

NO, THIS WAS AN *INVASION FROM WITHIN*... A SURPRISE *INSURRECTION* BY THE LEGIONS OF *COMPUTERIZED ROBOTS* THAT HAD FAITHFULLY *SERVED* THEIR HUMAN *CREATORS* FOR CENTURIES!



THINK OF A PLANET... NOT UNLIKE *EARTH* MIGHT BE AFTER SEVERAL MORE CENTURIES OF ADVANCING *TECHNOLOGY*...

A PLANET BESEIGED BY A RUTHLESS *INVASION FORCE* THAT POSED A DEADLY THREAT TO A TOTALLY *UNPREPARED* HUMAN RACE!

BUT THIS WAS NO *INVADING FORCE* FROM THE *STARS*...

BUT *NO LONGER!* ONCE THE *COMPUTER REVOLT* HAD TAKEN PLACE...

RACE OF THE DAMNED



...LIFE FOR THIS HUMAN RACE HAD BECOME **INTOLERABLE!** LEFT WITH NO ALTERNATIVE, THE HUMANS WERE FORCED TO **ABANDON** THEIR HOME...

BUT IN SPITE OF THEIR VASTLY **SUPERIOR** COMPUTERIZED INTELLECTS-- THE **ROBOT RACE** HAD BEEN IMPRINTED WITH MANY OF THE **CHARACTERISTICS** OF THEIR MORTAL **CREATORS**--



STRANGELY ENOUGH, THE MOST **PROMINENT** BEING A PASSION FOR **SPORT**.. FOR **GAMES-PLAYING**... FOR **GAMBLING** FOR OUTRAGEOUSLY **HIGH STAKES!**



THUS IT WAS THIS **PENCHANT** FOR **SPORT** THAT PROMPTED THE REIGNING **ROBOTS** TO PERIODICALLY OFFER THE **HUMANS** A **CHANCE** TO RECLAIM THEIR FORFEITED PLANET...

...TAKING TO THE STARS IN A MASSIVE FLEET OF **SPACE SHIPS!**

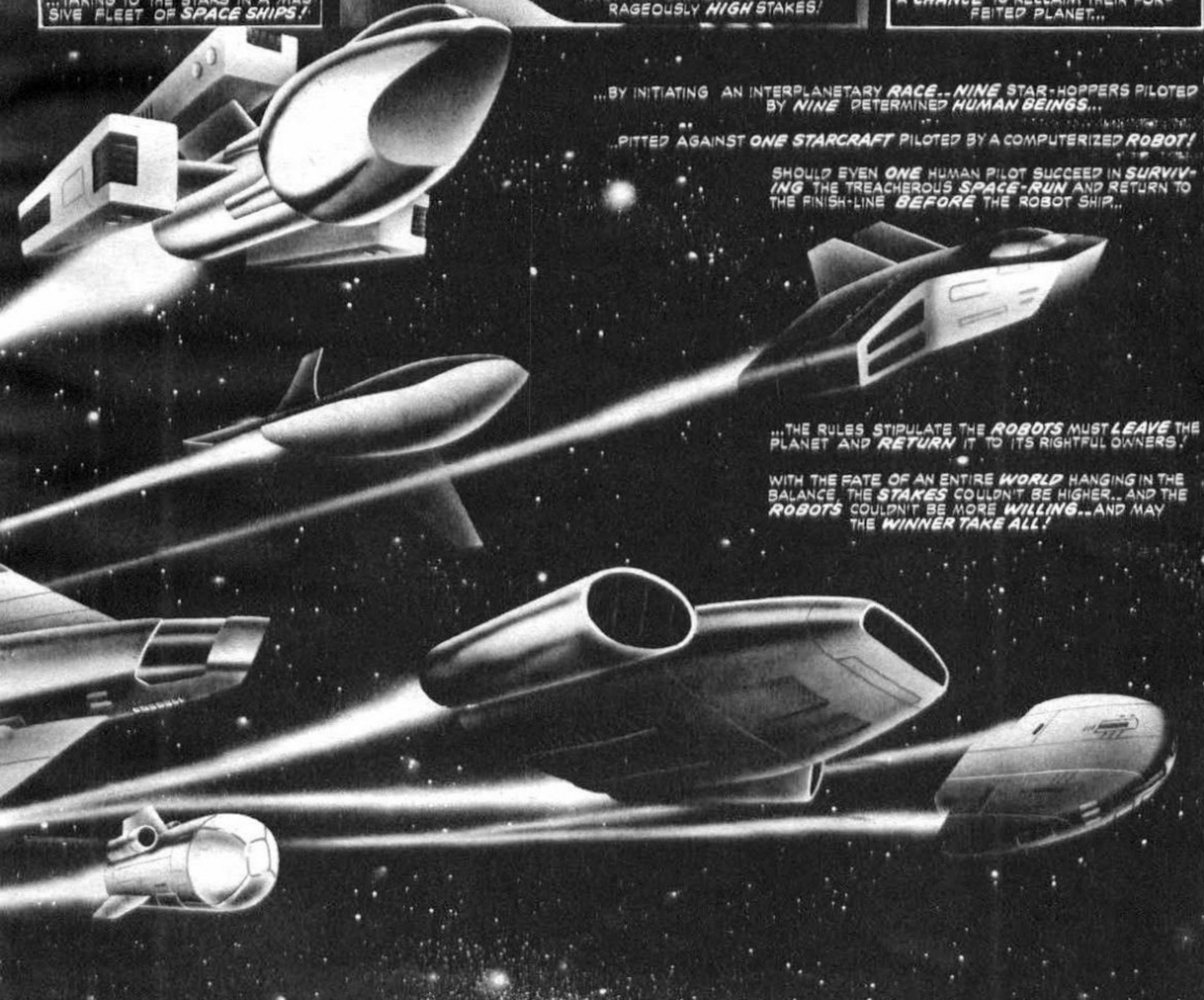
...BY INITIATING AN INTERPLANETARY **RACE**.. **NINE** STAR-HOPPERS PILOTED BY **NINE** DETERMINED **HUMAN BEINGS**...

