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THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN
MAY. №29
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The SAVAGE SWORD of CONAN™
THE BARBARIAN
SPECIAL ISSUE STARRING THE FABULOUS FEMALES OF SWORDS-AND-SORCERY!
PLUS: RED SONJA!
ALL-NEW!
ERNIE CHAN 1977

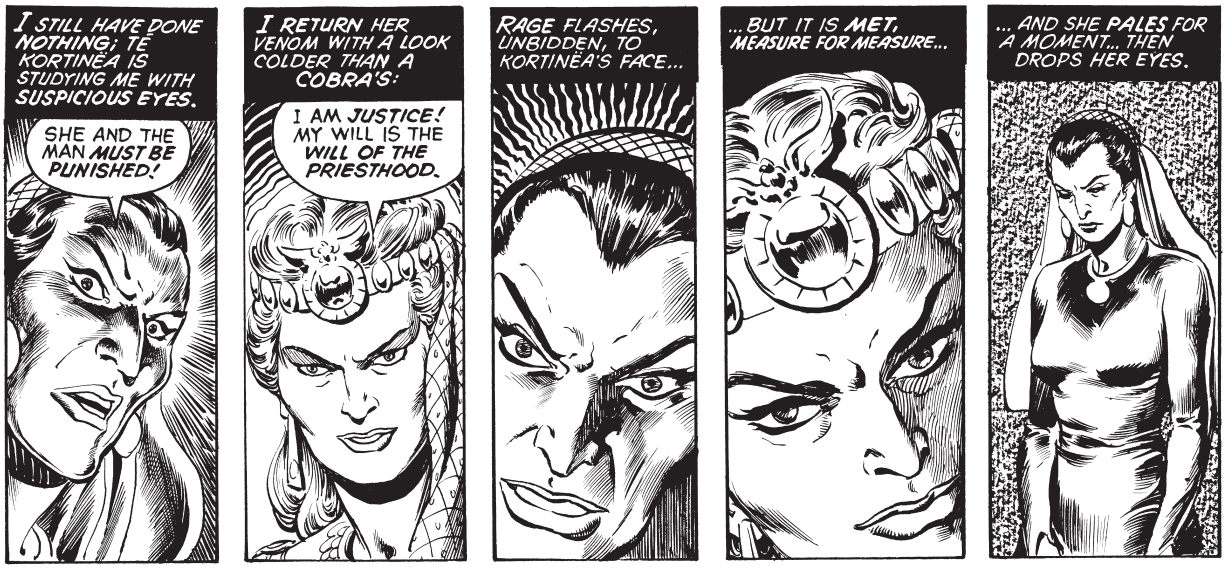


Child of Sorcery

Script: ROY THOMAS Art: ERNIE CHAN

From a story by CHRISTY MARX


THE WIND FROM THE NORTH IS CHILL, WHEN THE OTHER WOMEN BRING HER TO ME:
THE HOLY CHILD, RÂ MORGANA...!
WE FOUND HER EMBRACED WITH... A MAN!
RÂ MORGANA THROWS HERSELF IN MERCY-PROSTRATE AT MY FEET.
I CAN SEE THAT SHE SHIVERS UPON THE ICY MARBLE FLOOR... YET, FOR THE MOMENT, I SAY NOTHING... MERELY WAIT FOR TÉ KORTINËA TO SPEAK.
THAT USUALLY DOES NOT TAKE LONG.
WELL? DID YOU HEAR ME, ALL-MOTHER?
I SAID, WE FOUND HER EMBRACED WITH A MAN!
SHE SPITS THE WORD AS IF IT WERE A SERPENT IN HER MOUTH.
KORTINËA HAS FELT LOVE FOR NO CREATURE THAT WALKS UPON THE EARTH, AND SHE IS UGLY.
BUT, I LOOK AT RÂ MORGANA...
YES, IT IS TRUE, WHAT SHE SAYS.
I WAS WITH HIM, AND YES, I HAVE BEEN WITH HIM BEFORE.
I LOVE HIM...
... AND HE WANTS ME TO GO AWAY WITH HIM!
AT THIS, THE PRIESTESSES GROAN AND CLUTCH AT THEIR BREASTS.
THEY ARE GOOD AT THAT.


I STILL HAVE DONE NOTHING; TE KORTINÊA IS STUDYING ME WITH SUSPICIOUS EYES.
SHE AND THE MAN MUST BE PUNISHED!
I RETURN HER VENOM WITH A LOOK COLDER THAN A COBRA'S:
I AM JUSTICE! MY WILL IS THE WILL OF THE PRIESTHOOD.
RAGE FLASHES, UNBIDDEN, TO KORTINÊA'S FACE...
...BUT IT IS MET, MEASURE FOR MEASURE...
...AND SHE PALES FOR A MOMENT... THEN DROPS HER EYES.


