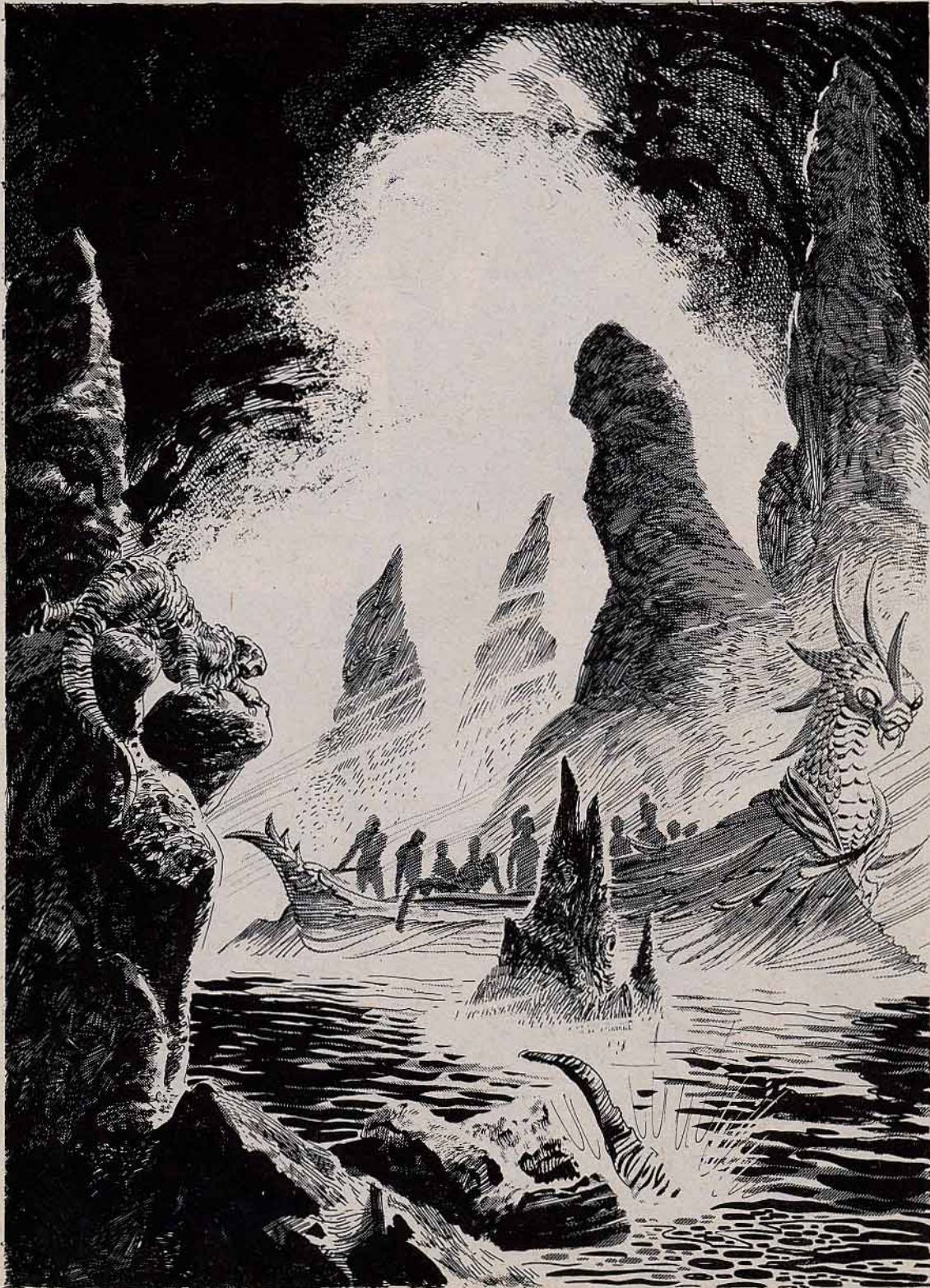




GET READY, **RABID READERS**... I'M TURNING BACK THE PAGES OF **HORROR HISTORY** TO A TIME OF GREAT HEROES AND GREATER TERROR! IT'S 500 B.C. AND YOU'RE ABOUT TO JOIN ONE OF THE MIGHTIEST GREEK WARRIORS AS HE FINDS HIMSELF TRAPPED IN THE...

