

CONAN THE
BARBARIAN

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CONAN

THE BARBARIAN

WAR
IN A
WORLD
BELOW!



NEVER
BEFORE REVEALED!
SONG
OF THE
SHE-PIRATE!
THE AWESOME
ORIGIN
OF BÉLIT!

"Know, O prince, that between the years when the oceans drank Atlantis and the gleaming cities, and the rise of the sons of Aryas, there was an Age undreamed of, when shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles beneath the stars.

"Hither came Conan, the Cimmerian, black-haired, sullen-eyed, sword in hand, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth, to tread the jeweled thrones of the Earth under his sandaled feet."

—The Nemedian Chronicles.

Stan Lee
PRESENTS: **CONAN THE BARBARIAN™**

THE BALLAD OF BÊLIT!

FOR LONG MONTHS, THE PIRATE SHIP
TIGRESS HAS RULED THE **BLACK
COAST** WHILE THE NATIVE
VILLAGES SHUDDERED.

YET, IT IS NO TREMBLING
TRIBESMEN WHOM THE
FEARSOME **BLACK
CORSAIRS** ATTACK
THIS DAY—

--BUT
A **STYSIAN** GALLEY, WHICH
HAD HOPED TO
FIND SLAVES AND
CHEAP IVORY
ON THE COASTS
OF KUSH...

--AND HAS
FOUND INSTEAD
**STEEL-
BLADED
DEATH!**

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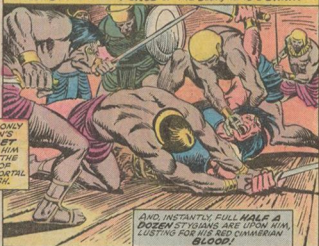
FEATURING THE CREATIONS OF
ROBERT E. HOWARD

THE DESPERATE DEFENDERS, TOO, HAVE
BLADES, HOWEVER...



...AND ONLY CONAN'S
HELMET
SAVES HIM
FROM THE
FATE OF
ALL MORTAL
FLESH.

FELLED BY THE SHEER FORCE OF THE BLOW, HE IS DOWN...



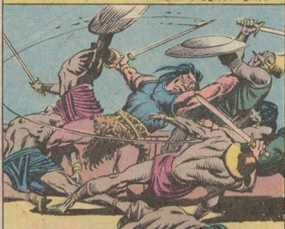
AND, INSTANTLY, FULL HALF A
DOZEN STYGIANS ARE UPON HIM,
LUSTING FOR HIS RED CIMMERIAN
BLOOD!

AND THEY'D HAVE IT
FOR ALL HIS STRENGTH,
SAVE FOR HIS SHIELD-
ING NEMEDIAN
MAIL-SHIRT.



BUT, IT WARDS OFF THEIR
BLOWS LONG ENOUGH FOR HIM
TO STRIKE BACK...

...SHOWING CITY-REARED STYGIAN JACKALS WHAT IT
MEANS TO GRAPPLE WITH A HILL-BRED TIGER AT BAY!



HE IS UP NOW, SNARLING
WORDLESSLY-- AS MUCH
WILD BEAST AS MAN--



--BEFORE HE
REALIZES THERE
ARE NO MORE
FOEMEN WITHIN
REACH OF HIS
THIRSTING SWORD.

THEN IT IS THAT HE THINKS OF HIS PARTNER
IN PIRACY--



BELIT--
MISTRESS
OF THE
TIGRESS--

BELIT-- WHOSE FURY MATCHES ANY TWO OF THE DARK-SKINNED CORSAIRS WHOSE WILD-EYED CAPTAIN SHE IS--

BELIT-- QUEEN OF THE BLACK COAST!



CRINGING STYGIAN SWINE!

AND YOU, DOG OF KHEMI--

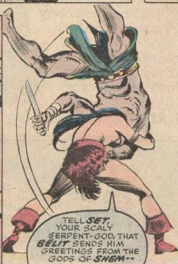


-- LET THE **LEAVES OF LUXOR** TRY PATCHING UP THIS WOUND!