WHERE IS THE MAN?
WE TRIED TO IMPRISON HIM, BUT HE PUSHED US ASIDE... LAUGHED, AND MADE CRUDE JOKES.
HE SAID HE WOULD RETURN. WE CAN LAY A TRAP FOR HIM...
NO! LEAVE US!
RÂ MORGANA AND I MUST SPEAK THE WORD OF GODS. WOULD YOU STAY, AND BE STRUCK DEAF?

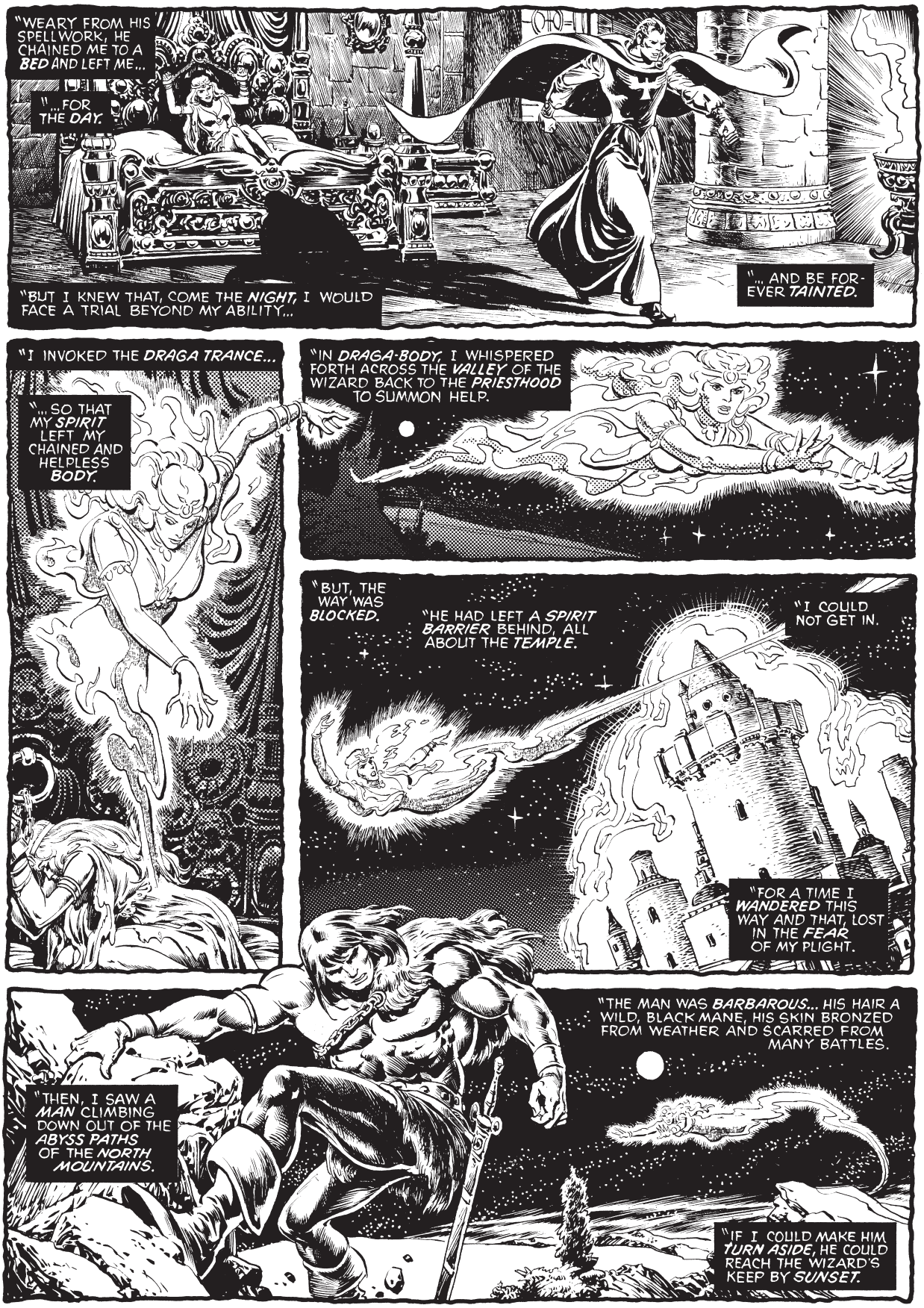

AT LAST, THEY ARE GONE... AND I LOOK AT MY DAUGHTER.
THE GIRL IS UNSURE, HAVING RECEIVED NONE OF THE REACTIONS SHE EXPECTED.
RÂ, YOU ARE NOW A WOMAN.
YOU HAVE TASTED A WOMAN'S DESIRES... FELT THE HUNGRY TOUCH OF A MAN.
DID IT PLEASE YOU?


SHE LOOKS TROUBLED... CONFUSED.
NEVER MIND. I CAN SEE THAT IT DID.
IT IS TIME, THEN, AFTER TWENTY LONG YEARS, TO SPEAK NOT AS HIGH PRIESTESS TO HOLY CHILD...
... BUT SIMPLY AS A MOTHER TO A DAUGHTER.
THESE ARE THINGS OF WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN TO NO OTHER LIVING BEING...


