

# TARZAN OF THE APES

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

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was looking upon the remains of his own father and mother he would have been no more greatly moved.

The furnishings and other contents of the room it was which riveted his attention. He examined many things minutely—strange tools and weapons, books, papers, clothing—what little had withstood the ravages of time in the humid atmosphere of the jungle coast.

He opened chests and cupboards, such as did not baffle his small experience, and in these he found the contents much better preserved.

Among other things he found a sharp hunting knife, on the keen blade of which he immediately proceeded to cut his finger. Nothing daunted, he continued his experiments, finding that he could hack and hew splinters of wood from the table and chairs with this new toy.

For a long time this amused him; but, finally tiring, he continued his explorations. In a cupboard filled with books he came across one with brightly colored pictures. It was a child's illustrated alphabet:

A is for archer.  
Who shoots with a bow.  
B is for boy.  
His first name is Joe.

### CHAPTER III. A Jungle Battle.

THE pictures in the books which Tarzan found in the cabin interested him greatly.

There were many apes with faces similar to his own, and farther over in the book he found under "M" some little monkeys such as he saw daily flitting through the trees of his primeval forest. But nowhere was pictured any of his own people. In all the book was none that resembled Kerchak or Tublat or Kala.

At first he tried to pick the little figures from the paper, but he soon saw that they were not real, though he knew not what they might be, nor had he any words to describe them.

The bears and tigers and cows and horses were quite meaningless to him, but not quite so baffling as the odd little figures which appeared beneath and between the colored pictures—some strange kind of bugs he thought they might be, for many of them had legs, though nowhere could he find one with eight and a mouth. It was his first introduction to the letters of the alphabet, and he was over ten years old.

Of course he had never before seen print, or never had spoken with any living thing which had the remotest idea that such a thing as a written language existed, and never had he seen any one reading.

So what wonder that the little boy was quite at a loss to guess the meaning of these strange figures.

Near the back of the book he found his old enemy, Sabor, the tiger, and just above him, coiled Mistah, the snake.

Oh, it was most engrossing! Never before in all his ten years had he enjoyed anything so much. So absorbed was he that he did not notice the approaching dusk until it was quite upon him.

He put the book back in the cupboard and closed the door, for he did not wish any one else to find and destroy his treasure, and as he went out into the gathering darkness he closed the great door of the cabin behind him, as it had been before he discovered the secret of its lock, but before he left he had noticed the hunting knife lying where he had thrown it upon the floor, and this he picked up and took with him to show to his fellows.

He had taken across a dozen steps toward the jungle when a great form rose up before him from the shadows of a low bush.

At first he thought it was one of his own people, but in another instant he realized that it was a huge gorilla.

So close was he that there was no chance for flight, and little Tarzan knew that he must stand and fight for his life; for these great beasts were the deadly enemies of his tribe, and neither one nor the other ever asked or gave quarter.

Had Tarzan been a full grown bull ape of the species of his tribe he would have been more than a match for the gorilla, but being only a little English boy, though enormously muscular for such, he stood no show against his cruel antagonist. In his veins, however, flowed the blood of the best of a race of mighty fighters, and back of this was the training of his short lifetime among the fierce brutes of the jungle.

He knew no fear, as we know it; his heart beat the faster, but from the excitement and exhilaration of adventure. Had the opportunity presented itself he would have escaped, but solely because his judgment told him he was no match for the great thing which confronted him. And as flight was out of the question, he faced the gorilla squarely and bravely without a tremor of a single muscle or any sign of panic.

In fact, he met the brute midway in its charge, striking its huge body with his closed fists and as futilely as if he had been a fly attacking an elephant.

But in one instant he still clutched the knife he had found, and as the brute striking and biting, closed upon him the boy accidentally turned the point toward the hairy breast.

As it sank deep into the body of him the gorilla shrieked in pain and fear. But the boy had learned in that brief second a use for his sharp and shining toy, so that as the tearing, striking beast dragged him to earth he plunged the blade repeatedly into its breast.

The gorilla, fighting after the manner of its kind, struck terrific blows with its open hand and tore the flesh at the boy's throat and chest with its mighty tusks.

For a moment they rolled upon the ground in the fierce frenzy of combat. More and more weakly the torn and bleeding arm struck home with the long sharp blade, then the little figure stiffened with a spasmodic jerk, and Tarzan, the young Lord Greystoke, rolled senseless upon the dead and decaying vegetation which carpeted his jungle home.

A mile back in the forest the tribe had heard the fierce challenge of the gorilla, and, as was his custom when any danger threatened, Kerchak called his people together, partly for mutual protection against a common enemy, since this gorilla might be but one of several, and also to see that all members of the tribe were accounted for.

It was soon discovered that Tarzan was missing, and Tublat was strongly opposed to sending assistance. Kerchak himself had no liking for the strange little waif, so he listened to Tublat, and finally, with a shrug of his shoulders, turned back to the pile of leaves on which he had made his bed.

