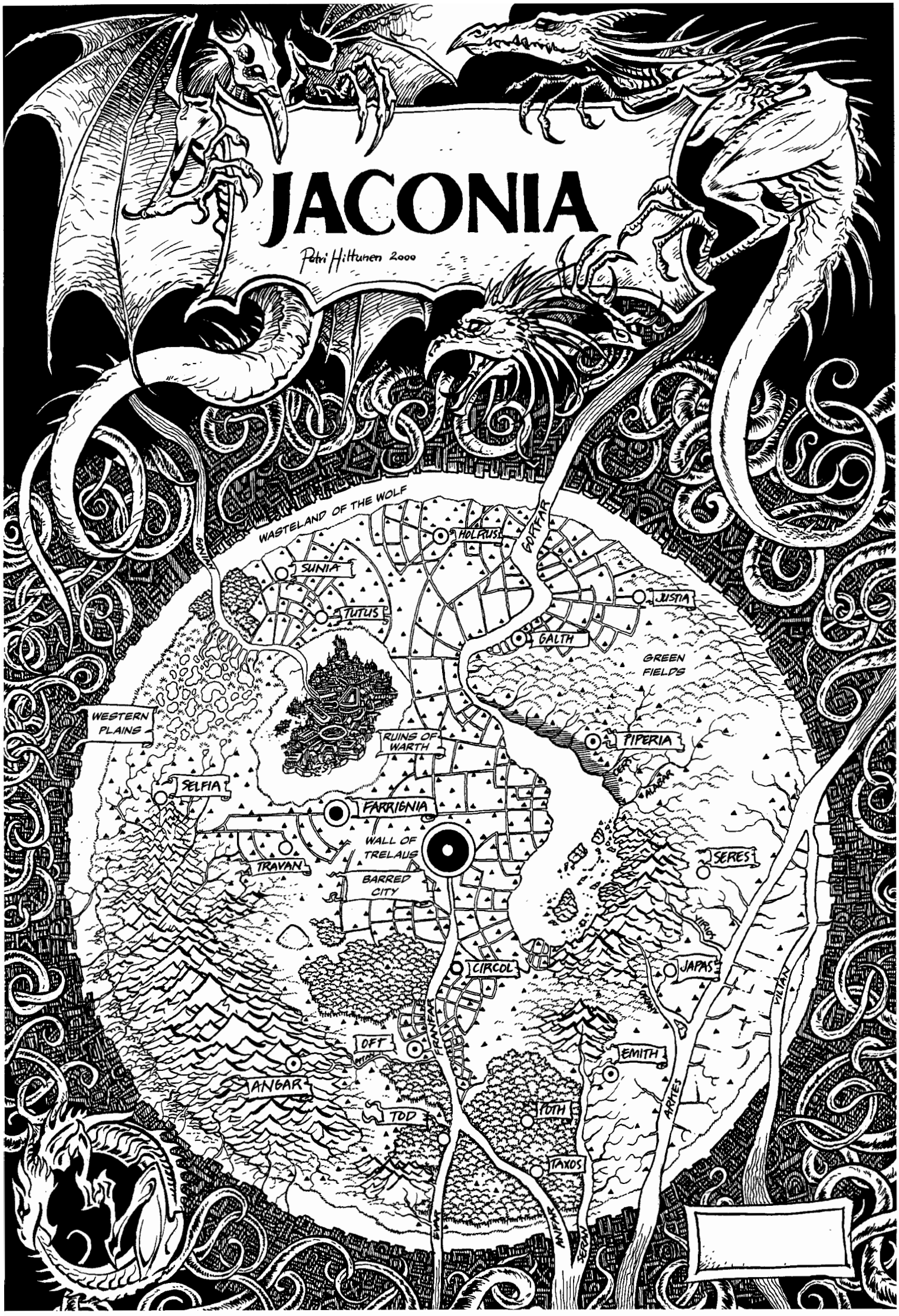
Petri Hiltunen

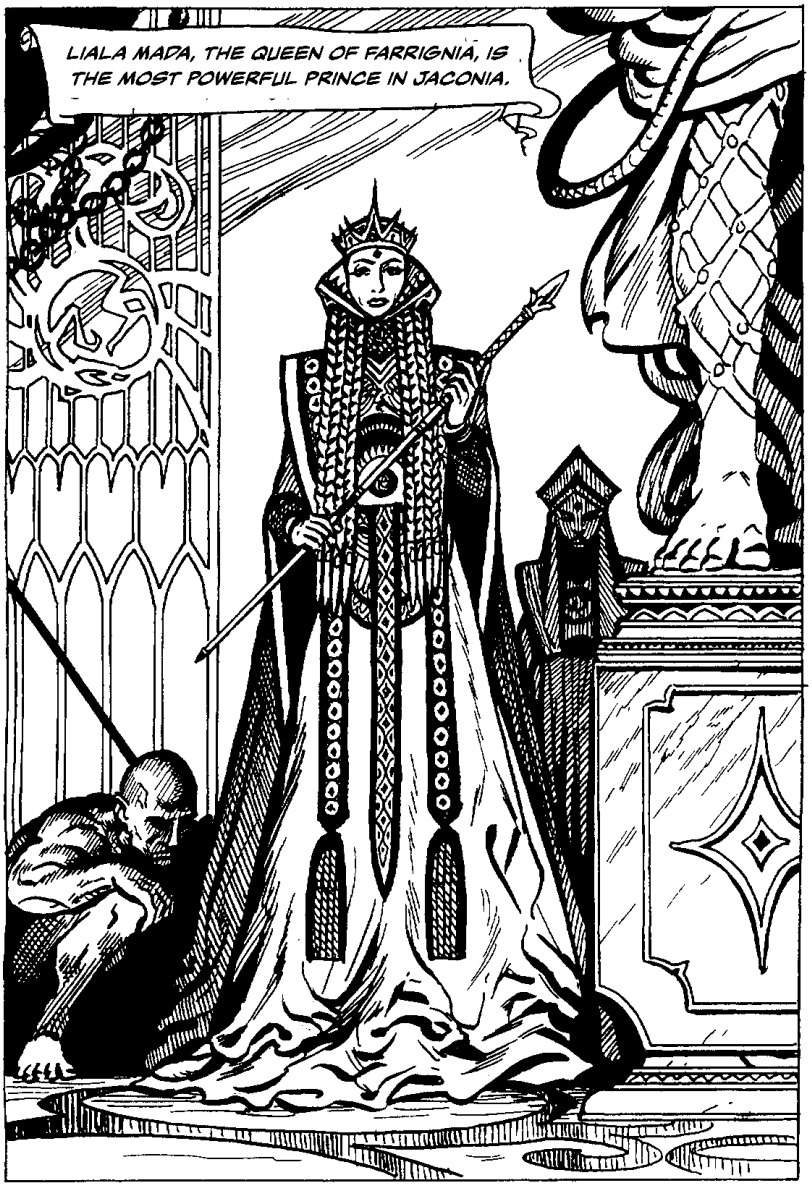
Praedor

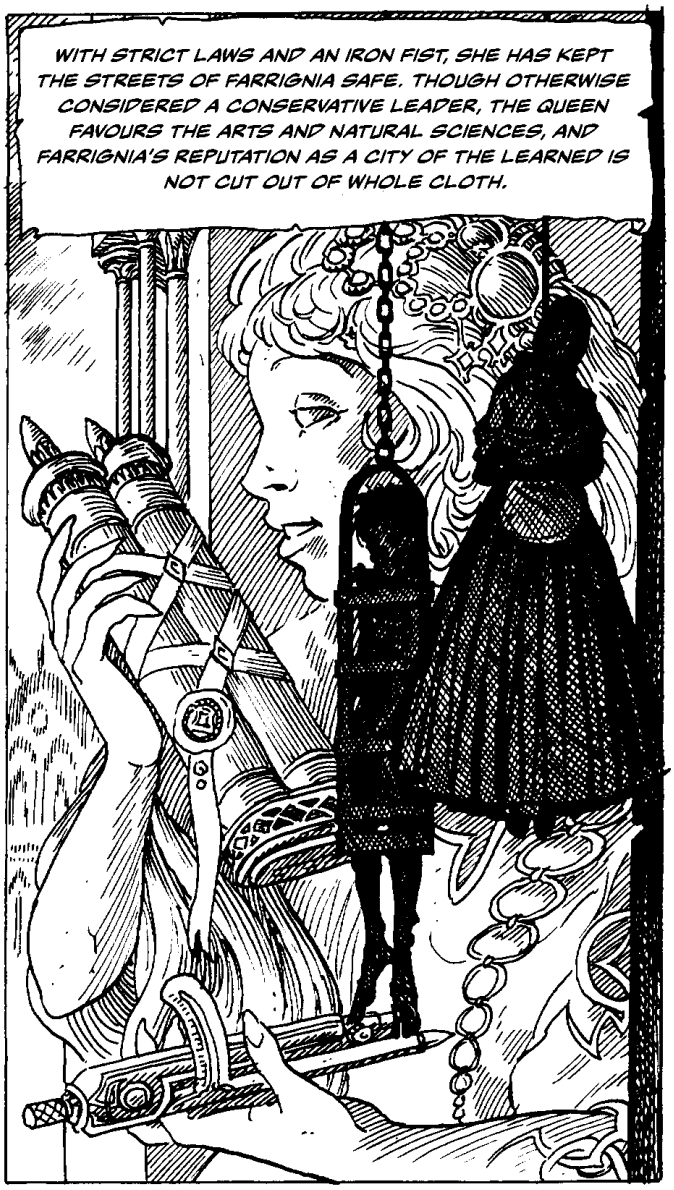
A Tale of Three Sovereigns

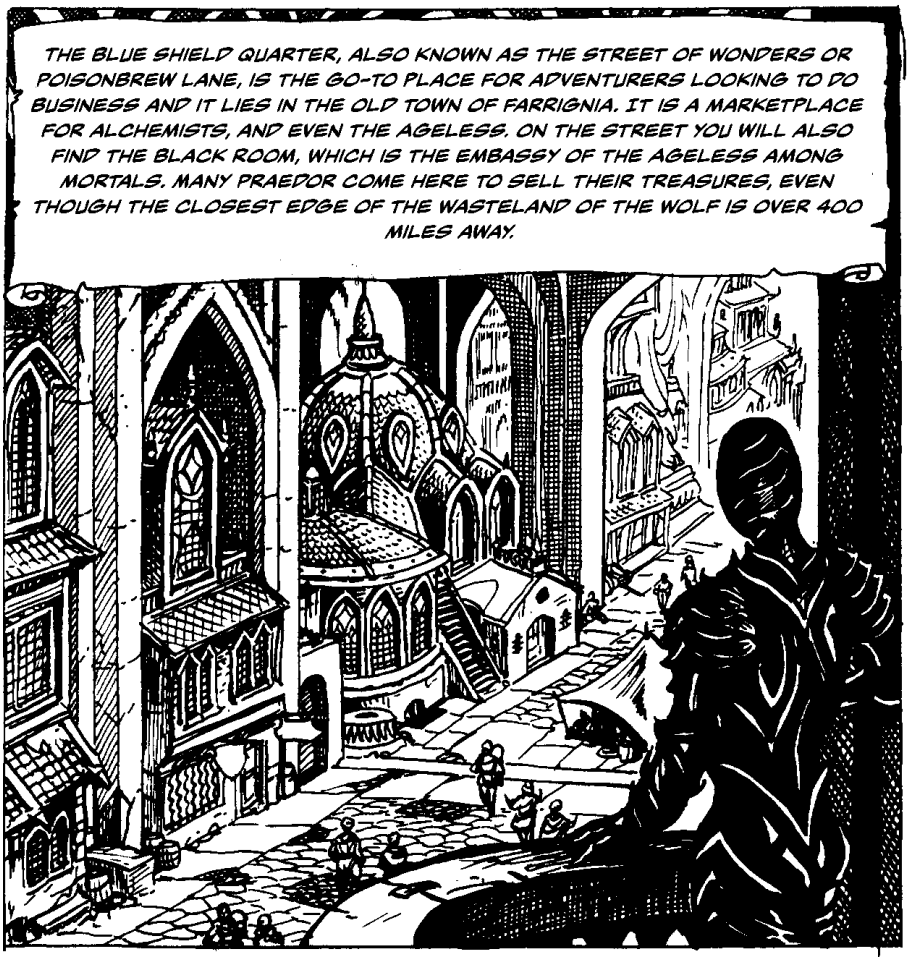

JACONIA
Petri Hiltunen 2000
WASTELAND OF THE WOLF
HOLRUS
GORTFAR
SUNIA
TUTUS
JUSTIA
GALTH
GREEN FIELDS
WESTERN PLAINS
RUINS OF WARTH
PIPERIA
SELFIA
FARRIGNIA
WALL OF TRELAUS
BARRED CITY
TRAVAN
SERES
CIRCOL
JAPAS
OFT
EMITH
ANGAR
TOD
POTH
TAXOS
ARPTES
VILTAN

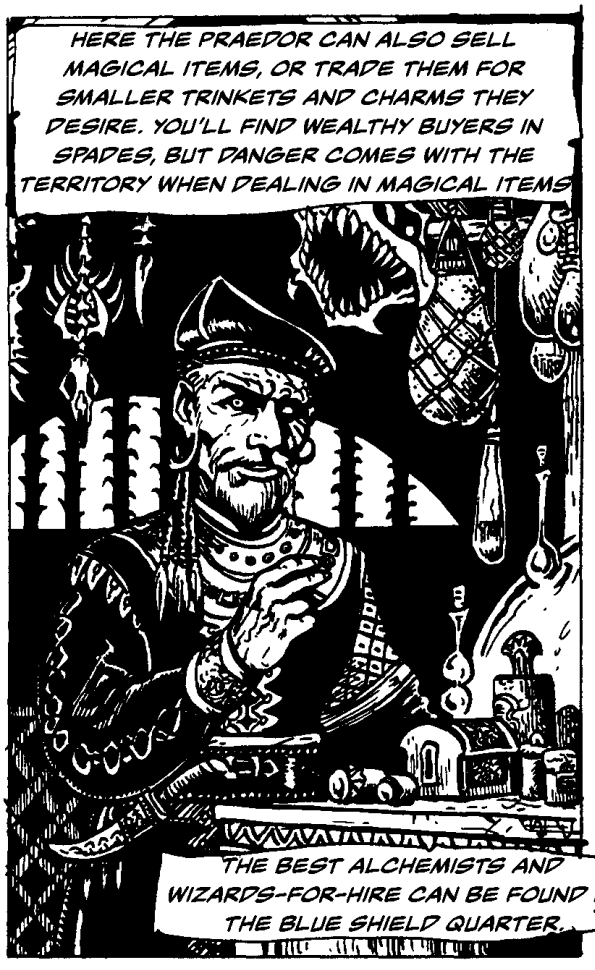
FARRIGNIA WAS CHOSEN AS THE CAPITAL OF JACONIA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR. TULATH HAD BEEN TURNED INTO THE BARRED CITY AND WARTH WAS ALREADY IN RUINS. THE CITY WAS CENTRALLY LOCATED AND MANY ROADS AND RIVERS CROSSED THEIR PATHS THERE. FOLLOWING THE RISING UNREST WITHIN THE NATION, FARRIGNIA HAD BECOME A SAFE HAVEN FOR ARTISTS AND SCHOLARS. AS A POLITICALLY INSIGNIFICANT CITY, IT HAD MANAGED TO AVOID ANY ARMED CONFLICTS AND, AS A RESULT, RETAIN MUCH OF ITS FORMER GLORY, DESPITE VAST OVERPOPULATION.

