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WHEN
WORLDS
COLLIDE !

An Extraordinary Novel

By Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie

TARZAN And the
Leopard Men
By Edgar Rice Burroughs

Cash Prizes for Real Experiences



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VOL. 55, NO. 5

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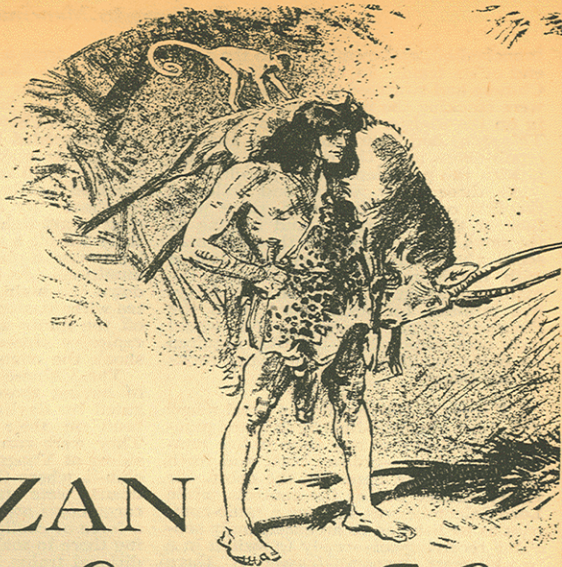
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"Where have you been, Muzimo?" asked Orlando. "Some said that Sobito had slain you!"

The world's champion fiction adventurer embarks upon his war against the sinister Leopard Men, who have made captive a daring American girl.



TARZAN

And the Leopard Men

The Story So Far:

THE forest bent beneath the heavy hand of Usha the wind. Dark clouds obscured the heavens. The voices of the jungle were silenced. . . . The girl turned uneasily upon her cot—awoke.

In the vivid and almost incessant flashes of lightning she saw a man entering the tent—Goloto the headman. The girl raised herself upon an elbow. "Is there something wrong, Goloto?" she asked. "What do you want?"

"You, Kali Bwana," answered the man huskily.

So it had come at last! For days she had been cognizant of the black's increasing insolence toward her. . . . From a holster at the side of her cot she drew a revolver. "Get out of here," she said, "or I'll kill you!"

For answer the black leaped toward her. She fired.

Next day the wounded headman and the rest of the safari had deserted; and

the girl was left alone to fend for herself in the heart of Africa. And yet not quite alone, for—though she was not aware of it—not far from her two wandering ivory-poachers were camped. The campers were white men, Americans, who knew each other only as "the Kid" and "Old-timer," and who were united by a peculiar bond: each had forsaken civilization for the jungle because of a woman.

Meanwhile a strange thing had happened not far away. For that greatest of all adventurers Tarzan of the Apes (born the son of an English lord, but through remarkable circumstance brought up among the wild folk of Africa to become Lord of the Jungle) had suffered a wilderness accident: a great tree-branch torn loose by the tempest had struck him on the head, knocked him unconscious and pinned him down helpless. And although rescue came in the person of a native named Orlando, who freed and revived him, Tarzan recovered his senses suffer-

By EDGAR
RICE
BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban



ing from amnesia—that strange malady of complete forgetfulness which sometimes follows a heavy blow on the head. He did not know even his own identity; and so bizarre was his appearance and manner that the native decided he was something more than mortal, and christened him "Muzimo," believing him the reincarnated spirit of one of his ancestors.

As Muzimo, then, Tarzan hunted with Orando and shared the native's battles. For Orando's friend Nyamwegi had been killed by the Leopard Men, that extraordinary cannibalistic African secret society whose members adorn themselves with leopard skins, wear masks fashioned of leopard heads—and strike down their human victims with iron claws made to resemble those of the leopard. Tarzan accompanied Orando back to his village, where Orando told of his friend's death, and proposed a war-party to pursue the Leopard Men and exact vengeance. His guiding spirit Muzimo, Orando explained to Sobito the witch-doctor and the other tribesmen, would aid them in this attack upon a dreadful enemy. (*The story continues in detail.*)

At this shouts of approval arose from the younger men, but the majority of the older men sat in silence. It is always thus; the younger men for war, the older for peace. Lobongo was an old man. He was proud that his son should be warlike. That was the reaction of the father; but the reaction of age was all against war. So he too, remained silent. Not so, Sobito! To his personal grievance against Muzimo were added other considerations that inclined him against this contemplated foray; at least one of which (and the most potent) was a secret he might not divulge with impunity. Scowling forbiddingly, he leaped to his feet.

"Who makes this foolish talk of war?" he demanded. "Young men. What do young men know of war? They think only of victory. They forget defeat. They forget that if they make war upon a village, the warriors of that village will come some day and make war upon us. What is to be gained by making war upon the Leopard Men? Who knows where their village lies? It must be very far away. Why should our warriors go far from their own country to make war upon the Leopard Men? Because Nyamwegi has been killed? Nyamwegi has already been avenged.

"This is foolish talk, this war-talk. Who started it? Perhaps it is a stranger among us who wishes to make trouble for us." He looked at Tarzan of the Apes, known to them as Muzimo. "Who knows why? Perhaps the Leopard Men have sent one of their own people to lure us into making war upon them. Then all our warriors will be ambushed and killed. That is what will happen. Make no more foolish talk about war."

As Sobito concluded his harangue and again squatted upon his heels, Orando arose. He was disturbed by what the



"He opened his mouth and spoke to me. He said: 'I am the brother of the Leopard God.'"

old witch-doctor had said, and he was angry, too, angry because Sobito had impugned the integrity of his *muzimo*. But his anger was leashed by his fear of the powerful old man; for who dares openly oppose one in league with the forces of darkness, one whose enmity can spell disaster and death? Yet Orando was a brave warrior and a loyal friend, as befitted one in whose veins flowed the blood of hereditary chieftainship; and so he could not permit the innuendoes of Sobito to go entirely unchallenged.

"Sobito has spoken against war," he began. "Old men always speak against war, which is right if one is an old man. Orando is a young man; yet he too would speak against war if it were only the foolish talk of young men who wished to appear brave in the eyes of women; but now there is a reason for war. Nyamwegi has been killed. He was a brave warrior. He was a good friend. Because we have killed three of those who killed Nyamwegi, we cannot say that he is avenged. We must go and make war upon the chief who sent these murderers into the Watenga country, or he will think that the Utengas are all old women. He will think that whenever his people wish to eat the flesh of man, they have only to come to the Watenga country to get it."

Orando gazed defiantly at Sobito. "Sobito has said that perhaps the Leopard Men sent a stranger among us to lure us into ambush. There is only one stranger among us—Muzimo. But Muzimo cannot be a friend of the Leopard Men. With his own eyes Orando saw him kill two of the Leopard Men; he saw the fourth run away very fast when his eyes discovered the might of Muzimo. Had Muzimo been his friend, he would not have run away.

"I am Orando, the son of Lobongo. Some day I shall be chief. I would not lead the warriors of Lobongo into a foolish war. I am going to the village of the Leopard Men and make war upon them, that they may know that not all the Utenga warriors are old women. Muzimo is going with me. Perhaps there are a few brave men who will accompany us. I have spoken."

Several of the younger warriors leaped from their haunches and stamped their feet in approval. They raised their voices in the war-cry of their clan, and brandished their spears. One of them danced in a circle, leaping high, and jabbing with his spear. "Thus will I kill the Leopard Men!" he cried.

Another leaped about, slashing with his knife. "I cut the heart from the chief of the Leopard Men!" He pretended to tear at something with his teeth, while he held it tightly in his hands. "I eat the heart of the chief of the Leopard Men!"

"War! War!" cried others, until there were a dozen howling savages dancing in the sunlight, their sleek hides glistening with sweat, their features contorted by hideous grimaces.

THEN Lobongo arose. His deep voice boomed above the cries of the dancers as he commanded them to silence. One by one they ceased their howling, but they gathered together in a little knot behind Orando.

"A few of the young men have spoken for war," he announced; "but we do not make war lightly because a few young men wish to fight. There are times for war and times for peace. We must find out if this is the time for war; otherwise we shall find only defeat and death at the end of the war-trail. Before undertaking war, we must consult the ghosts of our dead chiefs."

