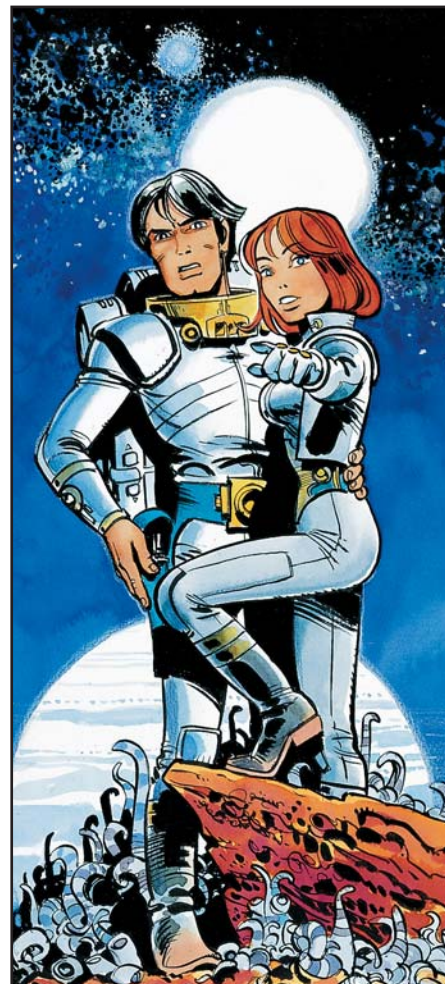




VALERIAN AND LAURELINE

THE **EMPIRE** OF A THOUSAND PLANETS

J.-C. MÉZIÈRES AND P. CHRISTIN
COLOUR WORK: E. TRANLÉ



Original title: Valerian 2 – L’empire des mille planètes

Original edition: © Dargaud Paris, 1971 by Christin, Mezières & Tran-Lê
www.dargaud.com
All rights reserved

English translation: © 2011 Cinebook Ltd

Translator: Jerome Saincantin
Lettering and text layout: Imadjinn
Printed in Spain by Just Colour Graphic

This edition first published in Great Britain in 2011 by
Cinebook Ltd
56 Beech Avenue
Canterbury, Kent
CT4 7TA
www.cinebook.com

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-84918-087-0





DARK, INFINITE EXPANSE OF THE UNIVERSE...
BLAZING SUNS BATHING UNKNOWN LANDS IN LIGHT...
HOW MANY BILLIONS OF CIVILISATIONS,
HOW MANY BILLIONS UPON BILLIONS OF BEINGS
MIGHT CALL YOU HOME?...

IN A DISTANT PART OF THE GALAXY, ONE PLANET IS THE HEART OF A HUGE SOLAR SYSTEM.

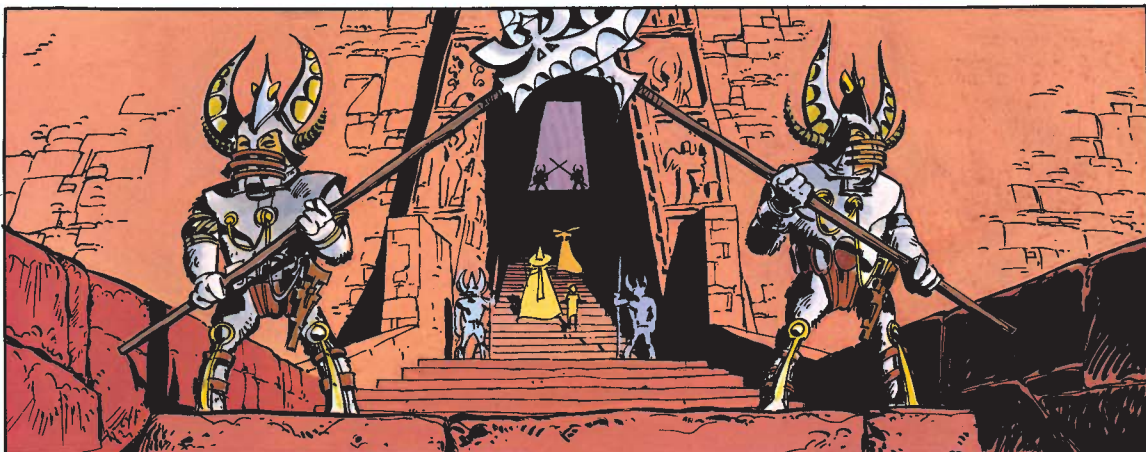
IT IS SYRTE THE MAGNIFICENT, CAPITAL OF THE EMPIRE OF A THOUSAND PLANETS.



SYRTE AND ITS FABULOUS IMPERIAL PALACE ARE HOME TO THE LAST MEMBER OF A DYNASTY THAT HAS RULED OVER ALL THE SYSTEM'S PLANETS SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL.



