

WARREN
MAGAZINE



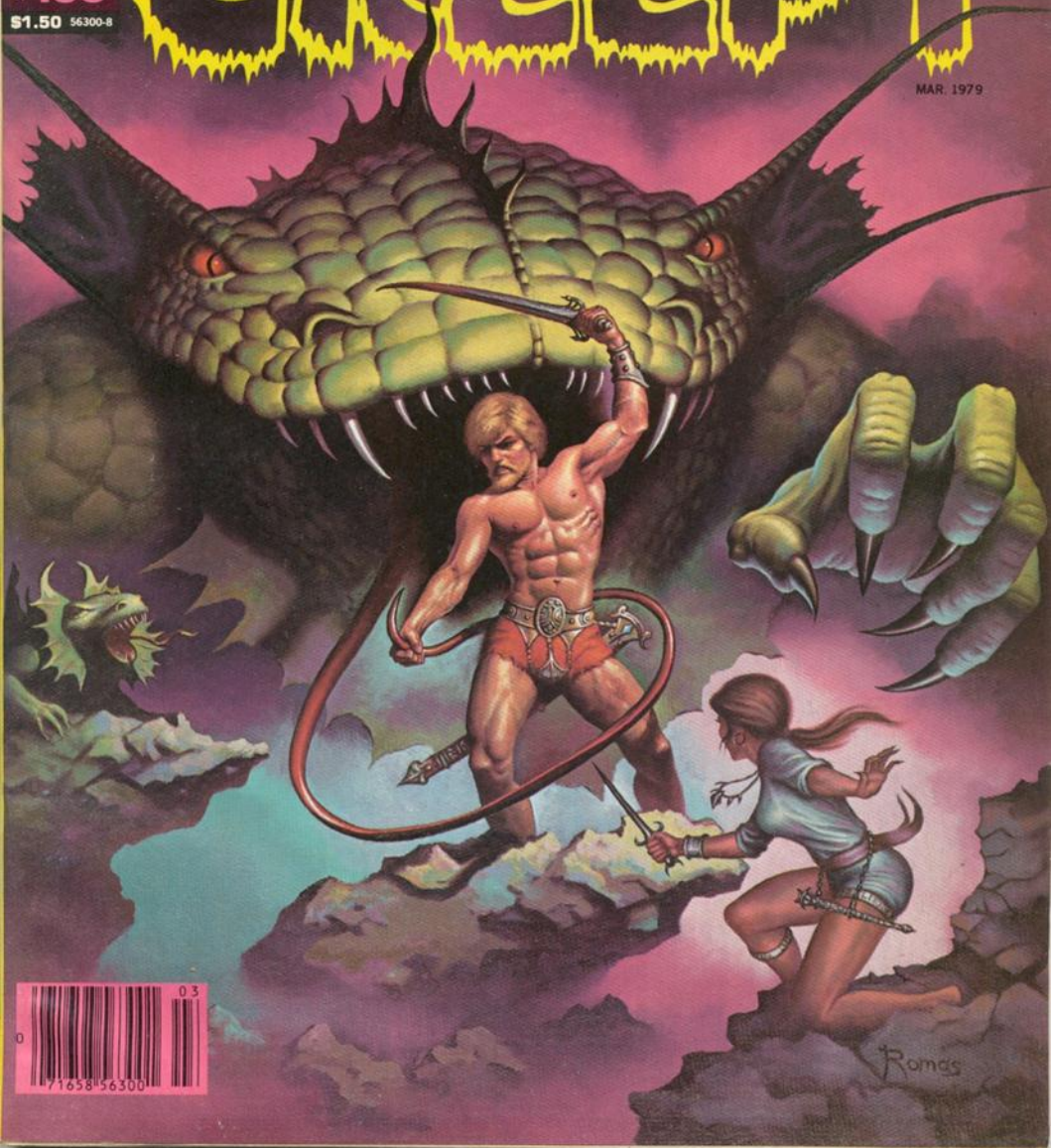
CREEPLY
#106

\$1.50 56300-8

SWORDS & SORCERY SPECIAL!

CREEPLY

MAR. 1979



PROLOGUE

WEDNESDAY NIGHT, APRIL 7, 2020 --



LATER --



HOW MANY OTHERS WILL BE DREAMING WITH ME TONIGHT?

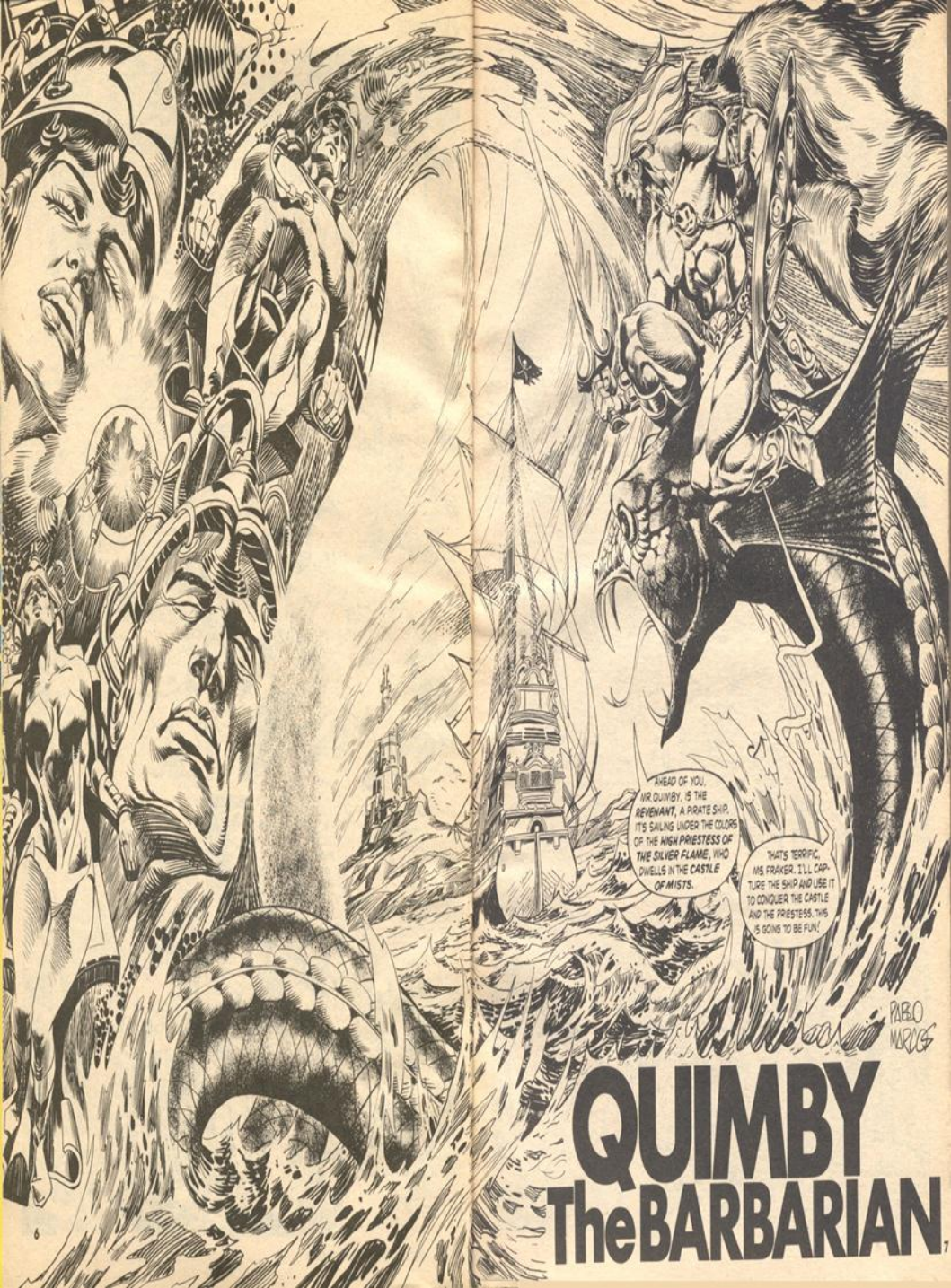
ONLY TWO, MR. QUIMBY. BOTH NOVICES. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE WITH THEM.

WITH YOU AS MY GUIDE, MS. FRAKER, I'M SURE I'LL DO BEAUTIFULLY. YOU'RE THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS.

THANK YOU.

ARE YOU READY, MR. QUIMBY?

I'M READY -- SWITCH ON THE DREAM.



AHEAD OF YOU,
MR. QUIMBY, IS THE
REVENANT, A PIRATE SHIP.
IT'S SAILING UNDER THE COLORS
OF THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF
THE SILVER FLAME, WHO
DWELLS IN THE CASTLE
OF MISTS.

