

## Chapter 7 - Jungle Craft

Presently he looked up and at Pan-at-lee. "Can you cross the gorge through the trees very rapidly?" he questioned.

"Alone?" she asked.

"No," replied Tarzan.

"I can follow wherever you can lead," she said then.

"Across and back again?"

"Yes."

"Then come, and do exactly as I bid." He started back again through the trees, swiftly, swinging monkey-like from limb to limb, following a zigzag course that he tried to select with an eye for the difficulties of the trail beneath. Where the underbrush was heaviest, where fallen trees blocked the way, he led the footsteps of the creature below them; but all to no avail. When they reached the opposite side of the gorge the gryf was with them.

"Back again," said Tarzan, and, turning, the two retraced their high-flung way through the upper terraces of the ancient forest of Kor-ul-gryf. But the result was the same--no, not quite; it was worse, for another gryf had joined the first and now two waited beneath the tree in which they stopped.

The cliff looming high above them with its innumerable cave mouths seemed to beckon and to taunt them. It was so near, yet eternity yawned between. The body of the Tor-o-don lay at the cliff's foot where it had fallen. It was in plain view of the two in the tree. One of the gryfs walked over and sniffed about it, but did not offer to devour it. Tarzan had examined it casually as he had passed earlier in the morning. He guessed that it represented either a very high order of ape or a very low order of man--something akin to the Java man, perhaps; a truer example of the pithecanthropi than either the Ho-don or the Waz-don; possibly the precursor of them both. As his eyes wandered idly over the scene below his active brain was working out the details of the plan that he had made to permit Pan-at-lee's escape from the gorge. His thoughts were interrupted by a strange cry from above them in the gorge.

"Whee-oo! Whee-oo!" it sounded, coming closer.

The gryfs below raised their heads and looked in the direction of the interruption. One of them made a low, rumbling sound in its throat. It was not a bellow and it

did not indicate anger. Immediately the "Whee-oo!" responded. The gryfs repeated the rumbling and at intervals the "Whee-oo!" was repeated, coming ever closer.

Tarzan looked at Pan-at-lee. "What is it?" he asked.

"I do not know," she replied. "Perhaps a strange bird, or another horrid beast that dwells in this frightful place."

"Ah," exclaimed Tarzan; "there it is. Look!"

Pan-at-lee voiced a cry of despair. "A Tor-o-don!"

The creature, walking erect and carrying a stick in one hand, advanced at a slow, lumbering gait. It walked directly toward the gryfs who moved aside, as though afraid. Tarzan watched intently. The Tor-o-don was now quite close to one of the triceratops. It swung its head and snapped at him viciously. Instantly the Tor-o-don sprang in and commenced to belabor the huge beast across the face with his stick. To the ape-man's amazement the gryf, that might have annihilated the comparatively puny Tor-o-don instantly in any of a dozen ways, cringed like a whipped cur.

"Whee-oo! Whee-oo!" shouted the Tor-o-don and the gryf came slowly toward him. A whack on the median horn brought it to a stop. Then the Tor-o-don walked around behind it, clambered up its tail and seated himself astraddle of the huge back. "Whee-oo!" he shouted and prodded the beast with a sharp point of his stick. The gryf commenced to move off.

So rapt had Tarzan been in the scene below him that he had given no thought to escape, for he realized that for him and Pan-at-lee time had in these brief moments turned back countless ages to spread before their eyes a page of the dim and distant past. They two had looked upon the first man and his primitive beasts of burden.

And now the ridden gryf halted and looked up at them, bellowing. It was sufficient. The creature had warned its master of their presence. Instantly the Tor-o-don urged the beast close beneath the tree which held them, at the same time leaping to his feet upon the horny back. Tarzan saw the bestial face, the great fangs, the mighty muscles. From the loins of such had sprung the human race--and only from such could it have sprung, for only such as this might have survived the horrid dangers of the age that was theirs.

The Tor-o-don beat upon his breast and growled horribly--hideous, uncouth, beastly. Tarzan rose to his full height upon a swaying branch--straight and beautiful as a demigod--unspoiled by the taint of civilization--a perfect specimen

of what the human race might have been had the laws of man not interfered with the laws of nature.

