

TRIBULATIONS OF THE ROGUE ADVENTURER

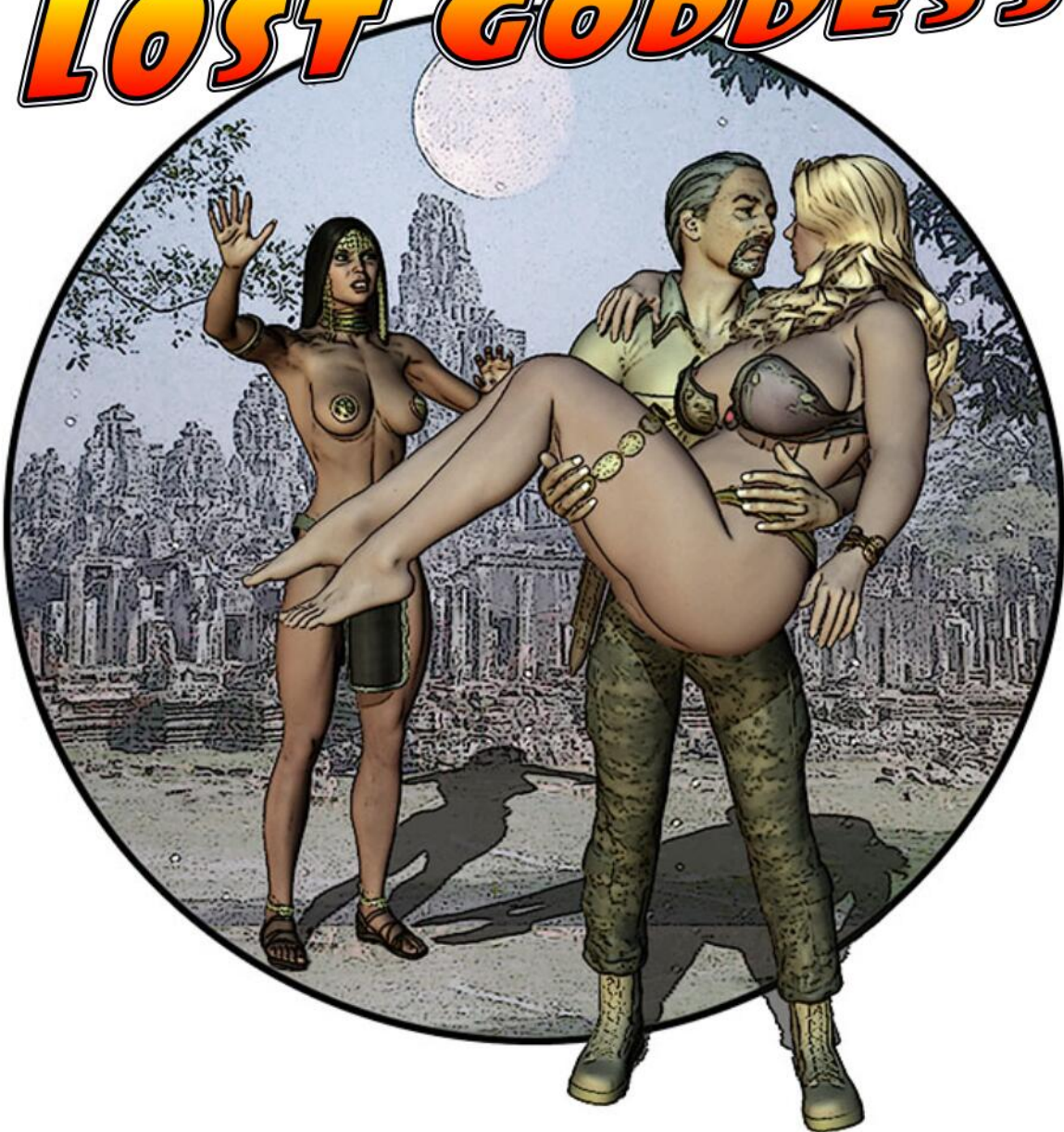
IN SEARCH OF THE LOST GODDESS



MIDNIGHT PUBLISHING

TRIBULATIONS OF THE ROGUE ADVENTURER

IN SEARCH OF THE LOST GODDESS



Scenario and Art by: Panko

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2017

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.





I FOUND MYSELF IN ANGOLA FOLLOWING A BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT THE NATURE OF WHICH IS OF NO RELEVANCE TO OUR STORY.



ALAS, MY PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYER WAS FOUND FLOATING ON THE RIVER FACE DOWN UPON MY ARRIVAL AND THIS LEFT ME AT A TIGHT SPOT...



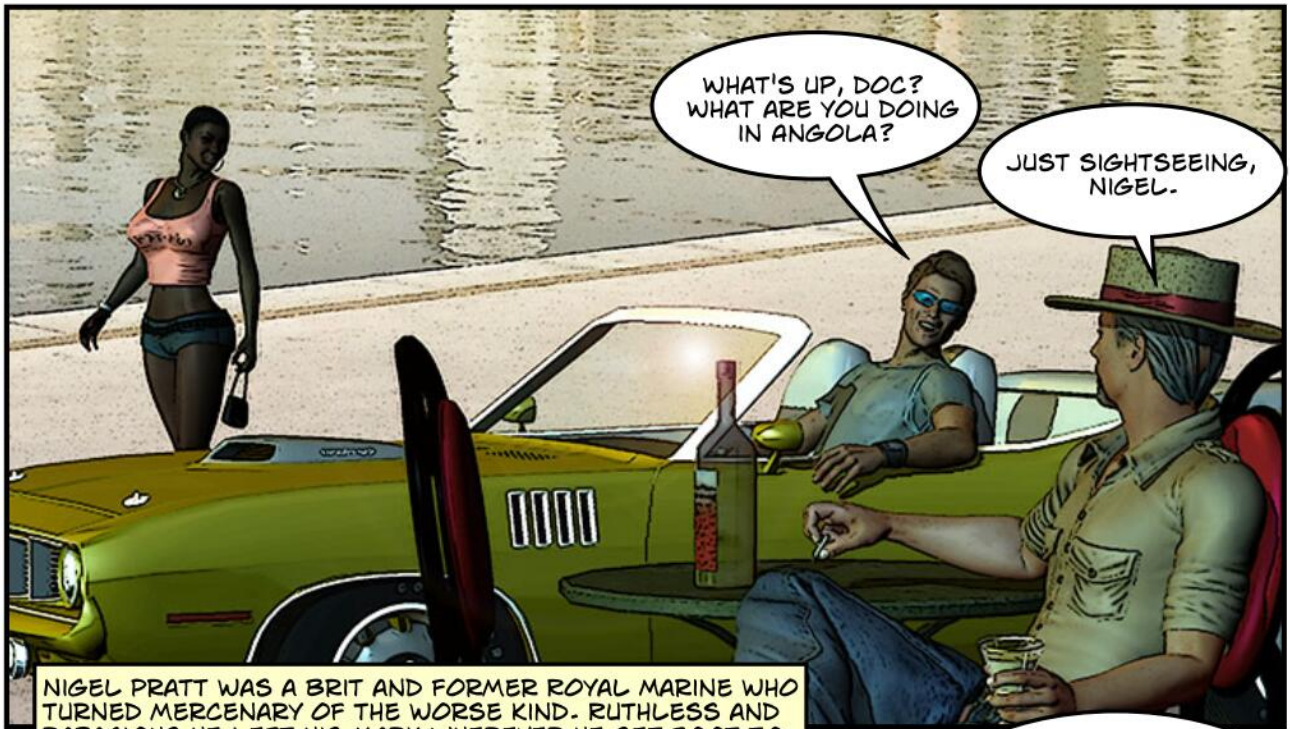
...AS MY MEAGRE RESOURCES WERE DWINDLING RAPIDLY AND I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A RETURN TICKET.



I WAS STUCK IN ONE OF THE WORSE PLACES IN AFRICA AND I KNEW THAT I NEEDED TO COME UP WITH AN ESCAPE PLAN QUICKLY LEST I STARTED BEGGING IN STREET CORNERS.



HEY, MIKE!



WHAT'S UP, DOC?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING
IN ANGOLA?

JUST SIGHTSEEING,
NIGEL.

NIGEL PRATT WAS A BRIT AND FORMER ROYAL MARINE WHO TURNED MERCENARY OF THE WORSE KIND. RUTHLESS AND RAPACIOUS HE LEFT HIS MARK WHEREVER HE SET FOOT TO. IN A COUPLE OF OCCASIONS OUR PATHS CROSSED.



ARE YOU
LOOKING FOR A
JOB, OLD CHUM?

MAYBE... IT
DEPENDS.



I MIGHT HAVE JUST THE
THING FOR YOU. I'M STAYING
AT THE HOTEL "SALAMANDRA".
LOOK ME UP, WILL YOU?



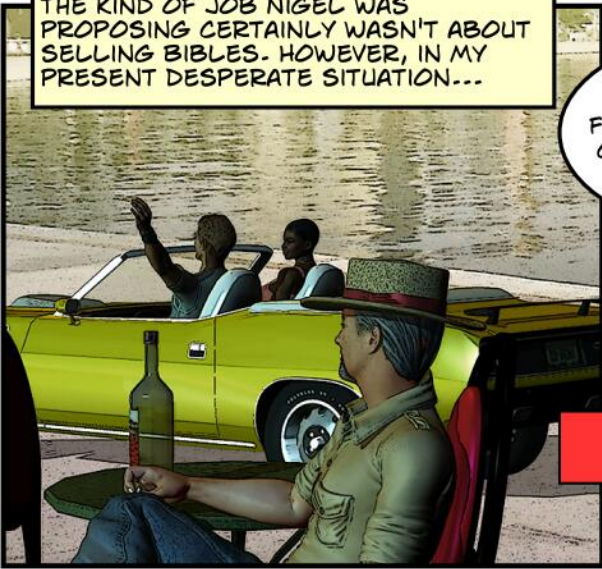
WHAT KIND OF
A JOB?

COME ON, SPORT!
YOU ARE IN ANGOLA. IT'S
NOT ABOUT SELLING
BIBLES TO PEACEFUL
HOUSEWIVES.



HOPE IN, LUV. HEY,
MIKE... CALL ME.

THE KIND OF JOB NIGEL WAS PROPOSING CERTAINLY WASN'T ABOUT SELLING BIBLES. HOWEVER, IN MY PRESENT DESPERATE SITUATION...



WANNA HAVE SOME FUN, BWANA? ME TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU. VERY CHEAP.



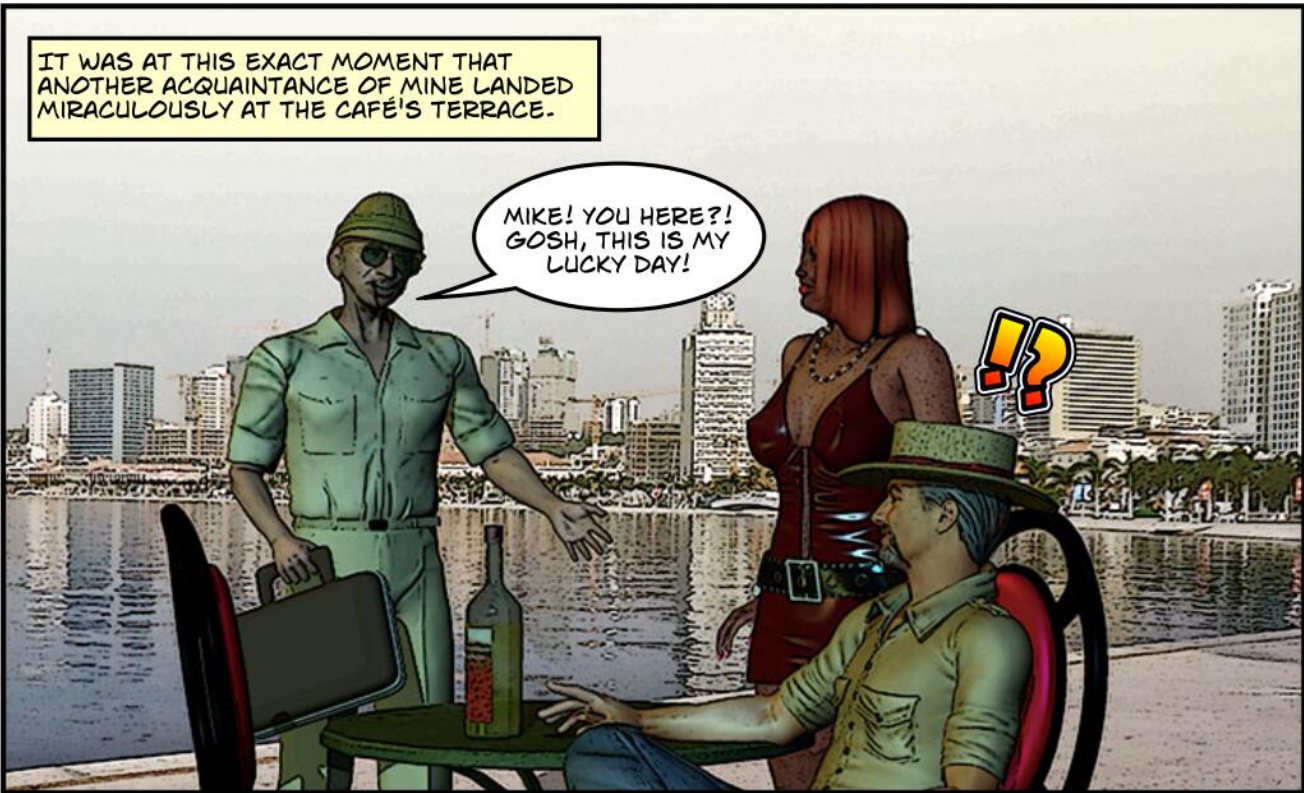
NO, THANKS, DEAR. I'M TOTALLY BROKE YOU SEE...



