

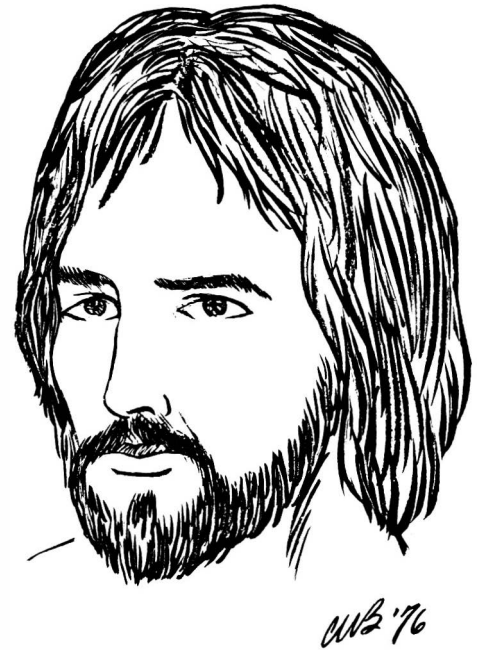
Balik





In a world of trouble, chaos, and crime,
I sail the multi-colored oceans of my mind,
Far from realities brazen shore,
Adrift in fantasy evermore.

C. W. Bird



I've always said that fandom is the best teacher of future professionals whether they be writers, letterers, artists, or whatever. Fandom serves as a "training ground" for these future-pros, allowing them to polish their talents and then make the final move into the "big leagues". We've all seen it happen before, with such names as Roy Thomas, Jim Starlin, Alan Weiss, Marv Wolfman, Len Wein, Bill Dubay, and many others. Now we'll have to add another name to that honored roster, that of Clifford Bird.

Cliff was born in Brisbane, Australia on December 5, 1945 and came to the United States at the age of two. Even at an early age he displayed an active interest in, and a talent for, drawing, and like most other illustrators seemed to have a pencil in his hand twenty four hours a day. And like most self taught artists, Cliff drew a lot of Disney and other cartoon characters, copied scenes from Universal horror movies on television, read and redrew a lot of comic books, and in general went about redrawing the world with his trusty inkpen.

It was only natural that Cliff's profession be in the artistic line. He custom built and painted motorcycles (winning two trophies in auto shows), did signs and advertising art for local-area businesses, and eventually discovered fandom, where his enormous talents were quickly recognized and appreciated by fans, and the demand for his artwork mushroomed.

In 1974, at the American Nostalgia Convention in Dallas, Cliff met Marvel and DC artist Gil Kane, who encouraged our hero to do a comic strip. This, coupled with a request from C.E. "Caz" Cazedessus, Jr. (editor and publisher of ERB-dom and Voyage magazines) led to the creation of BALIK.

An archetype hero, BALIK is the culmination of Cliff's interest in Greek and Roman history, mythology and ancient culture, as well as receiving inspiration from such diverse sources as the Koran, the Old Testament, the writings of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Howard-de Camp-Carter. All of it has been blended into one epic adventure that makes BALIK the epitome of adventure. As Cliff points out, BALIK is "...a hero who is fallible yet strong, able to overcome his own weakness, and somehow survive in a savage, barbaric world".

This then is BALIK and his creator. I think you'll agree, after reading this volume, that both Clifford Bird and his creation are ready for the "big leagues" now. What else can I add, except: read and enjoy!

Larry Herndon
March 18th, 1976



Balik

by C.W. BIRD



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"Balik"

and

"Siren of Alcatraz"

Are dedicated to Shella Jayne Bird

The Assyrians Masters of the East

by
Clifford W. Bird

INTRODUCTION

The majority of the following article is comprised of excerpts from the book "Great Cities of the Ancient World" by Lyon Sprague de Camp, published by Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, and copyright 1972 by L. Sprague de Camp. The author was kind enough to offer the chapter on the ancient city of Nineveh, from the above mentioned book, as a source for this article. Sprague de Camp personally proofread the final draft and approved it for publication here.



"Ashur and the great gods, who have made my kingdom great, and who have bestowed might and power as a gift, commanded that I should extend the boundry of their land, and they entrusted to my hand their mighty weapons, the storm of battle. Lands, mountains, cities, and princes, the enemies of Ashur, I have brought under my sway, and have subdued their territories.... Unto Assyria I added land, unto her peoples, peoples. I enlarged the frontier of my land, and all of their lands I brought under my sway."

Tiglath-Pileser I (1114 - 1076 B. C.)

From northern Mesopotamia they came. A Semitic people, once nomadic, they settled down to live as peasant farmers but soon became a powerful nation that dedicated itself to war. In the nineteenth century B.C. they began to establish commercial colonies and by the eighth century B.C. Shamshi-Adad began what was to become the Assyrian empire. They derive their name from Asur, a city they settled in about 2000 b.c.

Racially, the Assyrians seem always to have been predominantly of the Armenoid type of the white race. This type, which has prevailed in Asia Minor from the earliest historical times on down, is stocky and muscular, with a medium swarthy complexion, abundant dark curly hair and beard, a large hooked nose, and a broad skull. This is the type shown in Assyrian sculptures, even though the Assyrians were probably not all so much alike as the reliefs might give us to think.

Assyria prided herself on being a great military nation, with most of its history written in blood. It was not uncommon for Assyrian monarchs to boast of their campaigns and executions which consisted of many varied atrocities. Men of conquered races were impaled before the walls of their cities, their heads were heaped up at the gates, and many were mutilated. Young men and maidens alike were burned in fire, often enemy soldiers had their eyes put out.

The Assyrian kings led their forces against such diverse nations and peoples as: Damascus, Israel, Judaea, Phoenicia, Syria, the Aramaeans, Bablonians, Cassites, Egyptians, Elamites, Ethiopians, Gimirrai (Cimmerians), Hittites and so on. The Ethiopians were known as Kushites.

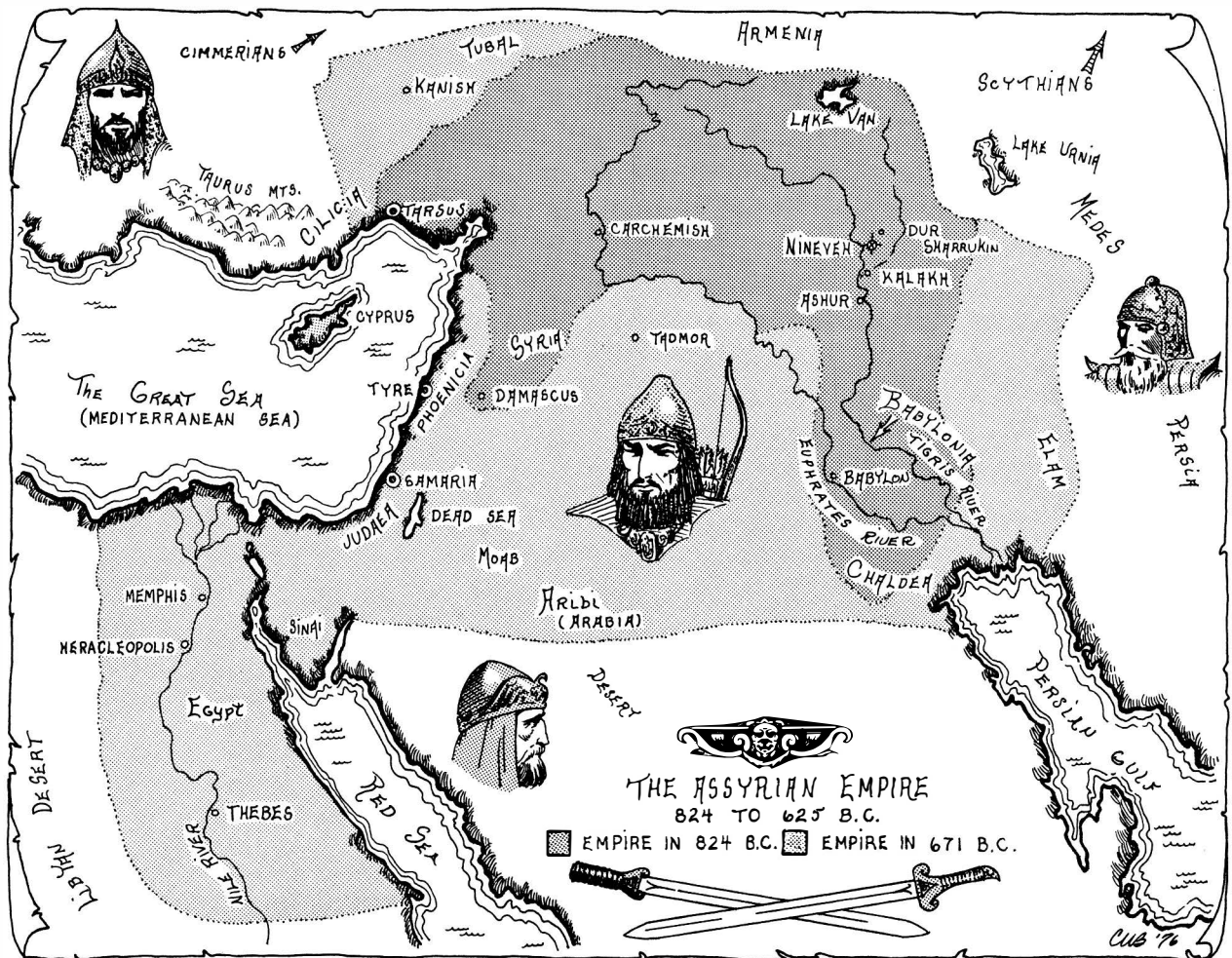
As a R.E. Howard fan, it is interesting to note; A nomadic horde, the Gimirrai or Cimmerians, had broken into Asia Minor in the reign of Sargon II, who defeated them in a great battle. The Cimmerians, who shaved their faces and wore caps that stood up in tall points, then turned their attention westward against the kingdom of Lydia, which appealed to the Assyrians for help. The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal eventually beat the Elamites and the Cimmerians, though it was some time later. The latter (Cimmerians) broke up, and some settled in northeastern Asia Minor, where their descendants became the Armenians. At least, their language evolved into Armenian, although the people themselves doubtless mingled with the folks they found already settled in Armenia and disappeared as a distinct ethnic type. It was no doubt the continuous wars, intrigues within the nation itself, and the Scythian invasion that finally weakened the Assyrian might.

The Assyrians, who had always been warlike, survived as long as they did by becoming the fiercest militarists of their day. The death of an Assyrian king was usually the signal for a frantic revolt of the subject peoples, and the new king spent the first few years of his reign reconquering his sire's dominions. To discourage such revolts, Assyrian kings deported sections of the revolting population to other parts of the empire. They (Assyrians) were pioneers in the military art, being among the first to adopt such innovations as iron weapons and squadrons of cavalry. They invented wheeled war machines like the belfry, the helepolis, or more commonly referred to as the movable siege tower, which had a battering ram on the ground floor and a tower above. The tower was made as tall as the wall to be attacked, so that, when it was pushed up to the wall, the attackers could swarm up the tower ladders and invade the top of the wall. In some cases the towers were higher than the city walls, therefore allowing Assyrian archers to use their bows and shoot down at the defenders.

The Assyrian army consisted of infantry, cavalry, and chariots. The infantry carried sword, spear, bow, and slings. They wore coats of mail, pointed ornamented helmets, and carried round or rectangular shields made of intertwined twigs or leather. The cavalry used swords and bows, the mounted archers being protected by a fellow cavalryman who held his shield and led the two horses. The chariot played an important part as a weapon of war, and the Assyrians were constantly improving them. They also made ramps of earth, stone, or tree trunks against the walls of besieged cities in order to sally over the top of the wall.