"They are waiting to speak to us," cried Sobito. "Let there be silence, while I speak with the spirits of the chiefs who are gone."

As he spoke, there was the gradual beginning of a movement among the tribesmen that presently formed a circle in the center of which squatted the witch-doctor. From a pouch he withdrew a number of articles which he spread upon the ground before him. Then he called for dry twigs and fresh leaves; and when these were brought, he built a tiny fire. With the fresh leaves he partially smothered it, so that it threw off a quantity of smoke. Stooping, half-doubled, the witch-doctor moved cautiously around the fire, describing a small circle, his eyes constantly fixed upon the thin column of smoke spiraling upward in the quiet air of the drowsy afternoon. In one hand Sobito held a small pouch made of the skin of a rodent, in the other the tail of a hyena, the root bound with copper wire to form a handle.

GRADUALLY the old man increased his pace, until he was circling the fire rapidly in prodigious leaps and bounds; but always his eyes remained fixed upon the spiraling smoke-column. As he danced, he intoned a weird jargon, a combination of meaningless syllables interspersed with an occasional shrill scream that brought terror to the eyes of his spellbound audience.

Suddenly he halted, and stooping low, tossed some powder from his pouch upon the fire; then with the root of the hyena tail he drew a rude geometric figure in the dust before the blaze. Stiffening, he closed his eyes and appeared to be listening intently, his face turned partially upward.

In awestruck silence the warriors leaned forward, waiting. It was a tense moment, and quite effective. Sobito prolonged it to the utmost. At last he opened his eyes and let them move solemnly about the circle of expectant faces, waiting again before he spoke.

"There are many ghosts about us," he announced. "They all speak against war. Those who go to battle with the Leopard Men will die. None will return. The ghosts are angry with Orando. The true *muzimo* of Orando spoke to me; it is very angry with Orando. Let Orando beware. That is all; the young men of the Utengas will not go to war against the Leopard Men."

The warriors gathered behind Orando looked questioningly at him, and at Muzimo. Doubt was written plainly upon every face. Gradually they began to move, drifting imperceptibly away from

Orando. Then the son of the chief looked at Muzimo questioningly. "If Sobito has spoken true words," he said, "you are not my *muzimo*." The words seemed a challenge.

"What does Sobito know about it?" demanded Muzimo. "I could build a fire and wave the tail of Dango. I could make marks in the dirt and throw powders on the fire. Then I could tell you whatever I wanted to tell you, just as Sobito has told you what he wanted you to believe; but such things prove nothing. The only way you can know if a war against the Leopard Men will succeed is to send warriors to fight them. Sobito knows nothing about it."

The witch-doctor trembled from anger. Never before had a creature dared voice a doubt as to his powers. So abjectly had the members of his clan acknowledged his infallibility, that he had almost come to believe in it himself. He shook a withered finger at Muzimo.

"You speak with a lying tongue," he cried. "You have angered my fetish. Nothing can save you. You are lost. You will die." He paused as a new idea was born in his cunning brain. "Un-



less," he added, "you go away, and do not come back."

Having no idea as to his true identity, Muzimo had had to accept Orando's word that he was the ancestral spirit of the chief's son; and having heard himself described as such innumerable times, he had come to accept it as fact. He felt no fear of Sobito the man; and when Sobito the witch-doctor, threatened him, he recalled that he was a *muzimo*, and as such, immortal. How, therefore, he reasoned, could the fetish of Sobito kill him? Nothing could kill a spirit.

"I shall not go away," he announced. "I am not afraid of Sobito."

The villagers were aghast. Never had they heard a witch-doctor flouted and defied as Muzimo had flouted and defied Sobito. They expected to see the rash creature destroyed before their eyes; but nothing happened. They looked at Sobito questioningly, and that wily old fraud, sensing the critical turn of the event, and fearing for his prestige, overcame his physical fear of the strange white giant in the hope of regaining his dignity by a single bold stroke.

Brandishing his hyena tail, he leaped toward Muzimo. "Die!" he screamed. "Nothing can save you now. Before the moon has risen the third time, you will be dead. My fetish has spoken!" He waved the hyena tail in the face of Muzimo.

The white man stood with folded arms, a sneer upon his lips. "I am Muzimo," he said; "I am the spirit of the ancestor of Orando. Sobito is only a man; his fetish is only the tail of Dango." As he ceased speaking, his hand shot out and snatched the fetish from the grasp of the witch-doctor. "Thus does Muzimo with the fetish of Sobito!" he cried, tossing the tail into the fire.

SEIZED by the unreasoning rage of fanaticism, Sobito cast caution to the winds and leaped for Muzimo, a naked blade in his upraised hand. There was the froth of madness upon his bared lips. His yellow fangs gleamed in a hideous snarl. He was the personification of hatred and maniacal fury. But swift and vicious as was his attack, it did not find Muzimo unprepared. A bronzed hand seized the black wrist of the witch-doctor in a grip of steel; another tore the knife from his grasp. Then Muzimo picked him up and held him high above his head, as though Sobito were some incorporeal thing without substance or weight.



Terror was writ large upon the countenances of the astounded onlookers; an idol was in the clutches of an iconoclast. The situation had passed beyond the scope of their simple minds, leaving them dazed. Perhaps it was well for Muzimo that Sobito was far from being a beloved idol.

Muzimo looked at Orando. "Shall I kill him?" he asked, almost casually.

Orando was as shocked and terrified as his fellows. A lifetime of unquestioning belief in the supernatural powers of witch-doctors could not be overcome in an instant. Yet there was another force working upon the son of the chief. He was only human. Muzimo was his *muzimo*, and being very human, he could not but feel a certain justifiable pride in the fearlessness and prowess of this splendid enigma whom he had enthusiastically accepted as the spirit of his dead ancestor. However, witch-doctors were witch-doctors. Their powers were well known to all men. There was, therefore, no wisdom in tempting fate too far.

Orando ran forward. "No!" he cried. "Do not kill him."

Upon the branch of a tree a little mon-



"Shall I kill him?" Muzimo asked. Orando ran forward. "No!" he cried. "Do not kill him."

key danced, screaming and scolding. "Kill him!" he shrieked. "Kill him!" A very bloodthirsty little monkey was Nkima, who had been adjudged by the tribesmen as the spirit of Nyamwegi.

Muzimo tossed Sobito to the ground in an ignominious heap.

"He is no good," he announced. "No witch-doctor is any good. His fetish was no good. If it had been, why did it not protect Sobito? Sobito did not know what he was talking about. If there are any brave warriors among the Utengas, they will come with Orando and Muzimo, and make war on the Leopard Men."

A low cry, growing in volume, rose among the younger warriors; and in the momentary confusion Sobito crawled to his feet and sneaked away toward his hut. When he was safely out of reach of Muzimo, he halted and faced about. "I go," he called back, "to make powerful medicine. Tonight the white man who calls himself Muzimo dies."

The white giant took a few steps in the direction of Sobito, and the witch-doctor turned and fled. The young men, seeing the waning of Sobito's power, talked loudly now of war. The older men talked

no more of peace. One and all, they feared and hated Sobito. They were relieved to see his power broken. On the morrow they might be afraid again, but today, for the first time in their lives, they were free from the domination of a witch-doctor.

Lobongo, the chief, would not sanction war; but influenced by the demands of Orando and other young men, he at last grudgingly gave his approval to the formation of a small raiding-party. Immediately runners were dispatched to other villages to seek recruits, and preparations were begun for a huge dance to be held that night.

BECAUSE of Lobongo's refusal to make a general war against the Leopard Men, there was no booming of war-drums; but news travels fast in the jungle, and night had scarcely closed down upon the village of Tumbai before warriors from the nearer villages commenced coming in to Tumbai by ones and twos to join the twenty volunteers from Lobongo's village—who swaggered and strutted before the admiring eyes of the dusky belles preparing the food and native beer that

would form an important part of the night's festivities.

From Kibbu came ten young warriors, among them the brother of the girl Nyamwegi had been courting, and one Lupingu, from whom the murdered warrior had stolen her heart. That Lupingu should volunteer to risk his life for the purpose of avenging Nyamwegi passed unnoticed, since already thoughts of vengeance had been submerged by lust for glory, and poor Nyamwegi practically forgotten by all but Orlando.

