



PROVINCE OF  
CONAJOHARA.

THE STILLNESS OF THE  
FOREST TRAIL WAS SO PRIMEVAL  
THAT THE TREAD OF A  
SOFT-BOOTED FOOT WAS A  
STARTLING DISTURBANCE...



AT LEAST IT SEEMED  
SO TO THE EARS OF  
THE WAYFARER...

...THOUGH HE WAS MOVING  
ALONG THE PATH WITH THE CAUTION  
THAT MUST BE PRACTICED BY  
ANY MAN WHO VENTURES  
BEYOND THUNDER RIVER...



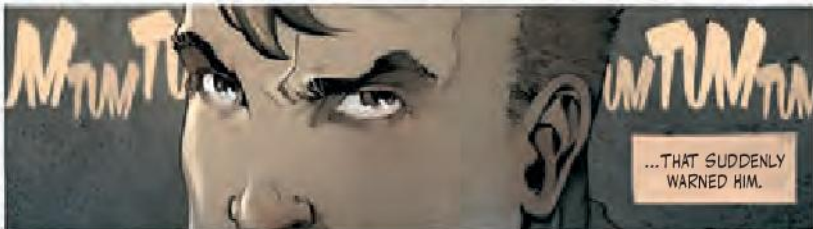
HIS CARELESS  
ATTITUDE WAS  
NOT GENUINE, AND  
HIS EYES AND EARS  
WERE KEENLY  
ALERT.



...MORE  
THAN HIS  
SENSES...

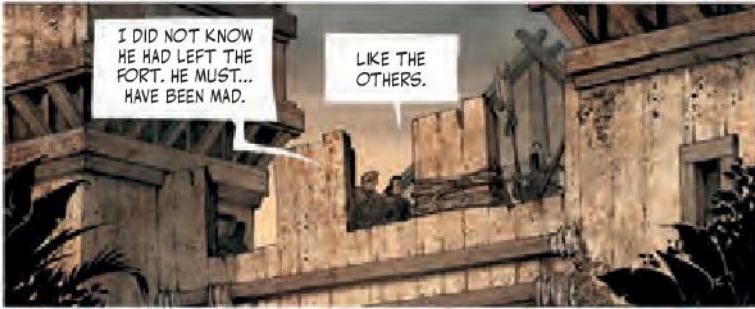


HOWEVER,  
IT WAS HIS  
INSTINCT...



...THAT SUDDENLY  
WARNED HIM.





I DID NOT KNOW HE HAD LEFT THE FORT. HE MUST... HAVE BEEN MAD.

LIKE THE OTHERS.



YOU SHOULD HAVE HIDDEN IT.

AND THE PICTS WOULD HAVE RETURNED IT TO THE FORT... PIECE BY PIECE OUTSIDE THE GATE...



DO THE SOLDIERS KNOW?

WE LEFT THE BODY BY THE EASTERN GATE.



BAH.

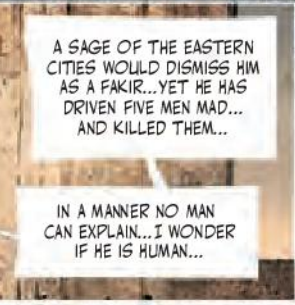
NO WHITE MAN HAS EVER MANAGED TO COME BACK ALIVE AFTER CROSSING THE BLACK RIVER.



WHO KNOWS WHAT GODS ARE WORSHIPPED THERE, WHAT DEVILS MAY HAVE ARISEN...



SOME PEOPLE LOVE ZOGAR SAG...



A SAGE OF THE EASTERN CITIES WOULD DISMISS HIM AS A FAKIR...YET HE HAS DRIVEN FIVE MEN MAD... AND KILLED THEM...

IN A MANNER NO MAN CAN EXPLAIN... I WONDER IF HE IS HUMAN...



IF I GET WITHIN AX-THROWING DISTANCE OF HIM, I WILL SETTLE THAT QUESTION.

THE SOLDIERS WHO DO NOT BELIEVE IN GHOSTS OR DEVILS ARE ALMOST IN A PANIC OF FEAR.

