



CONAN[®]

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Book of Thoth

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40
Story Pages



KELLEY
JONES

CONAN® Book of Thoth

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HARKEN TO A TALE
THAT BEGINS THUS—
THERE WAS A CITY,
AND ITS NAME WAS
MEMPHIA.



NESTLED 'TWTXT THE
SLOW-FLOWING STYX AND
THE VAST DESERT WASTES,
THE CITY MEMPHIA,
CAPITAL OF STYGIA, HAD
FALLEN WOEFULLY UPON THE
HARDEST OF TIMES, 'TIS SAID,
FORGOTTEN BY THE MOST
MUNIFICENT GODS...

THOSE THERE WERE WHO
BOASTED OF MEMPHIA THAT
IT WAS ONCE THE SEAT OF A
MIGHTY EMPIRE. BUT NONE
THERE WERE STILL LIVING
WHO REMEMBERED
THOSE DAYS.

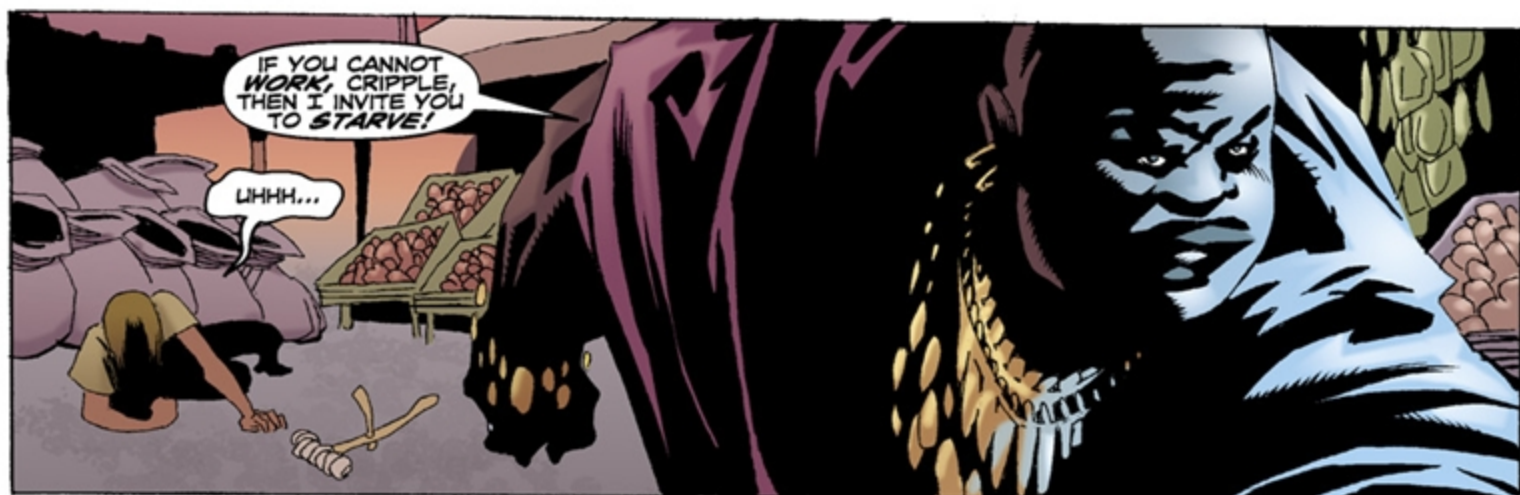
AYE, OR REMEMBERED THOSE
WHO REMEMBERED THOSE
WHO REMEMBERED THOSE DAYS.

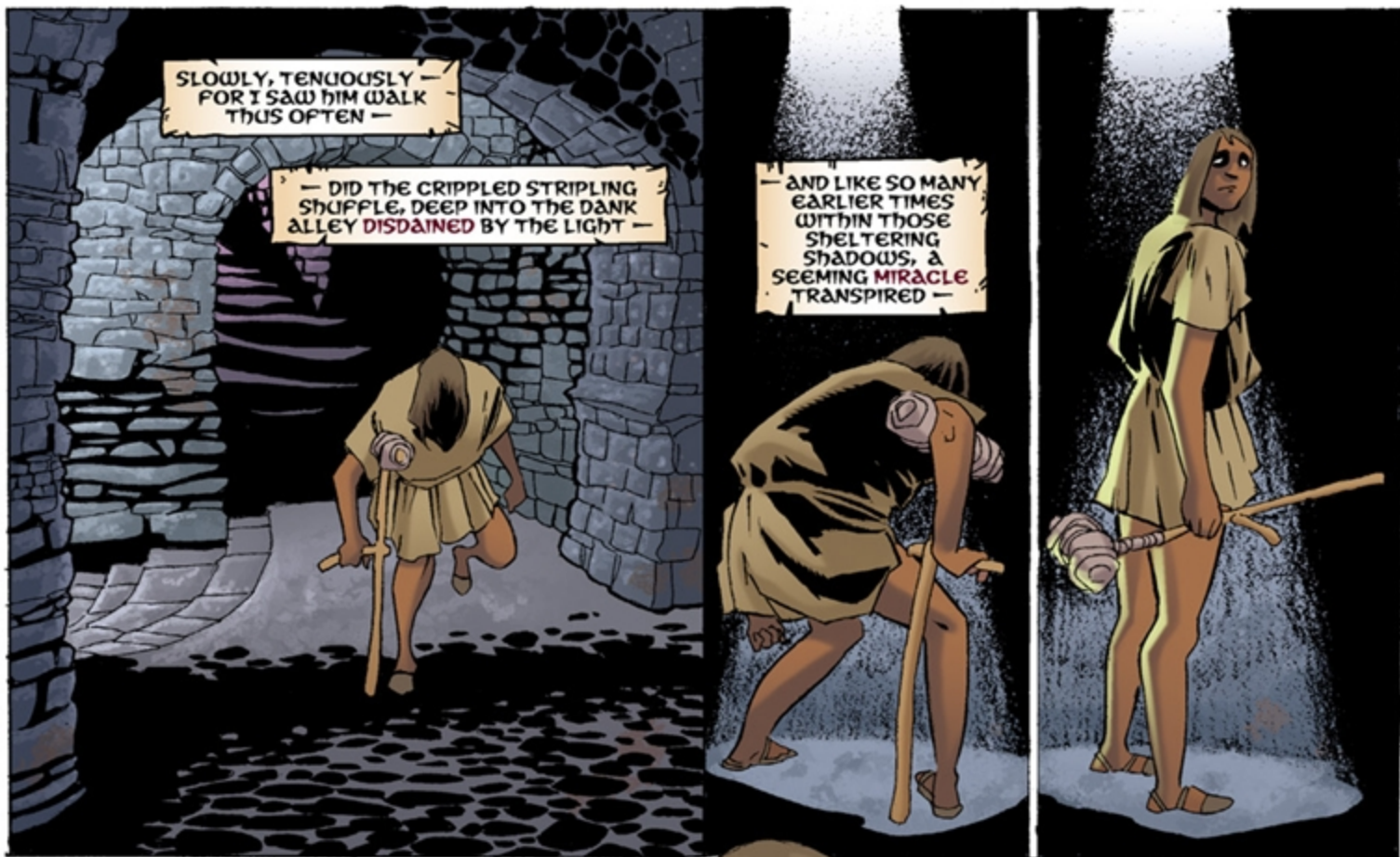
AND THUS, IN MOURNFUL
MEMORY, DID LIFE IN
THE CITY OF MEMPHIA GO...

