

THE CAPTURE OF TARZAN The Second of a Series of Jungle Tales of Tarzan, Each Complete in Itself By Edgar Rice Burroughs

Copyright, 1919, by Public Ledger Co. Copyright, 1919, by Edgar Rice Burroughs. THE CAPTURE OF TARZAN

The black warriors labored in the humid heat of the jungle's stifling shade. With war spears they loosened the thick, black loam and the deep layers of rotting vegetation.

Against the boles of nearby trees leaned their long, oval shields of thick buffalo hide, and the spears of those who were doing the scooping. Sweat glistened upon their smooth, bronzed skins, beneath which rolled rounded muscles, supple in the perfection of nature's uncontaminated health.

A reed buck, stepping warily along the trail toward water, halted as a burst of laughter broke upon his startled ears. For a moment he stood statuettesque but for his sensitively dilating nostrils; then he wheeled and fled noiselessly from the terrifying presence of man.

A hundred yards away, deep in the tangle of impenetrable jungle, Numa, the lion, raised his massive head. Numa had dined well, slept until almost daybreak and it had required much noise to awaken him. Now he lifted his muzzle and sniffed the air, caught the acrid scent spear of the reed buck and the heavy scent of man.

Brilliantly plumaged birds with raucous voices darted from tree to tree. Little monkeys, chattering and scolding, swung through the swaying limbs above the black warriors. Yet they were alone, for the teeming jungle with all its myriad life, like the swarming streets of a great metropolis, is one of the loneliest spots in God's great universe.

But were they alone? Above them, lightly balanced upon a leafy tree limb, a gray-eyed youth watched with eager intentness their every move. The fire of hate, restrained, smoldered beneath the lad's evident desire to know the purpose of the black men's labors.

He saw the pit grow in depth until a great hole yawned the width of the trail—a hole which was amply large enough to hold at one time all of the six excavators. Tarzan could not guess the purpose of so great a labor. And when they cut long stakes, sharpened at their upper ends, and set them at intervals upright in the bottom of the pit, his wonderment but increased, nor was it satisfied with the placing of the light cross-ropes over the pit, or the careful arrangement of leaves and earth which completely hid from view the work the black men had performed.

When they were done they surveyed their handiwork with evident satisfaction, and Tarzan surveyed it, too. Even to his practiced eye there remained scarce a vestige of evidence that the ancient game trail had been tampered with in any way.

meat, pungent odor close at hand, and a moment later there loomed beneath him a huge, gray-black bulk forging steadily along the jungle trail. Tarzan seized and broke a small tree limb, and at the sudden cracking sound the ponderous figure halted. Great ears were thrown forward, and a long, supple trunk rose quickly to wave to and fro in search of the scent of an enemy, while two weak little eyes peered suspiciously and furtively about in quest of the author of the noise which had disturbed his peaceful way.

Tarzan laughed aloud and came closer above the head of the pachyderm. "Tantor! Tantor!" he cried. "Bara, the deer, is less fearful than you—you, Tantor, the elephant, greatest of the jungle folk, with the strength of as many Numas as I have toes upon my feet and fingers upon my hands. Tantor, who can uproot great trees, trembles with fear at the sound of a broken twig."

A rumbling noise, which might have been either a sign of contempt or a sigh of relief, was Tantor's only reply as the uplifted trunk and ears came down and the beast's tail drooped to normal; but his eyes still roved about in search of Tarzan. He was not long kept in suspense, however, as, to the whereabouts of the ape-man, for a second later the youth dropped lightly to the broad head of his old friend. Then stretching himself at full length, he drummed with his bare toes upon the thick hide, and as his fingers scratched the more tender surfaces beneath the great ears, he talked to Tantor of the gossip of the jungle as though the great beast understood every word that he said.

Much there was which Tarzan could make Tantor understand, and though the small talk of the wild was beyond the great gray dreadnought of the jungle, he stood with blinking eyes and gently swaying trunk as though drinking in every word of it with keenest appreciation. As a matter of fact it was the pleasant, friendly voice and caressing hands behind his ears which he enjoyed, and the close proximity of him whom he had often borne upon his back since Tarzan, as a little child, had once fearfully approached the great bulk, assuming upon the part of the pachyderm the same friendliness which filled his own heart.

In the years of their association Tarzan had discovered that he possessed an inexplicable power to govern and direct his mighty friend. At his bidding, Tantor would come from a great distance—as far as his keen ears could detect the shrill and piercing summons of the ape-man—and when Tarzan was spat upon by his head, Tantor would lumber through the jungle in any direction which his rider bade him go. It was the power of the man-mind over that of the brute and it was just as effective as though both fully understood its origin, though neither did.

For half an hour Tarzan sprawled there upon Tantor's back. Time had no meaning for either of them. Life, as they saw it, consisted principally in keeping their stomachs filled. To Tarzan this was a less arduous labor than to Tantor, for Tarzan's stomach was smaller, and being omnivorous, food was less difficult to obtain. If one sort did not come readily to hand, there were always many others to satisfy his hunger. He was less particular as to his diet than Tantor, who would eat only the bark of certain trees, and the wood of others, while a third appealed to him only through its leaves, and these, perhaps, just at certain seasons of the year.

