

# The RETURN of TARZAN

By ... EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

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In a flash he knew why he had been left in that little valley by Gernois, but there had been a hitch in the arrangements—the men had come too late. Closer and closer came the footstep. Tarzan halted and faced them, his rifle ready in his hand. Now he caught a fleeting glimpse of a white burrhead. He called aloud in French, asking what they would do with him. His reward was the flash of a long gun, and with the sound of the shot Tarzan of the Apes plunged forward upon his face.

The Arabs did not rush out immediately; instead, they waited to be sure that their victim did not rise. Then they came rapidly from their concealment and bent over him. It was soon apparent that he was not dead. One of the men put the muzzle of his gun to the back of Tarzan's head to finish him, but another waved him aside. "If we bring him to the reward is to be greater," explained the latter.

So they bound his hands and feet and, picking him up, placed him on the shoulders of four of their number. Then the march was resumed toward the desert. When they had come out of the mountains they turned toward the south and about daylight came to the spot where their horses-stood in care of two of their number.

From here on their progress was more rapid. Tarzan, who had regained consciousness, was tied to a spare horse, which they evidently had brought for the purpose. His wound was but a slight scratch, which had narrowed the flesh across his temple. It had stopped bleeding, but the dried and clotted blood smeared his face and clothing. He had said no word since he had fallen into the hands of these Arabs nor had they addressed him other than to issue a few brief commands to him when the horses had been reached.

For six hours they rode rapidly across the burning desert, avoiding the cases near which their way lay. About noon they came to a cluster of about twenty tents. Here they halted, and as one of the Arabs was releasing the silk grass ropes which bound him to his mount they were surrounded by a mob of men, women and children. Many of the tribe, and more especially the women, appeared to take delight in heaping insults upon the prisoner, and some had even gone so far as to throw stones at him and strike him with sticks when a loud shriek appeared and drove them away.

"All ben Ahmed tells me," he said, "that this man sat alone in the mountains and slew el adrea. What the business of the stranger who sent us after him may be I know not, and what he may do with this man when we turn him over to him I care not, but the prisoner is a brave man, and while he is in our hands he shall be treated with the respect that he deserves. He is the lion-killer, and he is not sorry that chance had played into his hands thus favorably to relieve him of the petty tortures of the tribe. Shortly after this he was taken to a goatskin tent upon the upper side of the dour. There he was fed, and then, securely bound, was left lying on a piece of native carpet alone in the tent.

He could see a guard sitting before the door of his frail prison, but when he attempted to force the stout bonds that held him he realized that any extra precaution on the part of his captors was quite unnecessary—not even his giant muscles could part those numerous strands.

Just before dusk several men approached the tent where he lay and entered it. All wore in Arab dress, but presently one of the number advanced to Tarzan's side, and as he let the folds of cloth that had hidden the lower half of his face fall away the ape-man saw the malevolent features of Nikolai Rokoff. There was a nasty smile on the bearded lips.

"Very well," he replied to the Arab. "I shall kill him presently."

"Not within the precincts of my dour," returned the sheik. "When he leaves here he leaves alive. What you do with him in the desert is none of my concern, but I shall not have the blood of a Frenchman on the hands of my tribe on account of another man's quarrel. They would send soldiers here and kill many of my people and burn our tents and drive away our flocks."

"As you say," growled Rokoff. "I'll take him out into the desert before the dour and dispatch him."

"You will take him a day's ride from my country," said the sheik firmly, "and some of my children shall follow you to see that you do not disobey me. Otherwise there may be two dead Frenchmen in the desert."

Rokoff shrugged. "Then I shall have to wait until tomorrow. It is already dark."

"As you will," said the sheik. "But by an hour after dawn you must be gone from my dour. I have little liking for unbelievers and none at all for a coward."

Rokoff would have made some kind of remark, but he checked himself, for he realized that it would require but a little excuse for the old man to turn upon him. Together they left the tent. At the door Rokoff could not resist the temptation to turn and fling a parting taunt at Tarzan.

"Sleep well, monsieur," he said, "and do not forget to pray well, for when you die tomorrow it will be in such agony that you will be unable to pray for blaspheming."

