

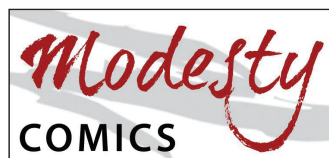
WOŚTOK
GRABOWSKI



THE NINETIES

Wostok and Grabowski

The Nineties



Wostok and Grabowski
The Nineties

This edition published in 2013 by
Modesty Comics, London, UK
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Editor: Zivojin Tamburic

Original title: **Devedeste**, Wostok i Grabowski
Script and art © Wostok & Grabowski
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English translation: Zivojin Tamburic & Tijana Tamburic
Forward 1 © Zoran Djukanovic
Forward 2 © Miroslav Cmur
Forwards translation: Zivojin Tamburic, Zoran Djukanovic & Bojan Tamburic

Graphic design: www.omnibus.rs

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And the darkness in our souls thickened: Wostok Archipelago

Certain segments of Wostok's creativity may only be fully understood once they are brought in contact with one another, once they form the complete author's portrait and collection of procedures known as Wostok. Otherwise, it would be almost inexplicable how this one author could create such diverse comic book worlds, some of which are so radical that they overstep the boundaries of 'good' taste of the comic book mediocrity.

There are few critical analyses of Wostok's work, in stark contrast to the quantity and quality of his achievements. This is in part the price for using alternative channels to communicate with the public. This is probably the reason why nobody has attempted to evaluate the controversial whole known as Wostok. Of course, Wostok himself doesn't help much given his consistent alternative image, which evades and opposes complete insight. The confusing elements are not only the pseudonyms and countless author symbioses on all levels of script and illustration, including other authors, accidental guests, family members (father, daughter, wife)...

What kind of references do we find in this comic book? Beside Little Nemo cloaked in Kafkaesque attire,

we will also find a monument to some girl from the *Wizard of Oz*. Poposak drinks 'moloko', a reference to Burgess' and later Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. But, instead of the murderous bullets that abound in other Wostok's mockeries, raspberries and strawberries fly out of revolver barrels here. Wostok's 'demonic' hand is in this case gentle and (almost) harmless. The journey of Poposak and Flowers is full of surprises, barriers and danger, but of beauty as well. One such moment is their entry into a blizzard that 'rages at full force exactly 1 minute and 16 seconds'.

Grabovski and Wostok stage all of this in the form of the black-and-white wonder of a



A fairy tale is flying through dreams

graphically imaginative fairy tale. Of course, this cannot be reduced to classic fairy tale approach. When we pay attention to the language in this comic book, we will also notice the revelatory ability of a child's deconstructive power acting upon the language we think we understand. *Poposak and Flowers* is a metaphysical comic book for children, similar to McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and Herrimanov's *Krazy Cat*.

There is no principle difference between the tradition and the avant-garde, between the oldest artistic canons and the postmodern attempt to avoid those canons. Even when we avoid it, we hover over it, attracted by it with magical certainty like flies towards the light. This is a spiritual journey.

Wostok is the Frank Zappa of our comic book world. Why Zappa? For many reasons. Just like Zappa, Wostok loves to experiment. He resists any kind of standard categorisation. Wostok's entire oeuvre is based upon improvisations across the three thematic fields, two of which he created together with Grabowski: the theme of children's poetical metaphysics (*Poposak and Flowers*) and the theme of melancholy, as well as the third thematic field – the mockery of comic book heroes and the 'heroes' of the political landscape of the Balkans, steeped in overpolitization in which life and culture lose their value and, at the same time or maybe just for that reason, everything becomes 'untouchable and saintly'. In fact, it is here that we discover the banality of our fears and vulnerabilities from any kind of attacking common stereotypes, which



Ingenious minimalism

Wostok mercilessly carries out. Wostok's oeuvre is built upon opposing poles, just like Zappa's is built between rock 'n' roll and avant-garde music. The passion, vehemence and endless energy that they have brought to their creation, disregarding the reaction of mediocre critics, is without equal in both media, music and comic books.

Zoran Djukanovic

Independent “The Nineties” in the dependent nineties of the 20th century

Being able to see through the miserable dullness and nothingness of mediocrity, independent comic authors demonstrate their abilities in unconventional works which are of an unconventional nature and as such not recognised and even laughed at by reputable artists, who are themselves conventional.

Grotesque and black-white humour in the collection of stories *The Nineties* abounds, and there is an impression that they have emerged from vivid nightmares or in collaboration with the bizarre brothers Coen, who would be able to make at least a short film from every story. *The Nineties* are not presenting

the soul of one finished period of history or a social climate, but, in a strange way, a weird side of reality, which doesn't change its nature. Themes are treacherous love (*Oh Love!*), alienation of spirit (*Loneliness*), absurd situations which repeat through human history (*Sniper*), and in some of them there is an aimless narrative without big ideas, which are almost unachievable in real life anyway.

The lack of colours in *The Nineties* is certainly an advantage (according to Zezelj, colours are an optical deceit). By contrasting black and white, a Kafkaesque atmosphere is achieved, differences of opinions are emphasized, and



Billy, a heroic supporter of justice

the world is presented like a warped chess board on which it is difficult to keep the upright position. Hermetic elements, which are not lacking in some stories, could become heretic (even diabolic) for ordinary folk, who are not going to show much interest for 'underground art' as they are occupied with 'ground floor things'. Despite the short form, the comics by Wostok-Grabowsky speak volumes and easily get your attention, the aesthetic of ugliness (*ugly is beautiful and vice versa*), which they often use, is effective and achieves irrational warmth and readers are not disappointed, but

become thoughtful, leading to questioning, delighted with the individual panels and witty dialogues which would be worthy of Harvey Pekar or Robert Crumb, the giants of the American underground comic scene. If the duo Wostok-Grabowsky lived in a more intellectually developed country, where the comic art was not for decades perceived as contemptible by art historians and other quasi-cultural workers as trash, they could live from their art all the way into their nineties.

