

ROBERT E.
HOWARD™
OFFICIAL LICENSE

THOMAS • PANOSIAN



**DARK
HORSE
COMICS**

#10 | \$3.50

CONAN

ROAD OF KINGS



ROBERT E.
HOWARD™
OFFICIAL LICENSE



CONAN

CONAN: ROAD OF KINGS #10 / NOVEMBER 2011

Based on the work of Conan creator **ROBERT E. HOWARD**

SCRIPT
ROY THOMAS

ART
DAN PANOSIAN

COLORS
DAN JACKSON

LETTERS
**RICHARD STARKINGS
& COMICRAFT**

COVER
ALEKSI BRICLOT

CONAN: ROAD OF KINGS

In Tarantia, capital of Aquilonia, Conan found himself in the company of conspirators plotting to overthrow King Deucalion: Prospero, trusted lieutenant of Count Trocero of Poitain . . . J'Honn, a priest of Mitra from Gunderland . . . Prince Arpello, the craven "Butcher of Pellia" . . . and Countess Thelitis, who had brought her young daughter Albiona into that web of intrigue. Fleeing the king's guards into catacombs beneath Tarantia, the six survived attacks from swarms of oversized insects and worms and from "walking dead" Aquilonian corpses to make their way back to the surface, just in time for Conan to discover that Count Trocero had launched a siege of Tarantia! For the sake of little Albiona, Conan agreed to help the conspirators get to Deucalion—only to learn that the apparent successor to that tyrant would be the vicious and amoral Prince Arpello . . .

◆ NUMBER **85** IN A SERIES ◆



Publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON** • Editor **DAVE MARSHALL** •
Assistant Editor **BRENDAN WRIGHT** • Designer **KAT LARSON** •
Special thanks to **FREDRIK MALMBERG**, **JOAKIM ZETTERBERG**,
and **LESLIE BUHLER** at **CONAN PROPERTIES**. Special thanks to
Jimmy Betancourt at **Comicraft**. **DarkHorse.com**

Conan®: Road of Kings #10, November 2011. Published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, Oregon 97222. Conan® © 2011 Conan Properties International LLC ("CPI"). CONAN, CONAN THE BARBARIAN, THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN, HYBORIA, and related logos, characters, names, and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks or registered trademarks of CPI. All rights reserved. Dark Horse Comics® and the Dark Horse logo are trademarks of Dark Horse Comics, Inc., registered in various categories and countries. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the express written permission of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. Names, characters, places, and incidents featured in this publication either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, institutions, or locales, without satiric intent, is coincidental. Printed by Cadmus Communications, Easton, PA, U.S.A.

PRINCE
ARPELLO--

--"THE
BUTCHER OF
PELLIA"--

--NEXT
IN LINE TO BE
AQUILONIA'S
KING?

AND YOU WANT ME
TO HELP YOU SET HIS
COWARDLY BEHIND ON
THE ROYAL PRIVY?

YOU MUST
ALL BE MAD AS
HYPERBOREANS!

IT IS THE *DUTY*
OF COMMONERS,
BARBARIAN, TO HELP
THOSE OF REGAL
BLOOD!

