

Three

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Conan the Barbarian: Red Nails

Robert E. Howard

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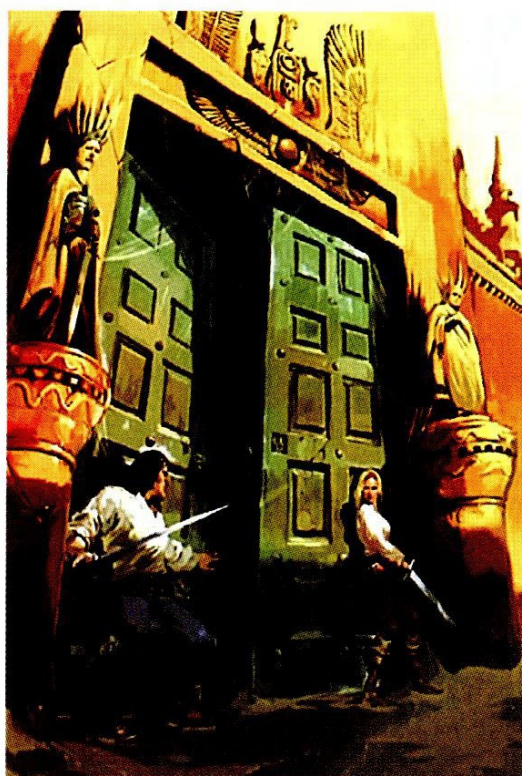
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DOMINOES

Conan the Barbarian: Red Nails



LEVEL THREE

1000 HEADWORDS



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به صورت نشر بر خط و حامل به ثبت رسیده است.
کپی برداری از آن خلاف شرع، قانون و اخلاق است و شامل پیگیرد خواهد شد.

DOMINOES

Series Editors: Bill Bowler and Sue Parminter

Conan the Barbarian: Red Nails

Robert E. Howard

Text adaptation by Bill Bowler

Illustrated by Ollie Cuthbertson

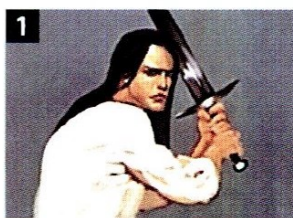
Robert Ervin Howard (1906–1936) was an American author of popular fiction. He wrote different kinds of stories, and many of these were published in serial form – in monthly fiction magazines such as *Weird Tales*. His work includes fantasy stories – like those about Conan the Barbarian; cowboy and western stories; and sports stories – about life in the boxing ring. *Conan the Barbarian* is probably Howard's most famous fictional character, and a number of Conan films have been made over the years.

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ACTIVITIES

BEFORE READING

- 1 Read about some of the characters in *Conan the Barbarian: Red Nails*. Match the sentences with the named and numbered pictures.



Conan the Barbarian



Valeria, the pirate



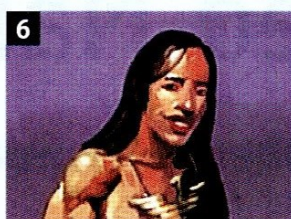
Prince Olmec



Princess Tascela



Tolkemec



Techotl

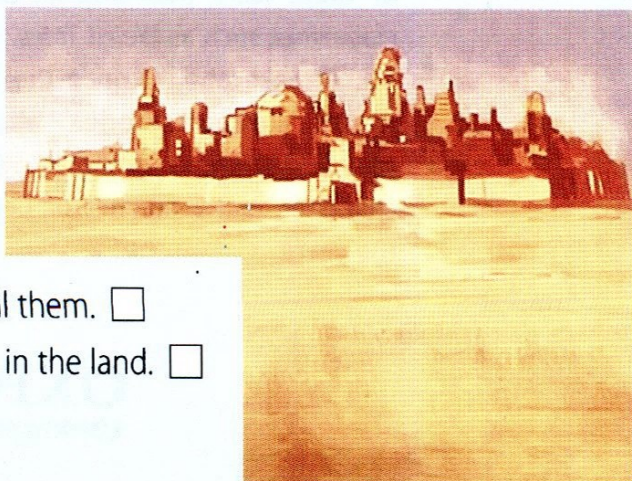


Yasala

- a She is older than she seems, and she knows many terrible secrets. ☐
- b He comes from the cold northern lands, is brave, and likes fighting. ☐
- c She likes living on a ship, and stealing things from other ships. ☐
- d He is a friendly fighter who helps Conan and Valeria. ☐
- e His people must obey him, and he is interested in Valeria. ☐
- f She is a young woman who takes her orders from Tascela. ☐
- g He is a clever old man, but no one has seen him for many years. ☐

- 2 *Conan the Barbarian: Red Nails* takes place mostly in Xuchotl, an old city in the dry southern lands. What do you think Conan and Valeria find there? Tick four boxes.

- a A very old king who is dying. ☐
- b Fighting going on between two armies. ☐
- c The ghosts of dead soldiers. ☐
- d Unusual farm animals. ☐
- e Strange fruits that grow in the air. ☐
- f Flowers that make you sleepy when you smell them. ☐
- g A queen who wants to be the most beautiful in the land. ☐
- h Music that makes the listener go crazy. ☐



1. THE BONES ON THE CRAG

The young woman got down from her tired horse. She tied it to a nearby tree and looked around. Tall trees with thick **undergrowth** between them stood by the **pool** where she stopped to drink.

She was a tall, strong figure, wearing brown boots, red **breeches**, a red **belt**, and a white shirt. Her long, golden hair was tied back. She had a straight **sword**, and a long knife in her belt. She was Valeria, one of the famous Red **Pirates** from the coast, and her eyes were the colour of the sea.

Turning, she walked beyond the pool to the east. The silent forest made her uncomfortable. No birds sang in the trees. No small forest animals moved in the undergrowth. Nothing broke the heavy, unnatural stillness around her.

She was hungry now. So she looked for some fruit to eat. Suddenly, she saw a large hill of grey rock before her. Its sides narrowed as they went up, and its top went above the tree branches.

undergrowth
plants that grow under trees

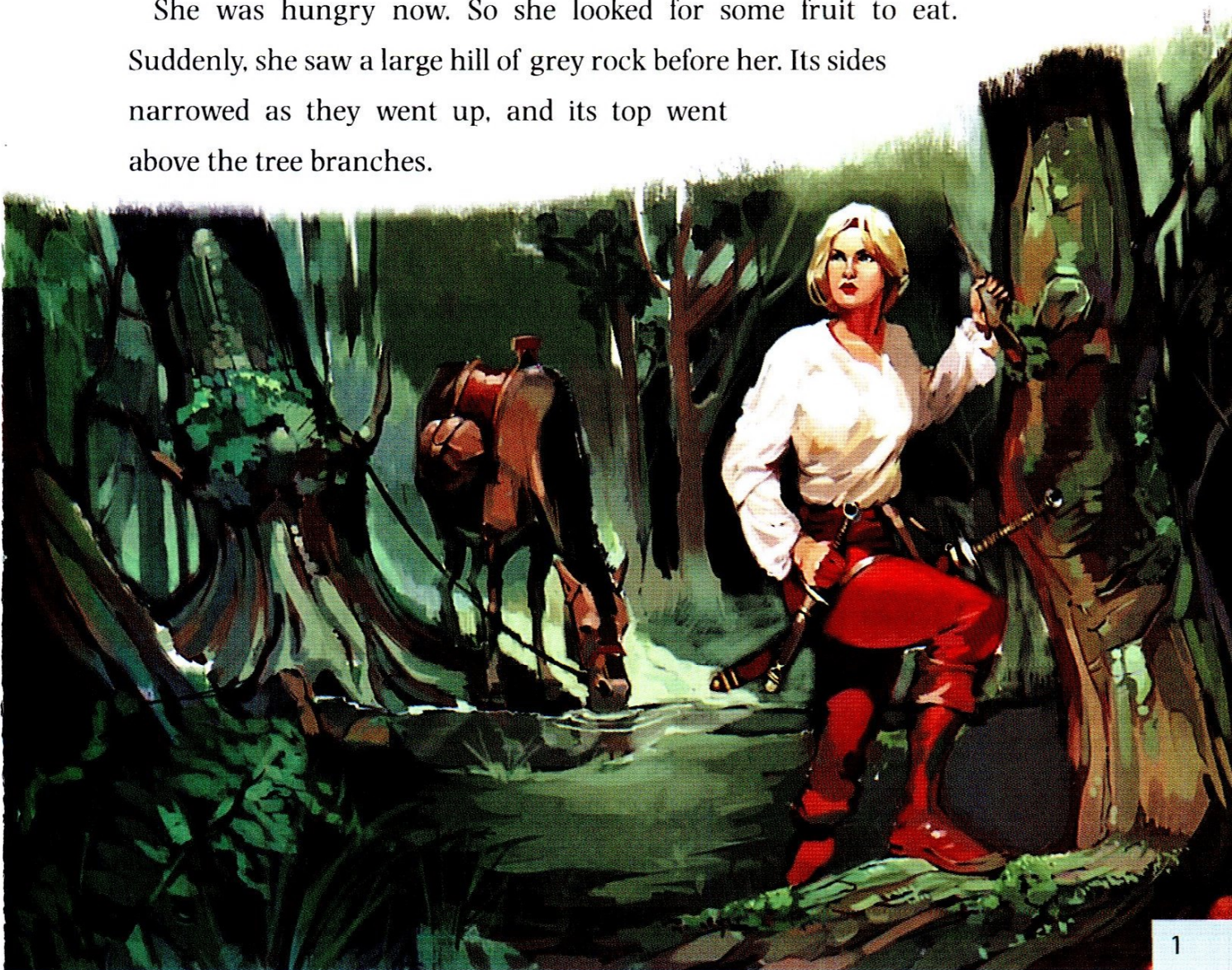
pool a little water on the ground

breeches
trousers or pants that stop just below the knee

belt you wear this round your middle

sword a long, sharp knife for fighting

pirate a person on a ship who takes things from other ships



'**Maybe** up there I can see what lies beyond this forest,' she thought. So she climbed up the **crag**. Soon she stood on a wide stone **ledge** as high as the tallest tree. A thin finger of rock went up from this into the sky.

Just then, the toe of her boot hit something hard under the dry leaves on the ledge. She moved these to one side and found the whitened **bones** of a man underneath. She looked at these carefully. He had died a natural, not violent death, she decided. 'But why did he come up here to die?' she wondered.

She climbed up the finger of rock and looked around her. To the north, she saw hills at the furthest edge of the forest. She had crossed those, escaping from the town of Sukmet. To the west and east, there were only trees as far as she could see. But southward, she saw something surprising. There the green forest ended in a wide yellow **desert**, full of **cactus** plants. And in this desert there was a great, walled **city**. 'Hmm ... it's strange to find a large city so far from the nearest town,' thought Valeria. 'Maybe it's worth visiting.'

She climbed back down to the ledge. Just then, she heard something behind her. She turned quickly, her hand going to her sword. Her eyes widened when she saw the man who was standing on the ledge. He was dressed like her, in pirate's clothes – boots, breeches, and a shirt open at the neck. He also had a sword and knife in his belt.

'Conan!' cried Valeria. 'What are you doing here?'

Conan the **Barbarian** stared at her with **fierce** blue eyes. 'I thought you guessed how I felt about you in Sukmet.'

'I noticed,' she replied coolly. 'So you came after me.'

'Yes,' answered Conan. 'The Chief of the Stygian Army went crazy when he heard you'd killed one of his officers. Suddenly you were an enemy and he sent his men after you.'

maybe perhaps

crag a tall, thin mountain of rock

ledge a long, flat thing that you can stand on high above the ground

bone a hard, white thing inside the body of an animal or person

desert a place which has no water

cactus a plant growing in dry country; it has skin with spines to stop animals eating it

city a big and important town

barbarian someone wild who comes from a wild country

fierce very strong, and frightening



'What could I do? The man **attacked** me, said he wanted me as his wife. I wasn't interested. So I used my knife and ran.'

'It was good that you left quickly,' Conan said. 'The man's brother came after you – to kill you.'

'And?' asked Valeria.

'I killed him, and left his body for the wild animals. That stopped me for a while, and I nearly lost you. But here I am.'

'Ready to take me back to Sukmet,' Valeria said coldly.

'No,' Conan answered. 'I'm bored with army life.'

attack to start fighting; when you start fighting someone

'You prefer to be a poor traveller,' Valeria smiled.

'I'm a pirate, like you. Money comes and goes easily for us. Coming south was clever,' went on Conan. 'The dead officer's brother was the only man to come this way. So you're safe.'

'And what are you going to do now?' Valeria asked.

'Travel to the coast,' answered Conan.

'Then go,' she said, 'I have other plans.'

'Come with me,' he answered, taking a step toward her.

'Never!' she cried, pulling out her sword.

Just then, they heard loud animal screams far below them, together with the noise of breaking bones.

'What's that?' cried Valeria.

'Our horses,' answered Conan. 'I left mine next to yours by the pool. Something's attacking them. But what?'

They climbed slowly down the crag until they were just under the forest roof. In the green darkness between the **vines**, they looked toward the place where they had left both of their horses. They could see nothing.

'Listen,' whispered Conan.

They heard terrible sounds from the undergrowth of great teeth pulling at horsemeat. Then a gentle wind blew past Conan and Valeria, taking their smell straight to the nose of the killer among the leaves.

At once, the large head of a great **reptile** looked up on its long neck over the plants around it. It had rows of fierce-looking, yellow teeth, and its open mouth was bloody. It stepped out of the undergrowth, and they could see its short legs, rounded body, and long tail.



vine a long, thin, green climbing plant in the forest

reptile an animal that has scales on its body and is often green

'A **dragon**! Back up the crag – quick!' cried Conan. 'I don't think it can climb, but maybe it can stand on its back legs.'

They hurried back up the grey rock, while the dragon ran toward them. It hit the rock face with a crash, and stood on its back legs to attack them. But it could not reach them, so it sat at the bottom of the crag and waited.

'How long will it stay, do you think?' asked Valeria.

Conan put the toe of his boot to the bones of the man lying on the ledge. 'Well, this man climbed up to escape from a dragon, and it never left the bottom of the crag until he died.'

'Can't we move across to a tree and escape that way?' asked Valeria.

'The branches around us aren't thick enough. And that dragon could push down a tree easily,' answered Conan.

'But can't we climb down when it goes to eat or drink?'

'It's just eaten, and drunk blood! It won't be hungry or thirsty for some time now.'

'Then let's die fighting it,' said Valeria. It was hard, as a fighter, to sit waiting calmly for death.

'No, its skin is too thick for our swords. And why die for nothing?' said Conan. 'We'll find a way out of this, I'm sure. It's lucky for us that it's not a flying fire-dragon!'

Just then, Valeria saw some purple fruits on a tree branch near them. It was a tree with dark green leaves.

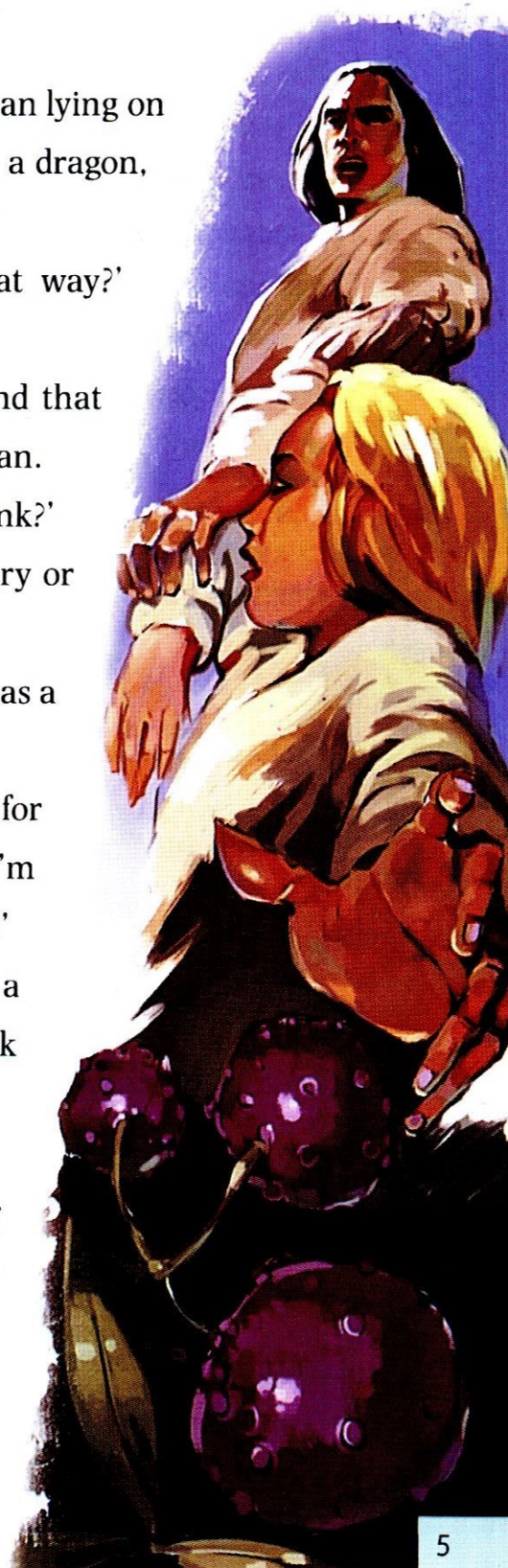
'At least we won't die hungry,' she said. 'Look.'

'Don't touch those!' cried Conan. 'They're Apples of Death. Take a bite of one, or let some of its **juice** fall on your skin, and you'll die in seconds.'

Suddenly, he smiled at Valeria. 'Hey!' he cried. 'You've just found the answer to our problem!'

dragon a big animal that can usually fly through the sky, and send fire from its mouth

juice sweet water from fruit that you can drink



READING CHECK

1 Put these sentences in the correct order. Number them 1–11.

- a She finds and climbs a tall, thin mountain of rock. ☐
- b Conan has an idea of how to kill the dragon. ☐
- c They climb back up the rock away from the dragon. ☐
- d Valeria stops in the forest to drink. ☒
- e They hear the screams of their horses so they climb down the rock. ☐
- f Conan arrives, climbs the tall rock, and surprises Valeria. ☐
- g She finds what is left of a man's dead body near the top. ☐
- h Conan and Valeria talk about why she left Sukmet. ☐
- i They see a meat-eating dragon in the forest. ☐
- j Valeria sees some purple forest fruits on a tree near them. ☐
- k She looks north, south, east, and west over the tops of the forest trees. ☐

2 A 'back story' is what happens to a character before the story begins. Correct six more mistakes in Valeria's back story.

A Stygian Army officer wanted Valeria as his ~~friend~~^{wife}. She wasn't interested, and so she killed him with her gun. Then she left Sukmet slowly. The Stygian Army Chief sent his women after Valeria. The officer's father came after her, too, but Conan killed him. Then Conan followed Valeria to the coast. Conan is going to take Valeria back to Sukmet.

