

XEBEL.
THE SECRET
KINGDOM OF
EXILES.

IN THE ARENA OF
SHIPWRECKS KNOWN
AS THE STRAND...

THIS IS
RIDICULOUS! A RITUAL
COMBAT TO PROVE WE'RE
WORTHY TO EVEN SPEAK
TO THE DAMN XEBELLIAN
KING--

I TOLD
YOU WE'D HAVE TO
JUMP THROUGH HOOPS,
ORM. THIS IS XEBELLIAN
CUSTOM... TO GAIN THE
RIGHT OF AUDIENCE AS
AN OUTSIDER...

JUST
GET READY,
OKAY?

XEBEL HEART

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**ORM
MARIUS! FALLEN
KING OF CURSED
ATLANTIS!**

**AND
MERA, THE
TREASONOUS
RENEGADE!**

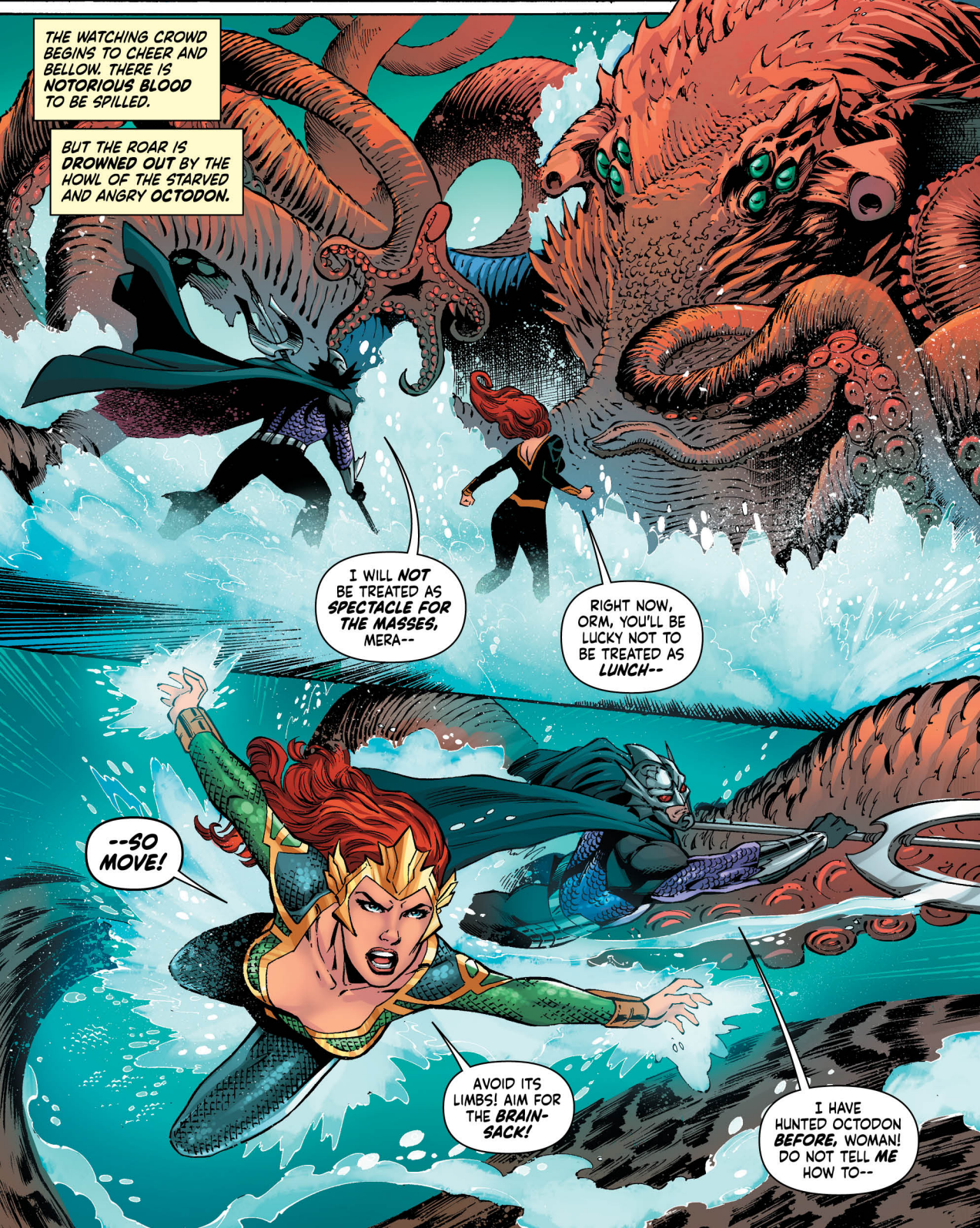
**YOU MUST
PROVE YOURSELVES
IN THE RITE OF
SUPPLICATION!**

**LERON?
LET THE RITE
COMMENCE!**

**AT
YOUR COMMAND,
KING NEREUS.**

**THE WATCHING CROWD
BEGINS TO CHEER AND
BELLOW. THERE IS