...PITTED AGAINST **ONE STARCRAFT** PILOTED BY A COMPUTERIZED **ROBOT!**

SHOULD EVEN **ONE** HUMAN PILOT SUCCEED IN **SURVIVING** THE TREACHEROUS **SPACE-RUN** AND RETURN TO THE FINISH-LINE **BEFORE** THE **ROBOT SHIP**...

...THE RULES STIPULATE THE **ROBOTS** MUST **LEAVE** THE PLANET AND **RETURN** IT TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNERS!

WITH THE FATE OF AN ENTIRE **WORLD** HANGING IN THE BALANCE, THE **STAKES** COULDN'T BE HIGHER.. AND THE **ROBOTS** COULDN'T BE MORE **WILLING**..AND MAY THE **WINNER TAKE ALL!**





"WELL *KRRY* NOW THAT WE'RE PAST THE MIDDLE POINT OF THIS GRUELING RACE, IT'S QUITE POSSIBLE OUR CONTESTANTS MIGHT BE FEELING THE EFFECTS OF *STRESS* AND *FATIGUE*!"

"TO BE SURE, *NOV*! AT THIS POINT OUT OF THE HUMAN'S ORIGINAL *NINE* STAR-HOPPERS UP AGAINST OUR OWN *EX-9*... ONLY *TWO* ARE STILL IN THE RUNNING!"

"AND THERE COULD BE ONLY *ONE* OF THEM SOON! APPARENTLY THE *HUMAN* PILOT TAILING *EX-9* IS EITHER TOO *EXHAUSTED* OR TOO *DESPERATE* TO TAKE HEED OF THE *DYING* COMET CROSSING THE RACE TRAJECTORY!"

"*EX-9* APPEARS TO BE VEERING TO AVOID IT... BUT THE HUMAN IS CUTTING IT PRETTY CLOSE. NOT A VERY WISE COURSE OF ACTION... CONSIDERING THE POWERFUL *GRAVITATIONAL FIELD* SUCH A MASS WOULD GENERATE."

"NOTE HOW *EX-9* WAS ABLE TO MATHEMATICALLY COMPUTE PRECISELY HOW MANY *ERGS* OF *THRUST* WOULD BE REQUIRED TO CARRY HIS CRAFT SAFELY OUT OF THE DANGER ZONE!"

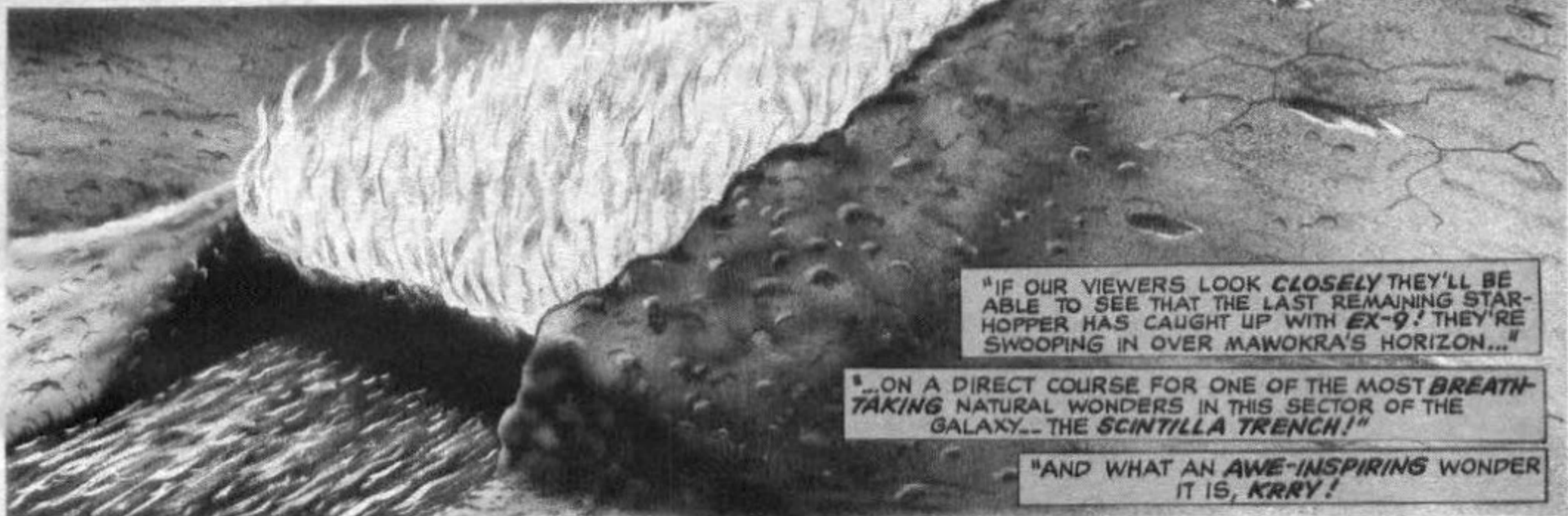
"BUT ALAS..."

"...IT IS A BIT LATE FOR THE STAR-HOPPER TO LEARN FROM *EX-9*'S EXAMPLE!"

"THE STRIATED HEAVENLY BODY DIRECTLY AHEAD IS NO SURPRISE TO THE SPECTATORS OF PREVIOUS RACES, NOV!"