THAT'S TERRIFIC.
MR. FRAKER, I'LL CAP-
TURE THE SHIP AND USE IT
TO CONQUER THE CASTLE
AND THE PRIESTESS. THIS
IS GOING TO BE FUN!

PABLO
MARCOS

QUIMBY

The BARBARIAN.



ARE YOU
OKAY, MS. FRAKER?
I MEAN, THOSE
ARROWS --

JUST WINDOW
DRESSING. IT'S THE
PIRATE CAPTAIN YOU'LL
BE FACING. NOTHING
ELSE MATTERS.



HERE HE
COMES, MR. HANNIGAN.
WATCH OUT FOR HIM. HE'S
AN EXPERIENCED
DREAMER.

I'LL CUT HIM
TO PIECES. BARBARIANS
ARE BASICALLY CLUMSY
OAFS. HE DOESN'T
HAVE A CHANCE!



NO WAY,
DIRTY LAUNDRY!
TRY AND TAKE
IT!

SURRENDER
THIS SHIP OR
DIE!



WHAT DO
YOU DO IN REAL
LIFE?

I'M A
STOCKBROKER,
SPECIALIZING IN
MUTUAL FUNDS. HOW
ABOUT YOU?



I'M A
TAX ACCOUNT-
TANT.

LET'S HAVE
DINNER TOGETHER
TONIGHT AFTER
WORK.



SORRY-- I
HAVE A DATE. HOW
ABOUT TOMORROW?

I'VE BEEN GIVING SOME THOUGHT TO INVESTING IN MUTUAL FUNDS, BUT IT'S HARD TO FIND A RELIABLE BROKER THESE DAYS.

WHY DON'T YOU GIVE ME A CALL SOMETIME? THE NAME'S TED HANNIGAN. I'M IN THE YELLOW PAGES.

LOOK NO FURTHER. I'M YOUR MAN.

WHOMP

OOOF!

LET'S SEE-- HOW DOES FRIDAY SOUND?

FRIDAY IS PERFECT. I'M FREE ALL MORNING. YOU'LL LOVE MY PORTFOLIO, MR. --?

YOUR BOYS IN TROUBLE.

YEAH-- I THINK HE'S ABOUT TO WAKE UP.

CLANG

QUIMBY-- I'LL GIVE YOU A RING AROUND TEN.

WHAK

GOODBYE, MR. HANNIGAN.

UNNGGH!

AAAHIEE!





THIS ISN'T
FAIR, MS. FRAKER. HOW
AM I SUPPOSED TO FIGHT
SOMEONE WHO CAN THROW
FIRE AROUND LIKE THAT?

YOU NEED
A **MAGIC CHARM**.
FORTUNATELY WE'RE
HAVING A **SPECIAL** ON
THEM THIS MONTH.



I DON'T LIKE
HAVING TO PAY
HIDDEN
CHARGES.

MY APOLOGIES,
MR. QUIMBY. YOU'RE A
GOOD CUSTOMER. CONSIDER
YOURSELF **CHARMED** ---
ON THE HOUSE.



MOOWWOOWAA

WHOOOMMMM

THIS HIGH
PRIESTESS, WHAT
DOES SHE LOOK
LIKE?

THE STANDARD
MODEL. SHE'S THE
MOST **BEAUTIFUL**
WOMAN IN THE WORLD.
WHAT WOULD YOU
EXPECT?



I'LL HAVE TO
SHIFT FROM HERE. YOU
GO AHEAD. I'LL MEET YOU
INSIDE THE SECRET
TUNNEL.



IT'S AWFULLY
DARK IN THERE.

COME ALONG, MR.
QUIMBY. ONLY THE
ENTRANCEWAY IS DARK.
IT GETS **LIGHTER** IN-
SIDE.



MS. FRAKER?
WHERE ARE
YOU?

I'M RIGHT
HERE, MR. QUIMBY.





END

FANGS

JANORA SWIMS DAZEDLY... ONE OF A SIX ADOLESCENTS WHO APPROACH THE UNDERSEA CAVERN NESTLED AMONG THE GIANT CLUMPS OF CORAL.

IT IS JUST BEFORE THE HIGH MEAL AS TIME IS MEASURED IN THE ETERNAL DUSK THAT SHADOWS THE DEEPS OF THE PACIFIC. THE OCCASION... THE ENTRY OF THESE CHOSEN YOUTHS INTO THE SHARK CULT.



JANORA GLIMPSES THE MER-PEOPLE LURKING FEARFULLY IN THE SHADOWS. SHE CATCHES AN OCCASIONAL GLINT OF AN UNSHEATHED SWORD... HEARS A SOFTLY MUTTERED CURSE... YET NOT EVEN HER OWN FATHER THE HIGH LORD OF MER, DARES HALT THE PROCESSION...

FOR IT HAS BEEN ORDERED BY THE CRUEL SORCERER-PRIESTS OF THE DREADED CULT... AND IS POLICED BY ITS VORACIOUS, HOVERING SENTINELS... THE DREADED SHARKS!

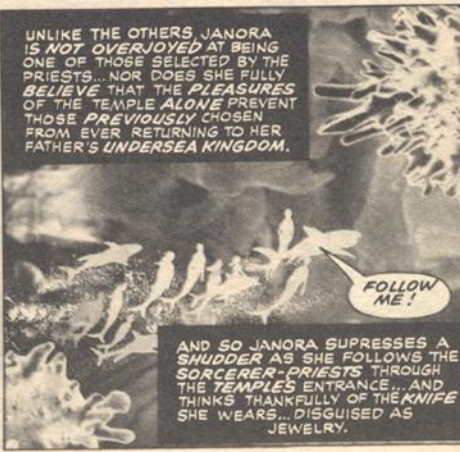
EXCELLENT!
YOU ARE EXACTLY
WHAT WE REQUIRE!
YOU ARE ACCEPTED!



UNLIKE THE OTHERS, JANORA IS NOT OVERJOYED AT BEING ONE OF THOSE SELECTED BY THE PRIESTS... NOR DOES SHE FULLY BELIEVE THAT THE PLEASURES OF THE TEMPLE ALONE PREVENT THOSE PREVIOUSLY CHOSEN FROM EVER RETURNING TO HER FATHER'S UNDERSEA KINGDOM.

FOLLOW
ME!

AND SO JANORA SUPPRESSES A SHUDDER AS SHE FOLLOWS THE SORCERER-PRIESTS THROUGH THE TEMPLE'S ENTRANCE... AND THINKS THANKFULLY OF THE KNIFE SHE WEARS... DISGUISED AS JEWELRY.



JANORA IS **ASTOUNDED** BY THE BEAUTY OF THE VAST CENTRAL CHAMBER AND THE **MASTER SORCERER'S** COURTEOUS **GREETING**, **EAGERLY** THE CHOSEN **DEVOUR** DELICATE FARE AND FIND IT MORE **WONDERFUL** THAN ANYTHING THEY HAVE EVER EATEN.

WELCOME, MY CHILDREN!
EAT THE **FOODS** WHICH MY
HANDMAIDENS HAVE PRE-
PARED FOR YOUR **PLEASURE!**

IT'S **WONDERFUL**
JANORA. WHY ARE
YOU **NOT EATING?**

NONE OF THE
CULT IS EITHER...
WHY IS THAT?

DON'T BE **SILLY**, **LITTLE**
ONE. THIS FEAST WAS PRE-
PARED FOR **YOU ALONE**.
WE **OTHERS** HAVE OUR
OWN FOOD! EAT NOW!

MY COMPANIONS
SEEM UNHARMED AND
THE FOOD LOOKS SO
DELICIOUS...PERHAPS
I'M TOO **SUSPICIOUS**—

SUDDENLY...

I-I
FEEL SO
STRANGE...

CAN'T
SEE...
DIZZY...
SO
DIZZY...

THE FOOD
IS **DRUGGED...**
OR **POISONED**.
I **HAVEN'T**
EATEN BUT
I'M **TRAPPED**
...WHAT AM I
GOING TO **DO?**

DON'T LOOK SO
DISTRESSED
JANORA, YOU HAVE
PASSED THE
TEST! YOU HAVE
PROVED YOURSELF
WORTHY OF
ETERNAL LIFE...

...FOR YOU **ALONE** HAD
WIT ENOUGH TO REMAIN
SUSPICIOUS AND **CONTROL**
ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND THE
SPELL WE USED TO MAKE
THE FOOD **IRRESISTIBLE...**

THE OTHERS NOW
FLOAT LIKE SO
MUCH **SEAWEED**
ON THE WAVES...

COME, CHILD.
YOU WILL BE
SAFE WITH
ME WHILE WE
HARVEST
THE OTHERS!

