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**DARK
HORSE
COMICS**

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CONAN

ROAD OF KINGS



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CONAN

CONAN: ROAD OF KINGS #6 / JUNE 2011

Based on the work of Conan creator ROBERT E. HOWARD

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CONAN: ROAD OF KINGS

After Olivia dreamed that her father, the king of Ophir, wanted her back, she and Conan set out upon the Road of Kings. However, the Zamorian rogue Fharos kidnapped her, intending to ransom her for gold. On reaching Ophir's capital, Olivia, Fharos, and the Ophirian captain Jemal were sentenced by King Kennak to be beheaded. The monarch had fallen under the spell of Queen Sophonesba, through the mystic power of the ring called the Star of Khorala, unleashed by her astrologer, Necrodemus. The queen had also recently poisoned Olivia's mother. Conan, having crossed the mountains into Ophir despite the menace of huge gold-devouring worms, arrived in Aurolla the night before the execution, bent on rescue—only to slip in a pool of water in the very shadow of the headsmen's looming ax . . . And even if he survives that threat, there is still the matter of the murderous sword-handed assassin Gamesh, who has been hired to track the Cimmerian down and kill him . . .

◆ NUMBER **81** IN A SERIES ◆



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THE OPHEREAN DAY DAWNED
GLOWING AND GOLDEN...

BUT IMMINENT DEATH CAST ITS
LONG SHADOW OVER THE THREE
FIGURES ON THE PLATFORM ABOVE THE
GATHERED ONLOOKERS... A SHADOW
NO MORNING SUN COULD PIERCE.

DON'T
DESPAIR, MY
PRINCESS.

YOUR FATHER
MAY YET THINK
BETTER OF HAVING
HIS FAVORITE
DAUGHTER
BEHEADED.

WHY
ME, BEL?
WHY ME?

ALL I
WANTED WAS
TEN PACK ASSES
WEIGHTED DOWN
WITH GOLD FOR
HER SAFE
RETURN.

WAS
THAT TOO
MUCH TO
ASK?

ALL
HAIL--





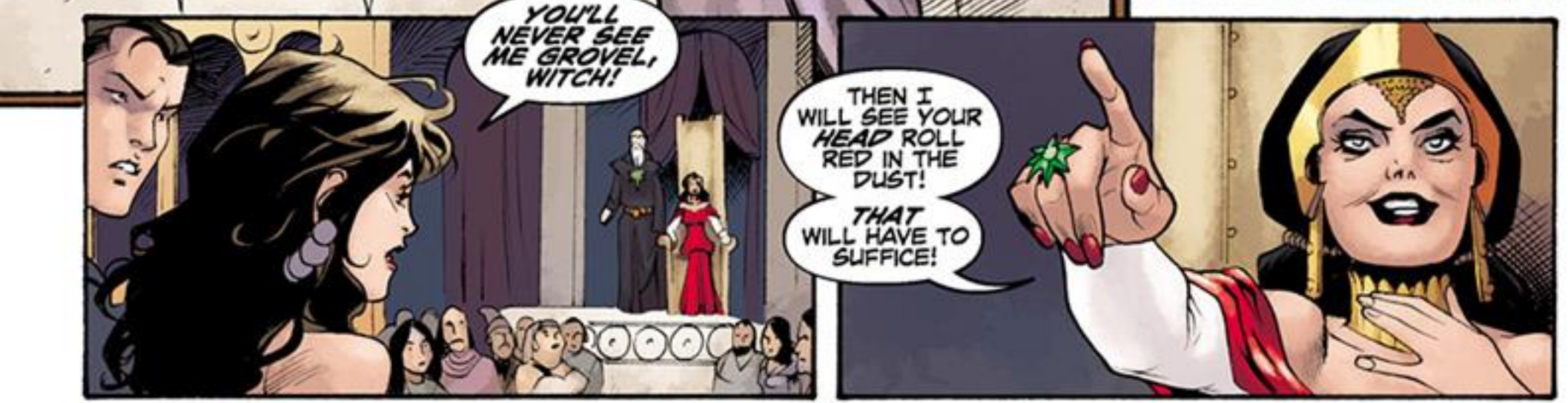
--HER HIGHNESS, QUEEN SOPHONESBA!

A PITY THE KING WAS INDISPOSED, MILADY.

EVEN THE RING'S ENCHANTMENTS COULD GIVE HIM NO STOMACH FOR WITNESSING THIS DEED.

SHALL I SIGNAL THE EXECUTION TO PROCEED--SO I MAY RETURN TO MY MYSTIC SCROLLS?

FIRST, NECRODEMUS, I WOULD SEE MY HUSBAND'S BASTARD PLEAD IN VAIN FOR HER LIFE.



