



Tarzan and the Ant Men

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CHAPTER XIX. (continued).

JANZARA'S BOUDOIR.

TARZAN shook his head impatiently. "You do not love me," he said. "I am sorry that you think you do, for I do not love you. I have no time to waste. Come!" And he stepped closer to take her by the wrist.

"Are you mad?" she demanded. "Or can it be that you do not know who I am?"

"You are Janzara, daughter of Elko-moelhago," replied Tarzan. "I know well who you are."

"And you dare to spurn my love!" She was breathing heavily, her bosom rising and falling to the tumultuous urge of her emotions.

"It is no question of love between us," replied the ape-man. "To me it is only

a question of liberty and life for myself and my companions."

"You love another?" asked Janzara.

"Yes," Tarzan told her.

"Who is she?" demanded the princess.

"Will you come quietly, or shall I be compelled to carry you away by force?"

For a moment the woman stood silently before him, her every muscle tensed, her dark eyes two blazing wells of fire, and then slowly her expression changed. Her face softened, and she stretched one hand toward him.

"I will help you, Zuanthrol," she said.

"I will help you to escape. Because I love you I shall do this. Come! Follow me!" She turned and moved softly across the apartment.

"But my companions," said the ape-man. "I cannot go without them."

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"Where are they?"

He did not tell her, for as yet he was none too sure of her motives.

"Show me the way," he said, "and I can return for them."

"Yes," she replied, "I will show you, and then perhaps you will love me better than you love the other."

In the passage behind the paneling Talaskar and Komodoflorensal awaited the outcome of Tarzan's venture. Distinctly to their ears came every word of the conversation between the ape-man and the princess.

"He loves you," said Komodoflorensal. "You see, he loves you."

"I see nothing of the kind," returned Talaskar. "Because he does not love the Princess Janzara is no proof that he loves me."

"But he does love you—and you love him! I have seen it since first he came. Would that he were not my friend, for then I might run him through."

"Why would you run him through because he loves me—if he does?" demanded the girl. "Am I so low that you would rather see your friend dead than mated with me?"

"I—" he hesitated. "I cannot tell you what I mean."

The girl laughed and then suddenly sobered. "She is leading him from her apartment," she said. "We had better follow."

As Talaskar laid her fingers upon the spring that actuated the lock holding the panel in place, Janzara led Tarzan across her chamber toward a doorway in one of the side walls—not the doorway through which her slave had departed.

"Follow me," whispered the princess, "and you will see what the love of Janzara means."

Tarzan, not entirely assured of her intentions, followed her warily.

"You are afraid," she said. "You do not trust me. Well, come here then and look, yourself, into this chamber before you enter."

Komodoflorensal and Talaskar had but just stepped into the apartment when Tarzan approached the door to one side of

which Janzara stood. They saw the floor give suddenly beneath his feet and an instant later Zuanthrol had disappeared. As he shot down a polished chute he heard a wild laugh from Janzara following him into the darkness of the unknown.

Komodoflorensal and Talaskar leaped quickly across the chamber, but too late. The floor that had given beneath Tarzan's feet had slipped quietly back into place. Janzara stood above the spot trembling with anger and staring down at the place where the ape-man had disappeared. She shook as an aspen shakes in the breeze—shook in the mad tempest of her own passions.

"If you will not come to me, you shall never go to another!" she screamed, and then she turned and saw Komodoflorensal and Talaskar running toward her.

What followed occurred so quickly that it would be impossible to record the facts in the brief time that they actually consumed. It was over almost before Tarzan reached the bottom of the chute and picked himself from the earthen floor upon which he had been deposited.

The room in which he found himself was lighted by several candles burning in iron barred niches. Opposite him was a heavy gate of iron bars, through which he could see another lighted apartment in which a man, his chin sagging dejectedly upon his breast, was seated on a low bench. At the sound of Tarzan's precipitate entrance into the adjoining chamber the man looked up, and, at sight of Zuanthrol, leaped to his feet.

"Quick! To your left!" he cried; and Tarzan, turning, saw two huge, green eyed beasts crouching to spring.

His first impulse was to rub his eyes as one might to erase the phantom figures of a disquieting dream, for what he saw were two ordinary African wildcats—ordinary in contour and markings, but in size gigantic. For an instant the ape-man forgot that he was only one-fourth his normal size and that the cats, which appeared to him as large as full grown lions, were in reality but average specimens of their kind.

As they came toward him he whipped out his sword, prepared to battle for his

life with these great felines as he had so often before with their mighty cousins of his own jungle.

"If you can hold them off until you reach this gate," cried the man in the next chamber, "I can let you through. The bolt is upon this side." But even as he spoke one of the cats charged.

Komodoflorensai, brushing past Janzara, leaped for the spot upon the floor at which Tarzan had disappeared, and as it gave beneath him he heard a savage cry break from the lips of the Princess of Veltoptismakus.

"So it is you he loves?" she screamed. "But he shall not have you—no, not even in death!" And that was all that Komodoflorensai heard as the chute swallowed him.

Talaskar, confronted by the infuriated Janzara, halted, and then stepped back, for the princess was rushing upon her with drawn dagger.

"Die, slave!" she screamed, as she lunged for the white breast of Talaskar; but the slave girl caught the other's wrist, and a moment later they dropped, locked in each other's embrace. Together they rolled about the floor, the daughter of Elkomoeihago seeking to drive her slim blade into the breast of the slave girl, while Talaskar fought to hold off the menacing steel and to close with her fingers upon the throat of her antagonist.

As the first cat charged, the other followed, not to be robbed of its share of the flesh of the kill, for both were ravenous, and as the ape-man met the charge of the first, sidestepping its rush and springing in again to thrust at its side, Komodoflorensai, who had drawn his sword as he entered the apartment of Janzara, shot into the subterranean den almost into the teeth of the second beast. This savage cat was so disconcerted by the sudden appearance of a second human that it wheeled and sprang to the far end of the den before it could gather its courage for another attack.

In the chamber above, Talaskar and Janzará fought savagely, two she-tigers in human form. They rolled to and fro about the room, straining and striking; Janzara screaming, "Die, slave! You shall not have him!"