THE CLOUD OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS LIFTED SLOWLY... ARGOS THE SPARTAN STIRRED... THE CLASH AND DIN OF BATTLE THAT HAD ONCE RUNG IN HIS EARS WAS GONE! HE COULD FEEL ROUGH-HEWN PLANKS BENEATH HIS BATTERED BODY, THE SOUND OF RUSHING WATER WAS NEARBY, AND DAMP MISTS SWIRLED ABOUT...



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I'VE BEEN TAKEN PRISONER!
BEING CARRIED OFF INTO SLAVERY
...OR **WORSE!** THE FOOLS LEFT
ME MY SWORD...THOUGHT ME
TOO WOUNDED TO USE IT!



HSSSSST! FRIEND! HOW MANY HOLD
US? WHERE ARE WE BEING TAKEN?



WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
SPEAK! ACT! WE'RE **SPARTANS!**
NONE CAN MAKE US PRISONERS
...WE'LL ESCAPE... **NOW!**



YOU'RE
FAR FROM
SPARTA,
ARGOS... FAR
FROM ANY
ESCAPE!

WITH NONE BUT
YOU WATCHING
OVER US, OLD
MAN? PERHAPS
THESE OTHERS
HAVE ABANDONED
HOPE!



I HAVE MY SWORD... MY
STRENGTH... MY **WILL**... OTHERS
MIGHT GIVE IN, BUT **ARGOS?**...



...**NEVER!**



THE BLACK WATERS WERE SWIFT AND TREACHEROUS... ARGOS Poured HIS GREAT STRENGTH INTO FIGHTING THE CURRENT... UNTIL, AT LAST, HE ATTAINED THE BLEAK SHORE...

YOU STRIVE FOR NOTHING, ARGOS! THERE IS NO ESCAPE... NONE!

I WILL NOT GIVE UP!

GRIPPING THE BLADE OF FINE DAMASCUS STEEL THAT HAD SERVED HIM THROUGH MANY A BATTLE, THE SPARTAN MOVED FORWARD INTO THE MIST AND STEAM OF THIS ALIEN LANDSCAPE...

WHAT MANNER OF LAND IS THIS? A PLACE OF ENDLESS ROCKS AND CAVERNS...

THEN, ABOVE, HE HEARD A TERRIFYING SOUND... LIKE THE FLAPPING OF GIANT WINGS!

BY THE BEARD OF ARES!



ARGOS DROVE HIS BLADE INTO THE UNDERBELLY OF THE FIRST OF THE WINGED HORRORS DESCENDING UPON HIM! FANG AND CLAW TORE AT HIS BODY... MUSCLES IN HIS SWORD ARM RIPPLED, BLOOD SPURTED, AS AGAIN AND AGAIN HE THRUST AT THE LEATHERY SCALED HIDES OF HIS ATTACKERS!



WELL FOUGHT, ARGOS... BUT IN VAIN!



YOU ARE STILL IN MY KINGDOM... SUBJECT TO MY WILL... CEASE YOUR STRUGGLES, ARGOS... SURRENDER!



CURSE YOU AND CURSE YOUR KINGDOM! I GIVE IN TO NO ONE!

FROM MY LAND, THERE IS NO ESCAPE!



FOR A SPARTAN THERE IS ALWAYS ESCAPE!

CRANG!

SPARKS FLEW AND SHATTERING VIBRATIONS STRUCK ARGOS AS HIS MIGHTY BLOW WENT HOME...

BUT HIS COURAGE AND WILL DROVE HIM ON... SOMEWHERE, SOME WAY, THERE HAD TO BE ESCAPE... OR COMFORT!

DISAPPEARED! MY BLADE SHATTERED ON THE ROCK BEHIND HIM! I AM UNARMED IN THIS FEARFUL LAND!



ARGOS! MIGHTIEST OF SPARTANS! HEAR THE VOICE OF A FRIEND...

W-WHO?



EVEN IN THIS LAND, THEY SING OF YOUR MIGHTY DEEDS... TELL OF YOUR MANY FEATS...

BUT EVEN THE MIGHTY MUST REST... EVEN THE BRAVE MAY TIRE ...

YOU MUST RELAX... FORGET... GIVE IN TO MY CHARMS...