Farrignia

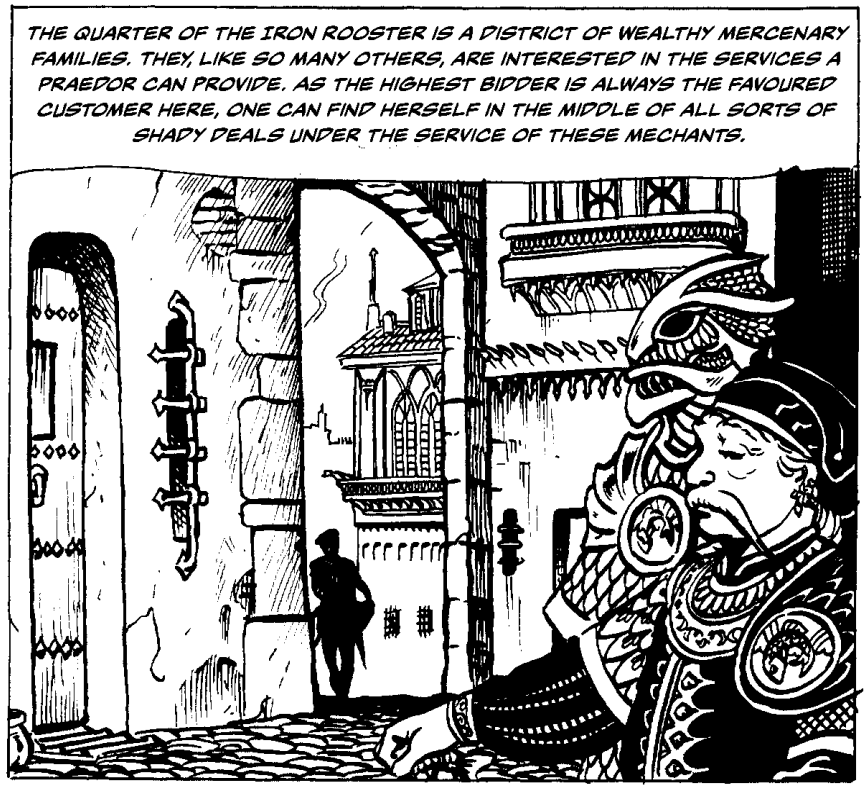

LIALA MADA, THE QUEEN OF FARRIGNIA, IS THE MOST POWERFUL PRINCE IN JACONIA.

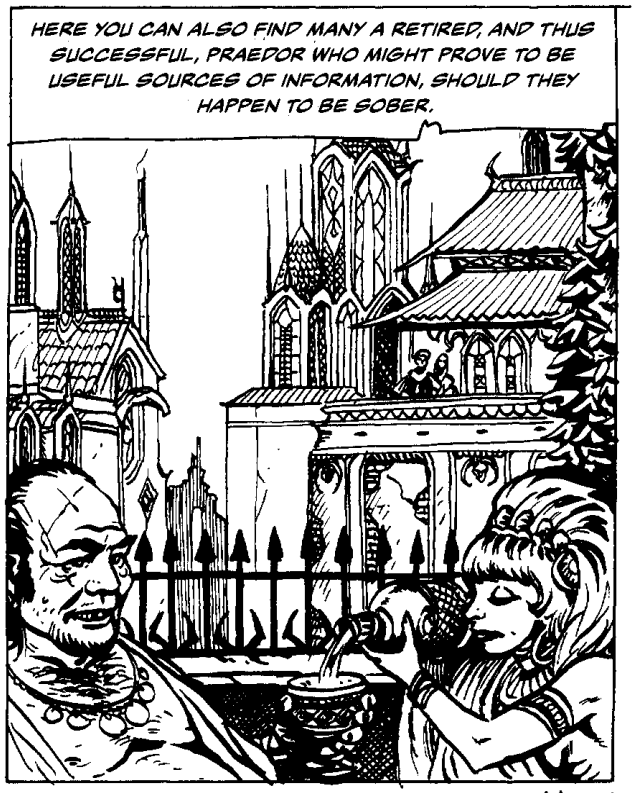

WITH STRICT LAWS AND AN IRON FIST, SHE HAS KEPT THE STREETS OF FARRIGNIA SAFE. THOUGH OTHERWISE CONSIDERED A CONSERVATIVE LEADER, THE QUEEN FAVOURS THE ARTS AND NATURAL SCIENCES, AND FARRIGNIA'S REPUTATION AS A CITY OF THE LEARNED IS NOT CUT OUT OF WHOLE CLOTH.

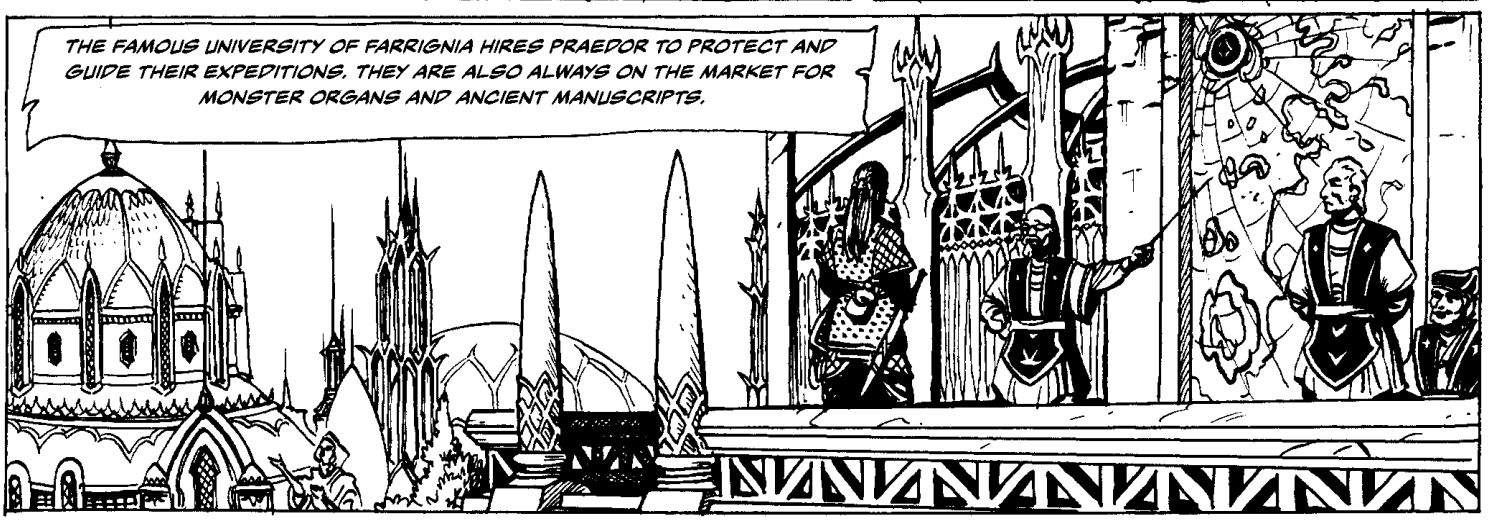

THE BLUE SHIELD QUARTER, ALSO KNOWN AS THE STREET OF WONDERS OR POISONBREW LANE, IS THE GO-TO PLACE FOR ADVENTURERS LOOKING TO DO BUSINESS AND IT LIES IN THE OLD TOWN OF FARRIGNIA. IT IS A MARKETPLACE FOR ALCHEMISTS, AND EVEN THE AGELESS. ON THE STREET YOU WILL ALSO FIND THE BLACK ROOM, WHICH IS THE EMBASSY OF THE AGELESS AMONG MORTALS. MANY PRAEDOR COME HERE TO SELL THEIR TREASURES, EVEN THOUGH THE CLOSEST EDGE OF THE WASTELAND OF THE WOLF IS OVER 400 MILES AWAY.


HERE THE PRAEDOR CAN ALSO SELL MAGICAL ITEMS, OR TRADE THEM FOR SMALLER TRINKETS AND CHARMS THEY DESIRE. YOU'LL FIND WEALTHY BUYERS IN SPADES, BUT DANGER COMES WITH THE TERRITORY WHEN DEALING IN MAGICAL ITEMS
THE BEST ALCHEMISTS AND WIZARDS-FOR-HIRE CAN BE FOUND IN THE BLUE SHIELD QUARTER.

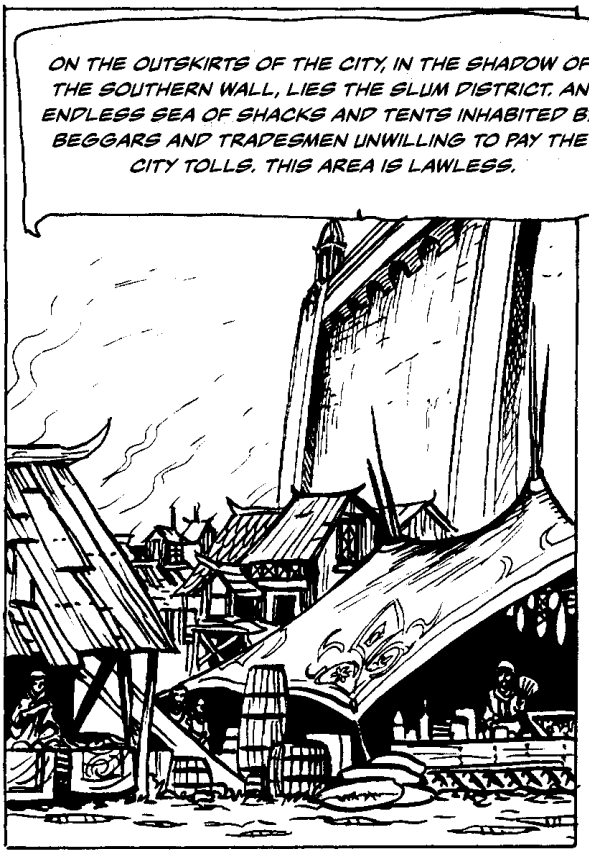
Farrignia


THE QUARTER OF THE IRON ROOSTER IS A DISTRICT OF WEALTHY MERCENARY FAMILIES. THEY, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, ARE INTERESTED IN THE SERVICES A PRAEDOR CAN PROVIDE. AS THE HIGHEST BIDDER IS ALWAYS THE FAVOURED CUSTOMER HERE, ONE CAN FIND HERSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL SORTS OF SHADY DEALS UNDER THE SERVICE OF THESE MECHANTS.

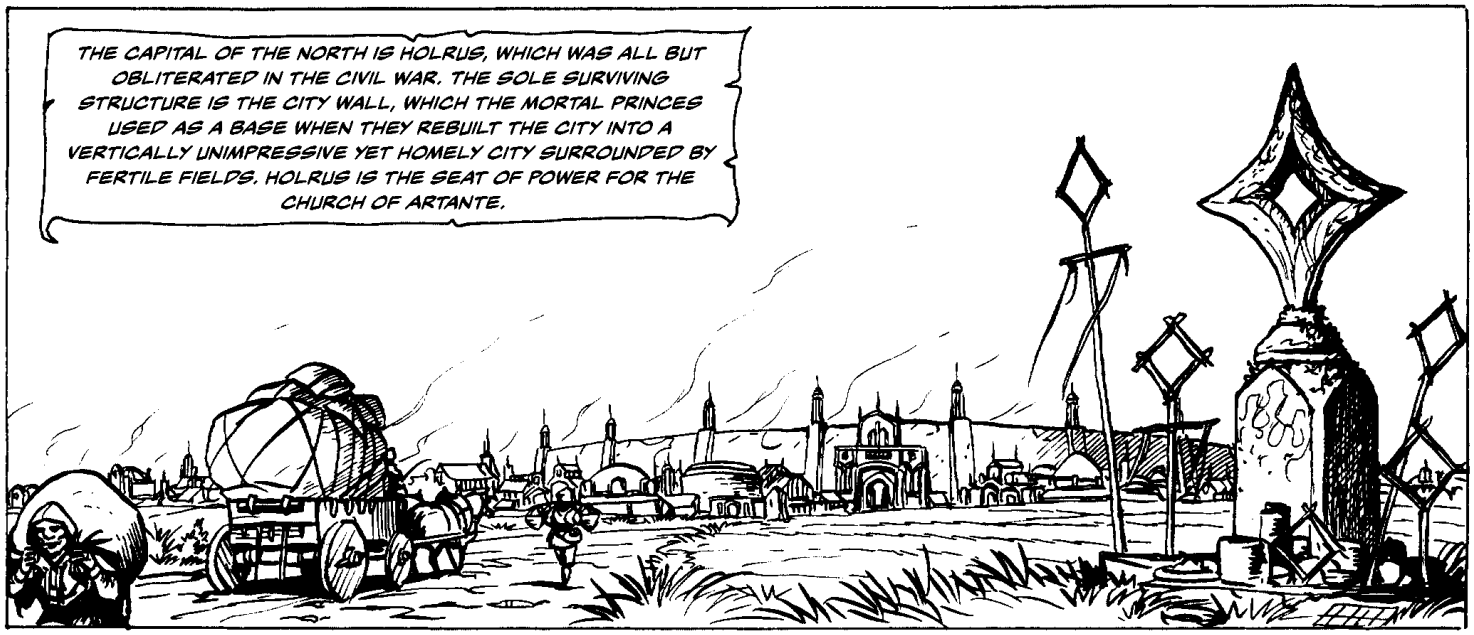

HERE YOU CAN ALSO FIND MANY A RETIRED, AND THUS SUCCESSFUL, PRAEDOR WHO MIGHT PROVE TO BE USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION, SHOULD THEY HAPPEN TO BE SOBER.


THE FAMOUS UNIVERSITY OF FARRIGNIA HIRES PRAEDOR TO PROTECT AND GUIDE THEIR EXPEDITIONS. THEY ARE ALSO ALWAYS ON THE MARKET FOR MONSTER ORGANS AND ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS.

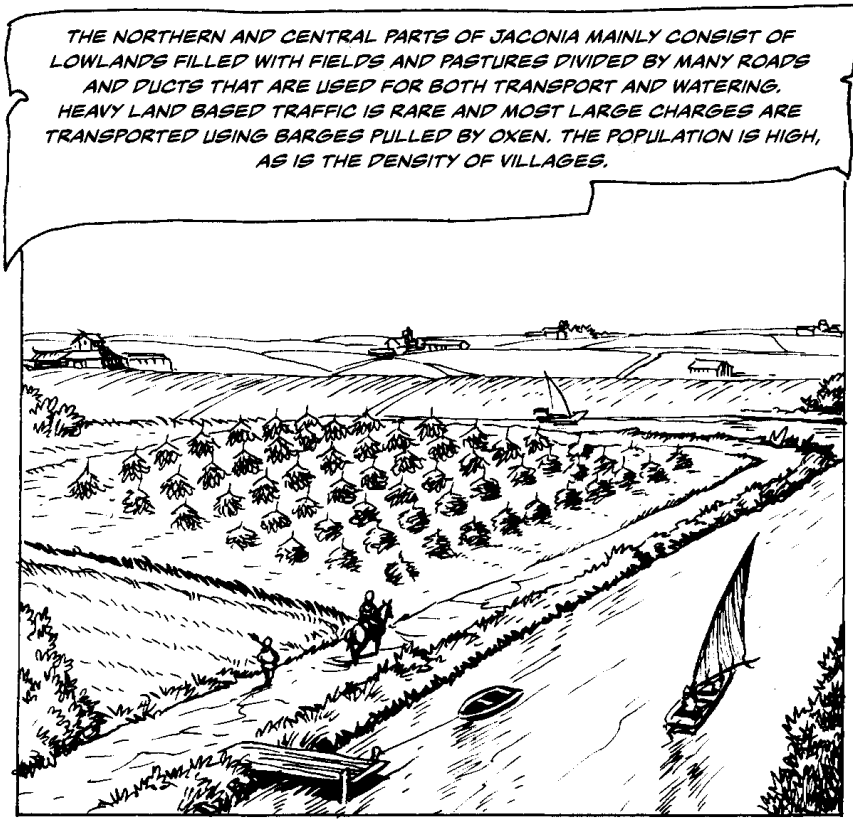
DESPITE HER CONSERVATIVE WAYS, THE QUEEN HAS PERMITTED PROSTITUTION AND GAMBLING BETWEEN THE THIRD AND FOURTH (THE OUTERMOST) WALLS. THE THIEVES' GUILD HAS GRATEFULLY KEPT THESE PASTIMES, AND THEIR BYPRODUCTS, FROM SPREADING TO THE MORE WEALTHY PARTS OF THE CITY. MOST OF THE CITY'S POPULATION CONSISTS OF HONEST CRAFTSMEN.

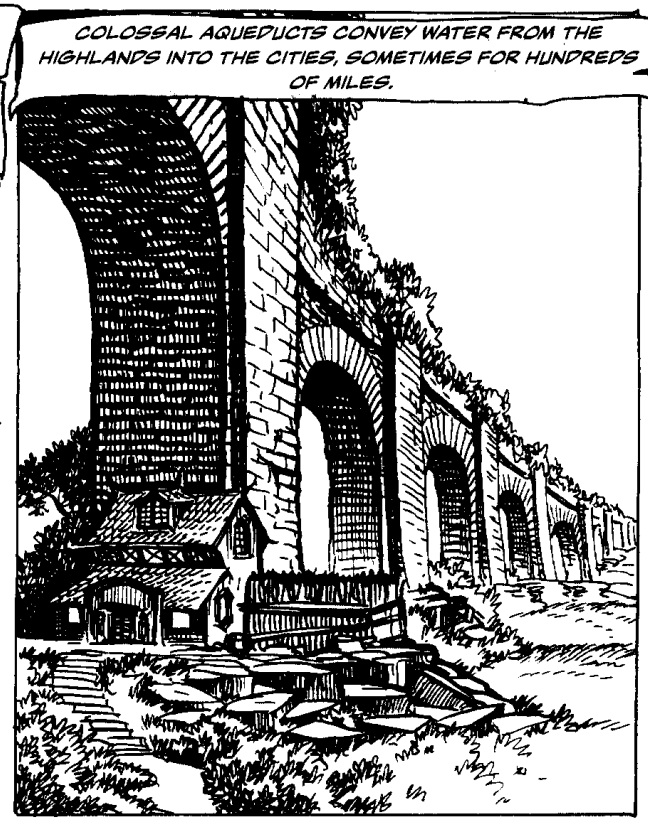

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, IN THE SHADOW OF THE SOUTHERN WALL, LIES THE SLUM DISTRICT. AN ENDLESS SEA OF SHACKS AND TENTS INHABITED BY BEGGARS AND TRADESMEN UNWILLING TO PAY THE CITY TOLLS. THIS AREA IS LAWLESS.

