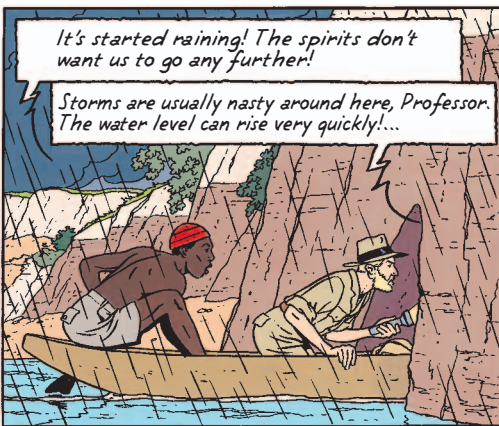
?



Oh? What is this opening? It looks like...



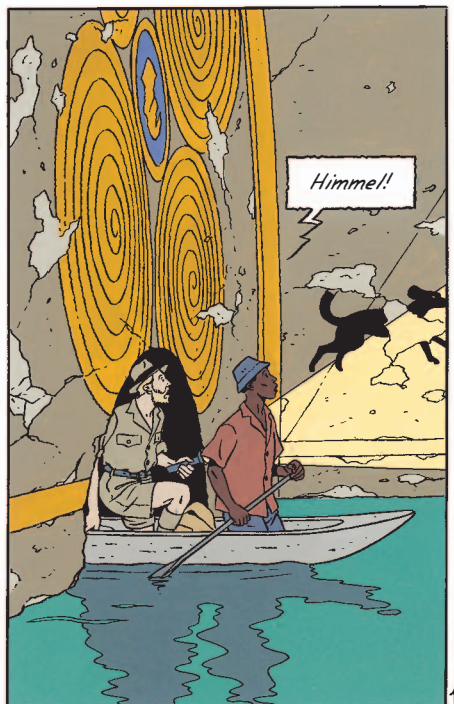
It's the entrance to a tunnel! Let's see if it leads anywhere.



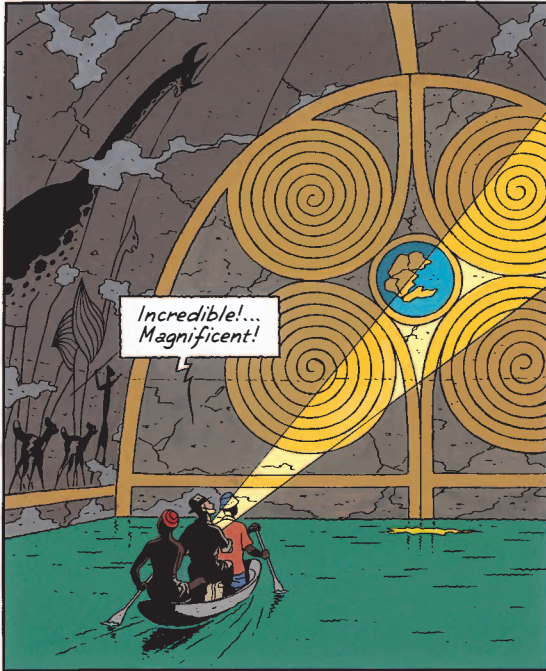
It's started raining! The spirits don't want us to go any further!
Storms are usually nasty around here, Professor. The water level can rise very quickly!...



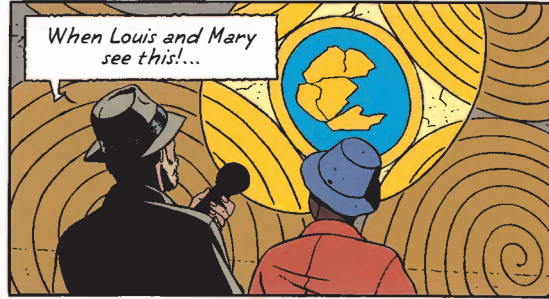
Look! The tunnel seems to widen over there...