SHEMITE HELLCAT! BY SET, I'LL--



UHN



TELL **SET**, YOUR SCALY SERPENT-GOD, THAT **BELIT** SENDS HIM GREETINGS FROM THE GODS OF **SHEM**--

-- GODS THAT **DON'T CRAWL** UPON THEIR SLIMY **BELLIES!**



ARRRR

STAY YOUR HAND, WOMAN--

YOU HAVE **WON!**

OUR SHIP OUR TREASURE-- ALL ARE **YOURS.**



A **STYGIAN PRIEST**. EH, BY YOUR **GARB!**

WELL, I'LL LET YOU **LIVE--** UNLESS YOU REACH FOR A HIDDEN **DAGGER!**

MY **CURSES** ARE MY WEAPONS, HELLION!

I **NAMED** YOU WITH SUCH A CURSE-- YOU, AND THE **WHITE WARRIOR** WITH THE **FIERCE BLUE EYES!**

KNOW YOU THAT THE **STYGIAN PRINCES** SHALL REMEMBER THIS MAN **LONG AND LONG--**



--AND THEIR MEMORY SHALL BE A **BITTER TREE** WHICH WILL BEAR **CRIMSON FRUIT** IN THE YEARS TO COME!





"FOR GENERATIONS, BELITS FOREBARS HAVE BEEN **KINGS IN ASSALUN, GREAT CITY-STATE OF SHEM TO THE NORTH.**

"AND, IGNORING THE OBVIOUS **AMBITIONS** OF HIS BROTHER, **NIM-KARRAK...**

"...NO MAN WAS EVER A **BETTER** KING TO THOSE FIERCE, WARY PEOPLE WHO DWELL AMONG THEIR STONE COLD **ZIGGURATS** THAN WAS **ATRAHASIS.**

"NOR DID **ANY** MAN, KING OR COMMONER, LOVE HIS MOTHERLESS **DAUGHTER** MORE THAN **ATRAHASIS** LOVED HIS LITTLE **BELIT...**

"...SHE WHOSE VERY NAME MEANS **GODDESS** IN THE **SHEMITISH** TONGUE!



"**SAILING** HE TAUGHT HER, FOR HE HIMSELF DEARLY LOVED THE **ROLLING SEA...**

"AND **NO SHIP** OF ANY NATION COULD OUT-RACE THE **TIGRESS**, MISTRESS OF THE **WHITE-CRESTED WAVES!**



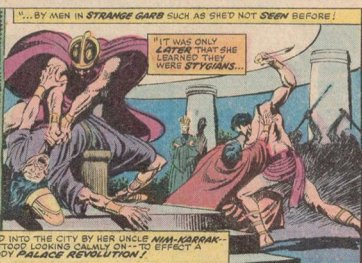
"HER **NON-ROYAL** EDUCATION WAS UP TO **ME--TO N'YAGA...**

"FOR, I HAD **FLED** THE **SOUTHERN ISLES** BEYOND **KUSH** YEARS BEFORE TO BECOME **INFORMAL ADVISOR** TO **ATRAHASIS.**

"HIS **DARK-HAIRED CHILD** WAS **OPEN, AND LOVING, AND TRUSTING...**



"...UNTIL THAT **FATEFUL** NIGHT WHEN, **STEALING** PLAYFULLY FROM HER BED, SHE SAW HER **FATHER** AND HIS MOST FAITHFUL **RETAINERS** BEING **RUTHLESSLY SLAIN--**



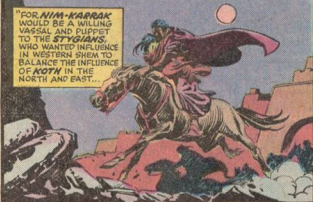
"...BY MEN IN **STRANGE GARB** SUCH AS SHE'D NOT **SEEN** BEFORE!

