

CONAN

THE BARBARIAN

THE MASK OF ACHERON



**BASED
ON THE
NEW HIT
FILM!**

GUZMAN
TAIBO



THE BARBARIAN

THE MASK OF ACHERON

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Special thanks to Fredrik Malmberg, Joakim Zetterberg, and Leslie Buhler at Conan Properties.

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"KNOW, O PRINCE, THAT BETWEEN
THE YEARS WHEN THE OCEANS DRANK
ATLANTIS AND THE GLEAMING CITIES..."

"...AND THE YEARS
OF 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."



"NEMEDIA, OPHIR, BRYTHUNIA, HYPERBOREA,
ZAMORA WITH ITS DARK-HAIRED WOMEN AND
TOWERS OF SPIDER-HAUNTED MYSTERY."


"ZINGARA, KOTH, STYGIA WITH ITS
SHADOW-GUARDED TOMBS,
HYRKANIA WHOSE RIDERS WORE
STEEL AND SILK AND GOLD.
AQUILONIA, REIGNING SUPREME
IN THE DREAMING WEST."



"HITHER..."

"...TO TREAD THE
JEWELLED THRONES
OF THE EARTH UNDER
HIS BOOTED FEET..."






"...CAME KHALAR ZYM.

"AN EXILED PRINCE FROM THE
LANDS OF NEMEDIA. A BRIGAND
WITH THE TONGUE OF A NOBLEMAN,
A WOULD-BE CONQUEROR WITH A
FATAL, ALL-CONSUMING OBSESSION.

"BUT MOST OF ALL...



"...A SEEKER AFTER
THE DARKEST SORCERY
KNOWN TO MAN."

YEARS AGO.

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

MALIVA, DAUGHTER OF ERIN. YOU HAVE PURSUED THE FORBIDDEN SECRETS OF ANCIENT ACHERON.

YOU SOUGHT TO ENSLAVE ALL HYBORIA WITH YOUR EVIL SORCERY...

MALIVA,
DAUGHTER OF
ERIN. YOU HAVE
PURSUED THE
FORBIDDEN
SECRETS
OF ANCIENT
ACHERON.

YOU SOUGHT
TO ENSLAVE ALL
HYBORIA WITH
YOUR EVIL
SORCERY...

...AND SO,
FOR THE SAFETY
OF ALL OUR
PEOPLE...

...YOU
MUST BE PUT
TO DEATH.



ONE YEAR LATER.

AYE,
'TISN'T MUCH TO
LOOK AT.

COULDN'T
AFFORD A FANCY
IRON ONE, COULD
I?

TOUGH TO
MAKE AN HONEST
LIVING ON THE
ZINGARAN SEAS,
THESE DAYS.

TOO
MANY NORTHERN
BARBARIANS
FOULIN' THE
WATER--

YOU'VE NEVER
MADE AN HONEST
LIVING IN YOUR LIFE,
BRIGAND. AND I'VE NO
INTEREST IN YOUR
COMPLAINTS.

DO YOU
HAVE WHAT I
WANT?

AYE.

A GENUINE
SHARD OF
THE MASK OF
ACHERON.

THEY SAY THIS BEAUTY WAS MORE
FEARED THAN THE ELDER GODS
THEMSELVES. BACK IN ANCIENT
TIMES, O' COURSE!

WHY, IF YE SHOULD
MANAGE TO GATHER UP
ALL THE PIECES...
WELL, I'D NOT CARE TO
CROSS YOU THEN!

HE SEEKS
TO CHEAT US.
HE DOES NOT
BELIEVE.

NO, BUT
HE IS THE
FOOL.

THE
SHARD IS
REAL.

AND, AH, NOW
THEN, SIR...

...ABOUT MY
PAYMENT?





THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO, CHILD...THE KINGDOM OF ACHERON WAS THE MOST FEARED IN ALL THE WORLD.

ITS REIGN OF TERROR REACHED FROM NENEVIA THROUGH AGULONIA, DOWN TO ARGOS IN THE SOUTH, AND THE SOURCE OF ACHERON'S POWER...

"...WAS ITS NECROMANCERS.

"DARK HEARTED THEY WERE, DEVOTED ONLY TO THEIR ARTS... AND TO CONQUEST. IN THEIR SINGLE-MINDED FERVOR, THEY HARNESSSED POWERS NOW LOST TO US, IN THIS FALLEN AGE.

"LEGEND SAYS THEY SACRIFICED VIRGINS... THEIR OWN, AND THOSE OF NEIGHBORING AND CONQUERED LANDS...TO FEED THEIR HUNGRY GODS, AS WELL AS THEIR OWN LUST FOR BLOOD AND POWER.

"AND THEIR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT...THE TALSHAN WELDED BY THEIR SORCERER-KING AS HE STRODE ACROSS THE WORLD LIKE A GOD...WAS THE MASK OF ACHERON.

