

THE TRUE STORY OF ODYSSEUS, ONCE KING OF ITHACA
- BY HIMSELF -

----- **BOOK 4** -----
THE FLOATING ISLAND OF AEOLOS







THE TRUE STORY
OF ODYSSEUS
ONCE KING OF ITHACA
- BY HIMSELF -

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ΑΙΟΛΟΣ ΙΠΠΟΤΑΔΗΣ, ΦΙΛΟΣ ΑΘΑΝΑΤΟΙΣΙ ΘΕΟΙΣΙΝ,
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Homer, "The Odyssey", x 1-4

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BOOK 4

THE FLOATING ISLAND OF AEOLOS

SAILING THROUGH THE VAST IMMENSITY OF THE CALM SEA WATERS, DAY AFTER DAY AND NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, MY MIND KEEPS WANDERING IN REALMS AND REALITIES THAT I COULD NOT EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE HAD EXISTED WHEN AS A YOUNG AND IGNORANT BARBARIAN I HAD STARTED ON THE TRACK LEADING TO THE TROJAN ADVENTURE.

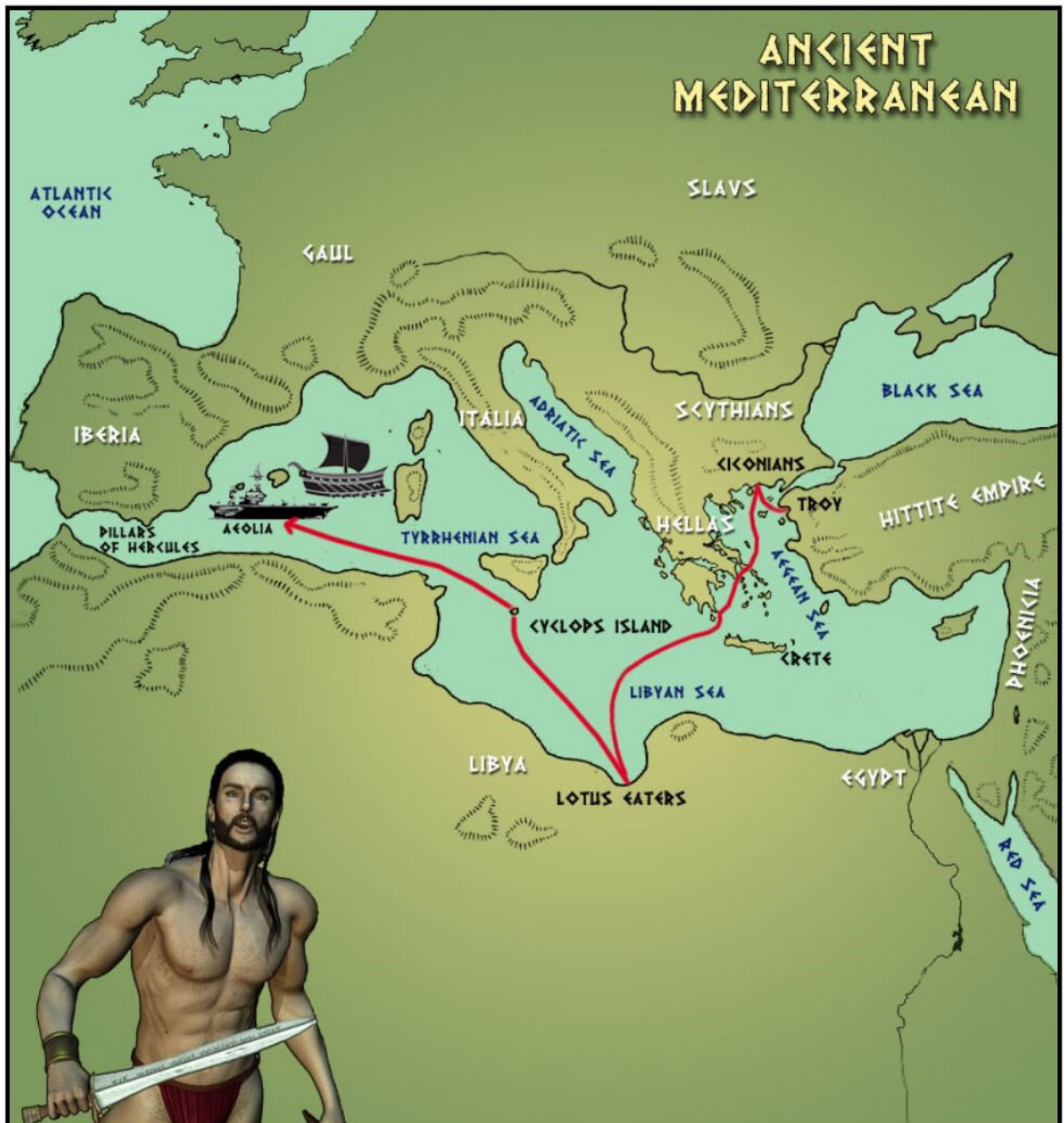
HOW MANY THINGS I HAD COME TO UNDERSTAND SINCE! HOW MANY WONDERS HAD I COME TO WITNESS! I NOW KNEW THAT NOTHING IN THIS WORLD IS AS IT SEEMS, THAT THERE IS A STORY BEHIND AND BEYOND EVERY STORY TOLD BY THE PRIESTS AND THE ELDERS OF OUR SOCIETY, A REALITY SO DIFFERENT FROM OUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE THAT BORDERS THE OUTER LIMITS OF THE MIRACULOUS.

FATE HAS DECREED THAT I SHOULD COME TO KNOW THOSE EXTRAORDINARY BEINGS THAT IGNORANT PEOPLE, AS I HAD ONCE BEEN, CALLED "GODS", TO TAKE A GLIMPSE OF THEIR INTIMATE LIVES, TO LEARN THEIR LANGUAGE AND -WORST OF ALL- TO FALL IN LOVE WITH ONE OF THEM.

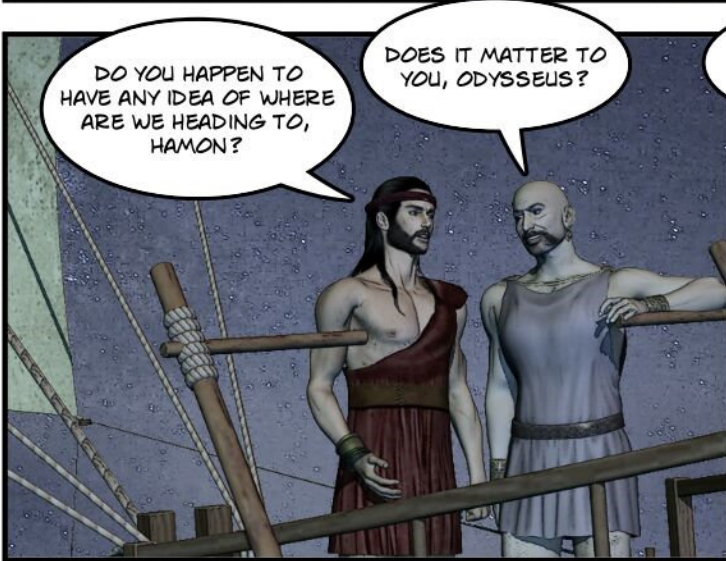
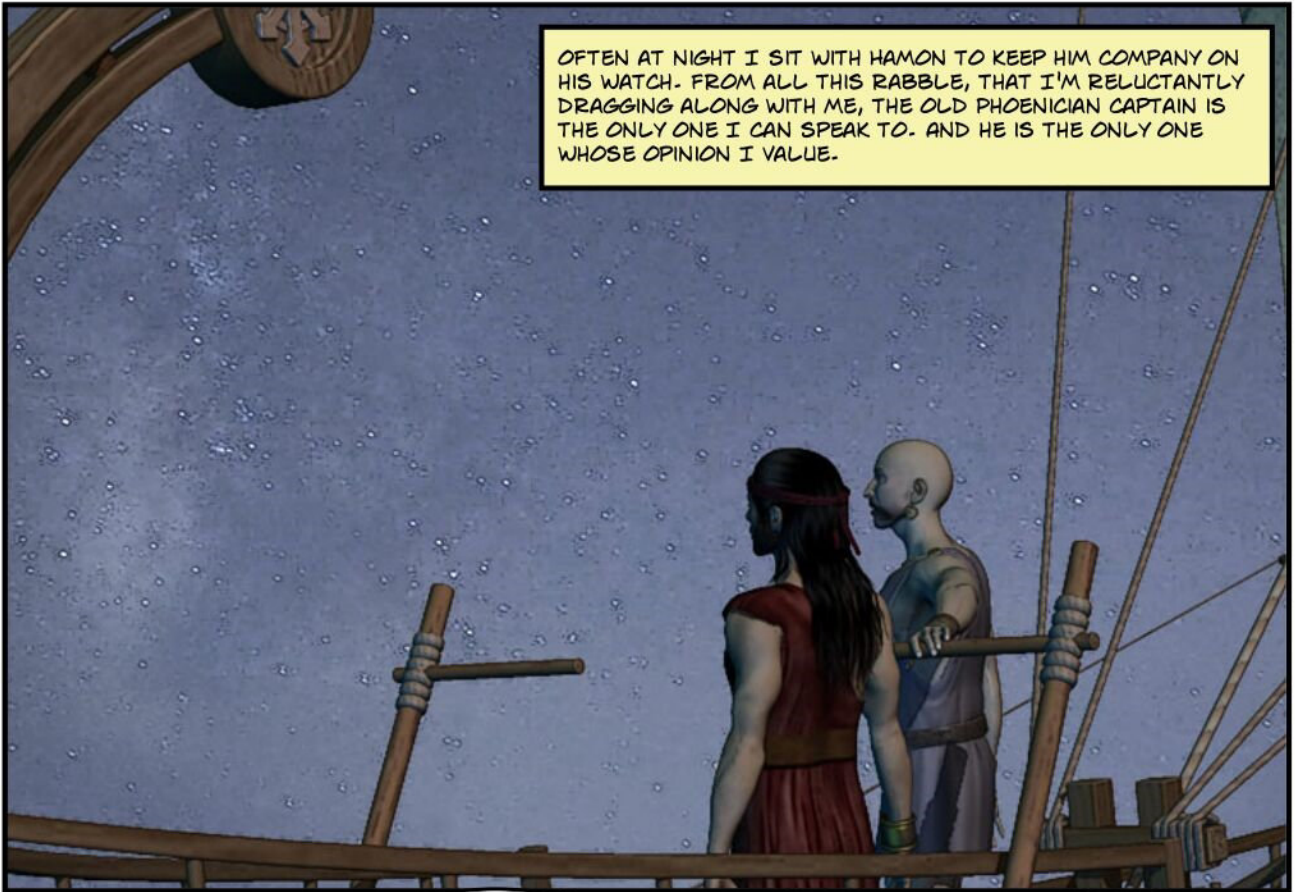
HOW LONG SINCE I LAST SAW ATHENA? HOW LONG SINCE I HELD HER MAGNIFICENT BODY IN MY ARMS AND KISSED THOSE DIVINE LIPS? AT TIMES I WONDER WHETHER THIS PART ISN'T A FIGMENT OF MY IMAGINATION, WHETHER I MADE THIS WHOLE THING UP IN AN ATTEMPT TO PRESERVE MY SANITY BY SEEKING REFUGE IN THE REALMS OF FANTASY? SOME TIMES I WONDER.