But Talaskar held her peace and saved her breath, so that slowly she was overcoming the other when they chanced to roll upon the very spot that had let Tarzan and Komodoflorensai down to the pit beneath.

As Janzara realized what had happened she uttered a scream of terror. "The cats! The cats!" she cried; and then the two disappeared into the black shaft.

Komodoflorensai did not follow the cat that had retreated to the far end of the pit, but sprang at once to Tarzan's aid, and together they drove off the first beast as they backed toward the gate where the man in the adjoining chamber stood ready to admit them to the safety of his own apartment.

The two cats charged and then retreated, springing in quickly and away again as quickly, for they had learned the taste of the sharp steel with which the humans were defending themselves. The two men were almost at the gate, another instant and they could spring through. The cats charged again, and again were driven to the far corner of the pit. The man in the next chamber swung open the gate.

"Quick!" he cried; and at the same instant the two figures shot from the mouth of the shaft and, locked tightly in each other's embrace, rolled to the floor of the pit directly in the path of the charging cats.

CHAPTER XX.

FUGITIVES.

AS Tarzan and Komodoflorensai realized that Talaskar and Janzara lay exposed to the savage assault of the hungry beasts they both sprang quickly toward the two girls. As had been the case when Komodoflorensai had shot into the pit, the cats were startled by the sudden appearance of these two new humans, and in the first instant of their surprise had leaped again to the far end of the chamber.

Janzara had lost her dagger as the two girls had fallen into the shaft, and now Talaskar saw it lying on the floor beside her. Releasing her hold upon the princess, she seized the weapon and leaped to her feet. Already Tarzan and Komodoflorensai were

at her side, and the cats were returning to the attack.

Janzara arose slowly and half bewildered. She looked about, terror disfiguring her marvelous beauty, and as she did so the man in the adjoining chamber saw her.

"Janzara!" he cried. "My princess, I come!" And seizing the bench upon which he had been sitting, and the only thing within the chamber that might be converted into a weapon, he swung wide the gate and leaped into the chamber where the four were now facing the thoroughly infuriated cats.

Both animals, bleeding from many wounds, were mad with pain, rage and hunger. Screaming and growling, they threw themselves upon the swords of the two men, who had pushed the girls behind them and were backing slowly toward the gate, and then the man with the bench joined Tarzan and Komodoflorensal, and the three fought back the charges of the infuriated cats.

The bench proved fully as good a weapon of defense as the swords, and so together the five drew slowly back until, quite suddenly, and without the slightest warning, both cats leaped quickly to one side and darted behind the party as if sensing that the women would prove easier prey. One of them came near to closing upon Janzara had not the man with the bench, imbued apparently with demoniacal fury, leaped upon it with his strange weapon and beaten it back so desperately that it was forced to abandon the princess.

Even then the man did not cease to follow it, but, brandishing the bench, pursued it and its fellow with such terrifying cries and prodigious blows that, to escape him, both cats suddenly dodged into the chamber that the man had occupied, and before they could return to the attack he with the bench had slammed the gate and fastened them upon its opposite side. Then he wheeled and faced the four.

"Zoanthrohago!" cried the princess.

"Your slave!" replied the noble, dropping to one knee and leaning far back with outstretched arms.

"You have saved my life, Zoanthrohago," said Janzara, "and after all the indignities that I have heaped upon you! How can I reward you?"

"I love you, princess, as you have long known," replied the man, "but now it is too late, for to-morrow I die by the king's will. Elkomoelhago has spoken, and, even though you be his daughter, I do not hesitate to say his very ignorance prevents him ever changing a decision once reached."

"I know," said Janzara. "He is my sire, but I love him not. He killed my mother in a fit of unreasoning jealousy. He is a fool—the fool of fools."

Suddenly she turned upon the others.

"These slaves would escape, Zoanthrohago," she cried. "With my aid they might accomplish it. With their company we might succeed in escaping, too, and in finding an asylum in their own land."

"If any one of them is of sufficient power in his own native city," replied Zoanthrohago.

"This one," said Tarzan, seeing a miraculous opportunity for freedom, "is the son of Adendrohakkis, King of Trohanadalmakus—the oldest son, and Zertolosto."

Janzara looked at Tarzan a moment after he had done speaking. "I was wicked, Zuanthrol," she said; "but I thought that I wanted you, and being the daughter of a king I have seldom been denied aught that I craved." And then, to Talaskar: "Take your man, my girl, and may you be happy with him." And she pushed Talaskar gently toward the ape-man; but Talaskar drew back.

"You are mistaken, Janzara," she said; "I do not love Zuanthrol, nor does he love me."

Komodoflorensal looked at Tarzan as if expecting that he would quickly deny the truth of Talaskar's statement, but the ape-man only nodded his head in assent.

"Do you mean," demanded Komodoflorensal, "that you do not love Talaskar?" And he looked straight into the eyes of his friend.

"On the contrary, I love her very much," replied Tarzan; "but not in the way that you have believed—or should I say feared? I love her because she is a good girl and a kind girl and a loyal friend, and also because she was in trouble and needed the love and protection which you and I alone could give her; but as a man loves his mate,

I do not love her, for I have a mate of my own in my country beyond the thorns."

Komodoflorensal said no more, but he thought a great deal. He thought of what it would mean to return to his own city where he was the Zertolosto, and where, by all the customs of ages, he would be supposed to marry a princess from another city. But he did not want a princess; he wanted Talaskar, the little slave girl of Veltoptismakus, who scarcely knew the name of her own mother and most probably had never heard that of her father.

He wanted Talaskar, but he could only have her in Trohanadalmakus as a slave. His love for her was real, and so he would not insult her by thinking such a thing as that. If he could not make her his princess, he would not have her at all; and so, Komodoflorensal, the son of Adendrohahkis, was sad.

But he had none too much time to dwell upon his sorrow now, for the others were planning the best means for escape.

"The keepers come down to feed the cats upon this side," said Zoanthrohago, indicating a small door in the wall of the pit opposite that which led into the chamber in which he had been incarcerated.