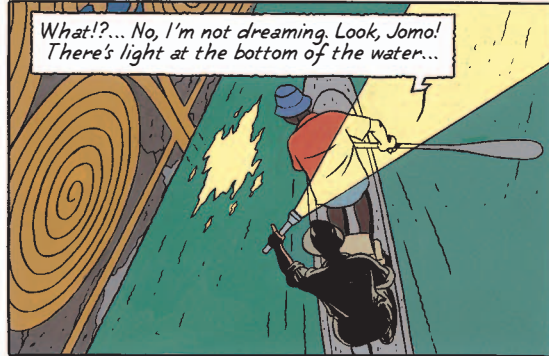
Himmel!



Incredible!...
Magnificent!



When Louis and Mary
see this!...



What!?... No, I'm not dreaming. Look, Jomo!
There's light at the bottom of the water...



I have to...



BRRROOMM



Nonsense! It's nothing but
the sound of thunder
echoing through the cave.

Thunder is an omen of
heavy rains, Professor!
The water will rise and
we won't be able to leave
again. Kyu's right—we
must leave!



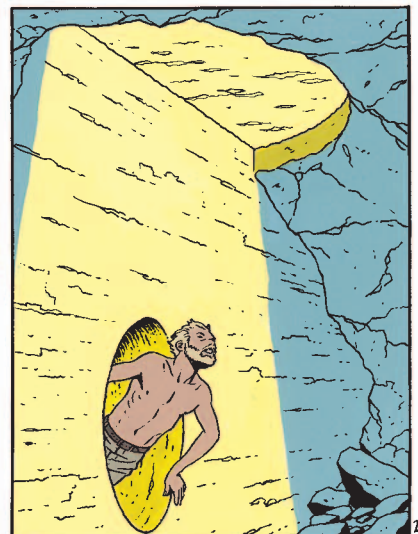
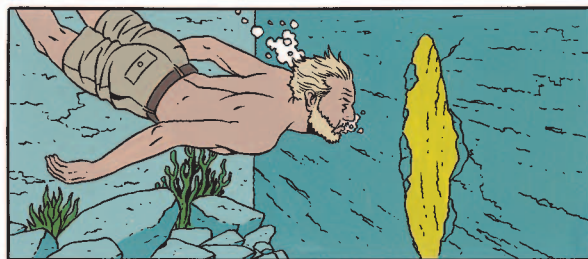
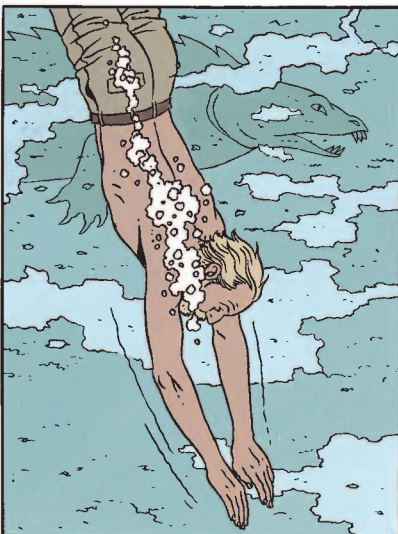
The water isn't going to rise right away. Wait
for me for 10 minutes. I have to go see where
that light is coming from!

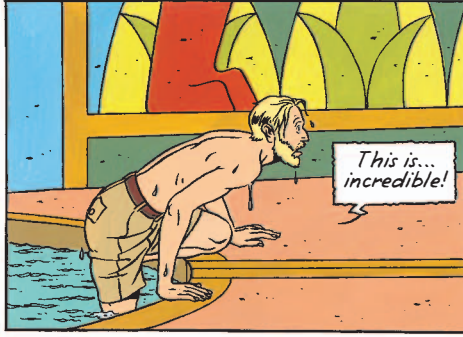


The spirits of the lake!
They're angry because
of our presence in this
cave. We must leave!

