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HORSE
COMICS**

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MILLER
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VARLEY**



STORY & ART
**FRANK
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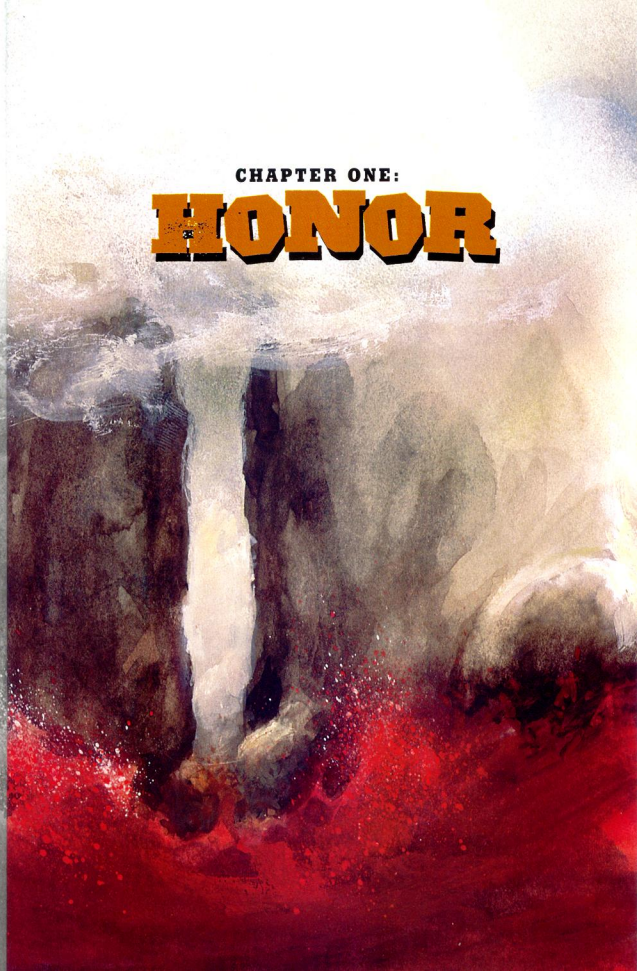
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LOGO DESIGN
**STEVE MILLER
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MARK COX

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CHAPTER ONE:
HONOR



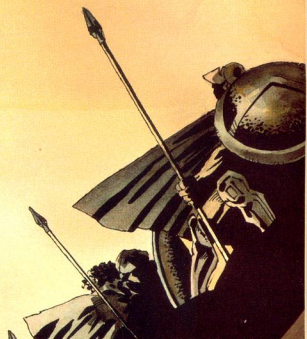


WE
MARCH.

FROM DEAR
LAKONIA--

--FROM SACRED
SPARTA--

--WE
MARCH.





FOR
HONOR'S
SAKE--

--FOR
GLORY'S
SAKE--

--WE
MARCH.

480 B.C.



THREE
DAYS OUT.

MERCILESS
HEAT.

THROATS
GO DRY.

YOUNG *STELIOS*
GETS *DIZZY*.

UNPARDONABLE.

WHOOF!

STELIOS.
YOU
CLOWN.

YES,
SIR.

I'M READY FOR
MY PUNISHMENT,
SIR.

KRAK

WHUUKK

WE WONDER
IF *STELIOS*
WILL DIE.

ONLY *ONE*
AMONG US
CAN STOP
THIS.

ONLY
HE

ENOUGH.

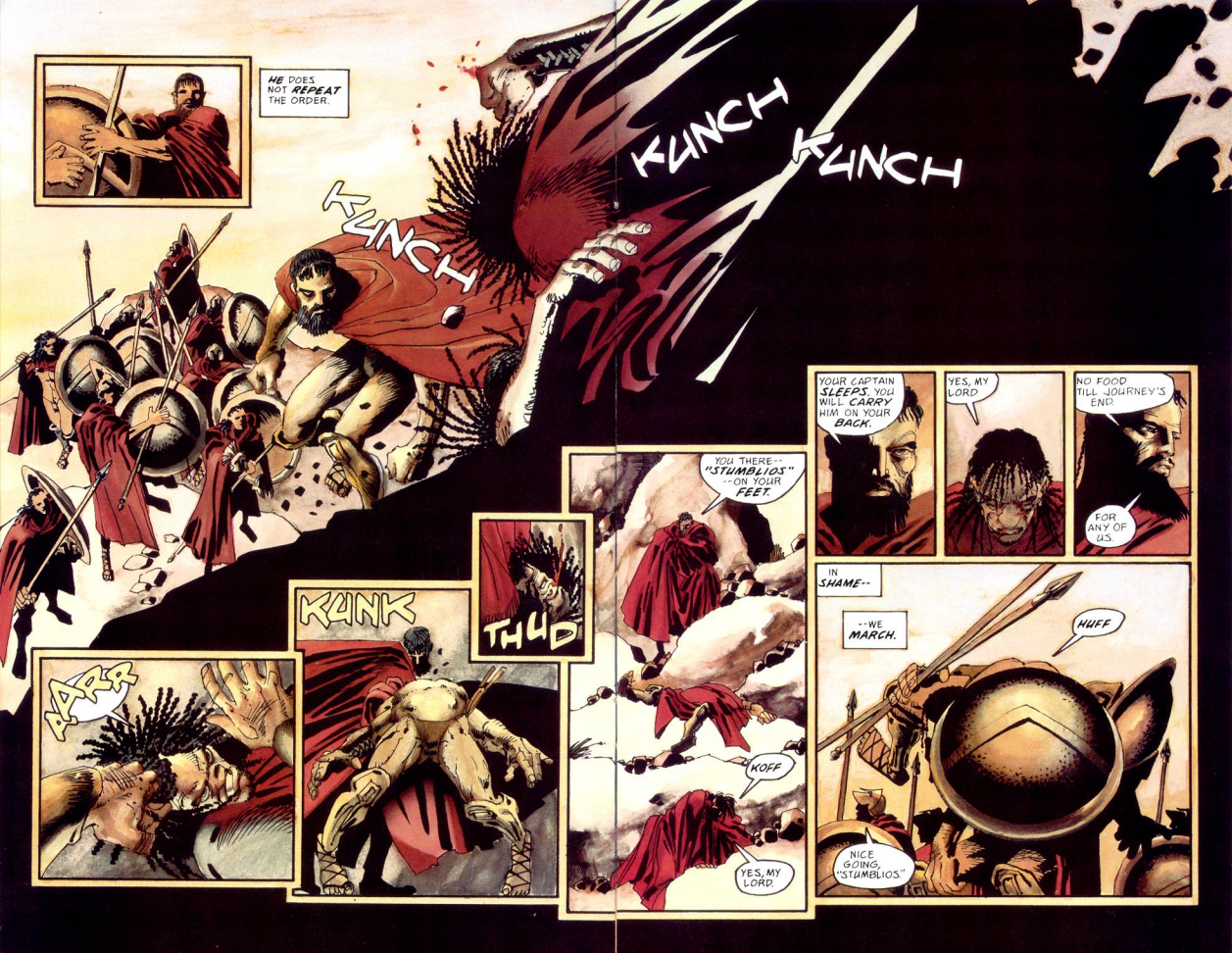
KRAK

BUT THE
CAPTAIN
DOESN'T
HEAR.

WHUUKK



HE DOES
NOT REPEAT
THE ORDER.



KANK



THUD



YOU THERE--
"STUMBLIOS"
--ON YOUR
FEET.

KOFF

YES, MY
LORD.



YOUR CAPTAIN
SLEEPS. YOU
WILL CARRY
HIM ON YOUR
BACK.



YES, MY
LORD

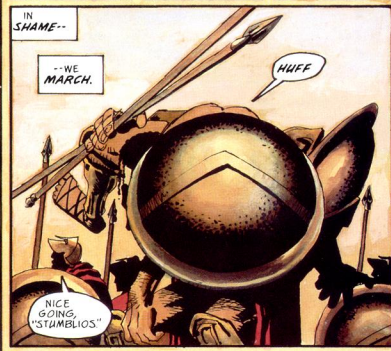


NO FOOD
TILL JOURNEY'S
END

FOR ANY
OF
US

IN
SHAME--

--WE
MARCH.



HUFF

NICE
GOING--
"STUMBLIOS"

NIGHT. THE SUMMER
WIND BLOWS COOL
OFF THE AEGEAN.

DILIOS
SPINS HIS
STORIES.

TRAINING
CAN MAKE A MAN
A GOOD WARRIOR
— BUT A GREAT
WARRIOR IS CRAFTED
BY THE GODS.

OUR
FAVORITE
STORY.

THE ONE
ABOUT THE
BOY.

HE WAS COLD.
THE BOY WAS
COLD. HUNGRY.

IT WAS
HIS INITIA-
TION. HIS
TIME IN THE
WILD.

HE WOULD
RETURN AS A
SPARTAN—OR
NOT AT ALL.

HE HAD WAN-
DERED FAR
FROM SPARTA
FAR FROM
HOME.

HE HEARD A
LOW GROWL.

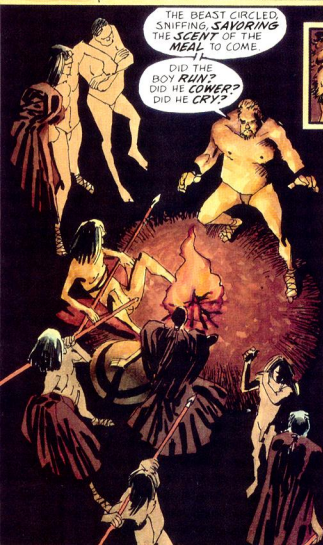
HE'D SUR-
VIVED ON
ROOTS
AND BUGS
AND RO-
DENTS—
AND NOW
HE WAS
FREEZ-
ING TO
DEATH.

COLD. HUNGRY. FAR FROM
HOME. DEFENSELESS.

DEFENSELESS. THE
SCRAWNY STICK HE'D
SHARPENED—IT WAS
NOTHING. A JOKE.
A CHILD'S TOY MAS-
QUERADING AS A
PROPER SPEAR.

HE WAS
DEFENSELESS.

HE WAS
PREY.



THE BEAST CIRCLED,
SNIFFING, SAVORING
THE SCENT OF THE
MEAL TO COME.

DID THE
BOY RUN?
DID HE COWER?
DID HE CRY?



NOT
THIS
BOY.

HE
SHOWED
THE WOLF
HIS BACK-
SIDE.

HE WAS
CALM.



NOT A
TRACE
OF FEAR
DID HE
SHOW.



THE WIND
SCREAMED
THROUGH
A NARROW
WOUND
IN THE
ROCK.



TOO LATE, THE
BEAST CHARGED
AND HOWLED,
THRASHING,
TRAPPED--



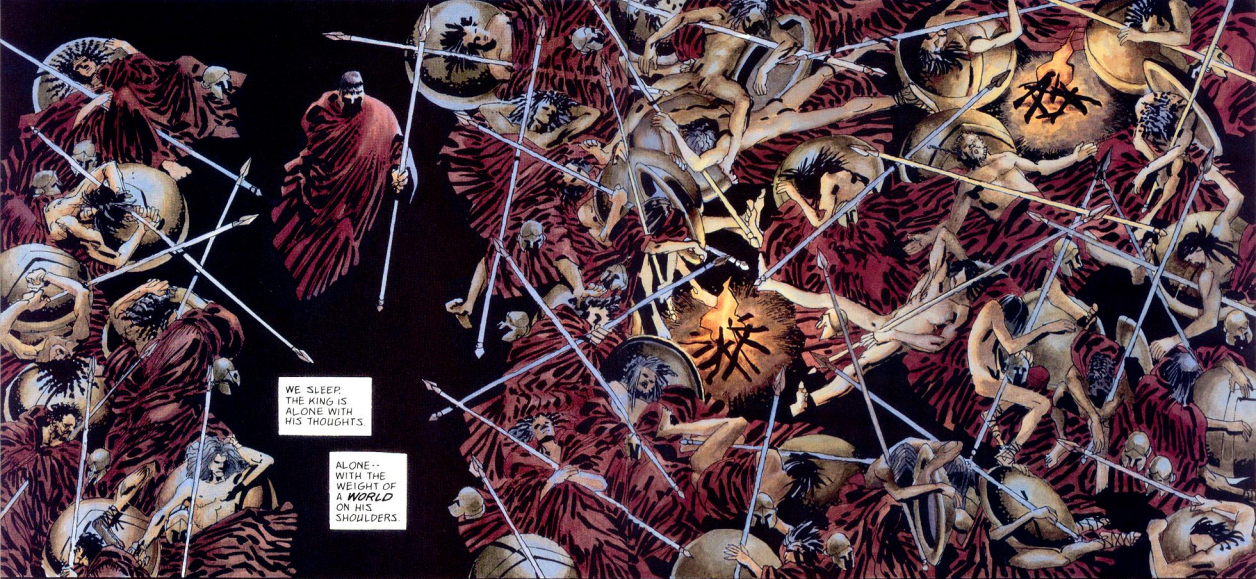
--PINNED
BY THE UN-
FORGIVING
ROCK.

THE BOY
RAISED
HIS STICK,
HIS HANDS
WERE
STEADY.



HIS
FORM WAS
PERFECT.





WE SLEEP.
THE KING IS
ALONE WITH
HIS THOUGHTS.

ALONE--
WITH THE
WEIGHT OF
A WORLD
ON HIS
SHOULDERS.

IT HAS BEEN
MORE THAN
FORTY YEARS
SINCE THE
WOLF AND THE
WINTER COLD.
NOW, AS THEN,
IT IS NOT
FEAR THAT
GRIPS HIM.



NO. NOT FEAR. ONLY
A RESTLESSNESS, A
HEIGHTENED SENSE
OF THINGS. THE ROCKY
SOIL BENEATH HIS
FEET. THE SALTY
GREECE, THE SNOR-
ING AND SHALLOW
BREATHING OF THE
THREE HUNDRED BOYS
IN HIS CHARGE--READY
TO DIE FOR HIM WITH-
OUT A MOMENT'S
PAUSE, EVERY ONE
OF THEM.

READY
TO DIE.
HE MUSES.
THEY
THINK
THEY
KNOW
WHAT
THAT
MEANS.

NOW, AS THEN, A
BEAST APPROACHES,
PATIENT, CONFIDENT,
SAVORING THE
MEAL TO COME. BUT
THIS BEAST IS MADE
OF MEN AND HORSES
AND SPEARS AND
SWORDS. IT IS AN
ARMY, YAST BEYOND
IMAGINING, READY
TO DEVOUR TINY
GREECE--TO SNIFF
OUT THE WORLD'S
ONE HOPE FOR
REASON AND
JUSTICE.

THE BEAST
APPROACHES
--AND IT WAS
KING LEONIDAS
HIMSELF WHO
PROVOKED
IT.

BARELY A
YEAR AGO.



BARELY A
YEAR AGO.

SPARTA

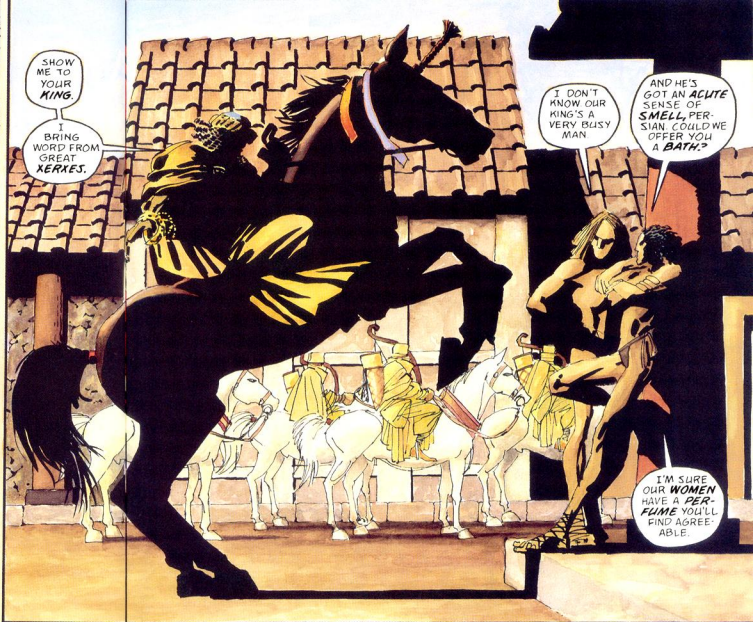
UNINVITED
GUESTS.

SHOW
ME TO
YOUR
KING.

I
BRING
WORD FROM
GREAT
XERXES.

GREEK
ARROGANCE
IT WILL BE
THE DEATH
OF YOU
ALL.

BE
AFRAID,
SPARTA WILL
BURN TO THE
GROUND, ONLY THE
GROUND OF KING
LEONIDAS CAN
SAVE IT.



I DON'T
KNOW OUR
KING'S A
VERY BUSY
MAN.

AND HE'S
GOT AN ACUTE
SENSE OF
SMELL, PER-
SIAN. COULD WE
OFFER YOU
A BATH?

I'M SURE
OUR WOMEN
HAVE A PER-
FUME YOU'LL
FIND AGREE-
ABLE.

HE SOUNDS
SERIOUS.
MAYBE WE
SHOULD
TELL THE
KING.

YEAH,
I SUPPOSE
WE DON'T WANT
ANYBODY SAYING
SPARTANS
AREN'T GOOD
HOSTS.

THE MATCHED
FOOTSTEPS
OF THE KING'S
PERSONAL
GUARD.

THE CLATTER
AND CHICKER-
ING OF THE
MARKETPLACE
CEASE.

DARELY A
YEAR AGO

EARTH AND
WATER? YOU
RODE ALL THE WAY
FROM PERSIA
FOR EARTH AND
WATER?

DON'T BE
COY, DON'T BE
STUPID, YOU
CAN AFFORD
NEITHER

A
FORCE OF
MEN IS ASSEM-
BLED--SO MAS-
SIVE IT SHAKES
THE EARTH WITH
ITS MARCH--ITS
NUMBERS SO
GREAT IT DRINKS
THE RIVERS
DRY.





EARTH
AND
WATER.

YOU'LL
FIND PLENTY
OF BOTH
DOWN
THERE.

MADMAN
YOU'RE A
MADMAN.

NO MAN--
PERSIAN OR
GREEK--NO MAN
THREATENS A
MESSENGER!



THIS IS
BLASPHEMY!

THIS IS
MADNESS!



