

Under the Moons of Mars

A Wonder Romance by the Creator of "TARZAN"

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

CHAPTER IV.

A Glimpse of Kindness.

WHAT will be the manner of her going out? inquired Sola. "She is very small and very beautiful. I had hoped that they would hold her for ransom."

Sarkoja and the other women grunted angrily at this evidence of weakness on the part of Sola. "It is sad, Sola, that you were not born a million years ago," snapped Sarkoja, "when all the hollows of the land were filled with water and the peoples were as soft as the stuff they called upon. In our day we have progressed to a point where such sentiments mark the weakling."

"It will not be well for you to permit Tara Tarkas to learn that you hold such degenerate sentiments, as I doubt that he would care to entrust such a woman with the grave responsibilities of matrimony."

"I see nothing wrong with my expression of interest in this red woman," retorted Sola. "She has never harmed us, nor would she should we have fallen into her hands. It is only the men of her kind who war upon us, and I have always thought that their attitude toward us is but the reflection of ours toward them. They live at peace with all their fellows, except when duty calls upon them to make war, while we are at peace with none; forever warring among men, and even in our own communities the individuals fight among themselves."

"Oh! It is one continual, tiresome, awful period of bloodshed from dawn until the sun sets, until we gladly embrace the bosom of the river of mystery, the dark and ancient sea which carries us to an unknown, but at least no more frightful and terrible existence. Fortunately indeed is he who meets his end in an early death."

"Say what you please to Tara Tarkas, he can meet out no worse fate to me than a continuation of the horrible existence we are forced to lead in this life."

This wild outbreak on the part of Sola so greatly surprised and shocked the other women, that after a few words of general reprimand, they all lapsed into silence and were soon asleep.

CHAPTER V. To the Rescue.

EARLY the next morning I was astrid. Considerable freedom was allowed me, as Sola had informed me that so long as I did not attempt to leave the city, I was free to go and come as I pleased. She had warned me, however, against venturing forth unarmed, as this city, like all other deserted metropolises of an ancient Martian civilization, was peopled by the great white apes of my second day's adventure.

In advising me that I must not leave the boundaries of the city, Sola had explained that Woola would prevent this any way might I attempt it.

On this morning I had chosen a new street to explore when suddenly I found myself at the limits of the city.

Before me were low hills pierced by narrow and inviting ravines. As I approached the boundary line Woola ran anxiously before me and thrust his body against my legs. His expression was pleading rather than precocious, nor did he bare his great tusks or utter his fearful guttural warnings.

I patted him and he accompanied me without further objection as I walked on into the country for several miles. On regaining the plaza I had my third glimpse of the captive girl.

She was standing with her guards before the entrance to the women's chambers, as I approached she gave me one haughty glance and turned her back full upon me.

The act was so womanly, so earthly womanly, that though it stung my pride, it also warmed my heart with a feeling of companionship. It was good to know that some one else on Mars besides myself had human instincts of a woman's nature, and that through the manifestation of them was so painful and mortifying.

Seeing that the prisoner seemed the centre of attraction I halted to witness what was taking place. I had not long to wait, for presently Lorquas Ptomel and his retinue of chieftains approached the building and, signing the guards to follow with the prisoner, entered the audience chamber.

The council squatted upon the steps of the rostrum, while below them stood the prisoner and her guards. I saw that one of the women was Sarkoja, and thus understood how she had been present at the hearing of the preceding day, the results of which she had reported to the occupants of our dormitory last night.

Her attitude toward the captive was most harsh and brutal. When she held her she sank her rudimentary nails into the poor girl's flesh, and her attention to her in a most painful manner. When it was necessary to move from one spot to another she either jerked her roughly, or pushed her headlong before her.

As Lorquas Ptomel raised his eyes to address the prisoner they fell on me and he turned to Tara Tarkas with a word and gesture of impatience. Tara Tarkas made some reply which I could not catch, but which caused Lorquas Ptomel to smile; after which they paid no further attention to me.

"What is your name?" asked Lorquas Ptomel, addressing the prisoner. "Dejah Thoris, daughter of Mors Kajak of Hellum."

