

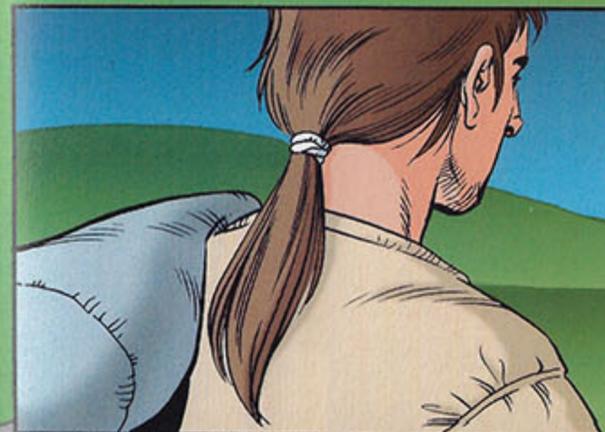
PART
TWO



THE SALISBURY PLAIN,
SOUTHERN ENGLAND.

The centuries
passed like
hours.

I could tell you about
them... wars, pestilence,
inquisitions... generations
of men and women
swarmed up out of the
ground, broken, burned,
blasted.



I had to have something to
hold onto. Something that
wasn't in furious motion.

I found
it here.

Stonehenge the ancient:



Apart from the pyramids,
the only human
structure still standing
that I knew when I
first came into the world.



The Empire State Building...
The Eiffel Tower... St. Peters...
The Amphitheater in Rome...
The Parthenon... all had
been forgotten for a
thousand years or more.



But even Stonehenge wasn't
something I could hold onto.

Even Stonehenge
slipped away
into the centuries.



WELL,
NOW, ISN'T
THIS
CURIOUS?



I'VE KNOWN MANY A
FISH... AND RATHER
WELL, IF I DO SAY
SO MYSELF...



...BUT
NEVER A
STONE FISH.
WHERE ON
EARTH DID YOU
GET IT?



IT WAS
GIVEN TO
ME...IN ANOTHER
LAND, LONG
AGO.

N'YAWK.
CHICAHGA.
NAWLEEYUNS.
SN'FRISCO.

HOW
DO YOU
KNOW
THOSE
NAMES?

WHO
SAID YOU
LOOK
DUMB? I
DIDN'T--

Heh.
DON'T GET
IN A PUCKER,
MY BOY. I
BELIEVE WE'LL
HAVE TO FIND
YOU AN AD-
VISOR.

WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN?

I CAN'T
BE CERTAIN, BUT
I THINK IT'LL
HAVE TO BE... A
TALKING
FISH.



A
WHAT?

WE'VE
NOTHING LIKE
THAT ON THIS
SCEPTER'D ISLE.
I'M CERTAIN OF
THAT. DO YOU
FANCY NIPPING
OVER TO THE CON-
TINENT FOR A
DAY OR TWO?



THE
CONTINENT?

NORMANDY WILL
BE THE PLACE. WHAT WE
USED TO CALL NORMANDY.
BEFORE EVERYONE FORGOT
THE NAMES. A FEW HOURS
IN A CORACLE WILL GET
YOUR BLOOD MOVING! THE
NATIVE BRITON WATER
CRAFT, YOU KNOW.

BUILD ONE
IN AN HOUR, IF
YOU'VE GOT THE
MATERIALS. MIRACLE
OF TIME-TESTED
FOLK DESIGN, YOU
KNOW, LIKE THE
IGLOO...



THE ENGLISH CHANNEL.

NEVER HAVE LEARNED HOW TO MANAGE ONE OF THESE DAMN THINGS!

IMAGINE BUILDING A BOAT WITHOUT A KEEL! COMPLETELY DAFT, OF COURSE! HOPELESS INCOMPETENTS, THE BRITONS! THOROUGHLY HOPELESS!



I THINK I CAN SEE LAND AHEAD!

OF COURSE. WITH A WHOLE BLOODY CONTINENT IN FRONT OF US, WE COULD HARDLY MISS.



HOLD IT!

SCHIESS! COME ON, GIVE ME A HAND! MERDE!



EVENTUALLY...

WHERE EXACTLY ARE WE GOING?

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A STREAM, OF COURSE...OR A RIVER.



WHY DO YOU THINK THEY DISMANTLED STONEHENGE?

IT WAS TIME TO RELEASE THE PRISONER.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT A HENGE IS?

I DON'T KNOW... SOMETHING LIKE A HINGE?

CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR.