BUT, I TELL YOU NOW, SO THAT YOU MAY MAKE A DIFFICULT CHOICE, AND MAY YOUR CHOICE BE THE RIGHT ONE.
BECAUSE YOU ARE A WOMAN NOW, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND.
I TURN MY SIGHT NORTH TO THE BLUE MOUNTAINS AND TELL MY FULL TALE BEFORE I LOOK AGAIN AT RÂ MORGANA:


"TWENTY YEARS AGO, I WAS LIKE YOU... A YOUNG WOMAN REACHING MY FULL GROWTH, FILLED WITH LIFE, DIFFICULT TO DISCIPLINE... oh YES, I WAS ALL THESE THINGS.
"BUT, I WAS DESTINED BY THE MATRIARCHY FOR FULL PRIESTHOOD...
"... AND THEY HELD ME IN THEIR IVORY GRIP FROM THE DAY OF MY BIRTH.
"THEY TAUGHT ME THE WOMAN-MAGICK, EVEN AS I TAUGHT YOU.
"I GREW ARROGANT, THINKING MY POWER WAS GREAT.
"THEN THE STRANGER CAME.
"HE WAS A WIZARD OUT OF THE EAST, RETURNING FROM THE SOUTH ON SOME UNKNOWN ERRAND.
"THE SISTERS WOULD NOT HAVE LET HIM IN, THOUGH IT WAS A BONE-CHILLING NIGHT...
"... HAD I NOT RAGED AND THROWN A TANTRUM AND DEMANDED TO SEE HIM!
"I DRANK IN THE SIGHT OF HIM AS HE ATE SOUP IN OUR COMMON ROOM.
"YET, WHEN HIS BLACK EYES CAME MY WAY, I KNEW FEAR.


"THERE WAS KNOWLEDGE BEYOND MINE IN THOSE EYES... BUT WORSE...
"I SAW GREAT CRUELTY AND PASSION THERE.
"HAVING SATISFIED MY CURIOSITY, I RETIRED TO MY TOWER.
"HE CAME FOR ME THAT NIGHT...
"...RIDING A WINGED DEMON THAT HE HAD SUMMONED IN OUR VERY COURTYARD!
"I FOUGHT AS ONLY A DAUGHTER OF SORCERY CAN...
"...EVEN STABBING AT THEM BOTH WITH THE TEMPLE KNIFE.
"BUT I WAS LIKE THE MOTH TO THE SPIDER...
"...AND HE CARRIED ME AWAY TO HIS KEEP.


"WEARY FROM HIS SPELLWORK, HE CHAINED ME TO A BED AND LEFT ME...
"...FOR THE DAY.
"BUT I KNEW THAT, COME THE NIGHT, I WOULD FACE A TRIAL BEYOND MY ABILITY...
"...AND BE FOREVER TAINTED.
"I INVOKED THE DRAGA TRANCE...
"...SO THAT MY SPIRIT LEFT MY CHAINED AND HELPLESS BODY.
"IN DRAGA-BODY, I WHISPERED FORTH ACROSS THE VALLEY OF THE WIZARD BACK TO THE PRIESTHOOD TO SUMMON HELP.
"BUT, THE WAY WAS BLOCKED.
"HE HAD LEFT A SPIRIT BARRIER BEHIND, ALL ABOUT THE TEMPLE.
"I COULD NOT GET IN.
"FOR A TIME I WANDERED THIS WAY AND THAT, LOST IN THE FEAR OF MY PLIGHT.
"THEN, I SAW A MAN CLIMBING DOWN OUT OF THE ABYSS PATHS OF THE NORTH MOUNTAINS.
"THE MAN WAS BARBAROUS... HIS HAIR A WILD, BLACK MANE, HIS SKIN BRONZED FROM WEATHER AND SCARRED FROM MANY BATTLES.
"IF I COULD MAKE HIM TURN ASIDE, HE COULD REACH THE WIZARD'S KEEP BY SUNSET.


"AS I DREW UP BEFORE HIM, I MADE THE DRAGA-BODY AS SOLID AS I COULD, OVER THE INTERVENE DISTANCE.
"STILL, I MUST HAVE LOOKED WISPY AND GHOSTLIKE TO THE BARBARIAN.
"IT COULD NOT BE HELPED.
CROM'S DEVILS!
"AS HIS SWORD LEAPED INTO HIS HAND FASTER THAN MY EYE COULD FOLLOW, I FELT SURE OF MY CHOICE.
MAN OF THE OUTLANDS, I NEED YOUR HELP!
SINCE WHEN DO GHOSTS ASK HELP OF LIVING WANDERERS?
I AM NO GHOST!
TO THE EAST, A HALF-DAY'S MARCH FROM HERE, THERE IS A CASTLE.
MY TRUE SELF IS HELD PRISONER THERE; THIS IS BUT AN IMAGE YOU SEE BEFORE YOU.
MY CAPTOR MEANS TO DESPOIL ME.
IF YOU WILL RESCUE ME AND RETURN ME SAFELY TO MY SACRED ORDER, WHICH LIES IN THE VALLEY BEFORE YOU-- I WILL SEE THAT YOU ARE RICHLY REWARDED!
WHAT SORT OF REWARD?
IF YOU CAN SPEAK TO ME IN THIS FASHION, WHY NOT TELL YOUR FRIENDS?
THIS IS SOME TRICK...!


