

PETRI HILTUNEN

PRAE**DOR**

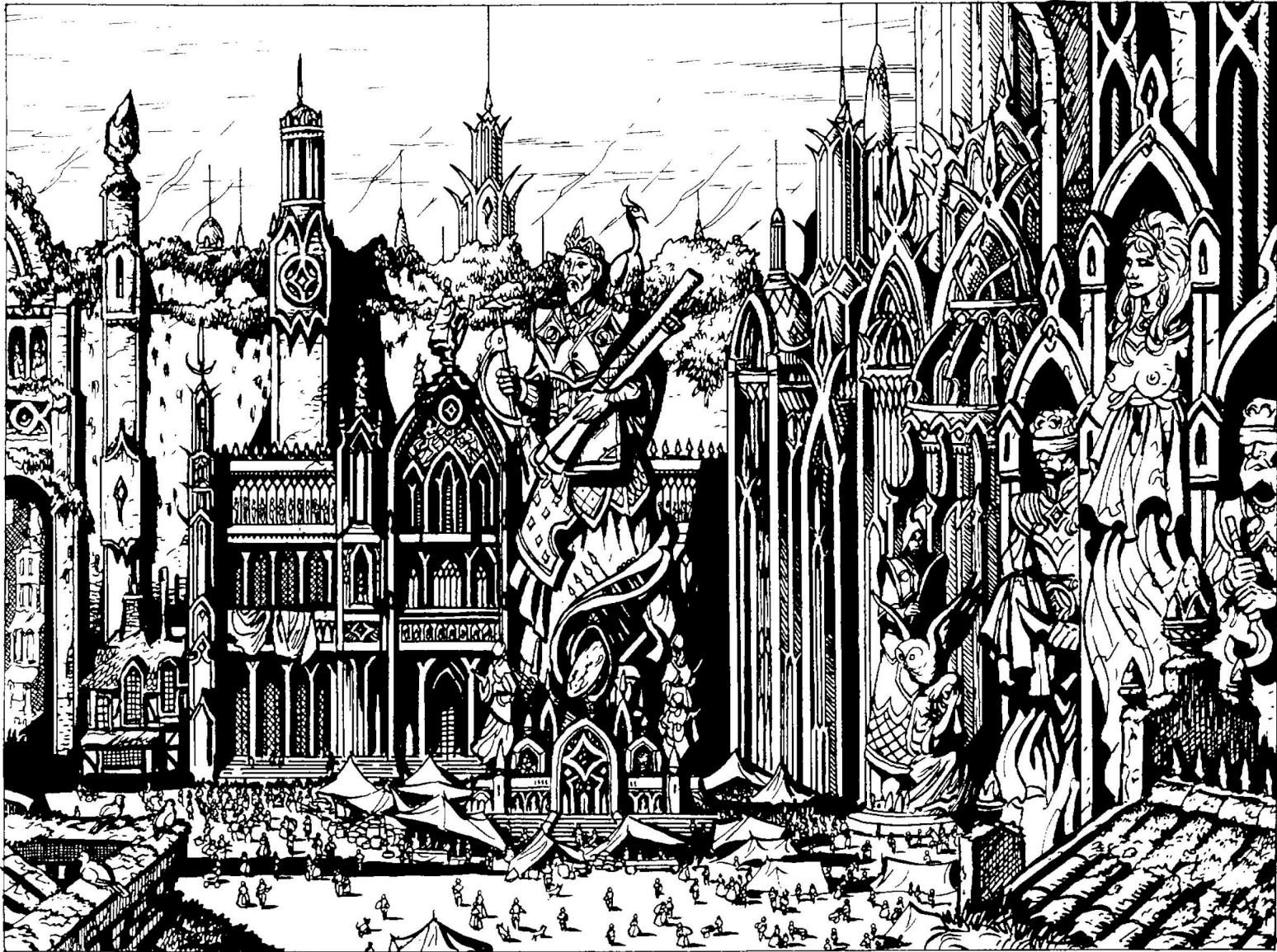
A Tale of Three Sovereigns



JACONIA

Petri Hiltunen 2000





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.

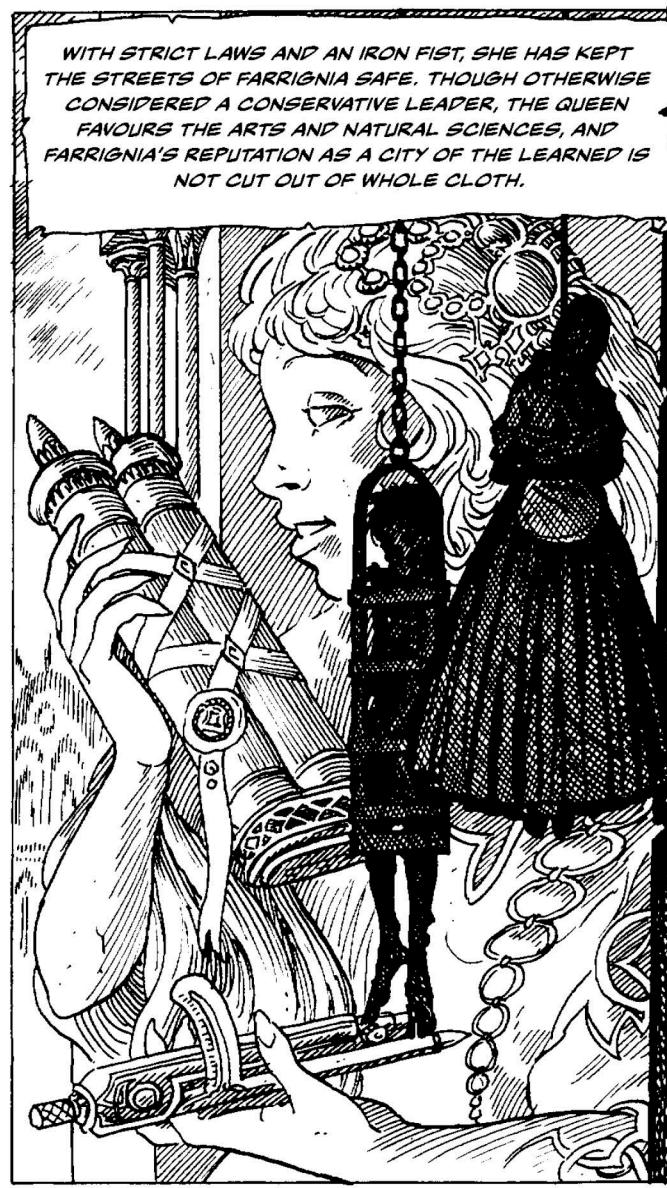
THE FAMOUS ROYAL PALACE IS ONE OF JACONIA'S MOST GLORIOUS SIGHTS.