NOTORIOUS BLOOD
TO BE SPILLED.**

**BUT THE ROAR IS
DROWNED OUT BY THE
HOWL OF THE STARVED
AND ANGRY OCTODON.**



**I WILL NOT
BE TREATED AS
SPECTACLE FOR
THE MASSES,
MERA--**

**RIGHT NOW,
ORM, YOU'LL BE
LUCKY NOT TO
BE TREATED AS
LUNCH--**

**--SO
MOVE!**

**AVOID ITS
LIMBS! AIM FOR
THE BRAIN-
SACK!**

**I HAVE
HUNTED OCTODON
BEFORE, WOMAN!
DO NOT TELL ME
HOW TO--**

ORM!
I SAID AVOID
THE LIMBS---

GAAAH!

THE PRESSURE
CONSTRUCTS LIKE
A TOURNIQUET.

UGHNNBBKK!

THE CROWD
SQUEALS IN
DELIGHT.

I TRUST THIS
BEAST OF YOURS
HAS BEEN BRED
FIERCE, MY LADY
LAMMIA?

MY DEAR
LORD NEREUS,
I HAVEN'T HAD
IT FED FOR
WEEKS.

MY MONEY'S
STILL ON LADY
MERA...

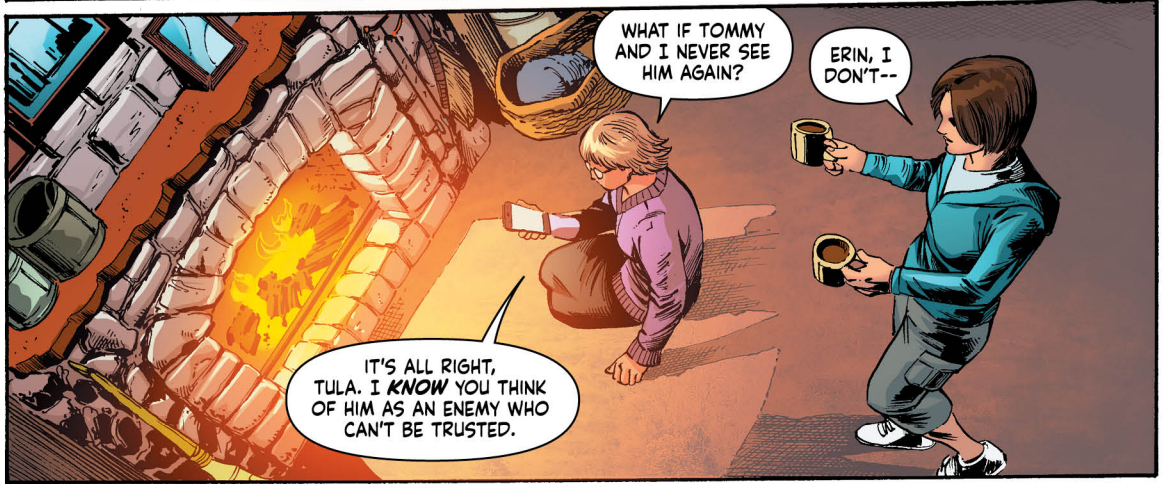
WHY
THEN, CAPTAIN
LERON...



