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The Eternal Lover



by Edgar Rice Burroughs

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Rising, the girl paced back and forth the length of her room. She felt stifling and confined within its narrow limits. Outside, beneath the open sky, with no boundaries save the distant horizon, was the field best fitted for such a battle as was raging within her. Snatching a silken scarf, she threw it about her shoulders—a concession to habit, for the night was hot—and, stepping through her window to the porch that encircled the bungalow, she passed on into the garden.

Just round the nearest angle of the house her brother and Billy Curtiss sat smoking before the window of their bedroom, clad in pajamas and slippers. Curtiss was cleaning the rifle he had used that day, the same that he had carried into the rose garden earlier in the evening. Neither heard the girl's light footsteps upon the sward, and the corner of the building hid her from their view.

In the open moonlight before the rose thicket Victoria Custer paced back and forth. A dozen times she reached the determination to seek the first opportunity upon the morrow to give Billy Curtiss an affirmative answer to the question he had asked her the night before—the night of the earthquake—but each time that she thought she had disposed of the matter definitely she found herself involuntarily comparing him with the heroic figure of her dream man, and again she must need renege her battle.

As she walked in the moonlight two pairs of eyes watched her every movement—one pair, clear and black, from the rose thicket; the other, flaming yellow-green, hidden in a little clump of bushes at the point where she turned in her pacing to retrace her steps at the point farthest from the watcher among the roses.

Twenty times Nu was on the point of leaping from his concealment and taking the girl in his arms, for to him she was Nat-ul, daughter of Tha, and it had not been a hundred thousand years, but only yesterday, the day before, that he had last seen her.

Yet each time something deterred him—a strange, vague, indefinable fear of this wondrous creature who was Nat-ul and yet who was not Nat-ul, but another maid in Nat-ul's image.

The strange things that covered her fair figure seemed to have raised a barrier between them—the last time that he had walked hand in hand with her upon the beach night but the soft skin of a red doe had clothed her.

Her familiar association, too, with these strange people, coupled with the fact that she spoke and understood their language, only tended to remove her further from him.

Nu was very sad and very lonely, and the sight of Nat-ul seemed to accentuate rather than relieve his depression. Slowly there was born within him the conviction that Nat-ul was no longer for Nu, the son of Nu. Why he could not guess, but the bitter fact seemed inevitable.

The girl had turned quite close to him now and was retracing her steps toward the bushes twenty yards away.

Behind their screening verdure Old Raffles, the sheep stealer, twitched his tufted tail and drew his steel thewed legs beneath him for the spring, and as he waited just the faintest of purrs escaped his slaving jaws.

Too faint the sound to pierce the dull senses of the twentieth century maiden, but to the man hiding in the rose thicket twenty paces farther from the lion it fell sinister upon his unspooled ear.

Like a bolt of lightning—so quickly his muscles responded to his will—the cave man hurried the intervening rose bushes with a single bound, and, raised spear in hand, bounded after the unconscious girl.

The great lion saw him coming, and, less he be cheated of his prey, leaped into the moonlight before his intended victim was quite within the radius of his spring.

The beast emitted a horrid roar that froze the girl with terror, and then in the face of his terrific charge the figure of a naked giant leaped past her. She saw a great arm, wielding a mighty spear, hurl the weapon at the infuriated beast—and then she swooned.

As the savage note of the lion's roar broke the stillness of the quiet night, Curtiss and Barney Custer sprang to their feet, running toward the side of the bungalow from which the sound had come.

Curtiss grasped the rifle he had just reloaded, and as he turned the corner of the building he caught one fleeting glimpse of something moving near the bushes fifty yards away. Raising his weapon, he fired.

The whole household had been roused by the lion's deep voice and the answering boom of the big rifle, so that scarcely a minute after Barney and Curtiss reached the side of the prostrate girl a score of white men and black were gathered about them.