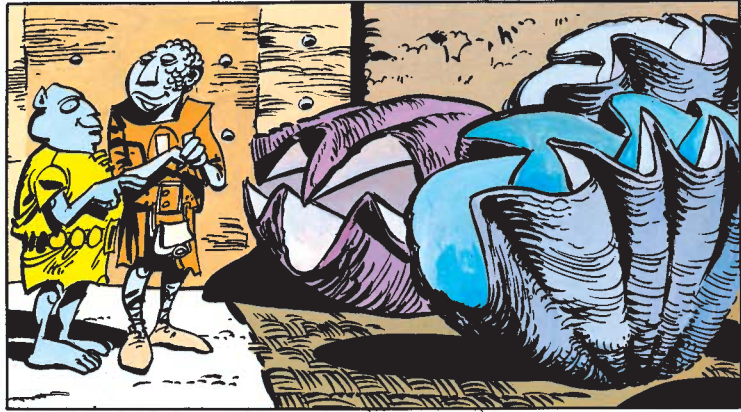
ONLY THE PRINCE'S FAVOURITES AND AMBASSADORS ACCREDITED BY IMPERIAL AUTHORITIES EVER ENTER THE HEAVILY GUARDED PALACE. THE PEOPLE, OFTEN GATHERED AT THE DOORSTEP OF THE BUILDING, HEAR BUT THE ECHOES OF MYSTERIOUS CELEBRATIONS...



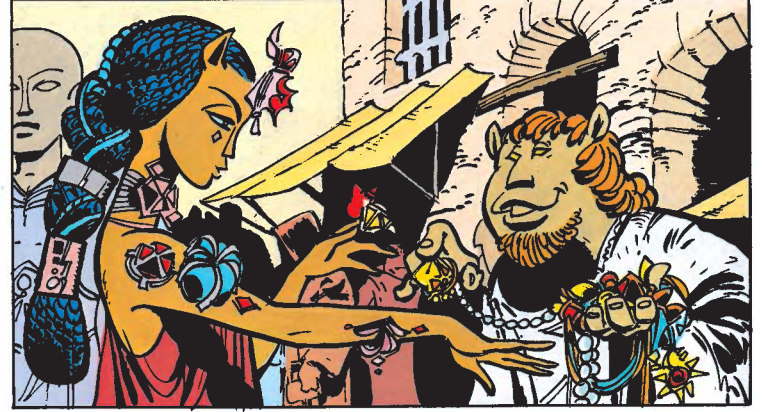
BUT SYRTE IS, FIRST OF ALL, THE GREATEST MARKET OF THE EMPIRE. IN ITS SOUQS, ARRAYED ALONG THE CANALS, ONE CAN FIND ANYTHING. THE MERCHANT GUILD ROAMS THE SYSTEM TO BRING BACK COUNTLESS WONDERS...



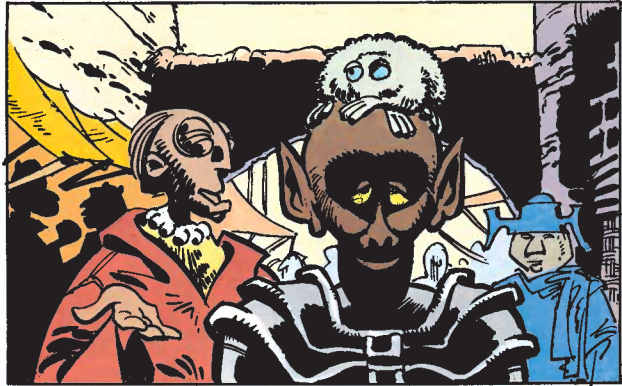
... HYPNOTIC SCHAMIRS FROM PLANET GLIMIUS, INSIDE OF WHICH ONE SLEEPS TO FIND OBLIVION...



... LIVING STONES OF ARPHAL THAT STICK TO ONE'S SKIN TO MAKE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL JEWELS...



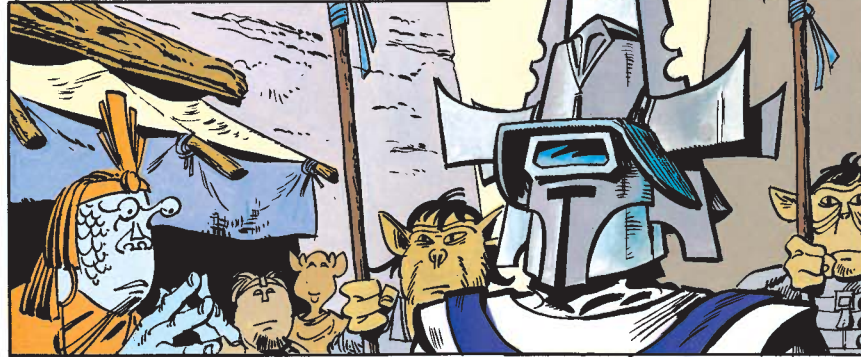
... EXCEEDINGLY RARE TELEPATHIC SPIGLICS FROM BLIXT-PETS THAT LIVE ON THEIR MASTERS' HEADS AND COMMUNICATE TO THEM THEIR CONSTANT BLISS...



