

WARREN
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EERIE
#59

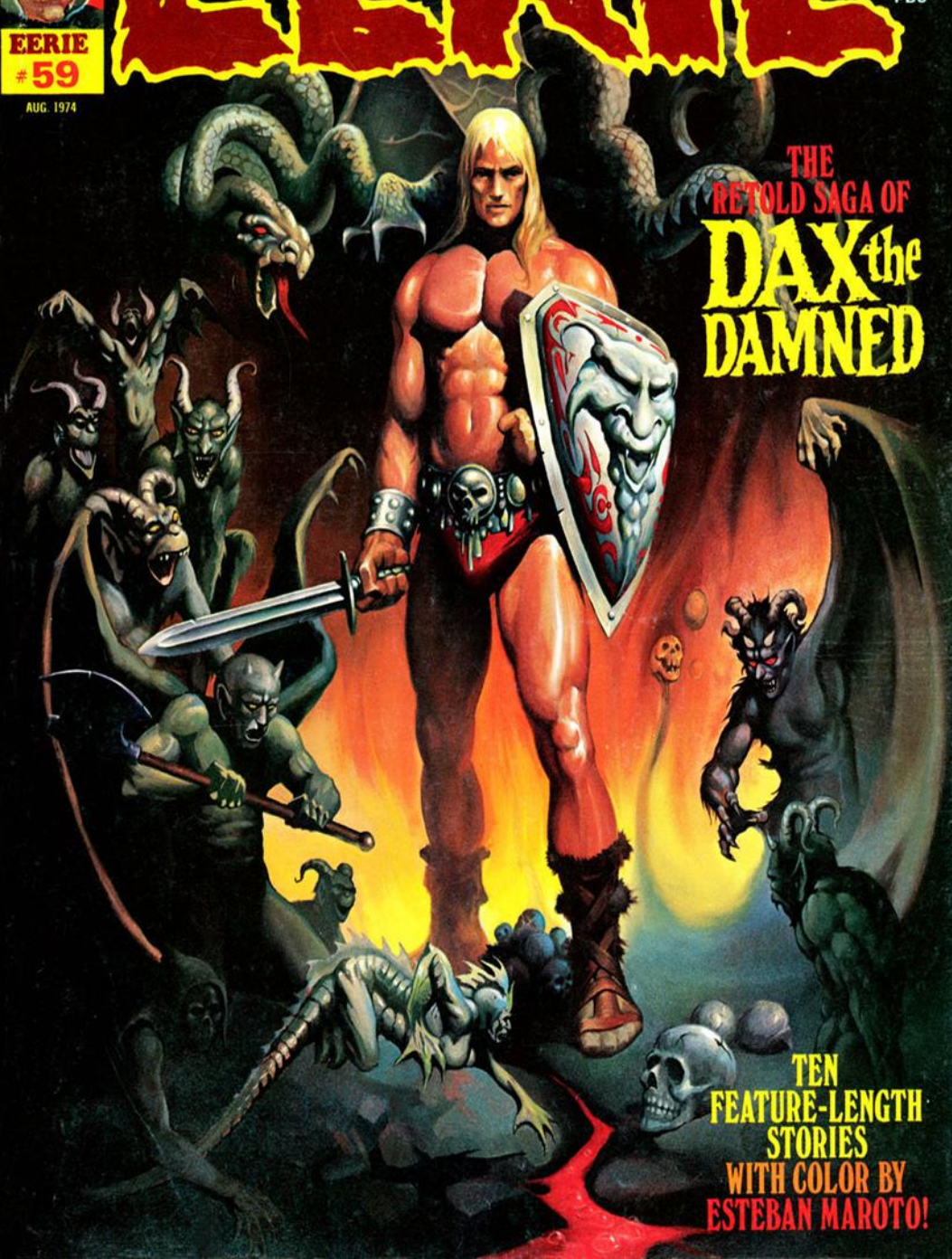
AUG. 1974

SUPER SPECIAL SUMMER GIANT!

EERIE

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THE
RETOLD SAGA OF
**DAX the
DAMNED**



TEN
FEATURE-LENGTH
STORIES
WITH COLOR BY
ESTEBAN MAROTO!



**SPECIAL
ISSUE**
TIME AGAIN,
CHILLUNS!

AND DOES
YOUR OLD
COUSIN EERIE
HAVE A
SAGA FOR
YOU!..

...TEN
FULL-LENGTH,
FANTASY-FILLED
ADVENTURES OF
DAX...
THE BARBARIAN!

DAX...
HERO, VILLAIN,
WARRIOR-MERCENARY!
HIS COMPLETE STORY
RETOLD!

**ENCORE
DAX!**



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EERIE®

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19 CHESS The warrior is pulled into the heavens to meet the gods in a game of chess. The pawns: members of Dax' own family. The precious prize to be won: their very lives!

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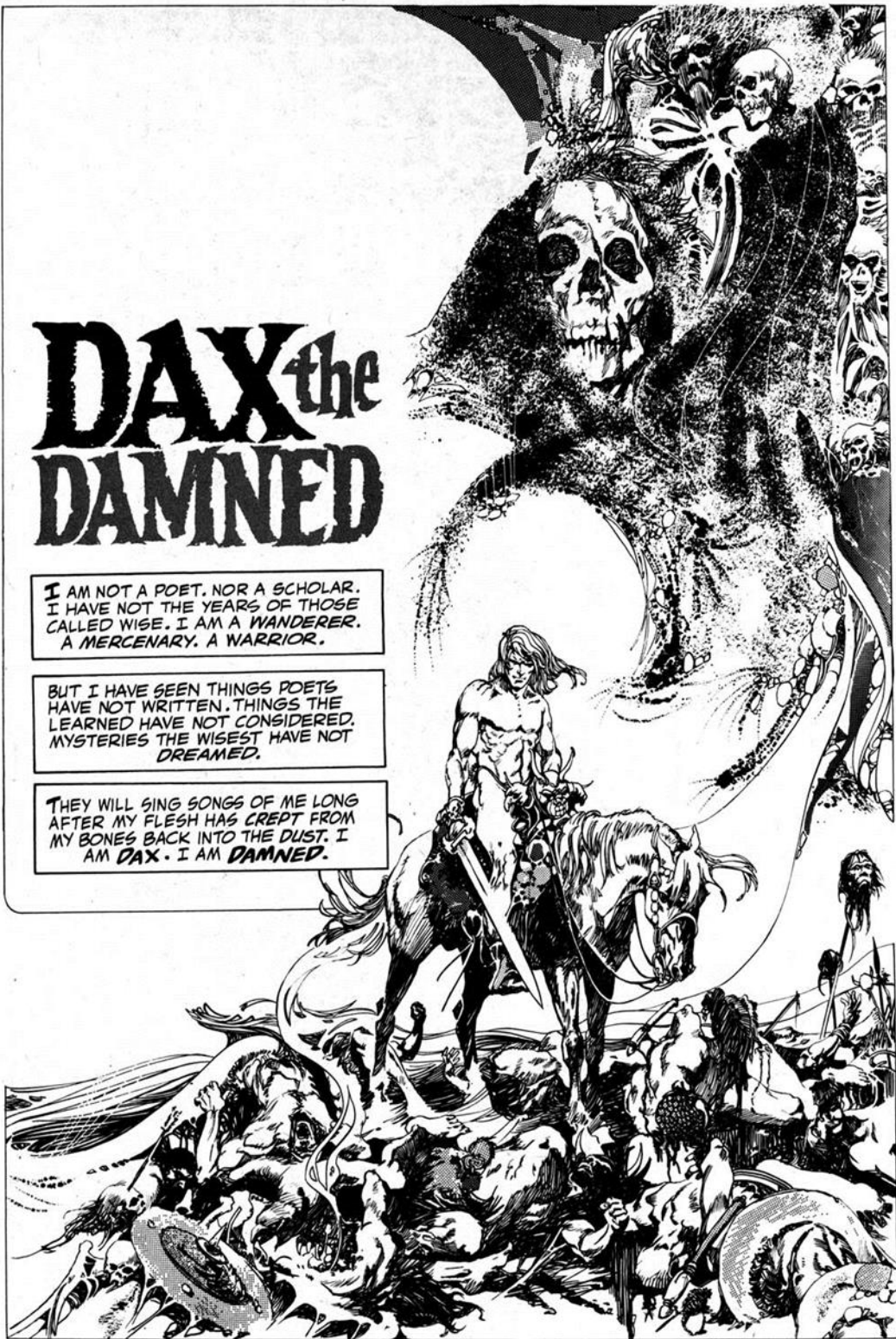
75 DEATH RIDES THIS NIGHT Here is the moment of truth! Dax faces death and his dark angel! Incredibly, Dax meets the pair in combat, with a surprise ending!

DAX^{the} DAMNED

I AM NOT A POET. NOR A SCHOLAR.
I HAVE NOT THE YEARS OF THOSE
CALLED WISE. I AM A *WANDERER*.
A *MERCENARY*. A *WARRIOR*.

BUT I HAVE SEEN THINGS POETS
HAVE NOT WRITTEN. THINGS THE
LEARNED HAVE NOT CONSIDERED.
MYSTERIES THE WISEST HAVE NOT
DREAMED.

THEY WILL SING SONGS OF ME LONG
AFTER MY FLESH HAS CREEPT FROM
MY BONES BACK INTO THE DUST. I
AM *DAX*. I AM *DAMNED*.



IN BUT THE TIME
OF A MOMENT'S
DECISION, I TURNED
MY FACE FROM
WAR'S GROUND
AND SOMEWAY
BECAME CURSED
BY THE GODS.

MY SPIRIT WAS
WOUNDED.
I SOUGHT
SOMETHING
MORE.
ESCAPE.



FOLLOWING THE TRACERY OF THE ANCIENT EARTH'S RIBS, I
FOLLOWED NOT THE COWARD'S PATH AWAY FROM WAR, BUT
THE WANDERER'S WAY TOWARD A NEW ONE. AND THEN...

BY THE THREE
HEADS OF TYPHOEUS!
I'LL NOT WASH
ALONE!

WAR COULD WAIT.



WOMEN WAIT NOT.



HERE, SHE MADE SOFT LOVE TO ME.
SHE TAUGHT ME OF THINGS I DID
NOT KNOW.



SHE SANG SWEET SONGS TO ME, AND WAITED FOR I WAS SLOW. SURELY THE GODS FOUND FAVOR IN DAX TO SEND HIM GENTLE NAIAD.



EVEN WHEN YOU FOUND ME, MY DAX, I WAS ESCAPING FROM DEATH. PROTECT ME. SAVE ME FOR YOURSELF!



HUSH, SWEET FAUN. DEATH DARES NOT WALK IN A DREAM SO FAIR.

BUT MY DREAM ERUPTED WHEN HORROR FLUNG FAST UPON US, WITH ALIEN WINGS BEATING A DEMON'S WINDSONG.

W-WHAT CURSE DO THE GODS SEND US...?

THE KEEPER...!

THE KEEPER OF HELL NO DOUBT!



BUT DAX HAD FOUND HER FIRST!



THE CARRION RIDER'S WHIP SANG A FIERCE SONG TO ME AND I HAD NO INSTRUMENT TO PLAY HIM THE MUSIC OF DAX.

YET I FELT PAIN ONLY WHERE THE TALONS GRIPPED NAIAD'S DELICATE BREAST.

YAAA GGG HH

LEATHERN WINGS SLASHED THE AIR. THE FELL WRAITH STRUGGLED INTO THE SKY, RIPPING FROM ME THAT WHICH WAS MOST PRECIOUS.

SHALL I EVER FORGET HER EYES? OR MY HELPLESSNESS?

DEATH TOOK HER.
DEATH FILLED MY
SOUL.

FLY HIGH,
VERMIN. FLY FAR.
AND WHEN YOU
LIGHT DOWN...

MY LOVE!
MY DAX!

THERE WILL
DAX BE!



STEAL THE
HEADMAN'S
AXE! STEAL
THE QUEEN'S
VIRGINITY!
STEAL THE
KING'S OWN
CONCUBINE
AND LIVE!

BUT STEAL
DAX'S WOMAN...



...AND BE
FED YOUR
OWN
HEART!

AND LO,
I CAME
UPON
THE
DEVIL'S
NEST.



AND ENTERED I THERE.

THEN ... VISIONS BEFORE ME, TO
CHILL MY HEART AND COVER MY
RESOLVE IN HOARFROST.

VISIONS OF NAIAD, SLAUGHTERED,
AND DAX, DISEMBOWELED.




VISIONS OF THAT
WHICH COMES TO
FOOLS.



STAND AWAY FROM ME, COWL FACE. OR KNOW THE WRATH OF A FOOL. CALL FORTH YOUR BIRD AND DELIVER UP TO ME MY WOMAN, NAIAD. THIEF!

THIEF? SUCK-TIT, MORTAL. NAIAD BELONGS TO ME. I RETRIEVED MY PROPERTY.

SHE IS RETURNED NOW. DEAD. GONE. LOST HENCE AND EVER IN SHADOWS.



SHE IS PART OF THIS WORLD. LEAVE HER HERE! SHE NO LONGER BELONGS TO YOU.

REMEMBER HER AS LAST YOU SAW HER. WHEN SHE WAS STILL IN THE LIGHT. LET WHAT SHE WAS HAUNT YOU. REMEMBER THAT ONLY.

NO! NONE BELONG TO THE DOMAIN OF THE DEAD BUT THE DEAD.



NAIAD LIVES! AND THUS I'LL BRING HER BACK INTO LIFE!

NONE BELONG TO THE DEAD BUT THE DEAD? I THINK I WILL ALLOW YOU TO EXPLORE THAT THEORY.

THUS THE SHROUD WEARER BADE ME
PASS, TO SEARCH FOR THAT WHICH
I LOVED.

STEPPED
HE ASIDE,
WAVED
ME GO.
I WENT
INTO THE
DEPTHS.

THE LIMITS OF THE
UNCLEAN HEAVED
BENEATH MY FEET.

MY SENSES
SWIRLED
WITHIN THE
LABYRINTHS
OF MY OWN
FEARS.

HOURS, YEARS PASSED FROM ME.
THEN! BREATHS! BREATHING
WHICH I BREATHED NOT.

NAIAD?!

DAX? DO... NOT COME...
NEAR. LEAVE... ME, MY...
LOVE. GO!

