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CONAN

SCOURGE OF THE SERPENT



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FOR RIGHTS INFORMATION CONTACT: ROSANNA.ANNESS@TITANEMAIL.COM

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NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTION & ADVERTISING SALES:
TOTAL PUBLISHERS SERVICES INC. JOHN DZIEWIATKOWSKI
JOHND@TITANPUBLISHINGUSA.COM
PHONE: 630-851-7683

WWW.TITAN-COMICS.COM

TWITTER @COMICSTITAN

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EU RP
eucomply OÜ Pärnu mnt 139b-14 11317
Tallinn, Estonia
hello@eucompliancepartner.com
+3375690241



THE HYBORIAN AGE

WHEN CONAN
WALKED THE EARTH

NEMEDIAN CHRONICLES



"**K**now, oh prince, that between the years when the oceans drank Atlantis and the gleaming cities, and the years of the rise of the Sons of Aryas, there was an Age undreamed of, when shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles beneath the stars — Nemedias, Ophir, Brythunia, Hyperborea, Zamora with its dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery, Zingara with its chivalry, Koth that bordered on the pastoral lands of Shem, Stygia with its shadow-guarded tombs, Hyrkania whose riders wore steel and silk and gold. But the proudest kingdom of the world was Aquilonia, reigning supreme in the dreaming west.

Hither came Conan, the Cimmerian, black-haired, sullen-eyed, sword in hand, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth, to tread the jeweled thrones of the Earth under his sandalled feet."



THE HYBORIAN AGE

LEGENDS CAN BE FORGED
IN UNLIKELY PLACES.

THIS LEGEND BEGINS
ON THE NIGHT-SWEPT
STREETS OF NUMALIA,
SECOND-LARGEST
CITY IN NEMEDIA.

A YOUNG WANDERLUST-LADEN WARRIOR
FROM BARBARIC LANDS FINDS HIMSELF
AMONGST THOSE OF "CIVILIZED" STOCK.

WITH THE GRACE AND
POWER OF A PANTHER
ON THE PROWL...



CONAN SCOURGE OF THE SERPENT PRELUDE

A SIMPLE STEAL

...17-YEAR-OLD
CONAN OF CIMMERIA
IS THE CITY'S NEWEST
SNEAK THIEF.



GRIM
JIM ZUB
WRITER

IVAN
GIL
ARTIST

JUMPING
JÃO CANOLA
COLOR ARTIST

RASCALLY RICHARD STARKINGS &
COMICRAFT'S TITANIC TYLER SMITH
LETTERING

CALAMITOUS
CHRIS BUTERA
EDITOR

QUICKLY,
CONFIDENTLY...



...HE MAKES MOCKERY OF
THEIR FEEBLE ATTEMPTS
AT SECURITY.



COMPARED TO THE STRAINS
OF A BLOODY BATTLEFIELD,
BREAKING INTO THE MANOR
HOUSE OF NOBLE AZTRIAS
PETANIUS IS CHILD'S PLAY.



THE CIMMERIAN IS SIZABLE IN STATURE, BUT SILENT AS ALL HUNTERS FROM HIS LANDS LEARN TO BE BEFORE THEY'RE FULL-GROWN.

CONAN'S KEEN HUNTING GAZE GRAZES OVER FURNITURE AND FINERY, LOOKING FOR ALL MANNER OF TREASURES TO STEAL AND SELL IN TRADE FOR WINE AND WOMEN.



NOTHING LARGE AND UNWIELDY...



...UGLY...



...OR FRAGILE.



AT FIRST, NO BOUNTY IS FORTHCOMING...

...TIL A LARGE LOCKBOX CATCHES HIS ATTENTION. ITS FILIGREE A GLINTING GOAL, EAGER FOR HIS ATTENTION.



WELL-CRAFTED WITH AN IMPRESSIVE
LOCK BUILT INTO THE LID.

HMM--

WHATEVER'S INSIDE IS
WORTH PROTECTING...

...AND THEREFORE,
WORTH TAKING.

TOO HEAVY
TO HEFT.

TOO SECURE
TO SMASH.