"WHEN THE BARBARIANS--THE YOUNG KINGDOMS--ROSE UP AGAINST ACHERON, THE MASK ITSELF WAS SHATTERED INTO A DOZEN PIECES, BUT SUCH WAS ITS POWER, THAT IT COULD NOT BE DESTROYED.

"THE OLD SCROLLS SAY ITS MAGICS CAN ONLY BE UNLEASHED BY THE BLOOD OF A PURE ACHERONIAN. VERY FEW OF THOSE YET EXIST; ACHERON'S PEOPLE LONG AGO FLED TO THE HILLS, INTERBREEDING WITH THE TRIBES OF AGULONIA AND NENEVIA.

"BUT AFTER WE HAVE GATHERED UP EVERY SHARD OF THE MASK...THEN, NARQUE, I SWEAR TO YOU..."

"...WE SHALL USE ITS ANCIENT POWER...

"...TO RETURN YOUR MOTHER TO LIFE.



**CIMMERIA.
YEARS LATER.**

THERE IS
NO SHAME IN
KNEELING
BEFORE
ME...

...ALL THESE
FIGHTERS HAVE
SURRENDERED. LEFT
THEIR LANDS, SWORN
THEIR ALLEGIANCE
TO ME.

BECAUSE
THEY KNOW I WILL
ONE DAY BE
A GOD.

ONE DAY, THE
OTHER CLANS OF
CIMMERIA WILL GATHER
TO AVENGE US. THEN--
**GOD OR NOT--YOU
SHALL FALL--**

I NEED BUT ONE
MORE PIECE TO COMPLETE
THIS MASK. AND THAT
PIECE IS HERE.

GIVE IT TO ME
NOW...OR DIE,
AND I'LL FIND
IT MYSELF.

I
PREFER
DEATH.

VERY
WELL.







...MARIQUE?



THE CIMMERIANS DO NOT PRAY. THEY HAVE NO PRIESTS, NO TEACHERS.

THIS IS WHAT MATTERS TO THEM. THIS IS THEIR CHURCH...



...IT WILL BE HERE.



WELL DONE.

YOUR MOTHER WOULD BE PROUD.



GATHER THE MEN.

BURN IT ALL.





CONAN--
SON.
YOU
CANNOT
SAVE
ME--



--LET
GO OF THE
CHAIN.

EEEEAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!



THE LAST
PIECE.
WE ARE
HALFWAY THERE,
MARIQUE.

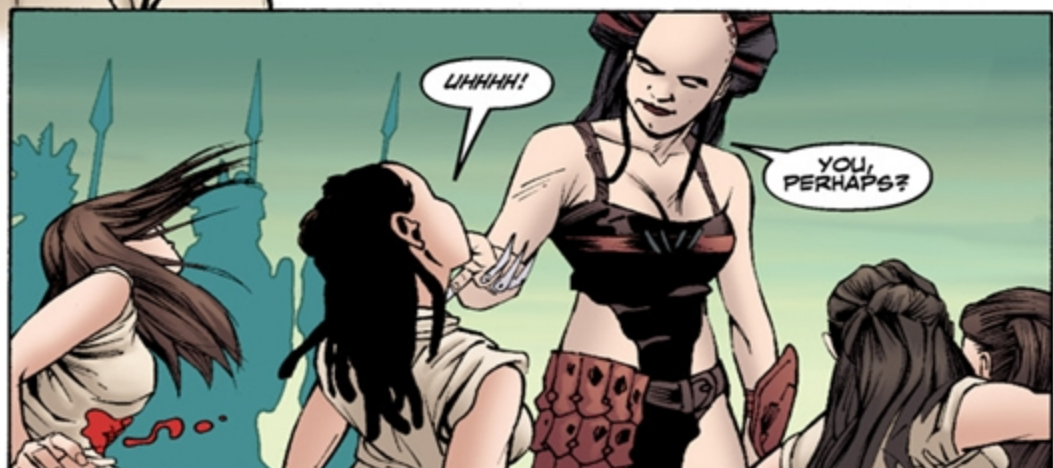


NOW--WE
RIDE.
TO FIND THE
PUREBLOOD!











GET INTO THE CARRIAGE--

NO! I WILL DEFEND OUR HOME!



YOU ARE MY FINEST STUDENT, TAMARA. AND I TELL YOU, NOW:

FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR PEOPLE, YOU MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE AND GO TO THE MONKS IN HYRKANIA.



IT IS YOUR DUTY.

DO NOT HESITATE AND DO NOT WAVER!



EH?



AFTER THEM!

LET NONE ESCAPE!





...THE PRIZE IS NEAR.

AT LAST YOU WILL HAVE NOT ONLY THE MASK, BUT ALSO THE BLOOD TO FILL IT.

HOW YOUR MOTHER YEARNED FOR THE SORCERY OF ACHERON.