"Doubtless it is not locked, either," said Janzara, "for a prisoner could not reach it without crossing through this chamber where the two cats were kept."

"We will see," said Tarzan, and crossed to the door.

A moment sufficed to force it open, revealing a narrow corridor beyond. One after another the five crawled through the small aperture and, following the corridor, ascended an acclivity, lighting their way with candles taken from the den of the carnivores. At the top a door opened into a wide corridor, a short distance down which stood a warrior, evidently on guard before a door.

Janzara looked through the tiny crack that Tarzan had opened the door and saw the corridor and the man.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "It is my own corridor, and the warrior is on guard before my door. I know him well. Through me he has escaped payment of his taxes for the past thirty moons. He would die for

me. Come! We have nothing to fear." And stepping boldly into the corridor, she approached the sentry, the others following behind her.

Until he recognized her there was danger that the fellow would raise an alarm, but the moment he saw who it was he was as wax in her hands.

"You are blind," she told him.

"If the Princess Janzara wishes it," he replied.

She told him what she wished—five diadets and some warriors' heavy wraps. He eyed those who were with her, and evidently recognized Zoanthrohago, and guessed who the two other men were.

"Not only shall I be blind for my princess," he said, "but to-morrow I shall be dead for her."

"Fetch six diadets, then," said the princess; and he understood her and smiled his gratitude.

Then she turned toward Komodoflorensal. "You are Prince Royal of Trohanadalmakus?" she asked.

"I am," he replied.

"And if we show you the way to liberty you will not enslave us?"

"I shall take you to the city as my own slaves and then liberate you," he replied.

"It is something that has seldom if ever been done," she mused; "not in the memory of living man in Veltoptismakus. I wonder if your sire will permit it."

"The thing is not without precedent," replied Komodoflorensal. "It has been done but rarely, yet it *has* been done. I think you may feel assured of a friendly welcome at the court of Adendrohahkis, where the wisdom of Zoanthrohago will not go unappreciated or unrewarded."

It was a long time before the warrior returned with the diadets. His face was covered with perspiration and his hands with blood.

"I had to fight for them," he said, "and we shall have to fight to use them if we do not hurry. Here, prince, I brought you weapons," and he handed a sword and dagger to Zoanthrohago.

They mounted quickly. It was Tarzan's first experience upon one of the wiry, active little mounts of the Minunians, but he

found the saddle well designed and the diadet easily controlled.

"They will be following me from the King's Corridor," explained Oratharc, the warrior who had fetched the diadets. "It would be best, then, to leave by one of the others."

"Trohanadalmakus is east of Veltoptismakus," said Zoanthrohago, "and if we leave by the Women's Corridor with two slaves from Trohanadalmakus they will assume that we are going there; but if we leave by another corridor they will not be sure, and if they lose even a little time in starting the pursuit it will give us just that much of an advantage. If we go straight toward Trohanadalmakus we shall almost certainly be overtaken, as the swiftest of diadets will be used in our pursuit."

"Our only hope lies in deceiving them as to our route or destination, and to accomplish this I believe that we should leave either by the Warriors' Corridor or the Slaves' Corridor, cross the hills north of the city, circle far out to the north and east, not turning south until we are well past Trohanadalmakus. In this way we can approach that city from the east while our pursuers are patrolling the country west of Trohanadalmakus to Veltoptismakus."

"Let us leave by the Warriors' Corridor, then," suggested Janzara.

"The trees and shrubbery will conceal us while we pass around to the north of the city," said Komodoflorensal.

"We should leave at once," urged Oratharc.

"Go first, then, with the princess," said Zoanthrohago, "for there is a possibility that the guard at the entrance will let her pass with her party. We will muffle ourselves well with our warriors' cloaks. Come, lead the way!"

With Janzara and Oratharc ahead and the others following closely, they moved at a steady trot along the circular corridor toward the Warriors' Corridor, and it was not until they had turned into the latter that any sign of pursuit developed. Even then, although they heard the voices of men behind them, they hesitated to break into a faster gait lest they arouse the suspicions of the warriors in the guard room which

they must pass near the mouth of the corridor.

Never had the Warriors' Corridor seemed so long to any of the Veltoptismakusians in the party as it did this night; never had they so wished to race their diadets as now; but they held their mounts to an even pace that would never have suggested to the most suspicious that here were six persons seeking escape, most of them from death.

They had come almost to the exit when they were aware that the pursuit had turned into the Warriors' Corridor behind them, and that their pursuers were advancing at a rapid gait.

Janzara and Oratharc drew up beside the sentry at the mouth of the corridor as he stepped out to bar their progress.

"The Princess Janzara!" announced Oratharc. "Aside for the Princess Janzara!"

The princess threw back the hood of the warrior's cloak she wore, revealing her features, well known to every warrior in the Royal Dome—and well feared. The fellow hesitated.

"Aside, man," cried the princess, "or I ride you down!"

A great shout arose behind them. Warriors on swiftly galloping diadets leaped along the corridor toward them. The warriors were shouting something, the sense of which was hidden by the distance and the noise, but the sentry was suspicious.

"Wait until I call the Novand of the Guard, princess," he cried. "Something is amiss, and I dare let no one pass without authority; but wait! here he is." And the party turned in their saddles to see a Novand emerging from the door of the guard room, followed by a number of warriors.

"Ride!" cried Janzara, and spurred her diadet straight for the single sentry in their path.

The others lifted their mounts quickly in pursuit. The sentry went down, striking valiantly with his rapier at the legs and bellies of flying diadets. The Novand and his men rushed from the guard room just in time to collide with the pursuers, whom they immediately assumed were belated members of the fleeing party. The brief

minutes that these fought, before explanations could be made and understood, gave the fugitives time to pass among the trees to the west side of the city, and, turning north, make for the hills that were dimly visible in the light of a clear but moonless night.

Oratharc, who said that he knew the hill trails perfectly, led the way, the others following as closely as they could; Komodoflorensal and Tarzan bringing up the rear. Thus they moved on in silence through the night, winding along precipitous mountain trails, leaping now and again from rock to rock where the trail itself had been able to find no footing; sliding into dank ravines, clambering through heavy brush and timber along tunnel-like trails that followed their windings, or crept up their opposite sides to narrow ridge or broad plateau; and all night long no sign of pursuit developed.