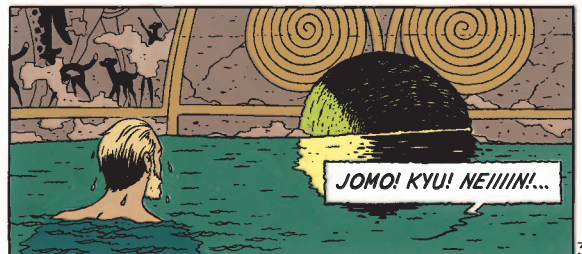
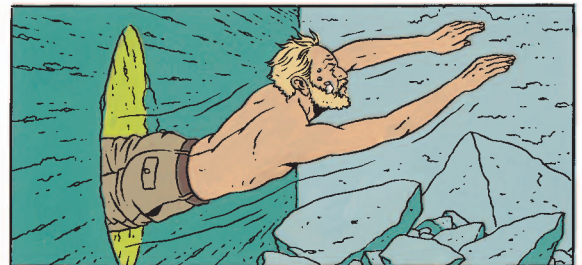
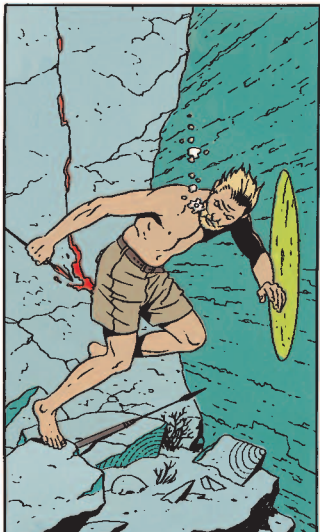
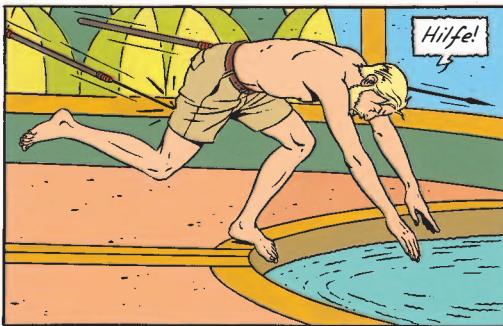
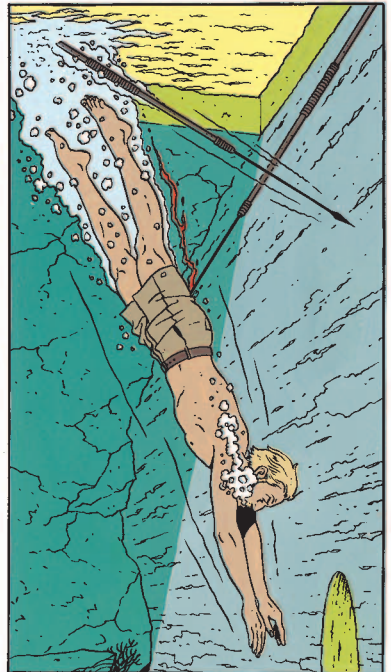


No, bwana,
don't dive...





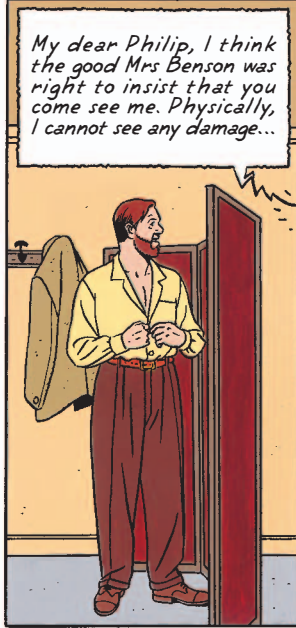
THE ETHNOLOGIST HAS NO SOONER TAKEN THE IMPOSING STATUE'S RING THAN A LOUD, MOURNFUL WAIL ESCAPES THE FIGURE'S OPEN MOUTH.



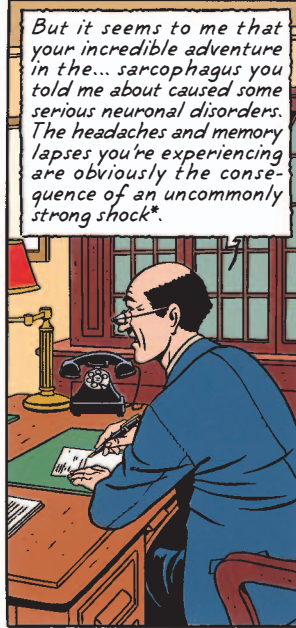
THREE MONTHS LATER, IN LONDON...



So, Doctor, what do you think?