Miroslav Cmok

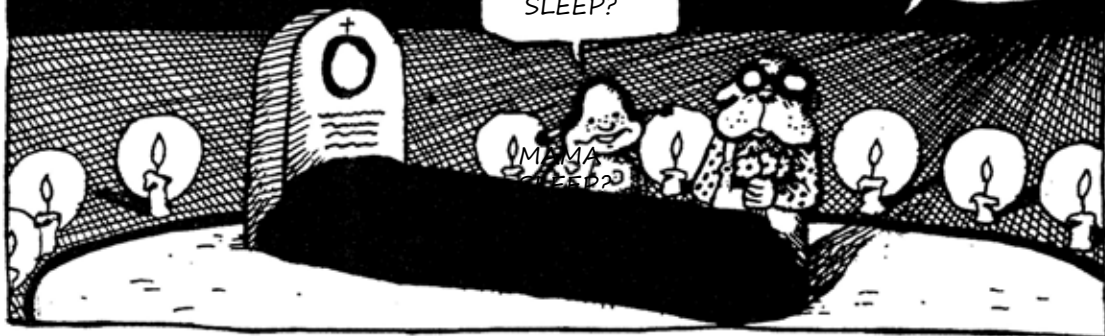
Daddy, where are you?

Wostok & Grabovski

A TWO-YEAR OLD GIRL CALLED POPOSHAK AND HER VERY WELL EDUCATED DOG CALLED FLOWER STOOD IN FRONT OF A GRAVE FOR A LONG TIME.

MAMA
SLEEP?

YES, POPOSHAK,
MAMA IS
SLEEPING...



...FOREVER!



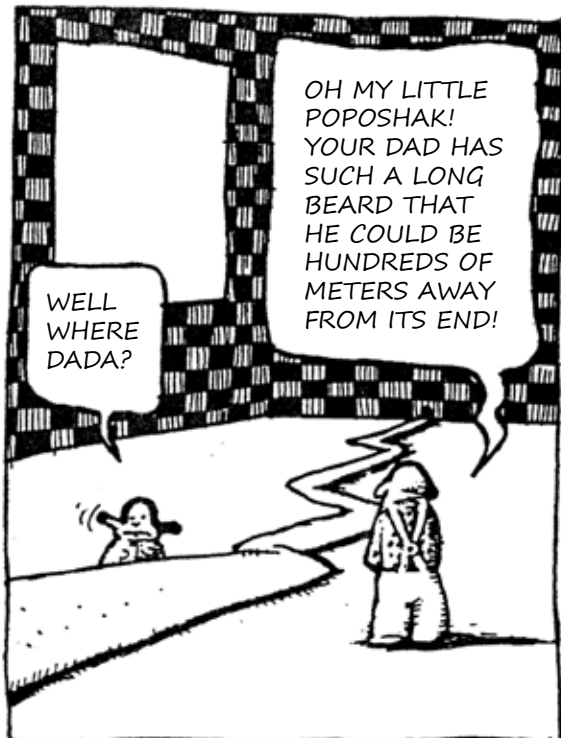
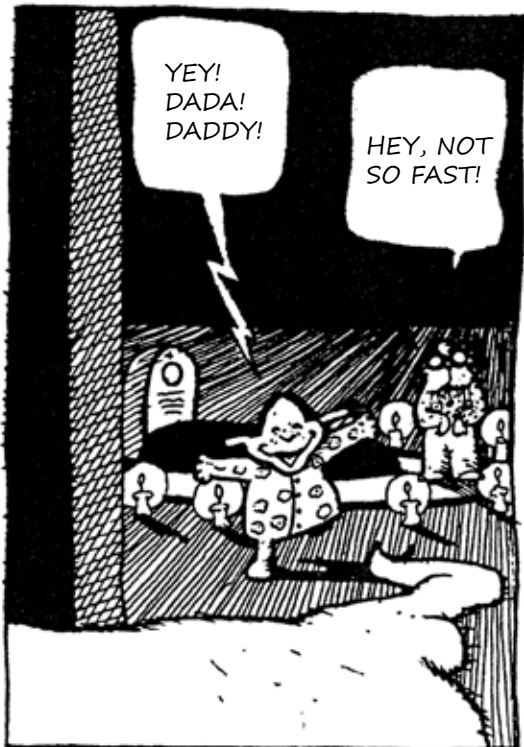
WHERE
DADA?