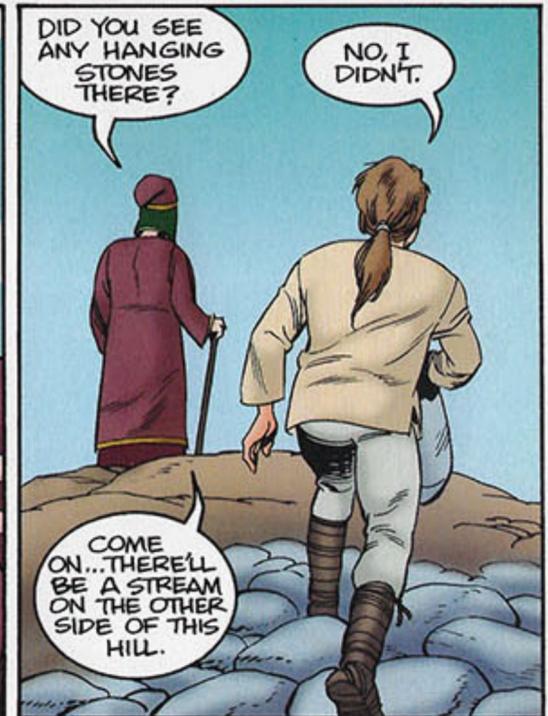
IT'S LIKE THE WORD GIRT. DO YOU KNOW WHAT AN EXPRESSION LIKE STONE-GIRT MIGHT MEAN?

STONE-GIRT... SOMETHING LIKE "HELD IN BY STONE?"

THAT'S RIGHT. STONEHENGE MEANS "STONE-HUNG."

STONE-HUNG? I DON'T GET IT.

NOT MANY PEOPLE DID IN YOUR ANCIENT TIMES. THEY THOUGHT IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH HANGING STONES.



DID YOU SEE ANY HANGING STONES THERE?

NO, I DIDN'T.

COME ON...THERE'LL BE A STREAM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS HILL.



NOTHING.



NO... TALKING FISH?

NOT A SYLLABLE.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT. THERE ARE PLENTY MORE STREAMS.



SO WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE WAS HUNG BY STONE AT STONEHENGE?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

YES, YOU DO. AND WHEN I TELL YOU, YOU'LL SAY, "Oh, THAT'S VERY OBVIOUS."

A GOD WAS HUNG ON THE STONES OF STONEHENGE.

TRY ME.



HUH?

TWO HUNDRED GENERATIONS OF PEOPLE LABORED TO DISMANTLE STONEHENGE, DRAGGING THIRTY-TON STONES TO QUARRIES DOZENS OF MILES AWAY. WHY?

DIDN'T THEY USE IT AS A CALENDAR TO REGULATE THE PLANTING OF CROPS?

THAT WAS THE GOD'S WORK. HE WAS IMPRISONED TO PERFORM THAT SERVICE.



I DON'T GET IT.

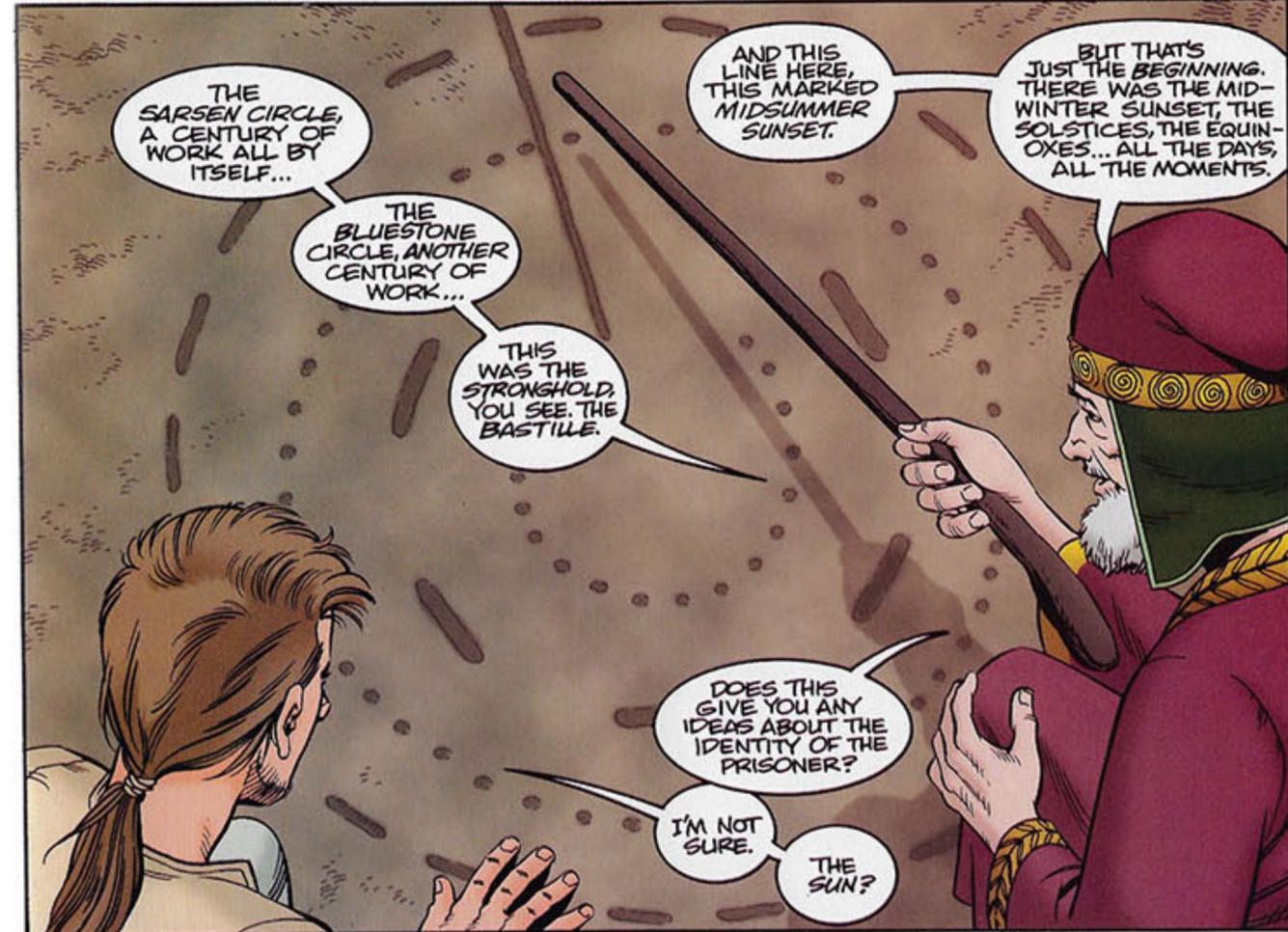
PACING HIS CELL, THE GOD SHOWED THEM EXACTLY WHEN TO PLANT, YEAR AFTER YEAR.

