

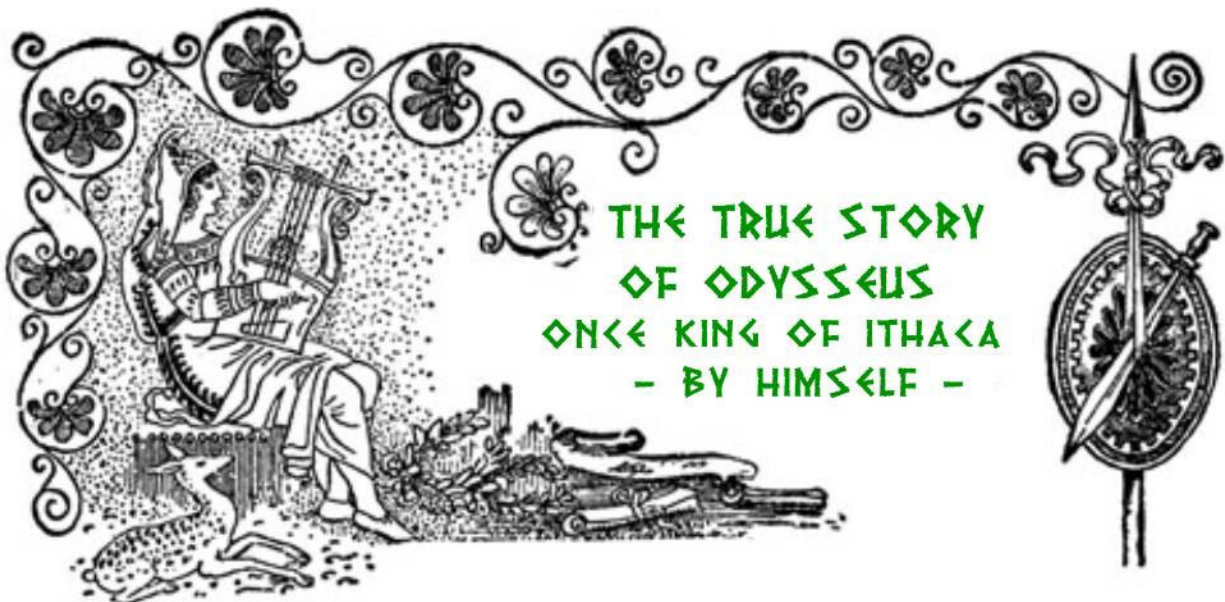
THE TRUE STORY OF ODYSSEUS, ONCE KING OF ITHACA  
- BY HIMSELF -

----- BOOK 8 -----  
**ON THE ISLAND OF THE SIRENS**



Panko





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SCRIPT AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY PANKO



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Homer, "The Odyssey", xii 39-46

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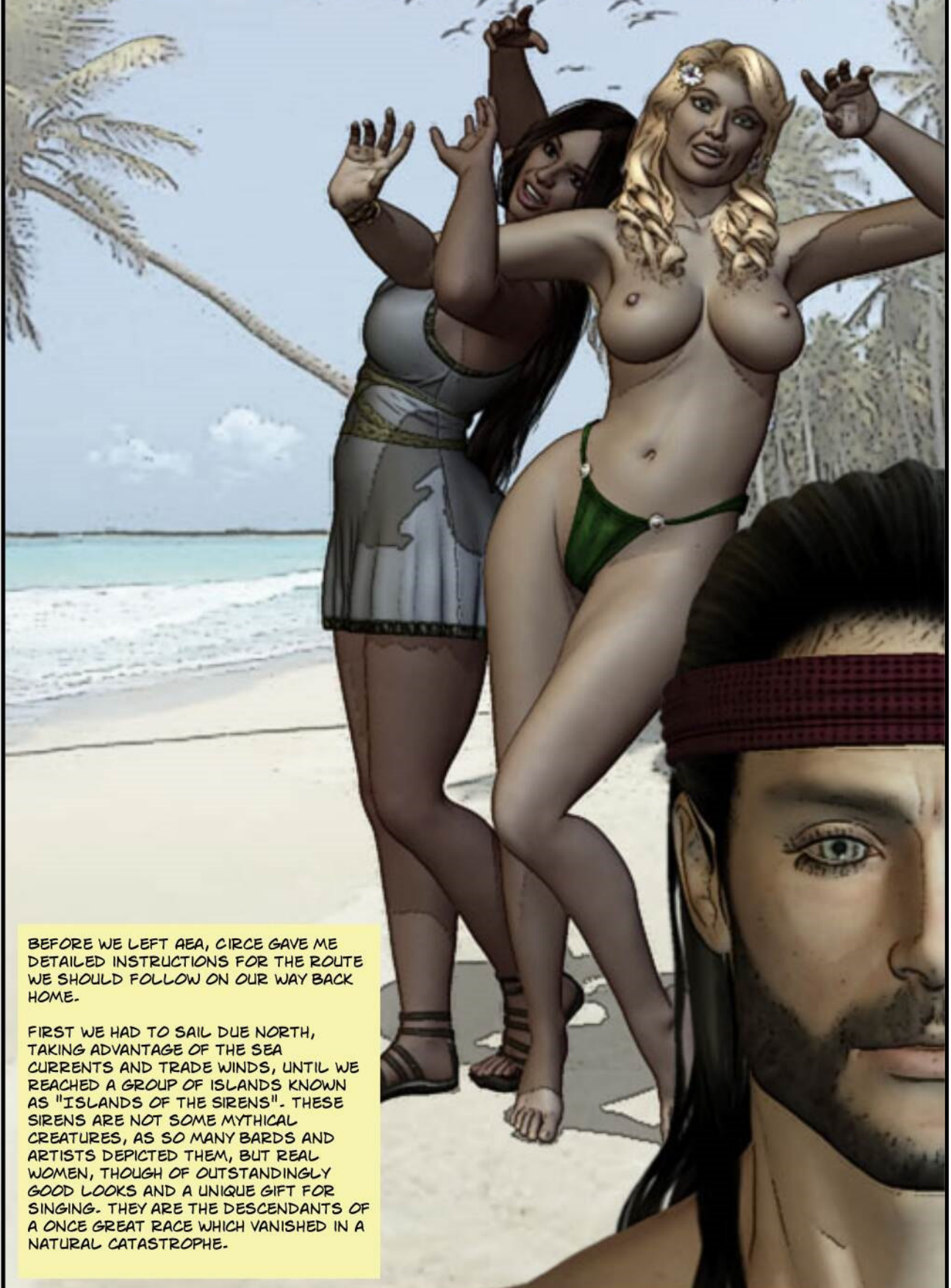
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# BOOK 8

## ON THE ISLAND OF THE SIRENS



BEFORE WE LEFT AEA, CIRCE GAVE ME DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ROUTE WE SHOULD FOLLOW ON OUR WAY BACK HOME.

FIRST WE HAD TO SAIL DUE NORTH, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SEA CURRENTS AND TRADE WINDS, UNTIL WE REACHED A GROUP OF ISLANDS KNOWN AS "ISLANDS OF THE SIRENS". THESE SIRENS ARE NOT SOME MYTHICAL CREATURES, AS SO MANY BARDS AND ARTISTS DEPICTED THEM, BUT REAL WOMEN, THOUGH OF OUTSTANDINGLY GOOD LOOKS AND A UNIQUE GIFT FOR SINGING. THEY ARE THE DESCENDANTS OF A ONCE GREAT RACE WHICH VANISHED IN A NATURAL CATASTROPHE.



THEY LIVE ON A GROUP OF SMALL ISLANDS, OUT, ON THE OCEAN, WHICH ARE ALL THAT REMAIN FROM THEIR ORIGINAL HOMELAND, A HUGE CONTINENT THAT SANK BELOW THE WAVES THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO.

THEY BELONG TO A DEGENERATE TRIBE WHO REVERTED TO CANNIBALISM AND LOST THE CULTURE THEY ONCE POSSESSED AND THIS IS WHAT MAKES THEM EXTREMELY DANGEROUS TO UNSUSPECTING TRAVELLERS. IN THIS TRIBE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN DISPROPORTIONALLY EXCEEDS THE NUMBER OF MEN, THEREFORE THEY FACE A PROBLEM PERTAINING TO THEIR SURVIVAL AND PERPETRATION OF THE RACE.

