



VLADIMIR

PRINCE OF RUSSIA



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LISTEN!
- YOU CHIEF
OF SINNERS!

YOU WHO HAVE NO
HOPE OF SALVATION-

- FOR THE WEIGHT OF YOUR
SINS HAS TIPPED THE BALANCE-

MY LORD
SVYATOSLAV...?

- IN FAVOR
OF HELL!

NOOOO!
I AM YOUR
MOTHER'S HAND
MAIDEN!

LISTEN! YOU WHO
ARE DEJECTED!

'GOD HATH CHOSEN
THE BASE THINGS OF
THE WORLD, AND THINGS
WHICH ARE DESPISED-

- YEA, AND THINGS WHICH
ARE NOT, TO BRING TO
NAUGHT THINGS THAT ARE.'





LISTEN! YOU WHO WOULD DESPAIR!

FROM DESPAIR - COMES HOPE!
FROM THE DARKNESS - LIGHT!
FROM DESOLATION- REDEMPTION!



HEAR MY STORY OF ONE WHO WAS REVILED BY MEN- YET CHOSEN BY GOD- TO BRING REDEMPTION TO A NATION.

AAIIIEEE!

THE CHILD COMES.

LISTEN TO THE STORY OF:

VLADIMIR

PRINCE OF RUSSIA



MAKE WAY!

PERUN!

PERUN!

PERUN!

PERUN!
GREAT GOD OF THUNDER!
BEHOLD MY SON,
VLADIMIR!



MAKE WAY FOR THE LADY OLGA!

SVYATOSLAV! STOP!

YOU MAY CHOOSE TO FOLLOW AFTER YOUR IDOLS OF WOOD! AND TEACH YOUR SONS TO DO THE SAME!



BUT THIS CHILD WILL NOT BOW TO YOUR PAGAN GODS!

I CLAIM HIM AS THE CHILD OF MY HAND MAIDEN!

MOTHER-I...

YOU HAVE SHAMED MY HOUSE ENOUGH!



MY GRANDSON SHALL LEARN TO WORSHIP THE CHRISTIAN GOD!

MY LORD JESUS CHRIST!



MY SONS WILL NOT FOLLOW YOUR WEAK GOD-

BAAH!



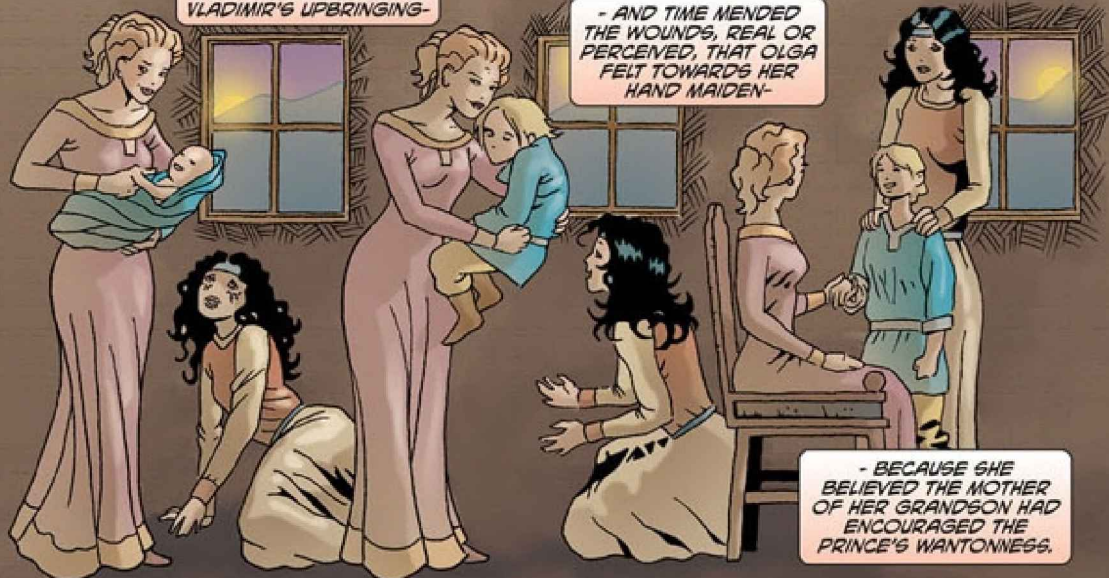
- WHO LET HIMSELF BE KILLED!

GGGWWIIICCCFF

LURED BY THE TITILLATING WEALTH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, THE CITY THE VIKINGS CALLED MIKLAGARD, SVYATOSLAV RETURNED TO HIS BASE AT PEREYASLAVETS ON THE DANUBE RIVER WITH HIS NORSE AND SLAVIC WARRIORS- AND TO HIS WARS-



WHILE SVYATOSLAV'S MOTHER, OLGA, SAW TO VLADIMIR'S UPBRINGING-



- AND TIME MENDED THE WOUNDS, REAL OR PERCEIVED, THAT OLGA FELT TOWARDS HER HAND MAIDEN-

- BECAUSE SHE BELIEVED THE MOTHER OF HER GRANDSON HAD ENCOURAGED THE PRINCE'S WANTONNESS.

TIME ALSO BROUGHT THE PECHENEG CHIEFTAIN KURYA TO KIEV IN 968, WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF SVYATOSLAV'S ABSENCE.



THE PECHENEGS WILL HAVE ENOUGH TROOPS IN THE MORNING TO STORM THE WALLS.

GENERAL PRETICH IS ACROSS THE DNIEPER RIVER WITH OUR ONLY FORCE, BUT HE IS UNAWARE OF OUR PLIGHT.

NOR CAN WE GET THROUGH THE PECHENEG LINES TO ALERT HIM.

AND WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH MEN HERE IN THE CITY TO REPULSE THEIR ATTACK.

EVEN IF WE COULD, THEY WOULD JUST WAIT AND STARVE US OUT.

THEN CAPTAIN DOBRYNYA, WE MUST SURRENDER THE CITY IN THE MORNING.

AND BECOME SLAVES TO BE SOLD TO THE GREEKS? OR WORSE, TO THE BULGARS!?

WAIT!

I KNOW THEIR LANGUAGE AND I CAN SWIM. GIVE ME AN OLD BRIDLE AND I WILL TRY AND GET TO GENERAL PRETICH.

TO SOME, THE EVENTS OF THIS NIGHT-



<WHERE'S MY HORSE? HAVE YOU'VE SEEN MY HORSE?>

<ARE WE YOUR HORSE HERDER'S BOY? AWAY WITH YOU!>

<LOOK DOWN BY THE RIVER.>

- WOULD BE REMEMBERED AS THE NIGHT-



<THE BOY HAS DECEIVED US!>

<DON'T LET HIM GET ACROSS THE RIVER!>

ZING

ZING


- THE PEOPLE OF KIEV GOT LUCKY-



<THE RUS' COME! IT MUST BE PRINCE SVYATOSLAV!>


<FLEE FOR YOUR LIVES!>²

- BUT TO NINE YEAR OLD VLADIMIR-



I AM GENERAL PRETICH, IN COMMAND OF PRINCE SVYATOSLAV'S VANGUARD. HE COMES BEHIND ME WITH HIS FULL ARMY.

- IT WOULD BE THE NIGHT HE REALIZED-




DON'T LET ON THAT THE PRINCE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW YET OF OUR SITUATION.


- THAT ONE PERSON-




THEN WHY DON'T YOU AND I BECOME FRIENDS?



- COULD CHANGE THE FATE OF A NATION.



TOMORROW IS MY TENTH BIRTHDAY GRANDMAMMA- DO YOU THINK PAPA WILL COME?



GENERAL PRETICH HAS SENT WORD TO YOUR FATHER OF THE PECHENEGS ATTEMPT ON THE CITY, HE SHOULD BE ARRIVING SOON.

THE PRINCE SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE PROTECTING HIS CITY, INSTEAD OF HARASSING THE GREEKS AND PLUNDERING THEIR LANDS!

LET US PRAY FOR YOUR FATHER'S SAFE RETURN, VLADIMIR.

WILL YOU JOIN US CHAPLAIN GREGORY?

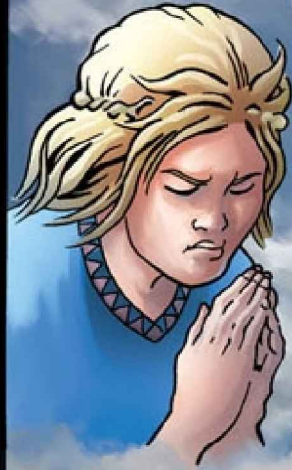
I HAVE KNOWN SUCH JOY FROM KNOWING YOU MY LORD JESUS-

- GRANT THAT MY SON MAY COME TO KNOW THIS JOY-3



- FORGIVE HIM, HIS IDOLATRY AND LEAD HIM INTO PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THY NAME'S SAKE.

BEWARE THE LESHY, THOSE TROUBLESOME WOOD IMPS WILL TRY AND MAKE YOU LOSE YOUR WAY-



- AND THE
RUSSALKA, WHO
WOULD LURE YOU
INTO HER WATERY
GRAVE-


- OR THE
DIDKO, WHICH
HIDE IN THE
HOLLOW OF
TREES.

YOUR FATHER
LEFT ME IN CHARGE
OF YOUR TRAINING-
AND TO LEARN OF THE
GODS THAT CAN CAUSE A
MAN TO BE VICTORIOUS IN
BATTLE- OR LOSE ALL
THAT HE HAS-
- YOU KNOW OF
VARILO, GOD OF
WAR AND FERTILITY
AND PERUN GOD OF
THUNDER WHOM
YOUR FATHER
HONORS-

IT IS WELL
YOU HAVE YOUR
GREAT GRANDFATHER
RURIK'S TRIDENT AS
PROTECTION.




- BUT DO NOT
NEGLECT DAZHBOG,
GOD OF THE SUN AND
STRIBOG, GOD OF THE
WINDS- NOR VOLOS,
GOD OF POETRY, ORACLES
AND TRADE-



AND ALWAYS
HONOR SVAROG,
THE GOD OF
GODS, HEAVEN
WALKER.

THESE CAN
NOT BE FOUND
KNEELING INSIDE
A CHURCH.

GRANDMAMMA
SAYS THAT THERE IS
BUT ONE GOD, UNCLE
DOBRYNYA, AND ALL
OTHERS ARE JUST
IDOLS FILLED WITH
DEMONS.



YOUR
GRANDMOTHER
OLGA IS WISE
BEYOND THAT OF
A WOMAN.


KIEV WOULD
NOT HAVE PROSPERED
AS WELL AS IT HAS WITHOUT
HER CAREFUL GUIDANCE
THROUGH THE YEARS YOUR
FATHER HAS BEEN
AWAY.



BUT
WHEN IT
COMES
TO THE
GODS?

I FEAR
SHE HAS BEEN
MISLEAD BY THAT
CHAPLAIN SHE CALLS
HER PASTOR.

HOW CAN
ONE GOD BE HERE
IN RUS' AND IN THE GREEK
LANDS OF THE SOUTH AND THE
EASTERN WASTE OF THE VOLGA
BULGARS AND IN THE FAR
WESTERN LANDS OF THE
SAXONS- ALL AT THE
SAME TIME?



PAPA!
PAPA HAS
RETURNED!



PAPA!
PAPA!

SEE HOW YOU'VE GROWN OLEG, MY SON!

LOOK WHO IT IS- MY HALF BREED OF A BROTHER- - THE SLAVE GIRL'S BOY!

MY MAMA IS NOT A SLAVE! TAKE IT BACK OR YOU'RE DEAD, YAROPOLK!



I SEE CAPTAIN DOBRYNYA, THAT YOU HAVE NOT LET ALL OF MY MOTHER'S BELIEFS CORRUPT VLADIMIR.

AT LEAST NOT THE ONE ABOUT 'TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK!'

HAR HAR!

HA HA!



COME YAROPOLK, MY FIRST BORN, I HAVE BROUGHT YOU SOME FORBIDDEN FRUIT FROM THE LAND OF THE GREEKS.

PAPA...?

A RIPE PEACH I PLUCKED FROM A CHRISTIAN CONVENT, WHERE SHE WOULD HAVE ROTTED AWAY AS A NUN.

COME MY BEAUTY AND MEET YOUR NEW PRIEST- WHO WILL TEACH YOU HOW THE RUS' PRAY!

AT LEAST ON THIS YOU CAN BE SURE YARO-POLK- SHE IS A VIRGIN!

HA HA HA!

HA HA HA!



MY GOD IS THERE NO END TO THEIR BARBARIC CRUELITIES?



MY CHEST! GRAND-MAMMA!



PLEASE GOD, DON'T LET GRAND-MAMMA DIE.

SHE ALWAYS SAID I SHOULD PRAY, 'THY WILL BE DONE,' BUT IF YOU MAKE HER BETTER, I PROMISE, I WILL HONOR YOU ONLY-

- AND I WILL TEAR DOWN ALL OF PAPA'S IDOLS!

BUT GOD'S WILL IS NOT THE ONLY WILL THAT WOULD BE OBEYED IN THIS WORLD.

THERE ARE OTHER- DARKER- MALEVOLENT WILLS THAT SEEK TO STEAL, KILL AND DESTROY ALL THAT IS GOOD AND HOLY.



PAPA WAS RIGHT- YOU ARE WEAK.

GRANDMAWMA LOVED YOU MORE THAN ANYTHING, JESUS!

BUT WHEN SHE NEEDED YOU MOST-

CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD-

- YOU WERE NOT THERE!

SHE BELIEVED WITH ALL HER HEART THAT YOU WERE HER SAVIOR! BUT YOU COULDN'T SAVE HER COULD YOU?!

SHE BELIEVED A LIE!

I WILL NOT BELIEVE THE SAME.

- TRAMPLING DOWN DEATH BY DEATH-

- AND UPON THOSE IN THE TOMBS BESTOWING LIFE!

WITH THE PASSING
OF OLGA'S LIGHT-

- THE DARKNESS
STRUCK BACK-

- AND CONTENDED FOR THE
SOUL OF THE BOY PRINCE.

YOU HAVE
ALWAYS GIVEN MY
PAPA VICTORY OVER
HIS ENEMIES, GREAT
PERUN!

IF YOU
GRANT ME A
PRINCEDOM-

- I WILL SERVE
YOU AND RESTORE
THE GLORY YOU HAD
AMONG MY FORE-
FATHERS!

FIERCE WAS THE FIGHT
WAGED IN THE HEAVENLIES-

- AND I WILL
PUT AN END TO
THIS NEW RELIGION
THAT IS FIT ONLY FOR
COWARDS AND GLAVES,
AND... AND OLD
WOMEN!