WHAT GOD WAS IT?



Oh, USE A LITTLE IMAGINATION, FOR GOD'S SAKE!

LOOK...



THE SARSEN CIRCLE, A CENTURY OF WORK ALL BY ITSELF...

THE BLUESTONE CIRCLE, ANOTHER CENTURY OF WORK...

THIS WAS THE STRONGHOLD. YOU SEE, THE BASTILLE.

AND THIS LINE HERE, THIS MARKED MIDSUMMER SUNSET.

BUT THAT'S JUST THE BEGINNING. THERE WAS THE MID-WINTER SUNSET, THE SOLSTICES, THE EQUINOXES... ALL THE DAYS, ALL THE MOMENTS.

DOES THIS GIVE YOU ANY IDEAS ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE PRISONER?

I'M NOT SURE.

THE SUN?



OF COURSE! AT STONEHENGE, THE SUN WAS LIKE A SLAVE WITH ONE FOOT NAILED TO THE FLOOR. IT WAS COMPELLED TO CIRCLE STONEHENGE EVERY YEAR, IN AND OUT, DECADE AFTER DECADE, CENTURY AFTER CENTURY.

BUT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHY THEY GOT RID OF IT.

THEY GOT RID OF IT BECAUSE THEY WERE SICK OF IT! EVERY PRISON CREATES TWO SETS OF CAPTIVES-- INMATES AND WARDERS, WHO ARE AS FIRMLY SHACKLED TO THE PRISON AS THE INMATES.



THE SUN WAS THEIR CAPTIVE, BUT THEY WERE ITS CAPTIVE AS WELL, AND THEY GOT TIRED OF IT.

WATER AHEAD!



JUST IN TIME.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

THEY'RE FINDING OUR TALKING FISH FOR US. THIS TIME OF THE YEAR, EVERYONE WANTS ONE.



SIGH... SHALL WE GIVE THEM A HAND?

WOULDN'T WANT TO INTERRUPT THEM JUST YET. RITUAL BUSINESS, YOU SEE.



HERE! OVER HERE!



JOLLY GOOD SHOW! WELL DONE!

WHAT THE DEVIL...?



LOVELY SPRING WEATHER, ISN'T IT?

PERFECT DAY FOR THIS SORT OF WORK. COULDN'T ASK FOR BETTER.



Oh, uh, ABSOLUTELY. STUNNING WEATHER... CONSIDERING THAT IT'S SPRING...

LONG NIGHTS JUST AROUND THE CORNER, THOUGH. WINTER IS A'COMIN' IN, WHAT?

LHUDE SING GODDAM!



I AM ALTA.

YOU WITNESSED MY BIRTH FROM THE WATER?

YES... I GUESS I DID.



YOU ARE WELCOME TO SPEND THE NIGHT WITH US.

AS IS YOUR BEARER.



"BEARER?"

SHE CALLED ME YOUR "BEARER?"

