











MY NAME IS GILAD ANNI-PADDA.
FOR MANY CENTURIES I HAVE
SERVED THE GEOMANCER.

I AM THE ETERNAL WARRIOR, THE
BLOOD-SOAKED INSTRUMENT IN
HIS STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN BALANCE
AND WELL-BEING ON THE EARTH.

BY THE WALLS OF KADESH
I HELPED QUELL THE HITTITES.
I SAVED PHARAOH'S LIFE.

IN THE BATTLE OF GAUGAMELA
I HELPED ALEXANDER TURN
BACK DARIUS'S FEARED
SCYTHE-WHEELED CHARIOTS.

I RECEIVED NO THANKS
FROM THE GREAT GREEK,
WHO WAS ALWAYS ANXIOUS
TO HOG THE LIMELIGHT.

TWICE.

I FOUGHT ALONGSIDE THE
BASQUES WHO DESTROYED
CHARLEMAGNE'S ARMY AT
THE RONCEVAUX PASS.

I NEVER
ASKED WHY.

I DID NOT WONDER
HOW THIS INCESSANT
BUTCHERY MIGHT AID THE
PLANET'S WELL-BEING.

I SIMPLY TOOK MY
ORDERS FROM THE
GEOMANCER.

WHO GAVE INSTRUCTIONS
IN A VOICE THAT WAS AS
HARSH AS IT WAS INSISTENT.

BUT THOUGH I MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND
HIS WORKINGS I TOLD MYSELF THAT THE
GEOMANCER KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.

SOMEHOW, I'M HELPING
TO CREATE A FAIRER,
BETTER, AND MAYBE MORE
PEACEFUL WORLD--

FOR SO LONG, I
TOLD MYSELF THAT.

CENTURIES OF
WORK. MILLENNIA
OF BLOODSHED.

AND THIS IS WHAT
THE WORLD IS.

THIS IS THE WORLD
I'VE HELPED TO CREATE.

THIS IS THE PRODUCT
OF THE GEOMANCER'S
GRAND PLANNING.





THIS LATEST MANIFESTATION
OF HUMANITY'S GREAT COMEDY
IS IN THE LAND OF THE *FRANKS*.

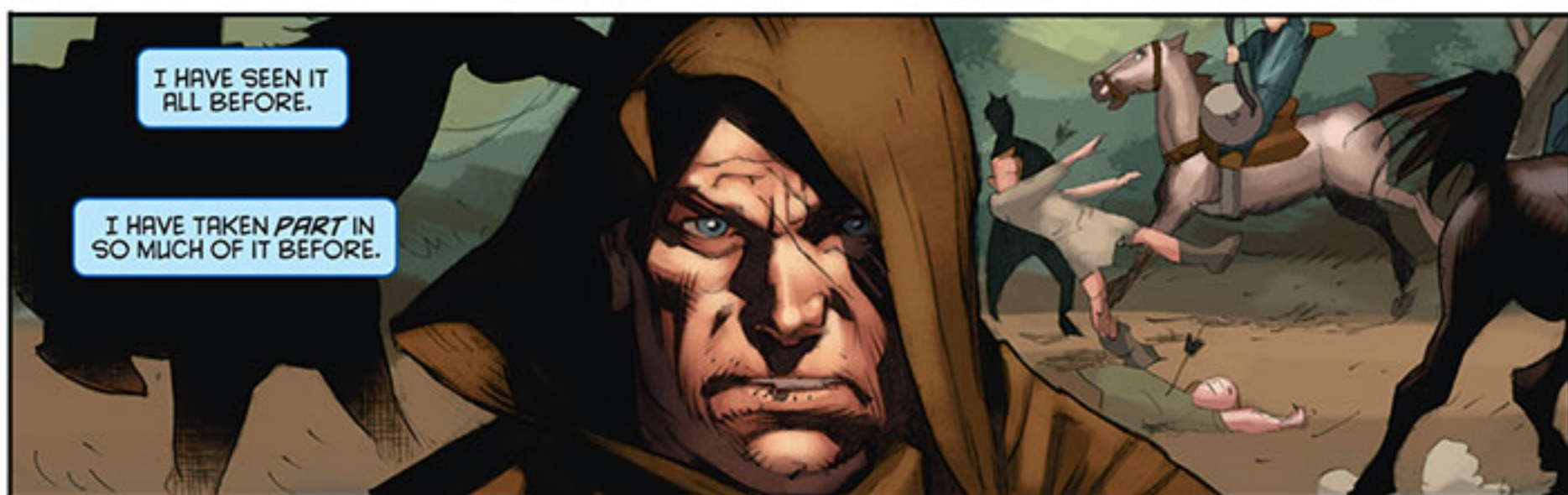
AAAGHH!