The morning came at last, and with it, from the summit of a lofty ridge, a panorama of broad plain stretching to the north, of distant hills, of forests, and of streams. They decided then to descend to one of the numerous parklike glades that they could see nestling in the hills below them, and there rest their mounts and permit them to feed, for the work of the night had been hard upon them.

They knew that in the hills they might hide almost indefinitely, so wild and so little traveled were they, and so they went into camp an hour after sunrise in a tiny cup-like valley surrounded by great trees, and watered and fed their mounts with a sense of security greater than they had felt since they left Veltoptismakus.

Oratharc went out on foot and killed a couple of quail, and Tarzan speared a large fish in the stream. These they prepared and ate, and then, the men taking turns on guard, they slept until afternoon, for none had had sleep the night before.

Taking up their flight again in mid-afternoon, they were well out upon the plain when darkness overtook them. Komodoflorensal and Zoanthrothago were riding on the flanks, and all were searching for a suitable camping place. It was Zoanthrothago who found it, and when they all gathered about

him Tarzan saw nothing in the waning light of day that appeared any more like a good camping place than any other spot on the open plain. There was a little clump of trees, but they had passed many such clumps, and there was nothing about this one that appeared to offer any greater security than another.

As a matter of fact, to Tarzan it was anything but a desirable camp site. There was no water; there was little shelter from the wind and none from an enemy; but perhaps they were going into the trees. That would be better. He looked up at the lofty branches lovingly. How enormous these trees seemed! He knew them for what they were, and that they were trees of only average size, yet to him now they reared their heads aloft like veritable giants.

"I will go in first," he heard Komodoflorensal say, and turned to learn what he referred to.

The three other men were standing at the mouth of a large hole, into which they were looking. Tarzan knew that the opening was the mouth of the burrow of a ratel, the African member of the badger family, and he wondered why any of them wished to enter it.

Tarzan had never cared for the flesh of the ratel. He stepped over and joined the others, and as he did so he saw Komodoflorensal crawl into the opening, his drawn sword in his hand.

"Why is he doing that?" he asked Zoanthrothago.

"To drive out or kill the cambon, if he is there," replied the prince, giving the ratel its Minunian name.

"And why?" asked Tarzan. "Surely you do not eat its flesh?"

"No, but we want its home for the night," replied Zoanthrothago. "I had forgotten that you are not a Minunian. We will spend the night in the underground chambers of the cambon, safe from the attacks of the cat or the lion. It would be better were we there now—this is a bad hour of the night for Minunians to be abroad on the plain or in the forest, for it is at this hour that the lion hunts."

A few minutes later Komodoflorensal

emerged from the hole. "The cambon is not there," he said. "The burrow is deserted. I found only a snake, which I killed. Go in, Oratharc, and Janzara and Talaskar will follow you. You have candles?"

They had, and one by one they disappeared into the mouth of the hole, until Tarzan, who had asked to remain until last, stood alone in the gathering night, gazing at the mouth of the ratel's burrow, a smile upon his lips. It seemed ridiculous to him that Tarzan of the Apes should ever be contemplating hiding from Numa in the hole of a ratel, or, worse still, hiding from little Skree, the wildcat. And, as he stood there smiling, a bulk loomed dimly among the trees; the diadets, standing near, untethered, snorted and leaped away; and Tarzan wheeled to face the largest lion he ever had seen—a lion that towered more than twice the ape-man's height above him.

How tremendous, how awe-inspiring Numa appeared to one the size of a Minunian!

The lion crouched, its tail extended, the tip moving ever so gently, but the ape-man was not deceived. He guessed what was coming, and even as the great cat sprang he turned and dove head foremost down the hole of the ratel. Behind him rattled the loose earth pushed into the burrow's mouth by Numa as he alighted upon the spot where Tarzan had stood.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SON OF THE FIRST WOMAN.

FOR three days the six traveled toward the east and then, upon the fourth, they turned south. A great forest loomed upon the distant southern horizon, sweeping also wide upon the east. To the southwest lay Trohanadalmakus, a good two days' journey for their tired diadets.

Tarzan often wondered what rest the little creatures obtained. At night they were turned loose to graze, but his knowledge of the habits of the carnivora assured him that the tiny antelope must spend the greater part of each night in terrified watching or in flight, yet every morning they were

back at the camp awaiting the pleasure of their masters.

That they did not escape, never to return, is doubtless due to two principal facts. One is that they have been for ages bred in the domes of the Minunians—they know no other life than with their masters, to whom they look for food and care—and the other is the extreme kindness and affection which the Minunians accord their beautiful beasts of burden, and which have won the love and confidence of the little animals to such an extent that the diadet is most contented when in the company of man.

It was during the afternoon of the fourth day of their flight that Talaskar suddenly called their attention to a small cloud of dust far to their rear. For a while all six watched it intently as it increased in size and drew nearer.

"It may be the long awaited pursuit," said Zoanthrohago.

"Or some of my own people from Trohanadalmakus," suggested Komodoflorensal.

"Whoever they are they greatly outnumber us," said Janzara, "and I think we should find shelter until we know their identity."

"We can reach the forest before they overtake us," said Oratharc, "and in the forest we may elude them if it is necessary to do so."

"I fear the forest," said Janzara.

"We have no alternative," said Zoanthrohago; "but even now I doubt that we can reach it ahead of them. Come, we must be quick!"

Never before had Tarzan of the Apes covered ground so rapidly upon the back of an animal. The diadets flew through the air in great bounds. Behind them the nucleus of the dust cloud had resolved itself into a dozen mounted warriors, against whom their four blades would be helpless. Their one hope, therefore, lay in reaching the forest ahead of their pursuers, and now it appeared that they would be successful and now it appeared that they would not.

The recently distant wood seemed rushing toward him as Tarzan watched ahead between the tiny horns of his graceful

mount, and, behind, the enemy was gaining. They were Veltoptismakusians—they were close enough now for the devices upon their helmets to be seen—and they had recognized their quarry for they cried aloud upon them to stop, calling several of them by name.