I WILL
SHOW EVERY-
ONE WHICH
GOD IS
MIGHTIER!

- AND THOUGH THE CHOICE OF
THE BOY PRINCE GAVE VICTORY
TO THE DARKNESS THIS FIGHT-

THUD
THUD
THUD

- THE WAR WAS NOT OVER

PRINCE SVYATOSLAV! A DELEGATION FROM NOVGOROD STANDS WITHOUT!

NOW WHAT DO THOSE TROUBLE-SOME NORTHERNERS WANT?



- AND YOUR SON, OLEG, TO BE PRINCE OF ISKOROSTEN AND THE LANDS OF THE DREVLJANGS.

THEY HEARD THAT YOU HAVE APPOINTED YOUR SON, YAROPOLK, TO BE PRINCE OF KIEV-

YES, SO...?

SO WE WANT A PRINCE OF OUR OWN.





MY SON, YAROPOLK, WILL...

WE WILL NOT BE RULED BY A BOY SO FAR FROM NOVGOROD. WE WILL HAVE OUR OWN PRINCE-



- OR WE WILL LOOK ELSEWHERE.



THEN VLADIMIR SHALL BE YOUR PRINCE.



YEEAAHHH!



THERE LIES YOUR PRINCEDOM, MY SISTER'S SON - NOVGOROD!

LOOK ON THE HILL, UNCLE DOBRYNYA! LOOK MOTHER! DO YOU SEE HIM?

PERUN RISES TO GREET US!



SEE OUR NEW YOUNG PRINCE, HOW HE HONORS THE GODS AND GIVES THANKS FOR HIS SAFE ARRIVAL.

HE HAS THE BLOOD OF RURIK IN HIM.

OUR BOYARS HAVE
CHOSEN WISELY.

BUT I'M NOT SURE ABOUT
THIS DOBRYNYA FELLOW.

HE WILL GOVERN UNTIL
THE PRINCE IS OLDER.

IT IS GOOD THE YOUNG PRINCE
HAS TAKEN GENERAL SIGURD INTO
HIS SERVICE- HE KNOWS OUR WAYS.



AT THE AGE OF THIRTEEN, THE YOUNG PRINCE WAS
ACQUIRING A REPUTATION FOR THROWING LAVISH
BANQUETS AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. A REPUTATION
THAT WOULD FOLLOW HIM THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE.

PRINCE
VLADIMIR!

A MESSAGE
FROM KIEV!



SAY
ON.

YOUR
FATHER IS
DEAD.



PAPA?
HOW!?

FOR MANY MONTHS YOUR FATHER
WARRED AGAINST THE BULGARIANS
BEFORE DEFEATING THEM -

- HE NEXT TURNED HIS ATTENTION
ON THE BYZANTINES, WHERE AFTER
A LONG AND BLOODY CAMPAIGN, HE
FOUND HIMSELF SURROUNDED IN
THE CITY OF DOROSTOL.

IN A LAST DESPERATE ATTEMPT,
THE PRINCE RALLIED FORTH
AGAINST THE GREEKS, BUT A
WIND CAME UP THAT BLEW SAND
IN THE FACES OF YOUR FATHER'S
MEN, BLINDING THEM AND
CAUSING THEIR DEFEAT.

SOME OF THE GREEKS SAID
IT WAS ST. THEODORE UPON
A WHITE HORSE THAT CAUSED
THE SAND STORM; OTHERS
SAID IT WAS AN ANGEL
SENT BY THEIR GOD.



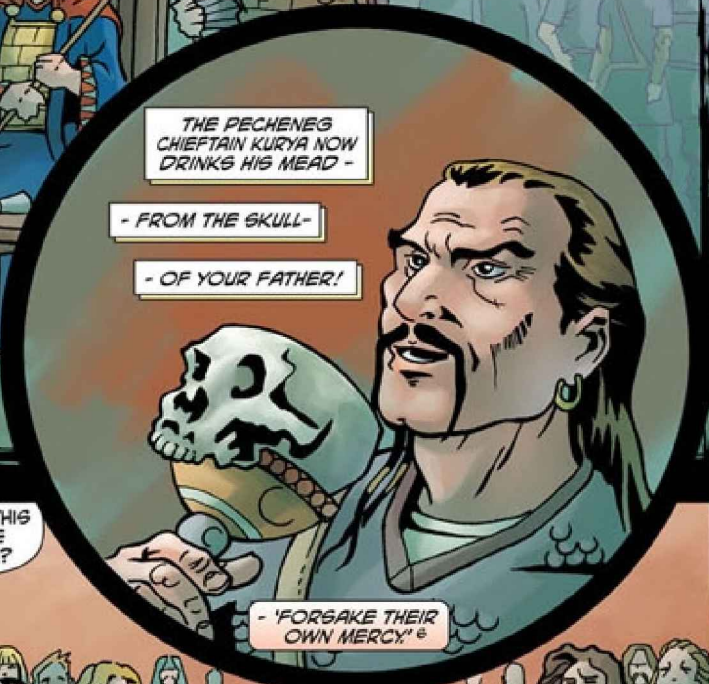
COULD
IT BE?



PRINCE SVYATOSLAV MADE TERMS
WITH THE EMPEROR TZIMISCHES
AND TURNED TOWARDS HOME.

BUT THE MEN WERE EXHAUSTED AND
HUNGRY AFTER SO LONG A CAMPAIGN.
THE PECHENEGS AMBUSHED YOUR FATHER
AT THE CATARACTS OF THE DNIIEPR.

THOSE WHO REGARD
WORTHLESS IDOLS -




THE PECHENEG
CHIEFTAIN KURYA NOW
DRINKS HIS MEAD -

- FROM THE SKULL-

- OF YOUR FATHER!

- 'FORSAKE THEIR
OWN MERCY.' e



HOW COULD THIS
BE? WHERE
WAS PERUN?

THE PRINCE
MUST BE
AVENGED!

SVYATOSLAV-
DEFEATED!?

IS THE
CHRISTIAN
GOD- SO MUCH
STRONGER
THAN PERUN?

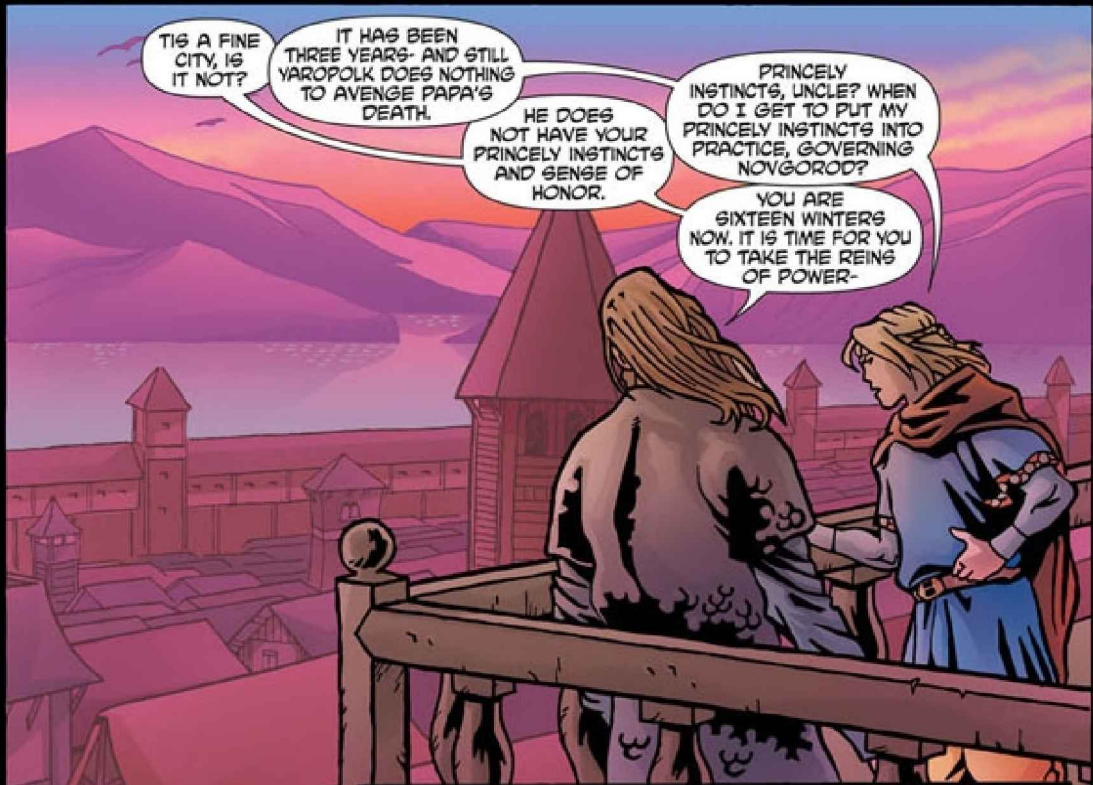
TIS A FINE CITY, IS IT NOT?

IT HAS BEEN THREE YEARS- AND STILL YAROPOLK DOES NOTHING TO AVENGE PAPA'S DEATH.

HE DOES NOT HAVE YOUR PRINCELY INSTINCTS AND SENSE OF HONOR.

PRINCELY INSTINCTS, UNCLE? WHEN DO I GET TO PUT MY PRINCELY INSTINCTS INTO PRACTICE, GOVERNING NOVGOROD?

YOU ARE SIXTEEN WINTERS NOW. IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO TAKE THE REINS OF POWER-



- BEGINNING WITH A WIFE!

MEET YOUR BRIDE, OLAVA EIRIKSDÓTTIR OF SWEDEN, AND A BOYARINA OF NOVGOROD!





YAAIEEEEE!

YIP!
YIP!

TAP
TAP
TAP

♪♪♪

COME, WIFE!

OUCH! YOU'RE HURTING ME!

MY DESIRE WILL WAIT NO LONGER!

HAR HAR

HA HA
HA HA

SO BEGINS HIS CONQUESTS!
JUST LIKE HIS FATHER!



NINE MONTHS LATER...

NA ZHYTTYA!

TO LIFE!

TO THE PROUD PAPA AND THE NEXT PRINCE OF NOVGOROD!

THAT'S YOU, VVSHESLAV, MY SON. THE NEXT PRINCE OF NOVGOROD.





YOU KILLED THOROLF LOUSE-BEARD, YOU MURDERER!

STOP HIM! MURDERER!

CRACK

UGHH!



UNCLE SIGURD! HELP ME!

THE BOY IS A MURDERER! HE KILLED KLERKON!

WE DEMAND JUSTICE! BLOOD FOR BLOOD!

HOLD! DO YOU KNOW THIS LAD, GENERAL SIGURD?

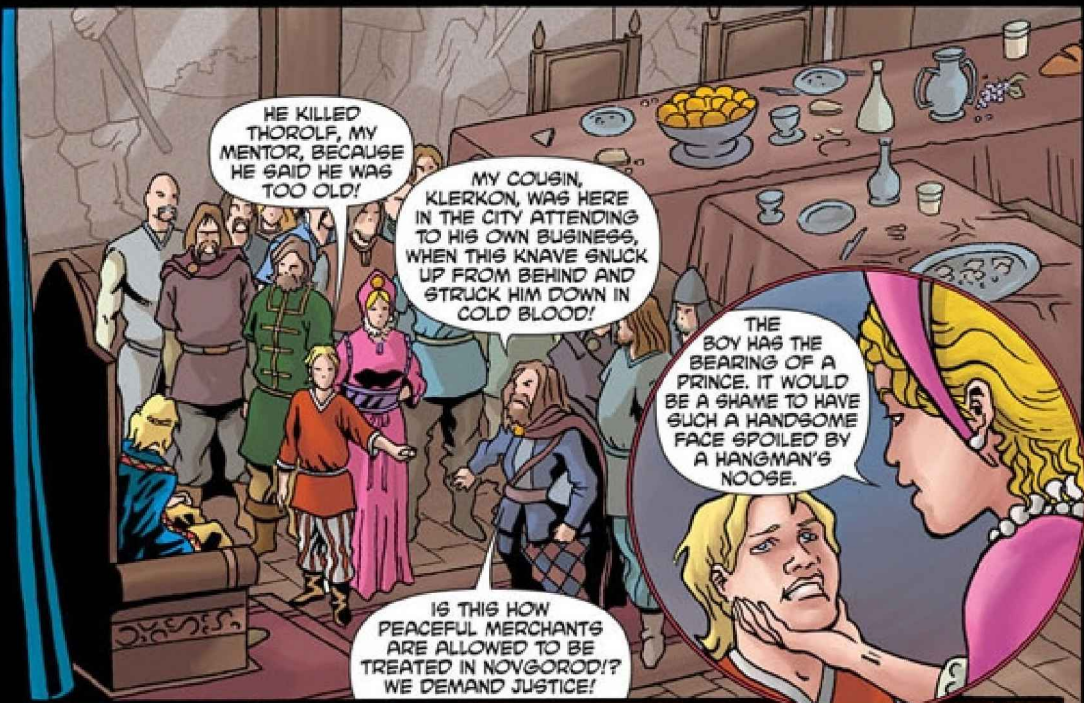


YES, HE IS OLAF, MY SISTER'S SON AND RIGHTFUL HEIR TO THE THRONE OF NORWAY

WHO IS KLERKON?

AN ESTONIAN PIRATE THAT TOOK MY SISTER AND HER BOY AS SLAVES WHEN THEY WERE FLEEING HER HUSBAND'S MURDERERS.

I PURCHASED THE BOY BACK FROM HIM.



HE KILLED THOROLF, MY MENTOR, BECAUSE HE SAID HE WAS TOO OLD!

MY COUSIN, KLERKON, WAS HERE IN THE CITY ATTENDING TO HIS OWN BUSINESS, WHEN THIS KNAVE SNUCK UP FROM BEHIND AND STRUCK HIM DOWN IN COLD BLOOD!



THE BOY HAS THE BEARING OF A PRINCE. IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO HAVE SUCH A HANDSOME FACE SPOILED BY A HANGMAN'S NOOSE.

IS THIS HOW PEACEFUL MERCHANTS ARE ALLOWED TO BE TREATED IN NOVGOROD!? WE DEMAND JUSTICE!



THEN THE BOY MUST PAY A WERGELD TO KLERKON'S KINGMEN.

I HAVE NO MONEY...

I WILL PAY HIS FINE!



I AM YOUR VASSAL MY PRINCE AND LADY.