YOU BELIEVE IN GHOULS AND GOBLINS...BUT DON'T SEEM TO FEAR ANY OF IT.





THERE IS NOTHING THAT STEEL CAN NOT KILL.

I'M NOT GOING OUT OF MY WAY TO QUARREL WITH DEVILS...BUT I WON'T STEP OUT OF MY PATH TO LET ONE GO.

CONAN, YOU KNOW THE WEAKNESS OF THIS PROVINCE, A SLENDER WEDGE THRUST INTO THE UNTAMED WILDERNESS.

YOU KNOW THAT THE LIVES OF THE SETTLERS DEPEND ON THIS FORT.



HIS MAJESTY AND HIS ADVISERS IGNORE MY REQUESTS FOR REINFORCEMENTS, AND THE PICTS ARE EMBOLDENED. I HAVE HUNDREDS OF MEN HERE, AND ZOGAR SAG IS JUST ANOTHER THORN IN OUR SIDE...

...BUT HE IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE OTHERS, AND THE SOLDIERS ARE STARTING TO BE AFRAID. I DON'T WANT TO WASTE TIME.

I WANT THIS PROBLEM TO BE FIXED BEFORE IT GETS WORSE, AS LONG AS IT IS ONLY A LITTLE PISSED OFF SHAMAN...

YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS BEEN TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BLACK RIVER...



GO BACK THERE AND KILL THE SORCERER. SEND THE PICTS A CLEAR MESSAGE...



THIS TERRITORY IS OURS.




I'M TAURAN, I KNOW THE FOREST...NOT AS WELL AS CONAN, BUT I CAN HELP HIM.

GOOD IDEA. YOU CAN TAKE AS MANY MEN AS YOU WANT, CONAN.




A DOZEN WILL SUFFICE.





THE RIVER WAS A VAGUE  
TRACE BETWEEN WALLS  
OF EBONY...




BALTHUS KNEW THAT NOT  
EVEN THE KEEN EYES OF  
THE MAN WHO KNELT IN  
THE PROW...

...WOULD BE ABLE  
TO DISCERN ANYTHING  
MORE THAN A FEW FEET  
AHEAD OF THEM.




CONAN  
ORIENTED  
HIMSELF BY  
INSTINCT.

BALTHUS HAD  
EXAMINED HIS  
COMPANIONS...



MEN WHOSE  
GRIM NECESSI-  
TIES OF LIFE...

...HAD TAUGHT  
THEM TO LIVE  
AND SURVIVE IN  
THESE DANGE-  
ROUS WOODS...



THEY WERE WILD MEN,  
OF A SORT...



YET THERE WAS STILL  
A WIDE GULF BETWEEN  
THEM AND THE  
CIMMERIAN.



THEY WERE SONS OF  
CIVILIZATION, REVERTED  
TO A SEMI-BARBARISM.



HE WAS A  
BARBARIAN.



THEY HAD  
ACQUIRED STEALTH  
AND CRAFT...

THESE  
THINGS WERE  
INNATE WITH HIM.



THEY WERE  
WOLVES...



...HE WAS A  
TIGER.





TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM TUM







AN ARMY...

WHAT DID THE BOSS SAY ALREADY...?



"KILL THE WIZARD BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE."

WE FAILED...



ALL THE KNOWN CLANS ARE HERE.



I SEE EVEN MORE THAT I DO NOT RECOGNIZE.

THEY ARE READY TO RECLAIM THEIR LAND...



...AND WE GAVE THEM THE SIGNAL TO START WITH OUR EXPEDITION.

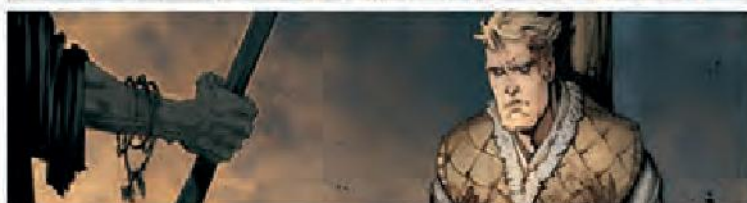


WHAT...