I SWEAR TO YOU-- IT IS NO TRICK!
I CANNOT REACH THEM; MY CAPTOR HAS... TAKEN STEPS TO PREVENT IT.
WHAT KIND OF STEPS?
HE IS A WIZARD... BUT, I WILL HELP YOU.
I HAVE SOME POWERS, ALSO.


HAH! NOT NEARLY ENOUGH, IT SEEMS!
I DON'T LIKE DEALING WITH WIZARDS... BUT, IF THIS IS THE WAY YOU REALLY LOOK, AND NOT THE FALSE MIRAGE OF SOME UGLY HAG--!
THIS IS EXACTLY HOW I LOOK, YOU FOUL PAGAN!


THEN--
WHICH WAY?
"I HAD NEVER DEALT WITH SUCH A PERSON.
"I BEGAN TO FEAR THAT I HAD ASKED THE HELP OF A DEVIL TO FREE ME FROM A DEMON.


"I LED HIM ONWARD UNTIL I FELT THE BODY SIGNS OF WARNING.
"BY THEN, HOWEVER--


"--HE COULD SEE THE WIZARD'S KEEP FOR HIMSELF--
"--SO I LEFT HIM.
"THE SUN HAD LONG SUNK AND THE MOUNTAINS WORE LONG CLOAKS OF SHADOW BY THE TIME I RETURNED TO MY CORPOREAL BODY...


"EVEN AS I DID SO, A COLD DRAUGHT BLEW UPON MY BACK.
"MY CAPTOR HAD COME FOR ME.
YOU HAD BETTER RELEASE ME NOW--
FOR, MY CHAMPION APPROACHES!
"HE LAUGHED AT MY FOOLISHNESS--A LAUGH TO CHILL THE SOUL.
YOU FOOLISH GIRL!
NO ONE WILL TAKE YOU FROM ME, UNTIL I WANT THEM TO--
--AND THAT WILL BE--NEVER!
"... AND I BIT HIM!
"SEIZING ME, HE FORCED HIS LIPS TO MINE...
"STEPPING AWAY FROM ME, HE TASTED HIS BLOOD... AND FOUND IT GOOD.
"I KNEW THEN THAT HE WOULD NOT BE SATISFIED UNTIL HE HAD TASTED MINE.


MY CHAMPION WILL KILL YOU FOR YOUR SACRILEGE!
AGAIN THIS TALK OF A CHAMPION...
LOOK FOR YOUR-SELF!
"MY VOICE SOUNDED WEAK AND HOPELESS; I WAS SURE HE WOULD NOT BELIEVE ME.
"INSTEAD, HE WALKED TO THE WINDOW... AND SPIED THE BARBARIAN I HAD GUIDED TO HIM.
YOUR CHAMPION?
YES.
MY VICTIM!
"FREEING ME FROM THE CHAINS, HE DRAGGED ME TO A CHAMBER IN WHICH HE WORKED HIS CRAFT.
"FOR MANY A DAY I FELT THE BRUISES OF HIS STRONG GRIP.
YOU STILL HOPE TO RESIST ME, DON'T YOU?
IT IS FITTING, THEN, THAT YOU BEHOLD THE FULL POWER OF THE ONE YOU WOULD SPURN!
"THERE IN HIS ROOM, HE MADE ME LOOK INTO A SEEING-CRYSTAL.
"THE BARBARIAN LOOMED UP SHARP AND CLEAR ON THE PLAIN, STALKING WITH THE GRACE OF A LARGE CAT.
A FORMIDABLE ANTAGONIST, PERHAPS... FOR SOME.
BUT NOT FOR ME.
WATCH NOW!


"THEN, THE EVIL ONE CHANTED *FORGOTTEN RUNE-WORDS* WHICH FILLED ME WITH *TERROR*--WORDS I WILL NOT REPEAT, EVEN TO *YOU*.
"AND SUDDENLY, A *LOATHSOME MIST* FILLED THE CRYSTAL--TAKING SHAPE WITH *SCALE* AND *TALON* BEFORE MY CHAMPION...
"BUT, I HAD *CHOSEN WELL*, EVEN IN MY *DESPERATION*.
"FOR, THE BARBARIAN RAISED HIS GREAT SWORD AND *SLEW* THE MONSTER--
"-- BEFORE THE *SCALES* UPON ITS EXPOSED NECK WERE FULLY *HARDENED!*


