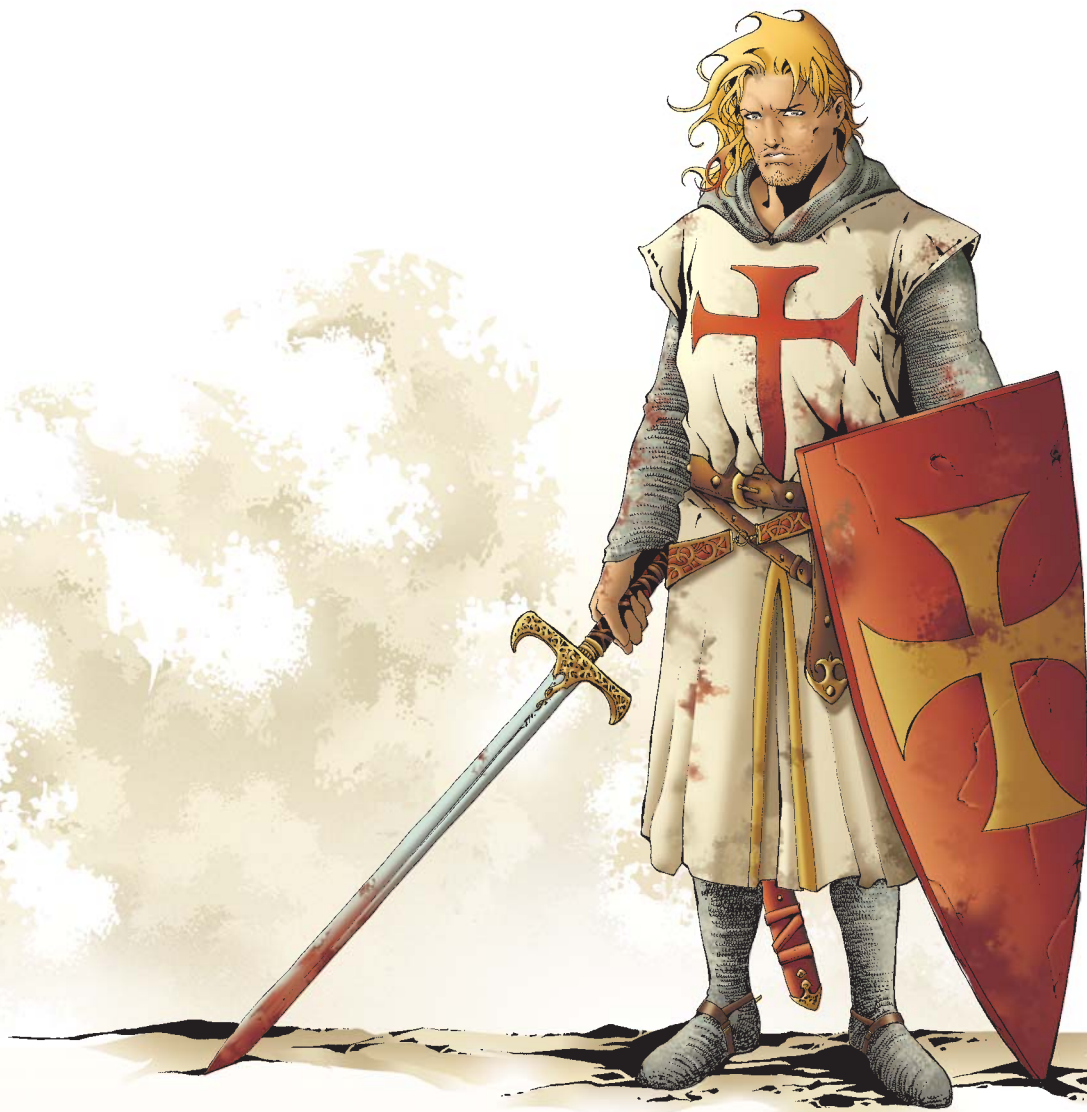


DUFAUX - XAVIER

CRUSADE

I - SIMOUN DJA



COLOUR WORK: JEAN-JACQUES CHAGNAUD

9th CINEBOOK
The 9th Art Publisher

Original title: Croisade 1 – Simoun Dja

Original edition: © Editions du Lombard (Dargaud-Lombard SA), 2007
by Xavier & Dufaux
www.l lombard.com
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English translation: © 2010 Cinebook Ltd

