

The Eternal Lover

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

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CHAPTER X. The Death Dance.

Each day Nu realized that he was gaining rapidly upon those with whom Nat-ul traveled.

The experience of his other life assured him that she must be a prisoner, yet at the same time he realized that such might not be the case at all, for had he not thought of her a prisoner among the others who had held him prisoner, only to learn that one of them claimed her as a sister?

It all seemed very strange to Nu. It was quite beyond him. Nat-ul could not be the sister of Custer, and yet he had seen her apparently happy and contented in the society of these strangers, and Custer unquestionably appeared to feel for her the solitude of a brother.

Curtiss, it was evident, loved Nat-ul—that much he had gleaned from conversations he had overheard between him and Custer. How the man could have become so well acquainted with Nat-ul between the two days that had elapsed since Nu had set forth from the caves beside the restless sea to hunt down Oo and the morning that he had awakened following the mighty shaking of the world was quite as much a mystery as was the remarkable changes that had taken place in the aspect of the world during the same brief period.

Nu had given much thought to these miraculous happenings, with the result that he had about convinced himself that he must have slept much longer than he had believed, but that a hundred thousand years had rolled their slow and weary progress above his unconscious head could not, of course, have occurred to him, even as the remotest of possibilities.

He had also weighed the sneering words of Curtiss, and with them the attitude of the strangers with whom he had been thrown. He had quickly appreciated the fact that their manners and customs were as far removed from his as they were from those of the beasts of the jungle.

He had seen that his own ways were more in accordance with the ways of the black and half-naked natives whom the whites looked upon as so much their inferiors that they would not even eat at the same table with them.

He had noted the fact that the blacks treated the other whites with a marked respect which they did not extend to Nu, and, being no fool, Nu had come to the conclusion that the whites themselves looked upon him as an inferior, even before Curtiss' words convinced him of the truth of his suspicions.

Evidently, though his skin was white, he was now in some subtle way different from the other whites. Possibly it was in the matter of reindeer.

He had tried to wear the strange body coverings they had given him, but they were cumbersome and uncomfortable, and, though he was seldom warm enough now, he had nevertheless been glad when the opportunity came to discard the hampering and unaccustomed clothing.

These thoughts suggested the possibility that if Nat-ul had found recognition among the strangers upon an equal footing with them that she, too, might have those attributes of superiority which the strangers claimed, and if such was the fact it became evident that she would consider Nu from the viewpoint of her new friends—as an inferior.

Such reveries made Nu very sad, for he loved Nat-ul just as you or I would love—just as normal white men have always loved—with a devotion that placed the object of his affection upon a pedestal, before which he was happy to bow down and worship. His passion was not of the brute type of the inferior races, which oftentimes solemnizes the marriage ceremony with a cudgel and ever places the woman in the position of an inferior and a chattel.

Even as Nu pondered the puzzling questions which confronted him his eyes and ears were alert as he sped along the now fresh trail of the caravan.

Every indication pointed the recent passing of many men, and the troglodyte was positive that he could be but a few hours behind his quarry.

A few miles east of him the rescue party from the Graystone ranch were pushing rapidly ahead upon a different trail, with a view to heading off the Arabs.

Ibn Aswad had taken a circuitous route in order that he might pass around the country of the Waziri, and with his slow moving slave caravan he had now reached a point but a few days' journey in a direct line from the ranch. The lightly equipped pursuers, having knowledge of the route taken by the Arabs from the messenger who had come to seek their assistance, had not been compelled to follow

the spur of their quarry, but they had marched straight across country, in a direct line for a point which they judged would bring them ahead of the caravan.

Thus it was that Nu and Ibn Aswad and the party of whites and Waziri from the ranch were closing in upon Ibn Aswad from opposite directions simultaneously.

But Nu was not destined to follow the trail of the fugitives to where they were still on guard in repelling the savage attack of the fierce Wamboi, for as he trotted along with the dog at his side his quick eyes detected that which the bound, with all his wondrous instinctive powers, would have passed by unnoticed, the well marked prints of the hoofs of two donkeys that had come back along the trail since the caravan had passed.

