TARZAN AND THE JEWELS OF OPAR

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CHAPTER XVI.

The Fight in the Jungle

Sleepless upon the bloodless, silver Wanger lay like still dead beauty under the charms of the woman in the moonlight tent. He had saved Mohammed Bedj's earlier interest in the girl, and helping the man by his acts would be bad grossed at the basis of the Arab's sudden change of attitude toward the prisoner.

A sudden resolution possessed him. He threw the blankets from him and rose to his feet. Pulling on his boots and buckling his cartridge belt and revolver around him he stepped to the flap of his tent and looked out. There was no sentry before the entrance to the prisoner's tent! What could it mean? Fate was always playing into his hands.

Stepping outside he passed to the rear of the girl's tent. There was no sentry there, either, and he knew it would be waited to the entrance and stepped within.

Dimly the moonlight illumined the interior, disclosing the girl's figure lying above the blankets of a bed. There was a disquieted look and another figure rose from the blankets to a sitting position. Slowly Albert Wanger eyes were becoming accustomed to the half darkness of the tent. He saw that the figure leaning over the bed was that of a man, and he guessed at the truth of the nocturnal visitor's identity.

A sullen, jealous rage enveloped Wanger. He heard a frightened cry issue from the girl's lips as she recognized the intruder, and then the man leaped and he saw Mohammed Bedj's arm held by the throat of the girl's companion in the blankets.

Chested passion rent a red hot line before the eyes of the Belgian. The Arab man should not have her. She was for him and him alone. He must and would be robbed of his rights.

Quickly he ran across the tent and threw himself upon the back of Mohammed Bedj. This man, too, was surprised by this sudden and unexpected attack, was not sure to put up a strong a battle. The Belgian's fingers were feeling for his throat when the Arab's force them away, and rising wheeled upon his adversary. As they faced each other Wanger struck the Arab a heavy blow in the face, sending him staggering backward. It he had followed up his advantage it would have been had Mohammed Bedj or his sentry in another moment; but he paused and stood at his revolver to draw it from his holster, and Mohammed Bedj saw that particular moment the weapon already out in his hand.

Before he could disengage it Mohammed Bedj had drawn his revolver and was darkly upon him. Neither was at such other and accustomed to shoot, the two battled about the tent, each trying to get the best opportunity to fire the fatal shot.

Wanger was still dragging futilely at his weapon as Mohammed Bedj fired upon him. In desperation the Belgian, never until Mohammed Bedj was all but against him, then he threw himself bodily upon the Arab with his head, leaving a log extended in the path of the shot.

The two wrestled. Mohammed Bedj reached for his knife, but Wanger, with his charge, stumbled over the prostrate body of the native and fell heavily. Instantly he was up again and wheeling to rescue the girl, but Mohammed Bedj was on foot ahead of him and, with his revolver, clubbed it as he faced.

The Arab drew his effort to grapple with him, there was a sharp report, a burst cloud of flame in the moonlight and Mohammed Bedj rolled over and over upon his back. Wanger turned and met beside the bed of the woman he had come to rescue.

Almost immediately following the report a number of men came running to the camp without. Men were calling back and forth and there was the sound of shouting in the distance.

Wanger knelt by the girl and took her in his arms. She was trembling with fear and distress, but she did not cry out.

"Come," he whispered, "as soon as I can elude them, I will rescue you, gladly returned to their brown men. Then I will take you to Opar."

"I have a plan," he cried. "You must simulate death while I carry you from the camp. I will explain to the sentries that Mohammed Bedj has ordered me to take your body into the jungle. This seemingly unnecessary act I shall explain upon the grounds that Mohammed Bedj has executed a violent passion for you and that he so regretted that act by which he had become your slayer that he could not endure the silent reproach of your lifeless body."

"But how will you explain Mohammed Bedj's death?" she asked. "It will be discovered before ever you can escape the camp in the morning."

"I shall not explain it," answered Wanger. "Mohammed Bedj shall explain his own death in remorse for his deed. Wait, I must get you a weapon and ammunition." And Wanger walked quickly from the tent.

Very soon he returned with an extra revolver and ammunition belt which he buckled about her.

"Now come and throw yourself limply across my shoulder as I lift shoulder," and Wanger bent to receive her.

"There is the body of the woman," he explained. "Mohammed Bedj has ordered me to take it into the jungle that he cannot bear to look upon the face of the woman he loved, and whom we were compelled him to slay. He suffered remorse in knowing that I was with difficulty that I prevented him from slaying me also."

Across the speaker's shoulder limp and lifeless hung the head of the girl as the Arab's reply. He would laugh at this superstitious fear of the dead, and that particular moment the weapon almost sent to his own head.

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