SURELY, THE MASTER OF THIS
MANOR CARRIES THE KEY, BUT HIS
CURRENT WHEREABOUTS ARE--

A DRINK
ON MY LIPS,
AND I AM
ALIVE--!



--CLOSER THAN EXPECTED!

MOTHER OF MITRA!



DISTRACTED BY GREED, NOW THE YOUNG CIMMERIAN WILL HAVE TO LEAVE HIS THOUGHTS AS A THIEF BEHIND...

GUARDS, GUARDS!

DAMN IT ALL--



SOME KINDA WILD MAN?!



HE'S A BIG LAD, BUT WE'LL CUT 'IM DOWN.



...AND SHOW THEM THE BARBARIAN!

UNNNH!



IF THIS WAS
A TRUE
BATTLEGROUND,
CONAN WOULD
NOT HESITATE
TO SEND
THEIR SOULS
SCREAMING
TO THEIR
MAKERS, BUT
THESE TIRED
OLD GUARDS
ARE NOT A
THREAT.



THEY'RE A
NUISSANCE.

BLUH!



A MOMENTARY
DISTRACTION
FROM HIS OBJECTIVE.

HOW MUCH DOES THAT
PRAT PAY YOU TO RISK
YOUR LIFE 'GAINST THE
LIKES OF ME?

A HALF-CROWN
A MONTH?

LESS?



S-S-STAY
BACK NOW!

TH-THE DOG!
HE'LL TEAR YER
SACK OFF!

O-OH YES,
HE WILL!

HE'S A VERY
DANGEROUS
BREED!



SO
AM I.



WITH THE CONFIDENT EASE OF A VETERAN TWICE HIS AGE, CONAN UNLEASHES HIS ATTACK.



GAH!



I DIDN'T KILL HIM, BECAUSE WORKING FOR A POMPULOUS PIG LIKE YOU IS DEATH ENOUGH.

DO YOU KNOW WHY I'M HERE?

M-M-MONEY?

UHHH--



I SAW YOU AT THE DAWNEER MARKET TODAY, FLAUNTING YOUR NOBILITY LIKE YOU WERE GOVERNOR, TREATING THE VENDORS LIKE TRASH.

M-M-MY UNCLE IS GOVERNOR!

OF COURSE HE IS.



SO, I THOUGHT--

"THERE'S A BASTARD WHO NEEDS TO GET ROBBED."

NO PLEASE PLEASE--

I FOLLOWED YOU HOME, MARKED THE TARGET, HAD A FEW FLAGONS, AND CAME BACK...

...BUT YOU WERE OFF WHEREVER FOOLS GATHER TO SPEN THEIR SELF-ASSURED SLOP.

AND YOU SHOULD'VE STAYED THERE.





ALRIGHT
THEN, WHERE'S
YOUR TREASURE
HIDDEN?

TH-THERE
IS **NONE!**



I-I WAS AT
THE **GAMBLING**
HOUSE, TRYING TO
RECLAIM PAST LOSSES
OR RENEGOTIATE
MY DEBT, BUT IT
WENT...



...POORLY.

"POORLY?"



VERY POORLY,
FOR NOW I AM
POOR!

UNCLE WON'T
COVER ANY MORE
OBLIGATIONS. I-I-I
CAN'T EVEN AFFORD
TO PAY THE
GUARDS OR THE
GARDENER!



WHAT?!



THEN WHAT IN
HELL'S NAME
AM I DOIN'
HERE?

C'MON,
BOY, LET'S
GO--



APPARENTLY THE MOST
APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT
IS LETTING YOUR PITIFUL LIFE
CARRY ON, WORM.

OH GODS,
I KNOW--



NO,
WAIT!
I HAVE
AN IDEA!

“GROAN”



YOU ARE
STRONG,
STEALTHY, AND
SMART WITH EYES
LIKE A HAWK
AND THEWS LIKE
A BULL!

MAKE YOUR
POINT...



I KNOW OF
A SCINTILLATING
PLACE NOT FAR
FROM HERE.

AN ANTIQUE
HOUSE OWNED
BY A FABULOUSLY
WEALTHY MAN
NAMED KALLIAN
PUBLICO.



