

E.P. JACOBS

# ATLANTIS MYSTERY



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PROFESSOR PHILIP MORTIMER HAS COME TO THE ENCHANTING ISLAND OF SAO MIGUEL TO SPEND A FEW WEEKS' HOLIDAY. ITS STRANGE AND MAGNIFICENT SITES, COMBINED WITH A PAST SHROUDED IN MYSTERY, MAKE THE "GREEN ISLAND" THE MOST RENOWNED PART OF THE AZORES. AN EXTREMELY ANCIENT TRADITION HOLDS THAT IT IS ONE OF THE EMERGED SUMMITS OF ATLANTIS, THAT MYSTERIOUS LOST CONTINENT DESCRIBED BY THE PHILOSOPHER PLATO, WHICH, IN A MYSTICAL PAST, IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE VANISHED INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE ATLANTIC OCEAN...



IT WAS ENOUGH FOR THE PROFESSOR, EVER EAGER FOR NEW AND UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES, TO BEGIN EXPLORING THE WILD VALES AND CANYONS NEAR THE VOLCANIC VALLEY OF FURNAS. IT LED HIM TO A SURPRISING DISCOVERY—SO SURPRISING, IN FACT, THAT HE IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED HIS OLD FRIEND, CAPTAIN FRANCIS BLAKE. AS THIS EXTRAORDINARY STORY BEGINS, MORTIMER IS AT THE SANT'ANA AIRFIELD TO WELCOME THE CAPTAIN. BUT NO SOONER HAVE OUR TWO FRIENDS LEFT THE TERMINAL, ALREADY DEEP IN A LIVELY DISCUSSION, THAN THE PLOT BEGINS TO THICKEN!...



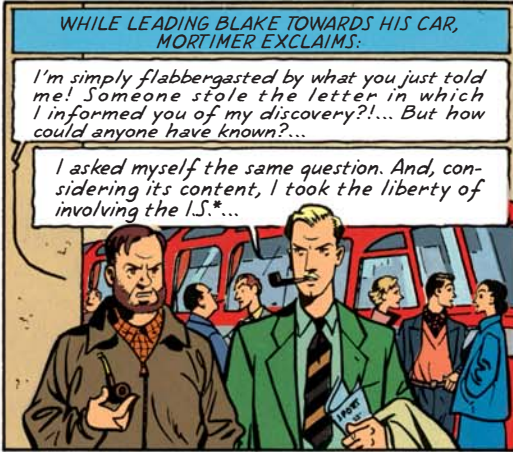
FROM BEHIND A GLASS PANE, A MAN OBSERVES THE TRAVELLERS' EXIT...

There they are!...



IMMEDIATELY, THE STRANGER GIVES A WHISTLE. TWO OTHER MEN, BENT OVER AN OLD FORD SOME DISTANCE AWAY, RECOGNISE THE SOUND AS A SIGNAL.

**FWEEET**  
Look out!  
It's done!...



WHILE LEADING BLAKE TOWARDS HIS CAR, MORTIMER EXCLAIMS:

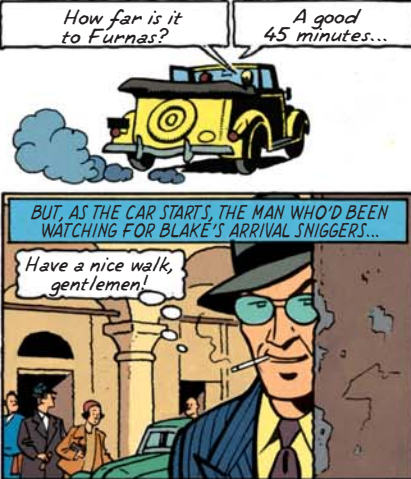
I'm simply flabbergasted by what you just told me! Someone stole the letter in which I informed you of my discovery?!... But how could anyone have known?...

I asked myself the same question. And, considering its content, I took the liberty of involving the I.S.\*...