YOU'LL NEVER SEE ME GROVEL, WITCH!

THEN I WILL SEE YOUR HEAD ROLL RED IN THE DUST!
THAT WILL HAVE TO SUFFICE!



WHAT? YOU DIDN'T LIKE MY LITTLE JEST?

HEH HEH HEH...

HEH.



HEH...

HAH!

ER... HA HA!

HAHAHA HAHAHAHA







NOW, GET HER OUT OF HERE--

--WHILE I PUT THIS AX TO BETTER USE--



--THAN IT'S SEEN IN MANY A DAY!



NOOOO...



SKRAKK



THAT NAKED SAVAGE MISSED THE QUEEN, THANK THE GODS!

GET HIM!

WE'LL GET THEM ALL, ASTROLOGER!

THEY'VE ONLY ONE WEAPON BETWEEN THEM!



CROM
TAKE ME, IF THEY
DON'T THINK I
MISSED HER BY
ACCIDENT!

WHY ARE
YOU SHEATHING
YOUR SWORD,
MAN?

IF YOU
DON'T PLAN TO
USE IT, TOSS IT
TO ME!



ONE
SWORD--
HNNH--WON'T
DO US MUCH
GOOD--

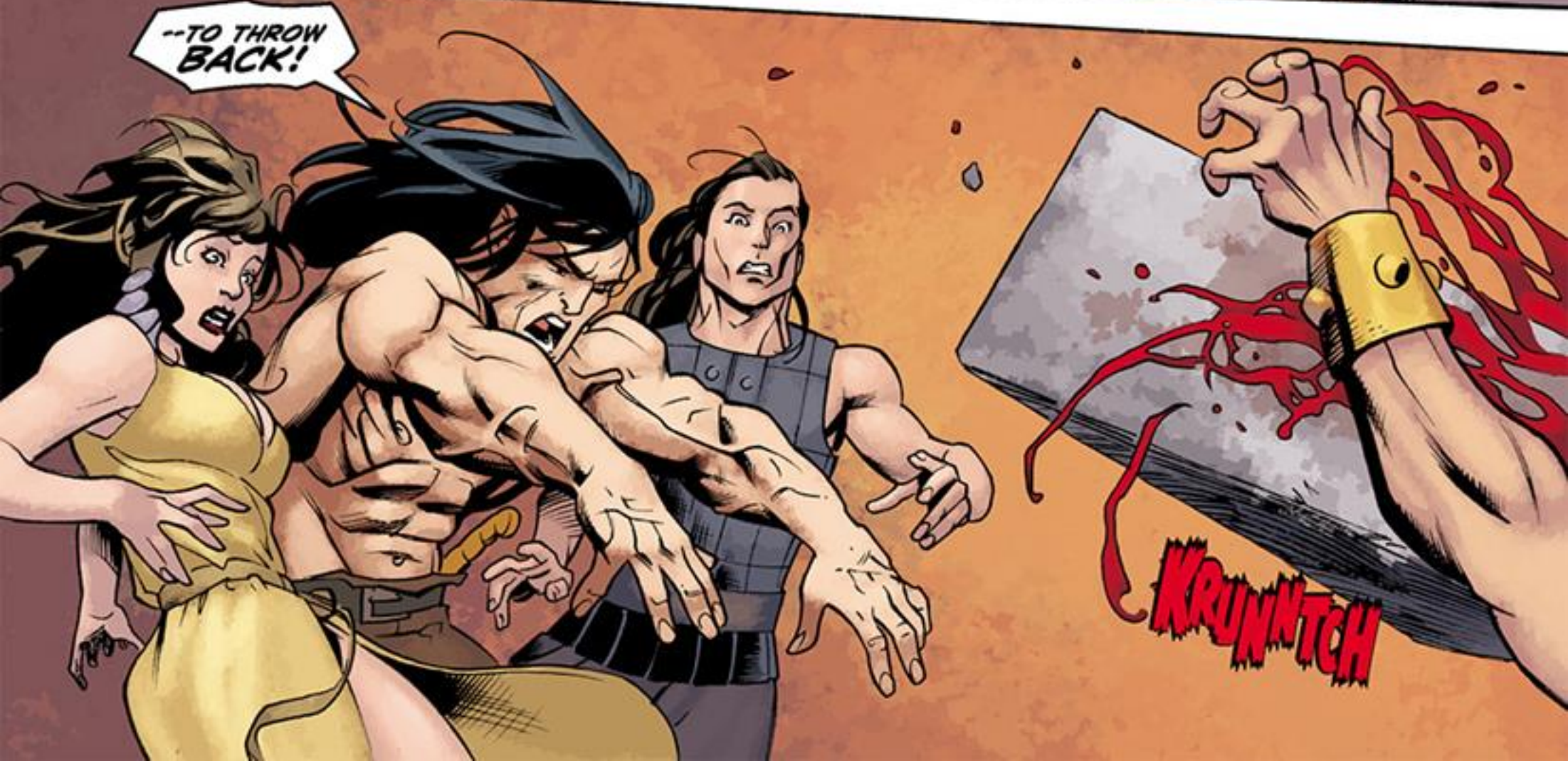
--IF THEY
HURL--HNNNGGH--
THEIR SPEARS.