THIS IS
SPARTA.

YAAAAA



THE CHILDREN
FROLIC.

A WAR
BEGINS



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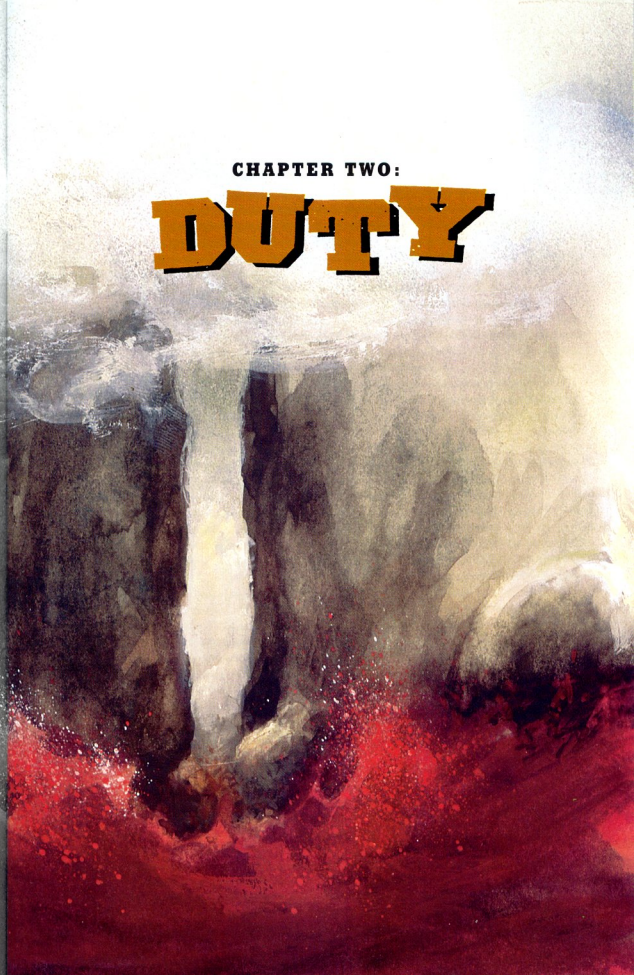
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CHAPTER TWO:

DUTY





NO. NO SLEEP
TONIGHT. NOT
FOR THE KING.

TOO RESTLESS.
EAGER AS A
YOUTH--EAGER
AS A BEARLESS,
WETNOSED
CADET--FOR
BATTLE.

BATTLE STILL
MILES AND DAYS
DISTANT.

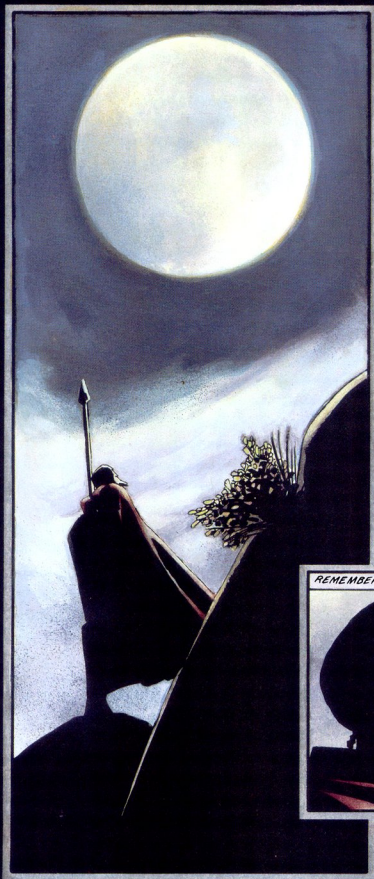
RESTLESS. FRUSTRATED.
ALL HIS FIFTY YEARS
HAVE BEEN A STRAIGHT
ROAD TO THIS ONE GLEAM-
ING MOMENT OF DESTINY--
THIS ONE RADIANT CLASH
OF SHIELD AND SPEAR AND
SWORD AND BONE AND
FLESH AND BLOOD.

STILL
DAYS
AWAY.

AND THOUGH
HE LEADS HIS
PRECIOUS
THREE HUN-
DRED TO CERTAIN
DEATH--HIS
ONLY REGRET
IS THAT HE HAS
SO FEW TO
SACRIFICE.

EVERY SPARTAN--
MAN OR WOMAN--
SHOULD SHARE IN
THIS GLORY AND IN
THE VICTORY THAT
WOULD'VE BEEN
SECURED, HAD NOT
KING LEONIDAS BEEN
SO ROULINLY
THWARTED.

THWARTED--BY
A FOE WHO SQUATS
AMONG THE SUMMER
CLOUDS, AS ROUND
AND FAT AS SOME
GLUTTONOUS
ATHENIAN.



REMEMBER



TWO
WEEKS
AGO

ABOVE
SPARTA.

A HARD
CLIMB.





WELCOME,
LEONIDAS. WE
HAVE BEEN
EXPECTING
YOU.

I TRUST
YOU DIDN'T
COME *EMPTY-*
HANDED?



COME
ALONG. MY
BROTHERS ARE
WAITING.



IT LOOKS
HEAVY. YOU
CARRY IT.

THE *EPHORS*.
PRIESTS TO
THE *OLD GODS*.

INBRED *SWINE*
WHOM EVEN A
KING MUST
BRIBE--AND
BEG.



KING
HERMES
IS ON THE
MARCH.
THE FATE
OF ALL
GREECE
HANGS IN
THE BAL-
ANCE.

FIRST
THINGS FIRST,
LEONIDAS.

YOU
MUSTN'T
INSULT
THE
GODS.

KLINK
KLANK



PROCEED



FIRST
THINGS
FIRST.

THERE'S
NEVER BEEN
A HOLY MAN
WHO LACKED
THE LOVE
FOR GOLD.

THE PERSIANS
CLAIM THEIR
FORCES NUMBER
IN THE MILLIONS.
SURELY THEY EX-
AGGERATE--BUT
THERE'S NO QUES-
TION THAT WE
WILL FACE THE
MOST MASSIVE
ARMY EVER
ASSEMBLED.

WE WILL USE
OUR SUPERIOR
FIGHTING SKILL
--AND THE TERRAIN
OF GREECE HER-
SELF--TO DESTROY
THEM. WE WILL
MARCH NORTH.
TO THE
COAST.

IT IS
AUGUST.
THE FULL MOON
APPROACHES.

THE
CARNEIA.
THE SACRED
FESTIVAL OF THE
CARNEIA.

SPARTA
WAGES NO
WAR AT THE
TIME OF THE
CARNEIA



THE
FESTIVAL
WILL BE OUR
LAST--UNLESS
YOU ALLOW ME
MY **PLEA**, HEAR
ME **OUT**.

WE WILL **BLOCK** THE
PERSIANS' COASTAL
MARCH WITH A GREAT
STONE WALL--**FUN-**
NELING THEM INTO THE
MOUNTAIN PASS WE
CALL **THE HOT GATES**.
IN THAT NARROW COR-
RIDOR, THEIR NUMBERS
WILL COUNT FOR
NOTHING.



LIKE AN **ANGRY SEA**
HEAVING **WAVE** AFTER
WAVE AGAINST AN UN-
YIELDING **CLIFF**, THEY
WILL **SHATTER** AT
EACH **ADVANCE**. XER-
XES' **LOSSES** WILL BE
SO **GREAT**--HIS MEN
SO **DEMORALIZED**--HE
WILL HAVE NO **CHOICE**
BUT TO **ABANDON**
HIS CAMPAIGN.



BUT--THE
CARNIEA...



--WE MUST
CONSULT THE
ORACLE.

I'D PREFER
YOU TRUSTED
YOUR
REASON.



YOUR **BLASPHEMIES**
HAVE COST US QUITE
ENOUGH **ALREADY**.
DON'T **COMPOUND**
THEM.

WE WILL CON-
SULT THE
ORACLE.



COME
ALONG.
ENJOY THE
SHOW.

INBRED **SWINE**, DISEASED
OLD **MYSTICS**.



WORTHLESS
REMNANTS.

WORTHLESS,
USELESS.
REMNANTS
OF THE OLD
TIME--BEFORE
LYKOURGOS
THE **LAW-**
GIVER--
BEFORE SPAR-
TA'S **ASCENT**
FROM THE
AGE OF
DARKNESS.

REMNANTS,
WOLFY ROTTING
REMNANTS OF
ANCIENT SENSE-
LESS, **STUPID**
TRADITION--TRA-
DITION EVEN
LYKOURGOS
THE **LAW-**
GIVER COULD
NOT **DEFY**.

LEONIDAS
MUST OBEY
THE WORD
OF THE
EPHORS.
THAT IS THE
LAW.

NO **SPARTAN--**
SLAVE OR **CIT-**
IZEN OR **KING**
--IS ABOVE THE
LAW.

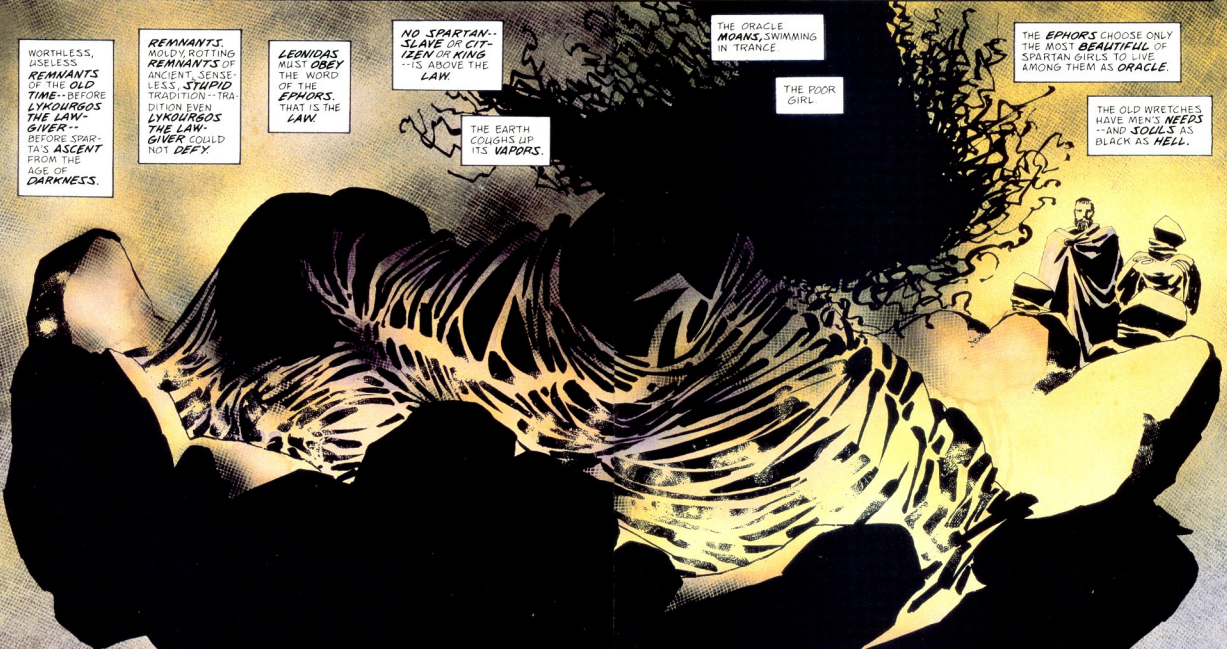
THE EARTH
COUGHS UP
ITS **VAPORS**.

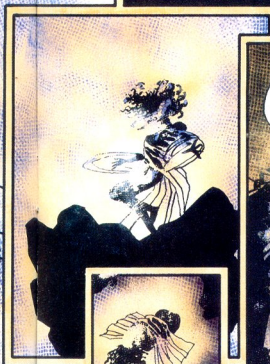
THE **ORACLE**
MOANS, SWIMMING
IN **TRANCE**

THE POOR
GIRL

THE **EPHORS** CHOOSE ONLY
THE MOST **BEAUTIFUL**
OF SPARTAN GIRLS TO LIVE
AMONG THEM AS **ORACLE**.

THE OLD WRETCHES
HAVE MEN'S **NEEDS**
--AND **SOULS** AS
BLACK AS **HELL**.





PRAY TO
THE WINDS.
SPARTA WILL FALL.
ALL GREECE WILL
FALL. TRUST NOT IN
MEN, HONOR THE OLD
GODS. HONOR THE
CARNEIA.

THE CLIMB
DOWN IT'S
HARDER.

POMPOUS,
INBRED
SWINE.

WORTHLESS.

DISEASED.

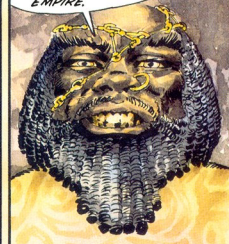
ROTTEN.

KLANK KLANK KLANK ^{CORRUPT.}



GREAT
XERXES
GIVES HIS
THANKS,
WISE
MEN.

WHEN SPARTA BURNS-- YOU
WILL BATHE IN GOLD. FRESH
ORACLES WILL BE DELIVERED
TO YOU-- DAILY-- FROM
EVERY CORNER OF THE
EMPIRE.



SPARTA
THE NEXT
MORNING

LEONIDAS HAS
BARELY STRAPPED
UP HIS SANDALS
WHEN THE COUNCIL
IS UPON HIM.
VOICES HUSHED:

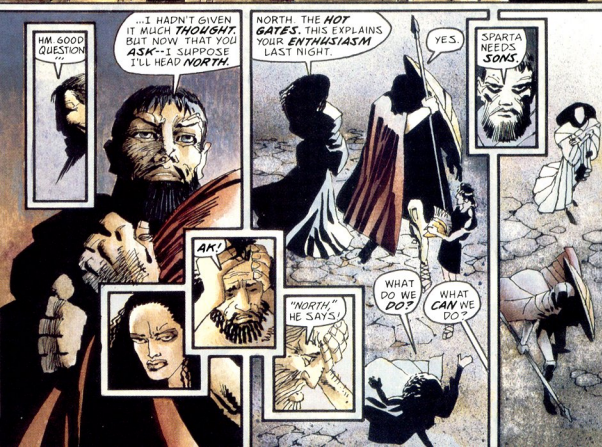
GOOD KING,
THE ORACLE
HAS SPOKEN.
THE EPHORS
HAVE SPOKEN.
THERE MUST BE
NO MARCH.

THE
LAW, MY
LORD, THE
SPARTAN
ARMY
MUST NOT
GO TO WAR.

NOR
SHALL IT
YOU WORRY
OVER NOTHING
I'VE ISSUED NO
ORDERS. I'M
JUST STRETCH-
ING MY LEGS.
TAKING A
WALK.

AND I INSIST
YOU TAKE YOUR
ENTIRE BODYGUARD
WITH YOU DEAR HUSBAND
ALL THREE HUNDRED.
CALL ME PRO-
TECTIVE.

WE'D NEVER
DOUBT YOUR WORD,
LEONIDAS, BUT PERMIT
ME TO ASK-- WHERE
IS IT YOU INTEND
TO WALK?



A STRONG
WOMAN. A
FINE WIFE
TO HIM,
ONLY A
MEMORY
NOW.

HE WILL
NEVER
SEE HER
AGAIN.

HE WILL NEVER
SEE SPARTA
AGAIN.

FIRST
LIGHT.

WE
MARCH.

NOISY
ARCADIANS
GREET US
WITH NOISY
COMPLAINTS.

DAXOS.
A PLEASANT
SURPRISE.

WHAT
IS
THIS?

THIS MORNING'S
FULL OF SURPRISES,
LEONIDAS!

WE'VE
BEEN
TRICKED!

CAN'T
BE MORE
THAN A FEW
HUNDREDS
OF THEM!

WE WERE
TOLD SPARTA
WAS ON THE
WARPATH!
WE WERE
EAGER TO
JOIN
FORCES--

DAMN! IS THIS
SOME KIND
OF JOKE?

--BUT YOU BRING
ONLY THIS HAND-
FUL-- AGAINST
XERXES?

WE EXPECTED
SPARTA'S
COMMITMENT
TO AT LEAST
MATCH OUR
OWN!

DOESN'T
IT?

YOU THERE
--ARCADIAN--
WHAT IS YOUR
PROFESSION?

I AM A
POTTER,
SIR.

AND YOU,
ARCADIAN, WHAT
IS YOUR PRO-
FESSION?

A SCULP-
TOR,
SIR.

AND
YOU?

A BLACK-
SMITH.


YOU

A
BAKER.

SPARTANS!
WHAT IS YOUR
PROFESSION?

YOU
SEE, OLD
FRIEND? I
BROUGHT
MORE SOLD-
IERS
THAN YOU
DID.

DAMN
SPARTANS!
THEY
ALWAYS
KNOW HOW
TO SURVIVE.



FROM **TEGEA** AND
MANTINEA THEY
COME--FROM
THESPIAE AND
THEBES AND **OPUS**
AND **PHOCIS** AND
HALIS. SOME BY
THE **DOZENS**.
SOME BY THE **HUN-**
DREDS. CITIZEN-
SOLDIERS. FREED
SLAVES. DRAVE
GREEKS ALL.

BRAVE AMATEURS.
THEY JABBER.
THEY DRAG. THEY
BICKER. THEY
JOKE. THEY EVEN
LAUGH OUT LOUD.

SEVEN
THOUSAND
STRONG--

--WE
MARCH.

INTO HELL'S
MOUTH--

--WE
MARCH.





THE
HOT
GATES



LET THE *OTHERS* SCURRY
FOR *COVER*. WE RUSH TO
BEAR *WITNESS*.

THE GODS
PLAY.

ZEUS STABS THE
SKY WITH *THUN-*
DERBOLTS.

