

XXXII
JANE

QUICKLY, the Warlord urged his followers to prepare to aid the apeman in his search for his mate. This rescue now became the most vital task of the armies of the Heliumitic Empire. John Carter full knew how he would feel if his princess, the incomparable Dejah Thoris, were the one being borne away by such villians as Zithad and Sardon Dhur. Nothing would stop him until they both lay dead at his feet.

Tarzan finally could wait no longer for the Warlord or Tharos Pthan to prepare their troops, and so, finally, he approached the new Guardian of Issus.

"Tharos Pthan," he spoke, "I must go ahead. I cannot wait! Follow when you can, but I must get to my mate as soon as possible!"

Without waiting for an answer, the apeman turned and started for the door.

As he trod purposely, Tarzan was brought to a sudden halt by a sight which he had traveled over a year to see -- Jane Clayton, Lady Greystoke strode through the door between two men. The one was as pale as any Thern and the other somewhat darker, but not quite the redness of the other Barsoomians. He was tall and powerful and Tarzan thought he saw a hint of familiarity about him.

These men could wait. The King of the Apes rushed to his wife and crushed her to his chest.

All about the throne room, activity stopped and men turned to see the powerful apeman holding the beautiful blond woman as though she was the most valuable treasure ever known -- which she was, to Tarzan of the Apes.

"John," Lady Jane struggled free enough to look up into the apeman's smiling face. "Don't hold so tight. You're breaking my ribs."

Tarzan relaxed the pressure on her, but did not let go. "How did you escape? I was just on my way to rescue you!"

"I was on some sort of a boat in the air when I suddenly seemed to come out of some sort of trance. I could not remember anything after looking at the amulet from Opar the other night. I had no idea of where I was or who I was with but just then we were attacked," Jane Clayton began. "The battle was furious. There were black and white men defending the group I was with against a much larger force of red and yellow men as well as several giant green creatures with four arms. The attackers beat down my companions forces and soon we were conquered and they placed all the defenders in chains.

"After the battle, the leader of the victors came to where I was and tried to talk to me, but I didn't understand a word he was saying and told him so. He turned and left only to return a short time later with another man who began again to question me. When I answered in English, I was surprised by the look of recognition on his face. He smiled and asked, 'Who are you and how do you speak English?'

"After I had identified myself, he told me that he was an American soldier who had been living on Mars for many years. We talked about all kinds of things until we reached this land where we heard that a giant white man and the Warlord had beaten the devil of a being named Tario."

Jane Clayton took her husband's hand and led him to the two men who had escorted her into the throne room. "This is Vad Varo," she pointed to the white skinned man, "and this is Carthoris, the son of John Carter, Warlord of Barsoom."

Tarzan reached out to each of them. "Vad Varo and Carthoris," he spoke. "I owe you more than my life for rescuing my mate, or more properly, as you would say, my princess. You have but to ask."

The son of John Carter smiled back. "We have done nothing that we wouldn't have done for any other woman, Lord Greystoke."

"Nevertheless, Tarzan of the Apes owes you more than he can repay," replied the apeman.

A look of pure shock appeared on Vad Varo's face – "T - T -Tarzan of the Apes! " he exclaimed. "And I thought only the great white apes could kill Lord Greystoke."

Vad Varo turned to his companions and began to tell about the man of his home world who had been raised by apes and had become a nobleman in one of the great countries of that world. Finally, Tarzan felt he had heard enough about himself for one day.

"Vad Varo," he interrupted. "What happened to Zithad and Sardon Dhur? Did they get away?"

For answer, Carthoris signalled and the Dator of the First Born and the Hekkador of Holy Therns were ushered into the room chained and begging for mercy.

"They are yours, Tarzan!" Carthoris handed the ends of their chains to the apeman. "You they have offended the most. Let you decide their punishment."

Fury blazed in Tarzan's eyes and the great scar on his forehead turned bright red. Then it subsided and the civilized man in John Clayton, Lord Greystoke, surfaced before he spoke.

"You deserve a death of great pain," he told the two miscreants, "but I think it will be better if you serve as slaves to the great white apes of Issus!" and so he turned to the leader of the white apes and spoke to him in his own language, "I give these mangani to you to do with as you wish. Make them be your slaves, but do not kill them. Keep them in chains and never let them go. They are yours."

As the apes dragged Zithad and Sardon Dhur to whatever fate they would meet, Tarzan turned to the Warlord.

"Now," he said, "if only we can find a way to return to our home."

"I think I know a way –," John Carter answered. "But, it will be up to Tharos Pthan to make the decision."

For several months, Tarzan and Jane visited with La and Tharos Pthan in the palace at Tarnath. Each day Tarzan and Tharos Pthan would spend long hours in studying the methods of travel which might return Tarzan and Jane to their native Earth.

Finally, both Tarzan and Tharos Pthan felt that the time had come to try to make the journey. The day would be a day of celebration – John Carter and his princess, Dejah Thoris were invited to the farewell meal as were Carthoris and Vad Varo.

When the meal was over, the Warlord took the King of the Apes aside. "My friend," he said, "I wish that you could stay. I've found Barsoom to be more suited to me than Earth and am glad to live here. Why not change your mind and stay?"

"Your world is interesting, John Carter," the apeman replied, "but, we still have our children on Earth and wish to see them and let them know that we are still alive. Perhaps, fate will allow us to return someday. "

"You will always find a welcome at the palace in Helium, my friend." John Carter's eyes smiled with just a bit of sadness.

The time had come! These people whose lives had been entwined across space and time for nearly a decade might never see each other again. It was a solemn time all around.

For the last time, Tarzan and Jane looked at the little egg in the incubator in the courtyard of the palace of Tarnath. La had thought she was not even human because she couldn't have children, but now as Issus, she knew that she was fulfilled on the planet of her origin, Barsoom. The egg that she and Tharos Pthan had placed there would produce the next great ruler of Lothar as it was rebuilt.

Issus handed her husband the Great Star of Issus. Reverently, he who had been Kar Komak, held the jewel in front of him at shoulder height. For months, he and Tarzan had experimented with teleportation using the jewel and now they were going to try to reverse what had been done by Tario so many years before. Tario had brought La of Opar and Jane Clayton to Barsoom from Earth using the power of both the Greater and Lesser Stars of Issus. He would try to send Jane Clayton and Tarzan back to earth by the same means.

Tharos Pthan lifted the smaller jewel from its place on a small pedestal near the wall. "With these two jewels," he said, "Tario tried to rule a planet. We will try to restore our friends to their homes."

All present gathered about Lord and Lady Greystoke while Tharos Pthan closed his eyes and concentrated. Each person added their own mental power to that of the Consort of Issus and concentrated.

How long they stood there concentrating cannot be known, but suddenly, after what seemed like hours or days, Tarzan and Jane Clayton vanished before their very eyes.