NO! I WILL NOT HAVE YOU AS MY VASSAL-

- YOU ARE A PRINCE YOURSELF-



- SO I WILL HAVE YOU AS MY FRIEND.



WHY DO YOU NOT PARTICIPATE IN HONORING THE GODS, OLAF?



WHEN I WAS IN CAPTIVITY AS AN INFANT, I WAS AFRAID OF THE DARK-

- SO THE SISTER OF KLERKON WOULD LIGHT A CANDLE AT NIGHT AND TELL ME OF THE CHRISTIAN GOD WHO IS LIGHT-

- AND THAT IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL?

DO YOU SEE HOW VLADIMIR'S FACE GROWS DARK WHEN HE PERFORMS THESE RITES?



HE IS NOT HIMSELF.



WHY DO YOU BOW TO GODS THAT CANNOT SPEAK, HEAR OR SEE?

KEEP YOUR SHIELD ARM UP, OLAF!

THWACK



YOU ARE BETTER THAN THEM VLADIMIR!

YOU WOULD DO WELL TO HEED THE GODS AND NOT OFFEND THEM.

HOW CAN I OFFEND A WOODEN POLE?

THAT IS BLASPHEMY!



THE CHRISTIANS BELIEVE MEN ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

YOUR GODS ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF MEN.



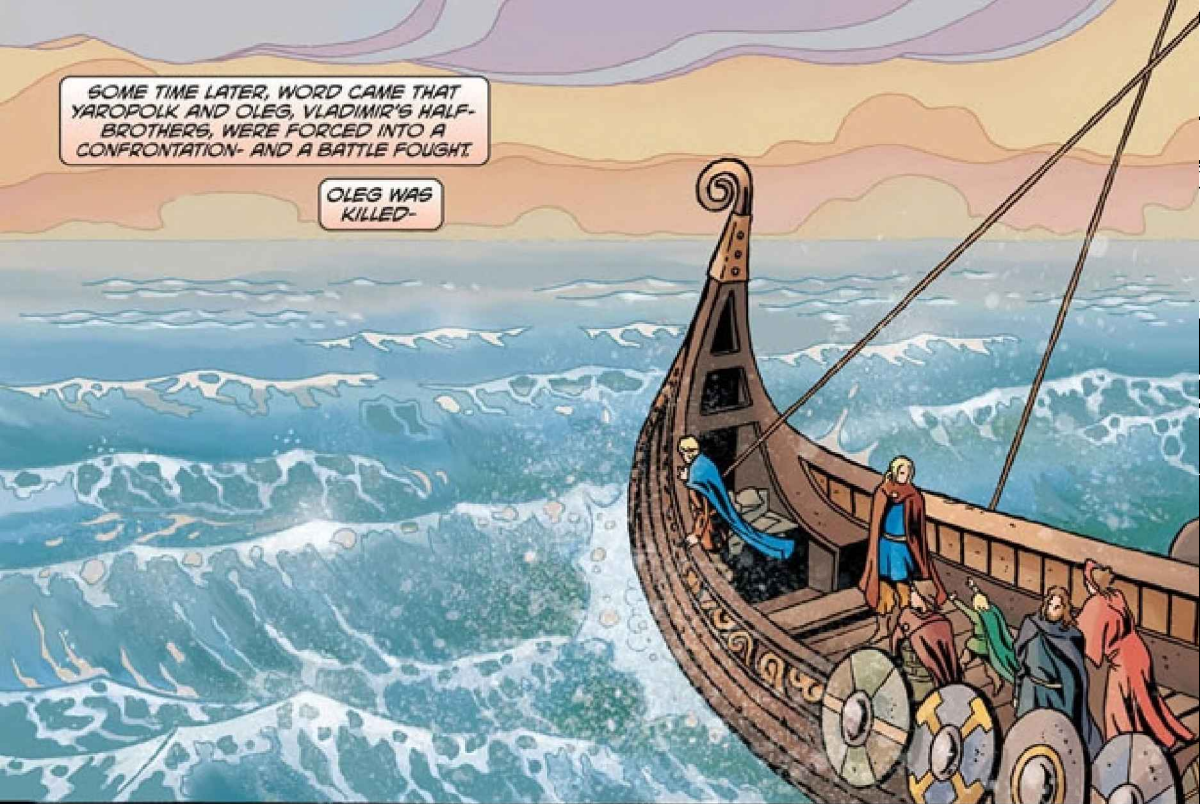
WHICH GOD DO THE PEOPLE SEE IN YOUR FACE, VLADIMIR?

UMMPHH!

AS THEIR PRINCE DOES, SO DO THE PEOPLE. THEY TRUST YOU TO KNOW WHICH GOD THEY SHOULD FOLLOW.

SOME TIME LATER, WORD CAME THAT YAROPOLK AND OLEG, VLADIMIR'S HALF-BROTHERS, WERE FORCED INTO A CONFRONTATION- AND A BATTLE FOUGHT.

OLEG WAS
KILLED-



- AND YAROPOLK TOOK ISKOROSTEN AND HIS BROTHER'S LANDS, DECLARING HIMSELF THE GREAT PRINCE OF KIEV.



VLADIMIR KNEW IT WOULD BE ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE YAROPOLK WOULD COME TO CLAIM HIS CITY.

SO HE TOOK LEAVE OF THE GOOD PEOPLE OF NOVGOROD-



- AND SAILED TO THE LANDS OF HIS ANCESTORS IN SCANDINAVIA-

- UNTIL HE COULD GATHER ENOUGH STRENGTH TO CONFRONT HIS BROTHER.



FOR TWO YEARS VLADIMIR AND OLAF WANDERED AS VIKINGS, RAIDING ALONG THE COASTS OF EUROPE-

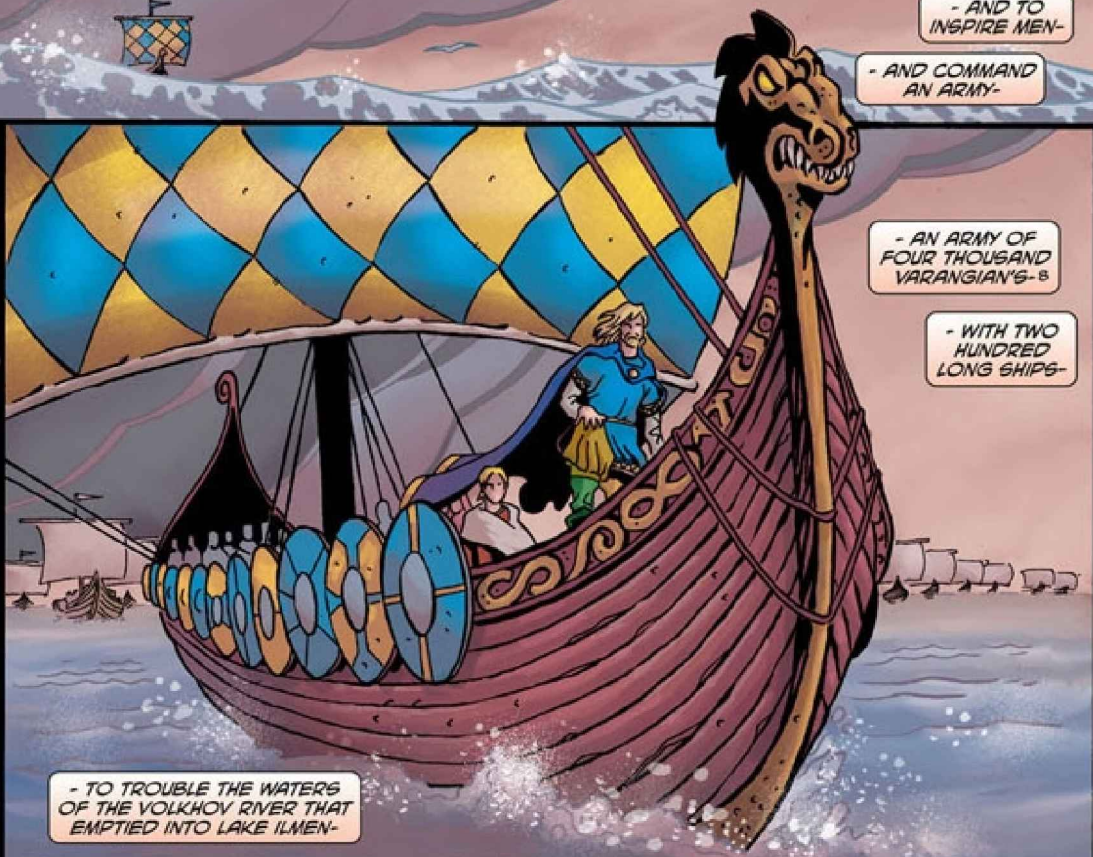
- WHERE VLADIMIR LEARNED TO FIGHT-

- AND TO INSPIRE MEN-

- AND COMMAND AN ARMY-

- AN ARMY OF FOUR THOUSAND VARANGIAN'S-

- WITH TWO HUNDRED LONG SHIPS-



- TO TROUBLE THE WATERS OF THE VOLKHOV RIVER THAT EMPTIED INTO LAKE ILMEN-

- AND BRING BACK TO NOVGOROD-

- HER TRUE PRINCE-

- ALONG WITH A GROWING DARKNESS-

YOU ARE VAROPOLK'S APPOINTED REGENT?

I-I AM.

GO AND TELL MY BROTHER, THAT I AM SETTING FORTH AGAINST HIM.



- A DARKNESS THAT OLAF SAW SHADOWING HIS FRIEND TWO YEARS BEFORE-

ON OUR WAY TO KIEV, WE WILL STOP AT POLOTSK. PRINCE ROGVOLOD'S DAUGHTER IS THERE AND BETROTHED TO YAROPOLK.

THE PRINCESS ROGNEDA? SHE IS SAID TO BE VERY BEAUTIFUL.

GO UNCLE AND TELL HER, I COME TO TAKE HER AS MY WIFE.

SHE NOR HER FATHER WILL AGREE.



POLOTSK, 977

- AND WHICH NOW SEEPED IN AND STAINED ALL THE CORRIDORS OF VLADIMIR'S MIND-

- HEART-

- AND SOUL-



THERE SHE IS! THE PRINCESS ROGNEDA! THE ONE WHO SAID SHE WOULD NEVER STOOP TO YOU- AND CALLED YOUR MOTHER A SLAVE!







THE PRINCESS ROGNEDA HAS GIVEN YOU A SON.

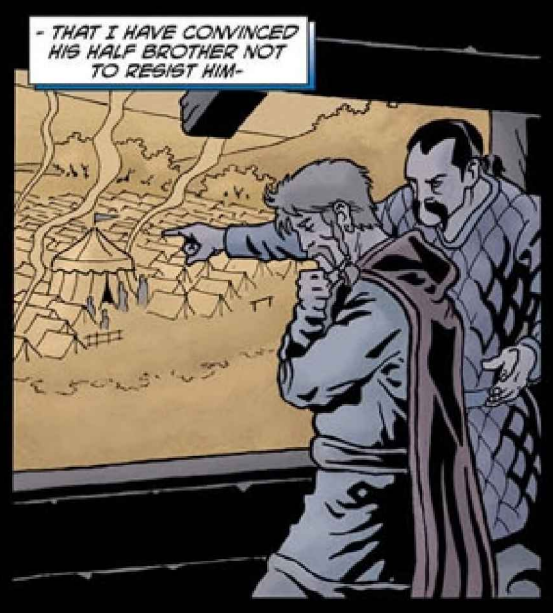
HE SHALL BE CALLED IZVASLAV, FOR I HAVE TAKEN HIS MOTHER'S GLORY.

WAAAAA!



GENERAL BLUD?

I AM HE, GENERAL DOBRYNYA, PRINCE YAROPOLK'S MOST TRUSTED CHIEF ADVISOR. TELL PRINCE VLADIMIR-



- THAT I HAVE CONVINCED HIS HALF BROTHER NOT TO RESIST HIM-



- BUT TO FLEE THE CITY-

- BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF KIEV ARE WITH VLADIMIR.

KIEV. JULY 11, 978

HAIL THE GREAT PRINCE OF KIEV AND ALL RUSSIA!

HAIL PRINCE VLADIMIR!

THIS IS MY DESTINY OLAF!

'A MAN'S HEART PLANS HIS WAY, BUT THE LORD DIRECTS HIS STEPS.'¹⁰

100 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF KIEV.

I WILL LEAD YAROPOLK TO RODNYA. THERE VLADIMIR CAN TAKE HIM WITHOUT HARMING KIEV.

WHY DO YOU BETRAY YOUR PRINCE, GENERAL BLUD?

HIS EARS HAVE BEEN STOPPED UP WITH THE BLASPHEMIES OF HIS CHRISTIAN WIFE - HE NOW FEARS HER GOD.

HE IS WEAK AND DESERVES NOT POWER.



THE PEOPLE STARVE. WE CANNOT GO ON LIKE THIS.

IT HAS BEEN MONTHS SINCE THE SIEGE BEGAN, PRINCE VAROPOLK- VLADIMIR HAS RETURNED TO KIEV LEAVING GENERAL DOBRYNVA IN CHARGE.

THEN GENERAL BLUD, I WILL GO AND MAKE PEACE WITH MY BROTHER.



MY PRINCE VAROPOLK, VLADIMIR WILL KILL YOU IF YOU RETURN TO KIEV! WE SHOULD HAVE GONE DOWN TO THE PECHENEGS AND SOUGHT THEIR AID.

SOUGHT THE HELP OF THOSE WHO KILLED MY FATHER?



FEAR NOT, VARYAZHKO, VLADIMIR IS FAMILY AND HAS A KIND HEART. I AM SURE HE WILL EXTEND TO US, MERCY.



WOULD PRINCE VLADIMIR HARM HIS OWN BROTHER?



WELL SAID, APELPIGIA, MY WIFE. IS THAT NOT WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH, VARYAZHKO? THAT 'MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT?''



VLADIMIR KNOWS NOT THIS MERCY.



VLADIMIR...?
BROTHER...?

AAAAAHHHHH!



BLUD HAS BETRAYED THE PRINCE!
FLEE FOR YOUR LIFE!

MY HUSBAND!
NOOOOO!



'O LORD GOD, TO WHOM VENGEANCE BELONGS-

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE MINE! MY RIPE PEACH! PAPA BROUGHT YOU ON MY TENTH BIRTHDAY-
- BUT YAROPOLK TOOK YOU FROM ME, JUST LIKE HE TOOK PAPA'S LOVE FROM ME-



- SO NOW I TAKE WHAT WAS MY BROTHER'S-

- 'O GOD, TO WHOM VENGEANCE BELONGS, SHINE FORTH!-

- FIRST HIS CITY AND PRINCEDOM-

- THEN HIS LIFE-
- AND NOW HIS PRETTY GREEK NUN-



WHERE IS YOUR DECENCY!?

