

The RETURN of TARZAN



By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

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SYNOPSIS

Tarzan, ape-man, who lived in the African jungle twenty years, is returning to Europe after renouncing his birthright as Lord Greystoke for the sake of Jane Porter, engaged to his cousin, William Clayton. He assists Count de Coude and the countess against their enemy, Nikolaus Rokoff.

In Paris D'Arnot, Tarzan's friend, reproves him for giving up his position in the world. Tarzan asserts his preference for jungle life.

Rokoff tries to have Tarzan assassinated, but the ape-man's enormous strength and agility save him. D'Arnot receives a letter from Clayton. The latter and Jane are to be married.

Rokoff plots against the Countess de Coude and Tarzan. He deceives the latter to the countess' rooms at night by a false message and then notifies the count. Rokoff is the countess' brother.

De Coude, infuriated when he finds Tarzan and the countess together, challenges Tarzan to a duel. Tarzan forces Rokoff to sign a confession of his plot.

In the duel Tarzan refuses to fire. He tells De Coude of the plot, and is reconciled to him. Tarzan is employed by the French ministry to watch Lieutenant Germain, suspected of being a spy, in Algeria. At Sidi Aissa Tarzan makes friends with Sheikh Kadour ben Saden. A dancing girl shows him a way of escape when he and Abdul, his servant, are attacked in a dance hall by natives, who are instigated by two foreigners.

The girl is the stolen daughter of Saden and is restored by Tarzan. Tarzan and Abdul fight off a desert attack. At Bou Saada Tarzan learns in a letter from D'Arnot of Jane's postponement of her marriage. Rokoff, paid by the countess, has left France.

(Continued from Yesterday.)

Just before dusk several men approached the tent where he lay and entered it. All were in Arab dress, but presently one of the number advanced to Tarzan's side, and as he let the folds of cloth that had hidden the lower half of his face fall away the ape-man saw the malevolent features of Nikolaus Rokoff. There was a nasty smile on the bearded lips.

"Ah, M. Tarzan," he said, "this is indeed a pleasure. But why do you not arise and greet your guest?"



He kicked Tarzan heavily in the Side. Then, with an ugly oath, "Get up, you dog!" And, drawing back his booted foot, he kicked Tarzan heavily in the side. "And here is another and another and another," he continued as he kicked Tarzan about the face and side, "one for each of the injuries you have done me."

The ape-man made no reply. He did not even deign to look upon the Russian again after the first glance of recognition. Finally the sheik, who had been standing a mute and frowning witness of the cowardly attack, intervened.

"Stop!" he commanded. "Kill him if you will, but I will see no brave man subjected to such indignities in my presence. I have half a mind to turn him loose that I may see how long you would kick him then."

This threat put a sudden end to Rokoff's brutality, for he had no craving to see Tarzan loosed from his bonds while he was within reach of those powerful hands.

"Very well," he replied to the Arab. "I shall kill him presently."

"Not within the precincts of my dour," returned the sheik. "When he leaves here he leaves alive. What you do with him in the desert is none of my concern, but I shall not have the blood of a Frenchman on the hands of my tribe on account of another man's quarrel. They would send soldiers here and kill many of my people and burn our tents and drive away our flocks."

"As you say," growled Rokoff. "I'll take him out into the desert before the dawn and dispatch him."

"You will take him a day's ride from my country," said the sheik firmly, "and some of my children shall follow you to see that you do not disobey me. Otherwise there may be two dead Frenchmen in the desert."

Rokoff shrugged. "Then I shall have to wait until tomorrow. It is already dark."

"As you will," said the sheik. "But in an hour after dawn I will see to it that you are dead."

gone from my dour. I have little liking for unbelievers and none at all for a coward."

Rokoff would have made some kind of retort, but he checked himself, for he realized that it would require but little excuse for the old man to turn upon him. Together they left the tent. At the door Rokoff could not resist the temptation to turn and fling a parting taunt at Tarzan.

