

FRANK

# FRAZZETTA

BOOK TWO

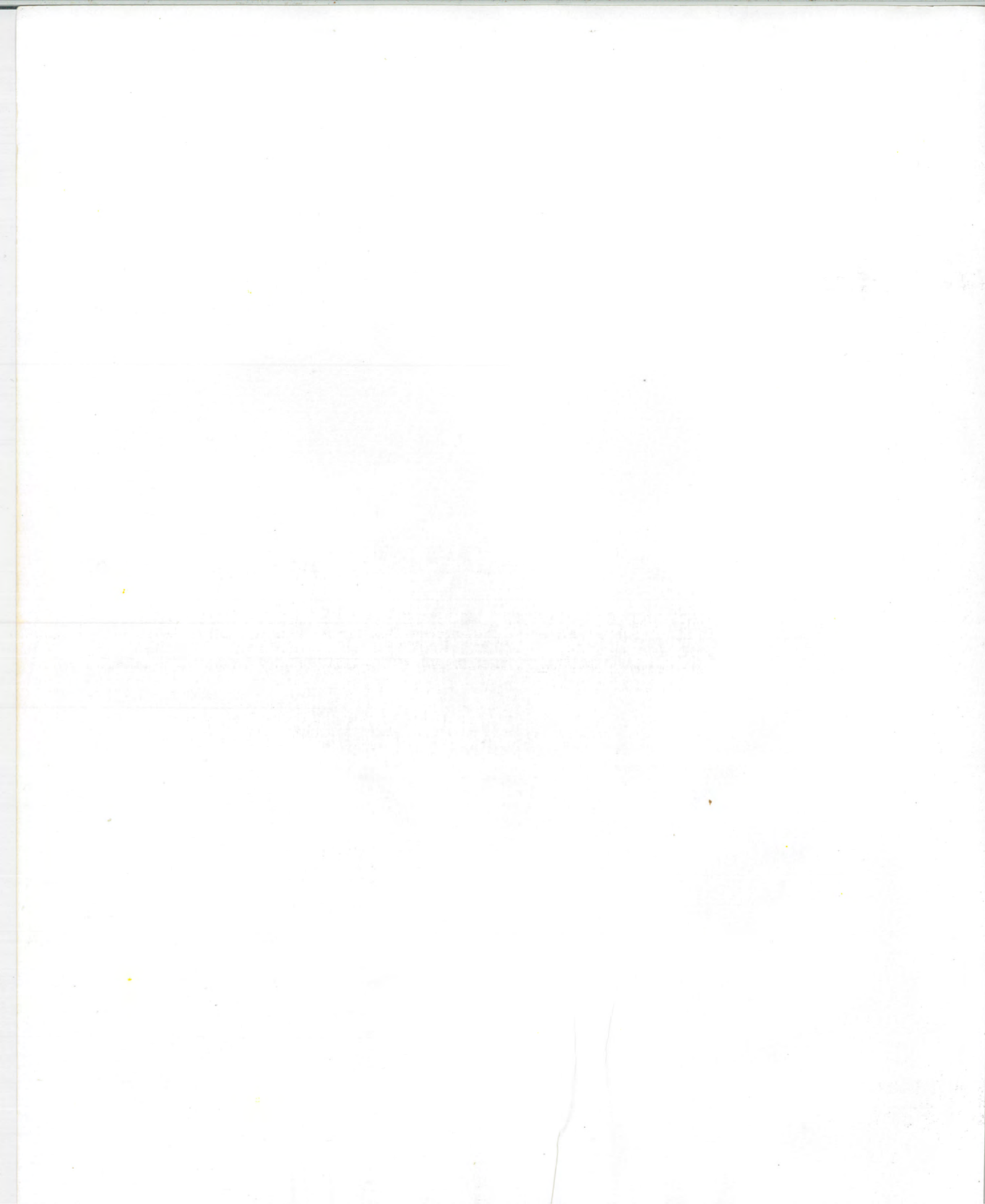


Edited by Betty Ballantine

A Peacock Press/Bantam Book



Once again, with twelve black-and-white studies and thirty-two magnificent color plates in this, his second book, Frank Frazetta proves his pre-eminence in the worlds of fantasy and science fiction art.



FRANK  
FRAZETTA



Frazetta © 72



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BOOK TWO



Introduction by Betty Ballantine

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## FRANK FRAZETTA BOOK TWO

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A perceptive article on Frank Frazetta appearing in *American Artist* opens with the observation, "It is rare that an illustrator . . . creates work and a publisher searches for a text to fit it . . . Frank Frazetta has reached this point." Many other articles have been written about him in which he appears as Frazetta the artist, Frazetta the man, Frazetta the enigma. He is variously described as the wild one, a gutter fighter from the streets of Brooklyn, the second coming of Michaelangelo, a painter who prefers to play baseball, and several other differing views. No one asks why Frazetta, a commercial artist ("fine" art sells only itself, commercial art sells some other product) is a household word in most of America and much of the world—a standard by which other artists are judged, a recognition symbol between strangers. In one sense at least, Frazetta does fulfil the narrow definition of fine artist since the paintings he does for book covers and other projects also sell in their own right in the form of prints—and in vast quantities. His wife, Ellie, runs the poster-print business and its thriving sales, in multi-thousands of each painting, testify to the enormous popularity of Frazetta's work.





When people first react to an artist, they know nothing of his background, or his training, or indeed, anything about him. They are responding simply and solely to what he has put down on canvas, to the pure visual image that pleases, excites, angers, awes, inspires—in a word, *moves* them. So what is it that people see when they first encounter a Frazetta?

First, and most importantly, life. And next, life's closest brother, death. These two subjects dominate Frazetta's work. Look at each plate purely for its subject matter and you will inevitably find some aspect of rampant life or

violent death, and very often, life surmounting death against all likely odds. The girl in *Flying Reptiles* (Pl. 43) is clearly outnumbered and outweighed by that sinuous sabretooth and the threatening bird-reptile creatures. Yet every contorted curve and muscle in her wonderfully over-lifesized body shouts defiance, affirms life in what will obviously be a terminal battle for at least some of the protagonists. One's sympathy is of course with the fearless, gallant female—and notice that at once, emotions are being evoked in the viewer. On the other hand, *The Destroyer* (Pl. 49) is one of Frazetta's loudest paeans to death: a single dominant figure still savagely attacking in a sea of dead and dying bodies. Frazetta is justly famous for his sense of composition. Here the convoluted figures crowd the canvas but, as always, his handling of the lighting leaves the emphasis on his central character. The sense of ferocious power is explicit in this painting, whereas it is only implied in his magnificent warhorse and rider, *The Death Dealer* (Pl. 31 in *THE FANTASTIC ART OF FRANK FRAZETTA, VOL. I*).

