

THE SPACE BARRIER HAS BEEN BROKEN! THE STARS LIE WITHIN GRASP! EVEN NOW, RIVAL SPACESHIPS TRAIL VAPOR CLOUDS TOWARD MARS, THE FIRST STEPPING STONE TO THE FAR-FLUNG GALAXY! WHAT WILL THEY FIND? WHAT GREAT SECRETS WILL THEY UNLOCK...

THEY LAND ONLY HOURS APART, WITHIN A TEN MILE RADIUS OF EACH OTHER...

WHEN THE VAULT OPENS



CAPT. HASSID

CAPT. MIDLAND

CAPT. CHANG

ACTIVITY IS FEVERISH IN EACH RIVAL CAMP, AS THEY PREPARE TO EXPLORE...

OUR SCOUT REPORTS THAT THE RUINS OF THE CAPITAL CITY LIE THREE MILES SOUTH, CAPT. MIDLAND!

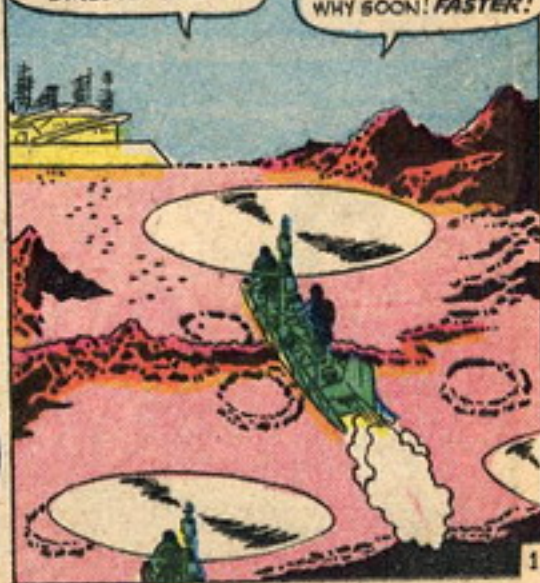
GOOD! LET'S HURRY! WE MUST BE THE FIRST ONES TO ENTER AND CLAIM ITS TREASURES!



THE SECOND GROUP BREAKS OUT AIR SLEDS TO HASTEN THEIR TRIP...

WE'RE MAKING ALL POSSIBLE SPEED, CAPTAIN HASSID! LOOK, THE CITY IS DIRECTLY AHEAD!

MAGNIFICENT! BUT WHAT A CATASTROPHE MUST HAVE STRUCK THEM! WE'LL FIND OUT WHY SOON! FASTER!



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PETE MORISI

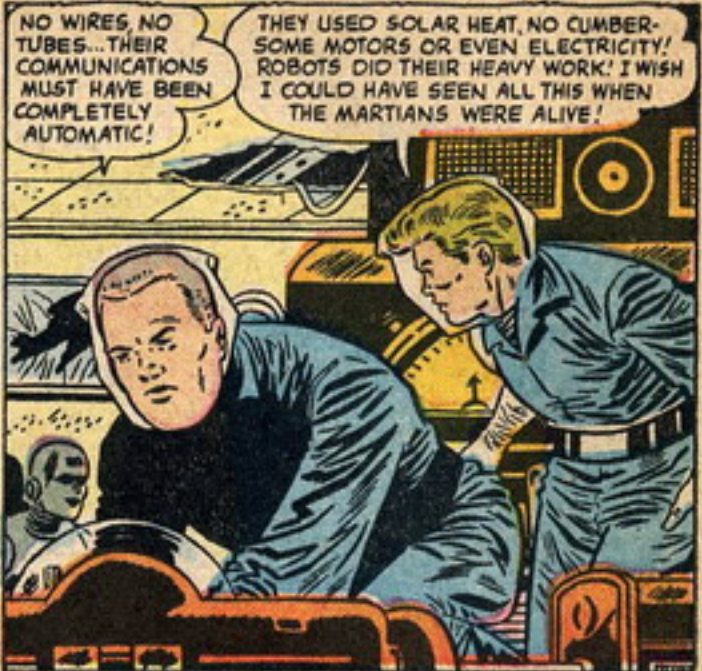
WHILE THE THIRD, WHICH HAS LANDED CLOSEST TO THE RUINS, PREPARES TO ENTER...

