





ZENOBIA.



I CAME TO CONAN,
MY KING, BY NIGHT...



...AND FOUND HIM IN
THE BURIAL CHAMBERS
OF HIS FIRST QUEEN.



SHOW YOURSELF, DOG--BEFORE I SPLIT YOU FROM NECK TO HIPBONE!



NO, SIRE! IT'S ME! PRAMIS! THE SCRIBE!

COUNCILOR PUBLIUS SUMMONED ME TO THE PALACE, THAT WE MIGHT FURTHER OUR WORK ON THE CHRONICLES!



DAMMIT, BOY. PADDING THROUGH THE SHADOWS LIKE A CLUBFOOTED BURGLAR! THANK YOUR GODS I DIDN'T GUT YOU!

I WAS LOATH TO INTRUDE UPON YOUR SOLITUDE, SIRE. COUNCILOR PUBLIUS... HE SENT FOR ME. HE SEEMS QUITE ANXIOUS TO RESUME OUR WORK ON THE CHRONICLES BEFORE YOU SET OUT FOR THE WEST.



BAH! HAVE YOU NOT YET WEARIED OF SCRIBBLING AND SCRATCHING AT THESE DAMNED HISTORIES HE'S COMMISSIONED FROM YOU?



PUBLIUS "SUGGESTED," DID HE? THAT WITHERED, TACTLESS OLD CROW. BY CROM, I'LL YET WRING HIS NECK.

IT IS THE ANNIVERSARY OF ZENOBIA'S DEATH.

FAR FROM IT, MY KING. I'M A SCHOLAR. A MAN MUST DO WHAT HE WAS MEANT TO DO. PUBLIUS SUGGESTED IT WAS TIME FOR ME TO INQUIRE ABOUT HOW YOU MET YOUR QUEEN.



IT'S... IT'S SAID THAT SHE WAS REMARKABLY BEAUTIFUL, SIRE.



I'VE BEDDED MANY WOMEN, PRAMIS. BUT THERE WERE ONLY **TWO** WITH WHOM I'D HAVE CHOSEN TO SPEND MY LIFE. ONE WAS **BELIT**, THE FIERY QUEEN OF THE BLACK COAST. GENTLE ZENOBIA WAS THE **OTHER**.

WHO COULD HAVE FATHOMED THAT A ROGUE SUCH AS I WOULD OUTLIVE THEM **BOTH**?

AT LAST, A RUMOR WITH SOME **TRUTH** TO IT. AYE, A BEAUTY ZENOBIA WAS-- AS FAIR WHEN SHE DIED AS SHE WAS THE DAY I FIRST CAST EYES ON HER.



SO PUBLIUS WOULD HAVE YOU KNOW HOW ZENOBIA CAME TO SIT BESIDE ME ON MY THRONE, WOULD HE? THE OLD HOUND SHOULD KNOW. HE **WITNESSED** SOME OF IT!



WELL, SIT, THEN, **SCRIBE**. POUR US SOME WINE...
...AND I SHALL **TELL** YOU...

AND THUS, MY LIEGE BEGAN HIS TALE.



A STORY WHICH HAD BEGUN, AS HE HAD SINCE LEARNED, ON A COLD NIGHT YEARS BEFORE...

...IN A REMOTE, MOONLIT HIDEAWAY IN NEMEDIA, AMIDST FLICKERING TAPERS AND BLACK, WAVERING SHADOWS...



...DURING THE WANING OF THE YEAR OF THE LION, AND THE EVE OF THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON!



THE HEART OF AHRIMAN!









Sanjulián