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## In the Valley of the Shiny Beasts

by Stanley Korn, FSPE

**Editor's Note:** This fiction story is an excerpt from Stanley Korn's book, *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Beyond*. The full book is available at Smashwords.com (<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/915825>), and the link is also available on our ISPE website by clicking on "Member Links" and then "Websites/Books."

For many seasons, the huge flying monsters had been seen in the sky. Though shaped like birds, they did not appear to flap their wings. Each one sounded like an army of giant bees.

The elders of the tribe discussed many possible explanations. Strange gods? Magical creatures? Monsters? Neither prayers nor magic incantations had any effect on the flying monsters. Neither spears nor stones could reach them.

One day, one of the monsters landed near the village. Everyone was frightened and fled into the jungle. Everyone, that is, but Lomi, a young man who was more curious than scared. As he approached the huge creature, its belly suddenly opened, and live people, dressed in strange garments, walked out! Lomi's astonishment and curiosity overcame his fear, and he approached in a friendly manner. These were obviously men but dressed in odd, brightly colored skins. He wondered what kind of animals such skins could have come from.

The strangers motioned Lomi to follow them toward the huge creature. They did not appear to be hostile. Should he follow them or flee? What a story this would make to dazzle the elders with! But who would believe him?

Lomi slowly followed the strangers as they entered into the belly of the creature. He found himself in a brightly lit room, though he could see neither the sun nor a fire. He had never seen anything like this before and wondered how he could describe it later.

The strangers talked among themselves in an unfamiliar tongue. They sat down and motioned Lomi to do likewise, which he did. After a short time, Lomi was thrust back in his seat by an invisible force, accompanied by a loud rumbling sound. He was shaken and grew panicky, but the strangers made reassuring signs to him. Then, as the rumbling and the invisible force gradually subsided, they directed his attention to a circular opening in the wall. As Lomi attempted to climb out, thinking that they wanted him to leave, he was stopped by an invisible barrier.

As Lomi looked out through the invisible barrier, he saw patterns of green and brown moving below him. As he continued to look, he recognized trees, which appeared even smaller than they did when he stood on the highest hill in his village. Then he realized that he was inside the creature flying high in the sky!

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Sometime later, when Lomi was led out of the flying creature, the strangers took him to a huge hut. They took away his animal skin clothing, bathed him, and dressed him like one of them. The material was varied in color, soft, but not furry, and of a very fine texture.

His body was examined from head to toe, and he was jabbed in the arm with something sharp. Later, they brought him smooth squares with colored markings on them and watched as he toyed with them.

By now, Lomi thought, his people must have given him up for dead, taken away by the flying creature. He wondered if he could ever get back. At least he must try.

While walking with two of the strangers outside the huge hut, Lomi made his escape by running into crowds of people—so many people—until he could no longer see his former captors behind him.

Lomi observed his strange surroundings. He was walking along what appeared to be the edge of a riverbed. The surface was hard, like stone, and very smooth. Close to the riverbed's edge was a strip along which limbless trees appeared at regular intervals. Strung between the tops of those trees were ropes.

What fascinated Lomi most, though, were the strange beasts that ran along the middle of the riverbed. They were about the size of large lions, though some were much higher and longer, and had shiny, brightly colored skins of varied colors. They had large, widely spaced eyes that gleamed like the eyes of a tiger at night. The beasts had short round legs that did not move as they ran, but turned!

Lomi noticed that many of the creatures were sleeping along the sides of the riverbed. Since they appeared tame—after all, the people walked among them—he approached one cautiously, lest he disturb it, and touched it. The hide was smooth and hard as polished stone and just as cold. Could these beasts really be alive?

Lomi saw one of the creatures stop. An opening appeared in its side and a person emerged. Perhaps, like the big flying monster that he had been transported in, these beasts were trained to carry people inside them!

As Lomi approached a shiny beast in motion, it emitted a loud honking sound, obviously annoyed. Lomi quickly retreated to the stone strip along which the people were walking.

Lomi continued walking until he came to another riverbed that ran across the path of the one he was on. He observed that the shiny beasts on one of the riverbeds would stop, while those on the other riverbed would run across the intersection of the two riverbeds. After a while, the beasts and the people on the other path would make the crossing while those on the first path would wait.

Lomi searched to find the cause of this strange behavior. Whatever it was, it not only made the shiny beasts stop and go but the people as well. Then he found it!

Perched on the rope strung between two limbless trees, above the place where the paths crossed, hung a strange creature with luminous eyes. Perhaps, he thought, the rope-like material was produced by this creature, as a spider spins a web.

The luminous eyes of the creature, one above the other, would alternately turn different colors. Lomi noticed that when the eye turned red, both the people and the shiny beasts nearby would be frozen in their tracks, causing those behind them to stop as well. What power this creature had!

Lomi kept his distance, lest he be immobilized when the creature turned its powerful red eye toward him. He had heard stories about creatures with the power to freeze a man with a mere look. Now he was actually face-to-face with one!

In the distance, Lomi saw men running toward him. He had to move fast to escape from them. Then an idea struck him. If he could capture the creature with the powerful luminous eyes, he could freeze his pursuers in their tracks with its terrible red eye. And then he could try to find his way home.

Think of the possibilities! If he could tame this creature, he could use its power to freeze game for hunting. He could immobilize his tribe's enemies.

Lomi quickly climbed one of the limbless trees supporting the rope from which the luminous-eyed creature was suspended, carefully avoiding the red eye. Once he reached the top, Lomi tried to avoid the effects of the red eye by hiding behind the limbless tree. He waited, watching the shiny beasts below in order to gauge when the red eye was no longer facing in his direction. In the distance, he heard a wailing sound, like a jackal's cry, but louder and more sustained.

When the red eye blinked off, Lomi quickly clambered across the rope toward the creature. He would have to get directly above it before the red eye was once again facing him.


The wailing grew louder, and Lomi could see a huge red shiny beast approach, with its own powerful blinking red eye. He crouched to avoid being immobilized by it. The other shiny beasts, alerted by the noise, quickly cleared a path for this frightful creature.

Lomi grabbed the luminous-eyed creature. It was cold, hard, and immobile. He aimed the red eye directly at the huge red beast below. But it had no effect! How powerful this red beast must be!

The speeding red beast stopped directly under him. He could see that there were men riding on it. The beast extended a long cross-hatched pole in his direction, on which two men were climbing toward him. There was no escape now.

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Back at the research center, there was relief that the aborigine had been found. However, one thing puzzled the researchers. They could understand his climbing the pole to elude capture, but what did he expect to do with the traffic light? Who knows what strange things go on in the mind of an aborigine? An answer would have to wait until communication was established. Ω



“There is nothing insignificant  
in the world.  
It all depends on the point of view.”  
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe