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Chapter 2 - The Lion's Cave

The rain lasted for twenty-four hours and much of the time it fell in torrents so that when it ceased, the trail he had been following was entirely obliterated. Cold and uncomfortable -- it was a savage Tarzan who threaded the mazes of the soggy jungle. Manu, the monkey, shivering and chattering in the dank trees, scolded and fled at his approach. Even the panthers and the lions let the growling Tarmangani pass unmolested.

When the sun shone again upon the second day and a wide, open plain let the full heat of Kudu flood the chilled, brown body, Tarzan's spirits rose; but it was still a sullen, surly brute that moved steadily onward into the south where he hoped again to pick up the trail of the Germans. He was now in German East Africa and it was his intention to skirt the mountains west of Kilimanjaro, whose rugged peaks he was quite willing to give a wide berth, and then swing eastward along the south side of the range to the railway that led to Tanga, for his experience among men suggested that it was toward this railroad that German troops would be likely to converge.

Two days later, from the southern slopes of Kilimanjaro, he heard the boom of cannon far away to the east. The afternoon had been dull and cloudy and now as he was passing through a narrow gorge a few great drops of rain began to splatter upon his naked shoulders. Tarzan shook his head and growled his disapproval; then he cast his eyes about for shelter, for he had had quite enough of the cold and drenching. He wanted to hasten on in the direction of the booming noise, for he knew that there would be Germans fighting against the English. For an instant his bosom swelled with pride at the thought that he was English and then he shook his head again viciously. "No!" he muttered, "Tarzan of the Apes is not English, for the English are men and Tarzan is Tarmangani;" but he could not hide even from his sorrow or from his sullen hatred of mankind in general that his heart warmed at the thought it was Englishmen who fought the Germans. His regret was that the English were human and not great white apes as he again considered himself.

"Tomorrow," he thought, "I will travel that way and find the Germans," and then he set himself to the immediate task of discovering some shelter from the storm. Presently he espied the low and narrow entrance to what appeared to be a cave at the base of the cliffs which formed the northern side of the gorge. With drawn knife he approached the spot warily, for he knew that if it were a cave it was doubtless the lair of some other beast. Before the entrance lay many large fragments of rock of different sizes, similar to others scattered along the entire base of the cliff, and it was in Tarzan's mind that if he found the cave unoccupied he would barricade the door and insure himself a quiet and peaceful night's repose within the sheltered interior. Let the storm rage without -- Tarzan would remain within until it ceased, comfortable and dry. A tiny rivulet of cold water trickled outward from the opening.

Close to the cave Tarzan knelt and sniffed the ground. A low growl escaped him and his upper lip curved to expose his fighting fangs. "Numa!" he muttered; but he did not stop. Numa might not be at home -- he would investigate. The entrance was so low that the ape-man was compelled to drop to all fours before he could poke his head within the aperture; but first he looked, listened, and sniffed in each direction at his rear -- he would not be taken by surprise from that quarter.

His first glance within the cave revealed a narrow tunnel with daylight at its farther end. The interior of the tunnel was not so dark but that the ape-man could readily see that it was untenanted at present. Advancing cautiously he crawled toward the opposite end imbued with a full realization of what it would mean if Numa should suddenly enter the tunnel in front of him; but Numa did not appear and the ape-man emerged at length into the open and stood erect, finding himself in a rocky cleft whose precipitous walls rose almost sheer on every hand, the tunnel from the gorge passing through the cliff and forming a passageway from the outer world into a large pocket or gulch entirely inclosed by steep walls of rock. Except for the small passageway from the gorge, there was no other entrance to the gulch which was some hundred feet in length and about fifty in width and appeared to have been worn from the rocky cliff by the falling of water during long ages. A tiny stream from Kilimanjaro's eternal snow cap still trickled over the edge of the rocky wall at the upper end of the gulch, forming a little pool at the bottom of the cliff from which a small rivulet wound downward to the tunnel through which it passed to the gorge beyond. A single great tree flourished near the center of the gulch, while tufts of wiry grass were scattered here and there among the rocks of the gravelly floor.