ZOGAR...









COME ON,  
COME ON ...

**GRNWWL**

LET'S GET  
THIS OVER  
WITH...!!!









COME ON OUT! ALL'S SAFE NOW. THERE WAS ONLY ONE OF THESE DOGS.



COME OUT!

WHO ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



WELL, HERE HE IS...



A PICT...

ARE YOU SURPRISED?

I WAS TOLD THAT THESE DEVILS SOMETIMES CROSSED THE BLACK RIVER...BUT I DID NOT EXPECT TO SEE ONE SO FAR IN THE INTERIOR.



THE DRUMS STOPPED.

YES...FOR NOW.



NO SETTLER BETWEEN THUNDER RIVER AND FORT TUSCELAN IS REALLY SAFE.

I'VE BEEN TRACKING HIM FOR SEVERAL MILES AND I CAME UP BEHIND HIM AS HE WAS DRAWING AN ARROW ON YOU...



AND I THANK YOU FOR THAT.

MY NAME IS BALTHUS...





I AM CONAN.

COME, LET'S GO BACK TO THE FORT...



ARE YOU PART OF THE GARRISON?

I AM NO SOLDIER, BUT I DRAW THE PAY OF AN OFFICER.

VALANNUS USES MY TALENTS RANGING ALONG THE RIVER...ARE YOU A SETTLER?



I HAVEN'T DECIDED WHETHER I'LL TAKE A PIECE OF LAND, OR ENTER FORT SERVICE...

THE BEST LAND IS ALREADY TAKEN. AND THE PICTS ARE MORE AND MORE DANGEROUS. THEY WILL EVENTUALLY DRIVE OUT THE SETTLERS AND THE SOLDIERS...



FUNNY SPEECH FOR SOMEONE WHO PROTECTS THE COLONY...

I'M A MERCENARY. I SELL MY SWORD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER. YOUR IDIOTIC KING DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS HERE.



YOU'VE PUSHED THE PICTS OUT OF THEIR TERRITORIES, YOU EXPANDED AS FAR AS YOU COULD...BUT THE KING WILL NEVER SEND ENOUGH REINFORCEMENTS TO THE GARRISON, AND THE COLONISTS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RESIST A CONCERTED ATTACK BY THE PICTS.

"A CONCERTED ATTACK"? THEY ARE ONLY SMALL, DISUNITED CLANS...



BUT INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS. SOMEDAY A MAN WILL RISE AND UNITE THE CLANS...THE GUNDERMEN MADE THE SAME MISTAKE TRYING TO COLONIZE CIMMERIA...



I KNOW. MY UNCLE WAS THERE WHEN THE CIMMERIANS FINALLY SWEEPED OVER THE WALLS.

A MASSACRE...

YOU CAN SAY IT.





WERE YOU THERE? ARE YOU GUNDERMAN?

YES.



I AM CIMMERIAN.



WAIT, ARE YOU... "CONAN"... THE CIMMERIAN?

I'VE HEARD OF Y--



WHAT IS THAT?!

FOLLOW ME.



THIS WAY...



THERE.





INDEED, THE TERRITORY IS NO LONGER VERY SAFE...

BUT IT WAS NO PICT WHO DID THIS. THEY DO NOT HAVE CLAWS...

PERHAPS A PANTHER...?



PANTHERS DO NOT DECAPITATE...



IT WAS A FOREST DEMON WHO DID IT...

A DEMON SENT BY A SORCERER. ZOGAR SAG.



HE IS A PICTISH WIZARD WHO DWELLS IN GWAWELA, THE NEAREST VILLAGE ACROSS THE BLACK RIVER.

THREE MONTHS AGO, HE STOLE THE MULES FROM A MERCHANT CALLED TIBERIAS.

A WOODSMAN TRAILED ZOGAR AND LED SOME MEN FROM THE FORT TO HIM. VALANNUS THREW HIM IN A CELL...



WHICH IS THE WORST INSULT YOU CAN GIVE A PICT.



ZOGAR SWORE TO KILL TIBERIAS AND THE MEN WHO CAUGHT HIM...

AND HE KEPT HIS WORD.