AT NIGHT I LOOK AT THE STARS AND SEE HER FACE. IS SHE SMILING? NO, SHE IS ANGRY. OR WORSE -INDIFFERENT. BUT SHE IS THERE, HAUNTING MY EVERY MOMENT, MY EVERY THOUGHT.

WHY HASN'T SHE APPEARED TO ME IN SUCH A LONG TIME? IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SHE HAS ALREADY FORGOTTEN THE MAGICAL MOMENTS THAT WE SPENT TOGETHER? WAS THIS JUST A DIVERTISSEMENT, A PASSING CAPRICE, OF A BEING WHO IS NOT RESTRAINED BY ANY OF THE MORAL RULES THAT DRIVE OUR HUMAN SOCIETY? WAS I JUST AN INCIDENT IN A LIFE SO RICH IN EXPERIENCES THAT MAKES SOMETHING LIKE THIS APPEAR INSIGNIFICANT?



OFTEN AT NIGHT I SIT WITH HAMON TO KEEP HIM COMPANY ON HIS WATCH. FROM ALL THIS RABBLE, THAT I'M RELUCTANTLY DRAGGING ALONG WITH ME, THE OLD PHOENICIAN CAPTAIN IS THE ONLY ONE I CAN SPEAK TO. AND HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHOSE OPINION I VALUE.



HE POINTED AT A BRIGHT SPOT IN THE SKY THAT WAS MOVING FAST WESTWARDS.





DO I DETECT SOME REGRET IN YOUR VOICE, MY KING?



YOU LOOK TO ME AS IF YOU ARE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN.

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.



THERE WAS A LONG MOMENT OF SILENCE.



I LOVED A GIRL ONCE...

TELL ME.

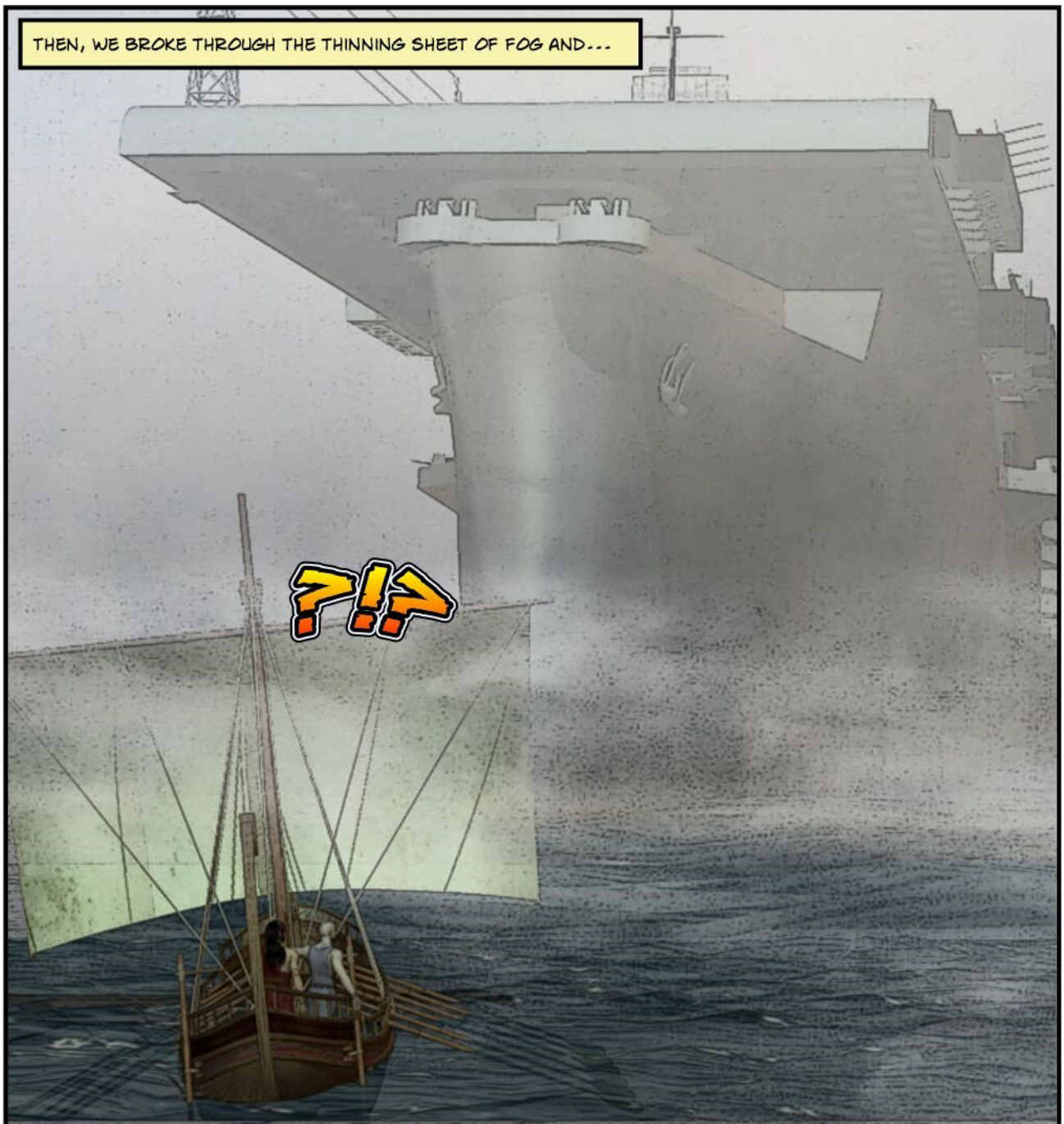


NOT MUCH TO TELL. SHE WAS FAR ABOVE ME SOCIALLY. DAUGHTER OF THE KING. THAT'S WHY I HAD TO LEAVE PHOENICIA.



DID SHE LOVE YOU?

WHO CAN FATHOM THE PSYCHE OF A WOMAN? CAN YOU, MY KING?





MIGHTY POSEIDON!
WHAT IS THIS?!!!



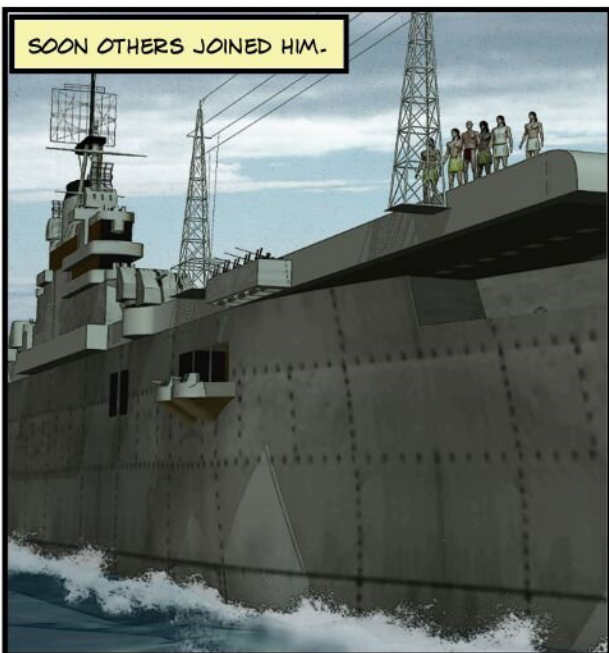
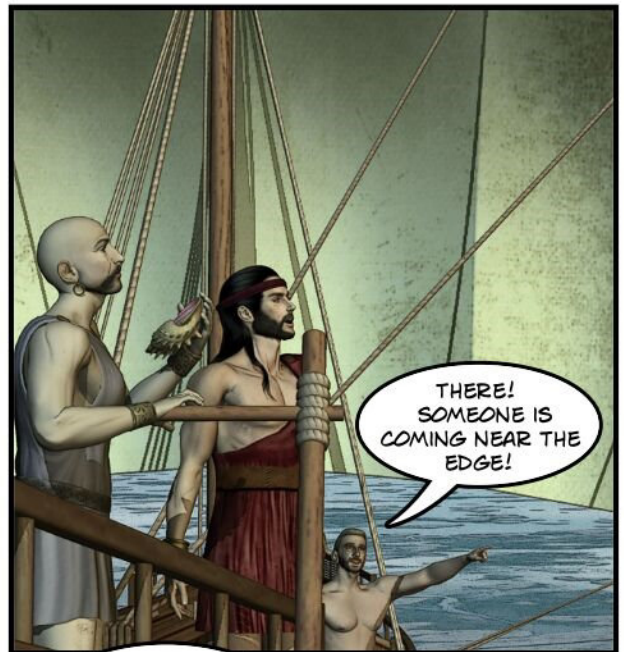
THIS IS A FLOATING
ISLAND, MY KING. I HEARD
ABOUT THEM, BUT I NEVER
BELIEVED THEY EXISTED.
UNTIL NOW.

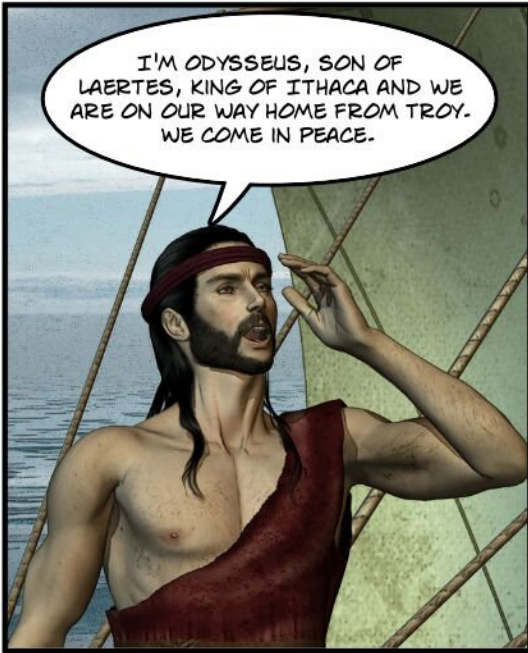


IT LOOKS AS IF IT IS
MADE OF BRONZE!... OR
SOMETHING LIKE
BRONZE.