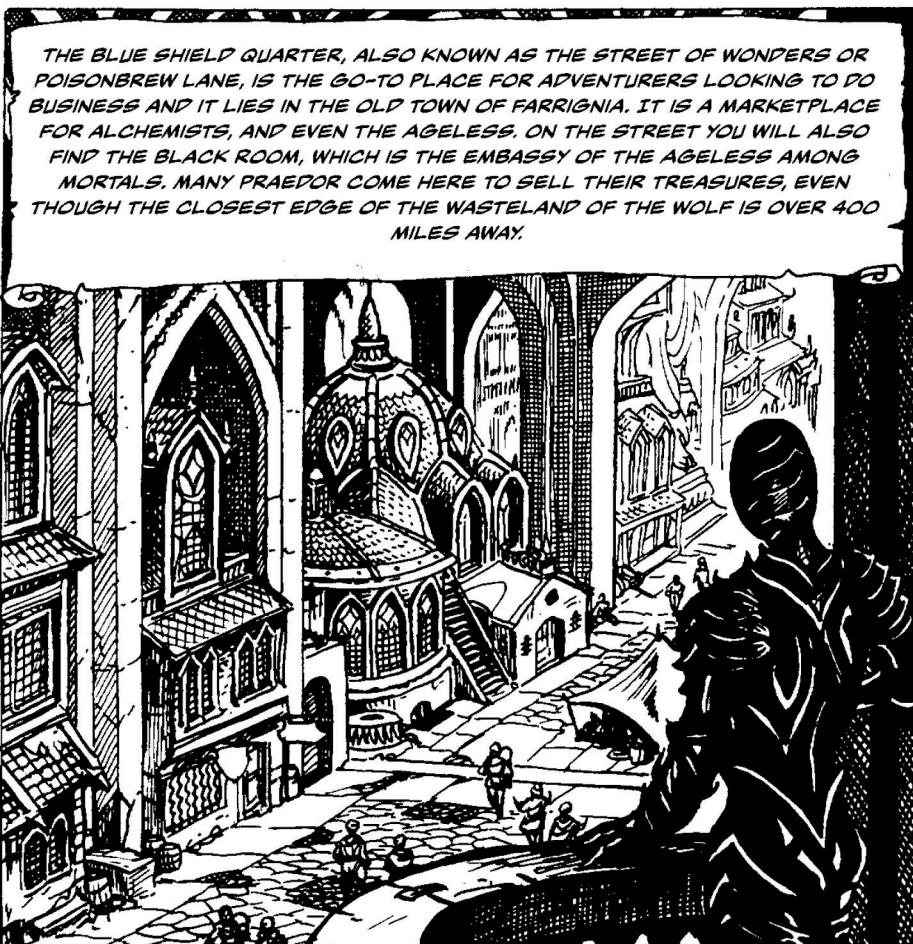
Farrignia



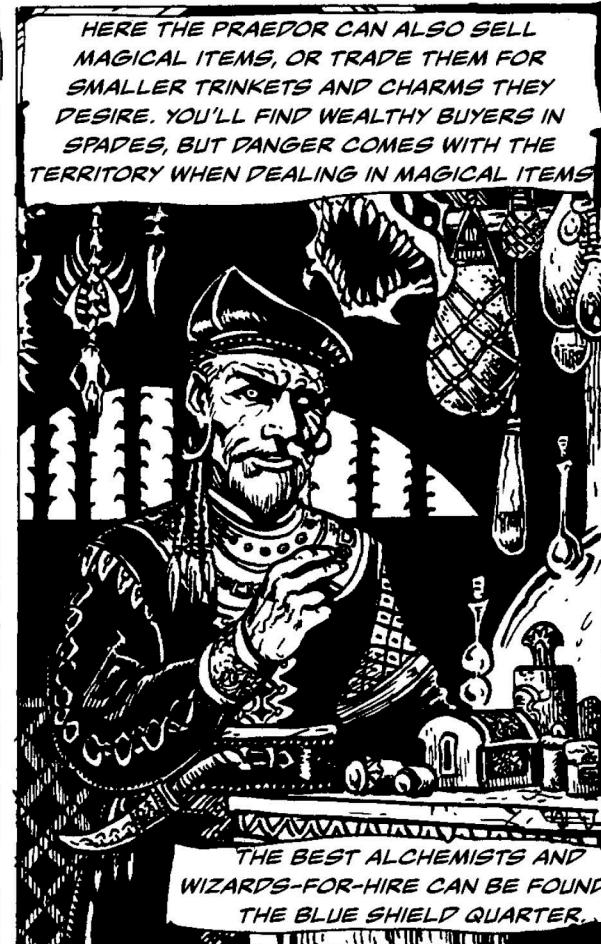
LIALA MADA, THE QUEEN OF FARRIGNIA, IS THE MOST POWERFUL RULER IN JACONIA.



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.

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 MERCHANTS.



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.



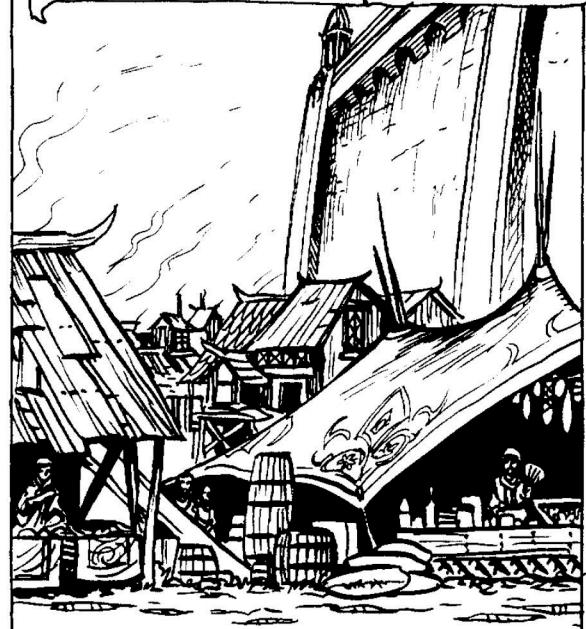
THE FAMOUS UNIVERSITY OF FARRIGNIA HIRES PRAEDOR TO PROTECT AND GUIDE THEIR EXPEDITIONS. THEY ARE ALSO ALWAYS ON THE MARKET FOR MONSTER ORGANS AND ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS.



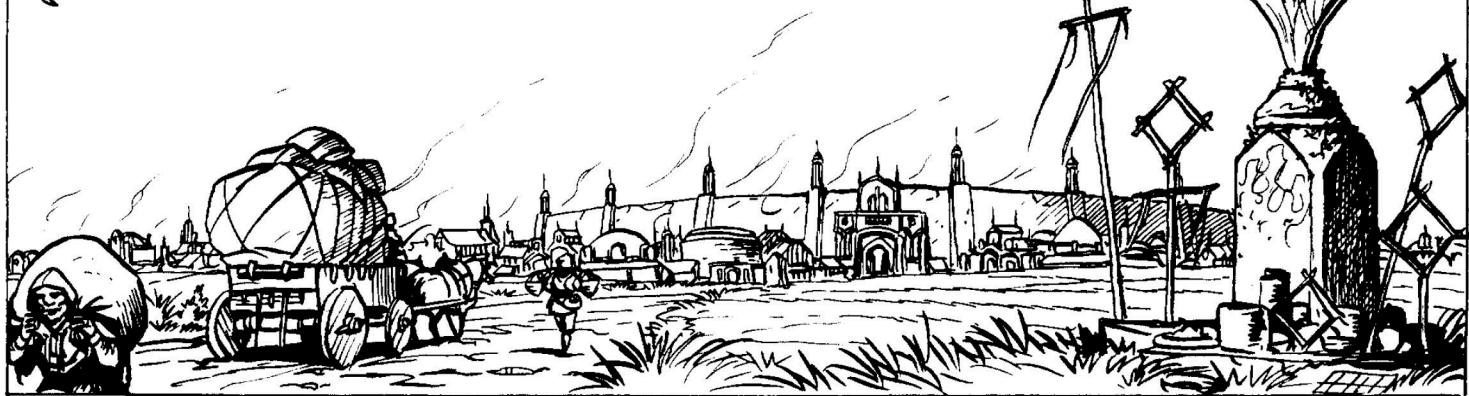
DESPITE HER CONSERVATIVE WAYS, THE QUEEN HAS PERMITTED PROSTITUTION AND GAMBLING BETWEEN THE THIRD AND FOURTH (THE OUTERMOST) WALLS. THE THIEVES' GUILD HAS GRATEFULLY KEPT THESE PASTIMES, AND THEIR BYPRODUCTS, FROM SPREADING TO THE MORE WEALTHY PARTS OF THE CITY. MOST OF THE CITY'S POPULATION CONSISTS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



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.

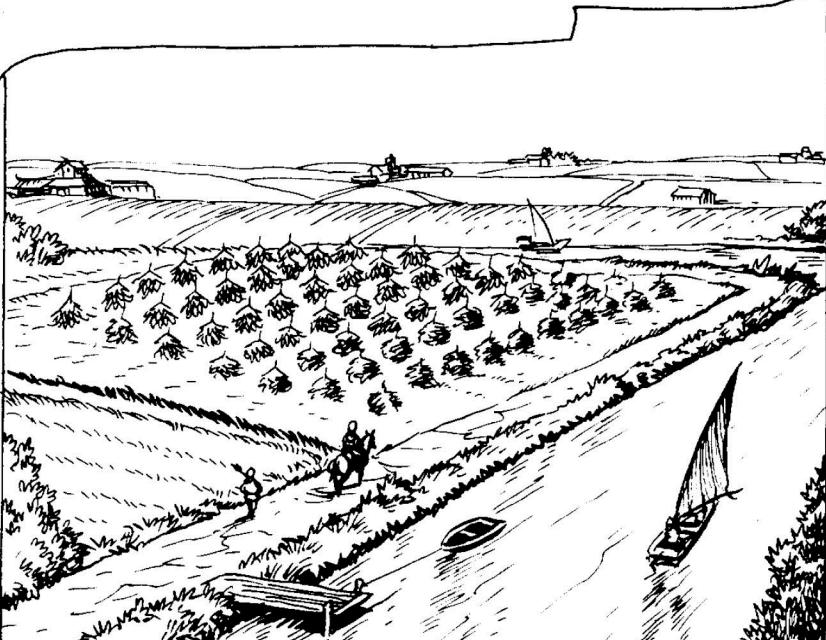


THIS PEACEFUL CITY, KNOWN FOR ITS FABRICS AND HANDICRAFTS, IS RULED BY KING VESTAR MADA. CRIME RATES ARE LOW, THE NUMBER OF HYPOCRITES IS HIGH.

