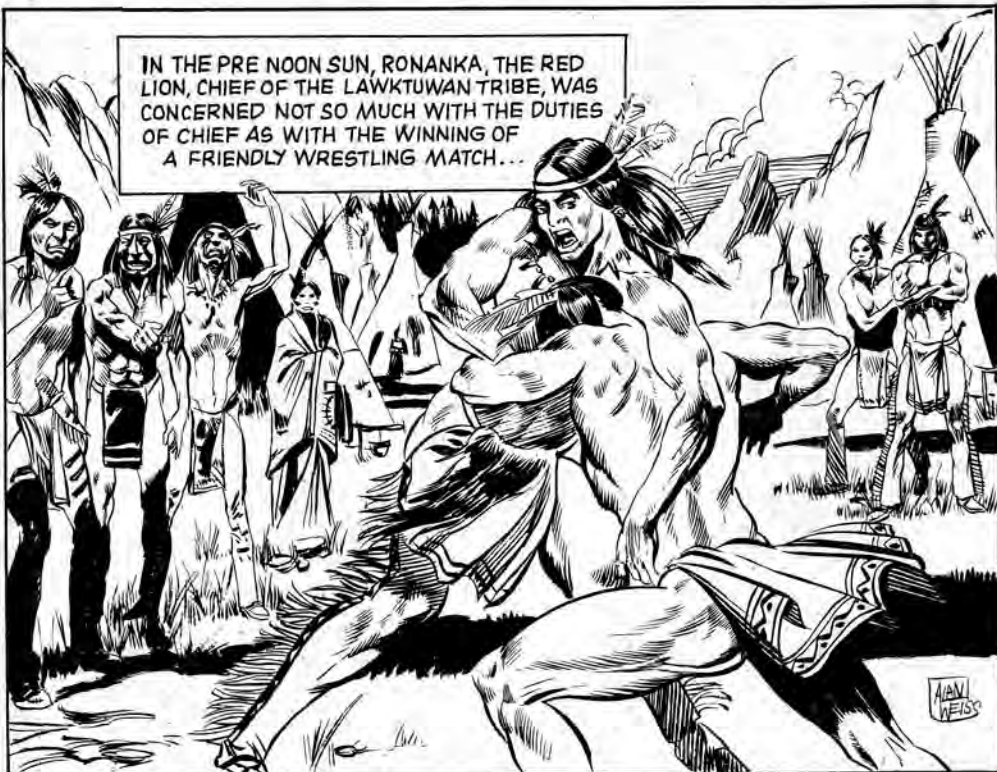


LAIR of the HORNED MAN

GREETINGS,
SCALP BAIT! TIME
FOR AN EARLY
AMERICAN FANTASY!
THAT MEANS INDIANS!
COME WITH ME BACK
IN TIME ABOUT A
THOUSAND YEARS
ON A HIKE TO THE...



IN THE PRE NOON SUN, RONANKA, THE RED LION, CHIEF OF THE LAWKTUWAN TRIBE, WAS CONCERNED NOT SO MUCH WITH THE DUTIES OF CHIEF AS WITH THE WINNING OF A FRIENDLY WRESTLING MATCH...



THE STRENGTH OF THE KIND CHIEF AS ALWAYS, PREVAILED...


HAAA!! RONANKA STILL POSSESSES THE STRENGTH OF THE LION HE WAS NAMED FOR!



BUT THE FRIVOLITY IS QUICKLY BROUGHT TO A CLOSE BY THE APPEARANCE OF A TRIBAL MEDICINE MAN, TAKTANA...

YES, OUR CHIEF IS INDEED AS STRONG AS HE IS WISE, AS FEARLESS AS HE IS KIND!






YOU WANT SOMETHING, TAKTANA! YOU CANNOT MASK YOUR INTENT WITH SWEET PRAISE! WHAT IS IT?

HAH! MY CHIEF CANNOT BE LULLED BY HOLLOW WORDS! I DO INDEED CRAVE A BOON!... I WISH CUSTODY OF THE SAGAK BRAVE WE HOLD PRISONER!