That they were donkeys belonging to the Arabs was evident to Nu through his familiarity with the distinctive hoof prints of each, which during the past three days had become as well known to him as his mother's face had been. But what were they doing retracing the way they had but just covered?

He halted and raised his head to sniff the air and listen intently for the faintest sound from the direction in which the beasts had gone when they left the old trail at the point that he had discovered their spur.

The wind, however, was blowing from the opposite direction, so there was no chance that Nu could scent them. He was in doubt as to whether he should leave the trail of the main body and follow these two or continue on his way.

From the manner of their passing, side by side—he was convinced that each carried a rider, since otherwise they would have gone in single file after the manner of beasts moving along a now too wide trail, but there was nothing to indicate that either rider was Nat-ul.

For an instant he hesitated, and then his judgment told him to keep on after the main body, for if Nat-ul was a prisoner she would be with the larger force—not riding in the opposite direction with a single guard.

Even as he turned to take up the pursuit again there came faintly to his ears from the jungle at his left the sound of a human voice. It was a woman's, raised in frightened protest.

Like a deer Nu turned and leaped in the direction of that familiar voice. The fleet wolfhound was put to it to keep pace with the agile cave man, for Nu had left the earth and taken to the branches of the trees, where no underbrush retarded his flight.

From tree to tree he leaped or swung, sometimes hurling his body twenty feet through the air from one jungle giant to another.

Below him raced the panting Terkoz, red tongue lolling from foam flecked mouth, but with all their speed the two moved with the noiselessness of shadowy ghosts.

At the edge of the jungle Nu came upon a parklike forest, and well into this he saw a woman struggling with a white robed Arab. One sinewy brown hand clutched her throat, the other was raised to strike her in the face.

Nu saw that he could not reach the man in time to prevent the blow, but he might distract his attention for the moment that would be required for him to reach his side.

From his throat there rose the savage war cry of his long dead people, a cry that brought a hundred jungle creatures to their feet, trembling in fear or in rage, according to their kind.

It brought Abdul Mukarram upstanding, too, for in all his life he had never heard the like of that blood freezing challenge.

At the sight which met his eyes he dropped the girl and darted toward his donkey, where hung his long barreled rifle in its boot.

Victoria Custer looked, too, and what she saw brought unutterable relief and happiness to her. Then the Arab had turned with leveled gun just as the cave man leaped upon him.

There was the report of the Grearm ere it was wrenched from Abdul Mukarram's grasp and hurled to one side, but the bullet went wide of its mark, and the next instant the girl saw the two men locked in what she knew was a death struggle.

The Arab struck mighty blows at the head and face of his antagonist, while the cave man, the great muscles rolling beneath his smooth hide, sought for a hold upon the other's throat.

About the two the vicious wolfhound slunk, growling and bristling, waiting for an opportunity to rush in upon the white robed antagonist of his master.

Victoria Custer, her clinched fists tight pressed against her bosom, watched the two men who battled for her. She saw the powerful hands of her savage man bend back the head of the doomed Abdul Mukarram.

She saw her ferocious mate shake the man as a terrier shakes a rat, and her heart swelled in fierce primitive pride at the prowess of her man.

No longer did Victoria Custer exist.

It was Nat-ul, the savage maiden of the Neocene who, as Nu threw the lifeless corpse of his kill to one side and opened his arms, flung herself into his embrace.

It was Nat-ul, daughter of Thana-Nat-ul of the tribe of Nu that dwelt beyond the barren cliffs beside the restless sea—who threw her arms about her lord and master's neck and drew his mouth down to her lips.

It was Nat-ul of the first born who watched Nu and the fierce wolfhound circle about the corpse of the dead Arab.

The cave man, moving in the savage steps of the death dance of his tribe, now bent half over, now leaping high in air, throwing his stone tipped spear

the ground, resting the stone tip against his hand.

"I go, Nat-ul!" he said simply. "That I may return again as you would have me."

The girl and the man were so occupied and engrossed with their own tragedy that they did not note the restless pacing of Terkoz, the wolfhound, or hear the ominous growls that rumbled from his savage throat as he looked toward the jungle behind them.