The Present fitted an arrow to his bow and drew the shaft far back. The Past basing its claims upon brute strength sought to reach the other and drag him down; but the loosed arrow sank deep into the savage heart and the Past sank back into the oblivion that had claimed his kind.

"Tarzan-jad-guru!" murmured Pan-at-lee, unknowingly giving him out of the fullness of her admiration the same title that the warriors of her tribe had bestowed upon him.

The ape-man turned to her. "Pan-at-lee," he said, "these beasts may keep us treed here indefinitely. I doubt if we can escape together, but I have a plan. You remain here, hiding yourself in the foliage, while I start back across the gorge in sight of them and yelling to attract their attention. Unless they have more brains than I suspect they will follow me. When they are gone you make for the cliff. Wait for me in the cave not longer than today. If I do not come by tomorrow's sun you will have to start back for Kor-ul-ja alone. Here is a joint of deer meat for you." He had severed one of the deer's hind legs and this he passed up to her.

"I cannot desert you," she said simply; "it is not the way of my people to desert a friend and ally. Om-at would never forgive me."

"Tell Om-at that I commanded you to go," replied Tarzan.

"It is a command?" she asked.

"It is! Good-bye, Pan-at-lee. Hasten back to Om-at--you are a fitting mate for the chief of Kor-ul-ja." He moved off slowly through the trees.

"Good-bye, Tarzan-jad-guru!" she called after him. "Fortunate are my Om-at and his Pan-at-lee in owning such a friend."

Tarzan, shouting aloud, continued upon his way and the great gryfs, lured by his voice, followed beneath. His ruse was evidently proving successful and he was filled with elation as he led the bellowing beasts farther and farther from Pan-at-lee. He hoped that she would take advantage of the opportunity afforded her for escape, yet at the same time he was filled with concern as to her ability to survive the dangers which lay between Kor-ul-gryf and Kor-ul-ja. There were lions and Tor-o-dons and the unfriendly tribe of Kor-ul-lul to hinder her progress, though the distance in itself to the cliffs of her people was not great.

He realized her bravery and understood the resourcefulness that she must share in common with all primitive people who, day by day, must contend face to face

with nature's law of the survival of the fittest, unaided by any of the numerous artificial protections that civilization has thrown around its brood of weaklings.

Several times during this crossing of the gorge Tarzan endeavored to outwit his keen pursuers, but all to no avail. Double as he would he could not throw them off his track and ever as he changed his course they changed theirs to conform. Along the verge of the forest upon the southeastern side of the gorge he sought some point at which the trees touched some negotiable portion of the cliff, but though he traveled far both up and down the gorge he discovered no such easy avenue of escape. The ape-man finally commenced to entertain an idea of the hopelessness of his case and to realize to the full why the Kor-ul-gryf had been religiously abjured by the races of Pal-ul-don for all these many ages.

Night was falling and though since early morning he had sought diligently a way out of this cul-de-sac he was no nearer to liberty than at the moment the first bellowing gryf had charged him as he stooped over the carcass of his kill: but with the falling of night came renewed hope for, in common with the great cats, Tarzan was, to a greater or lesser extent, a nocturnal beast. It is true he could not see by night as well as they, but that lack was largely recompensed for by the keenness of his scent and the highly developed sensitiveness of his other organs of perception. As the blind follow and interpret their Braille characters with deft fingers, so Tarzan reads the book of the jungle with feet and hands and eyes and ears and nose; each contributing its share to the quick and accurate translation of the text.

But again he was doomed to be thwarted by one vital weakness--he did not know the gryf, and before the night was over he wondered if the things never slept, for wheresoever he moved they moved also, and always they barred his road to liberty. Finally, just before dawn, he relinquished his immediate effort and sought rest in a friendly tree crotch in the safety of the middle terrace.

Once again was the sun high when Tarzan awoke, rested and refreshed. Keen to the necessities of the moment he made no effort to locate his jailers lest in the act he might apprise them of his movements. Instead he sought cautiously and silently to melt away among the foliage of the trees. His first move, however, was heralded by a deep bellow from below.