ALMS,
KIND SIR?

THE SERPENT SLUMBERS













THE BLOATED SUN, SATIATED ON THE DAY'S **BLOOD** AND MISERY, HUNG LOW ON THE HORIZON AS THE YOUNG STYGIAN MADE HIS WARY WAY THROUGH THE DEEPEST SHADOWS OF THE CITY...

...AND ONCE MOMENTARILY **FREE** OF ITS DISMAL CONFINES...







PAPA --
NO! LEAVE HIM
ALONE!
HE'S
DONE NOTHING
WRONG --!

EH?



AWAY FROM
ME, YOU USELESS
PULLET -- OR I'LL GIVE
YOU TWICE WHAT I
GAVE YOUR WRETCHED
BROTHER!
YOU'LL BE
OLD ENOUGH TO
BE OF SOME VALUE
SOON, BUT UNTIL
THEN --



T-TOUCH
HER NOT, OLD
MAN...OR Y-YOU'LL
REGRET IT...!

YOU
DEFY ME,
BOY?

B-BEAT ME...
ALL YOU LIKE...
BUT K-KEEP YOUR
HANDS OFF...



PFAH!
YOU ARE
NEITHER OF YOU
WORTH DIRTYING
MY KNUCKLES
ON.

I'M
GOING TO
FIND SOME
PLACE I CAN
DRINK IN
PEACE.



OH,
BROTHER...
YOUR POOR
FACE...

THE BRUISES
WILL HEAL, AYINA...
THEY ALWAYS
DO.

BUT
I THANK
YOU FOR YOUR
EFFORTS.

WHEN AT
LAST I LEAVE
THIS HELLHOLE,
YOU ALONE SHALL
COME WITH
ME.

AT NIGHT, WITH HER
COOKFIRES BURNED TO
EMBERS, ONLY THE BALEFUL
MOON GAVE LIGHT TO
THE CITY OF SHADOWS.

BUT THE AIR WAS COOLER,
FOR A CHANGE, AND
BEYOND THE CITY WALLS
THERE WAS AN
OCCASIONAL BREEZE...

HE'LL
BEAT ME WHEN
HE RETURNS HOME
SOBER.

NOTHING HE
HASN'T DONE
BEFORE.





THIS
WORLD IS CRUEL,
AMON.
HAVE YOU
NOT YET LEARNED
THAT? HERE, ONE IS
EITHER PREDATOR
OR PREY.



AND PREDATORS FEAST,
WHILE PREY SUFFERS.
THE SOONER YOU
REALIZE THAT...
...THE
EASIER YOUR LOT
WILL BE.



I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IT,
FRIEND THOTH. THE WORLD
IS FILLED WITH MIRACLES.
THE GODS SAY --

THE
GODS!
PEFF!



THE GODS
OFFER HOPE TO
THOSE WHO FOLLOW
THEM FAITHFULLY!
THEY DO!

EVEN
THOSE OF OUR
WOEFUL STATION
CAN RISE, SHOULD
THE GODS
SMILE.