Power is generally regarded as an abstract element. Not, however, in a Frazetta painting. When Frazetta paints power, not only is it solidly and vividly delineated in every line of his larger-than-life figures, it ceases to be a mere element and becomes an omni-present integrated force that hits the eye as strongly as the subject matter. Even in the relatively tranquil *Atlantis* (Pl. 23,

VOL. I) one has to look twice to see that the heroic figure is in fact a statue, rather than a powerful warrior guarding a dead city. Or look at another relatively quiet subject—Egyptian Queen (Pl. 21, VOL. I). Every sinuous curve of that big cat spells power, intensifies the feral strength of the artist's subject. In fact, his enjoyment of power for its own sake is obvious from the number of canvases starring big cats (both real and imagined) leopards, tigers, bears, reptiles and other exemplars of extraordinary muscularity. A truly remarkable visualisation of this dedication to power and life exists in the canvas titled *Monster Out of Time* (Pl. 51). Here Frazetta has combined several of his favorite elements in a tour-de-force structured of life, death, power, threat, courage and conflict in a superbly controlled composition that positively writhes with violent energy. As a subject it is of course a well-used theme—man against alligator. However, in Frazetta terms, this becomes superman against super-alligator (or alligator-creature, anyway). For it is also characteristic of this artist, whatever the subject, to make it bigger, curvier, stronger, more venomous, more heroic, more alive, more dead. In a word—more. A good part of what strikes the eye in a Frazetta is his ability to believably exaggerate in order to emphasize the essential quality of whatever his subject may be. As Frazetta himself says, "I see things as they exist but I paint them from the image they've left on my mind rather than how they appear in reality. For instance, if you really

examine your fears, you realize how out of proportion they are. Your mind's eye constantly paints pictures far in excess of what's real. I try to capture those images in my work. I'll make the fist coming straight at you larger, bonier, and much more menacing, because I'm dealing with the emotion of fear and not the anatomical proportions of the hand."

When he encounters an opportunity to paint subject matter where the figures are not heroic his ability to express emotion in painting is particularly impressive. Thus, in *Stranded* (Pl. 46) it does not really matter that the physical circumstances are atypical of a Frazetta painting. He uses a rounded horizon against the void of space (implying a small, lonely world) as a background to emphasize the bleak desolation of his castaways. That defeated man, those bewildered creatures, are lost, they are abandoned, they are desolate. That is the feeling that is important to this illustration, hence it is the epitome of desolation that Frazetta projects. He conveys emotion fully as much as he conveys a story.

Look at *The Moonmaid* (Pl. 48). After one gets over the delicious shock of those magnificent buttocks one becomes aware that the girl must trust her horrendous charger. In fact, it is evident that he is rescuing her from some pursuing threat. The buzzards in the background, the vicious spear, the savagely snarling head of the



centaur-creature—all speak of death. Yet, as viewer, we feel confident that the girl (surely a princess of some kind) will be safe. Life in the form of violent action, another glorious element of Frazetta's work, speaks in every muscle of the girl's thigh and calf, the arched back, the rigid arm, the forward thrust of the centaur, in the very swirl of scarlet cloak and ebon mane.

Action fairly boils off the page in *The Return of the Mucker* (Pl. 75). Many of Frazetta's paintings, like this one, are all movement. Even where obvious movement does not exist, there is coiled tension, bodies vibrant and ready to explode into some heroic conflict, as in *Escape on Venus* (Pl. 53). This painting is also a splendid example of yet another effective aspect of Frazetta's ability to grab the viewer—his marvelous use of sinew, curve and muscle to convey a strongly sensual quality. This feeling runs all through his work, whether his subject is human, or the feline and reptilian forms he uses so much, or even his roots and trees and water.

To the delight of Frazetta's vast audience, when it comes to a visualization of the breasts of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Martian ladies, both artist and author happily ignore the realities of low-gravity Mars (plus the fact of course, that Martian females are oviparous, hence presumably do not need mammaries). On the other hand, Frazetta uses Martian gravity handily in the flying figure of John Carter battling several dozen green

anthropoid beings in *John Carter and the Savage Apes of Mars* (Pl. 55). Frazetta's Tarzan is far and away the most believable of all the Tarzans conceived. He is of course beautifully well-developed, lean, hard, tall and ropily muscled. It is entirely credible that this man could travel for miles by swinging through the trees hour-by-hour, or even grapple with a lion. Many of Frazetta's strongest supporters love the early Tarzan paintings such as *The Lost Empire* (Pl. 76). Although Frazetta's Tarzan is close to Burroughs' own image of the jungle hero, generally speaking, the artist prefers to use his own concepts of the male and female human form to that of any description an author might provide. Over the years his figures, no matter what their differences and characteristics, have become symbols—symbols of sex, symbols of strength. That in itself contributes to the high popularity and recognizability of a Frazetta painting. His women, indeed, are a breed unto themselves. And the artist says, "A woman can be sensuous and erotic in typical, mundane movements, and I try to capture that precise motion or pose when she is at her most sensuous."

Another quality which seems to have instant eye appeal is Frazetta's use of color. One responds at once to the breathtaking excitement of his reds, the subtle, deliberately mono-toned back-grounds, the strong blacks and sombre greens. Again, *John Carter and the Savage Apes of Mars*

(Pl. 55) is a remarkable composition combining the richness of all these colors, together with the clever use of light on that flying figure above the red cloak (focal point) and (secondary focus) the buttocks of a female captured by a gigantic anthropoid-appearing arm.