JANORA KNOWS THAT SHE MUST
RESIST... MUST **ESCAPE...** BUT
THE **MASTER'S WILL** PROVES
TOO STRONG AND, WHILE THE **CULT**
WATCHES, JANORA IS
ENCIRCLED IN THE **MASTER'S**
ARMS...

...AND HIS **RAZOR FANGS**
PLUNGE **SWIFTLY** INTO HER NECK.
BLOOD—HER OWN BLOOD—
STAINS THE WATER...

AAAGH!!

...AND AT THIS SIGNAL THE **CARNAGE**
BEGINS. THE **VAMPIRES** RIP
AT THE **VEINS** OF THE CHOSEN AND
WHEN THEY ARE **FILLED**, **SHARKS**
DEVOUR THEIR NOW **BLOODLESS**
CORPSES.

JANORA VIEWS THE **CARNAGE**
THROUGH A **BLOODY HAZE** UNTIL
WEAK FROM **SHOCK** AND **LOSS** OF
BLOOD, SHE SINKS INTO A **DEATH-**
LIKE FAINT.

UNCOUNTED TIME LATER, JANORA AWAKENS...



...TO FIND HER CURIOUS, UNEXPLAINED NIGHTMARE...



...EXPLAINED!



YOU ARE NOW
MORE THAN MER-
KIND, JANORA.
WE HAVE
CHOSEN YOU.

YOU ARE
NOW ONE
OF US!

THE FOOD
THAT YOU NOW
CRAVE FLOWS
IN MY VEINS...



...COME...COME
TO ME FOR
SUSTENANCE!





YOU DESIRE
...YOU NEED
...YOU WANT.

COME!



THE LIQUID GOES DOWN **HOT**
AND SWEET AS HER THROAT
EXPANDS AND CONTRACTS WITH
HYPNOTIC RHYTHM—SPELL
BINDING, SENSUOUS, EVERY
SENSE IS ALIVE IN HER HUNGER.
THE BEAST WITHIN HER DRINKS,
UNTIL —

YES... THAT IS
THE WAY!
UUHHH! DRINK!
PARTAKE OF ME!
BE BORN...
AGAIN!

STOP
NOW! YOU
HAVE HAD
ENOUGH!

NO! I AM
NOT YET DONE!
STILL HUNGRY!



YOU HAVE HAD
ENOUGH...OF MY
BLOOD, AT LEAST.
NOW YOU MUST
LEARN TO KILL FOR
YOUR FOOD! COME
WITH ME!



THE DOLPHIN
CUB WILL PUT UP
NO FIGHT!

KILL!
EAT AND BE
SATISFIED!



LOATHING CHOKES HER AT FIRST. TO KILL THIS INFANT THING GOES
AGAINST EVERY MORAL SHE HAS, BUT THIS NEW INSTINCT... DEMANDS!

AND SO, JANORA DRINKS—
DEEPLY AND HEAVILY...

...UNTIL
SHE IS
SATED!



MY MOUTH IS FOUL
WITH **BLOOD...** AND
I-I HAVE **FANGS**
NOW... LIKE THEM!

WHAT HAVE YOU
MADE OF ME?
WHAT KIND OF
MONSTER HAVE
I BECOME?



FOR THIS...
IF FOR NOTHING
ELSE... YOU
MUST **DIE!**

AND DRAWING HER CAREFULLY
CONCEALED **KNIFE...**



**DIE,
MONSTER!**

TEMPLE PRIESTS AND SHARKS FLOAT
ON THE CURRENTS IN THE MAIN
CAVERN, **SLEEPING** WITH
NARCOTIC-INDUCED SOUNDNESS
... **SATED** FROM FEASTING ON
THE **DRUG-PERMEATED FLESH**
AND **BLOOD OF THE CHOSEN**!...



MY PEOPLE HAVE
NO IDEA THAT THIS
TEMPLE IS DEVOTED TO
SLAKING THE **INNATURAL**
APPETITES OF THESE
VAMPIRES... THAT THEIR
CHILDREN HAVE BECOME
HUMAN SACRIFICES!

...AND SO JANORA IS ABLE TO SLIP
FROM THE TEMPLE UNOBSERVED.



I MUST **WARN**
THEM! THEY MUST
DESTROY THIS
EVIL NOW!



AS JANORA... THE ONLY ONE OF THE CHOSEN TO EVER RETURN FROM THE TEMPLE... APPROACHES. DOLPHIN SOUNDS AND MER-SPEECH MINGLE IN SURPRISED MURMURS...

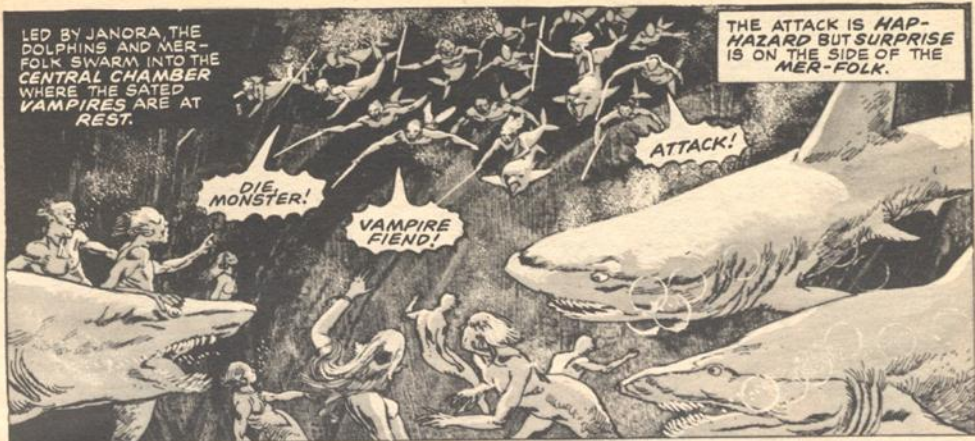


AS JANORA SPEAKS, THE CROWD BECOMES AGITATED. THEY DRAW THEIR SWORDS AND...



LED BY JANORA THE DOLPHINS AND MER-FOLK SWARM INTO THE CENTRAL CHAMBER WHERE THE SATIATED VAMPIRES ARE AT REST.

THE ATTACK IS HAP-
HAZARD BUT SURPRISE
IS ON THE SIDE OF THE
MER-FOLK.



DIE,
MONSTER!

VAMPIRE
FIEND!

ATTACK!

THE STUPEFIED VAMPIRES REACT SLUGGISHLY...



KILL!

DESTROY
THE
DEVILS!

AAARGH

CHUUD

THUD

...AND BY THE TIME THEIR DEFENSES HAVE BEEN
MARSHALLED IT IS MUCH, MUCH TOO LATE.

IT IS OVER! WE
HAVE WON! NO LONG-
ER SHALL THE SHADOW
OF THE DARK TEMPLE
DESTROY US!



OUR SLAVERY
IS DONE, AND
WE HAVE JANORA
TO THANK!

WHERE IS
JANORA?

VICTORY GOES TO THE
MER-FOLK... DEATH
TO THE VAMPIRES.
FINALLY THEIR REIGN
IS AT AN END!

TIME MEANS NOTHING IN THE DEEPS. JANORA KNOWS ONLY THAT SHE HAS BEEN SWIMMING UNTIL EVEN HER VAMPIRE STRENGTH BEGINS TO WANE. THE WATERS, ONCE WARM, ARE NOW ICY COLD. BUT SHE KNOWS THAT FOR THE SAKE OF HER PEOPLE SHE MUST NEVER APPROACH THEM AGAIN.

THERE IS NOTHING LEFT FOR ME NOW—NO HOME, NO PEOPLE—ONLY THIS VILE, UNNATURAL LIFE!

WHAT HOPE HAVE I, CAST ADRIFT IN THIS WILD OCEAN, UNABLE TO APPROACH ANOTHER MER-MAN WITHOUT BRINGING DEATH!

SO TIRED... CANNOT EVEN MANAGE TO KEEP SUBMERGED. NEVER BEEN SO NEAR THE SHORE!

I AM UTTERLY HELPLESS. PERHAPS I SHALL DIE...

...BUT, CAN I DIE?

THE CURRENT—STRONG AS FATE—PUSHES JANORA EVEN CLOSER TOWARD THE ROCKY COAST.

I'M SO HUNGRY! WHAT EVIL IS THIS THAT MAKES ME SO TERRIBLY RAVENOUS? OH, GOD OF GREAT DEPTHS—SUCCOR ME!

ON ALASKA'S SOUTHERN COAST, A FISHERMAN CASTS HIS NET, BENEATH THE BRIGHT MOON, WHOSE LIGHT HURTS JANORA'S EYES!