... RARE METALS, EXOTIC DELICACIES, MULTICOLOURED FABRICS... IN THE LABYRINTH OF SYRTE'S STREETS, A POPULATION COMING FROM ALL PLANETS BUYS, SELLS, SOMETIMES STEALS...



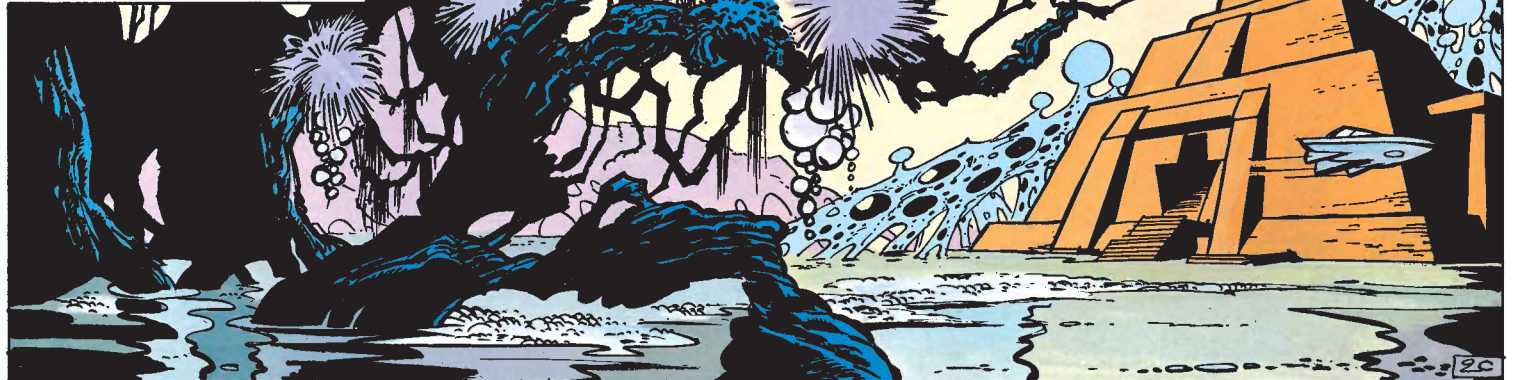
ONE ALSO COMES TO SYRTE TO CONSULT WITH THE ENLIGHTENEDS, HEALERS OF THE BODY AND SEERS OF THE SOUL, INSCRIBABLE WITHIN THEIR METAL HELMETS...



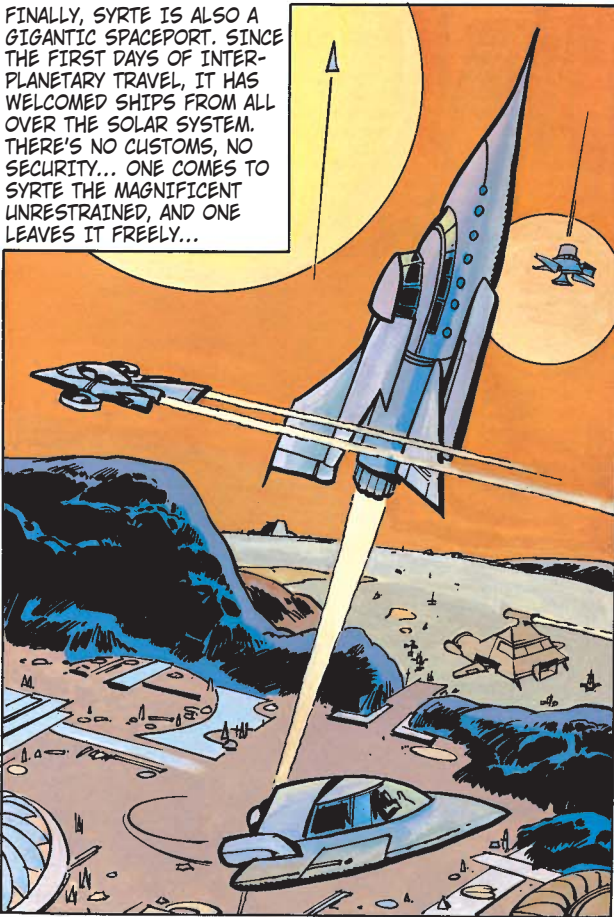
... IT IS SAID THAT THEIR POWER KEEPS GROWING, AND SOME BELIEVE THAT THEY MAY HAVE BECOME THE TRUE MASTERS OF SYRTE. FEW IN NUMBERS, THE ENLIGHTENEDS ARE THE MOST RESPECTED—AND, ABOVE ALL, THE MOST FEARED—GUESTS OF THE PALACE...