Still, one can analyse all one wants to about composition, color, drawing, exaggeration, emphasis—these are present but they are technicalities, the tools of the trade if you will. The fact is that it is the overall emotional impact of each painting which grabs people and keeps them fascinated despite the repetitive nature of the subject matter. Defiance, anger, death-threat, sex—each painting fairly crawls with emotions that are elemental to life—and each is constructed to give that emotion the effect of a hammerblow. The sensuously curved and superbly muscled figures, the heroic forms, the gigantic adversaries provoke instant attention, usually produce an instant Wow! reaction. The color, movement, violence and sheer bravura project and evoke feeling. Whether he does it consciously or not (and it seems evident from what he has said that Frazetta is very much aware of what he is doing) the fact is that this artist puts into his work those elements most likely to excite an emotional reaction. “Puts into” is easy to say. Why do others not do the same? The answer is, they try. But there is only one Frazetta, and the final ingredient has to be a talent that is unique to one man. You cannot, in

fact, divorce the artist from the man. Even though he works as an illustrator, Frazetta does in fact paint what he wants to paint. It is the man who dictates how the artist will use the gift he has been blessed with and has developed into one of the most successful pleasure-giving talents in the artistic world.

Probably one of the more fruitless discussions one can get into is to ask an artist how he does it; and trying to analyse Frazetta, supposing that one could, would take many more pages than are available here. Better by far to sit back, marvel, and enjoy the product of his talent.



43) FLYING REPTILES  
(Poster No. 43)



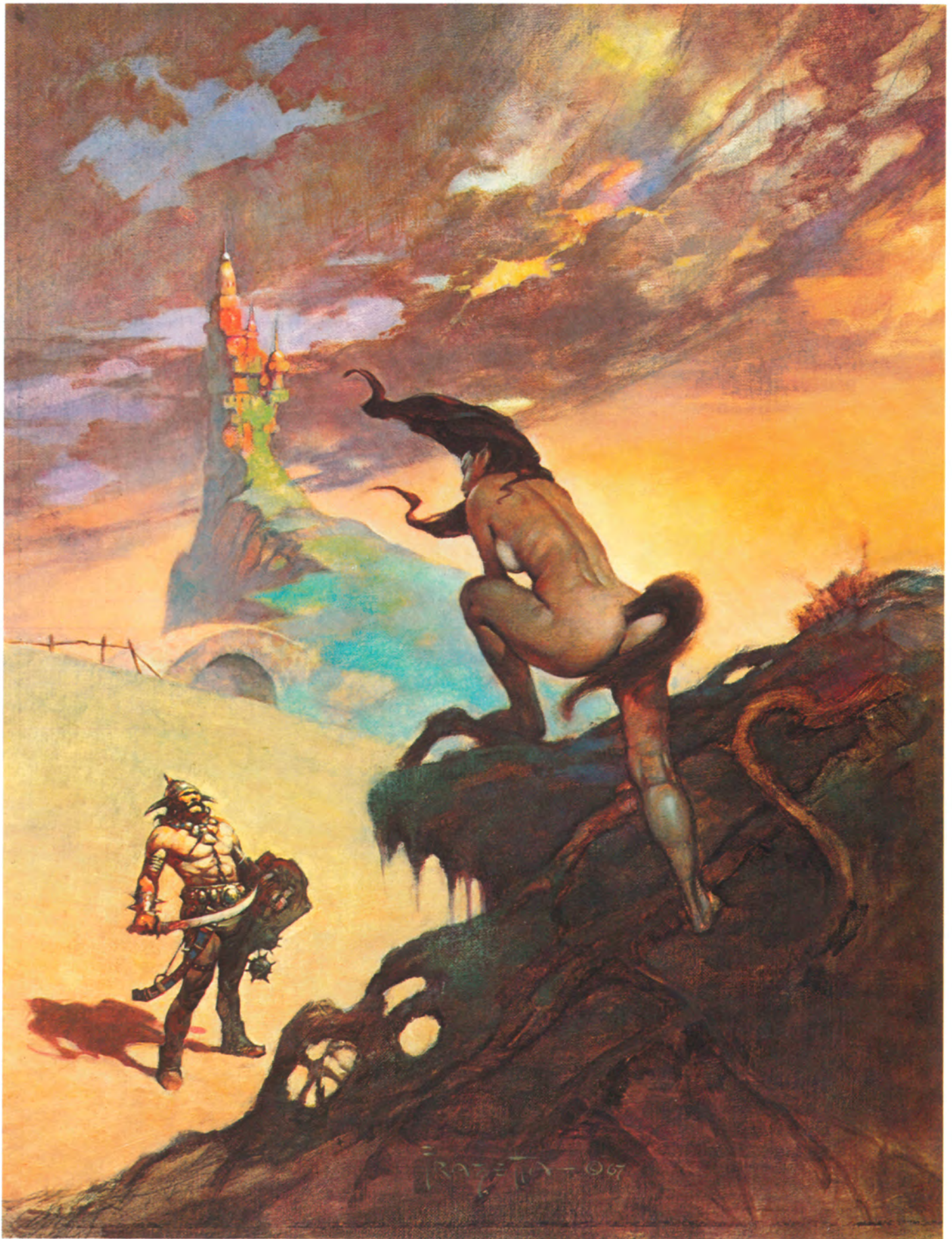
jan zetter - 08

44) JONGAR FIGHTS BACK  
(Poster No. 44)