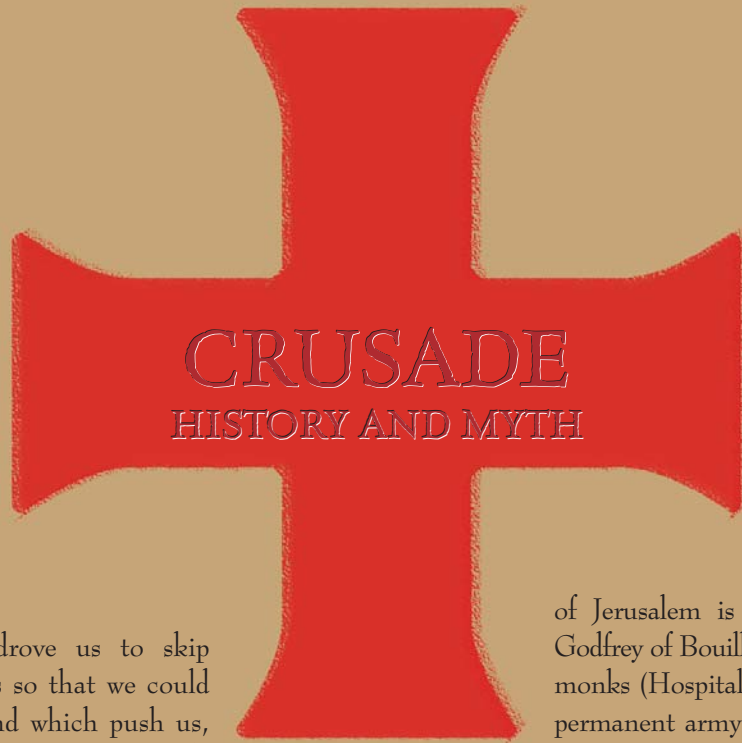
Translator: Jerome Saincantin
Lettering and text layout: Imadjinn
Printed in Spain by Just Colour Graphic

This edition first published in Great Britain in 2010 by
Cinebook Ltd
56 Beech Avenue
Canterbury, Kent
CT4 7TA
www.cinebook.com

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-84918-061-0





Let's begin with history.

Let's open the books, the memoirs, the chronicles, so that the words can escape and become legends, daydreams, variations... or be forgotten.

Those daydreams that drove us to skip school when we were kids so that we could write our own stories. And which push us, now, to undertake a very different crusade from the previous ones, even if it is a dark reflection of those.

And so, what were the texts teaching us?

That there had been eight crusades. Eight military pilgrimages (what a lovely oxymoron!) over two centuries, aiming at liberating the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Two centuries is a long time. Each crusade showed its own peculiarities. But all stood witness to the faith that drove them, mixing courage and cruelty, the absurd and the holy.

God, for his part, counted the dead. It's a grisly job. War doesn't promote any other sort.

During the first crusade (1096-99), the first to be massacred are Jews. As a sort of warm-up session. This crusade is launched by Urban II. It's the one that sees Peter the Hermit roam cities and countryside alike, raising fervour and self-sacrifice wherever he goes. Madness, too.

The Crusaders leave Europe with no manner of discipline at all, led by spontaneous warlords. Some 12,000 of them reach Asia Minor, only to be massacred immediately by the Turks. The Barons (from France, Lorraine and Germany) react by sending a second—better organised, better structured, more efficient—strike. A full 30,000 men march to the Middle East and take Nicaea and Antioch.

On July 15, 1099, Jerusalem falls at last. The city is sacked and a large part of its population slaughtered. (You don't break with tradition.) A Latin Kingdom

of Jerusalem is created under the rule of Godfrey of Bouillon. Various orders of soldier-monks (Hospitallers and Templars) form the permanent army charged with defending the territories conquered by the Crusaders.

Among these is the County of Edessa (an ancient Mesopotamian city) held by Baldwyn, Godfrey's brother.

The second crusade (1147-49).

This one is called by Pope Eugene III, who asks Bernard of Clairvaux to rekindle Christian ardour. The news is bad: Edessa has just fallen. Something has to be done. Conrad III and Louis VII lead the expedition. But the Emperor and the King can't manage to find common ground, and the expedition ends in failure, with each heading back home without a single victory.