LONG, LONG AGO IN A DIMENSION FAR, FAR AWAY, THE ARMIES OF THE SORCERERS WARDOC AND AMBOQ CLASH IN A DESPERATE STRUGGLE FOR POWER OVER THEIR ENTIRE PLANET.

NEITHER SIDE IS WINNING!



SWORDS IN THE WORLD SERIES

THE CRYSTAL BALL SHOWS PROOF! OUR ARMIES ARE EVENLY MATCHED! BOTH AMBOQ AND I WILL LOSE BY THE SLAUGHTER OF ALL OUR SOLDIERS!

I MUST CONTACT HIM AT ONCE!



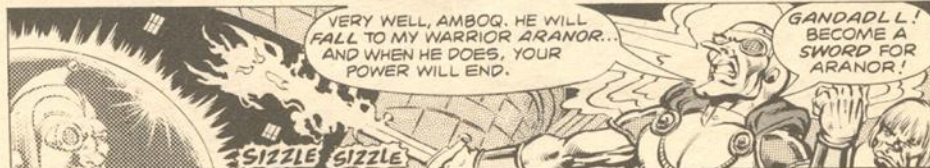
AMBOQ! AS YOU DOUBTLESS OBSERVE, NEITHER ARMY IS VICTORIOUS! I THEREFORE PROPOSE A SINGLE COMBAT OF CHAMPIONS! THE CHOICE OF WEAPONS IS YOURS.

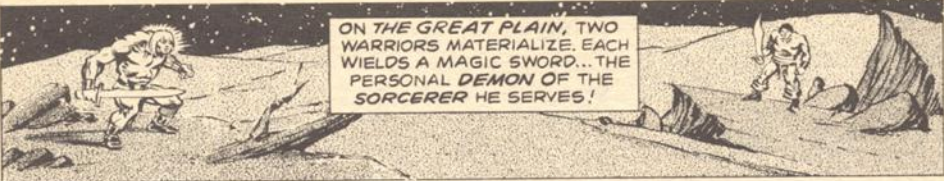
I ACCEPT! SWORDS-MEN! YOUR CHAMPION FACES MY CHAMPION, THARKUN, ON THE GREAT PLAIN!




VERY WELL, AMBOQ. HE WILL FALL TO MY WARRIOR ARANOR... AND WHEN HE DOES, YOUR POWER WILL END.

GANDADL! BECOME A SWORD FOR ARANOR!






ON THE GREAT PLAIN, TWO
WARRIORS MATERIALIZE, EACH
WIELDS A MAGIC SWORD...THE
PERSONAL DEMON OF THE
SORCERER HE SERVES!



EAGERLY, THE
SWORDS JOIN
BATTLE, THRUSTING
AND PARRYING,
RAINING KILLING
BLOWS AND DE-
FLECTING THEM...




...UNTIL A FINAL, VIBRANT
CLASH FLINGS THE SWORD
GANDADLL HIGH INTO THE
AIR...

...AND AMBOQ IS VICTORIOUS.



IA!
GANDADLL!
TO ME!



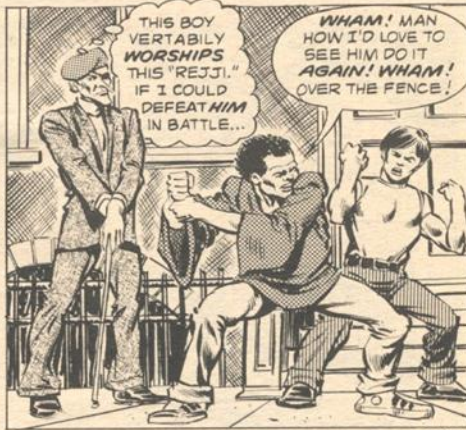
I CANNOT STAY HERE!
EVEN NOW MY WORSHIPERS
FLOCK TO HIS SIDE... AND
WITH EACH DEFECTION, MY
POWER DIMINISHES! WE
MUST GO, GANDADLL...
AWAY...

...TO
ANOTHER
TIME... ANOTHER
PLACE!



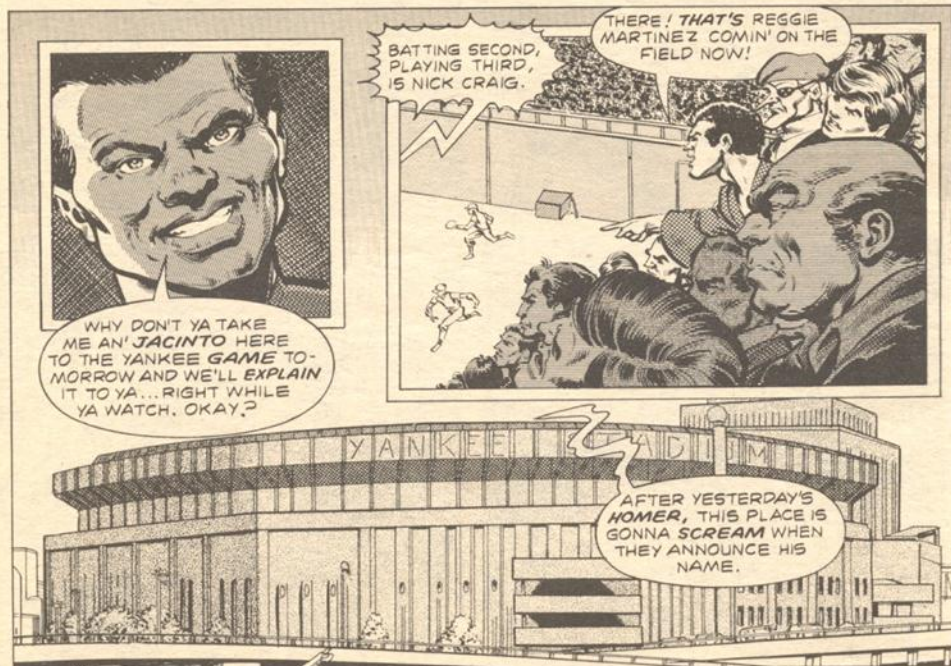
HERE WE WILL NOT
BE DISCOVERED! HERE
I WILL GAIN FOLLOWERS
...AND THEIR BLIND WOR-
SHIP WILL GIVE ME THE
STRENGTH TO RETAKE MY
KINGDOM.

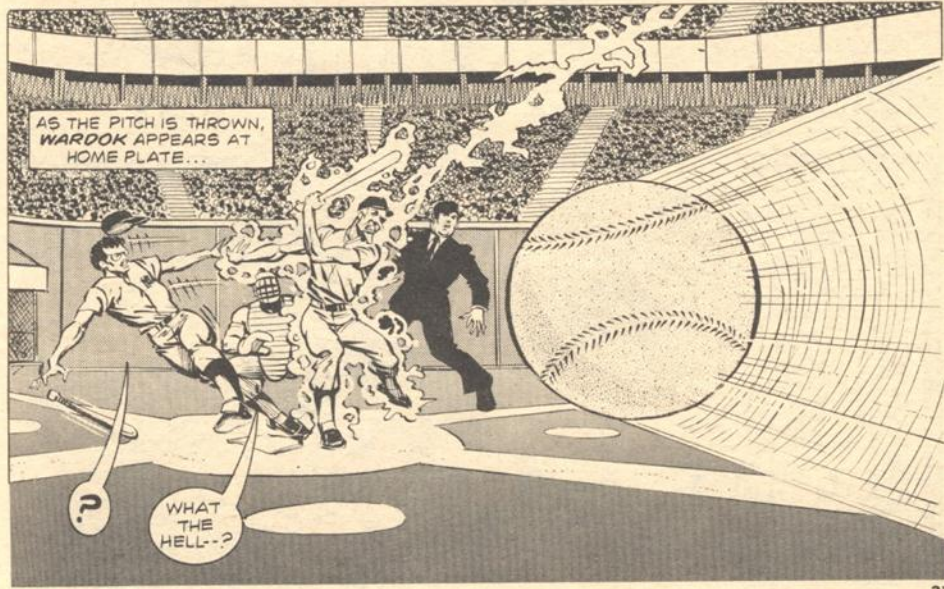
YOU AND I MUST
ADORN OURSELVES IN
THE RAIMENT OF THIS
ERA, GANDADLL...