But Kala was of a different mind. In fact, she had waited but to learn that Tarzan was absent ere she was fairly flying through the matted branches to ward the point from which the cries of the gorilla were still plainly audible.

Darkness had fallen, and an early moon was sending its faint light to cast strange, grotesque shadows among the dense foliage of the forest.

Presently Kala came upon them, lying in an open space full under the brilliant moon—Tarzan's torn and bloody form, and beside it a great bull gorilla, stone dead. With a low cry Kala rushed to Tarzan's side, and, gathering the poor, blood covered body to her breast, listened for a sign of life. Faintly she heard it—the weak beating of the little heart.

Tenderly she bore him back through the inky jungle to where the tribe lay, and for many days and nights she sat guard beside him, bringing him food and water and brushing the flies and other insects from his cruel wounds.

Of medicine or surgery the poor thing knew nothing. She could but lick the wounds, and thus she kept them cleansed, and the healing nature might the more quickly do her work.

As for Tarzan would eat nothing, but rolled and tossed in a wild delirium of fever. All he craved was water, and this she brought him in the only way she could, bearing it in her own mouth.

No human mother could have shown more unselfish and sacrificing devotion than did this poor wild brute for the little orphaned waif whom fate had thrown into her keeping.

At last the fever abated, and the boy commenced to mend. No complaint passed his tight set lips, though the pain of his wounds was excruciating. A portion of his chest was laid bare to the ribs, three of which had been broken by the mighty blows of the gorilla; one arm was nearly severed by the giant fangs, and a great piece had been torn from his neck, exposing his jugular vein, which the cruel jaws had missed but by a miracle.

After what seemed an eternity to the little sufferer he was once more able to walk, and from then on his recovery was rapid, so that in another month he was as strong and active as ever.

During his convalescence he had gone over in his mind many times the battle with the gorilla, and his first thought was to recover the wonderful little weapon which had transformed him from a hopelessly outclassed weakling to the superior of the mighty terror of the jungle.

Also he was anxious to return to the cabin and continue his investigations of the wondrous contents.

So early one morning he set forth alone upon his quest. After a little search he located the clean picked bones of his late adversary, and close to the spot where "M-O-N-K-E-Y-S." He knew, too, that old Sabor was a "T-I-G-E-R" and Hstah a "B-N-A-K-E-R" and Tantor an "E-L-E-P-H-A-N-T."

From then on his progress was rapid. With the help of the great dictionary and the active intelligence of a healthy mind endowed by inheritance with more than ordinary reasoning powers he shrewdly guessed at much which he could not really understand, and more often than not his guesses were close to the mark of truth.

There were many breaks in his education, caused by the migratory habits of his tribe, but even when removed from recourse to his books his active brain continued to search out the mysteries of his fascinating avocation.

Nor did he neglect the sterner duties of life while following the bent of his inclination toward the solving of the mystery of his library.

He practiced with his rope and played with his sharp knife, which he had learned to keep keen by whetting upon flat stones.

CHAPTER IV.  
Tarzan-Mightiest of the Apes.

THE tribe of apes had grown larger since Tarzan had come among them.

Under the leadership of Kerchak they had been able to frighten the other tribes from their part of the jungle, so that they had plenty to eat

and little or no loss from predatory incursions of neighbors.

The younger males as they became adult found it more comfortable to take wives from their own tribe, or, if they captured one of another tribe, to bring her back to Kerchak's band and live in amity rather than attempt to set up new establishments of their own or make war upon the redoubtable Kerchak.

Occasionally one more ferocious than his fellows would attempt this latter alternative, but none had come yet who could wrest the palm of victory from the fierce and brutal ape.

Tarzan held a peculiar position in the tribe.

They seemed to consider him one of them and yet in some way different. The older males either ignored him entirely or else hated him so vindictively that but for his wondrous agility and speed and the fierce protection of the huge Kala he would have been dispatched at an early age.

Tublat was his most consistent enemy, but it was through Tublat that when he was about thirteen, the persecution of his enemies suddenly ceased and he was left severely alone, except on the occasions when one of them ran amuck in the throes of one of those strange fits of insane rage which attack the males of many of the fiercer animals of the jungle. Then none was safe.

On the day that Tarzan established his right to respect the tribe was gathered about a small natural amphitheater which the jungle had left free from its entangling vines and creepers. Here the tribe often gathered. In the center of the amphitheater was one of those strange earthen drums which the anthropoids build for the dundum, the queer rites the sound of which men have heard in the fastnesses of the jungle, but which none has ever witnessed.

On the day that Tarzan won his emancipation, from the persecution that had followed him remorselessly for twelve of his thirteen years of life the tribe, now a full 100 strong, trooped silently through the lower terraces of the jungle trees and dropped noiselessly upon the floor of the amphitheater.