Holrus


THE CAPITAL OF THE NORTH IS HOLRUS, WHICH WAS ALL BUT OBLITERATED IN THE CIVIL WAR. THE SOLE SURVIVING STRUCTURE IS THE CITY WALL, WHICH THE MORTAL PRINCES USED AS A BASE WHEN THEY REBUILT THE CITY INTO A VERTICALLY UNIMPRESSIVE YET HOMELY CITY SURROUNDED BY FERTILE FIELDS. HOLRUS IS THE SEAT OF POWER FOR THE CHURCH OF ARTANTE.

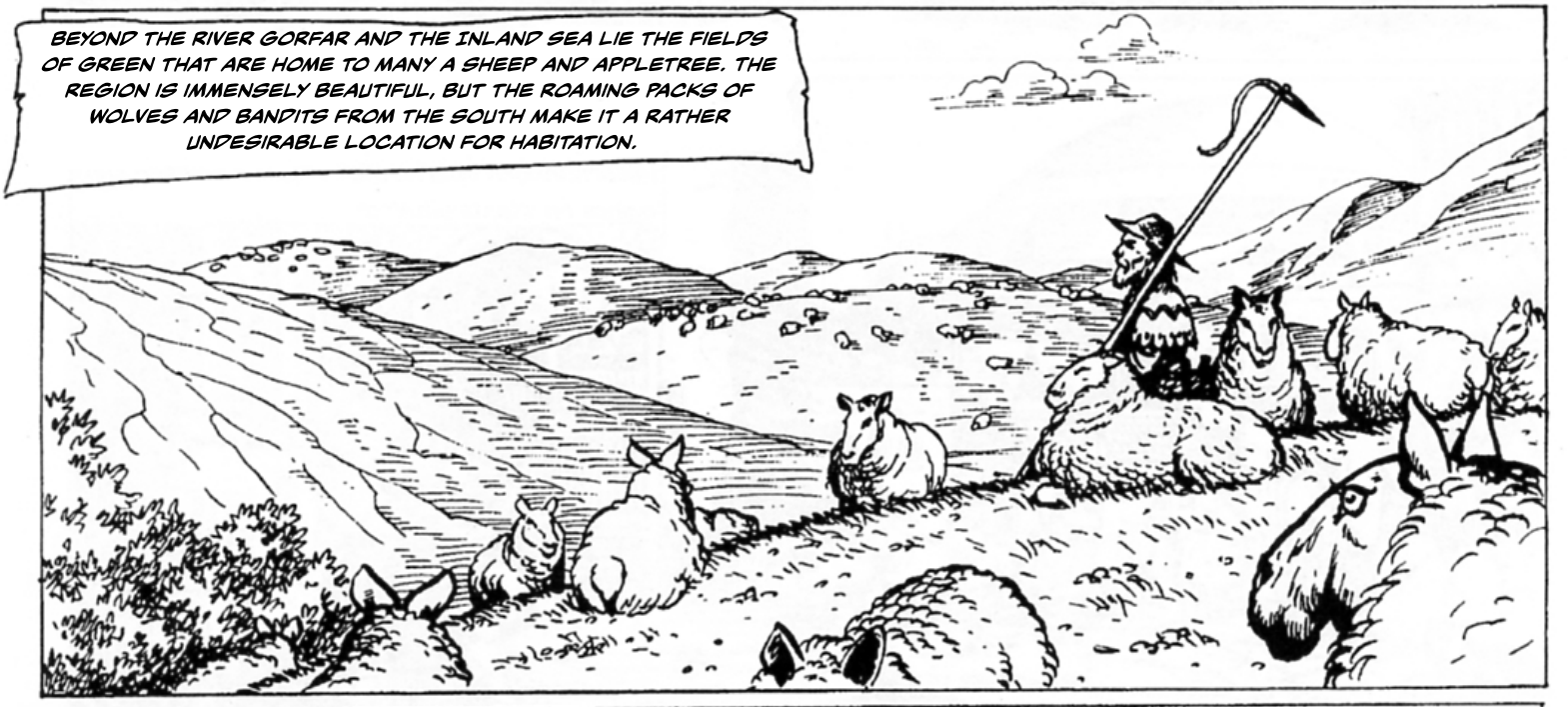
THIS PEACEFUL CITY, KNOWN FOR ITS FABRICS AND HANDICRAFTS, IS RULED BY KING VESTAR MADA. CRIME RATES ARE LOW, THE NUMBER OF HYPOCRITES IS HIGH.
PRAEDOR AND OTHER ADVENTURERS ARE GREETED WITH HOSTILE GLANCES AND CONSIDERED SCUM, RIPE FOR THE GALLOWS. THIS NARROW-MINDEDNESS HAS ALSO STIFLED MANY SCIENCES AND FORMS OF ART.

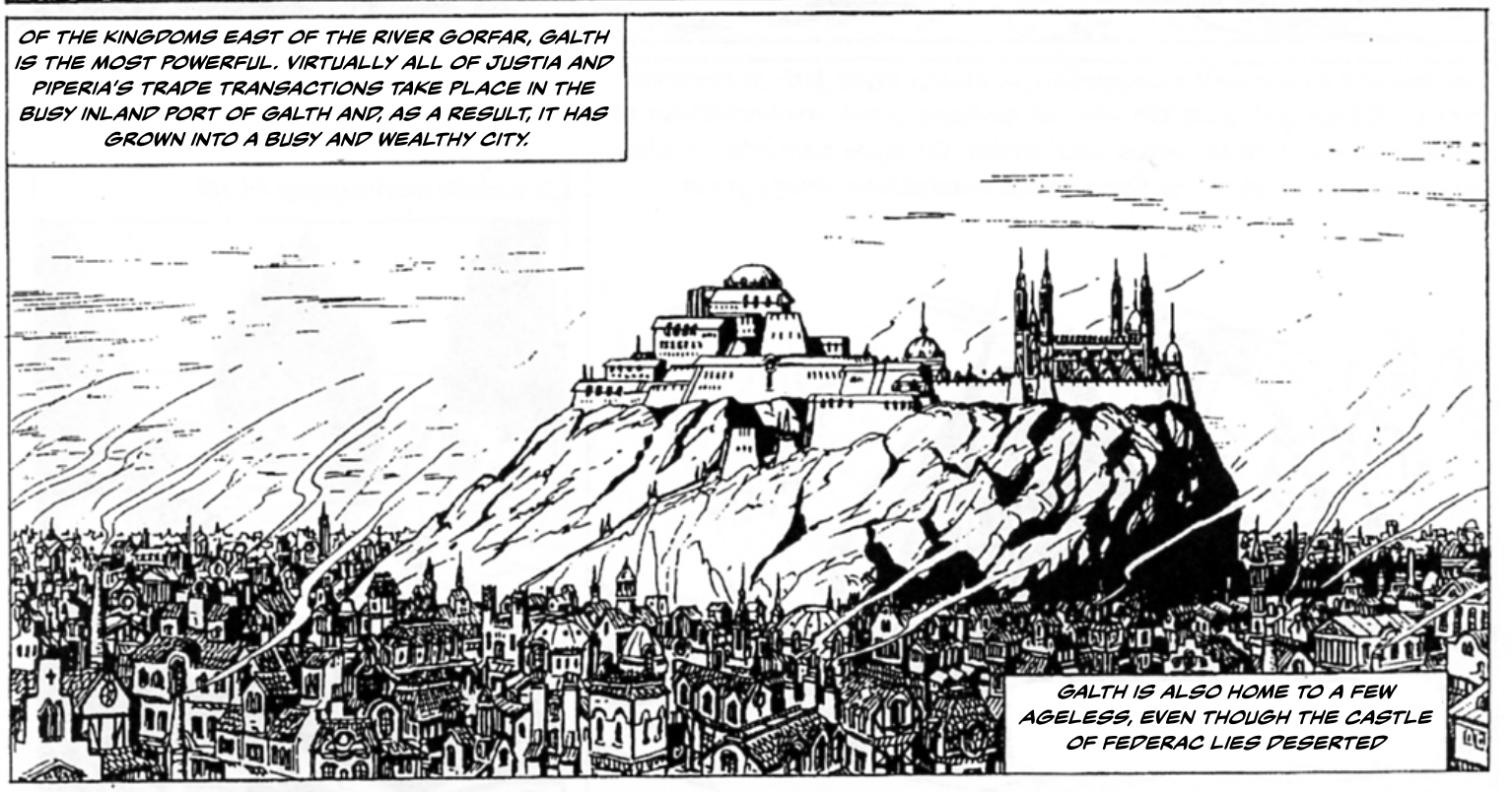

THE NORTHERN AND CENTRAL PARTS OF JACONIA MAINLY CONSIST OF LOWLANDS FILLED WITH FIELDS AND PASTURES DIVIDED BY MANY ROADS AND DUCTS THAT ARE USED FOR BOTH TRANSPORT AND WATERING. HEAVY LAND BASED TRAFFIC IS RARE AND MOST LARGE CHARGES ARE TRANSPORTED USING BARGES PULLED BY OXEN. THE POPULATION IS HIGH, AS IS THE DENSITY OF VILLAGES.


COLOSSAL AQUEDUCTS CONVEY WATER FROM THE HIGHLANDS INTO THE CITIES, SOMETIMES FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES.

Northeast

TOGETHER WITH THE AFOREMENTIONED AREAS, JACONIA'S BREADBASKET IS FORMED BY THE KINGDOMS OF SUNIA, TUTUS AND JUSTIA. ALL THREE ARE REMARKABLY SIMILAR.
THESE FIELDS HAVE BEEN FARMED FOR AN ETERNITY.


BEYOND THE RIVER GORFAR AND THE INLAND SEA LIE THE FIELDS OF GREEN THAT ARE HOME TO MANY A SHEEP AND APPLETREE. THE REGION IS IMMENSELY BEAUTIFUL, BUT THE ROAMING PACKS OF WOLVES AND BANDITS FROM THE SOUTH MAKE IT A RATHER UNDESIRABLE LOCATION FOR HABITATION.


OF THE KINGDOMS EAST OF THE RIVER GORFAR, GALTH IS THE MOST POWERFUL. VIRTUALLY ALL OF JUSTIA AND PIPERIA'S TRADE TRANSACTIONS TAKE PLACE IN THE BUSY INLAND PORT OF GALTH AND, AS A RESULT, IT HAS GROWN INTO A BUSY AND WEALTHY CITY.
GALTH IS ALSO HOME TO A FEW AGELESS, EVEN THOUGH THE CASTLE OF FEDERAC LIES DESERTED

Northeast

PIPERIA WAS BUILT ON THE SHORES OF THE INLAND SEA, BUT NOWADAYS THE WATERFRONT MEETS THE OLD DOCKS OF THE CITY ONLY DURING FLOOD SEASONS IN SPRING AND AUTUMN. HOWEVER, FISHING IS STILL A PROMINENT AND IMPORTANT LIVELIHOOD FOR THE KINGDOM.

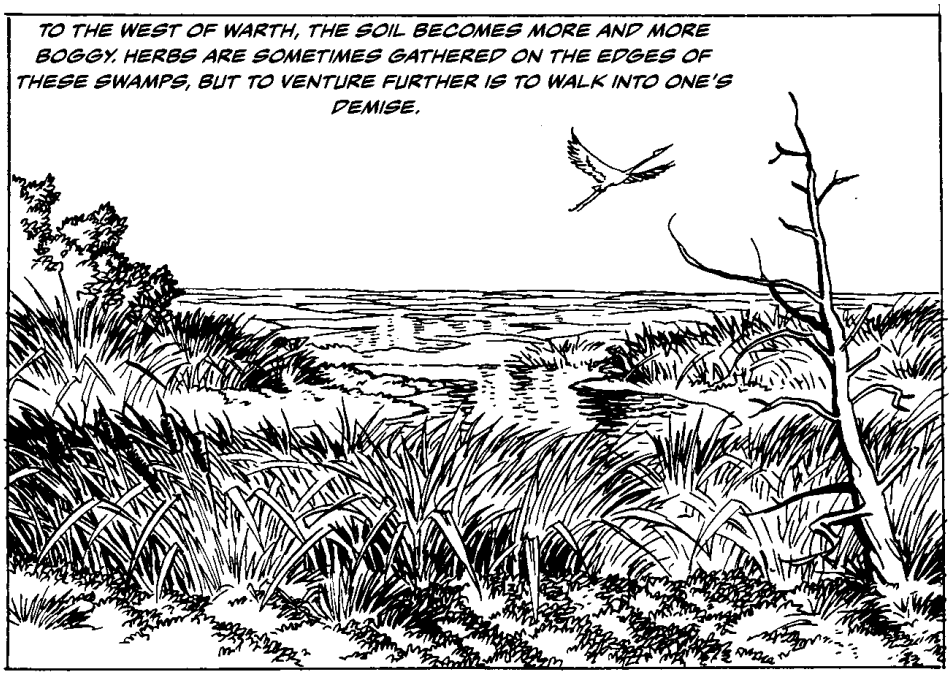
THE SEAT OF POWER IS OCCUPIED BY THE LENIENT KING MELEK ANDER. PIPERIA IS ALSO HOME TO THE MONASTERY OF THE SENNIT MONKS OF ARTANTE, FABLED FOR THEIR COLLECTION OF BOOKS, BUT OTHERWISE THE ATMOSPHERE IS RATHER RURAL.

MANY TRADE SHIPS TRAVERSE THE INLAND SEA, BUT IT IS ALSO SAILED BY MANY PIRATES. THEY WILL GENERALLY LEAVE FISHERMEN ALONE, AND DIGNITARIES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO DISGUISE THEMSELVES AS SUCH. TALES ARE ALSO TOLD OF MONSTERS THAT HAVE SWAM HERE FROM BORVARIA THROUGH THE UNDERGROUND STREAMS.

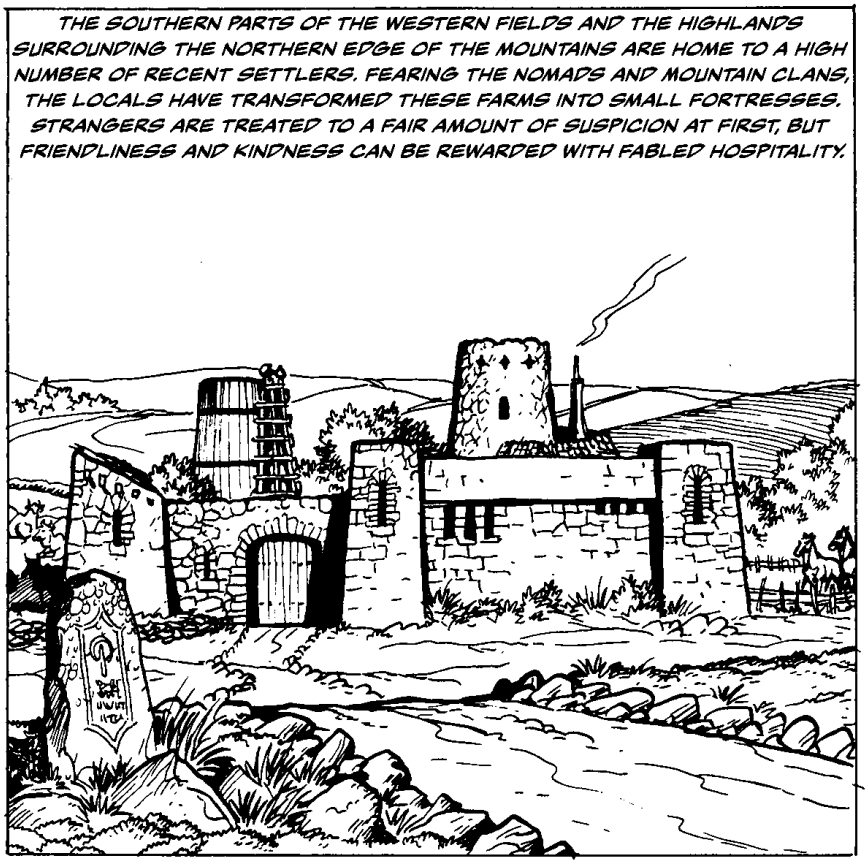
THE STEEP SLOPES AND ROCKY ISLANDS OF THE EASTERN MOUNTAINS RISE DIRECTLY FROM THE WATERFRONT. THE COVES OF THE SHORELINE HIDE MANY MOUNTAIN VILLAGES AND THE ISLANDS ARE FESTERING WITH PIRATES.