MAGYARS FROM THE
EAST BRING FORTH
THE PREDICTABLE
LEVELS OF DEATH.

FEAR.

AND, OF
COURSE,
MAYHEM.



I HAVE SEEN IT
ALL BEFORE.

I HAVE TAKEN *PART* IN
SO MUCH OF IT BEFORE.



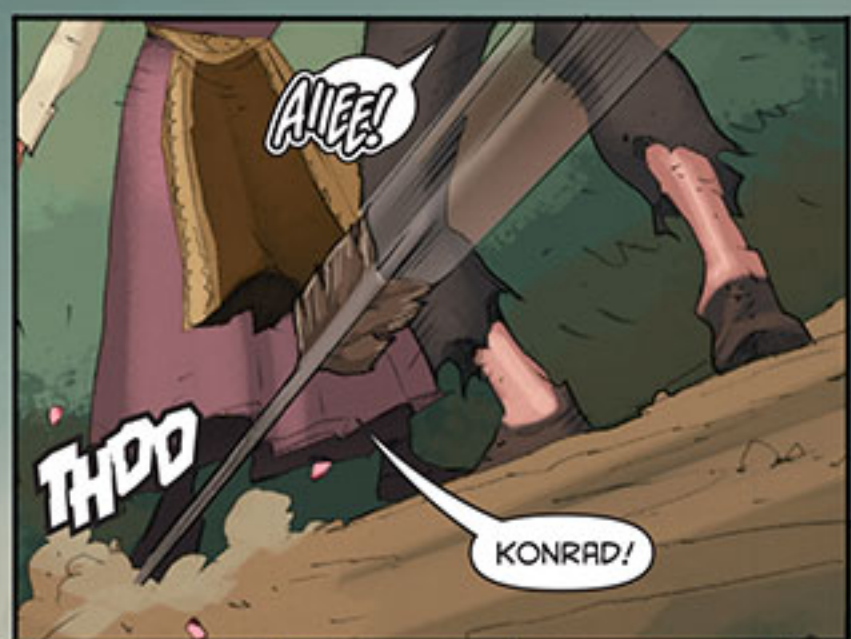
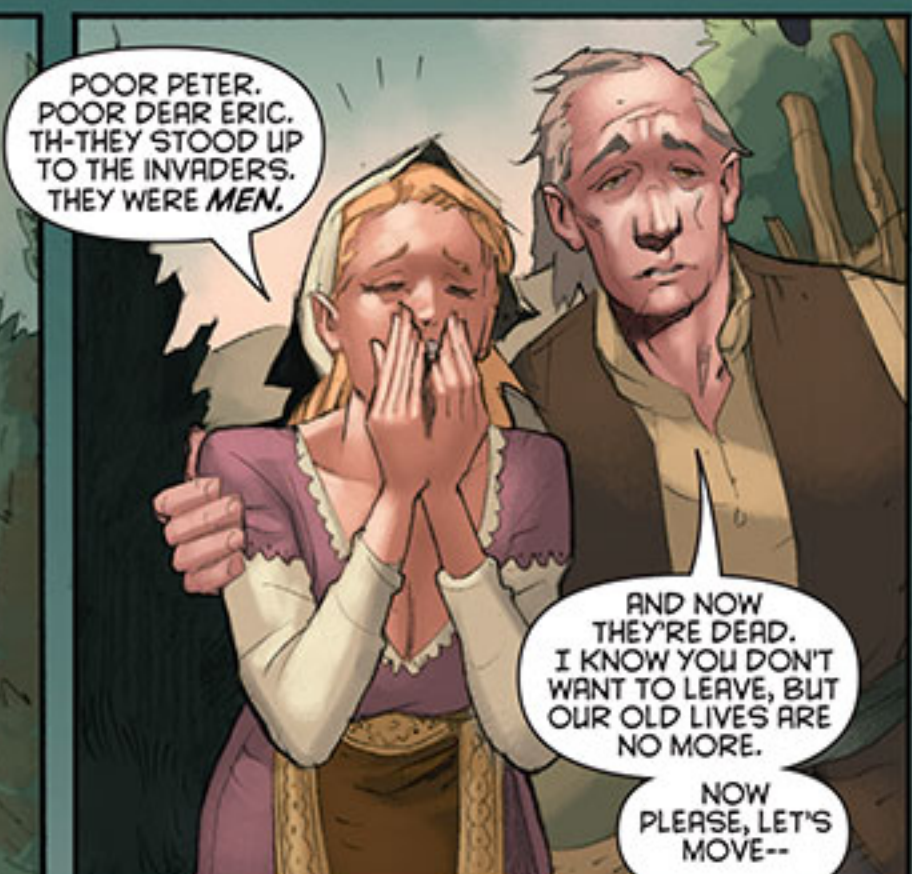
THE GEOMANCER MIGHT
KNOW ABOUT THE PLANET. OH,
HE MIGHT KNOW IT VERY WELL.

