

TARZAN THE TERRIBLE

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THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Tarzan, the ape-man, known in civilized life as Lord Greystoke, lives in an African jungle and is captivated by her. Arrived in a forgotten city from the temple and death, he encounters Princess O-lo-a and her handmaid, Pan-at-lee, whom Tarzan had previously befriended. The princess is anxious to help Tarzan escape from the temple and she will be killed by her father, the king, and Tarzan should learn of what she had done.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

"But they need never know," cried Pan-at-lee, "that you have seen me unless you tell them yourself, for as you are a god?" she asked with mortals.

"When gods mingle with mortals," Tarzan said, "they are no less vulnerable than mortals. Even Jai-ben-Otho should be afraid of you in the flesh, might be slain."

"You have seen Tarzan and spoken with him?" she asked with apparent relevancy.

"Yes, I have seen him and spoken with him," replied the ape-man. "For the duration of a moon I was with him constantly."

"And you cast her eyes toward me?" she asked with a flush mantling her cheeks. "The still and the flush mantle Tarzan knew that she loved me."

"Yes," he said, "Tarzan speaks only of O-lo-a and he will claim her."

"But tomorrow they give me to Jai-ben-Otho," she said sadly.

"May it be always tomorrow," replied Tarzan, "for tomorrow never comes."

"Ah, but this unhappiness will come, and for all the tomorrows of my life I will never be mine."

"But for Lu-don I might have helped you," said the ape-man. "And you know that I may not help you yet?"

"Ah, if you only could, Dor-ul-Otho," cried the girl. "And I know that you would if it were possible, for Pan-at-lee has told me how brave you are and at the same time how kind."

"Only Jai-ben-Otho knows what the future may bring," said Tarzan. "And now you two go your way lest some one should discover you and become suspicious."

"We will go," said O-lo-a, "but Pan-at-lee will return with food. I hope that you escape and that Jai-ben-Otho is pleased with what I have done." She turned and walked away, and Pan-at-lee followed, while the ape-man again resumed his hiding.

At dusk Pan-at-lee came with food and having here alone Tarzan put the question that he had been anxious to put since his conversation earlier in the day with O-lo-a.

"What do you know of the rumors of which O-lo-a spoke of the mysterious stranger which is supposed to have been here?"

"Yes," said Pan-at-lee, "I have heard it spoken of among the other slaves. It is something of which all whisper among themselves, but of which none dares to speak aloud. They say that there is a strange she hidden in the temple and that Lu-don wants her for a priestess, and that Ko-tan waits her for a wife and that neither as yet dares take her for fear of the other."

"Do you know where she is hidden in the temple?"

"No," said Pan-at-lee. "How should I know? I do not even know that it is more than a story and I but tell you that which I have heard others say."

"There was only one," asked Tarzan, "whom they spoke of?"

"No, they speak of another who came with her, but none seems to know what became of this one."

Tarzan nodded. "Thank you, Pan-at-lee," he said. "You may have helped me more than either of us knew."

"I hope that I have helped you," said the girl as she turned back toward the palace.

"And I hope so, too," exclaimed Tarzan emphatically.

CHAPTER XVI
The Temple of the Gryf

When night had fallen Tarzan donned his mask and the dead tail of the priestess. He entered the vaults beneath the temple. He judged that it would be best to attempt again to pass the guard, especially so late at night, as it would be likely to arouse comment and suspicion, and he would be in the trees that overhung the garden wall and from its branches dropped to the ground below.

Avoiding too grave risk of apprehension the ape-man passed through the grounds to the court of the palace, approaching the temple from the side opposite to that at which he had left it at the time of his escape. He came thus it is true, through a portion of the grounds with which he was unfamiliar, but he preferred the danger of the palace apartments and those of the temple. Having a definite goal in mind and endowed as he was with an almost miraculous sense of location he moved with great assurance through the shadows of the temple yard.

Taking advantage of the denser shadows close to the walls and of what without mishap at last to the ornate building concerning the purpose of which he had asked only to be put off with the assertion that it was forgotten—nothing strange in itself, but of great importance by the apparent hesitancy of the priestess which he used and the impression the ape-man had gained at the time that Lu-don had stood at last alone before the structure, which was three stories in height and detached from all other temple buildings. It had a single barred entrance that was carved from the living rock in representation of the head of a gryf, whose wide-open mouth, hood and front paws of the creature were depicted as though it loomed forward with its lower jaw on the ground between its outstretched paws. The barred entrance which was like a being that the coast was clear, Tarzan stepped into the darkened entrance where they were ingeniously locked in some device with which he was probably too strong to be broken even if he could have risked the noise which would have resulted. Nothing was visible within the darkened interior and he was momentarily baffled, he sought the door.