One of the pursuers forged further ahead than the others. He came now close behind Zoanthrohago, who rode neck and neck with Tarzan in the rear of their party. A half length ahead of Zoanthrohago was Janzara. The fellow called aloud to her.

"Princess!" he cried. "The king's pardon for you all if you return the slaves to us. Surrender and all will be forgiven."

Tarzan of the Apes heard and he wondered what the Veltoptismakusians would do. It must have been a great temptation, and he knew it. Had it not been for Talaskar he would have advised them to fall back among their friends, but he would not see the slave girl sacrificed. He drew his sword then and dropped back beside Zoanthrohago, although the other never guessed his purpose.

"Surrender and all will be forgiven!" shouted the pursuer again.

"Never!" cried Zoanthrohago.

"Never!" echoed Janzara.

"The consequences are yours," cried the messenger, and on they rushed, pursuers and pursued, toward the dark forest, while from just within its rim savage eyes watched the mad race and red tongues licked hungry lips in anticipation.

Tarzan had been glad to hear the reply given by both Zoanthrohago and Janzara whom he had found likable companions and good comrades. Janzara's whole attitude had changed since the very instant she had joined them in their attempted escape.

No longer was she the spoiled daughter of a despot, but a woman seeking happiness through the new love that she had found, or the old love that she had but just discovered, for she often told Zoanthrohago that she knew now that she always had loved him. And this new thing in her life made her more considerate and loving of others.

She seemed now to be trying to make

up to Talaskar for the cruelty of her attack upon her when she had first seen her. Her mad infatuation for Tarzan she now knew in its true light—because she had been refused him she wanted him, and she would have taken him as her prince to spite her father, whom she hated.

Komodoflorensal and Talaskar always rode together, but no words of love did the Trohanadalmakusian speak in the ear of the little slave girl. A great resolve was crystalizing in his mind, but it had as yet taken on no definite form. And Talaskar, happy just to be near him, rode blissfully through the first days of the only freedom she had ever known, but now all was forgotten except the instant danger of capture and its alternative concomitants, death or slavery.

The six urged their straining mounts ahead. The forest was so near now. Ah, if they could but reach it! There, one warrior might be as good as three and the odds against them would be reduced, for in the forest the whole twelve could not engage them at once and by careful maneuvering they doubtless could separate their pursuers.

They were going to make it! A great shout arose to the lips of Oratharc as his diadet leaped into the shadows of the first trees, and the others took it up, for a brief instant, and then it died upon their lips as they saw a giant hand reach down and snatch Oratharc from his saddle. They tried to stop and wheel their mounts, but it was too late.

Already they were in the forest and all about them was a horde of the hideous Zertalocolols. One by one they were snatched from their diadets, while their pursuers, who must have seen what was taking place just inside the forest, wheeled and galloped away.

Talaskar, writhing in the grip of a she Alali, turned toward Komodoflorensal.

"Good-by!" she cried. "This, at last, is the end, but I can die near you and so I am happier dying than I have been living until you came to Veltoptismakus."

"Good-by, Talaskar!" he replied. "Living I dared not tell you, but dying I can proclaim my love. Tell me that you love me."

"With all my heart, Komodoflorensai!" They seemed to have forgotten that another existed but themselves. In death they were alone with their love.

Tarzan found himself in the hand of a male and he also found himself wondering, even as he faced certain death, how it occurred that this great band of male and female Alali should be hunting together, and then he noticed the weapons of the males. They were not the crude bludgeon and the slinging stones that they had formerly carried, but long, trim spears, and bows and arrows.

And now the creature that held him had lifted him even with his face and was scrutinizing him and Tarzan saw a look of recognition and amazement cross the bestial features, and he, in turn, recognized his captor. It was the son of the First Woman.

Tarzan did not wait to learn the temper of his old acquaintance. Possibly their relations were altered now. Possibly they were not. He recalled the doglike devotion of the creature when last he had seen him and he put him to the test at once.

"Put me down!" he signed, peremptorily. "And tell your people to put down all of my people. Harm them not!"

Instantly the great creature set Tarzan gently upon the ground and immediately signaled his fellows to do the same with their captives. The man did immediately as they were bid and all of the women but one. She hesitated. The son of the First Woman leaped toward her, his spear raised like a whip, and the female cowered and set Talaskar down upon the ground.

Very proud, the son of the First Woman explained to Tarzan as best he could the great change that had come upon the Alali since the ape-man had given the men weapons and the son of the First Woman had discovered what a proper use of them would mean to the males of his kind. Now each male had a woman cooking for him—at least one, and some of them, the stronger, had more than one.

To entertain Tarzan and to show him what great strides civilization had taken in the land of the Zertalacolols, the son of the First Woman seized a female by the hair and, dragging her to him, struck her heav-

ily about the head and face with his clenched fist, and the woman fell upon her knees and fondled his legs, looking wistfully into his face, her own eloquent with love and admiration.

That night the six slept in the open surrounded by the great Zertalacolols and the next day they started across the plain toward Trohanadalmakus where Tarzan had resolved to remain until he regained his normal size, when he would make a determined effort to cut his way through the thorn forest to his own country.

The Zertalacolols went a short distance out into the plain with them, and both men and women tried in their crude, savage way, to show Tarzan their gratitude for the change that he had wrought among them, and the new happiness he had given them.

Two days later the six fugitives approached the domes of Trohanadalmakus. They had been seen by sentries when they were still a long way off, and a body of warriors rode forth to meet them, for it is always well to learn the nature of a visitor's business in Minuni before he gets too close to your home.

When the warriors discovered that Komodoflorensai and Tarzan had returned they shouted for joy and a number of them galloped swiftly back to the city to spread the news.

The fugitives were conducted at once to the throne room of Adendrohahkis and there that great ruler took his son in his arms and wept, so great was his happiness at having him returned safely to him. Nor did he forget Tarzan, although it was some time before he or the other Trohanadalmakusians could accustom themselves to the fact that this man, no bigger than they, was the giant who had dwelt among them a few moons since.

Adendrohahkis called Tarzan to the foot of the throne and there, before the nobles and warriors of Trohanadalmakus, he made him a zertol, or prince, and he gave him diadets and riches and allotted him quarters fitted to his rank, begging him to stay among them always.

Janzara, Zoanthrohago, and Oratharc he gave their liberty and permission to remain in Trohanadalmakus, and then Komodo-

florensal drew Talaskar to the foot of the throne.

"And now for myself I ask a boon, Adendrohahkis," he said. "As Zertolosto, I am bound by custom to wed a prisoner princess taken from another city; but in this slave girl have I found the one I love. Let me renounce my rights to the throne and have her instead."

Talaskar raised her hand as if to demur, but Komodoflorensal would not let her speak, and then Adendrohahkis arose and descended the steps at the foot of which Talaskar stood and, taking her by the hand, led her to a place beside the throne.

"You are bound by custom only, Komodoflorensal," he said, "to wed a princess, but custom is not law. A Trohanadamakusian may wed whom he pleases."

"And even though he were bound by law," said Talaskar, "to wed a princess, still might he wed me, for I am the daughter of Talaskhago, King of Mandalamakus. My mother was captured by the Veltoptismakusians but a few moons before my birth, which took place in the very chamber in which Komodoflorensal found me.

"She charged me to take my life before mating with any one less than a prince, but I would have forgotten her teachings had Komodoflorensal been but the son of a slave.

"That he was the son of a king I did not dream until the night we left Veltoptismakus, and I had already given him my heart long before, although he did not know it."

Weeks passed, and still no change came to Tarzan of the Apes. He was happy in his life with the Minunians, but he longed for his own people and the mate who would be grieving for him, and so he determined to set forth as he was, pass through the thorn forest, and make his way toward home, trusting to chance that he might escape the countless dangers that would infest his way. Perhaps he would come to his normal size somewhere during the long journey.

His friends sought to dissuade him, but he was determined, and at last, brooking no further delay, he set out toward the southeast in the direction that he thought

lay the point where he had entered the land of the Minuni. A kaniak, a body consisting of one thousand mounted warriors, accompanied him to the great forest, and there, after some days' delay, the son of the First Woman found him. The Minunians bade him good-by, and as he watched them ride away upon their graceful mounts something arose in his throat that only came upon those few occasions in his life that Tarzan of the Apes knew the meaning of homesickness.

The son of the First Woman and his savage band escorted Tarzan to the edge of the thorn forest. Farther than that they could not go. A moment later they saw him disappear among the thorns, with a wave of farewell to them.

For two days Tarzan, no larger than a Minunian, made his way through the thorn forest. He met small animals that now were large enough to be dangerous to him, but he met nothing that he could not cope with. By night he slept in the underground dens of the larger burrowing animals. Birds and eggs formed his food supply.

During the second night he awoke with a feeling of nausea suffusing him. A premonition of danger assailed him. It was dark as the grave in the burrow he had selected for the night.

Suddenly the thought smote him that he might be about to pass through the ordeal of regaining his normal stature. To have this thing happen while he lay buried in this tiny burrow would mean death, for he would be crushed or suffocated before he regained consciousness.

Already he felt dizzy, as one might feel who was upon the verge of unconsciousness. He stumbled to his knees and clawed his way up the steep acclivity that led to the surface. Would he be able to reach it in time?

He stumbled on, and then, abruptly, a burst of fresh night air smote his nostrils. He staggered to his feet. He was out! He was free!

Behind him he heard a low growl. Grasping his sword, he lunged forward among the thorn trees. How far he went, or in what direction, he did not know, but as he ran he instinctively tore his clothing from his

feverish body. It was still dark when he stumbled and fell unconscious to the ground.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RIVER DEVIL.

KHAMIS, the witch doctor, searched untiringly for Uhha, his young daughter. A tribal rumor had arisen that a River Devil had stolen her from their home village of Obebe, the cannibal. The father suspected that a ravenous lion or a marauding leopard had taken the child, but he doggedly made pilgrimages to other villages, some of them remote from his own country. So far, he had found no slightest trace of the girl or her abductor.

Khamis was returning from another fruitless search that had extended far to the east of the village of Obebe, skirting the Great Thorn Forest a few miles north of the Ugogo. It was early morning. He had just broken his lonely camp and set out upon the last leg of his homeward journey when his keen old eyes discovered something unusual lying at the edge of a small open space a hundred yards away.

He did not know what it was, but instinct bade him to investigate. Cautiously moving nearer, he presently identified the thing as a human knee showing above the low grass that covered the clearing. He crept closer, and suddenly his eyes narrowed and his breath made a single, odd little sound as it sucked rapidly between his lips in mechanical reaction to surprise.

For that which he saw was the body of what could be naught but a River Devil—a naked, brown skinned, beautifully proportioned man; which is one of the water fiend's disguises, of course. It was upon its back with one knee flexed—the knee that he had seen above the grasses.

His spear advanced and ready, he approached until he stood above the motionless form. Was the River Devil dead, or was he asleep? Placing the point of his spear against the brown breast, Khamis prodded. The Devil did not awaken. He was not asleep, then; nor did he appear to be dead. Khamis knelt and placed an ear

above the creature's heart. He was not dead!

The witch doctor thought quickly. In his heart he did not believe in River Devils, yet there was a chance that there might be such things, and perhaps this one was shamming unconsciousness, or temporarily absent from the flesh it assumed as a disguise so that it might go among men without arousing suspicion.

But, too, it probably was the abductor of his missing daughter. That thought filled him with rage and with courage. He must force the truth from those lips even though the creature were a fiend.

He unwound a bit of fiber rope from about his waist and, turning the helpless form over, quickly bound the wrists behind it. Then he sat down beside it to wait. An hour passed before signs of returning consciousness appeared, then the River Devil opened his eyes and looked up at Khamis.

"Where is Uhha, my daughter?" demanded the witch doctor.

The River Devil tried to free his arms, but they were too tightly bound. He made no reply to Khamis's question. It was as if he had not heard it. He ceased struggling and lay back again, resting. After a while he opened his eyes once more and lay looking at Khamis; but he did not speak.

"Get up!" commanded the witch doctor, and prodded him with a spear.

The River Devil rolled over on his side, flexed his right knee, raised on one elbow and finally got to his feet. Khamis prodded him in the direction of the trail. Toward dusk they arrived at the village of Obebe, the cannibal.

When the warriors and the women and the children saw what Khamis was bringing to the village they became very much excited, and had it not been for the witch doctor, of whom they were afraid, they would have knifed and stoned the prisoner to death before he was fairly inside the village gates; but Khamis did not want the River Devil killed—not yet.

He wanted first to force from him the truth concerning Uhha. So far he had been unable to get a word out of his prisoner. Incessant questioning, emphasized by many

prods of the spear point, had elicited nothing.

Khamis led his prisoner into a hut, bound him even more securely, and placed two warriors on guard. Obebe came to see him. He, too, questioned him, but the River Devil only looked blankly in the face of the chief.

"I will make him speak," said Obebe. "After we have finished eating we will have him out and make him speak. I know many ways."

"You must not kill him," said the witch doctor. "He knows what became of Uhha, and until he tells me no one shall kill him."

"He will speak before he dies," said Obebe.

"He is a River Devil, and will never die," said Khamis, reverting to an old tribal controversy.

After the cannibals had eaten they heated irons in a fire near the hut of the witch doctor, who was squatting before the entrance working rapidly with numerous charms—bits of wood wrapped in leaves, pieces of stone, some pebbles, a zebra's tail.

Villagers were congregating about Khamis until presently the prisoner could no longer see him. A little later he was taken out and pushed roughly toward the hut of the witch doctor.

Obebe was there, as he saw after the guards had opened a way through the throng, and he stood beside the fire in the center of the circle. It was only a small fire; just enough to keep a couple of irons hot.

"Where is Uhha, my daughter?" demanded Khamis.

The River Devil did not answer. Not once had he spoken since Khamis had captured him.

"Burn out one of his eyes," said Obebe. "That will make him speak."

"Cut out his tongue!" screamed a woman.

"Then he cannot speak at all, you she fool!" cried Khamis.

The witch doctor arose and put the question again, but received no reply. Then he struck the River Devil a heavy blow

in the face. Khamis had lost his temper, so that he did not fear even the sinister silence of this fiend.

"You will answer me now!" he screamed, and, stooping, he seized a red hot iron.

"The right eye first!" shrilled Obebe.

Suddenly the muscles upon the back and shoulders of the prisoner leaped into action, rolling beneath his brown hide. For just an instant he appeared to exert a terrific physical force, there was a snapping sound at his back as the strands about his wrists parted, and then steel-thewed fingers fell upon the right wrist of the witch doctor.

Blazing eyes burned into his. Khamis dropped the red hot rod, his fingers paralyzed by the pressure upon his wrist, and he screamed, for he saw death in the angry face of the river god.

Obebe leaped frantically to his feet. Warriors pressed forward—but not near enough to be within reach of the River Devil. They had never been certain of the safety of tempting fate in any such manner as Khamis and Obebe had been about to do. Now here was the result!

The wrath of the River Devil would fall upon them all. They fell back, some of them, and that was a cue for others to fall back. In the minds of all was the same thought: "If I have no hand in this, the River Devil will not be angry with me." Then they turned and fled to their huts, stumbling over women and children who were trying to outdistance their lords and masters.

Obebe turned now to flee, also, and the River Devil picked Khamis up and held him in his two hands high above his head, and ran after the chief. Obebe dodged into his own hut. He had scarce reached the center of it when there came a terrific crash upon the light, thatched roof, which gave way beneath a heavy weight. A body descending upon the chief filled him with terror.

The River Devil must have leaped in through the roof of his hut to destroy him! The instinct of self-preservation arose temporarily above his fear of the supernatural, for now he was convinced that Khamis had been right and the creature they had held prisoner was indeed the River Devil.

And Obebe drew the knife at his side and lunged it again and again into the creature that had leaped upon him, and when he knew that life was extinct he stood proudly erect and, dragging the body after him, stepped out of his hut into the light of the moon and the fires.

"Come, my people!" he cried. "You have nothing to fear; for I, Obebe, your chief, have slain the River Devil with my own hands," and then he looked down at the thing trailing behind him, and gave a gasp, and sat down suddenly in the dust of the village street. For the body at his heels was that of Khamis, the witch doctor.

His people came, and when they saw what had happened they said nothing, but looked terrified. Obebe examined his hut and the ground around it. He took several warriors and searched the village. The stranger had departed.

They went to the gates. These were closed, but in the dust before them was the imprint of naked feet—the naked feet of a white man. Then Obebe came back to his hut, where his frightened people stood waiting him.

"Khamis was mistaken," he said. "The creature was not the River Devil. It must have been the man that I have heard called Tarzan of the Apes, for only he could hurl Khamis so high above his head that he would fall through the roof of a hut, and only he could pass unaided over our gates."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SUBTLEST VIBRATION.

A WAZIRI, returning from the village of Obebe the cannibal, encountered a hungry python on the trail. In making a wide and discreet detour through the jungle, he discovered a human skeleton.

This find, in itself, was nothing remarkable. Many bones lie alongside savage trails in Africa.

But this skeleton caused him to pause. It was that of a child. Yet this alone was not enough to delay a warrior hastening through an unfriendly country back toward his own people.

But Usula, the spearman, had heard

strange tales in the village of Obebe the cannibal where a vague hint had brought him in search of his beloved master, the Big Bwana. Obebe had promptly denied that he had seen or heard anything of the giant white man, Tarzan of the Apes. He spoke much and argumentatively of a River Devil, instead.

From other members of the tribe, however, the Waziri learned that the terrible creature whom the chief foolishly tried to torture had left in the dust the footprints of a white man, lacking the callouses and the prehensile, outspread toes of the natives. Usula, therefore, was on the lookout for any clew that would fit the story of Obebe, or give that cannibal chieftain the lie.