Among the numerous refinements of civilization that Tarzan had failed to acquire was that of profanity, and possibly it is to be regretted since there are circumstances under which it is at least a relief to pent emotion. And it may be that in effect Tarzan resorted to profanity if there can be physical as well as vocal swearing, since immediately the bellow announced that his hopes had been again frustrated, he turned quickly and seeing the hideous face of the gryf below him

seized a large fruit from a nearby branch and hurled it viciously at the horned snout. The missile struck full between the creature's eyes, resulting in a reaction that surprised the ape-man; it did not arouse the beast to a show of revengeful rage as Tarzan had expected and hoped; instead the creature gave a single vicious side snap at the fruit as it bounded from his skull and then turned sulkily away, walking off a few steps.

There was that in the act that recalled immediately to Tarzan's mind similar action on the preceding day when the Tor-o-don had struck one of the creatures across the face with his staff, and instantly there sprung to the cunning and courageous brain a plan of escape from his predicament that might have blanched the cheek of the most heroic.

The gambling instinct is not strong among creatures of the wild; the chances of their daily life are sufficient stimuli for the beneficial excitement of their nerve centers. It has remained for civilized man, protected in a measure from the natural dangers of existence, to invent artificial stimulants in the form of cards and dice and roulette wheels. Yet when necessity bids there are no greater gamblers than the savage denizens of the jungle, the forest, and the hills, for as lightly as you roll the ivory cubes upon the green cloth they will gamble with death--their own lives the stake.

And so Tarzan would gamble now, pitting the seemingly wild deductions of his shrewd brain against all the proofs of the bestial ferocity of his antagonists that his experience of them had adduced--against all the age-old folklore and legend that had been handed down for countless generations and passed on to him through the lips of Pan-at-lee.

Yet as he worked in preparation for the greatest play that man can make in the game of life, he smiled; nor was there any indication of haste or excitement or nervousness in his demeanor.

First he selected a long, straight branch about two inches in diameter at its base. This he cut from the tree with his knife, removed the smaller branches and twigs until he had fashioned a pole about ten feet in length. This he sharpened at the smaller end. The staff finished to his satisfaction he looked down upon the triceratops.

"Whee-oo!" he cried.

Instantly the beasts raised their heads and looked at him. From the throat of one of them came faintly a low rumbling sound.

"Whee-oo!" repeated Tarzan and hurled the balance of the carcass of the deer to them.

Instantly the gryfs fell upon it with much bellowing, one of them attempting to seize it and keep it from the other: but finally the second obtained a hold and an instant later it had been torn asunder and greedily devoured. Once again they looked up at the ape-man and this time they saw him descending to the ground.

One of them started toward him. Again Tarzan repeated the weird cry of the Tor-o-don. The gryf halted in his track, apparently puzzled, while Tarzan slipped lightly to the earth and advanced toward the nearer beast, his staff raised menacingly and the call of the first-man upon his lips.

Would the cry be answered by the low rumbling of the beast of burden or the horrid bellow of the man-eater? Upon the answer to this question hung the fate of the ape-man.

Pan-at-lee was listening intently to the sounds of the departing gryfs as Tarzan led them cunningly from her, and when she was sure that they were far enough away to insure her safe retreat she dropped swiftly from the branches to the ground and sped like a frightened deer across the open space to the foot of the cliff, stepped over the body of the Tor-o-don who had attacked her the night before and was soon climbing rapidly up the ancient stone pegs of the deserted cliff village. In the mouth of the cave near that which she had occupied she kindled a fire and cooked the haunch of venison that Tarzan had left her, and from one of the trickling streams that ran down the face of the escarpment she obtained water to satisfy her thirst.

All day she waited, hearing in the distance, and sometimes close at hand, the bellowing of the gryfs which pursued the strange creature that had dropped so miraculously into her life. For him she felt the same keen, almost fanatical loyalty that many another had experienced for Tarzan of the Apes. Beast and human, he had held them to him with bonds that were stronger than steel--those of them that were clean and courageous, and the weak and the helpless; but never could Tarzan claim among his admirers the coward, the ingrate or the scoundrel; from such, both man and beast, he had won fear and hatred.

