

The Crawler in the Mists!



AT FIRST, THE MOTION IS NOT UNLIKE THE MONOTONOUS ROLLING OF WAVES LAPPING SOFTLY AGAINST THE SHORE, THEN THE CONSTANT MOVEMENT BECOMES A RAGGED BUMPING.



AND A SULLEN-EYED BARBARIAN STRUGGLES BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS TO FIND HIMSELF, NOT ON SOME GREAT SLAVE SHIP PROWLING THE ARGOSIAN SHORE, BUT RATHER ON A SHIP OF THE DESERT...



... A FOUL-SMELLING CAMEL!



WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, MY FRIEND. YOU HAVE SLEPT FOR QUITE SOME TIME.

WHO ARE YOU, LITTLE MAN? WHAT AM I DOING ASTRIDE THIS UGLY BEAST?



I AM CALLED RASTO, BARBARIAN. I AM A TRADER BOUND FOR THE MARKETPLACE AT MESSANTIA. MY FELLOWS AND I FOUND YOU LYING UNCONSCIOUS ALONG THE SHORE SO WE THOUGHT WE'D TAKE YOU WITH US, RATHER THAN LEAVE YOU AS FOOD FOR THE VULTURES.



SO YOU BOUND ME WITH THIS LENGTH OF CHAIN... BUT TO PROTECT ME FROM THOSE BIRDS, I TAKE IT.



AS I TOLD YOU, MY FRIEND, I AM A TRADER... AND YOU ARE A PIECE OF VALUABLE MERCHANDISE WHICH WILL BRING A MOST TIDY SUM INDEED ON THE MESSANTIAN SLAVE BLOCK!

AND WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'M EVER GOING TO REACH THAT SLAVE-BLOCK YOU SHRIVELED LITTLE WORM?



WELL, THERE'S CERTAINLY NO WAY YOU CAN ESCAPE ME, BARBARIAN. THE OTHER END OF THE CHAIN THAT BINDS YOU IS SHACKLED TO MY WRIST. ACCEPT IT, MY FRIEND... YOU'RE MY PRISONER!





RHOWLING LIKE WILD DESERT WOLVES, THE TRADERS CHARGE FORTH, THEIR SCIMITARS GLINTING IN THE SUNLIGHT... AND A FIRE-EYED CIMMERIAN MEETS THEIR ATTACK GLADLY, HIS TEETH BARED AND SNARLING...







ENOUGH, BARBARIAN... WE YIELD.

YOU HAVE SCATTERED OUR CAMELS... BEATEN US SENSELESS...



FRANKLY, YOU ARE MORE TROUBLE THAN YOU ARE WORTH.

BEGONE, BARBARIAN... AND GOOD RIDDANCE TO YOU



FREE ME FROM THIS CURSED SHACKLE, LITTLE WORM... AND I WILL GLADLY BE ON MY WAY.

C-CERTAINLY, BARBARIAN. I HAVE THE KEY RIGHT HERE IN MY ROBES.



JUST LET ME... BY ERLIK! NO!



WHAT IS IT, LITTLE WORM?

TH-THE KEY! IN THE HEAT OF B-BATTLE, I SEEM TO HAVE... ER... LOST IT SOMEWHERE IN THE SAND.



BEL'S BONES! IT FIGURES! WELL, LITTLE WORM, IF I WANT TO LEAVE HERE, IT SEEMS I'LL HAVE TO REMOVE YOUR SCRAWNY WRIST TO REMOVE YOUR SHACKLE...

R-REMOVE M-MY W-WRIST?

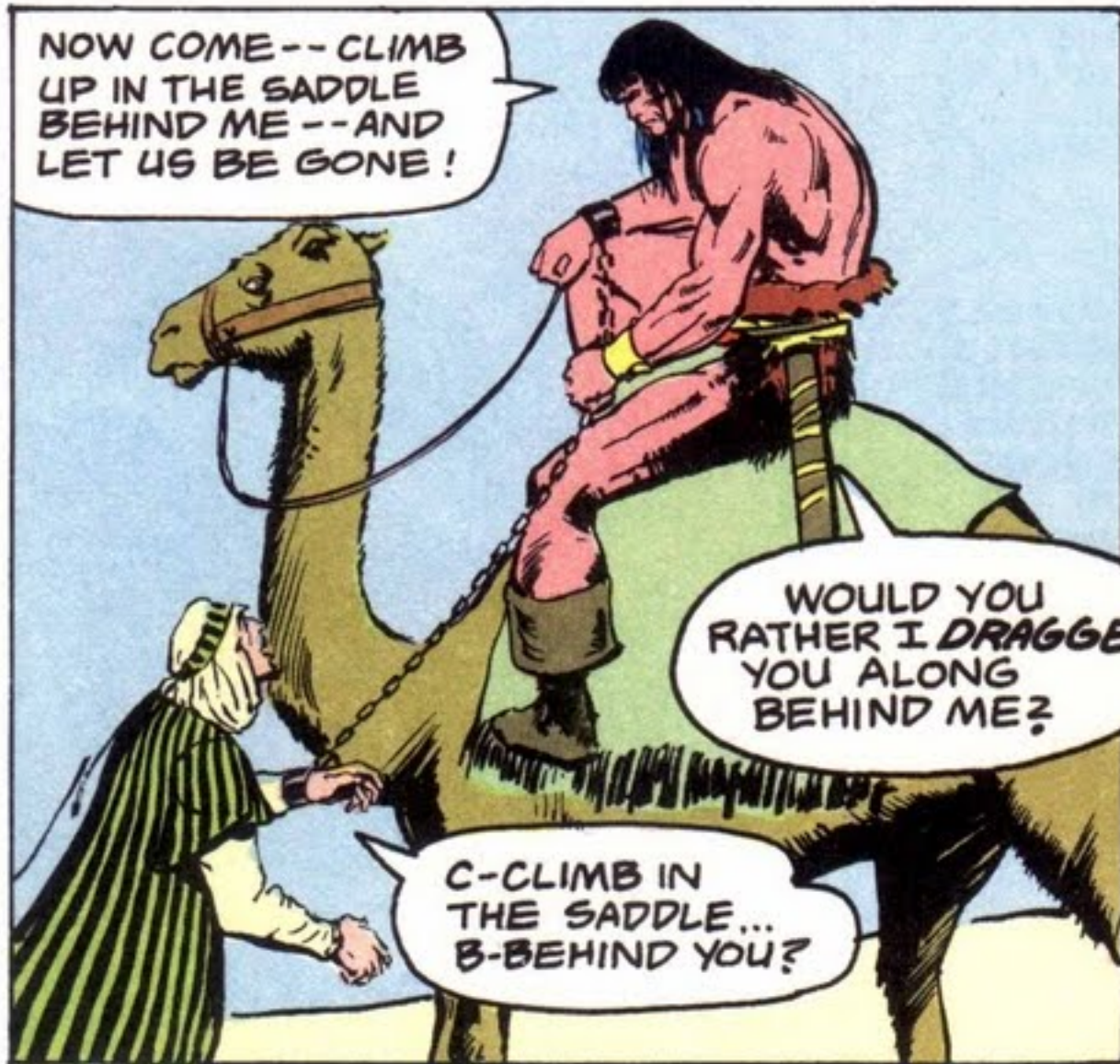


...OR TAKE YOU **WITH** ME UNTIL I CAN FIND SOMEONE TO **FREE** US FROM THESE CURSED CHAINS.

M-MY W-WRIST



OH, DON'T **WORRY**, LITTLE WORM-- I'LL LEAVE YOU YOUR PRECIOUS **WRIST**. WHAT GOOD, AFTER ALL, IS A ONE-HANDED **TRADER**? SUCH AS YOU NEEDS **BOTH** HANDS **FREE** TO PICK YOUR CUSTOMER'S **PURSE**!



NOW COME-- CLIMB UP IN THE SADDLE BEHIND ME -- AND LET US BE GONE !

WOULD YOU RATHER I **DROGGED** YOU ALONG BEHIND ME?

C-CLIMB IN THE SADDLE... B-BEHIND YOU?



YOU CAN MOVE SWIFTLY FOR ONE SO SMALL AND TWISTED, LITTLE WORM.

GIVEN SUCH A CHOICE, WOULDN'T YOU, BARBARIAN WOULDN'T YOU?



GET ON YOU UGLY BEAST-- GET ON!





WE HAVE BEEN TRAVELING FOR MANY **HOURS** NOW, BARBARIAN. ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU KNOW WHERE WE ARE GOING?

YOU WERE BOUND FOR THE MARKETPLACE AT **MESSANTIA**. IT SEEMS AS **GOOD** A DESTINATION AS ANY.



THEN WHY ARE WE TRAVELING IN **THIS** DIRECTION, BARBARIAN?

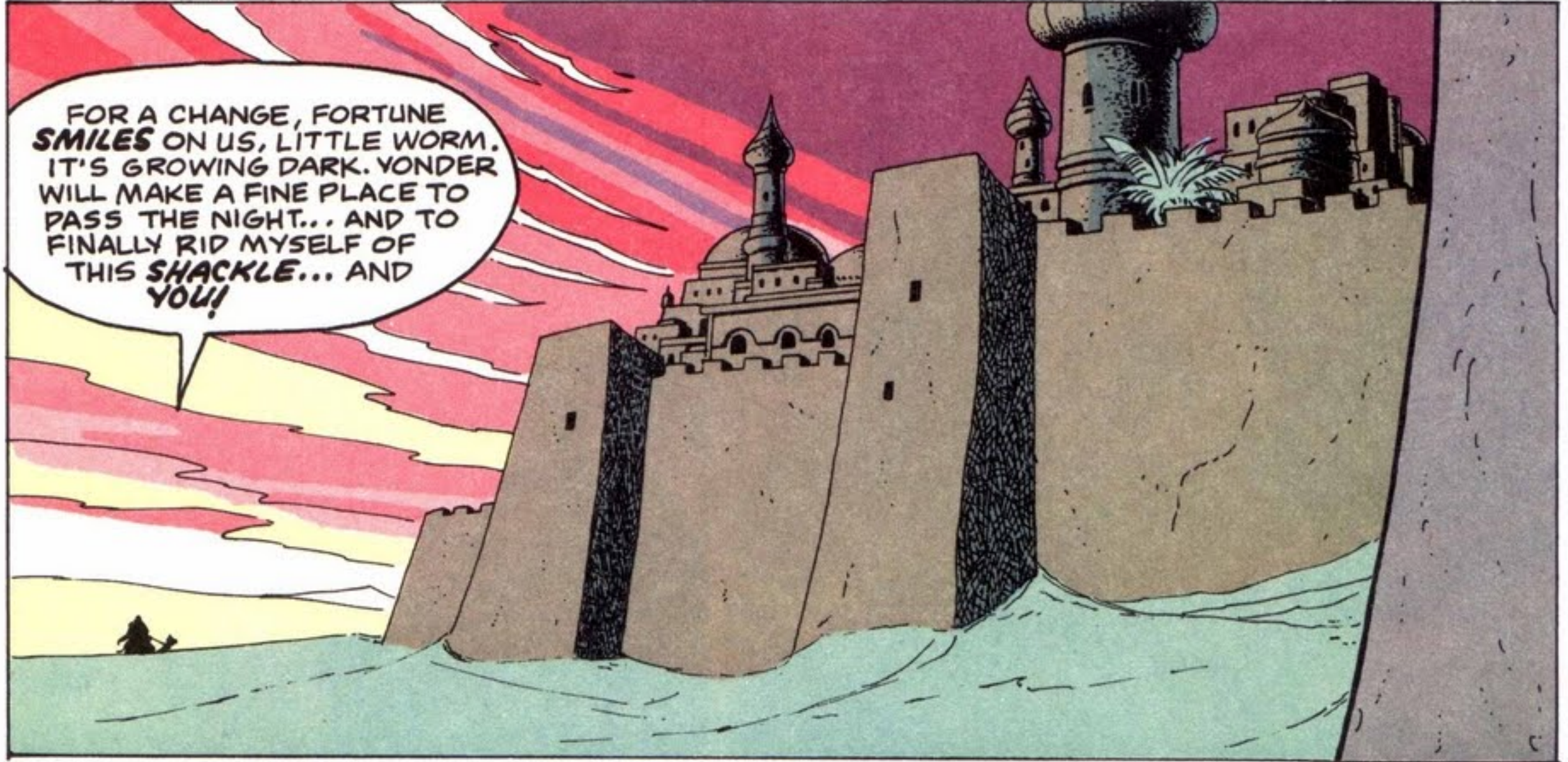
MESSANTIA LIES TO THE **SOUTH**.