ACTIVITIES

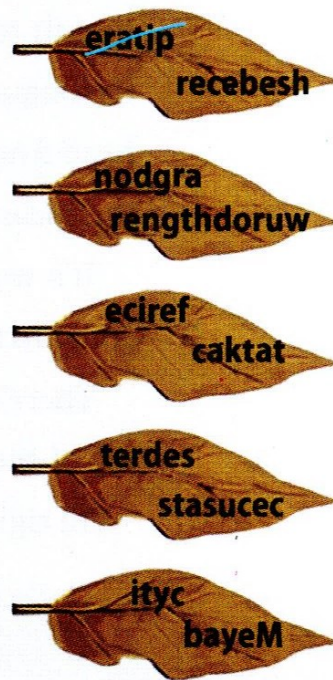
WORD WORK

1 Correct the boxed words in these sentences.

- Valeria drinks some water from the **fool**. *pool*
- She has a knife in her **bell**.
- She finds a man's **phone** under some dry leaves.
- There are many green **lines** in the forest.
- Conan has a **word** and a knife on him.
- A large, green **reporter** comes after them.
- They climb up the rocky **crash** to escape.
- They stand on the high stone **leg** and wait.
- This purple fruit is full of **jewels**.

2 Find words in the leaves to complete the sentences.

- Valeria the *pirate* is wearing a shirt, and boots.
- A is in the
- It has eyes, and it runs to them.
- The yellow has in it.
- Valeria sees a there. '..... I can visit it,' she thinks.



GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the next chapter? Tick the boxes.

	Yes	No
a The dragon hurts Conan badly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b Conan kills the dragon.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c The people of the forest angrily put Conan in prison.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d Valeria finds a baby dragon in the forest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e Valeria and Conan leave the forest for the desert.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f They find a lot of dead bodies in the city.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. BY FIRESTONE LIGHT

spear a long, thin stick with a sharp knife at one end that you use for fighting

poison something that kills you when you eat or drink it, or it gets into your body

Saying nothing more, Conan went down the crag a little way. He cut long, thin sticks from the tree branches. Back on the ledge, he tied these together, with his knife at one end, using forest vines. 'Do you like my **spear**?' he asked when he was finished.

'Yes. But will it go through dragon skin?' said Valeria.

'There's more than one way to kill a wild cat!' laughed Conan. He put the end of the spear into one of the **poison**-filled apples, moving it around until it was covered in purple juice. Then he went down the crag again and began shouting at the reptile, calling it every unpleasant name that he knew.

Angrily, the terrible animal stood on its back legs and opened its mouth to attack. At once, Conan drove the spear into the side of its tongue. The great animal went crazy, screaming and moving its head from side to side in pain, trying without success to shake out the spear. Then, suddenly, it ran off.

'It's working!' cried Conan. 'The poison's making it thirsty. It's going to the pool. Now's our chance to escape!'

'There's a walled city in the desert to the south. I saw it from the top of the crag,' said Valeria quickly. 'Let's go there.'

'All right,' answered Conan.



Quickly they climbed down to the forest floor, moving around the pool where the reptile drank. 'That's good. There's no wind,' whispered Conan. 'With the poison in its blood, the dragon won't be able to see. But if it smells us, we're finished!'

Soon they reached the edge of the forest. The desert was close by. The sun was going down now, and night was coming. Just then, a desert wind blew toward them. They suddenly heard the reptile moving through the trees behind them.

'Run!' cried Conan. They ran for their lives. But the reptile was dying. It crashed into a tree, fell, and did not get up.

'Let's go on,' said Conan. 'Maybe other dragons will come when they hear its death cries.'

So Conan and Valeria hurried across the desert. The great city, black in the silvery light of the moon, seemed very far. After they had walked for hours, they were only half the way there. So they decided to spend the night safe inside a circle of desert cactuses. While one of them slept, the other watched.

Early next morning, they had a tasty breakfast – sweet juicy cactus leaves from which they had cut the thick, hard skin.

After that, they walked on toward the city entrance.



‘Strange!’ said Conan on the way. ‘There are no cows or fields. How do these city people live?’

Valeria looked at the high city walls, now as red as blood in the morning light. No heads looked over them, no voices called. All was still and silent. ‘I don’t like it,’ she said.

Later that morning, they arrived at the great metal city **gates**. They were closed, and green with time.

‘Nobody has opened these for years!’ cried Valeria.

‘That explains a lot. It’s a dead city!’ replied Conan. ‘But who lived here? When? And why did they go?’

‘And did they leave any **treasure** behind them?’ added Valeria, with a pirate’s interest.

‘Let’s see about that,’ answered Conan. And he put his shoulder to one of the gates, and pushed it inward. Noisily, the great metal door opened. Taking their swords in their hands, Conan and Valeria entered the city.

They found themselves not in an open street, but in a great and colourful stone hall that was tall, long, and wide. The floor was a strange, deep red colour, and the walls were dark green. The **ceiling** was midnight blue, and groups of bright green stones in it shone down poisonously.

‘Those are “firestones”!’ explained Conan. ‘They shine in the dark like cat’s eyes. Let’s look around. I think you’re right – there’s probably treasure here.’

So they walked down the great hall. The floor under their feet shone like fire. There were no doors from the hall into the open air, only to other rooms. Sometimes narrow, high windows let in the light of day in different places, but mostly the firestones shone down, covering everything with their fantastic green light. Sometimes they saw white stone tables and chairs, or rich red carpets in the rooms.

gate a big door
into – or out of –
a city

treasure
something
expensive,
for example,
gold, silver, or
valuable stones

ceiling the part
of a room above
your head



‘There aren’t any bones or dead bodies anywhere, so I don’t think everyone here died suddenly from a terrible illness,’ said Conan. ‘Maybe they just left the city one day. But why?’

‘Who knows?’ answered Valeria.

Just then, they saw a **mosaic** by some stone stairs. It showed tall people with beautiful faces, dressed in fine clothes, eating, drinking, and laughing together. ‘They clearly weren’t fighters,’ laughed Conan. ‘Come on. Let’s look upstairs.’

The stairs went up three floors and ended in a large, wide room on the fourth – the highest floor in the building. On one side, there was a door to a long **gallery** with a narrow hall below it. On the other side were more rooms.

Valeria sat down on a green stone seat. ‘I think the people here took all their treasure away when they left,’ she said. ‘There’s nothing that’s worth stealing. I’m tired – and we’re lost!’

‘Maybe there’s a window looking out over the city in that room there,’ said Conan. ‘That’ll help us to find our way.’

‘You go and look,’ said Valeria. ‘I’ll rest here.’

Conan was gone for only a few minutes when Valeria heard something moving beyond the door to the gallery.

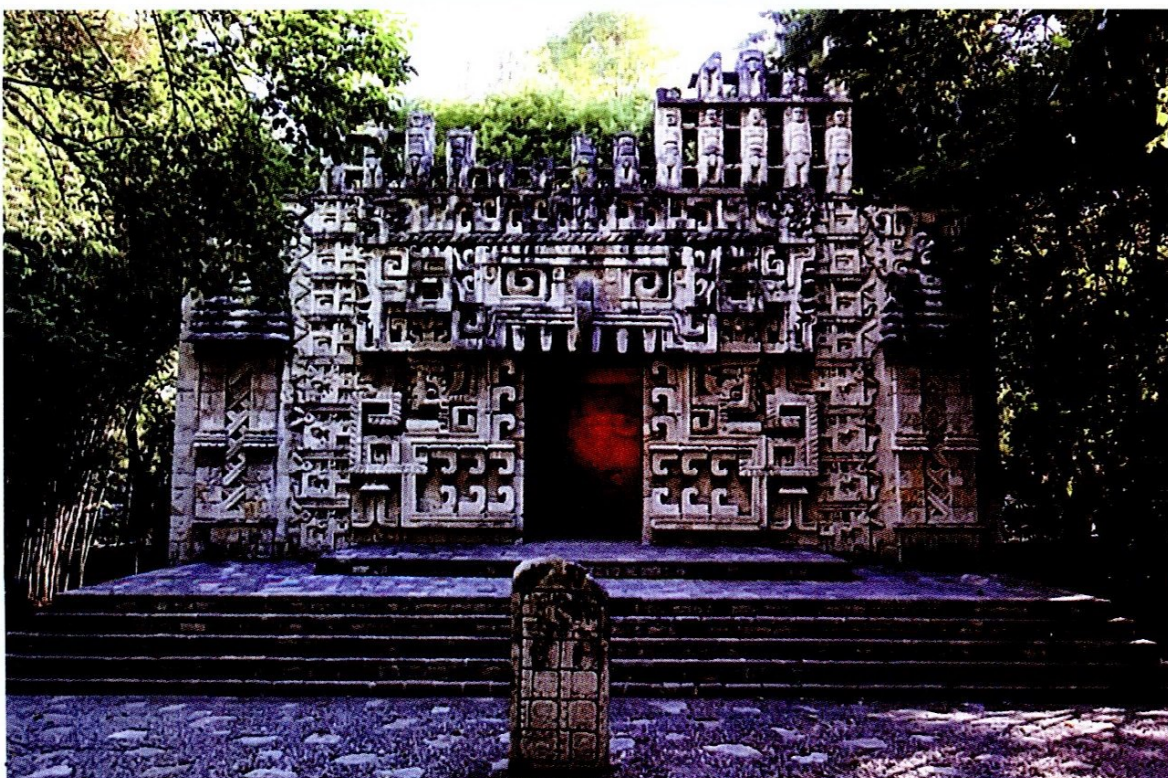
mosaic a picture that is made from small tiles

gallery a place where you can walk around the top of a room and look down

READING CHECK

Are these sentences true or false? Tick the boxes.

	True	False
a Conan makes a spear with his knife, some sticks, and vines.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b He puts 'Apple of Death' juice on it, and drives it into the dragon's eye.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c With the poison in its blood, the dragon goes to the pool to sleep.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d Conan and Valeria decide to go to the city in the desert.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e The dragon smells them and runs after them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f The dragon crashes into a rock and dies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g Conan and Valeria spend the night inside a circle of desert rocks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h They eat cactus leaves for breakfast.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i They see many farm animals on the way to the city.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j Somebody looks over the city walls at them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k Conan opens the city gates, and he and Valeria enter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l They find themselves in a long, wide hall.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m The walls of it are yellow, and the floor is red.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n They see a picture of beautiful people on one of the walls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o Conan leaves Valeria on a white stone bench while he looks around.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



WORD WORK

Find words in Chapter 2 to match the definitions.

- a This is a long fighting-stick with a knife at one end. spear
- b This wall picture has many small coloured pieces. _ _ _ _ _
- c When you look up in any room you see this. _ _ _ _ _
- d Gold, silver, or valuable stones are this. _ _ _ _ _
- e This kills you when you eat or drink it. _ _ _ _ _
- f This goes around the top of a room and you can look down from it. _ _ _ _ _

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the next chapter? Tick one picture.



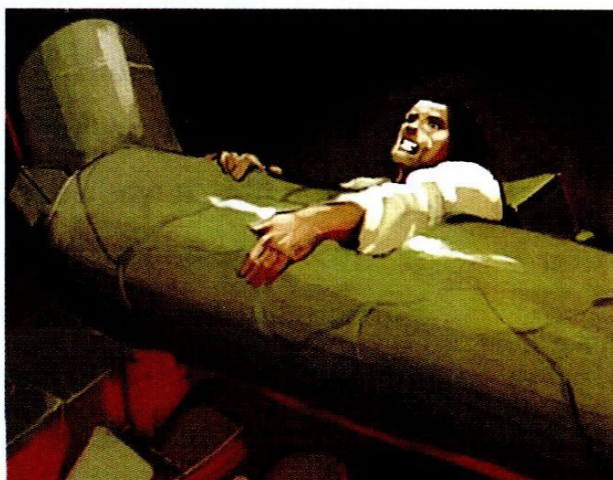
a Valeria sees a dragon in the city. ☐



b Valeria finds people in the city. ☐



c Conan falls down a deep hole in the floor, and can't get out. ☐



d A piece of the building falls on Conan and he can't move it. ☐

3. THE BURNING SKULL

Valeria went silently in her soft **leather** boots through the door, and looked down from the gallery. She saw a man moving secretly along the narrow hall below her. What a surprise to see someone living in this dead and silent place!

She watched the figure – so unlike the people in the mosaic at the foot of the stairs. He was wild-looking, thin and short, with long, dirty, black hair. He wore a leather belt round his middle and a short leather skirt. He carried a wide sword in his right hand, and he shook fearfully and looked worriedly from side to side as he moved quietly down the hall. He did not see Valeria watching him from the gallery above, but disappeared through an open door. Moments later, Valeria heard the sound of someone **choking**, and then all was silent.

What had happened? Valeria walked around the gallery until she reached a door. It was right above the door where the man had disappeared. Quietly, she opened it and went in.

She found herself standing at one side of a circular gallery. It was lit by firestones, and the room below was full of dark shadows. She looked downward, her eyes widening as the darkness began to clear. Below her, she could see the man that she had last seen in the hall. He lay still, face down on the red carpet that covered the floor. His sword lay by him.

‘Why isn’t he moving?’ she thought. And then she saw the carpet around him. It was a darker red. Her blood ran cold.

Just then, another man – very like the first – entered the room through a door opposite the hall door. He called to the man on the floor, ‘Chicmec!’ The other did not move.

The new man went over, took the first by the shoulder, and turned him over. A choking cry escaped him as the man’s head fell back. Someone had cut his **throat**.

leather of
animal skin

choke to die
because you
cannot take air
in through your
mouth

throat the inside
of your neck



The man let the dead body fall back on the carpet and stood up, shaking like a leaf. His face was grey with fear. He took out his sword and turned to leave, but then stopped, unable to move. He looked across the room with widening eyes.

In the shadows under the gallery, a ghostly light began shining and growing stronger. It was not part of the firestones' light. Valeria felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand up. In the middle of this ghostly light, a man's **skull** was **floating**, and it was from this that the unnatural light came.

The man stood still and stared at this ghostly figure, and the skull came out from the wall. A shadow moved under it, Valeria noticed. Slowly the shadow took the shape of a man – with a chest, arms, and legs that were deathly white in colour. The empty eyes of the skull were mysteriously inviting, and the man who was watching could not look away. He was not only afraid, Valeria realized. Something in the strange light had put him under a **spell**. His sword hand was now down at his side, useless.

skull the big bone inside the head

float to stay some way above the ground not resting on anything

spell something that you do to make someone do something in a way that people don't understand

knee the place
which moves in
the middle of
your leg

Suddenly, he fell to his **knees** and dropped his sword, covering his eyes with his hands. The ghostly figure lifted the sword in its hand high, ready to bring it down on his neck. Like a wild cat, Valeria jumped down from the gallery. She landed on the carpet, sword in hand, behind the ghostly shape.



The figure turned toward her, but she was too quick for it. She drove the sword fiercely into its body. It was a living man, she realized, and no ghost. Her sword cut through the man's chest, and he fell to the floor and died almost at once. The skull **rolled** away. He was a man very like the other, who was still on his knees at Valeria's feet.

Just then, the man who had been under the spell jumped up, staring at Valeria and crying, 'Who are you? Where are you from? Why are you here?' He didn't wait for answers, but went on, 'It doesn't matter who you are. You're a friend. You've killed "The Burning Skull". It was only a man after all! We thought it was a ghost that they'd called from the **catacombs**.'

He listened for a moment. Valeria could hear nothing.

'We must hurry. They're west of the Great Hall. Maybe they're coming for us.' He took her wrist in his hand.

'Who do you mean by "they"?' she asked.

'The people of **Xotalanc**!' he answered. 'The **clan** of the man that you killed. The people who live by the eastern gate!'

'You mean people are living in the city?'

'Yes. But be quick now. We must go to the home of my clan by the western gate! Come!'

'Who are you, and what brought you here?' cried Valeria.

'My name is Techotl. I came with my friend Chicmec to attack those from Xotalanc. But I lost him, and when I found him here, his throat was cut. The Burning Skull did it. And he wanted to kill me, too, before you saved me. But maybe he wasn't alone. Maybe others from Xotalanc will come. They do terrible things to those that they take alive!'

Valeria looked at Techotl's grey face and shaking body. What was he talking about? She did not fully understand. She turned back to the skull on the floor. Was it really so dangerous?

roll to move
by turning over
and over

catacombs
old rooms
underground
where dead
people's bones are
kept together

Xotalanc
/'ʃɒtəlæŋk/

clan a large
family group

ACTIVITIES

READING CHECK

Correct the mistakes in these false sentences.

- a** From the gallery, Valeria sees a ~~tail~~^{short}, thin man in a narrow hall below her.
- b** He is holding a spear in his hand.
- c** He goes into a room, and Valeria hears the sound of singing coming from it.
- d** She enters the gallery of the bright room and looks down.
- e** The man is standing still on the carpet below her.
- f** Another man comes into the room and finds that his friend is asleep.
- g** A dragon's skull begins shining in the room.
- h** The second man is really happy when he sees it.
- i** Valeria jumps down from the gallery and lands on the skull.
- j** She kills the woman who was under the skull.
- k** The man that Valeria saves wants to take her to his home by the eastern gate.

WORD WORK

Use the words in the 'firestone' in the correct form to complete the sentences on page 19.



ACTIVITIES

- a Valeria's soft leather boots do not make any noise when she walks.
- b Chicmec's is cut by one of his enemies.
- c After Valeria hears a noise, everything is silent again.
- d In the shadows, Valeria sees a white with a ghostly light around it.
- e At first, she thinks that it is in the air.
- f Techotl is under a and he cannot use his sword.
- g He falls to his on the floor and waits to die.
- h When Valeria kills the person under it, the skull away across the floor.
- i Techotl thought that 'The Burning Skull' was a ghost from the
- j Techotl's is at war with the people of Xotalanc.

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the next chapter? Tick one box for a, b, and c.

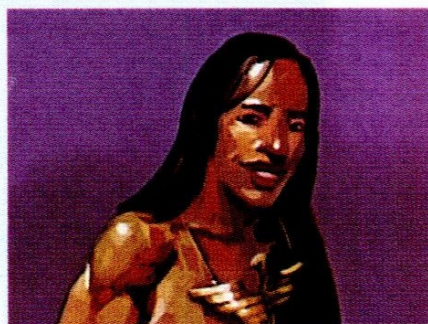
- a** Valeria ... the skull which is on the floor.