GO I WILL...
WITH YOU!

HIE
GUTSUCKER!

SHH, SWEET LOVE.
SLEEP NOW IN THE SAFETY
OF MY ARMS. WHEN YOU
WAKE, I'LL HAVE BROUGHT
YOU BACK INTO THE
LIGHT. SHH... SHH.

THUS I RAN, FIND-
ING THE LIGHT...

...THE WEIGHT IN
MY ARMS NO MORE
THAN MOONBEAMS...

...I RAN, FINDING
THE LIGHT...

...FINDING THE
LIGHT... FOR MY
LOVE

MORTALS!
MOLDING THEIR
LIVES IN THE
FIRES OF THEIR
WILLS! CONQUER-
ING THE UNCON-
QUERABLE, YET...
FOR NOTHING!

TASTE YOUR
VICTORY,
WARRIOR...

...AND KNOW THE TASTE
OF THE DISEASE WHICH
YOU'VE UNLEASHED
UPON THE EARTH!

AYE. MY LOVE BELONGED AMONG
THE DUNGEONS OF THE DEAD.
SHE BELONGED TO DEATH, NOT I.

YET SHE WAS NOT THE DAMNED.
FOR EACH TIME A CHILD VOMITS
ITSELF TO DEATH, IN FLAMES OF
FEVER, RAVAGED BY PLAGUE,
A MOTHER CURSES THE MEMORY
OF PAX.

DAX, THE UNLEASHER OF DISEASE
MOST FOUL! DAX, THE DAMNED.

DAX^{the} DAMINED

"The Paradise Tree"

I HAD FOUND A QUIET
PLACE. A PLACE OF
SOLITUDE. A PLACE
THAT MY SOUL MIGHT
MAKE MEND. AND HIDE
FROM THE CRUEL TESTS
OF THE GODS.

THE GODS THAT HAD
SINGLED OUT DAX,
AND DAMINED MY
PATHS IN THE DOING.

HERE
THERE
WAS
TIME.



AND OF TIME I WOULD
MAKE A **STREAM** UPON
WHOSE BANK I WOULD
SIT AND WATCH ITS
FLOWING.

MEAT FOR
THE BELLY.
NOW WOOD
FOR THE
FIRE.

YET NOW, TIME
AND CHANCE HAVE
COMBINED...

HULLO,
GRANDFATHER.
SOME OLD
LIMBS FROM
YOU?

AN ANCIENT TREE,
GRANDSIRE TO
THE ELDEST OAK.

WHAT? DRY
BRANCHES
REFUSE TO
BREAK?

RESIST
MY AXE
THEN!

AT ONCE, THE TREE
THRUST UP
A KNEE-LIKE ROOT
TO GLANCE THE
BLADE.

CHUNK



HELPLESSLY, I FELL
HEADLONG PAST ETERNITY.

WHAT HAPPENS TO
THE MIND WHEN
UNCONSCIOUS? DO
WE MOVE INTO ANOTHER
UNIVERSE... JUST
BEYOND OUR OWN?

SOME ETHEREAL
EXTENSION THAT
PRIMITIVE MAN HAS
ALWAYS CALLED THE
UNKNOWN?

THE GODS
HAVE
FOUND ME.

THEIR
SPORT
CONTINUES.

LONG I WANDERED THIS WORLD, JUST THE
OTHER SIDE OF HOPE. UNTIL I FOUND A PATH
WHICH SURELY LED TO PARADISE... OR HELL!

BE THIS
HEAVEN OR
BE IT THE
PIT...

I MAY HAVE TO
STAY! FURTHER
INSPECTION OF THE
CITIZENRY APPEARS
TO BE IN ORDER.



UPON DEMAND, I SOON STOOD
BEFORE THE HAUNTING GAZE
OF A VERITABLE QUEEN.

YOU ARE IN THE PRESENCE
OF ECHIDNA, ONE CALLED
DAX. SHOULD YOU NOT
KNEEL IN AWE?

THIS ONE KNOWS
NOT AWE, MY SWEET.
ONLY DEFIANCE
AND STRENGTH.

BE WELL MET,
DAX. YOU ARE IN THE
MYSTICAL CAVERNS OF
ECHIDNA, MOTHER
OF MONSTERS!

I AM A
WITCH-
ADDER.
DESPISED
BY THE GODS
THEM-
SELVES!

I HAVE
MATED WITH
STRONG MEN
BEFORE
AND
MOTHERED
AWESOME
CHILDREN...

I WONDER
WHAT TERROR
WILL COME FROM
THE UNION OF
ECHIDNA AND DAX?
SHOW DAX HIS
CHAMBERS.

BEWILDERED, I ALLOWED THE
SERVANTS TO ESCORT ME AWAY.

... AMONG THEM
CERBERUS,
THE CHIMERA,
AND THE SPHINX.
ALL TO TORTURE
THE GODS.

WEARILY, I GAVE IN TO
THEIR LUXURIES.
PERHAPS I WAS NOT
IN THE GODS' GAME
AFTER ALL.

PREPARE
FOR AUDIENCE,
WARRIOR!

ECHIDNA
DESIRES
YOUR
PRESENCE!

I HAVE ENJOYED
HER HOSPITALITY.
PERHAPS NOW
COMES PAYMENT.

STANDING BEFORE THAT WHICH IS STRANGE, UNARMED IS STANDING NAKED.

PAYMENT FOR YOUR PLEASURES, DAX? YES, I'LL EXTRACT PAYMENT. SENSUALLY.

IN AN ACT UNCLEAN, WITCH? IF YOU WERE BUT A LOVELY WOMAN AND NO WITCH THAT MIGHT CHANGE INTO A SERPENT BENEATH ME... YES!

OTHERWISE...

I... I AM A WITCH, DAX... AND... WOULD TO THE GODS IT WERE NOT SO.

ONCE... I WAS SOMETHING ELSE, SOMETHING COMMON. THEN THE BLACK GODS MADE ME WHAT I AM NOW. FOR PAYMENT, I WAS ABUSED ONE HUNDRED TIMES, THEN DISMISSED TO DO THEIR WRETCHED WORK.

THROUGH ME, THEY BREED MORE DEVILS TO DEFEY THE WHITE GODS. I AM TORMENTED. MOTHER OF MONSTERS!

I LIVE IN LUXURY AND AM A BEAUTIFUL QUEEN, YET...

HOLD ME... DAX LET US CREATE SWEETER MEMORIES THAN THOSE WHICH HANG ABOUT ME NOW!

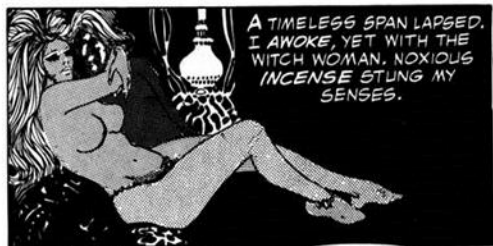
I DO NOT WISH TO THINK OF PAIN AND SLAVERY!

MAKE LOVE TO ME.

GIVE ME A CHILD AS LOVELY AS DAX.

SHARE, DAX... IN THE FREEDOM OF TOGETHERNESS... THE TWO OF US ALONE!!

AND THUS THROUGH THIS MAGIC MOMENT, TWO CAPTIVES RAN AWAY FROM THAT PLACE, TO DANCE BEYOND THE MOONBEAMS.



A TIMELESS SPAN LAPSED.
I AWOKE, YET WITH THE
WITCH WOMAN. NOXIOUS
INCENSE STUNG MY
SENSES.



I HAVE BEEN
THINKING. GATHER
UP WHAT YOU WILL,
AND I'LL GUIDE US
FROM THIS PLACE.



I KNOW THE WAY OUT.
I HAVE SEARCHED OUT MANY
DURING THE YEARS, YET I
CAN NEVER FOLLOW THEM.
THIS CENSER, BILLOWING
SOOTHING VAPORS, IS MY
MENTOR. I LIVE ONLY BY
ITS POWERS.

SHOULD I SEEK
TO ESCAPE, THE
IMP OF THE BOTTLE
WOULD RETURN ME
TO MY FORMER
LIFE!

THE BLACK
GODS WANT TO
KEEP ME AS
THEIR SOW!

FROM MY WOMB
SPRINGS TERROR!
THE DARK LORDS
SEND ONLY THE
MOST CURSED IN
HEAVEN AND EARTH
TO COUPLE WITH
ME!

THEY SEND
ME ONLY THE
DAMNED!

AND ONLY THE DAMNED COULD BREAK
THE BOTTLE TO FREE HER CURSED
IMPRISONMENT.



ONLY THE CURSED ENTERED
THERE, ONLY THE CURSED
COULD FREE HER IF HE
DARED. NONE DARED, SAVE
DAX!

FROM THE SHARDS OF THE
CENSER AROSE THE DEMON
WITHIN, TAKING BACK HIS
GIFTS TO ECHIDNA.



EACH WORD THE DEMON
SPOKE ECHOED LIKE
CLAPS OF THUNDER!

THIS MOTHER ECHIDNA
GROWS WEARY OF BIRTHING
HORROR. SHE HAS FOUND A
HERO TO FREE HER. POOR
ECHIDNA HAD THE WEALTH
OF THE EARTH AS TOYS,
AND LOVELY FLESH
TO ENJOY.

FREEDOM?
DONE! GO BACK...
TO YOUR OLD LIFE...
OF FREEDOM!

SCREAMS OF
TERROR AND
PRAYERS FOR
DELIVERANCE
FELL UPON
HEARTLESS
EARS.
ECHIDNA'S
FLAWLESS
BODY
FLAIED THE
AIR AS IT
MUTATED,
DISFIGURED
AND
LENGTHENED.

TENDER FLESH GAVE WAY
TO COILS OF WRITHING
SCALES. AND LO! THAT
WHICH WAS TEMPTING
ECHIDNA SLITHERED
AWAY... FREE.

YAHHHHHH!

EEEEEE

"BY THE SAME POWER THAT SLAYS
YOU, I TOO AM SLAIN; AND I
TOO SHALL BE CONSUMED.

"FOR THE LAW THAT DELIVERED
YOU INTO MY HAND SHALL
DELIVER ME INTO A MIGHTIER
HAND."

"YOUR BLOOD AND MY BLOOD IS
NAUGHT BUT THE SAP THAT
FEEDS THE TREE OF HEAVEN."

- Kahlil Gibran
from THE PROPHET



ALIEN WINGS BEAT **FORBODINGLY** UPON
VIOLENT WINDS **THIS** NIGHT.



HEAVEN AND EARTH
TREMBLE...



...AS **GODS**
AWAKEN...

DAX ^{the} DAMINED

LONG HAVE I KNOWN MY LIFE IS **CURSED**
BY THE GODS. DAX IS NO MORE THAN A
TORMENTED PLAYTHING. SOMETHING TO BE
PROVOKED. USED. **DAMINED** AM I BY NATURE OF
MY LIFE. A WARRIOR BEARS HIS SWORD ONLY
WHERE THE GODS STEER HIS PATH. **I** AM A
WARRIOR. NOTHING MORE THAN A **PAWN** UPON
SOME SUPERNATURAL BOARD, IN A TIMELESS GAME OF...

CHESS

ART: ESTEBAN MAROTO / COLOR: BILL DuBAY



...IN MALEVOLENT **SPLENDOR**.



AN IDLE GOD, FILLED
WITH TORMENT, BENT
LOW ACROSS THE EARTH
AND FOUND HIS **PAWN**.
AND DAX WAS DRAWN
THROUGH THE **NETHER**.



FALLING BEYOND
ENDLESSNESS, MY
STRAINED EYES SAW
THAT WHICH WAS
NEITHER PROPHET
NOR SEER, NOR
DREAMER NOR
MADMAN HAS
DARED TO BEHOLD.




MY DESCENT SLOWED
AND GENTLY TOUCHED
I THE FLINT, AND **LO!**
DAX WAS WITHIN THE
HALLS OF THE MOST
HOLY, SURELY.




DAX, DEAR BOY,
HULLO! I CAST A
PROJECTION TO
FETCH YOU. I AM
ATROPOS. I REPRESENT
THE DESTINY THAT NEITHER
MEN NOR GODS CAN CHANGE.
YOU SEE, I HAVE INVENTED
AN EXCITING **GAME**,
AND NEEDED SOMEONE
TO HELP ME PLAY IT.




I'M A
GAMESTER. A
GAMBLER SUPREME.
I WAGER AND PLAY
ANYTHING AND ALL.
AND I HAVE A GAME
OF **DEATH** AND
LIFE TO PLAY.




I'M NO GAMESTER, LORD.
ONLY A **SWORDMAN**.
A WARRIOR. I PLAY **NOT**.
WHY CHOOSE **ME**?




I CHOOSE **YOU**
BECAUSE YOU ARE **ALREADY**
MARKED BY THE GODS FOR
TORMENT. I'M A LESSER
LORD HERE, AND MAY ONLY
USE THOSE **ALREADY**
DAMED.



I KNOW THE GREAT
LORDS USE YOU FREELY
LIKE A PAWN OF CHESS.
I **PITY** YOU. THEREFORE,
I GIVE THE CHANCE TO
BE AS ONE OF YOUR
TORMENTORS...




...TO BE AS
A **GOD**!



IN **THIS** GAME DAX
WILL HOLD THE VERY
POWER OF LIFE...
AND DEATH IN HIS
HAND.



NEVER BEFORE HAD I
REFUSED A **CHALLENGE**.
BUT NOW...



YOU **KNOW** THE TASTE OF
BEING BUT A CHESSPIECE AS
BITTER. NOW TASTE THE
LUXURY OF BEING A **PLAYER**.
A **GOD**! YOUR CHESSPIECES
ASSEMBLE EVEN NOW.
BEHOLD!

MY HEART LEAPED WHEN MY EYES WITNESSED THE WHITE FIGURES MATERIALIZE BEFORE ME. MY **FATHER, BROTHER, KINSMEN** AND FRIENDS I LOVED WELL. I LOVED THEM ALL STILL, EVEN IN **DEATH!** MY **CHESSMEN.**



YOU MAY HAVE EACH ONE BACK IN LIFE IF YOU **WIN** MY GAME.