"IT WAS ONLY **LATER** THAT SHE LEARNED THEY WERE **STYGIANS...**

"...SMUGGLED INTO THE CITY BY HER UNCLE **NIM-KARRAK--** WHO NOW STOOD LOOKING CALMLY ON-- TO EFFECT A **BLOODY PALACE REVOLUTION!**

"BY GOOD FORTUNE AND WITH A HANDFUL OF ROYAL GUARDSMEN,
I MANAGED TO SNATCH THE GIRL-CHILD AWAY--"

"FOR NIM-KARRAK
WOULD BE A WILLING
VASSAL AND PUPPET
TO THE STYGIANS,
WHO WANTED INFLUENCE
IN WESTERN SHEMA
TO BALANCE THE INFLUENCE
OF KOTH IN THE
NORTH AND EAST..."



"...AND I KNEW HE WOULD HAVE SLAIN HER, AS CALLOUSLY AS HE
HAD BETRAYED HIS OWN BROTHER!"

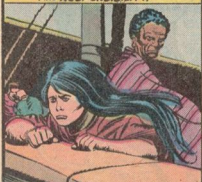
"BUT NO STYGIAN
GALLEY EVER
LAUNCHED COULD
HAVE OVERTAKEN
THE TIGRESS,
WHICH ATRAMASIS
HAD ORDERED TO
STAND EVER READY
TO SAIL..."



"...ALMOST AS IF
HE HAD EXPECTED
TO LOSE HIS LIFE
ONE DAY TO
SUDDEN
TREACHERY."

"DOWN THE COAST WE
SAILED, PAST THE COAST-
LINE OF SHEMA TOWARD THE
RIVER STYX AND BEYOND..."

"I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE GIRL-CHILD
KNEW THE WORD 'VENGEANCE' FOR I
HAD TRIED TO TEACH HER MAINLY LOVE
AND RESPONSIBILITY."



"YET IN HER OWN SILENT WAY, NO MAN OR
WOMAN EVER YEARNED MORE FOR A
DAY OF REVENGEFUL RECKONING--"

"...THAN LITTLE BELIT ON THE
NIGHT WE SAILED IN MOONLESS
DARKNESS..."



"...PAST BROODING, BLACK-
WALLED KHEMI, MAJOR
SEAPORT OF THE SERPENT-
WORSHIPPING STYGIANS!"

"PAST KUSH WE SAILED, THAT
LAND WHICH MANY WHITE MEN
WRONGLY USE TO NAME THE
WHOLE OF THE BLACK LANDS..."



"...TOWARD THE
MYSTERIOUS
SOUTHERN
ISLES WHICH HAD
BEEN THE HOME-
LAND OF MY YOUTH."

"I KNEW NOT WHAT SORT OF
RECEPTION WE MIGHT RECEIVE..."

"STILL, WHEN WE BEACHED BY THE JUNGLE'S EDGE, NO WORDS OF
MINE COULD RESTRAIN EITHER SOLDIER OR SAILOR."

"HOLD, FOOLS!
THERE MAY BE
DANGER--!"



"AND WHO
ARE WE--
TEMPLE
VIRGINS, TO
FEAR A FEW
RANK
SAVAGES?"

"IT'S LAND
WE WANT TO
TOUCH--
AFTER WEEKS
OF TOSsing TO
AND FRO WITH
EVERY FROTHING
WAVE!"

"LAND!"

"A PRAGMATIC MAN IN MY OWN WAY,
I GAVE IT UP..."



"COME,
CHILD."

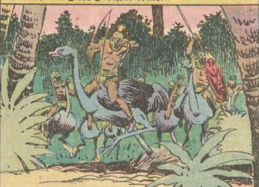
"PERHAPS
WE CAN
ESTABLISH A
SAFE CAMP
ON THE BEACH,
BEFORE ANY
PERIL CAN
ARISE!"

"I HAD SPOKEN,
ALAS, TOO
SOON!"



AAAAGHH--!!

