

LAS VEGAS, NV.

YO! ARCHER! WHAT YOU DOING SOLO OUT HERE?

I GOT THREE 8'S AND TWO 10'S FROM THE BAR TO COME UP TO OUR SUITE!

IF YOU KNOW LONG DIVISION, THE MATH'S ON YOUR SIDE!

THANK YOU BUT NO THANK YOU, MISTER ARMSTRONG.

FOR ONE THING, "THE BEAST WITH TWO BACKS" YOU ARE SO FOND OF WILL BE FORMED BY ME ONLY UNDER THE BONDS OF HOLY MATRIMONY.

FOR ANOTHER, I AM ALREADY OCCUPIED. BUT PLEASE DON'T LET ME KEEP YOU FROM YOUR NIGHTLY PERVERSIONS...

WATCHOO GOT THERE? A BOOK?

I SENSE THE MOCKING OF ME BY YOU TO BE IMMINENT, BUT IF YOU MUST KNOW:

I AM TRYING TO RE-EDUCATE MYSELF IN THE WORLD OF LITERATURE BANNED BY MY PARENTS FROM THEIR COMPOUND...



... AND I THOUGHT I MIGHT AS WELL START AT THE VERY BEGINNING...



THAT'S TERRIFIC!

SIR?!

I'M A STRONG BELIEVER IN SELF-IMPROVEMENT!

I STRIVED TO BE THE BEST I COULD BE FOR CENTURIES...



... THEN IN AD 529 I REALIZED I WAS AS GOOD AS I WAS GONNA GET, SO I STOPPED...

I'M HERE TO HELP!

WHAT ABOUT YOUR FORTY-FOUR?

WHOP? OH, THEM.

THEY MADE THE MISTAKE OF CHALLENGING ME TO A DRINKING GAME.

GIVE 'EM TIME TO BREW SOME COFFEE.



DON'T GET ME WRONG, THE TALE OF GILGAMESH IS GREAT, THE FIRST-EVER PAGE-TURNER, BUT WHO BETTER TO HEAR IT FROM THAN A GUY WHO WAS THERE AS EVENTS UNFOLDED IN REAL TIME?

YOU WERE AROUND IN ANCIENT SUMERIA? I SHOULD'VE GUESSED...

WOULD I LEAD YOU ASTRAY?

YES.

WELL, I'M NOT! (NOT NOW, ANYWAY.)

THE FIRST THING YOU NEED TO KNOW IS THAT THOUGH THE EPIC WAS "BASED ON A TRUE STORY," IT GOT HIGHLY FICTIONALIZED... NAMES WERE CHANGED TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT (AND ME).

THERE WASN'T JUST THE ONE MAIN GUY, THERE WERE THREE.

AND THEY WERE BROTHERS.



IVAR WAS THE OLDEST AND THE SMARTEST. JUST ASK HIM.

HE DESIGNED AND BUILT THE WALLS AROUND OUR CITY. YOU THINK THE ELDERS THANKED HIM FOR THAT?

HELL, NO. THEY WHINED THEIR SONS NO LONGER OBEYED THEM ANYMORE-- THEY JUST WANTED TO BE LIKE HIM.



BUT IT'S NOT LIKE THEY LIKED THE MIDDLE KID, ARAM, ANY BETTER.

HE HAD A JAWLINE BACK THEN. AND THOUGH HE WAS FREAKISHLY STRONG, ALL HE WANTED TO DO WAS WRITE POETRY.



THE CHICKS DUG HIM. THEY SAID, "HIS LUST LEFT NO VIRGIN TO HER LOVER, NEITHER THE WARRIOR'S DAUGHTER NOR THE WIFE OF THE NOBLE."

(*"THEY"* GREATLY OVERESTIMATED UR'S VIRGIN POPULATION, I'LL TELL YOU THAT FOR NOTHING.)

GILAD, THOUGH, THE YOUNGEST: HE DOWNRIGHT TERRIFIED THEM.

"THERE WAS VIRTUE IN HIM OF THE GOD OF WAR... HIS BODY WAS ROUGH, HE HAD LONG HAIR LIKE A WOMAN'S."



