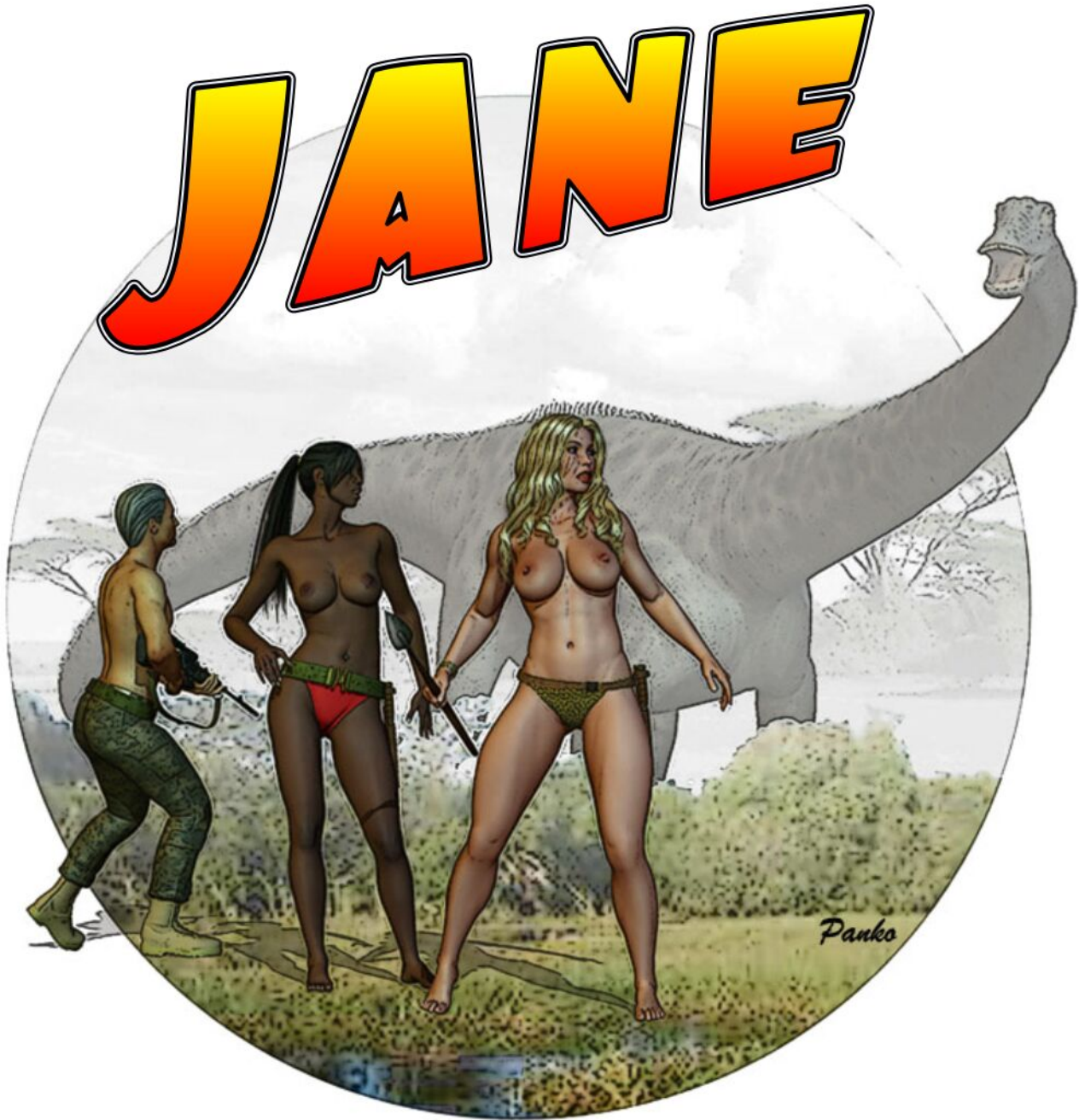


TRIBULATIONS OF THE ROGUE ADVENTURER

# JANE



TRIBULATIONS OF THE ROGUE ADVENTURER



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MY NAME IS IRRELEVANT AND COULD ONLY BE OF SOME INTEREST TO A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND AUTHORITIES WHO TAILED ME, RATHER LEISURELY I MUST ADMIT, IN THE PAST FEW DECADES. LET'S CALL ME JUST MIKE FOR THE NEEDS OF THE STORY I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU HERE, ONE OF THE MOST AMAZING, MOST INCREDIBLE STORIES THAT ANYONE ON THIS EARTH WAS GIVEN TO LIVE.

I DON'T EXPECT ANYONE TO BELIEVE THIS TALE -IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. IF I DECIDED TO NARRATE IT, TO MAKE IT PUBLIC PROPERTY, IT'S NOT BECAUSE I EXPECT TO BE RECOGNIZED, OR TO GAIN ANY HONOURS, OR TO MAKE A FAST BUCK OUT OF THIS. I'M WELL PAST THIS STAGE -AGAIN, I COULDN'T CARE LESS. NO... I'M DOING IT BECAUSE I NEEDED TO TAKE IT OFF MY CHEST, FOR THE BURDEN WAS BECOMING TOO HEAVY FOR ONE MAN TO CARRY. ALSO... PERHAPS... BECAUSE, IN A WAY, I WANTED TO RELIVE, EVEN IN THIS WAY, THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURE THAT I HAD IN THE HEART OF DARK AFRICA.





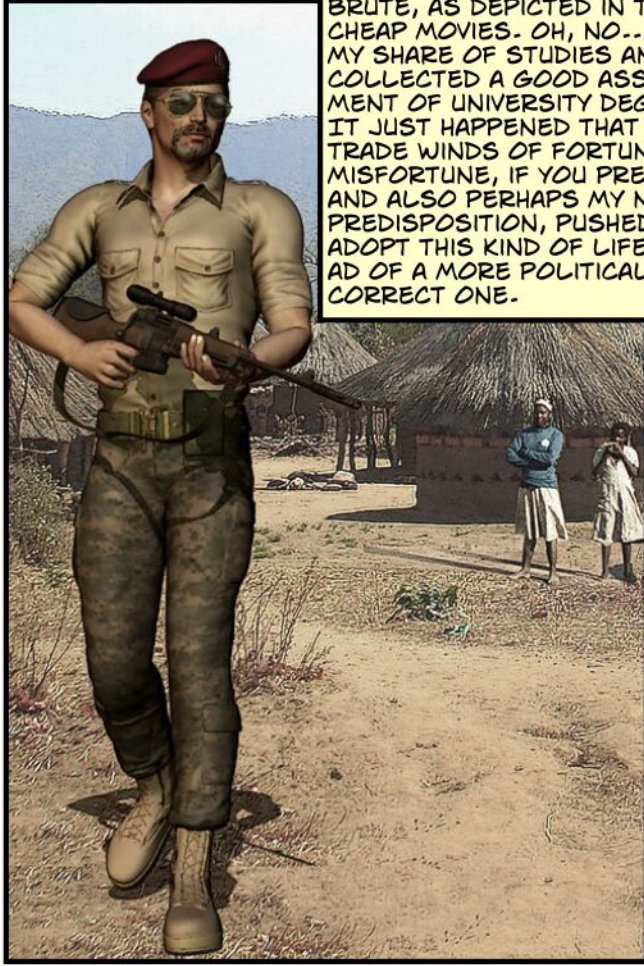
AFRICA HAS BEEN MY HOME AND HUNTING AREA FOR THE BEST PART OF THE SECOND HALF OF MY LIFE. I DID ALL SORTS OF THINGS, SOME OF WHICH ANOTHER PERSON WOULD BE ASHAMED OF AND SOME THAT WOULD EARN ME AN APPROVING NOD OF THE HEAD -I REMAIN INDIFFERENT ON BOTH ACCOUNTS. I AM WHO I AM AND I LEARNED TO LIVE WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE IN RELATIVE PEACE FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.



MERCENARY, SLAVE TRADER (OH YES, THE PROFESSION STILL EXISTS AND IS FLOURISHING IN THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE HORN OF AFRICA), POACHER, DIAMOND HUNTER, SAFARI GUIDE, ARMS DEALER... YOU NAME IT, I'VE DONE IT ALL.



HOWEVER IT WILL BE A MISTAKE TO THINK OF ME AS YOUR AVERAGE GREED-DRIVEN, ILLITERATE BRUTE, AS DEPICTED IN THE CHEAP MOVIES. OH, NO... I HAD MY SHARE OF STUDIES AND HAS COLLECTED A GOOD ASSORTMENT OF UNIVERSITY DEGREES... IT JUST HAPPENED THAT THE TRADE WINDS OF FORTUNE (OR MISFORTUNE, IF YOU PREFER), AND ALSO PERHAPS MY NATURAL PREDISPOSITION, PUSHED ME TO ADOPT THIS KIND OF LIFE INSTEAD OF A MORE POLITICALLY CORRECT ONE.



AS IT TURNED OUT I MADE NO FORTUNE, I ACHIEVED NO FAME, GAINED NO RECOGNITION. NOTHING SINGLED ME OUT FROM THE MASS OF THE NAMELESS MOB THAT ROAM THIS PLANET. WELL... ALMOST NOTHING... FOR THERE IS ONE SMALL DETAIL THAT MAKES ME UNIQUE...



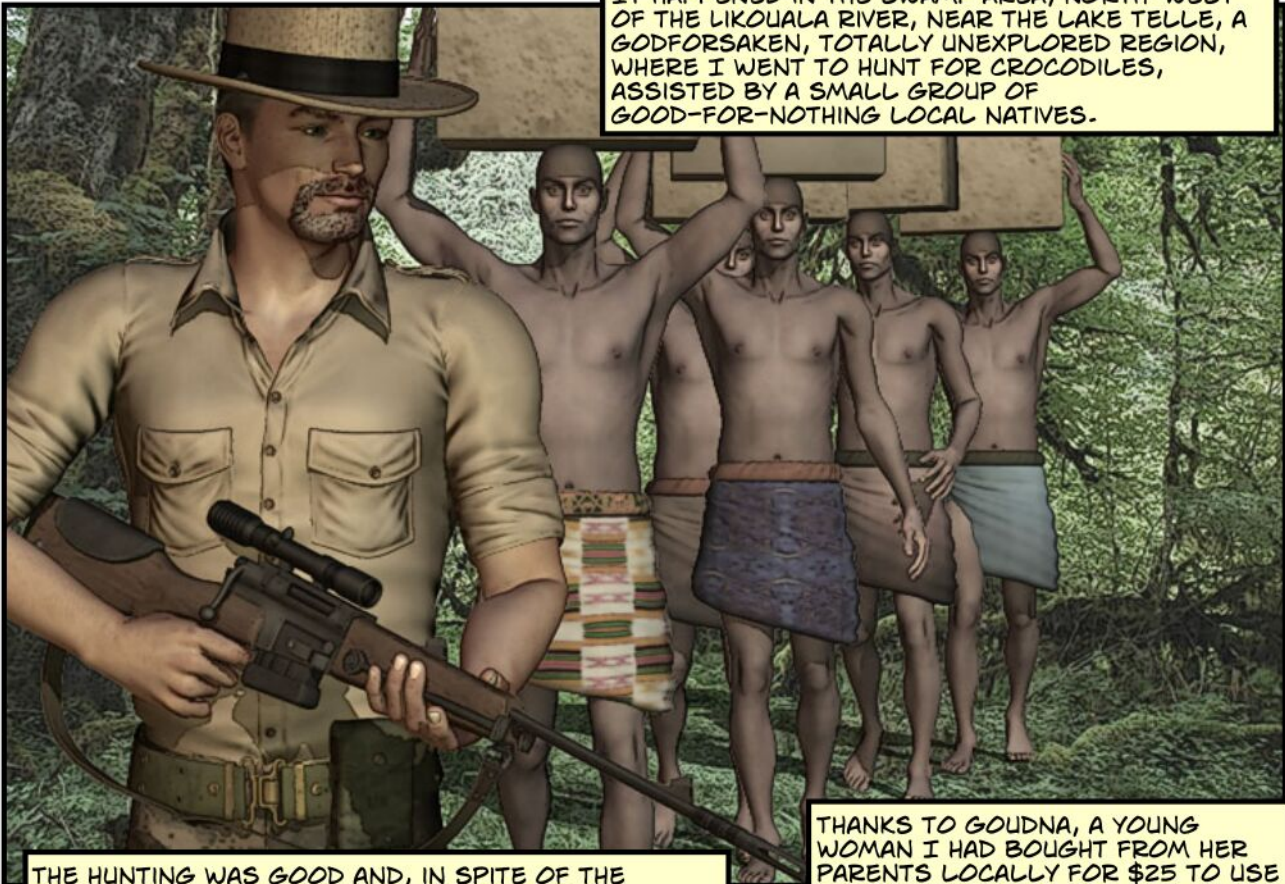


I MUST BE THE ONLY WHITE MAN ON EARTH WHO HAS SEEN  
A LIVING DINOSAUR -AND LIVED TO TELL THE STORY!