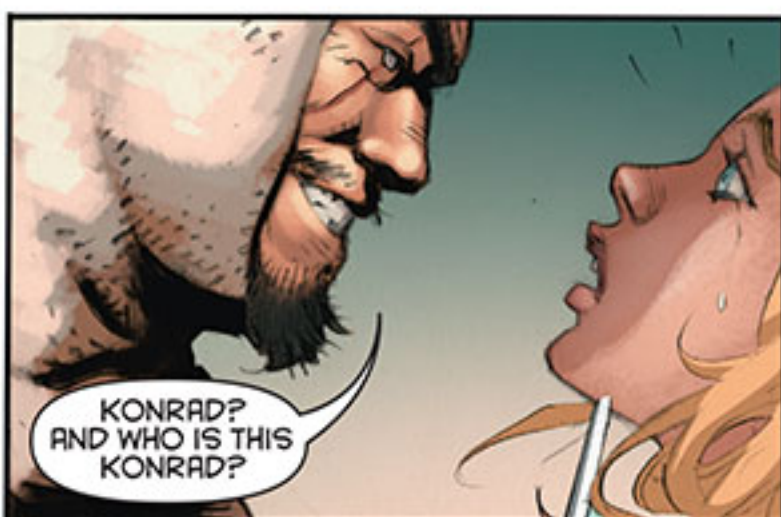
BUT MORE
AND MORE
I WONDER.



DOES HE KNOW
ANYTHING ABOUT
THE VIOLENT,
GREEDY, FLAWED
CREATURES WHO
INHABIT IT?

"DO I HAVE TO
HORSE-WHIP
YOU, WIFE?"





EIGHT MONTHS LATER...

I'VE HAD
ENOUGH OF
BLOODSHED,
WAR, STRANGE
STRATEGIES.

YES, I'VE HAD ENOUGH
OF THE *GEOMANCER*.

I SPEND MY DAYS WALKING
THE BACK ROADS. MY ACTIONS
HAVE NO CONSEQUENCE.

MY DEEDS LEAVE NO
IMPRINT ON THE WORLD.

I SLEEP UNDER THE STARS,
SAFE IN THE KNOWLEDGE
THAT TODAY, AT LEAST, I HAVE
MADE NO DIFFERENCE.

WHEN WINTER COMES
I FIND SHELTER. I AM
HAPPY WITHOUT THE
WORLD.

THE WORLD SEEMS HAPPY
ENOUGH WITHOUT ME.

GILAD?
GILAD, I'VE
BEEN LOOKING
FOR YOU--



GO AWAY.
I'VE FINISHED
WITH YOU.

BUT YOU ARE
NEEDED, GILAD.
OUR WORK
CONTINUES.

OUR WORK?
OUR WORK IS
MEANINGLESS.

AT THE END OF
EVERY BLOODY MISSION,
MANKIND ALWAYS SEEMS
JUST AS STUPID.

BUT PERHAPS
THEY ARE STUPID...
IN A SUBTLY
DIFFERENT WAY.

HKRRKK!

OR MAYBE
YOU KNOW NOTHING
ABOUT THE EARTH'S
WELL-BEING.

MAYBE ALL
MY WORK HAS BEEN
NOTHING BUT AN
INSANE GAME.

THE LAND OF
THE FRANKS IS
BEING OVERRUN
BY MAGYARS.

SO I HAVE
HEARD. THAT
IS NOT MY CONCERN.