IMAGINE WHAT SECRETS SHE WILL BRING BACK FROM THE REALM OF THE DEAD. IMAGINE HOW *INDOMITABLE* I WILL BECOME, WITH HER ONCE MORE AT MY SIDE.



BUT, FATHER... IF THE GIRL IS LOST, OR THE RITUAL FAILS--

IT WILL NOT FAIL!
MALIVA WILL RETURN.



MY POWERS ARE GROWING, FATHER. AND MOTHER'S BLOOD FLOWS THROUGH ME.

I COULD UNCOVER THE SECRETS OF ACHERON, AS SHE DID. I COULD MAKE THEM ALL *KNEEL BEFORE YOU...* JUST AS I DO NOW.



YES, MARIQUE. YOU ARE LIKE YOUR MOTHER, IN VERY MANY WAYS.

BUT YOU ARE *NOT* HER.



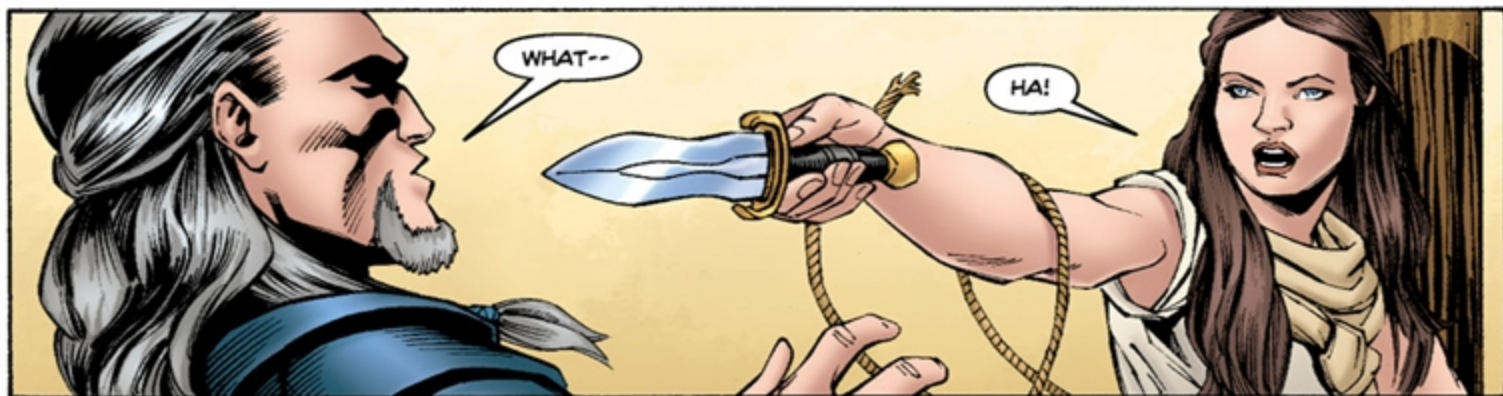




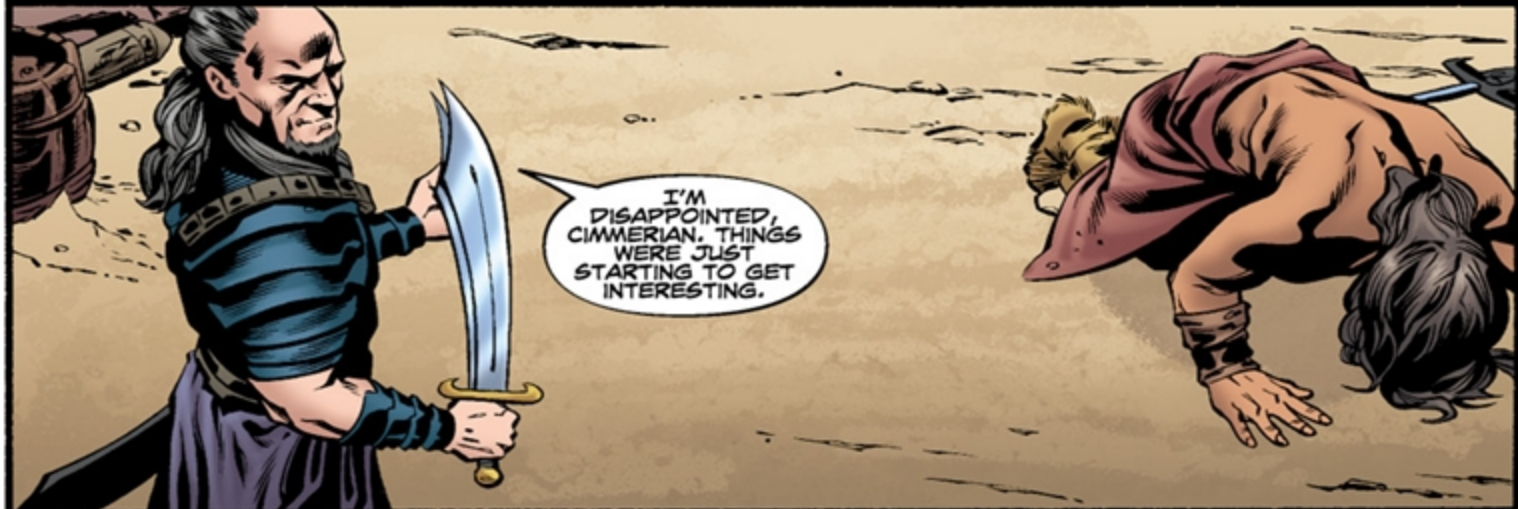




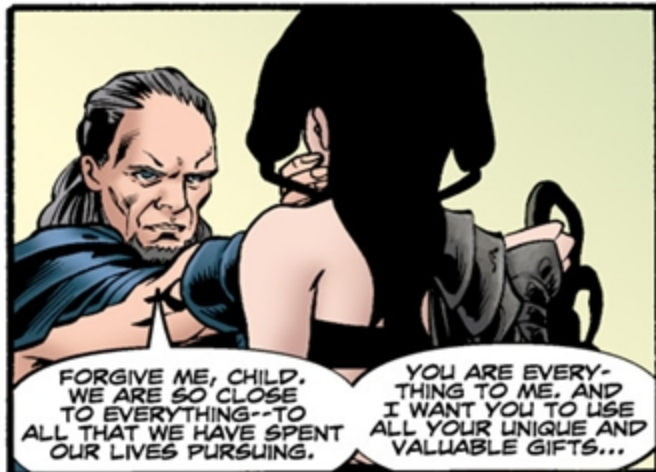
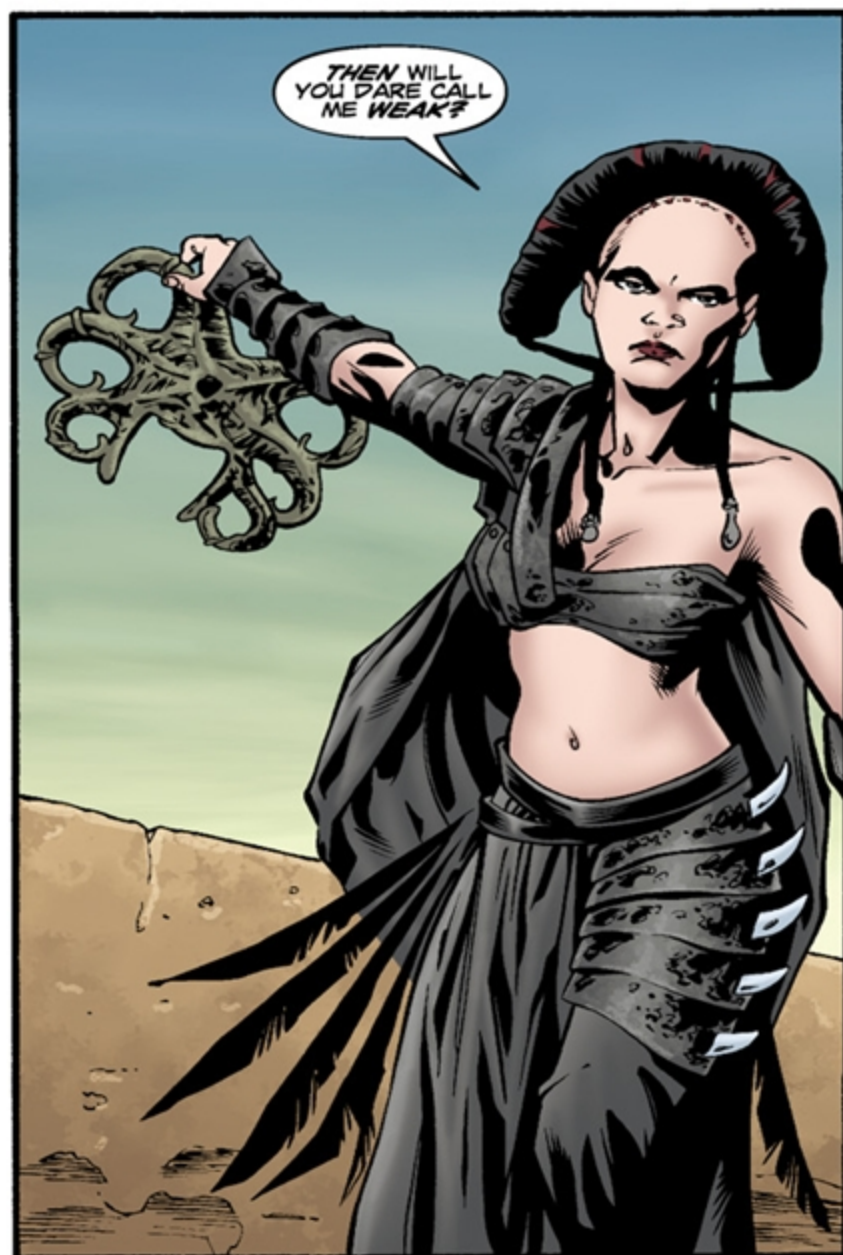




















MY MOTHER
WORE THIS GOWN
ON HER WEDDING
DAY...