"Sleep well, monsieur," he said, "and do not forget to pray well, for when you die tomorrow it will be in such agony that you will be unable to pray for blaspheming."

No one had bothered to bring Tarzan either food or water since noon, and consequently he suffered considerably from thirst. He wondered if it would be worth while to ask his guard for water, but, after making two or three requests without receiving any response, he decided that it would not.

Far up in the mountains he heard a lion roar. How much safer one was, he soliloquized, in the haunts of wild beasts than in the haunts of men.

Never in all his jungle life had he been more relentlessly tracked down than in the past few months of his experience among civilized men. Never had he been any nearer death.

Again the lion roared. It sounded a little nearer. Tarzan felt the old, wild impulse to reply with the challenge of his kind. His kind? He had almost forgotten that he was a man and not an ape. He tugged at his bonds. God, if he could but get them near those strong teeth of his! He felt a wild wave of madness sweep over him as his efforts to regain his liberty met with failure.

Numa was roaring almost continually now. It was quite evident that he was coming down into the desert to hunt. It was the roar of a hungry lion. Tarzan envied him, for he was free. No one would tie him with ropes and slaughter him like a sheep. It was that which galled the ape-man. He did not fear to die, no—it was the humiliation of defeat before death, without even a chance to battle for his life.

It must be near midnight, thought Tarzan. He had several hours to live. Possibly he would yet find a way to take Rokoff with him on the long journey. He could hear the savage lord of the desert quite close by now. Possibly he sought his meat from among the penned animals within the dour.

For a long time silence reigned, then Tarzan's trained ears caught the sound of a stealthily moving body. It came from the side of the tent nearest the mountains—the back. Nearer and nearer it came. He waited, listening intently, for it to pass. For a time there was silence without, such a terrible silence that Tarzan was surprised that he did not hear the breathing of the animal he felt sure must be crouching close to the back wall of his tent.

There! It is moving again. Closer it creeps. Tarzan turns his head in the direction of the sound. The inside of the tent is black as ink. Slowly the back rises from the ground, forced up by the head and shoulders of a body that looks all black in the blackness. Beyond is a faint glimpse of the dimly moonlighted desert.

A grim smile plays about Tarzan's lips. At least Rokoff will be cheated. How mad he will be! And death will be more merciful than he could have hoped for at the hands of the Russian.

Now the back of the tent drops into place and all is darkness again—whatever it is inside the tent with him. He hears it creeping close to him—now it is beside him. He closes his eyes and waits for the mighty paw. Upon his upturned face falls the gentle touch of a soft hand groping in the dark, and then a girl's voice in a scarcely audible whisper pronounces his name.

"Yes, it is I," he whispers in reply. "But in the name of heaven who are you?"

"The Ouled-Nail of Sidi Aissa," came the answer. While she spoke Tarzan could feel her working about his bonds. Occasionally the cold steel of a knife touched his flesh. A moment later he was free.

"Come!" she whispered. On hands and knees he followed her out of the tent by the way she had come. She continued crawling thus flat to the ground until she reached a little patch of shrub. There she halted until he gained her side. For a moment he looked at her before he spoke.

"I cannot understand," he said at last. "Why are you here? How did you know that I was a prisoner in that tent? How does it happen that it is you who have saved me?"

She smiled. "I have come a long way tonight," she said, "and we have a long way to go before we shall be out of danger. Come; I shall tell you all about it as we go."

CHAPTER XI.

Like a Gladiator of Old. TOGETHER they rose and set off across the desert in the direction of the mountains.

"I was not quite sure that I should ever reach you," she said at last. "El adra is almost tonight, and after I left the house I think he wind of me and was following. I was terrified to see the great frame of the lion."

"What a brave girl," he said. "And you ran all that risk for a stranger—an alien, an unbeliever?"