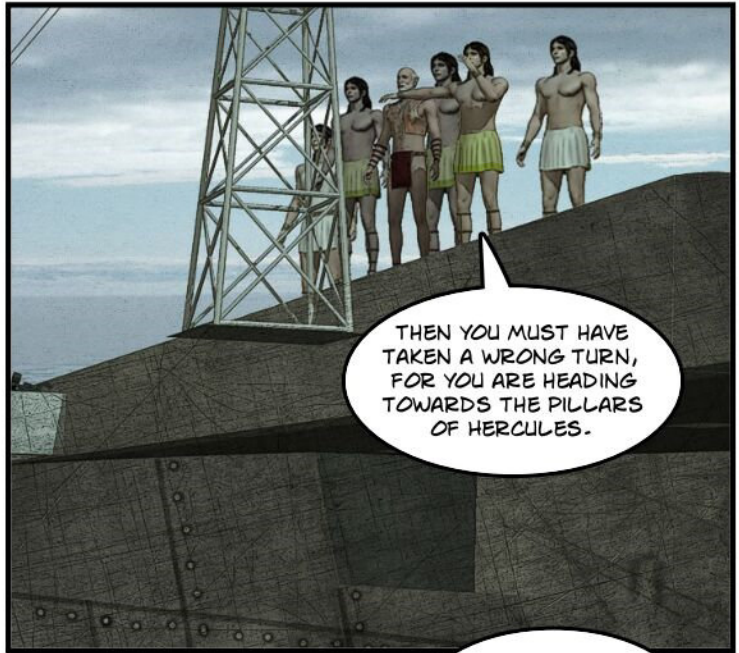
THE FLOATING ISLAND WAS HUGE AND GLIDED GENTLY ON THE SURFACE OF THE OIL-CALM WATERS. IN FACT IT LOOKED LIKE AN IMMENSE CASTLE.







I'M ODYSSEUS, SON OF LAERTES, KING OF ITHACA AND WE ARE ON OUR WAY HOME FROM TROY. WE COME IN PEACE.



THEN YOU MUST HAVE TAKEN A WRONG TURN, FOR YOU ARE HEADING TOWARDS THE PILLARS OF HERCULES.



THE PILLARS OF HERCULES!!!

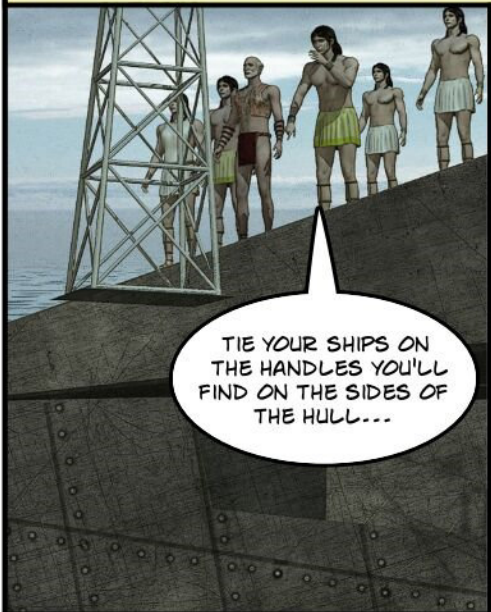
AT THE MOUTH OF THE OCEAN! BY POSEIDON AND BAAL! I KNEW THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG!



CAN WE LAND TO FETCH WATER/ WE ARE RUNNING OUT.

WE SAW THE PEOPLE AT THE EDGE OF THE ISLAND CONFERRING AMONG THEMSELVES BRIEFLY.

WE'LL THROW YOU A LADDER TO CLIMB UP. ONLY THREE PEOPLE SHOULD COME - UNARMED OF COURSE.



TIE YOUR SHIPS ON THE HANDLES YOU'LL FIND ON THE SIDES OF THE HULL...



WE DID AS TOLD AND I CLIMBED THE WALLS ALONE FOR NOT ONE OF THE COWARDS DARED TO JOIN ME.



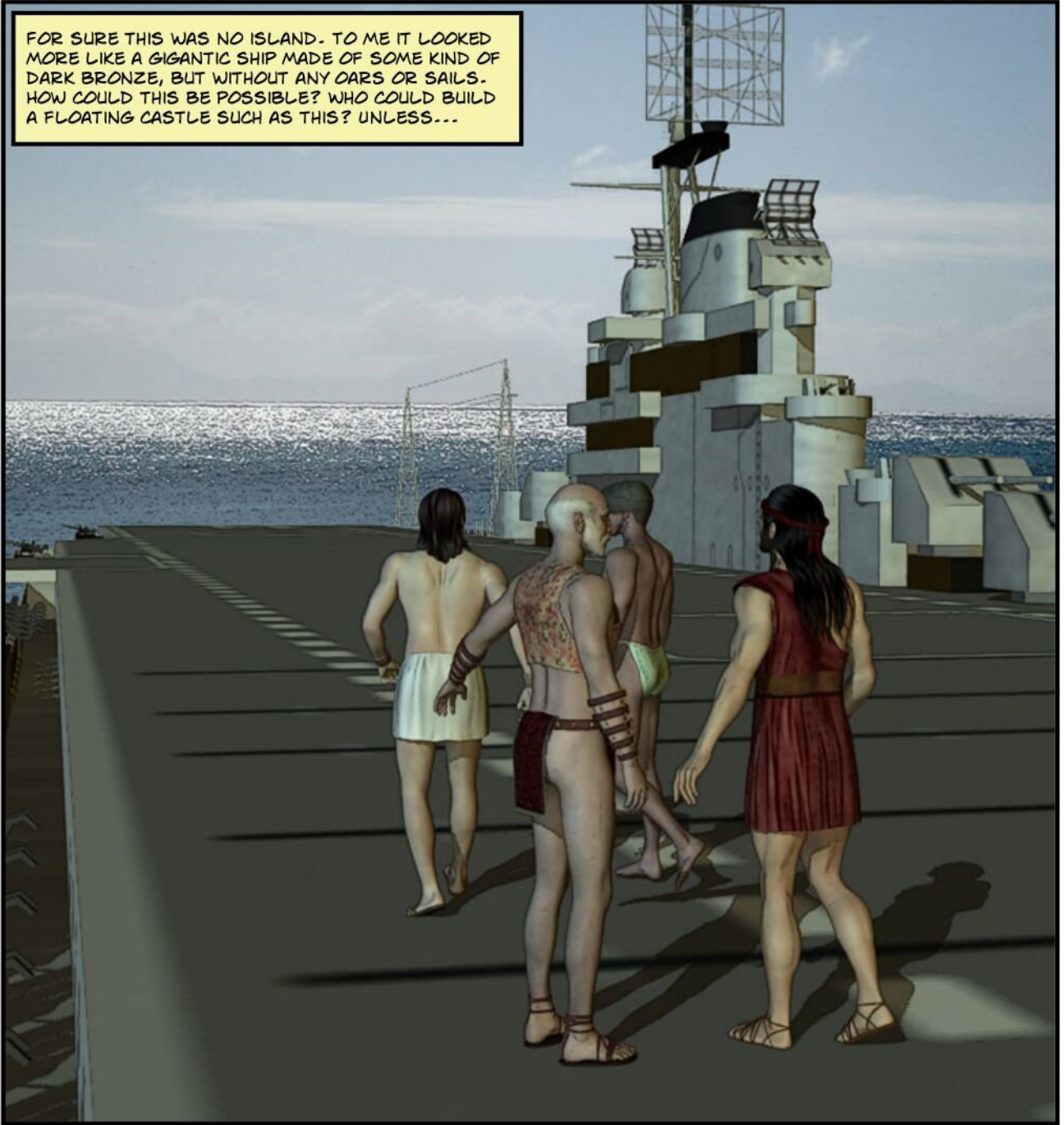
I FOUND THREE PEOPLE WAITING FOR ME THERE. THE REST OF THEM WERE GONE.





I THANKED HIM POLITELY, BUT MY MIND WAS ELSEWHERE, AS I WAS STUPEFIED FROM WHAT I COULD SEE AROUND ME.

FOR SURE THIS WAS NO ISLAND. TO ME IT LOOKED MORE LIKE A GIGANTIC SHIP MADE OF SOME KIND OF DARK BRONZE, BUT WITHOUT ANY OARS OR SAILS. HOW COULD THIS BE POSSIBLE? WHO COULD BUILD A FLOATING CASTLE SUCH AS THIS? UNLESS...





HAMON CAME ABOARD AND AEOLUS PRESENTED HIS FAMILY. HIS WIFE, AMFITHEA, HIS SIX BOYS AND SIX GIRLS, WHO, AS HE TOLD US WERE MARRIED TO EACH OTHER. WEIRD? PERHAPS, BUT BY NOW I WAS BECOMING ACCUSTOMED TO THE WAYS OF THE GODS AND THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THEM.



IN THE EVENING, AFTER SUPPER, THEY ASKED ME TO TELL MY STORY AND SO I DID, TAKING CARE OF COURSE TO OMIT THOSE PASSAGES THAT COULD SHOCK OR ALERT THEM.



ODYSSEUS, YOU CAN STAY IN AEOLIA AS LONG AS YOU WISH. WE ARE HEADING EAST, THEREFORE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION TO YOUR HOMELAND.



UNLESS YOU ARE IN A HURRY TO GET BACK HOME.



NO, MY LADY. THERE IS NO HURRY. NO HURRY AT ALL.



THE SAME EVENING HAMON CAME TO JOIN ME ON THE DECK OF THE ADMIRABLE FLOATING DEVICE.

A LOVELY NIGHT, ISN'T IT?

YES. BEAUTIFUL.

YOU COULD BRING THEM TEN AT A TIME AND LET THEM REST FOR A DAY.

YOU KNOW THEM. I CAN'T RISK TROUBLE WITH OUR HOSTS.

DO YOU THINK IT IS SAFE FOR THE CREW TO STAY DOWN THERE?

FINE... YOU FIX IT.

YOU HOPE SHE'LL COME?

