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BLOODLINES

VOLUME ONE

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POETRY OF MADNESS

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BLOODLINES

POETRY OF MADNESS

ATLANTIS...ITS BEAUTY, CULTURE, AND RICHES ARE THE STUFF OF LEGEND THE WORLD OVER.

EVERY BARBARIAN, BRIGAND, AND SLAVER FROM THE JIAHU TRIBES TO THE MEHRGARGH OASIS HAVE HEARD TELL OF ITS GLEAMING SPIRES AND ITS VAST, UNFORTIFIED GOLD PITS.

THOSE RUMORS AND THE KILLERS THEY DRAW TO POSEIDON'S GATES ARE BY DESIGN.

WE NEED THESE POOR SOULS TO COME. IN A WAY, THEY ARE THEMSELVES STEWARDS OF ATLANTEAN SOVEREIGNTY. THEY SERVE A KEY PURPOSE IN OUR KINGDOM'S ECOLOGY.

THEIR SPILLED BLOOD SLAKES THE THIRST OF THE ONE WHO SUSTAINS US ALL. FOR ATLANTIS'S TRUE LEGEND ISN'T IN ITS SPIRES OR ITS RICHES...

...BUT IN THE DEMI-GOD WHO PROTECTS THEM.

STOP!!

HALT, SCUM!

RRRRRUUMBBLLIEEEEE

WELL, WELL, THEY'VE SENT AN EMISSARY TO NEGOTIATE THEIR SURRENDER, BOYS! A VERY PRETTY EMISSARY, I MUST SAY.

WHAT ARE YOUR TERMS, MY SWEET LITTLE TART?

I AM ***ZUBATAI,*** LOYAL SERVANT TO THE BELOVED MONARCH OF ATLANTIS, ***KING AZAES THE KIND.*** I AM ALSO THE HONORED CHRONICLER AND SQUIRE TO THE KING'S PERSONAL GUARD.

YOU ARE TRESPASSING UPON ATLANTEAN SOIL! SURRENDER NOW AND PAY TRIBUTE TO OUR GREAT KING AND YOU WILL BASK IN OUR MERCY, INSTEAD OF OUR WRATH.

HAHAHAAAHA HAAAHA HAHAHAHAHA HAHAHA

AND IF WE REFUSE THIS GENEROUS OFFER?

THEN YOU WILL FACE THE KING'S GUARD.

THE KING'S GUARD? AND WHERE, MAY I ASK, ARE THEY?

NOT THEY... ***HIM!***

BEHOLD!!

POSEIDON'S PET DEMON! THE TIP OF THE TRIDENT! THE HOPE SLAYER!

UNUTE, THE BERSERKER!!!

UH, RIGHT. NO MORE TALK, GIRL. GO FETCH YOUR KING, HE CAN SURRENDER TO US PERSONALLY--

?!!

HE IS THE GREATEST LEGEND NO ONE HAS EVER HEARD OF, BECAUSE NONE HAVE EVER LIVED TO TELL HIS TALE.

FOR OVER HALF OF A CENTURY, MY HOUSE HAS PLEDGED ITS UNDYING SERVICE TO THE IMMORTAL MASTER. LIKE MY FATHER BEFORE ME, I SEE TO HIS EVERY NEED AND MAKE AN ACCOUNT OF ALL HIS GREAT AND NOBLE DEEDS.

HE IS PROOF THAT DIVINITY BEGETS GRACE. HE IS THE LITERAL BIRTH OF MYTH, AND HE TEACHES US WHY GODS MUST BE FEARED.

WHEN THE TIME CAME TO PREPARE ME FOR MY PLACE AT THE BERSERKER'S SIDE, MY FATHER SHARED ALL THE KNOWLEDGE HE'D GLEANED OF UNUTE FROM HIS YEARS OF LOYAL SERVICE.

HE TOLD ME THE MASTER HAD ONLY ONE TRUE NEED THAT MUST FOREVER BE MET...

...CARNAGE.

RRRRRR...