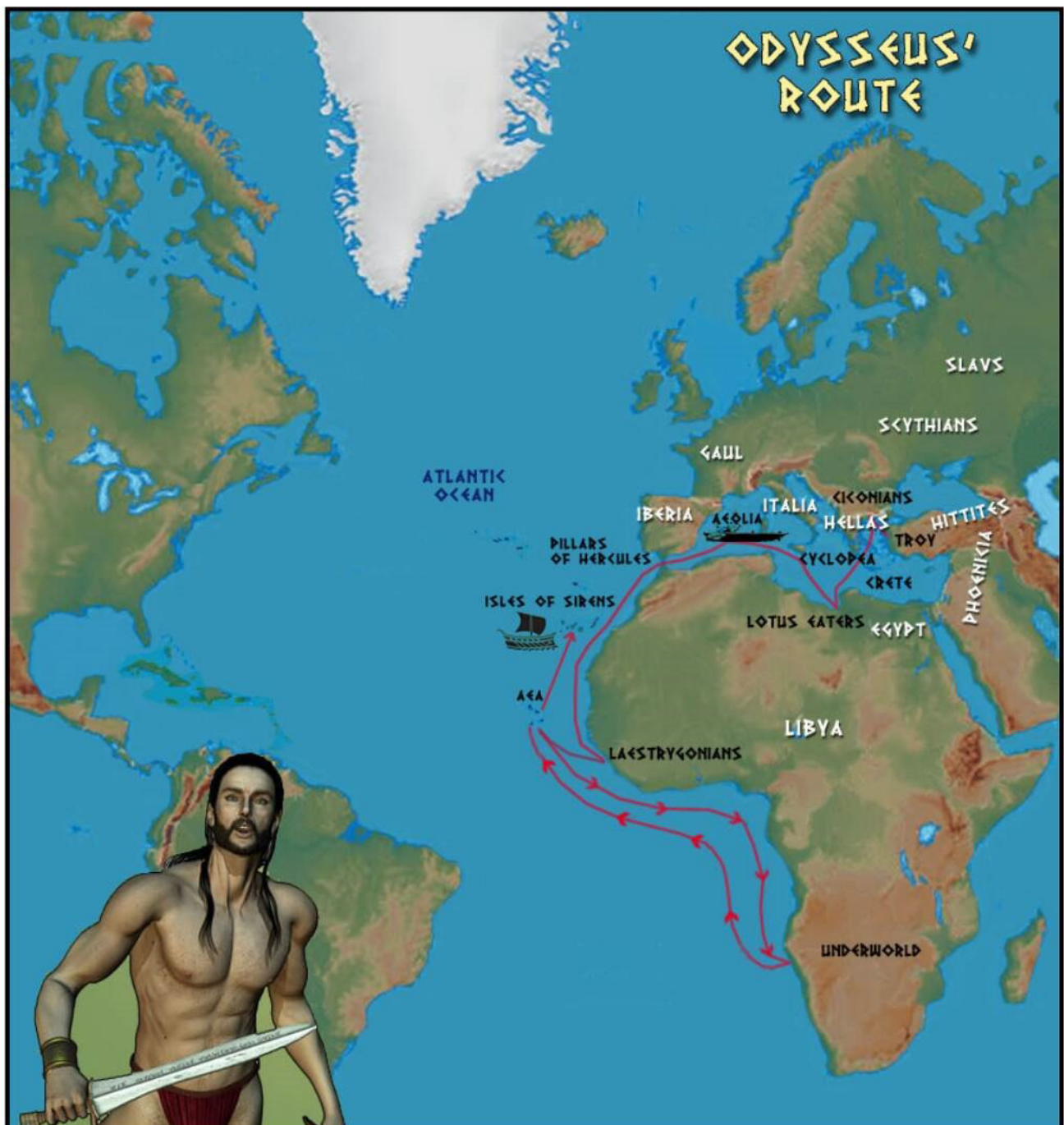
HERE IS WHAT THEY DO IN ORDER TO INFUSE NEW MALE MEMBERS, NEW BLOOD, INTO THEIR SOCIETY.

WHEN A SHIP COMES CLOSE TO THE COAST ALL THE WOMEN RUSH DOWN TO THE BEACH AND THERE, NAKED, START THEIR SINGING AND DANCING, TO LURE THE SAILORS AND MAKE THEM COME ASHORE.

THEN THEY FEED THEM AND OFFER THEM THE PRIVILEGES OF HOSPITALITY AND WHEN THEY ARE SURE THAT THEY ARE PREGNANT THEY KILL THE UNFORTUNATE, UNSUSPECTING MEN AND FEAST ON THEIR FLESH.

WE WERE LUCKY TO HAVE MISSED THOSE ACCURSED ISLANDS ON OUR WAY DOWN TO AEA, FOR THE WINDS HAD PUSHED US FAR OUT IN THE SEA, AVOIDING THIS WHOLE AREA, BUT NOW THAT THE CURRENT WAS TAKING US STRAIGHT THROUGH THE ISLANDS OUR ONLY CHANCE WAS TO KEEP GOING.

I HAD INFORMED THE CREW ABOUT THIS SITUATION AND THEY ALL AGREED THAT WE MUST, AT ANY COST, RESIST THE TEMPTATION. HOWEVER, KNOWING THEM ONLY TOO WELL BY NOW, I WAS UNDER NO ILLUSION AS TO THEIR REACTION WHEN THE TIME CAME.





WE CAME INTO VIEW OF ANTHEMOESSA, THE LARGEST OF THE SIREN ISLANDS, EARLY IN THE AFTERNOON. I ASKED HAMON IF WE COULD CROSS THROUGH THE CHANNELS DURING THE NIGHT.



NO WAY! THESE WATERS ARE TREACHEROUS. IT WOULD AMOUNT TO SUICIDE TO SAIL THROUGH THEM IN THE DARK.



CAN WE STAY ALOFT FOR THE NIGHT AND WAIT FOR THE FIRST LIGHT IN THE OPEN SEA?



NO. THE SEA IS SWELLING. WE SHOULD SEEK THE PROTECTION OF THE BAY.



IT CAN'T BE HELPED THEN. TAKE US IN AND LET'S HOPE FOR THE BEST.





WE ENTERED THE CALM WATERS OF THE BAY AS NIGHT WAS SETTING. WITH LUCK THEY WOULDN'T SEE US.



BUT THEY DID AND SOON A SONG, SUCH AS MY EARS HAD NEVER HEARD BEFORE, ROSE FROM THE SHORE AND CAME TO ENVELOP, LIKE A LOVING WOMAN'S CARESS, OUR SEA BATTERED SHIP.





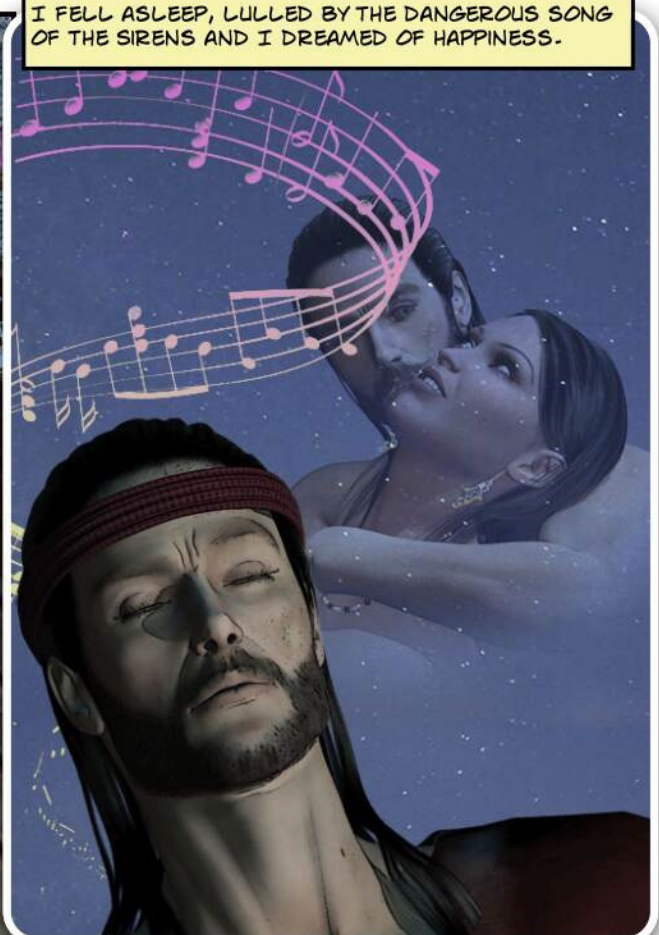
JUDGING BY THE REACTION OF THE CREW I KNEW THAT THE DAY AHEAD OF US WASN'T GOING TO BE AN EASY ONE.



I WENT TO LAY ON THE PROW, SCANNING THE STARLIT SKY WITH LONGING... BUT I FOUND IT TO BE DESPERATELY EMPTY.



I FELL ASLEEP, LULLED BY THE DANGEROUS SONG OF THE SIRENS AND I DREAMED OF HAPPINESS.