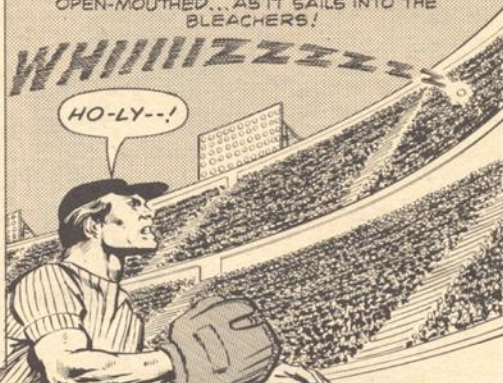
SO THE YOUNGSTERS EXPLAIN ALL ABOUT REGGIE MARTINEZ, THE YANKEES AND THE GAME OF BASEBALL...AND WARDOK'S INTEREST...AND ASTONISHMENT GROW!







THE BALL GOES OVER THE FENCE...WAY OVER. THE OUTFIELDER CAN ONLY STARE OPEN-MOUTHED... AS IT SALES INTO THE BLEACHERS!



THE CROWD GOES WILD...AND SO DOES THE OPPOSING MANAGER...

AAAAAAAAA

...BUT THE YANKEE SKIPPER MARTY WILLIAMS IS AS MUCH IN THE DARK AS EVERYONE ELSE... ASIDE FROM WARDOK HIMSELF.

WELL, WILLIAMS?

WHO IS THIS GUY?

MARTY--?

MARTY, ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS?

HEY, DID SOMEONE CALL A TIME-OUT?

WILLIAMS! WHAT THE HELL KIND OF STUNT ARE YOU PULLING?

MY NAME IS WARDOK. I WISH TO JOIN YOUR TEAM.

AND DISPLAYING THE INCISIVE REASONING THAT MADE HIM A MANAGER OF CHAMPIONS, WILLIAMS STAMMERS...

I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE! HOW COULD I BE?

THEN GET THAT MAN OFF THE FIELD!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TRYING TO PROVE ANYWAY? WHO ARE YOU?

N-NO KIDDIN'! WELL, WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO...? IF YOU CAN HIT LIKE THAT...

SO WARDOK BECOMES THE YANKEE'S NEW LEFT FIELDER, SURPASSING EVEN REGGIE MARTINEZ IN ABILITY... AND **PUBLICITY!** THROUGH GANDADLL, HIS MAGIC BAT, HE BECOMES THE HOME RUN LEADER OF THE MAJOR LEAGUES...



HE ALSO LEADS IN RBIS, RUNS SCORED, DOUBLES, SINGLES... AND WITH GANDADLL AS A MAGIC GLOVE, HE LEADS IN FIELDING AS WELL.



FINALLY, THE ADORATION HE NEEDS IS HIS!

AND AS THE YANKEES SWEEP THE PLAYOFFS AND EASILY TAKE THE FIRST THREE GAMES OF THE WORLD SERIES, HE FEELS HIS POWER GROW...



...UNTIL THE FOURTH GAME...

...AS WELL AS BEING THE FIRST MAN SINCE TED WILLIAMS TO HIT OVER .400.





THE BATTLEFIELD WAS SILENT. THE AIR WAS HEAVY WITH THE SMELL OF DEATH. THE ENDLESS WAR HAD AT LONG LAST COME TO AN **END**.

THE WARCRIES WERE NO MORE, FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT THERE WAS **NO ONE** LEFT ALIVE.

HOW DID IT COME TO **THIS**? WHO CAN REALLY SAY HOW MADNESS BEGINS? IT WAS **EONS** AGO... OR SO IT SEEMED, THAT THE FIRST FEEBLE CRIES OF UNREST STIRRED WITHIN THE HEARTS OF THE REBELS.

PRIMAL EQUATION



IT WAS A FAMILIAR PLEA. THEY WANTED **FREEDOM**: FREEDOM OF SPEECH, FREEDOM OF WILL. EQUALITY OF THE SPIRIT. AND YET, HADN'T THE REBELS BEEN FREE **ALL ALONG**?

GAAA!
AM...AM I
THE LAST?

UGHNN!
D-DEAD! THEY...
THEY'RE ALL
DEAD!

NOT TO HEAR **THEM** TELL IT. THEY BITTERLY CLAIMED THAT IT ALL DEPENDED ON YOUR DEFINITION OF FREEDOM.





CHANGE CAME *FINALLY* BUT WAS NEITHER SWIFT NOR ALL ENCOMPASSING...

EH!?
MOVEMENT!



...TOO LITTLE AND TOO LATE FOR THE MILITANTS WHO BEGAN A CAMPAIGN OF AGGRESSIVE TERROR TACTICS AND THE WAR ESCALATED INTO FULL SCALE. NO-HOLDS BARRED INSANITY.

I...I'M
NOT ALONE!



GOD ONLY KNOWS WHERE THEY GOT THE BOMBS.



NO, MY REBEL FRIEND, IT'S NOT MY DAY TO FACE THE PEARLY GATES!

BUT ONCE ARMED, THERE WAS NO STOPPING THEIR HEADLONG PLUNGE TOWARDS DESTINY.

BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES, HALF THE CIVILIZED WORLD WAS OBLITERATED. THE TREATY FOR THE TERMINATION OF NUCLEAR AGGRESSION WAS FINALLY SIGNED...



BUT YOU...

KING!

...YOU CAN MEET YOUR SISTERS IN HELL!

BUT BY THEN, THE REBELS WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO FACE THEIR OPPRESSORS HAND-TO-HAND.



THAT'S WHEN THEY BEGAN THE GOOD OLD-FASHIONED KIND OF WARFARE THAT MANKIND WAS MEANT TO FIGHT: SAVAGE, BRUTAL, ONE-ON-ONE!



THOSE WHO FIGURED THE WAR WOULD BE SHORT AND SWEET WERE WRONG.

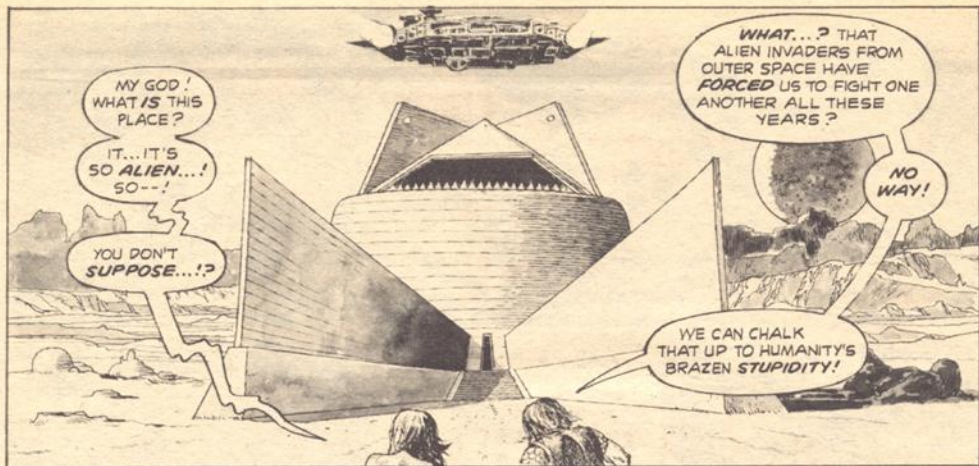
IT WENT ON FOR YEARS, EACH SIDE SUCCEEDING ONLY IN SLOWLY WHITTLED AWAY THE OTHER'S ARMIES.



UNTIL THIS!
JUST TWO REMAINED.

TWO: THE PRIMAL EQUATION!





MY GOD!
WHAT IS THIS
PLACE?

IT...IT'S
SO ALIEN...!
SO--!

YOU DON'T
SUPPOSE...!?

WHAT...? THAT
ALIEN INVADERS FROM
OUTER SPACE HAVE
FORCED US TO FIGHT ONE
ANOTHER ALL THESE
YEARS?

NO
WAY!

WE CAN CHALK
THAT UP TO HUMANITY'S
BRAZEN STUPIDITY!



BUT I WOULDN'T
RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY
THAT WE **HAVE** BEEN
MANIPULATED INTO WAR
FOR **SOME** DIABOLICAL
PURPOSE!

ALL THIS
MACHINERY...!
THIS IS SOME
SORT OF COMPLEX,
ISOLATED LAB!

SHHHH!
I HEAR SOME-
ONE ON THE
OTHER SIDE OF
THESE TANKS!

MORE LIQUID
PROTEIN, SIR!
FRESH FROM THE
BATTLEFIELDS!

IT NEVER CEASES
TO AMAZE ME, JENKINS,
HOW YOUR PROCESSING SHIP
CAN SCOOP UP THE DEAD,
BREAK DOWN HUMAN CELLS
AND **PACKAGE** THEM IN NEAT
LITTLE AIRTIGHT CONTAINERS
EVEN BEFORE YOU LAND!



THAT'S MODERN
TECHNOLOGY, SIR! IT'S
MADE US VERITABLE
GODS!

