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(Continued from last week)

Presently Akut came up with him. To the beast there was less of horror in the sight than to the lad, yet even the great ape growled beneath his breath at useless torture being inflicted upon the helpless slaves.

He looked at the boy. Now that he had caught up with the creatures of his own kind, why was it that he did not rush forward and greet them? He put the question to his companion.

"They are friends," muttered the boy. "I would not travel with such as they, for if I did I should set upon them and kill them the first time they beat their people as they are beating them now. But," he added after a moment's thought, "I can ask them the whereabouts of the nearest port, and then, Akut, we can leave them."

The ape made no reply, and the boy swung to the ground and started at a brisk walk toward the safari. He was a hundred yards away, perhaps, when one of the whites caught sight of him.

The man gave a shout of alarm, instantly yelling his rifle upon the boy and firing. The bullet struck just in front of his mark, scattering turf and fallen leaves against the lad's feet. A second later the other white and the black soldiers of the rear guard were firing hysterically at him.

Jack leaped behind a tree, unhit. Days of panic ridden flight through the jungle had lifted Carl Jensen and Sven Malblin with jangling nerves and their native boys with unresolvable terror. Every new note from behind sounded to their frightened ears the coming of the sheik and his blood-thirsty followers.

When, after conquering their nervousness, the rear guard advanced upon the enemy's position to investigate they found nothing, for Akut and the boy had retreated out of range of the unfriendly guns.

Jack was disheartened and sad. He had not entirely recovered from the depressing effect of the unfriendly reception he had received at the hands of the blacks, and now he had found an even more hostile one accorded him by men of his own color.

"The lesser beasts flee from me in terror," he murmured half to himself; the greater beasts are ready to tear me to pieces at sight. Black men would kill me with their spears or arrows. And now white men, my own kind, have fired upon and driven me away.

"Are all the creatures of the world my enemies? Has the son of Tarzan no friend other than Akut?"

The old ape drew closer to the boy. "There are the great apes," he said. "They only will be the friends of Akut's friend. Only the great apes will welcome the son of Tarzan. You have seen that men want nothing of you. Let us go now and continue our search for the great apes—our people."

CHAPTER VII. A Rescue. A year had passed since the two Swedes had been driven in terror from the savage country where the sheik held sway. Little Merion still played with her doll Geeka, lavishing all her childish love upon the now almost hopeless ruin of what had never, even in its palmy days, possessed even a slight degree of loveliness.

The sheik had been away for a long time, conducting a caravan of ivory, skins and rubber far into the north. The interim had been one of great peace for Merion. It is true that Mabunu had still been with her, to pinch or beat her as the mood seized the villainous old hag, but Mabunu was only one. When the sheik was there also there were two of them, and the sheik was stronger and more brutal even than Mabunu.

Little Merion often wondered why the grim old man hated her so. It is true that he was cruel and unjust to all with whom he came in contact, but to Merion he reserved his greatest cruelties, his most studied injustices.

As the little girl played she prattled continuously to her companion, propped in a sitting position with a couple of twigs. She was totally absorbed in Geeka—so much so that she did not note the gentle swaying of the branches of the tree above her as they bent to the body of a creature that had entered them stealthily from the jungle.

In happy ignorance the little girl played on, while from above two steady eyes looked down upon her, unblinking, unwavering. There was none other than the little girl in this part of the village, which had been almost deserted since the sheik had left long months before upon his journey toward the north.

And out in the jungle, an hour's march from the village, the sheik was leading his returning caravan homeward.

A year had passed since the white men had fired upon the lad and driven him back into the jungle to take up his search for the only remaining creatures to whom he might look for companionship—the great apes. For months the two had wandered eastward, deeper and deeper into the jungle.

The year had done much for the boy—turning his already mighty muscles

to thews of steel, developing his muscularity to a point where it verged upon the uncanny, perfecting his arboreal instincts and training him in the use of both natural and artificial weapons of offense and defense.

He had become at last a creature of marvelous physical powers and mental cunning. He was still but a boy, yet so great was his strength that the powerful anthropoid with which he often engaged in mimic battles was no match for him. Akut had taught him to fight as the bull ape fights, nor ever was there a teacher better fitted to instruct in the savage warfare of primordial man or a pupil better equipped to profit by the lessons of a master.

As the two searched for a band of the almost extinct species of ape to which Akut belonged they lived upon the best the jungle afforded. Antelope and zebra fell to the boy's spear or were dragged down by the two powerful beasts of prey, who leaped upon them from some overhanging limb or from the ambush of the undergrowth beside the trail to the water hole or the ford.

Akut and Jack, now called Korak in the ape language, were moving slowly down the wind, and warily, because the advantage was with whatever beast might chance to be hunting ahead of them, where their scent spoor was being borne by the light breeze. Suddenly the two halted simultaneously. Two heads were cocked upon one side. Like creatures howl from solid rock they stood immovable, listening. Not a muscle quivered.

For several seconds they remained thus. Then Korak advanced cautiously a few yards and leaped nimbly into a tree. Akut followed close upon his heels. Neither had made a sound that would have been appreciable to human ears at a dozen paces.

Stopping often to listen, they crept forward through the trees. That both were greatly puzzled was apparent from the questioning looks they cast at one another from time to time.

Finally the lad caught a glimpse of a pathside a hundred yards ahead and beyond it the tops of some goat skin tents and a number of thatched huts. His lip upturned in a savage snarl. Black! How he hated them! He signed to Akut to remain where he was while he advanced to reconnoiter.