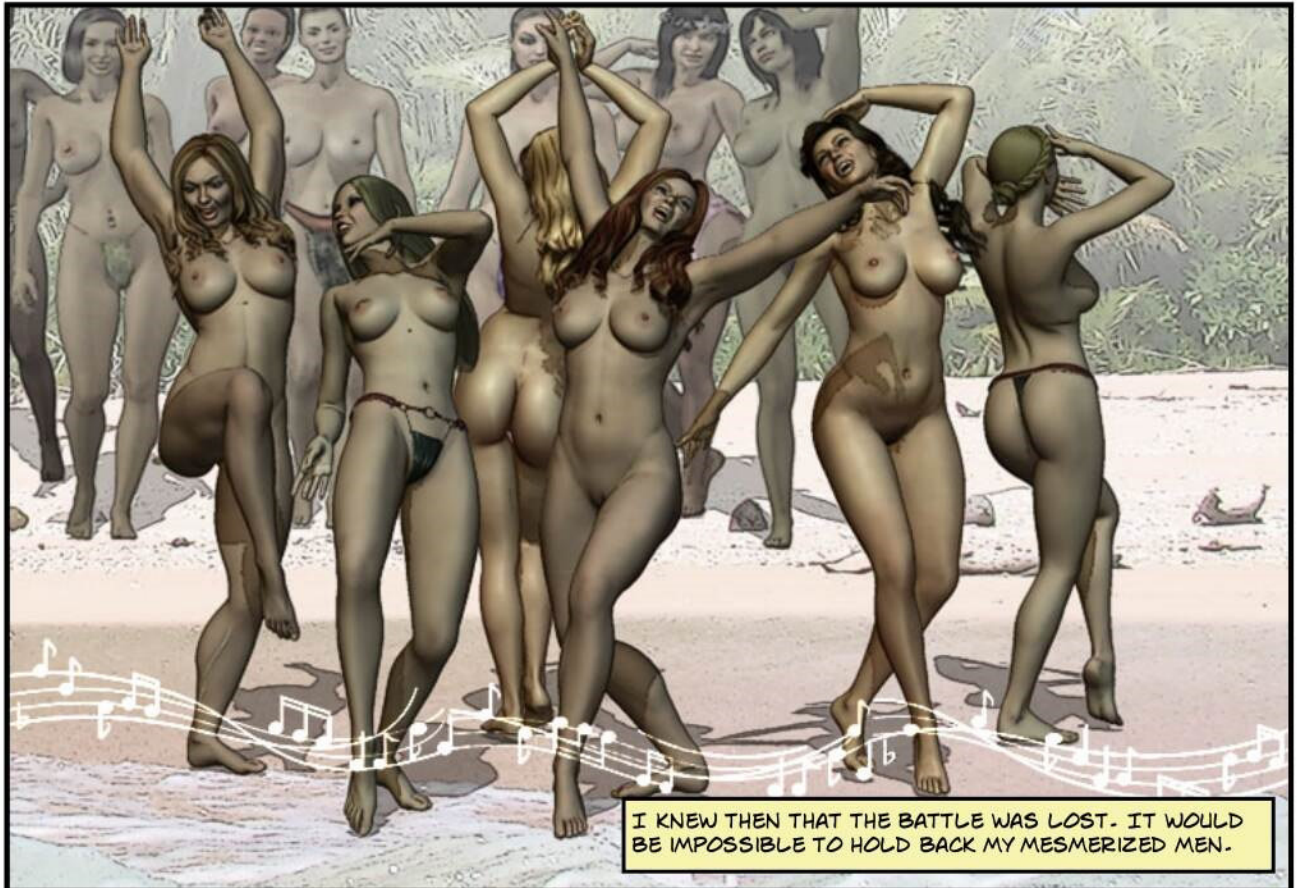


WHEN THE SUN ROSE FROM THE WATERY DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN AN INCREDIBLE SCENE WAS DISPLAYED IN FRONT OF OUR INCREDULOUS EYES.

OOOOOH!!!  
LOOK!







I KNEW THEN THAT THE BATTLE WAS LOST. IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO HOLD BACK MY MESMERIZED MEN.

EURYLOCHUS WAS THE FIRST TO JUMP OVERBOARD AND SWIM TO THE FLOWERY BAY.



HE WAS AT ONCE IMITATED BY OTHERS.

AND THEN MORE...



UNTIL, ONLY THE CAPTAIN AND I REMAINED ON THE SHIP.

WHAT SHALL WE DO, MY KING?



NOTHING. WE WAIT.







FROM THE DECK I WATCHED THE MEN DANCING WITH THESE STRANGE GIRLS ON THE BEACH.



SUDDENLY, I HEARD A SPLASH IN THE WATER AT THE SIDE OF THE SHIP AND I TURNED ALARMED.



A NAKED GIRL WAS CLIMBING UP THE RAILS.





SHE CLIMBED ABOARD AND I HAD MY BREATH KNOCKED OUT OF ME IN THE PRESENCE OF SUCH A BEAUTY.











SHE LAUGHED AND HER LAUGHTER WAS AS MELODIOUS AS HER VOICE.







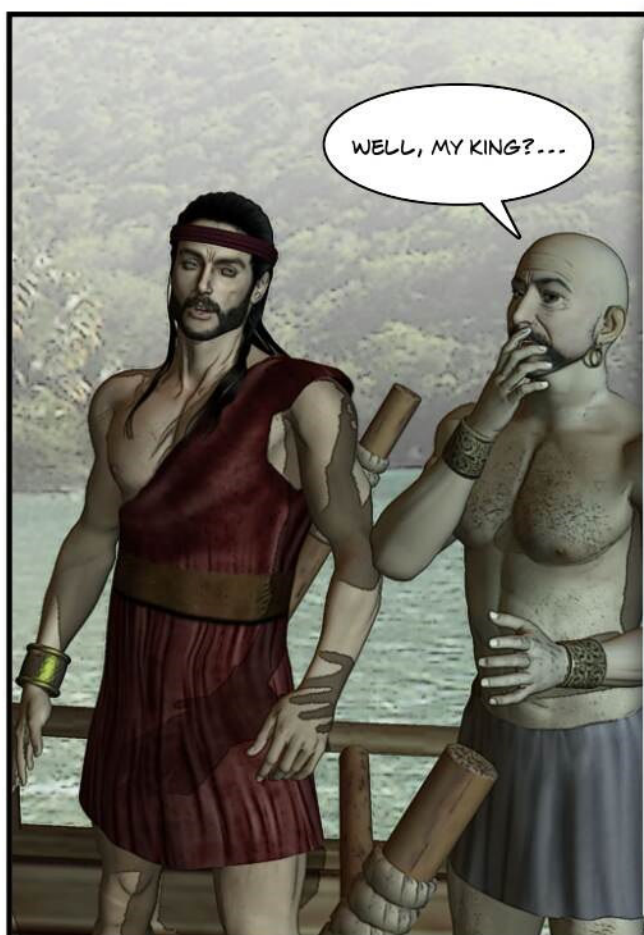
BUT WE ARE A DYING RACE. FEW MEN ARE LEFT AMONG US AND MOST OF THEM CEASED TO BE FERTILE.



WHAT WAS THERE TO DO? WE INVITED THE PASSING TRAVELLERS TO HELP US SURVIVE. IS THAT SO WRONG?

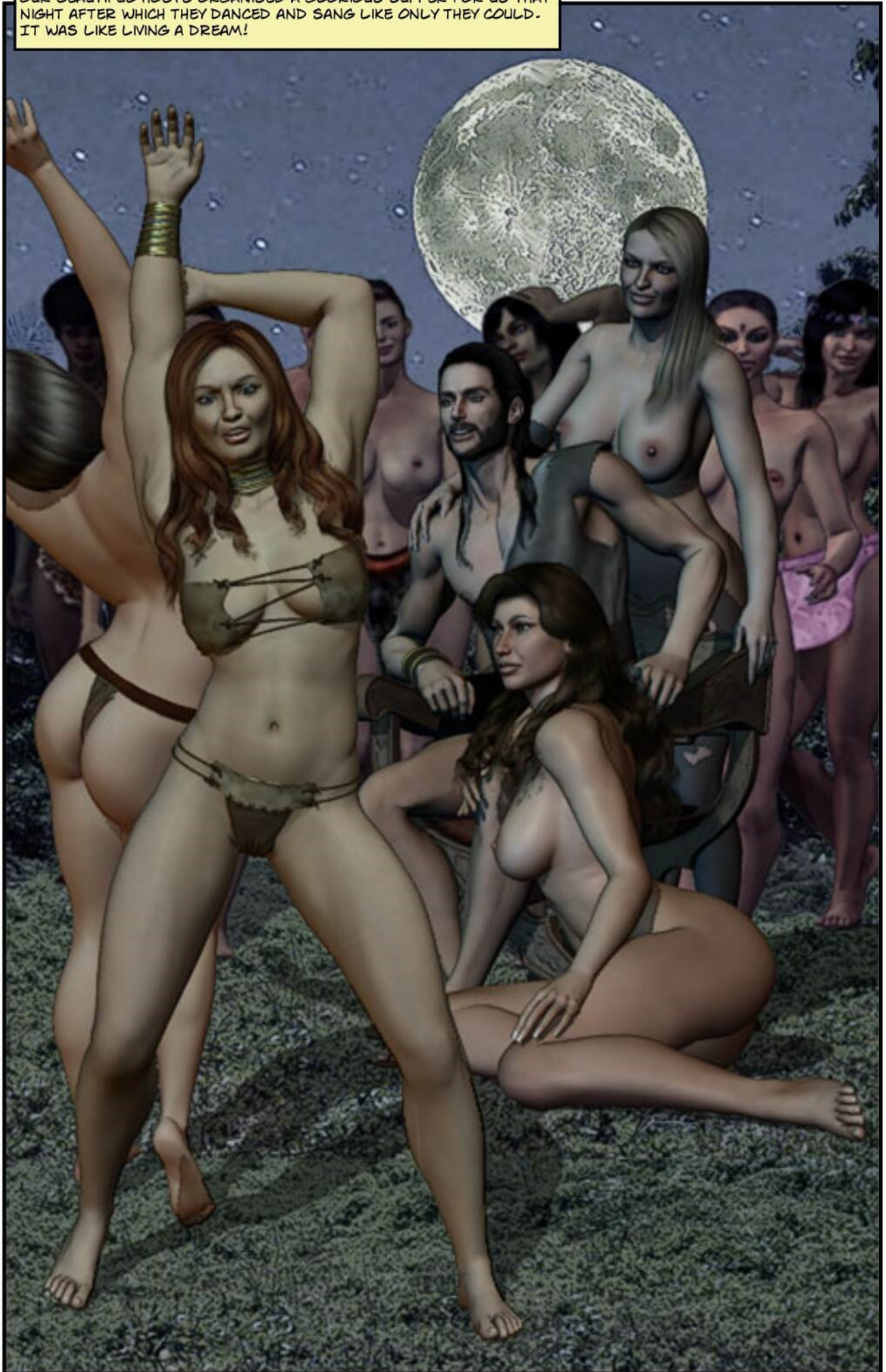








OUR BEAUTIFUL HOSTS ORGANISED A GLORIOUS SUPPER FOR US THAT NIGHT AFTER WHICH THEY DANCED AND SANG LIKE ONLY THEY COULD. IT WAS LIKE LIVING A DREAM!