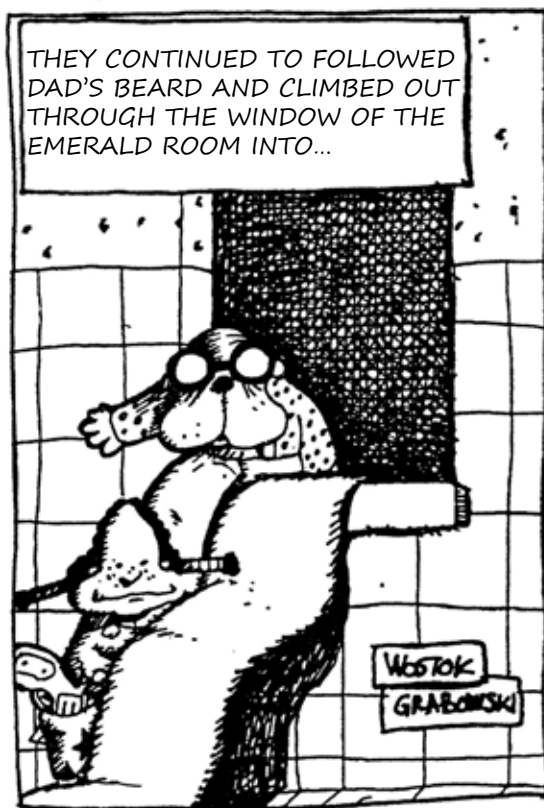
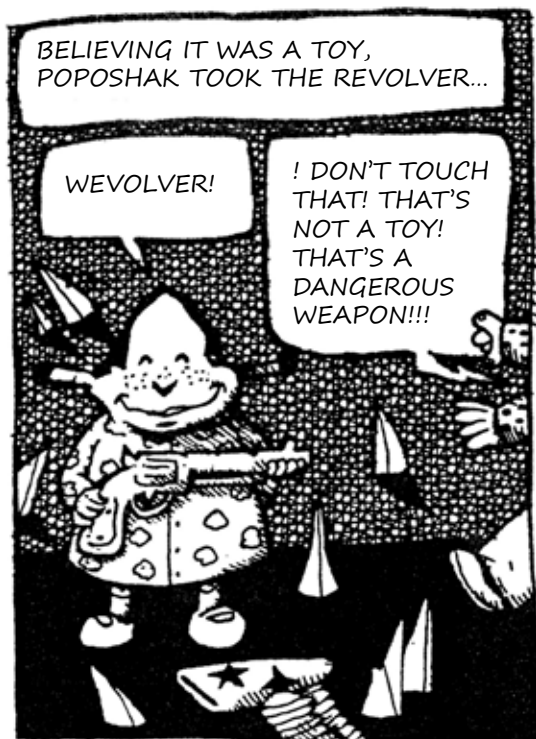
WHERE IS
YOUR DAD?

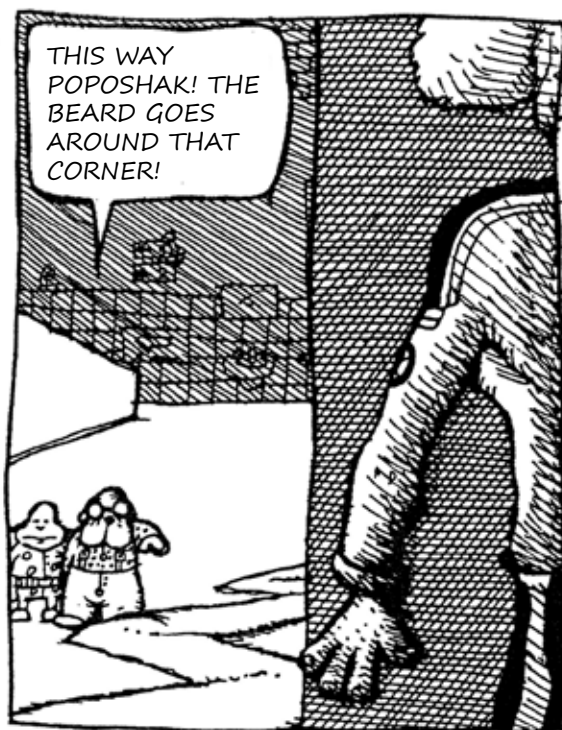


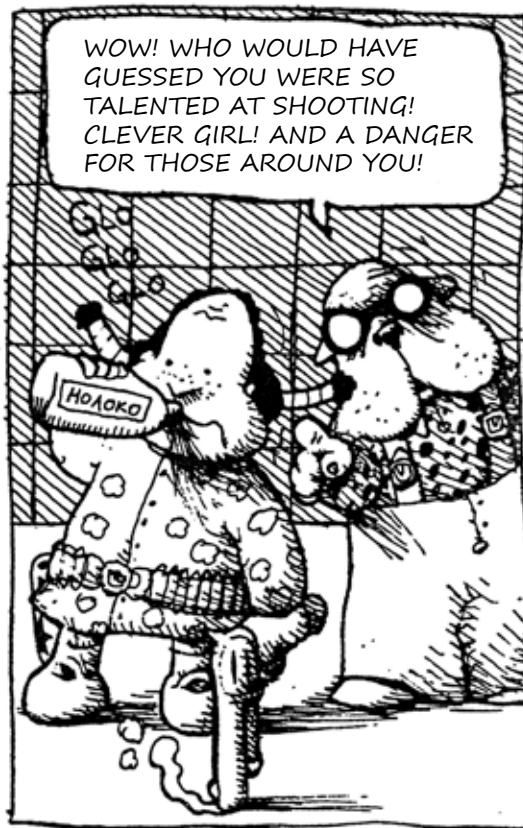
CAN YOU SEE YOUR
DAD'S BEARD POKING
OUT OF THAT BLUE
ROOM?!



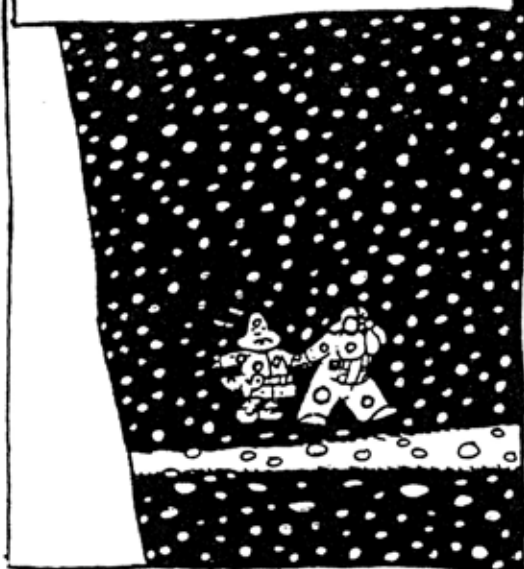








FOR HOURS THEY WALKED DOWN THE 'NEVER-ENDING CORRIDOR', THEN SUDDENLY THERE WAS A BLIZZARD!