SLOWLY, EACH GROUP WORKS TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE CITY!



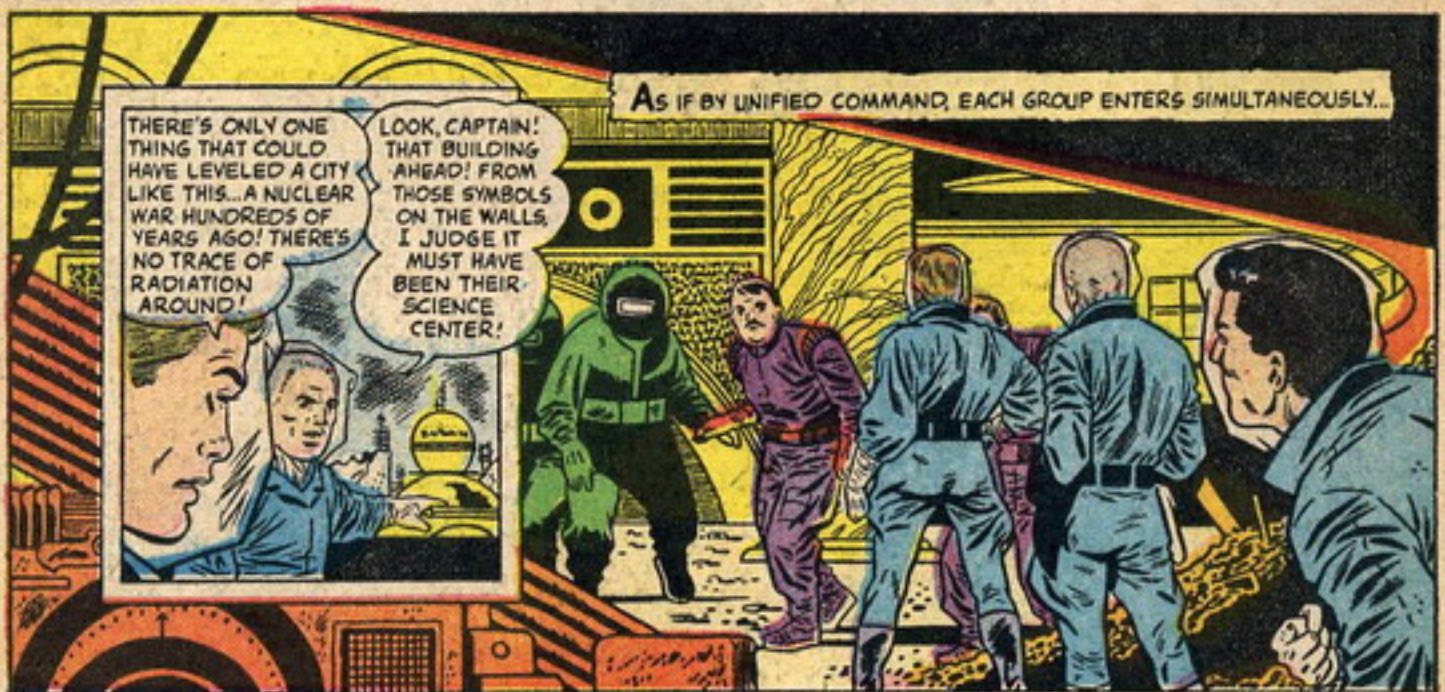
CAPTAIN CHANG, THIS METAL IS AS LIGHT AS BALSA WOOD! THEIR CITY MUST HAVE BEEN BUILT OF IT!

IT IS ONLY ONE OF THE MANY MIRACLES WE WILL DISCOVER HERE! COME, WE MUST PUSH ON!