PEISINOE CAME TO SIT NEXT TO ME.

I SEE, ODYSSEUS,  
THAT YOU FINALLY  
CHANGED YOUR MIND.

IT REMAINS TO BE  
SEEN WHO IS RIGHT  
AND WHO IS WRONG,  
PEISINOE.

SUIT YOURSELF, ODYSSEUS.  
TIME WILL TELL.

I SLEPT ON THE SHIP THAT NIGHT, WITH MY SWORD AT  
MY SIDE, WONDERING WHETHER THE BEAUTIFUL SIREN  
WASN'T AS SINCERE AS SHE APPEARED TO BE.



THE NEXT MORNING PEISINOE  
TOOK ME OUT FOR A WALK,  
TO SHOW ME HER ISLAND.



IT WAS A STRANGE AND WONDROUS PLACE.









SHE TOOK ME TO VISIT OTHER PLACES. AND WHEREVER WE WENT THE VESTIGES OF THE PAST REVEALED THE GRANDEUR OF THIS LOST CIVILISATION.



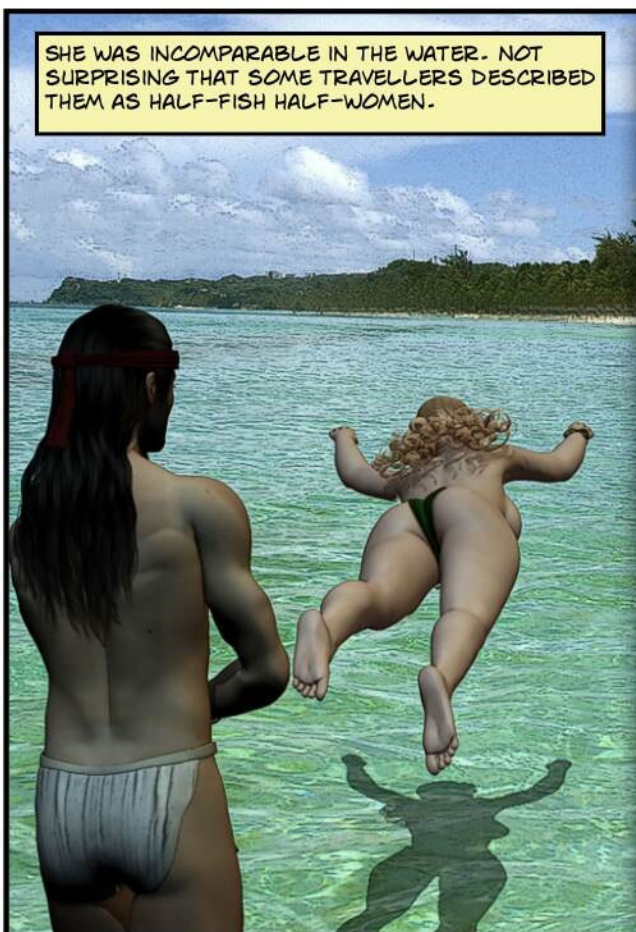


SHE THEN TOOK ME TO A PLEASANT BEACH FOR A SWIM.

WOULD YOU JOIN ME? UNLESS YOU ARE AFRAID THAT I MIGHT DROWN YOU...



SHE WAS INCOMPARABLE IN THE WATER. NOT SURPRISING THAT SOME TRAVELLERS DESCRIBED THEM AS HALF-FISH HALF-WOMEN.



THE TRUTH IS THAT IN THE WATER PEISINOE SEEMED TO BE IN HER NATURAL ELEMENT.

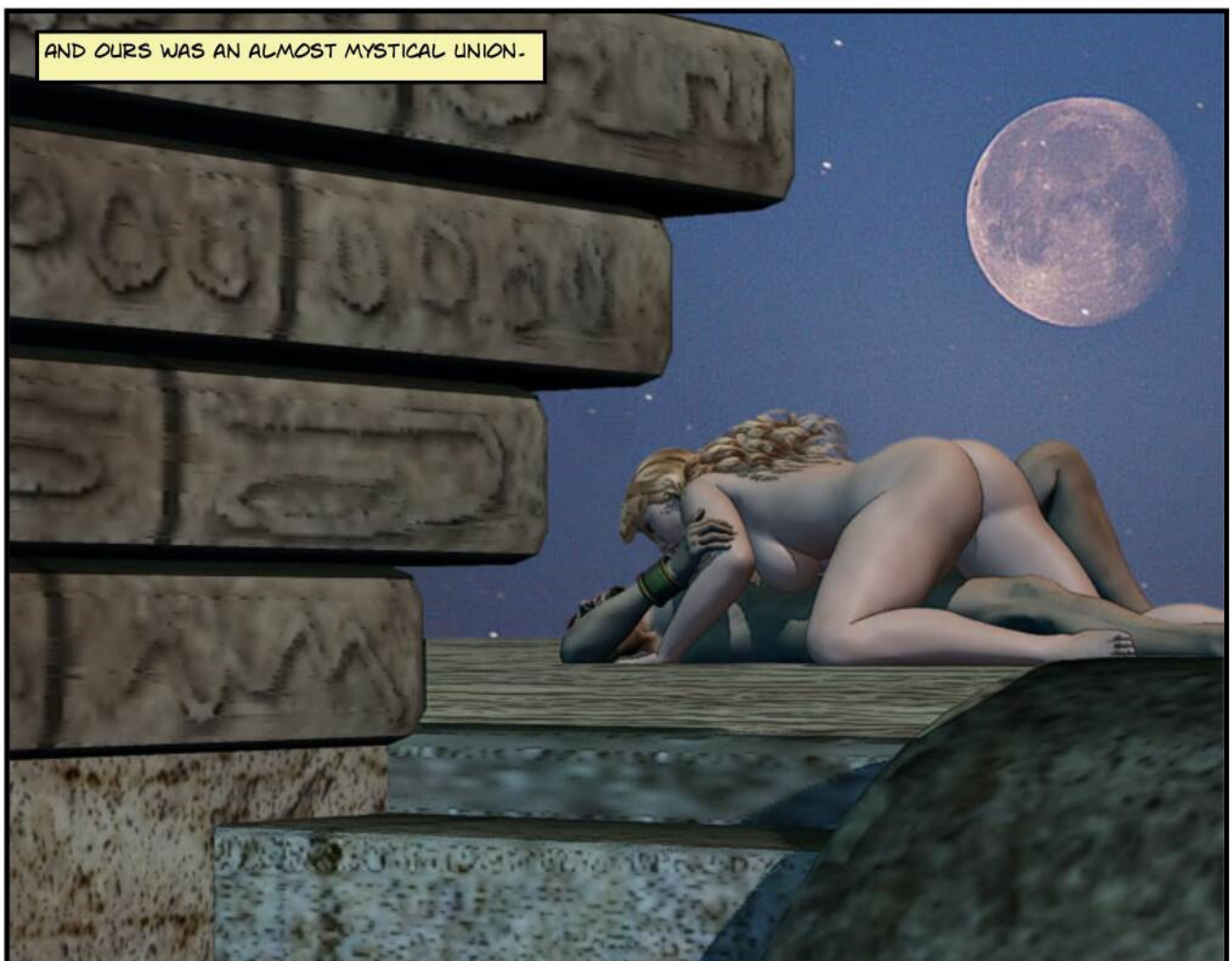
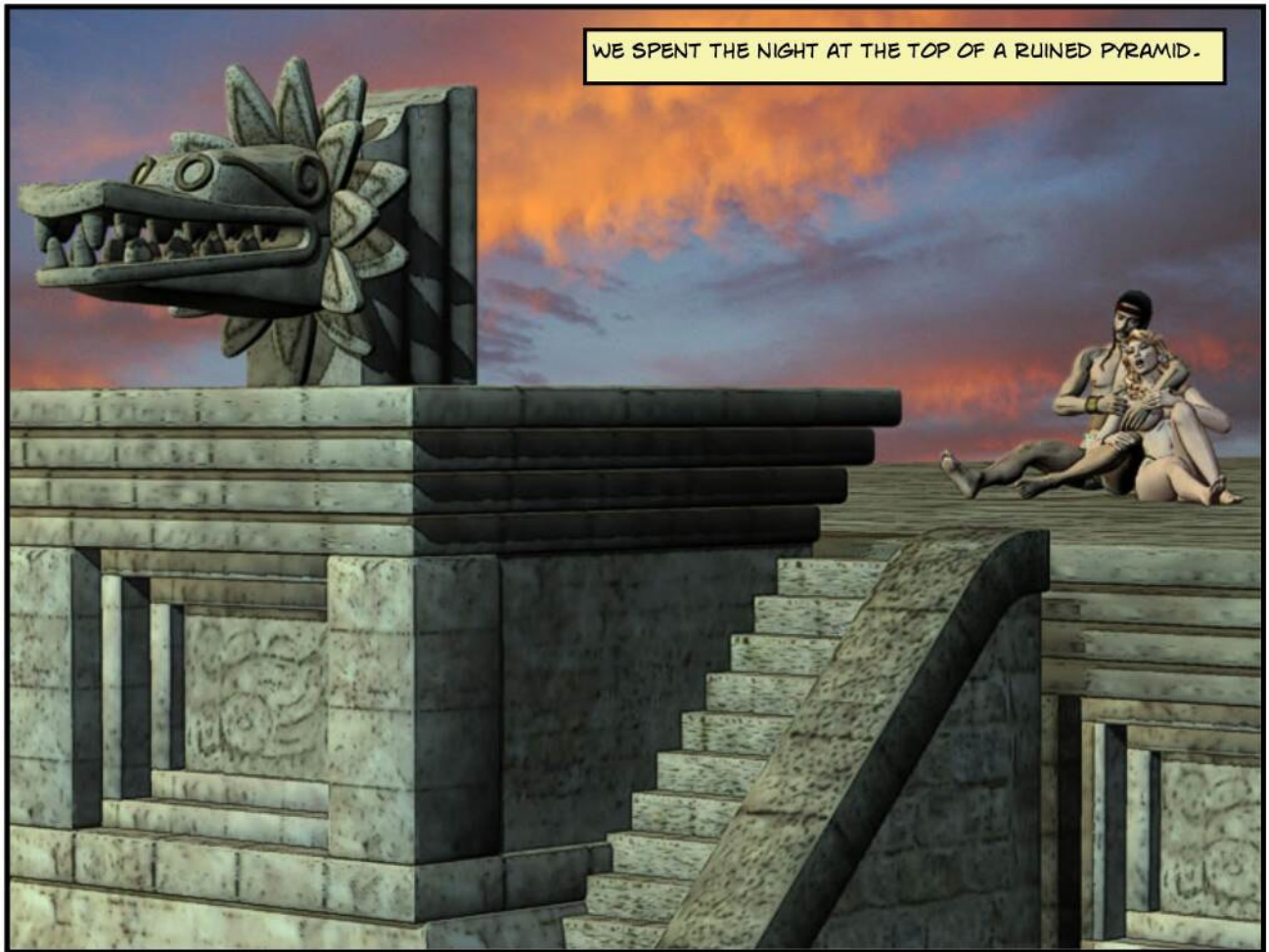