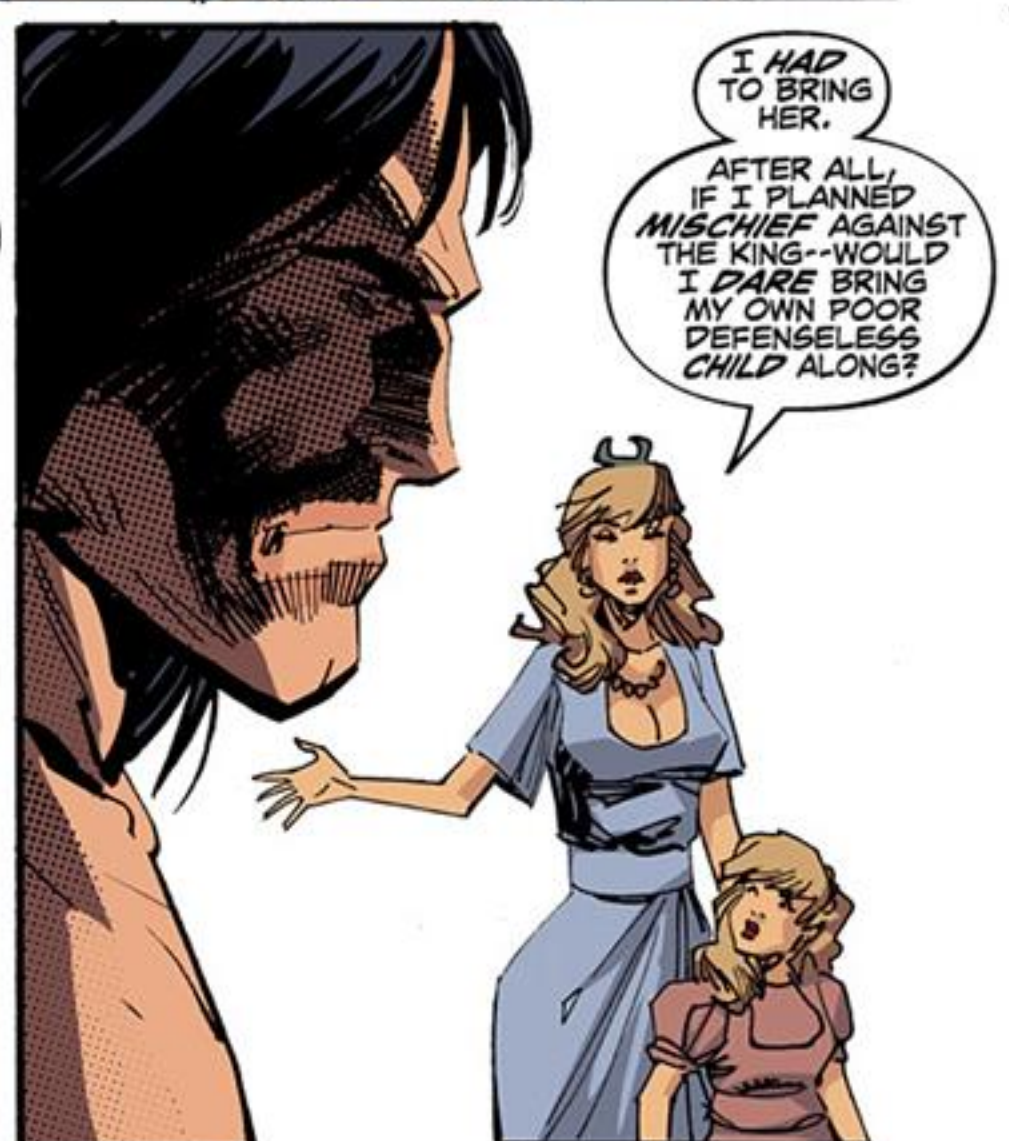
SHUT UP,
ARPELLO!
YOU ARE NOT
HELPING.

COME,
COUNTESS. I'LL
TRY TO GET YOU
AND YOUR DAUGHTER
OUT OF THIS CITY
WHILE IT'S STILL
STANDING.

NO! I CAME
HERE TO SEE
MY HUSBAND'S
MURDERER SLAIN--
NOT TO FLEE
BACK TO MY
ESTATE!

MOMMY--I'M
SCARED!

IS TARANTIA BURDING?



AND MEANWHILE, AT THE
RAMPARTS OF TARANTIA, THE
VIOLENT SIEGE CONTINUED REDLY...

...WITH SPEARS AND ARROWS RAINING
BOTH **SKYWARD** AND **EARTHWARD**--
AS IF THE TORRENTS OF THE **HEAVENS**
WERE BEING MET AND EQUALED BY
CASCADES FROM THE **NETHER REGIONS**.

HALT!
WHO WALKS
THERE?

NO MAN--OR
WOMAN--OR CHILD--
MAY ENTER THE ROYAL
APARTMENTS UNLESS
SENT FOR BY HIS
MAJESTY!

I AM **THELITIS**,
WIDOW OF COUNT
REGOR OF MANDIA,
LOYAL SUBJECT OF
KING DEUCALION...
HERE WITH MY CHILD
AND MY CLOSEST
SERVITORS.

THE KING
TOLD ME TO CALL
UPON HIM--AT
ANY TIME.

PLEASE
TELL HIM AT
ONCE THAT I
AM COME.



I RECOGNIZE YOU NOW, MILADY. I MEANT NO DISRESPECT.

BUT YOU MUST KNOW THE CITY IS BESIEGED BY THAT DEMON, TROCERO OF POITAIN.

THE KING HAS OTHER THINGS TO DO THAN--THOSE HE MIGHT WISH TO DO.



AT PRESENT, HE IS BUSY WEIGHING HOW TO MARSHAL HIS FORCES...

HAH! THAT FOOL DEUCALION COULDN'T COMMAND AN ARMY OF TOY SOLDIERS COMPETENTLY!



THE KING WILL BE *WROTH* WITH YOU IF YOU REFUSE OUR ENTRANCE!

STAND ASIDE! I SHALL--

DETAIN HER!



GOOD! NOW, YOU WILL ESCORT THE COUNTESS--

--TO MY PRIVATE CHAMBERS, SERGEANT!