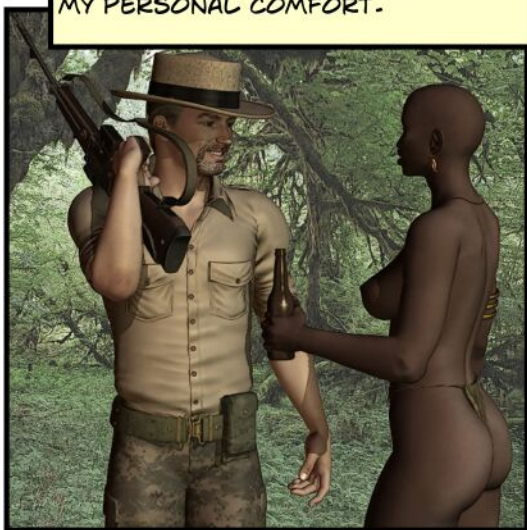


IT HAPPENED IN THE SWAMP AREA, NORTH-WEST OF THE LIKOALA RIVER, NEAR THE LAKE TELLE, A GODFORSAKEN, TOTALLY UNEXPLORED REGION, WHERE I WENT TO HUNT FOR CROCODILES, ASSISTED BY A SMALL GROUP OF GOOD-FOR-NOTHING LOCAL NATIVES.



THE HUNTING WAS GOOD AND, IN SPITE OF THE HARDSHIPS, THE TIME I SPENT THERE WASN'T TOTALLY DEVOID OF SOME KIND OF ENTERTAINMENT.

THANKS TO GOUDNA, A YOUNG WOMAN I HAD BOUGHT FROM HER PARENTS LOCALLY FOR \$25 TO USE AS A GUIDE AND -OF COURSE- FOR MY PERSONAL COMFORT.



GOUDNA WAS -BY LOCAL STANDARDS- A BEAUTY.



AND VERY EAGER TO PLEASE HER MASTER, AS SHE HOPED THAT I MIGHT TAKE HER ALONG WITH ME WHEN I SHOULD RETURN TO BRAZZA. (A HOPE NOT ENTIRELY UNFOUNDED).



THEN, ONE DAY, WE CAME ACROSS SOME HUGE ANIMAL FOOTPRINTS ON THE SOFT MUD OF THE LAKE'S SHORES.



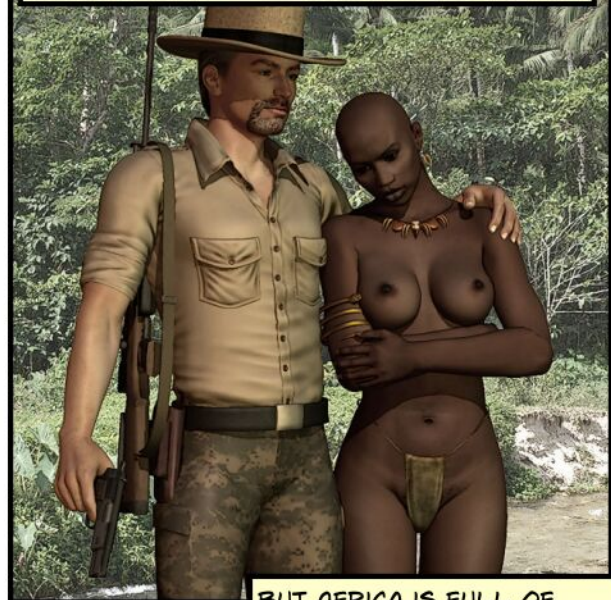
THE NATIVES WENT FRANTIC!



THEY FLED IN TOTAL PANIC. I MANAGED TO SHOOT DOWN A COUPLE BUT THIS DIDN'T STOP THEM.



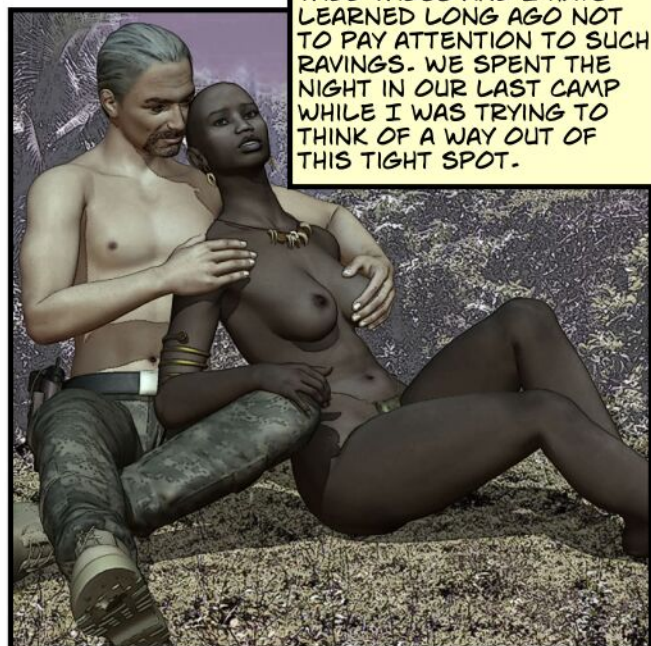
GOUDNA ALONE REMAINED BY MY SIDE, TERRIFIED AND TREMBLING, YET STILL LOYAL (TO HER HOPES MORE THAN TO ME).



I LIVED IN CENTRAL AFRICA FOR TOO LONG NOT TO HAVING HEARD OF THIS LEGENDARY ANIMAL CALLED BY THE NATIVES MOKELE MBEBE, THAT SOME CRANKS IN THE STATES AND EUROPE THOUGHT TO BE A KIND OF A SURVIVING BRONTOSAUR.



BUT AFRICA IS FULL OF TALL TALES AND I HAVE LEARNED LONG AGO NOT TO PAY ATTENTION TO SUCH RAVINGS. WE SPENT THE NIGHT IN OUR LAST CAMP WHILE I WAS TRYING TO THINK OF A WAY OUT OF THIS TIGHT SPOT.





BY SUNRISE I HAD MADE UP MY MIND. WE'LL LEAVE THE CROC HIDES HERE AND HEAD FOR THE NEAREST VILLAGE, WHERE WE WOULD HIRE PORTERS TO CARRY THEM TO THE RIVER.



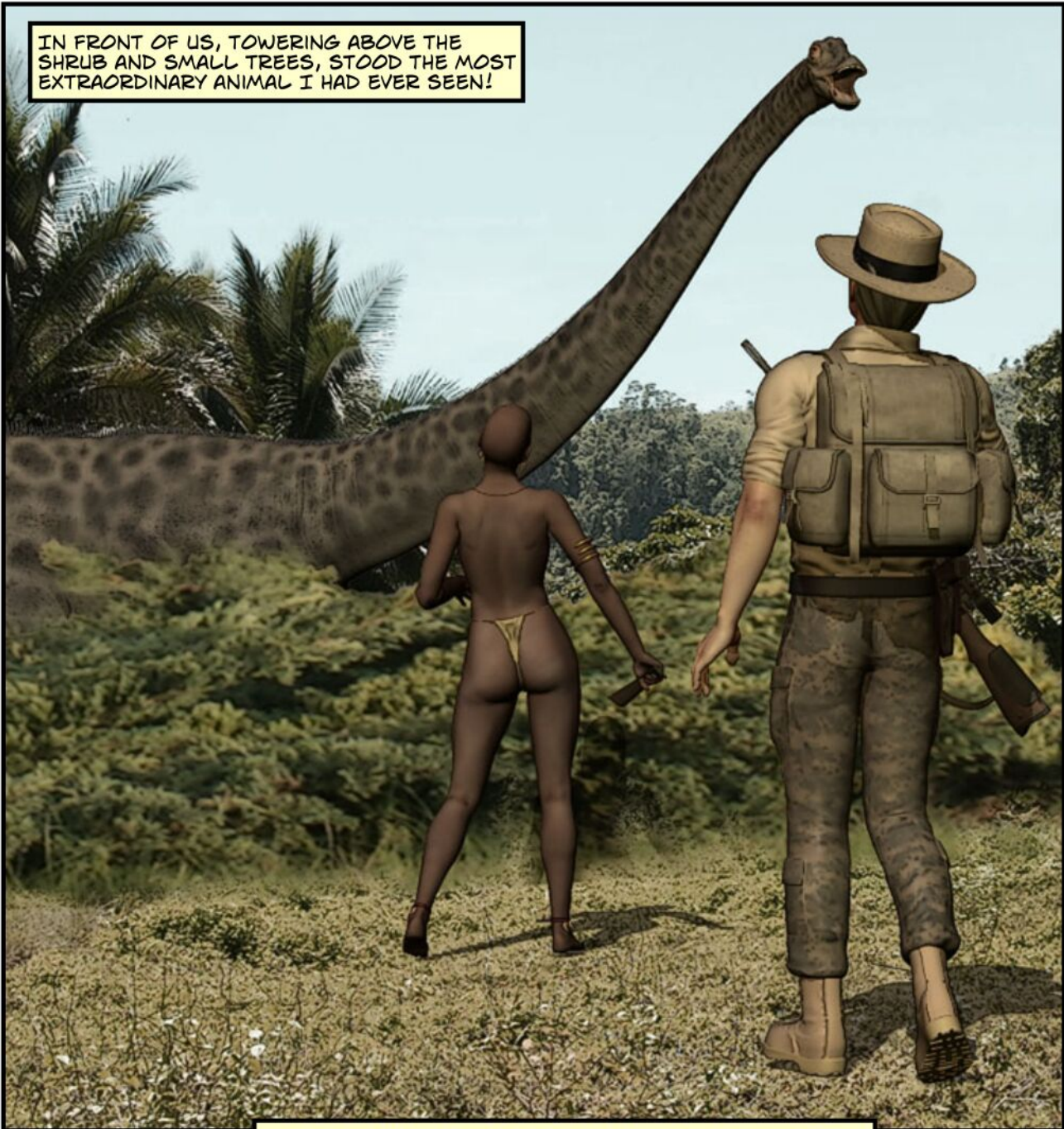
GOUDNA CLAIMED THAT SHE KNEW THE TRACK THAT WOULD TAKE US TO A VILLAGE CALLED MANABE, WHERE SHE HAD SOME RELATIVES.

SHE HAD TAKEN THE POINT AND BY MID-DAY WE'VE MADE LITTLE PROGRESS FOR THE TERRAIN WAS TREACHEROUS. SUDDENLY I SAW HER FREEZING ON THE SPOT -LITERALLY.

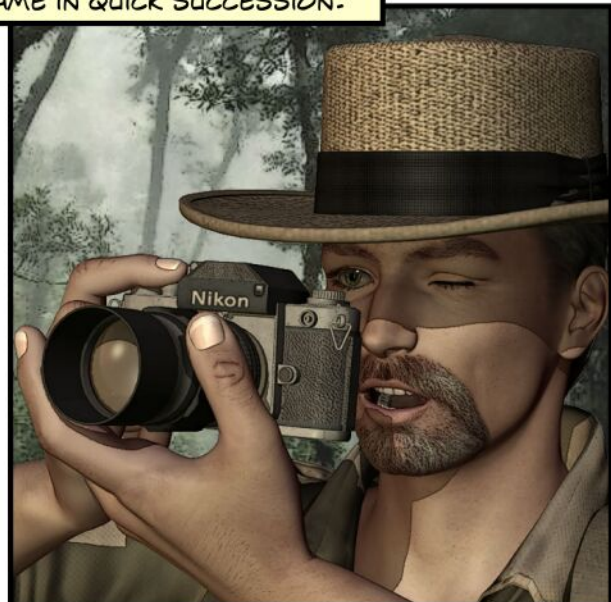
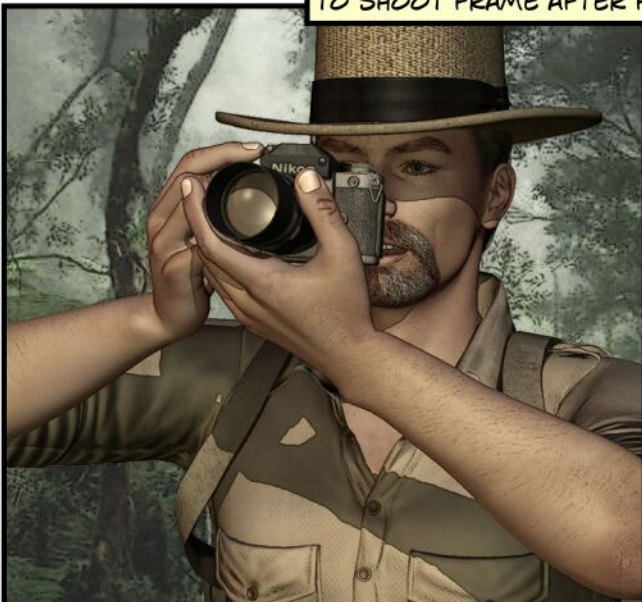




IN FRONT OF US, TOWERING ABOVE THE SHRUB AND SMALL TREES, STOOD THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY ANIMAL I HAD EVER SEEN!



WITHOUT THINKING I TOOK OUT MY NIKON AND STARTED TO SHOOT FRAME AFTER FRAME IN QUICK SUCCESSION.





ANNOYED BY THE NOISE OF THE MOTOR DRIVE THE MONSTER TURNED TO LEAVE AND BY DOING SO HIS MASSIVE TAIL CAUGHT THE POOR GIRL SQUARELY.