"FOR, FROM THE TREES BEYOND CAME THE **BIRD-RIDERS**-- THOSE GRIM WARRIORS WHO DO BATTLE
ASTRIDE THE **BIRDS-THAT-RUN**..."



"**DEADLY ARCHERS** THEY ARE, AND EVEN THE GREEDY **STYGIANS** HAVE LONG SINCE LEARNED TO GIVE THE **SOUTHERN ISLES** A WIDE BERTH--SO LONG BEFORE, THEY HAVE WHOLLY FORGOTTEN **WHY**."

"I KNEW WHY... BUT I WAS ALSO **N'YAGA**, MAN OF TWO WORLDS,
BLACK AND WHITE."



"IN THE **HYBORIAN WORLD**,
I IMPRESSED MEN WITH
MURMURED **JUTU** WORDS,
AND SIMPLE **NATIVE HERBS**."

"**SOUTH OF KUSH**, I PREFERRED CERTAIN
POWDERS WHICH THE **CANNY PRIESTS** OF
SEHU USED IN THEIR RITUAL SACRIFICES
TO **ISNTAR** AND **ASNTORETH** AND **ADONIS**."



HEAR ME,
MEN OF MY HOME
COUNTRY--

HAVE YOU
FORGOTTEN
N'YAGA, WHO
LEFT YOU
YEARS AGO
WITH A VOW
TO **RETURN**
ONE DAY?

WELL, RETURN I **HAVE**-- WITH THIS
PALE-SKINNED **CHILD**, WHOSE VERY
NAME MEANS **GODDESS**."

SHE IS NO **MORTAL**
THING, LIKE THE WHITE
DOGS YOU SLEW--
BUT THE **DAUGHTER**
OF THE **DEATH-**
GODDESS DERKETA!

HEED THE
WORDS OF **N'YAGA**,
THE **SHAMAN!**

N'YAGA...?

I REMEMBER
HIM-- FROM WHEN
I WAS BUT A
BABE!

AYE! THEY SAY HE WALKED
INTO THE **WATER** ONE DAY--
CLIMBED ONTO THE BACK OF A
DOLPHIN--



BESIDES,
HE THROWS
FIRE, AS IF
IT WERE
SEEDS!

--AND
NEVER
CAME
BACK!

PERHAPS
HIS WORDS
ARE AS TRUE
AS HIS **MAGIC!**



"THUS, ON THE BACKS OF THE BIRDS-THAT-RUN (BUT WHICH CAN ALSO WALK, THANK DRAGON!) WE RETURNED TO THE MAIN VILLAGE OF THIS FOREMOST OF THE SOUTHERN ISLES...



"AND, BY MY KEEPING LITTLE BLIT OUT OF UZUMI'S PATH, AND AWAY FROM TOO MANY PRYING EYES...



"...AND ENHANCED HER REPUTATION AS DERKETA'S DAUGHTER, FIRST BY KILLING A MAN-EATING LEOPARD WITH BUT A SPEAR...



"...THEN BY SLAYING A BLOOD-CRAZED BABOON WHICH TERRORIZED THE COUNTRYSIDE.



"YET, NOT EVEN HER USURPING UNCLE COULD HAVE WISHED HER WORSE THAN DID UZUMI-- WHOM ADVANCING AGE GAVE NEITHER WISDOM NOR COMPASSION. AND, ONE DAY--

YOU ARE THE
NEW WARRIORS
OF OUR TRIBE!

YOU HAVE
PASSED THE
RITUALS!

YOU HAVE SLAIN
WILD BEASTS--
AND HURLED
ARROWS FROM
THE BIRDS--
THAT RUN.

IF ANY OTHER FEELS
THAT HE DESERVES TO
STAND WITH THESE NEW
WARRIORS, LET HIM SPEAK NOW--

--OR KEEP
SILENT TILL THE
MOON HAS
TWELVE TIMES
DRUNK ITS FULL!