AH, THELITIS, THELITIS--I *KNEW* ONE DAY YOU WOULD STOP MOURNING THAT MILKSOP OF A HUSBAND AND COME TO ME!

AND, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF A WAR THAT HAS BEEN FORCED UPON ME BY UNGRATEFUL SUBJECTS--

--I AM PREPARED TO WELCOME YOU WITH *ARMS SPREAD WIDE!*



YOU KNOW, BETTER THAN ANY MAN, THE WORKINGS OF A WOMAN'S HEART, MY LIEGE.

TRUE.

YET I FEARED THAT PERHAPS--GIVEN THE CRIMSON NATURE OF THE COUNT'S DEMISE--YOU MIGHT HARBOR *SUSPICIONS* HE WAS A VICTIM OF MY ROYAL WILL.

EVEN WERE THAT SO, SIRE...I WOULD BE FLATTERED YOU SHOULD DESIRE ME SO GREATLY THAT NO MAN, NOT EVEN MY HUSBAND, COULD BE ALLOWED TO STAND BETWEEN US.

WE ARE NEAR ENOUGH TO STRIKE...

NO, CONAN! THERE ARE TOO MANY GUARDS.

WE MUST BIDE OUR TIME.

IT CHEERS ME YOU HAVE COME, MILADY, JUST AFTER TROCERO HAS SENT WORD I MUST *ABDICATE*--

--OR ELSE HIS POITANIANS WILL BATTER--OR *STARVE*--TARANTIA INTO SUBMISSION.

SURELY YOU WILL NOT CONSIDER *SURRENDERING*?

OF COURSE NOT.

THEN PERHAPS WE SHOULD RETIRE TO YOUR BED-CHAMBERS...TO CELEBRATE YOUR COMING *VICTORY*?

YES... OH, YES! BUT FIRST, ONE TRIFLING DETAIL...

CAPTAIN! FEED THE RETAINERS--AND THE CHILD--TO MY ROYAL *DRAGON*.

DRAGON? BUT SURELY, MY KING...

DO IT!







ONE WAS CAUGHT UP IN THE ARMS OF DEUCALION'S CAPTAIN--
TENDERED UP BY HER OWN MOTHER--

--WITH A WALL OF
AQUILONIAN STEEL
BETWEEN HER AND
THE CIMMERIAN.

THE OTHER WAS
HIS OWN LIFE!



BETWEEN THE THOUGHT
AND THE ACTION FELL NO
MORE THAN A HEARTBEAT...



GET
HIM!



HE'S
TRAPPED,
CAPTAIN!
THERE'S NO
WAY OUT
FROM UP
THERE!



WHAT IN
THE GODS'
NAME IS
HE--









EVEN...
BROKE MY
SWORD...



GLANCING BACK
TOWARD THE HIGH
WINDOW, CONAN
PONDERED HIS
FRIENDS' FATE
THERE... A
CERTAIN DOOM...



...AND THE
MELEE ABOUT
HIM IN THE CITY,
SCARLET AND
CHAOTIC AND
MEANINGLESS
TO HIM.



AND SO HE STRODE
RESOLUTELY BACK
TOWARD THE
LOOMING PALACE.



WHO'S
THERE?



YOUR GUIDE
TO THE DEVIL'S
DOORSTEP.





...AS THEY NEVER QUITE DID IN LIFE.



BUT NOW HE HAD
OTHER LIVES TO
SAVE, IF POSSIBLE...

...YET, ABOVE
ALL, ONE.

AND CONAN REALIZED FULLY,
AT LAST, JUST HOW STRONG
WAS THELITIS'S HATRED OF
HER HUSBAND'S SLAYER.



PROSPERO'S NASTY
FLESH WOUND MIGHT YET
PROVE FORTUITOUS.



IN AN INSTANT, THE CIMMERIAN'S GRIM GAZE TOOK IN THE STARK TABLEAU THAT LAY BEYOND THOSE WIDE-SWINGING DOORS...

...INCLUDING THE MASSIVE REPTILIAN IN THE YAWNING PIT...

...A CREATURE DOUBTLESS DRAGGED UP TO TARANTIA FROM THE JUNGLES AND SWAMPS RUMORED TO SPRAWL SOUTH OF STYGIA AND INLAND FROM THE BLACK COAST.

HSSSSSSSS

IN AN INSTANT, THE CIMMERIAN'S GRIM GAZE TOOK IN THE STARK TABLEAU THAT LAY BEYOND THOSE WIDE-SWINGING DOORS...

...INCLUDING THE MASSIVE REPTILIAN IN THE YAWNING PIT...

