

now back over Nat-ul's shoulder, cleaving the air downward toward the man's head. Tur, realizing his danger, leaped back, but the point of the blade struck his forehead a glancing blow. The man reeled drunkenly for a second, stumbled forward, and fell full upon his face on the wet sand.

The instant that the blade touched her tormentor Nat-ul dropped the paddle, dodged past the man, and scurried like a frightened deer toward the black shadows of the jungle above the beach.

The next great roller washed in across the prostrate form of Tur. It rolled him over, and as it raced back toward the sea it dragged him with it; but the water revived him, and he came coughing and struggling to his hands and knees, clinging desperately to life until the waters receded, leaving him in momentary safety.

Slowly he staggered to his feet and made his way up the beach beyond the reach of the greedy seas. Could he have laid his hands upon Nat-ul then she would have died beneath his choking fingers. But he did not lay hands upon her, for Nat-ul was already safely ensconced in a tree just within the shadows of the jungle.

Until daylight she was as safe there from Tur as though a thousand miles separated them. A half hour later Nu and Gron, a mile farther inland, were clambering into another tree. Ah, if Nat-ul could have but known it, what doubt, despair and suffering she might have been spared!

Tur ran down the beach in the direction in which he thought that he heard the sound of the fleeing Nat-ul. Yes, there she was. Tur redoubled his speed.

His quarry was just beneath a tree at the edge of the jungle. The man leaped forward with an exclamation of savage satisfaction—that died upon his lips, frozen by the horrid roar of a lion.

Tur turned and fled. The thing he had thought was Nat-ul proved to be a huge cave lion standing over the corpse of its kill.

Fortunate for Tur was it that the beast already had its supper before it. It did not pursue the frightened man, and so Tur reached the safety of a near-by tree, where he crouched, shaking and trembling, throughout the balance of the night.

Tur was a Boat Builder and a fisherman—he was not of the stock of Nu and Nat-ul, the hunters of savage beasts, the precursors of warrior nations yet unborn.

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### The Other Woman.

IT WAS late in the morning when Nat-ul awoke. She peered through the foliage in every direction, but could see no sign of Tur. Cautiously she descended to the ground. Upon the beach, not far separated, she saw two boats.

To whom could the other belong?

Naturally to some of the Boat Builders. Then there were other enemies upon the island besides Tur. She looked up and down the beach.

There was no sign of man or beast.

If she could but reach the boats she could push them both through the surf, and, some way, dragging one, paddle the other away from the island. This would leave no means of pursuit to her enemies.

That she could reach the mainland she had not the slightest doubt, so self-reliant had heredity and environment made her.

Again she glanced up and down the beach. Then she raced swiftly toward the nearest boat. She tugged and pushed upon the heavy thing until at last, after what seemed to her anxious mind many minutes, she felt it slipping loose from its moorings of sand.

Slowly, inch by inch, she was forcing it toward the point where the rollers would at last reach and float it.

She had almost gained success with this first boat when something impelled her to glance up.

Instantly her dream of escape faded, for from up the beach she saw Tur running swiftly toward her. Even could she have managed to launch this one boat and enter it, Tur easily could overtake her in the other.

Abandoning her efforts with the boat, she turned and fled back toward the jungle. A couple of hundred yards behind her

raced Tur, but the girl knew that once she reached the tangled vegetation of the forest it would take a better man than Tur to catch her.

Straight into the mazes of the wood she plunged, sometimes keeping to the ground and again running through the lower branches of the trees.

All day she fled, scarce halting for food or drink, for several times from the elevations of the foothills and the mountains that she traversed after leaving the jungle she saw the man sticking to her trail. It was dark when she came at last to a precipitous gulf, dropping how far she could not guess.

Below and as far as her eyes could reach all was impenetrable darkness. About her beasts wandered restlessly in search of prey. She caught their scent and heard their dismal moaning or the thunder of their titanic roaring.

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That the cliff upon the verge of which she had halted just in time to avert a plunge into its unknown depths was a high one she was sure from the volume of the night noises that came up to her from below, mellowed by distance.