OH? AND YOU THINK THE
GODS SMILE ON SUCH AS
US? I INVITE YOU TO
REMEMBER ME OF THAT,
AMON --

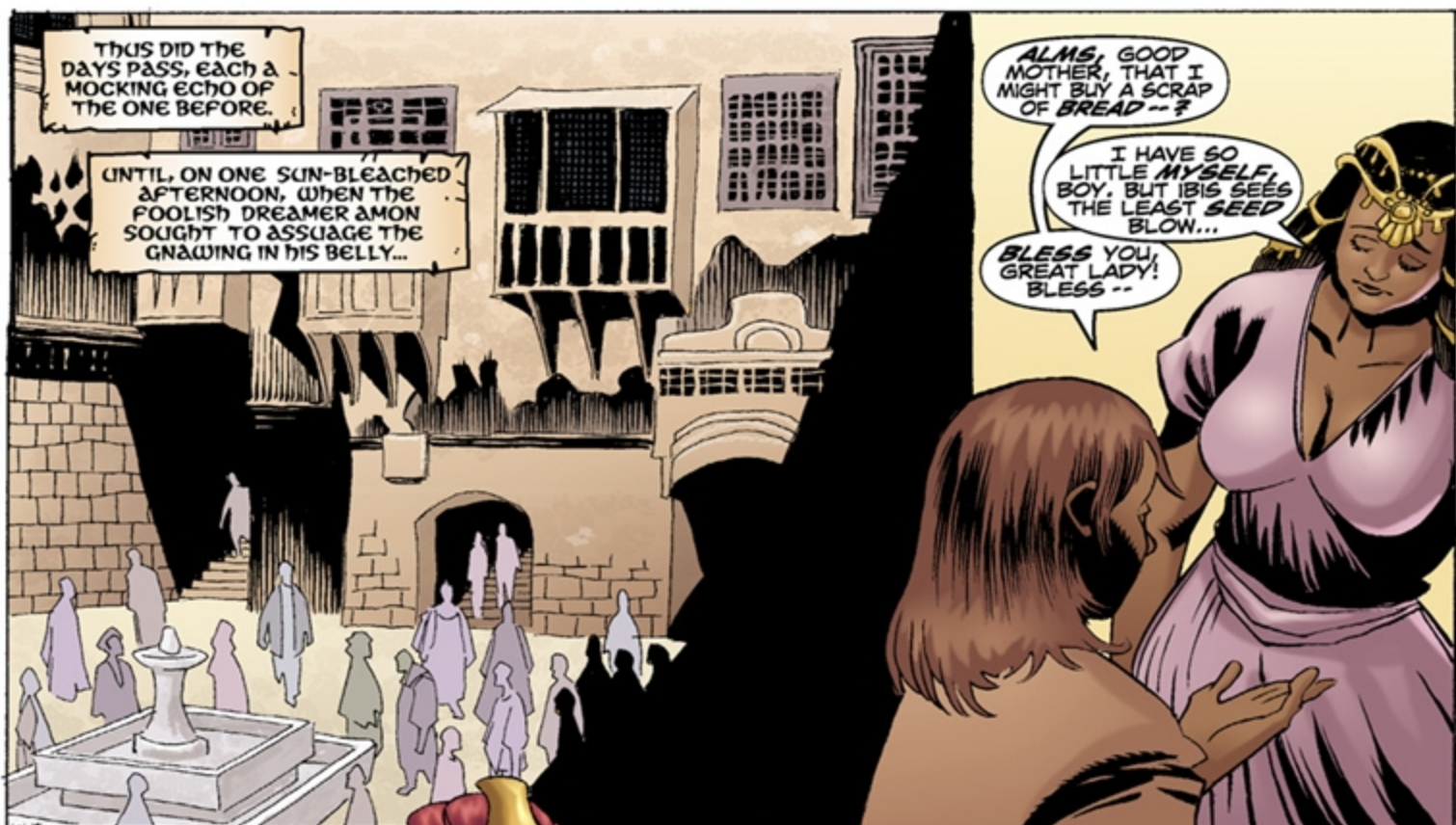
-- WHEN WE
ARE BOTH GROWN
MEN AND YOU ARE
STILL BEGGING IN
THE STREETS.



ONE CAN BE A
BEGGAR AND STILL
BE VIRTUOUS. AND
THE GODS --

VIRTUE?
AND HOW DOES
THAT FEEL, IN
AN EMPTY
BELLY?





THIS DID THE DAYS PASS, EACH A MOCKING ECHO OF THE ONE BEFORE.

UNTIL, ON ONE SUN-BLEACHED AFTERNOON, WHEN THE FOOLISH DREAMER AMON SOUGHT TO ASSUAGE THE GNAWING IN HIS BELLY...

ALMS, GOOD MOTHER, THAT I MIGHT BUY A SCRAP OF BREAD --?

I HAVE SO LITTLE MYSELF, BOY. BUT IBIS SEES THE LEAST SEED BLOW...

BLESS YOU, GREAT LADY! BLESS --



STAND YE ASIDE, CITIZENS. MAKE ROOM!

KHARANTUS, HIGH PRIEST OF IBIS, NOW PASSES AMONG YOU!

--EH?



AND, YEA, AMON'S HEART QUICKENED AT THIS NEWS --

— AT A CHANCE TO SEE ONE SO HIGH ABOVE HIS OWN PATHETIC STATION.



THIS DID HE CLAMBER UPWARD, IN SEARCH OF A LOFTIER PERCH --

— THAT HE MIGHT DARE TO LOOK UPON GREATNESS WITHOUT BEING CAST ASIDE.









I AM,
AND YOU HAVE
MY THANKS.

BUT WE
WOULD HAVE BEEN
LOST, IF NOT FOR
THAT TIMELY
WARNING. I MUST
KNOW...

WHO
AMONG YOU
WAS IT WITH
THE COURAGE
TO CALL
OUT?



FORGIVE ME, O GREAT
ONE. THOUGH IT IS
FORBIDDEN FOR ONE
AS LOW AS I TO
SPEAK TO GUARDSMEN
OR PRIESTS...

... 'T WAS
I WHO
SPOKE.



FORGIVE YOU, LAD?
I OWE YOU MY LIFE. THE
ROBES AND JEWELS I WEAR
BELONG TO IBIS, AND I
HAVE LITTLE MYSELF,
BUT STILL --

-- ASK A
BOON OF ME,
AND YOU SHALL
HAVE IT.

YOU
HONOR ME,
MASTER, BUT THE
CHANCE TO SERVE
IS ALL I
CAN ASK.



YOU CALL ME MASTER, EH?
THEN PERHAPS I CAN OFFER YOU
SOMETHING WORTH MORE
THAN GOLD...