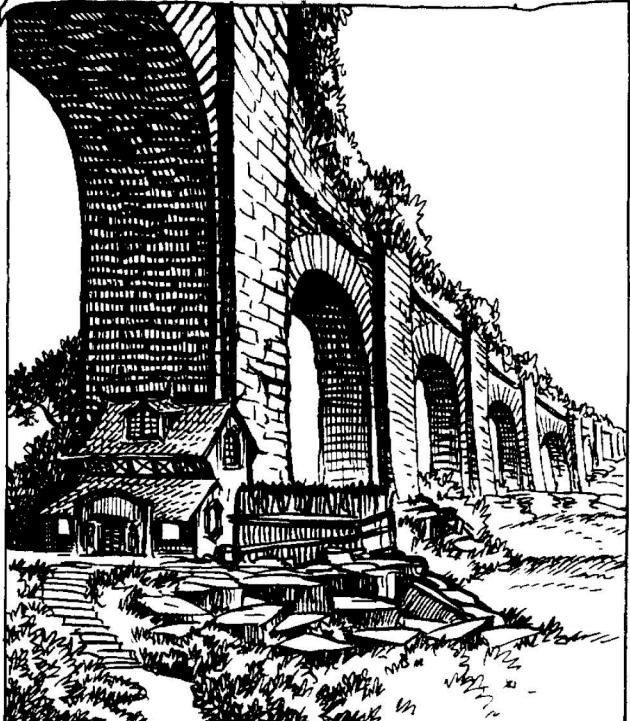
PRAEDOR AND OTHER ADVENTURERS ARE GREETED WITH HOSTILE GLANCES AND CONSIDERED SCUM, RIPE FOR THE GALLows. THIS NARROW-MINDEDNESS HAS ALSO STIFLED MANY SCIENCES AND FORMS OF ART.



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.



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.



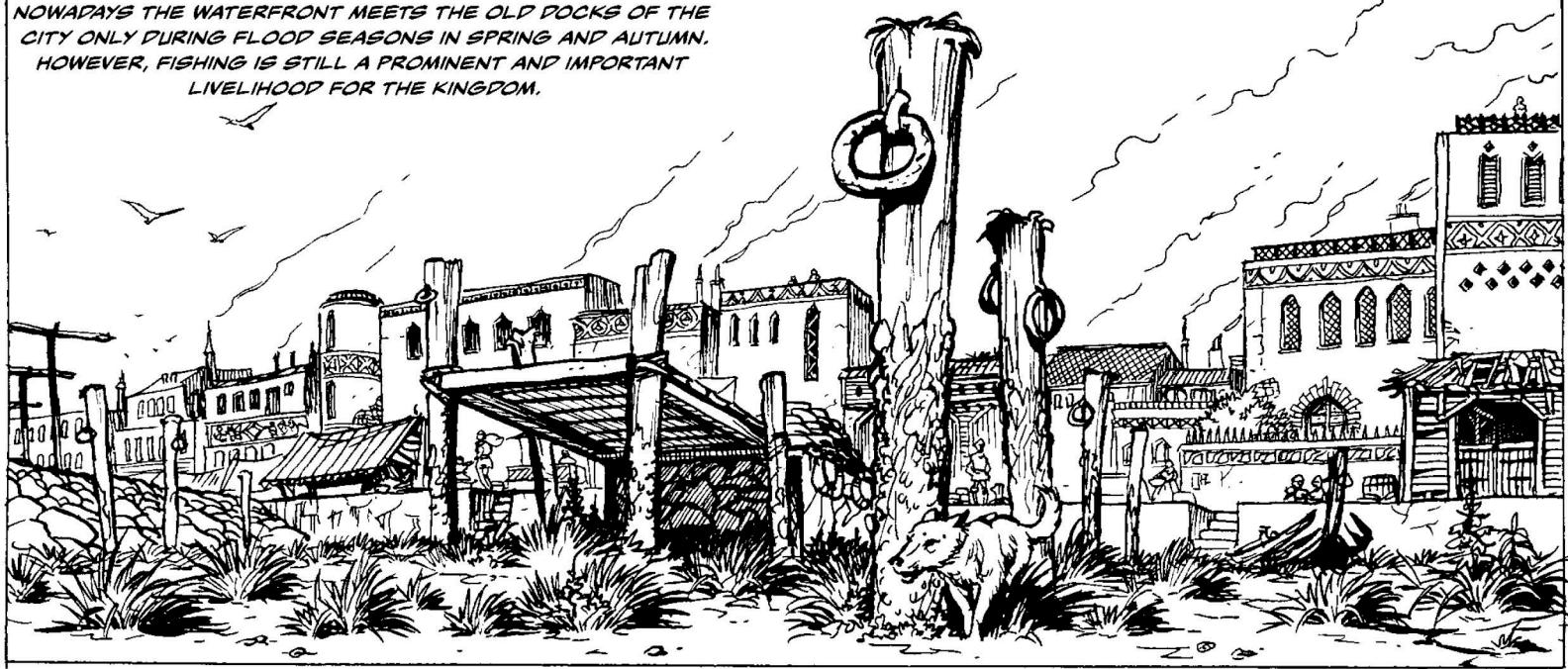
OF THE KINGDOMS EAST OF THE RIVER GORFAR, GALTH IS THE MOST POWERFUL. VIRTUALLY ALL OF JUSTIA AND PIPERIA'S TRADE TRANSACTIONS TAKE PLACE IN THE BUSY INLAND PORT OF GALTH AND, AS A RESULT, IT HAS GROWN INTO A BUSY AND WEALTHY CITY.

GALTH IS ALSO HOME TO A FEW AGELESS, EVEN THOUGH THE CASTLE OF FEDERAC LIES DESERTED



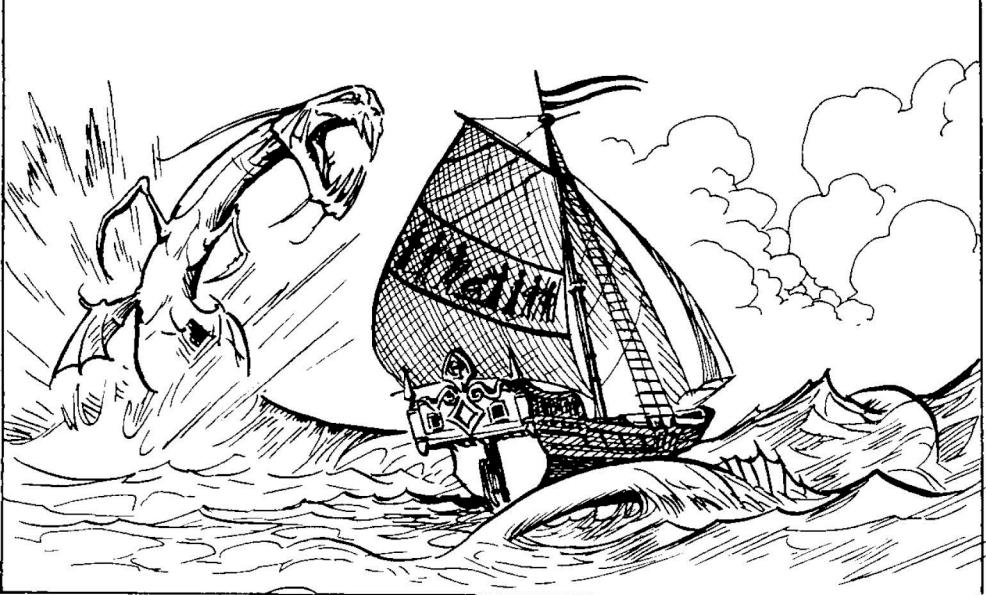
Northeast

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.



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 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.



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.



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.



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.



"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.

