

GOLD
KEY

BORIS KARLOFF

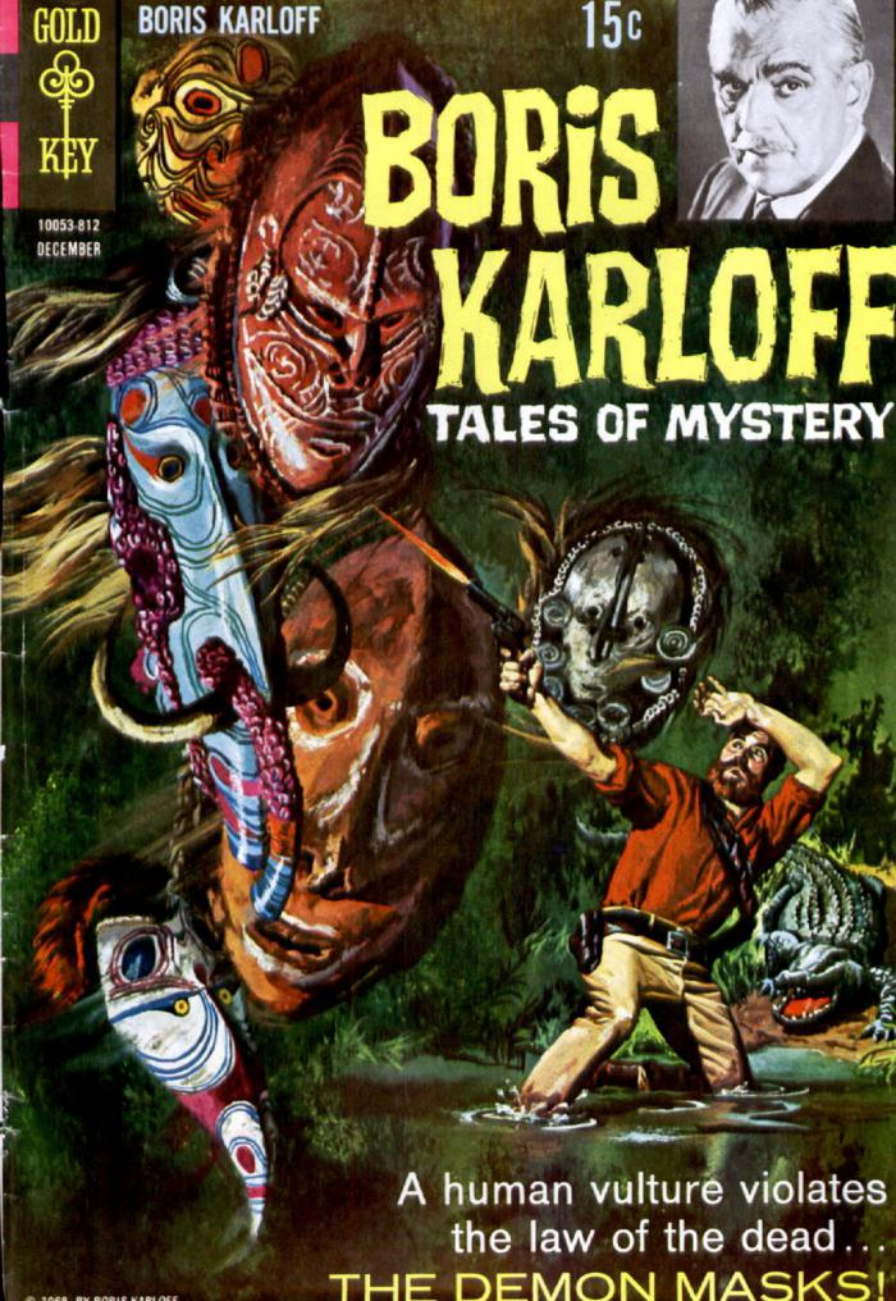
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10053-812
DECEMBER

BORIS KARLOFF

TALES OF MYSTERY



A human vulture violates
the law of the dead...

THE DEMON MASKS!

BORIS
KARLOFF

Tales of Mystery

The GUARDIANS

MEET WALT BYRON, NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST, WHO HOPES TO FIND A HUMAN INTEREST YARN HERE ON SKID ROW! BUT THE STORY HE UNCOVERES WILL LEAD HIM STRAIGHT INTO THE EERIE MISTS OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE!

DOCTORS, LAWYERS, ACCOUNTANTS!
WHO KNOWS WHAT THESE DRIFTERS
WERE BEFORE THEY ENDED UP HERE?

ONE WAY



THAT DERELICT! HE'S STEPPING IN
FRONT OF A TRUCK!



GET BACK,
YOU IDIOT!





SOON...

I'M A FOOL TO SNEAK AFTER HIM! LIKE THIS! THAT HOBO COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE WINSTON!



IT'S GOT TO BE WINSTON! THE POOR DEVIL MUST BE SUFFERING FROM AMNESIA ...BUT SOME CORNER OF HIS BRAIN IS STILL EXPERIMENTING WITH ANTI-GRAVITY AND SPACECRAFT!