WE--

NEED--

SOMETHING--



--TO THROW
BACK!

KRUNTCH



CAPTAIN JEMAL--WAIT! CONAN--!

HE TOLD ME TO GET YOU TO *SAFETY*--AND I'VE WALKED THIS PALACE BEFORE!



MAJESTY--WAKE UP! WAKE UP!

MY REACH IS LONGER THAN *YOURS*, BARBARIAN.



BUT YOUR SPEAR DOES NOT GO WHERE YOU WANT IT TO.

KLANNGG



MY BLADE DOES!

GGAAAA



MY QUEEN--WE ARE AT THE *MERCY* OF THAT RED-HANDED SAVAGE!

NO OTHER GUARDS CAN POSSIBLY REACH US--BEFORE HE CUTS US DOWN LIKE RIPE WHEAT!

AND YET--THERE BE *OTHER* POWERS--

POWERS AT WHOSE GATEWAY I HAVE LONG KNOCKED--SEEKING ADMITTANCE...



"DII PLEHTO
LENG FREK
SARKOMAN..."

GET OUT
OF THE WAY,
OLD MAN!

I NEED YOUR
SHE-DOG QUEEN
FOR A HOSTAGE--
OUR PASSAGE OUT
OF THIS DEATH
TRAP!

"FREK
DYLATH-LEEN--
FREK MOHR--FREK
HATHEG-KLA..."



DID YOU
HEAR ME?
I SAID--

HUHN?
WHERE'D THAT
SUDDEN
COLD WIND
BLOW IN
FROM?



"FREK
STETHELOS--
KLIMM
ABHOTH..."

YOU SEE,
SAVAGE?



CROM...



YOUR KNEES
TURN TO WATER--
AND YOUR SWORD TO
GRAINS OF SAND--
BEFORE THE COMING
OF ATACH-
NACHA!