THE BLIZZARD WAS IN FULL FORCE FOR EXACTLY 1 MINUTE AND 16 SECONDS...



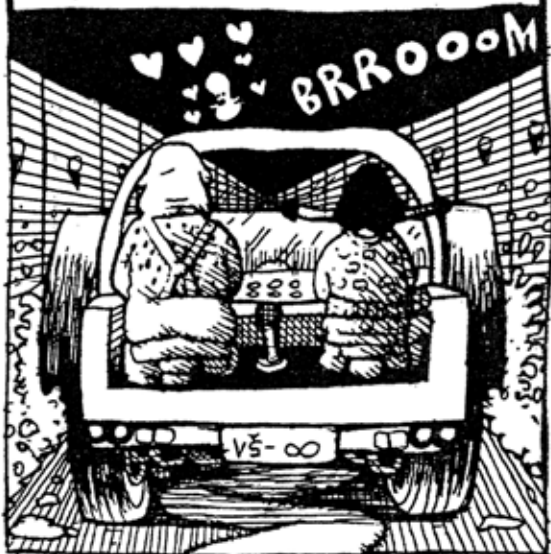
...AND WHEN IT ENDED, POPOSHAK AND FLOWER FOUND A LITTLE BIRD WHO WAS CHIRPING AND SHAKING WITH COLD.



THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE! THIS BIRD BELONGS TO THE 'KVA-KVA-PI-PI-KOKO-DA-KOKO-DA' FAMILY! SCIENTISTS FOR THE LAST 200 YEARS HAVE THOUGHT THIS BIRD EXTINCT. WE SHOULD TAKE IT WITH US!



THE THREE OF THEM CARRIED ON.
THEY WENT VERY SLOWLY BECAUSE
THEY HAD TO DIG OUT THE BEARD
WHICH WAS COVERED IN SNOW.



AND THEY
ARRIVED AT THE
ENTRANCE TO...



GREAT- THE
BEARD GOES
INTO THE
LABYRINTH!

TO ENTER OR NOT
TO ENTER THE
LABYRINTH THAT IS
THE QUESTION! TO
THIS DAY, NO ONE
HAS EVERY GOT OUT
OF THERE ALIVE...
BUT MAYBE YOUR
DAD IS IN THEIR
SOMEWHERE! WHAT
SHOULD WE DO?

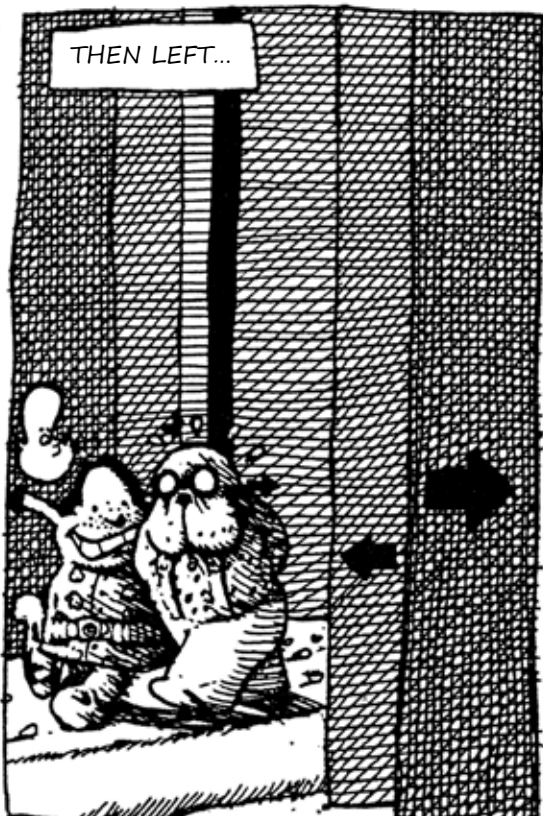
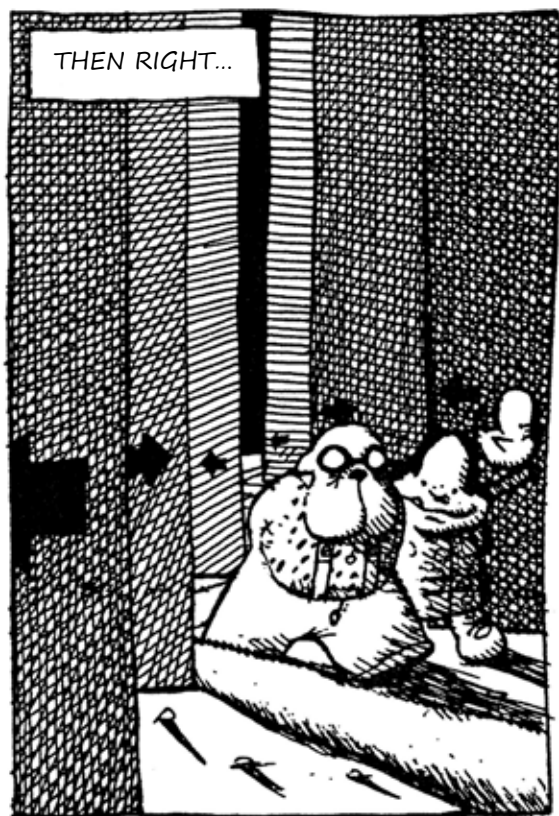
DU-DU,
DA-DA,
DU-DA-DA



LOOK
BIRDIE!



WASTOK
GRABOWSKI



... UNTIL THEY STARTED TO
GET DIZZY AND STAGGER...



