

## Chapter 4 - Tarzan-jad-guru

As Tarzan and Om-at clambered back to the vestibule of Pan-at-lee's cave and took their stand beside Ta-den in readiness for whatever eventuality might follow the death of Es-sat, the sun that topped the eastern hills touched also the figure of a sleeper upon a distant, thorn-covered steppe awakening him to another day of tireless tracking along a faint and rapidly disappearing spoor.

For a time silence reigned in the Kor-ul-ja. The tribesmen waited, looking now down upon the dead thing that had been their chief, now at one another, and now at Om-at and the two who stood upon his either side. Presently Om-at spoke. "I am Om-at," he cried. "Who will say that Om-at is not gund of Kor-ul-ja?"

He waited for a taker of his challenge. One or two of the larger young bucks fidgeted restlessly and eyed him; but there was no reply.

"Then Om-at is gund," he said with finality. "Now tell me, where are Pan-at-lee, her father, and her brothers?"

An old warrior spoke. "Pan-at-lee should be in her cave. Who should know that better than you who are there now? Her father and her brothers were sent to watch Kor-ul-lul; but neither of these questions arouse any tumult in our breasts. There is one that does: Can Om-at be chief of Kor-ul-ja and yet stand at bay against his own people with a Ho-don and that terrible man at his side--that terrible man who has no tail? Hand the strangers over to your people to be slain as is the way of the Waz-don and then may Om-at be gund."

Neither Tarzan nor Ta-den spoke then, they but stood watching Om-at and waiting for his decision, the ghost of a smile upon the lips of the ape-man. Ta-den, at least, knew that the old warrior had spoken the truth--the Waz-don entertain no strangers and take no prisoners of an alien race.

Then spoke Om-at. "Always there is change," he said. "Even the old hills of Pal-ul-don appear never twice alike--the brilliant sun, a passing cloud, the moon, a mist, the changing seasons, the sharp clearness following a storm; these things bring each a new change in our hills. From birth to death, day by day, there is constant change in each of us. Change, then, is one of Jad-ben-Otho's laws.

"And now I, Om-at, your gund, bring another change. Strangers who are brave men and good friends shall no longer be slain by the Waz-don of Kor-ul-ja!"

There were growls and murmurings and a restless moving among the warriors as each eyed the others to see who would take the initiative against Om-at, the iconoclast.

"Cease your mutterings," admonished the new gund. "I am your chief. My word is your law. You had no part in making me chief. Some of you helped Es-sat to drive me from the cave of my ancestors; the rest of you permitted it. I owe you nothing. Only these two, whom you would have me kill, were loyal to me. I am gund and if there be any who doubts it let him speak--he cannot die younger."

Tarzan was pleased. Here was a man after his own heart. He admired the fearlessness of Om-at's challenge and he was a sufficiently good judge of men to know that he had listened to no idle bluff--Om-at would back up his words to the death, if necessary, and the chances were that he would not be the one to die. Evidently the majority of the Kor-ul-jaians entertained the same conviction.

"I will make you a good gund," said Om-at, seeing that no one appeared inclined to dispute his rights. "Your wives and daughters will be safe--they were not safe while Es-sat ruled. Go now to your crops and your hunting. I leave to search for Pan-at-lee. Ab-on will be gund while I am away--look to him for guidance and to me for an accounting when I return--and may Jad-ben-Otho smile upon you."

He turned toward Tarzan and the Ho-don. "And you, my friends," he said, "are free to go among my people; the cave of my ancestors is yours, do what you will."

"I," said Tarzan, "will go with Om-at to search for Pan-at-lee."

"And I," said Ta-den.

Om-at smiled. "Good!" he exclaimed. "And when we have found her we shall go together upon Tarzan's business and Ta-den's. Where first shall we search?" He turned toward his warriors. "Who knows where she may be?"

None knew other than that Pan-at-lee had gone to her cave with the others the previous evening--there was no clew, no suggestion as to her whereabouts.

"Show me where she sleeps," said Tarzan; "let me see something that belongs to her--an article of her apparel--then, doubtless, I can help you."

Two young warriors climbed closer to the ledge upon which Om-at stood. They were In-sad and O-dan. It was the latter who spoke.

"Gund of Kor-ul-ja," he said, "we would go with you to search for Pan-at-lee."