In their independent history the Assyrians had four different capitals at different times. Ashur was the oldest, Kalakh (the Calah of Genesis) which was a capital off and on under several Assyrian kings, Nineveh (Qyunjiq), and the city of Sargon II. Sargon extended Assyrian rule far out into the Arabian desert and built a new capital north of Nineveh. He fittingly named it after himself, Dur Sharrukin, or Abode of Sargon. He fell in battle with northern hillmen in 705 b.c. and was succeeded by his son Sennacherib. The new king abandoned Dur Sharrukin, save only as a military outpost, and moved back to Nineveh, the bloody city.

Nineveh was a tribute to the Assyrian ability to build as well as destroy, proving that they were gifted and energetic inventors and engineers. Like the Romans they borrowed much of their culture from other nations. They built roads (paved with slabs of stone or brick), dams, Reservoirs, canals, and aqueducts, public gardens and orchards, porticos, huge rock reliefs consisting of rows of sculptured gods (reminiscent of the Hittite sanctuary of Yazilikaya), game preserves and innovations such as the pulley, for hauling water from a well. They built majestic cities, well fortified, with courtyards, the king's palace (some having walls from eleven to twenty six feet thick and few entranceways, most likely in the interest of security), sanctuaries to their gods, and public buildings and dwellings. In his private garden in Nineveh, where storks clattered and tame lions prowled, Sennacherib designed an improved swape or well hoist, with a copper bucket and posts of timber instead of dried mud. The Assyrians were enterprising traders though quite often they extracted provisions as tribute from those people under their dominion.



Perhaps today they are most remembered for their huge bas-reliefs, most of which depicted scenes of war or hunting, rows of tributaries, servants bearing the royal chariot and furnishings, winged djann and winged bulls and lions with human heads. Some depicted their chief gods: Sin-moon, Shamash-sun, Adad-storms, Ea-war, Ninurta-hunting, and Ningal-the female counterpart of Sin. Ashur was the national god, usually shown in the center of a winged disc in the act of bending a bow. Many of the Assyrian kings saw to it that their history was preserved, each king requiring their scribes to write the annals of their reign. Even an account of the Universal Flood can be found in their writings. They also turned out a respectable literature.

The Assyrians were great hunters. History records how Tiglath-Pileseri, with his powerful bow, shot four savage bulls in the desert of Mitanni, ten elephants in the region of Harran, and in Habour, one hundred twenty lions, on foot, and from his chariot eight hundred lions.

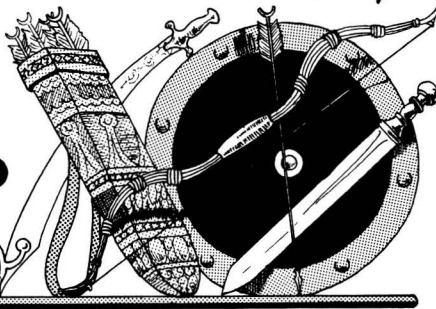
Assyria showed the beginnings of religious fanaticism, making sacred rites of the execution of captives. Assyrian religion seems to have been a rather gloomy form of polytheism. The pantheon was made the same as that of Babylonia, with Ashur substituted for Marduk as king of the gods. The world was thought to swarm with evil spirits, and the science of omens was tediously elaborated. The king himself was also high priest and deputy of the god Ashur.

For all their deeds and ambitions, the Assyrian empire dissolved after several short, disorderly reigns of undistinguished kings, who fought one another for the throne while more and more subject people revolted. The alliance of the Scythians, Medes, and Babylonians finally weakened and finished them in 605 b.c. Two centuries later Nineveh was a mere field of ruins, and the scourge of Assyria was fading from the memories of men.



Balik

by C.W.BIRD



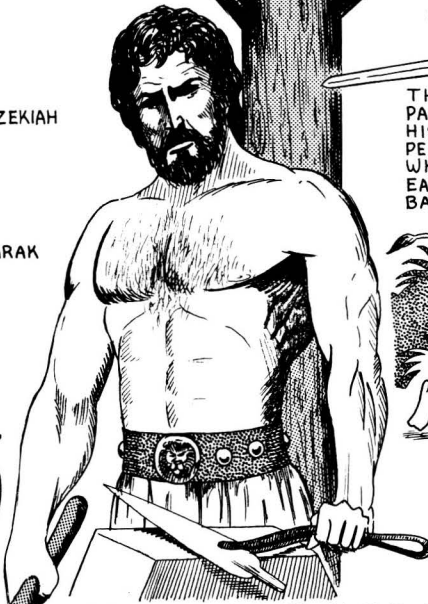
THESE ARE THE WORDS OF AMRU'UL - QAIS THE SCRIBE, WHO, IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY B.C., REMOVED HIMSELF FROM THE EYES OF MEN TO DWELL IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON. IN THOSE DAYS THE LIVING GOD WALKED WITH THE SONS OF MEN, BUT IT CAME TO PASS THAT MANY OF THEM STIFFENED THEIR NECKS BEFORE THE LAW OF THE PROPHETS, THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE WERE HARDENED AND THEY MOLDED STATUES AND KNELT BEFORE THEM, THEY PREPARED GARDENS ON ALL THE HIGH HILLS AND BURNED INCENSE SERVING BAAL, THEY WORSHIPPED THE STARS OF HEAVEN, SOUGHT AFTER DIVINATIONS AND SOOTHSAYERS, THEY SACRIFICED THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN FIRE AND DELIVERED THEMSELVES UP TO DO EVIL. AND GOD TURNED HIS FACE FROM THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL IN THE SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH, AND THEY FELL BEFORE THE MIGHT OF ASSYRIA, AND SO IT WAS THAT TIGLATH-PILESER III CAME WITH THE HOST OF ASSYRIA, REMOVING THE PEOPLE FROM THEIR CITIES, TOWNS AND FARMS, LEADING THEM AWAY AS SLAVES TO ASSYRIA TO THE LAND OF THE MEDES AND THE SHORES OF THE CASPIAN SEA. THE LAND WAS THEN FILLED WITH THE CONQUERED PEOPLE OF BABYLON, CUTA, AVAB, EMATH AND SEPHAVANIM, AS WAS THE CUSTOM OF ASSYRIA.



HEZEKIAH



BARAK

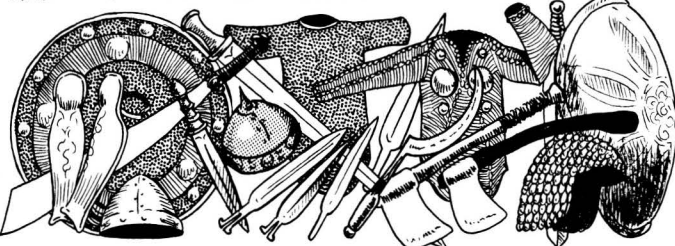


THERE WAS AT THAT TIME, IN THE MOUNTAINS OF PALESTINE, A MAN WHO FEARED GOD AND WALKED IN HIS WAYS. HE WAS BARAK THE KENITE, AND IN THE PEACE AND SOLITUDE OF THE STEPPES HE Sired ONE WHO WAS DESTINED TO WANDER THE FACE OF THE EARTH, A SON! LAYLA, HIS WIFE, CALLED THE BOY BALIK, AND THE SEMITES CALLED HIM ARIEL (LION OF GOD).



LAYLA AND YOUNG BALIK

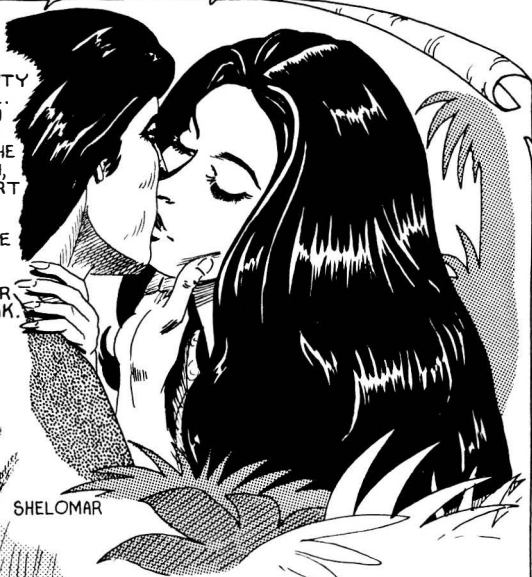
BARAK WAS WELL RESPECTED. A MAN SKILLED IN THE ART OF METAL, A FORGER OF TOOLS AND WEAPONS. UNDER HIS GUIDING HAND BALIK LEARNED TO FASHION SPEAR HEADS, DAGGERS, SWORDS AND ALL MANNER OF BLADES. HE WORKED WITH MAIL, HELMETS AND GREAVES. HE MASTERED THE BOW AND THE SLING AND WAS A GREAT HUNTER OF LIONS. HE GREW STRONG WITH HIS FRIEND CRITON AND TOGETHER THEY SHARED MANY ADVENTURES.



CRITON

BALIK

WHEN BALIK CAME OF AGE HIS EYES FELL UPON SHELOMAR, DAUGHTER OF NOABI THE MERCHANT, AND HIS HEART WAS ENSLAVED BECAUSE OF HER BEAUTY AND THE GENTLENESS OF HER SOUL. IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME LOVE GREW BETWEEN THEM, BUT AS THEIR WEDDING GREW NIGH THE JUDGEMENT AGAINST THE LAND OF ISRAEL CAME TO PASS. NOABI, WITH HIS WIFE HELENA, CHOSE TO DEPART FOR THE GREEK ISLAND OF CYPRUS AT THE ASSYRIAN THREAT, FOR HELENA WAS OF THE GREEKS AND THE HOUSE OF HER FATHER STOOD ON THAT ISLE. KNOWING THE LOVE THEIR DAUGHTER HELD FOR BALIK THEY ENTRUSTED HER TO HIM AND TO THE HOUSE OF BARAK.



SHELOMAR



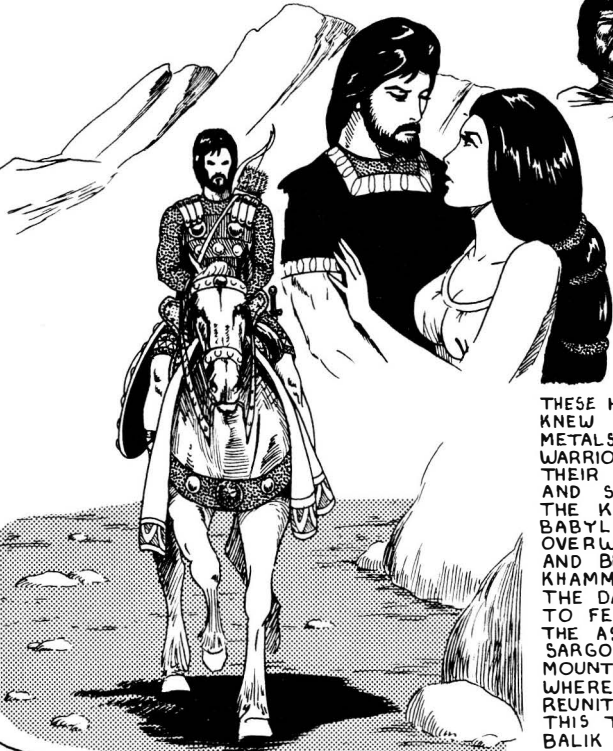
NOABI



BALIK WAS PROUD IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS YOUTH, AND SENDING SHELOMAR TO SAFETY HE TOOK UP ARMS, AS HE THOUGHT TO ARRAY HIMSELF AGAINST THE MIGHT OF ASSYRIA. AS HIS FAMILY, WITH SHELOMAR AND CRITON, DEPARTED FOR EGYPT, THE LAND BELOW THE NILE, BALIK JOINED THE GENERALS OF THE HITTITES AND THE FURY OF BATTLE.