ANOTHER PROFESSION THAT WAS THRIVING IN THIS PROUD COUNTRY, AFTER THEY GOT RID OF THEIR PORTUGUESE MASTERS AND FINISHED WITH THEIR OWN LONG-DROWN CIVIL WAR!

IT WAS AT THIS EXACT MOMENT THAT ANOTHER ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE LANDED MIRACULOUSLY AT THE CAFÉ'S TERRACE.

MIKE! YOU HERE?! GOSH, THIS IS MY LUCKY DAY!





PHILEMON FARTWORTH, AMERICAN, B' MOVIES PRODUCER AND RUTHLESS STOCK-EXCHANGE INVESTOR. I WORKED FOR HIM ONCE AS SCIENTIFIC AND MILITARY ADVISER IN ONE OF HIS RIDICULOUS MOVIES. HE WAS THE LAST PERSON I EXPECTED TO SEE IN ANGOLA.

HE JOINED ME WITHOUT ASKING FOR PERMISSION AND ORDERED SCOTCH FOR BOTH.



EXACTLY THE KIND OF MAN I WAS LOOKING FOR! THE GOOD LORD MUST HAVE SENT YOU.



I GOT A JOB FOR YOU.



TAKE A NUMBER IN THE QUEUE.

IT'LL BE PAYING WELL.



WHAT IS IT?
ANOTHER FLOP?

NO... NOTHING
LIKE THAT.



I WANT YOU TO FIND
SOMEONE FOR ME.



HERE, IN ANGOLA?
WHO?

THIS ONE.



HOLLY COW!
ANNYA LODBERG!
IS SHE STILL
ALIVE?

AS WE ALL KNOW ANNYA LODBERG HAD A SPECTACULAR PASSING FROM THE SILVER SCREEN INDUSTRY IN THE PAST TWO DECADES.



SHE WAS BETTER KNOWN FOR HER STUNNING PHYSIQUE RATHER THAN FOR HER TALENT BUT, AS TIME WENT BY AND FRESH FACES APPEARED SHE SLOWLY SLIPPED, LIKE SO MANY OF HER KIND, INTO QUIET OBLIVION.



ANNYA LODBERG HAS
BEEN ABDUCTED FROM
HER HOTEL, HERE, IN
LUANDA, MIKE.

WHAT IN HELL
WAS SHE DOING
HERE?

WHAT WAS SHE DOING HERE... WELL... GOOD QUESTION... YOU SEE, I MANAGED TO SIGN HER UP FOR A COUPLE OF MOVIES... NOTHING SPECTACULAR MIND YOU, BUT WE HOPED THAT WITH HER NAME AND PRESENCE WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET SOME DOVE COMING OUR WAY... HOWEVER, BEFORE SHOOTING STARTED SHE INSISTED THAT SHE NEEDED A GOOD HOLIDAY ABROAD. I COULD HAVE PUT MY FOOT DOWN, BUT IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT HAS ANY EFFECT WITH THE LIKES OF ANNYA LODBERG.



SO SHE TOOK OFF AND FLEW TO... AFRICA! DON'T ASK ME WHY, I CAN ONLY SPECULATE. SHE WAS PLANNING TO SPEND TWO MONTHS HERE AND IN THE BEGINNING SHE WAS SENDING ME CABLES SAYING THAT EVERYTHING WAS A-ALL RIGHT -TWICE A WEEK, AS PROMISED. THEN, THE CABLES BEGAN GETTING SCARCE, UNTIL ONE DAY THEY STOPPED COMING ALTOGETHER.



I RANG HER HOTEL... THEY TOLD ME SHE LEFT IN MID JULY... ALL SHE SAID WAS THAT SHE WAS GOING "TO SEE THE COUNTRY", IN THE COMPANY OF SOME OF HER RECENT LOCAL "ACQUAINTANCES". I PANICKED! BOUGHT MY TICKET PRESTO AND FLEW OVER TO INVESTIGATE.

WHAT I HEARD DID NOT SOUND REASSURING. NOT ONE BIT. I WAS TOLD THAT OUR STAR WAS GETTING PLASTERED ON BOOZE AND KIF EVERY NIGHT AND THAT SHE WAS BROUGHT TO THE HOTEL BY YOUNG LOCALS, DIFFERENT EACH TIME, WHO ALWAYS SPENT THE NIGHT IN HER ROOM.

WELL... IT IS A WELL KNOWN FACT THAT IN SEXUAL MATTERS MISS LODBERG NEVER HESITATED TO GO OVERBOARD.



APPARENTLY SOME OF THE YOUNG STUDS REALISED WHO SHE WAS AND DECIDED TO GO FOR RANSOM, HAVING PERSUADED HER TO FOLLOW THEM INTO THE GODFORSAKEN INTERIOR, PROBABLY TO THEIR OWN TRIBAL TERRITORY.







I TALKED TO THE STAFF OF THE "TALATONA HOTEL". FROM RECEPTIONISTS TO CLEANING LADIES, TO CHAMBER MAIDS, TO BELL BOYS AND LIFT OPERATORS. THEY ALL CONFIRMED FARTWORTH'S STORY. THE ONLY ONE WHO CAME UP WITH SOMETHING USEFUL THOUGH WAS AURELIA, A CHAMBER MAID OF THE LUCAZI TRIBE.

SHE SOCIALISED WITH TWO ESPECIALLY BAD PEOPLE, BWANA. I KNOW, FOR ONE OF THEM COMES FROM MY VILLAGE.

YOUR VILLAGE? WHERE IS IT?

IN MOXICO, NEAR LUAI, CLOSE TO THE CONGOLESE BORDER.

BLAST! A HELLISH PLACE!



YES, THAT'S WHY MOST OF OUR PEOPLE LEFT. THAT THOSE WHO WERE NOT KILLED DURING THE WAR OR BLOWN UP BY THE LAND-MINES.

I KNOW. I HAD FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE. DO YOU HAVE A NAME FOR THE BAD BOYS?



THE ONE FROM MY VILLAGE IS CALLED ISIDORO FUENTES. HE FOUGHT WITH JONAS SAVIMBI. HE USED TO WORK AS A WATER AT THE "TROPICANA CLUB".

OBRIGADO, MY CHILD. I HOPE TO SEE YOU AGAIN SOON.



ME TOO, BWANA.

THE "TROPICANA" WAS ONE OF THESE TOURIST TRAPS, VERY POPULAR NOWADAYS IN AFRICA, WHERE EUROPEAN, AMERICAN AND AUSTRALIAN VISITORS CONVERGE IN SEARCH OF LOCAL THRILLS -FOR A RATHER REASONABLE PRICE.



ISIDORO? SURE HE WORKS HERE. BUT HE WENT UP TO MOXICO NOW TAKING ALONG SOME RICH AMERICAN OLD HAG OF THE KIND THAT LIKE BEAUTIFULLY SHAPED AND WELL ENDOWED BLACK BOYS, IF YOU GET MY DRIFT. ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT YOURSELF, MISTER?



IS THIS THE RICH AMERICAN TOURIST THAT ISIDORO TOOK ALONG TO MOXICO?

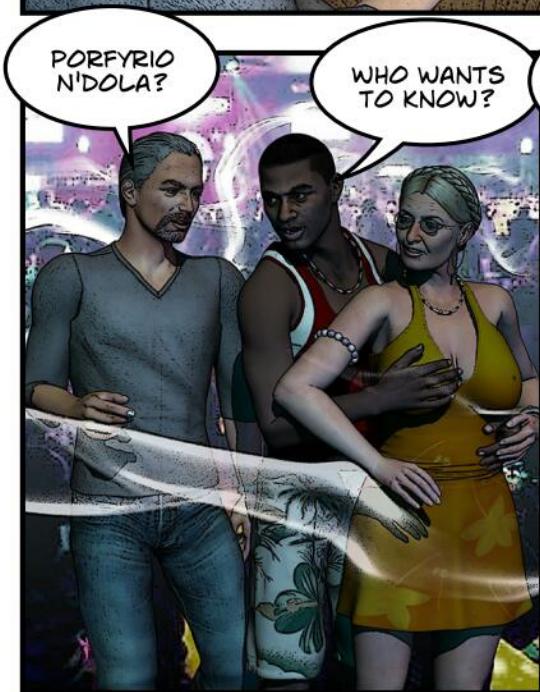
YEAH! THAT'S THE ONE! SHE HAD A GOOD PAIR OF BALLOONS UP THERE! NOT BAD FOR HER AGE!





HOW CAN I GET IN TOUCH WITH THIS ISIDORO GUY?

I DON'T KNOW. ASK HIS CHUM, PORFYRIO, OVER THERE. THEY HANG TOGETHER ALL THE TIME.

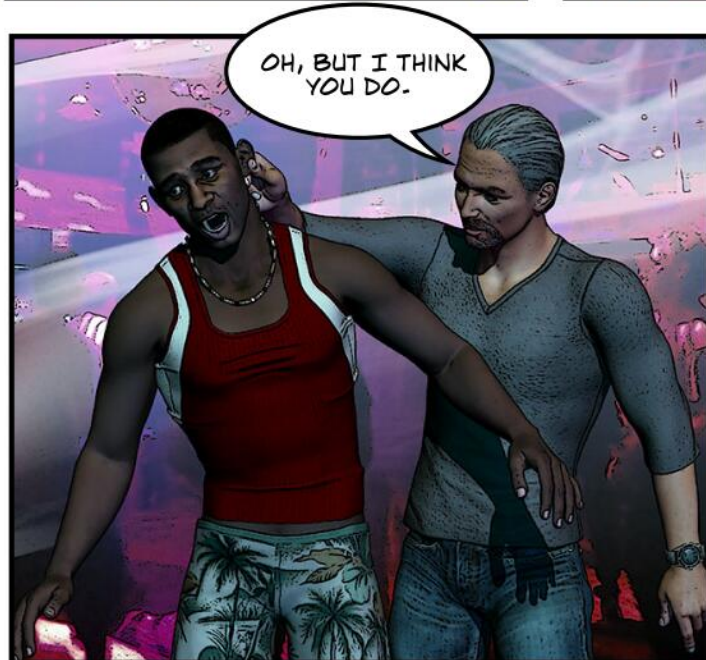


PORFYRIO N'DOLA?

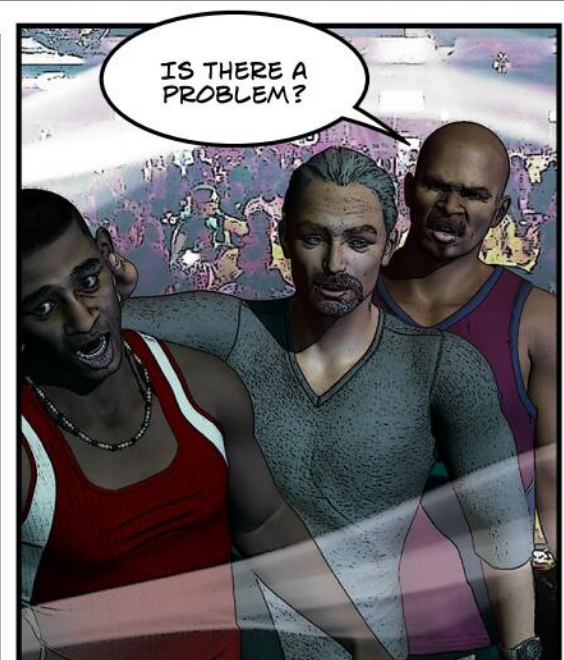
WHO WANTS TO KNOW?

I'M LOOKING FOR YOUR PAL, ISIDORO FUENTES.