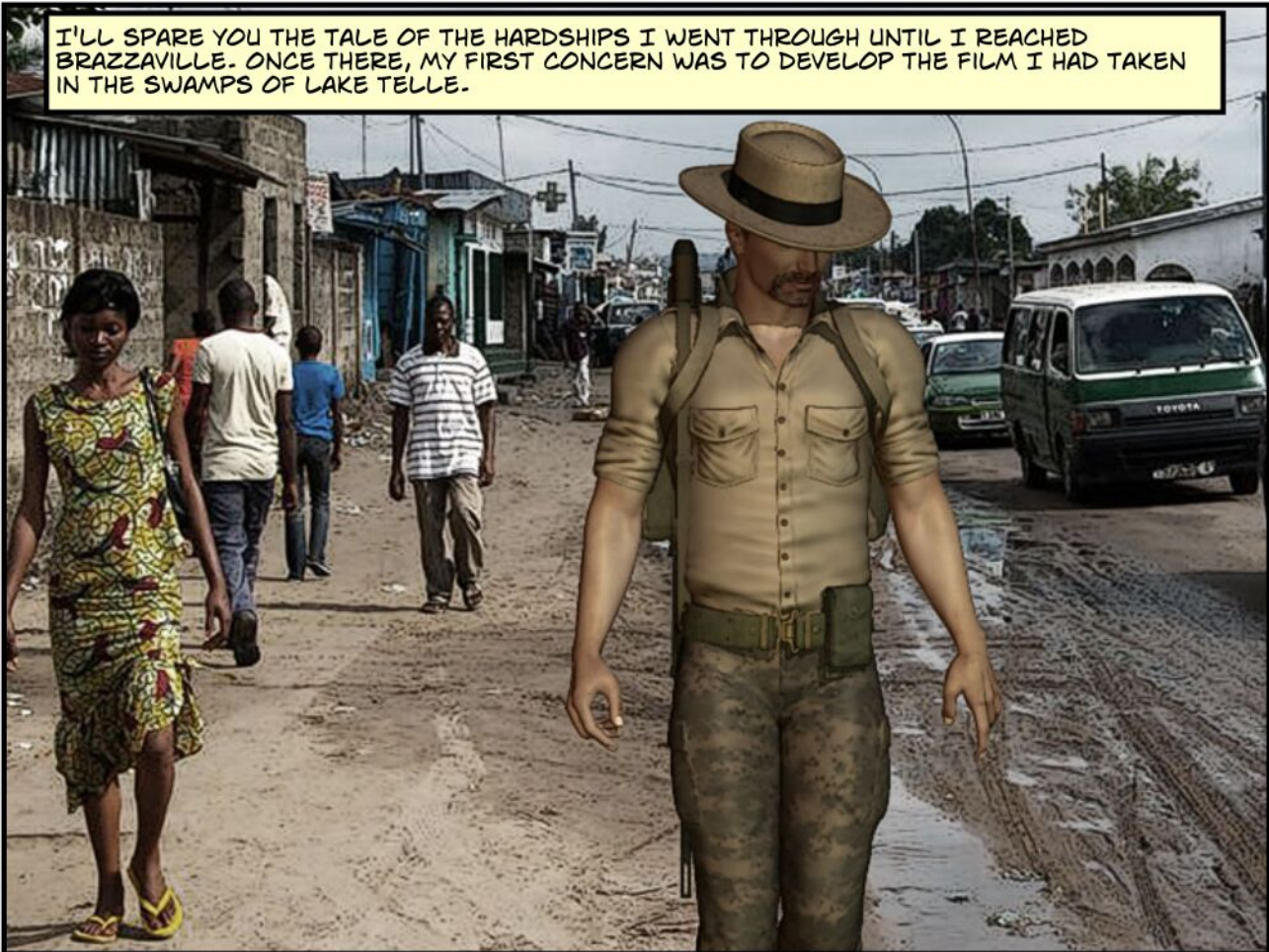


SHE WAS ALREADY DEAD WHEN I REACHED HER FALLEN BODY.

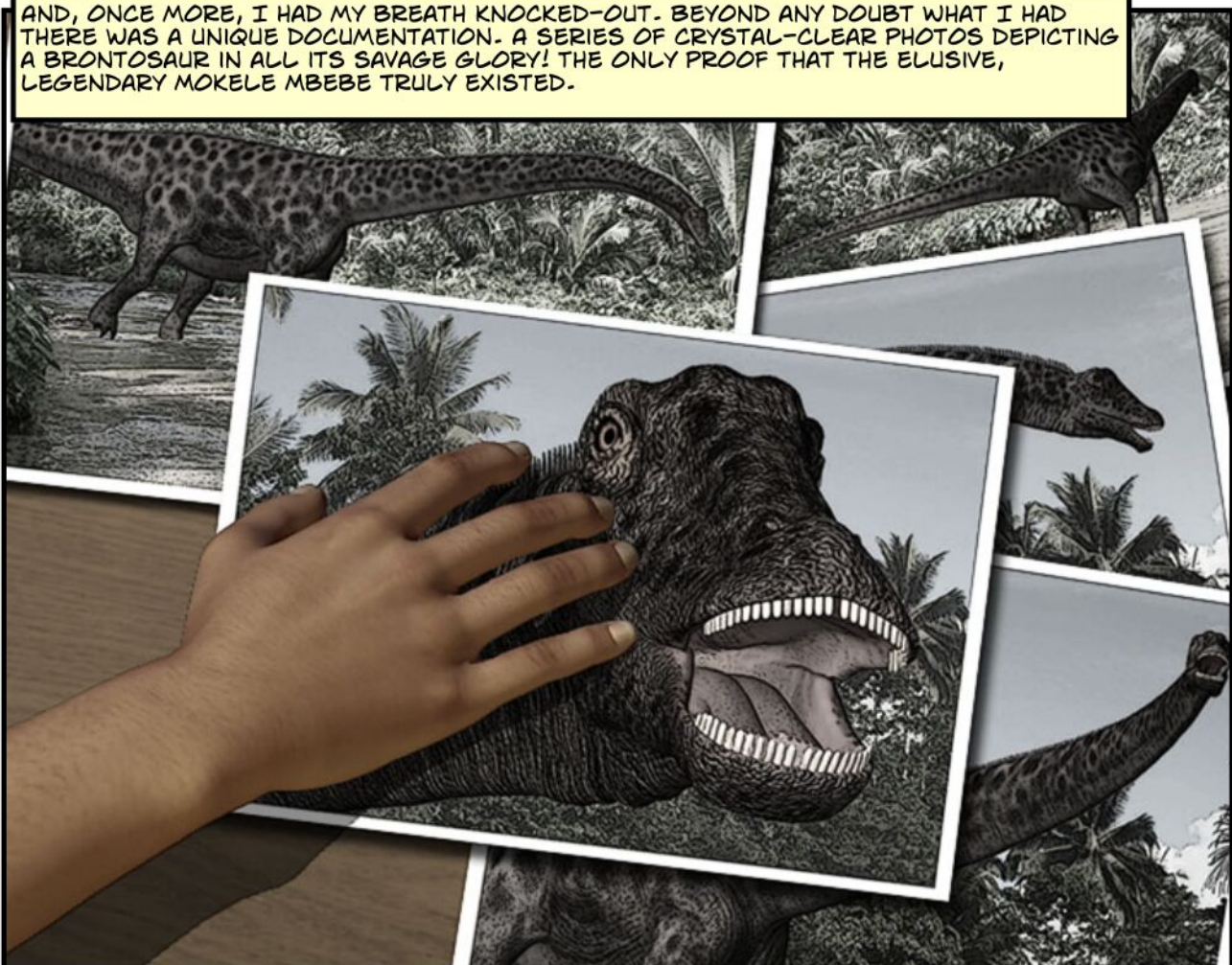




I'LL SPARE YOU THE TALE OF THE HARDSHIPS I WENT THROUGH UNTIL I REACHED BRAZZAVILLE. ONCE THERE, MY FIRST CONCERN WAS TO DEVELOP THE FILM I HAD TAKEN IN THE SWAMPS OF LAKE TELLE.



AND, ONCE MORE, I HAD MY BREATH KNOCKED-OUT. BEYOND ANY DOUBT WHAT I HAD THERE WAS A UNIQUE DOCUMENTATION. A SERIES OF CRYSTAL-CLEAR PHOTOS DEPICTING A BRONTOSAUR IN ALL ITS SAVAGE GLORY! THE ONLY PROOF THAT THE ELUSIVE, LEGENDARY MOKELE MBEBE TRULY EXISTED.





FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS I KNOCKED ON MANY DOORS IN A NUMBER OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN CITIES, TRYING TO FIND SPONSORS AND INVESTORS, TO MOUNT A DECENT EXPEDITION IN SEARCH OF THE MOKELE MBEBE.



BUT I'M NO GOOD IN THAT SORT OF THING AND COLLECTED NOTHING BUT DENIAL, SCORN AND INDIFFERENCE.



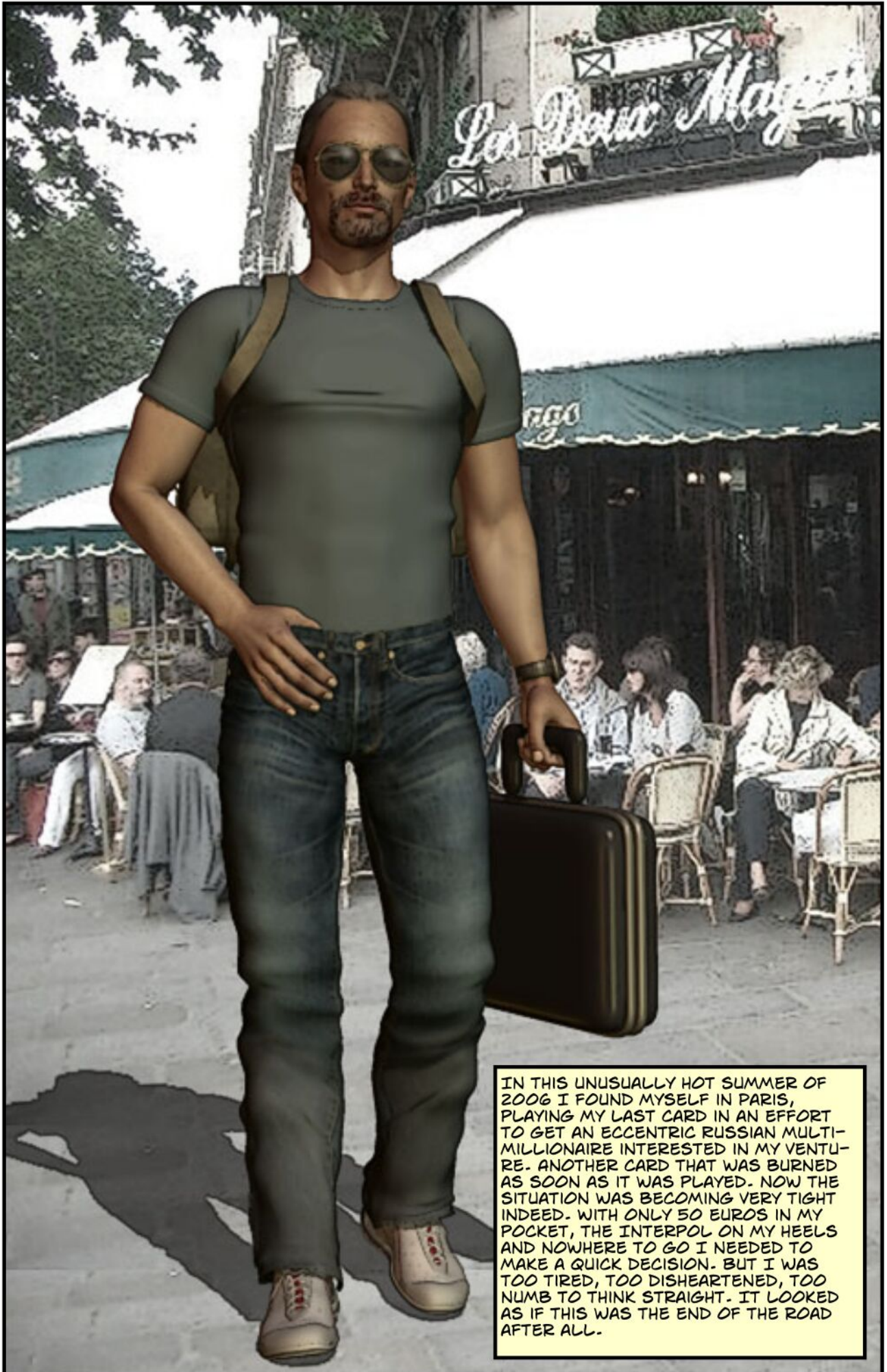
AS MY MEAGER FUNDS WERE RAPIDLY DIMINISHING THE PRESS TOOK WIND OF MY EFFORTS AND STARTED TO PUBLISH SCORNFUL PIECES ON MY ACCOUNT.