... THE
CHANCE TO
BECOME A TEMPLE
ACOLYTE AND TO
LEARN AT IBIS'S
FEET.

SUCH --
SUCH CHARITY
WOULD SURPASS MY
GREATEST DREAM,
MASTER.



THEN IT
IS DONE.

MEET ME
AT THE TEMPLE
OF IBIS AT THE
MID-MORNING
HOUR TOMORROW
AND WE SHALL
BEGIN YOUR
EDUCATION.





GIVE ME BACK --
SHUFFE -- WHAT IS MINE --
SHUNHE OR I'LL --
SHUFFE I'LL KILL YOU
ALL -- SHUNHE

YOU HAVE
SOME GRIT FOR
A SCRAWNY RUNT,
I'LL GIVE YOU
THAT --



-- NOT
THAT IT MAKES ANY
DIFFERENCE!

SHUNHE
SHUNHE
SHUNHE



YES,
EIGHTEEN PIASTORS
EXACTLY. A WEEK'S
ROISTERING.



HA HA HAHAHA

THANKS
FOR YOUR KIND
CONTRIBUTION,
RUNT.
YOU
CAN KEEP THE
JUNK WITH OUR
COMPLIMENTS.



BUT IT WAS
MINE, DAMN YOU...
ALL I HAD... IT
WAS MINE...

THOTH?
IS THAT
YOU?



BREATH
OF IBIS, ARE YOU
ALL RIGHT?

AMON?
WH-WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?

LOOKING
FOR YOU.

OH, MY FRIEND,
THE MOST **WONDERFUL**
THING HAS HAPPENED. TODAY, IN
THE CITY SQUARE, I SAVED THE
LIFE OF **KHARANTUS**, HIGH
PRIEST OF IBIS.

AND, AS
REWARD, HE
HAS OFFERED TO
MAKE ME AN
ACOLYTE.

YOU SEE,
THOTH? CHANGE
IS POSSIBLE. THERE
IS **ALWAYS**
HOPE.



YOU'RE A
FOOL, AMON.
WE ARE AS **DIRT** TO THE
HIGH AND MIGHTY. BY THIS
TIME TOMORROW, THE PRIEST
WILL HAVE **WIPED**
YOU FROM HIS
MEMORY.

NO,
KHARANTUS
IS A **GOOD** MAN,
A **DECENT**
MAN.



OH? AND
YOU COULD TELL
THIS FROM THE GREAT
GOLDEN HALO OF LIGHT
ABOUT HIS HEAD, I
TAKE IT?



ACTUALLY,
I... I HAD NOT
THE **COURAGE**
TO LOOK ONE SO
VIRTUOUS IN
THE EYE.



HM?
THEN...
THE PRIEST NEVER
ACTUALLY GOT A GOOD
LOOK AT YOU?

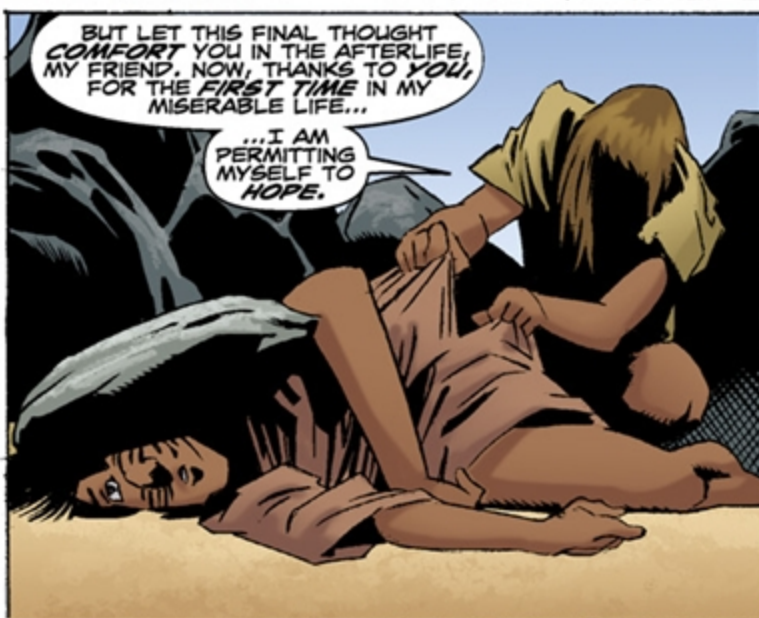
ah, AMON.



TO HIM, I'M CERTAIN
ONE BEGGAR BOY LOOKS
MUCH THE SAME AS
THE NEXT.

INDEED.







THOTH HAD SWORN THAT, WHEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE PRESENTED ITSELF, HE WOULD SPRING ON IT LIKE A TIGER. AND HE HAD.

NOW, HE WAITED FOR HIS FATHER TO DEPART FOR ANOTHER NIGHT OF DRUNKEN OBLIVION...



TH-THOTH? WHAT'S WRONG?

AYINA, HUSH. KEEP STILL.

FOR ONCE, BEST BELOVED, NOT A THING.



THAT OPPORTUNITY FOR WHICH I'VE SO LONG PRAYED HAS AT LAST OCCURRED.

I HAVE TO GO AWAY -- AND I KNOW NOT WHEN I SHALL SEE YOU AGAIN.