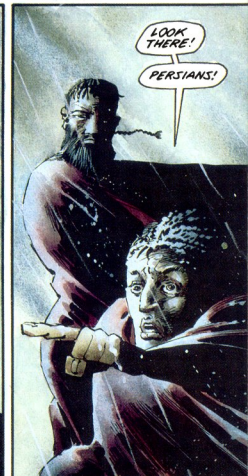
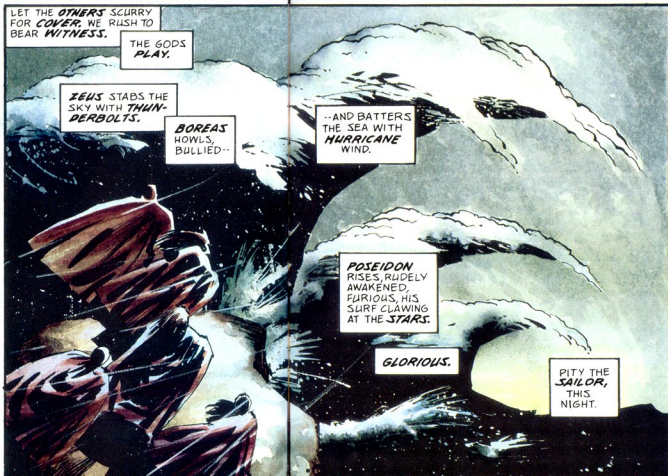
BOREAS
HOWLS,
BULLIED--

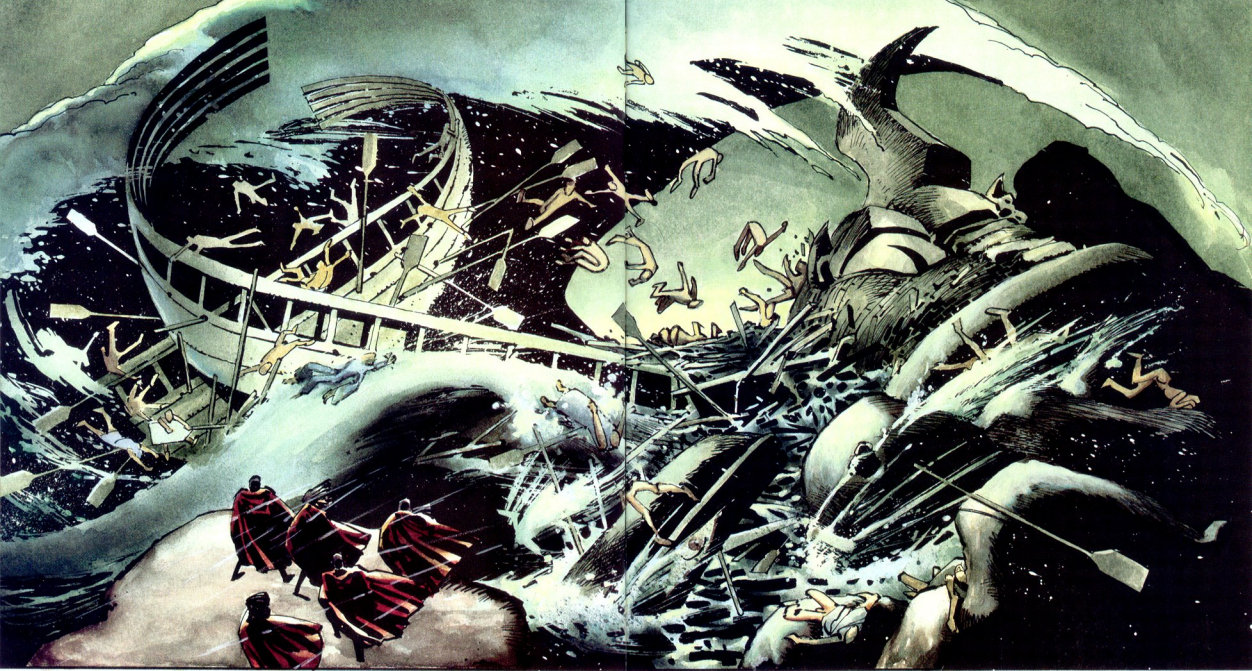
--AND BATTERS
THE SEA WITH
HURRICANE
WIND.

POSEIDON
RISES, RUDELY
AWAKENED.
FURIOUS, HIS
SURF CLAWING
AT THE *STARS*.

GLORIOUS.

PITY THE
SAILOR,
THIS
NIGHT.





JUBILATION.

LAUGHTER AND JONGS
AND PRAISE FOR THE GODS
THAT WILL CONTINUE TILL
THE NEXT DAY'S DAWN.

ONLY ONE
AMONG US
KEEPS HIS
SPARTAN
RESERVE.

ONLY
HE

ONLY
THE
KING.

HIS THOUGHTS ARE
BITTERSWEET.

THE FOOLS THE DEAR
YOUNG FOOLS.

THEY ACTUALLY THINK WE
HAVE A CHANCE.



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CHAPTER THREE:
GLORY





HONORED
FATHER--SMILE
DOWN UPON ME FROM
YOUR PLACE OF REST.
THIS DAY, YOUR SON
WILL PROVE HIM-
SELF. I WILL SHOW
YOU THAT YOU WERE
NOT WRONG TO
PROTECT ME.

HUFF
HUFF

I WILL
SHOW YOU
THAT I AM
WORTHY.



HUINH?

HENFF

BASTARDS.

TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK



TOK TOK
TOK

FASTER!

AAR

TOK
TOK



PERSIAN
BASTARDS.
WE'LL KILL
YOU ABB.

WE
SPARTANS
WILL DESTROY
YOU.



WE ARE
BORN.
WE ARE
INSPEC-
TED.



IF WE ARE
SMALL
OR PUNY
OR SICKLY
OR MIS-
SHAPEN,
WE ARE
DIS-
CARDED.



WE ARE STARNED.
DRIVEN TO
STEAL AND
FIGHT AND KILL.



WE ARE TESTED.
TOSSED INTO THE
WILD. LEFT TO
FIGHT OUR HITS
AND WILL
AGAINST NATURE'S
FURY.



BY ROD AND
LASH, WE ARE
PUNISHED.
TRAINED TO
SHOW NO
PAIN.

OUR TRAINING
NEVER ENDS.

WE ARE
SPARTANS.

DAXOS.
YOU'RE UP
EARLY FOR AN
ARCADIAN.

DOES
THIS HURT,
SPARTAN?

NO,
SIR.

ARE YOU
GETTING
TIRED,
SPARTAN?

NO,
SIR.

DO YOU
WANT TO
STOP NOW,
SPARTAN?

NO,
SIR.

ARE YOU
LIKING THIS,
SPARTAN?

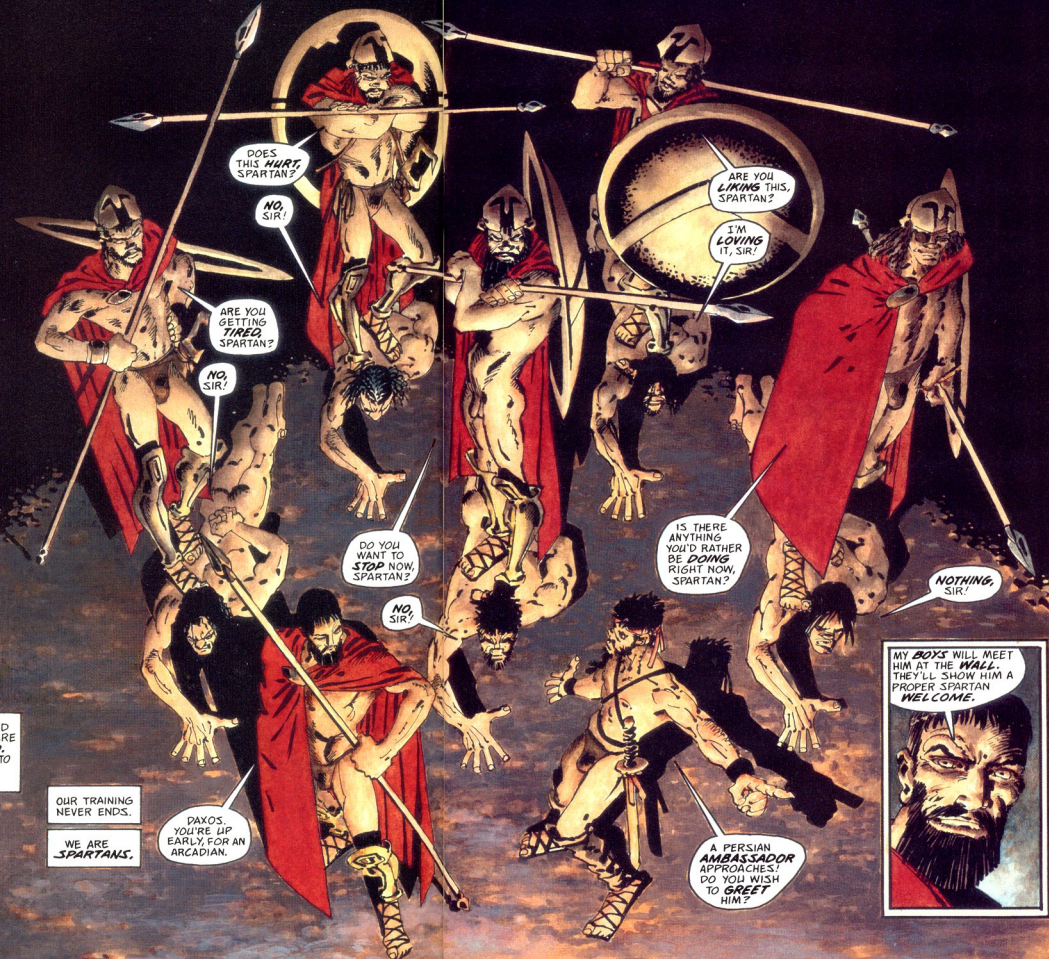
I'M
LOVING
IT, SIR!

IS THERE
ANYTHING
YOU'D RATHER
BE *DOING*
RIGHT NOW,
SPARTAN?

NOTHING,
SIR!

A PERSIAN
AMBASSADOR
APPROACHES!
DO YOU WISH
TO GREET
HIM?

MY BOYS WILL MEET
HIM AT THE WALL.
THEY'LL SHOW HIM A
PROPER SPARTAN
WELCOME.







A SPARTAN
WELCOME.



IT'S TRUE.
WHAT THEY
SAY.
THESE
SPARTANS, THEY
ARE DEMONS.



THEIR STEP
SLOWER--

--THEIR BREATH
QUICKER--

--THEIR FINGERS
GRIPPED MORE
TIGHTLY ABOUT
THEIR SPEARS--

--THE SLAVES
OF XERXES
ADVANCE.



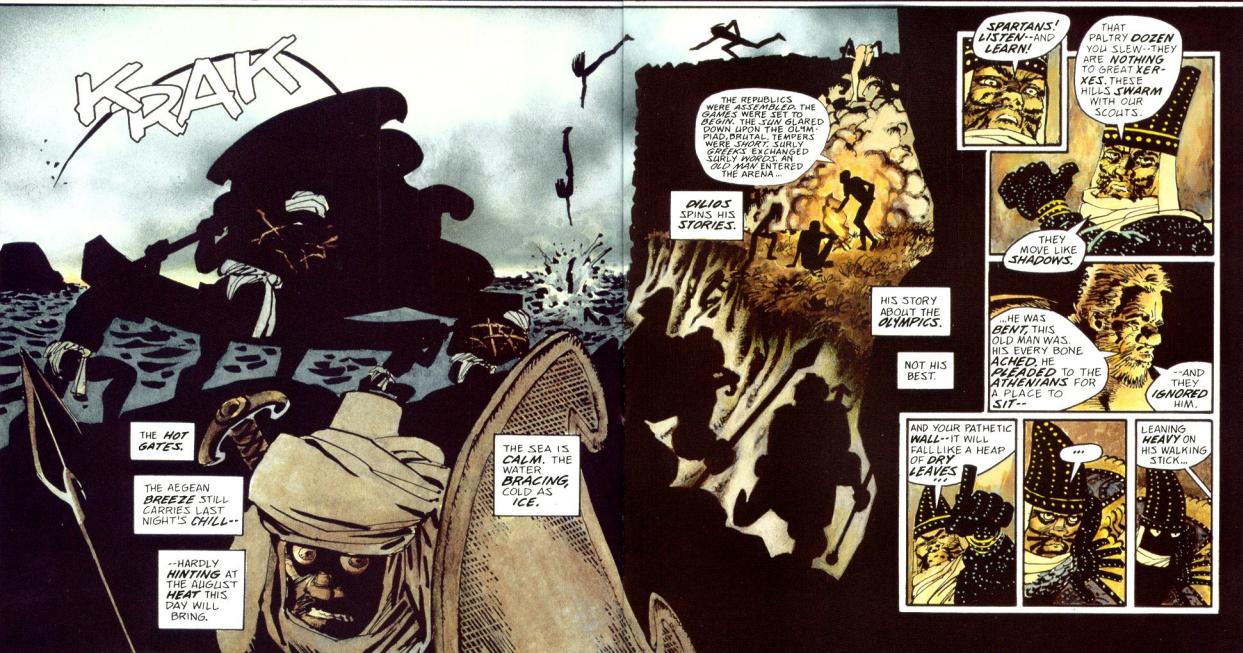
HUHK!
HUHK!

RIGHT UP
THEIR CAMEL-
CALLUSED
BACK-
SIDES!

BLESSED SPARTANS!
THE BOLDEST OF MEN!
THE FINEST WARRIORS
IN ALL THE WORLD!

THEY WILL
ACCEPT ME. THEY
MUST ACCEPT
ME!

FATHER! BELOVED
MOTHER! YOU WILL
SEE THAT YOU WERE
RIGHT!



KRAK

THE REPUBLICS
WERE ASSEMBLED. THE
GAMES WERE SET TO
BEGIN. THE SUN SHINED
DOWN UPON THE OLYMPIC
PIAD. BRITAIN. TEMPLES
WERE SHORT. SURLY
SOFTIES EXCHANGED
SURLY WORDS. AN
OLD MAN ENTERED
THE ARENA.

DILIOS
SPINS HIS
STORIES.

SPARTANS!
LISTEN--AND
LEARN!

THAT
PALTRY DOZEN
YOU SLEW--THEY
ARE NOTHING TO GREAT KER-
XES. THESE
HILLS SWARM
WITH OUR
SCOUTS.

THEY
MOVE LIKE
SHADOWS.

HIS STORY
ABOUT THE
OLYMPICS.

NOT HIS
BEST.

HE WAS
BENT, THIS
OLD MAN WAS.
HIS EVERY BONE
ACHED. HE
PLEADED TO THE
ATHENIANS FOR
A PLACE TO
SIT--

--AND
THEY
IGNORED
HIM.

THE HOT
GATES.

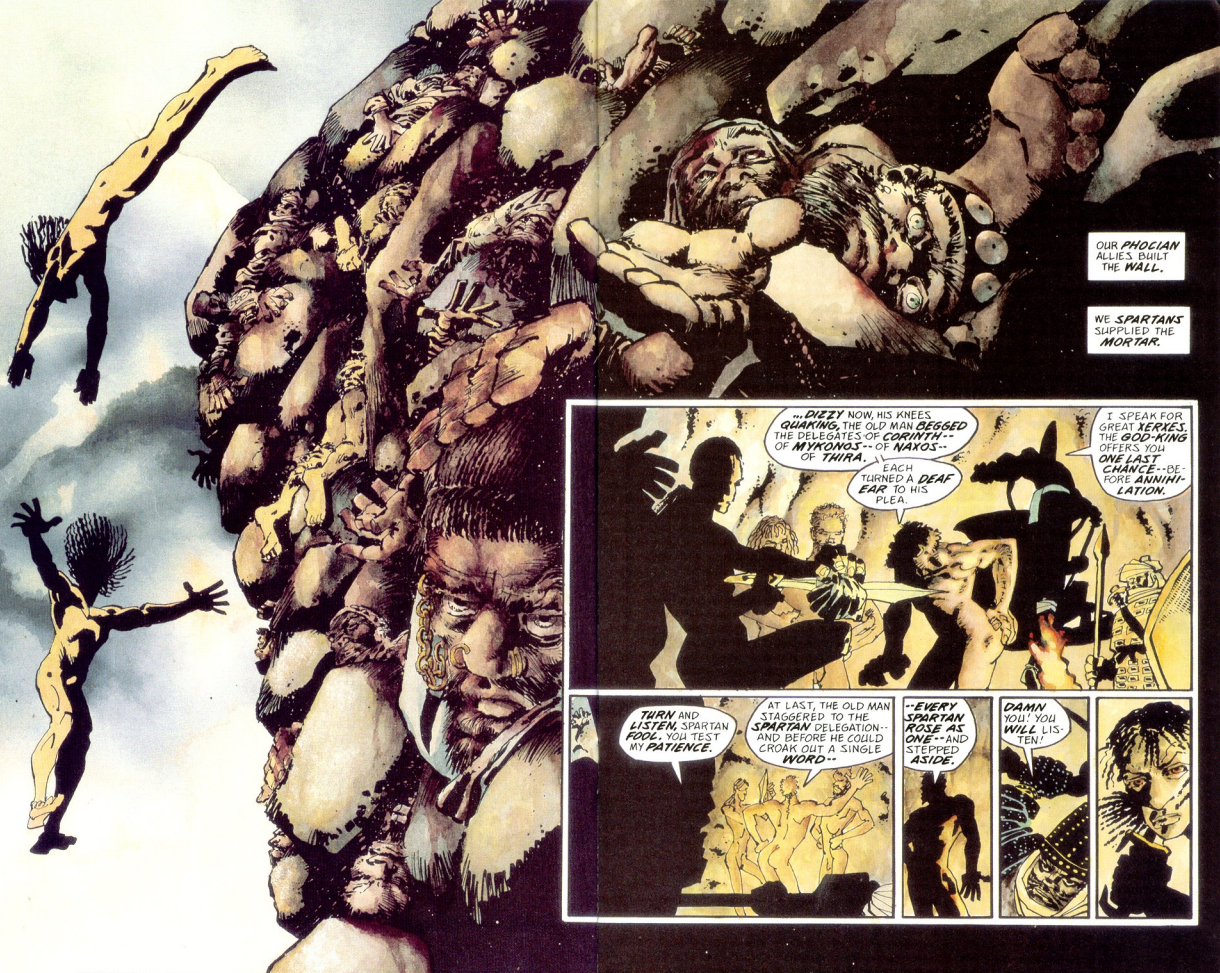
THE AEGEAN
BREEZE STILL
CARRIES LAST
NIGHT'S CHILL--

--HARDLY
HINTING AT
THE AUGUST
HEAT THIS
DAY WILL
BRING.

THE SEA IS
CALM. THE
WATER
BRACING,
COLD AS
ICE.

