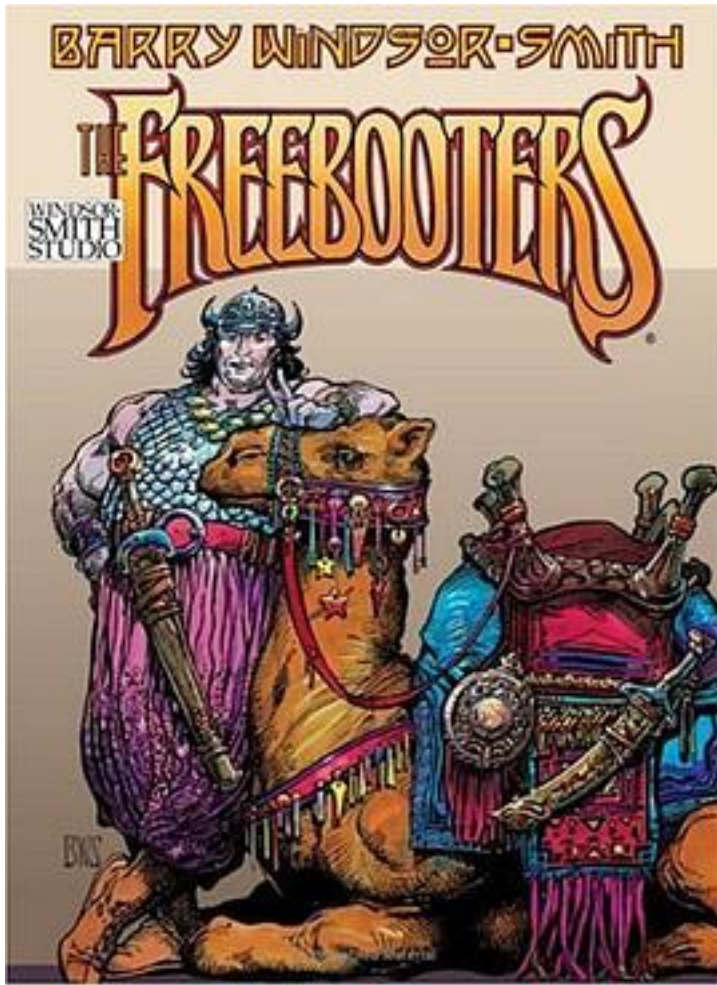


The Freebooters



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著者:Barry Windsor-Smith

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A barbarian fantasy from the man who defined Robert E. Howard's Conan in the comics.

The Freebooters is a lively, character-driven graphic narrative set in a fantastic, ancient milieu that superficially bears resemblance to a world that will be familiar to longtime Windsor-Smith fans who remember his work on another famous warrior. The infamously bizarre city of Shahariza may seem an unlikely venue from which to save the world from the ruin of ultimate evil, but it is home to Axus the Great—the legendary Freebooter and hero to the known world. Thus it is that young Aran Ana-Kashan, poet and seer, has traveled 100 days, seeking help to avert the apocalyptic future revealed to him in his visions. But though Axus's legend has grown far and wide, Axus himself has grown merely older (and wider), and Aran finds disappointment in the blustering, overweight adventurer, now retired to the sanctuary of his colorful inn and tavern, The Ram and the Peacock, and living off his reputation, unwilling to take Aran's prophecies seriously (Axus does hire Aran as his jester, however).

Central to Axus' renown is the story of the fire-demon, Ammon-Gra. According to legend, it was Axus who destroyed the creature, thirty years gone, in a fantastic battle that saved Shahariza and the entire world from annihilation. But the legendary exploits of Axus the Great have been gaudily spun for so long that Sharariza's history has become sinuated with folklore and myth, and the aging yet emotionally immature ex-warrior exists at odds with his own reputation.

When Aran's visions are revealed to foretell of the second-coming of Ammon-Gra, Axus remains blissfully ignorant of the gathering threat of catastrophe, preferring to indulge his mid-life crisis (this is not your father's barbarian) rather than act like a hero. By the end, destinies of hero and villain cross in unexpected ways.

While similarities with Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian are obvious given Windsor-Smith's history with the character (he made Conan a household name for Marvel Comics in the early 1970s and his visual style inspired the Arnold Schwarzenegger film as much as Howard's original novels), The Freebooters is a riotous, unexpected and postmodern take on the genre. Axus ages into a gluttonous manchild, too busy trying to prove he can still compete with younger prettyboys to face real adversity, a path that rings more true than the heroic king Conan became in later stories. The Freebooters is a politically incorrect farce worthy of its hedonistic milieu.

This volume collects the entirety of Windsor-Smith's "The Freebooter" stories from the acclaimed BWS: Storyteller comic book series from the early 1990s, including a full-length chapter from the unpublished tenth issue, plus more than 50 pages of new story. The Freebooters is amongst the most raucous and literate comics of Windsor-Smith's career, the culmination of a lifetime of experience and knowledge, approaching his comics with a seriousness of purpose while never losing his unmistakable sense of humor. A ripping good yarn!

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