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CHAPTER V.

The Sheik's Daughter.

Two Swedes, Carl Janssen and Sven Malbinn, after conducting several mysterious expeditions far to the south of the Sahara, turned their attention to the more profitable business of ivory poaching.

In a great district they were already known for their relentless cruelty and their greed for ivory. The natives feared and hated them. The European governments in whose possessions they worked had long sought them; but, working their way slowly out of the north, they had learned many things in the no man's land south of the Sahara, which gave them immunity from capture through easy avenues of escape that were unknown to those who pursued them.

Their raids were sudden and swift. They seized ivory and retreated into the trackless wastes of the north before the guardians of the territory they raped could be made aware of their presence. Relentlessly they slaughtered elephants themselves as well as stealing ivory from the natives. Their following consisted of a hundred renegade Arabs and negro slaves, a fierce band of cutthroats.

Remember them, Carl Janssen and Sven Malbinn, yellow bearded Swedish giants, for you shall meet them later.

In the heart of the jungle, hidden away upon the banks of a small un-

explored tributary of a large river that empties into the Atlantic not so far from the equator, lay a small heavily palisaded village. Twenty palm thatched, beehive huts sheltered its black population, while half a dozen goatskin tents in the center of the clearing housed the score of Arabs who found shelter here, while by trading and raiding they collected the cargoes which their ships of the desert bore northward twice each year to the market at Timbuktu.

Playing before one of the Arab tents was a little girl of ten, a black haired, black eyed little girl, who with her nut brown skin and graceful carriage looked every inch a daughter of the desert. Her little fingers were busily engaged in fashioning a skirt of grasses for a much disheveled doll which a kindly disposed slave had made for her a year or two before.

The head of the doll was rudely chipped from ivory, while the body was a rat skin stuffed with grass. The arms and legs were bits of wood, perforated at one end and sewn to the rat skin torso.

The doll was quite hideous and altogether disreputable and soiled, but Meriem thought it the most beautiful and adorable thing in the whole world, which is not so strange in view of the fact that it was the only object within that world upon which she could bestow her confidences and her love.

Every one else with whom Meriem came in contact was, almost without exception, either indifferent to her or cruel. There was the old black hag who looked after her, for example, Mabunu, toothless, filthy and ill tempered.

She lost no opportunity to cuff the little girl or even inflict minor tortures upon her. And there was the sheik, her father. She feared him more than she did Mabunu. He often scolded her for nothing, quite habitually terminating his tirades by cruelly beating her until her little body was black and blue.

Little Meriem could scarce recall any other existence than that of the stern cruelty of the sheik and Mabunu. Dimly in the back of her childish memory there lurked a blurred recollection of a gentle mother. But Meriem was not sure but that even this was a dream picture induced by her own desire for the caresses she never received.

Suddenly there arose sounds of altercation beyond the village gates. Meriem listened. With the curiosity of childhood she would have liked to run down there and learn what it was that caused the men to talk so loudly. Others of the villagers were already trooping in the direction of the noise.

But Meriem did not dare. The sheik would be there, doubtless, and if he saw her it would be but another opportunity to abuse her, so Meriem lay still and listened.

Presently she heard the crowd moving up the street toward the sheik's tent. Cautiously she stuck her head around the edge of the tent. She could not resist the temptation, for the sameness of the village life was monotonous and she craved diversion.

What she saw was two strangers—white men. They were alone, but as they approached she learned from the talk of the natives that surrounded them that they possessed a considerable following that was camped outside the village.

They were coming to palaver with the sheik.

The old Arab met them at the entrance to his tent. His eyes narrowed

wickedly when they had appraised the newcomers. They stopped before him, exchanging greetings. They had come to trade for ivory, they said.

The sheik grunted. He had no ivory. Meriem gasped. She knew that in a nearby hut the great tusks were piled almost to the roof. She poked her head farther forward to get a better view of the strangers. How white their skins! How yellow their great beards!

Suddenly one of them turned his eyes in her direction. She tried to dodge back out of sight, for she feared all men, but he saw her. Meriem saw the look of almost shocked surprise that crossed his face. The sheik saw it too and guessed the cause of it.