- 1 talks to ☐
- 2 breaks ☐
- 3 puts on ☐



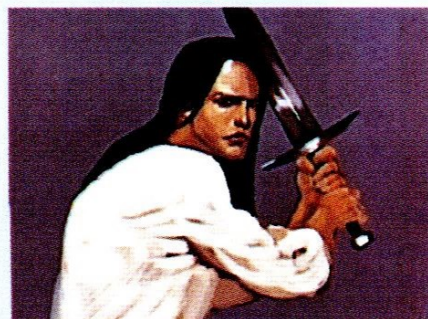
- b** Some of Techotl's ... arrive in the room.

- 1 army friends ☐
- 2 young sons ☐
- 3 enemies ☐



- c** Conan arrives and fights ... with Valeria.

- 1 the men of Xotalanc ☐
- 2 Techotl and his friends ☐
- 3 Techotl and his children ☐



4. FIVE DEAD DOGS

Valeria touched the still bright skull with the toe of her boot.

'Don't touch it! Don't look at it! It can make you crazy and kill you. The **wizards** of the city understand its secret. They found it in the catacombs, where the bones of the terrible kings who lived here in the dark past are kept. Come with me now.'

The skull shone brighter now. 'Whose skull was it?' Valeria wondered. It stared at her. Like a skull in a dream, it seemed able to talk. In fact, life was like a dream, she thought.

'Don't look at the skull!' She heard the cry from far away. Suddenly, Valeria shook herself out of her heavy, waking sleep. Techotl was standing next to her, speaking wildly. 'It was the skull of the king of all wizards. It still has life and fire in it.'

Valeria lifted her sword in both hands and brought it down squarely on the skull. It broke into several burning pieces. Inside her head, she heard a great and terrible cry of angry pain.

'You've destroyed it. They cannot mend it now. Come.'

'I can't. I have a friend nearby –' she began.

wizard a man who makes things happen in a way that you don't understand



The frightened **expression** on Techotl's face made her turn – in time to see four men enter the room. They were like the others that she had seen, but their chests were **painted** with a picture of a white skull. One man attacked Techotl, and the other three came for Valeria, with eyes as red as the eyes of **mad** dogs.

She brought her sword down on the head of the first man. He fell dead to the floor. Then she drove her sword through the belt of the second, who fell to his knees. His free hand went to the **wound** in his stomach. After that, the third – taller than the others – attacked her. Techotl was now sitting on the chest of the fourth man, who was lying on the floor. The man's hand was round Techotl's wrist, stopping him driving a knife into his chest.

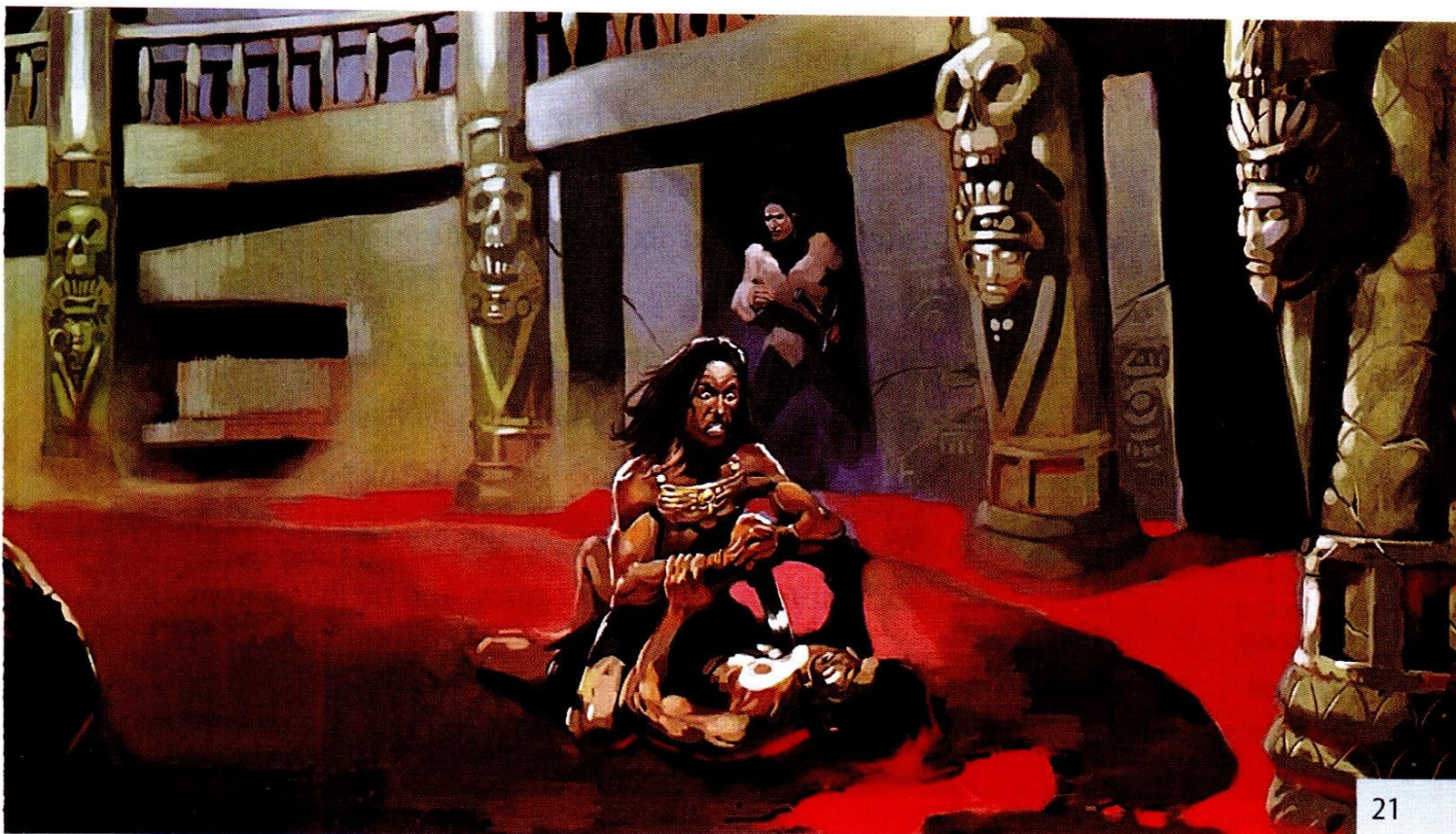
Valeria and the third man fought bravely, sword to sword. His eyes burned with red fire, but he could not beat her. After a while, he began fighting more tiredly. Valeria took a step backward to make him move forward. It was then that she felt a strong hand around her ankle. She had forgotten the wounded man on the floor.

expression
the way that your face shows how you feel

paint to put colour on something; colour that you put on something

mad crazy

wound a hole in the body from a knife or a sword



The tall man in front of her started to fight more fiercely now, and the man at her feet began biting at her legs like a wild animal. She pulled at the wounded man's long hair with her free hand, and the tall man saw his chance. But before he could attack, a large figure came up behind him and brought its sword down, cutting his skull in two. He died at once.

'Conan!' cried Valeria. Then she turned to the man at her feet, and cut off his head with her sword. His body fell back, lifeless. Techotl drove his knife into his enemy's chest, killing him immediately.

'What's happening?' asked Conan. 'When I went back to your seat, you'd gone. I came as soon as I heard the sound of fighting. So the city has people in it after all, I see!'

'Five dead dogs!' cried Techotl. 'Five red **nails** for the black **pillar**! I thank the **gods**!'

'Who's this?' asked Conan.

'His name's Techotl. His clan lives at the western end of the city, and the clan of these other men lives at the eastern end. Let's go with him. He seems friendly, and the others don't,' said Valeria.

'Come,' said Techotl. 'My people, the Tecultli, will welcome you!'

So Conan and Valeria followed him through room after room. 'Why don't we travel through the streets?' asked Valeria. As a pirate, she usually preferred fighting outside in the open air to fighting inside a closed building.

'There are no streets in the city of **Xuchotl**,' Techotl answered, 'No squares open to the sky. The whole city is like a great palace under one roof. The nearest thing to a street is the Great Hall that crosses the city from the North Gate to the South Gate. The only doors to the world outside are the city gates, and no living man has passed through those for fifty years.'

'How long have you lived here?' asked Conan.

nail a thick, metal pin that we usually use to fix one thing to another thing

pillar a tall thing that sometimes has a statue or the top of a building on it

god an important being who never dies and who decides what happens in the world

Xuchotl
/ˌtʃuːˈtʃɒtl/

'I was born thirty-five years ago in the castle of Tecultli. I've never been outside the city. But let us go quietly now. Maybe these halls are full of hiding **devils**. Olmec will tell you everything when we reach Tecultli.'

They went on in silence. When they arrived at a room that was wider than usual, Conan spoke again. 'Do you think some of your enemies are waiting in front of us?'

'They walk through these rooms at all hours,' answered Techotl. 'So do we. The halls and rooms between Tecultli and Xotalanc belong to neither side. We call this part of the city "The Halls of Silence". Why do you ask?'

'Because there are men in the rooms before us,' answered Conan. 'I heard the sound of metal against stone.'

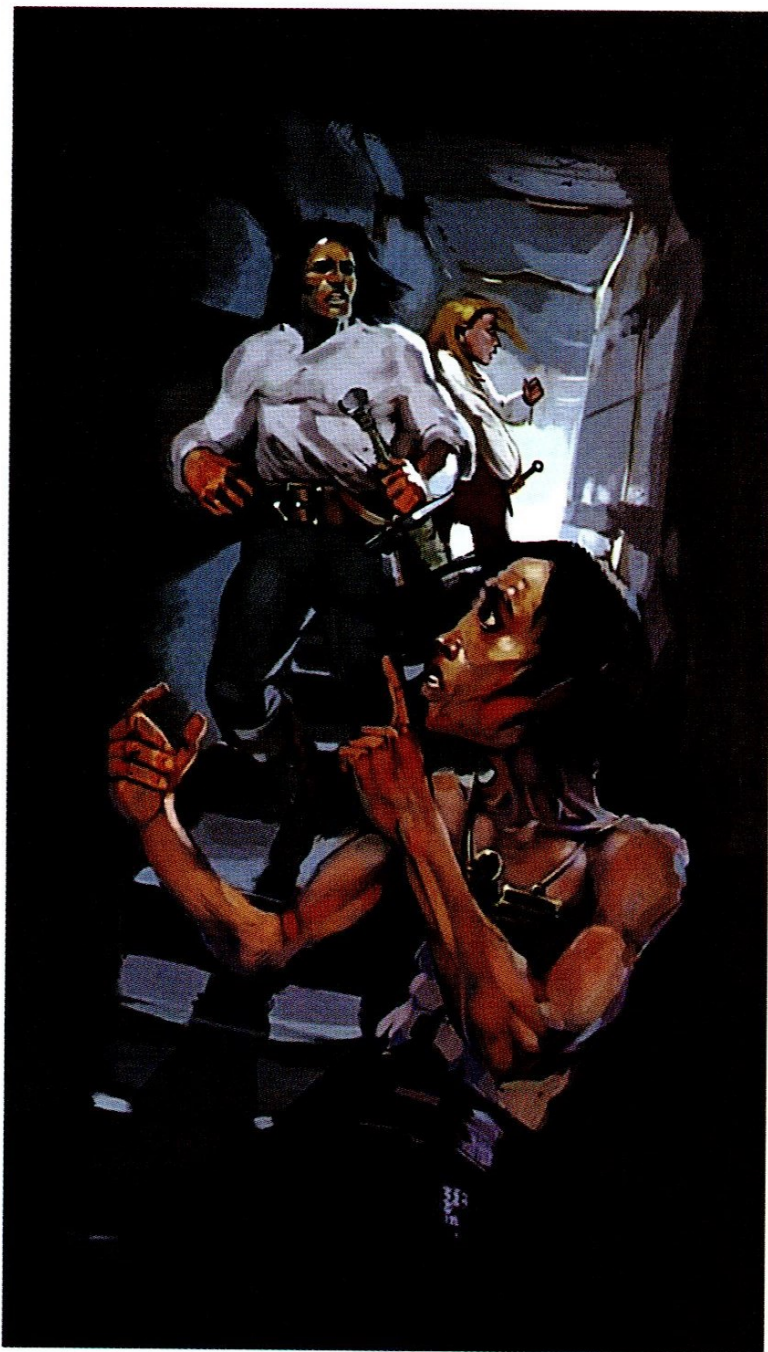
Techotl began shaking violently.

'Perhaps they're your friends,' said Valeria.

'We cannot take that chance,' he answered. 'Come.'

He went down some stairs. Conan and Valeria followed.

'These take us down to an unlit **corridor**,' he explained. 'Maybe the noises upstairs were a **trick**, and they'll attack us in the darkness below, but I don't think so.'



devil a very bad person

corridor you can walk from room to room in a building along this

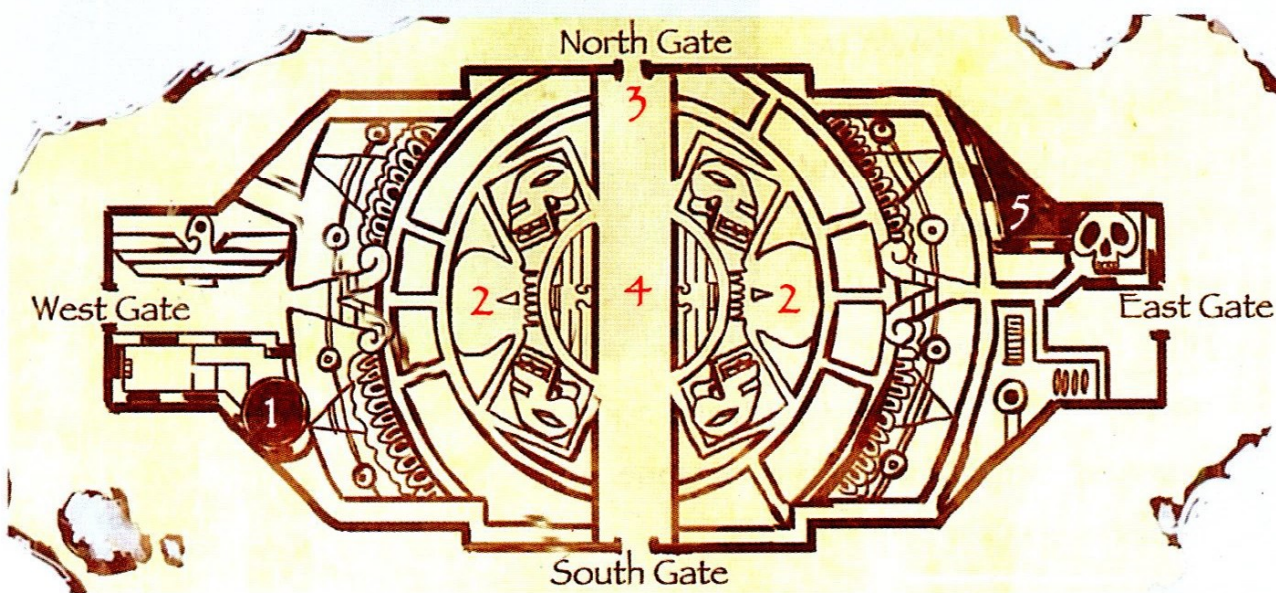
trick a thing which makes people think something false is true; to do something that makes someone act stupidly

READING CHECK

1 Circle the best words to complete these sentences.

- a 'The Burning Skull' once belonged to a great wizard / queen / criminal.
- b Valeria decides to *take* / break / leave the skull because it can make people crazy.
- c Suddenly, *three* / four / five of Techotl's enemies enter the room.
- d Valeria kills *none* / one / two of these men herself with her sword.
- e Techotl attacks one of the men with his *spear* / sword / knife.
- f In the end, Conan arrives and kills *one* / two / three of the men.
- g Techotl's clan are called the *Tecultli* / Xuchotl / men of Xotalanc.
- h There are *no* / not many / a lot of streets in the city that are open to the sky, explains Techotl.
- i Techotl says he was born in the city and has *often* / never / sometimes been outside it.
- j Conan hears the sound of *metal against stone* / shouting men / marching feet in front of them.
- k Techotl decides to go *upstairs* / downstairs / straight on to take Conan and Valeria to his home.

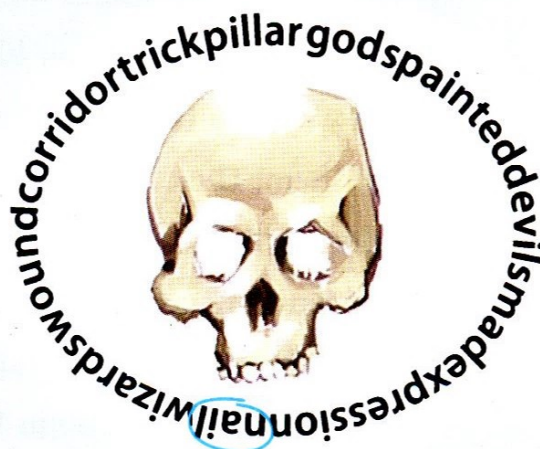
2 Match the sentences below with the places on the map of Xuchotl.



- a Conan and Valeria enter the city through this gate. ☒ 3
- b The Great Hall crosses the city from the North Gate to the South Gate. ☐
- c Techotl's clan-brothers, the Tecultli, live in their castle by the West Gate. ☐
- d Techotl's enemies, the men of Xotalanc, live in their castle by the East Gate. ☐
- e The rooms in the middle of the city belong to no one. They are called 'The Halls of Silence'. ☐

WORD WORK

- 1 Find words from Chapter 4 in the ghostly light around the skull.



- 2 Use the words in Activity 1 to complete the sentences.

- a Techotl wants to put a red nail in a black for each of his newly dead enemies.
- b Valeria turns round when she sees the of fear on Techotl's face.
- c Techotl's enemies have eyes like the eyes of dogs.
- d 'The of the city know the secrets of "The Burning Skull",' explains Techotl.
- e Techotl thanks the after he and his friends kill five of his enemies.
- f Each of the enemy soldiers has a picture of a white skull on his chest.
- g For Techotl, his enemies are '.....' because they are very bad men in his eyes.
- h Techotl thinks that his enemies are making noises in the halls before them to him.
- i Valeria makes a in the stomach of one of the men with her sword.
- j Techotl wants to take Conan and Valeria through a long, dark.....

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens to Techotl, Conan, and Valeria in the next chapter? Tick three sentences.

- a They run away from more fighters from Xotalanc on the way to Tecultli. ☐
- b They travel safely to Tecultli with no more problems. ☐
- c They are caught by the enemy and taken to the castle of Xotalanc. ☐
- d They enter the castle of Tecultli, and meet Olmec. ☐
- e They are all thrown into prison together, and they cannot escape. ☐
- f They see the black pillar with red nails in it. ☐
- g They leave the city of Xuchotl, and go out into the desert. ☐

5. THE RULERS OF TECUTLI

At the foot of the stairs, they arrived at the dark mouth of the corridor. Inside, it was as black as night. Techotl, Valeria, and Conan walked into this blackness, seeing nothing in front or either side of them. The corridor seemed endless.