I--I
AM *NOT* YOUR
MOTHER.

NO. BUT
YOU *WILL*
BE.

IMAGINE YOUR
BODY IS A VESSEL,
AND YOUR SOUL IS THE
WATER THAT FILLS IT.
WHEN YOUR BLOOD
SEEDS THE MASK,
MY FATHER WILL
EMPTY YOU.



AND MY MOTHER'S SOUL WILL
RISE TO FILL YOU UP, YOUR
TOES, YOUR LEGS, UP INTO
YOUR BREASTS, NECK,
AND LIPS...

...UNTIL MY MOTHER
TURNS YOUR PRETTY
BLUE EYES *PITCH*
BLACK.



DID YOU KNOW
I MET YOUR
BARBARIAN
WHEN HE WAS
A BOY?

I TOOK
THIS SWORD
FROM HIM.



I'M TOLD THAT
CIMMERIAN STEEL IS
SHARPER AND HARDER
THAN ANY OTHER.

THAT WHEN IT CUTS,
THE PAIN IS ALMOST THE
SAME AS PLEASURE.



I WOULD
RATHER DIE
THAN--

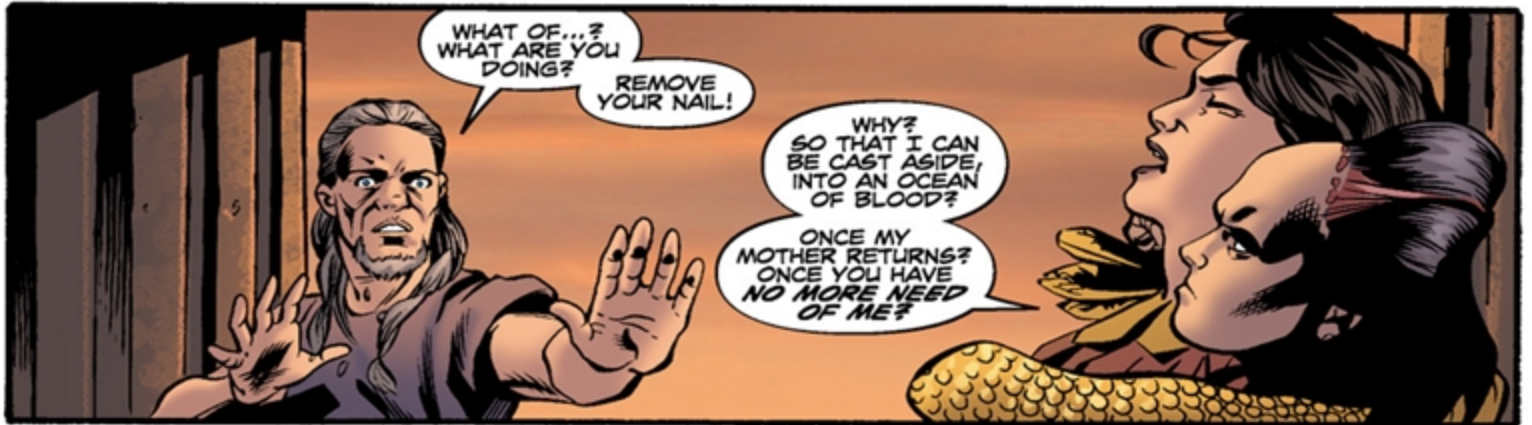
OH, YOU
WILL.

AND
YOUR DEATH
SHALL HERALD
A NEW AGE OF
ACHERON.



THE SPIRITS I RAISE
WILL MELT FLESH FROM
THE BONES OF KINGS.
MY WIFE AND I WILL
CAST **ALL RIVALS**
INTO OCEANS OF
BLOOD.

AND
WHAT OF ME,
FATHER?



WHAT OF...?
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING?

REMOVE
YOUR NAIL!

WHY?
SO THAT I CAN
BE CAST ASIDE,
INTO AN OCEAN
OF BLOOD?

ONCE MY
MOTHER RETURNS?
ONCE YOU HAVE
NO MORE NEED
OF ME?



SO THAT YOU
MAY REIGN AS
OUR PRINCESS
AND HEIR...



...ONCE
WE ARE A
FAMILY
AGAIN.

YES,
MY DEAR
FATHER.

YES...

**SKULL CAVE.
THAT NIGHT.**

...IT
BEGINS.