YET WITH EACH MOVE YOU LOSE, ONE WILL **DIE** AGAIN, UNTIL ALL ARE BACK WITHIN THE WRETCHED WALLS OF **DEATH.** THEY ARE **TRULY** ALIVE NOW, BUT ARE MUTE PUPPETS TILL GAME'S END. IF **ANY** LET THEM LIVE THEN.



AND LOOK, DAX! THE BLACKS! MY FIGURE PIECES! **THEY** ARE AT MY COMMAND! I BELIEVE WE ARE READY, LET US BEGIN.

IN THE EYE OF LEERING DESTINY, WE SAT TO **PLAY.**

JOEY HAROT



WHAT SPORT COULD I HAVE BEEN? A CHESSPIECE IN MY HAND RATHER THAN A SWORD, A SINGLE MOVE.
A MORTAL COMBAT.

WITH EACH MOVE UPON THE BOARD, THE LIVING CHESSMEN EMULATE. I LIFTED MY FIGURE. RONIUS, A COUSIN SLAIN, STIRRED TO LIFE. ATROPOS COUNTERED. A DEMON RUSHED AT RONIUS.



RONIUS DIED. SCREAMING.



FORFEIT
ONE PIECE,
DAX. ONE LIFE.



WHUMP

THUMP



WHAT AN ASS! NOT A **MOVE** COULD I MAKE RIGHT. PIECE BY PIECE FELL ...

KRAK



...AS I NUMBLY WATCHED FRIEND BY FRIEND CLOVEN FELL BY DEMON.

SWISH!



RIPPED, GASHED, DISMEMBERED, THEIR OZZING ENTRAILS **FEASTED** UPON.



TWO
PIECES
LEFT, DAX.
NOT EASY
EVEN BEING
A **GOD**, IS
IT?



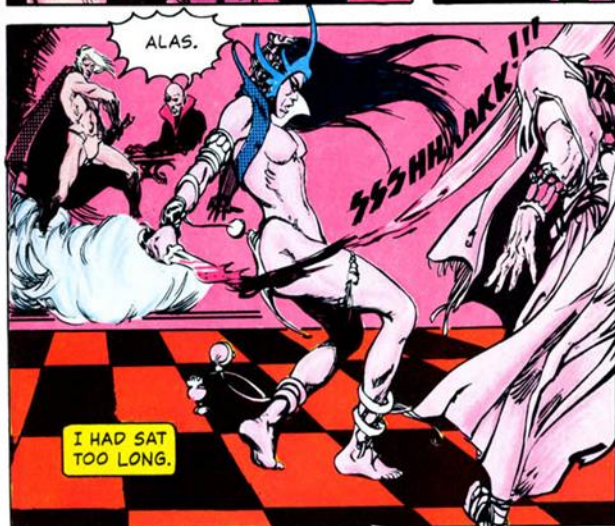
THERE WAS BUT ONE WHITE PIECE LEFT. MY **FATHER**. MY SWORD TREMBLED TOWARD MY HAND.



AND FINALLY... **CHECKMATE...** WITH THE QUEEN, TO BE MATE ON THE SECOND MOVE. SAY A VERY QUICK FAREWELL TO YOUR FATHER. QUICK NOW!



ALAS.

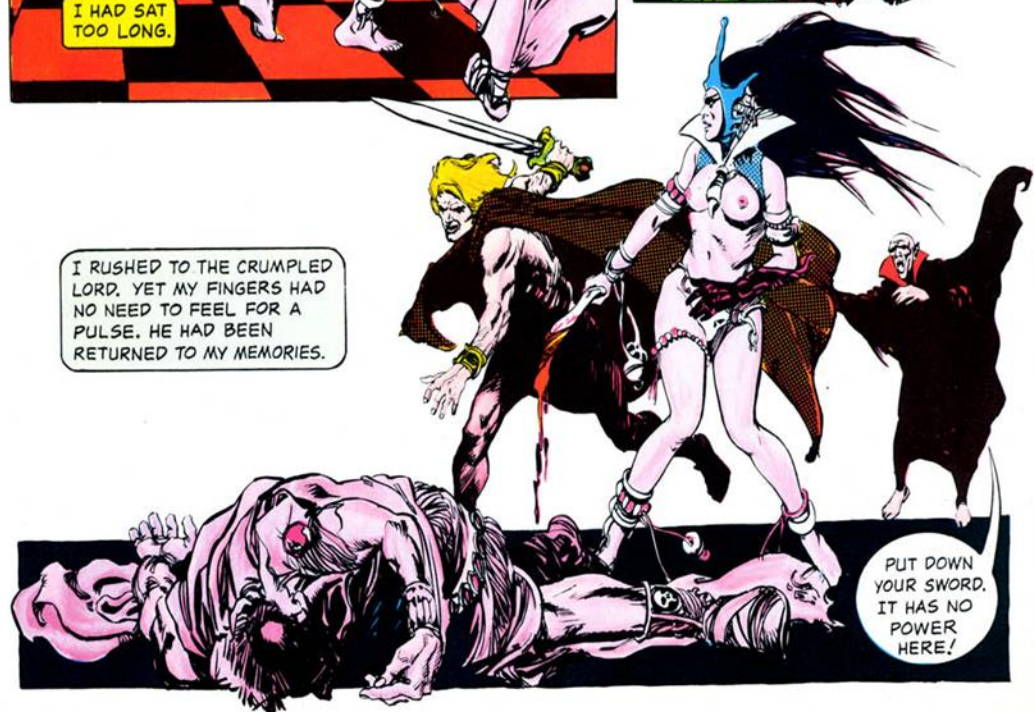


I HAD SAT TOO LONG.

NOT HIM!
NOT MY **FATHER**!
GET BACK FROM HIM, FILTH!



I RUSHED TO THE CRUMPLED LORD. YET MY FINGERS HAD NO NEED TO FEEL FOR A PULSE. HE HAD BEEN RETURNED TO MY MEMORIES.



PUT DOWN YOUR SWORD. IT HAS NO POWER HERE!

NO POWER BUT TO **SLAY**. TO KILL,
AND KILLING IS THE **ONLY** THING
TANGIBLE HERE. THE **ONLY** CAUSE
WORTH PURSUING. YET I NEEDED
NOT TO HAVE TRAVELED TO
HEAVEN TO KILL. I AM NO
GAMESTER. I AM A **KILLER**.

LET HIM
LIVE!

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE
IN GODS AND MEN! I
UNDERSTAND! GODS
LIVE TO **KILL**... MEN
KILL TO **LIVE**.

FOOLISHLY
SIMPLE.
THANK YOU DAX!
NOW **BEGONE!**

BRACCO!

IMMMNNNN!!!

AND THE GAMESTER GOD THREW THE
FISH **BACK** INTO THE POND. FOR THERE
WERE **OTHER** FISHERS WAITING TO
NET IT. A FEVERISH DREAM HAD IT
ALL BEEN.

AND DREAM IT **MIGHT** HAVE
BEEN. BUT CRUELLY THEY WOULD
NOT EVEN GIVE ME THE HOPE IT
WAS A DREAM. FOR I WAS SENT
ALONG A GRIM **REMINDER** OF A
BITTER GAME OF CHESS.

"TIS ALL A CHEQUER-BOARD OF NIGHTS AND DAYS
WHERE DESTINY WITH MEN FOR PIECES PLAYS:
HITHER AND THITHER MOVES, AND MATES AND SLAYS,
AND ONE BY ONE IN THE CLOSET LAYS."

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYAM

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I SAT AT THE KNEE
OF A VERY WISE SEER TO LEARN.
AND THUS ONCE, I POSED TO ANCIENT
NAIL GAYE, THE SEER, A CHILDISH
QUESTION. WHAT IS LIFE? THUS HE
OFFERED UP A CHILDISH ANSWER....

DAX^{the} DAMINED LET THE EVIL ONE SLEEP

LIFE, DAX, IS
BUT A
DREAM.

TWENTY YEARS
PASSED FROM ME
ERE I UNDERSTOOD
THE WISE MAN'S
ANSWER. IT WAS NOT
UNTIL I RODE, MY
SOUL SHRIVELING
WITHIN MY CHEST,
ACROSS THE WASTE-
LANDS. AND MY DREAM
WAS ENDING.

THE LAST WANING SECONDS
OF THE BITTERSWEET
DREAM I DESPERATELY
CLUNG TO EBBED INTO THE
SAND. AND LISTEN!

HUSH NOW! HEAR THE
DISTANT VOICE OF
NAILGAYE AS HE LAY
UPON HIS OWN DEATH-
BED: "IN MY END, IS
MY BEGINNING!"

NOW I UNDERSTOOD! AT ANY END,
BEYOND LIES ANOTHER BEGINNING.
NIGHT ENDS. DAY BEGINS. HELL ENDS.
HEAVEN BEGINS.

ONE DREAM
ENDS.
THE NEXT
BEGINS.



IF I AM DEAD, THEN
LET ME DRINK DEEP..
THEN BE DEAD.



I AM GLAD
YOU AWAKENED.
SLAKE YOUR
THIRST, AND COME
YOU ALONG WITH
ME.

THERE HAVE BEEN TOO
MANY WONDERS BEHELD
BY MY EYES TO HAVE
QUESTIONED YET
ANOTHER. STILL, A
WARRIOR'S WARINESS
PREVAELS.






HERE IS A PLACE CALLED EDEN. I ALONE ENJOY ITS LOVELINESS! YET I HAVE WAITED SO LONG TO SHARE IT!

CALL ME PHRIESE.

I'LL CALL YOU A VISION AMONG VISIONS. YOU, LIKE THIS GARDEN, ARE FAR TOO TEMPTING SWEET FOR SUBSTANTIABILITY!




MUST MEN QUESTION EVERYTHING? CAN YOU NOT ACCEPT THINGS AND THUS BE ACCEPTED?




I MEANT NOT--



HUSH! HOLD STILL AS WE PASS THIS GLEN!



THIS FOREST WAS FAR MORE LUSH AND LOVELY AS I HAD SEEN. MY DARK FAUN CLENCHED MY HAND AS WE CAME UPON A CLEARING WHERE STOOD A HEWN DAIS. AND THEREUPON SLUMBERED A MAN, ENSHROUDED.




DON'T HOLD ME HERE. MY EYES WILL BEHOLD HIM NOT.



WHO IS HE?

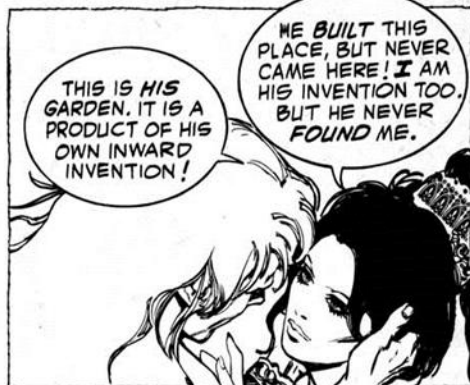


THE EVIL ONE. NOW COME!



THE EVIL ONE SLEEPS NOW. LET HIM LIE.

BUT... I DON'T UNDERSTAND...!?



THIS IS HIS GARDEN. IT IS A PRODUCT OF HIS OWN INWARD INVENTION!

WE BUILT THIS PLACE, BUT NEVER CAME HERE! I AM HIS INVENTION TOO. BUT HE NEVER FOUND ME.



"AND THEN YOU CAME. WHILE YOU WERE TRANSCENDING BETWEEN WORLDS, HE TRIED TO SLAY YOU. HE AND I FOUGHT."

"I OVERCAME HIM! BEGUILLED HIM! THUS NOW HE SLEEPS. DREAMING. PERHAPS OF ESCAPE. REVENGE! MY DEATH AND YOURS. BUT HE'LL NEVER ESCAPE. NEVER AWAKE."

I UNDERSTOOD HOW THE EVIL ONE COULD HAVE BEEN BEGUILLED BY THE FAIR PHRIESE.

I ALLOWED HER TO LEAD ME. HER SENSUAL LOVELINESS FILLED MY SENSES.

ENOUGH QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONING. HOW FILLING, INDEED, IT WAS TO ACCEPT...

... BE ACCEPTED.



THERE WERE NO WORDS.
FOR SHE BREATHED
WORDLESS SYMPHONIES
INTO MY SOUL.



IS THERE AS YET
RESTLESSNESS
IN YOUR HEART,
WARRIOR?



NO, GENTLE
NYMPH. FOR YOU
HAVE FILLED
UP MY HEART
WITH LOVE.



LOVE? SO
SOON? THE EVIL
ONE SPOKE EVEN
OF LOVE TO ME,
THEN SOUGHT
TO END MY
EXISTENCE!

DO NOT TRY TO
DUPE ME. THIS GARDEN
IS MINE. DO NOT
TRY TO TAKE IT,
DAX!



FOR ALL I KNOW,
I MIGHT BE YET
UPON THE BLISTERING
DESERT AND ALL THIS
BUT MY OWN FEVERED
DREAM.

IF I DECIDE TO
TAKE YOUR
INANE GARDEN,
I SHALL!

TAKE IT? I
DON'T EVEN KNOW
IF IT REALLY
EXISTS. NOR IF
DO YOU!



SO I WAS WRONG! YOU
ARE TRULY ACCURSED, DAX.
A PATHETIC CHILD SEEK-
ING TO PROVE MANHOOD BY
BRUTAL ASSERTION OF
YOUR MUSCLES AND GLANDS!

YOU ARE NO
BETTER THAN
THE EVIL
ONE.



THEN I'LL
CLUTTER UP EDEN
NO LONGER,
SHREW. SPIDER!



OF A SUDDEN, FELL
WRAITHS SLIPPED FROM
THE NETHER, REACHING
FOR THE WOMAN...



MY SWORD
WOULD NOT
PULL. I WAS
TRANSFIXED!

NO!
NOOO!!



PHRIESE...
I CANNOT
MOVE.

SOMETHING IN ME
AROUSED AT THE
PROSPECT OF SEEING
HER DELICATE WOMB
RIPPED OPEN AND
HER STEAMING
ENTRAILS STREWN.

DAX! T-THE EVIL ONE
DREAMS FORTH
DEVILS...! H...HELP
ME!

TWAIN FORCES
STRUGGLED
WITHIN MY
CHEST.

MY SHRIVELING SOUL SWELLED,
FILLING WITH THE VILE PUS OF
EVIL, BRUTALITY, AND DAMNATION.