The searching party from the Graystone ranch had come upon Ibn Aswad so unexpectedly that not a shot had been exchanged between the two parties.

The Arabs, pressed from behind by the savage Wamboi warriors, had literally run into the arms of the whites and the Waziri.

With a Graystone demanded that the white girl be turned over to him at once. Ibn Aswad raised his breast and swore that there had been no white girl with them, but one of the slaves told a different story to a Waziri, and when the whites found that Victoria had been stolen from Ibn Aswad by one of the sheik's lieutenants only a few hours before they listened to the search of the jungle in vain.

To facilitate their movements and insure covering as wide a territory as possible each of the whites took a few Waziri and, spreading out in a far flung skirmish line, beat the jungle in the direction toward which the slave had told them Abdul Mukarram had ridden.

To comb the jungle finely each white spread his Waziri upon either side of him, and thus they advanced, seldom in sight of one another, but always within hailing distance. And so it happened that chance brought William Curtiss, unseen, to the edge of the forest beside the parklike forest, beneath the giant trees of which he saw a tabernacle that brought him to a sudden halt.

There was the girl he loved and sought, apparently unharmed, and two donkeys, and the dead body of an Arab, and the great wolfhound, looking toward his hiding place and growling menacingly, and before the girl the savage white man stood.

Curtiss was about to spring forward when he saw the man place the butt of his spear upon the ground and the point against his heart. The act and the expression upon the man's face proclaimed his intention, and so Curtiss drew back again, waiting for the perpetration of the deed that he knew was coming.

A smile of anticipation played about the American's lips.

Victoria Custer, too, guessed the thing that Nu contemplated. It was, in accordance with her own reasoning, the only logical thing for the man to do; but love is not logical, and when love saw and realized the humbleness of its own movement it cast logic to the winds, and with a little scream of terror the girl threw herself upon Nu of the Neocene, striking the spear from its goal.

"No! No!" she cried. "You must not do it! I cannot let you go! I love you, Nu—I love you!"

As the strong arms unfolded her once more she gave a happy sigh of content and let her head drop again upon the breast of him who had come back out of the ages to claim her.

The man put an arm about her waist, and together the two turned toward the west in the direction that Abdul Mukarram had been fleeing; nor did either see the white faced, scowling man who leaped from the jungle behind them and with leveled rifle took deliberate aim at the back of the black haired giant.

Nor did they see the swift spring of the wolfhound nor the thing that followed there beneath the brooding st

MOON, and of the great victory won by a dark-skinned, white-skinned, his equally savage mate feet time with him, white hands.

CHAPTER XI
Happening?

THE dance was done Nu halted before Nat-ul. The girl was facing him, and for a long minute the two stood in silence looking at one another.

It was the first opportunity that either had had to study the features of the other since the strange miracle that had separated them.

Nu found that some subtle change had taken place in his Nat-ul.

It was one of that there could be no doubt, but yet there was that about her which was a part of reverential fear over him. She was infinitely finer and more wonderful than he ever had realized.

With the passing of the excitement of the battle and the dance the strange ecstasy which had held the girl in thrall passed slowly away. The rhythm of the dancing of the savage black haired giant had touched some cord within her which awoke the long dormant instincts of the primordial.

For the time she had been carried back a hundred thousand years to the childhood of the human race. She had not known for those brief instants Victoria Custer or the twentieth century or its civilization, for they were yet a thousand centuries in the future.

But now once more she saw through the eyes of generations of culture and refinement. Before her was a primitive man.

In his eyes was the fire of a great love that would not be denied. About her was the wild, fierce forest and the cruel jungle, and behind all this, and beyond, her vision wandered to the world she had always known—the world of cities and homes and gentleness.

She saw her father and her mother and her friends. What would they say?

Again she let her eyes rest upon the man. It was with difficulty that she restrained a desire to throw herself upon his broad breast and weep out her doubts and fears close to the beating of his great heart and in the safety of those protecting arms.

But with the wish there rose again the question, "What would they say?" to hold her trembling and frightened from him.