It was the first acknowledgment of Om-at's chieftainship and immediately following it the tenseness that had prevailed seemed to relax--the warriors spoke

aloud instead of in whispers, and the women appeared from the mouths of caves as with the passing of a sudden storm. In-sad and O-dan had taken the lead and now all seemed glad to follow. Some came to talk with Om-at and to look more closely at Tarzan; others, heads of caves, gathered their hunters and discussed the business of the day. The women and children prepared to descend to the fields with the youths and the old men, whose duty it was to guard them.

"O-dan and In-sad shall go with us," announced Om-at, "we shall not need more. Tarzan, come with me and I shall show you where Pan-at-lee sleeps, though why you should wish to know I cannot guess--she is not there. I have looked for myself."

The two entered the cave where Om-at led the way to the apartment in which Es-sat had surprised Pan-at-lee the previous night.

"All here are hers," said Om-at, "except the war club lying on the floor--that was Es-sat's."

The ape-man moved silently about the apartment, the quivering of his sensitive nostrils scarcely apparent to his companion who only wondered what good purpose could be served here and chafed at the delay.

"Come!" said the ape-man, presently, and led the way toward the outer recess.

Here their three companions were awaiting them. Tarzan passed to the left side of the niche and examined the pegs that lay within reach. He looked at them but it was not his eyes that were examining them. Keener than his keen eyes was that marvelously trained sense of scent that had first been developed in him during infancy under the tutorage of his foster mother, Kala, the she-ape, and further sharpened in the grim jungles by that master teacher--the instinct of self-preservation.

From the left side of the niche he turned to the right. Om-at was becoming impatient.

"Let us be off," he said. "We must search for Pan-at-lee if we would ever find her."

"Where shall we search?" asked Tarzan.

Om-at scratched his head. "Where?" he repeated. "Why all Pal-ul-don, if necessary."

"A large job," said Tarzan. "Come," he added, "she went this way," and he took to the pegs that led aloft toward the summit of the cliff. Here he followed the scent easily since none had passed that way since Pan-at-lee had fled. At the point at

which she had left the permanent pegs and resorted to those carried with her Tarzan came to an abrupt halt. "She went this way to the summit," he called back to Om-at who was directly behind him; "but there are no pegs here."

"I do not know how you know that she went this way," said Om-at; "but we will get pegs. In-sad, return and fetch climbing pegs for five."

The young warrior was soon back and the pegs distributed. Om-at handed five to Tarzan and explained their use. The ape-man returned one. "I need but four," he said.

Om-at smiled. "What a wonderful creature you would be if you were not deformed," he said, glancing with pride at his own strong tail.

"I admit that I am handicapped," replied Tarzan. "You others go ahead and leave the pegs in place for me. I am afraid that otherwise it will be slow work as I cannot hold the pegs in my toes as you do."

"All right," agreed Om-at; "Ta-den, In-sad, and I will go first, you follow and O-dan bring up the rear and collect the pegs--we cannot leave them here for our enemies."

"Can't your enemies bring their own pegs?" asked Tarzan.

"Yes; but it delays them and makes easier our defense and--they do not know which of all the holes you see are deep enough for pegs--the others are made to confuse our enemies and are too shallow to hold a peg."

At the top of the cliff beside the gnarled tree Tarzan again took up the trail. Here the scent was fully as strong as upon the pegs and the ape-man moved rapidly across the ridge in the direction of the Kor-ul-lul.

Presently he paused and turned toward Om-at. "Here she moved swiftly, running at top speed, and, Om-at, she was pursued by a lion."

"You can read that in the grass?" asked O-dan as the others gathered about the ape-man.

Tarzan nodded. "I do not think the lion got her," he added; "but that we shall determine quickly. No, he did not get her--look!" and he pointed toward the southwest, down the ridge.

Following the direction indicated by his finger, the others presently detected a movement in some bushes a couple of hundred yards away.

"What is it?" asked Om-at. "It is she?" and he started toward the spot.

"Wait," advised Tarzan. "It is the lion which pursued her."

"You can see him?" asked Ta-den.

"No, I can smell him."

The others looked their astonishment and incredulity; but of the fact that it was indeed a lion they were not left long in doubt. Presently the bushes parted and the creature stepped out in full view, facing them. It was a magnificent beast, large and beautifully maned, with the brilliant leopard spots of its kind well marked and symmetrical. For a moment it eyed them and then, still chafing at the loss of its prey earlier in the morning, it charged.