BUT MOMENTS LATER, AS THE DOOR IS LEFT AJAR...

HE'S PLAYING...WITH TOY ROCKETS AND SPACE VEHICLES! PLAYING LIKE A CHILD!



MOMENTS LATER, AT THE HOTEL DESK...

LISTEN! THAT MAN IN ROOM 213! DID YOU KNOW HE'S THE FAMOUS SCIENTIST...NORBERT WINSTON?

EH? WHAT'S THAT, SONNY? ONLY MAN IN 213 IS HENRY BARNES!



BARNES HAS BEEN LIVING HERE EVER SINCE THEY RELEASED HIM FROM A MENTAL HOSPITAL FIVE YEARS BACK! THERE'S HIS NAME IN THE REGISTER!

ER... I GUESS I'VE MADE A MISTAKE!



IMAGINE THAT OLD BUM BEING A SPACE SCIENTIST! HA, HA!

SORRY! I WAS SO SURE I WAS RIGHT! ESPECIALLY AFTER I SAW HIM PLAYING WITH THOSE ROCKET TOYS!



BUT AS THE JOURNALIST LEAVES...

YOU'RE MAKING TROUBLE FOR ME AGAIN, HENRY! I'VE WARNED YOU NOT TO PLAY WITH THOSE TOYS!

PLEASE... I DIDN'T MEAN IT!



(INSTANTS LATER, A WEIRD BEAM LANCES OUT, AND...

SORRY! BUT WE CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE CHANCES!

NO! NO! DON'T DO THAT TO MY TOYS!



MEANWHILE, OUT ON THE STREET...

DON'T TAKE MY SPACE-SHIPS AWAY! GIVE THEM BACK, PLEASE!

THAT VOICE! IT'S THE OLD TRAMP WHO CALLS HIMSELF BARNES! WHY ARE THEY TAKING THOSE ROCKETS FROM HIM, UNLESS...



JUST THEN BARNES IS FORGOTTEN...

WHAT'S THIS... **ANOTHER** FACE I RECOGNIZE! YES! THAT FLOATER IS A DEAD RINGER FOR PROF. RAMADI, THE MATHEMATICAL GENIUS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA!



ODD! RAMADI WAS ON HIS WAY TO A CYBERNETIC CONFERENCE TO DEMONSTRATE AN ADVANCED COMPUTER HE'D INVENTED... WHEN HE SUPPOSEDLY COMMITTED SUICIDE BY LEAPING OFF A SHIP!



BUT WHEN THE VAGRANT IS QUESTIONED...

RAMADI? I DO NOT
KNOW THE NAME, SIR!!
...PLEASE, COULD
YOU GIVE ME A DIME
FOR A CUP OF COFFEE?

YEAH, SURE!

THAT HAND...IT'S
THE TIP-OFF!

I READ A BIOGRAPHY OF RAMADI ONCE!
HE WAS BORN WITH FOUR FINGERS ON
HIS RIGHT HAND! THAT BEGGAR HAS
FOUR FINGERS, TOO!

RAMADI... HE'S GOING INTO
THAT FLOPHOUSE... AND WAIT!
WHO'S THAT HOBO FOLLOWING
HIM? I COULD SWEAR I'VE
SEEN **HIM** BEFORE!

A.A.
MEETING
TONITE

8:30

OF COURSE! DR. STROLLER, THE NOBEL
PRIZE WINNER IN BIOCHEMISTRY! HE WAS
ABOUT TO ANNOUNCE A BREAKTHROUGH
IN THE ARTIFICIAL CREATION OF LIFE WHEN
HE VANISHED IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLE!

NOW THERE HE
IS... LIKE A BLANK-
EYED ZOMBIE,
FOLLOWING THE
OTHERS INTO
THAT HOTEL!
OR MAYBE I'M
SEEING THINGS!

WINSTON... RAMADI... STROLLER... ALL SUFFERING FROM AMNESIA! ALL LIVING HERE ON SKID ROW! THINGS LIKE THAT JUST DON'T HAPPEN! I MUST BE LOSING MY GRIP!



NO! I'M A REPORTER! TRAINED TO REMEMBER FACES, FACTS! THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON AND I'M GOING TO GET TO BOTTOM OF IT!

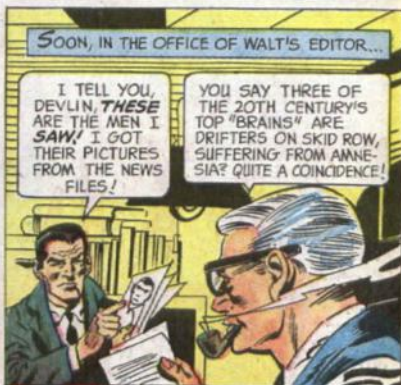
TAXI!



SOON, IN THE OFFICE OF WALT'S EDITOR...

