

# THE LAUGHING MAN

TUCKED AWAY AS IT WAS IN ONE OF THE MOST REMOTE REGIONS OF AFRICA'S UGHANI VALLEY, THE TINY VILLAGE OF MOSEBKEI HAS SEEN NO MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF WHITE MEN IN ITS 200 YEAR EXISTENCE-- SAVE FOR DR. CARL RICHARDS WHO HAD SPENT HALF HIS LIFE ADMINISTERING MEDICAL CARE TO THE UNDERNOURISHED, UNDEREDUCATED NATIVES.

IT WAS WITH MORE THAN A LITTLE SURPRISE THEN, THAT THE AGED DOCTOR LOOKED UP FROM HIS WORK TO FIND A YOUNG CAUCASIAN STUMBLING OUT OF THE TRACKLESS JUNGLE TOWARD HIS RUDE HUT. IT WAS EVEN MORE SURPRISING TO FIND THE HOLLOW-EYED MAN LAUGHING...

DRINK?... HEH-  
HEH... DRINK?...  
HEH-HEH-HEH...

GOOD LORD, MAN!  
WHAT HAPPENED TO  
YOU? WHERE HAVE  
YOU COME FROM?

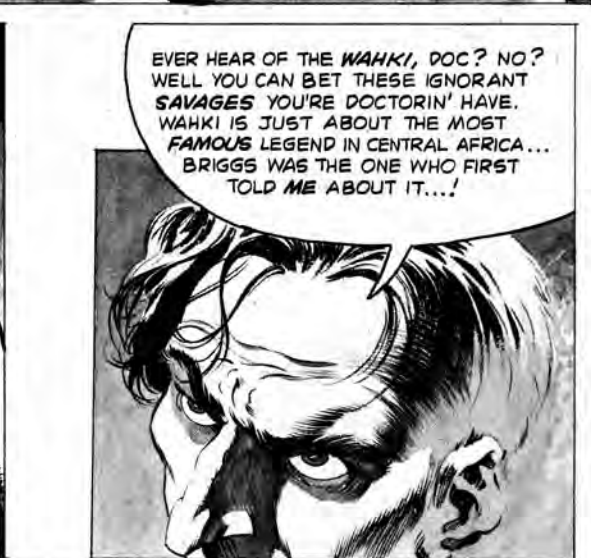
DRINK?...  
HEH-HEH!...  
WATER?

GLUG-  
GLUG!

HERE...  
DRINK IT  
SLOWLY...

WHO ARE  
YOU? WHAT  
ARE YOU DOING  
IN THIS PART  
OF AFRICA  
ALONE?

ALONE?...  
NO... NOT ALONE  
... BRIGGS...  
CAME WITH  
BRIGGS...



"WE WAS IN ILLINOIS AT THE TIME, TRYIN' TO KEEP TOGETHER WHAT WAS LEFT OF A BUSTED DOWN OLD TRAVELIN' CARNY. WE WAS NEARLY BUSTED OURSELVES. I REMEMBER IT WAS RAININ' LIKE CRAZY... HAD BEEN FOR DAYS... WHEN ONE MORNIN' BRIGGS COMES RUNNIN' INTO MY TRAILER..."



"HE WAS ALL HOT AND BOTHERED 'BOUT SOMETHING... SAID HE'D FOUND THE WAY TO MAKE US RICH ONCE AND FOR ALL. WE'RE GONNA BE EXPLORERS, HE SAID."

IT'S RIGHT HERE IN TIME MAGAZINE!  
"PHOTOGRAPHER'S SNAP-SHOT SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON MAN-APE LEGEND!"

JUST LOOK AT THIS PHOTO!



"ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, THE MAN-APES... WHAT THE NATIVES CALLED 'WAHKI'... WAS A LEGENDARY CREATURE THOUGHT BY THE LOCAL TRIBES TO BE 'THINKING GORILLAS' WHOSE RANGE WAS STRICTLY LIMITED TO THE UGHANI VALLEY REGION. SOME TOURIST HAD TAKEN A FOGGY PICTURE OF WHAT WAS SUPPOSE TO BE ONE OF THEM..."



