

THE END OF BUKAWAI : Being the Seventh of the Series of the Jungle Tales of Tarzan : By Edgar Rice Burroughs

WHEN Tarzan of the Apes was still but a boy he had learned among other things, to fashion plants of fibrous jungle grass. Strong and tough were the ropes of Tarzan, the little Tarmangani. Tublat, his foster father, would have told you this much and more. Had you tempted him with a handful of fat caterpillars he even might have sufficiently unbent to narrate to you a few stories of the many indignities which Tarzan had heaped upon him by means of his hated rope, but then Tublat always worked himself into such a frightful rage when he devoted any considerable thought either to the rope or to Tarzan that it might not have proved comfortable for you to have remained close enough to him to hear what he had to say.

So often had that snakelike nose settled unexpectedly over Tublat's head, so often had he been jerked ridiculously and painfully from his feet when he was least looking for such an occurrence, that there is little wonder he found scant space in his savage heart for love of his white-skinned foster child, or the inventions thereof. There had been other times, too, when Tublat had swung helplessly in midair, the noose tightening about his neck, death staring him in the face, and little Tarzan dancing upon a nearby limb, taunting him and making unseemly grimaces.

Then there had been another occasion in which the rope had figured prominently—an occasion, and the only one connected with the rope, which Tublat recalled with pleasure. Tarzan, as active in brain as he was in body, was always inventing new ways in which to play. It was through the medium of play that he learned much during his childhood. This day he learned something, and that he did not lose his life in the learning of it was a matter of great surprise to Tarzan, and the fly in the ointment to Tublat.

The man-child had, in throwing his noose at a playmate in a tree above him, caught a projecting branch instead. When he tried to shake it loose it but drew the tighter. Then Tarzan started to climb the rope to remove it from the branch. When he was part way up a frolicsome playmate seized that part of the rope which lay upon the ground and ran off with it as far as he could go. When Tarzan screamed at him to desist, the young ape released the rope a little and then drew it tight again. The result was to impart a swinging motion to Tarzan's body which the ape-boy suddenly realized was a new and pleasurable form of play. He urged the ape to continue until Tarzan was swinging to and fro as far as the short length of the rope would permit, but the distance was not great enough, and, too, he was not far enough above the ground to give the necessary thrills which add so greatly to the pastimes of the young.

So he clambered to the branch where the noose was caught and after removing it carried the rope far aloft and out upon a long and powerful branch. Here he again made it fast, and taking the loose end in his hand, clambered quickly down among the branches as far as the rope would permit him to go; then he swung out upon the end of it, his lithe, young body turning and twisting—a human bob upon a pendulum of grass—thirty feet above the ground. Ah, how delectable! This was indeed a new play of the first magnitude. Tarzan was entranced. Soon he discovered that by wriggling his body in just the right way at the proper time he could diminish or accelerate his oscillation, and, being a boy, he chose, naturally, to accelerate. Presently he was swinging far and wide, while below him, the apes of the tribe of Kerchak looked on in mild amaze.

Had it been you or I swinging there at the end of that grass rope, the thing which presently happened would not have happened, for we could not have hung on so long as to have made it possible, but Tarzan was quite as much at home swinging by his hands as he was standing upon his feet, or, at least, almost. At any rate he felt no fatigue long after the time that an ordinary mortal would have been numb with the strain of the physical exertion. And this was his undoing.

cious, hideous, loving Kala. She had seen the life crushed from her own balu in just such a fall years before. Was she to lose this one, too, in the same way? Tarzan was lying quite still when she found him, embedded deeply in the bush. It took Kala several minutes to disentangle him and drag him forth, but he was not killed. He was not even badly injured. The bush had broken the force of the fall. A cut upon the back of his head showed where he had struck the tough stem of the shrub and explained his unconsciousness.

In a few minutes he was as active as ever. Tublat was furious. In his rage he snatched at a fellow-ape without first discovering the identity of his victim, and was badly mauled for his ill temper, having chosen to vent his spite upon a husky and belligerent young bull in the full prime of his vigor.

But Tarzan had learned something new. He had learned that continued friction would wear through the strands of his rope, though it was many years before this knowledge did more for him than merely to keep him from swinging too long at a time, or too far above the ground at the end of his rope.