No one had bothered to bring Tarzan either food or water since noon, and consequently he suffered considerably from thirst. He wondered if it would be worth while to ask his guard for water, but, after making two or three requests without receiving any response, he decided that it would not.

Far up in the mountains he heard a lion roar. How much safer one was, he soliloquized, in the haunts of wild beasts than in the past few months of his experience among civilized men. Never had he been any nearer death.

Again the lion roared. It sounded a little nearer. Tarzan felt the old, wild impulse to reply with the challenge of his kind. His kind? He had almost forgotten that he was a man and not an ape. He tugged at his bonds. God, if he could but get them near those strong teeth of his! He felt a wild

But this time he found that he was pitted against a creature as agile and as quick as himself. When his mighty frame struck the spot where the man had been he was no longer there.

The watching girl was transfixed by astonishment at the ease with which the crouching man eluded the great paw. "What a brave girl!" he said, "and you will risk for a stranger—an alien, an unbeliever!"

She drew herself up very proudly. "I am the daughter of the sheik Kadour ben Saden," she answered. "I should be no fit daughter of his if I would not risk my life to save that of the man who saved mine while he yet thought that I was but a common Ouled-Nail."

"Nevertheless," he insisted, "you are a very brave girl. But how did you know that I was a prisoner back there?"

"Achmet din Taleb, who is my cousin on my father's side, was visiting some friends who belong to the tribe that captured you. He was at the dour when you were brought in. When he reached home he was telling us about the big Frenchman who had been captured by all ben Ahmed for another Frenchman who wished to kill him. From the description I knew that it must be you. My father was away, I tried to persuade some of the men to come and save you, but they would not do it, saying: 'Let the unbelievers kill one another if they wish. It is none of our affair, and if we go and interfere with all ben Ahmed's plans we shall only stir up a fight with our own people.'

"So when it was dark I came alone, riding one horse and leading another for you. They are tethered not far from here. By morning we shall be within my father's dour. He should be there himself by now—then let them come and try to take Kadour ben Saden's friend."

For a few moments they walked on in silence.

A grim smile plays about Tarzan's lips. At least Rokoff will be cheered. How mad he will be! And death will be more merciful than he could have hoped for at the hands of the Russian.

Now the back of the tent drops into place and all is darkness again—whatever it is inside the tent with him. He hears it creeping close to him—now it is beside him. He closes his eyes and waits for the mighty paw. Upon his upturned face falls the gentle touch of a soft hand groping in the dark, and then a girl's voice in a scarcely audible whisper pronounces his name.

"Yes, it is I," he whispers in reply. "But in the name of heaven who are you?"

"The Ouled-Nail of Sidi Aissa," came the answer. While she spoke Tarzan could feel her working about his bonds. Occasionally the cold steel of a knife touched his flesh. A moment later he was free.

"Come!" she whispered. On hands and knees he followed her out of the tent by the way she had come. She continued crawling thus flat to the ground until she reached a little patch of shrub. There she halted until he gained her side. For a moment he looked at her before he spoke.

"I cannot understand," he said at last. "Why are you here? How did you know that I was a prisoner in that tent? How does it happen that it is you who have saved me?"

She smiled. "I have come a long way tonight," she said, "and we have a long way to go before we shall be out of danger. Come; I shall tell you all about it as we go."

### CHAPTER XI.

Like a Gladiator of Old.

TOGETHER they rose and set off across the desert in the direction of the mountains.

"I was not quite sure that I should ever reach you," she said at last. "El adrea is abroad tonight, and after I led the horses I think he winded me and was following. I was terribly frightened."

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For a few moments they walked on in silence.

"We should be near the horses," she said. "It is strange that I do not see them here."

Then a moment later she stopped, with a little cry of consternation.

"They are gone!" she exclaimed. "It is here that I tethered them."

Tarzan stooped to examine the ground. He found that a large shrub had been torn up by the roots. Then he found something else. There was a wry smile on his face as he rose and turned toward the girl.

He found the officer in his quarters. He was filled with surprise and pleasure at seeing Tarzan alive and well.