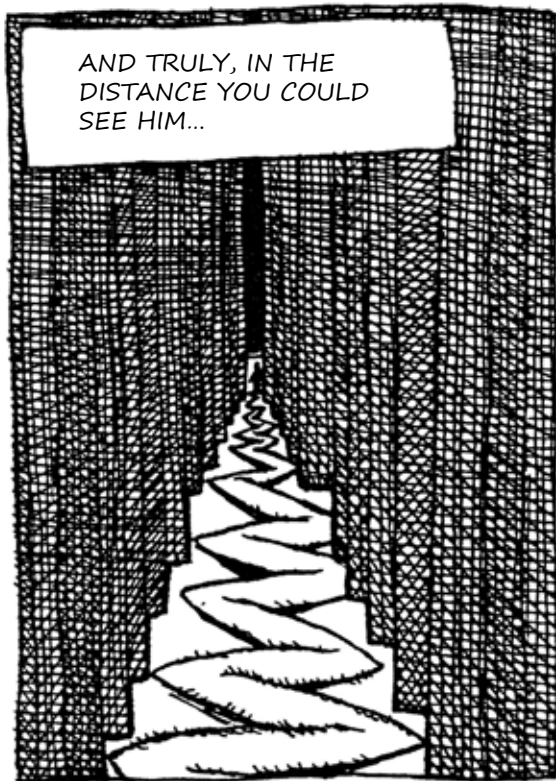
... AND THE LITTLE BIRD
TOOK THEM TO...

DADA!

THERE'S
DADA!

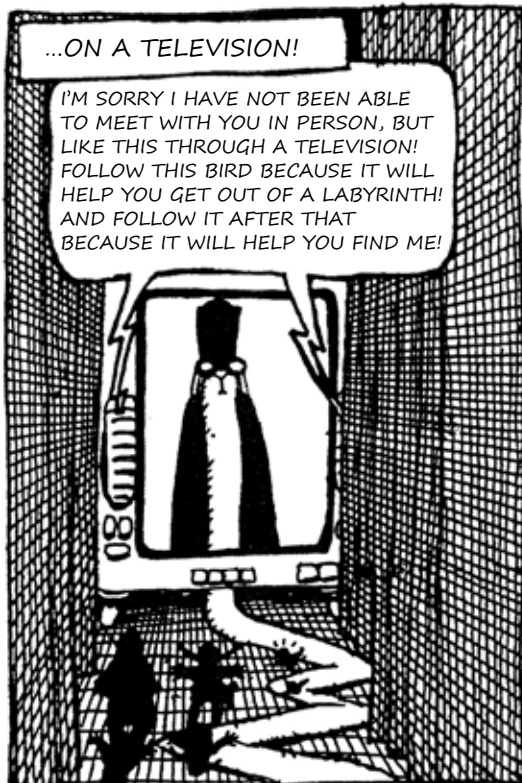


AND TRULY, IN THE
DISTANCE YOU COULD
SEE HIM...



...ON A TELEVISION!

I'M SORRY I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE
TO MEET WITH YOU IN PERSON, BUT
LIKE THIS THROUGH A TELEVISION!
FOLLOW THIS BIRD BECAUSE IT WILL
HELP YOU GET OUT OF A LABYRINTH!
AND FOLLOW IT AFTER THAT
BECAUSE IT WILL HELP YOU FIND ME!



THEN THE TELEVISION SWITCHED OFF, AND POPOSHAK STARTED CRYING.

THERE, THERE, DON'T CRY LITTLE DARLING! WE'LL FIND YOUR DADDY.

THEN THEY FOLLOWED THE LITTLE BIRD WHO WAS ALREADY AHEAD OF THEM.

THE BIRD FLEW TOO FAST AND THEY LOST SIGHT OF IT!

THEY FELT A STRANGE LIGHTNESS IN THEIR MOVEMENTS...

WOSTOK
GRABOWSKI



WOSTOK X '94
GRABOWSKI

BLACK SUN



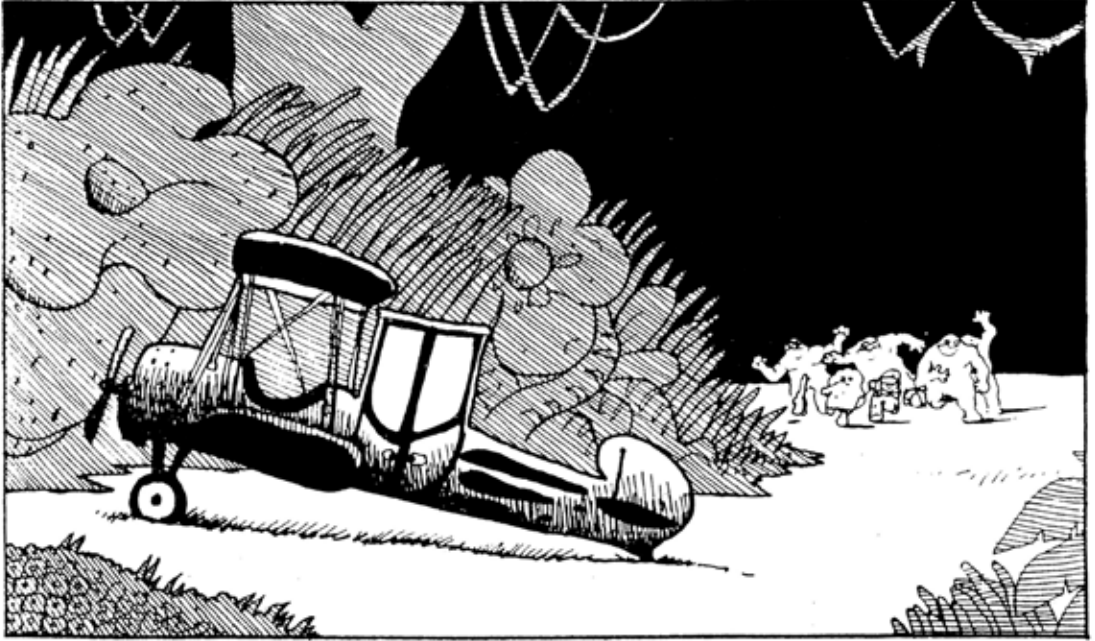
I CAN'T REMEMBER
HOW THIS FRIENDLY
DISAGREEMENT STARTED!

