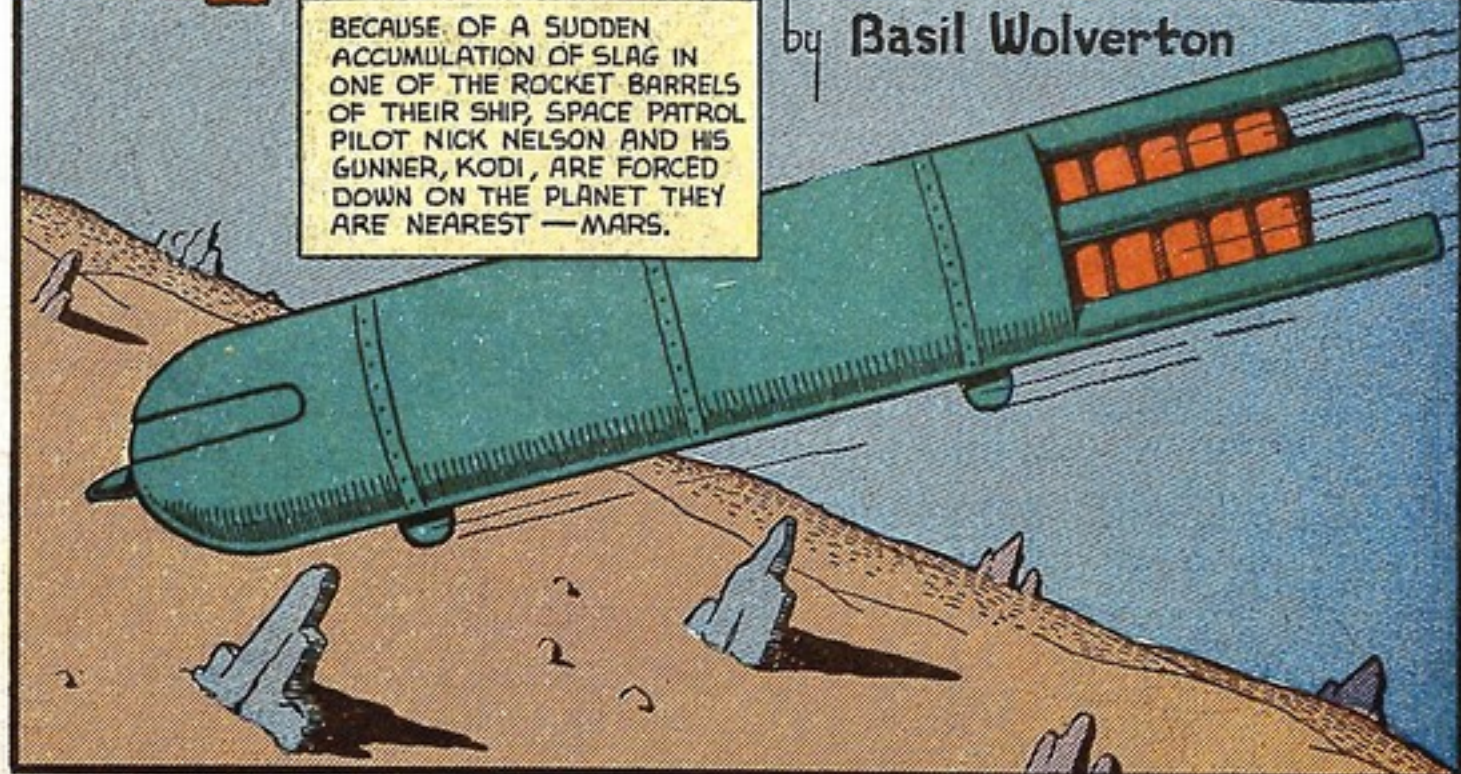


Space Patrol

BECAUSE OF A SUDDEN ACCUMULATION OF SLAG IN ONE OF THE ROCKET BARRELS OF THEIR SHIP, SPACE PATROL PILOT NICK NELSON AND HIS GUNNER, KODI, ARE FORCED DOWN ON THE PLANET THEY ARE NEAREST — MARS.

by Basil Wolverton



IT'S GREAT TO BE BACK ON MY OLD HOME PLANET, NICK, BUT I DON'T CARE FOR THIS DESERT! BENEATH IT LIE THE ANCIENT CITIES OF MARS! MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WERE BURIED ALIVE WHEN THE GREAT SAND STORMS CAME! IT'S LIKE A HUGE GRAVEYARD! SORT OF GIVES ME THE CREEPS!