What should she do? The summit of the escarpment was nude of trees in so far as she could judge in the darkness—at least she had not recently passed through any sort of forest.

To sleep in the open would be dangerous in the extreme, probably fatal. To risk the descent of an unknown precipice at night might prove equally as calamitous.

Nat-ul crouched upon the brink of the abyss, at a loss as to her future steps. She was alone, a woman, practically unarmed, in a strange and savage land. Hope that she might ever return to her own people seemed futile.

How, indeed, could she accomplish it, followed by enemies and surrounded by unknown dangers?

She was very hungry and thirsty and sleepy. She would have given almost her last chance for succor to have lain down and slept. She would risk it.

Drawing her shaggy robe about her, Nat-ul stretched herself upon the hard earth at the top of the precipice. She closed her eyes, and sleep would have instantly claimed her had not a stealthy noise a short distance away caused her to come to startled wakefulness.

Something was creeping upon her—death in some form, she was positive. Even now she heard the heavy breathing of a large animal, and although the wind was blowing between them she caught the pungent odor of a great cat.

There was but a single alternative to remaining and surrendering herself to the claws and fangs of the carnivore, nor did Nat-ul hesitate in accepting it.

With the speed of a swift she lowered herself over the edge of the cliff, her feet dangling in space. Rapidly, and yet without panic, she groped with her feet for a hold upon the rocky surface below her.

There seemed nothing, not the slightest protuberance that would give her a chance to lower herself from the clutches of the beast that she knew must be sneaking cautiously toward her from above.

A sudden chill of horror swept over her as she felt hot breath and the drip of saliva upon her hands where they clung to the edge of the cliff above.

A low growl came from above.

Evidently the beast was puzzled by the strange position of its quarry, but in another moment it would seize her wrists, or, reaching down, bury its talons in her head or back. And just then her fingers slipped from their hold and Nat-ul dropped into the darkness.

That she fell but a couple of feet did not detract an iota from the fright she endured in the instant that her hand hold gave way, but the relief of feeling a narrow ledge beneath her feet quickly overcame her terror.

That the beast might follow her she had little fear. There might be a ledge running down to this point, and then again there might not. All she could do was stay where she was and hope for the best, and so she settled herself as securely as

she might to await what the immediate future might hold for her.

She heard the beast growl angrily as it paced along the brow of the cliff above her, now stopping occasionally to lower its nose over the edge and sniff at her, and again reaching down a mighty paw whose great talons clawed desperately to seize her, sweeping but a few inches above her head.

For an hour or more this lasted until the hungry cat, baffled and disgruntled, wandered away into the jungle in search of other prey, voicing his anger as he went in deep-throated roars.

Nat-ul felt along the ledge to right and left with her fingers. The surface of the rock was weather-worn, but not polished as would have been true were the ledge the accustomed pathway of padded feet.

The girl felt a sense of relief in this discovery—at least she was not upon the well-beaten trail leading to the lair of some wild beast, or connecting the cliff-top with the valley below.

Slowly and cautiously she wormed her way along the ledge, searching for a wider and more comfortable projection, but the ledge only narrowed as she proceeded.

Having ventured thus far the girl decided to prosecute her search until she discovered a spot where she might sleep in comparative safety and comfort. As no place seemed to exist at the level at which she was, she determined to descend a way.

She lowered her feet over the ledge, groping with her sandaled toes along the rough surface below her. Finally she found a safe projection to which she descended.

For half an hour Nat-ul searched through the pitch black night upon the steep cliff-face until accident led her groping feet to the mouth of a cave—a darker blot upon the darkness of the cliff. For a moment she listened attentively at the somber opening.

No sound of breathing within came to her keen ears.

Satisfied that the cave was untenanted, Nat-ul crawled boldly in and lay down to sleep, exhausted by her day of flight.

A scraping sound upon the cliff-face awakened Nat-ul. She raised herself upon an elbow and listened attentively.

What was it that could make that particular noise?

It required but an instant for her to recognize it—a sound familiar since infancy to the Cliff Dwellers. It was the trailing of the butt of a spear as it dangled from its rawhide thong down the back of a climbing warrior. Now it scraped along a comparatively smooth surface, now it bumped and pounded over a series of projections.