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



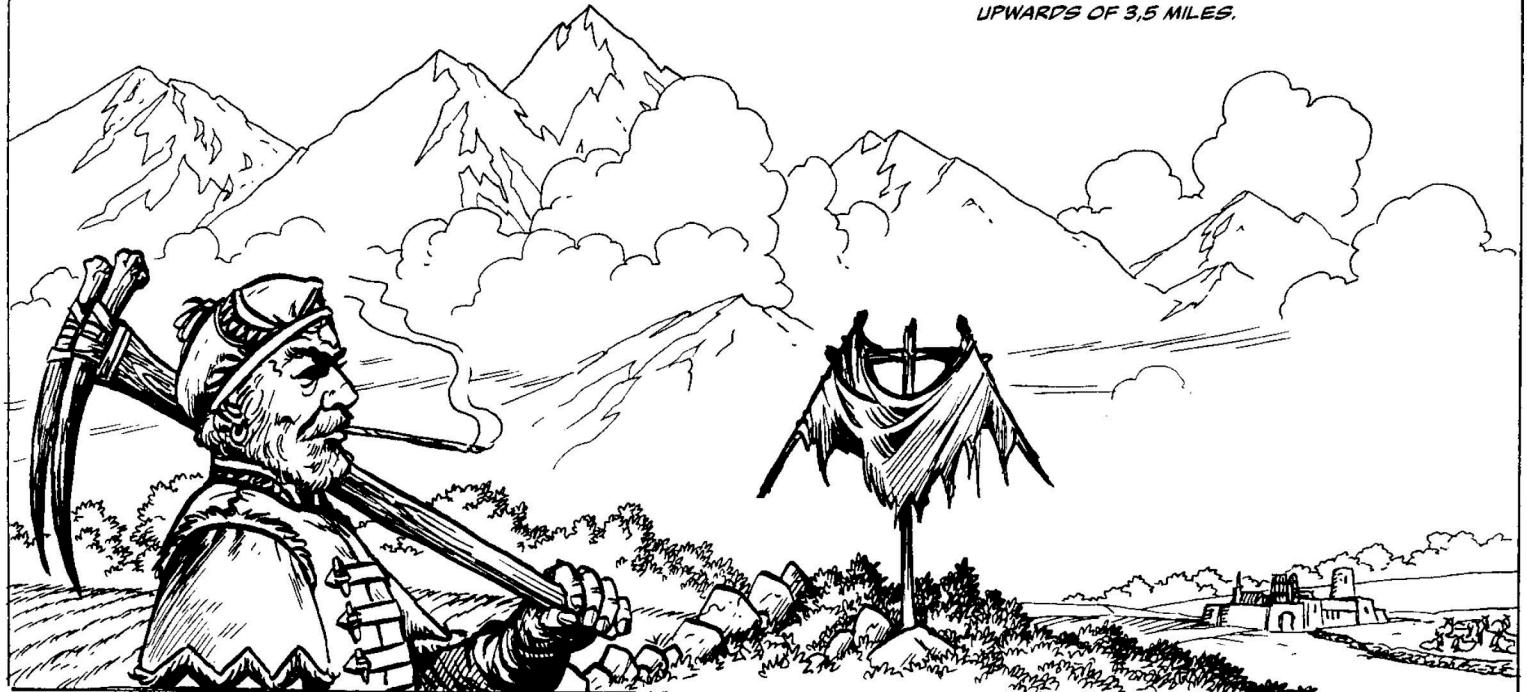
THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF THE WESTERN FIELDS AND THE HIGHLANDS SURROUNDING THE NORTHERN EDGE OF THE MOUNTAINS ARE HOME TO A HIGH NUMBER OF RECENT SETTLERS. FEARING THE NOMADS AND MOUNTAIN CLANS, THE LOCALS HAVE TRANSFORMED THESE FARMS INTO SMALL FORTRESSES. STRANGERS ARE TREATED TO A FAIR AMOUNT OF SUSPICION 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.



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.



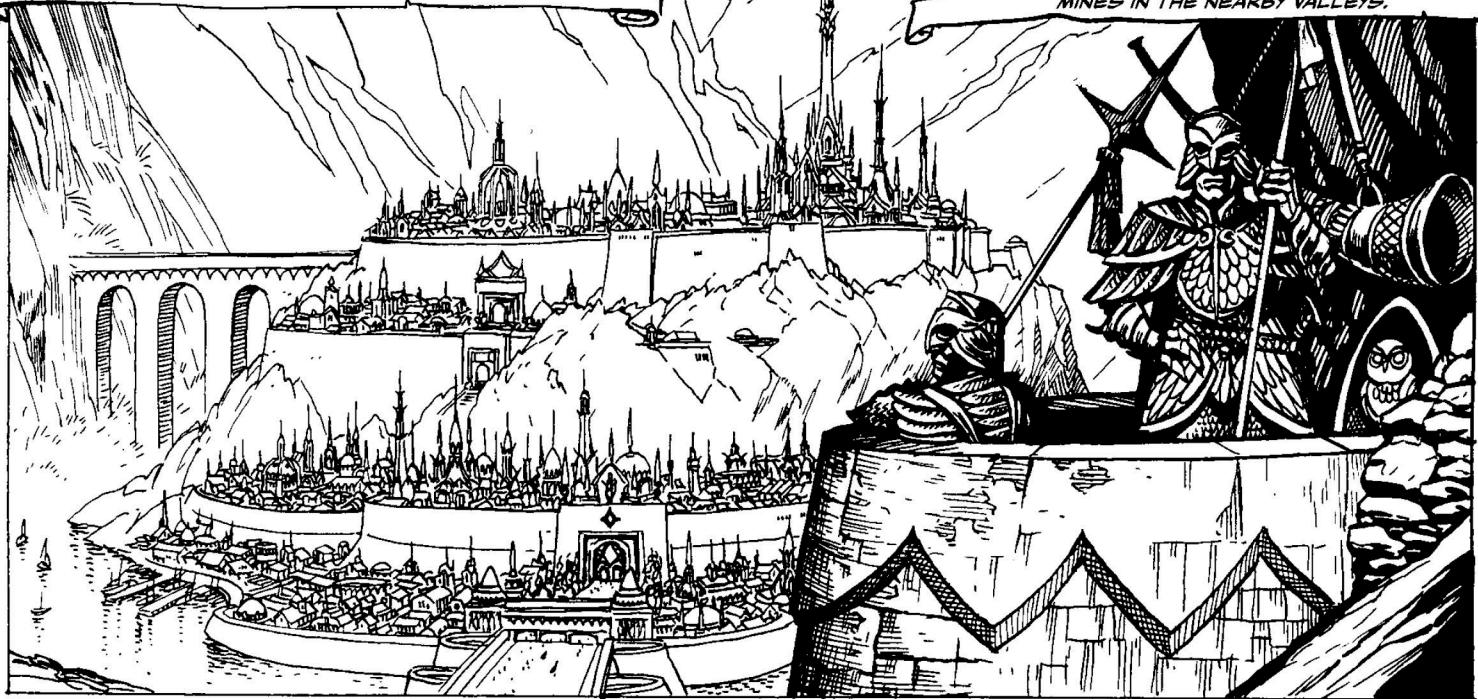
THE LOCATIONS OF THE FORTIFIED VILLAGES OF THE MOUNTAIN CLANS ARE KEPT SECRET, THROUGH SHEER VIOLENCE IF PUSH COMES TO SHOVE. CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THE CLANS DO NOT LIVE ON THE SNOWY SLOPES OF THE MOUNTAINS BUT IN THE VERDANT VALLEYS HIDDEN AMONGST THEM.



Western Mountains

TOWARDS THE SOUTHERN END OF THE MOUNTAIN RANGE YOU'LL FIND THE CITY OF ANGAR. THE ACTUAL KINGDOM OF ANGAR HAS BEEN PUSHED FAR TO THE EAST OF THE MOUNTAINS BY THE WILD CLANS. THE CAPITAL IS EFFECTIVELY JUST A WELL GARRISONED TRADEPOST.

THOUGH PROPERLY ARMED, THE GARRISON OFFERS FEEBLE RESISTANCE AGAINST THE MOUNTAIN CLANS AND THE CITY WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN ABANDONED A LONG TIME AGO IF NOT FOR THE RICH MINES IN THE NEARBY VALLEYS.



BETWEEN THE WESTERN AND EASTERN MOUNTAINS, SOUTHERN JACONIA IS A LAND OF GRAND FORESTS AND RIVERS. FORTIFIED FARMS AND FIELDS DECORATE THE TREE LINES, AND THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRADE ROUTE BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH FOLLOWS THE RIVER FRANFAR.