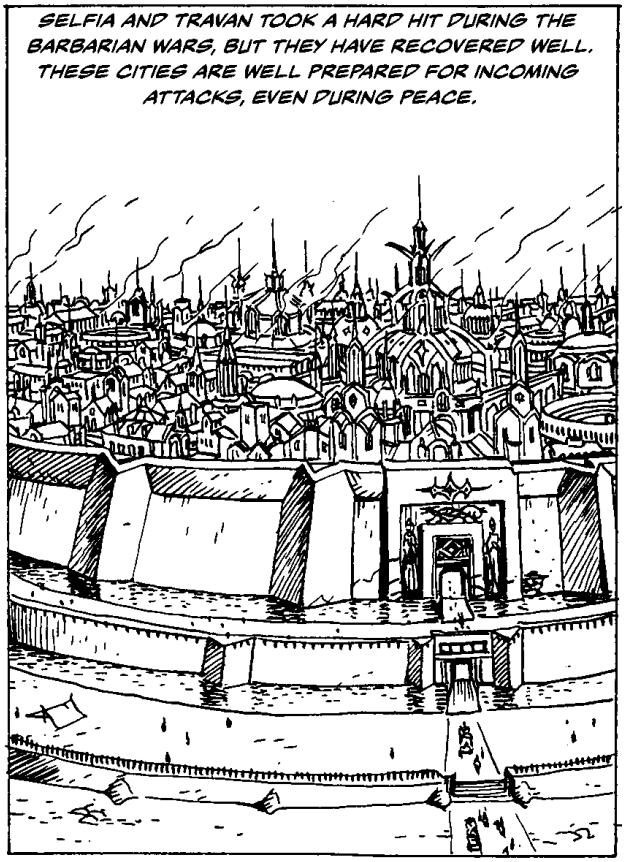
Inner Sea

THE GARGANTUAN RUINS OF WARTH LIE NORTH OF FARRIGNIA, AN UGLY SCAR IN THE MIDDLE OF JACONIA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL COUNTRYSIDE. FOR ALL POINTS AND PURPOSES, WARTH IS CURSED GROUNDS, BUT THE AGELESS DESTROYED EVERYTHING WITHIN IT AND NOW THE CITY HAS FALLEN SILENT AND BLEAK.
"THE RICHES HAVE BEEN TAKEN AND THE MONSTERS HAVE BEEN CUT DOWN TO A HANDFUL OF TIMID RUNTS."
THERE ARE RUMOURS OF SURVIVING TREASURE, BUT FINDING ANY WITHOUT A MAP IS NIGH IMPOSSIBLE.


TO THE WEST OF WARTH, THE SOIL BECOMES MORE AND MORE BOGGY. HERBS ARE SOMETIMES GATHERED ON THE EDGES OF THESE SWAMPS, BUT TO VENTURE FURTHER IS TO WALK INTO ONE'S DEMISE.

THIS IS ENSURED BY SWAMP DEVILS AND TALES OF OTHER SUCH MONSTERS - THE FAILED EXPERIMENTS AND CREATIONS OF ANCIENT AGELESS.


THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF THE WESTERN FIELDS AND THE HIGHLANDS SURROUNDING THE NORTHERN EDGE OF THE MOUNTAINS ARE HOME TO A HIGH NUMBER OF RECENT SETTLERS. FEARING THE NOMADS AND MOUNTAIN CLANS, THE LOCALS HAVE TRANSFORMED THESE FARMS INTO SMALL FORTRESSES. STRANGERS ARE TREATED TO A FAIR AMOUNT OF SUSPICION AT FIRST, BUT FRIENDLINESS AND KINDNESS CAN BE REWARDED WITH FABLED HOSPITALITY.


SELFIA AND TRAVAN TOOK A HARD HIT DURING THE BARBARIAN WARS, BUT THEY HAVE RECOVERED WELL. THESE CITIES ARE WELL PREPARED FOR INCOMING ATTACKS, EVEN DURING PEACE.

Northwest

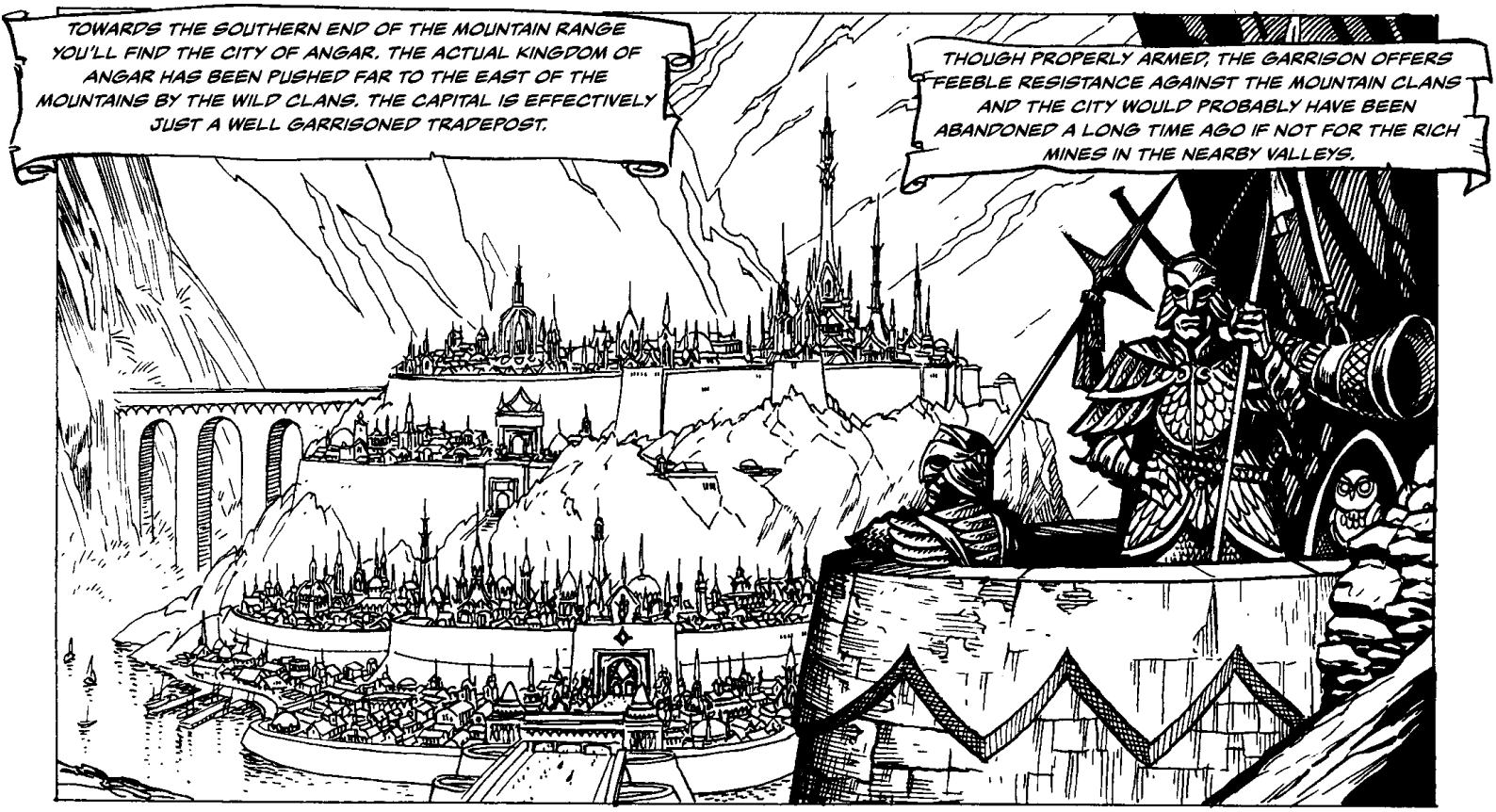
THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS LIE TO THE SOUTH OF SELFIA, AND THEY COVER ROUGHLY A SIXTH OF JACONIA'S SURFACE AREA. THESE MOUNTAINS ARE NOT A PART OF ANY KINGDOM WITHIN JACONIA, AND THEIR PEAKS CAN SOAR UPWARDS OF 3,5 MILES.

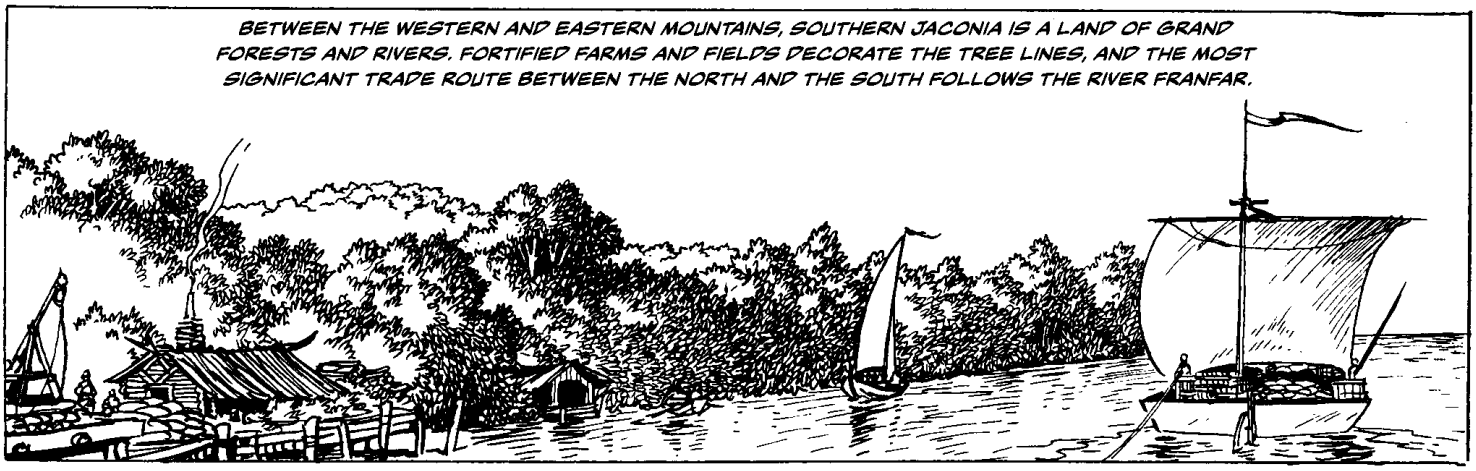
THE MOUNTAIN CLANS TAKE A RATHER KEEN INTEREST IN STRANGERS, SO YOU BETTER COME PREPARED WITH A GOOD EXPLANATION OR A HEFTY BRIBE. THE CLANS ALSO WAGE WARS AGAINST EACH OTHER, SO BEFRIENDING ONE MIGHT MAKE AN ENEMY OF ANOTHER. LUCKILY YOU CAN ALWAYS TELL IF A MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN FOLK IS PREPARED FOR WAR OR PEACE BASED ON THEIR OUTFITS.

THE AGELESS KING OF ANGAR CREATED THE YETIS AND MANY OTHER MOUNTAIN BEASTS IN ORDER TO ERADICATE THE EARLY MOUNTAIN CLANS. HE IS LONG GONE, BUT THE BEASTS CONTINUE TO WAGE WAR AGAINST THE HUMANS.

THE LOCATIONS OF THE FORTIFIED VILLAGES OF THE MOUNTAIN CLANS ARE KEPT SECRET, THROUGH SHEER VIOLENCE IF PUSH COMES TO SHOVE. CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THE CLANS DO NOT LIVE ON THE SNOWY SLOPES OF THE MOUNTAINS, BUT IN THE VERDANT VALLEYS HIDDEN AMONGST THEM.

Western Mountains





Shore of Franfar

The Great Forest

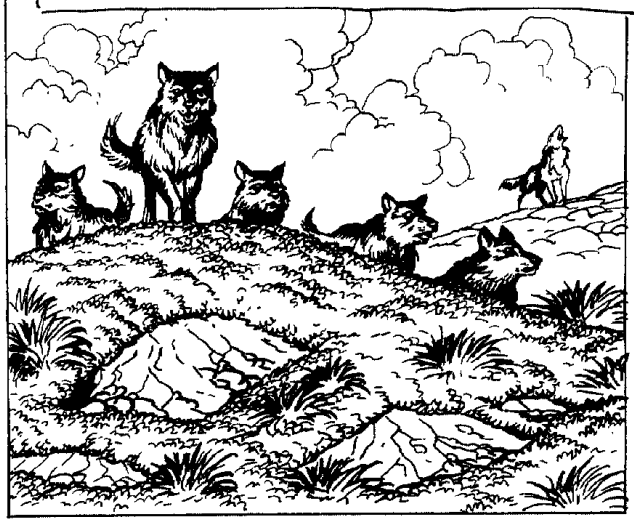
Eastern Kingdom

JACONIA IS SURROUNDED BY THE WASTELAND OF THE WOLF, A 30 MILES WIDE STUNTED STEP, WHOSE VEGETATION SLOWLY THINNES OUT AS YOU APPROACH BORVARIA. FOR THE LAST 600 FEET TOWARDS BORVARIA, THE LAND IS COMPLETELY BARREN AND DEAD.

YOU WILL KNOW YOU HAVE ENTERED THE WASTELAND OF THE WOLF WHEN THE GROWTH THINNES OUT AND WHAT LITTLE TREES AND BUSHES REMAIN GROW MISSHAPEN AND TOWARDS INLAND.

NOMADS INHABIT THE INNER RIM OF THE CIRCULAR WASTELAND, BUT YOU MAY RUN INTO THEM ELSEWHERE AS WELL. THEY DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO STRANGERS, BUT ONE MAY SURVIVE AN EN-COUNTER WITH A NOMAD BY OFFERING GIFTS OR THROUGH A GIFTED TONGUE. HOWEVER, SKIRMISHING WITH SETTLERS TENDS TO MAKE THE TRIBES BELLIGERENT.

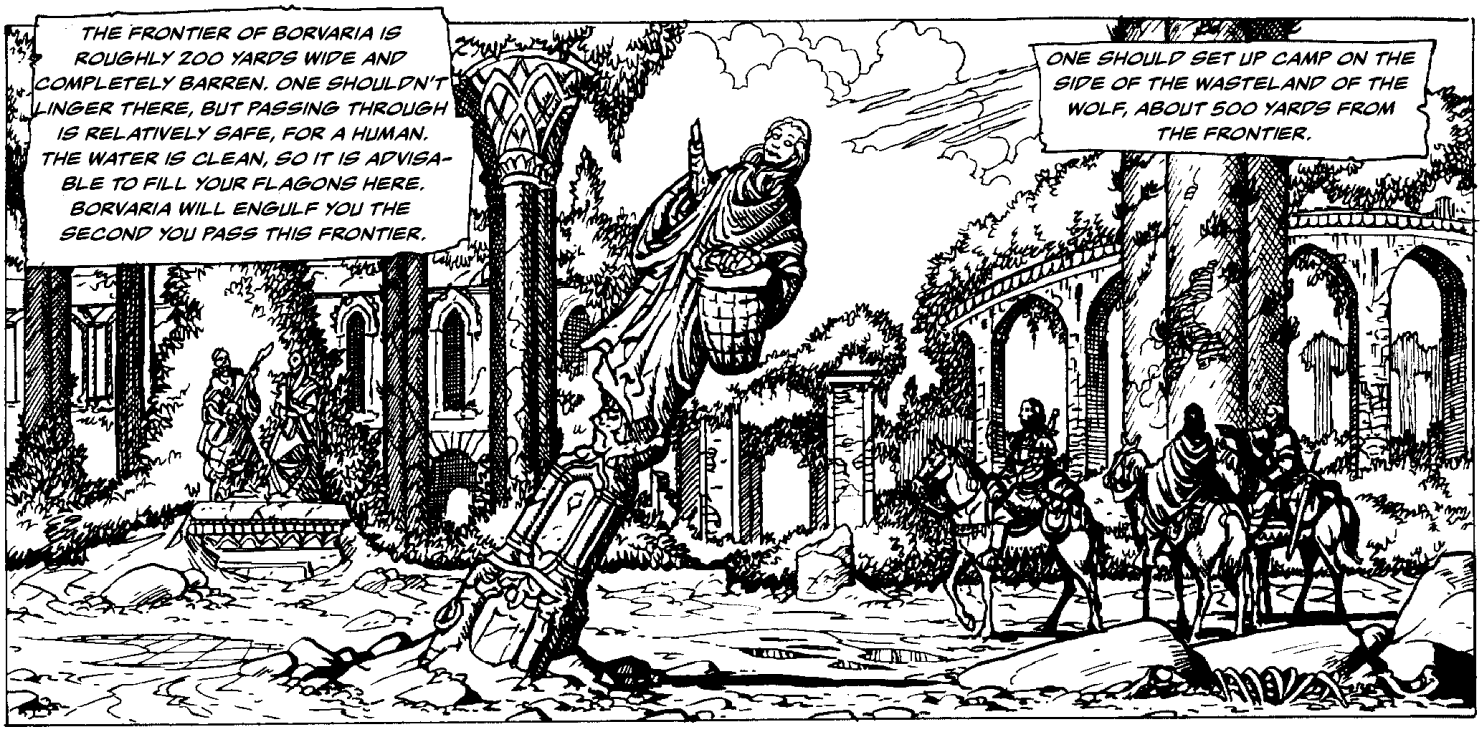
THE WASTELAND IS NAMED AFTER ITS WOLVES, WHO ARE THE ONLY PREDATORS IN THE AREA. DURING WINTER, THE PACKS OCCASIONALLY ATTACK HUMANS AS WELL.