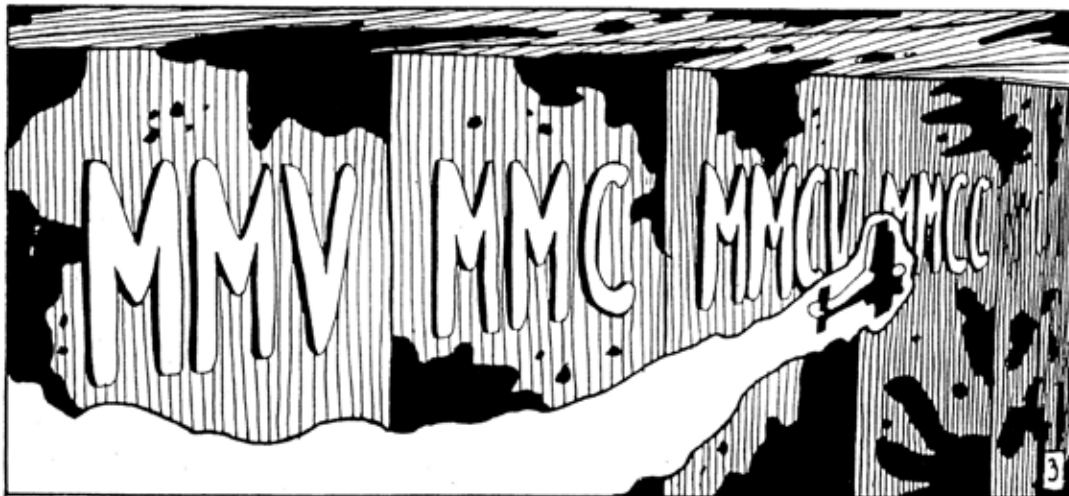
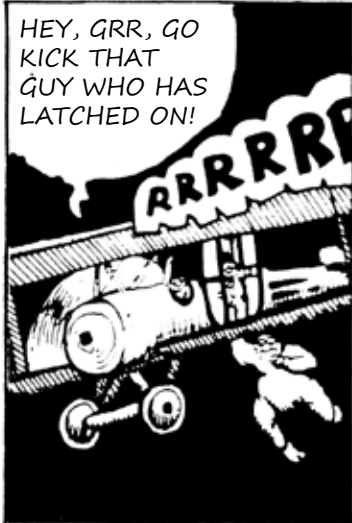


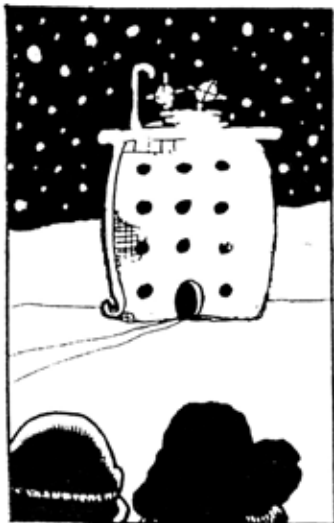
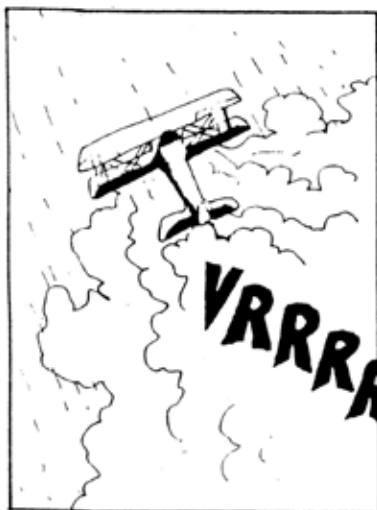
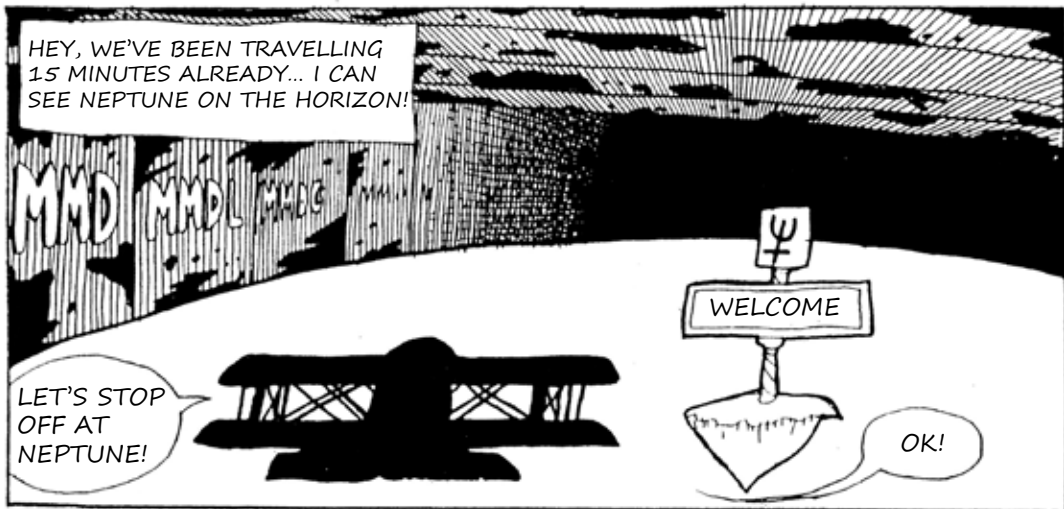
IT UNFOLDS IN A BOTANICAL
GARDEN ON THE MOON!



