



The Ape Man's Brother

Joe R. Lansdale , Ken Laager (Cover Artist)

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Orphaned by a plane crash, raised in the wilds of a lost world hidden somewhere beneath a constant mist, The Big Guy and his ape-man brother from another mother are living a life of danger amongst rampaging dinosaurs, giant birds, warring ape tribes, and all manner of deadly beasts. It's a wonderful existence for someone like The Big Guy and his furry brother, except for the flea problem. Then an expedition of explorers from the outside turn his world inside out. Or rather a very blonde beauty called The Woman does. It leads to his and his ape brother being convinced to fly to New York by zeppelin, where they become the toast of the town. They even make Hollywood movies. It seems perfect. At least until The Big Guy does something that comes quite naturally to him in the wild, but leads to public humiliation in this new found world. To make matters worse, his ape brother has grown to not only love the pampered life, meals he doesn't have to chase down, good cigars, fine wines and statuesque women, he's come to like the Wrong Woman.

Changes are afoot. They lead to a return to the world beneath the mist, and a deadly and unexpected encounter with a foe that is in many ways far worse than any dinosaur. Envy, jealousy, greed, fleas, and pyramids under the mist, are all part of this rollicking novella of the sort only Joe R. Lansdale could write. And don't forget dinosaurs.

The Ape Man's Brother Details

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Author : Joe R. Lansdale , Ken Laager (Cover Artist)

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From Reader Review The Ape Man's Brother for online ebook

Karl says

This is Lansdale trundling into Phil Farmer's "A Feast Unknown" territory. Mr. Lansdale's earlier venture into the world of Tarzan was 1995's "Tarzan: The Lost Adventure" where he finished a fragment of and Edgar Rice Burroughs novel.

"The Ape Man's Brother" is told by Tarzan's (called The Big Guy here) ape side kick and "brother" (who has been trained to talk) Cheetah. The book is about 100 pages of the Tarzan story re-told with lots of Lansdale humor and sex. This book is probably not for those easily offended, but definitely for those who enjoy Lansdale.

Randy says

The true story of the man raised among the apes, told by his adopted brother in first person. It clears up all those annoying inconsistencies in the biographer's version told in the many novels, the many films, and TV.

The Big Guy< called that because his true name is unpronounceable by humans, the name he was given by the narrator's people, not really apes but proto-humans. You see, he didn't grow up in Africa, but on the island of Burroughs' Caspax series.

an amusing, interesting little novella.

Derek Pennycuff says

I found this an enjoyable read but not to the extent I usually enjoy Lansdale's work. My enjoyment may suffer because I'm not terribly familiar with Tarzan as a character. And somehow the narrator's charm just never came together for me around all the crassness. Not that the crassness by itself is a problem. Look at the opening scene of *Bubba Ho-Tep* if you wanna talk about crass. But the narrator there still ends up being a likable, relatable character. That doesn't happen for me here but I'm not sure why. I even re-read the book a couple times (it's a short read) to see if I missed something the first time through. Lansdale for me is usually good edging into great. This one was just meh edging towards good.

I found the few hints of the setting much more interesting than the core story here. Apparently in this world we lost World War 2, and the US was split between Germany and Japan. I also get a bit of a dieselpunk vibe with the blimps and what not. A pulpy alternate history setting like that could have plenty of interesting stories to tell. This one just didn't quite grab my attention as I had hoped.

Randolph says

Crazy-assed retelling of the Tarzan story from the chimp's perspective. Full of dirty jokes and scatalogical references; everyone except the monkey has a good time. Funny little novella with pitchers.

Dan Schwent says

Now it can be told: the true story of The Big Guy, a man raised by ape-like beings in a lost world and brought to civilization, as told by his ape-brother, Bill! What really happened when The Woman and her scientist father brought The Big Guy and his brother from their jungle home?

Joe Lansdale has been one of my top five writers for over a decade now. As much as I pimp his Hap & Leonard series to crime fans, what really grabbed my attention was his weird fare like this.

In *The Ape Man's Brother*, Uncle Joe takes a page from Philip Jose Farmer's playbook and imagines what Tarzan, sorry, The Big Guy, might have been like if he actually existed. Only instead of Farmer's take, this tale is full of the usual mojo: sex, cursing, violence, and humor. Farmer sure didn't drag Tarzan and Cheetah to Hollywood and have them star in a movie based on their exploits. And Cheetah sure didn't... well, I don't want to spoil too much.

Even though Tarzan fans might not appreciate The Big Guy's antics, it's clear Joe Lansdale loves the subject matter he's tackling. There's pulpy action and, if you ask me, the Big Guy acts like a jungle-raised savage would if he was brought to Hollywood and had fame and fortune thrust upon him.

At 104 pages, it's a slim book but it's the perfect size for what it is: a hilarious tale only the mojo storyteller himself could dream up. With dinosaurs, lots of humor, violence, and the Big Guy sodomizing a dead lion, it's worth ever penny. Four out of five stars!

Karen Robiscoe says

A red riot from the word: go. Defines the term: page-turner, this humorous interpretation (continuation?) of the Tarzan story was bon-bon good. I couldn't stop poppin' pages to savor of this droll novella.

