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CHAPTER XIII. Morison and Hanson.

As Hanson and Morison rode toward the former's camp the Englishman maintained a morose silence. The other was attempting to formulate an opening that would lead naturally to the proposition he had in mind. He rode a neck behind his companion, grinning as he noted the sullen scowl upon the other's patrician face.

"Rather rough on you, wasn't he?" he ventured at last, jerking his head back in the direction of the bungalow as Baynes turned his eyes upon him at the remark.

"He thinks a lot of the girl," continued Hanson, "and don't want nobody to marry her and take her away. But it looks to me as though he was doin' her more harm than good in sendin' you away. She ought to marry sometime, and she couldn't do better than a fine young gentleman like you."

Baynes, who had at first felt inclined to take offense at the mention of his private affairs by this common fellow, was mollified by Hanson's final remark and immediately commenced to see in him a man of discrimination.

"He's a darned bounder," grumbled the Hon. Morison, "but I'll get even with him. He may be the whole thing in central Africa, but I'm as big as he is in London, and he'll find it out when he comes home."

"If I was you," said Hanson, "I wouldn't let any man keep me from gettin' the girl I want. Between you and me I ain't got no use for him either, and if I can help you any, why, just call on me."

"It's mighty good of you, Hanson," replied Baynes, warming up a bit, "but what can a fellow do here in this God-forsaken hole?"

"I know what I'd do," said Hanson. "I'd take the girl along with me. If she loves you she'll go all right."

"It can't be done," said Baynes. "He bosses this whole blooming country for miles around. He'd be sure to catch us."

"No, he wouldn't; not with me running things," said Hanson. "I've been trading and hunting here for ten years, and I know as much about the country as he does. If you want to take the girl along I'll help you, and I'll guarantee that there won't nobody catch up with us before we reach the coast."

"I'll tell you what—you write her a note, and I'll get it to her by my head man. Ask her to meet you to say goodby. She won't refuse that. In the meantime we can be movin' camp a little farther north all the time, and you can make arrangements with her to be all ready on a certain night. Tell her I'll meet her then, while you wait for us in camp. That'll be better, for I know the country well and can cover it quicker than you. You can take charge of the safari and be movin' along slow toward the north, and the girl and I'll catch up to you."

The balance of the long ride to Hanson's northerly camp was made in silence, for both men were occupied with their own thoughts, most of which were far from being either complimentary or loyal to the other.

As they rode through the wood the sounds of their comrades' jungle warfare came to the ears of another jungle warfarer. It was no other than Korak himself, who was perched in a tree.

He moved stealthily through the branches until he came within sight of the riders. He fell in behind the pair, following them to Hanson's camp. Here the Hon. Morison penned a brief note, which Hanson gave into the keeping of one of his boys, who started off southward with it, toward the south side of the camp.

Baynes was restless, pacing back and forth beneath the trees when he should have been resting against the forest marches of the coming fight. Hanson lay in his hammock and smoked. They spoke but little. Korak lay stretched upon a branch among the dense foliage above them.

In the garden beside the bungalow Meriem wandered idly about in the moonlight, she had started from Dawn's to him, to get treatment of the Hon. Morison's leg.

Meriem heard her name and was grateful to it, for it meant that she had done for him, but it was in her dream-swept vision of the night that she had seen her pearls of manhood, for when in the jungle had she seen the face of her lover. Now, for the first time since she had come to Africa, Meriem felt like a prisoner in the bungalow of Bwana and My Boy.

Like a caged dove the girl paced the length of the bungalow. Once she paused near the outer fence, her head upon one side, listening to the pad of naked human feet just beyond the garden. The sound was not repeated.

Then she resumed her restless walking. Down to the opposite end of the garden she passed, turned and retraced



Sounds of Their Passage Came to the Ears of Another Jungle Warfarer.

her steps toward the upper end. Upon the sword near the bushes that hid the fence, full in the glare of the moonlight, lay a white envelope that had not been there when she had turned almost upon the very spot a moment before.

Meriem stopped short in her tracks, listening again and sniffing—more than ever the tigress—alert, ready. Beyond the bushes a naked black runner squatted, peering through the foliage. He saw her take a step closer to the letter. She had seen it. He rose quietly and, following the shadows of the bushes that ran down to the corral, was soon gone from sight.