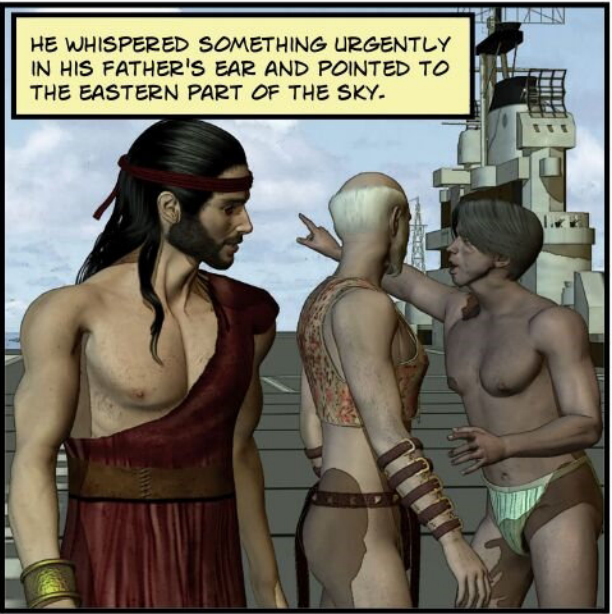
HE SHOOK HIS HEAD, BID ME GOODNIGHT AND LEFT ME ALONE TO DREAM UNDER THE STARLIT SKY.

SHE WON'T COME, HAMON. SHE WON'T COME.

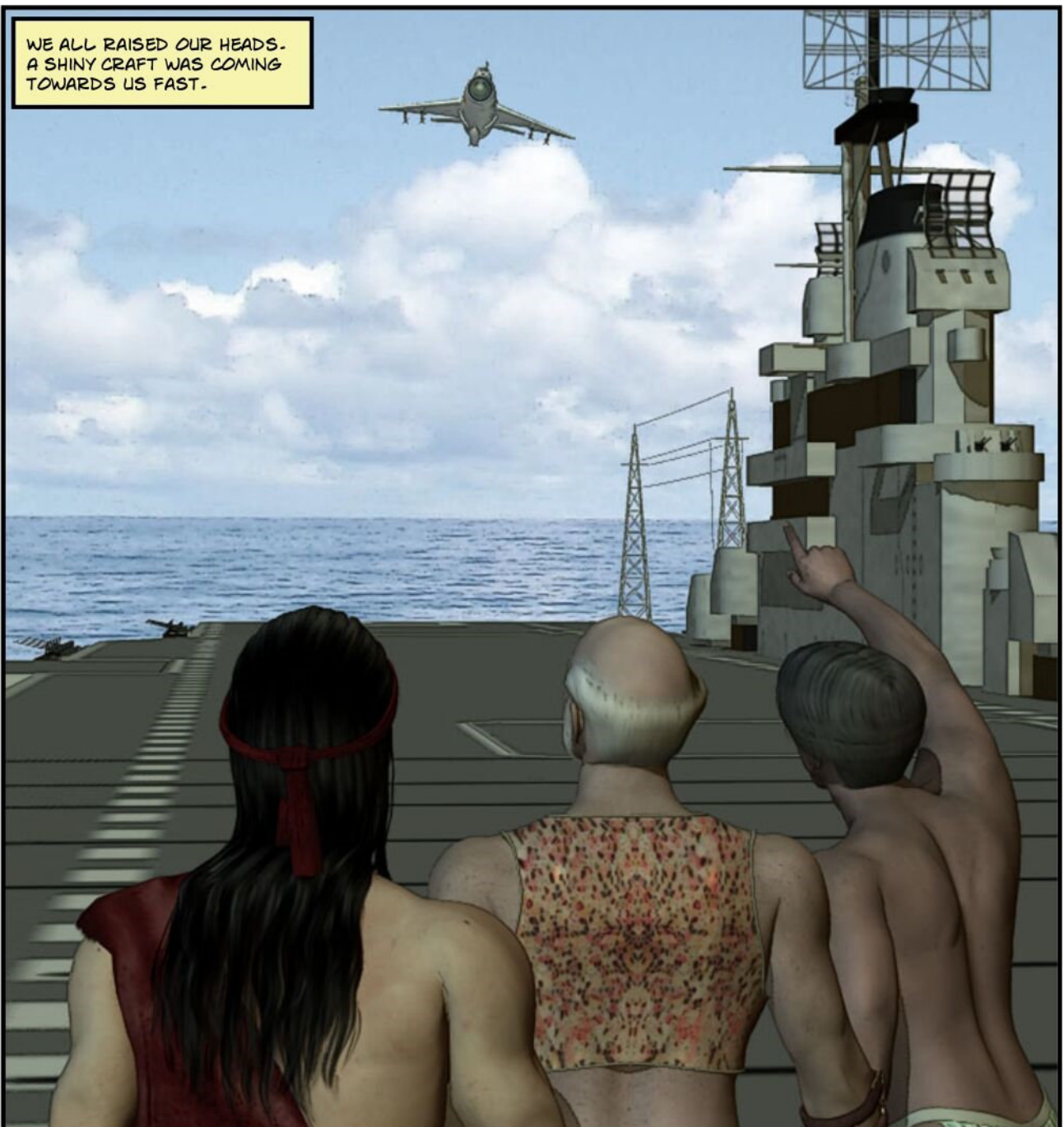
BUT EVENTS STARTED TO MOVE FASTER THAN I EXPECTED. I WAS WALKING ON THE DECK WITH AEDLOS WHEN ONE OF HIS SONS CAME RUNNING.



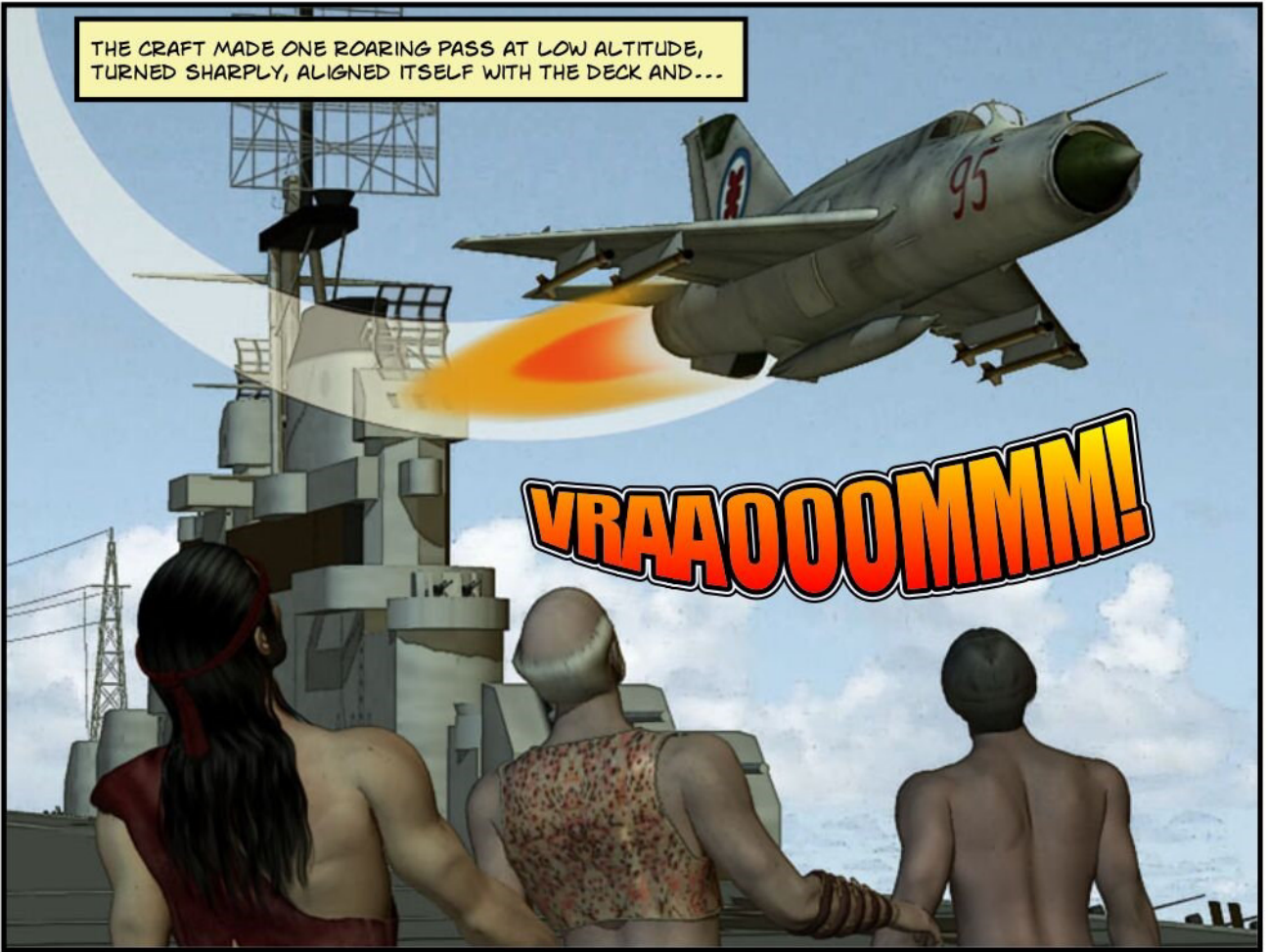
HE WHISPERED SOMETHING URGENTLY IN HIS FATHER'S EAR AND POINTED TO THE EASTERN PART OF THE SKY.



WE ALL RAISED OUR HEADS. A SHINY CRAFT WAS COMING TOWARDS US FAST.



THE CRAFT MADE ONE ROARING PASS AT LOW ALTITUDE, TURNED SHARPLY, ALIGNED ITSELF WITH THE DECK AND...



VRAA O O O M M M !

IN A TERRIBLE STORM OF FLAMES, SMOKE AND A SCREAMING SOUND LANDED AND ROLLED TILL IT CAME TO A STOP.



EEEEEE O O W W !



THE WONDERFUL FLYING CRAFT ROLLED SLOWLY ON THE DECK TOWARDS US...



A CANOPY SNAPPED OPEN AND A FIGURE CLAD IN STRANGE CLOTHES JUMPED OUT.



A TERRIBLE VOICE BOOMED IN THE AIR SHATTERING THE PEACE OF THE AFTERNOON.

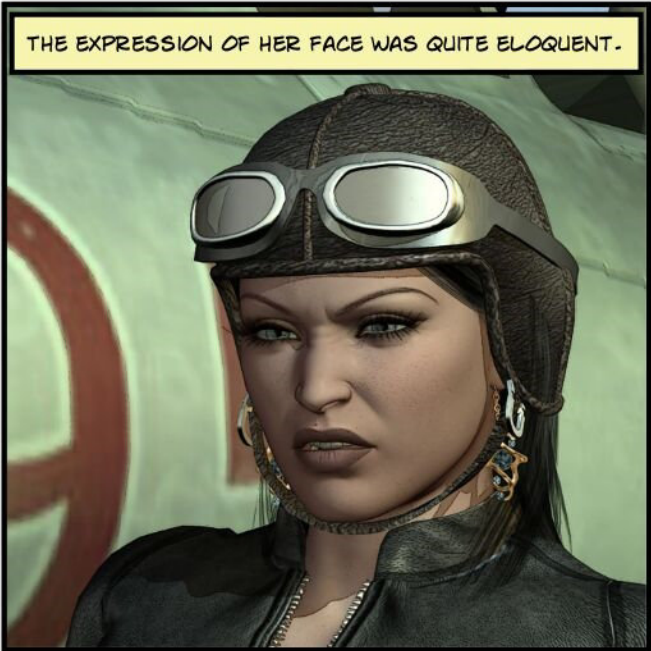
YOU,
ODYSSEUS!
COME HERE.
NOW!