"...YOU WILL BE A POORER MAN BY DAY'S END."

I'M WORRIED ABOUT ORM.

AMNESTY BAY.
A WORLD AWAY...



WHAT IF TOMMY AND I NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN?

ERIN, I DON'T--

IT'S ALL RIGHT, TULA. I *KNOW* YOU THINK OF HIM AS AN ENEMY WHO CAN'T BE TRUSTED.



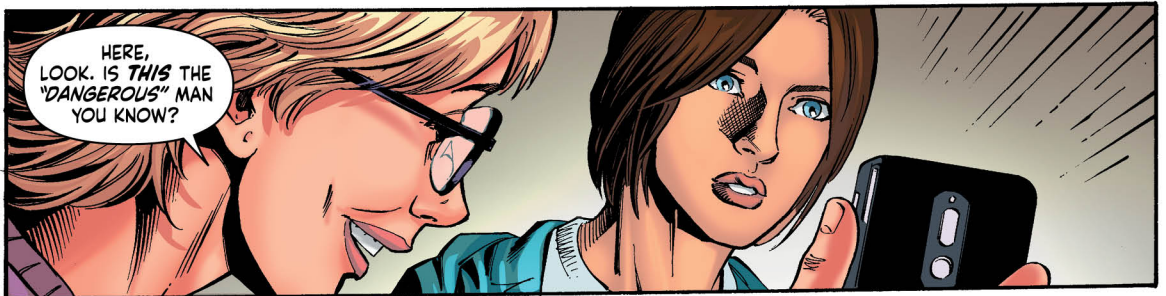
LOOK, ORM'S MY HALF-BROTHER.

I'M SAD WE'VE NEVER BEEN CLOSE.

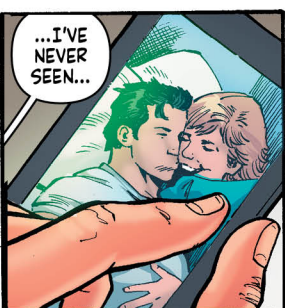
BUT HE HAS THIS UNFORTUNATE HABIT OF BEING... DANGEROUS.

DANGEROUS?

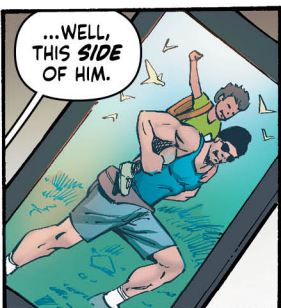
I KNOW HE'S *POWERFUL*. BUT HE'S *ALWAYS* PROTECTED ME AND TOMMY, RIGHT FROM THE DAY WE MET HIM...



HERE, LOOK. IS *THIS* THE "DANGEROUS" MAN YOU KNOW?



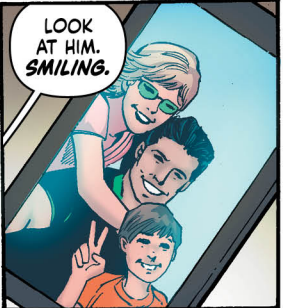
...I'VE NEVER SEEN...



...WELL, THIS *SIDE* OF HIM.



YOU REALLY *WERE* HAPPY TOGETHER, WEREN'T YOU?