You did the right thing! But here's the car. Get in; we'll be at my place in a jiffy.

Jolly good! I'm eager to see the thing up close. I must confess I'm rather uneasy about it...



How far is it to Furnas? A good 45 minutes...

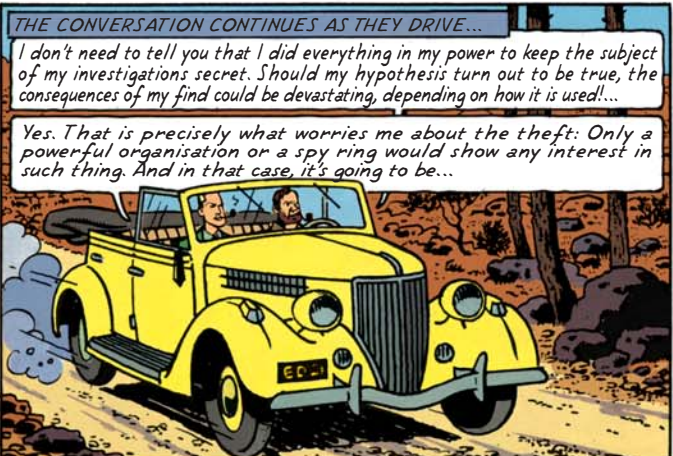
**BUT, AS THE CAR STARTS, THE MAN WHO'D BEEN WATCHING FOR BLAKE'S ARRIVAL SNIGGERS...**

Have a nice walk, gentlemen!



THE CAR PULLS INTO THE MAIN ROAD AND SPEEDS AWAY. BUT SOON...

Let's turn off here. It's quicker, and there's less traffic...



THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES AS THEY DRIVE...

I don't need to tell you that I did everything in my power to keep the subject of my investigations secret. Should my hypothesis turn out to be true, the consequences of my find could be devastating, depending on how it is used!...

Yes. That is precisely what worries me about the theft: Only a powerful organisation or a spy ring would show any interest in such thing. And in that case, it's going to be...



BUT A RATTLING AND COUGHING FROM THE ENGINE INTERRUPTS THE CAPTAIN...

Oh, what now? That ruddy engine again! Never a moment's peace with these rented vehicles!...



THE CAR GOES ANOTHER FEW YARDS, THEN STOPS ALTOGETHER...

Nothing too serious, I hope?...

I hope so, too, because this road isn't very busy... and night falls quickly here...

\*INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (BRITISH INTELLIGENCE)



LIFTING THE BONNET, MORTIMER CONDUCTS A QUICK INSPECTION...

The ignition?...

More than likely. Let's see...

... AND SUDDENLY...

By George! Sugar! Sugar in the petrol! Look at this sparking plug...

Sugar?! So, it was sabotage?...

... QUICKLY, THE TWO MEN CONFER...

I was expected—that much is obvious! And I'd lay a thousand-to-one odds that someone wanted to keep us away from your place.

That must be it! No sense in hanging around here then. Let's walk back to the main road, and then... trust in Providence.

MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, IN THE ALREADY DARK GROUNDS OF "QUINTA DO PICO," MORTIMER'S RESIDENCE, A DRAMATIC EVENT HAS JUST TAKEN PLACE...

There! I shouldn't be disturbed for a good while.

APPARENTLY SATISFIED, THE MASKED STRANGER QUICKLY MAKES HIS WAY ACROSS THE LAWN AND UP A FEW STEPS, PUSHES OPEN A FRENCH WINDOW AND ENTERS THE SILENT VILLA...

Perfect! And now, to work...

TAKING OUT A SMALL, OBLONG BOX FROM UNDER HIS CLOAK, HE SNIGGERS.

With this, it'll be child's play.

THEN, ADVANCING SLOWLY, STEP BY STEP, THE MAN BEGINS SWEEPING HIS PECULIAR DEVICE ALL AROUND HIM...