SHE LOOKED TERRIBLE, YET SO MAJESTIC, IN HER ANGER.



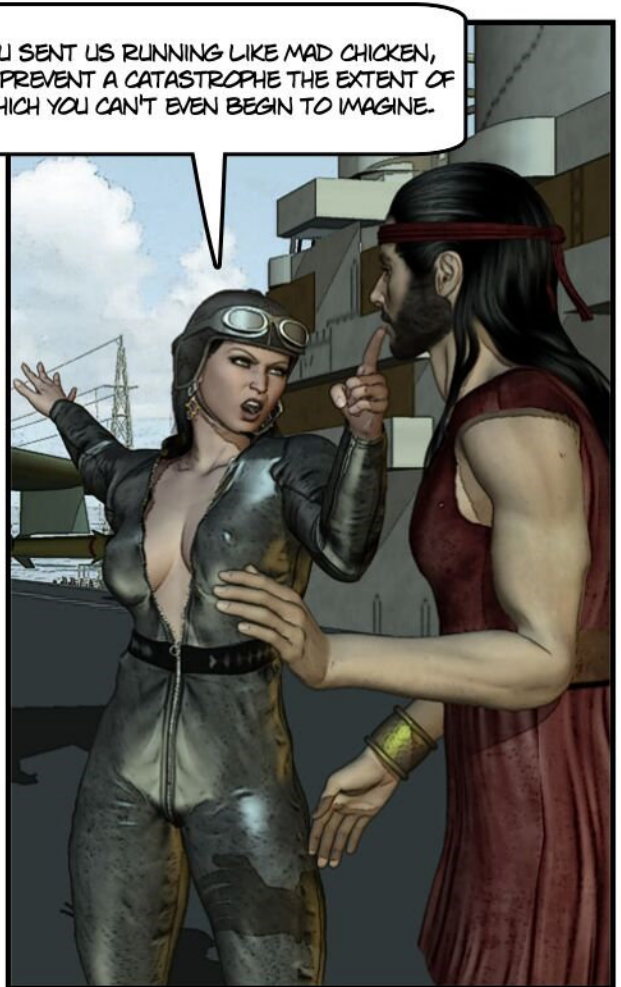
I WALKED TOWARDS HER LIKE A SOMNAMBULIST.



THE EXPRESSION OF HER FACE WAS QUITE ELOQUENT.



SO... HERE YOU ARE!





AND TO THINK THAT I WAS HELPING YOU! WHAT A BLOODY FOOL I HAVE BEEN!

SHE WAS IN A RAGE.



FROM NOW ON YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN. DO YOU HEAR? ON YOUR OWN.



THE OTHERS STILL DON'T KNOW WHO DID IT FOR THERE WERE NO SURVIVORS ON THE ISLAND. OTHERWISE...



YOU COULD TELL THEM. GIVE ME AWAY.



SHE PUNCHED ME IN THE CHEST, HER FACE TRANSFIGURED BY ANGER.

SHUT UP, YOU MISERABLE WORM. HOW DARE YOU? HOW DARE YOU! INSOLENT PEASANT!



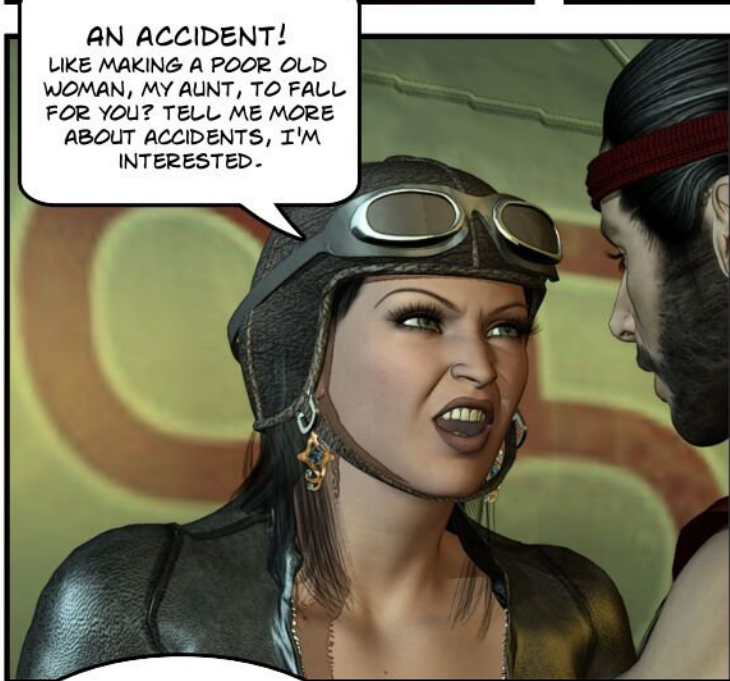
WITH DIFFICULTY I MANAGED TO GATHER MY COURAGE TOGETHER.

ATHENA. LET ME SPEAK.



NO! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THE SOUND OF YOUR UGLY VOICE. I DON'T...

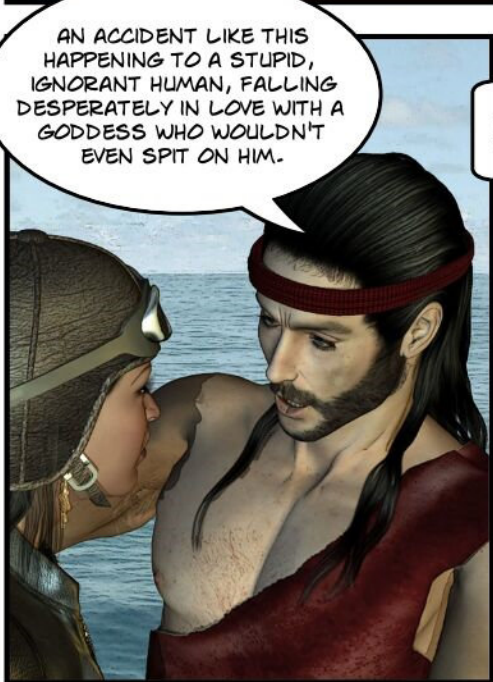
THIS THING... IT WASN'T DELIBERATE. IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT.



AN ACCIDENT! LIKE MAKING A POOR OLD WOMAN, MY AUNT, TO FALL FOR YOU? TELL ME MORE ABOUT ACCIDENTS, I'M INTERESTED.



YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT ACCIDENTS? I'LL GIVE YOU ONE EXAMPLE.



AN ACCIDENT LIKE THIS HAPPENING TO A STUPID, IGNORANT HUMAN, FALLING DESPERATELY IN LOVE WITH A GODDESS WHO WOULDN'T EVEN SPIT ON HIM.



HER EXPRESSION CHANGED AT ONCE.

WHAT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN?





AWAY, ATHENA. AWAY FROM YOU... AWAY FROM ALL THIS...



DON'T YOU FEAR MY WRATH, MORTAL?

NO, ATHENA. A MAN WHO DOESN'T FEAR DEATH HAS NOTHING TO FEAR ANY MORE.



SHE BLOCKED MY WAY IN ONE SWIFT MOVE.

WHAT IF I DON'T WANT YOU TO GO AWAY?

THEN I WILL STAY.



SHE TOOK ME BY THE HAND AND WE SAT ON A NEARBY BENCH.

TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED IN CYCLOPEA.

I GAVE HER A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS, NOT OMITTING ANYTHING.



NOW TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED WITH HESTIA.



SHE SAVED MY LIFE. I TRIED TO GIVE HER SOMETHING BACK...

AND YOU BROKE HER HEART.



DO GODS HAVE A HEART?

SHE LOOKED AT ME FOR A LONG TIME.



THEN SHE SMILED.



YOU'D BE SURPRISED!

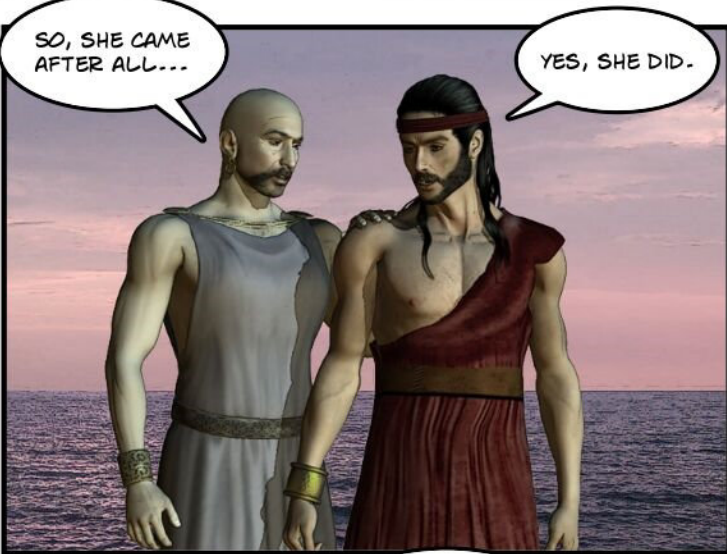


A FEW MINUTES LATER
THE CRAFT OF THE
GODDESS TOOK OFF
FROM AEOLIA AGAIN.



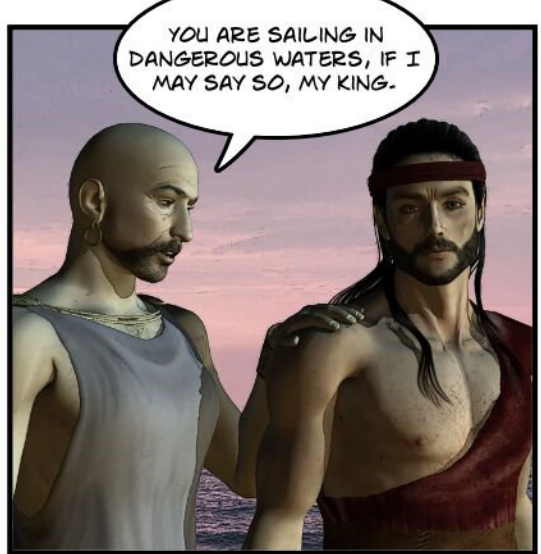
BRAAOWWWWWW

SO, SHE CAME
AFTER ALL...



YES, SHE DID.