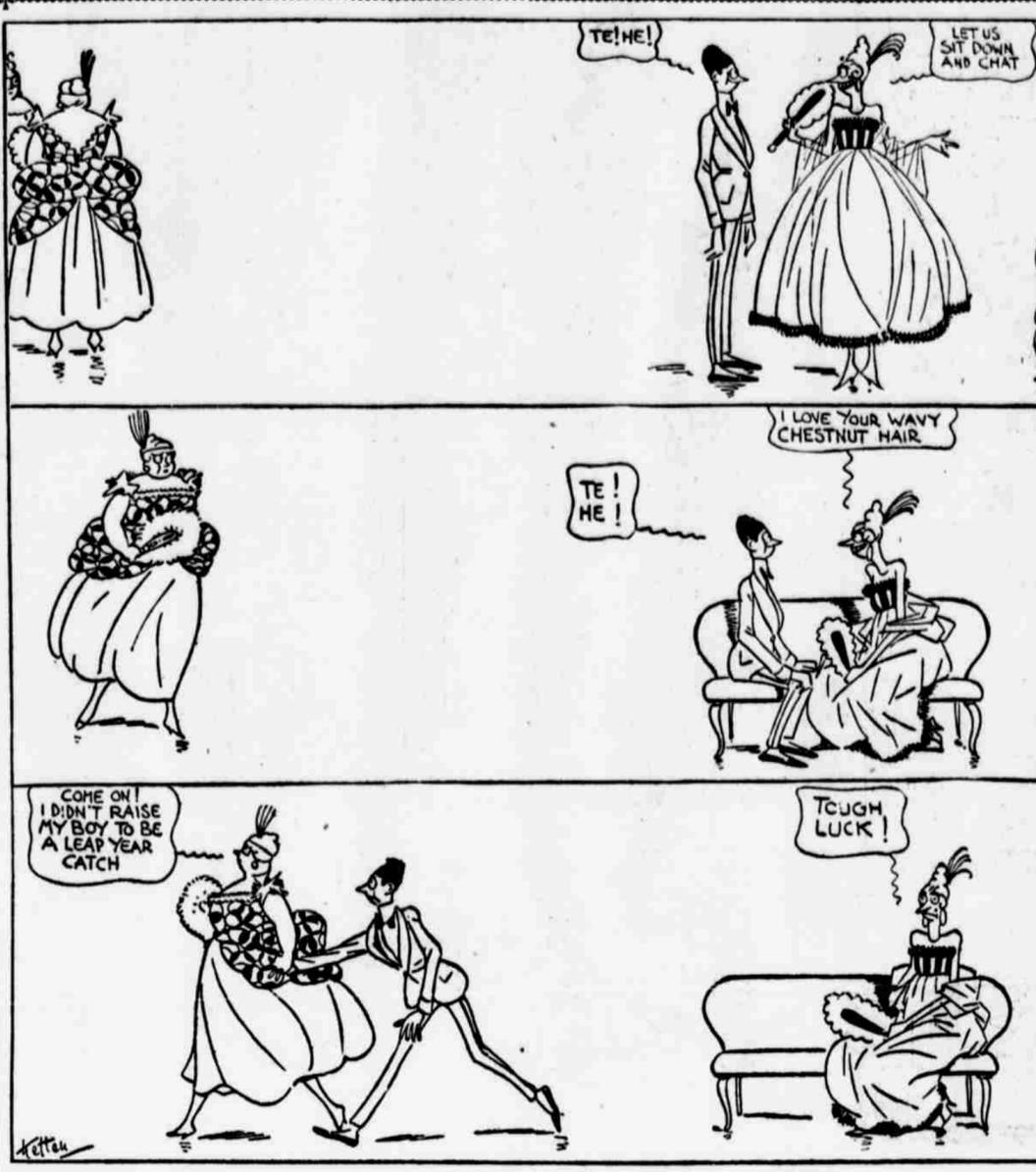
"And the nature of your expedition?" he continued.

"It was purely scientific research party sent out by my father's father, the Jeddak of Hellum, to rechart the air currents and to take atmospheric density tests," replied the fair prisoner in a low, well-modulated voice. "We were unprepared for battle," she continued, "as we were on a peaceful mission, as our banners and the colors of our craft denoted. The work we were doing was as much in your interests as ours, for you know full well that were it not for our labors and the fruits of our scientific operations there would not be enough air or water on Mars to support a single human life."

Tough Luck!

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By Maurice Kettner



as the inquiring glances of the chieftains.

CHAPTER VI. New Bonds.

AS we reached the open the two female guards who had been detailed to watch over Dejah Thoris hurried over and made as though to assume custody of her once more.

The poor child shrank against me and I felt her two little hands fold tightly over my arm. Waving the women away, I informed them that Sola would attend the captive hereafter, and I further warned Sarkoja that any more of her cruel attentions bestowed upon Dejah Thoris would result in Sarkoja's sudden and painful demise.