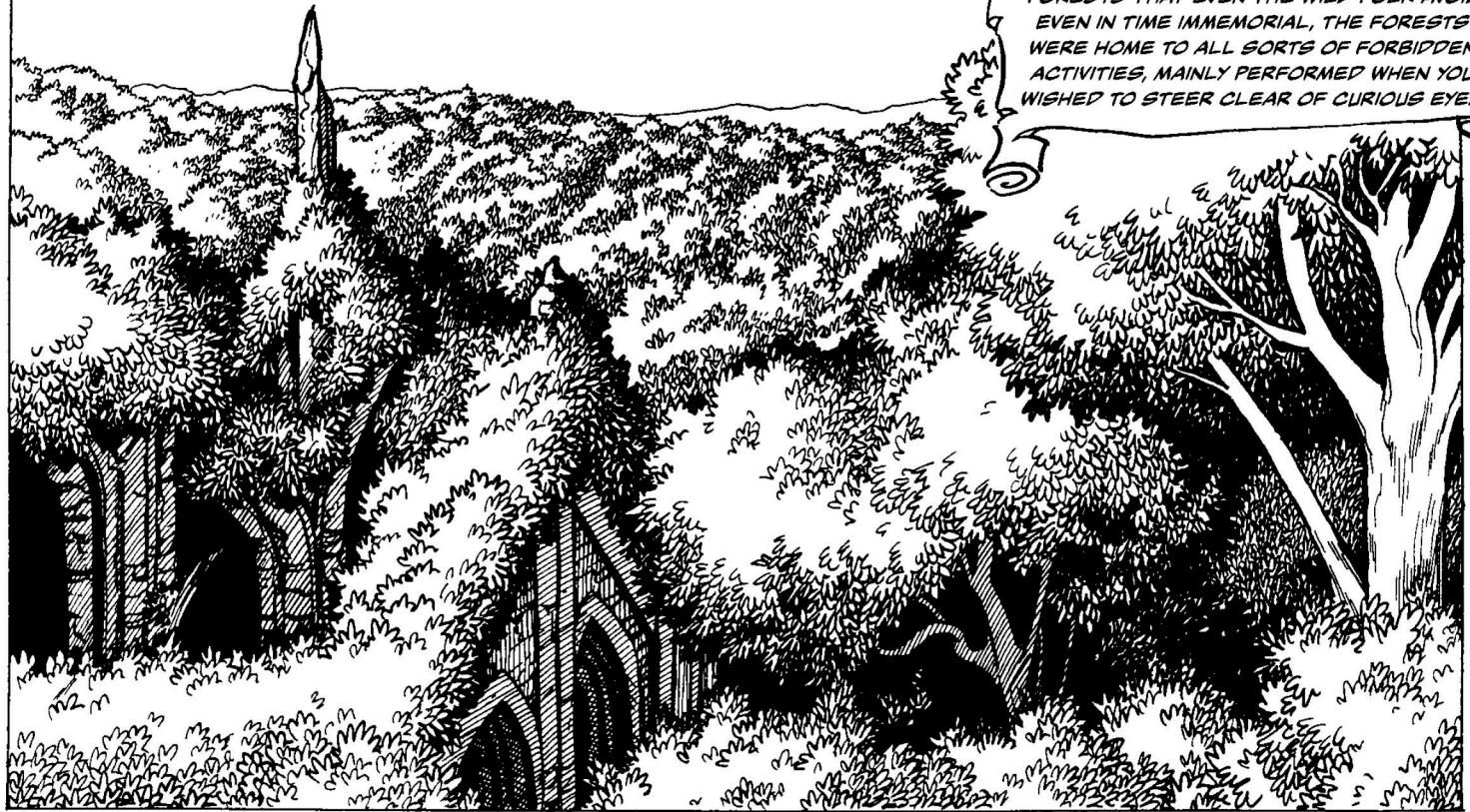
THE SOUTHERNMOST OF THE GREAT KINGDOMS IS OFT, THE CAPITAL OF WHICH IS AN ENORMOUS, AND RESTLESS, COMMERCIAL CITY ON THE RIVER FRANFAR. MERCHANTS FROM ALL CORNERS OF JACONIA COME HERE TO TRADE, AND IT IS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES WHERE MEMBERS OF THE BARBARIAN CLANS CAN TRADE THEIR WARES.

THE CITY IS CONSIDERED BY MOST TO BE A STINKING DEN OF SIN WHERE, WITH ENOUGH COIN, YOU CAN BUY ANYTHING. TALES OF OFTIAN WICKEDNESS ARE TOLD IN ALL CORNERS OF JACONIA.



Shore of Franfar

THERE ARE RUINS IN THE DEPTHS OF THESE FORESTS THAT EVEN THE WILD FOLK AVOID. EVEN IN TIME IMMEMORIAL, THE FORESTS WERE HOME TO ALL SORTS OF FORBIDDEN ACTIVITIES, MAINLY PERFORMED WHEN YOU WISHED TO STEER CLEAR OF CURIOUS EYES



THE WILD FOLK ARE A MOTLEY PEOPLE CONSISTING OF ESCAPED SLAVES, CRIMINALS, LUNATICS, CRACKPOTS AND FORTUNE HUNTERS. THEY WILL GLADLY INTRODUCE THE LOCAL CUSTOMS TO ANY UNFORTUNATE STRANGER WHO HAPPENS UPON THEIR LANDS. EACH WILD FOLK FAMILY HAS THEIR OWN FORTIFIED VILLAGE, HIDDEN SOMEWHERE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE FOREST.



TOD, POTH AND TAXOS WERE ONCE TRADING POSTS. TOD HAS SINCE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO AN ACTUAL KINGDOM (ONE THAT HAPPENS TO RULE OVER THE SETTLEMENTS OF THE RIVER FORK) BY THE NOBLES WHO SETTLED THERE FROM OTHER PARTS OF JACONIA, BUT IN POTH AND TAXOS DISAGREEMENTS ARE STILL SETTLED BY THE EDGE OF A BLADE.



The Great Forest

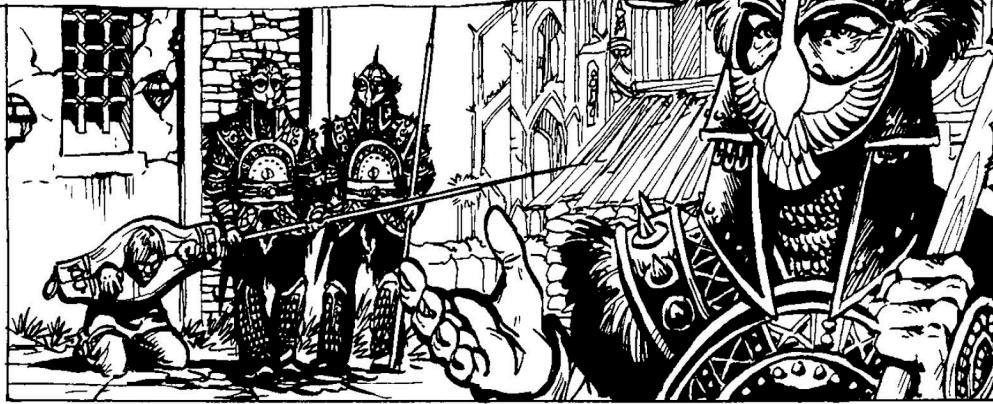
THE REGION EAST OF THE EASTERN MOUNTAINS IS THE DEVELOPING PART OF JACONIA. THESE ONCE WEALTHY LANDS WERE CONQUERED BY THE MOUNTAIN CLANS IN 216 VALIARIAN TIMES (VT), AND SINCE THEN PLAGUES, RAIDS, AND THE ARBITRARY WAR WAGING OF THE BANDIT KINGS DESCENDING FROM THE AFOREMENTIONED CONQUERORS HAVE LEFT THE REGION SEVERELY DESOLATE.

THE COUNTRYSIDE IS LITTERED WITH DESTROYED FARMS AND DESERTED VILLAGES, BATTLEFIELDS COVERED IN BONES AND OPEN MASS GRAVES.



EMITH, JAPAS AND SERES ARE STILL RULED BY THE DESCENDANTS OF THE RAYCOR CLAN, WHO REMAIN UNRECOGNIZED BY THE REST OF THE KINGDOMS AND ARE STILL REFERRED TO AS BANDIT KINGS. THE NAME IS FITTING AND THE TYRANNY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT GLARING. HERE YOU ARE AS LIKELY TO GET ROBBED BY THE SOLDIERS AS BY THE BANDITS.

HOWEVER, HUMANS ARE NOT THE ONLY THREAT TO THESE LANDS. THE ONCE NOBLE CITIES, CASTLES AND PALACES HAVE DETERIORATED VERY BADLY. THE ROADS AND AQUEDUCTS ARE UNKEMPT, SO THE POISONOUS WATER COMING IN FROM BORVARIA HAS POLLUTED THE FIELDS ON THE EASTBANK OF THE RIVER ARKES. WITHOUT THE STILL FUNCTIONAL (THOUGH ANCIENT) SEWERAGE, THESE CITIES WOULD DROWN IN THEIR OWN FECES.



AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE PRAEDOR ARE ACCUSED OF BRINGING THE PLAGUE INTO JACONIA FROM BORVARIA. THE EPIDEMIC IS STILL RAVAGING THE EASTERN LANDS, AND ADVENTURERS WHO WISH TO AVOID LYNNING BETTER COME PREPARED WITH A PROPER COVER STORY.