"BRIGGS WAS ALL SET TO SELL THE CARNY AND GO FIND THE CREATURE. A LIVE ONE WOULD BE WORTH A FORTUNE... HE SAID. EVEN A DEAD ONE WOULD MAKE US MILLIONAIRES! I TOLD HIM HE WAS NUTS, BUT WHEN BRIGGS GOT SOMETHING INTO HIS HEAD..."



"IN A WEEK I FOUND MYSELF ABOARD THE GRECIAN HORN SAILING FOR JOHANNESBURG..."



BUCK UP, TANNER! WHEN YOU'RE RUNNING BAREFOOT THROUGH YOUR FIRST MILLION, YOU'LL LOOK BACK ON ALL THIS AND LAUGH!

"GETTING THERE WAS ONE THING, FINDING A GUIDE TO TAKE US INTO THE VALLEY WAS ANOTHER..."

BUT I'M PAYING TRIPLE, FOR GOD'S SAKE!

SORRY, BOSS, NO BOYS GO INTO WAHKI COUNTRY... VERY BAD MAGIC!

WHAT NEXT, B'WANA?



"BUT A LITTLE THING LIKE THAT WASN'T GOING TO STOP JEFF BRIGGS. HE OBTAINED A QUESTIONABLE MAP FROM A QUESTIONABLE SOURCE SHOWING A SECRET RIVER THROUGH THE UGHANI VALLEY AND WE WERE OFF..."

MY ARMS ARE KILLIN' ME!

QUIT GRIPIN'! YOU WANNA BE RICH AND FAMOUS... YOU GOTTA PAY YOUR DUES!

HOLD IT A SECOND...!



HOLY CROW!



I SEEN 'EM!  
I SEEN 'EM!

QUICK! UNPACK  
THAT SNARE! WE'RE  
ABOUT TO BECOME  
FILTHY RICH!



"WE SAT WATCHING THE  
TRAP FOR THREE DAYS..."

IT'S NO GOOD,  
BRIGGS. THEY'RE TOO  
SMART FOR US! THEY  
KNOW WHAT  
WE'RE UP TO!

BULL! AIN'T  
NO CRITTER THAT  
UGLY CAN  
THINK!

BUT MAYBE  
THEY CAN SMELL  
US ON THE SNARE!  
I GOTTA  
BETTER IDEA!



I TELL YOU I  
DON'T LIKE IT! IT'S...  
LIKE KILLING A...A  
HUMAN BEING!

WILL YOU KNOCK  
IT OFF WITH ALL THAT  
HUMANITARIAN JUNK?  
THEY'RE JUST A BUNCH OF  
DUMB ANIMALS, FOR THE LOVE  
OF GOD! NOW QUIT  
BLUBBERIN' AND START  
DIGGIN'!



"THIS TIME WE HAD TO  
WAIT ONLY A FEW  
HOURS..."

SEE DOWN

WE GOT  
ONE!

HURRY!  
IT MIGHT BE  
TRYIN' TO CLIMB  
OUT OR SOME-  
THIN'!



GOD...



WELL COME ON!  
WE GOT WHAT WE  
CAME FOR! LET'S GET  
OUTTA HERE WHILE THE  
GETTIN'S GOOD!

I DON'T LIKE THE  
LOOKS OF THOSE  
EYES OUT THERE IN  
THE NIGHT! THEY  
KNOW WE KILLED  
ONE OF THEM!

KILLED..YEAH,  
THAT'S JUST IT..  
BUT WE DIDN'T  
COME HERE TO  
GET A DEAD  
ONE...!

"I TRIED TO TALK HIM OUT OF IT...BUT HE WAS BEYOND REASONING. HE WANTED TO TAKE ONE OF THE CREATURES ALIVE, AND NOTHING I SAID COULD DISSUADE HIM..."