Suddenly, they heard a noise behind them. It was a door opening softly. Men were coming after them along the corridor!

'Run!' shouted Techotl, hurrying away like a ghost down the corridor. Valeria and Conan followed. Behind them, the sound of running feet came closer.

'Quick. Up the stairs,' cried Techotl. Valeria hurried up after him. Conan turned back to fight, but something not **human** was following them now, together with the men. It **crawled** noisily up the steps, bringing bitterly cold air with it. He brought his sword down on it, feeling the metal cut through it, and hit stone. Something as cold as ice touched his foot, and then fell back. A man further down the stairs cried out. Conan turned and ran up to Valeria and Techotl, who stood by the door at the top of the stairs. Once Conan was through, Techotl banged the door shut and **bolted** it.

They ran from the bolted door. It now began to shake as those behind threw themselves against it, trying to push it open.

Now they were crossing well-lit rooms, and Techotl seemed braver. But Conan frightened him again when he asked, 'What was the thing that I fought on the stairs? It crawled and was ice-cold. I think I cut it in two, and it fell back on one of the men behind it and killed him!'

Techotl's face went grey. 'That was "The Crawler"! The people of Xotalanc have brought it from the catacombs to help them. It has killed many of our people. Once it is following you, it never rests until it catches you. We must hurry!'

human being, or of, a man or a woman

crawl to move along slowly with your body close to the ground

bolt to put a piece of wood across a door to stop someone opening it; a piece of wood that you put across a door to stop someone opening it

Suddenly, at the end of a long hall, Techotl stopped.

They stood before a large metal door. 'This is the entrance to Tecultli!' he said, knocking on the door. 'Open the door, Excelan!' he cried. 'I bring friends from the great world outside.'

He turned to Conan and Valeria. 'They are watching through "The Eye". Maybe they're surprised to see you,' he explained. 'But they'll open the door soon.'

'I hope so,' answered Conan, 'because I can hear something crawling across the floor beyond this hall.'

Techotl hit the door. 'Hurry! The Crawler is after us!'

At once, the great metal door opened. Four **guards** stood behind them with spears in their hands. Techotl, Valeria, and Conan ran in. Looking back, Conan saw for a moment a great **serpent** with a bloody head that was crawling up the long hall toward them. Then the guards quickly shut the door and pushed strong bolts into place.

On the wall by the door, there was a strange **device** that was made of mirrors. This, Conan guessed, was the Eye. The people inside Tecultli could secretly use this to watch anybody at the entrance to their castle.

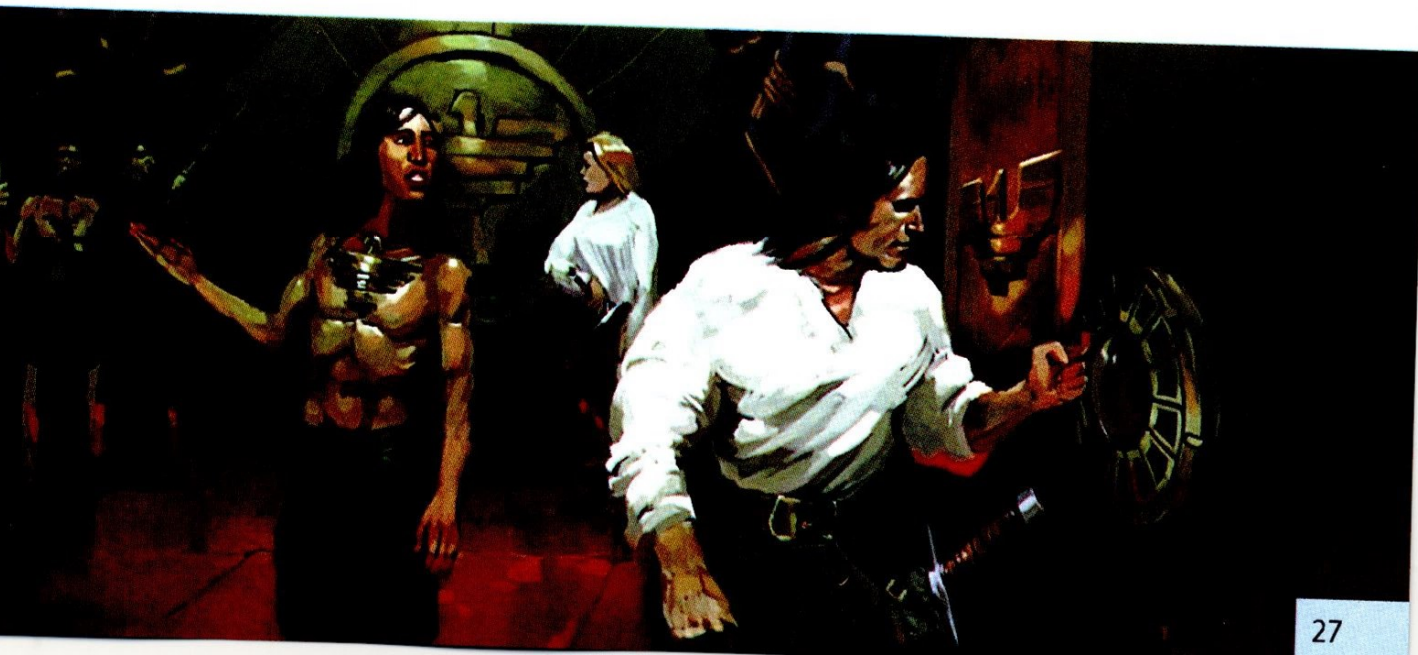
'Come with me,' said Techotl.

Conan looked back at the bolted entrance. 'Won't they try to break down the door?' he asked.

guard someone who watches people going in and out of somewhere

serpent a very big, long and thin animal with no legs

device a small machine of some kind





‘No,’ answered Techotl. ‘They cannot break down “The Door of the **Eagle**”. They will return to Xotalanc, taking their crawling devil with them. Let’s meet the **rulers** of Tecultli.’

eagle a very large, strong bird

ruler someone who tells people what must happen in a place

couch a long seat to lie on

breastplate a metal plate covering the chest that soldiers wore in the past to stop people killing them

jewel an expensive stone

throne the special chair where a king or queen sits

ivory this is white, and hard, and comes from the long tusks on an elephant’s face

One of the guards opened a door at the far end of the entrance hall, and Techotl took his two new friends through it.

They found themselves in a long corridor with fine mosaics on the green walls, and thick carpets on the red floors. Walking to the end of this corridor, Techotl opened a door and Conan and Valeria followed him into a wide hall.

The thirty men and women there jumped up from rich **couches** with cries of surprise when the visitors entered. They wore light shoes, golden **breastplates**, and short skirts with belts that were covered in **jewels**. Their long, black hair was cut squarely across the shoulders, and it was held in place by a thin circle of silver on each head.

Up some green stone steps, two figures sat on a wide **throne** of **ivory**. They were different from the others. The man was tall and strong-looking. Unlike the other men there, he was bald and had a



blue-black beard that came down to his belt. He wore a purple coat that shone with different colours when he moved, and the circle of gold on his head was heavy with jewels.

The woman was tall and beautiful. She wore a skirt, and jewels shone from the circle of gold on her head, and from her golden breastplate. She stood up in surprise when Techotl and his friends entered the room. The man on the ivory throne next to her stayed sitting.

'Prince Olmec,' began Techotl, **bowing**. 'I bring two friends from outside the city. They killed the Burning Skull!'

'The Burning Skull!' cried the people of Tecultli.

'It was only a man from Xotalanc with white body paint and the wizard's skull on his head,' went on Techotl. 'But this woman killed him and broke the skull. Then four more **Xotalancas** attacked us, but this man arrived and together we killed them. We must put five new nails in the pillar of the **feud**.' He looked at the pillar behind the throne. It had many red nails in it, shining in the black wood.

Olmec turned and stared down at Conan and Valeria.

prince the most important man in a little country

bow to put your head down in front of someone important

Xotalancas /ˌʃɒtəˈlæŋkəz/

feud when children go on fighting their parents' enemies

READING CHECK

Choose the best words to complete each sentence.

- a** When Conan and Valeria are in the corridor, they hear men ...
1 behind them. ☐ **2** in front of them. ☐ **3** next to them. ☐
- b** They run down the corridor ... the noise of running feet.
1 away from ☐ **2** toward ☐ **3** beside ☐
- c** Conan attacks 'The Crawler' with his ...
1 sword. ☐ **2** hands. ☐ **3** feet. ☐
- d** The Tecultli guards see ... in the mirrors of 'The Eye'.
1 themselves ☐ **2** the three friends ☐ **3** Olmec ☐
- e** The guards open the door at once when Techotl speaks of the ...
1 Burning Skull. ☐ **2** Crawler. ☐ **3** dragons. ☐
- f** Once the three friends are inside, the guards ... the door.
1 lock ☐ **2** half-close ☐ **3** bolt ☐
- g** Conan and Valeria go to meet Olmec and Tascela ...
1 with Techotl. ☐ **2** alone. ☐ **3** with the guard Excelan. ☐
- h** Techotl tells Olmec that his new friends killed the ...
1 last of the dragons. ☐ **2** Crawler. ☐ **3** Burning Skull. ☐

WORD WORK

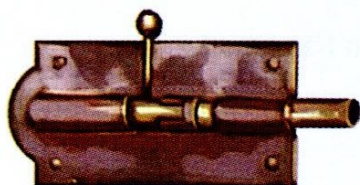
1 Find words in the pillar to complete the text.

The Tecultli **a)** ... guards ... at the 'Door of the
b) ... 'can see Techotl and his new friends in
'The Eye', a small **c)** ... by the door. They open
the door, and the three friends run in to escape from 'The
Crawler'. This is not **d)** ... It is a big
e) ..., and it is **f)** ... after them.
Then, Techotl takes his friends to meet **g)** ...
Olmec, who is one of the **h)** ... of Tecultli.
Behind Olmec, Conan and Valeria can see the black pillar of
the **i)** ...



ACTIVITIES

2 These words do not match the pictures. Correct them.



a ~~couch~~ bolt

b jewel

c ivory



d bolt

e throne

f breastplate

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the next chapter? Match the names with the sentences.



Conan



Valeria



Techotl



Olmec



Tascela

- a looks at Tascela while they eat.
- b stares at Valeria over dinner.
- c is surprised to hear that Conan killed a 'dragon-god' in the forest.
- d tells the story of the feud between Tecultli and Xotalanc.
- e notices when Olmec is keeping something secret.

6. THE PEOPLE OF THE FEUD

'Where are you from, and what brings you here?' asked Olmec.

'I'm Conan, and this is Valeria,' answered the barbarian. 'We come from the north, and we're travelling to the coast.'

'You'll never reach it,' said the woman next to Olmec. 'Nobody leaves Xuchotl!'

'Are we prisoners?' asked Conan, his hand on his sword.

'No,' answered Prince Olmec hurriedly. 'You're our friends. But maybe different things will keep you here.' He looked at the woman beside him, and said, 'This is **Princess** Tascela. But come. You must be hungry after your journey. Let's eat.'

They went to one side of the room, and sat at a table that was covered with strange fruit. During the meal, Conan often looked at Tascela, but the princess was busily staring at Valeria.

'So how did you come through the forest?' asked Olmec.

'Well, a dragon gave us some trouble there,' answered Conan. 'But once we'd killed it, we were fine.'

'You killed a dragon-god!' Techotl cried.

'Why not? It wanted to eat us.'

'But no man can kill a dragon,' said Olmec.

princess the most important woman in a little country



'They can if they put a poisoned spear in its mouth,' laughed Conan between mouthfuls of food.

Olmec looked at him in surprise, and then explained:

*Our **ancestors** came to this city fifty years ago to escape the forest dragons. The city of Xuchotl was old when they arrived. The sickly people living here then were the **descendants** of the city's builders. But even they did not know how old Xuchotl was. When our people first arrived, the city people closed the gates, and shot **arrows** at them. Our ancestors could not return to the dragons in the forest, so they stayed in the desert.*

*One night, a city **slave** secretly visited them. He'd come to the city years before, with soldiers from our country, through the forest. The dragons had killed his friends, but he managed to reach the city, where he became a slave. His name was Tolkemec.*

Prince Olmec's eyes shone as he said this, and many in the room whispered angry words when they heard the name Tolkemec. The prince went on:

Tolkemec promised to open the city gates to our ancestors. He asked only for all prisoners to be his. Our ancestors agreed. The next morning, he opened the gates. Our people entered Xuchotl, and most of the city people died in the fighting.

Tolkemec knew slaves had built the city. They brought gold, jewels, and stones from far away, and worked day and night on the building. The first rulers of Xuchotl were wizards, and they found old reptile bones in the ground. They gave these life and made dragons, which they kept in the forest around the desert.

Tolkemec also explained how the wizards made wonderful fruits that grew in the air, and how the city people let their fields go dry and their farm animals die.

ancestor a person from your family in the past

descendant a person who is the grandchild or great-grandchild of someone who lived many years before

arrow you shoot things with this

slave a person who must work for no money

*But this was centuries before our people came. The descendants of the first Xuchotlans had forgotten how to fight and make spells by the time that our ancestors arrived. So our soldiers killed all the city people except a hundred. These hundred prisoners were given to Tolkemec. For days he **tortured** and then killed them one by one.*

The chiefs of our ancestors in those days were two brothers – Tecultli and Xotalanc. They asked Tolkemec to be the third ruler of the city with them. He had opened the city gates, after all. He married a woman from among our people. And he taught the secrets of the air-growing fruit and other things to the new rulers of Xuchotl.

The killing of the Xuchotlans broke the spells that kept the dragons in the forest. So they ran hungrily about the city walls at night, fighting and killing each other. It was then that –

Olmec stopped talking suddenly. Valeria thought he had almost said something that he preferred to keep a secret. Then he went on: 'For five years, our ancestors lived here happily together, with no problems. Then Xotalanc took a woman as his wife.' Olmec looked for a moment at the silent woman beside him.

torture to hurt somebody because you want to learn things from them, or make them feel bad

council the group of important people who decide what happens in a place

war fighting between countries or people

divide to give parts of something to two or more people

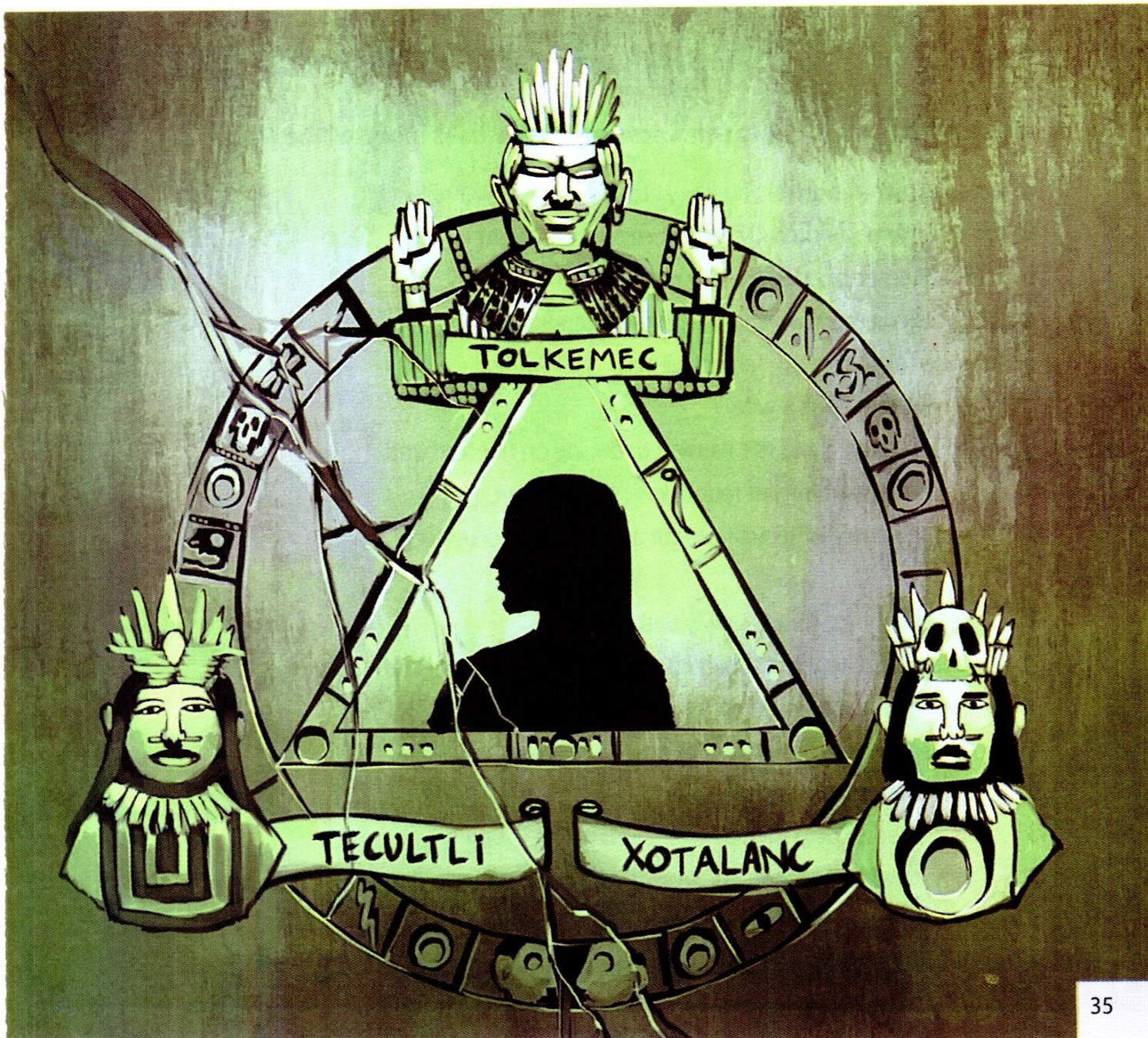
*Both Tecultli and old Tolkemec wanted her, too. Crazy with love, Tecultli stole her from her husband. Tolkemec helped Tecultli in order to hurt Xotalanc. Naturally, Xotalanc wanted his wife back. Both clans asked the **council** of our people what to do, and the councillors said the woman must decide. She chose to stay with Tecultli. Xotalanc tried to take her back, and so the two clans fought fiercely in the Great Hall. Many lives were lost.*

*Soon the fighting became a **war**. Xotalanc, Tecultli, and Tolkemec **divided** the city. Xotalanc's men took the part near the eastern gate, Tecultli's men took the part near the western gate, and Tolkemec's family took the part near the southern gate. Each clan made its part into a castle to be safe from attack.*

While the two brothers' clans fought, Tolkemec took sides first with one brother, and then with the other. He was a devil of a man, and he knew many secrets about the catacombs that he'd told nobody.

