

THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION HAS COME.



AN OLDER AGE, THE SHADOW AGE OF LEGEND AND MAGIC...  
...IS PASSING.



PASSING... BUT NOT YET GONE.



AND ON DARK, SELDOM TRAVELLED TRAILS...



...WIZARDRY CAN STILL BE FOUND.



IN THE GREAT MOUNTAINS THAT DIVIDE THE EAST AND WEST SANCTUARIES ARE FEW, THOSE THAT EXIST LIKE THE FROST LEOPARD INN, PLAY HOST TO TRAVELLERS AND CUT-THROATS, PILGRIMS AND MERCHANTS. ANY WITH COIN TO SPEND OR TRINKET TO TRADE ARE WELCOMED WITHOUT GREAT CEREMONY OR ATTENTION...

SOME HOWEVER, DO DRAW NOTICE

HE IS CALLED THANE. HE HAS BEEN A WARRIOR FOR MORE YEARS THAN MOST MEN IN THESE CHANGING AND VIOLENT TIMES LIVE. THANE IS NOT MOST MEN. HE IS A MAN ON A QUEST. A QUEST FOR...

# The Last Sorcerer





WINE! MULLED,  
YOUR STRONGEST  
AND HOTTEST.  
TWO TANKARDS.



SHNOP!

I CAN'T REACH  
THE ONE IN MY BACK.  
I'LL NEED HELP...

THEN YOU'LL  
ALSO NEED A  
THIRD  
TANKARD...

THAT'S MY PRICE  
FOR REMOVING  
ARROWS FROM  
AGING BARBARIANS.



I'M ARISTO... OF THE  
DARK SEA ISLES, OFF FOR  
THE EAST TO SELL MY  
SWORD IN ONE OF THOSE  
CONSTANT WARS THEY  
SEEM TO HAVE.

GOOD  
MAIL...

...OTHER-  
WISE  
YOU'D  
BE DEAD!

I'VE JUST  
COME  
FROM  
THERE!

YOU'LL FIND BOTH SIDES  
HOSTILE TO WESTERN  
MERCENARIES...

TOO MANY HAVE DEPARTED  
AFTER THE PAYMASTER BUT  
BEFORE THE BATTLE.



SHHMP



EVEN THOSE  
WITH THE RENOWN  
OF THANE!



BESIDES, A TRUE WARRIOR OUGHT  
TO TEST HIS SKILLS AGAINST  
SOMETHING WORTHIER THAN  
A DAMN TERRITORIAL SQUABBLE.

THAT DOESN'T  
SOUND LIKE THE  
LUSTY BARBARIAN  
I'VE HEARD  
ABOUT...

...WHO'S BEEN  
EVERYTHING FROM  
A BANDIT TO  
A KING.

ALL OF IT SEEMS PRETTY  
EMPTY NOW, BOY, I DOUBT  
IT WILL HAPPEN, BUT IF YOU  
GET TO BE MY AGE...



YOU'VE FOUND  
SOMETHING  
BETTER THAN  
ALL THAT, OLD  
MAN...?



BETTER FOR ME, I'VE BEEN  
AT IT A SCORE OF YEARS...  
TRAILING THE SORCERER...  
SHARKHAN!



I DON'T BELIEVE  
IT! FROM THE MOUTH  
OF THE MAN I ALWAYS  
THOUGHT I'D AMIRE...  
SORCERERS! IN THIS  
DAY AND AGE?

DON'T LAUGH. MANY  
OLD CHANTS AND SONGS  
MENTION HIM... LAST OF  
THE CRIMSON RING,  
GREATEST CONSORTIUM  
OF MAGICIANS EVER!

THEIR  
POWER TOPPLED  
EMPIRES! UNTIL...



UNTIL  
A SWORD  
TOPPLED  
THEM.  
MINSTREL!

FIVE NOTCHES!  
ONE FOR EACH  
OF THE CRIMSON  
RING, EXCEPTING...

-SHARKHAN...!

THE **LAST SORCERER**...!  
IF HE EXISTS... THE MAN  
WHO RIDES THE **WORLD**  
OF HIM WOULD BE A  
LEGEND.

WEALTH... WHOLE  
KINGDOMS COULD BE  
HIS FOR THE ASKING  
...OR THE **TAKING!**

WHAT WOULD YOU  
SAY TO MY **JOINING**  
YOU, OLD MAN?

**NO** SEEMS  
REASONABLE.

BUT IT'S PROBABLY  
BETTER TO HAVE YOU  
AT MY **SIDE** THAN  
TRAILING ALONG BEHIND  
WHERE I CAN'T  
**WATCH** YOU.

SUCH A QUEST SHOULD  
BE IMMORTALIZED IN  
**BALLAD**... IF THE GOING  
DOESN'T GET SO DES-  
PERATE I LOSE MY  
**VOICE.**

I'M GIMBA... SINGER  
OF SONGS, TELLER OF  
TALES. AND PERHAPS  
EVEN ABLE TO PUT  
A COIN OR TWO TOWARD  
THE PURCHASE OF  
**HORSES** IF WE NEED  
THEM!