"MY WIZARD-CAPTOR, OF COURSE, WAS WRATHFUL ABOUT HAVING WASTED A PRECIOUS SPELL...
THAT MAGIC WAS TOO WEAK-- TOO SLOW IN FORMING!
"ANOTHER SPELL, THEN--
"--AND A THICK-HIDED, HORNED DEMON-WORM SPRANG UP, FULL-MADE!
CROM AND ERLIK!
"I DO NOT KNOW IF HE CALLED UPON HIS OUTLAND GODS TRULY EXPECTING DIVINE HELP, OR HE WAS BUT SWEARING, AS I'VE HEARD SOME COARSER MEN DO.
"STILL, HE THRUST HIS THIRSTING BLADE INTO ONE OF ITS SQUINTING EYES--
"AND, WHEN HE HAD BLINDED IT, HAD LAID DOWN STROKES THAT BLED THE DEMON-WORM INTO WEAKNESS.
"THIS SECOND MONSTER FROM BEYOND WOULD HELP THE WIZARD'S CAUSE NO MORE THAN THE FIRST.


"AS MY CAPTOR WORKED NOW WITH FROTHING ANGER, I, UNNOTICED, WAS ABLE TO BACK AWAY TO A WINDOW.
"IF THE BARBARIAN WAS TO COMPLETE HIS RESCUE, I HAD TO PROVIDE HIM WITH A MEANS TO ENTER...
"THUS, I PLUCKED OUT THREE LONG STRANDS OF MY HAIR--
"--AND ANCHORED THEM WITH A QUICK AND SACRED WORD IN A CREVICE OF THE WINDOWSTONES.
"THEN, I WOVE A WOMAN-SONG...
"AND THE HAIRS BRAIDED...
"...GREW THICK AND LONG...
"... AND CASCADED DOWN THE HIGH CASTLE WALL...
"... MAKING A ROPE OF GLEAMING HAIR!
"I COULD SEE MY CHAMPION BELOW, UPON THE FAR SIDE OF THE DITCH.
"BEYOND HIM LAY A GORY PATH OF DEAD THINGS.
"DOUBTLESS ANY ONE OF THEM MIGHT HAVE SLAIN HIM, GIVEN TIME FULLY TO MATERIALIZE AND DEFEND ITSELF--
"BUT HE, QUICK AS A RABID PANTHER, GAVE THEM NO SUCH TIME.
"HE HAD COME SO FAR-- AGAINST SUCH ODDS!


"YET, I COULD SEE NO WAY TO HELP HIM *REACH* THE CASTLE, AND MY *ROPE OF TRESSES*.
"FOR, THE *BRIDGE* WAS UP--AND MY POWER COULD NOT TOUCH THE *IRON CHAINS* THAT HELD IT.
"JUST THEN, HE *LOOKED UP* FROM THE SUPERNATURAL CARNAGE AT HIS FEET...
"...AND *SAW* ME!
"ON *IMPULSE*, I LEANED OUT AND *WAVED*.
"I WAS *VERY* YOUNG AND FOOLISH THEN, AND NOT IN FULL *CONTROL* OF MYSELF.
"A MOMENT LATER, I REALIZED MY *MISTAKE*...
SO! YOU WOULD SEEK TO *ENCOURAGE* THAT HAIRY-CHESTED OAF, WOULD YOU?
"IF HE SAW MY *BRAIDED ROPE--!*
"I *FOUGHT* WITH HIM, TOOTH AND NAIL--
"--TO *KEEP* HIM FROM *DISCOVERING* IT!
ORDINARILY, I SHOULD *ENJOY* A BRIEF TUSSLE WITH YOU, BEFORE YOUR INEVITABLE AND SWEET *SURRENDER*--
BUT JUST NOW, I'VE *NO TIME!*
"HE *HURLED* ME AGAINST THE *WALL*.
"*RED SPARKS* SHOT ACROSS MY VISION--
"--AND I FELL INTO *DARKNESS!*


"THE BARBARIAN TOLD ME LATER HOW HE CROSSED THE DITCH:
"WITH STRENGTH WHICH MOST MEN COULD ONLY GASP AT, HE DRAGGED UP THE CARCASS OF ONE OF THE WIZARD'S OWN CREATIONS THAT HE HAD SLAIN...
"... AND THREW IT INTO THE WATER!
"HE WAITED UNTIL THE GREAT-FANGED FISH AND VICIOUS SERPENTS OF THE MOAT HAD FLOCKED TO IT--
"--THEN SWAM QUICKLY ACROSS--
"-- HAVING TO KILL ONLY ONE LONG-JAWED CREATURE THAT GRAZED HIS LEG.
"I DID NOT BELIEVE IT... UNTIL HE SHOWED ME THE TEETH-MARKS.
"IF THAT MONSTER, REAL AND ALREADY FULLY SENTIENT, HAD BEEN GUIDED BY THE WIZARD'S BRAIN, IT MIGHT WELL HAVE DEVOURED THE BARBARIAN.
"BUT, MY CAPTOR WAS BUSY WITH ME AT THAT MOMENT.
"THUS, MY CHAMPION EMERGED RELATIVELY UNSCATHED FROM THE HIDEOUS COMBAT.


