X-O MANOWAR

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and PHILIP TAN with ELMER SANTOS

In a distant past, Aric of Dacia was not yet the hero known as X-O Manowar. He was merely a prince of the Visigoths, a people persecuted by the Roman Empire. This younger, brasher Aric rode off to rescue a child named Batwin, the brother of his best friend, who had been kidnapped by the Roman army when he was ambushed by the Huns along the empire's aqueducts.

Meanwhile, in a different corner of this ancient world, a mysterious grifter named Sabbas – who is haunted by strange visions – makes a pilgrimage, trading stories to eager listeners for both profit and glory...

ARIC OF DACIA

Aric is Earth's strongest warrior. A Visigoth prince who found himself enslaved by an alien race, Aric managed to escape his captors by stealing their most powerful weapon – a sentient suit of armor named Shanhara. He returned home but, due to light speed travel, found himself displaced in the modern day. With the world he knew gone, he now protects our own as X-O Manowar.

GAFTI

Aric's closest friend and a trusted ally, Gafti sought Aric's help to rescue his younger brother, Batwin, who has been kidnapped by Romans. However, after being attacked by Huns, he fell into the waters of a Roman aqueduct. leaving Aric wondering about his fate.

SABBAS

A cunning laborer from the copper mines of Zambia. Sabbas has an optimistic mind and a knack for storytelling, though his truest desires and motivations remain a mystery.

SHANHARA

The sentient alien armor that is bonded to Aric in modern day, granting him his incredible power, Shanhara also provides a window into his past, recounting events to him that occurred centuries ago.

YOUR VISION IS AMAZING. I HAVE HEARD A TALE SIMILAR TO THIS. OR, PERHAPS, I TOO HAVE HAD THIS VISION. IT'S THE REASON I BEGAN MY JOURNEY. I HAVE BEEN HAVING DREAMS. THEY GUIDE ME.

THEY SHOW ME THAT I AM TO MEET A KING JUST AS YOU DESCRIBE. A MAN WITH GOLDEN HAIR.

AND YOUR STORY...I KNOW HOW IT ENDS. THE RING IS ENCHANTED. IT CURSES THE MAN WHO STOLE IT AND FINDS THE WOMAN ONCE MORE.

THE RING GUIDES THE WOMAN BACK TO THE KING AND THEY ARE REUNITED. THIS IS HOW YOUR STORY ENDS!

SABBAS, OUR MEETING MUST HAVE BEEN ARRANGED BY THE GODS. TRULY. I HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING WITH THIS TALE FOR MONTHS. AN ENCHANTED RING...IT IS A BRILLIANT IDEA!

IT'S A FUNNY THING. I'VE BEEN HAVING THESE VISIONS SINCE I WAS A CHILD. PREMONITIONS OF THE FUTURE. I'VE ALWAYS HAD THIS SENSE OF WHAT IS GOING TO HAPP--

THUNK

WHAT IS IT?!

PIRATES.

NO...NO...THE RUFFIANS! THEY HAVE NO RESPECT FOR ARTISTIC EXPRESSION. THEY ARE TRULY COWARDLY. MY LIFE'S WORK IS ON THIS BOAT. WE MUST--

SPLOSHH

SABBAS?

THERE IS NOTHING LEFT FOR ME TO DO. THE FATE OF MY EXISTENCE RESTS IN THE HANDS OF THE GODS.

CLOSER!