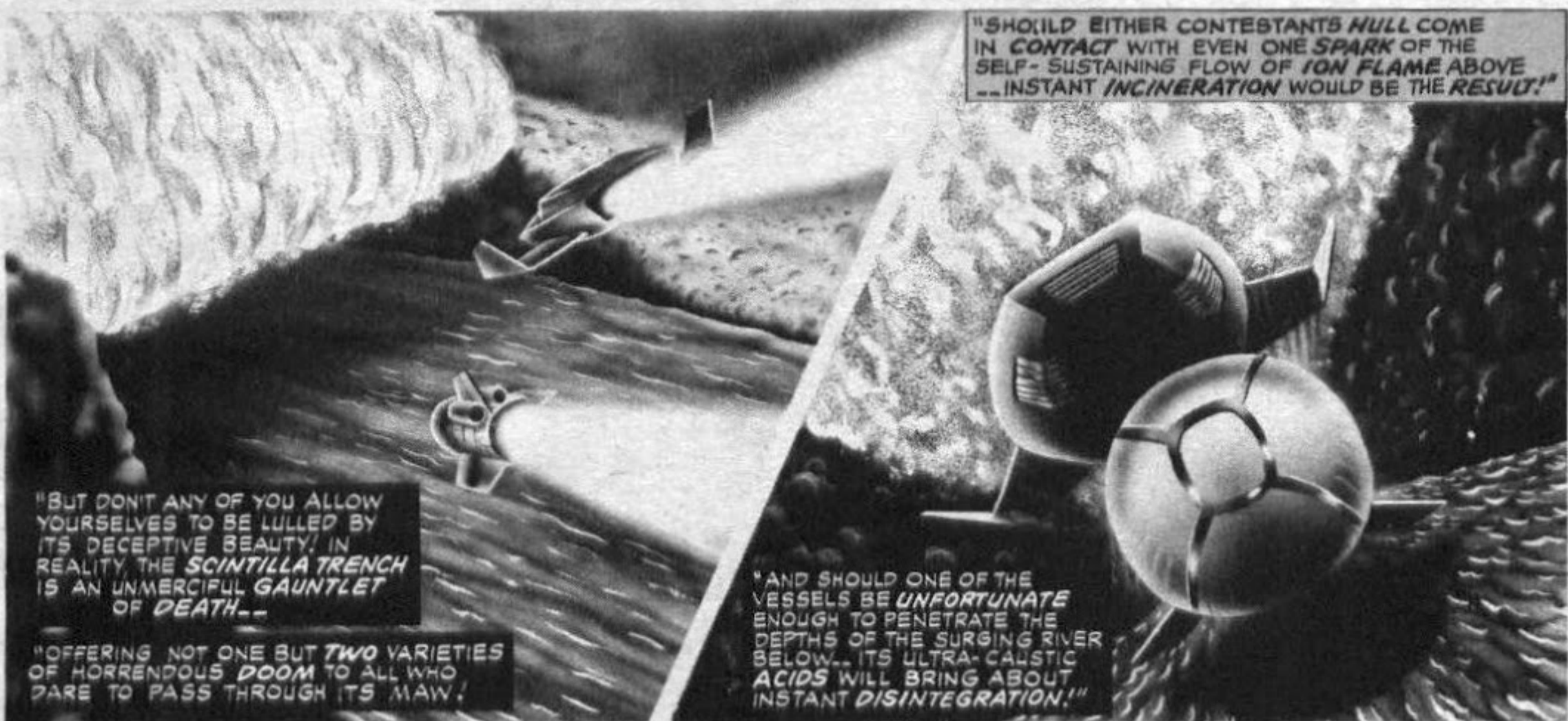
"MAWOKRA-- THE FINAL PLANET AND OBSTACLE THAT LIES BETWEEN OUR TWO FINALISTS AND THE FINISH LINE!"



"IF OUR VIEWERS LOOK CLOSELY THEY'LL BE ABLE TO SEE THAT THE LAST REMAINING STAR-HOPPER HAS CAUGHT UP WITH EX-9. THEY'RE SWOOPING IN OVER MAWOKRA'S HORIZON..."

"...ON A DIRECT COURSE FOR ONE OF THE MOST BREATHTAKING NATURAL WONDERS IN THIS SECTOR OF THE GALAXY-- THE SCINTILLA TRENCH!"

"AND WHAT AN AWE-INSPIRING WONDER IT IS, KRRY!"



"SHOULD EITHER CONTESTANTS HULL COME IN CONTACT WITH EVEN ONE SPARK OF THE SELF-SUSTAINING FLOW OF ION FLAME ABOVE -- INSTANT INCINERATION WOULD BE THE RESULT!"