The dead body of a huge lion lay scarce twenty feet from Victoria Custer, but a hurried examination of the

girl brought unutterable relief to them all, for she was uninjured.

Barney lifted her in his arms and carried her to her room, while the others examined the dead beast. From the center of the breast a wooden shaft protruded, and when they had drawn this out—and it required the united efforts of four strong men to do it—they found that a stone tipped spear had passed straight through the savage beast's heart.

"The zebra killer," said Brown to Greystoke.

The latter nodded his head.

"We must find him," he said. "He

must have been wounded."

Before he had finished speaking Brown, who had been nosing round in the garden, called to him from a little clump of bushes beside the spot where the lion's body had lain.

"Look here, Clayton," he called; "here's something we overlooked in the darkness last night."

The men upon the veranda followed Greystoke to the garden. Behind them came Victoria Custer, drawn as though by a magnet to the spot where they had gathered.

CHAPTER VI.
The Ancient Trail.

IN the bushes was a little pool of dried blood, and where the earth near the roots was free from sod there were several impressions of a bare foot.

"He must have been wounded," explained Brown, "by Curtiss' shot. I doubt if the lion touched him. The beast must have died instantly the spear entered his heart. But where can he have disappeared to?"

Victoria Custer was examining the grass a little distance beyond the bushes. She saw what the others failed to see—a drop of blood now and then leading away in the direction of the mountains to the south.

At the sight of it a great compassion welled in her heart for the lonely, wounded man who had saved her life and then staggered, bleeding, toward the savage wilderness from which he had come. It seemed to her that somewhere out there he was calling to her now and that she must go.

She did not call the attention of the others to her discovery, and presently they all returned to the veranda, where Barney again took up the discussion of their plans for the morrow's departure. The girl interposed no objections. Barney was delighted to see that she was apparently as anxious to return home as he was to have her; he had feared a flat refusal.

Barney had wanted to get a buffalo bull before he left, and when one of the Waziri warriors brought word that morning that there was a splendid herd a few miles north of the ranch Victoria urged him to accompany the other men upon the hunt.

"I'll attend to the balance of the packing," she said. "There's not the slightest reason in the world why you shouldn't go."

And so he went, and Victoria busied herself in the gathering together of the odds and ends of their personal belongings.

All morning the household was alive with its numerous duties, but after luncheon, while the heat of the day was greatest, the bungalow might have been entirely deserted for any sign of life that there was about it. Lady Greystoke was taking her siesta, as were practically all of the servants.

Victoria Custer had paused in her work to gaze out of her window toward the distant hills far to the south. At her side, nosing his muzzle into her palm, stood one of Lord Greystoke's great wolf hounds, Terkoz. He had taken a great fancy to Victoria Custer from the first and whenever permitted to do so remained close beside her.

The girl's heart filled with a great longing as she looked wistfully out toward the hills that she had so feared before. She feared them still, yet something there called to her.

She tried to fight against the mad desire with every ounce of her reason, but she was fighting against an unconscious instinct that was far stronger than any argument she could bring to bear against it.

Presently the hound's cold muzzle brought forth an idea in her mind, and with it she cast aside the last semblance of attempted restraint upon her mad desire. Seizing her rifle and ammunition belt, she moved noiselessly into the veranda.

There she found a number of leashes hanging from a peg. One of these she slipped to the hound's collar. Unseen she crossed the garden to the little patch of bushes where the dried blood was. Here she gathered up some of the brown stained earth and held it close to Terkoz's nose; then she put her finger to the ground where the trail of blood led toward the south.

"There, Terkoz!" she whispered.

Barney Custer shuddered at the thought. He must do something to avert a tragedy, and he must act at once. He drew Lord Greystoke to one side.

"Victoria and I must leave at once," he said. "The nervous strain of the earthquake and this last adventure have told upon her to such an extent that I fear we may have a very sick girl upon our hands, if I do not get her back to civilization and home as quickly as possible."