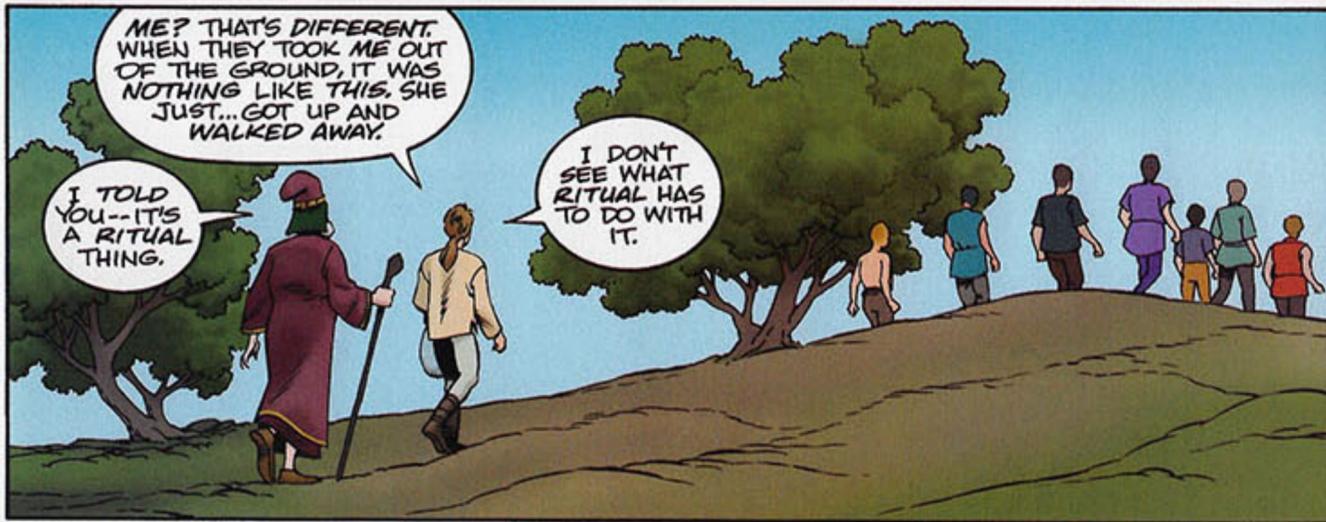
KEEP IT DOWN! WHAT'S THIS ABOUT, ANYWAY? IS SHE YOUR "TALKING FISH?"

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.



WHAT WAS SHE DOING THERE IN THE WATER?

WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THE GROUND, MY BOY, BEFORE YOU TOOK YOUR PLACE AMONG THE LIVING?



I TOLD YOU--IT'S A RITUAL THING.

ME? THAT'S DIFFERENT. WHEN THEY TOOK ME OUT OF THE GROUND, IT WAS NOTHING LIKE THIS, SHE JUST... GOT UP AND WALKED AWAY.

I DON'T SEE WHAT RITUAL HAS TO DO WITH IT.



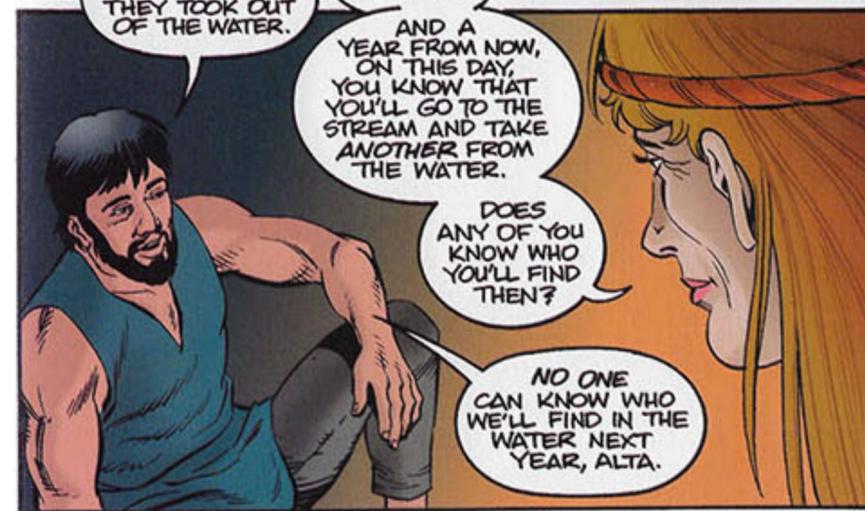
ASK HER TO EXPLAIN.

THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE HERE FOR.



A YEAR AGO ON THIS DAY, YOU WENT TO THE STREAM AND TOOK ANOTHER LIKE ME FROM THE WATER.

DO YOU REMEMBER?