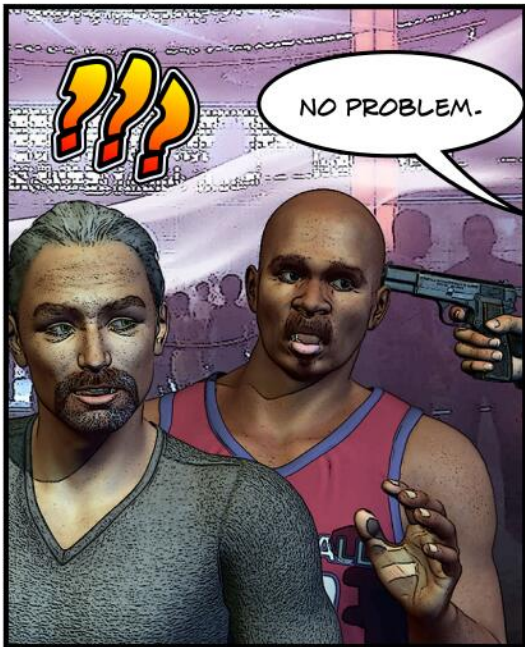
FUCK OFF, MAN. I DON'T KNOW NOTHING.



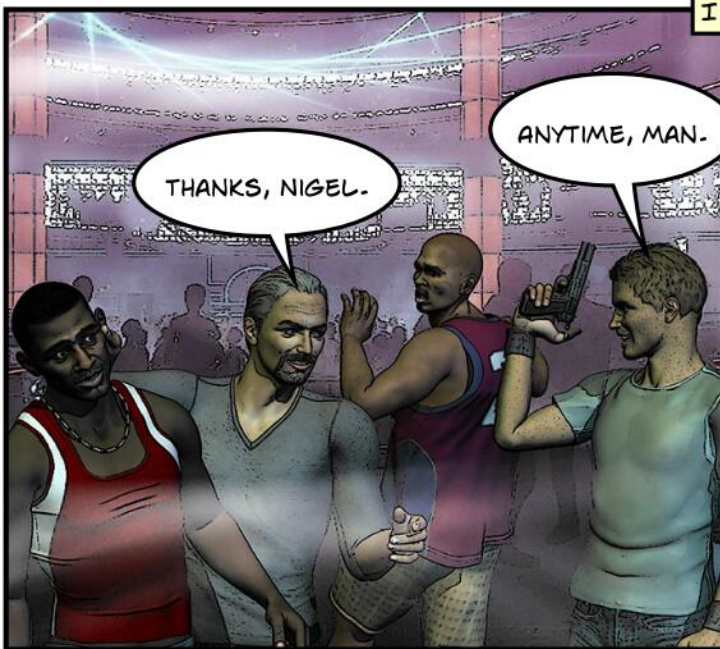
OH, BUT I THINK YOU DO.



IS THERE A PROBLEM?



I DRAGGED THE GIGOLO OUT OF THE CLUB.





IT WASN'T TOO BAD. THE WOMAN WAS WELL SHAPED FOR HER AGE AND VERY ENTHUSIASTIC... ALSO SHE PAYED WELL... CLEARLY SHE WAS VERY RICH IN HER COUNTRY.



ISIDORO GOT THE NOTION TO GET HER INTO SPENDING MORE MONEY ON US... HE PROPOSED A SAFARI IN THE INTERIOR... SHE WASN'T INTERESTED... HOWEVER SHE STARTED TO ASK FUNNY QUESTIONS...





WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS?

I DON'T KNOW... ABOUT A PLACE SHE HAD READ ABOUT IN A BOOK...



SOMETHING LIKE... OPREE... OPRA...

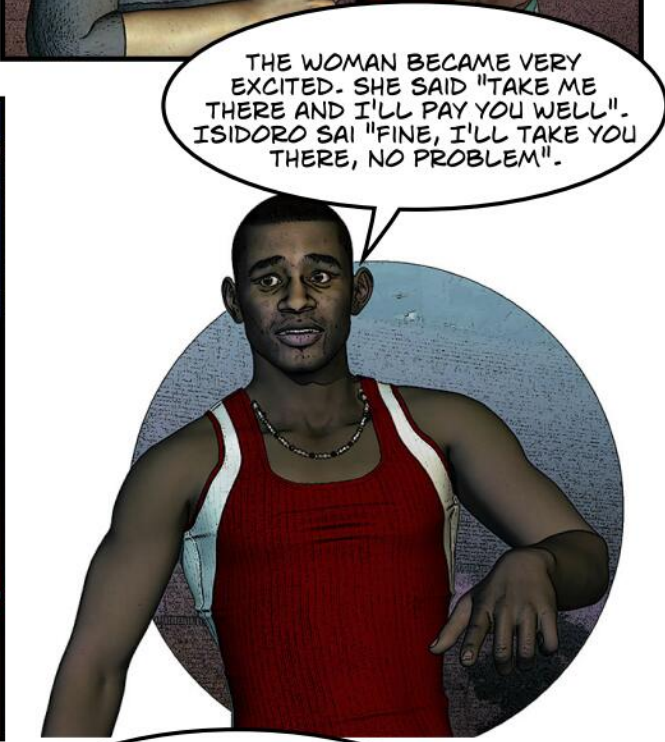
OPAR?!!!

YEAH! THAT'S IT!

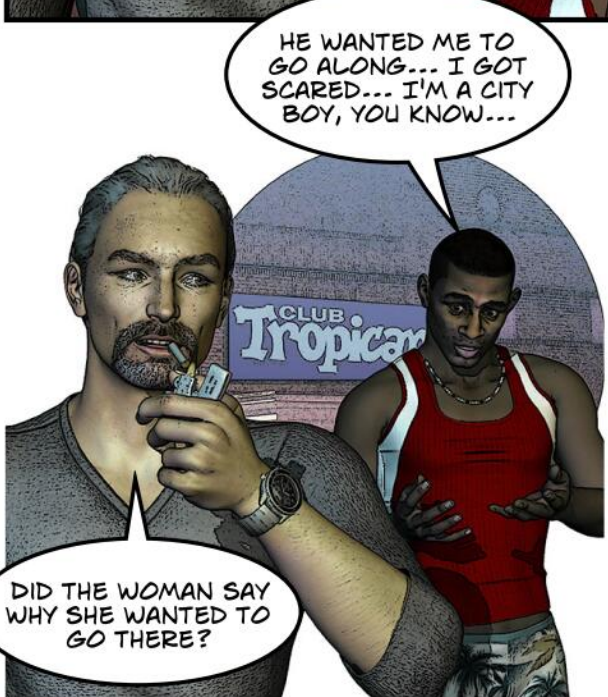


OH, GOD!...

ISIDORO SAID YES HE KNEW OF A PLACE LIKE THAT. IT WAS NEAR HIS VILLAGE, IN MEXICO, HE SAID.



THE WOMAN BECAME VERY EXCITED. SHE SAID "TAKE ME THERE AND I'LL PAY YOU WELL". ISIDORO SAID "FINE, I'LL TAKE YOU THERE, NO PROBLEM".



DID THE WOMAN SAY WHY SHE WANTED TO GO THERE?

HE WANTED ME TO GO ALONG... I GOT SCARED... I'M A CITY BOY, YOU KNOW...



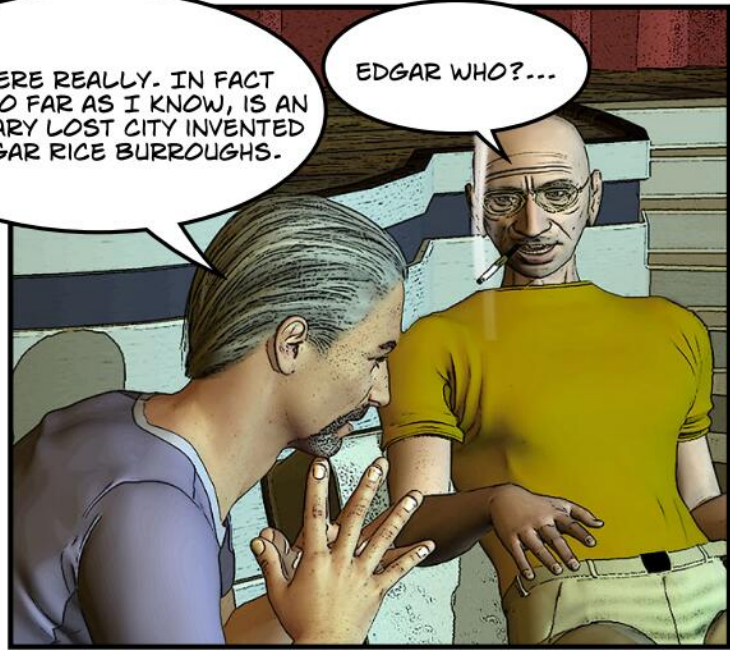
YEAH. SOMETHING CRAZY... ABOUT A FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH... THAT'S ALL I KNOW... HONEST!



OPAR? WHERE THE FUCK IS OPAR?

NOWHERE REALLY. IN FACT OPAR, SO FAR AS I KNOW, IS AN IMAGINARY LOST CITY INVENTED BY EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS.

EDGAR WHO?...



THE CREATOR OF TARZAN. ACCORDING TO HIM OPAR WAS A DECLINED COLONY OF ATLANTIS AND IS POPULATED BY DEGENERATE BEAST-MEN AND BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.



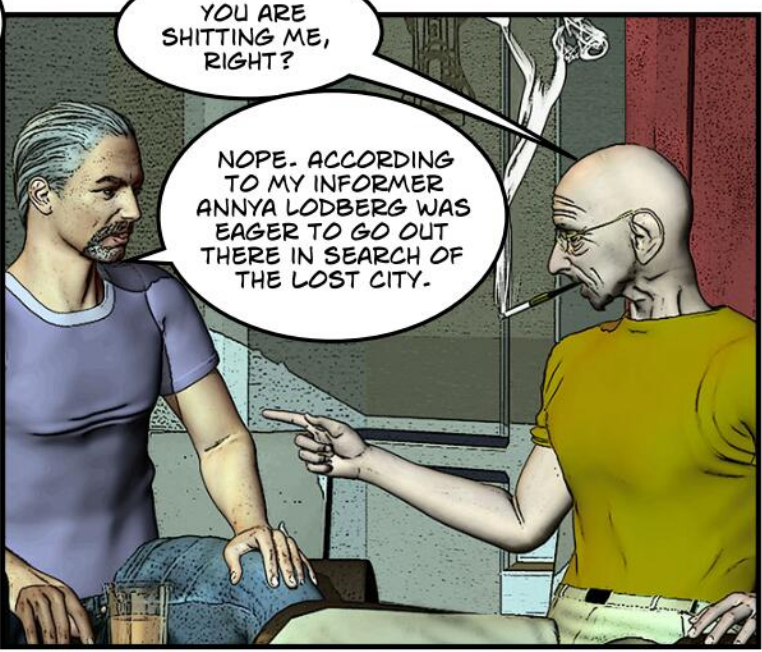
SO, THIS STUPID, OVERAGE BIMBO WANTED TO GO TO AN... IMAGINARY PLACE?!!!



IT LOOKS LIKE IT.

WHY?

THERE IS A NOTION AMONG ERB FANS THAT LA, THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF OPAR, WHO WAS IN LOVE WITH TARZAN, POSSESSED THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY.



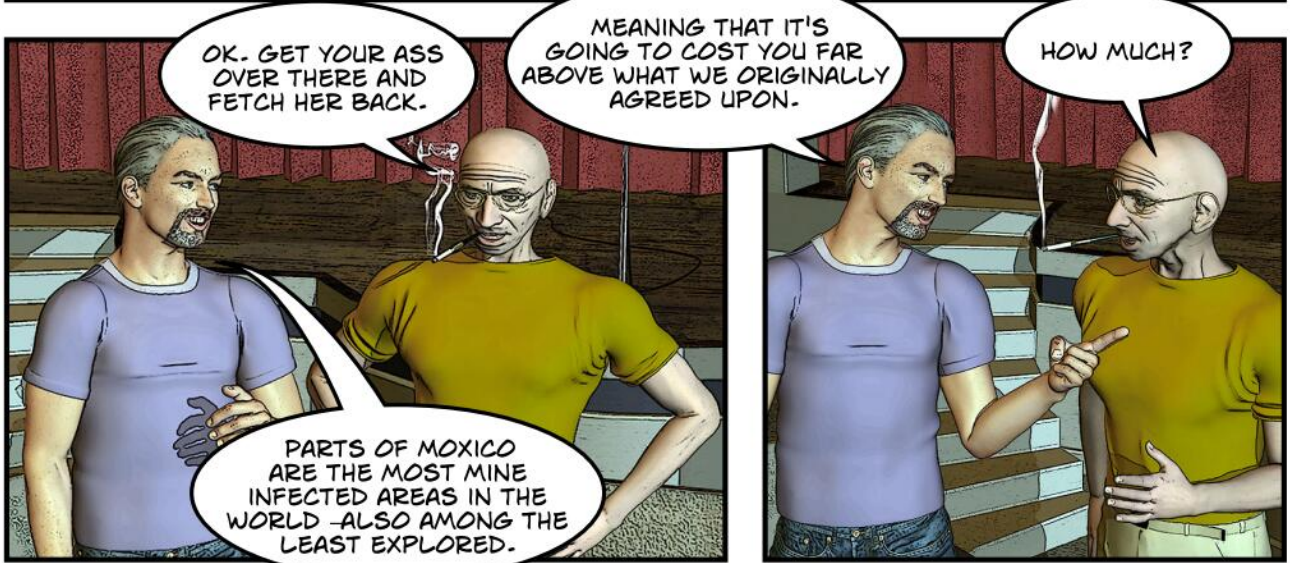
YOU ARE SHITTING ME, RIGHT?

