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### The Eternal Lover

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

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#### CHAPTER IX. The Hunt.

It was daylight when Barney Custer awoke. His first thought was for his prisoner, and when his eyes fell upon the empty cot across the room the American came to the center of the floor with a single bound. Clad in his pajamas he ran into the living room and gave the alarm. In another moment the search was on, but no sign of the cave man was to be found, nor of the guardian Terkoz. "He must have killed the dog," insisted Greystoke, but they failed to find the beast's body, for the excellent reason that at that very moment Terkoz, bristling with anger, was nosing about the spot where, nearly a month before, he had been struck down by the Arab as he had sought to protect the girl to whom he had attached himself. As he searched the spot his equally savage companion hastened to the cave farther up the mountainside, and with his knife unceremoniously cut the head of the cave man from the soft earth of a crevice within the lair. The trophy was now in a rather sad state, and Nu felt that he must forego the pleasure of laying it intact at the feet of his future mate, but the great saber teeth were there and the skull. He removed the former, fastening them to his loin cloth, and laid the balance of the head outside the cave, where vultures might strip it clean of flesh against Nu's return, for he did not wish to be burdened with it during his search for Nat-ul.

It was amazing. Life in such a world would scarce be worth the living. It was for a time the fugitive was forgotten, but as the march proceeded they came upon certain reminders that recalled him to their minds and indicated that he was far in advance of them upon the trail of the Arabs. The first sign of him was the carcass of a bull buffalo. Straight through the heart was the great hole that they now knew was made by the passage of the ancient stone tipped spear. Strips had been knife cut from the sides, and the belly was torn as though by a wild beast. Brown stooped to examine the ground about the bull. When he straightened up he looked at Greystoke and laughed. "Didn't I understand you to say that he must have killed the dog?" he asked. "Look here. They ate side by side from the body of their kill." For three weeks now Victoria Custer had been a prisoner of Sheik Ibn Aswad, but other than the ordinary hardships of African travel she had experienced nothing of which she might complain. She had even been permitted to ride upon one of the few donkeys that still survived, and her food was as good as that of Ibn Aswad himself, for the canny old sheik knew that the better the condition of his prisoner the better the price she would bring at the court of the sultan of Fula.



His Eyes Fell Upon the Empty Cot Across the Room.

made him lonelier than ever to feel that he could travel for miles without encountering a single danger. Far behind him along the trail of the Arabs came a dozen white men and half a hundred savage Waziri warriors. Not an hour after Barney Custer discovered Nu's absence a native runner had come hurrying in from the north to beg Lord Greystoke's help in pursuing and punishing a band of Arab slave and ivory raiders who were laying waste the villages, murdering the old men and the children and carrying the young men and women into slavery. While Greystoke was questioning the fellow he let drop the fact that among the other prisoners of the Arabs was a young white woman. Instantly, emotion reigned upon the Greystoke ranch. White men were jumping into field khaki, looking to the firearms and ammunition, lest their black-bodily servants should have neglected some essential. Stable boys were saddling the horses. The sleek upon warriors of Urdi were greasing their black hides, adjusting barbaric war bonnets, streaking faces, breasts and limbs with ochre, vermilion or ghostly bluish white and looking to slim shields, poisoned arrows and formidable spears.

death were better than the thing she was being dragged through the jungles to suffer. Every waking minute her mind was occupied with plans for escape, yet not one presented itself which did not offer insuperable obstacles. Even had she been able to leave the camp undetected, how long could she hope to survive in the jungle? And should by some miracle her life be spared even for months, of what avail would that be? She could no more have retraced her way to Lord Greystoke's ranch than she could have laid a true course upon the trackless ocean. The horrors of the march that passed daily in hideous review before her left her sick and disgusted. The cruelly beaten slaves who carried the great burdens of ivory, tents and provisions brought tears to her eyes. The brutal massacres that followed the forcible entrance into each succeeding village wrung her heart and roused her shame for these beasts in human form who urged on their savage and cowardly Manyema cannibals to commit nameless excesses against the cowering prisoners that fell into their hands. But at last they came to a village where victory failed to rush forward and fall into their arms. Instead, they were met with sullen resistance. Feroocious, painted devils fought them stubbornly every inch of the way, until Ibn Aswad decided to make a detour and pass round the village rather than sacrifice more of his followers. In the confusion of the fight and the near retreat which followed Abul Mukarram found the opportunity he had been awaiting. The prisoners, including the white girl, were being pushed ahead of the retreating raiders, while the Arabs and Manyema brought up the rear, fighting off the pursuing savages. Now Abul Mukarram knew a way to the northland that two might traverse with ease and over which one could fairly fly, but which was impossible for a slave caravan because it passed through the territory of the English. If the girl would accompany him willingly, well and good--if not, then he would go alone, but not before he should be revenged upon her. He left the firing line, therefore, and pushed his way through the terror-stricken slaves to the side of the Arab who guarded Victoria Custer. "Go back to Ibn Aswad," he said to the Arab. "He desires your presence."

The other looked at him closely for a moment. "You lie, Abul Mukarram!" he said at last. "Ibn Aswad commanded me particularly against permitting you to be alone with the girl. Go to!" "Fool!" muttered Abul Mukarram, and with the word he pulled the trigger of the long gun that rested across the pommel of his saddle with its wide muzzle scarce a foot from the side of the other Arab. With a shriek the man lunged his donkey. "Come!" cried Abul Mukarram, turning into the jungle to the west. The girl tried to slip from the saddle but a strong arm went about her and held her firm as the two donkeys forged, shoulder to shoulder, through the tangled mass of creepers while the Arab blocked their way. Once Victoria screamed for help, the war cries of the natives drove her voice. Fifteen minutes later the two came out upon the trail again that they followed when they approached the village, and soon the sounds of their behind them grew fainter and fainter until they were lost entirely in the distance. Victoria Custer's mind was working rapidly, casting about for some means of escape from the silent figure at her side. A revolver, or even a knife would have solved her difficulty, she had neither. Had she, the ill-fated Abul Mukarram would have been worth but little, for the girl was herself with hopeless horror. For the better part of two hours Mukarram kept on away from the trail, but he had robbed. He spoke, but when he did it was in the tone of the master to his slave. Near the end they left the jungle and came out a higher country, where the sparse trees were greater and more was little or no underbrush. "Traveling yourself an easy prey to lions (alligators and crocodiles as the result of a neglected cold? Count on Colds sap your strength and vitality less checked in the early stages. King's New Discovery is what you need--the first dose helps, your feet clear up, you breathe freely and feel so much better. Buy a bottle today and start taking at once. Advertisement.)

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