The bones of many large animals lay about and among them were several human skulls. Tarzan raised his eyebrows. "A man-eater," he murmured, "and from appearances he has held sway here for a long time. Tonight Tarzan will take the lair of the man-eater and Numa may roar and grumble upon the outside."

The ape-man had advanced well into the gulch as he investigated his surroundings and now as he stood near the tree, satisfied that the tunnel would prove a dry and quiet retreat for the night, he turned to retrace his way to the outer end of the entrance that he might block it with bowlders against Numa's return, but even with the thought there came something to his sensitive ears that froze him into statuesque immobility with eyes glued upon the tunnel's mouth. A moment later the head of a huge lion framed in a great black mane appeared in the opening. The yellow-green eyes glared, round and unblinking, straight at the trespassing Tarmangani, a low growl rumbled from the deep chest, and lips curled back to expose the mighty fangs.

"Brother of Dango!" shouted Tarzan, angered that Numa's return should have been so timed as to frustrate his plans for a comfortable night's repose. "I am Tarzan of the Apes, Lord of the Jungle. Tonight I lair here -- go!"

But Numa did not go. Instead he rumbled forth a menacing roar and took a few steps in Tarzan's direction. The ape-man picked up a rock and hurled it at the snarling face. One can never be sure of a lion. This one might turn tail and run at the first intimation of attack -- Tarzan had bluffed many in his time -- but not now. The missile struck Numa full upon the snout -- a tender part of a cat's anatomy -- and instead of causing him to flee it transformed him into an infuriated engine of wrath and destruction.

Up went his tail, stiff and erect, and with a series of frightful roars he bore down upon the Tarmangani at the speed of an express train. Not an instant too soon did Tarzan reach the tree and swing himself into its branches and there he squatted, hurling insults at the king of beasts while Numa paced a circle beneath him, growling and roaring in rage.

It was raining now in earnest adding to the ape-man's discomfort and disappointment. He was very angry; but as only direct necessity had ever led him to close in mortal combat with a lion, knowing as he did that he had only luck and agility to pit against the frightful odds of muscle, weight, fangs, and talons, he did not now even consider descending and engaging in so unequal and useless a duel for the mere reward of a little added creature comfort. And so he sat perched in the tree while the rain fell steadily and the lion padded round and round beneath, casting a baleful eye upward after every few steps.

Tarzan scanned the precipitous walls for an avenue of escape. They would have baffled an ordinary man; but the ape-man, accustomed to climbing, saw several places

for a moment. Numa, however, notwithstanding the rain, gave no evidence of quitting his post so that at last Tarzan really began to consider seriously if it might not be as well to take the chance of a battle with him rather than remain longer cold and wet and humiliated in the tree.

But even as he turned the matter over in his mind Numa turned suddenly and walked majestically toward the tunnel without even a backward glance. The instant that he disappeared, Tarzan dropped lightly to the ground upon the far side of the tree and was away at top speed for the cliff. The lion had no sooner entered the tunnel than he backed immediately out again and, pivoting like a flash, was off across the gulch in full charge after the flying ape-man; but Tarzan's lead was too great -- if he could find finger or foothold upon the sheer wall he would be safe; but should he slip from the wet rocks his doom was already sealed as he would fall directly into Numa's clutches where even the Great Tarman-gani would be helpless.

With the agility of a cat Tarzan ran up the cliff for thirty feet before he paused, and there finding a secure foothold, he stopped and looked down upon Numa who was leaping upward in a wild and futile attempt to scale the rocky wall to his prey. Fifteen or twenty feet from the ground the lion would scramble only to fall backward again defeated. Tarzan eyed him for a moment and then commenced a slow and cautious ascent toward the summit. Several times he had difficulty in finding holds but at last he drew himself over the edge, rose, picked up a bit of loose rock, hurled it at Numa and strode away.