NOPE. ACCORDING TO MY INFORMER ANNYA LODBERG WAS EAGER TO GO OUT THERE IN SEARCH OF THE LOST CITY.



GO WHERE, FOR CHRIS SAKE? IN A BOOK?

IN THE MOXICO PROVINCE, TO THE EAST OF THE COUNTRY. WHERE HER GIGOLO BOY-FRIEND CAME FROM.



OK. GET YOUR ASS OVER THERE AND FETCH HER BACK.

MEANING THAT IT'S GOING TO COST YOU FAR ABOVE WHAT WE ORIGINALLY AGREED UPON.

HOW MUCH?

PARTS OF MOXICO ARE THE MOST MINE INFECTED AREAS IN THE WORLD - ALSO AMONG THE LEAST EXPLORED.



AT LEAST DOUBLE.



OK. DO IT. DO IT AS FAST AS YOU CAN.

CHRISTOFORO ROJAS WAS AN OLD HAND OF THE PORTUGUESE COLONIAL FORCES WHO SAW HIS COUNTRY LOOSING ITS AFRICAN TERRITORIES ONE BY ONE. HE WAS ONE OF THE FEW WHO HAD CHOSEN TO STAY BEHIND AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND THE ENSUING CIVIL WAR, DURING WHICH HE DID SOME ARMS RUNNING FOR ALL INTERESTED PARTIES. AFTER THE END OF THE HOSTILITIES HE TURNED CROCODILE HUNTER. I NEEDED HIM FOR I KNEW THAT HE WAS VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE AREA I WAS INTERESTED IN.

MOXICO? SURE! I DID SOME HUNTING THERE LAST YEAR, AT THE ZAMBEZI. LOUSY PLACE. LOUSY. WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO THERE, MIKE?



A WHITE WOMAN IS PRESUMED ABDUCTED BY SOME LOCAL ELEMENTS. HER PEOPLE WANT HER BACK.

"PRESUMED", HUH? IT'S GOING TO COST YOU, DOC.



SEM PROBLEMA. HERE'S THE LIST OF WHAT WE NEED. WE ARE TAKING OFF AS SOON AS YOU FINISH SHOPPING.



INTERNET CONNECTION IN LUANDA IS A NIGHTMARE. HOWEVER, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF PHIL'S HOTEL FACILITIES I MANAGED TO DO SOME RESEARCH.

TARZAN GETS TO THE RUINED CITY OF OPAR WITH HIS WAZIRI WARRIORS IN THE SECOND BOOK OF ERB'S TARZAN SERIES, TITLED "THE RETURN OF TARZAN". THERE HE MEETS LA, HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE FLAMING GOD, WHO FALLS MADLY IN LOVE WITH HIM. HE GETS OUT CARRYING WITH HIM A LOAD OF GOLDEN INGOTS FROM THE VAULTS OF THE LOST CITY, A TREASURE THAT FORMS THE BASE OF THE GREYSTOKE FORTUNE.

OPAR IS MENTIONED IN THREE MORE ERB BOOKS. THE FIFTH ON THE TARZAN SERIES, "TARZAN AND THE JEWELS OF OPAR", WHERE JANE IS ABDUCTED BY THE OPARIAN BEAST-MEN TO BE SACRIFICED AND SAVED AT THE LAST MINUTE BY TARZAN, THE NINTH, "TARZAN AND THE GOLDEN LION" AND FINALLY THE FOURTEENTH, "TARZAN THE INVINCIBLE".

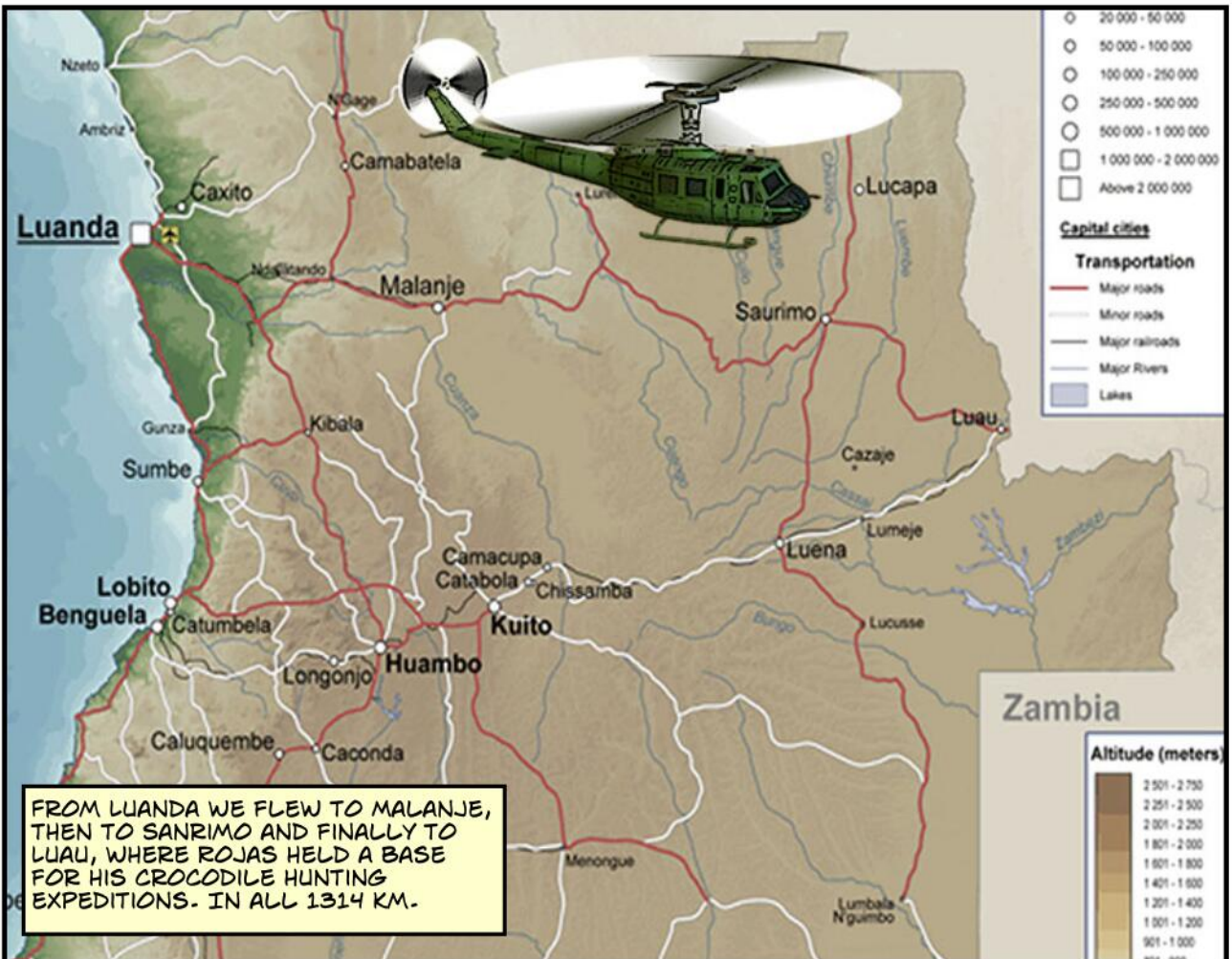
NO MENTION OF ANY LONGEVITY SECRET IN ANY OF THESE STORIES. ONLY PLACE YOU FIND ANYTHING LIKE IT IS IN "TARZAN'S QUEST", WHEN TARZAN, JANE AND THEIR PARTY END UP WITH THE PILLS AND RECIPE THAT THE KAVURU SORCERERS USED TO REMAIN YOUNG FOREVER.

IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT TARZAN PASSED THE SECRET ALSO TO LA, WITH WHOM, IN SPIE ERB'S PRUDISH COVER-UP, HE ALSO APPEARS TO BE INFATUATED. QUESTION IS HOW ANNYA LODBERG KNEW THIS? UNLESS OF COURSE SHE HAPPENED TO HAVE AN ENCOUNTER AS STRANGE AS MINE WITH ONE OF THE PROTAGONISTS OF THE DRAMA (*)

LIKE ALICE, OF THIS OTHER FABLE WOULD SAY: CURIOSER AND CURIOSER!

(*) SEE PREVIOUS ADVENTURE: "JANE".

FINALLY, IN SPITE OF FARTWORTH'S PROTESTS FOR THE EXTRA EXPENSE, ME, ROJAS AND TWO LUCAZI BOYS OF HIS TEAM, EMBARKED UPON THE CHOPPER THAT WOULD TAKE US INTO THE DEEP OF THE ANGOLAN WILDERNESS AND YET ANOTHER UNPREDICTABLE ADVENTURE BEGAN.



FROM LUANDA WE FLEW TO MALANJE, THEN TO SANRIMO AND FINALLY TO LUAU, WHERE ROJAS HELD A BASE FOR HIS CROCODILE HUNTING EXPEDITIONS. IN ALL 1314 KM.

FROM THAT POINT ONWARD IT WAS TOUCH AND GO. FIRST WE SHOULD GO TO THE "ABDUCTOR'S" VILLAGE. SOME 40 KM. EASTWARDS. I DIDN'T THINK WE WOULD FIND ANYTHING THERE, BUT WE NEEDED TO START AT SOMETHING.



MERDA!
FODA-SE!

WHAT ARE THEY?

MILICIA... BANDITS...
IT'S ALL THE SAME
AROUND HERE.



ARTURO, THERE'S
ONE UP ON THE TREE
TO THE RIGHT.

I SEE HIM,
BWANA.

AND I SEE THE
ONE HIDING BEHIND
THE BOULDER, ON
THE LEFT SIDE.



SENS PAPÉIS.
LET ME SEE YOUR
PAPERS.

BOM DIA, CHEFE.



I KNEW OF COURSE THE STANDARD
PROCEDURE IN AFRICA.



PAPERS NO GOOD.
GET OFF THE CAR.



ARE YOU SURE?

SURE I'M SURE.



DON'T SAY I
DIDN'T ASK.

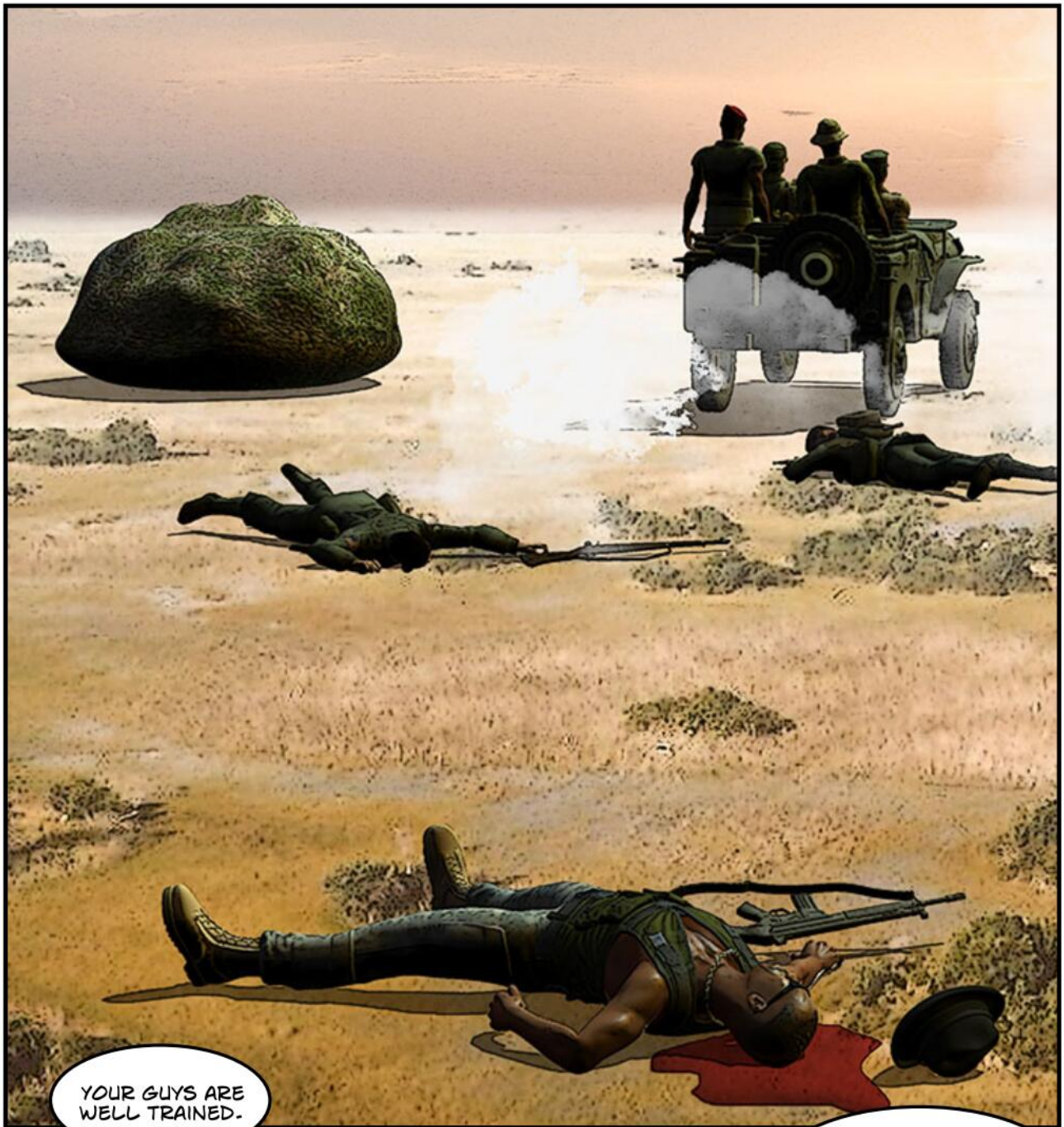
BANG

AT THE SAME TIME ROJAS FIRED A BURST AT THE ONES ON THE ROAD AHEAD...