WHILE YOU
LOOTED AND
PILLAGED--
LUSTED AND
PREYED--

--I PORED
EACH NIGHT OVER
THE BOOKS OF
VATHELOS
THE BLIND--

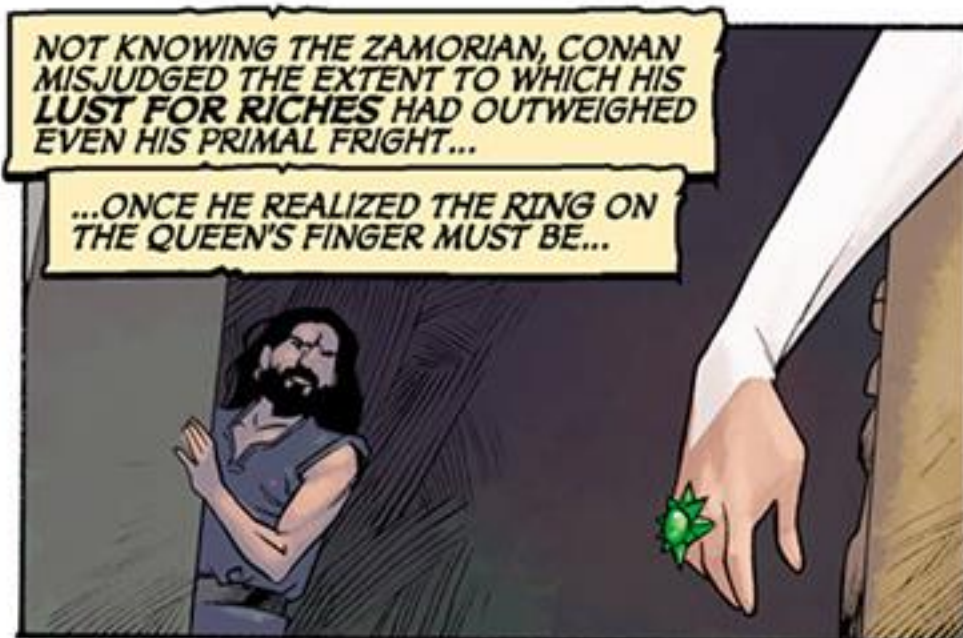






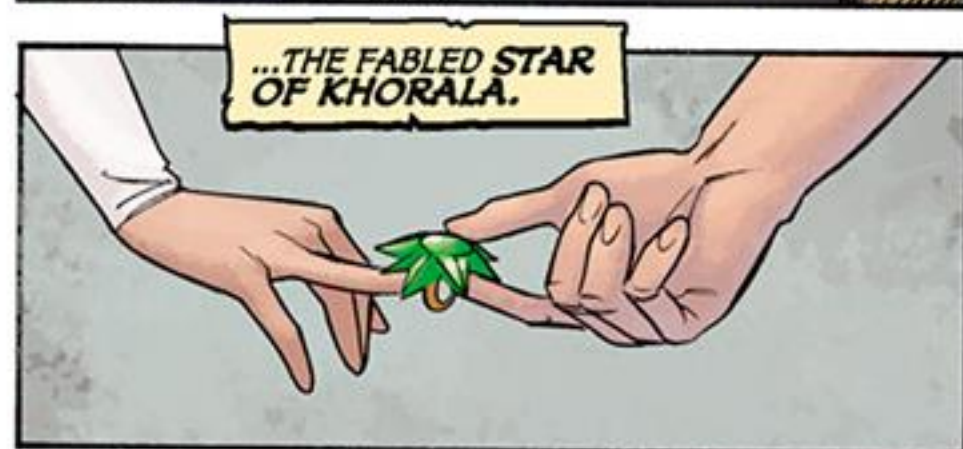
THAT DUNG RAT FHAROS IS THE ONE I WANTED TO KILL--

BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE HIGHTAILED IT FOR FOREIGN PARTS.



NOT KNOWING THE ZAMORIAN, CONAN MISJUDGED THE EXTENT TO WHICH HIS LUST FOR RICHES HAD OUTWEIGHED EVEN HIS PRIMAL FRIGHT...

...ONCE HE REALIZED THE RING ON THE QUEEN'S FINGER MUST BE...



...THE FABLED STAR OF KHORALA.



PLEASE, CONAN-- GET ME OUT OF HERE--

--AND I'LL GO ANYWHERE WITH YOU--



--FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!

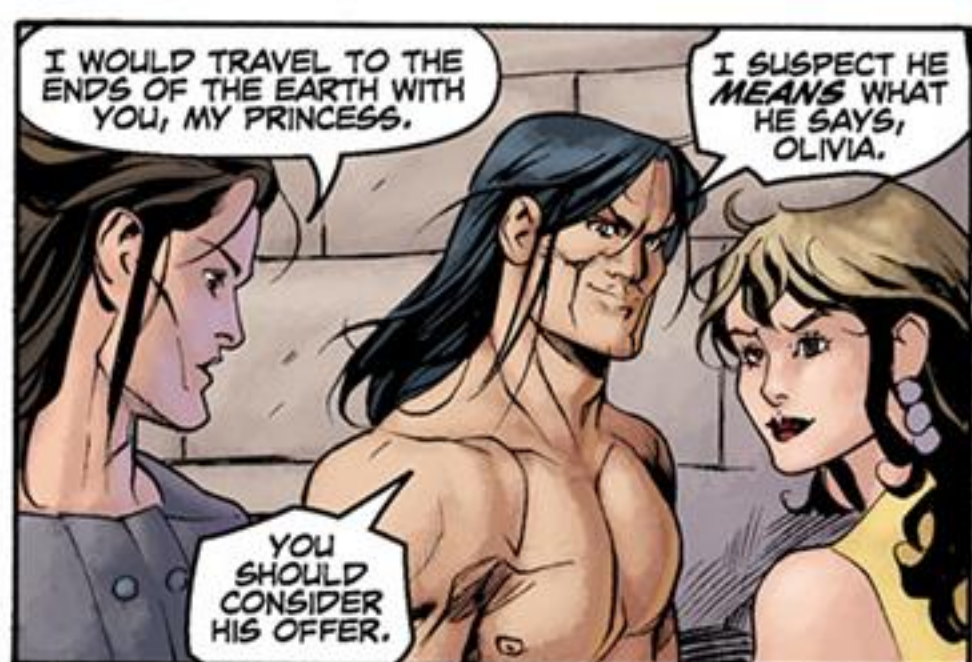
HMMN? NOW LOOK, GIRL...



I LIKE YOU... AND I OWED YOU A RESCUE, AS YOU WERE IN MY COMPANY WHEN FHAROS KIDNAPPED YOU...

BUT A WOMAN IS BAGGAGE A MAN IN MY LINE OF WORK CANNOT AFFORD.

BUT--I CAN'T STAY HERE! WHAT WILL BECOME OF ME?