SLOWLY MY RESERVATIONS STARTED TO SUBSIDE.



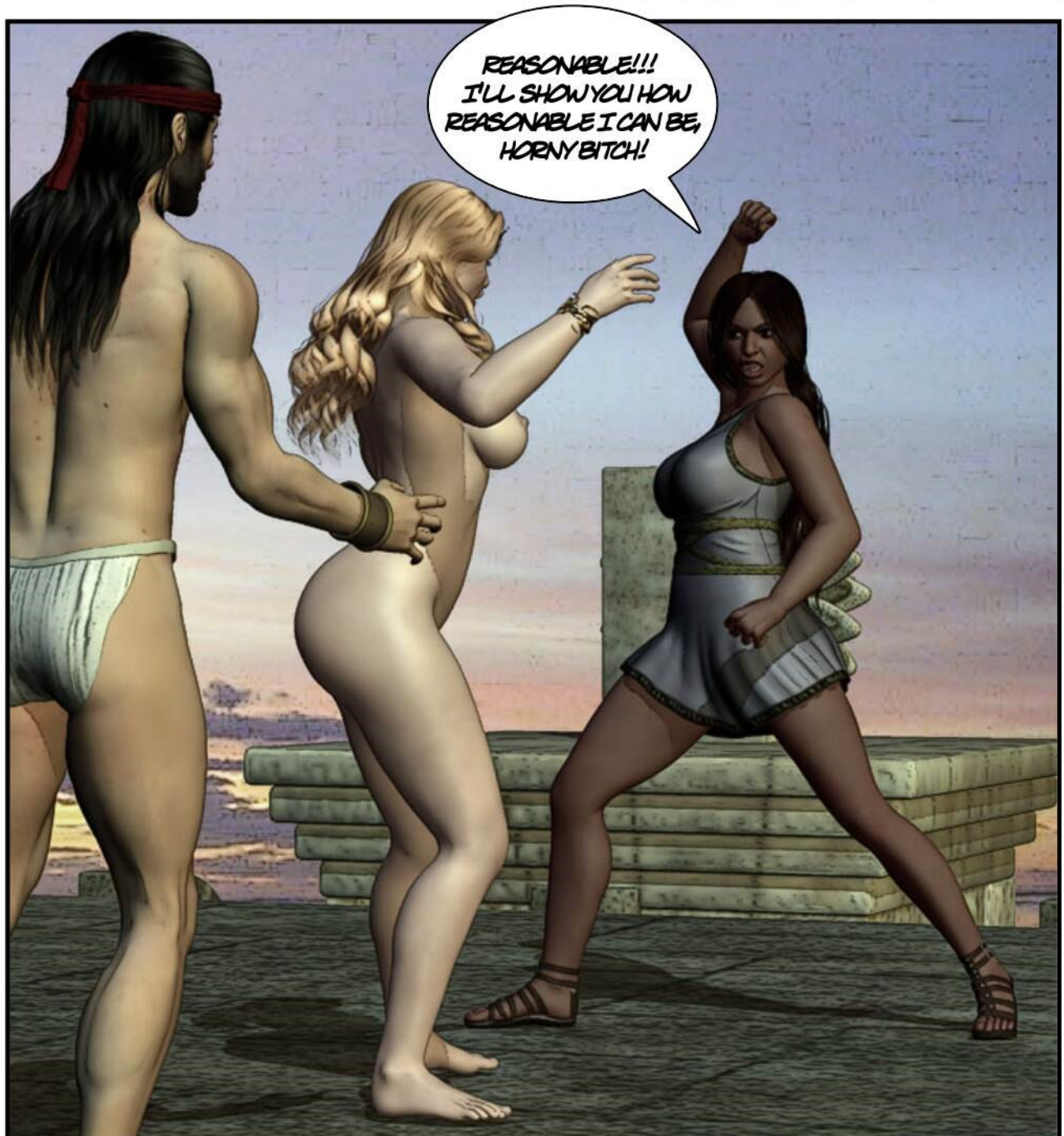














A TERRIBLE FIGHT BROKE OUT BETWEEN THE TWO GIRLS.



**AAARGHHH!**



I HAD GREAT TROUBLE  
SEPARATING THEM.







WE AREN'T FINISHED YOU AND I, PEISINOE. WE AREN'T.



PEISINOE WAS APOLOGETIC.

SHE IS JEALOUS. SHE THINKS THAT I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU.

YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT YOU TWO ARE... LOVERS?



ISN'T THIS NORMAL IN A SOCIETY WHERE MEN ARE A RARITY?



BUT THELXIEPEIA IS BECOMING UNREASONABLE. AND FAR TOO POSSESSIVE.





HOW UNREASONABLE I WAS TO FIND OUT FOR MYSELF ONE DAY, AS I WAS ABOUT TO VISIT ONE OF THE ISLAND'S RUINED MONUMENTS.

AAAAARRGHHH !

???



I'LL KILL YOU!  
I'LL KILL YOU!



YOU---!!!  
YOU!!!----









AND THEN, SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENED. THELXIEPEIA  
THREW HER ARMS AROUND MY NECK AND KISSED ME!



IT WAS A LONG AND PASSIONATE KISS,  
WHICH CAUGHT ME TOTALLY UNPREPARED.