WHILE ARTURO AND RAPHAEL GOT THE HIDDEN SNIPERS.





YOUR GUYS ARE WELL TRAINED.



THEY OUGHT TO. THEY KNOW NOTHING BUT FIGHTING SINCE THE TIME THEY WERE BORN.

AN HOUR BEFORE SUNDOWN WE ARRIVED AT ISIDORO'S VILLAGE.



BLOODY HELL!

LOOKS LIKE IT HAPPENED SOME TIME AGO.

THE DEMONS! THE DEMONS CAME... THEY KILLED... THEY BURNED... THEY TOOK AWAY THE WOMEN...

WHAT DEMONS?

THE SHE-DEMONS FROM THE FOREST. THEY CAME AGAIN.

SUDDENLY...



THEY KILLED... THEY BURNED... THEY ARE DEMONS!... DEMONS!

WAS THERE A WHITE WOMAN AMONG THOSE THEY TOOK AWAY?

YES. THE ONE WITH THE GOLDEN HAIR. ISIDORO'S WOMAN.





DO YOU KNOW WHAT SHE IS TALKING ABOUT?

THERE'S A LEGEND AMONG THE NATIVES OF THE AREA ABOUT A TRIBE OF BESTIAL WOMEN WHO LIVE UP NORTH, BEYOND THE FOREST.



BESTIAL?!!!

YEP. THEY SAY THEY ARE NOT FULLY HUMAN... YOU KNOW HOW THESE THINGS GO IN AFRICA.



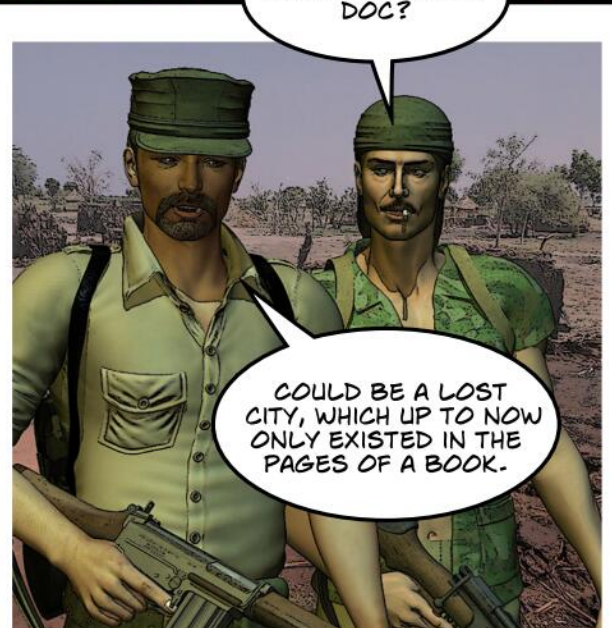
SHOW ME.

WHAT'S IN THERE, DOC?



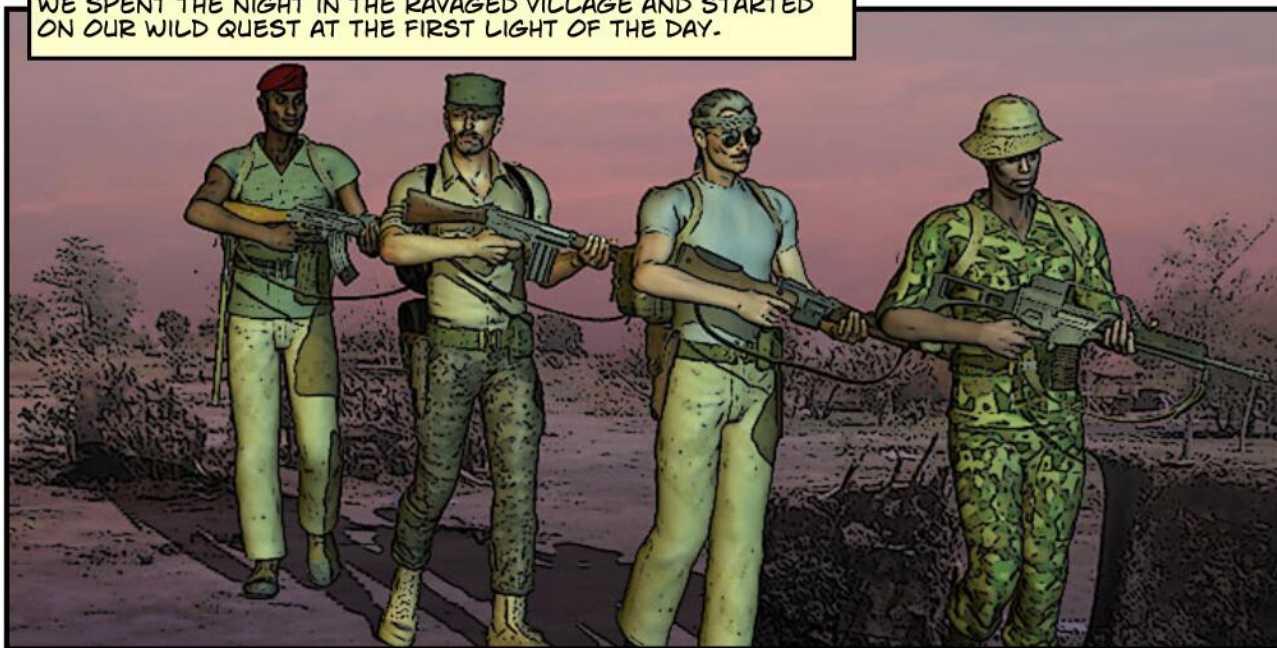
THERE. IT'S A STRANGELY FORMATTED ROCKY AREA. I DON'T THINK A WHITE MAN EVER SET FOOT THERE.

MAYBE JUST ONE... BUT THEN HE IS SUPPOSED TO BE A FICTIONAL CHARACTER.



COULD BE A LOST CITY, WHICH UP TO NOW ONLY EXISTED IN THE PAGES OF A BOOK.

WE SPENT THE NIGHT IN THE RAVAGED VILLAGE AND STARTED ON OUR WILD QUEST AT THE FIRST LIGHT OF THE DAY.



FOR TWO DAYS WE MOVED THROUGH THICK JUNGLE WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING A LIVING HUMAN SOUL.



ON THE THIRD DAY ONE OF ROJAS' HELPERS MADE A SIGNIFICANT DISCOVERY.





A PACK OF "BELGA"!

AND IT LOOKS FAIRLY RECENT.

MEANING THAT WE ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH.



OR... THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS.

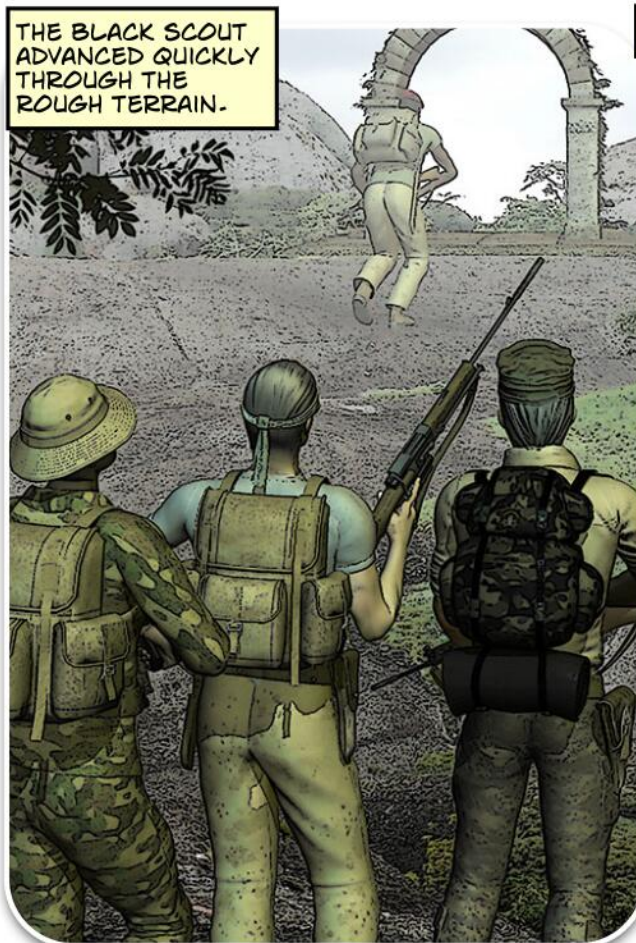
SO WE PUSHED FURTHER AND FURTHER INTO THE GREEN HELL.



UNTIL, IN THE MORNING OF THE FIFTH DAY...



HOLLY SHIT!



AND...



WE SWIFTLY MOVED UP THERE OURSELVES.



FODA-SE!

GOOD LORD!



I'LL BE DAMNED IF THIS IS NOT OPAR!



NOW, BOYS...
DON'T YOU DO
ANYTHING HASTY.

??

?!?



NIGEL PRATT!!

IN PERSON.
NOW, LET'S SEE
WHAT HAVE WE
HERE...

MERDA!



POOR SOD! YOU
GOT YOURSELF INTO
ALL THIS TROUBLE
FOR NOTHING.

I BRIEFLY EXPLAINED TO HIM THE PURPOSE OF OUR VENTURE.

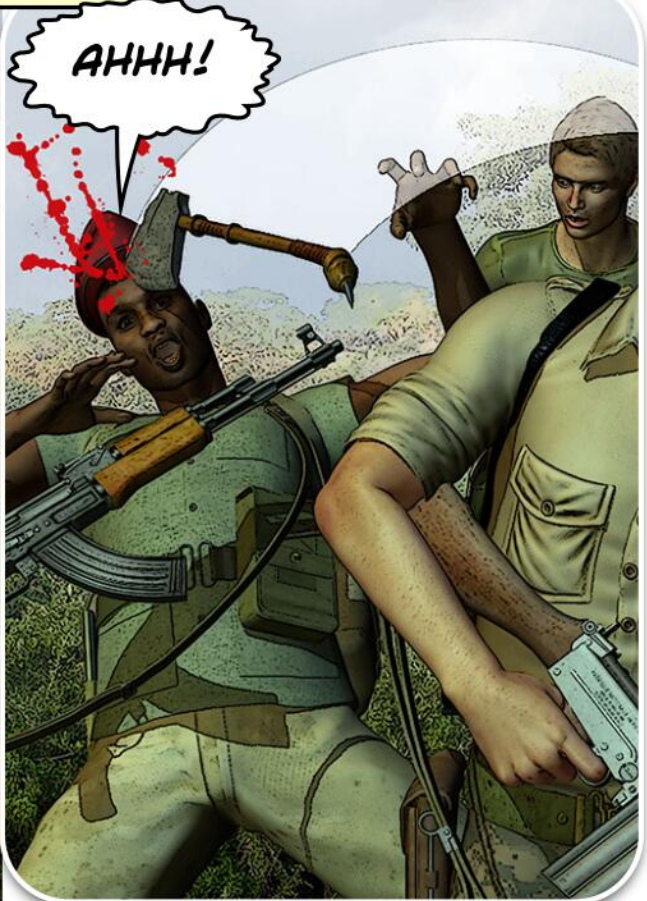
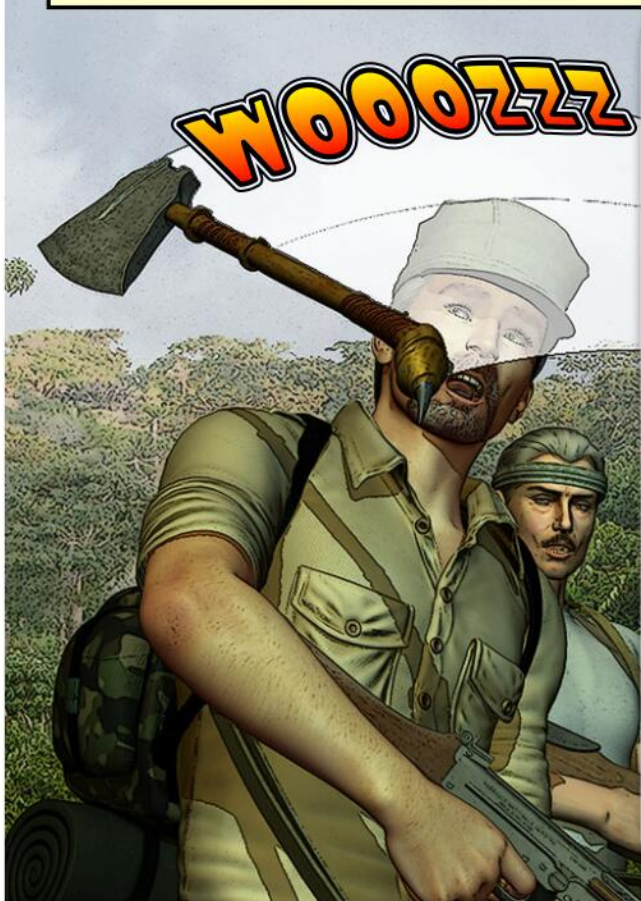
IN OTHER WORDS,
YOU BOYS ARE IN A KIND
OF HUMANITARIAN
MISSION.