Greystoke did not attempt to offer any remonstrances. He, too, felt that it would be best for Miss Custer to go home. He had noted her growing nervousness with increasing apprehension.

It was decided that they should leave on the morrow. There were fifty black carriers anxious to return to the coast, and Butzow and Curtiss readily signified their willingness to accompany the Nebraska and his sister.

As he was explaining his decision to Victoria a black servant came excitedly to Lord Greystoke. He told of the finding of a dead ewe in the compound.

The animal's neck had been broken, the man said, and several strips of meat cut from its haunches with a knife. Beside it in the soft mud of the inclosure the prints of an unsold human foot were plainly in evidence.

Greystoke smiled.

"The zebra killer again?" he said.

"Well, he is welcome to all he can get."

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The beast gave a low growl as the scent of the new blood filled his nostrils and, with nose close to the ground, started off, tugging upon the leash, in the direction of the mountains upon the opposite side of the plain.

Beside him walked the girl. Across her shoulder was slung a modern big game rifle, and in her left hand swung the stone tipped spear of the savage mate she sought.

What motive prompted her act she did not even pause to consider. The results she gave not the slightest thought. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that she should be seeking this lonely, wounded man. Her place was at his side. He needed her—that was enough for her to know.

She was no longer the pampered, petted child of an effete civilization. That any metamorphosis had taken place within her she did not dream, nor is it certain that any change had occurred, for who may say that it is such a far step from one incarnation to another, however many countless years of man measured time may have intervened?

Darkness had fallen upon the plain and the jungle and the mountains, and still Terkoz forged ahead, nose to the ground, and beside him moved the slender figure of the graceful girl.

Now the roar of a distant lion came faintly to her ears, answered, quite close, by the moaning of another—a sound that is infinitely more weird and terrifying than the deeper throated challenge. The cough of the leopard and the uncanny laughter of hyenas added their evidence that the night prowling carnivora were abroad.

The hair along the wolf hound's spine stiffened in a little ridge of bristling rage. The girl unslinging her rifle, shifting the leash to the hand that carried the heavy spear of the troglodyte, but she was unafraid.

Suddenly, just before her, a little band of antelope sprang from the grass in startled terror, there was a hideous roar and a great body hurtled through the air to alight upon the rump of the hindmost of the herd.

A single scream of pain and terror from the stricken animal, a succession of low growls and the sound of huge jaws crunching through flesh and bone, and then silence.

The girl made a slight detour to avoid the beast and its kill, passing a few yards above them. In the moonlight the lion saw her and the hound.

Standing across his fallen prey, his flaming eyes glaring at the intruders, he rumbled his deep warning to them, but Victoria, dragging the growling Terkoz after her, passed on, and the king of beasts turned to his feast.

It was fifteen minutes before Terkoz could relocate the trail, and then the two took up their lonely way once more.

Into the foothills past the tortured strata of an ancient age it wound. At sight of the naked rock the girl shuddered, yet on and on she went until Terkoz halted, bristling and growling, before the inkly entrance to a gloomy cave.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Magazines on Warships.

If there is one danger that sailors dread more than any other it is an explosion in the powder magazine. To prevent such an occurrence a device for flooding that compartment in the least possible time is fitted to most big battleships. A pipe below the surface connects the magazine with the sea. This pipe is closed by two taps, which are connected with the deck. In case of danger it is only the work of a minute to open the taps, let the sea rush in through the pipes and flood the magazine. The water is afterward drained off by means of a gutter.—London Mail.

Thrashing Wheat in Cyprus.

The ancient Roman tribulum, as used for thrashing, may still be seen in the island of Cyprus. It is a board about six feet long and two feet wide, studded with sharp edged flakes of flint. In use it is dragged by oxen or donkeys over the corn spread out on the hard earthen thrashing floor, separating the grain and at the same time bruising and chopping up the straw. Thrashing time is enjoyed alike by children and animals, the former riding on the primitive implement and the latter gorging themselves with a hearty meal, for in Cyprus the Biblical command, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," is still faithfully observed. Although the government offers to thrash by machine at nominal cost, the conservative Cypriote prefers the old method. He says that the animals will not eat machine chaffed straw, and straw they must eat, for there is no hay in Cyprus.—Wide World Magazine.