What new menace did it spell?

Nat-ul crawled cautiously to the opening of the cave. Here she could obtain a view of the cliff to the right, but the climber she could not see—he was below the projecting ledge that ran before the threshold of her cavern.

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As she looked, Nat-ul was startled to see a woman emerge from a cave a trifle above her, and fifty feet, perhaps, to her right. The watcher drew back lest she be discovered.

She heard the stranger's cry of delight as she sighted the climber below. She saw her clamber down to meet the newcomer. She saw the man an instant later as he clambered to the level of her ledge.

Her heart gave a throb of happiness—her lips formed a beloved name; but her happiness was short-lived, the name died ere it was uttered.

The man was Nu, the son of Nu, and the woman who met him and threw her arms about his neck and covered his lips with kisses, was Gron. Nat-ul recognized her now. Then she shrank back from the sight, covering her eyes with her hands, while hot tears trickled between her slim, brown fingers.

She did not see Nu's easy and indifferent laugh as he slipped Gron's arms from about his neck.

Fate was unkind. She hid this, and un-

sealed Nat-ul's eyes again only in time to show the distracted girl a momentary glance of her lover disappearing into Gron's cave with an arm about the woman's waist.

Nat-ul sprang to her feet.

Tears of rage, jealousy, and mortification blinded her eyes. She seized the knife that lay in her girdle. Murder flamed hot in her wild, young heart as she stepped boldly out upon the ledge.

She took a few hurried steps in the direction of the cave which held Nu and Gron. To the very threshold she went, and then, of a sudden, she paused.

Some new emotion seized her. A flood of hot tears welled once more to her eyes—tears of anguish and hurt love this time.

She tried to force herself within the cave, but pride held her back. Then sorrowfully she turned away and descended the cliff face. As she went her speed increased until by the time she reached the level before the forest she was flying like a deer from the scene of her greatest sorrow.

On through the woods she ran, heedless of every menace that might lurk within its wild shadows.

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Beyond the wood she came upon a little plain that seemed to end at the edge of a declivity some distance ahead of her. Beyond, in the far distance, she could see the tops of mountains rising through a mist that floated over an intervening valley.

She would keep on.

She cared not what lay ahead, only that at each step she was putting a greater distance between herself and the faithless Nu, the hateful Gron. That was all that counted—to get away where none might ever find her, to court death, to welcome the end that one need never seek for long in that savage, primeval world. She had crossed half the clearing, perhaps, when the head of a bull aurochs appeared topping the crest of the gulf ahead.

The brute paused to look at the woman. He lowered his head and bellowed. Directly behind him appeared another and another.

Ordinarily the aurochs was a harmless beast, fighting only when forced to it in self-defense; but an occasional bull there was that developed bellicose tendencies that made discretion upon the side of an unarmed human the better part of valor.

Nat-ul paused, measuring the distance between herself and the bull and herself and the nearest tree.

While Nat-ul, torn by anguish, fled the cliff that sheltered Nu, the man, within the cave with Gron, again disengaged the fingers of the woman from about his neck.

"Cease thy love-making, Gron," he said.

"There may be no love between us. In the tribe of Nu, my father, a man takes but one mate. I would take Nat-ul, the daughter of Tha. You are already mated to Tur. You have told me this, and I have seen his child sucking your breast. I love only Nat-ul—you should love only Tur."

"I hate him," she cried. "I hate him. I love only Nu, the son of Nu."

The man shook his head, and when he spoke it was still in a kindly voice, for he felt only sorrow for the unhappy woman.

"It is useless, Gron," he said, "for us to speak further upon this matter. Together we must remain until we have come back to our own countries. But there must be no love, nor more words of love between us. Do you understand?"

The woman looked at him for a moment.

What the emotion that stirred her heart her face did not betray. It might have been the anger of a woman scorned, or the sorrow of a breaking heart.

She took a step toward him, paused, and then throwing her arms before her face, turned and sank to the floor of the cave sobbing.

Nu turned away and stepped out upon the ledge before the cave.

In a single glance his quick eyes scanned the panorama spread out before