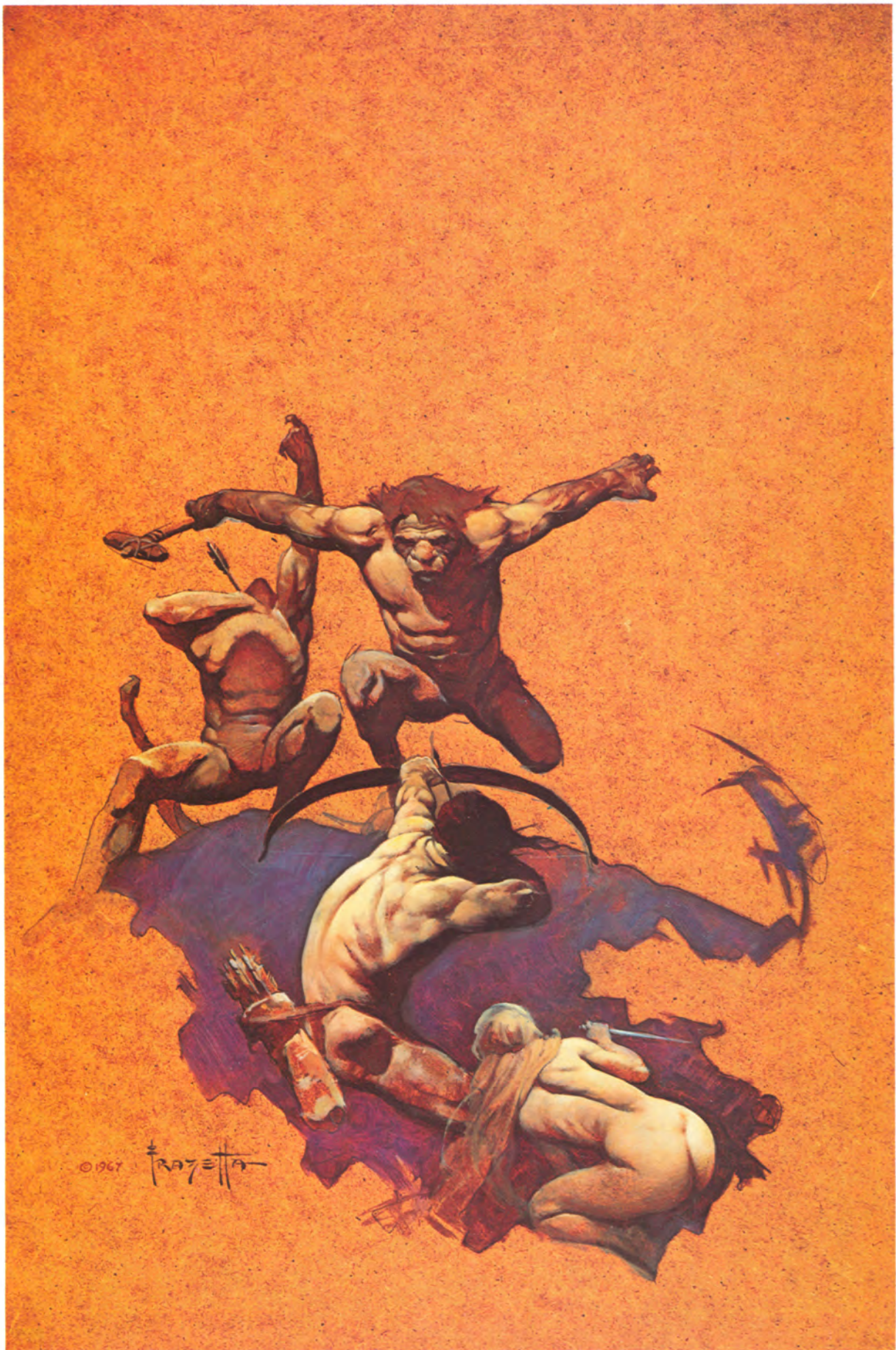
45) PONY TAIL  
(Poster No. 45)







47) LAND OF TERROR  
(Poster No. 47)



48) THE MOONMAID  
(Poster No. 48)





48a) detail from THE MOONMAID  
(No Poster)

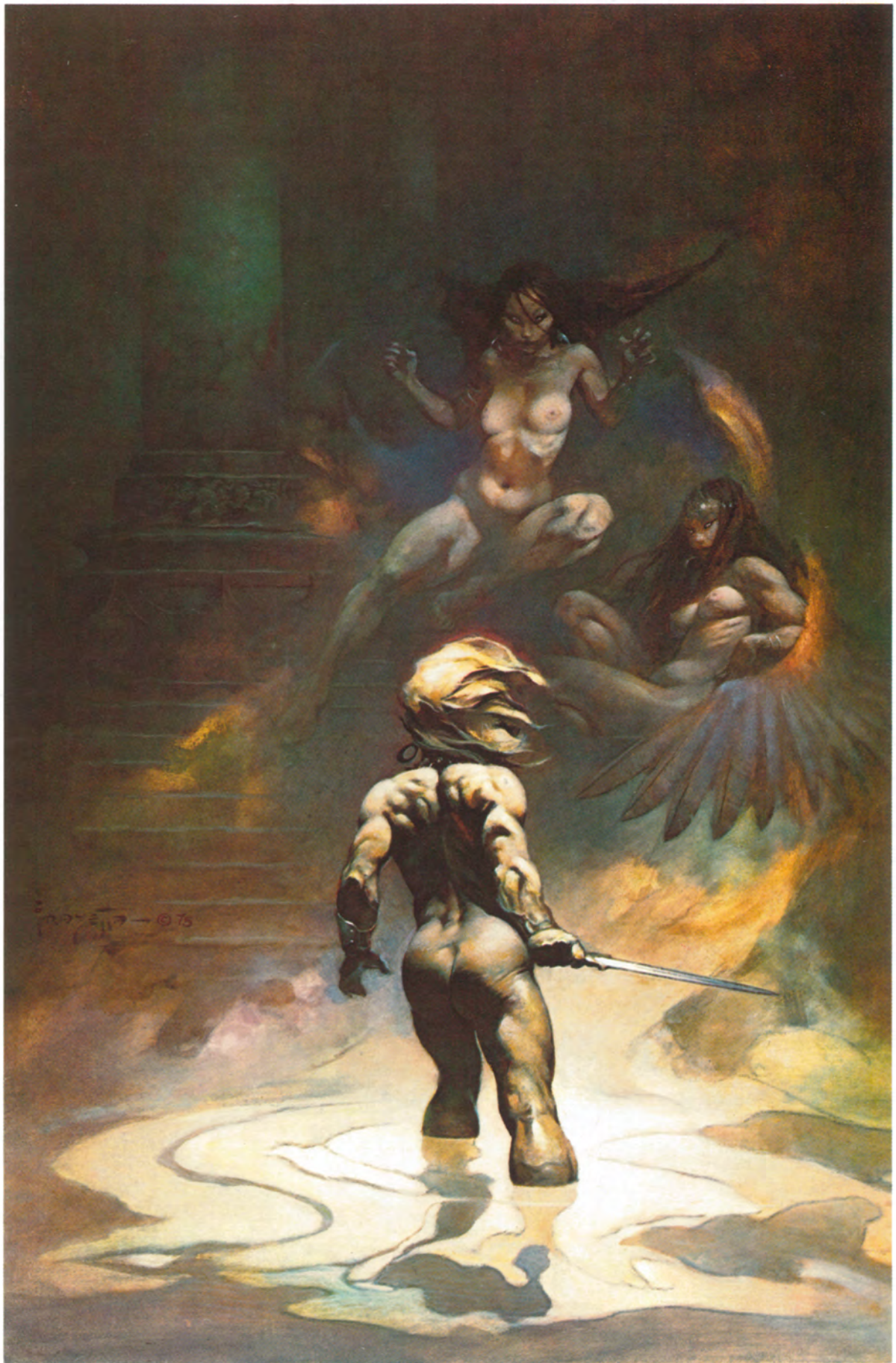




49a) detail from THE DESTROYER  
(No Poster)