I AM YOUR BROTHER'S WIFE AND CARRY HIS CHILD!

ALL THE SWEETER.

- 'RISE UP, O JUDGE OF THE EARTH! RENDER PUNISHMENT TO THE PROUD!' 12

- 'LORD, HOW LONG WILL THE WICKED,
HOW LONG WILL THE WICKED TRIUMPH!?' -

THEODORE!
LET US IN! THE
PRINCE WOULD MAKE A SACRIFICE
TO PERUN FOR HIS VICTORIES!

'SHALL THE THRONE OF INIQUITY,
WHICH DEVISES EVIL BY LAW, HAVE
FELLOWSHIP WITH YOU O GOD?'

POUND
POUND
POUND

LET US IN OR WE BREAK
DOWN THE DOOR!

THEODORE!
THE LOT FELL TO
YOUR SON, IVAN! HE
MUST BE SACRIFICED
TO THE GODS!

- 'THEY GATHER
TOGETHER AGAINST
THE LIFE OF THE
RIGHTEOUS-

WE ARE
CHRISTIANS! I
WILL NOT GIVE
UP MY SON TO
DEMONS!'¹³

- 'AND CONDEMN
INNOCENT BLOOD.'¹⁴

YOU HAVE
GONE TOO FAR,
VLADIMIR!

IF YOU CHOOSE
TO BOW BEFORE GODS
OF WOOD AND STONE THAT
IS YOUR CHOICE- BUT NOW
YOU DARE TO SACRIFICE A
CHRISTIAN FATHER AND
SON TO THEM?



ONLY THE BOY WAS TO DIE!
BUT HE WOULD NOT SUBMIT
AND THE PEOPLE GOT ANGRY.
A MOB KILLED THE BOY
AND HIS FATHER.

AND IT IS
ONLY OUT OF
RESPECT FOR YOU
AS MY FRIEND THAT
I DO NOT CUT OFF
YOUR HEAD!

A MOB
SANCTIONED
BY YOU!

IT IS
ONLY OUT OF
RESPECT FOR YOU AND
PRINCESS OLAVA THAT
I DO NOT CUT DOWN
YOUR WORTHLESS
IDOLS!



IS IT MY GODS THAT OFFEND YOU,
OLAF? OR THAT I HAVE WHAT
YOU DESIRE?

WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN?

SOME
HAVE SAID YOU
HAVE MORE THAN
"RESPECT" FOR MY
WIFE, OLAVA.

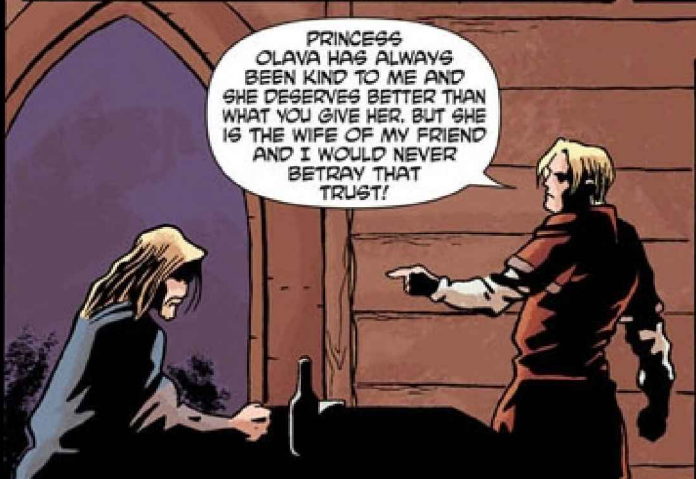
WHAT ARE
YOU ACCUSING
ME OF!?



I SEE HOW
YOUR EYE
LINGERS
ON HER!

YOU TAKE
A WOMAN
WHenever
IT PLEASES
YOU!

YOU NOW
HAVE FIVE WIVES
AND HUNDREDS OF
CONCUBINES! AND
YOU ACCUSE ME
OF DALLIANCE!



PRINCESS
OLAVA HAS ALWAYS
BEEN KIND TO ME AND
SHE DESERVES BETTER THAN
WHAT YOU GIVE HER. BUT SHE
IS THE WIFE OF MY FRIEND
AND I WOULD NEVER
BETRAY THAT
TRUST!



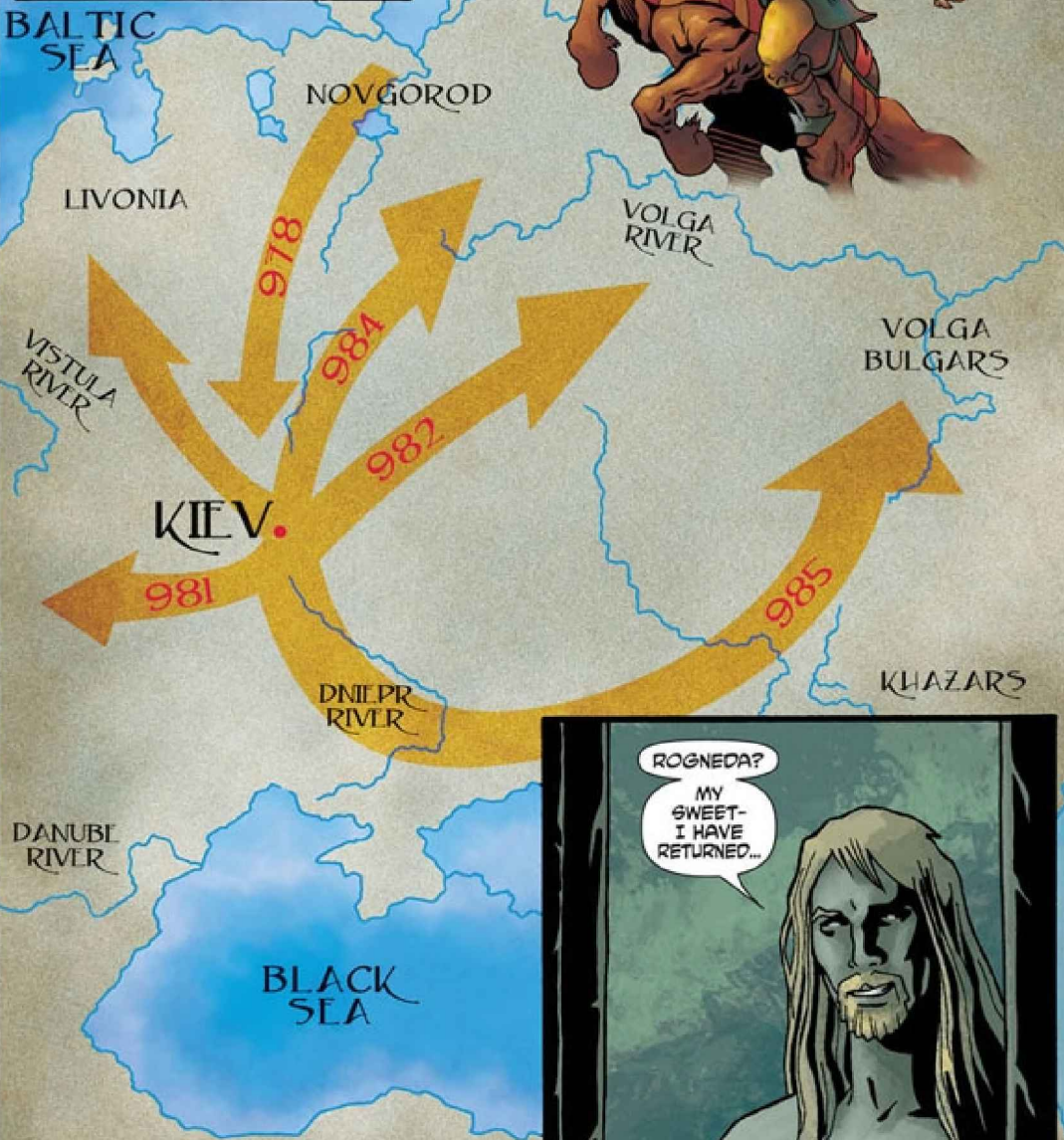
A TRUST
IT SEEMS, I
NO LONGER
HAVE-

- SO I
WILL NO LONGER
REMAIN IN THIS
HOUSE!

OLAF! WAIT!
STOP! I DIDN'T
MEAN...!

DURING THE NEXT SIX YEARS, THE GREAT PRINCE EXTENDED HIS INFLUENCE AND HIS TAX REVENUES UNTIL HIS PRINCEDOM REACHED FROM THE BALTIC TO THE BLACK SEA AND FROM THE VISTULA TO THE VOLGA RIVERS.

OLAF, MY OWN TRUE FRIEND. WHAT WILL BECOME OF YOU? 15



ROGNEDA?

MY SWEET- I HAVE RETURNED...





WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME, MY PRINCE?

UHN? OH- AH- UMM-



SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE MY RETURN WITH.



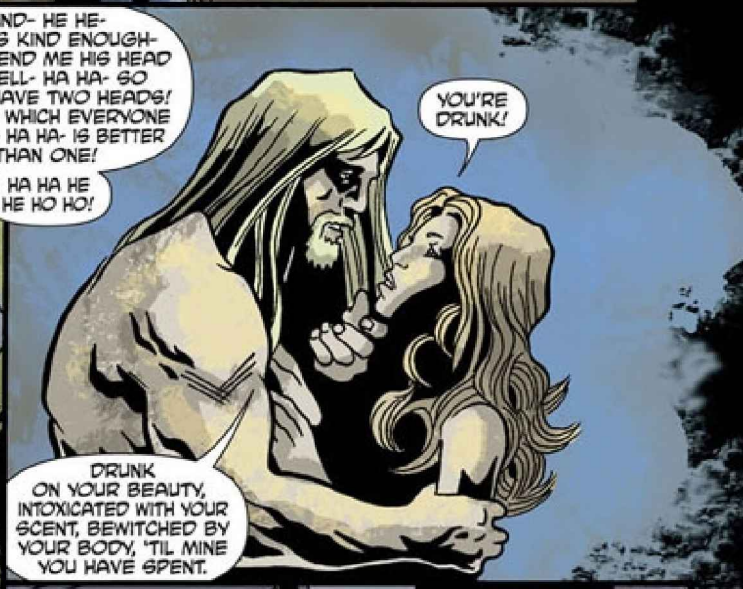
MY PAPA'S SKULL GOBLET!

UGH! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT?

FROM KURYA, THE MAN THAT KILLED PAPA-



AND- HE HE- HE WAS KIND ENOUGH- TO-TO LEND ME HIS HEAD AS WELL- HA HA- SO NOW I HAVE TWO HEADS! HA HUH- WHICH EVERYONE KNOWS- HA HA- IS BETTER THAN ONE!
HA HA HE HE HO HO!



YOU'RE DRUNK!

DRUNK ON YOUR BEAUTY, INTOXICATED WITH YOUR SCENT, BEWITCHED BY YOUR BODY, 'TIL MINE YOU HAVE SPENT.



THEN DRINK DEEPLY OF MY LOVE, MY PRINCE -
- AND SLEEP-
- FOR IT WILL BE YOUR LAST SLEEP.



BEFORE I SEND YOU TO HELL!



ROGNEDA!? WHY!?

DO YOU THINK I HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW YOU TOOK ME AND KILLED MY FATHER AND BROTHERS!?

HOW YOU TOOK MY LANDS!?! AND ALL BECAUSE YOU SAID YOU WANTED ME!

AND NOW YOU DO NOT EVEN LOVE ME OR OUR SON!



GO! PUT ON YOUR WEDDING DRESS!

FOR I SHALL KILL YOU!

THEN YOU WILL HAVE TO DO IT IN FRONT OF ME FATHER.



IZYAGLAV!

DID YOU THINK YOU WERE ALONE FATHER?

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT YOU WERE HERE?





WHAT HAVE I BECOME?

PERUN! WHAT HAVE YOU MADE ME!?

THEN IT IS THE DECISION OF THE BOYARS THAT I SPARE THE PRINCESS ROGNEDA- AND IN FACT, THAT I SEND HER AND HER SON BACK TO HER FATHER'S LANDS TO GOVERN FOR ME?



YES, GREAT PRINCE. IN THIS WAY YOU REMOVE HER FROM YOUR PRESENCE, ELIMINATING ANY MORE THREAT SHE MAY POSE...

WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, SHE WILL GLADLY GOVERN THE LAND OF HER FATHER, FOR HER SON TO RULE ONE DAY- AND MAINTAIN THE PEACE ON OUR WESTERN BORDERS.



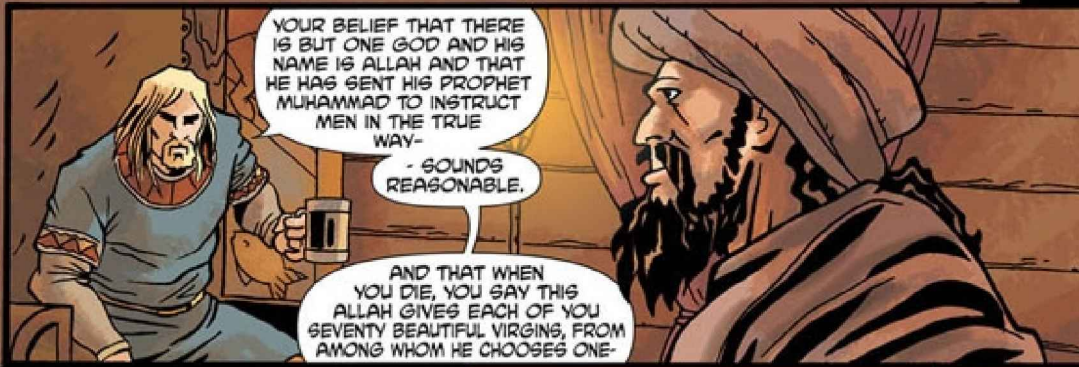
AS YOU HAVE SAID- SO BE IT.

KIEV 986

WORD OF PRINCE VLADIMIR'S GROWING DISILLUSIONMENT WITH HIS PAGAN GODS BROUGHT EMISSARIES TO KIEV FROM THE MAJOR RELIGIONS, IN HOPES OF CONVERTING THE GREAT PRINCE TO THEIR FAITH.



FROM THE VOLGA BULGARS IN THE EAST, CAME THE MUSLIMS.