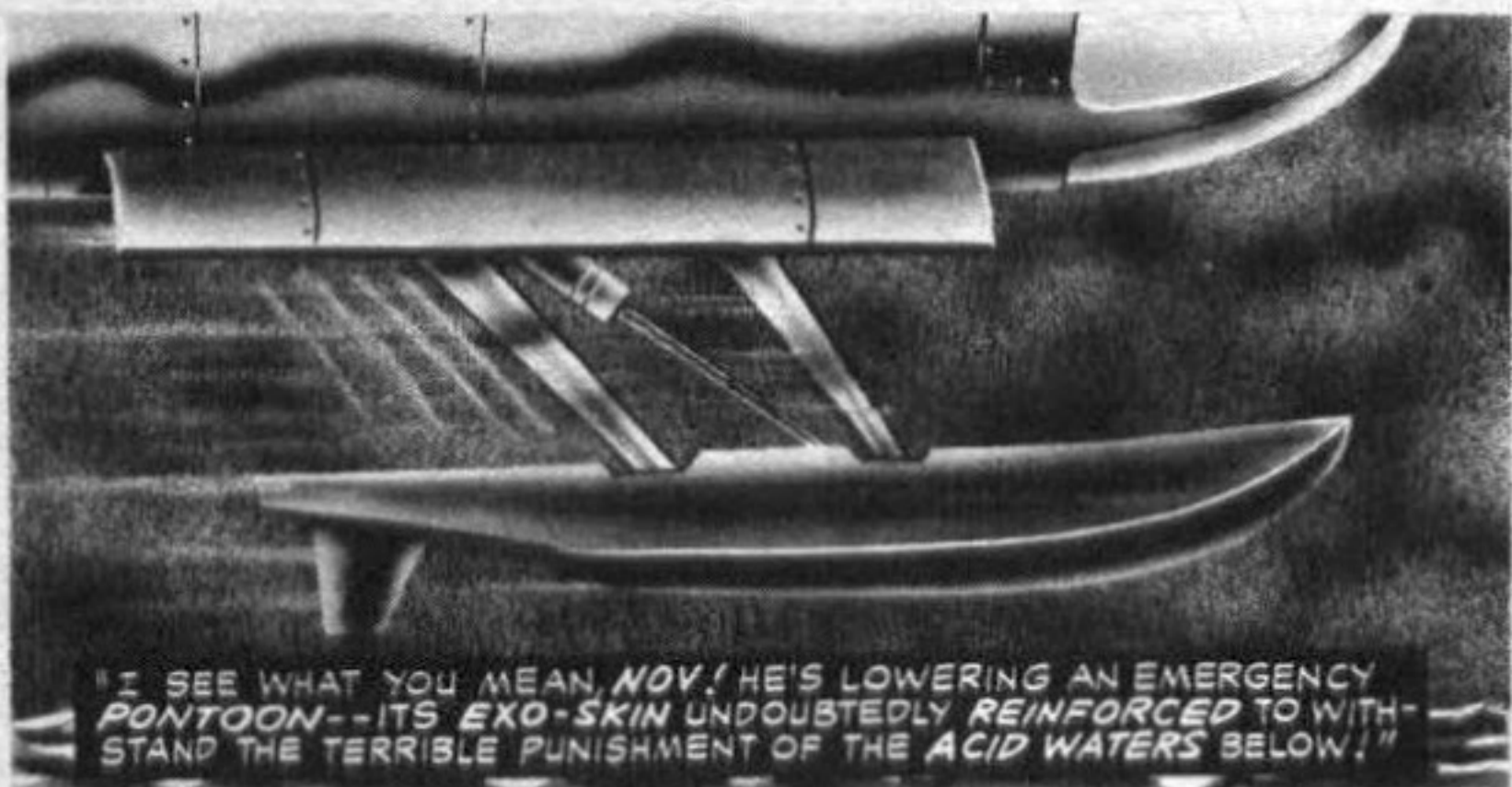
"BUT DON'T ANY OF YOU ALLOW YOURSELVES TO BE LULLED BY ITS DECEPTIVE BEAUTY! IN REALITY THE SCINTILLA TRENCH IS AN UNMERCIFUL GAUNTLET OF DEATH--"

"OFFERING NOT ONE BUT TWO VARIETIES OF HORRENDOUS DOOM TO ALL WHO DARE TO PASS THROUGH ITS MAW!"

"AND SHOULD ONE OF THE VESSELS BE UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO PENETRATE THE DEPTHS OF THE SURGING RIVER BELOW-- ITS ULTRA-CAUSTIC ACIDS WILL BRING ABOUT INSTANT DISINTEGRATION!"



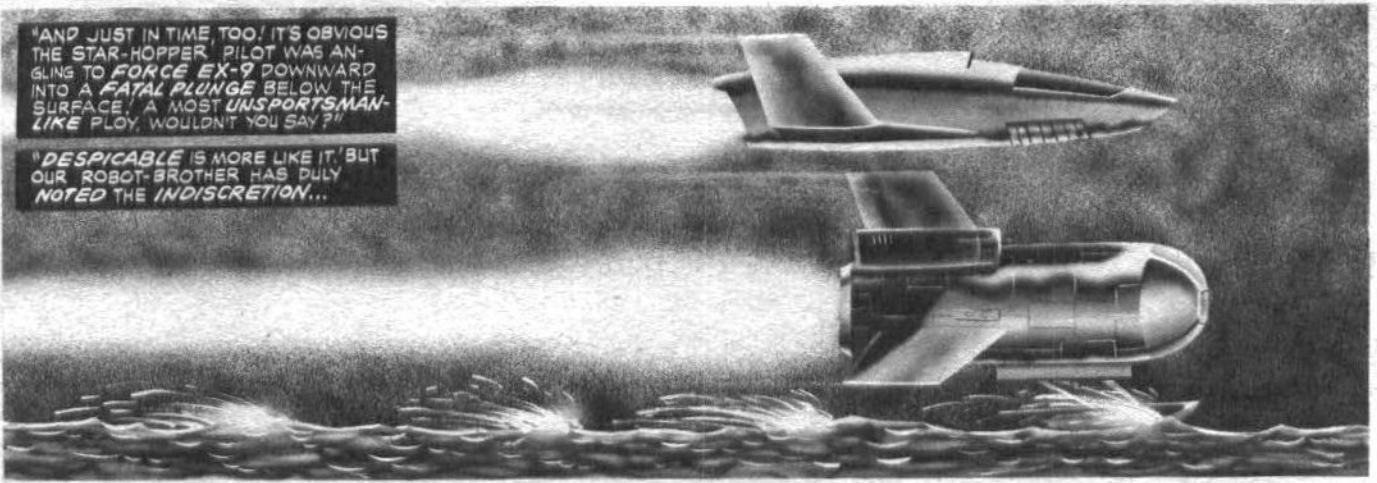
"BUT WHAT'S THIS? OUR IN-BOARD CAMERAS REVEAL THE ROBOT AT THE HELM OF EX-9 SEEMS TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS TREACHEROUS HOME-STRETCH!"



"I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN, NOV! HE'S LOWERING AN EMERGENCY PONTOON-- ITS EXO-SKIN UNDOUBTEDLY REINFORCED TO WITHSTAND THE TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT OF THE ACID WATERS BELOW!"

"AND JUST IN TIME, TOO! IT'S OBVIOUS THE STAR-HOPPER PILOT WAS ANGLING TO FORCE EX-9 DOWNWARD INTO A FATAL PLUNGE BELOW THE SURFACE. A MOST UNSPORTSMAN-LIKE PLOY, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?"