MADNESS SEEPED
INTO FESTERING
OPEN RENDS IN MY
SOUL, SMOTHERING
MY WAIVERING
SANITY.

YET, STRONGER STILL
THAN ANY MADNESS
OR EMOTION...
MY WARRIOR'S
INSTINCT!



THE BANGSHEES SCREAMED AS
DAX'S SWORD LEANED LOW TO
SING THEM A DIRGE OF DEATH.

BACK, DAMN YOU.
BACK TO DEATH AND
DREAMS OF HORROR'S
DOOM!



THE EVIL ONE!
IT WAS HE WHO
DREAM-FLUNG
THOSE AGAINST
US!



THEN WE'LL FIND
THE EVIL ONE AND
PUT AN END TO
HIS DREAMS...
TO HIS LIFE!



AND THUS WE HASTENED...
TO FIND THE EVIL ONE, THAT
I MAY MURDER HIM.

THAT WE MAY LIVE AND
KNOW NO DEATH... NO
TORMENT. DEATH EXISTS
THAT LIFE MIGHT PREVAIL.



URGING ME FORWARD, PHRIXESE
REALIZED **MURDER** MUST BE
DONE.

AND SO DID THE
EVIL ONE!

FITFUL IN DREAM-STREWN SLUMBER,
THE EVIL ONE FOUGHT AT US. HE
VOMITED FORTH ANOTHER DEMENTED
DEMON TO GUARD HIS WRETCHED
REPOSE.

I STOOD BETWEEN
MY WOMAN AND THE
VILE DREAM-CAST WORM.
SHE TOOK UP MY KNIFE
AND RACED UP THE
DAIS.

SHE RIPPED BACK THE SLEEPER'S
SHROUD! I SAW HIS FACE! SHE
RAISED THE KNIFE. MY FACE!
NO! HE WAS I! STOP!

I'M THE EVIL ONE!
THE THRUST!

THUS! MY EDEN DREAM ENDED!
MY OLD DREAM BEGAN ANEW, IN
TORMENT! SOMEWHERE GODS
LAUGHED AGAIN. AT DAX,
THE DAMNED!

YET I KNEW I WOULD
CONTINUE FROM
THERE.

FOR IN MY END IS MY
BEGINNING ... !

I QUESTIONED MY FATHER, ASKING THE MEANING OF FEAR. HE REPLIED, "DAX, MY SON, FEAR IS THE MOTHER OF FORESIGHT."

THESE WOLVES, THESE CONQUERORS, PRIDED THEMSELVES IN BEING MEN WITHOUT FEAR. FEARLESS. FOOLS!

LOAD THESE RABBITS A'SHIP!

CEASE THIS RAPE! MOST FEARED WARRIOR...O' JEHOI SUI, LEAVE THESE FARMERS BE.

TAKE THEM NOT INTO BONDAGE! SET THEM GO OR BE MERCIFUL...

YOU JUDGE THE BETTER, OLD MAN! SLAVERY OR...

...A QUICK SWORD!

THE GOLDEN LAKE

...GIVE THEM A QUICK SWORD! EVEN MY LIGHTLESS EYES CAN SEE THEIR HELLISH MISERY! THEY MAKE POOR SLAVES!

DAX^{the} DAMINED

AUHGG!



MERCY! HA! DO YOU
PEASANTS WANT MERCY?
YOUR ELDER HAS FOUND
THE MERCY OF
JEHOL SUI!

BUT CHOOSE SLAVERY,
AND CHOOSE LIFE.
A CHANCE. HOPE.
PERHAPS, EVENTUALLY
ESCAPE?

WHO WILL BE SECOND?
A COMPASSIONATE SWORD
AND HELL IS YOUR NEXT
FARMLAND.

THIS MAN OF GREAT COMPASSION,
THIS VICTOR, TOOK ABOARD HIS HUMAN
BOOTY.

THOSE WHOM HAD FOUND
MERCY REMAINED.



OFT TIMES THE GODS TORTURE MORTALS FOR
SPORT. THEY ARE THE DAMNED, AND TIMES,
THE GODS PUNISH MORTALS FOR SINS.
THEY ARE THE DOOMED.

THE SEA GODS ARE
FICKLE. YET ARE JUST.
JEHOL SUI HAD USED
THE SEA FOR SELFISH
EVIL. THUS PROVOKED
THE UNYIELDING TEM-
PEST OF THE WATERS.




LIGHTEN THE
SHIP...LEST IT BE
SWAMPED!

HURL THE SLAVES
OVER THE RAIL...
THAT WE MIGHT
SURVIVE!

THUS IT WAS
DONE.





THE INNOCENT WERE
SACRIFICED TO THE
SCAVENGING CHILDREN
OF THE SEA GODS.




YET A BREATH MORE VENGEFUL
THAN FATE DIRECTS THE
GUIDING SAIL WINDS.




NO MATTER WHICH
WAY WE SET SAIL,
OUR COURSE RUNS
SOUTH.

SOUTH, LORD?
INTO THE
DYADUN SEA?
BUT, LORD...



...THERE LIES
LEGENDARY
BAHALLE KNAR.
THE CURS'D ISLE
OF TREASURE
UNDREAMED...



DAWN MISTS PART TO
SHOW THE WARLORD
SHADOW-HEWN
PEAKS. BAHALLE
KNAR, DEMON
ISLE.



...TREASURE, TO
SUPPLEMENT LOST
CARGO.

DOES JEHOI
SUI SECRETLY
FEEL A
DISTANT
PRICKING OF
FEAR?



IS THERE NO
FEAR OF THE
UNKNOWN?
NO FORESIGHT?
NO WISDOM,
JEHOI SUI?
COME FORTH
THEN...



...COME FORTH
AND BE GREETED
BY THE UNKNOWN.

WELCOME, MOST
NOBLE WARRIORS,
TO BAHALLE KNAR.
AN ENCHANTED
PLACE. I AM LORD
HERE. **DAX!**



JEHOL GUI
KNOWS THIS PLACE!
BEAR ME **NO GREETING,**
BOY! **SURRENDER**
ALL!

TELL YOUR HIDDEN
WARRIORS **ALL**
IS LOST!



THERE ARE **NO** WARRIORS.
ONLY MY MAIDENS, THE **CRENAE**,
WHO ARE GUARDIANS OF THE
SPRINGS.

PERHAPS **THESE**
ARE THE TREASURE
FABLED OF THIS
ISLE?



WELL NOW, LORD DAX
OF THE CRENÆ, REPLENISH
MY WARMEN WITH **FOOD AND**
REST AND I WILL RESCUE
YOUR PEOPLE BACK TO
CIVILIZATION...

... AS
SLAVES!



GENEROUS, LORD.
THERE IS LITTLE **FOOD**.
BUT YOU ARE WELCOMED
TO IT, AND WINE. ENTER-
TAINMENT THERE IS
THOUGH, **APLENTY**.



LIKE **GODDESSES**
THEY ARE.
MUSCULAR LEGS,
WIDE HIPS,
FULL BREASTS.
UMMPH!

ALL THIS YOU
HAVE, BUT
NO FOOD?
PITY!

MY MAIDENS WERE
INDEED HOPING
YOU WOULD END
UP FEEDING
THEM!

AND WHAT DO YOU
MEAN BY THAT
CRYPTIC COMMENT?

ONLY THAT WE
ARE READY TO PAY
FOR TAKING US AWAY
FROM THIS ISLAND!

MY MAIDS ARE
HUNGRY!

PAY? HOW?
IN FISH HEADS AND
SOFT BOSOMS?

THAT... OR
GOLD! COME
WITH ME!

A WALK DOWN THE BEACH
LEADS TO A COVE WHERE
THIS WARLORD TREMBLED
AT THE SIGHT OF ...

GOLD!
GEMS THE SIZE
OF A MAN'S
HEART!

BUT
PLAYPRETTIES
BROUGHT FROM
THE LAKE! THE
RUBY LAKE!

RUBIES?

SUCH IS THE
NAME OF
THE LAKE.

MY CRENAE TELL
ME THAT IN THE
RUBY LAKE LIES
THE WEALTH OF
THE SEA GODS.

A LEGEND SPEAKS
OF POSEIDON'S
SIRENS... RAISING
UP AN IDOL ...

"...TO WORSHIP THE
GODS OF THE UNDER-
SEAS, AND BROUGHT
THEY THERE
SPLENDORS FROM
THE OCEAN'S DEEP
TO PLEASE THE
GODS."

"AND
THERE THE
TREASURES
LIE AT THE
BOTTOM OF
THE LAKE.
MEANINGLESS
TO US HERE."

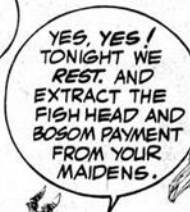


LEGENDS ARE FOR IDIOTS. YET LEGEND LED JEHOI SUI HERE!

I **WILL** SEE THIS LAKE OF GOLD!

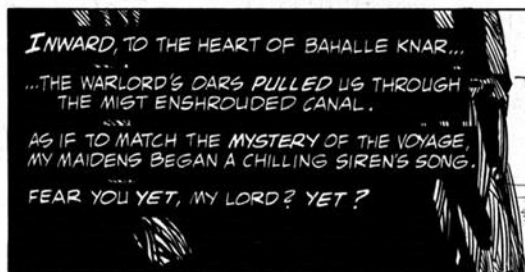


PERHAPS ON THE DAWN PINK OF THE MORROW?



YES, YES! TONIGHT WE REST, AND EXTRACT THE FISH HEAD AND BOSOM PAYMENT FROM YOUR MAIDENS.

DAX FLUNG BACK NIGHT'S SHADOWS TO FIND THE FEARLESS JEHOI SUI READY FOR VOYAGE.



INWARD, TO THE HEART OF BAHALLE KNAR...

...THE WARLORD'S DARS PULLED US THROUGH THE MIST ENSHROUDED CANAL.

AS IF TO MATCH THE MYSTERY OF THE VOYAGE, MY MAIDENS BEGAN A CHILLING SIREN'S SONG.

FEAR YOU YET, MY LORD? YET?



SILENTLY AS AN INFANT'S DEATH, THE WARSHIP CAME UPON THE ENSORCERRED LAKE.



AND DEEP BELOW, AS IF PEERING THROUGH A SHIMMERING MIRROR...

...THE TREASURE OF THE GODS!



ANCHOR WE HERE! HAVE THE CRENAE BRING ME TRIBUTE!

DONE! FLY MY NEREIDS!



LIKE SILVER FLASHING IN AN INSTANT OF SUN-LIGHT, WE DOVE.

AND WERE GONE.

MY ENCHANTRESSES SWAM TOWARD
THE ANCIENT IDOL, THERE THEIR
MORE ANCIENT RITE TO ENVOKE.

YET, LORD JEHOI SUI? SURELY
BY NOW.

ESCAPING FROM A GALLEY SHIP,
MONTHS AGO, I AWOKE AMONG
THESE ENRAPTURING CREATURES,
HAVING LIVED THROUGH THE SEA'S
TEMPEST, THEY PROCLAIMED DAX
A LORD.

AND'TIL I LEAVE THEM,
AS LORD, AND THEY LIKE MY
CHILDREN, IT IS MINE TO
PROVIDE FOR THEIR NEEDS...

...TO PROTECT THEIR DOMAIN.
THUS, IN A DUAL EFFORT...

I RIPPED AT THE WARSHIP
UNTIL THE RUBY LAKE RUSHED
IN!

WHAT BENEFITS A FEARLESS MAN, JEHOI SUI?
WHAT BENEFITS A FOOL? NOW YOU FEEL
ANGER ...



...BUT ALL TOO LATE YOU WILL KNOW FEAR.

NOW! JEHOI GUI KNOWS NAMELESS TERROR AS BENEATH THE BROILING WATERS HE SEES THE CRENAE OF DAX BECOME SCALED HORRORS. GRIMLY GRINNING FACES UPON THE IDOL OF THE SEA GODS RADIATE AN AURA OF SUBLIME JUSTICE.

MY LORD MUST KNOW SOUL-WITHERING FEAR AS HE SEES THE RUBY LAKE TURN RUBY RED... HIS OWN BLOOD BOILING UPWARD IN BLOWING CRIMSON CLOUDS.

MY OFFICE IS FULFILLED MIGHTY LORD.

I HAVE PROTECTED MY MAIDENS, THEIR TREASURE!

I HAVE PROVIDED A WEALTH OF FOOD FOR THEM.

AND SURELY I HAVE PLEASSED THE SEA GODS IN BRINGING THIS SON OF EVIL TO EXECUTION!

THANK YOU, JEHOI GUI, FOR MAKING DAX A MOST SUCCESSFUL KING.

LONG DWELT I WITH MY CRENAE AS RULER, LOVER AND PROVIDER. HERE I VENTURED AWAY.

AND LO! EACH TIME I LINGERED, HEARING THEIR UNWORLDLY VOCABLES IN CHILLING SWEET VOICES... I COULD NEVER HELP KNOWING THE ICY, FORESEEING FEELING... OF FEAR!



PHROMOG!
YOU MAGGOT
SUCKER! GIRD
YOURSELF AND
HIE THEE HENCE!

MEN COME THIS
WAY! KILL THEM!
BUTCHER THEM...
THEN FETCH THEM
HERE...

THE WITCH THE MANEATER

...FOR THE STEWART!
HURRY AND BRING
ME MANFLESH!
NOW!

HIE AWAY!
FAIL ME, PHROMOG,
AND I'LL SUCK
THE JELLY OUT OF
YOUR EYES!

DAX^{the} DAMNED

WAR RAGED IN LANDS AFAR. I
SOLD THE SWORD OF DAX FOR
THE YELLOWER GOLD.

AND I LED MEN FROM WAR TO WAR.
HARD MEN AND TRUE, I WOULD DIE
FOR ANY ONE. SUCH WERE THEY.

SNOW AGAIN
TONIGHT. MAKE
OUR FIRES HERE
OR PERHAPS
DOWN TH--



SUDDENLY SCREAMING DEMONS MATERIALIZED ABOVE US! RIDER AND RIDDEN BOTH REEKING SULPHUR FROM THE CHARRD GATES OF HELL.

WARHORSES, MURDER-TRAINED, AND WARMEN, BLOOD-HARDENED ERUPTED INTO A MAELSTROM OF TERROR.