HELENA



THESE HITTITES ARE THEY WHO KNEW THE SECRET OF SUPERIOR METALS. THEY WERE FIERCE WARRIORS AND GREAT HUNTERS. THEIR CITIES WERE STRENGTH AND SPLENDOR. THEY WARRIED WITH THE KINGS OF EGYPT, SYRIA AND BABYLONIA. IT WAS THEY WHO OVERWHELMED AKHAD-BABYLONIA AND BROUGHT TO AN END THE KHAMMURABI DYNASTY. BUT SOON THE DAY CAME WHEN THE HITTITE TO FELL BEFORE THE ARMIES OF SARGON II. AND BALIK FLED TO THE MOUNTAINS AND DESERT PLACES WHERE THE HAND OF FATE REUNITED TWO OLD FRIENDS. THIS THEN IS THE STORY OF BALIK, AND OF HIS DEEDS.



SARGON II



by C.W. BIRD

I

C.W. Bird
11-74

IN THE YEAR 717 B.C., THE WESTWARD ADVANCE OF THE ASSYRIAN ARMIES UNDER THE COMMAND OF SARGON II OVERCAME THE POWERFUL HITTITE KINGDOMS AND PUT AN END TO THEIR INDEPENDENT HISTORY. THE FINAL CONFRONTATION BEING AT CARCHEMISH, ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL HITTITE CAPITOLS, LOCATED ON THE UPPER EUPHRATES RIVER, WHICH IS NOW THE LAND OF SYRIA.



AMONG THE HITTITES WERE MANY SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE, MEN OF OTHER NATIONS AND TRIBES WHO SOLD THEIR SKILL FOR MONEY OR FAME.



ONE SUCH ADVENTURER WAS BALIK, A KENITE MERCENARY WHOSE HOME LAY AMONG THE SOUTHERN STEPPES OF PALISTINE...

"BALIK!"



"CRITON, WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?"
"YOU BALIK, I'VE SEARCHED ALL DAY. WHEN I DIDN'T FIND YOU IN THE CITY I THOUGHT YOU HAD LEFT WITH THE OTHERS."




"AHE, THE HITTITES ARE SUBJECT TO ASSYRIA NOW, THOSE WHO DO NOT WISH TO SERVE NEW MASTERS HAVE FLED, AND I WITH THEM..."



"BUT WHY IS IT YOU ARE HERE, SO FAR FROM PALESTINE?"






"TO FIND YOU OLD FRIEND, AS YOU KNOW, FIVE YEARS AGO WHEN THE ASSYRIANS INVADED ISRAEL I JOURNEYED TO EGYPT WITH YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHELOMAR WHILE YOU LEFT TO ENLIST WITH THE HITTITES WHO OPPOSED ASSYRIA.




I LATER RETURNED TO PALESTINE, WHERE NOT SIX MONTHS AGO YOUR FATHER AND A STRANGE MAN CAME TO MY HOUSE AT A LATE HOUR. HE AND YOUR MOTHER WERE ACCOMPANYING HIM TO HIS HOME FAR TO THE WEST.



SHELOMAR HAD STAYED IN EGYPT, AN UNWILLING GUEST OF PHARAOH. YOUR FATHER ASKED ME TO SEEK YOU OUT AND TELL YOU OF SHELOMAR'S PLIGHT."

"WHEN MY WAY IS CLEAR CRITON, I MUST GO TO EGYPT, FREE SHELOMAR AND THEN FIND MY FAMILY!"

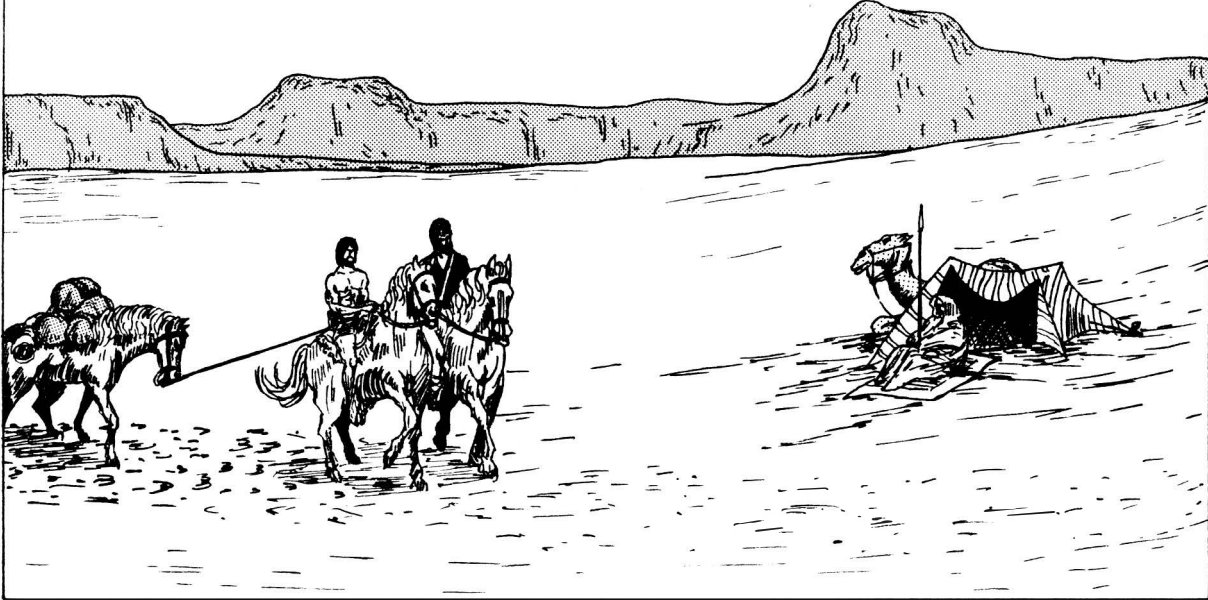
"AND I SHALL GO WITH YOU BALIK!"



AND SO, HAVING BARTERED FOR HORSES, BALIK AND CRITON DEPART FOR EGYPT WITH THE ARID DESERT WIND AT THEIR BACKS.



THE TWO ADVENTURERS RODE FOR ENDLESS HOURS BEFORE ONE OF THEM SPOKE. "BALIK, I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU. YOU TOLD ME THAT GENERAL ONESIMUS OWED YOU A YEARS WAGES, AND YET WE TRADE ALL WE HAVE OF VALUE TO A CURSED ARABIAN TRADER FOR THESE HORSES. WHY DID YOU NOT DEMAND MOUNTS AND PROVISIONS FROM ONESIMUS?"



"THE HITTITES WERE DEFEATED CRITON, IT WOULD BE DISHONOURABLE FOR ME TO EXACT PAYMENT FROM A HUMBLER COMMANDER. REGARDLESS OF THAT, MY REASON FOR SERVING THE HITTITES WAS VENGEANCE AGAINST THE ASSYRIANS, THE MONEY MATTERED LITTLE."



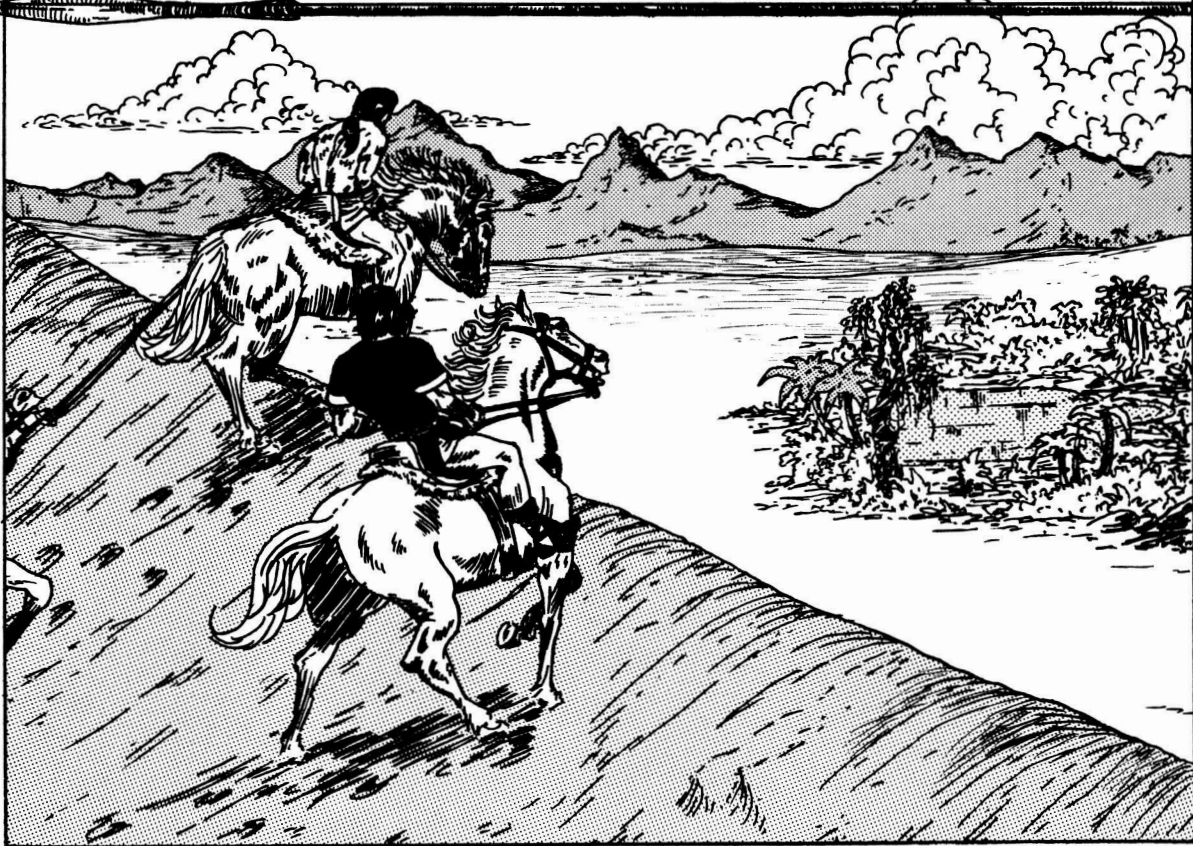
"FOR FIVE YEARS I'VE TRIED TO DESTROY THE INVADERS. I'VE LEARNED VENGEANCE IS FOR THE GOD OF ALL THINGS, NOT FOR MEN."



THERE WAS SILENCE AGAIN AS THEY BEGAN TO ASCEND A STEEP RISE OF SAND.

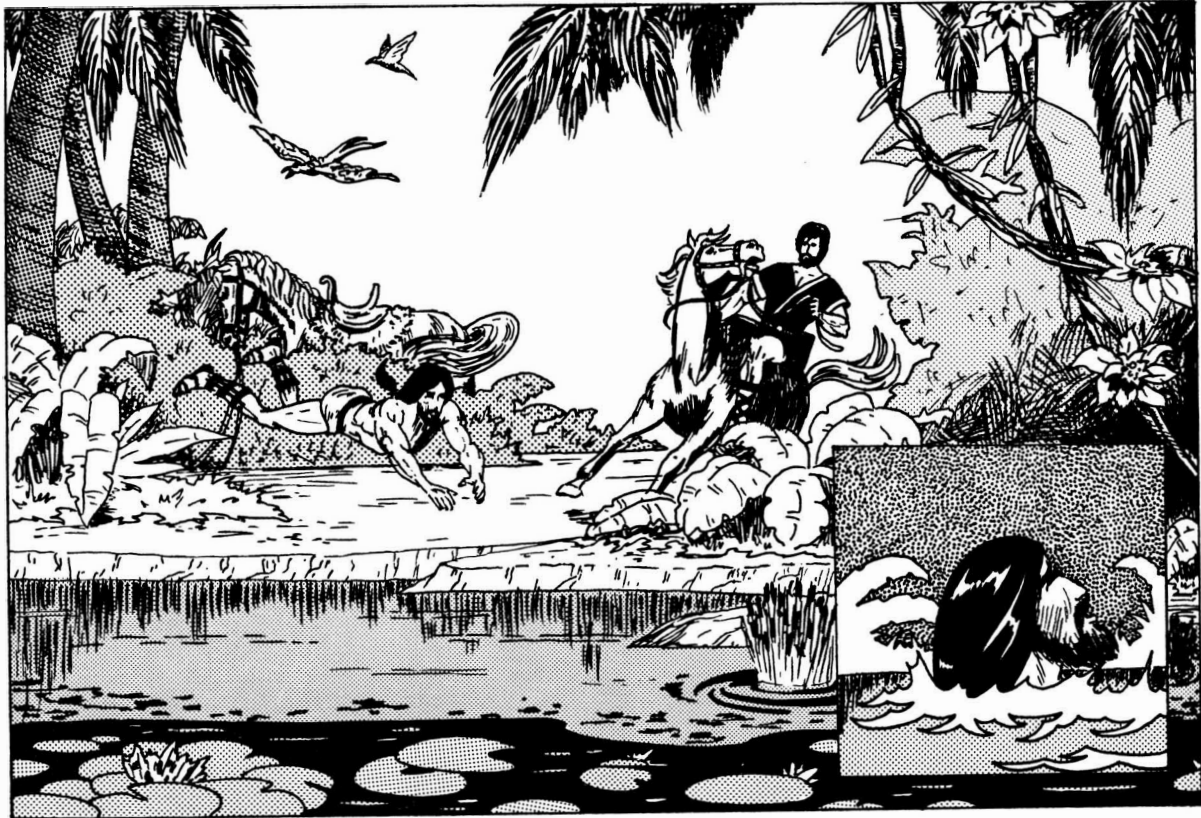


UPON THE CREST OF THE SANDY DUNE THE RIDERS PAUSED, SIGHTING AHEAD A VERDANT OASIS LYING ONLY A HALF DAYS RIDE FROM THE TOWERING PEAKS OF THE MOUNTAINS THEY MUST CROSS. "WE'LL STOP THERE FOR THE NIGHT CRITON, AND CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY IN THE MORNING. THE OASIS WILL PROVIDE WATER AND DATES, AND THE SHELTER OF TREES."