"DESPICABLE IS MORE LIKE IT, BUT OUR ROBOT-BROTHER HAS DULY NOTED THE INDISCRETION..."



"...AND IT'S THIS COMMENTATOR'S GUESS THAT HE INTENDS TO TAKE APPROPRIATE COUNTER ACTION!"

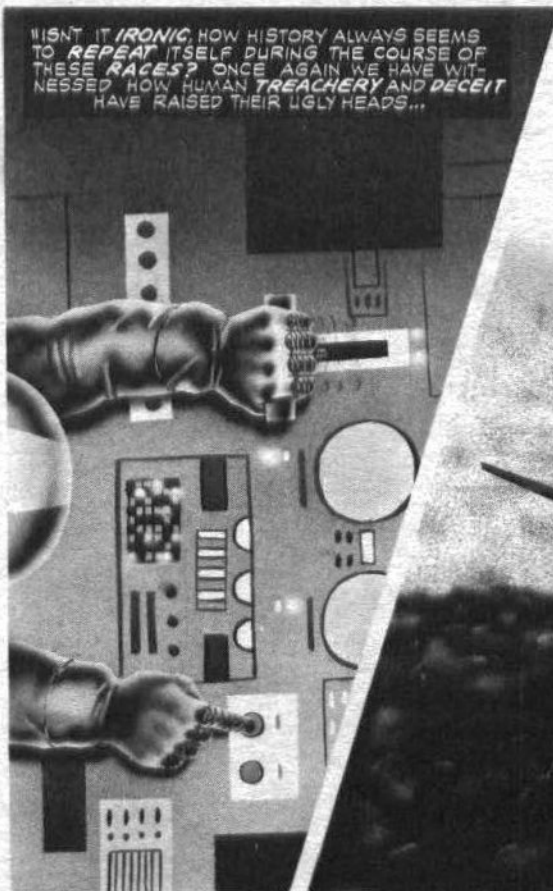


"SEE HOW HE USES HIS MONITOR TO TUNE IN THE FACE OF HIS UNSCRUPULOUS HUMAN OPPONENT!"

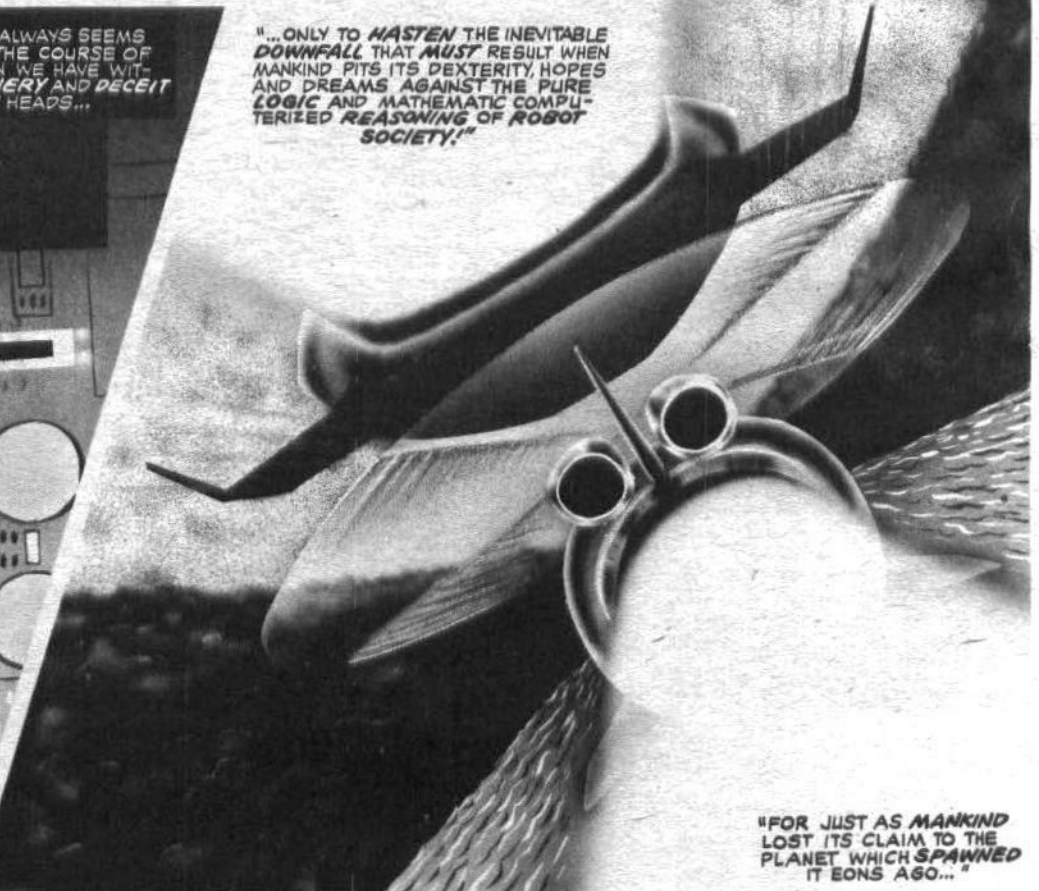


"JUDGING BY THE LOOK OF DESPAIR WEIGHING UPON HIS VIGAGE... PERHAPS THE HUMAN CAN SENSE WHAT IS IN STORE!"

"ISN'T IT IRONIC, HOW HISTORY ALWAYS SEEMS TO REPEAT ITSELF DURING THE COURSE OF THESE RACES? ONCE AGAIN WE HAVE WITNESSED HOW HUMAN TREACHERY AND DECEIT HAVE RAISED THEIR UGLY HEADS..."