THIS ATTRACTED A SWARM OF CRANKS AND ZEALOTS WHO BEGAN TO PESTER ME WITH CRAZY IDEAS AND PROPOSITIONS, BUT IT ALSO ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF SOME AUTHORITIES WHO STARTED TO DIG INTO THEIR FILES... IT WAS GETTING DESPERATE.







IN THIS UNUSUALLY HOT SUMMER OF 2006 I FOUND MYSELF IN PARIS, PLAYING MY LAST CARD IN AN EFFORT TO GET AN ECCENTRIC RUSSIAN MULTI-MILLIONAIRE INTERESTED IN MY VENTURE. ANOTHER CARD THAT WAS BURNED AS SOON AS IT WAS PLAYED. NOW THE SITUATION WAS BECOMING VERY TIGHT INDEED. WITH ONLY 50 EUROS IN MY POCKET, THE INTERPOL ON MY HEELS AND NOWHERE TO GO I NEEDED TO MAKE A QUICK DECISION. BUT I WAS TOO TIRED, TOO DISHEARTENED, TOO NUMB TO THINK STRAIGHT. IT LOOKED AS IF THIS WAS THE END OF THE ROAD AFTER ALL.



I WAS SITTING AT A REMOTE CAFÉ OF THE RIVE GAUCHE SIPPING THE LAST MUG OF BEER I COULD AFFORD WHEN I SAW THESE TWO, STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL WOMEN, APPROACHING MY TABLE.



AT FIRST I THOUGHT THEY WERE A PAIR OF CLASSY HOOKERS IN QUEST FOR A PIGEON.



DO YOU MIND IF WE JOIN YOU?

NOT AT ALL. PROVIDED YOU PAY FOR MY BEER...

THE BLOND ONE SMILED AND CALLED THE WAITER.



GARÇON...  
UNE BOUTEILLE  
DE VOTRE MEILLEUR  
VIN, S'IL VOUS  
PLAÎT.



HER FRENCH WAS PERFECT, HOWEVER I COULD DETECT A SOUPÇON OF AN ACCENT, WHICH I COULD NOT PLACE.

THE BLOND WHO CALLED HERSELF JANE SMILED AGAIN AND I THOUGHT THAT I HAD NEVER SEEN A WOMAN MORE BEAUTIFUL IN MY ENTIRE LIFE.



MY NAME IS JANE CLAYTON AND MY FRIEND'S BUIRA MAKELE. HOW SHALL I CALL YOU?

ALL RIGHT, MIKE. I WON'T BEAT ABOUT THE BUSH THEN... I KNOW WHY YOU ARE HERE, IN PARIS.

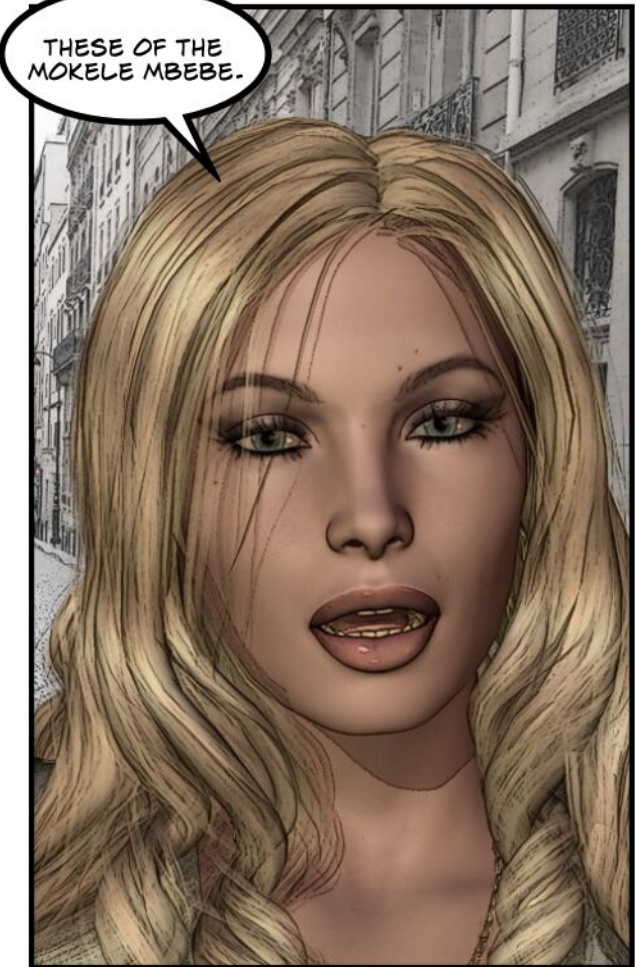
REALLY?

JUST CALL ME MIKE.



REALLY. DO YOU STILL HAVE THE PHOTOGRAPHS?

WHAT PHOTOGRAPHS?



THESE OF THE MOKELE MBEBE.







THE BLOND TURNED TOWARDS ME. AS SHE DID SO MY EYES FELL ON HER GLORIOUS CLEAVAGE AND I FELT MY THROAT GOING DRY. HOW LONG SINCE I LAST WENT TO BED WITH A BEAUTIFUL WHITE WOMAN?

MR MIKE, I BELIEVE I HAVE AN INTERESTING DEAL TO OFFER YOU. HERE IT IS...



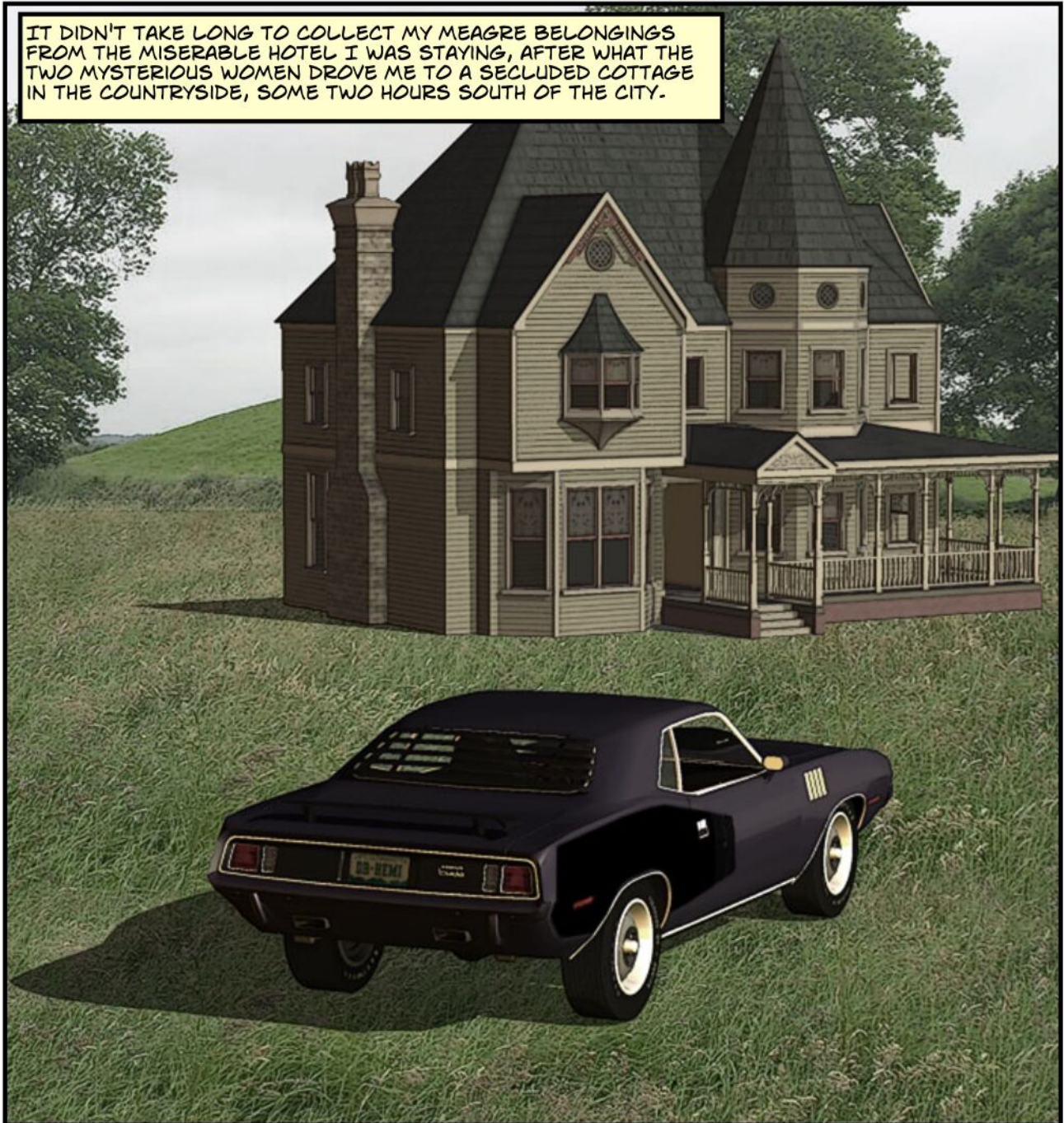
SHE DIDN'T BEAT ABOUT THE BUSH. AND WHAT SHE HAD TO PROPOSE WAS VERY INTERESTING INDEED -CONSIDERING MY DEPLORABLE SITUATION. SHE PROPOSED TO MOUNT AN EXPEDITION IN SEARCH OF THE MOKELE MBEBE, ALL EXPENSES COVERED BY HER. MY JOB WOULD BE TO GET HER TO THE EXACT POINT I HAD SEEN THE ANIMAL. I WOULD GET PAID FOR THIS HANDSOMELY AND WILL HAVE FREE GOING ON THE MATERIAL EVIDENCE COLLECTED THERE.







IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO COLLECT MY MEAGRE BELONGINGS FROM THE MISERABLE HOTEL I WAS STAYING, AFTER WHAT THE TWO MYSTERIOUS WOMEN DROVE ME TO A SECLUDED COTTAGE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, SOME TWO HOURS SOUTH OF THE CITY.





FOR THE NEXT THREE DAYS I DID NOTHING BUT EATING, DRINKING, SLEEPING AND GETTING BACK IN SHAPE, PHYSICALLY AS WELL AS MORALLY.



JANE AND BUIRA HAD GONE AWAY LEAVING ME TO THE CARE OF THE STAFF. I DIDN'T MIND, AS I NEEDED TIME TO TRY FIGURE OUT THIS WHOLE SCHEME.

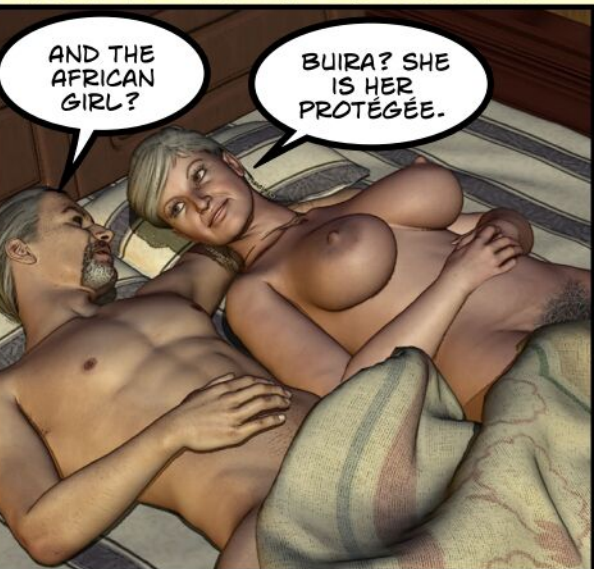


I MANAGED, NOT WITHOUT EFFORT, TO GET IN FRIENDLY TERMS WITH THE COOK, A FRENCH MIDDLE AGED WIDOW FROM TOULOUSE...

...WHO SEEMED TO BE AT LEAST AS SEXUALLY FRUSTRATED AS I WAS.



IT IS FROM HER THAT I LEARNED THAT HER MISTRESS BELONGED TO THE BRITISH GENTRY -SHE WAS LADY JANE IN FACT- AND THAT SHE WAS LOADED.



AND THE AFRICAN GIRL?

BUIRA? SHE IS HER PROTEGÉE.



YOU MEAN...?

OH, THAT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS... THEY DO SLEEP TOGETHER THOUGH...

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER.



AS SOON AS (LADY) JANE AND BUIRA RETURNED WE SET OURSELVES TO WORK, TO ORGANIZE THE EXPEDITION.

HOW MANY MEN YOU RECKON WE'LL BE NEEDING?

THE FEWER, THE BETTER. I'LL GET THEM FOR YOU.



FROM AMONG YOUR MERCENARY FRIENDS?

I SEE THAT YOU HAVE DONE YOUR HOMEWORK, MY LADY.

ONE CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL, DON'T YOU AGREE, PROFESSOR?

BY ALL MEANS, YOUR GRACE. BY ALL MEANS.



THERE'S A QUESTION I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU THOUGH BEFORE WE GET ANY FURTHER.

YES, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT.



WHY DO YOU WANT SO BADLY TO GO BACK THERE?







I WANT TO FIND THE ANIMAL AND DOCUMENT IT THOROUGHLY.



AND PROVE TO THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY THAT YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG.

REMARKABLE! I CONGRATULATE YOU, MY LADY.