My dear Philip, I think the good Mrs Benson was right to insist that you come see me. Physically, I cannot see any damage...



But it seems to me that your incredible adventure in the... sarcophagus you told me about caused some serious neuronal disorders. The headaches and memory lapses you're experiencing are obviously the consequence of an uncommonly strong shock*.



You need rest. I'm afraid I must forbid you from going back to work at the CSIR for a few weeks.

I'm forbidden to work!? Heavens, Mark! What on earth shall I do with myself?



Exactly what I expected from my hyperactive old friend... Take time to enjoy yourself—as well as these tablets for your headaches. Don't you think you deserve some holiday time after all the work you did for the Universal Exposition?

You know me, old chap. It's idleness that's most likely to make me ill...



Well... Why don't you take advantage of this forced rest to resume writing those memoirs of yours? You did tell me one day that you regretted never having had the time to work on them.

My memoirs?... Yes... Why not?



Exactly! Moreover, it will force you to exercise your memory before you come back to see me again. That's precisely what you need.

I'm sure you're right, Mark. As always. Thank you, my friend; I'll see you soon.

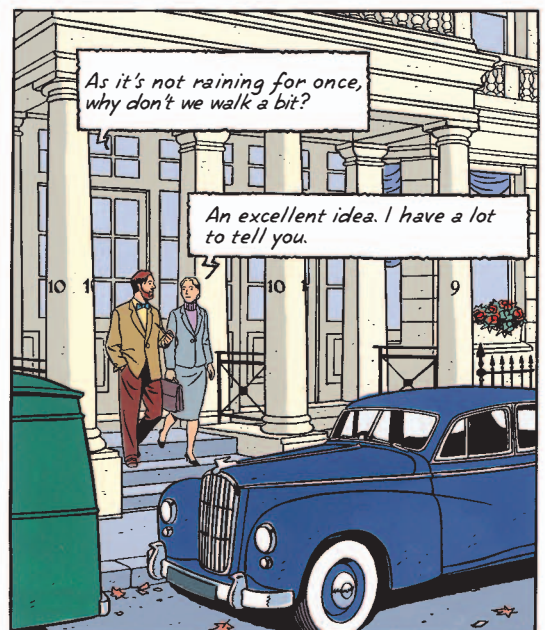


Nastasia! What happy chance brought you here, my dear?



I stopped by your house with the results of the analysis on that rock you left with me*. Mrs Benson told me you'd just left for your doctor's. And since I had some free time...

That was kind of you.



As it's not raining for once, why don't we walk a bit?

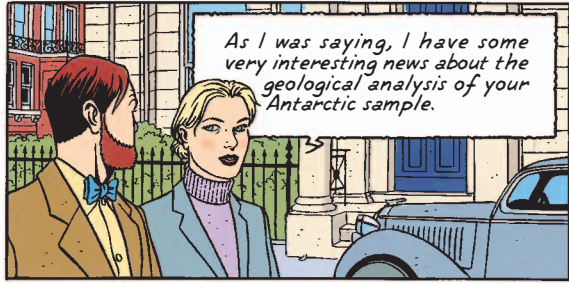
An excellent idea. I have a lot to tell you.

*SEE THE SARCOPHAGI OF THE SIXTH CONTINENT - PART 2.

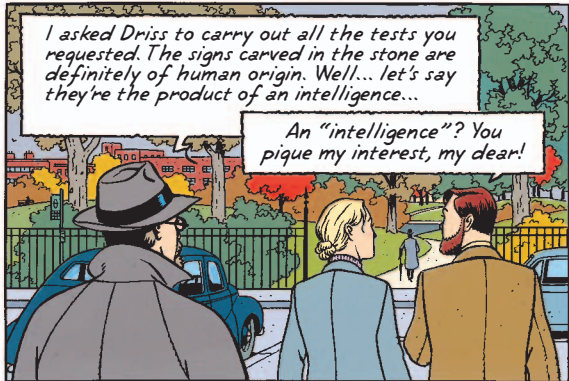


Nastasia, I want to thank you for being so considerate to me since I came back from Antarctica...

I'm the one who should be thanking you and Captain Blake for what you did for me*. I'm delighted to be able to help you out!