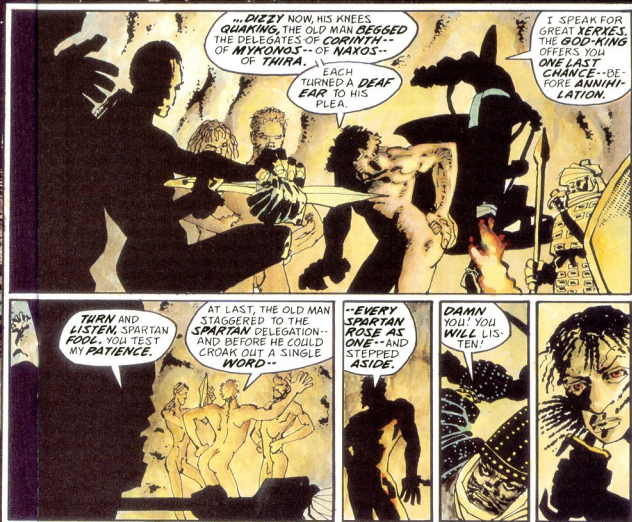
AND YOUR PATHETIC
WALL--IT WILL
FALL LIKE A HEAP OF DRY
LEAVES.

LEANING
HEAVY ON
HIS WALKING
STICK...



OUR PHOCIAN
ALLIES BUILT
THE WALL.

WE SPARTANS
SUPPLIED THE
MORTAR.



...DIZZY NOW, HIS KNEES
QUAKING, THE OLD MAN BEGGED
THE DELEGATES OF CORINTH--
OF MYKONOS--OF NAXOS--
OF THIRA.

EACH
TURNED A DEAF
EAR TO HIS
PLEA.

I SPEAK FOR
GREAT HERMES.
THE GOD-KING
OFFERS YOU
ONE LAST
CHANCE--BE-
FORE ANNIHI-
LATION.

THIRN AND
LISTEN, SPARTAN
FOOL, YOU TEST
MY PATIENCE.

AT LAST, THE OLD MAN
STAGGERED TO THE
SPARTAN DELEGATION--
AND BEFORE HE COULD
CROAK OUT A SINGLE
WORD--

--EVERY
SPARTAN
ROSE AL-
ONE--AND
STEPPED
ASIDE.

DAMN
YOU! YOU
WILL LIS-
TEN!







BE **WARY** THESE CONARDS USE **ARROWS--** AND THEY USE THEM **WELL**.

LET THEIR ARROWS **FLY** STAY OUT OF **SIGHT** UNTIL THEIR **CHARGE**. WHEN THEY CLEAR THE LAST OF THE **OLIVE TREES--** AND NOT ONE HEARTBEAT **BE--** **POKE--** HIT THEM WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE **GOY**.

FASTER, YOU **GOYS**! FASTER!

WHAT WE'VE **GOY** IS **LIMITED**, KING LEONIDAS. THERE ARE ONLY A FEW **DOZEN** OF US.

WE'LL BE OUT OF **JAVELINS** AFTER THEIR FIRST **CHARGE**.

WE'LL BRING YOU FRESH **SPEARS** BY THE **THOUSANDS**. **PERSIAN** SPEARS--PICKED FROM **PERSIAN** **DEAD**.

OOE!

PICK UP ONE **PERSIAN**.

DECENT **WORK**, KID.

MAYBE NOW YOU'LL STOP **CALLING** ME "**STUW--** **BE-GOY?**"

HELL! NO!



CAPTAIN-- HAVE THE MEN FOUND ANY ROUTE THROUGH THE HILLS TO OUR **BACK?**

NONE, SIR.

THERE IS SUCH A ROUTE, GOOD KING.

JUST PAST THAT **WESTERN RIDGE**. IT'S AN OLD **GOAT PATH**. THE **PERSIANS** COULD USE IT TO **OUT-FLANK** US.

WISE KING-- I HUMBLY REQUEST AN **AUDIENCE**.



NOT ONE STEP **CLOSER**, MONSTER.

OR I'LL **SKEWER** YOU WHERE YOU **STAND**!

I GAVE NO SUCH **ORDER**, CAPTAIN. BACK OFF.



FORGIVE THE CAPTAIN. HE'S A **GOOD SOLDIER**-- BUT A BIT SHORT ON **MANNERS**. THERE IS **NOTHING** TO FORGIVE, BRAVE KING. I KNOW WHAT I LOOK LIKE.

I AM **EPHIALTES**, BORN OF **SPARTA**. MY MOTHER'S **LOVE** LED MY PARENTS TO **FLEE** SPARTA, LEST I BE **DISCARDED**. MY FATHER BECAME A **SHEPHERD**-- BUT HE TAUGHT ME THE **WARRIOR'S WAY**.



I **BEG** YOU, BOLD KING, TO PERMIT ME TO **REDEM** MY FATHER'S **NAME** BY **SERVING** YOU--IN **COMBAT**.



LET'S TAKE A **WALK**.



DAY AND
NIGHT MY FATHER
TRAINED ME--TO FEEL
NO FEAR--TO SHOW NO
PAIN--TO MAKE SPEAR
AND SHIELD AND
SWORD AS MUCH A
PART OF ME AS MY
OWN BEATING
HEART.

HEFF

HUNFF!

YOU SEE?
MY ARMS ARE
STRONG. MY
REACH IS LONG.
I WILL EARN MY
FATHER'S ARMOR,
NOBLE KING--AND
RECLAIM MY
FAMILY'S
HONOR!

I WILL
KILL MANY
PERSIANS!

A FINE
THRUST.
BUT...

...RAISE
YOUR SHIELD.
AS FAR UP AS
YOU CAN.



YOUR FATHER SHOULD'VE
TAUGHT YOU HOW OUR
PHALANX WORKS. WE
FIGHT AS A SINGLE,
IMPENETRABLE UNIT.
THAT'S THE SOURCE
OF OUR STRENGTH.



EACH SPARTAN PRO-
TECTS THE MAN TO HIS
LEFT FROM THIGH
TO NECK. WITH HIS
SHIELD. A SINGLE
WEAK SPOT--AND
THE PHALANX SHAT-
TERS. FROM THIGH
TO NECK, EPHEALTES.



IM SORRY MY
FRIEND. I CAN'T
USE YOU. ...



MOTHER.
FATHER.
YOU WERE
WRONG.

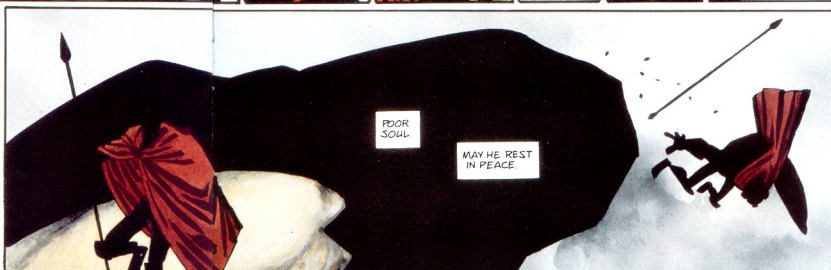


YOU WERE
WRONG.



POOR
SOUL

MAY HE REST
IN PEACE.





DISPATCH
THE PHOEGIANS
TO THAT GOAT
PATH--AND PRAY
TO THE GODS THAT
NOBODY TELLS
THE PERSIANS
ABOUT IT.

WHUFF!

EARTH-
QUAKE!

NO, CAPTAIN THAT'S
NO EARTHQUAKE!

BATTLE
STATIONS!



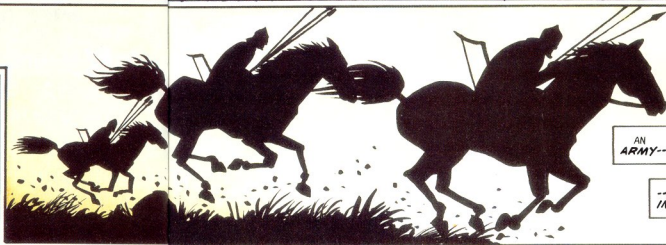
A BEAST
APPROACHES--

--SAVORING
THE MEAL TO
COME.



A FORCE
OF MEN--

--SO MASSIVE
IT SHAKES THE
EARTH WITH
ITS MARCH.



AN
ARMY--

--VAST BEYOND
IMAGINING--

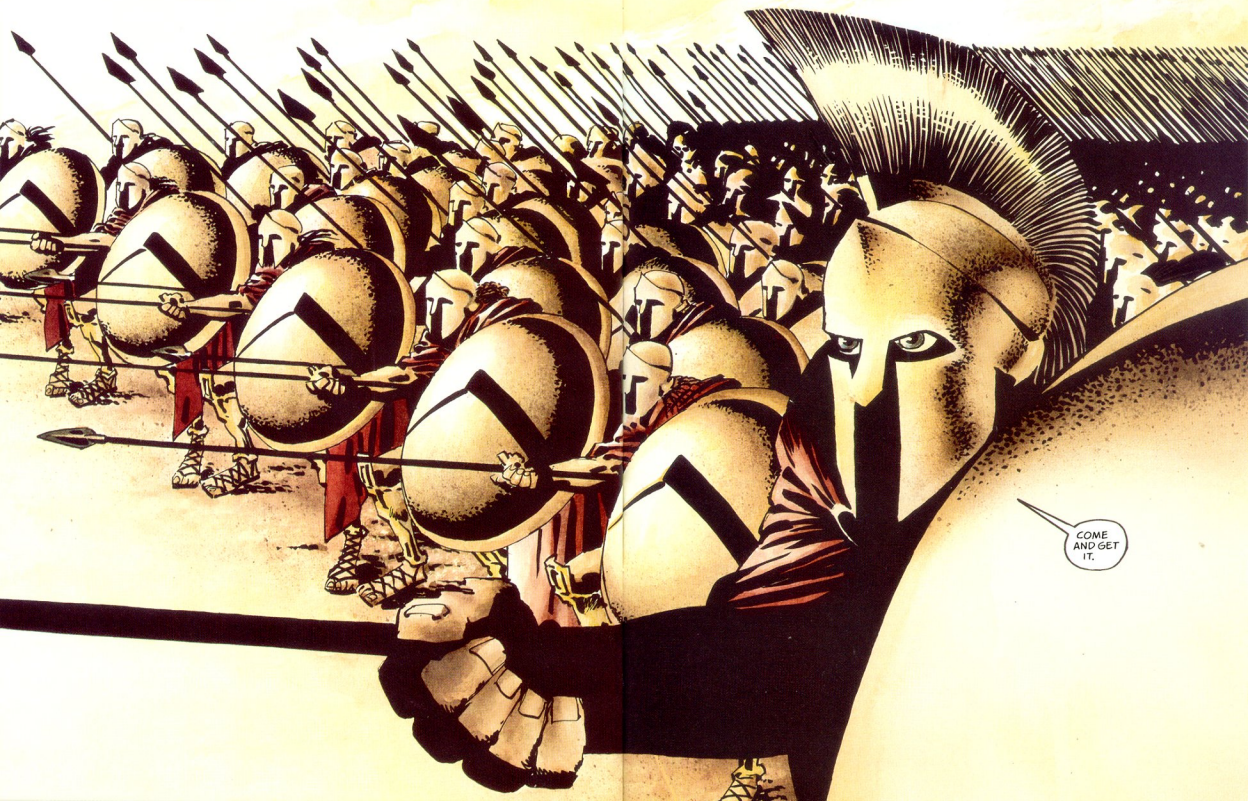


--POISED TO DEVOUR
TINY GREECE--

--TO SNIFF
OUT THE
WORLD'S ONE
HOPE FOR
REASON AND
JUSTICE.







COME
AND GET
IT.



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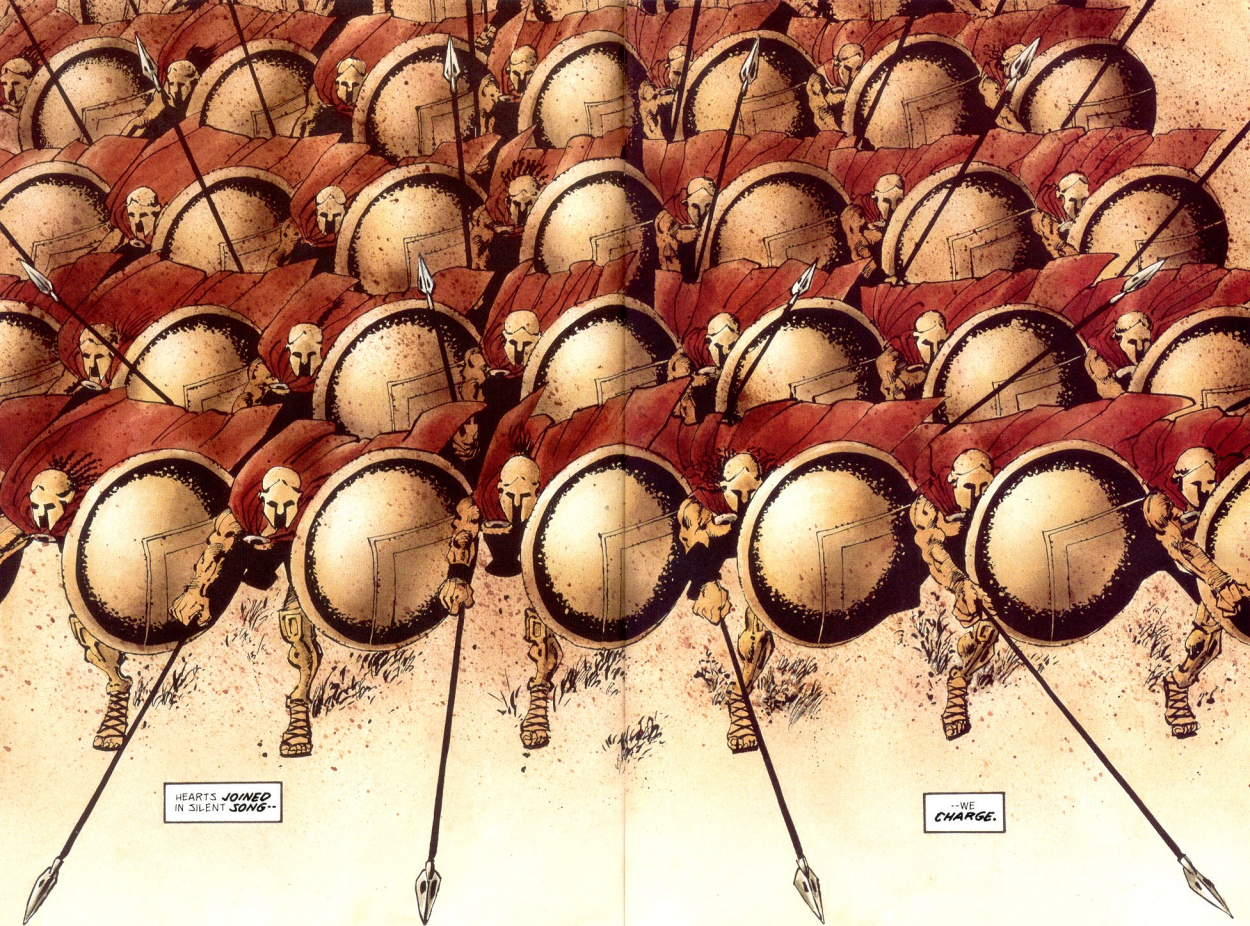
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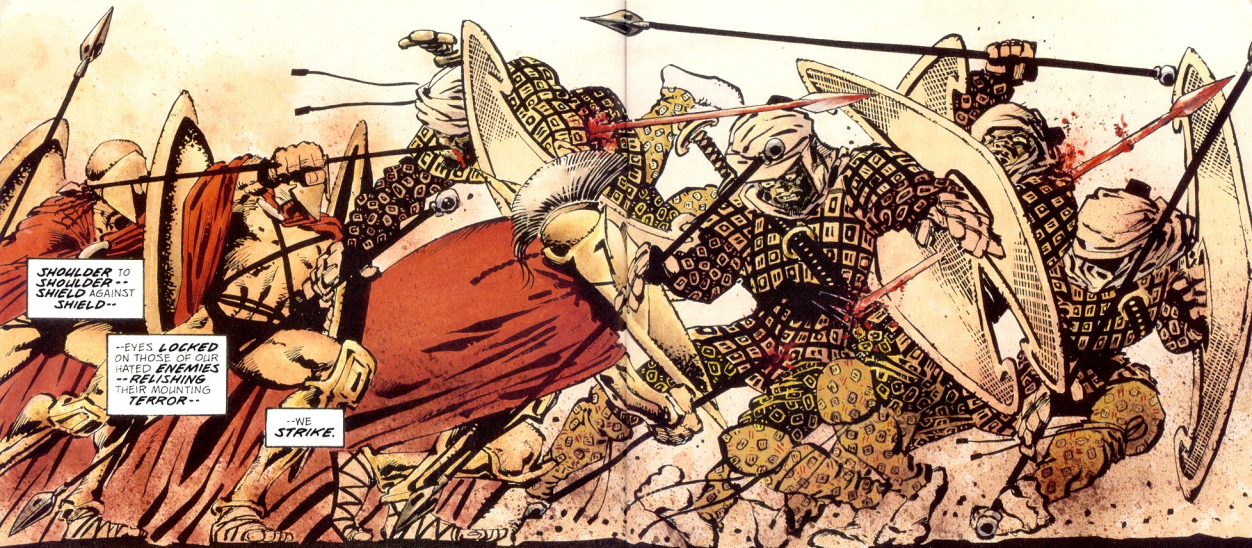
CHAPTER FOUR:
COMBAT





HEARTS JOINED
IN SILENT SONG--

--WE
CHARGE.





PERSIANS *GASP* AND
GROAN AND *GURGLE*
AND *SCREAM* AND
STUMBLE AND *TUM-
BLE* AND *FALL*.
BRAINS *SPLATTERING*
ACROSS BRINY *STONE*.
LINGS SUCKING *DEEP*
OF THE DEADLY,
SALTY *SEA*.

WE *SPARTANS*
LAUGH LIKE
FOOLS--AND
KEEP *PUSHING*.

NO
PRISONERS.