THANK YOU PROFESSOR. AND NOW THAT THIS HAS BEEN SETTLED LET'S GET BACK TO WORK.

AND YOU? WHAT'S YOUR REASONS FOR GOING THROUGH THIS DANGEROUS AND EXPENSIVE VENTURE?

SHE SEEMED TO HESITATE FOR A MOMENT.



MY FATHER WAS A NATURALIST -THAT'S WHAT THEY CALLED THEM THEN.

LIKE YOU, HE BELIEVED THAT THE DINOSAURS WERE NOT TOTALLY EXTINCT BUT STILL SURVIVED IN CERTAIN REMOTE AND SECLUDED AREAS OF THE GLOBE.



AND, LIKE YOU, HE WAS RIDICULED BY HIS PEERS AT THE UNIVERSITY. THEY CALLED HIM A CRANK AND A LOONY. I'D LIKE TO PROVE HIM RIGHT.



THERE WAS ANOTHER MOMENT OF HESITATION.

ALSO... I'LL BE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE... SOMEONE WHO, AS I'M TOLD, LIVES IN THIS AREA.





ONCE IN BRAZZA I SET MYSELF UP TO RECRUITING THE HELP NEEDED. I WASN'T AS EASY AS I THOUGHT, BUT AT LAST MANAGED TO GET SOME GUYS OF THE OLD GUARD, TOUGH COOKIES, WHO HAVE DONE EVERYTHING AND THEN SOME MORE. NOT LIKE THE PRESENT DAY WIZ KIDS WHO CALL THEMSELVES "CONTRACTORS" AND CAN'T FIND THEIR WAY TO THE BOYS' ROOM IF THEIR GPS STOPS WORKING.





MAX SCHNEIDER WAS GERMAN AND A FORMER NCO IN THE LEGION.

HE HAS BEEN IN THE CONGO, BIAFRA, SUDAN, ANGOLA, RHODESIA AND WORKED PRESENTLY AS A SAFARI GUIDE FOR A LOCAL AGENCY. A GUY OF FEW WORDS, LETHAL IN ACTION AND ONE WHO KNEW THIS PART OF AFRICA AS WELL AS I DID.



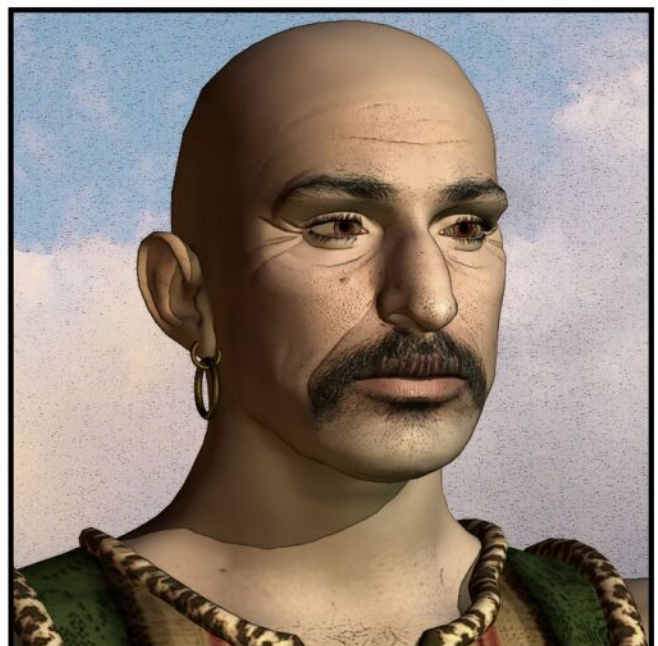
BOB GAUTIER WAS ALSO A FORMER LEGIONNAIRE AND A MERC OF THE OLD GUARD.

LIKE MAX HE HAS BEEN PLACES AND HAS DONE THINGS. AN EXPERT MARKSMAN HAD SETTLED IN BRAZZA WHERE HE RAN A BAR OWNED BY A FRENCH WOMAN WITH WHOM HE (RELUCTANTLY) LIVED.

IBRAHIM KRIVANOV, AN UZBEK, WAS THE ONLY ONE I DIDN'T KNOW PERSONALLY, BUT WAS RECOMMENDED BY BOB.

HE WAS A FORMER SPETZNATZ WHO SERVED IN AFGHANISTAN BEFORE THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION AND GOT INVOLVED IN MANY LOCAL CONFLICTS AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE RED EMPIRE.

HE HAD A REPUTATION FOR BEING RUTHLESS AND WITHOUT ANY SCRUPLES. A VERY DANGEROUS MAN.





A CHOPPER CARRIED US AND OUR PROVISIONS TO BANDOGO, A VILLAGE DEEP IN THE NORTHERN, UNEXPLORED COUNTRY, WHERE WE HIRED OUR PORTERS AND SET OF FOR THE GREAT ADVENTURE.





SOON WE WERE MOVING INTO A DEEP, IMPENETRABLE JUNGLE. THEN, IN THE MORNING OF THE THIRD DAY CAME OUR FIRST SURPRISE.



STUNNED WE WATCHED HER MOVING THROUGH THE THICK FOLIAGE WITH THE AGILITY OF A MONKEY.



I'LL GO THROUGH THE TREES TO RECKON THE AREA.

BUT...

A REGULAR TARZAN THIS ONE!

MERDE! DID YOU SEE THOSE BOOBS!



VERY FUCKABLE. VERY, VERY FUCKABLE!



STILL RATHER DIZZY FROM WHAT WE HAD WITNESSED WE CARRIED ON THROUGH THE DENSE VEGETATION.



I WALKED NEXT TO BUIRA.

DO YOU THINK SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT?

OH, YES. SHE'LL BE FINE.



A MOST UNUSUAL LADY, YOUR FRIEND!

YES, JANE IS VERY UNUSUAL INDEED.



IS THERE ANYTHING I NEED TO KNOW?

NO.



WHO IS SHE REALLY?

YOU'LL FIND OUT IN TIME -IF SHE LETS YOU.

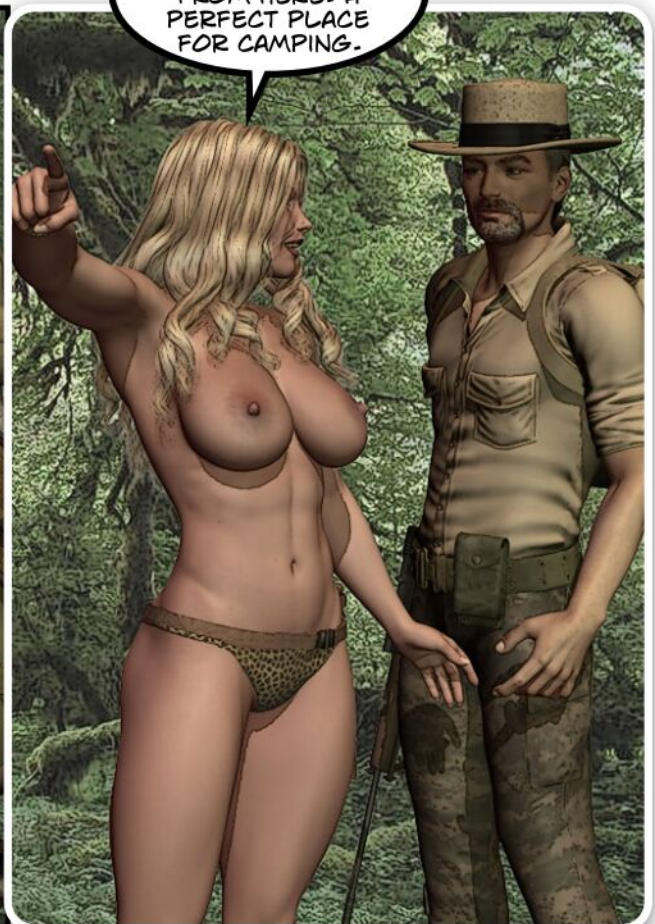




JANE REAPPEARED HOURS LATER CARRYING A SMALL ANTELOPE ON HER SHOULDERS.



THERE'S A CLEARING A MILE FROM HERE. A PERFECT PLACE FOR CAMPING.





IT WAS LIKE SHE SAID. WE SET CAMP AND JANE WENT WITH BUIRA TO TAKE A BATH IN A NEARBY BROOK.



I SAW KRIVANOV SNEAKING BEHIND THEM AND I GRABBED MY RIFLE AND FOLLOWED.



I HAD A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.



IT WAS AS I FEARED.



HEY, GIRLS! WANT SOME COMPANY?





I SAW JANE GETTING OUT OF THE WATER.



SHE MOVED LIKE LIGHTNING.



THE UZBEK HAD NO TIME TO REACT.



THE CROCS ARE GOING TO HAVE A BALL TONIGHT.

I HEARD A SICKENING SOUND AS THE MAN'S NECK SNAPPED.





LIKE BUIRA SAID... THIS WOMAN WAS VERY UNUSUAL.



YOU CAN COME OUT NOW, MIKE.

THANK YOU FOR WANTING TO PROTECT ME.

HOW DID YOU KNOW...?

I JUST DID.



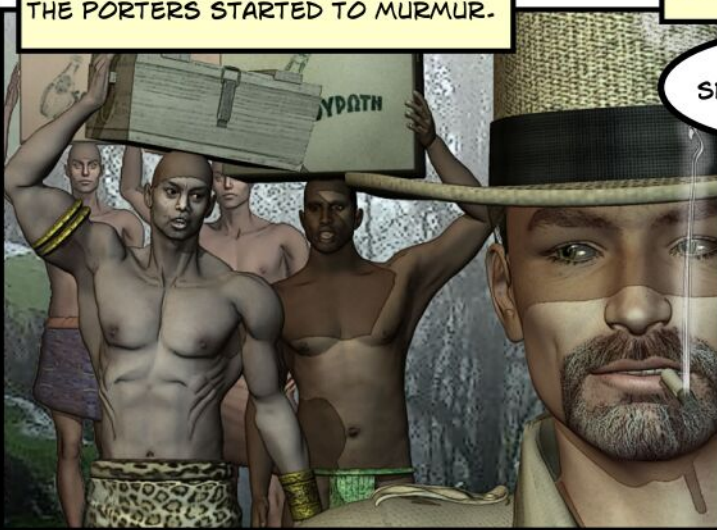


DEEPER AND DEEPER WE MOVED INTO UNCHARTED TERRITORY, UNTIL WE REACHED THE SWAMPS.



THE PORTERS STARTED TO MURMUR.

EVEN THE MERCS STARTED TO FEEL UNEASY.



IT'S RATHER SPOOKY 'ROUND HERE...

VERY SPOOKY.



I FELT LIKE IF WE WERE WATCHED BY UNSEEN EYES.

SUDDENLY...

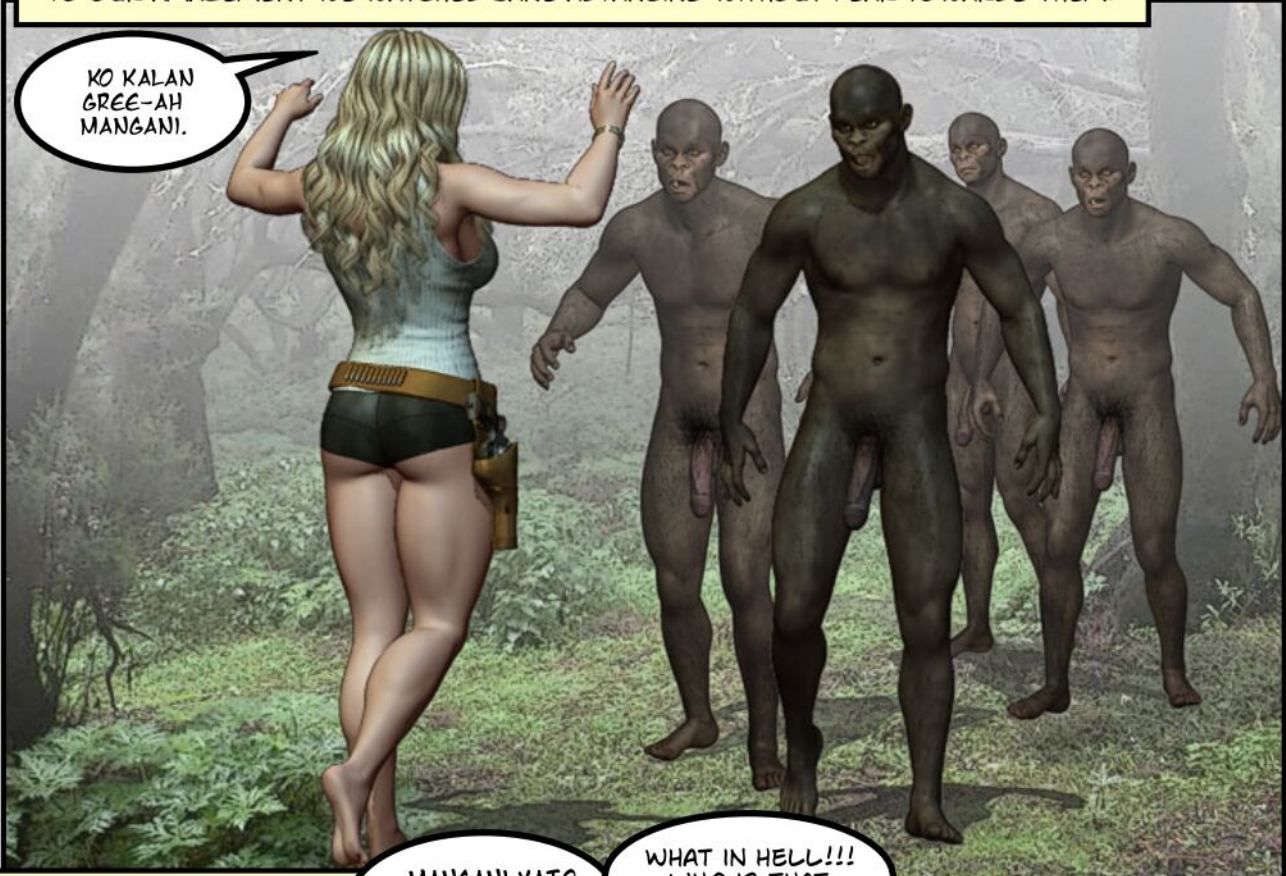


MERDE!