The third crusade (1189-92).

This is the one we're interested in. Frederick Barbarossa, Philip Augustus and Richard the Lionheart take part in it. The opposition is formidable—none other than Saladin, one of Islam's most noble figures. He has retaken Jerusalem and united the Muslim world.

Barbarossa dies and Philip Augustus returns to France. Left alone, and in spite of all his skill and courage, Richard the Lionheart will not succeed in retaking the Holy City. A three-year truce is signed between the two enemies. But legend sets in. The struggle between Richard the Lionheart sets the imagination of the people and the songs of minstrels ablaze.

Centuries go by. Walter Scott seizes the subject for his beautiful novel *The Talisman*—the spirit of which is close to Ridley Scott's movie *Kingdom of Heaven*.



Cecil B. de Mille's *The Crusades* gives us an incredible portrait of Richard the Lionheart. The King's return to England, where John Lackland had seized power, will give birth to two myths: *Ivanhoe* and *Robin Hood*. Finally, let's not forget David Butler's *King Richard and the Crusaders*, with Rex Harrison as Saladin and George Sanders as Richard the Lionheart.

As we can see, legend prevailed over facts. Then, children only had to open books and dream.

The fourth crusade (1202-04).

Launched by Pope Innocent III, preached by Fulk of Neuilly. Spiralling political elements push the Crusaders into fighting Constantinople rather than Jerusalem. The city falls and is sacked. It's a massacre. God is far away, but Christian purses are filled with gold.

The fifth crusade (1217-21).

Aimed against Egypt (centre of Muslim power), its only success is a fleeting one: the taking of Damietta.

The sixth crusade (1228-29).

Frederick II of Hohenstaufen leads it. A humanitarian prince, he'd rather negotiate with the Muslims. In 1229, a deal is struck with Malik al-Kamil, nephew of Saladin. The Turks give Jerusalem back and Frederick II becomes its king. Until the Holy City falls to the Muslims again in 1244.

The seventh crusade (1248-54).

Led by Saint Louis. Once again, the target is Egypt. The King marches on Cairo and crushes the Mameluks. But the plague devastates his army. Forced to retreat, Saint Louis is captured. The ransom demanded for his freedom is enormous.

The eighth crusade (1270).

Saint Louis, again. He tries to convert the Emir of Tunis. His army is struck down by an epidemic. The King dies on August 25, 1270.

And that's the end. The time of the crusades ends with this emblematic death. All for paltry results.

Let's dream, also, of the Children's Crusade: This mad expedition of French and German youths who dreamed, in 1212 (between the fourth and fifth crusades) of retaking Jerusalem. Nearly all of them died of starvation or exhaustion.

And then, there's this crusade, ours. Which no history book ever wanted to consign to its pages. It seems the hand of the devil is too much present in it.

But isn't it the devil who reigns supreme over the crusades? All the crusades? Hiding behind the Cross. Or at its foot.

And then, the shadow of the *Qa'dj* rises. That evil shadow that knows what hides behind appearances, behind the image reflected in the mirror.

The winds of the *Simoun Dja* erase all ambitions. And the sands of the desert spit out only bones.

One never comes back whole from a crusade.

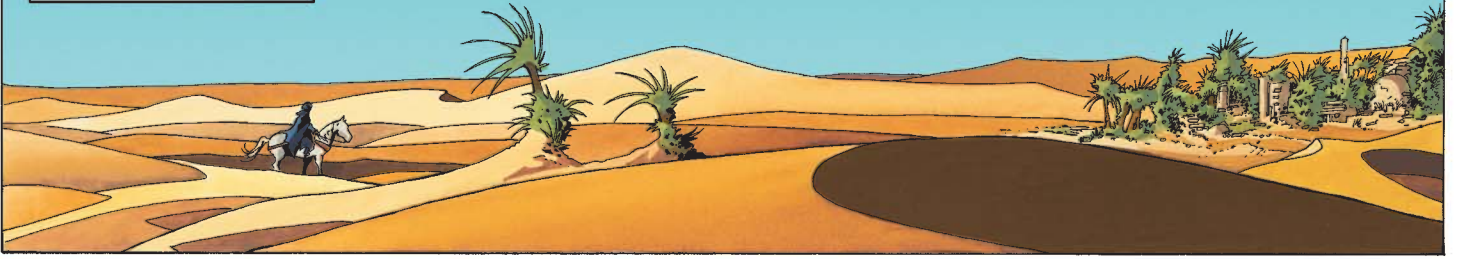
J.D. August 2007.