HE ESCAPED...

AND LATER WE SAW EACH OF THE SOLDIERS COME OUT OF THE CAMP, SUMMONED BY A CRY FROM THE JUNGLE... AS IF TAKEN WITH MADNESS...

EACH TIME, WE FOUND THEIR BODY, BUT NOT THEIR HEAD.



HE HAS YET TO TAKE THE HEAD OF TIBER-



IT WAS A WOMAN!



WE SHOULD GO AND SEE.



WAIT, WE SHOULD NOT RUSH-



WHAT WAS THAT?!

HA.  
HE TOOK THE HEAD.



SO FAST? SO CLOSE... TO US?

YES...WE'LL TAKE THE BODY IN. AT LEAST OUR LOAD'S A BIT LIGHTER...





FORT  
TUSCELAN.

OPEN THE GATE.  
YOU CAN SEE IT'S  
I, DON'T YOU?



HAVE YOU NEVER  
SEEN A CORPSE?

IT'S...IT'S  
TIBERIAS.

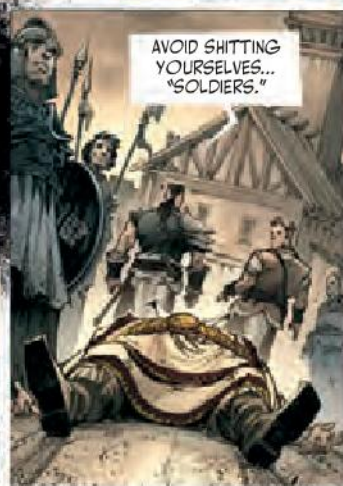
I SAID IT WOULD  
END LIKE THIS.  
WHEN WE HEARD...



... THAT CRY.  
ALWAYS THE  
SAME...

AND THEN  
HE LEFT. HE  
LOOKED  
HYPNOTIZED,  
LIKE THE  
OTHERS.

I KNEW HE'D  
COME BACK WITH-  
OUT HIS HEAD.



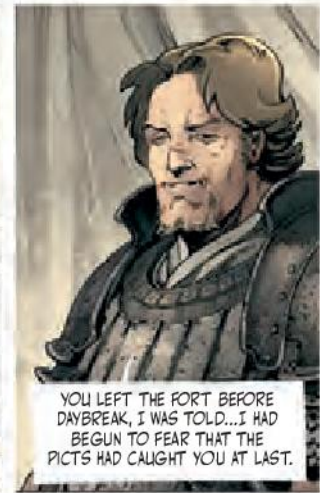
AVOID SHITTING  
YOURSELVES...  
"SOLDIERS."







CONAN!



YOU LEFT THE FORT BEFORE DAYBREAK, I WAS TOLD... I HAD BEGUN TO FEAR THAT THE PICTS HAD CAUGHT YOU AT LAST.



THE DAY THEY SMOKE MY HEAD, WE WILL HEAR THE PICTISH WOMEN LAMENT AND MOURN THEIR DEAD FAR BEYOND THIS COLONY...



I WAS ON A LONE SCOUT. I COULDN'T SLEEP. I KEPT HEARING DRUMS TALKING ACROSS THE RIVER...

THEY TALK EVERY NIGHT, NOW... EVER SINCE ZOGAR SAG LEFT.



WE SHOULD EITHER HAVE GIVEN HIM PRESENTS AND SENT HIM HOME... OR HANGED HIM, AS YOU ADVISED.

BUT IT'S HARD FOR YOU HYBORIANS TO LEARN THE WAYS OF THE OUTLANDS.



THE PICTS CROSS THE RIVER MORE AND MORE OFTEN.

I WAS FOLLOWING ONE WHEN I CAME ACROSS THIS LAD. HIS NAME IS BALTHUS, HE'S COME HERE TO HELP HOLD THE FRONTIER...



I AM GLAD TO WELCOME YOU, YOUNG SIR. I WISH MORE PEOPLE WOULD COME AS YOU HAVE.



THAT IS NOT LIKELY.

WE FOUND TIBERIAS... BEHEADED, LIKE THE OTHERS.

WHAT?!