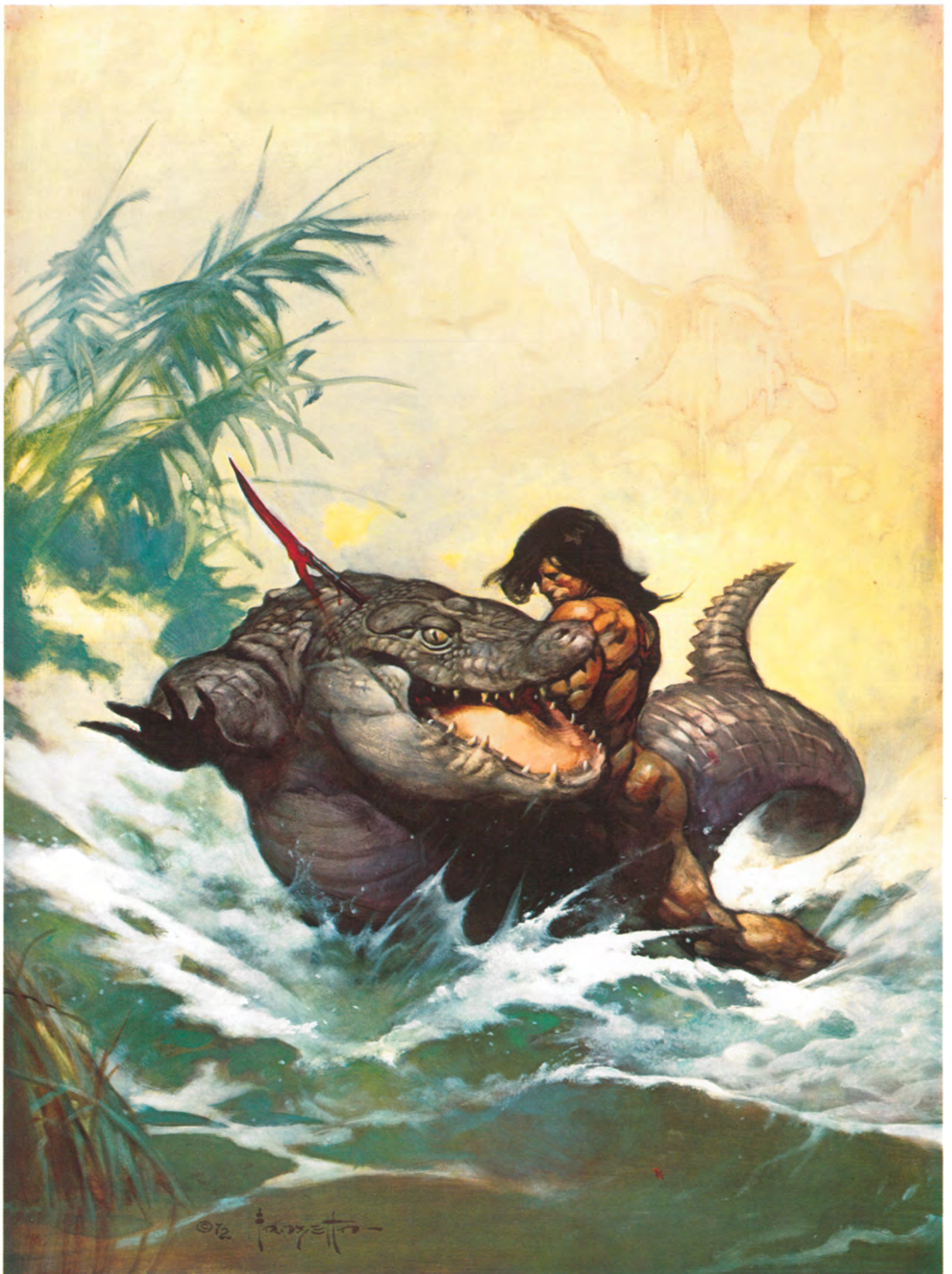






51) MONSTER OUT OF TIME  
(Poster No. 51)