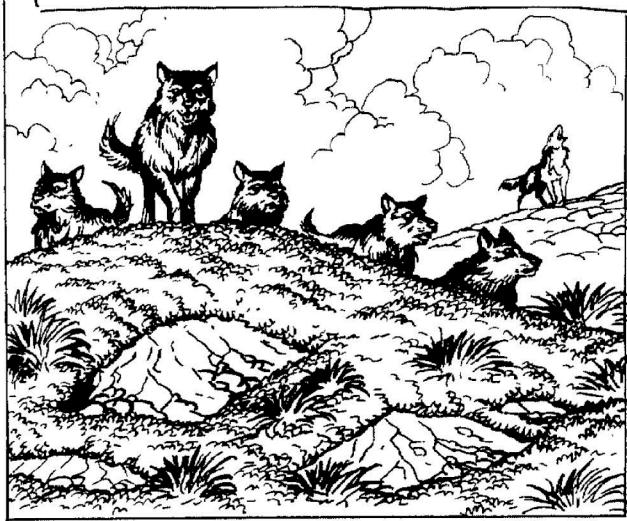
JACONIA IS SURROUNDED BY THE WASTELAND OF THE WOLF, A 30 MILES WIDE STUNTED STEP, WHOSE VEGETATION SLOWLY THINNES OUT AS YOU APPROACH BORVARIA. FOR THE LAST 600 FEET TOWARDS BORVARIA, THE LAND IS COMPLETELY BARREN AND DEAD.

YOU WILL KNOW YOU HAVE ENTERED THE WASTELAND OF THE WOLF WHEN THE GROWTH THINNES OUT AND WHAT LITTLE TREES AND BUSHES REMAIN GROW MISSHAPE 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 ENCOUNTER 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 RESILIENT THE ANIMALS GROW. EVEN THOUGH MOST OF THESE SMALL CREATURES ARE POISONOUS, THERE ARE NO MONSTERS IN THE WASTELAND.



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.



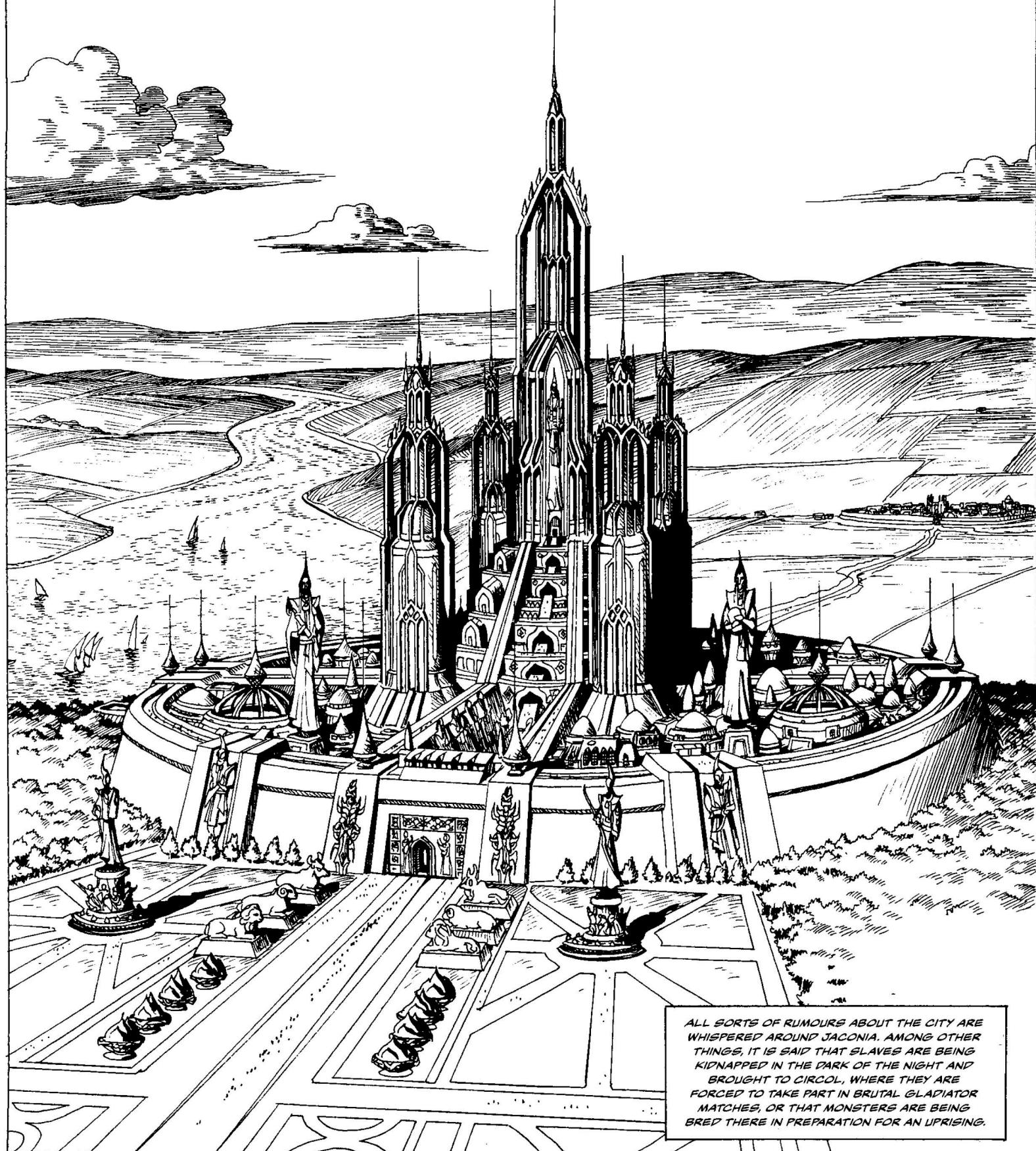
DO NOT EAT OR DRINK ANYTHING YOU DID NOT BRING WITH YOU. EVEN FAMILIAR FRUITS AND BERRIES ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM, AND CAN BE DEADLY.



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 MUNDA-NE 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.



The Lion and the Butterfly



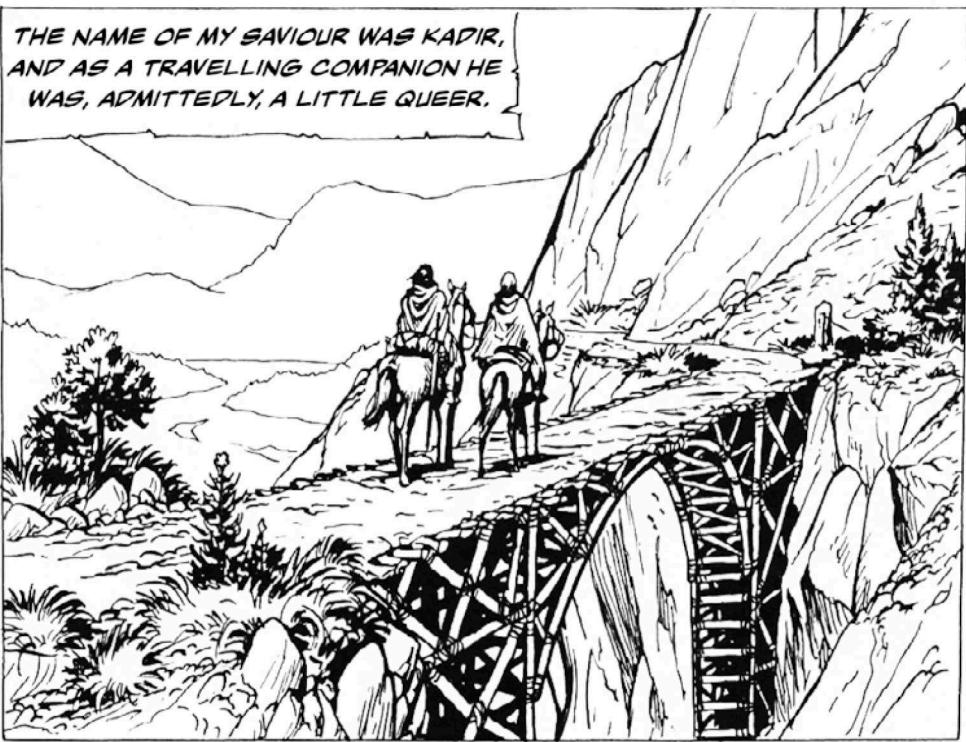
A Tale of Three Sovereigns 1/3

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.



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.



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.



YOUR VERY OWN ACADEMY THEN? OR A THEATER? A CONSERVATOIRE?

WHAT DO YOU WANT, THEN, IN LIFE?

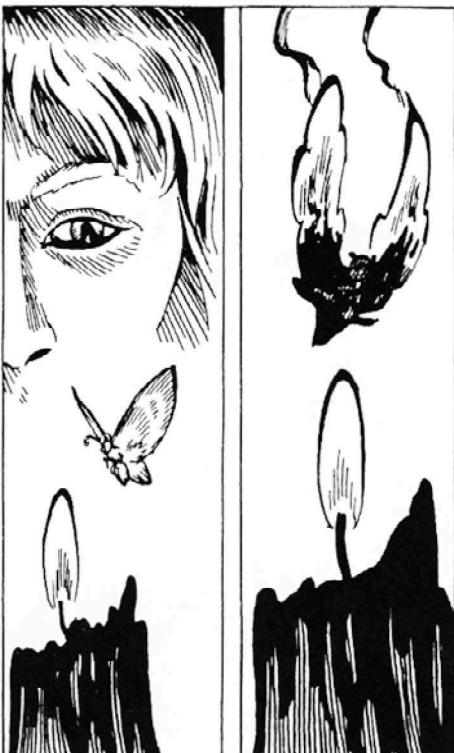
I DON'T WANT A LIBRARY!