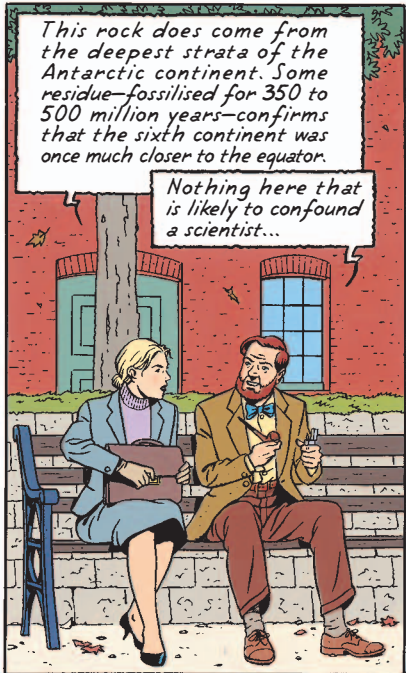


As I was saying, I have some very interesting news about the geological analysis of your Antarctic sample.



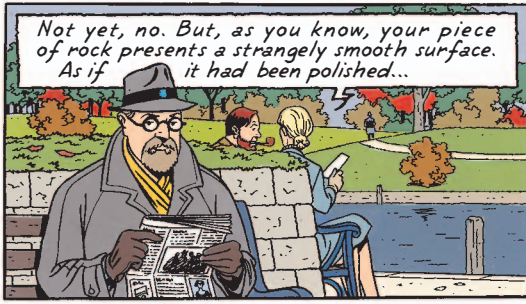
I asked Driss to carry out all the tests you requested. The signs carved in the stone are definitely of human origin. Well... let's say they're the product of an intelligence...

An "intelligence"? You pique my interest, my dear!

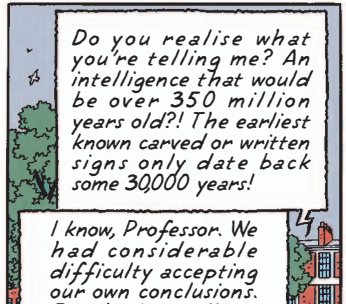


This rock does come from the deepest strata of the Antarctic continent. Some residue—fossilised for 350 to 500 million years—confirms that the sixth continent was once much closer to the equator.

Nothing here that is likely to confound a scientist...

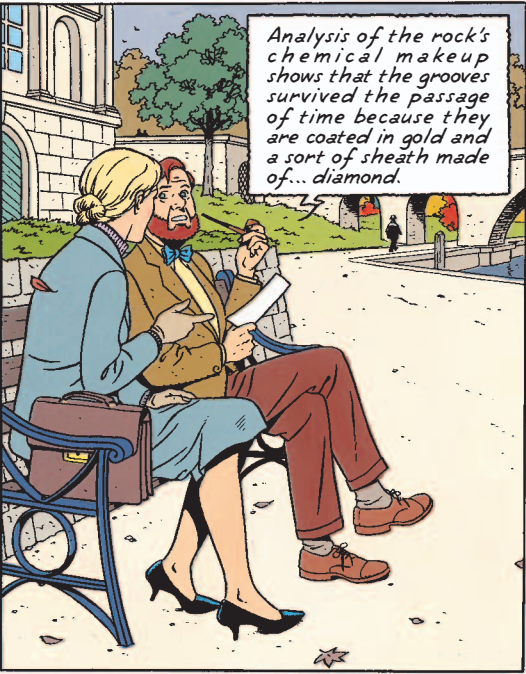


Not yet, no. But, as you know, your piece of rock presents a strangely smooth surface. As if it had been polished...

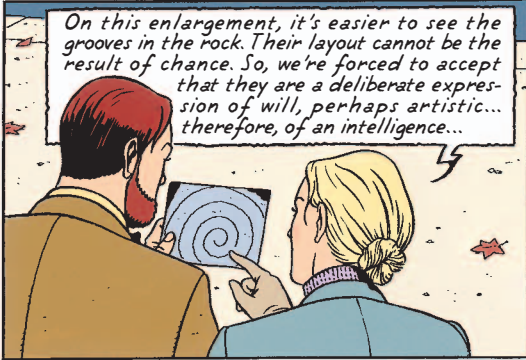


Do you realise what you're telling me? An intelligence that would be over 350 million years old?! The earliest known carved or written signs only date back some 30,000 years!