HUNGH!

KA-BLAM

WITHIN HIM RAGED AN INFERNO OF VIOLENCE AND BRUTALITY SO LIMITLESS IT COULD HAVE ENGULFED THE WORLD. PERHAPS ONE DAY IT WILL.

BOOM

FUCKING FUCKERS.

GRAAAAAA--

THAT'S WHY I GENERALLY KEEP MY DISTANCE WHEN THE FIGHTING STARTS.

RAAGH!!

TRUTH BE TOLD, IT IS MY LIFE'S GREAT HONOR TO OBSERVE HIM.

CHOOM!

SHRAK

I'M OFTEN ASKED IF MY VOYAGE ACROSS THESE RIVERS OF BLOOD IMPAIRS THE ARMOR OF MY SOUL.

NAH. NOT REALLY.

UNUTE, DESPITE HIS MURDEROUS TENDENCIES, IS A WONDERFUL MASTER. I NEVER HAVE TO WORK THE HARVEST FESTIVALS AND I'M GIFTED WINE AND DATES ON MY BIRTHDAY.

HE'S ACTUALLY QUITE NICE ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW HIM.

STILL, HE WON'T LAY WITH ME. I DON'T GET IT EITHER.

I'M WORKING ON IT.

THE HORNS ANNOUNCE THE BATTLE'S END, AND THE DWINDLING SCREAMS OF OUR PROTECTOR'S DYING VICTIMS ARE DROWNED OUT BY THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE.

THE ATLANTEAN PEOPLE HUNGER FOR THE BLOOD-SOAKED SPECTACLE HE PROVIDES. FOR SO MANY, MY MASTER'S ADVENTURES ARE ALL THEY LIVE FOR.

C'MON, THEY'RE GETTING IMPATIENT AND YOU'RE STARTING TO HEAL ALREADY. THE PEOPLE WANT THEIR GORE.

HNGH.

HE IS MORE THAN A MONSTER TO THE CITIZENS OF ATLANTIS. HE STANDS NEXT TO POSEIDON IN OUR PANTHEON'S HIERARCHY.

YET HE WALKS THE SAME STREETS AS OUR BEGGARS AND DRINKS THE SAME WINE...

...AND THE PEOPLE LOVE HIM FOR IT.

MY MASTER IS A SOLITARY CREATURE, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT HE WILL KEEP HIS OWN COMPANY.

EXCEPT ON VICTORY DAYS. THEN, MY MASTER ENGAGES WITH THE THRONGS OF HIS FAITHFUL. UNUTE LOOKS INTO THEIR EYES AND SEES THE REPLETE HEART OF THE ATLANTEAN PEOPLE...

...AND HE LOVES THEM RIGHT BACK.

THE KIND KING AZAES'S REIGN WAS ENABLED SOLELY BY MY MASTER'S WILL, IT WAS NO SECRET.

NO ONE CARED, ATLANTIS WAS SAFE AND LIFE WAS GOOD.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING YOURSELF, UNUTE? YOU NEVER COME TO COURT ANYMORE. I MISS YOU.

AND YOU ARE MISSED IN THE RELIQUARY, SIRE. I STILL SPEND MOST NIGHTS READING THE ANCIENT SCROLLS, IT'S VERY ILLUMINATING.

WE SHOULD BEGIN YOUR STUDIES AGAIN.

OOF. YOU AND YOUR ENDLESS SCROLLING.

THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO LIFE THAN OBSESSING OVER THE PAST. WE MUST THINK OF THE FUTURE.

MY MASTER LOVED THE KING...

...I BELIEVE THAT LOVE MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO SEE THE CHANGE IN THE KING'S EYES.

THE KINDNESS IN THEM WAS REPLACED WITH A MURKY MOONLIGHT, FULL OF CORRUPTION AND FORBIDDEN DESIRE.

IT'S SUCH AN EXCITING TIME, UNUTE. I WANT TO SHARE MORE, BUT...

SOON, MY FRIEND, SOON.