YOU WANT
ME TO SWIPE
A STATUE
OR A DAMN
PAINTING?

NO, NO--
SOMETHING
MUCH
SMALLER AND
MORE
VALUABLE...



PUBLICO'S LATEST
ACQUISITION IS A ZAMORIAN
GOBLET FESTOONED WITH
DIAMONDS!



I KNOW
MANY NOBLE
HANDS WHO WOULD
PAY A VAST SUM TO
HAVE IT IN THEIR
POSSESSION.

A SUM YOU
AND I COULD
SPLIT.



THERE'S
NO THIEF IN THE
CITY I'D TRUST
TO HANDLE A JOB
LIKE THIS, BUT
YOU...

...YOU'RE AN
OUTLANDER,
LOYAL TO NONE
BUT YOUR OWN
DESIRES...

AZTRIAS PETANIUS,
NEPHEW OF THE GOVERNOR,
PREENS AND PRAISES THE
CIMMERIAN, CONVINCING
HIM THAT THIS SIMPLE
STEAL CAN SOLVE ALL
THEIR PROBLEMS.

THE SELFISH DILETTANTE COULD
NOT POSSIBLY KNOW HE HAS
CAST A SMALL STONE UPON
A GREAT COSMIC POND
THAT SHIMMERS ABOVE
ALL THINGS, CARRYING ITS
RIPPLES EVER OUTWARD.





**FORWARD INTO
THE FUTURE...**

THE THURIAN AGE

**...AND DEEP INTO
THE PAST.**



BRULE THE SPEAR-SLAYER IS A VALIANT PICT WARRIOR, CHOSEN BY HIS ELDERS TO CARRY OUT A DANGEROUS MISSION WITHIN THE VAUNTED KINGDOM OF VALUSIA.



VALUSIA'S TROUBLED KING IS SURROUNDED BY TRAITORS AND THIS LOOPING SYMBOL, CRAFTED WITH DEEP WELLS OF MYSTIC POWER, MAY HELP HIM DISCERN FRIEND FROM FOE.



EACH COIL REPRESENTS ANOTHER TURN IN THE GRAND CYCLE OF EXISTENCE--

WHAT WAS...

...WHAT IS...