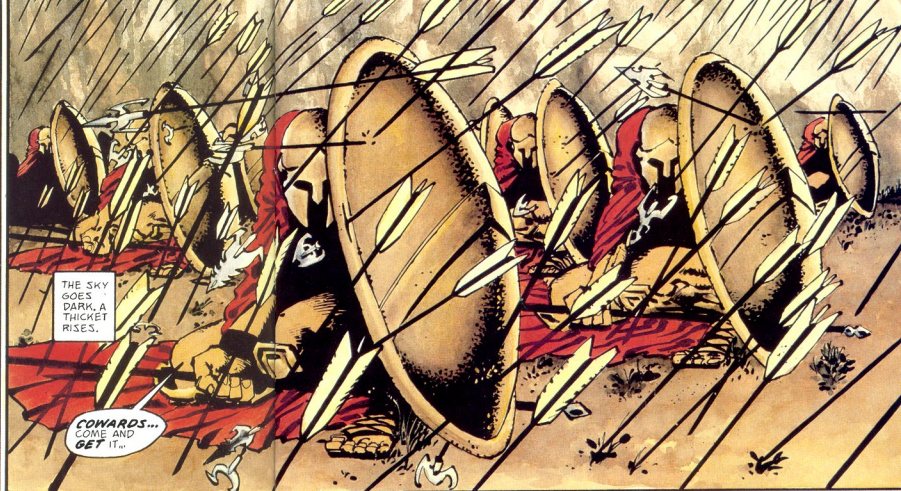
NO
MERCY.

WE'RE OFF TO
ONE *HELL*
OF A GOOD
START.

THE
FIRST
DAY

A DISTANT
HORN
CALLS.

A THOUSAND
HARPIS
SCREECH.



THE SKY
GOES
DARK, A
THICKET
RISES.

COWARDS...
COME AND
GET IT...

ONE HUNDRED
NATIONS DESCEND
UPON US.

SNORTING, SNARLING
DESERT **BEASTS.**

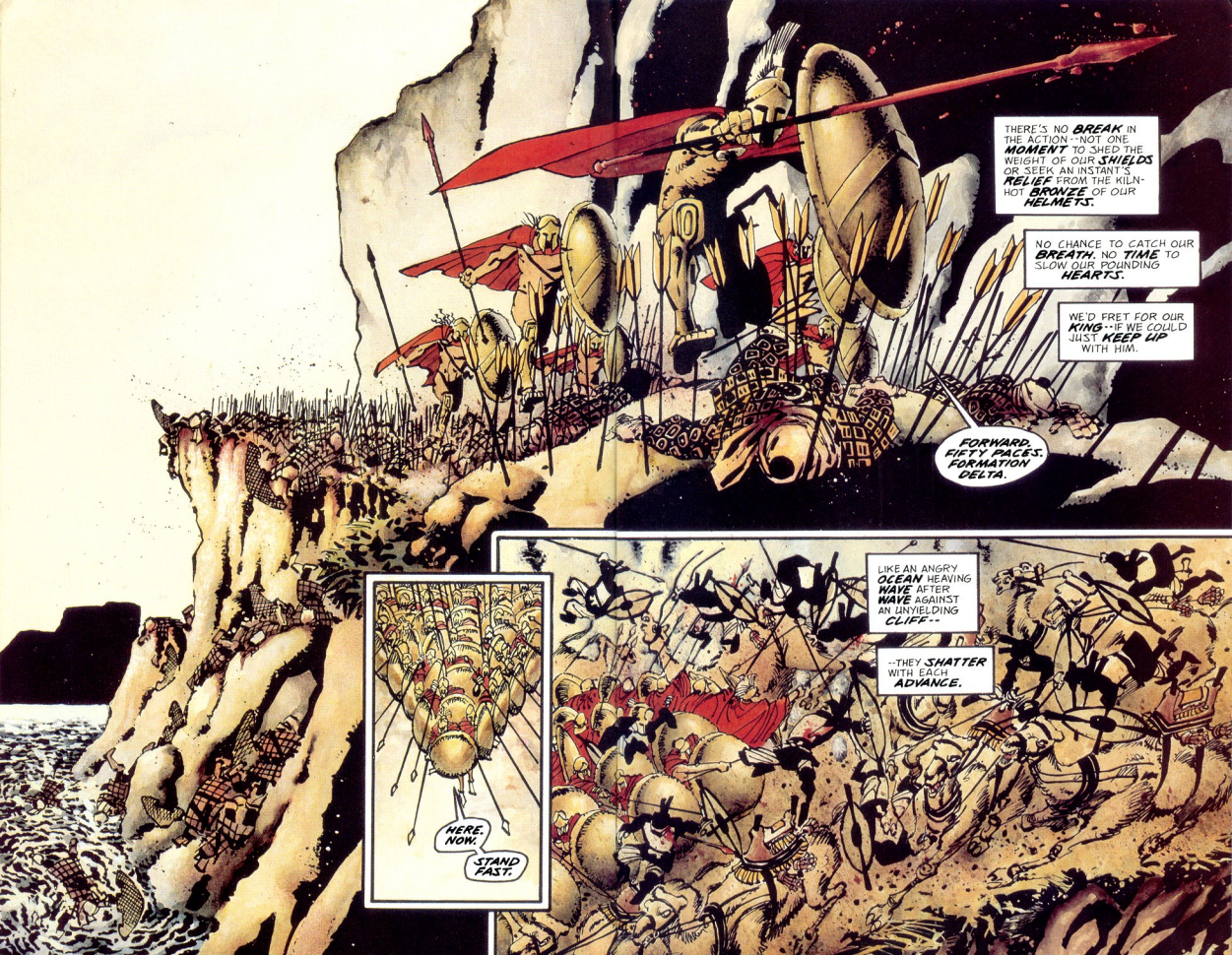
HOWLING
BARBARIANS.

THE **ARMIES**
OF ALL **ASIA--**

--PLEGED TO
CRUSH THE
IMPERTINENT
REPUBLICS OF
GREECE--

--TO MAKE
SLAVES OF
THE ONLY
FREE MEN
THE WORLD
HAS EVER
KNOWN.





THERE'S NO **BREAK** IN THE ACTION--NOT ONE **MOMENT** TO SHED THE WEIGHT OF OUR **SHIELDS** OR SEEK AN INSTANT'S **RELIEF** FROM THE KILN--NOT **GRANEE** OF OUR **HELMETS**.

NO CHANCE TO CATCH OUR **BREATH**. NO **TIME** TO SLOW OUR POUNDING **HEARTS**.

WE'D FRET FOR OUR **KING**--IF WE COULD JUST **KEEP UP** WITH HIM.

FORWARD.
FIFTY PACES.
FORMATION DELTA.

LIKE AN ANGRY **OCEAN** HEAVING **WAVE** AFTER **WAVE** AGAINST AN UNYIELDING **CLIFF**--

--THEY **SHATTER** WITH EACH **ADVANCE**.

HERE.
NOW.
STAND
FAST.

KUNCH
KUNCH

KUNCH

WHAT WE
WERE **BORN**
TO DO.

WHAT WE
WERE **BRED**
TO DO.

WE DO
WHAT WE
WERE
TRAINED
TO DO.

MERCY!
GIAA

COWARD!

KUNCH

NO PRISONERS.

KUNCH

NO
MERCY.

KUNCH

A GOOD
START.

KUNCH

AFTERNOON. NO
MOVEMENT FROM
THE PERSIAN
CAMP.

WE SET OUR
SHIELDS DOWN AND
PULL OUR HELMETS
OFF AND SHAKE AWAY
OUR SWEAT. WE
BIND OUR WOUNDS--
AND PUT THE FIN-
ISHING TOUCHES
TO THE MORNING'S
WORK.

NO
PRISONERS.

NO
MERCY.

GAAK

KUNCH

HURK

KUNCH
GHAA

KUNCH

THE
ARCADIANS
ARE GETTING
TWIFERY. SURE
THEY'RE BEGGING
FOR A CRACK AT
THE PERSIANS.

GOOD. I'VE GOT A **FLANKING
MANEUVER** IN MIND FOR THEM--
AND I WANT THEM **EAGER**. TELL
DOGS TO HAVE THEM **SOBER** AND
READY FOR THE NEXT **CHARGE**.
WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, GET THEIR
HELP PILING THE **CORPSES** ONTO
THAT **MOUND**. STACK THEM
HIGH.

LOOK NOW--
THERE'S AN
EXCITED YOUNG
FELLOW...

HEFF
HEFF

KING
LEONIDAS!

STELIOS, CATCH YOUR
BREATH,
BOY.

YES, MY
LORD

MUFF
HEFF

PERSIANS
APPROACH. MY
LORD, A **SMALL**
CONTINGENT--
TOO SMALL FOR
AN **ATTACK**.

MAYBE
THEY FEEL
A **CHAT**.

I'M ON
MY **WAY**,
CAPTAIN.
YOU'RE IN
CHARGE.

RELAX. IF
THEY AS-
SASSINATE
ME, ALL
SPARTA
GOES TO
WAR.

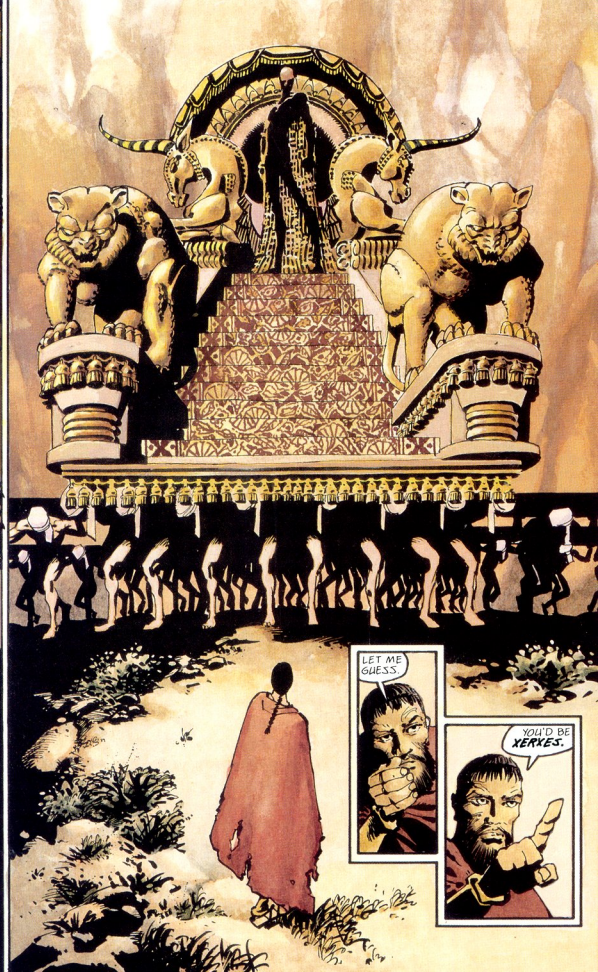
BUT,
SIRE--

PRAY THEY'RE
THAT **STUPID**.
PRAY WE'RE
THAT **LUCKY**.

BESIDES, THERE'S
NO REASON WE CAN'T
BE **CIVIL**. IS THERE?

NONE,
SIRE.

KUNCH
GAA



A VOICE AS SMOOTH
AS **WARM OIL** ON
WELL-WORN **LEATHER**
—AND AS **DEEP** AS
ROLLING **THUNDER**:

LEONIDAS. LET
US REASON
TOGETHER.

IT WOULD BE
A REGRETTABLE
WASTE—IT WOULD BE
NOTHING SHORT OF
HADNESS—WERE YOU
AND YOUR VALIANT TROOPS
PERISH, ALL BECAUSE
OF A SIMPLY AVOIDABLE
MISUNDERSTAND-
ING.

DON'T LOSE
SLEEP WORRYING
OVER **US**. WE'RE
HAVING THE TIME OF
OUR **LIVES**.

BRAVE WORDS, **SPAR-**
TAN WORDS. YOURS
IS A **FASCINATING**
TRIBE. THERE IS
MUCH OUR CULTURES
COULD **SHARE**.

WE'VE
BEEN
SHARING
OUR **CUL-**
TURE WITH
YOU ALL
MORNING.

ENOUGH
SARCASM. YOU
GREEKS TAKE PRIDE
IN YOUR **LOGIC**. I SUG-
GEST YOU **EMPLOY** IT.
CONSIDER THE BEAUTIFUL
LAND YOU SO VIGOROUSLY
DEFEND. PICTURE IT
REDUCED TO **ASH**.

CONSIDER THE
FATE OF YOUR
WOMEN.

YOU DON'T
KNOW OUR
WOMEN. I MIGHT
AS WELL HAVE
MARCHED **THEM**
HERE, JUDGING BY
WHAT I'VE SEEN.
YOU HAVE MANY **MEN**,
SOLDIERS.—BUT FEW
WON'T BE LONG
BEFORE THEY FEAR
MY **SPARS** MORE
THAN YOUR **WHIPS**.

IT'S NOT THE
LASH THEY FEAR.
IT IS MY **DIVINE**
POWER. BUT I AM
A **GENEROUS**
GOD. I CAN MAKE
YOU **RICH** BE-
YOND ALL
MEASURE.

I CAN MAKE YOU
WARLORD OF
ALL **GREECE**.
CARRYING MY **BAT-**
TLE STANDARD
TO THE HEART OF
YOUR **EUROPE**.
YOUR
ATHENIAN **RIVALS**
WILL KNEEL AT
YOUR **FEET**.—IF
YOU BUT KNEEL
AT **MINE**.

THAT'S
QUITE AN **OFFER**.
I'D BE **GLAD** TO
REFUSE IT.

BUT THIS **KNEELING**
BUSINESS—I'M AFRAID
KILLING ALL THOSE
SLAVES OF YOURS HAS
LEFT ME WITH A **NAS-**
TY CRAMP IN
MY **LEGS**.

AS I AM **GENEROUS**,
SO I AM **WRATHFUL**.
I WILL **ERASE** EVEN
THE **MEMORY** OF
SPARTA FROM THE
HISTORIES. THERE
WILL BE NO **GLORY**
IN YOUR SACRIFICE.

NO ONE
WILL EVER
KNOW.

I
THINK
I'LL WALK
IT OFF.

YOU
SADDEN
ME.

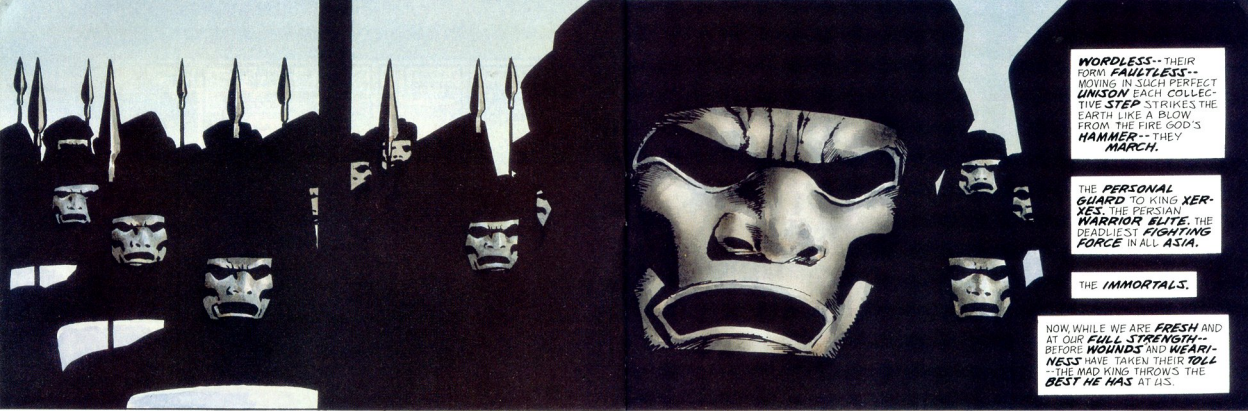
THEY'LL
KNOW.

WATCH
YOUR **BACK**.
YOUR MEN LOOK
NERVOUS.



THE FIRST NIGHT



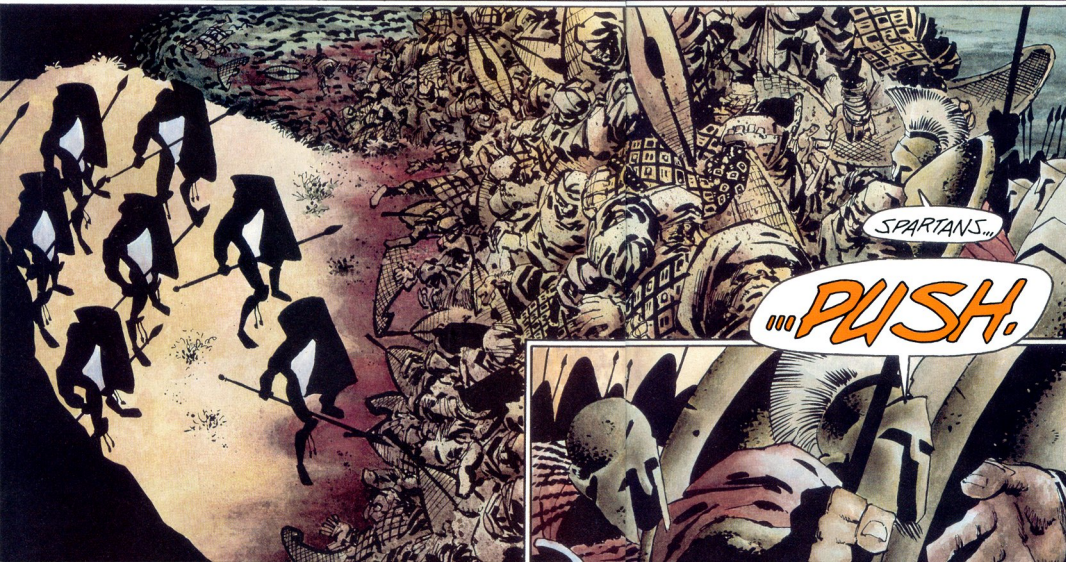


WORDLESS-- THEIR FORM, **FAULTLESS**-- MOVING IN SUCH PERFECT **UNISON** EACH COLLECTIVE **STEP** STRIKES THE EARTH LIKE A BLOW FROM THE FIRE GOD'S **HAMMER**-- THEY **MARCH**.

THE **PERSONAL GUARD** TO KING **XERXES**, THE PERSIAN **WARRIOR ELITE**, THE DEADLIEST **FIGHTING FORCE** IN ALL **ASIA**.

THE **IMMORTALS**.

NOW, WHILE WE ARE **FRESH** AND AT OUR **FULL STRENGTH**-- BEFORE **WOUNDS** AND **WEARINESS** HAVE TAKEN THEIR **TOLL**-- THE MAD KING THROWS THE **BEST HE HAS** AT US.



SPARTANS...