There was much talk of war and of brave deeds that would be accomplished; but the discomfiture of Sobito, being still fresh in every mind, also had an important part in the conversations. The village gossips found it a choice morsel with which to regale the warriors from other villages, with the result that Muzimo became an outstanding figure who reflected more glory upon the village of Tumbai than ever Sobito had. The visiting warriors regarded him with awe and some misgivings. They were accustomed to spirits that no one ever saw; the air was full of them. It was quite another matter to behold one standing silently in their midst.

Lupingu, especially, was perturbed. Recently he had purchased a love-charm from Sobito. He was wondering now if he had thrown away, uselessly, the little treasure he had paid for it. He decided to seek out the witch-doctor and make inquiries; perhaps there was not so much truth in what he had heard. There was also another reason why he wished to consult Sobito, a reason of far greater importance than a love-charm.

WHEN he could do so unnoticed, Lupingu withdrew from the crowd milling in the village street, and sneaked off to Sobito's hut. Here he found the old witch-doctor squatting upon the floor surrounded by charms and fetishes. A small fire burning beneath a pot fitfully lighted his sinister features, which were contorted by so hideous a scowl that Lupingu almost turned and fled before the old man at length looked up and recognized him.

For a long time Lupingu sat in the hut of the witch-doctor. They spoke in whispers, their heads close together. When Lupingu left, he carried with him an amulet of such prodigious potency that no enemy weapon could inflict injury upon him, and in his head he carried a plan that caused him both elation and terror.

CHAPTER V

"UNSPEAKABLE BOOR!"

LONG days of loneliness. Long nights of terror. Hopelessness and vain regrets so keen that they pained as might physical hurts. Only a brave heart had kept the girl from going mad since her men had deserted her. That seemed an eternity ago; days were ages.

Today she had hunted. A small boar had fallen to her rifle. At the sound of the shot, coming faintly to his ears, a white man had halted, scowling. His three companions jabbered excitedly.

With difficulty the girl had removed the viscera of the boar, thus reducing its weight sufficiently so that she could drag it to her camp; but it had been an ordeal that had taxed her strength and endurance to their limits. The meat was too precious, however, to be wasted; and she had struggled for hours, stopping often to rest, until at last, exhausted, she had sunk beside her prize before the entrance to her tent.

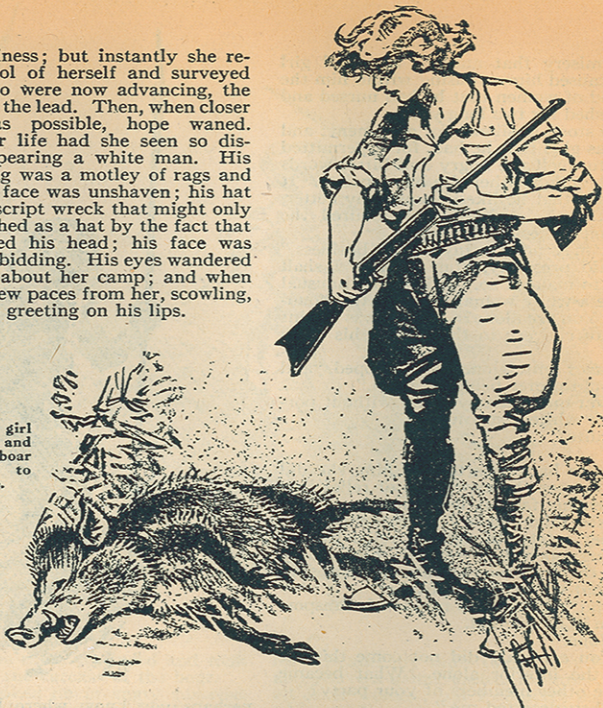
It was not encouraging to consider the vast amount of labor that still confronted her before the meat would be safe for future use. There was the butchering. The mere thought of it appalled her. She had never seen an animal butchered until after she had set out upon this disastrous safari. In all her life she had never even so much as cut a piece of raw meat. Her preparation, therefore, was most inadequate; but necessity overcomes obstacles, as it mothers inventions. She knew that the boar must be butchered, and the flesh cut into strips, and that these strips must be smoked. Even then they would not keep long, but she knew no better way.

With her limited knowledge of practical matters, with the means at hand, she must put up the best fight for life of which she was capable. She was weak and inexperienced and afraid; but none the less it was a courageous heart that beat beneath her once chic but now soiled and disreputable flannel shirt. She was without hope, yet she would not give up.

Wearily she had commenced to skin the boar, when a movement at the edge of the clearing in which her camp had been pitched attracted her attention. As she looked up, she saw four men standing silently regarding her. One was a white man. The other three were blacks. As she sprang to her feet, hope welled so strongly within her that she reeled slight-

ly with dizziness; but instantly she regained control of herself and surveyed the four, who were now advancing, the white man in the lead. Then, when closer scrutiny was possible, hope waned. Never in her life had she seen so disreputable-appearing a white man. His filthy clothing was a motley of rags and patches; his face was unshaven; his hat was a nondescript wreck that might only be distinguished as a hat by the fact that it surmounted his head; his face was stern and forbidding. His eyes wandered suspiciously about her camp; and when he halted a few paces from her, scowling, there was no greeting on his lips.

Today the girl had hunted, and a small boar had fallen to her rifle.



"Who are you?" he demanded. "What are you doing here?"

His tone and words antagonized her. Never before had any white man addressed her in so cavalier a manner. In a proud and spirited girl, the reaction was inevitable. Her chin went up; she eyed him coldly; the suggestion of a supercilious sneer curved her short upper lip; her eyes evaluated him disdainfully, from his run-down boots to the battered thing that covered his disheveled hair. Had his manner and address been different, she might have been afraid of him, but now for the moment at least she was too angry to be afraid.

"I cannot conceive that either matter concerns you," she said, and turned her back on him.

The scowl deepened on the man's face, and angry words leaped to his tongue; but he controlled himself, regarding her silently. Had he not already seen her

face, he would have guessed from the lines of her haughty little back that she was young. Having seen her face, he knew that she was beautiful. She was dirty, hot, perspiring and smeared with blood; but she was still beautiful. How beautiful she must be when properly garbed and groomed, he dared not even imagine. He had noticed her blue-gray eyes and long lashes; they alone would have made any face beautiful. Now he was appraising her hair, confined in a loose knot at the nape of her neck; it had that peculiar quality of bloneness that is described, today, as platinum.

It had been two years since Old-timer had seen a white woman. Perhaps if this one had been old and scrawny, or had buck teeth and a squint, he might have regarded her with less disapprobation and addressed her more courteously. But the moment that his eyes had beheld her, her beauty had recalled all the anguish

and misery that another beautiful girl had caused him, arousing within him the hatred of women that he had nursed and cherished for two long years.

He stood in silence for a moment; and he was glad that he had, for it permitted him to quell the angry and bitter words that he might otherwise have spoken. It was not that he liked women any better, but that he realized and admired the courageousness of her reply.

"It may not be any of my business," he said presently, "but perhaps I shall have to make it so. It is rather unusual to see a white woman alone in this country. You *are* alone?" There was a faint note of concern in the tone of his question.

"I was quite alone," she snapped, "and I should prefer being so again."

"You mean that you are without porters or white companions?"

"Quite."

AS her back was toward him, she did not see the expression of relief that crossed his face at her admission. Had she, she might have felt greater concern for her safety, though his relief had no bearing upon her welfare; his anxiety as to the presence of white men was simply that of the ivory-poacher.

"And you have no means of transportation?" he queried.

"None."

"You certainly did not come this far into the interior alone. What became of the other members of your party?"

"They deserted me."

"But your white companions—what of them?"

"I had none." She had faced him by now, but her attitude was still unfriendly.

"You came into the interior without any white men?" There was skepticism in his tone.

"I did."

"When did your men desert you?"

"Three days ago."

"What do you intend doing? You can't stay here alone, and I don't see how you can expect to go on without porters."

"I have stayed here three days alone; I can continue to do so until—"

"Until what?"

"I don't know."

