

The Hyborian Review

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If you'll keep listening, we'll keep talking...

Great REH Quotes

From *The Shadow Kingdom*, by Robert E. Howard, a short story about Kull, the fabled Atlantean.

"Slay, Kull!" rasped the Pict's voice. "They all be serpent men!"

The rest was a scarlet maze. Kull saw the familiar faces dim like fading fog and in their places gaped horrid reptilian visages as the whole band rushed forward. His mind was dazed but his giant body faltered not.

The singing of his sword filled the room, and the onrushing flood broke in a red wave. But they surged forward again, seemingly willing to fling their lives away in order to drag down the king. Hideous jaws gaped at him; terrible eyes blazed into his unblinkingly; a frightful fetid scent pervaded the atmosphere – the serpent scent that Kull had known in southern jungles. Swords and daggers leaped at him and he was dimly aware that they wounded him.

But Kull was in his element; never before had he faced such grim foes, but it mattered little; they lived, their veins held blood that could be spilt and they died when his great sword cleft their skulls or drove through their bodies.

Slash, thrust, thrust and swing. He slew a foe at each blow...

Book Review

by David M. Romaine

Conan: Conan and the Shaman's Curse

Author: Sean A. Moore

TOR

260 pages

This story starts out with a classic setting -- Conan is the lone survivor of a savage and bloody battle. After creating a massive pile of dead bodies around him, Conan finds himself face to face with a tattooed and dying shaman, who promptly curses him with his last breath.

Movie Talk

Sorbo Lands First Lead Role in Feature Film "Kull the Conqueror"

Here's what the Universal Studios Web page has to say about the upcoming movie:

'Kevin Sorbo has just landed his first feature film role in Universal Pictures action-adventure "Kull the Conqueror." He will be acting in the role of Kull. The project, based on a script by Charles Pogue and produced by Raffaella DeLaurentiis, is expected to start filming next summer. No director has been chosen, although Rob Cohen ("Dragonheart") and Kevin Hooks ("Passenger 57") are rumored to be possibilities.

'The "Kull the Conqueror" comic is distributed by Marvel Comics and was created by Robert E. Howard, who also created "Conan the Barbarian," the character that kickstarted the feature film career of Arnold Schwarzenegger. "Conan" and its sequel "Conan the Destroyer" were also Universal releases.

'"Kull the Conqueror" takes place a few centuries before "Conan" and follows the adventures of a slave who becomes a warrior king and rises to power in the mythical land of Lemuria.'



After making a pyre in respect for his fallen comrades, Conan is hounded by enemy reinforcements, who chase him into the southern tip of the Vilayet Sea. To his luck, he's picked up by a nearby boat and escapes the avenging reinforcements.

But the Captain is a Stygian admiral who Conan had met before, and after a scuffle, Conan is chained to the bottom of the boat.

With characteristic barbarian stoicism, Conan accepts his imprisonment even as he plots revenge, but his

plight is dire. Worse, that night Conan has a nightmarish dream where he is a savage beast chasing and hunting prey in a dense jungle. What evil it portends he cannot tell.

Days later, Conan is weak from lack of water and from his injuries during the earlier strenuous battle, but he is strong enough to overhear the captain talk of a short cut through haunted waters. That night the moon is full and the nightmare he endured earlier reasserts itself. Only this time he is even more powerful in his dream. Later, Conan wakes up amid a jumble of torn and ragged corpses strewn across the deck, with vague memories of transforming into ferocious beast, destroying everything in his path.

It is then that Conan finds out the truth behind the legends of these waters when a giant sea serpent attacks the ship. After defeating the serpent, the boat is torn apart, and he finds himself floating on a piece of wreckage in unknown waters of the Vilayet Sea.

Days go by before he floats onto the beach of an unknown island. After searching for a short time, Conan comes upon a clearing next to the beach. The sands are completely covered with the skeletons of a strange, vulture-like beast. While pondering this riddle, Conan spies some approaching boats riding through the surf. The vessels are filled with men resembling natives of Old Zimbabwe.

After listening to them he is surprised to note that he can understand their language. Just as the men get out of the boats, they are attacked by a swarm of vulture-like beasts. Ever chivalrous, Conan leaps in to help with the fight. Wearing by his shipwrecking, and the battle, Conan passes out.

When he awakens, he finds that he's alone, that his sword is gone, (Crom blast it!) but that the people he helped have left him a boat. Going to the boat he finds a crude map indicating the position of their home island. So he sets out to find their island, and does so after sailing a short distance. When he gets to the island, he finds a trail of sea shells, which Conan interprets as a path to the village.