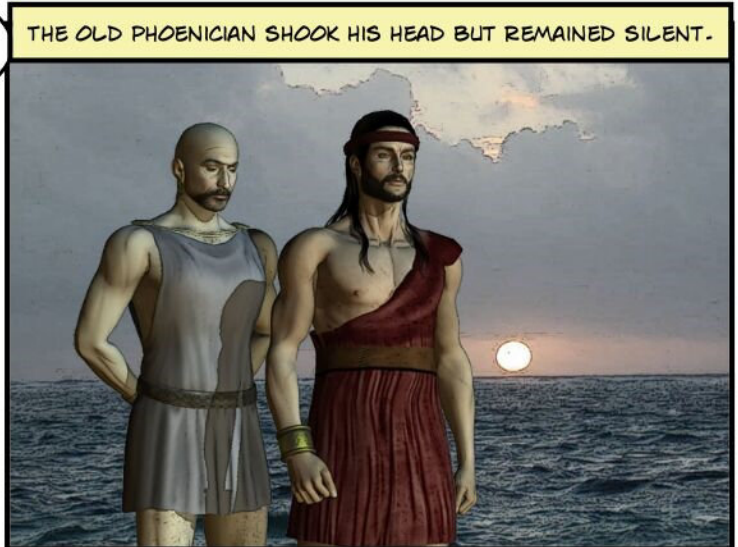
YOU ARE SAILING IN
DANGEROUS WATERS, IF I
MAY SAY SO, MY KING.



I KNOW,
HAMON. BUT I
HAVE NO CHOICE.



THE OLD PHOENICIAN SHOOK HIS HEAD BUT REMAINED SILENT.



THE SAME EVENING I HAD AN INTERESTING CHAT WITH AMFITHEA, THE WIFE OF OUR HOST.

LOVE CAN BE TORTURE AT TIMES, ODYSSEUS. BUT LOVING ONE OF "THEM" IS A FOLLY.

WOULDN'T LIFE BE WORTHLESS WITHOUT A RISK, MY LADY?

THEY ARE A STRANGE RACE, ODYSSEUS. THEIR MIND WORKS IN A VERY DIFFERENT WAY TO OURS.

YOU SEEM TO KNOW THEM WELL.

THROUGH MY HUSBAND. AND I LEARNED NOT TO TRUST THEM.

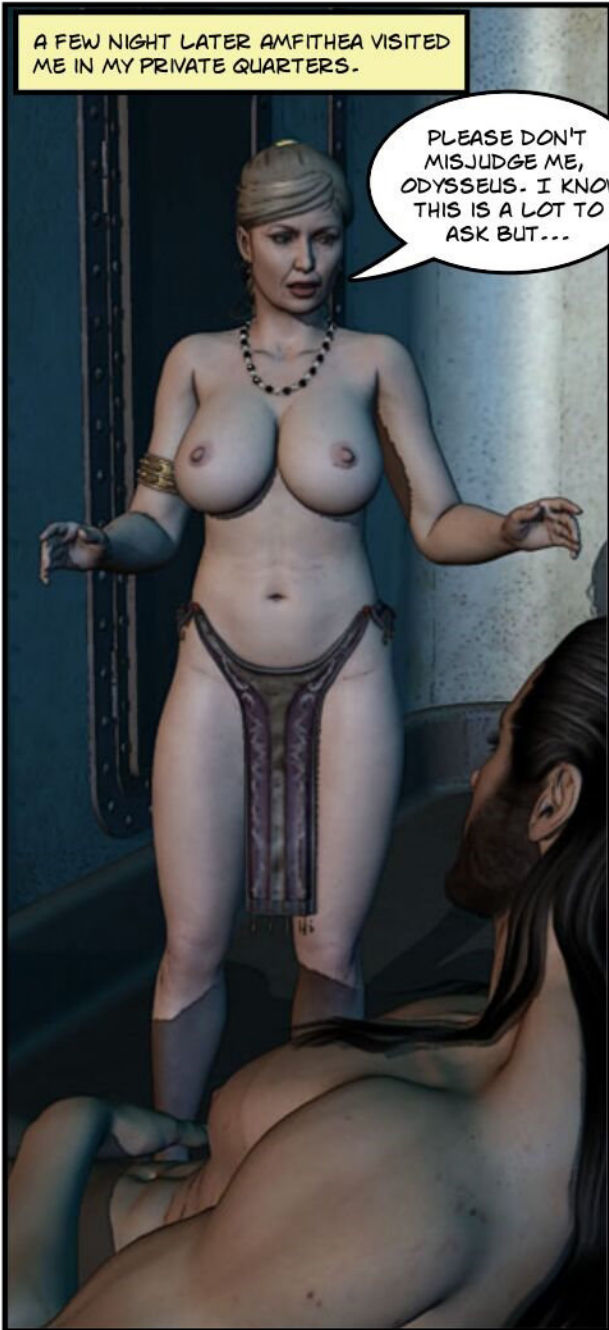
I DON'T TRUST THEM EITHER. I JUST HAPPEN TO LOVE ONE OF THEM.

WHAT CAN I SAY THEN BUT TO WISH YOU GOOD LUCK...

THANK YOU, MY LADY. I THINK I'LL NEED IT.

A FEW NIGHT LATER AMFITHEA VISITED ME IN MY PRIVATE QUARTERS.

PLEASE DON'T MISJUDGE ME, ODYSSEUS. I KNOW THIS IS A LOT TO ASK BUT...



MY HUSBAND IS OLD AND IMPOTENT AND SLEEPING WITH MY DAUGHTERS, THEIR WIVES, JEALOUS.



AM I SHOCKING YOU?

FEW THINGS CAN SHOCK ME ANY MORE, MY LADY.



THEN LET ME MAKE LOVE TO YOU AND IMAGINE THAT I AM "HER", IF YOU WISH.





I WAS GRATEFUL FOR THIS NIGHT,
SO UNEXPECTEDLY OFFERED TO ME.



HOLDING A HUMAN FEMALE IN MY ARMS AGAIN, AFTER SUCH A LONG TIME!...

THE NOCTURNAL VISIT OF AMFITHEA TRIGGERED A WAVE OF SIMILAR INCURSIONS -BY THE DAUGHTERS OF MY GRACIOUS HOSTS.



I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER THIS WAS PLANNED OR IT JUST HAPPENED; EITHER WAY I WELCOMED IT WITHOUT QUESTIONING THE ETHICS OF THIS PLEASANT IF UNUSUAL SCHEME.



THE GIRLS WERE EACH MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE OTHER.



AND MOST EAGER TO PLEASE AND BE PLEASED IN RETURN.



THE ELDEST WAS NO OLDER THAN TWENTY SIX.



WHILE THE YOUNGEST WAS NO MORE THAN FIFTEEN.





NIGHT AFTER NIGHT THEY CAME TO EXPERIENCE THE PLEASURES OF LUSTFUL LOVE WITH THE COMPLIANT -AND GRATEFUL- STRANGER.



SOMETIMES TWO AT A TIME...



SOMETIMES IN THE COMPANY OF THEIR HIGHLY EXPERIENCED MOTHER.

I WAS THRILLED, YET STILL QUITE PUZZLED WITH THIS BOLD ARRANGEMENT. ONE SUCH NIGHT I QUESTIONED THE YOUNGEST OF THE DAUGHTERS, THE FAIRY-LIKE CRYSTALEA.

ARE YOUR HUSBANDS AWARE OF THIS?

OF COURSE THEY ARE.



DON'T THEY OBJECT?

WHY SHOULD THEY? WE'RE DOING NOTHING BAD.



SHE WAS SINCERE. SHE COULDN'T SEE ANYTHING WRONG IN WHAT WAS GOING ON HERE EVERY NIGHT.

DO YOU LOVE YOUR HUSBANDS?

OF COURSE WE DO. BUT LOVE IS ONE THING AND LUST YET ANOTHER.

HOW VERY CONVENIENT!



THESE ARE OUR WAYS.

LIKE MARRYING INSIDE THE FAMILY?

ISN'T THIS A GUARANTEE THAT A UNION WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL AND HAPPY?

IS IT?



ELEOUSSA, THE ELDEST SISTER ANSWERED THIS QUESTION ADMIRABLY.

THE ADVANTAGE OF THIS ARRANGEMENT IS THAT WE CAN SWITCH PARTNERS WITHOUT ANY JEALOUSIES OR HARD FEELINGS.

BESIDES, THIS IS A REQUIREMENT IMPOSED BY THE GODS, WHO WANT TO KEEP OUR RACE AS PURE AS POSSIBLE.

IT IS SAID THAT INCESTUOUS UNIONS RESULT IN SICKNESS AMONG THE OFFSPRING.

YOUR MOTHER IS A MORTAL THOUGH.

A RARE EXCEPTION. ANYWAY, SHE SUBMITTED TO A SPECIAL TREATMENT.

NOT APPLICABLE TO THE RACE OF THE GODS. REMEMBER, WE MAY LOOK SIMILAR TO YOU BUT WE'RE VERY DIFFERENT.

JUST CURIOUS.

MEANING THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR MORTALS TO BECOME IMMORTAL?

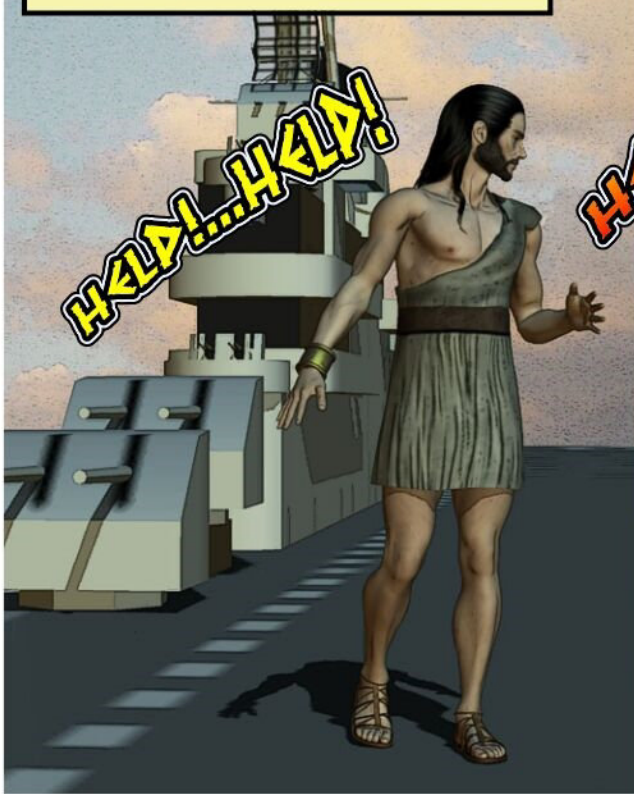
OF COURSE. ARE YOU INTERESTED, ODYSSEUS?