EVEN I, DAX... WARRIOR! SCREAMED LIKE A SUCKLING.

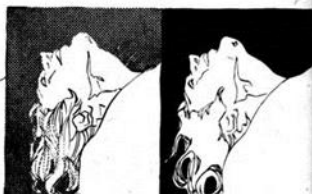
AND MY STALWART STAXION, FINEST OF STEEDFLESH WENT BLIND BEFORE THE HORRORS.



FEAR MADE HIS NOBLE HEART BETRAY ME, AND LEAVE ME.



THUMP!



TIME PASSED UNTIL I AWOKE FROM WITHIN MY OWN DARKENED PIT. THE DEVIL ROADKEEPERS HAD EXTRACTED A TERRIBLE TOLL FROM ME...

...MY... MEN!



THERE WAS WAR HERE! BUT NO DEAD! NO WOUNDED!

THAT TROLL RIDER! HE TOOK MY HEROS!

ALONE AND AFOOT, ALL THE ANIMALS BUTCHERED TO USE-LESSNESS, I STUMBLED ACROSS ACCURSED GROUND. THEN...

A DEAD FORTRESS. A LODGING FOR THE NAMELESS.





THROUGH A CRACK, AS A MOUSER, INTO THE MADDOG'S LAIR CROPT I... IN SEARCH OF BRETHREN.

FETID DEVILTRY OOOZED FROM THE VERY PORES OF THESE GRANITES.

FAINT WITH HUNGER, THE SHARP ODOR OF PUNGENT BEARING FAT AFIRE STUNG MY NOSTRILS.

FOLLOWING AN UNGEEN CAULDRON'S AROMA, I STOLE THROUGH THE HAUNTED PLACE TILL I FOUND THE COOK...

THROUGH THE EYE SMARTING SMOKE I DISCERNED BOTH WITCH AND TROLL DINING ON SUCCULENT...

THE MALEFICENT CHAMBERINGS HUNG WITH A PALL OF ATROCITIES... THE FLESHLESS REMAINS OF ONCE-LIVING MEN...



HUMAN FLESH! THEY'RE EATING MY WARRIORS!!

THESE DEPRAVED DEVIL-GHOULS SUCKED THE BOILED MEAT FROM THE BONE.


THE MEAT WAS SURELY TOO TOUGH, FOR T' WAS THE MEAT OF DAX'S HEROES!



YAAAAAIIIEE! COME CHEW THE ARM OF DAX THE DEMON SLAYER, YOU MAGGOT PUKES!

HELD FAST BY NUMBED DISGUST I STARED, UNTIL THE TROLL PICKED UP AN ARM WITH A CRESCENT SCAR... THE ARM OF YOUNG BRELLE. EIGHTEEN AND FAIR, BRELLE MY FAVORITE. I SPRANG IN WARCRY...





NO SWORD, NO LANCE, NO MORNING STAR
WOULD DO. NO DEATH WOULD THIS WORM
FIND BUT THE SEETHING DEATH WITHIN MY
HEART!

GOD'S TEETH!
I TREMBLED
TO RIP HIS
BODY OPEN
WITH MY TEETH
AND NAILS...



BUT I COULD NOT WAIT SO LONG
TO SEE HIS STEAMING GUTS.



GODSDAMN YOUR
REEKING BOWELS,
WITCH! I'M GOING
TO PULL OUT YOUR
RECTUM THROUGH
YOUR MOUTH!

YET THE FESTER-
ING HAG STOOD
FAST.

AND SUCKED
MY SOUL
INTO THAT EYE!



REEEEEEEE!
KEEP YE FROM
ME, SLIME...!
BLOOD WORM!





THE EARTH ROSE UP ABOUT MY BODY. GRAY MISTS ENSHROUDED MY RAGING MIND. COLD FIRE-STARS BURST BEHIND MY EYES.



THEN PAIN...



WITHOUT END...



THEN CHANGE...



THE MAN WITHIN ME SCREAMED IN DAMNATION... IN FUTILITY.




THEN THE CRIES OF DESPAIR GREW FAINT, DISTANT, AND WAS I THUS SOON INAUDIBLE.



WITH HEINOUS END!



AND SORROWFULLY, I REMEMBERED NOT THE NAME OF DAX... MY WARRIORS... MY WORLD!



CHANGE, WARRIOR... LET YOUR BODY RESHAPE ITSELF...



...BECOME WHAT ONCE YOU FOOLISH HUMANS WERE...



...A MINDLESS BEAST OF SCAVENGE!



ALAS LITTLE
BRUTE... HAVE YOU
NO NAME? HAVE
YOU NO PAST?

BE A
SWEET AND I
WILL LODGE YOU
HERE! PERHAPS
ONE DAY KERES
WILL GIVE YOU
BACK YOUR
MIND...



...AND THAT
BEAUTIFUL BODY
TO STUFF IT INTO.
BEAUTIFUL BODY.
ALACK!

WE HAVE BOTH
LOST OUR BEAUTY,
LITTLE APE.
YOURS THROUGH
BLACK ARTS,
MINE THROUGH
ANGUISHING
TIME.



ONCE MEN CON-
VULSED FOR WANT
OF TOUCHING MY
FLESH... SO LOVELY
WAS I. FAIR,
GODDESS-LIKE...

BUT TIME
RAVAGED, BEAUTY
WANED. DID YOU
KNOW HUMAN
HEARTS CHARMED
WITH SPELLS
RETURN YOUTH?



YES! I'LL
ENCHANT WITH
POTIONS THE
HEARTS OF YOUNG
WARRIORS, EAT
THEM AND BE
YOUNG AGAIN!
BEAUTIFUL!
REEEE!!



THANK YOU FOR
YOUR COMRADES,
ONCE-WARRIOR.
THEIR HEARTS WILL
SERVE KERES
BEAUTIFULLY,
HEH HEH HEH!

YOU MUST
REMAIN HERE...
WHILE I PRE-
PARE FOR THE
MYSTIC SPELL.

THE MIND OF THE APE SWIRLED
WITH VAGUE THOUGHTS, DIM SHAPES,
CONFUSING FIGURES... PATTERNS
WHICH MY HUMAN MIND SHOVED
TOWARD THE LIGHT.

YET I WAS HOPELESSLY BURIED
WITHIN THE PRIMORDIAL STUPIDITY.
I STROVE... AND DAX DID DUEL
WITH THE APE.



THEN FROM THE SIDE OF THE CASTLE WALL,
A DEADLY *SERPENT* SLITHERED.

HUNGERING
INSTINCT
PUSHED IT
TOWARD ME.

THE APE WOULD HAVE FLOWN
SHRIEKING FROM THE REPTILE...
YET THE WARRIOR SPRUNG UP-
WARD FROM MY SOUL...

MAN INSTINCT AGAINST APE
INSTINCT...

THE INSTINCT TO *SURVIVE*
PREVAILING OVER ALL!

I FELT THE WARRIOR'S RATIONALITY
SPINNING FORTH AGAINST THE
APE! IT SPUN FORTH SOME
MEASURE OF DIM REASONING.

I SANK THE FANGS INTO
A DEAD COMRADE'S
HEART.

ENTERTAINING
YOURSELF, LITTLE APE?
GOOD, YOU'RE
ADAPTING!

NOW, HIE YE ALONG... AND
RIP OUT THE HEARTS
OF THESE HEROES. THE
POTIONS ARE READY!

THE VILE WORK WAS DONE
AND THE VOCABLES SPAKE...

FOUL KERES GOBBLED
THE DRIPPING HEARTS.
I WATCHED... WAITING.



AND LO!...THE
TRANSFIGURATION BEGAN.

THE PARTED, SUCCULENT LIPS CHANTED.

THUS!...IN BUT THE TWINKLING OF TIME,
MY SOUL SHATTERED THROUGH THE
ANIMAL FORM AND SO STOOD I THERE
AGAIN, DAX... MAN AND WARRIOR!

EVEN AS THE WOMAN CONVULSED,
PITCHED FORWARD, VOMITING BILE!



I... I AM BILIOUS...
SUDDENLY FILLED WITH
DEATH! WHAT IS
WRONG?

THIS DOES NOT...
GASP! I AM DYING!
NOOOOOO!!
I CANNOT...
CANNOT NOW...
REEEEE!
AAHHH... AH...

AAHHHHHHH

GREED... VANITY...
MURDER MOST VILE,
WITCH! THREE DEADLY
SINS WHICH ARE BUT
POISON TO HEART
AND SOUL.

YOUR BEAUTY
WAS ENOUGH TO
MURDER FOR!
WAS IT ENOUGH
TO DIE FOR?

NOW HURRY!
DIE! AND EXPLAIN
YOURSELF TO MY
WARRIORS. THEY
WAIT FOR YOU...

...IN HELL'S
DOMAIN!



BY THE
GUTS OF THE
GODS! 'TIS
DONE!

AHHH...THE
BLOOD SINGS...
MUSCLES GLOW!
I AM ONCE MORE
BEAUTIFUL KERES.
ENCHANTRESS!
WITCH NO MORE!

COME BEFORE
ME WARRIOR...
MY LOINS
SCREAM FOR
YOU!

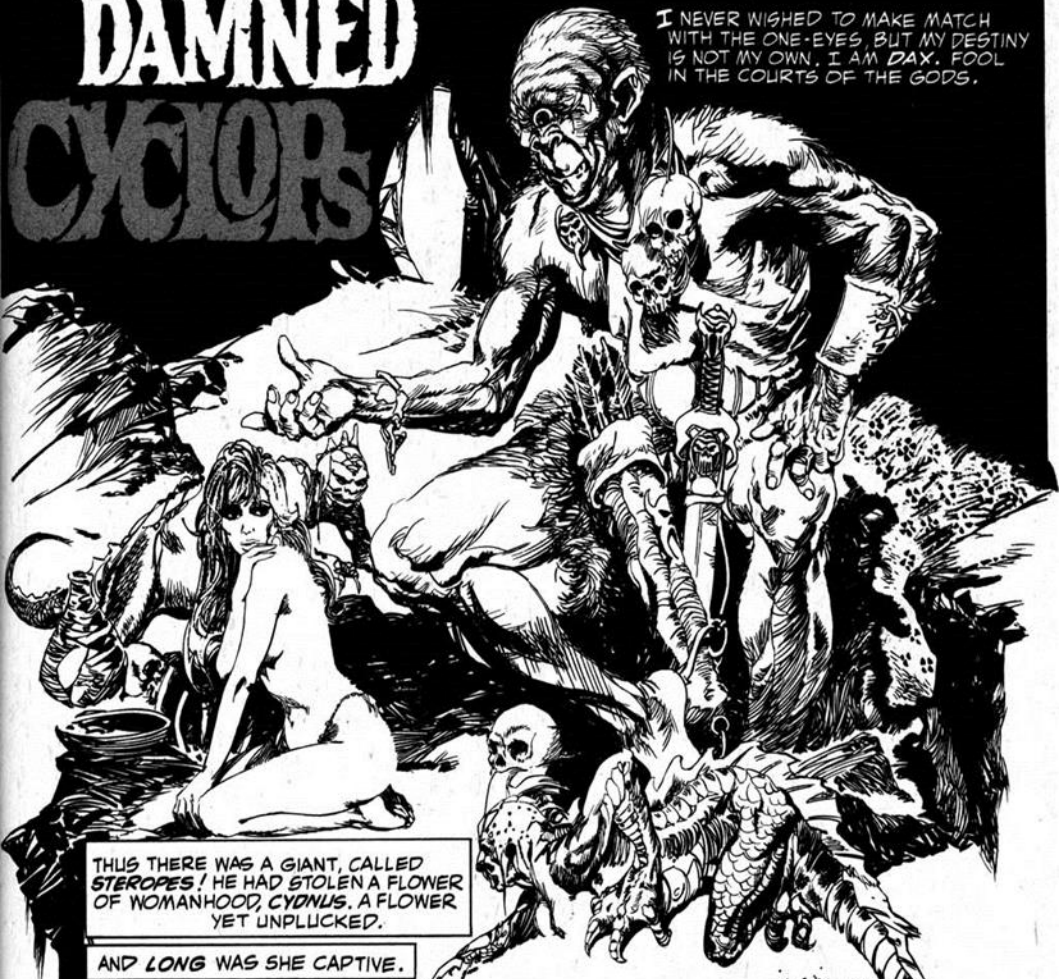


DAX the DAMNED CYCLOPS

AND LIVING IN THOSE LANDS WERE GIANTS...
COLOSSI OF EXCEEDING HEIGHT AND GIRTH
WHICH HELD MORTALS IN QUAVING TERROR!

AND THEY WERE CALLED CYCLOPS, AND THEY
STOLE THE FAIREST OF WOMEN TO TAKE AS
MATES!

I NEVER WISHED TO MAKE MATCH
WITH THE ONE-EYES, BUT MY DESTINY
IS NOT MY OWN, I AM DAX, FOOL
IN THE COURTS OF THE GODS.



THIS THERE WAS A GIANT, CALLED
STEROPES! HE HAD STOLEN A FLOWER
OF WOMANHOOD, CYDNUS, A FLOWER
YET UNPLUCKED.

AND LONG WAS SHE CAPTIVE.

THEN CAME THE DAY STEROPES
LEFT HER GUARDED BY HIS
BEASTS.

A PRISONER
KNOWS WHEN
THE MOMENT
IS COME...

...TO RUN!



TO RUN...TO ESCAPE...TO FLEE AND
TOUCH THE SUN, TOUCH TONGUE TO
BRIGHT, SWEET **FREEDOM**. TO DRAG
THE CHAIN BEHIND IN
A MAD CHASE OF
INSANE ABANDON.



WHEN NAUGHT ELSE MATTERS,
EVEN SHOULD THE HOUNDS OF
HELL BE UPON YOUR HEELS...
MAKE A DASH, MAKE A BID,
COME HITHER DEATH RATHER
THAN BONDAGE!

THUS RAN
THE GIRL...



...LEADING
THE
BEASTS...

...TO ME!

AND THE YEW
BOX OF DAX
SANG THEM A
DEATH SONG.



I HAVE SEARCHED
FOR YOU! WANDERING
THROUGH YOUR VILLAGE
THEY TOLD ME OF
THE ... GIANT ?

'DEED, THEY ARE
REAL. HE, A CYCLOPS
CALLED STEROPES,
STOLE ME AS
BRIDE!