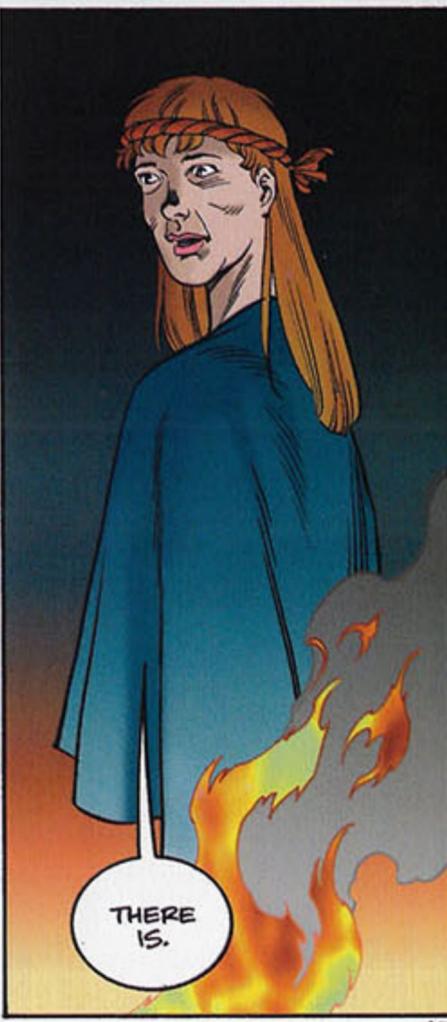
I REMEMBER. THAT WAS ME THEY TOOK OUT OF THE WATER.

INDEED, HASSOR.

AND A YEAR FROM NOW, ON THIS DAY, YOU KNOW THAT YOU'LL GO TO THE STREAM AND TAKE ANOTHER FROM THE WATER.

DOES ANY OF YOU KNOW WHO YOU'LL FIND THEN?

NO ONE CAN KNOW WHO WE'LL FIND IN THE WATER NEXT YEAR, ALTA.



THERE IS.



I SEE.

WELL, YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW, BUT I'M GOING TO TELL YOU. I'M GOING TO MAKE IT CLEAR FOR ALL OF YOU SO THAT EVEN THE YOUNG REMEMBER. EVERY YEAR ON THIS DAY, ANOTHER COMES FROM THE WATER.

IS THERE A REASON WHY, ALTA?

EACH OF YOU, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, WAS TAKEN FROM THE EARTH TO BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE. SOME OF YOU, LIKE HASSOR AND I, WERE TAKEN FROM THE STREAM. BUT MOST WERE TAKEN FROM THE EARTH.



DO YOU KNOW HOW YOU CAME TO BE IN THE EARTH, BEFORE YOU WERE TAKEN FROM IT?

COME ALONG. I WANT AN ANSWER.

Hmm...



Eh...

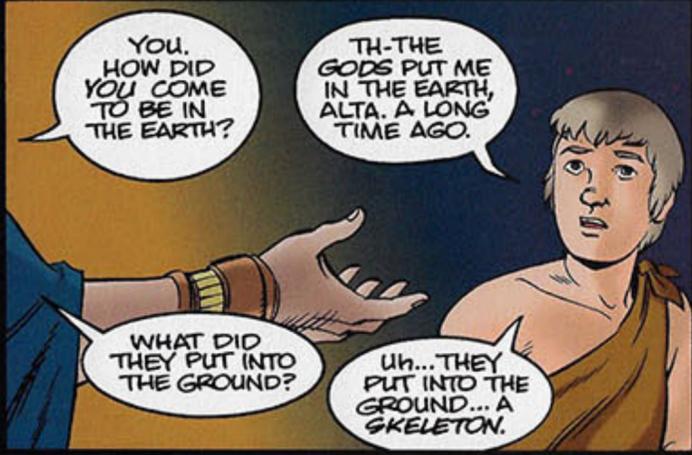


YOU. HOW DID YOU COME TO BE IN THE EARTH?

TH-THE GODS PUT ME IN THE EARTH, ALTA. A LONG TIME AGO.

WHAT DID THEY PUT INTO THE GROUND?

UH... THEY PUT INTO THE GROUND... A SKELETON.



AND THEN?

THEN THE EARTH... GATHERED FLESH AROUND THE SKELETON 'TIL THE BODY WAS COMPLETE...

'TIL IT WAS WHOLE, AND READY TO BE AWAKENED.



INDEED. FROM MOTHER TO MOTHER. FROM THE EARTH TO THE WOMB OF A WOMAN. THAT'S OUR JOURNEY.

BUT ON ONE DAY, EVERY SPRING, ONE OF US IS FOUND PINNED TO THE RIVERBED, FASTENED IN A CAGE OF STICKS. AND NEVER IS THIS ONE FOUND TO BE WEAK OR INJURED OR ILL, EVEN IN THE SLIGHTEST DEGREE.



AND YOU, ELDER... DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU CAME FROM THE EARTH?

YES. I WAS ILL AND FEEBLE...

...WITH LIMBS LIKE BRITTLE TWIGGS.



DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU WERE WHEN YOU CAME FROM THE WOMB OF THE EARTH?

YES... I HAD A TERRIBLE WOUND IN MY HEAD.