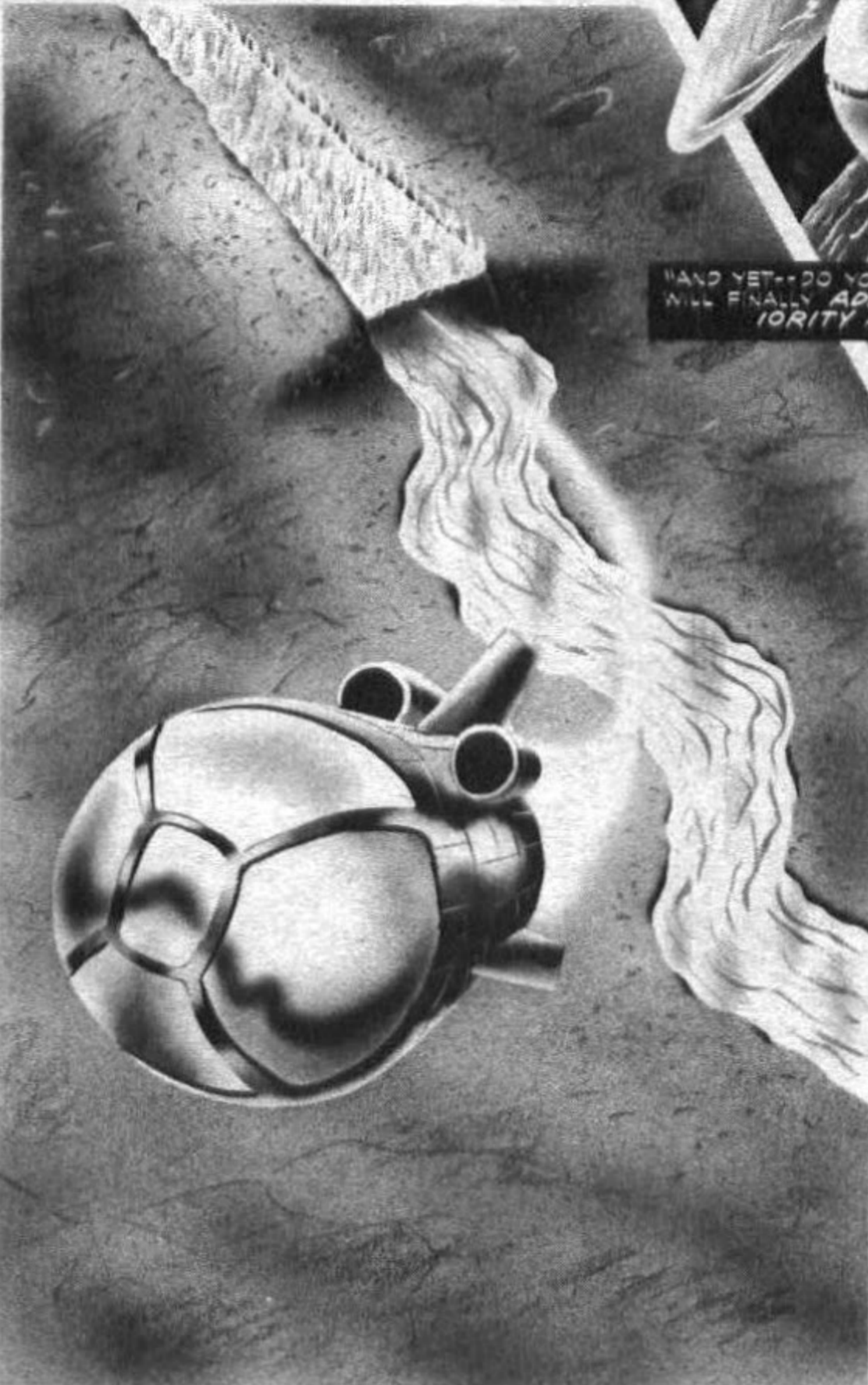
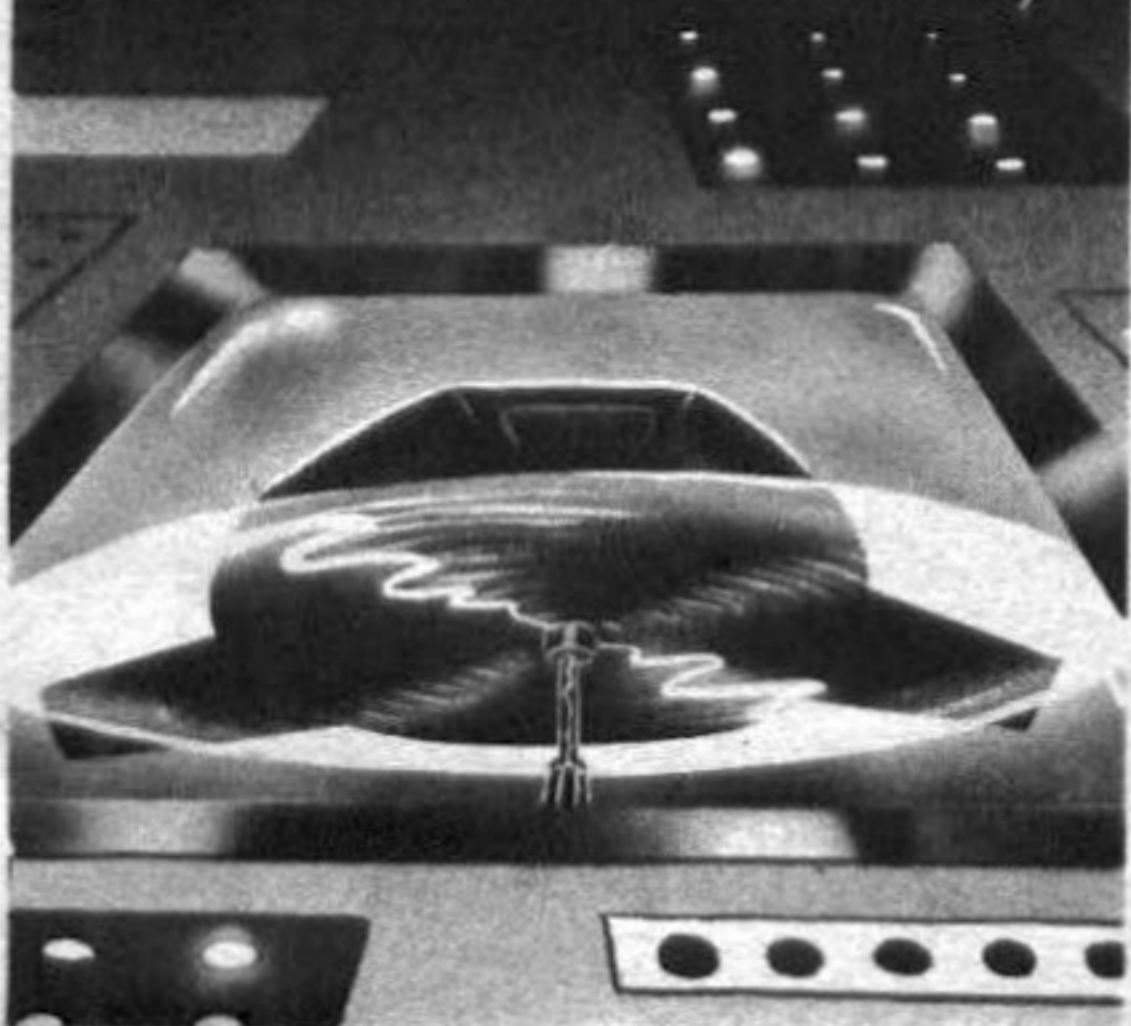