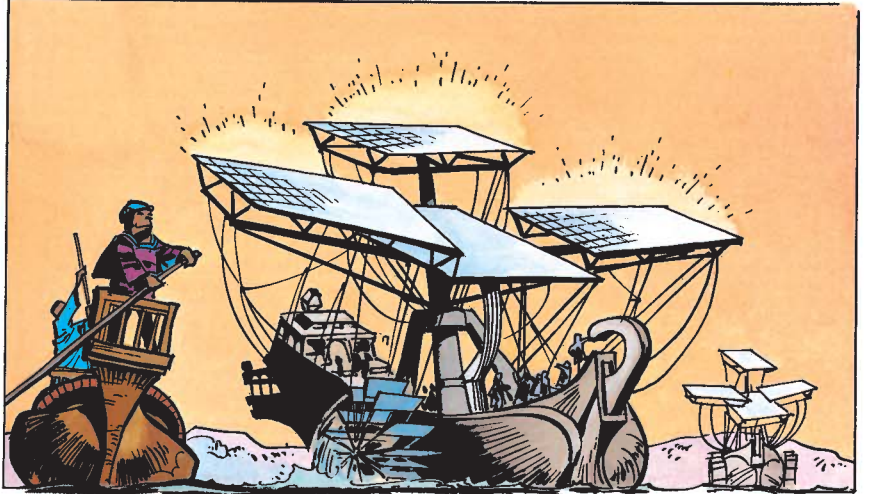
... WHEN THEY'RE NOT LIVING INSIDE THEIR TEMPLE-FORTRESSES, DEEP IN THE SYRTIAN JUNGLES.



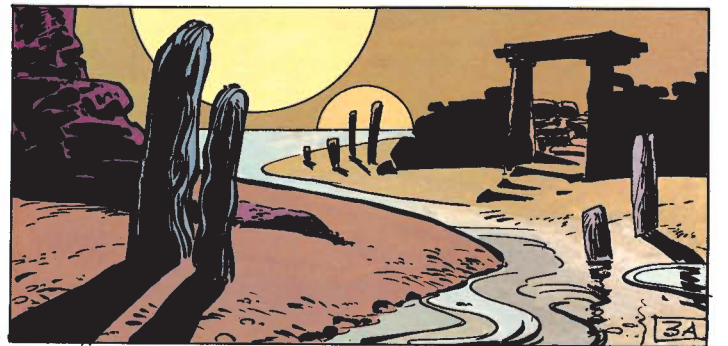
FINALLY, SYRTE IS ALSO A GIGANTIC SPACEPORT. SINCE THE FIRST DAYS OF INTER-PLANETARY TRAVEL, IT HAS WELCOMED SHIPS FROM ALL OVER THE SOLAR SYSTEM. THERE'S NO CUSTOMS, NO SECURITY... ONE COMES TO SYRTE THE MAGNIFICENT UNRESTRAINED, AND ONE LEAVES IT FREELY...



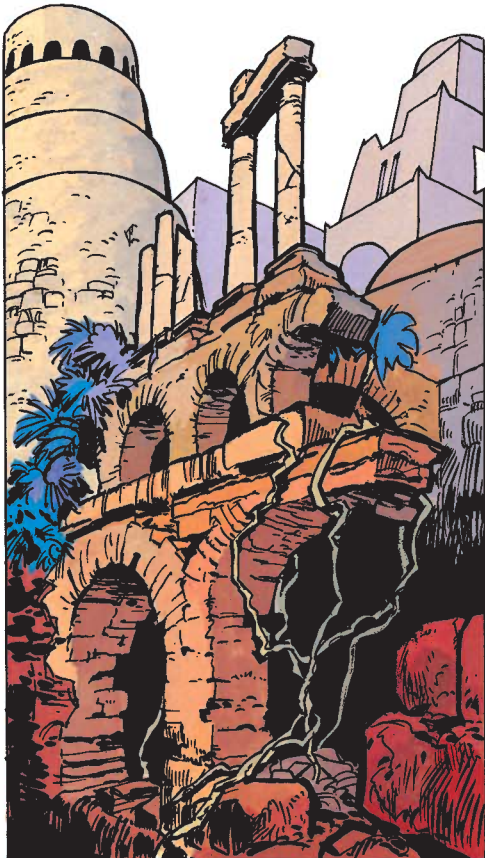
AND HEAVY TRADE VESSELS AS WELL AS LIGHT CRAFTS PEACEFULLY PLY THE SEA ROUTES BETWEEN THE BACK COUNTRY, THE CAPITAL AND THE SPACEPORT. PROPELLED BY THEIR SOLAR SAILS—ON THIS WINDLESS PLANET—THE BOATS THROUGH THE CANALS...



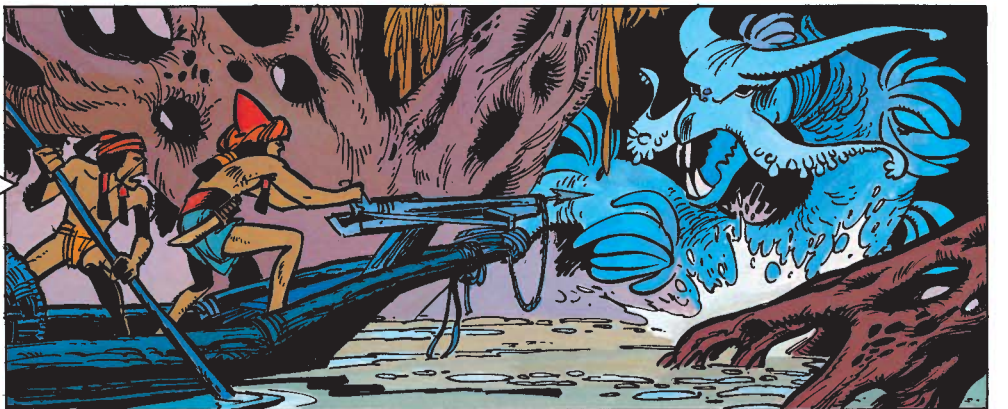
AND YET, DESPITE ITS AGE AND GLORY, SYRTE ISN'T WHAT IT ONCE WAS... EVERYWHERE, ABANDONED RUINS, COLLAPSED SEAWALLS AND SILTED-UP HARBOURS...