The man saw something of the girl's trouble in her eyes; but he partially misinterpreted it, for he read fear of himself where there was principally self fear, and because of what he had heard Curtiss say, he thought that he saw contempt, too, for primitive people are infinitely more sensitive than their more sophisticated brothers.

"You do not love me, Nat-ul?" he asked. "Have the strangers turned you against me? What one of them could have fetched you the head of Oo, the man hunter?"

"See!" He tapped the two great tusks that hung from his loin cloth. "Nu slew the mightiest of the beasts for Nat-ul—the head is buried in the cave of Oo—yet, now that I come to take you as my mate, I see fear in your eyes and something else which never was there before. What is it, Nat-ul? Have the strangers stolen your love from Nu?"

The man spoke in a tongue so ancient that in all the world there lived no man who spoke or knew a word of it, yet to Victoria Custer it was as intelligible as her own English, nor did it seem strange to her that she answered Nu in his own language.

"My heart tells me that I am yours, Nu," she said, "but my judgment and my training warn me against the step that my heart prompts. I love you, but I could not be happy to wander half naked through the jungle for the balance of my life, and if I go with you now, even for a day, I may never return to my people."

"Nor would you be happy in the life that I lead. It would stifle and kill you. I think I see now something of the miracle that has overwhelmed us. To you it has been but a few days since you left your Nat-ul to hunt down the ferocious Oo, but in reality countless ages have rolled by."

"By some strange freak of fate you have remained unchanged during all these ages, until now you step forth from your long sleep an unspooled cave man of the stone age into the midst of the twentieth century, while I doubtless have been born and reborn a thousand times, merging from one incarnation to another until in this we are again united."

"Had you, too, died and been born again during all these weary years no gap of ages would intervene between us now, and we should meet again upon a common footing, as do other souls, and mate and die to be born again to a new mating and a new life, with its inevitable death."

"But you have defied the laws of life and death—you have refused to die—and now that we meet again at last a hundred thousand years lie between us—an unbridgeable gulf across which I may not return and over which you may not come other than by the same route which I have followed—through death and a new life thereafter."

Much that the girl said was beyond Nu's comprehension and the most of it without the scope of his primitive language, so that she had been forced to draw liberally upon her twentieth century English to fill in the gap.

Yet the man had caught the idea in a vague sort of way, at least that his Nat-ul was far removed from him because of a great lapse of time that had occurred while he slept in the cave of Oo, and that through his own death steps could he span the gulf between them and claim her as his mate.

He placed the butt of his spear upon

What had he done gone to the south, seven depths to he to follow after?

He doubted that she would without her dream own: "Where she to huddle with him in the less jungle, which was the haunts of civilized men?"

A moment later he had reached the very swing of his stride he east or the west I do not know, was not there.

THE END.

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Notice of Annual Election

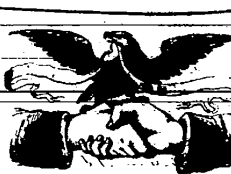
Notice is hereby given that the annual election will be held in and for the Village of Andover, N. Y., on the 16th day of March, 1915, at Village Hall, in said village. The polls will be opened at 1 o'clock p. m., and close at 5 o'clock p. m. The following officers are to be chosen:

President in place of E. J. Atwood, Term 1 year.
Trustee in place of James A. O'Leary, Term 2 years.
Treasurer in place of F. W. Burrows, Term 1 year.
Collector in place of Henry Garvin, Term 1 year.

QUESTION SUBMITTED:

Shall the Board of Trustees of the Village of Andover be authorized to spend the sum of fifty dollars (\$50) for band concerts during the summer of 1915 and each year thereafter until otherwise instructed?

The following is a true and correct list of all nominations of candidates for offices to be filled at the Village Election, filed with me pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 9 of the Laws of 1896 and amendments thereto.

Title of Office	Name of Candidate	Party Name	Residence	Emblem of Party
President	Edward J. Atwood	Union	Andover	
Trustee	J. Melvin Hartum	Union	Andover	
Treasurer	James P. Cannon	Union	Andover	
Collector	James D. Cheesman	Union	Andover	

ANDOVER, N. Y., MARCH 4, 1915.

A. D. FULLER, Village Clerk.

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