"EYE MY FRIEND, AND PERHAPS FISH AS WELL!"



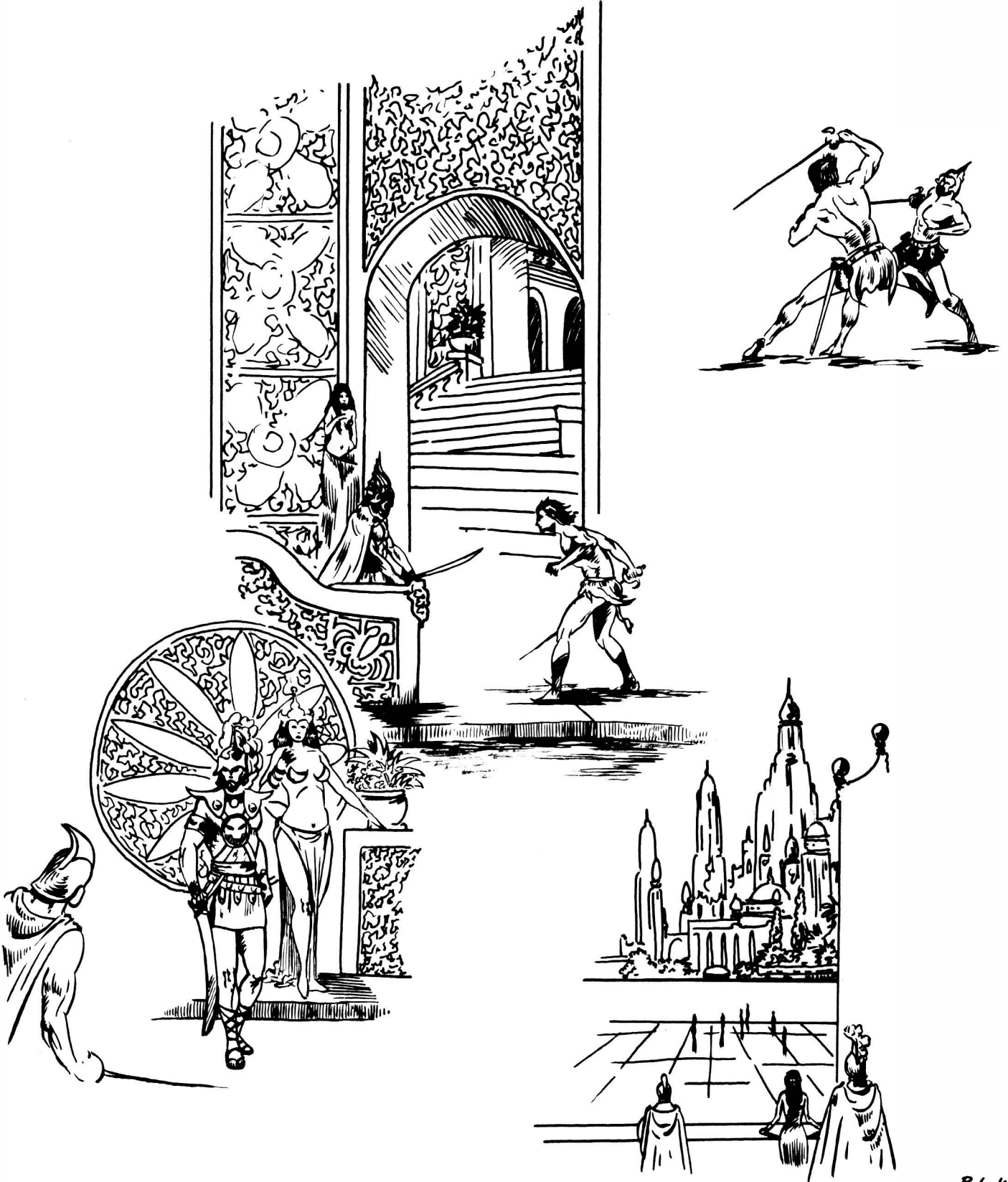


"PERHAPS WHEN YOU'RE REFRESHED YOU'LL RETRIEVE OUR PACK HORSE."



SOON, THEY HAD RETIRED FOR THE NIGHT. SLEEP CAME QUICKLY, AS WOULD THE DAWN AND THE LONG JOURNEY WHICH LIES AHEAD.





R.G.K.
CWS

Ralik

by C.W. BIRD

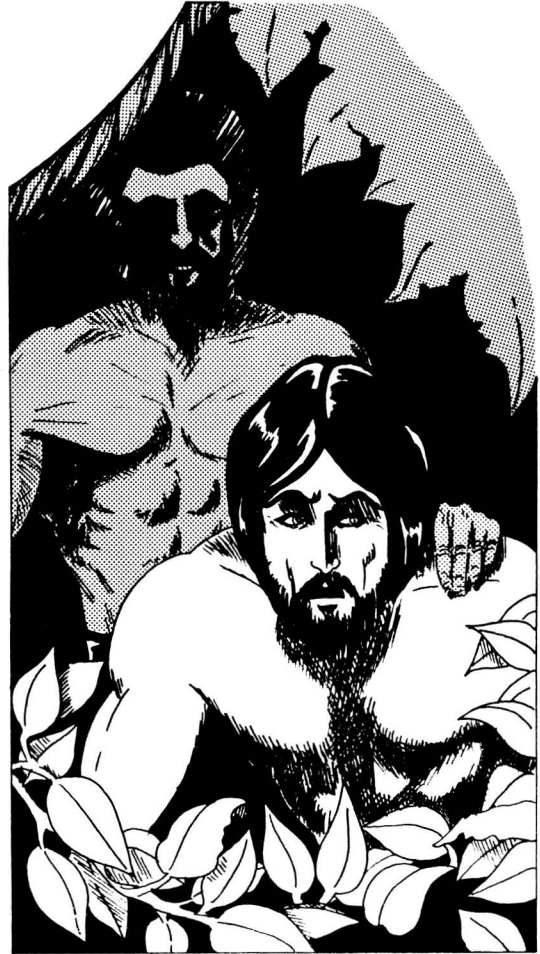
II



A WAKENED BY THE INTRUDERS, CRITON INVESTIGATES; CREEPING QUIETLY PAST HIS SLEEPING COMPANION.



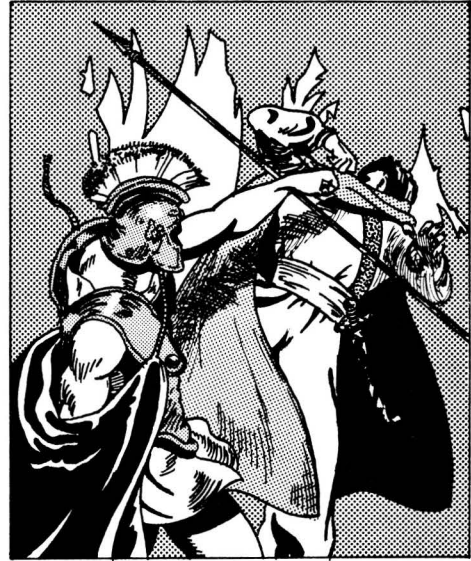
THE SULLEN MOON SHOWN BRIGHTLY ON THE CLEARING AS CRITON PEERED THROUGH THE SHADOWS AT THE STRANGERS WHO HAD DISTURBED HIS REST.





PRESENTLY, ONE OF THE WATER BEARERS COLLAPSES UNDER HIS BURDEN.





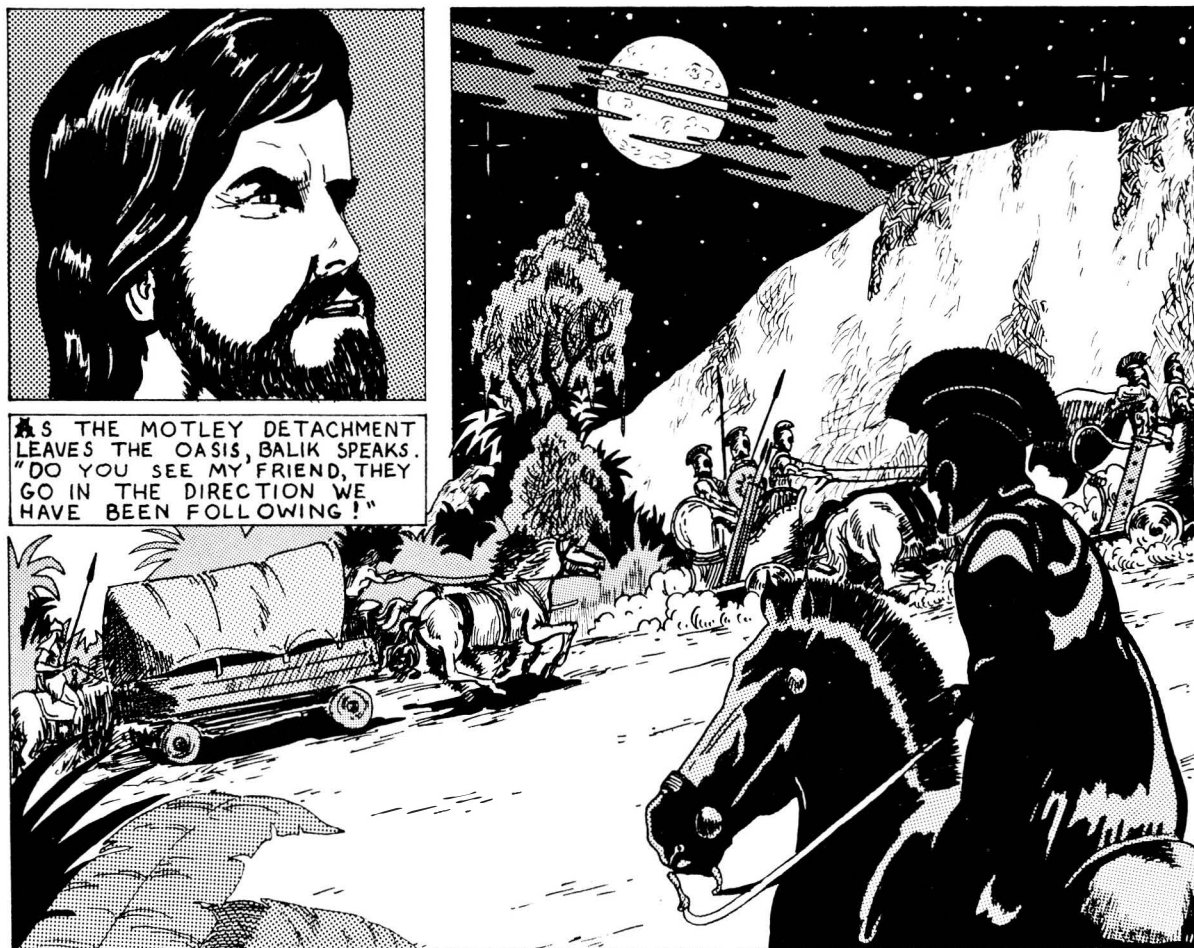
MOMENTS LATER, THE ARAB GUARDSMEN MURMUR THEIR DISLIKE OF THE AFFAIR. "ONE DAY HE WILL GO TO FAR AND I'LL SEND HIM TO HIS CURSED GODS BY THE POINT OF MY SWORD!"



