

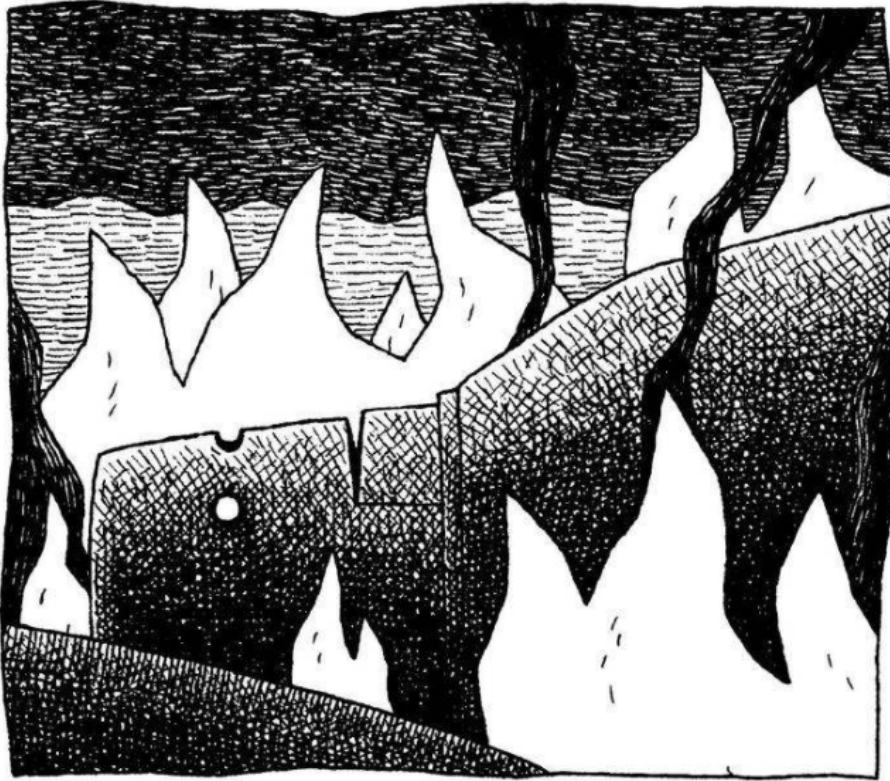
**The space-bat-angel-dragon watched in horror. He knew what this meant for him. He would have to go once more into the sun's flames.**

**And now the Iron Man's hair and toes and elbows were red-hot. He lay back in the flames, smiling up at the dragon. And his whole body was becoming red-hot, then orange, and finally white, like the blazing wire inside an electric bulb.**

**At this point, the Iron Man was terribly afraid. For what would happen if the flames went on getting fiercer and fiercer? He would melt. He would melt and drip into the flames like so much treacle and that would be the end of him. So even though he grinned up at the dragon as though he were enjoying the**

**flames, he was not enjoying them at all, and he was very very frightened.**

**Even the engineers, who were hiding behind thick asbestos screens over a mile away along the beach, felt the hair singeing on their heads, and they too thought it was the end of the Iron Man. Perhaps they had poured in just a bit too much fuel oil.**



But at that very moment, and the very second that the edge of the Iron Man's ear started to melt, the fuel was used up

and the flames died. The engineers came running down the beach. They saw the red-hot Iron Man getting off his fearful bed, and they saw him moving to and fro on the sand, cooling off.

At last, the Iron Man looked up at the dragon. He could hardly speak after his ordeal in the flames. Instead, he simply pointed towards the sun, and jabbed his finger towards the sun, as he gazed up at the monster.

"That's twice," he managed to say. "Now it's your turn."

The monster did not laugh. He set off, up from the earth, beating his colossal wings, writhing his long ponderous body up into the sky towards the sun. Now it

**was his turn. And he did not laugh. Last time had been too dreadful. But he went. He couldn't let the Iron Man win. He couldn't let the Iron Man of the earth beat him in this terrible contest.**

**And so all the telescopes and cameras of the world watched him flying into the sun. They saw him land among the flames, as before. As before, they saw his great ragged shape like an ink-blot sprawled over the centre of the sun. They saw him begin to glow red, then orange. And at last they could no longer see him. He and the sun were one blinding whiteness.**

**He had done it again! But was the sun burning him up? Had he melted in the**

**sun? Where was he?**

**No, here he was, here he came. Slowly, slowly, down through space. Much more slowly than before. His white-hot flying body cooled slowly to red as he came, and as he grew larger, coming nearer, he finally became once more black. And the great black shape flagged its way down through space until  
**BUMP!!!!!!****

**Heavier than ever, he landed on Australia. This time the bump was so heavy, it knocked down certain skyscrapers, sent tidal waves sweeping into harbours, and threw herds of cows on to their backs. All over the world, anybody who happened to be riding a bicycle at**

that moment instantly fell off. The space-bat-angel-dragon landed so ponderously because he was exhausted. And now he was a very changed monster. The fires of the sun had worked on him in a way that was awful to see. His wings were only rags of what they had been. His skin was crisped. And all his fatness had been changed by the fires of the sun into precious stones – jewels, emeralds, rubies, turquoises, and substances that had never been found on earth. And when he landed, with such a jolt, these loads of precious gems burst through the holes scorched in his skin and scattered down on to the Australian desert beneath.