SO DO YOUR **COMPANIONS**, LITTLE WORM. WE STRIKE **OUR OWN** COURSE FOR MESSANTIA, ONE WITH LESS CHANCE OF...



EYES OF ISHTAR! ON THAT RISE BEFORE US...

A **CITY!** BUT THERE IS NO CITY ON THE DESERT SANDS... UNLESS...

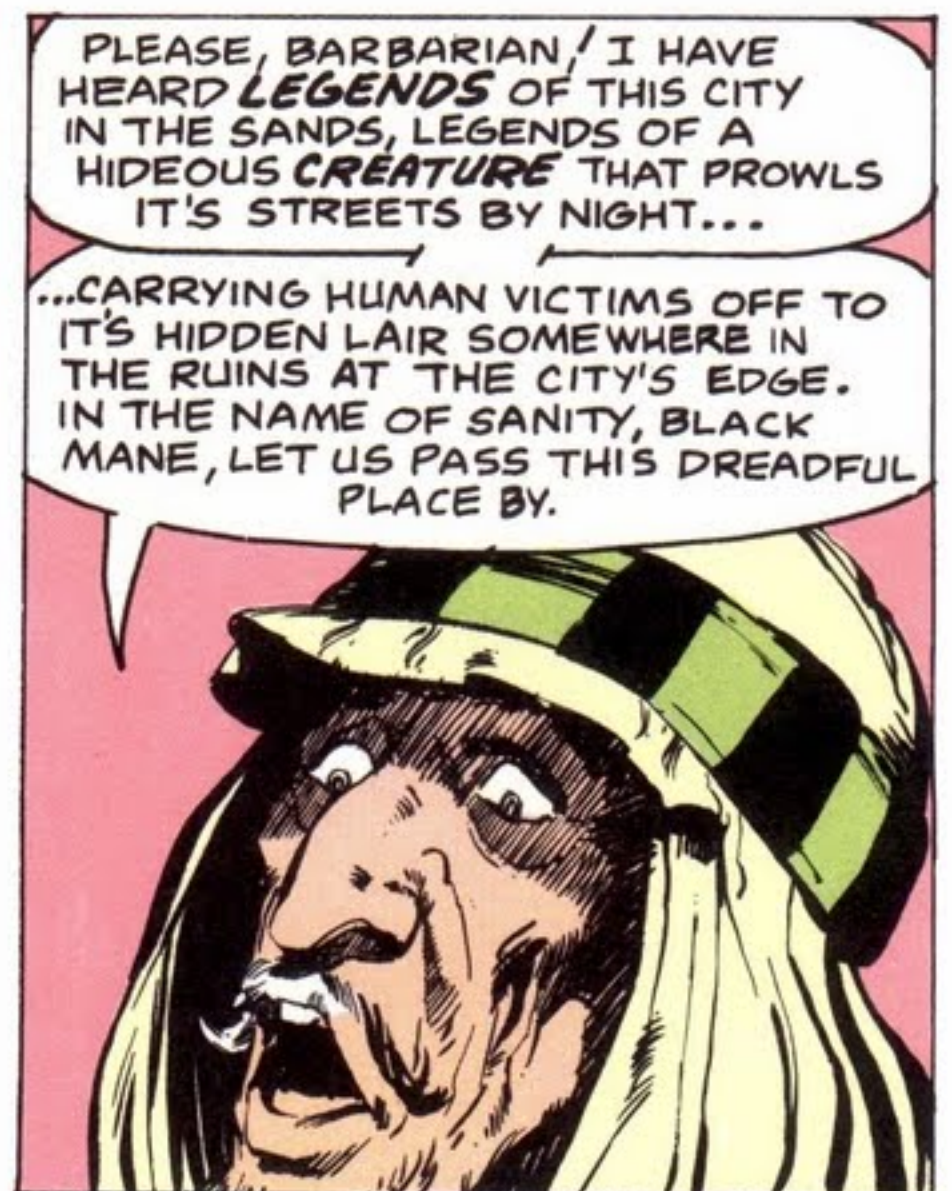


FOR A CHANGE, FORTUNE **SMILES** ON US, LITTLE WORM. IT'S GROWING DARK. YONDER WILL MAKE A FINE PLACE TO PASS THE NIGHT... AND TO FINALLY RID MYSELF OF THIS **SHACKLE...** AND **YOU!**



BARBARIAN-- **WAIT!**
I PRAY YOU, PASS
THAT CITY BY!
LET US FIND
OTHER LODGINGS
FOR THE NIGHT!

WHAT ARE YOU
JABBERING ABOUT
LITTLE WORM? A
CITY AWAITS TO
WELCOME US,
AND YOU'D
RATHER HAVE US
SLEEP UNDER
SOME DESERT
ROCK?



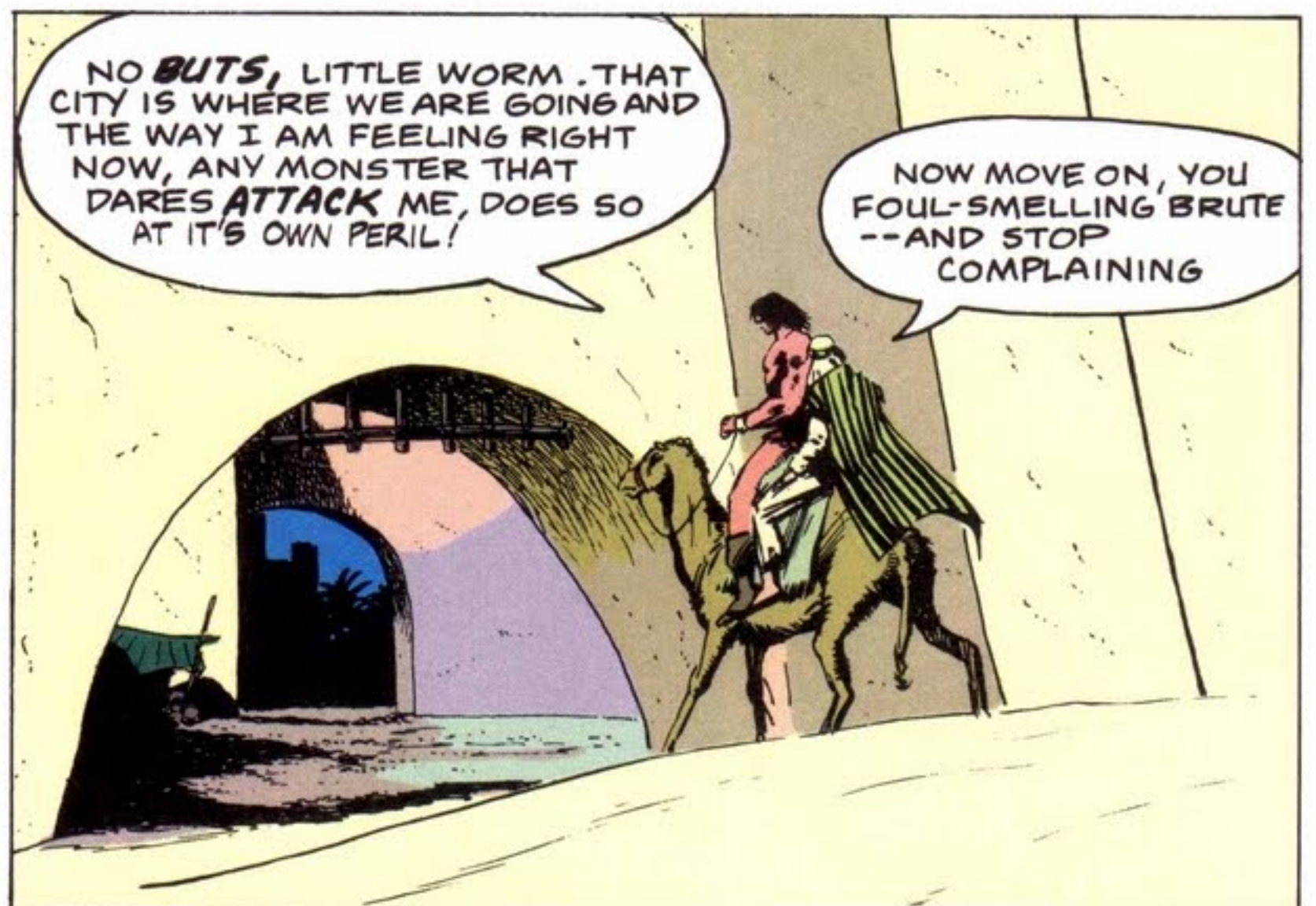
PLEASE, BARBARIAN, I HAVE
HEARD **LEGENDS** OF THIS CITY
IN THE SANDS, LEGENDS OF A
HIDEOUS **CREATURE** THAT PROWL
IT'S STREETS BY NIGHT...

...CARRYING HUMAN VICTIMS OFF TO
IT'S HIDDEN LAIR SOMEWHERE IN
THE RUINS AT THE CITY'S EDGE.
IN THE NAME OF SANITY, BLACK
MANE, LET US PASS THIS DREADFUL
PLACE BY.



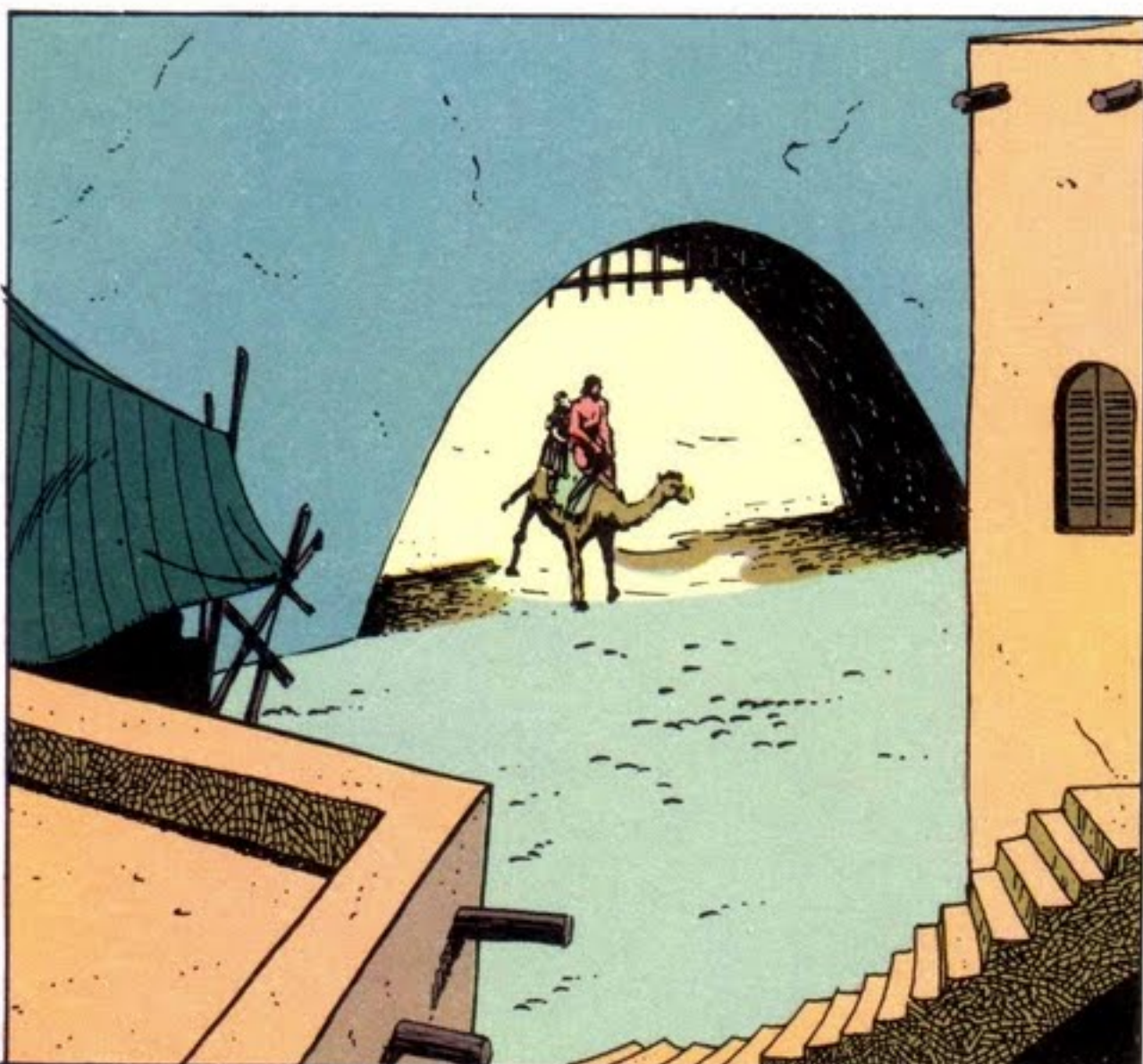
I AM **WEARY**, LITTLE
WORM, AND THAT CITY
OFFERS THE PROMISE
OF A SOFT BED...
AND **MORE**.