I WOULD TRAVEL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH WITH YOU, MY PRINCESS.

I SUSPECT HE MEANS WHAT HE SAYS, OLIVIA.

YOU SHOULD CONSIDER HIS OFFER.



STILL, BEFORE WE FLEE OPHIR WITH OUR TAILS BETWEEN OUR LEGS...

...I'VE A HUNCH I'D LIKE TO PLAY OUT.



CONAN! YOU'RE RUNNING TOWARD THE ROYAL APARTMENTS!

THAT I COULD TELL BY THE EVER-RICHER TAPESTRIES.

WE'VE DODGED THE REST OF THE GUARDSMEN THUS FAR--AND THEY WON'T BE EXPECTING US TO HOTFOOT IT HERE.



OF COURSE, IT WAS TOO MUCH TO HOPE THAT THERE WOULDN'T BE AT LEAST ONE LONE GUARD...

HALT, DOG!

FEW WOULD HAVE FAULTED THE SENTRY FOR FAILING TO SENSE HOW QUICKLY THIS INTERLOPER COULD TRAVERSE YARDS OF EMPTY SPACE--



--TO SMASH A FACE HIS SWORD COULD HAVE SLICED INTO CRIMSON SHARDS.



WHAT IN MITRA'S NAME IS GOING ON OUT--



OLIVIA?



FATHER...



I...

PLEASE, MY DAUGHTER--I BEG OF YOU--FORGIVE AN OLD MAN'S MURDEROUS FOLLY!

LET ME GIVE YOU YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE AS MY RECOGNIZED OFFSPRING--

--AND SPEND THE YEARS I HAVE LEFT ATONING FOR THE WRONGS I HAVE DONE YOU!



I HAVE NEVER WANTED MORE THAN TO BE YOUR DAUGHTER, SIRE...

BUT WHY DID YOU SELL ME INTO SLAVERY--THEN CONDEMN ME TO DIE BENEATH THE QUEEN'S GAZE?

I--I SWEAR TO YOU, CHILD--I KNOW NOT WHAT POSSESSED ME!



IT WAS AS THOUGH MY WILL WERE NOT MY OWN--BUT NOW, I AM ONCE AGAIN MASTER OF MY THRONE.

AND DO NOT FRET YOURSELF ABOUT QUEEN SOPHONESBA.

SOMEHOW--THOUGH I KNOW NOT HOW I KNOW--I FEEL I CAN HANDLE HER NOW...



"...AS IF THE UNHOLY INFLUENCE SHE HAS WIELDED OVER ME WERE RECEDING INTO THE DISTANCE..."

"...MOVING FURTHER AWAY, WITH EVERY MOMENT, FROM AUROLA."

CONAN--DID YOU KNOW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN?



I'M NO SEER... BUT I WANTED TO SEE FOR MYSELF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WHEN FATHER AND DAUGHTER STOOD FACE TO FACE.

OLIVIA, BELOVED--WHO ARE THESE TWO?



IT WAS CONAN OF CIMMERIA WHO RESTORED ME TO YOU, FATHER--

--THOUGH CAPTAIN JEMAL, OF YOUR NORTHERN BORDER PATROL, PROTECTED ME MOST VALIANTLY WHEN HE COULD.

SUCH SERVICE MUST BE REWARDED!



SOON AFTERWARD--UNWILLING TO TARRY AMID THE SIREN TEMPTATIONS OF A LAVISH LIFE AT COURT--CONAN RODE OUT OF THE CITY THE WAY HE HAD COME.

ONLY **CROM** KNEW WHAT **ARCANE** MEANS SOPHONESBA HAD USED TO TURN KING **KENNAK** AGAINST HIS FAVORED CHILD.



BUT, WITH **OLIVIA** SUSPICIOUS THE QUEEN HAD CAUSED HER MOTHER'S DEATH, THERE WOULD DOUBTLESS BE AMPLE **INTRIGUE** AT **OPHIR'S** COURT FOR SOME TIME TO COME...

...AND HE SUSPECTED HE WOULD PREFER SWINGING HIS SWORD FOR GOLD... IN FIGHTS IN WHICH HE HAD NO DOG.



TWO DAYS LATER, HE APPROACHED
A FAMILIAR MOUNTAIN GATEWAY...

WHO
RIDES
THERE?

ONE
WHO HAS THE
PROTECTION OF
YOUR KING...



...AS
VOUCHSAFED
BY THIS ROYAL
PARCHMENT.

NOW, WILL
YOU STAND
ASIDE AND
LET ME--



WHNEEEEEE

WHAT
IN CROM'S
NAME--?