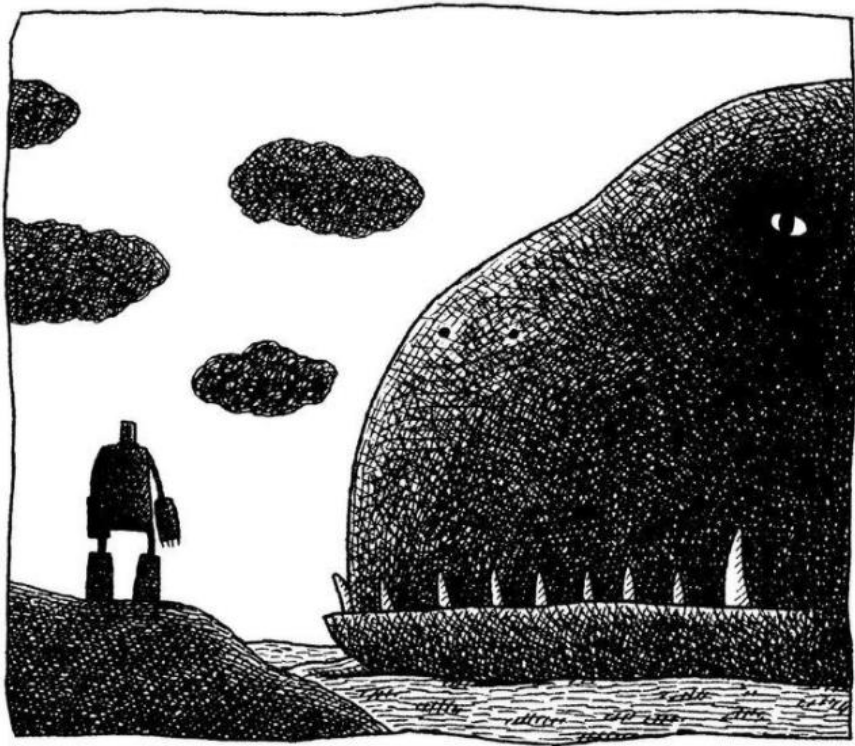
But the Iron Man could not allow himself to pity the space-bat-angel-dragon. He signalled to the engineers.

“Round three,” he shouted.

And the engineers began to pour in the oil. But what was this? An enormous whoofing sound. A booming, wheezing, sneezing sound. The space-bat-angel-dragon was weeping. If the Iron Man got on to his furnace again, it would mean that he, the monster, would have to take another roasting in the sun – and he could not stand another.

“Enough, enough, enough!” he roared.

“No, no,” replied the Iron Man. “I feel like going on. We’ve only had two each.”



**“It’s enough,” cried the dragon. “It’s too much. I can’t stand another. The fires of the sun are too terrible for me. I**

**submit.”**

**“Then I’ve won,” shouted the Iron Man. “Because I’m quite ready to roast myself red-hot again. If you daren’t, then I’ve won.”**

**“You’ve won, yes, you’ve won, and I am your slave,” cried the space-bat-angel-dragon. “I’ll do anything you like, but not the sun again.”**

**And he plunged his chin in the Pacific, to cool it.**

**“Very well,” said the Iron Man. “From now on you are the slave of the earth. What can you do?”**

**“Alas,” said the space-bat-angel-dragon, “I am useless. Utterly useless. All we do in space is fly, or make music.”**

**“Make music?” asked the Iron Man.  
“How? What sort of music?”**

**“Haven’t you heard of the music of the spheres?” asked the dragon. “It’s the music that space makes to itself. All the spirits inside all the stars are singing. I’m a star spirit. I sing too. The music of the spheres is what makes space so peaceful.”**

**“Then whatever made you want to eat up the earth?” asked the Iron Man. “If you’re all so peaceful up there, how did you get such greedy and cruel ideas?”**

**The dragon was silent for a long time after this question. And at last he said: “It just came over me. I don’t know why. It just came over me, listening to the**

**battling shouts and the war-cries of the earth – I got excited, I wanted to join in.”**

**“Well, you can sing for us instead,” said the Iron Man. “It’s a long time since anybody here on earth heard the music of the spheres. It might do us all good.”**

**And so it was fixed. The space-bat-angel-dragon was to send his star back into the constellation of Orion, and he was to live inside the moon. And every night he was to fly around the earth, through the heavens, singing.**

**So his fearful shape, slowly swimming through the night sky, didn’t frighten people, because it was dark and he couldn’t be seen. But the whole world could hear him, a strange soft music that**

swimming through the night sky, didn't frighten people, because it was dark and he couldn't be seen. But the whole world could hear him, a strange soft music that seemed to fill the whole of space, a deep weird singing, like millions of voices singing together.

Meanwhile the Iron Man was the world's hero. He went back to his scrapyard. But now everybody in the world sent him a present. Some only sent him a nail. Some sent him an old car. One rich man even sent him an ocean liner. He sprawled there in his yard, chewing away, with his one ear slightly drooped where the white heat of that last roasting had slightly melted it. As he chewed, he

hummed in harmony to the singing of his tremendous slave in heaven.

And the space-bat-angel's singing had the most unexpected effect. Suddenly the world became wonderfully peaceful. The singing got inside everybody and made them as peaceful as starry space, and blissfully above all their earlier little squabbles. The strange soft eerie space-music began to alter all the people of the world. They stopped making weapons. The countries began to think how they could live pleasantly alongside each other, rather than how to get rid of each other. All they wanted to do was to have peace to enjoy this strange, wild, blissful music from the giant singer in space.