THE WASTELAND IS NOT A NATURAL DESERT, THUS IT'S NOT PARTICULARLY DRY. DURING SPRING AND AUTUMN THE RAINS MAY TURN LARGE AREAS OF LAND INTO A MUDDY MESS AND QUICKSAND IS AN EVER PRESENT THREAT. THE REGION BEYOND THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS IS SEVERELY MIRED, WHEREAS IN THE EAST THE PASSAGEWAYS ARE CUT OFF BY RIVERS.

THE INNER RIM IS ALSO INHABITED BY DEERS, RABBITS AND WILD KINE BUT THE FURTHER YOU TRAVEL, THE SMALLER, ANGRIER AND MORE RESI-LIENT THE ANIMALS GROW. EVEN THOUGH MOST OF THESE SMALL CREATURES ARE POISONOUS, THERE ARE NO MONSTERS IN THE WASTELAND.

Wasteland of the Wolf


THE FRONTIER OF BORVARIA IS ROUGHLY 200 YARDS WIDE AND COMPLETELY BARREN. ONE SHOULDN'T LINGER THERE, BUT PASSING THROUGH IS RELATIVELY SAFE, FOR A HUMAN. THE WATER IS CLEAN, SO IT IS ADVISABLE TO FILL YOUR FLAGONS HERE. BORVARIA WILL ENGULF YOU THE SECOND YOU PASS THIS FRONTIER.
ONE SHOULD SET UP CAMP ON THE SIDE OF THE WASTELAND OF THE WOLF, ABOUT 500 YARDS FROM THE FRONTIER.

YOU SHOULD AVOID AREAS THAT ARE OVERGROWN. MOVING THROUGH IS SLOW, THE THORNS AND SAP OF THE PLANTS ARE POISONOUS, AND MANY A BEAST LURK WITHIN THE BUSHES. EVEN A BORVARIAN HERBIVORE CAN BE QUITE THE CHALLENGE IN COMBAT.

BUILDINGS THAT ARE TOO WELL PRESERVED, UNTOUCHED BY THE WILDLIFE, CAN BE EVEN MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE THICK BUSHES.

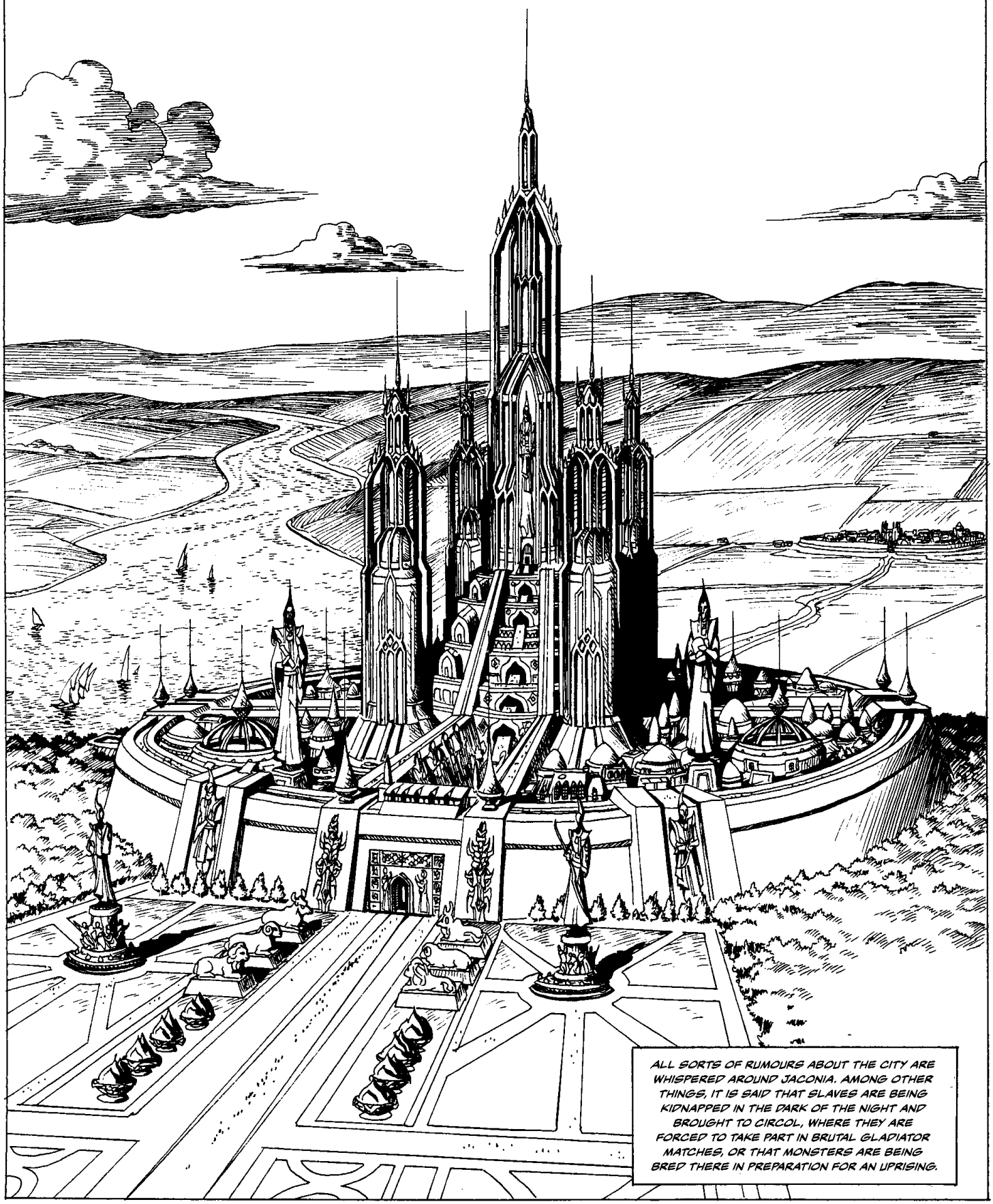
DO NOT EAT OR DRINK ANYTHING YOU DID NOT BRING WITH YOU. EVEN FAMILIAR FRUITS AND BERRIES ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM, AND CAN BE DEADLY.

Borvaria

THE INDEPENDENT CITY OF CIRCOL LIES ON THE EASTBANK OF THE RIVER FRANFAR, 125 MILES SOUTH OF THE BARRED CITY. IT IS ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE KINGDOM OF THE AGELESS. WHILE YOU CAN FIND THE OCCASIONAL AGELESS IN ALMOST ANY MAJOR CITY IN JACONIA, WHERE THEY ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY FROM THE MUNDANE AUTHORITIES, IN CIRCOL THEY ARE THE GOVERNING CLASS, AND NO ONE BUT THE AGELESS THEMSELVES AND THEIR SERVANTS ARE ALLOWED THROUGH ITS GATES.

CIRCOL IS ALSO WHERE THE COUNCIL OF THE AGELESS GATHERS, AND MOST OF THE BOOKS AND TREASURES THAT WERE SALVAGED DURING THE CIVIL WAR ARE HERE, EITHER FOR THE AGELESS TO PERUSE OR BEHIND LOCKED DOORS. THIS IS ALSO WHERE MAGE SLAYERS ARE BROUGHT IN FOR JUDGEMENT.

FOR A CITY BUILT DURING THE REIGN OF THE AGELESS KINGS, CIRCOL IS RATHER SMALL. HOWEVER, NEARLY ALL OF ITS BUILDINGS ARE ENORMOUS PALACES, WITH THE COUNCIL PALACE BEING THE HIGHEST BUILDING IN ALL OF JACONIA.



ALL SORTS OF RUMOURS ABOUT THE CITY ARE WHISPERED AROUND JACONIA. AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT IS SAID THAT SLAVES ARE BEING KIDNAPPED IN THE DARK OF THE NIGHT AND BROUGHT TO CIRCOL, WHERE THEY ARE FORCED TO TAKE PART IN BRUTAL GLADIATOR MATCHES, OR THAT MONSTERS ARE BEING BRED THERE IN PREPARATION FOR AN UPRISING.

Circol

LAGARD

The Lion and the Butterfly

A Tale of Three Sovereigns 1/3

WE ARE GOING TO STONE THIS BOY TO DEATH, STRANGER. HE'S A FAGGOT!

SO WHAT? I AM AS WELL. I'M TAKING THE BOY WITH ME.

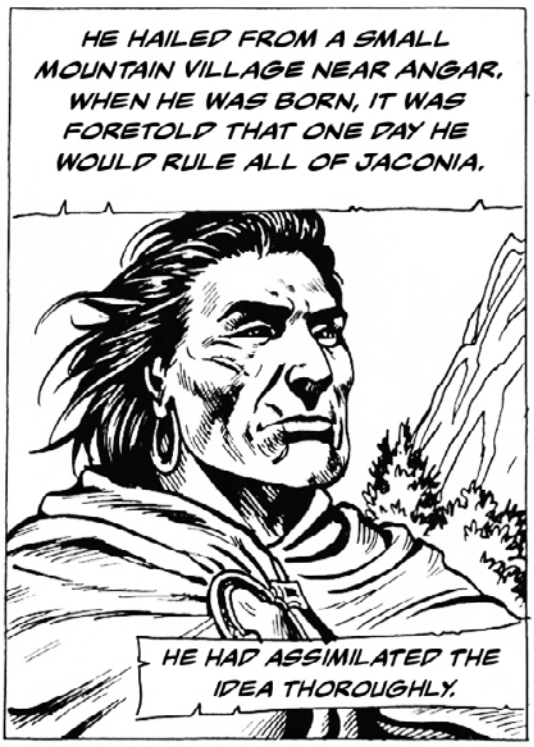
HAH! YOU WILL COME TO FIND THAT THE PEOPLE OF THIS TOWN DO NOT TOLERATE SUCH GODLESSNESS! TO LAY WITH A MAN IS A CRIME AGAINST THE GREAT CREATOR, ARTANTE!

MEN, ATTACK! HE IS ALONE, AND THERE'S OVER A HUNDRED OF US! GET HIM!

WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU, MEN!? THEY ARE GETTING AWAY! WHY AREN'T YOU DOING ANYTHING? DO YOU NOT FEAR THE WRATH OF ARTANTE?!

THE MAN WAS AN ERIDU. THEY ARE THE MOST FEARSOME WARRIOR CLAN IN ALL OF JACONIA. GAY AS THE DAY IS LONG, EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM.

THE NAME OF MY SAVIOUR WAS KADIR, AND AS A TRAVELLING COMPANION HE WAS, ADMITTEDLY, A LITTLE QUEER.


HE HAILED FROM A SMALL MOUNTAIN VILLAGE NEAR ANGAR. WHEN HE WAS BORN, IT WAS FORETOLD THAT ONE DAY HE WOULD RULE ALL OF JACONIA.
HE HAD ASSIMILATED THE IDEA THOROUGHLY.

THIS WILL MAKE A FINE SPOT FOR AN AQUEDUCT. THE WATER CAN BE CONVEYED FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES INTO THE VALLEYS.
WHAT IF THE LOCALS DO NOT WANT AN AQUEDUCT?

I WILL BUILD A BATHHOUSE AND A BREWERY DOWNHILL. IT WILL APPEASE THE WIVES AND HOUSEHOLDERS WITH EASE.
NO, I MEANT... WHAT IF THEY DO NOT WANT TO SUBMIT TO YOUR RULE?

THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION... THE THOUGHT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME.

THIS IS A SPARSELY POPULATED REGION. 2000 RAIDERS WILL BE MORE THAN ENOUGH. THE REBEL LEADERS AND THEIR FAMILIES I WILL CRUCIFY ALONG THIS ROAD... THE PROMISE OF PARDON WILL DISARM THOSE WHO REMAIN...

JULIAN, THIS RABBIT TASTES HORRIBLE.
I KNOW.

I AM A POET, A TRAINED SCRIBE, I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT COOKING!
IT MATTERS NOT. I CAN COOK ON THE ROAD. USED TO IT.

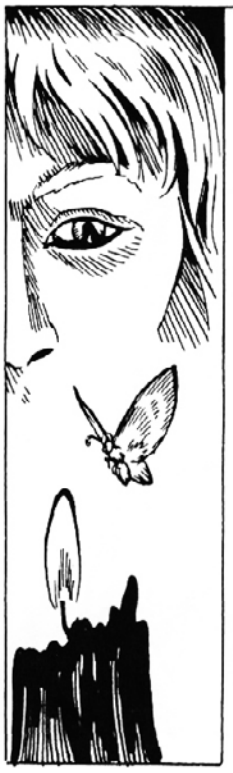
SO, A POET, HUH? AFTER I'VE DECLARED ANGAR AS THE NEW CAPITAL, I WILL BUILD A LIBRARY IN YOUR NAME AND DEDICATE AN ENTIRE WING TO YOUR WORKS.
I DON'T WANT A LIBRARY!

YOUR VERY OWN ACADEMY THEN? OR A THEATER? A CONSERVATOIRE?
NO, NO, NO! YOUR IMPOSITION IS OFF-PUTTING!

WHAT DO YOU WANT, THEN, IN LIFE?

YOU...

LIFE'S ROAD SOMETIMES TAKES ABSURD TURNS AND BECOMES DIFFICULT TO TRAVERSE. I HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A MAN WHO IS DRIVING ME BARKING MAD.



DO YOU EVER FEEL AS IF YOU WERE...

?

NOTHING.

I SEE NOT WHY YOU MUST FIGHT THEM, IF THESE FIVE ARE SUCH FEARED OUTLAWS.
THESE PEOPLE NEED HELP. A KING CANNOT BE A PARASITE IN HIS KINGDOM. HIS MISSION IS ALSO TO HELP.

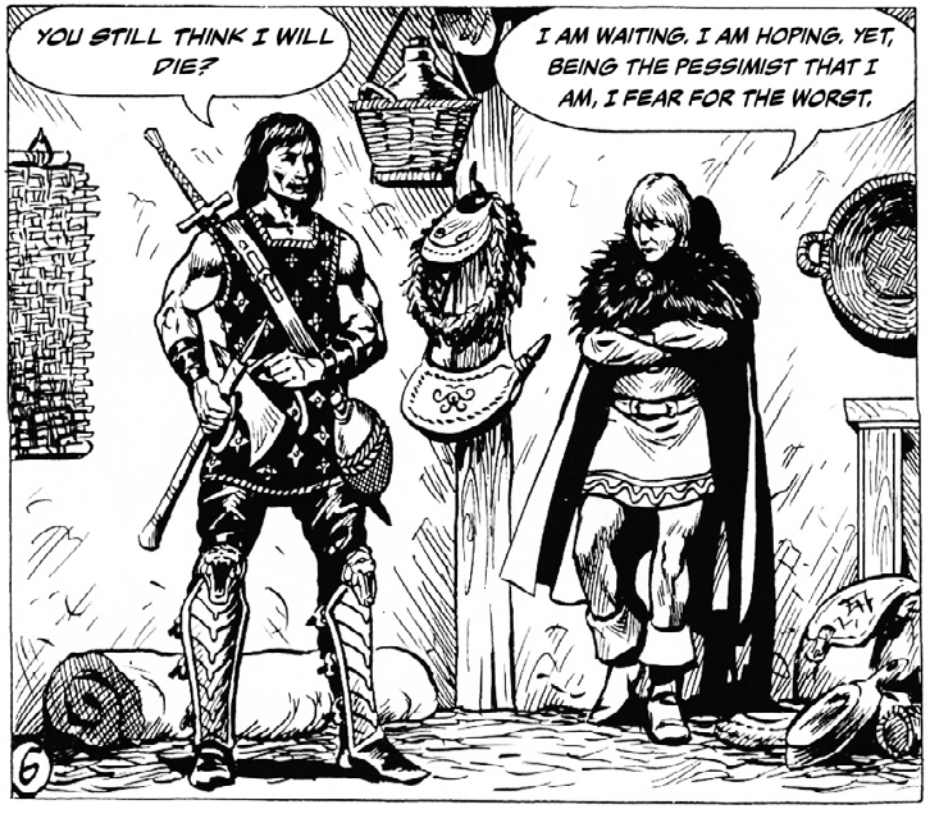
WHY CAN'T YOU WAIT FOR YOUR ARMY? WHY FACE THEM ALONE?
I'M ONLY HERE TO GET THE LAY OF THE LAND. THIS ENTIRE ORDEAL IS MORE OF A TANGENT.