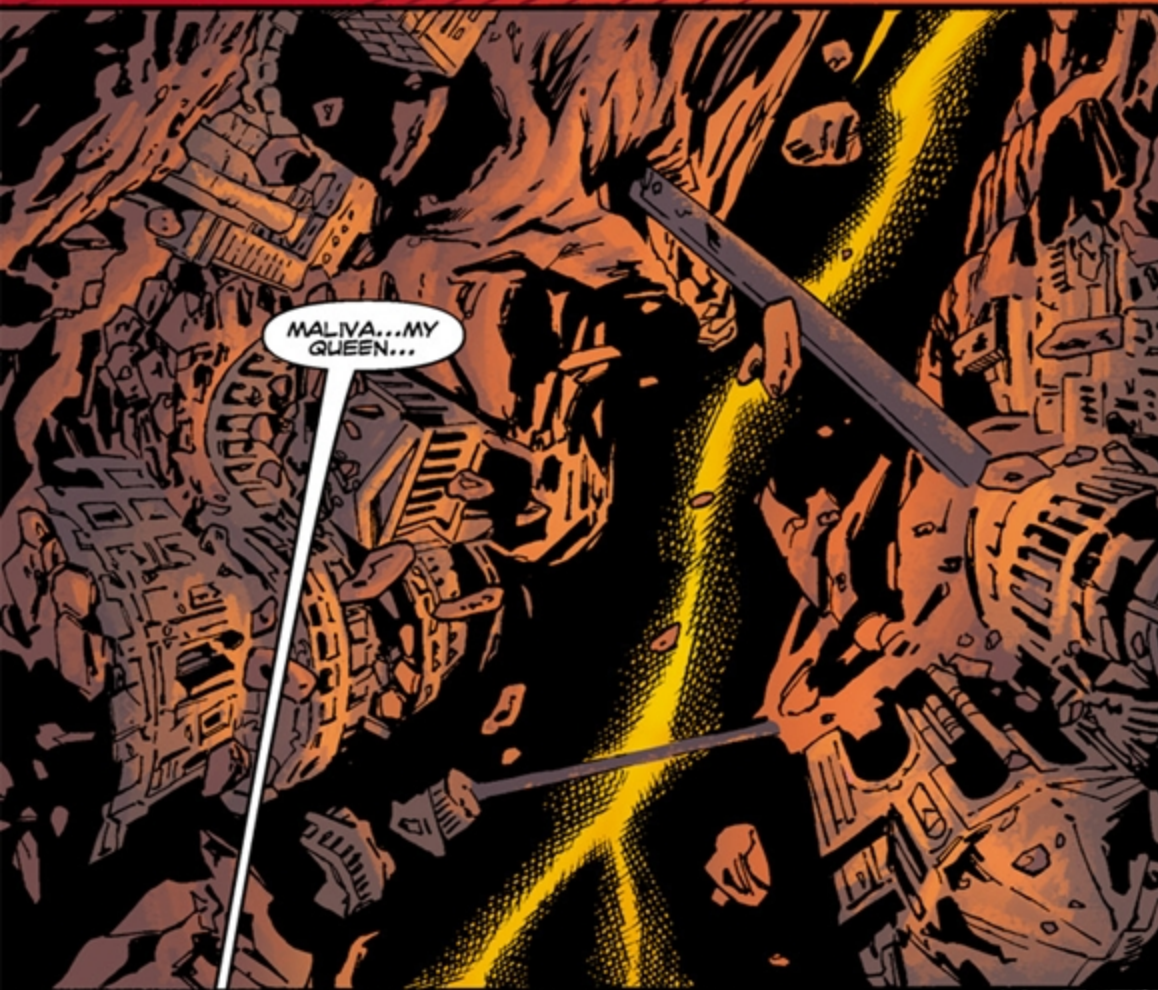
AS A VICTORIOUS
BARBARIAN SWORD
ONCE SHATTERED THE
MASK, EONS AGO...NOW
A VANQUISHED BARBARIAN
SWORD SHALL
RESTORE IT.

BY LUSTY *DERKETO*
AND SERPENT-HEADED
SET...

AAAAHHHHH!!!

...BY
DAGON AND
NERGAL...

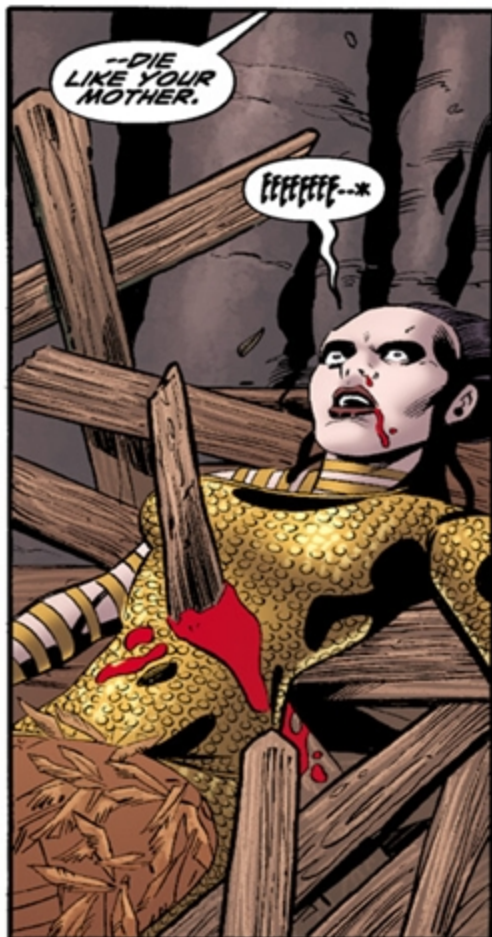
...I SEED
THE MASK WITH
ITS MASTER'S
BLOOD.