NO WIRES, NO TUBES...THEIR COMMUNICATIONS MUST HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY AUTOMATIC!

THEY USED SOLAR HEAT, NO CUMBERSOME MOTORS OR EVEN ELECTRICITY! ROBOTS DID THEIR HEAVY WORK! I WISH I COULD HAVE SEEN ALL THIS WHEN THE MARTIANS WERE ALIVE!



AS IF BY UNIFIED COMMAND, EACH GROUP ENTERS SIMULTANEOUSLY...

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING THAT COULD HAVE LEVELED A CITY LIKE THIS...A NUCLEAR WAR HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO! THERE'S NO TRACE OF RADIATION AROUND!

LOOK, CAPTAIN! THAT BUILDING AHEAD! FROM THOSE SYMBOLS ON THE WALLS, I JUDGE IT MUST HAVE BEEN THEIR SCIENCE CENTER!



I CLAIM THIS CENTER IN THE NAME OF THE UNITED ASIA!

I HAVE A PRIOR CLAIM! I ENTERED THE CITY FIRST!

BOTH OF YOU WILL HAVE TO PROVE THAT TO THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL!



KEEP YOUR MEN OUT OF MY WAY, OR THERE WILL BE TROUBLE!

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A FIGHT, YOU'LL GET IT! I REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE EITHER OF YOUR CLAIMS! I INTEND TO EXPLORE EVERY FOOT OF THIS SCIENCE CENTER!

BAH!

EACH GROUP CIRCLES THE HALL WARILY, KEEPING A SHARP LOOK-OUT AS THEY EXPLORE...

THE RIVAL GROUPS WORK CLOSE TO EACH OTHER TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE SCIENCE CENTER! SUDDENLY...



WHAT A FIND! A REAL WORKING MODEL OF THEIR SOLAR ENGINES, A THOUSAND YEARS AHEAD OF US!

JUST PICK UP ANYTHING OF ANY VALUE AND MARK IT WITH OUR EMBLEM! AND KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR ANY FAST ONES FROM OUR RIVALS OVER THERE!



IT'S MINE! I SAW IT FIRST!

GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME, YOU CROOK!

I FOUND IT FIRST!



IT'S OBVIOUSLY A TIME CAPSULE! I CAN'T READ WHAT IT SAYS, BUT IT'S PROBABLY THE MOST VALUABLE THING IN HERE!

THAT FOOL IS ITCHING FOR A FIGHT! I HAD MY HANDS ON IT! IT BELONGS TO THE UNITED ASIA!