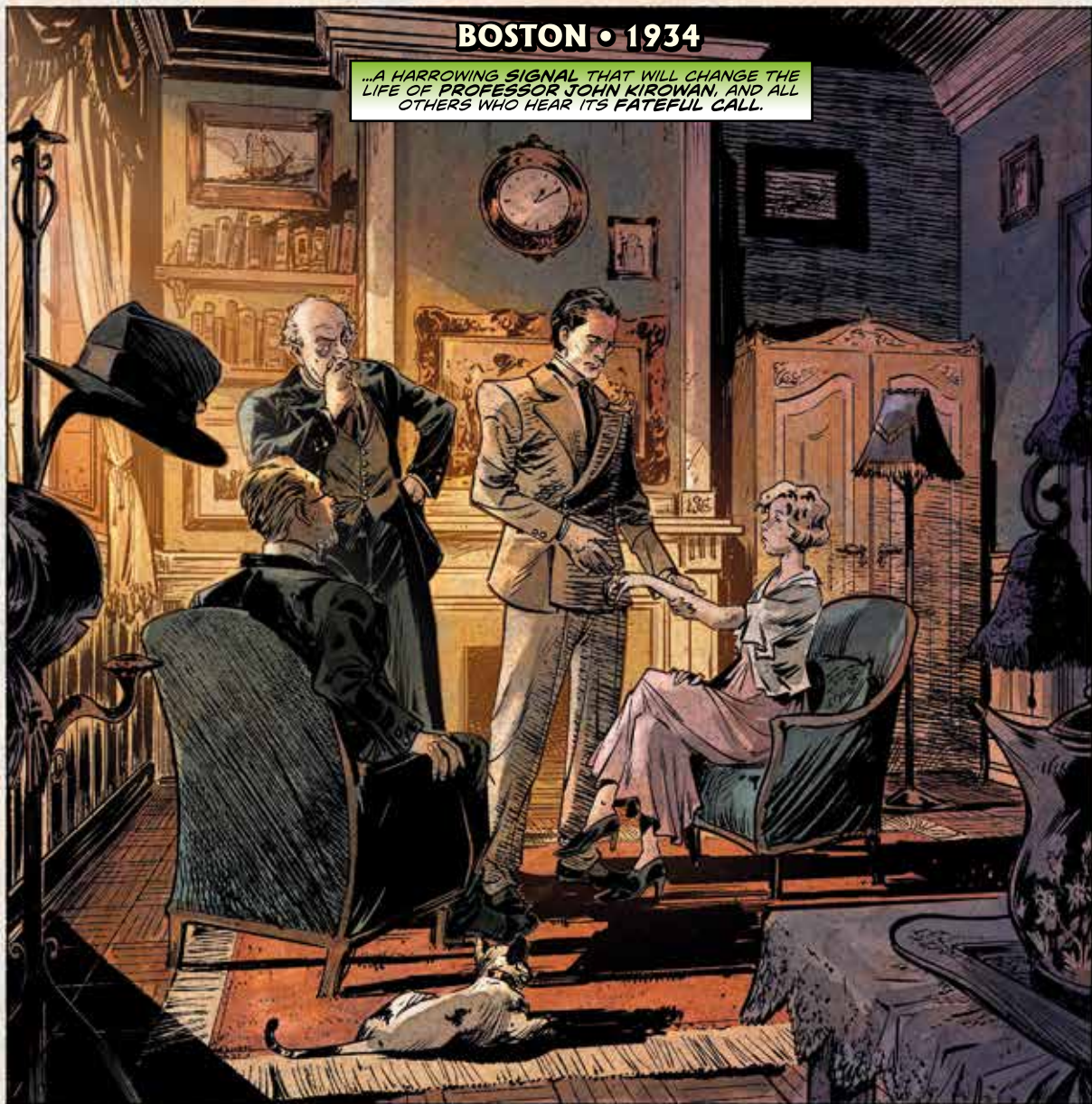
...WHAT YET
MAY BE.

CYCLES
AND RIPPLES,
INTERSECTING
ACROSS
REALITY...

...GROWING IN POWER
AND INTENSITY...

BOSTON • 1934

...A HARROWING SIGNAL THAT WILL CHANGE THE
LIFE OF PROFESSOR JOHN KIROWAN, AND ALL
OTHERS WHO HEAR ITS FATEFUL CALL.