"HE FEINTED BY RUNNING AROUND THE SIDE OF THE KEEP, THUS DRAWING THE WIZARD AWAY INTO ANOTHER ROOM.
"THEN, HE RAN BACK TO THE HAIR... AND CLIMBED UP.
"HE WAS NEARLY AT THE TOP WHEN THE WIZARD DISCOVERED HIS DECEIT--
"--AND RETURNED!
"MAGICALLY, MY CAPTOR SET FIRE TO THE HAIR...
"--WHICH LEAPED DOWN TOWARD THE BARBARIAN, EVEN AS HE SCRAMBLED FRANTICALLY UPWARD!
"THAT WAS WHEN I AWOKE, MY HEAD THROBBING, TO SEE THE FLAMING HAIR...
NO!
NNOOO!!
"EVEN AS I HURLED MYSELF UPON THE WIZARD'S BACK, I COULD SEE THAT IT WAS--
"--TOO LATE!
"YET, I HEARD NO BODY FALL...
"AND THEN--!


"MEANWHILE, THE WIZARD HAD TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO ME--
"--VENTING THE FULL FORCE OF HIS WRATH UPON ME!
"I WILL NOT SAY WHAT CRUEL BLOWS HE STRUCK ME THEN, BUT I WAS BENT AND BLEEDING WHEN THAT POWERFUL BRONZED FIGURE CROUCHED AT LAST ON THE WINDOW SILL...
"THE WIZARD TURNED FROM ME AT LAST.
"HE STILL CONSIDERED IT BENEATH HIS DIGNITY, NO DOUBT, TO FIGHT A HALF-NAKED SWORDSMAN...
"THUS, HE BROUGHT FORTH A PHIAL FROM HIS CLOTHES --
"--AND CRASHED IT TO THE FLOOR!
HERE, "CHAMPION"--
A REWARD FOR YOUR LABORS!
"DEADLY VAPORS STREAMED FORTH FROM THE PHIAL--
"--CLOYING, KILLING MISTS WHICH NO BLADE COULD SLAY, AS IT HAD DISPATCHED THE EARLIER MONSTERS.
"THEN, SURELY, THE BARBARIAN WOULD HAVE FALLEN--
"BUT, WITH THE LAST OF MY STRENGTH, I SANG UP A WIND--