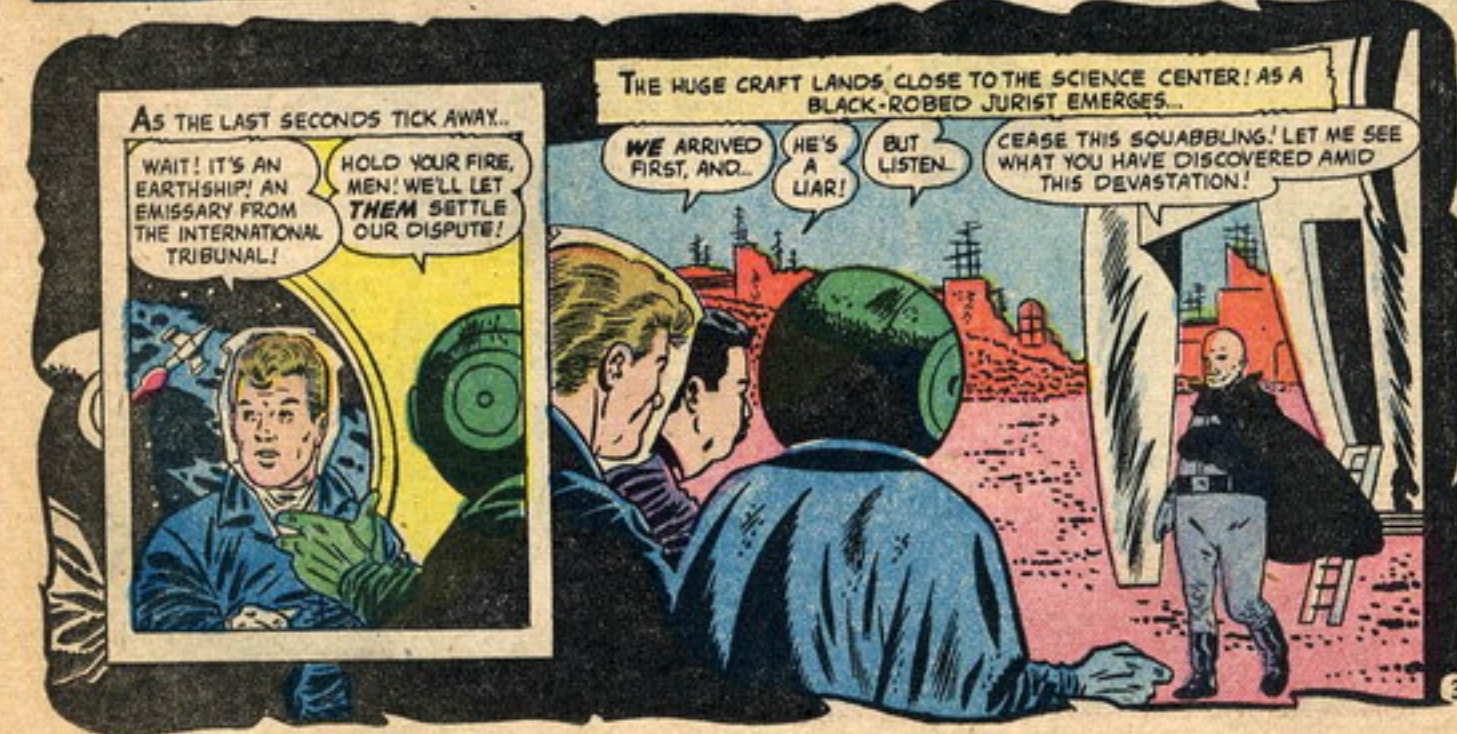


I'LL GIVE YOU EXACTLY TWO MINUTES TO CLEAR OUT OF HERE, BEFORE MY MEN START BLASTING!

I WARN YOU, WE'LL BLAST RIGHT BACK! HOW MANY OF YOUR MEN WOULD LIKE TO DIE ON MARS, CAPTAIN CHANG?



YOU HAVE THIRTY SECONDS LEFT! I'M NOT CHANGING MY MIND!



AS THE LAST SECONDS TICK AWAY...

WAIT! IT'S AN EARTHSHIP! AN EMISSARY FROM THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL!

HOLD YOUR FIRE, MEN! WE'LL LET THEM SETTLE OUR DISPUTE!

THE HUGE CRAFT LANDS CLOSE TO THE SCIENCE CENTER! AS A BLACK-ROBED JURIST EMERGES...

WE ARRIVED FIRST, AND...

HE'S A LIAR!

BUT LISTEN...

CEASE THIS SQUABBLING! LET ME SEE WHAT YOU HAVE DISCOVERED AMID THIS DEVASTATION!

IT READS: "THIS TIME VAULT WAS SEALED IN OUR DYING HOUR! WE LEARNED THE SECRETS OF A GREAT CIVILIZATION TOO LATE! WITHIN ARE THE THREE SECRET INGREDIENTS OF GREATNESS, HEED THEM WELL AND YOU WHO COME AFTER US SHALL ENDURE FOREVER!" I SHALL OPEN THE VAULT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT EACH OF YOU ACCEPTS ONE OF THE SECRETS! IS IT AGREED?



AGREED!