TRY AND NOT HAVE A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN DURING THE NEXT FIVE MINUTES, KODI! THAT'S AS LONG AS IT'LL TAKE US TO CLEAN OUT THIS BARREL!



GREAT GALAXIES!
WHAT'S THAT
COMING UP OUT
OF THE
GROUND?

LOOKS LIKE
YOU'RE THE
ONE WHO'S
GOING TO
HAVE THE
BREAKDOWN!



LOOK, KODI!

JUMPING
JUPITER!



A HAND-LIKE PAW
COMES INTO VIEW



THIS IS QUICKLY FOLLOWED
BY ANOTHER PAW, AND THE
TOP OF WHAT APPEARS TO
BE A HEAD....



UPON COMING HALF WAY
OUT OF THE GROUND,
THE CREATURE SPIES
THE PATROLMEN....



GLOWERING MALIGNANTLY,
IT IMMEDIATELY SQUIRMS
BACK INTO THE SAND.



I HOPE THAT'S
NOT ONE OF
YOUR BURIED
ANCESTORS
COME TO LIFE!

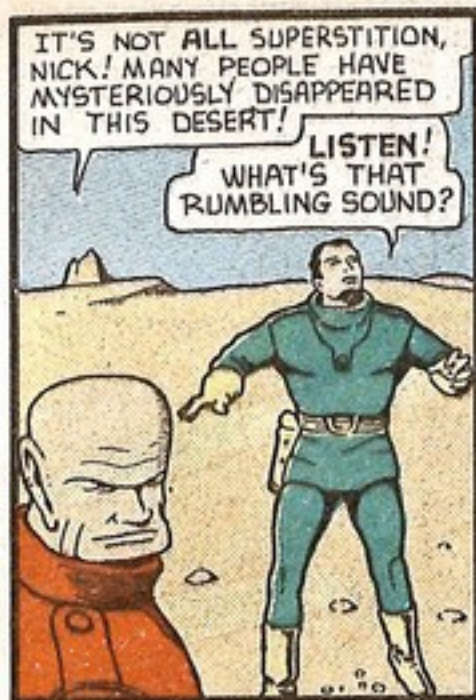
THAT'S A SAND RAT!
THEY'RE HALF HUMAN
CREATURES THAT
PRESUMABLY LIVE IN THE
BURIED CITIES BENEATH
US! OCCASIONALLY THEY
BURROW TO THE SURFACE!