"Look here," he demanded, "what in the world are you doing here, anyway?"

A sudden hope seemed to flash to her brain. "I am looking for a man," she said. "Perhaps you have heard of him;



perhaps you know where he is." Her voice was vibrant with eagerness.

"What's his name?" asked Old-timer.

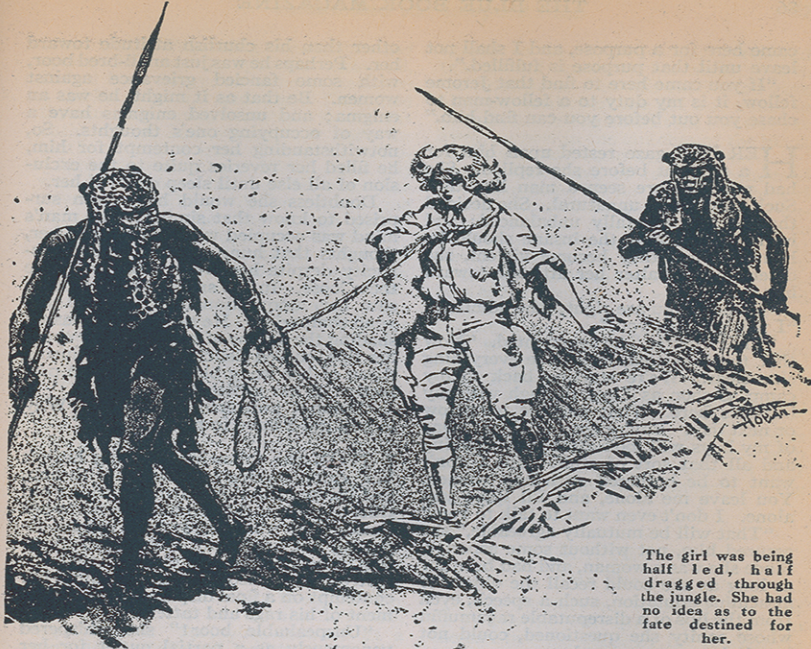
"Jerry Jerome." She looked up into his face hopefully.

He shook his head. "Never heard of him."

The hope in her eyes died out, suffused by the faintest suggestion of tears. Old-timer saw the moisture in her eyes, and it annoyed him. Why did women always have to cry? He steeled his heart against the weakness that was sympathy, and spoke brusquely. "What do you think you're going to do with that meat?" he demanded.

Her eyes widened in surprise. There were no tears in them now, but a glint of anger. "You are impossible. I wish you would get out of my camp and leave me alone."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," he replied. Then he spoke rapidly to his three followers in their native dialect—



The girl was being half led, half dragged through the jungle. She had no idea as to the fate destined for her.

whereupon the three advanced and took possession of the carcass of the boar.

The girl looked on in angry surprise. She recalled the heartbreaking labor of dragging the carcass to camp. Now it was being taken from her. The thought enraged her. She drew her revolver from its holster. "Tell them to leave that alone," she cried, "or I'll shoot them. It's mine."

"They're only going to butcher it for you," explained Old-timer. "That's what you wanted, isn't it? Or were you going to frame it?"

HIS sarcasm nettled her, but she realized that she had misunderstood their purpose. "Why didn't you say so?" she demanded. "I was going to smoke it. I may not always be able to get food easily."

"You won't have to," he told her; "we'll look after that."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that as soon as I'm through here, you're going back to my camp with

me. It aint my fault that you're here; and you're a damn' useless nuisance, like all other women; but I couldn't leave a white rat here alone in the jungle, much less a white woman."

"What if I don't care to go with you?" she inquired haughtily.

"I don't give a damn what you think about it," he snapped; "you're going with me. If you had any brains, you'd be grateful. It's too much to expect you to have a heart. You're like all the rest—selfish, inconsiderate, ungrateful."

"Anything else?" she inquired.

"Yes: cold, calculating, hard."

"You do not think much of women, do you?"

"You are discerning."

"And just what do you purpose doing with me when we get to your camp?" she asked.

"If we can scrape up a new safari for you, I'll get you out of Africa as quickly as I can," he replied.

"But I do not wish to get out of Africa. You have no right to dictate to me. I

came here for a purpose, and I shall not leave until that purpose is fulfilled."

"If you came here to find that Jerome fellow, it is my duty to a fellow-man to chase you out before you can find him."

HER level gaze rested upon him for a moment before she replied. She had never before seen a man like this. Such candor was unnatural. She decided that he was mentally unbalanced; and having heard that the insane should be humored, lest they become violent, she determined to alter her attitude toward him.

"Perhaps you are right," she admitted. "I will go with you."

"That's better," he commented. "Now that that's settled, let's have everything else clear. We're starting back to my camp as soon as I get through with my business here. That may be tomorrow or next day. You're coming along. One of my boys will look after you—cooking and all that sort of stuff. But I don't want to be bothered with any women. You leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone. I don't even want to talk to you."

"That will be mutually agreeable," she assured him, not without some asperity. Since she was a woman, and had been for as long as she could recall the object of masculine adulation, such a speech, even from the lips of a disreputable ragamuffin whose sanity she questioned, could not but induce a certain pique.

"One more thing," he added. "My camp is in Chief Bobolo's country. If anything happens to me, have my boys take you back there to my camp. My partner will look after you. Just tell him that I promised to get you back to the coast." He left her then, and busied himself with the simple preparation of his modest camp, calling one of the men from the butchering, to pitch his small tent and prepare his evening meal, for it was now late in the afternoon. Another of the boys was detailed to serve the girl. . . .

From her tent that evening she could see him sprawled before a fire, smoking his pipe. From a distance she gazed at him contemptuously, convinced that he was the most disagreeable person she had ever encountered, yet forced to admit that his presence gave her a feeling of security she had not enjoyed since she had entered Africa. She concluded that even a crazy white man was better than none. But was he crazy? He seemed quite normal and sane in all respects

other than his churlish attitude toward her. Perhaps he was just an ill-bred boor, with some fancied grievance against women. Be that as it might, he was an enigma; and unsolved enigmas have a way of occupying one's thoughts. So, notwithstanding her contempt for him, he filled her reveries quite to the exclusion of all else until sleep claimed her.

Doubtless she would have been surprised to know that similarly the man's mind was occupied with thoughts of her, thoughts that hung on with bulldog tenacity despite his every effort to shake them loose. In the smoke of his pipe he saw her, unquestionably beautiful beyond comparison. He saw the long lashes shading the depths of her blue-gray eyes; her lips, curved deliciously; the alluring sheen of her wavy blonde hair; the perfection of her girlish figure.

"Damn!" muttered Old-timer. "Why in hell did I have to run into her?"

UPON the following morning he left camp, taking two blacks with him, and leaving the third, armed with an old rifle, to protect the girl and attend to her wants. She was already up when he departed, but he did not look in her direction as he strode out of camp, though she furtively watched him go, feeding her contempt on a final disparaging appraisal of his rags and tatters.

"Unspeakable boor!" she whispered venomously as a partial outlet for her pent-up hatred of the man. . . .

Old-timer had a long, hard day. No sign of elephant rewarded his search, nor did he contact a single native from whom he might obtain information as to the whereabouts of the great herd that rumor and hope had located in this vicinity.

Not only was the day one of physical hardship, but it had been mentally trying as well. He had been disappointed in not locating the ivory they needed so sorely, but this had been the least of his mental perturbation. He had been haunted by thoughts of the girl. All day he had tried to rid his mind of recollection of that lovely face, but it persisted in haunting him. At first she had aroused other memories, painful memories of another girl. But gradually the vision of that other girl had faded until only the blue-gray eyes and blonde hair of the girl in the lonely camp persisted in his thoughts.

When he turned back toward camp at the end of his fruitless search for elephant signs, a new determination filled

him with disquieting thoughts and spurred him rapidly upon the back-trail. It had been two years since he had seen a white woman, and then Fate had thrown this lovely creature across his path. What had women ever done for him? "Made a bum of me," he soliloquized, "—ruined my life! This girl would have been lost but for me. She owes me something. All women owe me something for what one woman did to me. This girl is going to pay the debt."