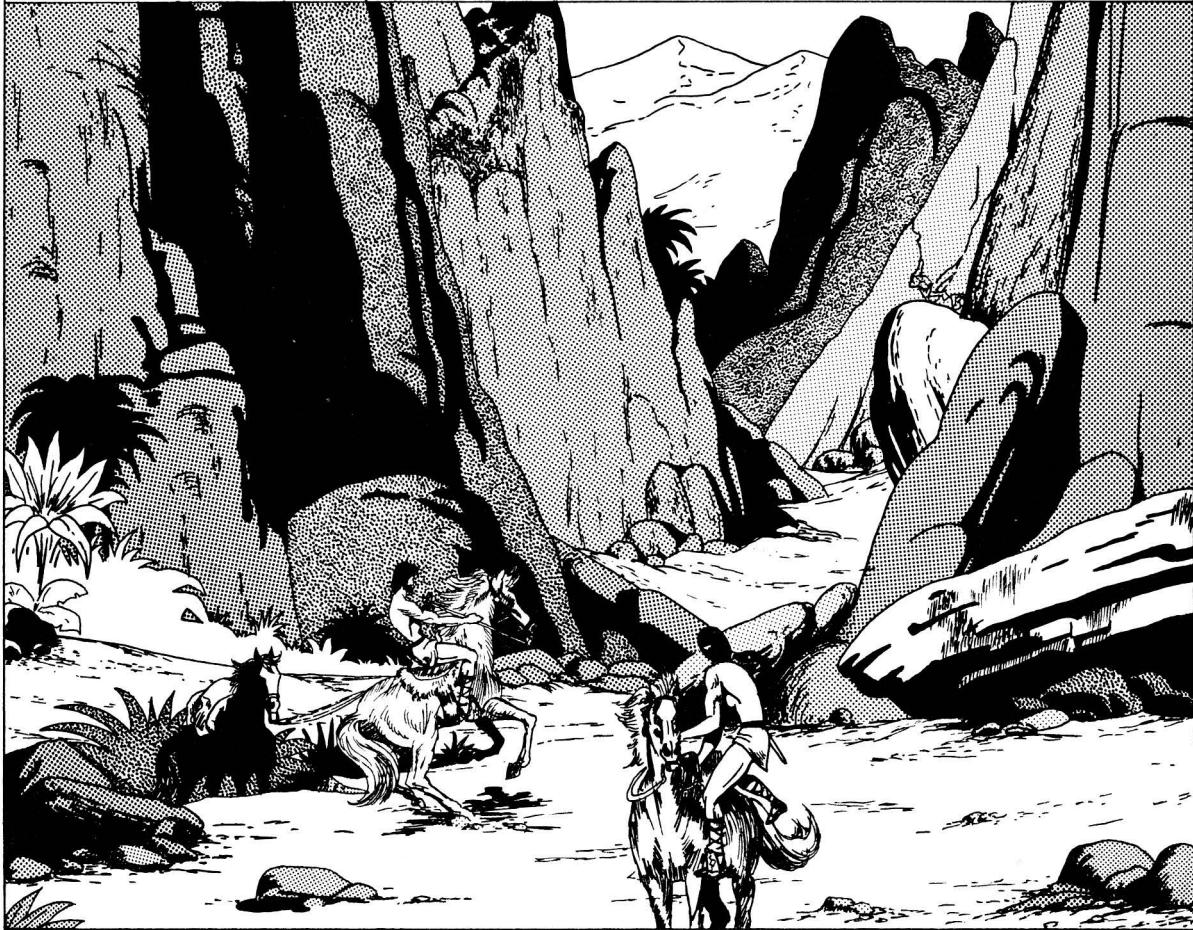
"BE PATIENT ARAFA, YOU CAN DO NOTHING WHILE HE REMAINS IN THE QUEENS FAVOR."



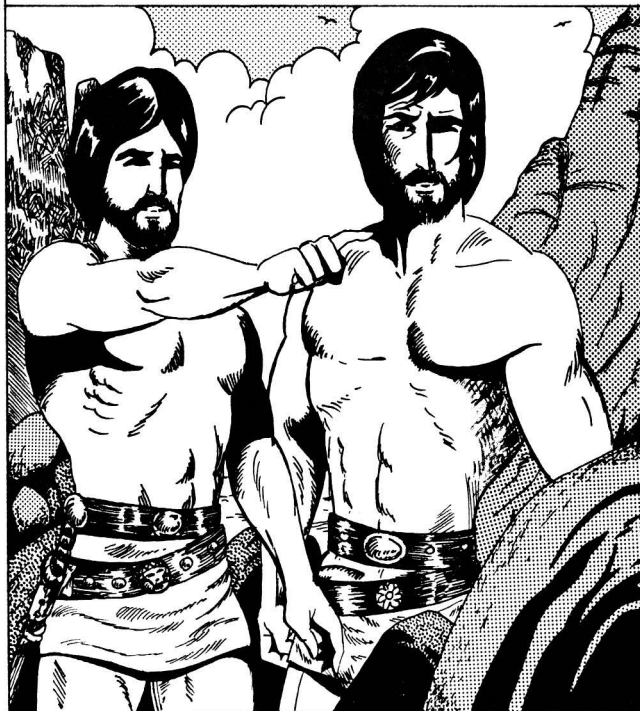
AS THE MOTLEY DETACHMENT LEAVES THE OASIS, BALIK SPEAKS. "DO YOU SEE MY FRIEND, THEY GO IN THE DIRECTION WE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING!"



HAVING RISEN EARLY, BALIK AND CRITON REACH THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON, WHICH LAY BETWEEN THE OASIS AND THE RED SEA. BY MID-DAY THEY HAVE PAUSED BEFORE A FOREBODING PASS THAT SNAKES IT'S WAY HELTER SKELTER THROUGH THE TOWERING ROCKS.

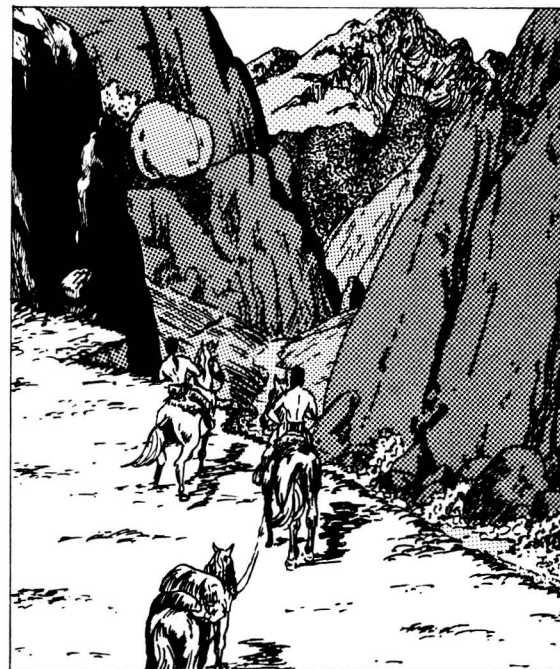


CRITON POINTS OUT THAT THE TRAIL LEFT BY THE SOLDIERS LIES AHEAD... "I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS ARAFA AGAIN..." HE EXPLAINS MOCKINGLY.

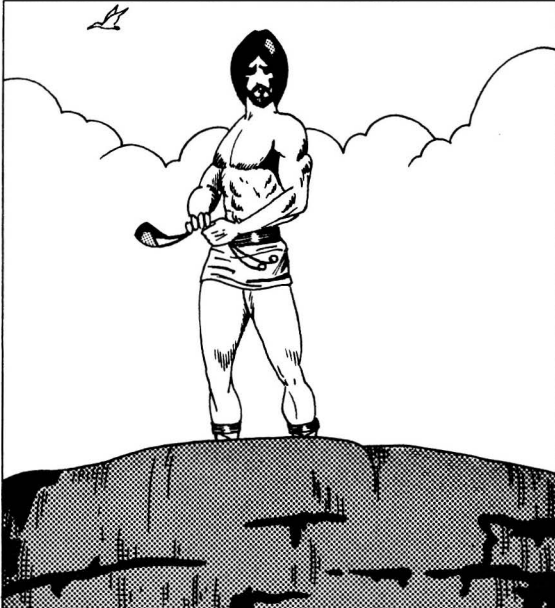


"NO CRITON, WE WILL FOLLOW THE PATH UPWARD! ALONG THE CREST WE CAN VIEW THE PASS, AND PERHAPS KNOW THEIR DESTINATION!"

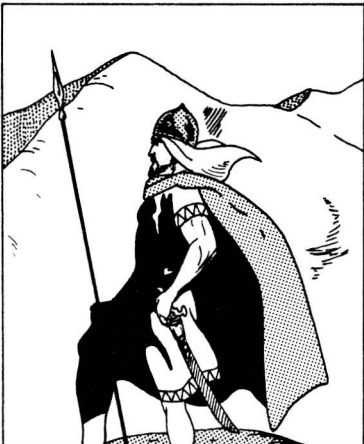




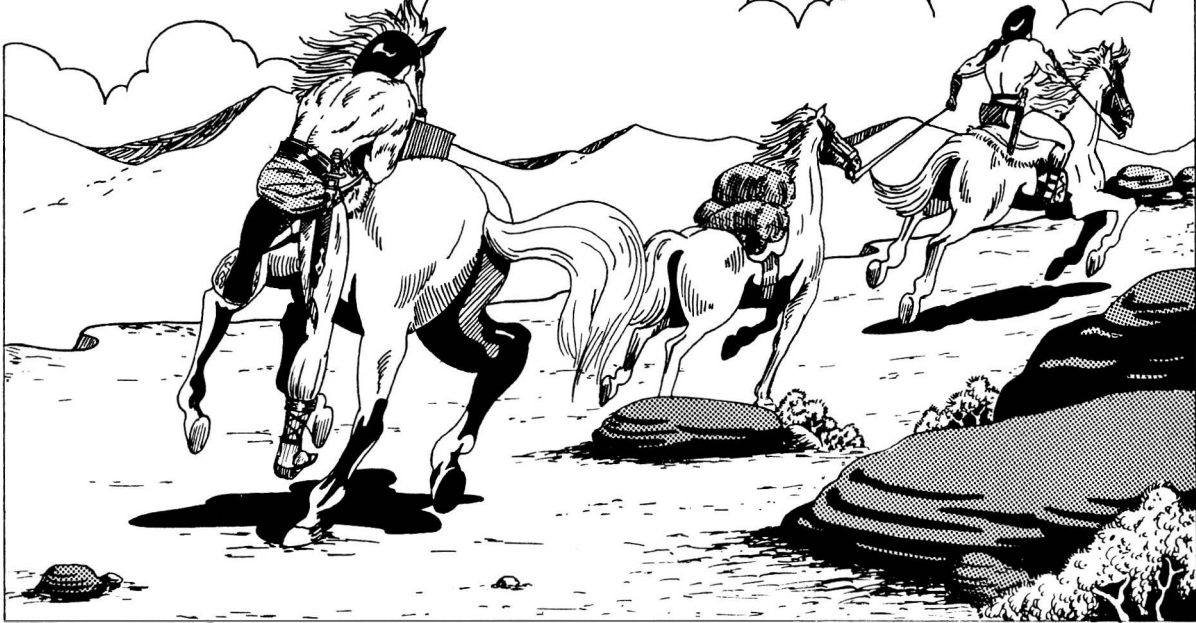
"THERE'S ONE OF THOSE SONS OF THE DESERT BELOW US BALIK..."