YOUR BELIEF THAT THERE IS BUT ONE GOD AND HIS NAME IS ALLAH AND THAT HE HAS SENT HIS PROPHET MUHAMMAD TO INSTRUCT MEN IN THE TRUE WAY-

- SOUNDS REASONABLE.

AND THAT WHEN YOU DIE, YOU SAY THIS ALLAH GIVES EACH OF YOU SEVENTY BEAUTIFUL VIRGINS, FROM AMONG WHOM HE CHOOSES ONE-

- UPON WHOM HE THEN TRANSFERS THE BEAUTY OF ALL THE OTHERS AND SHE BECOMES YOUR TRUE WIFE-



- I FIND APPEALING-

- FOR I HAVE LONG SEARCHED FOR AND KNOWN THAT THERE MUST BE ONE WOMAN, MY ONLY LOVE, FOR WHOM I COULD SHARE A TRUE MYSTICAL BOND-



- BUT NOT TO EAT PORK? THIS IS STRANGE. AND CIRCUMCISION? DISGUSTING!

AND YOUR PROHIBITION AGAINST STRONG DRINK? UNACCEPTABLE! FOR THE RUSSIANS, DRINKING IS THEIR JOY! WE CANNOT BE WITHOUT!

I WILL HEAR NO MORE.

HA HA HA

HAR HAR



NEXT FROM THE WESTERN HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE CAME THE GERMAN CATHOLICS SENT BY EMPEROR OTTO III.

OUR FAITH IS NOT BURDENSOME; WE ADORE GOD, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE STARS, SUN AND MOON AND EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH.

AND WHAT DOES THIS GOD REQUIRE OF THOSE TO WHOM BREATH HAS BEEN GIVEN?

TO LIVE A CHARITABLE LIFE, PARTAKE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENTS, MAKE CONFESSIONS TO THE PRIEST AND TO PRACTICE GOOD WORKS-

- BECAUSE WITHOUT WORKS, ONE'S FAITH IS DEAD!¹⁶

'ORA ET LABORA.'¹⁷ 'WE DISCIPLINE OUR BODIES AND BRING THEM INTO SUBJECTION, LEST, WHEN WE HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, WE OURSELVES SHOULD BECOME DISQUALIFIED!'¹⁸

YOU DO NOT PARTAKE IN FEASTING?

WE LIVE AN ASCETIC LIFE, SPENDING OUR DAYS IN PRAYER AND FASTING; PREFERRING POVERTY AND HOLINESS OVER RICHES AND THE INDULGENCIES OF THE FLESH.

THEN YOU DO NOT MARRY?

WE WHO FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS OF BROTHER BENEDICT, HAVE FORGAKEN THE SHACKLES OF A WIFE, TO BECOME BOND-SERVANTS OF CHRIST.

HA HA, I COULD DO WITHOUT SOME "SHACKLES" MYSELF, BUT TO GIVE UP FEASTING AND THE PLEASURES OF A WOMAN ALL TOGETHER?

OOO!

- I THINK NOT.

THEN FROM THE SOUTHERN LANDS OF THE KHAZARS CAME THE JEWS.



'HEAR, ISRA'EL! ADONAI OUR GOD, ADONAI IS ONE.'¹⁹

'YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.'²⁰

THAT IS WHY WE CRUCIFIED THE ONE THE CHRISTIANS BELIEVE IN. HE MADE HIMSELF EQUAL TO GOD!

HMMM, WHAT ELSE HAS THIS ADONAI COMMANDED OF YOU?

IN THE TORAH, MOSES INSTRUCTED US TO BE CIRCUMCISED, TO ABSTAIN FROM PORK AND TO KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY. FOR WE HAVE BEEN SET APART AS GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE.

THEN WHERE IS YOUR CHOSEN LAND?



JERUSALEM, THE CITY OF DAVID.

WHAT HAS BECOME OF YOUR CITY?

THE CITY WAS DESTROYED BY THE ROMANS BECAUSE OUR FOREFATHERS ANGERED JEHOVAH. HE DROVE THEM FROM OUR CITY AND LAND AND SCATTERED US ACROSS THE EARTH AS VAGABONDS.

HOW DARE YOU TEACH OTHERS, WHEN YOU YOURSELVES ARE REJECTED BY GOD?!

IF YOU ARE TRULY GOD'S CHOSEN, WHY WOULD HE SCATTER YOU THROUGH MANY LANDS?

OR DO YOU WANT THE SAME TO HAPPEN TO US?





'AS I WAS WITH MOSES, SO I WILL BE WITH YOU. I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU.'²¹

GOD HAS NOT REJECTED HIS PEOPLE- THEY REJECTED HIM WHEN THEY REJECTED HIS SON, YESHUA HA- MASHIACH. AND BECAUSE THEY HAVE REJECTED THE SON OF GOD, SALVATION HAS COME TO THE GENTILES. BUT IF THEIR BEING CAST AWAY CAUSES THE RECONCILIATION OF THE WORLD, WHAT WILL THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF YESHUA BE? LIKE COMING BACK FROM THE DEAD.²²

WHO ENTERS MY HALL SPEAKING STRANGE AND COMPELLING WORDS?



CHAPLAIN GREGORY!?



MY GRAND-MAMMA'S PASTOR! I THOUGHT YOU DEAD!?

IT SEEMS GOD HAS ONE MORE SERMON FOR ME TO PREACH.

THE PATRIARCH NICHOLAS II KHRISOBERGOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE RECEIVED WORD OF YOUR QUEST AND HAS SENT ME TO SEE WHAT I CAN DO ABOUT CONVERTING YOU TO THE EASTERN ORTHODOX FAITH.

I TOLD HIM THAT I MAY HAVE TO USE ONE OF YOUR VARANGIAN BATTLE AXES TO PENETRATE YOUR THICK SKULL.



HA HA HA!

HE SUGGESTED I APPEAL TO YOUR REASON FIRST.

GREGORY THE PHILOSOPHER!



NOW SPEAK TO ME OF MY GRANDMOTHER'S GOD.

OLGA BELIEVED IN THE GOD OF THE BIBLE WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH. SHE BELIEVED THAT MAN WAS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

A FRIEND SPOKE OF SUCH ONCE.

- TO HAVE COMMUNION WITH GOD.



BUT ADAM AND EVE WERE DECEIVED BY THE SERPENT AND DISOBEYED GOD'S COMMAND, BRINGING SIN INTO THE WORLD AND FOREVER SEPARATING MANKIND FROM GOD.

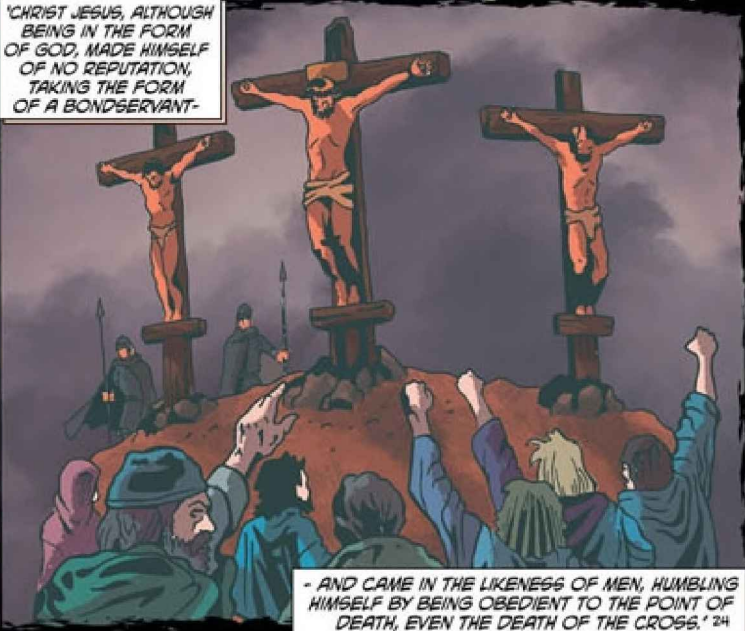


SO GOD CURSED THE SERPENT SAYING, 'I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMAN, AND BETWEEN YOUR SEED AND HER SEED; HE SHALL BRUISE YOUR HEAD, AND YOU SHALL BRUISE HIS HEEL.' 23


GOD WAS SPEAKING PROPHETICALLY OF THE TIME WHEN HIS SON WOULD COME TO EARTH TO BE CRUCIFIED-

- OF WHICH PAUL THE APOSTLE DECLARED THAT-

'CHRIST JESUS, ALTHOUGH BEING IN THE FORM OF GOD, MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION, TAKING THE FORM OF A BONDSERVANT-





- AND CAME IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN, HUMBLING HIMSELF BY BEING OBEIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.' 24



THIS I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. FOR IT GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING IN MY VIKING BLOOD. WHY WOULD GOD COME DOWN TO EARTH AND ENDURE SUCH DEATH ON A ROMAN CROSS?

WHY DID HE NOT CRUSH HIS OPPRESSORS AS PERUN WOULD HAVE DONE?

BECAUSE, 'GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.' 25




THE MUSLIMS AND THE JEWS DO NOT BELIEVE JESUS WAS THE SON OF GOD.


WHEN JESUS CAME THIS FIRST TIME AS THE SUFFERING SERVANT AND NOT AS THE KING THE JEWS EXPECTED, THE GOSPEL BECAME A STUMBLING BLOCK TO THEM -

- AND TO THE GREEKS, FOOLISHNESS. 26

BUT TO THE MUSLIMS, IT WAS UNSEEMLY, FOR...



THEN TO THE VIKINGS IT IS CONTEMPTIBLE!



THE MUSLIMS BELIEVE THAT ALLAH HAS NO NEED OF A SON. 27

BUT THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB DECLARED FROM HEAVEN OVER JESUS OF NAZARETH WHILE HE WAS BEING BAPTIZED BY JOHN IN THE JORDAN RIVER-

- THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASSED.'²⁸

AND AGAIN JESUS SAID, 'I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE.'²⁹

AND 'HE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER.'³⁰

SO IF ALLAH HAS NO SON, THEN HE IS NOT THE HEAVENLY FATHER OF JESUS, AND HE IS NOT MY GOD.

I KNOW NOT THIS ALLAH.



BUT JESUS I KNOW.

I KNOW HIM AS MY SAVIOR AND LORD, AND ONE DAY I SHALL KNOW HIM AS MY KING, WHEN HE RETURNS TO JUDGE BOTH THE LIVING AND THE DEAD-

- WHETHER THEY BE GODS, DEMONS OR MEN.

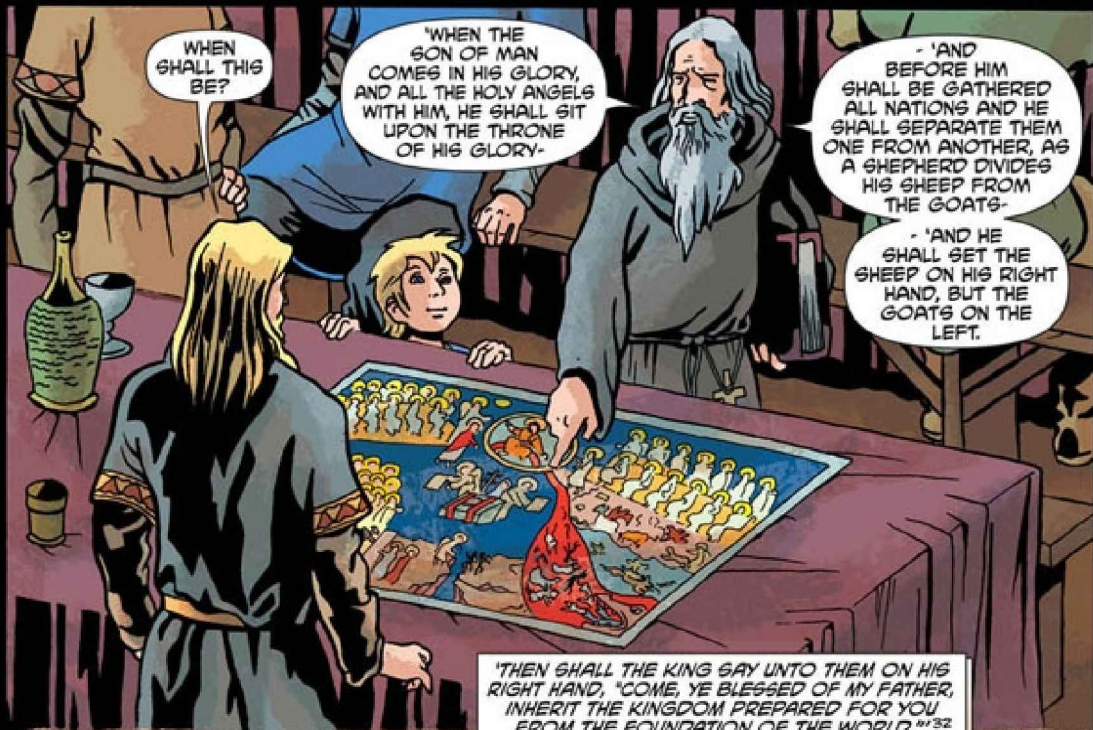


EVEN PERUN?

EVEN PERUN.



FOR 'AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, OF THOSE IN HEAVEN, AND OF THOSE ON EARTH, AND OF THOSE UNDER THE EARTH, AND EVERY TONGUE CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.'³¹



WHEN SHALL THIS BE?

'WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY, AND ALL THE HOLY ANGELS WITH HIM, HE SHALL SIT UPON THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY.'