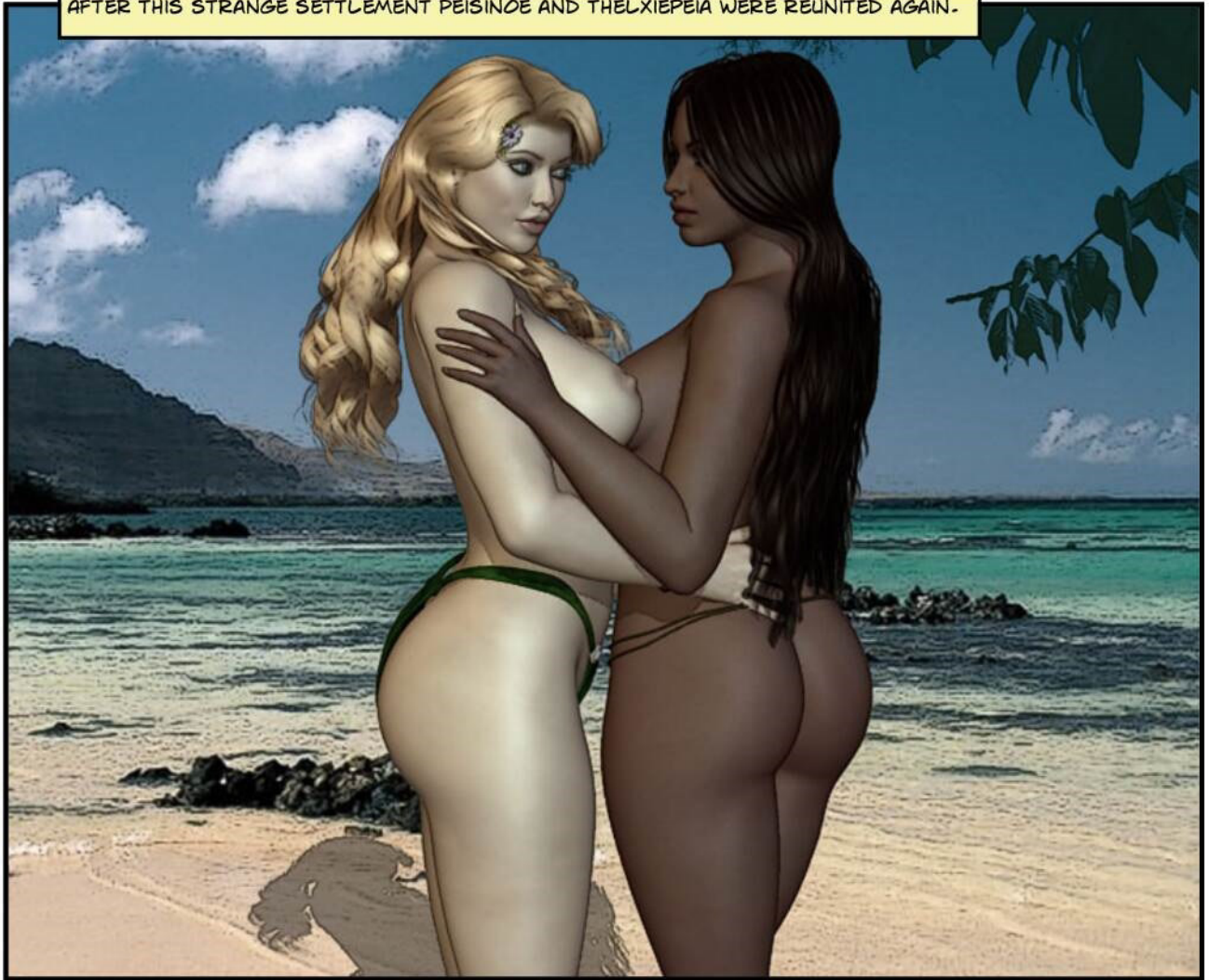


AS WAS THE MEMORABLE  
NIGHT WE SPENT TOGETHER.





AFTER THIS STRANGE SETTLEMENT PEISINOE AND THELXIEPEIA WERE REUNITED AGAIN.



AS FOR MYSELF, I HAD TO  
SHARE MY AFFECTIONS  
BETWEEN THE TWO LOVERS.





THE MORE I LEARN ABOUT THE SIRENS THE MORE AMAZED I AM. THESE ARE A STRANGE PEOPLE OF EVEN STRANGER ORIGINS.

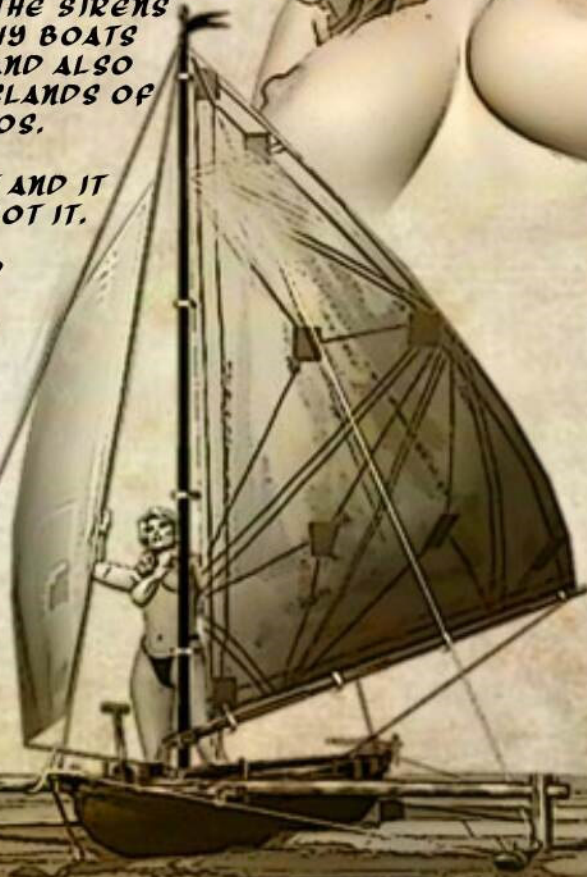
PEISIMOE TOLD ME THAT THEY ARE THE DESCENDANTS OF A ONCE POWERFUL NATION WHO VANISHED UNDER THE WAVES. AS I LEARNED FROM INSCRIPTIONS CARVED ON THE RUINED MONUMENTS THE NATION IN QUESTION WAS THAT OF THE FABLED ATLANTEANS, OF WHOM SO MANY HISTORIANS SPEAK. PEISIMOE CLAIMS THAT THERE ARE OTHER ISLANDS IN THE OCEAN, OF WHICH THE BEST KNOWN IS THAT OF THE PHAEACIANS, WHERE A LARGE NUMBER OF THE DESCENDANTS OF THOSE WHO ESCAPED THE CATASTROPHE STILL LIVE.

WHEN I ASKED HER WHY HER PEOPLE, THE SIRENS, DID NOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THEM SHE WAS EVASIVE, MUTTERING VAGUE EXCUSES ABOUT THE DISTANCE INVOLVED AND THE HAZARDS OF THE VOYAGE ON THE TREACHEROUS WATERS OF THE OCEAN. AND YET, THIS DOESN'T STAND TO REASON, AS THE SIRENS POSSESS SMALL BUT SEAWORTHY BOATS WHICH THEY USE FOR FISHING AND ALSO FOR TRAVELLING AMONG THE ISLANDS OF THEIR OWN SMALL ARCHIPELAGOS.

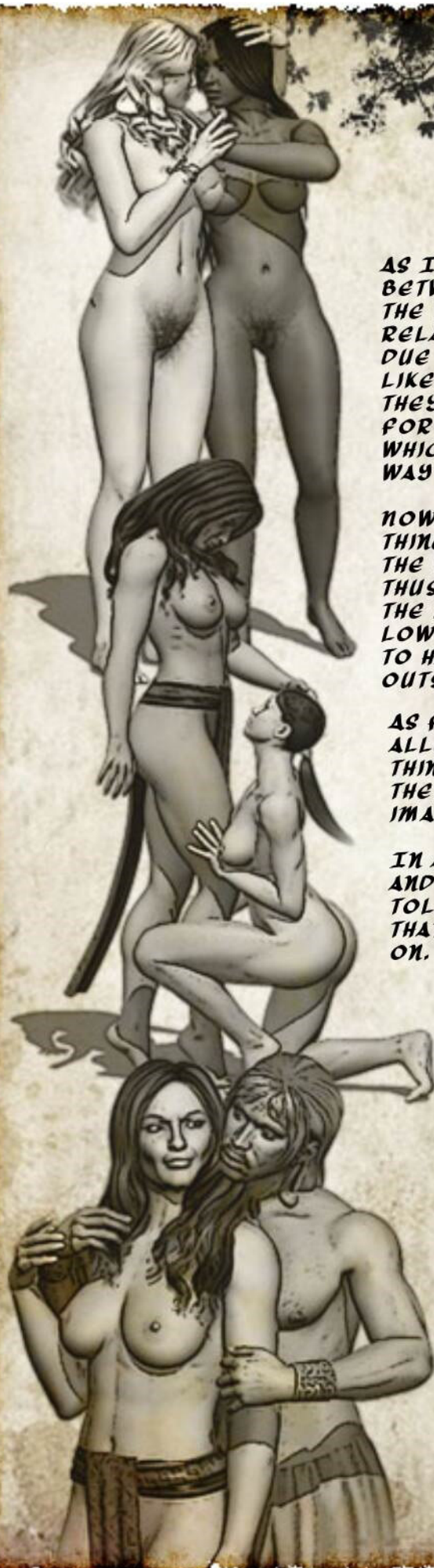
THE TRUTH IS QUITE DIFFERENT AND IT IS FROM THE LXIEPEIA THAT I GOT IT.

"OUR ORIGINAL HOMELAND HAD A STRICT SYSTEM OF SOCIAL CASTES", SHE TOLD ME. "OURS IS THE LOWEST. WE COULD ONLY BECOME PROSTITUTES OR SERVANTS AND FOR THAT REASON THE CASTES ABOVE US HELD US IN CONTEMPT.

IF WE ATTEMPT TO JOIN OUR KIN FOLK IN SCHERIA WE'D REVERT TO OUR ORIGINAL STATUS, AS PRESCRIBED BY THE LAWS OF OUR SOCIETY. WE HAVE CHOSEN TO LIVE ALONE INSTEAD -AND FREE."







AS I WAS TO FIND OUT IN THE INCIDENT BETWEEN PEISINOE AND THELXIEPEIA THE WOMEN HAD FORGED STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THEMSELVES DUE TO THE SCARCITY OF MALES, MUCH LIKE THE AMAZONS DO. AND LIKE THEM THEY USE MEN, WHENEVER IS POSSIBLE, FOR REPRODUCTIVE PURPOSES, AFTER WHICH THEY REVERT TO THEIR PREVIOUS WAY OF LIFE.