Tantor must needs spend the better part of his life in filling his immense stomach against the needs of his mighty thirst. It is thus with all the lower orders—their lives are so occupied either with searching for food or with the processes of digestion, that they have little time for other considerations. Doubtless it is this handicap which has kept them from advancing as rapidly as man, who has more time to give to thought upon other matters.

However, these questions troubled Tarzan but little, and Tantor not at all. What the former knew was that he was happy in the companionship of the elephant. He did not know why. He did not know that because he was a human being—a normal, healthy human being—he craved some living thing upon which to lavish his affection. His childhood playmates among the apes of Kerkch were now great, sullen brutes. They felt no inspired but little affection. The younger apes Tarzan still played with occasionally. In his savage way he loved them; but they were far from satisfying or restful companions. Tantor was a great mountain of calm, of poise, of stability. It was restful and satisfying to sprawl upon his rough pate and pour one's vague hopes and aspirations into the great ears which flapped ponderously to and fro in apparent understanding. Of all the jungle folk, Tantor commanded Tarzan's greatest love since Kala had been taken from him. Sometimes Tarzan wondered if Tantor reciprocated his affection. It was difficult to know.

It was the call of the stomach—the most compelling and insistent call which the jungle knows—that took Tarzan finally back to the trees and off in search of food, while Tantor continued his interrupted journey in the opposite direction. For an hour the ape-man foraged. A lofty nest yielded its fresh, warm warmth. Fruits, berries and tender plantain found a place upon his menu in the order that he happened upon them, for he did not seek such

foods. Meat, meat, meat! It was always meat that Tarzan of the Apes hunted; but sometimes meat eluded him, as today. And as he roamed the jungle his active mind busied itself not alone with his hunting, but with many other subjects. He had a habit of recalling often the events of the preceding days and hours. He lived over his visit with Tantor; he cogitated upon the digging blacks and the strange, covered pit they had left behind them. He wondered again and again what its purpose might be.

"The sinuous trunk encircled him and hurled him far after the fleeing crowd"

He compared perceptions and arrived at judgments. He compared judgments, reaching conclusions—not always correct ones, it is true, but at least he used his brain for the purpose God intended it, which was no less difficult because he was not handicapped by the second-hand, and usually erroneous, judgments of others.

And as he puzzled over the covered pit there loomed suddenly before his mental vision a huge, gray-black bulk which lumbered ponderously along a jungle trail. Instantly Tarzan tensed to the shock of a sudden fear. Decision and action usually occurred simultaneously in the life of the ape-man, and now he was away through the leafy branches ere the realization of the pit's purpose had scarce formed in his mind.

Swinging from swaying limb to swaying limb, he raced through the middle terraces where the trees grew close together. Again he dropped to the ground and sped, silently and light of foot, over the carpet of decaying vegetation, only toward the trail, taking positions in trees down wind from the point at which Tantor must pass them. Silently they waited and presently were rewarded by the sight of a mighty tusker carrying an amount of ivory in his long tusks that set their greedy hearts palpitating.

No sooner had he passed their positions than the warriors clambered from their perches. No longer were they silent, but instead clapped their hands and shouted as they reached the ground. For an instant Tantor, the elephant, paused with upraised trunk and tail, with great ears uppricked, and then he swung on along the trail at a rapid, shuffling pace—straight toward the covered pit with its sharpened stakes upstanding in the ground.

Behind him came the yelling warriors, urging him on in the rapid flight which would not permit a careful examination of the ground before him. Tantor, the elephant, who could have turned and scattered his adversaries with a single charge, fled like a frightened deer—fled toward a hideous, torturing death.

And behind them all came Tarzan of the Apes, racing through the jungle forest with the speed and agility of a squirrel, for he had heard the shouts of the warriors and had interpreted them correctly. Once he uttered a piercing call that reverberated through the jungle, but Tantor, in the panic of terror, either failed to hear, or hearing, dared not pause to heed. Now the giant pachyderm was but a few yards from the hidden death lurking in his path, and the blacks, certain of success, were screaming and dancing in his wake, waving their war spears and celebrating in advance the acquisition of the splendid ivory carried by their prey and the surfeit of elephant meat which would be theirs this night. So intent were they upon their gratulations that they entirely failed to note the silent passage of the man-beast above their heads, nor did Tantor, either, see or hear him, even though Tarzan called to him to stop. A few more steps would precipitate Tarzan upon the sharpened stakes; Tarzan fairly flew through the trees until he had come abreast of the fleeing animal and then had passed him. At the pit's verge the



ape-man dropped to the ground in the center of the trail. Tantor was almost upon him before his weak eyes permitted him to recognize his old friend.

"Stop!" cried Tarzan, and the great beast halted to the upraised hand. Tarzan turned and kicked aside some of the brush which hid the pit. Instantly Tantor saw and understood.