AFTER HAVING METHODICALLY GONE OVER THE GROUND FLOOR, THE VILLAIN GOES UP A STAIRCASE...

Let's see up there now...

THERE, GOING FROM ROOM TO ROOM, HE INSPECTS THAT STOREY AND IS BEGINNING TO LOSE PATIENCE. WHEN, SUDDENLY, AS HE PUSHES ONE LAST DOOR, THE DEVICE EMITS A STRANGE LITTLE SOUND...

At last!

BOP BOP BOP

HAVING PERFORMED A FEW PRUDENT SWEEPS, THE STRANGER FINALLY LOCATES THE PLACE HE HAS SO ARDENTLY SOUGHT...

Careful now! It's here, in this corner... But...

BOP BOP BOP

What? In this aquarium?... Good old Professor! As cunning as ever!

BOP BOP BOP

WITHOUT HESITATION, HE PLUNGES HIS HAND INTO THE WATER AND FEVERISHLY CLAWS THROUGH THE SAND AND ROCKS THAT COVER THE BOTTOM.

ALL AT ONCE, HE EXCLAIMS TRIUMPHANTLY...

I've got it!!

BUT, AT THAT MOMENT, SOFT LAUGHTER MAKES HIM LOSE HIS GRIP.

Ha! Ha! Ha!



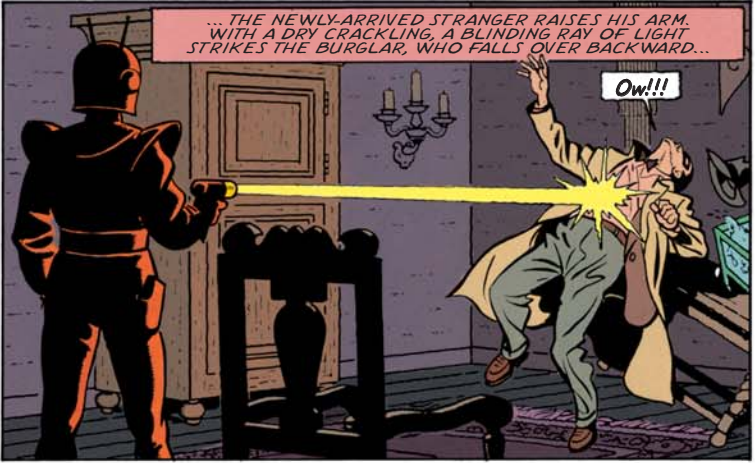


STRUCK DUMB WITH SURPRISE, HE SEES A STRANGE SILHOUETTE FRAMED INSIDE THE DOOR.



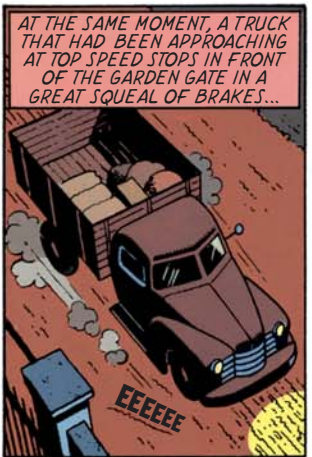
WITH A SHOUT OF RAGE, THE MASKED MAN GOES FOR HIS PISTOL, BUT...

Oh!...



... THE NEWLY-ARRIVED STRANGER RAISES HIS ARM, WITH A DRY CRACKLING, A BLINDING RAY OF LIGHT STRIKES THE BURGLAR, WHO FALLS OVER BACKWARD...

Ow!!!



AT THE SAME MOMENT, A TRUCK THAT HAD BEEN APPROACHING AT TOP SPEED STOPS IN FRONT OF THE GARDEN GATE IN A GREAT SQUEAL OF BRAKES...



MORTIMER AND BLAKE CLIMB OUT HURRIEDLY.

Please accept this, and thank you for your help...

Era um prazer, senhor\*!

Hurry up, old chap!



PUSHING PAST THE GATE, THE TWO MEN WALK BRISKLY INTO THE GARDEN.