Meriem's trained ears heard his every move. She made no attempt to seek closer knowledge of his identity. Already she had guessed that he was a messenger from the Hon. Morison. She stooped and picked up the envelope. Tearing it open, she read the contents easily by the moon's brilliant light.

It was, as she had guessed, from Baynes:

"I cannot go without seeing you again. Come to the clearing early tomorrow morning and say goodby to me. Come alone."

There was a little more—words that made her heart beat faster and a happy flush mount her cheek.

It was still dark when the Hon. Morison Baynes set forth for the trying place. He insisted upon having a guide, saying that he was not sure that he could find his way back to the little clearing.

As a matter of fact, the thought of that lonely ride through the darkness before the sun rose had been too much for his courage, and he craved company.

A black, therefore, preceded him on foot. Behind and above him came Korak, whom the noise in the camp had awakened.

It was nine o'clock before Baynes drew rein in the clearing. Meriem had not yet arrived. The black lay down to rest. Baynes leaped in his saddle. Korak stretched himself comfortably upon a lofty limb, where he could watch these beneath him without being seen.

An hour passed. Baynes gave evidence of nervousness. Korak had already guessed that the young Englishman had come here to meet another.

Presently the sound of an approaching horse came to Korak's ears. Meriem was coming. She had almost reached the clearing before Baynes became aware of her presence, and then as he looked up the foliage parted to the head and shoulders of her mount, and Meriem rode into view. Baynes spurred to meet her.

Korak leaped across the path down upon her, his body unerringly striking the broad-shouldered bay and his head her forehead. She was almost the Englishman's own.

Korak saw the man take both her hands and draw her close to his breast. He saw the man's face as he looked for a moment beneath the same broad brim that hid the girl's.

When he looked again they had drawn apart and were conversing earnestly. Korak could see the man urging something. It was equally evident that the girl was holding back. There were many of her gestures, and the way in which she tossed her head up and to the right, throwing her chin, that reminded Korak strongly of Meriem. And then the conversation was over, and the man took the girl in his arms again to kiss her goodby.

She turned and rode toward the point from which she had come. The man sat his horse watching her. At the edge of the jungle she turned to wave him a final farewell.

"I can't let you go," she called, throwing back her head as she called the words to him, and she called the words which separated them—throwing back her head and raising her face for the first time to the eyes of the Killer in the tree above.

Baynes started as though pierced through the heart with an arrow. He roared and shook like a leaf. He closed his eyes, pressing his palms across them, and when he opened them again and looked

But the girl was gone. Only the waving foliage of the jungle's rim marked where she had disappeared.

It was impossible! It could not be true! And yet with his own eyes he had seen his Meriem—older a little, with figure more rounded by nearer maturity, and subtly changed in other ways; more beautiful than ever, yet still his little Meriem. Yes, he had seen the dead alive again; he had seen his Meriem in the flesh. She lived! She had not died!

He had seen her—he had seen his Meriem—in the arms of another man! And that man sat below him now within easy reach.

Korak the Killer fondled his heavy spear. He played with the grass rope dangling from his gee string. He stroked the hunting knife at his hip. And the man beneath him called to his drowsy guide, bent the rein to his pony's neck and moved off toward the north.

Still sat Korak the Killer alone among the trees. Now his hands hung idly at his sides. His weapons and what he had intended were forgotten for the moment. Korak was thinking.

He had noted that subtle change in Meriem. When last he had seen her she had been his little, half-naked

Mangan—wild, savage and uncouth. She had not seemed uncouth to him then. But now, in the change that had come over her, he knew that such she had been, yet no more uncouth than he, and he was still uncouth.

In her had taken place the change. In her he had just seen a sweet and lovely flower of refinement and civilization, and he shuddered as he recalled the fate that he himself had planned for her—to be the mate of an ape man, his mate, in the savage jungle.

His Meriem loved another! For a long time he let that awful truth sink deep, and from it he tried to reason out his future plan of action. In his heart was a great desire to follow the man and slay him, but there rose in his consciousness the thought "she loves him."

Could he slay the creature Meriem loved? Sadly he shook his head. No, he could not.