Meanwhile the strange men, or Ganaks as they're called, have a legend about the Chosen One who will use the legendary weapon called the atnalga to destroy their ancient enemies. The vulture beasts have decimated the male population of the village down to only 30 or so men. Of course, this atnalga has a close resemblance to Conan's sword. So one of

the young warriors steals Conan's sword and claims to be the Chosen One.

As Conan follows the path and nears the village, a powerful storm hits and destroys all traces of the shell path. Ever an able woodsman, Conan camps under a tree and waits out the storm. The next day he tries to find his way again and is rewarded by another path -- an old one.

As he walks he gets hungry and picks up some fruit hanging on a tree and eats a couple. Being bitter they weren't very tasty but he needed to keep his strength up. It wasn't too much further when he saw the same kind of fruit hatch out baby spiders. *[To snack on baby spiders... Crom! Why the author had to include this is beyond me.]*

Back at the Ganak village, the head warrior (who thinks Conan -- and not the brazen youth -- is the Chosen One) realizes that the path of shells will be blown away by the storm, and that Conan is likely to wander into the dead lands where the deadly spiders live. So he sends out a party to find him, help him, and bring him to the village. The young warrior who took Conan's sword loses is cast out. When he sees the party move out to find Conan, he follows them with the intent of killing this foreign challenger.

Meanwhile, down the trail Conan indeed meets terrible company: a huge green spider that's easily twice his size. After a fierce struggle Conan wins (without his sword), but suffers a horrible spider bite and passes out from poison. When he wakes up he's instantly attacked by a horde of other spiders. *[Why he didn't get attacked in his sleep is something I don't understand; perhaps they thought he was faking?]*

There being close to a hundred spiders encircling him, Conan makes a wise retreat. Running for his life, he comes to a thick wall of trees. It's a close call but Conan barely manages to get through and encounters something totally unexpected.

He has found a massive castle of unknown design with a wall and a statue of some forgotten ancient deity. When Conan approaches, he becomes enthralled and nearly has his soul sucked out. Fortunately the gods were with him, and the party from the village finally finds him and saves him at the last moment. Minutes later they are attacked by the most horrible monster from the dead lands -- a giant preying mantis! This creature is the nemesis of the Ganaks and is greatly feared.

Conan, being experienced in dealing with demons and monsters, dispatches it with skill and efficiency. Thus he gained even more respect from the Ganaks, which he needed, because being a full head shorter than even the women, his smaller stature was held against him.

This is one of the most important links to other Conan tales – how the grim barbarian is able to overcome his deficient social skills by using his sword to aid suspicious strangers. In Howard's epic story Red Nails, Conan (and Valeria – who could forget her?) came to the aid of a band of hard-pressed survivors and helped them overcome their foes.

After the mantis is killed there is a surprise appearance by the head warrior's ex-girlfriend, who also happens to be the mother of the young outcast warrior, but very few people know this. Apparently she left right after the baby was born. The big surprise is that she's riding a tamed preying mantis and has gained unknown shaman powers.

At this point everyone rides back to the village, setting up an excellent and climactic battle scene. The bodies are piled high before the Cimmerian is through, and as he has so many times, Conan kills the last surviving members of an awful and ancient race.

But what about the title of the story, you ask? Another strong sub-plot running through the book is the shaman's curse. Conan has been increasingly beset by this spell from the beginning of the story, and after all vulture beasts and clinging vines have been put in their place, the village sorcerer can perhaps work out a cure for this bizarre plague.

Conclusion

One of the strengths of this book is the liberal use of sorcery, which Conan seems to fight in chapter after chapter. Enchanted swords, ancient legends, a shaman's curse... all is included in good order.

Any problems are difficult to quibble with unless arguing over a good campfire with plenty of Aquilonian wine. For example, there are some 'convenient' lapses – such as the spiders holding off their attack until he can wake up, or the handy ship that just happened to be on the Vilayet when Conan needed it.

Also, Sean Moore is extremely partial to animal-based, and particularly insect-based, fiends. The vulture-like creatures were much easier to root against than the mindless spiders and mantis.

Still, Shaman's Curse is well done. Again, however, it did keep up one annoying trend of Conan in the '90s – sober and chaste. There was some love interest, but damn little, and very few drinking scenes. Alas, a barbarian's lot is difficult indeed.

- DMR

About those comics...

Okay, tell the truth – how many years have you been collecting Conan comics? 10 years? 20? Since the origin issue?