NO, NO, NO!
YOUR IMPOSITION IS OFF-PUTTING!

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...



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.

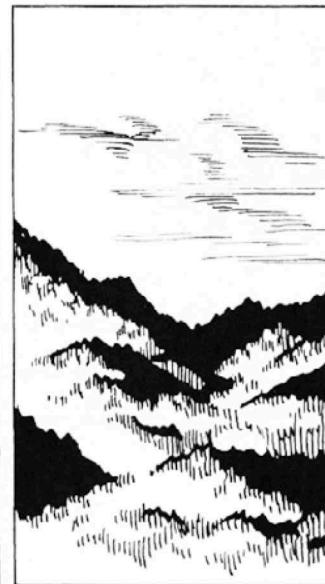
TOMORROW MORNING I WILL
WALK BACK THIS WAY WITH
FIVE HEADS.

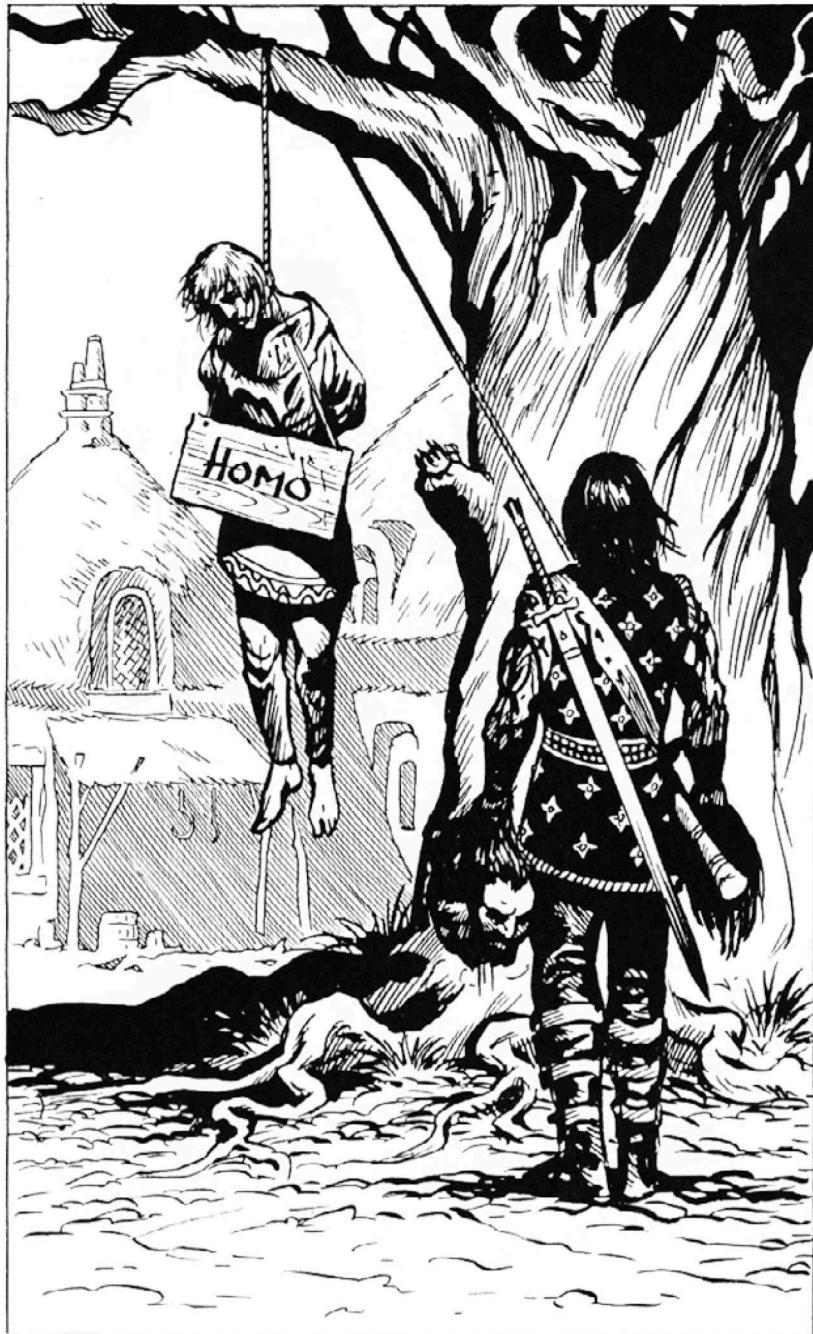
THOSE WOULD MAKE FOR
POOR FINAL WORDS FOR THE
EPIC THAT I AM WORKING ON.

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
MILLENNIUMS TO COME.

FAREWELL,
BUTTERFLY.

LADY LUCK BE ON
YOUR SIDE, LION.





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!!



I AM QUEEN LIALA MADA,
THE SOVEREIGN RULER OF JACONIA.



I AM KNOWN AS A
STRICT BUT JUST
RULER.



IN OTHER WORDS, I WILL
DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO
MAINTAIN ORDER IN THE
PREVAILING SOCIETY.



THE PEOPLE
FEEL SAFE.

A Tale of Three Sovereigns 2/3

Woe and Woe

FARRIGNIA, THE CAPITAL
OF JACONIA; THE ROYAL
PALACE, MY HOME.



MY FATHER WAS KING TENIRAN, A
HANDSOME HEDONISTIC SWINE.



MY LONE BROTHER, SAERAS, WAS HEIR TO THE
THRONE, SO MY SISTER AND I WERE MERELY
BEING RAISED TO MARRY INTO A SUITABLE
FAMILY.



I SPENT ALL MY FREE TIME IN THE
PALACE LIBRARY, NOSE IN TOMES.



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.



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



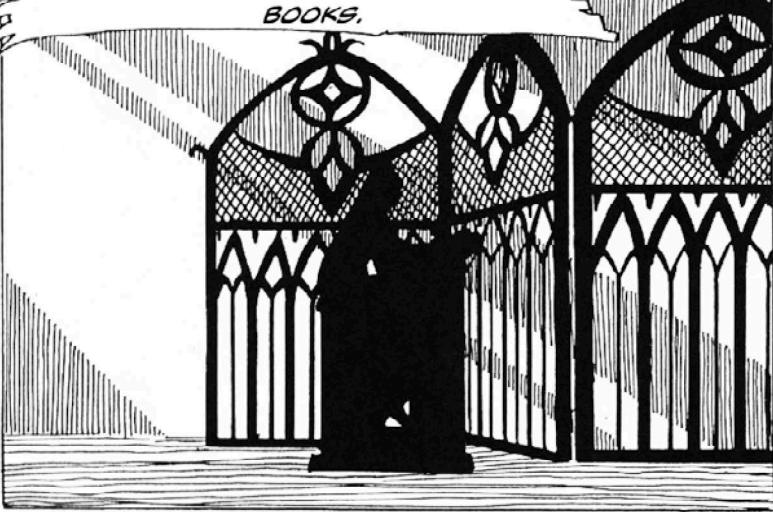
DESPITE MY
FATHER'S ADVICE, I
NEVER GAVE UP
READING.



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.



WHEN I WAS 16 YEARS OLD, MY MOTHER DIED OF AN ODD HEMOPHILIA.



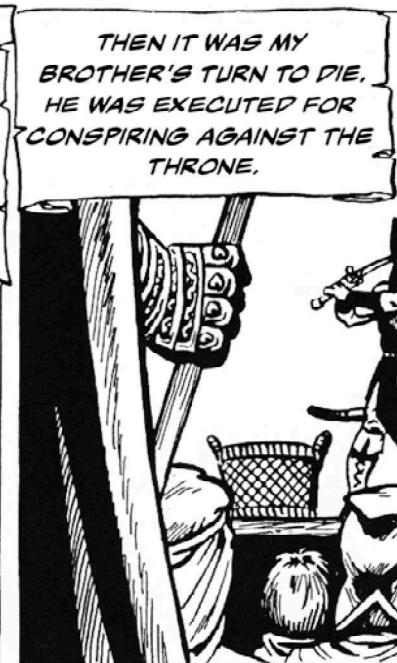
A WEEK LATER MY FATHER MARRIED MY ELDEST SISTER. IT WAS UNLAWFUL, BUT A KING IS ABOVE THE LAW.



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.



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.