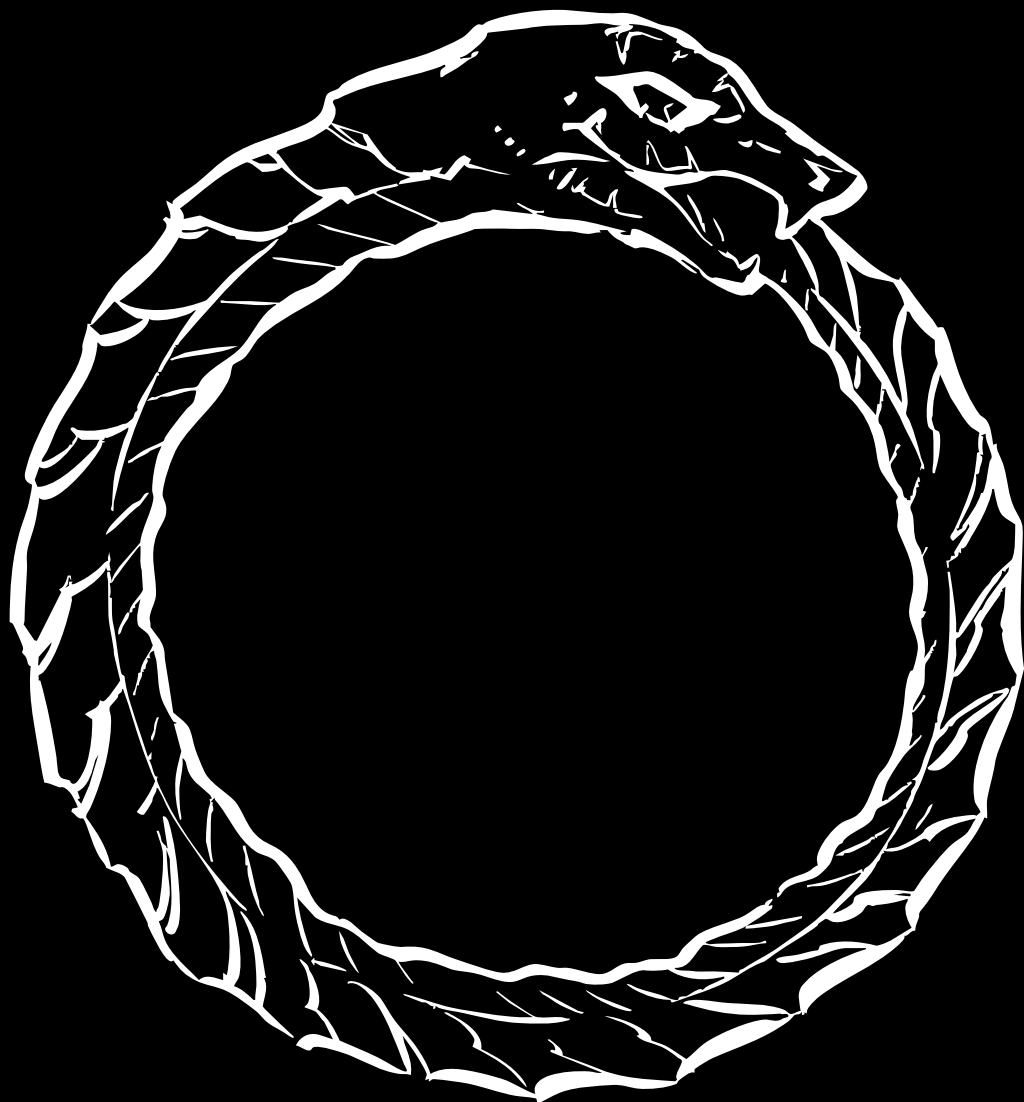
THE CALL OF
THE SERPENT.

A MESSAGE SENT FROM A
SLITHERING GOD...

...THE NEXT STAGE IN A WAR
BETWEEN THE DIVINE AND A
TERROR BEYOND DREAMS.

A NEW EPIC ADVENTURE BEGINS IN
SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #10 &
CONAN: SCOURGE OF THE SERPENT #1

CONAN SCOURGE OF THE SERPENT



**NEW EVENT
STARTING THIS FALL!**

SWORDS, SORCERY, AND SERPENTS!



by Jeffrey Shanks

Welcome to an age undreamed of! For those of you who are new to the world of Conan the Cimmerian, I hope you enjoyed this taste of what our regular readers have been experiencing for the last two years: swashbuckling adventure and weird horror in the pulp sword and sorcery tradition! And for our regular readers, welcome back and buckle up for a new round of tales of high adventure!

The Hyborian Age of Conan is a forgotten epoch of shining kingdoms and dark sorcery, set thousands of years in the past after a great cataclysm. Conan himself is a barbarian warrior from the gloomy northland of Cimmeria, whose wanderings lead to grand adventures in the civilized nations to the south and mysterious lands beyond. Throughout his career, he becomes a thief, mercenary, pirate, bandit chief, general, and eventually a king.

Conan was the brainchild of pulp magazine writer Robert E. Howard, who wrote hundreds of stories in the 1920s and '30s in many genres: weird fantasy, horror, historical adventure, westerns, hard-boiled detective, boxing, and others. He introduced a number of unique characters beyond just Conan: Kull of Atlantis, Solomon Kane the Puritan monster-hunter, the French sword-woman Dark Agnes, occult investigators Conrad and Kirowan, and many more. Regular readers of this series know by now that Howard intended for all of his characters to exist in the same continuity – what we have come to call the Howardverse.



This Free Comic Book Day issue by Jim Zub, Ivan Gil, and Jão Canola is the introduction to Conan: Scourge of the Serpent, a miniseries event arriving later this year which will explore three tales of the Howardverse – tales intertwined with the serpentine coils of the ancient snake god Set and her high priest, the Stygian sorcerer Thoth-Amon!