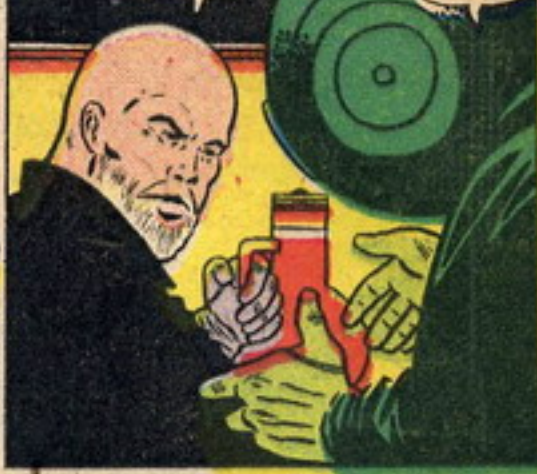
THE VAULT IS OPEN! EACH OF YOU WILL STEP FORWARD IN ORDER TO ACCEPT WHAT I OFFER!



CAPTAIN CHANG STEPS FORWARD TO ACCEPT A CURIOUSLY SHAPED FLASK! THE FLASK HAS A PRINTED MESSAGE ON IT...

"THIS IS THE FIRST, SECRET OF A GREAT CIVILIZATION...THE FLASK CONTAINS THE SWEAT OF A MAN'S BROW IN A LIFETIME OF HONEST WORK!"

I DIDN'T HAVE TO COME TO MARS TO LEARN THIS!



CAPTAIN MIDLAND RECEIVES THE SECOND GIFT...

THIS UNIVERSAL SYMBOL URGES THAT YOU LIVE IN ETERNAL PEACE WITH YOURSELF AND YOUR FELLOW MEN, CAPTAIN!

IT'S HARDLY WHAT I EXPECTED, BUT I CAN THINK OF NO WORTHIER OBJECT!



AND TO CAPTAIN HASSIO'S WAITING HANDS...

THE MIRROR IS ONLY A SYMBOL! IT READS... "KNOW THY SELF FOR YOU ARE EVERY MAN'S BROTHER!"

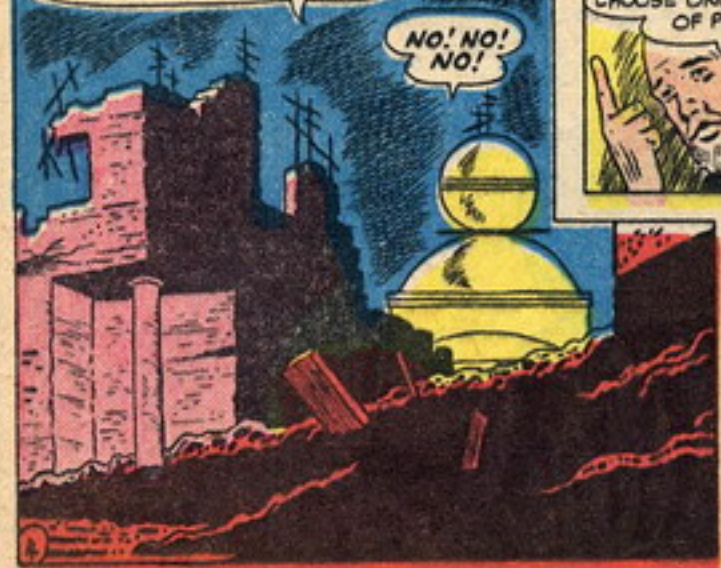
IN VIEW OF WHAT THE OTHERS RECEIVED, I AM NOT SURPRISED! IT'S JUST AS PRECIOUS!



WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? SECRETS OF DEVASTATION? MIGHTIER WEAPONS? LOOK ABOUT YOU! THE MARTIANS LEARNED TOO LATE! SHALL THIS OCCUR ON *OUR* PLANET, TOO?

NO! NO! NO!

THEN SWEAR THAT YOU SHALL LIVE AND WORK TOGETHER AS **BROTHERS** AND CHOOSE ONLY THE PATHS OF PEACE!



WE SWEAR AS BROTHERS! SO SHALL IT BE!