BUT...



NO **BUTS**, LITTLE WORM. THAT
CITY IS WHERE WE ARE GOING AND
THE WAY I AM FEELING RIGHT
NOW, ANY MONSTER THAT
DARES **ATTACK** ME, DOES SO
AT IT'S OWN PERIL!

NOW MOVE ON, YOU
FOUL-SMELLING BRUTE
--AND STOP
COMPLAINING

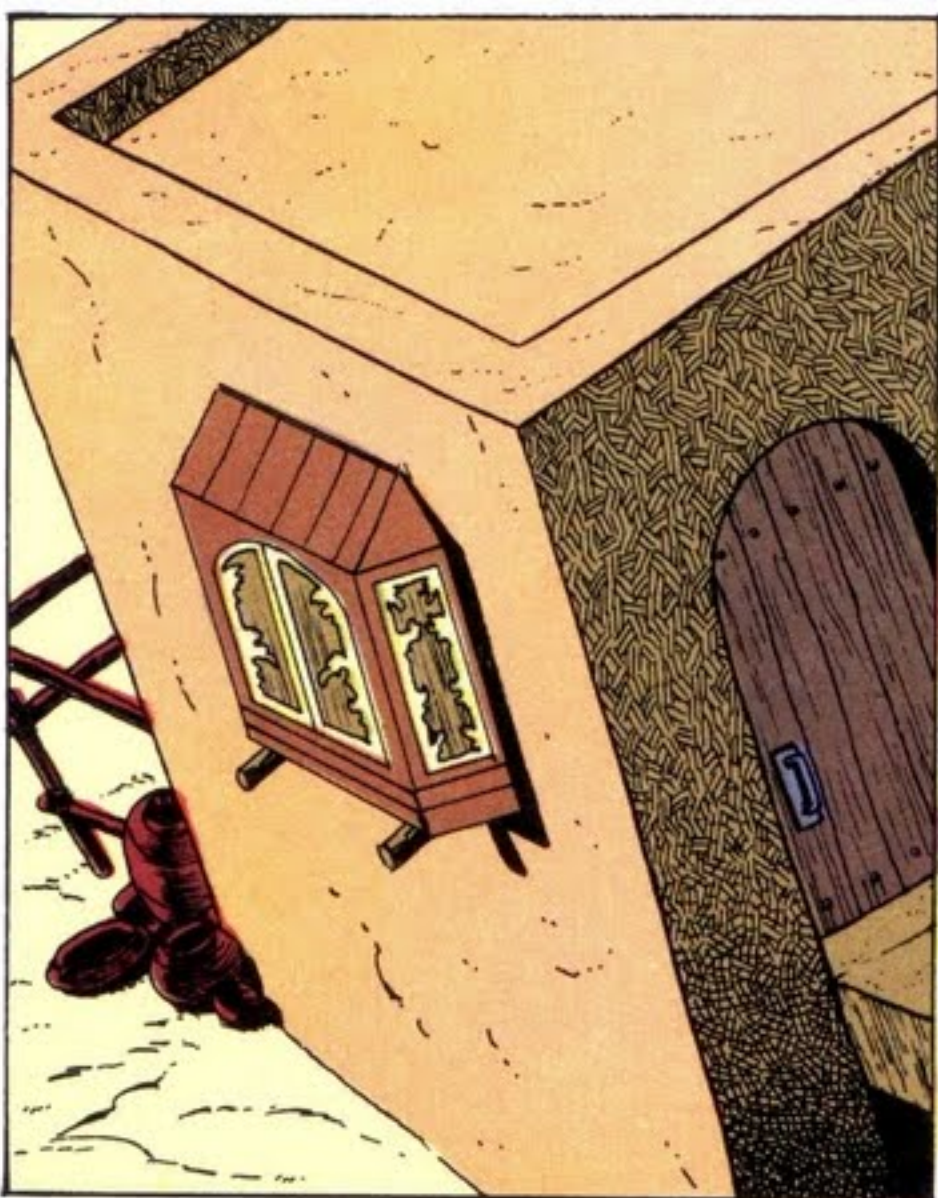
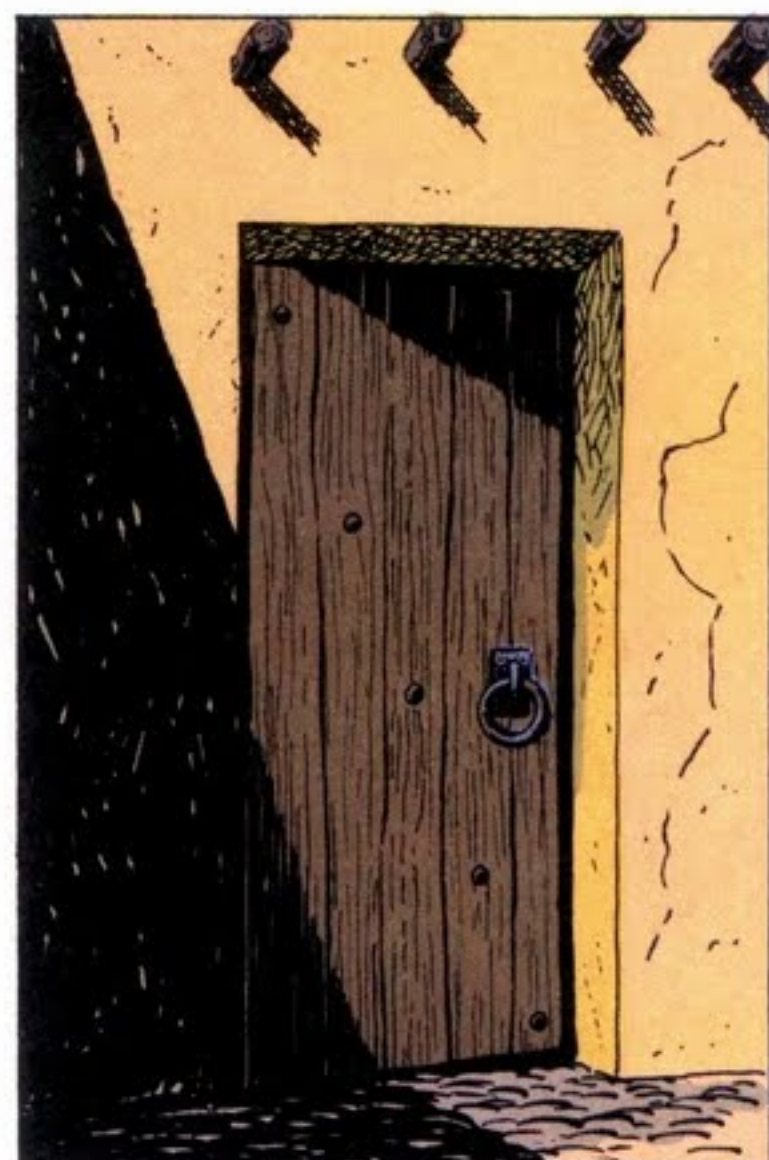


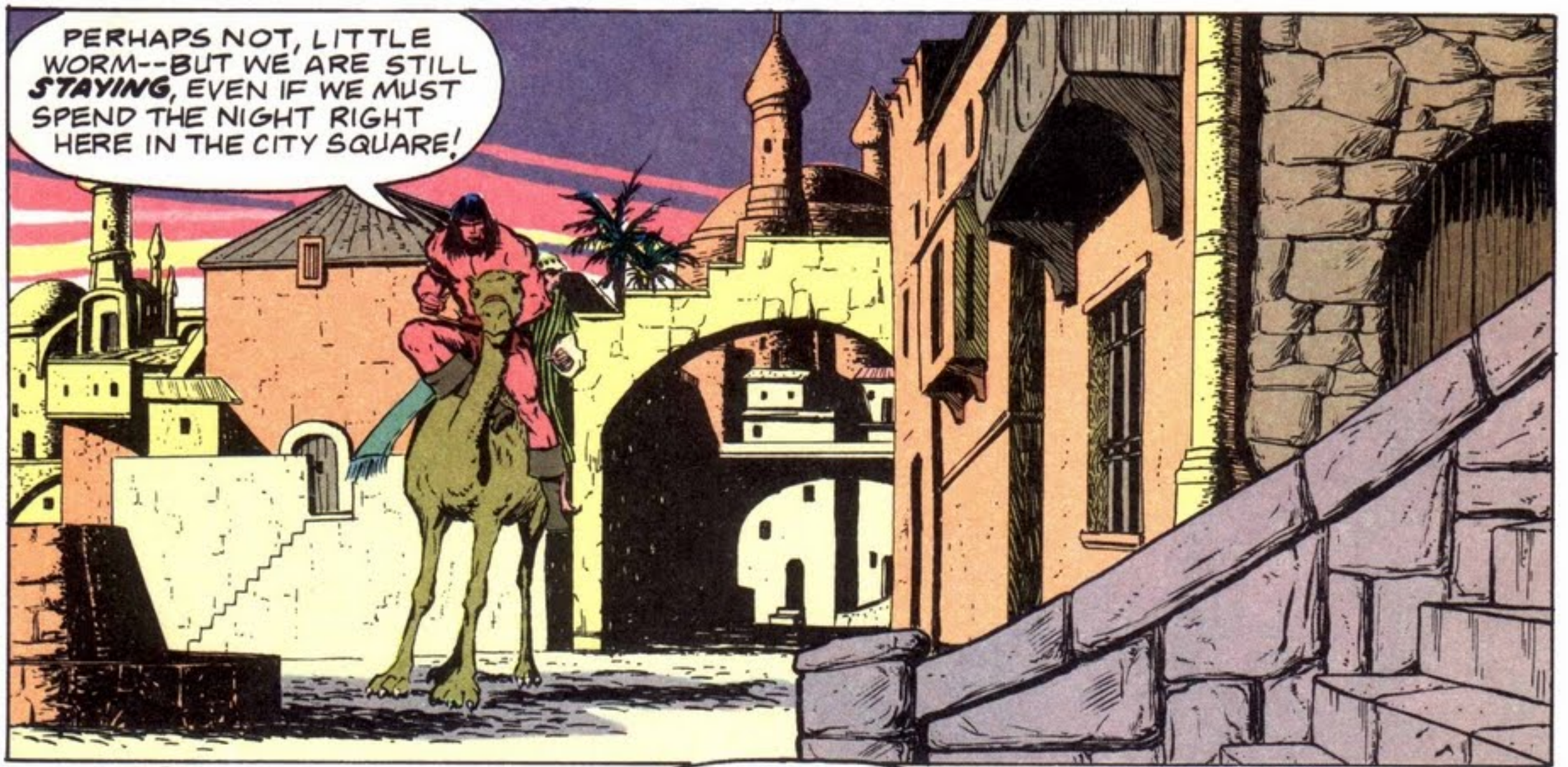
GOOD EVENING,
CITIZEN. CAN YOU
TELL ME WHERE
TO FIND A
BLACKSMITH
WHO COULD...