MY MASTER COULD STILL ONLY SEE THE EYES OF THE FRIGHTENED, INNOCENT BOY HE'D MET ON THE ROAD ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.

KILL HIM OR SELL HIM?

BOTH?

A COUP D'ÉTAT ATTEMPT HAD CLAIMED THE LIVES OF AZAES'S PARENTS, THE KING AND QUEEN. THE BOY WOULD HAVE FOLLOWED THEM INTO THE NEXT LIFE. BUT THEN...

...FATE INTERVENED.

MY FATHER SAID THAT THE MASTER SAW HIS OWN TALE OF WOE IN THE BOY KING'S CIRCUMSTANCE.

HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE FORTUNES OF SO MANY EVIL MEN WERE CONJOINED TO THE BOY'S FATE.

HE KNEW THE COLD COMFORTS OF A LIFE AS A TOOL, YOKED TO GREEDY MEN'S WANTS. UNUTE WOULD NOT ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN TO AZAES.

SO, HE STAYED AND PROTECTED HIM.

PERHAPS FOR AN IMMORTAL BEING SUCH AS HIM, HIS TIME AS ATLANTIS'S PROTECTOR HAD THE TENOR OF A TRAVELER, FINDING A MOMENT'S RESPITE AT A ROADSIDE OASIS.

I THINK ATLANTIS WAS MY MASTER'S FIRST TRUE HOME, CHOSEN AND BUILT ON HIS OWN TERMS.

VIZANE! COME SAY HELLO.

YOU TWO MUST SIMPLY SPEND MORE TIME TOGETHER--

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE, GREAT ONE. WE ARE IN YOUR DEBT ONCE MORE.

IT IS MY DUTY AND HONOR TO SERVE THE CROWN AND EXPUNGE ALL THREATS WITH EXTREME AND BRUTAL PREJUDICE.

REMEMBER THAT, PRIEST.

TSK, BE NICE, UNUTE.

APOLOGIES, GREAT ONE. WE ARE ALL HERE BECAUSE OF YOU, I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT. TRUST ME.

MY MASTER COULD PROTECT AZAES FROM ANYTHING, EXCEPT AZAES HIMSELF.

UNUTE WAS NO FATHER, BUT HE TRIED TO BE THERE FOR THE KING. HE DID NOT APPROVE OF AZAES'S NEW FRIENDS, BUT WHAT WAS HE TO DO?

AZAES'S NEW RELIGION WAS BEYOND THE PURVIEW OF THE KING'S GUARD, SO WHO WAS HE TO JUDGE?

AHA! I KNEW YOU'D BE DOWN HERE WITH THE OTHER OLD SHIT.

C'MON! WE NEED YOU AT THE ORGY! THEY'RE QUEUING UP IN YOUR SECTION.

I DON'T GO TO THOSE THINGS. I TOLD YOU TO STOP ASKING.

GASP! THE RELIQUARY WAS ROBBED!

YES.

THEY TOOK YOUR BIG ROCK THAT DIDN'T FIT IN HERE!

THE OBELISK. YES.

WHAT A FUCKING MESS!

YES.

THE PRIEST AND HIS FOLLOWERS HAVE ALSO STOLEN SOME DANGEROUS, ANCIENT TEXTS THAT I'D HIDDEN.

CRAP. I-I'LL PAY FOR IT, I SWEAR. WAS THIS ONE EXPENSIVE?

THEY WERE WRITTEN IN AN EVIL LANGUAGE CALLED AKLOW. IT POISONS THE MINDS OF MORTAL MEN.

THE PRIEST AND HIS FOLLOWERS HAVE GRANDIOSE SCHEMES. THEY WISH TO RESURRECT LONG-DEAD GODS.

URPKH!

SNIFF SNIFF

I'LL GET SOME SOLDIERS AND ROUND THEM UP, THEY COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR HAULING THAT BIG ROCK.

NO.

SNIFF SNIFF

THEY ARE STILL HERE.