Finding an easy descent to the gorge, he was about to pursue his journey in the direction of the still-booming guns when a sudden thought caused him to halt and a half-smile to play about his lips. Turning, he trotted quickly back to the outer opening of Numa's tunnel. Close beside it he listened for a moment and then rapidly began to gather large rocks and pile them within the entrance. He had almost closed the aperture when the lion appeared upon the inside -- a very ferocious and angry lion that pawed and clawed at the rocks and uttered mighty roars that caused the earth to tremble; but roars did not frighten Tarzan of the Apes. At Kala's shaggy breast he had closed his infant eyes in sleep upon countless nights in years gone by to the savage chorus of similar roars. Scarcely a day or night of his jungle life -- and practically all his life had been spent in the jungle -- had he not heard the roaring of hungry lions, or angry lions, or love-sick lions. Such sounds affected Tarzan as the tooting of an automobile horn may affect you -- if you are in front of the automobile it warns you out of the way, if you are not in front of it you scarcely notice it. Figuratively Tarzan was not in front of the automobile -- Numa could not reach him and Tarzan knew it, so he continued deliberately to choke the entrance until there was no possibility of Numa's getting out again. When he was quite through he made a grimace at the hidden lion beyond the barrier and resumed his way toward the east. "A man-eater who will eat no more men," he soliloquized.

That night Tarzan lay up under an overhanging shelf of rock. The next morning he resumed his journey, stopping only long enough to make a kill and satisfy his hunger. The other beasts of the wild eat and lie up; but Tarzan never let his belly interfere with his plans. In this lay one of the greatest differences between the ape-man and his fellows of the jungles and forests. The firing ahead rose and fell during the day. He had noticed that it was highest at dawn and immediately after dusk and that during the night it almost ceased. In the middle of the afternoon of the second day he came upon troops moving up toward the front. They appeared to be raiding parties, for they drove goats and cows along with them and there were native porters laden with grain and other foodstuffs. He saw that these natives were all secured by neck chains and he also saw that the troops were composed of native soldiers in German uniforms. The officers were white men. No one saw Tarzan, yet he was here and there about and among them for two hours. He inspected the insignia upon their uniforms and saw that they were not the same as that which he had taken from one of the dead soldiers at the bungalow and then he passed on ahead of them, unseen in the dense bush. He had come upon Germans and had not killed them; but it was because the killing of Germans at large was not yet the prime motive of his existence -- now it was to discover the individual who slew his mate.

After he had accounted for him he would take up the little matter of slaying ALL Germans who crossed his path, and he meant that many should cross it, for he would hunt them precisely as professional hunters hunt the man-eaters.

As he neared the front lines the troops became more numerous. There were motor trucks and ox teams and all the impedimenta of a small army and always there were wounded men walking or being carried toward the rear. He had crossed the railroad some distance back and judged that the wounded were being taken to it for transportation to a base hospital and possibly as far away as Tanga on the coast.

It was dusk when he reached a large camp hidden in the foothills of the Pare Mountains. As he was approaching from the rear he found it but lightly guarded and what sentinels there were, were not upon the alert, and so it was an easy thing for him to enter after darkness had fallen and prowl about listening at the backs of tents, searching for some clew to the slayer of his mate.

As he paused at the side of a tent before which sat a number of native soldiers he caught a few words spoken in native dialect that riveted his attention instantly: "The Waziri fought like devils; but we are greater fighters and we killed them all. When we were through the captain came and killed the woman. He stayed outside and yelled in a very loud voice until all the men were killed. Unterlieutenant von Goss is braver -- he came in and stood beside the door shouting at us, also in a very loud voice, and bade us nail one of the Waziri who was wounded to the wall, and then he laughed loudly because the man suffered. We all laughed. It was very funny."

Like a beast of prey, grim and terrible, Tarzan crouched in the shadows beside the tent. What thoughts passed through that savage mind? Who may say? No outward sign of passion was revealed by the expression of the handsome face; the cold, gray eyes denoted only intense watchfulness. Presently the soldier Tarzan had heard first rose and with a parting word turned away. He passed within ten feet of the ape-man and continued on toward the rear of the camp. Tarzan followed and in the shadows of a clump of bushes overtook his quarry. There was no sound as the man beast sprang upon the back of his prey and bore it to the ground for steel fingers closed simultaneously upon the soldier's throat, effectually stifling any outcry. By the neck Tarzan dragged his victim well into the concealment of the bushes.