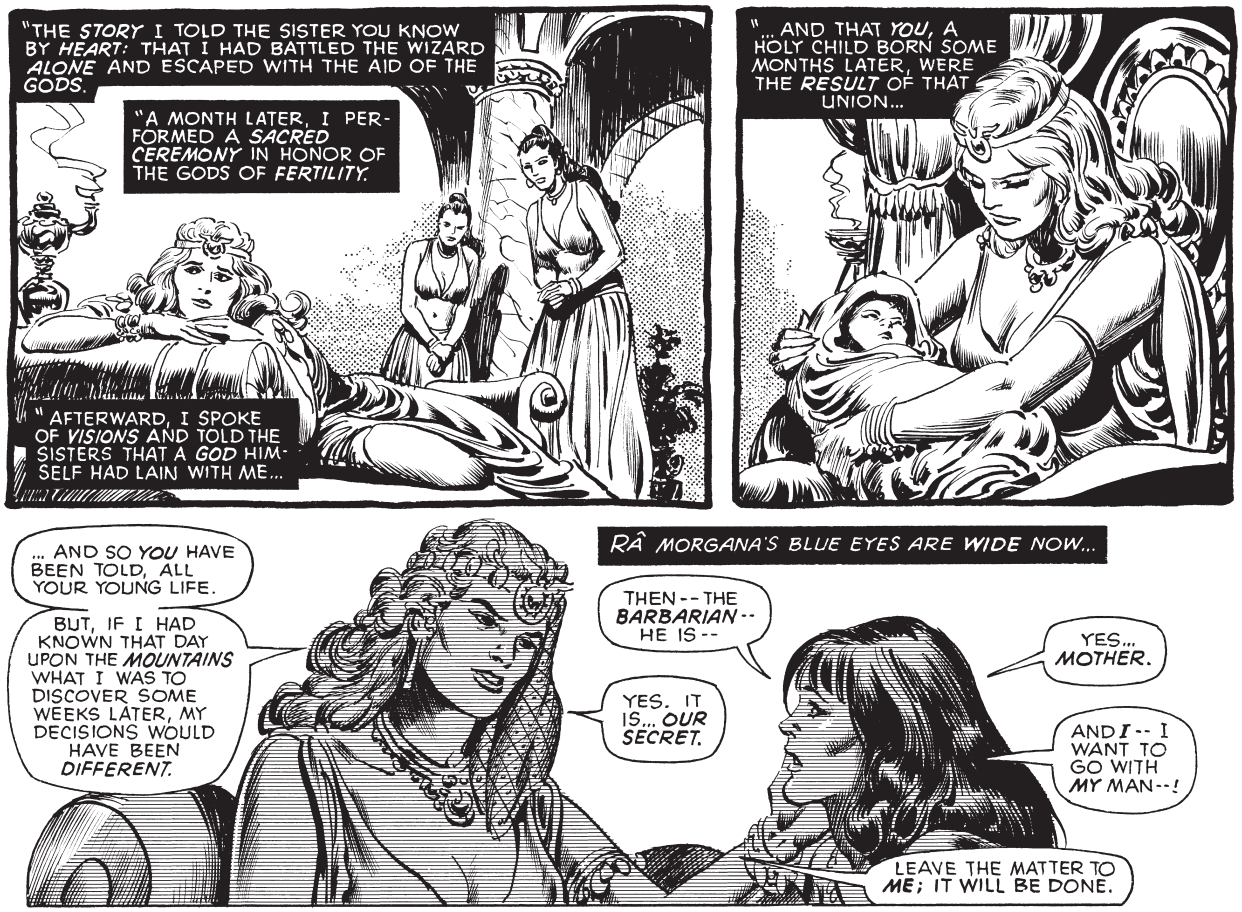

"--AND CLEARED IT FROM THE ROOM!
SHADES OF ERLIK!
"THEN, WEAK WITH EXHAUSTION, I MOANED--
I...CAN DO... NO MORE...!
"THE BARBARIAN WAS STRIDING, GRIM-FACED, TOWARD THE WIZARD--
"--WHO SWIFTLY THREW UP A CRYSTAL WALL ABOUT HIMSELF.
"BUT, HE HAD ALREADY EXPENDED MUCH OF HIS POWER ON THE EARLIER SPELLS--
"...AND THE WARRIOR'S FIRST BLOW CRACKED THE WALL...JUST A LITTLE.
"NO WORD ESCAPED THE BARBARIAN'S TAUT LIPS, AS HE POUNDED THE QUAVERING, GLASSY WALL AGAIN AND YET AGAIN--
"YET, WITH EACH BLOW--
"--A LARGER PORTION OF THE MAGICAL SHIELD WAS SPLINTERED INTO GLEAMING YET ALMOST INVISIBLE SHARDS!


"THEN, A FINAL SWING OF THAT SLASHING SWORD--
"--AND THE WIZARD STOOD BEFORE MY CHAMPION NAKED AND ALONE--
"--AND AFRAID!
NO! IN THE NAME OF THE DARK GODS-- DON'T!
I'LL GIVE YOU ANYTHING-- ANYTHING YOU WANT--
--ANYTHI!!!!
"THE WIZARD'S DEATH-SHRIEK SEEMED TO CONTINUE, LONG AFTER HIS BODY HAD TOPPLED, LIFELESS AND SPEWING BLOOD, TO THE FLOOR.
"STRANGELY--I SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT I HAD NEVER EVEN KNOWN THE WIZARD'S NAME.


"MY CHAMPION LIFTED ME, THEN, WITH EFFORT; I WAS TOO WEAK TO HAVE RESISTED, EVEN HAD I WISHED TO.
"HIS ARMS WERE IRON BANDS; HIS SMELL WAS POTENT-- THE NATURAL STRONG ODOR OF A MAN WHO LABORED HARD --
"-- BUT ALSO THE SCENT OF HIS BLOOD, FOR HE WAS NOT UNSCATHED.
"I REMEMBER NO MORE FROM THAT TIME OR PLACE.
"WHEN NEXT I WOKE, WE WERE IN THE MOUNTAINS.
"HE HAD ROLLED ME IN HIS SKIN CLOAK AND BUILT A FIRE, WITH THE PLAIN AND CASTLE STILL IN VIEW BELOW US.
"FOR A TIME, I LAY THERE FEELING THE ACHES OF MY BODY, ABSORBING THE WARMTH FROM THE FIRE.
"AT LAST, I BECAME AWARE OF HIS SCRUTINY...
WELL?
"I IMAGINED MY VOICE WAS IMPERIOUS, DEMANDING.
"HIS ANSWER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE FIRST SMILE I HAD SEEN UPON THAT SCARRED VISAGE...
YOU DID NOT LIE, GIRL.
WHAT...?
YOU LOOK JUST AS YOU APPEARED TO ME.
"THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE APPRAISAL IN HIS EYES.
"THOUGH I HAD BEEN SHELTERED FROM MATTERS OF THE FLESH, I FOUND I COULD NOT CONTROL THE POUNDING OF MY BLOOD...
"...AND FLEW INTO HIS ARMS.
"IN THAT MOMENT, I THOUGHT NOTHING OF MY POSITION, MY SPELLS, OR MY DESTINY.
"THERE WAS ONLY THE PASSION OF THE NIGHT...
"...AND THE CRUSHING GENTLENESS OF HIS EMBRACE.