When he saw the small skeleton near the trail he recalled the story of the missing Uhha; poked among the bones with the blade of his spear and retrieved a copper necklace which a woman of the cannibal tribe had described as belonging to the daughter of the ill-fated witch doctor. And then Usula knew that Obebe had lied. A River Devil leaves behind no trace of the human victim.

So now the warrior renewed his eager search for the white man who had pressed straight, firm toes in the dust of Obebe's village path. This identification, coupled with the tale of his terrific strength, pointed to none other than Tarzan of the Apes.

Usula sought his missing master with all the hunting skill of his meat eating tribe. He climbed trees to take observations of the wide veldt where grazed the antelope herds.

If, miles away, he saw a flurried movement among the grazing animals he made his way there. But always the alarm had been from some beast of prey, perhaps a hunting leopard, or cheetah, or mayhap only the scent of lion brought down on the wind.

And ever the warrior cast a raging glance aloft at the arching sky to where the vultures moved in their sentinel circles. He had a sullen, bitter fear of seeing these slow, feathery windings turn into an aerial funnel that should touch the earth where Tarzan of the Apes might lie helpless or even beyond help.

Three days after finding the child's skeleton, as he moved silently along the trail close to the Great Thorn Forest he came suddenly to a halt, the hand grasping his heavy spear, tensing in readiness. In a little open place he saw a man, an almost naked man, lying upon the ground. The man was alive—he saw him move—but what was he doing?

Usula crept closer, making no noise. He moved around until he could observe the man from another angle and then he saw a horrid sight. This man was white and he lay beside the carcass of a long dead buffalo, greedily devouring the dried remnants of hide that clung to the bleaching bones.

The man raised his head a little, and Usula, catching a better view of his face, gave a cry of horror. Then the man looked up and grinned foolishly. It was the Big Bwana!

Usula ran to him and raised him upon his knees, but the man only smiled and grinned like an infant as yet without the power of speech.

At his side, caught over one of the horns of the buffalo, was the Big Bwana's golden locket with the great diamonds set in it. Usula replaced it about the master's neck.

He then built a strong shelter for him near by and hunted food, and for many days he remained until Tarzan's strength came back; but his mind did not come back, nor did his speech. And thus, in this condition, the faithful Usula led his master home.

They found many wounds and bruises upon his body and his head; some old, some new, some trivial, some serious; and they sent to England for a great surgeon to come out to Africa to seek to mend the poor thing that once had been Tarzan of the Apes.

The dogs that had once loved Lord Greystoke slunk uneasily from this brainless creature. Jad-bal-ja, the Golden Lion, growled when the man was brought near his cage.

Korak, the killer, paced the floor in dumb despair, for his mother was on her way from England, and what would be the effect upon her of this awful blow? He hesitated even to contemplate it.

The surgeon arrived first at the bungalow of the ape-man. He examined his patient at great length, paying particular attention to the skull. And the puzzled shaking of the scientist's head was an added terror to the hearts of Korak and Merriem, his wife.

Being a truly great surgeon, he did not operate at once. Instead, he discoursed learnedly of "fictitious imbecility," "amnesia," "aphasia," and the like, and then courteously translated the terms into common phrases for his lay hearers.

"Tarzan has sustained some subtle shock," he declared, "and there probably is lacking only a slight vibration to restore him to his normal senses. You will observe that he has not the true signs of imbecility—his head does not loll on his neck; he does not drool at the mouth.

"His amnesia—loss of memory—is complete for the moment, as is his aphasia—loss of speech. As opposed to these disabilities is the fact **that he reacts swiftly** to a brusque touch or harsh sound.

"Undoubtedly, he fled for many hours in the jungle from pursuing beasts of prey and, perhaps, imaginary dangers until he dropped exhausted. Those hardships, however, do not account for his mental condition.

"I shall await the arrival of his wife before operating on the head."

Lady Greystoke was a tired and dusty traveler as she alighted before the rose embowered entrance of the bungalow. Korak, her son, would have detained her in the hope that his words of warning might prepare her for the worst. He had not dared to put all the truth in his cable and radio messages.

She gently put his hands aside.

"Take me to my man, at once!" she said, softly but imperiously.

Her distressed son motioned to Merriem and the surgeon to accompany them, and so the four entered the room where Tarzan of the Apes sat staring dully at the shining world visible through the window. He glanced with a blank air at the intruders, and turned again to his brainless contemplation.

"He does not know any of us," Korak whispered to his mother. "Wait until after the operation before you see him again. You can do him no good, and to see him this way is too hard a strain upon you."

Again Lady Greystoke calmly disregarded the plea of her son. It was as if she instinctively knew more of the ailing human before her than did the great surgeon.

With a cautionary finger on her proud lips to enforce silence on the spectators, she stole silently toward the unsuspecting ape-

man. Here she clapped her slender hands onto his eyelids and called out, laughingly:

"Guess!"

At the touch of these trembling, loving hands an electric shock appeared to course through Tarzan of the Apes. His lips spread in a smile, a human, understanding amusement; and he laughed the deep throated note of his normal days.

"As if I wouldn't know the touch of your fingers, my dear wife, in this world or the next!" he said triumphantly.

THE END



THE SPOILERS

THE deer have left their forest feeding grounds,
And on the hill,
Where the last snows of winter linger still,
The muffled clamor of the ax resounds;
While from their reedy coverts flapping forth,
The wild duck seek the silence of the North.

The prophet pines that line the lichened ledge
Gaze grave below,
Where melt, like sunlit banks of springtime snow
The swift-receding miles of forest edge;
Where, nest-deserting on his northward flight,
A loon wails from the shadows of the night.

The plain's wind brings the reek of camp-smoke curled,
The stir of Man,
Who, cunning working since the earth began,
Slow-forged his mighty chain that binds the world;
To grip it close with groping, giant clutch,
And leave it scarred and broken at his touch.

But calm, serene, against their mountain throne,
The lone pines stand,
Unmarred by touch of Man's despoiling hand,
The yoke of his enslaving chain unknown;
While in their kingly hearts old visions rise
Of pine-pricked leagues and starry northern skies.

Martha Haskell Clark.