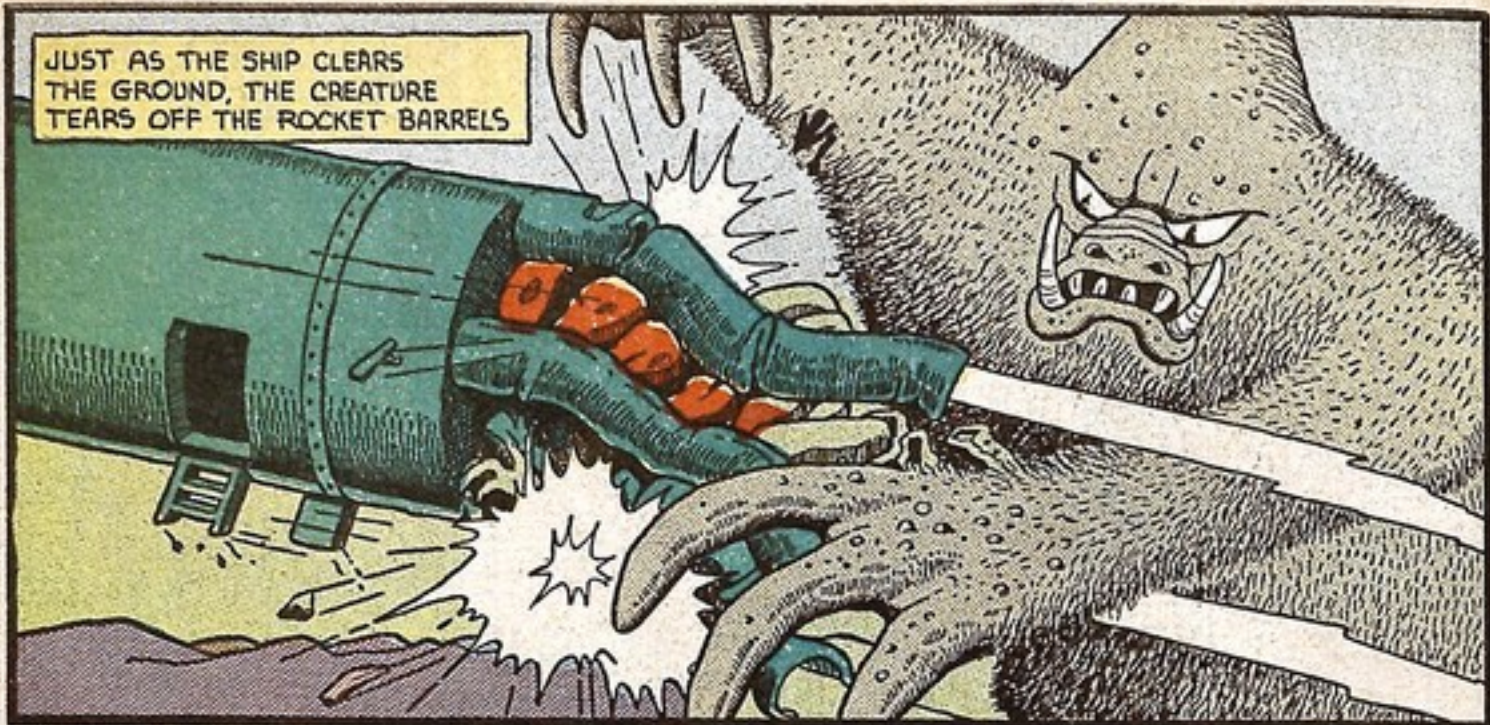
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE
BAD LUCK TO SEE ONE
OF THOSE THINGS!
THERE'S A MARTIAN
BELIEF THAT THOSE WHO
DO RARELY LEAVE
THIS DESERT!

DON'T TELL ME
YOU GO IN FOR
THOSE ANCIENT
SUPERSTITIONS, KODI!





JUST AS THE SHIP CLEARS
THE GROUND, THE CREATURE
TEARS OFF THE ROCKET BARRELS



NICK AND KODI,
UP FORWARD,
ARE UNHARMED.

THE ANTI-GRAVITY UNIT
IS CRIPPLED, TOO! OUR
ONLY CHANCE IS TO GET
INTO OUR SPACE SUITS
AND BAIL OUT BEFORE THE
SHIP SETTLES TO THE GROUND!



SUPPORTED BY THE ANTI-GRAVITY UNITS IN
THE SPACE SUITS, THE PATROLMEN SPRING
FROM THEIR WRECKED CRAFT...



A MOMENT LATER THE SHIP STRIKES THE
GROUND. THE GIGANTIC MARTIAN BEAST
LEAPS UPON IT, REDUCING IT TO A PILE
OF TANGLED METAL—



SUDDENLY THERE
IS A TREMENDOUS
EXPLOSION AS
THE SHIP'S ATOM
BOMBS ARE
CRUSHED —

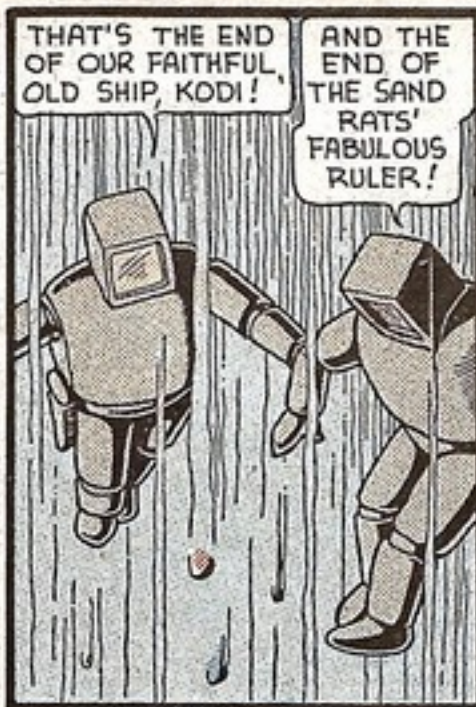


NICK AND KODI ARE ENGULFED IN A WAVE OF FLYING DEBRIS, BUT THEIR TOUGH ARMOR PROTECTS THEM.