DAYLIGHT  
COMES  
AND THE  
JOURNEY  
BEGINS.



TAKING THE **HIGH**  
TRAIL IS RISKY,  
THANE...! IF IT'S  
SNOWING DOWN  
HERE, UP **THERE**  
WE'LL FIND..

**A BLIZZARD!**  
SLEET COMES  
AT THEM IN  
TORRENTS.  
RELENTLESSLY.  
OPPRESSIVELY.



THESE ANIMALS  
ARE SKITTISH AS  
VIRGINS AT A  
PIRATE ORGY!

THEY **SENSE**  
WE'RE GETTING  
CLOSE...

I'VE TRACKED SHARKHAN  
FROM LAIR TO **LAIR** OVER  
THE YEARS... ALWAYS HE'S  
FLED TO **ANOTHER.**

ONE OF MY ATTACKERS  
LAST NIGHT MUTTERED  
SOMETHING ABOUT  
PROTECTING THE MASTER'S  
**HIGH CITADEL**...



...EVERY BONE IN  
MY BODY SREAMS  
THAT...



...THIS IS  
IT!  
AND FROM THE  
**DESPERATION** OF  
THE ATTACK... I'D WAGER  
THIS IS SHARKHAN'S  
**LAST HIDEAWAY!**

SOMETHING'S  
COMING **OUT** OF  
THERE...! IS IT A  
**CLOUD**...? DAMNABLE  
**SNOW** MAKES IT  
ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE  
TO--

**B-BATS**...!  
ALBINO BATS!  
GIANTS...  
MAN-  
KILLERS!





THEY FALL FROM THE SKY. A LIVING WAVE, BREAKING...

...ON COLD STEEL AND FIERCE DETERMINATION!



EASY GIMBA...THEY'RE GONE. THIS MONSTER WAS APPARENTLY THE LEADER OF THE FLOCK...!

YOU'VE A SWIFT, STRONG SWORD ARM, ARISTO.

BECAUSE IT'S UNHAMPERED BY AGE OR IDEALS, THANE...



...AND BECAUSE I MIGHT NEED THE TWO OF YOU BEFORE THE SORCERER IS WITHIN REACH OF IT!

HERE'S YOUR LUTE, MINSTREL! SERENADE US... WITH AN ODE TO THE HUMILITY OF YOUTH!

DAYS FROM NOW MY HANDS WILL STILL BE TREMBLING TOO MUCH TO PLAY!



...PERHAPS... MY DECISION TO KEEP COMPANY WITH YOU WAS RASH.

THINGS ARE NOT ALL GLOOM, GIMBA. THE SNOW SEEMS TO HAVE STOPPED!



B-BUT... YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S AHEAD. HOW CAN YOU KEEP AT THIS...?

ONCE IT WAS VENGEANCE. THE CRIMSON RING ROBBED ME OF A KINGDOM.



BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO... I SELDOM EVEN THINK OF THE LOSS NOW. PERHAPS... IT'S THAT IN A CHANGING WORLD, SHARKHAN... DEADLY THOUGH HE MAY BE, IS A WORTHY FOE.

THEN YOU OUGHT TO BE HAPPY, THANE... THE WORTHY SORCERER IS SURELY CLOSE-BY!

AND HE'S LEFT HIS DOOR OPEN FOR US!



THANE! I'M FALLING! HELP ME!



GIMBA!

A LEAP. THE FRANTIC CLENCHING OF AN IRON-TENDONED HAND. THEN...



...THE LEATHERY FLUTTER OF DEATH ON THE WING!





DON'T BE A FOOL, ARISTO. SORCERERS HAVE NO NEED OF LOCKS OR DRAW-BRIDGES--

THERE'S A GUARDIAN COMING FORTH!



YOU'VE STOPPED SMILING, YOUNG WARRIOR. DO YOU BELIEVE IN WIZARDS AND MAGICIANS AT LAST?

THANE FINDS SMALL SATISFACTION IN THE TAUNT. FOR SHARKHAN'S GUARDIAN DOES NOT STOP, DOES NOT HESITATE...AND ON A NARROW ARCH OF STONE ABOVE A MILES DEEP CHASM, THE BATTLE IS JOINED!



SWINGING HIS ARM LIKE A BLACKSMITH AT THE FORGE, THANE HAMMERS THE GREAT FIGURE. HAMMERS, BUT...

THERE'S NO BODY... NO FLESH... IN THERE! THE FORCE OF THE BLOWS ROCK IT BACK...

...BUT WE COULD POUND IT FOR A FORTNIGHT WITH AX AND SWORD AND DO NO HARM!



BLOOD OF THE GODS!

ARISTO! STRIKE AT THE THING... DISTRACT IT, IT'LL KNOCK MY HEAD OFF BEFORE I CAN DRAW MY BLADE!