HE RAN WITH THE WILD BEASTS AT THEIR WATER-HOLES SO HE COULD LEARN THEIR WAYS OF STALKING. OF KILLING.

HE WAS THE TIP OF UR'S SPEAR. NONE COULD WITHSTAND HIS ARMS...



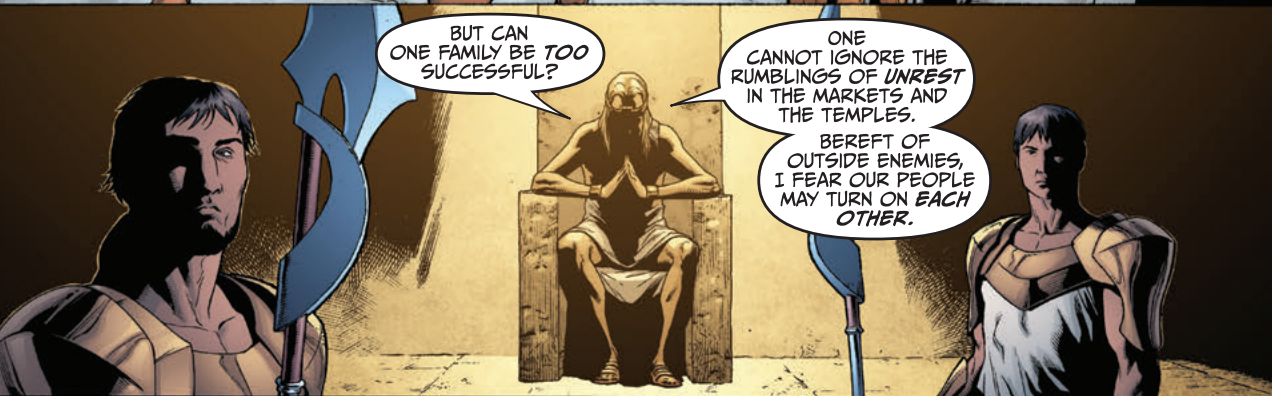
... YOU THREE HAVE BROUGHT HONOR TO YOUR TRIBE AND THE NAMES OF YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER, MAY SHAMASH SHINE ON THEIR SOULS.

WISE IVAR HAS IRRIGATED UR'S FIELDS AND FIERCE GILAD HAS ENSLAVED HER ENEMIES TO WORK THEM...

... WHILE ARAM HAS, UH...

I'M GOOD FOR A LARF OR TWO, RIGHT, KINGSY?

SURE. THAT.



BUT CAN ONE FAMILY BE TOO SUCCESSFUL?

ONE CANNOT IGNORE THE RUMBLINGS OF UNREST IN THE MARKETS AND THE TEMPLES.