That truck was a godsend. Without it, we'd still be trudging along that...

Shhh!... Listen!...



A LOW MOANING CAN BE HEARD COMING FROM A NEARBY BUSH...

Heavens!

There, look! A man on the ground!

\*IT WAS A PLEASURE, SIR.



IN AN INSTANT, THEY'RE KNEELING BY THE WOUNDED MAN...

Blimey! It's Zarco, my manservant! The poor man was knocked out.

Did we get here too late, then?!



INSTINCTIVELY, BLAKE TURNS AROUND TO LOOK TOWARDS THE VILLA AND LETS OUT A STARTLED CRY...

Philip!



A MAN HAS JUST LANDED ON THE TERRACE AFTER JUMPING OUT A WINDOW ONE STOREY UP...



WITHOUT A WORD, OUR TWO FRIENDS HAVE LEAPT FORWARD...

He disappeared behind the house!

Good! There's no other way out of there. The terrace is surrounded by a ravine 100 feet deep!



BUT, JUST AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO ARRIVE, THEY'RE STOPPED IN THEIR TRACKS BY AN INCREDIBLE SIGHT: WITH A LOW WHISTLING SOUND, A STRANGE MACHINE COMES OUT OF A BUSH, ZOOMS THROUGH THE AIR AT LIGHTNING SPEED, AND VANISHES!!



Francis, old boy!... Did you see that... that thing?!

Yes!... I think we can stop the chase here...



**THE NEXT DAY...**

## PECULIAR BURGLARY AT THE QUINTA DO PICO

"Yes, someone knocked out my servant and broke into my home," declares the current tenant of the villa, Pr. Mortimer, to the detective in charge of the investigation...

Yesterday towards 8:30 p.m., as he was making his usual round before closing the gate, Zarco Nêves, servant at the Quinta do Pico, rented some time ago by Professor Mortimer, was knocked out in the garden by an unseen attacker. Shortly afterwards, after being delayed by an automobile breakdown on his way back from the Sant' Ana airfield, where he'd gone to pick up a friend, the professor found the unfortunate servant lying behind a bush...

### WHAT WAS THE BURGLAR LOOKING FOR?

However, while the terse statement the professor gave the police seems to have satisfied the officer in charge of the case, Inspector Henriques, it does not appear to have convinced everyone. Certain reporters speak of rumours going around Furnas, concerning certain trips the professor took around the wild canyons and forests near Povoação. Trips that

**MORE FLYING SAUCERS?...**  
Last night, around 9 p.m., an inhabitant

IN A ROOM AT THE CENTRAL HOTEL IN PONTE DELGADO, TWO MEN ARE HAVING A SOMEWHAT SOUR EXCHANGE...

Fine, let's just forget about it!...

Believe me, Colonel. You'd be better off dropping your fantastic account of last night's events!... You can see that the newspapers don't...

THE MAN ADDRESSED AS COLONEL WHIRLS AROUND, HIS FACE TWISTED WITH RAGE, AND WE CAN NOW RECOGNISE HIM... OLRIK, THE ELUSIVE ADVENTURER AND ETERNAL OPPONENT OF BLAKE AND MORTIMER!

By thunder!... I told you before... That devilish weapon was no ordinary piece... Lightning shot out of it, and bam!... It was like a sledgehammer blow to my guts!!! By the time I came to, the other guy had vanished with the loot... I heard shouts in the garden and barely had time to run. My legs were shaky and my skull was still ringing like a bell!...

Listen, my dear fellow, if my government turned to you to get your hands on that... thing, it wasn't to hear you justify your failures with wild stories!... An unknown weapon? Ha, ha! Don't make me laugh! Was it used by some Martian fresh off last night's flying saucer, maybe?!

All right, Ostrag, cut the sarcasm!... I'll get my revenge!...

AT THAT MOMENT, AT THE QUINTA DO PICO, MORALE ISN'T ANY BETTER!

I could have done without this publicity! And to think we were just discussing the need for discretion!