STEROPES AND
HIS BRETHREN
HAVE STOLEN
MANY BEFORE...

...BUT I CHOOSE
DEATH RATHER
THAN SUBMIT!

AND DEATH I
WOULD HAVE FOUND
WERE IT NOT
FOR...FOR--

HER
HORRORS
CAUGHT UP
TO HER NOW
THAT SHE
WAS SAFE.
I LET HER
CRY. TEARS
CLEANSE
A WOMAN'S
SOUL.

YET HERE WAS NO PLACE
TO TARRY LONG.

CYDNUS,
HURRY HOME.
CEASE YOUR
VILLAGE'S
FEARS.

I'LL FOLLOW THE
TRAIL OF STEROPES
AND END HIS
THIEVING!

BUT...DAX...
I WOULD NOT
LEAVE YOU
SO.

TOGETHER WE TROD THE
ILL-BODING MOUNTAINS,
WHERE THE COLOSSI HAUNT.

AND ALAS!
NEITHER WOULD
I LEAVE
LOVELY CYDNUS!



SCALING THE RAGGED
PEAKS, WE FROZE AS
A BRACE OF BLOOD-
WRAITHS FLEW FROM
THE SUN.

MORE THAN GIANTS
INHABITED THESE
GRANITE SPIRES.

AND DIED...
SKEWERED AT
THE END OF ITS
DIVE.

CHUK!



MY YEW BOW
SHRIEKED.



YET ERE I
COULD NOTCH
A SECOND
OAK SHAFT,
THE MALE
WRAITH FELL
LIKE A
SCREAMING
STAR.



THESE DEMONS DEAD AND
DAMNED BE. BUT MY
DELICATE FLOWER LAY
WITHERED, CRUSHED IN
MY HANDS.



THE GODS HAD CHOSEN A MOST PRECIOUS BLOSSOM TO GRACE THE HALLS OF HEAVEN!

AND THUS LEFT ME... BUT SORROWFUL SWEET ASHES.



HALT!



WHAT DO YOU **WISH** FROM ME?



IS THIS DAX? THE WARRIOR AND STALKER OF MY CYCLOPEAN CHILDREN?

WHAT DO YOU, IN THE HALL OF GAEA?

I LAY TO REST A GENTLE DOVE, GAEA, FATHER OF MONSTERS! GIVE ME A MOMENT, THEN I'LL KILL YOU.

DON'T BOTHER TO BURY THE SOW. JUST LEAVE HER. SOONER OR LATER SOMETHING WILL EAT HER AND SAVE YOU THE TROUBLE!

OH! DON'T GLOWER AT ME! I HAVE SOMETHING OF MORE PRESSING NEED!

IF YOU DON'T KNOW, I AM MASTER OVER HUNDREDS OF GIANTS, TROLLS AND OTHER CREATIONS.

I KNOW OF YOU... AND I SUMMON YOUR HELP. BE MY GENERAL! RULE OVER MY CHILDREN. AND BE AS A GOD!

RULE MONSTERS OF THE EARTH... GOD DAX!

THERE WAS A CHESS GAME ONCE. DAX TASTED THE POWER OF A GOD! AND I CONDEMNED MY LOVED ONES TO DEATH'S DARK LABYRINTHS FOREVER!

GO YE TO HELL!



ANSWERED! BUT 'T'WILL BE THEE IN HELL THIS NIGHT... NOT I!



STEROPES!



THE ONE EYE CUFFED ME FROM GRANITE WALL TO GRANITE WALL. I REBOUNDED LIKE A CHILD'S TOY.

YET DAMN HIS SOUL... I WOULD NOT DIE!



ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS EMBRACE DEATH! SHOW ME HOW A PITIFULLY SMALL MAN DIES!



YES... UHHH... I-I'LL SHOW YOU... I'LL... SHOW YOU.



OH DAMMIT! LAY DOWN AND SURRENDER! YOU CANNOT SURMOUNT YOUR OWN SMALL SIZE... NOT OVER-COME HIS GREATNESS!



A FLEA CAN MAKE AN OX WINCE!

STEROPES HOWLED AS I
LEAPT BENEATH HIS
CLUTCHING FINGERS.

MY KNIFE MADE NO LOST
MOTION AS IT KEENLY
SEVERED A GIGANTIC
HEEL STRING...



... THEN DARTED LIKE
AN ADDER'S
STRIKE, SEVERING
THE OTHER!



THE THICK MINDED BRUTE
BELLOWED IN PAIN AND
CONFUSION. HAMSTRUNG,
STEROPES FLOUNDERED
HELPLESS.



BLOOD, STEAMING,
SPLATTERED
AS I SPRANG.

YAAAAAAGGGGHHHHH



THOUGH DAX WAS SMALL
AND PITIFUL, I STOOD
NOW FAR TALLER THAN
THE CYCLOPS. FAR.

FATHER...
BEHOLD
THY CHILD!

NOW, GUT-SUCKING
OLD MAGGOT... BEND
CLOSE AND KISS THE
CHEEK OF THE VICTOR.
THAT I MAY HAVE
YOUR HEAD NEXT!

OR FLY, DEFEATED,
BACK TO HEAVEN OR
HELL OR THE NETHER
AND BOTHER PITIFULLY
SMALL MEN NO MORE.

REMEMBER,
FEAR NOT A MAN
IF HE IS BIG, NOR
UNDERESTIMATE
HIM IF HE IS SMALL...
FOR BUT A SINGLE
GRAIN OF SAND
WILL CLOSE ANY
MAN'S EYE!

THE EVIL LORD CURSED
THE NAME OF DAX EVEN
AS HE ROSE LIKE BLACK
SWIRLING MIST TO THE
ROOF OF THE CAVE.

BUT THE LONG SHADOWS OF
EVENING CLOSED ABOUT MY
HEART, AS I RETURNED TO
THE SOIL A MOST GENTLE
FLOWER... SAYING FOREVER...
GOODBYE.

AND SO LIKE THE ENDING
OF NIGHT AND FEAR, WAS
GONE!

DAX^{the} DAMNED

STARLIGHT

THE FROZEN BREATH OF WINTER HAD MELTED BEFORE SUMMER'S WARM SMILE FOUR TIMES SINCE I LEARNED I WAS CHOSEN BY THE GODS TO WALK MY EARTH CURSED, PAWN UPON A DISTANT BOARD OF FATE WAS I,

HOW LONG CAN A MAN ENDURE CONSTANT TORTURE? NO LONGER COULD I. THUS I SOUGHT TO ESCAPE THE PRYING EYES OF THE TRICKSTER GODS.

I FLED TO THE EDGE OF THE EARTH, THERE TO HIDE, TO REST, TO REFLECT UPON MY LIFE. SAFE IN THE JUNGLES WHERE NO MAN NOR GOD HAD WALKED BEFORE.

AMID THE OOZING GREEN LUSH GARDENS OF TIME LOST, I FOUND PEACE. THE ONLY SOUNDS I HEARD OF MAN, WERE THOSE I MADE MYSELF. UNTIL...

///AARCHH///

WHAT?
A CRY?
IT CAN'T
BE!

AN INVADER
IN MY REALM!
YET... I MUST
HELP HIS
AGONY!

I DROVE THROUGH THE
TEEMING UNDERGROWTH,
FOLLOWING THE
DISTRESSED CRIES... AND
CAME OUT UPON A VELDT.
WHERE I FOUND...

A BEAST...
ATTACKING
THOSE
HELPLESS
HUMANS!

IN THIS VALLEY
I HAD SEEN MANY
OF THE GREAT
LIZARDS REFUSING
TO YIELD TO TIME'S
TOLL. WILY THEY
WERE, AND MALIGN.

IT WHEELED,
SEEING ME TAKE
POSITION TO
MEET HIM.

HAVING DONE WITH THE MAN,
THE HORNED ONE TURNED...
EYES BURNING TOWARD
THE WOMAN.

HE CAME!

INTELLIGENT OR NOT, THIS
ANCIENT BEAST WOULD NOT
HARM HER.

HOODOO!
HERE! HERE
FAT ONE!
THIS WAY!

AND WORLDS COLLIDED!

THANK!

THANKS TO THE
GODS, FELLOW...
I THOUGHT
BIG HORN HAD
KILLED YOU.

I ALSO THOUGHT
I WAS ALONE
IN THESE JUNGLES.

LAY HANDS ON ME
AGAIN, OUTLANDER,
AND I'LL CUT
THEM OFF!

I OWE MY LIFE
TO YOU, BARBARIAN.
MY NAME IS AUR AUR
AND I RETURN YOUR
FAVOR.

I SAVE YOUR
LIFE BY NOT
SLAYING YOU
NOW.

WELL THEN,
FAT MOUTH, I
SUPPOSE WE'RE
EVEN!

ᠠᠷᠠᠭᠤᠠᠷᠤ

YOUR WOMAN...
SHE SPEAKS LIKE
THE CHIMING
OF BELLS.

TURN YOUR
EYES AWAY
FROM HER.

SHE STOOD BOUND AND
HELPLESS. HER SKIN
SPARKLED LIKE DISTANT
STARS.

THIS WOMAN IS MY
CAPTIVE, NOT MY MATE.
LOOK UPON HER ONCE
MORE AND I WILL
STRIKE OUT YOUR
EYES!

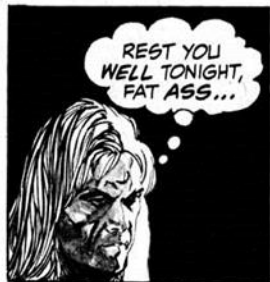
NOW, FLEE
FROM THIS
PLACE IN
TERROR OF
YOUR LIFE!

IT IS MINE, AND
IT IS AUR AUR'S
RIGHT TO GIVE OR
TAKE THE LIFE OF
ANYTHING
WITHIN IT!

JUST AS YOU
WERE GETTING
READY TO
SEVERLY
CHASTISE THAT
THUNDER
LIZARD, ᠠᠷᠠᠭᠤᠠᠷᠤ!

I AM A BARBARIAN!
I CAN SUFFER AND
DELIVER MUCH...
BUT NEVER SLAVERY!

I'LL SEE
YOU THIS
NIGHT,
AUR AUR.



VISIONS OF THE STARLIGHTED WOMAN
HAUNTED MY FOOTSTEPS AS I
FOLLOWED THEM.

I WANTED TO SKEWER THE PIG
AUR AUR WHEN HE TOUCHED HER.



PULLING HER HIGH
INTO THE BRANCHES
TO FREEDOM, SHE
THANKED ME WITH
A LUST-FILLED
SMILE!



THAT NIGHT, I FASHIONED A ROPE OF HEMP
AS I WATCHED AUR AUR FALL SLEEP, THEN
I LOWERED IT TO THE GIRL.



SHE LOOKED UP,
SAW ME, SMILED
AND TOOK THE
ROPE.

COVERING OUR MOUTHS TO
HOLD BACK BELLY KNOTTING
GIGGLES, WE RAN TOGETHER
INTO THE SOFT FOLDS OF
DARKNESS...!

MILES FADED BENEATH OUR FEET AS WE
RAN UNTIRINGLY.

SHE HELD MY HAND AND
SENSATIONS LIKE LIVING
STARBURSTS COURSED
THROUGH MY BODY.

THE MOST UNIQUE
CREATURE AS I HAD
SEEN IN ALL THE
UNIVERSE.

EXHILERATING HOURS SWIFTED BY US AS DEEP
AND DEEPER INTO THE NIGHTED JUNGLE RAN
DAX AND MY GLOWING ENCHANTRESS.

AND SOON, ERE THE GENTLE
COMING OF DAWN, UP AND
AWAY FROM THE FOREST PATH,
THERE WAS A CAVE.

NO HUNTER'S EYES
WILL FIND THIS
SANCTUARY, PET.
WE CAN REST
HERE.

YET... JUST
TOUCHING
YOU...

...STIMULATES,
EXCITES
ME.

I AM NOT EVEN
TIRED...YES...
WE'LL LAY
HERE.

I WAS, INDEED,
BEGUILED AND
FILLED WITH
NEED...

...NEED TO TOUCH...

...TO HOLD...

...ENDLESSLY.

FEARS OF THE HUNT, THE CHASE,
FOR THIS ONE STAR STREWN
MOMENT IN TIME, HUNG **SUSPENDED**,
DREAM-LIKE, DISTANT AND FAR AWAY.

GOD... THAT I MAY EVER **RECOVER**
THAT MOMENT.

BUT CAME THE DAY... AND SO PARTED
THE MAGIC BEDCLOTHES OF AN EN-
RAPTURED NIGHT. THE JOURNEY
HAD NEEDS TO CONTINUE.

I KNOW NOT WHERE
TO TAKE YOU, OTHER THAN
RETURN TO THE CIVILIZED
WORLD... OR PLUNGE DEEPER
INTO AN UNKNOWN ONE.

WHEREVER, IT WILL
BE HEAVEN
WITH YOU.

WHAT SAY? YONDER
WAY YOU WANT TO GO?
SO BE IT THEN, PER-
HAPS THIS JUNGLE IS
YOUR DOMAIN AND
YOU KNOW BEST.

YET OF A SUDDEN, AUR AUR AND
A SCORE OF WARRIORS RINGED
US. HE'D COME FOR VENGEANCE.

AH, I SEE WHAT
YOU WISH... WATER...
AND THE CRYSTAL
CLEARNESS OF A
YONDER SILVER
LAKE.

I SPRANG
TO THE FOE!

SO! THE
OFFSPRING OF
A ROAST
SUCKLING HAS
FOUND US!

AND SENT AUR AUR
QUICKLY TO HELL
UNAVENGED.

GO, WOMAN! GET
AWAY FROM HERE!

I CAN'T CONTAIN
THEM MUCH
LONGER.