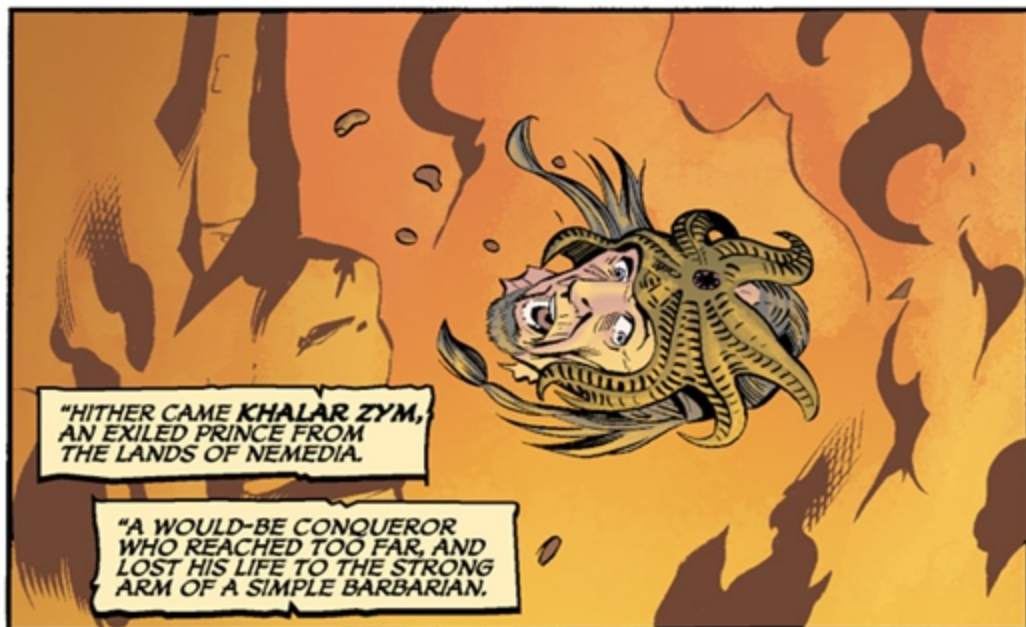






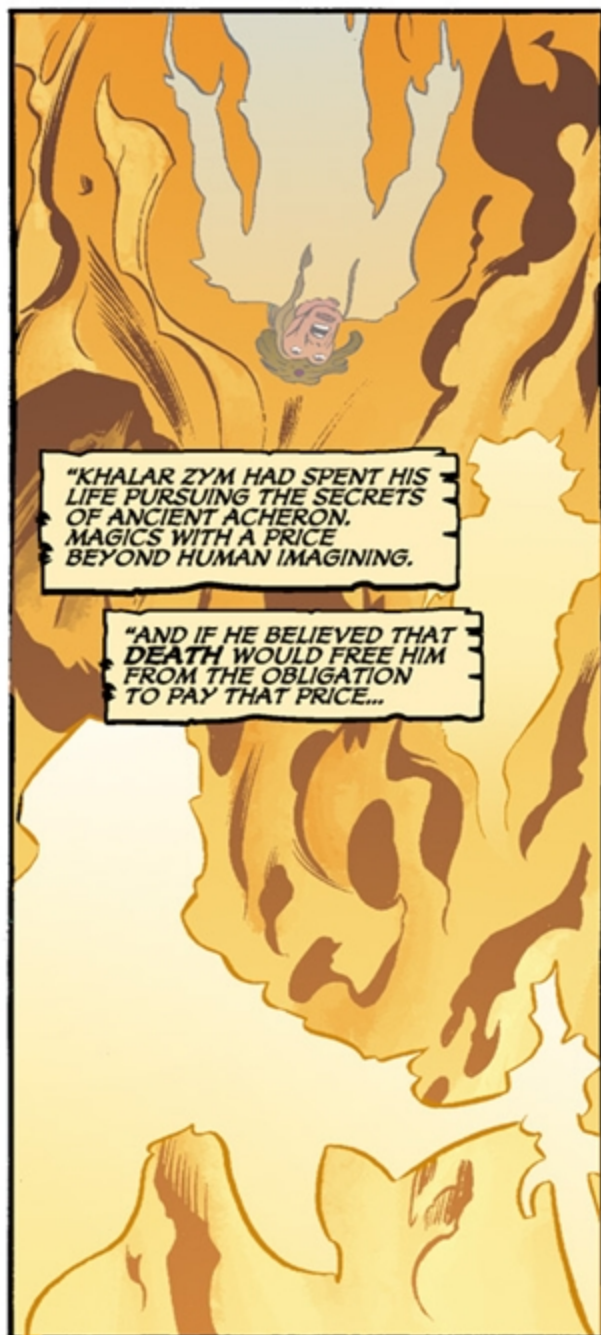
"AFTER THE YEARS WHEN
THE OCEANS DRANK ATLANTIS
AND THE GLEAMING CITIES..."