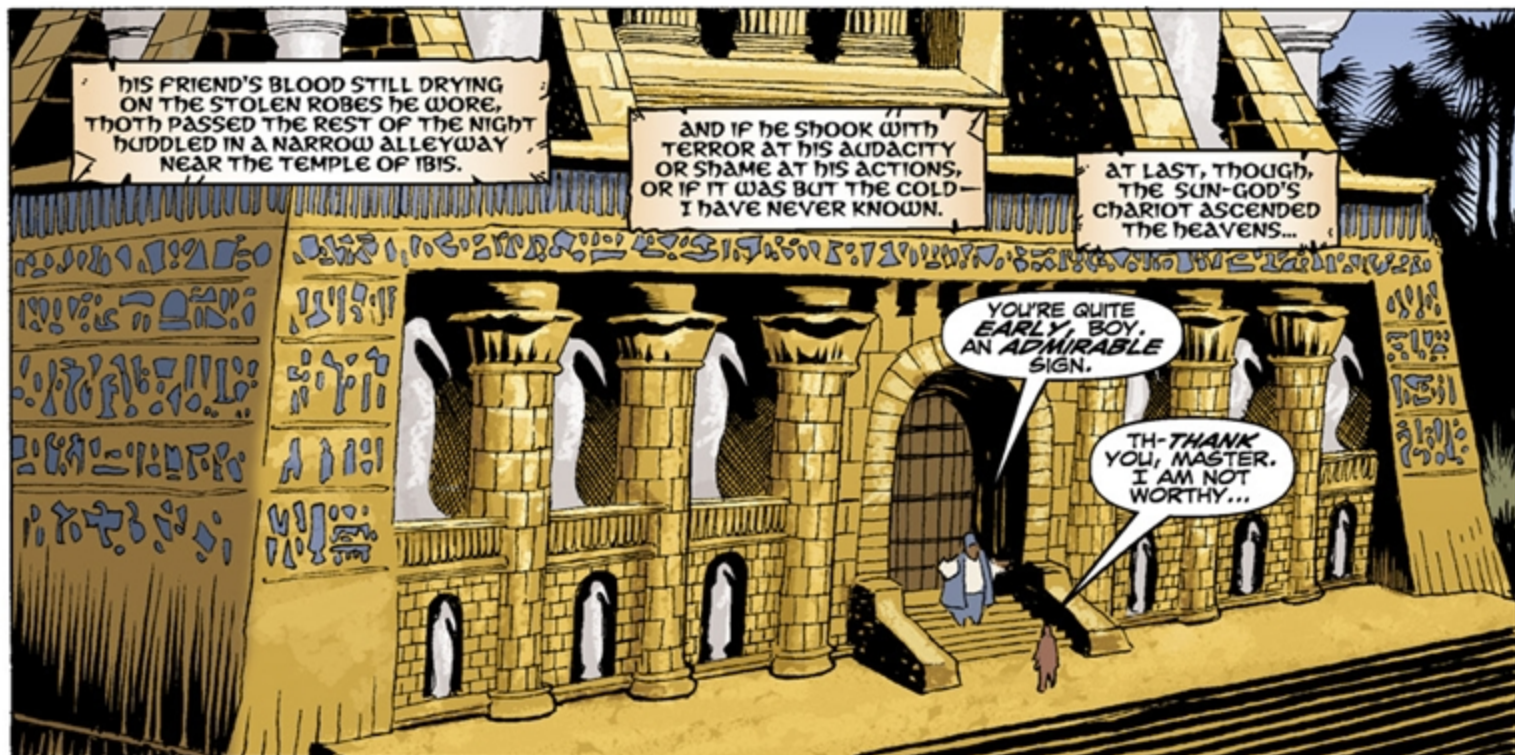
BUT I LEAVE YOU THIS RING AS A TOKEN, SWEET SISTER. MY PLEDGE THAT I SHALL SOME DAY RETURN --

-- TO TAKE YOU AWAY FROM HERE.



UNTIL THEN, AYINA, STAY SAFE IF YOU CAN. STAY STRONG.

FAREWELL, BROTHER. MAY IBIS PROTECT YOU.





— THE LAD ONCE CALLED THOTH, BUT NOW BECOME AMON, STEPPED INTO A NEW WORLD.

THE ORDER OF THE AZURE CIRCLE OF IBIS IS OLD, MY BOY, ITS ORIGINS NOW LOST IN THE MISTS OF ANTIQUITY --

-- BUT THE LESSONS IT TEACHES ARE ETERNAL. YOU'LL HAVE HEARD SHREDS OF IBIS'S WISDOM IN THE MARKETPLACE, I'M SURE.



ABOVE ALL ELSE, IBIS LEADS US TO WADE THE CURRENTS OF PEACE...

...TO LET OUR SPIRITS SOAR ON WINDS OF JOY.

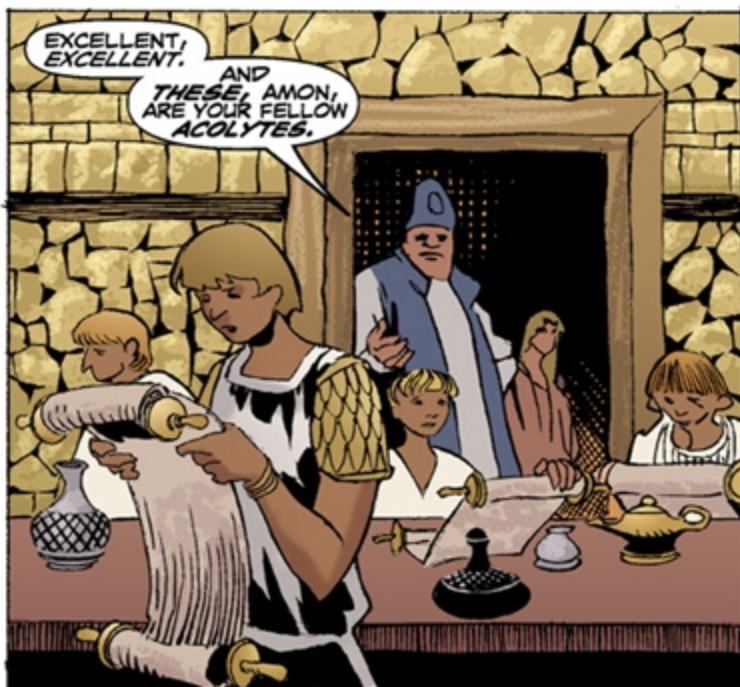


YOU WILL LEARN GREAT MAGIC HERE -- BUT ALWAYS, OUR MAGIC IS BORN OF THE NATURAL ORDER --

-- AND STRIVES TO ACHIEVE BALANCE AND HARMONY WITH ALL THINGS.