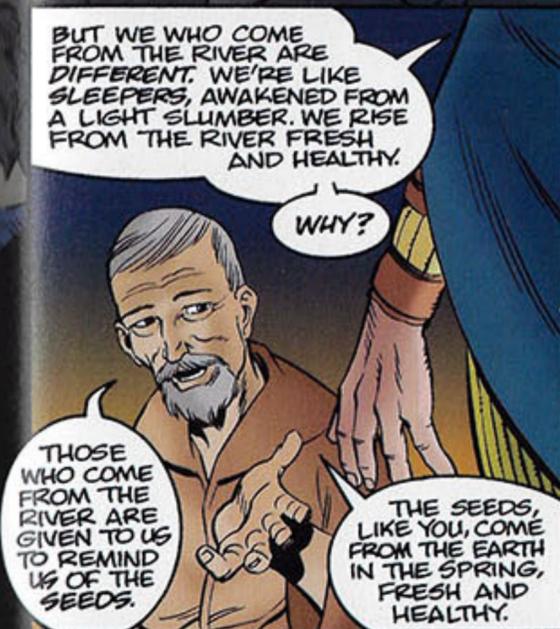


BUT WE WHO COME FROM THE RIVER ARE DIFFERENT. WE'RE LIKE SLEEPERS, AWAKENED FROM A LIGHT SLUMBER. WE RISE FROM THE RIVER FRESH AND HEALTHY.

WHY?

THOSE WHO COME FROM THE RIVER ARE GIVEN TO US TO REMIND US OF THE SEEDS.

THE SEEDS, LIKE YOU, COME FROM THE EARTH IN THE SPRING, FRESH AND HEALTHY.



AH, JUST SO. BUT WHAT I MUST TELL YOU IS...

...ONCE UPON A TIME, LONG AGO...

BEFORE WE LIVED IN THIS DIRECTION...



...WE LIVED IN THIS DIRECTION.





DO YOU MEAN, ALTA, THAT ONCE UPON A TIME, PEOPLE LIVED... BACKWARDS?



THAT'S WHAT I MEAN, ELDER. BUT IT WASN'T JUST PEOPLE. THE UNIVERSE ITSELF LIVED BACKWARDS. THE STARS MOVED ACROSS THE SKY IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.

HA HA HA HA HA



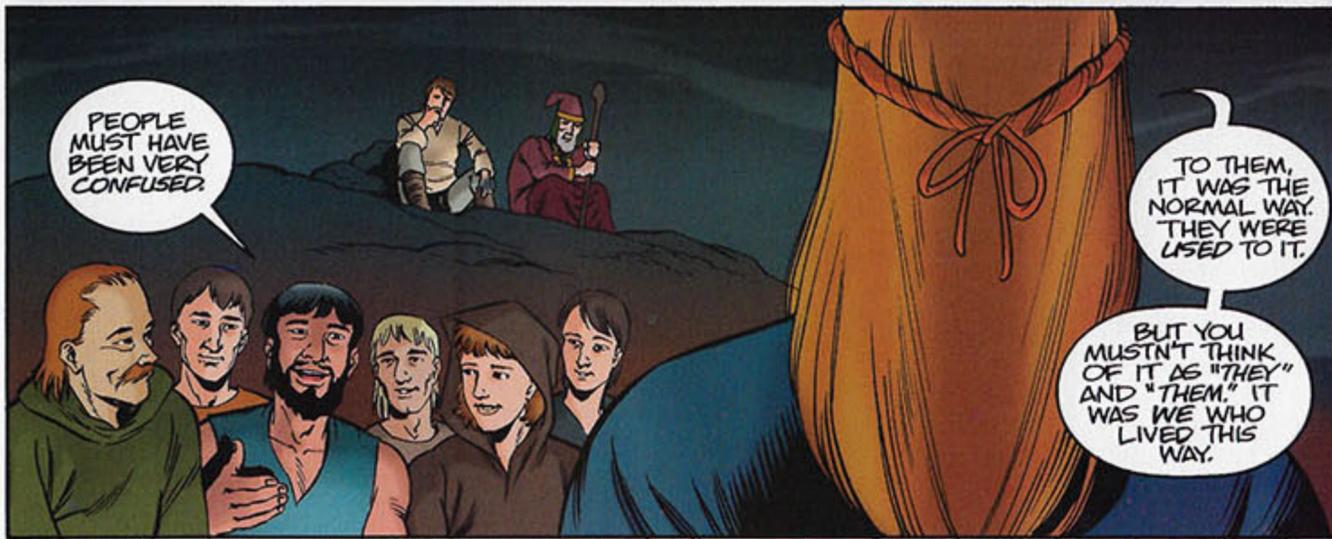
AND WHAT ABOUT THE SUN, ALTA? DID THE SUN RISE IN THE EAST AND SET IN THE WEST?



CERTAINLY, HASSOR.

AND IN THOSE DAYS, WINTER FOLLOWED AUTUMN, AND SUMMER FOLLOWED SPRING.

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA



PEOPLE MUST HAVE BEEN VERY CONFUSED.

TO THEM, IT WAS THE NORMAL WAY. THEY WERE USED TO IT.

BUT YOU MUSTN'T THINK OF IT AS "THEY" AND "THEM." IT WAS WE WHO LIVED THIS WAY.