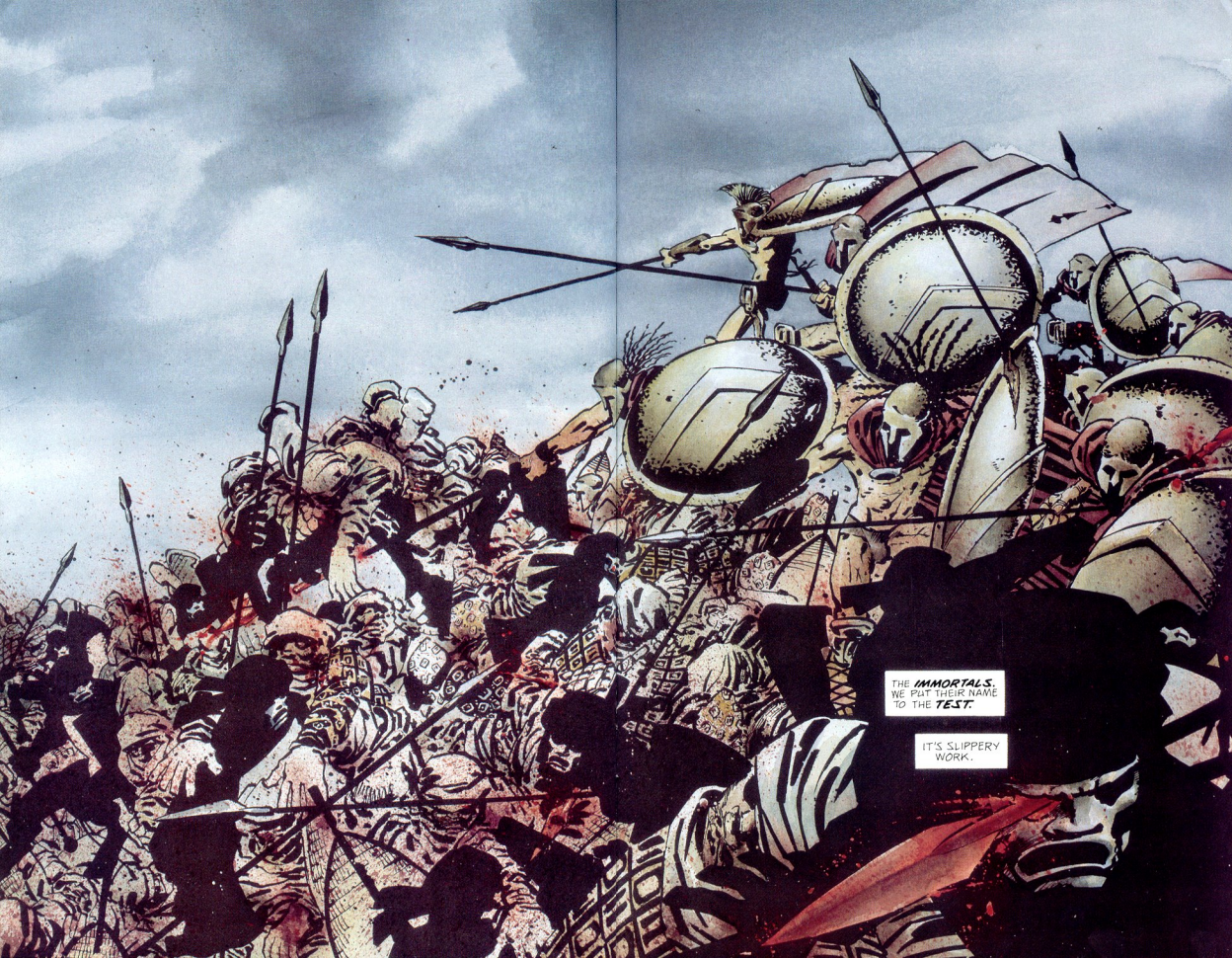
...**PUSH.**



XERXES HAS **TAKEN** THE **BAIT**.

AND NOW THE **TRAP** IS **SPRINGING**.





THE IMMORTALS.
WE PUT THEIR NAME
TO THE TEST.

IT'S SLIPPERY
WORK.



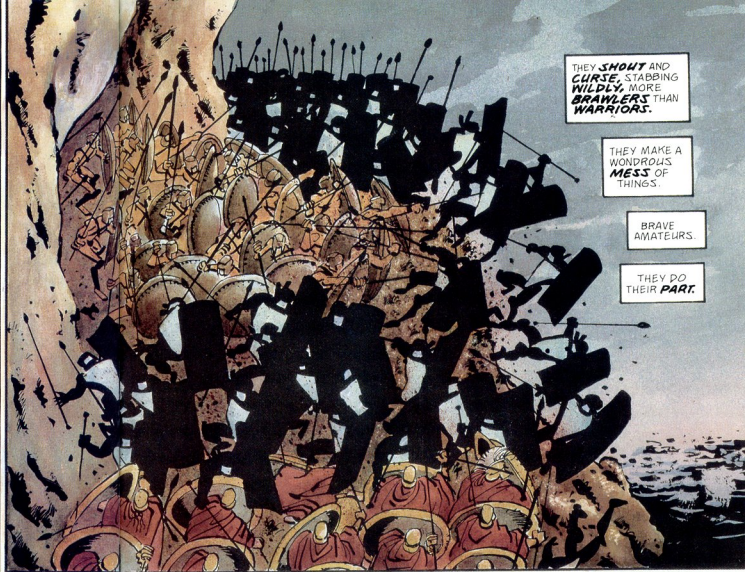
ARCADIANS...

...NFW!



GO! GO!
GO! LET'S
SHOW THE SPAR-
TANS WHAT WE
CAN DO!

CALL US
AMATEURS,
WILL THEY...

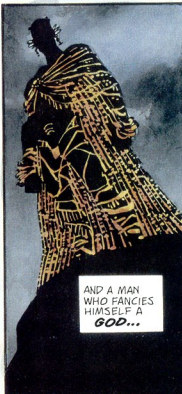


THEY **SHOUT** AND
CURSE, STABBING
WILDLY MORE
BRAWLERS THAN
WARRIORS.

THEY MAKE A
WONDERFUL
MESS OF
THINGS.

BRAVE
AMATEURS.

THEY DO
THEIR **PART**.



AND A MAN
WHO FANCIES
HIMSELF A
GOD...



...FEELS
A VERY
HUMAN
CHILL
CRAWL
UP HIS
SPINE.





CHILDREN,
CHILDREN...

TRIUMPH.
THE DAY IS
OURS.

THE DEAD
IMMORTALS
SLINK BACK
TO THEIR
CAMP LIKE
WHIPPED
ODDS--AND
EVERY PER-
SIAN SEES
IT.

WHOM WILL
XERXES
DARE TO DIS-
PATCH NEXT?

AND WHO
AMONG HIS
LEGIONS
WILL DARE TO
FACE THE
SPARTANS?



EVEN THE
KING ALLOWS
HIMSELF TO
HOPE--FOR
MORE THAN
GLORY.

SUCH MAD
HOPE--BUT
THERE IT IS.

AGAINST ASIA'S
ENDLESS
HORDS--
AGAINST ALL
ODDS--WE
CAN DO IT WE
CAN HOLD
THE HOT
GATES.

WE CAN WIN.

EVEN AS WE RUB
OIL INTO STIFFENED
MUSCLES AND
SEAL TORN FLESH
WITH RED-HOT IRON
--EVEN AS WE BID
FAREWELL TO
OUR HONORED
DEAD--EACH
HOUR BRINGS
GOOD THINGS.

THE ATHENIAN
FLEET HAS ENGAGED
THE FOG AT SEA,
HACKING MERCI-
LESSLY AT
XERXES' NAVY.

AND BACK ON LAND,
AT THE PERSIAN
CAMP--BLESSED
CHAOS.



CHAOS! THE
MEDIAS AND SCYTHIANS
ARE IN OPEN REVOLT!
XERXES IS SLAUGHTER-
ING HIS OWN TROOPS!

AND THERE'S
NOTHING THAT
CAN STOP US!
NOTHING.

SETTLE
DOWN, BOY.
DON'T GET
COCKY.

LIFE'S
FULL OF SUR-
PRISES.

KHAFF
GODS...I
STILL BREATHE
--I STILL LIVE--
GODS--YOU ARE
CRUEL!

DAMN
YOU!



DAMN YOU, DAMN YOU,
GODS! DAMN YOU, FATHER!
DAMN YOU, MOTHER!
DAMN YOU ALL
TO HELL!

HENCE!

SPARTANS...



...SPARTANS!
THE BOLDEST OF
MEN! THE FINEST
WARRIORS IN ALL
THE WORLD!

DAMN
YOU!

BTW!



DAMN
YOU
ALL!



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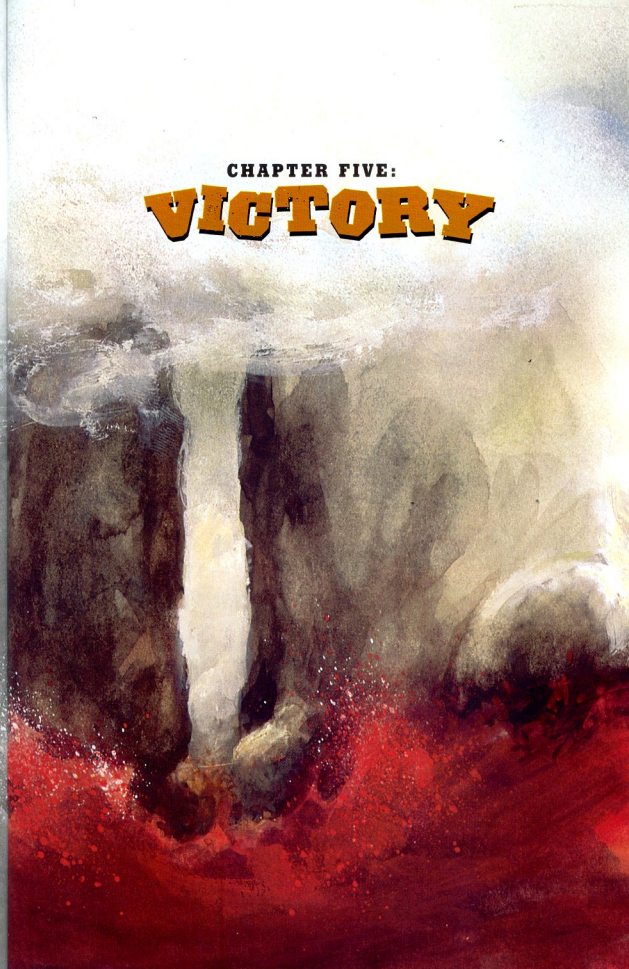
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CHAPTER FIVE:
VICTORY

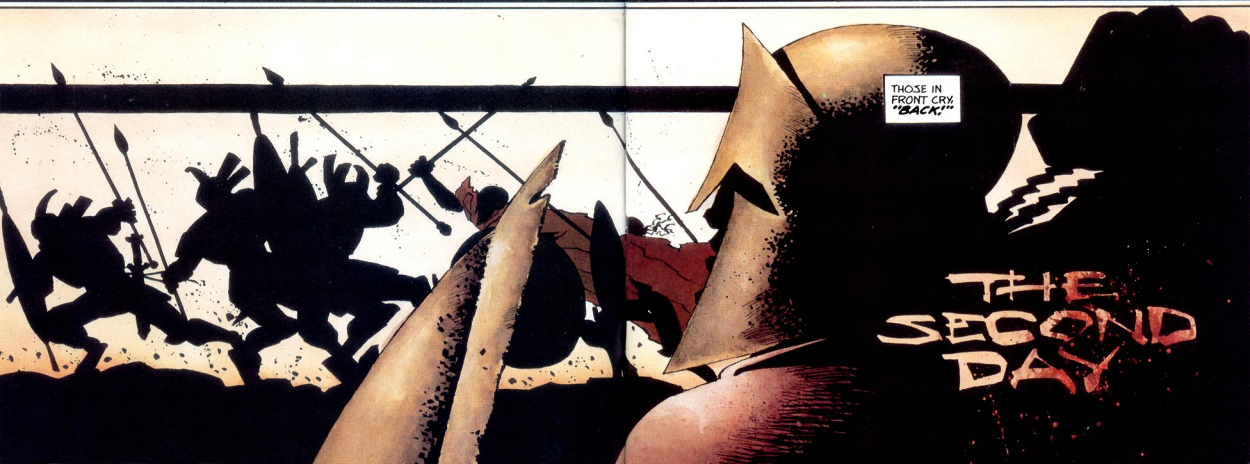




WHIPS
CRACK.

BARBARIANS
HOWL.

THOSE BEHIND CRY
"FORWARD!"



THOSE IN
FRONT CRY
"BACK!"

THE
SECOND
DAY

ONE HUNDRED
NATIONS DESCEND
UPON US. THE AR-
MIES OF ALL ASIA.

FUNNELED INTO
THIS NARROW
CORRIDOR, THEIR
NUMBERS COUNT
FOR *NOTHING*.

THEY *SHATTER*
WITH EACH
ADVANCE.

KING XERXES IS
DISPLEASED.



HE REPRIMANDS
HIS GENERALS.

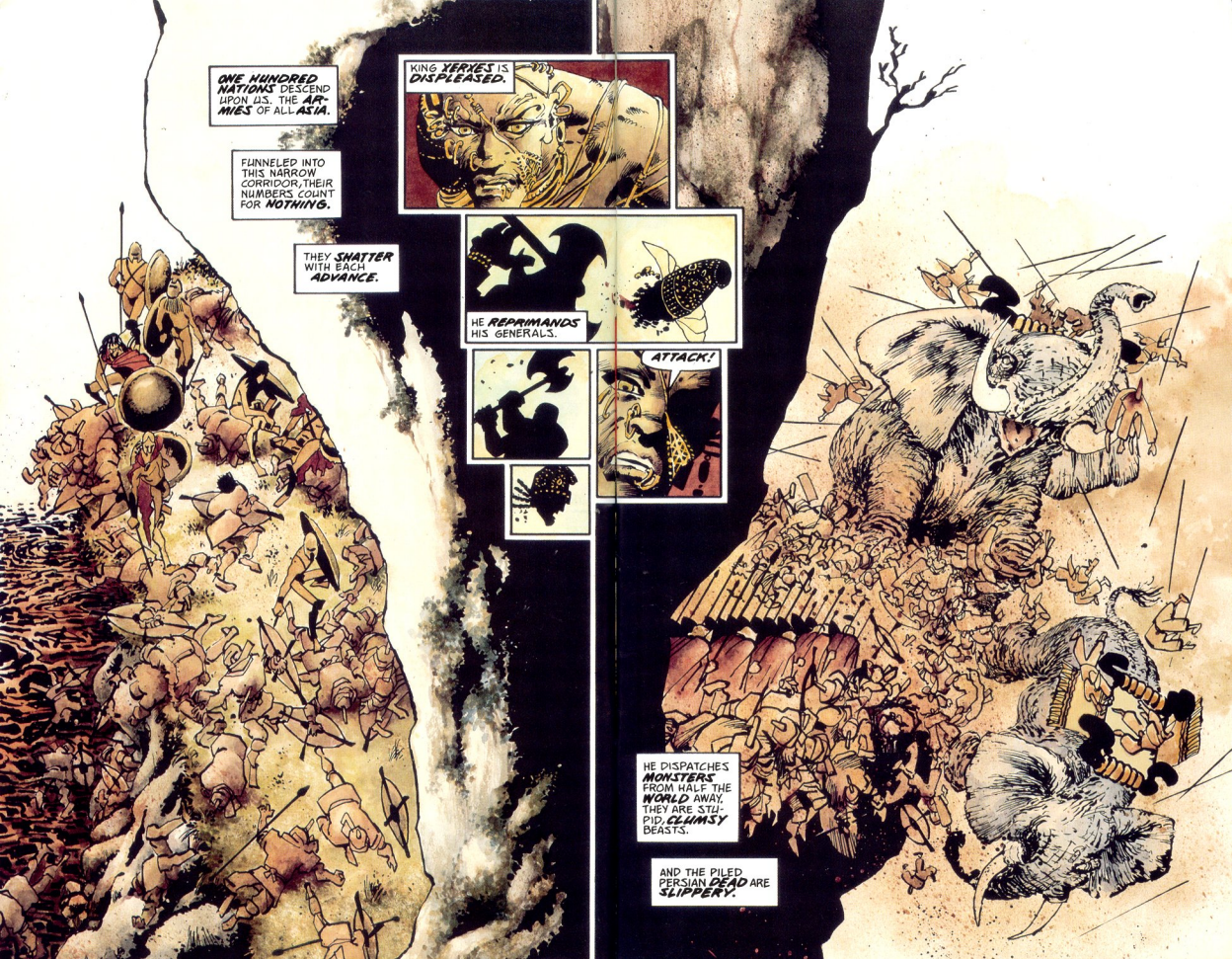


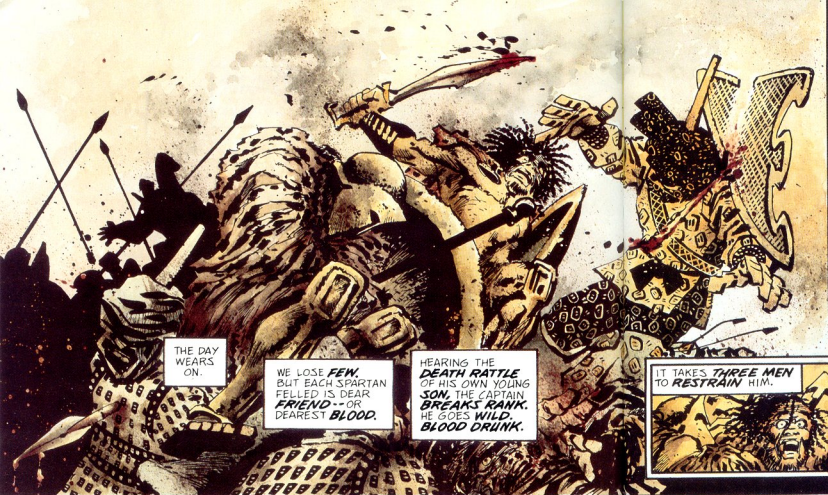
ATTACK!



HE DISPATCHES
MONSTERS
FROM HALF THE
WORLD AWAY.
THEY ARE STE-
PID, CLUMSY
BEASTS.

AND THE PILED
PERSIAN DEAD ARE
SLIPPERY.





THE DAY
WEARS ON.