John Bruni says

This is an unofficial Ned the Seal book. Unofficial because Ned's not in it, but it happens in his world, where zeppelins are the preferred method of air travel and Japan discovered the west coast of America. This is the true story of Tarzan--er, I mean, the Big Guy, narrated by his ape brother who insists that he's not a chimp, and he was not named Cheetah. This is an incredibly funny, yet touching story of what happens when they are discovered by the Woman and brought to live in civilization. The problem is, they're not very civilized themselves. The Big Guy turns into an alcoholic who likes breaking animals out of zoos, for example. And

then there's a great scene between him and a lion that you will never forget. An amazing book.

The Shayne-Train says

This was a highly entertaining, sometimes absurd, and surprisingly touching novella about the "truth" behind Tarzan.

As told by his adopted brother, an offshoot of humanity that is not quite ape and not quite human, this is the story of The Big Guy (the names Tarzan or Cheeta are not only never mentioned, but openly despised by the narrator).

There's lost-world stuff, steampunk stuff, a tad bit of alt-history stuff. But mainly, it's quite simply a quick and delightful read about the things civilization can add to your life, and what it can rip away.

Albert says

Title - The Ape Man's Brother

Author - Joe R. Lansdale

Story Summary -

In the dense jungle, a species of ape like creatures witness the crash of an airplane. Amongst the wreckage a baby lays crying. A female of the tribe takes the baby and raises him as her own. Together with her family the child grows in the wild. We know this story only it is not the one we were told. This is the true story of the child raised in the jungle among the tribe of apes.

"..Now the true events can be told, because other than myself, everyone involved with the sordid affair is now dead or missing, except that goddamn chimpanzee. He's got the constitution of a redwood tree. Then again it's not his fault. He was an actor. He was never actually involved, but the way he's treated, living in a retirement home for animals of the cinema, photos and articles popping up about him on his birthday every year, his fuzzy face covered in birthday cake, you'd think he'd at least have been President for a term. Me, I was the real thing, and my raggedy ass has been left to its own devices. So, I thank you for coming to me to get the real story, and I will tell it true without dropping a stitch on the real lowdown..."

Life for the ape man (The Big Guy) and his adopted brother goes along as normal as life can be. They hunt, they kill, they eat and they screw. Until one day they hear a sound unlike any they have ever heard in the jungle. It was the sound of singing. Human singing. And with this sound the whole world is changed. They have found The Woman.

"..The Delicate Thing struck me at that moment in time as ugly as The Big Guy. Reason for this, I'm sure, is obvious. My view of what was beautiful was based on my upbringing, my culture, and my own appearance. My idea then of attractive was fur-covered, no sores, both eyes worked, they had a vagina, and the fleas were minimal, though sometimes you could eat fleas while you mated, which I suppose for us could be classified as a cheap dinner date.

In time my views on attractiveness changed..."

The Big Guy falls hard for The Woman and is taken back, along with his brother, to America where they become instant celebrities. The Brother takes to civilization quickly, wearing clothes, trimming his body hair and even setting fashion trends. And also finding himself wanted by a variety of human females. None of which he said no too.

The Big Guy finds civilization more difficult to conform to. He and the woman try to settle down, making the occasional appearance and the Big Guy appearing in movies. But the jungle won't leave him alone and soon his actions lead to public humiliation and from there the Big Guy finds his solace in whiskey and other drink.

The Woman finds her solace in The Ape Man's Brother.

This sordid triangle of love and betrayal lead to unfathomable repercussions for all involved.

"..The Woman had seen him as well. She had tears in her eyes.

We waited.

He didn't come rushing down after us.

I heard a car start up behind the trees and race away.

I could tell by the sound of the engine that it was his Buick, the one he hardly drove and really shouldn't drive at all. The Big Guy could do many things, but he never really learned to drive too well. He was always being pulled out of ditches and having to pay other drivers for banging up their cars. But he had been smart enough to ease up behind that hill silently, get out and climb that tree. Now he didn't care. About anything was my guess.

You want to know what hurt me the most right then? That he didn't even have the courtesy to kill us..."

Together the Ape Man's Brother and The Woman must find a way to save The Big Guy and return them all to the way things had been.

Review -

Wow. Okay I have to say I really liked this book. It is like Tarzan on an E Channel Expose. Where are they now and all that. It is twisted and sordid and a whole lot of fun. Told through the voice and eyes of The Big Guy's brother, the ape, it is just a fun story.

Joe R. Lansdale rendition of the Tarzan story is going to go missed by a lot of readers and that is a shame. It should be read. It should be laughed out loud at and OMG'd at and whatever the hell the tale illicits from you because it will. You will have a reaction.

Like Christopher Moore's take on the life of Jesus in Lamb, this novel is satire on an Icon of Pop Culture.

This is the Tarzan you never knew but you should.

A really good and fun read.

Jason Bradley says

This is the story of Tarzan from the ape's POV. VERY stream of consciousness. The narrator dances around not actually naming Tarzan until that is seems to be the main subject.