The rites of the dundum marked important events in the life of the tribe—a victory, the capture of a prisoner, the killing of some large, fierce denizen of the jungle, the death or accession of a king.

Today it was the killing of a giant ape, a member of another tribe, and as the people of Kerchak entered the arena to see the body of the vanquished between them. They laid their burden before the earthen drum and then squatted beside it as guards, while the other members of the community curled themselves in grassy nooks to sleep until the rising moon should give the signal for the commencement of the orgy.

A darkness settled upon the jungle, the apes commenced to beat themselves, and soon they formed a great circle about the earthen drum.

The females and young gathered in a thin line at the outer periphery of the circle, while just in front of them ranged the adult males. Before the drum sat three old females, each armed with a knotted branch fifteen or eighteen inches in length.

Slowly and softly they began tapping upon the resounding surface of the drum as the faint rays of the sun descended moon silvered the forest.

As the light increased the females augmented the frequency and force of their blows until presently a rhythmic din pervaded the jungle for miles in every direction. Huge brutes stopped in their hunting, with upturned ears and raised heads, to listen to the dull booming that betokened the dundum of the great apes.

As the din of the drum rose to almost deafening volume Kerchak sprang into the open space, between the squatting males and the drummers.

Standing erect, he threw his head far back, and, looking full into the eye of the rising moon, he beat upon his breast with his great hairy paws and emitted his fearful roaring shriek.

Once—twice—thrice that terrifying cry rang out across the teeming solitude of that unpeopled world.

Then, crouching, Kerchak slunk noiselessly around the open circle, veering far away from the dead body lying before the altar drum, but as he passed keeping his little, fierce, wicked red eyes upon the corpse.

Another male then sprang into the arena and, repeating the horrid cries of his king, followed stealthily in his wake. Another and another followed in quick succession until the jungle reverberated with the now almost ceaseless notes of their bloodthirsty screams.

It was the challenge and the hunt. When all the adult males had joined in the thin line of crouching dancers the attack commenced.

Kerchak, seizing a huge club from the pile which lay at hand for the purpose, rushed furiously upon the dead ape, dealing the corpse a terrific blow, at the same time emitting the growls and snarls of combat.

The din of the drum was now increased, as well as the frequency of the blows, and the warriors, as each approached the victim of the hunt and delivered his bloodstained blow, joined in the mad whirl of the death dance.

Tarzan was one of the wild, leaping horde. His brown, sweat streaked, muscular body glistening in the moonlight, shone supple and graceful among the uncouth, awkward, hairy brutes about him.

For half an hour the weird dance went on, until, at a sign from Kerchak, the noise of the drums ceased, the female drummers scampering hurriedly through the line of dancers toward the outer rim of squatting spectators.

Then, as one man, the males rushed headlong upon the thing which their terrific blows had reduced to a mass of jelly pulp.

Flesh seldom came to their jaws in satisfying quantities, so a fit finale to their wild revel was a taste of fresh killed meat, and it was to the purpose of devouring their late enemy that they now turned their attention.

Tarzan more than the apes craved and needed flesh. Descended from a race of meat eaters, never in his life, he thought, had he once satisfied his appetite for animal food, and so now his agile little body wormed its way far into the mass of struggling apes in an endeavor to obtain a share which his strength would have been unequal to the task of winning for him.

At his side hung the hunting knife of his unknown father in a sheath self-fashioned in copy of one he had seen among the pictures of his treasure books.

At last he reached the fast disappearing feast and with his sharp knife slashed off a more generous portion than he had hoped for.

Then he wriggled out from beneath the struggling mass, clenching his prize close.

Among those circling futilely the outskirts of the banquet was the old Tublat. He had been among the first to attack the males of many of the fiercer animals of the jungle. Then none was safe.

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turned upon her tormentor. In an instant the trees were crashing beneath the weight of hurrying apes, swinging rapidly toward the scene of trouble in answer to Kala's scream.

As Kala charged, Kulonga unslung his bow and fitted an arrow with almost unthinkable quickness. Drawing the shaft far back, he drove the poisoned missile straight into the heart of the great she ape.

With a horrid scream Kala plunged forward upon her face before the astonished members of her tribe.

Roaring and shrieking, the apes dashed toward Kulonga, but that wary savage was fleeing down the trail like a frightened antelope. They followed him, racing through the trees for a long distance, but finally one by one they abandoned the chase and returned to the scene of the tragedy.

On the far beach by the little cabin Tarzan heard the faint echoes of the conflict, and, knowing that something was seriously amiss among the tribe, he hastened rapidly toward the direction of the sound.

When he arrived he found the entire tribe gathered jabbering about the dead body of his slain mother.

Tarzan's grief and anger were unbounded. He roared out his hideous challenge slowly and again. He beat upon his chest with his fist, and then he fell upon the body of Kala and sobbed out the pitiful screeching of his lonely heart.

But after the