GOING THROUGH
EXPLOSION LIKE
WHIZZING THROUGH
SKI GATES!...

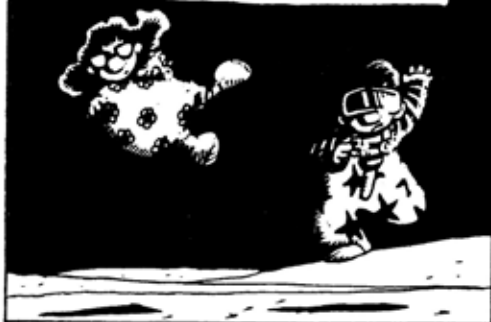








AND JUST BEFORE WE FELL ON THE GROUND, THE FIXED STARS CALLED DENEbola, AND THEIR STRANGE GRAVITY, STOPPED US FROM CRASHING INTO THE GROUND!



YOU KNOW WHAT- I FIND DENEbola STARS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SUN IN MY NATAL HOROSCOPE...

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

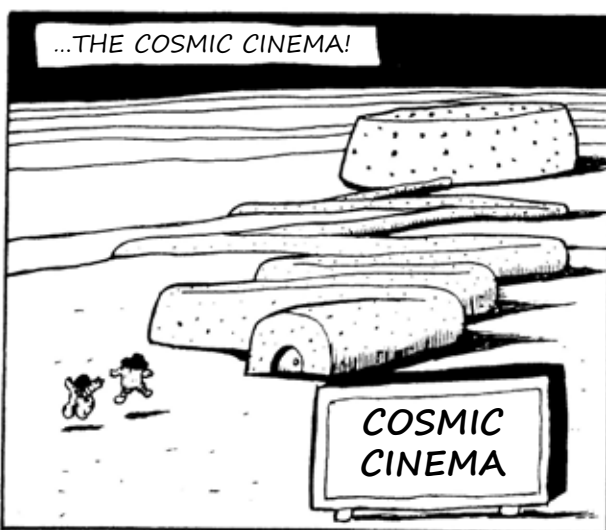
AND IT REALLY BOTHERS ME!



WE CONTINUED LEVITATING UNTIL...



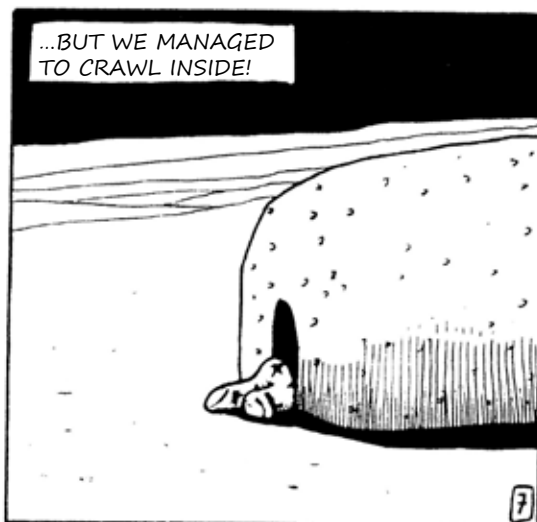
...THE COSMIC CINEMA!

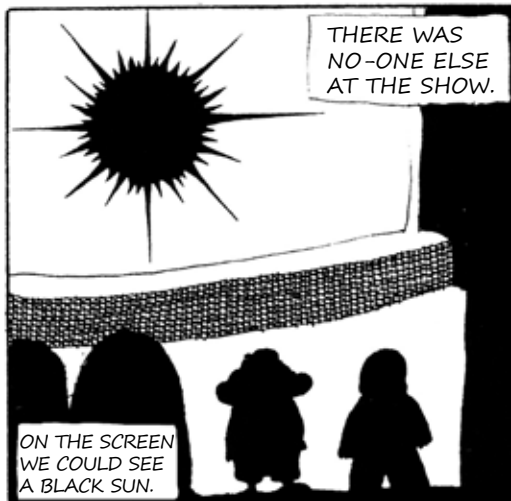
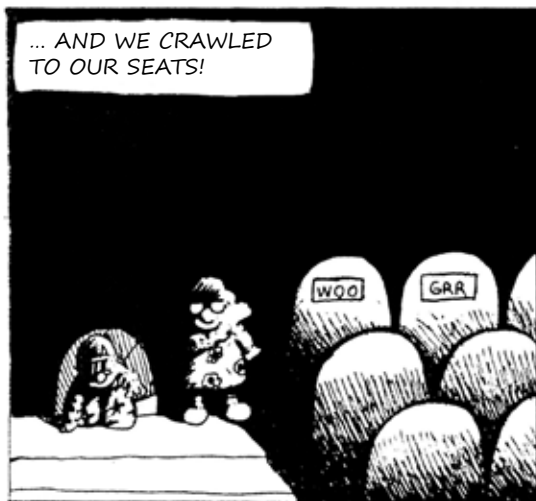
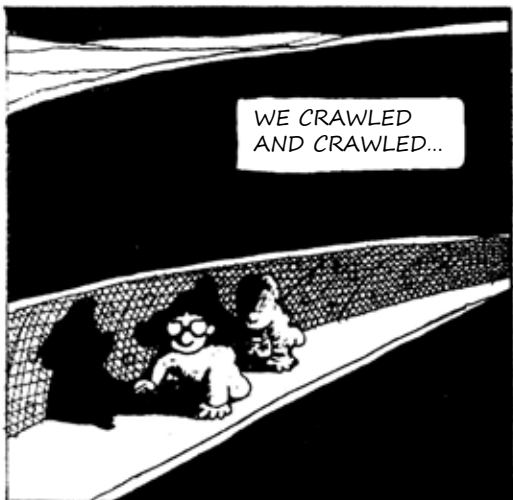