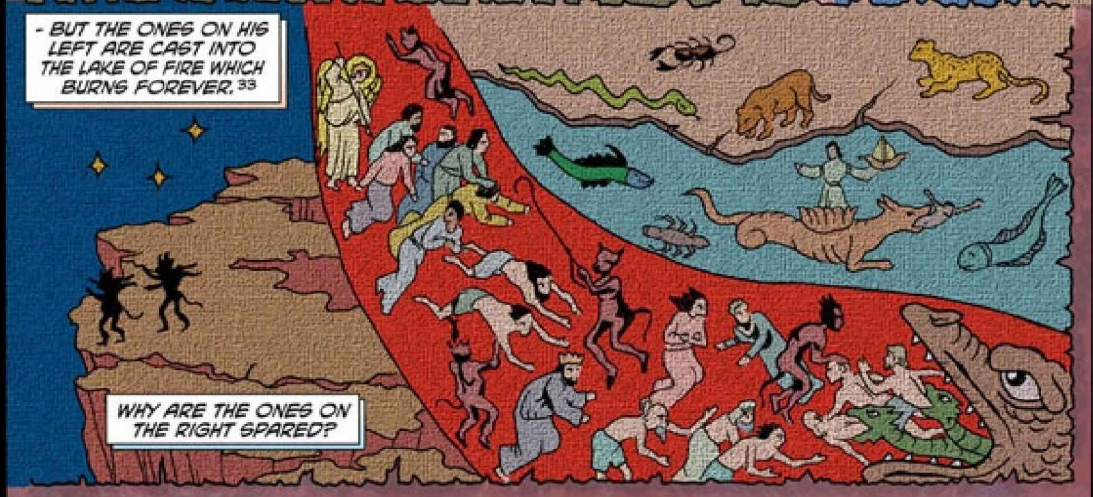
- 'AND BEFORE HIM SHALL BE GATHERED ALL NATIONS AND HE SHALL SEPARATE THEM ONE FROM ANOTHER, AS A SHEPHERD DIVIDES HIS SHEEP FROM THE GOATS-

- 'AND HE SHALL SET THE SHEEP ON HIS RIGHT HAND, BUT THE GOATS ON THE LEFT.

'THEN SHALL THE KING SAY UNTO THEM ON HIS RIGHT HAND, "COME, YE BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."³²



SEE THE ONES ON JESUS'S RIGHT ENTER INTO HEAVEN AND GOD'S ETERNAL GLORY-



- BUT THE ONES ON HIS LEFT ARE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE WHICH BURNS FOREVER.³³

WHY ARE THE ONES ON THE RIGHT SPARED?

JESUS SAID THAT 'WHOEVER CONFESSES ME BEFORE MEN, HIM I WILL ALSO CONFESS BEFORE MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.' 34

AND THEIR NAMES SHALL BE RECORDED IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE. 35

BUT THOSE WHO HAVE DENIED JESUS AS THE CHRIST AND THE SON OF GOD-

- THEIR NAMES WILL NOT BE FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE-

- AND THE LAST WORDS THEY WILL EVER HEAR FROM JESUS- AND THAT WILL RING IN THEIR EARS FOR ALL ETERNITY WILL BE-

- 'DEPART FROM ME, YE CURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS.' 36



IT IS WELL FOR THOSE ON THE RIGHT-

- BUT WOE TO THOSE ON THE LEFT.

THEN REPENT YOUR SINS NOW, VLADIMIR! CONFESS JESUS AS LORD AND BE BAPTIZED! AND YOU TOO SHALL ENTER THE GATES OF GLORY WITH THOSE ON THE RIGHT!



I WILL SEND FORTH MY OWN ENVOYS TO TEST THE CLAIMS OF THESE RELIGIONS AND SEE HOW THEIR FAITH IS LIVED OUT.

THEN I SHALL DECIDE.

SIX MONTHS LATER

WE HAVE RETURNED, O GREAT PRINCE, FROM OUR INVESTIGATION OF THE FAITHS. AS AGREED

WE WENT NOT TO THE KHAZAR JEWS AS THEIR GOD HAS TURNED HIS FACE FROM THEM.

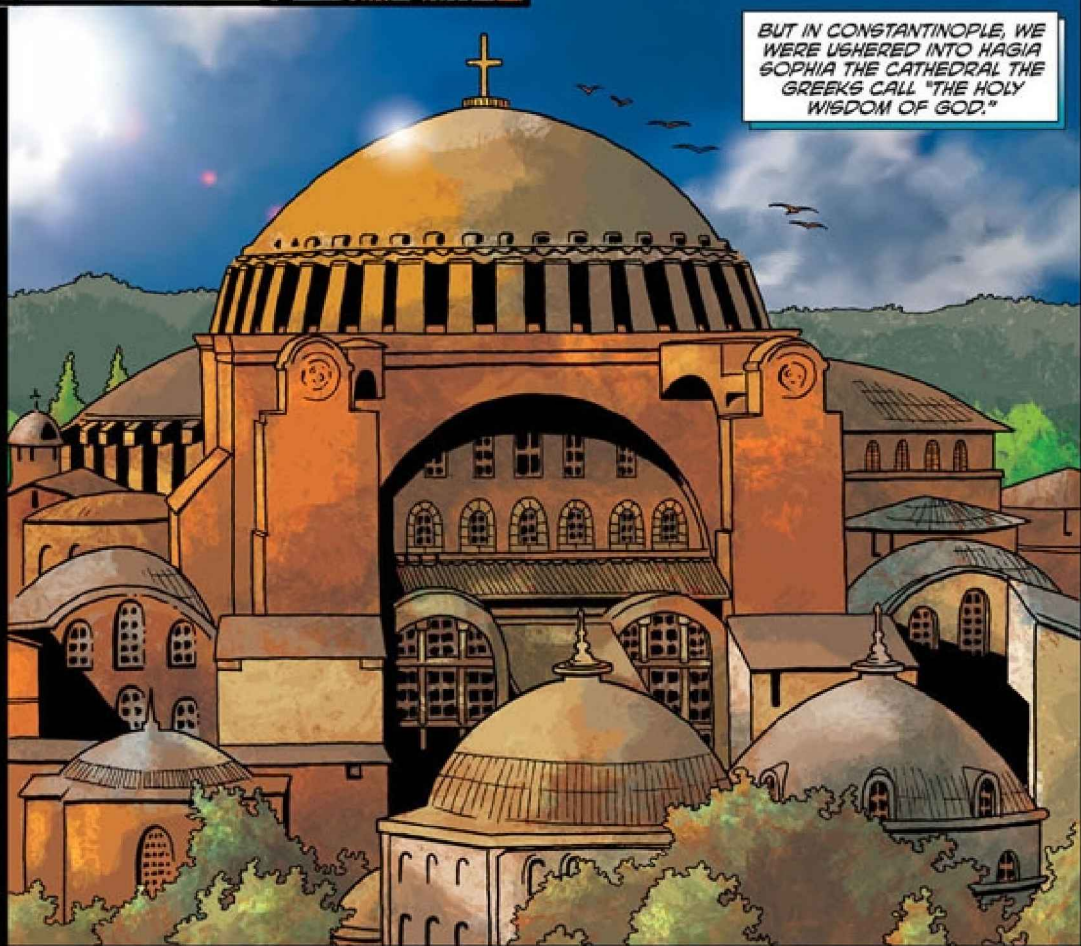


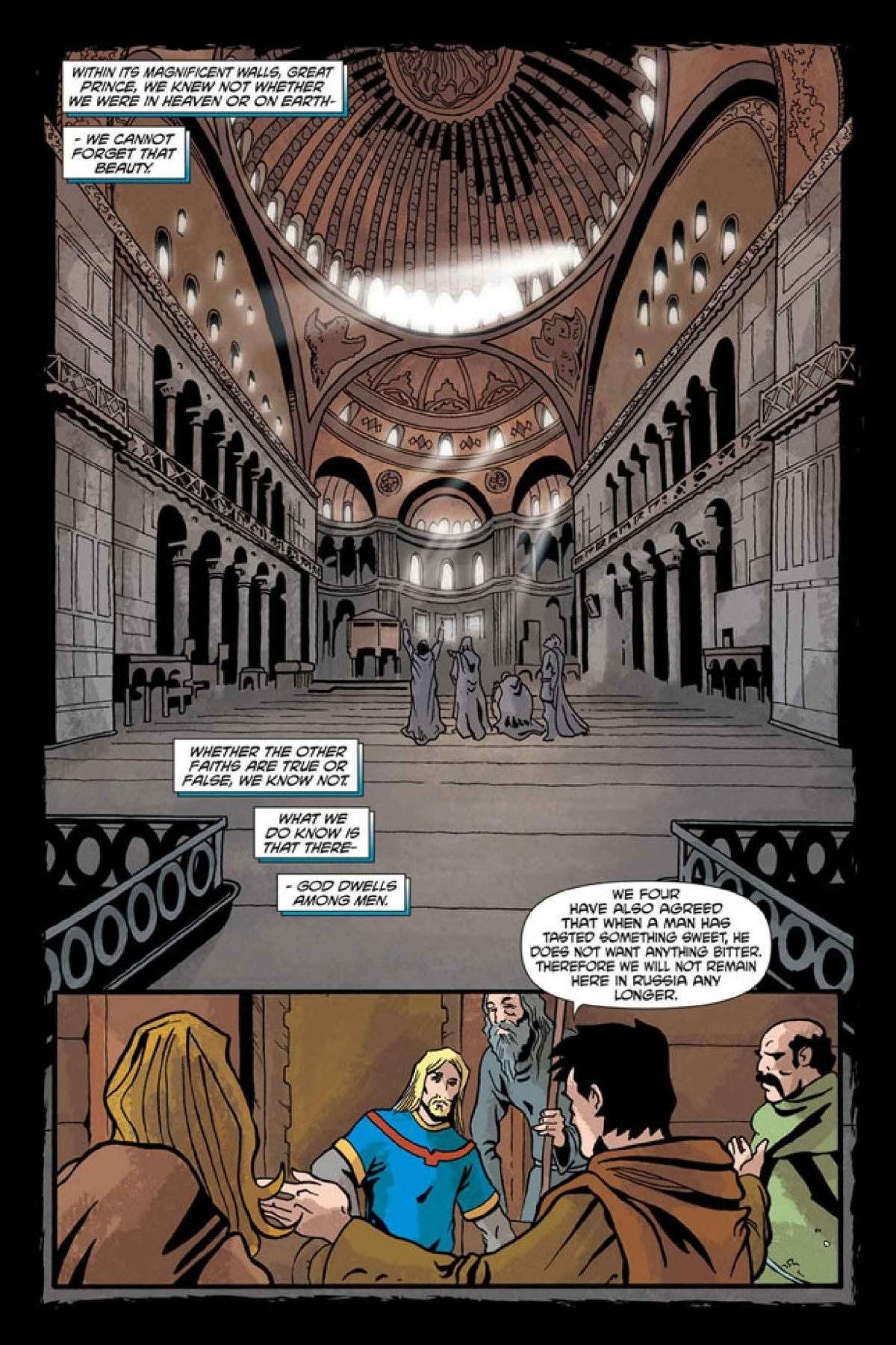
WITH THE VOLGA MUSLIMS WE SAW NO JOY AND THEIR MOSQUES STANK.

THE GERMANS RECEIVED US CORDIALLY ENOUGH BUT THE CHANT THEY CALLED "GREGORIAN," WE FOUND MONOTONOUS AND THEIR CHURCHES COLD.



BUT IN CONSTANTINOPLE, WE WERE USHERED INTO HAGIA SOPHIA THE CATHEDRAL THE GREEKS CALL "THE HOLY WISDOM OF GOD."





WITHIN ITS MAGNIFICENT WALLS, GREAT PRINCE, WE KNEW NOT WHETHER WE WERE IN HEAVEN OR ON EARTH.

- WE CANNOT FORGET THAT BEAUTY.

WHETHER THE OTHER FAITHS ARE TRUE OR FALSE, WE KNOW NOT.

WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT THERE-

- GOD DWELLS AMONG MEN.

WE FOUR HAVE ALSO AGREED THAT WHEN A MAN HAS TASTED SOMETHING SWEET, HE DOES NOT WANT ANYTHING BITTER. THEREFORE WE WILL NOT REMAIN HERE IN RUSSIA ANY LONGER.





IF THE GREEK RELIGION HAD BEEN BAD, YOUR GRANDMOTHER WOULD NOT HAVE ADOPTED IT. SHE WAS THE WISEST OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS.



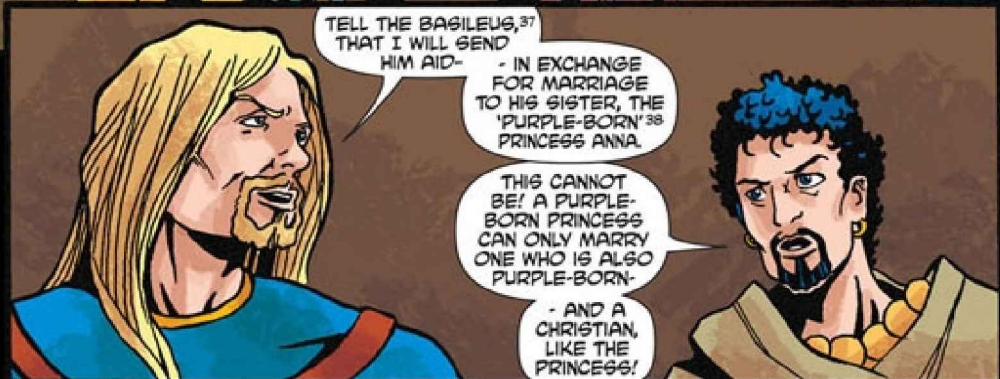
SO WHERE SHALL WE BE BAPTIZED THEN?

PRINCE VLADIMIR! AN ENVOY FROM THE BYZANTINE EMPERORS, BASIL II AND CONSTANTINE VIII!

THE EMPERORS WANT ME TO SEND THEM SIX THOUSAND VARANGIANS TO SUPPRESS A REBELLION IN THEIR SOUTHERN LANDS.



WHAT WILL BE YOUR REPLY?



TELL THE BAGILEUS,³⁷ THAT I WILL SEND HIM AID-

- IN EXCHANGE FOR MARRIAGE TO HIS SISTER, THE 'PURPLE-BORN'³⁸ PRINCESS ANNA.

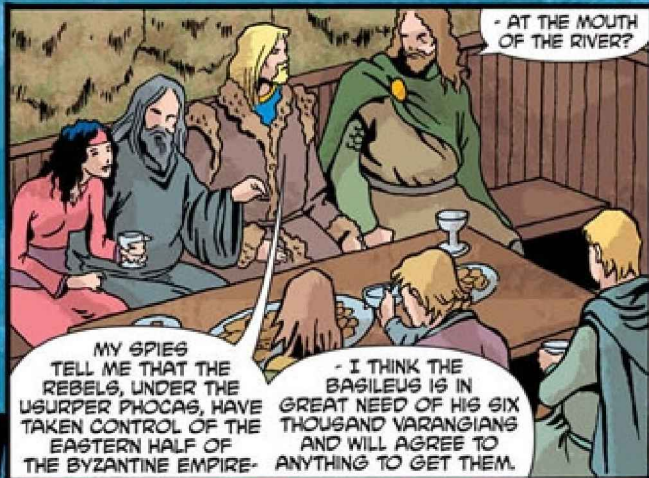
THIS CANNOT BE! A PURPLE-BORN PRINCESS CAN ONLY MARRY ONE WHO IS ALSO PURPLE-BORN-

- AND A CHRISTIAN, LIKE THE PRINCESS!