Then twelve years ago, the people of Tecultli attacked Tolkemec's castle, killed his people, and took him prisoner. He was tortured, and left to die. But he managed to escape, and crawled down to the catacombs. There – I'm sure – he died. We've never seen him since. But his bones were never found, and some of our people say his ghost walks the catacombs today.

All of us here – except for Tascela – were born into this feud. It began fifty years ago and will never end ...



READING CHECK

1 What do they say or think? Complete the sentences.

1 Are we prisoners?

2 ~~Nobody leaves Xuchotl!~~

3 You must be hungry after your journey. Let's eat!

4 You killed a dragon-god!

5 He almost said something that he prefers to keep a secret.

- a ' Nobody leaves Xuchotl! ' says Tascela to Conan and Valeria
 b ' ' Olmec tells Conan and Valeria.
 c ' ' Techotl says to Conan excitedly.
 d ' ' Conan asks Olmec.
 e ' ', thinks Valeria when Olmec stops talking suddenly.

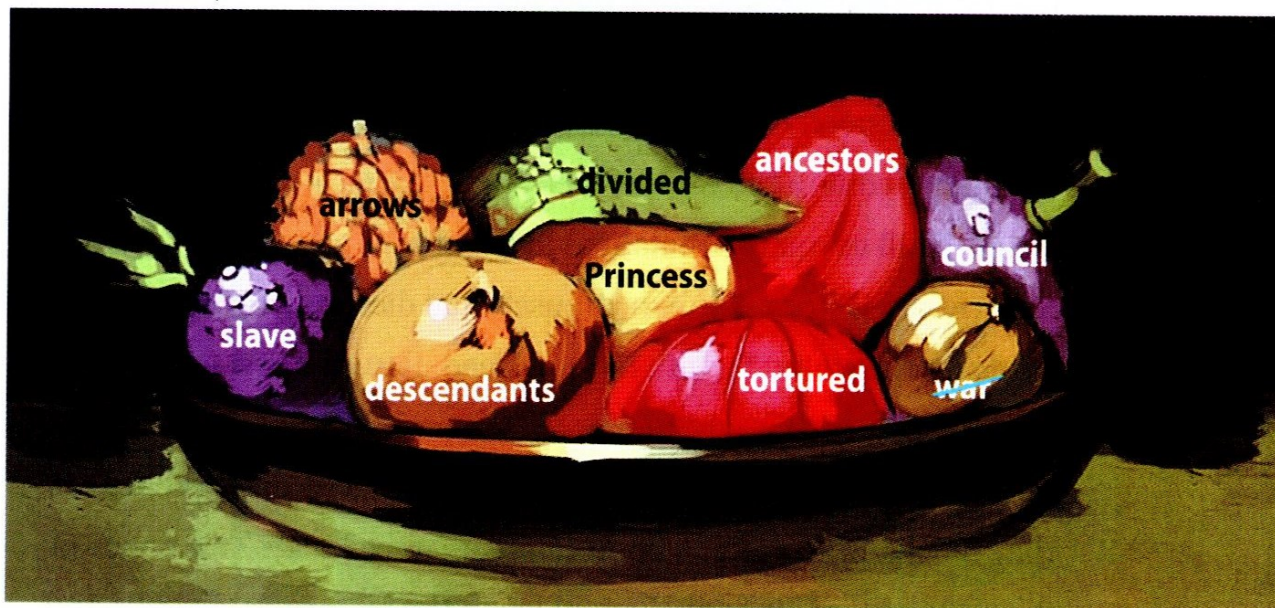
2 Match both parts of these sentences to tell the 'back story' of the feud.

- a When Olmec's ancestors arrived at the city, ☒ 3
 b When Tolkemec visited Olmec's ancestors one night, ☐
 c After Tolkemec opened the city gates to Olmec's ancestors, ☐
 d Because Tolkemec was angry with the Xuchotlans, ☐
 e Because Tolkemec had helped them, ☐
 f When Xotalanc took a wife, ☐
 g When the council told the woman to decide on her husband, ☐
 h Because the two brothers fought over this woman, ☐
 i When the people of Tecultli caught and tortured Tolkemec, ☐

- 1 ... he killed his prisoners slowly and painfully.
 2 ... Tecultli and Xotalanc asked Tolkemec to be a city ruler with them.
 3 ... the Xuchotlans closed the city gates against them.
 4 ... he escaped to the catacombs and no one saw him again.
 5 ... she chose to stay with Tecultli.
 6 ... he agreed to help them.
 7 ... they killed most of the Xuchotlans, and gave a hundred prisoners to Tolkemec.
 8 ... the war between their two clans began.
 9 ... Tecultli stole the woman from his brother.

WORD WORK

Use the words in the fruit to complete the sentences.



- a The war between the clans of Tecultli and Xotalanc began fifty years before.
- b Olmec's had two brothers as their chiefs.
- c The of the builders of Xuchotl did not know how old the city was.
- d They shot from the city walls at Olmec's ancestors.
- e Tolkemec his Xuchotlan prisoners before he killed them.
- f Tolkemec felt angry with the Xuchotlans because they had made him their
- g Xotalanc wanted his wife back, so he spoke to the of his people about her.
- h After the feud began, the two clans the city between them.
- i Tascela is the only person in the room who wasn't born into the feud.

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the next chapter? Tick three boxes.

- a Conan and Valeria leave the city and go across the desert. ☐
- b Dragons from the forest attack the city. ☐
- c Conan and Valeria agree to stay with the Tecultli and fight the Xotalanc clan. ☐
- d Olmec tells Valeria that he loves her. ☐
- e Conan learns something interesting about Tascela. ☐
- f Tascela orders guards to put Conan and Valeria in prison. ☐
- g Valeria has a really strange dream. ☐

7. THE SMELL OF BLACK LOTUS

Prince Olmec's eyes shone strangely as he continued his story:

'Our time here is nearly over. When the feud began, each clan had hundreds of people. Now only forty men and women of Tecultli live. We don't know the number of the Xotalancas, but they can't have many more. For fifteen years we've had no children, and we've seen none among the Xotalancas. So we'll die soon, but before we do, we'll kill as many Xotalancas as we can.'

It was a sad story. Xotalanc himself had died long ago, killed in a battle on the stairs. Tecultli too was dead. He was **torn** to pieces by the enemies who caught him.

Olmec also spoke of wizards, of **magic**, and of dark **creatures** that helped in the war. The Xotalancas were lucky. The bones of the great wizard kings of Xuchotl lay in the eastern catacombs and their secrets were kept there, too.

As Valeria listened, she felt Tascela staring at her.

'We never leave the city,' the prince went on. 'For fifty years nobody has left, except those –' Again he stopped.

'Even without the dragons,' he went on, 'we wouldn't like to be under open skies, with the sun shining on us.'

'Well, with your **permission**, we'll take our chances with the dragons,' said Conan.

Tascela began to speak, but Olmec put up a hand to stop her. 'It's nearly night. If you travel across the desert now, the dragons will surely attack and kill you.'

'We saw none there last night,' replied Conan.

Tascela smiled icily. 'You will not leave Xuchotl!'

'I think they will,' said Olmec. 'Look – Conan, Valeria – the gods sent you to help us win the war against our enemies. Stay and help us beat the Xotalancas. Then you can leave the city with all the treasure that you can carry.'

tear (*past tore, torn*) to pull something quickly away from another thing

magic
something that makes things happen in a way that you can't understand

creature a person or animal that someone brings to life and can order to do things

permission
when you agree that somebody can do something

'And can you help us destroy the dragons?' asked Valeria. 'With **bows** and poisoned arrows, thirty men could kill all the dragons in the forest in a day.'

'Well, we don't use bows and arrows for close fighting here. But if you teach us how to shoot with them, we can,' said Olmec.

'What do you think?' Valeria asked Conan.

'Well, we're poor travellers, aren't we? And killing Xotalancas is as good a job as any!'

'Then you agree!' cried Olmec. Techotl seemed pleased.

'Yes,' answered Conan. 'But now can we go to rooms where we can sleep? We must be ready for battle tomorrow.'

Olmec smiled, and waved a hand. Techotl and a woman took the two adventurers through a door to one side of the green steps. Looking back, Valeria could see the prince, his head on one hand, watching them. Sitting next to him, Tascela called her **maid** to her, and whispered something in her ear.

bow you use this to shoot arrows

maid a woman that looks after somebody rich



The corridor that they walked down was not wide, but it was very long. Soon the woman opened a door on the right. She stood to one side to let Valeria enter the room before her.

'And where am I sleeping?' asked Conan.

Techotl **pointed** to a room across the corridor, one door further along. Valeria smiled at Conan and shut her door in his face. After that, the barbarian followed Techotl to his room.

'Is Tascela Olmec's wife?' Conan asked when they arrived.

Techotl looked secretively about him before he answered. 'No. She was the wife of Xotalanc – the woman Tecultli stole years ago – when the feud began.'

'What are you saying?' cried Conan. 'Tascela's beautiful and young. Are you telling me she was married fifty years ago?'

'It's true, I promise you. She came to Xuchotl as a young woman, when Xotalanc and Tecultli were young men.'

'How is that possible?'

'She's a **witch**. She knows the secret of **eternal youth**.'

'And what secret is that?' asked Conan..

'Don't ask me. I can't tell you. It's too terrible for words.'

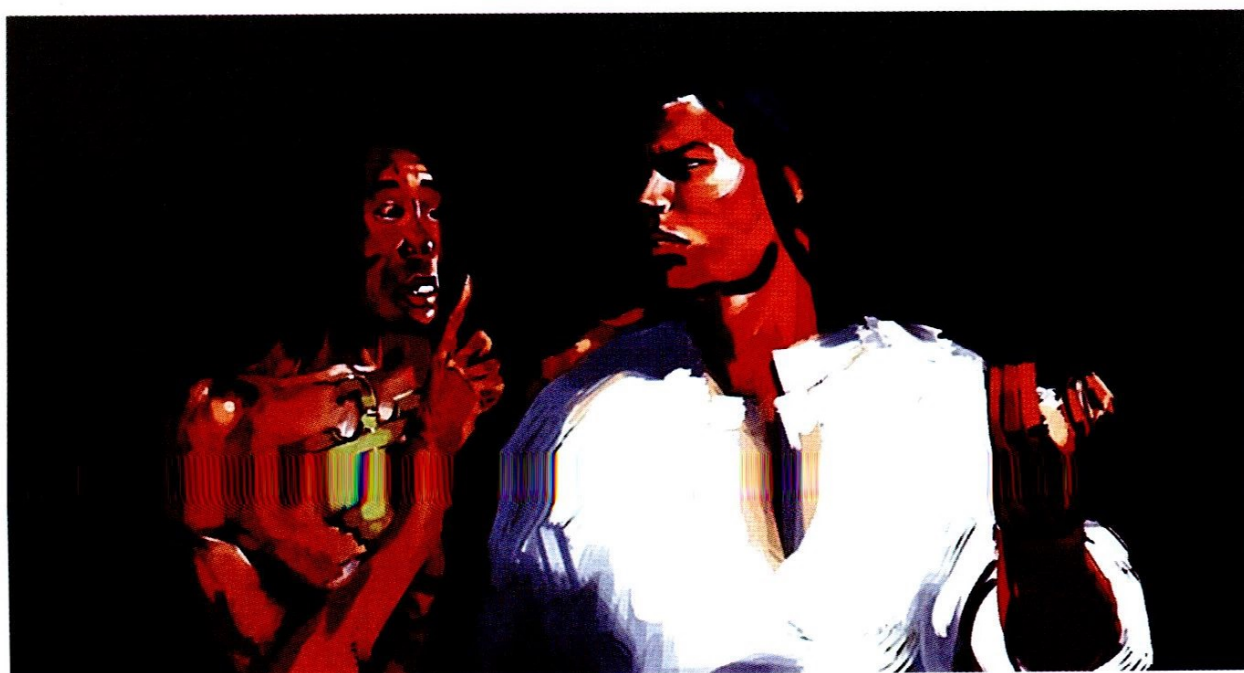
Then, putting a finger to his lips, Techotl left the room.

point to show something with your finger

witch a woman who makes things happen in a way you don't understand

eternal never-ending

youth being young



Valeria took off her sword belt and put it on the couch where she planned to sleep. All the doors in her room had bolts, she noticed. 'Where do they go?' she asked.

'Those two open on the rooms next door,' the woman answered, pointing to the doors on the right and on the left.

'And that one?' asked Valeria, pointing to the metal-faced door opposite the one that they had come through.

'Behind it is a corridor that takes you to stairs going to the catacombs. But don't be afraid. Nothing can hurt you here.'

'Who's afraid? I'm just checking for danger,' said Valeria. 'You have my permission to go now.'

Once she was alone, Valeria bolted all the doors, took off her boots, and lay on the couch. She was soon asleep. But she woke up suddenly in the middle of a strange dream.

In the darkness, she saw something shadowy **bending** over her. At first, she thought the figure was part of her dream. She lay on the couch, and a large black flower floated above her. Its smell filled her body with lazy tiredness. She floated on clouds of happy sleepiness. Then something touched her face and she woke up fully. She saw not a flower, but a woman bending over her.

Valeria sat up, and the woman turned to run away. But the pirate jumped up from the couch and caught her arm. The woman tried to escape, but could not. Valeria pulled her back, and turned her around until she could see her face. It was Tascela's maid, Yasala.

'What are you doing here? And what's in your hand?' cried Valeria.

Yasala tried to hide the thing behind her, but Valeria pulled her arm forward. The thing that the maid held fell to the floor. It was a large black flower, as big as a woman's head, on a thick green branch with dark green leaves.

bend (*past bent*) to put the top of your body forward and down



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'A black **lotus**!' cried Valeria. 'Its smell brings deep sleep. You were trying to **drug** me. But why?'

Yasala said nothing. Valeria pushed the maid to her knees and pulled her arm up behind her back.

'Tell me, or I'll tear your arm from your body,' she shouted. Yasala only shook her head silently.

Valeria remembered Tascela's eyes on her at dinner, and her whispered conversation in Yasala's ear. 'Did Tascela send you?' she asked. The maid said nothing.

'Why don't you speak? Who are you afraid of? Tascela? Olmec? Do I have to torture you to find out?'

A low cry escaped the woman's lips. 'Please, no torture. I'll speak. But first I need a drink. My mouth is dry.'

lotus a water plant with a large, beautiful flower that smells very nice

drug to give something to someone to make them feel sleepy

She pointed to a gold cup of **wine** on the table by the couch. Valeria brought it to her. Yasala took the cup in her hand and suddenly threw the wine hard in the pirate's face. Valeria stepped back, helpless, her eyes half-closed with pain. Yasala unbolted the metal door and ran through it, away down the corridor.

wine a red or white drink that is made from grapes

Seconds later, Valeria followed – but Yasala was already gone. When the pirate reached the end of the corridor, she found an open door through which she saw dark stairs going underground. A terrible smell of dry bones floated up from below. 'This must be the entrance to the catacombs!' she thought.

Just then, a woman's cry reached her from down in the blackness. 'Help! No! Please! Aaargh!' The voice died away suddenly, but Valeria heard a sickening, ghostly laugh follow it.

She hurried back along the corridor, not stopping to close the stair door, and went into her room. She quickly pulled on her boots and put on her sword belt. She decided to ask Conan to run away with her from this city of devils.

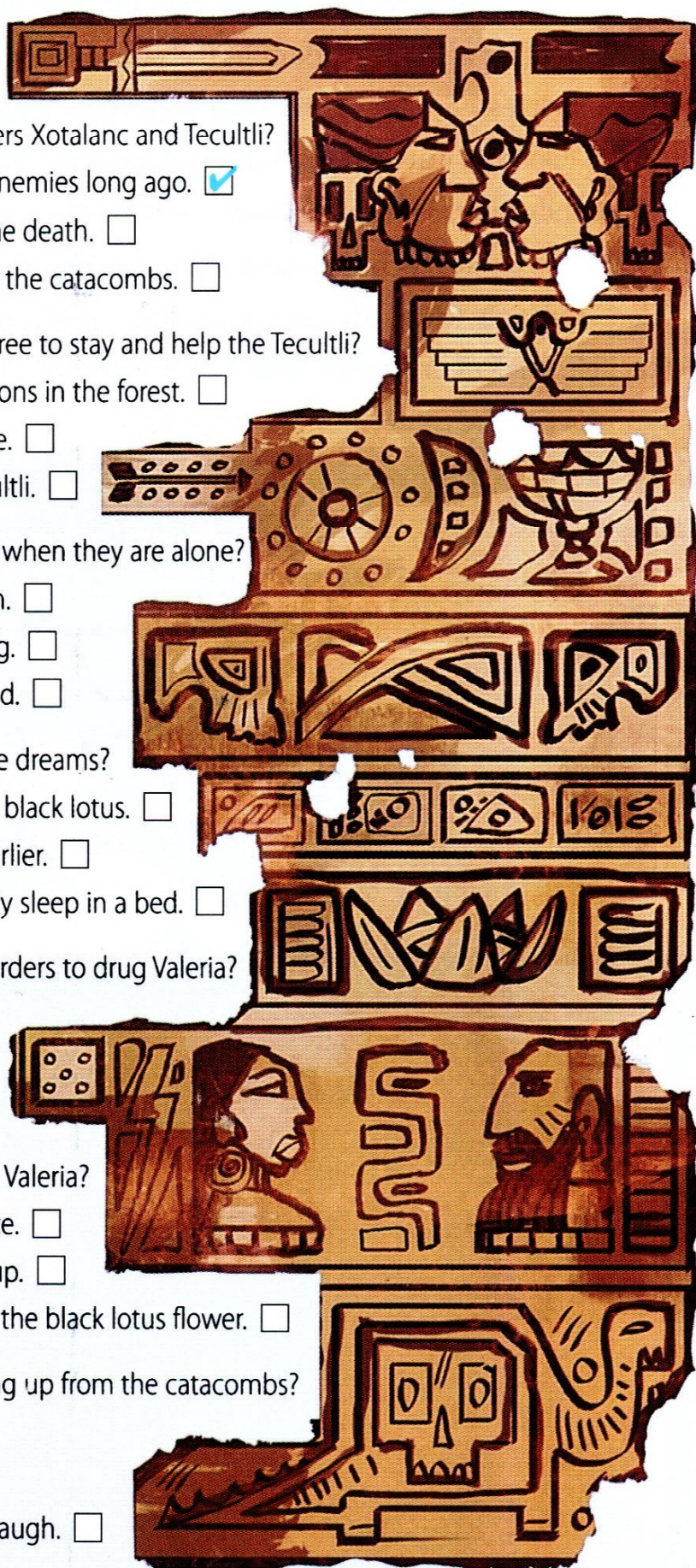
But just then – as she left her room – a long, loud scream filled the air, together with the sound of swords and running feet.