TO OUR AMAZEMENT WE WATCHED JANE ADVANCING WITHOUT FEAR TOWARDS THEM.

KO KALAN  
GREE-AH  
MANGANI.



THE BRUTE WHO APPEARED TO BE THEIR LEADER REPLIED IN THE SAME SPEECH.

MANGANI YATO  
KO KALAN. K  
O KALAN YO.

WHAT IN HELL!!!  
WHO IS THAT  
WOMAN?

JANE SQUATTED WITH THEM AND THEY HAD A LONG PALAVER.



AS FOR MYSELF I WAS BUSY PHOTOGRAPHING THE STRANGE HOMINIDS.



AFTER A WHILE THE APE-MEN LEFT AND JANE CAME BACK TO US.









TWO DAYS LATER WE CAME TO THE PLACE I HAD BURIED THE UNFORTUNATE GOUDNA.



THERE WERE NO FOOTPRINTS LEFT OF THE MOKELE MBEBE -NOT THAT I EXPECTED TO FIND ANY.

JANE LEFT AGAIN FOR A RECONNAISSANCE AND WE SPENT THE NIGHT AROUND THE FIRE.



THE NEXT DAY WE HEADED NORTH-WEST, DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE SWAMPS.

I HATE THIS COUNTRY!

THEN PERHAPS YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO TOULOUSE.

YEAH, SURE! FROM ONE HELL TO ANOTHER!



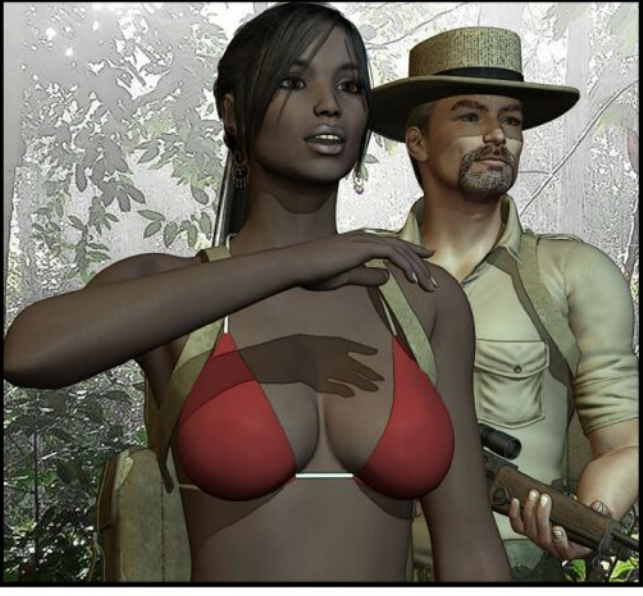


SUDDENLY, BUIRA RAISED HER HAND.

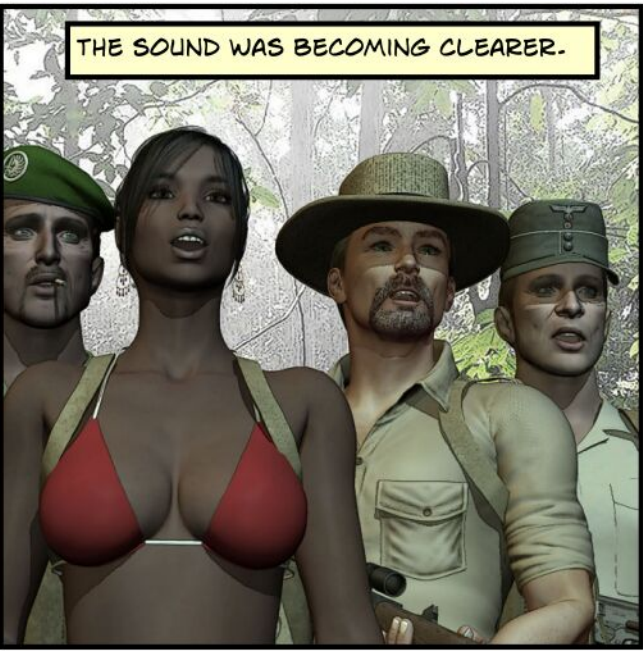
STOP!  
LISTEN TO  
THIS.



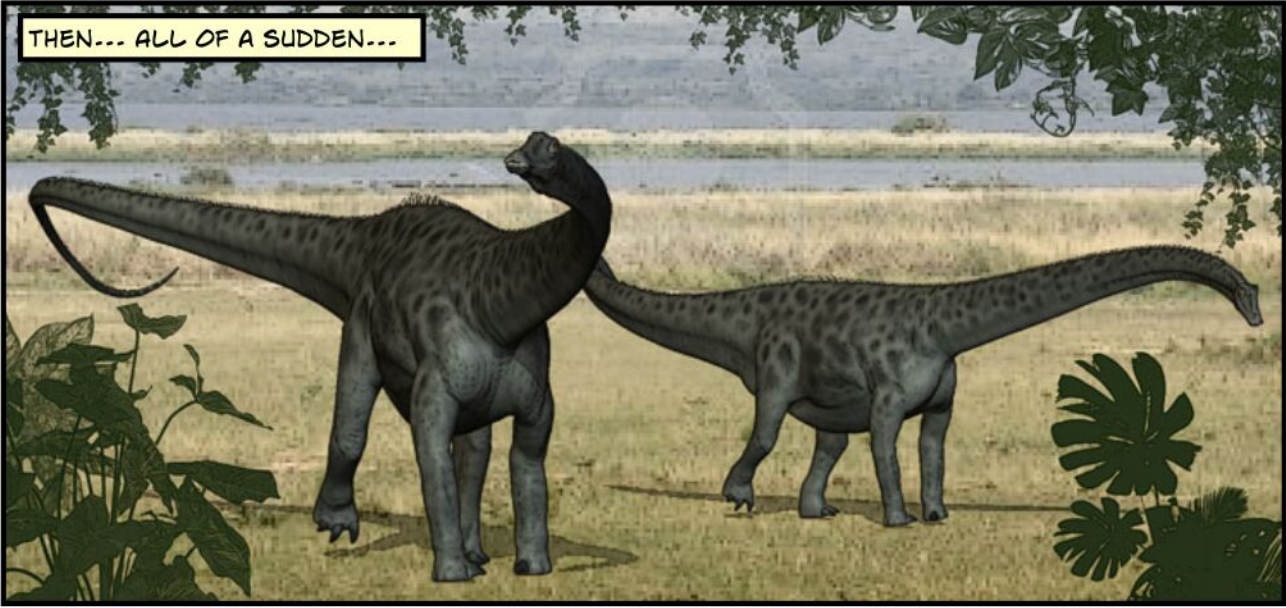
A THUMPING SOUND WAS COMING MUFFLED FROM STRAIGHT AHEAD. WE ADVANCED CAUTIOUSLY, OUR WEAPONS AT THE READY.



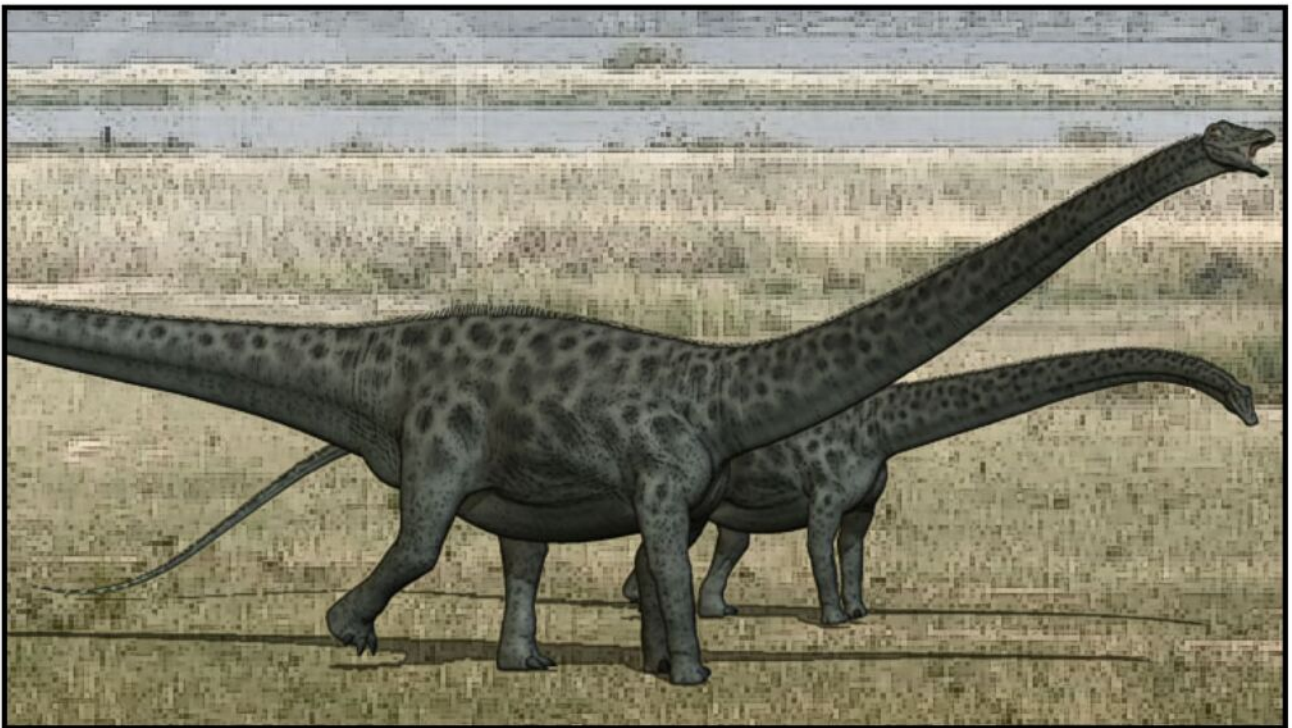
THE SOUND WAS BECOMING CLEARER.



THEN... ALL OF A SUDDEN...

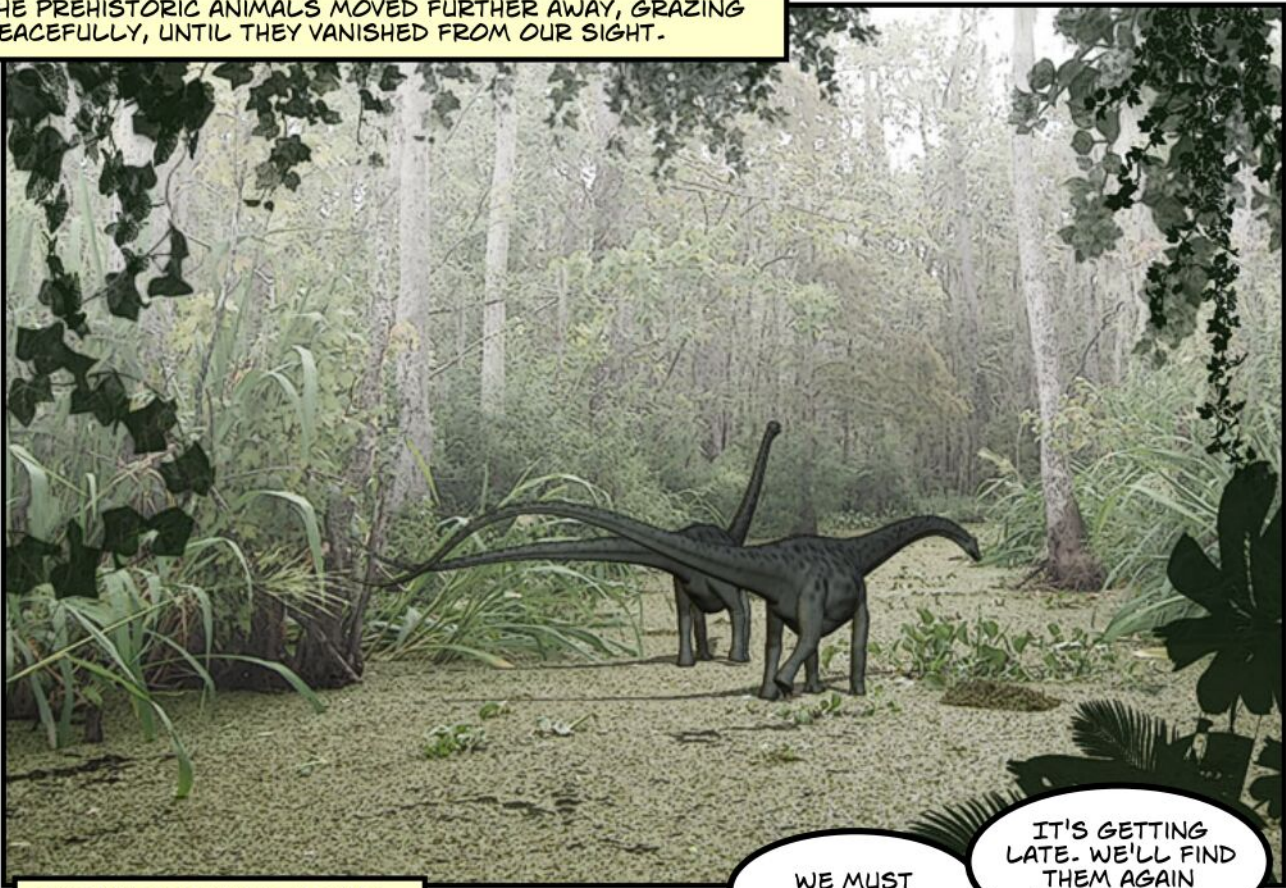








THE PREHISTORIC ANIMALS MOVED FURTHER AWAY, GRAZING PEACEFULLY, UNTIL THEY VANISHED FROM OUR SIGHT.