...A CREATURE DOUBTLESS DRAGGED UP TO TARANTIA FROM THE JUNGLES AND SWAMPS RUMORED TO SPRAWL SOUTH OF STYGIA AND INLAND FROM THE BLACK COAST.

HSSSSSS

IN AN INSTANT, THE CIMMERIAN'S GRIM GAZE TOOK IN THE STARK TABLEAU THAT LAY BEYOND THOSE WIDE-SWINGING DOORS...

...INCLUDING THE MASSIVE REPTILIAN IN THE YAWNING PIT...

...A CREATURE DOUBTLESS DRAGGED UP TO TARANTIA FROM THE JUNGLES AND SWAMPS RUMORED TO SPRAWL SOUTH OF STYGIA AND INLAND FROM THE BLACK COAST.

HSSSSSSSS

IN AN INSTANT, THE CIMMERIAN'S GRIM GAZE TOOK IN THE STARK TABLEAU THAT LAY BEYOND THOSE WIDE-SWINGING DOORS...

...INCLUDING THE MASSIVE REPTILIAN IN THE YAWNING PIT...

...A CREATURE DOUBTLESS DRAGGED UP TO TARANTIA FROM THE JUNGLES AND SWAMPS RUMORED TO SPRAWL SOUTH OF STYGIA AND INLAND FROM THE BLACK COAST.

HSSSSSS

BUT HIS STEEL-BLUE EYES WERE RIVETED ON A SMALL, BLOND, WRIGGLING FORM...

CAPTAIN!
LET GO OF
THE GIRL--AND
LIVE!

CONAN--
HE'S HURTING
ME!

I HAVE
MY ORDERS,
BARBARIAN--

SHE'S A TIDBIT FOR THE
KING'S DRAGON!

EEEEEE

ALBIONA!

AARRRR

I'M
COMING,
GIRL!

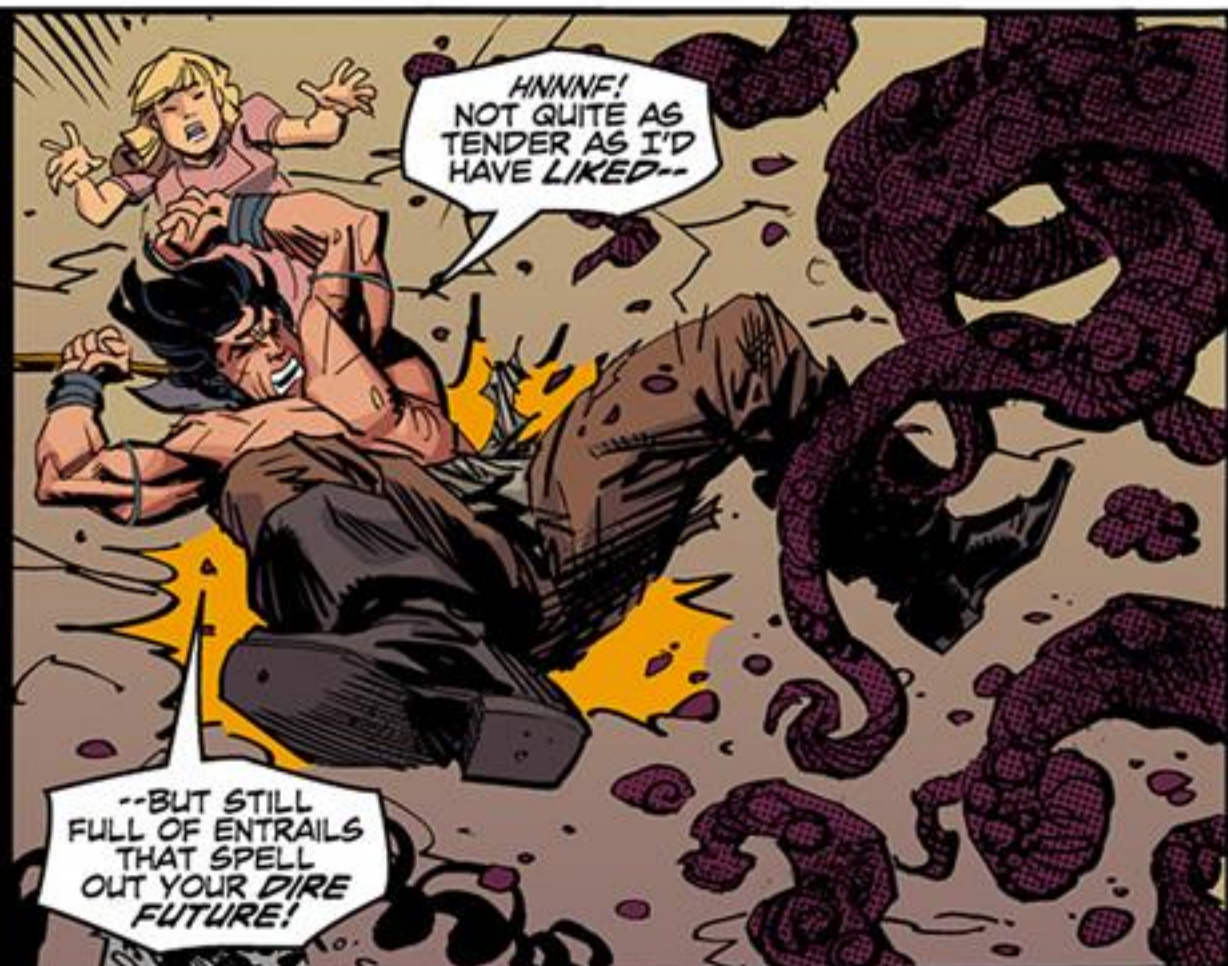
YOU SHOULD
HAVE KEPT YOUR
EYES ON YOUR
PRISONER!