I DESERVE
THE NAME OF
WARRIOR,
O CHIEFTAIN--

FOR I, BELIT, HAVE SLAIN AS
MANY BEASTS, ON FOOT OR
ON THE BACK OF THE GREAT
BIRDS, AS ANY YOUTH HERE!

YOU ARE A GIRL!
YOU SHOULD FIND A
HEARTH
TO MIND!

I MIND
WHAT I
MIND-- AND
I WISH TO
BE A
WARRIOR!

FOR A
FEMALE,
IT WOULD
TAKE A VERY
SPECIAL
TASK TO--

THEN GIVE
ME THAT
TASK-- AND
I SHALL
PERFORM IT!
THIS I SWEAR!

VERY WELL! YEARS AND YEARS AGO, THE MOUND-
DWELLERS STOLE THE RIGHT EYE OF YONDER
CARVEN IMAGE OF OUR GREAT GOD DAGON!

MANY HAVE VENTURED INTO THEIR
DARK REALM TO RESTORE IT;
NONE HAVE EVER
RETURNED.

BRING
BACK THE
SILVER
EYE OF
DAGON--

--AND WE SHALL DECLARE YOU A MAN-- A WARRIOR!

NO, MY CHIEFTAIN! NO OTHER SEEKER
OF MANHOOD HAS EVER BEEN SET
SUCH AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK.

IT WAS
ALWAYS
SEASONED
WARRIORS
WHO--

SILENCE,
M'GORA...

YOU ARE BUT A SUB-
CHIEFTAIN, AND YOUR
WORD MAY NOT STAND
AGAINST MINE!

BESIDES, THIS SHOULD BE A
SIMPLE TASK-- FOR
ONE WHO, N'YAGA SAYS,
IS THE DAUGHTER OF
DERKETA HERSELF!

SHE MUST
ATTEMPT
THIS FEAT--
OR DIE,
HERE AND
NOW!

UZUMI HAS
SPOKEN, AND
IN THESE
RITES, UZUMI'S
WORD IS
UNDISPUTED
LAW!

AND I, BELIT--
ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE!

"NEXT MORNING, OUT OF HEARING OF THE TRIBE..."



IT IS A
MISSION OF
CERTAIN DEATH
HE SENDS YOU ON,
MY CHILD!

TAKE A
BOAT, RATHER,
AND FLEE
THESE
ISLANDS!
I CAN--

NO, NI'YAGA! I'VE
LISTENED TO YOU
BEFORE IN ALL
THINGS...

BUT
I AM NOT
A CHILD
ANY LONGER
...YOURS, OR
ANYONE'S!

I AM
BELIT...

AND, IT IS LESS
THE MYSTERY-
SHROUDED
MOUND-
DWELLERS
I SEEK THIS
BRIGHT MORN...

...THAN MY
OWN DARK
DESTINY!

THEN MAY
YOU FIND IT--
AND RETURN
BEFORE THE
MOONLIT
NIGHT
COMES!



"LATER, SHE TOLD
ME IT WAS *MOURS*
BEFORE EVEN HER
TRAINED SENSES
NOTICED THE
SLIGHTEST OF
EXTRA WEIGHTS IN
HER *SIDE-POUCH*...



"...AND SHE
FOUND THE
TINY VIAL
FILLED WITH
LIQUID
SILVER WHICH
I HAD
STEALTHILY
PLACED
THERE.

"SHE MUST HAVE
SMILED GRIMLY THEN,
AND SEEN AT ONCE
WHAT I INTENDED.

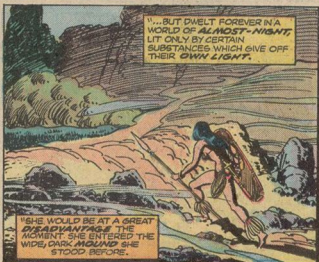
"FOR, SHE
HAD HEARD
THE *VAGUE*
LEGENDS
OF HER
LOATHSOME
QUARRY...