"Make no sound," he cautioned in the man's own tribal dialect as he released his hold upon the other's throat.

The fellow gasped for breath, rolling frightened eyes upward to see what manner of creature it might be in whose power he was. In the darkness he saw only a naked brown body bending above him; but he still remembered the terrific strength of the mighty muscles that had closed upon his wind and dragged him into the bushes as though he had been but a little child. If any thought of resistance had crossed his mind he must have discarded it at once, as he made no move to escape.

"What is the name of the officer who killed the woman at the bungalow where you fought with the Waziri?" asked Tarzan.

"Hauptmann Schneider," replied the black when he could again command his voice.

"Where is he?" demanded the ape-man.

"He is here. It may be that he is at headquarters. Many of the officers go there in the evening to receive orders."

"Lead me there," commanded Tarzan, "and if I am discovered I will kill you immediately. Get up!"

The black rose and led the way by a roundabout route back through the camp. Several times they were forced to hide while soldiers passed; but at last they reached a great pile of baled hay from about the corner of which the black pointed out a two-story building in the distance.

"Headquarters," he said. "You can go no farther unseen. There are many soldiers about."

Tarzan realized that he could not proceed farther in company with the black. He turned and looked at the fellow for a moment as though pondering what disposition to make of him.

"You helped to crucify Wasimbu, the Waziri," he accused in a low yet none the less terrible tone.

The black trembled, his knees giving beneath him. "He ordered us to do it," he plead.

"Who ordered it done?" demanded Tarzan.

"Underlieutenant von Goss," replied the soldier. "He, too, is here."

"I shall find him," returned Tarzan, grimly. "You helped to crucify Wasimbu, the Waziri, and, while he suffered, you laughed."

The fellow reeled. It was as though in the accusation he read also his death sentence. With no other word Tarzan seized the man again by the neck. As before there was no outcry. The giant muscles tensed. The arms swung quickly upward and with them the body of the black soldier who had helped to crucify Wasimbu, the Waziri, described a circle in the air -- once, twice, three times, and then it was flung aside and the ape-man turned in the direction of General Kraut's headquarters.

A single sentinel in the rear of the building barred the way. Tarzan crawled, belly to the ground, toward him, taking advantage of cover as only the jungle-bred beast of prey can do. When the sentinel's eyes were toward him, Tarzan hugged the ground, motionless as stone; when they were turned away, he moved swiftly forward. Presently he was within charging distance. He waited until the man had turned his back once more and then he rose and sped noiselessly down upon him. Again there was no sound as he carried the dead body with him toward the building.

The lower floor was lighted, the upper dark. Through the windows Tarzan saw a large front room and a smaller room in rear of it. In the former were many officers. Some moved about talking to one another, others sat at field tables writing. The windows were open and Tarzan could hear much of the conversation; but nothing that interested him. It was mostly about the German successes in Africa and conjectures as to when the German army in Europe would reach Paris. Some said the Kaiser was doubtlessly already there, and there was a great deal of damning Belgium.

In the smaller back room a large, red-faced man sat behind a table. Some other officers were also sitting a little in rear of him, while two stood at attention before the general, who was questioning them. As he talked, the general toyed with an oil lamp that stood upon the table before him. Presently there came a knock upon the door and an aide entered the room. He saluted and reported: "Fraulein Kircher has arrived, sir."

"Bid her enter," commanded the general, and then nodded to the two officers before him in sign of dismissal.

The Fraulein, entering, passed them at the door. The officers in the little room rose and saluted, the Fraulein acknowledging the courtesy with a bow and a slight smile. She was a very pretty girl. Even the rough, soiled riding habit and the caked dust upon her face could not conceal the fact, and she was young. She could not have been over nineteen.

She advanced to the table behind which the general stood and, taking a folded paper from an inside pocket of her coat, handed it to him.

"Be seated, Fraulein," he said, and another officer brought her a chair. No one spoke while the general read the contents of the paper.

