

THE CURSE

HE WAS AFRAID... THAT MUCH HE KNEW, AND THAT SOMETHING HAD JUST HAPPENED... SOMETHING TERRIBLE, BUT WHAT IT WAS HE DID NOT KNOW. HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE HE WAS OR HOW HE HAD COME TO BE THERE...

...IT WAS AS IF THIS WAS THE VERY FIRST MOMENT OF TIME... AND FOR HIM IT WAS, THERE WAS NO MEMORY OF YESTERDAY TO GIVE HIM IDENTITY...

THIRSTY... WHAT-?! NO!

NO! THAT IS NOT ME! IT CAN'T BE!

HE SOON CAME UPON A CLEARING, AND...

COME...
I HAVE BEEN
WAITING FOR
YOU...

THE WOMAN LED
HIM INSIDE, AND
BEGAN TO PREPARE
DINNER, AS SHE
WORKED, SHE
TALKED... AND AS
SHE TALKED HE
BEGAN TO
UNDERSTAND...

I AM ZARA... YOU DO
NOT KNOW YOUR NAME?

NO, I...

BUT... ENOUGH OF
THAT FOR NOW... WE
SHALL DISCUSS IT ALL
WHEN WE HAVE
EATEN...

THEN... SOMEONE
HAS SOMEHOW STOLEN
MY MEMORY... MY
IDENTITY... AND
TURNED ME INTO
THIS THING THAT I AM...

YES... YOU ARE
THE VICTIM OF
A SPELL, AN EN-
CHANTMENT... AS
I AM!

BUT I KNOW
WHO IS RESPONSIB-
LE, AND IF YOU
WILL HELP ME,
PERHAPS WE
CAN DO
SOMETHING!

WHAT IS YOUR CURSE? YOU DO NOT SEEM TO BE—

I WILL TELL YOU OF THAT WHEN IT IS TIME... BUT I KNOW THAT IT WAS THE WORK OF THE WITCH ARACHNE, WHO DWELLS NEARBY...



I MUST CALL YOU SOMETHING. HOW ABOUT ZORG? I LIKE THAT! WILL YOU HELP ME, ZORG?

BUT... WHAT CAN I DO? I AM NO WIZARD...



THE SWORD IS ENCHANTED... IT WILL KILL A WITCH, NO MATTER WHAT MAGICAL PROTECTION SHE HAS...

I WILL ATTRACT HER WHOLE ATTENTION TO ME, AND YOU WILL STRIKE!



ALL YOU NEED FEAR IS THAT YOU WILL BEGIN TO BELIEVE IN HER ILLUSIONS, APPARITIONS... AND I CAN HELP YOU TO AVOID THAT...

VERY WELL... I WILL DO IT... LET US GO...



PRESENTLY, THEY EMERGED FROM THE FOREST...

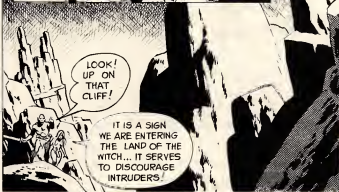
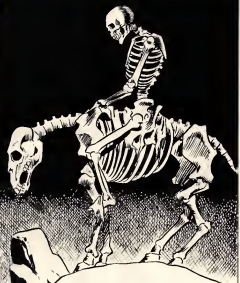


ONE MORE QUESTION, ZARA. ARE YOU A WITCH TOO?

NO, I AM NOT... BUT I LEARNED SOMETHING OF SORCERY FROM... FROM MY MOTHER...

BUT NOW, NO MORE QUESTIONS! WE WILL SOON BE IN THE LAND OF ARACHNE... SO BE PREPARED...

...FOR MADNESS!



LOOK! UP ON THAT CLIFF!

IT IS A SIGN WE ARE ENTERING THE LAND OF THE WITCH... IT SERVES TO DISCOURAGE INTRUDERS!

...AND FEELING THE FEAR GROW IN HIS HEART, AND WITH GREAT MISGIVINGS, ZORG FOLLOWED THE GIRL PAST THE HOLLOW STARE OF THE EERIE SENTINEL...

SUDDENLY, AS THEY ROUNDED A BEND...

LOOK OUT!
A MONSTER!

NO! STOP! IT
IS BUT AN
ILLUSION!

YOU ARE
RUNNING
INTO...

... A TRAP!

MY
ANKLE!

THE LIVING DEAD!

THEY
ARE REAL,
THEN?

YES... AND
THEY CAN KILL
US! THIS WAY...
QUICK!

THEY FOUND CONCEALMENT BEHIND A BOULDER, AND FROM THEIR VANTAGE POINT WATCHED THE EMERGENCE OF A GHASTLY ARMY... AN ARMY OF THE DEAD!

ZARA INDICATED A BOULDER, AND HE PUSHED IT ASIDE...

QUICK! INTO THE TUNNEL! THEY HAVE SEEN US!

YES, ZARA... BUT I... I AM AFRAID...



EEEE!
OH, FORGIVE ME, ZORG!
I CAN BE FOOLED, TOO!

SOMETHING HAS SEIZED ME!



ZARA! I AM BEING DEVoured!