"I have no ivory," he repeated. "I do not wish to trade. Go away. Go now!"

He stepped from his tent and almost pushed the strangers about in the direction of the gates. They demurred, and then the sheik threatened. It would have been suicide to have disobeyed, so the two men turned and left the village, making their way immediately to their own camp.

The sheik returned to his tent, but he did not enter it. Instead he walked to the side where little Meriem lay close to the goatskin wall, very frightened. The sheik stooped and clutched her by the arm. Viciously he jerked her to her feet, dragged her to the en-

trance of the tent and shoved her within. Following her, he seized her again, bearing her ruthlessly.

"Stay within!" he growled. "Never let the strangers see your face. Next time you show yourself to strangers I shall kill you!"

In the camp of the strangers one was speaking rapidly to the other.

"There is no doubt of it, Malbinn," he was saying, "not the slightest, but why the old scoundrel hasn't claimed the reward long since is what puzzles me."

"There are some things dearer to an Arab, Janssen, than money," returned the first speaker. "Revenge is one of them."

"Anyhow, it will not harm to try the power of gold," replied Janssen.

Malbinn shrugged.

"Not on the sheik," he said. "We might try it on one of his people, but the sheik will not part with his revenge for gold. To offer it to him would only confirm his suspicions that we must have awakened when we were talking to him before his tent. If we got away with our lives then we should be fortunate."

CHAPTER VI. In the Jungle.

His first night in the jungle was one which the son of Tarzan held longest in his memory. No savage carnivora menaced him. There was never a sign of hideous barbarian, or if there were the boy's troubled mind took no cognizance of them.

His conscience was harassed by the thought of his mother's suffering. Self blame plunged him into the depths of misery.

The killing of the American caused him little or no remorse. The fellow had earned his fate. Jack's regret on this score was due mainly to the effect which the death of Conlon had had upon his own plans.

Now he could not return directly to his parents, as he had planned. Fear of the primitive borderland law, of which he had read highly colored, imaginary tales, had thrust him into the jungle—a fugitive. He dared not return to the coast at this point, not that he was so greatly influenced through personal fear as from a desire to shield his father and mother from further sorrow and from the shame of having their honored name dragged through the sordid degradation of a murder trial.

With returning day the boy's spirits rose. With the rising sun came new hope within his breast. He would return to civilization by another way. None would guess that he had been connected with the killing of the stranger in the little out of the way trading post upon a remote shore.

Crouched close to the great ape in the crotch of a tree, the boy had shivered through an almost sleepless night. His light pajamas had been but little protection from the chill dampness of the jungle, and only that side of him which was pressed against the warm body of his slaggish companion approximated comfort. And so he welcomed the rising sun with its promise of warmth as well as light—the blessed sun, dispeller of physical and mental ills.

He shook Akut into wakefulness. "Come," he said, "I am cold and hungry. We will search for food out there in the sunlight," and he pointed to an open plain, dotted with stunted trees and strewn with jagged rock.

The boy sid to the ground as he spoke, but the ape first looked carefully about, sniffing the morning air. Then, satisfied that no danger lurked near, he descended slowly to the ground beside the boy.

"Numa and Sabor, his mate, feast upon those who descend first and look afterward, while those who look first and descend afterward live to feast themselves." Thus the old ape imparted to the son of Tarzan the boy's first lesson in jungle lore.

Side by side they set off across the rough plain, for the boy wished first to be warm. The ape showed him the best places to dig for rodents and worms, but the lad only gagged at the thought of devouring the repulsive things. Some eggs they found, and these he sucked raw, as also he ate roots and tubers which Akut unearthed.

That night the son of Tarzan was colder than he ever had been in all his life. The pajama trousers were not very heavy, but they were much heavier than nothing. And the next day he roasted in the hot sun, for again their way led much across wide and treeless plains.

It was still in the boy's mind to travel to the south and circle back to the coast in search of another outpost of civilization. He had said nothing of this plan to Akut, for he knew that the old ape would look with displeasure upon any suggestion that savored of separation.