There also the bars refused to yield to his secret, but again Tarzan was

not dismayed, since he had counted upon nothing different.

If the bars would yield to his cunning they would yield to his giant strength. If there proved no other means of ingress he would resort to the last himself that this latter was the case. Moving entirely around the building he examined it carefully. There were other windows, but they were solidly barred. He stopped often to look and listen, but he saw no one, and the sounds that he heard were too far away to cause him any apprehension.

He glanced above him at the wall of the building. Like so many of the other walls of the city, palace and temple, it was ornate, carved, and there were, too, the peculiar ledges that ran sometimes in a horizontal plane and again were tilted at an angle, giving oftentimes an impression of irregularity and even crookedness to the building. It was not a difficult wall to climb, at least not difficult for the ape-man.

But he found the bulky and awkward head-dress a considerable handicap, and so he laid it aside upon the ground at the foot of the wall. Nimbly he ascended to find the windows of the second floor not only barred, but curtained within. He did not delay long at the second floor, since he had in the easiest entrance through the ground which he had noticed was roughly dome-shaped, like the throne-room of Ko-tan. Here there were apertures. He found the entrance through the ground and if the construction of the interior resembled even slightly that of the throne-room, bars would not be necessary to close the apertures, since no one could reach them from the floor of the room.

There was but a single question: would they be large enough to admit the broad shoulders of the ape-man? He paused again at the third floor, and here, in spite of the hangings, he saw that the interior was lighted and simultaneously he saw at his feet a trail from within a rent that stripped from him temporarily any remnant of civilization that might have remained and left him a fierce and terrible bull of the jungles of Kord. So sudden and complete was the metamorphosis that there almost broke from the savage lips the hideous challenge of his kind, but the cunning brute mind saved him this blunder.

And now he heard voices within—the voice of Lu-don he could have sworn, Jeonning. And laughing and disdainful came the answering words, though utter hopelessness spoke in the tones of this other voice which brought Tarzan to the pinnacle of frenzy.

The dome with its possible apertures was forgotten. Every consideration of stealth and quiet was cast aside as the ape-man drew back his mighty fist and struck a single terrific blow upon the bars of the small window before him, a blow that sent the bars and the casing that held them clattering to the floor of the apartment within.

Instantly Tarzan dived headforemost through the aperture, carrying the hangings of antique hide with him to the floor below. Leaping to his feet he tore the entangling web from about his head only to find himself in utter darkness and in silence. He called aloud a name that had not passed his lips for many weary months. "Jane, Jane," he cried, "where are you?" But there was only silence in reply.

Again and again he called, groping with outstretched hands through the Stygian blackness of the room, his nostrils assailed and his brain tantalized by the delicate effluvia that had first assured him that his mate had been within this very room. And he had heard her dear voice combating the base demands of the vile priest. Ah, if he had but acted with greater caution! If he had but continued to move with quiet and stealth, he might even at this moment be holding her in his arms while the body of Lu-don, beneath his foot, spoke eloquently of vengeance achieved. But there was no time now for idle self-reproaches.

He stumbled blindly forward, groping for he knew not what, till suddenly the floor beneath him tilted and he shot downward into a darkness even more utter than that above. He felt his body strike a smooth surface and he realized that he was hurtling downward as through a polished chute while from above there came the mocking tones of a taunting laugh and the voice of Lu-don screamed after him: "Return to thy father, O Dor-ul-Otho!"

The ape-man came to a sudden and painful stop upon a rocky floor. Directly before him was an oval window crossed by many bars, and beyond he saw the moonlight playing on the waters of the blue lake below. Simultaneously he was conscious of a familiar odor in the air of the chamber, which a quick glance revealed in the semi-darkness as of considerable proportion.