Ah! Let's just be thankful that no one had the idea of linking our story to that of the flying object!...

Wouldn't that be dandy!... But don't you think, maybe, we were victims of some hallucination?

Alas! I'm afraid not!... I found a great circle of burnt grass on the terrace this morning!...

Heavens, Blake! Don't tell me you also think that...

Yes, I know. It seems preposterous! So, better to drop the subject for the moment... Instead, let's go back to the story of how you made your discovery so we can know where we stand... We've had little chance to do so since last night...

Well! As the journalists are implying (and even though I deliberately left some of these details out of my letter), the place is, indeed, located near Povoação. It's a deep chasm that the locals call "O foro da diabo."\* Intrigued by the extravagant stories about it, I decided to explore it. With the help of my guide Pepé, I descended into the chasm, and I must confess that I wasn't disappointed: The sights were worthy of the legend! Galleries, huge rooms, torrents... it was all there! Anyway, the map you're holding will tell you more than any description... I was eventually stopped by that lake. As I lacked the appropriate equipment, I was about to turn back when I suddenly caught a glimpse of something under the surface... something that looked like a peculiar concretion. With a good deal of effort, I managed to pull it out of the wall in which it was embedded, and to my immense surprise, I discovered that it wasn't a gypsum crystal as I'd originally thought but a material entirely foreign to the surrounding formations...

After coming back here, I examined my find and discovered that it was no mineral I could identify—and that it had some peculiar properties. Not only was it clearly luminescent in the dark, but, what's much more important, it was also indubitably radioactive!... As I pondered this conundrum, I must confess I couldn't help but think of orichalcum, the Atlanteans' mysterious metal that was as precious as gold!...

Here we are!...

But you seem to have neglected the fact that, according to Plato, this extraordinary orichalcum was used to craft jewellery and household items, and even to build defensive walls. I have a hard time imagining such things being radioactive!...

Of course I raised the same objections myself, and I concluded that only a more complete exploration of the cave would let us verify this crazy theory! That's why I asked you to join me here to help me solve this mystery, old friend.

All right! Count on me, old boy! All the more because we're not the only ones interested in that metal!...

Good show, Francis! I knew you'd agree! I'll call my guide Pepé immediately. We should be ready in four or five days!



FIVE DAYS LATER, AT DAWN, BLAKE AND MORTIMER ARE DRIVING FAST ON THE ROAD TO POVOÇÃO. PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXPEDITION HAVE BEEN MADE SWIFTLY, AND IN ORDER TO THROW JOURNALISTS AND POTENTIAL SPIES OFF THE SCENT, PÉPÉ HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ASSEMBLE THE EQUIPMENT AND PORTERS IN A SECRET PLACE.



Phew! I do believe we've finally managed to lose that pack of jackals. Reporters!...

Haven't they tried to get our guide to speak?

Of course they have! They even attempted to bribe him. But that good man told them that we wouldn't be leaving 'til next week... We can trust him!...



AND YET, AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THE "GOOD MAN" IS HAVING AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION WITH THREE FELLOWS DRESSED UP AS LOCALS. ONE OF THEM IS NONE OTHER THAN THE INFAMOUS OLRİK...

Is not very honest, what I'm doing. Hiring you instead of my porters!

I'm telling you, these gentlemen and I are journalists! Come, now. This should be enough to silence your scruples... And don't worry about the rest!...



FIVE MINUTES LATER...

Careful, now! Call me Luis!...

Hello, laddies!



AFTER A CAREFUL REVIEW OF HIS TROOPS, MORTIMER TURNS TOWARDS THE GUIDE:

Nothing strange, then? Did you see anyone nosing around the place?

And you will vouch for your assistants, of course?...

Não, senhor!...

My assistants?... Er!... Naturalmente, senhor...