Thoth-Amon appears in the very first Conan story, in which he uses his Serpent Ring of Set to summon a demonic creature to exact revenge. Stygia, where Thoth-Amon holds sway, is an ancient land where sorcery reigns supreme and giant snakes slither through the streets. It is a land with pre-human origins, where in ages past the half-serpent Children of Set worshipped their patron in unspeakable rites.

In the first of our tales, "The God in the Bowl," a young Conan, plying his trade as a thief in the city of Numalia, first hears mention of the name Thoth-Amon and learns of the pre-human

horrors of the primeval past. This was one of the earliest Conan stories that Howard wrote, and is told in the form of a "locked room" murder mystery. The story was rejected by the editor of *Weird Tales*, the pulp magazine, which published much of Howard's work, and it would not see print until 1952, long after Howard's death.

Next, in "The Shadow Kingdom," set tens of thousands of years before the time of Conan, the Pictish warrior Brule the Spear-Slayer aids his king, Kull of Atlantis, against the shape-shifting menace of the ancient serpent men. This story was published in *Weird Tales* in 1929 and was the first appearance in print of both Kull and Brule. Predating Conan's debut by three years, many people consider this to be the first true sword and sorcery tale.

And finally, in "The Haunter of the Ring," Professor John Kirowan encounters the Serpent Ring of Set in the 1930s and learns that its sorcerous power has not waned over the intervening millennia.

Published in *Weird Tales* in 1934, this story was part of a series of works in which Howard was writing somewhat in the style of his colleague and correspondent, H. P. Lovecraft, and contributing to what would come to be known as the Cthulhu Mythos. But unlike Lovecraft, Howard's occult investigator protagonists, like Prof. Kirowan, were much more proactive in directly confronting the eldritch horrors they encountered.

Make sure you join us for the epic event Conan: Scourge of the Serpent later this year, as Jim Zub, Ivan Gil, and the rest of our crew explore these three classic tales of primal gods and dark sorcery. If you can't wait for more serpentine sorcery, pick up Solomon Kane: The Serpent Ring by Patrick Zircher – on sale now. And don't forget to reserve your copy of the ongoing monthly Conan the Barbarian series and its sister anthology title, *The Savage Sword of Conan* at your favorite local comic book shop!



BEHIND THE SCENES OF 'A SIMPLE STEAL'

אִיבָּן גִּיל בְּרִינגִינג קוֹנָאן וְהַיְבּוֹרִיאַן אֶיִךְ אֶל חַיָּה!

A look behind the scenes of artist
Ivan Gil bringing Conan and
the Hyborian Age to life!



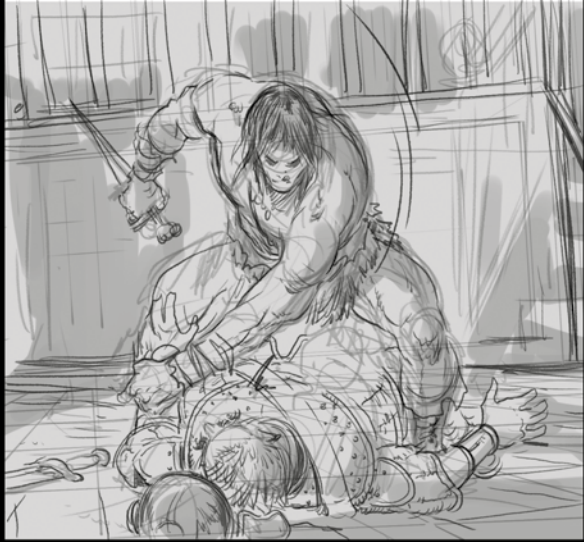
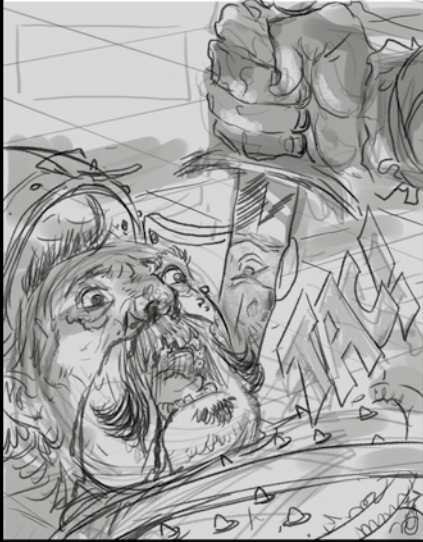
Character Designs, Conan



Page 2 pencils



Character Designs, Villains



SNEAK PREVIEW!