"When Lieutenant Gernois returned and reported that he had not found you at the spot that you had chosen to remain while the detachment was scouting I was filled with alarm. We then came word that you had been killed and eaten by a lion. As proof your gun was brought to us. Your horse had returned to camp the second day after your disappearance. We could not doubt. Lieutenant Gernois was grief-stricken. He took all the blame upon himself. It was he who insisted on carrying on the search for you. It was he who found the Arab with your gun. He will be delighted to know that you are safe."

"Doubtless," said Tarzan, with a grim smile.

"He is down in the town now or I should send for him," continued Captain Gerard. "I shall tell him as soon as he returns."

"Your knife," said Tarzan to the girl, extending his hand. She slipped the hilt of the weapon into his waiting palm. As his fingers closed upon it he drew her back and pushed her behind him. "Walk back to the desert as rapidly as you can. If you hear me call you will know that all is well and you may return."

"It is useless," she replied resignedly. "This is the end."

"Do as I tell you," he commanded. "Quickly! He is about to charge."

The girl dropped back a few paces, where she stood watching for the terrible sight that she knew she should soon witness.

The lion was advancing slowly toward Tarzan, his nose to the ground, like a challenging bull, his tail extended now, and quivering as though with intense excitement.

The ape-man stood, half crouching, the long Arab knife glistering in the moonlight. Behind him the tense figure of the girl, motionless as a carved statue. She leaned slightly forward, her lips parted, her eyes wide. Her only conscious thought was of the bravery of the man who dared face the lion with a puny knife of the lord with the large head. A snarl of her own blood would have knelt in prayer and gone down beneath those awful fangs without resistance. In either case the result would be the same—it was inevitable, but she could not repress a thrill of admiration as her eyes rested upon the heroic figure before her. Not a tremor in the whole giant frame—his attitude as menacing and as defiant as that of el adrea himself.

The lion was quite close to him now—but a few paces intervened—he crouched and then, with a deafening roar, he sprang.

As Numa, el adrea, launched himself with widespread paws and bared fangs he looked to find this puny man as easy prey as the score who had gone down beneath those awful fangs without resistance. In either case the result would be the same—it was inevitable, but she could not repress a thrill of admiration as her eyes rested upon the heroic figure before her. Not a tremor in the whole giant frame—his attitude as menacing and as defiant as that of el adrea himself.

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longer present, had stooped to rest. With little trouble Tarzan and the girl caught them and, mounting, rode out into the desert toward the dour of sheik Kadour ben Saden.

No sign of pursuit developed, and they came in safety about 9 o'clock to their destination. The sheik had but just returned. He was frantic with grief at the absence of his daughter, whom he thought had been again abducted by the marauders. With fifty men he was already mounted to go in search of her when the two rode into the dour.

His joy at the safe return of his daughter was only equalled by his gratitude to Tarzan for bringing her safely to him through the dangers of the night, and his thankfulness that she had been in time to save the man who had once saved her.

No honor that Kadour ben Saden could heap upon the ape-man in acknowledgment of his esteem and friendship was neglected. When the girl had recited the story of the slaying of el adrea Tarzan was surrounded by a mob of worshipping Arabs. It was a sure road to their admiration and respect.

The old sheik insisted that Tarzan remain indefinitely as his guest. He even wished to adopt him as a member of the tribe, and there was for some time a half formed resolution in the ape-man's mind to accept and remain forever with these wild people, whom he understood and who seemed to understand him. His friendship and liking for the girl were potent factors in urging him toward an affirmative decision.

Had she been a man, he argued, he should not have hesitated, for it would have meant a friend after his own heart, with whom he could ride and hunt at will, but as it was they would be judged by the conventionalities that are even more strictly observed by the wild nomads of the desert than by their more civilized brethren and sisters.

And in a little while she would be married to one of these warlike warriors, and there would be an end to their friendship. So he decided against the sheik's proposal, though he remained a week as his guest.

When he left Kadour ben Saden fifty white robed warriors rode with him to Bou Saada. While they were mounting in the dour of Kadour ben Saden the morning of their departure the girl came to bid farewell to Tarzan.

"I have prayed that you would remain with us," she said simply, as he leaned from his saddle to clasp her hand in farewell, "and now I shall pray that you will return."

There was an expression of wistfulness in her beautiful eyes, and a pathetic droop at the corners of her mouth. Tarzan was touched.