"...THERE WAS AN AGE
UNDREAMED OF."



"HITHER CAME **KHALAR ZYM**,
AN EXILED PRINCE FROM
THE LANDS OF NEMEDIA."

"A WOULD-BE CONQUEROR
WHO REACHED TOO FAR, AND
LOST HIS LIFE TO THE STRONG
ARM OF A SIMPLE BARBARIAN."



"KHALAR ZYM HAD SPENT HIS
LIFE PURSUING THE SECRETS
OF ANCIENT ACHERON,
MAGICS WITH A PRICE
BEYOND HUMAN IMAGINING."

"AND IF HE BELIEVED THAT
DEATH WOULD FREE HIM
FROM THE OBLIGATION
TO PAY THAT PRICE..."



"...HE WAS VERY,
VERY MISTAKEN."

"THE NECROMANCERS OF ACHERON
HAD HARNESSSED THE MOST POWERFUL
SORCERIES THE WORLD HAD EVER KNOWN.

"IT WAS RUMORED THEY COULD
EVEN TRANSCEND DEATH.

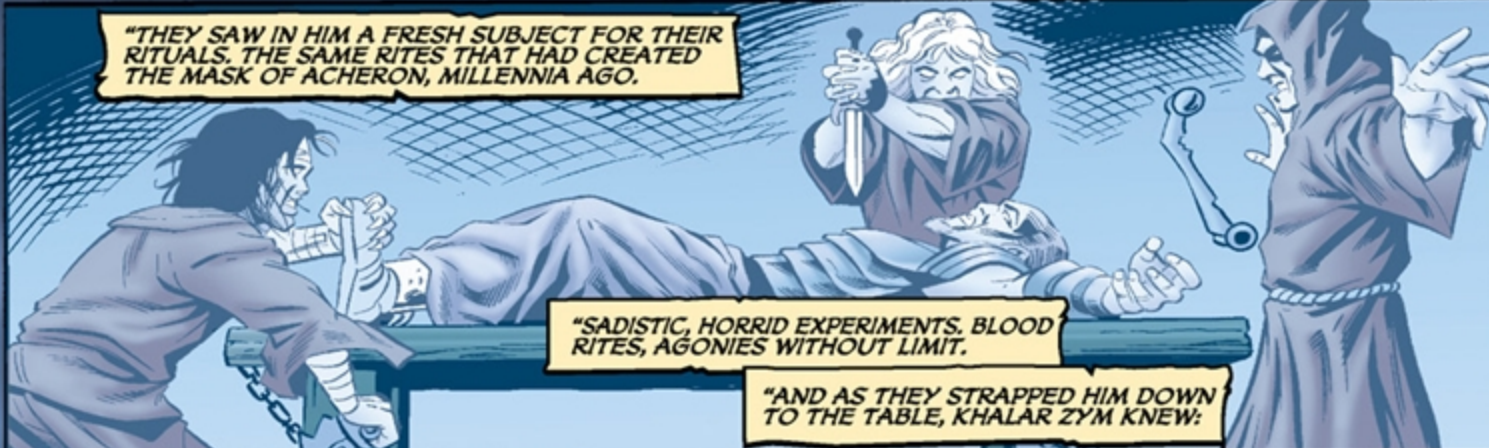


"TO THEM, KHALAR ZYM
WAS A BASE PRETENDER
TO THEIR GLORY.

"AND WHETHER HIS PRESENCE
RAISED THEIR IRE, THEIR
CONTEMPT, OR MERELY A COLD
INDIFFERENCE...ONE THING IS SURE:



"THEY SAW IN HIM A FRESH SUBJECT FOR THEIR
RITUALS. THE SAME RITES THAT HAD CREATED
THE MASK OF ACHERON, MILLENNIA AGO.



"SADISTIC, HORRID EXPERIMENTS. BLOOD
RITES, AGONIES WITHOUT LIMIT.

"AND AS THEY STRAPPED HIM DOWN
TO THE TABLE, KHALAR ZYM KNEW:

"IT WOULD LAST FOREVER.



"GOOD NIGHT, O PRINCE.

"SLEEP WELL."



THE END



"I live, I love, I slay, and I am content."