Well, it has all come to a temporary halt. Or permanent, as far as Marvel is concerned. I found this list out on a Web site devoted to comics and thought I better share it with you:

The Axe Has Fallen - UPDATED 3/27/96

Marvel has announced the following cancellations:

Beavis & Butt-Head (with issue #28)

Conan (with issue #11)

Conan the Savage (with issue #10)

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers/VR Troopers
(with issue #5)

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers
(with issue #7)

Ren & Stimpy (with issue #44)

Barbie (with issue #63)

Cosmic Powers Unlimited (with issue #5)

Mantra (with issue #7)

Rune (with issue #7)

Night Man (with issue #4)

Hot Web Sites

Surfing the Web for a few hours has revealed the following notes about various Web sites. To retrace these steps, start at the top, because Stale's site is the best and has more links.

<http://www.intercom.no/~savage/conan/other/links.html>
by Ståle Gismervik. The Grand Daddy of them all. Best site; good art, great links, beautiful layout. Start here to link to other Conan sites.

<http://users.icanect.net/~mikekane/>
Mike Kane's site has scanned art, .wav files, an And lots more. He also has information on the Virgin PC game. Good design, good art.

<http://www.calpoly.edu/~conan/conan/conan.html>
Bradley Clifford Leonard's home page
Lots of black and white, pen and ink drawings.
excellent collection of art, not all Conan related.
Links to Big Bad Barbarian's REH page.

<http://www.bluefin.net/~dmgrant/Robert-E.-Howard.html> Donald M. Grant, book publisher
Most advertisements for sale of REH literature, there are a few good art clips to copy.

<http://www.bekkoame.or.jp/~pancra/reh/reh.html#backpoint>
A great collection of Howard lore. Must see!

<http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/1133/conan.html>
Mark's Conan the Barbarian home page has a long list of Conan publications; little else.

<http://pages.ripco.com:8080/~bbb/howard.html>
Big Bad Barbarian's The Howard Archive
Great Howard collection. Not much else.

<http://www.eel.ufl.edu/~shadow/conan/conan.html>
Shadow's Conan page. Extensive glossary, a Howard letter, and the Hyborian World map.

http://www.csd.uu.se/~d94nek/hyborian_age.html
Hyborian home page. Some cool art, but devoted to an ongoing play-by-mail role-playing game.

<http://www.angelfire.com/free/mikaelspage.html>
Mostly Robert Jordan stuff.

Still developing:
http://www.ici.net/cust_pages/lordcrom/story.htm
The God Lord Crom. Not much in place yet.
<http://www.cs.washington.edu/homes/nch/conan.html>
Nick Hart's home page. Conan .wav files. Little else.
<http://158.38.33.18/~haraldp/conan.html>
Harald Pettersen's home page. Links don't work.
<http://www.powertech.no/~davide/conan.html>
David Egeland's home page

TOR Paperbacks Update

There are some re-releases scheduled:
CONAN AT THE DEMON'S GATE
by Roland Green (re-release in smaller size)
CONAN AND THE SHAMAN'S CURSE

by Sean A. Moore (re-release in smaller size)
But the big news is a brand new book by Sean --- is anyone looking forward to this?
The November 1996 mass market paperbacks
CONAN AND THE GRIM GREY GOD
by Sean A. Moore

You have to like it just judging by the cover, which brings to mind the rare Conan the Barbarian #3. No word yet on the story outline, but it sounds good already.

Since Moore is 'the man' right now, you might remember this book:

Conan the Hunter - by Sean A. Moore
TOR Fantasy Books - January 1994

Here's a thumbnail sketch:

'It all began when Conan bought the jeweled bracelet from the Zamoran thief. It would, Conan thought, make the perfect gift for his lady of the moment, Yvanna. But this was no ordinary bauble - it had been taken from the King of Brythunia's only daughter... the daughter who had been cruelly murdered only days before. Cursing his luck, Conan sets off to find the real killers in order to save himself from the executioner's ax. And blunders into a deadly web of palace intrigue masterminded by the Mutare, those ancient priests and priestesses dedicated to the vilest evils and the enslavement of all men. Even Conan's mighty muscles, potent instincts and extraordinary luck might not be enough - even Conan might need the help of the gods themselves!'

Did anyone catch the Robert Jordan cyber appearances? If you get a chance, you should be frequenting both the Compu\$erve SF/Fantasy Forum and the America Online Sci-Fi Fantasy Forum / Entertainment Forum

Send any and all feedback to:
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NEXT Issue: Robert E. Howard vs. all the rest.

FINIS