GO AWAY,
STRANGER!
LEAVE KAMALLA
WHILE YOU STILL
HAVE THE
CHANCE



PLEASE, BARBARIAN-- LET US FOLLOW THE MAN'S ADVICE!





PERHAPS NOT, LITTLE WORM--BUT WE ARE STILL **STAYING**, EVEN IF WE MUST SPEND THE NIGHT RIGHT HERE IN THE CITY SQUARE!



H-HERE, BARBARIAN?

AYE, LITTLE WORM. THESE COBBLESTONES WILL MAKE AS SOFT A **PILLOW** FOR OUR HEADS AS ANY DESERT **ROCK**.

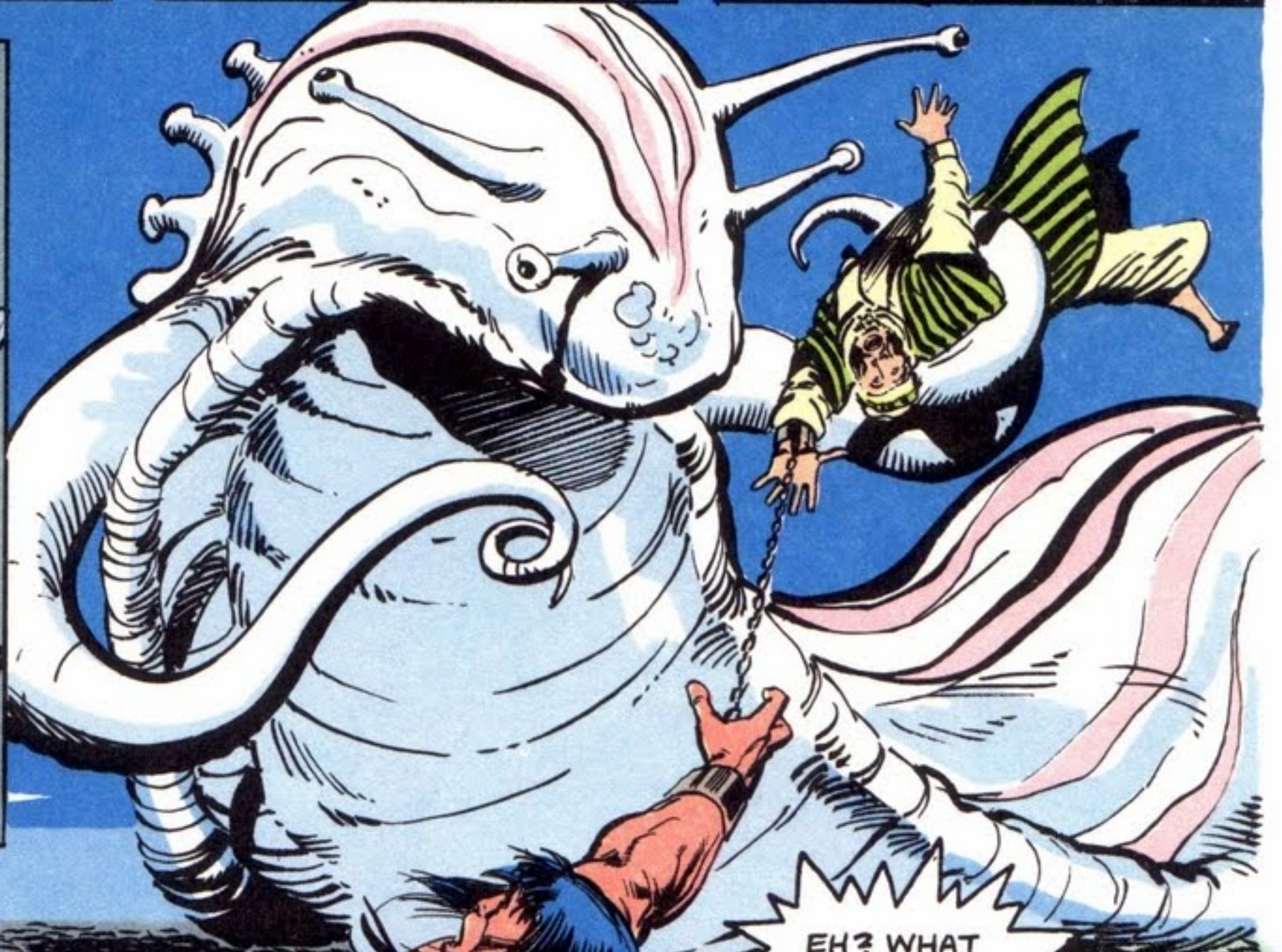


G-GOOD NIGHT, BARBARIAN.

GOOD NIGHT, LITTLE WORM. TRY NOT TO RATTLE THE CHAINS, WILL YOU. I SLEEP LIGHTLY.



B-BARBARIAN,
HELP M--
UUMPH!



EH? WHAT
IS... EYES
OF ISHTAR!



SOME GREAT,
MISSHAPEN SLUG HAS
GRABBED HOLD OF THE
LITTLE WORM, DRAGGING
ME ALONG BY THE CHAIN
ON MY WRIST! GOT TO
PULL FREE BEFORE...



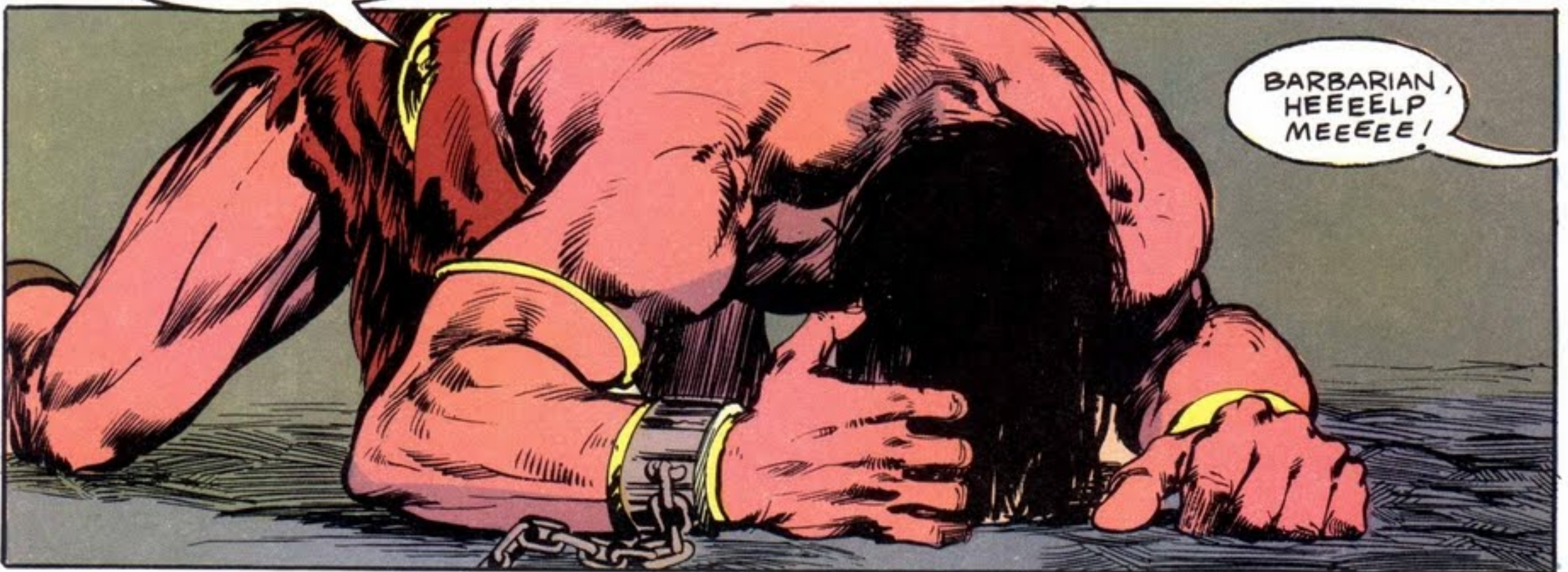
BY ERLIK!
THE CREATURE
SNAPPED THE CHAIN
AS IF IT WERE
ONLY TWINE!



I'VE GOT TO
FREE THE LITTLE
WORM WHILE
THERE'S STILL...



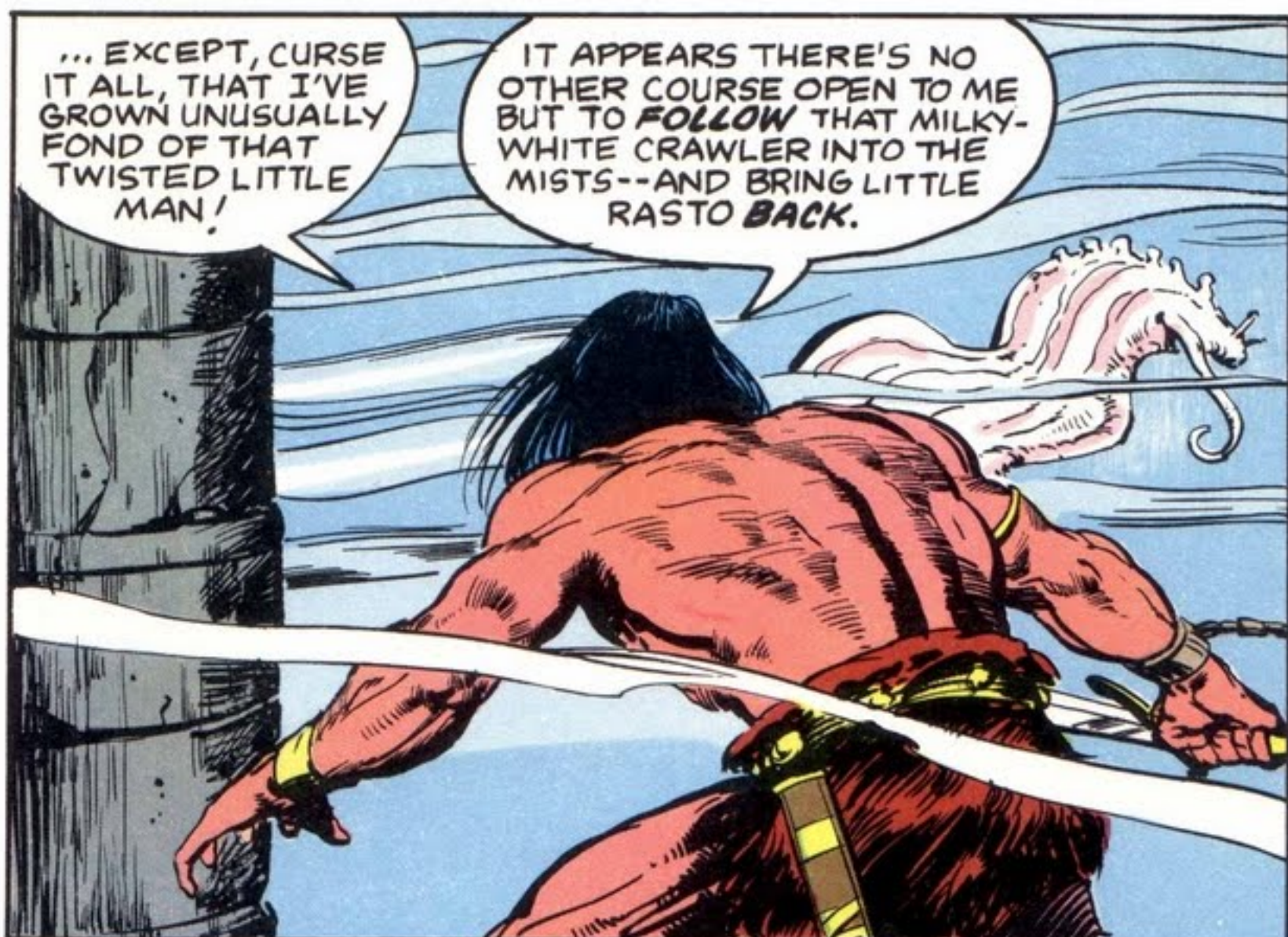
MY HEAD--REELING
...HAVE TO REGAIN
MY FOOTING,
THEN...