To Pan-at-lee he was all that was brave and noble and heroic and, too, he was Om-at's friend--the friend of the man she loved. For any one of these reasons Pan-at-lee would have died for Tarzan, for such is the loyalty of the simple-minded children of nature. It has remained for civilization to teach us to weigh the relative rewards of loyalty and its antithesis. The loyalty of the primitive is

spontaneous, unreasoning, unselfish and such was the loyalty of Pan-at-lee for the Tarmangani.

And so it was that she waited that day and night, hoping that he would return that she might accompany him back to Om-at, for her experience had taught her that in the face of danger two have a better chance than one. But Tarzan-jad-guru had not come, and so upon the following morning Pan-at-lee set out upon her return to Kor-ul-ja.

She knew the dangers and yet she faced them with the stolid indifference of her race. When they directly confronted and menaced her would be time enough to experience fear or excitement or confidence. In the meantime it was unnecessary to waste nerve energy by anticipating them. She moved therefore through her savage land with no greater show of concern than might mark your sauntering to a corner drug-store for a sundae. But this is your life and that is Pan-at-lee's and even now as you read this Pan-at-lee may be sitting upon the edge of the recess of Om-at's cave while the ja and jato roar from the gorge below and from the ridge above, and the Kor-ul-lul threaten upon the south and the Ho-don from the Valley of Jad-ben-Otho far below, for Pan-at-lee still lives and preens her silky coat of jet beneath the tropical moonlight of Pal-ul-don.

But she was not to reach Kor-ul-ja this day, nor the next, nor for many days after though the danger that threatened her was neither Waz-don enemy nor savage beast.

She came without misadventure to the Kor-ul-lul and after descending its rocky southern wall without catching the slightest glimpse of the hereditary enemies of her people, she experienced a renewal of confidence that was little short of practical assurance that she would successfully terminate her venture and be restored once more to her own people and the lover she had not seen for so many long and weary moons.

She was almost across the gorge now and moving with an extreme caution abated no wit by her confidence, for wariness is an instinctive trait of the primitive, something which cannot be laid aside even momentarily if one would survive. And so she came to the trail that follows the windings of Kor-ul-lul from its uppermost reaches down into the broad and fertile Valley of Jad-ben-Otho.

And as she stepped into the trail there arose on either side of her from out of the bushes that border the path, as though materialized from thin air, a score of tall, white warriors of the Ho-don. Like a frightened deer Pan-at-lee cast a single startled look at these menacers of her freedom and leaped quickly toward the bushes in an effort to escape; but the warriors were too close at hand. They

closed upon her from every side and then, drawing her knife she turned at bay, metamorphosed by the fires of fear and hate from a startled deer to a raging tiger-cat. They did not try to kill her, but only to subdue and capture her; and so it was that more than a single Ho-don warrior felt the keen edge of her blade in his flesh before they had succeeded in overpowering her by numbers. And still she fought and scratched and bit after they had taken the knife from her until it was necessary to tie her hands and fasten a piece of wood between her teeth by means of thongs passed behind her head.

At first she refused to walk when they started off in the direction of the valley but after two of them had seized her by the hair and dragged her for a number of yards she thought better of her original decision and came along with them, though still as defiant as her bound wrists and gagged mouth would permit.

Near the entrance to Kor-ul-lul they came upon another body of their warriors with which were several Waz-don prisoners from the tribe of Kor-ul-lul. It was a raiding party come up from a Ho-don city of the valley after slaves. This Pan-at-lee knew for the occurrence was by no means unusual. During her lifetime the tribe to which she belonged had been sufficiently fortunate, or powerful, to withstand successfully the majority of such raids made upon them, but yet Pan-at-lee had known of friends and relatives who had been carried into slavery by the Ho-don and she knew, too, another thing which gave her hope, as doubtless it did to each of the other captives--that occasionally the prisoners escaped from the cities of the hairless whites.

After they had joined the other party the entire band set forth into the valley and presently, from the conversation of her captors, Pan-at-lee knew that she was headed for A-lur, the City of Light; while in the cave of his ancestors, Om-at, chief of the Kor-ul-ja, bemoaned the loss of both his friend and she that was to have been his mate.