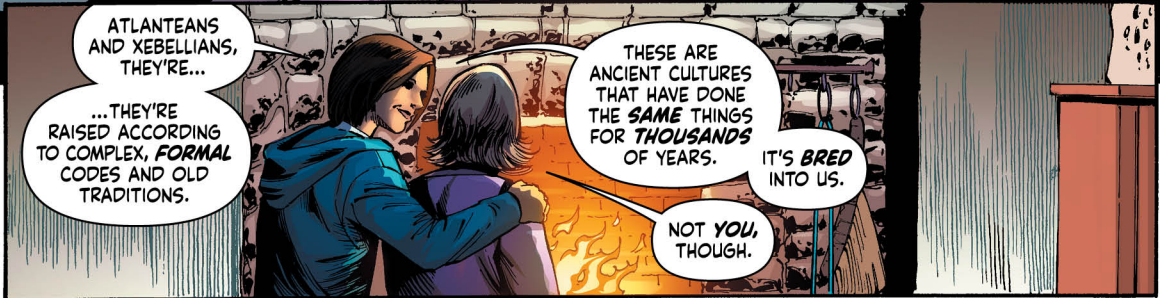
LOOK AT HIM. *SMILING*.



HE'S **STILL** GONE.

THE WAY HE IS WITH YOU AND TOMMY... I'VE NEVER **SEEN** HIM LIKE THAT BEFORE.

HE LOOKS... AT **HOME**, HERE WITH YOU. IN A PLACE HE THOUGHT HE **HATED**.



ATLANTEANS AND XEBELLIANS, THEY'RE...

...THEY'RE RAISED ACCORDING TO COMPLEX, **FORMAL** CODES AND OLD TRADITIONS.

THESE ARE ANCIENT CULTURES THAT HAVE DONE THE **SAME** THINGS FOR **THOUSANDS** OF YEARS.

IT'S **BRED** INTO US.

NOT YOU, **THOUGH**.

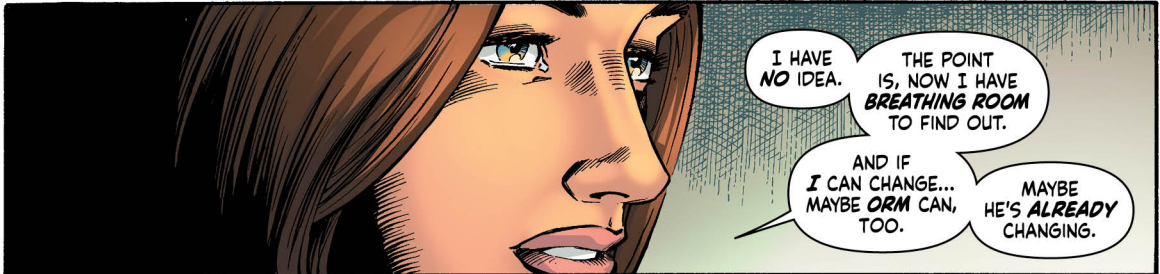


YEAH, WELL, I'M A **REBEL**.

I MADE A LIFE HERE IN THE AIR. I'VE GOT A JOB AT THE BOATYARD.

I EVEN MET A BOY... A **SURFACE** BOY.

IS HE **NICE**? IS IT GOING ANYWHERE?



I HAVE **NO** IDEA.

THE POINT IS, NOW I HAVE **BREATHING** ROOM TO FIND OUT.

AND IF I CAN CHANGE... **MAYBE** ORM CAN, TOO.

MAYBE HE'S **ALREADY** CHANGING.



HIS LOVE FOR YOU AND TOMMY SEEMS TO KEEP ORM **ANCHORED** HERE.

I HOPE **SO**.



THE ORM I KNEW WOULD HAVE JUST **RUSHED** INTO THE ATLANTEAN WAR, GUNS BLAZING, PARTLY OUT OF **DUTY** BUT MOSTLY TO **MAGNIFY** HIS OWN GLORY.

BUT WITH YOU HERE WAITING FOR HIM...