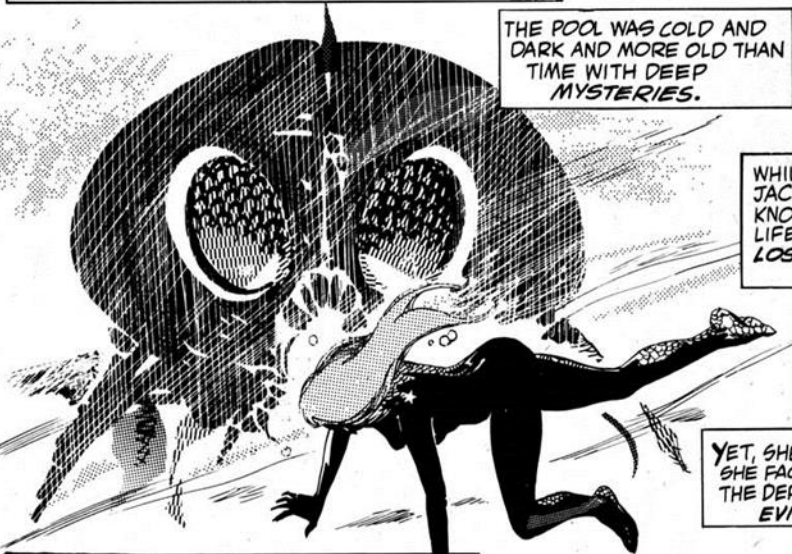


THE WARWORD OF DAX
SLUNG AN ANCIENT LAY
OF DOOM...

...BUT THE KILLING
STROKES BECAME
NUMBERED IN MY
ARM. I HAD TO
HOLD THEM.



FROM THE EDGE OF MY
EYE, I SAW MY STARCHILD
LEAP INTO THE POOL AND
COME NOT A SURFACE
AGAIN.



THE POOL WAS COLD AND
DARK AND MORE OLD THAN
TIME WITH DEEP
MYSTERIES.

WHILE I FOUGHT THE
JACKALS MY HEART WEPT,
KNOWING SHE FLOATED
LIFELESS, DROWNED...
LOST TO THE LOVE OF
DAX.

YET, SHE WAS NOT DROWN'D.
SHE FACED A VISAGE WITHIN
THE DEPTHS...OF REPTILIAN
EVIL INCARNATE.



AND
SWAM
DIRECTLY
INTO
THE
BEAST'S
YAWNING
MAW.



KNOWLEDGE OF MY
LOVER'S DEATH
WEAKENED MY
SWORDARM.



EXHAUSTED,
THE DEVIL'S
HOUNDS POISED
WICKED TEETH
ABOVE MY
THROAT...

...BUT NEVER
DID THEY RIP
MY FLESH.



THE WARRIORS
WRITHED AS
CRACKLING
FIRE COVERED
THEIR FORMS...

...CONSUMING
THEM IN AN
EYE'S BAT.



POOLS OF
SEARING
FAT
WHERE
THEY
STOOD...
WAS ALL
REMAINING.

MY SKIN CRAWLED LIKE ANTS
AND MY MUSCLES SPASMED.
WHAT SORCERY WAS THIS?

THEN LO!... I LOOKED INTO
THE LAKE AND BEHOLD! IT
BOILED OF ITS OWN ACCORD.
AND AT ONCE, AS A DEMON
ERUPTING FROM HELL'S
FIRE... A MONSTER!



A BEAST CARRYING WITHIN ITS
GULLET MY STARTWINKLING
LOVE. LOST FROM ME FOR-
EVER.

AND IT ROSE INTO THE HEAVENS,
ACROSS THE GLOWING FACE OF
THE SUN, PAST CLOUDS, PAST
HOPE... AND THUS, LIKE THE
TEARS DRYING UPON MY CHEEKS...
WAS GONE!

"RESEARCH SHIP OF PEACE, GEMMA 5, MISSION REPORT: THE FINAL HOURS I SPENT
UPON THE SAVAGE PLANET CALLED EARTH WERE THOSE OF TERROR AND...
SOMETHING INEXPLICABLE."

"THIS WORLD IS FAR TOO ALIEN AND
BRUTAL TO INHABIT. OUR SEARCH
MUST CONTINUE ELSEWHERE IN
THE GALAXY."

"OUR PEACEFUL WAYS OF GOODWILL
AND HARMONY WOULD BE CRUSHED BY
THE PRIMORDIAL TRIBES OF EARTH.
THERE IS NO HOPE THAT THESE PEOPLE
WILL EVOLVE INTO HUMANE, FEELING
UNIFIED COLONIES, THROUGH THEIR OWN
VICIOUSNESS THEY ARE FOREVER LOST.
LEAVE THEM TO THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION."

"ALL ARE ANIMALS. EXCEPT... FOR ONE... EXCEPT PERHAPS... FOR ONE."



I AM WEARY. I COULD SEE DOWN MY ROAD. **DARKNESS** LAY THERE. I CHERISHED **NOT** THE DEEPNESS OF THE DARK. I **FEARED** AND **HATED** IT. WEARINESS HAD COME TO FIND MY SOUL. SLOW MY MUSCLES. COOL THE FIRE THAT BURNED ONCE LIKE A COMET IN MY HEART.

I KNEW EVEN AS I RODE MY MOUNT INTO THE SWAMPLANDS, THAT MY **WARS** HAD DWINDLED DOWN TO **BUT FEW MORE.**

BEHIND ME LAY TORMENTED **MEMORIES**. BEFORE ME LAY THE **UNKNOWN**. AND NOW, I HAD NOT THE HEART TO FACE **EITHER.**

EVEN THE SUN CREPT LIKE A SICK MAN TO HIS DEATHBED. YET THERE WAS NOT EVEN A **DEATHBED** FOR **DAX.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

GENTLY, STEED...
GO GENTLY.
SOON WE WILL
TAKE OUR **REST.**

GODSDAMN!
THESE SANDS HAVE
GONE QUICK
BENEATH US, WE'RE
TRAPPED, UNLESS...

I CAN
SAVE
MYSELF!



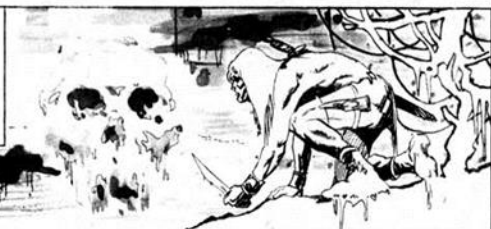
FAREWELL, MY
POOR STEED. I PRAY
YOU FIND **GREEN
PASTURES** IN THE
LAND BEYOND
THE GATES.



TAKING LEAVE OF MY
LONGTIME FRIEND,
COMMENDING HIS
SPIRIT FOR BRAVE
SERVICE, I TOOK TO
A LIMB TO LAY ME
A'REST.

BUT THERE WAS **SOMETHING**
AFOOT, **HOWLING** ACROSS
THE FETID STEAMING MARSH,
HOWLING... HOWLING.

THE THING'D **NOT**
LEAVE ME BE AND
TOOK I TO SHOUTING
BACK CURSES AT IT
UNTIL MY FATIGUE
SENT ME TO SLEEP.



YET EVEN MY SLEEP GAVE ME MORE **TERROR** THAN WHAT
I'D SEE **AWAKE**. TORMENTED DREAMS WALKED MY SLEEP.
I KNEW NOT I SLEPT. DREAMED I WAS WAKE AND WAS
TWICE THE FRIGHTENED. THINGS MOVED OUT FROM
THE FACE OF THE **MOON**.



AND BENT LOW TO
EARTH, SENDING
SCREAMING **SPECTRES...**



...**HORRORS!**



SUCH THAT THE SLEEPING,
DREAMING DAX SOUGHT TO
CUT HIMSELF TO AWAKEN,

AND WITH A PITCH, I DID
COME OUT OF THE
FEVERED NIGHT REVERIE.

THE SCREAMING *CONTINUES*...
BUT I DREAM *NO LONGER*. PERHAPS
IT IS ANOTHER BEAST CAUGHT IN
THE BOG... IN NEED OF HELP... HELP
I CANNOT *DENY* IT.

I CAREFULLY SET OUT IN
SEARCH OF THE HOWLER.

MY EARS GUIDED
MY FEET UNTIL...



...*THERE*, AT THE MARSH
EDGE, SILHOUETTED
AGAINST THE FACE OF
THE MOON...



*THERE I'LL
FIND THE
HOWLER.*



FIGHTING THE CLIFFS HARD HEWN
FACE, I PULLED MYSELF TO THE
SUMMIT. THIS GROTESQUE, BE-
HORNED DEMON'S SKULL WAS...

...A PAGAN TEMPLE,
GUARDED BY A BRACE
OF GRIM HEARTED
SWORDSMEN.





GUARDIANS OF WHAT?
THIS FOUL SCENE OF
ROTTING HUMANS
AND BEASTS? THOSE
DRAWN HERE BEFORE
ME?

SOME OF THESE FETID
REMAINS WERE ANCIENT...
SOME PITIFULLY WERE NOT!



I SCREAMED A SILENT
VOW TO MYSELF TO
END THIS NIGHTMARE.



KCHUK!




AND THUS DID SO!

WAAAAAGG!

WHAT IS THIS? A
BUTCHER AMONG
THE BUTCHERS?
IN THE TEMPLE
OF GOTHGON?
THOSE GUARDS
WERE NOT SWORDS-
MEN AS MUCH AS
BUGLERS. THEY
WERE HARMLESS
BEFORE, BUT ARE
MORE SO NOW!



I'M AFTER
THE HEAD
BUTCHER,
HAG. WHO
IS THIS
GOTHGON?



GOTHGON IS A SHADE OF THE NIGHT... A DEMONIC **FLESH** DESPOILER... A RAVAGER OF HUMANS.

GOTHGON IS A REPTILIAN **BEAST LEATHERN** OF WING, MOST ANCIENT OF OLD, AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM, **TREASURE** HIM AS A GOD AND THUS MAKE **HUMAN SACRIFICE** AS HOMAGE TO HIS GHASTLY SUPREMACY.

ON NIGHTS OF THE FULL MOON, THIS TEMPLE **SHRIEKS** WITH **BLOOD RITES**, AS **TONIGHT!**

LOOK NOT AT **ME**, OLD FEMALE CUR. DAX DOES NOT GRACE BLOOD ALTERS WITH HIS PRESENCE. JUST COME YOU AND **TAKE ME** TO GOTHGON'S SACRAMENT.

YOU **PROVE** YOUR IDIOTIC YOUTH! I SEEK **NOT** TO **SERVE** GOTHGON. BUT TO **SLAY** HIM. I'VE LOST THREE CHILDREN TO HIM.

IF YOU SPEAK TRULY OLD WOMAN, **DAX** IS YOUR MAN...

INJUSTICE IS MY MAIN FOE, AND I'VE RIGHTED MANY **WRONGS**.

BUT SIMPLE THANKS OF APPRECIATION FATTENS MY PURSE **NOT**. WHAT WILL YOU OFFER? I AM USED TO **PLENTY**.

THESE PEOPLE, TORMENTED FOR CENTURIES BY THE SACRIFICES OF GOTHGON ARE **POOR**. THEY HAVE Banded TOGETHER AND TAKEN **EVERYTHING** THEY OWN, DOWN TO THE LAST SHINING BUTTON AND EXCHANGED IT ALL FOR BUT **THREE COINS**.

EVERYTHING THEY HAVE IS SUMMED UP IN **THREE SILVER PIECES**. I OFFER IT TO **YOU**.

AS A MERCENARY SOLDIER I HAVE BEEN OFFERED MUCH FOR MY SERVICES...

...BUT NEVER **EVERYTHING**.



WARRIOR! THE
MOON HAS
RISEN! 'TIS
FULL! CHOOSE
YOUR ANSWER
QUICKLY!

GOthGON
IS HERE!!

AND LOATHSOME GOthGON
FELL UPON ME FROM THE
NIGHT.



YOU WANT TO
SEE BLOOD
DO YOU,
GOthGON?



THEN
LOOK TO
YOURSELF!



AND SEE
YOUR OWN!

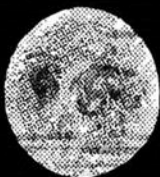
I DANCED A MADDENING BLOOD
DANCE WITH THE ABBERANT BEAST.
GOTHGON BEAT AT ME WITH WINGS,
RIPPED WITH TALON AND FANG...



...BUT 'T WAS **GOTHGON**, NOT **DAX**
THAT THIS MIDNIGHT FELT THE
ABSINTHIAN TASTE OF...



DEATH!



YOUR
PEOPLE ARE
FREE, CRONE.



ONLY FROM
GOTHGON,
BARBARIAN.

I DID NOT FULLY
UNDERSTAND WHY
THERE WAS NO
JOY IN THE OLD
WOMAN'S TONE.
INDEED THE
ENEMY **WAS**
DEAD.

**HIE! WHAT IS
A KNOWLING?**



THE COMING OF
THE **TRUE**
MONSTER. THE
TRUE ENEMY.

"HIDE HERE, WARRIOR, FOR
YONDER COMES THE
SACRIFICIAL PROCESSION,
BRINGING FLESH TRIBUTE
TO THE TEMPLE. GOTHGON
WAS OUR **TERROR**
ENCARNATE, BUT THIS...
IS OUR **SHAME**."



WELL, **QUICK!**
WE MUST RUN
TELL THEM THE
BEAST IS
SLAIN!

NO
USE...

...FOR CENTURIES
THESE PEOPLE HAVE
COME TO **NEED**
THESE BLOODBATHS.

AND NOW
THOUGH THEIR
GOD IS DEAD... THEIR
FAITH LIVES
ON. THEIR
NEED TO
BELIEVE
SURVIVES!

TELL THEM
GOD IS
DEAD?
DESTROY
THEM?

REMOVE THEIR
REASON TO **LIVE?**

NOW I **UNDERSTOOD**.
THERE WAS **NEED**
TO TAKE AWAY THE GOD,
BUT NOT TO TAKE
AWAY THE **NEED** FOR
HIM. A TERRIBLE
LESSON, THOUGH
DARKLY **SIMPLE**.

YET, EACH NIGHT OF THE FULL
MOON THE FAITHFUL WOULD
DUTIFULLY BE IN WORSHIP
SERVICE TO PRAISE THE
NAME OF THEIR **LORD**.

THERE CAME TO CLAIM THE
OFFERING OF NO **GOD**. NO
GOTHGON. NOR WOULD HE
COME AGAIN.

HEAR US, O'
FEARFUL **GOTHGON!**
THE **SACRIFICE** IS
THINE! TAKE
DRINK THIS IS
OUR **BLOOD**. TAKE
EAT. THIS IS OUR
BODY. THIS WE DO
IN REMEMBRANCE
OF **YOU!**

I COULD DO OR SAY NO MORE.
THERE WAS ANOTHER **WAR**
SOMEWHERE AND I WAS **FOR**
IT. THERE WAS **GOLD** TO BE
MADE AND I WAS **FOR** IT.

