

**THE STRAND  
ARENA, XEBEL.**

ARE YOU  
READY FOR  
THIS?

YES,  
LERON.

DO  
YOU WANT  
A WEAPON?  
I HAVE MY  
LANCE--

NO,  
LERON.

HE'LL  
HAVE A DAMN  
WEAPON--

HE'S  
THE **OCEAN  
MASTER**. HIS TRIDENT  
CHANNELS THE WRATH OF  
**STORMS**.

A **LANCE**  
ISN'T GOING TO  
HELP ME.

**KLUNG  
KLUNG  
KLUNG  
KLUNG**

YOUR  
POWERS?  
THEY'RE  
OKAY?

AS GOOD  
AS I COULD  
HOPE.

REMEMBER,  
IF YOU WIN  
THIS, MAKE IT  
A **GOOD FINISH**.  
GIVE THEM A  
SHOW--

THERE  
**IS NO "IF."**





THE CROWD'S  
ON HIS SIDE.

ORM!  
ORM!

# MORTAL COMBAT

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SHE  
DOESN'T STAND  
A CHANCE. NOT  
AGAINST HIM.

THAT IS  
THE PLAN, MY  
LORD KING.

YOU  
BASTARDS--!

EDITOR'S NOTE: READ THIS ISSUE BEFORE AQUAMAN #38!





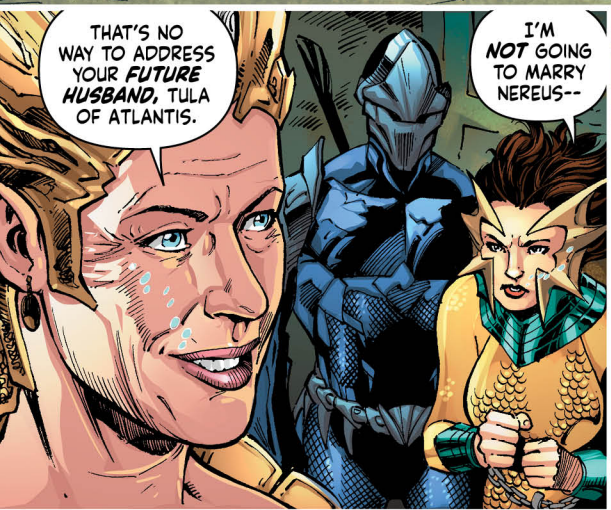
THE STRAND ARENA, RAISED FROM THE SALVAGED SCRAP OF XEBEL'S SHIP GRAVEYARD, SHAKES WITH THEIR VOICES.

ORM!  
ORM!

ORM!  
ORM!

THIS WILL BE MERA'S GREATEST TEST.

ORM! ORM!



THAT'S NO WAY TO ADDRESS YOUR **FUTURE HUSBAND**, TULA OF ATLANTIS.

I'M **NOT** GOING TO MARRY NEREUS--



OH, BUT YOU **ARE**.

ORM MARIUS **WILL** TRIUMPH. AS HIS SISTER, YOU WILL PERFORM YOUR ROYAL DUTY TO MARRY OUR KING.

A PERFECT DYNASTIC MATCH TO WELD THE NATIONS OF XEBEL AND ATLANTIS **TOGETHER**.



WAR HORNS  
BLARE. KING  
NEREUS RISES...

HEAR  
YOUR KING,  
PEOPLE OF  
XEBEL!

WE ASSEMBLE,  
ACCORDING TO  
TRADITION, TO WITNESS  
THE RITUAL **TRIAL BY  
COMBAT!**

THE COMBATANTS  
FIGHT FOR THE  
THRONE OF OUR  
GREAT RIVAL NATION  
**ATLANTIS!**

LET THIS,  
MY WILL, BE  
ENACTED!

ORM  
MARIUS,  
OF ROYAL  
ATLANTEAN  
BLOOD!

HIS  
CHALLENGER--  
MERA, DAUGHTER  
OF XEBEL!