"God, but she's beautiful! And she belongs to me. I found her, and I am going to keep her until I am tired of her. Then I'll throw her over, the way I was thrown over. It's only fair. I've got something coming to me in this world. I'm entitled to a little happiness, and by God, I'm going to have it."

The great sun hung low in the west as the man came in sight of the clearing. The tent of the girl was the first thing that greeted his eyes. The soiled canvas had sheltered and protected her; like all inanimate objects that have been closely associated with an individual, the tent reflected something of the personality of the girl. The mere sight of it stirred the man deeply. He quickened his pace in his eagerness to take the girl in his arms.

Then he saw an object lying just beyond her tent that turned him cold with apprehension. Springing forward at a run, closely followed by his two retainers, he came to a halt beside the grisly thing that had attracted his horrified attention and turned the hot wave of his desire to cold dread. It was the dead and horribly mutilated body of the black he had left to guard the girl. Cruel talons had lacerated the flesh with deep wounds that might have been inflicted by one of the great carnivores, but the further mutilation of the corpse had been the work of man.

Stooping over the body of their fellow, the two blacks muttered angrily in their native tongue; then one of them turned to Old-timer.

"The Leopard Men, Bwana," he said.

FEARFULLY the white man approached the girl's tent, dreading what he might find there, dreading even more that he might find nothing. As he threw aside the flap and looked in, his worst fears were realized: the girl was not there. His first impulse was to call aloud to her as though she might be somewhere near in the forest; but as he

turned to do so, he suddenly realized that he did not know her name, and in the brief pause that this realization gave him, the futility of the act was borne in upon him. If she still lived, she was far away by now in the clutches of the black fiends who had slain her protector.

A sudden wave of rage overwhelmed the white man; his hot desire for the girl was transmuted to almost maniacal anger toward her abductors. Perhaps he thought only of his own frustrated hopes; but he believed that he was thinking only of the girl's helplessness, of the hideousness of her situation. Ideas of rescue and vengeance filled his whole being, banishing the fatigue of the long arduous day.

It was already late in the afternoon, but he determined upon immediate pursuit. Following his curt orders, the two blacks hastily buried their dead comrade, made up a couple of packs with such provisions and camp necessities as the marauders had not filched, and with the sun but an hour high, followed their mad master upon the fresh trail of the Leopard Men.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRAITOR

THE warriors of Watenga had not responded with great enthusiasm to the call to arms borne by the messengers of Orando. There were wars, and wars. One directed against the feared secret order of the Leopard Men did not appear to be highly popular. There were excellent reasons for this. In the first place the very name of Leopard Men was sufficient to arouse terror in the breast of the bravest, the gruesome methods of the Leopard Men being what they were. There was also the well-known fact that, being a secret order recruited among unrelated clans, some of one's own friends might be members—in which event an active enemy of the order could easily be marked for death. And such a death!

It is little wonder, then, that from thousands of potential crusaders, Orando discovered but a scant hundred awaiting the call to arms the morning following the celebration and war-dance at Tumbai. Even among the hundred, there were several whose martial spirit had suffered eclipse overnight. Perhaps this was largely due to the after effects of an overdose of native beer. It is not pleasant to set out for war with a head-ache.

Orando was moving about among the warriors squatting near the numerous cooking-fires. There was not much talk this morning and less laughter; the boasting of yester eve was stilled. Today war seemed a serious business; yet, their bellies once filled with warm food, they would go forth presently with loud yells, with laughter, and with song.

Orando made inquiries. "Where is Muzimo?" he asked, but no one had seen Muzimo. He and the Spirit of Nyamwegi had disappeared. This seemed an ill omen. Some one suggested that possibly Sobito had been right; Muzimo might be in league with the Leopard Men.

This at once aroused inquiry as to the whereabouts of Sobito. No one had seen him, either—which was strange, since Sobito was an early riser, and not one to be missing when the cook-pots were a-boil. An old man went to his hut and questioned one of the witch-doctor's wives. Sobito was gone!

WHEN this fact was reported, conversation waxed. The enmity between Muzimo and Sobito was recalled, as was the latter's threat that Muzimo would die before morning. There were those who suggested that perhaps it was Sobito who was dead, while others recalled the fact that there was nothing unusual in his disappearance. He had disappeared before. In fact, it was nothing unusual for him to absent himself mysteriously from the village for days at a time. Upon his return after such absences, he had darkly hinted that he had been sitting in council with the spirits and demons of another world, from whom he derived his supernatural powers.

Lupingu of Tibbu thought that they should not set out upon the war-trail in the face of such dire omens. He went quietly among the warriors, seeking adherents to his suggestion that they disband and return to their own villages, but Orando shamed them out of desertion. The old men and the women would laugh at them, he told them. They had made too much talk about war; they had boasted too much. They would lose face forever if they failed to go through with it now.

"But who will guide us to the village of the Leopard Men, now that your *muzimo* has deserted you?" demanded Lupingu.

"I do not believe that he has deserted me," maintained Orando stoutly. "He



too has doubtless gone to take council with the spirits. He will return and lead us."

As though in answer to his statement, which was also a prayer, a giant figure dropped lightly from the branches of a near-by tree and strode toward him. It was Muzimo. Across one of his broad shoulders rested the carcass of a buck. On top of the buck sat the Spirit of Nyamwegi, screaming shrilly to attract attention to his prowess. "We are mighty hunters," he cried. "See what we have killed." No one but Muzimo understood him, but that made no difference to the Spirit of Nyamwegi, because he did not know that they could not understand him. He thought that he was making a fine impression, and he was quite proud of himself.

"Where have you been, Muzimo?" asked Orando. "Some said that Sobito had slain you."

Muzimo shrugged.

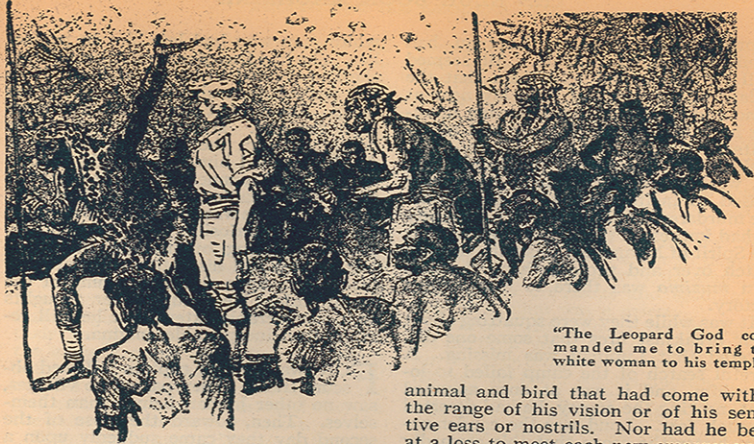
"Words do not kill," he said briefly. "Sobito is full of words."

"Have you killed Sobito?" demanded an old man.

"I have not seen Sobito since before Kudu, the sun, went to his lair last night," replied Muzimo.

"He is gone from the village," Orando explained. "It was thought that maybe—"

"I went to hunt. Your food is no good; you spoil it with fire." Muzimo squatted down at the bole of a tree and cut meat from his kill, which he ate, growling. The blacks looked on terrified, giving him a wide berth.



"The Leopard God commanded me to bring the white woman to his temple."

When he had finished his meal, he arose and stretched his great frame, and the action reminded them of Simba the lion.

"Muzimo is now ready," he announced. "If the Utengas are ready, let us go."

Orando gathered his warriors. He selected his captains and gave the necessary orders for the conduct of the march. This all required time, as no point could be decided without a general argument in which all participated whether the matter concerned them or not.

Tarzan—known to the blacks and to himself only as Muzimo—stood silently aside. He was wondering about these people. He was wondering about himself. Physically, he and they were much alike; yet in addition to the difference in coloration, there were other differences, those he could see and those he could not see but sensed. The Spirit of Nyamwegi was like them and like him, too; yet here again was a vast difference. Muzimo knit his brows in perplexity. Vaguely he almost recalled a fleeting memory that seemed the key to the riddle, but it eluded him. He felt dimly that he had had a past, but he could not recall it. He recalled only the things that he had seen and the experiences that had come to him, since Orando had freed him from the great tree that had fallen on him; yet he appreciated the fact that when he had seen each seemingly new thing he had instantly recognized it for what it was—man, the okapi, the buck, each and every

animal and bird that had come within the range of his vision or of his sensitive ears or nostrils. Nor had he been at a loss to meet each new emergency of life as it confronted him.