YOU ARE NOT IMMORTAL, YOU UNDERSTAND THAT? YOU STRIDE ON AS IF NOTHING CAN TOUCH YOU, BUT IF YOU DON'T SOON WAKE UP, YOU WILL END UP WASTING YOUR LIFE AND YOUR DREAMS OF BEING A KING WILL DIE WITH YOU.

DO YOU THINK THESE PEOPLE RESPECT YOU? THAT THEY ARE GRATEFUL? YOU ARE NOTHING TO THEM BUT ANOTHER STRANGER CAUSING UNWANTED UNREST.

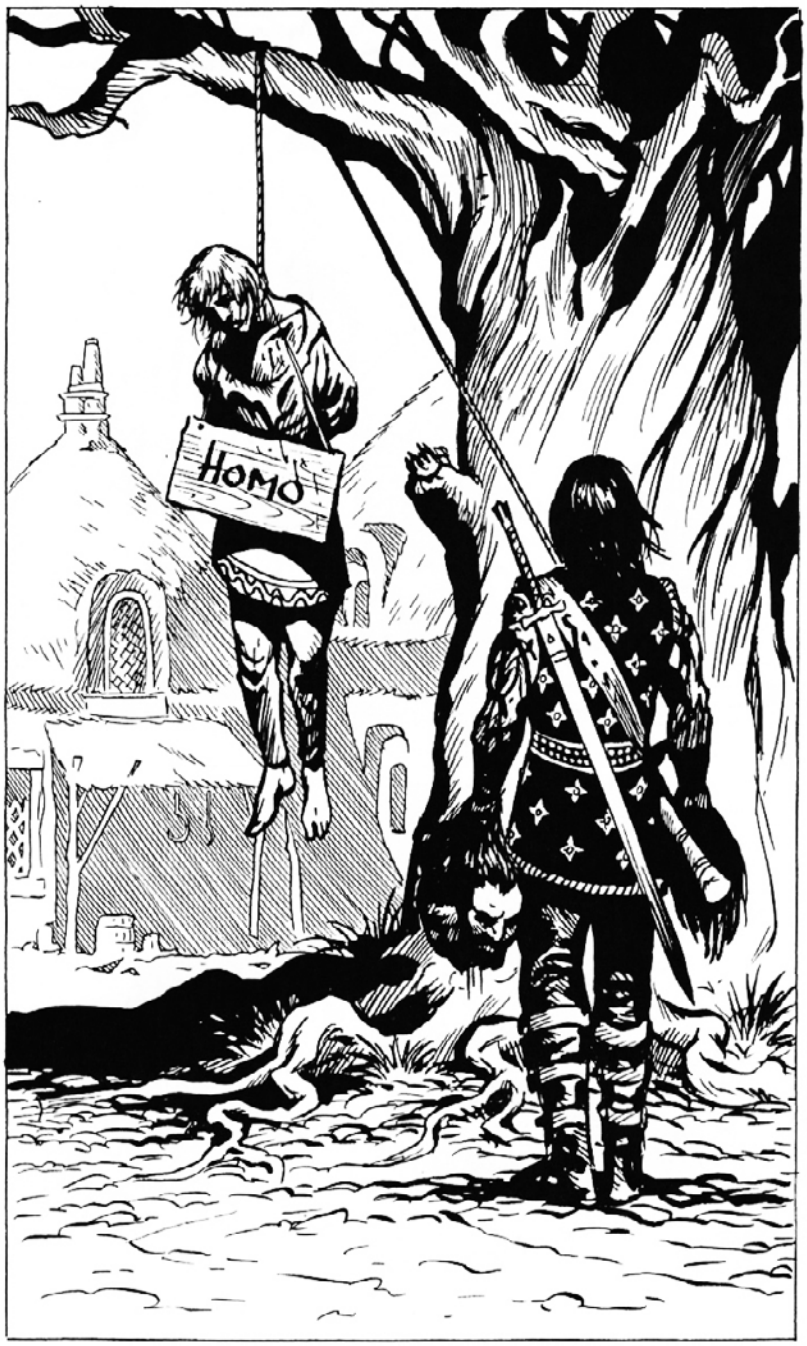
THE ONLY REASON THEY ARE BEING FRIENDLY TO YOU IS BECAUSE THEY THINK YOU WILL DIE TOMORROW. THEY ONLY WISH YOU DEAL A DECENT ENOUGH BLOW TO THESE BANDITS BEFORE YOUR DEMISE.

SILLY BOY. COME HERE...

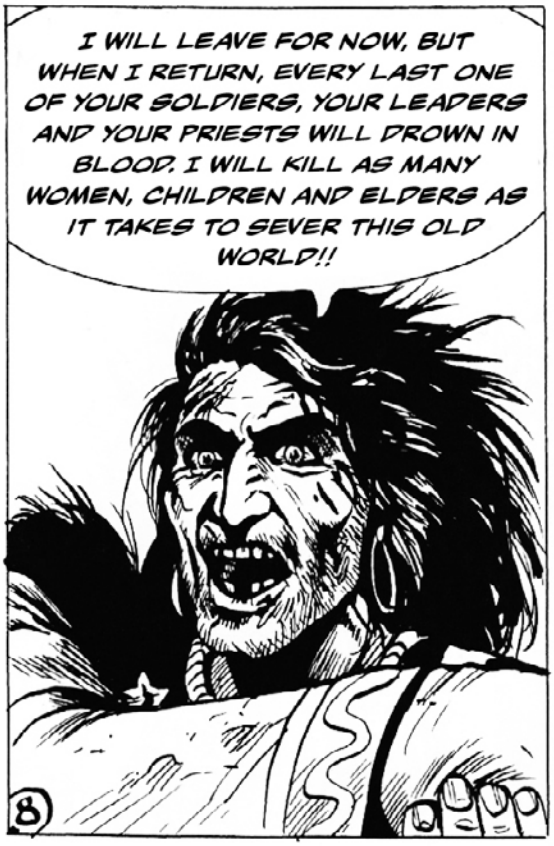

YOU STILL THINK I WILL DIE?
I AM WAITING. I AM HOPING. YET, BEING THE PESSIMIST THAT I AM, I FEAR FOR THE WORST.

TOMORROW MORNING I WILL WALK BACK THIS WAY WITH FIVE HEADS.
THOSE WOULD MAKE FOR POOR FINAL WORDS FOR THE EPIC THAT I AM WORKING ON.

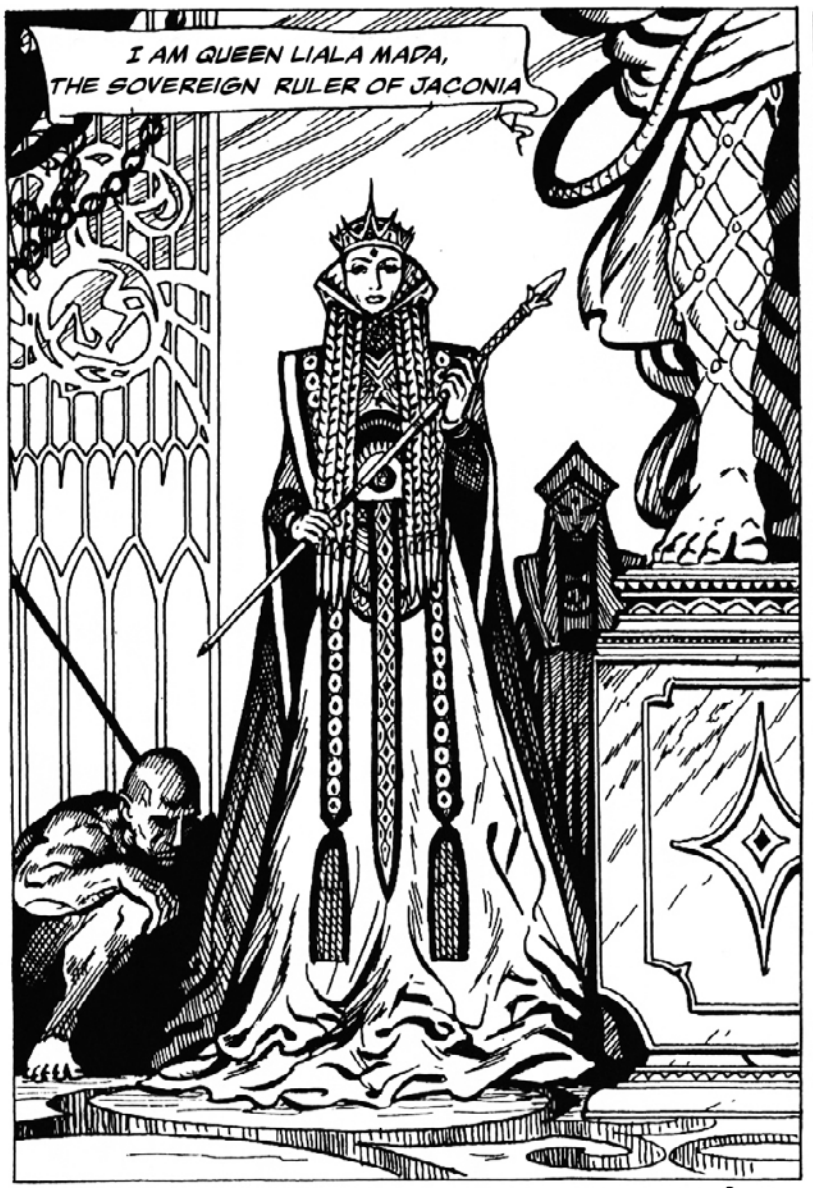
I WILL KEEP YOU BY MY SIDE UNTIL YOU ARE OLD AND CAN NO LONGER SEE TO WRITE. AFTER THAT, I WILL HAVE AN ARMY OF SCHOLARS SCRIBE DOWN YOUR SONGS AND YOUR TALES. YOUR EPIC WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR MILLENIUMS TO COME.
FAREWELL, BUTTERFLY.
LADY LUCK BE ON YOUR SIDE, LION.
7


HOMO

HEAR ME, CITIZENS OF AETHAKA! I, IRAM KADIR, SWEAR THIS...


I WILL LEAVE FOR NOW, BUT WHEN I RETURN, EVERY LAST ONE OF YOUR SOLDIERS, YOUR LEADERS AND YOUR PRIESTS WILL DROWN IN BLOOD. I WILL KILL AS MANY WOMEN, CHILDREN AND ELDERS AS IT TAKES TO SEVER THIS OLD WORLD!!

THIS WORLD IS ONLY FIT FOR KINDLINGS!



A Tale of Three Sovereigns 2/3

Word and Woe

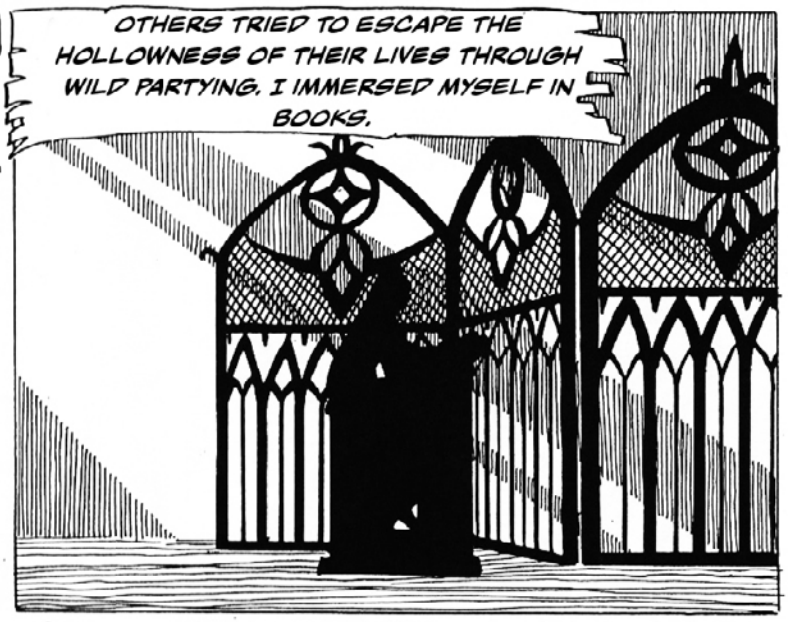
MY FATHER WAS KING TENIRAN, A HANDSOME HEDONISTIC SWINE.
I SPENT ALL MY FREE TIME IN THE PALACE LIBRARY, NOSE IN TOMES.
MY LONE BROTHER, SAERAS, WAS HEIR TO THE THRONE, SO I AND MY SISTER WERE MERELY BEING RAISED TO MARRY INTO A SUITABLE FAMILY.
LIALA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE IN THE LIBRARY? EVERYONE ELSE IS AT THE FEAST.
I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF A BOOK, MOTHER..
HAH, HAH, HAH!! LIALA AIMS TO BE A SCRIBE! HAH HAH!
TENIRAN.

DO YOU THINK THAT BOOKS WILL GET YOU SOMEWHERE IN LIFE!? YOU WILL NEVER FIND ANYTHING USEFUL IN THEM! READING WON'T MAKE YOU ANY FANCIER THAN THE REST OF US.
TENIRAN, DON'T!

A LADY OF THIS COURT ONLY NEEDS TO KNOW HOW TO DO TWO THINGS: SUCK COCK AND KISS ASS!

DESPITE MY FATHER'S ADVICE, I NEVER GAVE UP READING.

THE YEARS PASSED IN UNNECESSARY AND POINTLESS COURT POLITESSE.


OTHERS TRIED TO ESCAPE THE HOLLOWNESS OF THEIR LIVES THROUGH WILD PARTYING. I IMMERSED MYSELF IN BOOKS.

TIME AND ALL MANNER OF INTOXICANTS DROVE MY FATHER MADDER BY THE DAY.
HE CLUNG TO HIS ARBITRARINESS EVER TIGHTER.

WHEN I WAS 16 YEARS OLD, MY MOTHER DIED OF AN ODD HEMOPHILIA.
A WEEK LATER MY FATHER MARRIED MY ELDEST SISTER. IT WAS UNLAWFUL, BUT A KING IS ABOVE THE LAW.
I READ ABOUT SIMILAR INCIDENTS IN MY BOOKS. THE KINGS OF OLD HAD BROKEN THEIR OWN LAWS AS WELL. IT IS A KING'S RIGHT TO COVET ANYTHING AND ANYONE. THE KINGDOM'S DUTY IS TO BEND TO HIS WILL.
THEN IT WAS MY BROTHER'S TURN TO DIE. HE WAS EXECUTED FOR CONSPIRING AGAINST THE THRONE.
WHO KNOWS, I SUPPOSE IT'S POSSIBLE HE DID.
THE BOOKS TOLD TALES OF JUST RULERS AS WELL. THEY ALWAYS HAD THE SMALLEST MONUMENTS. IF YOU DON'T INVEST IN THEM YOURSELF, NO ONE ELSE WILL REMEMBER YOU EITHER.
WHEN I TURNED 18, MY ELDEST SISTER WAS EXECUTED FOR INFIDELITY. MY FATHER MARRIED MY OTHER SISTER.
I KNEW THEN THAT MY TURN WOULD COME.
4

MY SISTER HELD ON FOR THREE MONTHS BEFORE KILLING HERSELF.
THE BEST THING I CAN SAY ABOUT OUR WEDDING IS THAT THE FAÇADE WAS BEAUTIFUL.
I WAS OBEDIENT AND AWAITED THE WINTER.
AFTER WHAT FELT LIKE AN ETERNITY, IT FINALLY CAME.