THAT'S THE END OF OUR FAITHFUL, OLD SHIP, KODI!

AND THE END OF THE SAND RATS' FABULOUS RULER!



THE WHAT?

THERE'S AN OLD MARTIAN BELIEF THAT THE BURIED, RAT-INHABITED CITIES HAVE BEEN RULED FOR CENTURIES BY A HUGE MONSTER - ONE THAT KILLS ALL WHO DARE SET FOOT ON THIS DESERT. WELL - WE'VE JUST SEEN THAT MONSTER - AND THE LAST OF HIM, TOO!



WHEN THE AIR CLEARS, THE PATROLMEN ARE AMAZED TO SEE THAT THE BLAST HAS CAUSED A PART OF THE DESERT TO CAVE IN ON THE MONSTER'S UNDERGROUND DOMAIN..

ANCIENT BUILDINGS ARE STICKING UP THRU THE SAND!



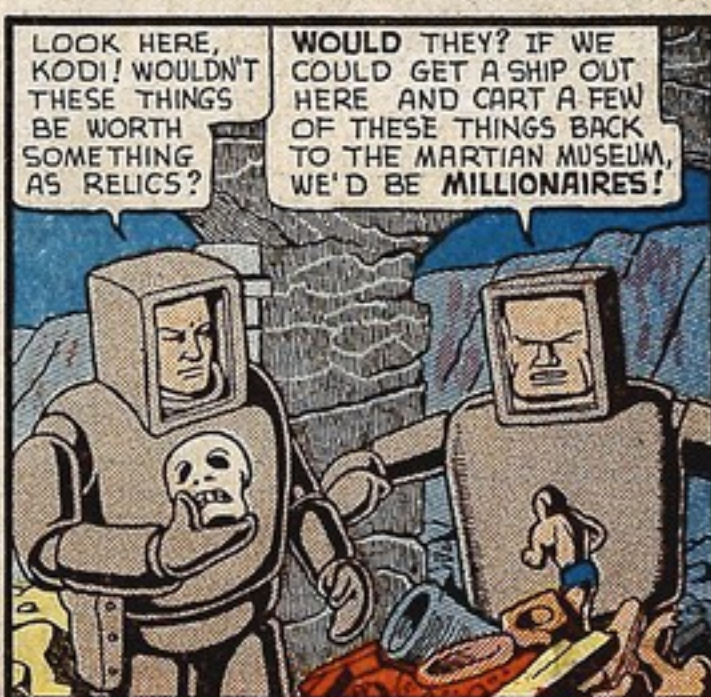
THEY DESCEND AND EXAMINE THE RUINS -

THESE MUST BE ONLY THE TOPS OF THE OLD SKY-SCRAPERS! THEIR BASES ARE PROBABLY HUNDREDS OF FEET BELOW US!



LOOK HERE, KODI! WOULDN'T THESE THINGS BE WORTH SOMETHING AS RELICS?

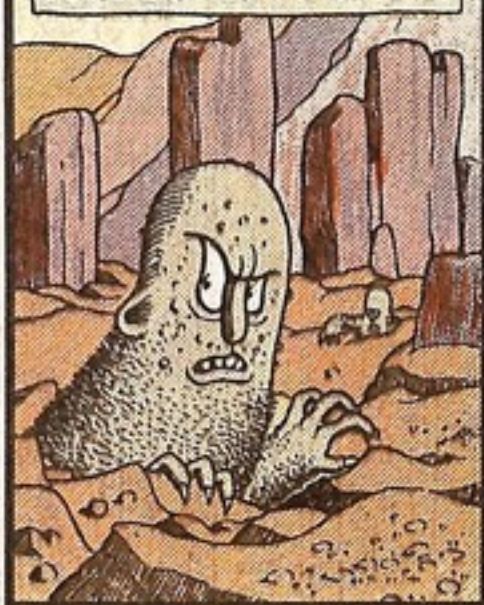
WOULD THEY? IF WE COULD GET A SHIP OUT HERE AND CART A FEW OF THESE THINGS BACK TO THE MARTIAN MUSEUM, WE'D BE MILLIONAIRES!