"Who knows?" and then he turned and rode after the departing Arabs.

Outside Bou Saada he bade Kadour ben Saden and his men goodbye, for there were reasons which made him wish to make his entry into the town as secret as possible. As he had explained to the sheik the latter concurred in his decision. The Arabs were to enter Bou Saada ahead of him, saying nothing as to his presence with them. Later Tarzan would come in alone and go directly to an obscure native inn.

This making his entrance after dark as he did, he was not seen by any one who knew him and reached the inn unobserved. After dining with Kadour ben Saden as his guest he went to his former hotel by a roundabout way and, coming in by a rear entrance, sought the proprietor, who seemed much surprised to see him alive.

Yes, there was mail for monsieur; he would fetch it. No, he would mention monsieur's return to no one. Presently he returned with a packet of letters. One was an order from his superior to lay off on his present work and hasten to Cape Town by the first steamer he could get. His further instructions would be awaiting him there in the hands of another agent whose name and address were given. That was all—brief but explicit. Tarzan arranged to leave Bou Saada early the next morning. Then he started for the garrison to see Captain Gerard, who the hotel man had told him had returned with his detachment the previous day.

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He Was Like a Babe in the Mighty Grasp of Tarzan.

who gave birth to you. But I shall spare you only this once on her account. Should I ever learn that you have again annoyed her or her husband—should you ever annoy me again—should I hear that you have returned to France or to any French possession—I shall make it my sole business to hunt you down and complete the choking I commenced tonight." Then he turned to the table, on which the two pieces of paper still lay. As he picked them up Rokoff gasped in horror.

Tarzan examined both the check and the other. He was amazed at the information the latter contained. Rokoff had partially read it, but Tarzan knew that no one could remember the salient facts and figures it held which made it of real value to an enemy of France.

"These will interest the chief of staff," he said as he slipped them into his pocket.

Rokoff groaned. He did not dare guess aloud.

The next morning Tarzan rode north on his way to Bouira and Algiers. As he had ridden past the hotel Lieutenant Gernois was standing on the veranda. As his eyes discovered Tarzan he went white as chalk. The ape-man would have been glad had the meeting not occurred, but he could not avoid it. He saluted the officer as he rode past. Mechanically Gernois returned the salute, but those terrible, white eyes followed the horseman, expressions of horror.

As Sidi Aissa Tarzan met a French officer with whom he had become acquainted on the occasion of his recent sojourn in the town.

"You left Bou Saada early?" questioned the officer. "Then you have not heard about poor Gernois?"

"He was the last man I saw as I rode away," replied Tarzan. "What about him?"

"He is dead. He shot himself about 8 o'clock this morning."

Two days later Tarzan reached Algiers. There he found that he would have a two days' wait before he could catch a ship bound for Cape Town. He occupied his time in writing out a full report of his mission. The secret paper he had taken from Rokoff he did not inclose, for he did not dare trust them, out of his own possession until he had been authorized to turn them over to another agent of himself returned to Paris with them.

As Tarzan boarded his ship after what seemed a most tedious wait from an inn two men watched him from an upper deck. Both were fashionably dressed and smooth shaven. The taller of the two had sandy hair, but his eyebrows were very black. Later in the day they changed to meet Tarzan on deck, but as one hurriedly called Tarzan's companion's attention to something at sea their faces were turned from Tarzan as he passed, so that he did not notice their features. In fact, he had paid no attention to them at all.

Following the instructions of his agent, Tarzan had booked his passage under an assumed name—John Caldwell, London. He did not understand the necessity for this, and it caused him considerable speculation. He wondered what role he was to play in Cape Town.

"Well," he thought, "think heaven that I am rid of Rokoff. He was becoming a really becoming, so civilized that presently I shall develop a set of nerves. He would give them to me if any one could, for he does not fight fair. One never knows through what new agency he is going to strike. It is as though Sahur, the tiger, had indeed, Tanoh, the elephant, and Hishab, the snake, to join him in attempting to kill me. I would then, never have known what miserie or by whom I was to be attacked next. But the brutes are more chivalrous than man. They do not stoop to cowardly intrigues."



He Kicked Tarzan Heavily in the Side.

wave of