PERHAPS
THE DRAGON
WOULD PREFER
A MAN-SIZE
MEAL!

PLEASE--I'VE
MADE NO MOVE
TO ESCAPE...

YYYYY!!!





--BUT STILL FULL OF ENTRAILS THAT SPELL OUT YOUR DIRE FUTURE!

HNNNF! NOT QUITE AS TENDER AS I'D HAVE LIKED--



IS--IS IT DYING?

PROBABLY--



--BUT I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD HANG AROUND TO FIND OUT, DO YOU?

N-NO!



NOW TO
SEE WHAT KIND OF
GREETING WE GET
TOPSIDE!

WHAT? WILL IT
TAKE *PARADES* TO
SATISFY YOU?

JUST A
HELPING HAND,
PRIEST.
WHERE'S
PROSPERO?

HE... HAD
AN *ERRAND*
TO RUN, AFTER
WE FINISHED
OFF THESE
GUARDS.



IF HE MEANS TO TRY TO
ASSASSINATE AQUILONIA'S
KING--THE *COUNTRESS*
BEAT HIM TO IT.

DEUCALION--
DEAD?

PRAISE BE
TO MITRA!



COME! WE
GO TO MEET
PROSPERO.



GIRL, YOU HIDE
HERE, TILL WE
RETURN FOR
YOU.

IS MY
MOMMY
HIDING,
TOO?



I'LL YOU AS STRAIGHT AS
I WOULD TELL A LITTLE
CIMMERIAN GIRL.

SHE DIED...
TO PROTECT
YOU.



AH...
THERE'S
PROSPERO
NOW.

IS IT
TRUE, MAN OF
POITAIN?
IS THE
TYRANT *DEAD*--
AND IS THE CROWN
MINE?





YOU'VE NOTHING TO *FEAR* FROM ME, ARPELLO--SO LONG AS I HAVE YOUR LOYALTY.

PERHAPS AQUILONIA HAS GAINED A *WORTHY* SOVEREIGN, AT LAST!

I WILL SEND COUNT TROCERO WORD THAT HE MAY LIFT THE SIEGE.