So Sarkoja gave us an ugly look and departed to hatch up deviltries against us.

I soon found Sola and explained to her that I wished her to guard Dejah Thoris as she had guarded me; that I wished her to find other quarters where they would not be molested by Sarkoja, and I finally informed her that I myself would take up my quarters among the men.

Sola glanced at the accommodations which I carried in my hand and slung across my shoulder.

"You are a great chieftain now, John Carter," she said, "and I must do your bidding, though indeed I am glad to do it under any circumstances. The man whose metal you carry was young, but he was a great warrior, and by his promotions and kills had won his way close to the rank of Tara Tarkas, and several others had followed Lorquas Ptomel only. You are eleventh; there are but ten chieftains in this community who rank you in prowess."

"And if I should kill Lorquas Ptomel?" I asked.

"You would be first, John Carter. But you may only win that honor by the will of the entire council that Lorquas Ptomel meet you in combat, or should he attack you, you may kill him in self-defense and thus win first place."

"I accompanied Sola and Dejah Thoris in a search for new quarters. We found these in a building nearer the audience chamber and of far more pretentious architecture than our former habitation. We also found here real sleeping apartments with ancient beds of highly wrought metal swung from enormous gold chains depending from the marble ceilings."

"Sola departed, Dejah Thoris turned to me with a faint smile. "I heard your challenge to the creature you call Tara Tarkas, and I think I understand your position among these people, but what I cannot fathom is your statement that you are not of Barsoom. In the name of my first ancestor, then, where may you be from?"

Briefly, I told her my story. We fell into a general conversation then, asking and answering many questions on each side. She was curious to learn of the customs of my people, and displayed a remarkable knowledge of events on earth. When I questioned her closely on this seeming familiarity with earthly things she laughed and cried out:

"Why every schoolboy on Barsoom knows the geography and much concerning the fauna and flora, as well as the history of your planet fully as well as of his own. Can we not see everything which takes place upon earth—as you call it? Is it not hanging there in the heavens in plain sight?"

This baffled me. I must confess fully as much as my statements had confounded her, and I told her so. She then explained roughly the instruments her people had used and been perfecting for ages, which permit them to throw upon a screen a perfect image of what is transpiring upon any planet and upon many of the stars.

At this point Sola returned with our meagre belongings and her young Martian protegee, who of course would have to share the quarters with them. Sola asked us if we had had a visitor during her absence, and seemed much surprised when we answered in the negative. It seemed that as she had mounted the approach to the upper floors where our quarters were located, she had met Sarkoja descending.

count to Tai Hajus. It is I who shall have to face Tara Tarkas, and either demonstrate my right to command or give up the metal from my dead carcass to a better man, for such is the custom of the Tharks.

"I have no quarrel with Tara Tarkas," together we rule supreme the greatest of the lesser communities among the green men. We do not wish to fight between ourselves, and so if you were dead, John Carter, I should be glad.

"Under two conditions only, however, may you be killed by us without orders from Tai Hajus—in personal combat in self-defense, should you attack one of us, or were you apprehended in an attempt to escape."

"As a matter of justice, I must warn you that we only await one of these two excuses for ridding ourselves of so great a responsibility."

"The safe delivery of the red girl to Tai Hajus is of the greatest importance. Not in a thousand years have the Tharks made such a capture. She is the granddaughter of the greatest of the red jeddaks, who is also our bitterest enemy."

"I have spoken. The red girl told us that we were without the softer sentiments of humanity, but we are just and truthful race. You may go."

Turning, I left the audience chamber. So this was the beginning of Sarkoja's persecution! I know that none other than she could be responsible for this report which had reached the ears of Lorquas Ptomel so quickly, and now I recalled those portions of our conversation which dealt with our escape and upon my origin.

Instead, however, of putting thoughts of possible escape from my mind, my audience with Lorquas Ptomel only served to centre my every faculty on this subject. Now, more than before, the absolute necessity for escape, in so far as Dejah Thoris was concerned, was impressed upon me, for I was convinced that some horrible fate awaited her at the headquarters of Tai Hajus.

As described by Sola, this monster was the exaggerated personification of the ages of cruelty, ferocity and brutality from which he had descended.

As I wandered about the plaza, lost in my gloomy forebodings, Tara Tarkas approached me on his way from the audience chamber. His demeanor toward me was unchanged, and he greeted me as though we had not just parted.

"Where are your quarters, John Carter?" he asked.