AN ICICLE THROUGH THE EAR IS A NIGH PERFECT MURDER WEAPON. IT KILLS WITH EFFICIENCY AND CONGEALS THE BLOOD WITH ITS COLDNESS, PREVENTING IT FROM SPILLING, BEFORE TURNING INTO WATER.
NO BLOOD. NO WOUND. NO WEAPON. NO POISON. NO MURDER!
I READ THAT IN A BOOK.
MY FATHER'S FUNERAL WAS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN OUR WEDDING.
MY VERY FIRST ACT AS QUEEN WAS RAISING MYSELF A MONUMENT.
LARGER THAN THAT OF MY FATHER'S.
I KNOW THE GAME, AND I KNOW HOW TO PLAY IT. I WILL BE REMEMBERED.

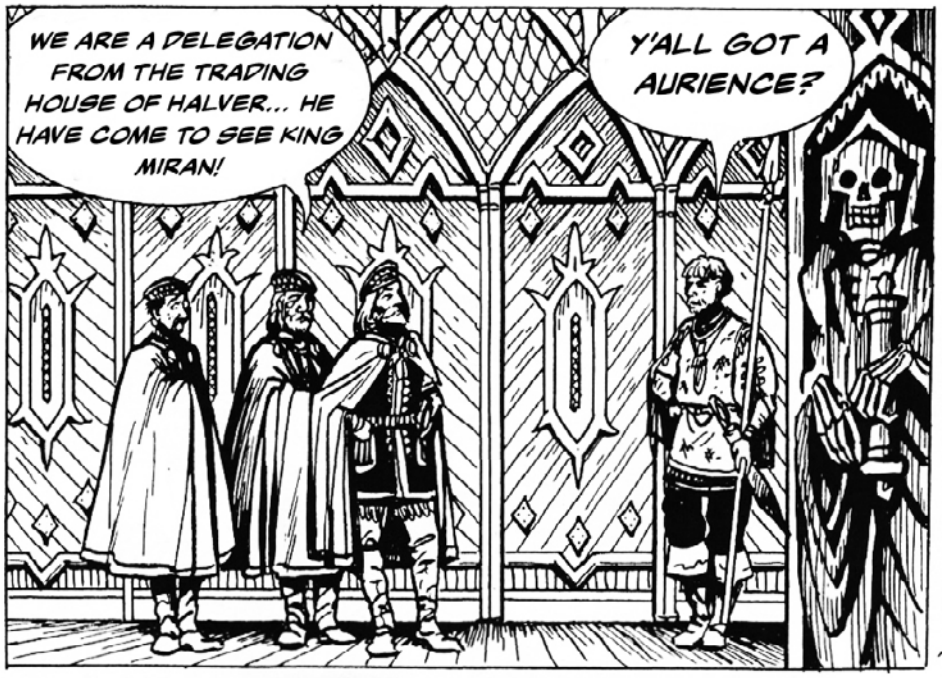
Power and Spirit

A Tale of Three Sovereigns 3/3

OH MY...

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, FRIENDS, BUT I'M A COWARD OF CONSIDERABLE CONVICTION...

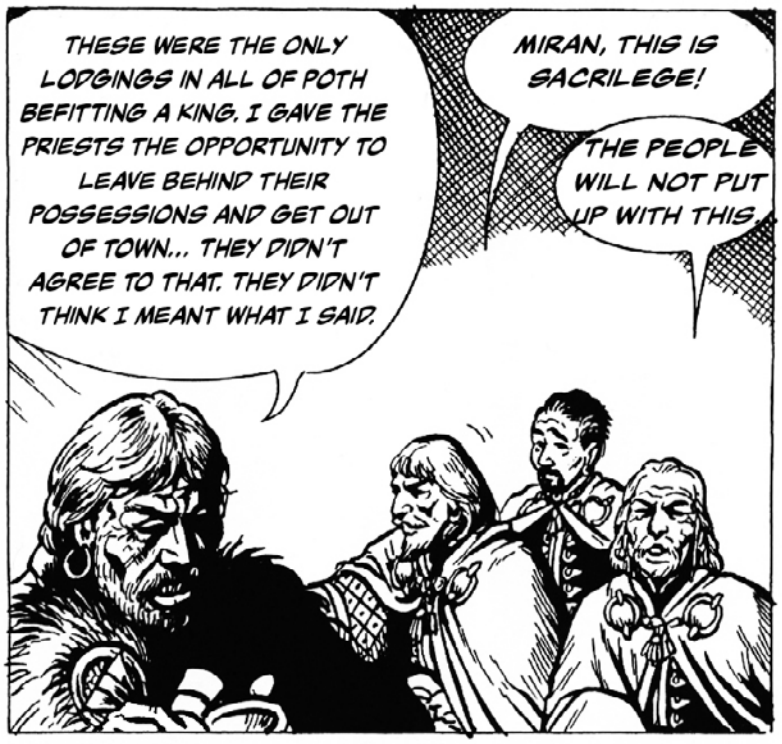
THE TEMPLE OF ARTANTE IN POTH, AMIDST THE GREAT FORESTS...

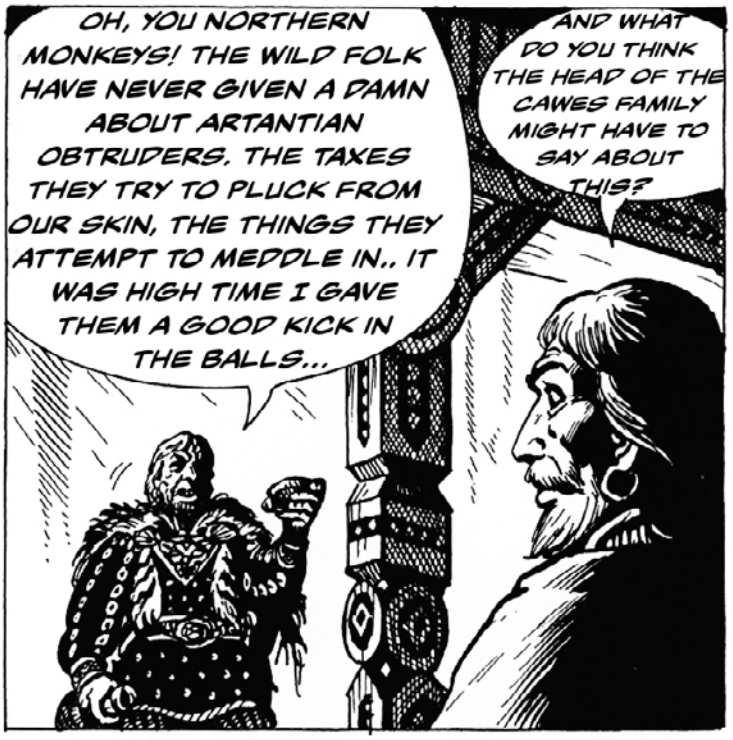

WE ARE A DELEGATION FROM THE TRADING HOUSE OF HALVER... HE HAVE COME TO SEE KING MIRAN!
Y'ALL GOT A AURIENCE?

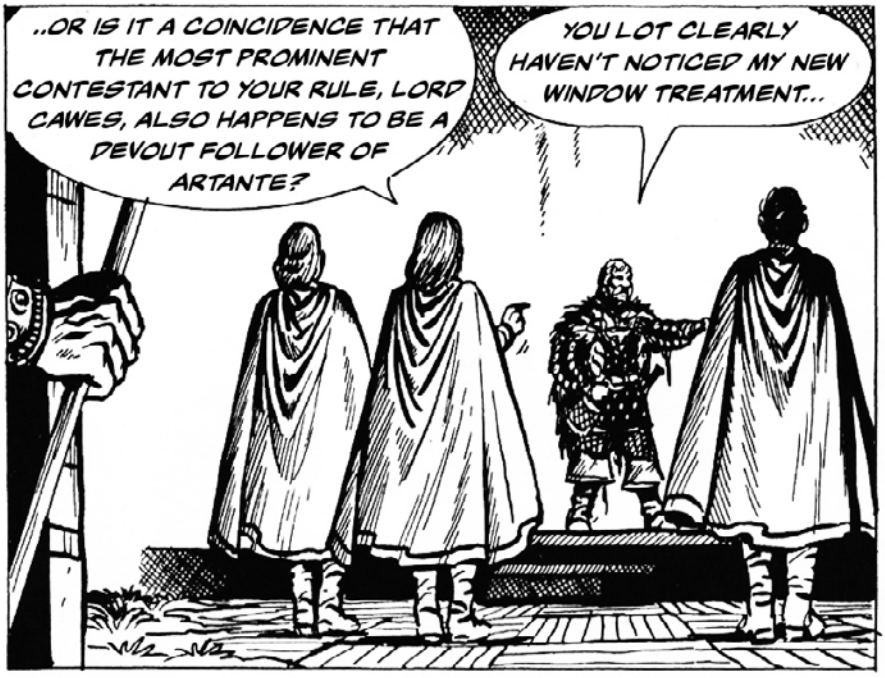
AURI...?
LISTEN UP, YOKEL, WE KNEW YOUR KING WHEN HE WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A WORTHLESS...
HALT!

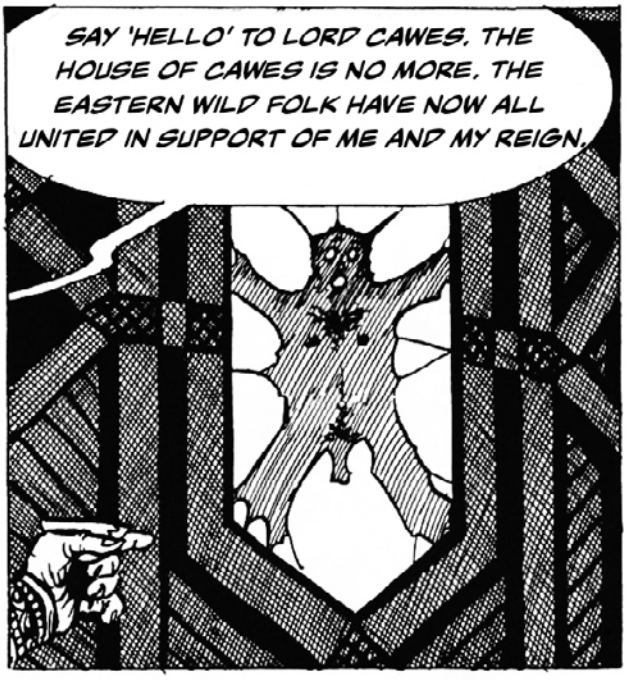
I WILL RECEIVE THEM.
FINALLY!

NOT A BAD HALL FOR A KING, DON'T YOU THINK...?
MIRAN! HOW COULD YOU!? THIS IS A TEMPLE OF ARTANTE!
WHAT MADNESS DROVE YOU TO HANG ALL THE PRIESTS OF ARTANTE?
THIS IS PREPOSTEROUS!

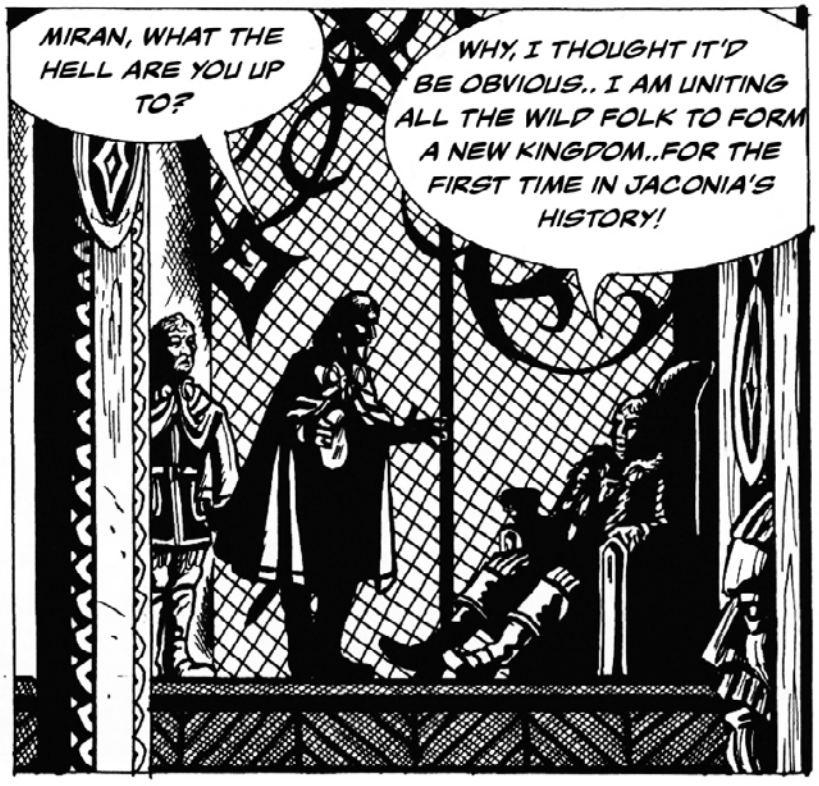

THESE WERE THE ONLY LODGINGS IN ALL OF POTH BEFITTING A KING. I GAVE THE PRIESTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAVE BEHIND THEIR POSSESSIONS AND GET OUT OF TOWN... THEY DIDN'T AGREE TO THAT. THEY DIDN'T THINK I MEANT WHAT I SAID.
MIRAN, THIS IS SACRILEGE!
THE PEOPLE WILL NOT PUT UP WITH THIS.

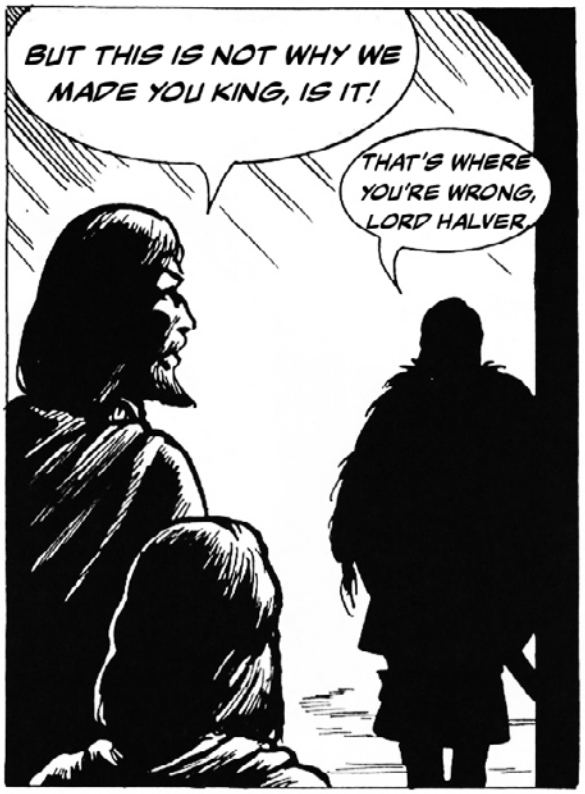

OH, YOU NORTHERN MONKEYS! THE WILD FOLK HAVE NEVER GIVEN A DAMN ABOUT ARTANTIAN OBTRUDERS. THE TAXES THEY TRY TO PLUCK FROM OUR SKIN, THE THINGS THEY ATTEMPT TO MEDDLE IN.. IT WAS HIGH TIME I GAVE THEM A GOOD KICK IN THE BALLS...
AND WHAT DO YOU THINK THE HEAD OF THE CAWES FAMILY MIGHT HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THIS?

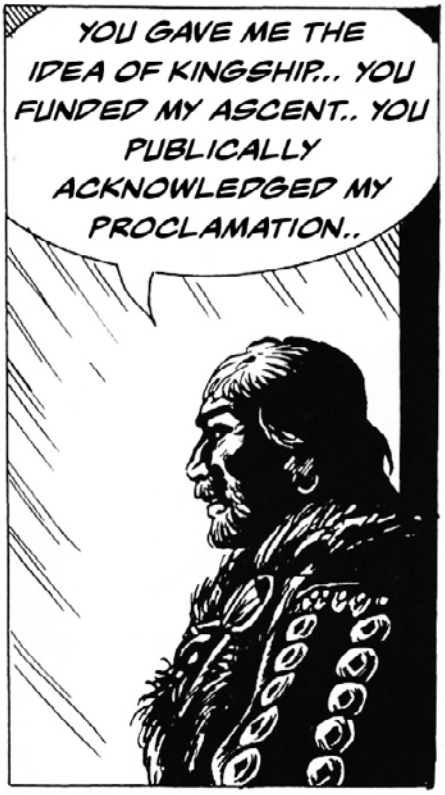

..OR IS IT A COINCIDENCE THAT THE MOST PROMINENT CONTESTANT TO YOUR RULE, LORD CAWES, ALSO HAPPENS TO BE A DEVOUT FOLLOWER OF ARTANTE?
YOU LOT CLEARLY HAVEN'T NOTICED MY NEW WINDOW TREATMENT...


SAY 'HELLO' TO LORD CAWES. THE HOUSE OF CAWES IS NO MORE. THE EASTERN WILD FOLK HAVE NOW ALL UNITED IN SUPPORT OF ME AND MY REIGN.