He had thought much upon this subject (so much that at times the effort of sustained thought tired him), and he had come to the conclusion that somewhere, sometime he must have experienced many things. He had questioned Orando casually as to the young black's past, and learned that he could recall events in clear detail as far back as his early childhood. Muzimo could recall but a couple of yesterdays. Finally he came to the conclusion that his mental state must be the natural state of spirits, and because it was so different from that of man he found in it almost irrefutable proof of his spirit-hood. With a feeling of detachment he viewed the antics of man, viewed them contemptuously. With folded arms he stood apart in silence, apparently as oblivious to the noisy bickerings of the blacks as to the chattering and scolding of the Spirit of Nyamwegi perched upon his shoulder.

But at last the noisy horde was herded into something approximating order, and, followed by laughing, screaming women and children, started upon its march toward high adventure. Not, however, until the latter had turned back did the men settle down to serious marching, though Lupingu's croakings of eventual disaster had never permitted them to forget the seriousness of their undertaking.

FOR three days they marched, led by Orando and guided by Muzimo. The spirits of the warriors were high as they

approached their goal. Lupingu had been silenced by ridicule. All seemed well. Muzimo had told them that the village of the Leopard Men lay near at hand and that upon the following morning he would go ahead alone and reconnoiter.

With the dawning of the fourth day, all were eager, for Orando had never ceased to incite them to anger against the murderers of Nyamwegi. Constantly he had impressed them with the fact that the Spirit of Nyamwegi was with them to watch over and protect them, that his own *muzimo* was there to insure them victory.

It was while they were squatting about their breakfast fires that some one discovered that Lupingu was missing. A careful search of the camp failed to locate him, and it was at once assumed that, nearing the enemy, he had deserted through fear. Loud was the condemnation, bitter the scorn that this cowardly defection aroused. It was still the topic of angry discussion as Muzimo and the Spirit of Nyamwegi slipped silently away through the trees toward the village of the Leopard Men.

A FIBER rope about her neck, the girl was being half led, half dragged through the jungle. A powerful young black walking ahead of her held the free end of the rope; ahead of him an old man led the way; behind her was a second young man. All three were strangely garbed in leopard-skins. The heads of leopards, cunningly mounted, fitted snugly over their woolly pates. Curved steel talons were fitted to their fingers. Their teeth were filed, their faces hideously painted. Of the three, the old man was the most terrifying. He was the leader. The others cringed servilely when he gave commands.

The girl could understand little that they said. She had no idea as to the fate that was destined for her. As yet they had not injured her, but she could anticipate nothing other than a horrible termination of this hideous adventure. The young man who led her was occasionally rough when she stumbled or faltered, though he had not been actually brutal. Their appearance, however, was sufficient to arouse the direst forebodings in her mind, and she had always the recollection of the horrid butchery of the faithful black man who had been left to guard her.

Thoughts of him reminded her of the

white man who had left him to protect her. She had feared and mistrusted him; she had wanted to be rid of him. Now she wished that she were back in his camp. She did not admire him any more than she had. It was merely that she considered him the lesser of two evils. As she recalled him she thought of him only as an ill-mannered boor, as quite the most disagreeable person she had ever seen. Yet there was that about him which aroused her curiosity. His English suggested anything other than illiteracy. His clothes and his attitude toward her placed him upon the lowest rung of the social scale. He occupied her thoughts to a considerable extent, but he still remained an inexplicable enigma.

FOR two days her captors followed obscure trails. They passed no villages, saw no other human beings than themselves. Then, toward the close of the second day they came suddenly upon a large, palisaded village beside a river. The heavy gates that barred the entrance were closed, although the sun had not yet set; but when they had approached closely enough to be recognized they were admitted following a short parley between the old leader and the keepers of the gate.

The stronghold of the Leopard Men was the village of Gato Mgungu, chief of a once powerful tribe that had dwindled in numbers until now it boasted but this single village. But Gato Mgungu was also chief of the Leopard Men, a position which carried with it a sinister power far above that of many a chief whose villages were more numerous and whose tribes were numerically far stronger. This was true largely because of the fact that the secret order whose affairs he administered was recruited from unrelated clans and villages, and, because of the allegiance enforced by its strict and merciless code, Gato Mgungu demanded the first loyalty of its members, even above their loyalty to their own tribes or families. Thus, in nearly every village within a radius of a hundred miles Gato Mgungu had followers who kept him informed as to the plans of other chiefs, followers who must even slay their own kin if the chief of the Leopard Men so decreed.

IN the village of Gato Mgungu alone were all inhabitants members of the secret order; in the other villages his adherents were unknown, or, at most, only

suspected of membership in the feared and hated order. To be positively identified as a Leopard Man, in most villages, would have been to meet sudden mysterious death; for so loathed were they a son would kill his own father if he knew that he was a member of the sect, yet so feared that no man dared destroy one except in secret lest the wrath and the terrible vengeance of the order fall upon him.

In secret places, deep hidden in impenetrable jungle, the Leopard Men of outlying districts performed the abhorrent rites of the order except upon those occasions when they gathered at the village of Gato Mgungu, near which was located their temple. Such was the reason for the gathering that now filled the village with warriors and for the relatively small number of women and children that the girl noticed as she was dragged through the gateway into the main street.

Here the women, degraded, hideous, filed-toothed harpies, would have set upon her and torn her to pieces but for the interference of her captors, who laid about them with the hafts of their spears, driving the creatures off until the old man could make himself heard. He spoke angrily with a voice of authority, and immediately the women withdrew, though they cast angry, venomous glances at the captive that boded no good for her should she fall into their hands.

GUARDING her closely, her captors led her through a horde of milling warriors to a large hut before which was seated an old, wrinkled black, with a huge belly. This was Gato Mgungu, chief of the Leopard Men. As the four approached he looked up, and at sight of the white girl a sudden interest momentarily lighted his blood-shot eyes that ordinarily gazed dully from between red and swollen lids. Then he recognized the old man.

"You have brought me a present, Lulimi?" he demanded.

"Lulimi has brought a present," replied the old man, "but not for Gato Mgungu alone."

"What do you mean?" The chief scowled now.

"I have brought a present for the whole clan and for the Leopard God."

"Gato Mgungu does not share his slaves with others," the chief growled.

"I have brought no slave," snapped Lulimi. It was evident that he did not greatly fear Gato Mgungu. And why

should he, who was high in the priesthood of the Leopard Clan?

"Then why have you brought this white woman to my village?"

BY now there was a dense half-circle of interested auditors craning their necks to view the prisoner and straining their ears to catch all that was passing between these two great men of their little world.

For this audience Lulimi was most grateful, since he was never so happy as when he held the center of the stage, surrounded by credulous and ignorant listeners. Lulimi was a priest.

"Three nights ago we lay in the forest far from the village of Gato Mgungu, far from the temple of the Leopard God." Already he could see his auditors pricking up their ears. "It was a dark night. The lion was abroad, and the leopard. We kept a large fire burning to frighten them away. It was my turn to watch. The others slept. Suddenly I saw two green eyes shining just beyond the fire. They blazed like living coals. They came closer, and I was afraid; but I could not move. I could not call out. My tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. My jaws would not open. Closer and closer they came, those terrible eyes, until, just beyond the fire, I saw a great leopard, the largest leopard that I have ever seen. I thought that the end of my days had come and that I was about to die.

"I waited for him to spring upon me, but he did not spring. Instead, he opened his mouth and spoke to me."

Gasps of astonishment greeted this remarkable statement, while Lulimi paused for effect.

"What did he say to you?" demanded Gato Mgungu.

"He said, 'I am the brother of the Leopard God. He sent me to find Lulimi, because he trusts Lulimi. Lulimi is a great man. He is very brave and wise. There is no one knows as much as Lulimi.'"

Gato Mgungu looked bored. "Did the Leopard God send his brother three marches to tell you that?"

"He told me other things, many things. Some of them I can repeat, but others I may never speak of. Only the Leopard God, and his brother, and Lulimi know these things."