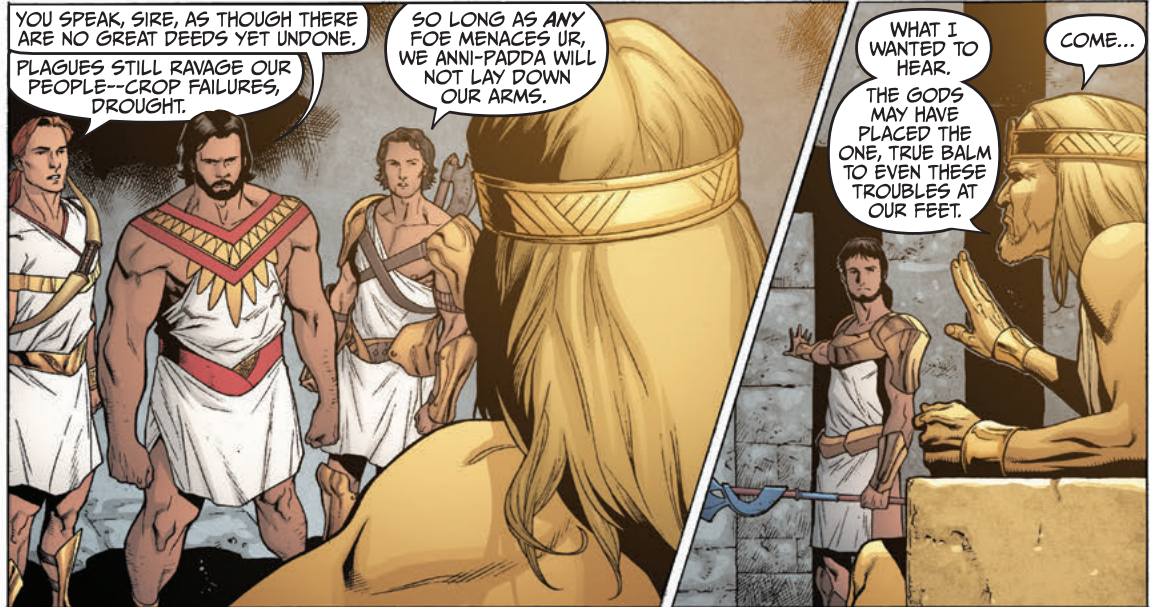
BEREFT OF OUTSIDE ENEMIES, I FEAR OUR PEOPLE MAY TURN ON EACH OTHER.

YOU SPEAK, SIRE, AS THOUGH THERE ARE NO GREAT DEEDS YET UNDONE. PLAGUES STILL RAVAGE OUR PEOPLE--CROP FAILURES, DROUGHT.

SO LONG AS ANY FOE MENACES UR, WE ANNI-PADDA WILL NOT LAY DOWN OUR ARMS.

WHAT I WANTED TO HEAR. THE GODS MAY HAVE PLACED THE ONE, TRUE BALM TO EVEN THESE TROUBLES AT OUR FEET.

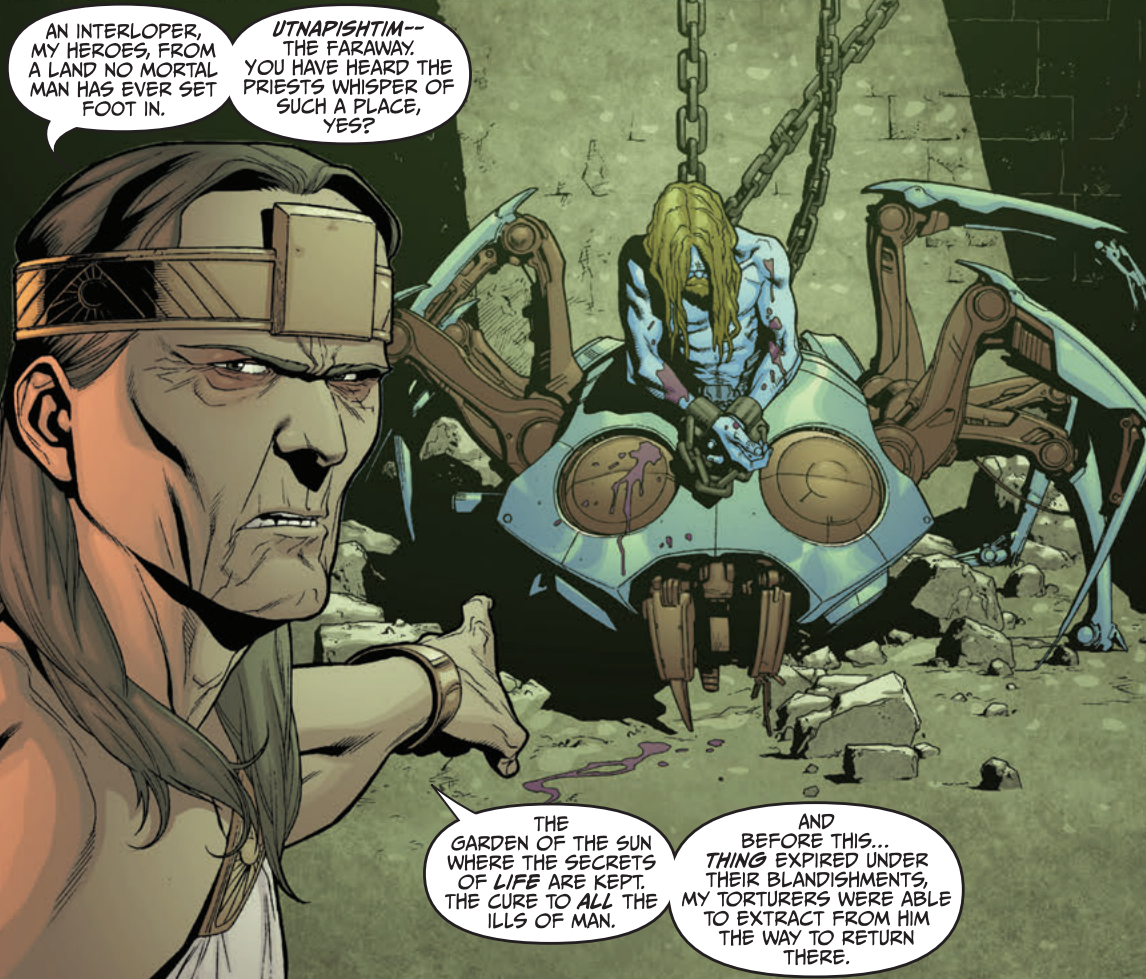
COME...