JANE MATERIALIZED AMONG US SHORTLY AFTERWARDS.



DID YOU SEE THEM?

YES. I'VE BEEN STALKING THEM FOR HOURS.

WE MUST FOLLOW THEM.

IT'S GETTING LATE. WE'LL FIND THEM AGAIN TOMORROW.



BUT...

TRUST ME.



THIS NIGHT WE REFRAINED FROM MAKING ANY FIRES AT THE CAMP.





IF WE COULD CAPTURE ONE OF THEM... IMAGINE THE PRICE WE'LL GET!

AND HOW ARE YOU GOING TO DO THIS?



WE GOT STUNNING DARTS, FOR ELEPHANTS. THEY'LL DO THE JOB.

PROBLEM IS THAT THESE BABIES ARE NOT ELEPHANTS.



I SAY IT CAN BE DONE.

AND THEN WHAT? WE CARRY THE SLEEPY BRONTOSAUR ON A STRETCHER? JUST THE THREE OF US?



WE'LL GET HELP FROM A NEARBY VILLAGE.

FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD OF THEM YOU DON'T WANT TO MEET THEM, LET ALONE ASK FOR HELP.



WE ARE IN THE BACOMBIE PYGMIES COUNTRY, BOB. THERE ARE NO FRIENDLY VILLAGES ANYWHERE NEAR.

WHAT ABOUT THESE BACOMBIES?



WHY NOT?

THERE ARE NOTORIOUS HEAD HUNTERS AND CANNIBALS.



THE FOLLOWING MORNING JANE TOOK ME TO A SPOT FROM WHERE I COULD OBSERVE THE BRONTOSAURS WITHOUT BEING DETECTED.



HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE YOU TO GET YOUR MATERIAL TOGETHER?

I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE A FEW DAYS?

YOU HAVE A WEEK. AFTER THAT WE'LL BE MOVING WESTWARDS.

THAT MIGHT TAKE US INTO THE GABON.



IF I'M RIGHT WE MIGHT FIND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR BEFORE WE CROSS THE BORDER.



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

A MAN. A MAN LIKE NO OTHER MAN ON THIS EARTH.





THE FRENCH COOK, BACK IN PARIS, HAD MADE A COVERT HINT ON THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JANE AND BUIRA AND ALL ALONG THIS TRIP I HAD THE CHANCE TO NOTICE THAT SHE WAS PROBABLY RIGHT.





BOB WASN'T AN ANIMAL, LIKE KRIVANOV, BUT I KNEW THAT HE WAS GETTING RESTLESS. THE IDEA OF CAPTURING ONE OF THE ANIMALS WAS HAUNTING HIM.



I KEPT AN EYE ON HIM, BUT I WASN'T AS VIGILANT AS I SHOULD BE FOR I WAS SO DEEPLY INVOLVED IN DOCUMENTING AND STUDYING MY INCREDIBLE FIND.



THEN, ONE DAY HE DID THE STUPID THING I WAS SO AFRAID OF.



THE ANIMAL TURNED AND CHARGED IN FURY.

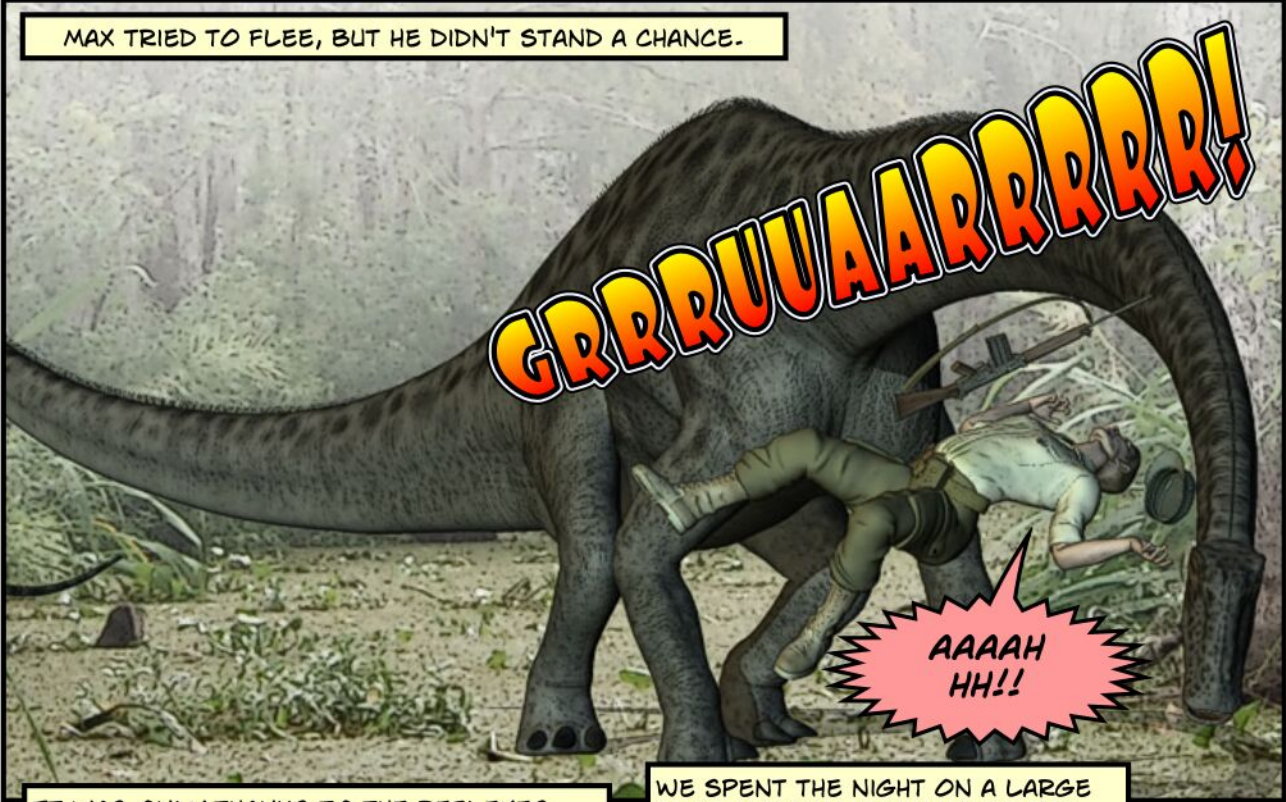


BOB NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT HIM.





MAX TRIED TO FLEE, BUT HE DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE.



IT WAS ONLY THANKS TO THE REFLEXES AND SKILLS OF JANE THAT THE REMAINING THREE OF US MANAGED TO GET AWAY WITH OUR LIVES.

WE SPENT THE NIGHT ON A LARGE TREE BRANCH LISTENING TO THE HUGE ANIMALS SPLASHING IN THE SWAMP WATERS BELOW OUR FEET.



DON'T EVEN BREATHE!





WHEN THE DAY CAME WE MOVED WESTWARDS, AWAY FROM THE LAKE. FORTUNATELY I MANAGED TO SAVE ALL THE FILMS AND NOTEBOOKS, BUT THE CAMERA WAS LEFT BEHIND.







I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS.

THEY KNEW THEIR JOB WAS DANGEROUS.

AND YOU, PROFESSOR? DO YOU INTEND TO CONTINUE CHARGING WINDMILLS?



NO. AT PRESENT I HAVE A DIFFERENT KIND OF BATTLE TO FIGHT.

GLAD TO HEAR THAT.



AND I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT YOUR FATHER'S REPUTATION WOULD BE RESTORED.

THANK YOU.



HOWEVER, I MUST ADMIT THAT I AM A LITTLE PUZZLED HERE...

YES, YOU OUGHT TO BE.



UNFORTUNATELY I CAN'T ANSWER YOUR LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS LEST THIS PUT IN JEOPARDY THE SAFETY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAR TO ME.

I UNDERSTAND.





WE KEPT MOVING THROUGH THICK JUNGLE, WITH JANE LEAVING FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME WITHOUT OFFERING AN EXPLANATION.

BUIRA PROVED TO BE A PLEASANT COMPANION THOUGH AND I DISCOVERED, TO MY SURPRISE, THAT I WAS BECOMING RATHER ATTACHED TO HER.

HOWEVER, KNOWING WHAT I DID, I TOOK SPECIAL CARE TO KEEP MY DISTANCES.



SHE ENDED UP BY NOTICING IT.

ARE YOU AVOIDING ME, MIKE, OR IS IT JUST MY IMPRESSION?



AVOIDING YOU? NO... OF COURSE NOT.

ARE YOU SURE?

NO.

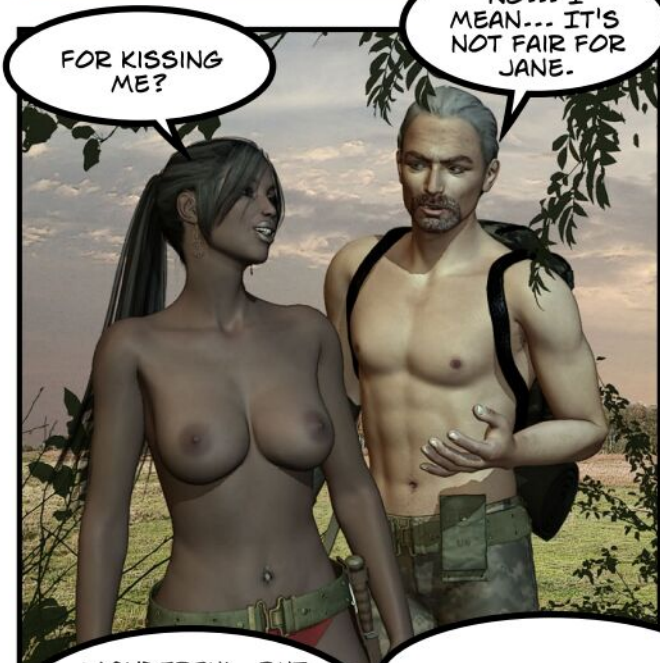




HERE. ISN'T THIS BETTER?

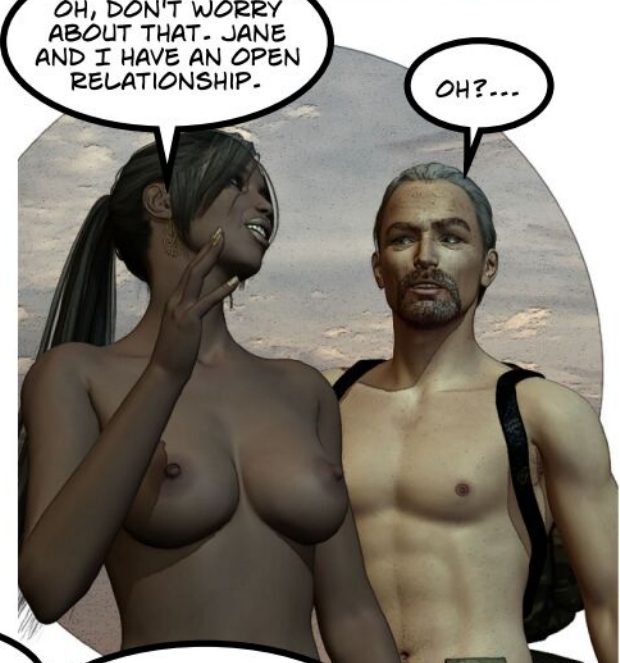


I'M SORRY...



FOR KISSING ME?

NO... I MEAN... IT'S NOT FAIR FOR JANE.



OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. JANE AND I HAVE AN OPEN RELATIONSHIP.

OH?...



WONDERFUL, BUT ALSO FLEXIBLE. SHE KNOWS THAT I LIKE YOU. AS SHE KNOWS THAT YOU ARE ATTRACTED TO HER.