BEFORE BALIK CAN STOP HIM CRITON LOADS HIS SLING AND LETS FLY A STONE.



"YOUR A FOOLHARDY CLOUT CRITON, YOU'LL HAVE US IN IRONS YET!"



CONTINUED



Fantasy Art Folio



featuring

Frontpiece - "Conan in Aquilonia" by Roy G. Krenkel, copyright 1973 by C. Cazede-
ssus Jr. and reprinted from ERB-dom number 67.

Thark - By Dave Cockrum, from the collection of Ray Files.

Balik - By Dallas artist, and friend, Paul Schliesser.

Conan - By Clifford Bird. This drawing was among those that Gil Kane viewed at
the 1974 American Nostalgia Convention in Dallas, where he suggested I
do an illustrated comic strip. It is included here because the figure of
Conan, in the drawing, was taken from a Gil Kane illustration.

Balik - By my long time friend, William McMurtray.

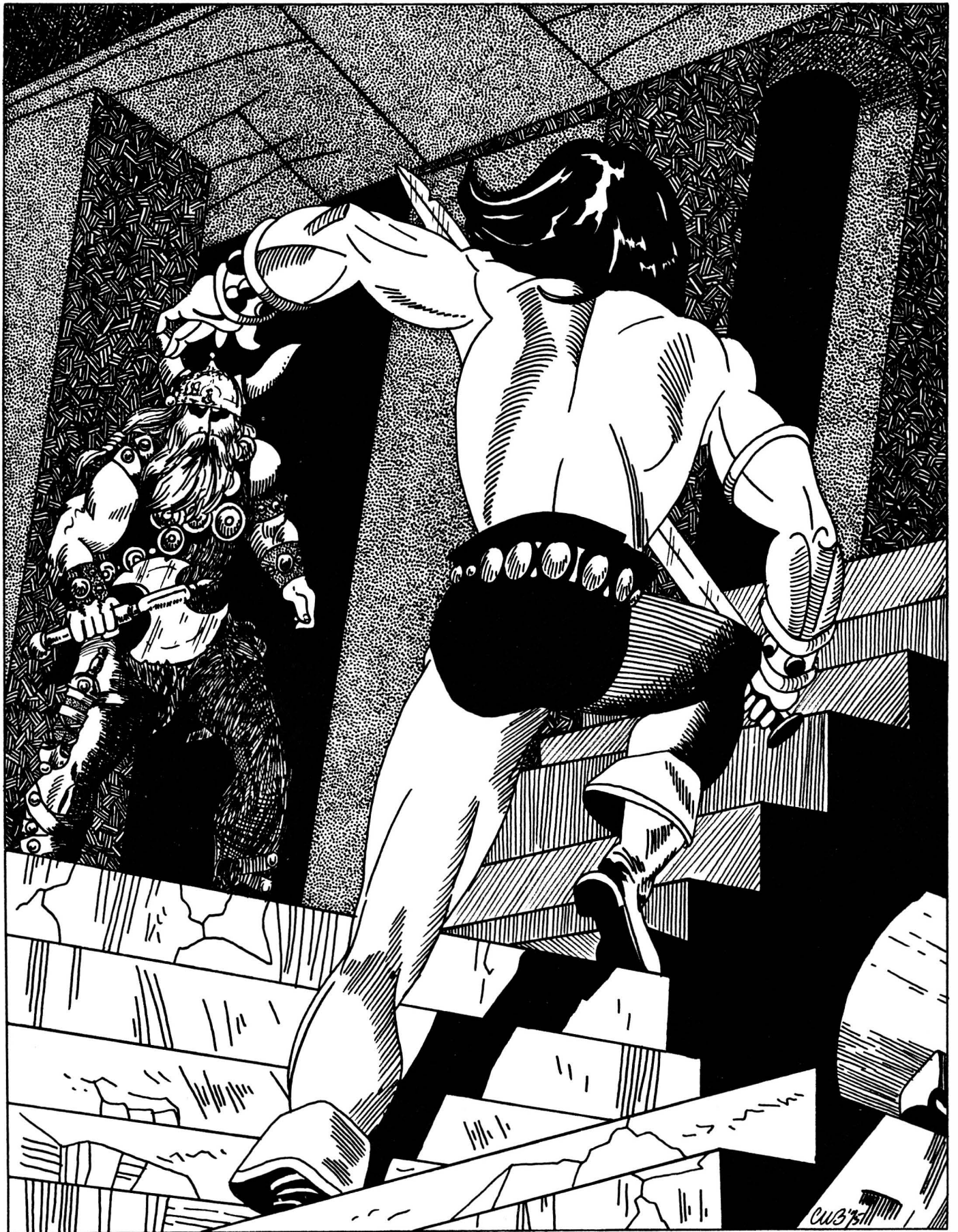
Pellucidar - A scene from the Edgar Rice Burroughs story, by Frank Frazetta. This
illustration is plate number 20 from the 22 plate OPAR PRESS Burroughs
-Frazetta portfolio, now out of print.

Sabertooth - By Clifford Bird, from the "Simba" series.



Dae
Cockroim

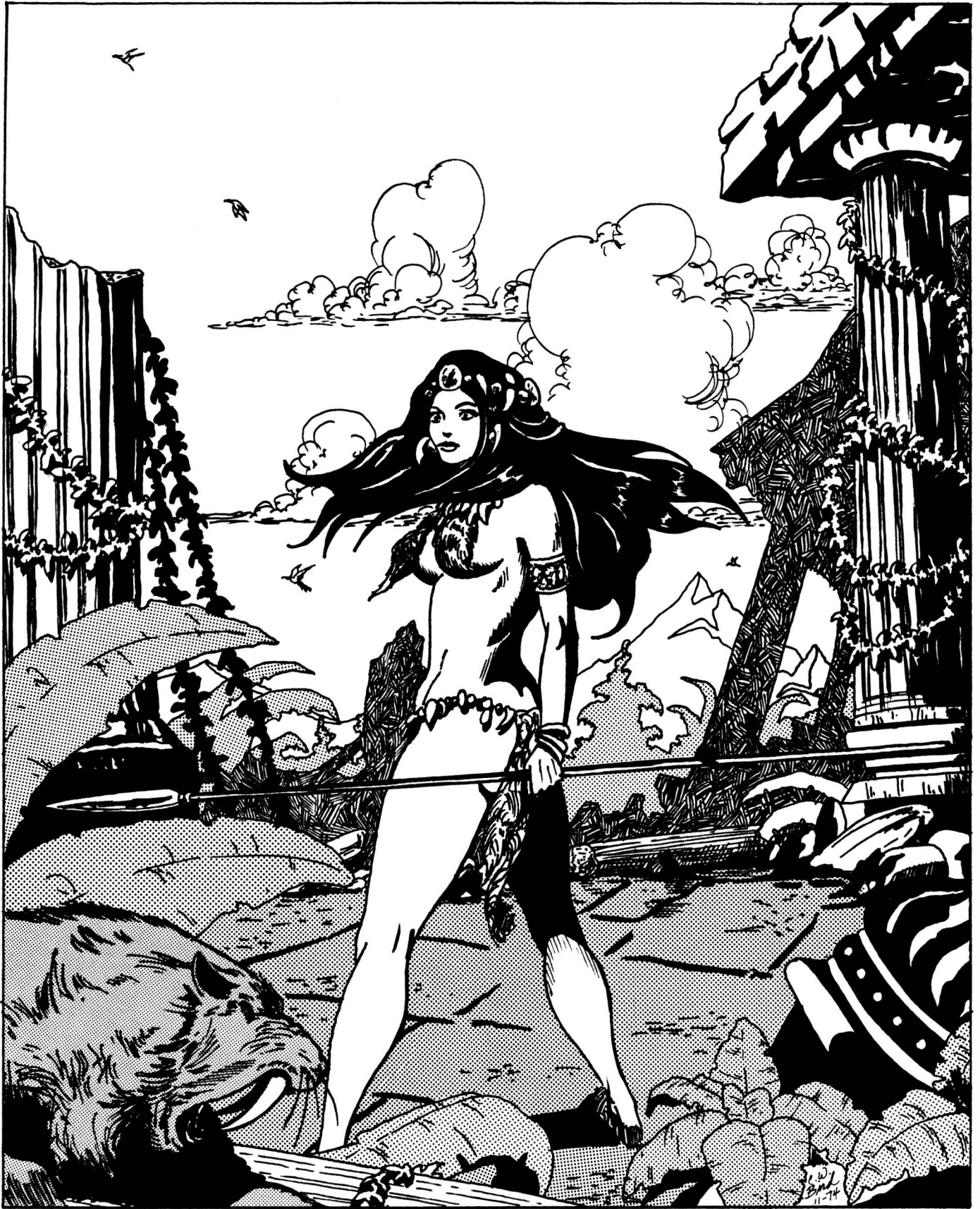






William A. McMurtry
76



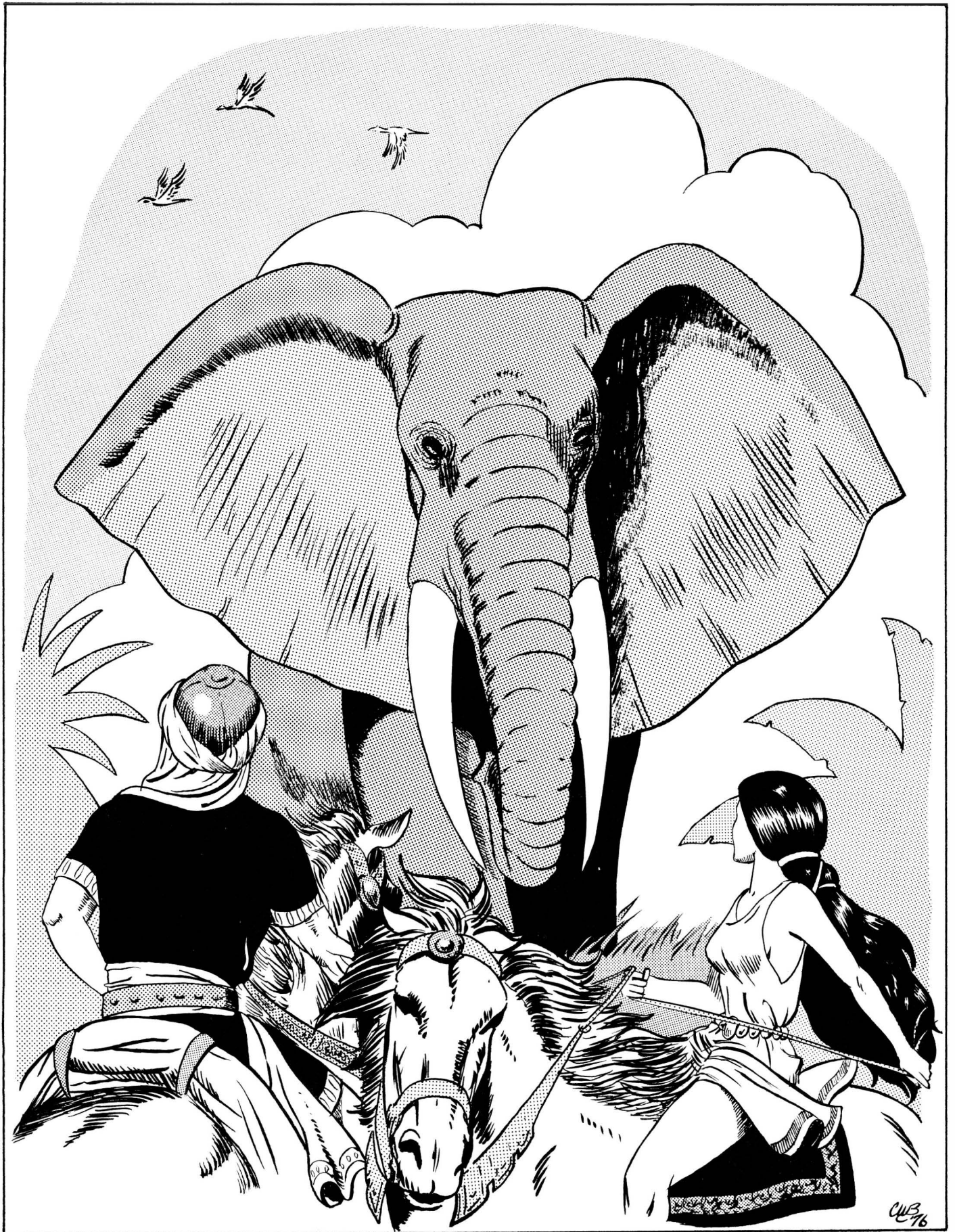




The continuing adventures of Balik are being serialized in the Opar Press publication "Voyage". Caz, the publisher, is offering both Voyage numbers 1 and 2 for \$1.50 post paid, regularly \$1.00 each. One of the unique aspects of Voyage is that it is color in part.