"...THEY WHOSE *MOUNDS* COULD BE
REACHED ONLY BY DESCENT INTO THE AREA
KNOWN AS THE *GREAT CRATER*.

"IT WAS SAID
THAT THEY
WERE *NEARLY-
BLIND*
CREATURES, AS
MUCH LIKE
WORMS AS
MORTAL MAN...

"...CREATURES
WHO COULD
NOT STAND
THE *LIGHT*
OF DAY...



"...BUT DWELT FOREVER IN A
WORLD OF *ALMOST-NIGHT*,
LIT ONLY BY CERTAIN
SUBSTANCES WHICH GIVE OFF
THEIR *OWN LIGHT*.

"SHE WOULD BE AT A GREAT
DISADVANTAGE THE
MOMENT SHE ENTERED THE
WIDE, DARK *MOUND* SHE
STOOD BEFORE.

"THE
THOUGHT
DID NOT
DETER
HER.



"HIGH-SIGHTLESS, THE MOUND-DWELLERS WERE SAID TO HAVE
IMPROVED THEIR OTHER SENSES OVER THE EONS--OF *SMELL*, AND
TASTE, AND *TOUCH*.



"NO ONE KNOWS
TO THIS DAY IF
THEY CAN *HEAR*
OR NOT.

"WITH EVERY SOFTEST
FOOTFALL, EVEN ON
HARD ROCK, SHE FEARED
THEY MIGHT DETECT
TREMORS AS IF AN
ELEPHANT WERE
STAMPEDING THRU
THEIR LOWER REGIONS.

"BUT STILL, SHE WENT
RELENTLESSLY, FIERCELY
ON...



"...AND HER OWN EARS
WERE SHARP ENOUGH
TO HEAR, ERE LONG, THE
FAINTEST OF *SHAMB-
LING*, *SHUFFLING*
SOUNDS FROM SOME
DISTANCE AHEAD.

"AND THEN,
WHEN SHE
REACHED A
CERTAIN
LEDGE...



"...BEYOND WHICH THE
EERIE *TWILIGHT* WAS
A WEE BIT *BRIGHTER*
THAN BEFORE...

"AH, THEN,
WITH A
SUDDEN
INTAKE OF
BREATH--
SHE *SAW!*



"THE MOUND-DWELLERS!"

"AND THERE, AMID THE GAUE-SOME TABLEAU--BEING PASSED FROM HAND TO SNARLED HAND BECAUSE IT REFLECTED THE PHOSPHORESCENCE AND MADE THE ETERNAL NIGHT A BIT LESS DARK--

"--SHE BEHELD THE SILVER EYE OF DAGON!"

"IT HAD LONG SINCE CEASED TO BE MERELY A TROPHY OF WAR, AND HAD BECOME AN OBJECT OF WORSHIP TO THE MISBEGOTTEN MAN-WORMS.

"WHAT FEELINGS OF HOOROR AND REVULSION THIS SLIM GIRL, BORN AND GENTLY REARED IN CIVILIZED ASGALUN, MUST HAVE FELT--

"--AS SHE AWAITED THE PRECISE MOMENT WHEN ONE QUASI-HUMAN MONSTER HANDED IT TO THE NEXT IN LINE--

"--THEN RUSHED SWIFTLY FORWARD--

"--TO STRIKE, WITH A FORCE AND TIMING WHICH FEW MALE WARRIORS COULD HAVE EQUALLED!

"EVEN THE GHASTLY SILENCE MUST HAVE OPRESSED HER IN THAT NEXT INSTANT..."

"FOR, THE MAN-WORMS MADE NO SOUND--NOT EVEN A HISSING OF RAGE--AS SHE RETRIEVED THE SILVER EYE..."

"NOR HAD SHE TIME TO REPLACE THE EYE WITH THE VIAL OF SILVER, AS I HAD INTENDED, TO DISTRACT THEIR ALTERED SENSES.