I REJOICE
THAT NO MAN
KILLED YOU--
BEFORE I HAD
MY CHANCE!



GAMESH!

SO YOU
STRIKE FROM
SHADOWS NOW,
ASSASSIN!

SWINE!
YOU SWORE IF
I HELPED YOU,
THE BARBARIAN'S
HORSE WOULD
BE MINE!







I COULD
CHARGE YOU LIKE
A BULL--AND HOPE
TO *DUCK* UNDER
THAT RAPIER
HAND--

--OR PERHAPS
I COULD OFFER YOU
SOMETHING TO MAKE
YOU *FORGET* ALL
ABOUT PURSUING
ME.



**NOTHING
MAKES ME FORGET MY
QUARRY... WHILE HE
BREATHES.**

EVEN SO,
I AM CURIOUS.
WHAT DID
YOU PLAN TO
OFFER ME?



**GOLD--HOT FROM
THE COURT OF KING
KENNAK!**



YOU
DISAPPOINT
ME.

THOUGH
NITOS PAYS
ME WELL,
I'M HARDLY
AVERSE TO AN
ADDITIONAL
POUCH OF
GOLD.



**BUT WHAT'S
TO PREVENT
ME FROM
HAVING BOTH
GOLD *AND*
YOUR BLACK-
MANED
HEAD??**

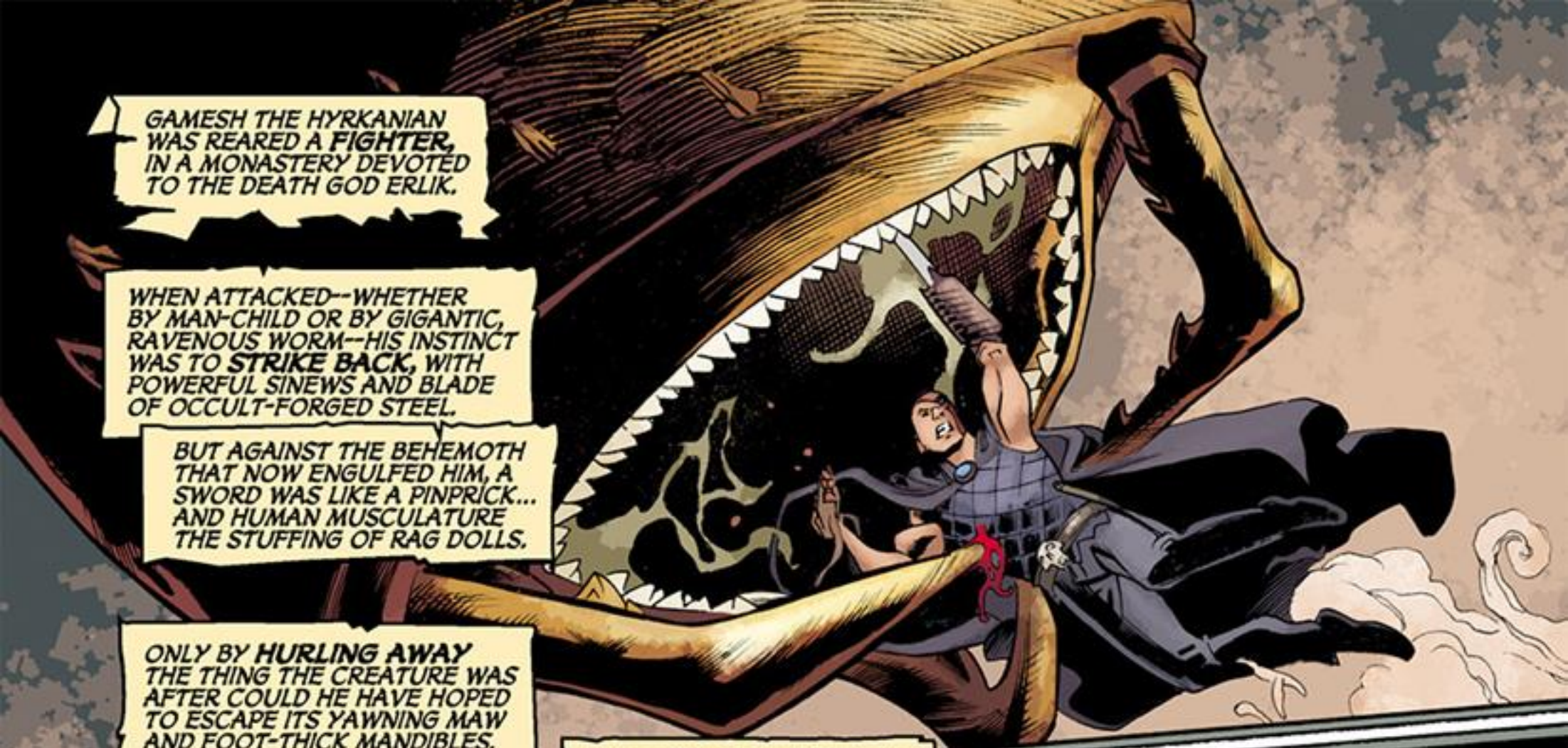


THAT!