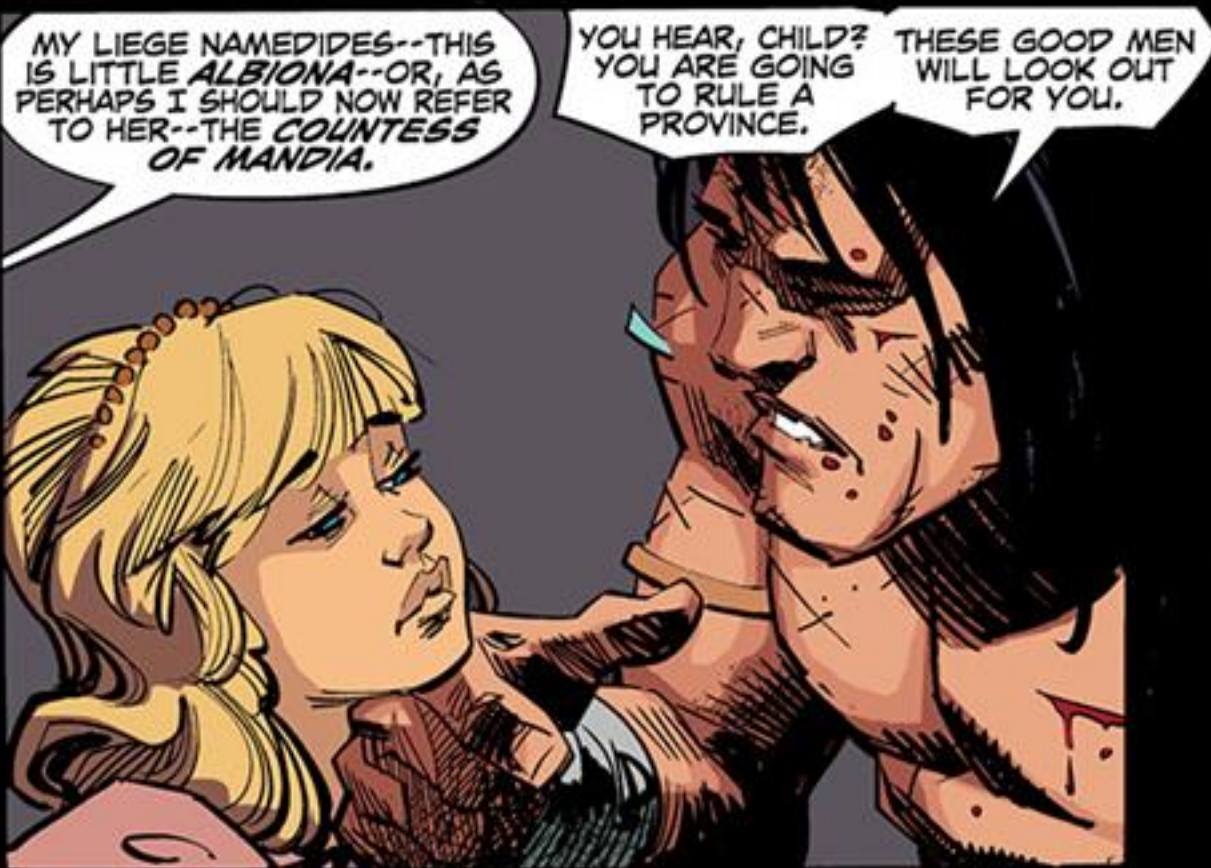
AND YOU, BARBARIAN--"*CONAN*," PROSPERO CALLED YOU--WILL YOU SWEAR FEALTY TO ME AS AQUILONIA'S NEW KING?

SINCE I'M CLEARLY NOT GOING TO RULE THIS KINGDOM, WHAT THE HELL DO I CARE WHO *DOES*?

CONAN...



CAN I COME OUT NOW?



MY LIEGE NAMED IDES--THIS IS LITTLE *ALBIONA*--OR, AS PERHAPS I SHOULD NOW REFER TO HER--THE *COUNTESS OF MANDIA*.

YOU HEAR, CHILD? YOU ARE GOING TO RULE A PROVINCE.

THESE GOOD MEN WILL LOOK OUT FOR YOU.



BUT I WANT TO BE WITH *YOU*, CONAN.



NO, YOU *DON'T*. I'M ONE WHO HAS EVER A HORSE BETWEEN HIS KNEES--OR A BATTLEFIELD OR A SHIP'S DECK BENEATH MY FEET.

BUT PERHAPS--I'LL COME BACK AND *VISIT* YOU, ONE DAY.

I'LL SEE TO HER, CONAN.



DON'T LEAVE, CIMMERIAN.
I CAN OFFER YOU A
COMMISSION IN THE
POITANIAN ARMY.

SURELY THAT'S
BETTER THAN BECOMING
A MERCENARY IN ARGOS
OR ZINGARA.

NO
DOUBT...