THEY HAVE GATHERED UPON THE NORTHEASTERN TOWER. THE KING IS WITH THEM.

COME. LET'S NOT KEEP THEM WAITING.

SURPRISE!

PLEASE DON'T BE MAD, UNUTE.

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS, AZAES?

WE JUST WANT TO TALK, UNUTE. WE STAND ON THE PRECIPICE OF A GREAT CHANGE, BROTHER! WE ARE ALL THE CHOSEN, YOU SEE, ESPECIALLY YOU.

LET'S ALL STAY CALM, ALRIGHT? THAT'S THE KING'S COMMAND. PLEASE, UNUTE, LISTEN TO WHAT VIZANE HAS TO SAY.

I HAVE ONLY YOUR DESTINY TO OFFER YOU, UNUTE. COME, LET US SIT TOGETHER.

THESE FOOLS ARE EVIL, AZAES. THAT WIZARD HAS POISONED YOUR MIND!

THEY SEEK TO END THE WORLD. I WON'T ALLOW THIS!

I'M SORRY, YOU CAN BANISH ME IF YOU WISH, BUT I NEED TO KILL ALL THESE PEOPLE. IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.

I-I AM YOUR KING! YOU MUST OBEY, ER--WAIT, PLEASE!

YOU CAN MAKE NEW FRIENDS.

KA-CHK

YEEEAAARGH!!!

NO! GET OFF ME, YOU FROG-FACED FUCKER!

NNGGRRH--

OH, THAT LOOKS MORE PAINFUL THAN THEY SAID IT WOULD BE. I'M SO SORRY, BUT YOU WON'T LISTEN! YOU STILL THINK I'M A CHILD!

I HAVE FAILED YOU, AZAES--*NGH*-- FORGIVE ME.

NO, NO, UNUTE. YOU ARE HERE FOR A REASON! WHEN YOUR PURPOSE IS REALIZED, THEN WE WILL BE IMMORTAL BROTHERS TOGETHER, TRULY!

HURRY, FILL THOSE CUPS, IT'S ALMOST TIME. AND BRING ME HIS SWORD...

UH!

YEARS AGO, THE KING GIFTED YOU THIS BLADE, AN ARTIFACT, FORGED FROM THE PRIMORDIAL ORE. THERE'S MORE TO ITS LEGEND THAN YOU KNOW, MONSTER.

ITS PART OF A ***SET,*** YOU SEE, AND LIKE YOU THIS BLADE IS DESTINED FOR A HIGHER PURPOSE THAN JUST RENDING FLESH.

YOUR BLADE IS A KEY, AND THAT OBELISK IS THE DOOR IT UNLOCKS.

A DOORWAY TO GOD. YOU'VE POSSESSED THE PATH TO PARADISE FOR DECADES AND DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT.

DRINK DEEP, MY BROTHERS. WE GIVE YOU THANKS, UNUTE. THE PROPHECY DECREES THAT YOUR IMMORTAL BLOOD SHALL MARK US FAITHFUL, AND UNTO THIS OUR GOD'S WRATH SHALL ***PASS OVER*** US.

RRAAAAA!!!

RAGE ALL YOU WANT, BEAST. THAT CAGE IS QUITE UNBREAKABLE. WHILE YOU SPENT DECADES NUMBING YOURSELF WITH BLOOD AND WINE, WE WORKED TO GIVE YOUR LONG, USELESS LIFE ITS TRUE PURPOSE!

WHEN OUR PEOPLE HEARD A DEMON WITH A HANDSOME FACE WALKED ALTLANTIS'S GUARDWALL, WE KNEW IT WAS THE PROPHECY. YOU BROUGHT US HERE, UNUTE.

YOU'RE GOING TO DINE ON YOUR OWN GUTS, WIZARD!!

KKRRK

KKRR

KAARRRRRGHH!!

UH, PERHAPS WE SHOULD START THE RITUAL.

THEIR CAGE COULD NOT HOLD MY MASTER. STILL, THE WIZARD WAS SWIFT WITH HIS MAGIC RITUALS.