WOMEN FROM 45 to 55 TESTIFY

To the Merit of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound during Change of Life.

Westbrook, Me. — "I was passing through the Change of Life and had pains in my back and side and was so weak I could hardly do my housework. I have taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and it has done me a lot of good. I will recommend your medicine to my friends and give you permission to publish my testimonial."

— Mrs. LAWRENCE MARTIN, 12 King St., Westbrook, Maine.

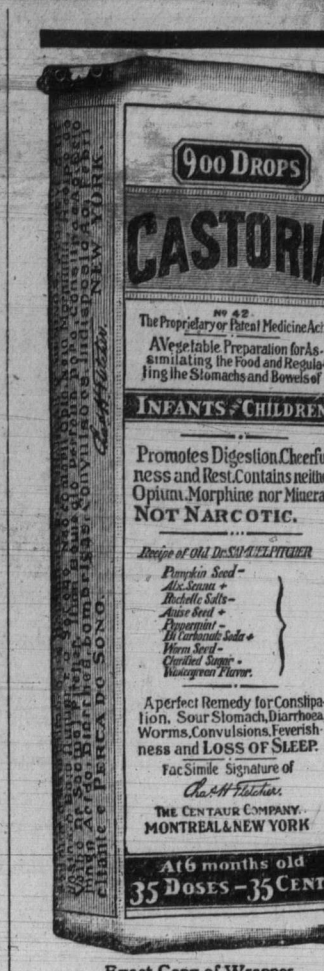
Manston, Wis. — "At the Change of Life I suffered with pains in my back and loins until I could not stand. I also had night-sweats so that the sheets would be wet. I tried other medicine but got no relief. After taking one bottle of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I began to improve and I continued its use for six months. The pains left me, the night-sweats and hot flashes grew less, and in one year I was a different woman. I know I have to thank you for my continued good health ever since."

— Mrs. M. J. BROWNELL, Manston, Wis.

The success of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made from roots and herbs, is unparalleled in such cases.

If you want special advice write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. (confidentially) Lynn, Mass. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman, and held in strict confidence.

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If an Ant Were as Big as a Man.

An ant can carry a grain of corn ten times the weight of its body, while a man or horse can carry loads only about equal to its bodily weight. It is not a fact, however, that the ant is greatly superior in strength. If an ant should grow to twice its original size, still retaining its geometrical and histological structure, its volume, and accordingly the weight of its body, would increase eightfold. Although the muscles grow to twice their original dimensions, the increase in length does not increase the strength, which is proportional to their cross section, and the ant would only be four times as strong as before. As it now carries but five times its weight, however, it is relatively only half as strong. It is calculated that the same ant developed to the size of a man would only be able to carry one one-hundredth of its own weight instead of ten times its own weight.

Trademarked.

"If my little brother Willie ever gets lost we can easily find him," said small Elsie.

"How, pray?" queried the visitor.

"He's got a strawberry trademark on his right arm," was the reply.—Chicago News.

Health Recipe.

One time a man asked the poet Longfellow how to be healthy, and this is the answer he received: Joy, temperance and repose. Slam the door on the doctor's nose.

A Thorough Case.

Every schoolroom is supposed to have its romancer, or boaster.

There was a mild epidemic of mumps in an uptown school not long ago, and a teacher asked the pupils in her room how many remembered having the disease.

A few remembered it, but most of them had never heard of it.

Then the romancer attracted the teacher's attention.

"I get the mumps, teacher," he smilingly said. "I get it around my face so. And I get one by each eye—and one under my neck."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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