YES, MASTER, I SEE THE... WISDOM IN THAT.



EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT.

AND THESE, AMON, ARE YOUR FELLOW ACOLYTES.



GET TO KNOW THEM AND KNOW THEM WELL...

...FOR IN TIME TO COME, THEY SHALL BE AS BROTHERS TO YOU.



REALLY, MASTER, IS OUR FAMILY ALREADY NOT LARGE ENOUGH?

YOU HAVE BARELY TIME TO SEE TO OUR EDUCATION.

DO WE TRULY NEED SUCH A GRUBBY-FEATHERED CHICK UNDERFOOT?



JOKE AS YOU WILL, MY FAITHFUL, BUT **WHATEVER** YOUR ACCIDENT OF BIRTH, ONCE YOU ALL WERE AS HE.

IN TIME YOU WILL COME TO KNOW HIS VALUE, AND HE YOURS.

FOR THE GLORY OF IBIS COMES **NOT** FROM PRIDE. ALL FEET REST IN THE MUD TOGETHER.



AS YOU WISH, MASTER, INDEED SHALL IT BE --

-- BUT I, FOR ONE, DO SERIOUSLY HAVE DOUBTS.



COME, AMON. LET ME SHOW YOU TO YOUR NEW QUARTERS. AND DO NOT LET THE OTHERS' PLAYFUL CHIDING CONCERN YOU. IT WILL SOON PASS.

YES, MASTER, IT WILL. ONE WAY, OR ANOTHER...





AND THUS, MOST WISE SCHOLAR, WAS FORGED AN UNLIKELY BOND THAT WOULD IN TIME COMMAND THE COURSE OF BOTH BOYS' LIVES...

...AND THE DAYS PASSED BY LIKE SAND IN THE WIND, DRIFTING INTO MONTHS AND YEARS —

THERE, YOU SEE? "THE PASSAGE OF IBIS'S WINGS BRINGS A CLEANSING BREEZE TO ALL."



— AND YOUNG THOTH PROVED HIMSELF DILIGENT, QUICK OF WIT AND ATTENTIVE —

AND THE CONSTELLATIONS ARE THE WARRIORS OF THE GODS, BATTLING AGAINST THE CREATURES OF THE OUTER DARK...



— TAKING TO LEARNING AS A STARVING MAN TO FOOD —

...AND NOW AND ONLY NOW, THE POWDERED BEETLE SHELL...

YES, YES... I SEE...

— AND IN TIME, AS SURELY AS FLOOD FOLLOWS DROUGHT —



AND SO, YOU SEE, "THE PASSAGE OF IBIS'S WINGS BRINGS A CLEANSING BREEZE TO ALL."





YET, LO —

— AS NIGHT'S CLOAK
WRAPPED TIGHT ABOUT
THE CITY —

THERE
IS NOTHING THAT
MORE **INTERESTS**
ME THAN THAT WHICH
I SHOULD NOT
SEE.



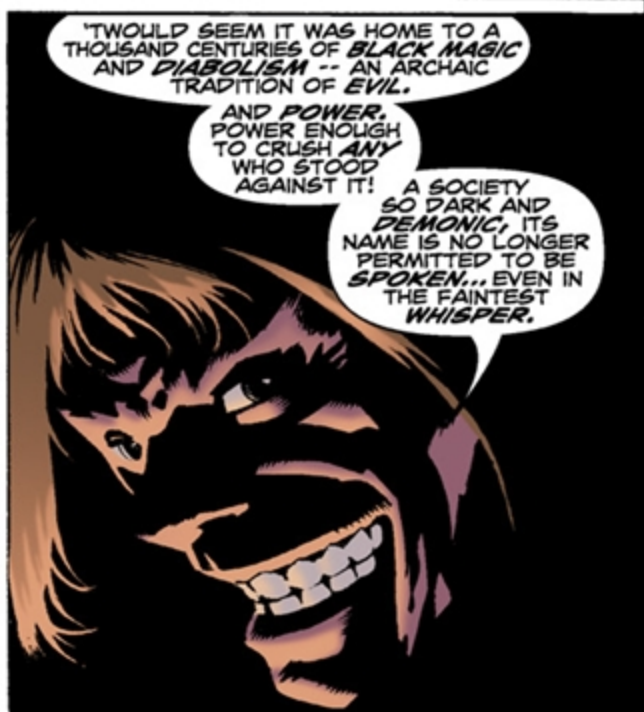
THUS, IF
DEAR, TRUSTING
KALANTHES WILL **FORGIVE**
HIS YOUNG FRIEND **AMON**
FOR UTILIZING THE TOOLS OF
STREET-THIEF **THOTH'S**
OLD TRADE...

YOUNG THOTH CAUTIOUSLY
STUDIED HIS PILFERED
SCROLLS, STRUGGLING
TO MAKE SENSE OF
THE ANCIENT TEXT.



AND ONE WORD DID HE
FIND REPEATED AGAIN AND YET-
AGAIN, UNTIL HE GLEANED AT
LAST THE TRUTH OF IT...

ACHERON.