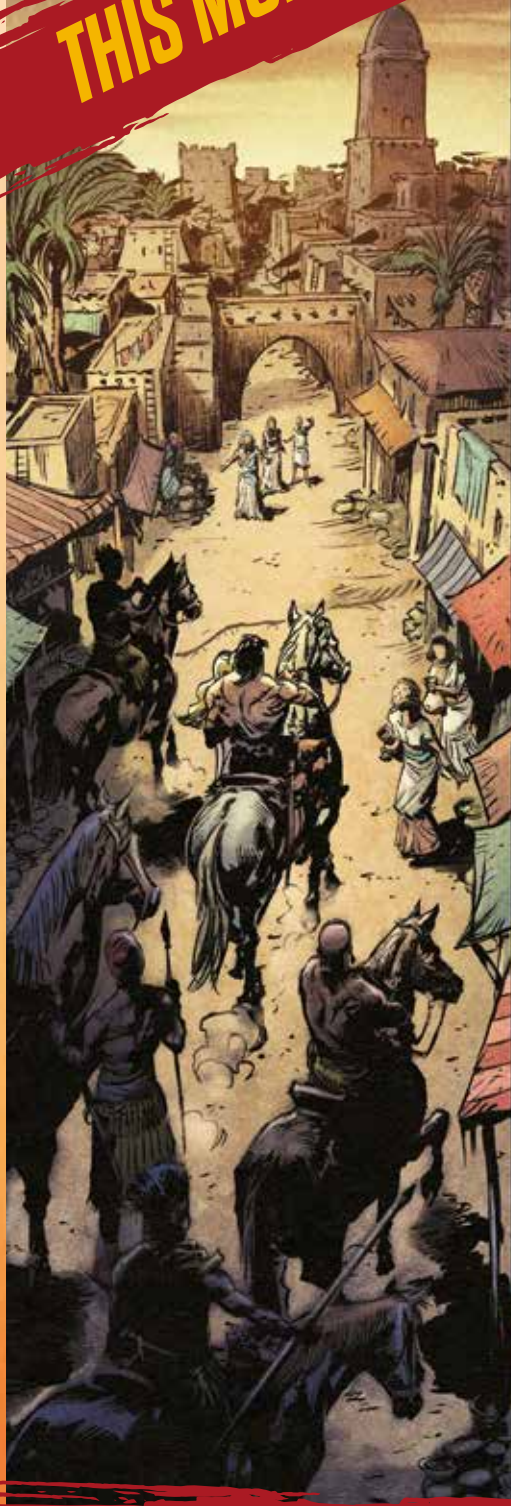




To honor the triumphant new era of CONAN, our landmark twenty-fifth issue will be a true spectacle: an original, done-in-one, extended adventure crafted for longtime fans and new readers alike. And to make it even more extraordinary, every page will be fully painted by the legendary, fan-favorite Alex Horley!

THE NOMAD: Conan the King welcomes a strange visitor with an even stranger mission. Can the Ruler of Aquilonia prove his mettle or will the mysterious wanderer's incredible power change the course of history?
On Sale this September!

THIS MONTH!



Prepare for **SCOURGE OF THE SERPENT** by catching up on the Cimmerian's latest adventures in **Conan the Barbarian #21!** Written by Jim Zub and featuring the bombastic monthly debut of artist Fernando Dagnino!

The Great Serpent's influence twists and turns, pulling Conan into their deadly coils as the Cimmerian and his allies are lured into Stygia... and what they find on this journey will make their blood run cold and set the stage for a conflict beyond their wildest imagination!