John says

Interesting idea for a novella - the "real" tarzan story told from the viewpoint of the "cheetah" character. Lansdale keeps the history weird - America has a Japanese-America Coast and zeppelins are a viable form of long distance transportation. There are other sci fi elements as well. But the overall detournment is perfect, raunchy, and fun. Quick read which leads me back to the source material. Still not as good as some of the other short stories, but what can be, actually?

Gregor Xane says

I like Lansdale's gritty westerns, his crazy horror stories, his extreme noir, and his literary stuff. But, man, do I really love his wackier stories.

This is Lansdale writing in wacky mode. Like much of his crazy shit, it's a literary pastiche with lots of crude humor and outlandish situations.

Makes me smile just to think about it.

Joe R. Lansdale is a national treasure.

Craig Childs says

This is Lansdale's second take on the Tarzan myth. First, he was hired by Edgar Rice Burroughs' estate to complete the author's final novel posthumously, Tarzan: The Lost Adventure (1996), which I found to be a satisfying official conclusion to the original series.

Ape Man's Brother does not fit into the official Tarzan cannon but is instead a retelling from Nkima's point of view (or Chimpanzee-Mike, if you prefer the movie incarnation). The name Tarzan is never used since, as the story goes, that was not his real name. There is a lot of revisionist history, mostly played for laughs: Tarzan is a drunk, Jane falls for the ape, etc. A little bit of violence and bawdy humor. It's a rather fun story, not serious at all, and it has some minor connections to other Lansdale works.

Lansdale reuses his alternate universe where Japan settled the American West Coast, also referenced in the novel Zeppelins West as well as the short stories "Trains Not Taken" and "Letter from the South, Two Moons West of Nacogdoches".

Two other Lansdale works also reference Burroughs' fictional world of Pellucidar, which is part of the larger Tarzan mythology (from Tarzan at the Earth's Core and Tarzan: The Lost Adventure). Lansdale's short story "Way Down There" also features a journey to that fabled land that time forgot. His graphic novel Red Range (1999) is about a black cowboy who eventually travels to Pellucidar in a cliffhanger ending.

Joe Lansdale's website lists Ape Man's Brother as a "limited edition chapbook", although it received a hardback printing in 2013 from Subterranean Press. It is really a novella in length and may get included in a larger collection at some point. As of now, it is only in print in this kindle edition.

Thomas says

There were two strikes against me as I started reading this novella. First, I'm not too familiar with the Tarzan stories. I mean, yeah, I know who he is, but I haven't read any of the books, so my knowledge of the character and series is only superficial. Sure, I knew the story was going to be a riff on the Tarzan mythology (with a title like *The Ape Man's Brother*, how could I not know? I'm not an idiot), but I didn't realize it was going to be a more-or-less complete retelling of his origin.

Secondly, I haven't read Lansdale's *Ned the Seal* books. I wouldn't have expected this to be a strike against me, but apparently the story is set in that same universe, which explains the strange geography of the United States. At first, I thought Lansdale was channeling Philip K. Dick with how the US was split into a European-led eastern half and a Japanese-led western half, but maybe he still is. I haven't read those books to get a clear idea of why that's the case.

(For that matter, why set this novella in that universe at all? Or will that make more sense to me once I read those books?)

The story is, as I mentioned above, a retelling of Tarzan's origin, told through retrospection from the perspective of Cheetah (not his real name, he's quick to tell you). In true Lansdale fashion, it's a profane retelling, including the sexual exploits of both Tarzan ... er, The Big Guy, and Bill, our ape-like narrator. Bill tells us how The Big Guy arrived in their hidden wilderness, how they were later discovered, and how they went back to the US to learn to be civilized. It's less an adventure story than I would have expected for a Tarzan story, but it still winds up being a compelling character study.

Much of the book relies on description, which is fine by itself, but Lansdale is known for his snappy dialogue, which is mostly missing. There are still his unique turns of phrase, but without that dialogue, not only does it feel less like a Lansdale story, but it also distances the reader from all the characters but Bill. Without having a better idea of the characters outside of what they mean to Bill, we lack a better connection to the other characters. On the bright side, Lansdale is showing us that the ape-like narrator is more human than any of his human companions, so maybe that's intended.

I get the feeling I should have caught up on the Tarzan books before reading this novella, but what I did know seemed to be enough. The story is compelling and interesting enough, though Lansdale has done much better than this with his other stories. In the grand scheme of things, it's better than, say, *Prisoner 489*, but not as good (not nearly as good) as his Texas noir stories. It's lodged firmly in the middle, making this story only for the completionists.

Tim Schneider says

Lansdale goes into P. J. Farmer Wold-Newton mode with a novella covering the life of The Big Guy, The Woman and The Ape Man's Brother, a hominid who is definitely not named Cheetah. Lansdale clearly loves both Burroughs and Farmer and does a fine job of hitting the highlights of The Big Guy's life with a few Easter eggs for us ERB fans.

I'm led to understand that this takes place in the world of Ned the Seal. That explains the, what was to me, inexplicable alt-history elements. Not that they were terribly distracting, but they seemed more than a bit unnecessary without the knowledge of whence they came.

This is a spiffy little book. A must for Farmer fans and for Burroughs fans who don't take themselves too seriously.