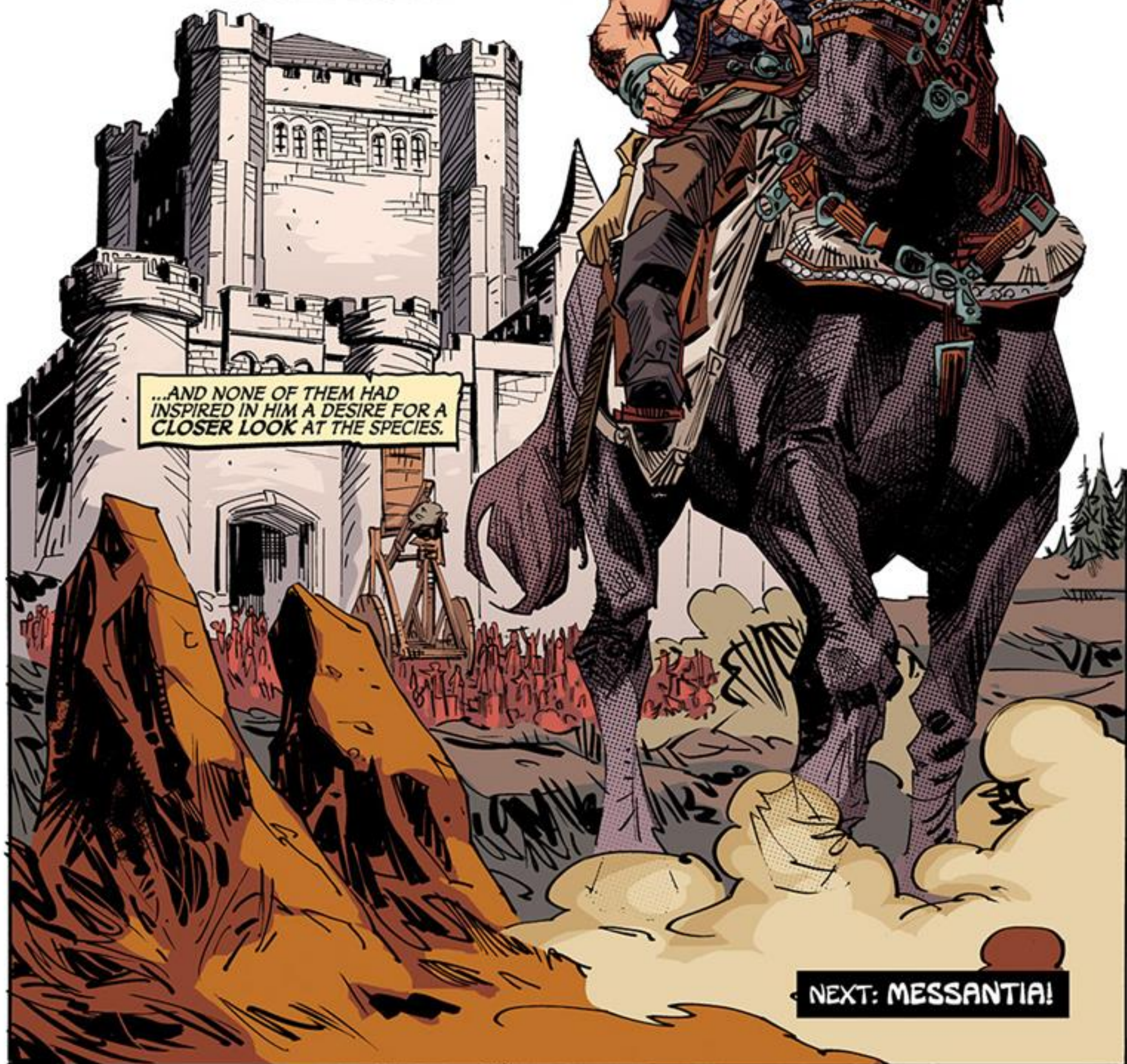
BUT I PREFER
A LIFE WHERE I'M
BEHOLDEN TO *NO*
MAN...NOT EVEN TO
YOU, PROSPERO.

STILL... IF IT'S
NOT TOO MUCH TO ASK...
I WOULD ACCEPT A GOOD
STRONG HORSE...

...AND GARMENTS
THAT DO NOT REEK OF
DRAGON BLOOD.

NEXT DAWN, AS POITAIN'S SOLDIERS
AND SIEGE ENGINES MADE PREPARATIONS
TO RETURN SOUTHWARD... A
NORTH-BORN BARBARIAN SET
OUT AHEAD OF THEM, UPON THE
WELL-NAMED ROAD OF KINGS.

THUS FAR, ALONG ITS WINDING
TRACK, CONAN HAD BEHELD
MORE THAN ONE MONARCH...



...AND NONE OF THEM HAD
INSPIRED IN HIM A DESIRE FOR A
CLOSER LOOK AT THE SPECIES.

NEXT: MESSANTIA!



As we jump back on the road, we say goodbye to guest artist Dan Panosian, who kept the badass quotient high while Mike and John geared up for the home stretch. Thanks again, Dan!

This month we have a good mix of letters on *Island of No Return* and several different issues of *Road of Kings*, beginning with some sharp thoughts on different art and writing styles from Mike Autry:

Last night I read issues #1–#6 of *Conan: Road of Kings* and *King Conan: The Scarlet Citadel* #1–#4. I'm not an REH scholar or a comic scholar, but it seems to me that anyone who would argue that one is better than the other is taking this character a bit too seriously. Some people enjoy more of a witty, superhero-like Conan. Some people enjoy a darker, grittier barbarian. Some people can enjoy both. Both books have great art and a great story. They're just two different Conan characters. Yes, that can be attributed to the teams, but it has just as much to do with the period of Conan's life and personal preference.