Tarzan appraised the various people in the room. He wondered if one might not be Hauptmann Schneider, for two of them were captains. The girl he judged to be of the intelligence department -- a spy. Her beauty held no appeal for him -- without a glimmer of compunction he could have wrung that fair, young neck. She was German and that was enough; but he had other and more important work before him. He wanted Hauptmann Schneider.

Finally the general looked up from the paper.

"Good," he said to the girl, and then to one of his aides, "Send for Major Schneider."

Major Schneider! Tarzan felt the short hairs at the back of his neck rise. Already they had promoted the beast who had murdered his mate -- doubtless they had promoted him for that very crime.

The aide left the room and the others fell into a general conversation from which it became apparent to Tarzan that the German East African forces greatly outnumbered the British and that the latter were suffering heavily. The ape-man stood so concealed in a clump of bushes that he could watch the interior of the room without being seen from within, while he was at the same time hidden from the view of anyone who might chance to pass along the post of the sentinel he had slain. Momentarily he was expecting a patrol or a relief to appear and discover that the sentinel was missing, when he knew an immediate and thorough search would be made.

Impatiently he awaited the coming of the man he sought and at last he was rewarded by the reappearance of the aide who had been dispatched to fetch him accompanied by an officer of medium size with fierce, upstanding mustaches. The newcomer strode to the table, halted and saluted, reporting. The general acknowledged the salute and turned toward the girl.

"Fraulein Kircher," he said, "allow me to present Major Schneider --"

Tarzan waited to hear no more. Placing a palm upon the sill of the window he vaulted into the room into the midst of an astounded company of the Kaiser's officers. With a stride he was at the table and with a sweep of his hand sent the lamp crashing into the fat belly of the general who, in his mad effort to escape cremation, fell over backward, chair and all, upon the floor. Two of the aides sprang for the ape-man who picked up the first and flung him in the face of the other. The girl had leaped from her chair and stood flattened against the wall. The other officers were calling aloud for the guard and for help. Tarzan's purpose centered upon but a single individual and him he never lost sight of. Freed from attack for an instant he seized Major Schneider, threw him over his shoulder and was out of the window so quickly that the astonished assemblage could scarce realize what had occurred.

A single glance showed him that the sentinel's post was still vacant and a moment later he and his burden were in the shadows of the hay dump. Major Schneider had made no outcry for the very excellent reason that his wind was shut off. Now Tarzan released his grasp enough to permit the man to breathe.

"If you make a sound you will be choked again," he said.

Cautiously and after infinite patience Tarzan passed the final outpost. Forcing his captive to walk before him he pushed on toward the west until, late into the night, he recrossed the railway where he felt reasonably safe from discovery. The German had cursed and grumbled and threatened and asked questions; but his only reply was another prod from Tarzan's sharp war spear. The ape-man herded him along as he would have driven a hog with the difference that he would have had more respect and

therefore more consideration for a hog.

Until now Tarzan had given little thought to the details of revenge. Now he pondered what form the punishment should take. Of only one thing was he certain -- it must end in death. Like all brave men and courageous beasts Tarzan had little natural inclination to torture -- none, in fact; but this case was unique in his experience. An inherent sense of justice called for an eye for an eye and his recent oath demanded even more. Yes, the creature must suffer even as he had caused Jane Clayton to suffer. Tarzan could not hope to make the man suffer as he had suffered, since physical pain may never approach the exquisiteness of mental torture.

All through the long night the ape-man goaded on the exhausted and now terrified Hun. The awful silence of his captor wrought upon the German's nerves. If he would only speak! Again and again Schneider tried to force or coax a word from him; but always the result was the same -- continued silence and a vicious and painful prod from the spear point. Schneider was bleeding and sore. He was so exhausted that he staggered at every step, and often he fell only to be prodded to his feet again by that terrifying and remorseless spear.