WE LOSE FEW.
BUT EACH SPARTAN
FELLIED IS DEAR
FRIEND--OR
DEAREST BLOOD.

HEARING THE
DEATH RATTLE
OF HIS OWN YOUNG
SON, THE CAPTAIN
BREAKS RANK.
HE GOES WILD.
BLOOD DRUNK.

IT TAKES THREE MEN
TO RESTRAIN HIM.

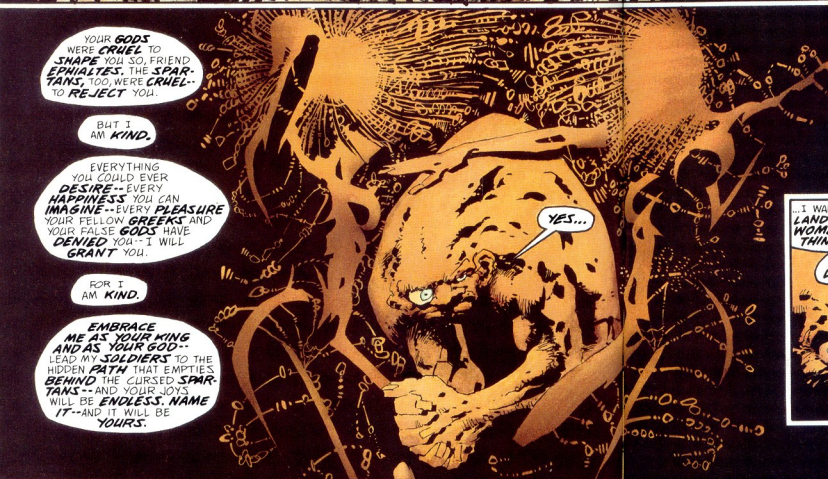


THE DAY
IS OURS.

NO SONGS
ARE SUNG.



THE PERSIAN
CAMP
GOES
DEADLY
QUIET.



YOUR GODS
WERE CRUEL TO
SHAPE YOU SO, FRIEND
EPHIALTES. THE SPAR-
TANS TOO WERE CRUEL--
TO REJECT YOU.

BUT I
AM KIND.

EVERYTHING
YOU COULD EVER
DESIRE--EVERY
HAPPINESS YOU CAN
IMAGINE--EVERY PLEASURE
YOUR FELLOW GREEKS AND
YOUR FALSE GODS HAVE
DENIED YOU--I WILL
GRANT YOU.

FOR I
AM KIND.

EMBRACE
ME AS YOUR KING
AND AS YOUR GOD--
LEAD MY SOLDIERS TO THE
HIDDEN PATH THAT EMPTIES
BEHIND THE CURSED SPAR-
TANS--AND YOUR JOYS
WILL BE ENDLESS. NAME
IT--AND IT WILL BE
YOURS.

YES...

I WANT IT ALL.
LAND. WEALTH.
WOMEN. AND ONE
THING MORE.

I WANT A
UNIFORM.

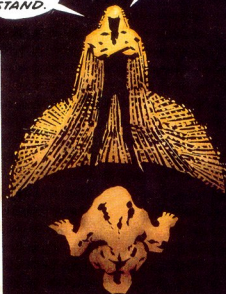
I AM
KIND.

CRUEL
LEONIDAS
DEMANDED
THAT YOU
STAND.

I
REQUIRE
ONLY THAT
YOU
KNEEL.



DONE



THE SECOND NIGHT

THE HOT GATES.

DILIOS, I TRUST THAT SCRATCH HASN'T MADE YOU USE-LESS.

HARDLY, MY LORD. IT'S JUST AN EYE THE GODS SAW FIT TO GRACE ME WITH A SPARE.

DILIOS SPINS HIS STORIES.

THE STORY OF MARATHON.

A PERFECT CHOICE.

GOOD. THE MEN NEED A BOOST. TELL THEM A STORY. ONE THAT'LL GET THEIR BLOOD UP.



ATHENIANS, AMATEURS. FOPISSH, FRILLY CITIZEN SOLDIERS. NOT A SPARTAN AMONG THEM--AND STILL THEY DROVE THE PERSIANS BACK TO THE SEA AND AWAY!



BROTHERS! HOW CAN WE FAL--AGAINST FOES SO FEARFUL OF COMBAT THEY'D SHOW THEIR BACKSIDES TO ATHENIANS?



MUCH LAUGHTER.

SHORT-LIVED.

XERXES REPEATS HIS FATHER'S FOLLY. TEN SUMMERS PAST, PERSIAN SLAVES SET SHORE AT THE PLAIN OF MARATHON, THERE TO FACE BRAVE GREEKS--AND OUR MIGHTIEST ALLY, THE HARSH, PROUD TERRAIN OF GREECE HERSELF.

THE PERSIANS STUMBLED FROM THEIR CROWDED SHIPS, THEIR LEGS CRAMPED, THEIR SOFT FEET RECOILING FROM THE ROCKY SOIL, THE SNAPPING, STABBING, THORNY UNDERBRUSH.

THEY LOOKED UP-- JAWS SLACK, HEARTS LURELING UP THEIR THROATS. ARMORED MEN CHARGED AT THEM-- AT A FULL RUN-- FROM A FULL MILE DISTANT.



ARMORED MEN. ATHENIANS. WITH THEIR LEATHER SKIRTS AND LOVINGLY SCULPTED BRASS PLATES. WHAT A PRETTY PACK THEY MUST HAVE BEEN.



LEONIDAS! WE ARE LINDONE!



UNDONE, I TELL YOU!
DESTROYED! A HUNCHBACK
TRAITOR HAS LED XERXES'
IMMORTALS TO THE HIDDEN GOAT
PATH BEHIND US! THE PHOCIANS
YOU POSTED THERE SCATTERED
WITHOUT A FIGHT! THIS **BAT-**
TLE IS OVER, LEONIDAS! BY
MORNING, THE **IMMOR-**
TALS WILL SURROUND
US. THE **HOT GATES**
WILL FALL!

THIS BATTLE IS
OVER WHEN I SAY IT
IS, DAKOS. **SPARTANS!**
PREPARE FOR
GLORY!



WHOA,
GIRL.
STEADY,
STEADY.



GLORY?
HAVE YOU GONE
MAD? THERE'S
NO **GLORY** TO BE
HAD NOW! ONLY
RETREAT--OR
SURRENDER--
OR DEATH!

THAT'S AN **EASY** CHOICE
FOR US, ARCADIAN! **SPAR-**
TANS NEVER RETREAT!
SPARTANS NEVER
SURRENDER!

GO! SPREAD THE
WORD! LET EVERY
GREEK ASSEMBLED
KNOW THE **BOLD TRUTH**
--LET EACH AMONG
THEM SEARCH HIS OWN
SOUL! AND WHILE
YOU'RE AT IT--SEARCH
YOUR OWN!

DAMN YOU,
DAMN YOU!

GODSPEED,
LEONIDAS.

AND GOOD-
BYE.



CHILDREN.
GATHER
ROUND.



THE GODS FAVOR US.
COME TOMORROW, WE
LIGHT A **FIRE** THAT
WILL BURN IN THE
HEARTS OF **FREE MEN**
FOR ALL THE CENTU-
RIES YET TO BE.

NO RETREAT.
NO SURRENDER.
THAT IS **SPARTAN**
LAW. AND BY
SPARTAN LAW,
WE WILL **STAND**
AND **FIGHT** AND
DIE.



THE **LAW.** WE DO NOT **SACRI-**
FICE THE RULE OF LAW TO
THE **WILL** AND **WHIM** OF MEN.
THAT IS THE **OLD** WAY, THE **OLD,**
SAD, **STUPID** WAY. THE WAY OF
XERXES AND EVERY CREATURE
LIKE HIM.

A **NEW** AGE IS
BEGIN. AN AGE OF **GREAT**
DEEDS. AN AGE OF **REASON.**
AN AGE OF **JUSTICE.** AN AGE
OF **LAW.** AND **ALL WILL**
KNOW THAT **THREE HUN-**
DRED SPARTANS GAVE
THEIR **LAST BREATH**
TO **DEFEND** IT.



WE'RE **WITH**
YOU, SIR. TO THE
DEATH.



I DIDN'T ASK.
LEAVE **DEMOC-**
RACY TO THE
ATHENIANS.
BOY!



YES, MY
LORD.



...



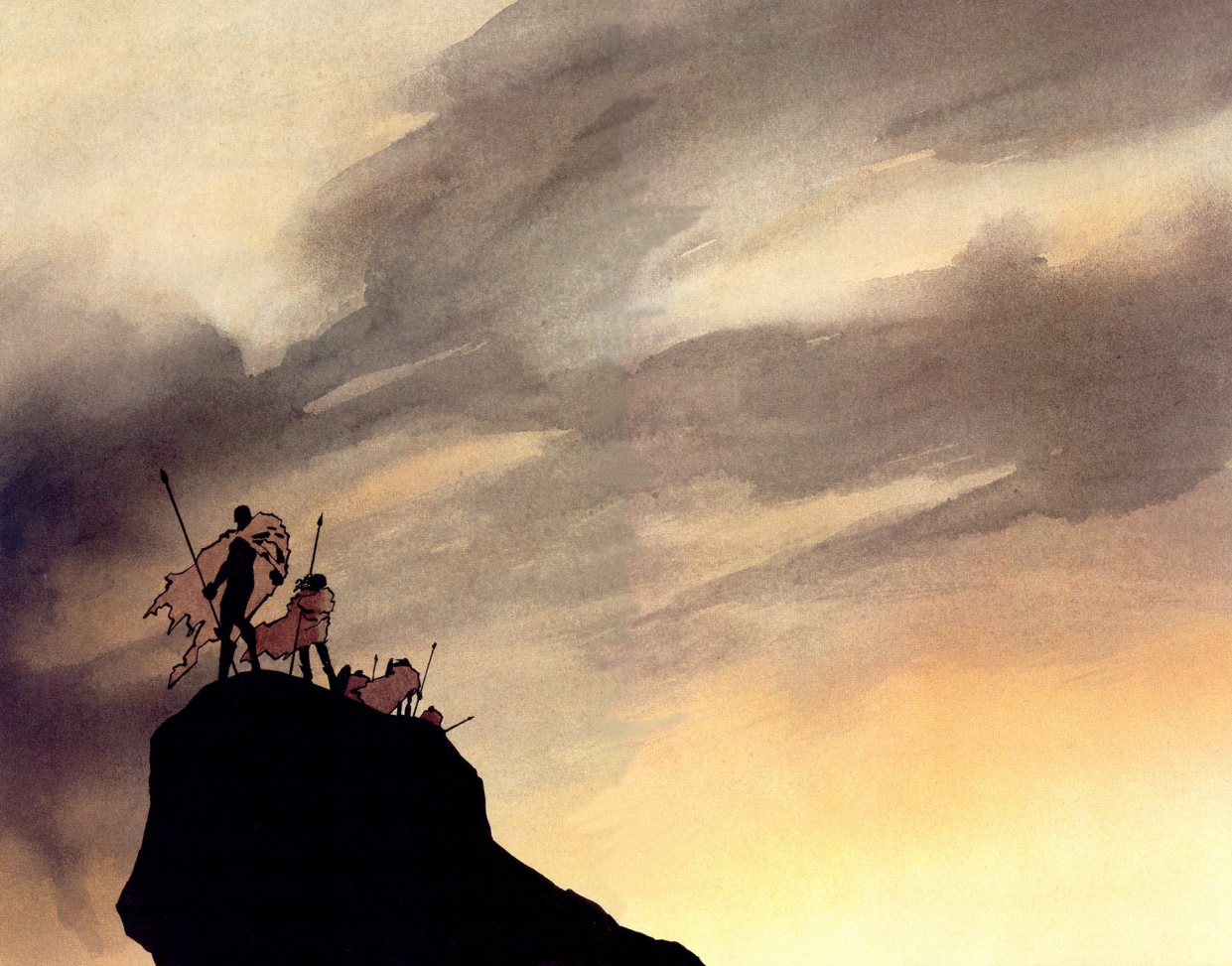
...DILIOS.
LET'S
TAKE A
WALK.



YES, MY
LORD.



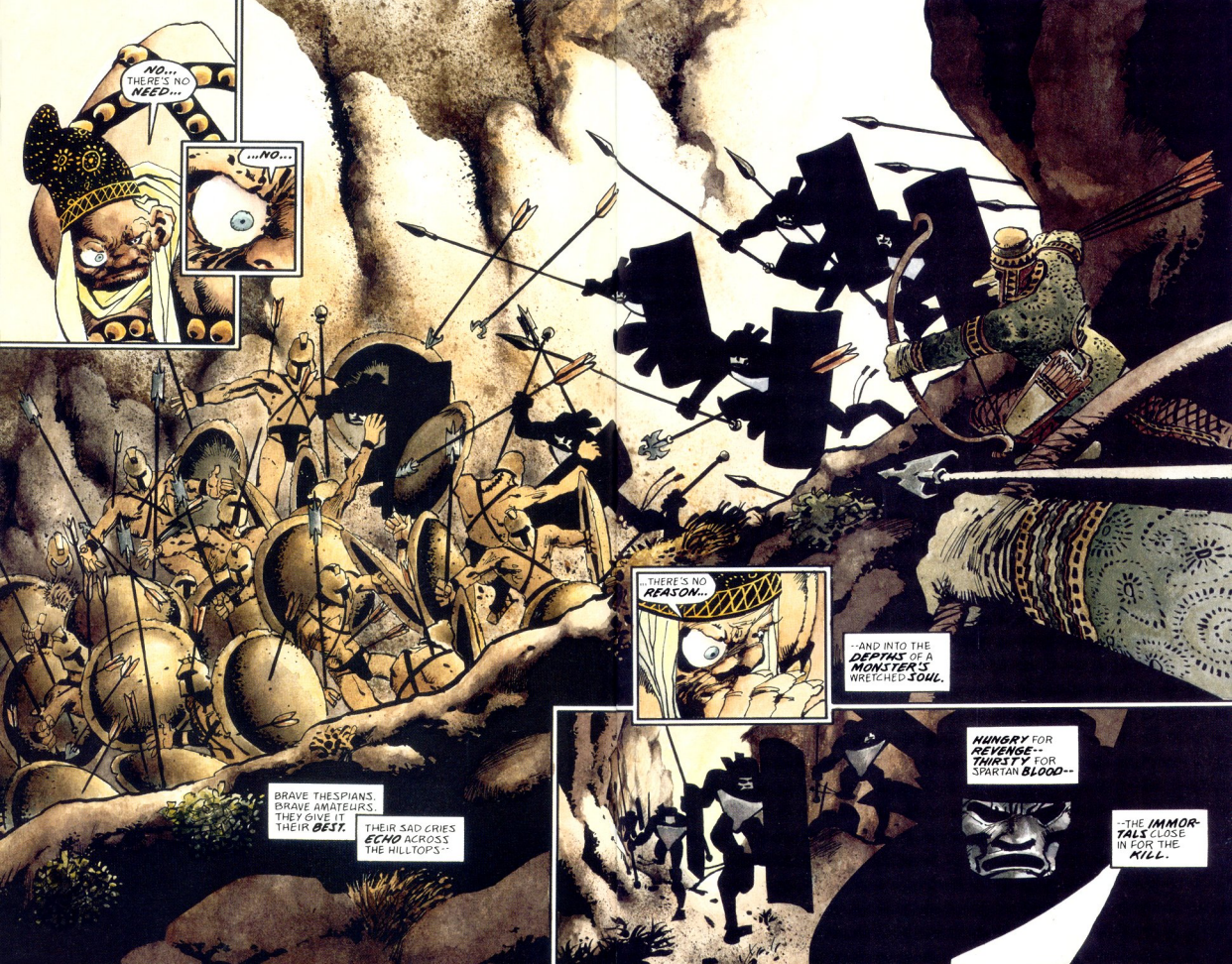






DOWN
FAGRE--THAT
BUNCH WON'T GIVE
YOU TROUBLE. THEY'RE
NOT SPARTANS. JUST
A FEW STRAGGLING
THE SPYKANS SHOW
THEM YOUR SPEARS
AND THEY'LL SCATTER
LIKE THE PNOGANS
DID. THERE'S NO
NEED TO KILL
THEM.

THE
THIRD
DAY



NO...
THERE'S NO
NEED...

...NO...

...THERE'S NO
REASON...

--AND INTO THE
DEPTHS OF A
MONSTER'S
WRETCHED SOUL.

BRAVE THESPIANS.
BRAVE AMATEURS.
THEY GIVE IT
THEIR BEST.