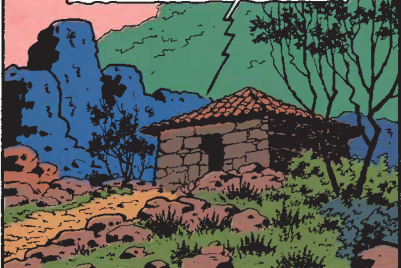
\*NO, SIR!

WITH THESE WORDS, AND AFTER HIDING THE CAR, THE SMALL CARAVAN IS UNDERWAY, LEAVING BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL FURNAS VALLEY.



BUT NEITHER BLAKE NOR MORTIMER SUSPECTS THAT ONE OF THE TEAM'S MEN IS IN RADIO CONTACT WITH TWO INDIVIDUALS HIDDEN A COUPLE OF MILES AWAY, INSIDE A SHEPHERD'S HUT...

You're leaving?... OK... Be careful... Understood!...



THE SUN HAS NOW FULLY RISEN. AFTER AN EXHAUSTING WALK, THE SMALL PARTY HAS FINALLY REACHED THE ENTRANCE TO THE CHASM AND IMMEDIATELY SETS UP CAMP THERE... FULLY DECKED OUT, OUR TWO FRIENDS ARE GETTING READY FOR THE TRIP DOWN. BUT OLRİK, WHO'S GOING WITH THEM, SWIFTLY SLIPS OVER TO ONE OF HIS ACCOMPLICES...

Keep an eye on Pépé... And if he should think about changing his mind...

Understood!...

You're ready, Francis. Go ahead!



MEANWHILE, THE MAN WITH THE WALKIE-TALKIE IS CALLING...

He's managed to get chosen for the trip down instead of Pépé... No, they don't suspect a thing... Very well... I'll let you know...



Understood, then? If the weather shows signs of changing, call us right away!

De acordo, senhor!...



MORTIMER HAVING JOINED BLAKE, OLRİK, WITH A LAST INTENT LOOK AT HIS MEN, FOLLOWS THEM DOWN INSIDE THE GAPING HOLE...



... WHILE INSIDE THE SHEPHERD'S HUT, IT'S TIME FOR REJOICING...

Well, Kurt, I think this one's a done deal!...



\*VERY WELL, SIR.



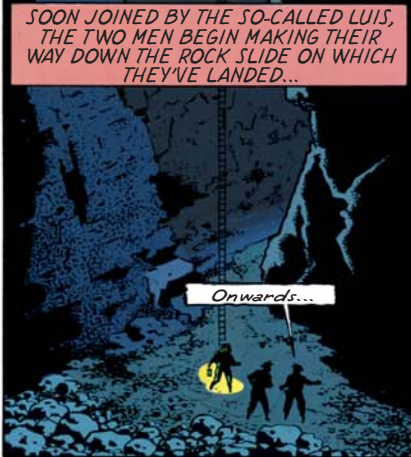


AFTER A 150-FOOT DESCENT, OLRIK HEARS THE PROFESSOR CALL HIM.

Ho, Luis! Are you OK?

Sim, muito bem, senhor!\*

\*YES, VERY WELL, SIR.



SOON JOINED BY THE SO-CALLED LUIS, THE TWO MEN BEGIN MAKING THEIR WAY DOWN THE ROCK SLIDE ON WHICH THEY'VE LANDED...

Onwards...



GOING FIRST, MORTIMER WALKS RESOLUTELY WHILE UNCOILING A TELEPHONE WIRE...

How on Earth can you be making your way forward so boldly?

Thanks to these ribbons of Scotchlite I carefully placed to mark my path during my last visit... When the light from my torch sweeps over them, they become luminescent.



HAVING REACHED THE BOTTOM OF THE FIRST ROOM, MORTIMER STOPS BEFORE A NARROW OPENING IN THE GROUND.

This is the shaft! Be especially careful as you go down. The rock is rotten. It crumbles and breaks off at the merest touch...



FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, AFTER THEY'VE GOT DOWN WITHOUT A HITCH, MORTIMER WATCHES "LUIS" ARRIVE...