IT'S... IT'S...

THE OBELISK GLOWED LIKE A BLOOD-SOAKED SUN, THEN IT BURST INTO A COLUMN OF LIGHT THAT IGNITED THE EDGE OF THE MOON, UNTIL IT ALL WENT BLACK...

THEN...A ROAR OLDER THAN TIME ITSELF.

WHOA.

BEAUTIFUL.

THE DOORWAY TO HELL WAS OPEN AND THE NIGHT AIR FILLED WITH THE STENCH OF A THOUSAND MILLENNIUMS OF ALIEN ROT AND DECAY...

SKREEECH

GOD HAD RETURNED HOME.

HE DIDN'T SEEM HAPPY WITH WHAT WE'D DONE TO THE PLACE.

CTHULHU!

AH, THE GREAT PURGE HAS BEGUN! NOTICE THAT WE ARE ALL SPARED FROM CTHULHU'S WRATH.

HE *SEES* HIS FAITHFUL, AND HIS FAITHFUL SEE HIM. PRAISE YOU.

NOW, LET US RECITE THE INCANTATION OF WELCOMING.

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD! WE HAVE TO GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!

HUNGH!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!

MY DUTY.

I'M THE KING'S GUARD, ROYAL PROTECTOR OF ATLANTIS. AND THAT FUCKING THING IS TRESPASSING.

UNUTE, WAIT!

K-KOOM

TIME TO DIE, MONSTER!

GRAA?!

SLASH!

SKEEE

-EEEEOOONK!!

DOES THAT HURT?

UHN!

NOOOo-

YOU'VE COME HERE ONLY TO DIE, SQUID!

YOU! YOU ARE OF *HIM!* I CAN SMELL IT ON YOU. KNOW THAT TODAY THE LIGHT DIIIEESSSS, HALF-BREED.

CONGRATULATIONS! *GHAA!*

MOTHER-FUCKER!

WAK

YOU ARE NOTHING TO ME, YOU SPECK OF DUST.

THWAK!

YOU CANNOT HURT MEEEEE--

KOOM

CHOOM

KRSSHH

GODDAMMIT.

YOUR FATHER HAS SLEPT TOO LOOOONG, HIS GARDEN IS UNTENDED.

THE TIME HAS COME TO TILL THE SOIL OF THIS PLACE AND PLANT ANEW.

C'MON, RRR--

SLUKPP

GET BACK IN THERE!

EEEAARGH!!

MUCH BETTER.

STOP!! GRAAAA!

NOOO!!

YOU'VE HAD YOUR TIME, SPECK. NOW IT IS MY TIME!

WRONG AGAIN, SQUID!

NOOO!

YOUR TIME--

--IS UP!

WOK

SKEEE!!

KKRAK

I CAN SMELL YOUR FEAR TOO, OCTOPUS. YOU ARE RIGHT TO BE AFRAID, BECAUSE--

KOOOOMM!

I CAN HURT YOU!

SKR EEEEEEEEEE

YOU WILL DIE WITH THE REST OF THE LIGHTBRINGER'S WORLD!

D-DON'T BE AFRAID! WE ARE PERFECTLY SAFE, I ASSURE YOU!

WISHFUL THINKING, YOU DUMB FUCK!

MASTER!

UHNGH!

UH, HOW'S IT GOING?

IT'S GOING...

ENOUGH, LITTLE IMMORTAL!!!

YOU AND YOUR MISPLACED BRAVURA CAN DIE SLOWLY IN THE ACIDS OF MY STOMACHS, HERO.

YOU'VE INVITED DEATH INTO YOUR GULLET!

AAAAHHH--

FUUUUCK!!!

NOOO--

"KING OR NOT, YOU HAVE BEEN DERELICT IN YOUR DUTIES, BOY!"

THE CROWN DEMANDS A DECISION! OUR TRADE IS LOSING MONEY EVERY DAY WE--

LEAVE.