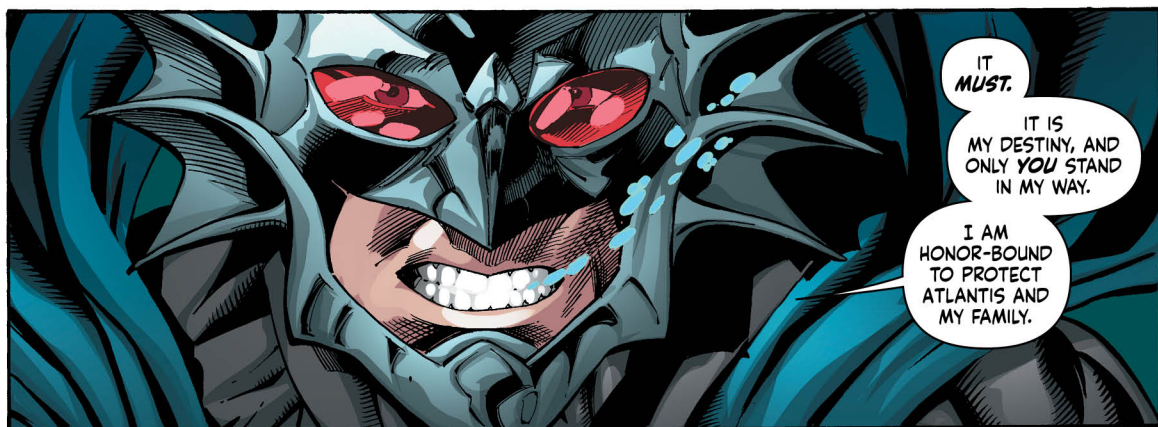
TO THE  
VICTOR, THE  
CROWN!

TO  
THE LOSER--  
DEATH!

IT'S NOT  
TOO LATE TO  
CHANGE YOUR  
MIND, ORM.

THIS DOESN'T  
**HAVE** TO HAPPEN,  
AND YOU'RE AN  
**ARROGANT FOOL**  
FOR FORCING IT.

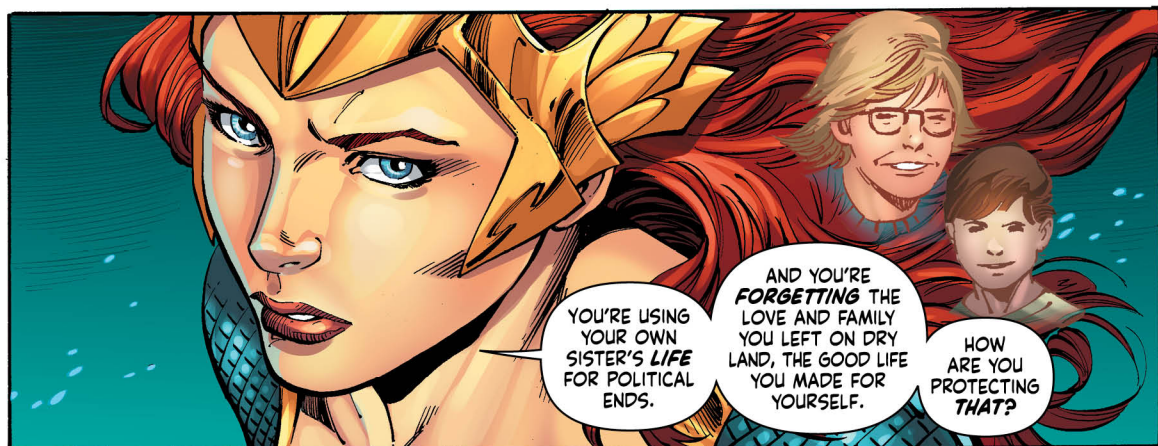




IT **MUST.**

IT IS MY DESTINY, AND ONLY **YOU** STAND IN MY WAY.

I AM HONOR-BOUND TO PROTECT ATLANTIS AND MY FAMILY.



YOU'RE USING YOUR OWN SISTER'S **LIFE** FOR POLITICAL ENDS.

AND YOU'RE **FORGETTING** THE LOVE AND FAMILY YOU LEFT ON DRY LAND, THE GOOD LIFE YOU MADE FOR YOURSELF.

HOW ARE YOU PROTECTING **THAT?**



NOTHING FROM THE SURFACE MATTERS.

NOT WHEN ATLANTIS NEEDS ME.



IT **DOESN'T.**

I NEVER **WANTED** THE DUTY OF BEING QUEEN, ORM...