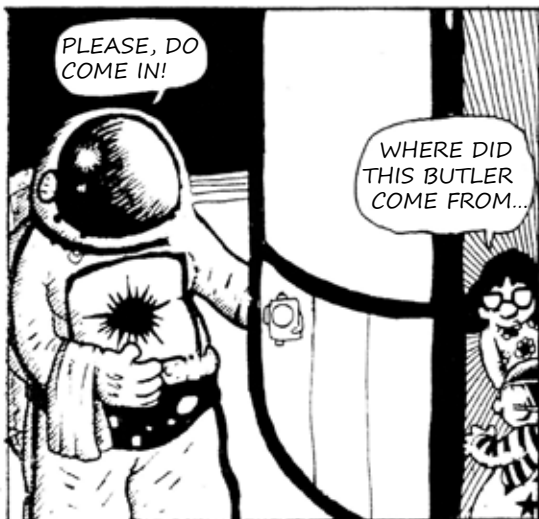
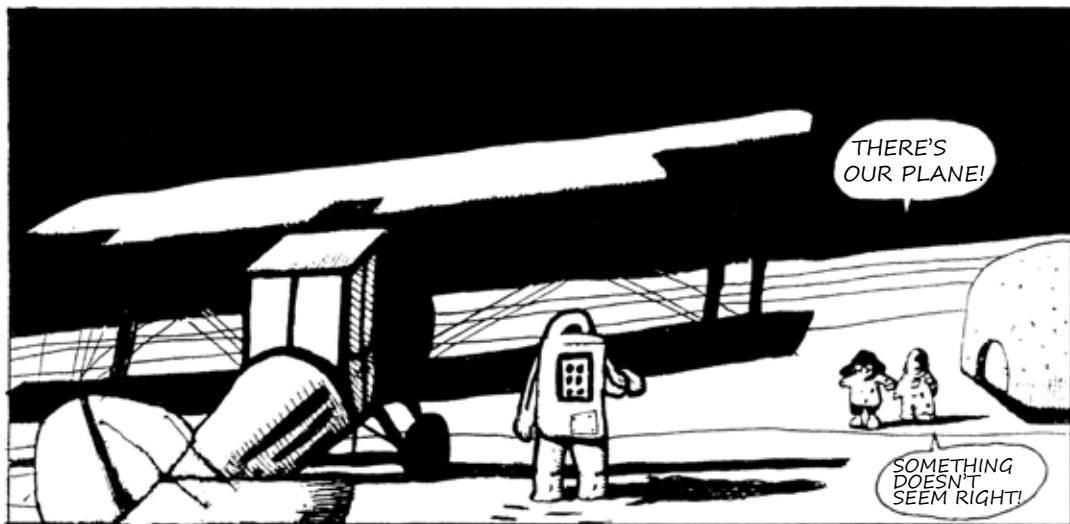
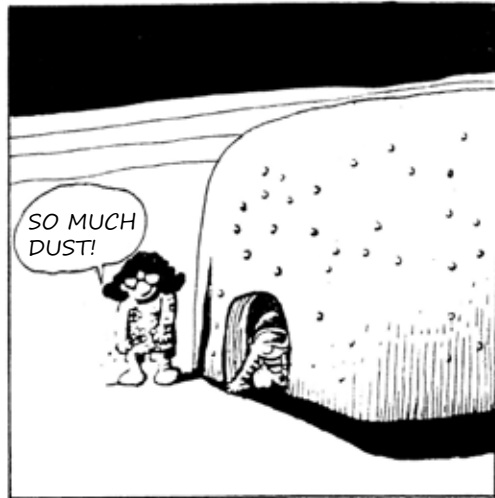
THE DOORS TO THE CINEMA WERE VERY SMALL...



...BUT WE MANAGED TO CRAWL INSIDE!

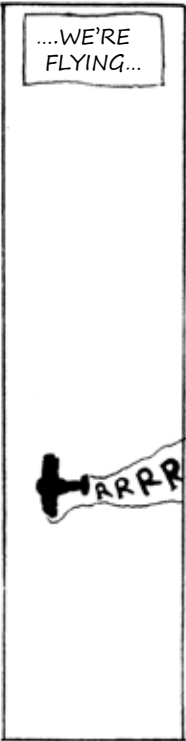








WE WERE AIRBORNE!...



...WE'RE
FLYING...



.... AND
MAKING....



...LOOPS...



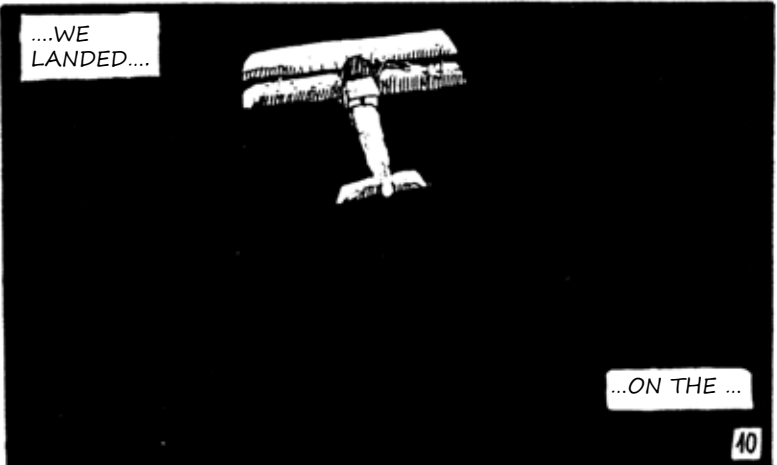
...AND THEN...



...AFTER
A LONG...



...TIME...



...WE
LANDED....

...ON THE ...

...BLACK SUN!