TARIM'S
BLOOD!



GAMESH THE HYRKANIAN
WAS REARED A FIGHTER,
IN A MONASTERY DEVOTED
TO THE DEATH GOD ERLIK.

WHEN ATTACKED--WHETHER
BY MAN-CHILD OR BY GIGANTIC,
RAVENOUS WORM--HIS INSTINCT
WAS TO **STRIKE BACK**, WITH
POWERFUL SINEWS AND BLADE
OF OCCULT-FORGED STEEL.

BUT AGAINST THE BEHEMOTH
THAT NOW ENGULFED HIM, A
SWORD WAS LIKE A PINPRICK...
AND HUMAN MUSCULATURE
THE STUFFING OF RAG DOLLS.

ONLY BY **HURLING AWAY**
THE THING THE CREATURE WAS
AFTER COULD HE HAVE HOPED
TO ESCAPE ITS YAWNING MAW
AND FOOT-THICK MANDIBLES.

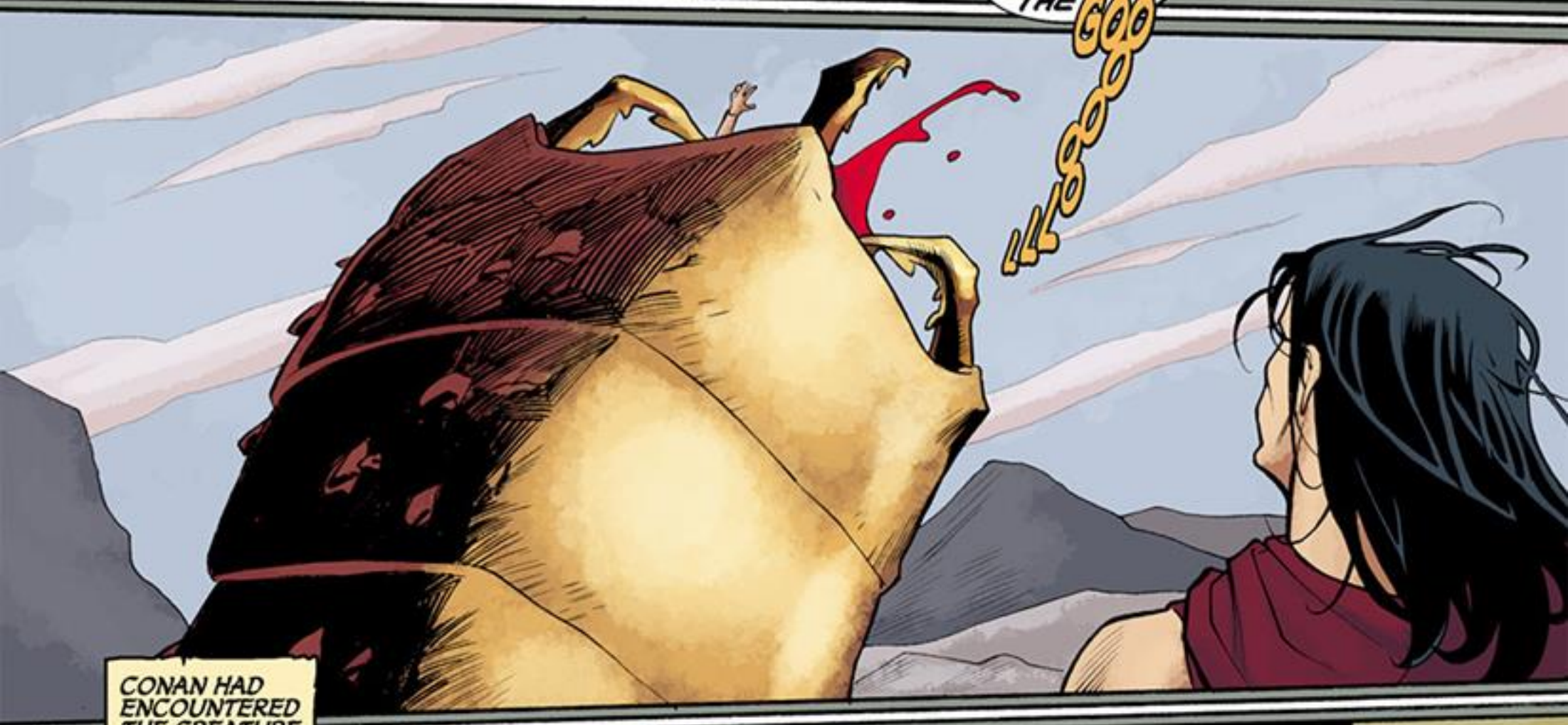
AND ONLY TOO LATE DID
GAMESH REALIZE THAT
WHAT IT WANTED WAS--



THE
GOLD!