YOU MEAN... WE ONCE JOURNEYED THROUGH TIME IN THAT DIRECTION, THEN, HAVING REACHED THE END, WE TURNED AROUND...

... AND BEGAN TO JOURNEY BACK THROUGH TIME IN THIS DIRECTION. IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, ALTA?



THAT'S IT EXACTLY.

NO, ALTA, YOU'VE HAD A NIGHTMARE IN YOUR SLEEP! A LIFE WITH SUCH AN ENDING WOULD BE... UNTHINKABLE!

INTOLERABLE!

BUT IF WE LIVED BACKWARDS, THAT WOULD MEAN... INSTEAD OF ENDING OUR JOURNEY IN THE BODY OF OUR MOTHER...

W-WE WOULD END IT...

...IN A HOLE IN THE GROUND!

EVERY LIFE LIVED IN THAT WAY WOULD BE DARKENED... BY A PERPETUAL SHADOW!

BE CALM...

...BE CALM. I SAY THIS ONLY TO ENLIGHTEN YOU.

IT'S NOW LONG PAST, AFTER ALL.

BUT HOW ARE WE MEANT TO BE ENLIGHTENED, ALTA?

AH! REMEMBER WHERE I BEGAN! I ASKED YOU, "HOW DID I COME TO BE IN THE RIVER IN MY CAGE OF STICKS?" NOW, PERHAPS, YOU'LL TELL ME!



COME ON, THINK!

IMAGINE THAT WE WERE LIVING IN THE OTHER DIRECTION! IN FOUR HOURS, THE SUN WOULD COME UP WHERE WE SAW IT SET. SOON AFTER DAWN, WE'D MAKE OUR WAY TO THE RIVER.

AND THEN YOU WOULD LEAD ME OUT INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE STREAM...

AND WITH THE STICKS YOU'D GATHERED ALONG THE WAY...



NO!

IT CAN'T BE!

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

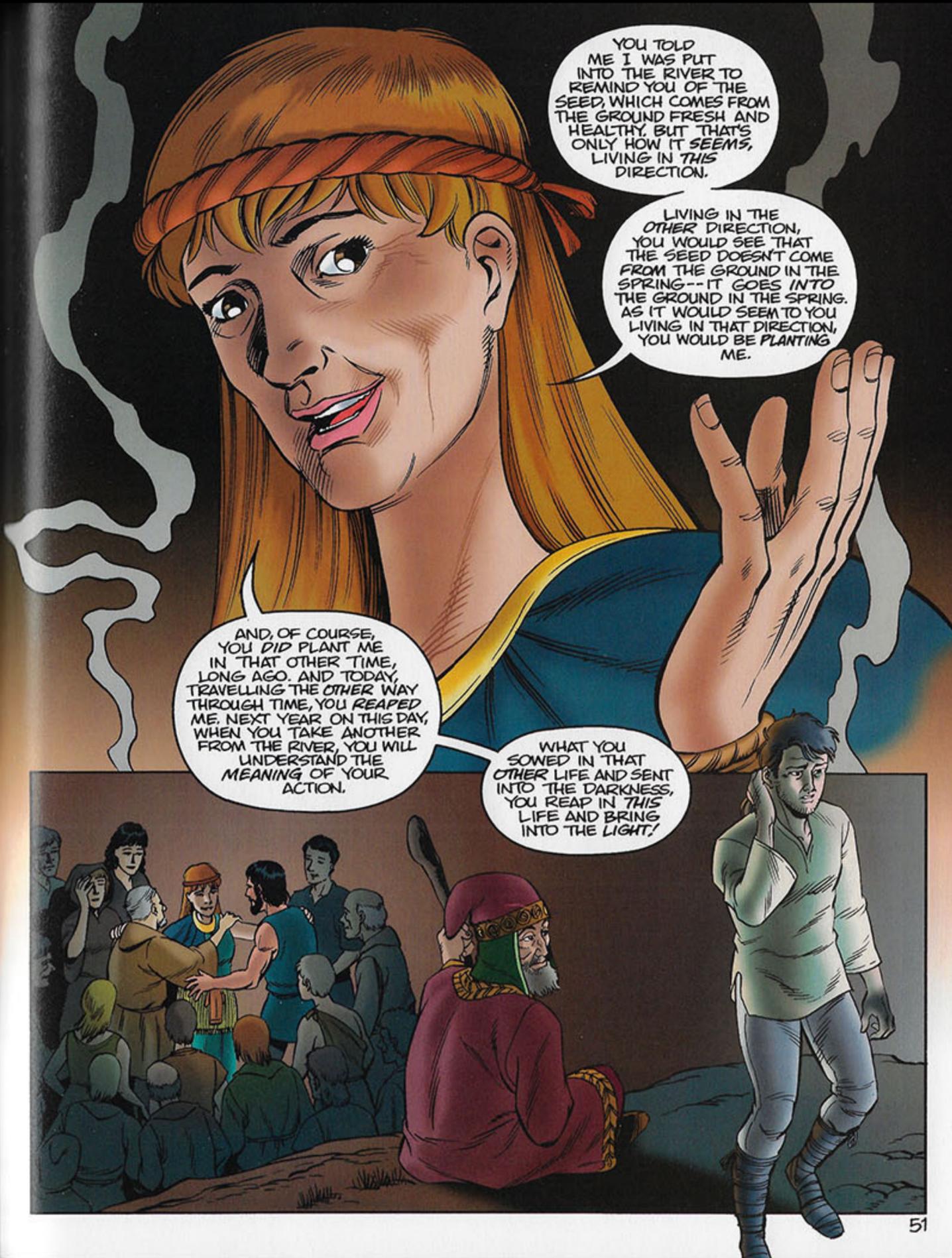
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT'S A SACRED THING YOU'D BE DOING. AND YOU DID DO IT ONCE, LONG AGO IN THAT ANCIENT TIME.