READING CHECK

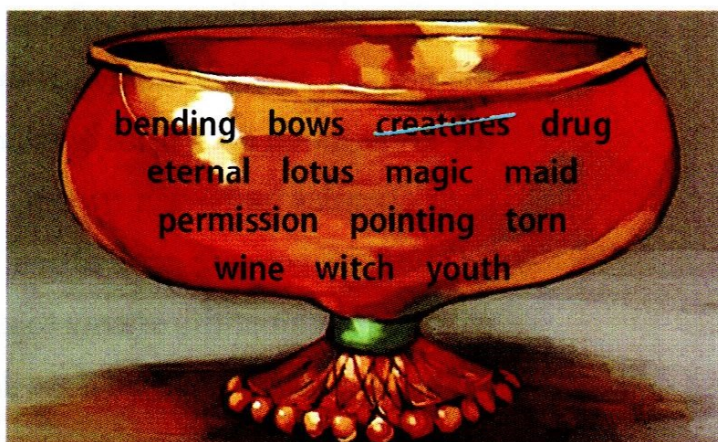
Tick the correct answers.

- a** What happened to the brothers Xotalanc and Tecutli?
- 1 They were killed by their enemies long ago. ☒
 - 2 They fought together to the death. ☐
 - 3 They are still alive down in the catacombs. ☐
- b** Why do Conan and Valeria agree to stay and help the Tecutli?
- 1 They are afraid of the dragons in the forest. ☐
 - 2 Olmec offers them treasure. ☐
 - 3 They feel sorry for the Tecutli. ☐
- c** What does Techotl tell Conan when they are alone?
- 1 That Tascela is an old witch. ☐
 - 2 That Olmec is a wizard king. ☐
 - 3 That the last dragon is dead. ☐
- d** Why does Valeria have strange dreams?
- 1 Because she can smell the black lotus. ☐
 - 2 Because she ate air fruit earlier. ☐
 - 3 Because she doesn't usually sleep in a bed. ☐
- e** Who gave Yasala whispered orders to drug Valeria?
- 1 Prince Olmec. ☐
 - 2 Princess Tascela. ☐
 - 3 The wizard Tolkemec. ☐
- f** How does Yasala escape from Valeria?
- 1 She throws wine in her face. ☐
 - 2 She hits her with a gold cup. ☐
 - 3 She touches her face with the black lotus flower. ☐
- g** What does Valeria hear coming up from the catacombs?
- 1 The sound of fighting. ☐
 - 2 Strange music. ☐
 - 3 Yasala's cry and a strange laugh. ☐



WORD WORK

Use the words in the gold cup to complete the summary.



Olmec explains about **a)** creatures which the men of Xotalanc called from the catacombs to fight in the war using **b)** He also explains how Tecultli's skin was **c)** from his body by his enemies. Conan asks for Olmec's **d)** to leave Xuchotl. Valeria talks about using **e)** and arrows to kill the dragons in the forest. But Olmec wants Conan and Valeria to fight for the Tecultli. They agree to stay. When Valeria enters her room, Techotl takes Conan to his room. He explains that Tascela is an old **f)** who doesn't want to lose her **g)** She also wants never to die, but to have **h)** life.

When Valeria wakes up, Yasala is **i)** over her with a black **j)** in her hand. Tascela's **k)** is trying to **l)** the pirate, but why? Soon after that, Yasala asks for a drink, **m)** to a cup of **n)** on the table by the couch. In the end, Yasala escapes from Valeria.

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the next chapter? Make five sentences with these phrases.

a Twenty fierce Xotalanc fighters	1 agree to take Conan to Xotalanc	i and help kill Xotalancas in the throne room.
b Conan and Valeria	2 are both wounded	ii by enemy fighters.
c The Tecultli	3 enter the castle of Tecultli	iii in the black pillar.
d Valeria and Techotl	4 fight for the Tecultli	iv to look for Xotalancas.
e Two unwounded men from Tecultli	5 plan to put twenty more red nails	v using devilish magic music.

8. TWENTY RED NAILS

Two Tecultli soldiers sat talking in the guardroom by the Door of the Eagle. Usually watchful, they were now resting. An attack on the great metal door from outside was possible, but for many years their enemies had never tried it.

‘The strangers are good **allies**,’ began one. ‘Everyone says Olmec will move against the enemy tomorrow.’

The other went on, ‘And if we destroy Xotalanc, what will happen then, **Xatmec**?’

‘Well, Excelan,’ replied Xatmec, ‘We’ll put more red nails in the pillar, I suppose. And if we take any prisoners, we’ll tear their skin off and cut them into quarters.’

Excelan went on, ‘But after we’ve killed them all, won’t it seem strange to have no enemy? All my life, I’ve fought and hated the Xotalancas. But when the feud ends, what will we do?’

Xatmec **shrugged** his shoulders. He couldn’t manage to think of a life without the feud. Then suddenly both men sat up. They had heard something outside the door.

‘Listen carefully!’ cried Excelan. ‘I’ll use the Eye!’

ally (*plural allies*) a person that is on your side and helps you in a fight

Xatmec
/ˈtʃætmeɪk/

shrug to lift your shoulders to show that something is not important to you, or that you don’t know something



Xatmec, sword in hand, put his ear to the door. Excelan looked into the mirrored device. His eyes widened in surprise. A crowd of serious men stood outside. They were holding their swords in their teeth, and they had their fingers in their ears. One of them, with **feathers** on his head, held some **pipes** in his hands. He lifted these to his lips, and just as Excelan started to give a warning cry, he began to play them.

The cry died in the guard's throat as the thin, strange music came through the thick metal of the door and reached his ears. Xatmec stood bent forward against the door, unable to move. His face



was wooden as he listened to those maddening pipes. Excelan, who was further away, noticed how the unnatural music filled his own head with strange and crazy ideas. With a great **effort**, he broke the spell and shouted to warn the others in the castle of an enemy attack.

Suddenly, the piper blew harder and faster. Now the music was high and fierce like a knife in Excelan's ears. Xatmec screamed in

sudden pain, and all the reason left his face like a light dying in the wind. He pulled back the bolts on the door, opened it, and ran out into the hall beyond. Twelve swords cut him down, and the Xotalancas stepped quickly over his wounded body and ran into the guardroom with a long, loud cry.

feather this comes from a bird

pipes you can play music on these by blowing across the top of them

effort something that is not easy to do

shock a very bad surprise; to surprise someone very badly

With an ache in his head from the **shock** of it all, Excelan jumped to meet them with a spear in his hand. The terrible magic of the pipes was less important now than the fact that enemy fighters were in Tecultli. He drove his spear into a Xotalanca's side, and then a sword crashed down hard on his skull and he knew no more. But just then, other wild-eyed Tecultli fighters ran into the guardroom from the halls behind it.



It was the shouting of men and the noise of sword against sword that made Conan jump from his couch, fully awake, with his sword in his hand. In a second, he had reached the door and thrown it open. He stared out into the corridor, just as Techotl hurried up to him, his eyes shining madly.

'The Xotalancas!' he cried. 'They're inside our castle!'

Conan was running down the corridor when Valeria suddenly came out of her room. 'What's happening?' she called.

'Techotl says the Xotalancas are inside Tecultli,' he answered.

With Techotl close behind them, they ran into the throne room, and saw a terrible picture there.



Twenty Xotalanca men and women, their long black hair flying out behind them and white skulls on their chests, were locked in battle with the people of Tecultli. The women on both sides fought as madly as the men, and already the room and the hall beyond were full of dead bodies.

Olmec was fighting for his life by the black pillar, and as the adventurers entered, Tascela ran in from a room behind the pillar with a sword in her hand.

Why had the Xotalancas decided to enter their enemies' castle? There were many reasons: they had lost more men than the Tecultli supposed. With the Burning Skull now destroyed, and the Crawler now badly wounded, things seemed hopeless for them. Added to that, they had heard the news, whispered by a dying man, that mysterious foreigners had joined their enemies to fight against them. All of these things together made them decide to die bravely, killing their old enemies.

After the first shock of the attack, the Tecultli fought back fiercely. It was a bitter battle to the death, the final fight after fifty years of the feud, and everyone knew it.



The end was no surprise. There were twice as many Tecultli as Xotalancas, and they were more **confident** of success, too, because Conan and Valeria were fighting beside them.

Valeria was fast on her feet and quick with her sword, which danced in her hand like white fire. Conan was sure-footed and terribly strong, a real killing machine. None of the Xotalancas stood a chance against him.

It was not long before the last of them fell dying to the ground. Those Tecultli still standing looked around in surprise at the dead bodies of friends and enemies lying on the floor.

'There's a wound on your leg,' Conan said to Valeria.

She looked down, for the first time noticing the pain. Some dying man on the floor behind her had driven his knife into the back of her leg with a last effort.

Olmec walked over to them, his eyes shining fiercely.

'We've won,' he cried. 'The feud is finished. The dogs of Xotalanc lie dead. It's good to look at their lifeless faces. Twenty dead dogs! Twenty red nails for the black pillar.'

'But are you sure that this is all of them?' asked Conan.

'Yes. A chief doesn't divide his army in an attack like this. I promise you: we've killed them all. There were fewer of them than I dreamed. But how could they enter our castle?'

Just then, Tascela came toward them with her sword in one hand. In the other, she held the pipes that she had taken from the feathered chief of the Xotalancas.

'Here are "The Pipes of Madness",' she explained. 'One of our fighters told me that Xatmec opened the door to our enemies after they played these.'

'This fighter arrived from the inner hall just in time to see all this happen, and to hear the last strange notes of some music that turned his blood to ice.'

confident when you are sure of yourself, or of something that will happen



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'In the old days, Tolkemec spoke of these pipes. The Xuchotlans had said they were hidden in the catacombs with the bones of the old wizard who once played them. In some way, the men of Xotalanc found them and learned their secret.'

'Why don't we check if any fighters in Xotalanc are still alive?' asked Conan. 'I'll go if somebody shows me the way.'

'Who will take Conan to Xotalanc?' asked Olmec.

Techotl stepped forward. He had a bad cut down one side of his body. 'I'll go,' he said.

'No, you won't,' said Conan. 'And you're not going either Valeria – not with your leg like that.'

'I'll go!' said a young fighter, cleaning a small cut on one arm.

'Very well, Yanath. Go with the barbarian. You too, Topal,' Olmec pointed to an older man who had only small cuts on him. 'But first, let's carry those people who are hurt to the couches. Our nurses can take better care of them there.'

They did this quickly. As they bent to pick up a woman that the Xotalancas had knocked on the head with a big fighting stick, Olmec's beard brushed against Topal's ear. Conan thought that the prince whispered something to the fighter, but he couldn't be sure. A few moments later, he was walking with Yanath and Topal down the hall to the metal entrance door.

READING CHECK

Match the first and second parts of these sentences.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a The Xotalancas play 'The Pipes of Madness' ...</p> <p>b Conan wakes up and jumps from his couch ...</p> <p>c Conan and Valeria run into the throne room ...</p> <p>d The few Xotalancas who are left want to die ...</p> <p>e Valeria and Techotl are both wounded ...</p> <p>f The Tecultli kill all of the Xotalancas ...</p> <p>g Conan wants to visit Xotalanc ...</p> <p>h Olmec chooses Topal and Yanath ...</p> | <p>1 in a last attack on their enemies' castle – Tecultli.</p> <p>2 and find twenty fierce Xotalanca fighters there.</p> <p>3 to check if any Xotalancas are still alive and hiding there.</p> <p>4 when they are fighting with the enemy in the throne room.</p> <p>5 to make the guards open the doors to Tecultli.</p> <p>6 when he hears the sound of fighting.</p> <p>7 to take Conan to Xotalanc.</p> <p>8 who have entered their castle.</p> |
|---|---|



ACTIVITIES

WORD WORK

Find words in the wordsquare to complete the sentences.

S	H	R	U	G	S	P	X	C
N	H	I	A	R	I	W	A	O
H	Y	E	F	F	O	R	T	N
A	D	B	H	E	A	H	Z	F
O	L	T	I	A	A	S	N	I
C	I	L	R	T	O	H	F	D
O	N	Z	I	H	L	O	J	E
T	R	E	B	E	O	C	R	N
D	N	O	M	R	S	K	K	T
P	I	P	E	S	M	A	H	Q

- The chief of the Xotalancas has *feathers* in his hair.
- The wizard Tolemec knew the secret of the, but he could never find them.
- Conan and Valeria are good of the Tecultli.
- It takes an for Excelan to give a warning cry while the music is playing.
- Xatmec his shoulders when Excelan asks him to think of life with no feud.
- It is a great for the Tecultli to find a lot of enemy fighters inside their castle.
- Olmec feels very when the feud is finished.

GUESS WHAT

What happens when Conan, Topal, and Yanath reach Xotalanc? Tick three boxes.

- They find 'The Crawler' there. ☐
- Yanath goes crazy. ☐
- They see a black pillar with nails in it in the throne room. ☐
- Topal tries to kill Conan. ☐
- They meet the wizard Tolkemec. ☐
- They fight and kill three Xotalanc guards. ☐

9. GLASS-FRONTED SHELVES

Carefully, the two Tecultli walked out beyond the metal door, and Conan followed. They went through many rooms, but they saw no one, and heard nothing. After they crossed the Great Hall that divided the city in two from north to south, they became more watchful. But all the rooms that they passed were empty.

At last, they reached a large metal door like the Door of the Eagle in Tecultli. They pushed it open. For fifty years no Tecultli had passed along here except prisoners on their way to torture and death. To Yanath and Topal, standing at that door was like waiting to step into **hell**. They were afraid to go further. Conan pushed past them and walked confidently into Xotalanc.

The others looked wildly about them as they followed, but nothing broke the silence except their own steps.

After the guardroom, there was a corridor, almost the same as the one that went to Olmec's throne room. Conan looked around and listened. He heard no noise, and the place felt empty. He was confident that there were no Xotalancas alive there.

'Come on,' he said, and began going down the corridor.

But only Yanath followed him, he realized.

hell the hot place where some people think that bad people go when they die

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Conan turned back to see Topal standing some way behind them. Topal held one arm out, like someone keeping danger away, and there was a frightened expression on his face. He was staring at something that was partly hidden by one of the couches.

‘What is it?’ cried Conan. And then he saw. An awful head **protruded** from behind the couch. It was large and dragonish, and two long, white teeth protruded from its mouth.

But the thing was unnaturally still, and its eyes were glassy.

Conan looked behind the couch and found a great serpent lying dead there. He had never seen anything like it. The smell of the catacombs was on it, and its colour changed when he looked at it from different sides. A great wound in its neck showed the reason for its death.

‘It’s the Crawler!’ whispered Yanath fearfully.

‘It’s the creature that I fought on the stairs,’ added Conan. ‘After it followed us to the Door of the Eagle, it crawled back here to die. But how could the Xotalancas **control** it?’



The Tecultli shrugged their shoulders. ‘They brought it up from the catacombs. They discovered secrets that were unknown to us.’

‘Well, it’s dead now,’ said Conan. ‘And my guess is there was only one Crawler. They didn’t bring another when they attacked the Door of the Eagle, did they? Come on.’

Yanath and Topal followed him to the end of the corridor where he opened a door that was faced with silver.

‘If we don’t find anyone on this floor, we’ll go lower. We’ll check Xotalanc from the roof to the catacombs ... By all the gods! What’s this?’

protrude to
come forward or
out of something

control to make
people or things
do what you want

They were now in the throne room. It had the same couches, green stone steps, and ivory throne as Olmec's great hall in Tecultli – except here there was no black pillar with red nails. The blood-feud was remembered in Xotalanc in a different way. On the wall behind the throne there were rows of glass-covered **shelves**. And on these shelves there were hundreds of carefully arranged human heads. They seemed almost alive as they stared out at the shocked visitors with unfeeling eyes, just as they had stared for countless months and years.

Topal whispered something angrily to himself, but Yanath stood silent, a mad light growing in his eyes. Conan watched the young man very carefully.

Just then, Yanath pointed to the lifeless heads with a shaking finger. 'There's my brother's head!' he said. 'And my uncle! And there beyond them is my sister's son!'

Suddenly he began to cry, dry-eyed, with deep **sobs** that shook his body from head to foot. He did not take his eyes from the heads.

shelf (*plural shelves*) a long, flat piece of wood or metal on the wall that you can put things on

sob a loud, sad, sudden cry; to give a loud, sad, sudden cry



His sobs grew louder and higher until he was laughing uncontrollably. Then the sound changed again and became hellish screams. Yanath had gone crazy.

Conan put a hand on the young fighter's shoulder. Yanath turned quickly at this and screamed loudly, attacking the barbarian with his sword. Conan fought back, and Topal tried to catch Yanath's arm. But the mad Tecultli pulled away and drove his sword hard into Topal's body. Topal fell to the floor with a cry, and Yanath turned for a moment in crazy circles. Then he ran to the glass-fronted shelves and began to hit them with his sword while shouting the most terrible things.

Conan jumped on him from behind, trying to catch him by surprise. But Yanath turned and went for him, screaming like a devil. The young fighter was hopelessly mad, Conan realized, and he stepped to one side as Yanath ran past. Then he brought his sword down heavily on Yanath's shoulder. The madman fell lifeless to the floor near Topal.



Conan went to Topal. He was losing blood fast from the deep wound in his side, and the barbarian could do nothing to save him. 'You're dying, Topal,' said Conan. 'Do you want to send any word back to your people?'

'Bend closer,' whispered Topal. Conan did that. A second later, he caught the man's wrist as Topal tried to drive a knife into the barbarian's chest.

'By the gods!' cried Conan. 'Are you mad, too?'

'Olmec ordered it,' whispered the dying man. 'I don't know why. As we took the wounded people to their couches, he asked me quietly to kill you before we returned to Tecultli –' And with the name of his clan on his lips, Topal died.

Conan looked at him wonderingly. Was Olmec mad, too? Were all the Tecultli mad? Shrugging away these questions, he walked out of Xotalanc and left Yanath and Topal lying dead before the staring, lifeless eyes of their clan-brothers.



Conan recognized the way back easily and needed no help. With his sword in his hand, he was as watchful on the journey back to Tecultli as he had been on the journey out to Xotalanc. But now he feared his past allies, not the ghosts of dead Xotalancas.

The barbarian had already crossed the Great Hall and entered a corridor beyond it, when he heard something in front of him. It sounded like someone pulling something over the floor, and it stopped and started often. A low, choking voice spoke from time to time in between the other noises.

Just then, Conan saw a man crawling across the floor toward him. It was Techotl, and his eyes were glassy. He was bleeding badly from his chest. His hand covering the wound was bloody, and with the other hand he was pulling himself along.