For the few notes above, I chose, as often, to follow my dear Michel Mourre and the first edition of his *Historic Encyclopedia* in eight volumes (Ed. Bordas.)

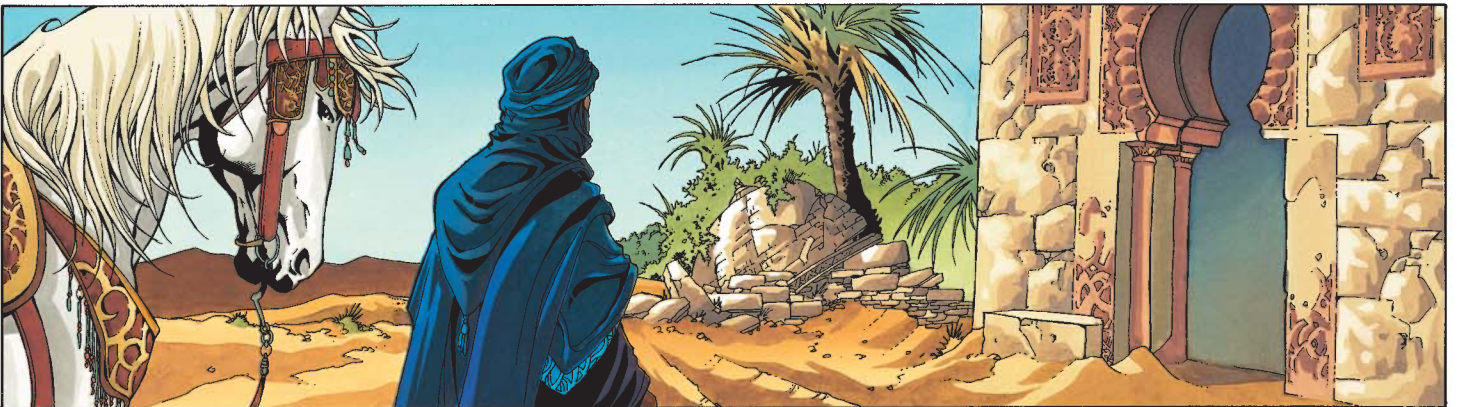
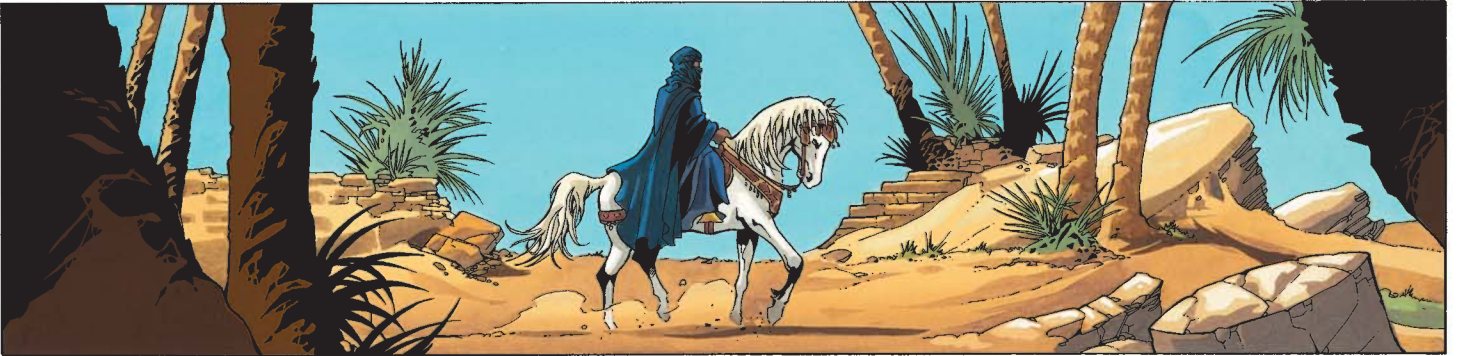
The authors dedicate "Crusade" to Hermann. Simply, and respectfully.