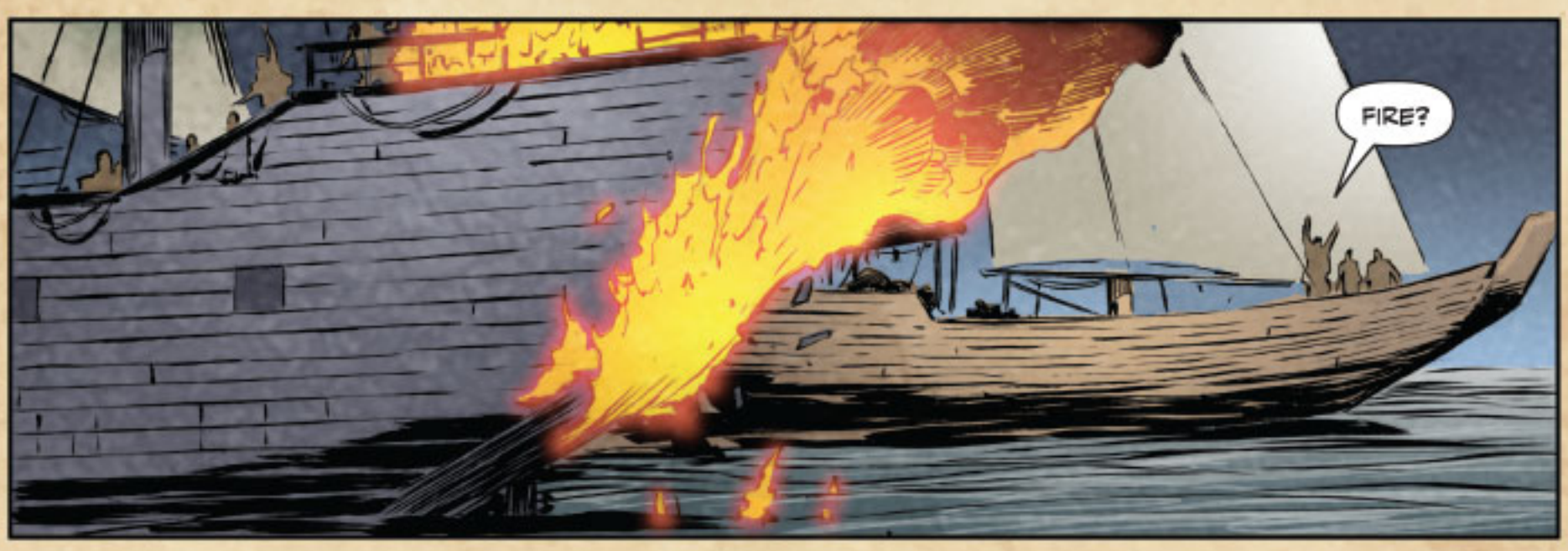
AWFULLY SMALL SHIP TO BE THIS FAR OUT AT SEA.

MUST BE LOST.

IF THEY AIN'T...THEY'RE GONNA BE!

WHAT'S ALL THIS? NUTHIN' BUT FANCY WRITIN'?!

NUTHIN' GOOD HERE. LET'S JUST SET IT ON...


FIRE?

FIRE!
BACK TO THE SHIP!

HURRY!

SABBAS? WHAT DID YOU DO?

LITTLE TRICK I LEARNED IN THE ISLANDS.

"GREEK FIRE," THEY CALL IT.

SABBAS? YOU ARE TRULY A GIFT SENT FROM THE GODS. I MUST REPAY YOU. WHAT COULD I POSSIBLY DO?

WELL, KAL, FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK. MY VISIONS ARE SENDING ME TO ROME. SO, IF YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE A MAP LYING AROUND, I COULD REALLY USE IT.

I HAVE SOMETHING EVEN BETTER, SABBAS. AN ***ENCHANTED*** MAP THAT HAS BEEN IN MY FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS. ON IT ARE MARKED THE MOST ***HOLY*** LOCATIONS IN THE KNOWN WORLD. THIS I GIVE TO YOU, MY FRIEND.

MAY IT SERVE YOU AS WELL AS YOU HAVE SERVED ME.

"That story was told to you many years ago."

"But, I wonder if *you* remember where you were then.

"Central Italy.

"A prisoner of the invading Huns.

ARIC!

"Your best friend lost.

"Does being a captive of a conquering army resonate?

"Do you see the parallels between then and now?"