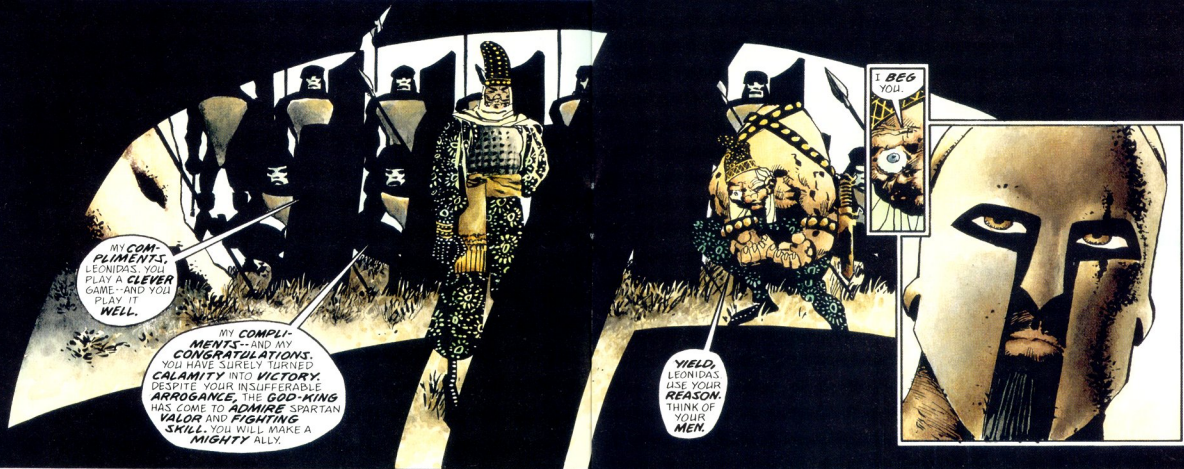
THEIR SAD CRIES
ECHO ACROSS
THE HILLTOPS--

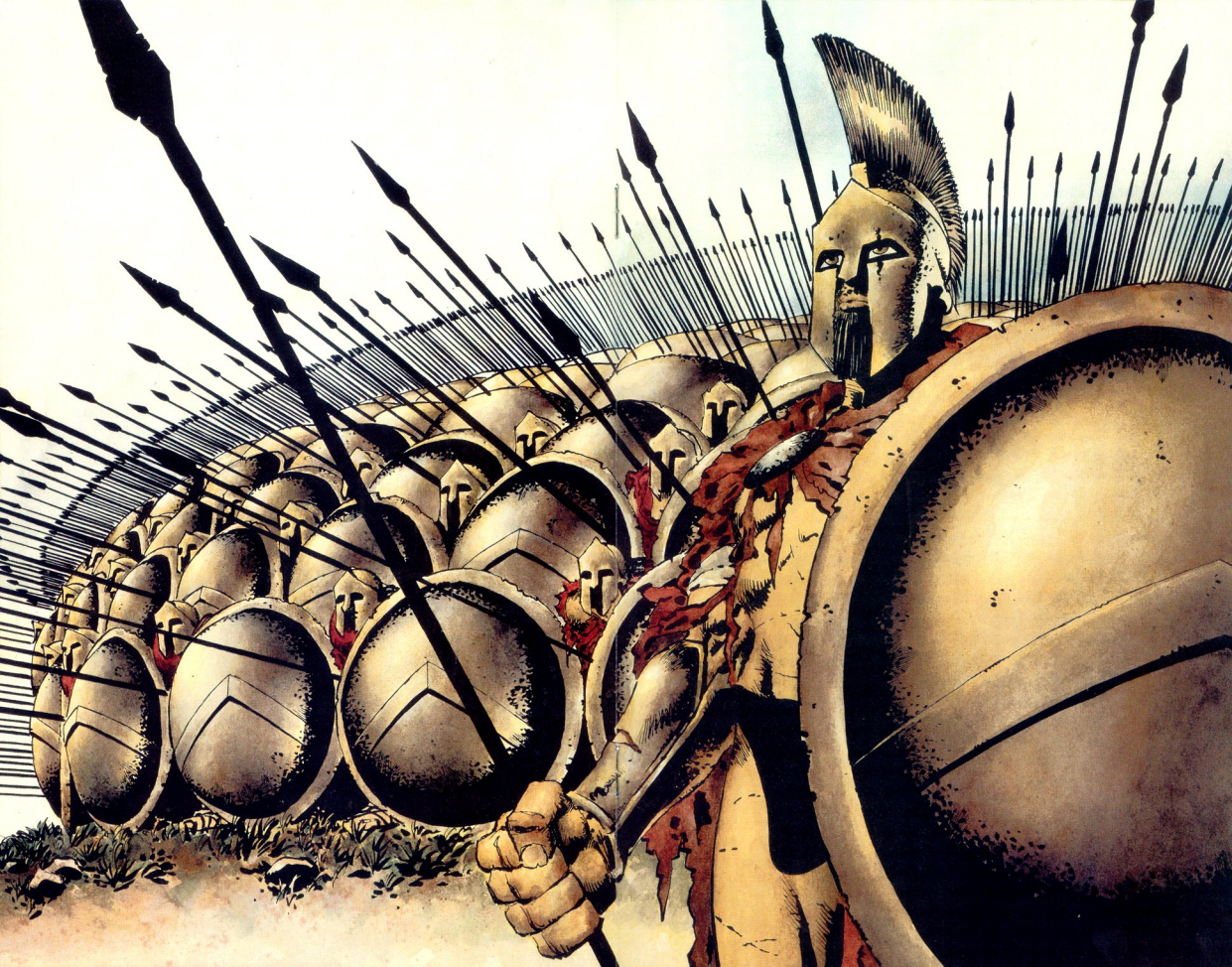
HUNGRY FOR
REVENGE--
THIRSTY FOR
SPARTAN BLOOD--



--THE IMMORTALS
CLOSE
IN FOR THE
KILL--









IT HAS BEEN
MORE THAN
FORTY YEARS
SINCE THE
WOLF AND THE
WINTER **COLD**.

NOW, AS THEN, IT IS NOT
FEAR THAT GRIPS HIM.
ONLY A **RESTLESS-**
NESS, A HEIGHTENED
SENSE OF THINGS.

THE SEABORNE **BREEZE** COOLLY
KISSING THE **SWEAT** AT HIS
CHEST AND **NECK**. **BULLS** CAW-
ING. **COMPLAINING** EVEN AS
THEY FEAST ON **THOUSANDS**
OF FLOATING **DEAD**.

THE STEADY **BREATHING**
OF THE THREE HUNDRED
BOYS AT HIS BACK-- READY
TO **DIE** FOR HIM WITHOUT A
MOMENT'S PAUSE, EVERY
ONE OF THEM.

READY
TO DIE

THEY THINK THEY
KNOW WHAT THAT
MEANS.



HIS **HELMET**
IS **STIFLING**.



TONK



KRANK

HIS **SHIELD**
IS **HEAVY**.

YOUR
SPEAR.



YOU THERE
EPHIALTES.



MAY YOU
LIVE FOR
EVER.



YOUR **SPEAR**
LEONIDAS.



TOK



STELIOS.



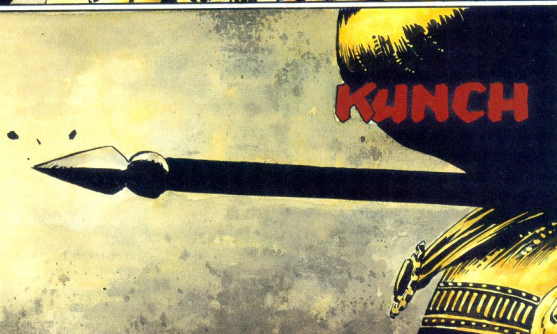


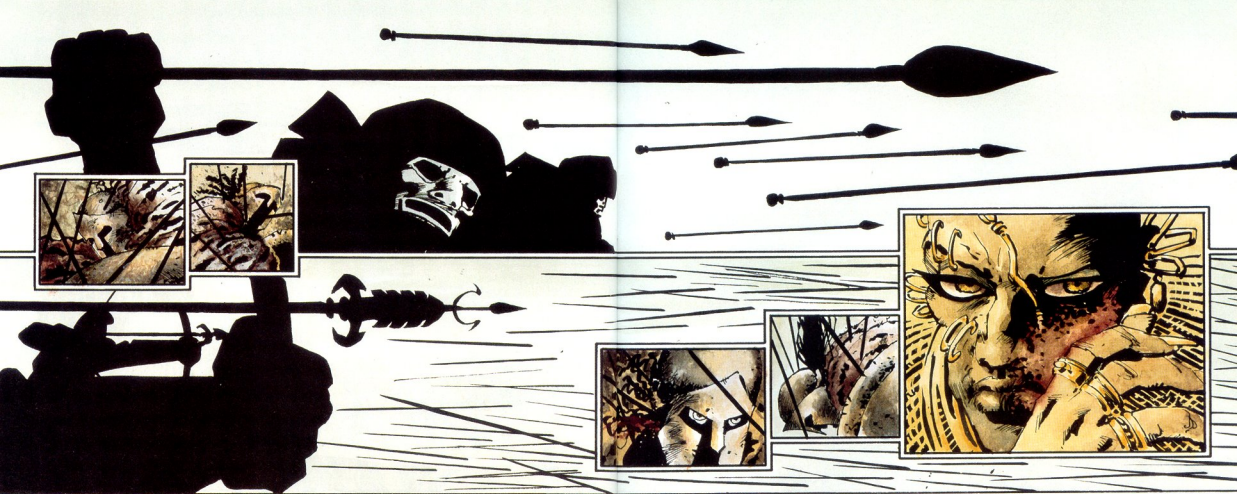
--DIE!

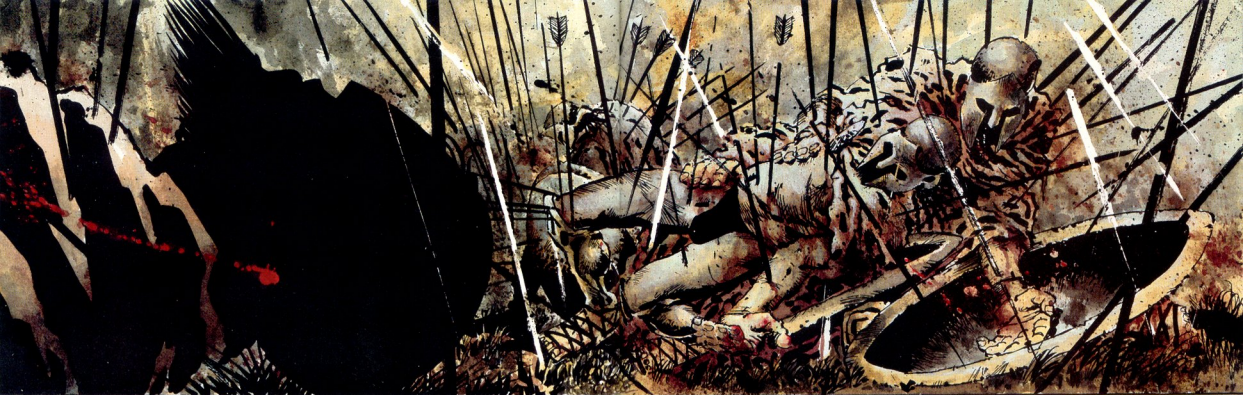
THE OLD ONES
CLAIM WE SPAR-
TANS DESCEND
FROM HERAKLES
HIMSELF.

BOLD LEONIDAS
GIVES TESTAMENT
TO OUR BLOODLINE.
HIS ROAR IS LONG
AND LOUD AND FULL
OF LAUGHTER.

STARING DEATH
SQUARE IN THE
EYE--HE
LAUGHS.







REMEMBER
U.S.



SHOULD ANY
FREE SOUL
COME ACROSS
THIS PLACE--

--IN ALL THE
COUNTLESS
CENTURIES
YET TO BE--

--MAY OUR
VOICES WHIS-
PER TO YOU
FROM THE
AGELESS
STONES.

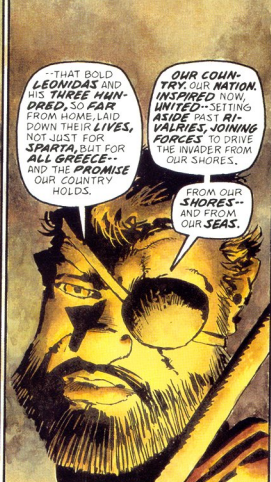
GO TELL THE
SPARTANS,
PASSERBY:

THAT HERE,
BY SPARTAN
LAW, WE LIE.



AND SO MY KING DIED AND SO MY BROTHERS DIED, BARELY A YEAR AGO.

LONG I PONDERED MY KING'S CRYPTIC TALK OF VICTORY, AND TIME PROVED HIM WISE. FROM FREE GREEK TO FREE GREEK, I SPREAD THE WORD--



--THAT BOLD LEONIDAS AND HIS THREE HUNDRED, SO FAR FROM HOME, LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES, NOT JUST FOR SPARTA, BUT FOR ALL GREECE-- AND THE PROMISE OUR COUNTRY HOLDS.

OUR COUNTRY, OUR NATION, INSPIRED NOW, UNITED-- SETTING ASIDE WAS I RIVALRIES, JOINING FORCES TO DRIVE THE INVADER FROM OUR SHORES.

FROM OUR SHORES-- AND FROM OUR SEAS.



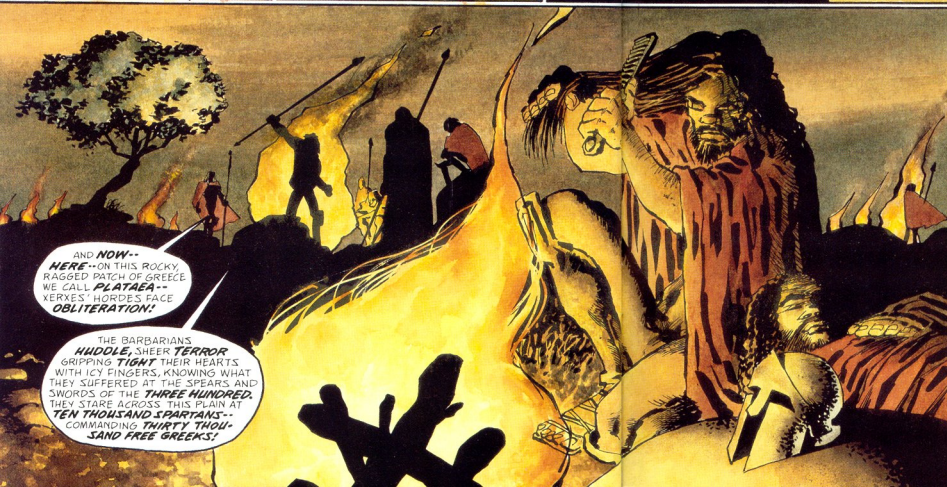
CAPTAIN DILIOS SPINS HIS STORIES.

HIS BEST STORY

THE ONE ABOUT THE HOT GATES.

THE HOT GATES-- AND BEYOND.

IN THE WATERS OF SALAMIS, ATHENIAN SEAFARING MASTERY LED THE UNITED GREEK NAVY TO SHATTER THE PERSIAN ARMADA.



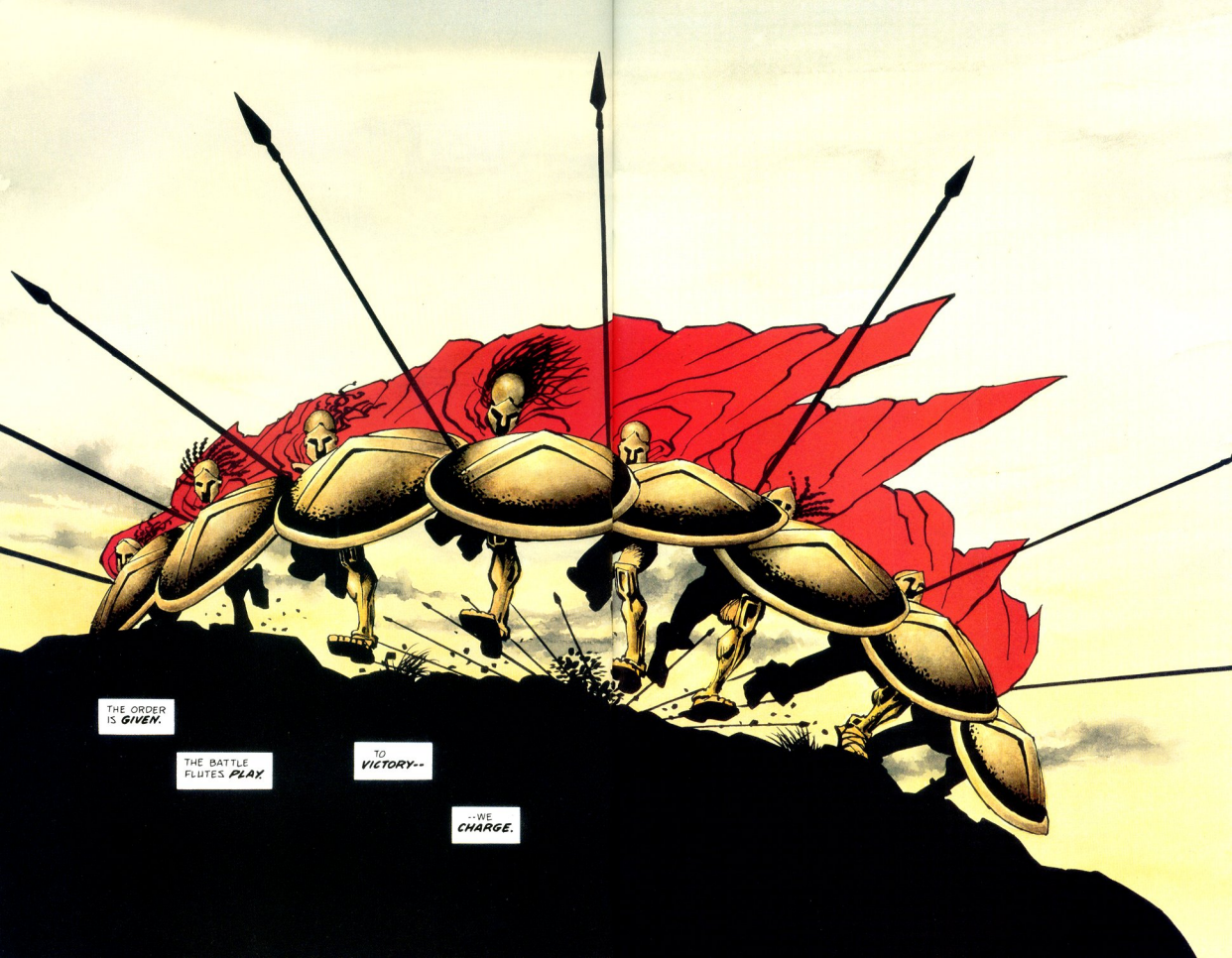
AND NOW-- HERE-- ON THIS ROCKY, RAGGED PATCH OF GREECE WE CALL PLATAEA-- XERXES' HORDES FACE OBLITERATION!

THE BARBARIANS Huddle, SHEER TERROR GRIPPING TIGHT THEIR HEARTS WITH ICY FINGERS, KNOWING WHAT THEY SUFFERED AT THE SPEARS AND SWORDS OF THE THREE HUNDRED. THEY STARE ACROSS THIS PLAIN AT TEN THOUSAND SPARTANS-- COMMANDING THIRTY THOUSAND FREE GREEKS!



THE ENEMY OUTNUMBERS US A PALTRY THREE TO ONE. GOOD ODDS FOR ANY GREEK. THIS DAY, WE RESCUE A WORLD FROM THE OLD, DARK, STUPID WAVES-- AND WE USHER IN A FUTURE THAT IS SURELY BRIGHTER THAN ANY WE CAN IMAGINE. GIVE THANKS, MEN, TO LEONIDAS AND HIS BRAVE THREE HUNDRED--

--AND READY YOURSELVES FOR WAR!



THE ORDER
IS *GIVEN.*

THE BATTLE
FLUTES *PLAY*

TO
VICTORY--

--WE
CHARGE.

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