NOW, THERE IS ANOTHER STRANGE THING... FOR SOME UNKNOWN REASON THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE CHILDREN THUS BORN ARE FEMALE! THEREFORE THE MALE POPULATION ALWAYS REMAINS LOW AND THUS THE SIRENS ARE OBLIGED TO HAVE RECOURSE TO HELP FROM THE OUTSIDE.

AS FOR THE STORIES ABOUT THEIR ALLEGED CANNIBALISTIC CUSTOMS, I THINK I CAN NOW SAFELY SAY THAT THEY BELONG TO THE REALM OF IMAGINATION.

IN ALL, THIS IS A WONDERFUL PLACE AND A NUMBER OF MY COMPANIONS TOLD ME, IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS, THAT THEY HAVE DECIDED TO STAY ON. SO BE IT!

FROM  
ODYSSEUS'  
NOTEBOOK



THEN SOMETHING STARTED TO HAPPEN THAT MADE ME FEEL UNEASY. ALTHOUGH FOR SOME TIME THE SKIES HAD BEEN DEPRESSINGLY CLEAR, ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY STARTED TO DISPLAY A VERY UNUSUAL ACTIVITY. A SWARM OF AERIAL CRAFTS BEGAN FLYING IN CRISS-CROSS PATTERNS OUT IN THE SEA AND ABOVE THE ISLANDS.



AT NIGHT POWERFUL BEAMS OF LIGHT SCANNED THE WATER AND THE EARTH, AS IF THEY WERE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING. IT WAS A GOOD THING THAT I HAD TAKEN CARE TO HIDE THE SHIP IN A SEA-CAVE.





HAMON, WHO HAD MORE EXPERIENCE THAN ALL OF THE CREW MEN PUT TOGETHER, ALSO APPEARED TO BE CONCERNED.

COULD THEY BE LOOKING FOR US, MY KING?

BUT... WHY?



MAYBE THEY HAVE ANOTHER MISSION FOR YOU. OR... MAYBE SOMEONE UP THERE IS PISSED.



THE ONLY "GOD" WHO WOULD BE PISSED WAS HADES, IF HE HAD DISCOVERED THE THEFT OF THE "SHEM" DISCS, WHICH WAS UNLIKELY.



BUT EVEN IF THIS WAS THE CASE HE WOULDN'T DARE TO LAUNCH SUCH AN OPERATION SO FAR FROM HIS ASSIGNED DOMAIN.



I COULDN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT COULD BE, BUT I FELT THAT WHATEVER IT WAS IT WASN'T GOOD.



UNLESS... UNLESS SHE WAS THE ONE LOOKING FOR ME.





I DIDN'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR TOO LONG TO FIND OUT. ON THIS DAY I WAS WITH PEISINOE AND THELXIEPEIA AT A MONUMENT SITE WHEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN...



THE GIRLS FLED IN TERROR AS THE FLYING SHIELD'S OCCUPANT STEPPED OUT... AND MY HEART STARTED TO BEAT WILDLY.





I RAN TO HER, BUT SOMETHING IN HER EXPRESSION MADE ME TO STOP DEAD IN MY TRACKS.





ALL OF A SUDDEN I SAW RED AND, WITHOUTH THINKING, I JUMPED AT HER THROAT.

I WON'T  
HAVE YOU INSULTING  
ME ANY LONGER,  
ATHENA.

OOOH!---

ENOUGH IS  
ENOUGH!

aaaaahhh!

I SPENT LONG  
SLEEPLESS NIGHTS HOPING  
TO STEAL A GLIMPSE OF  
YOU... ONE GLIMPSE!

AND NOW... AFTER  
ALL THIS TIME...



I WANTED TO KILL HER...  
I KISSED HER INSTEAD.



I LOVE YOU, ATHENA.  
IT CAN'T BE HELPED.

OH, MY FOOLISH BOY!...  
FOOLISH, FOOLISH BOY!





LISTEN TO ME... YOU ARE IN MORTAL DANGER. IT'S BY SHEER LUCK THAT I FOUND YOU FIRST.



BUT WHY?



THERE HAS BEEN GOSSIP IN OLYMPUS. OF A MORTAL SEDUCING THE QUEEN OF THE GODS. DOES IT RING A BELL WITH YOU?



OH, NO!  
HERMES...?



WHO ELSE? THE NEWS REACHED MY FATHER'S EAR... HE BECAME FURIOUS -THE HYPOCRITE!



HE DOESN'T KNOW YET WHO THE ALLEGED HUMAN LOVER IS, BUT HE'LL FIND OUT VERY SOON. HERA, OF COURSE, DENIED EVERYTHING.





HOWEVER, WHEN THEY FIND YOU,  
AND BELIEVE ME, THEY WILL,  
THEY'LL MAKE YOU TALK.



WHILE IF THEY DON'T  
FIND ME NO ONE WOULD  
BE ABLE TO PROVE  
HERA'S GUILT.



EXACTLY.



SO, HERA WOULD  
BE THE ONE LOOKING  
FOR ME...



YES. SHE SENT OUT HER  
KILLERS. THEY ARE  
CLOSING IN. SHE WANTS  
YOU DEAD, ODYSSEUS.







NO WITNESS, NO CRIME  
COMMITTED. IT'S THE  
HARD TRUTH.

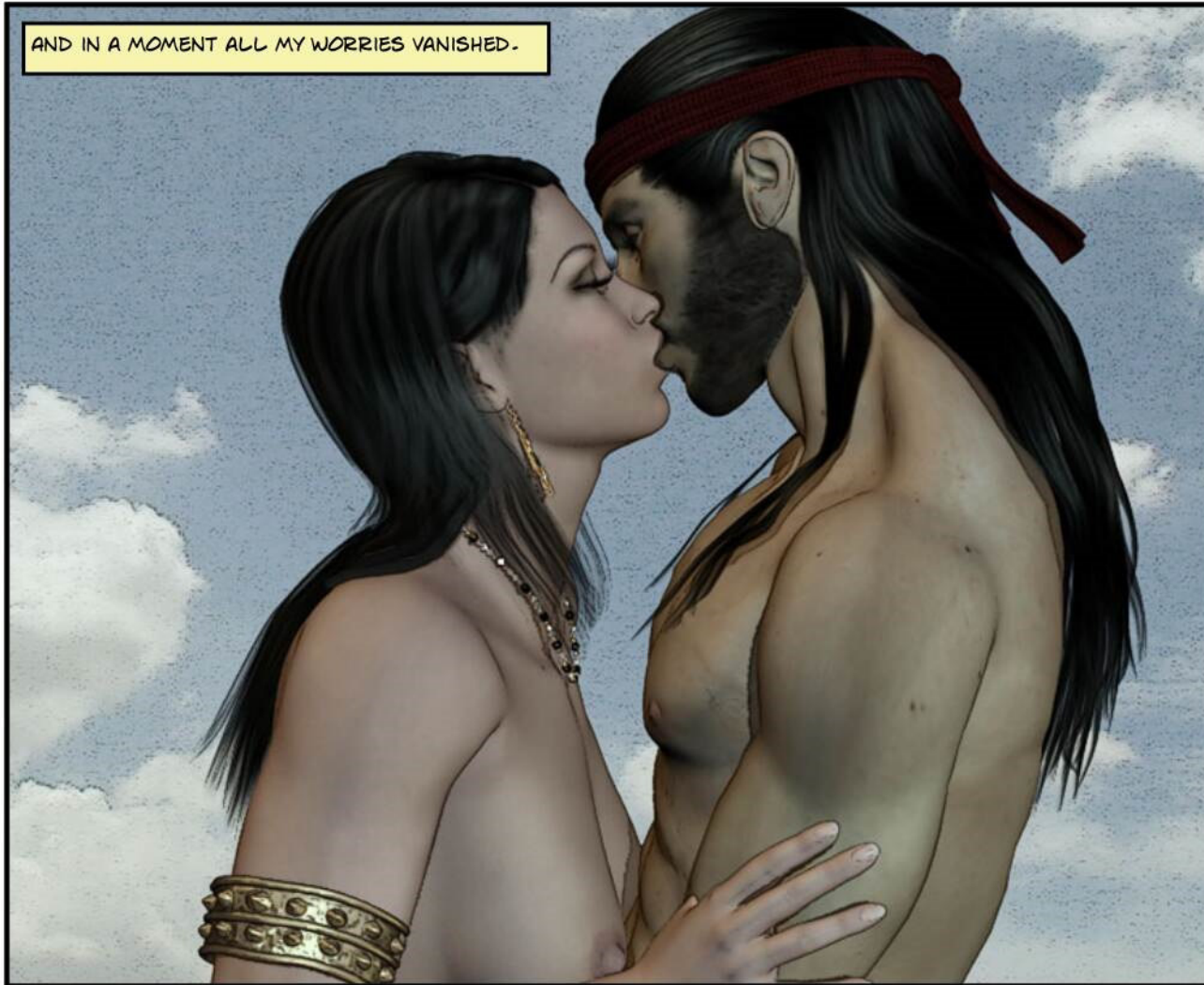


I SEARCHED FOR YOU,  
DIDN'T I?





AND IN A MOMENT ALL MY WORRIES VANISHED.



YOU MUST HIDE,  
ODYSSEUS.

WHERE?