THREE SILVER PIECES
LAST NOT LONG.



AND THUS, IT HAS COME TO THIS. UPON THE MOUNTAIN RIDGE I STOOD THIS MORNING AND STRODE DOWN TO WAR, COMRADES AROUND ME.

I HEAR THEIR SCREAMS AND SOUL WITHERING MOANS AS I LAY AMONGST THEM.

THIS DAY HAS BROUGHT ME THAT LAST BATTLE. THE LAST OF MY ADVENTURES HAS PARADED BEFORE MY SPIRIT'S EYES.

AND THUS, IT HAS ENDED HERE.

I AM DAX. WARRIOR. LAYING, DYING AMID THOSE THINGS WHICH GAVE ME LIFE AND REASON TO LIVE.

YET, I DIE NOT WHIMPERING. FOR I DIE LIKE A WARRIOR.

I ESCAPED THE TORMENTS OF THE GODS. I SNUBBED THEIR SPORT.

I TOOK THE DEATH-WOUND. I DIE NOT DAMNED!



DAX the DAMNED

TO EARTH THEN, O' DARK ANGEL! THERE IS A NEW BATTLEFIELD AND SOULS AWAIT!

BRING FIRST THE ACCURSED SOUL OF AN OLD FRIEND, DAX. IT IS TIME FOR HIM TO FIND PEACE.

I ALONE CAN SHIELD HIM FROM THE LIVING GODS' DAMNATION. BRING HIM QUICK, AND BE TENDER.

AYE, BE TENDER... WITH MY POOR DAX.

DEATH RIDES...

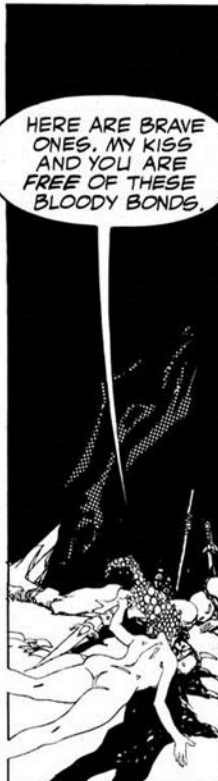
...THIS NIGHT!



AYE LORD.
I SHALL BRING
A HOST OF
LIFE'S
CHOICEST.
I SHALL FIND
YOU DAX.



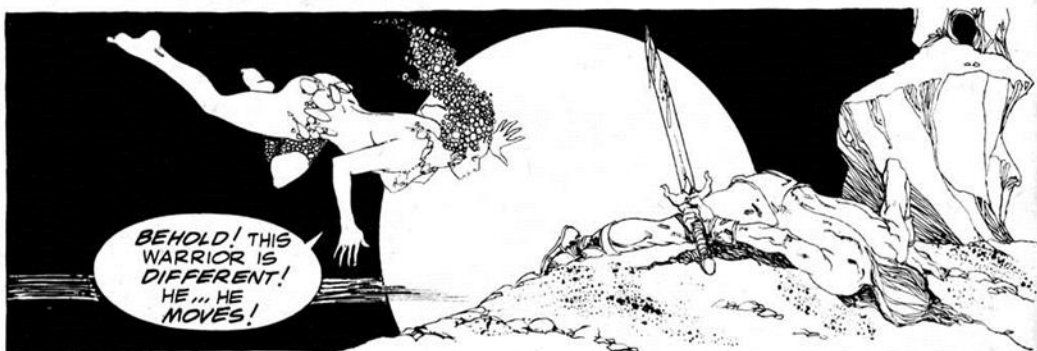
POOR MORTALS.
SUFFER YOU SO
AT EACH
OTHER'S HANDS?



HERE ARE BRAVE
ONES, MY KISS
AND YOU ARE
FREE OF THESE
BLOODY BONDS.



I MUST HURRY
WITH YOU. I SEARCH
FOR A PARTICULAR
WARRIOR. MY
LORD AWAITS HIM
PERSONALLY.



BEHOLD! THIS
WARRIOR IS
DIFFERENT!
HE... HE
MOVES!



OH! HE
LIVES!



HERE I BE... DYING BUT
A MOMENT AGO, THEN A
MAIDEN'S SHADOW FALLS
ACROSS ME AND WHAT!...
MY STRENGTH RETURNS!
I LIVE!

DAX LIVES! WHAT MAGIC
IS THIS? WHO ARE YOU?
NOT JUST A GHOUL. NOT
JUST ONE WHO GLEANS
BOOTY FROM AMONG THE
BLOOD DOZING BATTLE
DEAD!

YOU ARE DAX?
OH NO! I AM THE
ANGEL OF DEATH.

I... OH!
WHAT SHALL
I DO?



MY LORD DEATH
SENT ME TO BRING
BACK THE SOUL
OF DAX ESPECIALLY.
CALLING YOU BY
NAME.

LITTLE ANGEL...
PLEASE DON'T MAKE
ME APOLOGIZE FOR
STILL BEING ALIVE!

I KNOW NOT HOW,
BUT I DO LIVE. BRING
YOUR MASTER BACK
THE SOULS OF ALL
THESE HEROES. SURELY
'T WILL BE ENOUGH TO
TRADE FOR DAX!

YES... BUT... I WOULD
BE EXCEEDING GLAD TO
HAVE YOU IN THE
PEACEFUL FIELDS
BEYOND.

I AM FLATTERED
LITTLE ANGEL...
BUT I WOULD
NEEDS BE DEAD
TO BE WITH YOU
THERE.

DON'T YOU
KNOW WHAT
IT MEANS TO
LIVE?



NO... BUT I KNOW
IT MUST BE WORSE
THAN BEING OF THE
DEAD. AT LEAST I
WILL NEVER DREAD
DYING.

INSANE MAN! NEVER
IN ETERNITY HAS
THIS BEEN THOUGHT
BEFORE. MADNESS!
IT SHALL NOT BE DONE!

THEN TRULY,
YOU HAVE NEVER
LEARNED TO
LIVE...

OH DAMN!
THERE ARE WAYS
OF CHEATING
DEATH, I HAVE
FOR YEARS.

STAY WITH
ME HERE, AND
WE'LL CHEAT
HIM FOREVER.
TOGETHER!



...OR
LOVE!





NOOOOO!!!
WHAT HIDEOUS
THING IS THIS?
NO, DEATH!

GIVE HER
BACK TO
ME!

MY GODS!
SHE IS A
SNAIL!

"YET NOW SHE CHANGES!
WHAT EMERGES FROM
THE SHELL?"

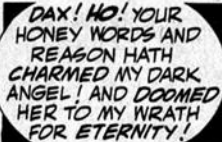
WHAT HORRIBLE
METAMORPHOSIS HAVE
I DOOMED HER TO?



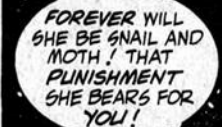
SHE BURNS!
LIKE A COMET
OF TORMENT!



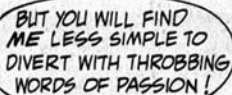
SOMETHING
FORMS FROM
THE MIDST
OF THE
FIREBALL!



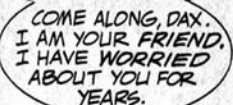
DAX! NO! YOUR
HONEY WORDS AND
REASON HATH
CHARMED MY DARK
ANGEL! AND DOOMED
HER TO MY WRATH
FOR ETERNITY!



FOREVER WILL
SHE BE SNAIL AND
MOTH! THAT
PUNISHMENT
SHE BEARS FOR
YOU!



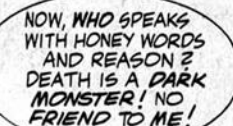
BUT YOU WILL FIND
ME LESS SIMPLE TO
DIVERT WITH THROBBING
WORDS OF PASSION!



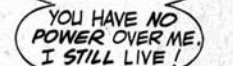
COME ALONG, DAX.
I AM YOUR FRIEND.
I HAVE WORRIED
ABOUT YOU FOR
YEARS.




COME ALONG
AND REST
NOW.




NOW, WHO SPEAKS
WITH HONEY WORDS
AND REASON? DEATH
IS A DARK
MONSTER! NO
FRIEND TO ME!




YOU HAVE NO
POWER OVER ME.
I STILL LIVE!



IF YOU MEAN TO FIGHT ME,
DAX, I ASSURE YOU IT IS A
STRUGGLE YOU WILL NOT WIN!
NO MAN MAY ESCAPE DEATH...
IF I DO NOT CLAIM YOU NOW,
I WILL DO SO LATER.



AFTER ALL, IT IS ONLY A
MATTER OF TIME... FOR ALL
MORTALS MUST YIELD TO ME IN
TIME. I ASK ONLY THAT YOU
WOULD YIELD TO ME NOW
AND COME TO KNOW PEACE...



... BUT YOU NEED TIME.
AND I GRANT YOU TIME TO
BRIEFLY CONTEMPLATE.
THINK CAREFULLY AND
CHOOSE WISELY BETWEEN
LIFE OR DEATH!

"I AM THRICE CURSED!
OF ALL THINGS A MAN
MUST DECIDE...
WHETHER TO LIVE OR
DIE."

TO ESCAPE THE CRUELTY
OF THE GODS TO COME
TO THIS... DECIDING IF
I AM TO LIVE OR DIE!...
ARGH! I KNOW I CANNOT
ESCAPE DEATH. FOR DEATH
IS MY CONSTANT COM-
PANION! IT SURROUNDS
ME, I DEAL IN IT.
YET...



...I WOULD NOT
SUCCEED TO IT. THIS
CARNAGE IS MY ONLY
LEGACY. AM I PROUD
OF MY WORKS? CAN
THE SEWER CLEANER
BE PROUD OF HIS
LIFE? NO... BUT HE
HAS DONE WHAT MUST
BE DONE... AND WELL.



IT MAY BE THAT DEATH IS
THE PEACE FROM TORMENT
I SEEK. BUT BY GODS
TEETH I WILL NOT DIE
THIS WAY! I HAVE LIVED
BY THIS SWORD AND SO
MUST DIE BY IT! OR NOT
DIE AT ALL!



"MY BROTHERS... HAVE YOU
FOUND PEACE? DO YOU
NOT MISS THE SUN'S WARMTH
UPON THY SKIN? COOL WINE
UPON A BURNING TONGUE?"



"DO YOU NOT MISS SOOTHING
RAINS... BLANKETING SNOWS?
DO YOU NOT MISS SAVORY BEEF
FOR AN EMPTY BELLY... DREAM-
FUL SLEEP WHEN TIRED? DO
YOU NOT MISS THE WONDER AT
A FISTFUL OF DUST OR A
TWINKLING STARFLING NIGHT?
TO NEVER HOLD SOFT FLESH
AGAINST YOUR NAKED LOINS?
NEVER TO HOLD HER WHEN
SHE SLEEPS... OR DELIVER
UP YOUR CHILD FROM HER
WOMB WITH YOUR OWN
TWO HANDS?"

IS THERE SOMETHING,
ANYTHING BEYOND
LIFE'S REALM TO COMPARE
WITH THESE THINGS?



I THINK NOT.
COME BOY, TAKE ME
AWAY FROM HERE.
TAKE ME TO LIFE!



DAX! DO YOU LEAVE ME? WAIT A BIT. AT LEAST GIVE AN OLD FRIEND THE COURTESY OF REPLY.



VERY WELL, OLD FRIEND. WE HAVE RIDDEN LONG YEARS TOGETHER. I HAVE BROUGHT YOU MANY SOULS. I AM NOT READY TO BECOME ONE OF THEM. I WILL GO BACK TO LIFE.

YOU MAKE MY HEART HEAVY. ALL THE OTHER GODS HAVE HAD THEIR TURN WITH YOU... MAKING SPORT OF YOU... TORTURING YOU... LAUGHING AT YOU! ONLY I HAVE HAILED YOU AS FRIEND. ONLY I HAVE LOVED YOU. ONLY I COULD HAVE SAVED YOU FROM THEM. NOW IT IS MY TURN TO CURSE YOU. REBUKE ME WILL YOU? RETURN THEN WARRIOR! RETURN TO LIFE! RETURN TO LIFE AND BE DAMNED!

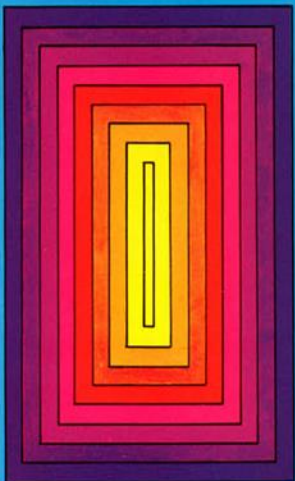


"RETURN TO LIFE AND BE DAMNED."



"I LIVE! DEATH IS CHEATED! YET I REALIZE NOW... I REALIZE. I REMEMBER. THAT LAST BATTLE... THOUSANDS OF HEROES DIED... AND I!... BUT RECEIVED A SWORD STROKE IN THE SPINE! NOW HERE I LAY. NERVELESS... I CANNOT MOVE. CANNOT BLINK, TWITCH A FINGER. I CANNOT EVEN FEEL MY PAIN. DEATH KNEW THIS, EVEN AS I DID NOT. DEATH HAD THE FINAL JOKE. I AM TRULY DAMNED. ALL I CAN DO IS LIE HERE AND REMEMBER... REMEMBER THE SAGA OF MY LIFE OVER AND OVER AGAIN. LIFE IS LIKE A BOOK AS I READ IT AGAIN AND AGAIN. I REMEMBER MY STORIES OF DAX. THE WARRIOR. THE DAMNED!"

**ESCAPE FROM THE ORDINARY
IN THIS MONTH'S WARREN MAGAZINE**



**THE SHOWPLACE OF CLASSIC FANTASY!
ON SALE NOW!**

ESTEBAN MAROTO'S

DAX the WARRIOR RETURNS

IN A SUPER-SPECIAL BOOK-LENGTH FEATURE!

DAX...CURSED
BY THE GODS,
DAMNED BY
HIS OWN KIND!
HIS SAGA
RETOLD!
INSIDE THIS
GIANT ISSUE!