MONTHS LATER, VLADIMIR LED A FLEET OF THREE HUNDRED LONG SHIPS WITH TWELVE THOUSAND VARANGIAN'S DOWN THE DNIIEPR RIVER TO THE BLACK SEA.



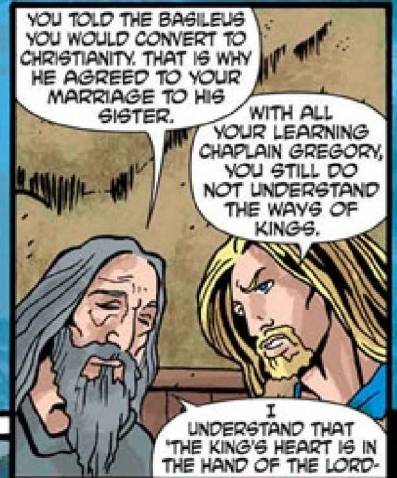
DO YOU THINK PRINCESS ANNA WILL MEET US AT THE AGREED UPON RENDEZVOUS POINT-



- AT THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER?

MY SPIES TELL ME THAT THE REBELS, UNDER THE USURPER PHOCAS, HAVE TAKEN CONTROL OF THE EASTERN HALF OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE-

- I THINK THE BASILEUS IS IN GREAT NEED OF HIS SIX THOUSAND VARANGIANS AND WILL AGREE TO ANYTHING TO GET THEM.



YOU TOLD THE BASILEUS YOU WOULD CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY. THAT IS WHY HE AGREED TO YOUR MARRIAGE TO HIS SISTER.

WITH ALL YOUR LEARNING CHAPLAIN GREGORY, YOU STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE WAYS OF KINGS.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE KING'S HEART IS IN THE HAND OF THE LORD-



- LIKE THE RIVERS OF WATER; HE TURNS IT WHEREVER HE WISHES.' 39

JUNE 988

THERE SAILS
THE SIX THOUSAND
VARANGIAN'S YOU
PROMISED THE
BASILEUS.

NOW LET'S
SEE IF A CHRISTIAN
KING'S WORD IS AS
GOOD AS A VIKING
PRINCE'S.



MID AUGUST, 988

PRINCESS ANNA
STILL DOES NOT COME.
SO WE WILL GIVE BASIL A
REASON TO REGRET THE
DELAY BY TAKING CHERSON-
HIS NORTHERN TRADE
PORT TO THE CRIMEAN
AND BEYOND.



SEPTEMBER 988, CHERSON

THE CHERSONIANS
ARE STUBBORN AND
WELL SUPPLIED. IT COULD
TAKE MONTHS TO BREAK
THEIR WILL!



O, GOD!
IF YOU ARE
MASTER OF
EVERYTHING, I
ASK THIS OF
YOU. DELIVER
THIS TOWN INTO
MY HANDS-

- AND I
WILL GIVE
YOU A
NATION.

LOOK!
THE HEAVENS
FORETELL
DISASTER!

BUT FOR
WHOM?



PRINCE
VLADIMIR! SOME-
ONE JUST SHOT
THIS ARROW FROM
THE WALLS.



A NOTE
IS TIED
TO IT!



IT READS,
'SPRINGS BEHIND
YOU. WATER FLOWS
DOWN PIPE. DIG
AND CUT.'



NOW HE
WILL BE ABLE
TO CUT THE
CITY'S WATER
SUPPLY!

GOD HAS
HEARD MY PRAYER
AND GIVEN ME
THIS TOWN!

LORD, WHY
WOULD YOU GIVE
A CHRISTIAN TOWN
TO THIS PAGAN?

I SHALL BE
BAPTIZED!

PRINCESS
ANNA CANNOT
REFUSE ME
NOW!

VLADIMIR REFRAINED HIS VARANGIANS
FROM SACKING CHERSON AS A GESTURE
OF GOD WILL TOWARDS THE PEOPLE...
AND TOWARDS THE GOD OF HEAVEN.



I WILL NEVER MARRY THAT SCYTHIAN FROM KIEV! I WOULD RATHER LEAP TO MY DEATH FROM THIS BALCONY, THAN MARRY HIM!

ANNA! PLEASE COME DOWN FROM THERE.

WE UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL SISTER- BELIEVE ME, WE DIDN'T WANT IT TO COME TO THIS-



- BUT THE EMPIRE IS IN PERIL...

BASIL, YOU SAID THAT YOU DEFEATED THE REBEL LEADER PHOCAS- AND THAT I WOULD NO LONGER HAVE TO MARRY THAT BARBARIAN!

OUR BROTHER DID ANNA, BUT IT SEEMS... IT SEEMS...



WHAT CONSTANTINE IS TRYING TO SAY ANNA, IS THAT THE WIFE OF PHOCAS HAS FANNED A NEW REBELLION IN THE SOUTH AND EAST-

- AND THE BULGARIANS ARE THREATENING US FROM THE WEST.

AND PRINCE VLADIMIR HAS SENT WORD THAT IF YOU DO NOT COME TO HIM AND MARRY HIM...



HE WILL ATTACK CONSTANTINOPLE FROM THE NORTH AND TAKE IT LIKE HE TOOK CHERSON!

DON'T YOU SEE, DEAR SWEET SISTER? GOD WANTS TO USE YOU TO TURN THE RUGGIANS TO REPENTANCE?



LIKE QUEEN ESTHER IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES-

- "YOU HAVE COME TO THE KINGDOM FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS!" 40

SUMMER 989

BEHOLD, THREE SHIPS APPROACH- ON WINDS FROM CONSTANTINOPLE!
PRINCESS ANNA COMES!



HURRAY!
HURRAY FOR PRINCESS ANNA!

TA-TA TA-TA TA-TA TA-TA



AT LAST-
MY ONLY
LOVE!

BUT THE DARKNESS WITHIN
IS NOT EASILY VANQUISHED-



- EVEN IN THE PRESENCE
OF SUCH PURE LIGHT.



SOMETIMES THE DARKNESS
NEEDS TO BE BURNED OUT-



AAAAHHH!
MY SKIN
FEELS LIKE IT
IS ON FIRE!
AAAAHHH!



- BY A
GREATER
LIGHT.

AAAAHHH!
I CAN'T
SEE! I'M
BLIND!

O GOD! HAVE MERCY!
HAVE MERCY ON ME A
SINNER! HAVE MERCY!

FORGIVE ME LORD! FOR I AM
A SINNER! THE CHIEF OF SINNERS
AND DESERVED OF DEATH!

I AM UNCLEAN! UNCLEAN!
PURGE ME WITH YOUR HOLY LIGHT!
DRIVE THIS DARKNESS FROM ME!

AAAAH! AAAHH!
AAAAHHHHH!

DELIVER ME FROM BLOODGUILT!
FROM THE BLOOD OF THOSE
I HAVE SLAIN, WHICH CRIES
OUT TO YOU FROM THE GROUND!

O GOD! YOU HAVE PAID ME RECOMPENSE FOR WHO I AM!
MY FLESH DOES NOW BURN THAT DID BURN WITH LUST! MY
EYES ARE NOW BLIND THAT WERE BLIND TO YOUR TRUTH!

YOU HAVE HUMBLLED ME, O
LORD! HAVE MERCY AND
HEAR THE PRAYER OF THIS
SINNER! O GOD, HAVE MERCY!

TAKE HIM TO
THE WATER!

QUICKLY!
TAKE HIM DOWN
TO THE WATER AND
BAPTIZE HIM!

ANNA?
YOU ARE STILL
HERE?

YOUR TEARS
HAVE BAPTIZED
MY HEART, MY DARLING
PRINCE- I SHALL NOT
LEAVE YOU NOW.

AGAIN WAS WAR WAGED IN
THE HEAVENLIES FOR THE
SOUL OF THE PRINCE.

DO YOU
PRINCE VLADIMIR
ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR
SINS BEFORE ALMIGHTY
GOD AND DESIRE NOW TO
SUBMIT YOUR LIFE WHOLLY
UNTO JESUS CHRIST AS
YOUR LORD AND
SAVIOR?

I DO.

ONLY THIS TIME THE
CHOICE OF THE MAN -

THEN I BAPTIZE
YOU IN THE NAME
OF THE FATHER-



- AND OF
THE SON-



- GAVE VICTORY
TO THE LIGHT!



THE WAR
WAS WON!



- AND OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT! AMEN!

LORD AND KING SOVEREIGN! YOU HAVE
REMEMBERED ME AND HAVE BROUGHT
ME TO THE LIGHT SO I COULD KNOW
YOU, THE CREATOR OF ALL CREATION!

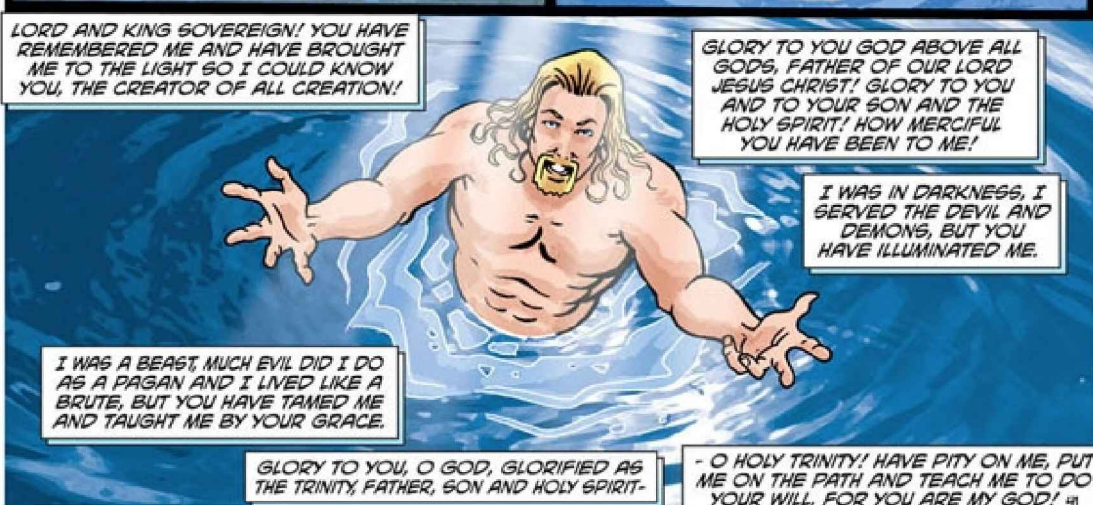
GLORY TO YOU GOD ABOVE ALL
GODS, FATHER OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST! GLORY TO YOU
AND TO YOUR SON AND THE
HOLY SPIRIT! HOW MERCIFUL
YOU HAVE BEEN TO ME!

I WAS IN DARKNESS, I
SERVED THE DEVIL AND
DEMONS, BUT YOU
HAVE ILLUMINATED ME.

I WAS A BEAST, MUCH EVIL DID I DO
AS A PAGAN AND I LIVED LIKE A
BRUTE, BUT YOU HAVE TAMED ME
AND TAUGHT ME BY YOUR GRACE.

GLORY TO YOU, O GOD, GLORIFIED AS
THE TRINITY, FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT-

- O HOLY TRINITY! HAVE PITY ON ME, PUT
ME ON THE PATH AND TEACH ME TO DO
YOUR WILL, FOR YOU ARE MY GOD! 41



ALL OF CHERSON CHEERED THE WEDDING OF THEIR PRINCESS TO THE NEWLY CONVERTED PRINCE.

AS A WEDDING GIFT, VLADIMIR GAVE THE CITY OF CHERSON BACK TO ANNA'S BROTHER'S, BASIL AND CONSTANTINE.

HURRAY FOR PRINCESS ANNA!

HURRAY FOR PRINCE VLADIMIR!

VLADIMIR RETURNED TO KIEV WITH THE REALIZATION THAT HE WAS NOW A STEWARD OF THE PEOPLE AND NOT JUST THEIR SOVEREIGN- AND THAT ONE DAY HE WOULD STAND BEFORE HIS HEAVENLY KING AND GIVE AN ACCOUNT

HE THEREFORE DETERMINED IN HIS HEART TO BEAR FRUIT WORTHY OF REPENTANCE.

AND THE PEOPLE FLOCKED TO THE CITY TO GREET THEIR REBORN BASILEUS AND THE PURPLE-BORN BASILISSA.

HAIL GREAT PRINCE VLADIMIR THE RED SUN!⁴²
RED SUN!

HAIL PRINCESS ANNA!

SEE HOW THE PEOPLE LOVE YOU!

WHAT I THOUGHT TO POSSESS BY THE STRENGTH OF THE SWORD-

- HAS NOW TAKEN POSSESSION OF ME.⁴³

'WHEN HE SAW THE MULTITUDES, HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION FOR THEM... BECAUSE THEY WERE LIKE SHEEP HAVING NO SHEPHERD.'⁴⁴

SO HE SHEPHERDED THEM-

- BY CLEANSING THE LAND OF ALL THE IDOLS-

- STARTING WITH PERUN.