For a month the two wandered on, the boy learning rapidly the laws of the jungle; his muscles adapting themselves to the new mode of life that had been thrust upon them. The thews of the sire had been transmitted to the son—it needed only the hardening of use to develop them.

One day as they were moving slowly along beside a river they came unexpectedly upon a native village. Some children were playing beside the water.

The boy's heart leaped within his breast at sight of them. For more than a month he had seen no human being. What if these were naked savages? What if their skins were black? Were they not creatures fashioned in the mold of their Maker as was he? They were his brothers and sisters! He started toward them.

With a low warning Akut laid a hand upon his arm to hold him back. The boy shook himself free and, with a shout of greeting, ran forward toward the ebony players.

The sound of his voice brought every head erect. Wide eyes viewed him for an instant, and then, with screams of terror, the children turned and fled toward the village. At their heels ran their mothers, and from the village gate, in response to the alarm, came a score of warriors, hastily snatched spears and shields ready in their hands.

At sight of the consternation he had wrought the boy halted. The glad smile faded from his face as with wild shouts and menacing gestures the warriors ran toward him. Akut was calling to him from behind to turn and flee; that the black would kill him.

With a low snarl, quite similar to that of a baffled beast, he turned and ran into the jungle. There was Akut awaiting him in a tree. The ape urged him to hasten in flight, for the wise old anthropoid knew that they two, naked and unarmed, were no match for the sinewy black warriors who would doubtless make some sort of search for them through the jungle.

But a new power moved the son of Tarzan. He had come with a boy's glad and open heart to offer his friendship to these people who were human beings like himself. He had been met with suspicion and spears. They had not even listened to him. Rage and hatred consumed him.

They made a detour about the hostile village and resumed their journey toward the coast.

All the while Jack's training went on under the guidance of Akut. Yet, though the boy loved the jungle, he had not let his selfish desires outweigh the sense of duty that had brought him to a realization of the moral wrong which lay beneath the adventurous escapade that had brought him to Africa. His love of father and mother was strong within him, too strong to permit unalloyed happiness which was undoubtedly causing them days of sorrow.

And so he held tight to his determination to find a port upon the coast where he might communicate with them and receive funds for his return to London. There he felt sure that he could now persuade his parents to let him spend at least a portion of his time upon those African estates which from little careless remarks dropped at home he knew his father possessed.

That would be something—better at least than a lifetime of the cramped and cloying restrictions of civilization.

And so he was rather contented than otherwise as he made his way in the direction of the coast, for, while he enjoyed the liberty and the savage pleasures of the wild, his conscience was at the same time clear, for he knew that he was doing all that lay in

his power to return to his parents. He looked forward, too, to meeting white men again—creatures of his own kind, for there had been many occasions upon which he had longed for other companionship than that of the old ape.

And at last the much dreamed of moment came. They were passing through a tangled forest when the boy's sharp eyes discovered from the lower branches through which he was traveling an old but well marked spear—a spear that set his heart to leaping.

Both the White Men Were Wielding Heavy Whips Brutally.

—the spear of man, of white men, for among the prints of naked feet were the well defined outlines of European made boots.

The trail, which marked the passage of a good sized company, pointed north at right angles to the course the boy and the ape were taking toward the coast.

Doubtless these white men knew the nearest coast settlement. They might even be headed for it now. At any rate, it would be worth while overtaking them, even if only for the pleasure of meeting again creatures of his own kind.

The boy was in the lead, excitement and anticipation carrying him ahead of his companion. And it was the boy who first saw the rear guard of the caravan and the white man he had been so anxious to overtake.

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"It Will Not Harm to Try the Power of Gold," Replied Janssen.

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Stumbling along the tangled trail of those ahead a dozen heavily laden blacks who, from fatigue or sickness, had dropped behind were being prodded by the black soldiers of the rear guard, kicked when they fell and then roughly jerked to their feet and hustled onward. On either side walked a giant white man, whose heavy blond beard almost obliterated their countenances.

(Continued next week.)

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