Thank you to Mr Jean-Jacques Chagnaud for having shined his light onto our story. It made it brighter and better.

IT IS SAID THAT
THE TRAITOR OSARIAS
WENT TO THE OASIS
AT AMLI KERMA.



THERE, HE HOPED TO FIND
THE LIGHT OF
THE MARTYRS.



YOUR PRAYERS
WILL NOT BE HEARD,
OSARIAS.

4



YOU KNOW MY NAME ?

HERE, ALL IS KNOWN.

ALL... I DON'T THINK SO.



YOU CAME OUT OF THE SHADOWS TOO EARLY.

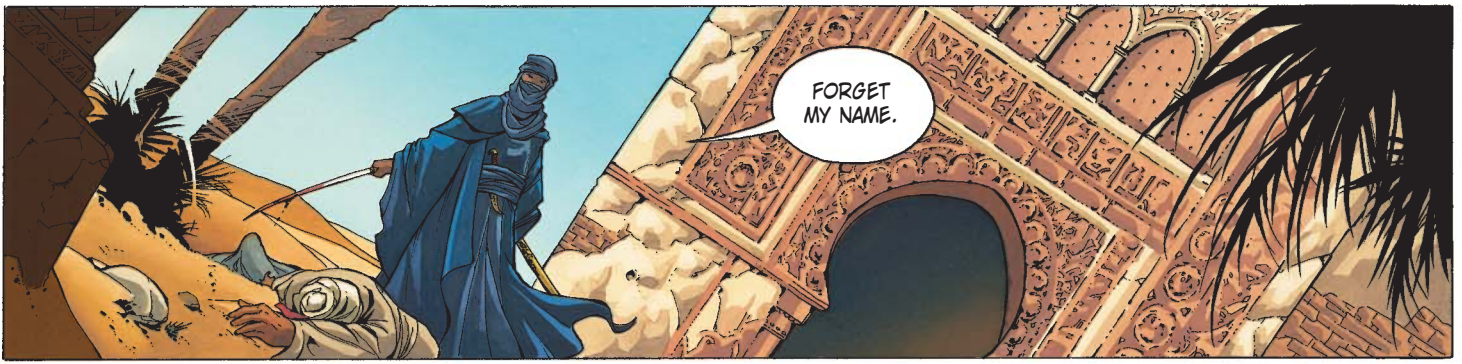


I AM BUT THE OPENER OF THE WAY !

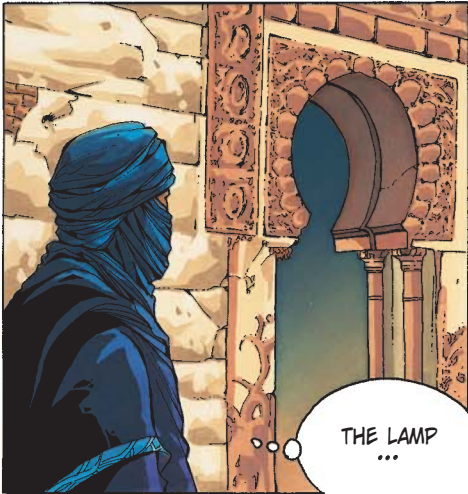


SAR MITRA DIDN'T JOIN IN THE FIGHT. HE FELT HIS TIME HAD NOT YET COME. IN THIS, HIS INSTINCTS DIDN'T LET HIM DOWN.

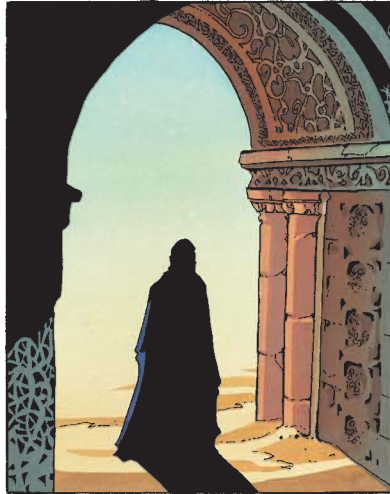




FORGET MY NAME.



THE LAMP ...