"What has all this to do with the white woman?" demanded Gato Mgungu.

"I am getting to that," replied Lulimi

sourly. He did not relish these interruptions.

"Then, when the great brother of the Leopard God had asked after my health, he told me that I was to go to a certain place the next day and that there I should find a white woman. She would be alone in the jungle with one black man. He commanded me to kill the black man and bring the woman to his temple to be high priestess of the Leopard Clan. This Lulimi will do. Tonight Lulimi takes the white high priestess to the great temple. I have spoken."

FOR a moment there was awed silence. Gato Mgunu did not seem pleased; but Lulimi was a powerful priest whom the rank and file respected, and he had greatly increased his prestige by this weird tale. Gato Mgunu was sufficiently a judge of men to know that. Furthermore, he was an astute old politician with an eye to the future. He knew that Imigeg, the high priest, was a very old man who could not live much longer and that Lulimi, who had been laying his plans to that end for years, would doubtless succeed him. Now a high priest friendly to Gato Mgunu could do much to increase the power and prestige of the chief and, incidentally, his revenues; while one who was inimical might threaten his ascendancy. Therefore, reading thus plainly the handwriting on the wall, Gato Mgunu seized this opportunity to lay the foundations of future friendship and understanding between them, though he knew that Lulimi was an old fraud and his story doubtless a canard.

Many of the warriors, having sensed in the chief's former attitude a certain antagonism to Lulimi, were evidently waiting a cue from their leader. As Gato Mgunu jumped, so would the majority of the fighting men; but when the day came that a successor to Imigeg must be chosen it would be the priests who would make the selection, and Gato Mgunu knew that Lulimi had a long memory.

All eyes were upon the chief as he cleared his royal throat. "We have heard the story of Lulimi," he said. "We all know Lulimi. In his own village he is a great witch-doctor. In the temple of the Leopard God there is no greater priest after Imigeg. It is not strange that the brother of the Leopard God should speak to Lulimi. Gato Mgunu is only a fighting man. He does not talk with gods and demons. This is not a matter for war-

riors. It is a matter for priests. All that Lulimi has said we believe. But let us take the white woman to the temple. The Leopard God and Imigeg will know whether the jungle leopard spoke true words to Lulimi or not. Has not my tongue spoken wise words, Lulimi?"

"The tongue of Gato Mgunu, the chief, always speaks wise words," replied the priest, who was inwardly delighted that the chief's attitude had not been, as he had feared, antagonistic. And thus the girl's fate was decided by the greed of corrupt politicians, temporal and ecclesiastical, suggesting that the benighted blacks of central Africa are in some respects quite as civilized as we.

As preparations were being made to conduct the girl to the temple, a lone warrior, sweat-streaked and breathless, approached the gates of the village. Here he was halted, but when he had given the secret sign of the Leopard Clan he was admitted. There was much excited jabbering at the gateway; but to all questions the newcomer insisted that he must speak to Gato Mgunu immediately upon a matter of urgent importance, and presently he was brought before the chief.

Again he gave the secret sign of the Leopard Clan as he faced Gato Mgunu. "What message do you bring?" demanded the chief.

"A few hours' march from here a hundred Utenga warriors led by Orando, the son of Lobongo the chief, are waiting to attack your village. They come to avenge Nyamwégi of Kibbu, who was killed by members of the clan. If you send warriors at once to hide beside the trail, they can ambush the Utengas, and kill them all."

"Where lies their camp?"

THE messenger described the location minutely; when he had finished, Gato Mgunu ordered a sub-chief to gather three hundred warriors and march against the invaders; then he turned to the messenger. "We shall feast tonight upon our enemies," he growled, "and you shall sit beside Gato Mgunu and have the choicest morsels."

"I may not remain," replied the messenger. "I must return from whence I came lest I be suspected of carrying word to you."

"Who are you?" demanded Gato Mgunu.

"I am Lupingu of Kibbu, in the Watinga country," replied the messenger.

Kali Bwana, who had worn creations of the most famous *couturiers* of Paris, stood clothed as she never had been clothed before.



CHAPTER VII THE CAPTIVE

KNOWING nothing of the meaning of what was transpiring around her, the girl yet sensed in the excitement and activity following the coming of the messenger something of the underlying cause. She saw the fighting men hurriedly arming themselves; she saw them depart from the village. In her heart was a hope that perhaps the enemy they went to meet might be a succoring party in search of her. Reason argued to the contrary; but hope catches at straws, unreasoning.

When the war-party had departed, attention was again focused upon the girl. Lulimi waxed important. He ordered people about right and left. Twenty men armed with spears and shields and carrying paddles formed about her as an escort.

Led proudly by Lulimi, they marched through the gateway of the village down to the river. Here they placed her in a large canoe which they launched in silence, knowing that enemies were not far distant. There was no singing or shouting as there would have been upon a similar occasion under ordinary circumstances. In silence they dipped their paddles into the swift stream; silently

they sped with the current down the broad river, keeping close to the river bank upon the same side as that upon which they had launched the craft by the village of Gato Mgunu.

Poor little Kali Bwana! They had taken the rope from about her neck; they treated her now with a certain respect, tinged with awe, for was she not to be the high priestess of the Leopard God? But of that she knew nothing. She could only wonder, as numb with hopelessness she watched the green verdure of the river bank move swiftly past. Where were they taking her? To what horrid fate? She noted the silence and the haste of her escort; she recalled the excitement following the coming of the messenger to the village and the hasty exodus of the war party.

All these facts combined to suggest that her captors were hurrying her away from a rescuing party. But who could have organized such an expedition? Who knew of her plight? Only the bitter man of rags and patches. But what could he do to effect her rescue, even if he cared to do so? It had been evident to her that he was a poor and worthless vagabond. His force consisted now of but two natives. His camp, he had told her, was several marches from where he had found her. He could not possibly have

obtained reinforcements from that source in the time that had elapsed since her capture, even if they existed, which she doubted. She could not imagine that such a sorry specimen of poverty commanded any resources whatever. Thus she was compelled to abandon hope of succor from this source; yet hope did not die. In the last extremity one may always expect a miracle. . . .

For a mile or two the canoe sped down the river, the paddles rising and falling with clocklike regularity and almost in silence; then suddenly the speed of the craft was checked, and its nose turned toward the bank. Ahead of them the girl saw the mouth of a small affluent of the main river, and presently the canoe slid into its sluggish waters.

Great trees arched above the narrow, winding stream, dense underbrush choked the ground between their boles; matted vines and creepers clung to their mossy branches, or hung motionless in the breathless air, trailing almost to the surface of the water; gorgeous blooms shot the green with vivid color. It was a scene of beauty, yet there hung about it an air of mystery and death like a noxious miasma. It reminded the girl of the face of a lovely woman behind whose mask of beauty hid a vicious soul. The silence, the scent of rotting things in the heavy air oppressed her.

Just ahead, a great slimy body slid from a rotting log into the slow-moving waters. It was a crocodile. As the canoe glided silently through the semi-darkness, the girl saw that the river was fairly alive with these hideous reptiles, whose presence served but to add to the depression that already weighed so heavily upon her.

SHE sought to arouse her drooping spirits by recalling the faint hope of rescue that she had entertained and clung to ever since she had been so hurriedly removed from the village. Fortunately for her peace of mind she did not know her destination, nor that the only avenue to it lay along this crocodile-infested stream. No other path led through the matted jungle to the cleverly hidden temple of the Leopard God. No other avenue than this fetid river gave ingress to it, and this was known to no human being who was not a Leopard Man.

The canoe had proceeded up the stream for a couple of miles when the girl saw upon the right bank just ahead of them a large, grass-thatched building. Un-

customed as she had been during the past few months to seeing any structure larger than the ordinary native huts, the size of this building filled her with astonishment. It was quite two hundred feet long and fifty feet wide, and fully fifty feet in height. It lay parallel to the river, its main entrance being in the end they were approaching. A wide veranda extended across the front of the building and along the side facing the river. The entire structure was elevated on piles to a height of about ten feet above the ground. She did not know it, but this was the temple of the Leopard God, whose high priestess she was destined to be.