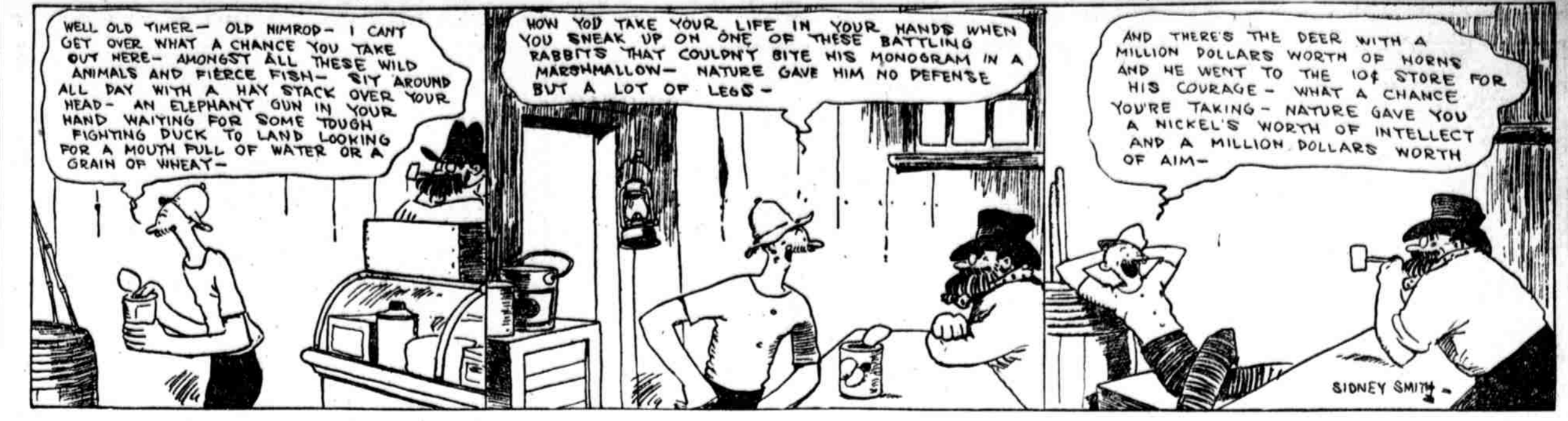
It was the faint but unmistakable odor of the gryf, and now Tarzan stood silently listening. At first he detected no sounds other than those of the city that came to him through the window overlooking the lake, but presently, not faintly, as though from a distance, he heard the shuffling of padded feet along a stone pavement, and as he listened he was aware that the sound approached. Nearer and nearer it came, and now even the breathing of the beast was audible. Evidently attracted by the noise of his descent into its cavernous retreat it was approaching to investigate. He could not see it, but he knew that it was not far distant, and then, deafeningly reverberated through the gloomy corridors the mad howl of the gryf.

Aware of the poor eyesight of the beast, and his own eyes now grown accustomed to the darkness of the cavern, the ape-man sought to elude the infuriated charge which he well knew no living creature could withstand. Neither did he dare risk the chance of experimenting upon this strange gryf with the tactics of the "Tom-o-don" that he had found so efficacious upon that other occasion when his life and liberty had been the stakes for which he cast. In many respects the conditions were dissimilar. Before, in broad daylight, he had been able to approach the gryf under normal conditions in its natural state, and the gryf itself was one that he had seen subjected to the authority of man, or at least of manlike creature; but here he was confronted by an imprisoned beast in the full swing of a furious charge and he had every reason to suspect that this gryf might never have felt the restraining influence of authority, confined as it was in this gloomy pit to serve likely but the single purpose that Tarzan had already seen so graphically portrayed in his own experience of the last few moments.

To elude the creature, then, upon the possibility of discovering some loophole of escape from his predicament seemed to the ape-man the wisest course to pursue. Too much was at stake to risk an encounter that might be avoided. He was aware of the outcome of which there was every reason to apprehend would seal the fate of the mate that he had just found, and only to lose again so narrowly. Yet high as his disappointment and chagrin ran, hopeless as his present estate now appeared, there tingled in the veins of the savage lord a warm glow of thanksgiving and elation. She lived! After all those weary months of hopelessness and fear he had found her. She lived!

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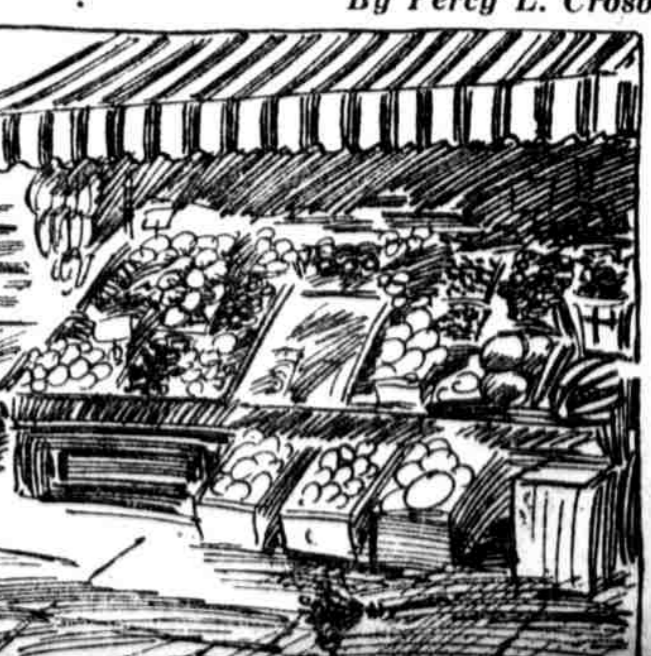
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