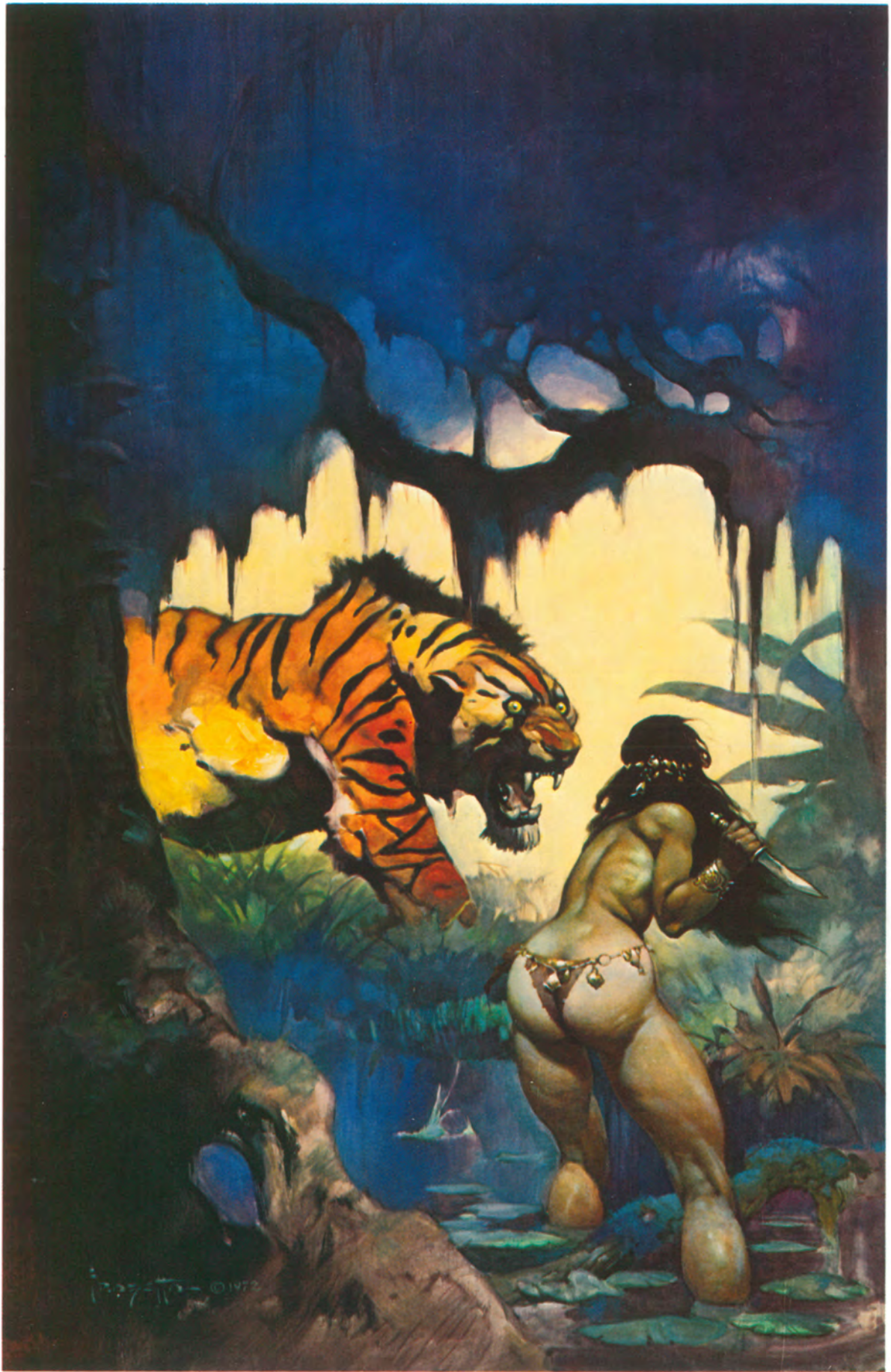




52) THE NORSEMAN  
(Poster No. 52)



53) ESCAPE ON VENUS  
(Poster No. 53)



54) A PRINCESS OF MARS  
(Poster No. 54)

Magister - 1970



55) JOHN CARTER AND THE SAVAGE APES OF MARS  
(Poster No. 55)





56) THUVIA, MAID OF MARS  
(Poster No. 56)



57) "To Tara's horror, the headless body moved,  
took the hideous head in its hands  
and set it on its shoulders."

from THE CHESSMEN OF MARS

irajeta © 75



58) "As Gahan entered his square, U-dor leaped  
towards him with drawn sword."

from THE CHESSMEN OF MARS









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FRAZZETTA  
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60) Scene from "Lord of the Rings"



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61) KUBLA'S ANGUISH



62) THE MAD KING  
(Poster No. 57)



63) GULLIVER OF MARS  
(Poster No. 58)

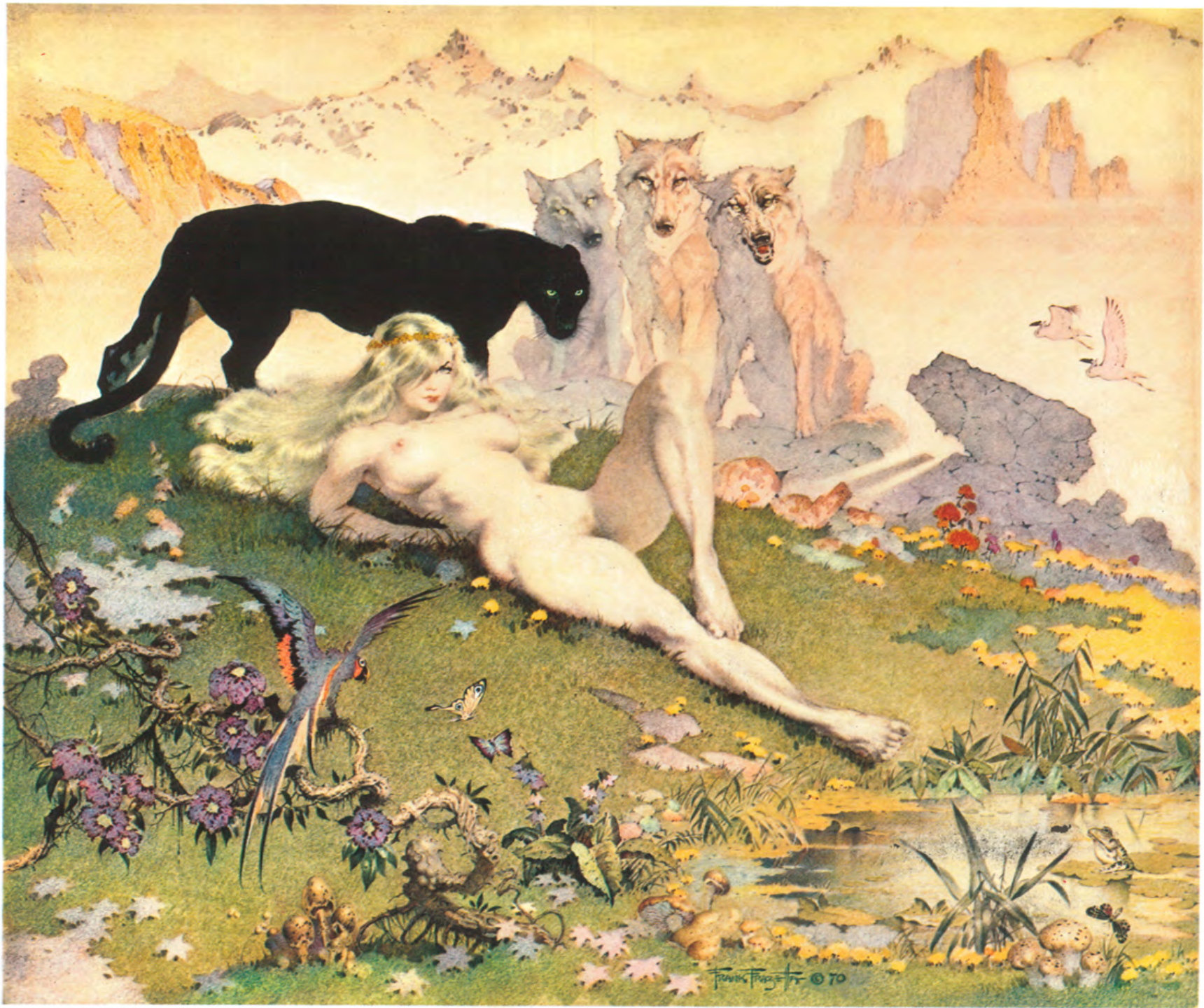




64) JUNGLE TALES OF TARZAN  
(No Poster)