He heard a voice beyond the pathside, and toward that he made his way. A great tree overhung the enclosure at the very point from which the voice came. Into this Korak crept. His spear was ready in his hand. A human being. All that his eyes required was a single glance to show him his target; then, lightning-like, the missile would fly to its point.

With raised spear he crept among the branches of the tree, gliding downward in search of the owner of the voice which rose to him from below.

At last he saw a human back. The spear hand flew to the limit of the throwing position to gather the force that would send the iron shod missile completely through the body of the unconscious victim. And then the Killer paused. He leaped forward a little to get a better view of the target.

He lowered his spear cautiously that it might make no noise by scraping against foliage or branches. Quietly he crouched in a comfortable position along a great limb, and there he lay with wide eyes looking down in wonder upon the creature he had crept upon to kill—looking down upon a little girl, a little nut brown maiden.

Korak wondered what the girl would do were he to drop suddenly from the tree to her side. Most likely she would scream and run away. Then would come the men of the village with spears and guns and set upon him. They would either kill him or drive him away.

A lupus rose in the boy's throat. He craved the companionship of his own kind, though he hardly realized how greatly. He would have liked to slip down beside her, though he knew from the words he had overheard that she spoke a language with which he was unfamiliar.

At last he hit upon a plan. He would attract her attention and reassure her by a smiling greeting from a

greater distance. Silently he wormed his way back into the tree. It was his intention to haul her from beyond the pathside, giving her the feeling of security which he imagined the stout barricade would afford.

He had scarcely left his position in the tree when his attention was attracted by a considerable noise upon the opposite side of the village. By moving a little he could see the gate at the far end of the main street.

A number of men, women and children were running toward it. It swung open, revealing the head of a caravan upon the opposite side. It trooped in motly organization—black slaves and dark hued Arabs of the northern deserts; cursing camel drivers urging on their vicious charges; overburdened donkeys, waving sadly pendulous ears while they endured with stoic patience the brutalities of their masters; goats, sheep and horses.

Into the village they all trooped behind a tall, sour old man, who rode, without greetings to those who shrunk from his path, directly to a large goat-skin tent in the center of the village.

Here he spoke to a wrinkled black hag. Korak from his vantage point could see it all. He saw the old man asking questions of the black woman, and then he saw the latter point in the direction of the tree beneath which the little girl played.

A grim smile curved the thin, cruel lips of the Arab. The child essayed to crawl away, but before she could get out of reach the old man kicked her brutally, sending her sprawling upon the grass. Then he followed her up to seize and strike her as was his custom.

Above them in the tree a beast crouched where a moment before had been a boy—a beast with dilating nostrils and bared fangs—a beast that trembled with rage.

The sheik was stooping to reach for the girl when the Killer dropped to the ground at his side. His spear was still in his left hand, but he had forgotten it. Instead his right fist was clinched, and the sheik took a backward step, astonished by the sudden materialization of this strange apparition apparently out of a clear sky, the heavy fist landed full upon his mouth, backed by the weight of the young giant and the terrific power of his more than human muscles.

Bleeding and senseless, the sheik sank to earth. Korak turned toward the child. She had regained her feet and stood, wide eyed and frightened, looking first up into his face and then horror struck at the recumbent figure of the sheik. In an involuntary gesture of protection the girl threw an arm about the girl's shoulders and stood waiting for the Arab to regain consciousness. For a moment they remained thus, then the girl spoke.

"When he regains his senses he will kill me," she said in Arabic. Korak could not understand her. He shook his head, speaking to her first in English and then in the language of the apes. But neither of these were intelligible to her.

She leaned forward and touched the hilt of the long knife that the Arab wore. Then she raised her clasped hand above her head and drove an imaginary blade into her breast above her heart.

Korak understood. The old man would kill her. The girl came to his side again and stood there trembling. She did not fear him. Why should she? He had saved her from a terrible beating at the hands of the sheik. Never in her memory had another so befriended her. She looked up into his face. It was a boyish, handsome face, but brown like her own. She admired the spotted leopard skin that encircled his little body from one shoulder to his knees.

And Korak looked at the girl. He had always held girls in a species of contempt. Boys who associated with them were, in his estimation, molluscoides. He wondered what he should do.

He stood for several minutes buried in thought. The girl watched his face, wondering what was passing in his mind. She, too, was thinking of the future.

She feared to remain and suffer the vengeance of the sheik. There was no one in all the world to whom she might turn other than this half naked stranger who had dropped miraculously from the clouds to save her from one of the sheik's accustomed beatings. Would her new friend leave her now? Wisfully she gazed at his intent face. She moved a little closer to him, laying a slim, brown hand upon his arm.

The contact awakened the lad from his absorption. He looked down at her, and then his arm went about her shoulders once more, for he saw tears upon her lashes.

"Come," he said, "the jungle is kinder than man. You shall live in the jungle, and Korak and Akut will protect you."

She did not understand his words, but the pressure of his arm drawing her away from the prostrate Arab and the tents was quite intelligible. One little arm crept about his waist, and together they walked toward the pathside.

Beneath the great tree that had harbored Korak while he watched the girl at play he lifted her in his arms and, throwing her lightly across his shoulders, leaped nimbly into the lower branches.

And so Merion entered the jungle with Korak, trusting in her childish innocence, the stranger who had befriended her and perhaps influenced in her belief in him by that strange intuitive power possessed by woman.

The two had gone but a short distance from the village when the girl spied the huge proportions of the great Akut. With a half stifled scream she clung more closely to Korak and pointed fearfully toward the ape.

Akut, thinking that the Killer was returning with a prisoner, came growling toward them. A little girl aroused no more sympathy in the beast's heart than would a full grown bull ape. She was a stranger and therefore to be

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