RIGHT. AND NOW STOP THINKING OF YOUR GODDESS SWEETHEART AND MAKE LOVE TO ME.

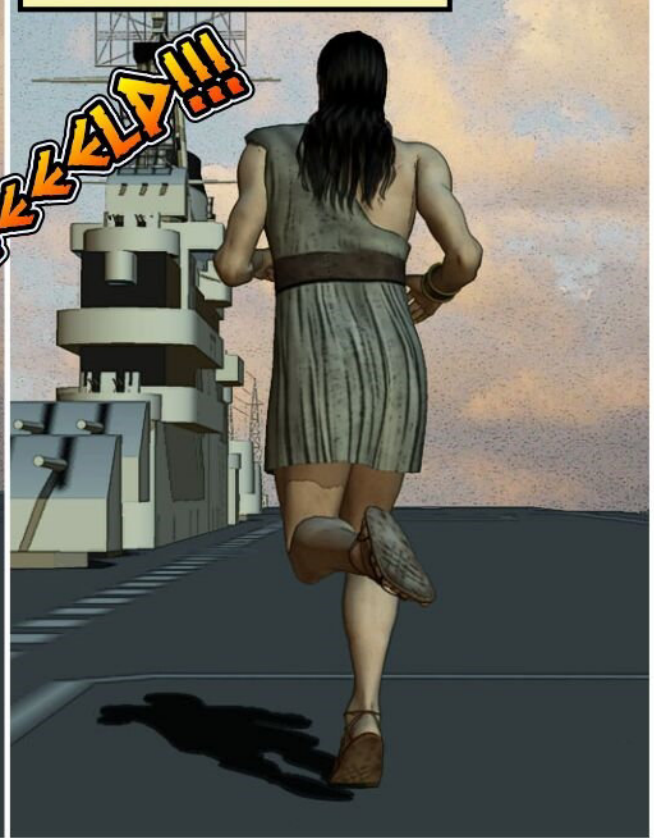
IT WAS A WONDERFUL TIME AND I ENJOYED EVERY SINGLE MOMENT, GIVING MYSELF WHOLEHEARTEDLY TO PLEASURE, FOR THIS WAY I COULD TAKE MY MIND OFF THE DARK THOUGHTS THAT HAD ROBBED ME OF MY SLEEP EVER SINCE I LEFT TROY.



TIME PASSED PLEASANTLY ON BOARD THE AEOLIA UNTIL A DISTURBING EVENT OCCURRED ONE AFTERNOON, AS I WAS TAKING A STROLL AT THE SOUTHERN DECK.



I RUSHED TO THE SPOT WHERE THE MUFFLED CRY HAD COME FROM...



...AND...



MAD WITH ANGER I GRABBED THE RASCAL AND THREW HIM HARD ONTO THE BRONZE WALL.

YOU, FILTHY WORM!



WHAT HAVE I DONE WRONG? I JUST WANTED TO HAVE SOME FUN, JUST LIKE YOU DO.



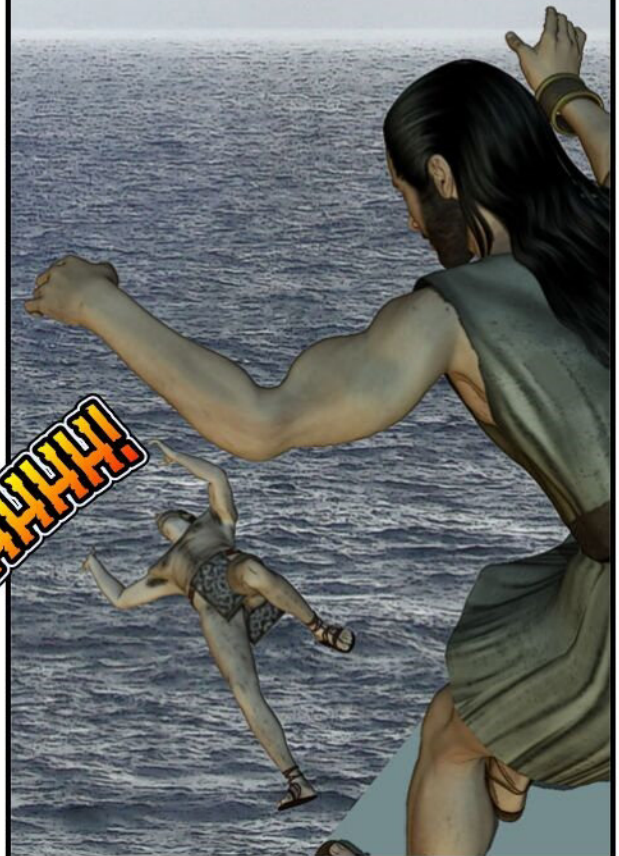
I COULDN'T CONTROL MYSELF.

NO!...NO!...



AARGHH!

ONLY WHEN I SAW THE MISERABLE WRECK PLUNGING TO HIS DEATH OVERBOARD DID I REALISE THE ENORMITY OF THIS ACT.



AAAAHHHHH!



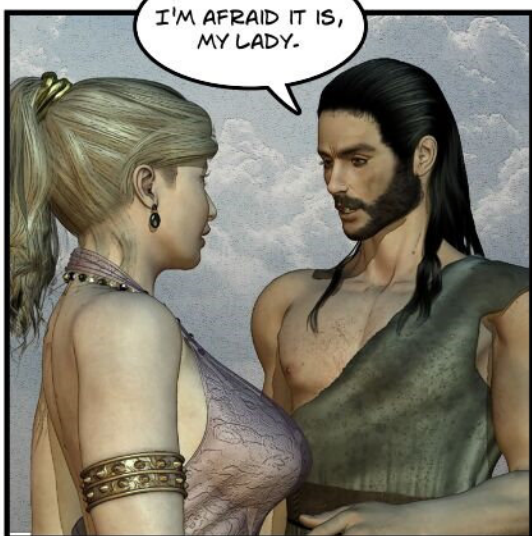
I CALLED HAMON.

PREPARE THE CREW.
WE SAIL IMMEDIATELY.



AEOLUS TRIED TO DISSUADE ME
BUT I HAD MADE UP MY MIND.

IT'S GOODBYE
THEN.



I'M AFRAID IT IS,
MY LADY.



FARE WELL,
ODYSSEUS.

AEOLUS HANDED ME OVER A MARVELLOUS NAUTICAL DEVICE.

THE NEEDLE ALWAYS POINTS DUE NORTH. THIS WAY YOU CAN'T GET LOST.

AND HERE IS A SET OF MAPS DRAWN BY THE GODS. THEY ARE SO DETAILED THAT YOU'LL FIND YOUR PATH TO ITHACA BLINDFOLDED.

AND THIS INSTRUMENT WILL GIVE YOU A WEATHER FORECAST A WEEK AHEAD, LETTING YOU KNOW WHICH WINDS WILL BE BLOWING AND FOR WHAT DURATION.

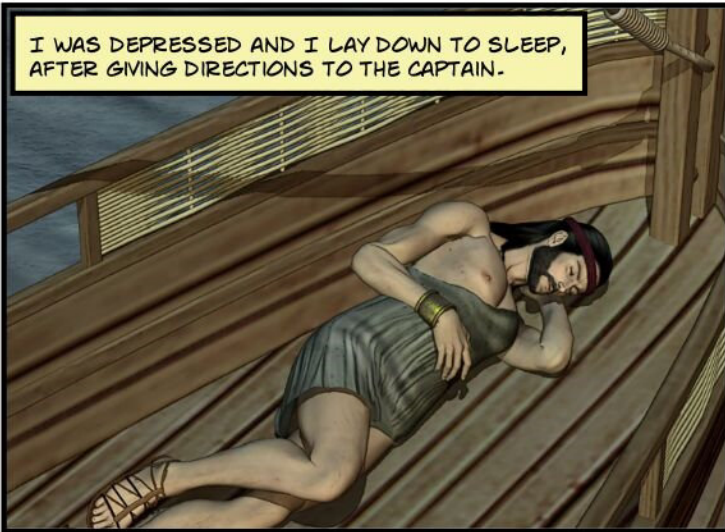
FARE WELL, MY FRIEND. MAY FATE BE FAVOURABLE TO YOU.

THANK YOU, AEOLUS. I SHALL NEVER FORGET YOUR KINDNESS.

WE SAILED AT DUSK, HEADING EAST ONCE AGAIN.



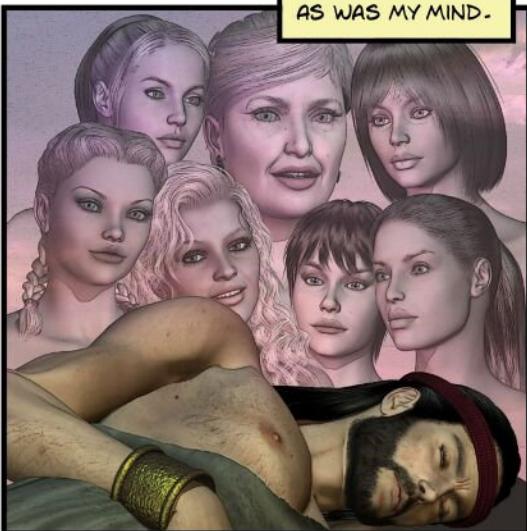
I WAS DEPRESSED AND I LAY DOWN TO SLEEP, AFTER GIVING DIRECTIONS TO THE CAPTAIN.



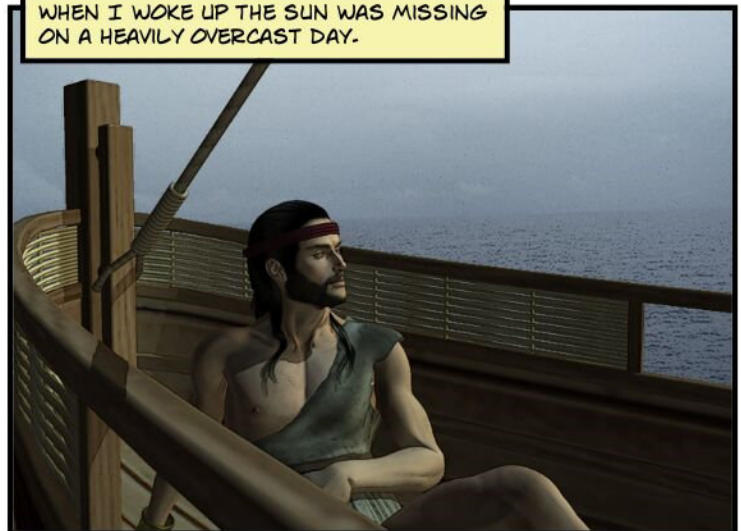
MY DREAMS WERE TORMENTED.