BARBARIAN,
HEEEELP
MEEEEEE!

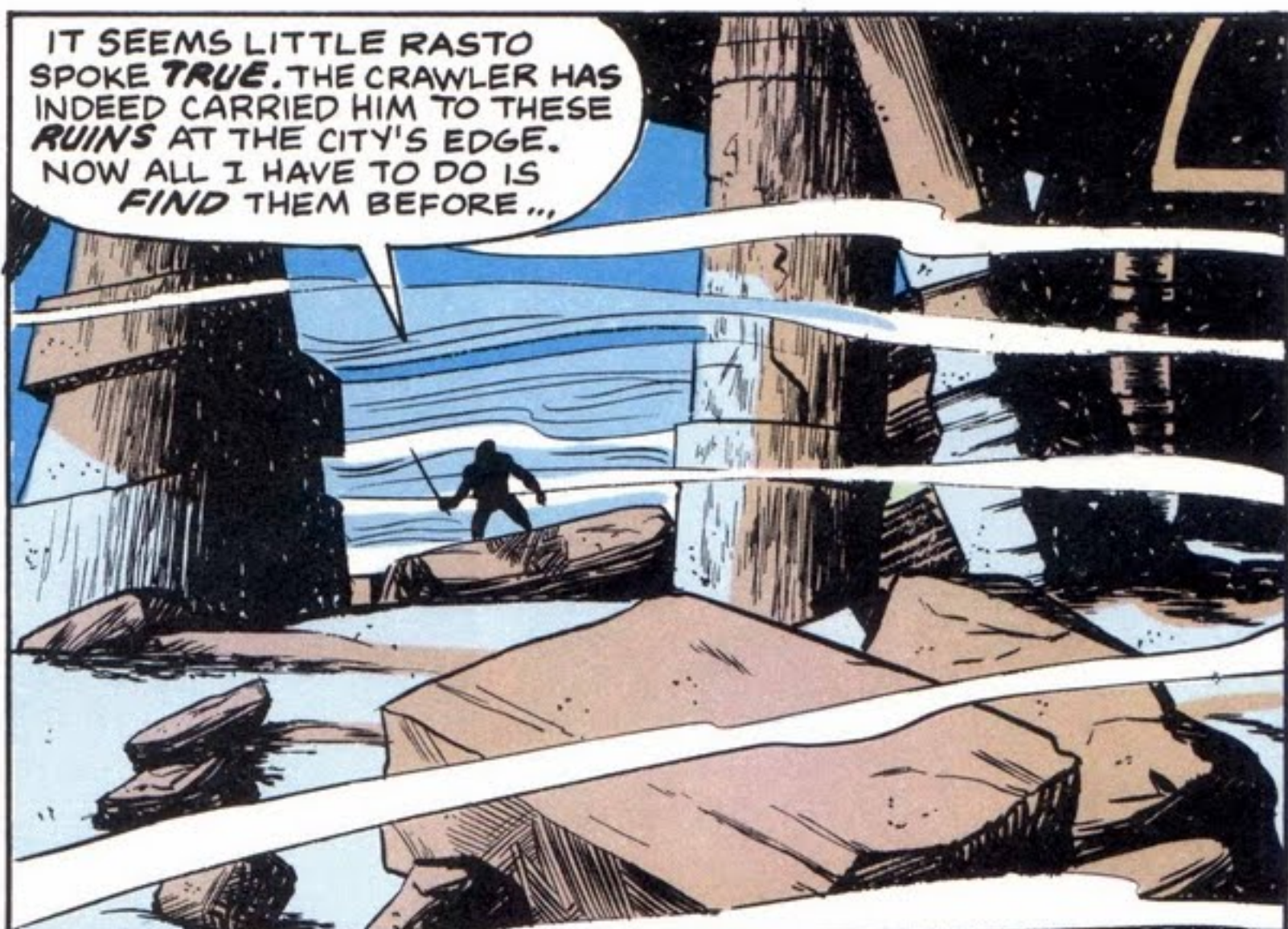


CROM! THE SLUG-THING HAS CARRIED LITTLE RASTO OFF INTO THE MISTS! I'M RID OF THEM **BOTH** THEN. ALL I NEED DO IS MOUNT UP AND RIDE OFF. THERE'S NOTHING MORE TO KEEP ME HERE...



... EXCEPT, CURSE IT ALL, THAT I'VE GROWN UNUSUALLY FOND OF THAT TWISTED LITTLE MAN!

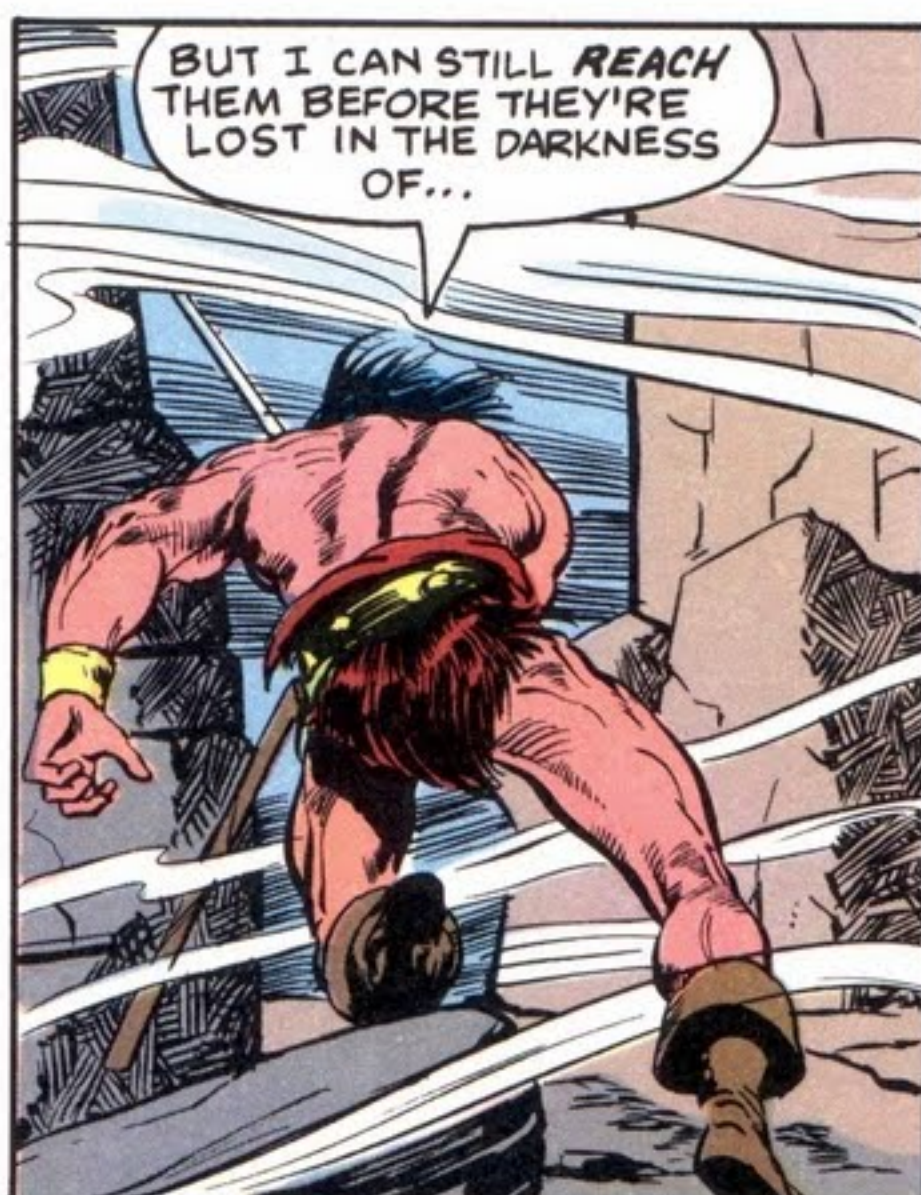
IT APPEARS THERE'S NO OTHER COURSE OPEN TO ME BUT TO **FOLLOW** THAT MILKY-WHITE CRAWLER INTO THE MISTS--AND BRING LITTLE RASTO **BACK**.



IT SEEMS LITTLE RASTO SPOKE **TRUE**. THE CRAWLER HAS INDEED CARRIED HIM TO THESE **RUINS** AT THE CITY'S EDGE. NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS **FIND** THEM BEFORE ...