'TWOULD SEEM IT WAS HOME TO A
THOUSAND CENTURIES OF **BLACK MAGIC**
AND **DIABOLISM** -- AN ARCHAIC
TRADITION OF **EVIL.**

AND **POWER.**
POWER ENOUGH
TO CRUSH **ANY**
WHO STOOD
AGAINST IT!

A SOCIETY
SO DARK AND
DEMONIC, ITS
NAME IS NO LONGER
PERMITTED TO BE
SPOKEN... EVEN IN
THE FAINTEST
WHISPER.



THIS, THEN, IS
WHAT I **CAME HERE**
FOR -- THAT FOR WHICH
I HAVE SO LONG BEEN
SEARCHING. A SOURCE
OF **POWER** BEYOND
EVEN MY VIVID
IMAGINING.

'TIS LONG
SINCE TIME FOR
WHAT HAS BEEN **LOST**
TO ONCE AGAIN
BE **FOUND.**

'TIS TIME
POWER WAS
MINE!



AND SPRING BECAME **SUMMER**, AND
SUMMER & DRY AND DUSTY **AUTUMN**.

AND THOTH SEARCHED EVERY
CREVICE AND CRANNY OF
SAD MEMPHIS, FOLLOWING ANY
TINY HINT OR CLUE, TO FIND
WORD OF FORBIDDEN ACHERON —

— AND AT LAST, ON ONE
TEARFUL SAND-SWEPT NIGHT —



WHERE
IS HE, CURSE
HIM?
IF THAT
FILTHY CUTPURSE
LIED TO ME,
I'LL --



NO,
THERE!
IT IS
HIM! IT **MUST**
BE!



YOU HAVE NO IDEA
WHAT IT HAS TAKEN TO
FIND YOU, OLD
MAN.

AND YET,
I HAVE BEEN
HERE ALL
ALONG.

QUICKLY NOW,
HOW ARE YOU CALLED?



I AM
CALLED
HE WHO
WAITS.

OH?
AND WHAT
ARE YOU WAITING
FOR?



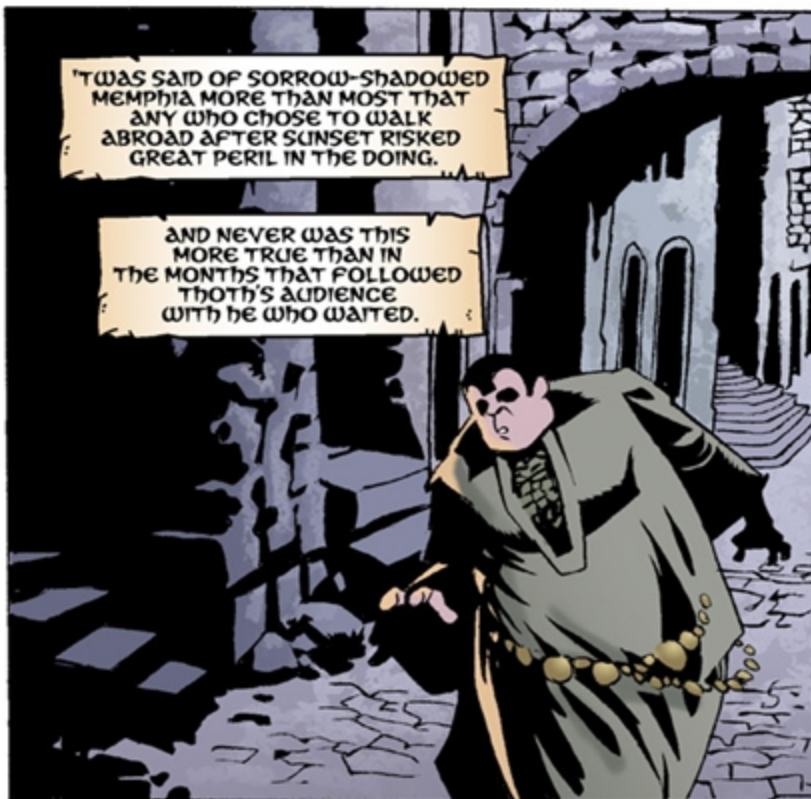
YOU.





"T WAS SAID OF SORROW-SHADOWED
MEMPHIA MORE THAN MOST THAT
ANY WHO CHOSE TO WALK
ABROAD AFTER SUNSET RISKED
GREAT PERIL IN THE DOING.

AND NEVER WAS THIS
MORE TRUE THAN IN
THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED
THOTH'S AUDIENCE
WITH HE WHO WAITED.



EH?!