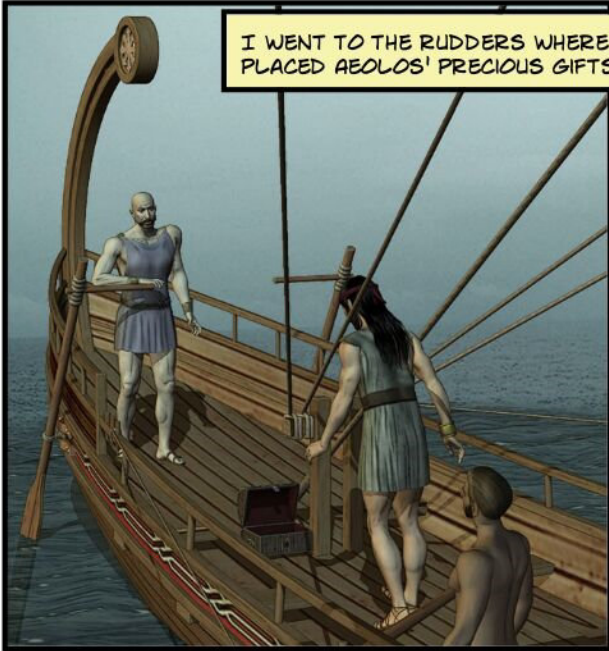


AS WAS MY MIND.



WHEN I WOKE UP THE SUN WAS MISSING ON A HEAVILY OVERCAST DAY.





I WENT TO THE RUDDERS WHERE I HAD PLACED AEOLUS' PRECIOUS GIFTS.



A PAINFUL SURPRISE AWAITED ME THERE.



THEY OPENED IT WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING. THE MAPS BLEW OVERBOARD AND THE INSTRUMENTS WERE BROKEN.



WHY WOULD THEY DO A THING LIKE THAT?

THEY THOUGHT THE BOX CONTAINED TREASURES.

I FELT NO ANGER. ON THE CONTRARY, A STRANGE SENSE OF RELIEF FLOODED MY ENTIRE BEING.



THERE IS A GALE COMING FROM THE EAST, ODYSSEUS. WHAT SHALL I DO?

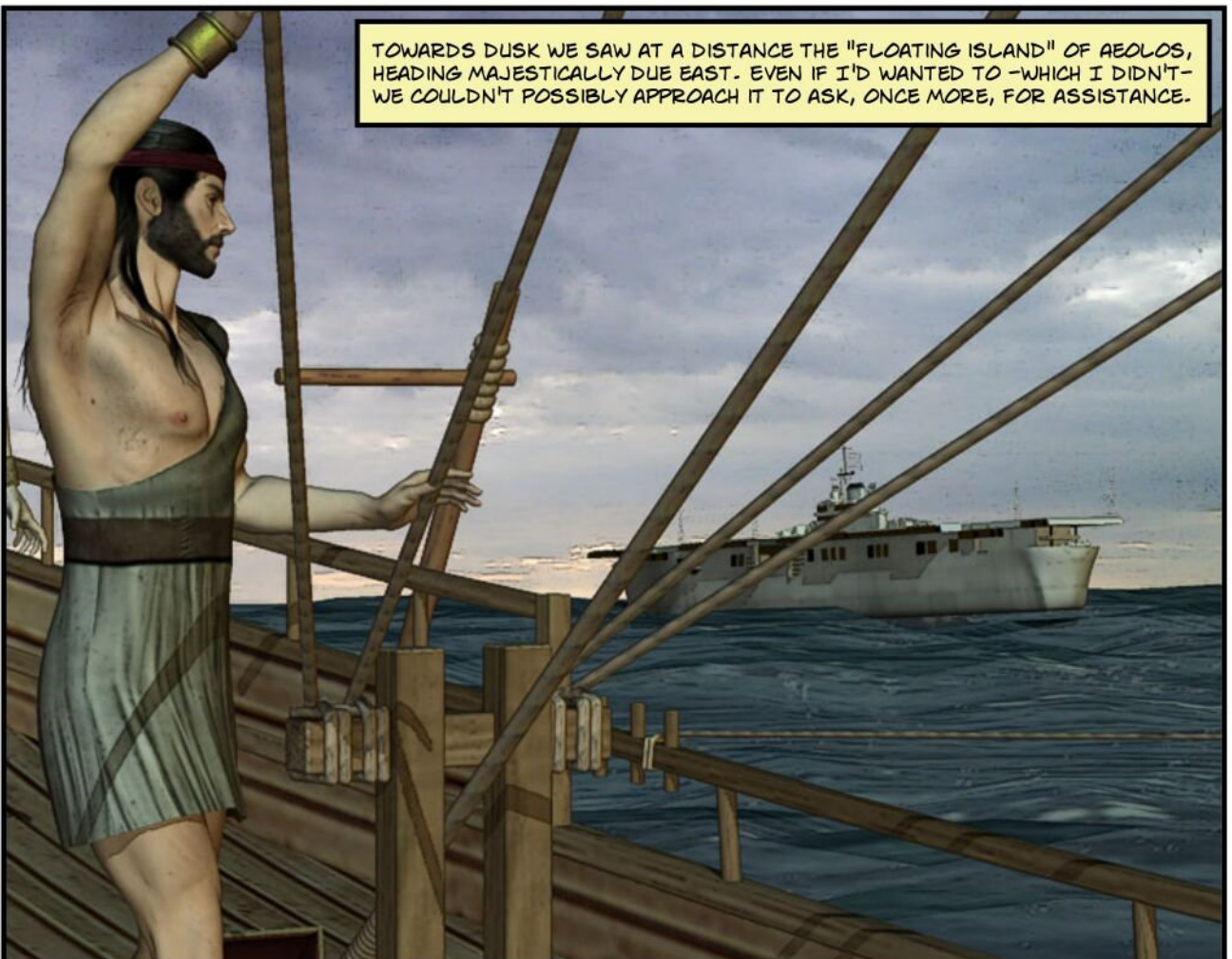


NOTHING. LET IT BLOW US IN WHICHEVER DIRECTION IT GOES.

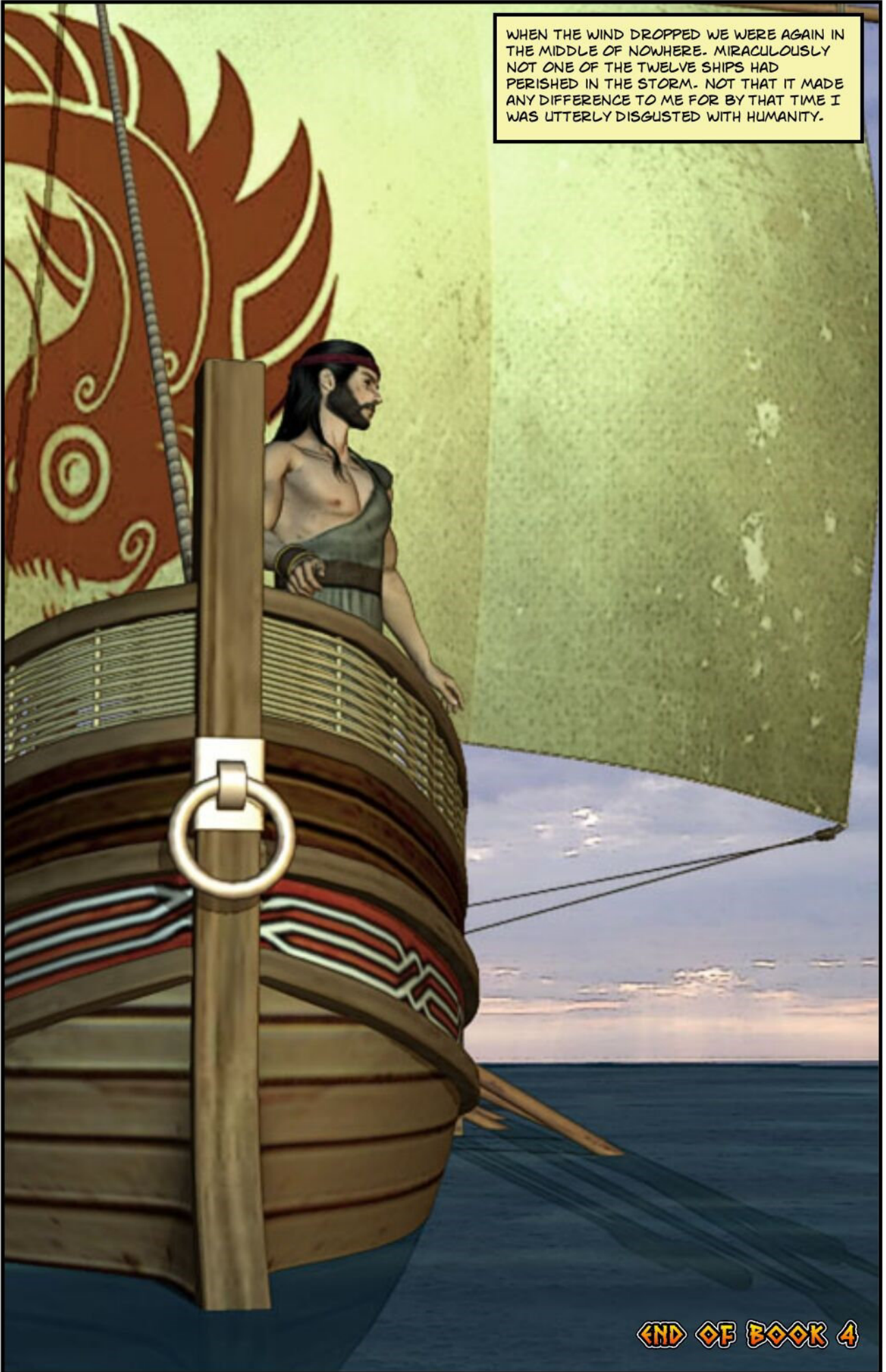
THE GALE BLEW US STEADILY WESTWARDS.



TOWARDS DUSK WE SAW AT A DISTANCE THE "FLOATING ISLAND" OF AEOLUS, HEADING MAJESTICALLY DUE EAST. EVEN IF I'D WANTED TO -WHICH I DIDN'T- WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY APPROACH IT TO ASK, ONCE MORE, FOR ASSISTANCE.



WHEN THE WIND DROPPED WE WERE AGAIN IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. MIRACULOUSLY NOT ONE OF THE TWELVE SHIPS HAD PERISHED IN THE STORM. NOT THAT IT MADE ANY DIFFERENCE TO ME FOR BY THAT TIME I WAS UTTERLY DISGUSTED WITH HUMANITY.



END OF BOOK 4