"Shalla" and a three-horned lizard, from the "Simba" strip which began in "Voyage" number two.





"Siren of Alcatthoe"

FEATURING

Balik

by

Clifford W. Bird

The two riders had paused on the verdant knoll overlooking the vast plain to their right, for a strange and terrifying sight loomed before them in the tall grass of the veld. It was a huge, frightful creature whose great grey body balked at the scent of the man and woman upwind from its sensitive nostrils. If nostrils it had, for between the somber eyes of the beast stretched a long, serpentine elongation that rose in the air, seemingly to sniff in a questing sort of way. On either side of its head there was a large mass of grey flesh that had suddenly fanned out as if straining to hear. Most ominous of all its features were the two long, teeth-like protrusions beneath the snout.

The woman clutched her companion's arm with trembling hands. Her widened eyes staring in frightened confusion at the vision.

"Have courage Shelomar," he reassured her. "The beast is not moving, perhaps it does not see us as yet."

Never before had their eyes beheld such a creature. The two travelers had recently ridden beyond the borders of Kush to explore the mysterious jungle lands of the Dark Continent, and had seen many new and different sights on their journey, but none to equal that which held them in silent wonder at this moment. The man, Balik, was a battle hardened warrior, not given to moments of indecision, yet like all mortals, he had a subconscious fear of the unknown. Surely, he thought, this apparition was only an animal and not some nameless demon of the nether world. The beast was tangible enough, of that they were sure. Shelomar, Balik's woman, was a stalwart individual, yet she well nigh swooned when first she viewed the leviathan beast.

To the left of the riders was a dense forest flanked by fauna of diverse shape, size, and color. It was a foreboding place of tangled limbs and thick greenery. Through the towering trees darted many small, dark shapes, chattering wildly and scolding the outsiders who happened their way, disturbing their daily routine. Birds of various size and description took to wing at the commotion.

Suddenly, without warning, several dusky men sallied from the underbrush, wielding short clubs and shouting in some forgotten dialect. It was obvious that their intentions were not friendly ones. At that instant Balik reached out and gave Shelomar's horse a swat on the backside. The startled mount neighed in alarm and bounded headlong down the hillock. The sudden lurch as the animal reared and hurried off nearly dislodged the petite girl. But she had been trained to ride well and immediately regained her balance. Meanwhile, the grey monstrosity, frightened by this unexpected turn of events, spun on its haunches and fled off in the opposite direction. Balik, by this time, had been set upon and knocked from his steed. In an attempt to protect its master, the white stallion kicked wildly at the assailants, knocking many of them to the ground. Balik, as well, was engaged in the fray, swinging one of the dark men in a semi-circle by his heels. At length one of the attackers struck the formidable outlander a sturdy blow on the head.

For Balik, the fight was at an end.

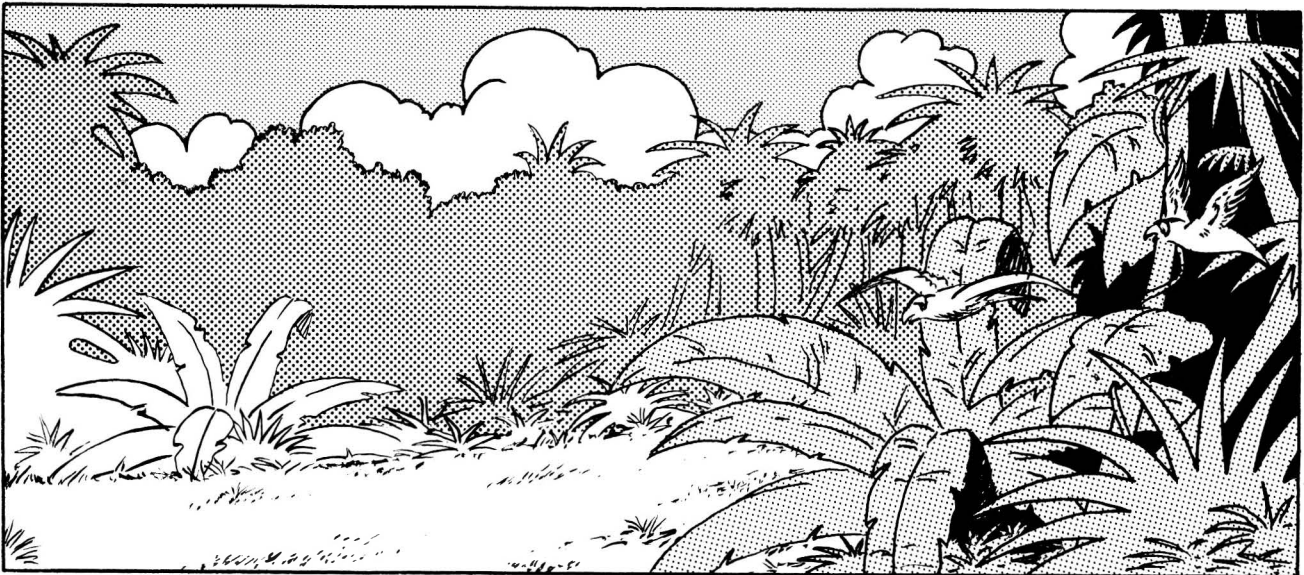
In the aftermath of the struggle two of the skulking savages were lying unconscious, having been made so by their finely muscled opponent. While three of the men bound Balik's arms, the remaining two roused their fellows, who awoke rather reluctantly. Battered and bruised, they were astonished at the strength of their captive. Often in the past they had way-laid barbarian and prince alike, some of which were hard fighters, but never had one lone man ever managed to practically beat seven of them. All of the dark men were much alike. They were sparsely dressed, and were obviously members of the same band or tribe. Balik would not have known in either case since he had never been to the Dark Continent, having only heard tales of the black men that inhabit those strange and forboding lands. Some of whom, it was rumored, ate the flesh of men, in the belief that the spirit of the dead warrior would increase their own strength and courage.

These men wore only tan or tawny loin cloths, each wore ornaments of ingots or animal teeth and claws about their necks, wrists, and ankles. Some wore brightly colored feathers or beads. The hair of their heads was short cropped, curly, and black as pitch. Their skin was much like that of the dark hued Kushites. Most prominent were their eyes, which bore a feral appearance that served to emphasize their savage countenance.

One of the dark men was spouting orders to the others. With a grunt he ceased overseeing Balik's capture just long enough to glance in the direction Shelomar's horse had taken her. Already the woman and her mount were beyond his sight. Still, he thought, the warrior was captured, and that is all that mattered. Shelomar would only have been sport for the men, who would have slain her once they had satiated their lusts.

Still unconscious, Balik was laid across the back of his horse by the black men, then the group dissappeared into the jungle growth at the command of the sullen leader of the small band.

Moments after their departure the birds and small monkies begin their respective song and chatter, as all returns to normal. Sudden, violent happenings are common in these savage jungles, and the creatures who inhabit them are blessed with the ability to soon forget such occurences and carry on as though nothing had happened. Indeed, to look upon the tranquil veld, and the trees of the forest swaying in the slight breeze, one would hardly suspect the drama that had moments ago occurred.



II

The lithe young maiden had ceased in her attempt to halt the flight of her startled mare. From the small hillock the animal had bolted, running tirelessly through the knee high grass of the veld. The horse was no less frightened than the girl herself, who, though she was concerned over her present predicament, feared for the safety of her man, Balik.

Within twenty minutes of the incident on the knoll, the horse began to slow its pace, and ere long it came to a stop beneath the shade of more forest trees. Now the girl could at last gather her thoughts. Looking about her she came to a rather bewildering conclusion, she was lost. Summoning her courage she suppressed the inclination to panic, and tried as best she could to regain her composure. Still breathless from the experience, she decided, for the moment at least, to wait where she was, hoping that Balik had managed to escape the dark warriors who had set upon them.

Cautiously she slipped from the back of the mare to the ground, then led the animal to a spot beneath a massive tree. Tangled vines dangled from the heights of the tree, and to one of these she tethered her mount. Having secured the reins, she sat beside the beast on a large rock. It was a vantage point from where she could see the open country about her. The vast plain had the appearance of a great tawny sea, the tall grass moving in the wind like waves over the surface of water. Birds overhead flew past with seeming indifference to the plight of the solitary girl below. To her back was the jungle, a place very alien to one who was raised in the hills of Palestine.

Silently, she prayed that Balik would find her, for if he did not, where could she go, what could she do, and what of him..? Balik was all that mattered to her, even now when her own future was uncertain.

The questions that assailed her confused mind soon brought to bear the futile aspects of her situation and she gave way to tears, sobbing uncontrollably. Suddenly a sound came to her ears, the snorting of a horse, could it be that Balik had managed to trail her? Brushing aside her ebony hair which flowed like cascading water over her slim shoulders, she could see a rider approaching. To her dismay it was not Balik.

The man had seen her, of that she was certain, and he moved slowly towards her, his black steed trotting relentlessly forward. Quickly her hand moved toward the nine inch dagger which hung from her shapely, rounded hips. The weapon was a gift from Balik, and with it she intended to defend her honor if need be. As the rider approached she was able to make out his features more clearly. He was a big man, with a white beard that hid his neck and nestled on his massive chest. He did not appear to be aged, yet the beard was as white as ever she had seen, having the look of fine wool. The eyes of the stranger were hidden beneath the burnoose he wore. Shelomar imagined him to be of Arabic descent, not because of his manner of dress alone, for he rode a magnificent black Arabian stallion, a war horse no doubt. A sudden fear assailed her as she thought of the many bandits and nomadic highwaymen who roamed about the East, aimlessly, in search of plunder, large or small. The man could be one of their kind, and if that was so she would receive no help at all. She had little time for musing, for the stranger was ever closer. As he stopped his horse a short distance from her she brandished the dagger. Though frightened she stared boldly at him, unspeaking.





Simba Reproductions

616 LIVINGSTON HURST, TEXAS 76053

Sheila and I wish to extend our sincerest appreciation to all of those people listed here. The names are not listed in order of importance, as we are equally grateful to all who helped in this publishing endeavor.

Jonathan Bacon - The publisher of "Fantasy Crossroads", and the Official Editor of the Robert E. Howard United Press Association (REHUPA), Jonathan acted as liaison between Stephen Fabian and myself, in commissioning the Balik cover. Since that time I have talked with Stephen and am pleased to say that he has promised more Balik illustrations. If you have not seen a copy of "Fantasy Crossroads" as yet, you are missing a fine publication. It is a R.E. Howard based magazine wherein Jonathan keeps an equal balance of text and art. The most recent copy, number 8, is 44 pages long, 8½"-11", it has wrap around binding, is printed on coated stock, and is professionally typeset with justified margins. Inside there is unpublished Robert E. Howard and Tevis Clyde Smith, art by Fabian, Clyde Caldwell, and Gene Day. There is much more as well, and the price for single issue copies is only \$2.50 post paid from; Jonathan Bacon, Box 147, Lamoni, Iowa 50140. It will be money well spent.