IF NOT, HOW DID YOU COME TO UNDO IT TODAY? IF IT WASN'T YOU WHO PINNED ME TO THE RIVER'S BED, THEN WHO WAS IT?



HOW COULD SUCH A THING BE SACRED?

IT WON'T BE EASY FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND, BUT LISTEN...



YOU TOLD ME I WAS PUT INTO THE RIVER TO REMIND YOU OF THE SEED, WHICH COMES FROM THE GROUND FRESH AND HEALTHY, BUT THAT'S ONLY HOW IT SEEMS, LIVING IN THIS DIRECTION.

LIVING IN THE OTHER DIRECTION, YOU WOULD SEE THAT THE SEED DOESN'T COME FROM THE GROUND IN THE SPRING--IT GOES INTO THE GROUND IN THE SPRING. AS IT WOULD SEEM TO YOU LIVING IN THAT DIRECTION, YOU WOULD BE PLANTING ME.

AND, OF COURSE, YOU DID PLANT ME IN THAT OTHER TIME, LONG AGO. AND TODAY, TRAVELLING THE OTHER WAY THROUGH TIME, YOU REAPED ME. NEXT YEAR ON THIS DAY, WHEN YOU TAKE ANOTHER FROM THE RIVER, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF YOUR ACTION.

WHAT YOU SOWED IN THAT OTHER LIFE AND SENT INTO THE DARKNESS, YOU REAP IN THIS LIFE AND BRING INTO THE LIGHT!



YOUR BEARER GOT VERY DRUNK AFTER YOU LEFT. HE TOLD ME ABOUT THE STONE FISH YOU CARRY.

MAY I SEE IT?



THIS IS A TOKEN OF YOUR MOTHER?

THAT'S RIGHT. MY, UH, BEARER BROUGHT ME TO YOU AS ONE WHO MIGHT... ADVISE ME.



ADVISE YOU HOW?

I'M LOST, ALTA.

A LOST MAN. LOST IN TIME. HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? I'VE WANDERED FOR THREE THOUSAND YEARS...

...HOPING TO FIND MY WAY.

YOUR WAY?



I THOUGHT I WAS SEARCHING FOR THE END OF MY LIFE, BUT ACCORDING TO YOUR STORY, I'M SEARCHING FOR ITS BEGINNING.

THE UNIVERSE IS LONG AND LARGE, ADAM. SO LONG AND LARGE THAT EVERYTHING MUST HAPPEN AT LEAST ONCE. EVERY SINGLE THING, NO MATTER HOW IMPROBABLE.

SOMEWHERE, ONCE, THERE HAS TO BE ONE WHO SEES WITH HIS OWN EYES THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF HIS OWN KIND. ONLY ONE! MORE THAN ONE WOULD BE UNNECESSARY.

MORE THAN ONE WOULD BE TOO MANY.

I WAS SOWN AND REAPED, ADAM. I DIDN'T CHOOSE THAT. THE UNIVERSE PLAYS US AND MAKES BEAUTIFUL MUSIC. NONE OF US CAN SAY, "I REFUSE TO SING."

I CAN SAY IT. I REFUSE TO SING!

NO! I DON'T WANT TO BE THAT ONE! I WON'T BE THAT ONE!

AND WHAT LOVELY MUSIC YOU MAKE!

AN EXPLORER? THAT'S JUST SOMEONE LOST WHO IN THE END JUST HAPPENS TO FIND SOMETHING.

THAT'S IT EXACTLY. WHEN YOU FIND SOMETHING YOU RECOGNIZE AS A THING TO BE FOUND, YOUR JOURNEY WILL END.

YOU'RE NOT A MAN LOST. YOU'RE AN EXPLORER, WHICH IS SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT.

I SUPPOSE THAT'S SOMETHING I CAN COUNT ON.



HAS ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU A BEDTIME STORY?

NO. NEVER.

SHALL I TELL YOU ONE?

YES, ALTA. THAT WOULD BE NICE.