YOU COULD
SAY THAT.



IT HAPPENED SUDDENLY, AS IT OFTEN IS THE CASE...



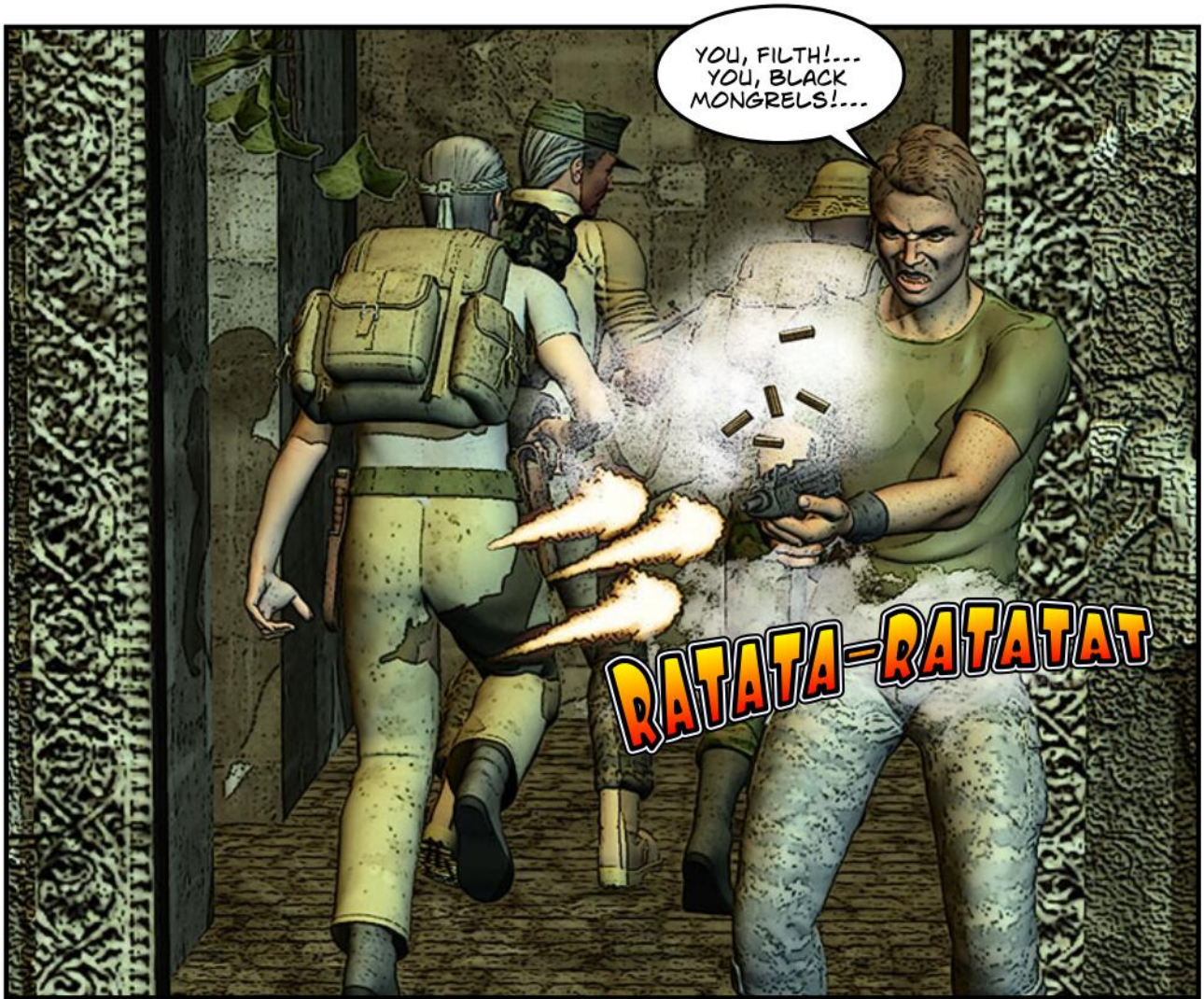
AT ONCE WE ALL STARTED FIRING BLINDLY IN ALL DIRECTIONS.



I WAS THE FIRST TO SPOT OUT THE ENEMY.







YOU, FILTH!...
YOU, BLACK
MONGRELS!...

RATATA-RATATAT



SUDDENLY THE DOORS SHUT UPON US.

BLAM!

WE ARE
TRAPPED.



MAYBE THERE'S
A WAY OUT.



FUCK!

THERE'S A CORRIDOR TO THE LEFT...

LET'S TAKE IT.



WE RAN WITH THE HOPE TO FIND AN ESCAPE FROM THIS MOUSETRAP.

THIS BUILDING IS IMMENSE!



IT'S NOT JUST ONE BUILDING BUT A NUMBER OF THEM JOINED BACK TO FRONT.

AN HOUR PASSED, UNTIL SUDDENLY...

LIGHT... IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE REACHED SOMETHING.



AND WE HAD INDEED.



IT WAS POINTLESS TO RESIST.



THEN BY PUSHING AND SHOVING THEY LEAD US TO A HUGE ROOM WHERE A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WAS SITTING UPON A THRONE.

HAUEK EZEZAGUN
ERRUKARRIAK DIRA, O
LATA. (THESE ARE THE
INTRUDERS, O LATA).

BENO, JUM-LA.
EROSKETA PREZIATUA DA.
(WELL DONE, JUM-LA.
THEIR ACQUISITION IS
PRECIOUS).



SHE CAME DOWN AND STARTED TO INSPECT HER MINIONS' CATCH.



SUDDENLY SHE STOPPED IN FRONT OF ME AND HER HAUTY EXPRESSION CHANGED TO SURPRISE.



COULD THAT BE YOU?!!!....

COME AGAIN?...



YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME, DO YOU?

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH YOUR HIGHNESS... NO.



HARTU GELA MANTENDUZ. UTZI HAU NIREKIN. (TAKE THEM TO THE KEEPING ROOM. LEAVE THIS ONE WITH ME).

WE ARE A POPULATION EXCLUSIVELY MADE UP BY WOMEN. YOU'LL SERVE THE PURPOSE OF THE CONTINUITY OF OUR RACE.



WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO WITH US?

CAN'T YOU GUESS?



YOU ARE NOT AFRAID. YOU MUST BE EITHER TOO BRAVE OR TOO STUPID.



AFTER WHAT YOU'LL BE SACRIFICED TO THE FLAMING GOD.

HOW LOVELY!



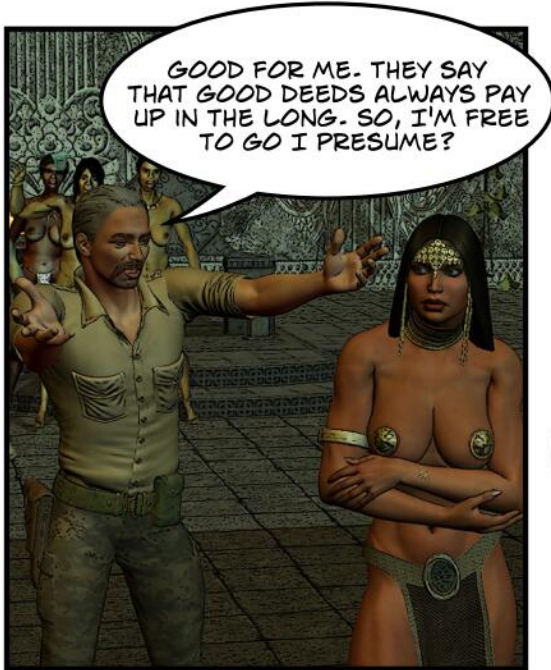
I'LL OPT FOR THE LATTER.

NO, YOU ARE BRAVE. I KNOW THIS FIRST HAND ALTHOUGH YOU DON'T SEEM TO REMEMBER THE INCIDENT.

IT HAPPENED MANY YEARS AGO IN THE COUNTRY THEY NAME THE CONGO. I WAS STRANDED THERE DURING A TIME OF WAR AND TURMOIL. SAVAGE REBELS WERE SPREADING DEATH AND TERROR WHEREVER THEY PASSED FROM. THEY CAME TO THE VILLAGE WHERE I SOUGHT REFUGE. THEY KILLED THE MEN AND STARTED RAPING AND THEN KILLING THE WOMEN.

YOU AND A SMALL BAND OF WHITE SOLDIERS CAME IN. YOU FOUGHT BRAVELY, RISKING YOUR LIVES... YOU SAVED US... YOU SAVED ME...

AFTERWARD YOU BROUGHT ME TO A MISSION THINKING THAT I WAS A EUROPEAN AND YOU GAVE THEM MONEY TO SEND ME TO MY PRESUMED COUNTRY OF ORIGIN. I OWE YOU MY LIFE.





IS THIS THE ONE YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?

ANNYA LODBERG!





IT WAS ONLY THEN THAT I REALISED THAT SHE WAS...





GOOD LORD!

OH, BUT HE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT, QUITE THE OPPOSITE I WOULD SAY.

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE? SHE MUST BE PAST FIFTY.

FIFTY-SIX TO BE PRECISE. WELL... IT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS.



YOU NEVER LOOKED MORE RADIANT I MUST SAY.

THANK YOU. I'M FEELING GOOD.

AND... WHEN ARE YOU DUE, MAY I ASK?

IN A COUPLE OF MONTHS... I THINK...



WHAT HAPPENED?

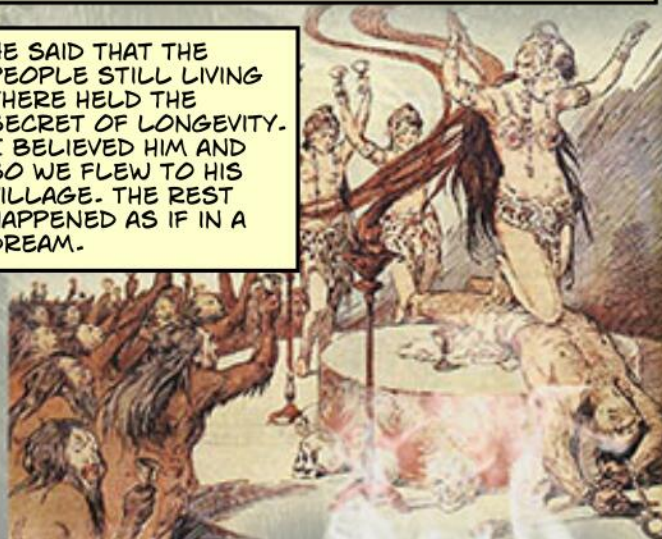
OH, IT'S A LONG STORY... AND ALSO A WEIRD ONE.

IT ALL STARTED WITH THIS BLACK GIGOLO I PICKED UP IN LUANDA. YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT HIM...

I DO INDEED.

HE CLAIMED THAT HE KNEW WHERE OPAR, THE FABULOUS CITY MENTIONED BY BURROUGHS IN THE TARZAN BOOKS, WAS SITUATED.

HE SAID THAT THE PEOPLE STILL LIVING THERE HELD THE SECRET OF LONGEVITY. I BELIEVED HIM AND SO WE FLEW TO HIS VILLAGE. THE REST HAPPENED AS IF IN A DREAM.