As the canoe drew closer to the building, a number of men emerged from its interior. Lulimi rose from the bottom of the craft where he had been squatting and shouted a few words to the men on the temple porch. They were the secret passwords of the order, to which one of the guardians of the temple replied, whereupon the canoe drew in to the shore.

A FEW curious priests surrounded Lulimi and the girl as the old man escorted her up the steps to the great entrance flanked by grotesquely carved images and into the half-light of the interior. Here she found herself in an enormous room open to the rafters far above her head. Hideous masks hung upon the supporting columns with shields, and spears, and knives, and human skulls. Idols, crudely carved, stood about the floor. Many of these represented a human body with the head of an animal, though so rude was the craftsmanship that the girl could not be certain what animal they were intended to represent. It might be a leopard, she thought.

At the far end of the room, which they were approaching, she discerned a raised dais. It was, in reality, a large platform paved with clay. Upon it, elevated a couple of feet, was a smaller dais about five feet wide and twice as long, which was covered with the skins of animals. A heavy post supporting a human skull was set in the center of the long dimension of the smaller dais close to its rear edge. These details she noted only casually at the time. She was to have reason to remember them vividly later.

As Lulimi led her toward the dais a very old man emerged from an opening in the wall at its back and came toward them. He had a particularly repellant visage, the ugliness of which was accen-

tuated by the glowering scowl with which he regarded her.

As his old eyes fell upon Lulimi they were lighted dimly by a feeble ray of recognition. "It is you?" he mumbled. "But why do you bring this white woman? Who is she? A sacrifice?"

"Listen, Imigeg," whispered Lulimi, "and think well. Remember your prophecy."

"What prophecy?" demanded the high priest querulously. He was very old, and his memory sometimes played him tricks, though he refused to admit it.

"Long ago you said that some day a white priestess would sit with you and the Leopard God, here on the great throne of the temple. Now your prophecy shall be fulfilled. Here is the white priestess, brought by Lulimi, just as you prophesied."

Now Imigeg did not recall having made any such prophecy, for the very excellent reason that he never had done so; but Lulimi was a wily old person who knew Imigeg better than Imigeg knew himself. He knew that the old high priest was rapidly losing his memory, and he knew, too, that he was very sensitive on the subject, so sensitive that he would not dare deny having made such a prophecy as Lulimi imputed to him.

FOR reasons of his own Lulimi desired a white priestess. Just how it might redound to his benefit is not entirely clear, but the mental processes of priests are often beyond the ken of lay minds. Perhaps his reason might have been obvious to a Hollywood publicity agent; but however that may be, the method he had adopted to insure the acceptance of his priestess was entirely successful.

Imigeg swallowed the bait, hook, line, and sinker. He swelled with importance. "Imigeg talks with the demons and the spirits," he said; "they tell him everything. When we have human flesh for the Leopard God and his priests, the white woman shall be made high priestess of the order."

"That should be soon then," announced Lulimi.

"How do you know that?" demanded Imigeg.

"My *muzimo* came to me and told me that the warriors now in the village of Gato Mgungu would march forth today, returning with food enough for all."

"Good," exclaimed Imigeg quickly; "it is just as I prophesied yesterday to the lesser priests."

"Tonight then," said Lulimi. "Now you will want to have the white woman prepared."

At the suggestion, Imigeg clapped his hands, whereupon several of the lesser priests advanced. "Take the woman," he instructed one of them, "to the quarters of the priestesses. She is to be high priestess of the order. Tell them this and that they shall prepare her. Tell them, also, that Imigeg holds them responsible for her safety."

THE lesser priest led the girl through the opening at the rear of the dais, and she discovered herself in a corridor flanked on either side by rooms. To the door of one of these the men conducted her and, pushing her ahead, entered. It was a large room in which were a dozen women, naked but for scanty skirts of grass. Nearly all of them were young; but there was one toothless old hag, and it was she whom the man addressed.

The angry and resentful movement of the women toward the white girl at the instant that she entered the room was halted at the first words of her escort. "This is the new high priestess of the Leopard God," he announced. "Imigeg sends orders that you are to prepare her for the rites to be held tonight. If any harm befalls her you will be held accountable, and you all know the anger of Imigeg."

"Leave her with me," mumbled the old woman. "I have served in the temple through many rains, and I have not filled the belly of the Leopard God yet."

"You are too old and tough," snarled one of the younger women.

"YOU are not," snapped the old hag. "All the more reason that you should be careful not to make Imigeg angry, or Mumga, either. Go," she directed the priest. "The white woman will be safe with old Mumga."



As the man left the room the women gathered about the girl. Hatred distorted their dark features. The younger women tore at her clothing. They pushed and pulled her about, all the while jabbering excitedly; but they did not injure her aside from a few scratches from claw-like nails.

THE reason for bringing her here at all was unknown to Kali Bwana; the intentions of the women were, similarly, a mystery. Their demeanor boded her no good, and she believed that eventually they would kill her. Their degraded faces, their sharp-filed, yellow fangs, their angry voices and glances left no doubt in her mind as to the seriousness of her situation or the desires of the harpies. That a power which they feared restrained them she did not know. She saw only the menace of their attitude toward her and their rough and brutal handling of her.

One by one they stripped her garments from her, and then she was accorded a respite as they fell to fighting among themselves for her clothing. For the first time she had an opportunity to note her surroundings. She saw that the room was the common sleeping and eating apartment of the women. Straw mats were stretched across one of its sides. There was a clay hearth at one end directly below a hole in the roof, through which some of the smoke from a still smoldering fire was finding its way into the open air, though most of it hung among the rafters of the high ceiling, from whence it settled down to fill the apartment with acrid fumes. A few cooking-pots stood on or beside the hearth. There were earthen jars and wooden boxes, fiber baskets and pouches of skin strewn upon the floor along the walls, many near the sleeping mats. From pegs stuck in the walls depended an array of ornaments and finery: strings of beads, necklaces of human teeth and of the teeth of leopards, bracelets of copper and iron and anklets of the same metals, feather head-dresses and breast-plates of metal and of hide, and innumerable garments fashioned from the black-spotted yellow skins of leopards. Everything in the apartment bespoke primitive savagery in keeping with its wild and savage inmates.

When the final battle for the last vestige of her apparel had terminated, the

women again turned their attention to the girl. Old Mumga addressed her at considerable length, but Kali Bwana only shook her head to indicate that she could understand nothing that was said to her. Then at a word from the old woman they laid hold of her again, none too gently. She was thrown upon one of the filthy sleeping mats, an earthen jar was dragged to the side of the mat, and two young women proceeded to anoint her with a vile-smelling oil, the base of which might have been rancid butter. This oil was rubbed in by rough hands until her flesh was almost raw; then a greenish liquid, which smelled of bay leaves and stung like fire, was poured over her; and again she was rubbed until the liquid had evaporated.

When this ordeal had been concluded, leaving her weak and sick from its effects, she was clothed. Much discussion accompanied this ceremony, and several times women were sent to consult Imigege and to fetch apparel from other parts of the temple. Finally they seemed satisfied with their handiwork, and Kali Bwana, who had worn some of the most exclusive creations of the most famous *couturiers* of Paris, stood clothed as she had never been clothed before.

FIRST they had adjusted about her waist a loin-cloth made from the skins of unborn leopard cubs; and then, over one shoulder, had been draped a gorgeous hide of vivid yellow, spotted with glossy black. This garment hung in graceful folds quite to her knee on one side, being shorter on the other. A rope of leopard tails gathered it loosely about her hips. About her throat was a necklace of human teeth; upon her wrists and arms were heavy bracelets, at least two of which she recognized as gold. In similar fashion were her ankles adorned, and then more necklaces were hung about her neck. Her head-dress consisted of a diadem of leopard skin supporting a variety of plumes and feathers which entirely encircled her head. But the finishing touch brought a chill of horror to her; long, curved talons of gold were affixed to her fingers and thumbs, recalling the cruel death of the black who had striven so bravely and so futilely to protect her.

Thus was Kali Bwana prepared for the hideous rites of the Leopard Men that would make her high priestess of their savage god.

This, the most intriguing tale of the great Tarzan which Mr. Burroughs has ever written, develops unexpected situations in the forthcoming October issue.