THE VOICE SOOTHED... ALMOST HYPNOTIZED... UNTIL SUDDENLY THERE WAS A TIGHTENING ON HIS BODY LIKE A CHAIN OF COLD SLIME!

EVERY MUSCLE IN HIS BODY STRAINED TO HOLD BACK REPTILIAN DEATH... THE FLICKERING TONGUE LASHED AND DARTED AT HIS THROAT, THE DEADLY FANGS READY BEHIND IT... A GIANT COIL GRIPPED HARDER AT HIS ENTIRE FRAME...

WHAT EVIL IS THIS?!



WITH A FINAL BURST OF STRENGTH, ARGOS WRENCHED FREE OF THE CONSTRICTING COILS, RAISING THE SERPENT ABOVE HIS HEAD...

KWISH!



DO NOT REST, ARGOS! YOUR FIGHT IS NOT WON... IT ONLY BEGINS!



YOU CAN'T WIN... CAN'T ESCAPE...

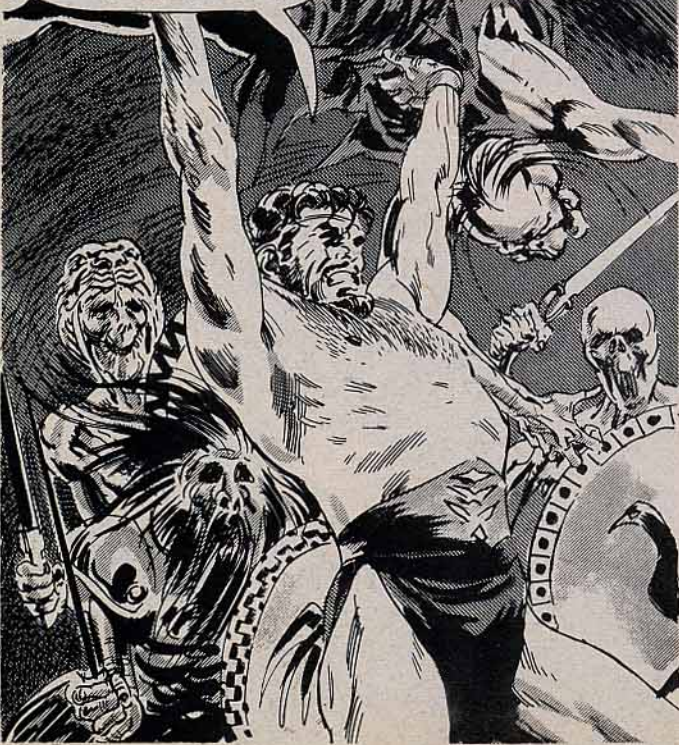
I WILL... NOT... SURRENDER...!!



HIS ENTIRE FRAME SCREAMED WITH AGONIZING FATIGUE, YET THE SPARTAN COULD NOT GIVE UP... ONE BY ONE THE CADAVEROUS WARRIORS WERE REPELLED...

WHAT KINGDOM IS THIS THAT HARBORS SUCH HORRORS?!!

POOR FOOL! HAVE YOU NOT YET GUESSED...?