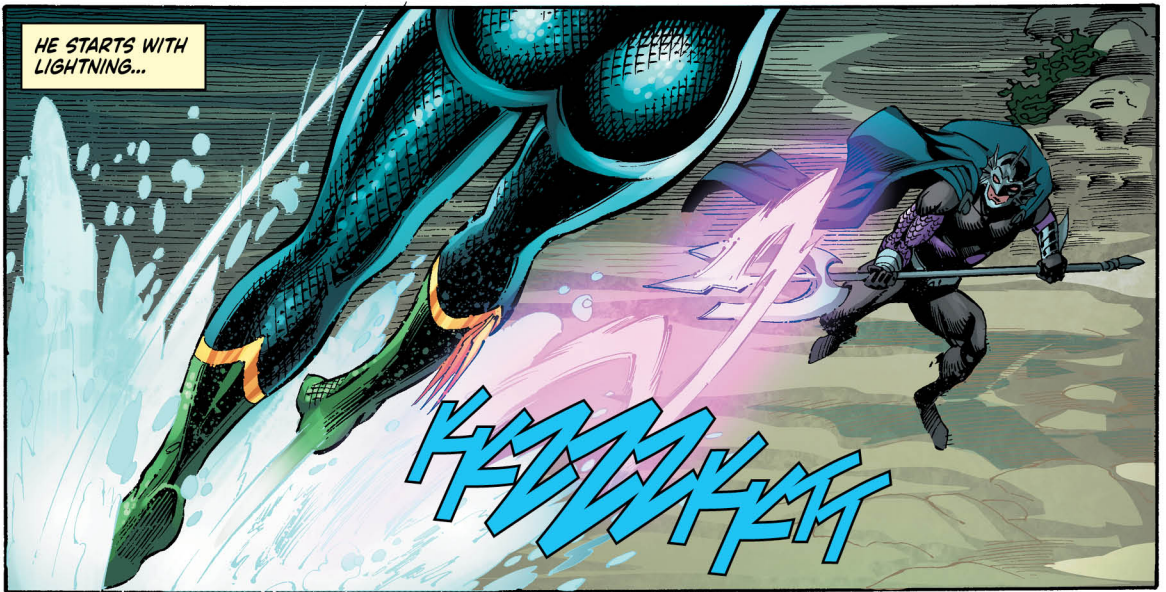
...BUT ONCE WE BEGIN, I WILL SHOW YOU **NO MERCY.**

YOU WILL NOT GET THE **CHANCE.**



**COMMENCE!**





HE STARTS WITH  
LIGHTNING...



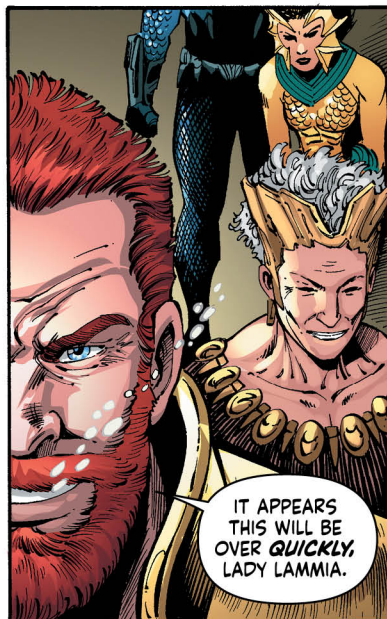
...AND SHE  
ANSWERS WITH  
SPEED.

IF YOU  
**REALLY** CARED  
ABOUT ATLANTIS,  
YOU'D HAVE  
FOUND **ANOTHER**  
WAY TO HELP--

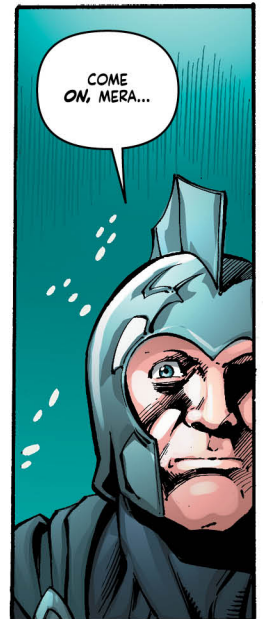
--A WAY  
THAT DIDN'T  
CONDEMN  
YOUR **SISTER**  
TO A LIFE OF  
SERVITUDE!



YOU SIMPLY DO NOT  
UNDERSTAND THE  
RESPONSIBILITIES  
AND **SACRIFICES**  
EXPECTED OF A  
MONARCH!



IT APPEARS  
THIS WILL BE  
OVER **QUICKLY**,  
LADY LAMMIA.



COME  
**ON**, MERA...