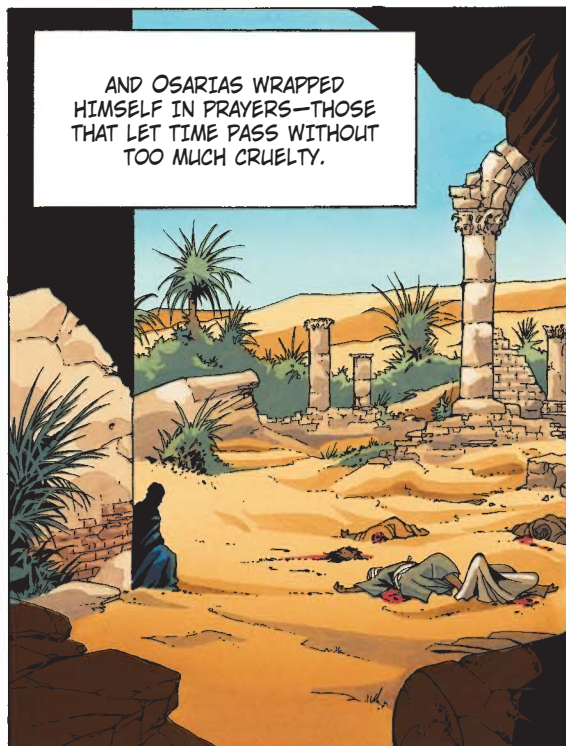
BY ALL THE PROPHETS !!!



THIS IS THE RIGHT PLACE!



SHE PUT THE LAMP DOWN. NOW I MUST WAIT.



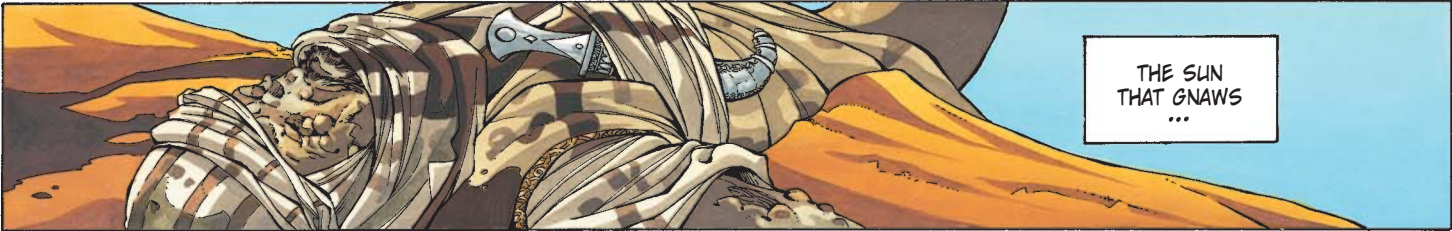
AND OSARIAS WRAPPED HIMSELF IN PRAYERS—THOSE THAT LET TIME PASS WITHOUT TOO MUCH CRUELTY.



HE WAITED.



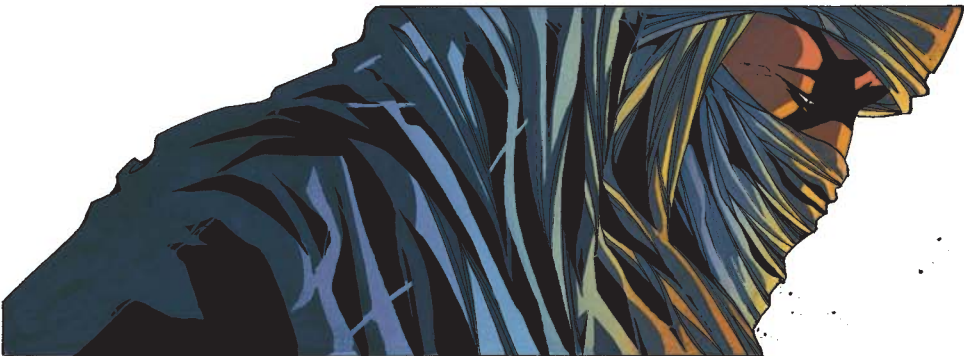
DISSOCIATING HIMSELF
FROM THE MINUTES THAT
DEVOUR...



THE SUN
THAT GNAWS
...



THE SAND
THAT SWALLOWS
...



THE MEMORY
THAT FORGETS.



THE LAMP,
MEANWHILE, KEPT
BURNING...



AND SAR MITRA
WAITED AS WELL.



UNTIL,
AT LAST
...