"I have selected none," I replied. "It seemed best that I quartered either by myself or among the other warriors, and I was awaiting an opportunity to ask your advice. As you know," and I smiled, "I am not yet familiar with all the customs of the Tharks."

"Come with me," he directed, and together we moved off across the plaza to a building which adjoined that occupied by Sola and her charges.

"My quarters are on the first floor of this building," he said. "The second floor is fully occupied by warriors, but the third floor and the floors above are vacant. You may take your choice of these."

"I understand," he continued, "that you have given your woman to the red prisoner. Well, as you have said, your ways are not our ways, but you can fight well enough to do about as you please. Thus, if you wish to give your woman to a captive, it is your own affair."

"As a chieftain, however, you should have those to serve you, and in accordance with our customs you may select any of the females of the red prisoner, except in the matter of preparing food, and so he promised to send women to me for this purpose and also for the care of my arms and the manufacture of my ammunition, which he said would be necessary."

I suggested that they might also bring some of the sleeping silks and furs which belonged to me as spoils of the combat, for the nights were cold and I had none of my own. He promised to do so, and departed.

Left alone, I ascended the winding corridor to the upper floors in search of suitable quarters. The beauties of the building were repeated in this, and, as usual, I was soon lost in a tour of investigation and discovery.

I finally chose a front room on the third floor, because this brought me nearer to Dejah Thoris, who was quartered on the second floor of the adjoining building.

My thoughts were cut short by the advent of several young females bearing loads of weapons, silks, furs, jewels, cooking utensils, and casks of food and drink, including considerable quantities of the most delicious wine.

It was in the direction they placed the stuff in one of the back rooms, and then departed, only to return with a second load, which they advised me constituted the balance of my goods. On the second trip they were accompanied by ten or fifteen other women and youths, who, it seemed, formed the retinue of the two chieftains.

One of the girls I charged with the duties of my stimple cuisine, and directed the others to take up the various activities which had formerly constituted their vocations.

Thereafter I saw little of them, nor did I care to.

CHAPTER VIII. The Old Climax.

FOLLOWING the battle with the airships, the community remained within the city for several days, abandoning the homeward march until they could feel reasonably assured that the ships would not return. To be caught on the open

THE NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE NOVEL IN THE EVENING WORLD The Great Shadow By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

plains with a cavalcade of chariots and children was far from the desire of even so warlike a people as the green Martians.

"During our period of inactivity Tara Tarkas had instructed me in many of the customs and arts of war familiar to the Tharks, including lessons in riding and guiding the great beasts which bore the warriors. These creatures, which are known as thoats, are as dangerous and vicious as their masters; but when once subdued are sufficiently tractable for the purposes of the green Martians."

Two of these animals had fallen to me from the warriors whose metal I wore, and in short time I could handle them quite as well as the native warriors.

The method was not at all complicated. If the thoats did not respond with sufficient celerity to the telepathic instructions of their riders they were dealt a terrific blow between the ears with the butt of a pistol, and if they showed fight this treatment was continued until the brutes either were subdued or had unseated their riders, often with fatal result.

In the latter event it immediately became a life and death struggle between the man and the beast. If the warrior were quick enough with his pistol he might live to ride again, though upon some other beast; if not, his torn and mangled body was gathered up by his women and buried in accordance with the Tharkian custom.

My experience with Woola determined me to attempt the experiment of kindness in my treatment of my first Martians. I was sure that they could not unseat me, and even rapped them sharply between the ears to impress upon them my authority and mastery.

"I have not, however, won their confidence in much the same manner as I had adopted countless times with my many mundane mounts. I was always a good hand with animals, and I was, moreover, a very good horseman. I brought more lasting and satisfactory results, I was always kind and humane in my dealings with the lower orders. I could take a human life, if necessary, with far less compunction than that of a poor, unreasoning, irresponsible brute."

In the course of a few days my thoats were the worse of the entire treatment. They would follow me like dogs, rubbing their great snouts against my body in awkward evidence of affection, and respond to my every command with alacrity. Only the warriors who caused the Martians to ascribe to me the possession of some earthly power unknown on Mars.

"How have you bewitched them?" asked Tara Tarkas one afternoon, when he had seen me run my arm far between the great jaws of one of my thoats which had wedged my foot between two of his teeth while feeding.

"By kindness," I replied. "You see, Tara Tarkas, the softer sentiments of the First Day have been with me in the light of battle, as well as upon my march, I know that my thoats will obey my every command, and therefore my fighting efficiency is enhanced, and I am better able to do duty which would cause the Martians warriors to ascribe to me the possession of some earthly power unknown on Mars."

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