Lyon Sprague de Camp - Here is a man who has yet to cease to amaze me. Since I have been corresponding with Sprague de Camp I have had many insights into one of the men who breathed new life into Robert E. Howard's Conan. He speaks several foreign languages, maintains correspondence with a pen pal in Italy (who writes in Italian), he has been an engineer, patent expert, and surveyor, he has written a large number of fiction, historical, non-fiction, and fantasy books and short stories, and has collaborated on many others, as well as being a "regular" in the pages of Amra and contributing to other fan publications. In the past few months Sprague de Camp has devoted some of his time aiding me in background research on the Balik stories. He is responsible for the pre Islamic names Amru ul qais, and Layla, the narrator and Baliks' mother respectively. Being quite busy, he was not able to do anything new for us, however, he was kind enough to offer the use of some of his prior historical text for an essay. When de Camp wrote the book he offered as a reference source, "Great Cities of the Ancient World", he traveled thousands of miles for more than two years to visit all but one of the cities he wrote about in that volume, some of which were Ancient Syracuse, Babylon, Jerusalem, Carthage, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Athens, and Nineveh. From his letters I know he has also been to the Congo. Lyon Sprague de Camp has proven himself to be man of many talents, and an intelligent, broad-minded, cordial individual who has been a good friend to this "Texan".

C.E. Cazedessus, Jr. - Publisher of the award winning Edgar Rice Burroughs magazine, ERB-dom, and recently Voyage, was first to print one of my drawings, back in ERB-dom 79. Caz was kind enough to let us use the Frazetta, R.G. Krenkel (Conan), and the Russ Manning illustrations. The Frazetta drawing has been purchased by publisher and art dealer Russ Cochran, the others are still in the collection of Caz. We, Caz and I, have spent a few nights sitting around, conferring on the Balik strip story line, and the finished version is a product of both our imaginations. Balik began in ERB-dom as a back-up to Russ Mannings sunday Tarzan pages, and that was a high point in my life. Russ Mannings Tarzan is in every issue of ERB-dom along with Burroughs related text and art. The latest, number 86, contains sunday and daily Tarzan pages by Russ Manning, unpublished art by John Coleman Burroughs, a tribute to Jesse Marsh, much art by Frank Frazetta, J. Allen St. John, Neal MacDonald, Jr., John Weible, Jesse Marsh, Jeff Jones, Tom Yeats, Reed Crandall, Roy Krenkel, and John Severin. There is a color John Carter page by Roland Trenary and set designs from the new Burroughs movie At the Earth's Core, etc. Single issue copies are \$2.50 post paid from; C.E. Cazedessus, Jr., P. O. Box 507, St. Francisville, Louisiana 70775.

Stephen E. Fabian - Stephen is well known in fan and professional circles alike. I have had the pleasure of conferring with him recently, and have commissioned him to do the cover of the upcoming Simba number 1. Stephen is a hard working and talented artist who is self taught. His work appears regularly in Amazing, Fantastic, Galaxy, and If. He has done work for many fan publications such as Fantasy Crossroads, Fantase, The Howard Review, The Howard Collector, Cross Plains, Marvel's Savage Sword of Conan, various Howard hardbacks, the Gerry de la Ree publications of The Miscast Barbarian (written by L. Sprague de Camp), The Book of Virgil Finlay, Fax paperbacks, "Starfawn" from Pyramid Books, two portfolios and a third upcoming from Jonathan Bacon based on Robert E. Howards' Almuric, etc. It is an honor for us to purchase and publish Stephen's work. In my opinion he is one of the finest illustrators of our time and he serves as an inspiration to my own artistic pursuits.

Ray Files - Ray, who operates a collectors bookstore in Arlington, Texas, granted us the use of the R.G. Krenkel and Dave Cockrum pencil drawings. Unfortunately the pencil lines were very light on the Krenkel drawing, and our printer feared they would not reproduce well. I wanted to print it so was forced to ink it, using an overlay sheet. My apologies to R.G.K.

Sam Grainger - Like Stephen, Sam has endless amounts of credits to his name. He has done lots of work for Caz, in ERB-dom, over the years, some of the most beautiful color work I have ever seen. I was very fortunate to have Sam teach me The Grainger method of the four color seperation process. It was Sam who told me of reduced copy PMTs, which I depend on to a great degree. Recently he has been busy with work for Marvel Comics, inking the pencil work of Dave Cockrum and John Buscema, for the X-Men series. In spite of his busy schedule, Sam has done the back cover illustration of Balik for us. I have much to thank him for and am honored to have him as a friend.

Larry Herndon - A central figure in Dallas fandom, recently his time has been spent in writing and as an aid in putting on local area conventions and The Nostalgia Journal news-ad-paper. Larry has been a guide to me and has helped me progress since I first met him in late 1973. He and Joe Bob Williams gave me my second published art job on the cover of The Nostalgia Journal number 7. Perhaps Larry has more confidence in me than I have in myself, judging from his introduction on the inside front page, at any rate, as always, he has given me much to live up to.

William A. McMurtray - Bill is a close friend who shares my interest in art. He was able to do a Balik drawing on short notice and have it ready for this printing.

Paul Schliesser - Paul is a local area artist, and was also given short notice on his Balik illustration. Paul also did the lettering logo for our cover, which has been placed where Stephen Fabian suggested.

BROTHERS OF THE SPEAR
of the



Russ Manning - The Brothers of the Spear illustration by Russ at the left is reprinted from ERB-dom number 47 and is copyright 1971 by C.E. Cazedessus, Jr. Though Russ had nothing directly to do with Balik, his art has been an inspiration to me since I first saw it in the early 50's. My mother had a subscription to Dells' Tarzan comics for me, and even today I vividly remember when first I saw Russ's work. The Brothers of the Spear strip that Russ took over from Jesse Marsh was one of the main influences for the Balik story. Through the years I have never forgotten the experience of seeing Russ's art for the first time, and today I am still influenced by it, and his current Tarzan strip. Russ Manning's work will always be one of the main reasons I wanted to draw.

Special thanks go to Bob and Eva Carr and family, who operate the Hurst branch of Copy Cat printing, for all the time they spent helping me get Balik 1 ready for the press. Bob, and his employee John, are part of that vanishing American breed, true craftsmen, who take pride in their work and do a fine job of it.

Special thanks also go to my long time friend, Roland (Medic) Smith, who helped financially, my wife Sheila, and my parents, William Leo and Stephanie Bird, all of whom helped support Balik number One.

The photograph on the editorial page of Steve Reeves is from "Hercules Unchained", and is copyright 1960 by Avco Embassy Pictures Corp.

The photograph on the inside back cover of Steve Reeves is from "Hercules", realased and copyright 1958 by Avco Embassy Corp.

"Siren of Alcatheo" is copyright 1976 by Sheila Jayne Bird.



editorial

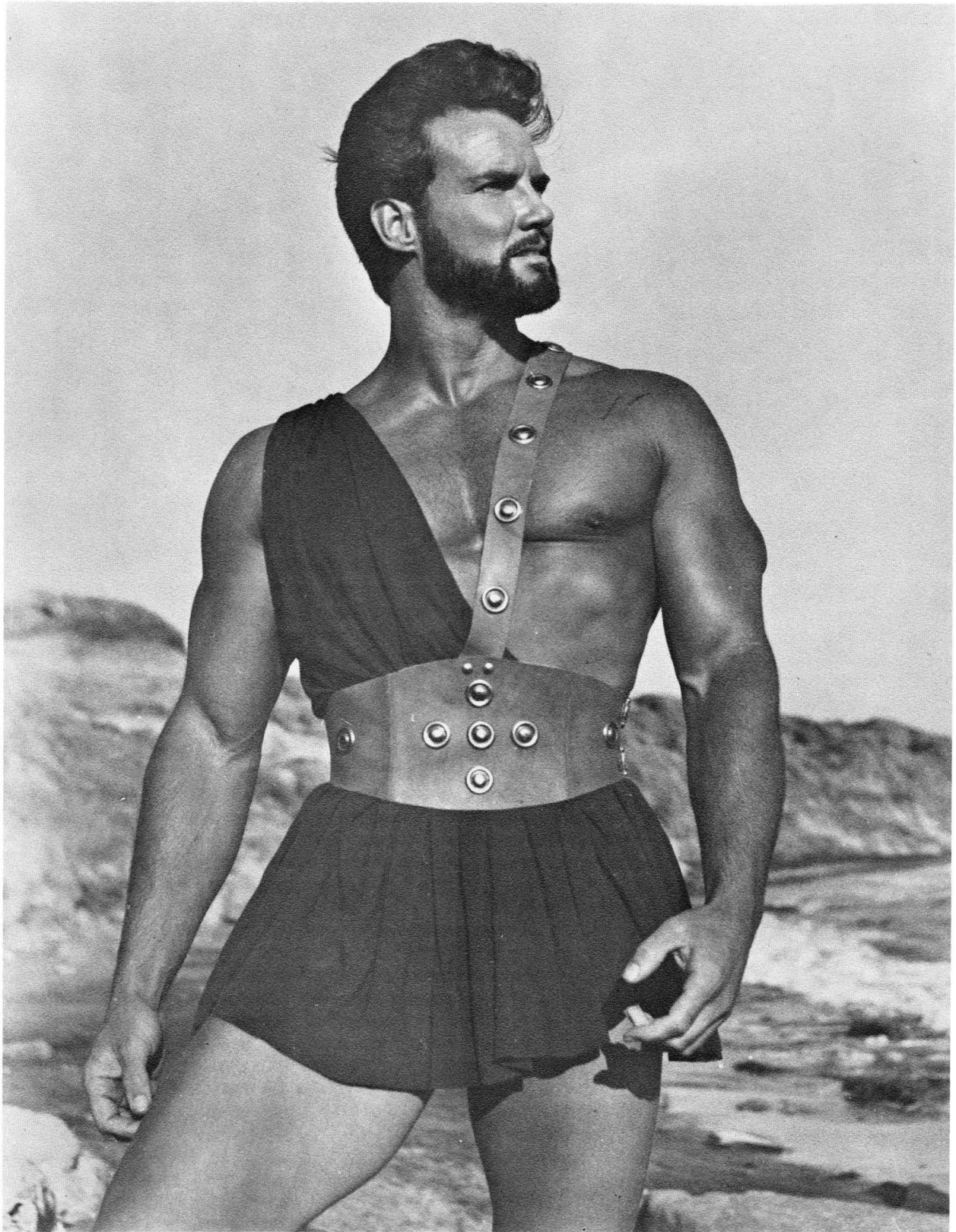
This magazine marks our first attempt at publishing, aside from an art portfolio and five prints previously printed and released. There is probably much room for improvement, but we ask that you be patient with us, and that you write to us at SIMBA. We want to know what we did wrong, what we did right, we welcome your suggestions and comments. It is our most fervent wish to see to it that there is a Balik number 2, and your letters and purchasing dollars will make it possible.

It will be a policy with us to have Balik covers done by our favorite "pro" illustrators, with a two fold purpose in mind. Personally speaking, I want to build a library of Balik art rendered by some of the men whose work I admire so much. The aid, work, time, and patience of the professionals involved in Balik 1 has served to encourage my hopes and our efforts at SIMBA.

If you liked Balik number 1, please tell your friends. Simba Reproductions will be the sole distributor for this first edition of Balik, so needless to say, we need your support. Single issue copies are \$2.50, post paid, from us at; Simba Reproductions, 616 Livingston, Hurst, Texas 76053.

Remember, drop us a line and let us know what you think of our first publishing effort.

Clifford Wm. Bird
May 11, 1976



With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand labour'd it to grow:
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd-
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

Omar Khayyám