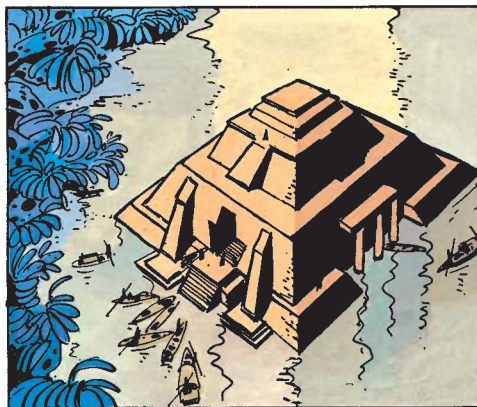
THE IMPERIAL PALACE ITSELF IS INCREASINGLY RUNDOWN...



IN THE JUNGLE, WHERE POOR FISHERMEN HUNT THE DANGEROUS MARCYAM—A GIGANTIC WATER SNAKE—FOR ITS PRECIOUS SKIN...

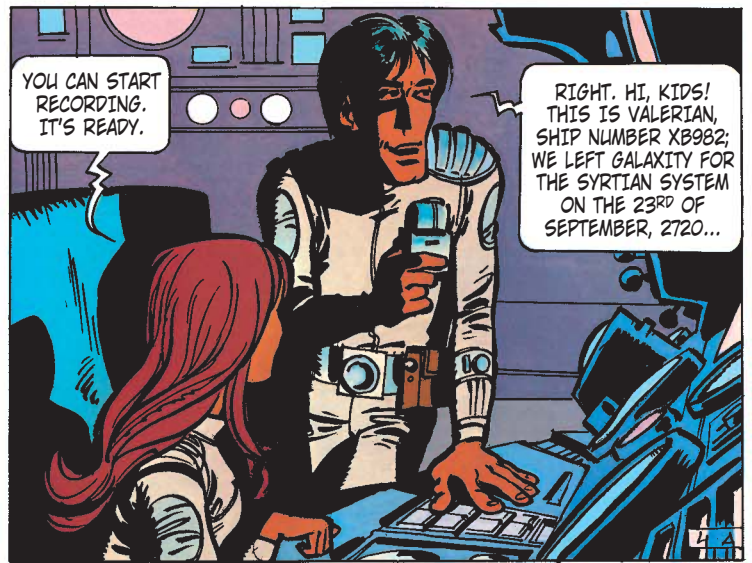


... ONLY THE ENLIGHTENEDS' IMPREGNABLE TEMPLES CONTRAST WITH THE GENERAL POVERTY.



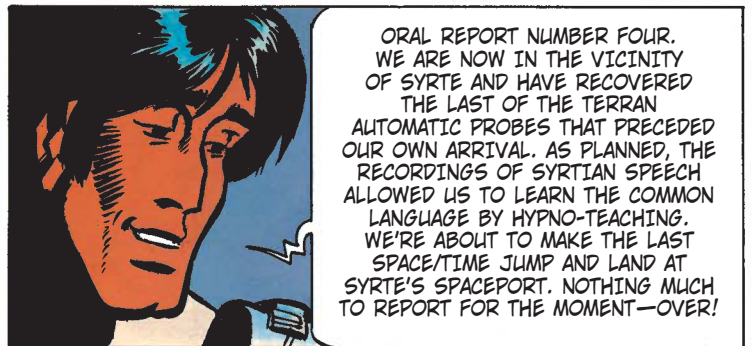
IN SPACE, A FEW LIGHT-YEARS AWAY FROM SYRTE...





YOU CAN START RECORDING. IT'S READY.

RIGHT. HI, KIDS! THIS IS VALERIAN, SHIP NUMBER XB982; WE LEFT GALAXY FOR THE SYRTIAN SYSTEM ON THE 23RD OF SEPTEMBER, 2720...