The day came, however, when the very thing that had once all but killed him proved the means of saving his life. He was no longer a child, but a mighty jungle male. There was none now to watch over him, solitously, nor did he need such. Kala was dead. Dead, too, was Tublat, and though with Kala he passed the one creature that ever really had loved him, there were still many who hated him after Tublat departed upon the arms of his fathers. It was not that he was more cruel or more savage than they that they hated him, for though he was both cruel and savage as were the beasts, his fellows, yet too was he often tender, which they never were. No, the thing which brought Tarzan most into disrepute with those who did not like him was the possession and practice of a characteristic which they had not and could not understand—the human sense of humor. In Tarzan it was a trifle broad, perhaps, manifesting himself in rough and painful practical jokes upon his friends and cruel baiting of his enemies.

But to neither of these did he owe the enmity of Bukawai, the witch doctor, who dwelt in the cave between the two hills far to the north of the village of Mbooga, the chief of the northlands, but in a sudden, choking, blinding deluge. "The blood of the kill," thought Tarzan, huddling himself closer to the bole of the great tree beneath which he stood.

He was close to the edge of the jungle, and at a little distance he had seen two hills before the storm broke, but now he could see nothing. It amused him to look out into the beating rain, searching for the two hills and imagining that the torrents from above had washed them away, yet he knew that presently the rain would cease, the sun come out again and all be as it was before, except where a few branches had fallen and here and there some old and rotted patriarch had crashed back to enrich the soil upon which he had fattened, for, maybe, centuries. All about him branches and leaves filled the air or fell to earth, torn away by the strength of the tornado and the weight of the water upon them. A gaunt corpse toppled and fell a few yards away, but Tarzan was protected from all these dangers by the sturdy young giant beneath which his jungle craft had guided him. Here there was but a single danger, and that a remote one. Yet it came. Without warning the tree above him was riven by lightning, and when the rain ceased and the sun came out Tarzan lay stretched as he had fallen, upon his face amidst the wreckage of the jungle giant that should have shielded him.

Bukawai came to the entrance of his cave after the rain and the storm had passed, and looked out upon the scene. From his one eye Bukawai could see, but had he had a dozen eyes he could have found no beauty in the fresh sweetness of the revived jungle, for to such things, in the chemistry of temperament, his brain failed to react, nor, even had he had a nose, which he had not for years, could he have found enjoyment or sweetness in the clean-washed air.

At either side of the leper stood his sole and constant companions, the two hyenas, sniffing the air. Presently one of them uttered a low growl and with flattened head started, sneaking and wary, toward the jungle. The other followed. Bukawai, his curiosity aroused, trailed after them, in his hand a heavy knobstick.

The hyenas halted a few yards from the prostrate Tarzan, sniffing and growling. Then came Bukawai, and at first he could not believe the witness of his own eyes, but when he did and saw that it was indeed the devil-god his rage knew no bounds, for he thought him dead and himself cheated of the revenge he had so long dreamed upon.



The ape-man surged forward with all his weight and all his great strength—the bonds parted

hated and baffled hunger gleaming from their savage eyes. Bukawai stooped and placed his ear above the ape-man's head. It still beat. As well as his sloughed features could register pleasure they did so, but it was not a pretty sight. At the ape-man's side lay his long, grass rope. Quickly Bukawai bound the limp arms behind his prisoner's back, then raised him to one of his shoulders, for, though Bukawai was old and diseased, he was still a strong man. The hyenas fell in behind as the witch doctor set off toward the cave, and through the long black corridors they followed as Bukawai bore his victim into the bowels of the hills. Through subterranean chambers, connected by winding passageways, Bukawai staggered with his load. At a sudden turning of the corridor, daylight flooded them and Bukawai stepped out into a small, circular basin in the hill, apparently the crater of an ancient volcano, one of those which never reached the dignity of a mountain and are little more than lavavimmed pits close to the earth's surface.

Steep walls rimmed the cavity. The only exit was through the passageway by which Bukawai had entered. A few stunted trees grew upon the rocky floor. A hundred feet above could be seen the ragged lips of this cold, dead mouth of hell. Bukawai propped Tarzan against a tree and bound him there with his own grass rope, leaving his hands free, but securing the knots in such a way that the ape-man could not reach them. The hyenas slunk to and fro, growling. Bukawai halted them and they waited for him. He knew that they but waited for the time when he should be helpless, or when their hatred should rise to such a height as to submerge their cringing fear of him.