THERE! SLITHERING INTO THE CRUMBLING SHELL OF THAT TEMPLE, IT'S **THEM!**



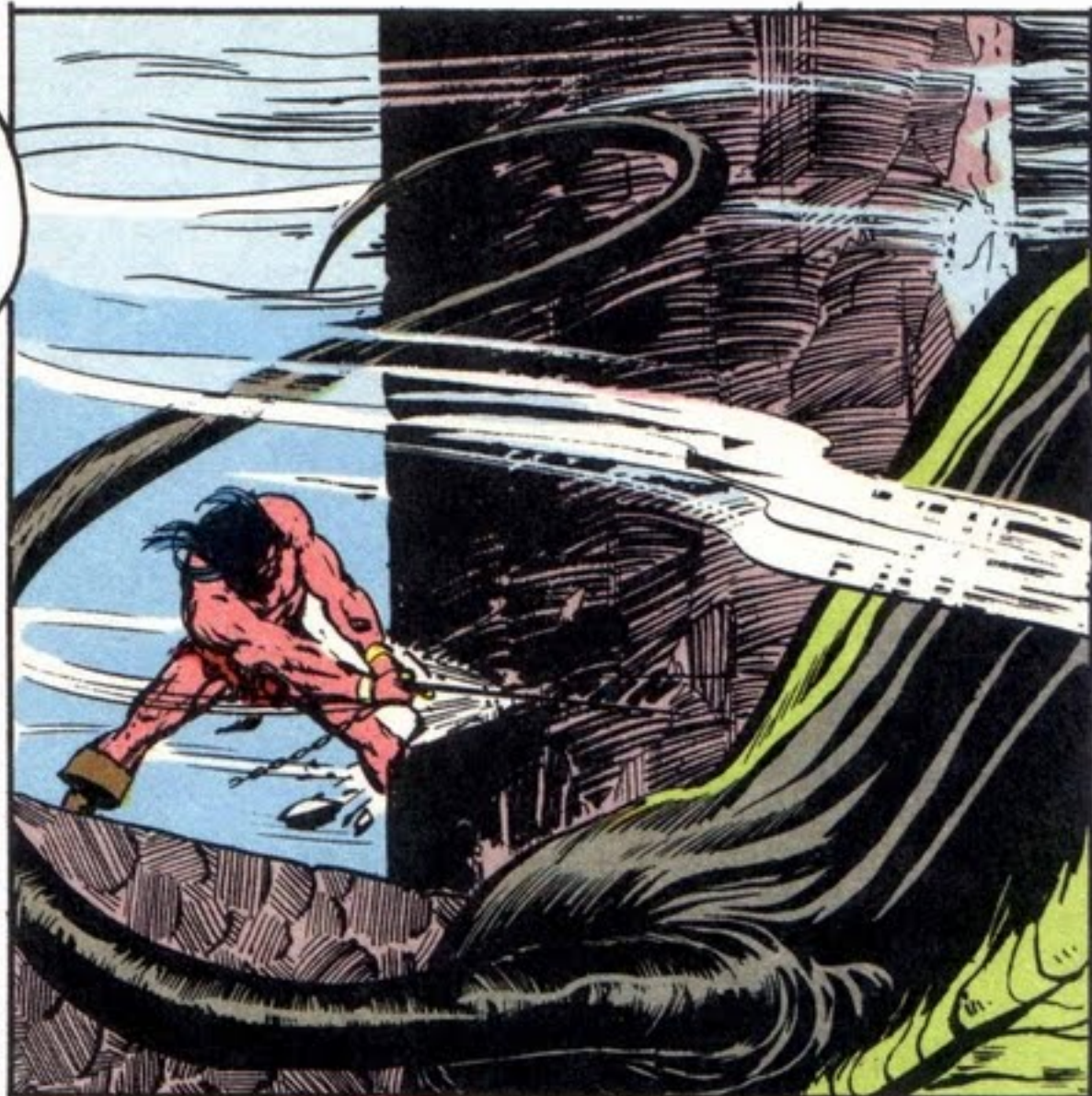
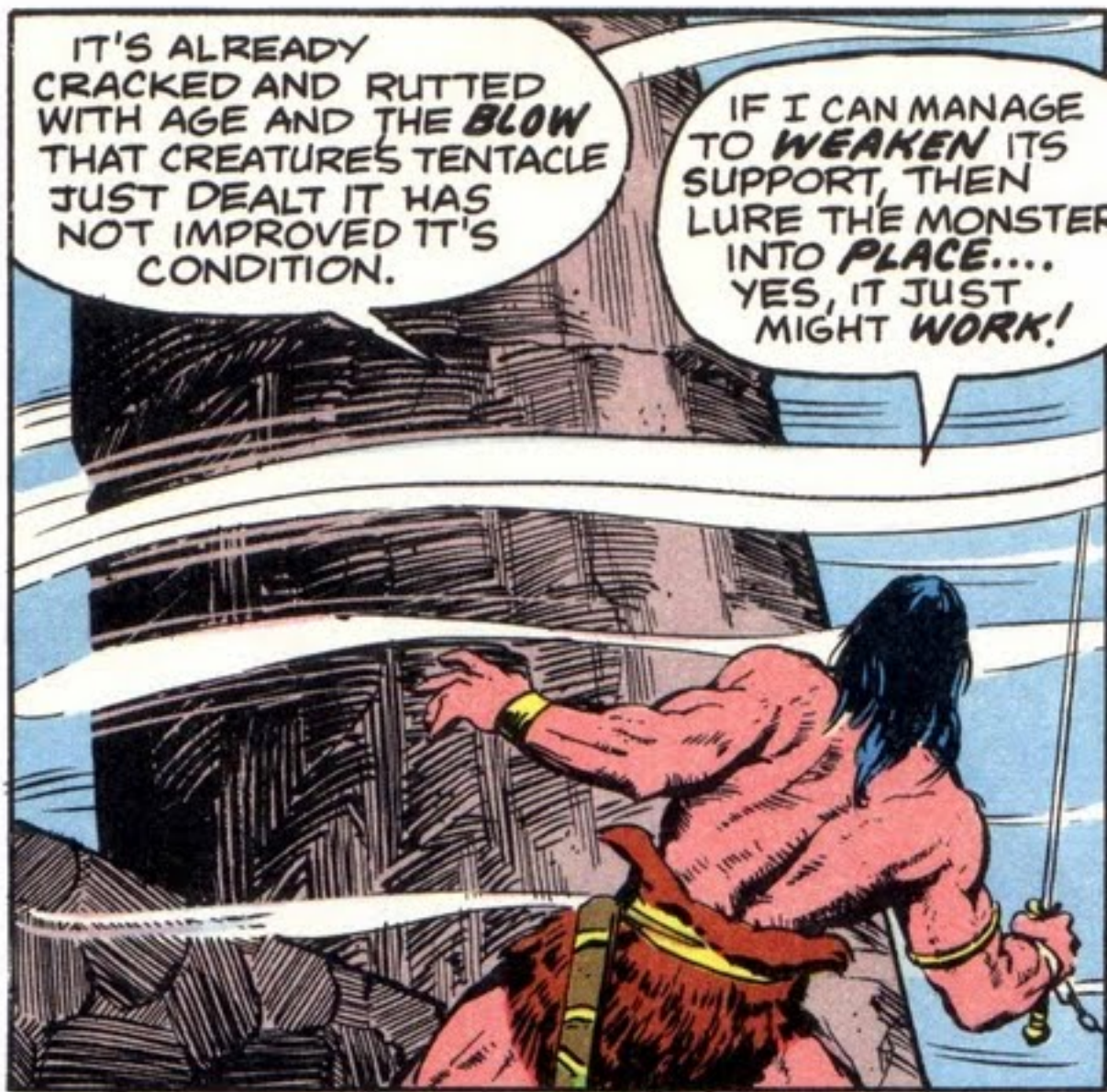
BUT I CAN STILL **REACH** THEM BEFORE THEY'RE LOST IN THE DARKNESS OF...





IT'S ALREADY
CRACKED AND RUTTED
WITH AGE AND THE **BLOW**
THAT CREATURE'S TENTACLE
JUST DEALT IT HAS
NOT IMPROVED IT'S
CONDITION.

IF I CAN MANAGE
TO **WEAKEN** ITS
SUPPORT, THEN
LURE THE MONSTER
INTO **PLACE**...
YES, IT JUST
MIGHT **WORK!**

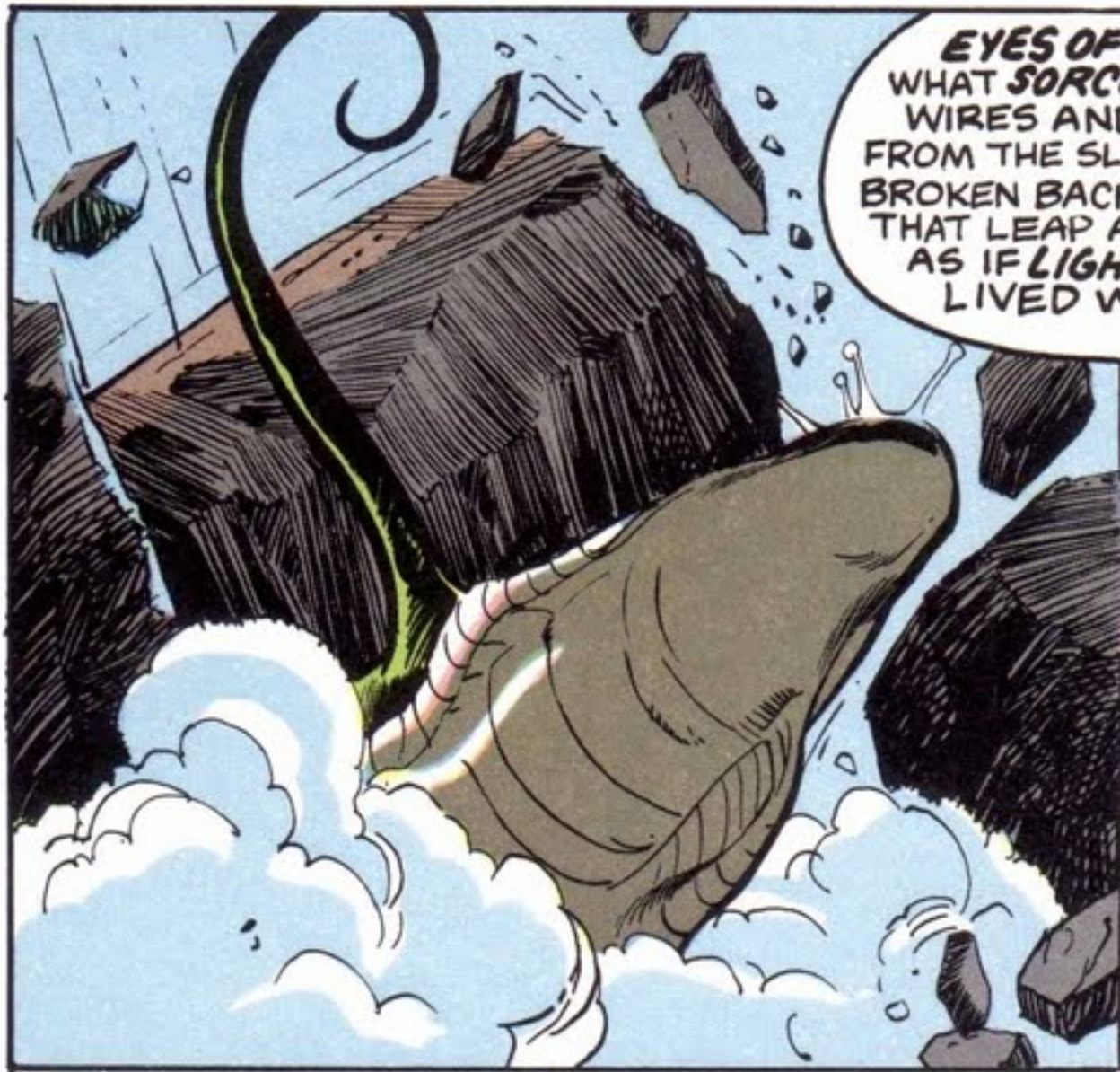


BY ERLIK! I WISH I HAD
A STURDY **AXE** TO USE UPON
THIS PILLAR, BUT IT SEEMS MY
SWORD SERVES JUST AS WELL.
FRAGMENTS OF THE STONE
FALL AWAY, EVEN AS THE
CREATURE DRAWS NEAR!



THE BEAST IS ALMOST
IN PLACE... I'VE GOT TO...
PUT MY BACK INTO IT...
SEND THIS PILLAR...
TOPPLING OVER... ON...
THAT... CURSED...
MONSTER!





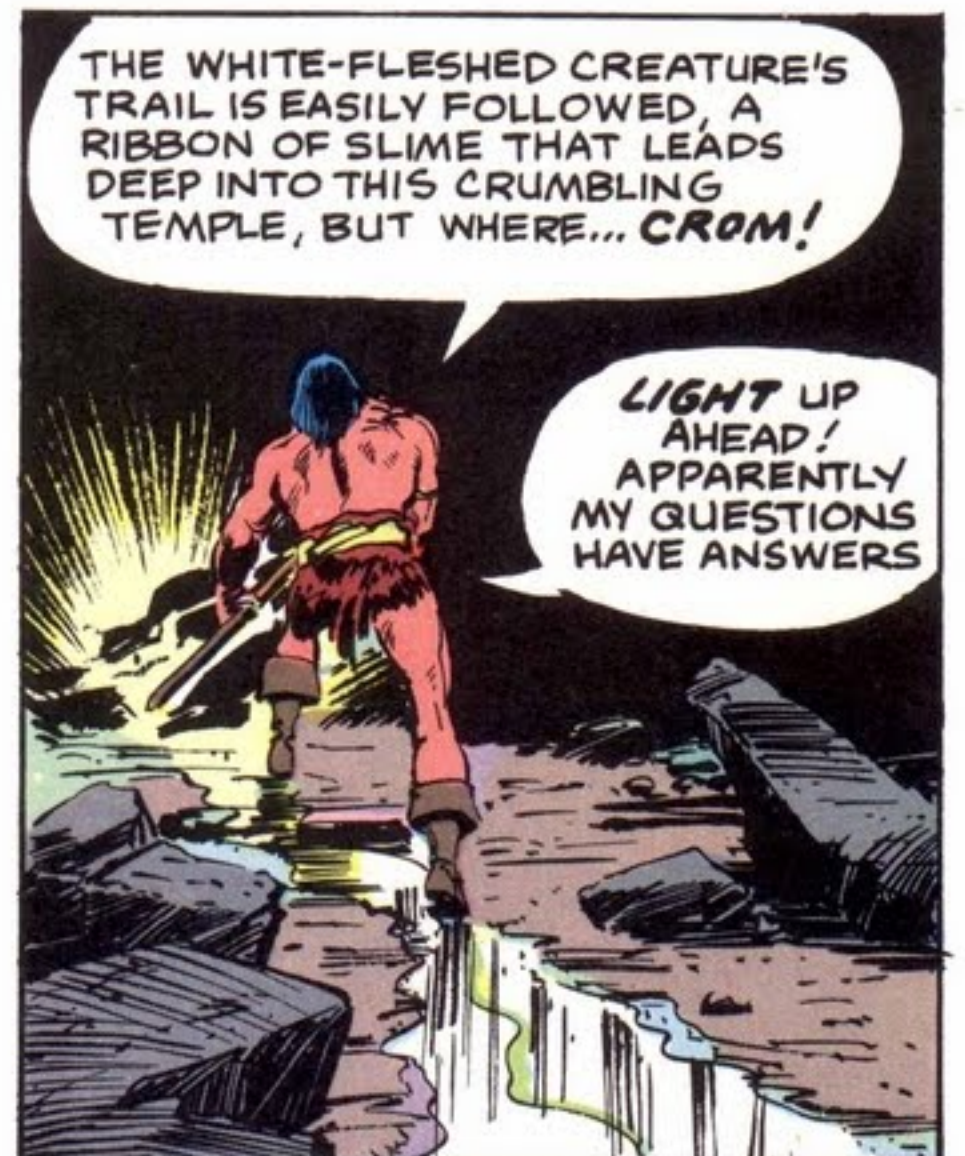
EYES OF ISHTAR!
WHAT *SORCERY* IS THIS?
WIRES AND COILS JUT
FROM THE SLAIN CREATURE'S
BROKEN BACK... WIRES
THAT LEAP AND CONGEAL
AS IF *LIGHTNING*
LIVED WITHIN THEM!