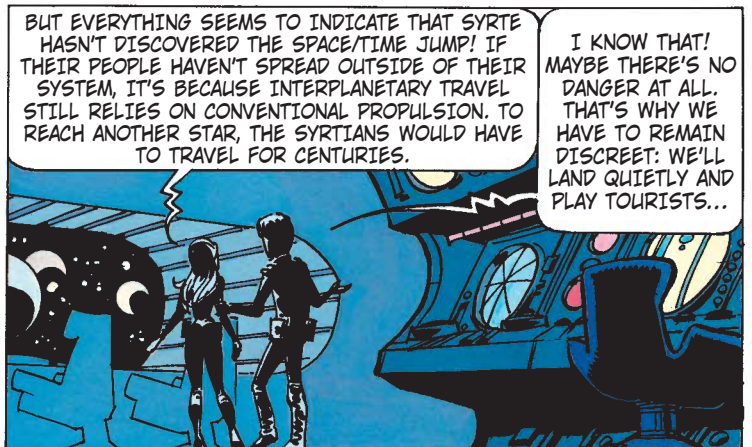


ORAL REPORT NUMBER FOUR. WE ARE NOW IN THE VICINITY OF SYRTE AND HAVE RECOVERED THE LAST OF THE TERRAN AUTOMATIC PROBES THAT PRECEDED OUR OWN ARRIVAL. AS PLANNED, THE RECORDINGS OF SYRTIAN SPEECH ALLOWED US TO LEARN THE COMMON LANGUAGE BY HYPNO-TEACHING. WE'RE ABOUT TO MAKE THE LAST SPACE/TIME JUMP AND LAND AT SYRTE'S SPACEPORT. NOTHING MUCH TO REPORT FOR THE MOMENT—OVER!



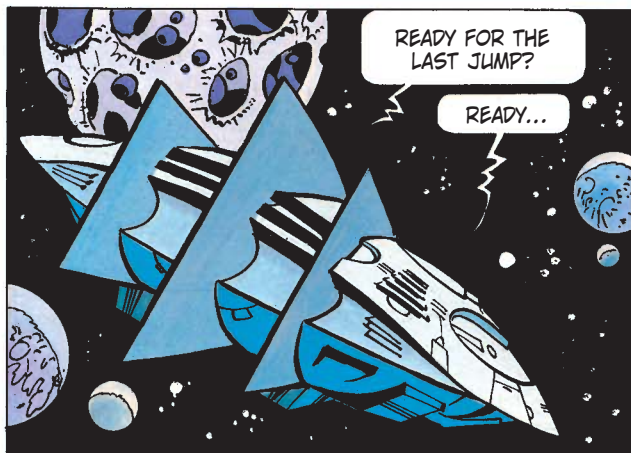
IT'S A STRANGE FEELING... TO THINK WE'RE ABOUT TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE FIRST GREAT GALACTIC CIVILISATION OVER WHICH EARTH HAS HAD NO INFLUENCE! DO YOU THINK THERE'S ANY ACTUAL DANGER?

HMM... I DON'T REALLY KNOW, LAURELINE! ANYWAY, WE'RE JUST AGENTS OF THE SPATIO-TEMPORAL SERVICE. OUR JOB IS TO ASSESS WHETHER SYRTE IS A DANGER TO EARTH—OR COULD BECOME ONE...

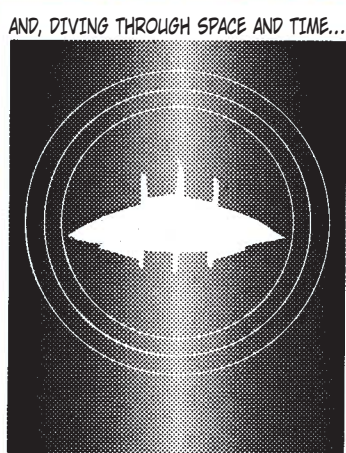


BUT EVERYTHING SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT SYRTE HASN'T DISCOVERED THE SPACE/TIME JUMP! IF THEIR PEOPLE HAVEN'T SPREAD OUTSIDE OF THEIR SYSTEM, IT'S BECAUSE INTERPLANETARY TRAVEL STILL RELIES ON CONVENTIONAL PROPULSION. TO REACH ANOTHER STAR, THE SYRTIANS WOULD HAVE TO TRAVEL FOR CENTURIES.

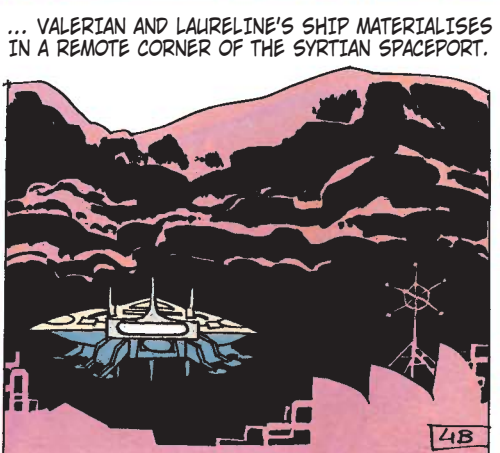
I KNOW THAT! MAYBE THERE'S NO DANGER AT ALL. THAT'S WHY WE HAVE TO REMAIN DISCREET: WE'LL LAND QUIETLY AND PLAY TOURISTS...