"Fight!" growled Tarzan. "They are coming behind you." But Tantor, the elephant, is a huge bunch of nerves, and now he was half panic-stricken by terror.

Before him yawned the pit, how far he did not know, but to right and left lay the primeval jungle untouched by man. With a squeal the great beast turned suddenly at right angles and burst his noisy way through the solid wall of matted vegetation that would have stopped any but him.

Tarzan, standing upon the edge of the pit, smiled as he watched Tantor's undignified flight. Soon the blacks would come. It was best that Tarzan of the Apes faded from the scene. He essayed a step from the pit's edge, and as he threw the weight of his body upon his left foot, the earth crumbled away. Tarzan made a single herculean effort to throw himself forward, but it was too late. Backward and downward he went toward the sharpened stakes in the bottom of the pit.

When, a moment later, the blacks came they saw even from a distance that Tantor had eluded them, for the size of the hole in the pit covering was too small to have accommodated the huge bulk of an elephant. At first they thought that their prey had put one great foot through the top and then, warned, drawn back; but when they had come to the pit's verge and peered over their eyes went wide in astonishment, for quiet and still, at the bottom lay the naked figure of a white giant.

Some of them there had glimpsed this forest god before and they drew back in terror, awed by the presence which they had for some time believed to possess the miraculous power of a demon, but others there were who pushed forward, thinking only of the capture of an enemy and these leaped into the pit and lifted Tarzan out.

There was no scar upon his body. None of the sharpened stakes had pierced him—only a swollen spot at the base of the brain indicated the nature of his injury. In falling backward his head had struck upon the side of one of the stakes, rendering him unconscious. The blacks were quick to discover this, and equally quick to bind their prisoner's arms and legs before he should regain consciousness, for they had learned to harbor a wholesome respect for this strange man-beast that consorted with the hairy tree folk.

They had carried him but a short distance toward their village when the ape-man's eyelids quivered and raised. He looked about him wonderingly for a moment, and then full consciousness returned and he realized the seriousness of his predicament. Accustomed almost from birth to relying solely upon his own resources, he did not cast about for outside aid now, but devoted his mind to a consideration of the possibilities for escape which lay within himself and his own powers. He did not dare test the strength of his bonds while the blacks were carrying him, for fear they would become apprehensive and add to them. Presently his captors discovered that he was conscious, and as they had little stomach for carrying a heavy man through the jungle heat, they set him upon his feet and forced him forward among them, pricking his nose and then with

his torture-laden death. He halted as he heard the notes of Tantor's call, and raising his head, gave vent to a terrifying scream that sent cold chills through the superstitious blacks and caused the warriors who guarded him to leap back even though their prisoner's arms were securely bound behind him. With raised spears they encircled him as for a moment longer he stood listening. Faintly from the distance came another, an answering cry, and Tarzan of the Apes, satisfied, turned and quietly pursued his way toward the hut where he was to be imprisoned.

The afternoon wore on. From the surrounding village the ape-man heard the bustle of preparation for the feast. Through the doorway of the hut he saw the women laying the cooking fires and filling their earthen caldrons with water; but above it all his ears were bent across the jungle in eager listening for the coming of Tantor.

Even Tarzan but half believed he would come. He knew Tantor even better than Tantor knew himself. He knew the timid heart which lay in the giant body. He knew the panic of terror which the scent of the Gomangani inspired within that savage breast, and as, night drew on, hope died within his heart and in the stolid calm of the wild beast which he was, he resigned himself to meet the fate which awaited him.

All afternoon he had been working, working with the bonds that held his wrists. Very slowly they were giving. He might free his hands before they came to lead him out to be butchered, and if he did—Tarzan licked his lips in anticipation, and smiled a cold, grim smile. He could imagine the feel of soft flesh beneath his fingers and the sinking of his white teeth into the throats of his foemen. He would let them taste his wrath before they overpowered him!

At last they came—painted, be-fathered warriors—even more hideous than nature had intended them. They came and pushed him into the open, where his appearance was greeted by wild shouts from the assembled villagers. To the stake they led him, and as they pushed him roughly against it preparatory to binding him there securely for the dance of death that would presently encircle him, Tarzan tensed his mighty thighs and with a single powerful wrench parted the loosened joints which had secured his hands. Like thought, for quickness, he leaped forward among the warriors nearest him. A blow sent one to earth, as, growling and snarling, the best-man leaped upon the breast of another. His fangs were buried instantly in the jugular of his adversary and then a half hundred black men had leaped upon him and borne him to earth.

Striking, clawing and snapping the ape-man fought—fought as his foster people had taught him to fight—fought like a wild beast cornered. His strength, his agility, his courage, and his intelligence rendered him easily a match for half a dozen men in a hand-to-hand struggle, but not even Tarzan of the Apes could hope to successfully cope with half a hundred.

Slowly they were overpowering him, though a score of them bled from ugly wounds, and two lay very still beneath the trampling feet, and the rolling bodies of the contestants. Overpower him they might, but could they keep him overpowered

(The next complete 'Jungle Tale' will appear Saturday, June 14.)

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