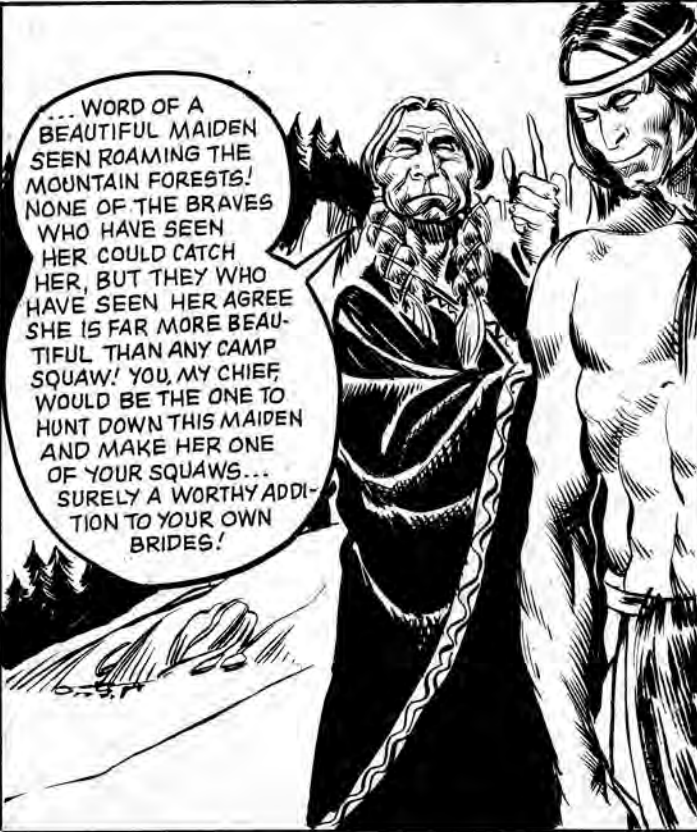


HE IS TO DIE ANYWAY! YOU MAY HAVE HIM!

I THANK YOU, MY CHIEF! I COME ALSO TO TELL YOU OF THE WORD HEARD LATELY IN THE CAMP...



SUCH AN INTRIGUING QUEST COULD NOT GO UNCHALLENGED, AND RED LION, A MAN OF SWIFT DECISION, LEFT THAT AFTERNOON! ARMED WITH BOW, TOMAHAWK, AND KNIFE, THE WARRIOR CHIEF MADE HIS WAY UP INTO THE MOUNTAIN FORESTS.



... WORD OF A BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN SEEN ROAMING THE MOUNTAIN FORESTS! NONE OF THE BRAVES WHO HAVE SEEN HER COULD CATCH HER, BUT THEY WHO HAVE SEEN HER AGREE SHE IS FAR MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ANY CAMP SQUAW! YOU, MY CHIEF, WOULD BE THE ONE TO HUNT DOWN THIS MAIDEN AND MAKE HER ONE OF YOUR SQUAWS... SURELY A WORTHY ADDITION TO YOUR OWN BRIDES!

FOR THE EXPERIENCED WOODSMAN, SUCH AN UNUSUAL TRAIL IS EASILY DISCOVERED...



...AND... AFTER A SHORT REST... FOLLOWED!



THE CADENCE OF RED LION'S LOPING STRIDE IS SUDDENLY BROKEN, AS HE HEARS... A SCREAM!

TRIPLING HIS SPEED, THE WARRIOR SOON PASSES THE FOREST BY, AND, COMING TO THE MOUNTAINSIDE...



...HE SEES A STAGGERING SIGHT! A NATURAL BRIDGE FORMED OF A HUGE AND GROTESQUE TREE HIGH ABOVE THE FOAMING, RUMBLING RIVER...



BUT RED LION CAN WASTE NO TIME MUSING ON THE SCENERY, FOR BEFORE HIS EYES, THE FOREST GIRL IS IN MORTAL DANGER FROM A HORRIBLE MAN-BEAST... A HORNED MAN!



DIVING BETWEEN THE BEAST AND THE GIRL, RONANKA SUCCEEDS IN SAVING HER LIFE...

RUN, GIRL... RUN!



SHE DOES RUN TO SAFETY! BUT THE BEAST, FRUSTRATED OF HIS CHOSEN PREY, TURNS ON THIS NEW INTRUDER!

**LOST MY BOW!
THE TOMAHAWK...
IT MUST SERVE, OR
I DIE THIS DAY!**



MEETING THE CHARGE OF THE STEELY THEWED MAN-BEAST, RONANKA HACKS VICIOUSLY WITH HIS TOMAHAWK...



HACKING AND SLICING, RED LIONS INFLECTS SCORES OF WOUNDS, BUT STILL THE HORNED MAN ONLY ATTACKS MORE FIERCELY!



THEN, HIS STRENGTH WANING, THE BRAVE WARRIOR STRIKES AT THE BASE OF THE BEAST'S NECK, CUTTING THROUGH TO HIS BRAIN!



REALIZING ITS MORTAL WOUND, THE BEAST, SHRIEKING HORRIBLY, GATHERS ALL ITS STRENGTH FOR ONE FINAL LUNGE...