'Conan!' Techotl sobbed when he saw the barbarian standing in

front of him. 'Olmec's taken Valeria!'

'So that's why he wanted me dead!' Conan thought. He dropped to his knees by the wounded man.

'I tried to stop him,' Techotl said. 'But he attacked me. He thought he'd killed me, but I crawled away. Be careful, Conan! He'll try to **ambush** you. Kill him! Then leave with Valeria. Olmec and Tascela lied about the dragons. They killed each other years ago, all except the strongest. For twelve years there's

been only one dragon. If it's dead now, then there are none. It was the prince's dragon-god. Olmec gave it human **sacrifices** – the old and the sick. They were tied and thrown from the city wall. Go quickly! He's taken Valeria to the Hall of ... ' Just then, his head dropped to one side, and he died.

Conan ran off toward Tecultli, thinking fast. How many of the clan were left? Seventeen, counting Olmec. Surely he could beat them. Then he remembered Techotl's words about an ambush.

'He's right!' he said aloud. 'Olmec planned for Topal to murder me, but he'll have another plan ready, just to make sure.'

'The prince will think I'll return the same way that I left, so I'll enter Tecultli from a lower floor,' he thought.

At the next stairs, he went down to the third floor and travelled west. After a while, he knew he must be near Tecultli. Then he heard a noise. Somebody was trying to cry out through a **gag**. Conan followed the sound, which was repeated many times. At last, he stood by the door from which the sound came. He opened it and looked inside, and was shocked at what he saw.



ambush to hide and attack someone by surprise; when people hide and attack someone by surprise

sacrifice a person or animal that you kill to please the gods; to kill a person or animal to please the gods

gag something that you tie across someone's mouth to stop them from speaking

ACTIVITIES

READING CHECK

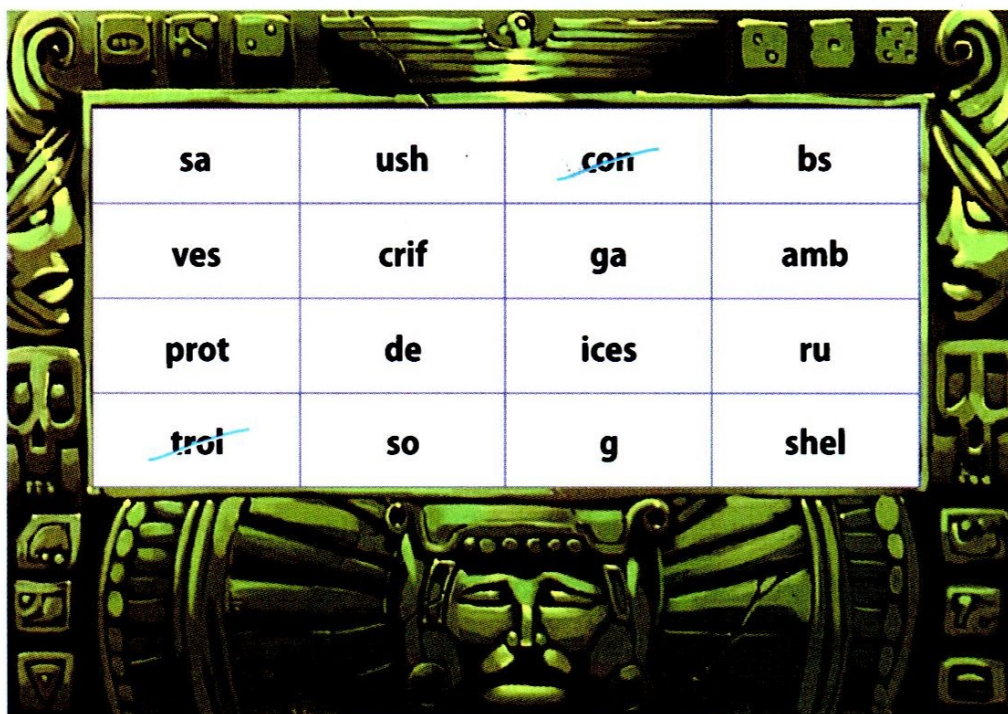
Correct ten more mistakes in the chapter summary.

before

Conan walks into Xotalanc ~~behind~~ before Topal and Yanath. The enemy castle is nearly the same as the Tecultli clan's home. Topal sees the dead Crawler behind a table, and Conan goes and looks at it. When they enter the throne room, they have a shock. There are a lot of shelves on the wall opposite the throne. And on each shelf there is a human hand. Yanath looks at these and goes crazy. Yanath drives his sword into Topal's leg. Then, Conan brings his sword down heavily on Yanath's head and kills him. Topal is losing blood from the wound in his back, and Conan bends over him to hear his last words. Just then, Topal tries to kiss Conan because Tascela has ordered him to do this. Once Topal is dead, Conan walks back toward Tecultli. On the way he meets Techotl, badly wounded, crawling to find him. Before he dies, Techotl tells Conan that Tascela has taken Valeria. Conan hurries back to help her, but then he follows a strange smell.

WORD WORK

Find words in the puzzle to complete the sentences on page 61.



- a How did the Xotalancas *control* a big serpent like the crawler?
- b The Crawler's teeth from its mouth.
- c There are heads on the in the throne room.
- d Yanath deeply before he begins laughing crazily.
- e When you have a in your mouth, you cannot speak easily.
- f An is when people hide and attack you by surprise.
- g In the past, some people used to make animal to their gods.

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the last chapter? Complete the sentences with the names. You can use each one more than once.



Tascela



Olmec



Valeria



Conan



Tolkemec

- a dies falling downstairs.
- b wants to take the life from to live longer.
- c comes up from the catacombs.
- d and must fight.
- e and are killed by a knife in the chest.
- f and leave the city together.

10. HE COMES FROM THE DARKNESS

'Why did you bring me to this room?'
asked Valeria. She sat on a couch with her
sword beside her, and her leg in front of
*her. A Tecultli woman was **bandaging** it.*

'They've taken the wounded fighters
to different rooms,' said the woman,
finishing her work. 'Then they'll take the
dead bodies to the catacombs, to stop their
ghosts walking at night.'

'Ghosts?' asked Valeria.

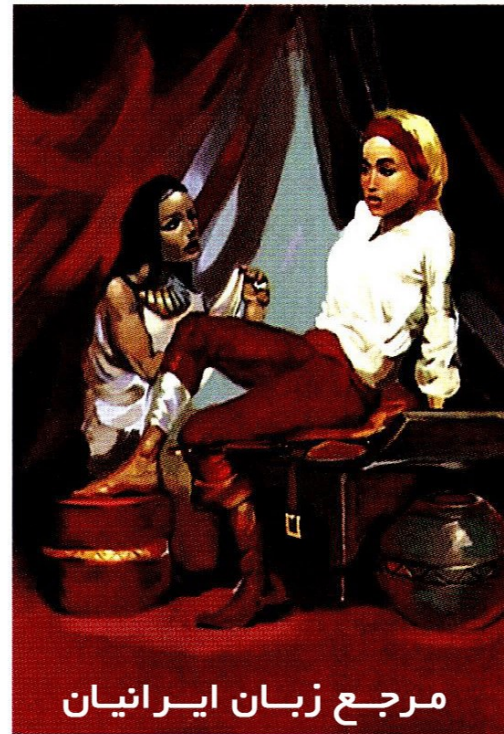
'Yes. I saw the ghost of Tolkemec once in
the catacombs,' the woman added. 'It took
the shape of an old man with long, white
hair, and a beard. It was Tolkemec, I'm sure. I saw him living when I was
a child.'

She went on fearfully, 'Olmec laughs, but Tolkemec's ghost lives, I
*know. They say the **rats** eat the meat from the bones of the newly dead*
– but I don't think it's rats. I think ...'

She looked up as a shadow fell across her. Valeria looked up also to
find Olmec staring down. The woman got up silently and left the room
in a hurry.

'That bandage doesn't look right,' said the prince, bending over Valeria.
'Let's see ...'

A moment later, he had thrown her sword across the room, and was
trying to take her in his arms. Valeria pulled out a knife, but Olmec took
her wrist in his hand, crushing it until the knife fell to the floor. After
Valeria bit his wrist, he hit her on the side of the head. She fell back on
the couch, unable to see straight.



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bandage to tie
a long, thin cloth
around part of your
body after you hurt
it; a long, thin cloth
that you tie around
part of your body
when you hurt it

rat an animal like
a big mouse; it is
often dirty

Moments later, he was carrying her hurriedly from the room. She lay still for a while. Conan was in Xotalanc, and she was sure that the Tecultli never questioned the wishes of their prince. So she didn't call for help. But Olmec had his head on one side, she noticed, like a thief listening for someone following him. They were also going away from the throne room, she realized. So then she screamed.

Suddenly, Techotl arrived. 'Olmec!' he shouted.

The prince turned angrily. He moved Valeria under his left arm, holding her around the middle. She could not escape.

'Valeria is Conan's friend!' Techotl cried. 'They fought against the Xotalancas. You mustn't ...'

Without a word, Olmec closed his free hand into a ball and sent it hard into the wounded fighter's face. Techotl fell to the floor. Then the prince, still with his prisoner under his arm, pulled Techotl's sword from his belt and drove it into Techotl's chest. Throwing the sword to one side, Olmec hurried off with Valeria. Techotl rolled over onto his front and began crawling eastward.

Olmec carried Valeria downstairs and along several corridors to a large hall with a metal door at one end.

'That door goes to the city outside Tecultli,' he said. 'We don't need guards here now because Xotalanc is finished.'

'Conan will cut your throat for this!' cried Valeria.

'Forget Conan,' he answered. 'I'm Prince of Xuchotl now, too. We'll have no more fighting here. Let's drink to that!'

He sat down on the edge of a stone table and held her in one arm. With his free hand, he reached across for an open bottle of wine that was standing on the table. He lifted it to Valeria's lips. 'Drink!' he ordered her.

Valeria turned her head. Wine fell down her shirt. 'She doesn't like your wine,' said a woman's voice coolly.



Olmec turned to see Tascela at the door behind them.

She had a small, gold bottle in her hand.

'Luckily, I have some of my wine. I brought it here years ago. Do you understand, Olmec?'

Tascela came closer. 'You think only of yourself, Olmec,' she said. 'But Valeria is mine. You did wrong.'

Olmec answered angrily, 'Witch! She-devil! Why didn't Tecultli murder you fifty years ago? Go, before I kill you!'

'Oh, Olmec,' the princess went on calmly. 'You can't fight me. You're a slave of the black lotus, and I control you!'

She pushed him back to sit on the table. Then she put the gold bottle to his lips. 'Drink!' she ordered him. The prince drank. Suddenly, he fell to the floor, unable to speak or move.

Valeria tried to attack Tascela, but the princess caught the pirate's wrists in one unnaturally strong hand and tied her to a chair. Then she opened the metal door. 'Through here there's a torture room that we used once. There's a big machine left there which will be very suitable.'

Fear showed in Olmec's eyes. 'Yes, you can hear me,' said Tascela. 'And soon the drugged wine will stop working and you'll feel again. But it'll be too late.'

She pulled the prince effortlessly across the floor and through the door. Soon after that, Valeria heard a machine working and a man's cries of pain.

Tascela returned alone. She closed the door behind her, and untied Valeria. 'I've chosen you for something very special,' she said. 'I'm old

inside, so I need your youth to keep me young and beautiful. And now you're going to give it to me.'

Tascela pulled the pirate to her feet. Valeria stared into the witch's eyes and knew she must obey.



In the room before Conan, Olmec, Prince of Tecultli was tied to a metal bed. He lay face up with his head on a bed of nails. A ring of leather was fastened around his head, and from this, a long **chain** went up to a metal box on the ceiling above his chest. From this box, another chain came down with a heavy metal ball at the end. While the prince lay still, the ball stayed where it was. But when the nails became too painful, and he lifted his head, the metal ball dropped a little. When he could no longer keep his head up, it fell back and everything began again.

'That ball's going to **crush** his chest!' Conan cried.

Olmec lifted his head and looked over at the barbarian. The gag in his mouth stopped him speaking. But his dark eyes asked for help. Conan walked over to him.

'Where's Valeria?' asked the barbarian, taking the gag from the prince's mouth.

'Once I'm out of this machine, I'll tell you,' said Olmec.

'Hmm. Maybe I'll find her myself,' said Conan, standing up.

'Wait. Don't leave. Princess Tascela has her. Look, Tascela's a witch and I'm her slave. I was just obeying orders.'

'But why does she want Valeria?' asked Conan.

'She needs Valeria's youth to stay young. She'll sacrifice her today. We must hurry.'

'We?' said Conan.

'Yes. I can help you get into the castle. I know all the doors in and out of it. Listen, Tascela thinks I'm helpless and you're dead. Let's arrive together and surprise her!'

chain a long string of metal rings which are joined together

crush to break something by pushing down heavily on it

Minutes later, Olmec was a free man. At once, he took Conan to a secret entrance into Tecultli. 'Only Tascela and I know of this,' he explained. 'Tecultli himself built it fifty years ago, but one day, when he was returning from a fight with the Xotalancas, the door didn't open. Tascela – who no longer loved him – had discovered his secret and bolted it against him. So his enemies came and killed him.'

Olmec pushed a golden button behind a pillar. A door opened in the wall. The prince and the barbarian began to climb the stairs going up inside, and the door closed behind them.

'These stairs take us up to the roof,' explained Olmec on the way. 'From there, more stairs go down to the throne room.'

When they reached the roof, they walked along a short corridor to the top of the other stairs. Suddenly, they heard a woman's scream far below. Conan recognized Valeria's voice. He pushed past Olmec, and started hurrying down the stairs. Just then, Olmec lifted his closed hand to hit the barbarian on the back of the head. Conan turned just in time, and his fingers closed around the prince's throat. The two of them fell, fighting, all the way down the stairs. They landed with a crash at the bottom, rolling across the floor and banging against the throne room door. This broke into pieces as they shot through it. Conan jumped up quickly, ready for more. But Olmec's neck was broken, and he lay lifeless on the floor.

Then Conan turned and saw the others. Tascela sat on the throne. Valeria lay on a black stone **altar** before the green steps. A young man held her wrists, and a young woman held her ankles. Thirteen more men and women of Tecultli were on their knees before the altar, and seven black **candles** burned in gold pots around it. These candles sent clouds of sweet-smelling green smoke floating up to the ceiling. Tascela stood. She walked to the altar and lifted a golden knife high in the air.

altar a special, high table in a temple or a church

candle it burns and gives light; in the past, people used them to see at night

'Stop!' cried Conan, running toward her. But just then, a metal **trap** in the floor closed around his leg. Its silver teeth bit into his skin. He was caught.

trap something that people make to catch somebody in

Tascela laughed. 'Stupid barbarian!' she cried. 'All the doors in this room have traps before them. Now watch while your friend gives me the greatest present of all – eternal life!'

Just then, a strange and terrible figure entered the room from a door by the green steps. He had long white hair, a white beard, and grey skin.

'Tolkemec!' cried Tascela, putting the gold knife in her belt. 'Not a story, then, not a ghost – you live! But why did you wait twelve years to return from the catacombs?'

The old man laughed crazily and jumped over the trap before him in the floor. He shook something madly in his hand. It was a long, green stick with a red ball at the top.

'Ah, I see,' said Tascela. 'You were searching for something down in the catacombs, and now you've found it.'



Tolkemec smiled toothlessly and pointed the stick straight at Tascela. Red fire shot from the ball at the end of it toward her. She jumped to one side, and the fire went past her. It hit the woman holding Valeria's ankles and she turned to **ash**.

The other fourteen Tecultli in the room ran around screaming as the old wizard shot them one by one with the fire-stick and turned them to ash. Soon only Conan, Valeria, and Tascela were left. Valeria had run to Conan's side as soon as she could. Now the princess joined them, putting a heavy silver knife in Conan's hand.

'Help me!' she cried. 'My magic spells are useless against Tolkemec. Kill him and you can go free.'

She stepped on a gold button. The trap opened and its teeth went back down into the red stone floor.

'Be careful,' cried Tascela. 'If you're between the altar or a metal door and the fire-stick, Tolkemec can burn you to ash. Good luck!'

After that, the barbarian and the wizard danced around the room silently. Conan stayed away from the altar and the metal doors, and Tolkemec tried to trick him into making a mistake. But Conan cleverly moved closer all the time, and Tolkemec never realized.

Suddenly, Valeria screamed. For a second, Conan stood between a metal door and the fire-stick.

Tolkemec pointed the stick and shot while Conan turned, jumped, and threw the silver knife. It landed squarely in the wizard's chest and the wizard fell down dead, while the fire-stick rolled across the floor.

Tascela ran for it, but Valeria pulled the golden knife from Tascela's belt, drove it deep into the witch's heart, and killed her.

'Good work,' laughed Conan.

ash the grey stuff that you see after something has burned

'You too,' smiled Valeria. 'And now let's leave Xuchotl.'
'Yes, let's do that, and without any of its hellish
treasure. Where shall we go next?' he asked.
'It's a long way to the coast,' said Valeria.
'Don't worry. We'll be there in no time.'
And, arm in arm, the two of them
left the dead city.

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READING CHECK

1 In a 'flashback', a storyteller tells of earlier things. Are these sentences about the flashback in chapter 10 true or false? Tick the boxes.

True False

Chapter 10 Flashback

- a** The woman bandaging Valeria talks of Tolkemec.
- b** Olmec takes Valeria's sword and knife away from her.
- c** Olmec carries Valeria away from the throne room.
- d** Techotl hears Valeria's cries and comes to help.
- e** Olmec drives Techotl's spear into his chest.
- f** Tascela finds Olmec with Yasala.
- g** Tascela gives Olmec drugged food.
- h** Tascela puts Olmec into the torture machine.
- i** Valeria falls under Tascela's spell and must obey her.

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2 Complete the sentences with the names of the people in the pictures.



Olmec



Conan



Valeria



Tascela



Tolkemec

- a** Conan helps *Olmec* out of the torture machine.
- b** Olmec takes into Tecultli by a secret door.
- c** breaks his neck and dies when he falls downstairs.
- d** is on an altar, waiting for to take her life.
- e** 's leg is caught in a trap.
- f** comes up from the catacombs with a magic stick.
- g** opens the trap around 's leg.
- h** Tolkemec kills with his fire-stick.
- i** kills with a knife in his chest.
- j** kills with a knife in her heart.
- k** and leave Xuchotl together.

WORD WORK

Find words from Chapter 10 to match the definitions.

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- a These are animals like mice, but bigger. r a t s
- b Valeria has this white thing around her leg. _ _ _ _ _
- c The fire-stick turns people to this. _ _ _
- d Valeria is waiting to die on this. _ _ _ _ _
- e Conan's leg is caught in this. _ _ _ _
- f The metal ball will do this to Olmec's chest. _ _ _ _ _
- g This goes from the metal ball to the ceiling. _ _ _ _ _
- h These give light around the altar. _ _ _ _ _

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens after the story ends? Tick the boxes and add your own ideas.