In his own heart was not a little fear of these repulsive creatures, and because of that fear, Bukawai always kept the beasts well fed, often hunting for them when their own forages for food failed, but ever was he cruel to them with the cruelty of a little brain, diseased, bestial, primitive. He had had them since they were puppies. They had known no other life than that with him, and though they went abroad to hunt, always they returned. Of late Bukawai had come to believe that they returned not so much from habit as from a fiendish patience which would submit to every indignity and pain rather than forgo the final vengeance, and Bukawai needed but little imagination to picture what that vengeance would be. Today he would see for himself what his end would be; but another should impersonate Bukawai. When he had trusted Tarzan securely, Bukawai went back into the corridor, driving the hyenas ahead of him, and pulling across the opening a lattice of laced branches, which shut the pit from the cave during the night that Bukawai might sleep

second application Tarzan opened his eyes and looked about. "Devil-god," cried Bukawai, "I am the great witch-doctor. My medicine is strong. Yours is weak. If it is not, why do you stay tied here like a goat that is bait for lions?"

Tarzan understood nothing the witch-doctor said, therefore, he did not reply, but only stared straight at Bukawai with cold and level gaze. The hyenas crept up behind him. He heard them growl; but he did not even turn his head. He was a beast with a man's brain. The beast in him refused to show fear in the face of a death which the man-mind already admitted to be inevitable.

Bukawai, not yet ready to give his victim to the beasts, rushed upon the hyenas with his knobstick. There was a short scuffle in which the brutes came off second best, as they always did. Tarzan watched it. He saw and realized the hatred which existed between the two animals and

would hold him quite as successfully. He did not wish to die, but he could look death in the face now as he had many times before without a quaver. As he pulled upon the rope he felt it rub against the small tree about which it was passed. Like a flash of the cinematograph upon the screen, a picture was flashed before his mind's eye from the storehouse of his memory. He saw a lithe, boyish figure swinging high above the ground at the end of a rope. He saw many apes watching from below, and then he saw the rope part and the boy hurtle downward toward the ground. Tarzan smiled. Immediately he commenced to draw the rope rapidly back and forth across the tree trunk.

The hyenas, gaining courage, came closer. They sniffed at his legs; but when he struck at them with his free arms they slunk off. He knew that with the growth of hunger they would attack. Coolly, methodically, without haste, Tarzan drew the rope back and forth against the rough trunk of the small tree. In the entrance to the cavern Bukawai fell asleep. He thought it would be some time before the beasts gained sufficient courage or hunger to attack the captive. Their growls and the cries of the victim would awaken him. In the meantime he might as well rest, and he did.

Thus the day wore on, for the hyenas were not famished, and the rope with which Tarzan was bound was a stronger one than that of his boyhood, which had parted so quickly to the chafing of the rough tree bark. Yet, all the while hunger was growing upon the beasts and the strands of the grass rope were wearing thinner and thinner. Bukawai slept.

It was late afternoon before one of the beasts, irritated by the gnawing of appetite, made a quick, noiseless dash at the ape-man. The noise awoke Bukawai. He sat up quickly and watched what went on within the unprotected throat. He saw Tarzan reach out and seize the second beast spring for the devil-god's shoulder. There was a mighty heave of the great, smooth-skinned body. Rounded muscles shot into great, tensed piles beneath the brown hide—the ape-man surged forward with all his weight and all his great strength—the bonds parted, and the three were rolling upon the floor of the crater snarling, snapping and rending.

Bukawai leaped to his feet. Could it be that the devil-god was to prevail against his servants? Impossible! The creature was unarmed, and he was down with two hyenas on top of him; but Bukawai did not know Tarzan.

The ape-man fastened his fingers upon the throat of one of the hyenas and rose to one knee, though the other beast tore at him frantically in an effort to pull him down. With a single hand Tarzan held the one, and with the other hand he reached forth and pulled toward him the second beast.

And then Bukawai, seeing the battle going against his forces, rushed forward from the cavern brandishing his knobstick. Tarzan saw him

in security, for then the hyenas were penned in the crater that they might not sneak upon a sleeping Bukawai in the darkness.

Bukawai returned to the outer cave mouth, filled a vessel with water at the spring which rose in the little canyon close at hand and returned to the pit. The hyenas stood before the lattice looking hungrily toward Tarzan. They had been fed in this manner before.

With his water, the witch-doctor approached Tarzan and threw a portion of the contents of the vessel in the ape-man's face. There was fluttering of the eyelids, and at the

hideous semblance of a man. With the hyenas subdued, Bukawai returned to the baiting of Tarzan; but finding that the ape-man understood nothing he said, the witch-doctor finally desisted. Then he withdrew into the corridor and pulled the lattice-work barrier across the opening. He went back into the cave and got a sleeping mat, which he brought to the opening, that he might lie down and watch the spectacle of his revenge in comfort.

The hyenas were sneaking furtively around the ape-man. Tarzan strained at his bonds for a moment, but soon realized that the rope he had braided to hold Numa, the lion,

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