ARISTO DOES NOT ANSWER...



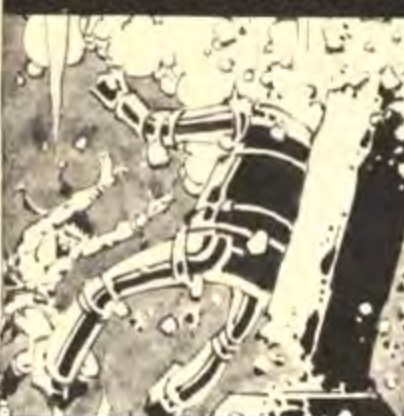
TO LOOK AROUND IS DEATH. TO MOVE BACK IS DEATH. THANE CAN ONLY LUNGE FORWARD... INTO PAIN!

AAAGHHH! THE WHOLE CREATURE MUST BE FIRE...! FIRE LIKE HELL'S OWN FURNACES!

AND YET, WITH ALL HIS GREAT STRENGTH, HE KEEPS SHOVING...

...FOR HE SEES HOPE IN IT! SHOVE, SHOVE UNTIL THE MONSTROSITY SLAMS AGAINST THE CITADEL WALL WITH VIBRATING FORCE...

...UNLEASHING A CASCADE...



...OF TUMBLING SNOW AND ICE!

GIMBA...! ARISTO... I-IT'S FINISHED...!

IT'S LIFE FIRE... TURNED TO STEAM...!



FEAR OF THE GUARDIAN DIDN'T KEEP THE YOUNG WARRIOR FROM HELPING YOU, THANE--

...WHILE YOU OCCUPIED THE CREATURE, HE SLIPPED ON TO REACH THE SORCERER AHEAD OF YOU!

CAUGHT...! THE GREAT SHARKHAN... CAUGHT NAPPING ON HIS THRONE IN A MYSTIC TRANCE!

THE SORCERER, THANE! SLAY HIM QUICKLY!

WAIT, GIMBA! WAIT AND SEE...!







YOU'RE DEAD, WIZARD... AND I AM A LEGEND!

ARISTO... SLAYER OF THE LAST SORCERER!

NO BLOOD... NO DEATH CRY...! AS THOUGH... HE WAS LONG DEAD BEFORE I STRUCK!

OR TRANSFERRED HIS SPIRIT TO ANOTHER FORM, ARISTO... SORCERER CAN DO THAT!

I FIRST SUSPECTED WHAT SHARKHAN HAD DONE AFTER OUR BATTLE WITH THE BATS.

BEYOND MUTILATING HIS BODY YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING...

... EXCEPT FORCE ME TO KILL YOU FOR BETRAYING ME ON THE BRIDGE!

HOW WILL YOU DO THAT, OLD MAN...? HOW WILL THOSE INJURED HANDS HOLD A BLADE AGAINST THE HAMMERING POWER OF MY SWORDSTROKES?!

I SAID YOUR SWORD ARM WAS SWIFT AND STRONG, ARISTO!

KRANG!

BUT IN YOUR ARROGANT, COCKSURE LITTLE MIND...



... COULDN'T YOU CONCEIVE OF SOMEONE BEING SWIFTER AND STRONGER?!



WELL THAT LEAVES YOU AND ME, GIMBA.



OR SHOULD I CALL YOU SHARKHAN?



I LOST CONTROL... COULDN'T MANAGE BATS AND WEATHER!

THEN YOU DID GUESS ALL BACK ON THE TRAIL!

INSTEAD OF PRE TENDING TO FALL ...TO DRAW YOU TO A VULNERABLE POSITION... I DID FALL!

AND IT FRIGHTENED YOU... ENOUGH THAT YOU LET THE SNOW STOP WHICH GAVE YOU AWAY TO ME.

BE DONE WITH IT, THANE...! TO WORK UP MORE SPELLS, EVEN A SORCERER OF MY ABILITY NEEDS TIME... YOU'VE HOUNDED ME FOR YEARS... IT'S OVER. AT LEAST DO ME THE COURTESY OF SLAYING ME SWIFTLY!

JUST THE WAY I ALWAYS INTENDED, SHARKHAN... TO FINALLY RID THE WORLD OF YOU AND YOUR DARK KIND!

ONLY WHAT THEN...? FIGHT FIGHT PIDDLING WARS AND BARROOM BRAWLS UNTIL SOME YOUNG BRAVO LIKE ARISTO FINALLY DOES ME IN...?



WHEN YOU DIE, SORCERER... AN AGE DIES WITH YOU. AND LIKE IT OR NOT...

... IT'S MY AGE TOO. WE'RE BOTH THE STUFF OF SONG AND STORY NOW. SO WORK WHATEVER SPELLS YOU WILL, SHARKHAN... AND LET OUR FIGHT CONTINUE. THIS NEW WORLD CAN USE A FEW LEGENDS MORE!



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