She drew herself up very proudly. "I am the daughter of the Sheikh Kadour ben Saden," she answered. "I would not risk my life to save that of the man who saved mine while he yet thought that I was but a common Ouled-Nail."

"Nevertheless," he insisted, "you are a very brave girl. But how did you know that I was a prisoner back there?"

"Achmet din Taleb, who is my cousin on my father's side, was visiting some friends who belong to the tribe that captured you. He was at the dour when you were brought in. When he reached home he was telling us about the big Frenchman who had been captured by Ali ben Ahmed for another Frenchman who wished to kill him. From the description I knew that it must be you. My father was away, I tried to persuade some of the men to come and save you, but they would not do it, saying, 'Let the unbelievers kill one another if they wish. It is none of our affair, and if we go and interfere with Ali ben Ahmed's plans we shall only stir up a fight with our own people.'"

"So when it was dark I came alone, riding one horse and leading another for you. They are tethered not far from here. By morning we shall be within my father's dour. He should be there himself by now—then let them come and try to take Kadour ben Saden's friend."

For a few moments they walked on in silence.

"We should be near the horses," she said. "It is strange that I do not see them here."

Then a moment later she stopped, with a little cry of consternation.

"They are gone!" she exclaimed. "It is here that I tethered them!"

Tarzan stooped to examine the ground. He found that a large shrub had been torn up by the roots. There he found something else. There was a wry smile on his face as he rose and turned toward the girl.

"El adra has been here. From the signs, though, I rather think that his prey escaped him. With a little start they would be safe enough from him in the open."

There was nothing to do but continue on foot. The way led them across a low spur of the mountains, but the girl knew the trail as well as she did her mother's face. They walked in easy, swinging strides, Tarzan keeping a hand's breadth behind the girl's shoulders that she might set the pace and thus be less fatigued. As they walked they talked, occasionally stopping to listen for sounds of pursuit.

It was a beautiful moonlit night. The air was crisp and invigorating. Behind them lay the interminable vista of the desert, dotted here and there with an occasional oasis. The date palms of the little fertile spot they had just left and the circle of goat-skin tents stood out in sharp relief against the yellow sand—a phantom paradise upon a phantom sea. Before them rose the grim and silent mountains. Tarzan's blood leaped in his veins. This was life! He looked down upon the girl beside him—a daughter of a dead world with a son of the jungle. He smiled at the thought. He wished that he had had a sister and that she had been like this girl. What a bully chum she would have been!

They had entered the mountains now and were progressing more slowly, for the trail was steeper and very rocky.

For a few minutes they had been silent. The girl was wondering if they would reach her father's dour before the pursuit had overtaken them. Tarzan was wishing that they might walk on thus forever. If the girl were only a man they might. He longed for a friend who loved the same wild life that he loved. He had learned to crave companionship, but it was his misfortune that most of the men he knew preferred immaculate linen and their clubs to nakedness and the jungle. It was, of course, difficult to understand, yet it was very evident that they did.

The two had just turned a projecting rock around which the trail ran when they were brought to a sudden stop. There before them, directly in the middle of the path, stood Numa, el adra, the black lion. His green eyes looked very wicked, and he bared his teeth and lashed his bay black sides with his angry tail. Then he roared—the fearsome, terror inspiring roar of the hungry lion which is also angry.

"Your knife," said Tarzan to the girl, extending his hand. She slipped the hilt of the weapon into his waiting palm. As his fingers closed upon it he drew her back and pushed her behind him. "Walk back to the desert as rapidly as you can. If you hear me call you will know that all is well and you may return."

"It is useless," she replied resignedly. "This is the end."

"Do as I tell you," he commanded. "Quickly! He is about to charge!" The girl dropped back a few paces, where she stood watching for the terrible sight that she knew she should soon witness.

The lion was advancing slowly toward Tarzan, his nose to the ground, like a challenging bull, his tail extended now, and quivering as though with intense excitement.