65) GOLDEN GIRL  
(Poster No. 59)



65a) detail from GOLDEN GIRL  
(No Poster)









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67) MADAME DERRINGER  
(Poster No. 61)







69) BEASTS OF VENUS  
(No Poster)



70) GHOUL QUEEN  
(Poster No. 63)



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72) BUCKING BRONCHO  
(Poster No. 65)



73) BEYOND THE FOREST STAR  
(No Poster)

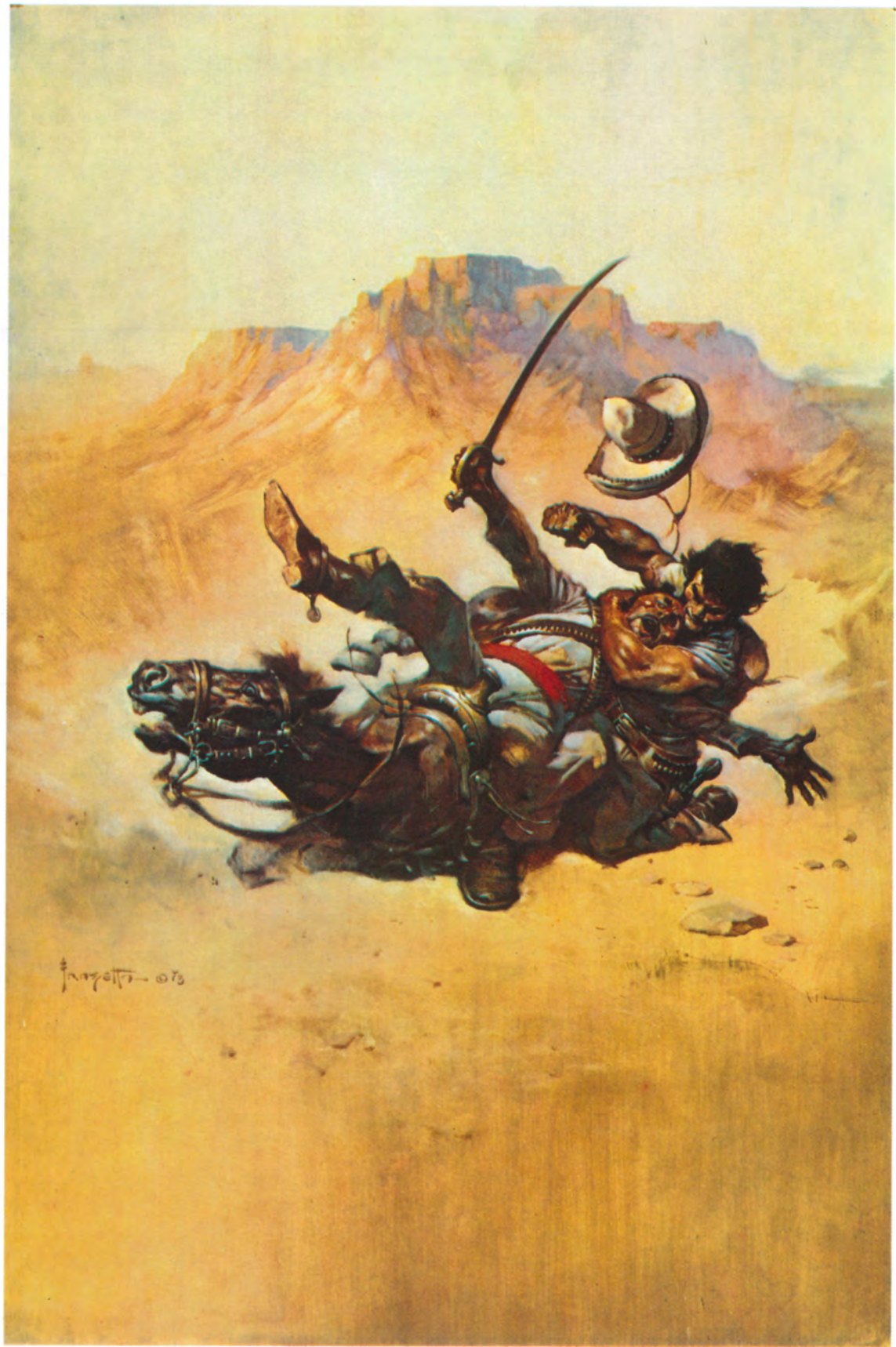


74) DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH  
(Poster No. 66)





75) THE RETURN OF THE MUCKER  
(Poster No. 67)



76) THE LOST EMPIRE  
(No Poster)



77) SPACEMAN









79) KUBLAI KHAN



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80) THE HUNTRESS  
(Poster No. 68)