THERE IS A PLACE... A PLACE  
THEY'D NEVER THINK TO LOOK UP.







GOOD HEAVENS! SO THE MONSTERS OF THE LEGEND DO EXIST!



THEY ARE NO MONSTERS. HOWEVER THIS DOESN'T MAKE THEM ANY LESS DANGEROUS.





BUT... THEY ARE WOMEN. AND  
DON'T WE ALL KNOW THAT YOU  
HAVE A WAY WITH WOMEN?

ATHENA!  
PLEASE...

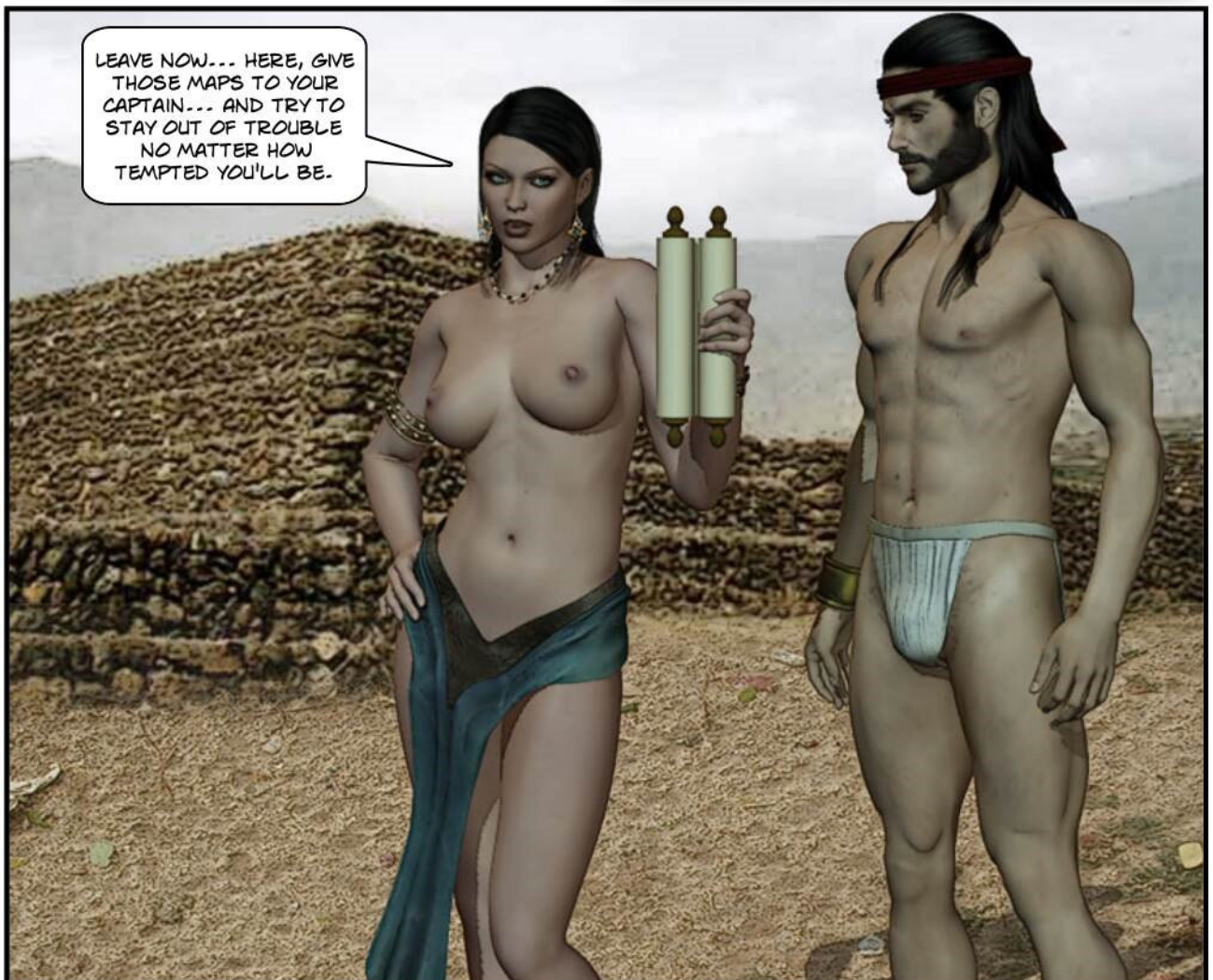
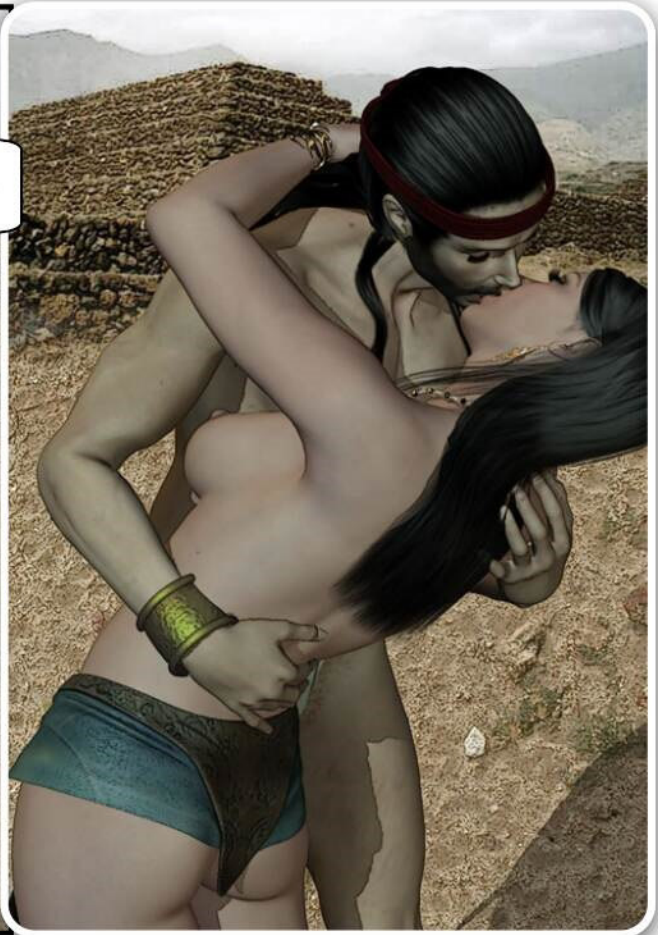
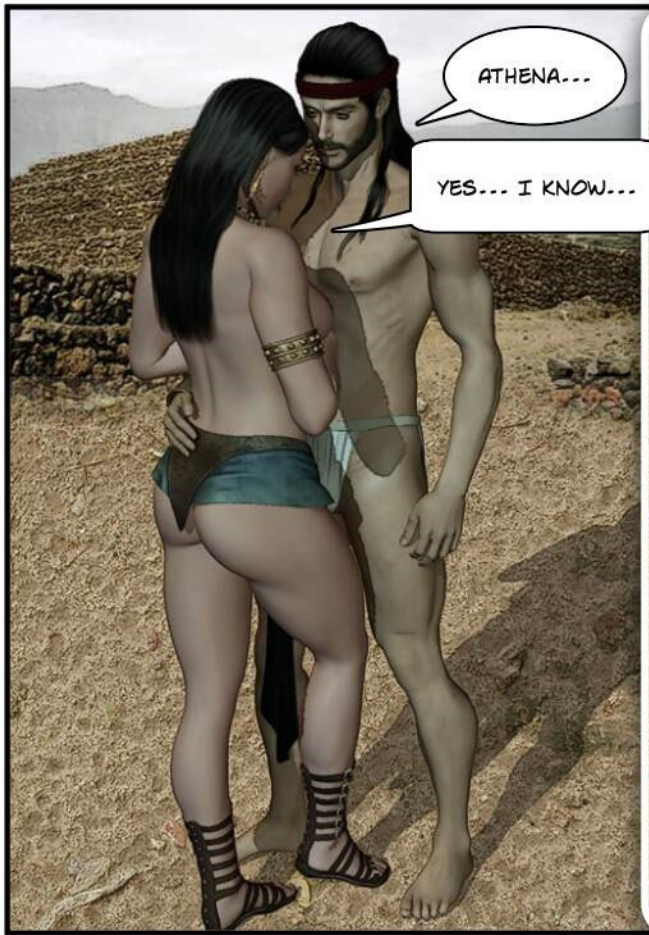
ISN'T THAT THE  
REASON YOU GOT  
YOURSELF IN  
TROUBLE ONCE  
MORE? BUT NEVER  
MIND THAT NOW...

WHAT MATTERS IS TO KEEP YOU  
SAFE, AND THAT IS THE ONLY  
SAFE PLACE I CAN THINK OF.

HOW LONG DO  
I HAVE TO STAY  
THERE?

PROVIDED YOU MANAGE  
TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE  
SISTERS, AS LONG AS  
IT TAKES FOR THINGS TO  
COOL DOWN.







WE SAILED THIS SAME NIGHT WITH ONLY TEN COMPANIONS TO MAN THE SHIP, THE REST HAVING CHOSEN TO STAY IN ANTHEMOESSA. ONCE OR TWICE THE SEARCH LIGHT ALMOST TOUCHED OUR SHIP, BUT WE MANAGED TO SLIP THROUGH UNDETECTED. ONCE MORE OUR DESTINATION WAS THE VAST UNKNOWN.



END OF BOOK 8