...OUR SCOUTS FOUND HIM COLLAPSED, HALF DEAD, A HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE BANKS OF THE EUFRATES.

WHAT... WHAT IS IT?



AN INTERLOPER, MY HEROES, FROM A LAND NO MORTAL MAN HAS EVER SET FOOT IN.

UTNAPISHTIM-- THE FARAWAY. YOU HAVE HEARD THE PRIESTS WHISPER OF SUCH A PLACE, YES?

THE GARDEN OF THE SUN WHERE THE SECRETS OF LIFE ARE KEPT, THE CURE TO ALL THE ILLS OF MAN.

AND BEFORE THIS... *THING* EXPIRED UNDER THEIR BLANDISHMENTS, MY TORTURERS WERE ABLE TO EXTRACT FROM HIM THE WAY TO RETURN THERE.



SUCH A QUEST WOULD BE WORTH A THOUSAND VERSES... THE TRULY IMMORTAL SUBJECT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR...



SUCH WARRIORS TO TEST AGAINST MY METTLE!



THE DISCOVERIES TO BE MADE THERE ARE WORTH THE TRIP ALONE...

WE WERE SO VERY YOUNG. THE SHORTCOMINGS AND FAILURES OF OUR PARENTS AND ELDERS *SICKENED* US.

AND WE KNEW WE WERE THEIR ONLY *SOLUTION*. ALL OF HISTORY HAD FINALLY CULMINATED IN *OUR* EXISTENCE.

AT LAST, WE THOUGHT, WE HAD FOUND A QUEST WORTHY OF *OUR AWESOMENESS*.



OR IT HAD FOUND *US*, SO WE MUST BE DESTINED TO *SUCCEED*.

THE LOVE OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE ANNI-PADDA RIVALS EVEN THEIR LOVE FOR YOU, SIRE.

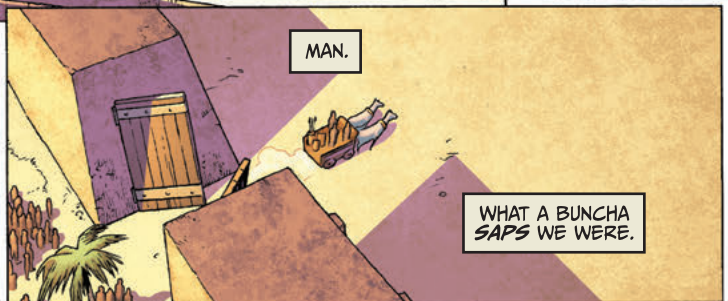
INDEED.



GOOD RIDDANCE.



MAN.



WHAT A BUNCHA SAPS WE WERE.