Judging from criticism that I've read about the Conan movies and books, I believe that if REH were

alive today, he could anonymously write a Dark Horse Conan comic and someone would complain about it. If you were sitting around a fire listening to Conan stories from people who had handed them down by word of mouth, would you decide to split the storyteller's skull with your ax? If so, you might need to ease back on the rotgut and try to enjoy the stories for what they are. They are comics. They're meant to be fun. If you're not having fun, drink more. You can't keep whipping your ax out every time you disagree with somebody's campfire story.

Mike Autry
Lexington, SC

I'm with you, Mike. I think if forty years of Conan comics have proven one thing, it's that Conan's a character in the class of Batman or Wolverine, characters that can not only withstand radically different interpretations, but open up really exciting story possibilities when approached with very different styles. I have just as much fun reading a roguish, swashbuckling Conan as I do a grittier Conan.

THE ADVENTURES OF TWO-GUN BOB™

TRUE STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF ROBERT E. HOWARD

BY JIM & RUTH KEEGAN

I've been the victim of many a kidding, only I don't usually think it out until afterwards.



SAY, BOB, WHAT PART OF NORWAY DID YOU COME FROM?



NORWAY! HELL! I'M NOT...



HA!

SMACK!



© COPYRIGHT 2011 BY JIM & RUTH KEEGAN DH140

THIS IS TO SHOW THAT I'M IRISH!

POW!



I wonder, was he kidding me?



Hey *Conan* folks,

I've been reading books and comics my whole life, but the day I saw issue #19 of *Conan the Cimmerian* I knew that was the book for me. Since then the titles have changed, and the art and stories are different, but the great comics still shine through. The folks taking care of Conan down there at Dark Horse know what they're doing. I just finished *King Conan* #4 and *Island of No Return* #1, and I have to say I think the books keep getting better and better. Keep up the good work and I'll always be a fan.

Craig Keyes
Pekin, Illinois

Glad to have you with us, Craig!

As much as I liked *Island of No Return* #1, I enjoyed the conclusion even more. While Robert E. Howard's stories are unmatched in my mind, I believe that Marz and Sears did a very good job bringing an untold tale of the Cimmerian to life. The sisters were even worse than I imagined. I thought they might have had a bit of a supernatural air about them, but they were even worse—greedy flesh and blood. Still, the final page with Conan getting the last laugh was a great touch. However, what really impressed me with this book was the art. It's great seeing Bart Sears cut loose. This issue he was able to showcase so much of what makes Conan such a great character: his ingenuity, fighting ability, and dark sense of humor. The battles with the octopoid-like sea creature, as well as the pirates, were great. I hope these two can fit in another Conan story in the future. I would like to see Sears have a chance to draw Conan going up against some true beasts. Crossing my fingers for *Queen of the Black Coast*.

I also read *Conan: Road of Kings* #7. This proved to be a very interesting issue, as it pertains to Conan's future in such a big way. Seeing characters that are central to Conan's story in their earlier days is a great move. This series is in great hands with comics legend Roy Thomas scripting it. Also, the artwork was exceptionally bloody this issue; between the dismembered limbs and guys being cleaved in half, it's obvious that no punches were being pulled.

Looking forward to seeing how Conan deals with having to care for the little girl over the next few issues, as well as hopefully seeing more of Conan's future pal Prospero in his younger days.

Jason Aiken

Hope you enjoyed the conclusion in this issue to the Arpello/Prospero arc. One of the pleasures of having Roy back scripting *Conan* is the unparalleled knowledge of the mythos he brings to the table.

Dear Dark Horse,

What an incredible cover for *Conan: Road of Kings* #7! Briclot created a piece of artwork that I had to stare at for hours. Hawthorne and Lucas did a great job on the

inside as well. To me the "voice of Conan" is Roy Thomas. This title is always at the top of my reading list. Looking forward to *Bêlit*!

Going to see the new Conan movie this week! Looks like this week is the week of the Barbarian!

Doug Butler
Champaign, IL

Hope you enjoyed the movie, Doug, and glad you're still enjoying what Roy, Mike, and John are doing! Let us know how Dan's guest stint hit you.

As you probably know by now, *Bêlit* is coming! We announced last month at New York Comic Con that the next phase of our Conan saga will be an epic adaptation of "Queen of the Black Coast," written by the great Brian Wood, with art in the first arc by the amazing Becky Cloonan. The new series is called *Conan the Barbarian*, a classic title that we've never actually used before at Dark Horse. Stay tuned!

Meanwhile, we are not going out quietly with the current incarnation of Conan. Saddle up as Mike and John return for the final leg of the journey and the blowout finale, beginning next month!



—Brendan

**ON SALE IN THIRTY!—CONAN:
ROAD OF KINGS #11**