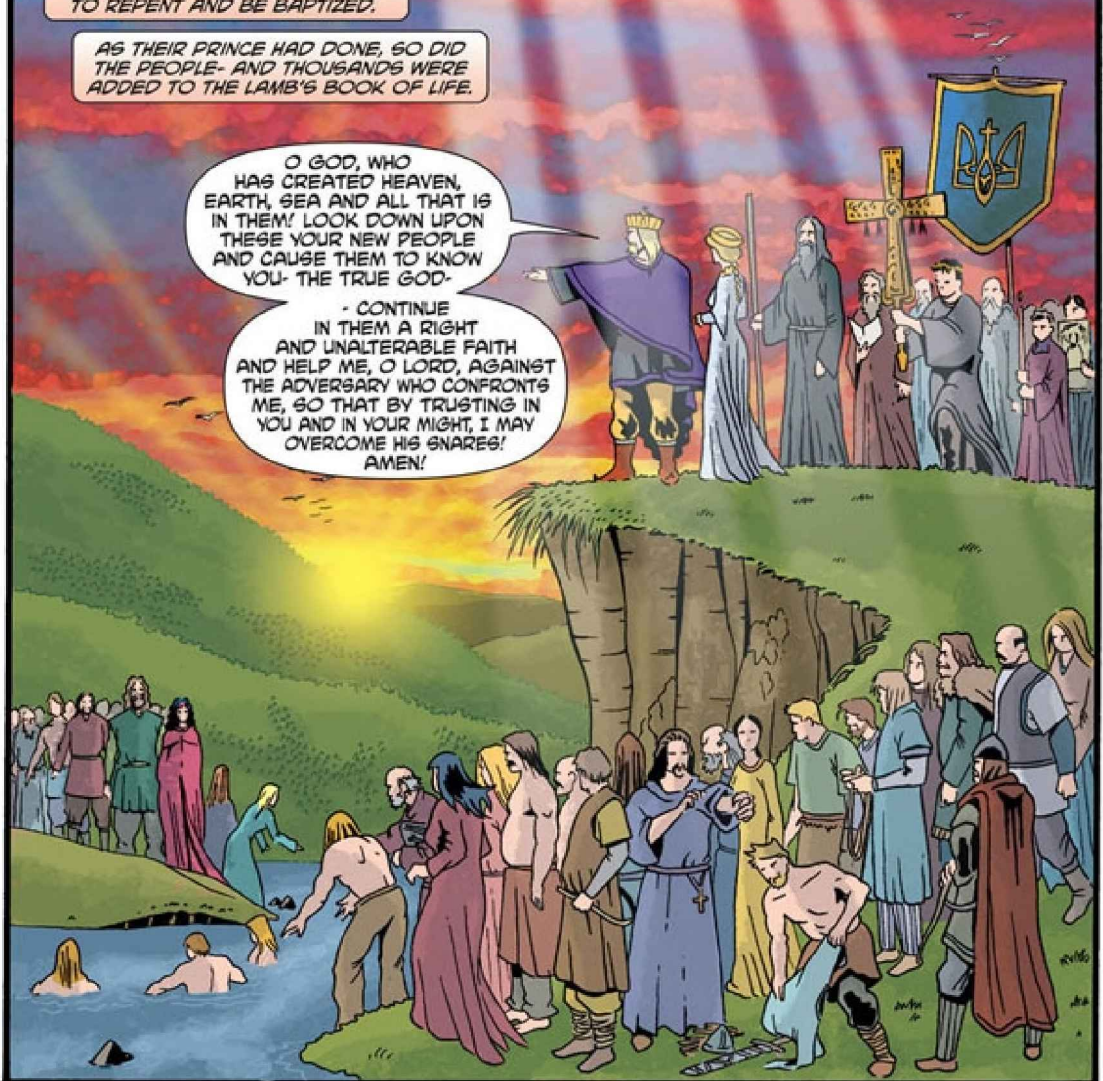
VLADIMIR HAD HIS MEN BEAT THE FALLEN GOD, TO INSULT THE DEMON WHO HAD DECEIVED HIM IN THIS FORM.

THEN HE INSTRUCTED THE PEOPLE IN HIS NEW FAITH AND URGED ALL TO REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED.

AS THEIR PRINCE HAD DONE, SO DID THE PEOPLE- AND THOUSANDS WERE ADDED TO THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE.

O GOD, WHO HAS CREATED HEAVEN, EARTH, SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM! LOOK DOWN UPON THESE YOUR NEW PEOPLE AND CAUSE THEM TO KNOW YOU- THE TRUE GOD-

- CONTINUE IN THEM A RIGHT AND UNALTERABLE FAITH AND HELP ME, O LORD, AGAINST THE ADVERSARY WHO CONFRONTS ME, SO THAT BY TRUSTING IN YOU AND IN YOUR MIGHT, I MAY OVERCOME HIS SNARES! AMEN!



HE ALSO RELEASED HIS OTHER WIVES AND CONCUBINES-
CLEAVING ONLY TO ANNA, WHOM
HE LOVED AS HIS ONLY LOVE.

AND FOR THE NEXT TWENTY-SIX YEARS
VLADIMIR RULED KIEVAN RUS' AS HER
GREAT PRINCE, TRANSFORMING RUSSIA'S
GEOGRAPHICAL, INSTITUTIONAL, POLITICAL,
MORAL AND SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE.



HE FED THE HUNGRY,
CLOTHED THE POOR,
AND ABOLISHED
CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

HE BUILT SCHOOLS, MONASTERIES AND
HUNDREDS OF CHURCHES THROUGHOUT
THE LAND, INCLUDING THE CHURCH OF
THE TITHES IN KIEV, WHICH VLADIMIR
ALONE SUPPORTED BY HIS TITHE.

AND THE PAGAN BOY
WHO ONCE RAISED HIS FIST
AGAINST A HOLY GOD-

- BECAME THE SAINTLY
FATHER OF HOLY RUSSIA.

SO LISTEN TO ONE WHO HAS
WITNESSED THESE THINGS-



- LISTEN TO ONE WHO WAS
RAVAGED BY HER MASTER
AND BORE HIM A SON-



- SHE, WHO IN HER GORROW
AND GRIEF CRIED OUT TO
THE LORD OF HEAVEN-

- WHO HEARD AND COMFORTED HER SAYING, 'HE THAT I HAVE FORMED⁴⁵ IN YOUR WOMB WILL BRING SALVATION TO THE PEOPLE.'

SHE, WHO IS NOW IN HER ONE HUNDRETH YEAR AND FORESAW THESE THINGS AND WITNESSED THEIR FULFILLMENT, BESEECH YOU HER CHILDREN-



- ALTHOUGH MANY WILL BE YOUR PRINCES AFTER THIS FIRST VLADIMIR- AND WILL LEAD YOU AWAY FROM YOUR HERITAGE AND STEAL YOUR LEGACY-

- EVEN THAT USURPER VLADIMIR,⁴⁶ WHO WILL COME AND DECEIVE YOU INTO BONDAGE TO THE TYRANNY OF DARKNESS-

YOU ARE A PEOPLE WHO SHOULD NO LONGER WALK IN DARKNESS-

- FOR YOU HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT!

YOU ARE A PEOPLE WHO SHOULD NO LONGER DWELL IN THE LAND OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH- FOR UPON YOU A LIGHT HAS SHONE!⁴⁷

SO DO NOT TOLERATE THE 'FATHER OF LIES,' AS THOUGH HE WERE YOUR RED SUN!

THROW OFF THE SHACKLES OF SEDUCTION AND RETURN TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, YOUR STABLE-BORN GREAT PRINCE AND BASILEUS!

IT IS CHRIST WHO SHED HIS BLOOD AND DIED FOR YOU- HE IS YOUR TRUE RED SON!

LISTEN TO ME MY CHILDREN! FOR I AM MALUSHA, THE MOTHER OF VLADIMIR- PRINCE OF RUGGIA!

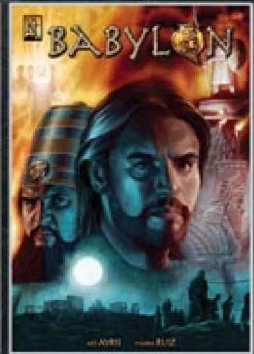
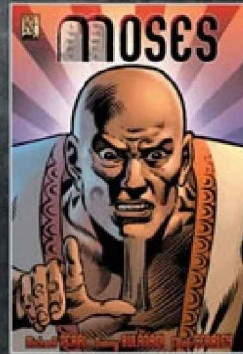
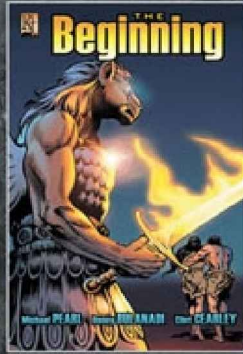
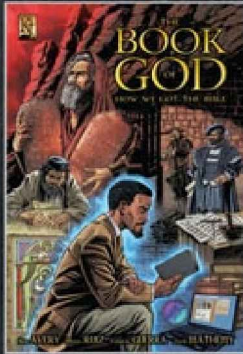
AND I AM YOUR MOTHER, HOLY RUGGIA! COME, BE HOLY AGAIN!

The End

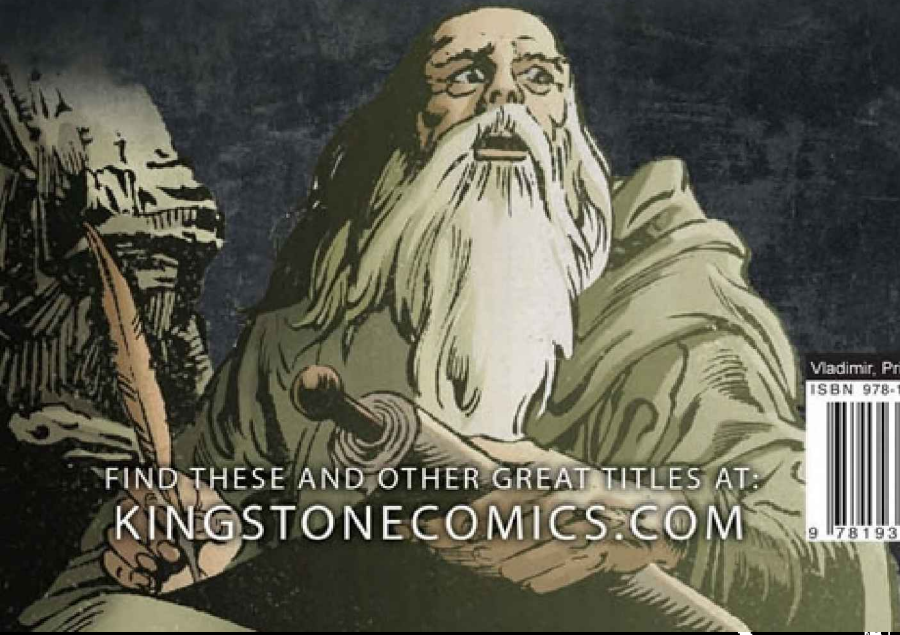
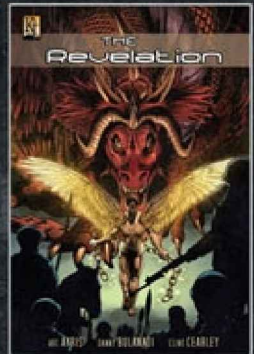
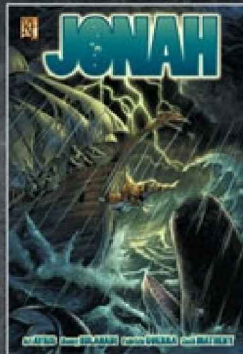
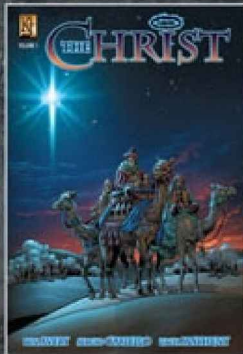
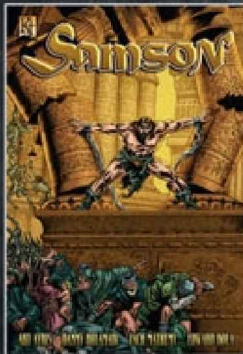
END NOTES

- [1] FROM 1 COR. 1:28
- [2] TRANSLATED FROM THE PECHENEGIAN.
- [3] SOME OF THE DIALOG IS PARAPHRASED FROM THE CHRONICLE OF BYGONE YEARS, A HISTORY OF KIEVAN RUS' WRITTEN AROUND 1113, AND AS RESOURCED IN VLADIMIR VOLKOFF'S BOOK, VLADIMIR THE RUSSIAN VIKING, (THE OVERLOOK PRESS, 1985).
- [4] FROM MATTHEW 5:39
- [5] TONE V OF THE PASCHAL TROPARION OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH.
- [6] FROM JONAH 2:8 (NKJV)
- [7] FROM 1 JOHN 1:5
- [8] SWORN COMPANIONS
- [9] FROM LUKE 11:10
- [10] FROM PROVERBS 19:21
- [11] FROM JAMES 2:13 (NKJV)
- [12] FROM PSALM 94:1-2 (NKJV)
- [13] THEODORE AND IVAN WOULD BECOME SAINTS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH.
- [14] FROM PSALM 94:3, 20-21 (NKJV)
- [15] OLAF TRYGGVASON BECAME KING OF NORWAY IN 997 AND CONVERTED THE COUNTRY TO CHRISTIANITY. HE ALSO BAPTIZED LEIF ERIKSON WHO WOULD COME TO AMERICA, 500 YEARS BEFORE COLUMBUS.
- [16] FROM JAMES 2:14-26
- [17] LATIN MOTTO OF THE BENEDICTINE ORDER, 'FIRST PRAYER, THEN WORK.'
- [18] FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 9:27
- [19] FROM DEUTERONOMY 6:4 TCJB
- [20] FROM EXODUS 20:3 TCJB
- [21] FROM JOSHUA 1:5
- [22] FROM ROMANS 11:2,11,15
- [23] FROM GENESIS 3:15 (NKJV)
- [24] FROM PHIL. 2:5-8
- [25] FROM JOHN 3:16
- [26] FROM 1 COR. 1:23
- [27] FROM THE QURAN, SURA 4.171, 17.111, 19.35, 23.91
- [28] FROM MATTHEW 3:17
- [29] FROM JOHN 10:30
- [30] FROM JOHN 14:9
- [31] FROM PHIL. 2:10, ISAIAH 45:21-23, ROMANS 14:11-12
- [32] FROM MATTHEW 25:31-34
- [33] FROM REVELATION 20:15
- [34] FROM MATTHEW 10:32
- [35] FROM REVELATION 21:22-27
- [36] FROM MATTHEW 25:41
- [37] RULER. LITERALLY: 'SWAYER OF THE UNIVERSE'
- [38] ONE WHO IS BORN FROM ROYALTY AND THUS PERMITTED TO WEAR THE TYRIAN PURPLE CLOTH DYED EXCLUSIVELY FOR ROYALS. THE BYZANTINES CONSIDERED THE VIKINGS TO BE BARBARIANS AND THEREFORE UNQUALIFIED AS ROYALS.
- [39] FROM PROVERBS 21:1 (NKJV)
- [40] FROM ESTHER 4:14
- [41] FROM THE CHRONICLE OF JACOB THE MONK – 11TH CENTURY.
- [42] RED SUN: KRASNOE SOLNYSHKO, A TITLE GIVEN BY THE PEOPLE TO VLADIMIR. ALSO RENDERED 'DARLING BEAUTIFUL SUN.'
- [43] FROM A POEM ON THE BAPTISM OF VLADIMIR, BY ALEKSEY TOLSTOY. (1817-1875)
- [44] FROM MATTHEW 9:36
- [45] FROM JOB 31:15, PSALM 139:13, JEREMIAH 1:5
- [46] VLADIMIR LENIN (1870-1924)
- [47] FROM ISAIAH 9:2





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