It was not until morning that Tarzan reached a decision and it came to him then like an inspiration from above. A slow smile touched his lips and he immediately sought a place to lie up and rest -- he wished his prisoner to be fit now for what lay in store for him. Ahead was a stream which Tarzan had crossed the day before. He knew the ford for a drinking place and a likely spot to make an easy kill. Cautioning the German to utter silence with a gesture the two approached the stream quietly. Down the game trail Tarzan saw some deer about to leave the water. He shoved Schneider into the brush at one side and, squatting next him, waited. The German watched the silent giant with puzzled, frightened eyes. In the new dawn he, for the first time, was able to obtain a good look at his captor, and, if he had been puzzled and frightened before, those sensations were nothing to what he experienced now.

Who and what could this almost naked, white savage be? He had heard him speak but once -- when he had cautioned him to silence -- and then in excellent German and the well-modulated tones of culture. He watched him now as the fascinated toad watches the snake that is about to devour it. He saw the graceful limbs and symmetrical body motionless as a marble statue as the creature crouched in the concealment of the leafy foliage. Not a muscle, not a nerve moved. He saw the deer coming slowly along the trail, down wind and unsuspecting. He saw a buck pass -- an old buck -- and then a young and plump one came opposite the giant in ambush, and Schneider's eyes went wide and a scream of terror almost broke from his lips as he saw the agile beast at his side spring straight for the throat of the young buck and heard from those human lips the hunting roar of a wild beast. Down went the buck and Tarzan and his captive had meat. The ape-man ate his raw, but he permitted the German to build a fire and cook his portion.

The two lay up until late in the afternoon and then took up the journey once again -- a journey that was so frightful to Schneider because of his ignorance of its destination that he at times groveled at Tarzan's feet begging for an explanation and for mercy; but on and on in silence the ape-man went, prodding the failing Hun whenever the latter faltered.

It was noon of the third day before they reached their destination. After a steep climb and a short walk they halted at the edge of a precipitous cliff and Schneider looked down into a narrow gulch where a single tree grew beside a tiny rivulet and sparse grass broke from a rock-strewn soil. Tarzan motioned him over the edge; but the German drew back in terror. The Ape-man seized him and pushed him roughly toward the brink. "Descend," he said. It was the second time he had spoken in three days and perhaps his very silence, ominous in itself, had done more to arouse terror in the breast of the Boche than even the spear point, ever ready as it always was.

Schneider looked fearfully over the edge; but was about to essay the attempt when Tarzan halted him. "I am Lord Greystoke," he said. "It was my wife you murdered in the Waziri country. You will understand now why I came for you. Descend."

The German fell upon his knees. "I did not murder your wife," he cried. "Have mercy! I did not murder your wife. I do not know anything about --"

"Descend!" snapped Tarzan, raising the point of his spear. He knew that the man lied and was not surprised that he did. A man who would murder for no cause would lie for less. Schneider still hesitated and pled. The ape-man jabbed him with the spear and Schneider slid fearfully over the top and began the perilous descent. Tarzan accompanied and assisted him over the worst places until at last they were within a few feet of the bottom.

"Be quiet now," cautioned the ape-man. He pointed at the entrance to what appeared to be a cave at the far end of the gulch. "There is a hungry lion in there. If you can reach that tree before he discovers you, you will have several days longer in which to enjoy life and then -- when you are too weak to cling longer to the branches of the tree Numa, the man-eater, will feed again for the last time." He pushed Schneider from his foothold to the ground below. "Now run," he said.

The German trembling in terror started for the tree. He had almost reached it when a horrid roar broke from the mouth of the cave and almost simultaneously a gaunt, hunger-mad lion leaped into the daylight of the gulch. Schneider had but a few yards to cover; but the lion flew over the ground to circumvent him while Tarzan watched the race with a slight smile upon his lips.

Schneider won by a slender margin, and as Tarzan scaled the cliff to the summit, he heard behind him mingled with the roaring of the baffled cat, the gibbering of a human voice that was at the same time more bestial than the beast's.

Upon the brink of the cliff the ape-man turned and looked back into the gulch. High in the tree the German clung frantically to a branch across which his body lay. Beneath him was Numa -- waiting.

The ape-man raised his face to Kudu, the sun, and from his mighty chest rose the savage victory cry of the bull ape.