The ape-man stood, half crouching, the long Arab knife glistening in the moonlight. Behind him the tense figure of the girl, motionless as a carved statue. She leaned slightly forward, her lips parted, her eyes wide. Her only conscious thought was wonder at the bravery of the man who dared face with a puny knife the lord with the large head. A man of her own blood would have knelt in prayer and gone down beneath those awful fangs without resistance. In either case the result would be the same—it was inevitable, but she could not repress a thrill of admiration as her eyes rested upon the heroic figure before her. Not a tremor in the whole great frame—his

attitude as menacing and as defiant as that of el adra himself.

The lion was quite close to him now—but a few paces intervened—he crouched and then, with a deafening roar, he sprang.

As Numa, el adra, launched himself with widespread paws and bared fangs he looked to find this puny man as easy prey as the score who had gone down beneath him in the past. To him man was a clumsy, slow moving, defenseless creature—he had little respect for him.

But this time he found that he was pitted against a creature as agile and as quick as himself. When his mighty frame struck the spot where the man had been he was no longer there.

The watching girl was transfixed by astonishment at the ease with which the crouching man eluded the great paws. And now, O Allah! He had rushed in behind el adra's shoulder even before the beast could turn and had grasped him by the mane. The lion reared upon his hind legs like a horse—Tarzan had known that he would do this, and he was ready. A giant arm encircled the black maned throat and once, twice, a dozen times a sharp blade darted in and out of the bay black side behind the left shoulder.

Frantic were the leaps of Numa; awful his roars of rage and pain. But the giant upon his back could not be dislodged or brought within reach of fangs or talons in the brief interval of life that remained to the lord with the large head. He was quite dead when Tarzan of the Apes released his hold and arose. Then the daughter of the desert witnessed a thing that terrified her even more than had the presence of el adra. The man placed a foot upon the carcass of his kill and, with his handsome face raised toward the full moon, gave voice to the most frightful cry that ever smote upon her ears.

With a little cry of fear she shrank away from him. She thought that the fearful strain of the encounter had driven him mad. As the last note of that fendish challenge died out in the dimming echoes of the distance the man dropped his eyes until they rested upon the girl.

Instantly his face was lighted by the kindly smile that was ample assurance of his sanity, and the girl breathed freely once again, smiling in response.

"What manner of man are you?" she asked. "The thing you have done is unheard of. Even now I cannot be-

lieve that it is possible for a lone man, armed only with a knife, to have fought hand to hand with el adra and conquered him, unscathed—to have conquered him at all. And that cry—it was 'not human.' Why did you do that?"

Tarzan flushed. "It is because I forget," he said, "sometimes that I am a civilized man. When I kill it must be that I am another creature." He did not try to explain further, for it always seemed to him that a woman must look with loathing upon one who was yet so nearly a beast. Together they continued their journey. The sun was an hour high when they came out into the desert again beyond the mountains. Beside a little rivulet they found the girl's horses grazing. They had come this far on their way home and, with the cause of their fear no longer present, had stopped to feed. With little trouble Tarzan and the girl caught them and, mounting, rode out into the desert toward the dour of Sheikh Kadour ben Saden.

No sign of pursuit developed, and they came in safety about 9 o'clock to their destination. The sheik had but just returned. He was frantic with grief at the absence of his daughter, whom he thought had been again abducted by the marauders. With fifty men he was already mounted to go in search of her when the two rode into the dour.

His joy at the safe return of his daughter was only equalled by his gratitude to Tarzan for bringing her safely to him through the dangers of the night, and his thankfulness that she had been in time to save the man who had once saved her.

No honor that Kadour ben Saden could heap upon the ape-man in acknowledgment of his esteem and friendship was neglected. When the girl had recited the story of the slaying of el adra Tarzan was surrounded by a mob of worshiping Arabs. It was a sure road to their admiration and respect.

(To Be Continued.)

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