THERE IS
MORE *MADNESS*
AFOOT HERE
THAN READILY
MEETS THE EYE...



... I'M NOT SO SURE
I WANT TO KNOW
FROM WHENCE IT
CAME... *BUT...*

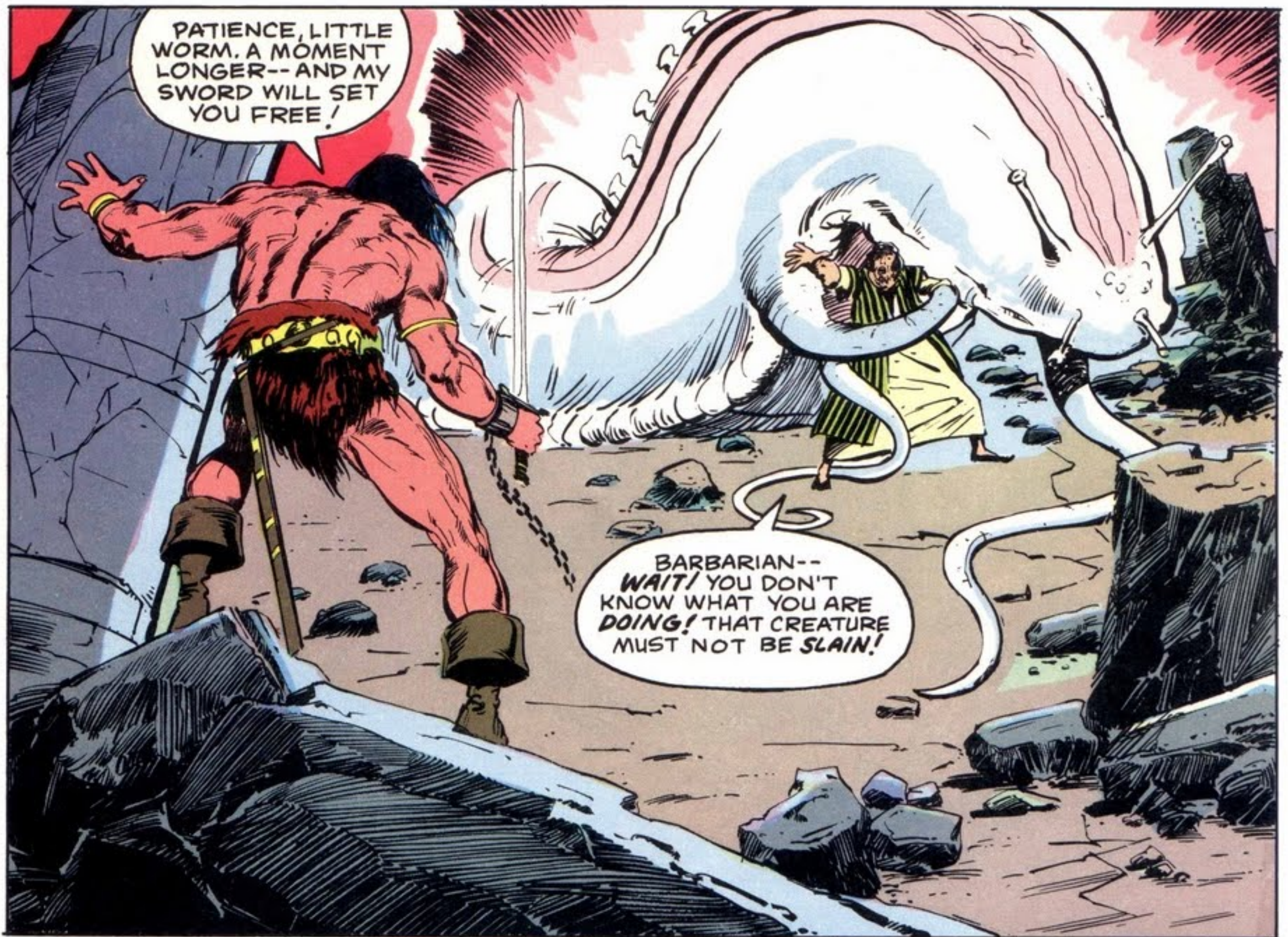


THE WHITE-FLESHED CREATURE'S
TRAIL IS EASILY FOLLOWED, A
RIBBON OF SLIME THAT LEADS
DEEP INTO THIS CRUMBLING
TEMPLE, BUT WHERE... *CROM!*

LIGHT UP
AHEAD!
APPARENTLY
MY QUESTIONS
HAVE ANSWERS



THERE-- BEFORE THAT
SHIMMERING VEIL OF LIGHT--
THE IVORY-SKINNED SLUG
THING AND *RASTO!*



PATIENCE, LITTLE WORM. A MOMENT LONGER-- AND MY SWORD WILL SET YOU FREE!

BARBARIAN-- WAIT! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING! THAT CREATURE MUST NOT BE SLAIN!



YOU SPEAK NONSENSE, LITTLE WORM. THAT MONSTER HAS BEWITCHED YOU BUT STILL I'LL...



STOP WHERE YOU ARE, CONAN OF CIMMERIA... FOR THE SAKE OF US ALL.



THAT VOICE-- THUNDERING INSIDE MY HEAD! BUT WHAT--? WHO?

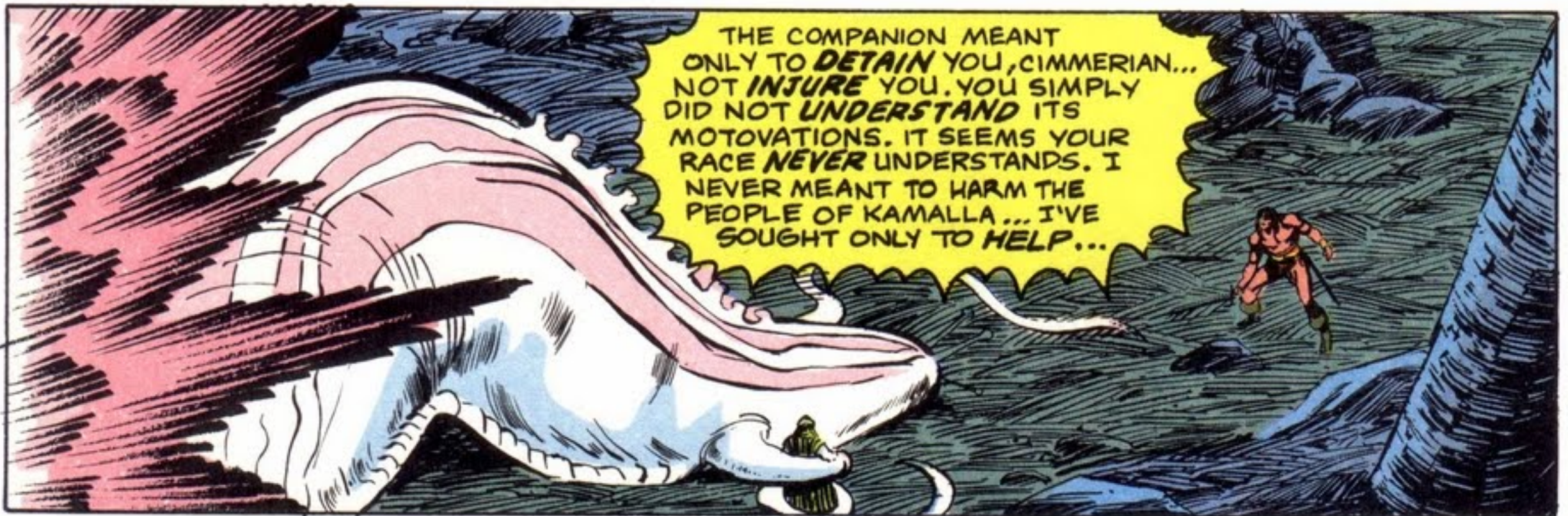


I AM **M'NAJJ**... HE WHOM YOU CALLED **MONSTER**. I AM THE **LAST** OF MY RACE. FOR CENTRIES, I HAVE DWELT HERE... **ALONE** BUT FOR THE **MECHANICAL COMPANION** I CREATED FOR MYSELF.



...THE **AUTOMATION** YOU SO CALLOUSLY DESTROYED OUTSIDE IN THE MISTS FOR NO GOOD REASON.

MY **LIFE** IS ALL THE REASON THAT I **NEED** CREATURE.



THE COMPANION MEANT ONLY TO **DETAIN** YOU, CIMMERIAN... NOT **INJURE** YOU. YOU SIMPLY DID NOT **UNDERSTAND** ITS MOTIVATIONS. IT SEEMS YOUR RACE **NEVER** UNDERSTANDS. I NEVER MEANT TO HARM THE PEOPLE OF **KAMALLA**... I'VE SOUGHT ONLY TO **HELP**...



I HAVE TAKEN THE **FRAIL**, THE CRIPPLED, THE AGED, THE INFIRM OF **KAMALLA** AND GRANTED THEM THE GIFT OF PEACE AND NEW LIFE IN THE LAND **BEYOND** THIS SHIMMERING VEIL. SUCH IS THE **GIFT** I WILL NOW GRANT THE ONE CALLED **RASTO**.



NOW DO YOU SEE **BARBARIAN**? NOW DO YOU **UNDERSTAND**?





NO, CIMMERIAN, THOUGH IT SORELY **GRIEVES** ME, I CANNOT LET YOU PASS. THERE IS NO **PLACE** FOR YOU BEYOND THE VEIL SO LONG AS THERE IS SUCH **FURY** IN YOUR HEART, SUCH **VIOLENCE** IN YOUR SOUL.

FORGIVE ME, CONAN... BUT THERE IS NO PLACE FOR SWORD-WIELDING SERPENT... IN **PARADISE**.