- a Conan and Valeria travel to the coast together. ☐
- b They say goodbye at the coast and go their different ways. ☐
- c Conan's enemies attack him and kill Valeria. ☐
- d Conan and Valeria marry and have children. ☐
- e Conan has more adventures on land alone. ☐
- f Valeria goes back to sea as a pirate. ☐
- g
- h
- i

Project A *An imaginary world*

- 1 Read the text about the Hyborian Age, and complete the table. Use a dictionary to help you.

The Hyborian Age was an imaginary past time on earth from 20,000 BCE to 9500 BCE invented by the American fiction writer Robert E. Howard. Howard was born in 1906 and died in 1936. He created this imaginary world in the 1930s as a setting for his stories about Conan the Barbarian. Many of the



imaginary places in this world represent places in our world. For example, Stygia in the Hyborian Age is Egypt in our world.

Howard published the first *Conan the Barbarian* story in 1932 in *Weird Tales* magazine. A number of films are based on Howard's character Conan and the imaginary world he lives in, including *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), *Conan the Destroyer* (1984), and a remake of *Conan the Barbarian* (2011).

Name of imaginary world	
Time of imaginary world	
Name and dates of inventor	
Date of invention	
Character(s) that live in this world	
Extra information about this world	
When/How was the first story about this world published?	
Which films are based on this imaginary world?	

PROJECTS

2 Complete the text about Middle-earth with information from the table.

Name of imaginary world	Middle-earth
Time of imaginary world	ending 6,000 years ago
Name and dates of inventor	Oxford professor and writer J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973)
Date of invention	in the 1930s
Character(s) that live in this world	'hobbits' Bilbo and Frodo Baggins
Extra information about this world	Hobbiton, the home of the hobbits, is in the same place as Oxford, England, in our world
When/How was the first story about this world published?	The Hobbit was published in 1937 as a children's book
Which films are based on this imaginary world?	The Lord of the Rings trilogy (2000, 2001, 2002); The Hobbit trilogy (2012, 2013, 2014)

..... was an imaginary past time on earth, ending years ago, invented by the Oxford professor and fantasy writer Tolkien was born in and died in He created this imaginary world in

..... as a setting for his stories about the 'hobbits'

..... and Many of the imaginary places in this world represent places in our world. For example,, the home of the, is in the same place as,

....., in our world. published his first book about this world,, in A number of films are based on 's characters and and the imaginary world that they live in, including the trilogy (....., 2001, and), and the trilogy (2012,, and).



3 Research and write about another imaginary world (like Narnia, Neverland, or Oz). Use the texts in Activities 1 and 2 for help.

Project B *Dramatizing offstage scenes*

An 'offstage scene' is described briefly in a story, but we do not read about everything in the scene in detail as it happens.

1 Read the first lines of these two-line dialogues. Write in the second line each time, choosing from the words in the speech bubbles on page 75.

- a **1** STYGIAN ARMY CHIEF: She's killed one of my best men. Go after her!
2 DEAD OFFICER'S BROTHER:

- b **1** XOTALANC: My brother has stolen my wife from me!
2 COUNCILLOR:

- c **1** TECULTLI: Oh, no! Why is the door closed?
2 TASCELA:

- d **1** TOLKEMEC: I'm a city slave, here to help you take the city.
2 SOLDIER:

- e **1** TRAVELLER: Help! It's still down there, and I've got nothing to eat or drink up here.
2 DRAGON:

- f **1** OLMEC: The gods are hungry. Throw those old people down to them!
2 GUARD:

- g **1** GIRL: Oh, why did I choose to hide down here?
2 TOLKEMEC:

- h **1** CONAN: What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?
2 VALERIA:

Grrrr! Grrrr!

Hmm. Now where's that fire-stick, I wonder?

I found and bolted it because I no longer love you.

Is this true, Tecultli?

Really? Then I'll take you to our clan chiefs.

Which of them shall we sacrifice first, sir?

Yes, sir. And when I catch her, I'll kill her.

Working as a soldier – that's what!

2 Match each two-line dialogue in Activity 1 with the correct time and place in the scenes below.

SCENE 1: In the desert one night, where XOTALANC and TECULTLI's army waits outside Xuchotl. ☐

SCENE 2: In the council room, where COUNCILLORS discuss TASCELA's future. ☐

SCENE 3: On the city walls one night, while dragons – free from the dead Xuchotlan's spells – walk around in the desert below. ☐

SCENE 4: By the secret way into the castle of Tecultli, just before TECULTLI dies. ☐

SCENE 5: In the catacombs, where a GIRL plays after TOLKEMEC's prison escape. ☐

SCENE 6: On the crag, where a TRAVELLER escaped from a fierce forest reptile. ☐

SCENE 7: In the Sukmet army, when CONAN meets VALERIA for the first time. ☐

SCENE 8: In Sukmet, just after THE ARMY CHIEF finds that VALERIA has left. ☐

PROJECTS

- 3 Choose one two-line dialogue from Activities 1 and 2. How does it go on? Work in groups to write the rest of the dialogue. Continue the scene for as long as you can.**
- 4 Read your group's finished dialogue aloud to the rest of the class. Make it dramatic! If you like, you can act it out.**



Olmec



Conan



Tecultli



Xotalanc



Valeria



the Dragon



Tolkemec



Tascela

TECULTLI. Oh, no! why is the door closed?
TASCELA:

GRAMMAR CHECK

Past Simple Active and Passive

When we talk about a past action or event, we usually use the Past Simple Active.

*Felix **saved** Spurius's life.*

When we want to focus on a past action and either we do not know who did it, or the person doing the action is not important to us, we can use the Past Simple Passive.

*One of the green tiles **was broken**.*

We make the Past Simple Passive with **was/were** + the past participle.

We add information about who or what did the action in a Passive sentence using **by**.

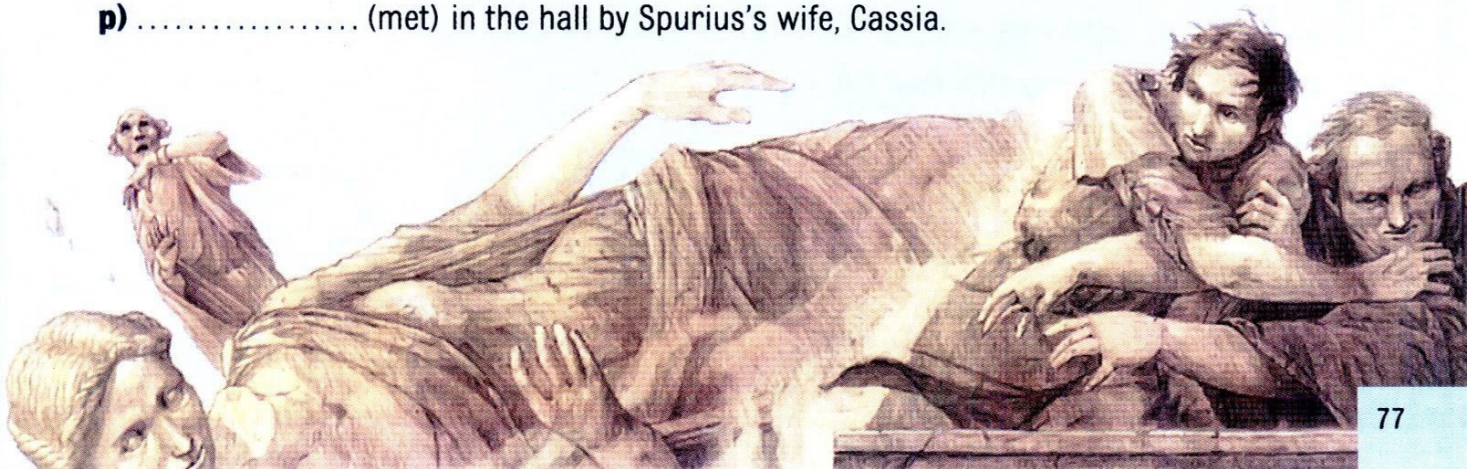
*Felix was freed **by Spurius**.*

1 Complete this text using the Past Simple Passive or the Past Simple Active.

Caius Calvinus Lepidus **a)** **was pleased** (please) by what he saw. The mosaic, which **b)** (design) by the slave Felix, **c)** (look) beautiful! Lepidus politely **d)** (offer) Spurius some wine, but his offer **e)** (refuse) just as politely. Then suddenly the whole room **f)** (shake) by a small earthquake. A large statue **g)** (knock) to the floor by the tremor. Luckily nobody **h)** (hurt) because Felix **i)** (push) his master out of the way just in time. After that, Felix **j)** (give) his freedom by Spurius who **k)** (feel) very grateful to him.

Before they **l)** (leave) the senator's house, Spurius and Felix **m)** (tell) by Lepidus that there had been more than the usual number of earthquakes south of Rome recently. Then they **n)** (go) to collect Petrus from a house nearby.

When all three of them **o)** (arrive) back at Spurius's house in Rome, they **p)** (met) in the hall by Spurius's wife, Cassia.



GRAMMAR CHECK

Relative clauses with **who**, **what**, **where**, **when**

We use **who** to introduce relative clauses about people.

Petrus was the one who had the idea of writing graffiti.

We use **what** to introduce relative clauses about things.

The graffiti was what made Cassia so angry.

We use **where** to introduce relative clauses about places.

The outside wall of Spurius's house was where Petrus wrote the graffiti.

We use **when** to introduce relative clauses about times.

Just after lunch was when Petrus wrote it.

2 Complete these sentences with **who**, **what**, **where**, or **when**.

- a Asking Spurius if they could marry was **what** Flavia and Petrus planned to do.
- b Spurius's office was Cassia spoke to Flavia.
- c 'You must marry Felix,' was Cassia told her daughter.
- d Flavia's screams were Petrus heard in the garden.
- e Petrus was the one loved Flavia.
- f The garden was Petrus took Flavia in his arms.
- g Felix was the person said hello to them there.
- h What the neighbours thought – and said – about her was worried Cassia more than anything.
- i A bottle of wine was Festus and Bassus had in their carriage.
- j Festus was the visitor had problems walking up the steps.
- k Spurius was the only one of the family tried to make polite conversation over lunch.
- l After lunch was Festus and Bassus went to the Colosseum.
- m Two hours later was Cassia saw the graffiti.
- n The fact that the graffiti said she was forty was made Cassia really very angry.



GRAMMAR CHECK

Used to

We use **used to** when we talk about past habits. We make the affirmative with **used + to + infinitive**.

Bassus *used to drive* a chariot in the races, but he *doesn't* any more.

We make the negative with **didn't + use + to + infinitive**.

Bassus *didn't use to drink* much, but he *drinks* a lot now.

We make the question with **did + subject + use + to + infinitive**.

Did Bassus use to play dice when he was younger?

3 Complete these sentences with the **used to** form of the verbs in brackets in the affirmative or negative.

- a Bassus *used to live* (live) with his parents when he was a young man.
- b He (be) handsome and very good at sport when he was younger.
- c He (go) to parties every night because he was so famous.
- d He (stay) alone at home every evening.
- e He (have) a very exciting life as a charioteer.
- f He (feel) that life was boring in those days.
- g He (have) much money before he married Rectina.
- h Rectina (watch) the chariot races a lot when Bassus was in them.
- i She (hate) her husband when they were first married.
- j She (love) Bassus until she learnt he spent time with other women.



4 Write questions with **used to** using these prompt words.

- a Festus and Bassus/be/friends/when/they/be/younger
Did Festus and Bassus used to be friends when they were younger?
- b Rectina/live/with her parents/before/she/marry/Bassus
.....
- c Bassus's parents/watch/the chariot races/when/he/be/in them
.....
- d Petrus's mother/spend/a lot of time with Bassus/before/Petrus/be born
.....
- e Bassus/see/much of his son/before/he/send/him/away to Rome.
.....

GRAMMAR CHECK

Past Continuous and Past Simple

We often use the Past Continuous to describe things or talk about repeated past actions.

*Petrus and Felix **were standing** on one side of the square. (= describing)*

*Felix **was looking** around him interestedly. (= talking about repeated actions)*

We use the Past Simple to describe single actions in the past, and for state verbs (**like have, seem, want**) which we can't use in the continuous form.

*Petrus **put** a hand on Felix's arm. (= single action)*

*Petrus **had** Bassus's letter to the shop owner with him. (= state verb)*

5 Complete the text with the verbs in the box in the Past Continuous where possible, or in the Past Simple.

buy	carry	give	have	leave	look	pay	see
sell	not seem	stand	speak	stop	talk	wear	want

The people around them **a)** *were speaking* different languages, and some of them **b)** to be Roman. The shops **c)** fruit and vegetables that Felix hadn't seen before.

Just then, across the square, Felix **d)** a beautiful slave girl. She **e)** a blue tunic, and she **f)** yellow hair and blue eyes. She **g)** a basket over one arm, and she **h)** some fruit from one of the shops in the market. She and the shop owner **i)** together in a friendly way while she **j)** him for the fruit.

Suddenly the girl **k)** across the square at Felix. She **l)** him a smile, and then she **m)** the square in a hurry with her basket of fruit. Felix **n)** to run after her at once, but Petrus, who **o)** next to him, **p)** him from following her.

GRAMMAR CHECK

Direct and reported speech

In direct speech we give the words that people say. In reported speech we put the verb a step into the past and we change the pronouns and time and place references.

'Neptune is angry,' said Agathe. Agathe said (that) Neptune was angry.
'The gods will punish us!' she said. She said (that) the gods would punish them.

We can use the word that to introduce reported speech statements, but it is not necessary. tell needs an indirect object – me, her, Felix; say does not need an indirect object.

Alcander told Felix (that) it was the most beautiful mosaic he had ever seen.
He said (that) it was the most beautiful mosaic he had ever seen.

We use tell + infinitive with to to report commands, and ask + infinitive with to to report requests.

'Pull back the curtain,' Bassus said to Felix. Bassus told Felix to pull back the curtain.
'Please look at it,' he said to his guests. He asked his guests to look at it.

6 Rewrite the direct speech sentences in reported speech.

- a 'Please play dice with me for Agathe's freedom,' Felix said to Bassus.
Felix asked Bassus to play dice with him for Agathe's freedom...
- b 'If I lose the game, I'll be your slave,' Felix explained to Bassus.
.....
- c 'You can't refuse to play in front of all your guests,' Rectina told Bassus.
.....
- d 'Bring me the dice,' Bassus told Alcander.
.....
- e 'He's a brave boy,' said the senator's wife of Felix.
.....
- f 'You have some friends in high places,' the general told Felix.
.....
- g 'I've won your freedom,' Felix told Agathe.
.....
- h 'Please choose a couch for dinner,' said Rectina to everybody.
.....

GRAMMAR CHECK

Gerund with sense verbs

We use the **-ing** verb form (the gerund) with verbs of the senses like **hear**, **see**, **feel** and **smell**, and also verbs like **watch**, **listen to** and **notice**.

Suddenly they heard lots of dogs howling.

When a verb ends in consonant + **e**, we remove the final **e** and add **-ing**

come – coming, shake – shaking

When a verb ends in consonant + short vowel + single consonant, we double the final consonant and add **-ing**

hit – hitting, run – running

With the verbs **die** and **lie** we remove the final **ie** and add **-ying**

die – dying, lie – lying

7 Complete the sentences with the verbs in brackets in the **-ing** form

- a They saw smoke ... **coming** ... (come) from Vesuvius.
- b They felt the ground (shake) under them.
- c The horses felt stones (hit) their backs.
- d Petrus felt his father (lie) across him.
- e Agathe noticed people (run) around.
- f She heard people (scream),
..... (shout), and (cry).
- g She saw Petrus and Bassus (sit) calmly in the middle of the crowd.
- h Agathe and Festus noticed people (swim) in the sea around their boat.
- i Felix and Alcander saw some people (hide) in their houses.
- j They heard officers in Misenum (give) orders to slaves.
- k Felix heard people (die) in Herculaneum.
- l He smelt the gas (come) from the volcano in Stabiae.
- m The sailors heard Gaius Plinius (whisper) as he lay on the beach.
- n Felix saw the ships around him (ride) the waves near the coast.
- o He noticed a man and a woman (hug) two children under a blanket of ash on the beach.
- p He watched two sailors (get) into the little silver boat.



GRAMMAR CHECK

Will

We can use **will** to make predictions.

'We'll be fine,' said Petrus. 'Gaius Plinius will save us. We won't die.'

We put adverbs like **always** and **never** between **will** and the main verb.

'I'll never forget your kindness,' Petrus told Agathe.

We often start **will** predictions with **I think** when we are not completely sure of them.

'I think the admiral will be here soon,' Petrus said.

We can also use **will** to make offers and promises.

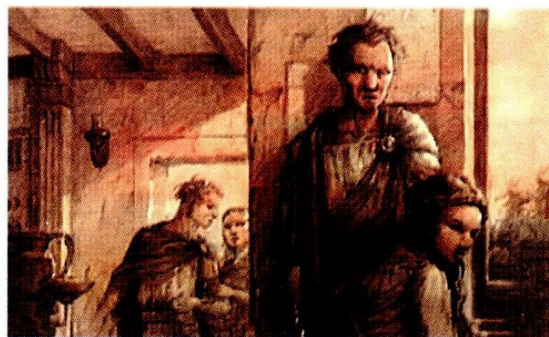
'I'll stay with you,' said Agathe to Petrus. (= offer)

'I'll do my best to follow you,' said Felix to Alcander. (= promise).

8 Complete these sentences using the verbs in the box in the **will/won't** form.

agree ask ask ~~be~~ not do fetch forget help
order remember sell teach tell not understand

- a 'Cassia **will be** pleased,' Spurius told Felix.
- b 'I the servants to bring food and wine at once,' said Cassia.
- c 'I Flavia about Petrus,' said Agathe.
- d 'I you how to design and make mosaics,' Felix told Alcander.
- e 'I half my business to you,' Spurius told Felix.
- f 'I you with the children,' Flavia told Agathe.
- g 'Everyone thinks the Emperor Felix to design a big new mosaic to honour the dead of Pompeii,' said Flavia.
- h 'I'm sure he it,' said Alcander. 'We never the nightmare we lived through there.'
- i 'I think perhaps he to do it – for people like Petrus,' said Agathe.
- j 'I always Petrus,' thought Flavia sadly.
- k 'I more wine from the kitchen,' said Agathe.
- l 'You ever how women think,' said Agathe to Felix.
- m 'I think I Flavia to marry me,' said Alcander to his sister.




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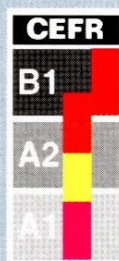
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