THE WILD WOMEN RAIDED THE VILLAGE IN SEARCH OF MEN, AS THEY DO QUITE REGULARLY. ISIDORO WAS KILLED IN THE RAID AND THEY CARRIED ME ALONG WITH THEM, PROBABLY IMPRESSED BY MY PHYSIQUE. LATA, THE HIGH PRIESTESS, WAS EQUALLY IMPRESSED, SO SHE DECIDED TO SPARE MY LIFE AND KEEP ME AS A COMPANION INSTEAD OF SACRIFICING ME TO THE FLAMING GOD. ERB GOT THIS BIT RIGHT. WHERE HE MADE A MISTAKE WAS ON THE NATURE OF THE DEGENERATE INHABITANTS OF OPAR. THESE ARE WOMEN, NOT MEN. FOR SOME REASON THE MALE POPULATION BECAME EXTINCT, SHORTLY AFTER THEY WERE CUT OFF THEIR ATLANTEAN METROPOLIS.





THE WOMEN STARTED TO MIX WITH A NOW EXTINCT SPECIES OF HUMANOIDS, A UNION THAT GAVE BIRTH TO THE BEAST-WOMEN THAT CONSTITUTE THE MAJORITY OF OPAR'S POPULATION. HOWEVER IN SOME CASES THE HUMAN GENES PREVAILED AND BROUGHT UP A LIMITED NUMBER OF "NORMAL" WOMEN, LIKE LATA. FROM THE UNION WITH THE HOMINIDS ONLY FEMALE CHILDREN WERE BORN, FOR SOME STRANGE REASON.

AND FROM TIME TO TIME A DIFFERENT KIND OF CREATURE, BOTH MALE AND FEMALE. THESE ARE CALLED "THYLARRENS" AND ARE CAPABLE OF PROCREATING. UNFORTUNATELY THEIR NUMBERS ARE ALWAYS EXTREMELY LIMITED. ONLY THREE OF THEIR KIND SURVIVE TODAY. WHENCE THE RAIDING PARTIES ON THE NATIVE TRIBES.



YOUR PREGNANCY?...

YES. IT WAS FROM ONE OF THEM, ON SPECIAL REQUEST FROM LATA, WHO SAW A CHANCE TO IMPROVE HER RACE THROUGH ME.

BUT... HOW...?



OH, THEY ARE VERY ADVANCED IN CERTAIN BRANCHES OF BIOLOGY. NOT JUST IN LONGEVITY RESEARCH... DON'T ASK ME HOW.

LATA SENT FOOD AS PROMISED AND WE HAD DINNER ON THE TERRACE UNDER THE TROPICAL MOON.



PRESUMING I'LL BE ABLE TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE... WILL YOU CONSIDER COMING ALONG?

MAYBE... WOULD YOU COME?

I GUESS I WILL... YOU SEE, I HAVE SOMEONE ELSE'S FUTURE TO THINK ABOUT NOW.



CAN YOU GET ME OUT?

THEN BE READY WHEN THE HIGH PRIESTESS SHOWS UP AGAIN.

OH, SHE WON'T COME BEFORE NOON.



ISN'T THIS OBVIOUS WHY SHE BROUGHT YOU TO ME? SHE OFFERED ME A DISTRACTION AND TO YOU PERHAPS A GOODBYE GIFT.



HOW DO YOU KNOW?



CHARMING!

SHE REMOVED HER CLOTHES AND I COULDN'T HELP MARVELING AT THIS MATURE WOMAN'S BEAUTY!



MY GOD! YOU ARE STUNNING!



I'LL BE YOURS FOR TONIGHT THEN. DON'T WAIST IT.



I WASN'T GOING TO...



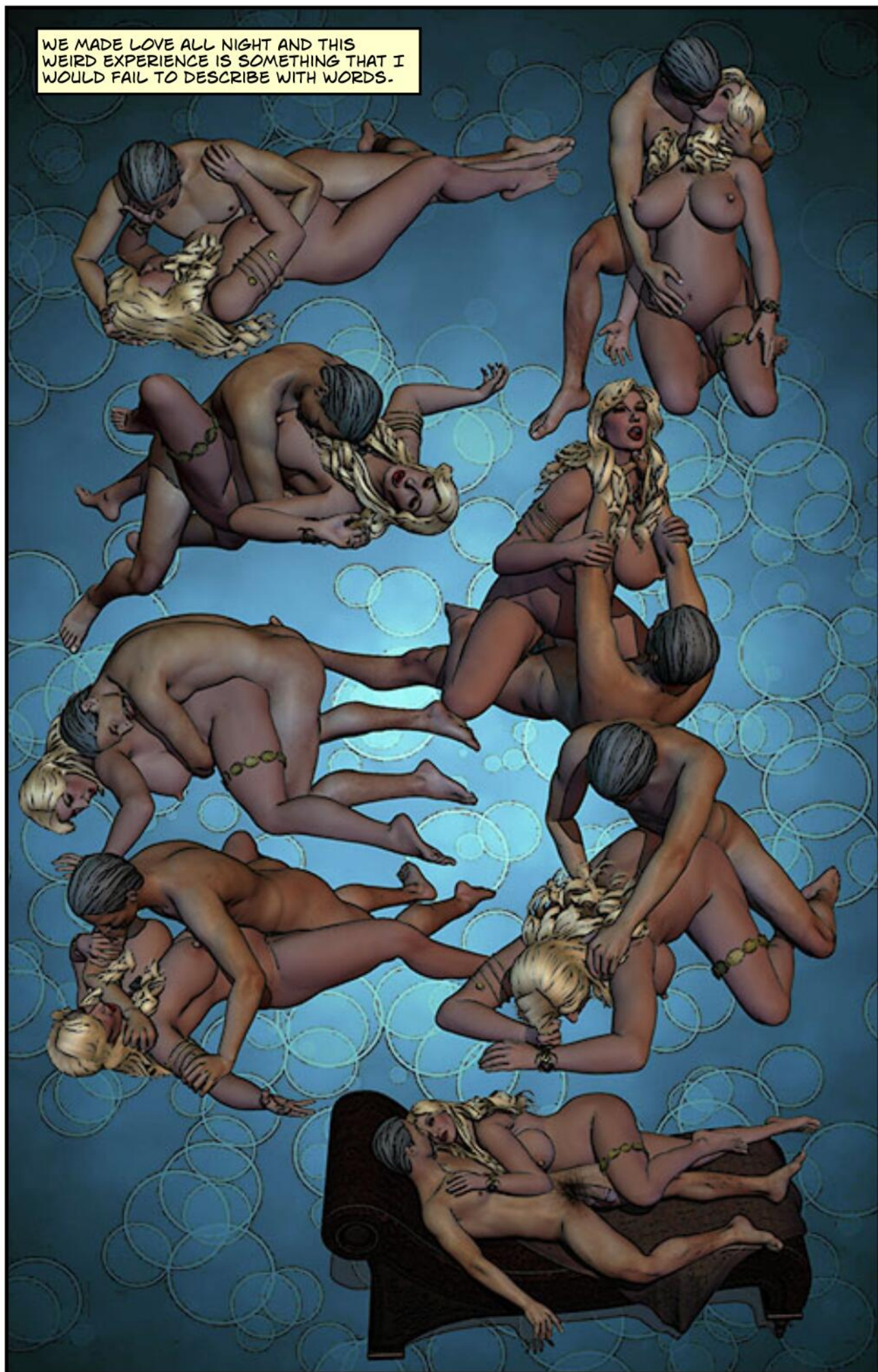
IT WAS LIKE A DREAM!



I HELD IN MY ARMS A WOMAN THAT MILLIONS OF MEN HAD DESIRED AND WOULD GLADLY GIVE UP YEARS OFF THEIR LIVES TO BE IN MY PLACE AT THIS MOMENT.



WE MADE LOVE ALL NIGHT AND THIS WEIRD EXPERIENCE IS SOMETHING THAT I WOULD FAIL TO DESCRIBE WITH WORDS.





SHE CAME A LITTLE BEFORE NOON. AND SHE WAS ALONE.





I'M SORRY. THIS IS OUR LAW.

RIGHT.

AND THIS IS MINE. TAKE US TO WHERE MY COMPANIONS ARE KEPT. AND NO MONKEY BUSINESS OR ELSE... BELIEVE ME... I'M VERY ANGRY AT YOU AND MY HAND FEELS PRETTY UNSTEADY.



YOU ARE A FOOL. YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS.

WANNA BET? GO ON... LEAD THE WAY.



SHE OBEYED, KEEPING HER PEOPLE AT DISTANCE.

EZ EGIN EZER. BIDEAN MANTENDU. (DON'T DO ANYTHING. KEEP OUT OF THE WAY.)



SOON WE REACHED THE CELL WHERE ROJAS, PRATT AND RAPHAEL WERE KEPT.



MIKE! WHAT'S GOING ON?

GET UP AND GET READY. WE ARE LEAVING.

WHAT ABOUT THE TREASURE?



DON'T BE STUPID, PRATT. THERE IS NO TREASURE HERE. WE CAME TO RESCUE ANNYA LODBERG.

HOLLY COW! IT IS ANNYA BOOBY-LODBERG!

WE MOVED THROUGH THE LABYRINTH OF THE RUINED CITY FOLLOWED BY THE BEAST-WOMEN OF OPAR AT A FAIR DISTANCE.



THE SUCCESSION OF CORRIDORS, ROOMS, INNER COURTYARDS AND PATIOS WAS ENDLESS. I STARTED GROWING SUSPICIOUS OF OUR RELUCTANT GUIDE.





ANNYA... THINK OF YOUR BABY. IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD SHE WILL BE A NOTHING, WHILE HERE SHE WILL BECOME HIGH PRIESTESS ONE DAY AND SHE WILL REVIVE OUR ONCE GLORIOUS RACE.

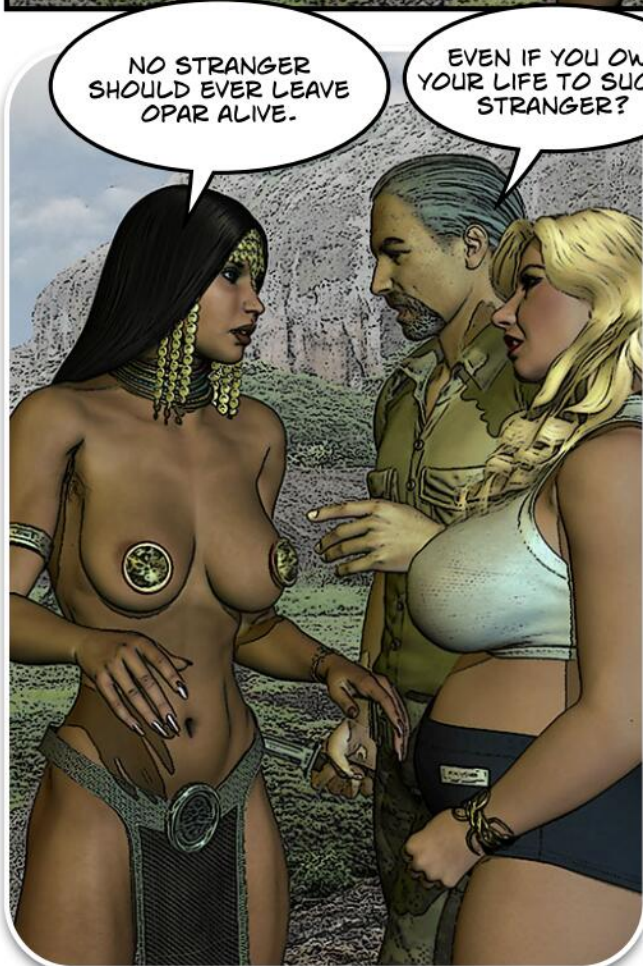


WE HAD, AT LAST, COME OUT IN THE OPEN SPACE.



YOU CAN KILL ME NOW. FOR I WILL ORDER MY PEOPLE TO TAKE YOU DOWN.

NOW, GIRL! DON'T BE STUPID. WE DON'T WANT ANYONE TO GET HURT.