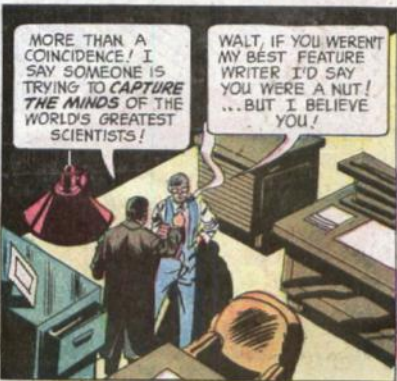
I TELL YOU, DEVLIN, **THESE** ARE THE MEN I **SAW!** I GOT THEIR PICTURES FROM THE NEWS FILES!

YOU SAY THREE OF THE 20TH CENTURY'S TOP "BRAINS" ARE DRIFTERS ON SKID ROW, SUFFERING FROM AMNESIA? QUITE A COINCIDENCE!



MORE THAN A COINCIDENCE! I SAY SOMEONE IS TRYING TO **CAPTURE THE MINDS** OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SCIENTISTS!

WALT, IF YOU WEREN'T MY BEST FEATURE WRITER I'D SAY YOU WERE A NUT! ...BUT I BELIEVE YOU!



SOON, THE LOCAL PRECINCT GETS A CALL...

SO I'D LIKE TO HAVE THAT FLOPHOUSE CHECKED OUT, CAPTAIN! COULD I HAVE A POLICE ESCORT?

I'LL GIVE YOU A SQUAD CAR, DEVLIN, BUT ONLY BECAUSE YOU'VE DONE A FEW FAVORS FOR ME!







FACE IT, GENTLEMEN!
THIS POOR CHARACTER
HAS BEEN HAVING PIPE-
DREAMS! BETTER GET
HIM TO A DOCTOR!

YOU COULD
BE RIGHT,
PAL!



HOW DID
HE DO IT?
I CAN'T UNDER-
STAND WHAT
HAPPENED?

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT
HAPPENED! YOU'VE MADE
ME THE LAUGHING-STOCK
OF THE POLICE FORCE!
YOU'RE LUCKY I DON'T
SHIP YOU OUT TO THE
SQUIRREL FARM!



LATER, AT DEVLIN'S HOME...

WALT, IT WAS PROBABLY
ALL YOUR IMAGINATION!
MAYBE YOU'VE BEEN
WORKING TOO HARD!
WHY NOT TAKE A FEW
DAYS OFF?

YOU, TOO?
OKAY, DEVLIN!
MAYBE I
HAVE BEEN
SEEING THINGS!



BUT THAT NIGHT, IN HIS ROOM...

NO, NO, NO! IT WASN'T MY IMAGINATION!
I SAW THEM... WINSTON, RAMADI AND
STROLLER! NO ONE'S GOING TO CON-
VINCE ME OTHERWISE!



I'M GOING BACK THERE...
I'VE GOT TO PROVE THAT
I'M NOT GOING OUT OF
MY MIND!



WHAT'S THIS
ALL ABOUT?
WHO ARE
YOU?

CALL ME *THE GUARDIAN*!
I WAS SENT HERE FROM
...ELSEWHERE... TO SEE
THAT YOUR EARTH SCIENCE
DOES NOT ADVANCE FASTER
THAN THE LOW LEVEL OF
YOUR CIVILIZATION CAN
TOLERATE!



THESE THREE WERE DABBLING WITH
IDEAS MUCH TOO ADVANCED FOR YOUR
WORLD... SO WE HAD TO READJUST THEIR
BRAIN CIRCUITS!

WINSTON
AND THE
OTHERS!



I DON'T CARE WHO YOU
ARE OR WHERE YOU'RE
FROM! YOU CAN'T GET
AWAY WITH THIS, YOU
LITTLE CREEP! WHEN I
GET OUT OF HERE...

AH, YES!
WE MUST
PREPARE
FOR THAT
EVENTUALITY!



AS I MENTIONED,
THIS IS A MOST
USEFUL LITTLE GADGET!

MY HEAD!
MY MIND!
WHAT'S
HAPPENING?



ONLY A MOMENT—THAT'S ALL IT TAKES
TO ERASE THE MEMORY CELLS AND
IMPLANT A NEW PERSONALITY!



MOMENTS LATER...

THERE! IT'S
FINISHED! WE
WON'T NEED THE
FORCE FIELD ANY
LONGER! WAIT
THERE WHILE I
CONTACT MY
SUPERIORS!



AND AS CONTACT IS MADE A FANTASTIC
CHANGE COMES OVER THE GUARDIAN'S
FEATURES...

GUARDIAN OF 3RD
PLANET, SOLAR SYSTEM
304, REPORTING... EMER-
GENCY IS ENDED! ALL
PROBLEMS SOLVED!

EXCELLENT! CON-
TINUE YOUR
MISSION AS
BEFORE!



DAYS LATER, AN OUTSIDER VISITS
SKID ROW...

NOT A WORD FROM WALT IN A WEEK!
HE CAN'T SIT STILL THAT LONG! MAYBE
HE HASN'T GIVEN UP ON THIS STORY!



THERE HE IS NOW! JUST AS I THOUGHT,
HE'S OBSESSED ABOUT THOSE MISSING
SCIENTISTS! HE'S EVEN IN DISGUISE!

WALT! WALT
BYRON!