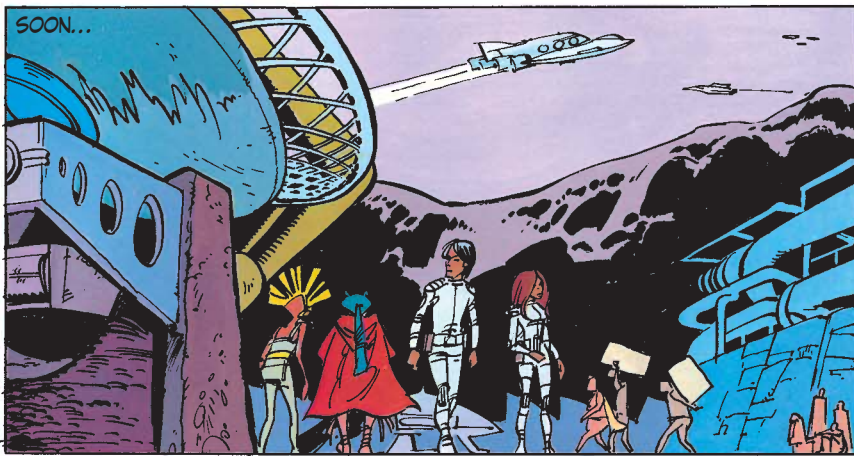
READY FOR THE LAST JUMP?
READY...



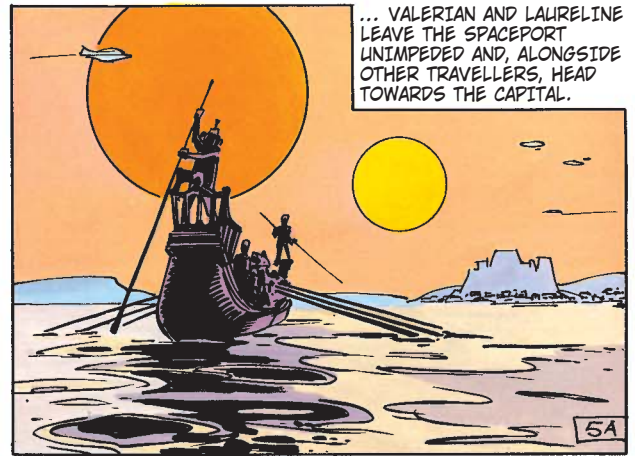
AND, DIVING THROUGH SPACE AND TIME...



... VALERIAN AND LAURELINE'S SHIP MATERIALISES IN A REMOTE CORNER OF THE SYRTIAN SPACEPORT.

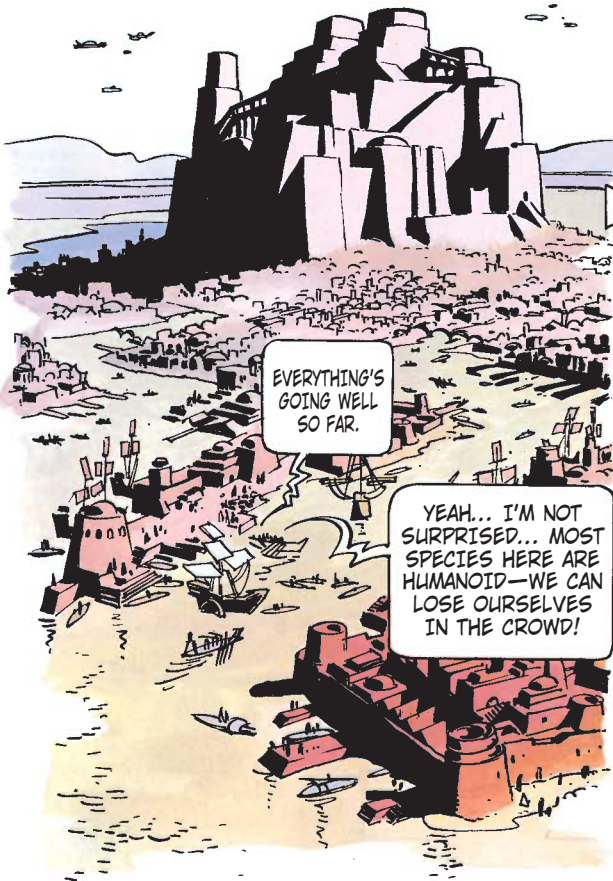


SOON...



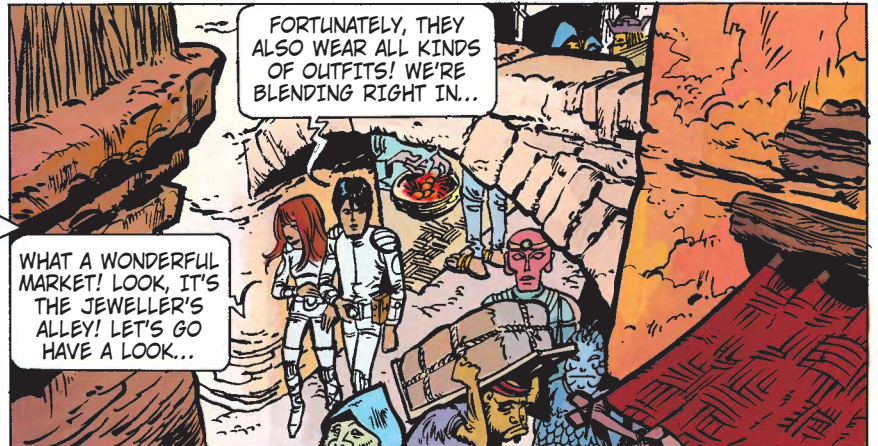
... VALERIAN AND LAURELINE LEAVE THE SPACEPORT UNIMPEDED AND, ALONGSIDE OTHER TRAVELLERS, HEAD TOWARDS THE CAPITAL.