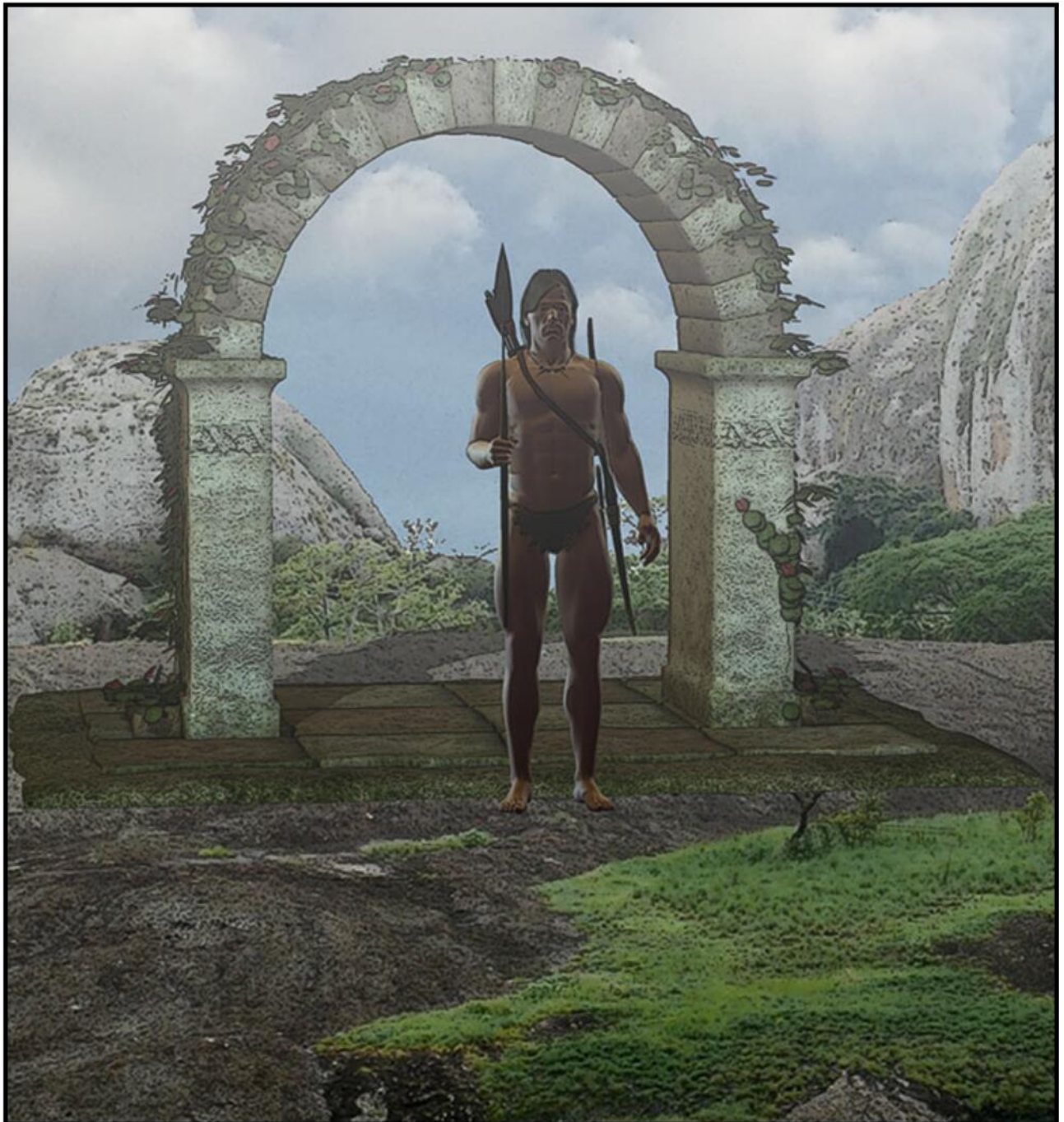
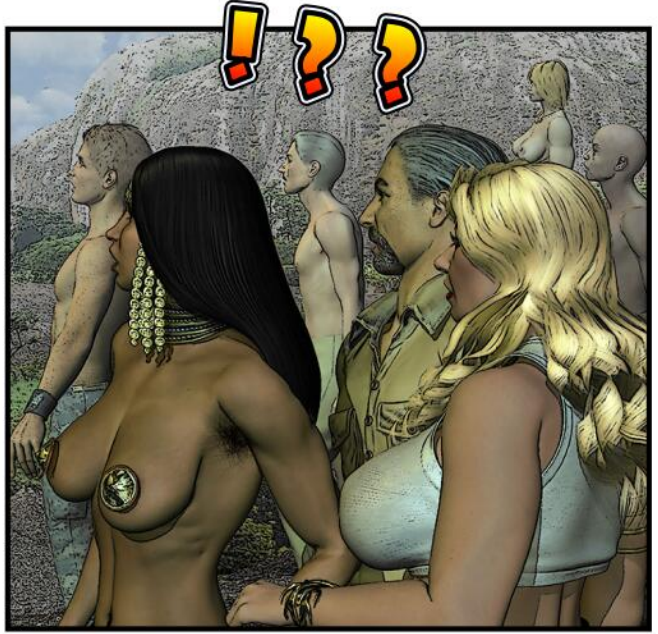
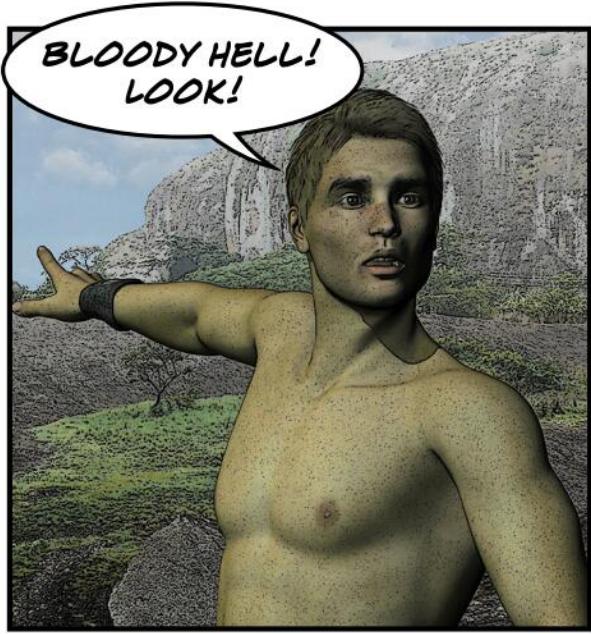


NO STRANGER SHOULD EVER LEAVE OPAR ALIVE.

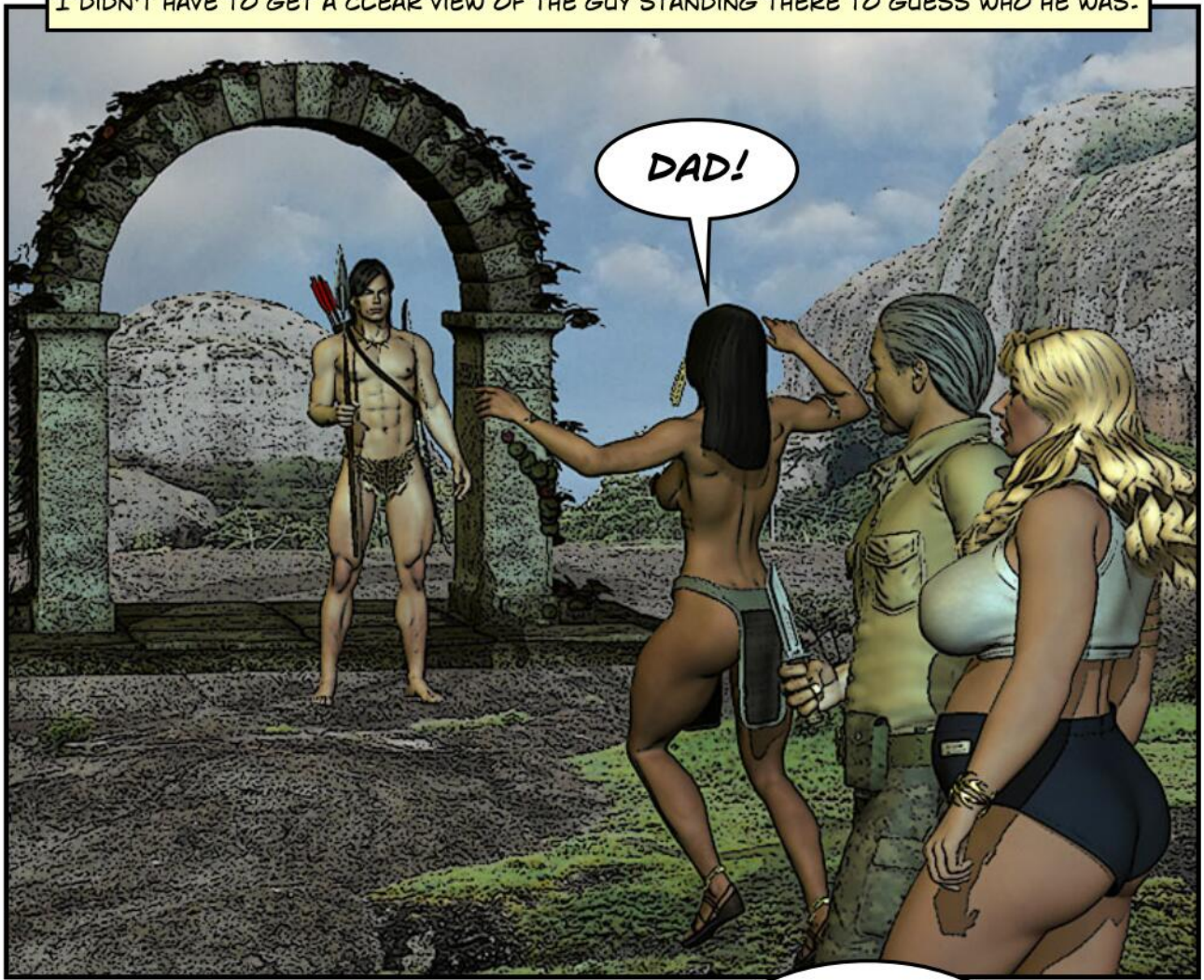
EVEN IF YOU OWE YOUR LIFE TO SUCH A STRANGER?



SORRY. I HAVE TO DO WHAT I HAVE TO DO.



I DIDN'T HAVE TO GET A CLEAR VIEW OF THE GUY STANDING THERE TO GUESS WHO HE WAS.





LET THEM GO. AND THIS IS THE LAST TIME I LET IT PASS.

ALL RIGHT, DAD. WHATEVER YOU SAY...



I'LL BE DAMNED! IS THIS...?

YEP. IT LOOKS THAT WAY.



THIS IS THE SECOND TIME OUR PATHS ARE CROSSING. SO STRANGE!

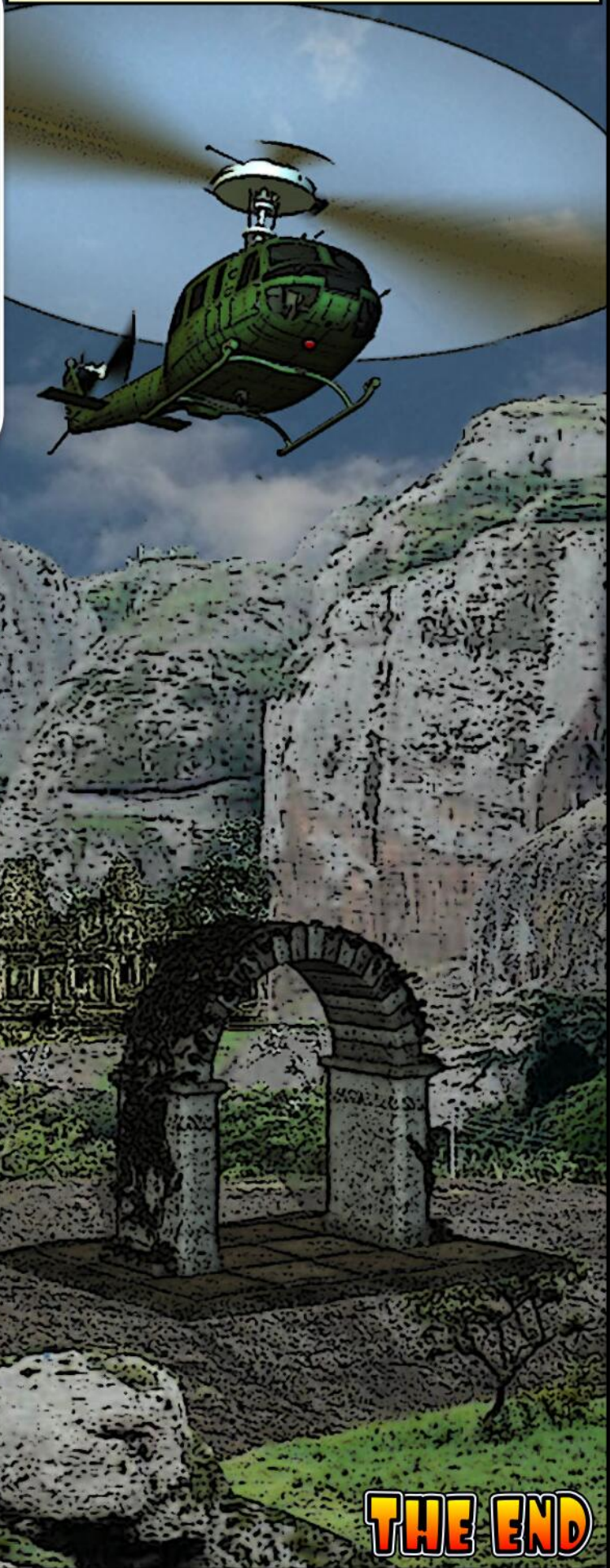


I FORGOT TO TELL YOU THAT LATA IS HIS DAUGHTER -WITH LA.



WHENCE THE NAME: LA-TA.

AS THE CHOPPER WAS BRINGING US BACK TO CIVILISATION I COULDN'T HELP WONDERING WHAT KIND OF LIFE AWAITED ANNYA LODBERG AND HER CHILD.



THE END