AS THE PATROLMEN UNCOVER THE PRICELESS RELICS OF MARS' PAST CIVILIZATION, HATE-FILLED EYES WATCH THEIR EVERY MOVE....



ONE BY ONE, THE SAND RATS COME OUT OF THE GROUND.



SILENTLY THEY SURROUND THE MEN WHOM THEY BELIEVE CAME WITH THE PURPOSE OF MURDERING THEIR GIANT LEADER AND DESTROYING THEIR HABITAT



SUDDENLY THEY CHARGE. BEFORE NICK AND KODI CAN REACH FOR THEIR PISTOLS OR TURN ON THEIR ANTI-GRAVITY FORCE, THEY ARE BURIED IN A MOUND OF SAVAGE, STRUGGLING BODIES....



FINDING THAT THE VICTIMS' SHELLS ARE MUCH TOO HARD TO BE DENTED BY BARE FISTS, ONE OF THE SAND RATS GIVES AN ORDER TO ATTACK WITH STONES....



THE CREATURES FALL BACK TO GET WEAPONS, AND UNWITTINGLY PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PATROLMEN TO SNAP THEIR ANTI-GRAVITY UNITS INTO ACTION....



WITH MANY SAND RATS CLINGING TO THEM, THE MEN SLOWLY RISE INTO THE AIR....

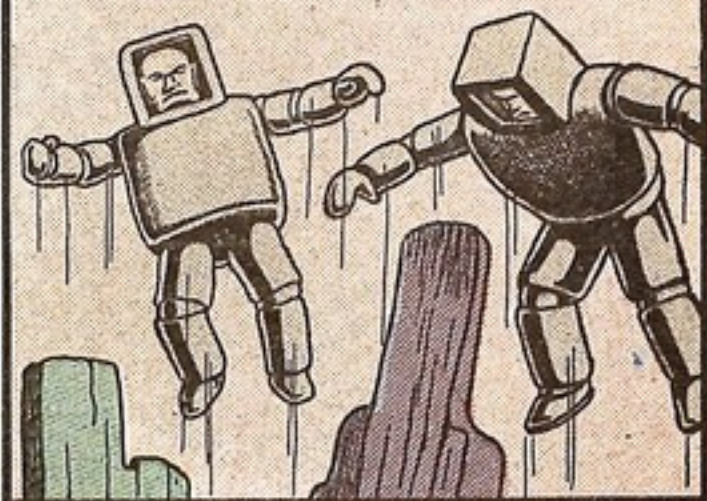


HAMMERED BY ARMORED FISTS, THE SAND RATS ARE FORCED TO DROP OFF



WHEW! THAT WAS A TOUGH STRUGGLE! THOSE SAND RATS ARE PLENTY FIERCE!

WE COULD TAME THEM IF WE HAD OUR PISTOLS! THEY RIPPED THEM OFF US — HOLSTERS AND ALL!



WITH THE HOPE OF BEING PICKED UP, NICK AND KODI WHISK UP INTO THE TRAFFIC LANES OF MARS' STRATOSPHERE



WE'RE IN LUCK! HERE COMES A PASSENGER SHIP!



LOST YOUR SHIP, EH? THAT'S TOUGH! I'LL DROP YOU OFF AT THE NEAREST PATROL BASE! WE'LL BE OVER IT IN A FEW MINUTES!

THAT'S FINE, CAPTAIN! WE NEED TO GET ANOTHER SHIP RIGHT AWAY!



NOW THAT YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO RECONSIDER, WHAT'S YOUR LATEST OPINION OF OUR OLD MARTIAN SUPERSTITIONS?

YOU WIN, KODI! IF WE CAN MAKE A FEW MILLION JUST BY GOING BACK AND GETTING THOSE RELICS — I'LL BELIEVE ANYTHING!



THE END