Then came a partial decision to follow Meriem and speak with her. He half started and then was ashamed. He, the son of a British peer, had thus thrown away his life, had thus degraded himself to the level of a beast so that he was ashamed to go to the woman he loved and lay his love at her feet. He was ashamed to go to the little Arab maid who had been his jungle playmate. For what had he to offer her?

For years circumstances had prevented a return to his father and mother, and at last pride had stepped in and expunged from his mind the last vestige of any intention to return. In a spirit of boyish adventure he had cast his lot with the jungle ape. The killing of the crook in the coast inn had filled his childish mind with terror of the law and driven him deeper into the wilds. The rebuffs that he had met with at the hands of men, both black and white, had had their effect upon his mind while it was yet in the formative state and easily influenced.

Meriem was not for him—not for the savage ape. No, she was not for him, but he still was hers. If he could not have her and happiness, he would at least do all that lay in his power to assure happiness to her. He would follow the young Englishman. In the first place, he would know that he meant Meriem no harm and after that, though jealousy wrenched his heart, he would watch over the man Meriem loved for Meriem's sake.

And so it came that a few minutes after the Hon. Morison Baynes entered the camp to be greeted by Hanson. Korak slipped noiselessly into a nearby tree. There he lay until Hanson had gone, and still the young Englishman made no move to leave camp. He wondered if Meriem were coming. A little later Hanson and one of the black boys rode out of camp. Korak in vain tried to see them. He was particularly interested in the driver, a boy of other members of the company than the young Englishman.

CHAPTER XIV. A Tryed by Proxy.

Hanson and his boy had ridden directly to the clearing. It was still dark when they arrived. Hanson lay there, listening to the boy's tale. There he waited. It was the boy's duty to report to him the doings of the camp. A few minutes later Meriem came in her pony, leading her horse. She was nervous and flushed.

When she recognized Hanson she drew back startled.

"Mr. Baynes' boys fell on him and spanked his arse!" Hanson hastened to explain. "He couldn't very well come, so he sent me to meet you and bring you to camp."

"The girl could not see in the darkness the shadow of a hand upon her shoulder on the speaker's head."

"We had better hurry," called Hanson. "We will have to move to the pony, for if we don't want to be overheard."

"To be badly hurt?" asked Meriem. "Only a little sprain," replied Hanson, "but you can ride all right, but you had better hold tight to the pony and keep your feet on the ground for a few weeks."

"Yes!" cried the girl.

Hanson swung his pony about, and Meriem followed him. They rode north along the edge of the forest for some distance, then turned straight into it toward the west. Meriem, following, paid little attention to directions. She did not know exactly where Hanson's camp lay, and so she did not guess that he was not leading her toward it.

All night they rode straight toward

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the west. When morning came Hanson permitted a short halt for breakfast, which he had provided in well-filled saddlebags before leaving his camp. They pushed on again, in the heat of the day, he stopped and motioned the girl to dismount. "We will sleep here for a time and let the ponies graze," he said. "I had no idea the camp was so far away," said Meriem. "I left orders that they were to move on at daybreak," explained the trader, "so that we could get a good start. I knew that you and I could easily overtake a laden safari. It may not be until tomorrow that we'll catch up with them."

But, though they traveled part of the night and all the following day, no sign of the safari appeared ahead of them. Meriem, an adept in jungle craft, knew that none had passed ahead of them for many days. Occasionally she saw indications of an old spoor—a very old spoor—of many men. For the most part they followed this well-marked trail along elephant paths and through parklike groves. It was an ideal trail for rapid traveling.

Meriem at last became suspicious. Gradually the attitude of the man at her side had begun to change. Often she suspected him devouring her with his eyes.

Steadily the former sensation of provisions and companionship urged her to up a hand somewhere, some time, for she had known this man. It was evident that he had not slept for several days. A blond stubble had commenced to cover his face and cheeks and chin, and with this was sure that he had not showered or washed for many days.

It was not until the second day, however, that she noticed the change in her pony's habit and behavior. Hanson, who had been riding in the lead, suddenly turned back and looked at her. "What's the matter?" he asked. "The pony's acting queer," she said. "He's been acting queer since we left camp."

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