The Pal-ul-donians unslung their clubs and stood waiting the onrushing beast. Tarzan of the Apes drew his hunting knife and crouched in the path of the fanged fury. It was almost upon him when it swerved to the right and leaped for Om-at only to be sent to earth with a staggering blow upon the head. Almost instantly it was up and though the men rushed fearlessly in, it managed to sweep aside their weapons with its mighty paws. A single blow wrenched O-dan's club from his hand and sent it hurtling against Ta-den, knocking him from his feet. Taking advantage of its opportunity the lion rose to throw itself upon O-dan and at the same instant Tarzan flung himself upon its back. Strong, white teeth buried themselves in the spotted neck, mighty arms encircled the savage throat and the sinewy legs of the ape-man locked themselves about the gaunt belly.

The others, powerless to aid, stood breathlessly about as the great lion lunged hither and thither, clawing and biting fearfully and futilely at the savage creature that had fastened itself upon him. Over and over they rolled and now the onlookers saw a brown hand raised above the lion's side--a brown hand grasping a keen blade. They saw it fall and rise and fall again--each time with terrific force and in its wake they saw a crimson stream trickling down ja's gorgeous coat.

Now from the lion's throat rose hideous screams of hate and rage and pain as he redoubled his efforts to dislodge and punish his tormentor; but always the tousled black head remained half buried in the dark brown mane and the mighty arm rose and fell to plunge the knife again and again into the dying beast.

The Pal-ul-donians stood in mute wonder and admiration. Brave men and mighty hunters they were and as such the first to accord honor to a mightier.

"And you would have had me slay him!" cried Om-at, glancing at In-sad and O-dan.

"Jad-ben-Otho reward you that you did not," breathed In-sad.

And now the lion lunged suddenly to earth and with a few spasmodic quiverings lay still. The ape-man rose and shook himself, even as might ja, the leopard-coated lion of Pal-ul-don, had he been the one to survive.

O-dan advanced quickly toward Tarzan. Placing a palm upon his own breast and the other on Tarzan's, "Tarzan the Terrible," he said, "I ask no greater honor than your friendship."

"And I no more than the friendship of Om-at's friends," replied the ape-man simply, returning the other's salute.

"Do you think," asked Om-at, coming close to Tarzan and laying a hand upon the other's shoulder, "that he got her?"

"No, my friend; it was a hungry lion that charged us."

"You seem to know much of lions," said In-sad.

"Had I a brother I could not know him better," replied Tarzan.

"Then where can she be?" continued Om-at.

"We can but follow while the spoor is fresh," answered the ape-man and again taking up his interrupted tracking he led them down the ridge and at a sharp turning of the trail to the left brought them to the verge of the cliff that dropped into the Kor-ul-lul. For a moment Tarzan examined the ground to the right and to the left, then he stood erect and looking at Om-at pointed into the gorge.

For a moment the Waz-don gazed down into the green rift at the bottom of which a tumultuous river tumbled downward along its rocky bed, then he closed his eyes as to a sudden spasm of pain and turned away.

"You--mean--she jumped?" he asked.

"To escape the lion," replied Tarzan. "He was right behind her--look, you can see where his four paws left their impress in the turf as he checked his charge upon the very verge of the abyss."

"Is there any chance--" commenced Om-at, to be suddenly silenced by a warning gesture from Tarzan.

"Down!" whispered the ape-man, "many men are coming. They are running--from down the ridge." He flattened himself upon his belly in the grass, the others following his example.

For some minutes they waited thus and then the others, too, heard the sound of running feet and now a hoarse shout followed by many more.

"It is the war cry of the Kor-ul-lul," whispered Om-at--"the hunting cry of men who hunt men. Presently shall we see them and if Jad-ben-Otho is pleased with us they shall not too greatly outnumber us."

"They are many," said Tarzan, "forty or fifty, I should say; but how many are the pursued and how many the pursuers we cannot even guess, except that the latter must greatly outnumber the former, else these would not run so fast."

"Here they come," said Ta-den.

"It is An-un, father of Pan-at-lee, and his two sons," exclaimed O-dan. "They will pass without seeing us if we do not hurry," he added looking at Om-at, the chief, for a sign.

"Come!" cried the latter, springing to his feet and running rapidly to intercept the three fugitives. The others followed him.

"Five friends!" shouted Om-at as An-un and his sons discovered them.

"Adenen yo!" echoed O-dan and In-sad.

The fugitives scarcely paused as these unexpected reinforcements joined them but they eyed Ta-den and Tarzan with puzzled glances.