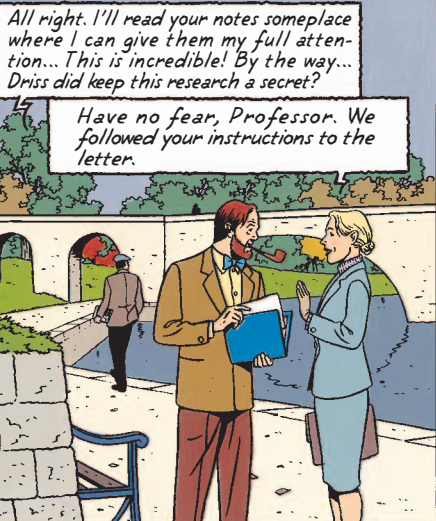
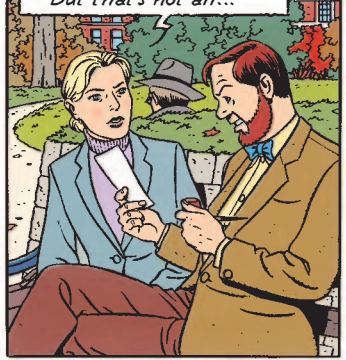
I know, Professor. We had considerable difficulty accepting our own conclusions. But that's not all...



Analysis of the rock's chemical makeup shows that the grooves survived the passage of time because they are coated in gold and a sort of sheath made of... diamond.

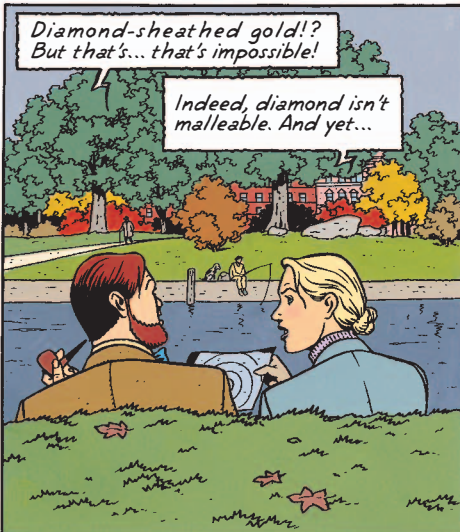


On this enlargement, it's easier to see the grooves in the rock. Their layout cannot be the result of chance. So, we're forced to accept that they are a deliberate expression of will, perhaps artistic... therefore, of an intelligence...



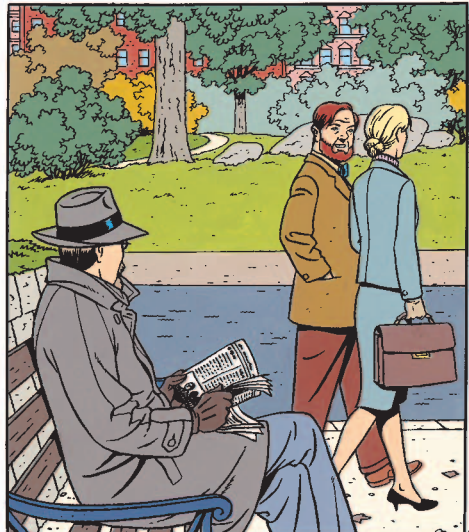
All right. I'll read your notes someplace where I can give them my full attention... This is incredible! By the way... Driss did keep this research a secret?

Have no fear, Professor. We followed your instructions to the letter.



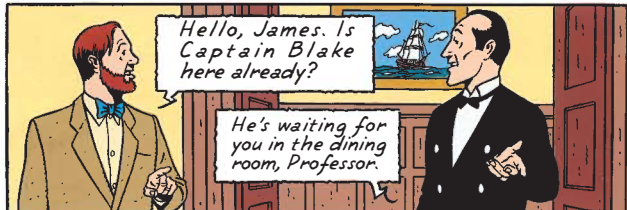
Diamond-sheathed gold!? But that's... that's impossible!