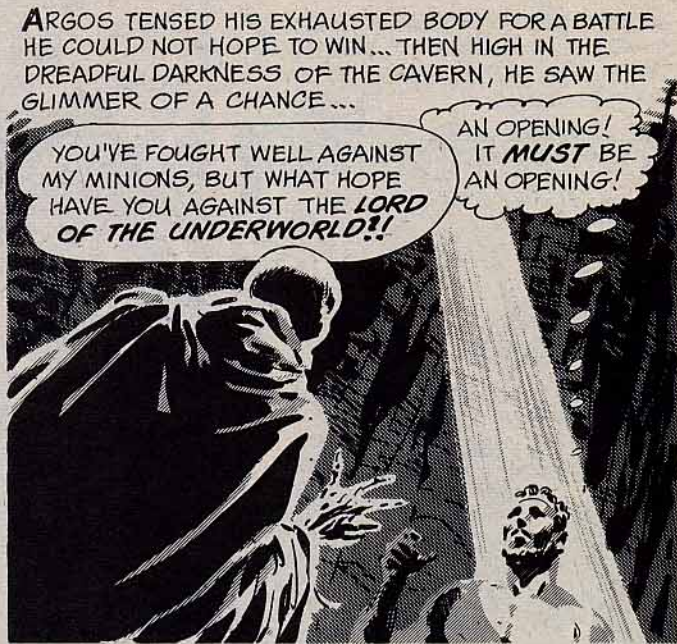
THIS IS MY LAND... IT BEARS MY NAME... **HADES!!**





T-THE LAND OF THE DEAD...? BUT I AM **ALIVE!**

YOU WERE MORTALLY WOUNDED IN BATTLE... I CLAIMED YOU! YET FOOLISHLY YOU FIGHT... CLINGING TO LIFE ... **UNTIL NOW!**



YOU'VE FOUGHT WELL AGAINST MY MINIONS, BUT WHAT HOPE HAVE YOU AGAINST THE **LORD OF THE UNDERWORLD!?**

AN OPENING! IT **MUST** BE AN OPENING!

UP THE CAVERN WALL, THE SPARTAN SCRAMBLED WITH NEW-FOUND STRENGTH BORN OUT OF ONE ALL BUT HOPELESS CHANCE ...



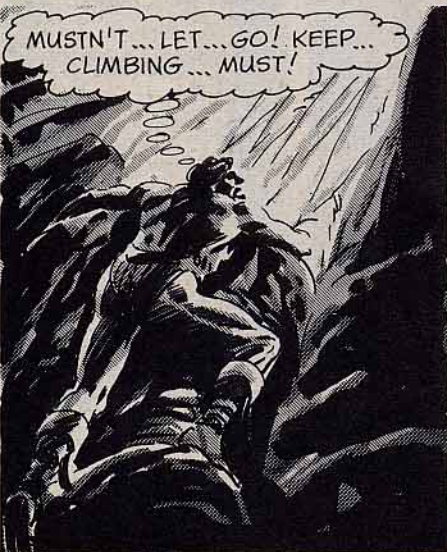
YOU'RE **MINE**, ARGOS! I WON'T LET YOU ESCAPE ME!

GOT TO... KEEP... TRYING...! GOT... TO...

SUDDENLY ARGOS FELT THE HEAT AND MONSTROUS STRENGTH OF HADES' HAND... PULLING, DRAGGING HIM DOWN FROM HIS PRECARIOUS HOLD...



HIS NUMB BLEEDING FINGERS SCRAPED, CLAWED AND PULLED... HIS BODY TREMBLED AND SHOOK WITH IMPOSSIBLE STRAIN ... HIS SWEAT-BLURRED EYES RIVETED ON THE FARAWAY OPENING... THE FAINT PROMISE OF A FRESH BREEZE...



MUSTN'T... LET... GO! KEEP... CLIMBING... MUST!



I CAN... MAKE IT... MUST... KEEP... GOING...



CLOSER... CLOSER... I ... CAN... DO... IT...!!

SOMEWHERE IN GREECE THE SITE OF A BATTLE IS MARKED BY BODIES OF THE SLAIN, AND GUARDED BY TWO OF THE LIVING ...

UUUUHHHHHHHH

THAT MOAN--
COMING FROM
AMONG THE
D-DEAD!

IMPOSSIBLE!
WE MADE SURE
ALL THE WOUNDED
HAD BEEN
REMOVED!



THERE!
IT'S...
ARGOS!

A MIRACLE! ALL WHO
SAW HIM JUDGED
HIM SLAIN!



FIGHT... ALL...
HADES... WILL
NOT... GIVE
IN... HADES...
CANNOT...
MAKE ME...

THE WOUND'S
LEFT HIM
DELIRIOUS... HE
IMAGINES HE
FOUGHT THE
LORD OF THE
UNDERWORLD
HIMSELF!



MIGHTY ZEUS! HIS BACK!
LOOK ON HIS BACK!



BOTH MEN LOOKED INCREDULOUSLY AT THE WOUND ON THE BACK OF THE MIGHTY SPARTAN ... A WOUND SUCH AS NO BATTLE HAD EVER LEFT!



SEE, MERRY MANIACS!
ANYONE CAN HAVE A
BIRTHMARK, BUT YOU
GO THROUGH A LOT
FOR A **DEATHMARK!**
AND THERE'S A LOT
MORE FOR YOU TO
GO THROUGH ON THE
FOLLOWING PAGES!



U.C. - A.D.