HOW TRUE!
HOW TRUE! WELL,
LET'S GET THIS
FOOD UP TO OUR
LITTLE '**GODLING!**'



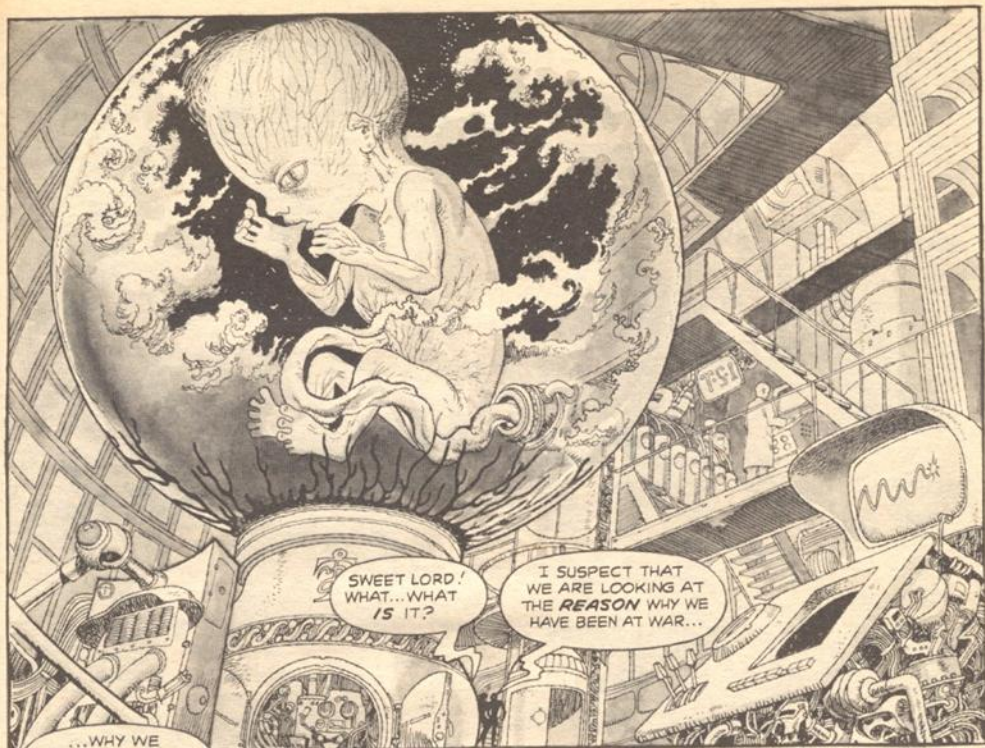
THERE'S NOTHING
HE LIKES BETTER THAN
SOLID HUMAN **PROTEIN**...
FRESH FROM THE FIELDS
OF WAR!



GODS!
GODLINGS!
THEY...THEY'RE
MAD!

THAT...
OR WE ARE
INSANE!

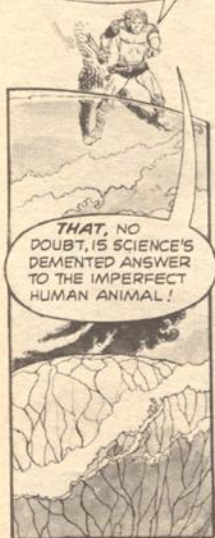
LOOK!



SWEET LORD!
WHAT...WHAT
IS IT?

I SUSPECT THAT
WE ARE LOOKING AT
THE **REASON** WHY WE
HAVE BEEN AT WAR...

...WHY WE
HAVE TRIED TO KILL
ONE ANOTHER FOR
SO MANY YEARS!



THAT, NO
DOUBT, IS SCIENCE'S
DEMENTED ANSWER
TO THE IMPERFECT
HUMAN ANIMAL!



THE SCIENTISTS...!
WE SHOULD HAVE **KNOWN!**
THEY WERE THE ONLY
ONES INTELLIGENT ENOUGH
TO **MANIPULATE** US INTO
SELF-DECIATION!

THEY OBVIOUSLY
WANTED THE HUMAN
RACE DESTROYED SO
THIS...THIS **ABOM-
INATION** COULD
TAKE OUR PLACE!
FURTHER...THEY
NEEDED **FOOD;**
PROTEIN TO MAKE
IT GROW!



AND THEY HAD
US PROVIDE THEM
WITH BOTH!



WE'VE BEEN
HAD, MY LADY LOVE
...BUT THE JEST
ENDS **HERE!**

**NO!
NOOO!**

YOU DON'T
KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE
DOING!



DON'T I, OH WISE AND NOBLE SAGE OF SCIENCE?

YOU TELL ME THEN...! EXPLAIN EVERYTHING!

TELL ME WHY MANKIND WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO CARRY ON!

EXPLAIN TO ME WHY YOU FOUND IT NECESSARY TO BUILD A MORE "PERFECT" HUMAN!

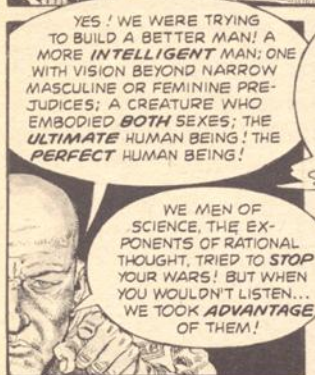
AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, MAKE ME UNDERSTAND WHY YOU HAD TO ELIMINATE ALL OF US IN THE PROCESS!

KASHH!



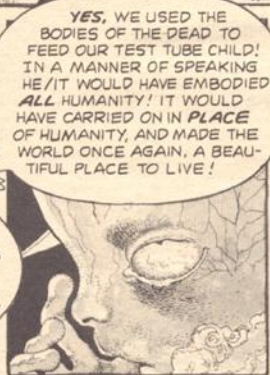
YOU FOOL! YOU MINDLESS, IDIOTIC FOOL! WE MANIPULATED NO ONE!

WE DIDN'T CAUSE ANY WAR! YOU DID! THROUGH IGNORANCE, PREJUDICE... THROUGH EVERY OTHER FRAILTY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.



YES! WE WERE TRYING TO BUILD A BETTER MAN! A MORE INTELLIGENT MAN! ONE WITH VISION BEYOND NARROW MASCULINE OR FEMININE PREJUDICES; A CREATURE WHO EMBODIED BOTH SEXES; THE ULTIMATE HUMAN BEING! THE PERFECT HUMAN BEING!

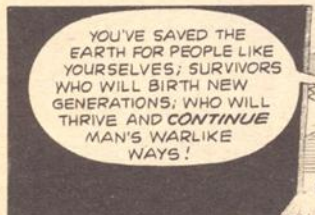
WE MEN OF SCIENCE, THE EXPONENTS OF RATIONAL THOUGHT, TRIED TO STOP YOUR WARS! BUT WHEN YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN... WE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THEM!



YES, WE USED THE BODIES OF THE DEAD TO FEED OUR TEST TUBE CHILD! IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING HE/IT WOULD HAVE EMBODIED ALL HUMANITY! IT WOULD HAVE CARRIED ON IN PLACE OF HUMANITY, AND MADE THE WORLD ONCE AGAIN, A BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO LIVE!



THANKS TO YOU, MY SAVAGE FRIEND, THAT DREAM HAS BEEN SHATTERED!



YOU'VE SAVED THE EARTH FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELVES; SURVIVORS WHO WILL BIRTH NEW GENERATIONS; WHO WILL THRIVE AND CONTINUE MAN'S WARLIKE WAYS!



OH MY GOD! WHAT...WHAT HAVE I DONE?



YOU COMMITTED NO SIN, MY LOVE! YOU'VE GIVEN THE GARDEN BACK TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNERS!

FOR BETTER OR WORSE... THAT IS THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE!

SUDDEN DEATH PLAYOFF

WELCOME TO
THIS CRUCIAL LAST
ROUND OF THE HOLOCAUST
INVITATIONAL, WHERE THE
DIFFERENCE OF A SINGLE
STROKE WILL DECIDE
THE FATE OF OUR
PLANET.

MAJOR AL

CANTHORNE OF EARTH
HAS JUST HIT A LONG, STRAIGHT
DRIVE ALMOST 300 YARDS
DOWN THE MIDDLE OF THE
FAIRWAY.

THWAK

IN JUST A
MOMENT THE IN-
VADING MONSTER
WILL BE STEPPING UP
TO THE TEE. BUT FIRST
A WORD FROM OUR
SPONSOR--

IT'S
ANOTHER PERFECT
DRIVE, RIGHT DOWN THE
MIDDLE. THE INVADER'S BALL
SHOULD LAND WITHIN A
COUPLE OF YARDS OF
MAJOR CANTHORNE'S
BALL.