Indeed, diamond isn't malleable. And yet...



*SEE THE VORONOV PLOT.

HAVING TAKEN LEAVE OF HIS YOUNG COLLEAGUE, PROFESSOR MORTIMER GOES TO THE CENTAUR CLUB.



Hello, James. Is Captain Blake here already?

He's waiting for you in the dining room, Professor.



Francis! I hope you'll forgive my tardiness, old chap.

Don't worry, Philip. It gave me a chance to spend some quiet time with this sherry and forget my meetings abroad.



Well, then. I will happily join you to celebrate your return to London.

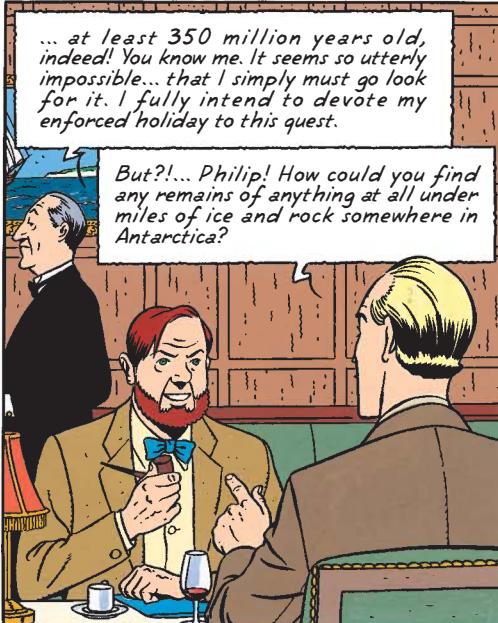
What about you, Philip? Your headaches? You seem in much better shape than when I left.

AS LUNCH PROGRESSES, PROFESSOR MORTIMER REASSURES HIS FRIEND AS TO HIS HEALTH, AND SHARES WITH HIM HIS REFLECTIONS ON THE ANALYSES PERFORMED ON THE ROCK FROM ANTARCTICA.



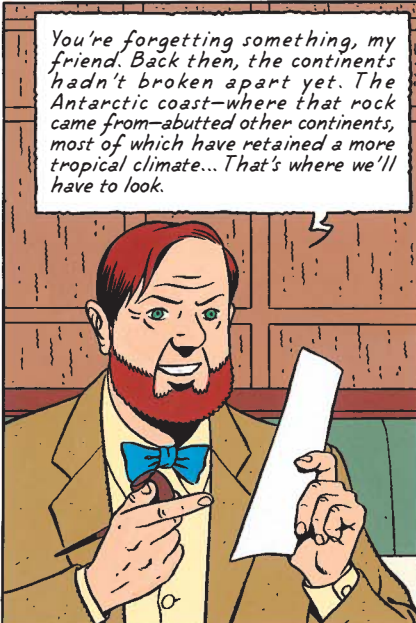
Can you imagine, Francis? If that rock shows traces of an intelligence with a technical mastery vastly superior to ours...

It'd mean that that civilisation is at least...



... at least 350 million years old, indeed! You know me. It seems so utterly impossible... that I simply must go look for it. I fully intend to devote my enforced holiday to this quest.

But?!... Philip! How could you find any remains of anything at all under miles of ice and rock somewhere in Antarctica?



You're forgetting something, my friend. Back then, the continents hadn't broken apart yet. The Antarctic coast—where that rock came from—abutted other continents, most of which have retained a more tropical climate... That's where we'll have to look.



These signs vaguely seem to evoke cultures that are still alive. But which ones? I must admit my thoughts are still hazy on the subject.



Why don't you head to the Daily Mail archives and speak to good Mr Stone? You know his perfect knowledge of his archives could prove very useful*. You could give our friend Macomber my best while you're there.



Mr Stone of the Daily Mail?... You think? Why not?



Very good. As for me, I'm leaving for Paris this afternoon. The construction of the Subglacior II has become a joint strategic project between Britain and France, with possible future use for the surveillance of both poles. I won't fail to give your best to Professor Labrousse.

I was about to ask you to.

*SEE THE YELLOW M.