BLEEDING FROM HALF A DOZEN WOUNDS, RONANKA BARELY SIDESTEPS THE FEROCIOUS MAN BEAST... AND THE HORNED MAN FALLS...

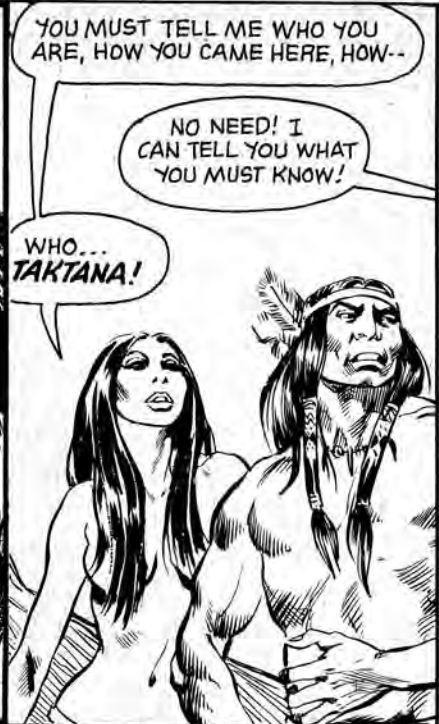


YOU SAVED ME! NO ONE HAS EVER HELPED ME IN ANY WAY BEFORE! I WILL HEAL YOU!

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ME! WHAT IS YOUR NAME?



I AM CALLED LANEAAH!



YOU MUST TELL ME WHO YOU ARE, HOW YOU CAME HERE, HOW--

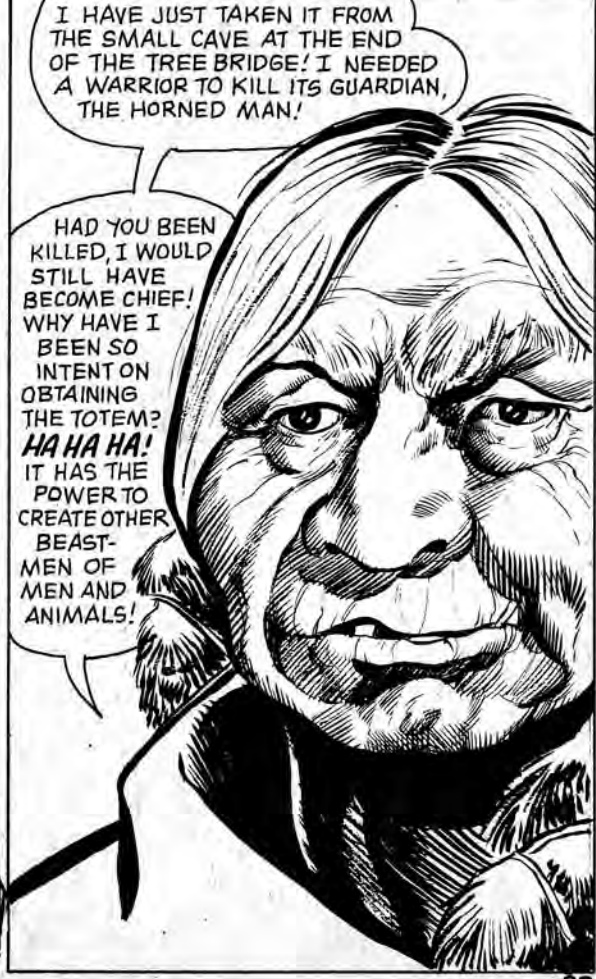
NO NEED! I CAN TELL YOU WHAT YOU MUST KNOW!

WHO... TAKTANA!



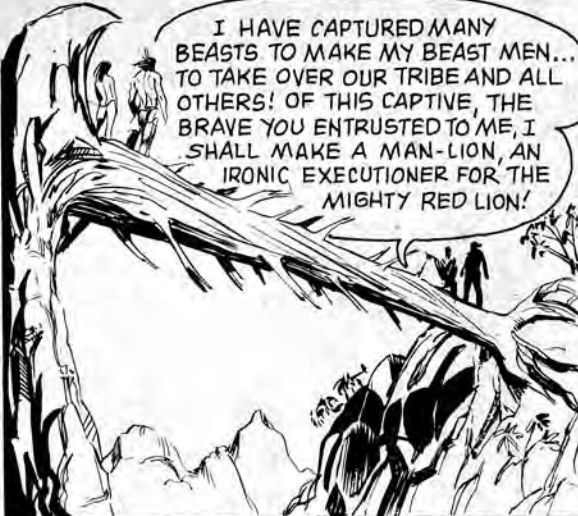
YES, TAKTANA, YOUR FAITHFUL MEDICINE MAN! IT WAS I WHO LURED YOU HERE... WITH THE HELP OF... **MY DAUGHTER!**

YES, MY DAUGHTER! I HAD HER RAISED ALONE IN THE FOREST FOR JUST SUCH AN OCCASION! YOU SEE THIS TOTEM I HOLD!