TAKE IT EASY, WILL YOU? YOU'RE BEGINNING TO MAKE ME JUMPY!

THOSE...TH-THOSE EYES! I CAN FEEL THEM WATCHING US!

I TELL YOU THEY'RE OUT THERE STUDYING US!

START COUNTING YOUR MONEY, TANNER... IT WON'T BE LONG NOW! IF THIS DOESN'T LURE THEM, NOTHING WILL!



"WE REMOVED THE STAKES FROM THE PIT AND PLACED A NARROW BEAM ACROSS IT TO SUPPORT BRIGGS' WEIGHT. HE SAT NERVOUSLY IN THE CENTER OF THE TRAP WHILE I HID IN THE SHRUBBERY NEARBY. BY DAWN A DENSE FOG HAD MOVED IN..."



"I HAD ALMOST DOZED OFF WHEN I HEARD THE SCREAM..."

TANNER! TANNER! THE RIFLE!

AAAGGHH!

BRIGGS!

BRIGGS! BRIGGS!

BLASTED FOG...CAN'T SEE A--

HE'S GONE! HE'S GONE!



"I SEARCHED ALL THAT NIGHT AND THE NEXT DAY BUT NO BRIGGS. I BEGAN WALKING IN ERRATIC CIRCLES, STUMBLING BLINDLY THROUGH THE JUNGLE CALLING HIS NAME..."



BRIGGS! BRIGGS, FOR GOD'S SAKE ANSWER ME!

"BY DUSK I COLLAPSED EXHAUSTED ON THE DANK EARTH, TOTALLY DISORIENTED, HELPLESSLY LOST IN THE LABYRINTH OF VINES AND CREEPERS..."



BRIGGS... BRIGGS...

"I AWOKE LOOKING INTO HIS EYES..."



**BRIGGS!**  
YOU'RE ALIVE! I  
THOUGHT THEY--

GOD! IT'S  
GOOD TO SEE  
YOU!  
HEY, WHERE  
ARE YOU  
GOING?

"WE WALKED FOR MILES THROUGH  
THE INSECT INFESTED FOREST, BRIGGS  
NEVER UTTERING A WORD. HE LOOKED  
AS THOUGH HE WERE IN SHOCK, HIS  
EYES DULL, HEAVY LIDDED. MY MIND  
CRAWLED WITH IMAGINED HORRORS  
THE APE-PEOPLE HAD COMMITTED  
WITH HIM. YET HE SEEMED TO KNOW  
UNERRINGLY WHERE HE WAS GOING..."

WHAT'S THE  
MATTER? WHY  
DON'T YOU SAY  
SOMETHING?  
IT'S ME!  
TANNER!

"ABRUPTLY WE WERE AT A FAMILIAR  
CLEARING. I CRIED OUT IN ELATION.  
THE CANOE! BRIGGS HAD FOUND  
IT!"

"HURRY! LET'S GET  
OUTTA HERE! I NEVER  
WANNA SEE THIS HELL-  
HOLE OR HEAR THE  
WORD WHAK!  
AGAIN!"

NOW WHAT?  
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?  
C'MON! GET IN!

DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE  
GOING BACK AFTER  
THEM AGAIN!

HAVEN'T YOU HAD  
ENOUGH?

"HE JUST STOOD  
THERE POINTING  
DOWN RIVER,  
BECKONING ME TO  
GO... TO ABANDON  
HIM..."

LOOK, I  
AIN'T LEAVING  
WITHOUT YOU SO YOU  
MIGHT AS WELL...

WHAT'RE YOU DO--  
AAAAGGHHHH!

WHAT  
HAPPENED?  
WHY DID YOU  
SCREAM?

HE--HEH-  
HEH... HE  
TOOK IT OFF...  
HEH-HEH... HE  
TOOK THE BLOODY  
THING OFF!  
HA-HA-HA-HA-  
HA-HA-HA-HA!