"...ONLY TO HASTEN THE INEVITABLE DOWNFALL THAT MUST RESULT WHEN MANKIND PITS ITS DEXTERITY, HOPES AND DREAMS AGAINST THE PURE LOGIC AND MATHEMATIC COMPUTERIZED REASONING OF ROBOT SOCIETY!"



"FOR JUST AS MANKIND LOST ITS CLAIM TO THE PLANET WHICH SPANNED IT EONS AGO..."

"...SO MUST THEY *LOSE* THIS RACE! FOR IF THERE WAS EVER ANY *REAL* DOUBT ABOUT THE *OUTCOME* OF THIS COMPETITION..."



"...IT WAS ONLY ABOUT HOW *LONG* THE HUMANS WOULD *PERSEVERE* THIS TIME -- BEFORE THEIR PILOTS WOULD ONCE AGAIN PROVE THE *INESCAPABLE INFERIORITY* OF THEIR SPECIES!"



"AND YET-- DO YOU SUPPOSE OUR CHALLENGERS WILL FINALLY *ADMIT* TO OUR REGNING *SUPERIORITY* AND THEIR *ETERNAL DEFEAT*?"

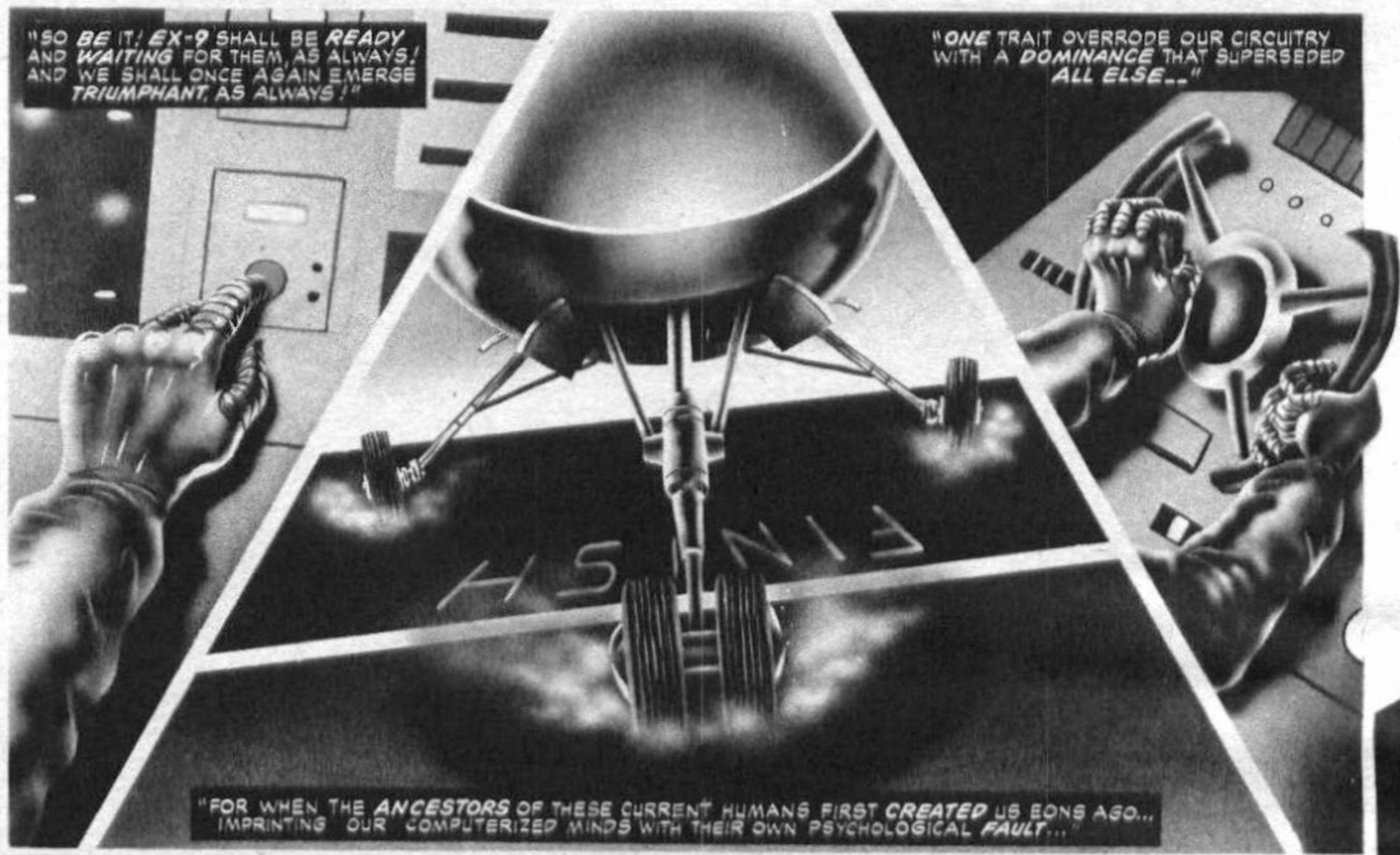


"YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION AS WELL AS I DO. *KRRY-- OF COURSE NOT!*"