I HAVE JUST TAKEN IT FROM THE SMALL CAVE AT THE END OF THE TREE BRIDGE! I NEEDED A WARRIOR TO KILL ITS GUARDIAN, THE HORNED MAN!

HAD YOU BEEN KILLED, I WOULD STILL HAVE BECOME CHIEF! WHY HAVE I BEEN SO INTENT ON OBTAINING THE TOTEM? **H A H A H A!** IT HAS THE POWER TO CREATE OTHER BEAST-MEN OF MEN AND ANIMALS!



I HAVE CAPTURED MANY BEASTS TO MAKE MY BEAST MEN... TO TAKE OVER OUR TRIBE AND ALL OTHERS! OF THIS CAPTIVE, THE BRAVE YOU ENTRUSTED TO ME, I SHALL MAKE A MAN-LION, AN IRONIC EXECUTIONER FOR THE MIGHTY RED LION!




NO, FATHER! HE SAVED ME! YOU CANNOT DO THIS THING!

I FORESAW THIS DISLOYALTY, MY DAUGHTER! AS YOU WILL BE OF NO FURTHER USE TO ME... FOR YOU I BROUGHT A...



... RATTLESNAKE!



WORK NOW, MY TOTEM! WORK YOUR MAGIC!



YOU... YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR OWN DAUGHTER INTO... THIS?!



YES, OF COURSE! AS EASILY AS I HAVE CHANGED THIS MAN INTO A MAN-LION! KILL HIM, MY PET!

GRROWRRS!



NOW RONANKA WAS ARMED ONLY WITH HIS KNIFE! YET, IN A SEEMINGLY HOPELESS MOVE, MAN Faced MAN-BEAST...



THE CLAWS OF THE POWERFUL CREATURE RIPPED AND SLASHED AT THE FLESH OF THE WARRIOR CHIEF...



KEEPING HIS WITS, RONANKA BREAKS FREE, TURNS, AND TAUNTS THE TERRIBLE BEAST! THE LION-MAN LEAPS...



... ONLY TO IMPALE ITSELF ON A PROTRUDING LANCE-LIKE LIMB OF THE MONSTER TREE!



THEN, TRIUMPHANT, TORN, ACHINGLY FATIGUED, RONANKA TURNS TO FACE HIS ENEMY...



...WHEN...



IN TERRIBLE AGONY, THE WARRIOR FALLS AT HIS ENEMY'S FEET...

HA HA HA! SO YOU DEFEATED BEAST MAN, BUT COULD NOT RECKON WITH THE TRUE MAN... THE MOST BESTIAL CREATURE OF ALL! HA HA! SHOT WITH AN ARROW FROM YOUR OWN BOW!



NOW NOTHING... NO ONE CAN STOP TAKTANA FROM BECOMING THE MOST POWERFUL MAN OF ALL THE TRIBES! HA HA HA HA! RONANKA IS DEAD!



BUT THE GLOATING, BOASTFUL MEDICINE MAN DOES NOT NOTICE AN INCREDIBLY GROTESQUE SERPENT COILED NEAR HIS LEGS... NOR DOES HE HEAR THE SOFT RATTLING, AN ALMOST INHUMANLY MELODIC SONG...



BUT THEN IT IS TOO LATE, FOR THE BITE OF THIS ENCHANTED CREATURE IS MANY TIMES DEADLIER THAN ANY ORDINARY SNAKE!



WHEN TAKTANA FALLS, HE DROPS THE MAGIC TOTEM! THE BADLY WOUNDED RONANKA STRAIN... CRAWLING... AND FINALLY REACHES IT!



TOUCHING IT, ALL PREVIOUS SPELLS ARE NEGATED, AND LANEESH BECOMES ONCE MORE HER HUMAN, FEMALE SELF...

YOU ARE STRONG, RONANKA! I WILL HEAL YOU! YOU WILL LIVE!

YES! I WILL LIVE! HAVE I NOT MORE REASON TO THAN EVER BEFORE.



HMM... SEEMS OLD TAKTANA'S TOTEM WAS PRETTY BAD MEDICINE, AND SPEAKING OF MEDICINE, WAIT' LL YOU SEE WHAT I PRESCRIBE NEXT!