5A



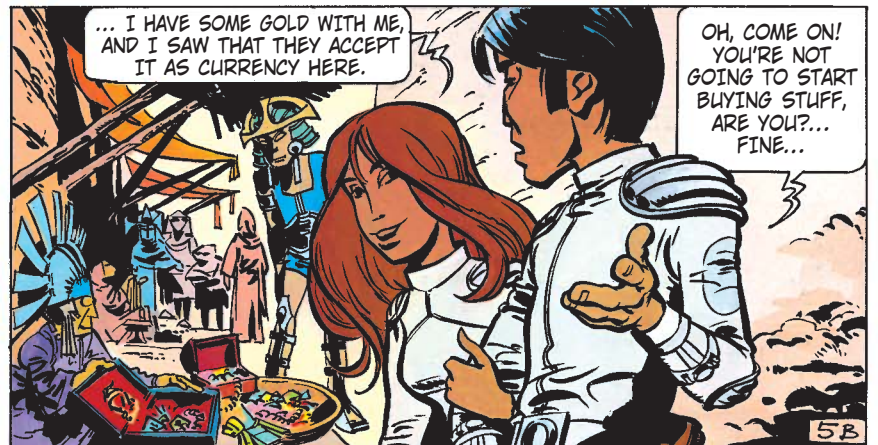
EVERYTHING'S GOING WELL SO FAR.

YEAH... I'M NOT SURPRISED... MOST SPECIES HERE ARE HUMANOID—WE CAN LOSE OURSELVES IN THE CROWD!



FORTUNATELY, THEY ALSO WEAR ALL KINDS OF OUTFITS! WE'RE BLENDING RIGHT IN...

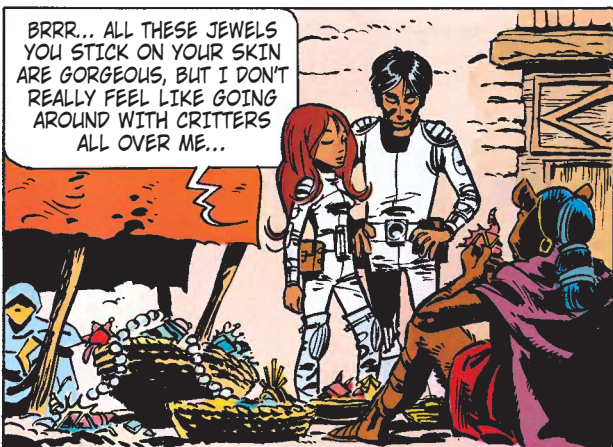
WHAT A WONDERFUL MARKET! LOOK, IT'S THE JEWELLER'S ALLEY! LET'S GO HAVE A LOOK...



... I HAVE SOME GOLD WITH ME, AND I SAW THAT THEY ACCEPT IT AS CURRENCY HERE.

OH, COME ON! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO START BUYING STUFF, ARE YOU?... FINE...

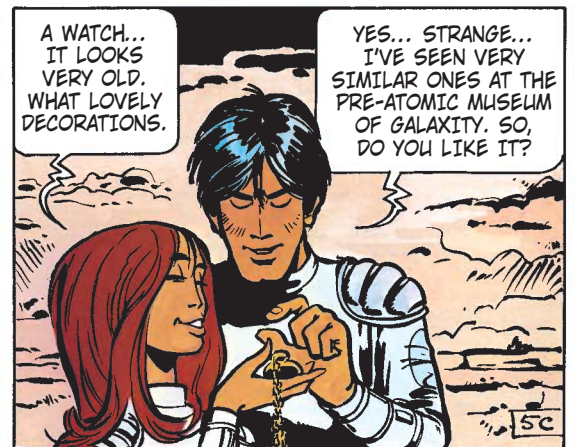
5B



BRRR... ALL THESE JEWELS YOU STICK ON YOUR SKIN ARE GORGEOUS, BUT I DON'T REALLY FEEL LIKE GOING AROUND WITH CRITTERS ALL OVER ME...



OH, VALERIAN! LOOK!



A WATCH... IT LOOKS VERY OLD. WHAT LOVELY DECORATIONS.

YES... STRANGE... I'VE SEEN VERY SIMILAR ONES AT THE PRE-ATOMIC MUSEUM OF GALAXY. SO, DO YOU LIKE IT?

5C