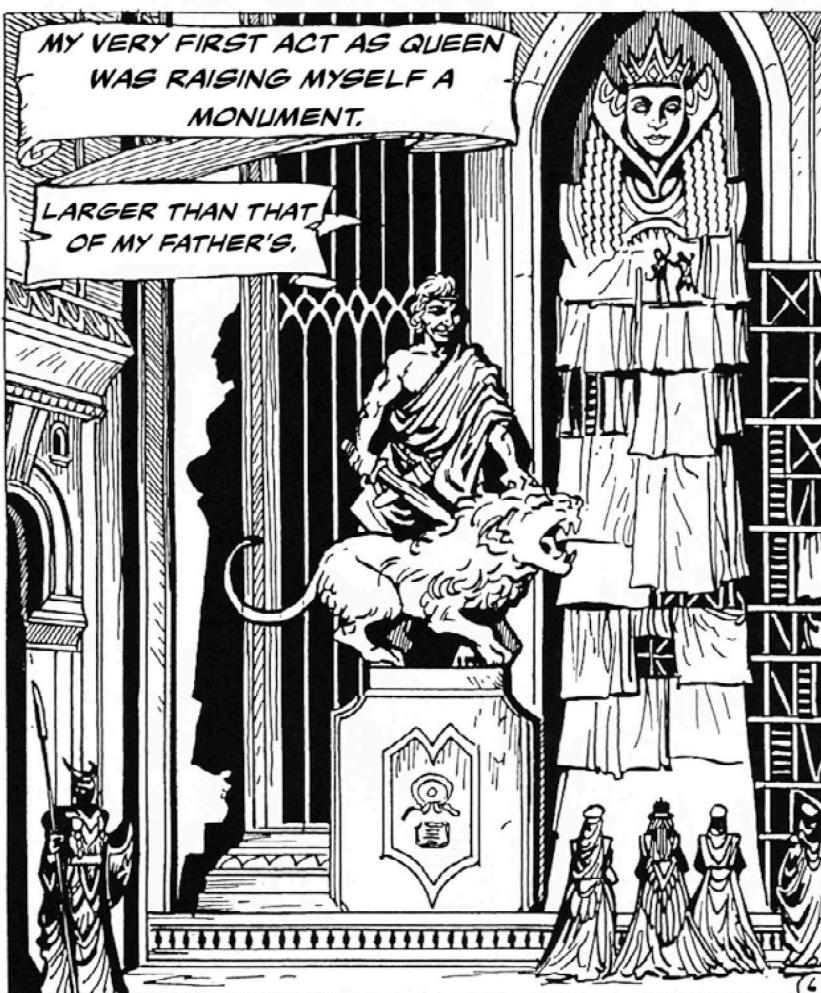
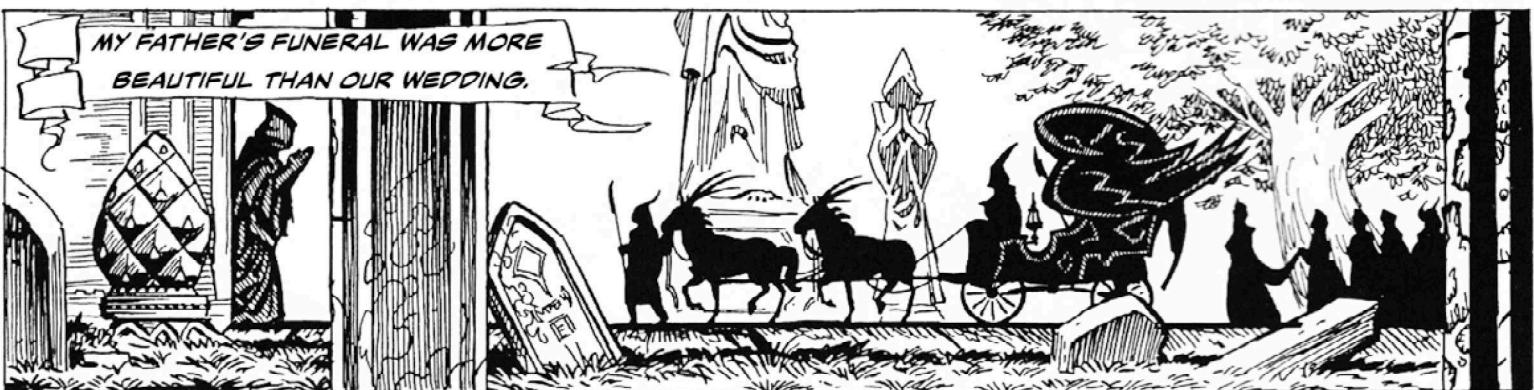


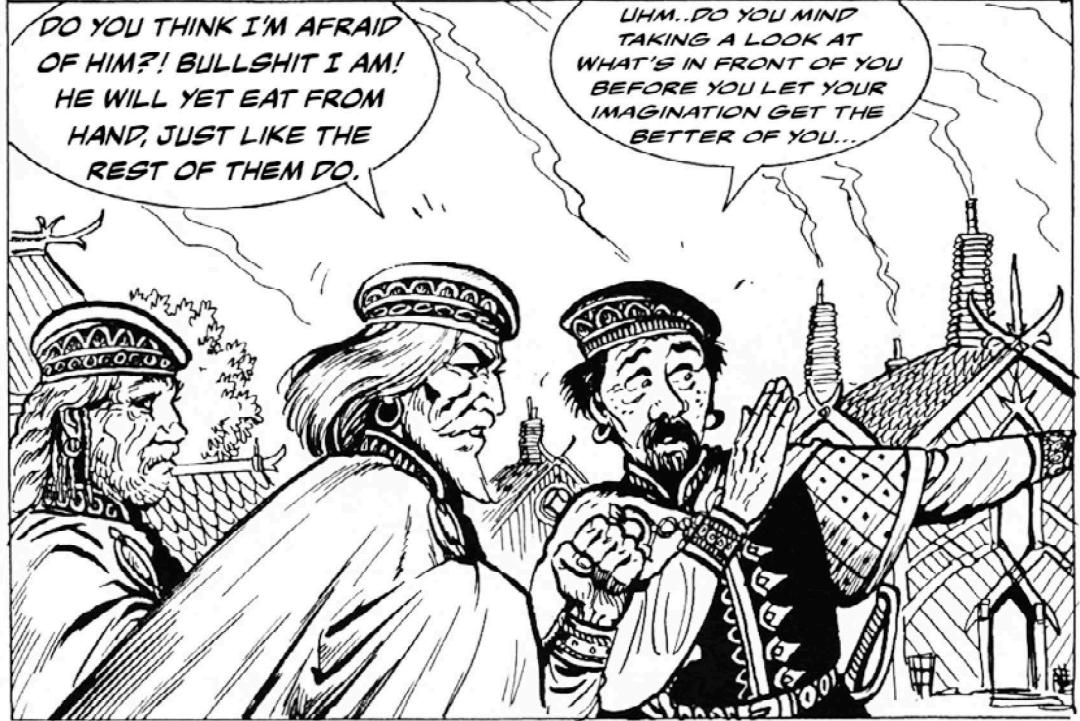
AFTER WHAT FELT
LIKE AN ETERNITY, IT
FINALLY CAME.





AN ICICLE THROUGH THE EAR IS A HIGH
PERFECT MURDER WEAPON. IT KILLS
WITH EFFICIENCY AND CONGEALS THE
BLOOD WITH ITS COLDNESS,
PREVENTING IT FROM SPILLING, BEFORE
TURNING INTO WATER.





Power and Spirit

A Tale of Three Sovereigns 3/3



WE ARE A DELEGATION
FROM THE TRADING
HOUSE OF HALVER...
WE HAVE COME TO SEE
KING MIRAN!

Y'ALL GOT A
AURIENCE?

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 POTHE 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...

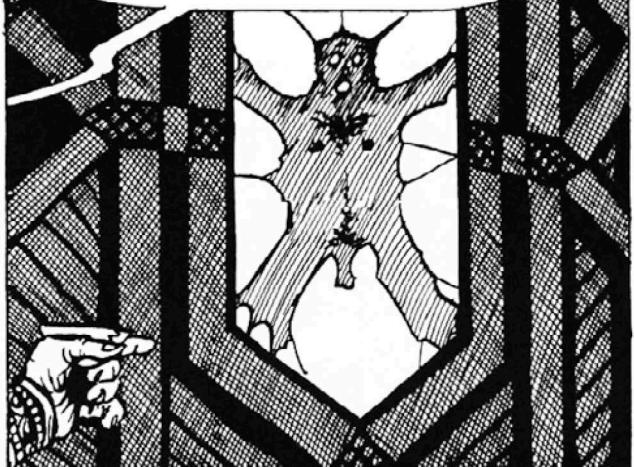
AND WHAT DO YOU THINK THE HEAD OF THE CAWES FAMILY MIGHT HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THIS?



..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.



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
PUBLICLY
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 POTHE, 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!



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...