THE KING HAS HAD ENOUGH FOR TODAY. YOU CAN RENEW YOUR SCHEMING TOMORROW.

I WILL NOT REPEAT MYSELF.

NO MATTER THEIR TONE, AZAES, KNOW THAT YOU ARE SAFE. EVERYONE IN THE REALM UNDERSTANDS THAT YOU ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION.

THERE IS NO LIFE ON THIS EARTH THAT IS SAFER.

TRULY? DO YOU SWEAR IT, UNUTE?

I SWEAR IT, AZAES.

YOUR PARENTS AWAIT YOU AT THE END OF THE PATH, AZAES. GO TO THEM, BOY.

IS THAT EVERYONE? WE CAN START THE INCANTATION FROM HERE...

OH, SHIT.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU, WIZARD?

WAIT! I-I CAN HELP YOU. I KNOW ITS LANGUAGE. I CAN SPEAK IT! I CAN COMMUNICATE WITH CTHULHU!

PLEASE!

[illegible]

Y-YOU SPEAK IT? B-BUT DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE MASCULINE AND FEMININE OF THE LANGUAGE?

I-IT'S ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING THE NOUNS, ELDER GODS ARE KNOWN TO BE FICKLE, GRAMMATICALLY SPEAKING.

[illegible]

OH, YOU KNOW IT. YOUR ACCENT IS SPOT ON, TOO...

UGH!

THANK YOU.

I HOPE YOU'RE HUNGRY.

GLKKGHKK!

MASTER! THIS THING IS OOZING SOME SERIOUS SHIT! WHAT ARE WE DOING?!

WUMF WUMP

WUMP WUM

CALM YOURSELF, ZUBATAI.

FOLLOW ME.

MY MASTER'S SENSES WENT FAR BEYOND THAT OF A MAN OR BEAST. HE COULD HEAR THE MONSTER'S BEATING HEART AND BEGAN TO CARVE HIS SWORD TOWARD IT.

WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! NOOO!!

NOT LIKE THISSSS!

NOOOO!! NOT LIKE THISSSS!!

YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN HELL, CREATURE!

ON THE SUBJECT OF GODS, MY MASTER WOULD OFTEN SAY, *"GOD IS JUST A WORD THAT MEANS MORE POWER THAN SENSE."*

CTHULHU, IT TURNS OUT, DESPITE ITS INFINITE POWER FOR DESTRUCTION, WAS JUST AN ANIMAL LIKE ANY OTHER.

AND LIKE ANY OTHER MAN OR BEAST WHO'VE FACED THE MASTER. IT DIED ONCE ITS HEART WAS TORN OUT.

THOOM

HOLD ON!

SLSSHH

MY MASTER HAD SAVED THE WORLD FROM BECOMING HELL ON EARTH.

AS A REWARD, THE FATES ALLOWED UNUTE TO WATCH HIS CHOSEN HOME DISSOLVE UNDER ALIEN FIRE, CAST FROM CTHULHU'S OWN DYING BODY.

MY MASTER ENDURED THE SCENE WITHOUT EMOTION. ALL TRACE OF THE GREATEST CIVILIZATION TO EVER EXIST WAS GONE...FOREVER.

WE BORE WITNESS TO EVERY SPIRE AND BURNING TENTACLE DEVOURED BY THE BRINY DEEP, UNTIL ALL THAT WAS LEFT TO SEE WERE THE GENTLE LAPPING WAVES OF THE EVENING TIDE.

MY MASTER THANKED ME FOR MY YEARS OF LOYALTY AND THEN RELEASED ME FROM HIS SERVICE. HE HAD CHOSEN THE SOLITUDE OF THE WILDERNESS ONCE AGAIN.

EVEN FOR ***UNUTE THE BERSERKER,*** SOME WOUNDS WILL NEVER HEAL. DESPITE ALL THE PAIN AND SUFFERING THAT HE HAS ENDURED, HE STILL DOES NOT CRY...

SO I WEEP FOR US BOTH.