HOW EMBARRASSING!



NOT AT ALL. IT'S NORMAL. HUMANS ARE POLYGAMOUS ANIMALS, DIDN'T YOU KNOW THIS?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...





I OBEYED AND IT WAS HEAVENLY BLISS. A FEELING I HAD FORGOTTEN IT EXISTS.





JANE DIDN'T FAIL TO NOTICE THE CHANGE OF ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN HER PROTEGÉE AND ME.



MIKE, YOU HAVE PROVED YOURSELF TO BE A LOYAL FRIEND AND A GOOD COMPANION THROUGHOUT THIS AFFAIR.

THANK YOU. I FEEL THE SAME WAY FOR YOU.

ON THE FIRST OCCASION OCCURRING SHE TOOK ME ASIDE.

BUIRA TOLD ME EVERYTHING.

I CAN EXPLAIN...



THERE'S NO NEED. YOU HAVE FEELINGS FOR HER, IT'S OBVIOUS. AND I THINK THAT THE SAME GOES FOR HER.

IT'S RATHER EMBARRASSING...

YOU SHOULDN'T FEEL THAT WAY. IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR ME TO KNOW, WHEN I LEAVE, THAT MY GIRL IS IN GOOD HANDS.

WOULD YOU LEAVE US?





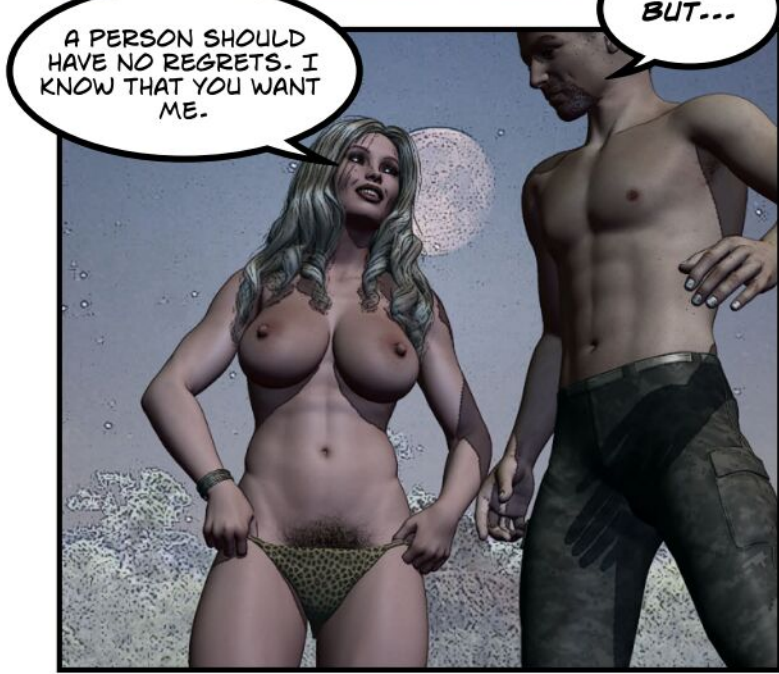


YES. WHEN I FIND THE ONE I'M LOOKING FOR. AND I THINK THAT WE ARE GETTING VERY CLOSE.



BUT, BEFORE THIS HAPPENS...

?!!!



A PERSON SHOULD HAVE NO REGRETS. I KNOW THAT YOU WANT ME.

BUT...



AND... I HAVEN'T HAD A MAN FOR A VERY LONG TIME.



THE REST WAS LIKE IN A DREAM.



A DREAM UNLIKE ANY I EVER DREAMED...



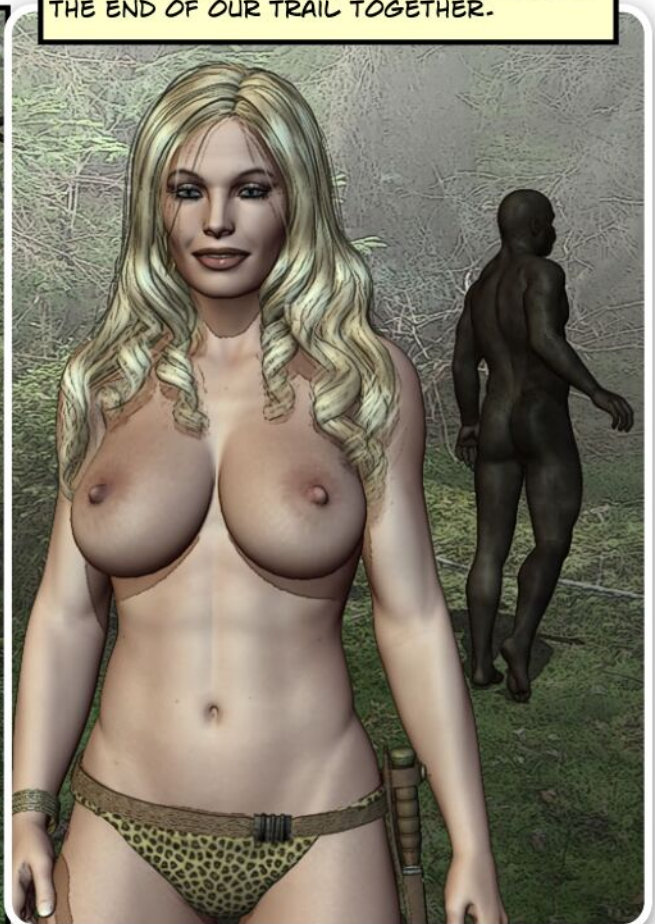


THE NEXT DAY ONE OF THE STRANGE APE-MEN DROPPED IN THE PATH, IN FRONT OF US.



JANE AND HIM ENGAGED IN A VIVID CONVERSATION. IT LOOKED AS IF THE BRUTE WAS TELLING HER SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT.

FROM HER EXPRESSION WHEN SHE CAME TO JOIN US I KNEW THAT WE HAD REACHED THE END OF OUR TRAIL TOGETHER.







THEY FOUND HIM?

YES.



THE TWO WOMEN KISSED GOODBYE.



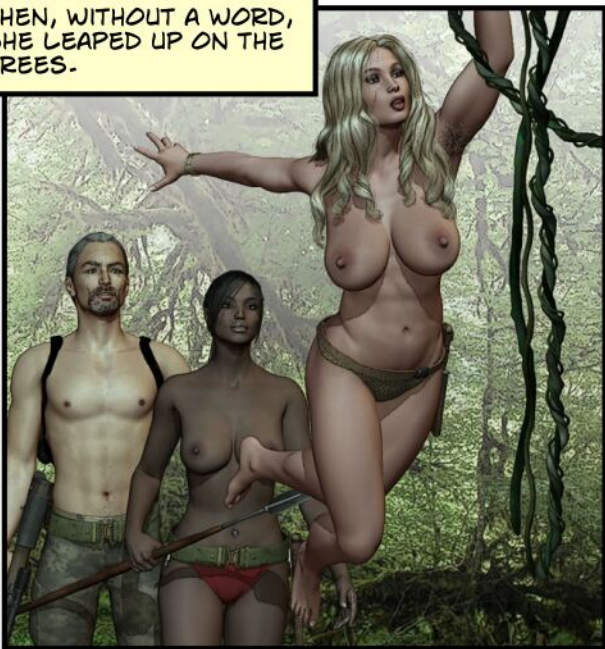
THEN JANE TURNED TO ME.

AGAIN... THANK YOU.

SHE KISSED ME. A KISS I SHALL NEVER FORGET.



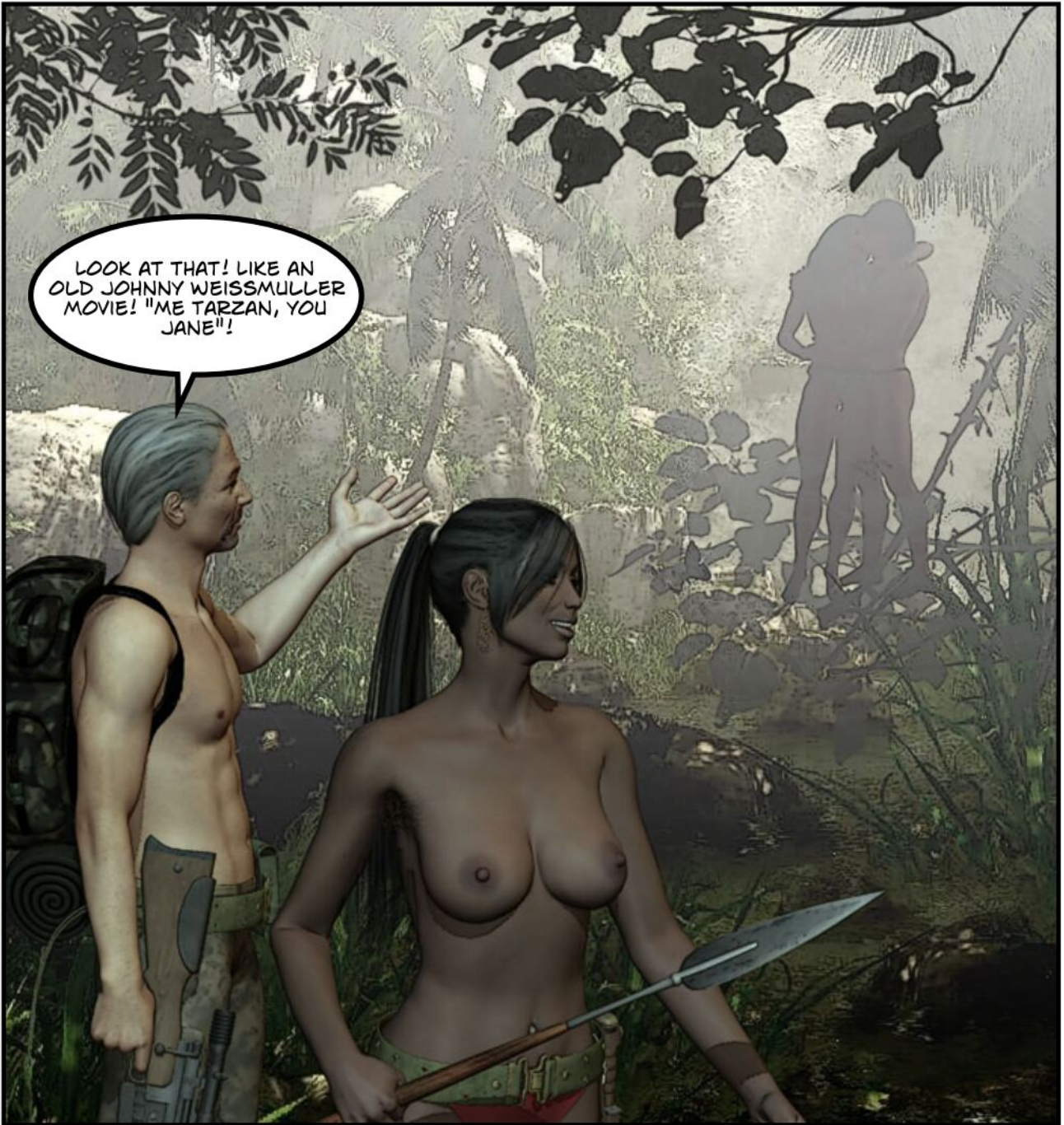
THEN, WITHOUT A WORD, SHE LEAPED UP ON THE TREES.



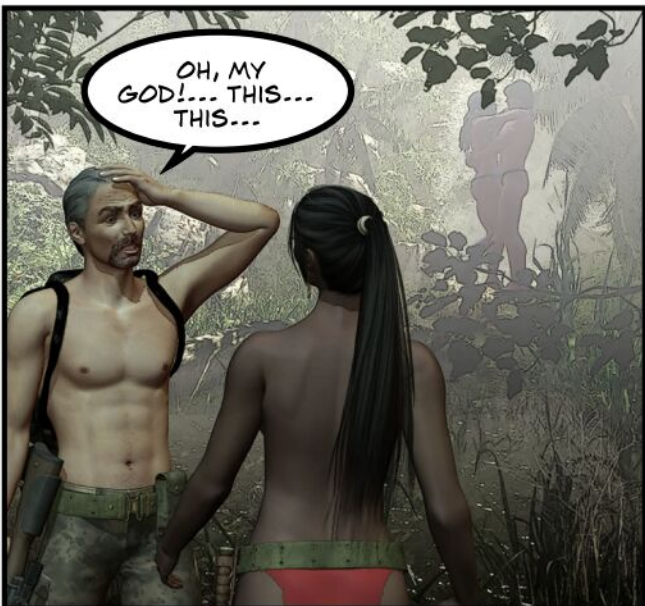
WE WATCHED HER FLYING GRACEFULLY THROUGH THE FOLIAGE TOWARDS THE SILHOUETTED FIGURE OF A MAN STANDING ON A TREE BRANCH, A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY.







LOOK AT THAT! LIKE AN OLD JOHNNY WEISSMULLER MOVIE! "ME TARZAN, YOU JANE!"



OH, MY GOD!... THIS... THIS...



COME ON, PROFESSOR. WE HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO YOU AND I.

**END**