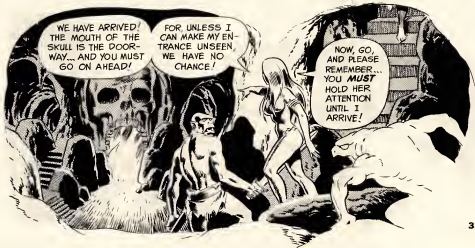
KEEP FOLLOWING ME!
IT IS NOT REAL! REMEMBER THAT!

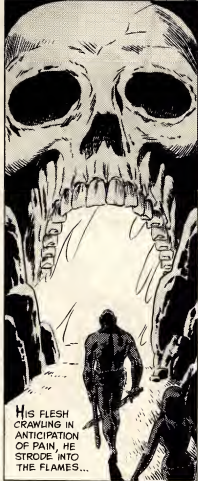


WE HAVE ARRIVED!
THE MOUTH OF THE SKULL IS THE DOORWAY... AND YOU MUST GO ON AHEAD!

FOR, UNLESS I CAN MAKE MY ENTRANCE UNSEEN, WE HAVE NO CHANCE!

NOW, GO, AND PLEASE REMEMBER... YOU **MUST** HOLD HER ATTENTION UNTIL I ARRIVE!





HIS FLESH CRAWLING IN ANTICIPATION OF PAIN, HE STRODE INTO THE FLAMES...

A MOMENT OF PANIC, AND HE WAS INSIDE! AT THE SIGHT OF A GIANT SPIDER, HE PAUSED, INDECISIVE...



...AND THEN THE ROOM WAS FULL OF MONSTERS, ATTACKING HIM WITH SAVAGE FRENZY FROM ALL SIDES...



HE KNEW, AND YET DID NOT KNOW, THAT HE WAS FIGHTING PHANTOMS... HE FELT PAIN AS SHARP TEETH RIPPED INTO HIS THROAT...



SUDDENLY, HIS MIND WAS CLEAR... AND HE SAW THAT THE BEAST WAS HIS OWN HAND! THEN HE REALIZED...



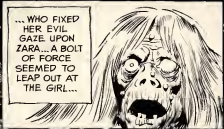
...IT WAS BECAUSE ZARA HAD ENTERED!



FOR A MOMENT THERE WAS ABSOLUTE SILENCE... THEN THE VERY AIR ABOUT THEM WAS RENT BY UNSEEN FORCES, AND THE SPIDER WAS NO LONGER A SPIDER, BUT A VERY OLD WOMAN...



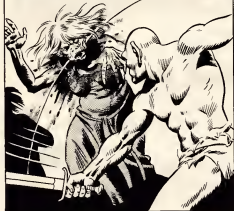
... WHO FIXED HER EVIL GAZE UPON ZARA... A BOLT OF FORCE SEEMED TO LEAP OUT AT THE GIRL...



... AND ZARA CRUMPLED TO THE GROUND.



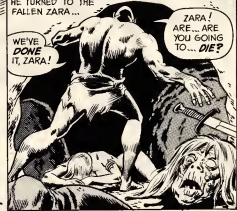
BUT IN THAT INSTANT, ZORG ACTED...



THEN SWORD DROPPING FROM NERVELESS FINGERS, HE TURNED TO THE FALLEN ZARA...

WE'VE DONE IT, ZARA!

ZARA!
ARE... ARE YOU GOING TO... DIE?



AND THEN, AS HE CRADLED THE FALLEN SORCERESS IN HIS ARMS, SHE BEGAN TO SPEAK, IN A VOICE ALMOST INAUDIBLE...

YES... I AM DYING, ZORG... BUT DO NOT WEEP FOR ME...



I WANT TO DIE... THAT WAS PART OF MY PURPOSE IN COMING HERE! THE OTHER PART WAS TO AVENGE MYSELF ON HER...

BUT... NOW TAKE ME OUT OF HERE... I DO NOT WISH TO DIE IN THIS PLACE...

ZARA, I DON'T UNDERSTAND... SHE IS DEAD, BUT I AM STILL THE SAME...

THAT IS BECAUSE IT WAS **NOT** SHE WHO CAST THE SPELL UPON YOU... IT WAS I! WITH **MY DEATH** YOU WILL BE FREE!



WHAT? YOU? BUT... I...

DON'T... PLEASE DON'T HATE ME, ZORG... I TRICKED YOU BECAUSE I COULD NOT SLAY HER MYSELF... I NEEDED SOMEONE TO DO IT WHILE I FOCUSSED HER MAGIC ON ME...



FORGIVE ME... AND DO NOT WEEP... I AM MORE THAN A THOUSAND YEARS OLD, AND WEARY OF LIFE... MY CURSE WAS IMMORTALITY!

NOW SHE IS DEAD, AND I CAN DIE, AND ALL IS RIGHT...

ZARA!



THEN THE PAIN BEGAN, AND HE KNEW SHE WAS DEAD. SLOWLY HE RETURNED TO HIS TRUE FORM, AND IN THAT ONE LAST MOMENT OF INTELLIGENCE, HE KNEW...

... AND UNDERSTOOD...

... AND HAPPILY SLITHERED OFF TO THE BOG, WHERE HIS ANXIOUS FAMILY WAITED FOR HIM.



The END