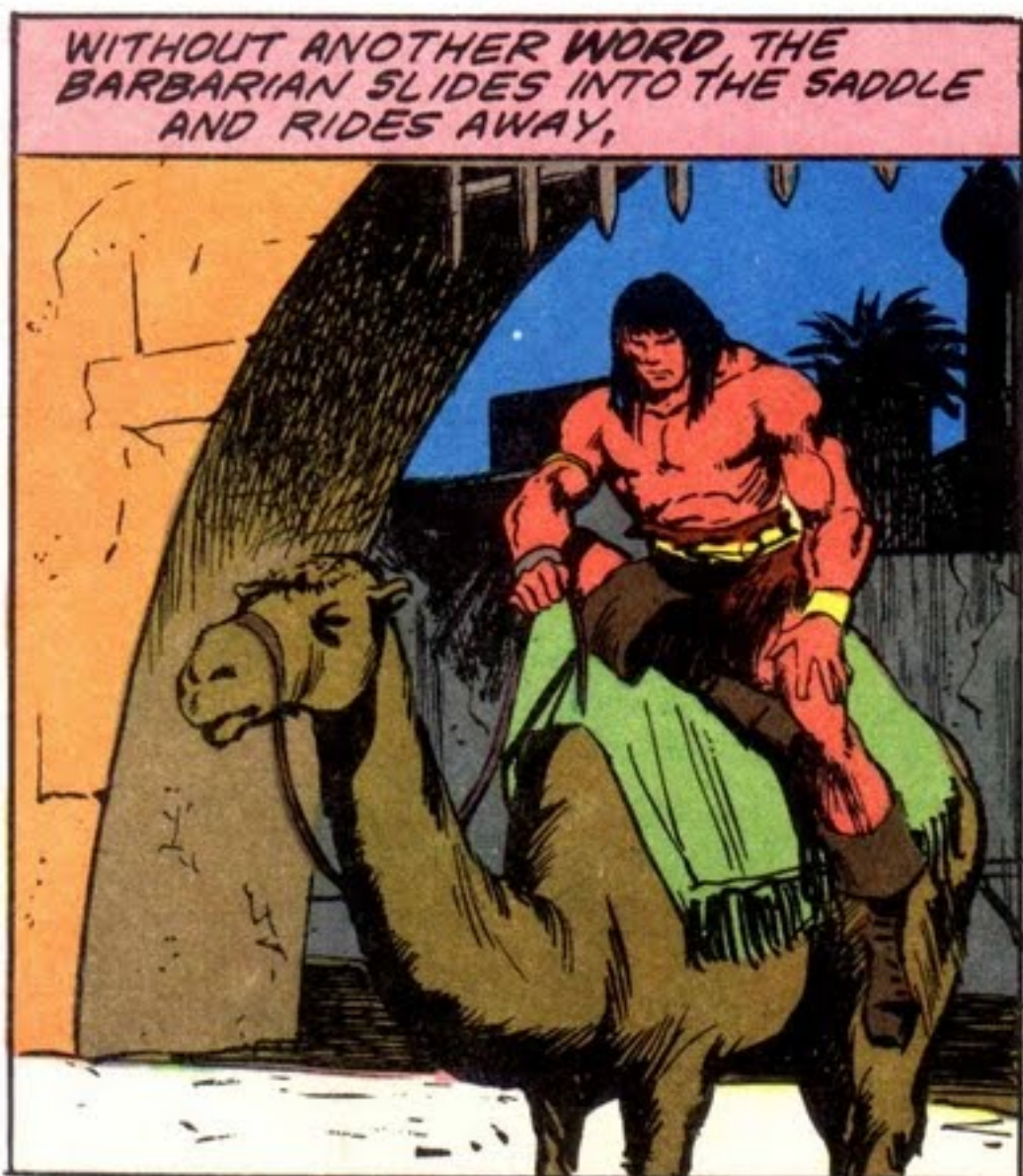
IT'S **GONE**... RASTO... THE MONSTER... THE VEIL... ALL OF IT... **GONE**.



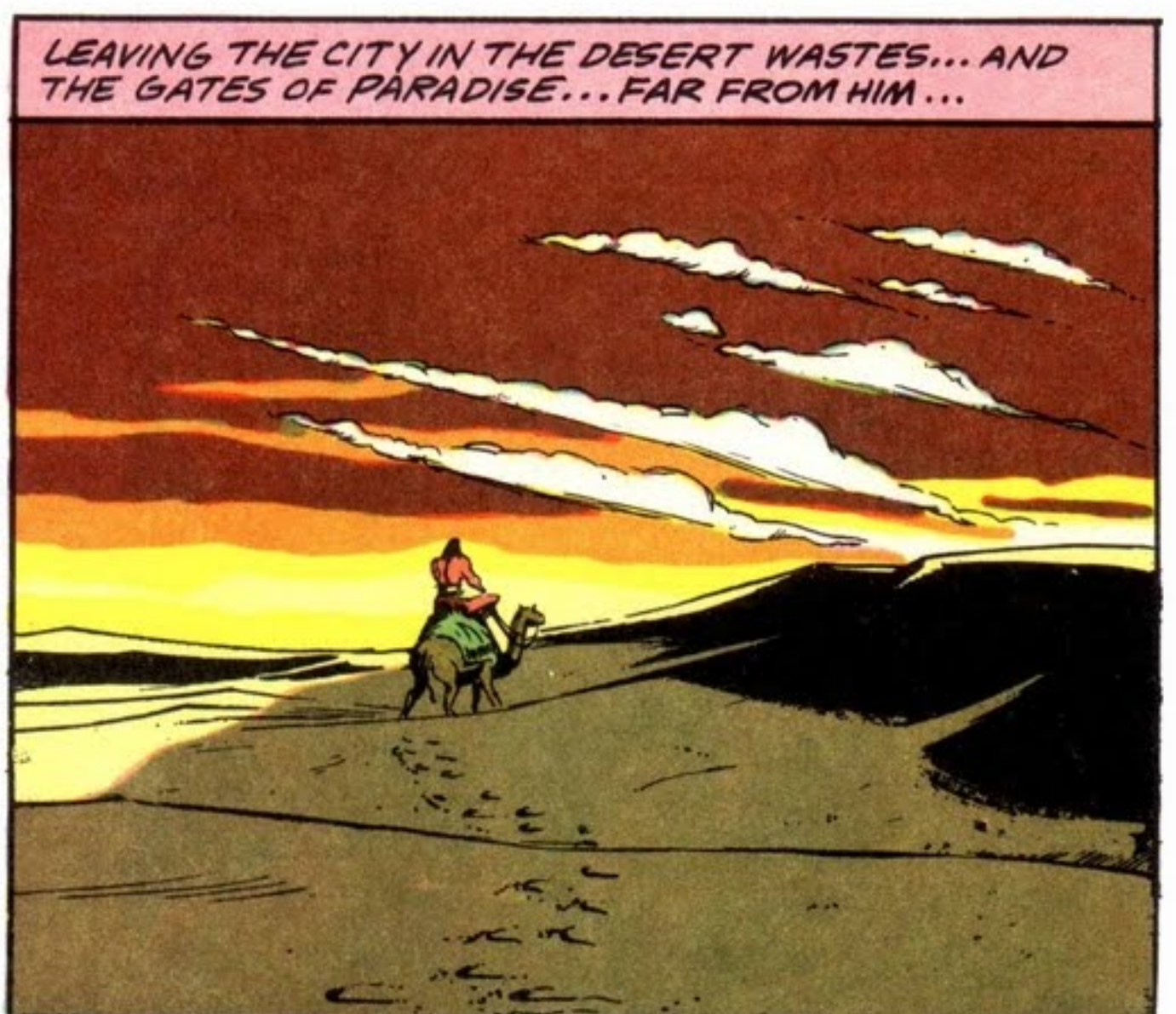
HEAD BOWED, JAW CLENCHED CONAN OF CIMMERIA TURNS AWAY FROM THE RUINS...



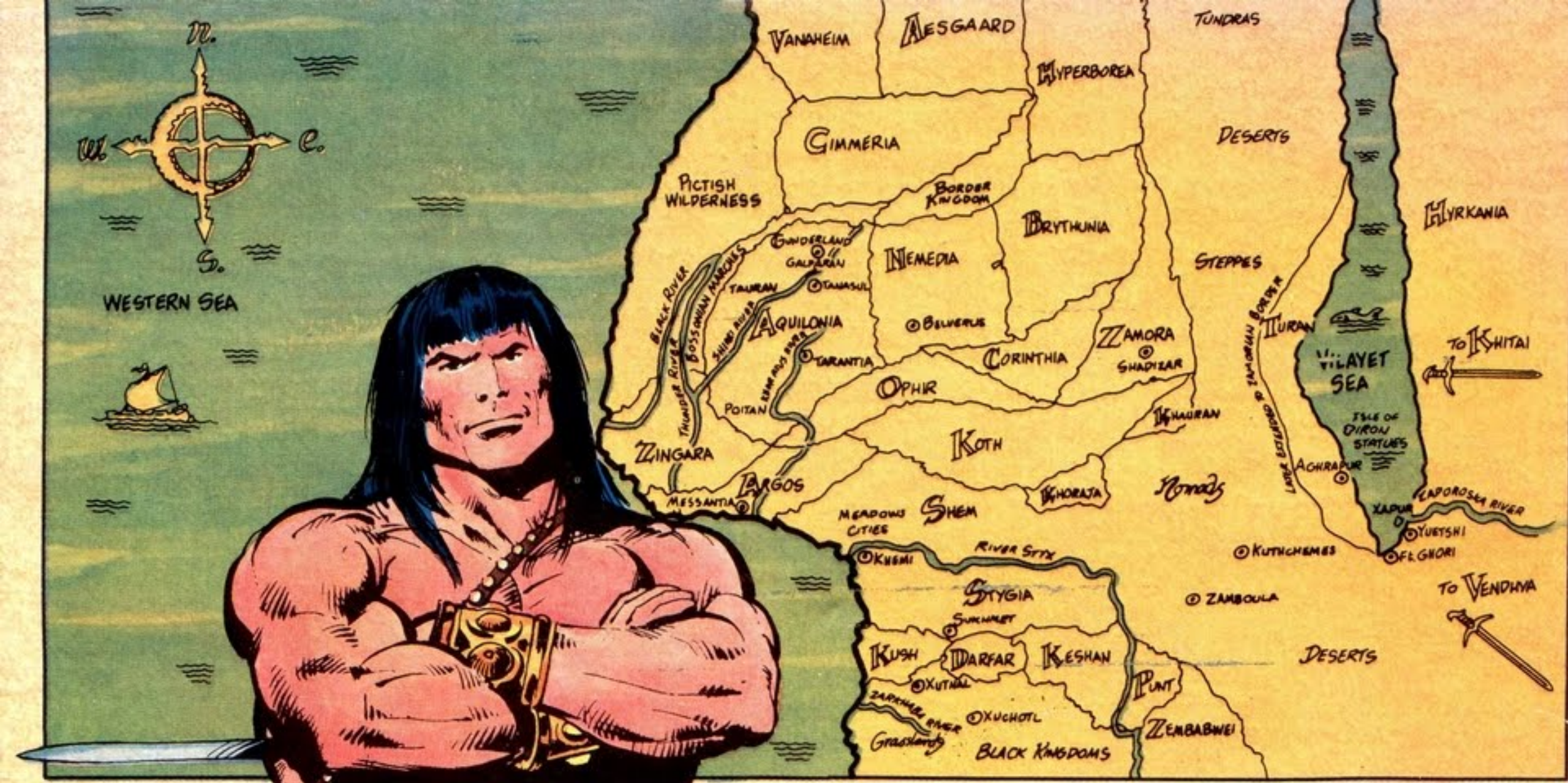
STRIDING SOLEMNLY BACK TO HIS MOUNT WAITING IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE.



WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, THE BARBARIAN SLIDES INTO THE SADDLE AND RIDES AWAY,



LEAVING THE CITY IN THE DESERT WASTES... AND THE GATES OF PARADISE... FAR FROM HIM...



In the age of sword and sorcery - sometime between the sinking of Atlantis and the flowering of Egypt lived Conan the Barbarian. Down he strode from the hills of Cimmeria, into a world where science and magic held equal sway. Black-haired and sullen-eyed, sword in hand, an adventurer with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth. This then is Robert E. Howard's most fantastic character,

CONAN

THE BARBARIAN



DIVISION OF PETER PAN INDUSTRIES.