"THE NEXT DAY, I STOOD LOOKING DOWN UPON THESE MONASTERY WALLS.
"THEY LOOKED FOREIGN AND UNFRIENDLY IN THE LIGHT OF THAT DAY.
YOU MUST REMAIN HERE, CONAN.
I WILL HAVE TO MAKE UP A STORY ABOUT MY ESCAPE... THEN SNEAK OUT TOMORROW NIGHT TO GIVE YOU YOUR REWARD.
LIKE HELL YOU WILL.
I MUST! I AM A SPECIAL PRIESTESS OF THE ORDER!
THEY MUST NEVER KNOW THAT I HAVE BEEN...
WHAT IS WRONG? DO YOU NOT TRUST ME?
I TRUST YOU.
I WILL BRING GOLD -- MUCH GOLD! I GIVE YOU MY WORD!
I HAVE HAD MY REWARD.
WHY MUST YOU GO AT ALL? THAT'S NO PLACE FOR YOU.
I -- I MUST! I --
SHUT UP LIKE THAT -- WITHIN STONE WALLS?
COME WITH ME, GIRL, INTO THE WIDE WORLD!
YOU DESERVE TO LIVE!
CROM, YOU HAVE SPIRIT!
WILL YOU WASTE IT?


"MY THROAT FELT TIGHT; I LOOKED DOWN OVER THE VALLEY, THE WHOLE OF MY LIFE AND KNOWLEDGE.
"NOTHING HAD PREPARED ME FOR THAT MOMENT.
IF -- IF I COME WITH YOU, WILL YOU STAY WITH ME FOREVER?
WILL I TURN TO YOU...
...AND ALWAYS FIND YOU THERE?
NO.
I CANNOT PROMISE THAT.
SO THAT IS THE LESSON OF LAST NIGHT: TO BE HELD WHILE I PLEASE YOU, THEN BE SPURNED?
IF YOU THINK THAT, YOU LEARNED NOTHING.
BUT YOU ASKED ME "FOREVER" AND "ALWAYS." WHAT MAN CAN PROMISE YOU THAT? IF HE DOES, HE'S A LIAR.
I OFFER YOU FREEDOM AND A CHANCE TO ROAM THE WORLD AT MY SIDE UNTIL WE CHOOSE TO PART.
WELL? WHAT WILL YOU DO? DECIDE, GIRL...
I AM OVERLONG IN THESE HILLS.
"IN THE END, I WAS NOT SO BRAVE AS I HAD THOUGHT.
"WHEN WE PARTED, HE TOOK MY SHOULDERS AS IF TO DRAW ME TO HIM.
"I WAS WILLING...
"BUT HE MERELY TOUCHED THE TEARS THAT POURED ACROSS MY CHEEKS, THEN LET ME GO.
"HE WATCHED ME WALK BACK TOWARD THE MONASTERY.
"THEN, HE TURNED UPON HIS HEEL AND WENT HIS WAY.
"I HAVE NEVER SEEN HIM AGAIN.


"THE STORY I TOLD THE SISTER YOU KNOW BY HEART: THAT I HAD BATTLED THE WIZARD ALONE AND ESCAPED WITH THE AID OF THE GODS.
"A MONTH LATER, I PERFORMED A SACRED CEREMONY IN HONOR OF THE GODS OF FERTILITY.
" AFTERWARD, I SPOKE OF VISIONS AND TOLD THE SISTERS THAT A GOD HIMSELF HAD LAIN WITH ME...
"... AND THAT YOU, A HOLY CHILD BORN SOME MONTHS LATER, WERE THE RESULT OF THAT UNION...
... AND SO YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD, ALL YOUR YOUNG LIFE.
BUT, IF I HAD KNOWN THAT DAY UPON THE MOUNTAINS WHAT I WAS TO DISCOVER SOME WEEKS LATER, MY DECISIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT.
RÂ MORGANA'S BLUE EYES ARE WIDE NOW...
THEN -- THE BARBARIAN -- HE IS --
YES. IT IS... OUR SECRET.
YES... MOTHER.
AND I -- I WANT TO GO WITH MY MAN--!
LEAVE THE MATTER TO ME; IT WILL BE DONE.


TÉ KORTINËA HAS MANY EVIL WORDS TO SAY, BUT I SCARCELY HEAR THEM, AS I WATCH RÂ MORGANA WALK OUT THE FRONT GATE.
NOT FAR AWAY, A TALL YOUNG MAN WAITS ON A HORSE. SHE RUNS TO HIM...
... AND THEY ARE GONE.


TÉ KORTINËA TALKS OF EXPELLING ME -- OF DETHRONING, STONING, AND DEFROCKING ME.
I DO NOT CARE.
I SIT UPON MY STONE SEAT, LOOKING NORTH TO THE MOUNTAINS.
PERHAPS, SOMEDAY SOON, I WILL GO THERE...!