"SHE COULD NOT FLEE, THRU NIGHTED CAVERNS SHE HAD COMMITTED TO **MEMORY** ON HER BLACK JOURNEY!

"NO, THEY MADE NO SOUND.

"...WITH A **SPEED** SHE WOULD NOT HAVE DREAMED **POSSIBLE**.

"THEY MERELY... FOLLOWED...

"REACHING THE **MOUND-ENTRANCE**, SHE EXPECTED TO SEE THE **LIGHT OF MIDDAY ABOVE**.

"BUT, IT WAS NIGH AS **NIGHT** ABOVE...

"...ALMOST AS IF **NIGHT** HAD FALLEN IN A FEW BRIEF HOURS, TO AID THE MAN-WORMS IN **STALKING** HER!

"THEN, AT LAST, BELIT FELT **STARK PANIC**, AS SHE RUSHED HEADLONG TOWARD THE **VILLAGE**, NEVER LOOKING **BACK**...

"MEANWHILE, **UZUMI** HAD ACTED EVEN MORE **SWIFTLY** THAN I HAD IMAGINED HE WOULD...

YOU SEE? THE GIRL WAS NO **GODDESS** OR DAUGHTER OF ONE, OR ELSE **DERKETA** HERSELF HAD PROTECTED HER!

RATHER, **DERKETA** HAD **BLOTTED OUT THE VERY SUN**-- TO SHOW HER **DISPLEASURE** AT OUR **FOOLISHNESS**!

N'YAGA HAS **LIED** TO US --AND THUS MUST **DIE**!

THUS SPEAKS **UZUMI**! DOES ANY DARE TO **DISPUTE** ME?

"...NEEDLESS OF **LURKING REPTILES** AND **THORNS** THAT TORE HER PALE FLESH.

"IN THAT INSTANT, I BEHELD **M'GORA**-- TENSE AMONG THE SHUFFLING, MURMURING WARRIORS--AS IF AWAITING A SIGN FROM **ME**.

"BUT, GUNK IN **DESPAIR** OVER BELIT'S LOSS-- AND MY OWN FAILURE TO RECALL THAT THE **SHENITES** HAD LONG BEFORE PREDICTED THE **SUN'S ECLIPSE** ON THAT VERY DAY--

"...I COULD NOT ASK FOR **HELP**, EVEN IN THE FACE OF **DEATH**.

"JUST THEN, FAIRLY **BURSTING** INTO THE CLEARING--

HAI, MY TRIBEEMEN!

I HAVE REGAINED THE **EYE OF RAGON**!

BUT, THE **MOUND-DWELLERS** MAY BE HOT UPON MY **TRAIL**!

"UZUMI, HOWEVER, THOUGHT QUICKLY--

AGAIN, DO YOU SEE? EVEN IN RESTORING THE SILVER EYE, SHE BRINGS DISASTER UPON US!

FOR, IN THIS DARKNESS AT NOON, THE MOUND-DWELLERS MAY ATTACK EVEN US!

SLAY HER--AND N'YAGA, AS WELL!

"AND, THOSE WHO HELD ME MIGHT HAVE DONE SO, IN THEIR FRIGHT--BUT NOW I DID WHAT I'D NO HEART FOR, BEFORE...

"MY HANDS SEEMED TO BURST INTO FLAME!

AIEEE

"TERRIFIED BY THIS EVEN MORE IMMEDIATE THREAT THAN THE MAN-WORMS, THEY LEAPED BACK FROM ME--

"--EVEN AS SELIT REACHED UZUMI!

YOU TREACHEROUS NYENA!

YOU BAITED ME! YOU MUST HAVE PLOTTED JUST SO, FOR MANY A LONG MOON!

I OUGHT TO SLIT YOUR LYING THROAT, AND--

STOP AND THINK A MOMENT, GIRL-- AND YOU'LL SEE A BETTER WAY!

BUT HURRY-- FOR I FEEL THE EARTH TREMBLE SLIGHTLY BENEATH MY FEET!