NO!
PLEASE,
I --



--GULK--



NOW
TO SEE IF I
BLOODIED MY BLADE
FOR NAUGHT,
OR --

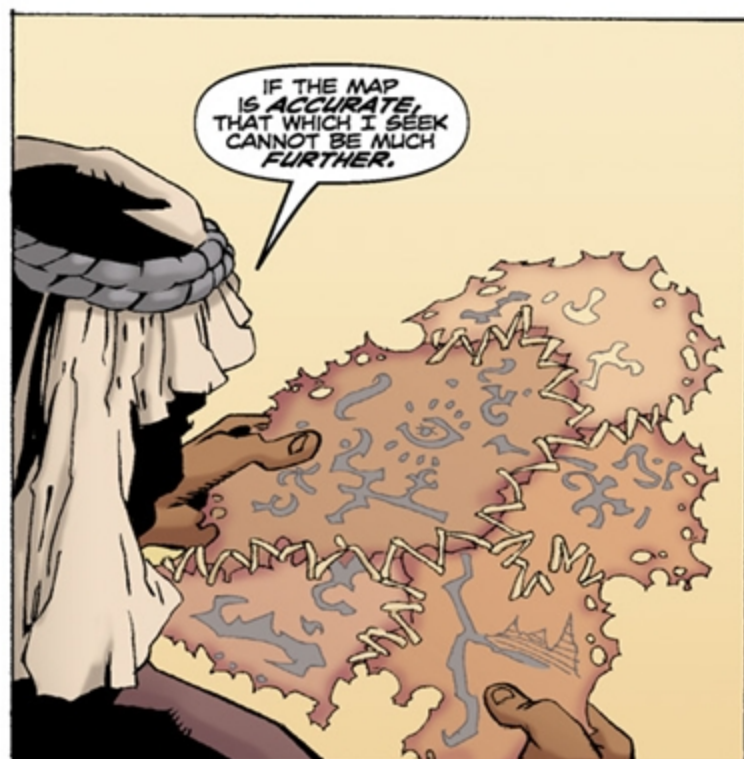
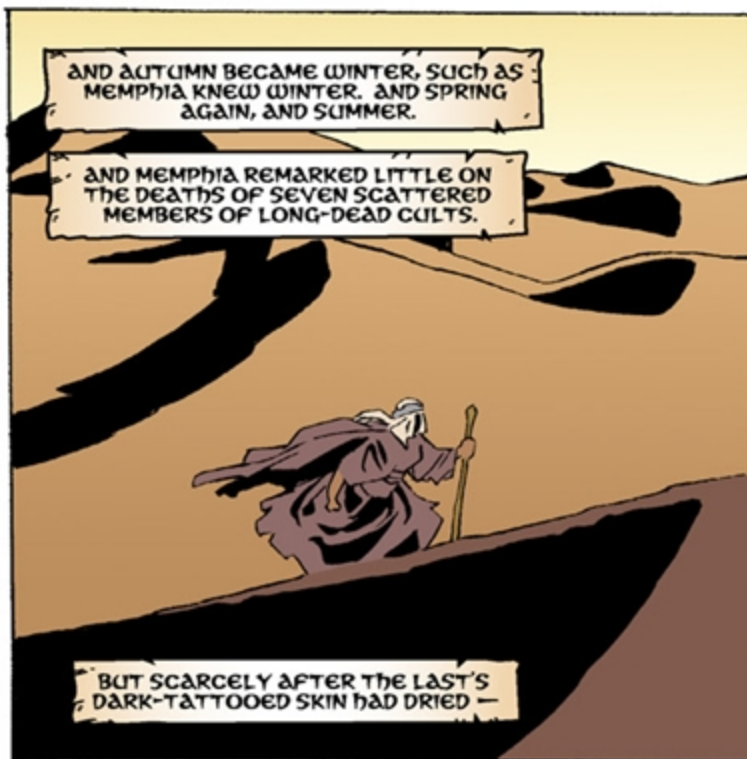
BY SET,
THE DREAM
SPOKE
TRUE!

THE MAP TO THE POWER
OF ACHERON DOES STILL EXIST,
PASSED FROM FATHER TO
SON IN CERTAIN NAMELESS
CULTS --



-- AND THE
FIRST PART OF
THE PUZZLE...IS
NOW MINE!







AHH.

ACROSS A VALLEY
OF SHIFTING SAND
IT CALLED TO HIM...

...A CAVERNOUS
MOUTH MORE LIKE
A HUNGRY MAW
THAN ANY
COINCIDENCE
OF STONE...

AYE, IT CALLED, LAST
AND LOATHSOME,
THE REFUGE OF THE
DARK GOD SET —

— AND EAGERLY DID
THE IMPATIENT THOTH
SEEK TO ANSWER...



BUT DARK
TREASURES SOUGHT
ARE NEVER SO
EASILY GAINED...



IBIS!
WHAT -- ?!

HHHOOOORSH





AND DEEP,
DEEP, DEEP
IT LED —

— UNTIL, MORE
THAN A LEAGUE
BENEATH THE
SMOTHERING
EARTH, YOUNG
THOTH FOUND
HIMSELF FACING
HIS DESTINY —

BY
ACHERON!
THE
CHILDREN OF
SET!



A WRITHING
REPTILIAN
TIDE, THEY
ROLLED AT HIM,
THIS GREAT
UNDULATING SEA,
SEEKING IN THEIR
FANGED FURY
TO OVERWHELM
HIM, TO
CONSUME HIM —

NO!

HHSSSSSTT



STOP, I SAY YOU!
STAY BACK!
DESTROY ME
AND YOU DESTROY
ALL HOPE OF YOUR
RESURRECTION!



EH? THEY --
HALTED?

BY SET,
THESE CREATURES
KNOW THEIR
MASTER!

AND THOTH SMILED.
AND THOTH RELAXED.



KRAKKK

AAH!

AND THOTH FELL.





UUNNHH!!



C-CAN'T
MOVE... B-BONES
BROKEN... CH-CHEST...
HURTS...
...AND
SET'S... SET'S
CHILDREN...

AAGGH!!

AND HE
SCREAMED IN PAIN.

AND HE CURSED HIS FATHER,
AND THE OTHER ACOLYTES,
AND THE SCAR-FACED BULLY
WHO STOLE HIS TREASURE.



AND HE CALLED
FOR HIS SISTER,
AND FOR AMON.

AND HIS VISION
DIMMED, HIS BREATH
Soured, HIS
LUNGS BUBBLED
WITH BLOOD.

WH-WHY,
DARK LORD?
WHY DID YOU LEAD
ME HERE...

...ONLY TO
SLAY ME LIKE
A DOG IN THE
DARKNESS...?



W-WAIT.
THERE... IN THE
DARKNESS...
COULD
IT... COULD IT
BE...?

AND THOTH
STRETCHED OUT
HIS ARM.



AND SO IT WAS, STRAINING,
AGONIZED, THAT FOR THE
FIRST TIME, THE YOUTH ONCE
THOTH NOW AMON...

P-PERHAPS...

...DIED.