One moment! Our abseiling rope is caught on...



BUT, STOPPING IN MID-SENTENCE, HE SUDDENLY GRABS HIM AND SLAMS HIM AGAINST THE WALL.

Move!!!



AT THAT MOMENT, A LARGE ROCK NARROWLY MISSES THE PROFESSOR'S BACK AND SHATTERS ON THE BOTTOM OF THE SHAFT, SENDING PIECES FLYING IN ALL DIRECTIONS.



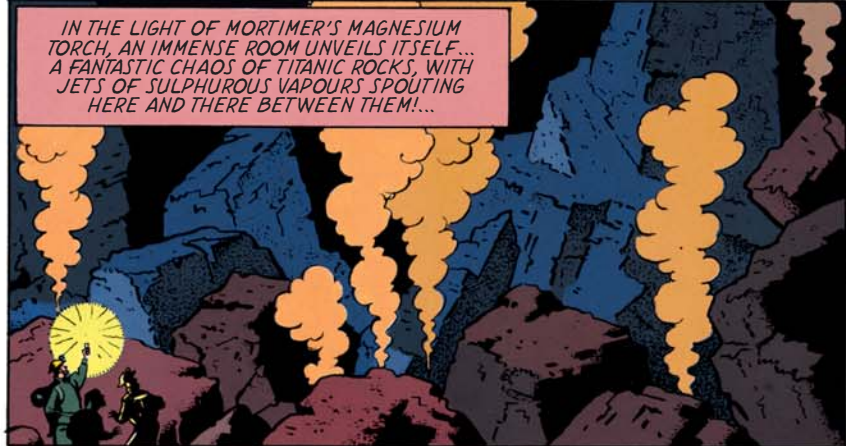
Well! Luis, lad, that was a close one!...

Er!... I... I... Deus te paghe, senhor!\*



By Jove! This blasted place is full of dangers!

No doubt... But it also has its compensations. Look at this!...

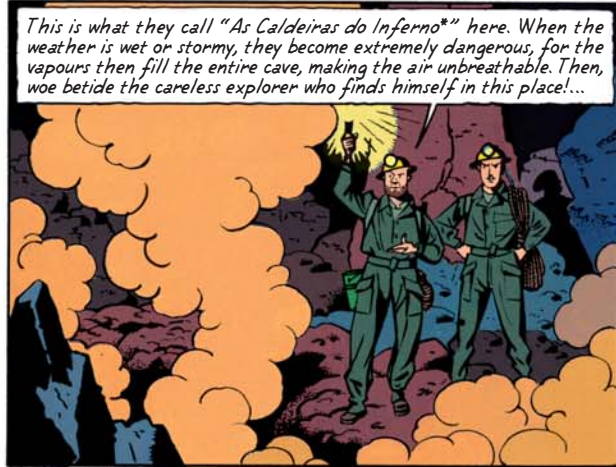


IN THE LIGHT OF MORTIMER'S MAGNESIUM TORCH, AN IMMENSE ROOM UNVEILS ITSELF... A FANTASTIC CHAOS OF TITANIC ROCKS, WITH JETS OF SULPHUROUS VAPOURS SPOUTING HERE AND THERE BETWEEN THEM!...

\*GOD BLESS YOU, SIR!



Heavens! I feel like I'm looking at Dante's Inferno!... What are these vapours?



This is what they call "As Caldeiras do Inferno" here. When the weather is wet or stormy, they become extremely dangerous, for the vapours then fill the entire cave, making the air unbreathable. Then, woe betide the careless explorer who finds himself in this place!...

\*HELL'S CAULDRONS



Why didn't we bring masks, if this is so?

Because they would be completely useless to us. The vapours are opaque and would make it impossible to get our bearings. Suffocating or getting hopelessly lost would be our only choices!

\*I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THAT CLOUD!



AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CHASM, PEPE IS CASTING A WORRIED EYE ON THE SKY...

Desconfio dissa nuvem!!!\*