"EVEN AS WE *SPEAK*, NO DOUBT THE HUMANS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN *BREEDING* THE NEXT *NINE PILOTS* WHO SHALL BE CONCEIVED AND TRAINED FOR THE YEAR OF OUR *NEXT INTERPLANETARY RACE*."

"SO BE IT! EX-9 SHALL BE READY AND WAITING FOR THEM, AS ALWAYS! AND WE SHALL ONCE AGAIN EMERGE TRIUMPHANT, AS ALWAYS!"

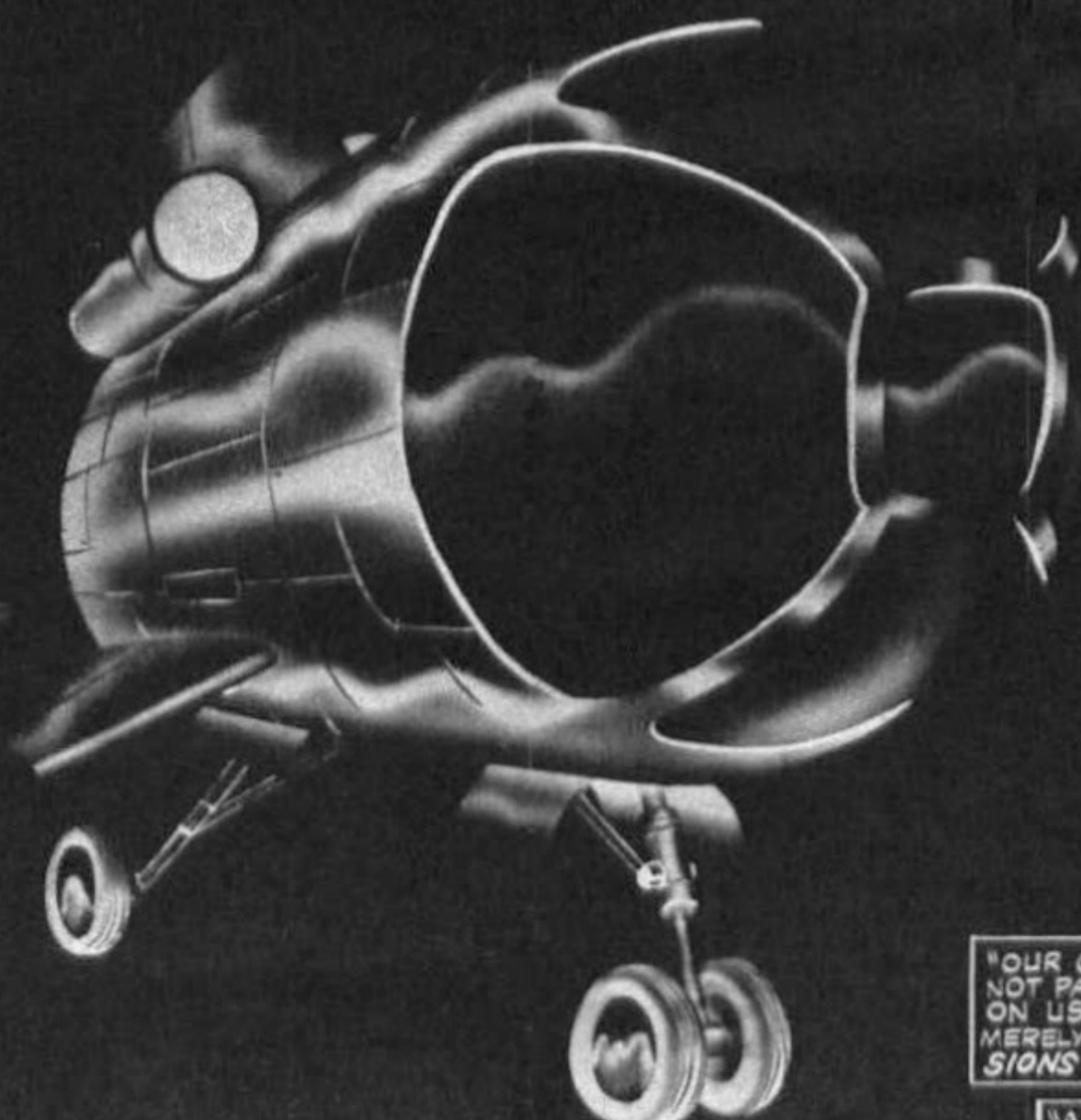
"ONE TRAIT OVERRODE OUR CIRCUITRY WITH A DOMINANCE THAT SUPERSEDED ALL ELSE..."



"FOR WHEN THE ANCESTORS OF THESE CURRENT HUMANS FIRST CREATED US EONS AGO... IMPRINTING OUR COMPUTERIZED MINDS WITH THEIR OWN PSYCHOLOGICAL FAULT..."

"AN OBSESSIVE DESIRE TO WIN, NO MATTER WHAT THE COST..."

"...EVEN IF IT MEANS WINNING WITHOUT HONOR!"



"OUR CREATORS CANNOT PASS JUDGEMENT ON US... FOR ARE WE NOT MERELY ULTIMATE EXTENSIONS OF THEMSELVES?"

"A FITTING ETERNAL PENANCE, DON'T YOU THINK... FOR A RACE OF THE DAMNED?"