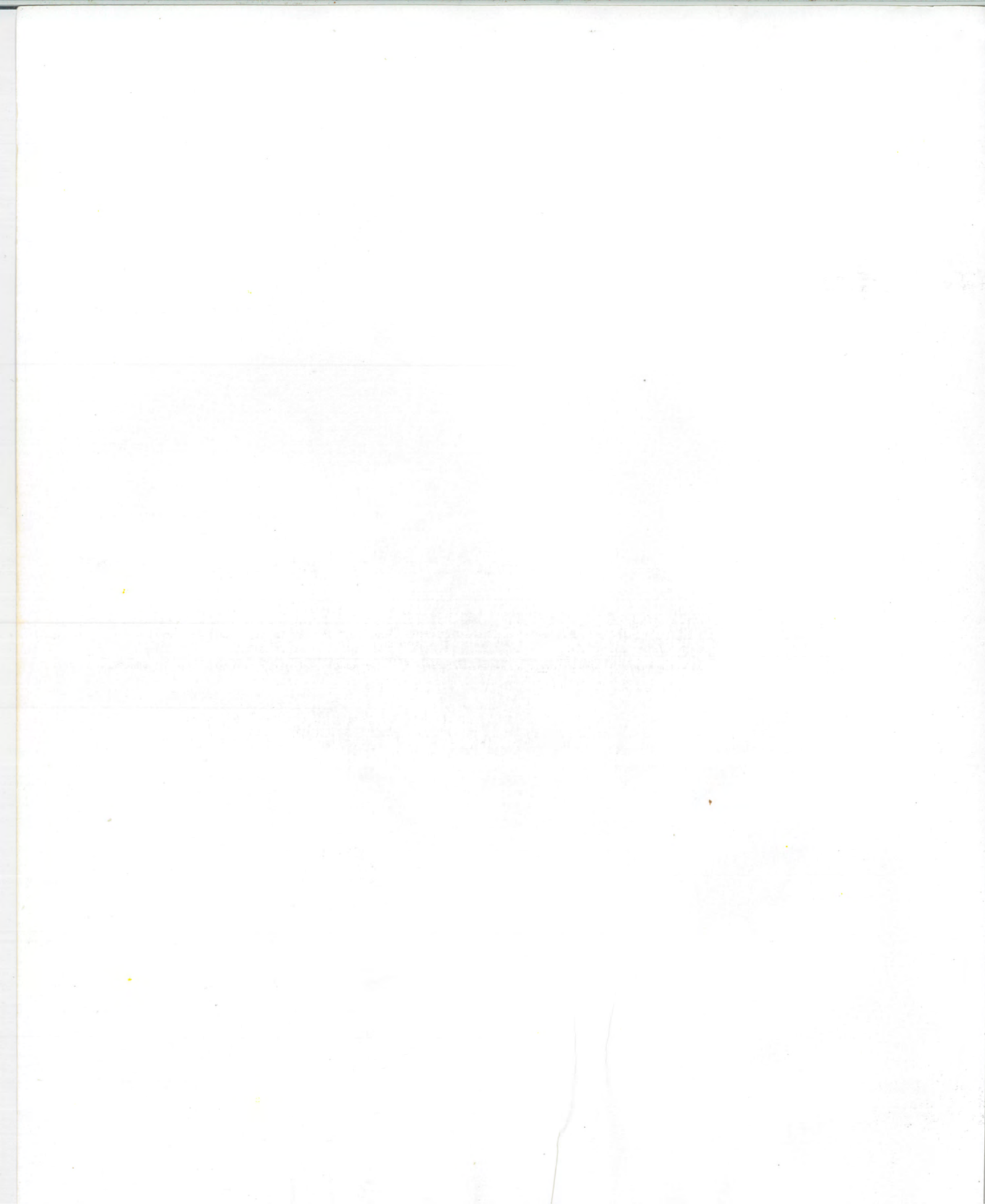
81) DARK KINGDOM  
(Poster No. 69)

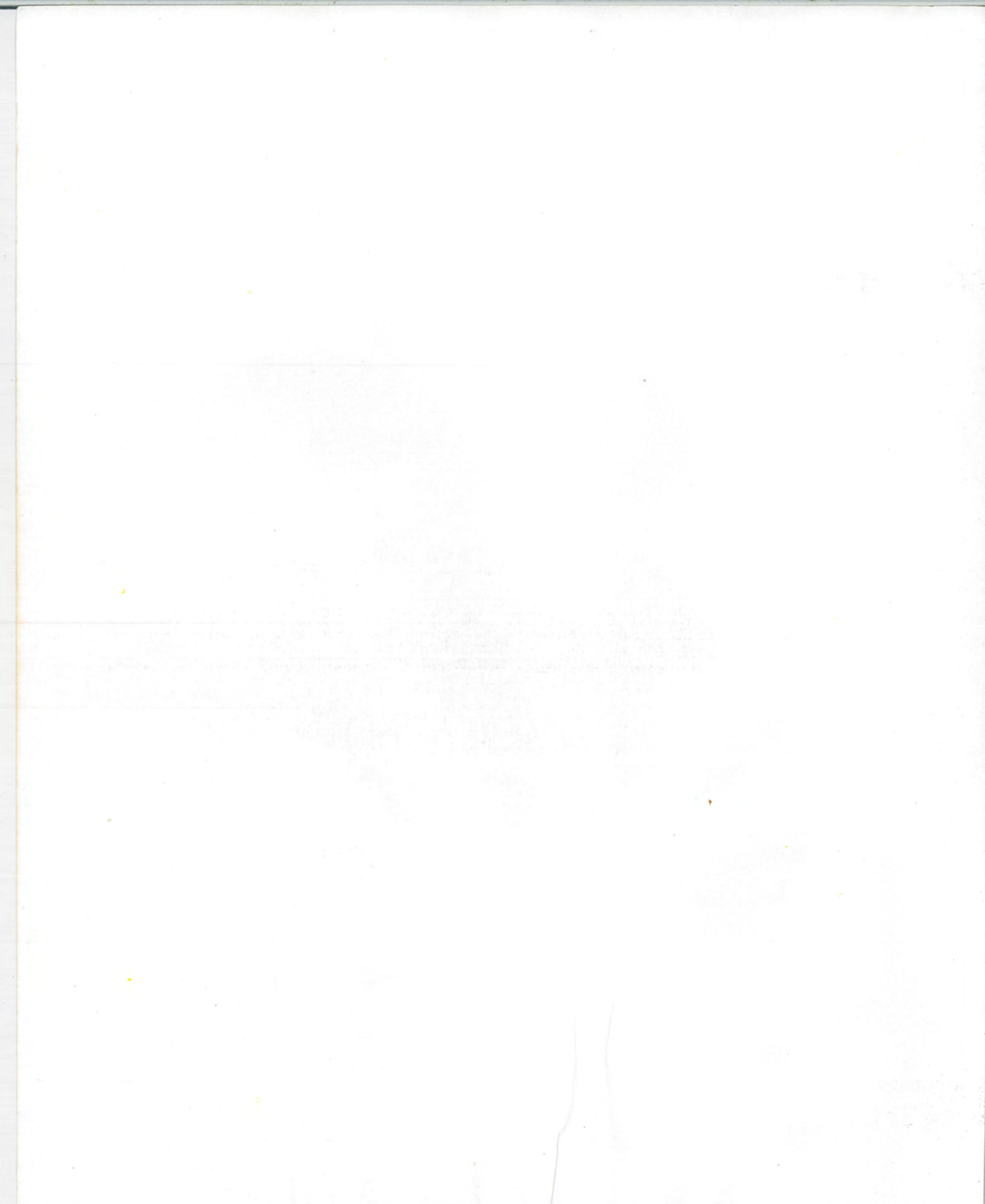


81a) detail of DARK KINGDOM  
(No Poster)









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BOOK TWO

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