FROM
HERE ON OUT,
IT'S ANYBODY'S
GAME.

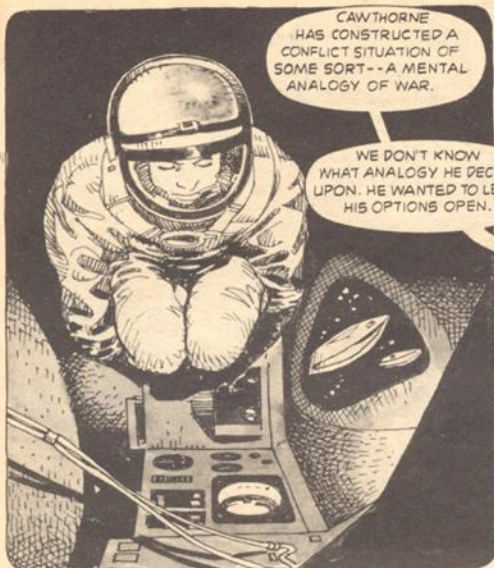
TERRIFIC
DRIVE, MAJOR
CANTHORNE.

THANKS.

THWAK

* MORENO TP *



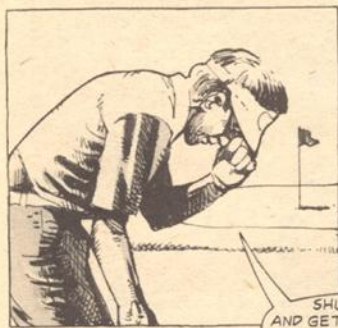


CAWTHORNE HAS CONSTRUCTED A CONFLICT SITUATION OF SOME SORT--A MENTAL ANALOGY OF WAR.

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT ANALOGY HE DECIDED UPON. HE WANTED TO LEAVE HIS OPTIONS OPEN.



CAWTHORNE IS CERTAIN THAT A SUFFICIENTLY STRONG MENTAL RESISTANCE WILL DRIVE THE INVADERS AWAY.



SHUT UP AND GET REAL. YOU'RE JUST A GOLF BALL.

THAT'S BETTER.

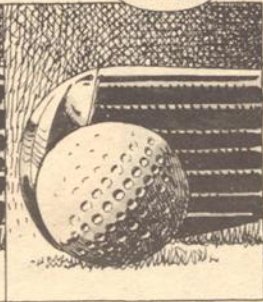


PLEASE--PLEASE DON'T HIT ME!



HURRY UP.

GET WITH IT.



STAND BY, LITTLE BALL. I'M ABOUT TO DROP YOU RIGHT ON THAT GREEN OVER THERE.









TAKE THAT,
YOU LOUSE!

ANEEEE

CHOK

THERE.

"MAJOR CAWTHORNE
--CAN YOU HEAR
ME?"

"THIS IS MISSION
CONTROL."

MAJOR CAWTHORNE--
THIS IS MISSION CON-
TROL. DO YOU COPY?

YEAH, YEAH--
I HEAR YOU.

YOU DID IT,
MAJOR CAWTHORNE.
YOU PROVE THE IN-
VADERS AWAY.

THEIR FLEET
IS WITHDRAWING AT
THIS VERY MOMENT.
YOU DID A TERRIFIC
JOB.

BUT I
COULD HAVE DONE
BETTER.

--I
NEVER GOT A
HOLE IN ONE.

I HAVE NO NAME...I NEVER HAD ONE. MY FATHER HAS A NAME BUT BY OFFICIAL DECREE OF THE **GREAT LORD** NO MAN MAY UTTER IT UNDER **PAIN OF DEATH**. FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES MY FATHER IS CALLED THE **OLD MASTER** AND I AM KNOWN ONLY AS THE **YOUNG MASTER**.



WE LIVED ON A NAMELESS MOUNTAIN IN AN ISOLATED RANGE OVERLOOKING THE **GREAT BODHISATTVA PASS**. THERE WERE NO NEIGHBORING FARMERS TO OVERHEAR THE **CLASH** OF PRACTICE SWORDS—NO CURIOUS PILGRIMS TO WANDER INTO OUR **ARCHERY RANGE**...

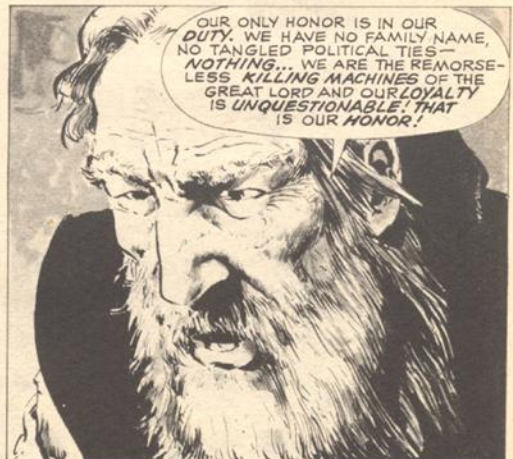
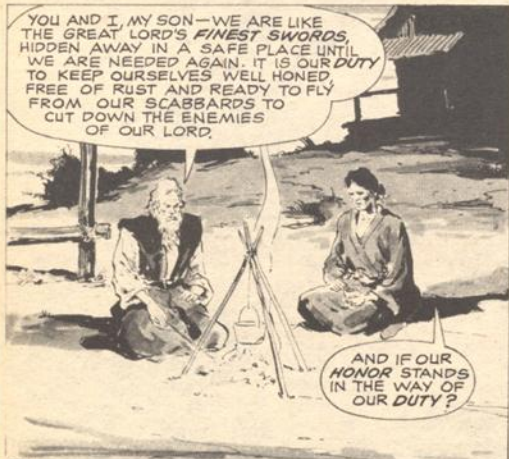


...IN SHORT—WE HAD THE **SOLITUDE** TO DEVELOP AND REFINE OUR FAMILY **CRAFT**...



THE ART OF KILLING





TWICE A YEAR MY FATHER'S YOUNGER BROTHERS WOULD VISIT OUR MOUNTAIN TO TUTOR ME IN THEIR SPECIALIZED ARTS...

FIRST UNCLE WAS THE FOREMOST SPEAR-MAN OF THE LAND...



TRAINING WITH MY UNCLES BEGAN AT DAWN AND LASTED UNTIL SUNSET EVERY DAY. AS TEACHERS, THEY BROOKED NO INSOLENCE...

SECOND UNCLE COULD DROP A RUNNING RABBIT AT TWENTY PACES WITH A SINGLE THROWING STAR...



...AND THIRD UNCLE WAS THE UNDISPUTED MASTER OF THE HORSE-KILLING SWORD!



IN THE EVENINGS MY UNCLES WOULD RETELL THE OLD STORIES AND SING SONGS ABOUT ANCIENT HEROES... TALES TO CHALLENGE THE IMAGINATION AND SONGS TO LIFT THE SPIRIT! NIGHT AFTER NIGHT I SAT ENTRANCED—SAVORING EVERY MOMENT... RELISHING THE WARMTH OF THEIR COMRADERY ...



...AND DEMANDED PERFECTION...

...AFTER ALL I WAS THEIR OWN HEIR...

THE TALKING BOOK THAT WOULD CARRY THEIR KNOWLEDGE INTO THE NEXT GENERATION...



I WAS PROUD TO BE THEIR STUDENT... AND I LOVED THEM AS DEARLY AS I LOVED MY FATHER...

I REMEMBER ONE COLD MORNING DURING THE SALMON RUN. MY FATHER WAS TEACHING ME THE FORM OF **THE BLADE THAT FLIES THROUGH WATER...**

WHEN HIS CONCENTRATION SEEMED TO SLIP—

PERHAPS DISTRACTED BY AN INNOCENT PIECE OF FLOTSAM...



THE LITTLE ENEMY ESCAPES UNCUT. I GROW OLD, MY SON... MY VISION FADES AND THE IRON EBBS FROM MY LIMBS...

DON'T INVENT EXCUSES! MY POWERS ARE WANING AND THAT IS THAT! TOMORROW I MUST TEACH YOU THE **SECRET OF THE IMMOVABLE BLADE**—THE ONLY TECHNIQUE AGAINST WHICH THERE IS **NO DEFENSE!** A FORM THAT I'VE KEPT SECRET FOR THIRTY YEARS!

THAT NIGHT OUR EVENING MEAL WAS INTERRUPTED BY THE UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL OF MY THREE UNCLÉS.

ELDER BROTHER! THE GREAT LORD HAS DISPATCHED TWO **SEALED ORDERS** TO YOUR SON, THE **YOUNG MASTER...**

THE FIRST ORDER MUST BE EXECUTED BEFORE THE SECOND MAY BE DELIVERED...