"The Kor-ul-lul are many," shouted An-un. "Would that we might pause and fight; but first we must warn Es-sat and our people."

"Yes," said Om-at, "we must warn our people."

"Es-sat is dead," said In-sad.

"Who is chief?" asked one of An-un's sons.

"Om-at," replied O-dan.

"It is well," cried An-un. "Pan-at-lee said that you would come back and slay Es-sat."

Now the enemy broke into sight behind them.

"Come!" cried Tarzan, "let us turn and charge them, raising a great cry. They pursued but three and when they see eight charging upon them they will think that many men have come to do battle. They will believe that there are more even

than they see and then one who is swift will have time to reach the gorge and warn your people."

"It is well," said Om-at. "Id-an, you are swift--carry word to the warriors of Kor-ul-ja that we fight the Kor-ul-lul upon the ridge and that Ab-on shall send a hundred men."

Id-an, the son of An-un, sped swiftly toward the cliff-dwellings of the Kor-ul-ja while the others charged the oncoming Kor-ul-lul, the war cries of the two tribes rising and falling in a certain grim harmony. The leaders of the Kor-ul-lul paused at sight of the reinforcements, waiting apparently for those behind to catch up with them and, possibly, also to learn how great a force confronted them. The leaders, swifter runners than their fellows, perhaps, were far in advance while the balance of their number had not yet emerged from the brush; and now as Om-at and his companions fell upon them with a ferocity born of necessity they fell back, so that when their companions at last came in sight of them they appeared to be in full rout. The natural result was that the others turned and fled.

Encouraged by this first success Om-at followed them into the brush, his little company charging valiantly upon his either side, and loud and terrifying were the savage yells with which they pursued the fleeing enemy. The brush, while not growing so closely together as to impede progress, was of such height as to hide the members of the party from one another when they became separated by even a few yards. The result was that Tarzan, always swift and always keen for battle, was soon pursuing the enemy far in the lead of the others--a lack of prudence which was to prove his undoing.

The warriors of Kor-ul-lul, doubtless as valorous as their foemen, retreated only to a more strategic position in the brush, nor were they long in guessing that the number of their pursuers was fewer than their own. They made a stand then where the brush was densest--an ambush it was, and into this ran Tarzan of the Apes. They tricked him neatly. Yes, sad as is the narration of it, they tricked the wily jungle lord. But then they were fighting on their own ground, every foot of which they knew as you know your front parlor, and they were following their own tactics, of which Tarzan knew nothing.

A single black warrior appeared to Tarzan a laggard in the rear of the retreating enemy and thus retreating he lured Tarzan on. At last he turned at bay confronting the ape-man with bludgeon and drawn knife and as Tarzan charged him a score of burly Waz-don leaped from the surrounding brush. Instantly, but too late, the giant Tarmangani realized his peril. There flashed before him a vision of his lost mate and a great and sickening regret surged through him with the



realization that if she still lived she might no longer hope, for though she might never know of the passing of her lord the fact of it must inevitably seal her doom.

And consequent to this thought there enveloped him a blind frenzy of hatred for these creatures who dared thwart his purpose and menace the welfare of his wife. With a savage growl he threw himself upon the warrior before him twisting the heavy club from the creature's hand as if he had been a little child, and with his left fist backed by the weight and sinew of his giant frame, he crashed a shattering blow to the center of the Waz-don's face--a blow that crushed the bones and dropped the fellow in his tracks. Then he swung upon the others with their fallen comrade's bludgeon striking to right and left mighty, unmerciful blows that drove down their own weapons until that wielded by the ape-man was splintered and shattered. On either hand they fell before his cudgel; so rapid the delivery of his blows, so catlike his recovery that in the first few moments of the battle he seemed invulnerable to their attack; but it could not last--he was outnumbered twenty to one and his undoing came from a thrown club. It struck him upon the back of the head. For a moment he stood swaying and then like a great pine beneath the woodsman's ax he crashed to earth.

Others of the Kor-ul-lul had rushed to engage the balance of Om-at's party. They could be heard fighting at a short distance and it was evident that the Kor-ul-ja were falling slowly back and as they fell Om-at called to the missing one: "Tarzan the Terrible! Tarzan the Terrible!"

"Jad-guru, indeed," repeated one of the Kor-ul-lul rising from where Tarzan had dropped him. "Tarzan-jad-guru! He was worse than that."