ERLIK
PRESERVE
ME--IT WAS
THE

GGOO



CONAN HAD
ENCOUNTERED
THE CREATURE
BEFORE.

GAMESH, HIS RAZOR-SHARP
SENSES LEADING HIM
STRAIGHT TOWARD THE
CIMMERIAN, HAD NOT.



AND THAT, IN THE
END, HAD MADE ALL
THE DIFFERENCE.

HHSSSSSS

AS THE MONSTER TURNED ITS MAMMOTH HEAD--IF HEAD IT COULD BE CALLED--TOWARD HIM, CONAN DID NOT TURN AND FLEE.

HE KNEW HIS ONLY HOPE WAS THAT THE GOLD SCENT WAS NOT UNDULY ON HIM...

HHSSSSSSSS

AS THE MONSTER TURNED ITS MAMMOTH HEAD--IF HEAD IT COULD BE CALLED--TOWARD HIM, CONAN DID NOT TURN AND FLEE.

HE KNEW HIS ONLY HOPE WAS THAT THE GOLD SCENT WAS NOT UNDULY ON HIM...

AND SO IT PROVED.

THE *ASTROLOGER'S* DEATH TAUGHT ME, WORM, THAT WHEN ABOMINATIONS SLITHER FORTH FROM THEIR HELLACIOUS LAIRS--

--THEY'RE ONLY AFTER WHAT THEY'RE AFTER--

AND SO IT PROVED.

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--THEY'RE ONLY AFTER WHAT THEY'RE AFTER--

--BE IT A HUMAN LIFE--

A wide comic panel showing a character with a red cape running through a desert canyon. The character is seen from behind, running towards the right. The landscape is arid with rocky cliffs and distant mountains under a hazy sky. A speech bubble from the character reads: "--OR THE PURE BRIGHT TASTE OF GOLD!"



BUT I WISH
THE HYRKANIAN
HAD SPARED
MY HORSE.

FOR OCEAN-HUGGING
ARGOS AND ITS RUMORED
WAR WITH ZINGARA ARE
MANY LEAGUES AWAY...

...ALONG THE WINDING
ROAD OF KINGS.

BUT I WISH THE HYRKANIAN HAD SPARED MY HORSE.

FOR OCEAN-HUGGING ARGOS AND ITS RUMORED WAR WITH ZINGARA ARE MANY LEAGUES AWAY...

...ALONG THE WINDING ROAD OF KINGS.

BUT I WISH THE HYRKANIAN HAD SPARED MY HORSE.

FOR OCEAN-HUGGING ARGOS AND ITS RUMORED WAR WITH ZINGARA ARE MANY LEAGUES AWAY...

...ALONG THE WINDING ROAD OF KINGS.

NUMALIA, SECOND-GREATEST CITY OF THE WEST'S SECOND-GREATEST KINGDOM...

ARE THE THIEF-FENCES IN NEMEDIA STARK, STARING MAD?

THIS RING IS THE LEGENDARY STAR OF KHORALA, I TELL YOU!

I MYSELF PULLED IT OFF THE FINGER OF THE QUEEN OF OPHIR, WHILE SHE LAY IN A FAINT.

YOU MUST KNOW THAT ITS MAGIC, IN THE HANDS OF A SKILLED ADEPT, CAN ENSLAVE ANY HEART.

THE QUEEN WOULD GIVE A ROOMFUL OF GOLD FOR ITS RETURN.

AND I KNOW A YOUNG SATRAP IN MY NATIVE ZAMBOULA WHO'D PAY EVEN MORE FOR IT.

SO! AND YET YOU WILL NOT EVEN MAKE ME AN OFFER FOR IT?

I WILL MAKE YOU AN OFFER...

...FHAROS, IS IT?

YES, YES... FHAROS OF ZAMORA.

SO WHAT IS YOUR OFFER?

A SHALLOW GRAVE, WITH NO HEADSTONE...

RRGGGG

...NEAR WHERE LONG-CLAWED JACKALS PROWL.

COMING IN AUGUST—
CONAN: ROAD OF KINGS
WINDS THROUGH AQUILONIA—
IN TIME FOR A BEDEVILED CIVIL WAR!