FATHER! THAT WAS AN **IMPOSSIBLE** CUT TO MAKE! NO MAN—



...AND DISOBEDIENCE OF EITHER ORDER IS PUNISHABLE BY **DEATH!**

THERE IS NO NEED FOR ME
TO READ THE ORDER... I KNOW
THE CONTENTS AS WELL
AS YOU DO—



...YOUR OWN APPREHENSION
BETRAYS YOU... YOU ARE COILED
TO CUT ME DOWN AT THE MOMENT
BOTH MY HANDS HOLD THE
FOLDED PAPER...

...THERE IS ONLY ONE
EXPLANATION—THE GREAT
LORD HAS ENTRUSTED YOU
TO DELIVER...



...YOUR OWN DEATH
WARRANTS!



SAAA!



TZING

TZING



UNNGH!

YAAAA!



CRATCH





WELL PLAYED,
MY SON-YOUR
REASONING WAS
IMPECCABLE...



THANK YOU,
FATHER...IT IS
TIME TO OPEN THE
SECOND ORDER-

...UNFORTUNATELY, YOU
WERE **WRONG** ABOUT THE
CONTENTS OF THE **FIRST**
MESSAGE...



...BLANK
PAPER.

VERY
ZEN...
YES?



IT WAS A **MISTAKE**?!
I **KILLED** YOUR BROTHERS
FOR **NOTHING**?

NO, YOU UNDERESTIMATE
THE **LABYRINTHINE COM-
PLEXITY** OF THE **GREAT**
LORDS MIND...THE **INTENT**
OF THE **FIRST ORDER** WAS
TO FORCE YOU TO KILL
YOUR **UNCLES** -

IF YOU HAD BEEN DULL-WITTED
ENOUGH TO **ACCEPT** THE **PIECE** OF
PAPER, YOU'D HAVE DIED **INSTANTLY**
...BUT AS IT TURNS OUT, THE **GREAT**
LORD'S WILL IS CARRIED OUT
AND THERE'S ONE LESS **PIECE** OF
INCrimINATING PAPER
WORK TO WORRY ABOUT!...



...THE **SECOND ORDER**
HOWEVER IS **NOT** BLANK,
AND I WOULD ADVISE
YOU TO BURN IT AFTER
YOU READ IT...

...I SHALL AWAIT
YOU ON THE MOUN-
TAIN TOP, MY SON.

MORNING SUNLIGHT WAS STREAM-
ING THROUGH THE HIGH PASSES
BY THE TIME I HAD STEELED
MYSELF FOR THE TREK TO THE
TOP OF THE NAMELESS MOUN-
TAIN...

OH, SO YOU HAVE
READ MY *DEATH*
WARRANT? I
TRUST IT WAS
SUCCINCT?

YES, FATHER...
AND I BURNED
IT AS WELL AS
OUR HUT AND
ALL OUR GOODS..!

I KNOW.
I SAW THE
SMOKE.

...YOU KNOW
I *WON'T*
MAKE IT
EASY FOR
YOU...

F-FATHER—
THERE ARE
THINGS I WISH
TO SAY—

THE TIME FOR
TALKING IS
PAST! NOW IS
THE TIME FOR—

ACTION!

AT THAT POINT, I SAW THE
OPENING IN HIS DEFENSE...

YES MY SON
...I'VE TAUGHT
YOU *EVERY-*
THING...

...EVERYTHING—

EXCEPT FOR THE
SECRET OF THE
IMMOVABLE
BLADE!

...I WAITED UNTIL HIS SWORD
REACHED ITS HIGHEST POINT, AND
HIS CHEST WAS UNPROTECTED...

...AND I STRUCK WITH
ALL MY STRENGTH!



THIS IS THE SECRET, MY SON...
NO... DON'T TRY TO WITHDRAW
YOUR BLADE... IT IS QUITE
...IMMOVABLE...

...MY MUSCLES
HOLD IT IN
PLACE...



-AND NOW,
COMES THE
TIME, MY
SON...



...TO TEACH
THE FINAL
LESSON!





AND THE LESSON IS THAT...

CLANK

...JUST TO KNOW THAT ONE CAN DO SOMETHING IS ENOUGH... A MASTER NEED NOT PROVE ANYTHING...

MY SWORD IS YOURS NOW...IT IS A MURA-SAMA BLADE...WEAR IT WITH HONOR...

FATHER! I—

DON'T INTERRUPT! ...I HAVE MUCH TO SAY... AND SO LITTLE TIME...

EVERYTHING THAT HAS COME TO PASS TODAY... WAS ANTICIPATED BY THE GREAT LORD...IT WAS YOUR RITE OF PASSAGE INTO A FAR CRUELER WORLD THAN YOU HAVE KNOWN

...THIS IS THE THIRD ORDER FROM THE GREAT LORD... IT BIDS YOU TRAVEL TO THE GATE OF RASH-OMON... THERE, A MENDICANT MONK WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER SEALED MISSIVE.

THE TASK THE MONK WILL SET YOU WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN ANYTHING YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED TODAY...

...BUT YOU WILL PREVAIL!

...YOUR UNCLES AND I STRUGGLED FOR TWENTY YEARS TO PREPARE YOU FOR THIS ONE DAY... TO FAIL, WOULD DIS-HONOR US ALL...

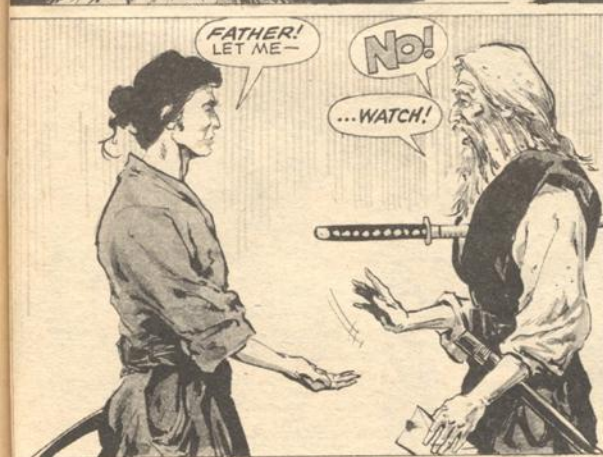
...SO GO NOW INTO THE WORLD TO DO THE GREAT LORD'S WORK... AND BEAR NO REGRETS FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE... FOR YOU HAVE FULFILLED ALL OF AN OLD MAN'S CHERISHED DREAMS...



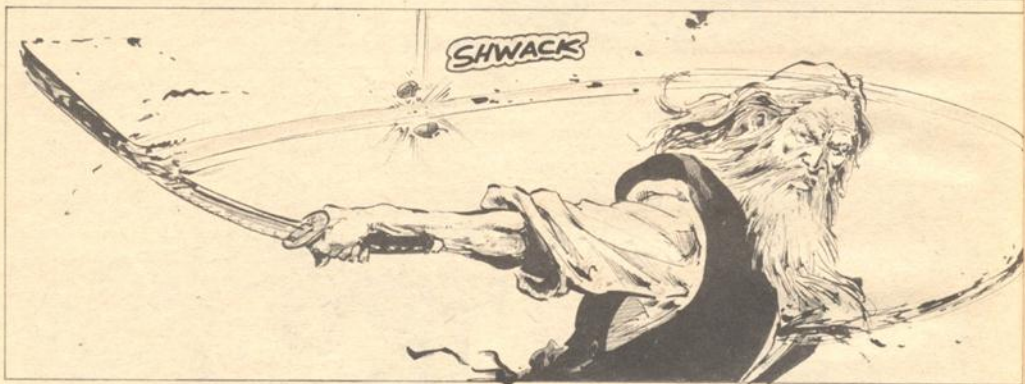
FATHER! LET ME—

No!

...WATCH!



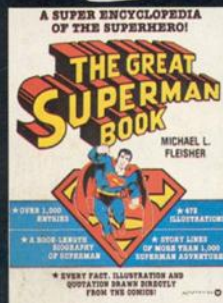
SKREEEE



—WITH A MENDICANT MONK, AT THE GATE OF RASHOMON!

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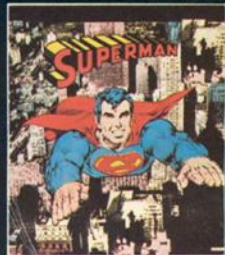
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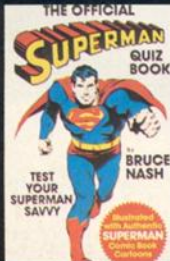
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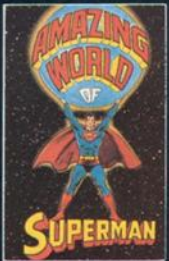
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