HOLY ARTANTE!
YOUR MAJESTY.. MIGHT WE CONVERSE..IN PRIVATE?
OF COURSE.. GUARDS! LEAVE US.

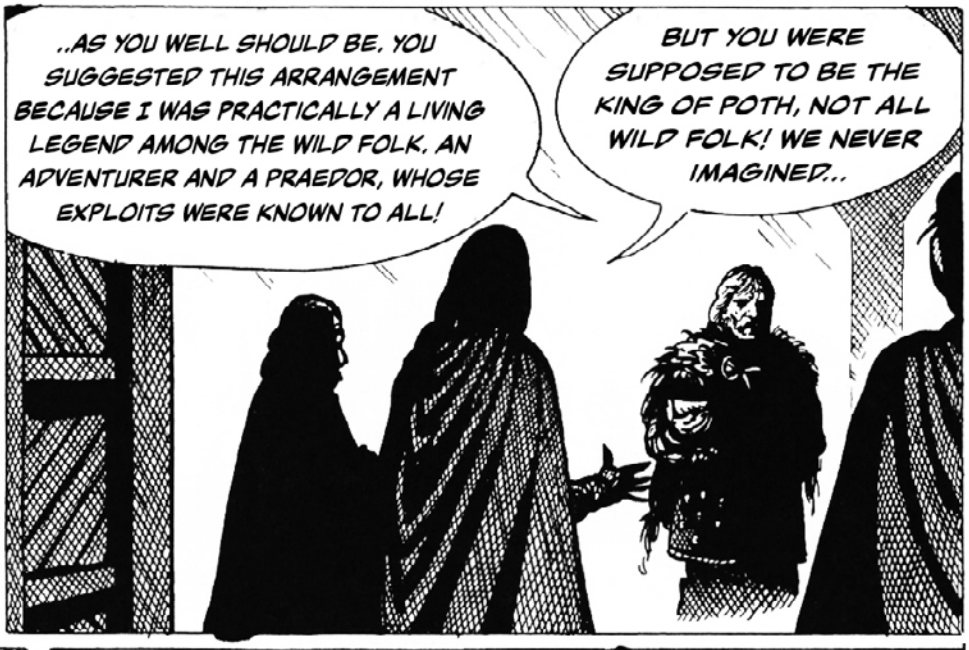

MIRAN, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO?
WHY, I THOUGHT IT'D BE OBVIOUS.. I AM UNITING ALL THE WILD FOLK TO FORM A NEW KINGDOM..FOR THE FIRST TIME IN JACONIA'S HISTORY!


BUT THIS IS NOT WHY WE MADE YOU KING, IS IT!
THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG, LORD HALVER.

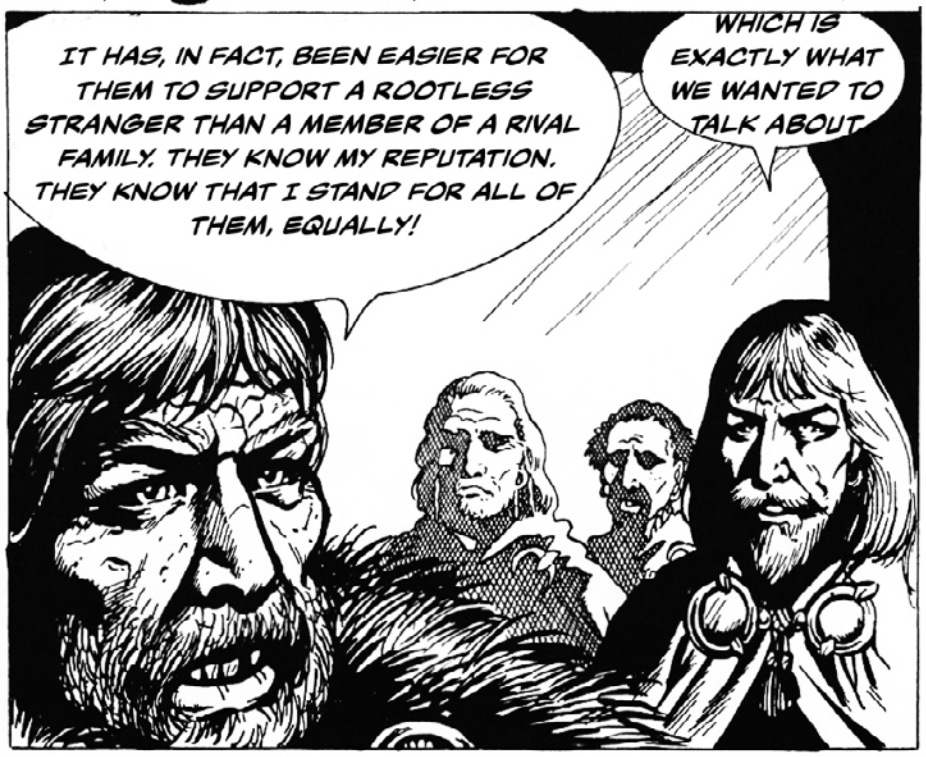

YOU GAVE ME THE IDEA OF KINGSHIP... YOU FUNDED MY ASCENT.. YOU PUBLICALLY ACKNOWLEDGED MY PROCLAMATION..

..BUT YOU DID NOT MAKE ME KING! I MADE ME KING!

I TOOK ALL THE RISKS! I DID ALL YOUR DIRTY WORK FOR YOU!
FORGIVE US, LORD MIRAN ..WE ARE WELL AWARE OF YOUR MERITS...

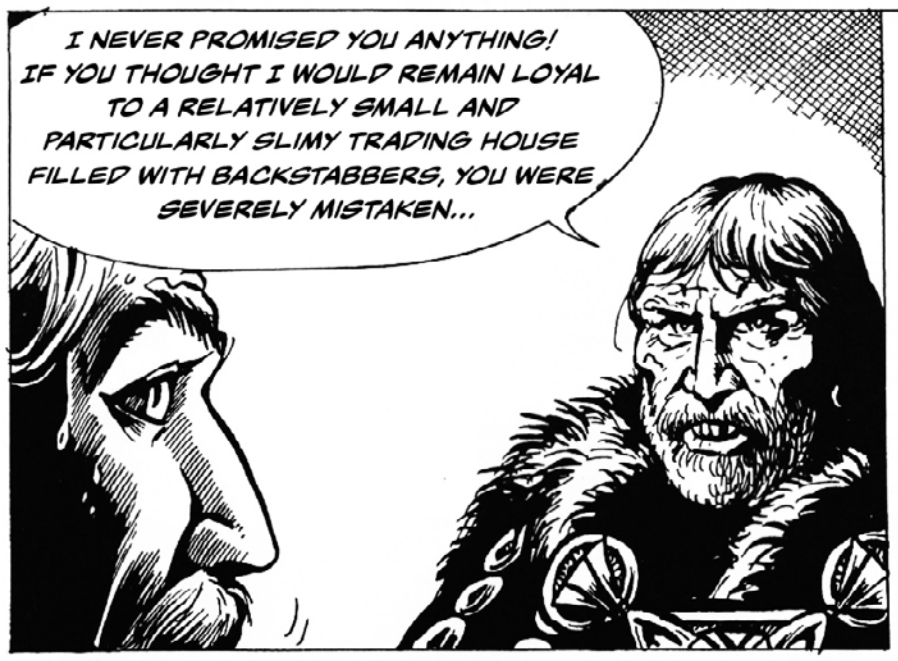

..AS YOU WELL SHOULD BE. YOU SUGGESTED THIS ARRANGEMENT BECAUSE I WAS PRACTICALLY A LIVING LEGEND AMONG THE WILD FOLK, AN ADVENTURER AND A PRAEDOR, WHOSE EXPLOITS WERE KNOWN TO ALL!
BUT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE THE KING OF POTH, NOT ALL WILD FOLK! WE NEVER IMAGINED...

JUST COME OUT AND SAY IT... YOU NEVER IMAGINED THAT THE WILD FOLK WOULD TRULY RECOGNIZE ME AS THEIR LORD..


IT HAS, IN FACT, BEEN EASIER FOR THEM TO SUPPORT A ROOTLESS STRANGER THAN A MEMBER OF A RIVAL FAMILY. THEY KNOW MY REPUTATION. THEY KNOW THAT I STAND FOR ALL OF THEM, EQUALLY!
WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT WE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT

LET ME GUESS.. YOU WISH TO TALK TRADE? OF GOLD AND THE PEARLS OF THE RIVER SERA!
IT WAS OUR ARRANGEMENT THAT ONCE YOU ROSE TO POWER, THE TRADING HOUSE OF HALVER WOULD RECEIVE EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO TRADING THEM!

YOU SUGGESTED IT.. I HAVE NOW THOUGHT IT OVER.. TRADING WILL REMAIN OPEN FOR ALL HOUSES.. AND THE PRICES WILL, IN FACT, GO UP..
WHAT?
YOU DIRTY..!!


I NEVER PROMISED YOU ANYTHING! IF YOU THOUGHT I WOULD REMAIN LOYAL TO A RELATIVELY SMALL AND PARTICULARLY SLIMY TRADING HOUSE FILLED WITH BACKSTABBERS, YOU WERE SEVERELY MISTAKEN...

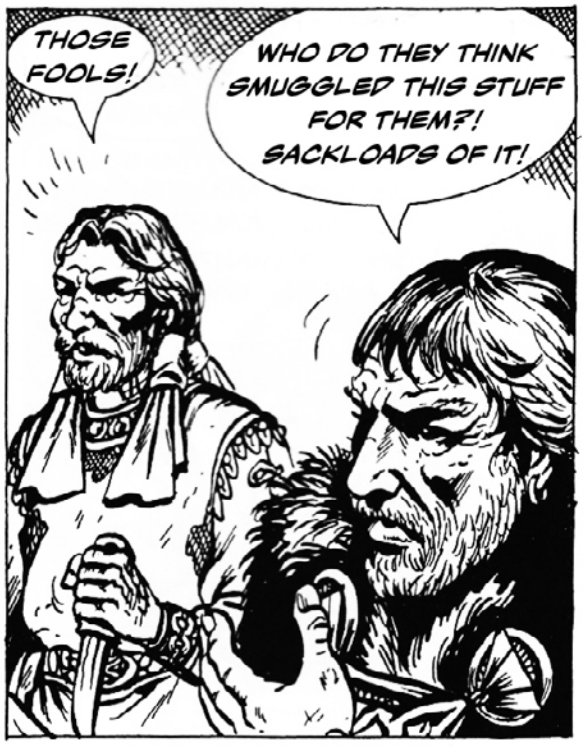
THAT..THAT..THAT UNGRATEFUL PIECE OF SHIT!!
CALM DOWN, FOR THE LOVE OF...

HOW CAN I REMAIN CALM WHEN THAT DIRTY HICK..?
I HAVE TAKEN CARE OF IT. I ALREADY TOOK CARE OF IT IN THE MORNING.

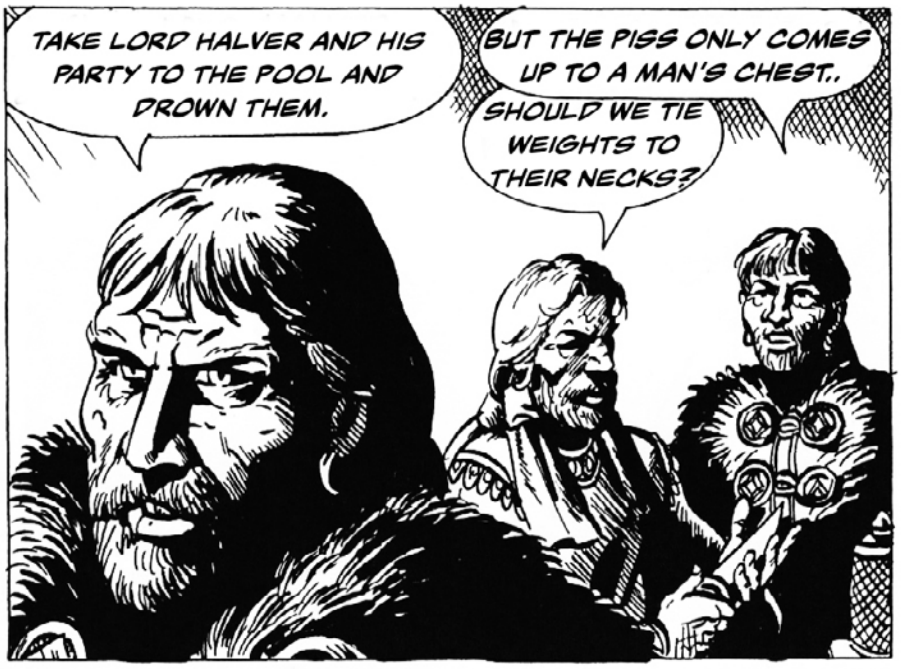
TONIGHT THE KING WILL SIT DOWN TO ONE OF HIS FEASTS... SECRETLY PROVIDED BY THE TRADING HOUSE OF HALVER..

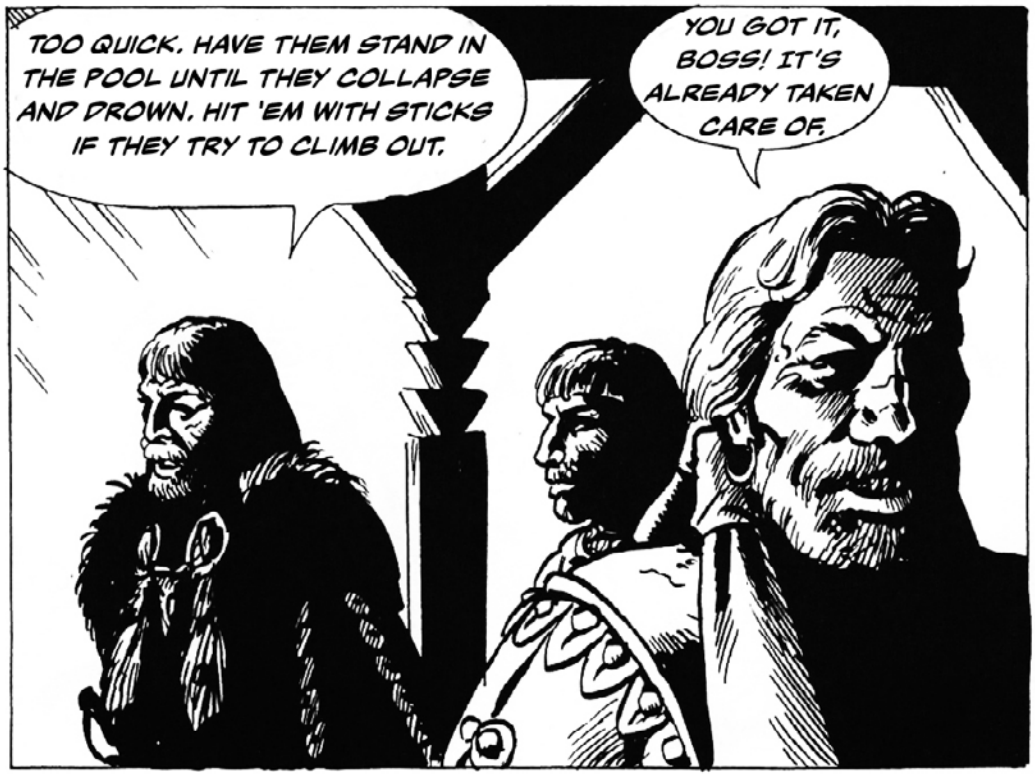
AFTER THE MEAL WE WILL NEVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THIS EMBARRASSING MISCALCULATION AGAIN..

DERCAL - PLANT POISON..
QUITE A POTENT DOSE
REMARKABLY WELL DISGUISED WITH SEASONING.


THOSE FOOLS!
WHO DO THEY THINK SMUGGLED THIS STUFF FOR THEM?! SACKLOADS OF IT!

IS THE POOL IN THE BACKYARD OF OLD TAWOR STILL THERE? THE ONE WHERE THEY LEAD THE PIG PISS
WHERE WOULD IT GO, YES IT'S STILL THERE.


TAKE LORD HALVER AND HIS PARTY TO THE POOL AND DROWN THEM.
BUT THE PISS ONLY COMES UP TO A MAN'S CHEST..
SHOULD WE TIE WEIGHTS TO THEIR NECKS?


TOO QUICK. HAVE THEM STAND IN THE POOL UNTIL THEY COLLAPSE AND DROWN. HIT 'EM WITH STICKS IF THEY TRY TO CLIMB OUT.
YOU GOT IT, BOSS! IT'S ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF.

NOW, LEAVE ME ALONE FOR A MOMENT. I NEED TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO NEXT...