I FEAR THE ANGERED MOUND-DWELLERS TUNNEL UNDER US!

SELIT--YOUR NAME MEANS GODDESS, AND AT LAST I BELIEVE!

AT THIS MOMENT-- I BELIEVE YOU ARE TRULY THE DAUGHTER OF DERKETA, GODDESS OF DEATH!

THAT IS NO LONGER ENOUGH, UZUMI!

DRINK DEEPLY FROM THIS VIAL--

--AND LET LIQUID SILVER FILL YOUR GULLET-- INSTEAD OF COLD HARD STEEL!

"IN THAT SELFSAME INSTANT, THE SLIGHT GROUND TREMOR ABRUPTLY GREW--

"--ERUPTING INTO A HORRID FRENZY OF QUAKING EARTH AND FLYING BODIES!

"AND EVEN AS UZUMI GAGGED ON THAT PORTION OF PUREST SILVER--

"THE MOUND-DWELLERS WERE SUDDENLY THERE!

"IF BELIT HAD NOT LEAPED FREE, THE EYE OF DRAGON STILL IN HER POUCH--

"AND SO, THEY WERE CONTENT TO RETURN WITH HIM TO THEIR TERRIBLE TWILIGHT WORLD--

"--IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HER PERSON ON WHOM THE MURDEROUS MAN-WORMS WOULD HAVE SENSED THE NEARNESS OF SILVER.

"AS IT WAS, THEY SENSED IT MERELY IN THE THROAT AND VITAL ORGANS OF THE SCREAMING, NOW-MAD UZUMI--

"--BECAUSE THEY KNEW THEY COULD EASILY RETRIEVE THE HOLY METAL!

"AND, WHEN THE FINAL, FLUTTERING **ECHO** OF UZUMI'S AGONIES HAD FADED FROM THE EAR, IF NOT FROM MEMORY...

IT IS OVER!

THE MOUND-DWELLERS WILL HAVE THEIR **SILVER** WHICH THEY CAN SHAPE INTO A **NEW GLEAMING EYE**...

...AND WE, AN UNEASY **PEACE!**

"FOR A HEARTBEAT, ALL WAS STUNNED SILENCE AMONG THE EBON WARRIORS OF MY PROUD RACE. THEN, N'GORA SPOKE...

N'YAGA IS RIGHT! ONLY A **GODDESS** COULD HAVE RETURNED TO US THE **EYE OF RAGON!**

I SAY-- LET HER BE **CHIEF!**

"IN A MOMENT, ALL HAD TAKEN UP THE CRY...

HAIL BELIT-- CHIEFTAIN OF THE SILVER ISLES!

IF THAT BE YOUR **WILL!** BUT, KNOW YOU **THIS--**

FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, THESE ISLANDS' **WEALTH** WILL BE BASED NOT ALONE ON **FARMING AND HUNTING--** THE CALLING OF **LAND-DWELLERS--**

--BUT ON **PIRACY** AND THE **OPEN SEA!**

NO MORE SHALL THE **GREEDY MERCHANTS** OF THE NORTHERN LANDS GROW FAT ON GOODS THAT **WE** PROVIDE!

RATHER, THEY SHALL **PAY** FOR THEIR PAST MISDEEDS--

--AND NONE **MORE** THAN THE **SHIPS OF SYGIA--**

MAY--WE SHALL HAVE FAR MORE THAN THAT!

FOR, EVEN THE DOOMED **UZUMI** PROCLAIMED BELIT A **GODDESS--TRUE DAUGHTER OF DEARKETA HERSELF!**

--TILL THE DAY COMES WHEN BELIT MARCHES ONCE MORE INTO **ASGALUN--**

--TO BECOME **QUEEN** OF THAT ANCIENT **CITY**, AS WELL AS OF THE **SOUTHERN ISLES** AND THE **SHORES OF KUSH!**

HAIL BELIT-- QUEEN OF THE BLACK COAST!!



NEXT ISSUE: THE COMING OF AMRA!